

AMLAW 200 LATERAL HIRING REPORT

2025



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
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Methodology	4
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AmLaw 200 Lateral Hiring	5
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Partner Level Hiring	7
----------------------	---

Counsel Level Hiring	11
----------------------	----

Associate Level Hiring	15
------------------------	----

Outlook for 2026	19
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Executive Summary

This report draws on data from Firm Prospects' proprietary database, offering a comprehensive analysis of 2025 lateral hiring trends across AmLaw 200 firms. It examines hiring patterns by attorney level (partner, counsel, and associate), practice area, geographic location, and talent source. A total of 13,214 attorneys were hired, with litigation emerging as the dominant practice area across all levels. This analysis provides actionable insights to inform strategic decision-making in a competitive legal market.

Record Partner Hiring

Partner hiring reached a five-year high of 3,009 hires, a 10% increase from 2024. Litigation led partner hiring at 26%, followed by corporate at 16%. Kirkland & Ellis dominated with 116 partner hires—more than 25% ahead of second-place Lewis Brisbois (92).

Government-to-Partner Pipeline

Government sources contributed 270 partner hires (9% of total), with the U.S. Attorney's Office (67) and DOJ (50) leading. Washington, D.C. ranked second in partner hiring (469 hires) behind only New York (606), reflecting significant talent flow from federal agencies.

Counsel Role Expansion

Counsel hiring reached a five-year high of 1,974, up 12% from 2024. Gordon & Rees (101) and Wilson Elser (92) led all firms, while labor and employment-focused firms—Ogletree Deakins, Littler Mendelson, Fisher Phillips, and Jackson Lewis—also ranked among the top ten. Government sources represented 19% of counsel hires, significantly higher than at partner level.

Associate Market Stabilization

Associate hiring (7,686) increased 5% from 2024, continuing the recovery from the 2023 correction. Large litigation platforms—Lewis Brisbois, Wilson Elser, and Gordon & Rees—ranked alongside elite transactional firms in the top five. Kirkland & Ellis (279) and Latham & Watkins (215) led overall.

Notable Firm Trends

Kirkland & Ellis led overall hiring across all attorney levels. Labor and employment firms (Ogletree Deakins, Littler Mendelson, Fisher Phillips, Jackson Lewis) showed particularly strong hiring activity at the counsel level, while elite transactional firms dominated partner and associate hiring.

Methodology

The findings in this report are based on Firm Prospects' proprietary database, which tracks, among other things, attorney lateral moves across the legal industry from publicly available sources*. The dataset includes non-entry-level hires made by AmLaw 200 firms in 2025.

To ensure data integrity, Firm Prospects incorporates various proprietary AI tools in conjunction with human oversight into its data review and cleaning process. Practice area classifications are standardized, and any inconsistencies are resolved through thorough independent verification by Firm Prospects' research team. This ensures the data is accurate and consistent, providing a clear picture of lateral hiring trends in the legal industry.

*Firm Prospects does not scrape data on attorney lateral moves or law firm experience from LinkedIn.



AmLaw 200 Lateral Hiring

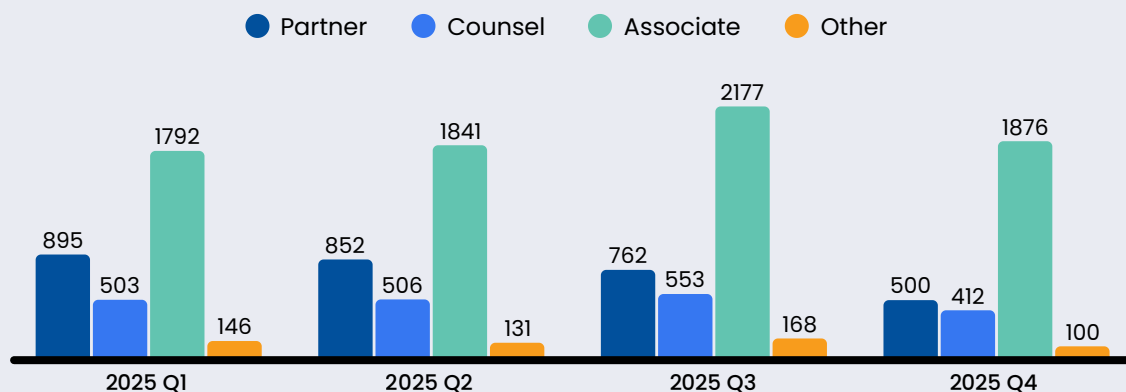
Total Lateral Hires by Role

Total Moves	Partner	Counsel	Associate	Other
13,214	3,009	1,974	7,686	545

In 2025, AmLaw 200 firms recorded 13,214 non-entry-level lateral hires, representing a meaningful increase over 2024 and the highest total since the post-pandemic peak of 2021–2022. Associates continued to comprise the majority of lateral activity, accounting for 58% of all hires, followed by partners (23%), counsel (15%), and other roles (4%). The increase in total hiring was driven largely by gains at the partner and counsel levels, signaling a renewed emphasis on senior talent acquisition alongside sustained associate demand.

2025 Hires by Quarter

Hiring activity in 2025 peaked in Q3, which saw the highest overall volume of lateral moves, driven primarily by associate hiring.



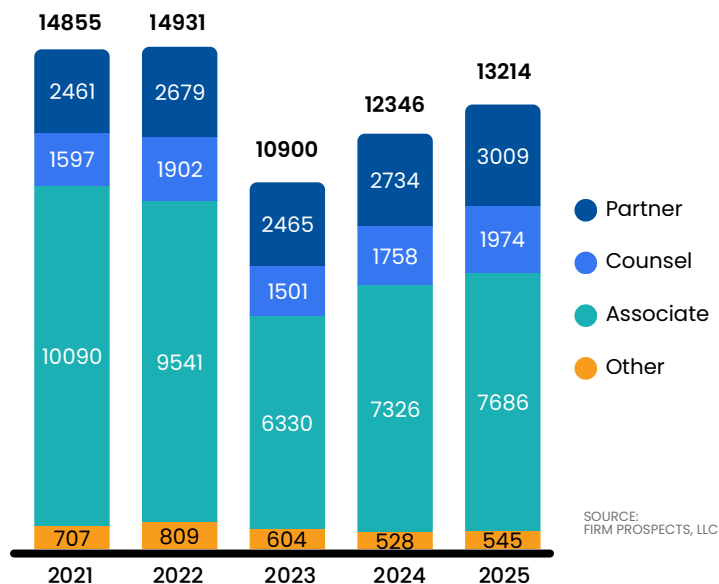
While Q1 and Q2 reflected relatively stable activity, Q4 experienced a notable slowdown, particularly at the partner and counsel levels, consistent with year-end caution and deal timing dynamics. Despite the Q4 decline, total annual hiring still exceeded prior-year levels, suggesting that the slowdown reflected timing rather than a broader pullback in lateral demand.

SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Five-Year Hiring Comparison

A five-year view of AmLaw 200 lateral hiring highlights a continued normalization following the exceptional hiring levels of 2021 and 2022.

While total hiring in 2025 remained below the post-pandemic peak, it exceeded both 2023 and 2024 levels, reflecting a measured rebound in lateral activity. Partner hiring reached its highest level in the five-year period, underscoring firms' increased willingness to invest in senior talent amid improved economic and transactional conditions. Associate hiring also rose year over year, reinforcing the depth of demand across experience levels.



Partner Level Hiring

AmLaw 200 firms hired 3,009 partners in 2025, marking the highest annual total in the past five years. This increase reflects a strategic shift toward lateral partner recruitment as firms sought to strengthen practice depth, expand client relationships, and position themselves for anticipated growth in transactional and regulatory work. Compared to 2024, partner hiring rose meaningfully, outpacing growth at other experience levels.

2025 partner hires

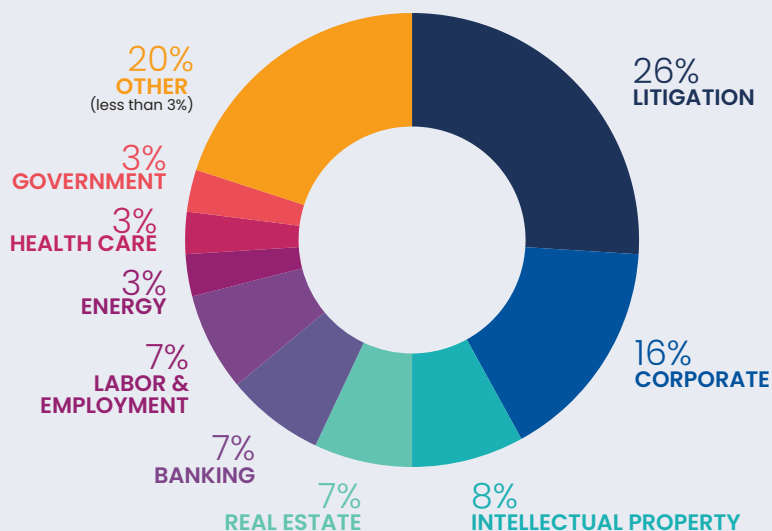
3,009

Increase from 2024

+10%

Partner Hires by Practice Area

Litigation remained the most active practice area for partner hiring in 2025 with 790 hires, accounting for 26% of all partner hires.



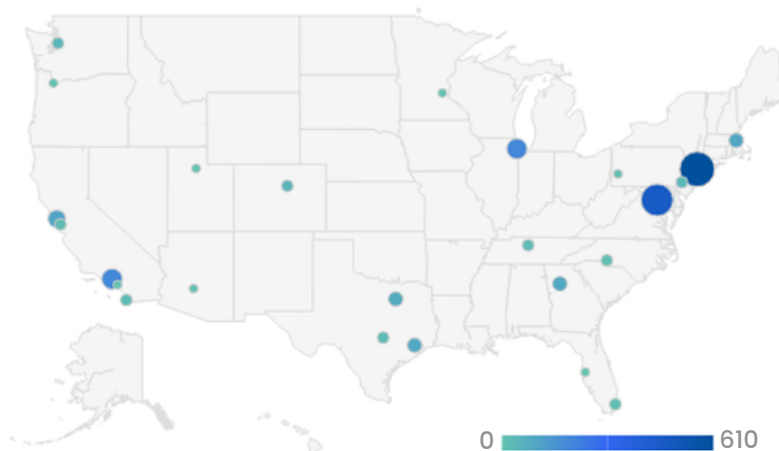
Corporate followed as the second-largest category with 474 hires (16%), reflecting renewed confidence in deal-driven practices. Intellectual property (230), real estate (213), banking (206), and labor & employment (206) each contributed meaningful volumes, highlighting continued diversification in senior hiring needs. The distribution underscores that while litigation continues to anchor partner hiring, firms are increasingly balancing growth across both contentious and transactional disciplines.

SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Partner Hires by Location

Partner hiring in 2025 was heavily concentrated in major legal markets, led by New York and Washington, D.C.

Notably, Washington, D.C. recorded an unusually high volume of partner hires, reflecting increased lateral movement from federal agencies and regulatory bodies into private practice. This trend underscores the continued importance of regulatory, enforcement, and government-facing expertise, particularly as firms anticipate heightened activity in these areas.

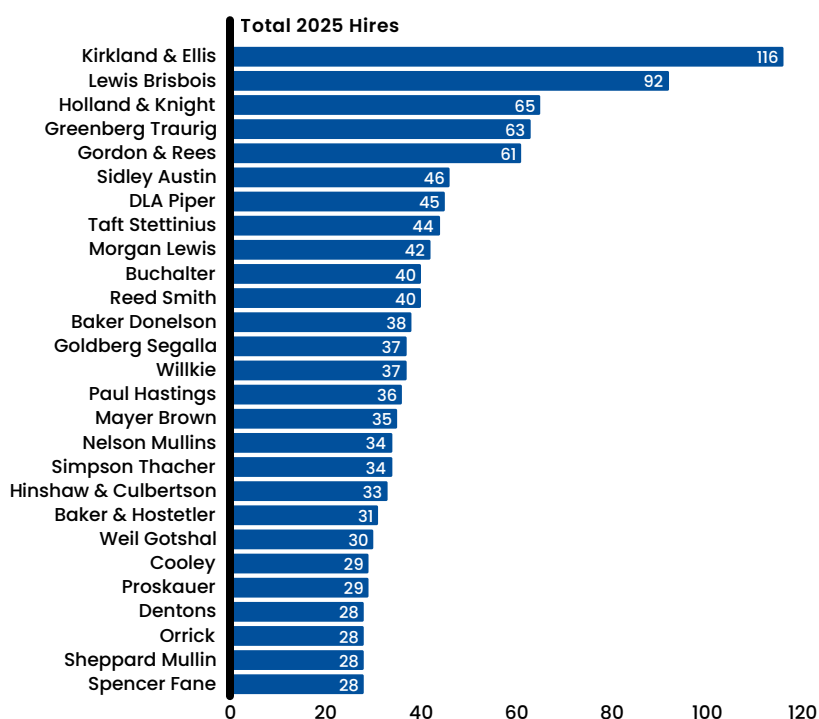


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Top Firms for Partner Hiring

Kirkland & Ellis led all AmLaw 200 firms in partner hiring with 116 hires in 2025, followed by Lewis Brisbois (92) and Holland & Knight (65).

The list reflects a mix of elite transactional firms and large litigation-focused platforms. Notably, several firms known for insurance defense and labor practices—including Gordon & Rees (61), Goldberg Segalla (37), and Hinshaw & Culbertson (33)—appeared among the top hirers, reflecting continued growth in those practice areas.

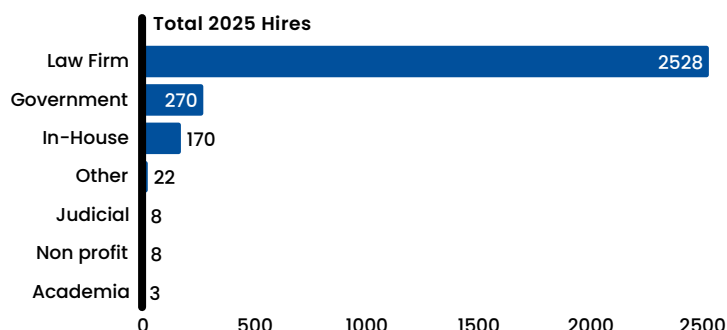


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Partner Hires by Source

The vast majority of partner hires originated from law firms.

Government agencies represented a meaningful secondary source, particularly in Washington, D.C. In-house transitions also contributed a steady pipeline of senior talent, while judicial, nonprofit, and academic sources played a more limited role.

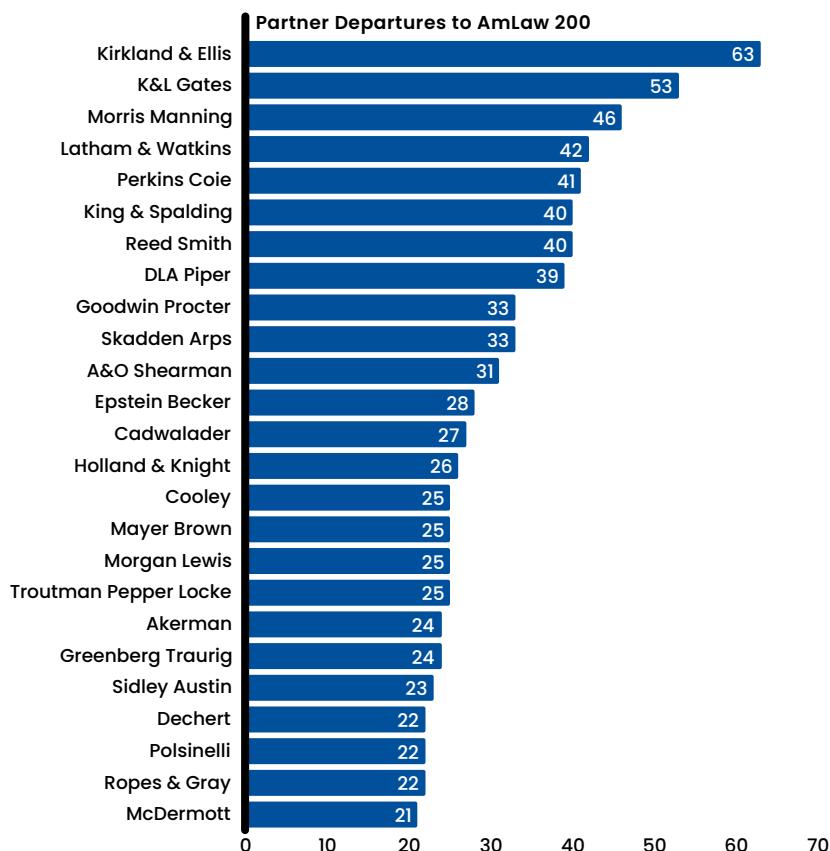


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Partner Hires from Law Firms

Kirkland & Ellis was the largest source of partner departures to other AmLaw 200 firms, with 63 partners leaving for competitors.

K&L Gates (53), Morris Manning (46), Latham & Watkins (42), and Perkins Coie (41) rounded out the top five. The list includes a mix of large platform firms and regional players, indicating that partner movement occurs across all tiers of the market. Notably, several firms appear both as top hirers and top sources, reflecting the fluid nature of lateral movement among elite firms.



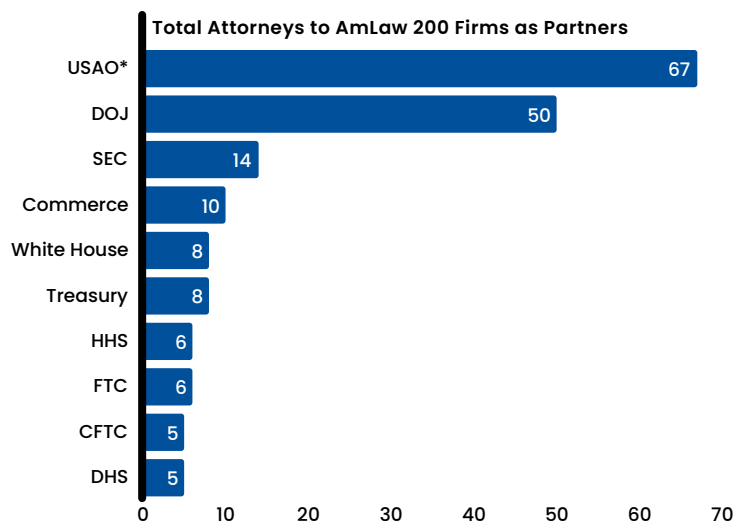
SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Partner Hires from Government Agencies

The U.S. Attorney's Office led government sources with 67 partner-level hires, followed by the U.S. Department of Justice (50) and the SEC (14).

The prominence of DOJ and U.S. Attorney hires reflects the value firms place on white-collar defense and investigations experience. Other notable sources included the Department of Commerce (10), The White House (8), and the Treasury Department (8), indicating demand for regulatory and policy expertise across multiple practice areas.

*The U.S. Attorney's Office operates under the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) but is listed separately here to reflect distinct hiring patterns.

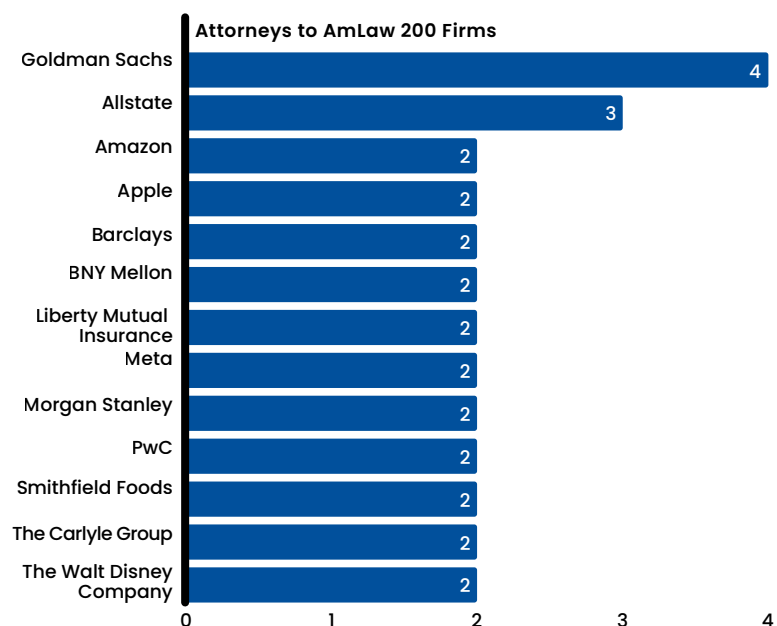


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Partner Hires from In-House Legal Departments

Goldman Sachs led in-house sources with 4 partner hires returning to law firms, followed by Allstate (3).

The remaining top sources—including Amazon, Apple, Barclays, Meta, Morgan Stanley, and The Carlyle Group—each contributed 2 hires. The relatively small numbers reflect the less common trajectory of partners returning from in-house roles, though financial services and technology companies remain the primary sources for this talent flow.



SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Counsel Level Hiring

AmLaw 200 firms hired 1,974 counsel-level attorneys in 2025, a 12% increase from the 1,758 counsel hires made in 2024. This marks the highest level of counsel hiring in the five-year period examined, surpassing even the 1,902 counsel hires recorded in 2022. The growth in counsel hiring reflects firms' continued reliance on this role as a flexible talent pathway—whether for experienced practitioners transitioning from government or in-house positions, or as a stepping stone on the path to partnership.

2025 counsel-level hires

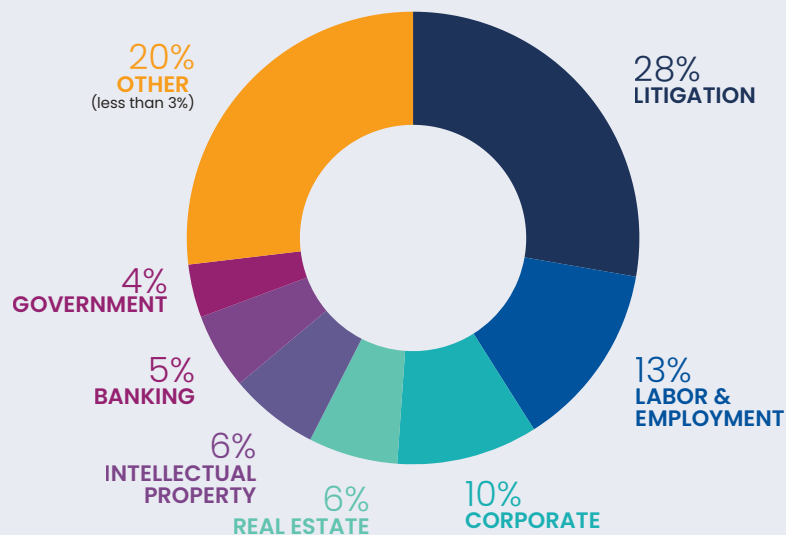
1,974

Increase from 2024

+12%

Counsel Hires by Practice Area

Litigation led counsel-level hiring with 547 hires, comprising 28% of all counsel appointments.



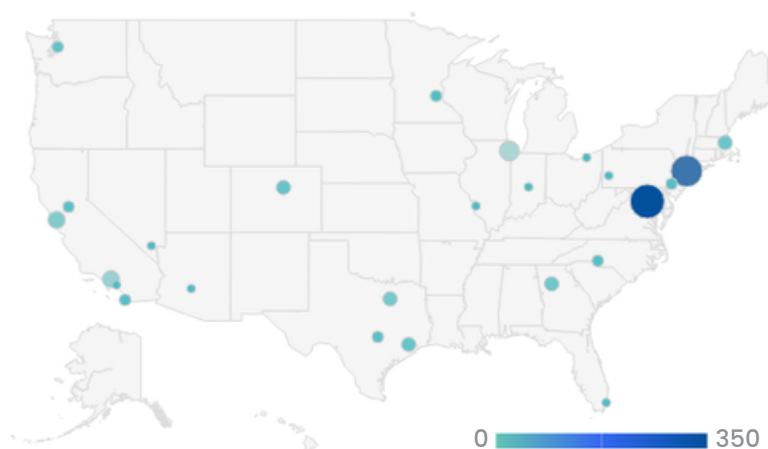
Labor and employment followed with 262 hires (13%), reflecting the counsel role's prevalence in employment law practices where experienced practitioners often transition from agencies or corporations. Corporate ranked third with 199 hires (10%), followed by real estate (126) and intellectual property (126). The practice distribution for counsel hires shows a stronger emphasis on litigation and labor-related work compared to partner hiring, where corporate plays a larger role.

SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Counsel Hires by Location

Washington, D.C. led all markets in counsel hiring with 341 hires, surpassing New York (300).

This reflects the significant flow of government attorneys into counsel roles at law firms. Chicago (115), Los Angeles (95), and San Francisco (74) rounded out the top five. Secondary markets showed meaningful activity, with Denver (46), Sacramento (33), and Charlotte (30) all appearing in the top 15, while Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Las Vegas each recorded 19 counsel hires.

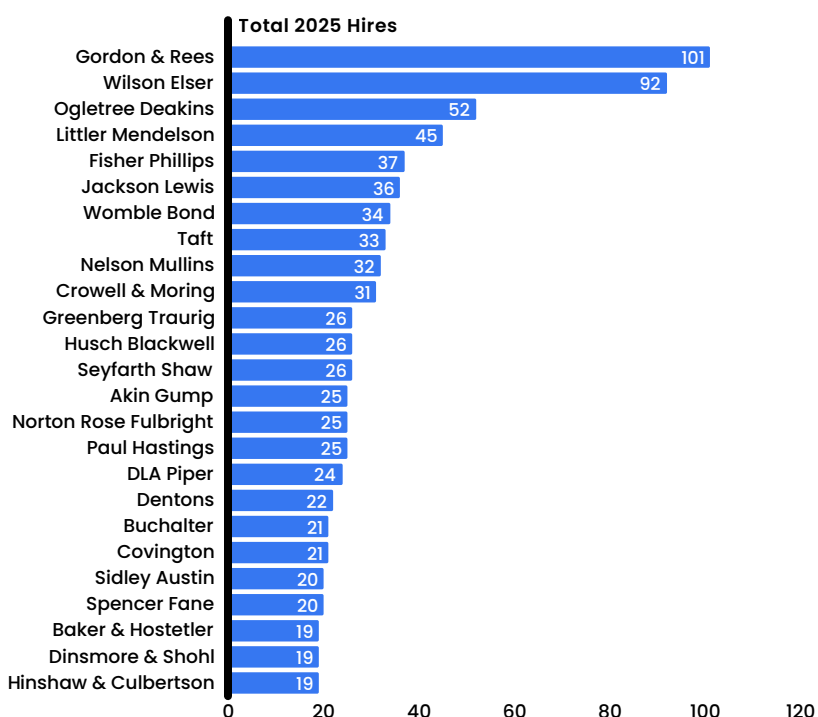


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Top Firms for Counsel Hiring

Gordon & Rees led all firms in counsel hiring with 101 hires, followed by Wilson Elser (92).

Labor and employment-focused firms dominated the top of the list, with Ogletree Deakins (52), Littler Mendelson (45), Fisher Phillips (37), and Jackson Lewis (36) all ranking among the top ten. This pattern reflects the prevalence of the counsel role in employment law practices, where experienced attorneys frequently join at this level from government agencies, corporations, or other firms.

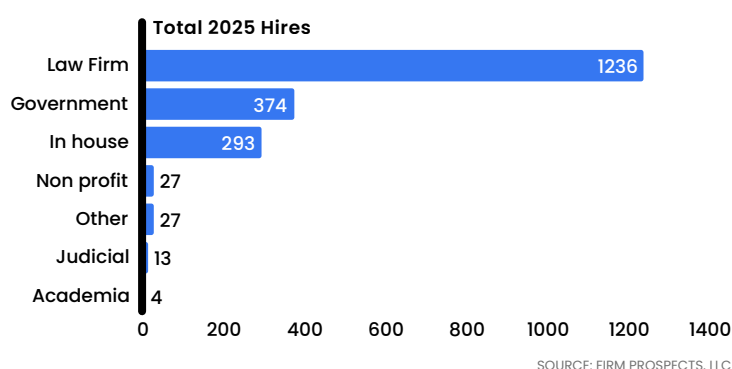


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Counsel Hires by Source

Law firms remained the primary source of counsel hires at 1,236 (63%), though government sources represented a significantly larger share than at the partner level, contributing 374 hires (19%).

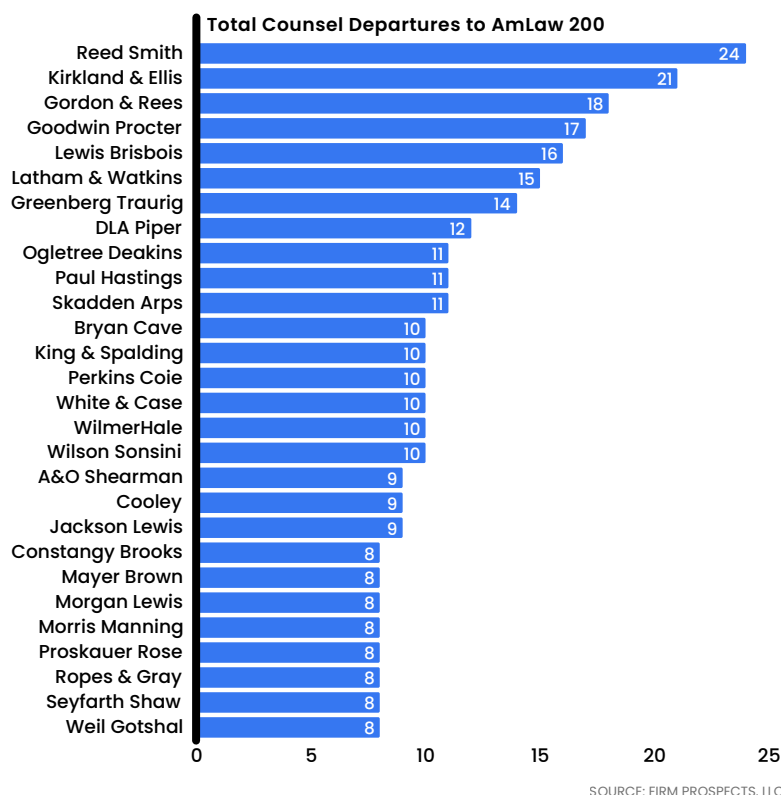
In-house counsel accounted for 293 hires (15%), reflecting the counsel role's function as a common landing spot for attorneys returning from corporate positions. The elevated government share underscores the counsel role's appeal for mid-career attorneys transitioning from public service.



Counsel Hires from Law Firms

Reed Smith led law firm sources of counsel departures with 24 attorneys moving to other AmLaw 200 firms, followed by Kirkland & Ellis (21) and Gordon & Rees (18).

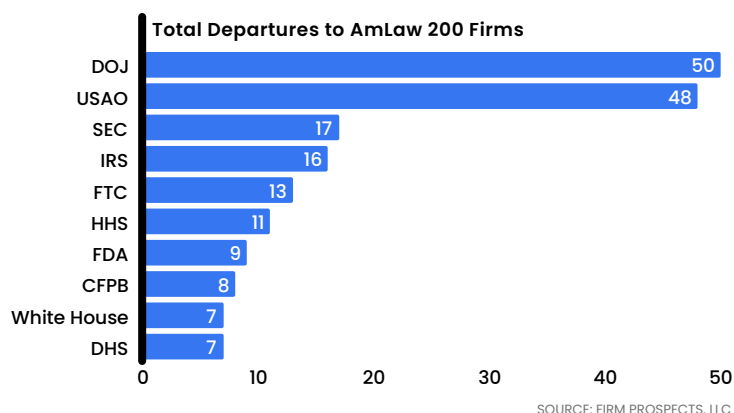
The list reflects a diverse mix of large platform firms and specialized practices. Several labor and employment firms—including Ogletree Deakins (11), Jackson Lewis (9), Constangy Brooks (8), and Seyfarth Shaw (8)—appeared among top sources, reflecting the active counsel-level movement within that practice area.



Counsel Hires from Government Agencies

The U.S. Department of Justice (50) and U.S. Attorney's Office (48) together accounted for nearly 100 counsel-level hires, dominating government sources.

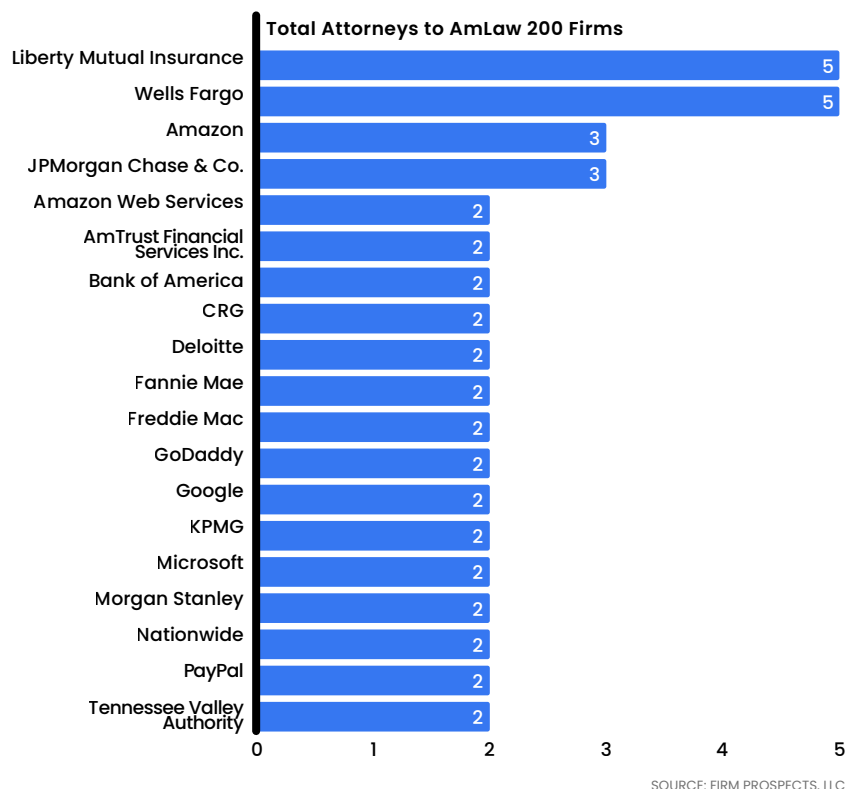
The SEC (17), IRS (16), and FTC (13) followed, reflecting demand for regulatory expertise in securities, tax, and antitrust practices. Health-related agencies including HHS (11) and FDA (9) also contributed meaningful numbers, while The White House (7) and HUD (7) rounded out the top ten.



Counsel Hires from In-House Legal Departments

Liberty Mutual Insurance and Wells Fargo each led in-house sources of counsel hires with 5 attorneys returning to law firms.

Amazon and JPMorgan Chase followed with 3 each. The list spans financial services (Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac), technology (Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft, GoDaddy, PayPal), and professional services (Deloitte, KPMG), reflecting the diversity of corporate legal departments that serve as talent sources for counsel-level positions.



Associate Level Hiring

AmLaw 200 firms hired 7,686 associates in 2025, a 5% increase from the 7,326 associate hires made in 2024. While this figure remains below the peak hiring years of 2021 (10,090) and 2022 (9,541), it represents continued stabilization following the significant correction in 2023 when associate hiring dropped to 6,330. Associates continue to represent the largest segment of lateral hires across the AmLaw 200, accounting for 58% of all 2025 hires.

2025 associate-level hires

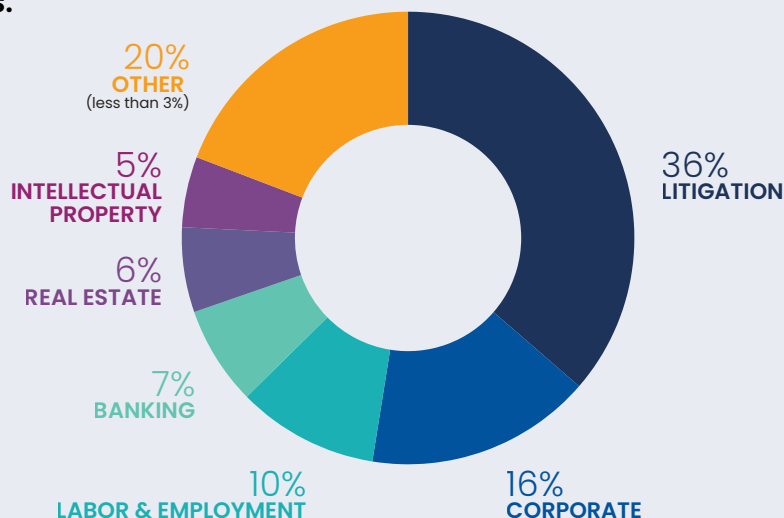
7,686

Increase from 2024

+5%

Associate Hires by Practice Area

Litigation led associate hiring with 2,726 hires, representing 36% of all associate hires—a higher concentration than at partner (26%) or counsel (28%) levels.



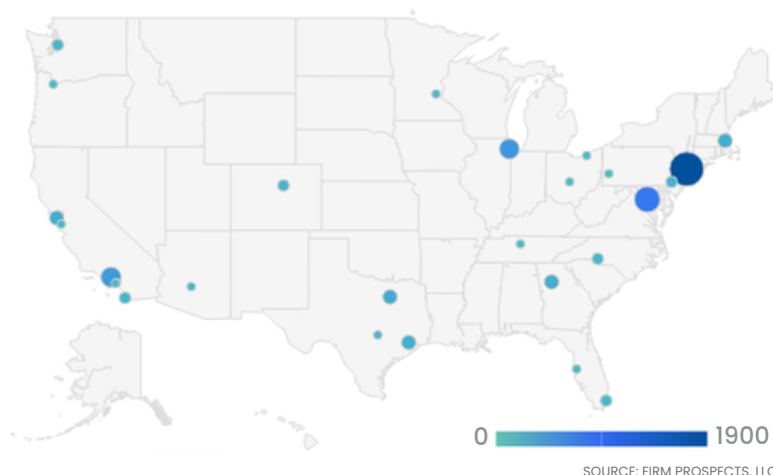
Corporate followed with 1,233 hires (16%), reflecting continued demand for transactional associates despite a slower deal environment. Labor and employment ranked third with 753 hires (10%), followed by banking (552), real estate (465) and intellectual property (417). The distribution underscores firms' reliance on associates for leveraged litigation work while maintaining pipeline strength in core transactional practices.

SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Associate Hires by Location

New York dominated associate hiring with 1,851 hires—nearly double second-place Washington, D.C. (930).

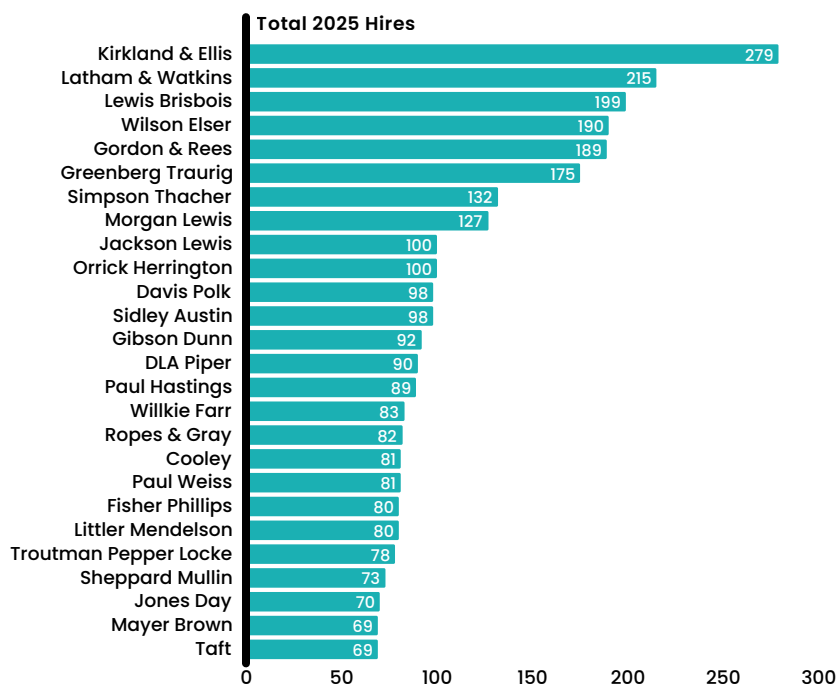
Chicago (542), Los Angeles (500), and Dallas (259) rounded out the top five. The geographic distribution reflects the concentration of large law firm offices in major markets. Texas cities combined for significant activity (Dallas 259, Houston 221, Austin 72), while California markets beyond Los Angeles also showed strength (San Francisco 255, San Diego 115, Silicon Valley 75, Irvine 47, Costa Mesa 42).



Top Firms for Associate Hiring

Kirkland & Ellis led all firms in associate hiring with 279 hires, followed by Latham & Watkins (215).

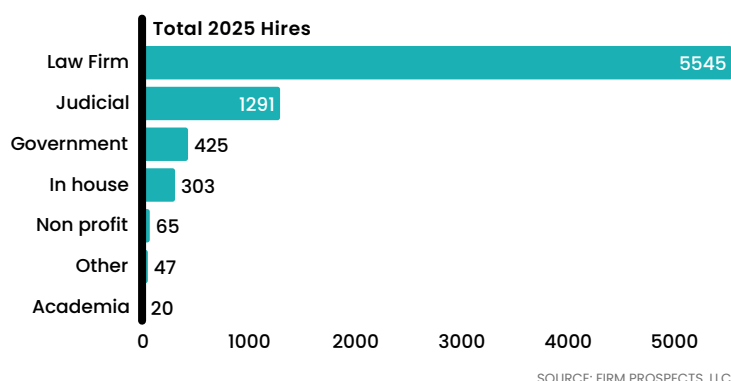
Large litigation platforms including Lewis Brisbois (199), Wilson Elser (190), and Gordon & Rees (189) ranked in the top five. Elite transactional firms showed strong activity, with Simpson Thacher (132), Davis Polk (98), Gibson Dunn (92), Paul Weiss (81), and Ropes & Gray (82) all appearing among the top hirers. Labor and employment firms Fisher Phillips (80) and Littler Mendelson (80) also ranked prominently.



Associate Hires by Source

Law firms remained the dominant source of associate hires at 5,545 (72%).

Judicial clerkships represented the second-largest source with 1,291 hires (17%), reinforcing the clerkship-to-associate pipeline as a critical talent channel for AmLaw 200 firms. Government (425), in-house (303), nonprofit (65), and academia (20) rounded out the remaining sources, together accounting for approximately 11% of associate hires.

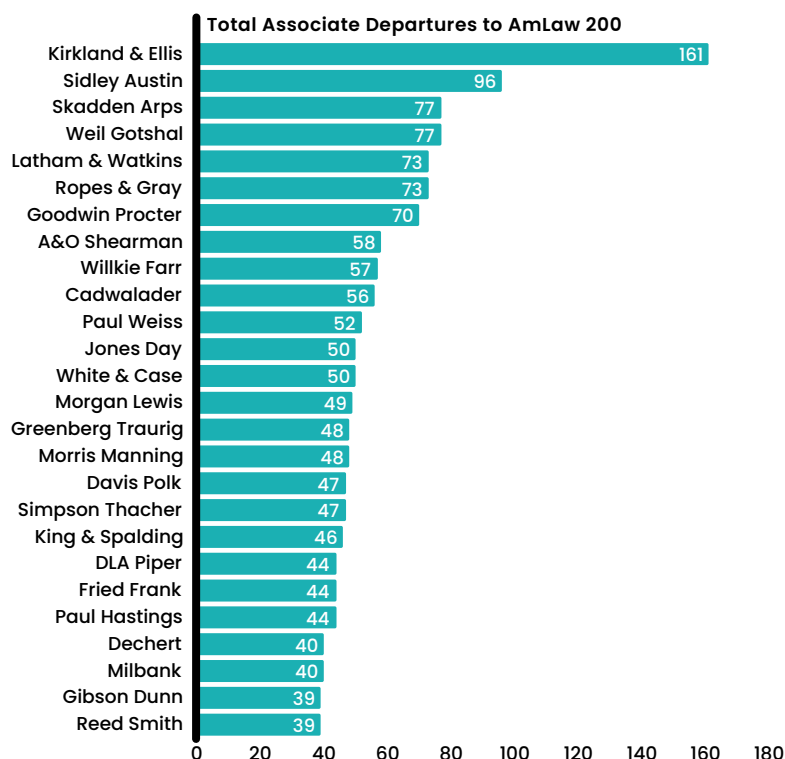


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Associate Hires from Law Firms

Kirkland & Ellis led all firms in associate departures with 161 associates leaving for other AmLaw 200 firms, followed by Sidley Austin (96), Skadden Arps (77), and Weil Gotshal (77).

Elite firms dominated the list, with Latham & Watkins (73), Ropes & Gray (73), Goodwin Procter (70), A&O Shearman (58), and Willkie Farr (57) all ranking among the top sources. The pattern reflects significant associate movement among top-tier firms competing for talent in the same markets.

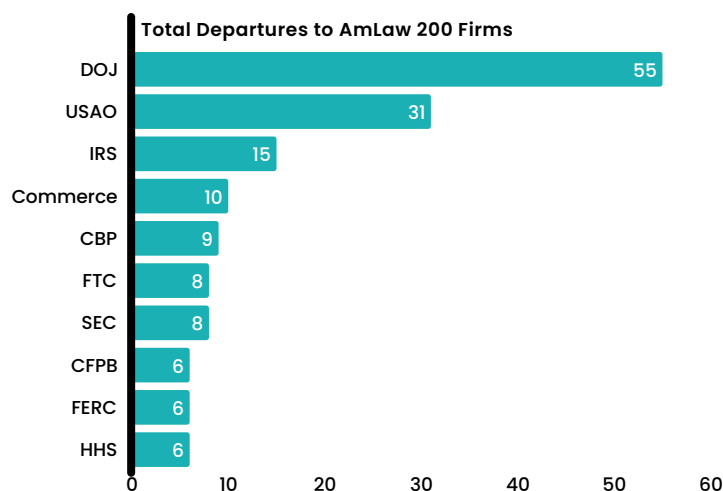


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Associate Hires from Government Agencies

The U.S. Department of Justice led government sources of associate hires with 55, followed by the U.S. Attorney's Office (31).

The IRS (15) and Department of Commerce (10) rounded out the top four. Regulatory agencies including Customs and Border Protection (9), FTC (8), SEC (8), CFPB (6), and FERC (6) also contributed meaningfully, reflecting demand for associates with early-career government experience across litigation, regulatory, and enforcement practices.

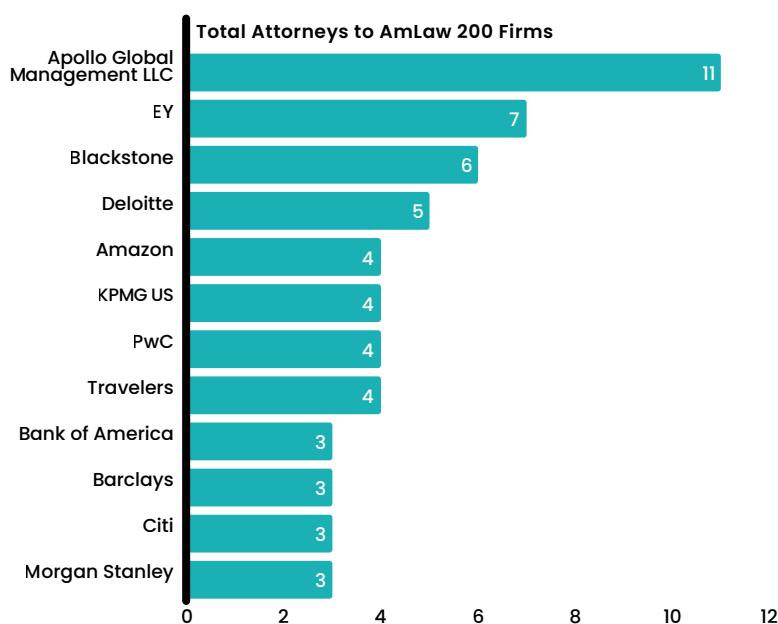


SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC

Associate Hires from In-House Legal Departments

Apollo Global Management led in-house sources of associate hires with 11 attorneys returning to law firms, followed by EY (7) and Blackstone (6).

Professional services firms featured prominently, with Deloitte (5), KPMG US (4), and PwC (4) all ranking among top sources. Financial institutions including Bank of America (3), Barclays (3), Citi (3), and Morgan Stanley (3) also contributed, reflecting the movement of early-career attorneys between corporate legal departments and law firm practice.



SOURCE: FIRM PROSPECTS, LLC



Outlook for 2026

As we look toward 2026, several factors are poised to shape lateral hiring across AmLaw 200 firms. The record partner hiring observed in 2025 suggests firms remain committed to strategic growth through experienced talent acquisition, a trend likely to continue as competition for rainmakers intensifies.

The continued flow of talent from government agencies—particularly DOJ, U.S. Attorney's Offices, and regulatory bodies—is expected to remain elevated as attorneys who joined the administration seek private sector opportunities. This creates significant recruitment opportunities for firms building white-collar defense, investigations, and regulatory practices.

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the legal industry in ways that will increasingly impact hiring decisions. While AI tools are enhancing attorney productivity in document review, legal research, and contract analysis, firms are simultaneously seeking attorneys who can leverage these technologies effectively. The emergence of AI-related legal issues—including intellectual property questions, regulatory compliance, and liability concerns—is driving demand for attorneys with technology expertise. However, AI's efficiency gains may temper associate hiring growth as firms evaluate optimal staffing levels for leveraged work.

M&A activity and capital markets work are expected to strengthen as interest rate stabilization improves deal financing conditions. This should

benefit corporate and transactional practices that saw reduced activity during the higher-rate environment. Meanwhile, litigation remains resilient, with antitrust enforcement, class actions, and commercial disputes continuing to drive demand.

The counsel role's continued expansion reflects structural changes in law firm staffing models. As firms seek flexible talent solutions and experienced attorneys pursue alternatives to the traditional partnership track, counsel hiring is expected to remain strong. Labor and employment practices, in particular, should continue to see robust counsel-level activity given regulatory developments and workplace policy changes.

Overall, we anticipate 2026 lateral hiring to remain robust, with continued strength at the partner level and selective growth in associate ranks. Firms that strategically invest in emerging practice areas—AI and technology, international trade, energy transition, and data privacy—while maintaining core litigation and transactional capabilities will be best positioned to compete for top talent in an evolving market.



Firm Prospects is a law firm intelligence platform uniquely created by former attorneys, management consultants, and data scientists. Our platform offers a comprehensive, AI-driven database of attorneys, meticulously reviewed by our U.S.-based team to ensure accuracy and relevance.

We provide in-depth analytics on individual law firms, attorney career trajectories, and emerging trends in the lateral hiring market—equipping law firms, corporate legal departments, and legal recruiters with the insights needed to make informed hiring decisions and stay competitive in a dynamic legal landscape.

Our data powers strategic decisions across the legal industry, from identifying top lateral candidates to benchmarking firm performance against market trends. With Firm Prospects, you can streamline hiring, making it faster, easier, and more cost-effective.

About the Author



Adam Oliver
Co-Founder & President
Firm Prospects

Adam co-founded Firm Prospects after spending eight years as a corporate attorney at international law firms and subsequently founding a legal search firm. He writes and speaks regularly on lateral hiring trends, law firm talent strategy, and the evolving legal market. He advises law firm leaders and legal recruiters on leveraging data to gain a competitive edge in talent acquisition, business development and law firm marketing.

Learn more

To explore how law firms use Firm Prospects' data to analyze lateral hiring trends and support recruiting and firm strategy:

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