


# Reliable Compensation Data for In-house Legal Professionals

**Community**

**Employment and Labor**

**Law Department Management**



The existing data available on the market for in-house counsel is notoriously variable, representing too few legal job titles, limited in the compensation metrics reported, or can only be purchased at a high cost.

Some well-known recruiting firms conduct strong salary surveys but exclusively collect self-reported data, and the data that is reported is often not Safe Harbor compliant. Or they only survey professionals looking for new career options (and large salary increases), which can report inaccurate/inflated data that is not representative of the market as a whole. As a result, there is a high degree of uncertainty among in-house legal professionals as to whether they are truly being compensated at proper market rates.

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The ACC/Empsight Law Department Compensation Survey and Benchmarking Reports provide data that represents your actual job position in a similarly sized company, industry, and geographic region. You can also use this accurate and comparable data for practical benchmarking purposes.

## What differentiates our data from most market offerings?

### The data is company-sourced and crowd-sourced (i.e., self-reported)

We know that compensation data is sought for a variety of reasons. You may be seeking to change jobs and need data to assist in compensation package negotiations during interviews. Or you may be seeking a promotion and want to know what kind of salary increase you should expect.

Companies and legal departments also need to make sure they are compensating their staff at appropriate market rates and seek out benchmarking data to stay competitive. Therefore, ACC and Empsight collect compensation data at both the company-level and the individual-level, which enables us to produce compensation reports structured to reflect the varying needs of those seeking out the data.

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By “company-sourced” we mean that we allow for the data to be reported for all positions in the legal department. For smaller departments, this might be handled by the general counsel or legal operations professional. For larger departments, the company-level version almost always requires HR or the compensation department to fill out the survey.

The “individual-level” survey is structured as a conventional online survey and is intended for a single individual to report their own compensation data.

## The depth and breadth of the data is vast

Each year, nearly 20,000 professionals are represented in the data across over 90 in-house legal positions. The company-level survey submissions allow us to present a wide range of compensation metrics (listed in the below table) as well to identify important non-compensation metrics such as the number of levels each position is located from the CEO and total headcount managed for each position.

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This data is also organized by key demographic segments. The individual-level survey captures slightly fewer metrics, recognizing that some of them would be difficult to self-report (e.g., long-term incentive valuation, salary increase budget and forecast, and total rewards practices). It also captures fewer positions as not all in-house legal positions have ACC membership eligibility (e.g., paralegals, admins, non-lawyer positions in compliance, government relations, privacy, as well as contract negotiators and administrators).

**COMPENSATION METRICS REPORTED**
Annual Base Salary
Short-Term Incentive Eligible Percentage
Short-Term Incentive Target Percentage
Incentive Amount $
Total Cash All
Total Cash Incentive Paid
Long-Term Incentive Eligible Percentage

Long-Term Incentive Target Percentage
Long-Term Incentive Valuation
Total Direct Compensation
FLSA Percentage Exempt

**NON-COMPENSATION METRICS REPORTED**

Levels from CEO
Total headcount managed (direct & indirect reports)
Revenue responsibility in $ millions

**SCOPE**

Industry
Law Department Size (# of Lawyers)
Company Revenue
Legal Specialty
Geography
Law School Class
Law School Rank

Note that we present a reduced number of metrics than shown here in the self-reported data reports. This is because not all of the listed metrics can be reported easily at an individual level and must be reported by HR.

## We offer a range of compensation reports

Once the data is collected, we produce a suite of reports structured to reflect the varying benchmarking needs of our members and the in-house profession. We produce a self-reported edition of the results that captures only the individual-level survey submissions from companies of all revenue sizes. This data is also offered in the form of single job title reports for those who have limited interest in very specific positions.

The company-sourced data is used to produce three reports reflecting company revenue size: small companies, mid-size companies, and large companies (company revenue is one of the key drivers of compensation). Each company report presents the full spectrum of compensation data for the complete set of job titles submitted (over 90 titles included in the large company edition). The company reports also come with an interactive excel file that can be uploaded to HRIS/Market Pricing systems for companies to benchmark against other data sources.

## We implement legal-specific job level matching

Compensation benchmarking for in-house legal positions is uniquely challenging in that legal positions do not typically match the leveling structure of other business units throughout organizations. While most business units will have a conventional leveling hierarchy such as analyst, manager, director, VP, etc., legal positions do not usually align with this structure.

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At what level is an associate general counsel? At what level is a senior counsel? To overcome this level confusion, Empsight has created a comprehensive level matching guide for the company-level survey that helps HR to accurately match the legal position to its appropriate level in the organization. This level matching makes our data more accurate for legal positions as compared to other surveys

on the market.

### The data is Safe Harbor compliant

Our data collection and reporting standards conform with Safe Harbor guidelines to ensure confidentiality. We recognize that compensation data is highly sensitive, and we have instituted several important practices to preserve confidentiality.

Compensation data is not reported where there are fewer than five participants, no single organization's data represents more than 25 percent of any reported statistic, and the data must be three months old prior to reporting. Additional minimum participant thresholds are used when presenting percentiles in a statistical distribution. See our practices on our data confidentiality webpage.

In combination, these differentiators make the ACC/Empsight compensation data some of the highest quality available on the market.

## How to participate

The 2022 ACC/Empsight law department compensation survey is open for US participants between April and June. All ACC members that have opted into ACC Research communications receive a unique survey link through an email invitation.

The survey can also be taken on ACC's compensation webpage. The link will direct you to either self-report your data or to have it filled out for your entire law department.

Participate in the survey now

The compensation benchmarking reports are typically released in late September annually and can be accessed through the same webpage. In the meantime, feel free to review the 2021 highlights summary or view the past reports. Reach out to ACC Research with questions.

Blake E. Garcia, PhD



Senior Director of Research and Business Intelligence

Association of Corporate Counsel

Dr. Blake Garcia is the Senior Director of Research and Business Intelligence at the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC), where he spearheads the growth and management of ACC's research department. Over the past 10 years, Dr. Garcia has transformed ACC's research capabilities from a limited member surveying unit into a multifaceted, full-service data hub that empowers the in-house legal community. He has led numerous high-impact international surveys and developed data-driven resources, products, and services that equip in-house counsel and legal operations professionals with the insights they need to make strategic business decisions.

Dr. Garcia has published several peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals applying statistical and experimental methodologies and has taught several college courses on quantitative research in the social sciences. He has a Ph.D. in political science from Texas A&M University and a B.A. in international politics from The Pennsylvania State University.

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