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## Gains Stall For Female Partners In Numbers, Salaries

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Law360 (October 9, 2018, 9:13 PM EDT) -- The number of female equity partners at top law firms has barely budged in more than a decade, with few signs of women making significant inroads into the upper tiers of management or earning as much as men, according to a report from the National Association of Women Lawyers.

Female attorneys comprise 20 percent of equity partners at the nation's 200 largest law firms, just 1 percentage point more than they did a decade ago when the NAWL began keeping track, the organization said Tuesday.

Despite working the same number of hours, women bill just 92 percent of those of men. The report also found that billing rates for men and women develop a 5 percent gap by the time attorneys reach nonequity partnership despite starting at a relatively more equal rate when both men and women start as associates. As associates, men make between \$7,712 to \$8,959 more a year than women, a gap that increases to as much as \$99,000 between male and female equity partners, according to the report.

Still, there are signs of progress in other areas. Women make up 25 percent of firm governance roles, some 22 percent of firmwide managing partners, 20 percent of office-level managing partners, and 22 percent of practice group leaders, all up from when the organization started keeping tabs on women in the legal profession as a whole.

"NAWL launched its survey 12 years ago to make transparent what had been opaque — the progression of women into equity ranks at law firms," NAWL President Sarretta McDonough said. "Since then, the survey has called out the incipient inequities within law firms that continue to serve as roadblocks to women lawyers who have been entering law firms at nearly equal rates as men for 20 years.

Despite making up more than 40 percent of law school grads, this year's report found that the likelihood of women becoming equity partners has only ticked up 5 percent — from 15 percent to 20 percent — in the past 12 years. While [standout firms exist](#), in total, women make up 47 percent of associates, but just 30 percent of nonequity partners and 20 percent of equity partners. In firm governance committees, women tend to make up a quarter of the members.

While [some firms vary](#), almost every one, 93 percent, reported that their top earner is a man, while their top 10 best compensated attorneys are also men. At most, just one of those 10 is a woman, the report found.

"Despite universal adoption of women's initiatives, a ramping up of broader diversity initiatives and increased awareness of the challenges women face in their advancement through the law firm, there has been little progress made in recent years that is reflected in noticeable increases in representation of women and diverse attorneys, particularly at the more senior and higher status levels of the law firm," the report found.

Firms reported that they tend to focus on thwarting bias in hiring and advancement earlier on in an attorney's career, with significant attention paid to how firms are recruiting and administering performance evaluations. However firms said they tended to drop off when it came to promotion or elevating employees to partner and equity partner.

Those figures drop for women of color and attorneys with disabilities. [Eight percent](#) of equity partners are people of color, and just 2 percent are women. Attorneys who are open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex make up just 2 percent of equity partners,

while those with disabilities represent less than 1 percent, according to the report. The figures are roughly the same as 2015.

"We will continue to measure women's progress under the well-accepted adage that what is measured is managed, and we continue to push for changes in process and mindset at law firms to realize the long overdue equality for women, including diverse and LGBTQI women," said McDonough, who is the general counsel at [Intel Corp.](#)

--Editing by Connor Relyea.

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