

The Best Firms For Minority Attorneys

By Jacqueline Bell

Law360 (July 7, 2019, 8:02 PM EDT) -- It's no secret that the legal industry is one of the least diverse professions in the country. But some law firms have made notable progress. Here are the firms that are making some headway and turning longstanding diversity goals into workplace realities.

Law360's 2019 Diversity Snapshot shows that the ranks of attorneys at U.S. law firms still lack diversity, especially as attorneys move up the ranks. Less than 10% of all partners at surveyed firms identify as a racial or ethnic minority.

General counsel are delivering ultimatums, demanding that firms update their demographic profiles or risk losing business. Partly in response to this demand, and to increase diversity and inclusion, the legal industry has begun examining hiring practices, elevating diversity professionals to the C-suite and working to create new tools to help drive diversity goals.

Law firms and corporate counsel are also working together on initiatives to improve the talent pipeline, giving diverse candidates opportunities to build skills and improve their networks.

Still, it's the rare law firm that can demonstrate a significantly different demographic reality from the current norm.

For the ranking, Law360 grouped firms based on their U.S. attorney head count in order to evaluate their diversity as compared with similarly sized peer firms. Any firm that had a below average minority representation at any level was excluded from our ranking. The remaining firms were ranked according to the percentage of minority attorneys at the nonpartner and partner level. Firms were required to disclose the diversity of their equity partnerships in order to be eligible for the ranking.

For the largest firms on the list, attorneys of color make up nearly 23% of nonpartners and nearly 11% of partners. At the smallest firms, several law firms reported that more than 40% of nonpartners and more than 30% of partners were attorneys of color.

The Best Law Firms For Minority Attorneys

600+ Lawyers

| Rank | Firm |
|------|---|
| 1 | Wilson Sonsini |
| 2 | Morrison & Foerster Paul Hastings |
| 4 | Sheppard Mullin |
| 5 | Cleary Gottlieb |
| 6 | Akerman |
| 7 | Orrick |
| 8 | Paul Weiss Covington |
| 9 | Davis Polk Greenberg Traurig Lewis Brisbois |
| 12 | Littler O'Melveny |
| 15 | Morgan Lewis |
| 16 | Jackson Lewis Sidley Austin |
| 18 | DLA Piper |
| 19 | Dentons |

300-599 Lawyers

| Rank | Firm |
|------|--|
| 1 | Fragomen |
| 2 | Fenwick & West |
| 3 | Fish & Richardson |
| 4 | Shearman & Sterling |
| 5 | Crowell & Moring |
| 6 | Carlton Fields Cadwalader |
| 7 | Cahill Gordon Mintz |
| 10 | Haynes and Boone |
| 11 | Davis Wright Tremaine Williams & Connolly |
| 13 | Kramer Levin |

150-299 Lawyers

| Rank | Firm |
|------|----------------|
| 1 | Knobbe Martens |
| 2 | Procopio Cory |

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 3 | Shutts & Bowen |
| 4 | Best Best & Krieger |
| 5 | Atkinson Andelson Munger Tolles |
| 7 | Nossaman |
| 8 | Finnegan |
| 9 | Hanson Bridgett |
| 10 | Bowman and Brooke Wood Smith |
| 12 | Constangy Brooks Manning & Kass |
| 14 | Kasowitz Benson |
| 15 | Hughes Hubbard |
| 16 | Thompson Coe Allen Matkins |
| 17 | Greenspoon Marder Kelley Dye |
| 20 | Susman Godfrey |
| 21 | Stroock Wiley Rein |
| 23 | Epstein Becker Green |
| 24 | Chapman and Cutler |
| 25 | Miller Nash |
| 26 | Buchalter |

50-149 Lawyers

- | Rank | Firm |
|------|---|
| 1 | Roig Lawyers |
| 2 | Berry Appleman |
| 3 | Seed IP |
| 4 | MG&M Law Walsworth Keker Van Nest |
| 6 | Liebert Cassidy Riley Safer |
| 9 | Mitchell Silberberg Sterne Kessler |
| 11 | Bilzin Sumberg |
| 12 | Kobre & Kim |
| 13 | Outten & Golden |

- 14 Miller & Chevalier**
- 15 Fowler White**
- 16 Banner & Witcoff**
- Tyson & Mendes**
- 18 Van Ness Feldman**
- 19 FordHarrison**
- Irell & Manella**
- 21 Schwegman Lundberg**
- 22 Foster Pepper**
- 23 Patterson & Sheridan**
- 24 Richards Kibbe**
- 25 Coblenz Patch**

20-49 Lawyers

- | Rank | Firm |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Diaz Reus |
| 2 | Bookoff McAndrews |
| 3 | Wong Fleming |
| 4 | Carothers DiSante |

The top firms in each size category have demonstrable diversity levels of at least 20% of all attorneys at the firm, creating examples of what a more diverse and more inclusive workforce can look like.

To be eligible for the ranking, firms had to report at least an average representation of minority attorneys in each of the categories listed in the chart below. Those firms were then ranked by examining the minority representation at the nonpartner and partner tiers.

Sizing Up The Average Firm

The average representation of minorities in law firm roles, from associate to equity partner.

| | Minority Attorneys | Minority Nonpartners | Total Minority Partners | Minority Equity Partners |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 600+ Attorneys | 18.3% | 22.9% | 10.7% | 9.3% |
| 300-599 Attorneys | 14.6% | 19.6% | 8.7% | 7.3% |
| 150-299 Attorneys | 12.6% | 17.6% | 8.2% | 7.2% |
| 50-149 Attorneys | 13.0% | 16.7% | 9.5% | 8.5% |
| 20-49 Attorneys | 19.8% | 25.8% | 13.0% | 11.5% |

--Editing by Pamela Wilkinson and John Campbell.

Methodology: Law360 collected demographic data from more than 300 U.S. firms, or vereins with a U.S. component, on their attorneys by head count as of Dec. 31, 2018. Only U.S.-based attorneys were included in the survey, and firms had to have at least 20 U.S.-based attorneys to participate. Where indicated, some attorneys declined to self-identify.

Law360 collects data from law firms using the race, gender and ethnicity categories used by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in its annual Employer Information EEO-1 survey.

For the ranking, firms were first grouped according to size: 20-49 attorneys, 50-149 attorneys, 150-299 attorneys, 300-599 attorneys and 600-plus attorneys. Then, firms that fell below the average in their group in any of the following categories were deemed ineligible for the ranking: (1) percentage of minority attorneys; (2) percentage of minority nonpartners; (3) percentage of minority partners, both equity and nonequity; and (4) percentage of minority equity partners. Finally, remaining firms were ranked using a formula that equally weights the percentage of nonpartners and percentage of total partners who are minorities. Firms that declined to disclose their equity partnership data were not eligible for the ranking.