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## **First-Year Associate Salaries Increase Sharply Since 2021**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The **National Association for Law Placement** (NALP) today released its **2023 Associate Salary Survey** report, showing that the overall median first-year associate base salary as of Jan. 1, 2023, was \$200,000, up \$35,000 (+21.2%) from 2021, when the survey was last administered. Law offices in firms of more than 250 lawyers accounted for about 81% of the 694 survey responses, up from 78% in 2021.

“The past two years saw a red-hot recruiting market where associates scored multiple pay raises and commanded unprecedented leverage as firms desperately tried to add and retain lawyers,” said Nikia L. Gray, NALP’s Executive Director. “Although the market has since turned 180 degrees, the added pressure of the so-called talent wars at the time appears to have caused these pay increases to cascade throughout the market at an accelerated pace. While normally it takes the highly publicized raises at the largest firms two or more years to move through the market, NALP’s latest *Associate Salary Survey* shows that salaries increased dramatically across the industry, regardless of firm size or location.”

By firm size, first-year salaries increased across the board since 2021. Despite much of the press coverage that has been focused on salaries in larger-sized firms, in terms of percentage growth, salaries were up the most in firms of 100 or fewer lawyers — where the median first-year salary grew from \$120,000 in the 2021 survey to \$155,000 in 2023 (+29.2%). In actual dollars, firms of 501-700 lawyers saw the largest increase, with the median first-year salary growing from \$155,000 in 2021 to \$200,000 in 2023 (+\$45,000). Although firms of more than 1,000 lawyers were the only firms in which the median first-year salary was \$215,000 in 2023, it nevertheless seems that those large firm salary increases, coupled with rising inflation, may have put pressure on smaller firms to increase their salaries as well.

It is important to note that because the respondent pool for the survey varies from year to year, use of the Associate Salary Survey data across different years to discern trends should be done with caution, as these analyses do not contain salary scales for a set group of firms. Salary adjustments on the part of some large firms in recent years, law firm acquisitions and mergers which can result

in the size of a law firm changing, and fluctuations in the distribution of respondents play a role in determining changes in median salaries within the report.

The full *2023 Associate Salary Survey* report is available at [www.nalp.org/bookstore](http://www.nalp.org/bookstore).

### **Key Findings:**

- Although several firms announced first-year associate salaries of \$215,000 in early 2022, the overall median salary for all firms (regardless of size) was \$200,000, and therefore was still shy of that amount by \$15,000 in 2023. Only in the largest firms of more than 1,000 lawyers did the median first-year salary reach \$215,000, accounting for 75.0% of all first-year salaries in this firm size.
- Across all firm sizes, a \$215,000 salary was the modal, or most frequently occurring, first-year associate base salary reported, accounting for 42.7% of all salaries.
- Geography continues to have a considerable impact on salary differences across regions, cities, and states. This year's report contains analyses for 26 individual cities, as well as additional states and regions not encompassed by those cities. These analyses reveal a wide spectrum of law firm compensation, with median first-year salaries by city ranging from \$145,000 to \$215,000.
- Eleven cities now have a median starting salary of \$215,000: Austin, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles/Orange County, New York City, San Diego, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and the Washington, DC area.
- NALP's analyses also include regional salary data for locations outside of the 26 individual cities included in the report. Starting salaries of \$215,000 are found far less frequently in offices in these smaller U.S. cities and towns. For locations outside of the 26 major cities included in the report, the highest median first-year associate base salary was in the Northeast (\$170,000), followed by the Midwest and West, both at \$165,000. The lowest salaries were in the South, with a median first-year salary of \$135,000.
- The median weekly salary for second-year summer associates grew from \$3,075 in 2021 to \$3,550 in 2023 (+13.4%).

## Median Base Salaries by Associate Year and Firm Size

(in \$/year unless otherwise noted, as of January 1, 2023)

Associate Year	FIRM SIZE — Number of Lawyers													
	100 or Fewer		101-250		251-500		501-700		701-1,000		1,001+		All Sizes	
	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept	Median	# Rept
<b>First</b>	\$155,000	29	\$160,000	78	\$190,000	64	\$200,000	83	\$200,000	160	\$215,000*	108	\$200,000	522
<b>Second</b>	165,000	27	170,000	74	195,000	67	207,500	87	209,000	162	225,000	94	209,000	511
<b>Third</b>	180,000	27	180,000	71	207,500	66	215,000	86	220,000	168	250,000*	92	220,000	510
<b>Fourth</b>	181,250	24	195,000	69	239,025	64	230,000	85	255,000	164	285,000	99	245,000	505
<b>Fifth</b>	192,500	22	200,000	73	243,325	66	255,000	86	280,000	161	315,000	94	265,000	502
<b>Sixth</b>	193,450	24	210,000	73	245,000	64	265,000	86	290,000	162	355,000	93	280,000	502
<b>Seventh</b>	210,000	24	225,000	68	286,250	64	275,000	95	303,750	160	387,500	90	295,000	501
<b>Eighth</b>	213,950	20	217,775	68	235,000	49	300,000	76	310,000	149	395,000	88	307,500	450

### Summer Associates (\$/week)

<b>1st Year</b>	\$2,600	15	\$3,000	53	\$3,550	66	\$3,600	100	\$3,650	160	\$4,000	136	\$3,650	530
<b>2nd Year</b>	2,975	24	3,275	68	3,500	77	3,600	100	3,650	159	4,000	136	3,550	564
<b>3rd Year</b>	1,550	5	3,300	13	4,125	24	3,600	58	—	—	—	—	3,450	218

Note: All figures are based on average salaries reported. The "# Rept." column indicates the number of offices reporting. For purposes of this summary report, medians have been rounded to the nearest \$25. A dash indicates that fewer than 5 firms reported salary data.

\* This figure was reported by more than half of the offices in this category and is also the high and prevailing salary for this category.

## Detailed Data on Associate Salaries

The **2023 Associate Salary Survey** report provides information about associate and summer associate salaries by firm size, region, and the metropolitan area population; detailed salary analyses for 26 major markets; analyses of salaries for offices using a levels-based compensation system; base salaries for Class of 2023 associates by firm size and city; salaries for intellectual property lawyers, salaries for law clerks and staff attorneys; and more. NALP has published the *Associate Salary Survey* report since 1996. Purchase your copy of the **2023 Associate Salary Survey** report at [www.nalp.org/bookstore](http://www.nalp.org/bookstore).

## About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 3,000 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at [www.nalp.org/pressreleases](http://www.nalp.org/pressreleases). For additional information, contact NALP at [info@nalp.org](mailto:info@nalp.org) or call (202) 835-1001.