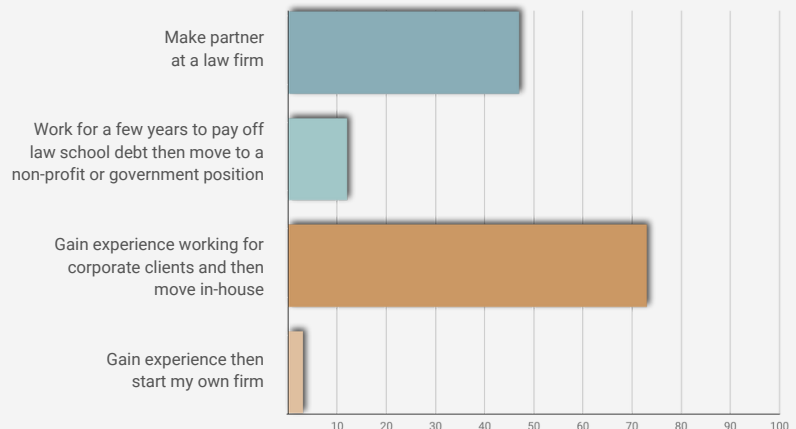


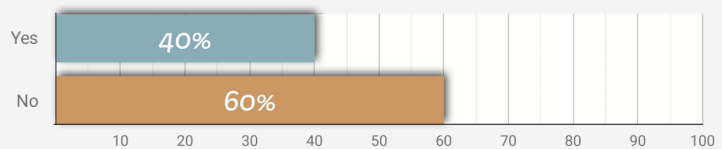
Women in Big Law Survey 2023



Which of the following best describes your career goals upon entering a Top 200 Law Firm?



Did your goals change after joining the Top 200 Firm?



When asked if their goals changed after joining the firm, 40% said yes, citing reasons such as not getting enough support from the firms towards working moms, the unrelenting long hours, work stress, having to work the expected billable hours, and not given enough time off for childbirth.



Women in Big Law Survey 2023



"Unrealistic hours—there is simply no allowance to have any other life. Or else you have to fit everything around your billable demand."

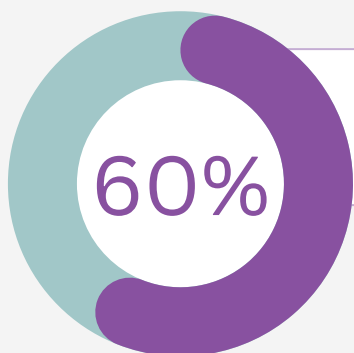
"Not enough support as a working mom; not enough opportunities for women"

"Long hours, stress, lack of work-life balance, I don't enjoy the job as much as I thought I would, feeling unfulfilled."

For the women who responded **"No"** to "my goals did not change," they are in a completely different world. They mentioned that the flexibility they received during the pandemic was something they did not want to lose, so they will stay put if the firms continue to give flexibility. Those who responded positively also saw a path to a more streamlined and defined partnership. They feel their goals are attainable and like the work more than expected. It is the complete opposite reality to the women on the other side who answered that their goals have changed since joining a big law firm.

Reason: Not All Firms Are the Same.

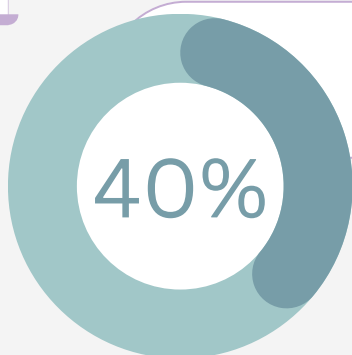
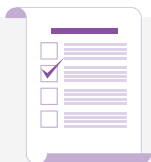
60% who said their goals had stayed the same shared that they got more support from their firms and that their work was more streamlined. It was the opposite reality of the other **40%** of respondents. Those who made partners saw and got the opportunity onto a partnership path. For the **40%** who responded negatively, toxicity and harassment were still problems they repeatedly cited that they saw and experienced in their firms.



of the respondents with a positive view of their firms.

"Our firm has a fairly straightforward and relatively short path to partnership, and most people are elected to partnership if they are here for a certain period of time."

Women in Big Law Survey 2023



of the respondents had a less bright outlook for their firms.

"I previously thought I would want to stay in Big Law longer, potentially make partner and spend my career in Big Law, but the lifestyle is not sustainable, and I absolutely hate it."

Law firms are a horrible environment for Black women.

To be honest, I'm not sure. But the money is nice.

Childbirth

I learned I do not want to be a partner - Originally I wanted to. I don't like the lifestyle or the hours.

The inappropriate comments made about women at*****.

I'm not certain that the partnership path is for me any longer. I don't yet know what I want to do with my career, but I am considering teaching, in-house, or remaining at a firm in a counsel position.

Realized I did not want to grind like this forever, particularly given that I want to have kids soon.

I saw how slow the promotion was and thought I didn't want to spend my whole life waiting

Law firms are full of toxicity, harassment and mental abuse.

Billable hours

Since law school, I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a partner, but now that I've worked at my current job for over a year, I am confident I do not want to be a partner.

Partnership not feasible; became more interested in in-house roles as well.

Hours are not friendly to life outside work.

The big law environment is not conducive to self care, let alone raising a family. I love the complexity of legal practice at this level, but now that I'm newly married and considering children, I'm planning my exit.

Women in Big Law Survey 2023



The extreme responses prompted the need to look deeper into the responses on what these women are really looking for. The survey asked them what the most important factors for them in Big Law were.

Remote work was ranked number one as the most important factor, followed by work-life balance and mentorship. These three factors rendered the most significant frustration among the women in Big Law.

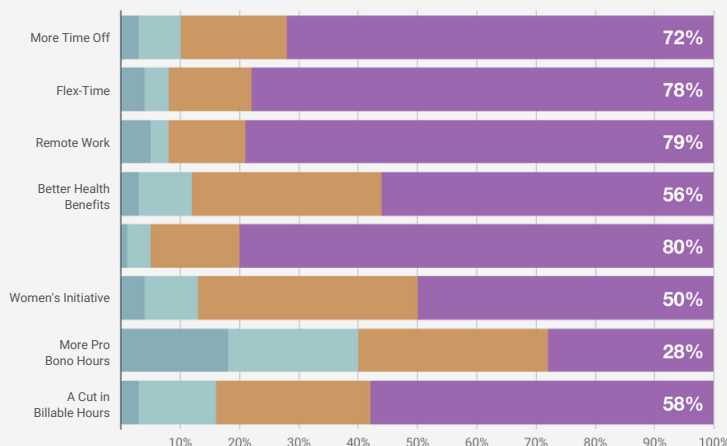
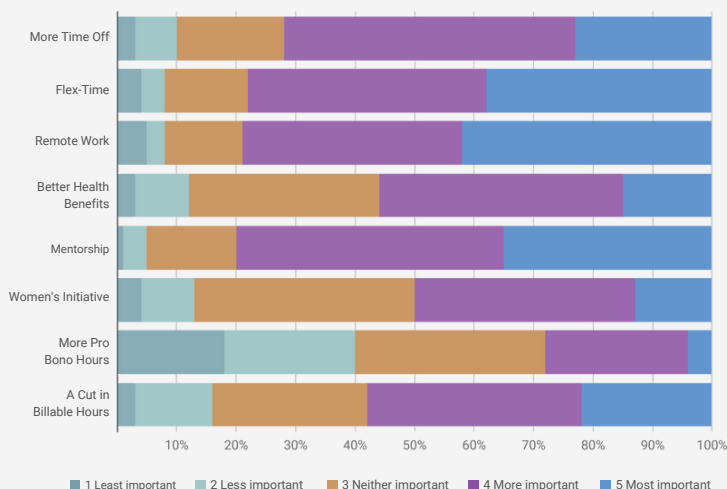
But when we combine those who responded “More Important” and “Most important,” the data shows what women are most frustrated about—lack of mentorship, indicating the need for firms to provide a career path for women in their firms. I.e., guidance and career advice before remote work and flex time, indicating the need for firms to provide a career path for women in their firms.

While many top firms have mentorship programs in place, the structure of the programs may need refreshing to ensure they still meet the needs of the attorneys that will help them on a career development path while aligning the needs with the firm’s overall growth strategy. At Herrick Feinstein LLP, the women's initiative network is continually expanding, adding many components of mentorship programs. Women attorneys are placed with partners that have flourished and built books of business. The partner-mentor would have these women mentees participate in client development pitches and learn to develop their own books of business.

The improved programs have paid dividends as female leadership is developed from all corners of the firm. Morgan Dufault, Director of Talent Acquisition and Professional Development at Herrick, Feinstein LLP, shared the successes of how they have improved retention and developed talent across the firm. There are industry-specific panels that focus on, for example, financial services or technology that allow both the lawyers and the business owners at all stages of their business to share knowledge and form bonds that would lead to business development.

For each of the following, please rate the level of importance to you.

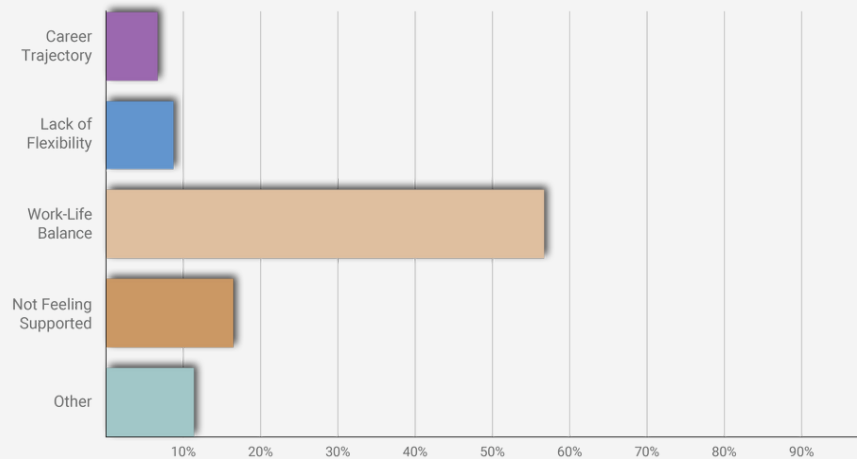
1 being the least important and 5 being the most important



Women in Big Law Survey 2023

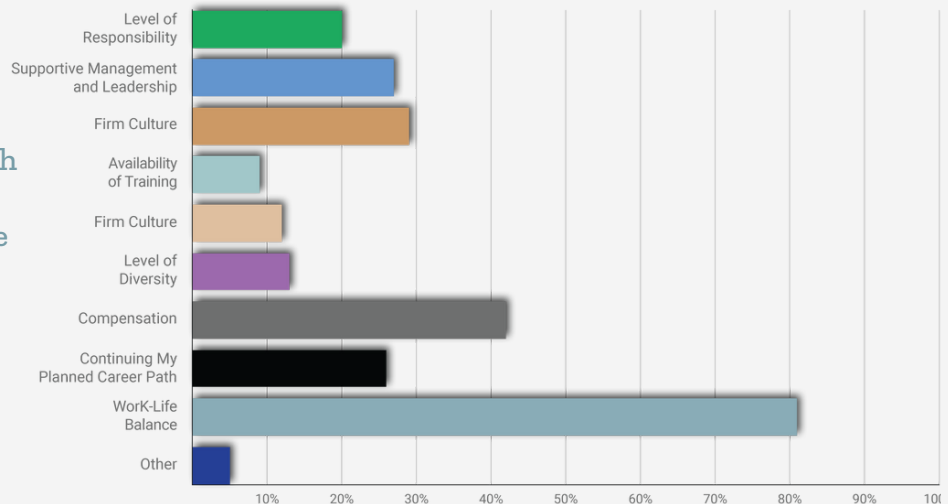


What was your biggest frustration in working at the top 200 law firm?



They were generally satisfied with their jobs in the Big Law. When asked if they were to leave the firm, what would be the prime reasons they would do so?

For the new job opportunity, which of the following reasons will be the most compelling for you to want to move?



Again, Work-life balance came in as the top reason. Any firm addressing its needs would want to focus on creating a work-life balanced company environment. But there are more underlying challenges firms should tackle too. The following two reasons: compensation and the desire to continue their planned career paths, were ranked high after work-life balance. Women in Big Law need to see a clear career future or partnership path at their current firms. When probed further, while work-life balance is still the most significant frustration point, it became apparent that compensation and clear career planning also need to be addressed.

Women in Big Law Survey 2023



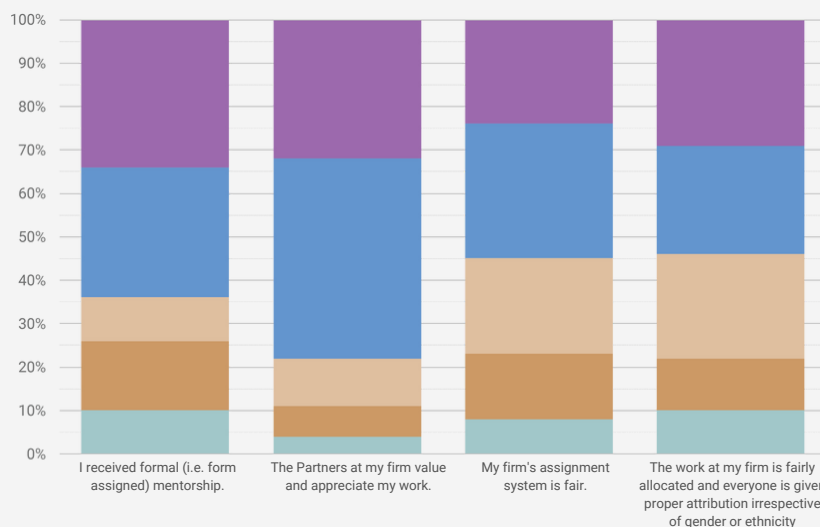
When asked about the work at their firms, 33% totally agreed with the statement that they received formal firm-assigned mentorship. 31% responded 'somewhat agree' with the following option, which could indicate that while they assigned a mentor, it was not as helpful. The non-affirmative response suggests that the firm can do more work.

Additionally, a sizable percentage (78%) responded that partners at their firm totally or somewhat valued their work. But when asked if the firm assignment was fair, only 18% said that they totally agreed that it was appropriate. The most significant percentage 'somewhat agreed,' so it was not a wholehearted YES from that group. Only 26% totally agreed that the work at their firm was fairly allocated.

On a scale of 1 - 5,
please rank the
following
statements.

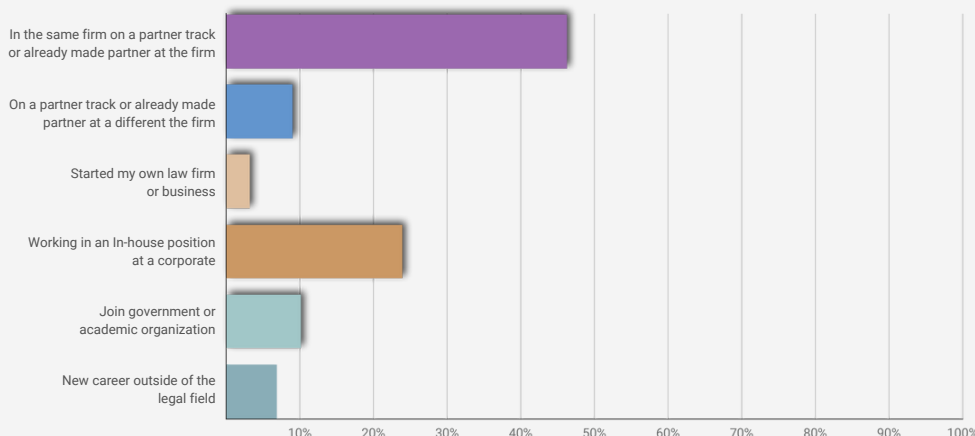
1 being totally disagree
and 5 being totally agree

- Totally Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Totally Disagree



The responses to this survey question aligned with the 60% who responded positively about their experiences at Big Law. When further asked where they would see themselves in five years, 48% answered that they saw themselves in the same firm on a partner track or had already made a partner at the firm. These women saw a future and/or a path to partnership, which is the fundamental reason one would want to join a Big Law in the first place.

Where do
you see
yourself in
five years?

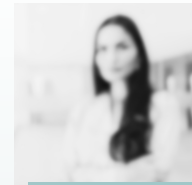


Legal Industry Gender Equality in Need of a Boost

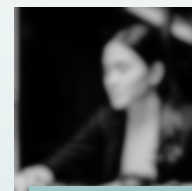
Overall, the women in the Big Law survey did not show that Big Law neglects gender equality. The legal industry has taken on DE&I (Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion) and pays more attention to gender equality, but firms need a boost of a more concerted effort to seriously drive gender equality for growth while retaining the best talents. Firms that have started implementing DE&I programs are getting the retention and growth results they seek, as we saw the 60% who responded positively in the survey. Nonetheless, the programs need improvement to address the negative feedback we are still getting from others on the survey.

3 Key Areas that Women Attorneys are Asking for Change

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and also half of its potential. We know that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth. Creating a workplace not just for the women currently in law but an environment that will attract future women to want to become a part of our legal system is essential.



"No one has discussed my career development with me."

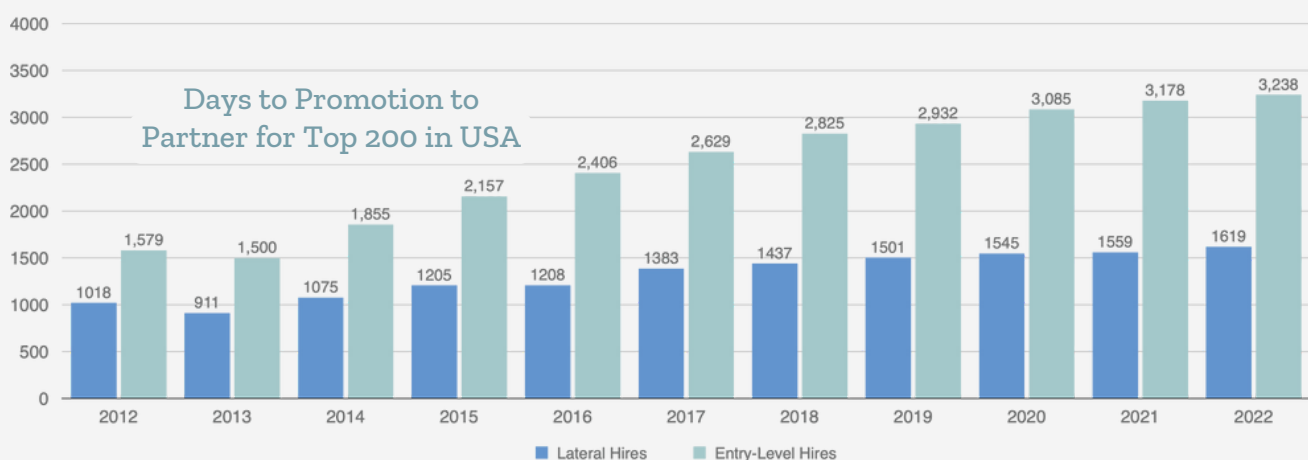


"There is no clear path or mentorship, especially for a working mother."

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A Clear Partnership Path

Time to partnership has taken its toll on many ambitious young attorneys. The need for a clear path toward partnership makes these attorneys reassess what they want for their careers.

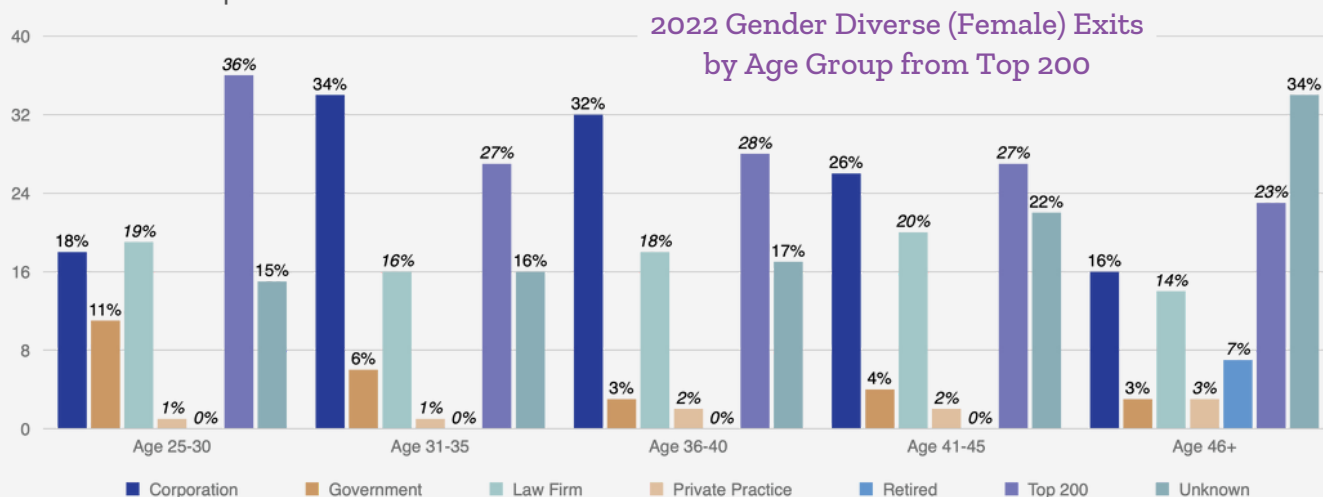


In 2012 it took 40% more in the number of days to make partners as entry-level associates versus lateral hires.

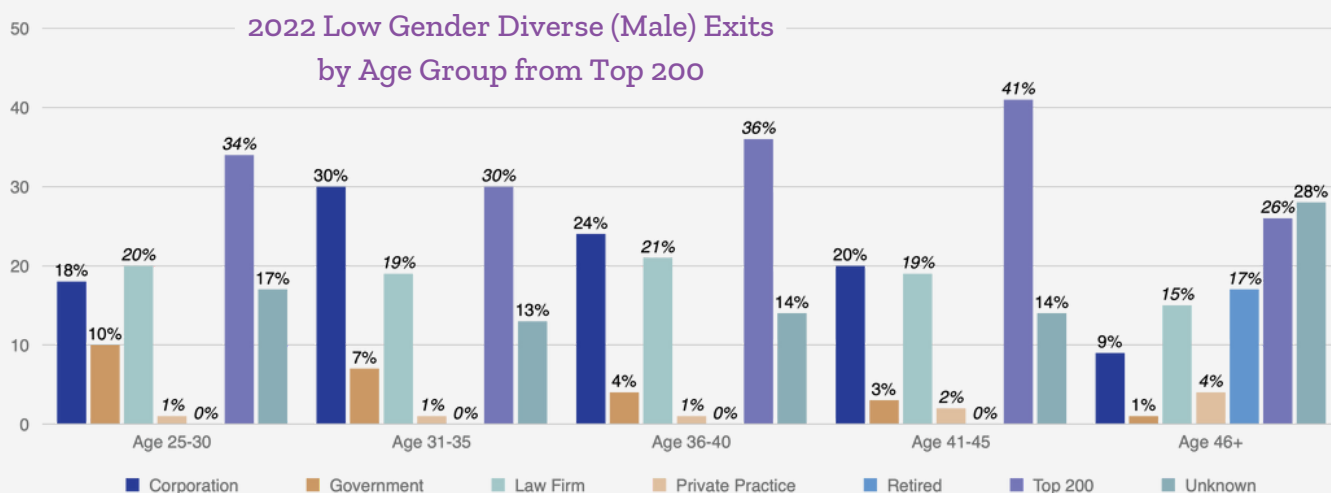
Today it takes 99% more days to make partner as an entry-level hire than a lateral. Today, laterals make partners after an average of 1622 days. Entry-level hires face 3229 days before they would be promoted to partner. The road for laterals has increased by 68% over time.

Many of the women surveyed did not see a clear path to partnership; an issue that women often cited in their decision to leave the industry.

When we compare attorneys leaving the Top 200 firms, more women by percentage departed compared to men in 2022. Comparing women of all age groups in 2022 who moved back into a Top 200 firm, the youngest groups had the largest return percentages at 36 and 37%. That number dropped to 28% in the 36-40 age group and 27% in the 41-45 age group. The 31-35 age group has the most sizable number moving into corporations at 34%, with 18% of women in the 25-30 age group and 32% in the 36-40 group that moved to the corporate world.



Looking at women in all age groups, we see that the largest number moving back into a Top 200 firm is from the youngest groupings with 37% and 36%.



Here we see the opposite; the largest group of non-diverse men exits and re-enters the Top 200 is the 41-45 age group, with 41% returning.

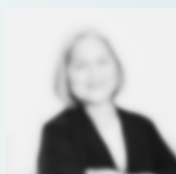
Women are recruited early in their careers, while men are sought after at more senior levels. That places men closer to partnership, making that road far more difficult for women.

The respondents who answered positively to the survey expressed that their paths to partnerships were clear and transparent. They saw opportunities rise as they witnessed other women elevated to partnership. They were supported with mentorship, positive feedback, and generous maternity leave.

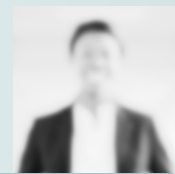
A critical difference between the polarizing responses was whether the firm had a solid mentorship program or not. A robust mentorship program can make a difference for women, especially for any associate coming into Big Law to build a career.

Promotion by Gender in Top 200 US Firms – Promotion in Fairness

Men are evaluated based on potential, whereas women are evaluated based on performance, leading to a skewed management structure. Companies should align how they assess for promotions to ensure a level playing field for both genders. Although the number of women in partnership positions increased in 2022, the gap between men and women remains wide on the partner level.



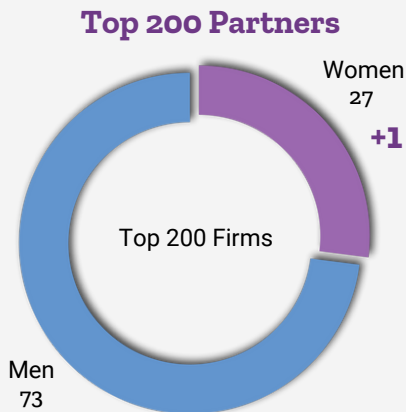
*"I see other people become a partner.
I can become a partner to my job."*



*"My firm has done an incredible
job cultivating women. I see other
people supported."*

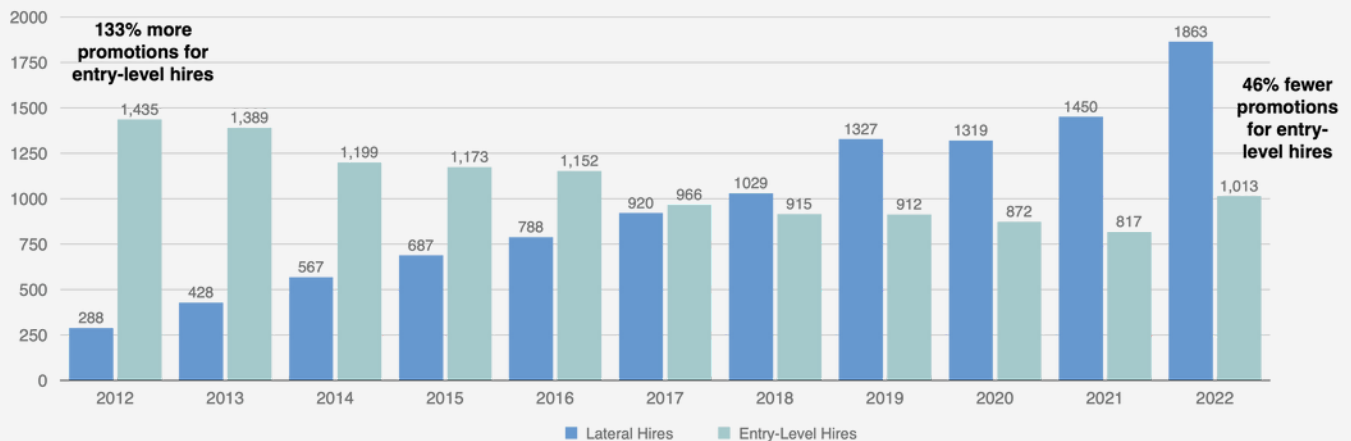


A previous survey highlights variations in responses between women in Big Law and the general population. Promotions to partner still lag for women, even though they have made more progress than other underrepresented groups. There are several roadblocks for women that do not exist for their male counterparts. Lack of opportunity, unconscious bias, and a lack of acknowledgment of successes are just a few. Women are also dropping out mid-career in more significant numbers than men. While firms hire more women than men from law school (women also outnumber them on campus), women have indicated that support is lacking for them once they reach the mid-career level.



A McKinsey & Co. study found that when considering promotions for all industries, the unequal standards of promoting men and women lead to the highly skewed management structure that we see in most workplaces — whereby entry-level ranks are split 50/50 between men and women, but men dominate the management ranks.

Promotions to Partners by Lateral and Entry-Level



The number one thing firms can do to advance gender equality is to change how they evaluate women for promotions to ensure that they are on a level playing field. As previously noted, Big Law hires more women as entry-level attorneys and hires more men as laterals. We saw that men at more senior levels are being recruited and thus are closer to the partnership track. Here we see that in 2012 Big Law promoted more entry-level hires than laterals by a good margin, but today the lateral hires are promoted at a higher rate. This stacks the deck against the women in making partnership much more difficult for them. Women's promotion to the partnership only increased by 1% in 2022. The gap remains wide. There is parity on the lateral associate level; the adjustment needs to start there, i.e., place more women on a partnership path.

Changing Hiring Strategies – Entry-level vs. Lateral

Presumably, lateral recruitment brings in already successful attorneys with transferable business to the firm or with considerable experience in the practices the firm needs. They are better positioned to become high-fee earners and, thus, earn partnerships. When using the same rules to measure the potential for entry-level hires, they would need more time to become experienced, successful fee earners and to build a book of business. Since 2022, firms have decided to hire more laterals over entry-level talent. As we saw the hiring trend in 2012, the top 200 firms hired more entry-level than lateral associates. The pattern has dramatically shifted, with laterals now surpassing entry-level hires by a large margin in 2022.

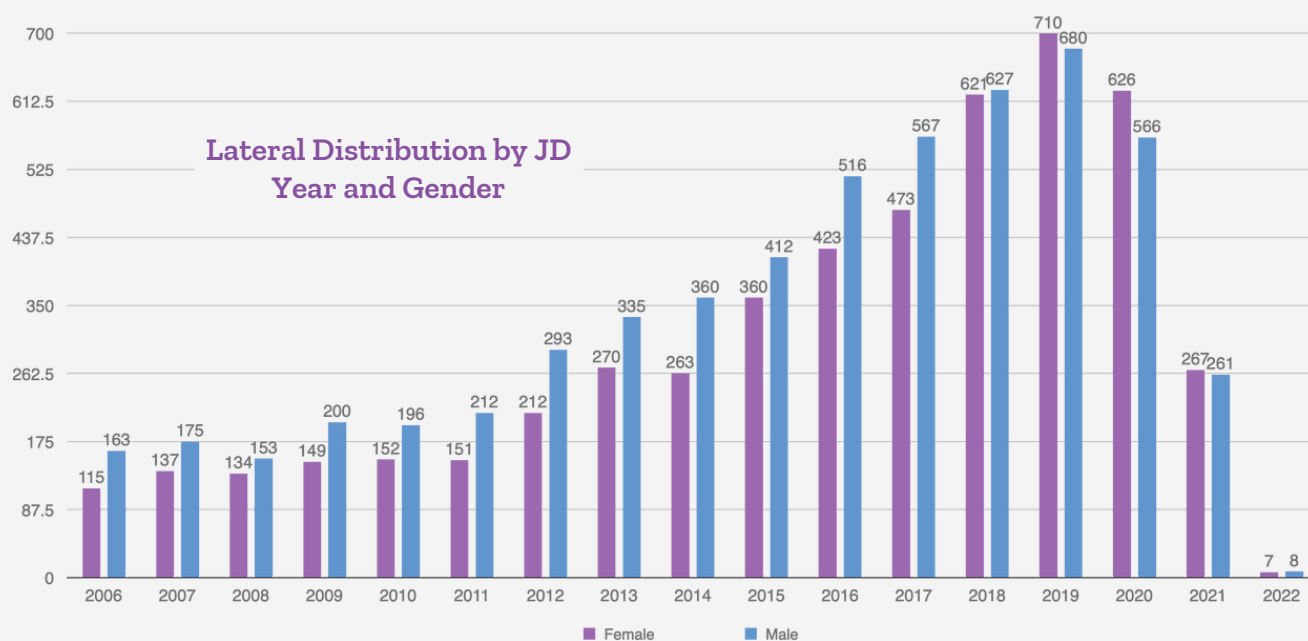


In 2012 these firms hired a good deal more entry level hires than laterals. Over time that pattern began to change and in 2022, you see laterals outpacing entry level hires by a good margin. Only 55 firms in this group hire more entry level associates than lateral associates. The hiring pattern has flipped from what it was in 2012. Lateral hires topped entry level hires in 2018 and it has remained the same since.



Hire More Senior Women Laterals

Looking at laterals by JD year, we see more female than male laterals on the youngest end of the spectrum, but after the JD year of 2018, male laterals overtake the women and stay in the lead throughout. Hiring mostly young women laterals will only place women further away from partnership than their male peers. Instead, hiring more senior female laterals will help close the gender gap more quickly by placing them in positions better poised to be elevated to partnership.



Women make a strong showing in the age groups from 2018 on up
but men out pace them in the rest of the year groups.

At a high-level view of the hiring pattern over time for gender diverse associates, lateral and entry-level, you can see that there are many more laterals on the younger side of the spectrum. Looking more closely into the hiring numbers, women made a strong showing in the age groups through 2018, but men outpace women in every group from this point forward.

In the Women Leaving Law report, Leopard Solutions' key action items highlighted hiring more women laterals. With the latest 2022 data, we emphasize hiring more SENIOR female laterals, as this is the only way to help close the gender diversity gap at the partner level. The deck appears stacked against women who wish to move into leadership positions. While they hire more women at the entry-level, they promote far fewer entry-level hires than laterals. Also, the time has significantly increased for any entry-level employment to reach partnership. With the need for mid-career lateral hires, women face a far more difficult road to success. Firms should seek out women laterals at more senior levels, and women should also be aware that not all firms are created equal, and while some firms do not support women, others do. Choices are out there.

Continual Focus on the 11 Strategic Actions to Elevate Gender Equality

The challenges women face in the legal profession require specific strategies to overcome. If implemented correctly, the 11 action items identified in the 2022 Women Leaving Law Report will help firms retain and elevate women. The latest follow-up survey on women in Big Law further reiterated how important these strategies are that firms must not ignore. While some firms have made strides in doing so, much work remains for the firms to take note of.



Let Women Speak and Amplify Their Voices

Many women have had men 'talk over them' or repeat what they just said to claim an idea of their own. Firm leaders must take responsibility and end such behavior to build women's confidence and encourage participation. This means addressing micro-aggressions such as men interrupting, rewording, or claiming women's views as their own.

What we see in practice is that it requires a consistent strategy to correct this behavior. Create an environment that breeds candor and allows one to speak out to communicate boundaries and offer support when women are silenced. Our first white paper outlines two strategies for this, and they both require teamwork and vocal support. What might work for one firm may not for another.

As the top law firms develop DE&I programs, they should not assume one size fits all, according to Pooja Krumenacker, Founder and CEO of Balanced Legal Solutions. Most firms have launched diversity programs, but they need to listen to what women want. They are not asking the right questions to determine what is needed to create the space for women to be heard.

“ Women being reduced to a single story is something I see time and time again...one dimensional approaches based on gender or race will not generate the success the firms seek. ”

Pooja Krumenacker
Founder and CEO of Balanced Legal Solutions

Let Women Speak

Give Women Opportunities

Give Women a Seat At the Table

Don't Tolerate Sexism

Uncover Unconscious Bias

Offer Equal Paternity Care

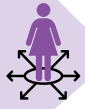
Offer a Flextime Schedule/Remote Work

Acknowledge Women's Success

Promotion Fairness

Hire More Women Laterals

Mentorship



Ensure that the Firm is Giving Women Opportunities

Baker Donelson has been running a Women to Equity program for six years. They have learned that the program needs to be tailored to individual attorneys to ensure that each of the women they placed on mentorship programs or other career development paths are based on their personal goals as well as aligned with the firm's needs. Firms can then use centralized assignment databases to measure partners' access and ensure equal opportunities for all associates. They can see successes through this hands-on approach.

“ A program designed to advance women should allow flexibility for the individual to share her goals and, based on her individual aspirations, be matched with the proper mentor. Men are key to a well-designed Women’s Initiative as many of my key mentors have been men. ”

*Christy Tosh Crider, Chair of Healthcare Litigation
Chair of Women's Initiative at Baker, Donelson.*