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Women and Black/African-American Associates Still Below Pre-Recession Numbers Despite Small Gains in 2016 Overall

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) today released its [2016 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms](#) based on the recent analyses of the 2016-2017 NALP Directory of Legal Employers (NDLE) — the annual compendium of legal employer data published by NALP. Women and Black/African-Americans made small gains in representation at major U.S. law firms in 2016 compared with 2015, according to the latest law firm demographic findings. However, representation of both these groups remains below 2009 levels. Although women and minorities continue to make small gains in their representation among law firm *partners* in 2016, the overall percentage of women *associates* has decreased more often than not since 2009, and the percentage of Black/African-American associates has declined every year since 2009, except for the small increase in 2016. To see the full report, download it [here](#).

Significant Findings:

- Representation of women, minorities, and minority women among associates saw small gains in 2016, but representation of women is still below pre-recession levels.
- In 2016, representation of women, minorities, and minority women among partners in law firms across the nation all increased a small amount over 2015.
- Overall, representation of women lawyers as a whole was up and remains higher than in 2009, despite losses in 2010, 2011, and 2015.
- The representation of women and minorities in the summer associate ranks compares much more favorably to the population of recent law school graduates.

NALP Executive Director James Leipold commented on the new findings noting, “These national benchmark data are helpful in highlighting the overall progress, or lack thereof, in achieving greater diversity among the lawyers working in U.S. law firms, but the national figures mask many significant differences by law firm size and geography. In many ways these stories tell a narrative of difference, with the largest law firms having achieved much greater diversity than smaller law firms. And while it is encouraging to see small gains in most areas this year, the incredibly slow pace of change continues to be discouraging.”

Leipold continued, “Minority women and Black/African-American men and women continue to be the least well represented in law firms, at every level, and law firms must double down to make more dramatic headway among these groups most of all. And, while the relatively high levels of diversity among the summer associate classes is always encouraging, the fact that representation falls off so dramatically for associates, and then again for partners, underscores that retention and promotion remain the primary challenges that law firms face with respect to diversity.”

NALP also recently reported demographic information for LGBT lawyers and lawyers with disabilities, which is included in the same report. To see the full report, download it [here](#).

The 2016-2017 NALP Directory of Legal Employers (NDLE), which provides the individual firm listings on which these aggregate analyses are based, includes attorney race/ethnicity and gender information for over 112,000 partners, associates, and other lawyers in 1,082 offices, and for over 7,000 summer associates in 804 offices nationwide. The NDLE is available online at www.nalpdirectory.com.

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About NALP

NALP is an association of over 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That’s why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and standards for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 40 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve.

NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For additional information about NALP research, contact Judith Collins (jcollins@nalp.org), Director of Research, or James G. Leipold (jleipold@nalp.org), Executive Director, at 202-835-1001. **Mailing address:** National Association for Law Placement, 1220 19th Street NW, Suite 401, Washington, DC 20036-2405.