

# State of the Law Firm Hiring Market - Fall/Winter 2020

Northern California (San Francisco and Silicon Valley)

Southern California (San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange County)

Northwest (Seattle and Portland)

Southwest (Phoenix, Colorado, and Las Vegas)

Midwest (Chicago, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio)

Northeast (Boston/New England, Washington, D.C., New York, Philadelphia)

South (Atlanta, North Carolina, and Texas)

Southeast (Florida)

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

### State of the Market Report: San Francisco & Silicon Valley

by Sarah Garvey, Diversity Director, BCG Attorney Search

### Hot Practice Areas

**Data Privacy and Tech Transactions | Patent Prosecution | Patent Litigation | Litigation | Corporate and Finance | Labor and Employment | Tax and Estate Planning**

### Data Privacy and Tech Transactions

The Bay Area is a leader in technology and innovation, so it is no surprise that technology-related practice areas remain strong in both San Francisco and Silicon Valley. We continue to see demand for candidates with expertise in Data Privacy, Tech Transactions, and FinTech.

The most competitive candidates have at least three years of experience in global, federal, and state privacy laws and regulations such as CCPA, GDPR, FCRA, GLBA, COPPA, and HIPAA as well as experience in data mapping, privacy impact assessments, mobile app audits, data breach response, data processing agreements, licensing and technology agreements, intellectual property issues, enterprise software, cloud services, outsourcing, artificial intelligence, blockchain, financial technologies, payment systems, mobile applications, and e-commerce. A CIPP certification is preferred.

Large firm experience is highly desirable but firms will consider candidates with strong in-house experience. As with all California positions, having the California bar is essential.

### Patent Prosecution

Patent Prosecution remains healthy throughout the Bay Area and large firms as well as IP boutiques are actively hiring patent prosecution attorneys in both the hard and life sciences. Firms are looking for candidates with advanced degrees and experience in areas such as electrical engineering, computer software, physics, mechanical engineering, robotics, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, chemistry, biotechnology, molecular biology, genetics, immunology, virology, and pharmaceuticals.

Candidates should be skilled at preparation of patent applications, IP strategy and portfolio management, and general IP consulting. They must be good writers and admitted to the USPTO.

### Patent Litigation

Patent litigation rounds out the technology-related practice areas that remain strong in Northern California. Firms are hiring candidates who have advanced hard or life science degrees and patent and trade secret

litigation experience as well as experience litigating cases in other technology-related areas such as unfair competition, privacy, and fraud. USPTO registration and ITC and PTAB experience is a plus.

## Litigation

Litigation is very active in San Francisco. It is also active in Silicon Valley, but to a lesser extent. Firms are looking for candidates with at least two to three years of strong litigation experience, preferably with a federal clerkship and large firm training.

Highest demand right now is for litigators with experience in general commercial litigation, construction and real estate litigation, product liability and mass torts, securities litigation, investigations and FCPA, IP and patent litigation, labor and employment, insurance defense and coverage litigation, and workers' compensation.

California firms are particularly adamant about lateral attorney hires being admitted to the California bar and absent exceptional circumstances firms will not consider candidates without the bar.

## Corporate and Finance

Corporate and finance work is picking up again in the Bay Area, especially as it relates to companies engaged in technology, health care, and energy/renewables. In both San Francisco and Silicon Valley, firms are looking for attorneys with experience in capital markets, mergers and acquisitions, venture capital, private equity, general corporate and governance work, debt finance, and project finance (especially in renewables). Ideal candidates will have three to five years of experience and AmLaw training.

## Labor and Employment

Labor and employment is traditionally a strong practice area throughout the Bay Area, as well as in the East Bay and Sacramento, and continues to be so. Firms are looking for strong mid-level candidates with backgrounds in L&E litigation and/or counseling, including class actions, wage and hour cases, discrimination and wrongful termination, drafting handbooks, and conducting internal investigations. Firms are also interested in candidates with traditional labor experience.

## Tax and Estate Planning

There has been an uptick in demand for niche practice areas related to tax and estate planning throughout Northern California (including the East Bay and Sacramento). Firms are looking for candidates with experience in trusts, estates, and wealth transfer planning. Firms are also looking for attorneys with tax controversy experience and, to a lesser extent, international transactional tax experience (M&A and capital markets and other transactions) as well as state and local taxes including Proposition 13. [Having an LLM degree and sophisticated prior law firm training is very helpful for these positions.](#)

### Steady Practice Areas

[Land Use and Environmental](#) | [Immigration](#) | [ERISA and Executive Compensation](#) | [Family Law](#) | [Antitrust](#)

## Land Use and Environmental

Traditional real estate work has slowed in Northern California, but there is a steady but limited demand for experienced environmental and land use attorneys throughout the region. For the most part, firms are interested in attorneys with at least four years of experience in federal, state, and local land use laws and regulations including NEPA and CEQA, knowledge of planning and zoning law, and general exposure to real estate transactions. Other areas of interest include toxic torts and energy-related matters. Preferred

candidates will have experience with both public and private entities, and both transactional and litigation experience.

## Immigration

Though limited, there continues to be demand for business immigration attorneys in San Francisco and to a lesser extent in Silicon Valley and Oakland.

## ERISA and Executive Compensation

Like land use and immigration, there continues to be limited demand for ERISA and executive compensation attorneys. ERISA candidates should have Taft-Hartley or labor law experience. Executive compensation candidates should have experience with equity matters, proxy disclosures, severance and employment agreements, Sections 280G, M&A transactions, and IPOs.

Family law and Antitrust are steady but limited-availability practice areas in Northern California.

### Slower Practice Areas

Demand has been slower for positions in Trademark, International Trade, Maritime, and Bankruptcy.

## Explore law firm jobs in San Francisco by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Data Privacy/Cybersecurity/Data Breach](#)

[Environmental](#)

[Immigration](#)

[Labor and Employment](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Patent/IP Litigation](#)

[Patent Prosecution/Patent Agents](#)

[Technology transactions](#)

[Real Estate/Land Use](#)

[Tax](#)

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

### State of the Market Report: Los Angeles

by *Romina L. Filippou*, Legal Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

In terms of the state of the legal hiring market in Los Angeles, this year has been vastly different from previous ones, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas the market was behaving relatively normally up until mid to end of March, hiring came to almost a complete standstill at the end of March, and did not start to pick up again until around July. The first practice area to recover was litigation, followed by niche practice areas such as tax, trusts & estates, bankruptcy and data privacy.

Corporate and real estate transactional, as well as tech transactions, have been slower to recover. Los Angeles firms are continuing to require the CA bar, except for exceptional candidates with sophisticated experience in certain niche and transactional specialties, and firms are not hiring candidates to indefinitely work for them remotely, although firms are, for the most part, allowing recent hires to work for them remotely for the near future.

### Hot Practice Areas

[Litigation](#) | [Labor & Employment](#)

[Litigation](#)

The only practice area that has been steady and has continued to see activity throughout this year, including from March through the early summer (when hiring largely came to a standstill), is litigation. From March through the early summer, mostly only boutique litigation firms in Los Angeles were hiring, while mid-sized and larger firms had put their hiring on hold. Then, during the summer, Big Law firms in Los Angeles slowly started to open, with just a few Am Law 100 firms posting and re-posting general litigation openings.

Now, in the fall, several Big Law firms and even mid-sized firms have recently started or restarted the search for litigation associates. Los Angeles firms are generally searching for litigation associates with around 1 to 6 years of experience, and that are licensed to practice law in California, or at the very least have passed the California bar and are awaiting admission.

Firms are often looking for general commercial and business litigation experience and like to see that a candidate has taken and / or defended depositions, argued motions, and gained other types of substantive pre-litigation experience. Trial experience (first and second chair experience) is always highly valued by firms.

## Labor & Employment

Labor & Employment and Employment Litigation are always very robust practice areas in Los Angeles. However, while boutique general litigation firms continued to hire from March through the early summer, Labor & Employment slowed down dramatically and significantly, especially on the defense-side.

While small plaintiff-side Labor & Employment firms continued to hire during the worst of the pandemic, small, mid-sized and Big Law firms generally put their defense-side Labor & Employment openings on hold. By the fall, though, Labor & Employment on the defense side has really picked up again, and we are seeing openings at both boutique plaintiff-side Labor & Employment firms, and defense-side openings at firms of all sizes.

Firms are generally seeking attorneys with around 1 to 6 years of experience, and that are licensed to practice law in California. Firms are searching for candidates with experience in all areas of employment law, including class action, wage and hour, discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, retaliation and counseling. Wage and hour class action and PAGA experience is highly desirable and sought after.

### Steady Practice Areas

#### Bankruptcy

## Bankruptcy

Bankruptcy is a practice area that is generally countercyclical. When the economy and market are robust, bankruptcy and refinancing are slow, and when the economy and market are weaker or more unsteady, bankruptcy does well. Whereas bankruptcy had generally been slow for the past several years, we are suddenly seeing a resurgence in bankruptcy work and bankruptcy openings, especially since March.

Firms of all sizes - boutique, mid-sized and Big Law - are searching for bankruptcy clerks and attorneys with 1-6 years of litigation and transactional experience. Business restructuring and reorganization experience, as well as debtor, creditor and distressed acquisition experience, are high in demand. Chapter 7 but in particular Chapter 11 experience is highly desirable, and cross-border and out-of-court restructuring experience is also sought after. Bankruptcy attorneys and partners with significant books of business are, of course, highly marketable.

### Other Steady Practice Areas

While there is not a significant amount of jobs in these practice areas, other steady practice areas at the

moment in Los Angeles include Tax, Trusts & Estates, Energy, ERISA / Executive Compensation and Data Privacy. As mentioned above, attorneys that specialize in niche practice areas and have sophisticated, substantive experience will have no trouble landing jobs in Los Angeles right now.

### Slower Practice Areas

Demand has been slower for positions in Real Estate Transactional and Finance, General Corporate, Trademark and IP Litigation in LA. Whereas before March, Real Estate Transactional, Real Estate Finance and General Corporate were incredibly robust, these practice areas have been much slower since the pandemic hit the United States.

That said, we are starting to see both Real Estate and General Corporate start to pick up again. Trademark and IP Litigation are never strong practice areas in Los Angeles (they do much better in the Bay Area, as the major tech companies are mostly headquartered there), but these practice areas are especially slow right now.

**Explore law firm jobs in Los Angeles by practice area:**

**Corporate**

**Environmental**

**Health Care**

**Labor & Employment**

**Litigation**

**Patent Prosecution**

**Real Estate**

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### **State of the Market Report: Orange County**

by *Romina L. Filippou*, Legal Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

In terms of the state of the legal hiring market in Orange County, this year has been very different from previous ones, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas the market was behaving relatively normally up until mid to end of March, hiring came to almost a complete standstill at the end of March, and did not start to pick up again until around July.

The first practice area to recover was litigation, followed by niche practice areas such as patent prosecution, tax and trusts & estates (defense-side labor & employment has also recovered very nicely in the OC). Corporate and real estate transactional, as well as tech transactions, have been slower to recover. Orange County firms are continuing to require the CA bar, except for exceptional candidates with sophisticated experience in certain niche and transactional specialties, and firms are not hiring candidates to indefinitely work for them remotely, although firms are for the most part allowing recent hires to work for them remotely for the near future. It should be noted that OC firms like to see candidates with specific ties to the OC, and a real and true desire to be in the OC long-term.

OC firms realize that the OC is a backup option for a lot of candidates to LA (a similar phenomenon happens with San Diego, through which SD is the backup to LA), and will therefore want to see strong ties to the OC. Examples of strong ties to the OC include family in the OC, having attended either college or law school in the OC and a current residence in the OC.

### Hot Practice Areas

**Litigation | Labor & Employment**

#### **Litigation**

Similar to Los Angeles, litigation has done well throughout the year in the OC, both before March and after

March. If anything, litigation is even stronger now than it was before the pandemic hit the United States in March. Orange County firms that are hiring litigators are searching for general business and commercial litigation experience, but products liability is a robust practice area under the broader umbrella of general litigation as well.

OC firms are generally searching for litigation associates with around 1 to 6 years of experience, and that are licensed to practice law in California, or at the very least have passed the California bar and are awaiting admission. Firms like to see that a candidate has taken and / or defended depositions, argued motions and gained other types of substantive pre-litigation experience. Trial experience (first and second chair experience) is always highly valued by firms.

## Labor & Employment

Labor & Employment and Employment Litigation are always very robust practice areas in the OC. However, unlike in LA, plaintiff-side Labor & Employment is not robust in the OC. Most plaintiff-side Labor & Employment firms in Southern California are in Los Angeles, and there are very few of these sorts of firms in the OC, and as a result very few plaintiff-side openings in the OC. However, defense-side [Labor & Employment](#) has seen a remarkably similar trend in the OC as it has in LA this year.

Whereas hiring at defense-side firms in the area of Labor & Employment really slowed from March through the early summer, in the fall we are seeing a significant uptick in the number of postings and re-postings for defense-side L&E positions at boutique, mid-sized and Big Law firms in the OC. OC firms are generally seeking defense-side L&E attorneys with around 1 to 6 years of experience, and that are licensed to practice law in California.

Firms are seeking candidates with experience in all areas of employment law, including class action, wage and hour, discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, retaliation and counseling. Wage and hour class action and PAGA experience are highly desirable and sought after.

### Steady Practice Areas

#### [Patent Prosecution](#)

## Patent Prosecution

Unlike trademark and IP litigation in LA (and in the OC), patent prosecution in the OC (and in LA) has been steady throughout the year and has only picked up since the summer. Firms in the OC (and in LA) are searching for patent agents, patent prosecution associates and technical specialists with around 1 to 6 years of experience in the field of hard sciences (life sciences is not as robust right now).

Software, computer science, electrical engineering and physics experience is especially in demand, and candidates should ideally have an advanced degree in one of these fields, whether a master's or a PhD. Candidates must be a member of the USPTO, and should ideally have strong grades from their undergraduate school and/or their advanced degree program (firms will sometimes request both the law school and the undergraduate and/or advanced degree transcript).

### Other Steady Practice Areas

While there is not a significant amount of jobs in these practice areas in the OC, other steady practice areas right now include Tax and Trusts & Estates. As mentioned above, attorneys that specialize in niche practice areas and have sophisticated, substantive experience will have no trouble landing jobs in the OC right now.

### Slower Practice Areas

Other than Litigation, Labor & Employment and IP, most practice areas are and have been slow in the OC



recently. These slower practice areas include Bankruptcy, Energy, ERISA / Executive Compensation, Data Privacy (these four are steady in LA), General Corporate, General Finance and Tech Transactions. Real Estate Transactional and Finance have also been slow, but luckily, we are starting to see an uptick in the number of postings in these practice areas in the OC.

**Explore law firm jobs in Irvine, Orange County, California by practice area:**

**Corporate**

**Labor & Employment**

**Litigation**

**Patent Prosecution**

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## **SOUTHWEST**

### **State of the Market Report: Colorado**

by *Annie Haselfeld*, General Manager, BCG Attorney Search

## **Hot Practice Areas**

**Commercial Litigation | Family Law**

### **Commercial Litigation**

The pandemic has not slowed down the demand for litigators. While primarily seeking junior to mid-level candidates, a few firms are also seeking senior candidates. Defense attorneys with experience in commercial litigation, construction, insurance, tort/civil litigation (personal injury, products liability and mass torts) are in highest demand. Trial experience is highly sought after and, because there are always a healthy number of litigators in the market, firms are looking for highly credentialed candidates (top academics, AMLAW 100 experience and clerkships). Admission to the Colorado bar is almost always required before a firm will even look at your resume.

### **Family Law**

Due to the pandemic, many couples are taking stock of their current family situation. Perhaps being quarantined together has made couples re-evaluate their priorities and relationships. Family law attorneys are in great demand in the Colorado area. Most firms require attorneys with at least one year for family law experience under their belts. The openings range from solo practitioners requiring more help to mid-sized firms.

## **Slow Practice Areas**

**Corporate and M&A | Real Estate**

### **Corporate and M&A**

The pandemic has slowed down the need for corporate and mergers and acquisitions attorneys. Many companies have delayed or cancelled large deals to cut costs. As a result, there is a decrease in corporate legal positions.

### **Real Estate**

The pandemic has slowed down the need for real estate attorneys as well. There are not many positions available in this field right now. Large real estate developments and projects have been delayed or cancelled.

**Explore law firm jobs in Colorado by practice area:**

[Corporate](#)  
[Energy & Oil and Gas](#)  
[Environmental & Land Use](#)  
[Finance](#)  
[Intellectual Property](#)  
[Labor & Employment](#)  
[Litigation](#)  
[Real Estate](#)

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## NORTHEAST

### **State of the Market Report: Boston/New England**

by [Carolina Ramirez](#), Legal Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

The Boston/New England market has been incredibly slow since the beginning of COVID-19. While we were hopeful that the market would see an uptick in activity in September, compared to other markets such as New York, and California, there was minimal change in demand and things continue to be at a standstill. Practice areas that are typically steady in the region such as litigation and intellectual property have few openings and if there is an opening it is taking firms months to onboard new hires.

### Slow Practice Areas

[Litigation](#) | [Intellectual Property](#)

## **Litigation**

Of all the practice areas, litigation had the most openings over the past six months but again things have been slow across the board in all sectors and practice areas. Boston has been slower than other areas of New England. Both Rhode Island and Maine have seen more litigation activity during the last six months or so but nothing to signal that demand is on the rise. The candidates that are having most traction in Boston/New England are mid-level litigation associates (2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> year).

Most of the top Am Law 100 firms instituted a hiring freeze at the outset of the pandemic that started in mid-March and that hiring freeze has continued until present day. The firms that are seeing a bit more activity are mid-size and smaller litigation boutiques. But again, there is minimal activity even amongst these smaller firms. A few firms have decided to take on temporary associates with potential for full-time employment, but this seems to be in response to an uncertain future and legal market due to the pandemic. It is unclear whether these temporary roles will turn into full-time employment.

## **Intellectual Property**

Whereas Boston is typically an active market for data privacy, intellectual property and tech transactions, the past eight months have seen a marked decline in movement in this practice area. If you want to be competitive in this market you have to have substantive experience and not simply a demonstrated interest. There have been very few new openings in this practice area in the past six months.

### Slower Practice Areas

[Corporate](#) | [Real Estate](#)

## **Corporate**

I have seen little to no demand for corporate attorneys in the Boston/New England area. There have been some opportunities for capital markets and securities attorneys but securing an interview has been an incredibly difficult feat with all the competition in the marketplace.

## **Real Estate**



Real estate attorneys are in even less demand than corporate attorneys and there has been no movement on this front. Nor does it look likely that this will change soon since the real estate market was hard hit across most geographic regions in the US over the past six months.

### Dormant Practice Areas

Contrary to expectations in the legal industry Bankruptcy, Labor and Employment, Insurance and Healthcare saw essentially no activity in the last six months nor are there signs that this will be changing any time soon.

Explore law firm jobs in Boston by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Labor & Employment](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Patent Prosecution](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Technology Transactions](#)

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### **State of the Market Report: Washington, D.C.**

by [Carolina Ramirez](#), Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

Like Boston and New England, D.C. has seen extraordinarily little hiring activity over the last six months. Litigation and government contract work which is usually steady for DC has seen a marked drop in demand. Corporate openings have all but ceased in the region.

### Slow Practice Areas

#### **Litigation/White Collar and Government Investigations | Healthcare**

#### **Litigation/White Collar and Government Investigations**

Hiring in D.C. has been very slow overall and there have been minimal openings in litigation with even less openings in the White Collar and Government Investigations practice area. D.C. normally a hotbed of activity for government related positions as well as white collar roles has seen few openings in the last six months and no new openings in the last three months. White Collar positions have all but disappeared with the exception of a few of the big firms hiring for very specific roles that are seeing intense competition since there are limited openings and numerous highly qualified candidates.

#### **Healthcare**

D.C. is typically a good market for healthcare attorneys and there are various types of healthcare openings such as healthcare regulatory, insurance and government contracts work but the past six months this area has also been very slow. There have been openings but not nearly as many as is usual for the DC area and hiring has dropped off considerably.

### Slower Practice Areas

#### **Intellectual Property**

This practice area normally sees a fair amount of activity, especially in the patent prosecution, trademark and copyright practice areas but again, there has been little to no activity in the DC and surrounding areas over the last six months.

### Dormant Practice Areas

Like Boston and New England, real estate and bankruptcy have seen no activity in the last six months. The

same is true of Trusts and Estates, Insurance, M&A, Venture Capital, as well as Capital Markets and Securities. There have been no indications that hiring in these practice areas will pick up soon in the DC area.

Explore law firm jobs in Washington, D.C. by practice area:

[Antitrust](#)  
[Corporate](#)  
[Data Privacy](#)  
[ERISA](#)  
[Government Contracts](#)  
[Health Care](#)  
[International Trade](#)  
[Labor and Employment](#)  
[Litigation](#)  
[Patent Litigation](#)  
[Patent Prosecution](#)  
[Real Estate](#)  
[Trademark and Copyright](#)

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## State of the Market Report: New York and Philadelphia

by *Becca Levine*, Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

[Litigation](#) | [Bankruptcy](#) | [Corporate](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Intellectual Property](#) | [ERISA/Employment and Tax/Trust and Estates](#) | [Finance](#)

With the pandemic sweeping the country in 2020, the legal market looks a lot different now than it did in early 2020. New York and Philadelphia continue to be severely affected by the pandemic, with hiring at most major firms still at exceptionally low levels. Yet, more local and small firm hiring has remained steady throughout the period. We have seen some positive trends in the market lately and hope that continues throughout the end of 2020 and into 2021, especially in litigation and major top firm corporate practices.

### Litigation

While no practice area in either New York or Philadelphia is "hot" right now, litigation would probably be the "hottest" market. Most of the action, however, is at smaller or regional firms looking to grow and capitalize on the influx of top talent in the litigation market, but we have been seeing movement in some bigger firms as well.

### Bankruptcy

A solid bankruptcy attorney in both New York and Philadelphia can land interviews at this time, and probably make a step up move in the lateral firm world. Not surprisingly, bankruptcy has picked up during the pandemic, although not as fast as we initially would have anticipated. Nevertheless, firms are looking for strong bankruptcy attorneys, so now is an unusual time to try to make that move if you fit this bill. Bankruptcy ebbs and flows over time, and can have long periods of relatively little hiring, so we would suggest jumping at the chance to make the move while the iron is hot in this area.

### Corporate

The corporate market in Philadelphia is extremely slow, so this category is only appearing here with respect to New York and only in one instance. Corporate has been the most affected practice area due to the pandemic, and we have seen firms completely shut down all corporate openings and tell us the work has

dried up significantly.

However, there is one world in the New York market where this is not true - Vault top 20 big law firms have been thriving in corporate during this, and attorneys have told me they are busier than ever in those practice areas. These firms are generally looking for superstar attorneys - third to fifth year associates with extraordinarily strong law firm backgrounds and top school credentials. These firms are typically looking to hire within the Vault top 20 market.

If you are therefore in that world and are not finding that your firm is the right fit, now would be an unusually good time to consider making a lateral move in the corporate world.

Other big law firms, however, have been seriously affected in this group and this is where a lot of the layoffs have occurred. So outside of the Vault top world, this is probably going to be a very slow practice area for some time.

## **Real Estate**

Real estate has flat lined during the pandemic, especially in Philadelphia and New York. While we often see a lot of need for real estate finance in these markets, especially Philadelphia, there are very few firms looking right now. However, that does not mean the practice area is completely dead. We have seen people get offers and interviews in the real estate space with the right experience and strong credentials.

## **Intellectual Property**

Patent law is where it is at right now, across the country. While this practice area is never big in Philadelphia, patent prosecution has remained steady throughout the pandemic. IP litigation, as well, if you have the appropriate science background to handle a patent litigation role, has remained strong during the pandemic. Trademark/copyright, however, is extremely slow, with firms typically not doing this type of work as much given the low fees, and we have seen very few openings in this area for a long time.

## **ERISA/Employment and Tax/Trust and Estates**

ERISA in Philadelphia and New York is a smaller market, with an opening coming out every couple of months. Employment litigation is another area that we had expected to see significant growth during the pandemic, but the market in big law has not seen any movement, with very few firms looking to hire in the employment space. Trust and estates, however, has picked up and we expect to see continued interest for very skilled trust and estate attorneys.

## **Finance**

We continue to see steady hiring in the finance space, especially when it relates to leveraged financing and structured financings, mostly in the New York market. Firms are generally looking for associates with 3-6 years of experience with a laser focus in leveraged finance. Fund formation is another practice area that has remained steady, but the firms are not looking for juniors in this area. If you have over three years of experience, but not over seven years, with a strong fund formation/investment management focus, you can make a really strong lateral move at this time. Project finance continues to remain steady as well, with firms looking for individuals with specialized experience in this area.

Explore law firm jobs in New York by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[ERISA/Employment](#)

Intellectual Property  
Litigation  
Tax  
Trusts and Estates  
Real Estate

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## SOUTH

### State of the Market Report: Atlanta

by [Nadeen Weybrecht](#), Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

Several large companies are headquartered in Atlanta including Home Depot, UPS, Coca Cola, Delta Airlines, Daimler (the German car maker's US headquarter relocated in 2017), Sun Trust Bank and AFLAC. 16 of the Fortune 500 companies have their headquarters in Atlanta and most of the legal work for these companies is done out of the Atlanta law firms. Five Atlanta-based firms are AmLaw 100 firms and 31 of the AmLaw 100 firms have offices in Atlanta.

### Healthy Practice Areas

[Litigation](#) | [Corporate](#)

#### Litigation

Not surprisingly, with the economic slowdown brought on by Covid-19, litigation has been quite active in Atlanta. In addition to commercial and health care litigation needs, there are several insurance litigation positions open. To be considered for the top firms, strong credentials are a must, including large law firm experience, law review, and a federal judicial clerkship. Admission to the Georgia bar is required.

#### Corporate

Corporate law is the other area with a sizeable need, but still, the demand is far less than it is for litigators. Firms are looking for corporate associates with a wide range of experience, including public and private M&A, debt finance, public securities, and traditional corporate. Most of the current postings are for associates with 1 to 4 years of corporate law experience. Firms are willing to consider candidates who are not currently located in Atlanta, especially if they are relocating from a larger market.

### Steady Practice Areas

[Real Estate](#) | [Intellectual Property](#)

#### Real Estate

Real estate associate hiring seems to be showing signs of life again. Some firms with top real estate practices are looking for associates with real estate transactions, financings, fund formation, equity investment, and management experience.

#### Intellectual Property

About the same number of firms looking for real estate associates are also looking for patent prosecution associates with at least two years of experience. Firms are seeking associates with hard science backgrounds, including electrical engineering, computer engineering, computer science, or physics. USPTO registration is essential.

Explore law firm jobs in Atlanta by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Intellectual Property](#)

[Litigation](#)

## Real Estate

[TOP](#)

### State of the Market Report: North Carolina by [Nadeen Weybrecht](#), General Manager, BCG Attorney Search

Several years ago, law firms looked to the Southeast as a region rife with expansion opportunities, there was a flurry of new office openings in Charlotte. Charlotte is both a commercial hub and the second-largest banking hub in the country by assets. It is home to Bank of America. Recently, it has also become the home of choice for firms looking to add an outpost in the Southeast.

#### Healthy Practice Areas [Corporate](#) | [Real Estate](#)

### Corporate

There are many opportunities for attorneys in North Carolina in the corporate and finance practice areas. Firms hiring are looking for mid-to-senior level associates with either sophisticated corporate experience--especially in mergers and acquisitions and capital markets--or complex financial transactions experience--particularly in asset-based financing and syndicated lending, and AmLaw 100 experience. Firms particularly value experience gained by practicing in New York, or locally with a top firm.

### Real Estate

There are as many firms seeking corporate and finance associates as there are seeking real estate attorneys who have experience with financing, structuring, negotiating and documenting commercial development projects. The need ranges from junior associates to do the low-level diligence to more senior attorneys who can run the deals.

#### Slower Practice Areas

While there are always litigation opportunities across North Carolina, this practice area is relatively slow, especially compared to other markets. The IP market is slower, with only about a handful of firms looking in this area. The few firms that are looking are seeking those with hard science technical backgrounds, especially electrical/mechanical engineering and computer science.

Some firms are looking to grow their labor and employment practices by bringing on partners with business, but few firms have enough L&E work to sustain new hires.

Explore law firm jobs in North Carolina by practice area:

[Corporate](#)
[Finance](#)
[Intellectual Property](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[TOP](#)

### State of the Market Report: Austin, Texas by [Nadeen Weybrecht](#), Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

The demand in Texas overall is relatively stable and diverse. Texas has multiple distinct legal markets, and the largest are Houston and Dallas. Austin closely follows but is very difficult to break into without very strong ties to the area. There are over 50 Fortune 500 companies with headquarters in Texas and 46 firms opened offices in Houston between 2001 and 2017; 29 firms opened offices in Dallas during that same period.

Houston is known as the "Energy Capital of the World" and this industry drives much of the legal work in this

city, but firms have recently diversified their practices. Half of the Am Law 100 firms have offices here.

Dallas is the second largest legal market in Texas. Dallas also has a diverse legal market and is not as energy dependent as Houston. The Dallas legal market is also relatively open to newcomers who do not have strong ties to Texas.

### Healthy Practice Areas

[Corporate](#) | [Litigation](#) | [Intellectual Property](#)

#### Corporate

Corporate law remains steady in Austin, with a particular need for junior to mid-level associates. The influx of tech companies and startups has created a need for a wide variety of corporate attorneys. Firms are especially interested in associates with experience with M&A, venture capital, private equity, public financing, and SEC reporting. Firms want to see large firm experience.

#### Litigation

Litigation also remains a healthy practice area in Austin. Large firms in Austin require top credentials; they will only look at candidates from Top 25 schools with law review, moot court, mock trial, and other trial skills activities.

#### Intellectual Property

A few large firms are looking for associates with technology transactions experience. They are looking for associates from 2 to 7 years of experience in intellectual property and technology experience. Candidates must have actual experience in this practice area to get a second look from big Austin firms.

Explore law firm jobs in Austin by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Employment](#)

[Intellectual Property](#)

[Litigation](#)

[TOP](#)

### **State of the Market Report: Dallas, Texas**

by [Nadeen Weybrecht](#), Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

As home to 24 of the Fortune 500 companies, the Dallas legal market is quite strong.

### Healthy Practice Areas

[Litigation](#) | [Corporate](#) | [Real Estate](#)

#### Litigation

We have placed more litigation associates in Dallas than any other city in the south, and Dallas continues to be a strong market for litigators. Dallas is home to a number of prestigious trial boutiques, as well as strong litigation groups in national firms. There is a competitive market for junior to mid-level litigators with top credentials. Firms look for candidates who did well at a top law school (top 20% or higher), competed in trial advocacy competitions (mock trial, moot court, legal clinics), and participated in law review. There is a very strong preference for candidates with federal court clerkships.

#### Corporate

Most of the big firms in Dallas are focused on finding corporate associates with transactions experience, including M&A, private equity, and debt finance. Firms have a strong preference for lateral associates who



were trained at nationally recognized firms.

## Real Estate

Real estate associate hiring seems to be picking back up. A few Dallas firms are looking for real estate associates with transactions or debt finance experience and there are needs for both junior and more senior associates.

Explore law firm jobs in Dallas by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[TOP](#)

## State of the Market Report: Houston, Texas

by [Nadeen Weybrecht](#), Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search

The legal market in Houston has been depressed over the past couple of years because of lower energy prices. The good news is that hiring has picked up recently, on the disputes side.

### Healthy Practice Areas

[Litigation](#) | [Corporate](#)

## Litigation

By far, litigation is the strongest practice area in Houston now, and both smaller, boutique firms and larger AmLaw firms are looking. Strong litigation candidates have experience from top tier law firms and/or a federal judicial clerkship, and experience in commercial litigation.

## Corporate

As in Dallas and Austin, several Houston firms are looking for junior to mid-level corporate associates, preferably with capital markets and M&A experience. There is a smaller number of openings in Houston, though, as compared to Dallas and Austin.

Explore law firm jobs in Houston by practice area:

[Corporate](#)

[Energy](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Tax](#)