

How We Did This

Our process is simple: cut, paste, and rank. The National Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP) maintains a public, online directory of law firm employment statistics, including demographic information, to facilitate “legal career counseling and planning.” For every law firm office employing 100 or more attorneys¹ in the six major legal markets (New York, Washington DC, Chicago, Southern California, Northern California, and Boston) as well as five subsidiary markets (Atlanta, Miami, Pacific Northwest, Philadelphia, and Texas,) we collected data from the NALP directory and then sorted the firms from best to worst. The NALP data collected for each office is based on the most recent firm self-reports, which are current as of February 1, 2011.

Some firms decline to report office-specific information and report only firmwide data to NALP. We included firms filing a multi-office NALP form where 90% or more of the firms’ attorneys were located in one office within one of the relevant ranked geographic markets. In 2011, there were 20 offices included pursuant to this rule, as follows:

Arnold & Porter	Washington, DC
Cahill Gordon & Reindel	New York
Cravath, Swaine & Moore	New York
Farella Braun & Martel	San Francisco
Hanson, Bridgett, Marcus	San Francisco
Herrick, Feinstein	New York
Hinckley, Allen & Snyder	Boston
Hunton & Williams	Dallas
Hunton & Williams	Washington, DC
Kelly Hart & Hallman	Fort Worth
Linklaters	New York
Locke, Lord Bissell & Liddell	Houston
Nutter, McClennen & Fish	Boston
Parker, Hudson, Rainer & Dobbs	Atlanta
Pryor Cashman	New York
Rutan & Tucker	Costa Mesa
Schulte Roth & Zabel	New York
Seward & Kissel	New York
Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon	Chicago
Wiley Rein	Washington, DC

Types of Tables

The website allows users to dynamically generate two types of tables as well as several types of charts and graphs. First, our “Diversity Rankings” cover five groups that are historically underrepresented in the legal profession: women, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and openly gay, bisexual, or transgendered individuals

¹ The number of attorneys includes only partners and associates. The office size constraints were relaxed for Boston, Miami, Philadelphia, Pacific Northwest, and Atlanta (we included offices with 50 or more lawyers) and Northern California (we included offices employing 100 or more lawyers plus the Silicon Valley offices of the Vault-ranked top ten “most prestigious in Northern California” firms).

(LGBT).² This function allows users to rank the offices by the percentage of attorneys they employ from that group, with separate lists for partners and associates.³ These rankings include the absolute number of attorneys in that minority group (broken down by gender) immediately to the right of the percentage. We then divide this ranking into quintiles and assign letter grades (A, B, C, D, and F) to each of these quintiles.⁴ The grade received by the office is displayed on the right hand side of the table. Offices displayed in boldfaced type are those that are Vault-ranked “most prestigious” in that particular regional market for 2011, using the Vault “Best Law Firms in Each U.S. Region” listing on the Vault website.

Users should observe a note of caution regarding the rankings. There is tremendous variability and not a little dissembling by firms in the definition of “partner.” Some firms, such as Wachtell Lipton, have only one tier of partner – that of full equity partner. Far more commonly, firms use multiple and shifting definitions of partnership and include many tiers of “income,” or “nonequity” partners as well as real, full equity partners. Women and minority lawyers are disproportionately represented in these lesser categories of partners, which often do not carry full voting and management rights, while the equity partnership is predominantly white and male. NALP currently permits firms to aggregate their tiers and categories of partnership. This is misleading to clients, associates, and students and leads to unfair comparisons between firms such as Wachtell, with its single equity tier reporting a low 9.4% (F) for female partners and firms such as Chicago-based Kirkland & Ellis which received an A for its 26.3% female partnership in its New York office without revealing the distribution of women between its real equity partnership and its nonequity “partners.” A comparison of Kirkland’s reporting of its partnership numbers to NALP, the American Lawyer, the National Law Journal, and the Vault diversity guide makes it clear that more than half of the partners that Kirkland reported to NALP were nonequity “partners.” Women and minority lawyers are known to be overrepresented in the ranks of nonequity partners. These comparisons between firms with one tier and those with multiple tiers are, obviously, comparing apples and oranges. NALP requested information on nonequity partnership in 2011 but did not use a standardized definition of equity partner, making comparisons impossible. In any event, most firms declined to answer the question, which was optional. Many of those that did answer the item provided information that did not correspond to the firm’s Amlaw data, rendering it useless. While our website reflects the best and most accurate information currently available, we are currently collecting and analyzing data on the important topic of partnership structure and diversity and hope to display it on the website in the near term.

² We are aware that lawyers with disabilities also suffer from discrimination in the profession, and hope to include information on the treatment of disability in large law firms in the future.

³ The percentages are not rounded for purposes of producing the rankings. The tables are presented rounded to one decimal place. In the event of a tie, we rank higher the firm that has fewer total attorneys.

⁴ If a firm does not have any attorneys in a given category (for example, if it has no Hispanic partners) then it automatically receives an “F” in that category, regardless of quintile. For example, in New York there are so many firms with no black partners that they fill the entire bottom quintile and much of the fourth quintile as well. Under our normal grading system ties are ranked by in order of firm size with smaller firms ranking above larger ones. This would have resulted in many of these firms with zero partners in particular categories receiving a “D.” We did not think that any firm should receive any more than a failing grade if it failed to employ a single minority partner. Offices which failed to provide the number of lawyers in a category were treated as having zero lawyers in that category.

The second type of table users can generate on our website is a Diversity Report Card. This table aggregates the information from the five “Diversity Rankings” for each geographic market and presents them in a single table. The firm’s letter grade in each of the 10 diversity categories (e.g, female partners) is assigned a letter grade and then all 10 letter grades are averaged to suggest the firm’s overall diversity. These overall grades are calculated much like a law student’s GPA: an A is worth 4.0, a D is worth 1.0 and C’s are 2.0 each. We rank firms by their overall grade point average. If multiple firms have the same GPA then they are listed in alphabetical order.

This report card provides students with a quick reference guide when trying to determine how well represented certain minority groups are at a particular office. Offices with higher grade point averages are more likely to be hospitable to underrepresented groups.

Grading Scale:

4.0-3.8	A
3.7-3.5	A-
3.4-3.2	B+
3.1-2.8	B
2.7-2.5	B-
2.4-2.2	C+
2.1-1.8	C
1.7-1.5	C-
1.4-1.2	D+
1.1-0.8	D
0.7-0.5	D-
0.4-0	F

Attrition Data

BBLP provides the public with a free web-based tool for estimating the associate attrition rates for every firm office that we rank. This is only an estimate. We do not know which individual associates leave or stay in any given year. No firm provides actual attrition data to NALP or any other source. Obviously, actual attrition numbers would be more accurate than our estimates. Nevertheless, we believe our model for estimating attrition is a reasonable proxy for associate attrition and is the best available based on the data.

Our attrition calculations are an estimate of the increase or decrease in the expected number of associates at a firm for each year. That expected number is based on the generally reasonable assumption that the office will hire its summer associates each year and that therefore the number of associates in present at the firm in February 2011 (when the NALP data is collected) should increase over the number of associates in February 2010 by a number equal to the number of summer associates in the summer of 2009. Although there may be a few firms

that do not hire their summer associates, the large legal industry representatives ranked by BBLP typically plan to extend offers to their summer associate class.

Attrition is estimated by comparing the current year's associate count with the previous year's associate and summer associate count. The attrition percentage is the number of "missing" associates divided by the number of "expected" associates based on the number of prior year's associates plus the number of prior year's summer associates, as follows:

Attrition Estimate = $\frac{\text{Missing Associates (last year associates + last year summer associates - this year associates)}}{\text{Expected Associates (last year associates + last year summer associates)}}$.

The **retention ratio** is derived by dividing the "minority" retention rate (that is, 1 - the attrition rate, for either women or minorities) by the "majority" retention rate for either men or whites. Using the retention rate rather than the attrition rate for this comparison helps to constrain the range of variation by avoiding extremely small numbers in the denominator of this fraction.

Firms are graded on a curve. We divide the firms into quintiles, and then assign letter grades based on this division. Firms with retention ratios greater than or equal to 1 receive an A regardless of quintile.

Charts and Graphs

Users are able to dynamically generate several different types of charts and graphs from each "Firm Page." These include pie charts for each office of the firm, for both female and demographic diversity, trends over time for each office of the firm, and market comparisons for each office. All of these charts are images that can easily be copied and dropped into reports or other documents.

Take Our Data and Use It

BBLP is committed to data publicity. Please take our data and use it, manipulate it, and share it. If you find it useful, please cite BBLP, and link to our website at www.betterlegalprofession.org.

Accuracy

We are strongly committed to providing students with data that is 100% accurate. If you believe that we have presented any data that is inaccurate, please contact BBLP at info@betterlegalprofession.org so that we may correct the error. Please note that BBLP uses NALP data for its rankings. BBLP is not responsible for errors on NALP forms.