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JAWATANKUASA PEGUAM PULAU PINANG PENANG BAR COMMITTEE

Circular 3/21 18 Feb 2021

To Members of the Penang Bar,

Report on State-Level Survey on Minimum Starting Salary for Newly-Qualified Legal Assistants

Reference is made to our previous Circular 22/20 dated 3 Nov 2020 for Members of the Penang Bar to participate in a State-Level Survey on Minimum Starting Salary for Newly-Qualified Legal Assistants carried out by the Penang Bar Committee to gather feedback and responses from Members who are employers and employees of Penang-based legal firms to obtain balanced views from both perspectives on whether a minimum wage system should be developed within the legal profession in Peninsular Malaysia, namely in relation to newly-qualified Legal Assistants.

The State-Level Survey which ran from 3 Nov 2020 to 1 Dec 2020 received a total of 163 responses from 26 employers and 137 employees respectively. The 43-page Report on the outcome of the State-Level Survey can be viewed at https://tinyurl.com/3rk27eo2 and will be posted on the Penang Bar website. We urge Members to have a look at the Report to gain a better understanding of the current issues which are affecting a large segment of the legal profession.

Lee Guan Tong Chairman

STATE LEVEL SURVEY
Dated 2.2.2021

PENANG BAR

[Duration of the Survey] 3.11.2020 – 1.12.2020



MINIMUM STARTING SALARY FOR NEWLY-QUALIFIED LEGAL ASSISTANTS

Prepared by

Penang Bar Committee and National Young Lawyers & Pupils Committee

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to a Bar Council Circular No. 004/2020 dated 7 Jan 2020, an online survey titled "National Survey on Minimum Salary of Young Lawyers" ("the National Survey") was initiated by the Bar Council National Young Lawyers and Pupils Committee ("NYLPC") to gain a better understanding of the perspectives and financial challenges faced by Young Lawyers and to collect views on whether a minimum wage system should be developed within the legal profession in Peninsular Malaysia.

The ensuing Report from the National Survey found that 91.85% (2289 out of 2492 Respondents) agreed that the Bar Council should fix a minimum starting salary for Legal Assistants.

This State-Level Survey conducted via Penang Bar Committee Circular No. 22/20 is intended as a follow-up pursuant to a directive from the Bar Council to NYLPC on whether to propose a Minimum Starting Salary for newly-qualified Legal Assistants in Peninsular Malaysia.

OBJECTIVES

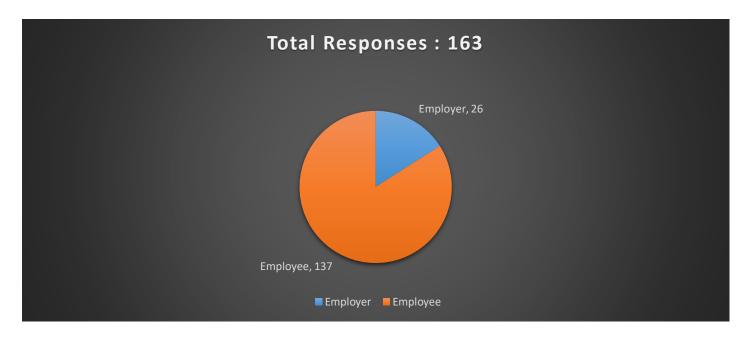
- ✓ To gather feedback and responses from members of the Penang Bar who are employers and employees of Penang-based legal firms.
- ✓ To provide balanced views from both perspectives.
- ✓ To gain further understanding of the perspectives and financial challenges faced by Young Lawyers in Penang.



TOTAL RESPONSES

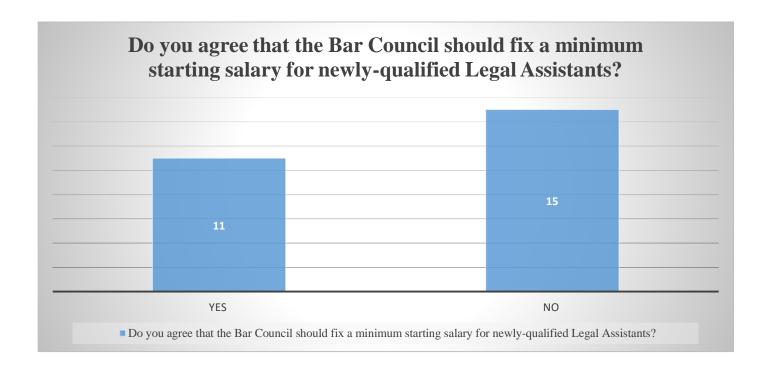
Total Responses : 163

Total Responses from Employee : 137 (84%) Total Responses from Employer : 26 (16%)



EMPLOYER: THE KEY SURVEY RESULTS

There are 26 employers participated in this Survey, with 15 of them (57.7%) think that there should not be a fixed minimum starting salary for Legal Assistants, while 11 of them (42.3%) think that the Bar Council should fix a minimum starting salary for newly-qualified Legal Assistants.



THE YES: REASONING & JUSTIFICATION

Stop all nature of employee exploitation please. Its modern era now, basic human rights to be upheld. LA are not slaves. We all know this minimum starting salary is necessary. We treat them with respect, they will work harder. Its law of attraction.

Because different legal firms start with different starting salaries based on their localities and also work load. So people with small firms have difficulty in paying as much as the larger firms pay and also always there is comparisons made by the Legal Assistants not knowing that they are also given other benefits. So if there is a balanced starting salary it would be better for everyone to follow. The most important thing for the minimum starting salary is how much the newly qualified Legal Assistant knows her/his work. The present newly qualified Legal Assistant's not knowing a thing even after going through chambering period is demanding a huge 4 figure salary. I would suggest for the chambering pupils too that there should be a minimum allowance kinda of thing should be set. Because they come to us to learn so should not be asking or demanding a salary kinda of thing. They utilise everything from office to knowledge. So there should be a flat rate kinda of salary for the newly qualified legal assistant and also the chambering students.

3000

To avoid from being underpaid

To uphold the dignity of the profession.

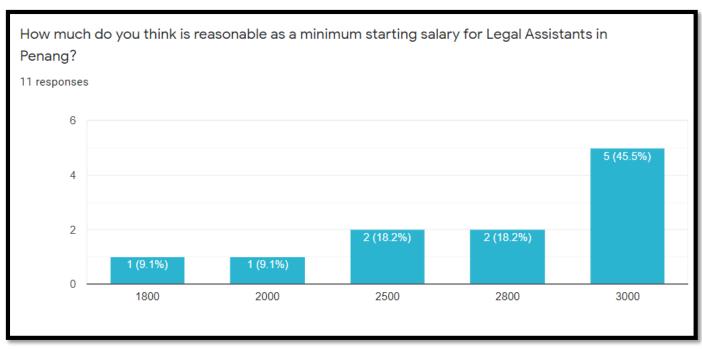
To encourage young lawyers to uphold the law to more lenient way

In view of rising cost of living, minimum starting salary is a must for their survival.

To encourage new LA

RM2800

THE YES: SUGGESTION & PROPOSAL



THE NO: REASONING & JUSTIFICATION

It should depend on the firm's capability.

Depends on the affordability of the firm

Should be allowed to access capabilities of new lawyers during probation period. Thus now minimum should be fixed. If capable and have potential then a higher salary may be given.

Personally fixing the minimum salary will not be the same between the states. What a new young lawyer gets in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan will be different. It also depends on the volume of cases the firm is handling and how beneficial will the LA be to the firm. Further taking the loss suffered by most of the firms during this pandemic will be another factor to be considered. On top of that the firm needs to pay EPF, SOCSO, SIP and the Insurances for the Sijil Annual. Rentals and overhead expenses also is the other factor.

Majority of young lawyers are lacking in terms of skills and knowledge. By fixing a minimum salary for legal assistants, legal firms will become uncompetitive as cost will be pushed up eventually leading to unemployment of young lawyers.

2500

The starting salary of the LA should commensurate with the abilities garnered whilst Chambering.

Living expenses vary in different parts of the country and also the scope of legal work also varies from from state to state. Also supply and demand issues and market forces come into play. It may be best left to market forces in these difficult times when many small legal firms are struggling.

Better leave it to the individual firm to decide based on its financial position and market force

salary should depend on the capability of the candidate and his/her passion to in legal field

- 1. A guide can be drawn up.
- 2. In terms of minimum starting salary, it really depends on the ability of the Legal Assistants and should be left to the market forces
- 3. We should be allowed to offer different remuneration package to the Legal Assistants, lower basic higher commission on files handle.
- 1) LA might be awarded by other means instead of salary.
- 2) Firm might not be able to follow the minimum starting salary fixed because every Firm got their own overheads and income of the Firm differs.

There should not be a fixed minimum salary as there are many fresh Legal Assistants who are incompetent in the "practice market" and requires extensive training akin to chambering when they start practice. Salary should commensurate in the level of knowledge and exposure the Legal Assistant posses not just by capping minimum salary that will make them complacent and remain saturated. They should earn based on their knowledge and exposure as this is vital for them to understand the need for show their potential in their growth and dedication to receive further incentives accordingly.

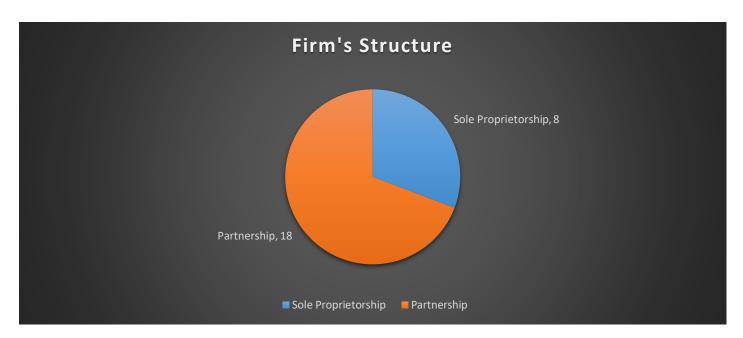
Need to depend on the capability and the performance of the LA

Some are better qualified than others

EMPLOYER: Data Digest of the 26 Employers

1.1 Firm Structure

Partnership : 18 (69%) Sole Proprietorship : 8 (31%)



1.2 Area of Practice

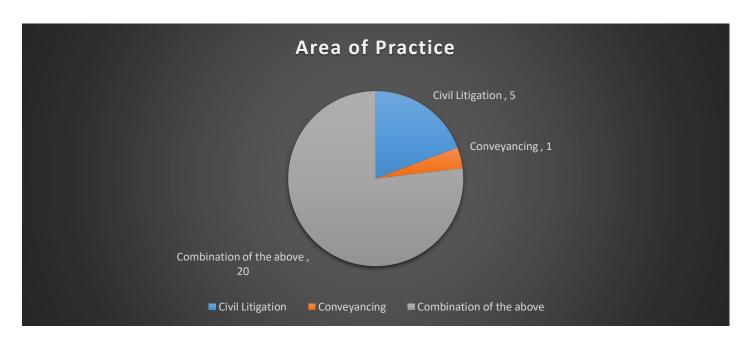
 Combination
 : 20 (77%)

 Civil Litigation
 : 5 (19%)

 Conveyancing
 : 1 (4%)

 Criminal Litigation
 : 0 (0%)

 Corporate
 : 0 (0%)



1.3 Location of Firm

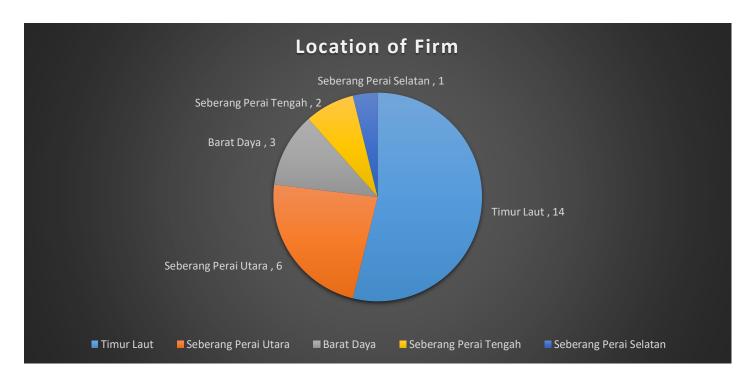
 Timur Laut
 : 14 (53.8%)

 Seberang Perai Utara
 : 6 (23.1%)

 Barat Daya
 : 3 (11.5%)

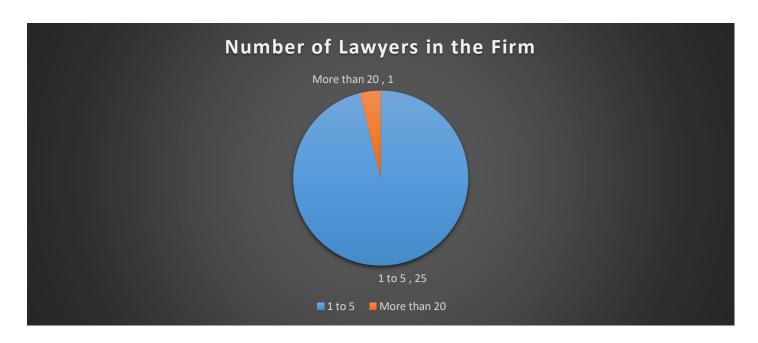
 Seberang Perai Tengah
 : 2 (7.7%)

 Seberang Perai Selatan
 : 1 (3.8%)

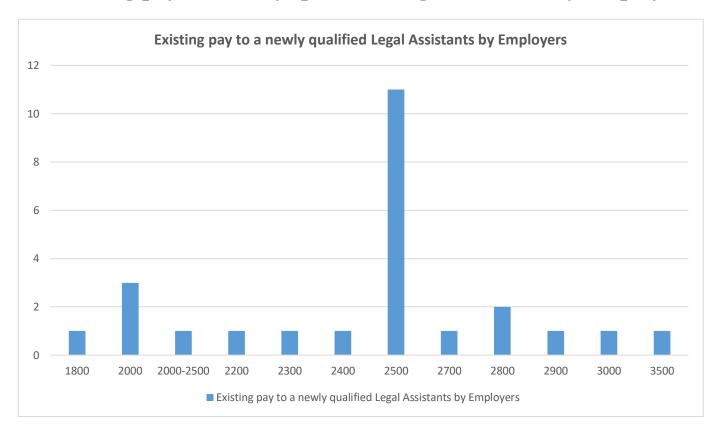


1.4 Number of Lawyers in the Firm

1 to 5 : 25 (96.2%) More than 20 : 1 (3.8%)



1.5 Existing pay to a newly-qualified Legal Assistant by Employers



Existing Pay	Total	Remark
RM2500	11	-
RM2000	3	-
RM2800	2	-
RM3500	1	-
RM3000	1	-
RM2900	1	-
RM2700	1	-
RM2400	1	-
RM2300	1	-
RM2200	1	-
RM2000 – RM2500	1	-
RM1800	1	This respondent is currently not hiring any legal assistant, but indicated that he/she would pay RM1800 if he/she were to hire a legal assistant in the future.
No answer given	1	This respondent participated in this Survey, but did not provide any answer to this Question.
Total	26	

1.6 Criteria considered by Employer when hiring a new Legal Assistant

Criteria	Total
Owns own transport	11
Willingness to work long hours and/or weekends	10
Type of legal qualifications i.e. foreign or local degree	9
character and attitude of the LA	1
Independent	1
attitude & personality	1
Attitude, team spirit	1
Willingness to learn and work independently	1
How much knowledge they have attained because of the time when the Legal Assistant's starts, it is as they are doing chambering in the learning process.	1
Handle the file without much supervision	1
Attitudes	1
Whether he/she has the aptitude for the job requirements of a lawyer	1
ability to work independently with initiative	1
Level of knowledge and exposure in relevant areas	1
Attitude, work ethics, proactive, able to reason and have own opinions	1
Attitude and competence	1
Must be Dedicated and have passion for law	1
Quality of Work, Working Attitude, Responsibility	1
willing to learn and able to travel	1

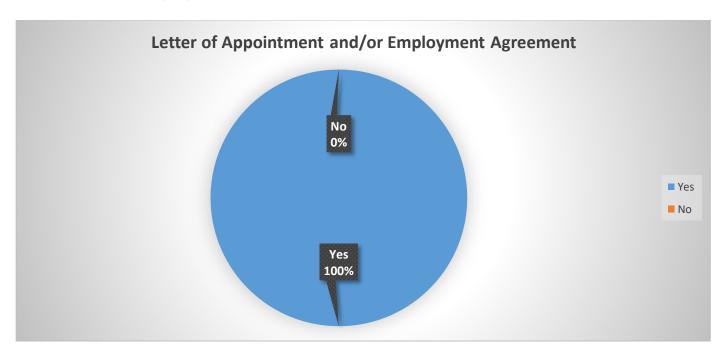
OTHER PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Question 1

Does your firm provide a Letter of Appointment and/or Employment Agreement to Legal Assistant?

Answer

Yes 26 (100%) No 0 (0%)

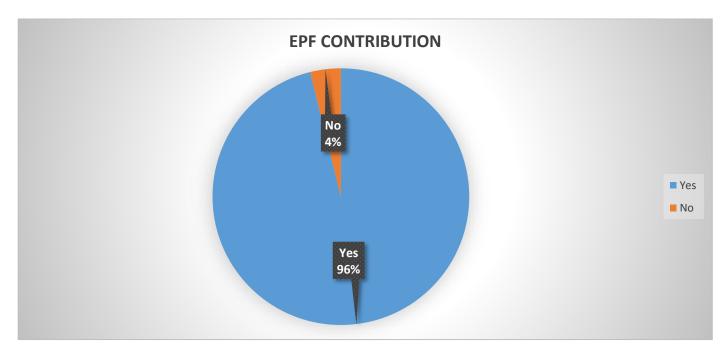


Question 2

Does your firm pay for EPF contribution?

Answer

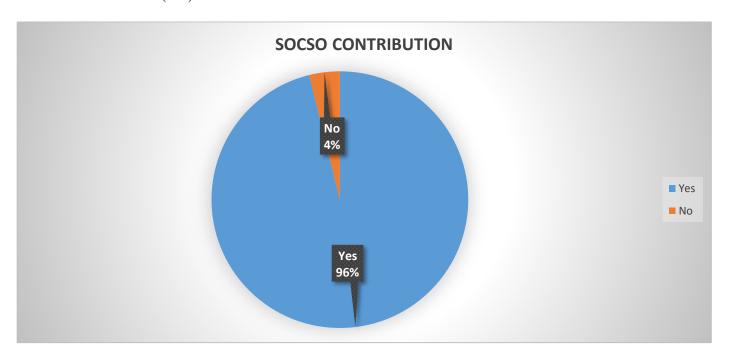
Yes 25 (96%) No 1 (4%)



Does your firm pay for SOCSO contribution?

Answer

Yes 25 (96%) No 1 (4%)

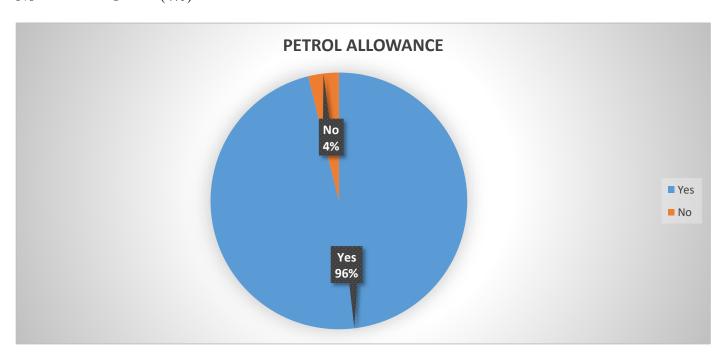


Question 4

Does your firm provide petrol allowance to Legal Assistants for their work-related travelling & trips?

Answer

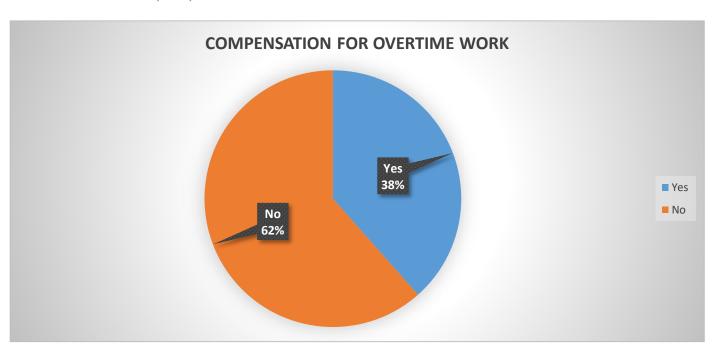
Yes 25 (96%) No 1 (4%)



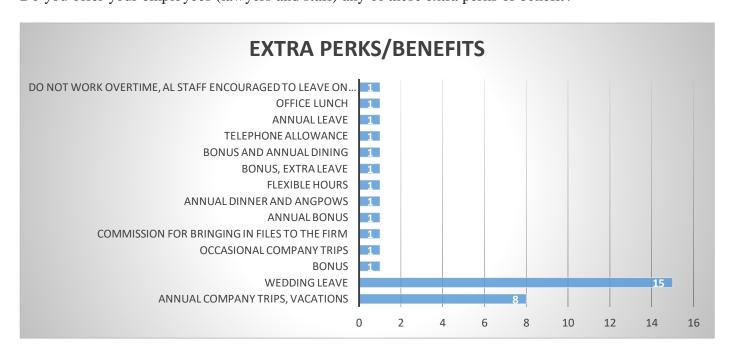
Does your firm compensate Legal Assistants for overtime work?

Answer

Yes 10 (38%) No 16 (62%)



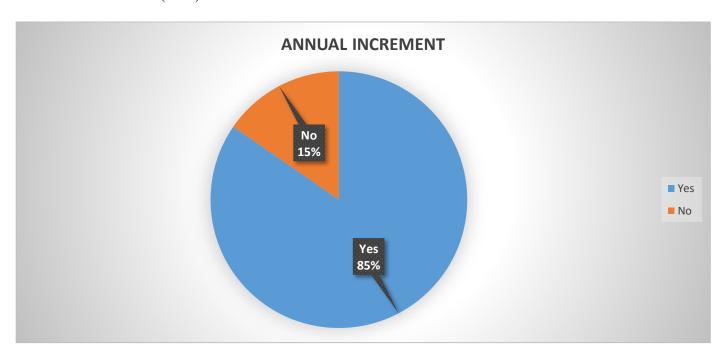
<u>Question 6</u> Do you offer your employees (lawyers and staff) any of these extra perks or benefit?



Does your firm provide an annual increment to Legal Assistants?

Answer

Yes 22 (85%) No 4 (15%)

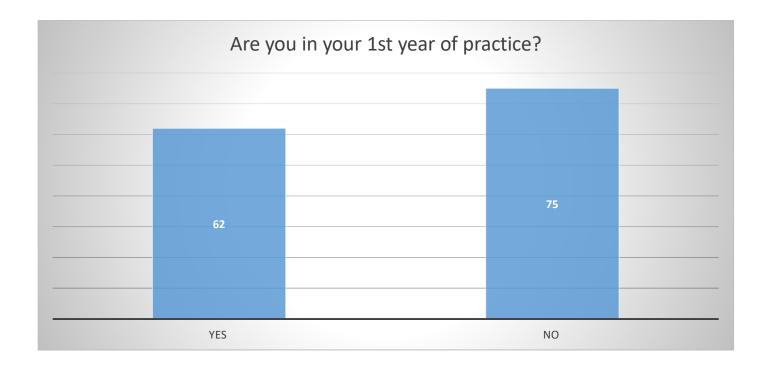


<u>Question 8</u> How much annual increment do you pay your Legal Assistants?

Annual Increment	Total
500	3
Depends on their performance	3
300	3
300 - 1000	1
1-month salary	1
depend on their performance, we provide incentives	1
for work done on certain files	
Depending, in the region of 10% to 20%	1
About 10%	1
200	1
Depends	1
10%	1
Based on merits % firm's performance, 5-10% of	1
current salary	
200 to 300	1
RM300 - RM500	1
3 to 8 % based on performance appraisal	1

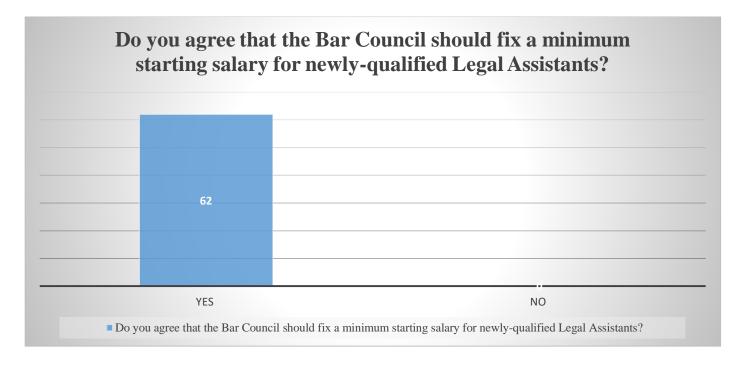
EMPLOYEE: 137 RESPONSES

There are 137 employees participated in this Survey, with 62 of them (45%) are in their 1st year of practice, while 75 of them (55%) are more than 1 year in practice.



EMPLOYEE (1ST YEAR OF PRACTICE): THE KEY SURVEY RESULTS

There are 62 employees in their 1st year of practice participated in this Survey, with all 62 of them (100%) think that the Bar Council should fix a minimum starting salary for newly-qualified Legal Assistants.



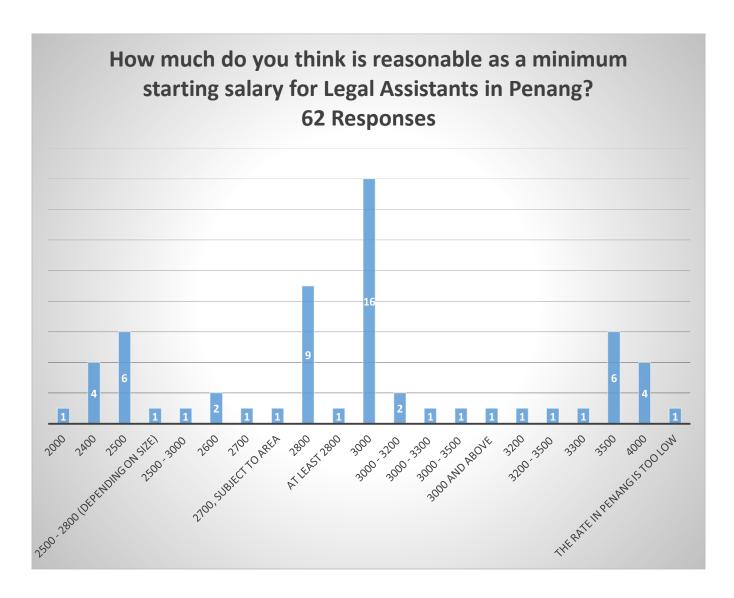
THE YES: REASONING & JUSTIFICATION

- 3500
- 4000
- 3000
- 3300
- Otherwise exploited... and many opted for other field as they can't survive in legal field... passion must be supported by reality...
- so to avoid employee being taken advantage of by the employer
- In every job sectors there are minimum salary fixed, we as as doing a professional job should also have a fixed minimum salary which will be very helpful for junior lawyers
- Starting salary for Legal Assistants varies from states to states. On top of that, starting salary differs between different districts in similar state. Some states offer lower salary but with similar amount of workload as other states offering higher salary.
- Some firms are giving way too low even though they earn loads
- Many employers are paying low monthly salary to their legal assistants. Some are only paid RM1,800.00
- No exploitation
- The starting salary for LA is lower than the people in other fields. However, we need to consume more time and money to become a lawyer. The allowance for chambering is also quite low.
- Avoid exploitation by law firms.
- To provide a fair and decent starting salary for fresh LAs to start with and to survive with having personal commitment
- Coz LA are qualified with valid PC
- To ensure the employees' interest is secured and not prejudice by employers' different excuses for not giving a reasonable salary. Also to prevent the huge gap of income between legal assistant in different law firm.
- Young lawyers are getting the same amount of work load/stress but salary is way apart for those who have similar years of experience. No consistency in the salary paying scheme like some other professions that provide minimum starting salary, or at very least a range for the minimum salary. In the legal arena, young lawyers are getting paid so little but the effort and time spent on work do not tally at all to the amount of salary being paid monthly, it feels like an exploitation for some of the young lawyers. By setting a minimum salary, the BC can assure that there wont be exploitation on young lawyers and this could in turn increase the productivity and performance of young lawyers in the legal field.
- 2800.00
- To ensure uniformity and certain firms to not take advantage of a 1st year LA. We work just as hard as others in different firms, how do we survive with just a salary less than 2.5 every month?
- To prevent exploitation of cheap labour by employer
- To ensure minimum living standards and to avoid employers take benefit to impose any wages amount. In some firm the wages of clerk and LA is more or less the same which shows that somehow there is no value for a Legal Assistant with a degree/LLB. Besides, not all firm that give extra allowances or commissions to their new LA. Most of the time new LA also need to work overtime at the office and there is no extra allowance for the overtime work.
- Because many senior practitioner is not getting the idea that starting salary 20 years back and now is totally different. With increasing pricing rate and worsening pandemic situation it makes starting salary is getting lower compared to other profession and not equivalent to the amount of works faced by the practitioners.
- So that we don't have to do part time job to cover our expenses

- Junior LAs do most of the groundworks for senior lawyers and the amount of time and effort spent working over hours are never mentioned and compensated. Reasons like "newbies should work longer hours/harder to gain more experience" and that they "shouldn't complain about the (meagre) pay" encourages toxic working culture which is already a prominent thing in the legal industry. People sometimes forget that junior LAs are human too and have to pay rent and/or feed themselves and their family just like the senior LAs. If things like "honour", "experience" and "justice" can't bring food to the table at the end of every month from the start, what makes people think that we can continue working in the industry for the next 30 years?
- To avoid abuse
- 2700
- To make sure legal assistance can feed his family but not being fed by his family after being a legal assistance
- Because at present, most law firms are exploiting Legal Assistants, paying them ridiculously low pay with unreasonable work hours and expectations. Law firms know that the rate is similarly low across the industry, and with the current condition of the economy, they are also well aware that Legal Assistants are at the employer's mercy and that they can further exploit their employees. Without setting a minimum starting salary for Legal Assistants, this group of young practitioners will continue to become the victims of exploitation by their employers.
- RM2000.00 and above
- The low starting salary for legal assistants does not reflect the mountain load of work and stress that they need to endure. It is true that nothing easy comes without hard work but at a proper and comfortable starting salary for legal assistants would provide some form of comfort in the face of excessive workload and stress.
- In order to ensure that the Legal Assistants are not exploited and their hardwork are rewarded accordingly
- To prevent 'cheap labour'. 2. Worth the qualification. 3. Should not differentiate salary with place of practice i.e seberang perai (tanah besar) mostly new LA under 2.5k 4. Alr 2020 but paid like 10yrs back. 5. To make a living
- Because the salary does not surmount to the effort, workload and amount of time spent on the work. More often than not, the salary differs from State to State. Why should that be the case when the same, if not more effort is being put into the work? Smaller states will hop onto the excuse that "it's a small island/State and we're not in the big city, so expect this salary". This is unfair as I have heard first year LAs in KL earning almost double to the salaries of first year LAs in other States.
- it'll be easier to negotiate if less salary is offered
- The Penang Bar consists of some very traditional law firms who disagree that a higher starting salary is relevant in this day and age. By providing us with a minimum salary, we can be ensured that young lawyers have a minimum wage that reflects our position as Legal Assistants who has financial commitments to meet.
- The average starting salary for Legal Assistants is too low in Northern Region including Penang
- To ensure that employers do not misuse the recently qualified pupil as cheap labour in the name of experience as the reality we do more than we get paid
- to avoid any underpaid salary
- Protect the interest of newly qualified legal assistant
- So that the rights of LA will not be taken for granted and the minimum starting salary gives all of us a chance to start fresh on the same and equal ground #Equality
- to avoid prejudice and unfair treatment to young lawyers
- The average wage for LAs haven't changed as much since the 90s when the cost of living has increased significantly. My mother received the same amount of salary in 1995 when she first started practicing law. Quite honestly, I think that this is a huge travesty in the legal profession when we are the ones who should be knowledgeable in employee and human rights.

- As a noble career, the legal fraternity should show that it is able to set an example that minimum starting salary is feasible. It should reflect the change of time whereby 10 years ago, starting of RM1700-1800 is reasonable but going forward you can't expect a professional, lawyer to start below RM2100
- 2400
- To ensure that Legal Assistants are not oppressed by the employers with unbalanced work-pay scheme
- Different legal firms offer different minimum starting salary for Legal Assistants, some are quite sufficient and some are not. However, considering the amount of living in Penang during CoViD-19, minimum starting salary for Legal Assistant should be above RM3000. Commitments are increasing, therefore the increment of minimum starting salary from RM2000 to RM3000 is highly recommended.
- Because Legal Assistant is a professional career
- To ensure that no exploitation by the employer towards the new young employee when paying young lawyer salary. This is my general view as regardless of whether it is our legal profession, so long as it is graduated from a professional course, then the salary should be at least 3000.
- to avoid the underpaid wages
- The minimum starting salary that the employer is currently paying might be a reasonable rate 20 years ago, but not today
- Legal profession is a Professional Body. In many industries, standard have been set and also regulated. Thus, it is important that Employers in Legal Industry also update to this, same as other industries.
- Employers tend to overwork and underpay newly-qualified lawyers. I understand our qualifications can only justify our pay for so much, but the amount being paid now, especially for older, more traditional firms are way below par. The pay young lawyers are receiving does not compensate us for the hours and work we put in, nor does it correspond with the cost of living today. Particularly without any incentives such as commission or overtime, it makes it really difficult for younger lawyers to be excited about the long hours the profession requires of us. I think in order to keep the next generation of lawyers in the profession, some changes need to be made to our salaries as an incentive for us to stay.
- so that employers can't start very low
- So that legal assistants are not underpaid
- to provide certainty to the professional and refrain from allowing exploitation
- The prices for basic needs and services are increasing but the salary is still the same
- The Bar Council should set a good example in providing labour protections for its members.

THE YES: SUGGESTION & PROPOSAL





EMPLOYEE: Data Digest of the 62 Employees who are in their $\mathbf{1}^{st}$ year of practice

1.1 Current Monthly Salary

Current Monthly Salary (RM)	Total
2500	12
2000	8
2300	7
2200	6
2600	6
3000	4
1500	3
2800	3
700	2
1800	2
2400	2
1200	1
1700	1
2100	1
2900	1
3200	1
3500	1
0	1
Total	62



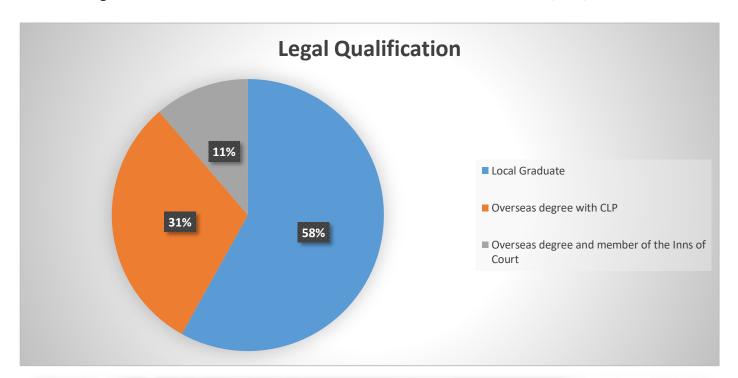
1.2 Expected Monthly Salary

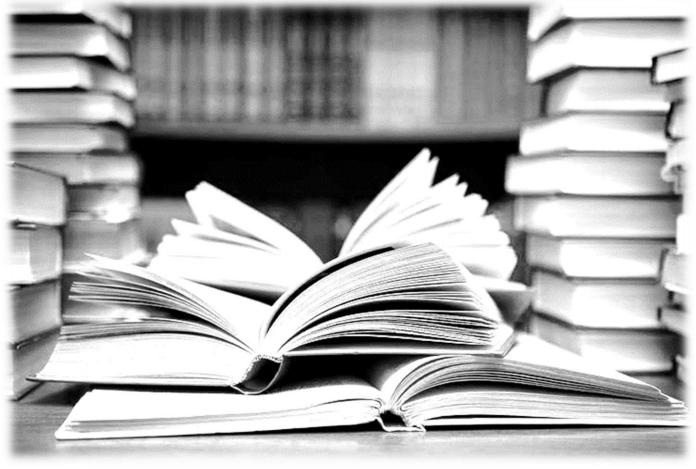
Expected Monthly Salary (RM)	Total
3000	18
3500	8
2500	7
2800	7
4000	4
3300	4
2600	3
2000	2
2200	2
3200	2
5000	1
3700	1
2700	1
2400	1
2300	1
Total	62



1.3 Legal Qualification

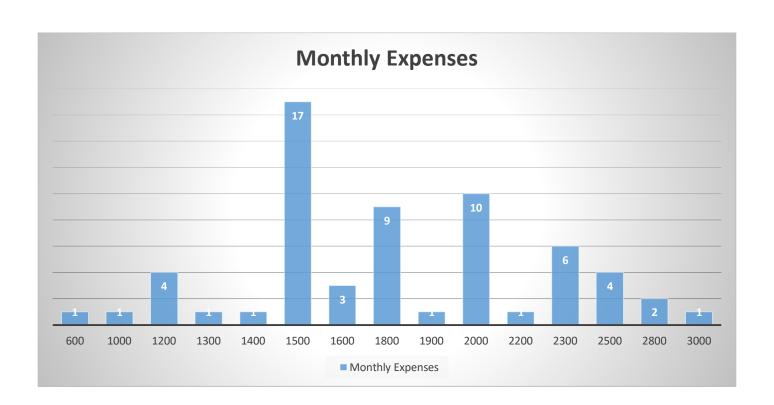
Local Graduate (MU, IIU, UUM, MMU, UniSza, UiTM, UKM)36 (58%)Overseas degree with CLP19 (31%)Overseas degree and member of the Inns of Court7 (11%)



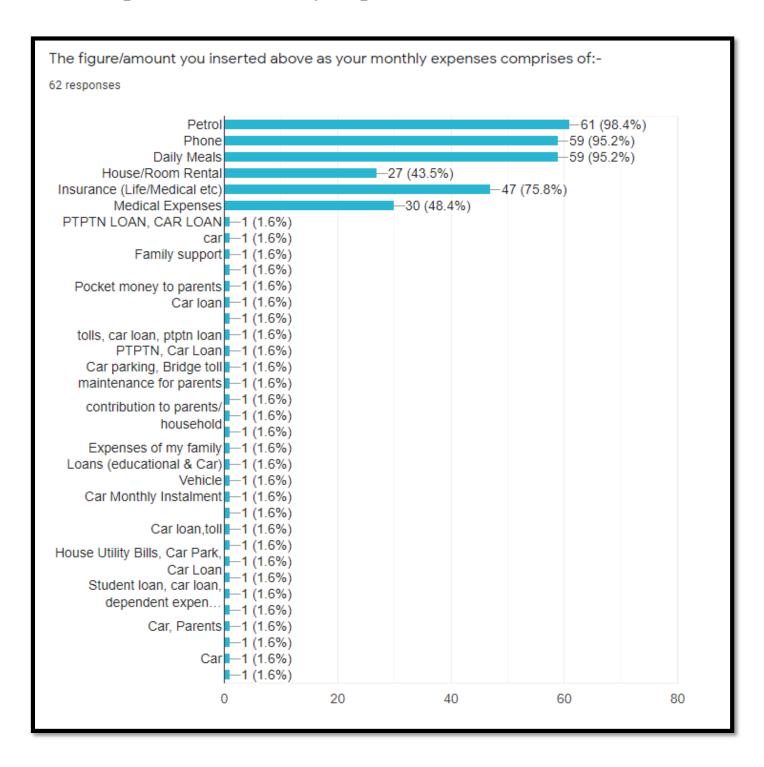


1.4 Monthly Expenses

Monthly Expenses	Total
1500	17
2000	10
1800	9
2300	6
1200	4
2500	4
1600	3
2800	2
600	1
1000	1
1300	1
1400	1
1900	1
2200	1
3000	1
Total	62



1.5 Composition of Monthly Expenses



1.6 Area of Practice

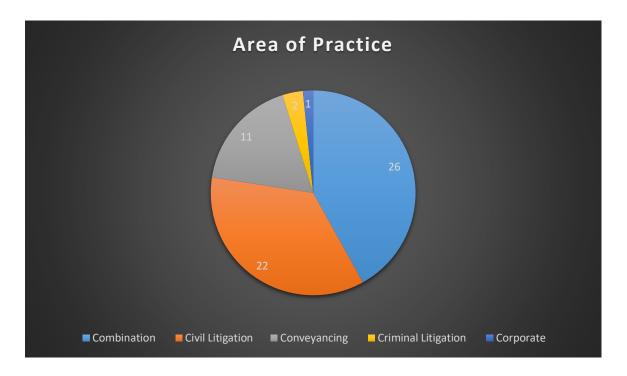
 Combination
 : 26 (42%)

 Civil Litigation
 : 22 (35%)

 Conveyancing
 : 11 (18%)

 Criminal Litigation
 : 2 (3%)

 Corporate
 : 1 (2%)



1.7 Location of Firm

 Timur Laut
 : 35
 (56.5%)

 Seberang Perai Utara
 : 15
 (24.2%)

 Seberang Perai Tengah
 : 7
 (11.3%)

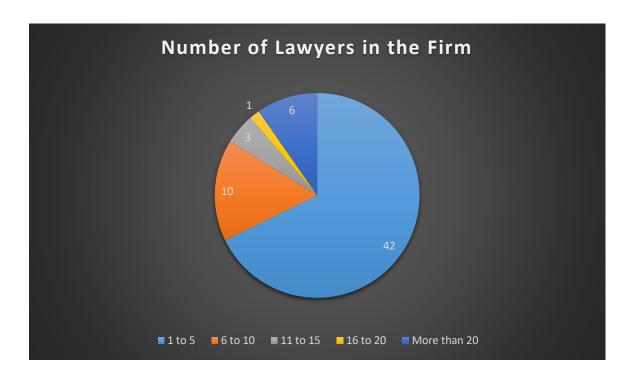
 Barat Daya
 : 4
 (6.5%)

 Seberang Perai Selatan
 : 1
 (1.6%)



1.8 Number of Lawyers in the Firm

1 to 5	: 42	(68%)
6 to 10	: 10	(16%)
11 to 15	: 3	(5%)
16 to 20	: 1	(2%)
More than 20	: 6	(9%)



1.9 Working Hours

 5 days a week, 8 hours average daily
 : 29 (46.8%)

 5 days a week, 12 hours average daily
 : 21 (33.9%)

 6 days a week
 : 10 (16.1%)

 7 days a week
 : 2 (3.2%)



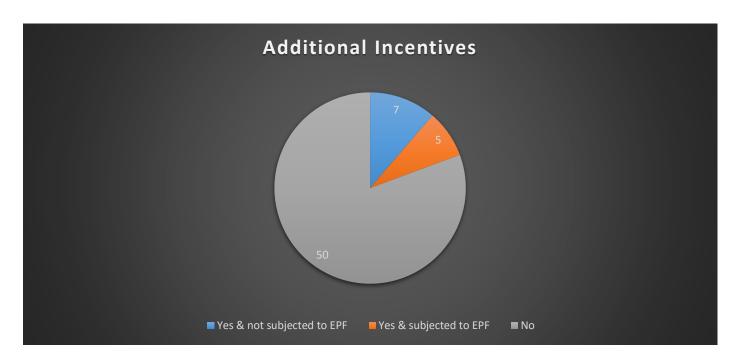
OTHER PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Question 1

Does your firm offer any incentives (e.g. commission on files)?

Answer

Yes & not subjected to EPF	7	(11.3%)
Yes & subjected to EPF	5	(8.1%)
No	50	(80.6%)

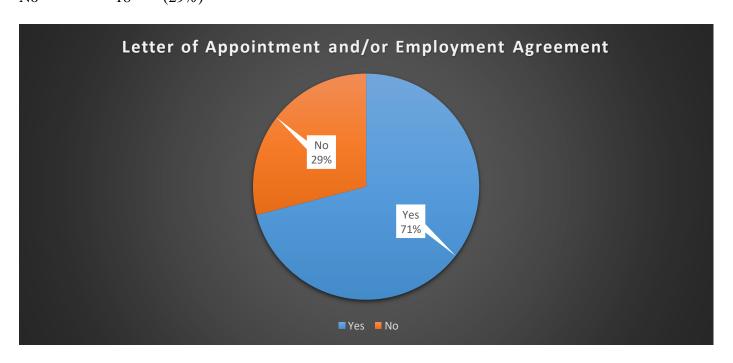


Question 2

Does your firm provide you with a Letter of Appointment and/or Employment Agreement?

Answer

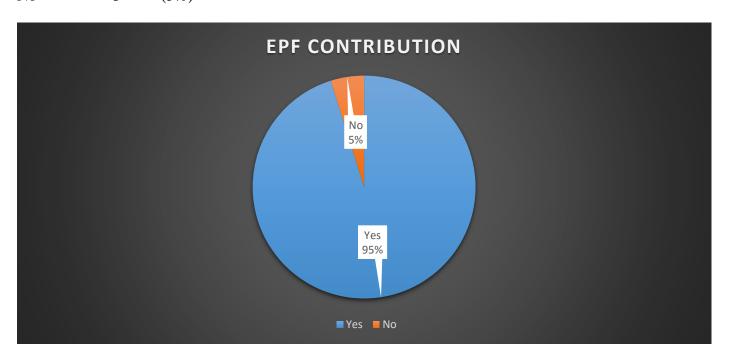
Yes 44 (71%) No 18 (29%)



Does your firm pay for EPF contribution?

Answer

Yes 59 (95%) No 3 (5%)

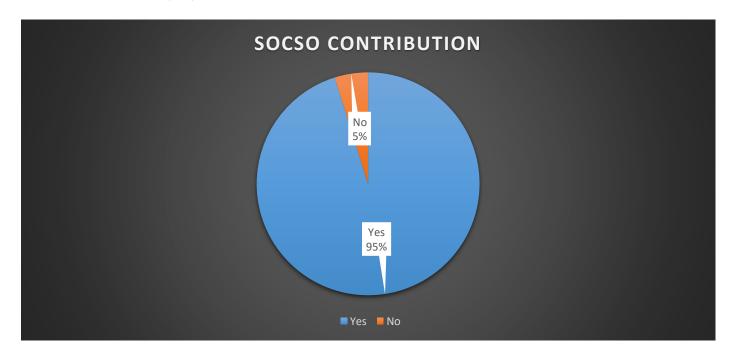


Question 4

Does your firm pay for SOCSO contribution?

Answer

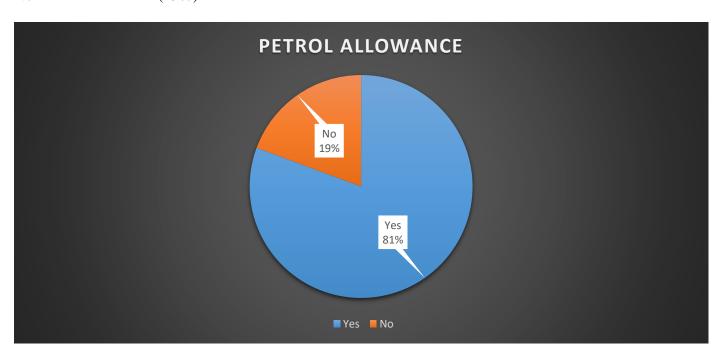
Yes 59 (95%) No 3 (5%)



Does your firm provide petrol allowance to you for your work-related travelling & trips?

Answer

Yes 50 (81%) No 12 (19%)

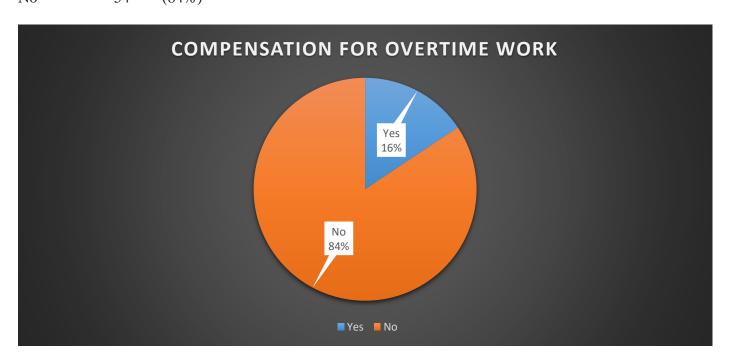


Question 6

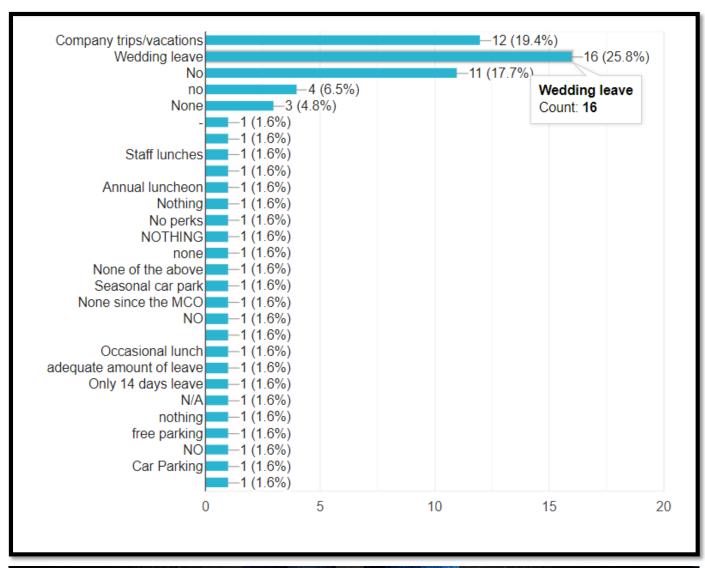
Does your firm compensate Legal Assistants for overtime work?

Answer

Yes 8 (16%) No 54 (84%)



Question 7Do you offer your employees (lawyers and staff) any of these extra perks or benefit?



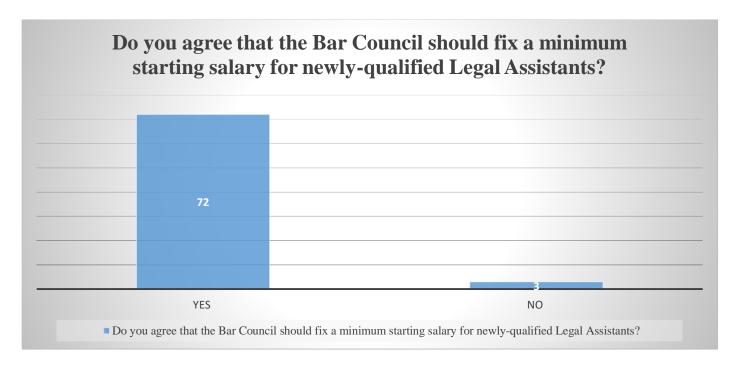


EMPLOYEE (MORE THAN 1 YEAR OF PRACTICE): THE KEY SURVEY RESULTS

There are 75 employees beyond their 1st year of practice participated in this Survey, with:

- (a) 71 of them in 2-7 years of practice; and
- (b) 4 of them are more than 7 years in practice.

There are **72 employees** (**96%**) think that the Bar Council should fix a minimum starting salary for newly-qualified Legal Assistants, while the remaining **3 respondents** (**4%**) view that minimum starting salary should not be fixed for newly qualified Legal Assistants.



THE YES: REASONING & JUSTIFICATION

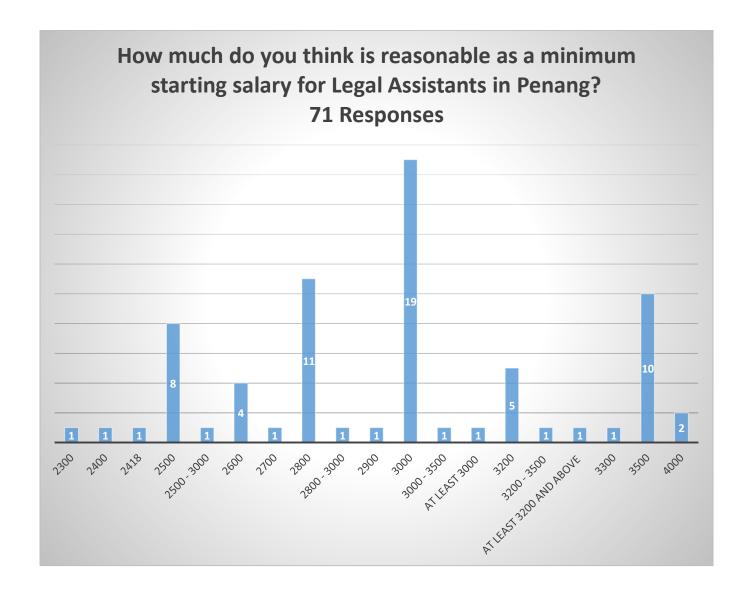
- Yes
- Because a lot firm give very minimal salary to 1st year lawyer
- Can serve to prompt a stronger sense of self worth and accomplishment
- Current salary level is too low
- because cost of living in penang is very high
- Equality for all
- Because it avoids possible abuse
- high living cost
- To protect the financial interests of the newly admitted members of the Bar. If our duties as legal professionals are to fight for the rights of our clients, how can we not fight for our junior Legal Assistants to protect their basic rights and entitlements. After all, even a foreign worker is protected under the law to have at least minimum payment of salary, Legal Assistants deserved a minimum starting salary too.
- To ensure that young lawyers are not opressed by low wage and lack of opportunity
- the employer has the right to increase or not the employee salary. But please at least let us have the same minimum starting salary. Sometimes the salary we received is below average
- By fixing minimum starting salary can prevent the first year practice legal assistant from any exploitation from the Employer as they are freshmen in the legal field and they might not know of their value as a profession

- It would balanced out the income gap for 1st year lawyers. Some firms pay 2nd to 3rd year pay for 1st year lawyers depending on the size of the firm. Whereas smaller firms may underpay the 1st year lawyers just because of their size. But work load for both are equally the same if not more than what it is supposed to.
- To ensure that everyone is adequately pay and not underpaid. To ensure that the pay commensurate work done.
- So that we can avoid abuse of young LA
- Cost of living
- The number of hours put into work do not correspond to the pay that we are receiving as LAs. Furthermore, as a professional, lawyers are expected to look well put. With the type of salary we are receiving, it is difficult to present ourselves as a professional, on top of the other financial commitments made. The same applies to chambering students.
- Minimum salary should be fixed not only for Legal Assistants but also Pupils to avoid salary stagnation or worse, in my situation the seniors were paid higher chambering allowance compared to my batch chambering allowance and to ensure that EPF and SOCSO are at least given to Pupils. Perhaps it is expected that the juniors have to accept their current conditions since it's just for 9 months or 1 year, but why should they be treated worse than other employees. It is ridiculous that the salary of the Pupils and Legal Assistants are lower than a newly appointed clerks or admin staff. But Pupils and Legal Assistants are expected to travel interstates and to government departments and clients offices to deliver documents without getting transportation claims or claims as low as 40 cents per km and which is lower than the claim given to the despatch of the firm. The traditional of expecting juniors to be the driver for the seniors but they are not paid for their petrol since they are paid allowance is which includes travelling allowance is right. By allowing this situation to continue, the Bar is indirectly consenting to the oppression of the juniors by the employers.
- As the partners of the firm have more bargaining power on their side, often the Legal Assistants will be facing dilemma of employed with lower rate or be replaced.
- To avoid underpaid for legal assistants
- Lawyers are underpaid
- SOme lawyers are under paid.
- If not employers will take advantage of the newly-qualified legal assistants by giving very low pay. The older generation of lawyers still has backward thinking and thinks that the legal assistant should be paying them instead as they are giving experience to the legal assistant. Furthermore, a legal assistant in a firm is usually not just the legal assistant, they are also a despatch, a clerk, a mover, a cleaner and etc.
- I found there is salary lower market rate is given to the new LA.. And costs of living is high now
- the salary offered is far too low compared to other professions therefore taking away interests and passion they have in this legal profession.
- Our salaries are lower than any administrative job out there
- The living costs in Penang is increasing and adjustment of salary is needed for fresh legal assistants to survive
- to prevent law firms exploit on junior lawyers
- The starting salary is way too low for us to cope with our life. Even fresh graduate engineer in MNC company in Penang Industrial Area earns more than us as a fresh graduate lawyer. We do not in any way inferior to them. In fact, we spend more years of studies and also internship period compared to them. How do we justify this?
- Most firms refuse to increase the salary as they are of the opinion that other firms are paying the same rate so that is no need to pay more. 30 years ago, the rate are still the same and it's 2020.
- To uphold the professionalism of our field.
- Yes truely agreed for a minimum starting salary. Mostly many firm took advantage to the young lawyer by offering very low salary but come with loads of workload.
- some firms offer A VERY LOW starting salary
- To avoid exploitation of young & fresh graduate lawyers.
- There should be a reasonable yardstick for all the employers to follow in this legal fraternity.
- Because Penang lawyers are severely underpaid
- 2600
- Sustaining liveable living life
- To avoid employers and firms from taking advantage of new lawyers as cheap or free labour

- .
- Many legal assistants are exploited by getting low salary but having heavy workload. Many work long hours
 without getting paid for their overtime work and without getting rewarded in any way for their work done other
 than getting paid their basic salary (which is already low in the first place). The salary increment is also slow.
 The fact that there is no minimum starting salary is almost like a catalyst for the employers to exploit the legal
 assistants even further.
- Because its a professional career that need intervention of Bar to put forward a minimum starting salary for young lawyers, taking into account of the basic salary received by our fellow friends in the Government's servants.
- Rising cost of living
- Compare to other profession, eg doctor, engineer, accountant, etc lawyer first year pay way much lower. I even knew some firms offer less than rm2k for a first year lawyer.
- To protect the legal assistants from unduly low pay
- Fairness & to uphold our profession.
- So that junior lawyers or fresh graduates will at least have a secured salary and is in line or achieve the level as a professional practice.
- 3000
- For a first year Legal Assistant, a minimum of RM2,400.00
- Employer shall not randomly fix the minimum salary.
- 3500
- because it would be fair regardless the size of the firm or the workload especially considering the needs and the
 cost of living at the moment, the starting salary should consider more factors instead of just qualification or
 experience.
- Legal Assistants (LA) are only paid RM2000 the most as their starting salary and gradually be increased with RM100 on an annual basis. This is strongly unfair as the workload given to LA are however, very heavy. With the current standard of living in Penang RM2000 is unsustainable.
- For a trainee doctor which is equivalent to pupilage, the government had fixed a scale but we lawyers after completing our llb, clp is being paid in the range of RM 700 to RM 1000. Both are learning process but why is there so much variance.
- To avoid the problem of overworked and underpaid (perhaps for some firm it can be understaffed too. Hence, young lawyer/LA does everything from scratch)
- some employers are paying very low wages.
- Just because
- Else employer will suppress young lawyers especially those newly called to the bar
- to ensure the juniors who have contributed to the firm to get a commensurate reward
- Monthly financial commitments
- must follow the current inflation rate. Costs of living is quite similar to KL in terms of accommodation.
- So that all young lawyers will have an equivalent salary for every state. During my time and until to date, every state will have a different minimum salary offered to Legal Assistants. For example, in Kuala Lumpur, you will be paid higher reaching more than RM 3,000.00 above for a fresh Legal Assistant, whereas in Kedah, the minimum salary can be as low as RM 2,000.00 or below offered to fresh Legal Assistant. Not everyone can afford to go to Kuala Lumpur to secure a job. Taken into account the economic situation nowadays and the increase in price for goods, rental house, fare for public vehicle, that is why a minimum starting salary should be fixed
- Motivate the young lawyers and to cover their monthly expenses
- It should be tally with the current economy situation, taking into account that this is a lucrative profession.
- Student loan is the main reason, many of us have to repay student loan which only increasingly higher for each generation to come. I have heard some firm exploited 1st year LA mainly for being inexperienced and paid them below RM1,800.00 for starting pay (before deduction of epf etc). With ever increasing living expenses (even for the basics) it is important that young lawyers be at least able to afford a decent set of suits for Court attendance and be able to focus on legal career rather than having to do side hustle to get by. Not every young lawyer had the luxury of family support, many young lawyer struggled their own way through to become a lawyer and still need to support their younger siblings in the family.

- 1800
- Employer more often than not offered them lowest salary possible with reason that they have no experience.
- 3500.00
- because some employee are paid below Rm2k for starting salary and the annual increment is just Rm 100 which is way below than miskin bandar level. With RM 2,000 is way below than what the government servant of below rank is getting.
- high living costs, and high expectation on lawyers by others.

THE YES: SUGGESTION & PROPOSAL



THE NO: REASONING & JUSTIFICATION

- Free market
- If a fixed starting salary is fixed, all firms would fall back on the minimum salary. I agree that the average starting salary for an newly qualified LA is not sufficiently attractive and is not consistent with the amount of effort put in, but there should be some flexibility instead of fixing a minimum maybe a minimum pay should be in the region of so and so and factors to be taken into account
- LA's need to prove themselves not be fixated on money

EMPLOYEE: Data Digest of the 75 Employees who are beyond their $\mathbf{1}^{st}$ year of practice

1.1 Current Monthly Salary

Current Monthly Salary (RM)		Total
3000		12
2500		7
3500		6
2800		5
5000		5
4000		4
2000		3
3600		3
4200		3
1800		2
2200		2
2300		2
2600		2
2900		2
3300		2
3400		2
7000		2
1000		1
1050		1
1200		1
2350		1
2650		1
2750		1
3100		1
3800		1
4500		1
4700		1
4900		1
	Total	75



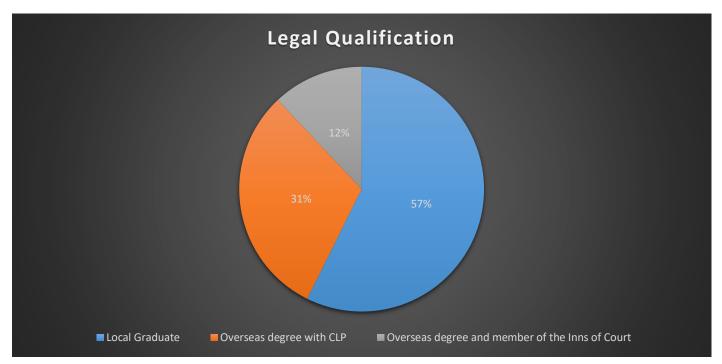
1.2 Expected Monthly Salary

Expected Monthly Salary (RM)	Total
3500	12
5000	12
3000	10
4000	8
4500	8
5500	3
6000	3
2650	2
2800	2
7000	2
8000	2
2000	1
2500	1
2900	1
3200	1
3300	1
3400	1
3800	1
4200	1
4300	1
4800	1
8500	1
Total	75



1.3 Legal Qualification

Local Graduate (MU, IIU, UUM, MMU, UniSza, UiTM, UKM)43 (57%)Overseas degree with CLP23 (31%)Overseas degree and member of the Inns of Court9 (12%)





1.4 Area of Practice

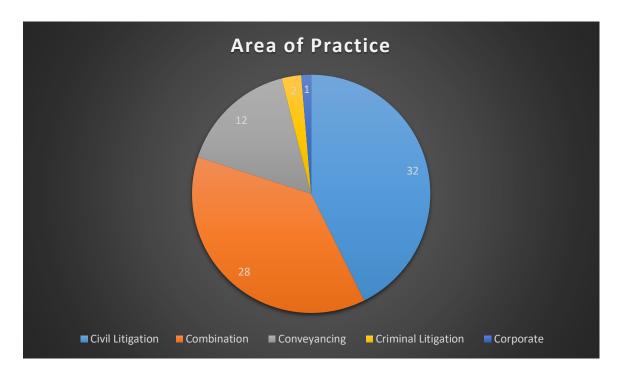
 Civil Litigation
 : 32 (43%)

 Combination
 : 28 (37%)

 Conveyancing
 : 12 (16%)

 Criminal Litigation
 : 2 (3%)

 Corporate
 : 1 (1%)



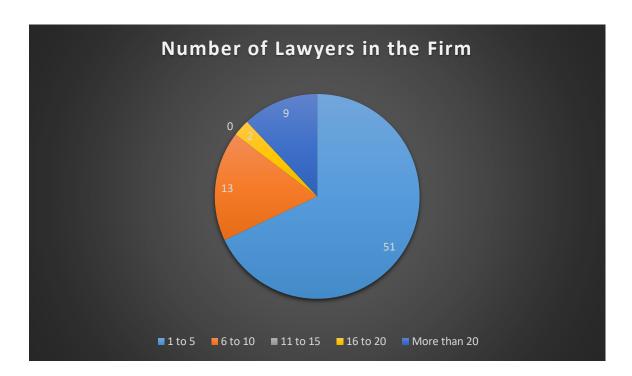
1.5 Location of Firm

Timur Laut : 48 (64%)
Seberang Perai Utara : 18 (24%)
Seberang Perai Tengah : 8 (11%)
Barat Daya : 1 (1%)
Seberang Perai Selatan : 0 (0%)



1.6 Number of Lawyers in the Firm

1 to 5	: 51	(68%)
6 to 10	: 13	(17%)
11 to 15	: 0	(0%)
16 to 20	: 2	(3%)
More than 20	: 9	(12%)



1.7 Working Hours

 5 days a week, 8 hours average daily
 : 38 (51%)

 5 days a week, 12 hours average daily
 : 25 (33%)

 6 days a week
 : 10 (13%)

 7 days a week
 : 2 (3%)



OTHER PERTINENT QUESTIONS

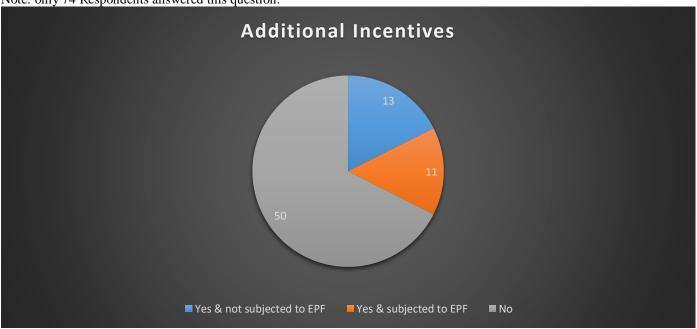
Question 1

Does your firm offer any incentives (e.g. commission on files)?

Answer

Yes & not subjected to EPF 13 (17.57%) Yes & subjected to EPF 11 (14.86%) No 50 (67.57%)

Note: only 74 Respondents answered this question.

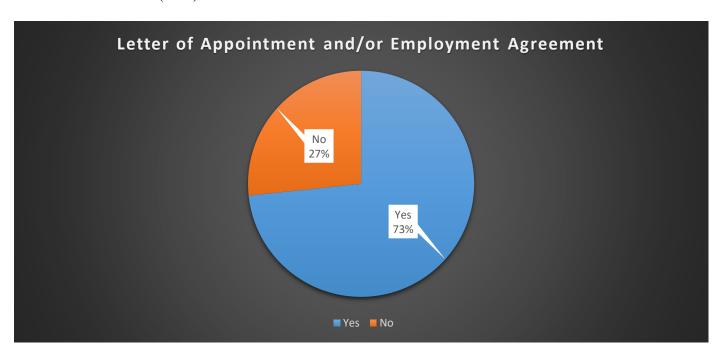


Question 2

Does your firm provide you with a Letter of Appointment and/or Employment Agreement?

Answer

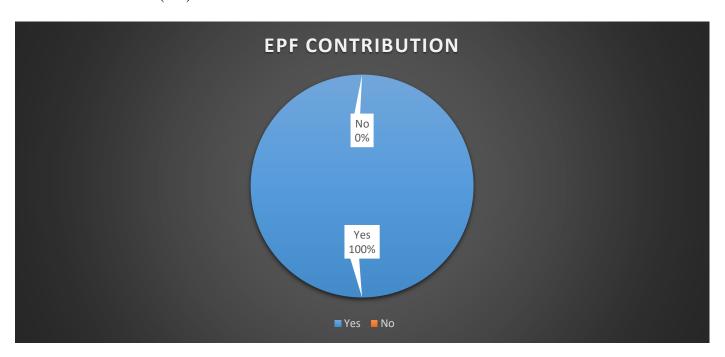
Yes 55 (73%) No 20 (27%)



Does your firm pay for EPF contribution?

Answer

Yes 75 (100%) No 0 (0%)

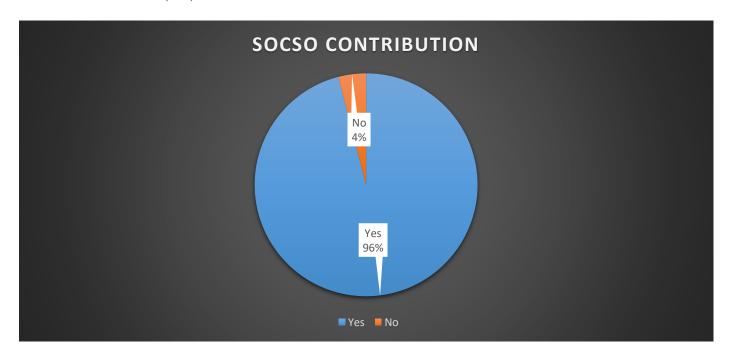


Question 4

Does your firm pay for SOCSO contribution?

Answer

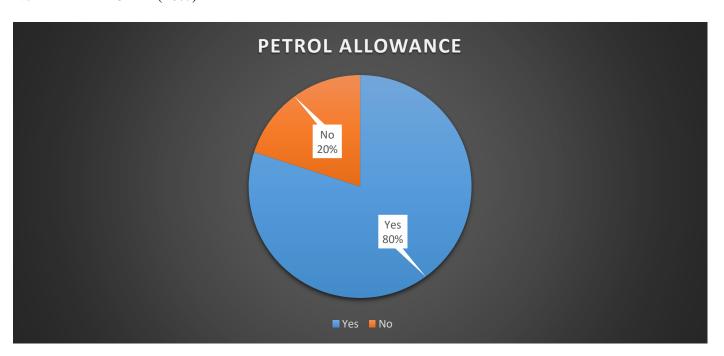
Yes 72 (96%) No 3 (4%)



Does your firm provide petrol allowance to you for your work-related travelling & trips?

Answer

Yes 60 (80%) No 15 (20%)

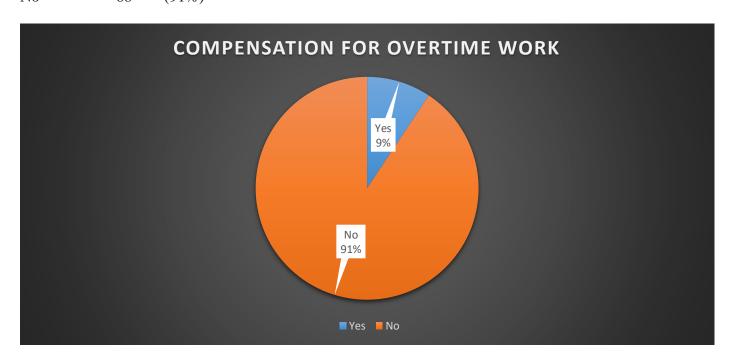


Question 6

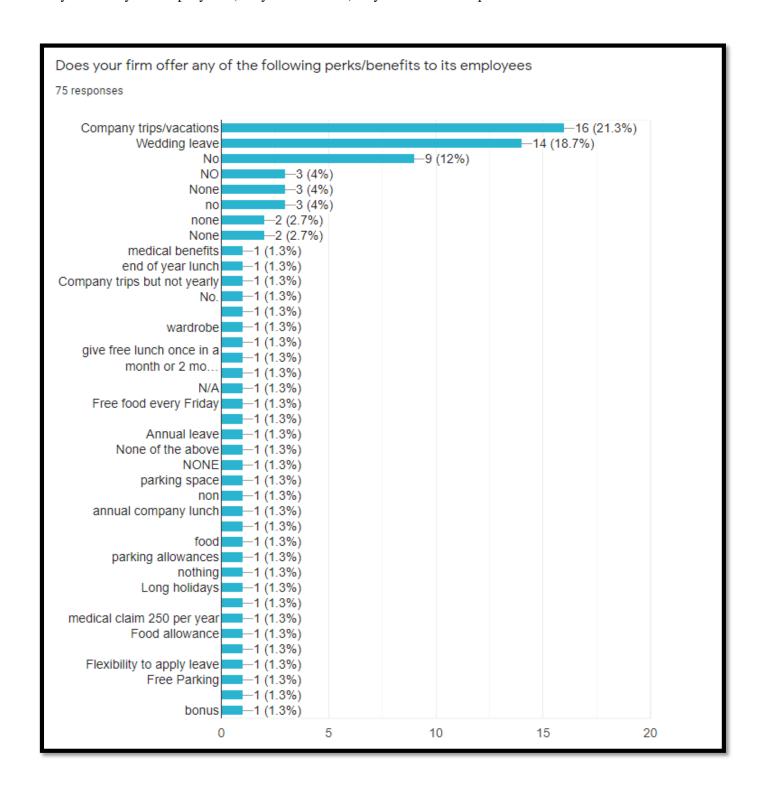
Does your firm compensate Legal Assistants for overtime work?

Answer

Yes 7 (9%) No 68 (91%)



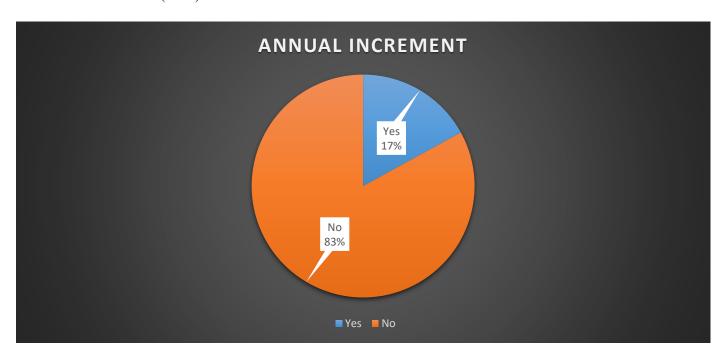
Do you offer your employees (lawyers and staff) any of these extra perks or benefit?



Does your firm provide an annual increment to you?

Answer

Yes 36 (17%) No 39 (83%)



<u>Question 9</u> How much annual increment have you received from your firm?

