



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Lateral Hiring Across U.S. Law Firms Sees Robust Growth in 2025

NALP released the results of its [2025 Survey of Law Firms on Lateral and 3L Hiring](#) today. The U.S. law firm lateral hiring market grew for the second year in a row in 2025, with hiring up 16%. Unlike the volatility seen during the pandemic years, this growth was steady, with similar increases in both partner and associate hiring. This is in contrast to 2024, when growth was disproportionately driven by associate hiring. This shift suggests firms weren't just adding capacity – they were also making strategic partner hires to expand their market presence and strengthen key practice areas.

NALP Executive Director Nikia Gray said, “Trends in the lateral hiring market are particularly notable and align with broader industry reporting indicating that many law firms are moving toward more senior leverage models, with a growing share of their talent concentrated at higher levels of experience. This evolution bears close watching, as it carries significant implications for entry-level hiring, talent development, and the long-term structure of the profession.”

In addition to lateral hiring, the survey looked at post-clerkship and 3L hiring, both of which increased in 2025. Hiring of direct-to-clerkship associates, who completed a judicial clerkship immediately following law school before entering private practice, was up 17% compared to 2024 and hiring of practice-then-clerkship associates, who had prior practice experience before completing a judicial clerkship and then returned to practice, increased by 5%.

Although still relatively uncommon, the percentage of law offices that recruited 3Ls grew from 14% in 2024 to 22% in 2025. One factor that may have contributed to this increase is the rescission of job offers by the federal government in early 2025. This led to a sudden influx of 3L candidates in the market, and some firms strategically adjusted their hiring to recruit from this available talent pool.

Gray added, “While 3L recruiting increased to 22% of offices in 2025, that level remains consistent with recent historical norms and does not suggest a broad return to 3L hiring, as some had anticipated in light of recent shifts in the summer associate recruiting process. Instead, the data likely reflects a targeted response to the early 2025 rescission of federal Honors Program and agency offers, which temporarily expanded the pool of highly qualified candidates available to firms.”

NALP’s 2025 analyses include hiring data on 3,535 lateral lawyers, 339 post-clerkship associates, and 161 3L students. Firms were asked to submit as much office-specific information as possible; however, in some cases, they could only provide data on a firm-wide or multi-office basis.

## Key Findings

### Lateral Hiring

- Total lateral hiring volume increased 16.4% from 2024 at the 305 law offices/firms that reported lateral hiring data for both 2024 and 2025. The median number of lateral hires in 2025 was 4.0 and the average was 11.6 per office/firm.
- Lateral associate hiring accounted for 58.2% of all lateral hiring in 2025, while lateral partner hiring accounted for 22.3%. Other lateral hiring, which includes staff attorneys and counsel, comprised 19.5% of lateral hiring.
- Both lateral partner and associate hiring contributed to this year’s growth, increasing 17.8% and 17.1% from 2024, respectively.
- The strongest gains in lateral hiring were at smaller firms with 250 or fewer lawyers. Hiring was up 44% overall in firms of this size, compared to 20% in firms of 251-1,000 lawyers, and 11% in firms of 1,001+ lawyers.
- Among offices reporting hiring activity for a single office, rather than firm-wide, the average number of lateral associate hires ranged from 1.1 to 8.4 by city, and the average number of lateral partners ranged from 0.5 to 2.8 hires. New York City had the highest average of lateral associates per office, while New York City and the Washington DC/Northern VA area tied for the highest average of lateral partner hires.
- A slight majority (52.1%) of offices reported that their organization has policies in place that allow them to hire fully remote lateral hires (regardless of whether they hired any in 2025), up from 49.2% in 2024.

### Post-Clerkship Hiring

- An average of 0.7 direct-to-clerkship associates and 0.4 practice-then-clerkship associates were hired per office/firm in 2025. In total, direct-to-clerkship hiring increased 17% and practice-then-clerkship associate hiring increased 5% compared to 2024.

- Among firms reporting firm-wide/multi-office data, the average number of direct-to-clerkship associate hires ranged from 0.6 at firms with 250 or fewer lawyers to 8.0 at firms with more than 1,000 lawyers, while practice-then-clerkship hires ranged from 0.1 to 6.8.
- Among single office submissions, direct-to-clerkship average hires ranged from 0.1 to 1.1 per office depending on firm size/region and practice-then-clerkship averages ranged from 0.1 to 0.7.

### 3L Hiring

- Overall, 22% of offices recruited 3L students during 2025, up from 14% in 2024. Firms of 250 or fewer lawyers and offices located in the Northeast were slightly more likely to recruit 3Ls in 2025.
- Responding offices extended 180 entry-level associate offers to 3Ls and 161 of these offers were accepted (89.4% acceptance rate).
- Most offices (60.9%) that recruited 3L students extended just one offer.

Read NALP's full analysis on the 2025 lateral and 3L hiring market at [www.nalp.org/entry-lateral](http://www.nalp.org/entry-lateral). To request an interview, contact [media@nalp.org](mailto:media@nalp.org).

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## About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 3,000 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 ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 50 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](http://www.nalp.org/pressreleases). For more information, contact NALP at [info@nalp.org](mailto:info@nalp.org) or call (202) 835-1001.