

Boston Business Journal - November 23, 2009  
</boston/stories/2009/11/23/story9.html>

## **Boston Business Journal**

Friday, November 20, 2009

# Women lawyers facing fewer barriers on partner track

Boston Business Journal - by [Lisa van der Pool](#)

Bit by bit, more women are making partner at law firms in Boston, and perhaps more importantly, the obstacles that have been traditionally unique to women aren't as insurmountable as they used to be.

Women represent 20.7 percent of partners at law firms in the Boston area, according to fresh data from the **Association for Legal Career Professionals**. That's up from 18.8 percent in 2006 and beats the national average of 19.2 percent.

And as a city, Boston is more female-friendly than most, the data suggest. Only 11 cities have a higher percentage of female partners. Austin, Texas, has the highest, with women making up 24 percent of all partners in the city.

The rising numbers seem to be a result of law firms' willingness to institute such programs as allowing mothers to work part-time schedules but remain on the partnership track.

Mary-Laura Greely, who recently joined the Boston office of **McDermott Will & Emery** from **Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC**, has three children. She made partner in 1998, an opportunity she never felt she had to skip because she is a woman.

"I missed some vacations, that did happen. There were some late nights where I had a bowl of Cheerios for dinner," said Greely. "But I never had the sense that I wasn't getting support."

Still, 52 percent of summer associates are women and 47 percent of all associates in the Boston area are women, according to NALP. Women, it seems, are dropping out of law firms as they progress along the career track — either for family reasons or simply for different career opportunities.

"Women are caught in the cultural tailspin between the 365-days-a-year, 24-7 world today versus the world we grew up in with traditional stay-at-home moms. A lot of them, when their first or second child comes along, they don't know how to make it work," said Greely.

Lisa Glahn, 34, a senior litigation associate at Mintz Levin, recently took a six-month maternity leave and now has a 15-month-old baby at home. She currently works four days a week. Glahn, who has the goal of making partner, said that her firm has been supportive.

"The challenges that I would face are the same that my male counterparts would face. When I look at becoming partner, I don't think of it through a lens with gender in mind."

**Marilyn Sticklor, who joined Boston-based Goulston & Storrs PC in 1977 as the first woman at the firm, said law firms have made progress in accommodating the schedules of everyone, especially young mothers.**

**"As long as you see the trend going up, to eventually become equal in 10 or 20 years, that's the positive," she said.**

Ellen Janos, who made partner in 1995 at Mintz Levin, said law firms can harness the power of large numbers to become a supportive network. Although large law firms often get a bad rap for being quite rigid, Janos, who has children, credits her many colleagues at Mintz Levin with being available to jump in and help out on a matter.

"There's a lot to be said for being in a bigger environment where you've got some backup support, as opposed to working in-house or at a small law firm," she said.

*Lisa van der Pool can be reached at [lvanderpool@bizjournals.com](mailto:lvanderpool@bizjournals.com).*

*All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.*



W. Marc Bernsau

Mary-Laura Greely, a partner at McDermott Will & Emery, said despite steady gains, many women still have challenges balancing their work and home lives.

[View Larger](#)