

**SUPPORTING JUSTICE:
A REPORT ON THE PRO BONO WORK
OF AMERICA'S LAWYERS**

**THE ABA STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRO BONO AND PUBLIC SERVICE
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- Attorneys surveyed, on average, said they provided an additional 38 hours of free pro bono service to individuals or groups seeking to secure or protect civil rights, to community organizations and other non-profits and toward efforts to improve the legal system.
- 46% of the lawyers surveyed met the ABA’s aspirational goal of providing at least 50 hours of free pro bono services.
- There was a direct correlation between age and incidence of providing pro bono. Older attorneys were more likely to report doing pro bono than younger attorneys.
- The prime motivator for attorneys who have done pro bono is the combined sense of professional duty and personal satisfaction derived from the work (70%). The second largest factor was a recognition of the needs of the poor and responding to specific requests for assistance (43%).
- The main discouragement from doing – or doing more – pro bono, is a lack of time (69%). Other demotivators include employer-related issues (15%), such as billable hours expectations, and the lack of specific expertise or skills in the required practice area (15%).
- Providing pro bono work by substantially reducing legal fees is much less common than providing free legal services. Only 33% of the attorneys indicated doing any “substantially reduced fee” pro bono work.
- Overall, pro bono clients are most likely to be referred by a friend or family member (40%) or by some type of organized pro bono program (36%), and this finding varied significantly by practice location, setting and size and age of the attorney.

This study shows both the profound sense of responsibility that attorneys have for engaging in public service and the need that exists for increasing the amount of pro bono legal services that attorneys provide for the poor. This is the first survey of its kind and a useful tool for measuring pro bono activity and identifying strategies for expanding pro bono service around the country.

Introduction

Pro Bono Publico is fundamental to the practice of law and has been viewed as an ethical responsibility of lawyers – both informally and formally – since the beginning of the profession. While ample evidence demonstrates pro bono’s growth in the last 25 years, there has been little national quantitative data to help illuminate the extent of this growth and the nature of the pro bono work done by individual attorneys. This project was undertaken to develop a national, comprehensive profile of attorneys doing pro bono to enable the ABA to better support their efforts and to help others provide pro bono service. As the national representative of the legal profession, the ABA is uniquely qualified to undertake this study.