

Evidence

Women in the Law

Can the race for equality be won?
BY VICKI SANDERS AND LEAH HERSCOVICI '18

For several decades women have been entering and graduating from law school in numbers almost equal to men. They have also been entering the legal profession at near equal rates for thirty years. Yet, equality in the legal ranks declines for women over time, and salaries for men and women in the field are not commensurate. Add to these realities the growing number of revelations about workplace biases and harassment—along with employers' growing willingness to support diversity programs—and a picture emerges of an industry in transition, with all the challenges and opportunities that such change entails.

At numerous BC Law events this past semester, these issues were probed, discussed, and debated at length. While all the participants were very clear-eyed about the hardships they've faced and the social norms and barriers that have hindered women's progress, they were also optimistic, enthusiastically dispensing advice and providing insight into the profession's inner workings.

One conversation focused on the #MeToo movement. Another dwelt on the difficulty of getting people to appreciate the need for and impact of diversity. An Asian lawyer observed that finding role models can be hard for women of her race because they "haven't been in the legal industry long enough to have twenty years' worth of supervisors and partners above us." But she also offered a formula for change: "We've got to bring ourselves up and bring everyone below up with us."

Perhaps no event so aptly captured this moment in time for women than the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy discussion about women in politics. As the number of women running for office is breaking records nationwide this campaign season, Boston City Councilor Lydia Edwards could have been speaking for all women trying to advance their careers when she said: "There was just a parade of horrors as to why I shouldn't even try. If someone is fighting that hard to keep you out of the race, then you should definitely run because they must know something that you don't know about your abilities to...win."



NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

55,777 V. 55,059

Women enrolled in law school in 2017 outnumbered men for 1st time

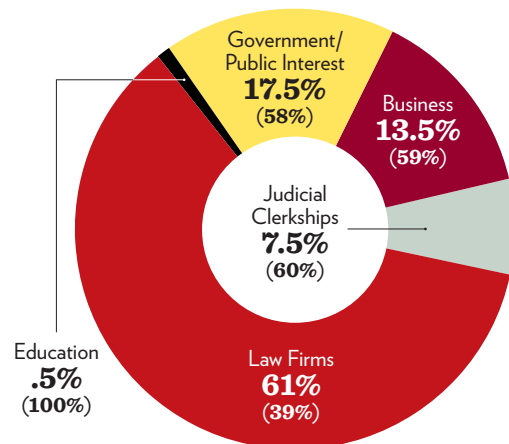
49.9% / Summer associates who are women

46% / Leadership positions held by women in top 50 law reviews

30 Years women have been graduating in nearly equal numbers to men

ENTERING THE PROFESSION FROM BC LAW (2016)*

Percentage of all Graduates (and Percentage of Women) in Each Position



*Percentages do not include those employed in full- and part-time short-term jobs

FEMALE LAWYERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Law Firms



36%

Women currently make up 36% of the law firm workforce



23% / Partners who are women

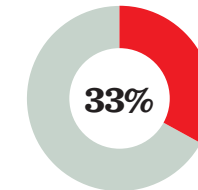


45% / Associates who are women

25%

Women make up 25% of firm governance roles, high governance committees, compensation committees, or as managing or practice group leaders, nearly doubling in the last decade

The Judiciary

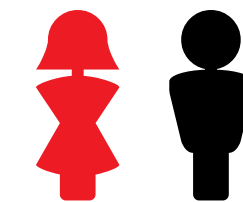


33%

Active US district (or trial) court judges who are women

Six

District courts in US where there has never been a female judge



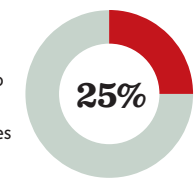
60 v. 167
FEMALE MALE

Active judges sitting on the 13 federal courts of appeal

Business

7%

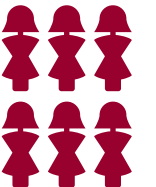
Chief executives of Fortune 1000 companies who are women



25%

General counsels who are women for Fortune 500 companies

Academics



Number of women deans running top 12 law schools (Yale, Stanford, Columbia, Virginia, Duke, and Northwestern)

Government



22% / Women-held seats in the US Senate



19% / Women-held seats in the House of Representatives

527

A record number of women are running for House and Senate seats, a 67% jump from 2016 (Bloomberg, as of April 2018)

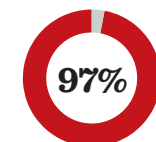
A record number of women are expected to run for governor in 2018, more than double the record of 34 in 1994

(Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics)

777

IMBALANCES

The gender pay gap persists across all levels of attorneys. Women earn 90-94% of what men in the same position earn, according to a 2017 NAWL Survey



97%

Firms reporting top earner is a man

70

Firms where only one or no women are top 10 earners

\$779,000 V. \$530,000

What male partners make a year, on average, versus female partners



141
MEN

For every 100 women promoted to partner, 141 men are promoted (McKinsey & Company, 2017)



291
FIRMS

Nine out of 300 firms surveyed had a lawyer workforce 50% or more female (New York Times, 2016)

BC LAW FEMALE FIRSTS

- ▶ **MARGARET HECKLER '56**
US Representative (8 terms, 1967-1983), US Secretary of Health and Human Services (1983-1985), US Ambassador to Ireland (1986-1989)
- ▶ **MIRIAM SHEARING '65**
First woman district court judge and justice and chief justice of Nevada Supreme Court
- ▶ **JOAN LUKEY '74**
First woman president of American College of Trial Lawyers
- ▶ **THERESE PRITCHARD '78**
First woman Chair of Bryan Cave LLP
- ▶ **DEBRA YANG '85**
First female Asian American US Attorney (California, 2002-2006)
- ▶ **ELEANOR COE SINNOTT '89**
First Korean American female judge in Massachusetts, Boston Municipal Court (2014-)