

The Best Firms For Minority Attorneys

By **Jacqueline Bell**

Law360, New York (August 20, 2017, 8:02 PM EDT) -- After years of diversity initiatives, the legal industry is still coming up short.

Law360's 2017 Diversity Snapshot shows that racial and ethnic minorities make up just over 15 percent of the attorneys employed by U.S. law firms, a number that has inched up incrementally over the year before. Among the more than 300 law firms surveyed, minorities make up about 20 percent of nonpartners and almost 9 percent of partners.

Those numbers have long failed to match the diversity of law school students. Over the past two decades, minorities have made up at least 20 percent of law school graduates. The proportion of minorities attending law schools now hovers around 30 percent, according to data compiled by the American Bar Association.

In 2016, 44 percent of students entering Harvard Law School and 42 percent of those entering Yale Law School were minorities.

Although law firms have long struggled to recruit and retain minority attorneys, the firms on Law360's list are making some headway and enjoying the benefits of a more diverse attorney workforce.

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 even a single 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 26 percent of nonpartners and at least 11 percent of partners. At the smallest firms, minority attorneys make up at least 40 percent of nonpartners and at least 26 percent of partners.

The Best Law Firms For Minority Attorneys

600+ Lawyers

Rank	Firm
1	Lewis Brisbois White & Case
3	Wilson Sonsini
4	Morrison & Foerster* Paul Hastings

300-599 Lawyers

1	Fenwick & West Fragomen, Del Rey
3	Finnegan
4	Debevoise & Plimpton Fish & Richardson Shearman & Sterling

150-299 Lawyers

1	Atkinson Andelson
2	Procopio Cory
3	Curtis Mallet-Prevost
4	Knobbe Martens
5	Shutts & Bowen

20-149 Lawyers

1	Bookoff McAndrews
2	Berry Appleman
3	Russ August
4	Linebarger Roig Lawyers

**Some attorneys declined to self-identify a race.*

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. The remaining firms were ranked by examining the minority representation at the nonpartner and partner tiers.

Sizing Up The US Law Firm

The average representation of minorities in law firm roles — from associate to equity partner — varies slightly by firm size.

	20-149 attys	150-299	300-599	600+
Minority Attorneys	13.6%	12.0%	14.0%	17.0%
Minority Nonpartners	17.7%	16.1%	18.9%	21.4%
Minority Partners	9.8%	7.9%	8.0%	9.8%
Minority Equity Partners	8.8%	6.5%	7.0%	8.4%

--Editing by Jeremy Barker and Philip Shea.

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, 2016. 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 a race.

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. The ranking lists the top five firms in each group.