2026 ALPMA New Zealand
Legal Industry Salary & HR Issues Survey

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

The following checklist contains the information you will need to fully complete the **2026 ALPMA / Fluid Recruitment New Zealand Legal Industry Salary & HR Issues Survey.**

We recommend that you gather this information and have it on hand prior to undertaking the online survey.

The online survey should take between 30-60 minutes to complete depending on the number of staff employed by your legal firm. You can review a full copy of the survey questionnaire here.

When you have compiled your information, you can commence the online survey at this link.

SURVEY LINK

SURVEY RESULTS

All participants of this survey will receive the survey results report free of charge. The final report will be made available in **early March 2026** to the contact person entered in the survey.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need further information regarding this survey, please call The ALPMA Research Team on +613 8644 7056 or via research@alpma.com.au**.**

Information Needed

The first section of the survey includes questions about your firm's staff employment profile, employment benefits, bonuses, recruitment and salary projections for the next 12 months, and the HR practices and issues facing the legal community in 2026.

To complete this section, you will need:

1. The total number of staff currently employed at your legal firm.
2. Current staff employment arrangements
    a. Number of permanent full-time staff
    b. Number of permanent part-time staff
    c. Number of contracted/temporary full-time staff
    d. Number of contracted/temporary part-time staff
    e. Number of casual staff
3. The number of departures from your firm over the last 12 months.
4. The employment benefits offered to staff at your firm, and knowledge of whether bonuses are offered and how these apply, including roles eligible for bonus.
5. The bonus that staff at your firm received over the last 12 months, as an average amount and % of their annual salary. You can then use the calculation spreadsheet to help determine the average % bonus for each position group.
6. Some knowledge of your firm's recruitment and salary projections for the next 12 months.
7. Your firms billing policies, billable hours targets and billable hourly rates for each fee earner position group at your firm.
8. Some knowledge of the importance of HR issues to your firm. The HR Issues listed in the survey and a description of these is provided on page 5 of this Checklist.

SALARY INFORMATION

The second section of the survey covers salary data for 55+ legal, management and support roles at law firms, and you will be asked to enter salary details for each position at your firm.

1. To enter the salary data for your firm, you will need the total number of staff and salary data for each position (see Position Types on page 4 of this Checklist).

2. You will be asked to enter the **LOWEST** and **HIGHEST** salary for each position type at your firm.

3. You will also be asked to calculate the **AVERAGE** salary for each position. For positions where there are more than two staff, the AVERAGE salary gives more accurate data for the analysis. By utilising all salaries in a position to calculate the average (not just the lowest and highest), you will provide the true cost per person for each position at your firm. Instructions for calculating the average are given below.

   Average salary for each position is calculated by totalling all salaries in the position type and then dividing by the number of staff. For example:

   - Position X has 4 people with salaries:
     $73,000 + $60,500 + $69,000 + $72,500 = total of $275,000

   - Total $275,000 divided by 4 people = $68,750 average

   - Enter 68750 in the AVERAGE box

   By contrast, if we calculated the average from the lowest and highest salary, the answer would be $66,750 which does not reflect the true cost per person.

4. You will also be asked to calculate the **AVERAGE MALE** Salary and the **AVERAGE FEMALE** Salary for each position. To calculate the average salary for each **GENDER**, perform the above calculation for all males in a position, and then again for all females in a position.

   Please note that gender data is optional, but will enable us to calculate the gender pay gap across the profession.

NB. You can use this Excel spreadsheet template, to calculate the average salary for each position. If you have any questions or queries, please contact us before starting the survey.

When entering salary data, please note the following:

- Salary rates should **EXCLUDE** Kiwisaver and superannuation.

- Additional employment benefits and bonuses should **NOT** be included in the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) salary calculation.

- Part-time or casual staff salaries should be calculated out to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) rate for your firm or 37.5 hours per week to obtain the FTE rate.

- Salaries should be entered in New Zealand dollars or converted to **NZD** rates.

- When entering data, each salary should be entered as a **WHOLE NUMBER**, with no commas, currency symbols or decimal places. For example, $68,750.40 should be entered as 68750.

- Please select the closest match to your position type/title.

LEGAL INDUSTRY POSITION TYPES

You will need to collect salary data (highest, lowest and average salaries) for each of the following positions in your firm. You will also need the total number of staff for each position type. **Please select the closest match to your position.**

Solicitors/Lawyers

Graduate
0-1 yr Post Qualification Experience (P.Q.E.)
1 yr P.Q.E.
2 yrs P.Q.E.
3 yrs P.Q.E.
4 yrs P.Q.E.
5 yrs P.Q.E.
6 yrs P.Q.E.
Associate/Senior Solicitor
Senior Associate
Special Counsel
Salaried Partner
Equity Partner
Managing Partner
Consultant

Legal Executives

Legal Executive (less than 5 yrs experience)
Legal Executive (5+ yrs experience)
Law Clerk

Secretarial Support (Legal Team)

Legal Secretary (less than 5 yrs experience)
Legal Secretary (5+ yrs experience)
Legal Assistant Trainee
Legal Assistant
Word Processor (less than 5 yrs experience)
Word Processor (5+ yrs experience)

Administration (Office Support)

Office/Administration Manager
Office Services Supervisor
PA (less than 5 yrs experience)
PA (5+ yrs experience)
Receptionist (less than 5 yrs experience)
Receptionist (5+years' experience)
AML Administrator
AML Officer / Manager
Administration Assistant (less than 5 yrs experience)
Administration Assistant (5+ years' experience)
Office Junior

Human Resources

HR Manager
HR Consultant/Advisor
HR Assistant
Recruitment Manager
Payroll

Information Technology

IT Manager
IT Trainer
IT Project Manager
Help Desk/Desktop/Support Officer
Programmer/Analyst

Finance

Financial Controller/CFO
Finance Manager
Trust Accountant
Assistant Accountant
Accounts Staff (AE/AP/Reconciliations)
Credit Control Staff

Knowledge Management

Precedent Manager
Librarian/Records Management

Marketing and Business Development

Marketing Manager
Marketing Coordinator
Events Coordinator
Desktop Publisher
Business Development Manager

Executive and Senior Management

CEO/COO
General Manager
Practice Manager

HR ISSUES – DESCRIPTION

The survey asks you to rate the level of importance of the following HR issues to your firm, from an HR perspective in 2026. A description of these issues is provided following.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Changing partnership or firm models

This issue has serious HR impacts including the need to develop new remuneration strategies and new equity models.

Developing organisational leadership capability

This issue includes the challenge of developing effective learning and development programs to increase leadership capability for partners and managers (including training, coaching and mentoring) often with limited resources.

Managing expectations of partners

This issue relates to ensuring partner expectations are realistic and achievable.

Managing cultural change

This issue relates to the number of mergers between mid and top tier law firms in the past 12 months and merging potentially two very different cultures into one.

Managing a remote or distributed workforce

This issue covers aspects relating managing employees who work in any location that differs to their direct manager, including communication, performance evaluation and management, and employee engagement.

Managing communication and staff management skills of partners

This issue covers people management shortfalls at Managing Partner or Partner level.

Managing intergenerational expectations

This issue covers the issues around the needs, engagement and retention of different generations in your firm.

Managing innovation & change management projects

This issue relates to keeping abreast with technology and adopting an innovation mindset in the firm.

Managing the mentoring / coaching of junior staff

This issue relates to the ability of senior staff to effectively mentor and guide junior staff within their career pathways.

Ensuring regular feedback is provided to all staff

This issue relates to the ability of senior staff to effectively mentor and guide junior staff within their career pathways.

Managing appropriate delegation of work from senior lawyer to junior lawyer

This issue relates to the communication method of; the detail of instructions provided by; and mindfulness of the junior lawyers' workflow, by senior lawyers when delegating work.

Managing a firm merger

This issue relates to the merging of two entities into one either by purchase or merger. This relates to the business operational functions that need to be restructured, updated and rolled out across the firm.

Managing staff with the adoption of new IT and / or providing IT training to staff
This issue relates to the training of employees in new or existing software platforms that enhance performance and/or efficiencies. This includes managing staff training for new technology adoption and the management of ongoing training & security requirements.

ACQUISITION, MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

Managing poor work performance
This issue includes managing poor performance or inappropriate behaviour by partners, employees or contractors.

Finding quality staff / talent acquisition
This issue covers the challenges associated with recruiting quality staff for your firm.

Employee retention/talent management
This issue spans the challenges of developing strategies to retain talented employees.

Managing workloads and employee flexibility
This issue relates to the balance between ensuring that employees have an appropriate amount of work to match their working hours, and flexibility to adjust those hours if needed.

Managing employee engagement
This issue covers the challenges associated with ensuring that employees are engaged and happy with both their work and their workplace.

Peformance evaluation
This issue covers the challenges of setting and implementing an effective performance evaluation framework for the firm.

Succession planning / aging of the profession
This issue spans succession planning for partners, retirement planning, and the development of strategies for retaining and managing older workers.

Managing staff expectations
This issue relates to providing clear, concise and transparent communication between employer and employee in relation to expectations, conditions of work and performance.

Managing employee wellbeing, resilience and mental health
This issue includes the development of resilience strategies to support the mental health of your workforce.

RESOURCES & POLICY

Effective social media usage
From an HR perspective, this issue includes the best ways to use social media for employee communications, recruitment and HR profiling, as well as ensuring appropriate usage of social media by partners, employees and contractors.

Managing mobile/remote connected workforce
This issue reflects the challenges of managing a workforce in a connected world where people can work from anywhere at any time. It includes developing appropriate policies for internet access while on leave, travelling or overseas, developing flexible working arrangements, while considering OH&S implications.

Workforce diversity & equal employment opportunities

This issue covers the challenges of creating and supporting a diverse workforce and meeting equal opportunity requirements.

Managing parental leave and other leave entitlements

This issue covers the needs, requirements and questions around parental leave.

Managing flexible working arrangements

This issue covers the needs and requests of staff for flexible hours.

Managing risk and policy reviews

This issue covers the development and maintenance of workplace policies, particularly those relating to managing risks.

Managing or developing diversity program / initiatives

This issue covers the challenges of developing specific programs aimed at creating and supporting diversity within the workplace.

Workforce planning and data analysis

This issue covers the challenges in effectively examining and interpreting workforce data, within the context of internal and external environmental factors, to identify workforce risks and manage talent.

Benchmark Position Descriptions

You will need to collect salary data (highest, lowest and average salaries) for each of the following positions in your firm. You will also need the total number of staff for each position type. As titles and responsibilities can vary between firms, please select the closest match to your position after carefully reviewing the definition.

By doing this we will ensure, as best we can, that we are comparing salaries for similar tasks performed within firms. The position descriptions will also be supplied in the final report when it is released, however you may like to make a note of any differences for your records. Note that the term Partner or Salaried Partner is used throughout the survey but also applies to Directors or Non-Equity Directors.

SOLICITORS / LAWYERS

Graduate
Has successfully completed a Law Degree and is undertaking further supervised work experience or training as governed by the relevant Law Societies and other legal bodies or institutions across Australasia to gain admission.

Lawyer *
Enter salary data based on a titled position first (e. g. Associate/ Senior Associate) then by PQE level. For example: A lawyer with 3 years PQE would be entered under Lawyer 3 years PQE but a 3 year PQE Associate would be entered under Associate.

A qualified and admitted Legal Practitioner with years of Post Qualification Experience (PQE). Salaries to be entered by years of experience:

- **0–1 yr PQE.**
- **1 yrs PQE**
- **2 yrs PQE**
- **3 yrs PQE**
- **4 yrs PQE**
- **5 yrs PQE**
- **6+ years PQE**

Associate *
A Lawyer with 3–5 years' experience who has achieved a level of specialist knowledge that can be held out to the public as a representative of the firm.

Senior Associate *
A Lawyer with 5+ years' experience held out to be an experienced representative of the firm on the path towards a Partner Position/Special Counsel/Consultant.

* NOTE: Salaries should be entered based on title first then years PQE. For example: If a 4-year PQE Lawyer has the title of Associate then the salary for this individual should be entered under Associate. If a 4-year PQE lawyer has the title of Lawyer then the salary should be entered under 4 years PQE.

Special Counsel
A Lawyer with 7+ years' experience. Appointment to Special Counsel can be a career path promotion towards Partnership or applied to a Senior Lawyer who is not seeking partnership as part of career goals. This person may also be a very senior lateral hire or person who has stepped down from Partnership.

General Counsel
An experienced Lawyer with 7+ years' experience who typically is responsible for the in-house legal functions for a company, organisation or government department.

Consultant
Usually, a lawyer whose role can range from a specialist advisor (like a Special Counsel), a Partner who has retired or been bought out (and may never come into the office), or can include an overseas qualified lawyer who is not yet admitted in Australia. This person may take the role of coach/mentor or client Relationship Manager and may also be a significant person on a retainer to appear at special events. This position relates to internal salaried consultants, not external consultants.

Salaried Partner **
Also known as Non-Equity Partner or Fixed Draw Partner. They do not receive a profit share but are subject to liability as a Partner. This is often an intermediary step to a full Equity Partner or may be recognition of seniority and prestige.

NOTE: The term Partner or Salaried Partner is used throughout the survey but also applies to Directors or Non-Equity Directors.

Managing Partner **
Usually performed by an Equity Partner who has been given authority from the partnership to have overall responsibility for the firm's partnership matters, practice management and other operational matters.

Equity Partner **
A Partner that shares in the profits and losses of the business, but who is not involved in its management.

** NOTE: For partners, please just average their regular drawings into an annual amount and include these figures. Do not include any additional profit share or top up payments received throughout the year.

LEGAL EXECUTIVES

Legal Executive
Undertakes specialist legal duties under the supervision of a lawyer, usually in a very defined and process driven area; e. g. Conveyancing, Mortgage, Debt Collection, and Personal Injury. They are frequently considered Fee Earners but are not qualified as a lawyer. They may have completed a Legal Diploma or Certificate. Salaries to be entered by years of experience:

- **Legal Executive (less than 5 yrs experience)**
- **Legal Executive (5+ yrs experience)**

Law Clerk
Students recruited, often in their penultimate year, to assist and gain experience within the firm. Students undertake a range of tasks including simple legal tasks supervised by a lawyer, research or assisting on specific projects. Usually work on a part time basis or as a Summer / Winter Clerk.

SECRETARIAL SUPPORT (LEGAL TEAM)

Legal Secretary
This person performs all secretarial duties for a lawyer or a small group of lawyers. Requires knowledge of policies, procedures, precedents and specialised terminology and maintains a working knowledge of a lawyer's area of practice. Salaries to be entered by years of experience:

- **Legal Secretary (less than 5 years' experience)**
- **Legal Secretary (more than 5 years' experience)**
- **Legal Assistant**
- **Trainee Legal Assistant**

Word Processor
An experienced operator dedicated to document production with a good understanding of the work practice and precedents, often working for many areas of the firm.

ADMINISTRATION (OFFICE SUPPORT)

Office Manager / Administration Manager
Responsible for all day-to-day administration and office co-ordination tasks for the firm. This is a varied role and typically has direct responsibility and supervision for the Administration, Secretarial and Accounts departments. An Office Manager could also be responsible for IT and HR functions within a smaller firm.

Office / Services Supervisor
This person is responsible for managing staff and delivery of service across the print or copy room, mail room, safe custody and archiving functions.

PA
Provides high level administrative and confidential secretarial support, may attend partner or Board meetings, has strong communication and organisation skills and usually works for the Managing Partner, CEO, COO or CFO.

- **PA (less than 5 years' experience)**
- **PA (more than 5 years' experience)**

Receptionist
A client-facing role, meets and greets clients in reception, manages meeting room bookings and refreshments, attends to the telephone switch board and other office duties.

- **Receptionist (less than 5 years' experience)**
- **Receptionist (more than years' experience)**

AML Administrator
Ensures the firm complies with Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing Terrorism (AML/CFT) laws, handling client due diligence (CDD), transaction monitoring, reporting suspicious activity, maintaining records, and often managing trust accounts and related financial admin for law firms or financial institutions, requiring strong attention to detail, accuracy, and computer skills to support regulatory obligations and internal processes.

AML Office Manager
An AML Office Manager (often titled AML/CTF Compliance Officer or AML Manager) is the management-level person responsible for coordinating a business's day-to-day compliance with AML/CTF laws and its internal AML program.

Administration Assistant / Office Junior
Provides assistance and support with general office administration and other duties as needed. This is a varied role and could include such tasks as basic administration, stationery ordering, data entry, meeting refreshments and general errands.

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR Manager
Responsible for recruitment, career planning, performance reviews, grievance and disciplinary issues, compensation and benefits, professional and technical learning and development, policies and procedures, legal compliance, and instructs payroll. Works closely with the leadership team in the business. May lead a team or work autonomously in smaller practices. Usually appointed in a firm with over 40 staff and responsible to the Managing Partner.

HR Consultant / Advisor
Assists the HR Manager in the broad spectrum of the HR function. Takes an active role with recruitment and change management projects, advises staff on policies and procedures, has involvement with performance reviews and professional development. In smaller practices where no HR Manager has been appointed, works closely with the Managing Partner to fulfil the needs of the business.

HR Assistant / Administrator
Assists the HR Manager/HR Consultant across a variety of paper based and data entry activities.

Recruitment Manager
Oversees the full recruitment lifecycle, from workforce planning and role scoping through to offer and onboarding, ensuring hiring aligns with firm strategy and budget. Manages employer brand, candidate experience, and relationships with agencies; advises partners and managers on selection decisions, diversity goals and market conditions. Tracks recruitment metrics and refines processes for improvement.

Payroll
Responsible for accurate and timely processing of employee pay, including salaries, allowances, overtime, superannuation, tax payment obligations, and other statutory deductions.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT Manager
Oversees the firm's IT strategy, and the computer systems, software and facilities to support the firm's strategic objectives and goals. Tasks carried out within this role will vary greatly between firms. In smaller firms the role would be mixture of hands-on daily tasks combined with project-based tasks whilst larger firms would involve a mixture of high-level planning with project-based tasks.

IT Trainer
Designs and delivers training to staff on the firm's core systems (practice management, document management, time-billing, collaboration tools, security tools), tailored to different roles and skill levels.

IT Project Manager
Plans and works with external vendors and internal key stakeholders for the timely and efficient introduction of significant upgrades, additions to the IT infrastructure or outsourced facilities.

Helpdesk / Desktop / Support Officer
Attends to daily issues raised by users, sets up new users, monitors security and daily backups etc.

Programmer / Data Analyst
An IT professional who can write code across multiple software platforms and specialises in analysing and designing information systems.

FINANCE

Financial Controller / CFO
Qualified CA/CPA. Develops and implements the firm's strategic financial goals and objectives, operational and legal team budgets and the firm's financial KPIs. Supervises finance team, preparation of accounts, cash flow management and works at a high level and closely with the Managing Partner. Has overall responsibility for the firm's finance.

Finance Manager
Usually CA / CPA qualified. Accountant or an individual with relevant / significant financial experience. Responsible for hands-on supervision of the accounts team in daily transactions including Trust, Accounts Receivable (Debtors) Accounts Payable (Creditors) Billing, Reconciliations, Statutory and Tax reports.

Trust Accountant
Usually qualified. Assists the CFO / Financial Controller with the preparation of quarterly and yearly accounts and assists with the production of specific financial reports and other tasks as required. Can assist the Partners with their individual and family trust tax returns, including management of private investment portfolios for accounting/tax implication purposes. Can assist with the production of client accounts during the billing cycle.

Assistant Accountant
Assists the Finance Manager / Accountant as required. Can be undertaking external study in Finance / Accounting.

Accounts Staff
Administration staff assisting the Finance Manager with the daily processing of accounts. Eg. Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Bank Reconciliations, Billing.

Credit Control Staff / Accounts Receivable
Responsible for managing account reminders and collection of the firm's debtors' ledger including telephone reminders.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Precedent Manager
Often a qualified lawyer who writes, reviews and standardises precedents across the firm. Responsible for momentum and quality of documents produced. Could also be involved in KM system design or maintenance and training of the firm's lawyers in the use of the precedent database and KM systems. May also be responsible for managing the firms Risk Management policies and procedures.

Librarian / Records Manager
Responsible for selection and upkeep of firm library resources whether written or online. May also maintain a Knowledge Bank of cases, articles, training information, barristers' opinions etc. that can be resourced by lawyers. May holds an applicable qualification. Responsible for the accurate entry, maintenance and retrieval of any Safe Custody and Archived documents held, physically or digitally, by the Firm.

MARKETING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Marketing Manager
Develops and implements the firm's marketing plans including website development and management, development of marketing material, preparation of tenders, social media, event organisation and staff training.

Marketing Coordinator
Assists the Marketing Manager or Business Development Manager with tasks, as required.

Events Coordinator
Works with the Partners, Business Development Manager, Marketing Manager and external vendors to coordinate and manage all internal and external client events.

Digital / Graphic Designer / Desktop Publisher
Proficient in the use of specialist programs and software to design and produce brochures, flyers, infographics and marketing material for the firm.

Business Development Manager
Responsible for building and implementing business development activities to grow market position in conjunction with the Partners and senior lawyers within the firm. Often works with the HR Manager to develop individual BD plans. Generally, works at a high level and closely with Managing Partner to identify BD opportunities. In larger firms the BDM can be responsible for generating new business for the firm and actively engages with clients to foster relationships and develop new opportunities. This role may include marketing activities.

EXECUTIVE / SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive Officer / Chief Operating Officer
A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) acts autonomously at a senior level within the firm (more senior than the General Manager), reporting to the board on significant issues. Usually, a CEO would act in a firm of 100 staff and over. A Chief Operating Officer (COO) may handle the day-to-day operations in a significantly larger firm, but not the overall strategy. These roles vary significantly across firms.

General Manager
A General Manager usually supervises other specialist areas of the firm such as Finance, HR, IT, Marketing and has the overall responsibility of managing revenue, costs and growth. A General Manager is given authority and autonomy to act in the role and liaises and reports to the Partners or a Managing Partner.

Practice Manager
Generally, in a smaller firm, a Practice Manager is responsible for the supervision of specialist areas such as Finance, HR, IT, Marketing and the overall responsibility of managing revenue, costs and growth, under greater supervision from managing partner, less autonomy.