

What a full-time receptionist really costs

Wages, benefits, and payroll taxes, from the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data | October 2026

\$57,469 Fully loaded annual cost, receptionist, all industries [S1, S3]	\$61,512 Fully loaded annual cost, receptionist at a law firm (NAICS 5411) [S2, S3]	40 of 168 Weekly hours one full-time receptionist covers (illustrative)
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Summary

The average U.S. receptionist (occupation 43-4171, Receptionists and Information Clerks) earns **\$18.97 an hour, or \$39,460 a year**. The median is \$18.27 an hour, or \$38,010 a year [S1]. Receptionists at law firms earn more: **\$20.65 an hour, or \$42,950 a year** on average [S2]. Wages are only part of the cost. For private-industry office and administrative support workers, total employer compensation is **\$36.73 per hour worked, against \$25.22 in wages**. Benefits and payroll taxes add about 46% on top of pay [S3]. Applying that ratio, one full-time receptionist costs an employer about **\$57,500 a year** in general and about **\$61,500 a year** at a law firm.

Methodology

- 1. Wages:** BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025 reference period, national and national industry-specific estimates for SOC 43-4171. These are the latest OEWS estimates, released May 15, 2026 [S1, S2]. OEWS annual wages equal hourly wage × 2,080 hours.
- 2. Benefits load:** BLS Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC), June 2026 (2026 Q2), released Sept 9, 2026 [S3, S4]. Load = total compensation ÷ wages and salaries, for the closest published occupation/industry group. Neither OEWS wages nor ECEC wages include overtime premiums, shift differentials, or nonproduction bonuses; ECEC counts those as supplemental pay, a benefit. That keeps the two sources consistent.
- 3. Fully loaded cost** = OEWS annual mean wage × ECEC load. This is an estimate built from two BLS sources. BLS does not publish a "fully loaded receptionist cost" itself.

Receptionist wages by industry (BLS OEWS, May 2025)

Industry (NAICS)	Employment	Hourly mean	Annual mean	Hourly median	Annual median
All industries (cross-industry)	910,180	\$18.97	\$39,460	\$18.27	\$38,010
Legal Services (5411)	25,020	\$20.65	\$42,950	\$20.00	\$41,600
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities (524)	13,550	\$19.03	\$39,580	\$18.78	\$39,070
Insurance Carriers (5241)	2,250	\$20.10	\$41,820	\$19.31	\$40,170
Agencies, Brokerages & Other Insurance Related (5242)	11,300	\$18.81	\$39,130	\$18.72	\$38,930

Source: BLS OEWS May 2025, SOC 43-4171. All industries from national_M2025_dl.xlsx [S1]; industry rows from nat3d/nat4d_M2025_dl.xlsx [S2]. Relative standard errors of the mean wage: 0.2% (all), 1.3% (legal), 1.1% (524), 1.2% (5241, 5242).

Employer costs: wages vs. total compensation (BLS ECEC, June 2026)

Component (\$ per hour worked, % of total)	All private workers	Office & admin support (all private)	Office & admin, Prof. & Business Svcs	Office & admin, Financial Activities
Wages and salaries	\$32.82 (70.0%)	\$25.22 (68.7%)	\$24.99 (69.8%)	\$27.12 (64.8%)

Component (\$ per hour worked, % of total)	All private workers	Office & admin support (all private)	Office & admin, Prof. & Business Svcs	Office & admin, Financial Activities
Paid leave	\$3.54 (7.5%)	\$2.77 (7.5%)	\$2.80 (7.8%)	\$3.56 (8.5%)
Supplemental pay	\$1.88 (4.0%)	\$1.06 (2.9%)	\$1.15 (3.2%)	\$1.55 (3.7%)
Insurance (incl. health)	\$3.69 (7.9%)	\$4.05 (11.0%)	\$3.41 (9.5%)	\$5.55 (13.3%)
Retirement and savings	\$1.57 (3.3%)	\$1.05 (2.9%)	\$0.86 (2.4%)	\$1.34 (3.2%)
Legally required benefits	\$3.40 (7.2%)	\$2.58 (7.0%)	\$2.57 (7.2%)	\$2.73 (6.5%)
Total compensation	\$46.89	\$36.73	\$35.79	\$41.86
Benefits load (total ÷ wages)	1.4287	1.4564	1.4322	1.5435
Applied to	(reference)	General receptionist	Law firm (proxy)	Insurance (proxy)

Source: BLS ECEC June 2026, Table 4 (private industry by occupational and industry group) and private-industry dataset; series CMU2010000000000D, CMU2010000220000D, CMU201540A220000D, CMU201520A220000D [S3, S4]. Columns may not sum exactly because of rounding. ECEC has no series for Legal Services (5411) or for office/admin support within Insurance Carriers. The closest published groups are used as proxies.

Legally required benefits and other detail, all private industry workers (June 2026, \$ per hour worked) [S4]

Legally required	Cost	Insurance / leave / retirement	Cost
Social Security	\$2.24 (4.8%)	Health insurance	\$3.48 (7.4%)
Medicare	\$0.55 (1.2%)	Life + short- & long-term disability	\$0.20 (0.4%)
Federal unemployment (FUTA)	\$0.03 (0.1%)	Vacation / holiday / sick / personal	\$1.76 / \$1.05 / \$0.50 / \$0.23
State unemployment (SUTA)	\$0.14 (0.3%)	Defined contribution / defined benefit	\$1.17 / \$0.40
Workers' compensation	\$0.43 (0.9%)	Overtime / shift / nonproduction bonuses	\$0.45 / \$0.10 / \$1.33

BLS publishes this level of detail for all private industry workers only, not for office and administrative support occupations. Starting with December 2026 data, ECEC will no longer include workers' compensation costs (BLS notice) [S3].

Fully loaded cost per receptionist

Formula: Fully loaded annual cost = OEWS annual mean wage × (ECEC total compensation ÷ ECEC wages and salaries)

Segment	OEWS annual mean wage	ECEC load	Fully loaded (mean wage)	Fully loaded (median wage)
General: all industries	\$39,460	× 36.73 / 25.22 = 1.4564	\$57,469	\$55,357
Law firm: Legal Services (5411)	\$42,950	× 35.79 / 24.99 = 1.4322	\$61,512	\$59,578
Insurance (524)	\$39,580	× 41.86 / 27.12 = 1.5435	\$61,092	\$60,305
Insurance Carriers (5241)	\$41,820	× 1.5435	\$64,550	\$62,003
Agencies & Brokerages (5242)	\$39,130	× 1.5435	\$60,398	\$60,089

Sources: wages [S1, S2]; loads [S3, S4]. Median column = OEWS annual median × the same load.

Coverage gap (illustrative, not a BLS statistic): one full-time receptionist works about 40 of the week's 168 hours. Staffing every hour takes 168 ÷ 40 = 4.2 full-time equivalents. That is about 4.2 × \$57,469 ≈ \$241,369 a year in general, or 4.2 × \$61,512 ≈ \$258,350 a year at a law firm. This is simple arithmetic. It leaves out overtime and night/weekend pay differentials, and it does not add staff to cover vacation and sick days.

Illustrative savings: one receptionist vs. a flat monthly AI receptionist

ILLUSTRATIVE, NOT A QUOTE. The monthly prices below are hypothetical examples. Wide Awake AI pricing is a flat setup fee plus a flat monthly fee, quoted in a walkthrough. Setup fees are not included.

Hypothetical AI price (illustrative)	Annual	Savings vs. general (\$57,469)	Savings vs. law firm (\$61,512)	Savings vs. insurance (\$61,092)
\$500 / month	\$6,000	\$51,469	\$55,512	\$55,092
\$1,000 / month	\$12,000	\$45,469	\$49,512	\$49,092
\$1,500 / month	\$18,000	\$39,469	\$43,512	\$43,092

Savings = fully loaded annual cost of one receptionist (table above) – (hypothetical monthly price × 12). The comparison is against one 40-hour receptionist, not 24/7 coverage.

Sources (all accessed Oct 19, 2026)

[S1] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS): National cross-industry estimates, SOC 43-4171 Receptionists and Information Clerks. Reference period: May 2025. Released May 15, 2026 (news release USDL-26-0725). File national_M2025_dl.xlsx.
<https://www.bls.gov/oes/special-requests/oesm25nat.zip> · <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm> · <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.nr0.htm>

[S2] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS: National industry-specific estimates (3-digit and 4-digit NAICS), SOC 43-4171, NAICS 5411, 524, 5241, 5242. Reference period: May 2025. Released May 15, 2026. Files nat3d_M2025_dl.xlsx and nat4d_M2025_dl.xlsx.
<https://www.bls.gov/oes/special-requests/oesm25in4.zip> · <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2025/may/oessrci.htm>

[S3] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC), news release USDL-26-1494, Table 4: Private industry workers by occupational and industry group. Reference period: June 2026 (2026 Q2). Released Sept 9, 2026.
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.t04.htm> · <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.nr0.htm> · <https://www.bls.gov/ecec/notices/2026/removing-workers-compensation-costs.htm>

[S4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ECEC Private industry dataset (detailed benefit components). Reference period: June 2026. Estimates released Sept 9, 2026.
<https://www.bls.gov/web/ecec/ecec-private-dataset.xlsx> · <https://www.bls.gov/web/ecec.supp.toc.htm>

Disclaimer

This document is for general information only. The wage and compensation figures are national averages published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Actual costs vary by location, experience, hours, benefit plans, and employer. The fully loaded figures are estimates that combine two BLS sources as described above. The proxy groups (professional and business services, financial activities) stand in where BLS publishes no industry-specific ECEC series. Coverage and savings figures are illustrative arithmetic, not BLS statistics. Hypothetical AI prices are illustrative, not a quote; actual pricing is a flat setup fee plus flat monthly, quoted in a walkthrough. Wide Awake AI is not affiliated with or endorsed by BLS.