

Judge

Not a job you apply for out of school. Lawyers with 10 or more years of practice apply, and a committee decides.

TYPICAL PAY

\$387,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$310k to \$415k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

17 to 25 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Courthouses, judges' chambers,
circuit courts in small communities**

How you get there

- Become a lawyer** 7 to 8 years
 Undergrad, the LSAT (law school admission test), a 3-year JD (juris doctor), then licensing.
- Practise law** 10 to 20 years
 At least 10 years at the bar is the legal minimum for federal appointments and for most provincial courts. Litigators, Crowns, defence and family lawyers are the usual pool.
- Build a reputation** Throughout
 Committees ask judges and lawyers who know you. Volunteer work, teaching and bar association roles matter.
- Apply** 6 months to years
 Provincial court: your province's judicial appointments committee. Superior courts: the federal judicial advisory committees run by the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs. The committee rates you; the government picks from the list.
- Appointment** Weeks
 The provincial cabinet or the federal Minister of Justice appoints you. Swearing-in, then judge training.

Pros and cons

- + Real power over outcomes, and the independence to use it
- + Top pay, a strong pension and security of tenure
- + Intellectually rich: every case is a puzzle
- You cannot get there before your 40s, and most who apply never do
- Isolating: judges cannot socialize freely with the lawyers in front of them
- Heavy dockets and a backlog of decisions to write

Optional boosts

Crown prosecutors and defence lawyers. Family lawyers. Civil litigators. Academics and government lawyers.

Good to know

Canadian judges do not use gavels

The wooden gavel is an American courtroom thing. No Canadian judge bangs one. A court clerk calls the room to order instead.

Three of nine must be from Quebec

By law, three of the Supreme Court of Canada's nine judges must come from Quebec, because Quebec uses civil law. By convention the others come from Ontario, the West and Atlantic Canada.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Judges, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Judicial Compensation and Benefits Commission
 Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs
 Ontario Courts

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/judge>



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