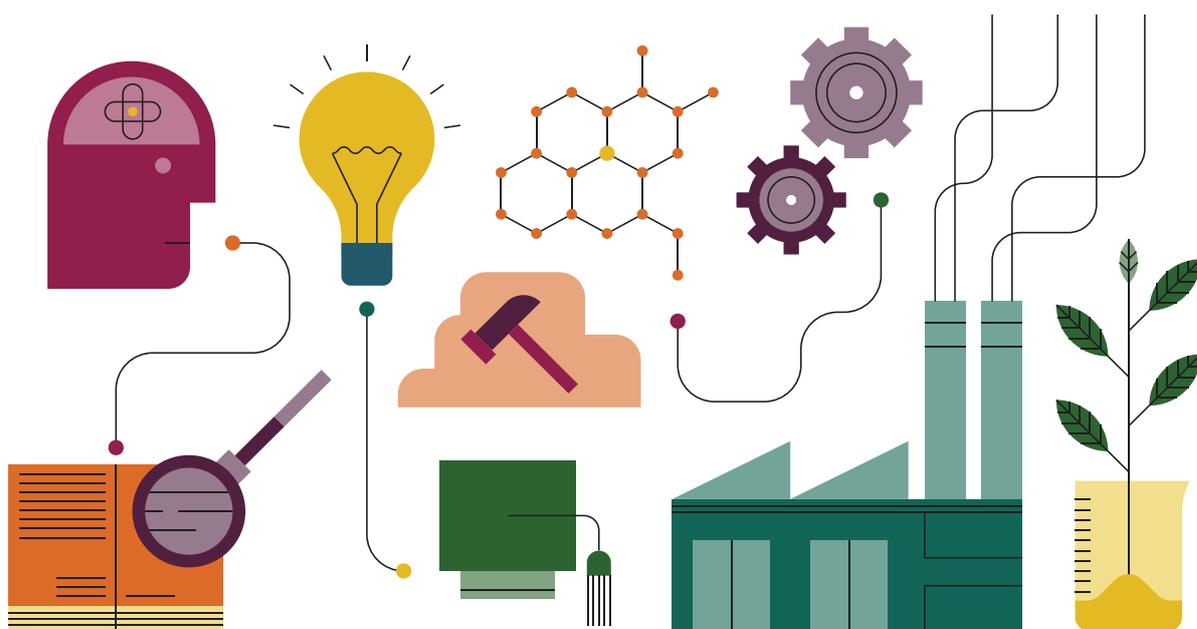


Chambers Associate 2021

Researching your Career in Law



We are experts in virtually every technology and industry.



As you lay the foundation for your career, know that Finnegan attorneys serve clients worldwide through 10 major IP practice areas and many additional sub-practices. We also follow innovation, with specialist teams focused on more than 20 industries that currently generate the bulk of IP activity.

Yes, Finnegan is a global IP law firm, specialized and successful, made up of smart professionals who are very good at what they do. We're also people, who come here to achieve individually while building something together. Here, teamwork, relationships, diversity, and a positive workplace experience count.

If this intrigues you, find out more about the kind of careers available by visiting www.finnegan.com/careers.



Your Career In Law

- PLANNING YOUR CAREER
- THE 1L YEAR
- GETTING TO KNOW THE LEGAL MARKET
- UNDERSTANDING YOUR MOTIVATIONS
- ABOUT CHAMBERS RESEARCH



Planning your career

SO YOU WANT TO BE A LAWYER. NOW WHAT?

To state the obvious, law school is full on. Between deadlines, grades and extracurriculars, you also need to start thinking ahead about which direction you want your career to go in. There will be times when it feels like you're being bombarded with information from every angle. Like scrolling through an endless Twitter feed, you'll have to sift through advice from your professors, your peers, and marketing spiels from the law firms that want to hire you, and figure out what's right for you. We know it is overwhelming for many. Our job is to offer you structure, clarity and certainty.

ULTIMATELY, SOUND CAREER PLANNING COMES DOWN TO THREE STEPS...



Build Knowledge

The candidates that ultimately get the job offer are the ones who understand the market they're entering. When you're interviewing with a firm, you should have a clear sense of the type of work it does, its strengths, and where it sits in the market.



Narrow your options

As your knowledge grows, you can start to narrow down the options that work for you by asking yourself questions like: Where do you want to be in the world? What sort of law interests you? What type of firm do you want to work at? Which sectors do you want to work in?

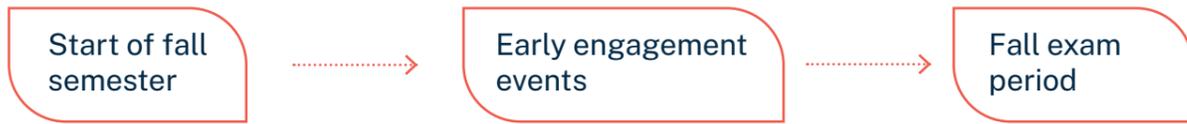


Make good decisions

As you build up your knowledge and examine the options available to you, you'll be able to align your market knowledge with your own career goals to make sensible, informed decisions.

The 1L year

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR FIRST YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL?



The first semester is all about finding your feet, focusing on your studies, and getting into the rhythm of law school.

Law schools have different approaches and timescales to introduce students to employers. In the fall semester, your school might put on some early engagement events to give you a chance to meet law firms.

Fall exam period



This is a much smaller program than the fall recruiting that takes place later in the year, but is more likely to include government and public interest organizations. Now is the time to start figuring out what kind of lawyer you want to be.

Exams take place in April or May and most students get their grades back in June.

"In their first semester students should look at their style of learning but in the second it's imperative to talk about different practice areas and make the most of networking opportunities. People don't necessarily need to know they want to go into project finance, but it's wise to distinguish between litigation and corporate and find something you enjoy."

Rebecca Bradley,
director of professional development, [Foley & Lardner](#)

The 1L year

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR FIRST YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL?



Around July and August, students can bid on between 20 and 50 employers for on-campus interviews (OCIs) that take place in the fall. The bidding process takes place via Symplicity.

Large firms tend to hire very few first year students. Careers Advisors at Cornell say: *"Positions with federal judges are very popular for first year interns. We also see a lot of people going to in-house legal departments, government services, the US attorney's office and nonprofits."*



As summer draws to a close, the sun sets on your days as a fresh-faced 1L. Now, you're a rising 2L, ready to tackle your OCIs in the coming fall with gusto.

"Because of the compressed time frame of on-campus interviews, some large firms do a small amount of 'precruting' in the summer to connect with candidates—and sometimes make offers ahead of OCIs."

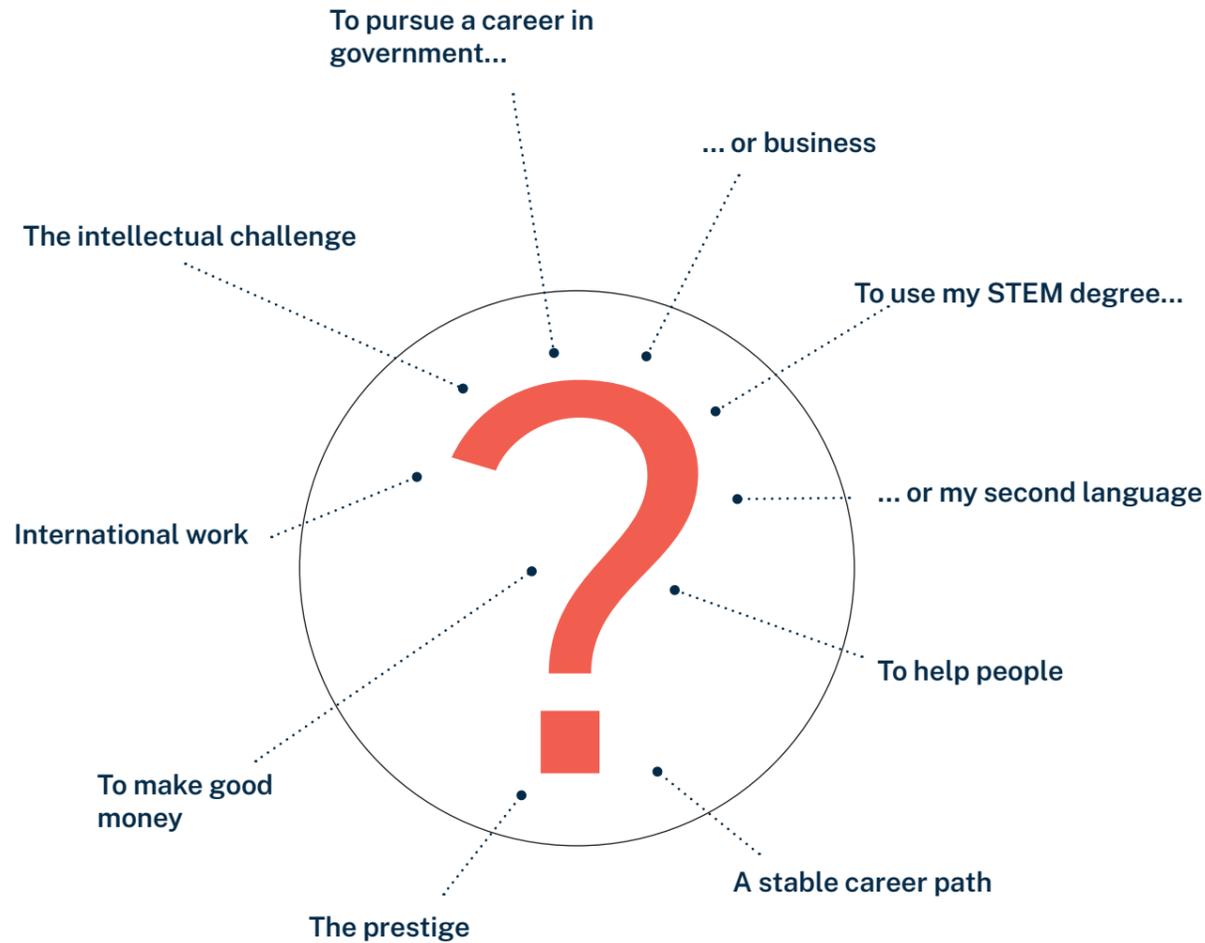
Lois T. Casaleggi, Senior Director of Career Services,
[University of Chicago Law School](#)

"Here at Cornell we have a series of programs during spring term where firms visit law schools to talk about their practice area."

John DeRosa, associate dean for career services, [Cornell Law School](#)

Understanding your motivations

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE A LAWYER?



This stage is crucial. The law is a highly complex industry and social aspiration can mean you easily lose sight of what's best for you.

Listen to your instincts

"Place weight on what feels right to you, and the sense you get from a place when interviewing – it's going to tell you a lot about what it's like to work there... Don't just accept an offer from the firm that offers you \$10k more in the short run. Think about where you're going to thrive, what firm is going to want you to thrive, and what firm is going to invest in you."

– Jami McKeon, chair of [Morgan Lewis](#)

Career motivations: US associates

This is what 4,000 successful candidates want from their careers at two key stages.

HOW IT STARTED...

Career motivations as students enter the legal profession



HOW IT'S GOING ...

What will influence your next career move?



Understanding your motivations

DO YOU WANT TO BE A GENERALIST OR A SPECIALIST?

At some firms, junior associates work as generalists across different types of deals or cases, while at others they're expected to take a more specialist approach and adopt a niche area of expertise. Working as a generalist or specialist in your first few years of practice will depend on which firm and practice area you join. Do your research to find out which is better suited for your long-term goals.

THE GENERALIST

Pros and Cons

If you're open-minded or don't know what you want to do long-term, a generalist approach offers you the flexibility to sample different matters. It's also easier to go from being a generalist to a specialist than the other way. It gives you exposure to a wide array of businesses, sectors and commercial problems. The experiences in your early years will be crucial in forming a well-rounded understanding of business.

However, generalist careers can mean less immediate career gratification: as you work around the industry finding your groove, it's harder to feel that you're making a tangible impact. Generalist roles are associated with weaker retention rates partly for that reason, but increasingly, the generalist corporate employers are very good at assisting you with onward career progression.

Where?

Firms with large summer class sizes often expect juniors to work across different groups. Some firms, like [Cravath](#) and [Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett](#), use rotational systems to allow associates to try out different areas. Others like [Latham & Watkins](#) and [Gibson Dunn](#) promote free-market work assignment, encouraging an entrepreneurial experience.

Career development

A generalist foundation will allow you to go for a wider range of opportunities if you decide to change firms. Many would argue there's no more effective training for a junior lawyer than this intensive system—after a few years you'll feel like you could competently run your own business.

THE SPECIALIST

Specialist roles are ideal for those who know what they want to do. A specialist career represents the right way a student should think about legal practice: to be motivated by a cause in the wider world that you can apply yourself to. They allow those with specific backgrounds, like STEM degrees, to apply their experience in a legal setting.

We know that 'the opportunity to specialize' is a high priority for successful lawyers. The downside is not being exposed to the variety of whole-company problems the generalists get to work on.

Boutique firms are more specialist, whether in litigation like [Holwell Shuster](#), or real estate like [Adam Leitman Bailey](#). Larger firms often make specific job offers for more technical practices like IP.

Carving out your niche might give you the edge above other candidates in future opportunities. The pace of your career development is quicker in the first few years and there is a tangible sense that you're making a difference earlier on. But it's not the 'almost-an-MBA' experience of the generalist path. We've learned from our research that specialist practice areas do much better at retaining associates up to partner.

Understanding your motivations

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A LAWYER?



"I had the opportunity to sit through a very difficult criminal case after completing my undergraduate studies. I sat through a multi-week jury trial and was fascinated to see how that process played out. That experience was a primary driver for me to apply to law school." – Terry Truax, partner at [Jenner & Block](#)

"I thought about becoming a professor, then realized it would be much more interesting to answer questions and advocate than be in a law school classroom... it was when answering questions that I was really enjoying myself."

– Karin DeMasi, managing partner of litigation at [Cravath](#)



"You have the ability to actually help people with their problems, and there is nothing more thrilling than that... Especially in these turbulent times, you do have the opportunity to "do good" as a lawyer through pro bono and community involvement."

– Joseph Shenker, chairman of [Sullivan & Cromwell](#)

Over to you...

Once you've figured out your priorities and what's motivating you, you can take a targeted approach and start considering which firms offer what you're looking for, and make choices that are right for you. You can use [Associate Satisfaction surveys](#) to glean which firms have the happiest associates under different topics, including [pro bono](#), [D&I](#), or [career development](#) opportunities...

About Chambers research

CHAMBERS ASSOCIATE: THE STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION



We speak to thousands of junior lawyers every year to find out what it's really like to work at different BigLaw firms. We bring you the Inside View to help you research law firms in detail and prepare for interviews.



We quiz juniors on every aspect of associate life: the type of work they do, their career development opportunities, pro bono, diversity and inclusion, hours and compensation, firm culture, and more.



We combine our findings from telephone interviews with comprehensive survey data to show you trends taking place across the wider market.



Practice area guides

Whether you've got a taste for transactions, a love of litigation, or you're still on the fence, we've got you covered. Our practice area guides are a great way to find out what it's like to work in a particular area of law.

[Corporate and transactional](#)

[Litigation and dispute resolution](#)

[IP, tech and life sciences](#)

[Finance, capital markets and bankruptcy](#)

[Energy, projects, and environment](#)

[Commercial and industrial](#)

[Government, public interest and regulatory](#)

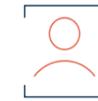
Our interviews are completely anonymous, so when associates speak to us on the phone, they know they can speak freely about the good, the bad, the downright weird, and everything in between at their firm, without worrying about their bosses finding out. We're the only legal career guide that operates this way.

Chambers Associate

THE STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION



Build commercial awareness with articles and podcasts covering [trends in the legal market](#).



Read in-depth conversations with leading lawyers in BigLaw in our [Big Interview series](#).



Overviews of the US [Regional Markets](#) digging into the top firms in different locations.



Explore articles, interviews, and podcasts examining [D&I in the legal profession](#).



You can sign up to the [Chambers Associate newsletter](#) to stay on top of our latest articles.



Once you're a fully qualified junior associate, you can use our [Career Moves](#) page to plan your next step.

Our sister publications

[Chambers & Partners](#) is a leading research company that ranks law firms and lawyers around the world.

You can use these rankings to get a sense of what area of law a firm excels in and where.

[Chambers USA](#)

[Chambers Global](#)

[Chambers High Net Worth](#)

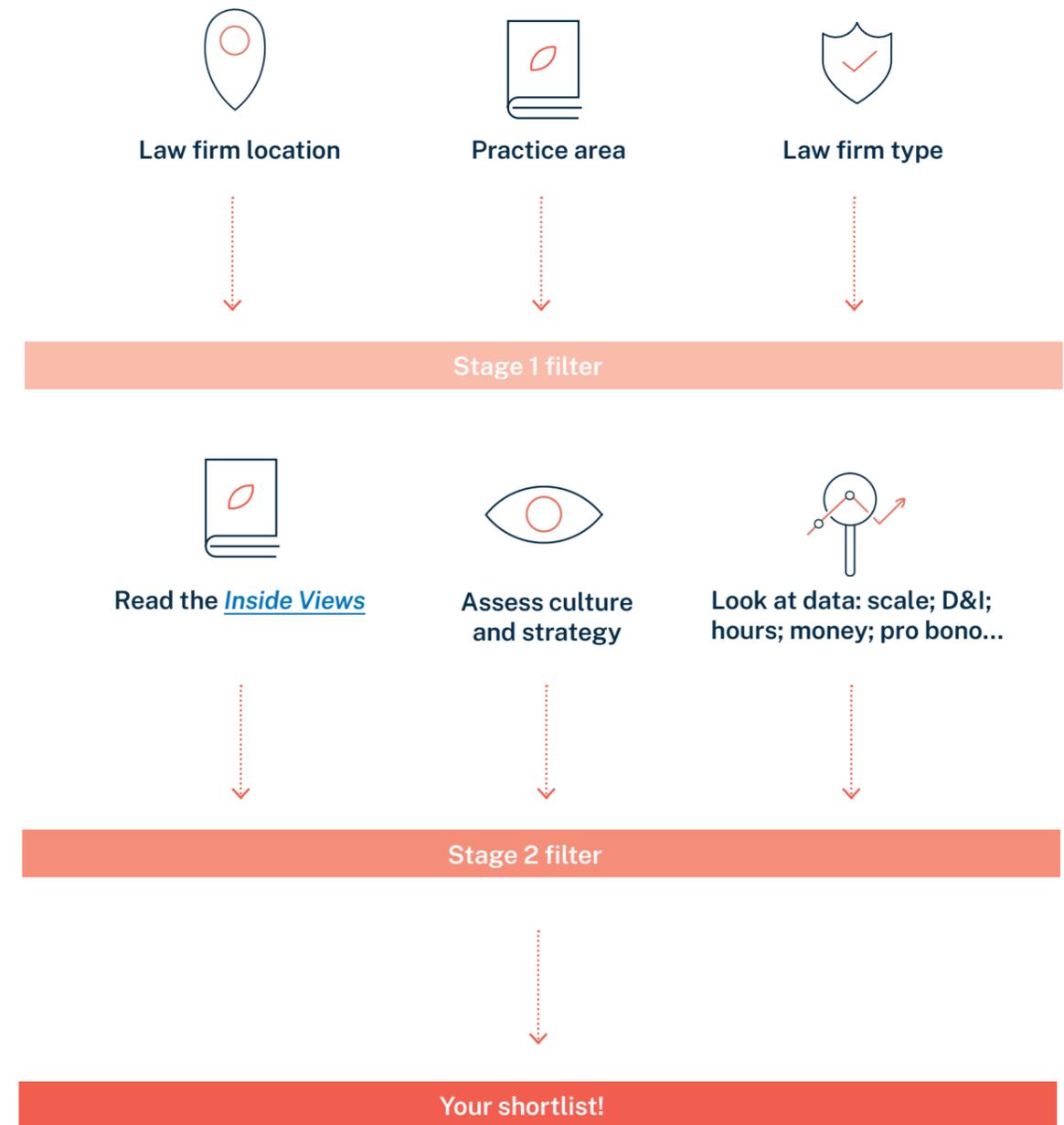
[Chambers FinTech](#)

Making Decisions

- HOW TO MAKE A SHORTLIST OF LAW FIRMS
- YOUR PRACTICE AREA AND YOU
 - Transactional Practice Areas
 - Litigation and dispute resolution
 - Financial practice areas
 - Intellectual property, tech and life sciences
 - Energy, projects, environment and infrastructure
 - Commercial and industrial
 - Government and regulatory
- PRACTICE AREAS BY SIZE
- LAW FIRM TYPES
- LAW FIRM VARIABLES



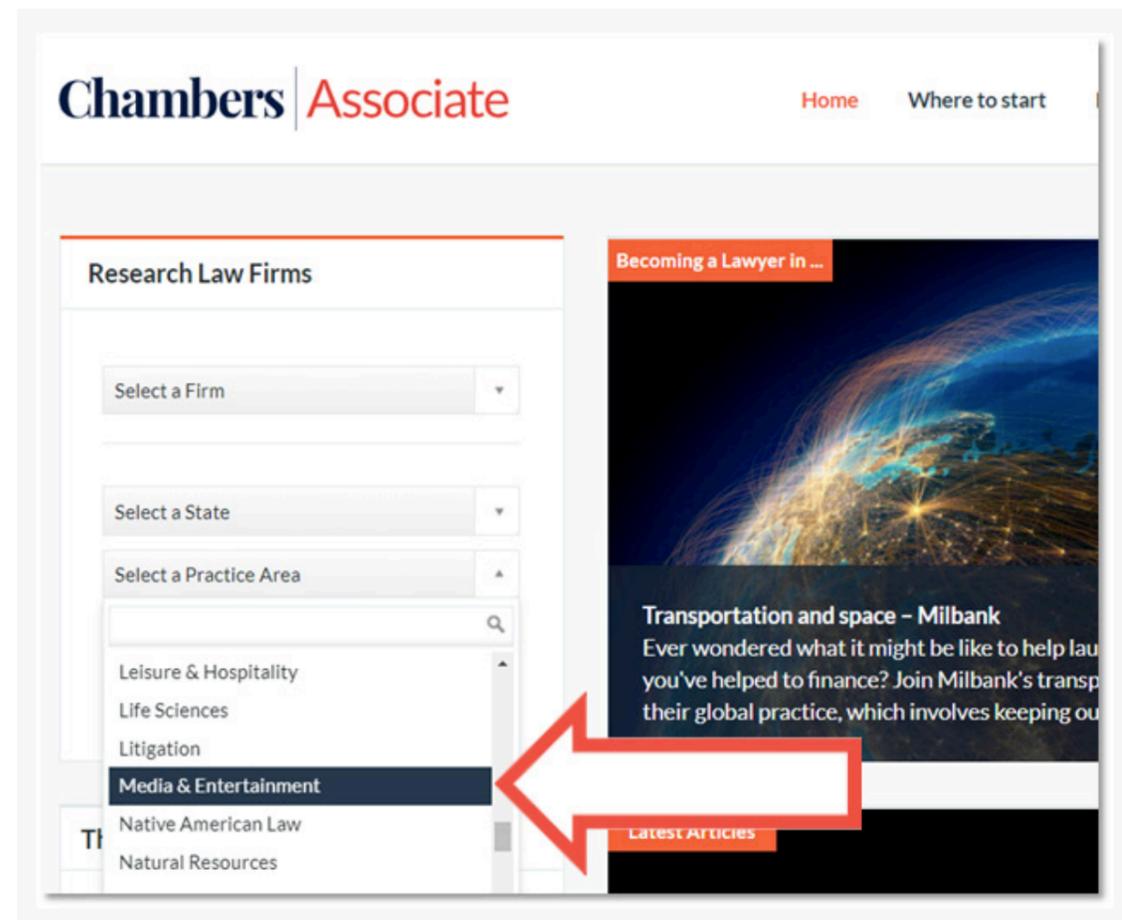
How to shortlist law firms



Starting a shortlist

The legal industry is highly complex, competitive and demanding. Knowing where to start is often an overwhelming task. But a few simple steps will reveal a career path you feel confident about.

There are hundreds of high-quality law firms in the US. When you filter firms by practice area and location, you create an initial shortlist—a more manageable group of firms to research.



Your practice area and you

CHOOSING A PRACTICE AREA IS ABOUT KNOWING HOW YOU'D FIT INTO THE LAW

Each practice area varies in the skills and abilities it draws upon, and the challenges it throws at you...

Analytical ability

This highly commercial skill sits at the heart of how lawyers justify their fees. Every client engagement involves extracting the legal problems from a complex scenario. [Tax](#) lawyers possibly reign supreme in this skill. Risk analysis is a big part of any lawyer's job.

Intellectual confidence

From networking, to case work, to standing in court, you'll be expected to face smart, accomplished people every day and assert yourself among them. Practice areas vary in the brain-types they attract: use the subject matter to guide where you might grow intellectually.

Resilience

From [Government law](#), with its drawn-out process and frustrations from competing pressure groups, to [projects law](#), where the project's scale creates a limitless array of things that can go wrong; your resilience will come in handy throughout your career.

Judgment

The law creates difficult problems that force the lawyer to balance competing commercial, moral and practical interests. Throw in time-pressure, and your decisiveness and healthy skepticism will be put to the test.

Commercial acuity

All practice areas are complex and demand an understanding of business, but [capital markets](#), [financial](#), and [corporate work](#) will be a rigorous test of this skill.

Organization

Planning and organising yourself and others around a deal with a thousand moving parts is central to [corporate work](#), [real estate](#), [financial](#), [private equity](#) and in fact anything with a deadline.

Enthusiasm

A highly attractive quality for law firms. Some legal work is, frankly, hard to sugar-coat. This sometimes abstract, dry and demanding profession requires an ability to immerse yourself in a topic—whatever it is—and tackle it well.

Leadership

Lawyers start out by taking ownership of a specific part of a deal or case, then building their work in scale and responsibility. The stakes are always high in legal work, and clients have to have complete confidence in your abilities.

Cognitive empathy

Strategic advantage in a case is won by not only understanding the concerns of your client in detail, but also appreciating the opposition's predicament. For this reason, [litigation](#) is a popular destination for graduates of literature, language, history and politics.

Command of language

Words always matter, but there are some practices where your choice of words can make or break the case. [Dispute resolution](#) and, especially, [appellate](#) stand out for this. Knowledge of a foreign language is an asset to global law firms, but not essential. What is essential in every practice is an ability to digest complexity and express it concisely.

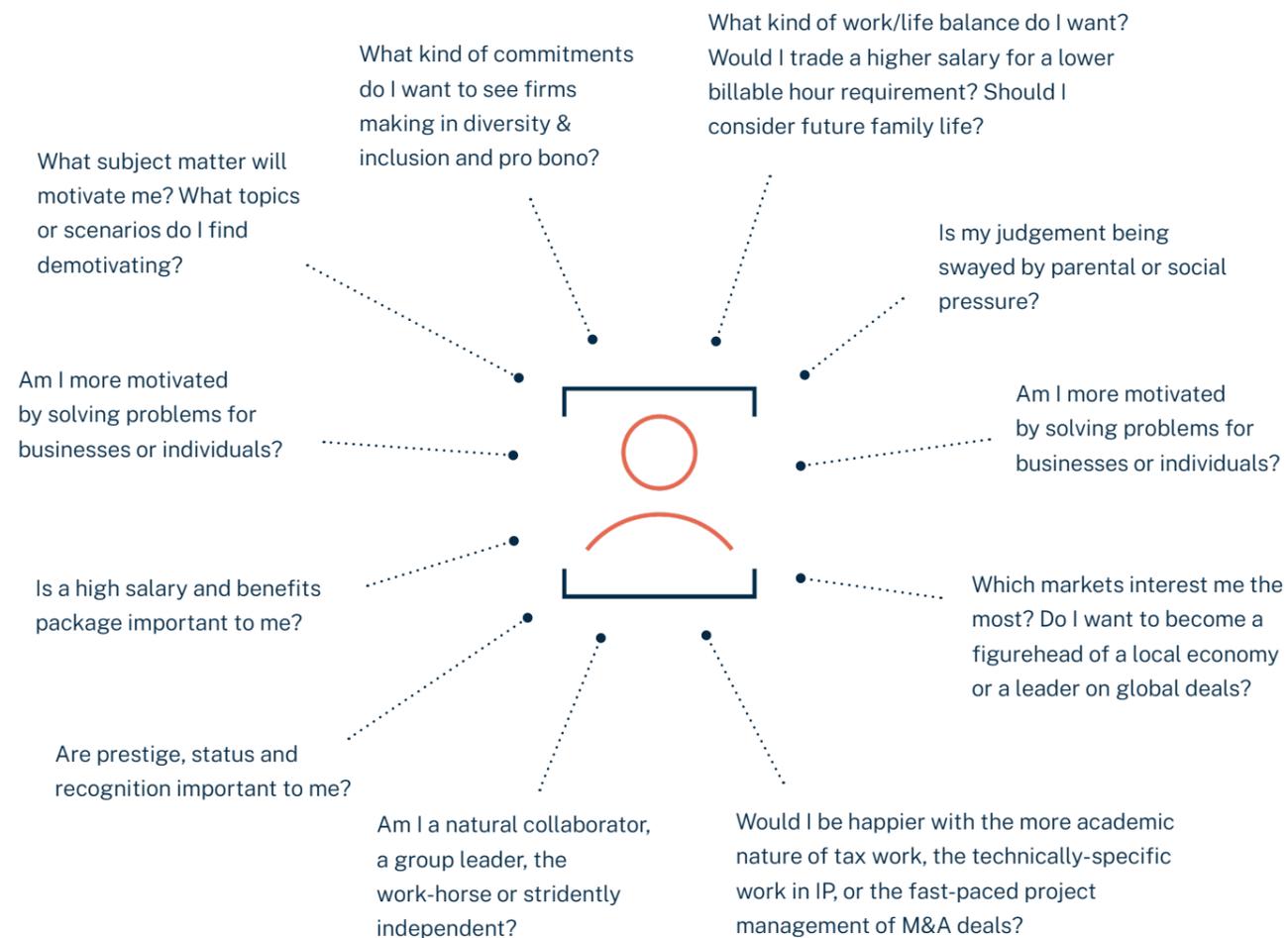
Passion for the subject matter

The law creates difficult This should be your basic filter for shortlisting practice areas. If you're not interested in wind farms, don't become a [renewable energy](#) lawyer. If you have a scientific degree, definitely consider [IP](#).

What do you want from your career?

It's easy to feel somewhat powerless in this process: it's just you v. an almighty law firm. So many candidates end up compromising because of this assumed powerlessness. But remember that law firms' only commodity is talent; they need you to survive. And more than anything at interview, they want to see someone who knows what they want. That certainty in your choices makes you a more confident – and more attractive – candidate.

So before you start even researching firms, we recommend that you take some time consider what will make you happy in your career. You can then tailor your search according to these baseline factors. This process leads you to firms better suited to you, increasing the likelihood of the chemistry being right between you and the firm.



[Podcast: The 7 personality traits of lawyers](#)

Getting to know the legal market

HOW TO TELL LAW FIRMS APART

With so many law firms out there, it can be hard to tell one from the other. How are you supposed to know which ones can offer you the opportunity you're really looking for to kickstart your career? When you know what to look out for, you can learn how to distinguish one firm from another and make informed judgments.



Location

Even in the virtual world where people work across time zones all the time, some regions remain hubs for particular industries, and that shapes the legal work on offer in those locations. There's [New York](#) and finance, [Texas](#) and energy, and [DC](#) and government. You'll find everything entertainment in LA, while [the Bay Area](#) is a magnet for tech companies and startups. Find out more about [US Regional Markets](#).



Expertise

You can find out which firms are considered the best in a particular practice area by analyzing legal rankings from [Chambers USA](#) (and [Chambers Global](#) for international firms). These prestigious accolades will help you to form a picture of which firms excel in which practice areas and where. Read more about [choosing a practice area](#).



Firms by size

Needless to say, working as part of an enormous, global firm with dozens of offices around the world offers up a very different experience to that of a one-site boutique. Consider how a firm's headcount and geographical reach will impact its work, training opportunities, client base and culture.

- [US firms and international presence](#)
- [Working at a mid-sized law firm](#)
- [Small firm life](#)
- [Life at a litigation boutique](#)



News

To stay on top of the trends among BigLaw's biggest players, keep an eye on the legal press. Follow social media accounts and sign up to newsletters that cover the latest trends and affairs in the legal market, like the [Chambers Associate newsletter](#).

Transactional practice areas

Corporate / M&A – The Inside View

Why we need corporate lawyers | What corporate lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in corporate law | Law firms shortlisted by corporate expertise [Read More >](#)

Private equity – The Inside View

Why we need private equity lawyers | What PE lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in private equity law | Law firms shortlisted by private equity expertise [Read More >](#)

Becoming a corporate lawyer, with Jones Day

"A good M&A lawyer is a shapeshifter, capable of understanding a client's goals and adapting to meet them in the most effective way possible."

[Read More >](#)

Becoming a private equity lawyer – Goodwin

The private equity industry supercharges companies' operations and puts money in the pocket of investors. Goodwin's lawyers explain that work in this area brings much more than financial profit.

[Read More >](#)

Corporate law

Firms call corporate different things. For some, a corporate department is mergers and acquisitions. Some split out public and private M&A; others welcome private equity into the M&A group; others consider capital markets to be a corporate practice, because it's a shareholder matter rather than operational finance. But however the firm arranges itself, the corporate department is the nerve center for many firms. It's not neatly defined because every transaction necessarily pulls in lawyers from tax, antitrust, finance, labor, sometimes IP, sometimes a specialist or regulated sector like energy or technology.

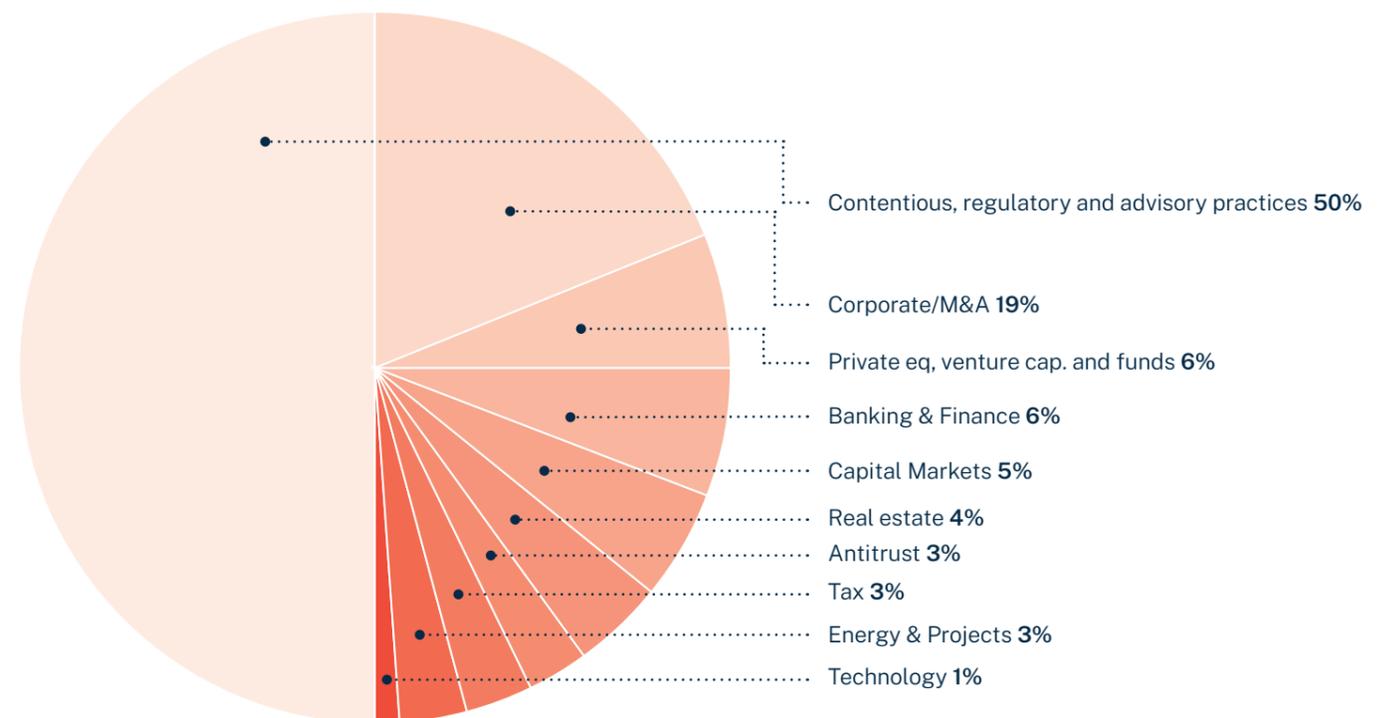
It's this variety and exposure to all the moving parts in a company during a critical moment that make corporate such a rewarding place to learn as a junior lawyer.

Transactional practice areas

The market

Transactional law competes with litigation in recruiting the highest number of new associates.

TRANSACTIONAL PRACTICE AREA HEADCOUNT AS A % OF BIGLAW, 2021



Transactional practice areas

Funds and investment management – Fried Frank

“Each phase of a fund’s life-cycle presents unique challenges that require different skills and play to different strengths.”

[Read on>](#)

Becoming a venture capital lawyer – Gunderson

In venture capital lawyers grow alongside the companies, mixing in a world of innovators and investors.

Gunderson’s expert attorneys tell all...

[Read on>](#)

Tech transactions, with White & Case

“The fact that technology is often outpacing the law makes tech transactions both challenging and exciting.”

[Read on>](#)

Emerging companies – Gunderson

Why we need private equity lawyers | What PE lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in private equity law | Law firms shortlisted by private equity expertise

[Read on>](#)

Career outlook

Corporate and capital markets featuring heavily in New York mean that we see shorter-term commitment from associates in this more transient market. Making partner is more challenging in the most competitive corporate practices. But corporate is an incredible training ground for learning, and exposing associates to a limitless array of legal and commercial problems.

Transactional practice areas

Antitrust law – The Inside View

Why we need antitrust lawyers | What antitrust lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in antitrust law | Law firms shortlisted by antitrust expertise

[Read on>](#)

Coming soon... Antitrust in 2021, with White & Case

Antitrust with 2021, with White & Case
“In simple terms, competitors cannot collude to fix prices or production levels, to divide markets, or to rig bids. Monopolists cannot use anti-competitive tactics, including mergers, to obtain or maintain their monopolies. There are large gray areas of potentially anti-competitive conduct around these basic principles.”

[Read on>](#)

When M&A meets antitrust law

Freshfields’ lawyers explain how the two practices combine: “You need to really understand the mechanics of the market you’re analyzing: the product, players, how it functions.”

[Read on>](#)

Lateralling in corporate – Latham & Watkins

“With the experience of your first firm, you should be well-equipped to see the differences in culture, work, and office experience, and decide what you are really looking for.”

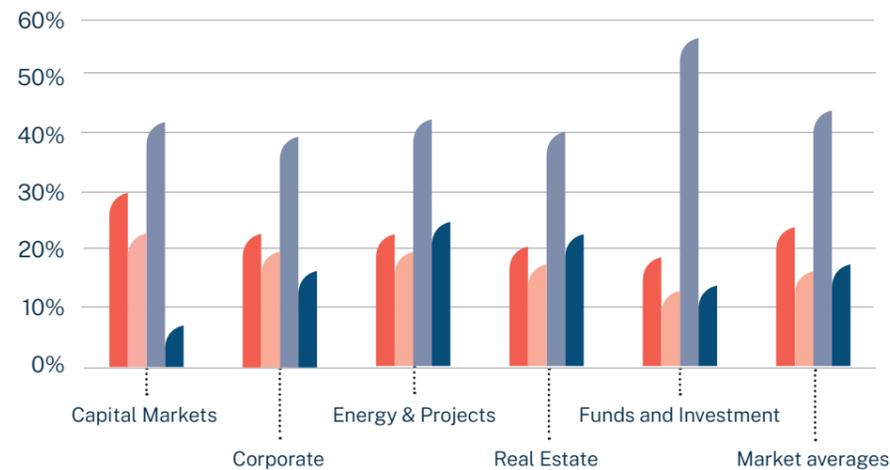
[Read on>](#)

Competitive practice areas in 2021

“Throughout the pandemic, every business that supports human beings has had to invest resources putting more tools and more information online.” We interviewed expert recruiters at VOYlegal about the areas of practice thriving amid the disruption.

[Read on>](#)

TRANSACTIONAL ASSOCIATE RETENTION



■ Leave within 2 years
 ■ Leave within 5 years
 ■ Stay indefinitely/undecided
 ■ Make partner

Litigation and dispute resolution

Litigation – The Inside View

Why we need litigators | What litigators do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in litigation • Law firms shortlisted by litigation expertise
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a commercial litigator – Weil (coming soon...)

Blah blah blah...
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a lawyer in a litigation boutique – Holwell Shuster

Litigation boutiques offer an intensive yet supportive learning environment for young lawyers – expect your skills to grow, and grow fast.
[Read on>](#)

International arbitration – The Inside View

Why we need arbitration lawyers | What arbitrators do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in arbitration | Law firms shortlisted by arbitration expertise
[Read on>](#)

White collar litigation - Cahill

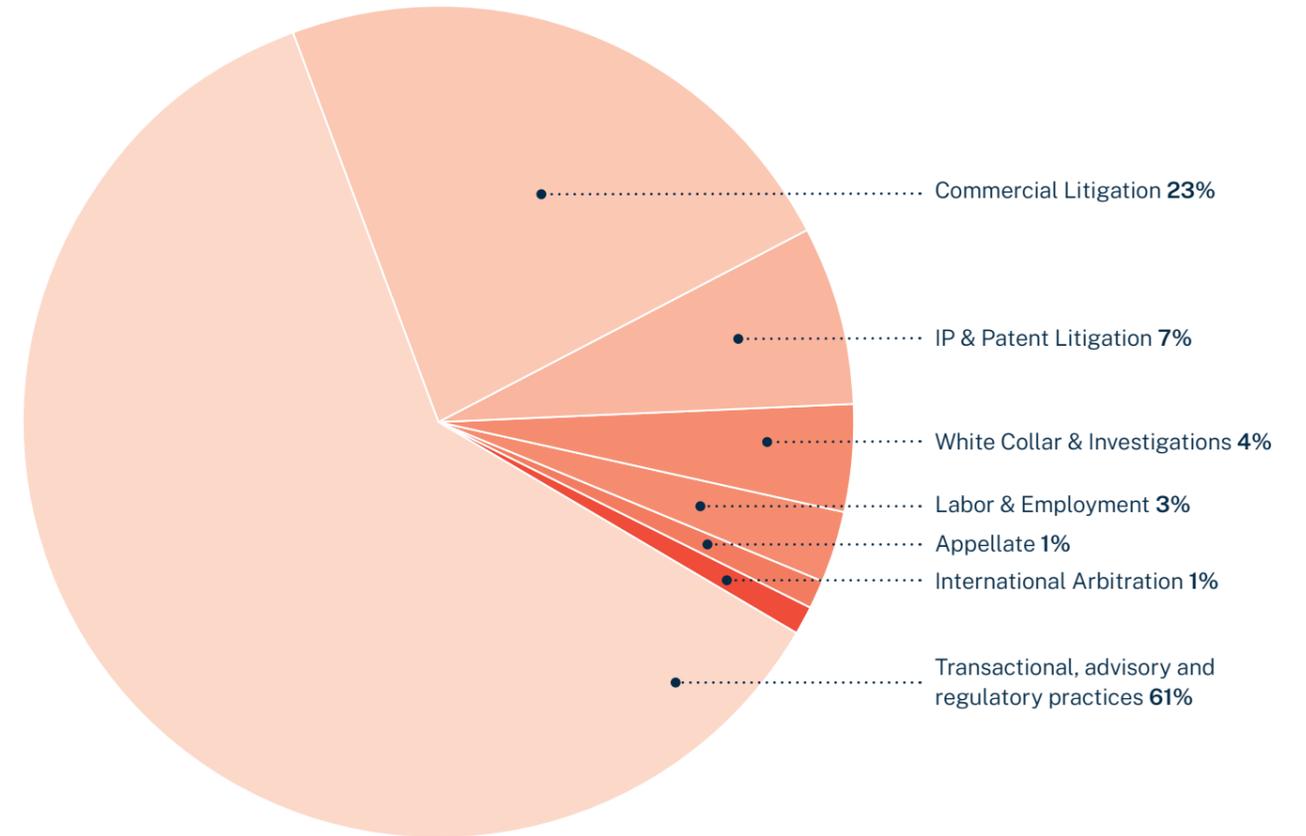
With questions like ‘what constitutes a public figure?’ at the complicated intersection of First Amendment and defamation law, those with a penchant for quiddity could thrive.
[Read on>](#)

The market

“Litigation is king in the US,” says Robert Giuffra, [Sullivan & Cromwell](#)’s vice chair. The US already stood out for its adversarial legal market, but then in 2020 litigation surpassed corporate by headcount as clients needed support in a crisis. Like corporate, commercial litigation interacts with every other legal practice, and “over the last 20 years litigators have become increasingly specialized,” Giuffra adds. This increased sophistication is only set to continue; even AI has started doing some of the heavy lifting in disputes now.

Litigation and dispute resolution

CONTENTIOUS PRACTICE AREAS AS A % OF US BIGLAW HEADCOUNT, 2021



Litigation and dispute resolution

Appellate – The Inside View

Why we need appellate lawyers | What appellate lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in appellate law | Law firms shortlisted by appellate expertise

[Read on>](#)

Going in-house as a litigator – Whistler Partners

“Whenever something is new and unknown, litigators thrive. They can be extremely strategic and helpful with the unprecedented.”

[Read on>](#)

International arbitration – The Inside View

Why we need arbitration lawyers | What arbitrators do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in arbitration | Law firms shortlisted by arbitration expertise

[Read on>](#)

Advertising litigation – Kramer Levin

Media is one of the most desirable sectors for students entering the legal profession. We interviewed the experts at Kramer Levin to find out about their varied, exciting practice.

[Read on>](#)

First amendment, defamation and libel – The Inside View

With questions like ‘what constitutes a public figure?’ at the complicated intersection of First Amendment and defamation law, those with a penchant for quiddity could thrive.

[Read on>](#)

“The great thing about being litigator is that every case has a new set of facts, new legal questions and a new cast of people, whether that’s adversaries, clients, judges or the jury.”

– Evan Chesler, [Cravath’s](#) Chairman

Financial practice areas

Banking and finance – The Inside View

Why we need finance lawyers | What finance lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in finance law | Law firms shortlisted by finance expertise

[Read on>](#)

Becoming a capital markets lawyer - Cahill

“Creativity is essential because each new transaction holds a puzzle that needs to be solved in a way that is mutually beneficial for all parties involved.”

[Read on>](#)

Banking regulatory – Clifford Chance

Why we need arbitration lawyers | What arbitrators do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in arbitration | Law firms shortlisted by arbitration expertise

[Read on>](#)

Capital markets – The Inside View

Why we need capital markets lawyers | What capital markets lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in capital markets | Law firms shortlisted by capital markets expertise

[Read on>](#)

CONTENTIOUS PRACTICE AREAS: ASSOCIATE RETENTION



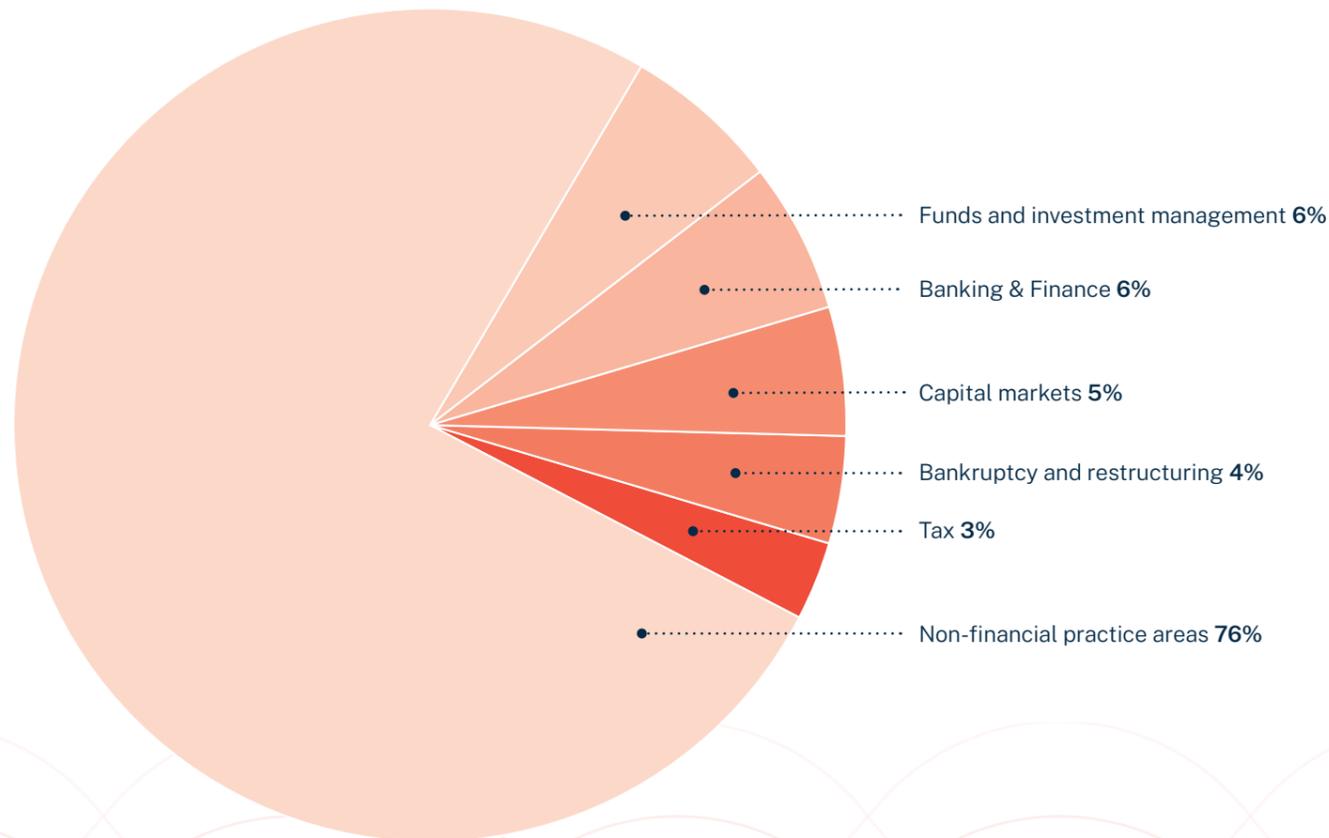
Financial practice areas

Can students prepare for a career in capital markets?

“While there are no prerequisites to becoming a capital markets attorney, students may find it helpful to have taken a basic accounting or finance course, preferably at the business school affiliated with their law school. The US securities laws, including SEC rules and guidelines and general disclosure issues, are central to the work we do, so courses in securities regulation and drafting will prove helpful after law school graduation. It definitely doesn’t hurt to start reading some financial news on a regular basis as well.”

– Jennifer Ezring, partner, Cahill

CONTENTIOUS PRACTICE AREAS AS A % OF US BIGLAW HEADCOUNT, 2021



Financial practice areas

Bankruptcy and restructuring – The Inside View

Why we need bankruptcy & restructuring lawyers | What bankruptcy & restructuring lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in bankruptcy & restructuring | Law firms shortlisted by bankruptcy & restructuring expertise [Read on>](#)

Becoming a leveraged finance lawyer – Paul Hastings

Ever look at massive M&A deals and wonder, “where is all this money coming from?” They might well involve leveraged finance. We asked the Paul Hastings team for an insight into this important area of law... [Read on>](#)

Lateralling into FinTech – Whistler Partners

“When I spoke to people in the space and heard about the technology they were creating, I thought, ‘Please hire me because I want to be on this journey with you!’” [Read on>](#)

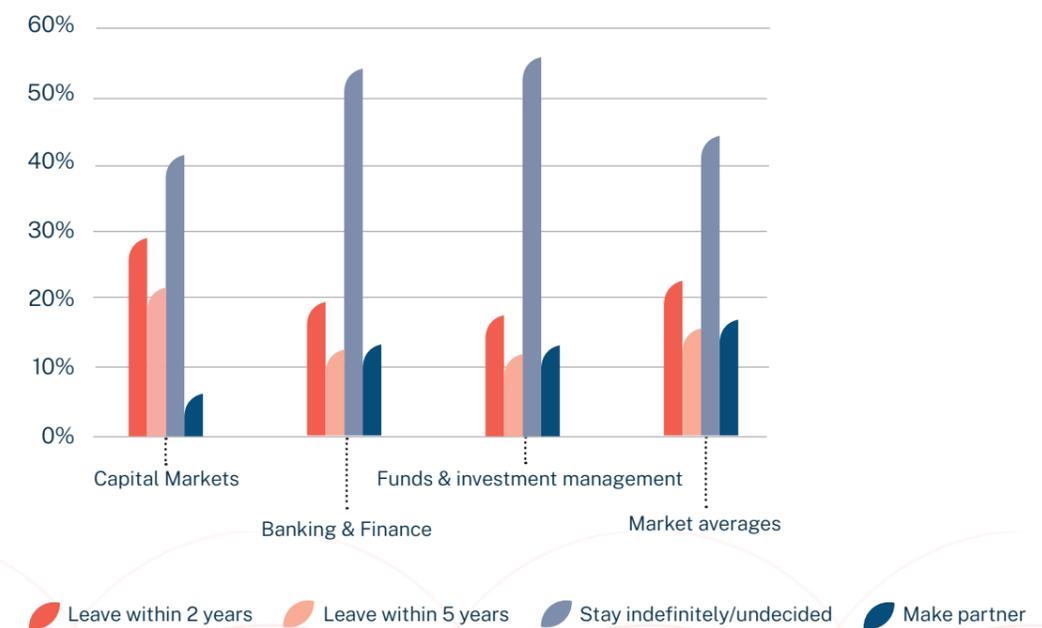
Bankruptcy and restructuring – Cleary

Coming soon.. [Read on>](#)

Insurance law – The Inside View

Why we need arbitration lawyers | What arbitrators do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in arbitration | Law firms shortlisted by arbitration expertise [Read on>](#)

FINANCIAL PRACTICE AREAS: ASSOCIATE RETENTION



Intellectual property, tech and life sciences

Intellectual property – The Inside View

Why we need IP lawyers | What IP lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in IP law | Law firms shortlisted by IP expertise
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a technology lawyer – Goodwin

“Working with founders is the most fun – especially when their companies are gaining steam and go from nothing more than an idea to a high valuation and profitable business.”
[Read on>](#)

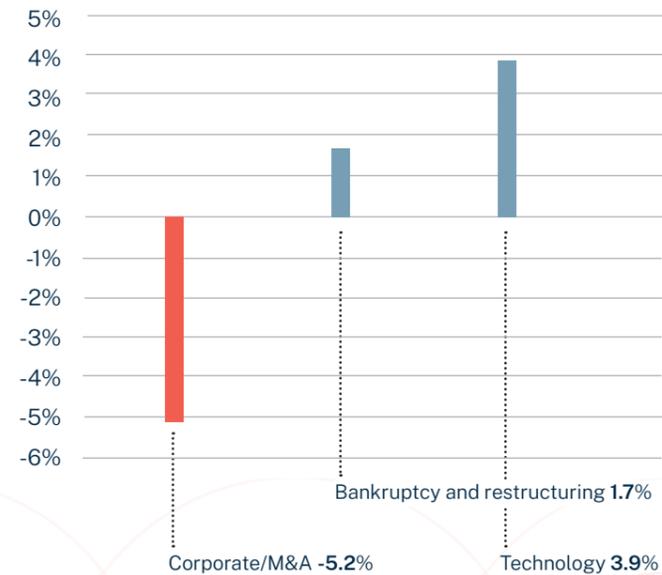
Becoming an IP lawyer – Finnegan

“To me, intellectual property is about discovery and cutting-edge science, and as IP attorneys we have the privilege of being at the cusp of innovation with our clients.”
[Read on>](#)

Tech transactions, with White & Case

“The fact that technology is often outpacing the law makes tech transactions both challenging and exciting.”
[Read on>](#)

ASSOCIATE HEADCOUNT MOVEMENT 2019-2021: MOVEMENTS SHOWN AS A % OF THE WHOLE CLASS



Headcount movement tells us where law firms think the commercial opportunity is. The big story is how corporate has hemorrhaged associates over to technology, the clear winner from this whole pandemic debacle. If you think about how we managed to survive 2020, it makes perfect sense to see a tech boom – or Zoom – and it explains we’re seeing elsewhere in venture capital.

A year on, the pandemic has had the chance to embed permanent change into our lifestyles. Times of crisis encourage ingenuity and invention, accelerating the evolution of our civilization. As we see, lawyers are moving and adapting to help that change happen. This is a resilient industry – whether we have calm or disruption, junior lawyers are put to good use.

[Career moves: Specializing in tech transactions >](#)

Intellectual property, tech and life sciences

Privacy & data security – The Inside View

Why we need data security lawyers | What data security lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in data security law | Law firms shortlisted by data security expertise
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a life sciences lawyer – Goodwin

“Working with founders is the most fun – especially when their companies are gaining steam and go from nothing more than an idea to a high valuation and profitable business.”
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a data security lawyer – Perkins Coie

Data is the great commodity of our age. It’s a hot, controversial topic that needs good lawyers to handle its complexities. Step forward, Perkins Coie.
[Read on>](#)

Life sciences – The Inside View

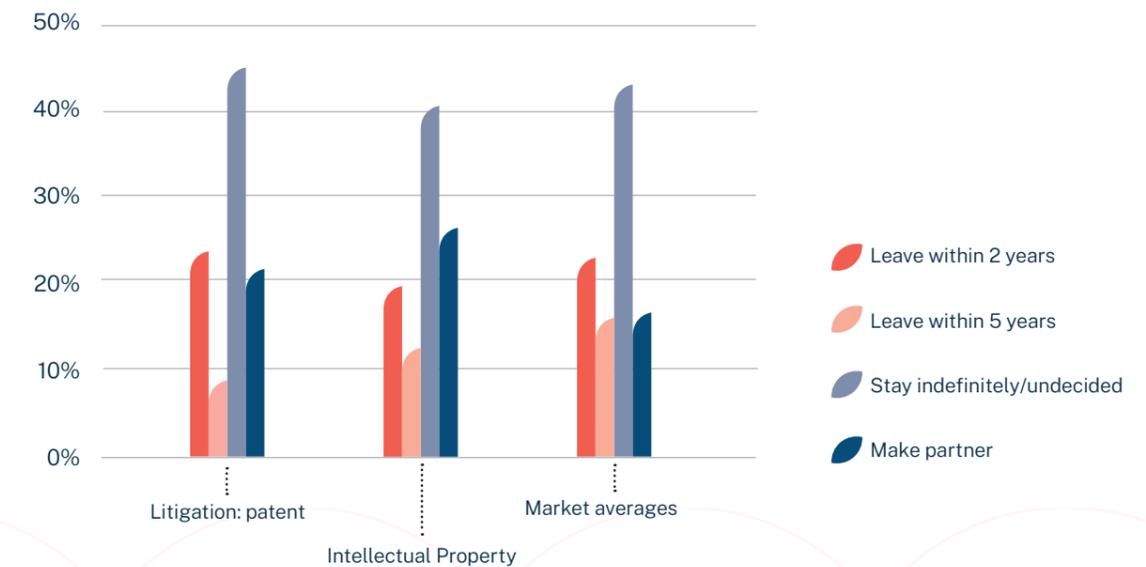
Why we need life sciences lawyers | What life sciences lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in life sciences law | Law firms shortlisted by life sciences expertise
[Read on>](#)

Women in tech law

“If you are a woman with an advanced life sciences degree, there’s going to be a long line of firms that want to talk to you.”

[Read on>](#)

IP ASSOCIATE RETENTION



Energy, projects, environment and infrastructure

Energy and projects – The Inside View

Why we need energy and projects lawyers | What energy and projects lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in energy and projects law | Law firms shortlisted by energy and projects expertise

[Read on>](#)

Environment – The Inside View

Why we need environment lawyers | What environment lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in data security law | Law firms shortlisted by data security expertise

[Read on>](#)

Transportation and space – Milbank

Ever wondered what it might be like to help launch a constellation of satellites? Or fly in an aircraft you've helped to finance? Join Milbank's transportation and space experts as they take you through their global practice, which involves keeping our ever-changing world moving and connected.

[Read on>](#)

Space law – The Inside View

Why we need space lawyers | What space lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in space law | Law firms shortlisted by space law expertise

[Read on>](#)

Energy, projects, environment and infrastructure

Renewable energy and climate change – The Inside View

Why we need climate change lawyers | What climate change lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in climate change law | Law firms shortlisted by climate change expertise

[Read on>](#)

Renewable energy – Vinson & Elkins

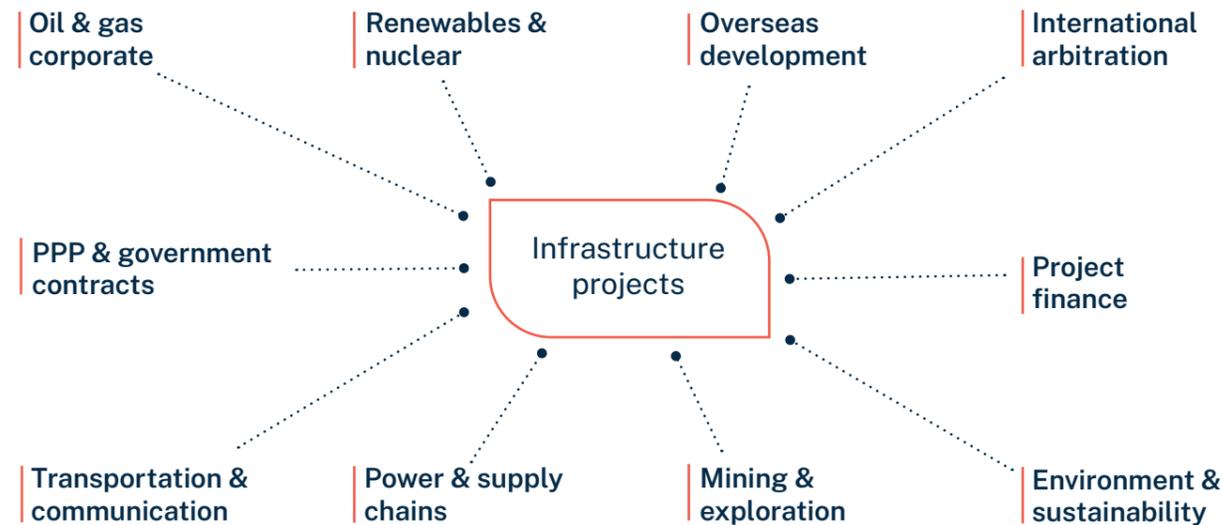
We interviewed the energy gurus at V&E about the role of lawyers in transitioning our economy to renewables.

[Read on>](#)

PPP – Ashurst

"There is a huge demand for public infrastructure. In developed countries such as the US and Europe, this involves replacing infrastructure assets which have reached the end of their useful life. In developing countries such as parts of Asia and Africa, new infrastructure is needed to support rapidly expanding economies."

[Read on>](#)



Building the post-carbon economy, with Norton Rose Fulbright

Lawyers will play a crucial role in averting a climate disaster. To better understand the challenges and opportunities that will come with the global economy's transition, our careers team spoke to experts at the global firm Norton Rose Fulbright, highly regarded for its work in the energy and infrastructure sectors. We discuss what the future of the post-carbon economy may look like, the role of both the private and public sectors in getting us there, and where lawyers fit into all of this.

[Read on>](#)

"The work tends to be extremely varied for many years, even for partners, and that keeps the learning curve very steep for a good part of your career. The challenge is that you don't have the opportunity to repeat transactions and hone your expertise early on, as you might in other areas. It takes longer to become an expert."

— Jonathan Green, co-chair of Milbank's project, energy and infrastructure finance group

Commercial and industrial

Labor and employment – The Inside View

Why we need product liability lawyers | What product liability lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in product liability law | Law firms shortlisted by product liability expertise

[Read on>](#)

Real estate – The Inside View

Why we need climate change lawyers | What climate change lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in climate change law | Law firms shortlisted by climate change expertise

[Read on>](#)

Real estate litigation – with ALB

New York real estate boutique ALB sits down with us to discuss this contentious practice in one of the world's most vibrant real estate markets.

[Read on>](#)

International trade – with Hogan Lovells

For trade to go on, the work of international trade lawyers is crucial. Five experts from the highly international Hogan Lovells oversee the free movement of knowledge to you, the lawyers of tomorrow.

[Read on>](#)

Transportation and space – Milbank

Ever wondered what it might be like to help launch a constellation of satellites? Or fly in an aircraft you've helped to finance? Join Milbank's transportation and space experts as they take you through their global practice, which involves keeping our ever-changing world moving and connected.

[Read on>](#)

Career prospects

Our research shows that the niche, sector-based practice areas are better at keeping associates for the long term. Part of the reason for this is the smaller teams, so closer contact with partners and clients. Personal development and mentoring are often better, and the path to the top more visible. The downside is you may not be exposed to the breadth of client problems that you might in corporate or general litigation, for example.

Commercial and industrial

Media and advertising – The Inside View

Why we need media lawyers | What media lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in media law | Law firms shortlisted by media and advertising expertise

[Read on>](#)

Insurance law – The Inside View

Why we need media lawyers | What media lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in media law | Law firms shortlisted by media and advertising expertise

[Read on>](#)

Product liability – The Inside View

Why we need product liability lawyers | What product liability lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in product liability law | Law firms shortlisted by product liability expertise

[Read on>](#)

Advertising litigation – Kramer Levin

Media is one of the most desirable sectors for students entering the legal profession. We interviewed the experts at Kramer Levin to find out about their varied, exciting practice.

[Read on>](#)

Food & beverages, retail and franchising – The Inside View

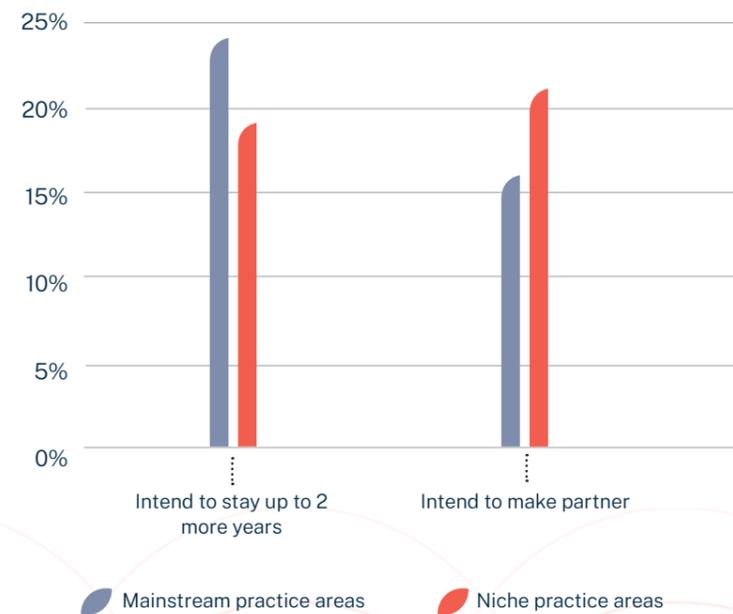
Why we need FBRF lawyers | What FBRF lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in FBRF law | Law firms shortlisted by FBRF expertise

[Read on>](#)

Breaking into media and entertainment law – have you got what it takes? Lights, camera, action! Industry experts give us a behind-the-scenes glimpse into one of law's most competitive practice areas. We speak to in-house counsel at AppleTV+, recruiters at Whistler Partners and lawyers at O'Melveny to learn more.

[Read on>](#)

ASSOCIATE COMMITMENT



Government and regulatory

Government law – The Inside View

Why we need government lawyers | What government lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in government law | Law firms shortlisted by government expertise
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a government regulatory lawyer – Akin Gump

Keeping up with the government maelstrom has been a full time job of late. For businesses to navigate and change the laws and regulations which govern their activities, they are in need of some prodigious legal expertise. Akin Gump is one firm which provides exactly that.
[Read on>](#)

Environment – The Inside View

Why we need environment lawyers | What environment lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in data security law | Law firms shortlisted by data security expertise
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a healthcare lawyer – Waller

Based in Nashville – the nation's healthcare capital – Waller is one of the leading firms in the US for healthcare law. We caught up with a few of its seasoned attorneys to discover what it's like to become a lawyer in this broad and rapidly evolving area.
[Read on>](#)

Becoming a life sciences lawyer – Goodwin

Based in Nashville – the nation's healthcare capital – Waller is one of the leading firms in the US for healthcare law. We caught up with a few of its seasoned attorneys to discover what it's like to become a lawyer in this broad and rapidly evolving area.
[Read on>](#)

Cannabis law: the expert focus

Following its legalization in several states, cannabis is big business: and that means opportunities for lawyers. We spoke with Duane Morris partner Seth Goldberg to unpack some of the realities of working in such an embryonic space. Goldberg leads Duane Morris' dedicated Cannabis Industry Group and has been at the forefront of the legal cannabis sector.
[Read on>](#)

Government and regulatory

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act – Allen & Overy

"I could tell you everything about the Kazakhstan oil and gas industry or how the tobacco sector works in a certain country." We learn from the FCPA experts at A&O about this intrigue-heavy practice area.
[Read on>](#)

International trade – with Hogan Lovells

For trade to go on, the work of international trade lawyers is crucial. Five experts from the highly international Hogan Lovells oversee the free movement of knowledge to you, the lawyers of tomorrow.
[Read on>](#)

Antitrust law – The Inside View

Why we need antitrust lawyers | What antitrust lawyers do | The highs, the lows and the daily realities | The current issues in antitrust law | Law firms shortlisted by antitrust expertise
[Read on>](#)

Coming soon... Antitrust in 2021, with White & Case

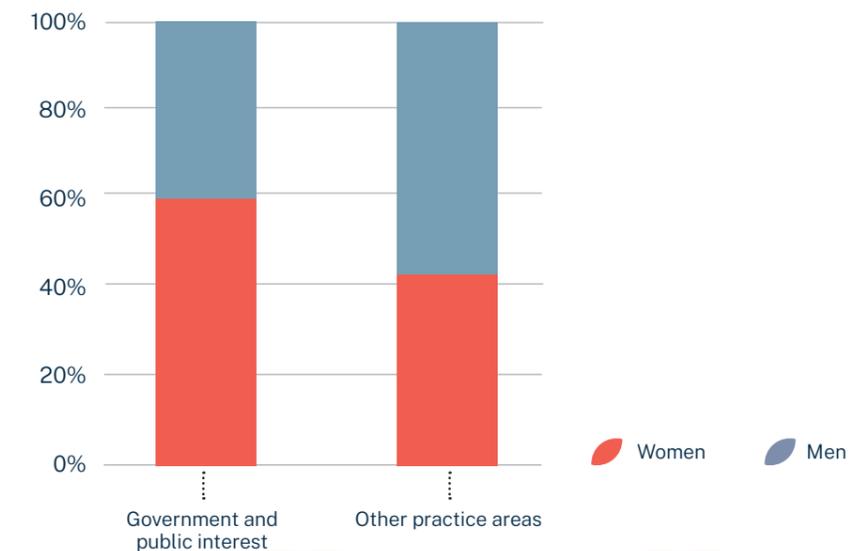
Antitrust with 2021, with White & Case "In simple terms, competitors cannot collude to fix prices or production levels, to divide markets, or to rig bids. Monopolists cannot use anti-competitive tactics, including mergers, to obtain or maintain their monopolies. There are large gray areas of potentially anti-competitive conduct around these basic principles."
[Read on>](#)

When M&A meets antitrust law

Freshfields' lawyers explain how the two practices combine: "You need to really understand the mechanics of the market you're analyzing: the product, players, how it functions."
[Read on>](#)

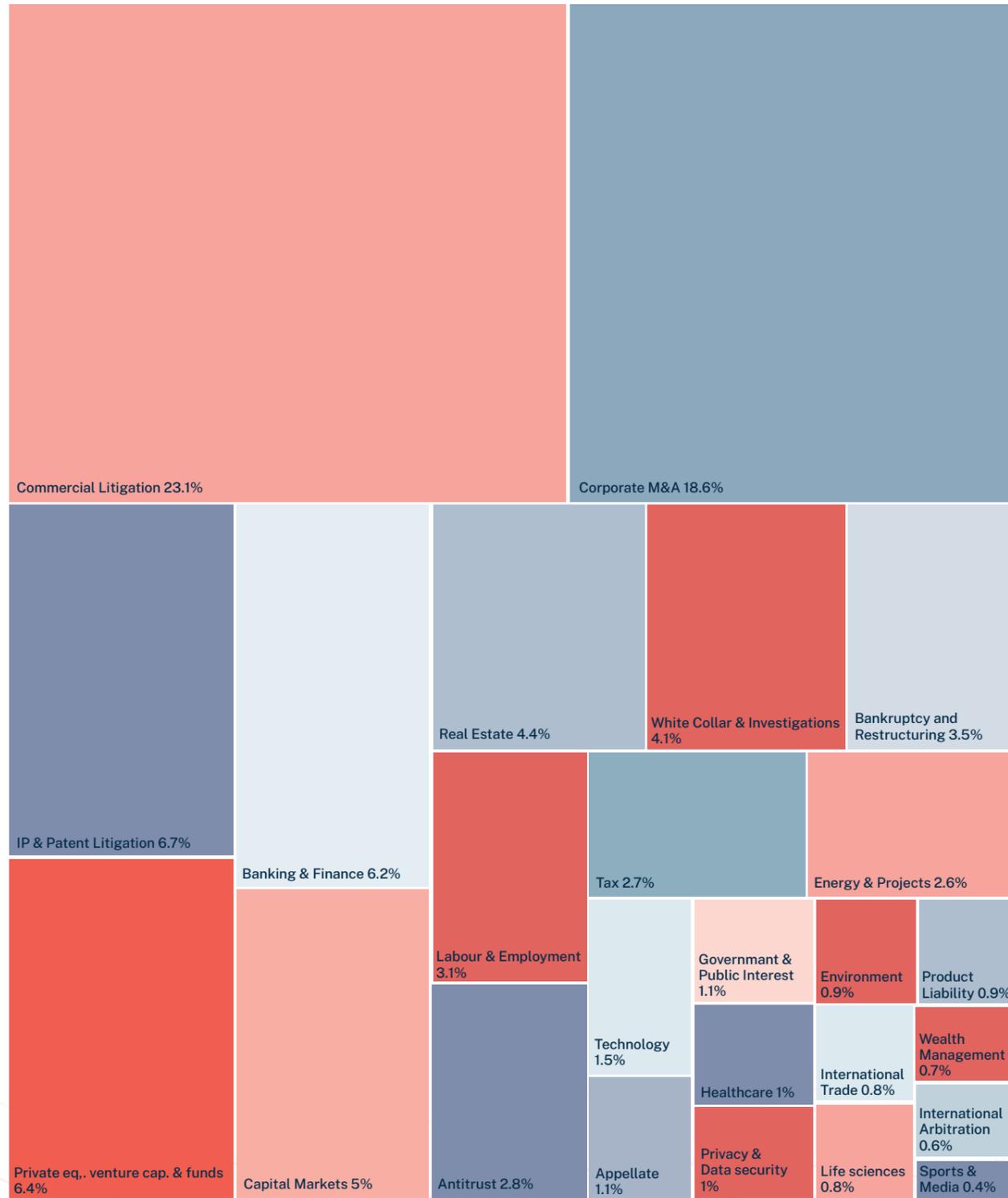
We see trends in how men and women favor different practice areas. Men are more drawn to transactional and financial areas; women are more populous in contentious, public and regulatory sectors.

PRACTICE AREA GENDER SPLIT



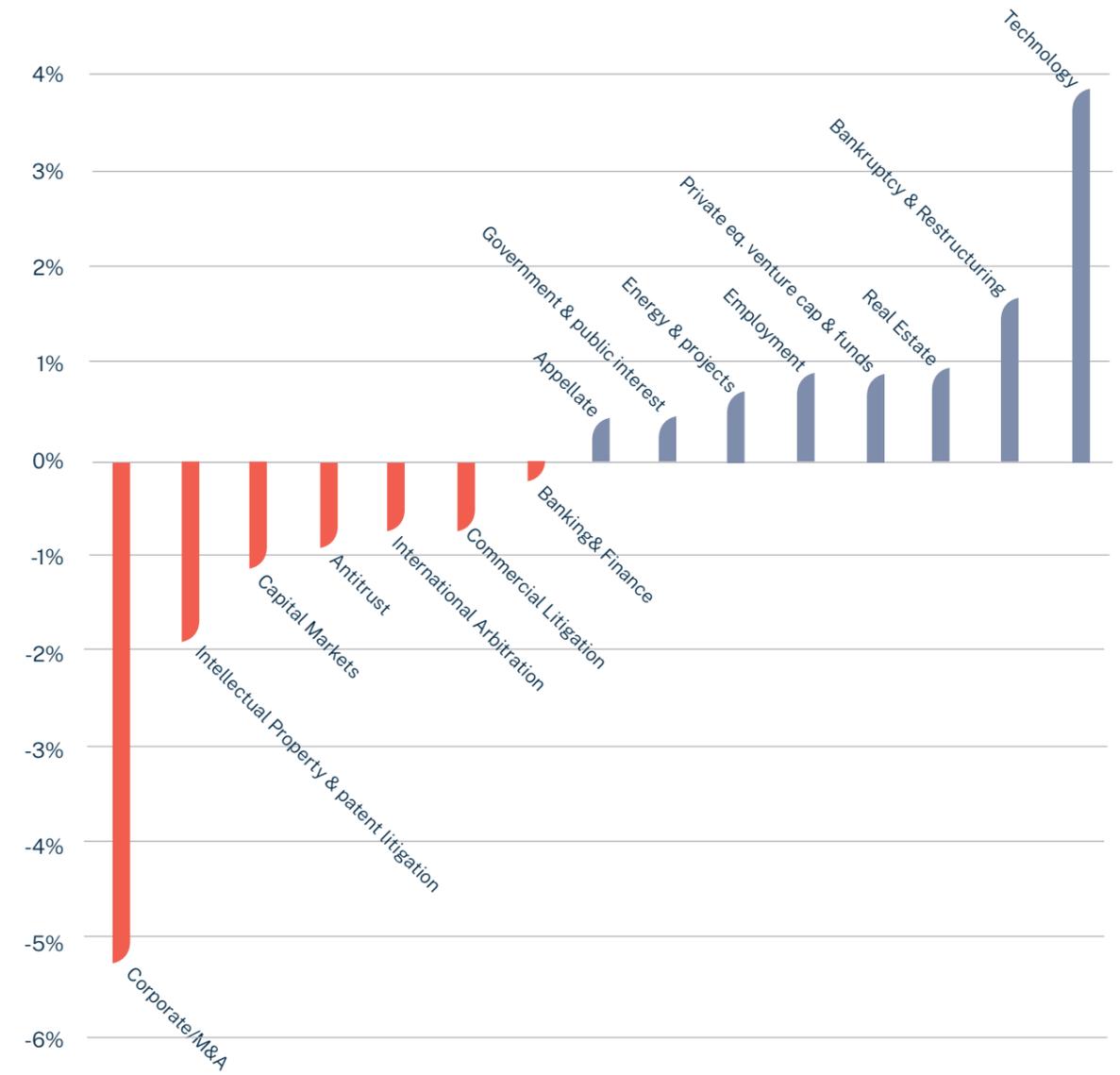
Practice areas by size

ASSOCIATE PRACTICE AREA HEADCOUNT ACROSS BIGLAW, JUNE 2021



Practice areas by size

ASSOCIATE HEADCOUNT MOVEMENT, JUNE 2019 – JUNE 2021



Law firm types

Global firms

This group of law firms has mirrored the rise of the globalized economy, following clients and the commercial opportunity as overseas markets liberalize. Since the 1980s we've seen many more of them build networks in big financial centers across the world. Lately the growth is happening in the emerging markets – Asia, Russia and Latin America.

These are demanding firms: think huge clients and meetings in different time zones. Global firms are highly competitive, strategically expansionist, and on the lookout for high-achieving, worldly candidates. They are usually full-service law firms offering associates a great variety of career paths.

Example firms:

Clifford Chance | Freshfields | Kirkland & Ellis | Latham & Watkins | Skadden | White & Case

New York elite

Based in Wall Street, Midtown, or lately Hudson Yards, these firms ooze class, and are some of the most formidable names in the industry. They are more strategically conservative than the global firms, although their work will often have an international dimension and most do have a few overseas offices.

Work typically focuses on corporate, finance, capital markets, funds and litigation. Like the global firms, the many perks come at a cost: young lawyers work long hours, so "from Monday to Friday, they own you." But as a learning experience and a resume entry, they are career gold. NB: no-one uses the term 'white-shoe firms' anymore.

Example firms:

Cahill | Cravath | Debevoise | Paul, Weiss | Simpson Thacher | Sullivan & Cromwell

Top-tier beyond New York

The scale of the economies they serve means that the top firms outside New York are every bit as competitive and prestigious. Chicago, California and Boston have produced some of the world's most successful firms.

With their large networks, they have a lot in common with the global firms; the local economies dictating that they should be full-service, offering multiple career paths.

Working cultures beyond New York tend to be slightly more chill, but still expect to be billing long hours.

Example firms:

Alston & Bird | Covington | Gibson Dunn | Jones Day | Latham & Watkins | Perkins Coie | Sidley

Law firm types

Nationwide firms

Clients like their lawyers close at hand, so as they've grown, many firms have established networks of offices across the country. These firms often combine three markets: international, national and local. Like the global multi-site firms, nationwide firms are very likely to be full service.

Culturally, nationwide firms will be highly professional places to work at, but perhaps not quite as demanding as the New York elite and globals. And these firms offer greater opportunity to get to know clients better. A major benefit of a multi-site firm is that as an associate you can move cities while remaining with the same employer.

Example firms:

DLA Piper | Duane Morris | Greenberg Traurig | K&L Gates |

Regional firms

Certain regions are known for certain types of work: corporate, banking and finance in New York; government/regulatory in DC; technology and media in California; energy in Texas; private equity in Boston, etc. Many West Coast firms look toward Asia for business, while Florida firms often work in Latin America. Each region has its own set of traits and it is worth finding out about the local market in which it operates. Typically, these firms are seen as less high-stress than the New York elite, and that's reflected in the salary – which will often give you a better quality of life than in New York, in any case.

Example firms:

Baker Botts | Choate | Jackson Walker | Sheppard Mullin

Boutiques and specialists

Boutiques focus on a single area of law – or a specific industry sector, such as technology (Gunderson) or media (Greenberg Glusker). Some are very small; others have hundreds of lawyers; a few have several offices (Finnegan). What they all have in common is the intensive learning opportunities for associates, the cohesive culture, and longer-term commitment from associates. DC and California both have a lot of boutiques, serving specific economies and interest groups.

Example firms:

Finnegan | Greenberg Glusker | Gunderson | Holwell Shuster | Irell | Wiley

Lateralling into a Boutique Law Firm – the view from Adam Leitman Bailey

"Working at a boutique firm allows an associate to participate in all aspects of a case. At a larger firm many associates might just do document review. Here, we are able to see a case from conception to end."

[Read on>](#)

BigLaw in a small office

Left out of the loop, or happier all-round? We take a look at the lives of associates at mega firms' satellite locations.

"Often we're playing the role of experts, and a team somewhere else has the relationship with the client company."

[Read on>](#)

Becoming a lawyer in a litigation boutique – the view from Holwell Shuster

Litigation boutiques offer an intensive yet supportive learning environment for young lawyers – expect your skills to grow, and grow fast.

[Read on>](#)

Law firm variables

USING DATA TO REFINE YOUR SEARCH

Chambers USA rankings

These tell you:

- How invested the firm is in each practice area
- That career development in that practice area will be good
- How prestigious the firm is

[Compare firms>](#)

Summer class size

This tells you:

- How close-knit the community is
- How broad your career options might be

[Compare firms>](#)

US and international office numbers

These tell you:

- How varied career paths will be
- What access you will get to international work and overseas placements
- How time zones will have an impact on your hours
- The scale of the firm's resources
- How close-knit the culture will be

[Compare firms>](#)

Salaries and perks

These tell you:

- How competitive the firm is in the market
- The caliber of the candidate they want
- How demanding the hours will be

[Compare firms>](#)

Diversity figures

These tell you:

- How committed the firm is to positive culture.
- How invested the firm is in retaining diverse leaders
- How compatible life in the firm is with raising a family

[Compare firms>](#)

Global capability rankings

These tell you:

- How well the firm has invested in markets overseas.
- How integrated these offices will be in your daily work

[Compare firms>](#)

Pro bono hours

These tell you:

- How much you will develop running your own cases
- How committed the firm is to community and society
- How large the firm's litigation practice is

[Compare firms>](#)

Associate satisfaction surveys

These tell you how the firms compare on:

- Associate happiness
- Career development
- Retention
- Pro bono
- D&I
- Quality of life

[Compare firms>](#)

First-year class size

This tells you:

- How close-knit the community is
- How broad your career options will be
- How quickly you will make your mark
- How much oversight you might have on each assignment

[Compare firms>](#)

Partner-associate ratio

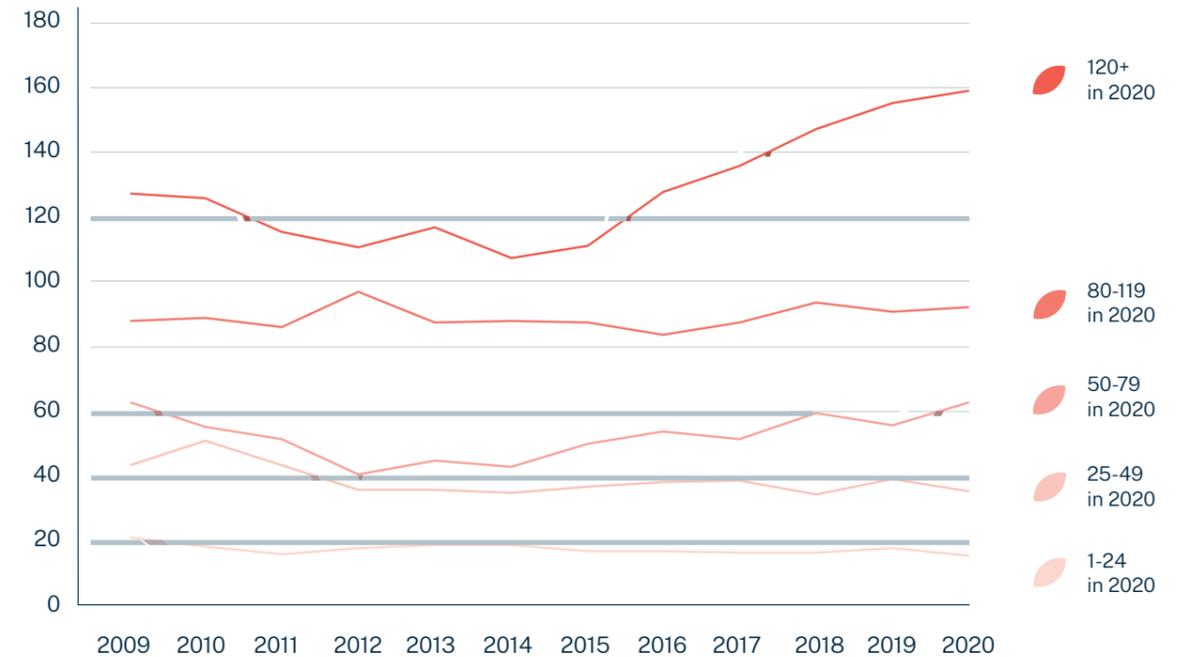
This tells you:

- Your likelihood of making partner
- Your access to top-level mentoring
- How hierarchical the culture might be

[Compare firms>](#)

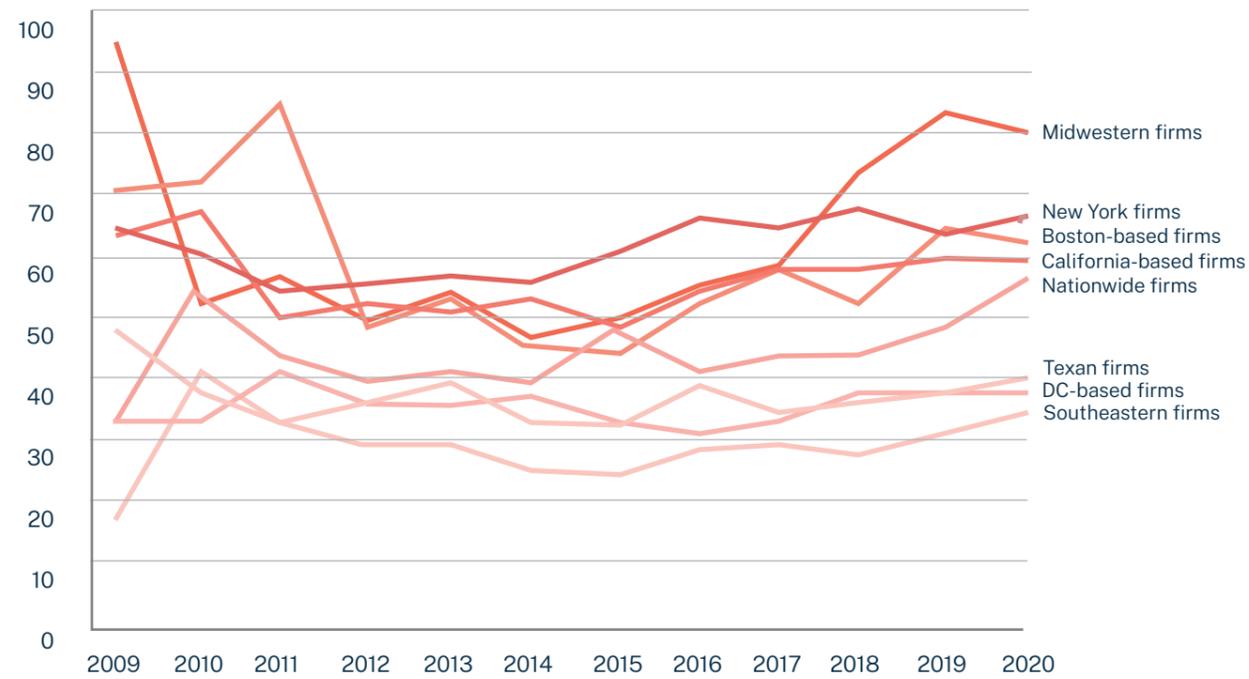
Market scale

BIGLAW 1ST YEAR CLASS SIZES SINCE 2009: TRACKING 75 FIRMS



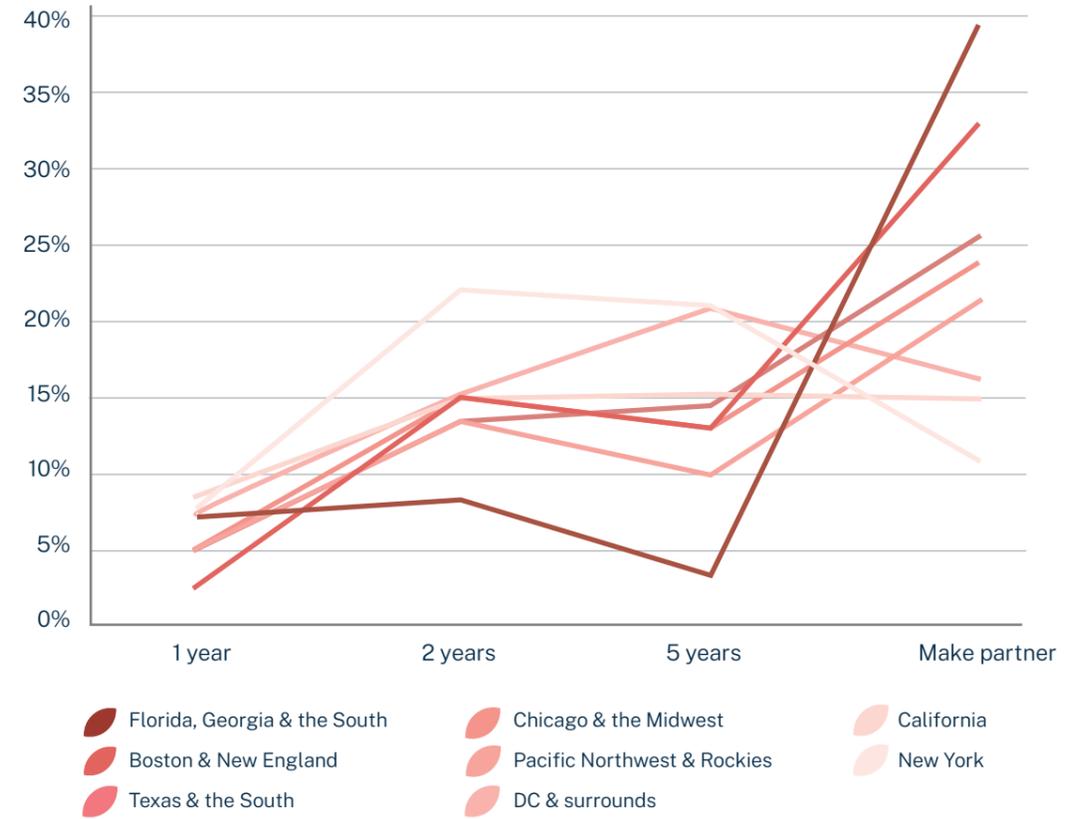
Regional fortunes

TRACKING 75 TOP FIRMS SINCE 2009: AVERAGE 1ST YEAR INTAKE BY REGION

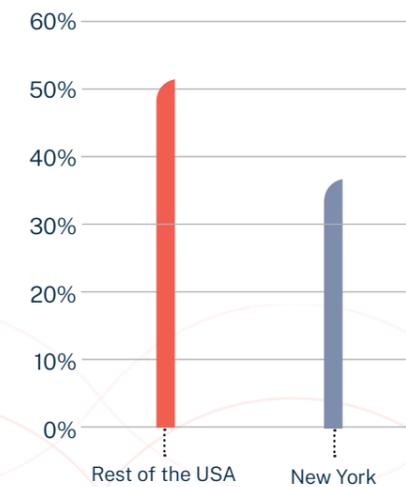


The path to partnership

CAREER INTENTIONS BY REGION



HOW ACHIEVABLE IS PARTNERSHIP?



How to research a law firm

Inside View: your companion to law firm research



Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP - The Inside View

Chambers Associate > Inside View

The Inside View | Get Hired | Firm Profile | Firm Rankings | Media

Move over Forrest, it's all about *Akin Gump* in this guide – the megafirm with roots in Texas, its largest base in DC, management in New York, and offices around the world.

WE all know Forrest Gump, but how's this for a movie pitch? Picture the scene, Texas, 1945. Two FBI agents – Richard Gump and Robert Strauss – return to Dallas after serving in WWII and decide to start a law firm together. *Akin Gump* is born. Flash forward to 75 years later and the firm is a worldwide box office blockbuster with over \$1 billion in revenue and over 900 attorneys in offices spanning the US, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. Chairperson Kim Koopersmith points out that “20% of our lawyers are now in offices throughout Asia, Europe and the Middle East.”

TOP READ: Becoming a government regulatory lawyer: Akin Gump's experts talk us through a career in this varied and challenging sphere.

Here in the US, the firm is revered for its stellar government relations practice in DC – it's one of the best in the country according to *Chambers USA*. The firm also shines in bankruptcy and Native American law, and gets high rankings for international trade, investment funds, projects, and its work in oil and gas. At a regional level, top marks are awarded for healthcare in DC and bankruptcy in New York – most juniors are recruited into these two offices. The firm also has a strong presence in Texas, with juniors in the Houston and Dallas bases. The LA office takes another handful, while San Antonio, San Francisco and Philadelphia may take a junior or two each year.

Strategy & Future

Koopersmith tells us that “London and Washington had the greatest growth last year” at the firm. Reflecting more broadly, she continues that “the challenging global political climate is affecting clients” and highlights the firm's focus on “making sure we recognize and address the challenges our clients are facing, be they regulatory issues, policy issues, transactional issues, and so forth. The increased need to analyze those requires the kind of real knowledge and experience that we have.” Koopersmith highlights the firm's growing focus on technology, cybersecurity and privacy in particular. Looking ahead, the firm is also building on its trade practice, “which has presented us with a lot of opportunities.”

The Work

Just under half of junior associates were in either litigation or corporate. Oil and gas took in the next biggest chunk – all juniors in this group were based in Houston. A similar number of international trade juniors were based exclusively in DC. The labor, IP, financial restructuring, and investment funds groups took in a handful each, and there were just one or two associates in real estate, tax, global projects, communications, health and environment.

“I was able to do a lot of persuasive writing during a federal jury trial.”

Our 'Inside View' features have been the backbone of our research since we established Chambers Associate in 2009. The aim of these features is simple: to bring you in-depth and unbiased insight into what associate life is like at the leading law firms in the US.

This research helps you in two ways:

- Shortlisting the right firms
- Preparing for interview

The features are broken down into key categories, which we'll explore individually in the subsequent pages: an introduction to the firm; the work; career development; the firm culture; pro bono work; diversity and inclusion; hours and compensation; and strategy and future.

What follows is a guide to how you should research law firms, theme-by-theme.

The firm overview: what to look out for

The standfirst is designed for the skim-reader.

We include bitesize info about practice and sector focuses; areas of strength; geographic scope; and strategic direction. If it doesn't sound like your bag, move on – you don't have time to read our whole guide!

Niche practices or mainstream?

It's useful to know if the practice group you have your eye on is at the core of the firm's business or a support department. We tell you this.

Culture snapshot.

You should have a vague idea of the kind of environment you'll thrive in or not. In our intros we give a snapshot of the culture before we get into the detail later on.

It's been an impressive decade for the folks at this Atlanta-founded firm – and the wheels aren't slowing down.

IF you saunter down Peachtree you're sure to find someone nattering about King & Spalding: "It has the best reputation in Atlanta; everyone knows us. Mention the firm and people know who we are." Beyond its native city, the firm carries its clout across 20 other offices – ten domestic, 11 international – and most recently opened up a new base (dubbed an initiative) in Brussels last year. But as we're told, "even though we're a global firm with successful other offices, the personal touch from Atlanta still carries through." It should be no surprise then that in the Georgian capital the firm bags numerous awards from *Chambers USA*, with top-tier rankings for their banking & finance, bankruptcy, corporate, environment, healthcare, litigation, real estate, and tax practices. Nationwide the firm does similarly well, most notably for their international arbitration and projects offering.

"It has the best reputation in Atlanta; everyone knows us."

2018 saw the rollout of the firm's 'Strategy 3.0', ushering in structural changes aiming to increase K&S's global income by 50% before 2022. While ambitious, firm-wide revenue over 2019 grew to \$1.34 billion, a 6.3% increase from 2018. Alongside financial success, organizational changes were implemented across the firm: "The biggest change has been the drive to have more collaboration between practice areas." Objectives aside, "we're integrated by being in one group, but the legacy groups still operate in the pools before and it'll be several years before true cross-practice integration."

Chambers and Partners rankings.

The Chambers USA and Chambers Global rankings indicate the firm's market position, capabilities, strategy and career development. These rankings are designed for clients to select the right firm, but they are a good guide for students as a sign of career development opportunities and practice area investment.

Recent developments at the firm.

The typical developments we flag include headline lateral hires and department growth; new office openings or closes; re-brands; financial results; mergers; and significant events in the life of the firm. We indicate what they say about a firm's trajectory, overall health and market position.

Associate's reasons for joining.

To judge whether this firm is right for you, who better to listen to than current associates? Do you notice much alignment between your own aspirations and those shared by the people who joined the firm?

Where might you be based?

Location determines class size, client base and access to head office resources. We indicate the size of each office's recruitment sizes and variations in career experiences.

The work: what to look out for

Work allocation systems

At one end of the spectrum you'll find firms with a rigorous system of work assignment where designated coordinators dish out work; at the other, you'll read about firms that have a 'free market' system – one where associates are free to knock on doors and pick up work themselves with no restrictions. A lot of firms blend the two approaches.

Client and case highlights

If you want to cram names before an interview, we've got you covered. We provide lists of recent clients in each department, and highlight cases and deals. These give you a flavor of the scale of the matters you might work on, the type of work you'll have access to, and how your career might level

General litigation is the most common destination for new arrivals. Securities, white-collar, product liability, government contracts, employment disputes and more all fall in here: "There's a bunch of subgroups, but most associates work on some products related-cases," interviewees explained. "That said, there's no strict rule about what you can or can't work on." Junior litigators spend their first three years as generalist practitioners after which "you can pick a specialty." Many of the second and third years we spoke to acted for pharmaceutical and medical device companies, "with matters ranging from traditional products cases on failure to warn, to consumer protection class actions. Product liability has been a mainstay of our litigation practice for decades."

"I can say for certain that through first year I got more experience as a litigator than anyone in my law school class."

Whether they were helping to write motions for summary judgment, preparing partners for taking and defending depositions, or enjoying extensive involvement in discovery stages, our litigation sources were all happy with their experiences so far. "I can say for certain that through first year I got more experience as a litigator than anyone in my law school class," one of them said. "There were times when I worked a lot of hours especially right before trial, but it was so exciting I didn't notice." Another was shocked to find themselves taking their first deposition "having barely started second year." It's worth noting that smaller offices like Denver often work for local clients.

Litigation clients: Endo Pharmaceuticals, Pfizer, JPMorgan Chase. Defended Samsung in consumer class action litigation following the recall of Galaxy Note7 phones due to lithium ion battery issues.

A&P's transactional wing acquired new depths after the combination with Kaye Scholer. M&A continues to be the bedrock of the practice, and the firm represents buyers and sellers in the mid-market with matters typically ranging

What day-to-day work can you expect to do as a junior?

Our editorial will give you a taster of the kinds of tasks and activities that will fill your days as a junior associate at a particular firm. What we can tell you now is that it's not all going to be adrenaline-fueled cross-examinations of witnesses or jetting off to fancy locations to get deals signed off and completed. No matter the law firm, there will be the more basic junior work that's not so hot: the due diligence reports to wade through on transactions, the seemingly

endless doc review to be completed to prep and progress cases. It's not all glam, but everyone's got to start somewhere right? The good news is that most firms will provide juniors with a balance between the basic tasks and the more substantive assignments that will lead to career progression.

Free market or formal assignment system?

Some associates we speak to love a free-market system as it allows them to take charge of their careers, build up relationships with partners and develop in the areas they're interested in. Although more entrepreneurial, there are drawbacks: associates can get swamped if they're not careful and not everyone will feel comfortable reaching out for work in this way. Some firms are evaluating their free-market systems as they can be associated with implicit bias.

The centrally coordinated approach offers more fairness, certainty and workload monitoring. It works well in full-service firms where associates are interested in a broad array of experiences; business development skills can wait.

Grunt work/substantive work balance

Look out for mentions of genuine responsibility in our reviews. Some firms are much better than others on this front. At the very least you're going to want a firm that can provide a mix of the larger matters that expose you to basic process and the smaller ones that can act as a gateway to more intellectually-stimulating and career-building tasks. *The formula is that, the bigger the client the less ownership you'll have: responsibility is all relative.*

Career development: what to look out for

Where do associates go after joining this firm?

Be it a lateral move to another firm, staying to make partner, a government position, or going in-house, we give you an indication of likely career paths from associates we speak to and survey.

During your time as an associate, it's common that firms will second you to a client, and these experiences build a network for your onward career moves.

At global firms and in the New York market, the odds of making partner are longer, but increasingly HR teams are assisting associates with finding onward employment.

Beyond New York and at specialized firms, there's more of a culture of staying to partner. But for many associates entering the market, having a stepping stone to your next role while you pay off law school debt is absolutely fine.

[Comparison data: partner associate leverage>](#)

Indicators that a firm takes the career development of its associates seriously

Pay attention to what associates say about the quality of their **annual reviews**; the regularity and depth of **informal feedback**; and the stewardship of senior associates and partners. How associates feel about any **mentorship or sponsorship schemes** is also key here, as the guidance and support provided by these figures at the firm is crucial for associate development. **The two key takeaways from these factors are: 1)** are there robust structures in place at the firm to support associate career progression? **And 2)** is there commitment from senior associates and partners to implement them and devote enough time and energy to them?

Which learning style suits you best?

The balance between formal and informal on-the-job training is significant. While for some associates, structure may be what they crave, others feel that too many formal training requirements get in the way of learning on the job or that designated sessions don't correlate with the stage they're at – training can't meet everyone's needs. The 'learn on the job' side of the market is associated with more specialized firms or those with a more entrepreneurial culture. Consider your academic life: have you responded best to a practical or theoretical style of learning?

Career Development

Training at Gibson can vary office to office. Public speaking training for the **San Francisco** juniors got rave reviews: *"It was probably the best training I've ever had!"* A **DC** associate praised *"a modern twist"* on sexual harassment training in the wake of #MeToo: *"We talked about the problems if people overcompensate. For example, if a male partner stopped inviting female associates to get-togethers because they're concerned it may appear improper, they'd be excluding women from professional opportunities."* There are also office mentoring groups to support associates.

Juniors in several offices had seen the firm help associates move in-house to one of the firm's clients. A firm-wide professional development department is on hand to advise associates on such matters, with members sitting in the **New York, DC and LA** offices. There's even a dedicated 'outplacement' adviser for those who leave the firm. Our interviewees weren't crystal clear on the route to partnership at Gibson, but a **DC** associate said the firm did put on a 'path to partnership' advice talk.

Does the firm invest in associates' career development?

Pay attention to what associates say about the quality of their annual reviews; the regularity and depth of informal feedback; and the stewardship of senior associates and partners. How associates feel about any mentorship or sponsorship schemes is also important.

The two key takeaways from these factors are:

- are there robust structures in place at the firm to support associate career progression?
- is there commitment from senior lawyers to implement them?

Partnership prospects

Also check out the 'Firm Facts' box at the top of each Inside View, where we indicate the number of attorneys promoted to the partnership in 2021.

[Compare firms: 1st year hires v. partner promotions>](#)

Culture: what to look out for

Which social set-up will help you thrive?

Culture in a firm is every form of interaction, professional and social. It's peer support, it's partner interaction, it's management transparency, it's inclusivity, it's events and social life, it's the backgrounds of the lawyers, it's the experiences they bring, it's the clients and their expectations. In short, culture is the result of everything each person brings to the firm and the environment they've created. It's a vital consideration because, as you know from education, there are scenarios that get the best out of you, and some that don't. We ask associates about all of this.

Beyond the rumor; beyond the marketing

Law firm marketing says one thing, the rumor mill says another. Our research looks for the truth. Some firms have a 'nerdy' rep, others are famous for attracting type-A perfectionists, others entrepreneurial go-getters. Some firms have a stuffy, conservative rep, others are known for their courtroom aggression. In our interviews we put these stereotypes to the test, and extract a truthful picture of the environment the lawyers work in.

Firm structures determine culture

A firm may have a lockstep compensation policy and no annual billable hours requirement, which associates feel helps to create a pleasantly non-competitive environment. Another firm may have a purely merit-based compensation system (eat-what-you-kill) combined with a free-market work allocation structure, which creates an atmosphere of competitiveness (which isn't always in the healthy category). Which of these would get the best out of you?

How will culture vary within a firm?

One of the most common remarks we hear is that an associate's experience of culture is largely dependent on the practice area and location they are in. While many BigLaw firms will advertise having 'one culture' on their websites, it's unavoidable that different cities, local industries and team sizes will all fundamentally alter the associate's experience. We frequently hear comments like 'the San Francisco office is more laid back than the New York HQ' or 'the corporate department is really tight-knit because we spend a lot of time with one another when deal flow is busy.' It's important to register what the overall tone of a firm culture is and how the firm is invested in culture, but remember that it's never uniform.

Culture

Associates were speaking the same language when describing the firm's friendly feel. *"I was surprised by how nice everyone is,"* one revealed. *"People are down to earth and laidback but striving for perfection."* Scoring way above average for nearly every criterion in our annual associate satisfaction survey, White & Case has struck on a modern, pragmatic approach to culture. *"I've never experienced that stuffy old-school vibe, nor felt stifled or nervous to say something,"* a source said. *"Sometimes I waste so much time chatting with friends in their offices."* Glass door offices in **New York** help attorneys there know who's free for as much small talk as BigLaw allows for; **DC** has *"a rep for being more buttoned-up because the clients are more formal there,"* while smaller offices come with *"more family feeling because you recognize everyone."*

"I've never experienced that stuffy old-school vibe, nor felt stifled or nervous to say something."

Given it takes on more than 100 juniors each year, we wondered if they ever feel swamped by the firm's size? *"There are so many different groups that you find your people and don't feel lost,"* one reassured us. Others confirmed that while there is a one-W&C feel, the size of practice groups means that each has its own quirks. They also organize their own social calendars to sit alongside *"a good number of office-wide events,"* though there's *"never pressure to socialize outside of work hours."*

Leadership and clients shape the culture

To a certain degree we find firms reflect the clients they serve – New York finance and California tech firms have some quite predictable cultural differences. Culture also trickles down from the partners: when they offer transparency on management decisions and financial performance, when they get involved in cultural and inclusivity initiatives, when they formalize mentoring, when they promote pro bono, it sends a powerful message.

Hours & Compensation: what to look out for

How working hour patterns vary by practice area

Here is where you can take a deeper dive into what BigLaw demands mean at each law firm we cover. Find out how working hours can vary between departments and between different stages of a case or deal. You can get a feel for whether a more 'peaks and troughs' corporate or finance experience is for you, or whether or more consistent litigation schedule that's built around court deadlines may suit you better.

Lockstep or merit-based compensation?

Some firms have lockstep compensation and bonus rates – this means that everyone (if they meet billable hour targets/requirements and other laid out expectations) will be rewarded with the same amount according to their class year. The idea behind this system is that it reduces a sharp-elbowed, 'eat-what-you-kill' competitive culture. Other firms, meanwhile, will have a merit-based compensation system, which can be met with mixed reviews from associates. Some like how they are rewarded for going the extra mile, while others feel that an entirely merit-based criteria can be unclear and lead to a 'black box' compensation system. Then there are firms that blend the two approaches, with merit-based bonuses offered on top of base lockstep salaries and bonuses.

Hours & Compensation

Billable hours: 2,000 target

Most Hogan offices fill up at 9am; associates head home by 6:30pm on an average day. *"Corporate transactional work tends to be stop and go, leading to some later nights. It's pretty unpredictable so you're expected to be checking your phone,"* a source said. *"I've worked till 3am once or twice but that is definitely an exception."* Litigators can plan ahead with more certainty: *"I usually know in advance if I have to work a weekend. Nothing will pop up while I'm at the bar on a Saturday night unless it's super urgent."* The size of the firm means *"it isn't difficult to get someone to cover you"* if you've got a hot date to shoot off to.

"Nothing will pop up while I'm at the bar on a Saturday night."

Each department – and each partner – has a different attitude to agile working for associates. Litigators in New York were *"surprised at how little face time is required. The partners are very reasonable."* It was a different story in the corporate department, where *"face time is very much valued and being in the office is important."* The firm has just rolled out a new timekeeping policy, requiring associates to log their hours efficiently – *"it could affect your bonus if you don't keep up."* If associates reach 1,850 billables in a compensation year they can then count an unlimited number of pro bono hours as billable.

What are the billable hours expectations like?

These expectations typically fall into two categories: either a requirement or a target. The crucial element to be aware of here is whether or not associates feel their target or requirement is realistic and achievable given the department they work in and the number of assignments available to them in any given year. Are there any consequences for not reaching a target or a requirement? A few firms won't have any set hours targets or requirements, but associates at these firms typically report that there's plenty of work to go around – meaning that they are reaching standard billing targets across the industry and sometimes going above them!

The attitude toward long working hours

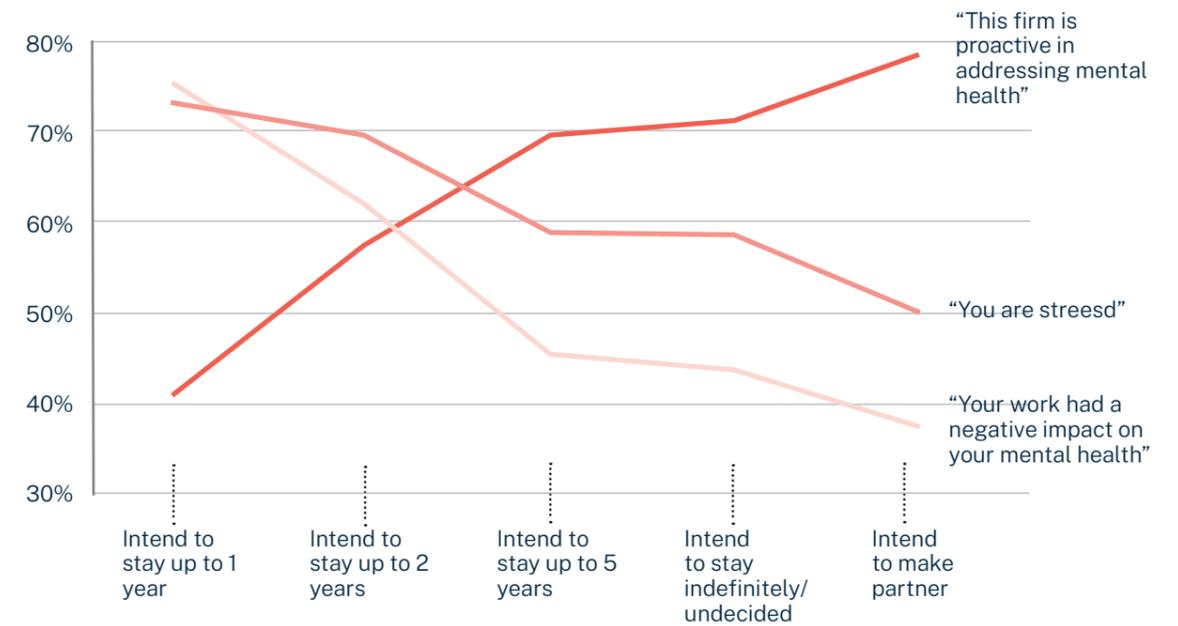
This is essential, because the overall approach to busy working schedules will indicate how manageable they are in the short and long-term. Are associates given time to recuperate after a busy deal closing? Is vacation time encouraged and respected? Do associates feel that they can easily say no to more work when they are at full capacity? Are partners looking out for associates and taking action if they

Does this firm meet your salary expectations?

Well-publicized market salary increases and bonus thresholds – set by New York heavy hitters like Milbank, Cravath and Davis Polk – may well have caught your attention. Some BigLaw firms will match these rates, others won't, while a few may well match in certain offices but not all. You'll get to know how associates feel about the compensation at their firm: do they feel that lower compensation at a more national or regional firm is worth the trade-off of a better work/life balance? Or do they feel that a top-end salary and bonus doesn't make up for the number of hours they work?

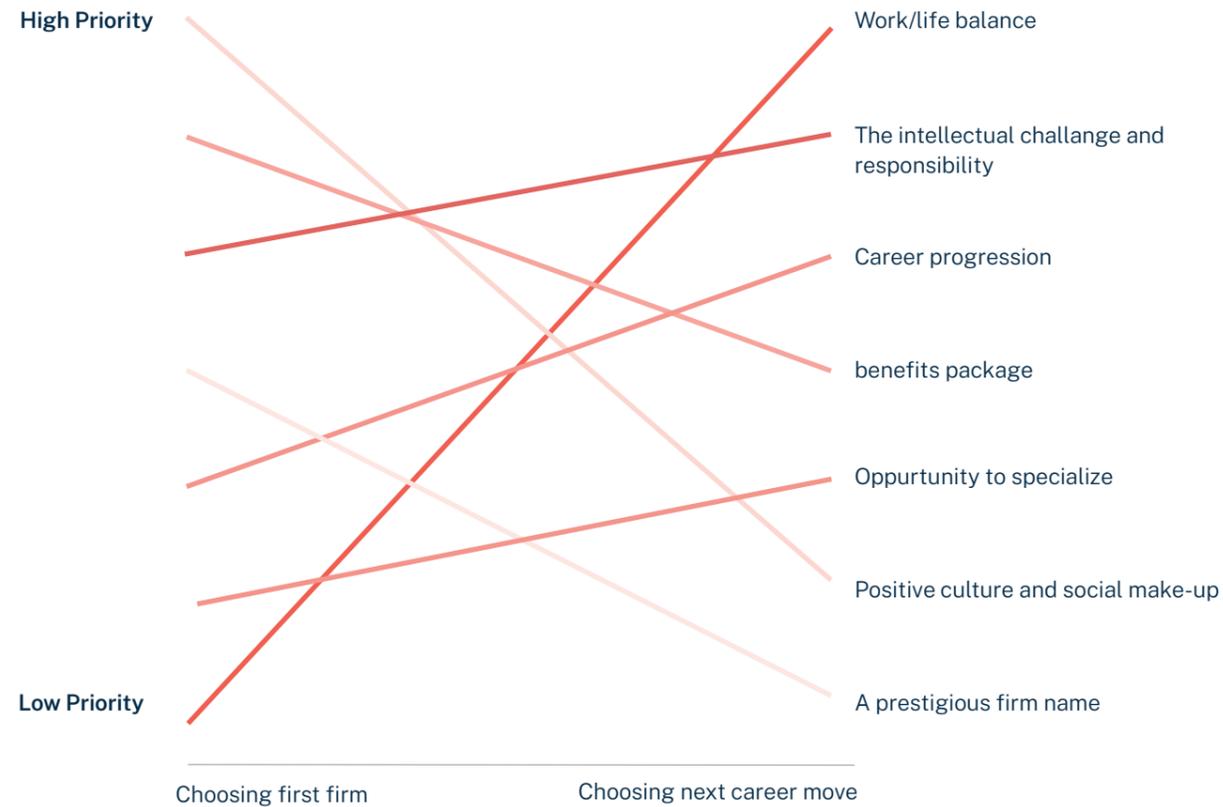
Hours & Compensation: what to look out for

ASSOCIATE RETENTION V. STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH



Hours & Compensation: what to look out for

CHANGE IN CAREER PRIORITIES WITH EXPERIENCE



[2021 salaries and benefits compared>](#)

Pro Bono: what to look out for

Are there many avenues for associates to get pro bono work?

Look out for commentary on the amount of infrastructure that's in place to help associates source pro bono opportunities. The following are all good indicators that a firm is serious about pro bono: the existence of designated pro bono coordinators; regular mail-outs that list available assignments; established partnerships or connections with non-profits and other pro bono organizations; pro bono secondments; and instances of approval being granted for independently sourced projects.

How culturally acceptable is it to devote time to pro bono?

Pay attention to associate comments that indicate the level of support for pro bono within teams and at various seniority levels across the firm. Each year we hear from associates who say that partners and senior associates have been understanding and supportive when a pro bono matter has reached a critical point and needed to be attended to. At the same time, we hear from those who tell us that pro bono is viewed as something that should be done outside of regular working hours, in the evenings and at weekends.

Pro Bono

"I think it's fair to say that the firm's pro bono program attracts left-leaning people," one source reasoned, adding that "anytime there is a conversation about politics, people aren't afraid to speak their minds." Interviewees certainly weren't afraid to talk about their pro bono efforts, including working with asylum seekers and assisting transgender individuals with name changes. Co-managing partner Katya Jestin has even represented clients detained in Guantanamo Bay. The firm is very proud of to be named on the Public Interest Law Initiative's pro bono recognition roster (a list honoring firms in Illinois that have shown dedication to pro bono). Partners and associates at Jenner aim for a 20-hour pro bono target – in 2019 all attorneys met it, and all the juniors we spoke to certainly breezed past it. Jenner's pro-pro bono reputation tends to attract juniors who are keen to put in hours, but that doesn't mean they're all wedded to the same causes: "I remembered finding out early on that not everyone here is left-leaning. There's a collective passion for giving back to community regardless of your political inclinations."

Pro bono hours

- For all US attorneys: 84,905
- Average per US attorney: 175

What's the scope of pro bono opportunities like?

We aim to give you a flavor of the main types of pro bono work available at each firm. What we've found is that most firms will offer opportunities connected to immigration, asylum, adoption, domestic abuse, landlord and tenant, and non-profit formation matters. However, each firm will typically have its own links to organizations and more bespoke assignments on offer. At a more specialist IP or venture capital firm, for example, you may well find pro bono opportunities where burgeoning inventors or entrepreneurs are represented. Many law firms also responded to the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 by increasing the amount of pro bono resources directed at social and racial justice initiatives.

[Market data: law firm pro bono hours compared>](#)

Does pro bono count as billable?

Many firms do count a certain amount of pro bono as billable and associates will typically comment on how generous or potentially restrictive these allowances are. Don't get too carried away if you find a firm with an unlimited billable pro bono allowance: while this signals that a firm has a healthy approach to pro bono, it generally comes with a clear understanding that associates won't be devoting all their time to it. Associates are typically expected to meet their other billable expectations and exercise good judgement on how much pro bono to take on. That said, we do hear from associates who have billed a substantial amount of pro bono in a year – this has usually happened after securing approval from the firm to take on extra hours for a substantial pro bono assignment.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: what to look out for

For a few years this has been a hot topic in US law firms. It's fundamental to firm culture, the developmental experience, and in particular, equitable recruiting and promotion. And clients are now weighing in, expecting better commitments from their lawyers...

The vital stats

Some firms inject serious time and resources into this. But as you can imagine, there is much boasting about D&I from firms across the world, that often isn't substantiated in headcount improvements. We ask associates to tell us how committed their firms are and which firms are doing the window-dressing.

[Compare D&I stats>](#)

Critical areas

Diversity efforts at law firms address three areas for improvement: pipeline and recruitment; retention; and promotion. We assess the success of each through figures and associate commentary. Look out for implicit bias training playing out in processes like work allocation and team staffing. Is the firm putting forward diverse role models? How about the mentoring and allyship for diverse lawyers? And what about the affinity groups?

Understanding success

While it's useful to see the numbers across the whole market and learn that a 30% women partners number is – in relative terms – a strong performance, we should remember context is everything. In IP, e.g., they recruit high numbers of STEM graduates, where the recruitment pool is already swayed towards men. And we find some practice areas are more attractive to either men or women. And when law school is so financially prohibitive, what degree of responsibility can law firms take in social mobility?

Inclusion is core culture

A firm is inclusive if you can be your whole self, no matter who you are. It's inclusive if lawyers are considerate to others', during their difficult times and their successes. It seems pretty basic, right? But in the performance-driven world of law, these things can get forgotten. Associates will point out in interview the times their partners stayed late with them or checked in to see if they were OK. Look out for our research on mental health, too, which is a problem in the law and tied to inclusivity. We test how proactive the firm is, independent to the pressures the market applies.

Chambers Associate DE&I hub

We analyze the data and share the stories of leaders and pioneers [Read on>](#)

Diversity & Inclusion

Jenner already boasts impressive statistics for its LGBTQ+ representation and was "one of the very first firms to list preferred pronouns in employees' email signatures and website bios," one associate pointed out. "In terms of diversity visibility at the partner level, it's great in DC. There's a senior partner here who makes a point to talk openly about her wife and kids, which is great to see." An annual summit brings together diverse associates in Chicago; one described it as a "breath of fresh air." However, a colleague in DC felt the firm could be more proactive in some elements of its approach to diversity: "Jenner was late to offer diverse scholarships compared to some rivals." Others also agreed the firm could "widen the group of universities from which it recruits."

"One of the very first firms to list preferred pronouns."

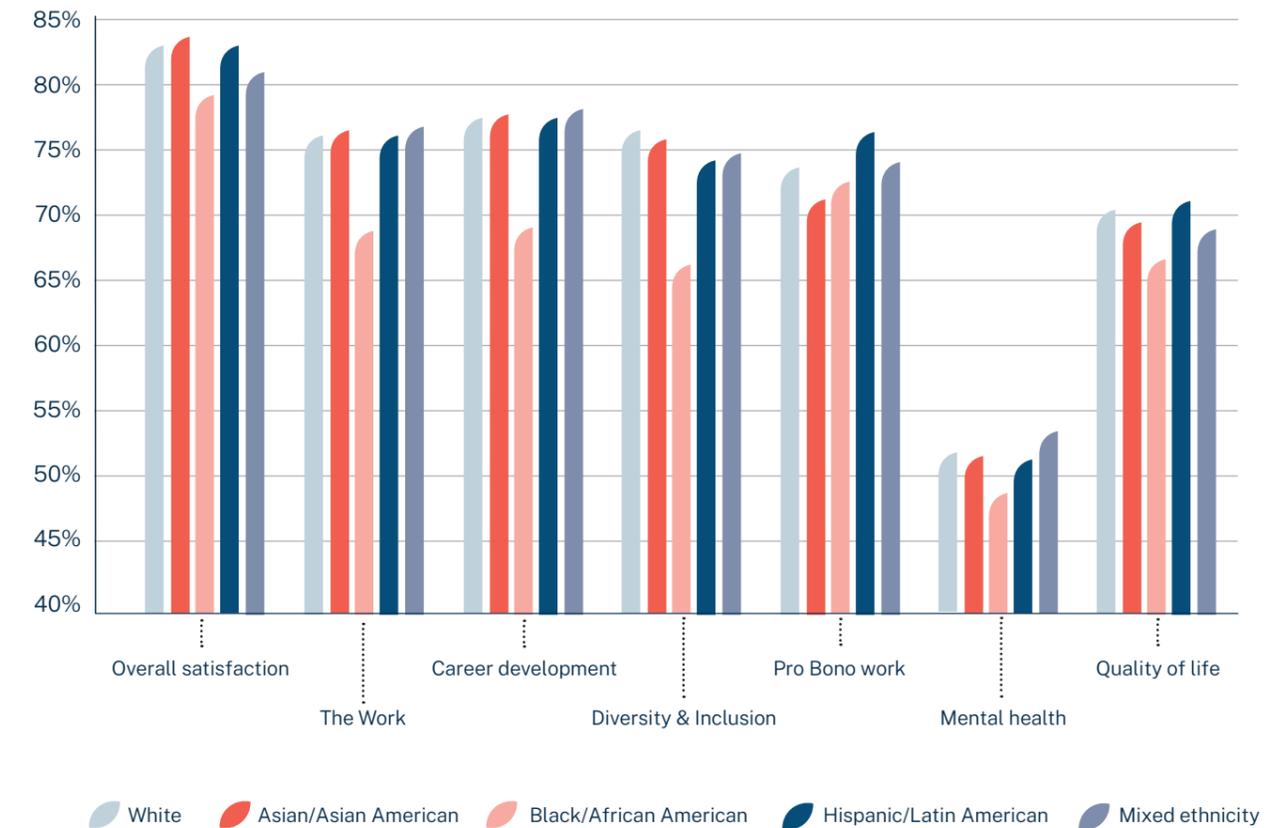
Part of leading the way on diversity is acknowledging where problems continue to exist, and Jenner recently commissioned a third party to help. "They looked at the challenges facing female partners and associates at the firm," we heard. "Jenner has since implemented new policies, events and programming." We also heard that the firm revamped its mothers circle, which supports new mothers. What's more, worries that the firm's business development program had become "a bit of a boys' club" prompted the creation of a new one exclusively for women.

What does good look like in 2021?

All firms have a diversity function. We'd highlight the following among the leading firms: the granting of billable credit for time spent on diversity activities; the addition of 'equity' as a focus in diversity efforts and outcomes; involvement in the Mansfield Certification programs run by Diversity Lab, which require participating firms to consider a minimum of 30% historically underrepresented candidates for leadership roles; firmwide inclusivity training; proactivity in addressing bias in firm systems; and, especially in light of the events of 2020, the implementation of initiatives to address social and racial equity.

Diversity, equity & inclusion: key issues

ASSOCIATE SATISFACTION, ETHNIC IDENTITY



Latham allyship podcast series

Episode 1: Allyship in action
 Episode 2: Top 5 tips for being an effective ally
 Episode 3: Why a culture of allyship is important [Listen>](#)



How effective leadership can power DE&I efforts

Whether it's participating in mentoring circles, devising diversity score-cards or increasing the inclusivity of pitch teams, there's plenty that law firm leaders can do to drive D&I in their businesses, as this article by Weil reveals. [Read on>](#)



DE&I market trends 2021

We explore the latest data to find where the strengths and weaknesses are in US law firms' diversity efforts. [Read on>](#)

Strategy & Future: what to look out for

Why is this vital info?

The most persuasive performances at interview are the candidates who know the direction the firm is going in, and can place themselves and their skillset within that picture. The candidate's and the firm's ambitions are aligned – the business case for hiring you is made clear. Arming yourself with information on the firm's commercial strategy – its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – is interview gold-dust. Our managing partner interviews give you that information. At the very least it shows you've done your research and can talk fluently about the firm's commercial future.

What do you want?

Too often applicants compromise, assuming they don't have the power of choice. That mindset is the wrong approach: the candidates who know what they want will more likely get what they want. The Strategy & Future section will help you with this problem. For the short-term and long-term, what is it you want from your career? Is what we're sharing in the Strategy section reflective of an organization you want to be part of down the line? Are their practice area or geographic growth an answer to your ambitions?

Strategy & Future

Chair and managing partner Ken Doran tells us: *"Our tech clients have been keeping us busy around the globe, especially with respect to privacy, IP and cybersecurity issues. We've been handling worker classification issues for a number of clients in the gig economy, including Grubhub, Uber and others."* Specifically in the US, Doran highlights that *"New York is our largest office and the primary financial center in the world, and California is a global leader in technology and media and entertainment, as it is the sixth largest economy in the world as a standalone. It therefore makes sense to continue to invest in those markets with a combination of organic growth and selective lateral hiring."* The firm added a team of restructuring lawyers to its New York base in 2019.

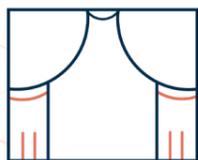
All aboard?

Is there a symmetry between what a managing partner says and what associates note? Do associates have the same level of enthusiasm in the strategy that's laid out by the managing partner?

First, look out for associates' understanding of the firm's commercial strategy. If they feel clued up it indicates two positives: that management knows what direction they are going in; and that the leadership is transparent and communicates inclusively. If associates feel kept in the dark on this, that's a warning signal of other cultural or management inadequacies.

How to interpret developments

- New office openings show the firm is investing in a particular location and the type of work or sectors associated with that region.
- Look at recent lateral hires to see which practices a firm is investing in.
- A recent merger is a major giveaway of what a firm is trying to achieve – consider the mutual benefits of the legacy firms and what motivated them to join forces.
- A recent rebrand tells you how the firm wants to be perceived.



The Big Interview: one-to-ones with legal industry figureheads

[Visit The Big Interview>](#)

A firm's website and how to read it



A website is a marketing vehicle. So, as any good litigator would do, you should read a website with some healthy skepticism. Read the lines and then between them.

Note the basic points

Where the firm has offices. What practices it has. What sectors it specializes in. This sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised how often we hear from hiring partners who've sat on interviews panels and candidates didn't know this basic material.

But you can also find this stuff on [Chambers Associate!](#)

Design and firm culture

Look at the careers pages, as they often follow a different design ethic to the client-facing pages. Consider the use of fonts, images, color, language and pictures of people. Are they attempting to excite you or empower you? Are they projecting calm or aggression? What does their language or design tell you about the type of person they want to attract?

[You could also read the Get Hired section on our website>](#)

Assess the branding style.

Most law firms will have spent big bucks on their website branding, tone and style. What do you pick up from these intentional branding decisions? Is the feel traditional and restrained, or is it projecting dynamism and modernity? These clues will hint at the firm's culture and commercial strategy.

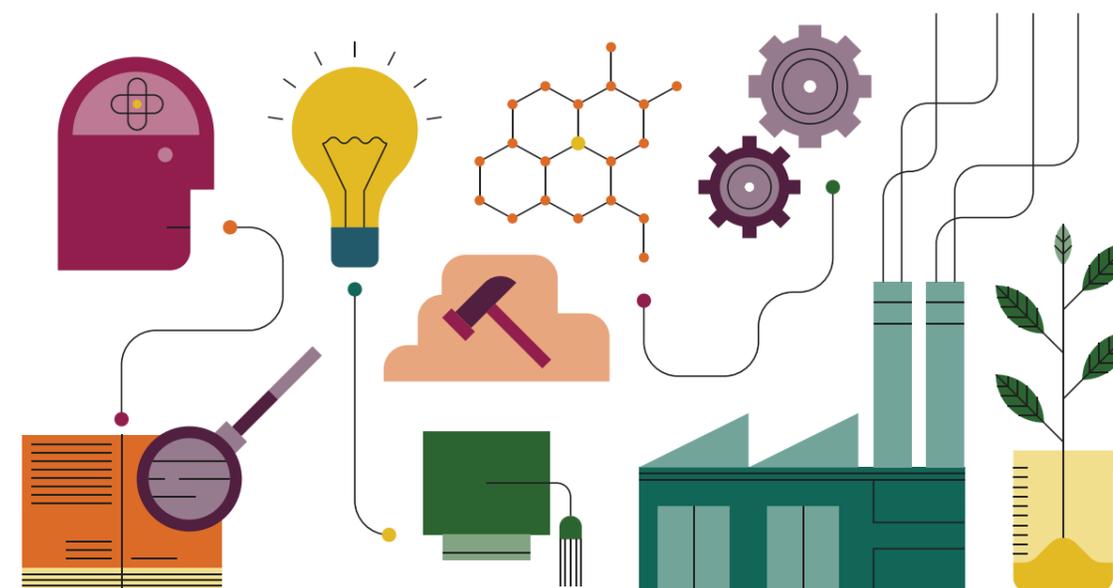
How detailed is website content in your areas of interest?

If you want an inclusive firm, or a niche practice area, or career autonomy, do you see any hits at these on the website. If a firm doesn't mention what you're looking for, it's probably they don't make it a priority.

The Inside View A-Z

FINNEGAN

We are experts in virtually every technology and industry.



As you lay the foundation for your career, know that Finnegan attorneys serve clients worldwide through 10 major IP practice areas and many additional sub-practices. We also follow innovation, with specialist teams focused on more than 20 industries that currently generate the bulk of IP activity.

Yes, Finnegan is a global IP law firm, specialized and successful, made up of smart professionals who are very good at what they do. We're also people, who come here to achieve individually while building something together. Here, teamwork, relationships, diversity, and a positive workplace experience count.

If this intrigues you, find out more about the kind of careers available by visiting www.finnegan.com/careers.

The Inside View A-Z

The Inside View A-Z

Firm	US offices	Overseas offices	Anticipated summers 2021	Number of first years joining 2021	1st year salary	Women Partners %	Famous for...
Adam Leitman Bailey New York and real estate go together like a Big Apple pie and a hefty scoop of ice cream – and no one knows that better than the folks at Adam Leitman Bailey.	1	0	4	2	\$75,000	46	real estate focus; eponymous founder; recruiting outside the Ivy League schools
Akin Gump A global restructuring practice served this BigLaw heavy-hitter well in 2020, but there are many other elements that make it run, Akin, run!	11	9	86	48	\$190,000	25	bankruptcy and restructuring expertise; government relations and international trade work; billable D&I hours; respectful culture; Texas origins and presence in the state
Allen & Overy A new LA office is all the buzz at Allen & Overy, which associates say is O-so-very “far away from the white-shoe Manhattan stereotype.”	2	38	12	46	\$190,000	21	global finance and corporate work; magic circle magic
Alston & Bird This Atlantan soars in the BigLaw market when it comes to IP, litigation, healthcare and antitrust matters especially.	10	3	Undisclosed	38	\$165,000-\$190,000	26	being an Atlantan powerhouse; excelling in areas like healthcare, antitrust, IP and litigation; being headed up by one of the Hays brothers
Arnold & Porter A premier reputation for DC-oriented work like government contracts brought many juniors to A&P, but you should also add it to your list if life sciences, IP and pro bono matters appeal.	9	4	76	58	\$190,000	24	top-rated government contracts work; commitment to pro bono; life sciences prowess
Ashurst This UK firm’s two US coastal offices pack a mighty punch in the world of public-private partnerships.	2	26	3	1	\$190,000	44	public-private partnerships; London-gone-global heritage; international finance
Axinn Less is more at this New York-based boutique: specializing in all things antitrust, alongside IP and litigation, Axinn’s associates get “great responsibility and lots of client and partner contact!”	4	0	43	13	\$190,000-\$175,000	28	antitrust and IP specialties; dedicated to boutique size
Baker Botts This 180-year old Texan maintains its market-leading status in the Lone Star State while expanding its brand on both coasts.	7	6	65	63	\$190,000	24	Texas roots; energy prowess
Bracewell Associates are braced for changes in global energy at this Texas firm, which also has sector focuses on finance and technology.	8	2	34	20	\$190,000	24	three sector focus on energy, finance and technology; growing renewable energy remit; social culture that’s well suited to entrepreneurial/extroverted types
Cadwalader In its 225-year history, Cadwalader has firmly established itself as the go-to firm for all things finance.	3	1	17	25	\$190,000	21	esteemed heritage in NYC; top-notch finance clientele; capital markets know-how
Cahill This New Yorker promises plenty of finance work with a free-market style... and you can take that to the bank.	2	1	Undisclosed	31	\$190,000	24	finance prowess; two bonuses; free-market system; first amendment leaders
Choate Hall & Stewart If you had one shot... one opportunity... to do international legal work in a tight-knit one-office Boston firm... would you capture it?	1	0	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Boston roots; insurance and government expertise

The Inside View A-Z

The Inside View A-Z

Firm	US offices	Overseas offices	Anticipated summers 2021	Number of first years joining 2021	1st year salary	Women Partners %	Famous for...
Cleary Gottlieb New York-founded BigLaw firm seeks “three-dimensional individuals” to undertake “quality international work” while also enhancing its “trademark collegiality.”	2	14	Undisclosed	50	\$190,000	22	prestige but with a ‘quirkier’ culture; international expertise
Clifford Chance The magic of BigLaw can be found in cozier dimensions at Brit-born Clifford Chance, which offers big responsibility in small teams for ambitious juniors.	2	30	73	28	\$190,000	20	‘magic circle’ status in the UK; global reach; well-regarded capital markets offering; white-collar and securities offering for litigators in US offices
Cooley From innovative startups to global giants, Cooley’s clientele is a who’s who of tech.	10	6	Undisclosed	91	\$190,000	Undisclosed	cutting-edge tech work; startup practice; IPOs
Covington & Burling Associates get huge clients and (Coving)tonnes of responsibility at this DC institution, where “mentorship and pro bono is in our DNA.”	5	8	339	136	\$190,000	29	nation-beating government practice; strength in the life sciences sector; DC stronghold, pro bono prowess
Cozen O’Connor For a refreshing take on BigLaw, take a hearty sip of what Cozen has to offer: a full-service operation paying plenty of attention to its people.	26	4	17	10	\$130,000-\$170,000	25	lack of meat-grinder culture; work/life balance
Cravath The Firm. The Myth. The Legend. One of New York’s most famous corporate law firms, Cravath has done things its own way for more than two centuries.	1	1	Undisclosed	84	\$190,000	27	the influential Cravath System; historically the compensation market-mover; prestigious name
Crowell & Moring If it’s quintessential BigLaw you’re looking for, move along. Government contracts powerhouse Crowell & Moring is BigLaw with a difference.	5	4	20	14	\$180,000	29	DC powerhouse; ducks (yes, really); friendly culture
Davis Polk & Wardwell Juniors described DP as “a corporate powerhouse with the premier capital markets practice in the world.” That’s as good a starting point as any...	3	7	149	107	\$190,000	19	banking and capital markets leader; New York institution; market-leading on COVID bonuses
Debevoise & Plimpton Any concerns about cutthroat BigLaw culture were null and Debe-void at this big, friendly New York giant.	2	7	0	108	\$190,000	26	big friendly giant; New York elite; international brand
Dechert All hands on Dech –international work pours through the doors of this multi-talented Pennsylvania institution.	13	13	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	\$190,000	20	global work; white-collar expertise; Philly high-flyer
DLA Piper There’s big, and then there’s DLA Piper big.	26	66	65	36	\$190,000	25	enormousness; global expansion; local know-how; history of massive mergers
Dorsey & Whitney ‘On your mark, get set, grow’, reads Dorsey’s website; and juniors at this 19-office international firm were keen to do just that.	13	6	45	22	\$135,000-\$165,000	28	nationwide but top of the game in Minnesota; more forgiving hours; strong reputation in mining law

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Firm	US offices	Overseas offices	Anticipated summers 2021	Number of first years joining 2021	1st year salary	Women Partners %	Famous for...
Duane Morris Duane Morris was built on rock-solid Philadelphia foundations, but it is by no means an East Coast island.	22	8	11	12	\$180,000-\$165,000	23	Philly roots; healthcare expertise
Dykema Gossett Aspiring lawyers, start your engines! A career at this national firm could be fueled by Dykema's automotive strengths in Motor City or its litigious might in the Lone Star State.	13	0	15	11	\$120,000-\$150,000	25	Michigan might with a strong national presence; history working in the automotive industry
Finnegan Cutting-edge IP work with a generalist approach allowing litigation and patent prosecution work, you say? Bazinga!	5	5	18	17	\$190,000	27	premier IP know-how; chance to do both litigation and patent prosecution work; specialized and high academic achievement of associates; focus on industries such as life sciences, tech and energy.
Fish & Richardson Fish & Richardson is a magnet for STEM graduates who want to "fire up both sides at once: the legal and the technical."	11	2	30	10	\$190,000	22	IP excellence; increasing presence at the International Trade Commission
Foley & Lardner This Cream City native is cream of the crop when it comes to "BigLaw with a work/life balance and Midwestern values."	21	3	77	55	\$140,000-\$190,000	24	Wisconsin base and a growing Texas presence; familial atmosphere; recent growth
Foley Hoag With its focus on innovative industries and a portfolio of clients established and new, Foley associates have everything they need to startup their legal careers.	3	1	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	\$190,000	Undisclosed	focus on innovative industries; work with startups; leanly staffed matters; mentor-based work allocation for first-years.
Fox Rothschild E pluribus Rothschildum: associates at this national firm likened its network of offices to a federation that's united by an entrepreneurial focus on the middle market.	27	0	40	21	\$115,000-\$135,000	28	midmarket success; extensive national presence
Freshfields With a new office in Silicon Valley and its first female leader, this magic circle member is keeping the 'fresh' in Freshfields.	3	25	141	22	\$190,000	30	international footprint; member of the British magic circle; international arbitration
Fried, Frank Give your future some Freedom at a firm that is, quite Frankly, superb	2	2	Undisclosed	67	\$190,000	19	globally recognized investment funds practice; large real estate department; petite collection of offices with international impact.
Gibson, Dunn Dive into the free market and get a taste of premier litigation or transactional work at one of California's most famous global legal enterprises.	10	10	368	126	\$190,000	22	extensive and highly regarded litigation practice; transactional clout; world-beating corporate investigations expertise; LA roots.
Goodwin Become a Goodwinner at a firm that's "placing itself at the crossroads of innovation and disruption."	7	6	141	90	\$190,000	Undisclosed	tech, life sciences and private equity expertise; big deal in Boston; international brand
Goulston & Storrs Keeping it real (estate) since 1900, this Boston-born firm helped associates to quickly feel at home.	3		18	6	\$190,000	Undisclosed	real estate work; Boston-based; nurturing associates

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Firm	US offices	Overseas offices	Anticipated summers 2021	Number of first years joining 2021	1st year salary	Women Partners %	Famous for...
Greenberg Glusker LA's Greenberg Glusker has a boutique atmosphere but packs a punch with its full-service offering, which includes a robust real estate group and star-studded media practice.	1	0	3	3	\$170,000	33	star-studded media & entertainment practice; boutique feel with national reach; real estate capabilities
Greenberg Traurig Green(berg) means go: with 30 offices in the US alone, this cross-country GT likes to move fast.	30	10	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Floridian connections; real estate expertise; giant US network; international brand
Gunderson This startups top Gun is on a lateral hiring spree to expand its niche practices	7	2	91	22	\$190,000	18	emerging companies and venture capital work; a more relaxed startup atmosphere; top-end compensation
Harris, Wiltshire Tons of telecoms, no hours requirements, and not a prima donna in sight. HWG ain't your typical BigLaw firm—and that's just how they like it.	2	0	3	1	\$188,500	30	telecoms top dog; emphasis on work/life balance
Haynes and Boone Born and raised in the Lone Star State, this dedicated Texan offers associates a "prestige" name with a healthy lifestyle to match.	15	3	Undisclosed	34	\$190,000	24	strength in the Texas market; ambition to expand; friendly name partner
Hogan Lovells US DC's hulking great Hogan may have grown into an international giant, but its attorneys say it's as much about sharing the Lovells.	15	35	116	51	\$148,440-\$190,000	29	DC corporate practice clout; culture; global presence; Transatlantic tie-up
Holland & Knight With Florida roots that go back a century, Holland & Knight has "a strong reputation" in the area, and expertise that it employs across the US and further afield.	25	3	62	60	Undisclosed	25	Florida base; national reach; transactional expertise
Holwell Shuster At this sleek boutique, "there's a shared sense of buy-in on growing the firm with the folks who founded it."	1	0	8	0	\$190,000	18	litigious expertise, especially in securities matters; boutique status
Hunton Andrews Kurth Three years post-merger, "there's definitely a lot of forward momentum" at Hunton Andrews Kurth.	15	6	Undisclosed	32	Undisclosed	22	energy, environment and real estate expertise; roots in Texas and Virginia
Irell & Manella Top-notch IP expertise and a quirky culture are on offer at this LA-headquartered firm.	2		Undisclosed	6	\$190,000	21	IP litigation big-wigs; a medley of media and tech clients
Jackson Walker Texas-born Jackson Walker will not only pledge loyalty to its Lone Star State, but also to its home-grown associates.	7	0	25	14	\$190,000	23	loyalty to and longevity in Texas; good long-term career opportunities
Jenner & Block Every year, junior associates at this Chicago native heap praise on its pro bono practice, and this year's Jenneration is no different.	5	1	96	31	\$190,000	30	pro bono rep; litigation work; LGBTQ+ representation

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Jones Day Worldwide working at Jones Day means “the whole world feels smaller and cozier” according to associates. So why, oh why, oh why, oh don't you go to Ohio?	18	24	329	167	\$170,000-\$190,000	31	Cleveland roots; ‘One Firm Worldwide’ motto; high volume of M&A deals; non-practice assignment for first-year juniors
K&L Gates Global meets local behind the K&L Gates.	24	21	73	48	\$160,000-\$180,000	27	connection to Bill Gates’s dad; taking Microsoft public; globally integrated coverage and reach; leading tech firm
Katten Celebrating a “small firm culture with big firm opportunities,” associates here sounded like the kats who’d got the cream.	8	2	Undisclosed	30	\$165,000-\$190,000	24	DIY entrepreneurial ethic; quirky specialisms; appetite for growth
King & Spalding Solid is this king’s legal throne in Georgia, but its realm stretches across the country and the globe.	11	11	72	59	\$165,000-\$190,000	24	Atlantan roots with global reach; highly respected projects, healthcare, product liability and international arbitration practices
Kirkland & Ellis Record-smashing Kirkland is in a financial league of its own, disrupting the industry with private equity mastery and international expansion.	9	6	406	221	\$190,000	28	market-leading revenue; private equity leader; hard-working associates; incredible growth
Kramer Levin You won’t be Levin anytime soon according to associates at this compact BigLaw firm: litigation prowess, an affable culture and generous pro bono policy keep Kramer’s attorneys billing for the long run.	2	1	18	18	\$190,000	18	litigation prowess, especially in advertising and white-collar crime specialties; commitment to pro bono; affable culture
Latham & Watkins The freedom to find their feet at a “global superpower in BigLaw” was a sweet deal for associates at Latham & Watkins.	18	11	449	184	\$190,000	Undisclosed	giant revenue; unassigned junior associates; Cali origins; global megafirm; climate change capability
Linklaters A Britain-born transactional titan of global proportions? Please, sir, I want some more information.	2	28	51	16	\$190,000	18	British elite magic circle member; global giant; transactional titan
Mayer Brown Financial services whiz Mayer Brown is making strides to ensure it stays on top of its game in the brave new world of legal tech and “cross-sector, cross-jurisdiction” practices.	8	18	71	60	\$190,000	22	strength in financial services sector; free-market assignment; current focus on legal tech, AI and law firm commitment to communities in the form of ‘Project Equity’
McDermott Windy City native McDermott is flying high on another year of double-digit revenue growth.	13	8	150	36	\$190,000	32	private wealth and healthcare expertise; keeping their people happy; Chicago history
Milbank You can bank on this elite New Yorker continuing to be a BigLaw trendsetter in years to come.	3	9	260	57	\$190,000	14	influence on the BigLaw market; top-rated bankruptcy/restructuring and projects expertise; finance focus; associate training program at Harvard; fancy digs in Hudson Yards.
Mintz Levin Associates are Levin’ la vida loca at this mid-sized Massachusetts mover and shaker.	6	1	23	11	\$190,000	25	leaders in the Boston market; Mintzy fresh practice areas: tech, healthcare and life sciences

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Morgan, Lewis Slytherins Keep Out: "It's a bunch of Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws" at Morgan Lewis, with some Gryffindors thrown in for good measure.	17	14	172	79	\$190,000	28	global expansion; labor & employment expertise; inclusive attitude and pro bono commitment
Morrison & Foerster MoFo combines a "progressive outlook" with tip-top expertise in all things tech.	8	8	158	80	\$190,000	33	tip-top tech practice; pro bono culture; Cali-gone-international brand
Munger, Tolles & Olson Satisfy your litigation hunger at Munger, a California firm with a taste for hiring federal law clerks.	3	0	22	29	\$190,000	27	litigation, litigation and litigation
Nelson Mullins Are you mullin' over the fact "the legal world can feel very pretentious?" Fear not, juniors say that ain't the way at "entrepreneurial" Nelson Mullins.	25		77	24	Undisclosed	24	national expansion; strength in healthcare sector; nationwide product liability expertise; unusual billable hours system
Norton Rose Fulbright To Norton Rose Fulbright global-minded folk flock, where they can serve clients "around the world and around the clock."	11	41	52	53	\$140,000-\$190,000	23	global heavyweight; Texas prominence; projects work
O'Melveny & Myers "The culture is the biggest selling point" at this "hip, litigation-leaning firm based in California."	7	8	Undisclosed	77	\$190,000	24	litigation leaders; media and entertainment expertise; strong presence in Asia
Orrick Innovative industries need "innovative and flexible" law firms. Enter the tech, energy, and finance experts at Orrick...	14	12	40	48	\$175,000-\$190,000	26	California roots; tech, energy and finance focus
Patterson Belknap Small in size but big on quality, you'll find a "breadth of litigation" in this TARDIS-like NYC firm.	1	0	0	3	\$190,000	25	litigation prowess; hiring clerks
Paul Hastings When a global network, high-end matters and multiple practice areas are par for the course in BigLaw, it's the "Cali dynamic" that makes this Paul stand out from the crowd.	11	10	Undisclosed	85	\$190,000	21	encouraging approach to pro bono; Cali cultural dynamics; strength in labor & employment, real estate, and high-end corporate and litigation matters; pace of lateral hiring in recent years
Paul, Weiss Paul, Weiss caters to associates hungry for pro bono public-interest cases and big-ticket commercial matters alike.	3	5	261	65	\$190,000	25	New York litigation superstar; home-grown partners; refreshingly frank chairman; pro bono prestige
Perkins Coie Powering up the industry titans of tomorrow, Seattle's finest is consolidating its position as a leading national firm.	17	3	48	52	\$115,000-\$190,000	30	having a liberal edge; lots of tech clients; political law expertise
Pillsbury Pillsbury isn't a bitter firm to swallow for those who want to work with clients across a spread of industries - from energy and tech to finance and real estate.	14	6	110	37	\$190,000	25	innovation; year-on-year growth; Cali roots
Proskauer Rose Setting the Rose gold standard in labor and employment, sports, media and other areas of law, Proskauer's carefully cultivated practices are growing nicely.	7	5	Undisclosed	62	\$190,000	16	labor expertise; sports and entertainment clients

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Reed Smith You don't need to be made of steel at this Steel City native: "We're a top law firm and we're expected to do good work, but nobody's an asshole about it."	18	15	60	42	\$175,000-\$190,000	26	Pittsburgh native gone global; healthcare and life sciences expertise
Ropes & Gray R&G hails from Boston but gains international recognition for its private equity, life sciences and healthcare work.	6	4	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	\$190,000	Undisclosed	strength in Boston sectors like private equity, healthcare and life sciences; high billable credit for D&I activities; respectful culture; global brand
Schulte Roth & Zabel Invest in your lawyerly future at New York's Schulte—a firm that dominates the funds space in every way, shape and form.	2	1	Undisclosed	47	\$190,000	15	investment fund all-rounder; New York native; fintech and cryptocurrency expertise
Seward & Kissel Shout it out loud for the hotter than hell midsize that's struck up a New York groove in funds and shipping finance.	2	0	10	12	\$180,000	13	world-renowned shipping finance expertise; deft handling of hedge funds; promotion of balance and life beyond work
Seyfarth Shaw Why labor over a decision when the answer is staring you in the face? For those interested in labor & employment law, Seyfarth is one of the top BigLaw firms to join.	12	5	17	25	\$150,000-\$180,000	31	strength in all things labor & employment; additional reputation for real estate; the Belonging Project; overseas presence in the Asia-Pacific region
Shearman & Sterling Steadily nearing the \$1 billion revenue mark, S&S has an impressively diverse practice and is making progress on diversity among its people.	7	18	Undisclosed	25	\$190,000	20	prestigious history; elite international work
Sheppard, Mullin Three decades worth of consistent financial growth show that this Cali hotshot is very much still keeping its cool.	11	4	55	35	\$190,000	23	West Coast vibes; extensive California presence; varied matter sizes
Sidley Austin Whether you're hoping to walk in presidential footsteps, or just looking for good work and culture alike, this "elite" Chicago-born outfit might fit you perfectly.	10	10	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	global giant and strong all-rounder; government investigation expertise; Midwestern culture; Michelle and Barack Obama's meeting place
Simpson Thacher STB associates described their employer as "the definition of law firm excellence both in practice and culture." What else did they have to say? Read on...	5	5	0	0	\$190,000	20	nice New Yorkers; big news deals; excellence; no billing target
Skadden Expectations are high at this legal titan, but despite its formidable reputation, juniors found Skadden "a great place to grow and learn early on."	8	14	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	\$190,000	27	global M&A superstars; securities and white-collar litigation; go-getting reputation
Sterne, Kessler The uber brainy bunch at Sterne Kessler meld their technical know-how with their love of law.	1	0	12	11	\$190,000	23	all things IP; PTAB litigation; one-office operation in DC
Sullivan & Cromwell A Wall Street institution with a monstrous appetite for history-making deals and cases... an associate role at this Sully will certainly open doors for you.	4	9	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	\$190,000	24	Wall Street history; intellectual culture; high expectations

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Thompson & Knight As "one of the oldest law firms in the whole of Texas," Dallas-born Thompson & Knight combines energy expertise with a "family feel."	5	4	16	20	\$190,000	23	Dallas heritage; energy and real estate expertise
Vedder Price Although a high-flyer in all things transportation finance, Vedder remains grounded by its Midwestern roots.	6	2	8	10	\$190,000	23	transportation finance; midsize dimensions; incremental growth; early responsibility.
Venable Venable takes the slow and steady approach to growth upon a strong foundation of domestic clout.	9	0	46	59	\$190,000	23	Baltimore legends; advertising, REITs, privacy and data security
Vinson & Elkins Drawn by the light of the Lone Star State or the glow of V&E's energy expertise, associates were proud to call this firm home.	8	4	126	77	\$190,000	17	Texas-born; energy powerhouse; international profile; renewables growth
Waller Where's Waller? Kicking ass in Tennessee, that's where.	5	0	Undisclosed	3	Undisclosed	17	healthcare, regional presence with national reach
Weil New York giant WG&M was helping massive companies through good times and bad Weil you were still in diapers.	8	7	130	125	\$190,000	28	bankruptcy behemoth; billion-dollar deals, especially with private equity backing
White & Case If it's big-ticket deals and international work you're interested in, White & Case could be your spiritual home	9	36	80	75	\$190,000	23	International work; international arbitration; global finance; antitrust. Did we mention international?
Wiley Rein The DC diehards at Wiley continue their commitment to the nation's capital... and their core practice areas.	1		15	9	\$190,000	32	government expertise; DC knowledge
Willkie Farr Riding a wave of revenue growth out of 2020, here's an international firm that knows how to keep its associates happy.	6	6	Undisclosed	79	\$190,000	24	relative work/life balance; private equity strength; rising big name
WilmerHale With a growing transactional remit and nation-leading strengths in IP and life sciences, this prestigious outfit offers juniors much more than just a springboard into government agencies.	7	5	85	60	\$190,000	27	filling government positions with alumni; top-rated IP and life sciences expertise; growing work with startups, especially within the California offices
Wilson Sonsini A real big deal in Silicon Valley, this techy firm with a passion for startups is a dream for millennials and Gen Z alike.	11	5	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	Undisclosed	tech and startup godfathers; Silicon Valley reputation
Winston & Strawn Laying down the gauntlet to the legal industry with a formidable litigation practice and "unique" niches, W&S hopes to stand for 'worldwide and successful'.	9	6	75	57	\$190,000	25	trial work; Chicago history; niche practice areas

Preparing for interviews

Interviewing with law firms

THE OCI PROCESS

Hiring at most top firms follows a highly structured pattern starting with on-campus interviews (OCIs). These are conducted with students at the start of their 2L year in August/September for positions the following summer. Many firms hire a handful of 1Ls each year too, often via scholarships or competitions, but the chances of nabbing a spot as a 3L are slimmer. Some public interest organizations and government agencies also recruit on campus. Read about the OCI process in more detail [here](#).

Every firm's recruitment practices are a little different. You can get the specifics of each step of a firm's hiring process by clicking the Get Hired tab on [the Inside View >](#)

Covid-19: Most OCIs in 2021 will be conducted virtually.

Bidding

Students can bid on interviews with a certain number of firms (roughly between 20 and 50), with bidding deadlines around July. Students usually have to submit a writing sample alongside their resume, typically a paper on a legal subject. Some schools allow employers to choose a proportion of the students they meet; others use a 'lottery' system.

The on-campus interview

Most students interview with between 10 and 30 firms. The 20-minute interview is conducted by a mix of partners and associates. As well as quizzing you on your resume, they'll consider how you present yourself and make arguments to judge whether you have the qualities they're looking for.

The callback interview

Successful candidates are invited to a second interview, which typically lasts a half or whole day and takes place in October at one of the firm's offices. Students are usually interviewed by four to six attorneys. There's often lunch or coffee with junior associates (which is part of the interview too). At this stage, interviewers want to see if the candidate is the right cultural fit for the firm.

Offers made

A short while later, the firm offers successful candidates a position as a summer associate. Depending on their school, students have between 14 and 21 days to accept.

"Why do you want to be a lawyer?"

"Tell us about a time when you had to juggle several responsibilities."

"Why are you applying to this firm?"

"Where do you see yourself in five years?"

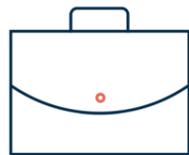
Interviewing with law firms

RECRUITMENT OUTSIDE OCIS



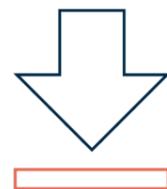
Direct applications

Some firms accept write-in applications and others bypass OCIs entirely. As one recruiter put it, “if someone writes in to us and they’re not from a top 50 school, but they came top of their class and were editor-in-chief of a law journal, that will certainly get our attention.”



Job fairs

Some firms also interview at job fairs with a regional focus (like the Midwest Job Fair), an industry focus (like the Loyola Patent Law Interview Program), or that focus on a specific minority (like the Lavender Law Fair).



Resume drops

At some schools, students can submit their resumes to a firm via a central pool.

Top tip:

Networking is important whether you’re going through OCIs or not, but if you want to get an associate job outside the process, putting yourself out there is crucial. Get in touch with attorneys at firms you’re interested in either directly or via alumni events.

Getting hired

TOP TIPS FROM HIRING PARTNERS

“I like to engage with students about what their passions are—say what they wrote their thesis on—to see their fluency with language and whether they have a clear world view, sophistication and maturity.”

“How would your law journal colleagues describe you?”

“Prepare. It takes more time than some students set aside for it. Practicing to get over the jitters is good, but what’s more important is thinking through what you’ve done in your life to understand what skills you have that can contribute to being a lawyer. When we sense that somebody’s done enough thinking about themselves to know which part of their experience to talk about at an interview, we’re prone to think they’re analytical and will be able to perform the tasks required of them.”

“Tell us about a time when you helped to produce a successful work product.”

“The worst answer I have ever had to a question was the person who told me about working on a group project at college where no one pulled their weight, so they did all the work. They were really proud of it, but it tells me they might not work well in a team.”

“One stock question I ask is: what is not on your resume that we should know about you? I like to know what’s behind the resume. That’s not just personality-related. I want them to go a little deeper so I can find out about their skills as a person. A wonderful response to that question is if someone relates it to a challenge they have overcome or a time when they have shown good judgment.”

“What do you enjoy about law school?”

“Identify a couple of areas of real interest and educate yourself about those areas, both through law school courses and practice experience. In that way you can distinguish yourself from the mass.”

“Which practice areas interest you and why?”

“During interviews candidates should have good questions about the firm. Not just questions to which the answers are on our website, but things that show they have done their homework.”

[More articles about getting hired>](#)
[What else are recruiters looking for?>](#)

Virtual interviews

GETTING HIRED DURING COVID-19

Before the pandemic, the OCI process had been conducted in person since time immemorial (well, since the 80s at least). While we're sure you're well into the swing of digital life by now, virtual OCIs are still fairly new for everyone.

Audio

Take the call in a quiet room and make sure your mic is working well. If there's background noise like construction work, let the interviewers know at the very beginning.

Lighting

Make sure you're well-lit and clearly visible, but keep the lighting as natural as possible—you don't want to appear as though you're under interrogation.

Background

Make sure your surroundings are tidy and consider using a background effect if you don't have the right look.

Testing, testing

Do a quick test with a friend before the interview so that they can check you on all of these points. And do remember to switch off your cat filter.

People are pretty forgiving of virtual mishaps, as there are some factors that are out of your control. Like maybe your neighbor decides that your 4pm with the law firm is the perfect time to test out their new drill.



For more tips and tricks on acing virtual interviews, listen to our [podcast](#) with global firm [White & Case](#).

Summer programs

WHAT TO EXPECT

If you're successful in the interviews, you'll be offered a place on a firm's [summer program](#): a six- to twelve-week adventure like no other. It's basically a prolonged interview, allowing recruiting attorneys an up-close and personal view of their potential colleagues. It's not all one-sided though. A summer program is as much a chance for you to get a taste of associate life.

What do summer associates do?

As a summer, you'll likely get the chance to try out work across different practice groups. Some firms rotate summers through groups to ensure they experience a broad mix of assignments. Typical duties include small research tasks, drafting memos and attending negotiations or depositions to observe associates. There may also be opportunities to take on pro bono. There are usually summer-specific training sessions too, covering topics like advocacy, due diligence, depositions, legal writing, and business development.

The social side

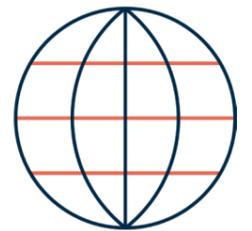
Summer programs traditionally involved a lot of wining, dining and schmoozing of participating students, as firms competed to impress top talent. With the job market as tough as it is, this is barely necessary anymore. Socializing is still an important part of the summer experience though, with lunches, sports events, wine-tastings, concerts, sailing outings, cooking classes and theater trips among the standard perks. Pandemics notwithstanding, of course.

Landing an offer

At the end of the program, candidates typically submit a preference for the group they want to join, which is taken into consideration when offers are made. At many BigLaw firms, getting on the summer program is tantamount to getting an associate job, with firms only hiring summers who they intend to take on as first-years. Basically, you'd have to screw up badly not to get an offer at the end.

Certain large international firms allow associates to spend part of their summer in an overseas office. Others offer the chance to spend several weeks working with a local public interest organization.

Social events as more than just a chance to kick back—they're golden opportunities to meet and mingle. We hear about rock concerts, cocktail-making classes, hikes, and design-your-own sneakers away days.



Clerking

KICKSTART YOUR CAREER AS A LITIGATOR

What is a law clerk?

A judicial clerk (or 'elbow clerk') works as a judge's assistant, usually just after graduating law school. Most appointments last one or two years. The educational value of clerkships cannot be overstated, as clerks learn directly from the arbiters of the law and get an insight into how the courts operate. Clerks learn how judges react to different briefs and styles of advocacy, and are exposed to a wide range of legal issues. Responsibilities vary from judge to judge, but all clerks engage in research and do a lot of writing.

Types of clerkship



Federal courts

There are 13 federal courts of appeals and 94 federal districts in the USA. Federal district courts offer clerkships with either a district judge or a magistrate judge. Federal district clerks have a more varied role than their appellate counterparts as they work in the general trial courts of the US federal system. Federal circuit court clerks do a lot of research: assessing opposing briefs, going over the trial records, and interpreting application of the law. There are also opportunities to clerk for federal judges in subject matter-specific special courts, like The Court of International Trade.



State courts

Law students looking to become criminal lawyers might be better off clerking in a state trial court than in federal court. Clerks here gain significant insight into the workings of the local Bar, state procedures and state law while assisting in trial procedures, research and drafting. This is also useful for those wishing to become public prosecutors in the region. These clerkships are the most competitive to obtain at state level. To be considered for one, high academic standing and some journal experience are essential.



Staff attorneys

Some courts hire staff attorneys: clerks who work for a group of judges instead of just one. Also known as pool clerks or court attorneys, these positions can be found in both federal and state courts. The core responsibilities of staff attorneys are more limited than those of other clerks and include reviewing appeals, preparing memos and assisting in case management.

Clerking

CLERKING AT THE SUPREME COURT

A stint at the US Supreme Court is the most sought-after, hard-to-land position on the clerking circuit. It really is the holy grail, the most prestigious gig any law grad can get. Only 36 SCOTUS clerkships come up for grabs each year. Only the brightest and very, very best need apply. Over a thousand who consider themselves in this category (and have letters from distinguished law professors and others to back them up) do so every year.

Primarily, their role is to sift through the thousands of petitions and mark the cases worthy of being granted time. On top of this, they help prepare their Justice for argument and conference and eventually assist with drafting opinions.

Unlike other clerkships, you don't go to the Supreme Court straight from law school – usually all successful candidates have previously clerked at federal appellate level, and wowed their judges there.

Being at the heart of such a profound process gives you tremendous insights, something that BigLaw recognizes by offering eye-popping SCOTUS clerkship bonuses. After their year at the elbow of a Supreme Court Justice, the 36 are in incredibly high demand.

Find out more about [SCOTUS clerkships](#)

Applying for a clerkship

A federal law clerk must have completed their JD and be a US citizen. There are no set academic requirements, but students who secure the most coveted clerkships are often from a highly ranked law school, were in the top quarter of their class, have worked on a law journal and have glowing academic references. Given the importance of personal recommendations, it's never too early to start forming connections with the right faculty members. If you don't have the best grades or you're not at one of the top schools, get practical experience under your belt: intern at a regional firm, work in-house, do pro bono work or work part-time at a small firm. Find out more here about [clerkships](#): the different types of courts, researching judges, and how to apply.

Building commercial awareness

COVID-19 AND THE LAW

Tech and cybersecurity

Data security and privacy matters were pertinent before Covid but the introduction of [virtual working](#) has only served to amplify their relevance. The tech transactional market remains particularly buoyant, as we're relying on these products.

- [Data security & privacy: the inside view](#)
- [Becoming a data security lawyer](#): the view from [Perkins Coie](#)
- [Becoming a Tech Lawyer](#): the view from [Goodwin](#)
- [Tech transactions uncovered](#): the view from [White & Case](#)
- [Women in tech law](#)

The Bankruptcy Boom

Last year, firms redeployed swathes of their junior associates into bankruptcy, restructuring and insolvency practices to deal with the influx of queries from struggling companies.

- [Bankruptcy](#): the inside view
- [Read more about the bankruptcy boom](#)

Healthcare

Tied to tech, firms have been busy advising clients amid the rise of telehealth services. Healthcare clients have also had to navigate the uncertainties and unprecedented challenges connected to the outbreak.

Litigation

When a recession hits, law firms go into battle mode and shift their focus from transactional to contentious, as clients' concerns become less expansionist and more survivalist.

- [Litigation](#): the inside view

Antitrust

While global M&A initially slowed down at the outset of the pandemic, now it's booming, which means antitrust lawyers have got their work cut out for them.

- [Antitrust](#): the inside view
- [When M&A meets antitrust law](#) with [Freshfields](#)

Building commercial awareness

TRENDS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Diversity & Inclusion

Over the last decade, [D&I](#) has become a key strategic focus of almost every BigLaw firm, with dedicated D&I officers at the helm, funded fellowship programs for disadvantaged students, internal affinity groups, social justice initiatives, and other D&I efforts to recruit and retain diverse talent and promote D&I among the ranks.

The focus firms are placing on D&I is partly tied to client demands for more diverse staffing (in 2021, Coca Cola said it would cut legal fees by 30% if law firms didn't meet its diversity criteria for staffing). Many firms doubled down on their efforts to promote racial equality last year in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the BLM protests that followed.

Government

The transition to the new administration hasn't been as turbulent for the legal sector as that of 2016, but any change in government marks a period of flux in [regulatory law](#).

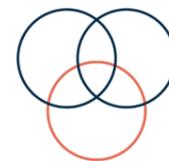
There are still a lot of unknowns about Biden's impact, but many of his early actions have been to undo those of his predecessor: going back on strict immigration policies, rejoining the Paris climate agreement, and formalizing the country's response to [Covid-19](#). In spring 2021, the President announced his first set of nominees for the federal judiciary – a diverse group of 11 attorneys including three Black women.

Technology

The pace at which tech is advancing may be the single biggest factor (and challenge) that's changing the role of the lawyer. Alternative legal service providers and even AI programs can now perform some of the work that used to be reserved for large law firm associates.

"Technology has transformed both the practice and business of law by globalizing it. This is a positive, as it opens up new frontiers (geographically and substantively), but it also requires that we, as a firm, evolve so that we are able to tackle problems the world-over, or to coordinate simultaneous work from many locations on a single matter that spans the globe... As the world evolves and our clients' needs change, our attorneys must also continue to learn new practice areas and develop new expertise."

– Ken Doran, managing partner of [Gibson Dunn](#)



When analyzing any legal-commercial problem in an interview there are four spheres of influence to consider: commercial; geopolitical; legislative; ethical.



Podcast: [Legal tech and how lawyers can use it](#)

Facts and figures

Other resources: the results from our Associate Satisfaction Survey

We use the responses from our annual associate satisfaction survey to inform our reviews of firm life in the inside view features, but we also collate the results to show you the big picture. Click on any of the categories below to see firms in context.



[Diversity and inclusion](#)



[Career progression](#)



[Benefits and quality of life](#)



[Overall satisfaction](#)



[Pro Bono](#)



[Associate satisfaction: top 50 firms](#)



[Retention](#)



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