

Paralegal Division
State Bar of New Mexico

2007 Paralegal Compensation, Utilization and Benefits Survey

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History of the Paralegal Division

The Legal Assistants Division was organized and formally recognized by the State Bar of New Mexico in August 1995. The Division's organizational meeting was held on August 26, 1995, at which time its first slate of officers and board members were elected. Soon afterward, the Division conducted its first survey of New Mexico paralegals/legal assistants.

Historically, the terms "paralegal" and "legal assistant" could be used interchangeably. Previously, by statute, New Mexico recognized that the terms "legal assistant" and "paralegal" were synonymous. The terms were used interchangeably, much as the terms "lawyer" and "attorney" are used interchangeably in the legal profession. However, in recent years, the term "paralegal" has come to be the preferred term across the United States.

In 1995, the National Federation of Paralegal Associations adopted the term "paralegal" as its preferred term in response to the confusion created when persons outside the definition of paralegal, such as legal secretaries, assistant county attorneys, and entry-level legal support staff, started calling themselves "legal assistants".¹ More recently, the National Association of Legal Assistants "filed to protect the mark 'CP' for those who prefer to use the term 'paralegal' instead of 'legal assistant.'"² Additionally, the latest report of the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Non-Lawyer Practice uses the term paralegal almost exclusively,³ and the ABA has changed the name of its Standing Committee on Legal Assistants to the Standing Committee on Paralegals.⁴

In response to this important trend, in 2003, the Division submitted a proposal to the Board of Bar Commissioners of the State Bar of New Mexico ("BBC") to change its name from the Legal Assistants Division to the Paralegal Division. Upon ratification of the proposal, the Division petitioned the New Mexico Supreme Court to change the Division's name and to revise the applicable Supreme Court Rules. The Supreme Court approved the petition in September 2003, officially changing the name of the Division to the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of New Mexico. The Supreme Court Rules regarding the utilization of paralegals were amended in March 2004. In New Mexico, the terms "paralegal" and "legal assistant" are not synonymous; the Rules outline specific qualifications for those who would call themselves paralegals.

The 2004 survey was conducted in recognition of the importance of these changes. Now, in 2007, the Paralegal Division decided that it would be appropriate to again survey New Mexico paralegals as a means of determining the impact the amended Rules has had on the profession in the State.

¹ See <http://www.paralegals.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=385>.

² See <http://www.nala.org/cert.htm>.

³ See <http://www.pdi.org/Paralegal/FAQ.html>.

⁴ See <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/legalassistants/resource.html>.

Survey Methodology

As was true in 2004 when the last paralegal survey was completed, there is no mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification of paralegals in the State of New Mexico. Therefore, no central record exists with the names and contact information for all paralegals in the State. Once again, getting the survey instrument to all attorneys in the New Mexico, and requesting that each attorney share the survey with his/her paralegal(s), was thought to be the best opportunity to reach all practicing paralegals.

The survey instrument followed the general format that was used in 2004. With the generous support of the BBC, the survey was again published as an insert in an issue of the New Mexico Bar Bulletin, a weekly publication of the State Bar that is mailed to every attorney in the State. The survey was designed so that it could be folded into a self-mailer and was addressed to the Paralegal Division. At the same time, a hyperlink to an online version of the survey was published on the Paralegal Division website and the New Mexico State Bar home webpage. The survey was publicized in the New Mexico State Bar Bulletin each week until the submission deadline of April 15, 2007; the deadline was subsequently extended to April 20, 2007. Additionally, two email notifications were sent to all Paralegal Division members with email addresses, and an email notification was sent to all New Mexico attorneys with email addresses on file. These email notifications encouraged each paralegal recipient to complete the survey and requested that each attorney recipient encourage his/her paralegal staff to complete the survey.

Confidentiality of submitted information was maintained at all times. All information was submitted anonymously.

Analysis of Data

De-identified data obtained from the surveys was compiled into a spreadsheet. Non-responses and outliers were eliminated when appropriate. Data was plotted on various graphs to identify overall patterns and deviations. Comments received on the surveys indicated the same three major areas of concern among paralegals in New Mexico as was evidenced in the 2004 survey: 1) salary; 2) the need for verifiable qualifications for paralegals; and 3) the effect of mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification. Relationships between various variables were examined, including: 1) The relationship between salary and experience; 2) The relationship between salary and education; 3) The relationship between salary and national certification; 4) The relationship between membership in the Paralegal Division and national certification; 5) The relationship between salary and the ratio of paralegals to attorneys in a firm; and 6) The relationship between a preference for mandatory regulation and Division membership.

The data sets for each individual survey participant vary greatly. It is critical that readers understand that this data analysis describes certain variables, what values the variables take, and general relationships. There are many other variables that might have an affect on the relationships described herein, but which have not been considered. No attempt at explaining causation is being offered.

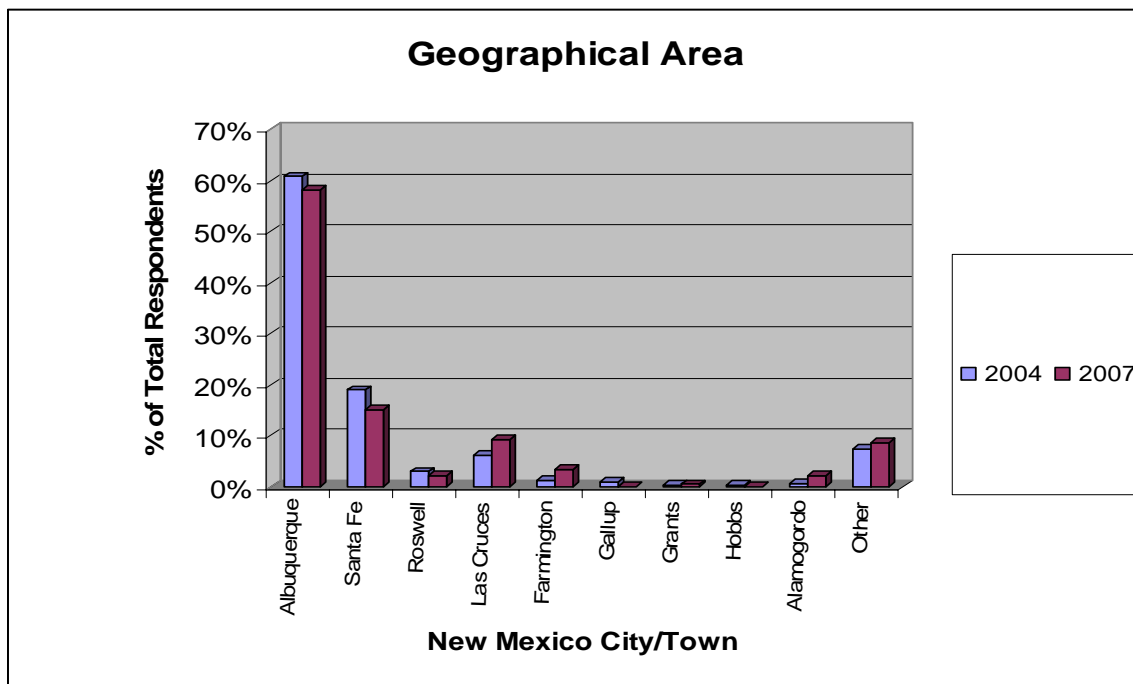
Participant Summary Information

Because there is no mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification for New Mexico paralegals, there is not an accurate means of estimating the total number of paralegals practicing in the State. One might presume that data compiled by the New Mexico Department of Labor (“NMDOL”), which comes from random samples provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, would be the best source for this information. However, the NMDOL combines data for “paralegals” and “legal assistants” into one category. Although this is appropriate for most states, it creates a significant problem in New Mexico since the terms are not synonymous here. By combining the data for paralegals, who must meet certain qualifications of experience, education, and/or certification, with legal assistants who do not have these minimum qualifications, salaries and other data relating to paralegals have the potential of being diluted.

At the time of the 2004 survey, because the amendments to the Supreme Court Rules Governing Paralegals had just gone into effect, the NMDOL data for the number of paralegals and legal assistants in New Mexico (952) was assumed to be accurate. In 2004, there were 306 completed surveys submitted to the Paralegal Division, just under one-third (32.14%) of the number of paralegals and legal assistants identified by the NMDOL.

Only 172 paralegals responded to the 2007 survey, or 56% of the 2004 response rate. Because of the small sample size and the unknown number of qualified paralegals practicing in the State, it is impossible to assure that any of the data is statistically significant. However, general comparisons with the 2004 data will be shown.

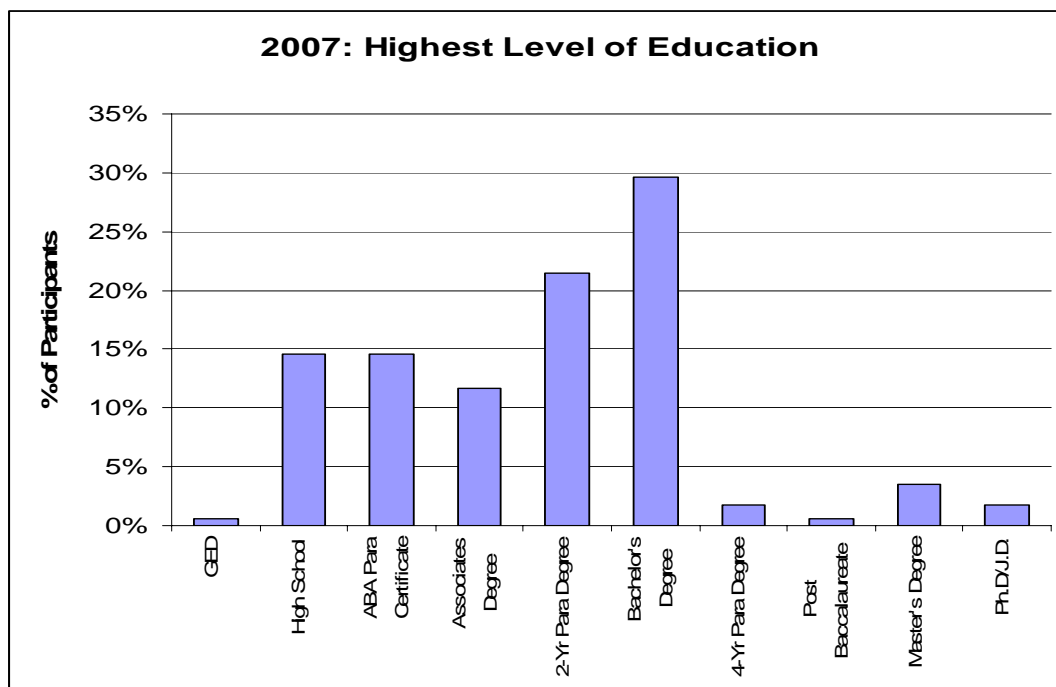
As would be expected, most of the survey participants came from the most populated areas of New Mexico: Albuquerque and Santa Fe. However, as compared to the 2004 survey, a greater percentage of the 2007 participants live or work in areas outside of Albuquerque and Santa Fe.



Of the 14 male (8.1%) and 158 female (91.9%) participants, 77 (44.8%) were members of the Paralegal Division. On-line surveys were completed by 138 paralegals (80.23%) and 34 paralegals (19.77%) mailed in hard-copy surveys.

Education

As paralegal education programs⁵ become more prevalent, more paralegals are entering the field through this means. However, there are many paralegals who have many years of experience and who entered the profession when these educational opportunities were not available. There are currently many ways to enter the paralegal field, as demonstrated by the variety of educational and experiential backgrounds of the survey participants. A GED was the highest level of education for only one (1.31%) participant. Twenty-five of the participants (14.53%) participants listed high school as their highest level of education. There were 25 paralegals with paralegal certificates from an ABA-approved program of studies as their highest level of education. Associates degrees are the highest level of education held by 20 (11.63%) paralegals and an additional 37 (21.51%) paralegals have a two-year associate's degree in paralegal studies from an ABA-approved program of studies as their highest level of education. Three (1.74%) participants hold a four-year paralegal degree as their highest level of educational achievement and 51 (29.65%) hold a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Seventeen of those 51 bachelor's degrees also have a paralegal certificate from an ABA-approved program of studies and six have a two-year degree from an ABA-approved program of studies. One participant has a post baccalaureate degree. Six (3.45%) participants hold master's degrees; two of these six also have an additional paralegal degree from an ABA-approved program of studies and one holds their four-year undergraduate degree in paralegal studies. There were three (1.74%) Ph.D/J.D.s participating,



⁵ Whether the paralegal program is a degreed program of studies or a certificate program, ABA approval serves as a standard for quality for the educational program.

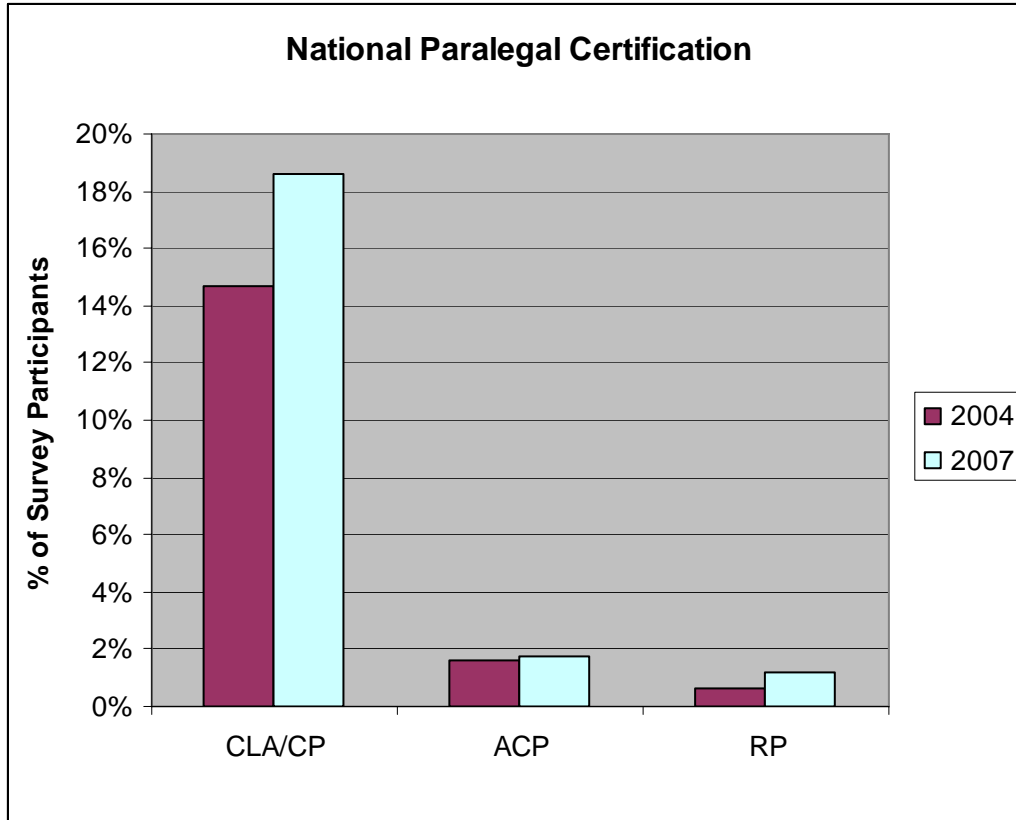
Certification

As there is confusion within the legal community over the definition of “legal assistant” and “paralegal”, there is also confusion over the difference between a paralegal who has a paralegal certificate and a certified paralegal. There are many kinds of paralegal education programs. Some programs offer two or four-year programs of study and confer degrees in paralegal studies to their students upon completion. Other shorter programs, often varying in length from six weeks to six months, provide a certificate to the student upon completion. The value of the paralegal certificate varies according to the length and quality of the paralegal program providing the certificate. A person who has a paralegal certificate is *certificated*, not certified.

Certification is not a program of study, but rather a nationwide credential. *Certified* paralegals are those persons who have successfully passed a two-day certification exam administered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) or a four-hour exam administered by the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA). Paralegals who are certified through (NALA) carry the designation of Certified Legal Assistant (CLA)/Certified Paralegal (CP). CLA and CP are interchangeable terms and designate the same certification. Paralegals who are certified through the NFPA carry the designation of PACE Registered Paralegal (RP). NALA previously offered an advanced certification in specialty practice areas for NALA certified paralegals who completed an additional one-day specialty exam; paralegals having successfully passed this exam were given the designation of Certified Legal Assistant Specialist (CLAS)/Certified Paralegal (CP) Specialist. NALA has recently instituted an online study course and testing program for its advanced certification and is encouraging all paralegals who successfully complete the new certification, as well as those holding the former designation of Certified Legal Assistant Specialist (CLAS)/Certified Paralegal (CP) Specialist, to use the new designation of Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP).

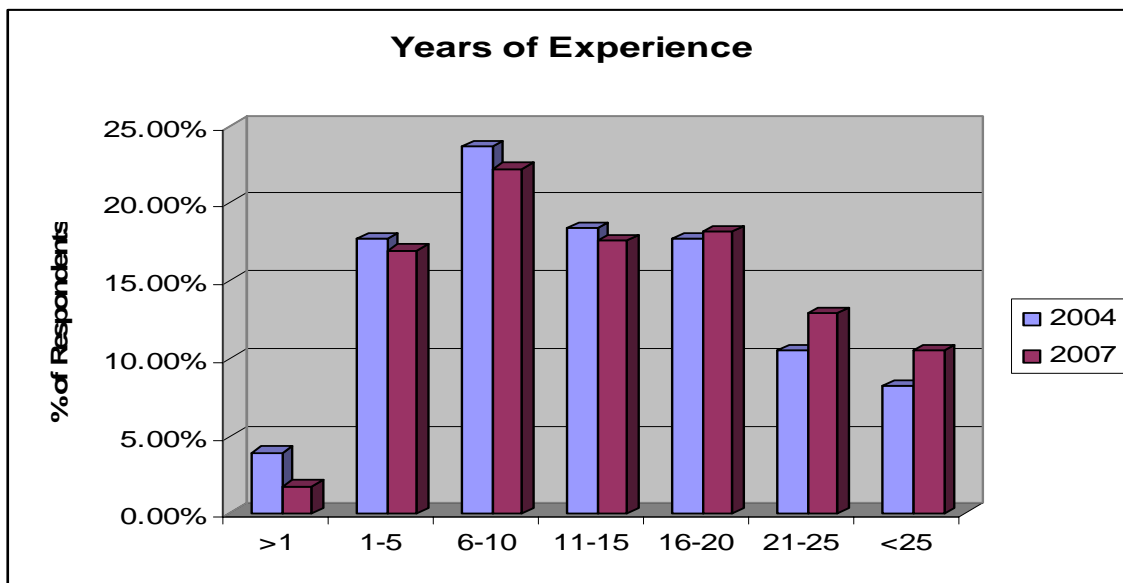
Certification serves as a national professional standard for paralegals and a means of identifying those who have met this standard. Additional information regarding the national certification and national specialty certification exams administered by NALA, and the prerequisite qualifications necessary to take these exams, can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nala.org/cert.htm#Background%20and%20Numbers> . Information regarding the certification exam administered by NFPA, and the prerequisite qualifications for taking this exam, can be found at <http://www.paralegals.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=17>.

There were 32 (18.6%) survey participants who indicated that they have their CLA/CP designation. One of these paralegals also carries the designation of PACE Registered Paralegal (RP). Three of these participants have also completed specialty certification exams and have the designation of Advanced Certified Paralegals. One of the paralegals who has completed advanced specialty certifications also is also an RP. Nineteen (59.38%) of the paralegals with their national certification also belong to the Paralegal Division.



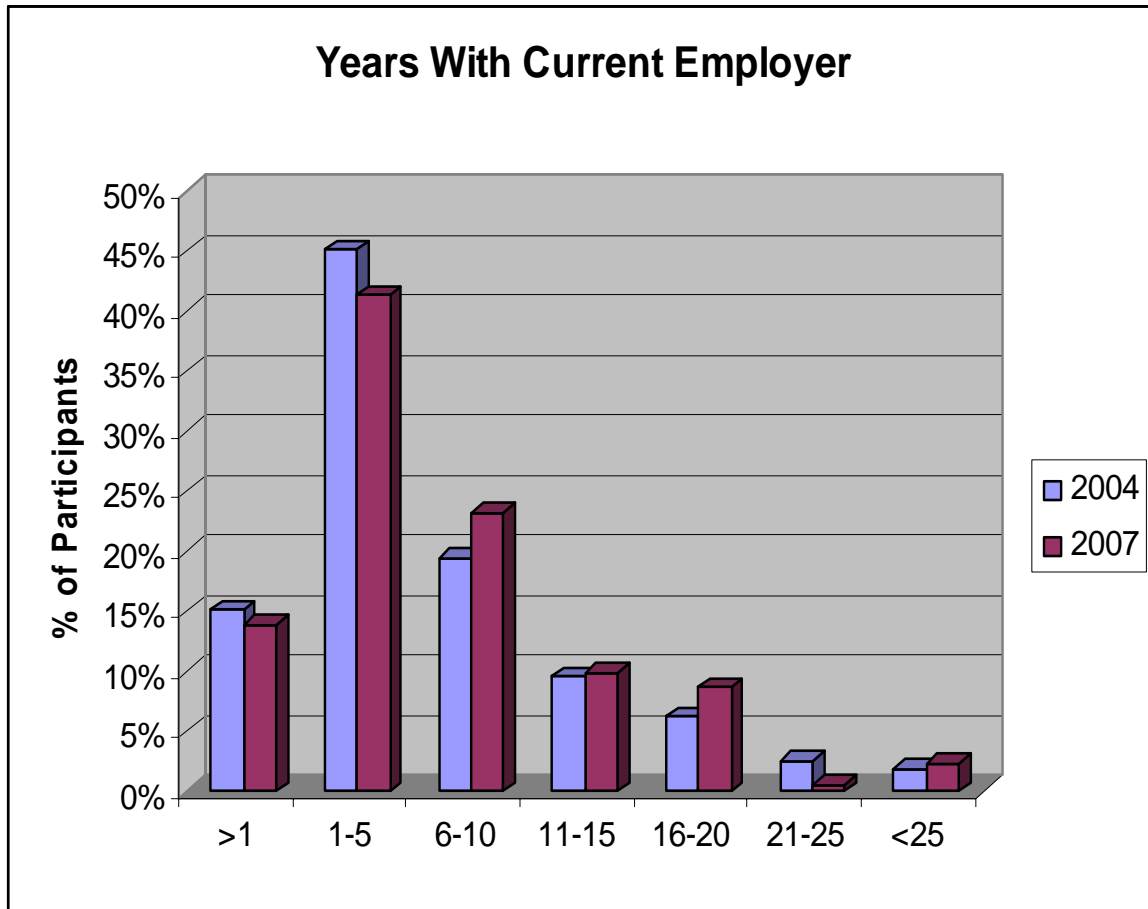
Experience

The following table provides information regarding the years of experience of survey participants:



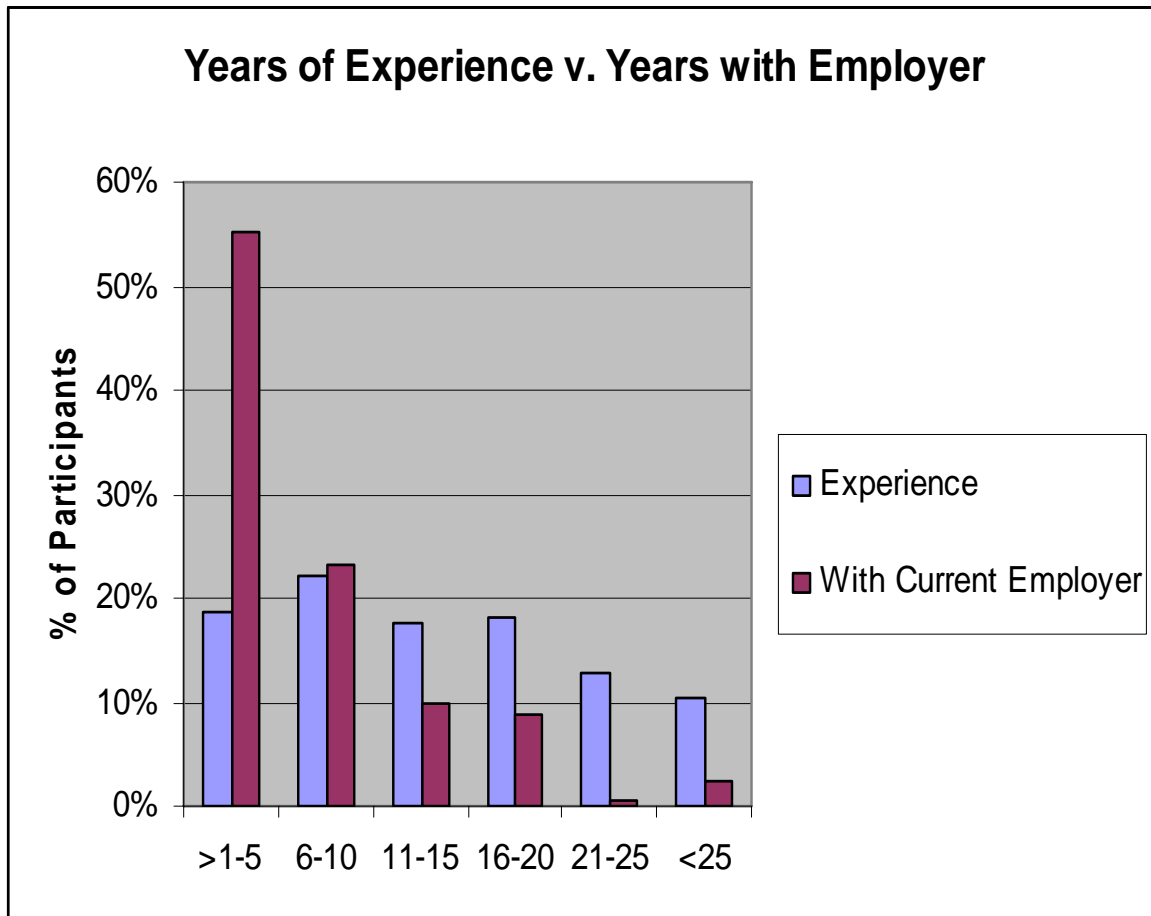
Tenure with Current Employer

The following table provides information regarding the number of years with the current employer reported by survey participants:



Years of Experience v. Years with Current Employer

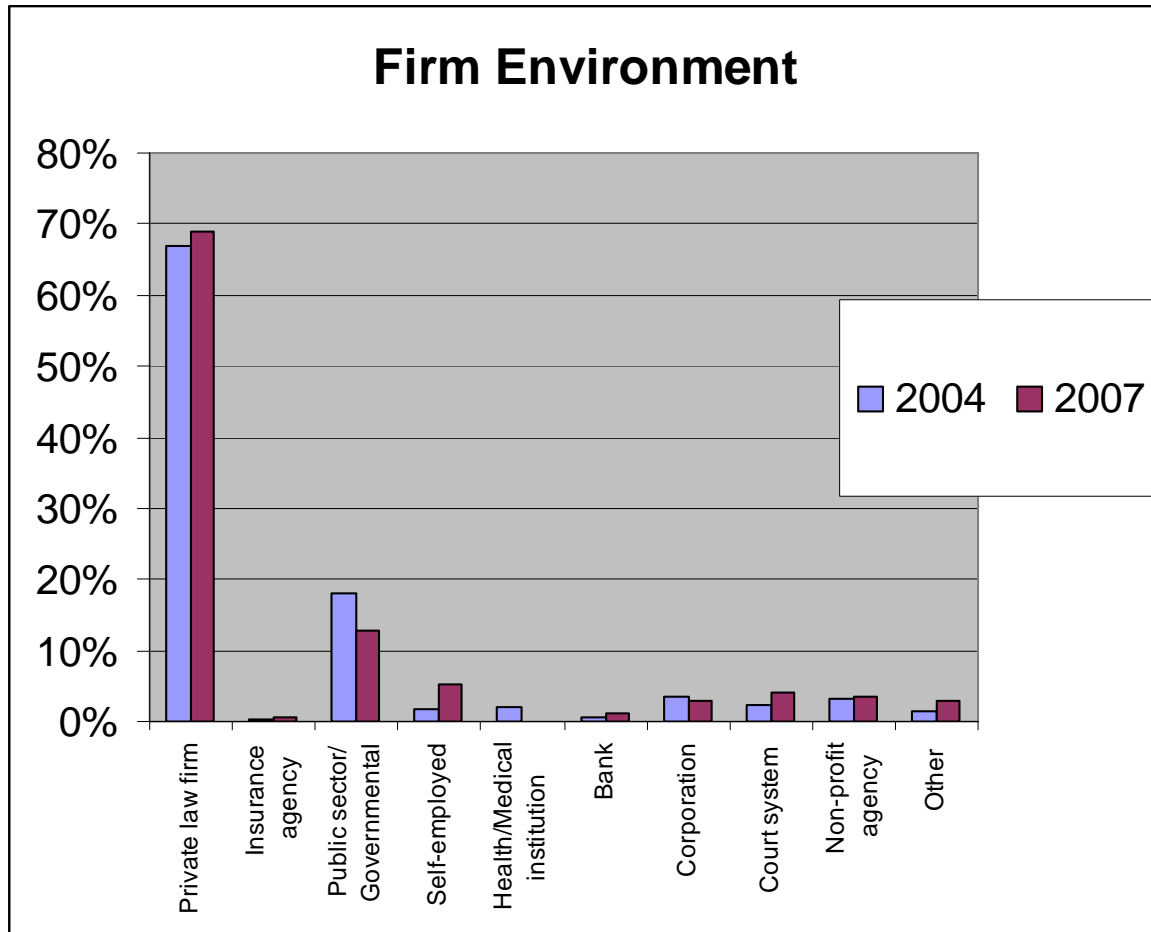
The majority of responding paralegals (over 55%) have been with their current employer only five years or less, even though only 18.71% have five years or less experience. Current national employment trends evidence a gradual lowering of the median number of years any employee works for an employer.⁶



⁶ See U.S. Census statistics, Distribution of Workers, by Tenure with Current Employer, by Selected Characteristic, at http://www.allcountries.org/uscensus/664_distribution_of_workers_by_tenure_withcurrent.html

Firm Environment

As in 2004, most paralegals (69%) responding to the 2007 survey work in a private law firm setting. Public sector employment runs a distant second with just under 13%. All other responding paralegals (18.1%) were divided between all the other categories.



The average paralegal works in a firm with 2.77 attorneys for each paralegal; the median is one paralegal for every attorney. However, individual ratios vary from one paralegal to 28 attorneys (1:28) to four paralegals for one attorney (4:1). There is very little relationship between the ratio of paralegals to attorneys and average paralegal salary.

Areas of Practice

As expected, some paralegals specialize in only one area of law, while others practice in many areas. Each paralegal was asked to note every area of law that comprised at least 20% of their practice. The following table presents the findings of survey questions describing the various areas of practice for participating paralegals:

Area of Practice	2004 Percentage of Total Participants	2007 Percentage of Total Participants
Administrative	20.92%	18.6%
Admiralty/Maritime	0%	0%
Antitrust	1.96%	3.6%
Asbestos	1.96%	%0
Aviation	0.98%	%0
Banking	2.94%	5.4%
Bankruptcy	9.48%	7.8%
Collections/Foreclosure	13.4%	12.6%
Commercial Lending	2.61%	3.6%
Contracts	22.55%	26.4%
Copyright	2.29%	2.4%
Corporate	20.59%	20.4%
Criminal	18.3%	16.2%
Entertainment	0.65%	0.6%
Environmental	11.11%	7.2%
ERISA/Employee Benefits	4.25%	6.6%
Family Law	21.24%	25.2.2%
Franchise	0.33%	1.2%
Health	5.23%	5.4%
Immigration	1.63%	2.4%
Insurance	18.3%	19.2%
Intellectual Properties	3.59%	5.4%
International	0.65%	1.2%
Labor	12.75%	10.8%
Legislation	3.27%	2.4%
Litigation (not set forth elsewhere)	36.93%	34.1%
Medical Malpractice	14.05%	13.8%
Mergers/Acquisitions	1.96%	4.2%
Municipal Finance	1.63%	3.6%
Patent/Trademark	3.59%	4.2%
Personal Injury	31.7%	33.5%
Products Liability	9.48%	13.2%
Public	5.56%	6.0%
Real Estate	18.95%	23.4%
Securities/Blue Sky	2.61%	3.6%
Tax	2.61%	4.2%
Telecommunications	2.29%	3.6%
Trade Regulation	0.65%	1.2%
Transportation	1.31%	3.0%
Trusts & Estates	18.3%	18.6%
Utilities	5.56%	4.8%
Workers' Comp	10.13%	12.0%

Job Duties

Almost all (90.5%) paralegals reported that they are required to draft correspondence. Most also draft pleadings and discovery responses (82.3%); organize documents (84%); and provide case management (84%). Over half of the paralegals who responded perform basic legal research (55.6%). Only 19.5% report that they perform advanced legal research as part of their duties, but this is a slight increase from the numbers reported in 2004. Over half of the respondents reported having to perform some type of administrative duties along with their paralegal duties.

The following table presents the findings of survey questions describing job duties for the paralegals who provided this information:

Job Duties	2004 Percentage of Total Paralegals	2007 Percentage of Total Paralegals
Assist at Trial	50.98%	49.7%
Assist/Attend Depositions	29.7%	29.6%
Assist/Attend Mediations, Arbitrations	25.5%	27.8%
Bookkeeping	16.7%	20.1%
Calendaring Deadlines	69%	70.4%
Case Management	84%	84%
Client/Witness Interviews	61%	55.6%
Copying	75.8%	69.2%
Court Filings	61.8%	66.9%
Deposition Summaries	37.6%	35.5%
Document Analysis/Summary	67.7%	67.5%
Document Control for Large Cases	66.7%	63.3%
Document Organization	84%	84.0%
Draft Correspondence	94.1%	90.5%
Draft Legal Briefs	30.7%	28.4%
Draft Legal Memoranda	38.2%	37.9%
Draft Pleadings/Document Responses/ Discovery	82.0%	82.3%
Factual Research	61.4%	66.9%
Faxing	73.5%	72.8%
Investigation	56.9%	56.8%
Large Case Document Control	57.5%	50.9%
Law Library Maintenance	16.7%	11.8%
Legal Research, Basic (highest level)	34.3%	19.5%
Legal Research, Intermediate (highest level)	24.8%	55.6%
Legal Research, Advanced (highest level)	17.3%	30.8%
Office Personnel Management	32.7%	21.9%
Other Administrative Duties	23.9%	55.6%
Training Employees	55.9%	29%

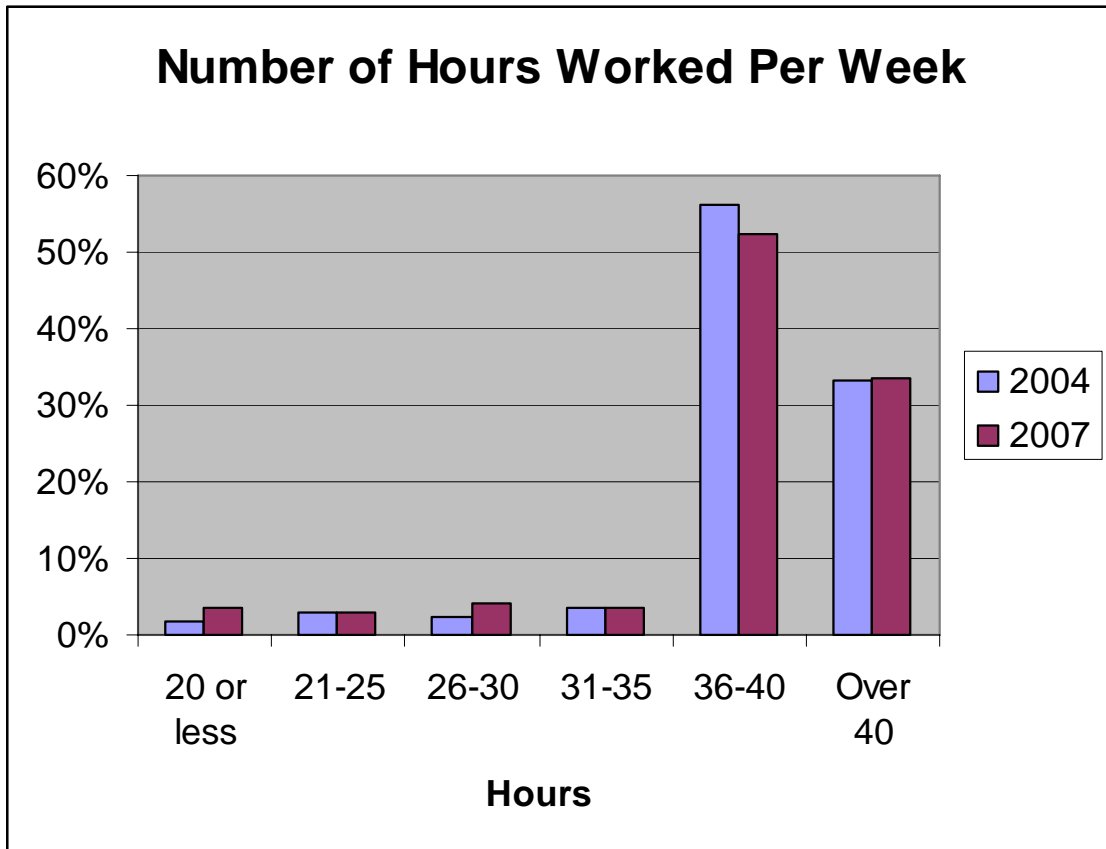
Billing Rates

Billing rates for participating paralegals varied from under \$20 per hour to over \$80 per hour. The following table presents the findings of survey questions describing billing rates for the 111 paralegals who provided this information:

Billing Rate	2004 Number of Paralegals	2007 Number of Paralegals
>\$20	1	
\$20-\$25	9	7
\$26-\$30	3	3
\$31-\$35	2	1
\$36-\$40	8	4
\$41-\$45	11	4
\$46-\$50	11	9
\$51-\$55	13	2
\$55-\$60	22	6
\$61-\$65	24	9
\$66-\$70	9	4
\$71-\$75	36	20
\$76-\$80	12	12
Over \$80	40	43

Hours Worked Per Week

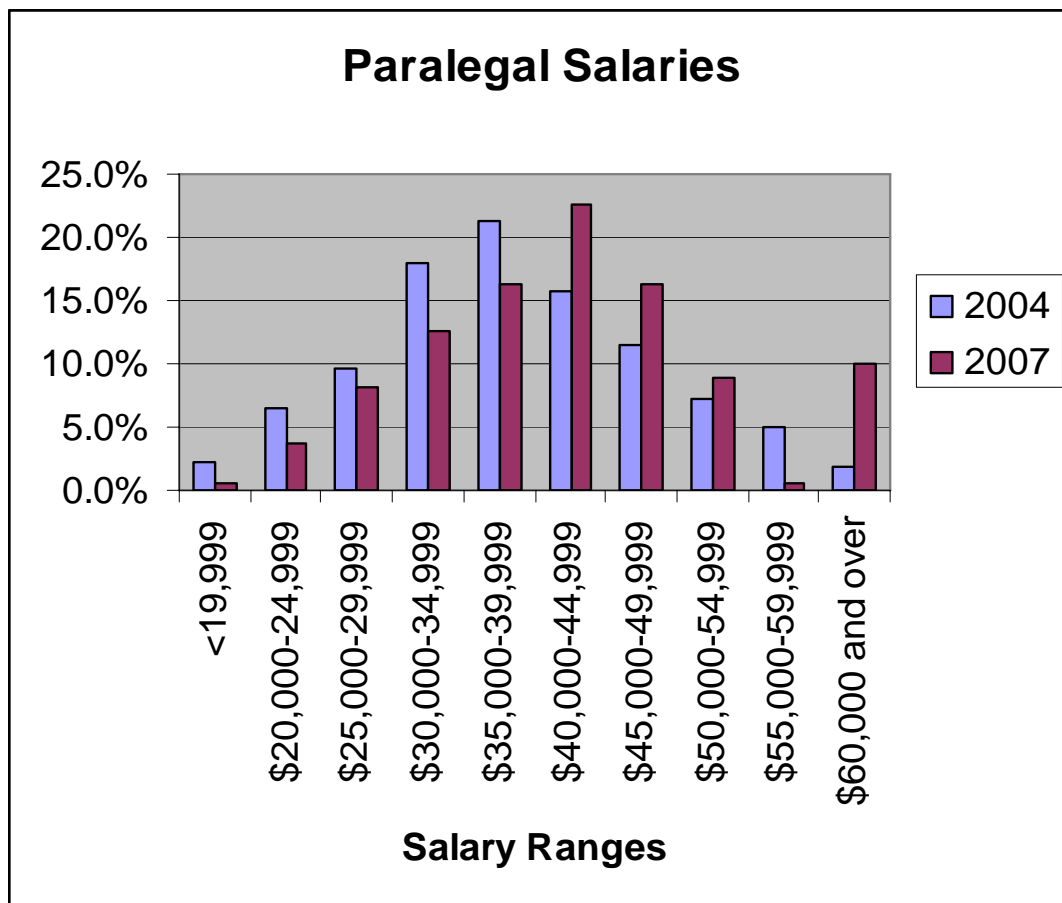
Most paralegals work a full-time schedule and almost one-third report regularly working over 40 hour per week. The following graph presents the findings of the 2004 survey compared with the 2007 survey for the average number of hours worked per week for the paralegals who provided this information. There is little difference in the percentages between the two surveys:



Salary

Salary information was provided by 159 paralegals; 13 survey participants either declined to report their salaries or provided a non-responsive answer. If a response gave a range for salary, the midpoint of the salary range provided was used as the response. Part-time hourly salaries were computed to arrive at an annual salary equivalent for purposes of comparison. Only one paralegal reported earning less than \$20,000 per year. One paralegal earns just under \$100,000 per year and two paralegals earn \$100,000 or more annually. The average salary in 2004 was \$38,495; the average salary in 2007 is \$42,521. In 2004, 15% of reporting paralegals made annual salaries of \$50,000 or more; in 2007, almost 20% (19.5%) make salaries of \$50,000 or more. Overall, salaries have increased just over ten percent (10%) since 2004.⁷

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics salary data for the combined category of paralegals and legal assistants for June 2006, available at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/sp/ncbl0910.pdf> <http://stats.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/sp/ncbl0910.pdf>, shows a mean annual salary of \$45,357 and a median annual salary of \$41,063.



⁷ According to the most recent data available from the New Mexico Department of Labor, the annual per capita income in New Mexico increased just over twelve percent (12%) from 2003 to 2005.

Salary Ranges	2004	2007	Difference
<19,999	2.2%	0.6%	-1.5%
\$20,000-24,999	6.5%	3.8%	-2.7%
\$25,000-29,999	9.7%	8.2%	-1.5%
\$30,000-34,999	18.0%	12.6%	-5.4%
\$35,000-39,999	21.2%	16.4%	-4.9%
\$40,000-44,999	15.8%	22.6%	6.8%
\$45,000-49,999	11.5%	16.4%	4.8%
\$50,000-54,999	7.2%	8.8%	1.6%
\$55,000-59,999	5.0%	0.6%	-4.4%
\$60,000 and over	1.8%	10.1%	8.3%

Salaries reported in this survey are higher than the latest New Mexico Department of Labor (NMDOL) figures published in the 2006 Edition of Wage Information for Job Seekers⁸. (See summary chart below.) Two possible explanations for this large disparity are: 1) the NMDOL classifies paralegals and legal assistants as one category and 2) the NMDOL codes to the highest skill level. By including paralegals and legal assistants together in one category, it is quite possible that many legal support staff without the qualifications to be called paralegals, and who may be making lower annual salaries, are included in the same category with paralegals. Likewise, coding to the highest skill level means that if a legal secretary indicates that he/she performs basic legal research, for instance, the coder would be obligated to put this staff member into the category of “Paralegals and legal assistants”, even if all the other work performed by the staff member was secretarial in nature.

2006 NM Department of Labor Statistics

	Beginning Salary	About 1/2 earn between
Albuquerque	\$31,110	\$31,650 - \$38,070
Santa Fe	\$32,021	\$33,782 - \$45,610
Las Cruces	\$24,335	\$25,681 - \$34,943
Northwest NM	\$23,500	\$29,100 - \$31,800
Eastern NM	\$26,250	\$26,116 - \$39,743
Southwestern NM	\$24,610	\$25,710 - \$34,120

⁸ See http://www.dol.state.nm.us/dol_jobs.html.

Experience, education, and national certification are all qualifying criteria for paralegals under the New Mexico Supreme Court Rules, and there were many combinations of these qualifications reported. A composite score was given to each response based on all three of these criteria. Successively increasing scores were awarded in three areas for progressively higher levels of 1) experience; 2) education; and 3) certification. The scores in each of these three areas were then added together to obtain a composite score. This composite score allows a comparison, for example, between a paralegal with a Bachelor's degree and five years of experience; a paralegal with a certificate from an ABA-approved program of studies and ten years of experience; and a paralegal with a national certification and over twenty years of experience. These cumulative scores were grouped into five major categories, with Group I having the lowest total score (lowest qualifications) and Group V having the highest total score (highest qualifications). It is clear that there exists a general positive relationship between paralegal qualifications and paralegal salaries:

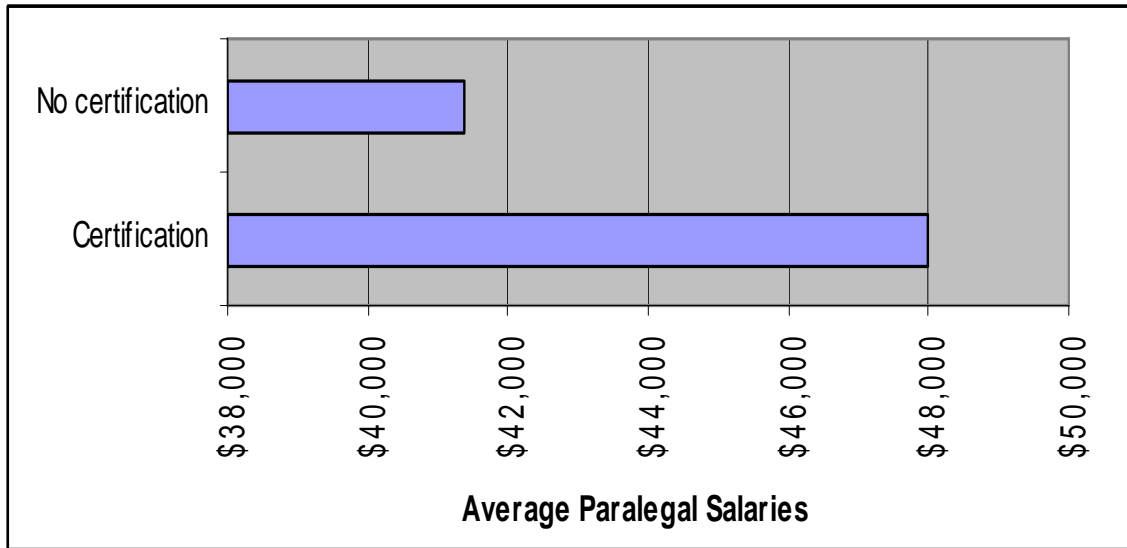
Average salary for Group I:	\$34,223
Average salary for Group II:	\$38,995
Average salary for Group III:	\$41,793
Average salary for Group IV:	\$48,369
Average salary for Group V:	\$53,295

Similarly, there is generally a positive relationship between years of experience and average salaries when no other variable is considered:

1-5 years experience:	\$34,053
6-10 years experience:	\$39,505
11-15 years experience:	\$43,984
16-20 years experience:	\$44,980
21-25 years experience:	\$44,777
Over 25 years experience:	\$47,526

By comparing the average salaries obtained by use of the composite scores versus average salaries obtained by consideration of only education, it can be inferred that although experience is an important indicator of paralegal salaries, experience alone does not command the highest salaries.

A strong positive relationship exists between paralegal salaries and national paralegal certification. The average salary for paralegals with national certifications was \$48,000; the average salary for paralegals without national certification was \$41,373. Therefore, with no other variables considered, paralegals with national certifications earn just over 16% more than paralegals who have not successfully completed one of the recognized national paralegal competency examinations.



The highest average annual salary by geographical region was in Santa Fe, where the salary of survey participants averaged \$44,379. In Albuquerque, the average reported annual salary is \$37,813; in Las Cruces, it is \$35,526; and in Roswell, it is \$30,793. The average annual salary for the category of “other” geographical areas was \$34,839. However, geographical region was not analyzed in conjunction with other variables. As one example, 56 paralegals reported working in the area of criminal law, but only six of those people were from Santa Fe. Working in the area of criminal law was shown to have a significant negative relationship to salary, so this would have a tendency to increase average salaries in Santa Fe. It is likely there are many other factors influencing these average salaries, but the relatively small number of survey respondents from certain geographical areas makes analysis of the variable of geography problematic. It is unlikely that geography, alone, can explain average salaries.

Benefits

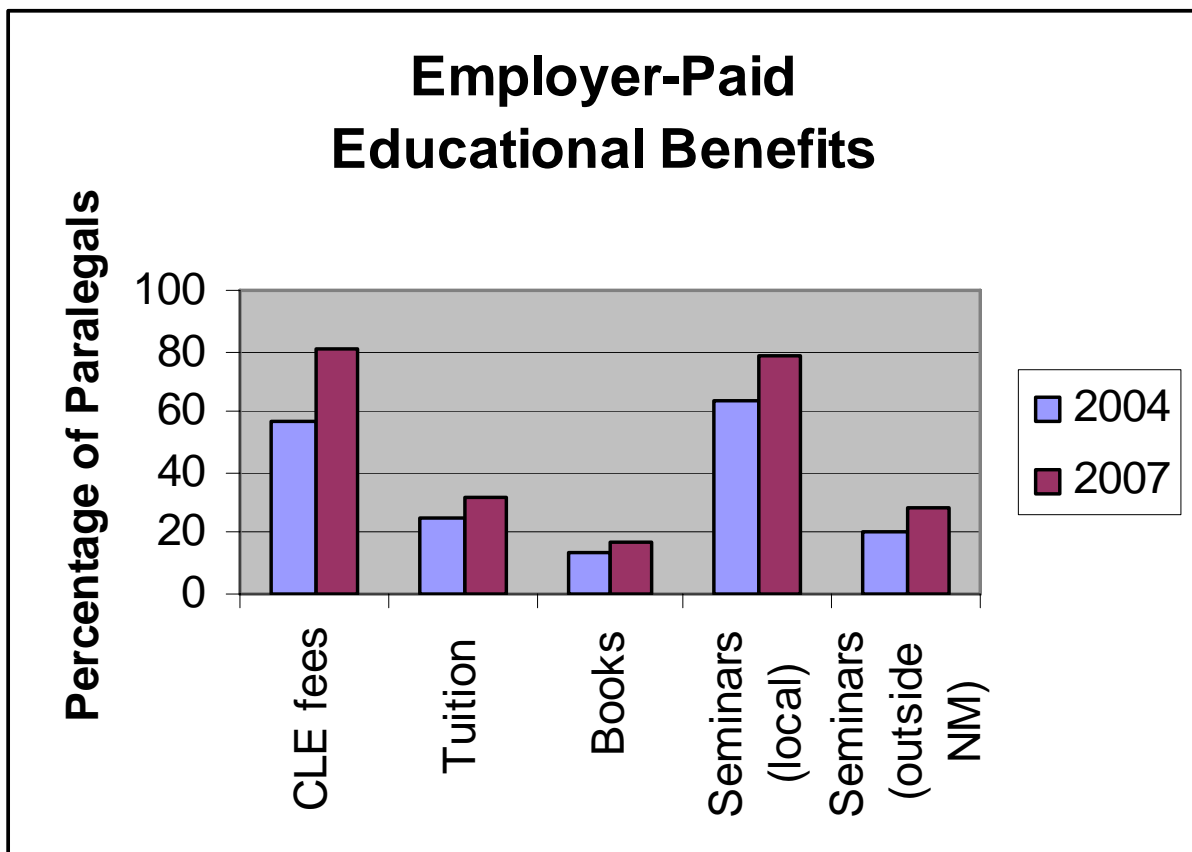
Over three-quarters of employers provided employee health insurance to their paralegals. Many provided comprehensive employee benefit packages. Overall, there was a slight increase in the percentage of paralegals receiving the various benefits listed, with the largest increase shown in employers who paid professional paralegal dues. The following table presents a comparison of the responses from 2004 and the current survey describing employer-paid benefits for paralegals who provided this information:

Benefit	2004 Percentage of Total Responding	2007 Percentage of Total Responding
Health Insurance (Employee)	66.99%	77.7%
Health Insurance (Family)	33.01%	35.8%
Life Insurance (Employee)	48.69%	52.0%
Life Insurance (Family)	13.07%	15.5%
Dental Insurance (Employee)	40.2%	45.3%
Dental Insurance (Family)	23.53%	31.8%
Vision Insurance (Employee)	26.14%	31.8%
Vision Insurance (Family)	17.52%	23.7%
Disability Insurance	44.77%	43.2%
Free Representation	17.97%	23.7%
Maternity Benefits	13.73%	14.9%
Parking	35.62%	38.5%
Child Care	0.33%	.7%
Leased Car	0.65%	.7%
Mileage Reimbursement	59.15%	60.8%
Professional Dues	39.22%	56.8%

Employer-Paid Educational Benefits

In all areas, a greater percentage of paralegals received employer-paid educational benefits in 2007 than in 2004. Based on the responses to the current survey, over four-fifths (80.5%) of employers support their paralegals' continuing education by paying these fees. However, 19% of the employers of certified paralegals do not pay for their paralegals' continuing legal education (CLE) fees, even though certified paralegals are required to maintain CLE credits in order to maintain their certification, and 22% do not pay for their certified paralegals' professional dues. Eighty-six percent (86%) of Paralegal Division members' employers pay for CLE fees,⁹ but only 39% of non-Division members have CLE fees paid by their employers. Nearly one-third (31.7%) of all employers offer tuition reimbursement, but only 17.1% pay for books, too. Almost four-fifths of employers pay for local seminars (78.9%), and well over one-fourth (28.5%) also pay for out-of-state seminars.

The following graph presents the findings of survey questions describing employer-paid educational benefits for the paralegals who provided this information, as well as a comparison with the 2004 survey data:



⁹ Paralegal Division members of the State Bar must maintain the same annual number of CLE credits as attorneys.

Mandatory v. Voluntary Regulation, Licensing and Certification

Eighty-three percent (83%) of paralegals who participated in this survey also responded to this question. Of those who responded, 59.4% favored some type of mandatory regulation, licensing, and certification.¹⁰ Another 43.4% favored some type of voluntary regulation, licensing, or certification.

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of survey participants answered the question about mandatory membership in the Paralegal Division. Over half of those responding (51.5%) favored mandatory Division membership; 33.5% were undecided; and 15% were opposed to mandatory membership.

Of those participants who provided comments and did not favor mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification, there continues to be concern for what this would mean for paralegals who have many years of experience, but who do not have any formal education or certification. Comments from paralegals favoring mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification often cite a desire for higher standards for the paralegal profession.

Knowledge of the New Mexico Supreme Court Rules Governing Paralegal Services

Over 85% of paralegals responding to the survey indicated that they know about the minimum education, training or work experience qualifications set forth in the New Mexico Supreme Court Rules Governing Paralegal Services. Over 58% indicated that their supervising attorneys were aware of these qualifications.

Conclusion and Recommendation

As the profession of paralegalism continues to evolve, New Mexico paralegals continue to demonstrate interest in ensuring high levels of professionalism and qualifications for the profession. It is encouraging to see the marked increase in attorney support since the last survey in 2004, which is demonstrated by the increase in the percentage of employers who are paying for continuing legal education and professional fees.

This survey was conducted three years after the amended New Mexico Supreme Court Rules Governing Paralegal Services took effect. The vast majority of paralegals responding to the survey are aware of the minimum qualifications for paralegals as outlined in these Rules. However, not nearly as many supervising attorneys know about these qualifications. Because New Mexico paralegals still voice a strong desire to have salaries and benefits reflect the education, training, experience, and certification that paralegals bring to the workplace, it is recommended that efforts to educate attorneys, paralegals, and

¹⁰ Sixty-two percent (62%) of Paralegal Division members favored some type of mandatory regulation; 40% of non-Division members favored some type of mandatory regulation.

the legal community about the necessity for paralegal qualifications as outlined in the Supreme Court Rules should continue.

Additionally, there appears to be significant paralegal interest in some kind of mandatory regulation, licensing, or certification. Further research and education related to the ramifications of this could prove helpful to New Mexico paralegals.