

2024 TOP FIRMS REPORT



YLW+
Yale Law Women

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INTRODUCTION



Yale Law Women+ (YLW+) is proud to present our nineteenth annual Top Firms Report. The Top Firms Report stands for the commitment of YLW+ to promote the interests of women and under-represented attorneys, not just at Yale Law School (YLS), but in the legal profession as a whole. In the just over 100 years since women were first admitted to YLS,¹ women and gender minorities have made enormous strides in the legal industry, and in recent years, our Report has tracked this progress while also identifying work yet to be done.

In 2023, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives faced significant challenges. In June, the Supreme Court, with its decision in *Students*

for *Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, overturned precedent to limit the consideration of race in higher education admissions decisions.² As the YLW+ Board noted in the wake of this decision, we believe this “exacerbated the inequality and inequity that have long permeated our classrooms and communities,” and we predicted ensuing threats to DEI. Sure enough, legal challenges were filed against law firms’ diversity hiring initiatives, forcing firms to scramble to ensure their policies were consistent with the law.³ Later, war in

¹ A *Timeline of Women at Yale*, WOMEN AT YALE, <https://celebratewomen.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Timeline-of-Women-at-Yale.pdf>.

² *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023).

³ Lynne Anne Anderson, Marc-Joseph Gansah, Brian Hayes, Thomas Johnson II, and James Strickland, *Update on Post-SFFA Challenges to DEI Initiatives: Law Firm Fellowship Programs in the Crosshairs*, JD SUPRA (Sept. 19, 2023), <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/update-on-post-sffa-challenges-to-dei-2548818/>.

Israel and Palestine presented law firms with the challenge of addressing instances of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism in workplaces and beyond, inciting debates over whether firms' responses went too far or not far enough.⁴ And broad attacks on DEI initiatives nationwide put champions of diversity, equity, and inclusion on the defensive.⁵

In the midst of this turbulence, our Report aims to clarify what DEI means from the perspective of YLW+, a nonpartisan organization that strives to promote women's and gender minorities' advancement in the legal profession, and to invite law firms to join us in that mission. Law firms reached an important milestone in 2024, with women comprising more than fifty percent of all associates for the first time.⁶ Nonetheless, associates of color comprise only thirty percent of all associates, and for the first time since 2017, the percentage of summer associates of color dropped.⁷ Furthermore, disparities are even more entrenched at the partnership level, where less than thirty percent of partners are women, and less than five percent are women of color.⁸ And even when nominally included, cultural aspects of firms often prevent under-represented attorneys from feeling a true sense of belonging.⁹

4 David Thomas, *Divisions Mount Over US Law Firms' Response to Israel-Hamas War*, REUTERS (Nov. 14, 2023, 4:54 PM), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/divisions-mount-over-us-law-firms-response-israel-hamas-war-2023-11-14/>.

5 See *The Assault on DEI*, CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUC., <https://www.chronicle.com/package/the-assault-on-dei>.

6 Tatyana Monnay, *Women Exceed 50% of Law Firm Associates for First Time*, BLOOMBERG LAW (Jan. 9, 2024, 2:30 PM), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/women-exceed-50-of-law-firm-associates-for-first-time>.

7 *Id.*

8 *2023 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms*, NALP 5 (Jan. 2024), <https://www.nalp.org/uploads/Research/2023NALPReportonDiversityFinal.pdf>.

9 See Brenda Sapino Jeffreys, *Black Women Lawyers Still Experience, See Discrimination in Workplace, Survey Finds*, LAW.COM (Aug. 8, 2023, 1:30 PM), <https://www.law.com/americanlawyer/2023/08/08/black-women-lawyers-still-experience-see-discrimination-in-workplace-survey-finds/>.

With this broad aim, our Report has three main objectives. First, we seek to recognize firms that are demonstrated leaders in aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion that relate to under-represented attorneys' experiences in the legal profession. Our Advancement award celebrates firms that create opportunities for diverse attorneys to not only be hired, but thrive. Our Agency and Flexibility award recognizes firms that effectively enable attorneys to balance individual life choices with their careers. Our Compensation award spotlights firms that compensate attorneys fairly, including on the basis of their non-billable contributions. Our Culture award highlights firms that cultivate work environments in which all attorneys can succeed without compromising their personality, values, or identity. And our Diversity award honors firms with demonstrated achievement in hiring and retaining diverse talent.

Second, our Report is an attempt to foster dialogue between students, attorneys, and firms. For the first time this year, we surveyed Yale Law students, in addition to Vault 100 law firms and YLW+ alumni, to learn what diverse candidates look for and value in firm employers. Our findings informed our evaluations of firms and the recommendations we offer firms in this report. We also expanded our alumni survey universe, soliciting the perspectives of alumni who have worked at firms in the past and offering a view of how things have changed since. Third, our Report functions as a guide to students considering law firm employment. We offer information on the state of DEI in the industry and a roadmap for students approaching the law firm hiring process.

We recognize that an important first step in the push for truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive law firms is a willingness to engage with existing efforts and interrogate one's own practices. We therefore deeply thank all of the firms that took the time to complete this year's survey and hope they find our results useful.

STATE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

What are students looking for in prospective law firm employers?

What makes for good firm culture?

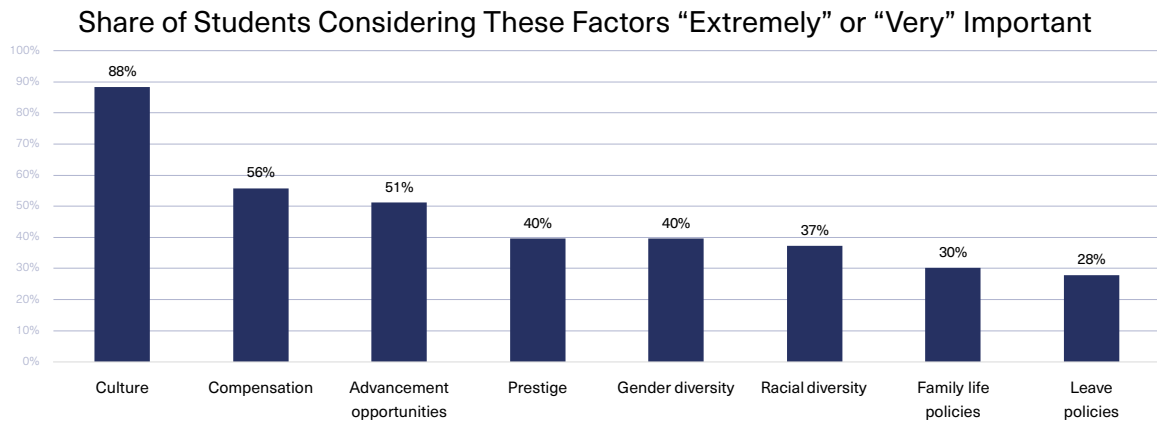
What makes a firm's culture inclusive?

How do students rate their summer experiences at firms?

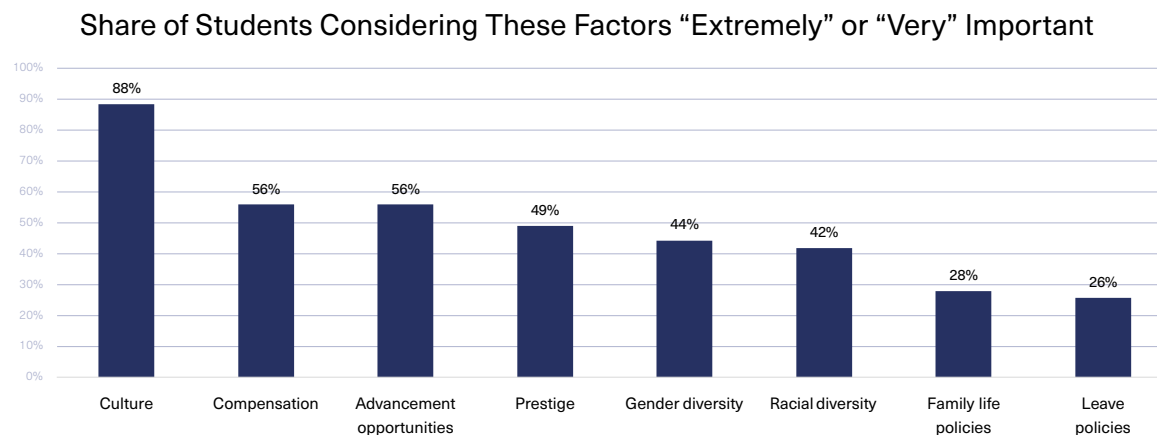
How do alumni rate their experiences at firms?

WHAT ARE STUDENTS LOOKING FOR IN PROSPECTIVE LAW FIRM EMPLOYERS?

What Factors Do Students Consider in Deciding Where to Interview?



What Factors Do Students Consider in Deciding Which Offer to Accept?



“Although actions speak louder than words, I was interested in firms that were enthusiastic about their **diversity initiatives** when I asked about them.”

YLS, 2025

“I really wanted to avoid a firm where there were unspoken rules about how much work you have to put into something beyond what’s asked . . . I know all firms work long hours, but I want **clear expectations** and not to be scolded for not making myself available on weekends without a prior warning.”

YLS, 2024

“It was important for me to join a firm where women of color were in leadership and had positive things to say about the firm.”

YLS, 2025

“I want a firm/practice group where my work friends are also my day-off friends.”

YLS, 2026

“I want to work with kind people who are talented and take the work seriously but don’t take themselves too seriously.”

YLS, 2024

WHAT MAKES FOR GOOD FIRM CULTURE?

Culture is the **most** important factor for YLS students in deciding which firms to work at. But what does good firm culture actually look like?

“merit-based advancement”

“The less hierarchical the better”
YLS, 2017

“Open and actual conversations about the importance of diversity and celebration and meaningful empowerment of those from disadvantaged backgrounds”
YLS, 2023

“work-life balance”

“Whether people stop to chat to each other in the kitchen”
YLS, 2024

“mutual support”

“Being comfortable wearing my natural hair”
YLS, 2025

“collaboration”

“I often had debates about my views on controversial topics and I considered it a credit to the firm that I never experienced adverse treatment despite having views, influenced by my identity, not shared by leadership at the firm.”
YLS, 1999

“transparency”

“Normalizing diversity as a default not a goal”
YLS, 2026

“Feeling like you have input into the firm's direction and major decisions”
YLS, 2012

WHAT MAKES A FIRM'S CULTURE INCLUSIVE?

"Firm provides support to, and is responsive to, **diverse affinity groups.**"
YLS, 2005

"People aren't excluded from work opportunities because of factors outside of their control or limited factors inside their control, such as whether they are a parent."
YLS, 2024

"Understanding and accommodating of different needs"
YLS, 2021

"[P]eople are not formally or informally penalized for their needs, differences, or personal political opinions, and are encouraged to be their full selves at work."
YLS, 2026

"People feel comfortable, like they can be themselves and express themselves."
YLS, 2024

"Respect for all people in the firm, including staff"
YLS, 1965

"Associates feel welcome and empowered to speak up for themselves"
YLS, 2025

"A work culture in which lawyers are able to express their cultural, racial, gender, or other identities without feeling it will impact the quality of work they receive or the perception of their professional identity."
YLS, 1999

"Openminded about what outstanding candidates will look like, sound like, dress like, etc. as long as they are bright, capable, have a strong work ethic, and are creative problem solvers"
YLS, 1996

"Junior associates respected as full-fledged members of the team"
YLS, 2024

"[C]onsiderate and welcoming of different political viewpoints and intellectual diversity"
YLS, 2025

"mentorship"

"flexibility"

"understanding"

"respect"

"compassion"

"client exposure"

"training"

"diversity"

HOW DO STUDENTS RATE THEIR SUMMER EXPERIENCES AT FIRMS?

“Very rarely did I interview with women of color, and I only occasionally interviewed with white women.”

YLS, 2024

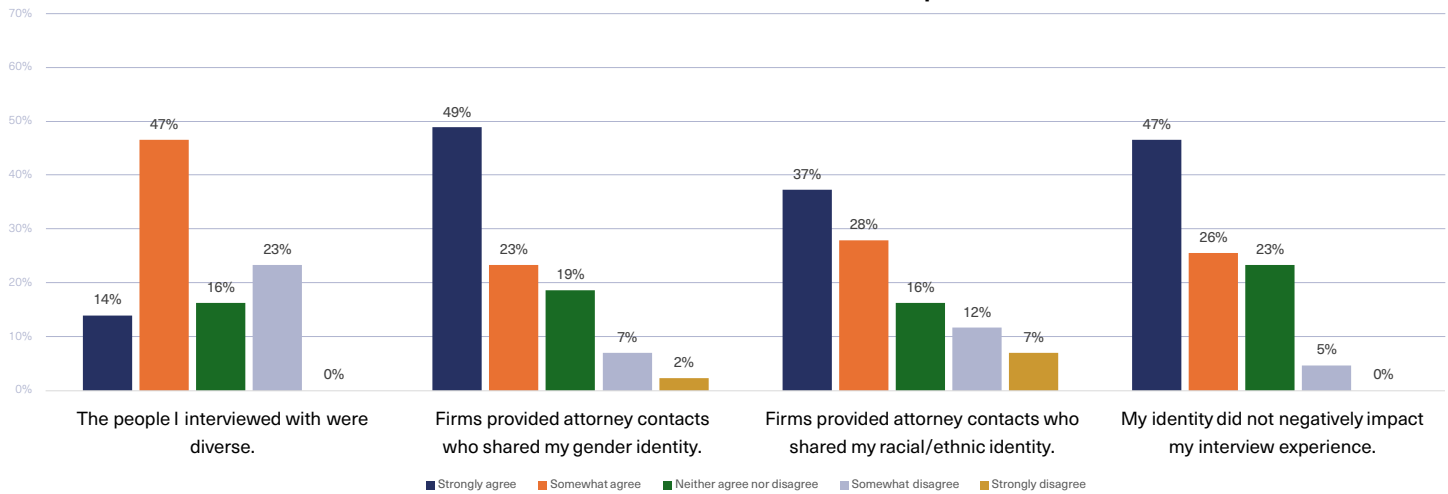
“All the firms I had callbacks with had some women interview me, but it was mostly male partners.”

YLS, 2024

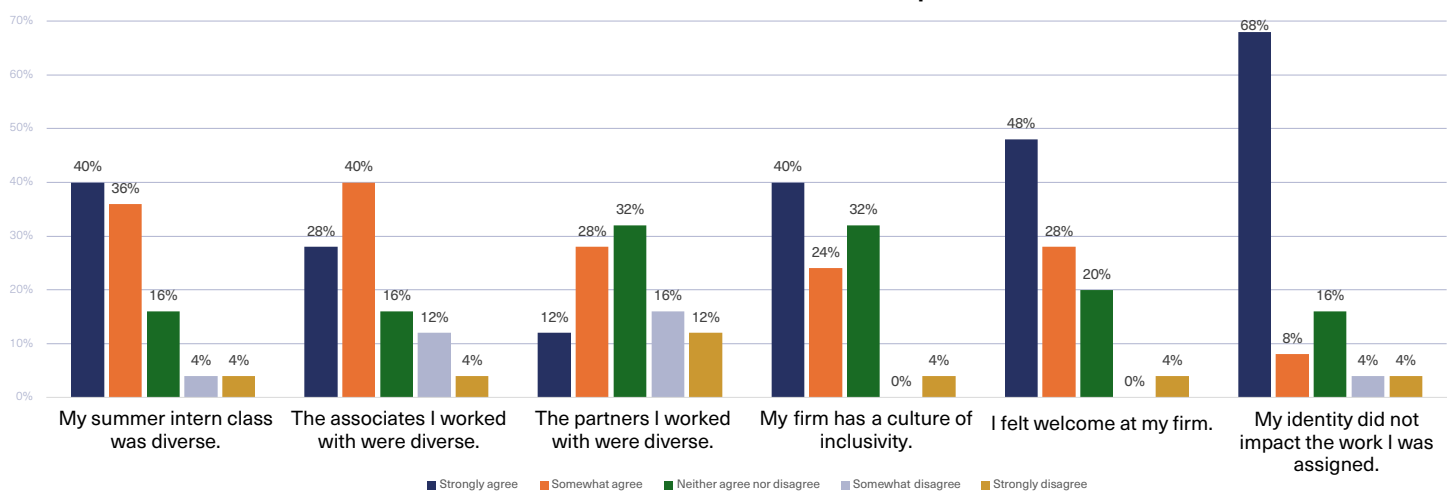
“Having the opportunity to candidly speak to junior associates post-offer was extremely valuable.”

YLS, 2025

How do Students Rate their Interview Experiences?



How do Students Rate their Summer Experiences?



“I appreciated that my assignment coordinators were often young women associates... which made them even more of a resource for me to go to, understand what I was being asked, and whether it was on par with associates of other identities.”

YLS, 2026

“The mentorship was really amazing. One of the law firm partners sat down with me on a memo I wrote with her and gave me detailed feedback for 30 minutes or so.”

YLS, 2024

“The partner face-time was strong, and gave a good view into what working at the firm as a first year associate would be like generally, and as a Black attorney.”

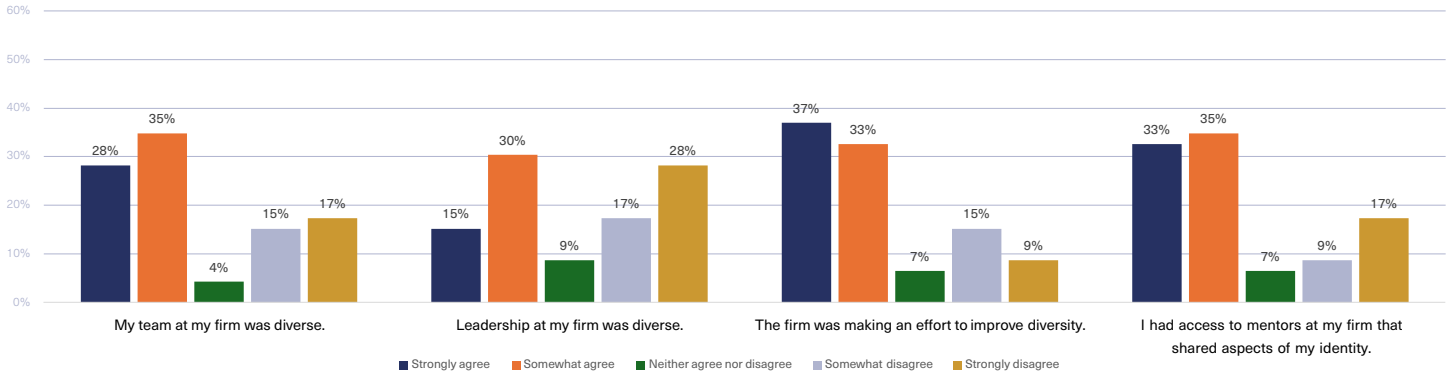
YLS, 2026

HOW DO ALUMNI RATE THEIR EXPERIENCES AT FIRMS?

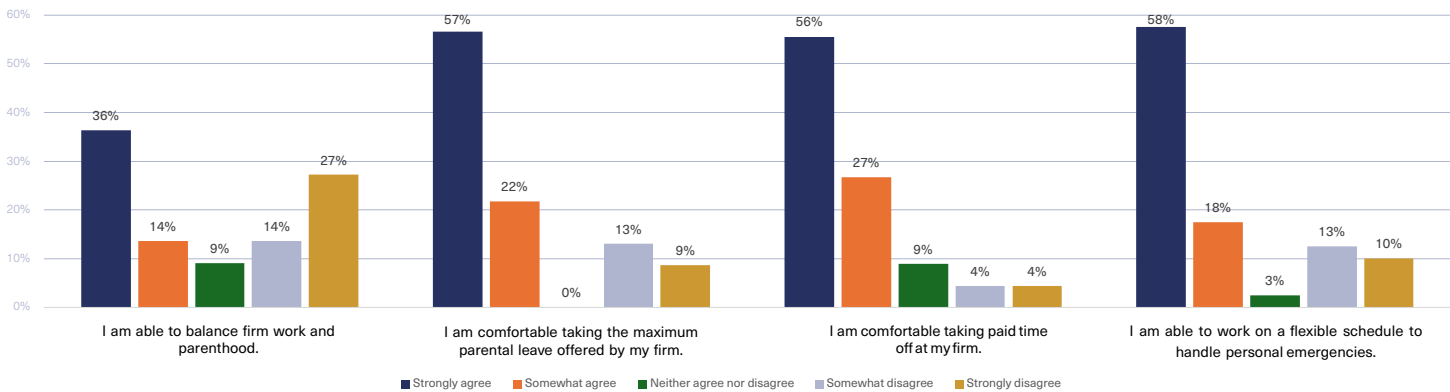
28% of alumni strongly agree that they work on diverse teams.

15% strongly agree that firm leadership is diverse.

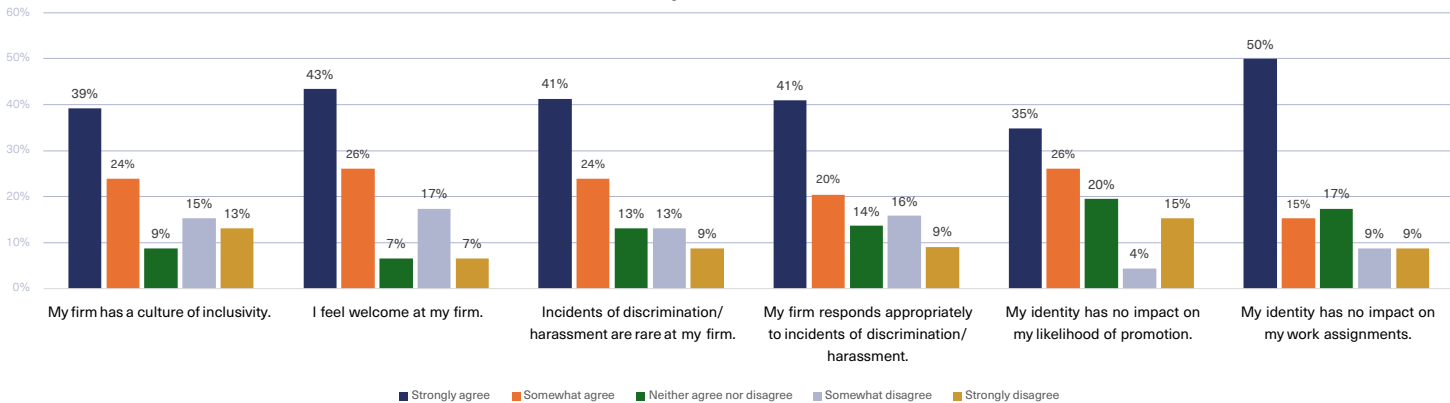
Alumni Experiences: Diversity



Alumni Experiences: Work-Life Balance



Alumni Experiences: Culture



“I think I have had a very positive experience at my firm in part because there are many female partners in my group. In fact, almost all the partners I work with are women. I have many amazing senior women attorneys to look up to, and I feel like they look out for me.”

YLS, 2022

“[My firm] has a generous parental leave policy and a very effective ‘ramp up’ program for attorneys returning from leave.”

YLS, 2008

ADVANCE- MENT

Advancement refers to the capacity of diverse attorneys to move up the ranks in firms, make meaningful contributions, and develop as attorneys. A law firm's opportunities for advancement reflects the firm's ability to elevate its associates through education, training, mentoring, networking, and promotions. New associates' experiences in firms are shaped by opportunities to cultivate their skills, expand their networks, and find mentors who can provide advice and support. These opportunities are generally less available to women and people of color, who have only been welcomed into the legal profession relatively recently and who experience higher attrition within firms. A lack of diversity at more senior levels creates barriers to mentorship, networking, and the establishment of intergenerational networks.

Winner

**JENNER &
BLOCK**

Jenner & Block's commitment to Advancement is evident from its promotions of diverse talent, including women, gender nonconforming attorneys, and attorneys of color. Jenner & Block's feedback system is designed to elevate the perspective of junior associates and support their careers, with formal processes to challenge performance reviews, mechanisms for upward feedback, and established procedures for seeking help if associates have a poor working relationship with their managers.

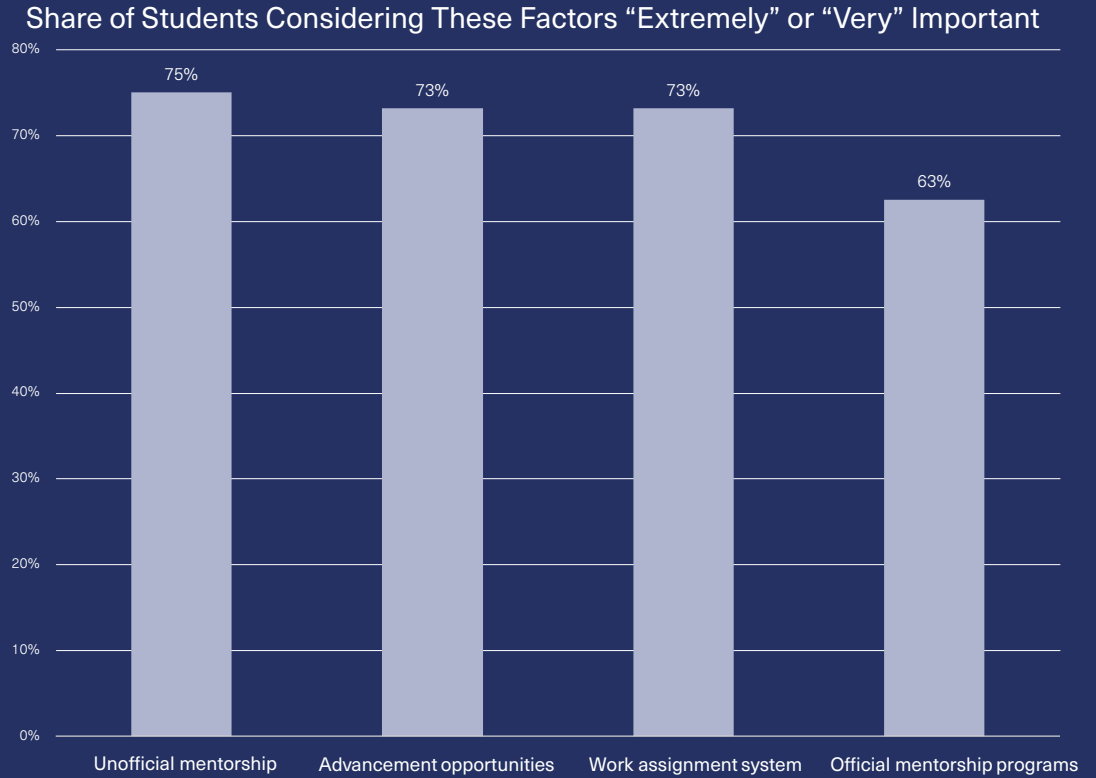
Honorable
Mentions

**PILLSBURY
WINTHROP
SHAW PITTMAN**

K&L GATES

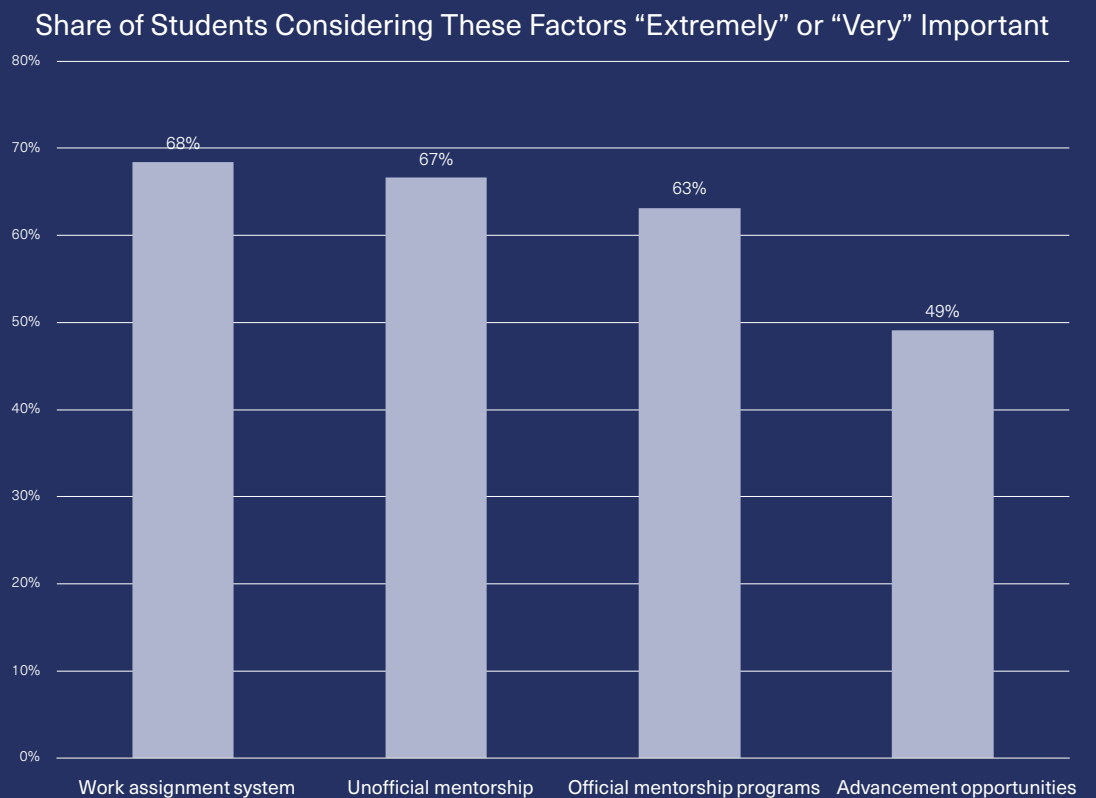
How Do Students Consider Advancement in Weighing Summer Job Offers?

75% of students consider a firm's unofficial mentorship system "extremely" or "very" important.



How Do Students Consider Advancement in Weighing Post-Graduate Job Offers?

68% of students consider a firm's work assignment system "extremely" or "very" important.



HOW CAN FIRMS PROMOTE ADVANCEMENT?

Firms can promote Advancement by providing training and mentoring opportunities and ensuring that these opportunities are available and accessible to all attorneys. Affinity groups can serve a useful role in creating professional networks for diverse attorneys. Firms can also track the identities of attorneys being considered for promotion, taking care to ensure that opportunities and expectations for promotion are transparently communicated to all attorneys. Promotion should not depend on factors unrelated to work effort and quality, such as time spent in the office—attorneys who are caregivers may spend fewer hours in the office, even while billing equivalent hours and generating high-quality work product. Here are a few of the factors YLW+ considers in evaluating firm Advancement:

1. Processes for providing upward feedback

Experts agree that “upward performance reviews” are an underutilized tool in law firms.¹⁰ Opportunities to provide upward feedback combat attrition by giving voice and agency to junior attorneys and equipping senior attorneys with feedback on how best to support newer talent.

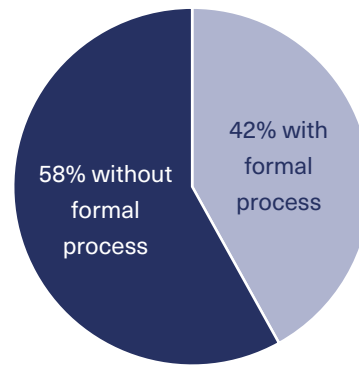
Share of Firms Allowing Associates to Give Feedback to Supervisors

41% of associates worked for firms where they were not able to give feedback to supervisors.



Share of Firms with Formal Processes to Challenge Performance Reviews

58% of associates worked for firms without a formal process to challenge performance reviews.



2. Mentorship opportunities

Mentorship is a crucial way for junior attorneys to cultivate professional connections, develop advancement strategies, and envision themselves in more senior roles.

“I believe I received much less mentoring than male attorneys at my firm; I had to look outside to other bar and alumni groups for sponsors and mentors.”

YLS, 1997

“Firms should offer real mentorship with consistent check-ins (not just one lunch and that’s it).”

YLS, 2024

“Having supportive women mentors through our mentorship assignment program has made a world of difference in my sense of belonging at the firm.”

YLS, 2022

“Was paired with a mentor who matched my identity on several levels, which was really crucial to feeling welcome and supported at the firm.”

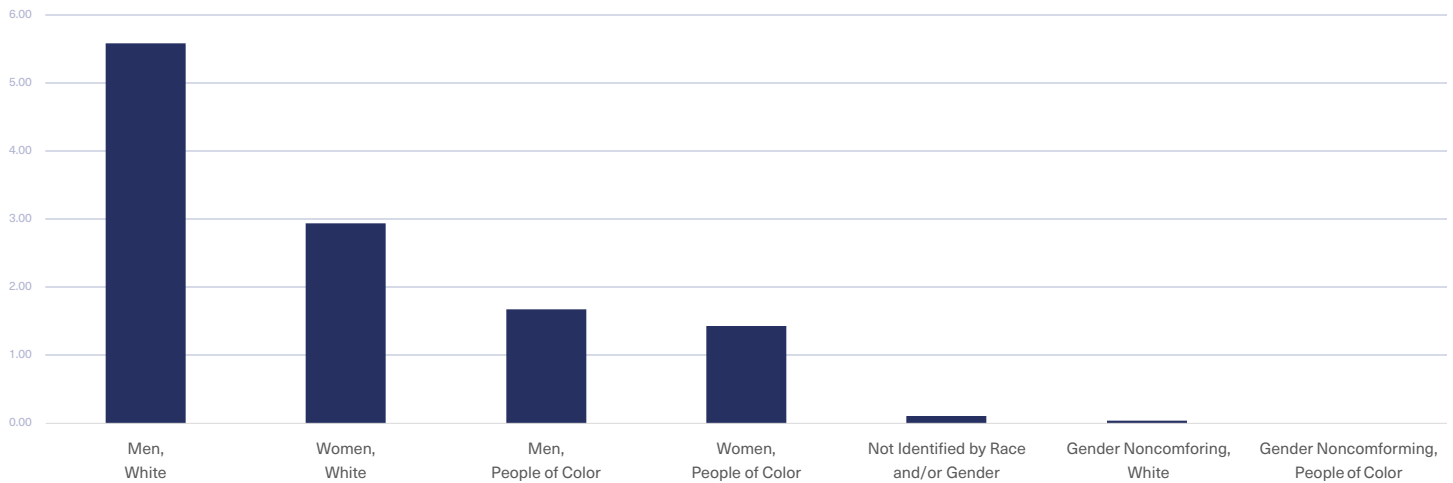
YLS, 2024

¹⁰ Sharon Meit Abrahams, *Practice Innovations: The Power of 360-Degree Feedback to Enable Greater Lawyer Retention*, THOMSON REUTERS (Apr. 11, 2022), <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/practice-innovations-april-2022-360-degree-feedback/>.

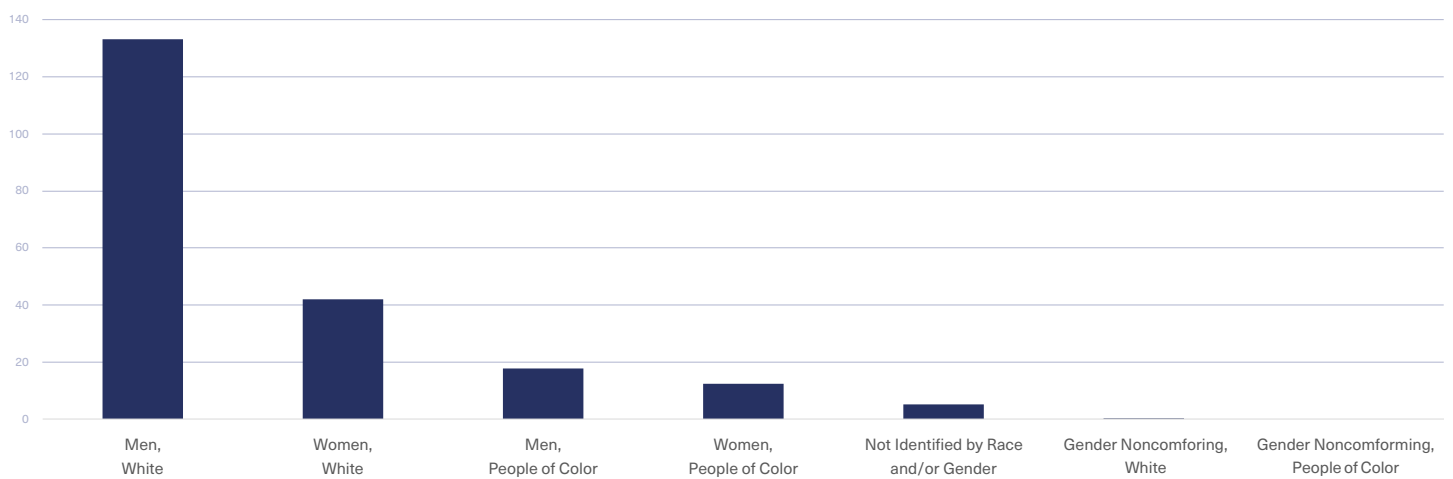
3. Promotion of diverse talent

Promotion outcomes by race and gender offer a clear reflection of firms' commitments to the advancement of diverse attorneys.

Average Promotions to Equity Partner by Race/Gender in 2023



Average Number of Equity Partners by Race/Gender in 2023



“[D]iversity is particularly meaningful when you see people of color not only leading diversity committees but also having leading positions in certain departments, especially those where they have been underrepresented in the past.”

YLS, 2025

4. Attrition

Where promotion of diverse talent shows that firms are succeeding in advancing diverse opportunities, attrition of diverse talent may represent an advancement failure.

AGENCY & FLEXIBILITY

Winner

**SHEPPARD
MULLIN**

Sheppard Mullin is an industry leader in its provision of paid and unpaid leave and its accommodation of flexible and remote work options. Sheppard Mullin prioritizes inclusivity through its caregiving leave, offering leave to care for family members with a disability or illness, for birth of a child, and for child adoption and fostering.

Honorable
Mention

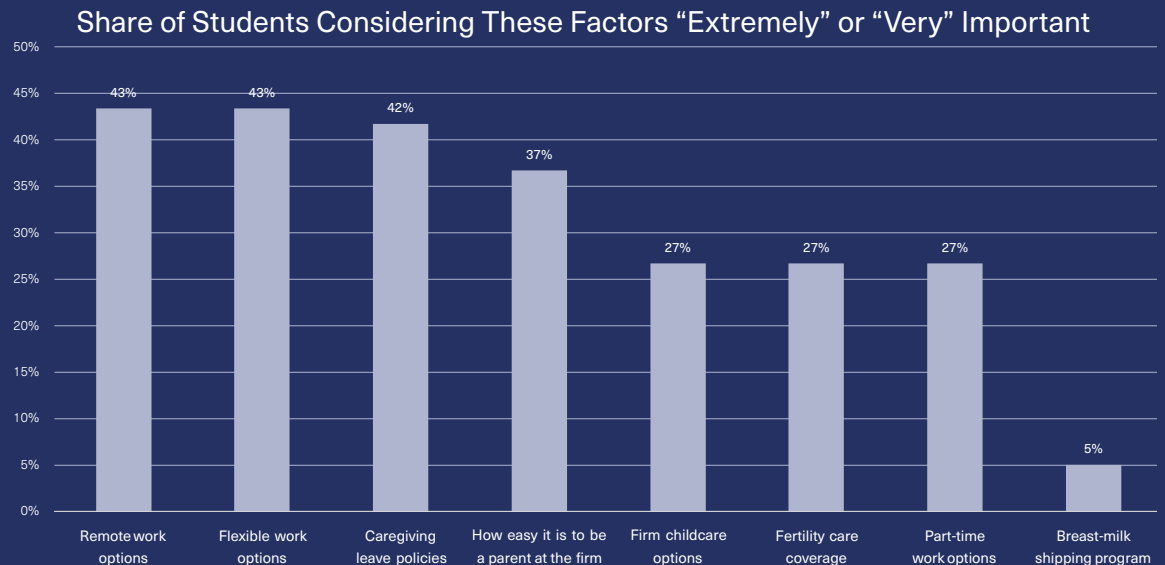
**ORRICK,
HERRINGTON
& SUTCLIFFE**

Agency & Flexibility refers to ways that attorneys at firms are empowered to pursue careers with other life objectives, including raising families, embodying positive mental health, and achieving a fulfilling work-life balance. In raising families, women are often birthing parents and primary caregivers, and the inability of such parents to take time off for caregiving and find reliable childcare can force them out of law firm practice.

Agency & Flexibility also plays an important role in preventing attorney burnout, enabling attorneys to find work schedules that work for them and take time off as needed. Importantly, the decision to opt into alternative work arrangements remains gendered, and women may fear the negative impact that part-time and flex-time work arrangements may have on their careers. When firms demonstrate a meaningful commitment to supporting employee success both at work and at home, they are more likely to attract and retain top talent and encourage employees to do their best work.

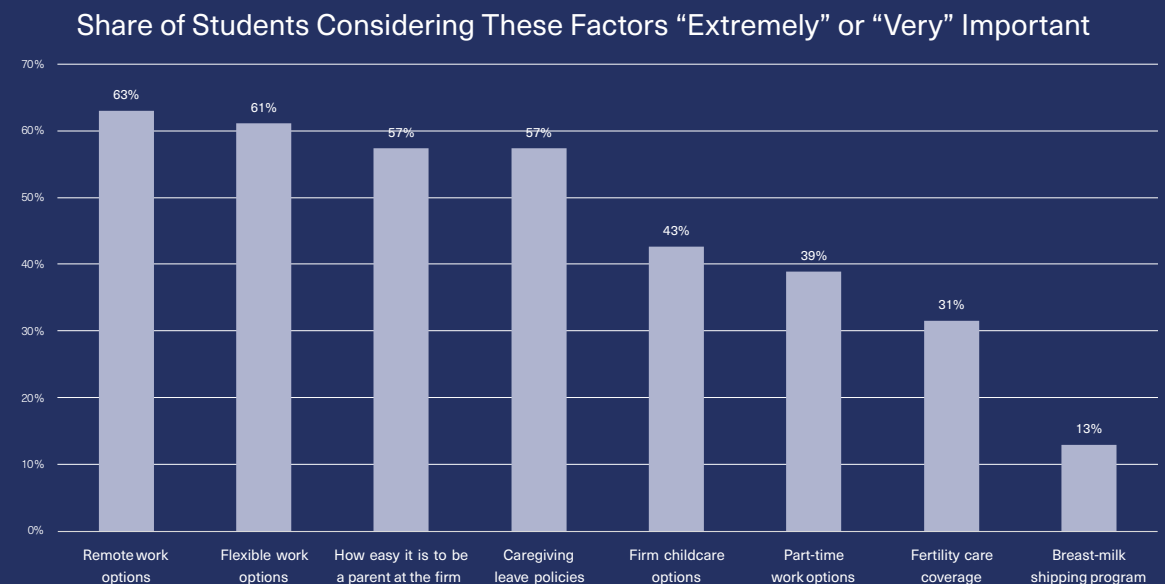
How Do Students Consider Agency & Flexibility in Weighing Summer Job Offers?

43% of students consider a firm's remote work options "extremely" or "very" important.



How Do Students Consider Agency & Flexibility in Weighing Post-Graduate Job Offers?

63% of students consider a firm's remote work options "extremely" or "very" important.



HOW CAN FIRMS PROMOTE AGENCY & FLEXIBILITY?

Among the features we look for in awarding our Agency & Flexibility awards, YLW+ values opportunities to work flexible schedules, including through remote and part-time work, firm provision of childcare, and ability to take paid leave. However, attorneys are often dissuaded from pursuing part-time and other flexible options due to real or perceived workplace consequences, such as poorer work assignments or reduced likelihood of promotion. Firms can both provide the following opportunities and benefits *and encourage employees to make use of them*, ensuring that careers are not harmed through their use:

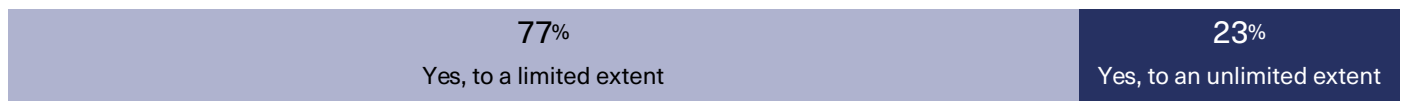
1. Opportunities to work on flexible schedules

Share of Firms Allowing Flexible Schedules



2. Opportunities to work remotely

Share of Firms Allowing Remote Work

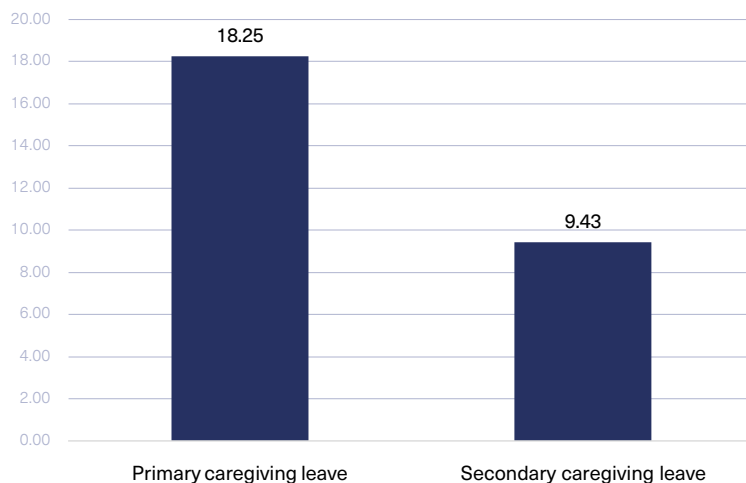


The median and mean firms require **3** days of in-person work per week.

“The expectation was that I would stay at the office late frequently even if I had obligations with my child. Remote work was not really an option.”
YLS, 1999

3. Opportunities to take paid leave

Average Maximum Length of Time (Weeks) Paid Caregiving Leave



“[Firms are inclusive when] men and women take family leave equally.”
YLS, 2026

“I felt undervalued and underappreciated after [I] became a mother.”
YLS, 1982

“The partner-in-charge took time he did not have to tell me how excited he was about my pregnancy and to discuss how [the firm] will support me having a long career there (whether I want to make partner, work part-time, or take time off).”
YLS, 2024

4. Opportunities to take unpaid, job-protected leave

Unprotected, job-protected leave allows attorneys the flexibility to pause work beyond the period for which paid leave is provided, safe in the knowledge that they can return to work when they are ready. This form of leave may be usefully combined with “ramp-up” programs that ease the transition back to full-time work.

Share of Firms Offering Unpaid, Job-Protected Leave



5. Opportunities to Work Part Time

“They were able to allow me to continue to stay at the firm through childbirth, working part time for the first time ever and then to encourage me to support part time women lawyers to become partners while working part time.”

YLS, 1965

“I was considered one of the top associates before I had a baby. After I went part-time, I received complaints that I wasn’t working hard enough, even though I was working more hours than I was scheduled to work.”

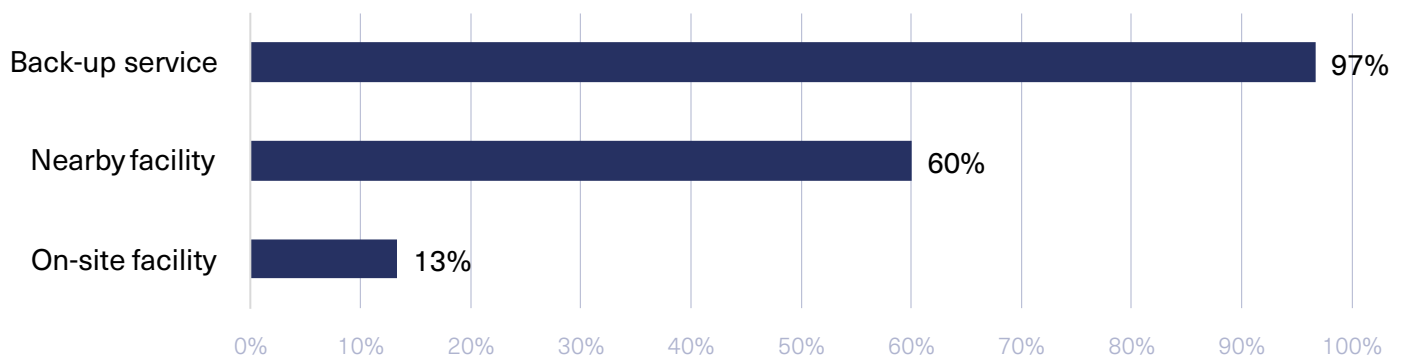
YLS, 2010

“When I went part time after having a baby, I was explicitly told I would not get good assignments.”

YLS, 2010

6. Childcare provision

Share of Firms Offering Childcare Options



7. Encouragement to take paid time off (PTO)

28% of firms we surveyed allow attorneys to take an unlimited number of days off. However, paid time-off policies on paper may not match actual practice, if attorneys are dissuaded from taking time off—explicitly, or implicitly, through reduced advancement opportunities or substantial work burdens during time off. Our alumni reported taking a mean of 17 days off per year and a median of 14 days off per year.

COMPEN- SATION

Winner

ROPES & GRAY

Ropes & Gray's lockstep compensation model provides equitable compensation to its attorneys with a competitive base salary. Pro bono hours are fully billable at Ropes & Gray, and billable caps for mentoring and diversity initiatives are relatively generous.

Honorable
Mentions

**KRAMER LEVIN
NAFTALIS &
FRANKEL**

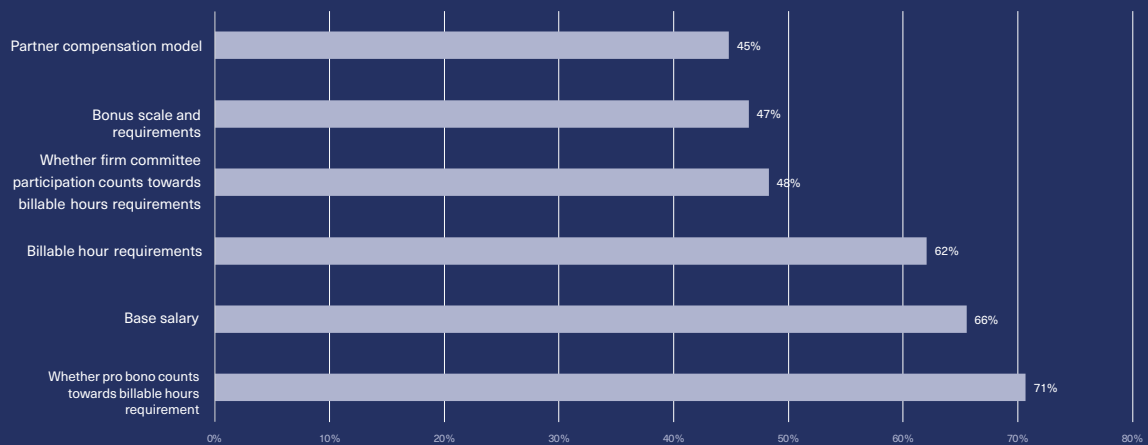
**ORRICK,
HERRINGTON &
SUTCLIFFE**

A law firm’s compensation policies attract talent, reflect how the firm values its attorneys, and create incentives for workplace culture. The gender pay gap in the legal industry is larger than the gap in the overall economy, with women attorneys earning 19% less than male attorneys.¹¹ Equitable compensation is crucial for attracting talent and advancing women and underrepresented minorities in the legal profession. Furthermore, billable hour requirements not only reflect a firm’s willingness to reward attorneys, but also the type of work the firm values. Women and people of color often take a disproportionate role in mentorship and DEI activities at firms—work that may go uncompensated according to a firm’s billable hours pay structure.

How Do Students Consider Compensation in Weighing Summer Job Offers?

71% of students consider whether pro bono counts towards billable hours requirement “extremely” or “very” important.

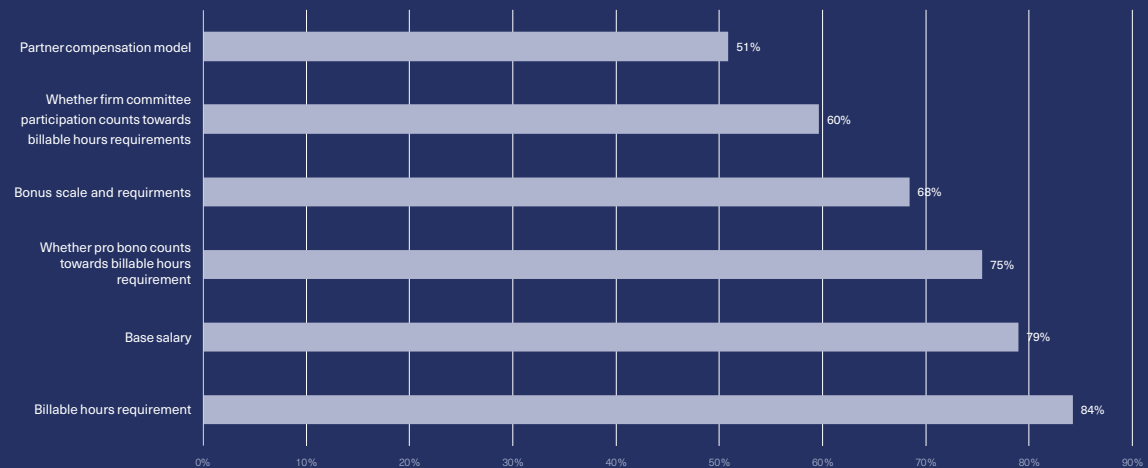
Share of Students Considering These Factors “Extremely” or “Very” Important



How Do Students Consider Compensation in Weighing Post-Grad Job Offers?

84% of students consider a firm’s billable hours requirement “extremely” or “very” important.

Share of Students Considering These Factors “Extremely” or “Very” Important



11 Brittany Long, *ANALYSIS: How Early-Career Transparency Can Close Law’s Wage Gap*, BLOOMBERG LAW (Nov. 5, 2023, 9:00 PM), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-how-early-career-transparency-can-close-laws-wage-gap>.

HOW CAN FIRMS PROMOTE POSITIVE COMPENSATION?

YLW+ values firms that adopt equitable compensation models and flexible billable hours requirements that transparently communicate bonus requirements while fairly compensating all contributions to the firm.

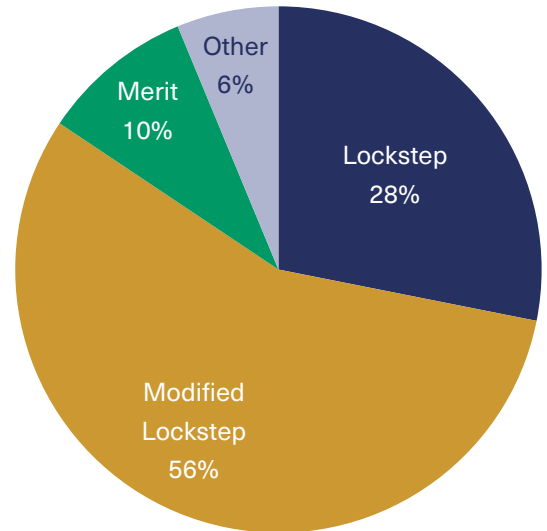
1. Equitable compensation models

Lockstep compensation models—which set pay solely based on firm seniority—offer maximal transparency and equity in associate pay and are therefore thought to reduce pay gaps¹². Meanwhile, modified or non-lockstep models that incorporate perceived merit may introduce bias and uncertainty. At the partner level, “eat-what-you-kill” models that compensate partners for the business they bring to the firm may create toxic work environments¹³ that prioritize competition over collaboration and reward traits like aggression that continue to be perceived through gendered lenses.

12 Christine Hendrickson, *Huge Pay Gap for Women Lawyers: What Firms Can Do*, BLOOMBERG LAW (June 16, 2022, 4:00 AM), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/huge-pay-gap-for-women-lawyers-what-firms-can-do>.

13 Lisa Schuchman, *Vanessa Ford Reminded Us That Law Firm Culture Is Still Toxic. Why Does It Survive?*, LAW.COM INTERNATIONAL (Mar. 3, 2024, 9:15 PM), <https://www.law.com/international-edition/2024/03/03/law-firm-culture-is-still-toxic-why-does-it-survive/>.

How do Firms Compensate Attorneys?



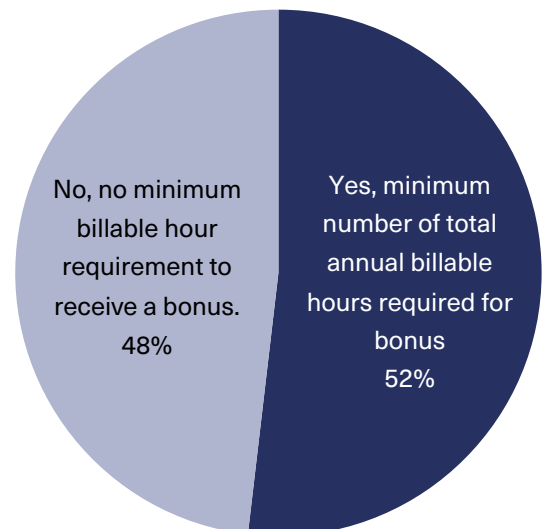
“Culture trickles down [from a firm’s partnership compensation model.]”
YLS, 2024

“I find that ‘eat what you kill’ attracts and creates people who act in their own self-interest, not in the firm’s.”
YLS, 2026

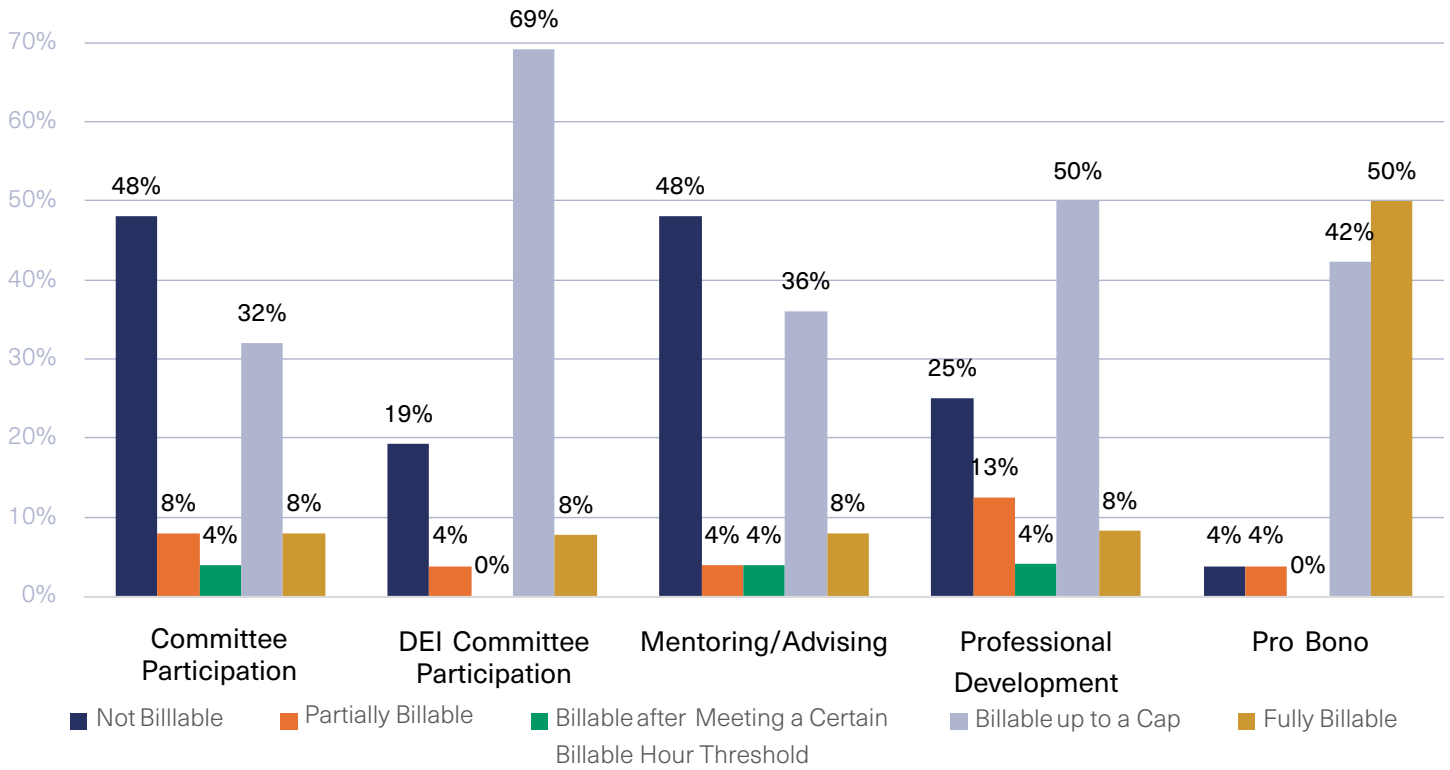
2. Flexible and fair billable hours requirements

Billable hours requirements provide standard, transparent targets for attorneys to aspire to in order to receive a bonus. Firms without explicit requirements may invite implicit requirements that are not clearly apparent to all attorneys. At the same time, billable hours requirements may lead to attorney burnout. We recommend billable hours requirements that respect work-life balance and that equally value contributions attorneys make in the form of pro bono work, mentorship, and committee participation—work that often falls upon under-represented attorneys to complete.

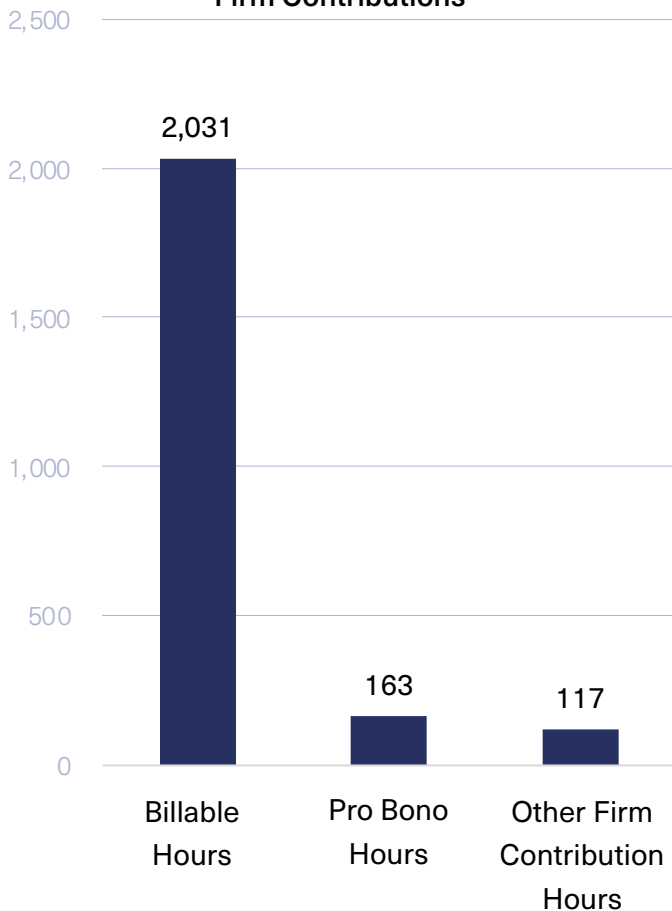
Share of Firms with Strict Billable Hours Requirements



Share of Firms with Billable Hours Caps/Limits



Average Hours Spent by Alumni on Firm Contributions



On average, YLW+ alumni billed **2,031** hours in one year.

The average surveyed firm with a billable hours requirement requires **1,943** hours to be eligible for a bonus.

“‘Inclusive’ can sometimes be code for ‘uncompensated work’ for minority attorneys.”
YLS, 2026

“They claimed to support pro bono, but the group I was in belittled the work.”
YLS, 1999

CULTURE

Culture, though impossible to define universally, is what makes attorneys enthusiastic about returning to work each day. Positive firm culture makes attorneys feel like welcomed and valued members of the team, without having to conceal aspects of their identity and personal expression. Historically, law firms employed white, male attorneys, and the culture at law firms reflected that reality. Law firms can attract and support diverse talent only when their cultures evolve such that white men are no longer the default employee. Firms can also foster reputations of treating attorneys fairly and kindly, such that attorneys are encouraged to build careers at the firm rather than leave due to burnout or lack of support in a “toxic” work environment.

Winner

**KRAMER LEVIN
NAFTALIS &
FRANKEL**

Across attorneys of all identities in the early years of their careers at Kramer Levin, attrition is low. Kramer Levin supports diverse attorneys, offering a range of male and female fertility-related benefits as well as free menstrual products in all its U.S. offices. Kramer Levin also sponsors green cards, unconditional on an attorney’s work tenure or country of origin.

Honorable
Mentions

**HOLLAND &
KNIGHT**

K&L GATES

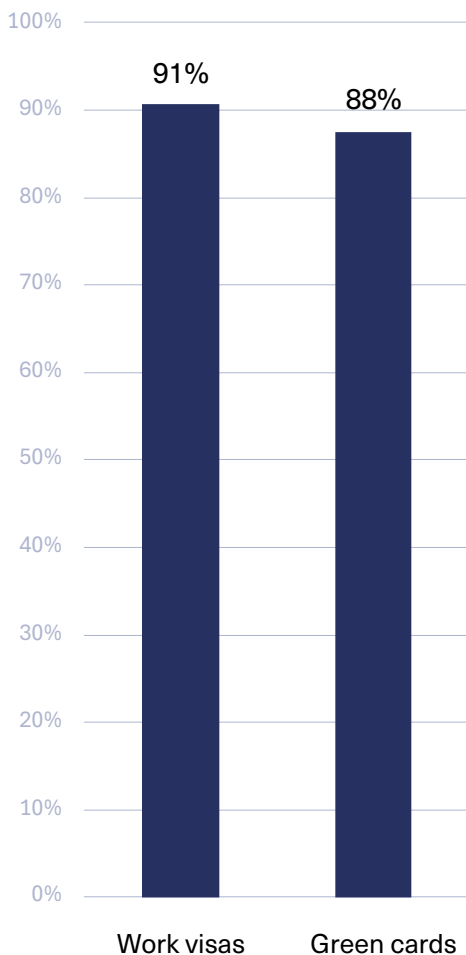
HOW CAN FIRMS PROMOTE POSITIVE CULTURE?

“There were times when I was asked to take on more administrative or secretarial tasks when there were other male colleagues at my level who were not asked to do the same.”

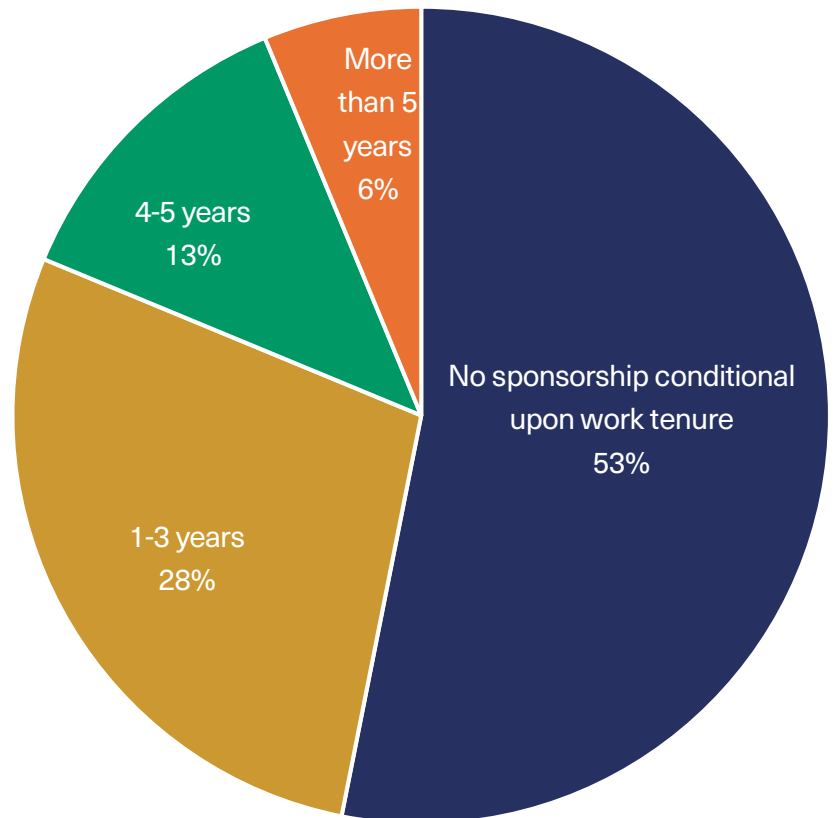
YLS, 2022

A law firm’s culture is reflected in countless ways, and as we have detailed before, may be valued in different ways by different attorneys. YLW+ recognizes firms whose policies encourage all attorneys to be their best and most authentic selves at work. Law firms can be particularly alienating cultural spaces for gender minorities and international lawyers. Provision of inclusive healthcare benefits, including reproductive and fertility care, and green card sponsorship are ways for firms to signal their commitment to supporting diverse attorneys. Firms demonstrate success in cultivating positive culture through low attrition rates, especially among underrepresented groups of attorneys. Support for attorney mental health and wellness can help combat burnout and attrition at firms.

Share of Firms Offering Visa/Green Card Sponsorship



Length of Work Tenure Required for Green Card Sponsorship



DIVERSITY

Diversity refers to firms' attraction and retention of diverse talent at all attorney levels. Attorneys can be diverse in many ways, through gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, disability status, and more. Attorneys with non-white, non-male identities have historically been underrepresented in the legal profession. In employing diverse talent, firms can transform their cultures, making their work environments more welcoming to even more diverse faces. Firms can also respond to clients, who are increasingly demanding diverse representation.

Winner

**ORRICK,
HERRINGTON
& SUTCLIFFE**

Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe boasts high percentages of equity partners who are women, gender nonconforming, and people of color. These attorneys are supported through Orrick's wide array of affinity groups. Orrick also tracks the gender and race of the associates each partner works with, helping to ensure opportunities are equitably shared.

Honorable
Mentions

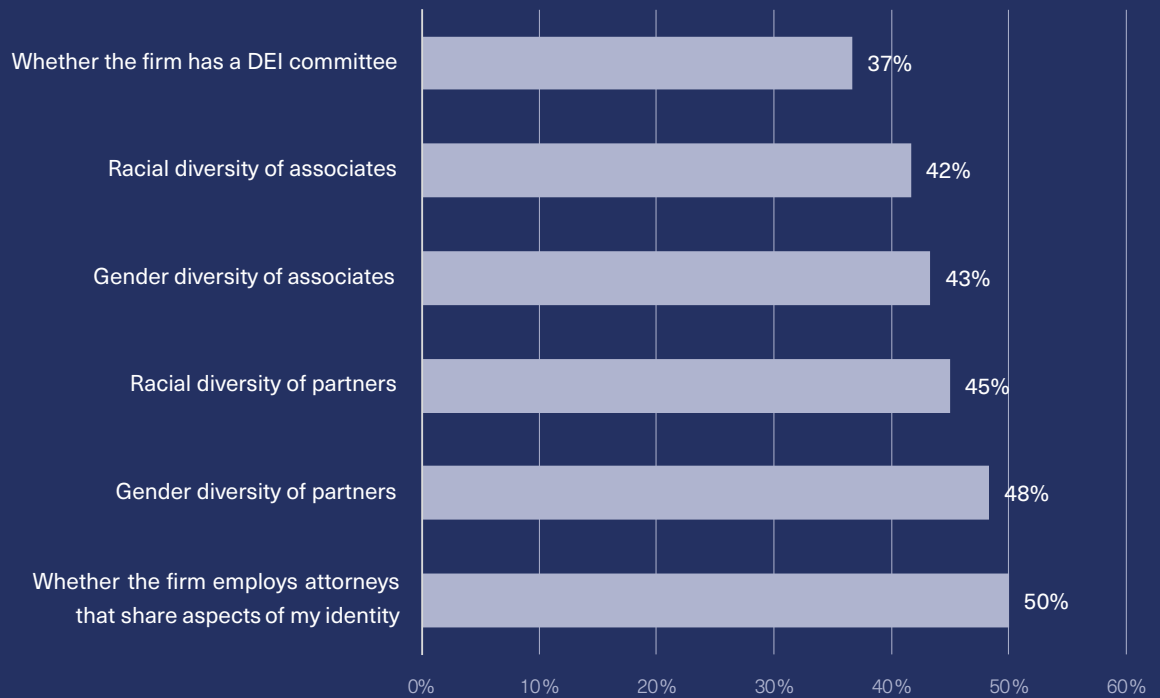
**LATHAM &
WATKINS**

ROPES & GRAY

Share of Students Considering These Factors “Extremely” or “Very” Important

How Do Students Consider Diversity in Weighing Summer Job Offers?

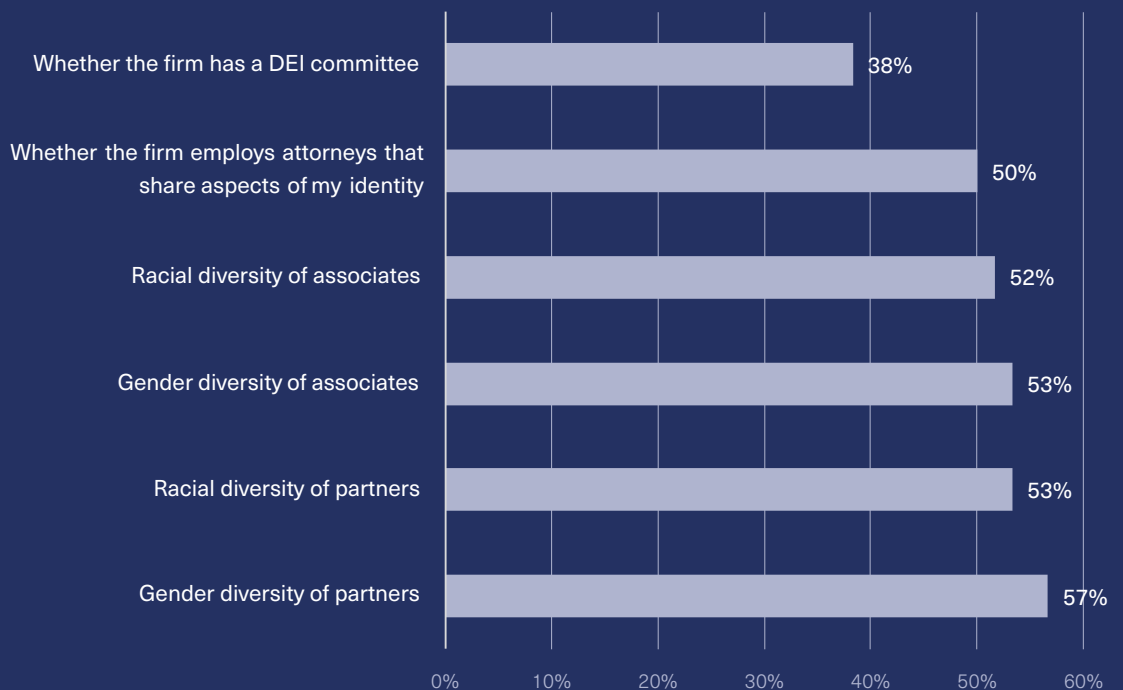
50% of students consider whether the firm employs attorneys that share aspects of their identities “extremely” or “very” important.



Share of Students Considering These Factors “Extremely” or “Very” Important

How Do Students Consider Diversity in Weighing Post-Graduate Job Offers?

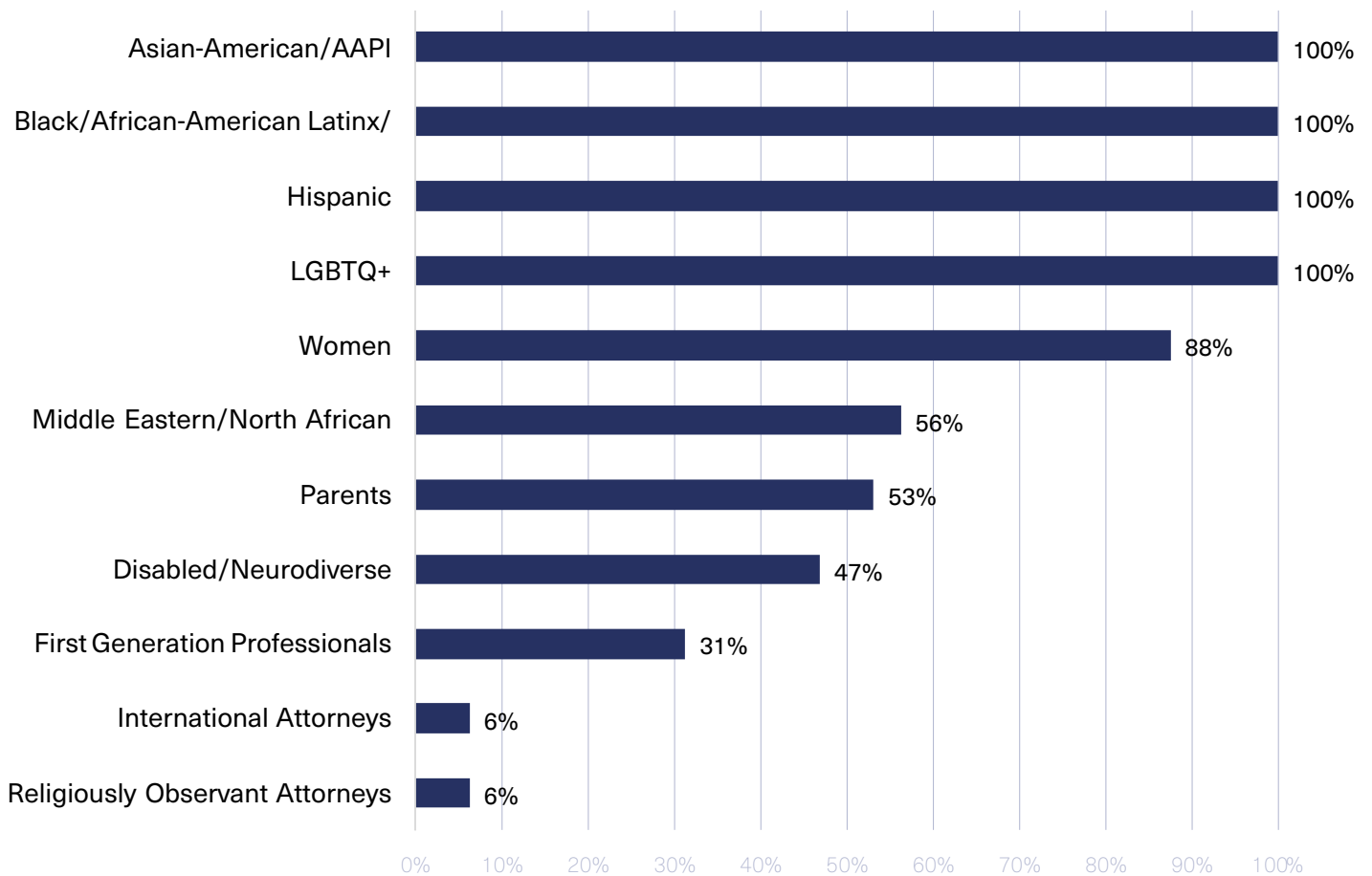
57% of students consider the gender diversity of partners “extremely” or “very” important.



HOW CAN FIRMS PROMOTE DIVERSITY?

Firms showcase diversity by employing diverse talent at all attorney levels. Firms can achieve this by supporting pipelines in legal hiring. Diversity scholarships can be useful ways to encourage diverse candidates to join law firms, but they can also be exploitative, forcing students to commit to a firm early in the recruiting process. YLW+ recommends that firms provide diversity hiring opportunities in a way that preserves student agency, allowing candidates time to weigh diversity offers alongside other opportunities. Firms also promote diversity by supporting diverse attorneys after hiring them. Affinity groups are invaluable networks for diverse attorneys. Firms can create and financially support a broad range of affinity groups that are responsive to attorney needs.

Share of Firms with Affinity Groups



“I found it very strong that they had a parents group at the firm which included partners and people who became parents as associates and were now partners.”

YLS, 2026

“I felt very comfortable in [affinity group] spaces, which made me feel comfortable at the firm as a whole.”

YLS, 2026

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS



WHEN CONSIDERING WHERE TO INTERVIEW

Do your research.

Investigate aspects of firms that matter to you. This Report is a great start!

Consider your values.

Is it important to you to share a workplace with attorneys that share your identity, or are you comfortable being a part of needed change? What benefits are you unwilling to compromise on? What are your goals in entering law firm practice, and how can firms support those goals?

Think ahead.

Consider what your values might be in years to come if you find yourself working at the same firm. Do you hope to take parental leave one day? Would it be helpful to have health insurance coverage for fertility care?

Be open-minded in applying to firms.

Remember that this initial research is just the first step in the process, and you will learn much more about firms, particularly in your practice and geographic areas of interest, through the interview process.

WHEN INTERVIEWING

Be specific.

Clearly articulate your interest in cultural aspects of the firm, mentioning this alongside your interest in the work the firm does. For example:

I hope to join a firm with a strong litigation practice that will support me in my goals of becoming an appellate litigator, and I saw that Jenner & Block was recognized by Yale Law Women+ for its mentorship and advancement policies.

Be cautious.

Exercise care when posing questions regarding culture and DEI. Demonstrate to firms that you are first and foremost focused on the work they do, and remember that you will have the opportunity to ask further questions about “fit” once you receive an offer.

Maintain agency in discussing your identity.

Feel free to share aspects of your identity as they relate to your interest in the firm and legal practice, but do not feel obliged to do so. This information may be more or less relevant depending on who your interviewer is, given their identity and receptiveness to discussing identity.

WHEN DECIDING BETWEEN FIRMS

Ask candid questions about culture and DEI.

Consider asking:

- What steps has the firm taken to promote greater diversity?
- What would I have to do to advance to partner, and can you provide an example of an attorney like me who recently did so?
- What mentorship opportunities would be available to me at this firm?
- How much PTO do you take in a typical year?
- What does your time off look like?
- What expectations, official and unofficial, does the firm have of its attorneys?

Ask firms to provide you helpful contacts.

Ask to be in touch with those who can help you understand what it's like to work at the firm, such as junior associates, attorneys that share aspects of your identity, or attorneys that have recently returned from caregiving leave.

Identify and reach out to attorneys who have recently left the firm.

Hear about their experience and why they decided to leave.

RECOMMEN- DATIONS FOR FIRMS



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider a broad view of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

When asked what inclusivity at firms means to them, students responded:

“[M]ore veterans and first generation professionals”
YLS, 2025

“Broad conception of diversity to include disability”
YLS, 2024

“DEI also includes not hiring only from T14 law schools”
YLS, 2024

“A firm's culture is inclusive if people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, identities, and experiences can feel comfortable in the firm environment”
YLS, 2024

“Diversity in terms of identity and belief”
YLS, 2025

Adopt an intersectional approach to DEI.

Our students recommend:

“Remember that some people don't fall neatly into any affinity label, and if you narrowly email (for example) the MENA group about Muslim-related accommodations, you'll miss all the Muslims in other affinity groups.”

YLS, 2024

Clearly articulate your firm's DEI values and commitments.

Proactive communication of values helps firms concretely work towards an inclusive culture and allows firms to uphold their employees to clear standards without harming firm culture.

“I was so frustrated and frightened by [offer revocations] that I considered changing my summer plans and not working as a summer associate at a firm. I am a leader in multiple affinity groups and know that this sentiment is shared widely among students with marginalized identities.”
YLS, 2025

“Lack of clarity around firms' accepted speech makes me nervous and fearful of retaliation as a person of color in expressing my political views outside of work.”
YLS, 2025

“[D]iversity should not be a buzz word, it needs to be a pervasive, well-structured default.”
YLS, 2026

HIRING

Provide agency to diversity scholarship recipients.

When offering diversity opportunities, ensure that students have adequate time to evaluate these opportunities against other offers, in compliance with any applicable law school recruiting policies.

“[Diversity scholarships] are often used to get competitive candidates from elite schools to join the firm rather than to promote actual diversity.”

YLS, 2024

“It is typically used as a bargaining chip rather than a genuine method of diversifying the class.”

YLS, 2024

Treat diverse candidates as individuals.

“[T]he interviewers were genuinely interested in getting to know me as a person, and I really appreciated that. How they asked questions made me believe they had a genuine interest in diversity and weren't just excited about a check in the box.”

YLS, 2024

Let candidates lead in discussing aspects of their identity.

Do not bring up aspects of a candidate's identity unless they do so first.

“[A] lack of boundaries . . . can be really harmful for the DEI context. A partner made a comment at a dinner speculating if an associate was pregnant [be]cause she didn't drink at a happy hour, for example.”

YLS, 2024

Ensure that candidates are interviewed by diverse attorneys.

This means providing interviews with varied identities, including women and people of color, but not merely selecting an interviewer that matches a candidate's identity.

“There were a few instances in callbacks where my interviewer was not from my practice area of interest, unlike other interviewers, and as far as I could tell was assigned to interview me solely because we shared aspects of our identities. I would have preferred that the firm offer me the opportunity to talk to such an associate at my discretion after I had received an offer.”

YLS, 2025

“The lack of racial diversity stood out to me considering I was interviewing for a diversity position.”

YLS, 2026

“I am not a fan of being paired *exclusively* with people who share my various identities. It wouldn't kill me to talk to a white, male associate/partner to get a sense of how they feel about the firm/how they navigate their role.”

YLS, 2024

EMPLOYMENT

Be transparent with current and prospective employees.

Ensure that attorneys have clear expectations of what work at the firm will entail and are equally equipped to contribute and advance.

“Creat[e] a hiring and promotion system that makes clear what the expectations are, with objective metrics for evaluating whether those expectations have been met.”

YLS, 2017

“I think it’s really important for firms to be honest about what they actually expect of associates so individuals can plan where they want to be effectively.”

YLS, 2025

“Have clear pathways to promotion and leadership and share those pathways with the people involved.”

YLS, 2009

“We were told that there was a formal assignment system, but it eventually became clear that some summers were receiving plum assignments outside of that process through networking. It made me feel very marginalized and out of the loop!”

YLS, 2024

Invite and be receptive to feedback.

“Listen to feedback from your diverse associates”

YLS, 2020

“[A firm’s culture is inclusive when] [l]eadership [is] willing to change and take accountability when problems are brought to their attention.”

YLS, 2024

“They claimed to have an ‘open door’ policy where anyone could go talk to leadership about anything. The reality was, if you tried to point out something they had done wrong (or even could do better) it resulted in you being iced out.”

YLS, 2017

“Listen to your summer associates and encourage critical feedback.”

YLS, 2024

Promote work-life balance widely.

Parents at law firms often struggle to balance work and family life. But other attorneys may also have caregiving or other personal obligations. Firms can use flexible schedules, remote work, and paid time off to encourage healthy work-life balance.

“Acknowledge family responsibilities even for those without children”

YLS, 2020

EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Focus DEI programming on engaging attorneys, building community, and advancing change within the firm.

When asked about the *least* successful DEI initiatives, our respondents said:

“Hosting invited speakers for lectures. We need to engage with each other rather than listen to a talk.”

YLS, 2022

“Official trainings run by outside groups that were very sanitized”

YLS, 2023

“Outspoken commitment to diversity felt somewhat weak/superficial/performative when there were so few non-white partners.”

YLS, 2024

Embrace diversity on DEI committees.

Under-represented attorneys are often best positioned to inform DEI initiatives, but the burden of DEI programming should not fall exclusively on these attorneys.

“[The firm] specified that the DEI committee was run by white partners in order to alleviate the time commitment of committee service on partners of color, many of whom are earlier in their careers. I think this showed thoughtfulness, yet it was still awkward to have DEI run by these white, middle-aged partners.”

YLS, 2026

REPORT METHODOLOGY

The year's Top Firms report is informed by three surveys. First, we invited this year's Vault Law 100 firms to respond to a survey on their DEI practices in the 2023 calendar year at their U.S. office locations. Second, we surveyed Yale Law students with previous law firm experience as SEO fellows and/or summer associates, or with interest in working at a firm in the future. Third, we surveyed Yale Law Women+ alumni who were previously or are currently employed at a law firm.

This year, we honor firms across five categories, representing firm attributes that foster wellbeing and success among a diverse workforce. Category honorees are selected by tabulating metrics for each individual firm based on their survey responses and weighted according to student preferences collected from the student survey. Categories are presented in alphabetical order, and each individual category is assessed independently of the others. For each section, selected data are aggregated and displayed.

**YALE LAW WOMEN+
TOP FIRMS COMMITTEE 2024**

Safia Sayed – Chair
Shubhangi Agarwalla
Lorena Essak-Hernandez
Mingyi Hua
Allison Li
Jandee Wallis

Thank you to the entire Top Firms Committee for their outstanding work constructing, executing, and analyzing this year's survey.

Please direct all inquiries to Safia Sayed at safia.sayed@yale.edu.

This report was designed by Kaci Xie. Please contact her via LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kaci-x>.

