



The Law Society

# Private practice solicitors' salaries 2012

## The Law Society's PC Holder Survey 2012

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# Approach

## The data

- During June and July 2012, telephone interviews were conducted with 2,267 Practising Certificate Holders in England and Wales. Interviews were conducted on behalf of the Law Society by Moulton Hall Ltd, an independent research agency.
- A group of 1,507 individuals were selected at random from three sectors (private practice, government and the in-house sector, where individuals were mainly working in commerce & industry). The additional 764 interviews were used as a booster to the private practice sample, to facilitate robust analysis in relation to ethnicity and gender.
- Analysis in this report is based on the 633 individuals from the 1,507 random core sample who were working in private practice and who provided full salary data, worked full-time and were either on a permanent contract or at partner (or partner equivalent) level.
- Average earnings reported in this factsheet are higher than the £39,894 reported in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The ONS survey covers a wider range of solicitors (from all three sectors) and excludes the self-employed (equity partners).

## Presentation of the data

- Average salaries are reported as medians and quartiles. The median divides an ordered set of responses into two equal halves: one half of respondents will have earnings below the median, and one half will have earnings above it. In the tables the two halves are further divided into quartiles: 25% of respondents will have earnings below the lower quartile, and 25% will have earnings above the upper quartile. This is the standard way of reporting salary data as figures using mean salaries can be distorted by a few unusually high figures and therefore not give picture of the typical salary.
- All of the collected data used to generate the tables has been 'weighted' by level of post-qualification experience (PQE) and gender so that the analysed sample more closely represents the population from which it was drawn.
- The sample sizes given in each table are 'unweighted' and so give the actual number of observations\* in the sample falling into each cell of each table.  
\* Valid n = the valid number of observations



# Overview

This factsheet is based on the 633 individuals of the 1,507 random sample, who provided salary data, were working full-time and were either on a permanent contract or at partnership level.

- Average median earnings across all private practice grades were £53,000, a decrease of £2,000 or -3.6% or (-14.7% RPI adjusted) on 2008 figures, when average earnings were £55,000.
- Equity partners have experienced the biggest decrease, with median drawings decreasing from £85,185 in 2008 to £70,000 in 2012. This represents a decrease of £15,185 or -17.8% (-27.2% RPI adjusted) in equity partner drawings since 2008.
- At each grade men earned more than women (Table 1). The gender pay gap across all private practice solicitors is 26.7%, which is a slight decrease on the 29.7% difference in earnings found in 2008, but strictly not statistically significant.
- Median earnings within each private practice grade increased as size of firm increased. Overall, those working in sole practices earned on average £35,000 compared to £76,000 earned by those working in firms with 81 or more partners (Table 2).
- Across all in private practice, median earnings were highest in Greater London (£72,000) and lowest in Wales (£38,000) (Table 3a), a likely reflection of the size of practices typically found in these regions, the type and volume of work they undertake and differences in living allowance costs. At a more aggregated level, outside of Greater London, solicitors in the North had higher median earnings (£47,000) compared to those working in the South (excluding Greater London)(£40,500) (Table 3b).
- Generally, higher levels of post qualification experience (PQE) were associated with higher median earnings (Tables 4 and 5).
- Across all grades, those undertaking work for legally-aided clients had lower median earnings compared to those not providing services to legally aided clients. Overall, solicitors providing services for legally-aided private clients earned on average £36,000 compared to £60,000 earned by those with no legally-aided clients (Table 8). A high degree of specialism in legal aid work tended to be associated with lower incomes (Table 9).

# Table 1. Private Practice earnings: by gender and grade

Grade		Male £ p.a	Female £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Percentile 25	34,000	31,620	32,000
	Median	48,000	40,000	42,850
	Percentile 75	70,000	60,000	63,000
	Valid n	n=177	n=210	n=387
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	45,000	43,000	45,000
	Median	70,000	65,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	150,000	100,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=135	n=39	n=174
Salaried partners	Percentile 25	52,000	48,000	50,000
	Median	70,000	50,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	95,000	100,500	100,500
	Valid n	n=41	n=31	n=72
All grades	Percentile 25	38,000	33,000	35,000
	Median	60,000	44,000	53,000
	Percentile 75	95,000	65,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=353	n=280	n=633

## Table 2. Private Practice earnings: by size of firm and private practice grade

Grade		Sole practice £ p.a	2-4 partner £ p.a	5-10 partners £ p.a	11-25 partners £ p.a	26-80 partners £ p.a	81+ Partners £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associates	Percentile 25	25,000	27,000	29,000	32,500	37,000	59,000	32,500
	Median	30,000	32,000	34,000	40,000	46,000	65,000	43,000
	Percentile 75	40,000	41,000	42,500	50,000	70,000	85,000	65,000
	Valid n	n=14	n=67	n=59	n=45	n=80	n=116	n=381
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	30,000	27,000	50,000	75,000	75,200	165,000	45,000
	Median	45,000	42,000	60,000	125,000	105,000	200,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	70,000	60,000	80,000	160,000	130,000	360,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=30	n=42	n=27	n=22	n=19	n=35	n=175
Salaried Partner	Percentile 25	.	34,000	36,000	53,000	74,000	95,000	50,000
	Median	.	55,000	50,000	65,000	109,000	105,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	.	63,000	51,500	83,000	170,000	106,000	100,500
	Valid n	-	n=11	n=14	n=21	n=13	n=12	n=71
All grades	Percentile 25	25,000	27,000	32,000	40,000	40,000	60,000	35,000
	Median	35,000	36,000	42,500	55,000	60,000	76,000	53,000
	Percentile 75	57,000	54,000	55,000	80,000	91,000	110,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=44	n=120	n=100	n=88	n=112	n=163	n=627

\* Size of firm data is missing for six individuals

# Table 3a. Private Practice earnings: by detailed regional location and grade

Grade		East Midlands	Eastern	Greater London	North West (inc. M/side)	North East	South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	Yorkshire & Humber	All
Assistant / Associate	Percentile 25	28,000	30,000	48,000	31,000	30,000	30,000	31,050	29,000	30,000	37,000	32,000
	Median	31,300	38,000	65,000	37,000	36,750	35,000	36,000	33,500	39,000	42,000	42,850
	Percentile 75	33,000	45,000	80,000	48,000	47,000	42,500	47,000	40,000	45,000	53,000	63,000
	Valid n	n=11	n=30	n=168	n=50	n=15	n=29	n=34	n=12	n=15	n=23	n=387
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	48,000	80,000	35,000	38,000	60,000	35,000	70,000	23,000	45,000	36,000	45,000
	Median	50,000	80,000	150,000	100,000	60,000	60,000	75,200	36,000	70,000	50,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	50,000	100,000	300,000	112,000	135,000	70,000	300,000	50,000	105,000	70,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=7	n=15	n=58	n=20	n=7	n=23	n=10	n=4	n=18	n=13	n=175
Salaried Partner	Percentile 25	48,000	44,000	75,000	46,000	84,000	33,000	54,000	60,000	32,000	60,000	50,000
	Median	55,000	52,000	105,000	51,500	84,000	40,000	55,000	60,000	33,500	95,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	70,000	52,000	150,000	73,000	84,000	50,000	63,000	83,000	35,000	103,000	100,500
	Valid n	n=7	n=3	n=27	n=10	n=2	n=8	n=5	n=3	n=2	n=4	n=71
All grades	Percentile 25	31,300	35,000	50,000	32,000	35,000	30,750	32,500	30,000	35,000	37,000	35,000
	Median	48,000	50,000	72,000	44,250	54,000	40,000	41,000	38,000	45,000	50,000	53,000
	Percentile 75	50,000	78,000	105,000	65,000	62,000	60,000	63,000	60,000	70,000	67,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=25	n=48	n=253	n=80	n=24	n=60	n=49	n=19	n=35	n=40	n=633

# Table 3b. Private Practice earnings : by broad regional location and grade

Grade		Midlands & Wales £ p.a	Greater London £ p.a	North £ p.a	South £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Percentile 25	30,000	48,000	31,500	30,000	32,000
	Median	35,000	65,000	38,000	36,000	42,850
	Percentile 75	42,850	80,000	50,000	43,000	63,000
	Valid n	n=68	n=168	n=88	n=63	n=387
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	49,500	35,000	40,000	40,000	45,000
	Median	70,000	150,000	60,000	70,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	100,000	300,000	112,000	80,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=44	n=58	n=40	n=33	n=175
Salaried Partner	Percentile 25	44,000	75,000	50,000	40,000	50,000
	Median	52,000	105,000	60,000	50,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	60,000	150,000	84,000	55,000	100,500
	Valid n	n=15	n=27	n=16	n=13	n=71
All grades	Percentile 25	33,000	50,000	34,000	32,000	35,000
	Median	45,000	72,000	47,000	40,500	53,000
	Percentile 75	60,000	105,000	65,000	62,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=127	n=253	n=144	n=109	n=633



## Table 4. Earnings of salaried partners, by years of post qualification experience (PQE)

	1 to 4 £ p.a	5 to 8 £ p.a	9 to 15 £ p.a	16 plus £ p.a	All levels of PQE £ p.a
Percentile 25	40,000	50,000	51,500	50,000	50,000
Median	55,000	60,000	73,500	65,000	63,000
Percentile 75	55,000	82,500	100,500	103,000	100,500
Valid n	n= 3	n=13	n=18	n=37	n=71

## Table 5. Earnings of assistant/associate solicitors, by years of PQE

	<1 year £ p.a	1 year £ p.a	2 years £ p.a	3 to 4 years £ p.a	5-10 years £ p.a	11 or more years £ p.a	All levels of PQE £ p.a
Percentile 25	30,000	27,000	34,800	32,000	40,000	38,000	32,000
Median	37,000	32,000	43,000	40,000	47,000	50,000	42,850
Percentile 75	60,000	56,000	72,000	73,000	70,000	62,000	63,000
Valid n	n=69	n=54	n=48	n=69	n=97	n=50	n=387

## Table 6. Private Practice earnings: by grade and tenure with current firm

		0-1 years £ p. a	2 to 3 years £ p. a	4 to 5 years £ p. a	6 to 10 years £ p. a	11 to 20 years £ p. a	21 plus years £ p. a	All £ p. a
Assistant / Associate	Percentile 25	30,000	33,000	33,500	36,750	50,000	63,000	32,000
	Median	38,000	47,000	45,000	46,000	78,000	63,000	42,850
	Percentile 75	60,000	70,000	80,000	60,000	110,000	84,000	63,000
	Valid n	n=153	n=105	n=60	n=57	n=8	n=4	n=387
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	25,000	54,000	43,000	55,000	36,000	40,000	45,000
	Median	110,000	70,000	60,000	75,200	70,000	70,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	185,000	100,000	130,000	170,000	150,000	140,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=12	n=17	n=21	n=38	n=44	n=43	n=175
Salaried Partner	Percentile 25	50,000	55,000	34,000	54,000	51,500	46,000	50,000
	Median	55,000	65,000	43,000	74,000	70,000	50,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	65,000	115,000	82,500	103,000	95,000	50,000	100,500
	Valid n	n= 5	n=16	n=7	n=23	n=14	n=6	n= 71
All grades	Percentile 25	30,000	35,000	34,000	41,000	40,000	43,334	35,000
	Median	40,000	54,000	49,000	58,500	70,000	70,000	53,000
	Percentile 75	61,000	72,000	80,000	78,000	150,000	125,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=170	n=138	n=88	n= 18	n=66	n= 53	n=633

# Table 7. Private Practice earnings: by grade and area of specialism

		Assistant / associates £ p.a	Equity partner £ p.a	Salaried partner £ p.a	All grades £ p.a
<b>Business and commercial affairs</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	40,000	70,000	55,000	52,000
	Valid n	n= 72	n=49	n=13	n=134
Specialist	Median	65,000	160,000	105,000	73,000
	Valid n	n=140	n=51	n=11	n=202
<b>Commercial property</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	40,000	55,000	60,000	50,000
	Valid n	n=49	n=41	n=10	n=100
Specialist	Median	55,000	105,000	90,000	68,000
	Valid n	n=34	n=22	n=10	n=66
<b>Crime</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	31,000	55,000	.	37,500
	Valid n	n=14	n=2	-	n=16
Specialist	Median	34,000	43,000	46,000	38,000
	Valid n	n=29	n=11	n=6	n=46
<b>Employment</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	36,000	70,000	60,000	54,000
	Valid n	n=38	n=23	n=10	n=71
Specialist	Median	42,000	150,000	95,000	55,000
	Valid n	n=26	n=5	n=4	n=35

# Table 7 cont. Private Practice earnings: by grade and area of specialism

		Assistant / associates £ p.a	Equity partner £ p.a	Salaried partner £ p.a	All grades £ p.a
<b>Family</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	30,000	54,000	60,000	31,600
	Valid n	n=19	n=17	n=5	n=41
Specialist	Median	30,000	42,000	50,000	35,000
	Valid n	n=26	n=19	n=13	n=58
<b>Probate, wills and trusts</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	32,000	50,000	55,000	40,000
	Valid n	n=26	n=40	n=5	n=71
Specialist	Median	34,800	54,000	120,000	40,000
	Valid n	n=25	n=11	n=2	n=38
<b>Residential conveyancing</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	36,000	54,000	74,000	41,000
	Valid n	n=45	n=37	n=11	n=93
Specialist	Median	30,000	50,000	75,000	42,500
	Valid n	n=10	n=13	n=5	n=28
<b>Personal injury</b>					
Non-specialist	Median	38,500	60,000	53,000	45,000
	Valid n	n=13	n=8	n=4	n=25
Specialist	Median	39,000	70,000	60,000	46,000
	Valid n	n=43	n=12	n=9	n=64

# Table 8. Private Practice earnings: by grade and whether or not legal aid work is undertaken

		No legally-aided private clients £ p.a	Legally-aided private clients £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Percentile 25	35,000	27,000	32,000
	Median	50,000	34,000	42,850
	Percentile 75	69,000	41,000	63,000
	Valid n	n=312	n=75	n=387
Equity Partner	Percentile 25	50,000	36,000	45,000
	Median	78,000	50,000	70,000
	Percentile 75	150,000	70,000	150,000
	Valid n	n=148	n=27	n=175
Salaried Partner	Percentile 25	55,000	34,000	50,000
	Median	82,500	48,000	63,000
	Percentile 75	106,000	52,000	100,500
	Valid n	n=54	n=17	n=71
All grades	Percentile 25	38,760	30,000	35,000
	Median	60,000	36,000	53,000
	Percentile 75	89,000	49,000	78,000
	Valid n	n=514	n=119	n=633

## Table 9. Private Practice earnings: by the proportion of fee-earning time spent with legal aid clients

	1-25% £ p.a	25-50% £ p.a	51-75% £ p.a	76-100% £ p.a	Total £ p.a
Percentile 25	35,000	30,000	25,000	29,000	30,000
Median	50,000	36,000	30,000	35,000	36,000
Percentile 75	63,000	48,000	35,000	46,000	50,000
Valid n	n=31	n=11	n=17	n=65	n=124