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BarkerGilmore's 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report

Research Report

Download your complimentary copy of BarkerGilmore's 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report

BarkerGilmore is happy to share our 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report.



Which industries pay the highest total compensation for all in-house positions? How long have in-house counsel been in their current roles? How often are the General Counsel's thoughts on business issues sought out?

The report contains a thorough breakdown of in-house counsel compensation data across a wide range of industries, practice areas, and company sizes for thousands of in-house lawyers at every level. You will discover the following key trends and more:

- Annual Salary Rates
- Colleagues Changing Roles
- Compensation by Organization Type: Private, Public, Portfolio, and Non-Profit Companies
- Highest and Lowest Paying Industries

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MESSAGE

BarkerGilmore’s 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report

BarkerGilmore’s 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report remains the trusted in-house counsel salary guide for legal executives, General Counsel, CHROs, and Boards seeking to understand current compensation dynamics and position their organizations for success.

In an environment where retaining experienced legal and compliance professionals has become a top priority, this comprehensive legal compensation survey equips organizations with the data required to benchmark every aspect of an in-house legal department’s pay structure. From base salary to annual bonuses and long-term incentives, BarkerGilmore provides the critical insights needed to design compensation strategies that attract high-performing legal talent and secure business continuity.

General Counsel Salary and In-House Counsel Trends for 2025

The 2025 in-house counsel salary guide analyzes total compensation for more than 2,700 in-house legal professionals nationwide. General Counsel, Managing Counsel, and Senior Counsel submitted confidential data through BarkerGilmore’s robust legal compensation survey conducted in March 2025. Respondents represent a broad cross-section of industries, company sizes, ownership types, and geographic regions.

The findings illustrate clear differences in General Counsel salary and total compensation based on company type and size. General Counsel at public companies continue to command the highest pay, with top earners exceeding \$4.5 million in total compensation. In comparison, private company GCs see top pay near \$3.3 million, while portfolio company GCs reach \$2.8 million and non-profit General Counsel can expect up to \$2 million at the 90th percentile.

Detailed Insights on In-House Legal Counsel Salaries

Base salaries for in-house counsel increased by an average of 2.8% this year—slower than the 4.4% average seen last year. General Counsel salaries rose by 2.5%, Managing Counsel by 3.0%, and Senior Counsel by 2.9%. While salary growth has moderated, cash bonus payout rates remain strong. Most in-house lawyers received 93% of their target cash bonus, with General Counsel at 88% and both Managing and Senior Counsel near 95%.

The in-house counsel salary guide also reveals that industry matters. Life Sciences offers the highest median total



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compensation for all in-house positions at \$474,000, followed closely by Energy at \$442,000 and Consumer at \$424,000.

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Elevating In-House Legal & Compliance

Benchmark by Role, Industry, and Organization Size

This year’s report empowers legal leaders to compare compensation by role, industry, practice area, company size, and structure. Whether the need is to benchmark a General Counsel salary for a multi-billion-dollar public company or understand what Managing Counsel earn at a private equity-backed portfolio company, the in-house counsel salary guide provides quartiles and medians that account for differences in revenue and complexity.

Additionally, the report examines key factors influencing compensation, including years in position, law school ranking, prior law firm experience, and reporting structure. For example, only 13% of General Counsel have remained in their current positions for 10 or more years, highlighting the importance of competitive pay to retain top legal officers.

Compensation Trends and Talent Retention

BarkerGilmore’s legal compensation survey indicates that 60% of in-house counsel are considering a job search within the next 12 months. While compensation is the leading driver, other factors include the desire for new challenges, stronger leadership roles, or improved work-life balance. Legal executives who wish to avoid costly turnover must understand market pay trends and adjust their compensation packages to compete with top-tier employers.

Furthermore, the report confirms that trusted advisors within the C-suite remain indispensable. Nearly two-thirds of General Counsel say their opinions on critical business issues are always sought and respected. This stature underscores why General Counsel compensation must reflect both legal and business leadership impact.



A Reliable In-House Counsel Salary Guide for 2025

With economic conditions shifting and organizations tightening budgets, trusted pay data has never been more vital. BarkerGilmore’s 2025 in-house counsel salary guide allows CHROs, CEOs, and General Counsel to align compensation with current realities, reward high performance, and stay ahead of market expectations.

The full report offers extensive tables detailing General Counsel salary by quartile, average in-house counsel compensation by industry, and bonus payout levels across company types. This unparalleled depth ensures that legal departments can design pay strategies that both reward and motivate.

Partner with BarkerGilmore



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For nearly two decades, ^{Elevating In-House Legal & Compliance} BarkerGilmore has served as the premier partner for in-house legal executive search, leadership development, and legal department consulting. In addition to publishing the most respected legal compensation survey in the industry, BarkerGilmore's consultants, coaches, and search professionals help organizations build in-house teams with the business acumen, gravitas, and EQ required to succeed in today's complex landscape.

Explore the complete 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report to benchmark with confidence, secure your competitive advantage, and elevate your legal department's talent strategy for the years ahead.

Frequently Asked Questions — 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report

1. *What were the in-house counsel compensation trends in 2025?*

Salaries for in-house legal counsel rose by 2.8% on average in 2025, marking a moderation from the previous year's 4.4% increase. Among roles, Managing Counsel experienced the largest increase at 3.0%, followed by Senior Counsel at 2.9% and General Counsel at 2.5%. These trends reinforce the need for organizations to use an accurate in-house counsel salary guide when planning budgets and retention strategies.

2. *Are sign-on bonuses still common for in-house counsel?*

Sign-on bonuses have become more selective. While the 2025 report does not show a dramatic drop like in 2024, the data confirms that cash bonuses as a percentage of target have held steady at 93% overall—88% for General Counsel and 95% for Managing and Senior Counsel. This points to a continued emphasis on rewarding retention and performance rather than aggressive sign-on incentives.

3. *Does legal education still influence in-house counsel salaries?*

The 2025 legal compensation survey reaffirms that educational pedigree continues to affect compensation levels for in-house counsel. Graduates from top-ranked law schools, especially those in the Top 50, earn higher average base salaries and bonuses than peers from lower-ranked institutions. Prior experience at AM Top 50 law firms also elevates earning potential, underscoring the value of both education and elite firm training in shaping General Counsel salary and overall in-house pay scales.

4. *Do public companies still offer higher General Counsel compensation?*

Yes. The 2025 in-house counsel salary guide shows that public companies continue to pay the highest total compensation for General Counsel. The 90th percentile for public company GCs now exceeds \$4.5 million in total compensation, well above private company GCs at \$3.3 million, portfolio company GCs at \$2.8 million, and non-profit GCs topping out near \$2 million. Public companies often maintain more transparent compensation frameworks and require broader regulatory expertise, driving premium pay for top legal officers.

5. Which industries lead in total legal counsel compensation?

Illustration: In-House Legal & Compliance

According to BarkerGilmore’s 2025 legal compensation survey, Life Sciences remains the highest paying industry for in-house counsel, with median total compensation for all legal positions reaching \$474,000. Energy follows at \$442,000, with Consumer rounding out the top three at \$424,000. These figures help General Counsel and legal departments benchmark salaries against peer industries and design packages that remain competitive.

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6. What are the latest insights on General Counsel salaries?

BarkerGilmore’s 2025 In-House Counsel Compensation Report details General Counsel salary data across all organization types and revenue bands, offering precise quartile breakdowns. This year’s report confirms that General Counsel remain among the best-compensated corporate officers, reflecting the strategic value they deliver as trusted advisors to the C-suite and Board. The report also illustrates how base pay, annual cash bonuses, and long-term incentives combine to drive total compensation packages for General Counsel at public, private, portfolio, and non-profit organizations.

Download the Full 2025 In-House Counsel Salary Guide

Access the full BarkerGilmore legal compensation survey to benchmark in-house counsel salaries by role, company type, industry, and location. Gain the insight needed to attract and retain top legal talent, maintain market competitiveness, and make informed decisions about pay structures for General Counsel, Managing Counsel, and Senior Counsel.

Download the Full Report



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