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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2022

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This Year's Summer Associate Class at U.S. Law Firms Was Most Diverse Ever, But Industry Challenges Remain

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NALP today released its annual *Report on Diversity at U.S. Law Firms*, available at www.nalp.org/reportondiversity. The report, based on information from the 2021-2022 NALP Directory of Legal Employers (NDLE), shows that overall gains have been made at the summer associate level in the representation of women, summer associates of color, and LGBTQ summer associates at major U.S. law firms in 2021 as compared to 2020.

The percentage of summer associates of color grew by nearly 5 percentage points in a single year, the largest gain in the 29 years that NALP has been tracking this information. In addition, women made up more than half of all summer associates for the fourth year in a row, and the proportion of LGBTQ summer associates increased to 8.41%, also a historic high.

“Without doubt, this summer associate class was the most diverse ever measured in every way, and it holds the promise of a law firm world that is truly more diverse, equitable, and inclusive,” noted NALP Executive Director James G. Leipold in the report. “The challenge for the industry is to retain, train, develop, and promote this talented and diverse pool of new lawyers so that 5 years from now the associate ranks as a whole reflect similar diversity and representation, and 10 or 15 years from now we can celebrate a partnership class that is similarly diverse.”



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Leipold continued that many challenges remain, including the representation of Black lawyers in the legal profession. “Although the percentages of Black partners, associates, and lawyers overall increased in 2021, the representation of Black lawyers in law firms still trails that of Asian and Latinx lawyers and those gaps have widened over time.” He also pointed out that in 2021, women made up just 25.92% of all partners, and Black women and Latinx women each continued to represent less than 1% of all partners in U.S. law firms.

“The 2021 law firm diversity numbers are a cause for celebration, but also a reminder of the hard work that remains to be done,” Leipold added.

Key Findings:

- The percentage of summer associates who are people of color grew by nearly 5 percentage points, increasing from 36.48% in 2020 to 41.34% in 2021 — the largest increase since NALP began tracking these data in 1993. The majority of this increase can be attributed to the rise in the percentage of summer associates who are women of color, which increased by 3 percentage points to 25.14% in 2021.
- In 2021, the percentage of summer associates who are women also increased by 1.4 percentage points to 55.06%. Women accounted for more than half of all summer associates for the fourth year in a row.
- While the percentage of LGBTQ lawyers overall grew by approximately one-third of a percentage point from 2020 to 2021, the percentage of LGBTQ summer associates continued to grow at a more accelerated rate, climbing 0.7 percentage points to 8.41% in 2021. Overall, 3.67% of all lawyers identified as LGBTQ.
- Although the percentage of Black associates overall increased by one-tenth of a percentage point to 5.22%, the rate of growth in the proportion of associates who are Black lags behind that of Latinx and Asian associates.
- The percentage of associates who were Latinx women in 2021 grew to 3.25%, surpassing the share of Black women associates (3.17%) for the first time.



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- Despite slight gains in 2021, just over 4% of all partners are women of color. Black women and Latinx women each continue to represent less than 1% of all partners in U.S. law firms.
- Equity partners in multi-tier law firms continue to be disproportionately white men. In 2021, 22.0% of equity partners were women and only 9.0% were people of color.

Read the *Report on Diversity at U.S. Law Firms* at 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. For additional information, contact NALP at info@nalp.org or call (202) 835-1001.