

Methodology for U.S. News – Best Lawyers “Best Law Firms” Rankings

The methodology for the U.S. News - Best Lawyers "Best Law Firms" involved surveying thousands of law firm clients; leading lawyers and law firm managers; partners and associates; and marketing officers and recruiting officers. Each were asked what factors they considered vital for clients hiring law firms, for lawyers choosing a firm to refer a legal matter to, and for lawyers seeking employment.



Based on that feedback, six key surveys instruments were created: A client survey was sent to **52,480 clients**; a lawyer survey was sent to **43,900 lawyers**, including every U.S. lawyer listed in Best Lawyers; surveys were sent to **2,314 marketing officers and 2,322 recruiting officers** as well as to **8,597 firms without marketing- or recruiting-office contacts**; and associate surveys were sent to **2,322 firm associates and 1,775 summer associates**. The marketing-officer, recruiting-officer, associate, and summer-associate surveys included a **total of 724 questions**.

The level of response from this vast group exceeded our most optimistic expectations: **1,859 firms** participated in the marketing-officer and recruiting-officer surveys; **9,514 clients** – including every **Fortune 100 company** and **587 of the Fortune 1000 companies** – provided **194,370 firm practice-area evaluations**; **6,190 clients provided 11,181 comments** about law firm practice areas and individual lawyers; and **8,842 lawyers provided 594,012 firm practice-area evaluations**.

Client and lawyer surveys collected mostly reputational data. Using a scale of 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest), clients voted on expertise, responsiveness, understanding of a business and its needs, cost-effectiveness, civility, and whether they would refer another client to a firm. Lawyers voted on expertise, responsiveness, integrity, cost-effectiveness, and whether they would refer a matter to a firm and whether they consider a firm a worthy competitor.

Marketing-officer and recruiting-officer surveys provided the following demographic data: number of lawyers in the firm; number and location of firm offices; number of lawyers who held senior positions in the office of the U.S. Attorney General or a State Attorney General; number of lawyers who clerked for federal or state judges (and at what level); number and percentage of lawyers who are members of the American College of Trial Lawyers or the American Law Institute; number of lawyers who have held senior positions at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, the U.S. Tax Court, the IRS, and a range of federal regulatory agencies including the FCC, DOJ, CFTC, DOE, ERC, EPA, FDA, EU, FTC, SEC.

In addition, information was collected about client profile (numbers of clients within different billing ranges); pro-bono commitment (number and percentage of lawyers doing pro-bono work and how many pro-bono hours performed overall); and diversity (number and percentage of lawyers who are women, members of an ethnic minority, GLBT, or disabled). The survey also gathered information about firm practice areas such as the number of transactions in a practice area at different dollar levels; the number of litigation matters at different dollar levels; and the significance of major legal matters undertaken by the firm that cannot be weighed in monetary terms. Where firms did not supply information directly, efforts were made to secure the data by alternate means.

In addition to information from these surveys, the rankings incorporate the **3.1 million evaluations of 39,372 individual leading lawyers** collected by Best Lawyers in its most recent annual survey. Because clients hire firms on the basis of outstanding individual lawyers as well as on a firm's overall strength, the number of lawyers listed in Best Lawyers in a practice area was factored in to that practice area's score, adjusted for firm size and other variables. In all cases, lawyer votes were weighted according to the voter's Best Lawyers record; client votes were weighted according to the client's standing; and outlying votes were disregarded.

All of the quantitative and qualitative data were combined into an overall U.S. News – Best Lawyers overall score for each firm. Firms with the highest overall scores were included on **metropolitan lists that covered as many as 81 practice areas in 171 metropolitan areas and 7 states and national lists covering 39 practice areas**. Because firms were often separated by small or insignificant differences in overall score, they have been **tiered rather than ranked sequentially**. In general, the first tier includes those firms that scored within a certain percentage of the highest-scoring firm(s); the second tier, those firms that scored within a certain percentage of the next highest scoring firm(s), etc.

To be eligible for a metropolitan ranking, a firm had to have **at least one lawyer listed in Best Lawyers**. As a result, **10,659 firms** were included in the ranking process; **8,903 firms**, including a large number of one-person firms, **received rankings**.

To be eligible for a national ranking, a firm had to have **an office in one of 40 metropolitan areas**:

Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus (Ohio), Dallas, Detroit, Hartford, Houston, Indianapolis, Jackson (Mississippi), Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland (both Maine and Oregon), Raleigh, Richmond, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Tampa, or Washington, D.C. or in the states of Colorado and New Jersey.

In metropolitan areas closely associated with specific practice areas (Banking Law in New York, for example, or Oil and Gas Law in Houston), a firm's high rankings in those areas were given additional weight in calculating national rankings in that practice area.

Firms were ranked in **81 practice areas**:

Administrative / Regulatory Law, Admiralty & Maritime Law, Advertising Law, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Antitrust Law, Banking and Finance Law, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law, Biotechnology Law, Civil Rights Law, Communications Law, Construction Law, Corporate Law, Criminal Defense: Non-White-Collar, Criminal Defense: White-Collar, Derivatives and Futures Law, DUI/DWI Defense, Education Law, Elder Law, Eminent Domain and Condemnation Law, Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law, Employment Law - Individuals, Employment Law - Management, Energy Law, Entertainment Law, Environmental Law, Equipment Finance Law, Family Law, Family Law Mediation, FDA Law, Franchise Law, Gaming Law, General Commercial Litigation, Government Relations Practice, Health Care Law, Immigration Law, Information Technology Law, Insurance Law, Intellectual Property Law, International Arbitration, Labor Law - Management, Labor Law - Union, Land Use & Zoning Law, Legal Malpractice Law - Defendants, Legal Malpractice Law - Plaintiffs, Mass Tort Litigation / Class Actions - Defendants, Mass Tort Litigation / Class Actions - Plaintiffs, Media & First Amendment Law, Medical Malpractice Law - Defendants, Medical Malpractice Law - Plaintiffs, Mergers & Acquisitions Law, Mining Law, Municipal Law, Mutual Funds Law, Native American Law, Natural Resources Law, Non-Profit/Charities Law, Oil & Gas Law, Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants, Personal Injury Litigation - Plaintiffs, Private Equity Law, Private Funds / Hedge Funds Law, Product Liability Litigation - Defendants, Product Liability Litigation - Plaintiffs, Professional Malpractice Law - Defendants, Professional

Malpractice Law - Plaintiffs, Project Finance Law, Public Finance Law, Railroad Law, Real Estate Law, Securities / Capital Markets Law, Securitization and Structured Finance Law, Sports Law, Tax Law , Technology Law, Timber Law, Transportation Law, Trusts & Estates Law, Venture Capital Law , Water Law, Workers' Compensation Law - Claimants, and Workers' Compensation Law – Employers.

Firms were ranked nationally in **39 practice areas**:

Admiralty & Maritime Law, Advertising Law, Antitrust Law, Banking and Finance Law, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law, Biotechnology Law, Communications Law, Construction Law, Corporate Law, Derivatives and Futures Law, Employment Law - Management, Energy Law, Entertainment Law, Equipment Finance Law, FDA Law, Franchise Law, General Commercial Litigation, Insurance Law, Intellectual Property Law, International Arbitration, Labor Law - Management, Mass Tort Litigation / Class Actions - Plaintiffs, Mergers & Acquisitions Law, Mining Law, Mutual Funds Law, Native American Law, Oil & Gas Law, Private Equity Law, Private Funds / Hedge Funds Law, Product Liability Litigation - Plaintiffs, Project Finance Law, Railroad Law, Securities / Capital Markets Law, Securitization and Structured Finance Law, Sports Law, Tax Law, Timber Law, Transportation Law, and Venture Capital Law.

Firms were ranked in 81 practice areas in **171 metropolitan areas and 7 states**:

Akron, Albany, Albuquerque, Allentown, Amarillo, Ann Arbor, Asheville, Atlanta, Augusta-GA, Augusta-ME, Austin, Baltimore, Bangor, Baton Rouge, Battle Creek, Beaumont, Billings, Binghamton, Birmingham, Bismarck, Boston, Bowling Green, Buffalo, Burlington, Butte, Casper, Cedar Rapids, Charleston-SC, Charleston-WV, Charlotte, Charlottesville, Chattanooga, Cheyenne, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbia-MO, Columbia-SC, Columbus-GA, Columbus-IN, Columbus-OH, Concord, Corpus Christi, Council Bluffs, Dallas, Davenport, Dayton, Des Moines, Detroit, Duluth, East St. Louis, Eau Claire, El Paso, Eugene, Evansville, Fargo, Fayetteville, Flint, Florence, Fort Myers, Fort Wayne, Frankfort, Gainesville, Grand Forks, Grand Rapids, Great Falls, Greensboro, Greenville, Gulfport, Harrisburg, Hartford, Hattiesburg, Helena, Houston, Huntsville, Indianapolis, Jackson-MS, Jackson-WY, Jacksonville, Kansas City-KS, Kansas City-MO, Knoxville, Lake Charles, Lansing, Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Lexington, Lincoln, Little Rock, Long Island, Los Angeles, Louisville, Macon, Madison, Manchester, Mason City, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Minot, Missoula, Mobile, Montgomery, Montpelier, Morgantown, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Norfolk, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orlando, Oshkosh, Pensacola, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pierre, Pittsburgh, Portland-ME, Portland-OR, Raleigh, Rapid City, Reno, Richmond, Riverside, Roanoke, Rochester-NY, Sacramento, Salem, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Ana, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe, Santa Rosa, Savannah, Seattle, Sheridan, Shreveport, Sioux City, Sioux Falls, South Bend, Spokane, Springfield-MA, Springfield-MO, St. Louis, Stamford, Syracuse, Tallahassee, Tampa, Terre Haute, Toledo, Topeka, Tri-Cities-TN, Tucson, Tulsa, Tupelo, Washington, Waterloo, Wausau, West Palm Beach, Western VA, White Plains, Wichita, Wilmington-NC, Worcester, and Yakima – as well as in Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Utah.