

# 2025 TOP FIRMS REPORT





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*Researched and compiled by Yale Law Women+  
and published in September 2025.*



# INTRODUCTION

**YALE LAW WOMEN+ (YLW+)** IS PROUD TO PRESENT our twentieth annual Top Firms Report. The Top Firms Report stands for YLW+'s commitment to promoting the interests of women and underrepresented attorneys not just at Yale Law School (YLS), but in the legal profession as a whole. Just over a century since women were first admitted to YLS,<sup>1</sup> women and gender minorities have made enormous strides in law schools and the wider legal industry. In recent years, our Report has tracked this progress while continuing to identify work yet to be done.

Over the past year, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have faced serious and sustained threats. The Supreme Court's decision in *SFFA v. Harvard*, which invalidated the use of affirmative-action policies in higher-education institutions, continues to reverberate through law-school campuses. In fall 2024, Harvard Law School admitted its lowest number of Black students since 1965, with these admits representing only 3.4% of the incoming class.<sup>2</sup> Enrollment of Hispanic students similarly declined, falling nearly 40% from 63 students to just 39.<sup>3</sup> Not all law schools reported such significant changes to the composition of their student bodies; in fact, Stanford Law School reported an increase in the number of Black and Hispanic students enrolled in their incoming class.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the chilling effects of the Court's decision, at Harvard and elsewhere, threaten to undermine these students' sense of belonging in their law-school communities and eventually their places of employment. Disparities in law-school enrollment will frustrate efforts to achieve equitable representation in the broader legal profession.

The onset of the second Trump Administration has brought further challenges to DEI efforts. Three days after his inauguration, President Trump issued an executive order eliminating all DEI programs in the federal government, including policies maintained by government

contractors.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent executive orders targeted law firms known to have pursued legal action at odds with Administration priorities or with the President himself, stripping these firms of security clearances and government contracts vital to their ongoing operations.<sup>6</sup> Among the concessions extracted from firm leadership were commitments to terminate DEI policies and redirect millions of dollars in pro bono work to projects aligned with the Administration's goals<sup>7</sup>—goals unlikely to include support for underrepresented racial groups, women, or the LGBTQ+ community. Notably, several firms have pushed back against these efforts, filing suit to enjoin the Administration's policies or electing to represent fellow firms under attack.<sup>8</sup> Students interested in learning more about firms' positions on these issues should consult the following section of our Report on the "State of the Legal Landscape."

Compounding these attacks, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued letters to an additional twenty law firms demanding information about their DEI practices.<sup>9</sup> In these letters, the EEOC alleged that a number of firm policies, should they remain in place, constituted unlawful disparate treatment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>10</sup> Particularly pernicious for current law students is the Commission's condemnation of diversity fellowship programs,<sup>11</sup> which are funds designed to equalize summer employment opportunities and ultimate hiring outcomes for underrepresented groups. Since the letters' release, at least four law firms have agreed to the EEOC's terms and eliminated their DEI programs.<sup>12</sup>

In the midst of this turbulence, our Report reaffirms YLW+'s commitment to promoting the advancement of women and gender minorities in the legal profession and invites law firms to join us in that mission. With this broad aim, our Report has two main objectives.

First, we seek to recognize firms whose policies elevate underrepresented attorneys' experiences in the legal profession and align with YLW+'s four core values in employment:

- **Advancement**—marked by mentorship programs, training workshops, and other opportunities for underrepresented attorneys to thrive and advance in the workplace.
- **Agency and Flexibility**—marked by policies that promote work-life balance and allow attorneys agency and flexibility in their individual life choices.
- **Compensation**—marked by compensation practices that strive for fairness and equity, including on the basis of attorneys' nonbillable contributions.
- **Inclusivity & Diversity**—marked by work environments in which all attorneys can succeed without compromising their identities.

This year, we sought to recognize a broader array of firms with demonstrated records of success in these areas. As such, *all* firms who met predetermined point thresholds will be honored within the Gold, Silver, and Bronze tiers. We hope that the recommendations encompassed within each section will help firms continue to grow toward these aims and make the legal profession a more inclusive space for attorneys from all backgrounds.

Second, our Report serves as a guide for students and young attorneys seeking to identify the workplaces best aligned with their needs and preferences. In addition to our Top Firm Awards, this year's Report includes tips from Yale law students on navigating the firm interview process. We hope that these insights, as well as aggregate data on the state of firm policies, will increase the transparency and accessibility of the hiring process for students and attorneys.

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 who took the time to complete this year's survey and hope they find our results useful.

One final note: the legal landscape continues to evolve. Firms' survey responses, collected between January 29 and March 28, may no longer reflect the conditions on the ground: some firms may have opted out of the survey due to concerns of retribution, while others (including those recognized in Section III) may have changed their policies in response to recent events. As such, we strongly encourage students to check for new developments to complement the findings presented here.

1. *A Timeline of Women at Yale*, WOMEN AT YALE, <https://celebratwomen.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Timeline-of-Women-at-Yale.pdf>.
2. Stephanie Saul & Anemona Hartocollis, *Black Student Enrollment at Harvard Law Drops by More Than Half*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 16, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/16/us/harvard-law-black-students-enrollment-decline.html>.
3. *Id.*
4. *Id.*
5. Andrea Hsu, *Trump Calls DEI Programs 'Illegal.' He Plans to End Them in the Federal Government*, NPR (Jan. 23, 2025, 5:00 AM ET), <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/23/nx-s1-5271588/trump-dei-diversity-equity-inclusion-federal-workers-government>.
6. *Addressing Risks from Paul Weiss*, WHITE HOUSE (Mar. 14, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-paul-weiss/>; *Addressing Risks from Perkins Coie LLP*, WHITE HOUSE (Mar. 6, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-perkins-coie-llp/>; Michael S. Schmidt, *Law Firm Bends in Face of Trump Demands*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 22, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/paul-weiss-deal-trump-executive-order-withdrawn.html>; Michael S. Schmidt, *Trump's Revenge on Law Firms Seen as Undermining Justice System*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 12, 2025) [hereinafter Schmidt, *Trump's Revenge*], <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/12/us/politics/trump-law-firms-perkins-coie.html>.

7. *Addressing Remedial Action by Paul Weiss*, WHITE HOUSE (Mar. 21, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-remedial-action-by-paul-weiss/>; Michael S. Schmidt, Maggie Haberman, Matthew Goldstein, Jessica Silver-Greenberg, Ben Protess & William K. Rashbaum, *Law Firms Made Deals with Trump. Now He Wants More from Them.*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 16, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/16/us/politics/law-firms-deals-trump.html>.
8. Matthew Goldstein, *Two Law Firms File for Permanent Relief from Trump's Executive Orders*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 8, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/business/jenner-block-trump-filing.html>; Schmidt, *Trump's Revenge*, *supra* note 6.
9. Press Release, Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, EEOC Acting Chair Andrea Lucas Sends Letters to 20 Law Firms Requesting Information About DEI-Related Employment Practices (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-acting-chair-andrea-lucas-sends-letters-20-law-firms-requesting-information-about-dei>.
10. *Id.*
11. See, e.g., Letter from Andrea R. Lucas, Acting Chair, Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, to Perkins Coie LLP 3-6 (Mar. 17, 2025), [https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/Law\\_Firm\\_Letters\\_-\\_03.17.2025.pdf](https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/Law_Firm_Letters_-_03.17.2025.pdf).
12. As of late April 2025, the four firms to comply with these letters are Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Latham & Watkins LLP, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, and A&O Shearman Sterling LLC. Press Release, Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, In EEOC Settlement, Four 'BigLaw' Firms Disavow DEI and Affirm Their Commitment to Merit-Based Employment Practices (Apr. 11, 2025), <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-settlement-four-biglaw-firms-disavow-dei-and-affirm-their-commitment-merit-based>.

# STATE OF THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

Firms have adopted varying positions in response to the Trump Administration's attacks on DEI and the independence of their operations. During these unprecedented times, we hope that this section will help students identify firms that align with their values and provide a snapshot of the legal landscape in spring 2025. The following chart is not intended to be comprehensive, and conditions continue to change as we draft this Report. We therefore encourage students to verify the research compiled in this Report at the time of their interviews to account for altered circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

## Law Firms' Compliance with Administration Priorities, April 2025

| FIRM                                                             | STATUS                      | NOTES                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A&amp;O Shearman<sup>14</sup></b>                             | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$125m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices |
| <b>Cadwalader, Wickersham &amp; Taft<sup>15</sup></b>            | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$100m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes                                                          |
| <b>Kirkland &amp; Ellis<sup>16</sup></b>                         | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$125m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices |
| <b>Latham &amp; Watkins<sup>17</sup></b>                         | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$125m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices |
| <b>Milbank<sup>18</sup></b>                                      | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$100m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices |
| <b>Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton &amp; Garrison<sup>19</sup></b> | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$40m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices  |
| <b>Simpson Thacher &amp; Bartlett<sup>20</sup></b>               | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$125m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes and agreed to terminate diversity-based hiring practices |
| <b>Skadden Arps<sup>21</sup></b>                                 | Settled with Administration | Pledged \$100m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes                                                          |

| FIRM                                             | STATUS                                   | NOTES                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sullivan &amp; Cromwell</b> <sup>22</sup>     | Settled with Administration              | Represented President Trump in negotiations with Paul Weiss regarding recent the Administration's recent Executive Order                                                          |
| <b>Wilkie Farr &amp; Gallagher</b> <sup>23</sup> | Settled with Administration              | Pledged \$100m in pro bono work to Trump Administration causes                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Altshuler Berzon LLP</b> <sup>24</sup>        | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Arnold &amp; Porter</b> <sup>25</sup>         | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Clement &amp; Murphy, PLLC</b> <sup>26</sup>  | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Representing WilmerHale in its suit against the Administration                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Cooley LLP</b> <sup>27</sup>                  | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Representing Jenner & Block in its suit against the Administration                                                                                                                |
| <b>Covington &amp; Burling LLP</b> <sup>28</sup> | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Eimer Stahl LLP</b> <sup>29</sup>             | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Circulated an amicus brief supporting Perkins Coie                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Elias Law Group</b> <sup>30</sup>             | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Released a statement condemning the Administration's Executive Orders                                                                                                             |
| <b>Hausfeld LLP</b> <sup>31</sup>                | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Posted a statement condemning the Administration's Executive Orders and expressing support for targeted firms on LinkedIn.<br><br>Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie. |

## Law Firms' Compliance with Administration Priorities, April 2025 *continued*

| FIRM                                                             | STATUS                                   | NOTES                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hecker Fink LLP</b> <sup>32</sup>                             | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Posted a statement condemning the Administration's Executive Orders and expressing support for targeted firms on LinkedIn.<br><br>Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie. |
| <b>Jenner &amp; Block</b> <sup>33</sup>                          | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Challenging the Administration's Executive Order in court                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Keker, Van Nest &amp; Peters</b> <sup>34</sup>                | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Wrote an op-ed in the <i>New York Times</i> condemning the Administration's actions and expressing support for targeted firms                                                     |
| <b>Lex Lumina LLP</b> <sup>35</sup>                              | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Released a statement condemning the Administration's actions and expressing support for targeted firms                                                                            |
| <b>Lieff Cabraser Heimann &amp; Bernstein, LLP</b> <sup>36</sup> | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Posted a statement condemning the Administration's Executive Orders and expressing support for targeted firms on LinkedIn.<br><br>Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie. |
| <b>Munger, Tolles &amp; Olson LLP</b> <sup>37</sup>              | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Circulated an amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Perkins Coie</b> <sup>38</sup>                                | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Challenging the Administration's Executive Order in court                                                                                                                         |

| FIRM                                         | STATUS                                   | NOTES                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Selendy Gay</b> <sup>39</sup>             | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Signed amicus brief in support of Perkins Coie                   |
| <b>Susman Godfrey</b> <sup>40</sup>          | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Challenging the Administration's Executive Order in court        |
| <b>Williams &amp; Connolly</b> <sup>41</sup> | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Representing Perkins Coie in its suit against the Administration |
| <b>WilmerHale</b> <sup>42</sup>              | Challenging the Administration's Actions | Challenging the Administration's Executive Order in court        |

13. YLW+ extends our sincere thanks to Mari Latibashvili and the rest of the team at Coalition Justice for their work to compile this [comprehensive and up-to-date list of firm actions](#). This resource proved immensely helpful in creating the chart below, and we remain very grateful for their contributions to the broader legal community.

14. Sam Levine, *Trump Says Five More Law Firms Agree to Pro Bono Work to Avoid Punitive Executive Orders*, GUARDIAN (Apr. 11, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/11/trump-law-firms-pro-bono-deal>.

15. *Id.*

16. *Id.*

17. *Id.*

18. Jack Queen & Luc Cohen, *Milbank Reaches Deal with Trump as Divide Among Law Firms Deepens*, REUTERS (Apr. 2, 2025, 7:20 PM EDT), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-reaches-agreement-with-milbank-law-firm-2025-04-02/>.

19. *Addressing Remedial Action by Paul Weiss*, *supra* note 7.

20. Levine, *supra* note 14.

21. Daniel Barnes, *Major Law Firm Strikes Preemptive Deal with White House*, POLITICO (Mar. 28, 2025, 2:47 PM EDT), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/28/skadden-arps-trump-law-deal-028324>.

22. Ruth Marcus, *How Donald Trump Throttled Big Law*, NEW YORKER (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/how-donald-trump-throttled-big-law>.

## Law Firms' Compliance with Administration Priorities, April 2025 *continued*

23. Michael S. Schmidt & Maggie Haberman, *Trump Announces Deal with Doug Emhoff's Law Firm*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 1, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/01/us/politics/trump-law-firm-doug-emhoff-wilkie-farr-gallagher.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>.
24. Brief of Amici Curiae 504 Law Firms in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment and for Declaratory and Permanent Injunction, *Perkins Coie LLP v. U.S. Dep't of Just.*, No. 25-716 (D.D.C. Apr. 4, 2025) [hereinafter *Law Firms Amicus Brief*].
25. *Id.*
26. Kyle Cheney & Daniel Barnes, *Two More Law Firms Targeted by Trump Sue to Block Punishing Executive Orders*, POLITICO (Mar. 28, 2025, 2:22 EDT), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/28/jenner-block-eo-lawsuit-trump-00256160>.
27. *Id.*
28. *Law Firms Amicus Brief*, *supra* note 24.
29. *Id.*
30. Press Release, Elias Law Group, *Statement from Elias Law Group Chair Marc Elias* (Mar. 22, 2025), <https://elias.law/newsroom/press-releases/statement-from-elias-law-group-chair-marc-elias>.
31. Hausfeld, LINKEDIN, [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/hausfeld\\_activity-7314014092065705987-Uc85/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAABTjdkwBndJduChof3rq9nSzUj1LLHP8JOM](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/hausfeld_activity-7314014092065705987-Uc85/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAABTjdkwBndJduChof3rq9nSzUj1LLHP8JOM).
32. Hecker Fink LLP, LINKEDIN, [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/hecker-fink\\_activity-7311125610079084545-egbP/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/hecker-fink_activity-7311125610079084545-egbP/).
33. Goldstein, *supra* note 8.
34. John W. Keker, Robert A. Van Nest & Elliott R. Peters, *Our Law Firm Won't Cave to Trump. Who Will Join Us?*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 30, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/30/opinion/perkins-coie-trump.html>.
35. Press Release, Lex Lumina LLP, *Lex Lumina's Statement on the President's Executive Orders Targeting Law Firms* (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.lex-lumina.com/newsroom/lex-luminas-statement-on-the-presidents-executive-orders-targeting-law-firms>.
36. Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP, LINKEDIN, [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lieff-cabraser-heimann-%26-bernstein\\_statement-on-recent-assaults-on-the-rule-activity-7310752742216474627-oBs6/?utm\\_source=social\\_share\\_send&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop\\_web&rcm=ACoAAC\\_nGYoBILO6kQZtxZtC4u\\_qV8xx\\_4HhCpY](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lieff-cabraser-heimann-%26-bernstein_statement-on-recent-assaults-on-the-rule-activity-7310752742216474627-oBs6/?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAC_nGYoBILO6kQZtxZtC4u_qV8xx_4HhCpY).
37. Press Release, Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, *Munger, Tolles & Olson and Eimer Stahl File Amicus Brief on Behalf of More Than 500 Law Firms* (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.mto.com/news/headlines/2025/munger-tolles-olson-and-eimer-stahl-file-amicus-brief-on-behalf-of-more-than-500-law-firms/>.
38. Ryan Lucas, *Law Firm Says Trump Order Targeting It Specifically Is Attack on Rule of Law*, NPR (Mar. 11, 2025, 5:56 PM ET), <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/11/g-s1-53218/perkins-coie-trump-law-firm>.
39. Press Release, Selendy Gay, *Selendy Gay Signs Amicus Brief in Support of Perkins Coie* (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.selendygay.com/news/general/2025-04-04-selendy-gay-signs-amicus-brief-in-support-of-perkins-coie-1>.
40. Press Release, Susman Godfrey, *Susman Godfrey's Statements in Response to Administration's Executive Order* (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://www.susmangodfrey.com/news/susman-godfreys-statement-in-response-to-administrations-executive-order/>.
41. Ben Protess, *More Than 500 Law Firms Back Perkins Coie in Fight with Trump*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/04/business/law-firms-perkins-coie-trump.html>.
42. Goldstein, *supra* note 8.

# TOP FIRM AWARDS: GOLD, SILVER, & BRONZE RECOGNITION

YLW+ is thrilled to recognize the following firms for their stand-out performance in areas of Advancement; Agency & Flexibility; Compensation; and Inclusivity & Diversity. We would particularly like to congratulate our gold-tier award winners—**Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP** and **Sheppard Mullin**—for going above and beyond in each of these categories.

## GOLD

**Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP**  
**Sheppard Mullin**

## SILVER

**Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP**  
**K&L Gates**  
**Littler**  
**Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP**  
**Simpson Thacher**

## BRONZE

**A&O Shearman**  
**Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP**  
**Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP**  
**Reed Smith**

# INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY

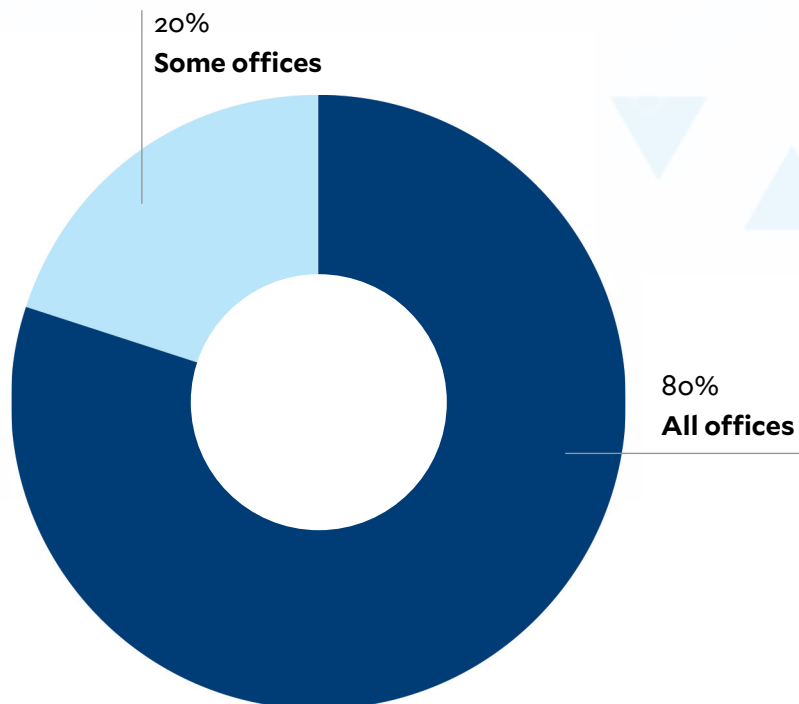
## **Why Inclusivity Matters**

YLW+ recognizes firms whose policies encourage all attorneys to be their best and most authentic selves at work. Law firms can be particularly alienating spaces for gender minorities. Provision of inclusive healthcare benefits, including reproductive and fertility care, is one way for firms to signal their commitment to these groups.

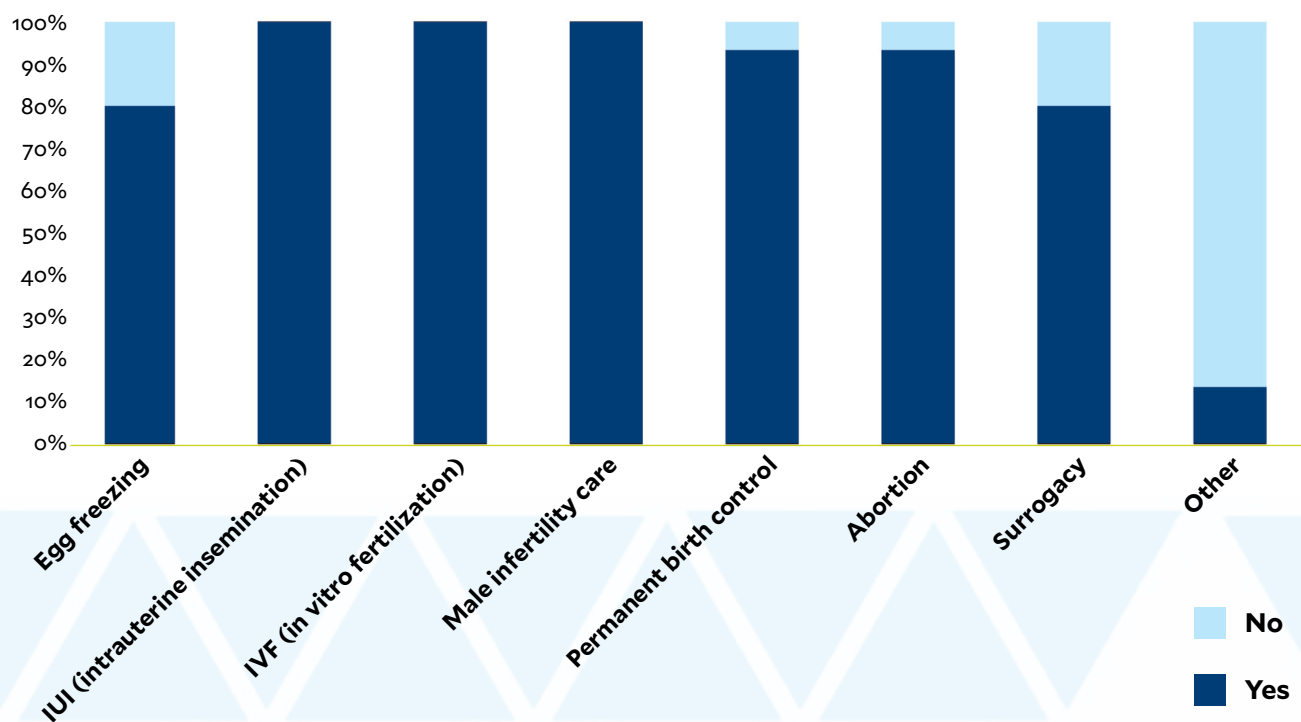
## **Why Diversity Matters**

Diversity refers to firms' attraction and retention of talent from a wide range of backgrounds at all attorney levels. Attorneys bring diverse perspectives shaped by their identities, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and disability status. Historically, many of these perspectives have been underrepresented in the legal profession. Cultivating an inclusive workplace not only broadens a firm's institutional culture and creates a more welcoming environment;

## Share of Firms Providing Free Menstrual Products in Women's Restrooms



## Share of Firms Providing Health Insurance Coverage for Reproductive Services



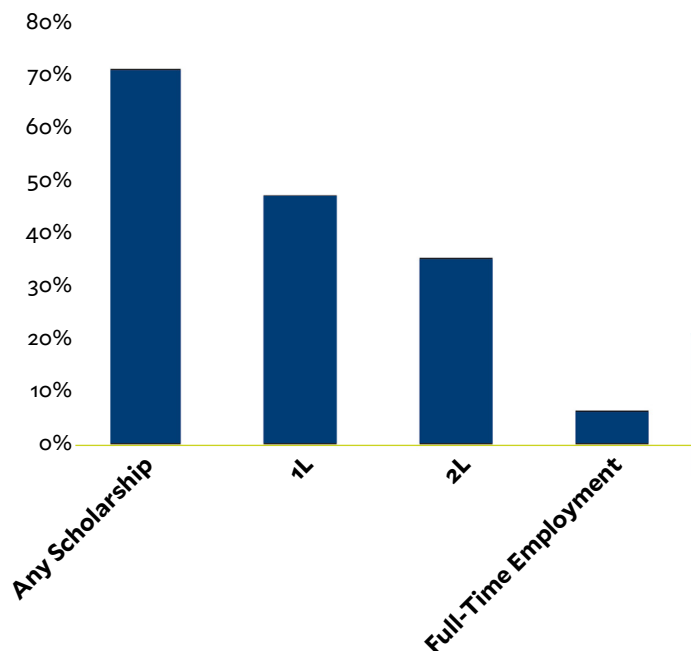
it also empowers attorneys to perform at their best. When attorneys feel respected and supported, they are better positioned to collaborate effectively and show up for their clients when it matters most. Clients are also increasingly attentive to whether the teams representing them reflect various viewpoints and lived experiences, which can enrich legal strategy and strengthen client relationships.

### **Action Items for Firms**

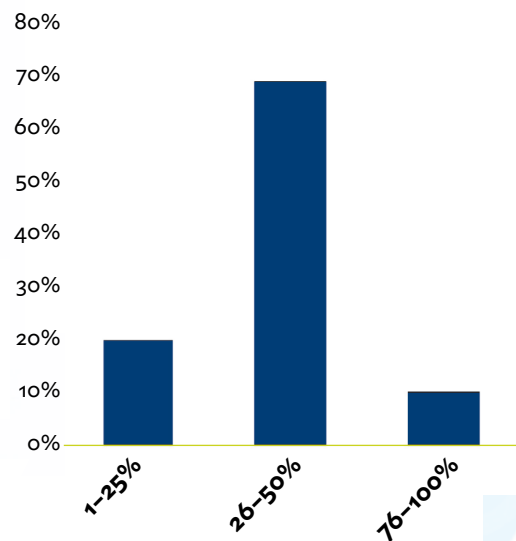
Firms can promote inclusivity and diversity through comprehensive hiring strategies, robust retention policies, and strong support systems. Effective strategies include developing meaningful pipeline programs and outreach initiatives that broaden access to the legal profession. While scholarships are a valuable resource, firms should ensure these programs allow candidates ample opportunities to thoughtfully evaluate their options, thereby preserving student agency and avoiding undue pressure.

Firms can also promote diversity by actively supporting attorneys throughout their careers. Affinity groups represent invaluable networks for diverse attorneys. As these programs come under attack in the recent push against DEI, it is more important than ever for firms to create spaces for attorneys to build community with peers of similar backgrounds. Firms can also track the identities of attorneys being considered for promotion, ensuring

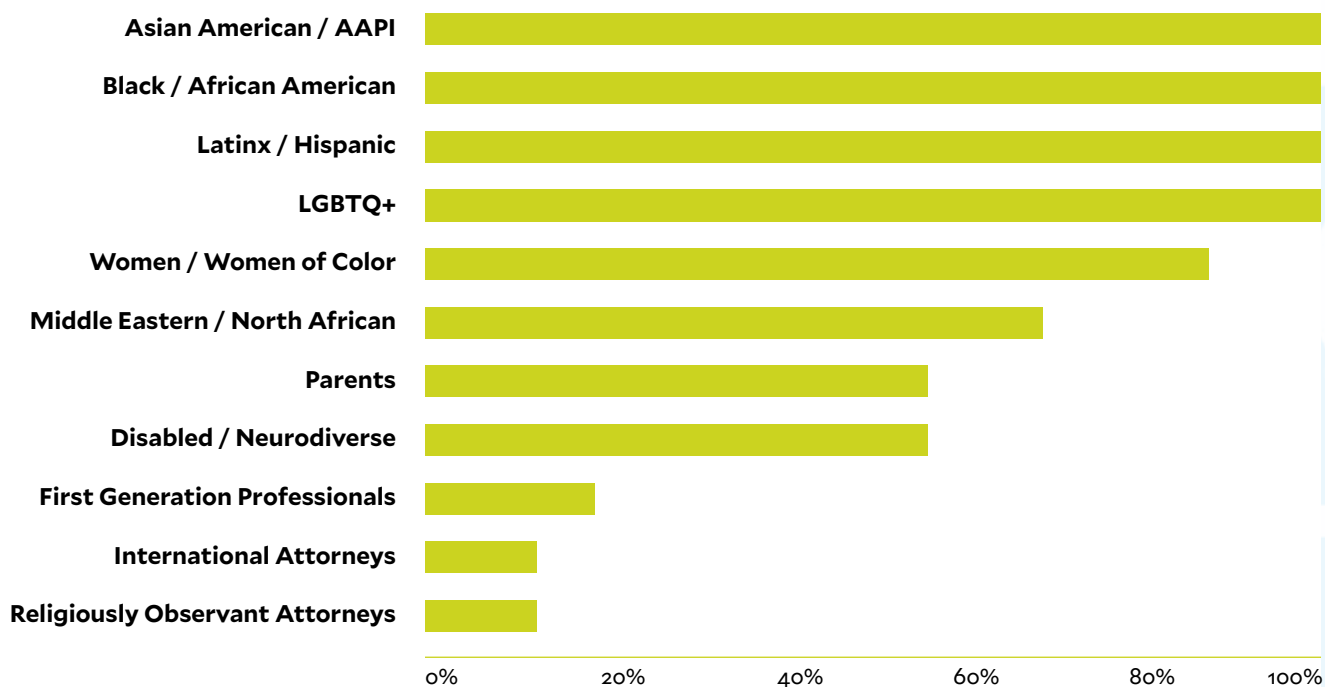
## Percentage of Firms Offering Scholarships



## Percentage of Scholarship Paid Out in the First Summer



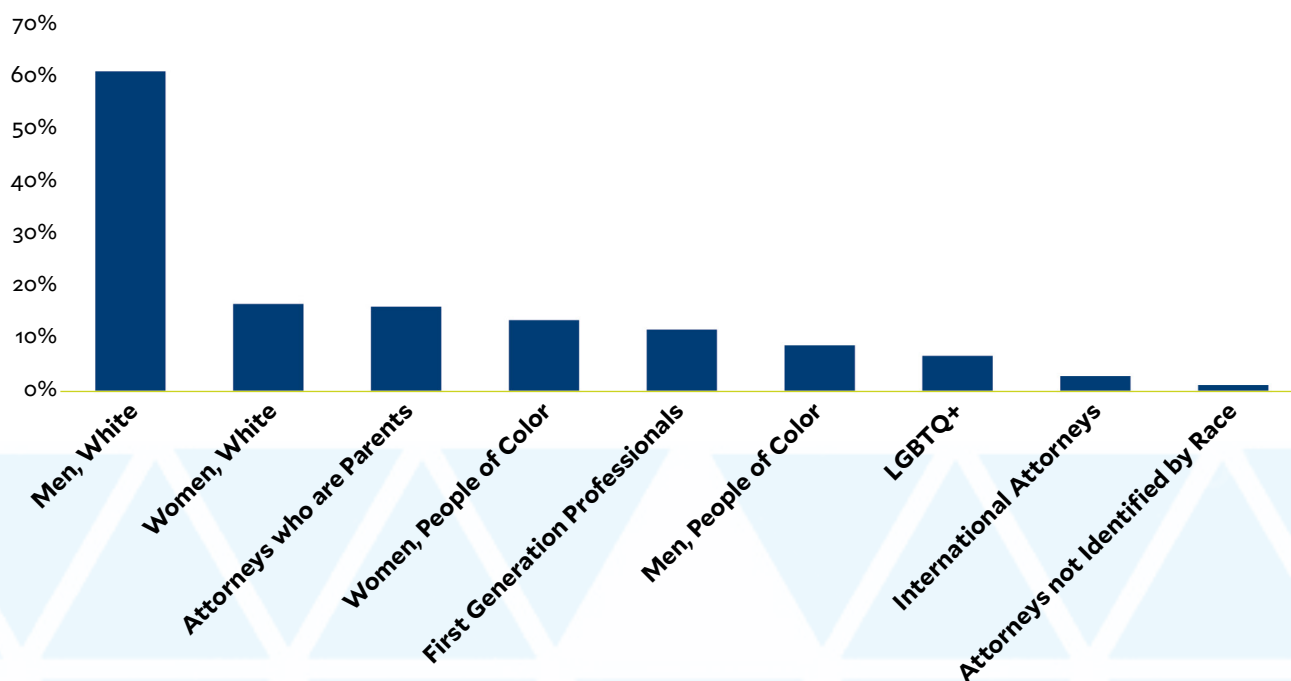
## Share of Firms with Affinity Groups



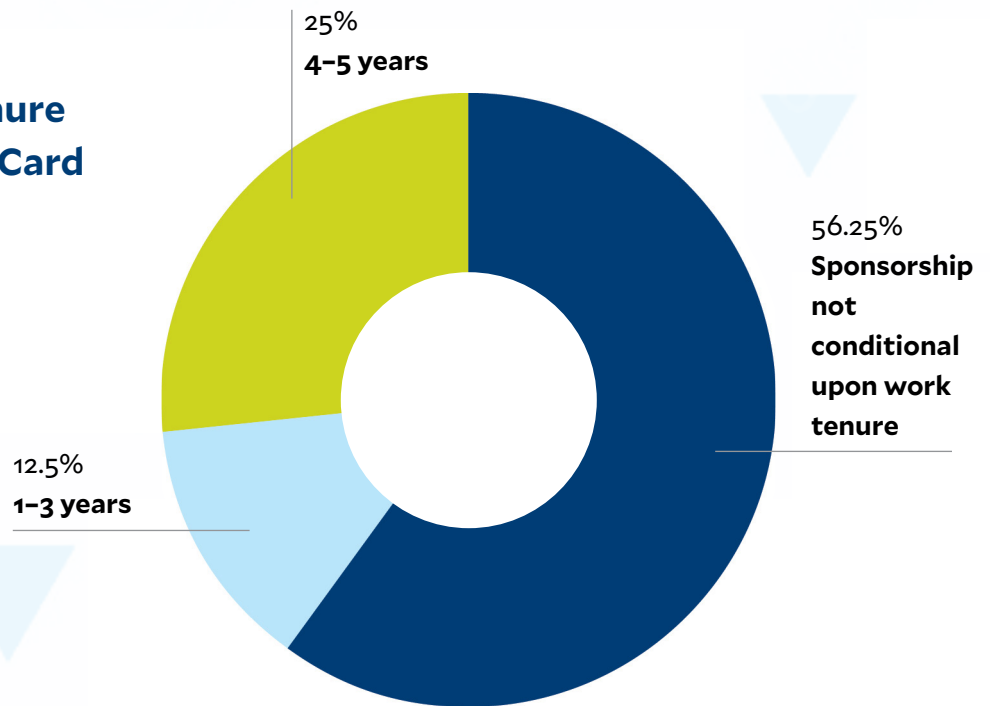
that opportunities and expectations for advancement are transparently communicated to all employees. In the face of increasing scrutiny, it is essential that firms maintain their commitments to these values in order to foster genuine, sustainable diversity and inclusion.

Green card sponsorship and supportive immigration policies are also essential practices for firms committed to attracting and retaining international talent. These policies signal the firm's dedication to inclusivity and long-term career development for attorneys of varying nationalities and backgrounds. 93.75% of firms currently offer green card/visa sponsorships, and we encourage them to continue these inclusive practices.

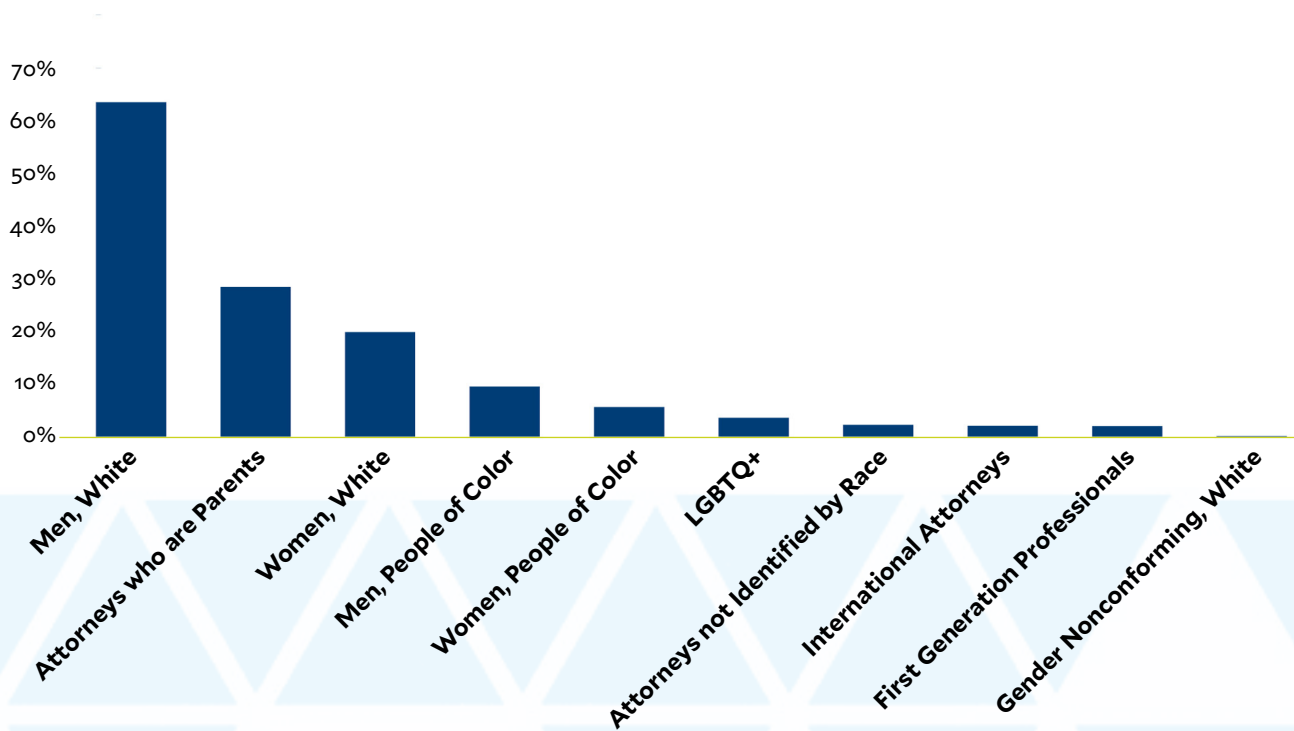
### Average Percentage of Equity Partner Promotions by Race/Gender in 2024



## Length of Work Tenure Required for Green Card Sponsorship



## Average Percentage of Equity Partners Employed by Race/Gender in 2024



# ADVANCEMENT

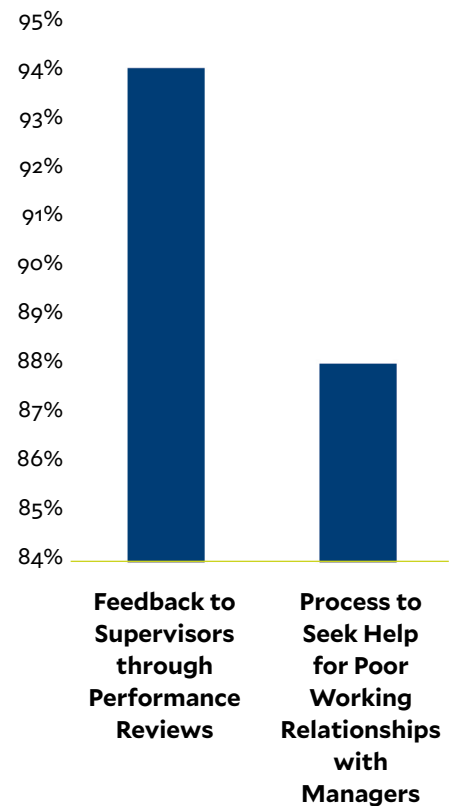
## Why Training Matters

Law school courses cover the mechanics of legal research and writing, but legal practice involves skills that aren't always taught in class, like client interaction, courtroom etiquette, and deal structuring. On-the-job training programs help bridge this gap, particularly for attorneys from underrepresented backgrounds; these programs expose associates to the firm's practice areas, new legal technologies, and the norms of the courtroom as well as the boardroom.

## Action Items for Firms

In addition to these on-the-job opportunities, firms should consider partnering with external organizations to provide career-coaching sessions, leadership training, and other professional-development programs. Investing in attorneys as people and providing continuous opportunities for personal growth will cultivate greater belonging and productivity in the long term.

## Percentage of Firms Offering Mechanisms for Improving Relationships with Supervisors



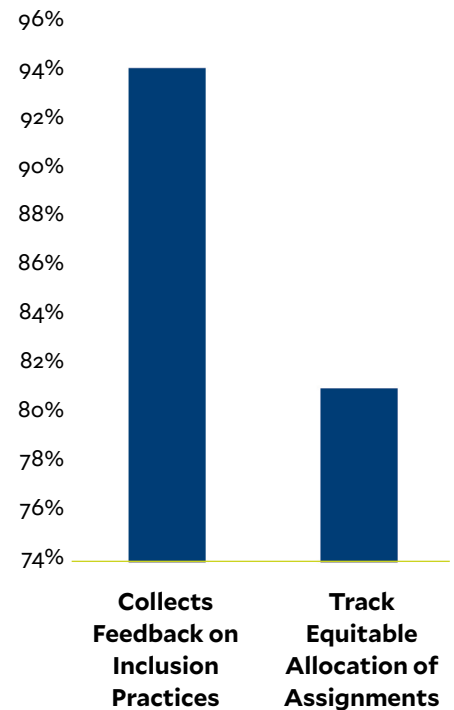
## Why Mentorship Matters

To complement training, mentorship provides junior lawyers with feedback, guidance, and modeling from experienced attorneys. Mentorship is a crucial way for junior attorneys to cultivate professional connections, develop advancement strategies, and envision themselves in more senior roles. As a result, firms that invest in mentoring are more likely to retain their associates and promote a culture of belonging.

## Action Items

First, implementing feedback mechanisms for supervisors and a process to address poor working relationships fosters accountability, transparency, and a healthier workplace culture. These systems empower junior employees to influence team norms and signal a firm's commitment to fairness, well-being, and professional growth at all levels. Second, collecting feedback on inclusion practices and tracking the equitable allocation of assignments supports employees' upward mobility by ensuring that everyone has access to meaningful work and possesses a real voice in shaping their workplace.

## Percentage of Firms Implementing Inclusion Practices



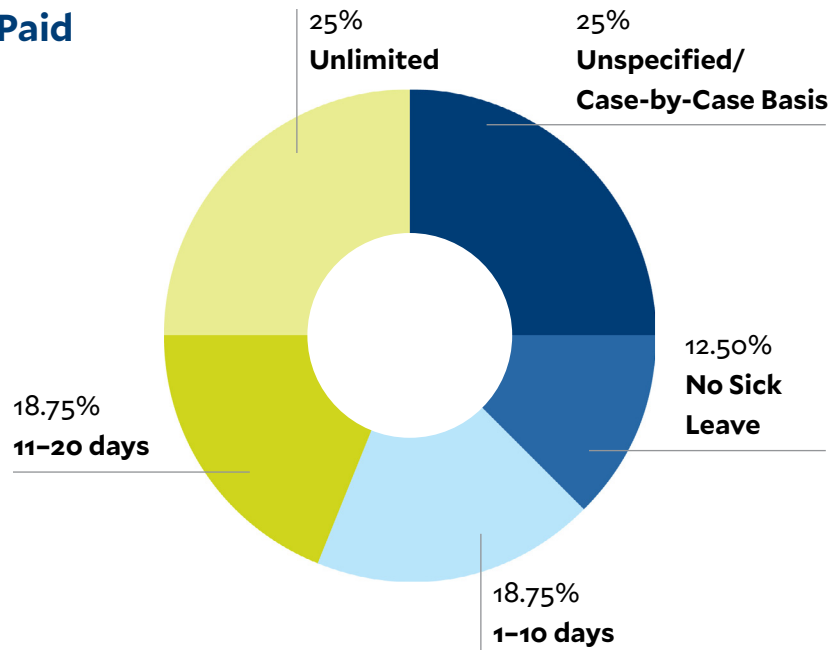
# AGENCY & FLEXIBILITY

## **Why Agency & Flexibility Matter**

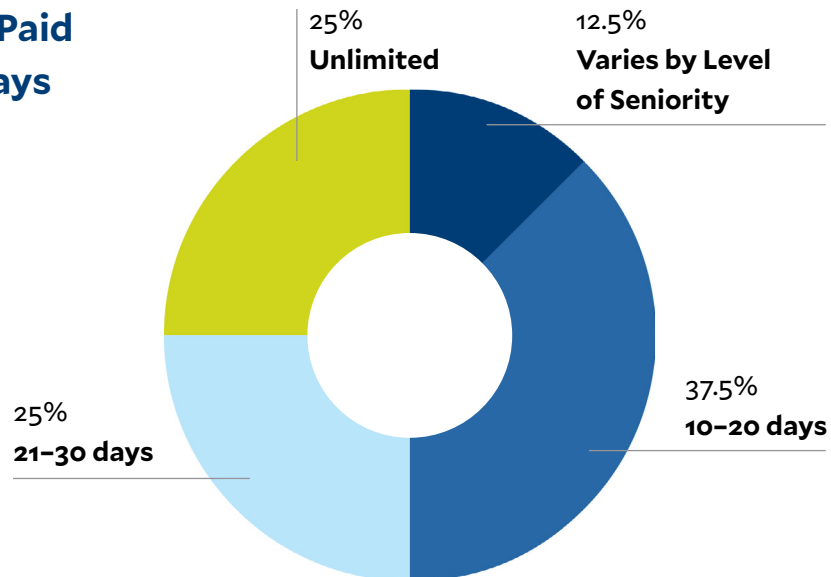
Agency & Flexibility refer to ways that firms empower their attorneys to pursue their careers alongside other life objectives, including raising families and achieving a fulfilling work-life balance. The strength of these values particularly impacts the careers of female attorneys. In raising families, 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.<sup>43</sup>

Agency & Flexibility also plays an important role in preventing attorney burnout, enabling attorneys to find work schedules that meet their individual needs and lifestyles. 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.<sup>44</sup> When firms demonstrate

## Number of Paid Sick Days



## Number of Paid Vacation Days



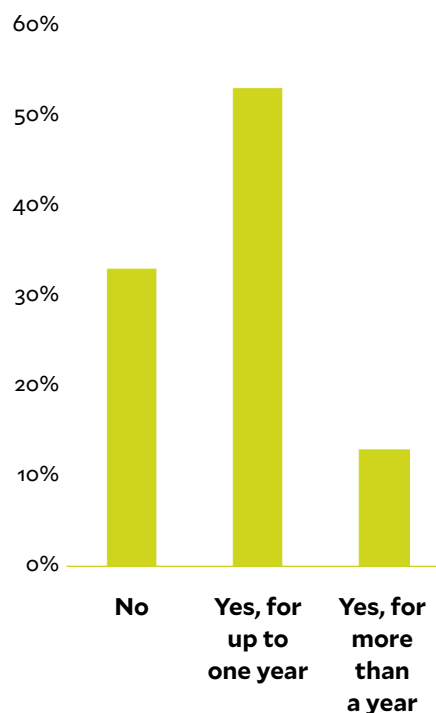
a meaningful commitment to supporting employee success at both work and home, they are more likely to attract and retain top talent and encourage employees to do their best work.

### Action Items

Among the features considered in the Agency & Flexibility category, YLW+ values opportunities to work flexible schedules, including through remote and part-time work, provision of childcare, job-protected leave, and the ability to take paid time off for vacation or illness. However, attorneys are often dissuaded from pursuing part-time and other flexible arrangements due to real or perceived workplace consequences, such as reduced work assignments or diminished likelihood of promotion.<sup>45</sup> To ensure that attorneys of all backgrounds feel comfortable taking advantage of these policies, firms should encourage employees to make use of these benefits and work to ensure that career outcomes are not harmed by these decisions.

Firms can signal their support of attorneys' lives outside of work by granting them job-protected leave for medical, family, and discretionary reasons. This indicates an interest not only in recruiting attorneys, but in retaining these team members regardless of their life circumstances.

### Percentage of Firms Offering Unpaid, Job-Protected Leave



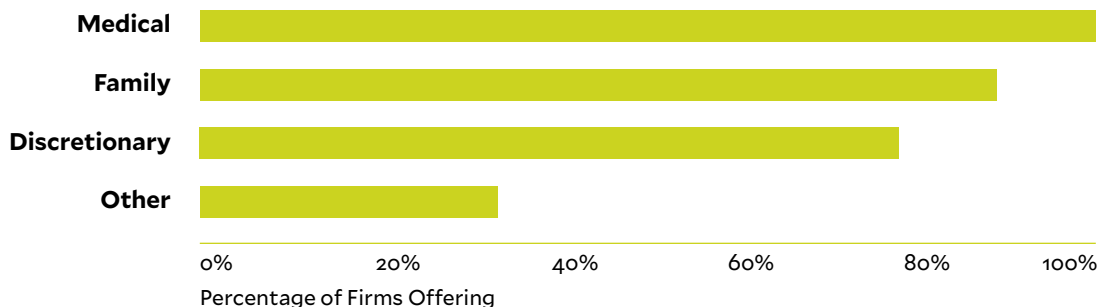
# 65.3%

**Percent of attorneys who took paid caregiving leave in 2024 were senior associates**

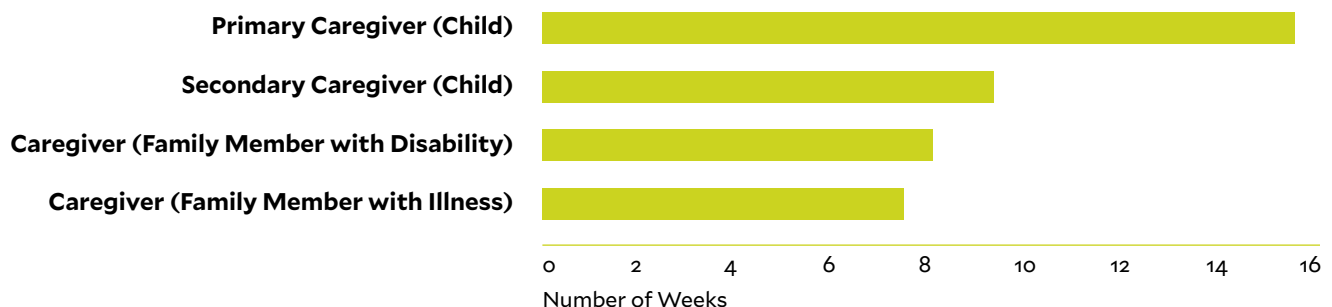
## Opportunities for Caregiving Leave

A majority of firms (81.25%) offered paid caregiving leave for the birth, fostering, or adoption of a child (provided to both primary and secondary caregivers); for family members with disabilities; and for family members with illnesses. However, 18.75% of firms limited paid caregiving leave to attorneys caring for children, forcing those caring for other family members to take *unpaid* time off to fulfill these responsibilities. Ensuring that attorneys have the flexibility to care for *all* members of their family without worrying about the financial costs of this decision will create a more welcoming and inclusive workplace.

## Types of Unpaid, Job-Protected Leave, of Firms Offering Leave

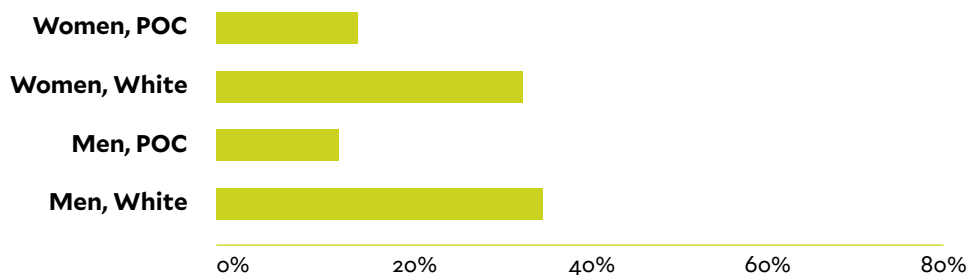


## Average Weeks of Paid Caregiving Leave



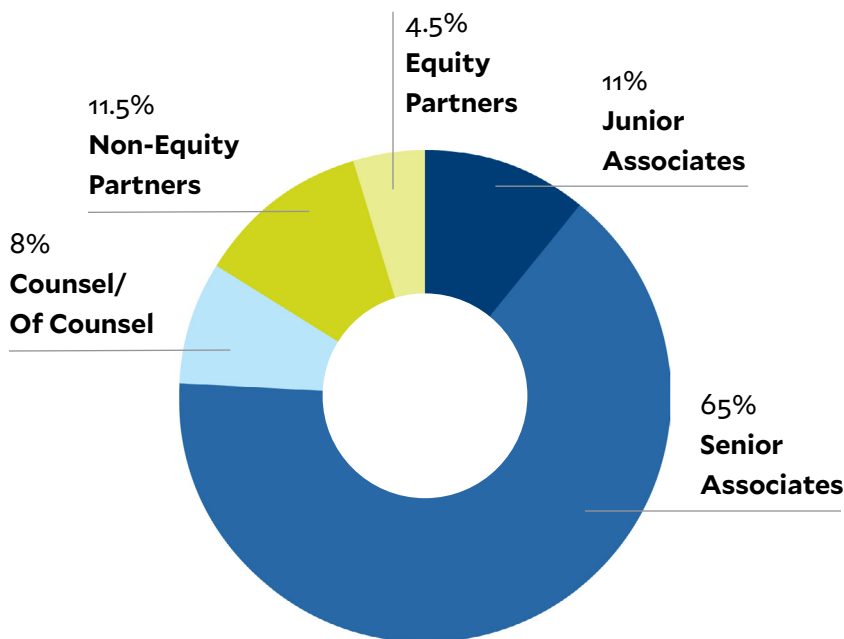
Race proved to be the most significant indicator of attorneys' willingness or need to take paid caregiving leave. On average, white men and women took paid caregiver leave at greater rates than both men and women of color. While the cause of this disparity is far from certain, firms should work to ensure that attorneys of all backgrounds feel empowered to take paid caregiver leave without fear of adverse career consequences.

### Average Percentage of Attorneys Who Took Paid Caregiver Leave, by Race and Gender



Senior associates took paid caregiving leave at far higher rates than other levels of attorneys. On average, 65.3% of attorneys who took paid caregiving leave during 2024 were senior associates, with partners trailing behind at 16.1%, junior associates at 10.6%, and counsel/ of counsel at 8%. While some of this variation may be attributable to the average stages of attorneys at each level, firms should adopt policies to ensure that attorneys at all levels of seniority feel comfortable taking paid caregiver leave without worries that this will inhibit their future advancement.

## Average Percentage of Attorneys Who Took Paid Caregiver Leave, by Level of Seniority



### Opportunities for Full-Time Work Flexibility

While most surveyed firms allowed attorneys to work flexible full-time hours on a case-by-case basis, firms could adopt a centralized model for requesting flexible hours or allow attorneys to make this choice at their own discretion. Further, flexibility could be improved by allowing full-time remote work. Currently, only 12% of surveyed firms offered unlimited remote work. This change is particularly important because, as of late, more law firms have been moving back to in-person arrangements for up to four days per week.<sup>46</sup>

## Opportunities to Increase Access to Childcare Services

As noted above, women are often the primary caregivers in their families and an inability to access childcare is likely to push them out of firm work. While nearly 90% of firms offer access to back-up childcare services, less than half subsidized childcare for their employees. The more access to childcare, the more likely it is that working parents can balance their careers and familial responsibilities.

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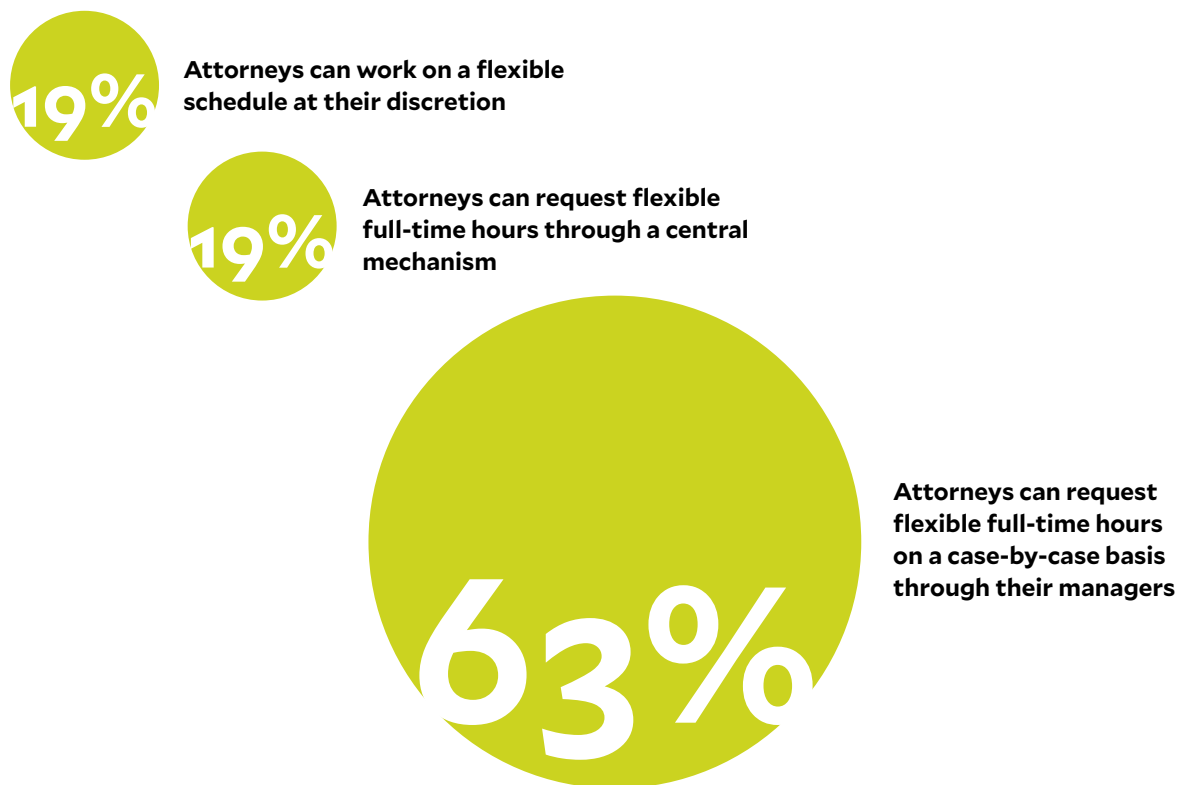
43. Stephanie A. Scharf, Roberta D. Liebenberg & Paulette Brown, *Legal Careers of Parents and Child Caregivers: Results and Best Practices from a National Study of the Legal Profession*, A.B.A. COMM'N ON WOMEN IN THE PRO. 3 (2023), <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/2023/parenthood-report-2023.pdf>.

44. *Id.* at 72–73.

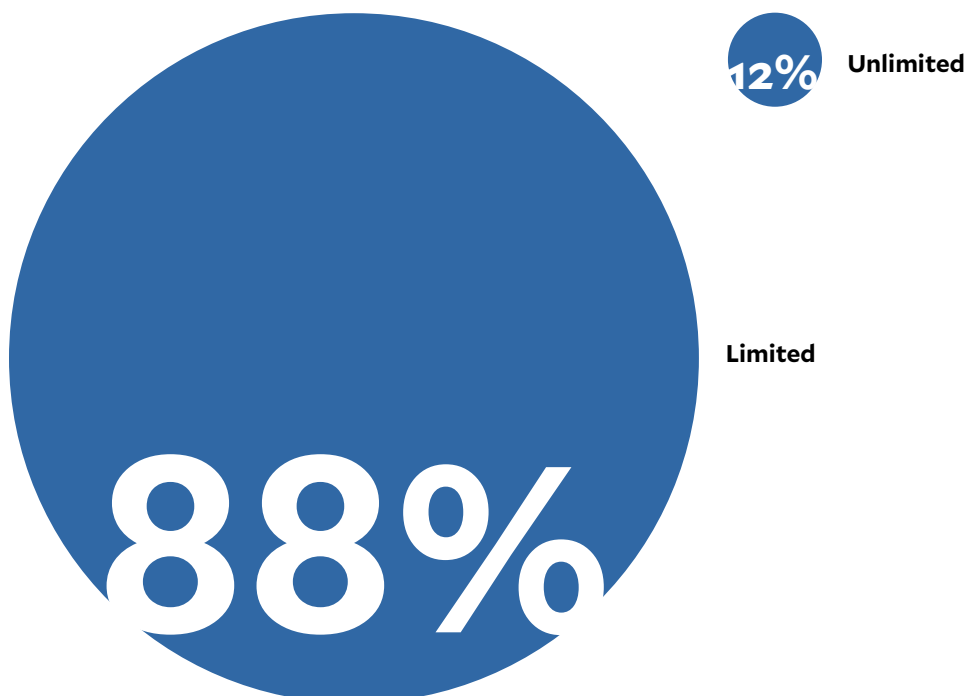
45. *Id.*

46. Sara Merken, *Four-Day Office Mandates Spread at Big US Law Firms*, REUTERS (Mar. 4, 2025, 11:34 AM), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/four-day-office-mandates-spread-big-us-law-firms-2025-03-04/>.

## Percentage of Firms Offering Flexible Full-Time Hours, by System



## Percentage of Firms Offering Unlimited Remote Work

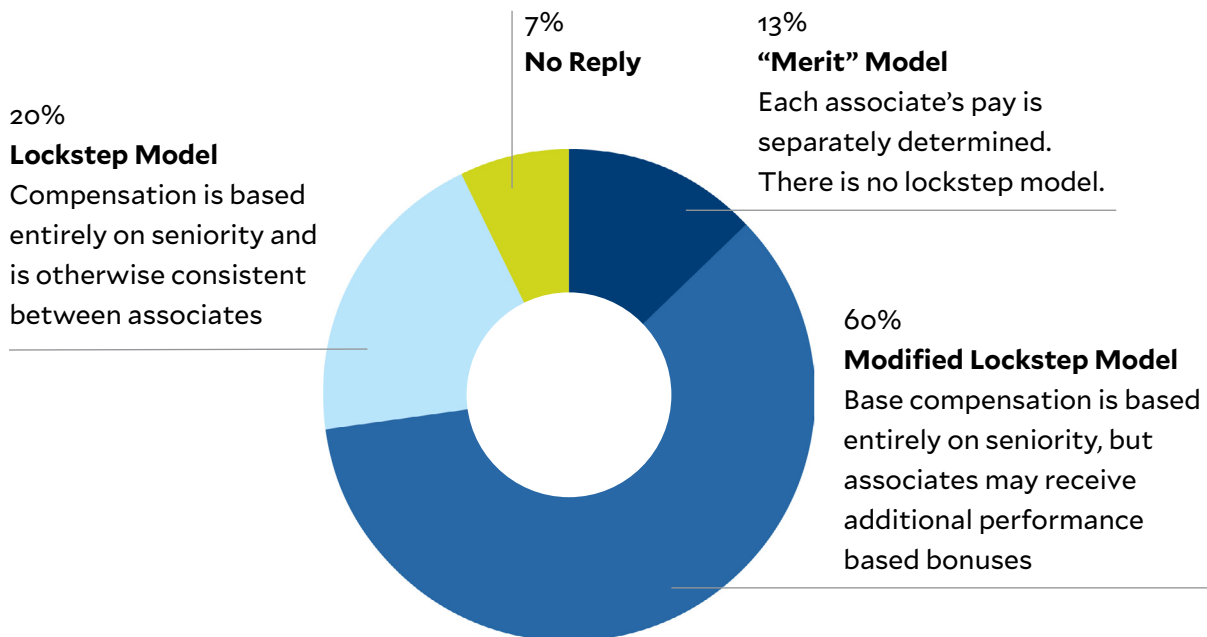


# COMPENSATION

## Why Compensation Matters

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 17.3% less than male attorneys.<sup>47</sup> This disparity widens even further for women of color; compared to the 20.1% gap between white men and women, Black women earned 33.5% less than their white male colleagues, and Latina women earned 44.2% less than these individuals.<sup>48</sup> 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.

## Share of Firms Using a Lockstep Model for Compensation



### Action Items for Firms

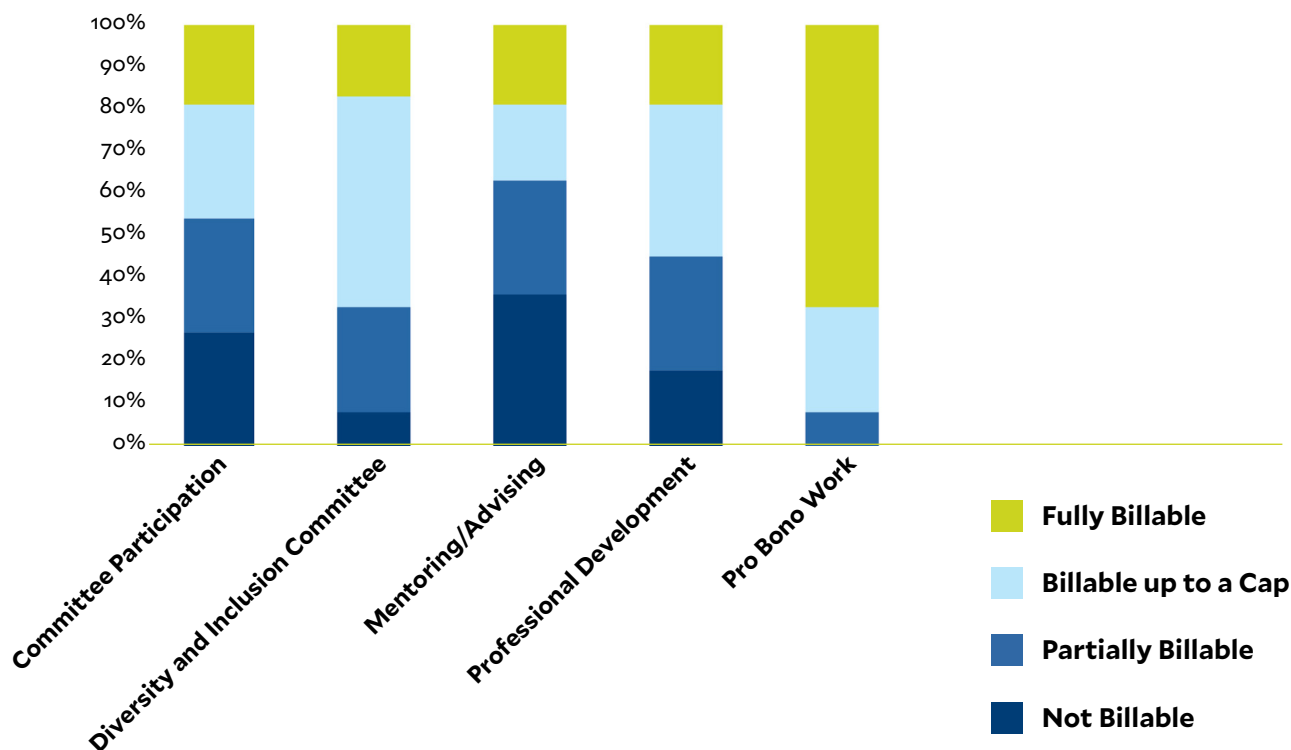
YLW+ values firms that adopt equitable compensation models and flexible billable-hours structures that transparently communicate bonus requirements while fairly compensating all contributions to the firm:

- *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 gaps.<sup>49</sup> 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

environments<sup>50</sup> that prioritize competition over collaboration and reward traits like aggression that continue to be perceived through gendered lenses. However, some applicants may prefer these models, as they can also lead to increased compensation and promotion opportunities for high performers. We encourage applicants to weigh the pros and cons of each compensation model when picking a firm, informed by candid conversations with current attorneys about how that firm's model affects its working culture.

- *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, high 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 underrepresented attorneys to complete.

## Share of Firms Providing Billable Hours for Non-Client Work



47. 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>.

48. Fact Sheet: *Gender and Racial Wage Gaps Worsened in 2023 and Pay Equity Still Decades Away*, INST. FOR WOMEN'S POL'Y RSCH. 1 (Sept. 2024), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IWPR-National-Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf>.

49. 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>.

50. 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/>.

# TIPS FOR FIRM RECRUITING

Conducted in April 2025, this survey gathered tips and tricks from current Yale students on how to navigate on-campus, virtual, and direct-application interviews for summer-associate positions. While some of these resources are specific to YLS, we hope that students from all schools can take advantage of similar tools and platforms at their own law schools, in addition to the resources publicly available online.

**Q:** What resources did you use to research firms (including information on firms' diversity practices)?

**A:** Common tools included the [NALP Directory of Legal Employers](#); the [Chambers USA Guide](#); Vault's [Top Law Firms Rankings](#); the [AmLaw 100 Rankings](#); and the [Firm Prospects platform](#). Students also encouraged their peers to take advantage of affinity group information sessions, conversations with alumni currently in the field, and student employer reviews on Yale's Career Management Services (CMS) platform.

**Q:** Did you conduct outreach to attorneys, older students, or YLS alumni when researching firms? If so, how did you identify these individuals?

**A:** Students connected with peers, attorneys, and alumni via CMS; LinkedIn; Firm Prospects; and the Courtyard, Yale's networking platform. Students also took advantage of on-campus firm visits to foster longer-lasting connections with attorneys at firms of interest.

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**“I kept up to date on the news of my industries of interest and any time legal-related events happened, I paid attention to the law firms involved and found people to contact at those firms through LinkedIn.”**

**Q:** **How many firms did you apply to?**

**A:** On average, students applied to 12 firms, with responses ranging from 8 to 20 applications. However, several students noted that their applications could have been more targeted.

**Q:** **How did you prepare for the interview process? What types of questions were most common across interviews?**

**A:** Most students did not undertake significant additional preparation for their interviews, describing the experience as “typical” to any other job interview. Common interview questions included:

- Why did you choose to go to law school?
- Elaborate on a legal issue of interest, ideally one for which you could defend both sides of the issue.
- Describe a time that you failed and how you responded.
- Describe your interest in this particular firm (and the specific city in which it is located).
- Be prepared to describe your practice areas of interest at the firm (and identify attorneys who work in those areas).
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What is your favorite book?

**Q:** What factors did you consider when making your final decision?

**A:** Students considered a wide range of factors, including:

- Work-life balance
- Whether the firm specializes in your practice areas of interest
- Family-friendly policies
- Diversity of attorneys in your desired practice area
- Interactions with attorneys during the interview and outreach processes
- Location
- Billable hours requirements, specifically limits on pro bono hours
- Size of the firm
- Compensation
- Unassigned vs. rotational summer programs

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“**Identify your passions, ambitions, and preferences as much as you can, then try to determine which firms best support those factors. Some firms have robust regulatory practices. Others are deal-making powerhouses. Sometimes the same firm can have these two focuses split across offices. It’s helpful to know these details when preparing your applications and interviews, because if your interests are aligned with the firm’s work, you will seem like a natural fit.**”

**Q:** What advice do you wish that you had heard before going into the VIP process?

**A:**

- Keep your interviews light and conversational. Specific details or stories are always more compelling than general answers.
- Don't feel pressured to apply to a ton of firms; only apply to those where you would be genuinely excited to work.
- Research details about your specific interviewers in advance to shape your questions and conversation topics.

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“If you know you want to work at a law firm, there is nothing wrong with (and arguably much to be gained from) pursuing a 1L summer associate position at a law firm.”

“You do not have to pick a firm on VIP! I ended up at a boutique firm that did not participate in VIP and it was an amazing experience.”

“[F]ind the people at firms you identify with—people with whom you share a career path/goals, alumni, folks with demographic traits you share, people you think you would be or would aspire to be if you joined that firm. The most helpful thing for me was to speak candidly with these people once I had an offer.”

“If you talk to someone at the firm (including someone who summered there), feel free to mention them/their name in the interview! My interviewers liked to hear that I was communicating with actual people instead of just the website.”

# REPORT METHODOLOGY

This year's Top Firms Report was informed by two surveys. First, we invited this year's Vault Law 100 firms to respond to a survey that queried firms on their DEI practices in the 2024 calendar year at their U.S. office locations. Survey responses were collected between January 29 and March 28, 2025. Second, we surveyed Yale law students to determine best practices for on-campus or virtual interview programs for summer-associate positions.

This year, we honored firms in three tiers based on their aggregate performance in Agency & Flexibility, Culture, Compensation, and Advancement. Honorees were selected by tabulating metrics for each individual firm based on their survey responses and weighted according to student preferences. For each section, selected data were aggregated and displayed.

Compared to previous years, fewer firms participated in this year's report, likely due to restrictions on capacity during the transition to the new administration. As such, we encourage students to supplement the rankings contained in this Report with the information contained in our "State of the Legal Landscape" section when identifying firms that align with their values.

## **Yale Law Women+ Top Firms Committee 2025**

Katie Kroft, *Chair*  
Iris Chen  
Samantha Stucky  
Elaine Wen  
Jenna Wong

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 Katie Kroft at [katie.kroft@yale.edu](mailto:katie.kroft@yale.edu).

