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The Best Firms For Minority Attorneys

By **Jacqueline Bell**

Law360 (June 17, 2018, 10:02 PM EDT) -- While U.S. law firms have long vowed to make their ranks more diverse and inclusive, the industry has long failed to deliver on those promises. But these firms are starting to make some headway.

Law360's **2018 Diversity Snapshot** shows the attorney workforce at U.S. law firms is still overwhelmingly white. Among the more than 300 law firms surveyed, racial and ethnic minorities make up about 21 percent of nonpartners and about 8 percent of equity partners, inching up only incrementally from last year's survey.

The static numbers at U.S. law firms stand in stark contrast to the growing diversity at U.S. law schools. Over the past two decades, minorities have made up at least 20 percent of law school graduates. The proportion of minorities in the first year of law school now tops 30 percent, according to data collected by the American Bar Association.

Most elite law schools also report that students of color make up more than 30 percent of their student body, and several have achieved far higher levels of diversity. In 2017, Harvard University reported that 45 percent of students entering Harvard Law School were minorities.

While private practice in the U.S. has long professed its adherence to diversity's ideals, that has yet to bear out in reality for most firms. But the firms on Law360's list are achieving some measurable results.

Law360 grouped firms based on U.S. attorney headcount in order to evaluate them with similar-sized peers. We excluded any firm that had below-average minority representation at any level of the firm, and then we ranked the rest based on their percentage of minority attorneys, both at the nonpartner and partner level.

At the largest firms on the list, minority attorneys make up at least 22 percent of nonpartners and at least 9 percent of partners. At the smallest firms on the list, several of the top law firms report minority representation of more than 40 percent for nonpartners and more than 30 percent for partners.

The top firms in each size category boast diversity levels of at least 22 percent of all attorneys at the firm and more diverse nonpartner ranks, developing workforces that at least are beginning to reflect the diversity of U.S. law schools.

The Best Law Firms For Minority Attorneys

600+ Lawyers

Rank	Firm
1	Lewis Brisbois Wilson Sonsini
3	Morrison & Foerster
4	Paul Hastings Sheppard Mullin
6	Covington & Burling Paul Weiss
8	Cleary Gottlieb
9	DLA Piper
10	Perkins Coie
11	Littler Sidley Austin
13	WilmerHale

300-599 Lawyers

1	Fragomen
2	Fenwick & West
3	Finnegan
4	Fish & Richardson
5	Crowell & Moring
6	Haynes and Boone Shearman & Sterling
8	Dykema Gossett
9	Davis Wright
10	Ballard Spahr Willkie Farr
12	Andrews Kurth
13	Cadwalader
14	Cahill Gordon Kramer Levin

150-299 Lawyers

1	Best Best Bowman and Brooke Knobbe Martens
4	Munger Tolles Nossaman Shutte & Bowen

	SHULLS & BOWEN
7	Curtis Mallet-Prevost
8	Atkinson Andelson
9	Wood Smith
10	Hanson Bridgett
11	FordHarrison
12	Allen Matkins
13	Kasowitz Benson
14	Hughes Hubbard
15	Kelley Drye
	Miller Nash
17	Buchalter PC
18	Epstein Becker
	Wiley Rein
20	Greenspoon Marder
21	Stroock & Stroock
22	Patterson Belknap

20-149 Lawyers

1	Bookoff McAndrews
2	Pearl Law Group
3	Bird Marella
4	Roig Lawyers
5	Berry Appleman
6	Riley Safer
7	Carothers DiSante
	Hunt Ortmann
9	Durie Tangri
	Nelson Hardiman
11	Kobre & Kim
	Sterne Kessler
13	Irwin Fritchie
	Linebarger Goggan
15	Brinks Gilson
	Hoge Fenton
17	Mitchell Silberberg
18	Archer Norris
19	Seed IP Law Group
20	Richards Kibbe
	Susman Godfrey
22	Van Ness Feldman
23	Foster Denner

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 US Law Firm

The average representation of minorities in various law firm roles.

	20-149 Attorneys	150-299 Attorneys	300-599 Attorneys	600+ Attorneys
Minority Attorneys	14.3%	12.8%	13.9%	17.7%
Minority Nonpartners	17.7%	17.6%	18.8%	22.0%
Minority Partners	10.8%	8.2%	8.2%	10.4%
Minority Equity Partners	9.5%	7.1%	7.1%	9.2%

--Editing by Jocelyn Allison, Jeremy Barker and Jill Coffey.

Methodology: Law360 surveyed more than 300 U.S. firms, or vereins with a U.S. component, about their overall and minority headcount numbers as of Dec. 31, 2017. Only U.S.-based attorneys were included in the survey, and firms had to have at least 20 U.S.-based attorneys to participate. At firms marked with an asterisk, some attorneys declined to self-identify.

For the ranking, firms were first grouped according to size: 20-149 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.

This year, Law360's data gathering methodology changed slightly from previous years.

Law360 now 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. We also have added an option for attorneys who decline to identify a race or ethnicity. This did not significantly impact our results for overall diversity levels at U.S. law firms.

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