



The Law Society

Private practice solicitors' salaries 2015

PC Holder Survey 2015

Representing, promoting and supporting solicitors

Contents

	Slide / page number
Overview	3
Assistant/associate earnings trends	4
Table 1. Gender and grade	5
Table 2. Size of firm and grade	6
Earnings by region	
Table 3a. Detailed regional location and grade	7
Table 3b. Broad regional location and grade	8
Earnings by years of post qualification experience (PQE)	
Table 4. Salaried partners analysed by years of PQE	9
Table 5. Assistant and associate solicitors analysed by years of PQE	10
Table 6. Grade and years of tenure with current firm	11
Earnings by area and client type	
Table 7. Grade and area of specialism	12-13
Table 8. Grade and whether or not legal aid work is undertaken	14
Table 9. Proportion of time spent with legal aid clients	15
Approach	16



Overview

The earnings factsheet figures are based on a sample of 491 private practitioners who participated in the Society's 2015 PC holder survey who: provided salary data; were working full-time; and were either on a permanent contract or at partnership level at the time.

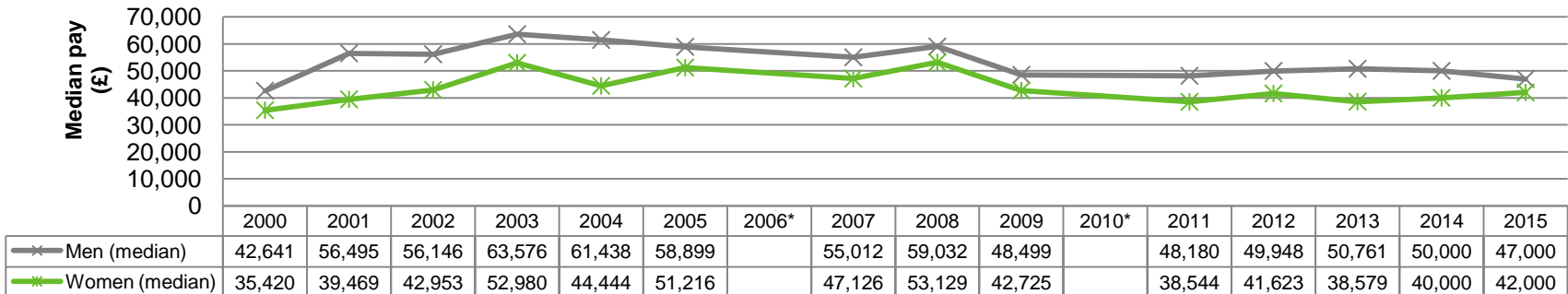
- The median average salary across all private practice grades in 2015 was £54,000 per annum, a 4.8% increase on 2014 median figure.
- Men on average, continued to earn more than women (page 4). The gender pay gap¹ based on average (median) annual earnings across private practice solicitors was 19.2%.
- Post-qualification experience, tenure, size of firm, region, practice areas undertaken and hours worked are factors which explained a larger amount of variation in earnings than gender when other factors were controlled for (based on a standard OLS regression).
- Median earnings within each private practice grade increased as size of firm increased (Table 2).
- Across all in private practice, median earnings were highest in Greater London (£76,000) and lowest in the East Midlands (£38,500) (Table 3a). Outside of Greater London, median earnings did not vary significantly across aggregated regions; the South of England (£46,000), the Midlands and Wales (£47,000), and the North of England (£42,000) (Table 3b).
- Of solicitors doing any work in a particular practice area those who specialised (spent 50% or more of fee-earning time on the practice area) had higher median earnings than non-specialists across four of the eight practice areas (Business and commercial affairs, Commercial property, Employment, and Family law - Table 7).
- Across all grades, those undertaking any work for legally-aided clients had 32% lower earnings than those not serving this client group (Table 8). The largest differences were at equity partner level, with equity partners doing any legal aid work earning on average £70,000 compared to the £100,000 earned by their counterparts with no legally-aided clients.
- Guidance on [equal pay](#) can be found on the Law Society's website.

¹ This is defined as the difference between men's and women's annual earnings as a percentage of men's earnings.

Women continued to earn less than men at assistant / associate level, although the gender pay gap was at its narrowest since 2008

- In 2015, assistant/associate solicitors earned on average £44,000 – an increase of 2.3% on the previous year and a 12.2% increase on 2000 in real terms. A quarter of assistant/associate solicitors earned £35,000 or less, and a quarter earned £64,000 or more.
- Median earnings were higher for assistant / associates in London firms (£68,000) compared to those located elsewhere (£38,000).
- Since 2000 women assistant/associate’s median earnings increased by 18.6% (based on 2015 prices), compared to a 10.2% increase in men’s median earnings.
- Since 2000, women’s upper quartile earnings have increased by 33.7% compared to a 9.5% increase in men’s upper quartile earnings.
- The gender pay gap based on median earnings of assistant/associates in 2015 was 10.6%, a decline on the 20% found in 2014 and the 16.9% found in 2000.
- The gender pay gap for this grade, based on median earnings, was narrower for solicitors based in London (4.3%) compared to elsewhere (10%).

Assistant/associate earnings 2000-2015 (Real terms, 2015 prices)



Law Society, PC Holder Survey 2000-2015

*No earnings data is available in 2006 and 2010.

Sample sizes vary, minimum total 225 (2011) to maximum 669 (2009). Average sample for men was 168, average sample size for women was 195.

Samples sizes at senior levels prohibit robust analysis. Here we compare individuals within a similar role – accepting that the title of ‘assistant/associate solicitor’ can cover a wide range of roles and responsibilities within private practice.

Prior to 2014 a random approach was taken in sample selection, from 2014 a proportionate (gender/ethnicity) random sampling approach was employed.

Table 1. Private Practice earnings: by gender and grade

Grade		Male £ p.a	Female £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Lower quartile	36,000	32,000	35,000
	Median	47,000	42,000	44,000
	Upper quartile	67,000	63,000	64,000
	Valid n	151	152	303
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	55,000	52,000	52,000
	Median	100,000	80,000	85,000
	Upper quartile	180,000	150,000	180,000
	Valid n	80	36	116
Salaried partners	Lower quartile	59,000	48,000	50,000
	Median	70,000	57,000	65,000
	Upper quartile	135,000	75,000	95,000
	Valid n	38	34	72
All grades	Lower quartile	39,000	35,000	37,000
	Median	60,000	48,500	54,000
	Upper quartile	100,000	70,000	80,000
	Valid n	269	222	491

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

Grade		Sole practice £ p.a	2-4 partners £ p.a	5-10 partners £ p.a	11-25 partners £ p.a	26-80 partners £ p.a	81 plus partners £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associates	Lower quartile	30,000	30,000	31,500	33,000	39,000	45,000	35,000
	Median	34,000	33,000	37,000	42,000	55,000	67,000	44,000
	Upper quartile	38,000	45,000	43,000	50,000	71,500	90,000	65,000
	Valid n	17	49	57	38	52	89	302
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	25,000	47,000	50,000	80,000	85,000	200,000	52,000
	Median	42,000	60,000	85,000	120,000	115,000	300,000	85,000
	Upper quartile	70,000	80,000	150,000	175,000	270,000	600,000	180,000
	Valid n	17	30	16	14	21	16	114
Salaried Partner	Lower quartile	-	42,000	48,000	60,000	65,000	70,000	50,000
	Median	-	50,000	65,000	65,000	70,000	95,000	65,000
	Upper quartile	-	70,000	81,000	88,500	85,000	220,000	95,000
	Valid n	3	19	15	10	13	11	71
All grades	Lower quartile	28,000	30,000	34,000	36,000	46,000	55,000	37,000
	Median	35,000	45,000	42,000	50,000	65,000	73,000	54,000
	Upper quartile	60,000	58,000	65,000	80,000	105,000	110,000	80,000
	Valid n	37	98	88	62	86	116	487

Size of firm is missing for four individuals

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

Grade		East Midlands £ p.a	East of England £ p.a	London £ p.a	North East £ p.a	North West £ p.a	South East £ p.a	South West £ p.a	Wales £ p.a	West Midlands £ p.a	Yorkshire and the Humber £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Lower quartile	30,000	37,000	48,000	25,000	33,000	34,500	37,000	-	30,000	33,000	35,000
	Median	32,500	42,000	68,000	42,000	38,000	40,000	38,750	-	38,000	36,000	44,000
	Upper quartile	50,000	50,000	90,000	60,000	45,000	50,000	47,000	-	47,000	45,000	64,000
	Valid n	17	12	114	11	34	38	19	9	26	23	303
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	-	80,000	70,000	-	50,000	28,000	55,000	-	-	-	52,000
	Median	-	90,000	180,000	-	50,000	60,000	80,000	-	-	-	85,000
	Upper quartile	-	150,000	400,000	-	90,000	67,000	160,000	-	-	-	180,000
	Valid n	4	10	40	3	10	17	11	4	8	9	116
Salaried Partner	Lower quartile	-	-	70,000	-	65,000	-	-	-	-	-	50,000
	Median	-	-	110,000	-	65,000	-	-	-	-	-	65,000
	Upper quartile	-	-	220,000	-	70,000	-	-	-	-	-	95,000
	Valid n	6	4	22	1	10	9	4	3	6	7	72
All grades	Lower quartile	30,000	40,000	54,000	25,000	35,000	35,000	37,500	35,000	36,000	33,000	37,000
	Median	38,500	58,000	76,000	42,000	42,000	46,000	43,000	45,000	47,000	45,000	54,000
	Upper quartile	57,000	80,000	117,000	60,000	65,000	60,000	70,000	85,000	60,000	67,000	80,000
	Valid n	27	26	176	15	54	64	34	16	40	39	491

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

Grade		Midlands & Wales £ p.a	Greater London £ p.a	North £ p.a	South £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Lower quartile	30,000	48,000	33,000	35,000	35,000
	Median	37,000	68,000	38,000	39,000	44,000
	Upper quartile	48,000	90,000	45,000	50,000	64,000
	Valid n	64	114	68	57	303
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	60,000	70,000	40,000	37,000	52,000
	Median	85,000	180,000	75,000	60,000	85,000
	Upper quartile	150,000	400,000	100,000	100,000	180,000
	Valid n	26	40	22	28	116
Salaried Partner	Lower quartile	45,000	70,000	46,000	50,000	50,000
	Median	55,000	110,000	65,000	64,000	65,000
	Upper quartile	70,000	220,000	70,000	72,000	95,000
	Valid n	19	22	18	13	72
All grades	Lower quartile	35,000	54,000	33,500	35,000	37,000
	Median	47,000	76,000	42,000	46,000	54,000
	Upper quartile	60,000	117,000	65,000	64,000	80,000
	Valid n	109	176	108	98	491

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 £ p.a
Lower quartile	-	-	57,000	46,000	50,000
Median	-	-	70,000	65,000	65,000
Upper quartile	-	-	85,000	100,000	95,000
Valid n	2	4	29	37	72

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

	0 years PQE	1 years PQE	2 years PQE	3-4 years PQE	5-10 years PQE	11-15 years PQE	16-20 years PQE	21+ years PQE	Total
Lower quartile	33,000	29,000	35,000	35,000	36,000	42,000	40,000	37,500	35,000
Median	37,000	36,000	40,000	42,000	48,000	53,000	45,000	48,000	44,000
Upper quartile	55,000	50,000	70,000	67,000	67,000	88,000	54,000	60,000	64,000
Valid n	14	48	39	59	79	26	13	24	302
PQE is missing for one individual									

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	Lower quartile	33,000	33,000	37,500	40,000	-	-	35,000
	Median	40,000	39,000	47,000	53,000	-	-	44,000
	Upper quartile	63,000	55,000	73,000	80,000	-	-	64,000
	Valid n	90	99	67	39	6	2	303
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	-	67,000	65,000	60,000	40,000	36,000	52,000
	Median	-	85,000	80,000	160,000	70,000	500,00	85,000
	Upper quartile	-	150,000	200,000	300,000	120,000	100,000	180,000
	Valid n	7	19	16	42	16	16	116
Salaried Partner	Lower quartile	57,000	48,000	49,000	53,000	-	-	50,000
	Median	81,000	60,000	65,000	65,000	-	-	65,000
	Upper quartile	150,000	88,500	150,000	80,000	-	-	95,000
	Valid n	10	18	10	25	7	2	72
All grades	Lower quartile	35,000	35,000	39,000	45,000	41,000	30,000	37,000
	Median	45,000	48,000	52,000	70,000	64,000	50,000	54,000
	Upper quartile	70,000	67,000	90,000	124,000	110,000	100,000	80,000
	Valid n	107	136	93	106	29	20	491

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

Specialist solicitors are those working in an area and with 50%+ fee earning time on that area

		Assistant / associates £ p.a	Equity partner £ p.a	Salaried partner £ p.a	All grades £ p.a
Business and commercial affairs					
Non-specialist	Median	38,500	60,000	65,000	48,000
	Valid n	44	23	11	78
Specialist	Median	67,000	200,000	125,000	80,000
	Valid n	96	28	18	142
Commercial property					
Non-specialist	Median	42,000	50,000	-	50,000
	Valid n	32	16	7	55
Specialist	Median	50,000	200,000	-	58,656
	Valid n	21	11	6	38
Crime					
Non-specialist	Median	-	-	-	50,000
	Valid n	6	4	3	13
Specialist	Median	36,000	-	-	37,500
	Valid n	19	8	4	31
Employment					
Non-specialist	Median	50,000	70,000	-	55,000
	Valid n	20	11	4	35
Specialist	Median	60,000	-	-	60,000
	Valid n	10	7	4	21

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

Specialist solicitors are those working in an area and with 50%+ fee earning time on that area

		Assistant / associates £ p.a	Equity partner £ p.a	All grades £ p.a
Family				
Non-specialist	Median	-	67,000	40,000
	Valid n	6	10	19
Specialist	Median	38,500	80,000	45,000
	Valid n	30	18	53
Probate, wills and trusts				
Non-specialist	Median	50,000	55,000	50,000
	Valid n	10	20	37
Specialist	Median	36,000	-	42,000
	Valid n	22	7	34
Residential conveyancing				
Non-specialist	Median	40,400	60,000	53,000
	Valid n	17	18	43
Specialist	Median	35,000	-	43,000
	Valid n	18	7	30
Personal injury				
Non-specialist	Median	-	-	65,000
	Valid n	5	5	14
Specialist	Median	35,000	-	40,000
	Valid n	38	7	58

* Medians based on very small samples (less than 10 individuals) are suppressed due to the likelihood that these results are misleading.

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

		No legally-aided private clients £ p.a	Legally-aided private clients £ p.a	All £ p.a
Assistant / Associate	Lower quartile	36,000	30,000	35,000
	Median	46,500	34,000	44,000
	Upper quartile	67,500	42,000	64,000
	Valid n	253	50	303
Equity Partner	Lower quartile	52,000	45,000	52,000
	Median	100,000	70,000	85,000
	Upper quartile	210,000	85,000	180,000
	Valid n	97	19	116
Salaried Partner	Lower quartile	49,000	50,000	50,000
	Median	65,000	65,000	65,000
	Upper quartile	95,000	72,000	95,000
	Valid n	62	10	72
All grades	Lower quartile	38,500	30,900	37,000
	Median	57,000	38,500	54,000
	Upper quartile	89,000	60,000	80,000
	Valid n	412	79	491



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

	1-25% FET £ p.a	25-50% FET £ p.a	51-75% FET £ p.a	76-100% FET £ p.a	All £ p.a
Lower quartile	33,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,900
Median	60,000	60,000	42,000	37,000	38,500
Upper quartile	80,000	70,000	49,000	48,000	60,000
Valid n	22	11	14	32	79



Approach

The data

- During May to September 2015, telephone interviews were conducted with 2,248 Practising Certificate holders in England and Wales. Interviews were conducted on behalf of the Law Society by PCP Marketing Ltd, an independent research agency.
- The sample comprised a core group of 1,502 individuals from private practice, government and the in-house sector (selected on the basis of stratified random sampling).
- Analysis in this report is based on the 491 individuals from the 1,502 random core sample who worked in private practice (assistant/associates, equity or salaried partners); provided full salary data, worked full-time (self-reported); and were either on a permanent contract or at partner (or partner equivalent) level.
- Average earnings reported in this factsheet are higher than the £39,717 (median) reported for solicitors in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2015 Provisional [Table14.7a](#) (Full Time / Row 118)). ONS figures represent an average for all solicitors, not just those in private practice and exclude the self-employed (equity partners). The ONS reports an annual percentage change of -3.5% since 2014.
- No direct comparisons can be made to the national gender pay gap (9.4%) reported by the ONS as this gap is based on differences in median hourly earnings of employees working 30 hours or more (full-time). The gender pay gap reported to the ONS by solicitor employees (non-partners) is 7.9% with caveats around cell sizes.

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 a standard way of reporting earnings, as the arithmetic mean tends to provide a distorted representation of earnings data because it is greatly affected by any extreme values.
- All of the collected data used to generate the tables has been weighted by gender and post qualification experience so that the analysed sample more closely represents the population from which it was drawn, based on these factors.
- 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. For context, the confidence interval for percentage results across all private practitioners providing earnings data is plus or minus 4.41%.
- Valid n = the valid number of observations. Low sample sizes (<25), should be treated with caution. Low sample sizes make comparisons over time, at individual cell level, unreliable.
- For comments or queries on the report, please contact joanne.cox@lawsociety.org.uk (020 7320 5892)