

Introducing the New Study of the Economics of Law Practice in Ohio

In 1990, the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) surveyed its membership in order to gain a clear picture of the legal profession in the first-ever Economics of Law Practice in Ohio. Seven subsequent studies have been conducted since then, up until the last edition in 2013. Today, the OSBA introduces the ninth study of its member attorneys with data based on responses to a survey conducted in the spring of 2019. Much has changed in almost 20 years.

Hourly rates have doubled and marketing practices have certainly shifted. (In 1990, 72 percent of respondents used the Yellow Pages as their primary marketing vehicle.) According to study data, in-house counsel has gone paperless while

private practitioners have adopted cloud computing and billing software more than any other group.

Today, we still measure attorney income by years in practice and geographic area, as we did back in 1990, but also by gender. We know that OSBA female attorney members are overwhelmingly drawn to government and public interest law, while men tend to be solo practitioners and in-house counsel. In some areas, women lawyers are close achieving wage parity or even outearn their male counterparts, while in others, they still have a long way to go.

This is the first year that law school debt was taken into account, revealing a stark

gap in debt owed from one generation to the next. We learned that debt is long-lived, with millennial private practitioners expecting to be paying their almost-\$100,000 law school debt for the next two decades.

The objective of this study in 1990 and today has been to create a usable reference for attorneys. From salary negotiations as an associate, to hiring a legal assistant, to determining hourly billing rates — the study of the economics of law in Ohio helps attorneys determine where they stand among their peers and how to better navigate the business of the profession at every stage in their careers.

ATTORNEYS: A STUDY

3-5
YEARS IN PRACTICE
DEBT: \$80,000



GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY SALARY

2018 \$51,000 | \$51,000
2012 \$46,000 | \$50,000



PRIVATE PRACTICE SALARY

2018 \$73,500 | \$78,000
2012 \$70,500 | \$57,500



IN-HOUSE SALARY

2018 \$90,000 | \$42,000
2012 \$83,000 | \$62,500



HOURLY RATE

2018 \$200/HR.
2012 \$175/HR.

Private practitioners and government attorneys are more optimistic with current and future economic conditions when compared to 2013 data.

Figures represent median values. Values are based on OSBA member survey responses.

● = Male ● = Female

11-15

YEARS IN PRACTICE

DEBT: \$60,000



IN-HOUSE SALARY

2018 \$130,899 | \$100,000

2012 \$150,000 | \$118,000



HOURLY RATE

2018 \$250/HR.

2012 \$200/HR.



GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY SALARY

2018 \$69,990 | \$84,500

2012 \$65,000 | \$59,500



PRIVATE PRACTICE SALARY

2018 \$120,000 | \$82,000

2012 \$135,000 | \$100,000

More than 70% of attorneys report using a firm website and networking at their bar association as marketing tools for their practice.

In 2019, 27% of private practitioners reported using a flat fee as an alternative fee arrangement, and data suggests that those in private practice are driving a trend away from the billable hour.



GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY SALARY

2018 \$100,500 | \$81,500

2012 \$102,000 | \$83,500

26-35

YEARS IN PRACTICE

DEBT: \$15,000



IN-HOUSE SALARY

2018 \$300,000 | \$228,000

2012 \$150,000 | \$152,500



HOURLY RATE

2018 \$250/HR.

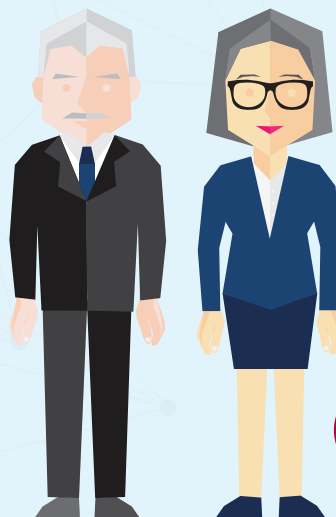
2012 \$225/HR.



PRIVATE PRACTICE SALARY

2018 \$150,000 | \$85,000

2012 \$140,000 | \$90,000



Access the report in its entirety at OhioBar.org/EconomicsofLaw to learn more, including data based on geographic location, legal assistant hourly rates and technology trends.