



Celebrating 30 years of the Law Firm
Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative



PRO BONO
INSTITUTE

LAW FIRM PRO BONO PROJECT

2025*

Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative

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*In conformity with the practice started in 2020, the name of this Report reflects the year in which the Report is being issued, rather than the year of the most recent statistics contained in the Report. Prior to 2020, the name of the Report reflected the calendar year for which data was collected.

Pro Bono Institute* (PBI), established in 1996, provides research, consultative services, analysis and assessment, publications, and training to a broad range of legal audiences.

Mission

PBI is mandated to explore and identify new approaches to, and resources for, the provision of legal services to the poor, disadvantaged, and other individuals or groups unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. We do so by supporting, enhancing, and transforming the pro bono efforts of major law firms, in-house legal departments, and public interest organizations in the U.S. and around the world.

Law Firm Pro Bono Project

The PBI Law Firm Pro Bono Project® program is a global effort designed to support and enhance the pro bono culture and performance of major law firms in the U.S. and around the world. The Project's goal is to fully integrate pro bono into the practice, philosophy, and culture of firms so that large law firms provide the institutional support, infrastructure, and encouragement essential to fostering a climate supportive of pro bono service and promoting attorney participation at all levels.

Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge Initiative

The PBI Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® initiative, launched in 1993 and implemented in 1995, is a unique, aspirational pro bono standard. Developed by law firm leaders and corporate general counsel, the Challenge articulates a voluntary, single standard for one key segment of the legal profession – major law firms. (A copy of the Challenge statement is included in the Appendices.) Challenge signatories publicly acknowledge their institutional, firm-wide commitment to provide pro bono legal services to low-income individuals and non-profit groups that serve them. The Challenge includes a narrow, but thoughtful, definition of pro bono that has become the industry standard for large law firms and others, as well as an accountability mechanism and measurement tool through its performance benchmarks and annual reporting requirement.

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Recognizing 30 Years of the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge Initiative

DRIVING IMPACT, ADVANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Three decades ago, Pro Bono Institute (PBI) Founder Esther F. Lardent, along with visionary leaders in the legal profession including PBI's first Board Chair, James W. Jones, launched a bold movement to embrace pro bono as a core institutional law firm value. The Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® initiative was born from that vision—a pledge from law firm Challenge signatories to publicly acknowledge their institutional, firm-wide commitment to provide pro bono legal services to low-income and underserved individuals and advance access to justice.

The Challenge also introduced a narrow but thoughtful definition of pro bono that has become the industry standard for large law firms and others. With a clear definition of pro bono and an annual reporting requirement, the Challenge serves as an accountability mechanism and benchmarking tool for collective pro bono efforts among major law firms.

This year's milestone 30th anniversary of the Challenge comes amid an uncertain legal landscape where the need for pro bono legal services is higher than ever before. Continued commitment and engagement around pro bono are crucial to ensuring that our legal system remains fair, functional, and true to its ideals. Law firm and other legal industry leaders have great power to promote justice in times like these, just as they did 30 years ago when the Challenge was created. The support, investment, and encouragement of pro bono champions are essential to sustaining the strong foundation laid 30 years ago to ensure that pro bono thrives for decades to come.

The 2025 Challenge Report is both a tribute and a call to action. It is a recognition of the remarkable leaders who launched the Challenge and created the law firm pro bono foundation that brought us here. The report also identifies pro bono trends and provides reflections on the evolution of pro bono that can help us to navigate the opportunities and challenges ahead to drive impact and advance access to justice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **2025 Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge Initiative** examines the pro bono performance of signatories to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge statement during the 2024 calendar year. Challenge signatories have committed to contribute 3 or 5% (or at a few firms, 60 or 100 hours per attorney) of their annual total client billable hours to pro bono activities as defined by the Challenge and report their performance to PBI Law Firm Pro Bono Project staff each year.

Overall Performance

This year, 114 firms reported performing an aggregated total of **4,925,000 hours of pro bono work in 2024**. Pro bono hours represented approximately 3.71% of total client billable hours in 2024, a 1.33% decrease from 2023.

Pro Bono for Those of Limited Means

For 2024, firms reported performing nearly **3.4 million pro bono hours for those of limited means** and organizations serving them. This comprises 73.4% of all pro bono hours reported for 2024, a slight decrease in percentage compared to 2023 (74%).

Participation

The percentage of attorneys engaged in pro bono in 2024 was slightly higher than the percentage engaged in 2023. The combined participation rate of all attorneys was 73.6% in 2024 as compared to 73.3% in 2023. The percentage of **partners participating in pro bono was 62.9%** as compared to 63.8% in 2023, and the percentage of **associates participating in pro bono was 84.1%** as compared to 84% in 2023.

Charitable Donations

In 2024, the total amount of **charitable giving to legal services organizations decreased to \$14,482,068** from \$16,722,447 in 2023, although 5 fewer firms reported on giving this year. The average reported firm donation in 2024 was \$425,943, which represents a 10.9% decrease from the average firm donation in 2023 (\$477,784).

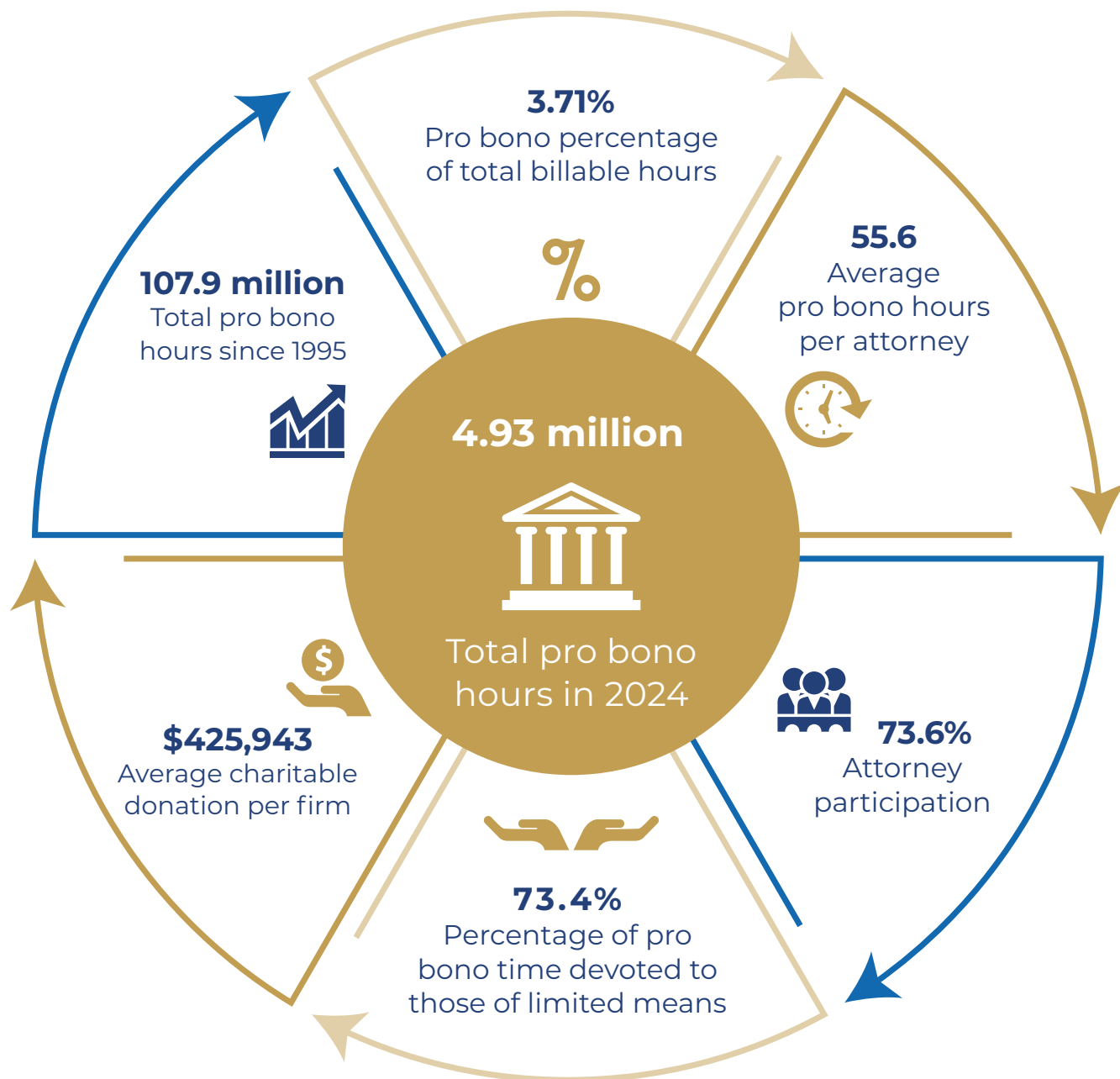
SNAPSHOT

30th
Anniversary

Celebrating 30 years of the Law Firm
Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

In 2024, signatories to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative contributed about 4.93 million hours of pro bono service. This represents a stronger performance, on average per responding firm, compared to pro bono hours in 2023 when 120 firms reported an aggregated total of 5,076,659 hours.

This translates to an average of 43,202 hours per reporting firm in 2024 as compared to an average of 42,305 per reporting firm in 2023.

“ Every generation leaves behind a legacy.
What that legacy will be is determined by the
people of that generation. What legacy do you
want to leave behind?”

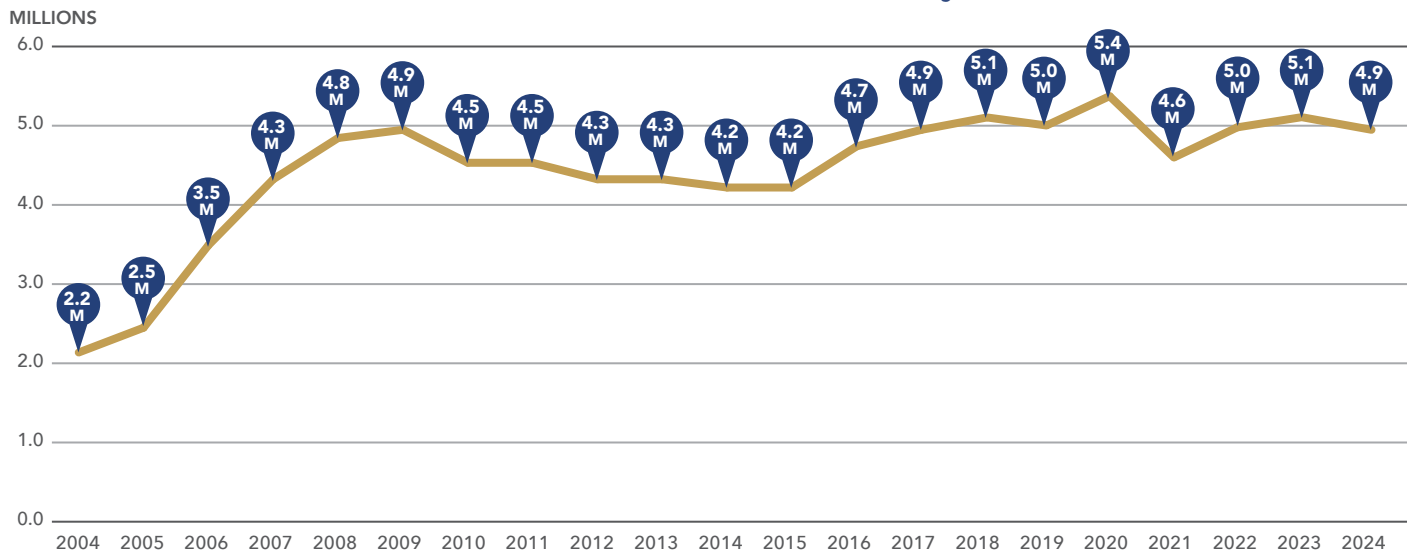
– John Lewis

2024 CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE DATA

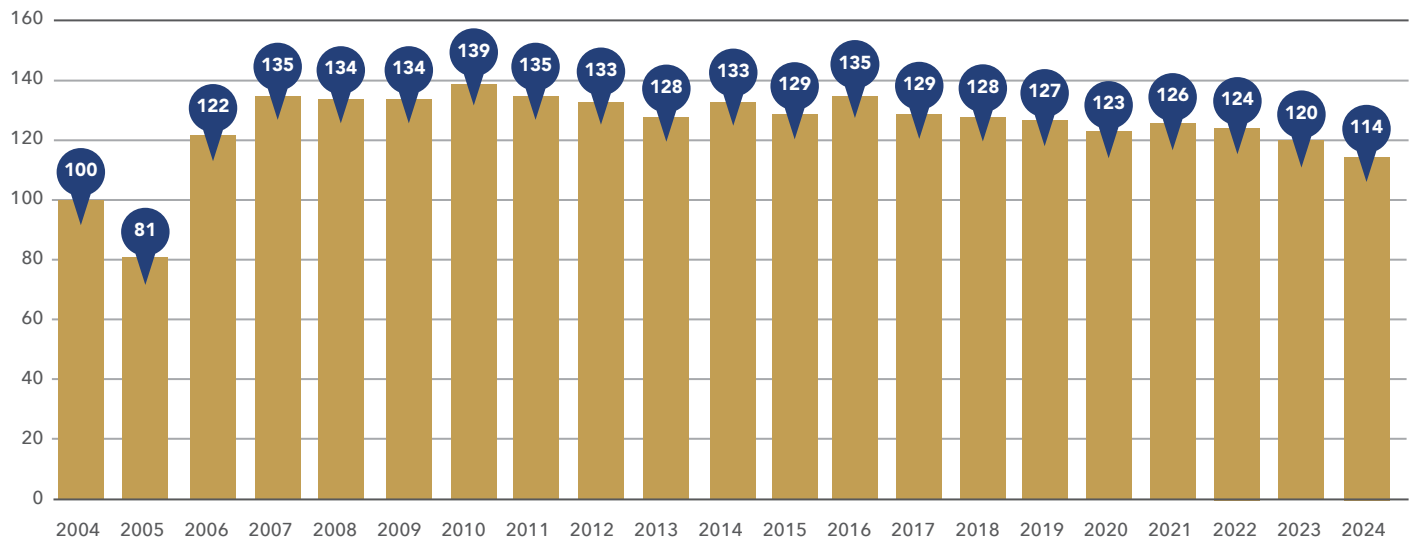
Highlights of Overall Pro Bono Performance

One hundred fourteen firms reported in 2025 for 2024. These firms performed an aggregated total of 4,925,000 hours of pro bono work. This represents 151,659 fewer hours than in 2023, when 120 firms performed an aggregated total of 5,076,659 hours of pro bono work.

Total Number of Pro Bono Hours by Year



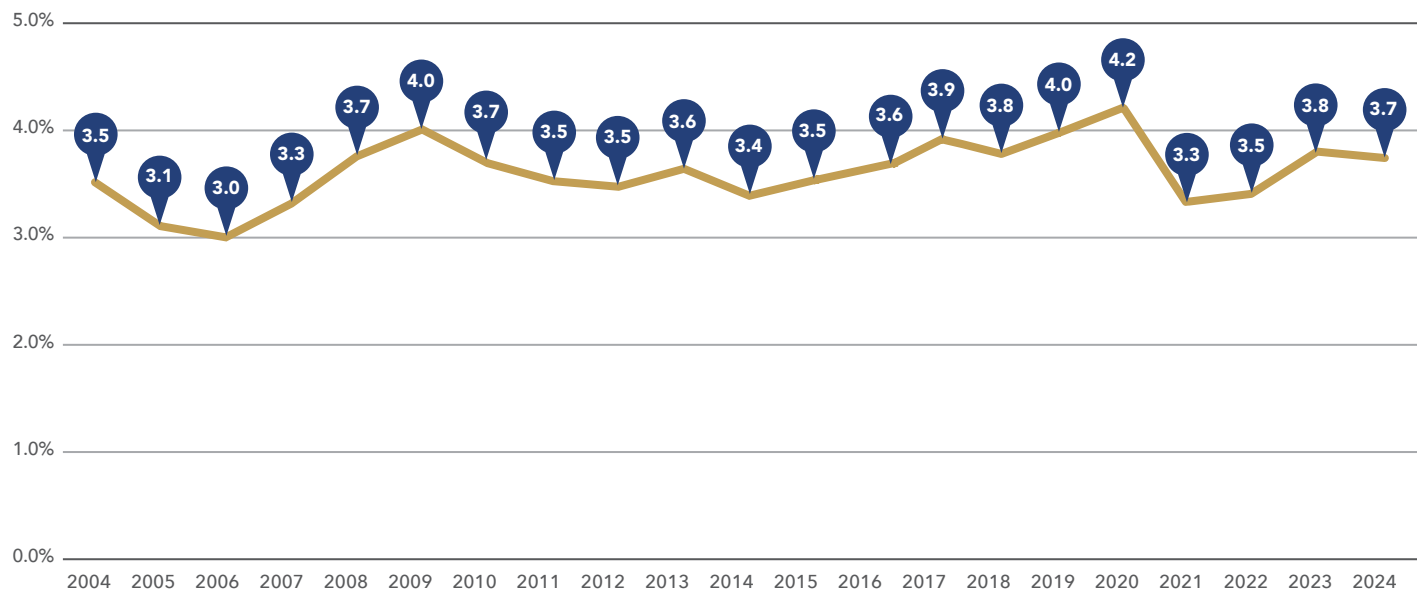
Number of Firms Reporting



Average Pro Bono Percentage

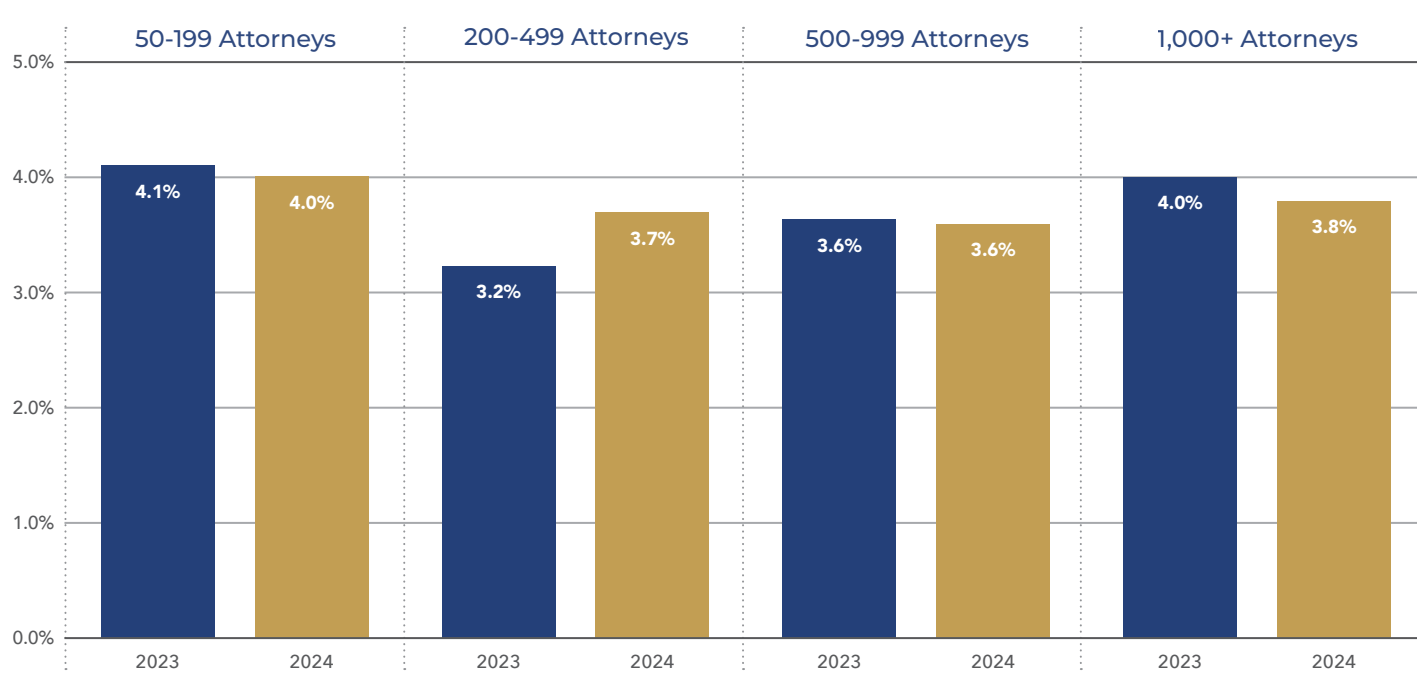
Viewed as a percentage of total client billable hours, pro bono hours decreased in 2024 to approximately 3.71% of all reported hours, a 1.33% decrease from 2023.

Average Pro Bono Percentage by Year



As in 2023, firms with headcounts of 50 to 199 attorneys had the highest average pro bono percentage in 2024. This repeated pattern may indicate a growing trend for this firm size group. The group of firms with 200-499 attorneys saw a notable increase in their pro bono percentage.¹

Average Pro Bono Percentage by Firm Size

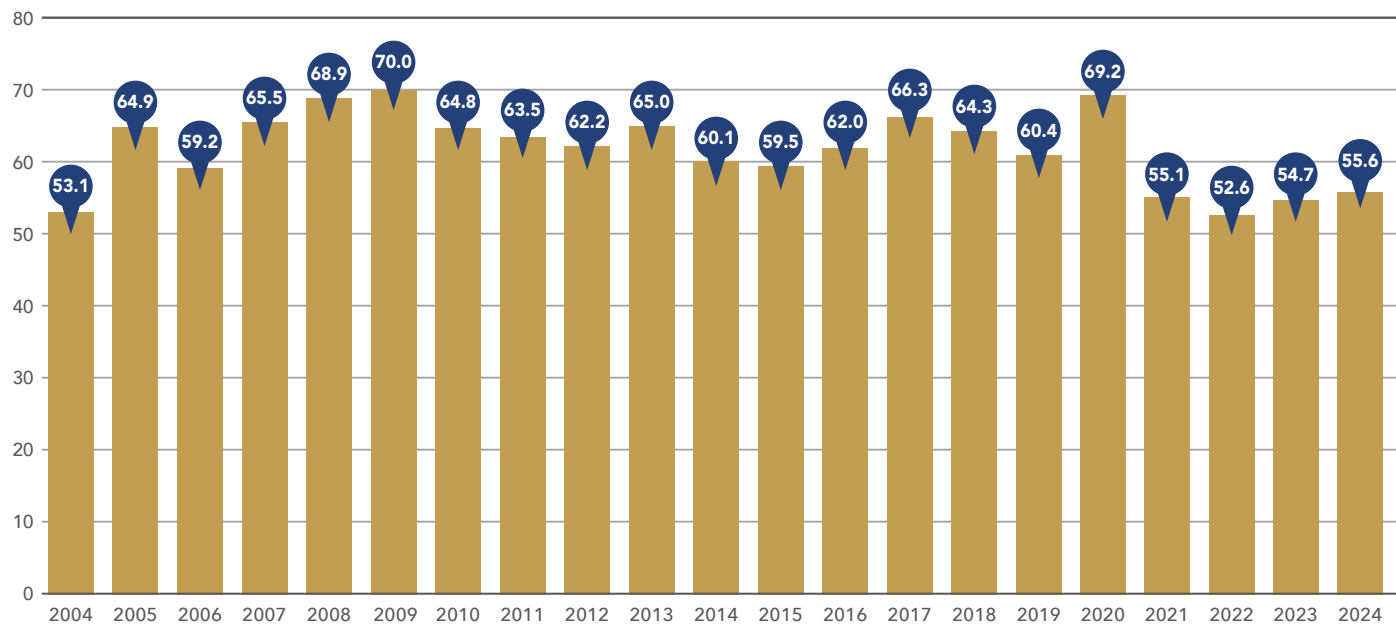


¹ For a detailed breakdown of average pro bono percentage by firm size, see Table 1 in Appendix B.

Average Pro Bono Hours Per Attorney

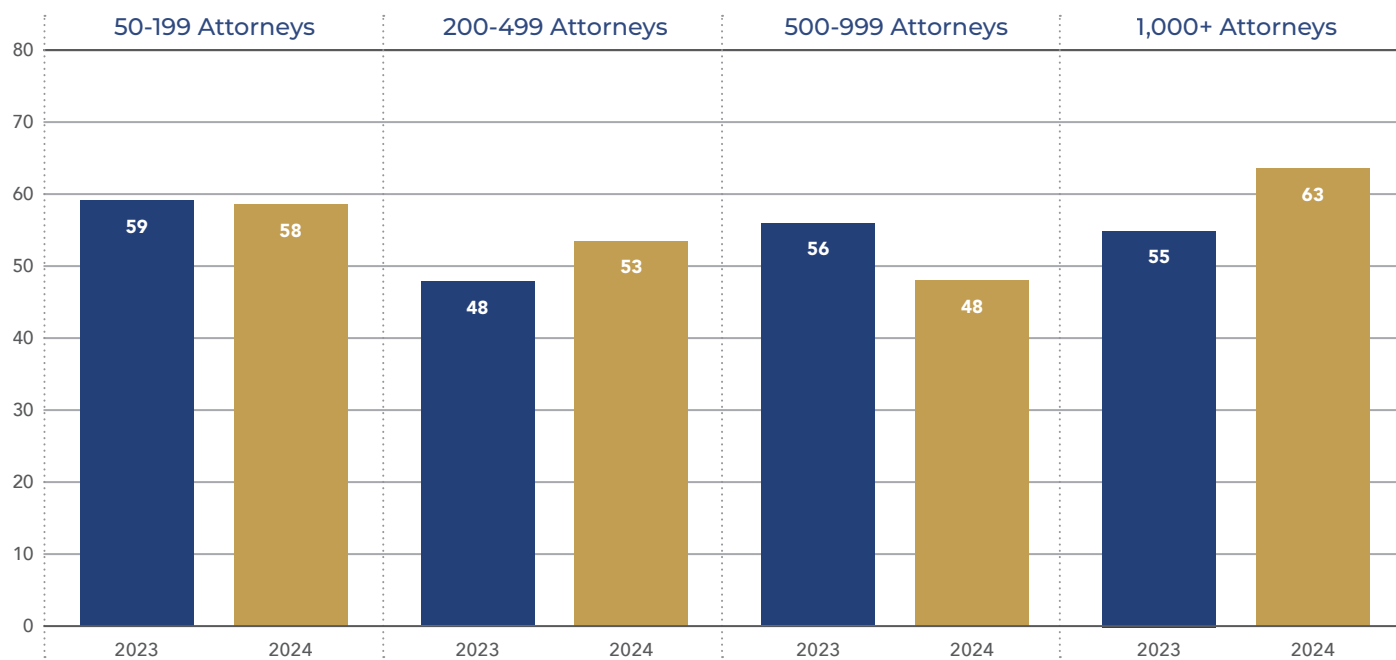
In 2024, the average number of pro bono hours per attorney increased slightly to 55.6 from 54.7 in 2023. While this represents a 1.6% increase this year and appears to maintain an upward trend on a gradual basis, it still reflects a significant drop from pre-pandemic average hours per attorney — 64.1 hours on average between 2005 and 2020.

Average Pro Bono Hours Per Attorney



The following graph presents a breakdown of average pro bono hours per attorney by firm size in 2023 and 2024.

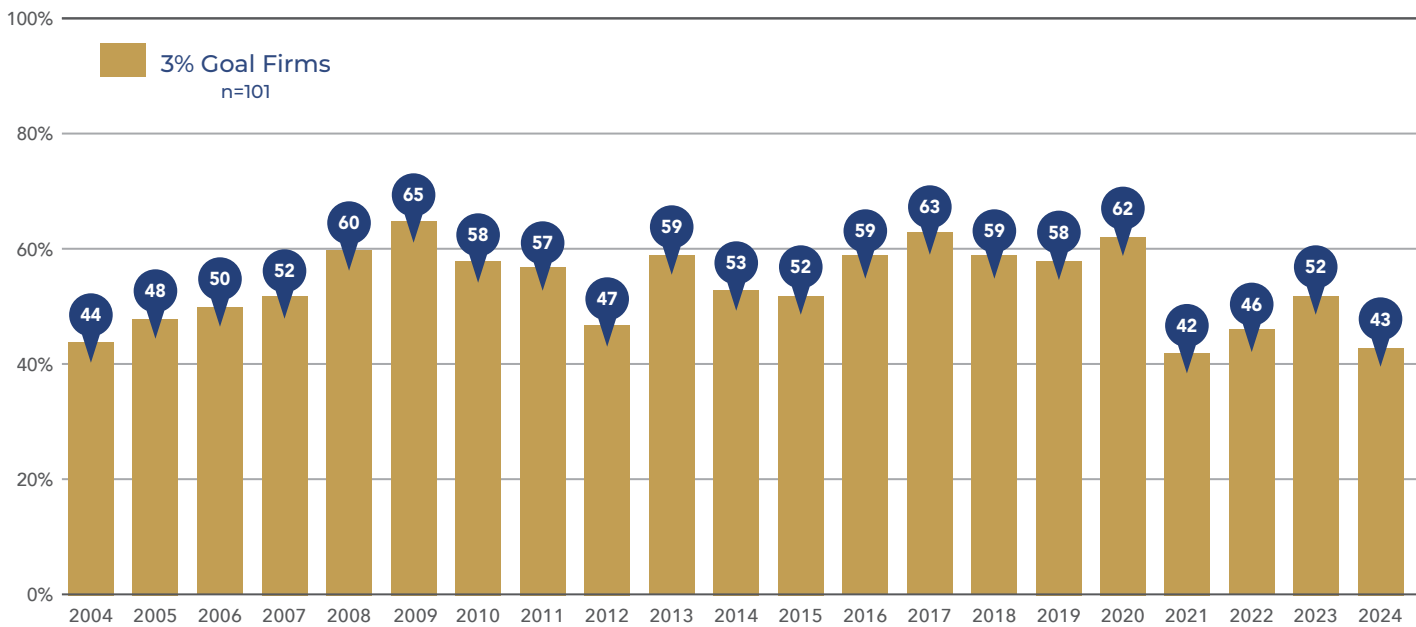
Average Pro Bono Hours Per Attorney by Firm Size



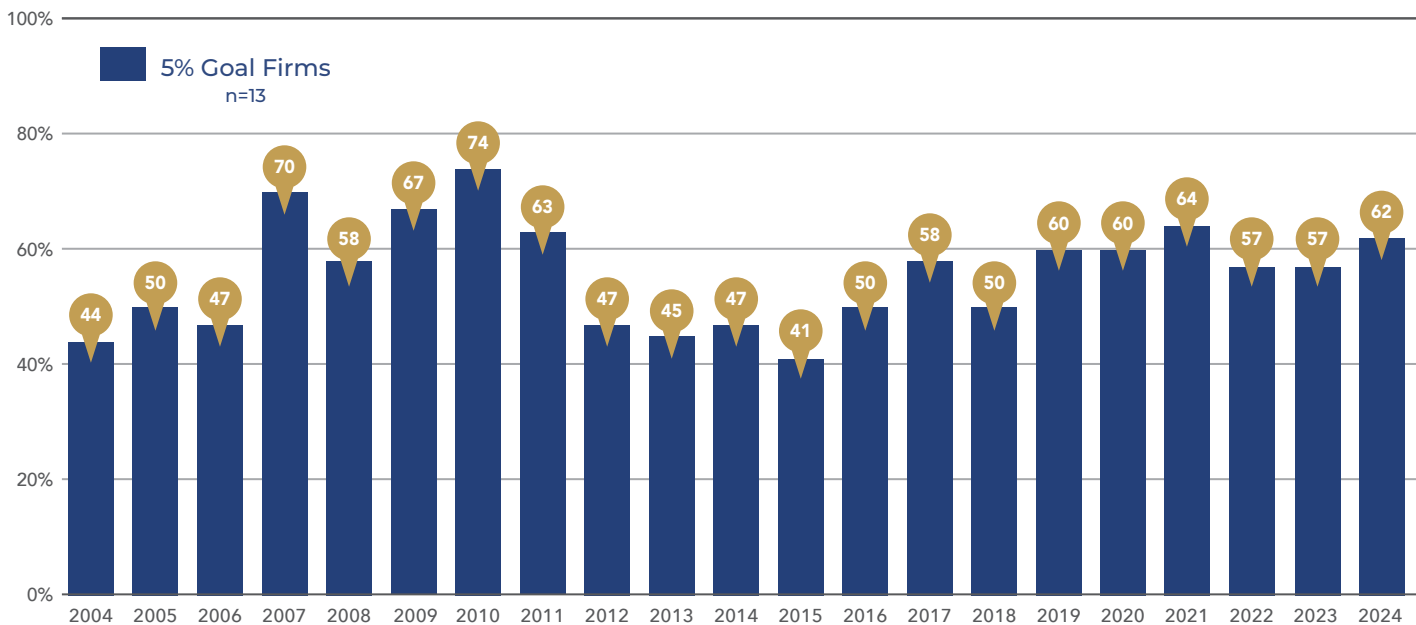
Reaching the Challenge Goal

The following graphs present the percentage of reporting firms that reached their Challenge goal in 2024.

Percentage of Firms that Achieved the 3% Goal



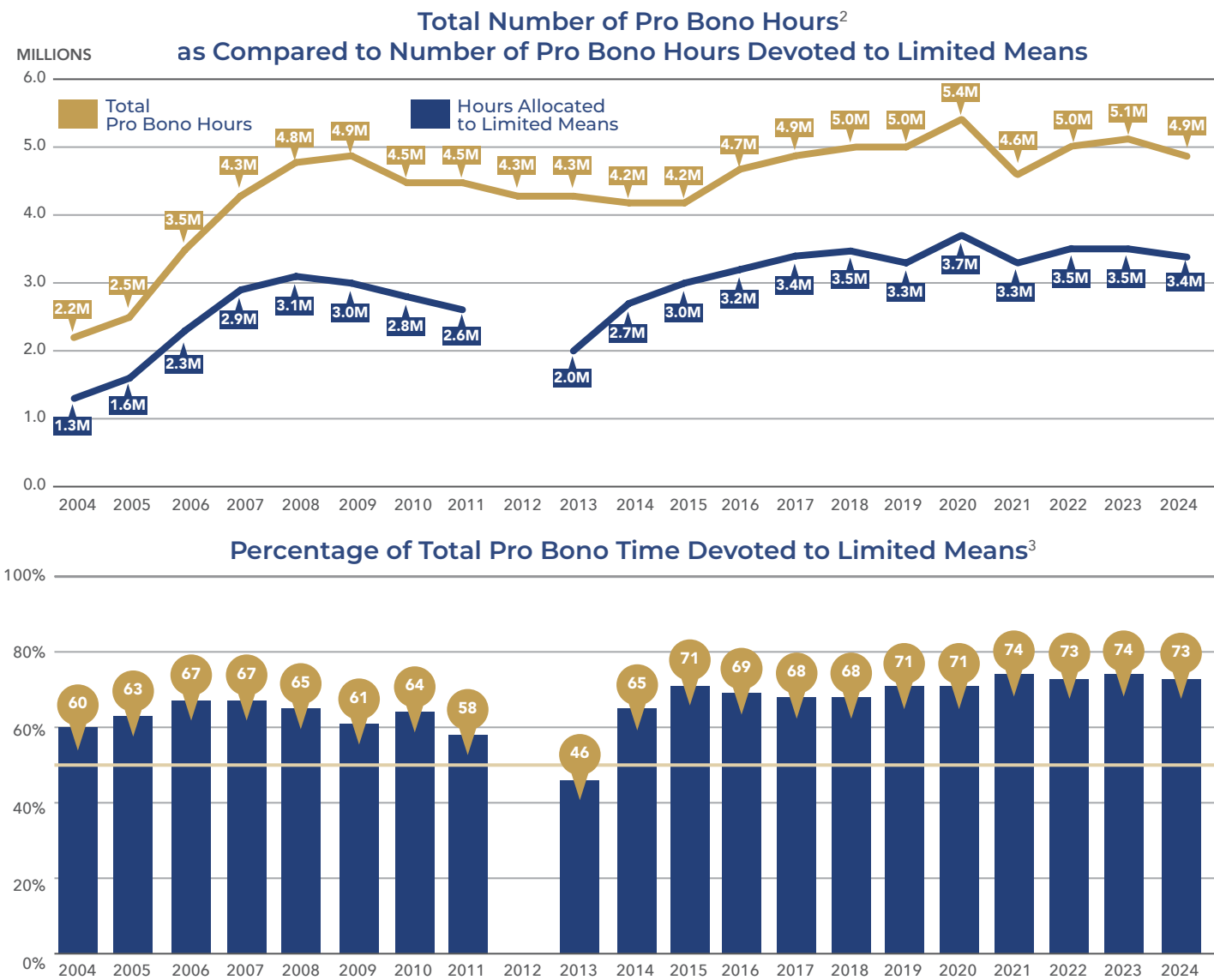
Percentage of Firms that Achieved the 5% Goal



Service to Persons of Limited Means

The Challenge (Principle 3) asks firms to devote a majority of their pro bono time “to persons of limited means or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.” This element of the Challenge remains particularly crucial at this time, when poverty in the U.S. remains high and resources and staffing for legal aid remain inadequate.

For 2024, 109 Challenge signatories reported 3,356,312 actual or estimated hours of service to persons of limited means and the organizations that serve them (collectively, “those of limited means”), a decrease in hours (188,069) from 2023. Scaling the average limited means hours for firms that provided this data for 2024 (30,792 hours per reporting firm, on average) to account for the decrease in reporting firms, the decrease in hours devoted to limited means is an estimated 3,318 hours. Pro bono hours for those of limited means represented 73.4% of all pro bono hours for firms that reported limited means pro bono hours in 2024, a slightly lower percentage compared to 2023 (74%). Reporting signatories continue to exceed their Challenge commitment to devote a “majority” of their pro bono time to those of limited means.



²In 2012, the failure of a large number of Challenge signatories to report reliable data on the hours and percentage of total pro bono time committed to persons of limited means and the organizations that serve them meant that PBI, in turn, could not provide reliable aggregated statistics.
³As explained for the prior graph, there is insufficient data to chart the percentage of total bono time devoted to limited means clients for 2012.

Correlation between Total Pro Bono and Limited Means Work

Again this year, we conducted further analysis to determine whether there are any correlations associated with firms engaging in more limited means pro bono work and pro bono work generally.⁴ For 2024, the correspondence between doing limited means pro bono work and overall pro bono work remained steady—a correlation of 0.96. Like 2023, this correlation was not a matter of more limited means pro bono work simply displacing other pro bono work. There was also a positive correlation (0.65) between firms doing more limited means work and doing more non-limited means work. Thus, firms doing more limited means work also did more pro bono hours of non-limited means work and more total pro bono hours.

Addressing Racial Justice

In light of law firm pro bono practices’ continuing focus on racial justice, we again asked Challenge signatories about their efforts in this area. For 2024, only 49.1% of Challenge signatories responded to these questions versus 63.9% in 2023. Since almost all responding firms previously indicated that they have racial justice initiatives in place, we again asked firms to assess whether their racial justice efforts had increased, remained the same, or decreased as compared to the prior year. This year, 26.8% of responding firms indicated they had devoted more hours to racial justice in 2024 than in 2023. While the percentage of firms ramping up their efforts decreased slightly from 2023 (when 27.6% had increased their efforts), there does appear to be a downward trend in this response with 37.3% of responding firms having indicated increasing racial justice efforts in 2022. Coupled with a significant decrease in firms indicating they are maintaining their level of effort in this area (down from 67.1% in 2022 to 58.9% in 2024), and an increase in firms indicating they are doing less (up to 14.3% from 5.3% in 2023), there is some indication that pro bono work focused on racial justice is in decline.

There continues to be no universal definition of racial justice pro bono work. To better understand efforts being devoted to racial justice, we asked law firms to provide the definition, if any, they used to define racial justice work. The variety of responses reinforced our observation that the scope of racial justice work continues to lack clear boundaries and consensus. However, many of the responding firms indicated that their individual definitions of racial justice include a focus on attacking issues at the systemic level.

To provide a sense of what firms are doing to address racial justice, we requested that they select from a list of categories of racial justice work that they performed in 2024.

The eight types of racial justice work surveyed, in the order of those selected by the most respondents to those selected by the fewest respondents, are:

1. Economic Empowerment

2. Housing

3. Education

4. Criminal Justice Reform

5. Voting Rights

6. Police Reform

7. Healthcare

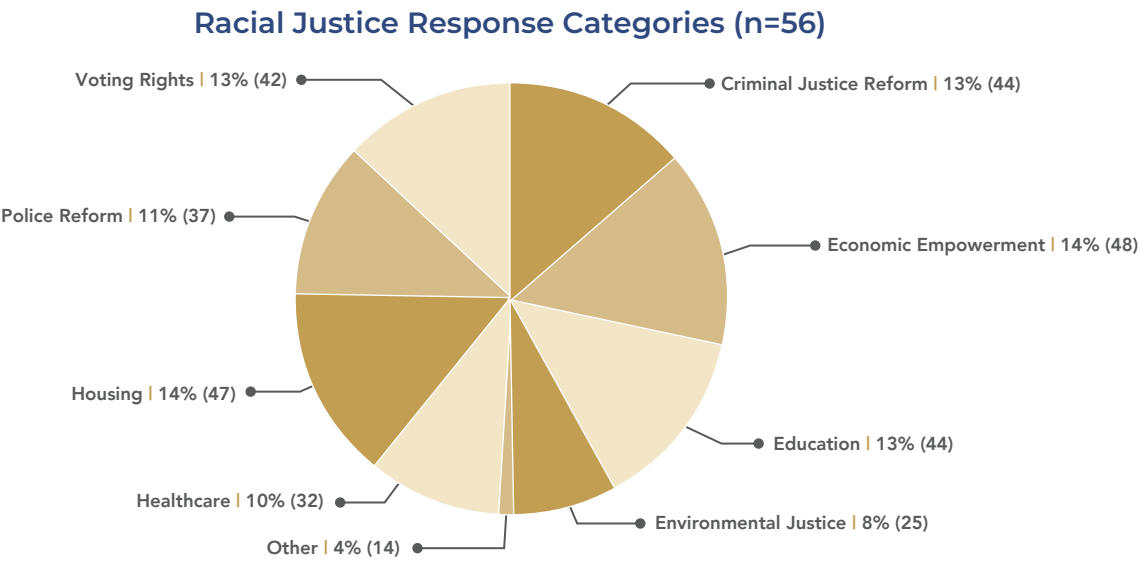
8. Environmental Justice

The third and fourth categories listed received the same number of selections. The responding firms made a total of 333 selections from these and other categories, indicating the scope of their racial justice work. Economic empowerment was the most common type of work, with 48 of the 56 firms selecting it, and with selections of this category constituting 14% of the total selections. Rounding out the top four were housing (47 firms and 14% of selections), education (44 firms and 13% of selections), and criminal justice reform (44 firms and 13% of selections). This is the first year that criminal justice reform was not the most commonly selected category.

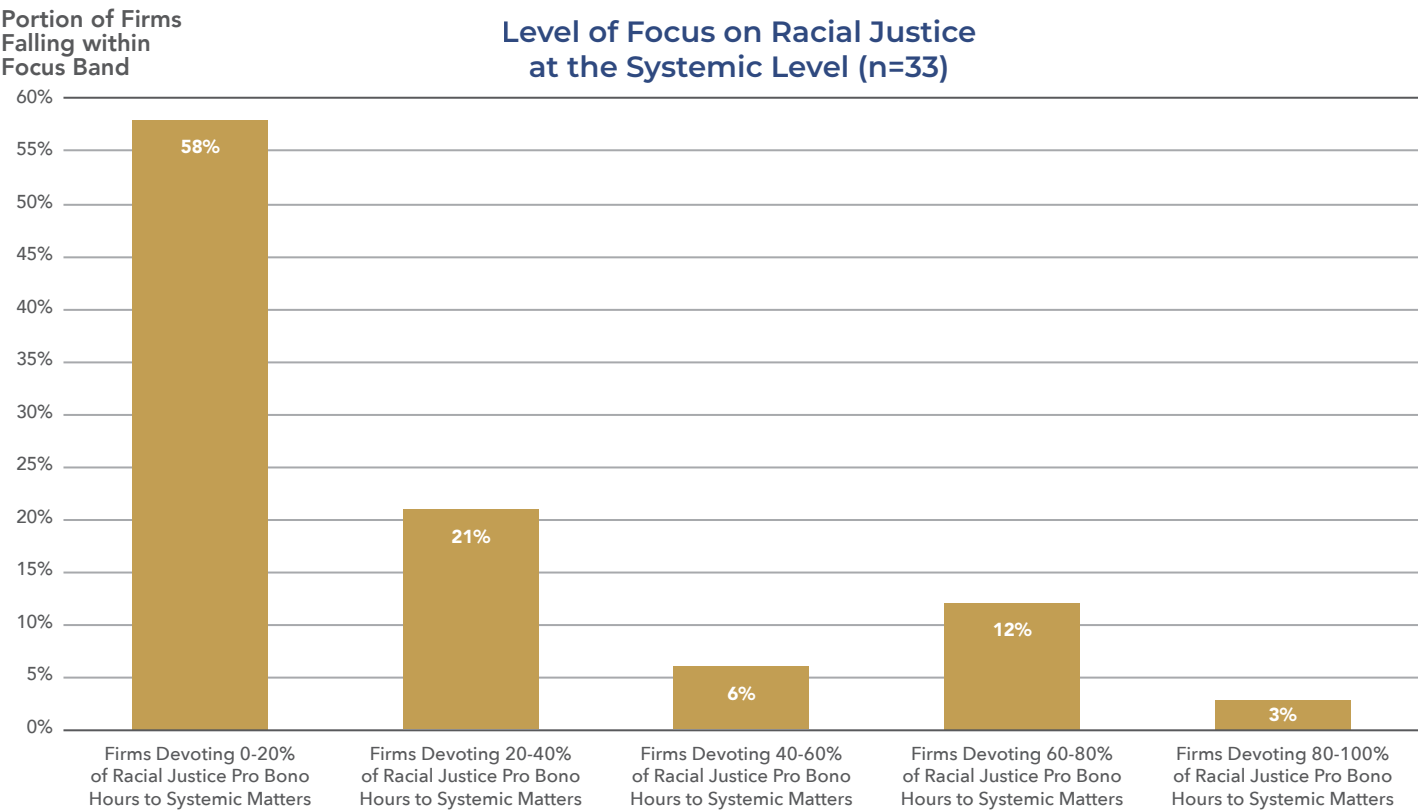
⁴While correlation does not demonstrate causation, it does provide a picture of what attributes go hand-in-hand. The higher the correlation, the more a change in one measure corresponds with the change in the other measure. The highest possible correlation is one (perfect correspondence) and the lowest is zero (no relationship between the two facts being measured). A positive correlation means that as one item increases, so does the other item being measured. A negative correlation means as one item increases, the other falls.

2024 CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE DATA

The only type of racial justice work with less than 10% of total selections was environmental justice, indicating this type of pro bono work offers opportunity for growth. The following graph shows the percentage of total selections each category received. The number of firms that selected each category is indicated in parentheses.



As was the case in 2023, not one firm reported that it had worked on legislative reform as a distinct category in 2024. Given that the topic was raised by several firms in 2020 and that many firms now define racial justice work to include focusing on systemic change, it is not clear why legislative reform is not being selected in responses to the Challenge survey. As shown in the following graph, 42% of firms estimated that their systemic work constitutes at least 20% of their pro bono hours devoted to racial justice, a 6% decrease from last year.

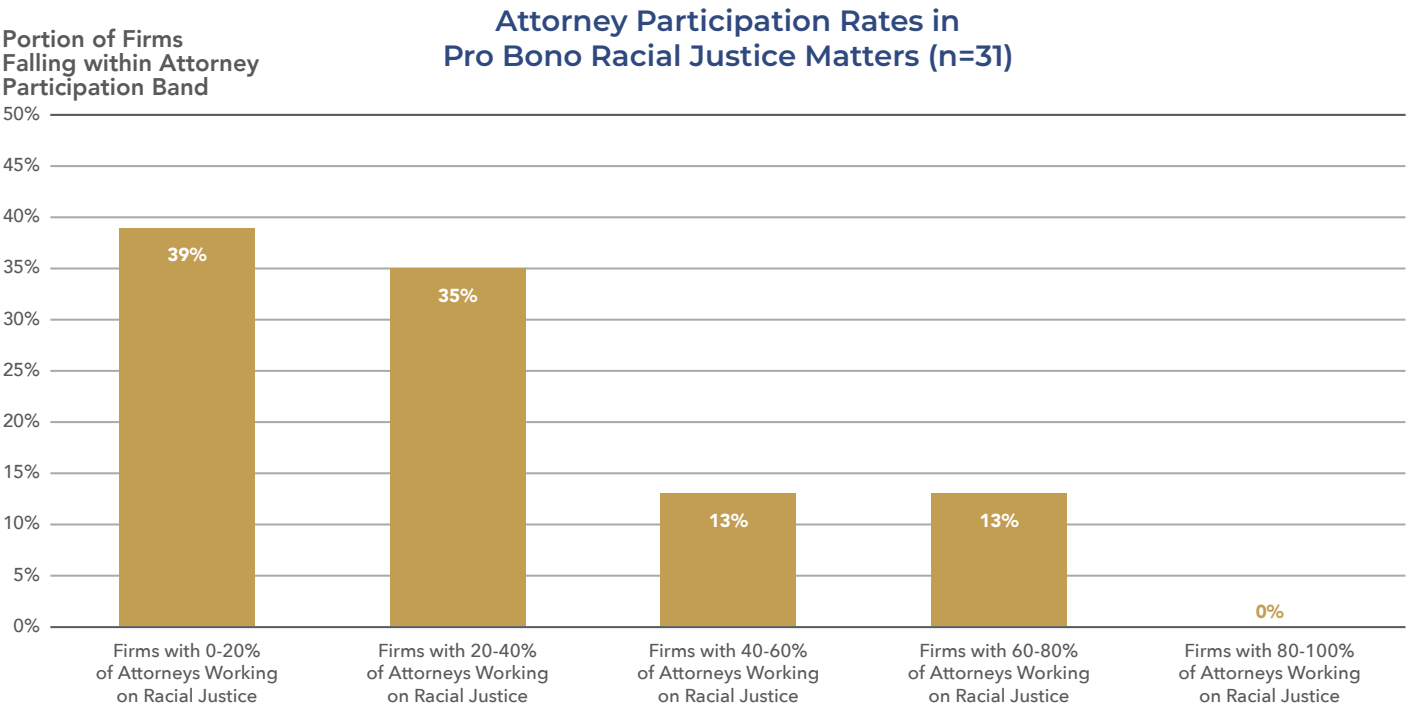


2024 CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE DATA

We again asked firms to report on the changes they were making to their organizational infrastructure to better serve the cause of racial justice. This year, 80% of firms responding to the question reported that they did not add to or modify their pro bono infrastructure to support racial justice. The remaining 20% of responding firms reported having made the following types of changes:

- > Hiring additional support staff for the pro bono program
- > Adding racial justice responsibilities to existing firm pro bono professionals’ roles
- > Hiring additional pro bono professional(s) focused on racial justice pro bono

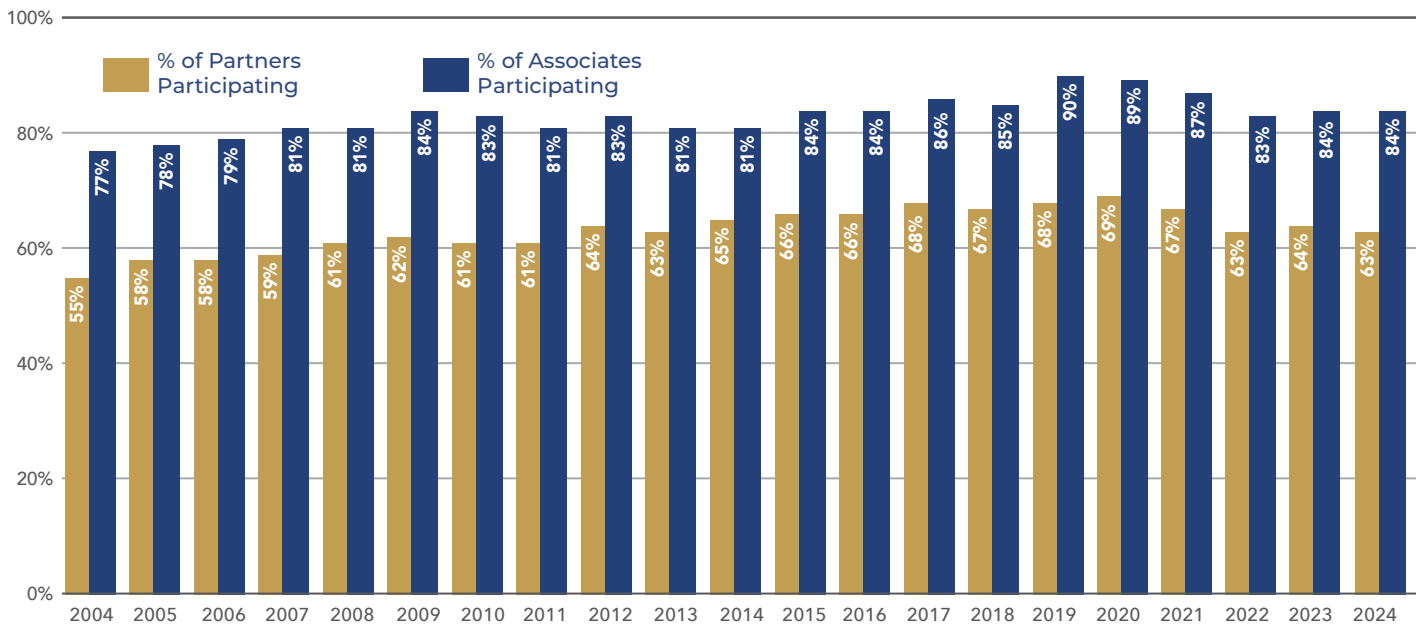
In order to determine the breadth of involvement in racial justice pro bono work among lawyers within firms, we asked each firm to estimate what percentage of its attorneys worked on racial justice matters in 2024. Responding firms were asked to choose from among five bands covering 20% increments. The most common answer this year was 0-20% (at 39%), followed by 20-40% (at 35%). These were also the most common answers in 2023, with 43% reporting 0-20% participation in pro bono racial justice matters and 28% reporting 20-40% participation. Overall, the percentage of firms reporting 20% or more participation of attorneys in pro bono racial justice matters increased from 57.5% in 2023 to 61.3% in 2024. No firms reported 80-100% participation.



Participation

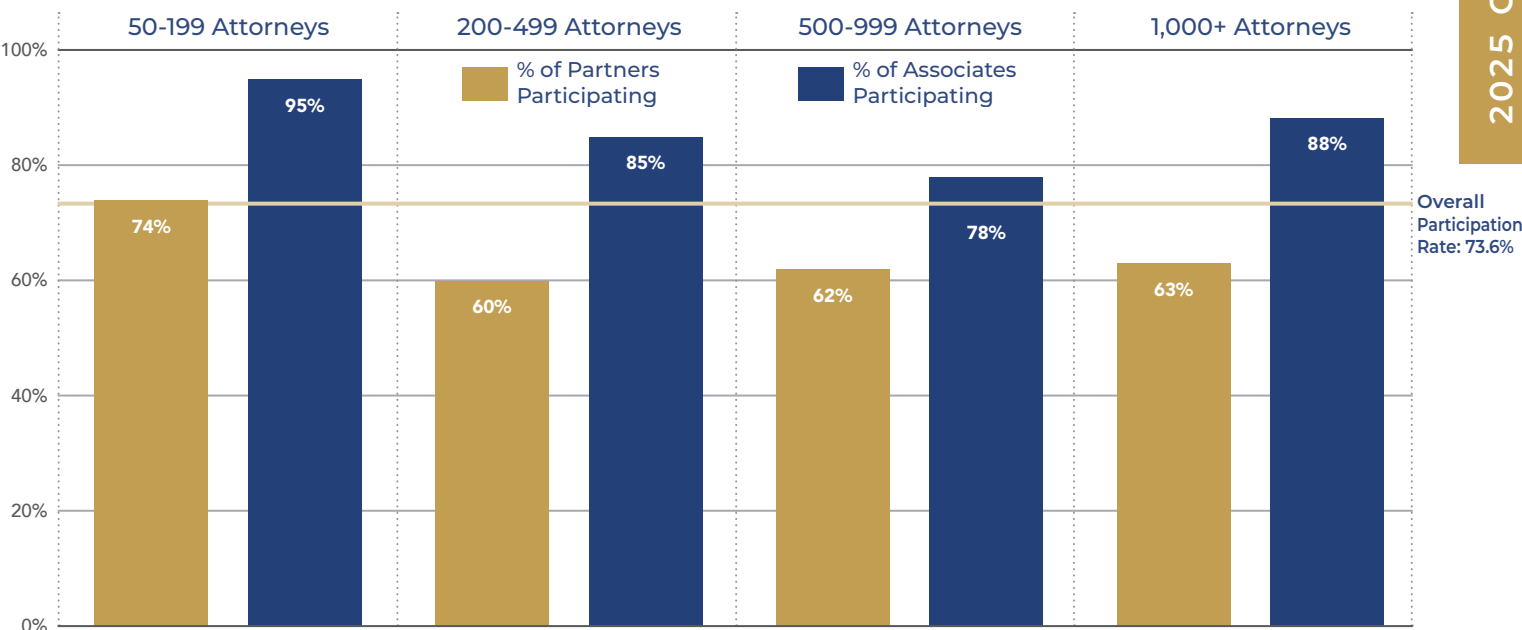
Participation rates in 2024 were on par with those seen in 2023, with a slight drop in partner participation rates and a slight uptick in associate participation rates. As seen below, 62.9% of partners and 84.1% of associates participated in pro bono in 2024, compared to 63.8% and 84%, respectively, in 2023. Collectively, 73.6% of attorneys participated in pro bono in 2024, slightly higher than the 73.3% who participated in 2023.

Attorney Participation Rates



The graph below shows a breakdown of partner/associate participation in pro bono by firm size for 2024.⁵

Attorney Participation Rates by Firm Size



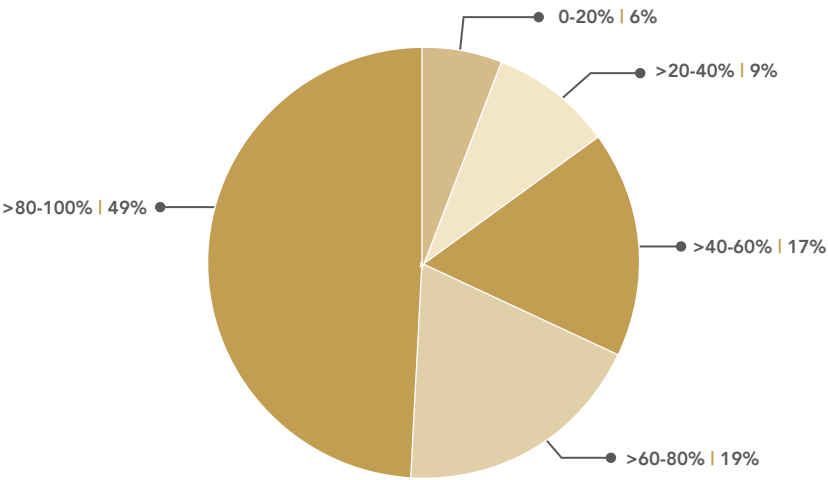
⁵For a detailed breakdown of attorney participation rates by firm size, see Table 3 in Appendix B.

We also considered the importance of partner participation for maximizing associate participation, increasing pro bono hours per participant, and meeting and exceeding Challenge goals. At 0.73, 0.29, and 0.52, respectively, associate participation, pro bono hours per participant, and pro bono hours as a percentage of all billable hours all have positive correlations with partner participation, as they did in 2023 when the correlations were 0.72, 0.40, and 0.37, respectively. Firms with higher partner participation rates still tend to have higher associate participation rates, higher pro bono hours per participant, and higher pro bono percentages.

In addition, we asked law firms to provide more granular data with respect to law students, paralegals, legal assistants, and other staff (Legal Staff) in pro bono matters. Of the total 114 survey respondents, 65 firms reported on their employment of law students in 2024, versus 69 in 2023.⁶ Of these firms, 97% reported involving their law students in pro bono in 2024, a slight decrease from 100% for firms that reported last year. A total of 2,329 law students, or 68.1% of all law students working at the responding firms, participated in those firms’ pro bono programs (as compared to 77.7% last year).

Fifty-two percent of the firms with law student involvement enjoyed at least 75% law student participation rates, and 28% of the firms reported achieving participation rates of 100%. In contrast, last year, 64% of the reporting firms reported at least 75% law student participation rates and 35% reported participation rates of 100%.

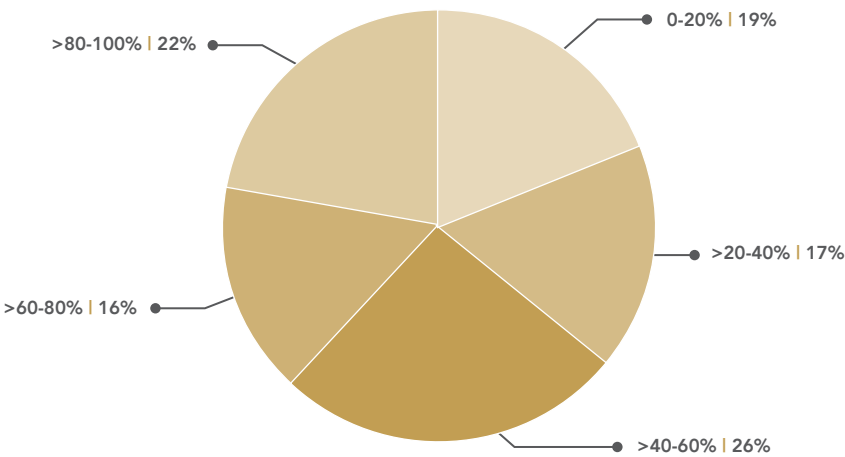
Law Student Pro Bono Participation Rates at Challenge Signatory Firms with Law Students (n=65)



With regard to other legal staff, 56% of responding firms reported employing Legal Staff who track their time in pro bono (the same percentage as last year). Ninety-eight percent of these firms reported having at least some of their Legal Staff engaged in pro bono. In all, firms reported that a total of 3,854 Legal Staff (28.8%) participated in pro bono, similar to the 29.1% in 2023. Eight percent of responding law firms reported participation rates of 100%, 27% of firms achieved participation rates of at least 75%, and 53% of firms had participation rates of over 50%. Of the 11% of firms with 100% participation, two had 100% associate participation as well.

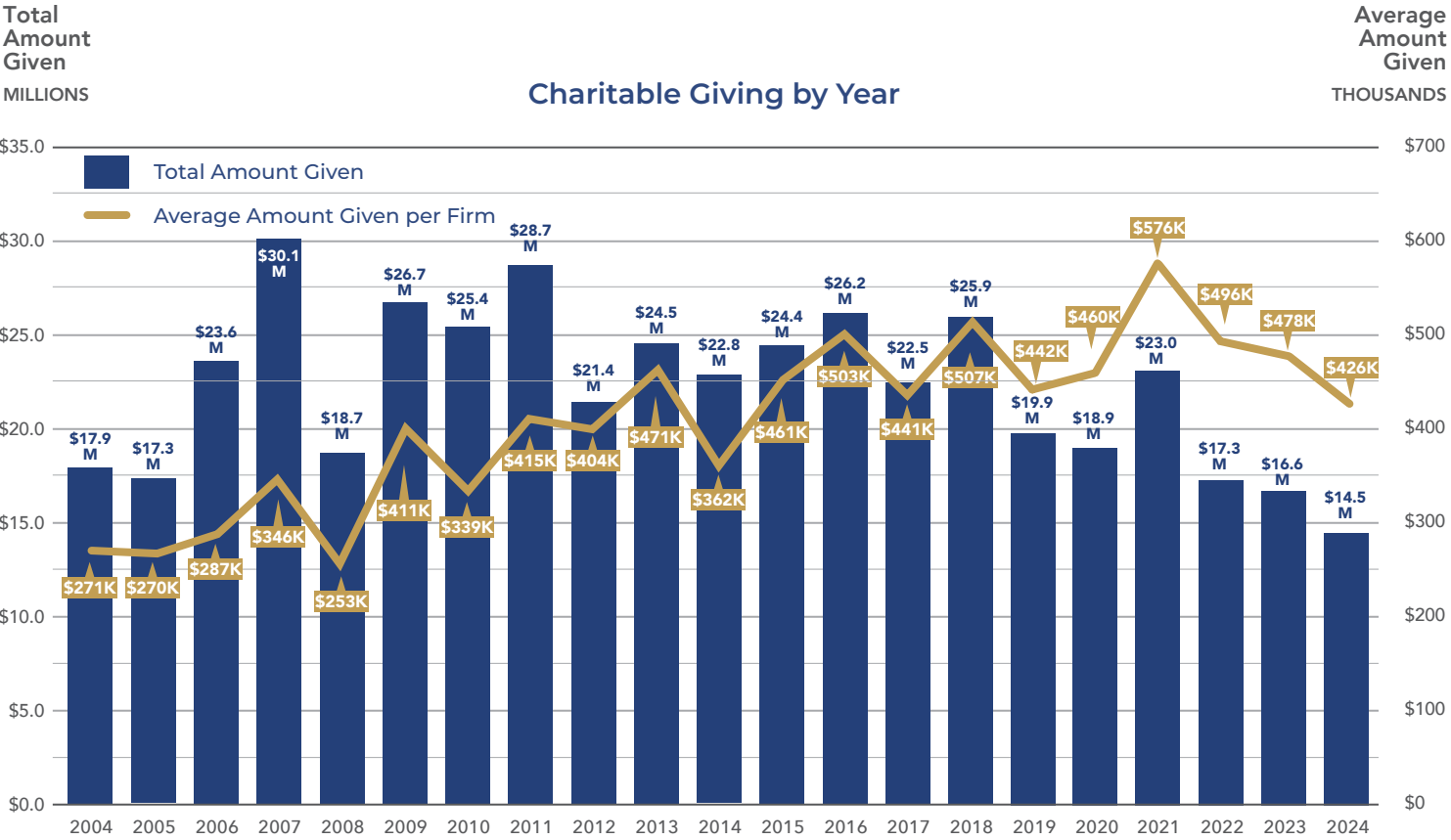
⁶As stated in the 2024 Challenge Report, we revised the wording of the Challenge Survey to further clarify that, unlike attorney head counts used for our analysis which are set based on attorneys employed as of December 31 of the applicable year, law student head counts are based on the total number of distinct law students employed at any time during the course of the year. This is necessary as most law students are employed on a seasonal basis as “summer associates.” As such, we believe our law student head count is more complete and accurate than in past years, and readers should not rely on the jump in reported law student head count since 2021 as an accurate reflection of growth in the number of firms employing law students or growth in the total number of law students employed.

Other Legal Staff Pro Bono Participation Rates (n=64)



Charitable Donations

Each year, we ask firms to respond to several standard optional questions, including providing supplemental information on charitable donations to legal services organizations (LSOs). This year, 34 firms reported that they donated \$14,482,068 to LSOs in 2024, compared to last year when 35 firms reported \$16,722,447 in donations to LSOs. The average donation amount of \$425,943 in 2024 represents a 10.9% decrease from the \$477,784 average amount in 2023.



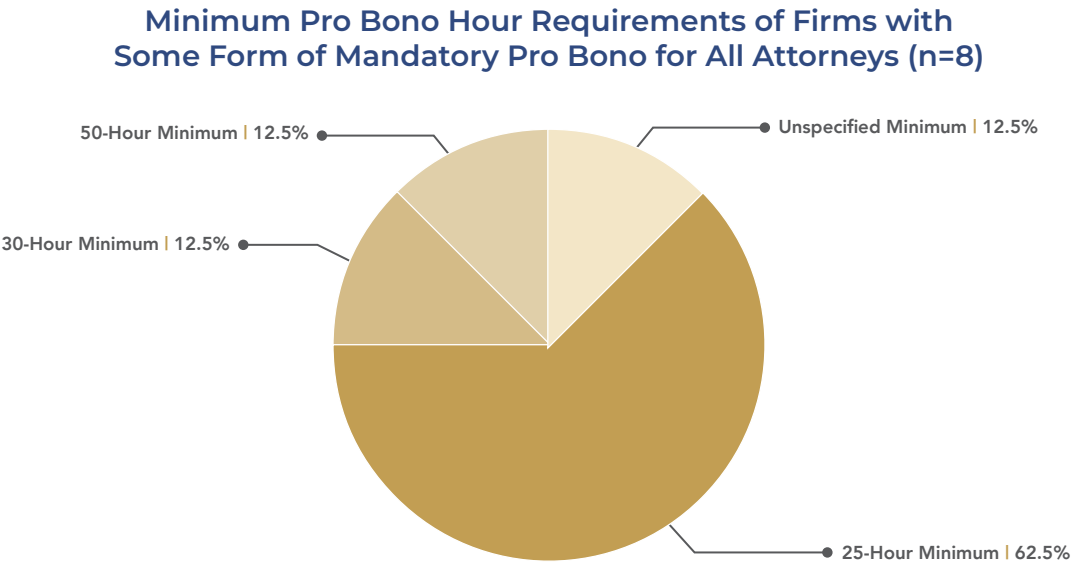
This year, we again addressed whether there was a relationship between charitable giving to entities providing free legal services and other firm attributes, including total billable hours, number of partners, number of partners participating in pro bono, and percentage of billable hours devoted to pro bono.

We found that a correlation between these other metrics and charitable giving persists and was stronger than in 2023.⁷ The correlation between a firm’s total billable hours and giving was 0.75 (versus 0.46 in 2023). The correlation between the percent of billable hours that a firm devoted to pro bono and giving increased to 0.40. While higher than the 0.20 correlation in 2023, this value indicates that although charitable support for LSOs still tends to increase with the percentage of billable hours firms devote to pro bono service, devoting billable hours to pro bono is not a key driver of donations to LSOs. Finally, there was little correlation between the number of partners at a firm and the money contributed (0.25, only slightly higher than the 0.21 correlation in 2023), but the number of partners participating in pro bono at a firm was more strongly associated with charitable giving (0.42 in 2024 as compared to 0.38 in 2023).

Mandatory Pro Bono

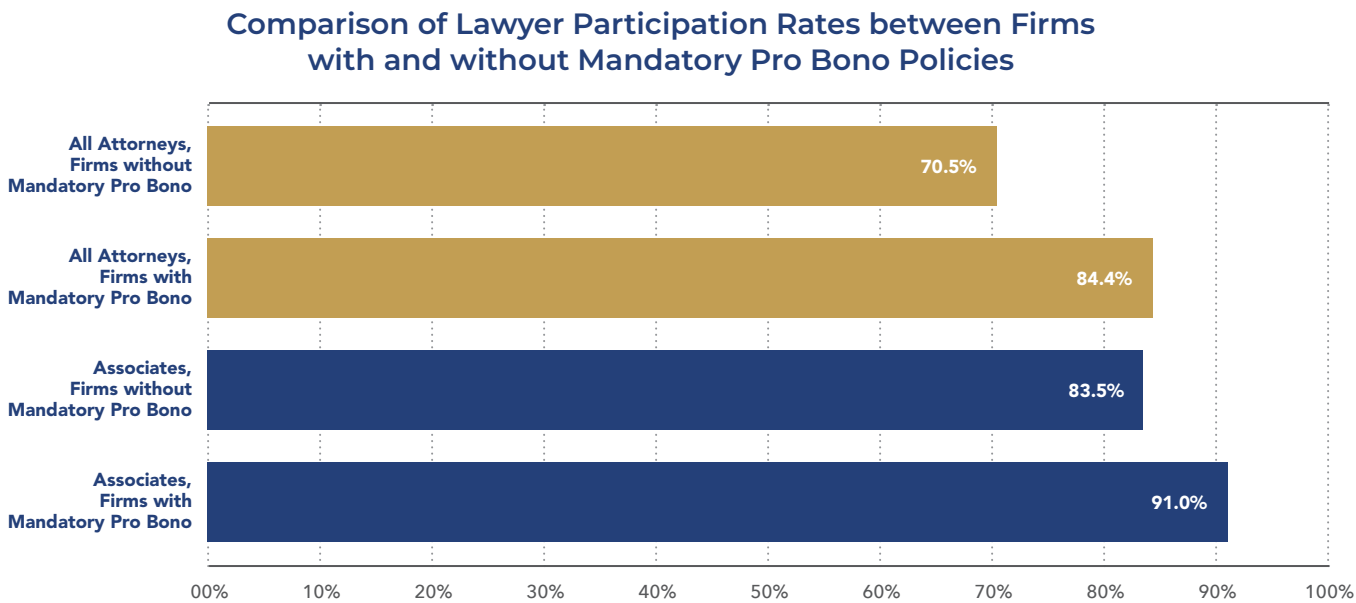
Last year, we added a series of questions to the Challenge Survey regarding firms’ policies and performance related to mandatory pro bono. This year, 75 of the 114 responding firms responded to these questions. Of those 75 firms, 11 (14.7%) had some form of mandatory pro bono requirement. Eight of those firms made pro bono mandatory for all attorneys, while only one of the firms made pro bono mandatory for all attorneys except partners.

For firms that have a mandatory pro bono policy for all attorneys, the following graph reflects the requirement in terms of pro bono hours, with 25 hours being the most common requirement.

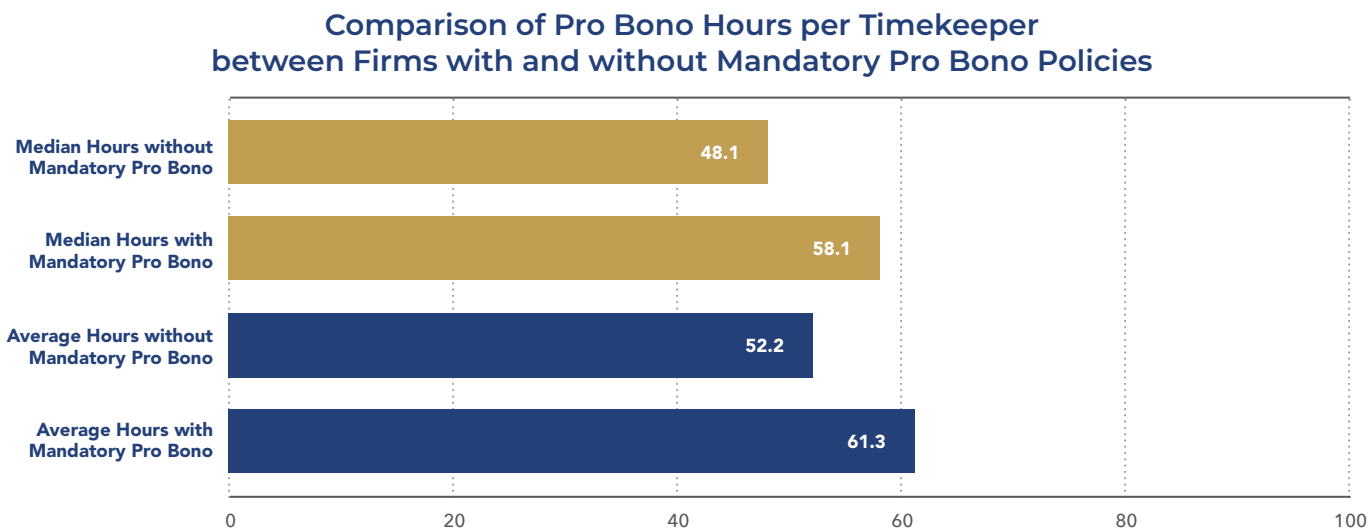


⁷In many fields, relationships are considered to be strong only if the correlation coefficient is at least 0.75. However, when it comes to human behavior, which is influenced by so many variables, correlation coefficients tend to be less than 0.6.

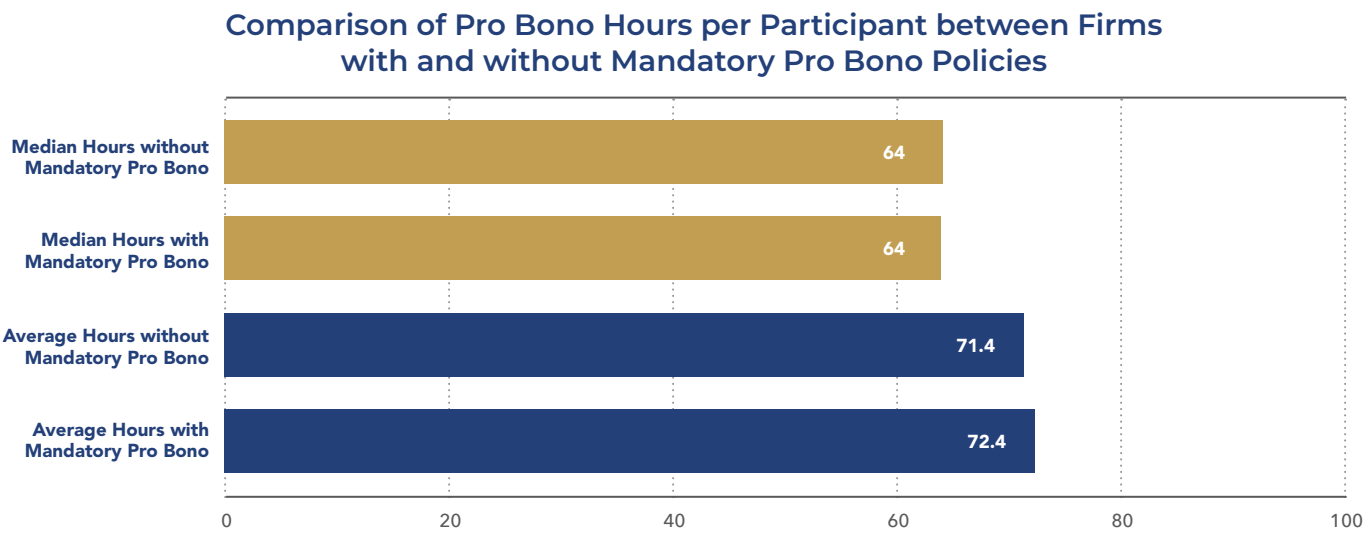
While mandatory requirements do appear to be associated with increased participation rates, none of the firms with a mandatory pro bono policy achieved a 100% participation rate for all attorneys, as compared to 2 firms without a mandatory policy that did achieve 100% participation. As shown below, average participation rates for all attorneys, and for associates specifically, are notably higher at firms with a mandatory pro bono policy than at those without such a policy — 84.4% as compared to 70.5% for all attorneys, and 91.0% as compared to 83.5% for associates.



On a per timekeeper basis, the average and median pro bono hours are notably higher at firms with some form of mandatory pro bono: 61.3 and 58.1 hours, respectively, as compared to 52.2 and 48.1 hours, respectively, for firms without some form of mandatory pro bono. When it comes to the highest pro bono hours per timekeeper, however, the analysis appears more nuanced. For example, the three responding firms with the highest pro bono hours per timekeeper did not have mandatory policies.



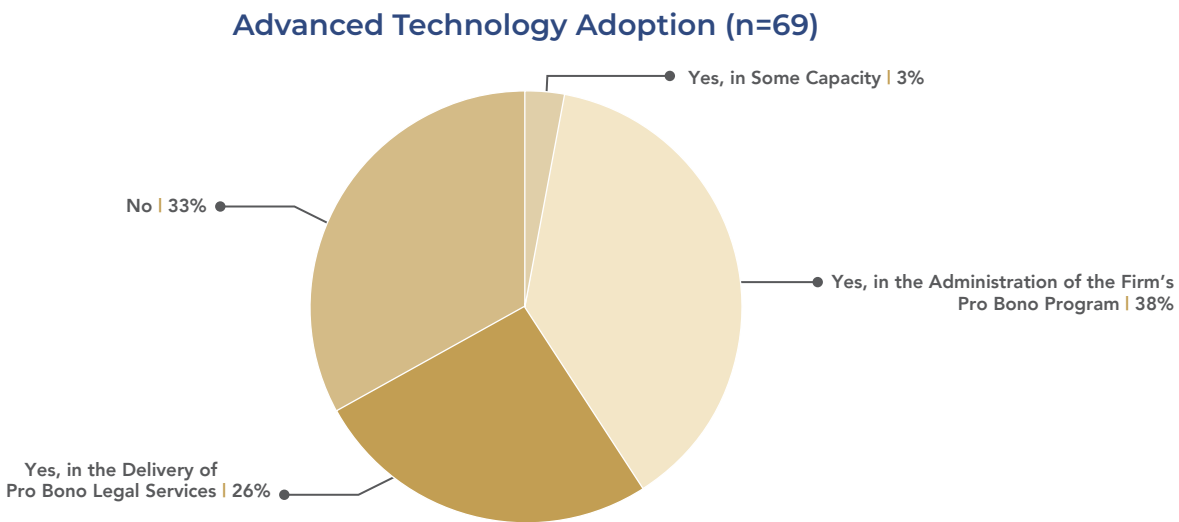
Average pro bono hours per participant were slightly lower at firms without any form of mandatory pro bono (71.4 hours as compared to 72.4 hours for firms with a mandatory policy). Firms with a mandatory policy had the same median pro bono hours per participant, at 64%. It is worth noting, however, that the five responding firms with the highest pro bono hours per participant did not have a mandatory policy.



The foregoing statistics appear to suggest some positive relationships between mandatory policies and certain law firm pro bono metrics. However, the incidence of the highest pro bono hours per lawyer and participant at firms without a mandatory pro bono policy continue to hint at the possibility that setting a mandatory pro bono requirement may send a weak signal to potential participants to meet the minimum requirement but not to exceed the minimum by more than a modest amount. We will continue to research the impact and efficacy of mandatory pro bono requirements and the attributes that make them effective in certain respects while analyzing those that may hinder the exceptional performance to which many firms aspire.

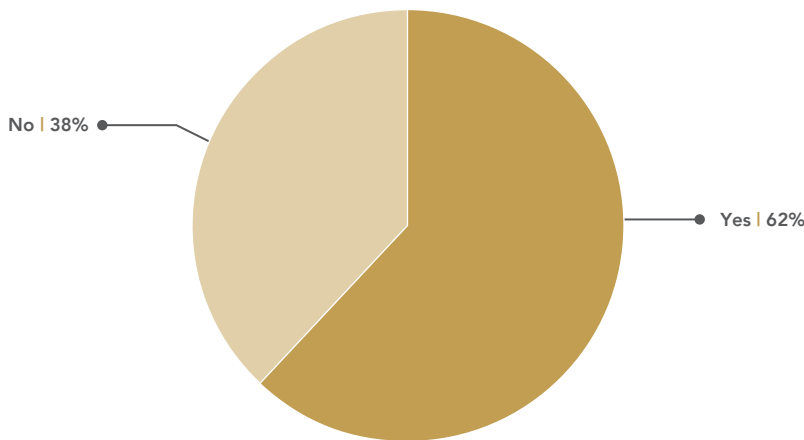
Role of Advanced Technology

The adoption of advanced technology such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) or automation tools and platforms is becoming increasingly common in law firm pro bono practices. However, implementation and application continue to vary. Of the 69 firms that responded to questions about the use of advanced technology, 67% reported using advanced technology, including 38% who use it for administration of a pro bono program and 26% who use it in the delivery of pro bono legal services. At the same time, 33% of responding firms reported not using advanced technology at all, underscoring a divide in adoption across the field.



Trends over time show gradual but notable movement. While 38% of 53 responding firms reported no change in starting or increasing their use of advanced technology, 62% indicated they have plans to start or increase their use of advanced technology in the upcoming year. These results suggest that a significant segment of firms are actively expanding their use of advanced technology.

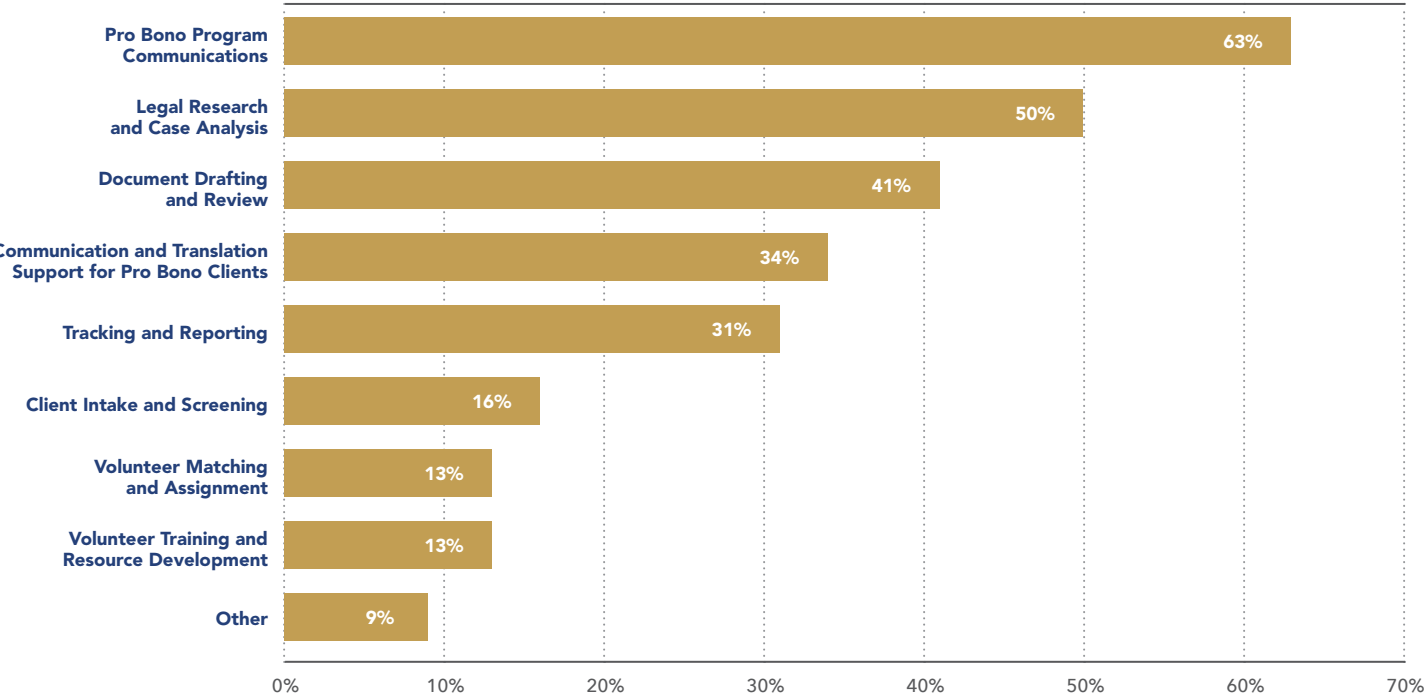
Plans to Start/Increase Use of Advanced Technology (n=53)



2024 CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE DATA

Current use of advanced technology centers on two key functional areas: (1) pro bono program communications; and (2) legal research and case analysis. These emerged as the most common reasons firms are integrating advanced technology into their pro bono efforts, reflecting a focus on internal coordination and support for legal work. While the use of advanced technology for volunteer management is not as common, it remains an area of opportunity. No responding firms indicated that they were using advanced technology to identify emerging legal needs.

Advanced Technology Use (n=32)



Overall, the data reveals that most responding firms are cautiously but steadily moving toward the greater use of advanced technology in their pro bono practices. While the most advanced applications are not yet widespread, the commitment to efficiency and expanded access to justice is clear. As firms continue to navigate rising demands for services and evolving tools, advanced technology is poised to play an increasing role in the future of pro bono legal work.

REFLECTIONS

This is a special year for the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the year law firms first signed onto the original Statement of Principles and reported on their metrics, forming a baseline for firms' commitment to pro bono service. It also marks a period in which law firm pro bono has faced unprecedented challenges, starting with the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing today. These challenges converge at a time when a study of pro bono statistics indicates that, as a community, we stand at an inflection point. With key metrics, such as percentage of total billable hours, average hours per attorney, and percentage of attorney participation, maintaining an overall post-pandemic decline, the future is in our hands.

This moment calls for leadership, vision, and commitment—the same kind that existed 30 years ago when signatories to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge came together to support a shared value and professional duty—to promote access to justice for all. Law firm and pro bono leaders who stand up for their communities find themselves in great company, as a review of our long list of Challenge signatories shows. As firms carry out their pro bono commitment in 2025, they are deciding in real time what the future of pro bono will look like and how their communities will be impacted.

Key Metrics: Law Firm Pro Bono at an Inflection Point

Like last year, there are some positive indicators that certain pro bono measures may trend back up, emerging from their post-pandemic low since 2021. The 2024 data reflects a modest 1.6% increase in average pro bono hours per attorney from 2023, up from 54.7 hours to 55.6 hours, with six fewer firms reporting. Attorney participation is also up slightly from 73.3% to 73.6%. While there have been solid gains on these metrics at different points throughout the life of the Challenge, current numbers are trending very close to where they started 30 years ago, when the overall attorney participation rate was 73% and the average hours per lawyer was 53.3 hours.

These slight increases are coupled with a slight downturn in the pro bono percentage of total billable hours, which decreased from 3.76% in 2023 to 3.71% in 2024. Given the slight degree of movement on these benchmarks, they should not be taken as a strong signal of an increase or decrease in performance. What they do show, however, is an idling of activity. Not seeing strong gains this year indicates we remain at an inflection point.

“What is really fascinating is that we have the longitudinal data, and over the period of time from 1995 when we had the first reports to 2007, the amount of pro bono work that firms, that the firms undertook was, I believe it increased if I remember right, 370 percent, and more than that, the kind of work that they did, the way they structured pro bono, their policies around things like giving parity and billable hour credit for pro bono time all changed — literally one of the most profound sea changes imaginable.”

– **Esther F. Lardent**, PBI Founder
Excerpt from American Bar Association
Women Trailblazers in the Law,
[Oral History of Esther Lardent](#) (2006-2012)

This year, 114 firms responded to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge survey. This is down from 120 last year and 124 two years ago. This year's survey responses came due at a time when law firm pro bono practices were facing heightened scrutiny. While there is always a margin for non-responding firms that are experiencing special circumstances (e.g., firm mergers), the Law Firm Pro Bono Project urges all Challenge signatories that are able to respond to do so, as an increased response rate translates into more meaningful data that benefits the entire pro bono community.

Notwithstanding the decrease in reporting firms, those that reported this year collectively performed over 4.9 million hours of pro bono service. This compares to 1.6 million pro bono hours reported in 1995 at the outset of the Challenge and 4.6 million pro bono hours reported ten years ago in 2015.

The Path to Pre-Pandemic Participation: Support from Law Firm Leadership

The mild increase in overall pro bono participation appears encouraging, although it is slight and therefore not indicative of a significant change when viewing the data as a whole. When broken down to the percentage participation of associates and partners, we see similar patterns. Associate participation rose slightly from 84% to 84.1%, and partner participation decreased slightly from 63.8% to 62.9%.

Correlations for partner participation with associate participation and the percentage of billable hours devoted to pro bono by a firm were stronger this year, reinforcing the increasing need for partners to engage in their firms' pro bono programs. Partners can greatly impact law firm pro bono programs by leading the charge on pro bono, leveraging relationships that support legal aid and important access to justice initiatives, fostering associate interest in pro bono, and contributing to an overall culture of service. Nearly 10% of firms reported partner participation rates in 2024 of 90% or more. This metric decreased slightly from 2023, but it continues to demonstrate that a significant band of law firms have successfully engaged most of their partners and that high partner engagement is indeed possible.

Maximizing engagement through the increased participation of both partners and associates remains a goal of our stakeholders. Whether this is accomplished through increased individual opportunities that speak to lawyers' unique passions, team-based programs, or clinics offering bite-sized pro bono, there are many approaches to increasing pro bono engagement.

A critical factor, however, remains support—and indeed encouragement—from law firm leadership. In pivotal times, the importance of positive messaging from leadership cannot be understated. Now is the time for law firm leaders to renew or incorporate effective measures at the structural level. Whether in management meetings, practice group meetings, or firm-wide events, putting pro bono on the agenda sends a powerful message. Providing billable-hour credit for pro bono and including pro bono in the attorney evaluation process, compensation decisions, and firm recognition programs are likewise meaningful ways to promote a thriving culture of pro bono.

Some firms have explored mandatory pro bono policies, a subject we have now surveyed for two years and which we will continue to evaluate. While the sample sizes are limited in these early stages of surveying on this topic, there is some indication that firms requiring lawyers to participate in pro bono appear to have higher participation rates and pro bono hours overall. However, based on the second year of reviewing this data, it also appears that firms with the highest pro bono hours do not have mandatory pro bono policies.

This paints a nuanced picture of mandatory pro bono policies and raises questions about the perceptions they may create that lawyers should meet but not exceed a certain number of pro bono hours. As the law firm pro bono community stands at a crossroads, it is critical that the implications of policy changes be carefully

considered to ensure that such changes enhance or at least do not diminish the firm’s pro bono culture. Law Firm Pro Bono Project staff is available to assist in developing or adapting pro bono policies to meet current needs.

Pro Bono Hours: A Gradual Upward Post-Pandemic Trend

Pro bono hours per lawyer continues to see a gradual increase, with the average hours per lawyer at 55.6 hours this year, as compared to 54.7 in 2023 and 52.6 in 2022. This exceeds the 50-hour standard set by Rule 6.1 of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, which applies to all attorneys, by an increasingly comfortable margin. However, it is still below pre-pandemic averages. Overall pro bono hours per lawyer ranged from 60 to 70 between 2004 and 2020, peaking at 70 hours in 2009 and 69.2 hours in 2020. When viewed as a percentage of billable hours, this year saw a decrease from 3.76% last year to 3.71% this year. This percentage, however, remains well in excess of the Challenge target of 3%, and all four firm size groups (*i.e.*, 50-199, 200-499, 500-999, and 1,000 or more attorneys) continue to average higher than the 3% standard.

We continue to see changing dynamics among the firm size groups with the highest pro bono hours per lawyer. This year, we saw a return to past years’ trends with firms with 1,000 or more lawyers having the highest number of hours per lawyer—63 hours. However, the second-highest hours per lawyer was seen at firms on the opposite end of the size spectrum—those with 50-199 lawyers. These firms averaged 58 hours per lawyer in 2024, down from 59 hours in 2023. This was followed by firms with 200-499 lawyers at 53 hours, and firms with 500-999 lawyers at 48 hours. These numbers reflect a significant gain from last year’s numbers for firms with 200-499 lawyers and firms with 1,000 or more lawyers, which averaged 48 and 55 hours per lawyer, respectively, in 2023. This represents a percentage increase of about 10% and 15%, respectively, for these firm size groups. A significant decrease was seen in firms with 500-999 lawyers—falling from 56 hours per lawyer in 2023 to 48 hours per lawyer in 2024, a 14% drop.

Challenge signatory firms do not all achieve the same level of results on an individual basis, even within firm size groups. Pro bono performance continues to vary greatly, demonstrating the need to address persistent differences in pro bono culture, leadership, infrastructure, and the availability of pro bono opportunities. PBI encourages Challenge signatory firms that did not meet their Challenge goals (*i.e.*, greater than 50% partner and associate participation, and at least 3% or 5% of billable hours being devoted to pro bono), or that have slipped in the average number of pro bono hours per lawyer, to assess how their pro bono programs may be improved. PBI stands ready to assist individual firms as they build upon their existing programs and consider new ways to generate momentum among their ranks.

Meeting the Challenge Commitment to Persons of Limited Means

Challenge signatories agree to devote “a majority” of their pro bono time “to persons of limited means or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means” (Principle 3). In 2024, pro bono directed to those of limited means hit 3.36 million hours, down from 3.48 million in 2023. These hours reflect a relative stability that has sustained over the past seven years. This year’s limited means hours as a percentage of all pro bono hours saw a very slight decrease—73.4% as compared to 74% in 2023.

While there are numerous causes in dire need of pro bono support, attention to those of limited means continues to be crucial, particularly in times when resources for LSOs providing direct services are threatened. This year, we again asked firms to separately report (on a voluntary basis) the percentage of pro bono provided directly to persons of limited means (as opposed to organizations that assist individuals of limited means).

Approximately 34% of firms provided information responsive to this question (despite the voluntary nature of the question and the fact this category historically has not been separately tracked by most firms). Their responses indicated that 69% of the hours devoted to serving persons of limited means involved direct representation of individuals of limited means.

As the legal aid community faces increased constraints on resources, and the need for legal assistance increases, the role of pro bono is especially important. As in prior years, we note that direct and indirect service to persons of limited means does not come at the cost of other worthy pro bono causes. Indeed, the correlation between firms that do more limited means pro bono work and other types of pro bono work remains consistent and relatively strong at 0.65. Accordingly, when a law firm chooses to increase its commitment to limited means pro bono, all causes are better off, and placing an emphasis on serving those of limited means does not stand in the way of providing pro bono participants with a wealth of opportunities of all types.

Meeting the Challenge Commitment to Racial Justice Pro Bono

We began surveying racial justice pro bono in 2021 (for data from 2020). The metrics developed at that time were geared toward capturing the development and early evolution of many firms' then-emerging racial justice initiatives following the 2020 murder of George Floyd. Of course, this is not to say that Challenge signatories were not doing substantial racial justice work before 2020, but the years that followed saw an increased emphasis on this work through specific programming and initiatives, the hiring of pro bono professionals to focus on racial justice pro bono, and the development of partnerships around this work.

In our first year surveying racial justice pro bono, 77% of reporting signatories responded to these questions. The vast majority (94%) of those who responded indicated that their pro bono programs had adopted a new or renewed focus on racial justice in 2020. Again, recognizing many firms' pre-existing commitment to this work, of the remaining 6% of firms that indicated they did not adopt a new or renewed focus on racial justice in 2020, many indicated that racial justice was already one of their key areas of focus. In 2022, we surveyed whether firms had devoted more, less, or the same amount of pro bono hours to racial justice pro bono. That year, nearly 56% reported an increase, 43% reported staying the same, and only 1% reported a decrease. This year's responses to the same question reflect changing trends, with only 27% of firms reporting an increase, 59% reporting that their engagement has remained the same, and 14% reporting a decrease.

Reporting firms' level of focus on racial justice pro bono at the systemic level has also fluctuated over the years, with 58% of firms indicating that more than 20% of their racial justice pro bono focused on the systemic level in 2021 as compared to 42% in 2024. When reporting on changes to the infrastructure of their pro bono practice related to racial justice pro bono (i.e., hiring a pro bono professional or developing a new committee or subcommittee focused on racial justice pro bono), 80% of responding firms reported that they made no such changes in 2024.

While decreases in metrics reflecting new and developing racial justice pro bono initiatives may present some cause for concern, these changes may be partially explained by racial justice pro bono becoming more effectively woven into some firms' pro bono practices (to the extent they were not already). Indeed, firms indicating that 0-20% of their lawyers worked on racial justice matters was down from 43% in 2023 to 39% in 2024, while firms indicating that 20-40% of their lawyers worked on racial justice matters was up from 28% in 2023 to 35% in 2024, supporting the notion that racial justice pro bono engagement has become more widespread. Notably, racial justice work still does not have a universal definition. However, it frequently includes pro bono services in the following areas: economic empowerment, education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice reform.

Harnessing Advanced Technology to Expand Access to Justice

The past few years have seen the increasing role of advanced technology in access to justice and the power of automation tools and generative AI to maximize efficiencies in law firm pro bono practices. This year, we surveyed law firms on their adoption of these tools to support their pro bono practices. The data reflects that firms are steadily progressing toward the greater use of advanced technology in pro bono work, although adoption remains uneven.

Of the 69 firms that responded, 67% reported using advanced technology in some aspect of their pro bono practices. However, a notable 33% indicated no current use, highlighting a divide in the pace of adoption. Some respondents indicated that they were currently evaluating potential tools, and 62% reported that they have plans to start or increase their use of advanced technology in the upcoming year. The specific uses most noted by respondents were pro bono communications and legal research or case analysis. Categories pertaining to volunteer training and management were selected by the fewest respondents, indicating ample room for growth for these applications.

PBI encourages firms to leverage the tools they are adopting firmwide into their pro bono practices. Advanced technologies offer many unique applications for a pro bono practice. They can maximize efficiency by eliminating human time spent on redundant tasks, they can automate follow-up and facilitate the maintenance of up-to-date databases, and they can help craft communications to promote effective engagement.

As legal needs continue to rise and innovative tools and applications evolve to meet these needs, law firm pro bono practices that invest thoughtfully in technology will be better positioned to expand their reach, efficiency, and impact. Law Firm Pro Bono Project staff are available to help identify opportunities for these applications to assist firms in their efforts to more efficiently scale their pro bono impact.

Donations to Legal Services Organizations

Challenge signatories continue to provide important financial support to LSOs, whose expertise and assistance are critical to effective pro bono programs, although this year saw a decrease in these donations, with 34 firms reporting that they donated an aggregated sum of \$14,482,068 to LSOs. This translates to an average donation amount of \$425,943 per reporting firm, down from \$477,784 in 2023 – a nearly 11% decrease. Fluctuations in these numbers occur based on the number and cohort of reporting firms and a variety of internal and external factors that can impact firms' giving cycles. This year's average donation amount is the lowest since 2014, when the average amount was \$362,000.

In addition to the average giving amount per firm, we analyze the average giving amount per lawyer. This metric appears to have its own cyclical qualities. This year, the average and median values for this metric were the highest for firms with 50-199 lawyers and firms with 1,000 or more lawyers. The latter category of firms saw an increase in both the average and median values. Speaking to the cyclical nature of donations, these two firm size groups had the lowest median values in 2023, while firms with 200-999 lawyers had the highest average and median values in 2023.

Law firm contributions to LSOs remain indispensable for maintaining healthy and effective legal services programs, which in turn benefit law firm pro bono efforts. This is true now more than ever. We encourage firms to continue to evaluate their financial and in-kind support for LSOs, consider creative and stretch increases when possible to maintain the quality and integrity of their own pro bono efforts, and commit to accurately tracking and reporting these amounts in connection with the Challenge survey. As always, such giving should be in addition to, not in lieu of, pro bono service.

Pro Bono as a Core Value: A Strong Foundation for the Future

Over the 30 years of the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative, law firm pro bono has seen many ups and downs. Time and time again, law firms have risen to the occasion, supporting their communities through economic downturns, working to eliminate systemic inequities in our legal system, and providing tech-forward solutions to help mend the justice gap.

Yet, the data from 2024 demonstrates that law firm pro bono remains at an inflection point. By most measures, law firms have not returned to pre-pandemic levels of pro bono. Generally, participation remains stable, yet new challenges may threaten advances made in pro bono since the pandemic. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative and chart our way into the future of pro bono, the time is now to rededicate ourselves to ensuring that pro bono thrives.

Join the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge Today!

If you have not yet signed onto the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative, we invite you to join us in this pivotal anniversary year and take that meaningful step. It is a commitment that directly impacts the individuals and organizations in our communities in need of pro bono assistance. Making this important commitment also benefits our signatory firms themselves by promoting a strong culture of pro bono and forming a baseline for individual firm performance. It likewise provides important support to the broader pro bono and legal aid communities by facilitating the longitudinal tracking of key pro bono metrics, providing perspective and insights that inform the future of pro bono.

For firms that have not yet joined the Challenge due to a concern that they may not meet their Challenge goals, we encourage them to sign on and use this tool to advance pro bono at their firms. There is no downside to enrolling—there are no dues or other fees associated with Challenge signatory status, we do not publish disaggregated statistics, nor do we in any way publicly identify individual firms as having met or not met their Challenge goals. All Challenge signatories are also entitled to unlimited free “What Counts?” advice.

Additional assistance and valuable benefits to strengthen your pro bono practice are also available through membership in the Law Firm Pro Bono Project initiative. Project member firms are encouraged to use their 20+ hours of free consulting time to explore their individual performance in more detail with PBI staff. This can be helpful for identifying innovative and practical ways to improve pro bono programs. Additional information can be found at <https://www.probonoinst.org/projects/law-firm-pro-bono/>.

Law Firm Pro Bono Project staff continues to listen to the pro bono community, to serve as counselor, resource, strategic advisor, trainer, and catalyst, and to offer expert guidance on law firm pro bono. We recognize that this moment calls for innovation, commitment, and creativity, and we welcome new and continued opportunities to partner and engage with our stakeholders as we forge ahead together to strengthen pro bono and access to justice.

Law Firm Pro Bono Project
Pro Bono Institute
202.729.6699
lawfirm@probonoinst.org
www.probonoinst.org

June 2025

2025*

Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative

APPENDICES



METHODOLOGY

In accordance with our standard practice, the survey was distributed exclusively in an electronic format, which allows for greater efficiency in the data-gathering process and improved accuracy of the data, which we carefully vet prior to analysis.

Some firms report attorney participation rates higher than 100%. For example, this occurs if the firm's headcount at the end of the year is smaller than the total number of attorneys who participated in pro bono throughout the year. For the purposes of data analysis in the Report, however, attorney participation was capped at 100% of each firm's respective year-end head count.

Aggregated data collected on pro bono hours devoted to those of limited means includes both tracked and estimated data. The Law Firm Pro Bono Project will continue to work with firms to develop comprehensive and accurate tracking systems.

Firms have historically been asked to report metrics for partners and associates. Since 2011, firms have been asked to separately report counsel and staff/other attorneys as well. Starting in 2020, we also asked firms to separately report on: 1) law students; and 2) paralegals, legal assistants and other (non-lawyer) staff. These additional groups represent an important resource for current law firm pro bono programs and their involvement with pro bono now will lead to future lawyers, members of the judiciary and policy makers with a greater appreciation for access to justice and the challenges that have yet to be overcome.

For ease of reference, we now present the data over a 20-year period (from 2004 to 2024 in this Report).

DATA TABLES

Table 1: Average Pro Bono Reporting by Firm Size

Firm Size	2024 # of Firms Reporting	2024 Average Pro Bono Percentage	2024 Average Pro Bono Hours Per Attorney	2023 # of Firms Reporting	2023 Average Pro Bono Percentage	2023 Average Pro Bono Hours Per Attorney	Average Pro Bono Percentage Change
50 - 199 Attorneys	17	3.98%	58.07	18	4.07%	59.12	-0.09%
200 - 499 Attorneys	22	3.71%	52.81	24	3.20%	48.38	0.51%
500 - 999 Attorneys	46	3.57%	48.08	47	3.56%	55.90	0.01%
1,000 + Attorneys	29	3.79%	62.71	30	4.02%	54.77	-0.23%

**Table 2: Participation by Partners, Associates, Counsel,
and Other Attorneys**

Category	2024 # of Attorneys	2024 # of Attorneys Participating	2024 Participation Rate	2023 # of Attorneys	2023 # of Attorneys Participating	2023 Participation Rate
Partners	34,016	21,394	62.9%	34,886	22,241	63.8%
Associates	43,631	36,707	84.1%	44,133	37,058	84.0%
Counsel	8,416	5,564	66.1%	8,736	5,662	65.0%
Other Attorneys	2,510	1,527	60.8%	4,919	2,951	60.0%
Totals	88,573	65,192	73.6%	92,673	67,912	73.3%

Table 3: Average Participation by Firm Size

Firm Size	2024 # of Firms Reporting	2024 Partner Participation Rate	2024 Associate Participation Rate	2024 Attorney Participation Rate	2023 # of Firms Reporting	2023 Partner Participation Rate	2023 Associate Participation Rate	2023 Attorney Participation Rate
50 - 199 Attorneys	17	74%	95%	81%	18	59%	89%	69%
200 - 499 Attorneys	22	60%	85%	69%	24	60%	83%	68%
500 - 999 Attorneys	46	62%	78%	70%	47	68%	86%	76%
1,000 + Attorneys	29	63%	88%	77%	30	62%	83%	72%

Table 4: Donations per Attorney by Firm Size

Firm Size	Average and Median Amounts per Attorney Donated to Legal Services Organizations in 2024	Average and Median Amounts per Attorney Donated to Legal Services Organizations in 2023
50 - 199 Attorneys	\$899 \$423	\$670 \$499
200 - 499 Attorneys	\$595 \$201	\$833 \$678
500 - 999 Attorneys	\$270 \$402	\$754 \$689
1,000 + Attorneys	\$809 \$684	\$486 \$623

2025 REPORTING CHALLENGE SIGNATORIES

We thank and congratulate the Challenge signatories whose commitment to pro bono is positively reflected in this Report, and we look forward to an increasing level of commitment this year, as the legal world adapts to changing business conditions and the access-to-justice crisis becomes ever clearer.

* Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld	Cooley	Goulston & Storrs
Alston & Bird	* Covington & Burling	Greenberg Traurig
* ArentFox Schiff	† Cozen O'Connor	* Hogan Lovells
Arnall Golden Gregory	† Cravath, Swaine & Moore	* Holland & Knight
* Arnold & Porter	Crowell & Moring	Hughes Hubbard & Reed
† Baker Botts	Davis Wright Tremaine	* Hunton Andrews Kurth
Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz	* Debevoise & Plimpton	Husch Blackwell
Baker McKenzie	† Dechert	Irell & Manella
Ballard Spahr	* DLA Piper (US)	* † Jenner & Block
Barnes & Thornburg	* Dorsey & Whitney	† K&L Gates
Beveridge & Diamond	* † Duane Morris	Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton
† Blank Rome	Epstein Becker & Green WASHINGTON, DC, OFFICE ONLY	King & Spalding
Bradley Arant Boult Cummings	Eversheds Sutherland	Kirkland & Ellis
† Brown Rudnick	† Faegre Drinker	Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck	Fenwick & West	Latham & Watkins
* Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner	† Foley & Lardner	Linklaters
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney	† Foley Hoag	Loeb & Loeb
† Butler Snow	* Foster Garvey	Lowenstein Sandler
Carlton Fields	* Fredrikson & Byron	Manatt, Phelps & Phillips
* Carrington, Coleman, Sloman & Blumenthal DALLAS, TX OFFICE ONLY	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer (US)	Maslon
Clark Hill	Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson	Mattos Filho, Veiga Filho, Marrey Jr. e Quiroga Advogados
* Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton	* Gibbons	Mayer Brown
	† Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher	McCarter & English
	Goodwin Procter	† McGuireWoods
		Milbank

* Denotes Charter signatories to the Challenge

† Denotes reporting on global offices, including U.S.

2025 REPORTING CHALLENGE SIGNATORIES

Miller & Chevalier
WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE ONLY

Miller Nash

Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris,
Glovsky and Popeo

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp

* Morrison & Foerster

Munger Tolles

* Nelson Mullins
Riley & Scarborough

† Nixon Peabody
Norton Rose Fulbright Canada
Nutter McClennen & Fish
O'Melveny & Myers

* Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe

Patterson Belknap
Webb & Tyler
NEW YORK, NY OFFICE ONLY

Paul Hastings

Perkins Coie

† Pillsbury Winthrop
Shaw Pittman

* † Proskauer Rose
Pullman & Comley
Quarles & Brady

* Reed Smith
Robins Kaplan
Robinson & Cole
Ropes & Gray
Saul Ewing
Seyfarth Shaw
Shook, Hardy & Bacon

† Sidley Austin
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett

* Skadden, Arps, Slate,
Meagher & Flom

* Steptoe

Stinson

Thompson Coburn

Troutman Pepper
Hamilton Sanders

* Venable

Vinson & Elkins

White & Case

Williams & Connolly
WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE ONLY

Willkie Farr & Gallagher

* Wilmer Cutler Pickering
Hale and Dorr

Wilson Sonsini
Goodrich & Rosati

* Winston & Strawn
Womble Bond Dickinson

Zuckerman Spaeder
WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE ONLY

* Denotes Charter signatories to the Challenge

† Denotes reporting on global offices, including U.S.

2025 NON-REPORTING CHALLENGE SIGNATORIES

These firms did not report in 2025 for the 2024 calendar year:

- * A&O Shearman
Armstrong Teasdale
Coblentz Patch Duffy & Bass
Day Pitney
Dentons
Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garret & Dunner
Foley & Mansfield
Graves, Dougherty, Hearon & Moody
DALLAS, TX OFFICE ONLY
- * Holland & Hart
Hollingsworth
- † McDermott Will & Emery
Michael Best & Friedrich
Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
Norton Rose Fulbright U.S.
- * Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison
Shipman & Goodwin
Snell & Wilmer
Weil, Gotshal & Manges
Wiley Rein

* Denotes Charter signatories to the Challenge

† Denotes reporting on global offices, including U.S.

ABOUT THE LAW FIRM PRO BONO CHALLENGE INITIATIVE

The Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative, developed by law firm leaders and corporate general counsel, articulates a single standard for one critical segment of the legal profession — firms with 50 or more lawyers. The Challenge has become the definitive aspirational pro bono standard for large law firms throughout the world. It is unique for several reasons:

- > It uses a progressive standard — *i.e.*, a target of either 3 or 5% of a firm's total paying client billable hours (equivalent to 60 or 100 hours per attorney), which ties pro bono performance to firm productivity and profitability.
- > It calls for an institutional commitment, rather than an individual lawyer goal, in recognition of the reality that the policies and practices of law firms are keys to the ability and willingness of firm lawyers to undertake pro bono work.
- > It creates goals not only with respect to the amount of pro bono work to be undertaken, but also with regard to the policy elements that are essential for the creation and maintenance of a pro bono-friendly firm culture.
- > It links Challenge signatories to the extensive consultative services and resources available from PBI Law Firm Pro Bono Project staff.
- > It includes an accountability mechanism and an outcome measurement through its annual reporting process.

While statistics are an important measurement tool, the Challenge is not limited to quantifiable goals. Rather, it provides a framework, a set of expectations, and operational and policy elements that are the keys to major law firms' ability to institutionalize and strengthen the culture and operations of their pro bono programs. Since the inception of the Challenge, PBI has worked with law firms to: promulgate pro bono policies; enhance their relationships with public interest, legal services, pro bono programs and other groups, including the courts; improve the oversight and staffing of firms' pro bono work; design and implement pro bono partnerships with corporate legal departments; improve processes for planning and evaluating pro bono efforts; create more meaningful time-keeping mechanisms; incorporate a number of innovative pro bono models – including signature projects, rotation/externship programs, global efforts, integration with other firm goals including professional development, talent management, diversity, associate satisfaction, and more; and successfully encourage many firms to expand the breadth and depth of their pro bono docket.

In keeping with its status as the industry standard by which firms define, measure, and assess their pro bono achievements, PBI has endeavored to minimize any changes in the Challenge language over time. However, PBI also recognizes that the Challenge must be kept current, so as to continue to promote pro bono service that meets the needs of an evolving world. To that end, in 2022, we added a new clause (d) to Principle 5 calling for attention to systemic justice system inequities, including racial injustice. We also recently reviewed the definition of "pro bono" embodied in Challenge Principle 7 and issued revised supporting documents to ensure that our guidance is clear in areas that many Challenge signatories find the most difficult to put boundaries around, including: 1) global, 2) public rights; 3) racial justice; and 4) social enterprise and impact finance pro bono matters. The materials can be found at <http://www.probonoinst.org/projects/law-firm-pro-bono/law-firm-pro-bono-challenge/>. With these refinements, we hope the Challenge will continue to constitute a rallying point and a catalyst that enables firms, despite economic cycles and other pressures, to contribute materially to their local communities, to the national justice system, and to communities around the world.

LAW FIRM PRO BONO CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Recognizing the growing severity of the unmet legal needs of the poor and disadvantaged in the communities we serve, and mindful that major law firms must—in the finest traditions of our profession—play a leading role in addressing these unmet needs, our firm is pleased to join with other firms across the country in subscribing to the following statement of principles and in pledging our best efforts to achieve the voluntary goals described below.

1. Our firm recognizes its institutional obligation to encourage and support the participation by all of its attorneys in pro bono publico activities. We agree to promulgate and maintain a clearly articulated and commonly understood firm policy which unequivocally states the firm's commitment to pro bono work.
2. To underscore our institutional commitment to pro bono activities, we agree to use our best efforts to ensure that, by no later than the close of the calendar year, our firm will either:
 - (1) annually contribute, at a minimum, an amount of time equal to 5% of the firm's total billable hours or 100 hours per attorney to pro bono work; or
 - (2) annually contribute, at a minimum, an amount of time equal to 3% of the firm's total billable hours or 60 hours per attorney to pro bono work.
3. In recognition of the special needs of the poor for legal services, we believe that our firm's pro bono activities should be particularly focused on providing access to the justice system for persons otherwise unable to afford it. Accordingly, in meeting the voluntary goals described above, we agree that a majority of the minimum pro bono time contributed by our firm should consist of the delivery of legal services on a pro bono basis to persons of limited means or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.
4. Recognizing that broad-based participation in pro bono activities is desirable, our firm agrees that, in meeting the minimum goals described above, we will use our best efforts to ensure that a majority of both partners and associates in the firm participate annually in pro bono activities.
5. In furtherance of these principles, our firm also agrees:
 - a. To provide a broad range of pro bono opportunities, training, and supervision to attorneys in the firm, to ensure that all of our attorneys can avail themselves of the opportunity to do pro bono work;
 - b. To ensure that the firm's policies with respect to evaluation, advancement, productivity, and compensation of its attorneys are compatible with the firm's strong commitment to encourage and support substantial pro bono participation by all attorneys; and
 - c. To monitor the firm's progress toward the goals established in this statement and to report its progress annually to the members of the firm and to the Law Firm Pro Bono Project; and
 - d. To support the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all by identifying and volunteering for pro bono opportunities that target racial injustice and other systemic inequities in the legal system.

LAW FIRM PRO BONO CHALLENGE STATEMENT

6. This firm also recognizes the obligation of major law firms to contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services free of charge to persons of limited means.
7. As used in this statement, the term “pro bono” refers to activities of the firm undertaken normally without expectation of fee and not in the course of ordinary commercial practice and consisting of (i) the delivery of legal services to persons of limited means or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means; (ii) the provision of legal assistance to individuals, groups, or organizations seeking to secure or protect human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, public rights or environmental rights; and (iii) the provision of legal assistance to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organizations in matters in furtherance of their organizational purposes, where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the organization’s economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate.

FIRM
PARTNER EXECUTING ON BEHALF OF FIRM
ADDRESS
ADDRESS (CONT.)
CITY / STATE / ZIP
PHONE / EMAIL
DATE