MPF Webinar

Managing Partner Forum®
ADVANCING THE BUSINESS OF LAW

Winning the Talent War:
Recruiting and Retaining Associates at Smaller and Midsize Law Firms

October 21, 2026

by

NALP Foundation

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TheRemsenGroup
Smart Strategies for the Forward Thinking Law Firm

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The MPF Webinar Series

Managing Partner Forum®
ADVANCING THE BUSINESS OF LAW

The MPF Webinar Series: Building the Law Firm of the Future

Winning the Talent War:
Recruiting and Retaining Associates at Smaller and Midsize Law Firms

An MPF Webinar with Fiona Trevelyan, Jennifer Mandery, and Skip Horne

October 21, 2026 – 2:00-3:00pm ET



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AMES & GOUGH

Managing Partner Forum®
ADVANCING THE BUSINESS OF LAW

Welcome



Uri Gutfreund
Senior Vice President and Managing Principal, Ames & Gough



John Remsen, Jr.
President and CEO, Managing Partner Forum
President, TheRemsenGroup

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Today's Guest Speakers







Fiona Trevelyan
President and CEO, NALP Foundation

Jennifer Mandery
Vice President for Research, NALP Foundation

Skip Horne
Vice President for Engagement, NALP Foundation

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30 YEARS 1996-2026

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS IN 2026-2027

- **MPF Webinar Series** – Third Wednesdays @ 2pm ET
- **The MPF 2027 Leadership Conference** – May 5-6, 2027, in Atlanta
- ***The MPF Weekly*** – Friday mornings
- **MPF Listserv** and Monthly **MPF Zoom Calls**
- Updated MPF Website – www.ManagingPartnerForum.org

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TODAY'S WEBINAR

- **Winning the Talent War:**
  Recruiting and Retaining Associates at Smaller and Midsize Law Firms
- 105 Managing Partners and Law Firm Leaders
- Registrant Survey Results and Audience Polling Questions
- On-Demand Recording, Handout Materials
- Your Feedback on Today's Session

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LIVE POLLING QUESTION

How many lawyers are with your law firm?

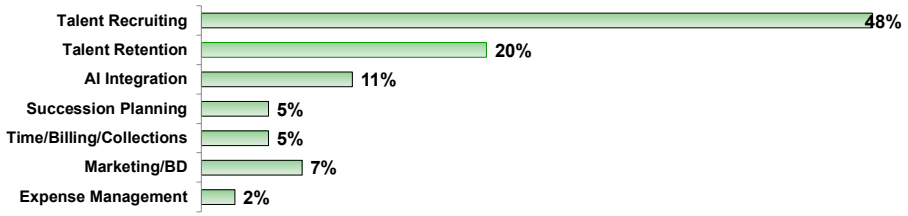


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REGISTRANT QUESTION
From the list below, what is your firm's top priority for the next 12-18 months?



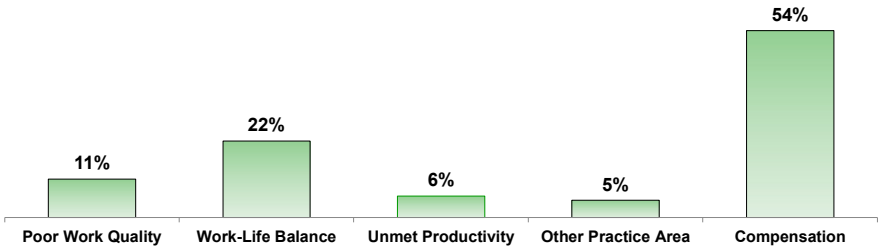
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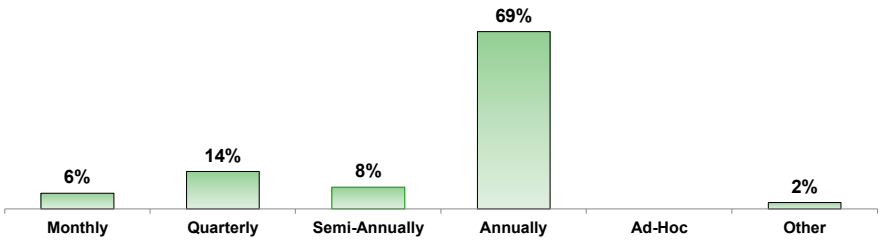
REGISTRANT QUESTION
From the list below, what do you think is the top reason firms cited as the reasons for lateral associate departures?



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REGISTRANT QUESTION
How frequently does your firm distribute bonuses to its associates?



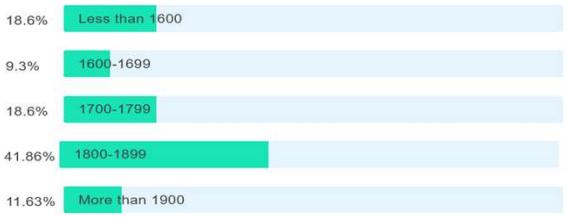
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LIVE POLLING QUESTION

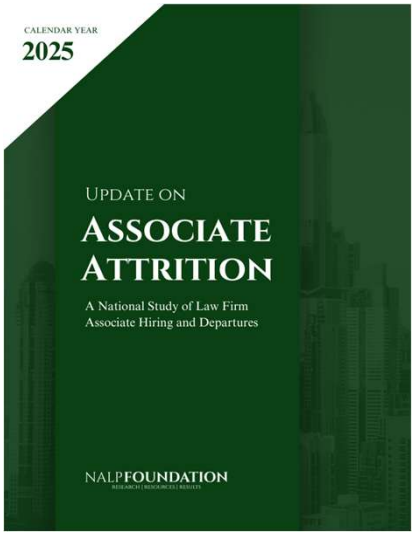
What is you firm's billable hour expectation for associate attorneys?



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CY 2025 Attrition Study

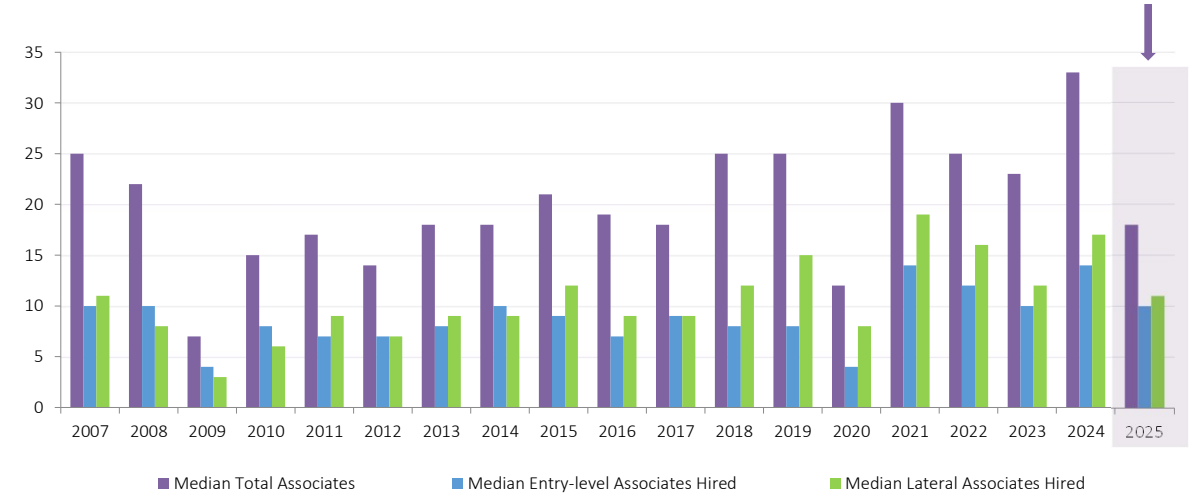


- **Data collection:** January 2 – February 13, 2026.
- **Results:** 141 law firms across the U.S. and Canada.
  - — 6,335 associate hires
  - — 4,042 associate departures
- **Unique data:** Participating firms receive an individual snapshot report, detailing their firm's data and comparing it to the national averages based on firm size.
- **Report:** Empiric data aggregated; also segmented by firm size and demographic cohorts.
- **Timely Topics:** New queries to track the impact of AI on associates' careers.
- **Confidentiality:** All survey responses and data, as well as participating firms' identities, is kept strictly confidential, with only aggregate results released in the public report.
- **Full report available for purchase** here.

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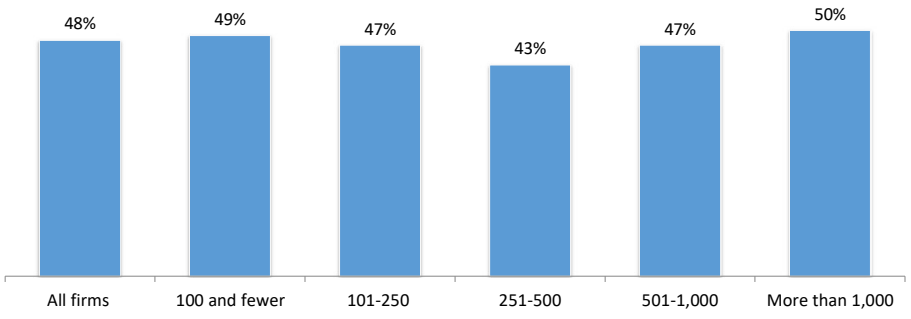
Associate Hiring 2007-2025



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2025 Entry-Level Hires: Percent of Total 2025 Associate Hiring



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2025 Associate Hiring by Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
All associate hiring	15%	13%	39%	32%
100 or fewer	17%	18%	43%	22%
101-250	19%	13%	50%	18%
251-500	20%	15%	40%	24%
501-1,000	16%	13%	36%	35%
More than 1,000	12%	12%	39%	36%

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2025 Rehires as a Percent of Total 2025 Associate Hiring

44%
of participating firms reported hiring at least one former associate.

10%
of participating firms reported hiring at least one associate who both left and returned to their firm within 2025.

6%
"Boomerang" associates represented 6% of total 2025 associate hiring.

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Stay Study: Key Retention Factors

Community, Culture and Inclusion:

- Community & Inclusion
- Firm Culture/Social Ties & Connections
- Pro Bono/Community Involvement

Compensation, Benefits and Policies:

- Benefits
- Compensation
- Firm Policies (e.g., billable hours, leave)
- Hybrid Work Policies (e.g., schedule, flexible work)

Location and Reputation:

- Location
- Market Perception (e.g., prestige of firm)

Professional Development and Growth:

- Career Path
- Mentoring
- Practice Area Alignment with Personal Interest
- Professional Development
- Work Allocation/Workflow Management

Work-Life Balance & Well-Being

- Well-Being (New)
- Work-Life Balance

Artificial Intelligence

- Artificial intelligence (New)

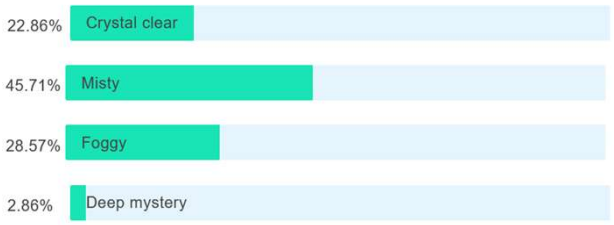
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LIVE POLLING QUESTION

How clear is the path to partnership, from the associate point of view, at your firm?



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Reasons Associates Elect to Stay

Top 3 Factors	Highest Score	Lowest Score
#1 - Compensation	Salary 4.8	Bonus 4.4
#2 - Work-Life Balance	Firm support for Work-life balance 4.7	Remote work arrangements 4.3
#3 - Career Path	Opportunities for advancement/partnership 4.5	Alumni program/ outplacement assistance 3.0

1-5 scale: 1 = not at all important; 5 = extremely important.

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Associate Attrition Rate Overall and by Firm Size 2007-2025

Year	Overall	100 or fewer attorneys	101-250 attorneys	251-500 attorneys	More than 500 attorneys
2025	**19%**	**24%**	**16%**	**16%**	**18%**
2024	20%	31%	19%	17%	18%
2023	18%	19%	20%	16%	16%
2022	20%	16%	21%	21%	19%
2021	26%	27%	25%	24%	28%
2020	16%	15%	15%	17%	15%
2019	18%	15%	18%	19%	19%
2018	19%	15%	20%	20%	20%
2017	16%	16%	14%	18%	18%
2016	16%	15%	14%	18%	18%
2015	20%	20%	20%	21%	19%
2014	18%	17%	17%	19%	19%
2013	17%	17%	17%	16%	17%
2012	17%	13%	17%	18%	18%
2011	18%	15%	18%	20%	19%
2010	18%	19%	15%	19%	18%
2009	17%	16%	16%	19%	18%
2008	16%	16%	15%	17%	16%
2007	18%	17%	17%	18%	21%

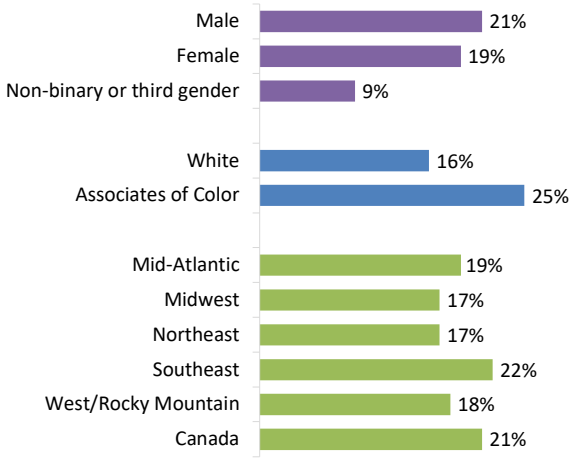
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2025 Associate Attrition Rates: Demographic Cohorts and Regions

19%

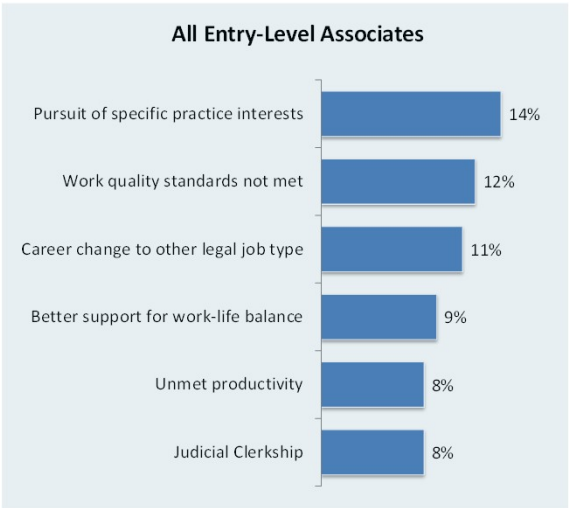
Overall attrition rate for CY 2025

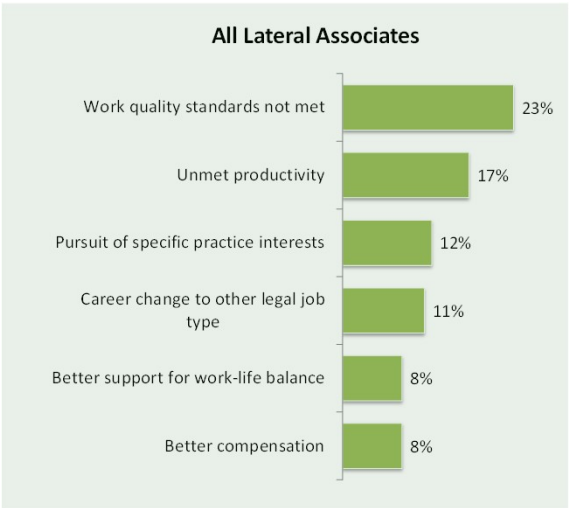


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Attrition Study: 2025 Top Reasons for Departures

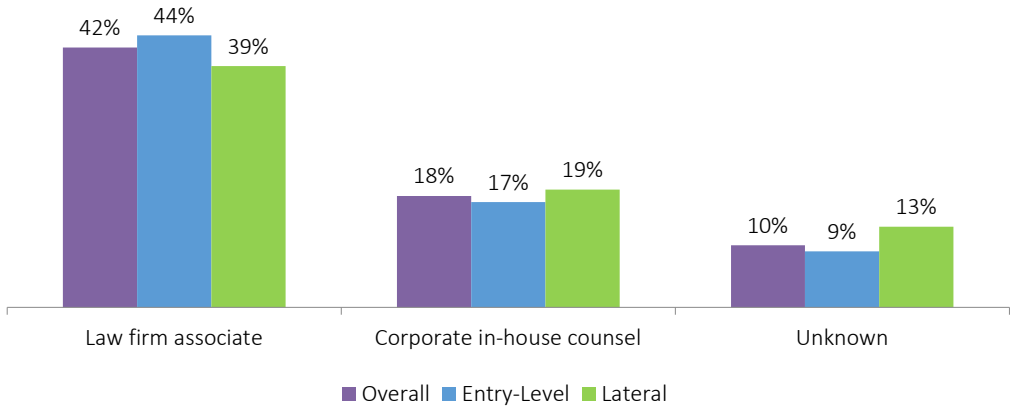




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2025 Departure Destinations



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Associate Departures by Tenure – Within 5 Years of Hire

83%
Overall

Longer Tenures

- Entry-Level Associates
- Summer Associates
- White Associates

Shorter Tenures

- Lateral Associates
- Non-Summer Associates
- Associates of Color

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Customized Reports and Consulting

- Individual Report
- Peer Firm Report
- AmLaw 50
- AmLaw 50-100
- AmLaw 100
- AmLaw 200
- Regional
- Individual Firm Presentations

To order a custom report:

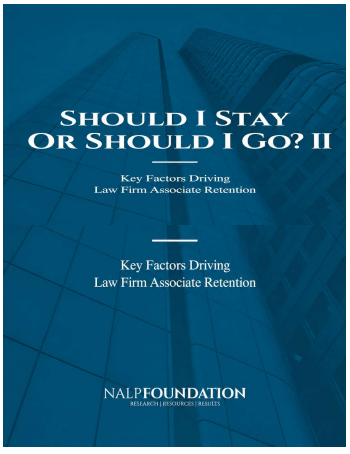
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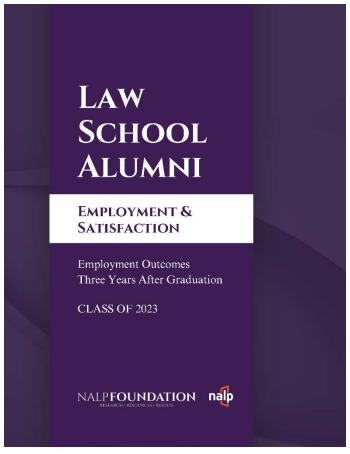
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Additional Upcoming Research

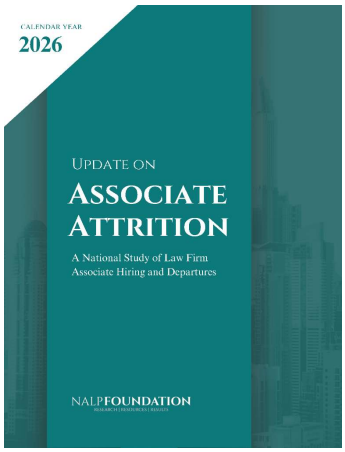
Anticipate Winter 2027 Report Release



Launches November 2027



Launches January 2027



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Questions

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MPF GUIDANCE TO FIRM LEADERS

- Use Psychological/Skills Assessment Tools
- Invest in an Associate Development Program
- Mentoring, Evaluation, Performance Bonuses
- Be as Transparent as Possible (ie Track to Partnership)
- Tune in to Firm Culture
- Check out NALP Foundation and its Offerings

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REMINDERS

- **The MPF Leadership Conference** – May 6-7, 2027, in Atlanta
- Next MPF Webinar – ABSs and MSOs – November 18th @ 2:00pm ET
- On-Demand Recording, Handout Materials with Polling Results
- Your Feedback on Today's Session
- Recap by 9Sail

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WEBINAR RECAPS

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Thank You!



Fiona Trevelyan
President and CEO, NALP Foundation

Jennifer Mandery
Vice President for Research, NALP Foundation

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