

Sacco Mann's Legal Salary Survey 2024 / 2025

After the huge salary inflation we saw in the aftermath of the pandemic, the last couple of years have seen things start to steady and mostly we've seen more modest increases. There has however, been some more significant change at a junior level. Amongst a small number of top tier international firms. Other internationals have held firmer and haven't implemented further 'mega' rises at NQ level – as a consequence we are seeing some national practices start to bridge the gap.

Salary compression has continued to be an issue in some teams over the last 12 months. This has been a lingering problem since 2022/23, when we saw massive salary inflation, driven through the large international firms at NQ level. This in turn pushed though into their mid-level salaries however, some mid-level lawyers were disappointed with the size of their increases, as many didn't receive 'proportionate increases' in line with the percentage rises seen at NQ level – causing a level of compression, a bone of contention for many.

Against a backdrop of recent political/economic uncertainty and a much steadier transactional market, firms are still trying to square profitability with remuneration levels. They have increased efficiency, and some have increased targets. The upper salary levels of the bands that fall within the top 25 are inflated by a small number of firms, something important to note when reading this survey. Our research concluded that most of the larger firms were happier to have salary outliers at most levels beyond 1-2 years PQE, they just weren't the norm for most. Within the top 25 category, we have also seen that bonuses haven't always been as large or predictable as previous years. Whilst this is another way of improving profitability for firms, it has had a negative impact on Lawyers who have worked hard to achieve these bonuses, only to be told (within more than one firm), that future market caution has reduced bonus pots, which were previously there to reward positive production, this was certainly the case over the summer of 2024 and it will be interesting to see how this evolves with there now being much more positivity about the market and work pipelines.

We have continued to see the salary pressure within the larger firms ripple through the market, particularly to In-House teams and mid-sized to smaller firms, which serve Commercial Clients. Whilst moving salaries upwards, many of these mid-sized firms are still focussing their 'sell' on the wider benefits of working in such a firm, including work life balance. We have seen the upper levels lift again though, and some report that they are 'breaking the bandings' for exceptional Lawyers. Within some of these firms, there had been increasing feedback of more active financial management, perhaps not to the extent of the Internationals, and on some occasions it's not even on an individual, but rather a team basis. That said, it's clear that many firms are continuing to keep a closer eye on the financials than they did pre covid, and this has been clear from a recruitment perspective when it comes to seeking approval for new hires, a much more laborious and heavily scrutinised process than it once was, particularly within the large international firms.

General Practice salaries have edged up a little, but generally haven't seen anywhere near the same increases and the gap between high street and larger Commercial Firm salaries continues to widen.

Salaries for Chartered Legal Executives, Licensed Conveyancers, and Non-Qualified Fee Earners in 2024 have returned to typical pre pandemic growth trends, following the post-pandemic surge. As mentioned last year, a significant amount of this level of Fee Earner work is in the smaller to medium sized practices, so we don't quite see the same salary levels as those see in the national and international practices. Residential Conveyancing recruitment (and the housing market in general) is picking up again, and as demand for Conveyancers grows, the salaries offered to these candidates are rising.

Entry level Paralegal salaries have risen in line with the increase in minimum wage, which has positively impacted salaries for experienced Paralegals.

We continue to see increases in the number of firms offering training contracts internally to Paralegals along with an increase in study fees being paid and so whilst salaries are important, the bigger picture shouldn't be ignored.

Do feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss any of the information within this survey, we are always happy to talk about our observations on the market.

Email: cs@saccomann.com

Call: 0113 245 3338 or 0161 831 6890

Visit: www.saccomann.com

Commercial Top 25 Law Firms Nationally

Solicitors & Partners Top 25-150

Significant Commercial, Public and Insurance Law Firms Nationally

*Please note that salaries may differ from these figures for the specialist Public Law firms in the West Midlands

	Yorkshire	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	North East
Level of Qualification	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High	Low – High	Low – High
Newly Qualified Solicitor	£50,000 - £62,000	£50,000 - £62,000	£50,000 - £60,000	£44,000 - £52,000*	£42,500 - £52,000
Solicitor - 1 year PQE	£51,000 - £64,000	£51,000 - £64,000	£52,000 - £62,000	£45,000 - £54,000*	£44,000 - £53,000
Solicitor - 2 years PQE	£52,000 - £65,000	£52,000 - £65,000	£52,000 - £64,000	£46,000 - £54,000*	£45,000 - £55,000
Solicitor - 3 years PQE	£54,000 - £67,000	£54,000 - £67,000	£54,000 - £66,000	£50,000 - £60,000 *	£45,000 - £60,000
Solicitor - 4 years PQE	£57,000 - £69,000	£57,000 – £69,000	£56,000 - £68,000	£53,000 - £69,000 *	£47,000 - £62,000
Solicitor - 5 years PQE	£60,000 - £75,000	£60,000 – £75,000	£58,000 - £70,000	£60,000 - £75,000 *	£48,500 - £64,000
Solicitor - 6 years PQE	£67,000 - £90,000	£67,000 - £90,000	£60,000 - £72,000	£60,000 - £90,000 *	£50,000 - £70,000
Senior / Managing Associate	£67,000 - £90,000	£67,000 - £90,000	£65,000 - £90,000	£65,000 - £90,000 *	£64,000 - £80,000
Legal Director	£80,000 - £130,000	£80,000 - £130,000	£75,000 - £130,000	£78,000 - £130,000 *	£80,000 - £110,000
Salaried Partner	£80,000 - £180,000	£80,000 - £180,000	£80,000 - £180,000	£80,000 - £185,000 *	£100,000+

	Yorkshire	North West	Midlands	North East
Level of Qualification	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High
Newly Qualified Solicitor	£34,000 - £45,000	£38,000 - £43,000	£34,000 - £42,000	£33,000 - £40,000
Solicitor - 1 year PQE	£35,000 - £47,000	£39,000 – £43,000	£35,000 – £44,000	£35,000 - £42,000
Solicitor - 2 years PQE	£36,000 - £49,000	£40,000 - £44,000	£37,000 - £46,000	£37,000 - £45,000
Solicitor - 3 years PQE	£38,000 - £51,000	£42,000 - £46,000	£38,000 - £49,000	£38,000 - £47,000
Solicitor - 4 years PQE	£40,000 - £53,000	£45,000 - £47,000	£40,000 - £50,000	£40,000 - £50,000
Solicitor - 5 years PQE	£42,000 – £55,000	£48,000 - £50,000	£43,000 - £54,000	£44,000 - £52,000
Solicitor - 6 years PQE	£44,000 - £57,000	£52,000 - £58,000	£45,000 - £57,000	£46,000 - £55,000
Senior / Managing Associate	£45,000 - £65,000	£53,000 - £60,000	£45,000 - £67,000	£48,000 - £65,000
Legal Director	£55,000 - £85,000	£70,000 - £85,000	£55,000 - £85,000	£55,000 - £80,000
Salaried Partner	£65,000 - £110,000	£85,000 - £110,000	£70,000 - £105,000	£70,000+

	Yorkshire	North West	Midlands	North East
Level of Qualification	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High
Newly Qualified Solicitor	£28,000 - £35,000	£28,000 - £34,000	£30,000 - £35,000	£31,500 - £33,000
Solicitor - 1 year PQE	£30,000 - £38,000	£30,000 - £35,000	£31,500 - £38,000	£32,000 - £35,000
Solicitor - 2 years PQE	£32,000 - £40,000	£32,000 - £38,000	£34,000 - £41,000	£34,000 - £37,000
Solicitor - 3 years PQE	£34,000 - £42,000	£34,000 - £42,000	£34,000 - £43,000	£34,000 - £38,000
Solicitor - 4 years PQE	£35,000 - £44,000	£36,000 - £44,000	£35,000 - £45,000	£35,000 - £44,000
Solicitor - 5 years PQE	£38,000 – £45,000	£40,000 - £46,000	£38,000 - £48,000	£38,000 - £45,000
Solicitor - 6 years PQE	£39,000 - £48,000	£42,000 - £48,000	£40,000 - £49,000	£40,000 - £48,000
Senior / Managing Associate	£40,000 - £55,000	£45,000 - £58,000	£45,000 - £52,000	£42,000 - £55,000
Legal Director	£45,000 - £65,000	£50,000 - £65,000	£48,000 - £65,000	£45,000 - £65,000
Salaried Partner	£60,000 - £85,000	£55,000 - £85,000	£55,000 - £90,000	£60,000+

Level of Qualification	Low - High
Solicitor NQ	£35,000 - £48,000
Solicitor 1 year PQE	£34,000 - £50,000
Solicitor 2 years PQE	£36,000 - £52,000
Solicitor 3 years PQE	£38,000 - £54,000
Solicitor 4 years PQE	£40,000 - £56,000
Solicitor 5 years PQE	£42,000 - £60,000
Solicitor 6 years PQE	£44,000 - £65,000
Senior Associate	£55,000 - £75,000
Legal Director	£65,000 - £90,000
Salaried Partner	£75,000 - £110,000

	Trainee Chartered Legal Executive	Qualified Chartered Legal Executive
Area of Law	Low - High Salary	Low - High Salary
Personal Injury	£23,000 - £30,000	£35,000 - £65,000
Debt Recovery	£24,000 - £30,000	£30,000 - £50,000
Private Client	£25,000 - £35,000	£35,000 - £60,000
Commercial Property	£24,000 - £35,000	£35,000 - £60,000
Employment	£26,000 - £32,000	£30,000 - £55,000
Family	£23,000 - £30,000	£30,000 - £50,000
Residential Property	£24,000 - £28,000	£30,000 - £48,000
Commercial	£24,000 - £30,000	£34,000 - £50,000

	0 - 2 years experience	2 - 3 years experience	3 - 4 years experience	5+ years experience
Area of Law	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High	Low - High
Personal Injury	£23,000 - £26,000	£25,000 - £30,000	£28,000 - £34,000	£34,000 - £60,000
Debt Recovery	£23,000 - £25,000	£24,000 - £28,000	£30,000 - £36,000	£32,000 - £45,000
Private Client	£23,000 - £25,000	£25,000 - £27,000	£26,000 - £32,000	£32,000 - £50,000
Commercial Property	£23,000 - £28,000	£26,000 - £28,000	£28,000 - £32,000	£34,000 - £48,000
Employment	£23,000 - £24,000	£25,000 - £27,000	£27,000 - £31,000	£32,000 - £47,000
Family	£23,000 - £24,000	£25,000 - £26,000	£26,000 - £30,000	£32,000 - £46,000
Residential Property	£23,000 - £24,000	£24,000 - £27,000	£28,000 - £35,000	£35,000 - £45,000
Commercial	£23,000 - £25,000	£25,000 - £27,000	£28,000 - £35,000	£32,000 - £50,000

Industry (Regions)

Salary Bandings for Industry Lawyers

		Sá
Level of Qualification	Low - High	re
Solicitor NQ - 2 years PQE	£48,000 - £68,000	T s
Solicitor 3– 4 years PQE	£60,000 - £80,000	v
Solicitor 5 - 6 years PQE	£60,000 - £90,000	ra
Solicitor 7+ years PQE	£70,000+	O
Legal Manager / Number 2	£90,000 - £110,000	N
Head of Legal	£110,000-£150,000	
General Counsel / Company Secretary	£135,000 - £220,000	

Salary bandings for Lawyers in Industry have always been a little more difficult to categorise than those of their counterparts in Private Practice and non-more so than in the times we currently live. Certainty, it appears clear that wage growth was (and looks likely to remain) inconsistent across both sectors and skill sets. As such, providing accurate data proves more difficult than ever as the disparity in wages remaining as wide as ever.

That said, we've seen a steadying in the rate increases this year, with some of the early post pandemic salary turbulence, levelling off somewhat. It remains the case that In-house legal teams cannot keep apace with top tier legal firms, but there is evidence to suggest that more organisations seem willing and able to offer packages in the regions which are in line with respected national law firms, outside the heavyweights.

Work/life balance and hybrid working arrangements arguably remains the In-house offerings most significant "Trump Card", especially as we see a rise in a growing number of law firms expectations to see more lawyers in their offices, more often. This is not to say Industry is universal in its flexibility – which can still vary sector to sector – however there remains a greater appreciation of the rationale. It is also possible that the flat structure of Industry and lack of hierarchical progression, means candidates are perhaps more adept and willing to vote with their feet, with employers running a greater risk of attrition.....

Overwhelmingly, the dominant skill set sought after remains non-contentious and commercial, which has proven tricky at NQ rate and we've seen a notable number of placements offering retraining, presenting opportunities that were historically closed to some. This versatility has proven successful and helped keep salaries in check in some instances, but its notable that demand in other skill sets, namely Real Estate, IP, Governance and Commercial Litigation has increased – which in turn has driven up salary expectations through demand and supply.

NQ-5 Years PQE remains the highest demand and hardest level to source – a trend that has been consistent in the sector for as long as we can recall. The increased number of In-house vacancies and competition from law firms makes for some interesting decision making, however the post pandemic labour shortages have largely passed resulting in a greater calmness and stability in wages. Similarly, packages and bonus levels have remained largely constant from those we saw last year, though we've seen an increase of innovative EV schemes replacing some more traditional car allowances etc.

The In-house market remains buoyant and the appeal to bring more work in-house continues to grow, not least as a result of the inevitable increase in the cost of instructing externals, helping form a compelling case for CFO's. For a more bespoke assessment of either your personal package or departmental bandings, please get in contact for a confidential discussion.

Other Considerations

What factors impact salary bandings?

As you will see from the salary figures, the bandings are quite broad and there are a variety of factors that impact on where any individual lawyer could sit within these bandings.

Area of Practice

It is not unusual for firms to pay different levels of salary dependent on practice area. Whilst it is not always consistent across the board, it is often the case that more commercial disciplines command higher salaries.

Market forces also directly impact salary levels, if there is a shortage of quality candidates, firms are prone to pay a higher basic and, where available, more attractive bonuses.

At the time of writing, it's fair to say that there are a lot of areas which are under pressure and have been for some time. Whilst most areas are challenging to recruit into, those under particular pressure at the time of writing are:

- Employment
- Commercial Property (which has been steadier this year but is starting to pick up)
- Corporate (like property this has been slower in 2024, but demand is starting to rise)
- Commercial
- Commercial Litigation (and niche areas of dispute resolution e.g. property litigation)
- Niche areas e.g. Tax, Pensions, Banking, Construction
- Private Client

Individual Skills & Capabilities

Irrespective of demand or sector it is possible for an individual to impact on their earnings, we consistently see exceptional candidates being rewarded beyond what could be expected within the market. In our experience they do so for a range of reasons, the most frequent/important being:

- Input in wider projects
- Management input
- Business Development
- Client management
- Exceptional Fee Earning
- Potential

Most often it is a combination of the above. We also see people who simply work and perform beyond their 'PQE' being effectively treated, for financial and other reasons, as someone of more seniority.

Benefits:

Bonuses: There is a fairly even split between those who offer a bonus and those who don't, what is clear though is that they are increasingly of importance to individuals. The vast majority of bonuses are non-contractual, and these can be linked to salary, individual or company performance. We have seen several firms overhaul bonus schemes in 2024.

Commercial Firms: Some firms offer clear contractual bonuses however most are discretionary. Some are purely financially driven, others include a review of wider activities such as assisting with internal projects, excellent client services, strong business development etc. Many individuals prefer bonuses that they can more readily identify and consequently some are less enthusiastic about those that rely upon the firm or department achieving specified targets but would rather them be driven by their own performance. Equally, some firms have expressed concern that individual bonuses may encourage behaviours that aren't necessarily team and firm spirited if this is the case. It can also be the case that some firms have additional bonuses at more senior levels, for example Senior Associate and Legal Director level.

General Practices: Again, there is a mixed story, however it tends to be volume driven areas of work attract bonuses more frequently within general practices.

Currently approximately 50% of our clients offer bonuses, however we are seeing some firms offer them where they previously hadn't. It will be interesting to see if this continues...

Welcome payments: A 'Golden hello' or relocation allowance is more prevalent now within high demand areas in commercial firms, these are often used as a way of enticing people on board, or to help them bridge the gap between London or overseas salaries and those in the regions. They are not just made when people are relocating. Over the past few years, we have also seen an increasing number of firms offering to 'buy' people out of their enhanced maternity leave claw backs, meaning that they don't need to return to their old firm, and firms compensating for pending bonus payments to allow people to commit earlier rather than delay resignations to protect their bonus. This trend has slowed in 2024 amidst a steadier market, but we think that most firms would still be willing to pull out the stops for exceptional candidates – particularly at a senior level. As demand starts to pick back up it will be interesting to see if more of this occurs.

Private Medical Insurance: Whilst the vast majority of national and regional commercial firms will offer health insurance to their lawyers and an increasing number of mid-tier firms are offering this, many smaller firms still don't. Those that do offer it usually offer to cover other family members for an additional but competitive cost, a few already include this.

Pensions: Since the introduction of auto enrolment minimum contributions have increased to 8% in total including 5% from the employee. Some firms offer a further enhancement in statutory minimums, but these vary greatly:

- Commercial Firms— most pay c5% however we have encountered one firm that pays 13%!
- General Practices —there is greater variance here, but we are finding an increasing number paying up to 5%.
- Employers usually require their contributions to be matched where they offer an enhanced contribution.

Death in Service Benefits: Death in Service Benefits vary greatly; many firms do offer it but the amount of benefit on offer varies significantly, and again often smaller practices don't offer this benefit. The minimum amount was 1 x salary, and the highest level of benefit was 7 x salary. In some cases, this can be enhanced via flexible benefits packages, in some it was linked to membership of the Pension Scheme.

Critical Illness Cover and Income Protection:

- This is a benefit far more likely to be available to Partners /Directors then to all staff.
- We don't have evidence of any firm offering this benefit on an all-staff basis. These benefits are also often part of a flexible benefits package.

Parking: As you would probably expect, this is a benefit that is generally only available to fee-earning and senior staff, particularly for City Centre roles. However, increasingly firms offering a salary sacrifice scheme to assist staff with parking costs, or indeed arrange discounted parking. We have seen a few firms phase parking out to support their ESG strategy.

Flexible Benefits: Firms are looking at flexible benefits far more closely. With the emphasis that many lawyers are putting on work—life balance, flexible benefits packages are becoming more common. Generally, these give employees the ability to choose to 'buy' additional holidays, or elect to put their benefits fund into enhanced pensions, parking, pay for additional family health care or other benefits. The most common flexible benefit is the opportunity to buy or sell holiday. Normally this would be a maximum of one week and if buying the cost would be spread across the year via deductions from salary.

Flexible and Remote Working: Flexible and remote working were slowly becoming more commonplace in the legal sector, but its implementation was hugely accelerated by the pandemic. Remote working policies do vary firm to firm and even between teams in some cases, but the norm in most firms is a hybrid of home and office working, with the majority asking lawyers to come into the office two or three days a week. In some cases, firms are viewing the ability to work remotely as an opportunity to cast a wider net for recruitment, on the basis that a new recruit based further afield may be able to attend the office just one day a week, or perhaps even less. Some of the larger firms have allowed leaders to decide what works best for their individual teams and in some cases, this has seen decisions being made for the whole team to work entirely remotely – with office attendance only required for meetings. The process of embedding remote working policies has not been straightforward, with firms needing to strike a balance between offering sufficient flexibility to those that require it and being able to offer appropriate support and learning to juniors, who learn so much by osmosis from being around a team and are generally required to attend the office more frequently than experienced Lawyers. Whilst hybrid working is very much still the norm as above (and we are sure it will continue to be), there has been a slight shift in 2024 towards getting lawyers back into the office a little more. There are pockets of firms requiring 100% office attendance for Lawyers although this does now present a challenge from a recruitment perspective. Flexible working is now also quite commonplace in the legal sector, with firms generally happy to consider adjusted start / finish times, compressed hours etc. although this won't work in every case and client needs will always be the primary consideration.

Maternity Benefits: Enhanced maternity benefits have been available within the larger National firms, and we are now seeing an increasing number of regional, mid-tier commercial and larger general practices offering enhanced payments. Enhanced maternity benefits are usually linked to a minimum length of service with some form of repayment scheme in the event that a specified time period is not completed following a return from maternity leave. These usually range from anywhere between 3 to 12 months. Sums offered vary, with the first 12-15 weeks being paid at full normal salary and the remaining weeks of leave being paid at a lower percentage. We have come across a small number of firms who are now paying 6 months full pay. At

some firms there is also the potential for longer serving members of staff to receive a 'return to work bonus,' payable 3 months after the employee has returned to work. Paid time off for ante natal appointments for men is also becoming more widely available.

Pre-Maternity Leave: we have seen one higher tier firm in particular offering up to 5 days full pay for time off for IVF treatment, while others are allowing time off for pre-natal appointments.

Enhanced Adoption Pay: many larger firms offer this, most mirroring enhanced maternity leave.

Paternity Benefits: We have seen it becoming increasingly common for firms to offer enhanced benefits for employees with a minimum length of service (we have seen this range from 26 weeks to 52 weeks). This is usually in the form of full normal salary for the first week of Paternity leave and statutory Paternity Pay in the second week. Aside from this, in some larger firms we have seen employers offering enhanced benefits of up to 4 weeks full pay to fathers. With regards to shared parental leave, this is a Statutory benefit that is being used more frequently.

Holiday Entitlement:

The average number of holidays is:

- 30 days for Partners/Directors
- 25 days for Solicitors and support staff

Many firms offer additional holiday for long service.

Salary Reviews: The vast majority of firms are awarding annual salary increases again but with there being quite significant differences in the size of the review, largely related to the factors mentioned earlier in this document.

Other Financial Benefits:

- Income Protection Insurance
- Voluntary Critical Illness Cover
- Introduction Rewards
- Enhanced Sick Pay Scheme
- Hospital Funds
- 'Health & Wellbeing' many firms try and do more around this: fresh fruit, access to financial advice, psychological support, stop smoking clinics etc.
- Discounted Legal Advice

It is becoming more commonplace for emphasis to be placed on the wellbeing of employees as well as the more traditional financial rewards.

This can include things such as:

- Gym Allowance/ Gym on Site, Ride to Work Salary Sacrifice Schemes or app subscriptions e.g. Grokker
- Season Ticket Loans / Parking / Travel / Childcare Vouchers
- Sabbatical Leave (unpaid/paid)
- Corporate Social Responsibility Days
- Flu Vaccination Health Screening
- Occupational Health
- Access to Perkbox or similar
- Subsidised Restaurants
- Well-Being Programmes, Confidential Counsellor Sessions & Mindfulness Lectures / Classes
- Some larger firms offer discounted shopping schemes with major high street stores
- Easter Eggs, Advent calendars, Birthday cards / gifts / deduction of hours or the day off on your Birthday

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Manchester has a thriving and dynamic legal community that has long been accepted as the strongest regional city from a law perspective (and many would argue from every perspective). Our Manchester office has a depth of expertise that reflects this and clearly has one of the leading legal recruitment offerings in the region. We are currently working on roles in the following locations:

> **North West West Midlands** Manchester

Our Leeds Office:

1 Broad Gate

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The Headrow

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Leeds

Our office in Leeds, with its reach spanning across Yorkshire, Newcastle and the North East, as well as the East Midlands, is a fundamental part of Sacco Mann. Since our establishment in 1997 we have become a trusted partner to all types of legal practice in these parts of the country. The long-term nature of these relationships ensures we have unparalleled access to the key decision makers and can provide our candidates with a depth of knowledge and context that ensures they can make the right career choices. We are currently working on roles in the following locations:

> **North East** Yorkshire **East Midlands**

All salary information included in our Salary Survey reflects basic salary information only; guaranteed bonuses, car allowances and other benefits which could be deemed to have a financial value have not been included in the data provided.