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The 2019 AILA Marketplace Study

A National Reference on the Economics of Immigration Law Practice



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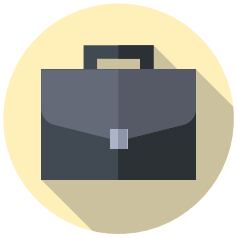
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Introduction

Welcome to the 2019 AILA Marketplace Study. We are pleased to present this important data that can help you make career choices and manage your practice. This is the third study of the economics of immigration law practice developed by AILA in the past nine years.

What stands out this time around

Women are leading the charge in immigration law. While the legal profession as a whole is showing just over one-third women, respondents to this study were two-thirds women and one-third men. Not only do women still lead in immigration nonprofits and associates at all firm sizes—all growing sectors over nine years—but for the first time women make up a majority of partners of all law firm sizes except those with 21 or more lawyers.

Women are leading the charge in immigration law. For the first time, women make up a majority of partners of all law firm sizes (except those with 21+ lawyers).



The immigration bar has a large cohort of younger attorneys, who are now the largest age segment, as baby boomers retire.

Hourly and flat fee rates have increased, as well as net income. Between the 2011 and 2016 study, the trend was stagnation or slight decline in most economic data points. This year's study shows a steady increase in most key financials since 2016.

Immigration lawyers continue to evolve their practices by incorporating different technologies into their firm. There is a correlation between higher net income firms and the use of case management software, document assembly software, cloud storage, and paperless offices.

The last few years has shown a decline in satisfaction with practicing immigration law. Immigration practitioners said they are working harder than ever. Over one-third say they have more work than they can handle, so it came as no surprise that satisfaction with the profession dipped, though it didn't plummet.

Money doesn't buy happiness—or at least the story isn't as simple as that. Despite immigration being a political hot button and in extreme flux, and satisfaction decreasing some, most practitioners forecast a positive future for immigration practice.

Stress from dealing with difficult government agencies was felt by a whopping 95% percent to some degree, an increase of 15% overall. Respondents considering it very stressful doubled from the 2016 study.

95%
feel the stress from dealing with difficult government agencies.

Methods and Measures

During June and July of 2019, the American Immigration Lawyers Association ("AILA") surveyed it's membership on the economics of law practice. The objectives of this study are to derive and report useful benchmarks to enhance practice planning and budgeting as well as career benchmarking, job satisfaction, and succession planning.

To help attorneys manage their professional lives, the information has been consolidated as this reference document and posted on the AILA website. Based on over seventy tables, charts and graphs, attorneys, firms and organizations can compare themselves against "norms" established by the aggregation of survey responses.

Assistance with interpreting and applying information is available at no charge to AILA members. Please contact Dr. Lawrence Stiffman of the Applied Statistics Laboratory (ASL) of Ann Arbor, Michigan at (734) 417-5151 or e-mail him at aslinfo@aol.com. Under the direction and oversight of Reid F. Trautz, Director, Practice & Professionalism Center at AILA, ASL fielded the survey, solely maintained and accessed the raw data, analyzed derived data and prepared this study. Results are based on an online survey consisting of 49 questions fielded in June and July 2019. Each AILA member with a listed email address was surveyed three times targeting approximately 15,000 potential respondents. There were 1,223 usable returns from members receiving the survey.

Most readers will be interested in comparing themselves and their firms to the data presented. In surveys, this most often means comparing to the "mean" or "median" data. The mean (also called the average or arithmetic average) is calculated by adding the values of all responses, then dividing by the number of responses. The median is the middle value of a series (distribution) of values, which is initially rank-ordered (from low to high or vice versa). By definition, half the numbers are greater and half are less than the median. Both mean and median values are used throughout this survey report to measure central tendency. Use of the median as a statistic for central tendency reduces the effect of "outliers" (extremely high or low values), while the average does not.

Despite the use of the median to reduce the "outlier" effect, readers should use caution in interpreting data when only a small number of responses, such as large firm partners herein, are available. Readers are advised to "group up" to a larger geographic area or practice category, where appropriate, to not distort reality. Generally, no value is represented if fewer than 5 responses were reported.

Because the survey was conducted in the summer of 2019, attorney income, gross revenue and overhead expenses represent calendar year (CY) 2018 values. All other data represent 2019 values covering the responses as received.

To help practitioners interpret the information provided in the exhibits, a brief discussion of measures of central tendency (mean and median) and dispersion (spread) is provided in Appendix A. We encourage you to review this information to obtain the best results from this study.

Summary Profile of the Typical Immigration Attorney and Firm

This section summarizes key statistics derived from the survey. Emphasis is on the concerns of the "average" attorney and the "average" firm with respect to demographics, core relationships of income, hourly billing rates, time expenditure and resultant practice and firm revenues and expenses. Female attorneys are in the majority within all practice categories except large firm *partners* **(Exhibit 1)**.



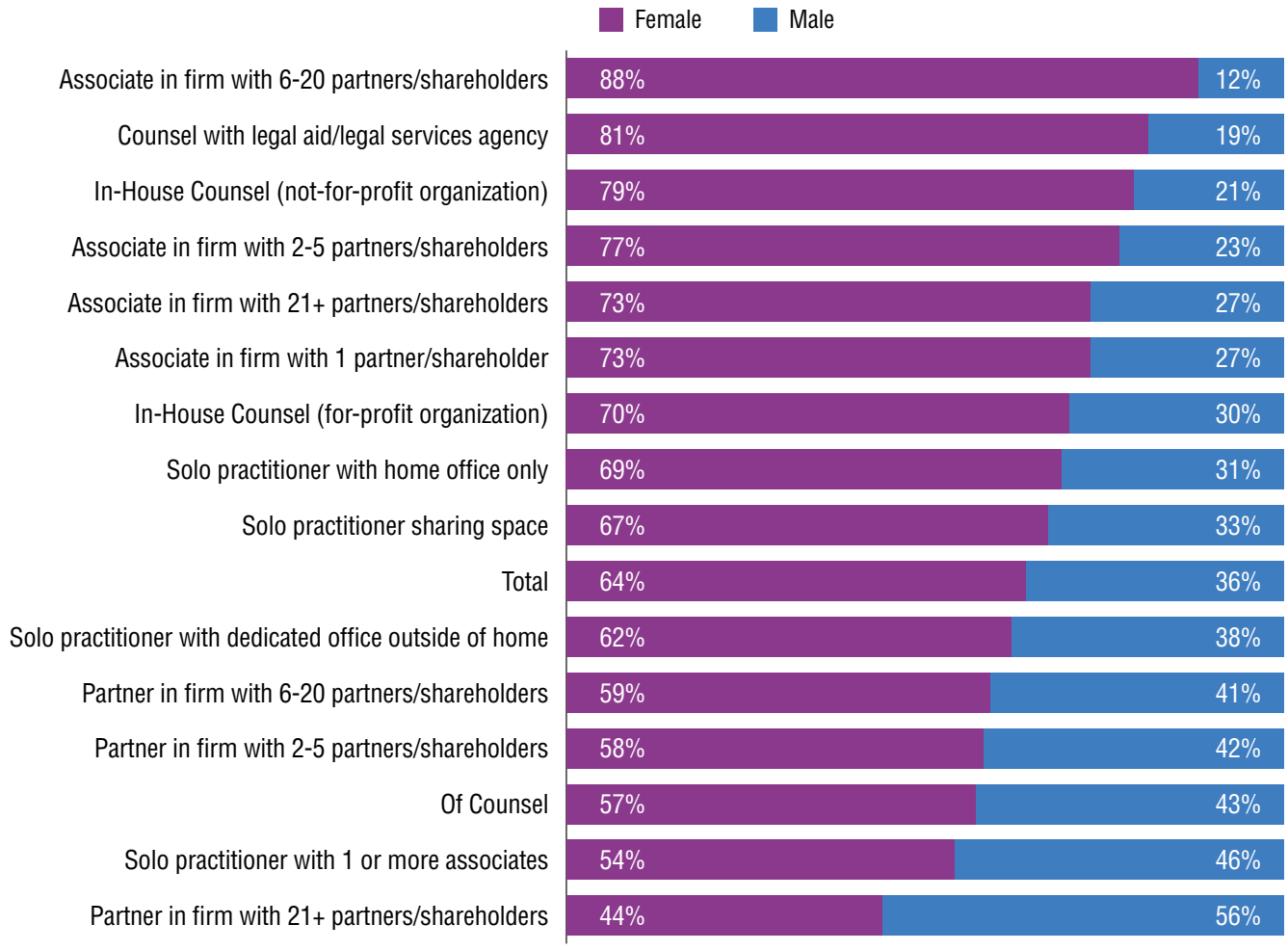
The immigration bar is becoming more female and more youthful.

Of 2019 Respondents:
56% are female working full-time
31% of those are under 35

Of 2019 Respondents:
34.7% are male working full-time
20.5% are over 55 years old



Exhibit 1: Ranked Percent Distribution of Respondents' Gender by Practice Category, 2019



Membership Demographics

It appears from the survey that AILA member demographics are changing. The immigration bar is becoming more female and more youthful. Those changes are reflected in the profession as a whole, but the shift appears more rapid in the immigration cohort. In 2019, 56% of survey respondents are females working full-time compared with 34.7% of male respondents. Approximately 8.9% of attorneys work on a part-time basis. The proportion of respondents who are females working full-time increased 15% since 2011 while the proportion of males working full-time decreased by 17%.

We also see that shift within age cohorts: About 31% of females working full time are less than 35 years old, compared with 21.9% of males, while 33% of part-time females are also less than 35 years old. In the oldest age cohort (<55 years), only 6% of females are over 55 years of age, compared with 20.5% of males. Further, those over 55 years of age—essentially baby boomers—are now our smallest age cohort.

Fifty-three percent of respondents are solo practitioners; 23% designated themselves as partners/Of Counsel in firms; 16% are associates in firms; while 5% are with a legal services non-profit; and 2% are In-house attorneys.

The largest chapters had the largest participation in the survey, but representation within the survey was spread across all chapters and all regions of the country. Non-U.S. chapters had little to no participation.

For more information and **Exhibits 2–12** detailing respondent demographic information, please see Appendix B.

2019 Attorney Hourly Billing Rates and Time Allocations

The 2019 median hourly billing rate is $300. The average is $303 **(Exhibit 13)**. Between 2011 and 2016 the median hourly rate did not increase. However, from 2016 to 2019 the median hourly rate increased from $250 to $300. Many factors influence the level of hourly billing rates including geographic location, practice size, years in practice, as summarized in the exhibits below. Further, immigration lawyers spend 3 times as many hours per week generating income by flat fees **(Exhibit 22)**. That reduces the importance of the hourly rate to many members. However, an average billable hourly rate is commonly multiplied by average time a case takes, to determine flat fees, and it is an important benchmark to compare against similarly situated immigration lawyers and lawyers in other practice areas.

Hourly Billing Rates by Office Location

Exhibits 13 and 14 distribute reported hourly billing rates by US Region and AILA Chapter. There is some variation by US region that becomes more pronounced when viewed by chapter.

Exhibit 13: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by US Region

US Region	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Northeast Region	149	$250	$300	$316	$350	$475
Southern Region	203	250	300	299	350	495
Midwest Region	139	225	250	283	325	450
Western Region	236	250	300	311	350	475
Outside US	18	150	275	295	425	650
Not listed	9	250	300	293	310	400
All Regions (2019)	**755**	**$250**	**$300**	**$303**	**$350**	**$475**
All Regions (2016)	**960**	**$200**	**$250**	**$273**	**$318**	**$468**
All Regions (2011)	**1062**	**$200**	**$250**	**$259**	**$300**	**$420**

Canada has the highest median hourly rate for a chapter, at $425; followed by New York, Northern California, Southern California, and South Florida, all at $350. Twenty chapters are at or above the national median hourly rate of $300 per hour.

Exhibit 14: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates by AILA Chapter

Office Location	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Not Listed	9	$250	$300	$297	$350	$400
Arizona	8	225	273	268	350	400
Georgia/Alabama	28	250	275	306	350	420
Bangkok District	6	200	200	226	350	600
Canada	5	250	425	435	600	650
Carolinas	27	225	300	268	300	350
Central Florida	26	250	300	296	350	400
Chicago	32	250	300	322	350	700
Colorado	54	250	250	264	300	385
Connecticut	8	300	330	329	350	425
Hawaii	5	250	260	266	300	325
Idaho	8	200	200	231	210	450
Iowa/Nebraska	11	190	220	206	250	365
Latin America & Caribbean District	4	225	300	300	375	450
Michigan	27	225	300	299	350	450
MidSouth *(Includes Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee)*	33	200	250	269	300	410
Minnesota/Dakotas	19	200	250	267	300	450
Missouri/Kansas	18	250	250	265	300	395
New England *(Includes Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont)*	34	200	250	286	350	500
New Jersey	9	295	325	317	335	425

continued

New York City Area *(Includes the 5 Boroughs & Nassau, Orange, Suffolk, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Ulster, and Sullivan Counties)*	36	300	350	355	388	500
Northern California	44	250	350	342	400	500
Ohio	23	200	264	271	325	425
Oregon	5	225	250	250	250	325
Philadelphia	17	250	275	273	300	750
Pittsburgh	4	195	225	223	250	250
San Diego *(Includes San Diego and Imperial Counties)*	17	250	300	291	350	550
Santa Clara *(Includes Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties)*	10	250	300	324	400	450
Southern California *(Includes Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties)*	65	300	350	347	375	500
Southern Florida *(Includes Dade, Collier, Broward, Monroe, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Okeechobee, Highlands & Glades Counties)*	23	250	350	351	450	500
Texas *(Includes New Mexico and Oklahoma)*	68	250	300	298	350	500
Upstate New York	5	250	310	311	375	380
Utah	3	275	300	292	300	300
Washington DC *(Includes DC, Maryland and Virginia)*	40	210	313	301	350	450
Washington State	18	250	300	292	350	450
Wisconsin	9	250	275	290	300	420
All Respondents	**765**	**$250**	**$300**	**$299**	**$350**	**$475**

Hourly Billing Rates by Gender & Work Status, Years in Practice, Practice Category, and Firm Size

Full-time attorneys bill at a higher hourly rate than part-time attorneys, and males bill at a higher rate than females. Hourly rates for males are about $20 per hour higher than women **(Exhibit 15)**.

Exhibit 15: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by Gender and Work Status

Gender and Work Status	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Female, working full-time (30 + hrs/wk)	401	$250	$280	$291	$350	$450
Female, working part-time (<30 hrs/wk)	55	200	250	261	310	400
Male, working full-time (30+ hrs/wk)	288	250	300	326	375	500
Male, working part-time (<30 hrs/wk)	8	300	343	339	413	500
All Respondents	**755**	**$250**	**$300**	**$303**	**$350**	**$475**

Rates are positively correlated with experience **(Exhibit 16)**. As one would expect, the greater the years in practice (experience) the higher the hourly rate.

Exhibit 16: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by Years in Practice

	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Years in Practice Category						
1 to 2	24	$200	$250	$261	$313	$420
3 to 5	79	200	250	249	300	350
6 to 10	182	250	250	275	300	375
11 to 15	126	250	300	298	350	450
16 to 25	194	250	300	325	375	475
26+	141	250	350	354	400	550
All Respondents (2019)	**746**	**$250**	**$300**	**$304**	**$350**	**$475**
All Respondents (2016)	**944**	**$200**	**$250**	**$273**	**$310**	**$465**
All Respondents (2011)	**1062**	**$200**	**$250**	**$259**	**$300**	**$420**

The median hourly rate for a solo practitioner is $250 per hour, but increases to $300 when the solo has one associate. Then, that associate's median hourly rate becomes $250 **(Exhibit 17)**. This is an increase of $45 per hour for the solo since the 2016 study, which only had a $5 per hour increase between the 2011 and 2016 studies. Hourly rates are the lowest in solo practices, increasing by size of practice such that firms of 21+ have the highest median hourly rates **(Exhibit 18)**.

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Exhibit 17: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by Practice Category

Practice Category	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Solo practitioner sharing space	25	$200	$250	$259	$300	$450
Solo practitioner with 1 or more associates	104	250	300	319	360	450
Solo practitioner with dedicated office outside of home	241	250	250	279	300	425
Solo practitioner with home office only	59	185	250	251	350	395
Associate in firm with 1 partner/shareholder	50	250	250	274	325	350
Associate in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	36	225	268	279	300	450
Associate in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	10	250	300	293	350	350
Associate in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	14	250	320	355	350	890
Partner in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	135	250	300	327	350	500
Partner in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	23	275	375	378	450	650
Partner in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	28	350	400	443	450	800
Of Counsel	18	200	330	336	400	1100
All Respondents (2019)	**755**	**$250**	**$300**	**$303**	**$350**	**$475**
All Respondents (2016)	**960**	**$200**	**$250**	**$273**	**$318**	**$468**
All Respondents (2011)	**1062**	**$200**	**$250**	**$259**	**$300**	**$420**

Exhibit 18: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by Size of Firm

Size of Firm (Number of Attorneys)	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
1	332	$225	$250	$275	$313	$425
2	141	250	300	299	350	450
3	73	250	300	300	350	475
4 to 6	81	250	325	334	350	500
7 to 20	81	250	325	349	400	550
21+	38	300	350	413	420	890
All Respondents	**746**	**$250**	**$300**	**$303**	**$350**	**$475**

Lawyers whose primary practice income comes from business and employer-based matters (including compliance) have a higher hourly billing rate than other practice areas. Humanitarian and asylum practitioners had the lowest hourly rates among practitioners. **Exhibit 19** is consistent with the overall increase in hourly rates from 2016 to 2019.

Exhibit 19: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates, Immigration Attorneys by Primary Source of Income

Primary Source of Income	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Asylum	105	$250	$250	$286	$350	$450
Business & employment	247	275	350	348	400	575
Consular processing	15	200	250	277	350	450
Employer compliance	5	300	350	340	400	400
Family Immigration	245	225	275	272	315	400
General law practice*	36	225	250	269	300	395
Health care related professionals	13	250	300	318	425	500
Humanitarian relief	19	200	250	305	300	1100
Waivers	64	250	300	299	350	475
All Respondents (2019)	**751**	**$250**	**$300**	**$303**	**$350**	**$475**
All Respondents (2016)	**947**	**$200**	**$250**	**$274**	**$320**	**$465**
All Respondents (2011)	**1062**	**$200**	**NA**	**NA**	**$300**	**$420**

*A general law practice for our purposes means a firm that offers more than immigration law, or services from a set of broad practice areas.

Flat Fee Changes

AILA Board policy does not allow us to collect and publish flat rates, but we can track changes in flat fees charged to ascertain trends in the market. However, we only track a limited number of legal services commonly charged on a flat fee basis. Between 28 and 39% of respondents changed their rates during the last 6 months **(Exhibit 20)** with the large majority changing their rates within the last year. Between 40-45% of respondents increasing their rates by 10-15% **(Exhibit 21)**. These two exhibits show a clear plurality of firms raised flat fees in the past 6 months by at least 10%. About one-third of lawyers raised their flat rates by less than 7% while over 25% of lawyers raised their flat rates by 20% or more. Again, this data is limited to these nine common services; whether flat fees for other services are changing is left to the reader.

Exhibit 20: Time Interval Since Flat Rate was Last Changed by Legal Service, 2019

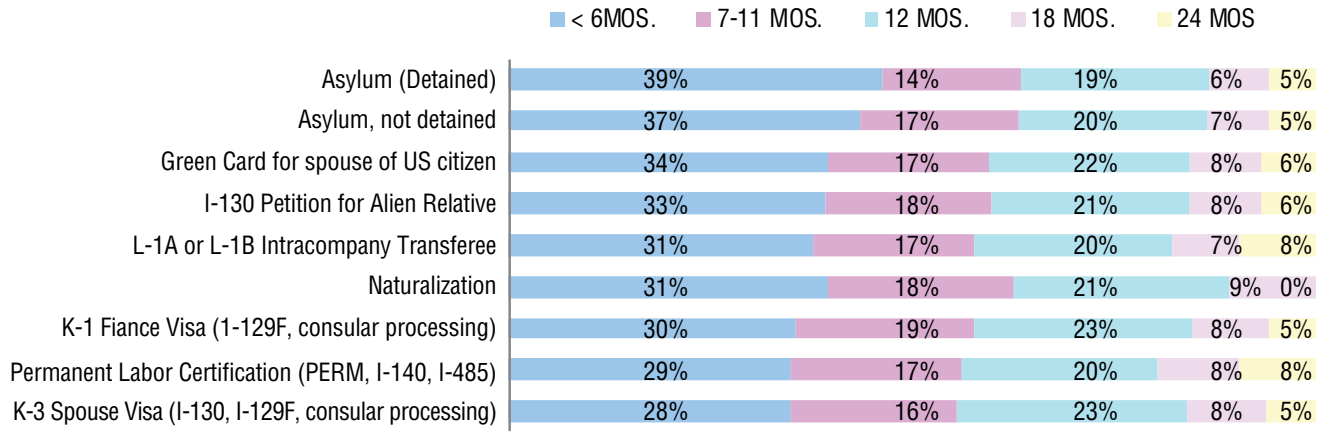
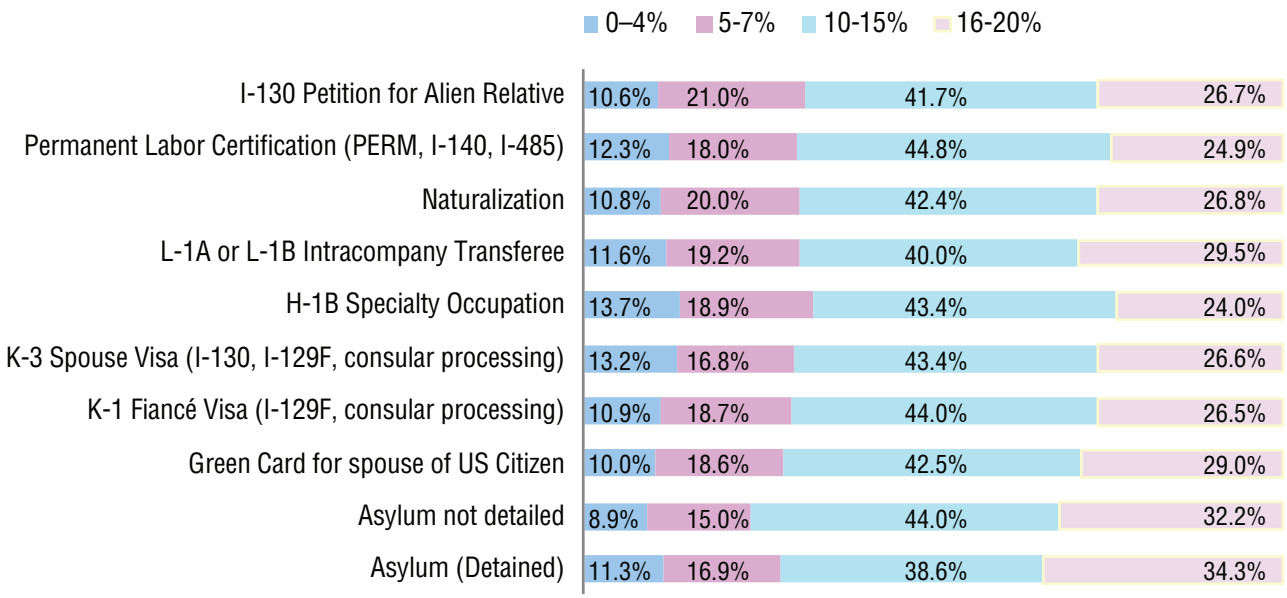


Exhibit 21: Approximate Percentage Change in Flat Fees since Last Rate Change by Legal Service, 2019



Hours in the Average Work Week and Work Year, 2019

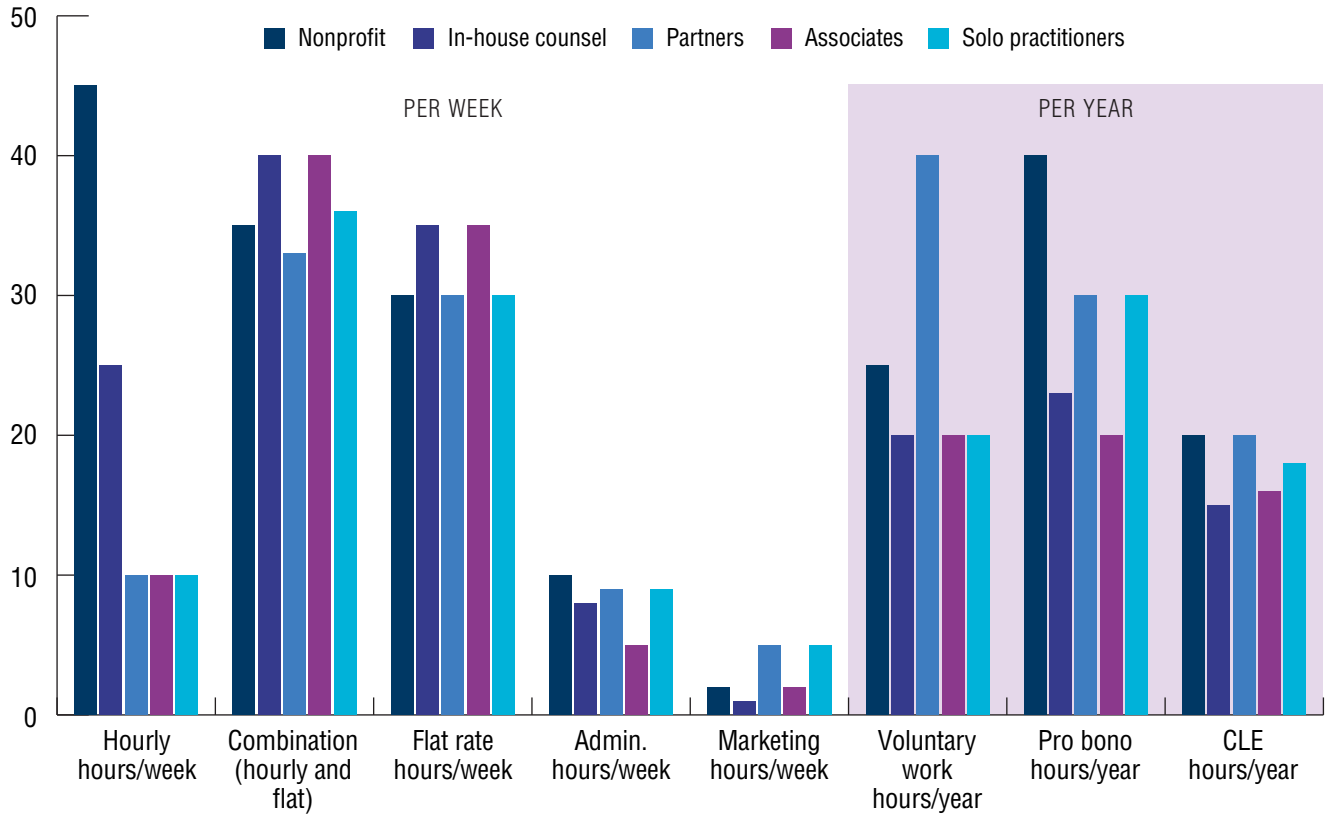
Immigration attorneys spend 3 times as many hours generating income based on flat fees (30 hours/ week) versus charging hourly rates (10 hours /week) **(Exhibit 22)**. Despite being busier over the past several years **(Exhibit 79)** median pro bono hours have remained at 25 per year.

Exhibit 22: Distribution of Hours in the Average Workweek and Year by Activity, 2019

Categories of Time Allocated to Attorney Tasks	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Hours per Week based on Billing by Hourly Rates	445	5	10	14	20	40
Hours per Week based on Billing by Flat Rates	948	20	30	30	40	50
Office Adminstration Hours per Week	935	5	7	8	10	20
Marketing Hours per Week	782	1	2	4	5	10
CLE/learning Hours per Year	909	12	20	22	25	50
Pro bono Hours per Year	859	10	25	54	50	150
Community Services Hours per Year	979	5	20	46	50	200

Attorneys reported the average number of hours they dedicated to CLE, pro bono work, volunteer work in professional organizations, and other non-legal community service hours. Partners work more hours on an hourly basis than associates or solos, while In-house counsel, which includes those working in non-profits, work the most pro bono hours/year **(Exhibit 23)**.

Exhibit 23: Median Hours in 2019 Average Workweek by Activity and Practice Category



Immigration Law Office Management Practices

This section summarizes information on:

- Per attorney gross revenues and fixed expenditures
- Overhead rates by firm-size and region
- 2019 salaries of associates, paralegals and secretaries
- Billing rates of associates and paralegals
- Staffing ratios by firm size and region
- Billing practices and collectables policies
- Marketing vehicles employed
- Use of law office technologies
- Fee agreement use rate and
- Malpractice insurance coverage rates

2018 Net Income Reported by Immigration Attorneys

Many interacting factors impact attorney income. Clues to explain income variation, at a given point in time, can be derived from seven factors addressed in the survey and summarized in this section below:

- Practice category (or class)
- Primary field of law
- Years in practice
- Gender
- Firm size (number of attorneys in firm or organization)
- Office location, and
- Work status (full-time versus part-time)

Income by Practice Category and Primary Source of Income



2018 INCOME FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS:

THE MEDIAN

$95,000

THE MEAN (AVG.)

$139,952

Exhibit 24 summarizes 2018 attorney net income by sixteen practice categories reported by 1,200 respondents (denoted by Count). By convention, this and subsequent exhibits providing percentile information, offer four data points—the 25th, 50th (Median), 75th and 95th percentiles—on the variable (item) of interest.

Median 2018 net income reported for **all respondents** is **$90,000**. **Mean** (average) 2018 net income for **all respondents** (working part- or full-time) is **$133,655**. **Median** 2018 net income reported for respondents **working full-time** is **$95,000**. **Mean** (average) net income for respondents **working full time** is **$139,952**. Net incomes for respondents **working part time** is **$50,000** (median value) and **$58,680** (mean value). This is approximately a 9% increase per year from the last Marketplace Study **(Exhibit 25)**. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics found the lawyer's average industry wage per year to be $144,230 in 2018.

Not surprisingly, the larger the firm, the larger the net income per attorney. Solo practitioners with one or more associates make over one-third more net income than solos with a dedicated office outside their home, on average.

Exhibit 24: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Practice Category

Practice Category	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Solo practitioner sharing space	28	$50,000	$77,500	$103,332	$102,500	$287,500
Solo practitioner with 1 or more associates	101	85,000	125,000	187,778	220,000	500,000
Solo practitioner with dedicated office outside of home	228	50,000	89,000	110,215	125,000	320,000
Solo practitioner with home office only	56	30,000	59,000	66,973	93,500	180,000
Associate in firm with 1 partner/shareholder	65	57,000	70,000	69,269	80,000	110,000
Associate in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	46	69,000	81,000	94,186	105,000	220,000
Associate in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	10	90,000	101,500	101,300	115,000	172,000
Associate in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	15	112,000	124,000	133,467	175,000	225,000
Partner in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	125	80,000	130,000	212,508	280,000	700,000

continued

Partner in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	20	123,750	169,000	188,025	212,500	480,000
Partner in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	25	205,000	275,000	331,678	400,000	750,000
Of Counsel	14	39,900	76,000	94,921	110,000	350,000
In-House Counsel (for-profit organization)	9	70,000	85,000	91,473	110,000	165,000
In-House Counsel (not-for-profit organization)	15	46,000	61,000	75,667	102,000	190,000
Counsel with legal aid/legal services agency	48	55,500	64,500	68,135	80,000	105,000
All Respondents (2018)	**823**	**$60,000**	**$90,000**	**$133,655**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**
All Respondents (2015)	**1200**	**$45,000**	**$70,000**	**$105,195**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**

Net income increased for almost all categories since 2015. Overall, *in-house counsel at not-for-profit organizations* reported the least net income gains from 2015 to 2018 and *solo practitioners with home offices only* reported the most gains.

Exhibit 25: Trends in Immigration Attorney Median Net Income by Practice Category, 2010-2018

Practice Category	2018 Median	2018 Mean	2015 Median	2015 Mean	2010 Median	2010 Mean
Solo practitioner with dedicated office outside of home	$77,500	$103,332	$65,000	$88,913	$70,000	$89,975
Solo practitioner with home office only	125,000	187,778	42,500	68,882	60,000	78,223
Solo practitioner sharing space	89,000	110,215	71,000	73,453	64,000	106,699
Solo practitioner with 1 or more associates	59,000	66,973	120,000	163,440	100,000	140,263
Associate in firm with 1 partner/shareholder	70,000	69,269	60,000	63,345	60,000	65,908
Associate in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	81,000	94,186	65,000	68,465	63,500	72,952
Associate in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	101,500	101,300	89,500	90,781	80,000	90,804
Associate in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	124,000	133,467	108,000	113,791	111,000	123,357
Partner in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	130,000	212,508	103,000	180,114	102,000	136,881
Partner in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	169,000	188,025	275,000	337,188	118,000	157,706
Partner in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	275,000	331,678	237,500	287,730	222,500	270,482
Of Counsel	76,000	94,921	90,000	113,355	115,000	125,900
In-House Counsel (for-profit organization)	85,000	91,473	102,250	118,375	118,827	124,166
In-House Counsel (not-for-profit organization)	61,000	75,667	60,000	72,795	48,000	51,764
Counsel with legal aid/legal services agency	64,500	68,135	50,000	50,862	49,750	51,725
All Respondents	**$90,000**	**$133,655**	**$70,000**	**$108,310**	**$75,000**	**$108,437**

Income by Office Location

Income is affected by geography. **Exhibit 26** distributes 2018 attorney income by region of the United States, while **Exhibit 27** distributes income by AILA chapter. The Midwest saw the greatest gains since the last study, while outside the US and Northeast Region saw the least.

Exhibit 26: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Office Location (Region of the US)

	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
All Respondents						
Northeast Region	168	$61,111	$94,500	$127,837	$131,000	$400,000
Southern Region	238	59,000	90,000	139,889	160,000	400,000
Midwest Region	149	60,000	85,000	138,761	150,000	400,000
Western Region	240	61,000	90,000	127,199	140,000	375,000
Outside US	19	30,000	65,000	126,584	180,000	700,000
Not Listed	8	70,000	83,500	190,000	200,000	750,000
Total	**823**	**$60,000**	**$90,000**	**$133,655**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**
Full-time Attorneys Only						
Northeast Region	154	$70,000	$100,000	$134,427	$150,000	$400,000
Southern Region	223	60,000	99,000	145,065	170,000	400,000
Midwest Region	134	60,500	87,500	147,421	170,000	450,000
Western Region	221	70,000	95,000	132,978	150,000	400,000
Outside US	18	30,000	77,500	131,672	180,000	700,000
Not Listed	8	70,000	83,500	190,000	200,000	750,000
Total	**758**	**$64,000**	**$95,000**	**$139,952**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**

Exhibit 27: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Office Location (AILA Chapter)

AILA Chapter	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
No Chapter	8	$73,500	$92,500	$211,875	$275,000	$750,000
Arizona	14	50,000	97,500	88,714	105,000	260,000
Georgia/Alabama	31	70,000	100,000	184,330	220,000	550,000
Bangkok District	5	40,000	60,000	179,000	65,000	700,000
Canada	5	110,000	180,000	147,000	200,000	225,000
Carolinas	29	50,000	75,000	111,624	120,000	400,000
Central Florida	23	40,000	95,000	144,730	170,000	300,000
Chicago	33	70,000	80,000	179,031	250,000	650,000
Colorado	44	60,000	97,500	117,602	127,500	225,000
Connecticut	8	58,500	110,000	114,677	190,000	200,000
Hawaii	4	59,000	97,500	98,250	137,500	150,000
Idaho	7	40,000	65,000	79,000	100,000	187,000
Iowa/Nebraska	9	79,000	115,000	128,889	127,500	400,000
Latin America & Caribbean District	4	55,000	135,000	125,000	195,000	210,000

continued

Michigan	35	50,000	90,000	128,883	150,000	356,938
MidSouth *(Includes Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee)*	29	64,000	86,000	125,328	122,500	350,000
Minnesota/Dakotas	25	60,000	84,000	115,191	100,000	400,000
Missouri/Kansas	21	40,000	60,000	78,066	100,000	150,000
New England *(Includes Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont)*	33	60,000	90,000	119,873	115,000	400,000
New Jersey	10	80,000	97,500	149,500	200,000	450,000
New York City Area *(Includes the 5 Boroughs & Nassau, Orange, Suffolk, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Ulster, and Sullivan Counties)*	42	65,000	93,500	112,213	125,000	300,000
Northern California	51	56,000	87,000	140,966	135,000	647,000
Ohio	21	80,000	100,000	173,492	180,000	450,000
Oregon	7	57,000	85,000	84,143	120,000	120,000
Philadelphia	22	55,000	87,500	143,865	250,000	300,000
San Diego *(Includes San Diego and Imperial Counties)*	18	20,000	57,500	82,000	100,000	425,000
Santa Clara *(Includes Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties)*	11	60,000	95,000	149,273	194,000	618,000
Southern California *(Includes Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties)*	60	75,000	100,000	142,132	200,000	345,000
Southern Florida *(Includes Dade, Collier, Broward, Monroe, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Okeechobee, Highlands & Glades Counties)*	43	50,000	85,000	114,081	150,000	260,000
Texas *(Includes New Mexico and Oklahoma)*	85	60,000	100,000	146,746	150,000	420,000
Upstate New York	8	105,000	125,000	142,500	202,500	275,000
Washington DC *(Includes DC, Maryland and Virginia)*	45	60,000	85,000	129,367	168,000	400,000
Washington State	20	55,000	82,000	144,050	137,500	675,000
Wisconsin	7	55,000	99,000	133,429	200,000	330,000
Total	**833**	**$60,000**	**$90,000**	**$132,051**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**

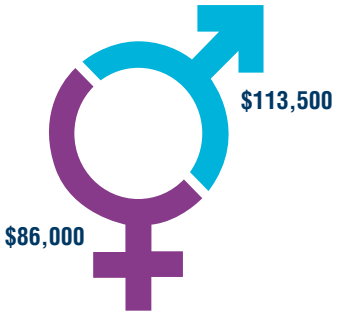
Attorney Income by Gender, Work Status, Firm Size and Years in Bar, 2018

The gender gap for full-time practitioners is **.76** ($86,000 for females/ $113,500 for males), while there is parity among part-time practitioners at $50,000 for males and females **(Exhibit 28)**. The gender gap between full-time male and female respondents has increased by 7% since 2016.

Exhibit 28: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Gender and Work Status

Gender and Work Status	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Female, working full-time (30 or more hours/week)	466	$60,000	$86,000	$112,567	$124,000	$300,000
Female, working part-time (<30 hours/week)	53	$35,000	$50,000	$57,670	$65,000	$139,000
Male, working full-time (30 or more hours/week)	292	$71,116	$113,500	$183,656	$225,000	$600,000
Male, working part-time (<30 hours/week)	8	$25,000	$50,000	$65,375	$110,000	$150,000
All Respondents	**823**	**$60,000**	**$90,000**	**$133,655**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**

The gender gap has not shrunk for all practice sizes in the private sector **(Exhibit 29)**. When part-time lawyers are excluded (because of the inordinate variety in part-time arrangements) female solo attorneys have closed the gap. But an income gap persists for other firm sizes in private practice, especially in firms of 4 to 6 lawyers and 7 to 20 lawyers, where a female made, on average, around half the salary of her male colleagues in 2018.



.76
The gender pay gap for full-time practitioners.

It is interesting to note the gender gap existed even among solo practitioners until this year, where full-time solo female attorneys made 102% of their full-time male counterparts **(Exhibit 29)**. Solo practitioners are presumably in charge of setting their own income. We held numerous conversations with female AILA members to discuss this gap, and have received various suggestions why this gap existed. Some say women are not as confident asking for a sufficient fee nor collecting it. Others say some women purposely charge less than male counterparts because they want to represent those who cannot otherwise afford an attorney. Still others believe women-owned firms are more generous to employees, leaving less profit for partners. These anecdotes do not explain the gap in firms where female associates are paid less. (We had insufficient data to track any gender gap among Non-Private Practitioners.)

Exhibit 29: Trends in Median and Average Net Income Among Full-Time Immigration Attorneys In Private Practice By Gender and Firm Size, 2010-2018

	Female			Male			2018 Gap		2015 Gap		2010 Gap	
Firm Size	Count	Median	Mean	Count	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
1	176	$87,000	$102,238	115	$85,000	$113,303	102%	90%	86%	76%	80%	70%
2	73	84,000	117,221	57	120,000	167,290	70%	70%	77%	78%	71%	71%
3	43	85,000	124,570	28	100,000	217,086	85%	57%	71%	73%	75%	70%
4 –6	43	85,000	112,605	29	200,000	248,949	43%	45%	78%	47%	58%	54%
7–20	48	102,500	159,281	30	192,500	350,744	53%	45%	48%	68%	64%	58%
>21	15	175,000	176,833	22	232,500	282,952	75%	62%	73%	75%	97%	1%
All	**398**	**$90,000**	**$118,210**	**281**	**$120,000**	**$187,226**	**75%**	**63%**	**82%**	**70%**	**72%**	**69%**

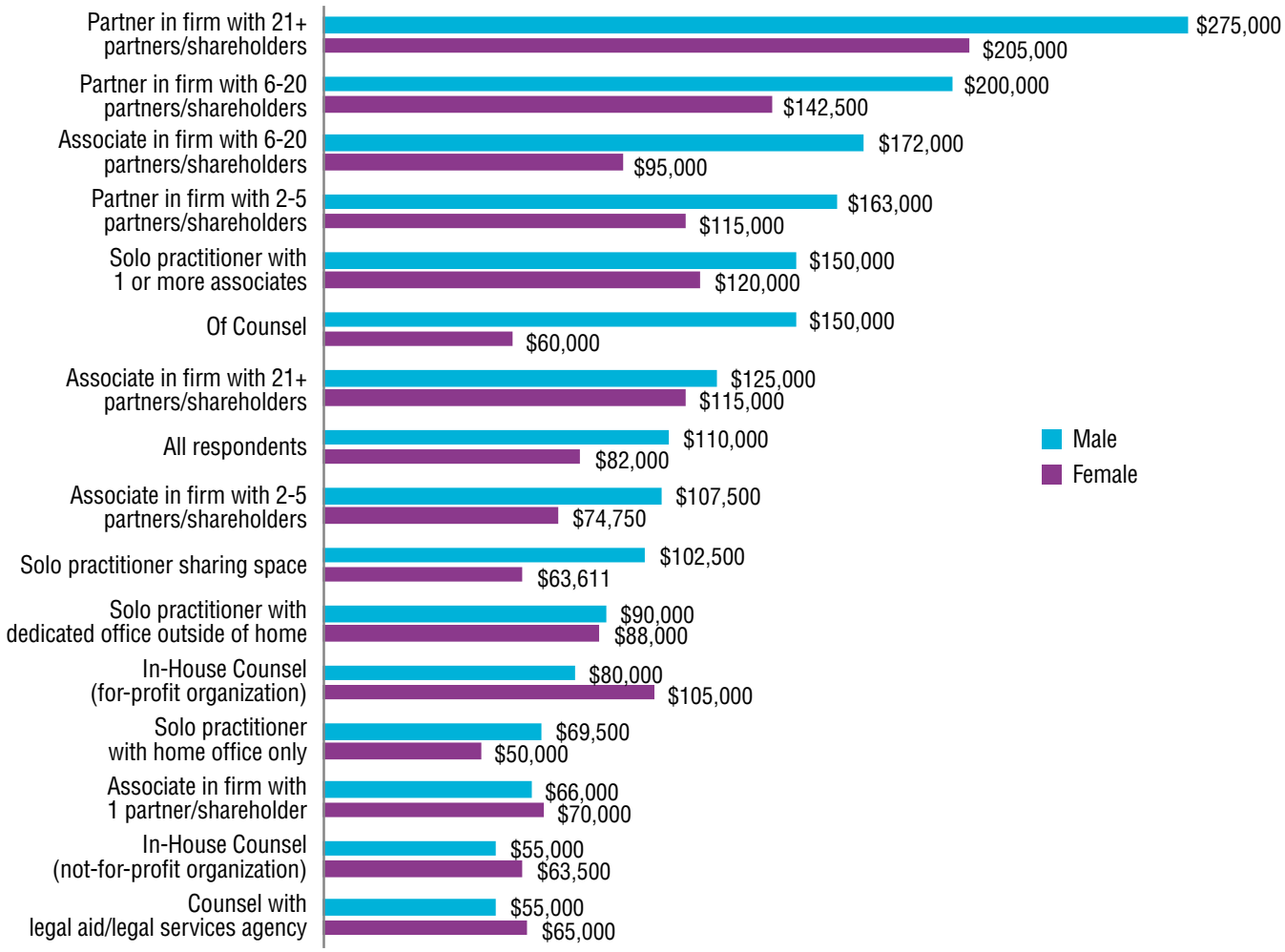
Exhibit 30 distributes income by size of firm. Median net income directly correlates with firm or organization size.

Exhibit 30: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Firm Size

Size of Firm (Number of Attorneys)	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
1	328	$48,500	$80,000	$100,943	$120,000	$287,500
2	139	60,000	98,000	133,631	150,000	400,000
3	73	65,000	90,000	157,629	150,000	500,000
4 to 6	80	72,000	99,500	157,144	200,000	475,000
7 to 20	82	85,000	115,000	226,839	250,000	750,000
21+	38	150,000	200,000	238,880	260,000	750,000
All Respondents	**740**	**$60,000**	**$95,000**	**$139,785**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**

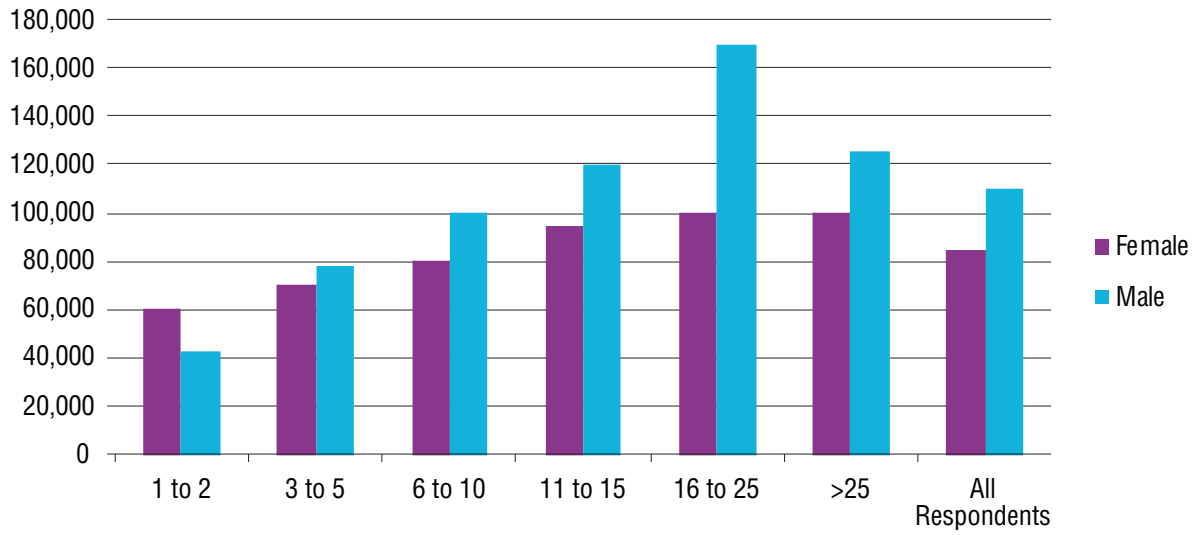
Exhibit 31 rank-orders gender gaps for 16 practice categories, ranked by male income. The gap tends to be less for females at the lower income categories and even overcame the gap in several categories. However, **Exhibits 2 and 3** (Appendix B) show that survey participation rates are higher for less experienced women and lower for all participants in firms of 21 or more lawyers. What the overall impact on income results is unknown.

Exhibit 31: 2018 Median Net Income Gender Gaps of Immigration Attorneys Rank-Ordered by Practice Category



Beginning attorneys (1-5 years) show little gap in income by gender, with females coming in at a higher income in the first year or two **(Exhibit 32)**. But the tables turn at 6 years and more of experience, with males dominating after that. Female incomes peak at 16 to 25 years, and stagnate thereafter.

Exhibit 32: Median 2018 Net Income of Immigration Attorneys by Years in Practice and Gender



Income by Primary Source of Income

Income varies by primary practice emphasis. For example, business and employment emphasis is more remunerative than family immigration emphasis **(Exhibit 33)**.

Exhibit 33: Distribution of 2015 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Primary Source of Income

	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Asylum, deportation, removal	138	$58,000	$80,000	$116,196	$120,000	$340,000
Business & employment	232	90,000	125,000	197,474	250,000	618,000
Consular processing	20	60,000	79,500	121,100	125,000	450,000
Employer compliance	4	54,500	97,500	107,250	160,000	200,000
Family Immigration	258	45,000	75,000	95,772	105,000	273,000
General law practice	37	50,000	70,000	105,432	125,000	300,000
Health care related professionals	14	65,000	130,000	170,744	260,000	400,000
Humanitarian relief	39	53,000	72,000	80,829	95,785	200,000
Student & exchange visas	5	55,000	60,000	69,800	80,000	114,000
Waivers	71	75,000	100,000	139,765	150,000	330,000
All Respondents (2018)	**818**	**60,000**	**90,000**	**133,405**	**150,000**	**400,000**
All Respondents (2015)	**1140**	**$46,000**	**$70,000**	**$106,767**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**
All Respondents (2010)	**1264**	**$50,000**	**$75,000**	**$103,824**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**

Income by Billable Hours Worked in the Average Workweek

Median reported income levels are higher among hourly billers than flat fee billing while the median level for both groups is about $91,000–$92,000 **(Exhibit 34)**.

Exhibit 34: Distributions of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Hours Billed (Hourly and Flat Rate) in the Average Workweek

	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Billable Hours in the Average Workweek (billed hourly)						
<28	277	$60,000	$90,000	$136,288	$150,000	$405,000
28-35	25	$50,000	$74,000	$170,761	$275,000	$500,000
36-40	12	$75,500	$137,000	$123,953	$162,500	$225,000
>40	8	$92,500	$129,000	$207,000	$200,000	$750,000
Total	**477**	**$60,000**	**$92,000**	**$136,725**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**
Billable Hours in the Average Workweek (using flat fees)						
<28	255	$55,000	$87,000	$124,376	$135,000	$400,000
28-35	206	$60,000	$88,000	$136,464	$165,000	$400,000
36-40	128	$68,500	$95,000	$150,883	$150,000	$450,000
>40	97	$75,000	$112,000	$153,979	$175,000	$425,000
Total	**686**	**$60,000**	**$91,000**	**$137,138**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**

2018 Law Office Expenditures and Revenues

Both office expenditures and gross revenues, on a per–attorney basis, vary across a wide distribution of private practitioners, as shown by firm size and region in **Exhibits 35–40**. Gross income per attorney generally increases as firm size increases. Similarly, expenses increase as firm size increases.

Median gross revenues per attorney have increased 25-30% in many firms in all regions of the country except the Northeast. Fixed expenses per attorney also rose significantly, but less so in firms of 4 or more attorneys. Note: Small sample sizes can distort results for a given category, as it may have done in 21 or more attorneys in **Exhibit 35**.

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Exhibit 35: Distribution of 2018 Gross Revenues per Attorney by Size of Firm

Size of Firm	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
1	241	$61,000	$126,451	$195,911	$251,000	$580,000
2	96	121,250	200,000	232,894	300,000	550,000
3	38	141,667	255,000	901,226	333,333	583,102
4 to 6	33	188,000	235,000	307,882	400,000	800,000
7 to 20	22	250,000	353,286	377,103	500,000	696,900
21>	10	26,667	302,958	504,265	375,000	3,000,000
All Firms (2018)	**440**	**$90,000**	**$184,805**	**$289,359**	**$300,000**	**$600,000**
All Firms (2015)	**531**	**$60,000**	**$143,000**	**$191,396**	**$257,500**	**$500,000**
All Firms (2010)	**456**	**$55,500**	**$113,750**	**$166,424**	**$215,833**	**$450,000**

Exhibit 36: Distribution of 2018 Gross Revenues per Attorney by US Region

US Region	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Northeast Region	92	$87,500	$150,000	$204,557	$258,750	$588,235
Southern Region	126	100,000	218,333	261,821	340,000	696,900
Midwest Region	77	80,000	160,000	570,028	325,000	800,000
Western Region	138	100,000	185,180	216,709	290,000	500,000
Outside US	7	14,480	55,000	174,216	300,000	600,000
All Firms (2018)	**443**	**$90,000**	**$184,610**	**$288,305**	**$300,000**	**$600,000**
All Firms (2015)	**534**	**$60,000**	**$143,000**	**$191,396**	**$257,500**	**$500,000**
All Firms (2010)	**448**	**$55,500**	**$113,750**	**$166,424**	**$215,833**	**$450,000**

Exhibit 37: Distribution of 2018 Fixed Expenses per Attorney by Size of Firm

Size of Firm	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
1	249	$20,000	$54,000	$114,441	$132,000	$370,000
2	97	60,000	125,000	149,190	214,614	397,500
3	39	57,667	150,000	151,837	200,000	333,333
4 to 6	36	95,000	150,000	186,357	250,000	550,000
7 to 20	24	156,250	272,727	271,447	348,021	500,000
21>	8	6,317	25,833	168,217	210,957	857,143
All Firms (2018)	**453**	**$30,000**	**$100,000**	**$140,084**	**$190,000**	**$400,000**
All Firms (2015)	**536**	**$21,918**	**$60,000**	**$108,836**	**$145,250**	**$342,857**
All Firms (2010)	**485**	**$17,800**	**$50,000**	**$99,270**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**

Exhibit 38: Distribution of 2018 Fixed Expenses per Attorney by US Region

US Region	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Northeast Region	91	$25,000	$68,000	$106,597	$160,000	$300,000
Southern Region	131	40,000	116,667	157,433	240,000	475,000
Midwest Region	81	24,263	105,000	133,344	170,510	350,000
Western Region	141	30,000	100,000	150,857	190,000	370,000
Outside US	8	6,190	37,500	110,988	220,250	360,000
All Firms (2018)	**456**	**$30,000**	**$100,000**	**$139,749**	**$192,000**	**$400,000**
All Firms (2015)	**537**	**$22,000**	**$60,000**	**$109,255**	**$145,500**	**$342,857**
All Firms (2010)	**485**	**$17,800**	**$50,000**	**$99,270**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**

Overhead rates are computed by dividing fixed expenses per attorney by gross receipts per attorney **(Exhibits 39 and 40)**. The overall rate is 55% (median value for all firms) and varies from 36% (25th percentile) to 74% (75th percentile). That means the average immigration attorney spends 55 cents of each dollar earned on expenses, pocketing the balance in some form. Some solos are able to keep costs down to very low levels (under 30 cents per dollar earned), while larger firms tend to have more fixed expenses, including higher real estate and staffing costs.

Exhibit 39: Percent Distribution of 2018 Computed Overhead Rates by Size of Firm

Size of Firm (Number of Attorneys)	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
1	239	.27	0.47	0.50	0.67	1.60
2	96	.48	0.62	0.88	0.76	1.14
3	34	.51	0.69	0.64	0.80	0.94
4 to 6	32	.50	0.62	0.63	0.78	0.96
7 to 20	22	.56	0.71	0.87	0.86	1.03
21+	6	.22	0.34	0.43	0.69	0.89
All Firms (2018)	**429**	**.36**	**0.55**	**0.60**	**0.74**	**1.10**
All Firms (2015)	**481**	**.30**	**0.46**	**0.48**	**0.67**	**0.83**
All Firms (2010)	**485**	**0.32**	**0.44**	**0.60**	**0.66**	**0.67**

Exhibit 40: Distribution of 2018 Computed Overhead Rate by US Region

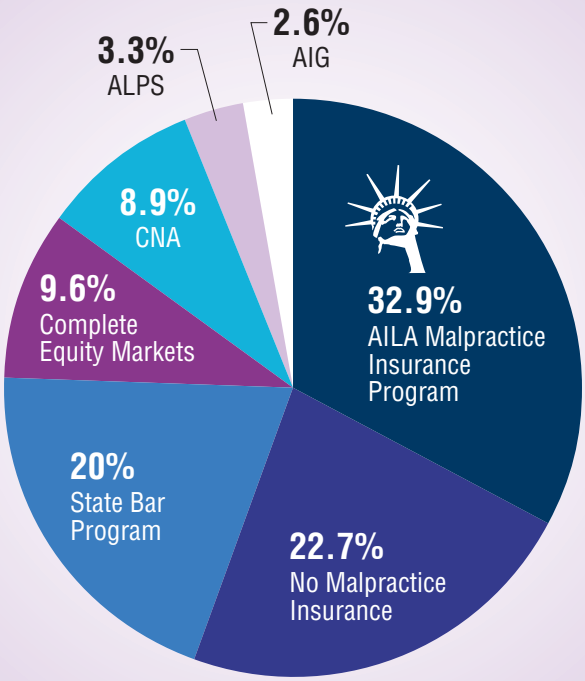
Region	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Northeast	87	0.31	0.50	0.68	0.66	1.27
Southern	122	0.40	0.60	0.69	0.78	1.03
Midwest	75	0.29	0.50	0.68	0.67	1.10
Western	137	0.40	0.60	0.66	0.76	1.10
All Firms (2018)	**431**	**0.36**	**0.55**	**0.61**	**0.74**	**1.10**
All Firms (2016)	**482**	**0.30**	**0.46**	**0.48**	**0.67**	**0.83**
All Firms (2010)	**485**	**0.32**	**0.44**	**0.60**	**0.66**	**0.67**

Malpractice Insurance

In 2019, immigration attorneys use a variety of malpractice insurance vendors. **Exhibit 41** rank-orders respondent preferences. The AILA Malpractice Insurance Program is the most popular insurance program among members, with about a third of respondents choosing that coverage. Twenty-three percent reported not carrying malpractice insurance. It is possible these respondents are covered through a firm, but are not aware of that coverage. It is a best practice to familiarize all lawyers with their insurance coverage, reporting requirements, and available resources through their malpractice carrier. The other possibility is about 1 in 5 respondents are not covered by malpractice insurance—a rate higher than the authors expected and potentially concerning. Malpractice coverage is highly recommended. In a breakdown of practice types, business and compliance immigration lawyers are the most likely to have malpractice coverage.

Almost half of respondents who carry malpractice insurance had aggregate coverage of $1,000,000, with another 25% having at least $500,000 in coverage.

Exhibit 41: Companies Providing Malpractice Insurance, Immigration Attorneys and Firms, 2019



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Salaries of Associates, Paralegals and Secretaries and Hourly Billing Rates of Associates and Paralegals

Annual salaries and current hourly billing rates are summarized for three classes of law firm employees and four tenure levels **(Exhibits 42, 43, and 44)**.

Exhibit 42: Distribution of 2019 Salary Levels by Position and Years of Experience

Position and Years of Experience	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Associate with No Experience	137	$48,000	$55,000	$56,984	$65,000	$110,000
Associate with 1-5 Years Experience	238	52,000	65,000	66,111	80,000	120,000
Associate with 6 -10 Years Experience	163	60,000	80,000	83,899	113,000	150,000
Associate with 11+ Years Experience	108	62,000	100,000	104,039	150,000	200,000
Paralegal with No Experience	137	28,000	35,000	31,545	40,000	48,000
Paralegal with 1-5 Years Experience	266	32,000	40,000	38,516	47,000	63,000
Paralegal with 6 -10 Years Experience	165	41,000	50,000	47,493	60,000	80,000
Paralegal with 11+ Years Experience	137	50,000	60,000	64,426	75,000	100,000
Secretary with No Experience	182	20,280	27,520	25,371	33,300	45,000
Secretary with 1-5 Years Experience	273	24,000	32,000	29,505	38,000	50,000
Secretary with 6 -10 Years Experience	120	30,000	40,000	35,663	47,000	60,000
Secretary with 11+ Years Experience	75	36,000	46,000	45,963	60,000	76,000

Law firm salaries took a dip from 2011 to 2016 but most positions have recovered to their former levels. Associates took the biggest dip, but median salaries have returned to former levels except for associates with 6-10 years of experience. (This generation of attorneys started their career just after the economic downturn in 2009.) Paralegal salaries didn't dip as much as they stagnated, then barely increased over several years. The same appears to have happened with administrative staff. Similarly, hourly rates for associates and paralegals dipped or stagnated from 2011 to 2016 but have increased since that time by at least $25 per hour for most categories.

Compare the median first year salary for associates in ($55,000) to the median first year associate salary for all lawyers in a recent ABA study ($155,000) with caution. The ABA study was weighed towards larger firms, while this one will have a greater representation in smaller firms (typical for immigration law).[1]

1. ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2019, p. 23.

Exhibit 43: Changes in Median Salary Levels by Position and Experience, 2011-2019

Position and Years of Experience	Median 2011	Median 2016	Median 2019
Associate with No Experience	$52,000	$50,000	$55,000
Associate with 1-5 Years Experience	60,000	60,000	65,000
Associate with 6 -10 Years Experience	85,000	80,000	80,000
Associate with 11+ Years Experience	100,000	87,500	100,000
Paralegal with No Experience	30,000	30,000	35,000
Paralegal with 1-5 Years Experience	35,000	37,440	40,000
Paralegal with 6 -10 Years Experience	48,000	48,000	50,000
Paralegal with 11+ Years Experience	55,000	60,000	60,000
Secretary with No Experience	24,000	25,000	27,520
Secretary with 1-5 Years Experience	30,000	30,000	32,000
Secretary with 6 -10 Years Experience	35,000	40,000	40,000
Secretary with 11+ Years Experience	45,000	45,000	46,000

Exhibit 44: Distribution of 2019 Hourly Billing Rates by Position and Experience

Position and Years of Experience	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Associate with No Experience	61	$175	$200	$233	$225	$300
Associate with 1-5 Years Experience	155	200	250	437	275	350
Associate with 6 -10 Years Experience	118	250	280	308	350	400
Associate with 11+ Years Experience	89	280	328	367	400	600
Paralegal with No Experience	5	$150	$100	$130	$175	$250
Paralegal with 1-5 Years Experience	55	75	125	133	145	175
Paralegal with 6 -10 Years Experience	96	110	150	161	175	250
Paralegal with 11+ Years Experience	77	150	175	193	210	275

Paralegal rates have risen slightly at all experience levels. Associate rates are slightly higher with very experienced associates dropping slightly per hour from 2016 **(Exhibit 45)**.

Exhibit 45: Trends in Distribution of Median Hourly Billing Rates

Position and Years of Experience	2011 Median	2016 Median	2019 Median
Associate with No Experience	$150	$200	$200
Associate with 1-5 Years Experience	200	225	250
Associate with 6 -10 Years Experience	250	250	280
Associate with 11+ Years Experience	300	350	328
Paralegal with No Experience	$95	$80	$100
Paralegal with 1-5 Years Experience	100	100	125
Paralegal with 6 -10 Years Experience	125	120	150
Paralegal with 11+ Years Experience	170	130	175

Outsourcing Practices

Outsourcing work to workers other than employees has changed slightly in the past ten years. A large majority of respondents (89%) outsource less than 10% of their work to others. Less than 5% of respondents outsource more than 25% of their work to non-employees. Not surprisingly, about half of the work is outsourced to other U.S.-based attorneys, followed by 35% of the work to U.S.-based paralegals. Outsourcing to off-shore sources, once a larger trend, has traveled an interesting path since 2011: Use of off-shore paralegals doubled from 3% to 6%, while use of off-shore attorneys dropped by half from 4% to 2%. **(Exhibits 46, 47)**.

Exhibit 46: Percent of Work Outsourced to Non-Employees, 2011 vs. 2019

Percent of Work Outsourced to Non-employees	2011	%	2016	%	2019	%
<10%	695	89	722	88	589	84
11-25%	58	7	73	8	81	12
26+%	23	4	28	4	29	4

Exhibit 47: Outsourced Fulfillment Utilized*

Outsourced Fullfillment Utilized	2011*	%	2016*	%	2019*	%
Domestic Paralegals	152	35%	189	39%	157	33%
Off-shore Paralegals	13	3%	17	4%	29	6%
Domestic Attorneys	240	55%	225	46%	218	46%
Off -shore Attorneys	18	4%	14	3%	10	2%
Mixed Service Bureau (2011) Virtual Assistants (2016)	15	3%	39	8%	55	12%

**Multiple choices possible*

Staffing Ratios

Staffing ratios show us how much help a lawyer or lawyers have in getting their work done. As noted above, few lawyers are outsourcing work, so much of the work must be done by staff. Which positions immigration lawyers are hiring is almost as important as the number of employees they hire. Staffing ratios in the exhibits below are stratified by firm size and derived to denote the proportions of staff to attorneys for:

- Legal assistants and secretaries to attorneys
- Paralegals to attorneys
- Non-legal employees (clerks, bookkeepers, marketing, etc.) to attorneys

The median number of paralegals to attorneys is now a 1 to 1 ratio, having been at or below .4 to 1 in 2011 and 2016. That means lawyers are hiring more paralegals and delegating more

work to them. Further, the median ratio of legal assistants/secretaries to lawyers remained at 1 to 1, but increased slightly in firms that utilize more paralegals per attorney (see 75th and 95th percentiles). Use of non-legal staff saw almost no increase since 2016. These increases correlate with the increase in business experienced by respondents, their increase in revenue and their increase in overhead costs **(Exhibits 25, 39, and 79)**.

Exhibit 48: Staffing Ratios to Attorneys by Firm Size, 2019

Size of Firm	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Legal Assistants/Secretaries						
1	237	1	1	1.39	2	3
2	150	0.5	0.5	0.9	1.0	2.0
3	86	0.3	0.7	0.8	1.0	2.0
4 to 6	93	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.8	2.3
7 to 20	94	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.8	2.1
21+	50	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.2
Total (2019)	**710**	**0.5**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**1.0**	**2.2**
Total (2016)	**807**	**0.5**	**1.0**	**0.8**	**1.0**	**2.0**
Total (2011)	**1188**	**0.1**	**0.5**	**0.7**	**1.0**	**2.0**
Paralegals						
1	164	1	1	1.59	2	4
2	124	0.5	1	1.09	1.5	2.5
3	72	0.33	0.67	0.99	1.33	2
4 to 6	93	0.4	0.75	0.94	1	2.4
7 to 20	101	0.45	1.11	1.2	1.71	2.81
21+	50	0.14	0.2	0.37	0.33	1.43
Total (2019)	**604**	**0.5**	**1**	**1.15**	**1.5**	**3**
Total (2016)	**1011**	**0**	**0.40**	**0.63**	**1**	**2**
Total (2011)	**1052**	**0**	**0.33**	**0.59**	**1**	**2**
Non-legal Employees						
1	132	1	1	1.27	1	2
2	91	0.5	0.5	0.87	1	1.5
3	64	0.33	0.67	0.75	1	2
4 to 6	90	0.25	0.4	0.59	0.75	1.5
7 to 21	99	0.22	0.42	0.49	0.63	1.5
21+	48	0.17	0.27	0.32	0.41	0.73
Total (2019)	**524**	**0.33**	**0.5**	**0.79**	**1**	**2**
Total (2016)	**574**	**0.14**	**0.5**	**0.79**	**1**	**1.7**
Total (2011)	**1024**	**0**	**0.3**	**0.64**	**0.67**	**1.25**

Income by Degree of Paralegal Use in Firm or Practice

Exhibit 49 highlights the relative value of paralegal use to law firms of varying sizes. Fifty-five percent of solo practitioners do not engage a part-time or full-time paralegal. But as the size of the firm grows (up to 20 attorneys), so does the use of paralegals up until the ratio of

paralegals to attorneys is greater than 1. For those firms who do hire a paralegal, solo attorneys are most likely to have a ratio of 1 paralegal to 1 lawyer. In firms of 2 to 6 attorneys, paralegal leverage rises so there are more paralegals than lawyers.

Exhibit 49: Cross Tabulation of Paralegal- to-Associate Ratios by Firm Size, 2019

Size of Firm	None	<.25	.25-.99	1	>1	Total
1	55.2%		0.5%	30.3%	13.9%	100%
2	29.9%		28.8%	18.6%	22.6%	100%
3	23.4%		40.4%	9.6%	26.6%	100%
4 to 6	14.7%	6.4%	45.9%	11.9%	21.1%	100%
7 to 20	9.0%	9.9%	32.4%	2.7%	45.9%	100%
>21	10.7%	53.6%	28.6%		7.1%	100%
	33.8%	**5.3%**	**21.1%**	**18.5%**	**21.2%**	**100%**

Further, as shown in **Exhibit 50**, the median net income for those attorneys who do not engage a paralegal—even a part-time paralegal—is significantly less than those attorneys who do. Firms—including solo practices—who engage paralegals can increase net income by $30,000 to $80,000 annually over those firms that do not. While those who leverage paralegals on at least a 1 attorney to 1 paralegal basis can increase their income the most, even those lawyers that share a paralegal can increase their income.

Exhibit 50: Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Paralegal -to -Attorney Ratios

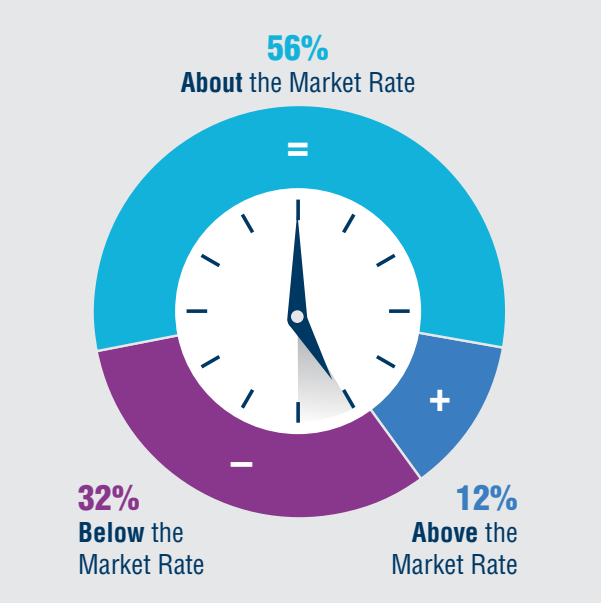
Paralegal to Attorney Ratio	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
0	257	$48,000	$70,000	$84,237	$100,000	$220,000
<.25	35	$90,000	$200,000	$222,784	$230,000	$750,000
.25-.99	137	$74,000	$100,000	$146,807	$180,000	$400,000
1	115	$70,000	$100,000	$125,476	$145,000	$340,000
>1	129	$95,000	$150,000	$239,234	$300,000	$700,000
Total	**673**	**$62,000**	**$95,000**	**$140,936**	**$160,000**	**$400,000**

Flat Fees, Billing Practices and Collection Policies

Setting fees, billing clients, and collecting fees owed are crucial to a successful law practice. Clients who believe they receive good value for their money are happier clients. Further, lawyers and staff who believe there are fairly compensated for their hard work are happier people too. Firm partners should be reviewing reports and monitoring fees, billing, and collections, as well as setting sound policies. A firm that does not pay attention to the finances can run into cash flow problems that can affect the firm negatively or cause it to close.

In 2019, almost one-third of respondents believe they are charging their clients less than the hourly market rate for their services. Looking at the exhibit below, one could assume that the

12% who believe they are above the market rate have been purposeful about setting their rates there. Further, the 56% who believe they are at market rate (whether they are or not) are also purposeful in setting their rates there. That raises the question about whether the same can be said for the 32% with below market rates: Is this a purposeful business strategy or a reluctance to change the status quo? This is also about the same percentage of respondents who believed their hourly rates were below market in 2016. A below-market pricing strategy has to be coupled with other elements, such as streamlined processes and lean overhead, to be an effective business strategy **(Exhibit 51)**.



← **Exhibit 51: Perception of Relative Standing of Current Hourly Rates, 2019**

More than half of 2019 respondents have not increased their hourly rates in more than a year, with about half of those waiting more than 2 years **(Exhibit 52)**. This is a slight change from 2016 and 2011. However, 46% of immigration lawyers did increase their hourly rates in the past year with 25% increasing their rates in the last six months compared with 28% in 2016 and only 18% in 2011.That becomes important when we review the amount of the change in **Exhibit 53**.

Exhibit 52: Trends in Time Interval since Hourly Rate was Last Changed, 2011- 2019

	2011	2016	2019
Interval	%	%	%
6 months or less	18	28	25
7-11 months	20	13	21
1 to 2 years	30	31	27
More than 2 years	32	28	27

Despite being busier and having more expenses, the vast majority of lawyers who raised their rates did so by less than 10%. Eighty-eight percent did not increase their rates more than 10% compared with 65% in 2016 and 72% in 2011. That means more lawyers in 2011 and 2016 raised their rates more than 10% than did lawyers in the past year **(Exhibit 53)**.

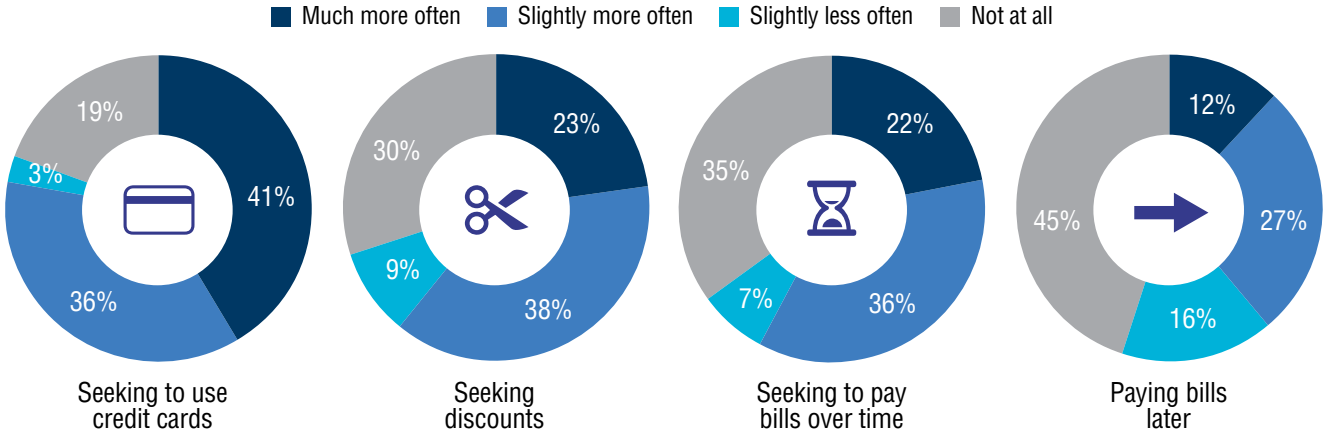
Exhibit 53: Percent Change since Hourly Billing Rate was Last Changed, 2011 vs 2019

	2011	2016	2019
Category	%	%	%
5% of less	38	34	68
6-10%	34	31	20
11-19%	11	16	7
20% of more	17	19	5

Client Behaviors and Realization Rates

Clients' behaviors influence decisions regarding billing policies and practices. **Exhibit 54** summarizes the degrees of change for a variety of client billing behaviors faced by immigration attorneys.

Exhibit 54: Client Billing Behavior Changes

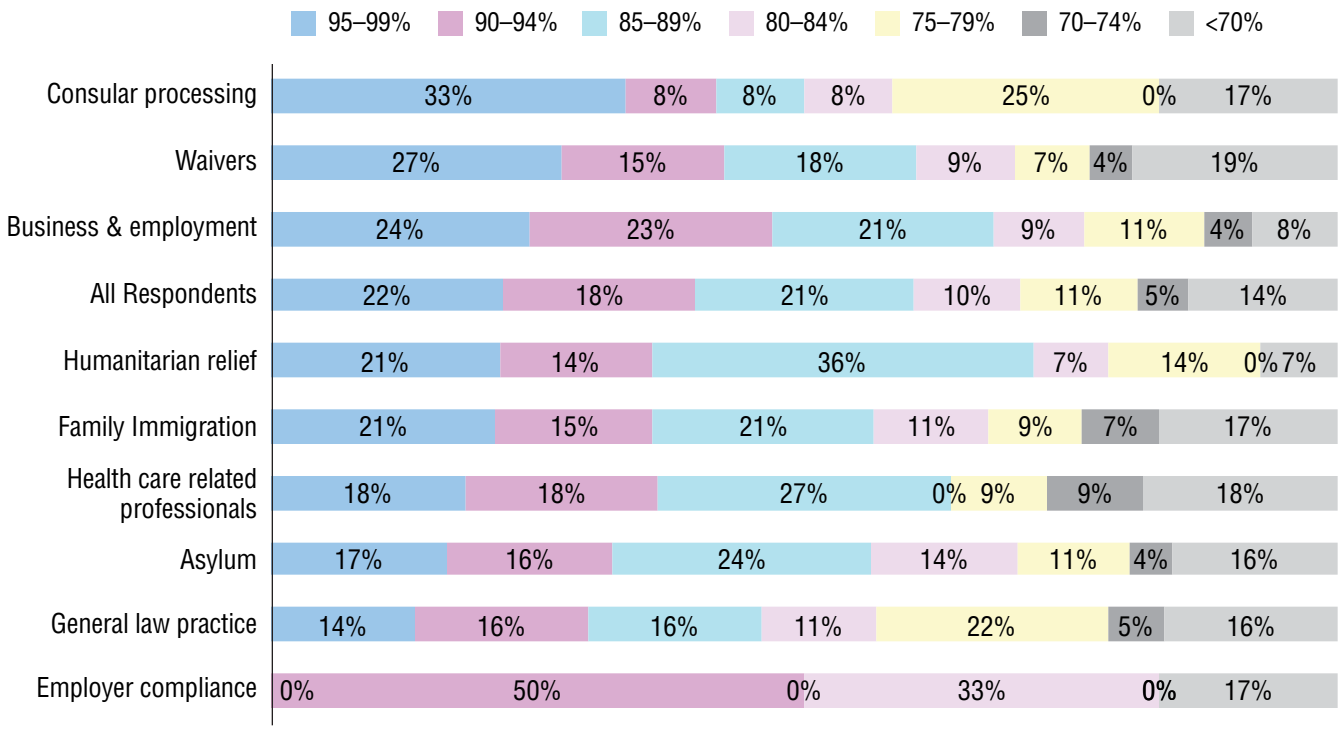


The **billing realization rate** is the percentage of time worked that is billed to the client. This is very important for lawyers who bill by the hour, but not so much for flat fee matters. The collection rate discussed above is more important for flat fee billers, because the client is almost always "billed" or charged for that work; the important function there is whether the client paid in full.

A realization rate of 95% or higher is considered excellent, with 90% being an acceptable benchmark. A realization rate below that number can be problematic especially if the collection rate is below 90%. That means for every $100 a lawyer works to be paid, only $90 is actually billed to the client, and the client only pays $81 of that. So, for $100 worth of work the firm receives about $80. That loss is generally all profit within the firm which would otherwise go to pay the firm owners/partners. **(Exhibit 63)**.

In 2019 slightly less than half of respondents claim a realization rate of 90% or better. About 25% are billing their clients for at least 80% of their work, while another 25% are under 80%. This last group needs to spend more time tracking their work for clients and more time billing them for their hard work **(Exhibit 55)**.

Exhibit 55: Billing Realization Rates by Primary Source of Income, Immigration Attorneys, 2019



Collecting the Money You Earn

There is a small improvement in uncollectables since the 2016 study, in terms of the amount and time for collection. A firm's collection rate is the percentage of fees billed that are actually paid by the client and collected by the firm. Generally, a collection rate of 95% is very good and anything above 90% is acceptable. Eight-eight percent of respondents meet that 90% benchmark. Firms that have 11-20% uncollectables need to focus on their credit policies to ensure more money is collected. The relatively few firms (5%) with 20% or more uncollectible fees are hovering in dangerous territory and need to focus on their finances **(Exhibit 56)**.

Also of note is the duration it takes firms to collect fees **(Exhibit 57)**. The time to collect fees is slightly longer than in 2016. Most experts agree that payment within 60 days is a best practice. Immediate attention should be given to amounts 60 days past due, because anything outstanding longer than 120 days is more difficult to collect **(Exhibits 56 and 57)**.

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Exhibit 56: Percentage of Fees Billed which are Uncollectible, 2011-2019

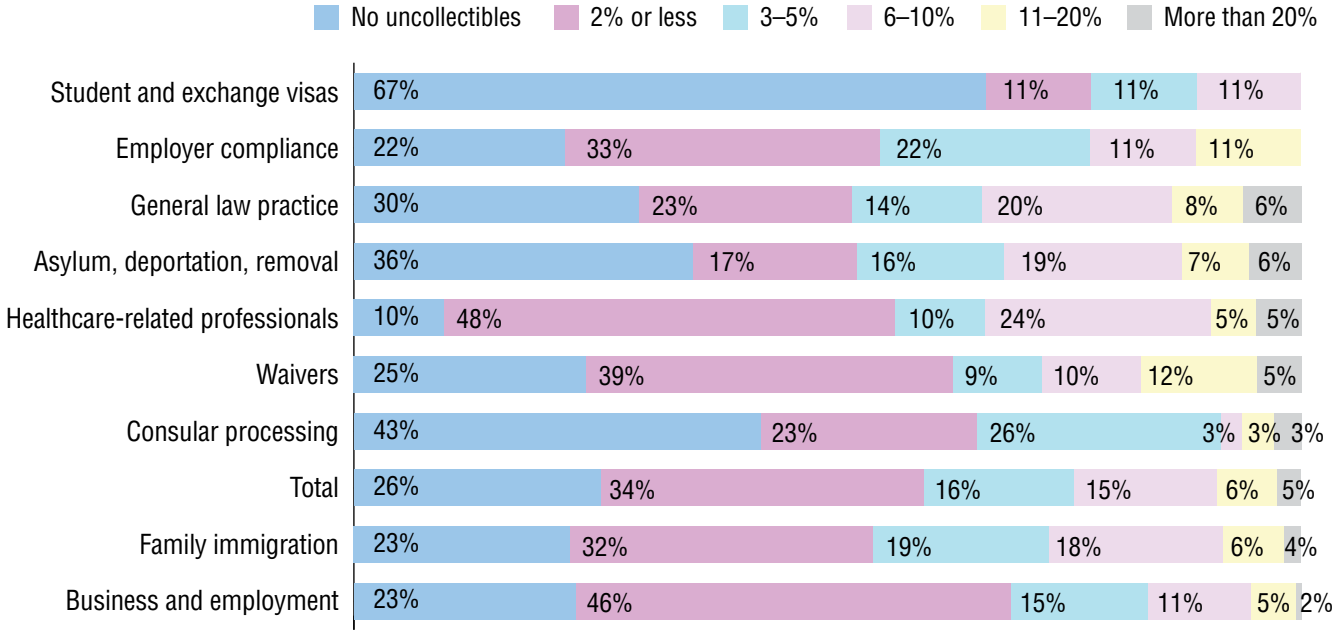
	2011	2016	2019
Category	%	%	%
2% of less	46	46	44
3-10%	36	42	44
11-20%	12	8	7
More than 20%	6	4	5

Exhibit 57: Amount of Time it Usually Takes to Collect Fees, 2011-2019

	2011	2016	2019
Category	%	%	%
30 days	38	46	43
60 days	28	23	24
90 days	15	13	11
120 days or longer	19	19	22

Distributions of uncollectibles vary among different immigration "specialists" as shown in **Exhibit 58**. Certain specialty areas experience greater difficulty with collection rates than others. For example, 2019 respondents who do student and exchange visas report virtually no issues with collectables, while generalists and asylum, removal, and deportation practitioners report a mixed bag, with some having high (20% or more) uncollectible rates.

Exhibit 58: Percent Distributions of Uncollectables by Primary Source of Income, 2019



Few immigration law firms impose interest charges on their clients. For 2019, about 77% of respondents do not impose a service interest on outstanding balances, choosing instead to finance this credit themselves. Only 9% of respondents "usually" or "always" impose interest charges. These numbers have been remarkably consistent over the three studies **(Exhibit 59)**.

Those firms that do impose this interest charge are mostly charging less than 2% per month **(Exhibit 60)**. Although not shown in an exhibit, AILA found firms that charge interest fees are spread across all immigration specialties.

Exhibit 59: Frequency of Imposition of Interest Charge to a Delinquent Account, 2011- 2019

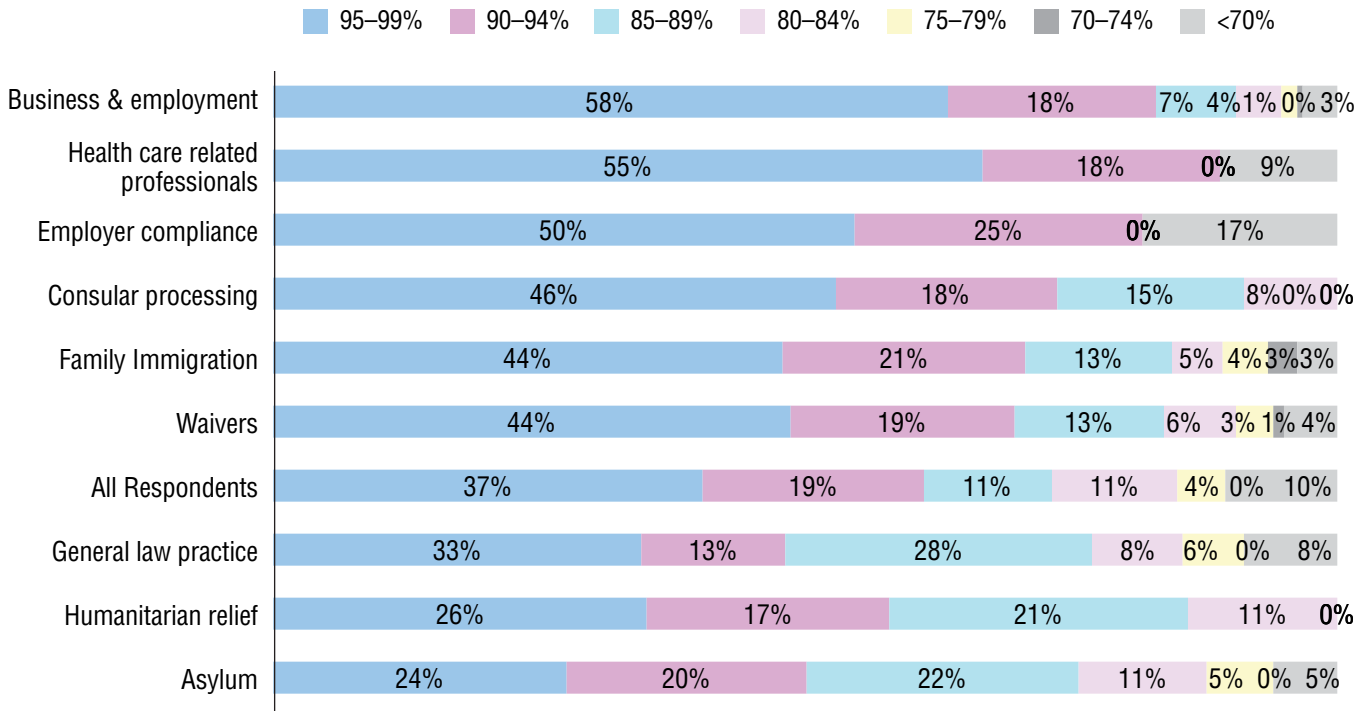
	2011	2016	2019
Category	%	%	%
Always	4	4	5
Usually	4	3	4
Sometimes	17	14	14
Never	75	79	77

Exhibit 60: Monthly Interest Charged on Unpaid Balances, 2011-2019

	2011	2016	2019
Category	%	%	%
<1%	17	22	18
1-2%	59	49	50
Over 2%	24	29	32

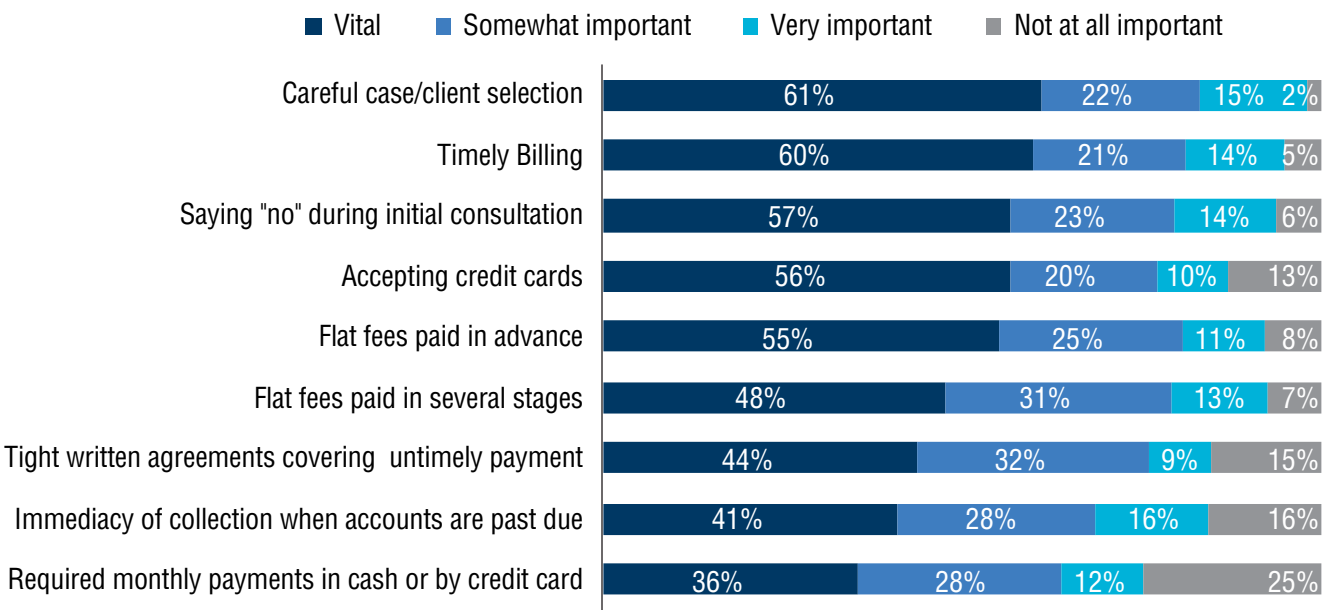
The **collections realization rate** is the percentage of fees billed that is collected (realized). Seventy-five percent of respondents report their collection realization is 90% or greater **(Exhibit 61)**. Asylum/deportation and removal practice specialists report the relatively least favorable collection realization rates.

Exhibit 61: Collections Realization Rates by Primary Source of Income, Immigration Attorneys, 2019



Lawyers cited a variety of techniques to improve financial realization rates. They use a combination of policies and procedures believed as vital to being paid, including accepting monthly payments, taking credit cards, billing in a timely manner, evaluating and turning down clients, and requiring interim payments tied to stages in completing the legal matter **(Exhibit 62)**. Respondents believe that all the client and financial management techniques listed below are more important than ever. Most techniques listed are rated "vital" by 5-10% more respondents than in 2016.

Exhibit 62: Relative Importance of Policies and Practices to Improve Realization Rates, 2019



In **Exhibit 63**, collections and billing rates are grouped under five classifications of percentage for each factor, from low (75-79%) to high (95-99%). For example only 14% of respondents report a low collection rate (75-79%) while also reporting a low billing realization rate (75-79%). This "double low" rate is a sign of financial trouble at these firms. At the high end, 66% of respondents stated they had a billing collection rate of about 95% and a collections realization rate of above 95%. These firms are doing an outstanding job of collecting the money they have earned. The 16% of firms in the 80-84% category for both billing realization and collection realization would also be advised to spend more time collecting earned fees from clients.

Exhibit 63: Comparing Collections and Billing Realization Rates, Immigration Lawyers, 2019

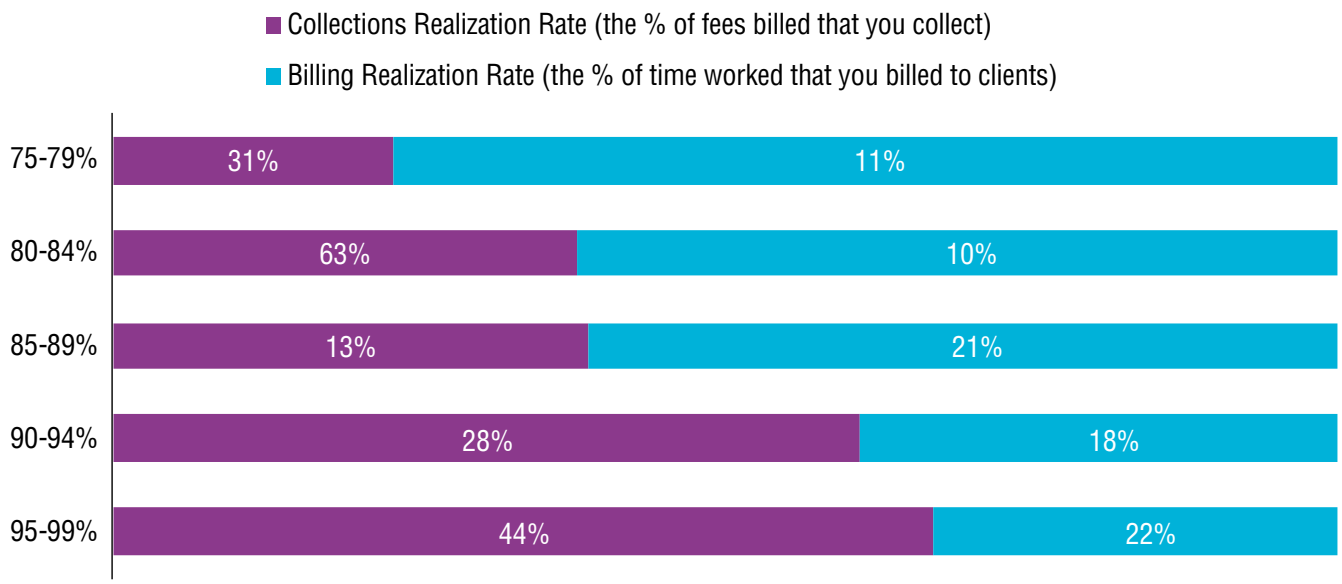




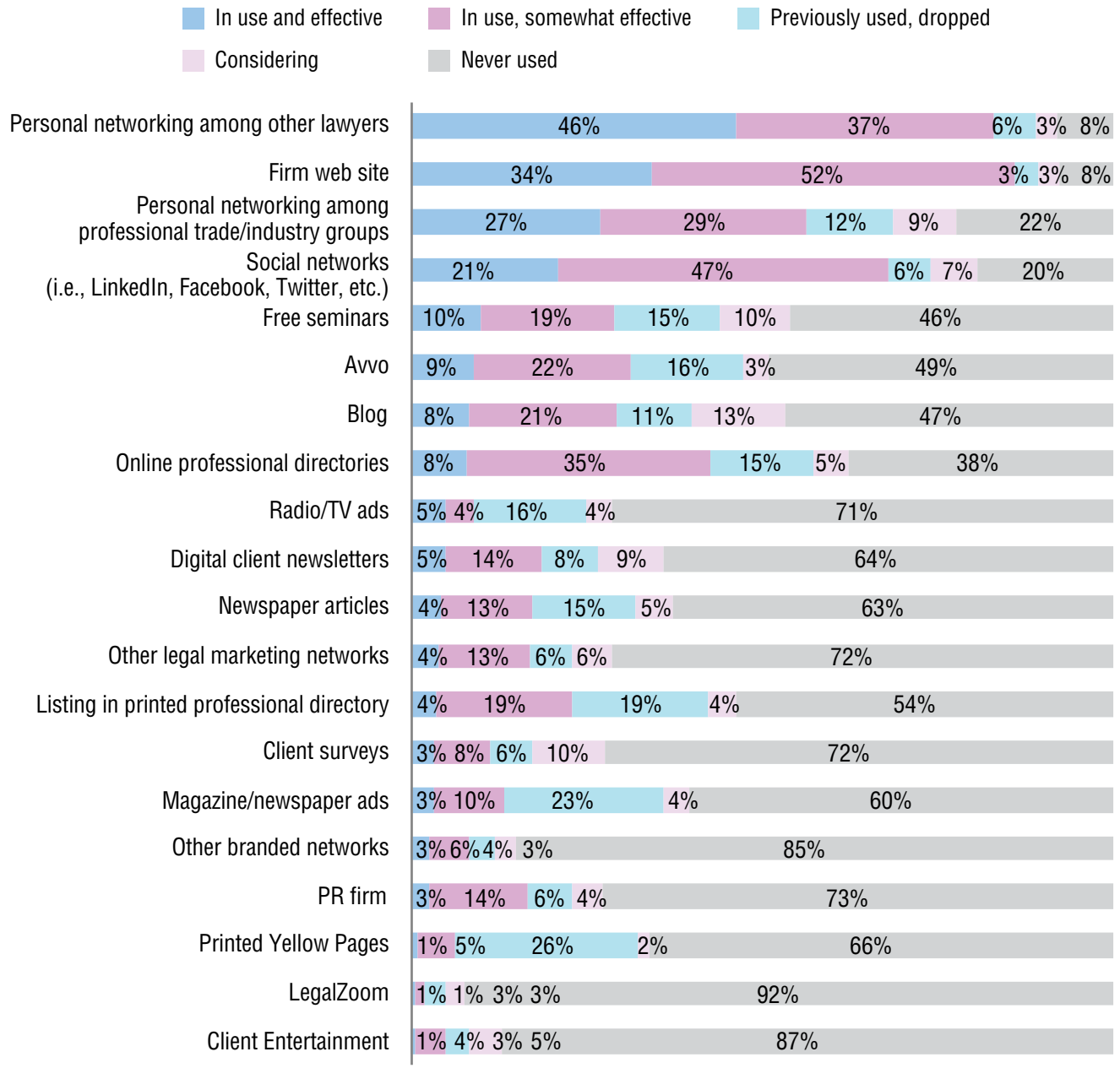
Exhibit 64: Distribution of Usual Way Immigration Attorneys Engage with Their Clients, 2019

The large majority of survey respondents employ a written fee agreement (84%) or engagement letter (11%) to enumerate the terms of the client-attorney agreement. Only 3% rely on a verbal disclosure. This is in line with ethics rules and best business practices and consistent with the 2016 study **(Exhibit 64)**.

Marketing Vehicles Deployed by Immigration Attorneys

Respondents identified various marketing vehicles and their usage along with their relative perceived effectiveness. All vehicles are rank-ordered **(Exhibit 65)**, followed by which ones are emerging or declining in use **(Exhibit 66–68)**.[2]

Exhibit 65: Distribution of Use and Effectiveness of Various Marketing Vehicles by Immigration Attorneys and Firms, 2019



2. We call these "emerging" marketing vehicles because we used this terminology in the last two studies, but results indicate that they are no longer "emerging" in the strictest sense.

Personal networking among other lawyers has taken the lead from last study, switching place with firm websites as the most used and effective marketing method of marketing **(Exhibit 65)**. Avvo has fallen two spots. Writing an Internet blog has fallen in effectiveness, but risen overall from the last study. Use of the venerable Yellow Pages was at 20% in 2011, but has now fallen to only 1% reporting they use it and it is effective.

As immigration practitioners became more busy, marketing efforts fell or were outsourced **(Exhibit 66 and 79)**. Only networking with other lawyers and the use of PR Firms to do marketing has risen over the last three years, while most methods have dropped in both use and their effectiveness rating. **Exhibit 66** ranks those marketing vehicles that dropped least first, to most last.

Exhibit 66: Change in In Use Marketing Strategies from 2016 to 2019

RISEN IN USE	STAYED THE SAME	DROPPED IN USE
• PR firm *[11 points up]* • Personal networking among other lawyers *[3]*	• Firm website • Digital Client Newsletter • Client Surveys	• Social networks *[1 point down]* • Printed listing *[1]* • Legal Zoom *[1]* • Yellow pages *[1]* • Radio *[2]* • Newspaper articles *[2]* • Other legal networks *[3]* • Other branded networks *[3]* • Online blog *[4]* • Magazine/newspaper ads *[4]* • Personal networking with trade/ industry groups *[6]* • Online professional directory *[6]* • Free seminars *[7]* • Avvo *[11]* • Client entertainment *[19]*



Personal networking among other lawyers has taken the lead among marketing vehicles.

Exhibit 67 compares the difference between what was effective and not in traditional marketing strategies, while **Exhibit 68** compares from study to study what was found effective in emerging strategies. Networking is the dominant traditional strategy, while use of websites is the dominant emerging strategy. Yet only 6% of respondents report offering any portion of their legal services through a website where most of the engagement occurs through the site, instead of a brick and mortar office.

Exhibit 67: Distribution of Use and Effectiveness of Traditional Marketing Vehicles by Immigration Attorneys and Firms, 2019

% Change	Traditional Marketing Vehicle	2019	2016
↓	Personal networking among other lawyers	**46%**	48%
↓	Personal networking among professional trade/industry groups	**27%**	28%
↓	Free seminars	**10%**	14%
↓	Radio/TV ads	**5%**	6%
↓	Newspaper articles	**4%**	6%
–	Listing in printed professional directory	**4%**	4%
↓	Client surveys	**3%**	4%
↓	Magazine/newspaper ads	**3%**	6%
↑	PR firm	**3%**	2%
–	Printed Yellow Pages	**1%**	1%
↓	Client entertainment	**1%**	6%

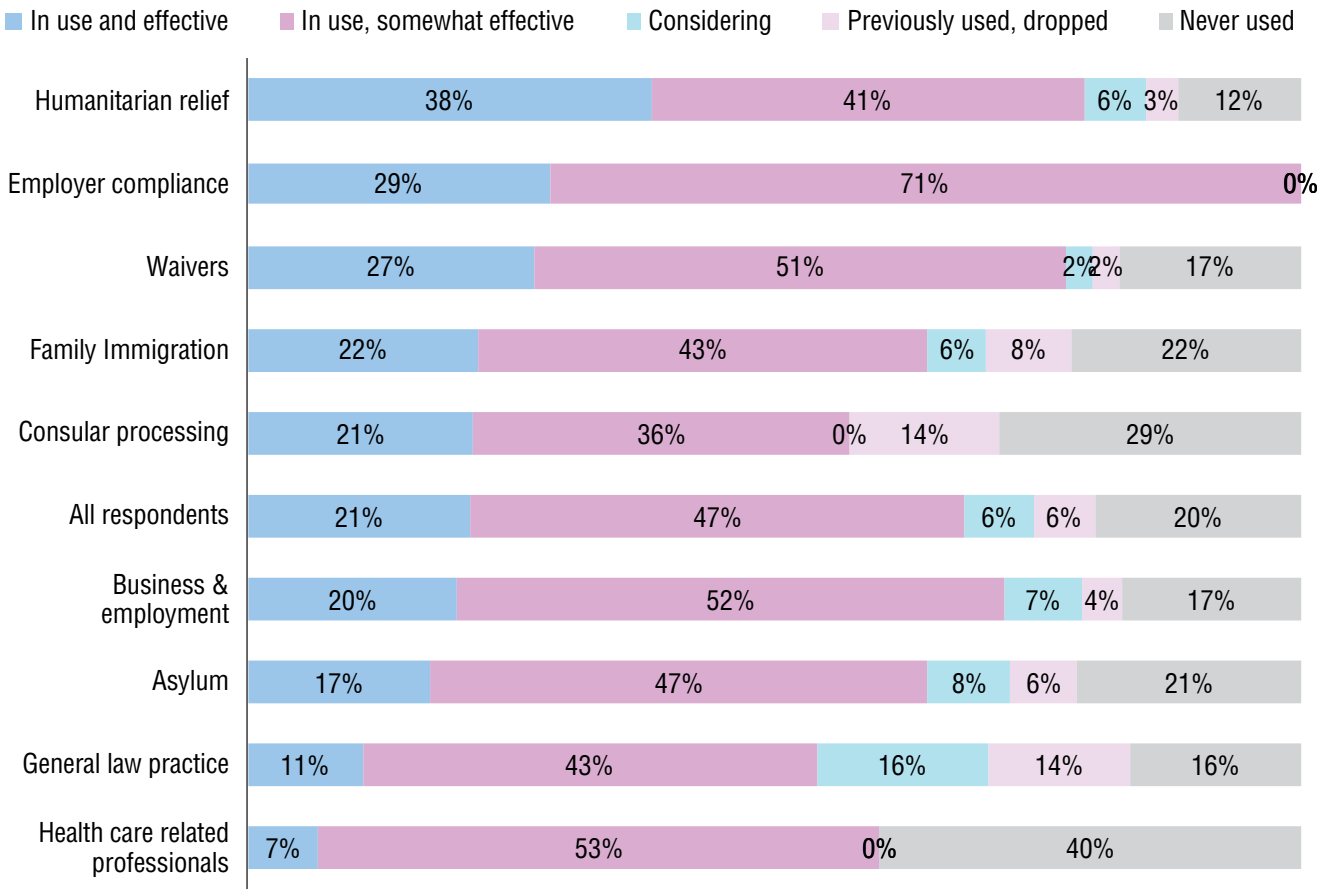
Eighty-two percent of respondents use a firm website and 68% use some form of social media to market their practice—a slight decrease from last year—but the effective rating has moved towards *somewhat effective* on website marketing **(Exhibit 68)**. Avvo has seen the steepest decline in emerging marketing strategies.

Exhibit 68: Distribution of Use and Effectiveness of Emerging Marketing Vehicles by Immigration Attorneys and Firms, 2019

% Change	Traditional Marketing Vehicle	2019	2016
↓	Firm web site	**34%**	43%
–	Social networks (i.e., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	**21%**	21%
↓	Avvo	**9%**	15%
↓	Blog	**8%**	13%
↓	Online professional directories	**8%**	12%
↓	Digital client newsletters	**5%**	7%
↓	Other legal marketing networks	**4%**	7%
↓	Other branded networks	**3%**	4%
–	LegalZoom	**1%**	1%

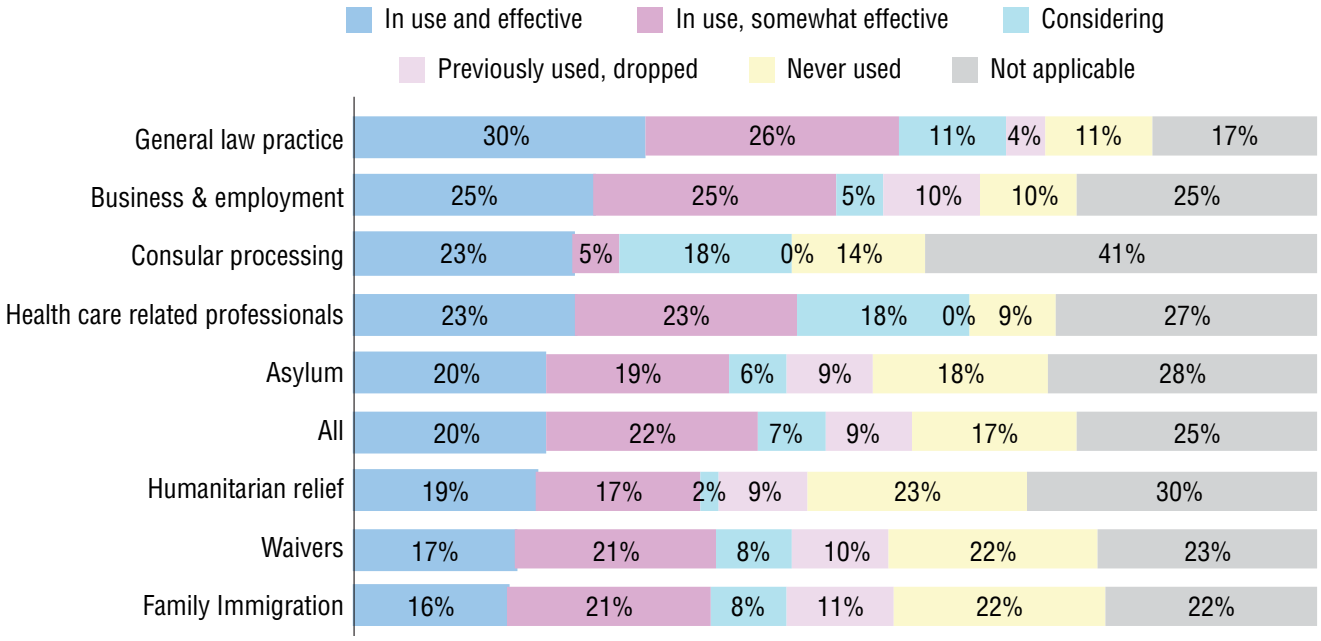
Exhibit 69 illustrates the use of social media networks for marketing by primary practice area. More than half immigration attorneys use it overall. Immigration employer compliance attorneys are the most likely to use social media, though the numbers could have been skewed by lower responses from compliance practitioners. Humanitarian relief lawyers find it the most effective (38%). Generalists are on the most likely to be on the fence about using social media most, at 16% still considering social media marketing. Attorneys that focus on healthcare professional immigration are the least likely to use it (40% never have) and the least likely to report it is effective (7%).

Exhibit 69: Percent Use of Social Media as a Marketing Device by Type of Immigration Practice, 2019



Half of respondents practicing business and employment immigration find networking with trade and industry groups either effective (25%) or somewhat effective (25%), but they have been inched out of first place for this method of marketing by general practitioners in the current study **(Exhibit 70)**. Forty-six percent of immigration attorneys that focus on health care professionals use this method of marketing, but another 27% says it is not applicable. It is interesting that there could be such a divide in perspectives within one practice group.

Exhibit 70: Percent Use of Networking among Trade/Industry Groups as a Marketing Device by Type of Immigration Practice, 2019



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THANK YOU LAWLOGIX!

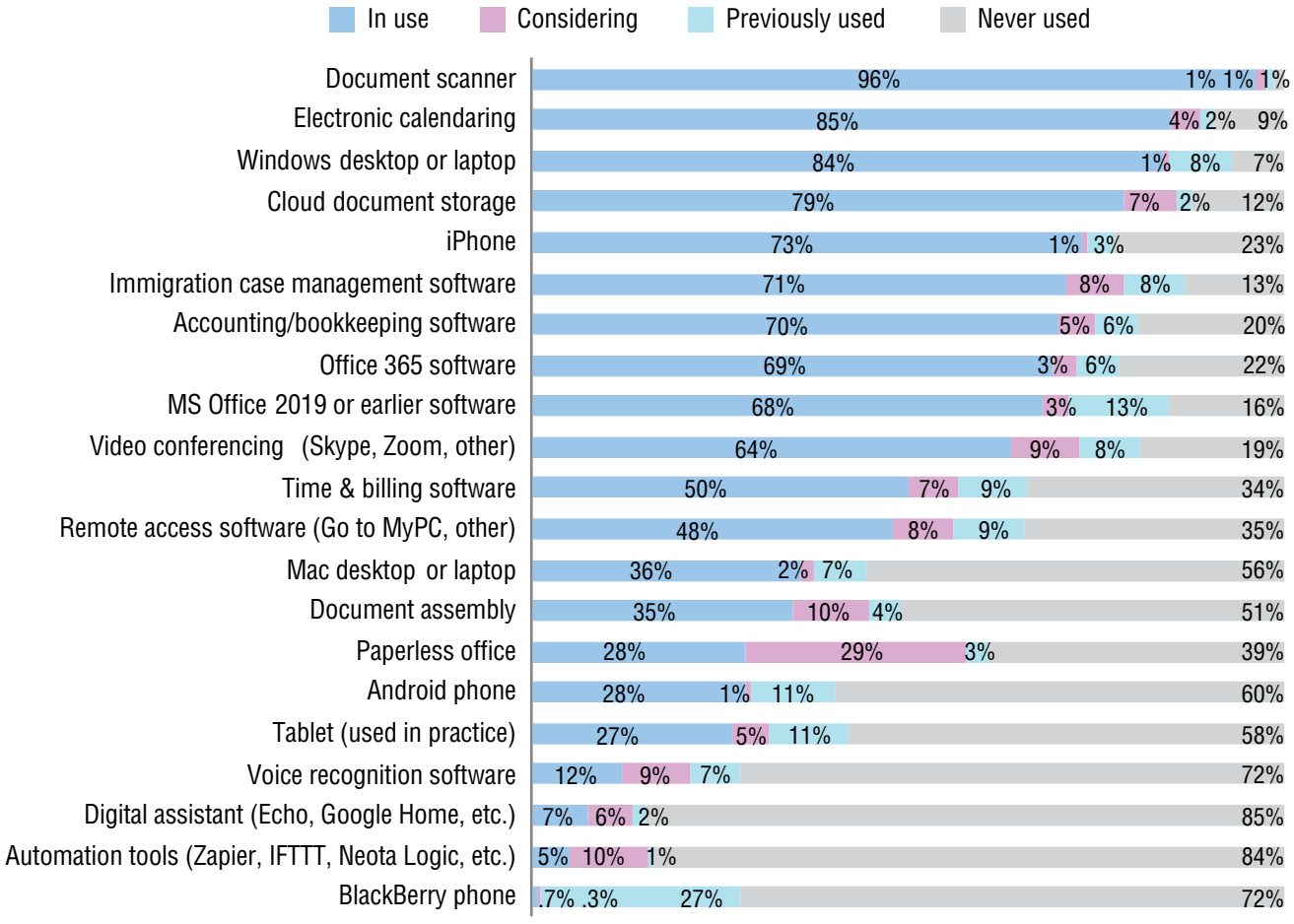
We want to thank LawLogix for their generous sponsorship of the 2019 Marketplace Study. Because of their generosity, AILA is pleased to offer exclusive data that can help immigration practitioners plan their career, and immigration firms troubleshoot, understand the immigration space, and prosper in kind.

Embracing Immigration Law Office Technology

Immigration lawyers continue to evolve their practices by incorporating different technologies into their firm that help them do the work more efficiently and effectively. There is a correlation between higher net income firms and the use of newer technologies. But there is also a fair amount of churn and a variety of products being used in the case management and practice management arena, indicating that there is some dissatisfaction with available products and no one silver bullet product on the market for immigration practitioners yet.

Exhibit 71 summarizes the use and perceived effectiveness of a variety of law office hardware, software and remote/mobile services. Apple grabbed more market share of laptops and desktops, with a 7% increase and more respondents considering it, compared to a 2% decline in Windows PC or laptop. iPhone and tablet use also went up by 7%. Cloud storage had the greatest increase in use from 2016, with 15% more respondents using it than three years ago.

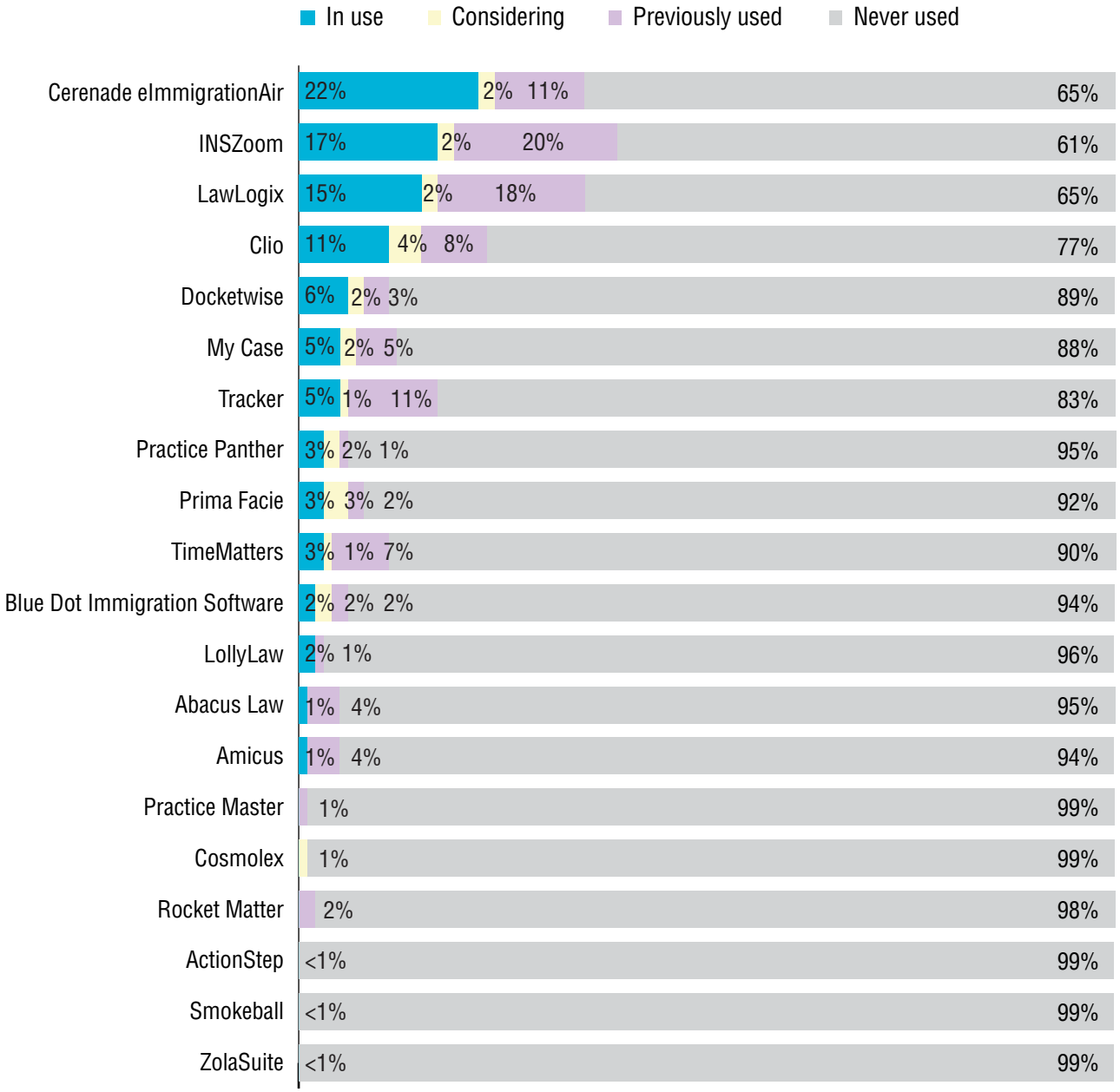
Exhibit 71: Rank-order of Technology Use by Immigration Attorneys, 2019



Case Management Software Preferences

Exhibit 72 summarizes the relative preference for immigration-specific case management software products. There is considerable "churn" in the market with many products under consideration, and the *previously used* category being relatively large. More lawyers use immigration case management software (LawLogix, etc.) than use practice management software (Clio, etc.), although some use both and Clio users increased by 5% since 2016.[3] More software platforms have been added to the survey this year. The market share of the top players generally stayed the same, except for Cerenade which increased 5%.

Exhibit 72: Rank Order of Case Management Software Preferences by Immigration Attorneys, 2019



3. LawLogix is the sponsor of the 2019 Marketplace Study, but had no role in or input on survey questions, administration, results, or analysis.

What technology adoptions correlate with income? Firm website and time and billing software seem to have little relation to income, but all the other categories in **Exhibit 73** increase lockstep with increased income. Whether technology use leads to higher income or higher income leads to more technology use is not apparent, but it is clear higher income practitioners tend to be on the receiving end of more technological advancements in the immigration law office.

Exhibit 73: Tech Products and Services Correlated with Attorney Income, 2019

Income Group	Document Assembly Software	Cloud Document Storage	Time & Billing Software	Paperless Office	Video Conf. Tools	Remote Access Software	Immig. Case Mgmt. Software
<$48,000	30%	71%	37%	22%	54%	28%	52%
$48,000-$70,000	31%	69%	50%	18%	61%	37%	63%
$70,000-$120,000	31%	77%	49%	30%	62%	43%	75%
$120,000 or >	40%	84%	56%	33%	73%	65%	81%

Economic Sentiment, Job Satisfaction, and Stress

Respondents indicated their sentiment about economic conditions, currently and in the past. Since 2011, there has been a shift toward optimism, with a correlating drop in pessimism **(Exhibit 74)**. Optimism about the future was similar in looking forward to 2012 and 2020. (Optimism peaked in 2017.) Only 12% of 2019 survey respondents feel economic circumstances will be worse in 2020 **(Exhibit 75)**.

Exhibit 74: Current Economic Circumstances of Immigration Law Practice Compared with Prior Years, 2011-2019

Category	2011	2016	2019
Better	14%	41%	39%
About the Same	25%	29%	32%
Worse	48%	15%	16%
Don't Know	13%	12%	8%

Exhibit 75: Future Economic Circumstances of Immigration Law Practice Estimated for 2012–2020

Category	2012	2017	2020
Better	28%	43%	29%
About the Same	46%	35%	43%
Worse	13%	5%	12%
Don't Know	13%	15%	11%



72% of respondents get a "great deal" or "quite a bit" satisfaction from their work.

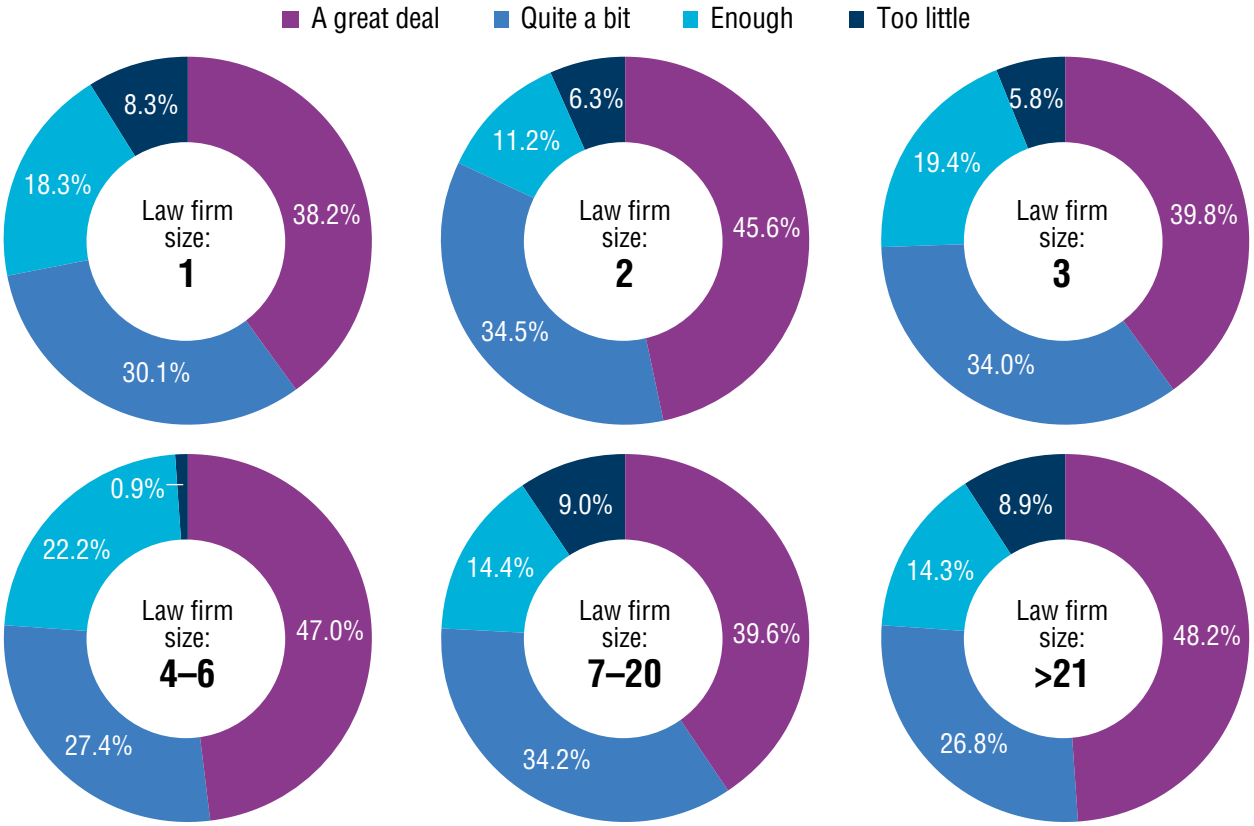
In 2019, the degree of satisfaction practicing immigration law is high, with 72% getting a *great deal* or *quite a bit* of satisfaction from practicing immigration law. This is similar to 2011, but it is down from 79% in 2016. Only 7% say they don't get enough satisfaction from the practice of immigration law, up 2% from the last study **(Exhibit 76)**.

Exhibit 76: Change in Degree of Satisfaction Practicing Immigration Law, 2011-2019

Category	2011	2016	2019
A great deal	44	50	41%
Quite a bit	30	29	31%
Enough	18	14	16%
Too little	8	5	7%

Lawyers in firms of 4 to 6 lawyers seem to be the most satisfied, showing the highest percentage of a *great deal* of satisfaction and the lowest percentage of *too little* satisfaction **(Exhibit 77)**.Those in solo practice or firms with seven or more lawyers appear to be the most likely to be dissatisfied, if we take the *too little* answer as guide. Despite the recent challenges in immigration practice over 90% of respondents get enough satisfaction or greater from the practice of immigration law across the board.

Exhibit 77: Degree of Satisfaction Practicing Immigration Law by Firm Size, 2019



With respect to future job satisfaction, 28% of respondents feel immigration work will become more satisfying, while 19% feel it will become less. In 2019, 10% of respondents are ready to quit

or seek to change their practice area **(Exhibit 78)**. This is on par with 2011 responses, but double 2016 responses, showing an increase in dissatisfaction among some immigration lawyers.

Exhibit 78: Change in Degree of Satisfaction Regarding Likely Futures of Immigration Practices, 2011-2019

Category	2011	2016	2019
Becoming more satisfying	39%	47%	28%
Remaining the same	42%	38%	38%
Becoming less satisfying	11%	8%	19%
Becoming unsatisfying enough to change practice area	3%	3%	5%
Unsatisfying enough to quit	5%	2%	5%

A third of immigration lawyers appear to be feeling overwhelmed by their workload. **Exhibit 79** shows that only 14% report having insufficient work to keep them busy, nearly half of what it was in 2011. Having all the work you can handle has stayed consistent, but having more work than you can handle has increased from 27% in 2016 to 35% in 2019.

Exhibit 79: Change in Quantity of Respondents' Personal Workload, 2011-2019

Category	2011	2016	2019
More than you can handle	21%	27%	35%
All you can handle	53%	53%	52%
Insufficient to keep you busy	27%	18%	14%

In 2019, with respect to job stress, 69% of respondents *strongly* or *somewhat agree* that job stress affects performance. That is a significant change from 2016, when only 28% of respondents *strongly* or *somewhat agreed* that job stress affects performance. Those that disagreed with that sentiment has dropped by half in three years **(Exhibit 80)**.

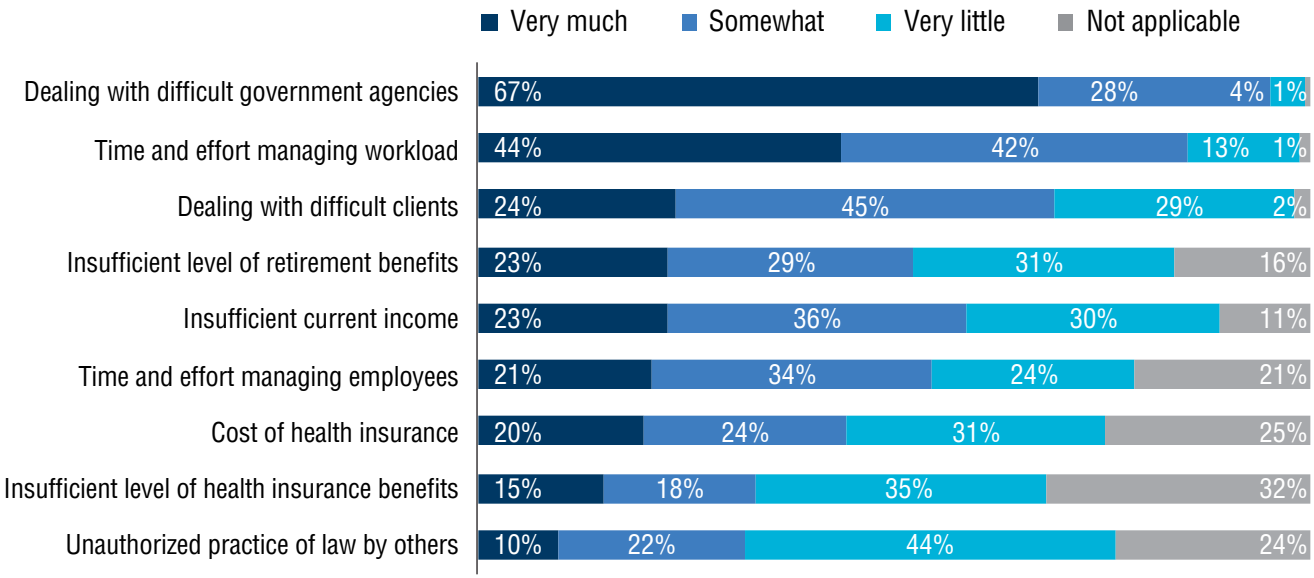
Exhibit 80: Change in Degree of Agreement that Job Stress Affects Performance, 2011-2019

Category	2011	2016	2019
Strongly agree	16%	14%	28%
Somewhat agree	34%	14%	41%
Neutral	25%	24%	19%
Somewhat disagree	11%	14%	8%
Strongly disagree	14%	10%	5%

There are numerous stressors affecting immigration lawyers. **Exhibit 81** rank-orders selected factors based on reported stress level. Immigration lawyers face multiple stresses, mostly economic and workload–related. Since the last survey, financial and healthcare concerns seemed to take a back seat, most dropping between 5 and 8% in the *very much* category and increasing in the *somewhat stressful* category. *Dealing with difficult clients* climbed 3% to the third slot.

The two leading factors of *dealing with difficult government agencies* and *time and effort managing workload* have been consistent over the years, but they swapped places since 2016. Eighty-six percent find *time and effort managing workload* either *very much* or *somewhat* stressful, up 4% from last year. But the big story is *dealing with difficult government agencies* was ranked by 95% of respondents as *somewhat* or *very much* a stress factor. This is up 15% from the last study, and those ranking it *very much* more than doubled. *Unauthorized practice of law by others* remained the least stressful factor.

Exhibit 81: Rank Order of Factors Affecting Job Stress, 2019



The added stress levels are significant and can clearly impact the health and well-being of all immigration lawyers. We encourage readers to take steps to build their resilience to stress and find healthy outlets to relieve chronic stress, including the lawyer-specific resources at the AILA Self-Care Center at AILA.org.



Appendix A:
Methods and Measurements Continued

Measures of Central Tendency

The **mean** (also called the average or arithmetic average) is calculated by adding the values of all responses, then dividing by the number of responses.

Example: Three responses—1, 2 and 3—are reported. The average is calculated by adding their values (1 + 2 + 3 = 6), then dividing by the number of responses (3). Thus, the average is 6 ÷ 3 = 2.

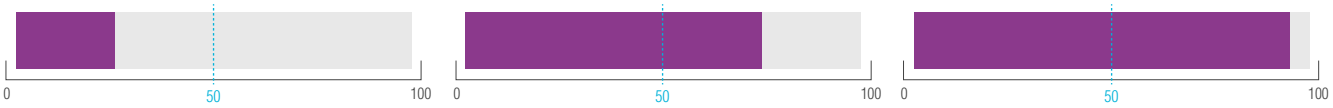
The **median** is the middle value of a series (distribution) of values, which is initially rank-ordered (from low to high or vice versa). By definition, half the numbers are greater and half are less than the median. Both mean and median values are used throughout this survey report to measure central tendency.

Use of the median as a statistic for central tendency reduces the effect of "outliers" (extremely high or low values, such as 30 in the example below), while the average does not.

Example: Three responses—1, 2 and 30—are reported. The median is the middle number of the order of distribution (1, 2, 30) or 2. The average of this same distribution is 33 / 3 = 11.

Measures of Dispersion (Spread)

By convention, the dispersion of data around the median (the 50th percentile) is presented by the:



25th percentile **25th percentile (lower quartile).**

One-fourth of the responses are less and three-fourths are more than this value.

75th percentile (upper quartile). **75th** percentile

Three-fourths of the responses are less and one-fourth are more than this value.

95th percentile

Ninety-five percent of the values are less and five percent are more than this response.

An Example

The example below summarizes 2018 attorney net income by sixteen practice categories reported by 1,200 respondents (denoted by Count). As stated above, this and subsequent exhibits provide a range of information, offering five data points—the 25th, 50th (Median), mean (average),75th and 95th percentiles—on the variable (item) of interest, in this instance, 2018 attorney net income.

Distribution of 2018 Immigration Attorney Net Income by Practice Category

Practice Category	Count	25th Percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	95th Percentile
Solo practitioner sharing space	28	$50,000	$77,500	$103,332	$102,500	$287,500
Solo practitioner with 1 or more associates	101	85,000	125,000	187,778	220,000	500,000
Solo practitioner with dedicated office outside of home	228	50,000	89,000	110,215	125,000	320,000
Solo practitioner with home office only	56	30,000	59,000	66,973	93,500	180,000
Associate in firm with 1 partner/shareholder	65	57,000	70,000	69,269	80,000	110,000
Associate in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	46	69,000	81,000	94,186	105,000	220,000
Associate in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	10	90,000	101,500	101,300	115,000	172,000
Associate in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	15	112,000	124,000	133,467	175,000	225,000
Partner in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	125	80,000	130,000	212,508	280,000	700,000
Partner in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	20	123,750	169,000	188,025	212,500	480,000
Partner in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	25	205,000	275,000	331,678	400,000	750,000
Of Counsel	14	39,900	76,000	94,921	110,000	350,000
In-House Counsel (for-profit organization)	9	70,000	85,000	91,473	110,000	165,000
In-House Counsel (not-for-profit organization)	15	46,000	61,000	75,667	102,000	190,000
Counsel with legal aid/legal services agency	48	55,500	64,500	68,135	80,000	105,000
All Respondents (2018)	**823**	**$60,000**	**$90,000**	**$133,655**	**$150,000**	**$400,000**
All Respondents (2015)	**1200**	**$45,000**	**$70,000**	**$105,195**	**$120,000**	**$300,000**

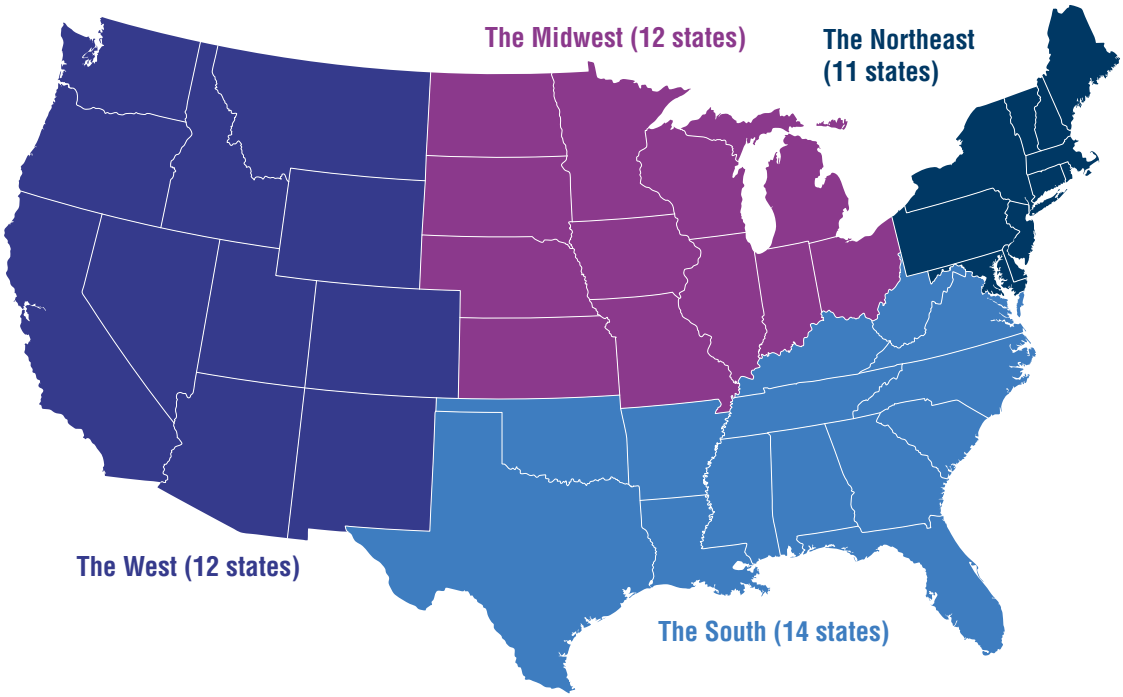
To help interpret the example, please first refer to "All Respondents" (bottom line). Twenty-five percent of all respondents earn less than $60,000, half earn less than $90,000, while half earn more than $90,000, 25 percent earn more than $150,000 and 5 percent earn more than $400,000. Also, the "range" of net income is large within groups—for example, from $205,000 for partners in firms with 21+ partners at the 25th percentile to $750,000 at the 95th percentile level.

Also note that the mean, or arithmetic average, is higher than the median for all practice categories as the average is heavily influenced by outliers at the high end of the income

distribution. The median, by convention, is offered as a measure of central tendency for most governmental and non-governmental statistical reporting for incomes, housing prices, wages, SAT scores, etc.

Geographic Areas Defined

Thirty-seven small area geographic areas were included to denote office location, based on local, regional and State AILA chapters. These US localities were collapsed into 4 multistate regions of the continental United States and Hawaii, including the Northeast (11 states), the South (14 states), the Midwest (12 states) and the West (12 states). Members residing outside the US were also counted.



Interpreting Findings

Because the survey was conducted in the summer of 2019, attorney income, gross revenue and overhead expenses represent CY 2018 values. All other data represent 2019 values covering the responses as received.

Net income represents all personal income from legal work (after expenses) or salaries from the practice of law, before taxes, for 2018. Bonus information was not addressed as a separate question and may or may not have been included by respondents.

To denote gaps such as the "gender gap" of reported incomes, the term "gap" is used on selected exhibits as a proportion calculated as the *median value of one group divided by another*. Hypothetically, a reported income of $75,000 for a group of female attorneys divided by $100,000 for a like group of male attorneys yields the proportion of .75. This could be interpreted in plain English as *"This group of females earns 75 cents on the dollar compared with their male colleagues."*

Despite the use of the median to reduce the effect of extremely high or low values ("outliers"), as noted above, readers should use particular caution in interpreting data when only a small number of responses, such as large firm partners, are available. In such cases, readers are advised to "group up" to a larger geographic area or practice category, where appropriate, to not distort reality. Generally, no value is represented if fewer than 5 responses were reported.

Personnel planning and decision-making include many factors not covered in surveys of this scope or nature. However, this study provides ranges of values that can help in developing sound and equitable hiring and compensation policies.

Confidence Intervals/Margins of Error and Representativeness of Sample

Confidence intervals (upper and lower bounds around the mean at the 95% confidence level) are shown for three selected variables:

+/- **7.8%** for private practitioners' **2018 net income** ($123,974, $133,655, $143,336)

+/- 5.1% for private practitioners' **total hours of flat-fee billing in average 2019 work week** (22.2, 23.5, 24.7)

+/- 2.7% for private practitioners' **2019 average hourly billing rate** ($291, $299, $307)

For example, the average 2019 hourly billing rate is plus or minus 2.7% of $299 with a 95% likelihood that the rate would fall between $291/hour and $307/hour.

For More on Methods and Measures

Assistance with interpreting and applying information is available at no charge to AILA members. Please contact Dr. Lawrence Stiffman of the Applied Statistics Laboratory (ASL) of Ann Arbor, Michigan at (734) 417-5151 or e-mail him at aslinfo@aol.com. Under the direction and oversight of Reid F. Trautz, Director, Practice & Professionalism Center at AILA, ASL fielded the survey, analyzed derived data and prepared this reference.

RETURN TO STUDY

Appendix B:
Summary Profile of the Typical Immigration Attorney and Firm

This section summarizes key statistics derived from the survey. Emphasis is on the concerns of the "average" attorney and the "average" firm with respect to demographics, core relationships of income, hourly billing rates, time expenditure and resultant practice and firm revenues and expenses.

Membership Demographics

Exhibit 2 compares median and average values for survey respondents in 2011, 2016 and 2019 with respect to their gender by years in practice (in total and with respect to immigration work specifically). Female respondents are younger.

Exhibit 2: Trends in Median and Average Years in Practice of Survey Respondents by Gender, 2011 to 2019

	2011	2011	2016	2016	2019	2019
Category	**Median**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mean**
All Respondents	12.0	14.4	12.0	13.5	13.0	15.0
All Female Attorneys	11.0	12.7	9.0	11.9	11.0	13.0
All Male Attorneys	14.0	16.5	15.0	16.3	18.0	19.0
All Respondents	10.0	12.1	9.0	11.9	11.0	13.0
All Female Attorneys	9.0	10.7	8.0	11.0	10.0	12.0
All Male Attorneys	12.0	13.8	12.0	14.0	14.0	16.0

In 2019, 56.4% of survey respondents are females working full-time, defined as over 30 hours/week compared with 34.7% of males working full-time. Approximately 8.9% of attorneys work on a part-time basis. The proportion of respondents who are females working full-time increased 15% since 2011 while the proportion of males working full-time decreased by 17% **(Exhibit 3)**.

Exhibit 3: Changes in Percent Distributions of Survey Respondents by Gender and Work Status, 2011, 2016, and 2019

Respondents by Gender and Work Status	% of Total 2011	% of Total 2016	% of Total 2019	% Change (2011-2019)
Female, working *full-time* (30 or more hours/week)	49.0	57.2	56.4	15%
Female, working *part-time* (<30 hours/week)	6.9	6.7	7.4	7%
Male, working *full-time* (30 or more hours/week)	41.8	33.9	34.7	-17%
Male, working *part-time* (<30 hours/week)	1.7	1.8	1.5	-12%
All Respondents	100%	100%	100%	

Exhibit 4 distributes gender, work-status group and age cohort. About 31.1% of females working full time are less than 35 years old compared with 21.9% of males while 33% of part-time females are also less than 35 years old. With respect to the oldest age cohort, only 6% of females are over 55 years of age compared with 20.5% of males.

Exhibit 4: Distribution of Survey Respondents (Table Percentages) by Gender and Work Status across Age Groups

	Age Group of Respondents				
	<34	35-39	40-45	46-55	>55
Female, working *full-time* (30 or more hours/week)	211	181	120	125	41
	31.1%	26.7%	17.7%	18.4%	6.0%
Female, working *part-time* (<30 hours/week)	30	25	13	15	8
	33.0%	27.5%	14.3%	16.5%	8.8%
Male, working *full-time* (30 or more hours/week)	91	83	58	98	85
	21.9%	20.0%	14.0%	23.6%	20.5%
Male, working *part-time* (<30 hours/week)	3	1	1	2	11
	16.7%	5.6%	5.6%	11.1%	61.1%
All Respondents 2019	335	291	194	241	147
	27.7%	24.1%	16.1%	20.0%	12.2%
All Respondents 2016	529	278	251	281	187
	34.7%	18.2%	16.4%	18.4%	12.3%
All Respondents 2011	348	250	298	321	313
	22.7%	16.3%	19.5%	21.0%	20.5%

About half of 2019 survey respondents are sole practitioners with partners and associates remaining constant over time. Non-private practitioners have increased their participation. Approximately 93% percent of respondents are private practitioners. Of the remainder, 2.4% are in-house counsel and 5.3% work in legal aid/legal services **(Exhibit 5)**.

Exhibit 5: Changes in Percent Distributions of 2011, 2016 and 2019 Survey Respondents by Practice Category

Practice Category	% of Total 2011	% of Total 2016	% of Total 2019	% Change 2011-2016	% Change 2016-2019
Solo Practitioners	54.2	49.3	53	**-10%**	**7%**
Associates	17.0	18.9	16.3	**10%**	**-16%**
Partners/Of Counsel	22.8	19.2	22.9	**-19%**	**16%**
Inhouse Counsel	1.8	4.5	2.4	**60%**	**-87%**
Legal Aid/Legal Services	4.2	7.5	5.3	**44%**	**-41%**

Exhibit 6 details changes in the count and frequency of respondents by their practice category. Proportions of respondents are stable over time.

Exhibit 6: Changes in Percent Distributions of Survey Respondents by Practice Category, 2011, 2016 and 2019

	2019		2016		2011	
Practice Category	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Solo practitioner sharing space	39	3.3%	60	3.9%	67	4.5%
Solo practitioner with 1 or more associates	145	12.1%	132	8.7%	136	9.1%
Solo practitioner with dedicated office outside of home	358	30.0%	464	30.5%	505	33.8%
Solo practitioner with home office only	91	7.6%	101	6.6%	110	7.4%
Associate in firm with 1 partner/shareholder	88	7.4%	153	10.0%	96	6.4%
Associate in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	64	5.4%	100	6.6%	92	6.1%
Associate in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	17	1.4%	15	1.0%	29	1.9%
Associate in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	26	2.2%	19	1.2%	40	2.7%
Partner in firm with 2-5 partners/shareholders	187	15.7%	211	13.9%	234	15.6%
Partner in firm with 6-20 partners/shareholders	27	2.3%	27	1.8%	25	1.7%
Partner in firm with 21+ partners/shareholders	37	3.1%	36	2.4%	71	4.7%
Of Counsel	23	1.9%	22	1.4%	15	1.7%
In-House Counsel (for-profit organization)	10	0.8%	18	1.2%	13	4.2%
In-House Counsel (not-for-profit organization)	19	1.6%	50	3.3%	14	0.9%
Counsel with legal aid/legal services agency	63	5.3%	115	7.6%	63	0.9%
All Respondents	**1131**	**100%**	**1408**	**100%**	**1433**	**100%**

Office Location of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents selected their office-based practice location based on local AILA chapters. The top 9 local chapters represent 50% of survey respondents, as shown in **Exhibit 7**.

Exhibit 7: Rank-Ordered Distribution of 2019 Survey Responses by Office Location—Top 50th Percentile

Office Location	Count	Percent of Total	Cumulative Percent
Texas *(Includes New Mexico and Oklahoma)*	127	10.4%	10.4%
Southern California *(Includes Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties)*	96	7.8	18.2
Northern California	71	5.8	24
Colorado	67	5.5	29.4
New York City Area *(Includes the 5 Boroughs & Nassau, Orange, Suffolk, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Ulster, and Sullivan Counties)*	64	5.2	34.7
Washington DC *(Includes DC, Maryland and Virginia)*	62	5.1	39.7
Southern Florida *(Includes Dade, Collier, Broward, Monroe, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Okeechobee, Highlands & Glades Counties)*	56	4.6	44.3
Chicago	52	4.2	48.5
New England *(Includes Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont)*	47	3.8	52.4

Exhibit 8: Rank-Ordered Distribution of 2016 Survey Responses by Office Location-Bottom 50th Percentile

Office Location	Count	Percent of Total	Cumulative Percent
Georgia/Alabama	44	3.6%	56%
Michigan	44	3.6	59.5
Central Florida	43	3.5	63.1
Carolinas	41	3.3	66.4
MidSouth *(Includes Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee)*	41	3.3	69.7
Minnesota/Dakotas	37	3	72.8
Ohio	32	2.6	75.4
Missouri/Kansas	29	2.4	77.7
Washington State	28	2.3	80
Philadelphia	27	2.2	82.2
San Diego *(Includes San Diego and Imperial Counties)*	27	2.2	84.4
Arizona	20	1.6	86.1
New Jersey	17	1.4	88.8
Santa Clara *(Includes Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties)*	17	1.4	90.2
Iowa/Nebraska	15	1.2	91.4
Wisconsin	14	1.1	92.6

continued

Idaho	10	0.8	93.4
Upstate New York	10	0.8	94.2
Connecticut	9	0.7	94.9
Oregon	9	0.7	95.7
Canada	8	0.7	96.3
Bangkok District	7	0.6	96.9
Hawaii	7	0.6	97.5
Utah	6	0.5	98
No Chapter	5	0.4	98.4
Pittsburgh	5	0.4	98.8
Rome District *(Includes Europe, Russia, Middle East and Africa)*	5	0.4	99.2
Latin America & Caribbean District	4	0.3	99.5
Nevada	3	0.2	99.8
Total	1226	100%	100%

Exhibit 9 distributes survey respondents by region of the United States, defined as four state-level areas by the US Census Bureau along with foreign locations.

Exhibit 9: Distribution of Respondents by US Region, 2011, 2016 and 2019

Multistate Region of US	% of Total 2011	% of Total 2016	% of Total 2019
Northeast Region	27	27	**20**
Southern Region	25	24	**29**
Midwest Region	17	19	**18**
Western Region	28	26	**30**
Outside US	3	2	**2**
Not Listed		2	**1**
	100%	100%	100%

Age of Survey Respondents

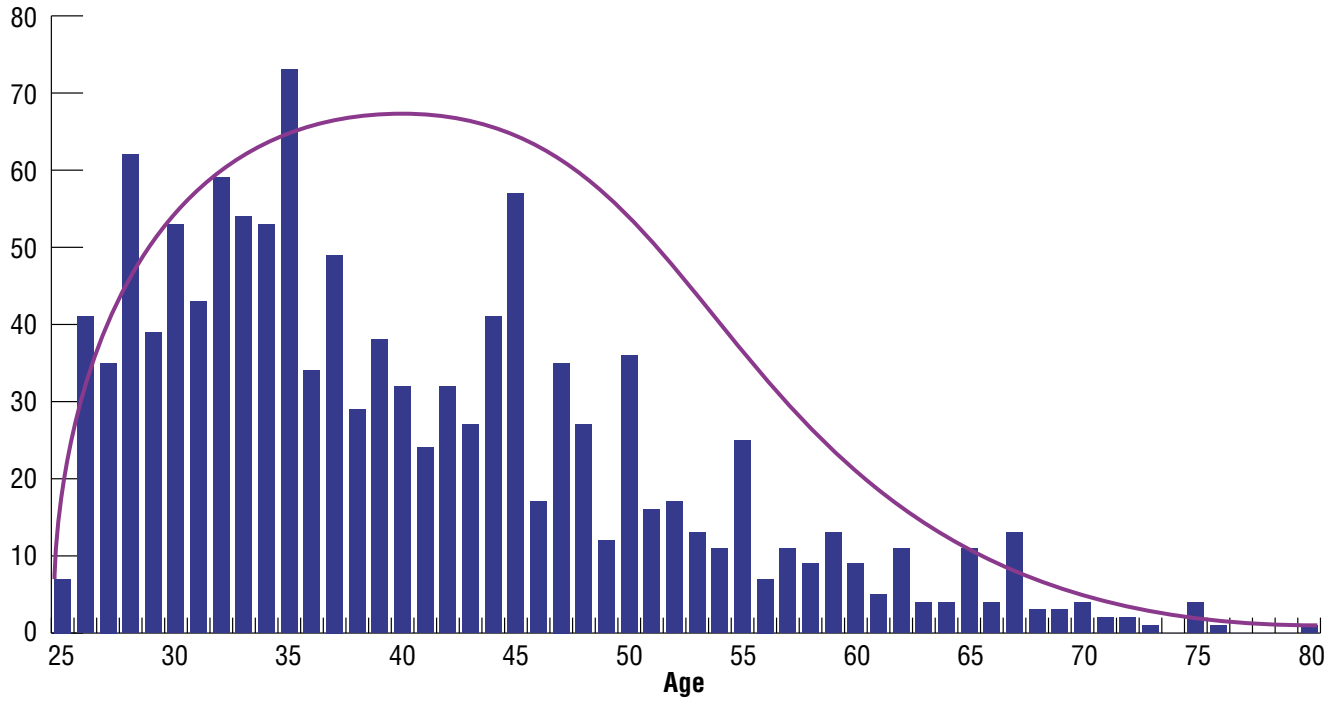
Survey respondents are well balanced across age group and office location with the 36 office location categories above collapsed as four multistate regions of the United States. For example 27.5% of Northeast Region 2019 survey respondents are 35 or less. About 22.7% of all respondents are less than 35 years of age, while 12.2% are over 55 years of age **(Exhibit 5)**.

Exhibit 10: Distribution of 2019 Survey Respondents by US Region and Age Group

	Age Group of Respondents					
Region of US	**<34**	**35-39**	**40-45**	**46-55**	**>55**	**Total**
Northeast Region	66	54	37	56	27	240
	27.5%	22.5%	15.4%	23.3%	11.3%	100.0%
Southern Region	99	84	55	57	55	350
	28.3%	24.0%	15.7%	16.3%	15.7%	100.0%
Midwest Region	55	67	30	44	23	219
	25.1%	30.6%	13.7%	20.1%	10.5%	100.0%
Western Region	106	76	61	75	39	357
	29.7%	21.3%	17.1%	21.0%	10.9%	100.0%
Outside US	3	4	10	7	3	27
	11.1%	14.8%	37.0%	25.9%	11.1%	100.0%
Not listed	6	6	1	2	0	15
	40.0%	40.0%	6.7%	13.3%	0.0%	100.0%
All Regions (2019)	335	291	194	241	147	1208
	27.7%	24.1%	16.1%	20.0%	12.2%	100.0%
All Regions (2016)	529	278	251	281	187	1526
	34.7%	18.2%	16.4%	18.4%	12.3%	100.0%
All Regions (2011)	348	250	298	321	313	1530
	22.7%	16.3%	19.5%	21.0%	20.5%	100.0%

The age of survey respondents is graphed as **Exhibit 11** with a normal curve super-imposed over the distribution. The mean age has changed from 42 in the 2016 study to 40 here. Notice how the distribution is skewed to younger attorneys. The median age is 37.

Exhibit 11: Distribution of Age of Survey Respondents, 2019



Size of Firm or Organization of Survey Respondents

Sole practitioners dominate the respondent pool. Only 15.2% of 2019 private practice respondents are in firms above 6 attorneys, compared with 37.3% of non-private practitioners **(Exhibit 12)**.

Exhibit 12: Distribution of Respondents by Firm Size (Private Practitioners) or Organization Size (Non-Private Practitioners)

	Private Practitioners					Non-Private Practitioners		
Size of Firm/ Organization	% of Total 2011	% of Total 2016	% of Total 2019	% Change 2011-2016	% Change 2016-2019	% of Total 2016	% of Total 2019	% Change 2016-2019
1	47.3	45.6	46.1	-3.7	1.1	25.8	24.5	-5.0
2	15.9	17.7	18.7	10.2	5.3	15.3	16	4.6
3	9.2	10.5	9.4	12.4	-11.7	8.9	4.3	-51.7
4 to 6	12.9	12.8	10.6	-0.8	-20.8	20.5	18.1	-11.7
7 to 20	8.4	8.6	10.1	2.3	14.9	21.6	27.7	28.2
>20	6.3	4.8	5.1	-31.3	5.9	7.9	9.6	21.5
All Respondents	100%	100%	100%			100%	100%	

RETURN TO STUDY



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