

Number of Summer Associate Positions Decreasing



Summary: *There were fewer summer associate hires this year compared to last year but the salary average has increased for summer associates.*

The number of summer associate positions are going down but the amount summer associates are being compensated is going up. This trend is making competition even stiffer for second- and third-year law students hoping to secure a spot with a top law firm. Big Law only offers a few spots to begin with so having even fewer available each year makes it a battle for even the most highly qualified students to get lucky.

For the past several years, there has been an average decrease in summer hires of 2.02 percent at the 92 Am Law 200 firms that participated in *The American Lawyer's* Summer Associates Survey. Despite this the survey reported an increase in the average salary for these associates. The average for summer associates at the participating law firms is \$3,285 per week. This salary is up 11.36 percent from just last year.

New York City is still the place to be for summer associates. There were 2,175 hired for the summer. Chicago had 311 summer associate hires with Los Angeles close behind at 299 and Boston had 222. There were four firms with the highest pay. Boasting a \$3,750 per week salary were Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson; Cooley; Dechert; and Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel. Working for Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz in Tennessee only brings in \$1,500 a week.

The lack of hires is being attributed to a lack of work to give them. As Ataman Weil consultant Eric Seeger said, "A majority of firms are telling us that their partners are not busy enough. In firms where partners are having a hard time keeping themselves busy, they have less work to throw to associates."

One firm with big changes to its number of summer associates is Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft. In 2016, they had 47 summer associates, this year they dropped the number down to 24. Managing partner Patrick Quinn explained, "We made a conscious decision to keep our numbers down to ensure that we keep quality up and that our summers have a great experience. At our firm's current size, we are able to provide this size of summer class with a great experience with lots of very substantive and challenging work and a lot of personal attention."

Paul Hastings was another firm with big drops, going from 132 summer hires to 84 this year. On the opposite side are Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart and Clearly Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton. Both firms hired more summer associates than last year. Ogletree jumped from 12 associates to 22 this year. Clearly Gottlieb took a huge jump from 97 hires last year to 151 this year.

The survey also found that the law firms are also planning on hiring fewer first-year associates for the fall, even if just by a few associates.

What can law students do if there are not enough positions for them? Tell us your thoughts in the comments below.

To learn more about tips for summer associates, read these articles:

- [Top 10 Reasons to Hire Interns or Summer Associates](#)
- [Job Offers Increasing for Summer Associates](#)
- [Start Your Summer Associate Job Search Now](#)

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