



1220 19<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 401

Washington, DC 20036-2405

Phone: (202) 835-1001

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contacts:** James G. Leipold, NALP Executive Director, [jleipold@nalp.org](mailto:jleipold@nalp.org)

Danielle A. Taylor, NALP Director of Research, [dtaylor@nalp.org](mailto:dtaylor@nalp.org)

Phone: (202) 835-1001

## **Slow, Incremental Progress Continues as People of Color and Women Remain Underrepresented at Law Firms**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NALP today released its annual *Report on Diversity at U.S. Law Firms*, available at [www.nalp.org/reportondiversity](http://www.nalp.org/reportondiversity). The report, based on information from the 2020-2021 NALP Directory of Legal Employers (NDLE), shows that overall, women and people of color continued to make incremental progress in representation at major U.S. law firms in 2020 as compared with 2019.

The percentage of Black partners and Black associates exceeded 2% and 5%, respectively, for the first time in 2020; however, representation of Black lawyers in law firms still trails that of Asian and Latinx lawyers. After experiencing several years of declines following the Great Recession, the percentage of associates who are Black women in 2020 (3.04%) finally surpassed the 2009 figure of 2.93% for the first time as well, equating to an increase of just one-tenth of a percentage point over this 11-year period.

“Despite these increases,” writes NALP Executive Director James G. Leipold in the report, “less than four percent of all partners are women of color — a figure that remains abysmally low due to the significant underrepresentation of both women and people of color at the partnership level and a pattern that holds true across all firm sizes and most jurisdictions. Worse, Black women and Latinx women each continued to represent less than 1% of all partners in U.S. law firms.”



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Leipold is urging the legal community to continue making strides toward an industry that is diverse, inclusive, and equitable. “The problems of racism and bias in American society are longstanding and run deep, dating back to our history of slavery, and the legal profession sits squarely in that history, but we are not bound by past practices and beliefs,” he writes. “Let this time embolden all of us to renew our efforts to address more directly and more forcefully systemic bias and prejudice in the legal profession, and in particular the many ways that the profession has failed Black lawyers and the Black community.”

While progress is slow for representation of women and people of color, the number of LGBTQ lawyers in large law firms continues to rise steadily. The overall percentage of LGBTQ lawyers reported in 2020 increased by approximately one-third of a percentage point, rising to 3.31%. LGBTQ representation among summer associates continues to grow at a much faster pace, increasing by 0.8 percentage points, from 6.86% in 2019 to 7.68% in 2020.

**New This Year:** Data for non-binary lawyers were collected within the NDLE for the first time in 2020. While reporting was still somewhat limited, overall counts are included in the Significant Findings section of the report.

### **Key Findings:**

- The percentage of Black or African American associates surpassed 5% for the first time since NALP began collecting data and the share of associates who are Black women (3.04%) finally exceeded the 2009 figure of 2.93%. Eleven years later, representation of Black or African American women at the associate level has increased by just one-tenth of a percentage point.
- After experiencing more than two decades of continuous growth, the percentage of Asian associates plateaued in 2020 at 12.12%, just below the 2019 figure of 12.17%.
- Despite modest growth in 2020, Black women and Latinx women each continued to represent less than 1% of all partners in U.S. law firms. The percentage of Black partners overall finally surpassed 2% for the first time since NALP began collecting data.



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- The percentage of summer associates who are people of color increased by 1.2 percentage points, growing from 35.26% in 2019 to 36.48% in 2020.
- Women accounted for over half of all summer associates (53.62%) for the third year in a row.
- The growth in the percentage of LGBTQ summer associates continued to outpace that of LGBTQ lawyers overall, climbing from 6.86% of all summer associates in 2019 to 7.68% in 2020.

Read the *Report on Diversity at U.S. Law Firms* at [www.nalp.org/reportondiversity](http://www.nalp.org/reportondiversity).

### About NALP

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