



New Orleans Paralegal Association

2010 Salary and Benefits Survey of Greater New Orleans Area Paralegals

The 2010 Salary and Benefits Survey was a great success! Of the 74 people who signed up to take the survey, 71 paralegals completed it. For our membership, that's about 75% participation rate and that's excellent.

Let's start with **education levels**: 51% of respondents have at least a Bachelor's degree and 68% have earned their paralegal certificate. This confirms that education is a valued commodity in New Orleans, with 42% of respondents telling us that their employer **requires** either a bachelor's degree or paralegal certificate.

Employment: According to our survey, the New Orleans employment market is soft, with a little over half of respondents saying there was no change in the number of paralegals at your place of employment. This means there's not much movement and very little new hiring. Not good news for paralegals with little or no prior legal experience as 63% of respondents say experience is required for employment.

Speaking of **experience**, 39% of respondents have 15+ years experience and 30% have 3-5 years experience. Here's the breakdown out of the 70 responses:

3-5 years	21
6-15 years	16
15+ years	27

This is an opportunity for mentoring between our senior paralegals and those of you who are just beginning your career as a paralegal. Whether you're looking to expand your knowledge or employment possibilities, you should take advantage of the experience of our members. NOPA is here for you; if you have any ideas of how to bring these two groups together for networking, please speak up. I think this one of the most important roles of any organization: to serve the needs of its members.

Now let's get to the meat and potatoes of the survey: **salary**. Here's the breakdown by actual numbers. With 62 people answering this question, this is where the majority of respondents fell:

12	make between	\$36,000 and \$40,999
9	make between	\$41,000 and \$45,999
10	make between	\$46,000 and \$50,999
15	make between	\$51,000 and \$55,999

The other 16 respondents made below \$35,999 (5) or above \$56,000 (11).

Six of the eight total respondents who began work as a paralegal in 2009 with no prior experience, say they earned between \$31,000 and \$35,999 (at the lowest end of the compensation scale.)

Clearly experience and education counts and the evidence is in the level of compensation reflected in our survey. If most of the paralegals who responded have 15+ years of experience and if most who responded to the question regarding salary are at the top tier of earnings -- 26 are at \$51,000 or above -- then one could deduce that those with the most experience and education make the most money.

One final set of facts and figures regarding **paralegal regulation**. NOPA is a member of the National Federation of Paralegal Organizations ("NFPA"), and both NFPA and NOPA strongly support regulation for paralegals. According to NFPA's Model Plan for Voluntary Paralegal Regulation or Licensure:

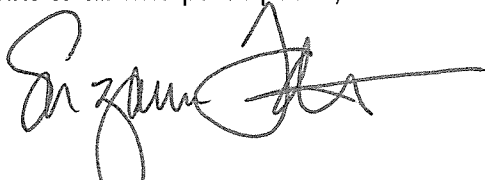
"Regulation of Paralegals is defined by NFPA as the process by which a governmental or other entity authorizes general practice in the Paralegal profession and the use of the title "Paralegal" to individuals meeting predetermined qualifications that include: a) an educational requirement; b) the passage of a proficiency based examination; c) continuing legal education; d) adherence to a code of ethics; and e) other criteria as required by the governmental or other entity."

<http://www.paralegals.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=795>

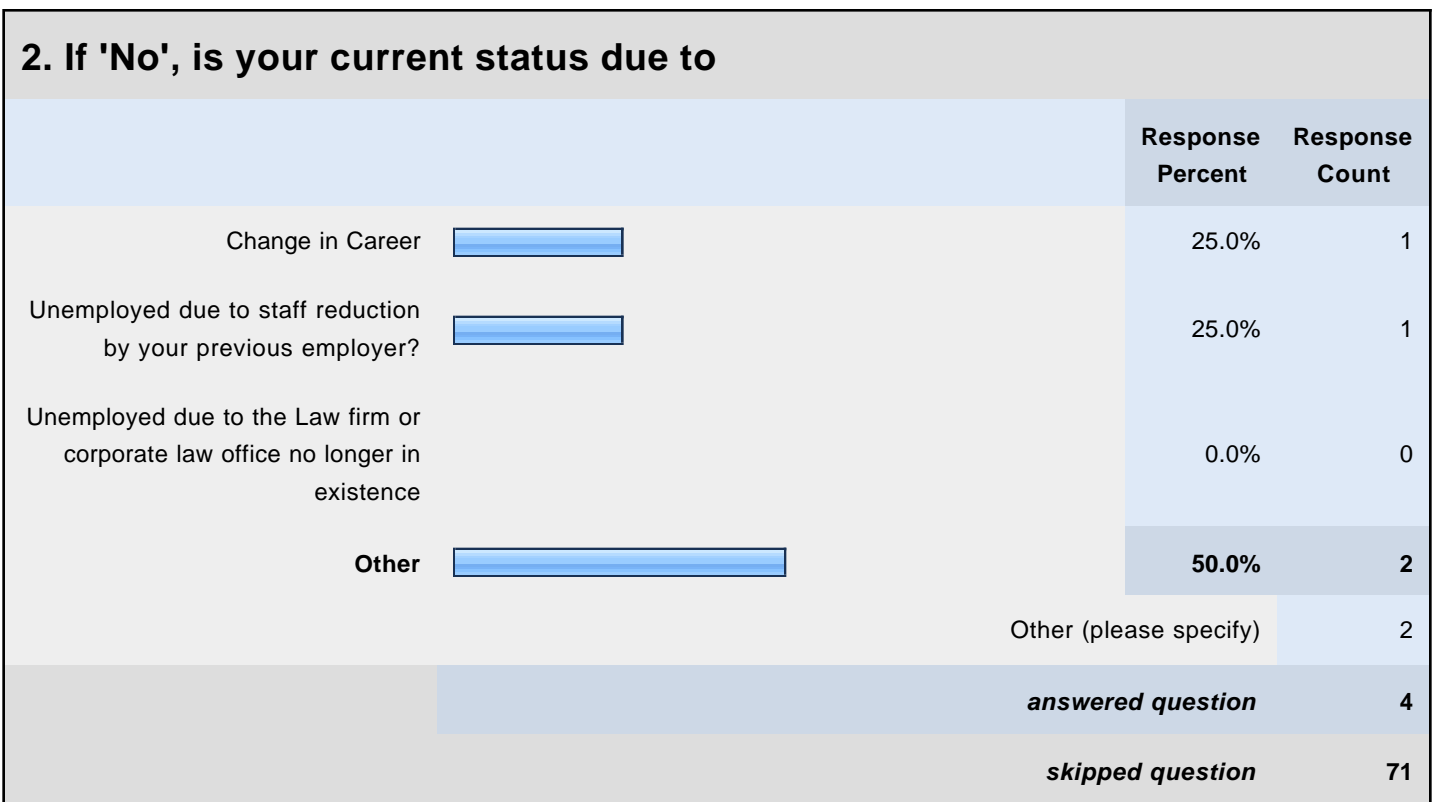
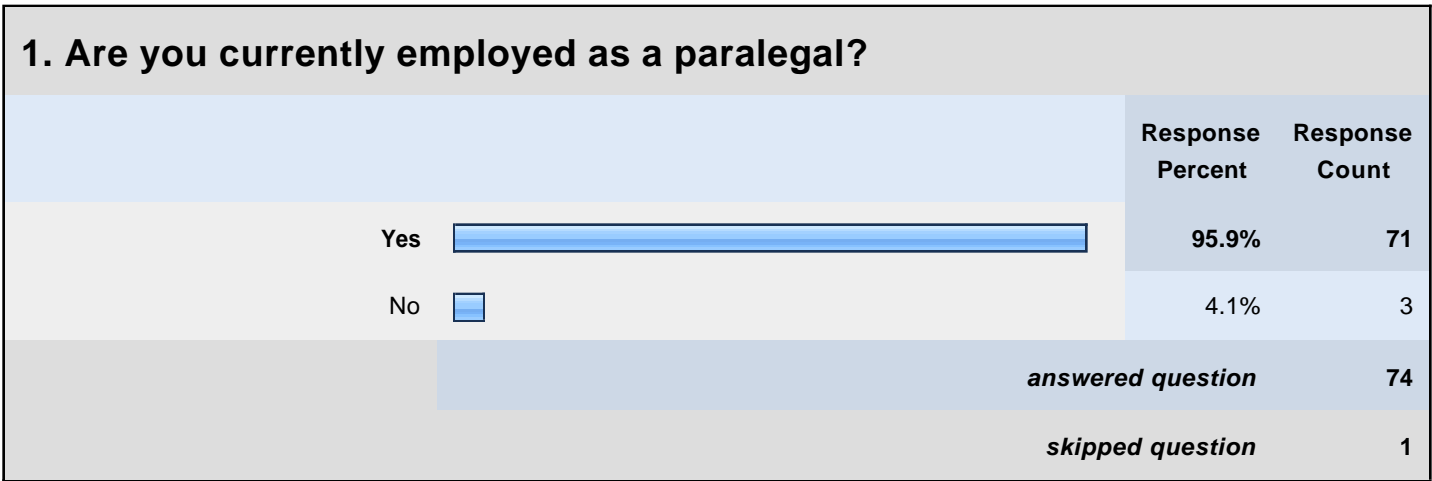
A little over half of respondents believe that paralegals, whether working independently or under the direct supervision of an attorney, should be regulated. And those agreeing with regulation believe that it should be by the State and/or local bar association and that paralegals should assist in formulating regulation requirements.

So here, in a nutshell, are some of the facts gleaned from the 2010 Salary and Benefits Survey. The full report can be found on our website: www.neworleansparalegals.org

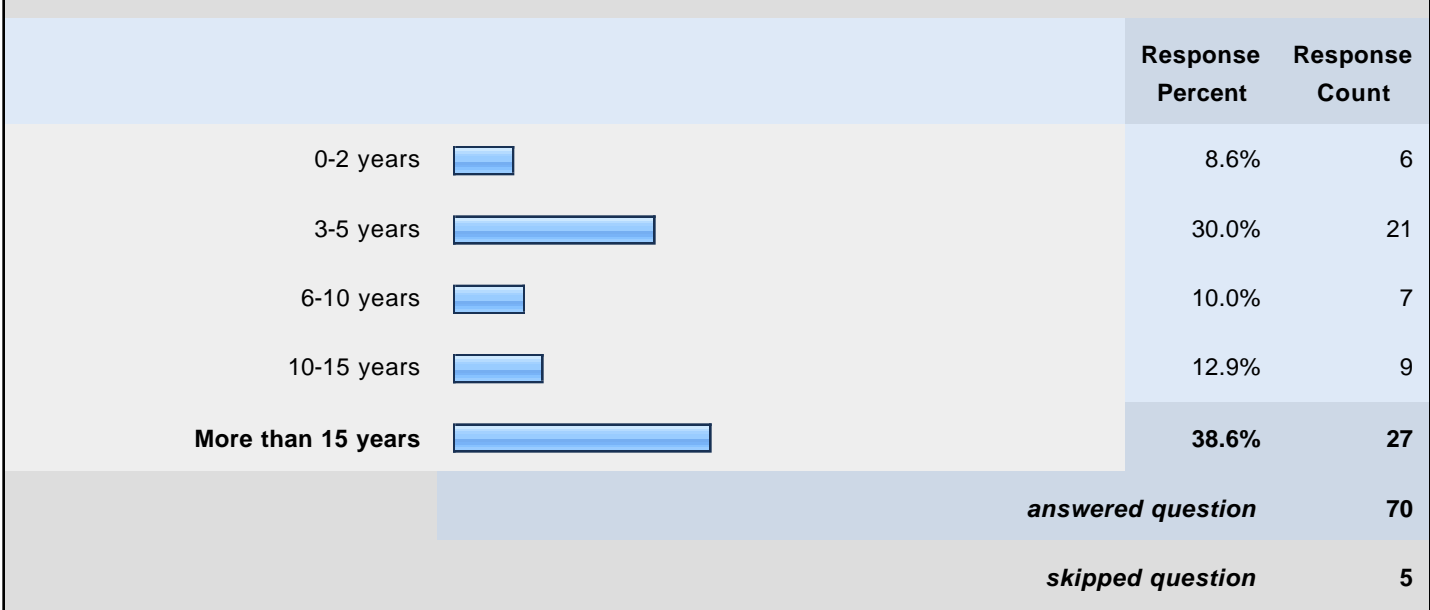
Thanks to all who participated; we'll roll out our next survey in fall 2011.



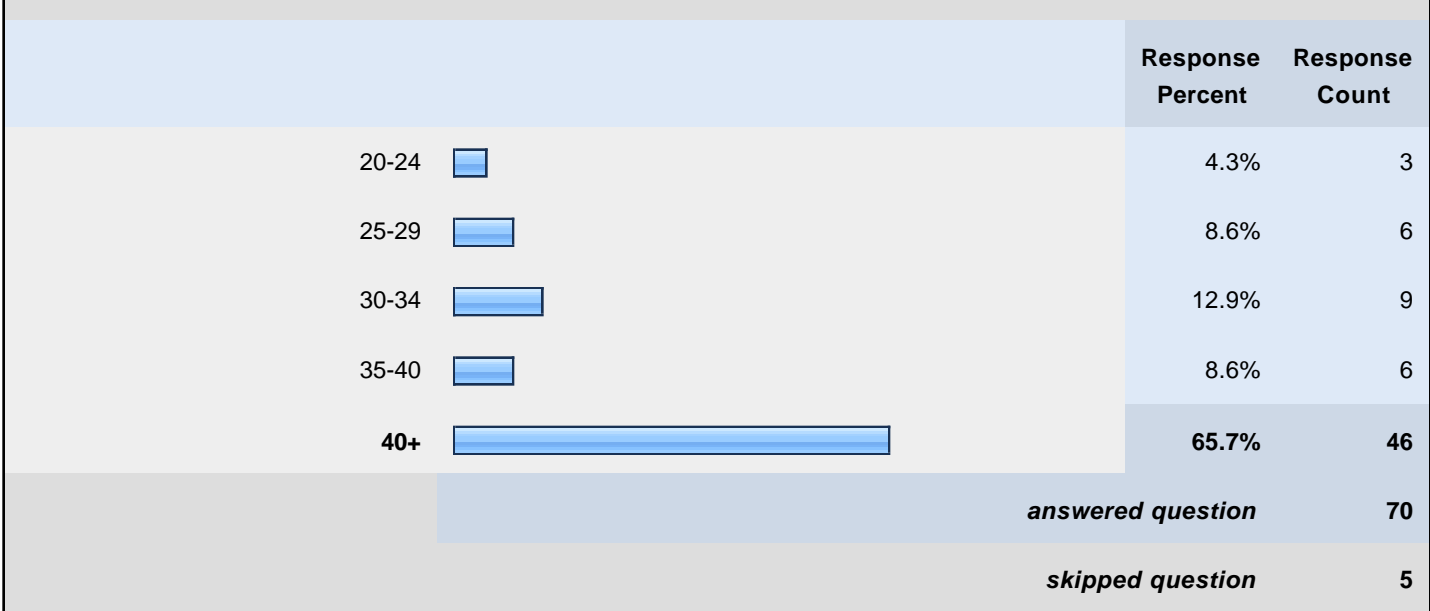
Suzanne Fontan
2010 NOPA President




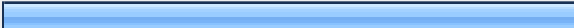
3. How many years experience do you have as a paralegal?



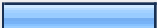






4. Age



5. Sex

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male 	12.9%	9
Female 	87.1%	61
<i>answered question</i>		70
<i>skipped question</i>		5

6. Parish in which you live

	Response Percent	Response Count
Orleans 	22.9%	16
Jefferson 	38.6%	27
St. Tammany 	18.6%	13
St. John 	2.9%	2
St. Charles 	4.3%	3
St. Bernard 	7.1%	5
Plaquemines	0.0%	0
Other 	5.7%	4
<i>answered question</i>		70
<i>skipped question</i>		5

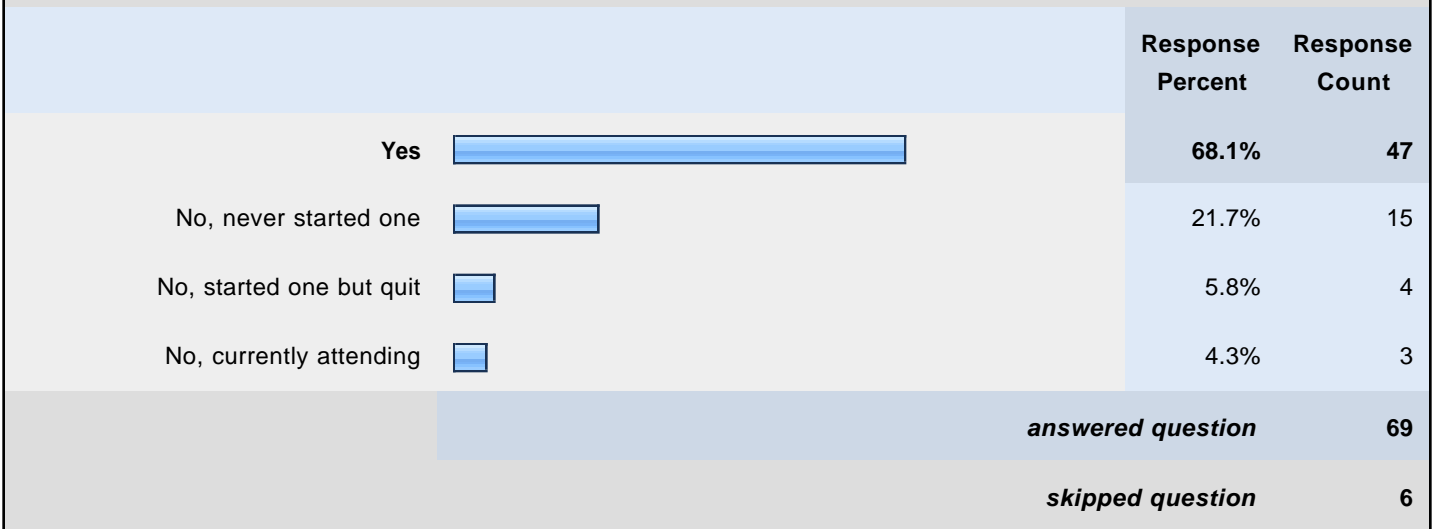
7. Parish in which you work

	Response Percent	Response Count
Orleans	84.3%	59
Jefferson	12.9%	9
St. Tammany	0.0%	0
St. John	1.4%	1
St. Charles	0.0%	0
St. Bernard	2.9%	2
Plaquemines	0.0%	0
Other	1.4%	1
answered question		70
skipped question		5

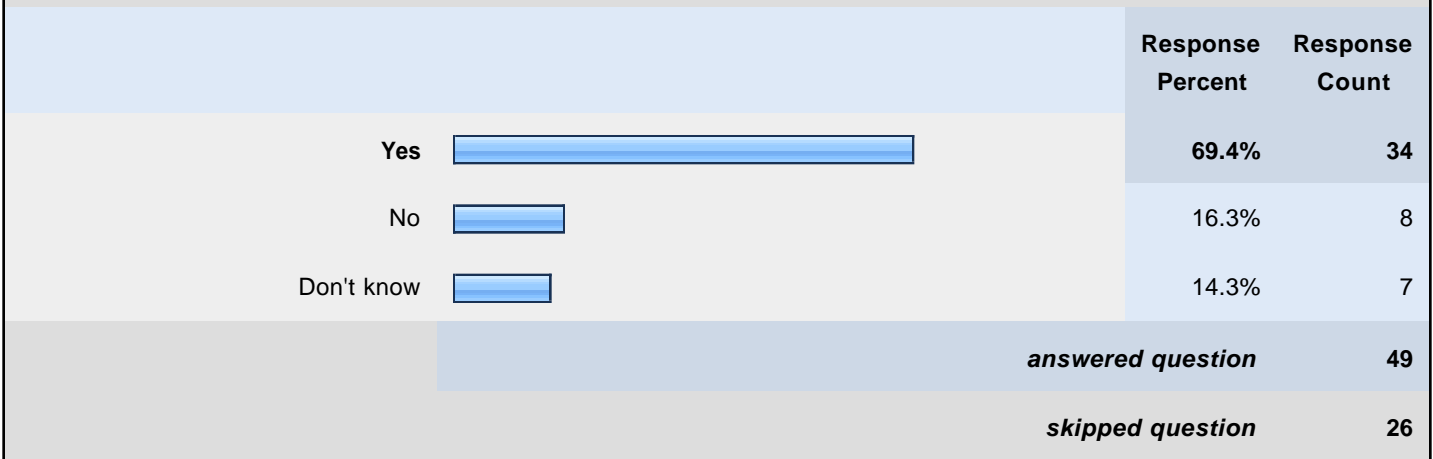
8. Indicate the highest educational degree you have attained:

	Response Percent	Response Count
High School Diploma	10.0%	7
Associates Degree	24.3%	17
Bachelor's Degree	51.4%	36
Master's Degree	5.7%	4
Doctorate	0.0%	0
Law school	4.3%	3
Other	11.4%	8
Other (please specify)		11
answered question		70
skipped question		5



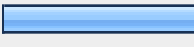


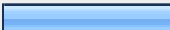
9. Have you completed a paralegal program?



10. If the answer to Question 7 is 'Yes', was the program ABA approved (at the time you completed the program)?



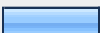
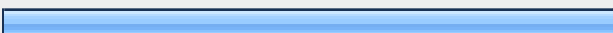
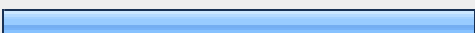
11. Upon completion of your paralegal education program, which did you receive?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Undergraduate Certificate 	13.5%	7
Post baccalaureate Certificate 	19.2%	10
Associates Degree Paralegal Program 	28.8%	15
Bachelors Degree Paralegal Program 	7.7%	4
None 	9.6%	5
Other 	25.0%	13
Other (please specify)		11
answered question		52
skipped question		23

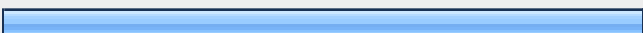

12. Have you taken any of the following licensure exams?

	Yes	No	Response Count
PACE	1.7% (1)	98.3% (59)	60
NALA Certification	3.3% (2)	96.7% (59)	61
Notary Public	18.2% (12)	81.8% (54)	66
Lousiana Certified Paralegal Exam	1.7% (1)	98.3% (59)	60
answered question			68
skipped question			7

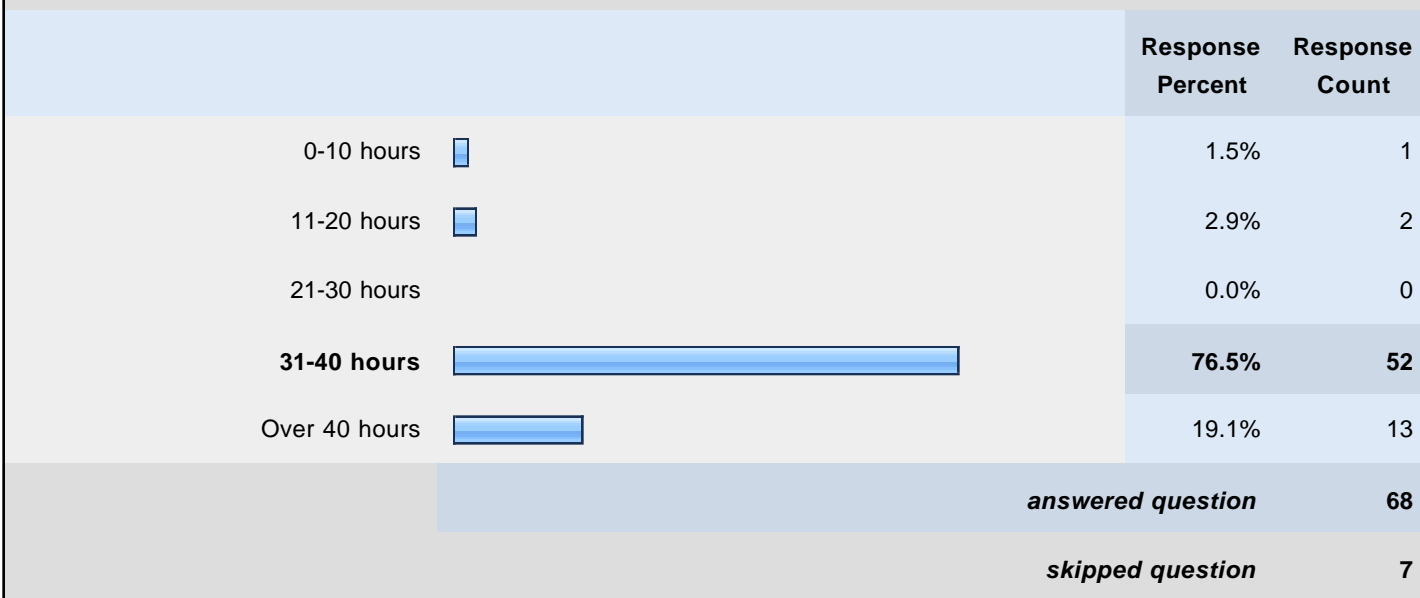
13. If the answer to Question 10 is 'Yes', did you take the test because

	Response Percent	Response Count
Your employer requires you to take the test 	14.3%	2
You feel it will enhance your marketability 	92.9%	13
You feel that it will increase your salary 	71.4%	10
answered question		14
skipped question		61

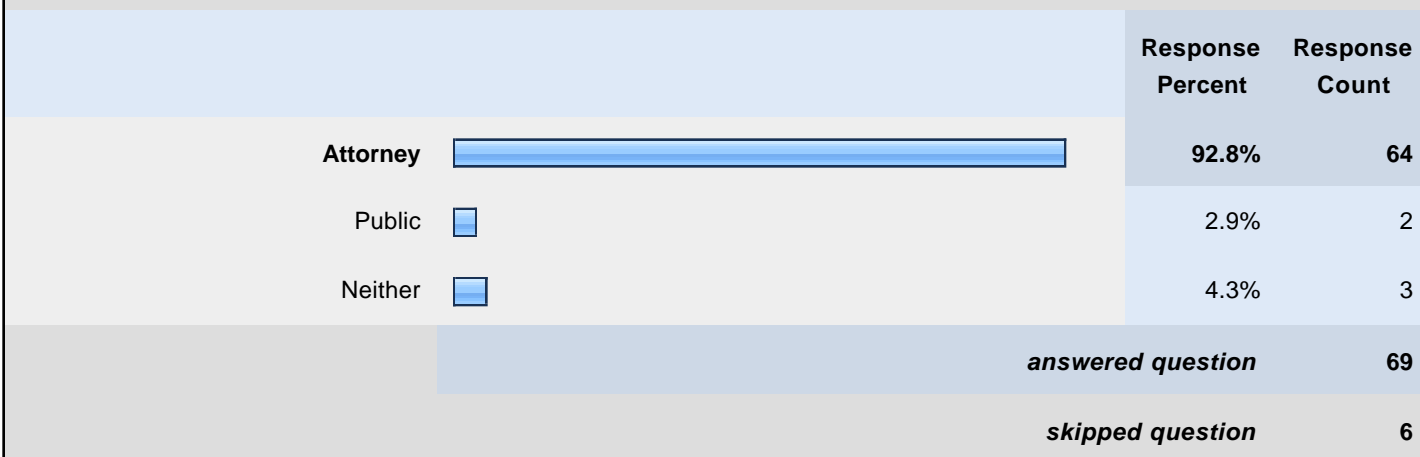
14. What is your employment basis?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Full Time (30 or more hours per week) 	97.1%	67
Part Time (permanent, less than 30 hours per week)	0.0%	0
Self-Employed 	2.9%	2
Temporary	0.0%	0
Contract	0.0%	0
answered question		69
skipped question		6

15. How many hours do you work in your normal work week (excluding overtime)?



16. Do you work under the supervision of an attorney or provide services directly to the public?



17. If the answer to No.3 is neither, do you work:

	Response Percent	Response Count
In a legal department of a corporation	66.7%	4
Other	33.3%	2
Other (please specify)		2
answered question		6
skipped question		69

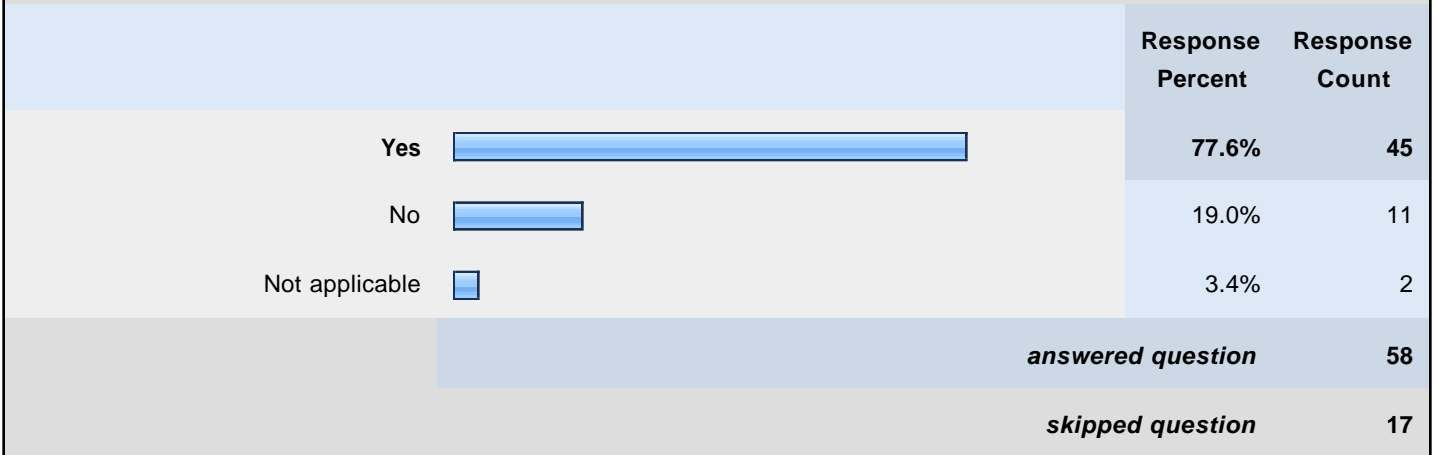
18. Does your firm bill your paralegal time?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	82.1%	55
No	17.9%	12
If you answered 'NO', please skip questions 6-8 and resume with Question 9.		0
answered question		67
skipped question		8

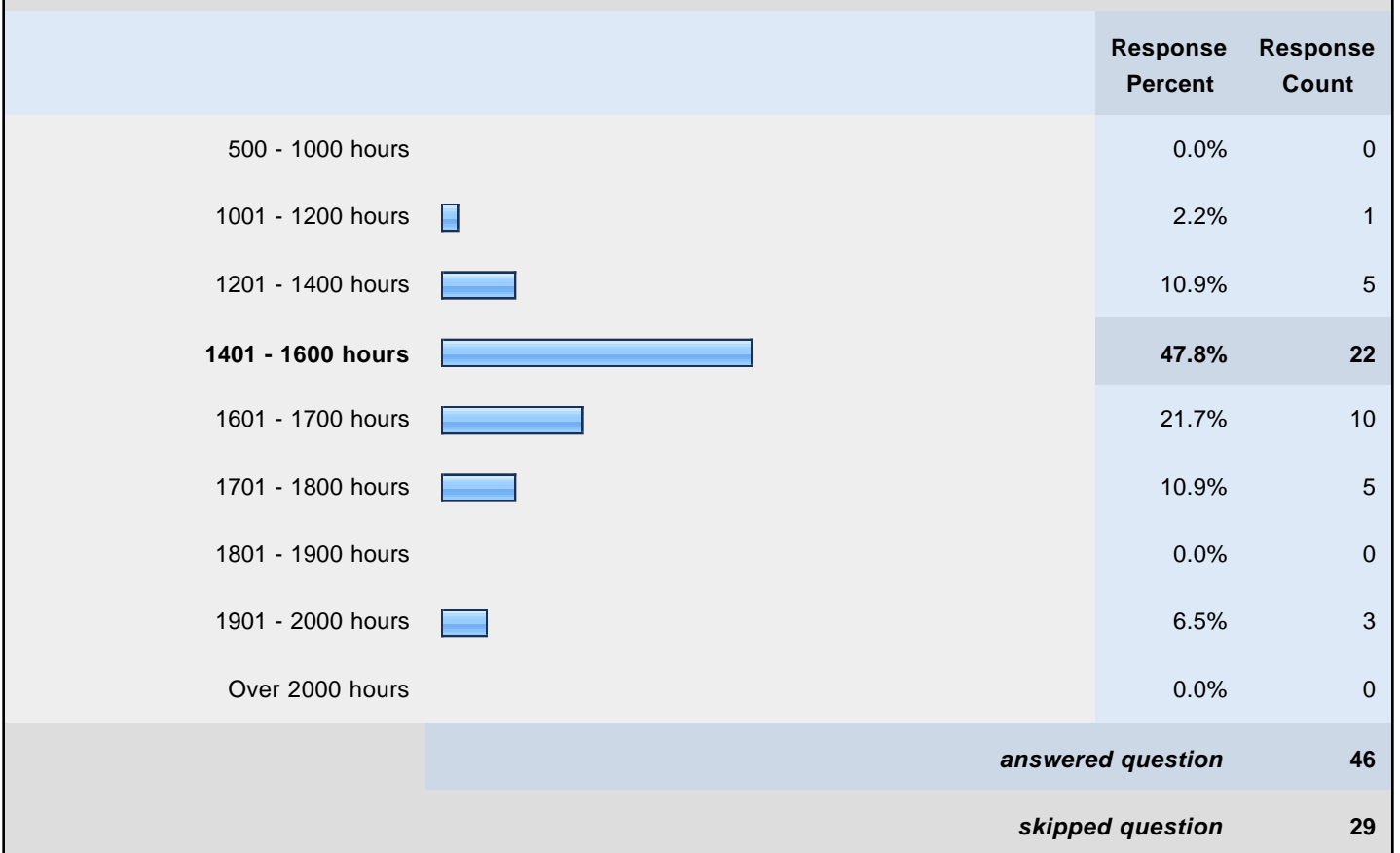
19. What is your average hourly billable rate?

	Response Percent	Response Count
\$50-\$70	12.3%	7
\$71-\$80	19.3%	11
\$81-\$90	10.5%	6
\$91-\$100	24.6%	14
more than \$100	33.3%	19
answered question		57
skipped question		18



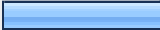


20. Are you expected to produce a set number of billable hours per year?




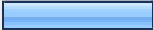


21. If you answered 'Yes' to No. 7 then indicate how many billable hours per year





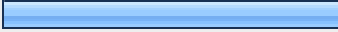

22. How frequently do you work in excess of your employer's normal working hours?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Almost every day 	14.7%	10
At least once a week 	35.3%	24
At least once monthly 	23.5%	16
Never or rarely 	25.0%	17
Not applicable 	1.5%	1
answered question		68
skipped question		7





23. How many paralegals work at your place of employment (including yourself)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5 paralegals 	40.3%	27
6-10 paralegals 	22.4%	15
11-20 paralegals 	23.9%	16
More than 20 paralegals 	13.4%	9
answered question		67
skipped question		8





24. During the past year, has the number of paralegals in your place of employment increased or decreased?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased 	26.9%	18
Decreased 	20.9%	14
Not changed 	50.7%	34
Not applicable 	1.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		67
<i>skipped question</i>		8

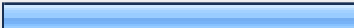
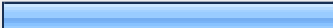
25. If you answered to No.11 as increased/decreased, indicate approximate number if available

	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased by 0 - 2 paralegals 	62.5%	20
Increased by 3 - 5 paralegals 	9.4%	3
Increased by 6 - 12 paralegals	0.0%	0
Decreased by 0 - 2 paralegals 	9.4%	3
Decreased by 3 - 5 paralegals 	18.8%	6
Decreased by 6 - 12 paralegals	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		32
<i>skipped question</i>		43




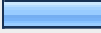
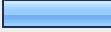
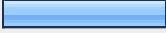




26. Which of the following requirements does your employer require when hiring a paralegal?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Paralegal Certificate 	52.3%	34
Bachelors Degree 	20.0%	13
Prior Legal experience 	63.1%	41
Other 	13.8%	9
Other (please specify)		10
answered question		65
skipped question		10

27. Indicate how you are compensated?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Hourly 	53.2%	33
Salaried 	50.0%	31
Other	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		0
answered question		62
skipped question		13






28. What is your yearly gross salary, excluding bonuses and overtime compensation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
\$20,000 - \$25,999	0.0%	0
\$26,000 - \$30,999 	4.8%	3
\$31,000 - \$35,999 	3.2%	2
\$36,000 - \$40,999 	19.4%	12
\$41,000 - \$45,999 	14.5%	9
\$46,000 - \$50,999 	16.1%	10
\$51,000 - \$55,999 	24.2%	15
\$56,000 - \$60,999 	6.5%	4
\$61,000 - \$65,999 	8.1%	5
\$66,000 - \$70,000 	1.6%	1
Over \$70,000 	1.6%	1
<i>answered question</i>		62
<i>skipped question</i>		13

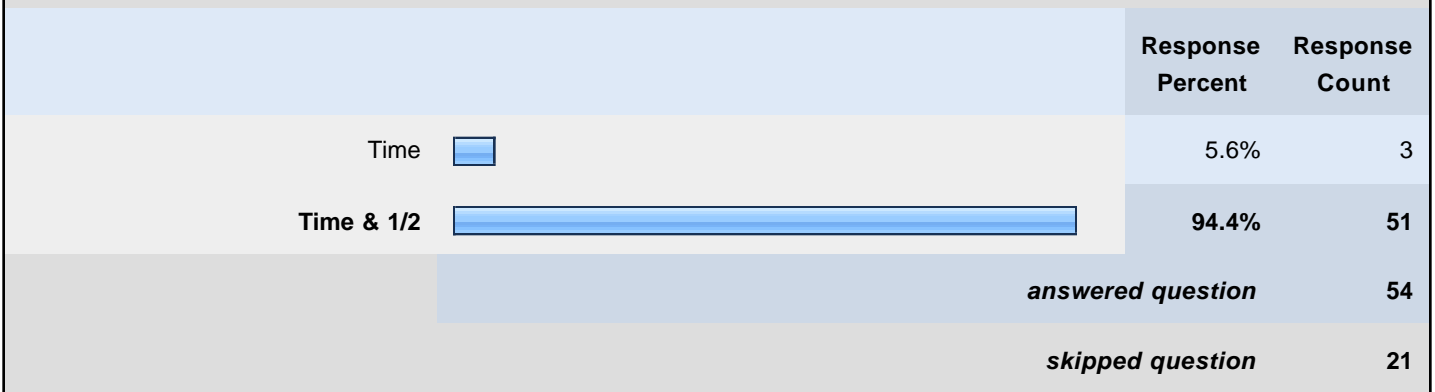
29. If you began work in 2009 with no prior experience, what was your entry level/base salary?

	Response Percent	Response Count
\$20,000 - \$25,999	0.0%	0
\$26,000 - \$30,999 	12.5%	1
\$31,000 - \$35,999 	75.0%	6
\$36,000 - \$40,999	0.0%	0
\$41,000 - \$45,999 	12.5%	1
\$46,000 - \$50,999	0.0%	0
\$51,000 - \$55,999	0.0%	0
\$56,000 - \$60,999	0.0%	0
\$61,000 - \$65,999	0.0%	0
\$66,000 - \$70,000	0.0%	0
Over \$70,000	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		67

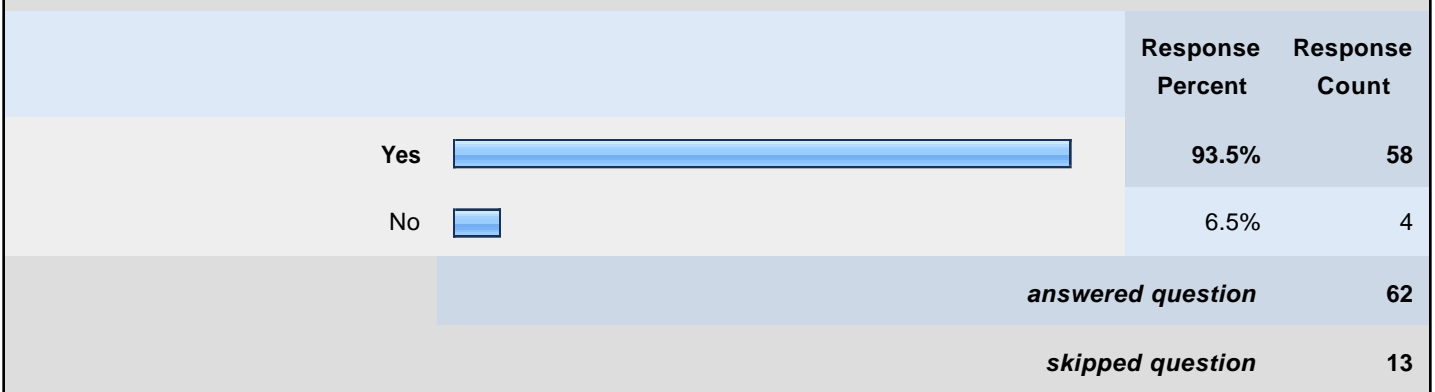
30. Do you receive overtime compensation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Always paid 	74.2%	46
Sometimes paid 	11.3%	7
Never paid 	6.5%	4
Compensatory time off 	3.2%	2
Not applicable 	8.1%	5
answered question		62
skipped question		13

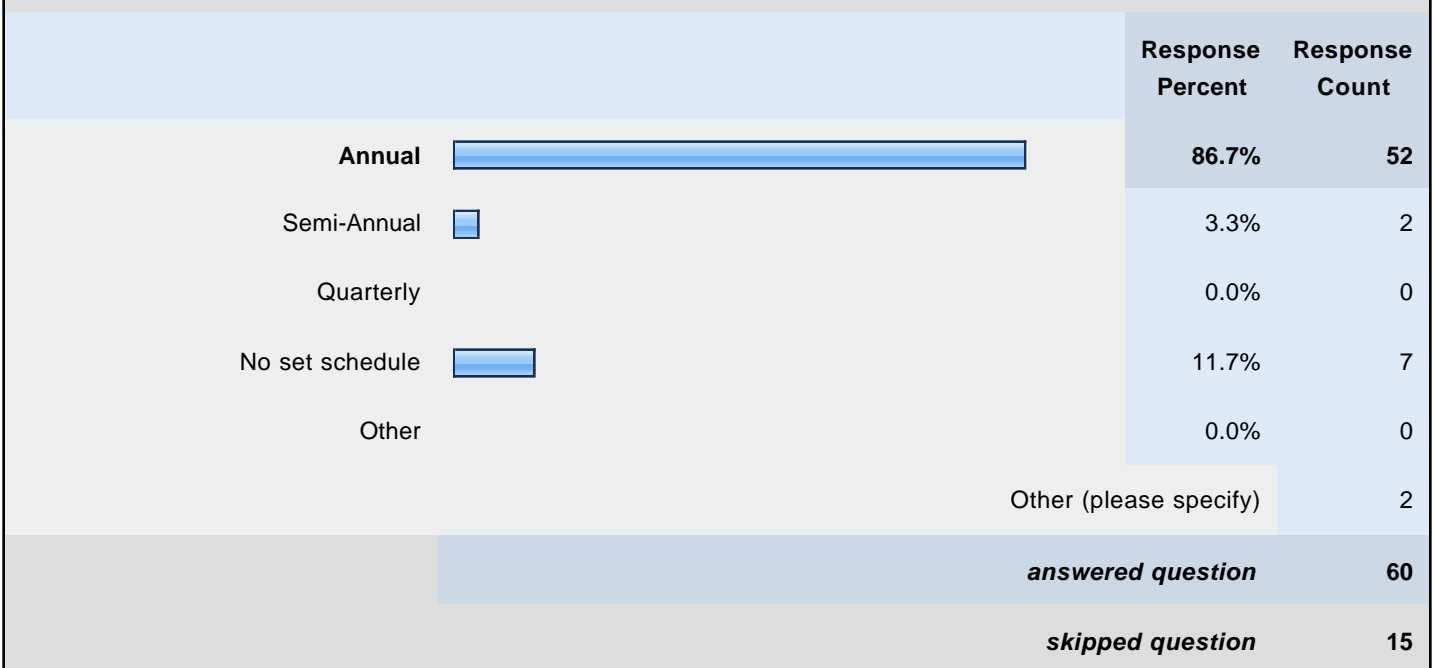
31. If you receive overtime compensation, what is the rate (based on your salary)?





32. Do you think that paralegals should be paid overtime?




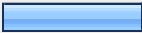




33. How often are you scheduled for salary increases?



34. Did you receive a salary increase in 2009?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	72.4%	42
No 	27.6%	16
answered question		58
skipped question		17









35. If the answer to No.8 is 'Yes', what was the basis for your salary increase?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Merit 	48.8%	21
Cost of Living 	20.9%	9
Merit and Cost of Living 	25.6%	11
Billable hours 	9.3%	4
Length of Employment 	7.0%	3
Other 	9.3%	4
Other (please specify)		4
answered question		43
skipped question		32



36. If the answer to No.8 is 'No', the reason for not receiving a salary increase was due to:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Billable hours are low	6.3%	1
Did not meet the length of employment requirement	31.3%	5
The law firm or corporate office did not give salary increases in 2009	37.5%	6
Salary decrease in 2009	0.0%	0
Other	25.0%	4
Other (please specify)		4
<i>answered question</i>		16
<i>skipped question</i>		59

37. If the answer to No.8 is 'Yes', what was the amount of your annual salary increase?

	Response Percent	Response Count
\$500 - \$1,000 	26.8%	11
\$1,001 - \$1,500 	22.0%	9
\$1,501 - \$2,000 	22.0%	9
\$2,001 - \$2,500 	14.6%	6
\$2,501 - \$3,000 	4.9%	2
\$3,001 - \$3,500	0.0%	0
\$3,501 - \$4,000 	4.9%	2
\$4,001 - \$4,500	0.0%	0
\$4,501 - \$5,000 	2.4%	1
Over \$5,000 	2.4%	1
<i>answered question</i>		41
<i>skipped question</i>		34

38. Did you receive any bonus in 2009?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	57.6%	34
No 	42.4%	25
<i>answered question</i>		59
<i>skipped question</i>		16

39. If the answer to No.12 is 'Yes', what was the amount?

	Response Percent	Response Count
\$500 - \$1,000	31.4%	11
\$1,001 - \$1,500	17.1%	6
\$1,501 - \$2,000	11.4%	4
\$2,001 - \$2,500	17.1%	6
\$2,501 - \$3,000	11.4%	4
\$3,001 - \$3,500	2.9%	1
\$3,501 - \$4,000	2.9%	1
\$4,001 - \$4,500	0.0%	0
\$4,501 - \$5,000	2.9%	1
\$5,001 - \$5,500	2.9%	1
\$5,501 - \$6,000	0.0%	0
Over \$6,000	0.0%	0
answered question		35
skipped question		40





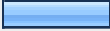
40. Do you participate in any of the following?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Employers Retirement/Pension Plan	87.8%	43
Employers Profit Sharing Plan	34.7%	17
Does your employer contribute to a retirement/pension or profit sharing plan on your behalf?	75.5%	37
answered question		49
skipped question		26




41. Does your place of employment provide or pay for the following (please mark only the ones your employer provided for you as employee in 2009)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Health Insurance		88.3%	53
Dental Insurance		51.7%	31
Disability Insurance		53.3%	32
Life Insurance		66.7%	40
Maternity Benefits		20.0%	12
Free Representation		3.3%	2
Parking		43.3%	26
Mileage		51.7%	31
Pension/Profit		40.0%	24
Professional Dues		36.7%	22
Paid Vacation		93.3%	56
Paid Sick leave		85.0%	51
Christmas Bonus		66.7%	40
Other Bonus		21.7%	13
Business Cards		43.3%	26
Name on Door		31.7%	19
Name on Letterhead		10.0%	6
Office with Door		48.3%	29
Secretarial assistance		38.3%	23
Court Runner		58.3%	35
answered question			60
skipped question			15



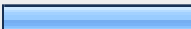
42. Does your place of employment provide or pay for the following (please mark only the ones your employer provided for your family in 2009)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Health Insurance 	88.6%	39
Dental Insurance 	52.3%	23
Life Insurance 	54.5%	24
Maternity Benefits 	13.6%	6
Other 	15.9%	7
Other (please specify)		6
answered question		44
skipped question		31




43. Did your employer cut any benefits in 2009?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	10.3%	6
No 	81.0%	47
Not Applicable 	8.6%	5
answered question		58
skipped question		17


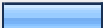
44. If Yes to No. 17, what benefits were cut in 2009?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Health Insurance 	57.1%	4
Dental Insurance 	14.3%	1
Life Insurance	0.0%	0
Maternity Benefits	0.0%	0
Other 	28.6%	2
<i>answered question</i>		7
<i>skipped question</i>		68

45. Do you expect any benefits to be cut in 2010?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	8.5%	5
No 	86.4%	51
Not Applicable 	5.1%	3
<i>answered question</i>		59
<i>skipped question</i>		16

46. Are you satisfied with your current paralegal position?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	85.2%	52
No 	14.8%	9
<i>answered question</i>		61
<i>skipped question</i>		14

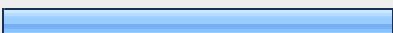

47. If the answer to No.20 is 'No', are you currently pursuing

	Response Percent	Response Count
a job change within the paralegal field	77.8%	7
a career change to another field	22.2%	2
If so, (please specify)		4
answered question		9
skipped question		66




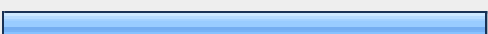
48. What is your practice area?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Personal Injury	25.9%	15
Corporate	22.4%	13
Insurance Litigation	44.8%	26
Admiralty/Maritime	13.8%	8
Real Estate	6.9%	4
Family/Domestic	3.4%	2
Medical Malpractice	10.3%	6
Labor/Employment	15.5%	9
Trusts, Estates, & Probate	8.6%	5
Bankruptcy	6.9%	4
Oil & Gas	17.2%	10
Environment	13.8%	8
Criminal	10.3%	6
Construction	8.6%	5
Securities	6.9%	4
Intellectual Property	3.4%	2
Other	5.2%	3
Other (please specify)		8
	answered question	58
	skipped question	17

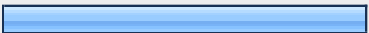
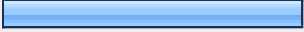
49. Do you think paralegals should be regulated?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		59.0%	36
No		41.0%	25
<i>answered question</i>			61
<i>skipped question</i>			14

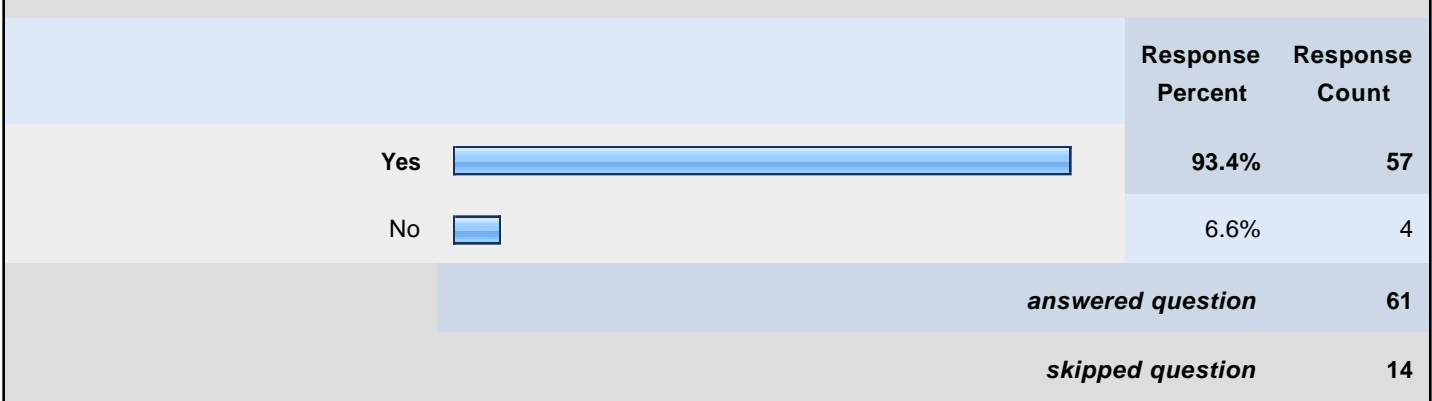
50. If the answer to No.23 is 'Yes', which form of regulations do you prefer?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Regulation by the state legislators		5.4%	2
Regulation by paralegals		13.5%	5
Regulation by the courts		8.1%	3
Regulation by the State and/or local bar association		73.0%	27
<i>answered question</i>			37
<i>skipped question</i>			38

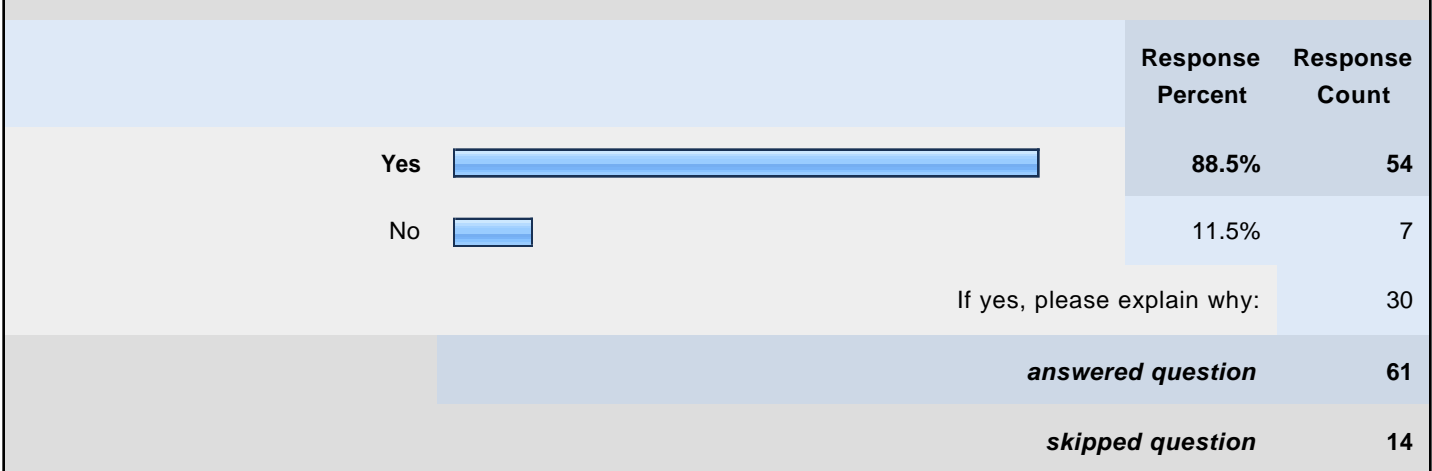
51. Should paralegals, working under the supervision of attorneys, be regulated?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		55.0%	33
No		45.0%	27
<i>answered question</i>			60
<i>skipped question</i>			15

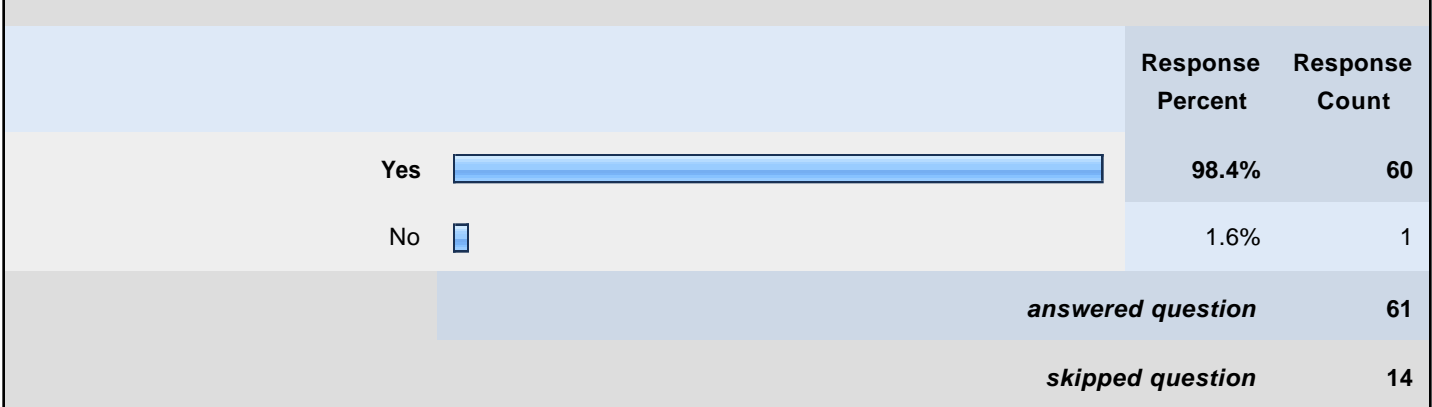
52. In your opinion, do you consider paralegals as professionals?



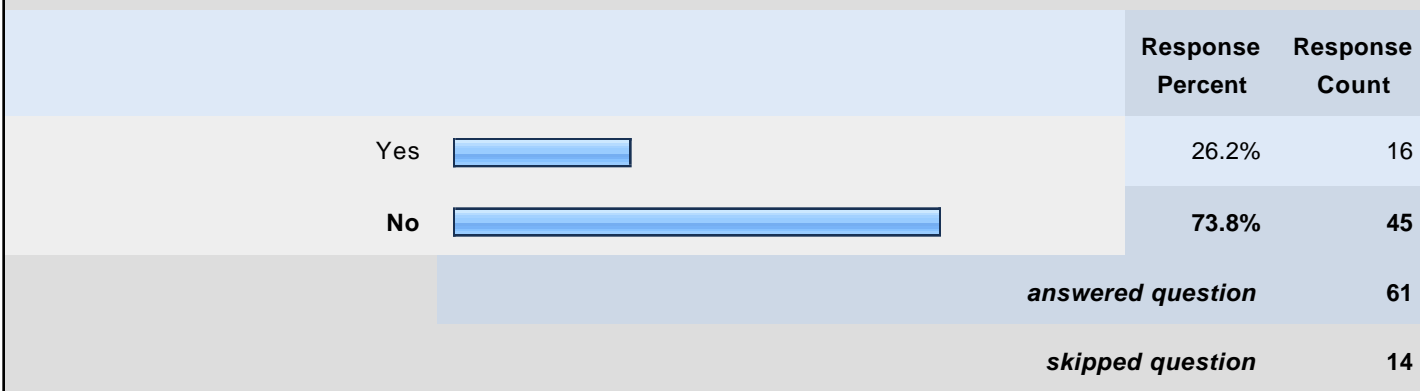
53. Should paralegals who offer services directly to the public be regulated?



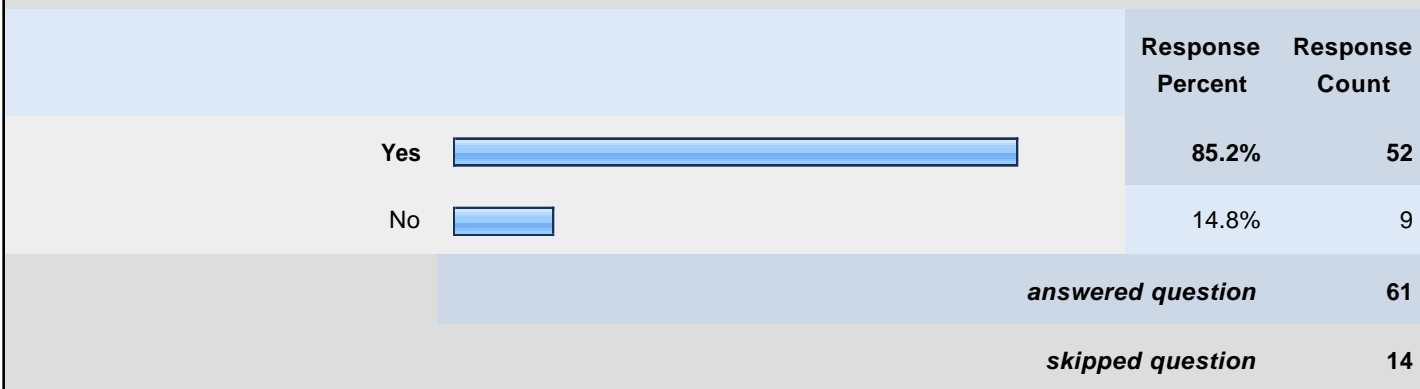
54. Should paralegals assist in formulating the regulation requirements that would affect them?





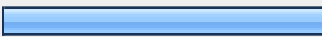


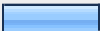
55. Should paralegals be able to offer legal services directly to the public without attorney supervision?





56. Should paralegals meet minimum educational requirements for entry into the profession?





57. If so, what do you see as minimum acceptable standards?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Some college 	12.5%	7
Associates Degree 	23.2%	13
Certificate from an ABA approved Paralegal School 	48.2%	27
Bachelors Degree 	21.4%	12
Bachelors Degree with Certificate from an ABA approved Paralegal School 	19.6%	11
Other 	14.3%	8
Other (please specify)		8
answered question		56
skipped question		19

58. Should paralegals meet continuing education requirements?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	83.6%	51
No 	16.4%	10
answered question		61
skipped question		14

59. Should educational standards and guidelines be an alternative to regulation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	51.7%	31
No 	48.3%	29
<i>answered question</i>		60
<i>skipped question</i>		15

60. Should paralegals with five (5) years experience or more be permitted to waive certain requirements under a regulatory program (i.e. "grandfathering")?

	Yes	No	Response Count
Education Requirements	68.4% (26)	31.6% (12)	38
Examination Requirements	48.6% (18)	51.4% (19)	37
Both	67.4% (29)	32.6% (14)	43
<i>answered question</i>			61
<i>skipped question</i>			14