

Encouraging Inclusivity Through Firm Management and Mentoring

MO Bar CLE # 799497

KS Activity #240368

October 21, 2026

Connectivity/Technical Issues

Audio Issues – If you have audio issues on computer, please try accessing by phone at

(701) 801-6121

****No Access Code Required****

If problems persist, contact Paige Tungate at ptungate@DowneyLawGroup.com

Watch the slides at <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/downeycle>

Download the slides at <http://www.downeyethicscle.com/>

Questions – Please submit questions during the program through CHAT or during or after the program by emailing Paige Tungate at ptungate@DowneyLawGroup.com

CLE Information

- Kansas Credit – If you are seeking Kansas credit, you will need to enter the two Attendance Verification Words and your Kansas Bar information into the Program Survey
 - Please complete the Survey **this week**, so we can ensure you receive proper credit
- Certificate of Completion – Available also through the Program Survey
- Three ways to access Program Survey:
 1. CHAT - Link available in the **CHAT** (right now)
 2. SLIDES - Link on the **next slide** and at the **end of the slides** (here or at www.DowneyEthicsCLE.com)
 3. EMAIL - Link sent to you in an email **within 30 minutes** of program ending



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/include1026>

Request to Attendees

Are you a newer lawyer (with approximately 10 years of practice or less) who has experienced good mentoring or sponsorship?

If so, please let us know your story at
Info@DowneyLawGroup.com

A Group of Boys Won't Let My Granddaughter Play Soccer With Them. Help!

Years ago, when I was a new lawyer, I went to work at a firm and found a superb mentor.

But there was a hitch: Before I started working with his clients, he would sit me down in his office, call them — in front of me — and ask if it was OK to assign a gay lawyer to their team.

It was humiliating! And I got the message: I was welcome for only as long as people tolerated me.

NY Times 10-14-2026

I respect your concern about being pushy, but in my experience, if girls and members of other disempowered groups had to wait for invitations to join the party, we would be waiting forever!

Your granddaughter needs to learn how to advocate on her own behalf, and for now that's probably best done by watching her parents model that behavior for her.

Mentoring

Mentor and Protégé

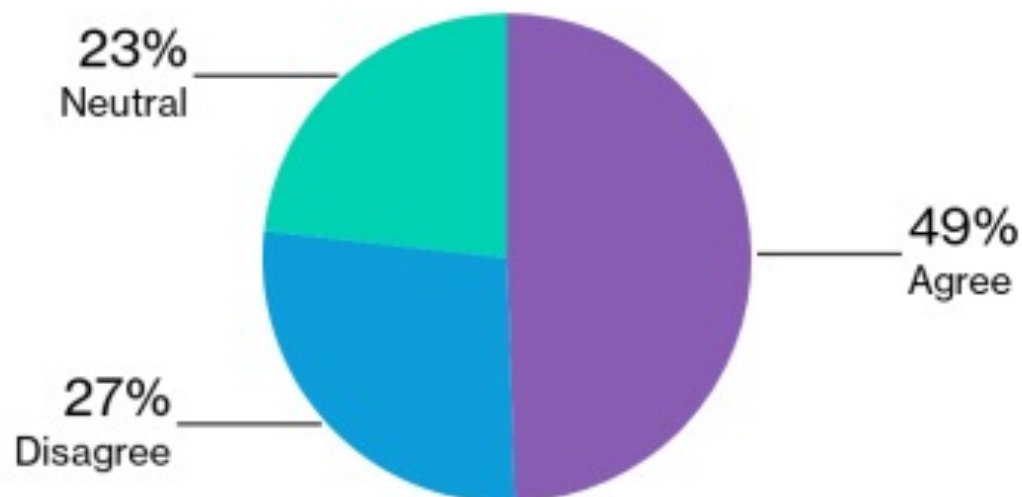
- Mentor: A person who helps a lawyer develop professionally to achieve the lawyer's desired professional goals.
- Protégé/Mentee: A less experienced individual whose career, skills, or personal development are actively supported, trained, and guided by a more experienced lawyer.

Mentoring

Mentoring: Process by which the mentor and protégé work together to identify and help the protégé work toward those professional goals.

Half of Surveyed Lawyers Agree They Have Mentors at Work

'There are people I consider mentors at work'



Source: Bloomberg Law's Attorney Workload & Hours Survey (Q1 & Q2 2023)

Bloomberg Law



One-to-One Mentoring

- Most traditional with one mentor and one mentee
- Highly personal and built on trust
- Often used for long-term career development and leadership growth
- Tailored advice and encouragement

Group Mentoring

- One mentor with several mentees
- Mentees also benefit from peer-to-peer learning through shared experiences
- Efficient use of mentor time
- Builds collaborative skills

Peer Mentoring

- Connects individuals at similar career stages or job level
- Built on shared experiences and mutual understanding rather than hierarchy

Reverse Mentoring

- Less experienced professional mentors a more experienced one
- Helps both sides learn from each other's lived experiences, perspectives, and skills
- Valuable for bridging generational, cultural, and technological gaps

Mentorship Sources

- Employer
- Practice and affinity groups
- Bar associations
- Civic groups
- Law school alumni groups
- Formal and informal

You are here: [Home](#) > **Lawyer Mentoring**



**Mentoring lays the foundation for legal careers
grounded in civility and professionalism.**



The Importance of Lawyer Mentoring: Perspectives
IL Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism

Elements of a Successful Mentoring Program

- Structure – goals, meeting frequency, and expectations
- Personalized matching – “fit” (personality, aspirations, communication styles)
- Formal training and resources
- Integration with firm culture, values, and strategy
- Ongoing evaluation

Obstacles to Law Firm Mentoring

- Time constraints
- Partner buy-in
- Lack of structure
- Resistance to change

General Benefits of Mentoring

- Cost-effective approach to many problems that face the legal profession
 - Develop proficient, productive, and profitable lawyers to serve employer's clients
 - Increase retention rates
 - Joins interests of individual lawyers with those of its organization

Benefits to Protégé

- Introduction to the firm
- Hands-on instruction
 - Designated time for feedback
- Multiple opportunities
 - Practice and affinity groups also helpful

Best Practices for Protégés

- Take responsibility in scheduling meetings, creating agendas, and following up
- Identify areas where you want support from mentor
- Respect mentor's time
- Be coachable

Be “SMART”

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Benefits to Mentor

- Help mentor develop leadership skills
- Obtain new ideas and perspectives
 - Diverse viewpoints
 - Renew enthusiasm for job
- Share successes and mistakes with protégé
- Build a strong, loyal team
- Build a legacy
- Reverse mentoring
 - Protégé educates mentor on generational, technological, or cultural shifts

Best Practices for Mentors

- Get to know protégé as a person
- Share your story – the good, bad, unfiltered
- Make clear what kind of support you can offer
- Set clear expectations
- Be dependable

Benefits to Employer

- Boosts retention and builds loyalty
- Passes on firm's accumulated wisdom
- Raises productivity
- Builds and transmits firm culture
- Promotes diversity
- Helps organization adapt to change

Traits of a Great Attorney Mentor

- Showing consistency in actions and offering reliable assistance and guidance
- Dedication and sincerity in seeing protégé succeed
- Sharing joys and disappointments with protégé
- Promotes honest and open communication by being approachable and personable

Mitigating Unconscious Biases in Mentoring

Unconscious Bias in Mentoring

Subconscious prejudices or assumptions about others based upon past experiences or misunderstandings

- Usually not ill-will

Types of Biases in Mentoring

- Affinity bias
 - Individuals feel more connected to others with similar backgrounds or interests
- Gender bias
 - Mentor might unintentionally provide more opportunities to protégé of same gender
- Confirmation bias
 - Preference for information that confirms pre-existing beliefs

Risks of Unconscious Bias

- Can inhibit efficacy of mentor relationships
- Mentor might treat protégé as a label rather than an individual

Examples

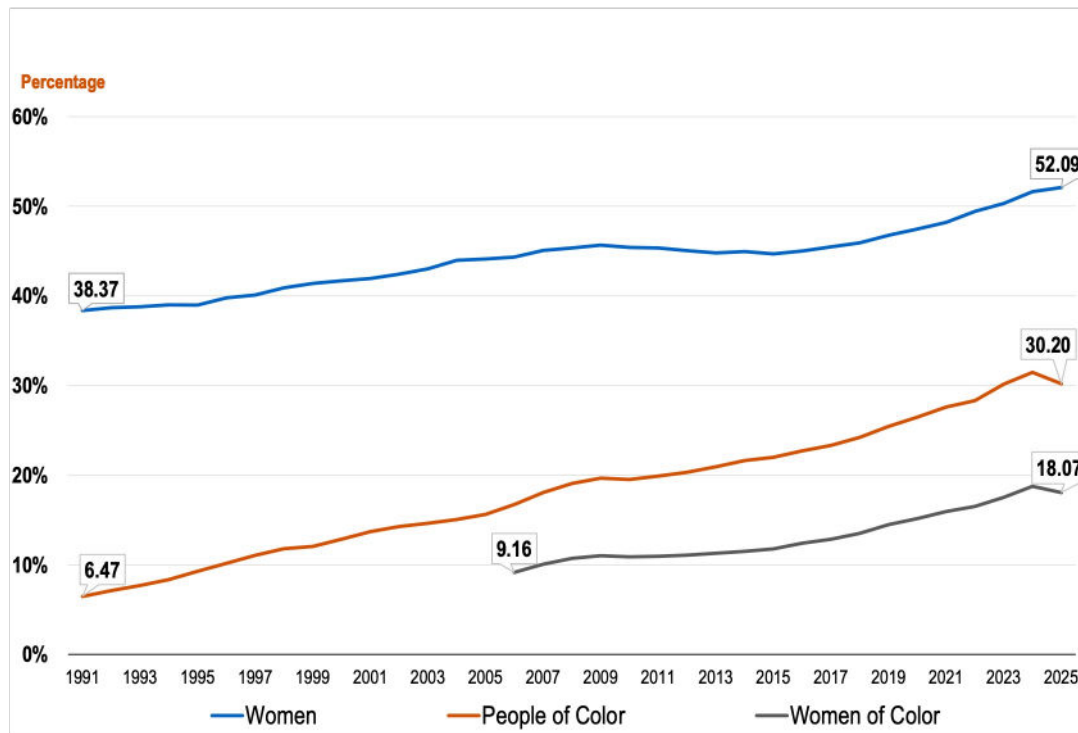
- Favoring protégé with similar background
 - Affinity bias
- Giving enthusiastic feedback to protégé perceived as a “go-getter”
- Pairing mentors and protégés based on external similarities

Combat Unconscious Biases in Mentoring

- Train mentors about unconscious biases
- Set expectations that bias awareness is part of mentoring process
- Confront potential biases early
- Create mentoring agreements to ensure open-mindedness

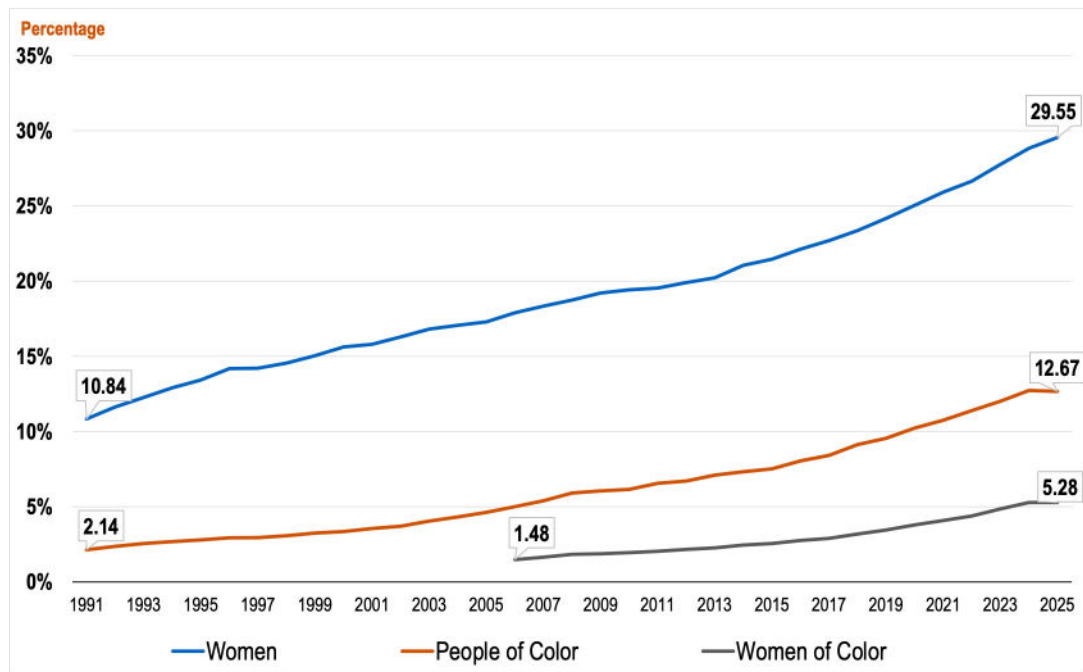
Encouraging Inclusivity

Percentage of Associates Who are Women and People of Color at Law Firms, 1991-2025



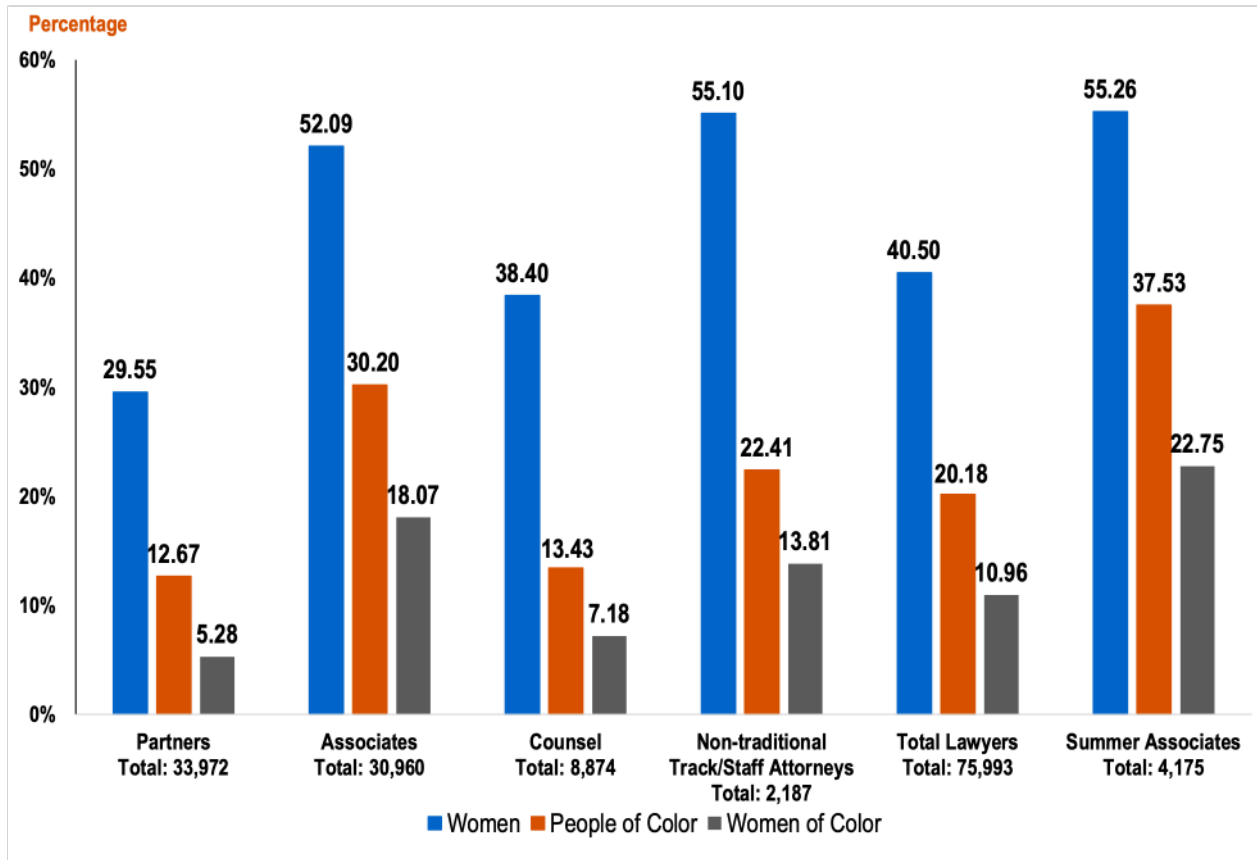
Note: Starting in 2006, data collection was expanded to include gender within each racial/ethnic category; therefore, data on women of color are not available for prior years. From 1991-2005, associate figures include senior attorneys and staff attorneys.

Percentage of Partners Who are Women and People of Color at Law Firms, 1991-2025



Note: Starting in 2006, data collection was expanded to include gender within each racial/ethnic category; therefore, data on women of color are not available for prior years. From 1991-1996, partner figures include of counsel.

Percentage of Women and People of Color at Law Firms, 2025



Percentage of LGBTQ+ Lawyers, 2004-2025

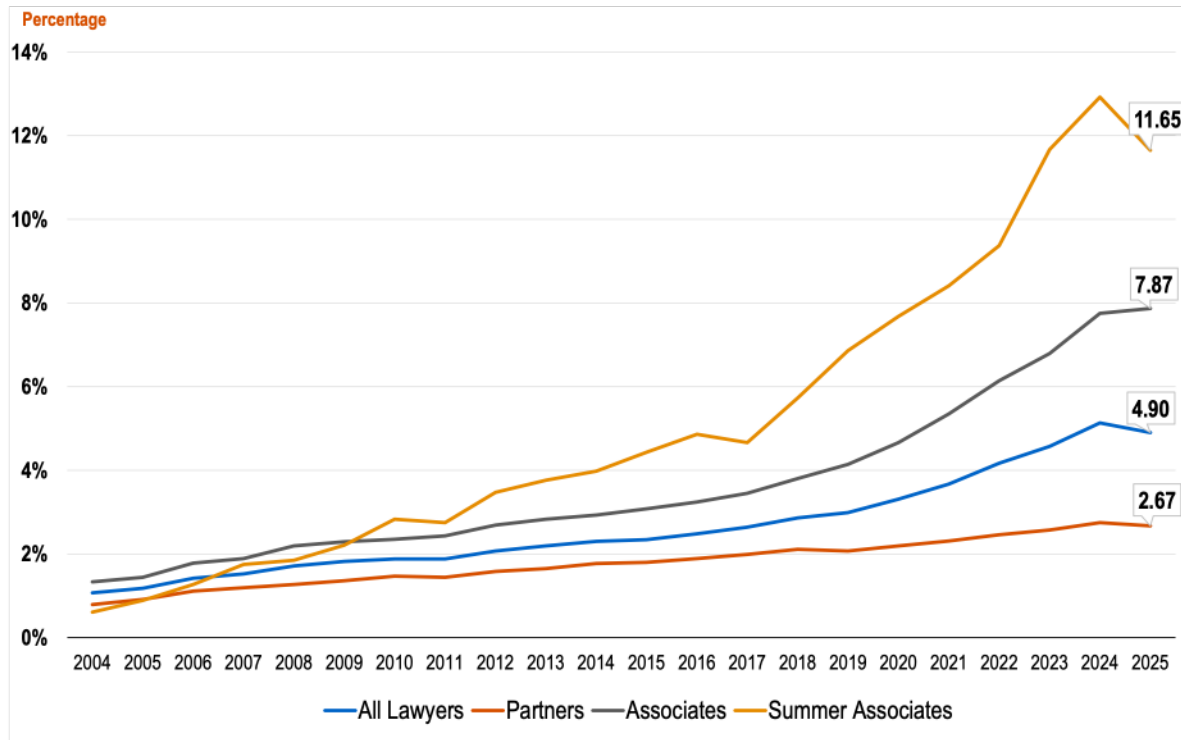


Figure 2. Demographic proportions per role by race and gender.

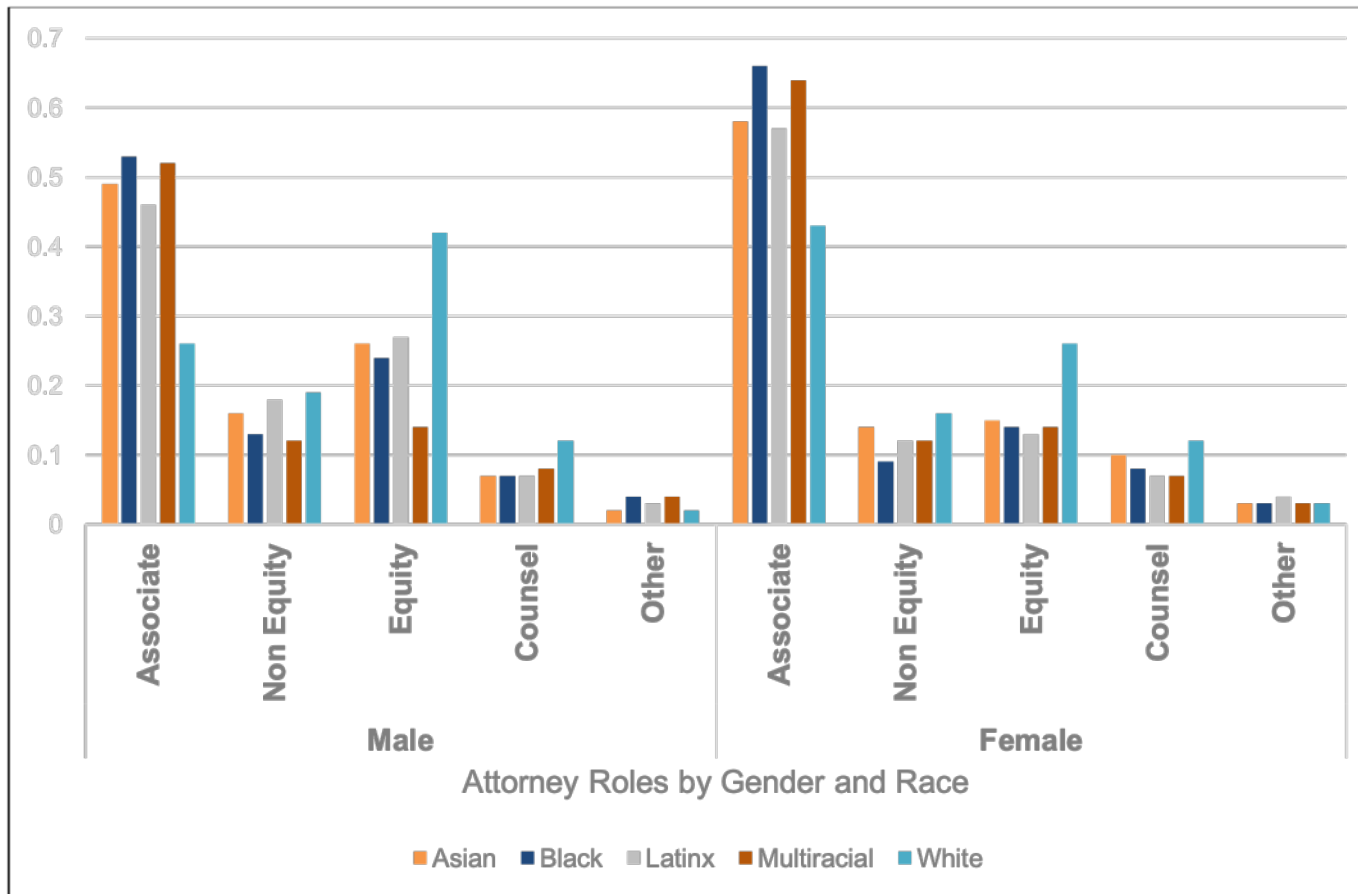
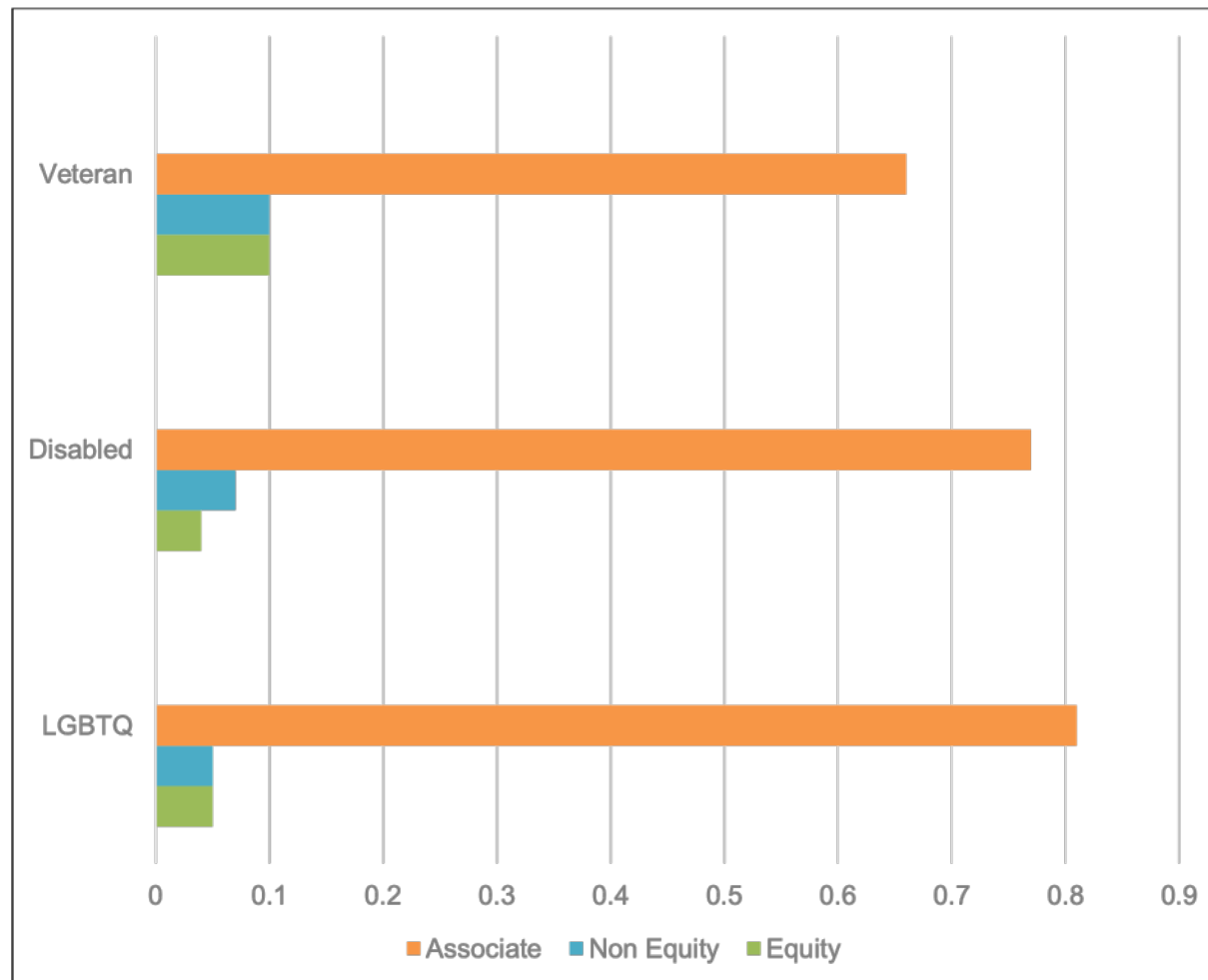


Figure 3. Demographic proportions per role by Disabled, LGBTQ+, and Veteran status



Mentoring Fosters Inclusivity

- Connect under-represented individuals with leaders, networks, and career pathways
- Help people from different backgrounds understand each other's day-to-day realities

Importance of Mentoring Women and Minority Lawyers

Women and minority lawyers more
likely to face barriers to advancement

Sponsorship

- If mentors are like coaches, sponsors are more like agents who represent you and work to advance your career
- Sponsors “speak for” a sponsee, recommending sponsee for opportunities and putting sponsee’s name forward
- Sponsors are loyal supporters for career advancement
- Sponsors
 - open doors for sponsee
 - Invest in sponsee and stake their reputation for sponsee

Mentor vs. Sponsor

- A mentor is someone who shares knowledge, provides guidance, and offers support.
- A sponsor actively and intentionally uses their credibility and influence to advocate for your professional growth and success.

Sponsorship Is Usually Earned

- Quality work
- Attitude
- Reliability
- Reciprocal loyalty

Challenges for Inclusive Mentoring

- Biases
- Establish clear boundaries and transparency
- Use structured frameworks
- Address hesitation, awkwardness, rumors and misconstrued interactions directly

Considerations for Inclusivity

- Opportunities
- Staffing
- Credit
- Transitioning credit
- Protecting colleagues
- Rewarding teamwork

Conclusory Matters

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Timed Agenda

12:00-05 Introduction

12:05-55 Discuss mentorships and how law firms can encourage inclusivity through mentorships

Future Programs

November 4 – Wednesday at 12:00 Noon CT – **Ending Client Relationships – Risks and Rules**

November 17 – Tuesday at 12:00 Noon CT – **Legal Ethics and New Firm Business Models (including MSOs)**

December 2 – Wednesday at 12:00 Noon CT – **Managing Your Lawyer Trust Account**

December 17 – Thursday at 12:00 Noon CT – **Legal Ethics and Dealing with Non-Clients**

www.DowneyEthicsCLE.com

Thank you



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