

# 2024

## Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Project® Staffing Survey

## **Pro Bono Institute (PBI)**

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 United States and around the world.

### **Law Firm Pro Bono Project**

PBI's 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 United States 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.

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# Report on 2024 Staffing Survey

## Background

The topic of pro bono staffing is of continual interest to the law firm pro bono community. Data on this topic offers insights into staffing methods that are working, those that could work better, and the challenges and opportunities associated with various methods of constructing a law firm pro bono program. PBI presents this report in the interest of supporting the pro bono community, providing data to facilitate ongoing conversations on these topics, and promoting increased access to justice through effective, evidence-based law firm pro bono programs.

The PBI 2024 Staffing Survey that is the basis for this report was conducted between February and May 2024. The survey was sent to Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge<sup>®</sup> signatories and Law Firm Pro Bono Project<sup>®</sup> members. PBI received 76 responses through May 2024, which are incorporated into this report. PBI thanks the respondents for offering their time to this important research for the benefit of the pro bono community and the communities in which we collectively strive to bridge the justice gap.

## 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 information reported. We carefully vetted the data prior to analysis, both via analytical means and through follow-up with sources, where appropriate. Analyses were likewise vetted and verified to ensure the accuracy of the data presented.

Given that not all categories of data are applicable to all firms, unless otherwise indicated, the averages reported are based on data from firms reporting for the subject category. The sample size for each chart and graph presentation is reflected within the chart or graph. Because much of the data informing this report is qualitative in nature, there are areas of the report in which the survey questions and options offered to respondents are important for context. Those areas are identified throughout the report, with the corresponding questions and options presented alongside the data reported.

We note that the levels of precision of statistics reflected in the report are limited by the relatively small sample size of the 76 responding firms and the subgroups of those firms informing more specific analyses throughout the report. Given this limitation, percentages in the report are presented in integer format with no decimal points to avoid suggesting a level of precision that is unsupported by the data.

# Executive Summary

## Employment of Pro Bono Professionals

- **92 percent** of responding firms employ one or more pro bono professionals, while **8 percent** do not employ dedicated pro bono staff.
- On average, firms employ one full-time pro bono professional and one additional professional for every additional **525** attorneys.

## Responsibilities of Pro Bono Professionals

- **62 percent** of professionals dedicate virtually all their time to pro bono program oversight.
- **30 percent** split their time between oversight and substantive representation of pro bono clients.
- **30 percent** have significant non-pro bono related responsibilities.

## Range of Titles for Pro Bono Professionals

- The most common titles for pro bono professionals who are licensed attorneys are partner (**50 percent**), counsel (**48 percent**), manager (**20 percent**), director (**18 percent**), and coordinator (**12 percent**).
- The most common titles for pro bono professionals who are not licensed attorneys are coordinator (**41 percent**), manager (**29 percent**), administrative assistant or secretary (**16 percent**), and pro bono specialist (**14 percent**).

## Pro Bono Professionals Providing Administrative and Operational Support

- **71 percent** of responding firms employ one or more pro bono professionals responsible for program oversight coupled with one or more professionals who provide administrative or operational support.
- For responding firms with 1,000 or more attorneys, this figure increases to **81 percent**.

## Professionals with Substantive Pro Bono Responsibilities

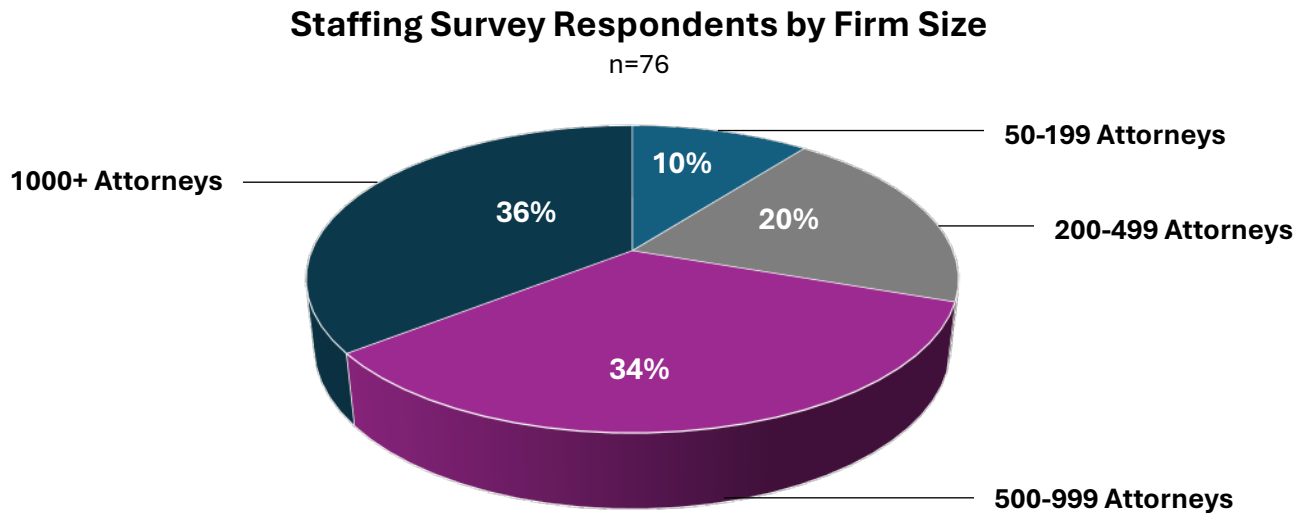
- Of respondents employing pro bono professionals, **24 percent** employ one or more full-time professionals to provide oversight in a single practice area, such as immigration, small businesses/non-profits, or civil rights.
- **14 percent** of responding firms employ professionals who spend virtually all their time delivering substantive pro bono legal services, with **60 percent** of such professionals spending most of their time handling their own cases, and **30 percent** spending most of their time supervising others.

## Pro Bono Committees

- **87 percent** of firms reported having a firm-wide pro bono committee, with roles varying from policy development to supervision and oversight.
- **51 percent** of these committees have overlapping membership with firm management or policy committees.
- All responding firms without a full-time pro bono professional have a pro bono committee overseeing their pro bono program.

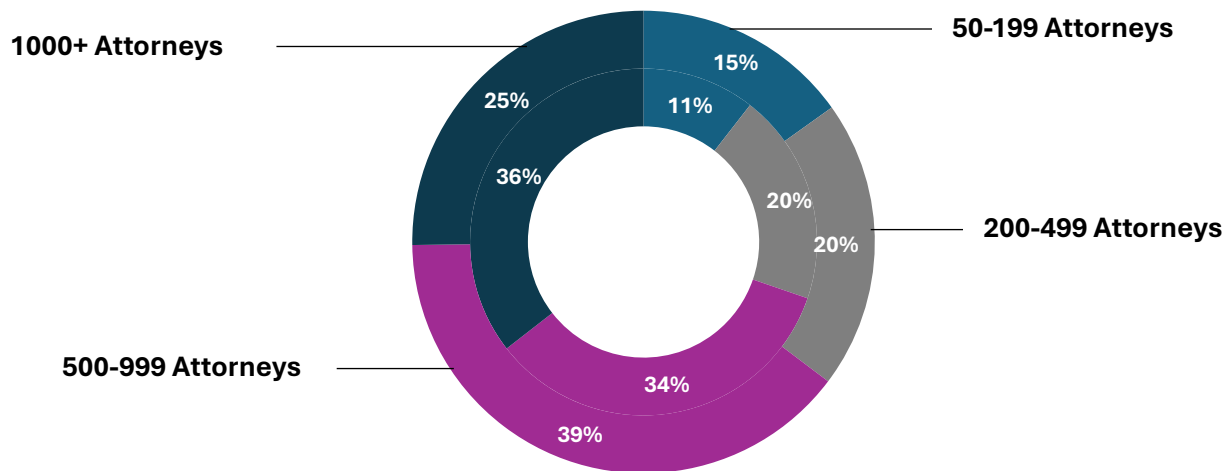
## Responding Firms: A Closer Look

There were 76 respondents to the 2024 Staffing Survey. Responding firms were largely representative of firms that responded to the 2024 Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge Survey. Respondents were most heavily weighted in firms with 500 or more attorneys (**70 percent** of responding firms). The full breakdown of respondents by firm size is as follows:



These proportions are somewhat similar to those reflected in this year's *Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative*, with respondents to the Challenge Survey reflecting a slightly more even distribution:

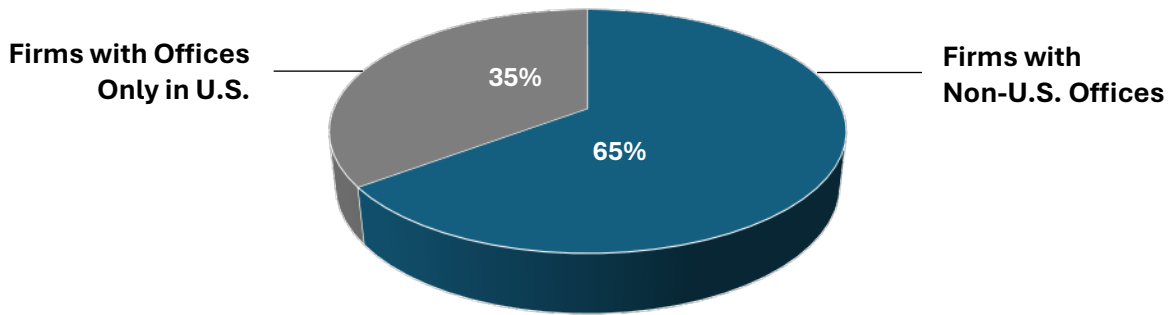
**Challenge Respondents by Firm Size (Exterior) n=120**  
**Staffing Respondents by Firm Size (Interior) n=76**



Regarding the geographical distribution of firms responding to the Staffing Survey, **65 percent** of responding firms have offices based solely in the U.S. or provided information regarding pro bono in their U.S. offices only, while **35 percent** have offices outside the U.S. and provided information about their U.S. and/or non-U.S. pro bono programs.

## Geographical Distribution of Responding Firms

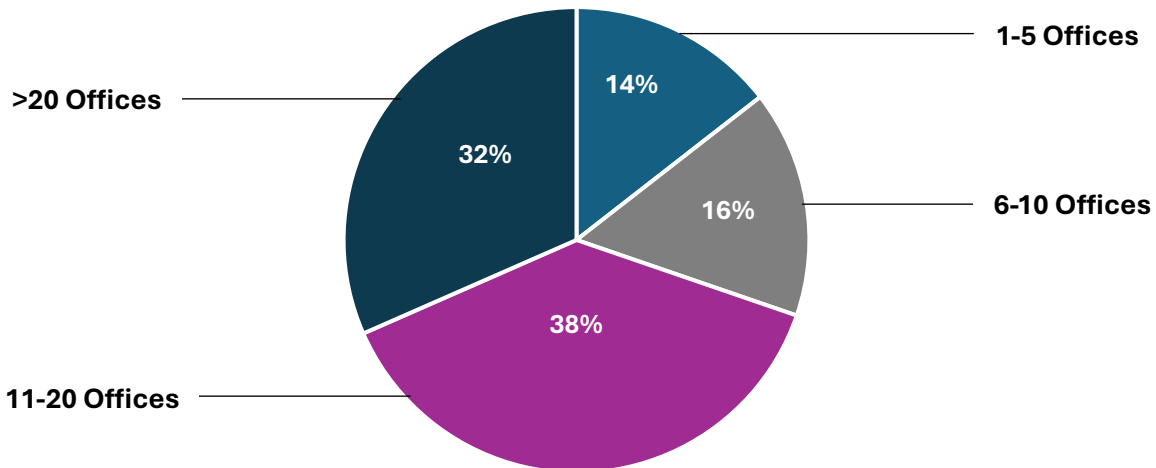
n=74



The average number of office locations for responding firms was 16, with the full distribution reflected below:

## Percentage of Firms with Number of Offices in Specified Range

n=76



As shown here, nearly **70 percent** of responding firms have over 10 office locations. Given that firm size and number of offices bear many significant relationships with law firm pro bono staffing metrics, several metrics in this report are broken down by firm size and/or number of office locations.

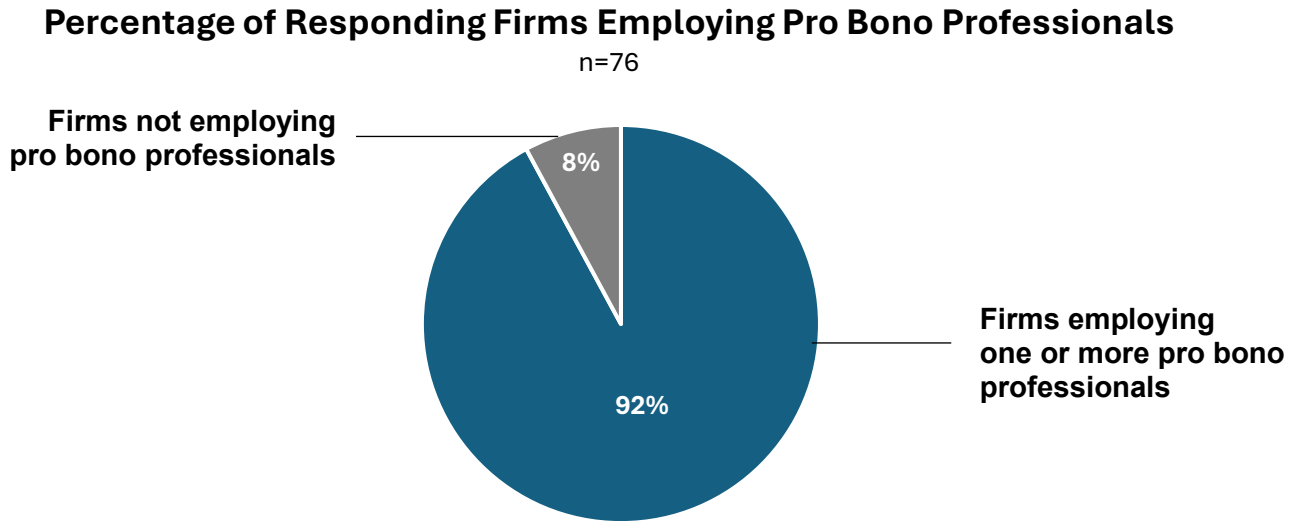
## The Varied Role of Pro Bono Professionals

Pro bono professionals support law firms' abilities to expand and scale the delivery and impact of their pro bono legal services. This includes professionals responsible for oversight of pro bono programs and who supervise the work of other professionals, distribute opportunities, support and maintain relationships with referring legal services organizations, and directly provide legal services to pro bono clients. In addition to overseeing or directly contributing to the firm's pro bono program, some pro bono professionals are also tasked with significant non-pro bono related responsibilities. These responsibilities may include corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, sustainability projects, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. The titles and responsibilities presented in this report are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, they represent the most common examples identified by respondents.

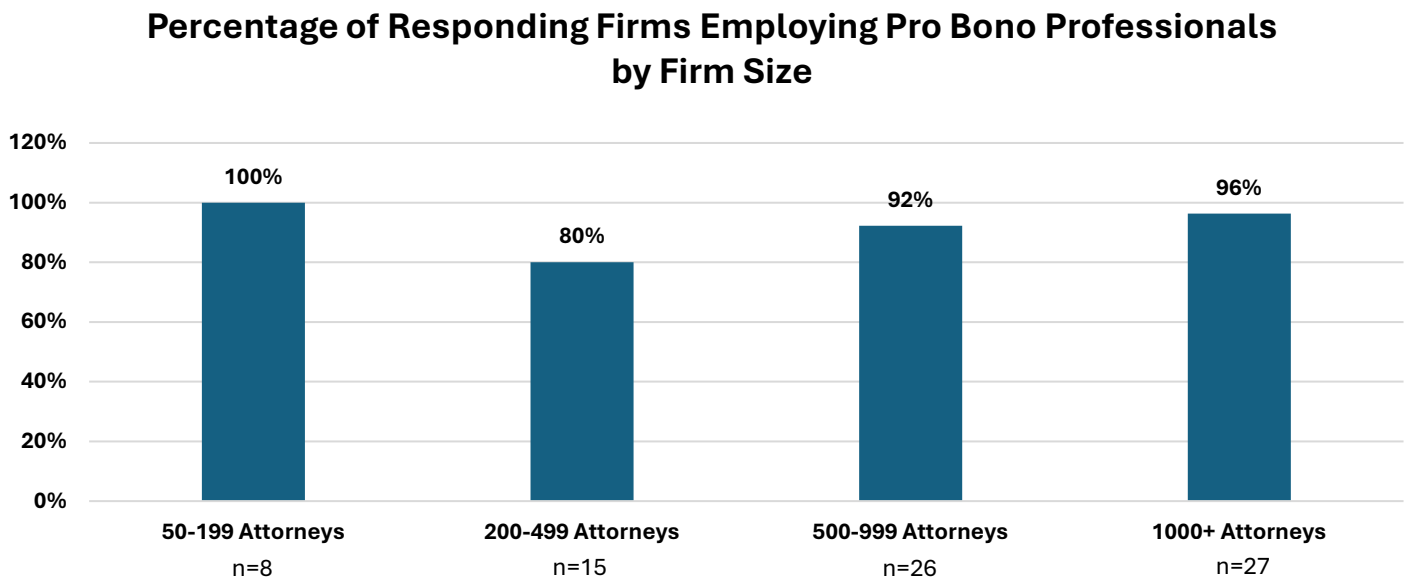


The definition of “pro bono professionals” provided in the Staffing Survey is “attorneys (including equity partners and shareholders), as well as salaried attorneys, paralegals, project managers, and/or other professionals who administrate, lead, manage, or coordinate the firm’s pro bono program.” This includes pro bono professionals with all oversight, partial oversight, and significant non-pro bono related responsibilities.

With this definition in mind, about **92 percent** of respondents indicated that they employ pro bono professionals, while about **8 percent** indicated they do not:



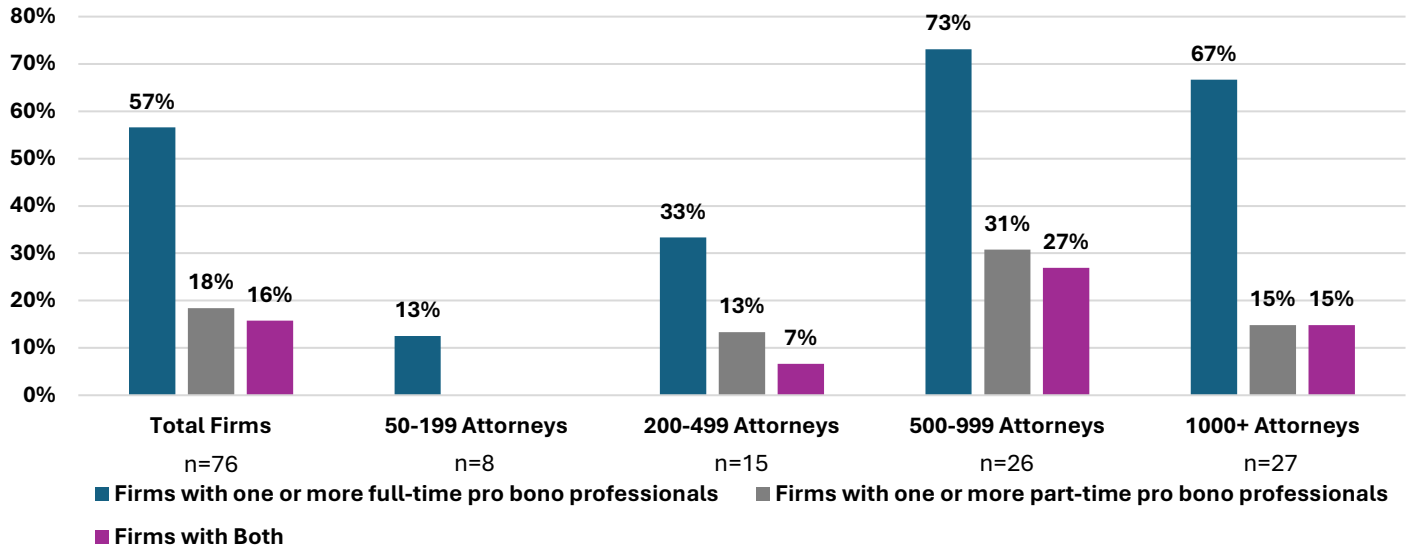
Most responding firms employ one or more pro bono professionals, whether such professionals are employed on a full-time or part-time basis. The firm size range with the fewest firms employing pro bono professionals is the set of firms with 200-499 attorneys.



## Part-Time and Full-Time Employment

In every firm-size band, firms more commonly employ full-time pro bono professionals than part-time pro bono professionals.<sup>2</sup>

### Employment Status of Pro Bono Professionals by Firm Size

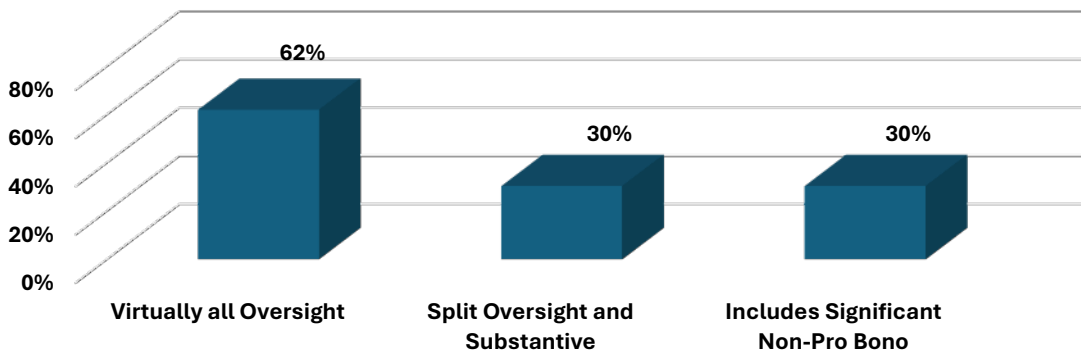


## Scope of Responsibilities

Regarding the nature of the responsibilities assigned to pro bono professionals, respondents indicated whether they employed one or more pro bono professionals in the following categories: (1) those with virtually all their responsibilities dedicated to oversight of the pro bono program; (2) those with responsibilities split between oversight and substantive representation of pro bono clients; and (3) those with significant non-pro bono related responsibilities. Recognizing that many firms have multiple professionals in different roles, we first examined firms with one or more professionals in each of these three categories:

### Percentage of Firms Employing One or More Pro Bono Professionals with Specified Scope of Responsibilities

n=76



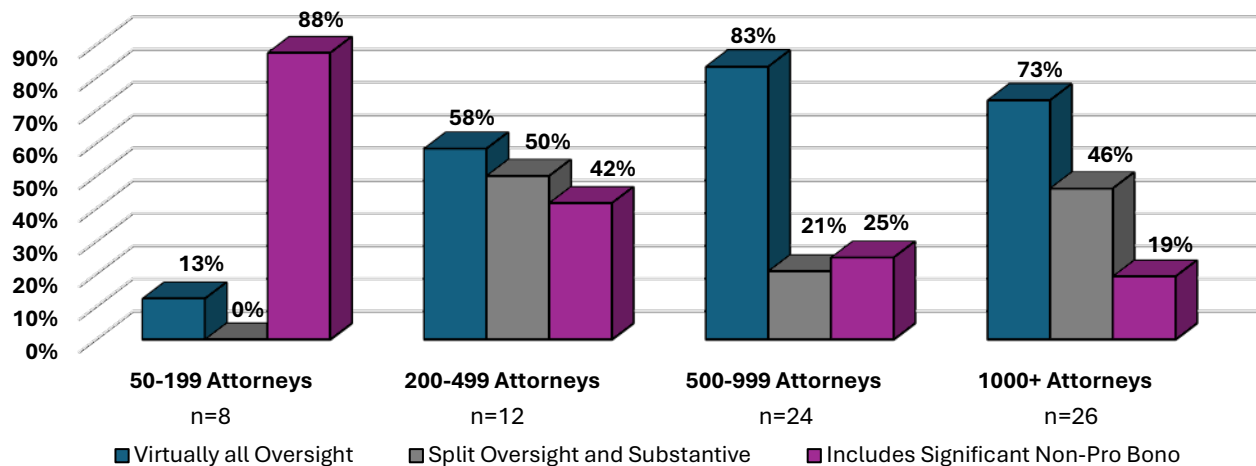
<sup>2</sup> Results of zero percent are omitted from the chart.

While there is a very strong correlation between firm size and whether a firm employs a pro bono professional, there does not appear to be a strong correlation between a firm's size and the number of pro bono professionals employed.<sup>3</sup> Weighing all pro bono professionals equally, without regard to their full-time or part-time status or their responsibility for substantive or non-pro bono related duties, a firm's number of lawyers has a correlation of 0.26 with its number of pro bono professionals focused on oversight. Weighting part-time professionals at half of their full-time counterparts, and professionals with split or non-pro bono responsibilities at half of their counterparts handling virtually all oversight, the correlation is a bit higher at 0.44. Neither of these correlations is particularly high, indicating that a firm's decision to employ more pro bono professionals focused on oversight has less to do with the firm's sheer size than other factors. Analyzing the data across all responding firms and using the same weighting coefficients, firms on average appear to employ one full-time pro bono professional focused on oversight and one additional such professional for every additional 525 lawyers at the firm.

Different patterns emerge when the above data is broken down by firm size, with the greatest distinction being the employment of professionals with significant non-pro bono responsibilities. The data indicates that pro bono professionals at firms with under 200 lawyers are much more likely to have significant non-pro bono related responsibilities.

### Percentage of Firms in Each Size Group Employing One or More Pro Bono Professionals with Specified Scope of Responsibilities

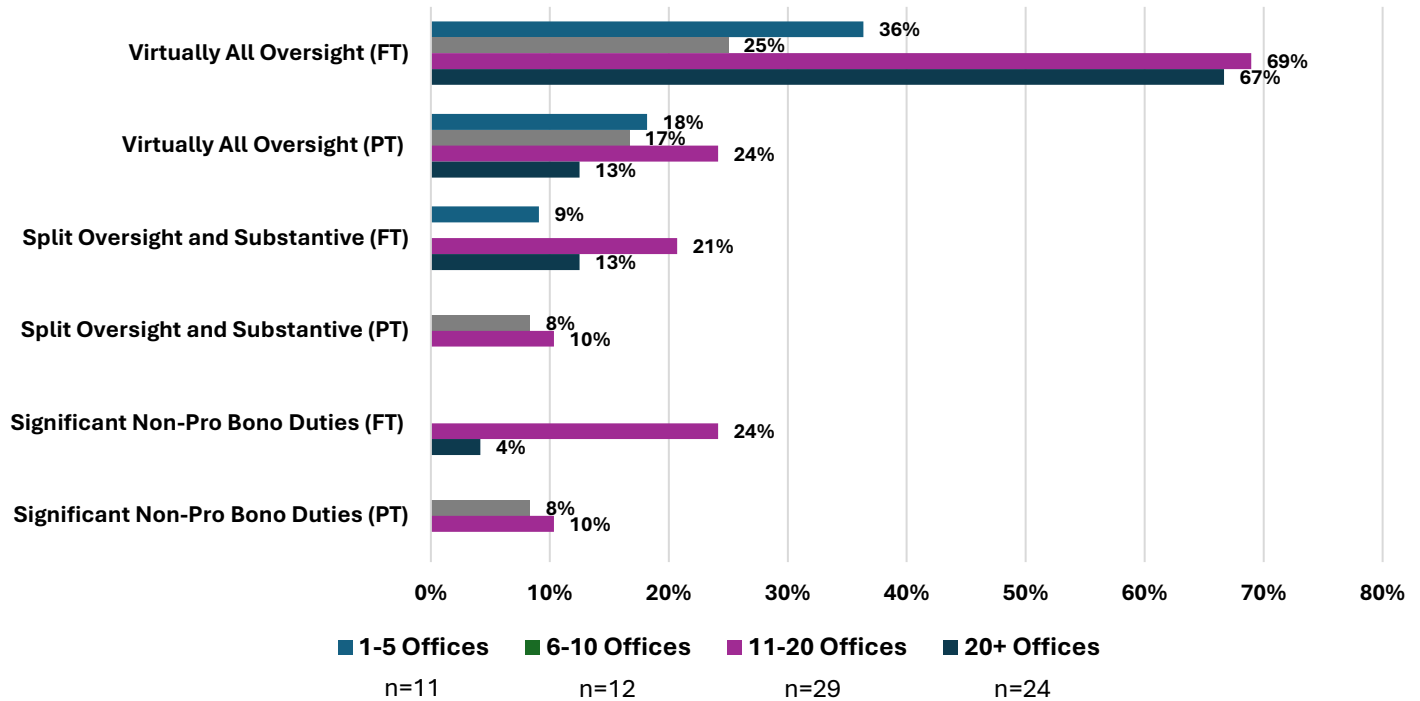
n=70



<sup>3</sup> While 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 a 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 decreases.

When broken down by the number of offices, firms with over 10 offices were most likely to employ pro bono professionals with virtually all their duties focused on oversight of the pro bono program. Firms with 1-5 offices most commonly employed pro bono professionals with substantial non-pro bono duties, and firms with 6-10 offices most commonly employed pro bono professionals with duties split between pro bono program oversight and substantive representation of pro bono clients. The following chart reflects this and breaks down the data further by full-time and part-time employment status.<sup>4</sup>

### Firms with Full-Time (FT) and Part-Time (PT) Pro Bono Professionals with Specified Scope of Responsibility by Number of Offices



For pro bono professionals with significant non-pro bono responsibilities, **30 percent** of firms employed one or more professionals in this category. For those that did, about **35 percent** had additional duties that were also non-revenue producing. These additional responsibilities most commonly included community service, CSR, and sustainability. There were also a limited number of pro bono professionals who were responsible for the firm’s professional development and DEI efforts.

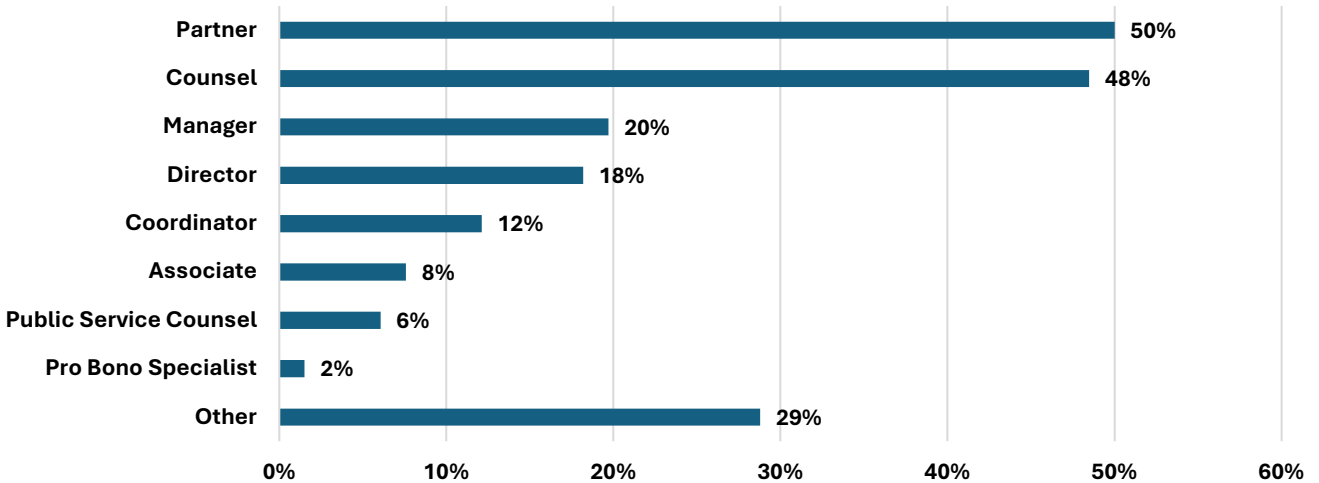
<sup>4</sup> Results of zero percent are omitted from the chart.

## Titles of Pro Bono Professionals

The survey examined the variety of law firm titles held by pro bono professionals. For the 66 responding firms employing pro bono professionals who are licensed attorneys, the most common titles were partner (**50 percent**) and counsel (**48 percent**). The titles of manager (**20 percent**), director (**18 percent**), and coordinator (**12 percent**) were all less than half as common.

### Most Common Titles (Licensed Attorneys)

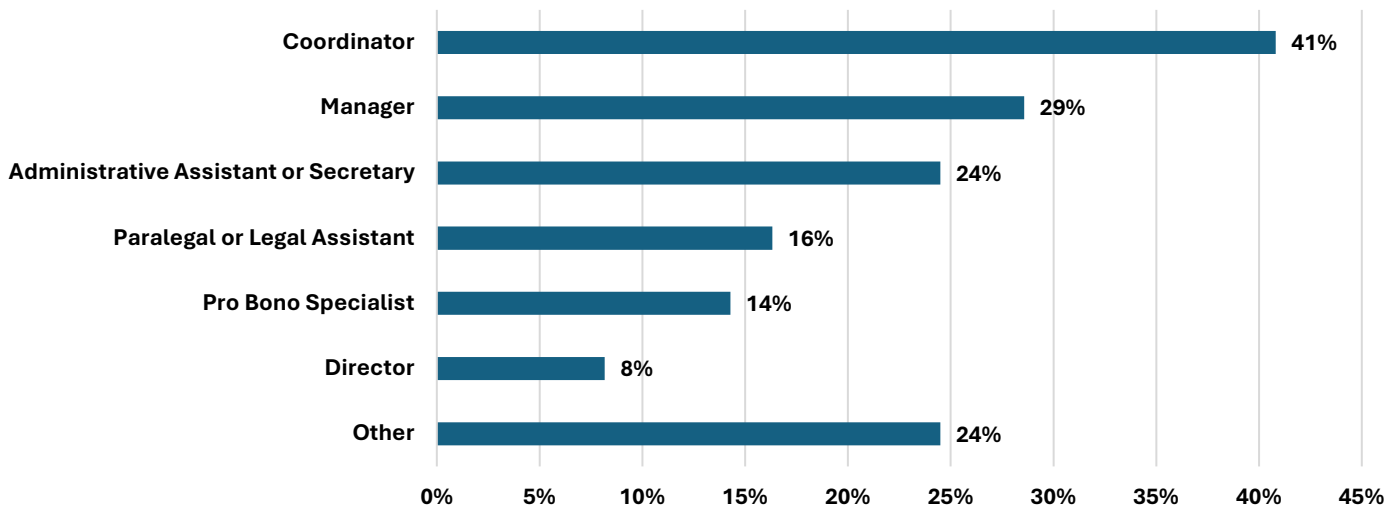
n=66



For the 49 responding firms employing pro bono professionals who are not licensed attorneys, the most common titles were coordinator (**41 percent**) and manager (**29 percent**).

### Most Common Titles (Not Licensed Attorneys)

n=49



## Responsibilities of Pro Bono Professionals

Survey responses reflected that pro bono professionals have a wide array of responsibilities. Of the responsibilities surveyed, responding firms that employ pro bono professionals who are licensed attorneys indicated that one or more of these professionals have the responsibilities reflected in the chart on the following page. The number of firms responding to this question that employ professionals with the subject titles are indicated in the top row beneath each title. The last column provides a larger picture of the percentage of firms assigning the subject responsibility across all attorney titles.

The chart is color-coded to illustrate varying percentage ranges, making it easier to visually assess the data distribution and highlight trends within the data set. The chart uses a red to green color scale, with dark red representing the lowest percentages and dark green representing the highest percentages. Recognizing limitations on conclusions that may be drawn from small sample sizes behind the percentages indicated, examining the distribution of responsibilities across titles of pro bono professionals provides insight into how these professionals operate internally within the law firm structure.

Understanding that there is significant variation in titles and responsibilities from firm to firm, the data nonetheless reflects multiple patterns. For example, it shows that pro bono directors, partners, counsel, and public service counsel are frequently engaged in strategic tasks such as approving major or controversial pro bono matters and reviewing, revising, and developing pro bono policies (with pro bono specialists also being strong in this category). Those with these titles, along with pro bono coordinators, appear to have the most variation in their responsibilities.

The chart reveals that associates are the primary contributors to direct client representation, with an involvement rate of **80 percent**, indicating that they dedicate significant time to client-facing pro bono work. Partners and counsel also play a role, but with a greater focus on strategic support and supervision. Partners (**76 percent**) and counsel (**78 percent**) are primarily responsible for supervising associates in their pro bono work, while those with other titles have more limited supervisory involvement.

## Responsibilities by Title of Pro Bono Professionals (Licensed Attorneys)

Duties	Director n=12	Partner n=33	Counsel n=32	Coordinator n=8	Manager n=13	Pro Bono Specialist n=1	Public Service Counsel n=4	Associate n=5	Other n=18	Firms Assigning Responsibility n=66
A single practice area (e.g. immigration, constitutional law, racial justice, housing, etc.)	17%	9%	25%	0%	15%	0%	25%	20%	33%	26%
Advertising pro bono opportunities and soliciting volunteers	83%	91%	97%	75%	85%	100%	100%	80%	61%	97%
Approving major or controversial pro bono matters	67%	91%	56%	13%	8%	0%	75%	20%	22%	83%
Approving substantial out-of-pocket costs	67%	76%	56%	13%	15%	0%	75%	0%	28%	77%
Coordinating pro bono projects, clinics, and matters	92%	67%	97%	100%	77%	100%	75%	60%	67%	94%
CSR	17%	21%	19%	13%	38%	100%	25%	20%	6%	27%
DEI	17%	9%	6%	0%	15%	0%	25%	0%	6%	14%
Designing or soliciting new pro bono projects	92%	85%	97%	50%	85%	100%	100%	40%	56%	95%
Directly representing pro bono clients	42%	73%	78%	25%	15%	0%	50%	80%	44%	74%
Establishing, developing, or maintaining contact with legal services and community organizations that are a source of pro bono matters	92%	85%	100%	75%	77%	100%	100%	60%	61%	95%
Meeting with assignment partners or practice group heads who may have some antipathy to pro bono	67%	58%	69%	0%	23%	0%	50%	20%	22%	67%
Meeting with attorneys whose pro bono hours may be excessive	58%	52%	56%	13%	23%	0%	25%	0%	17%	56%
Meeting with attorneys whose pro bono hours may be insufficient or who are not participating	58%	55%	72%	38%	38%	0%	50%	0%	28%	64%
Monitoring individual attorney levels of pro bono participation	83%	76%	84%	50%	62%	0%	50%	40%	67%	89%
Other	17%	6%	0%	13%	8%	0%	0%	0%	11%	18%
Philanthropy/charitable giving generally	42%	33%	13%	13%	23%	0%	25%	0%	6%	30%
Philanthropy/charitable giving to entities to which the firm provides pro bono services	33%	58%	0%	25%	23%	0%	25%	0%	17%	56%
Philanthropy/charitable giving to organizations with which the firm collaborates to provide pro bono services to others	58%	67%	56%	25%	23%	0%	50%	0%	17%	67%
Preparing an annual pro bono budget	75%	61%	50%	13%	31%	100%	75%	0%	17%	70%
Preparing an assessment of the firm's pro bono performance on an annual or periodic basis	83%	85%	81%	63%	54%	0%	100%	20%	44%	92%
Racial justice	67%	55%	69%	25%	23%	100%	50%	60%	22%	58%
Reporting to the firm's management committee on the status of the pro bono program	75%	82%	63%	13%	23%	100%	100%	20%	33%	83%
Reviewing, revising, and developing policies regarding pro bono	92%	94%	84%	13%	46%	100%	100%	20%	50%	95%
Screening and approving new pro bono matters	92%	91%	97%	38%	62%	0%	75%	40%	44%	97%
Sponsoring or participating in periodic events, such as department meetings, partner lunches, etc., to report on the firm's pro bono program	83%	88%	94%	50%	85%	0%	100%	100%	61%	95%
Supervising associates handling pro bono matters	42%	76%	78%	13%	23%	0%	50%	40%	44%	76%
Surveying the pro bono areas of interest of firm lawyers	75%	82%	78%	63%	54%	100%	75%	20%	61%	89%

Examining the distribution of responsibilities across titles of pro bono professionals who are not licensed attorneys likewise provides insight into how these professionals operate within their firms. The chart below presents this information using the same conventions as the chart presented on the previous page.

### Responsibilities by Title of Pro Bono Professionals (Not Licensed Attorneys)

Duties	Director n=4	Coordinator n=20	Manager n=14	Pro Bono Specialist n=7	Paralegal <sup>5</sup> n=8	Administrative Assistant <sup>6</sup> n=12	Other Titles n=12	Firms Assigning Responsibility n=49
A single practice area (e.g. immigration, constitutional law, racial justice, housing, etc.)	0%	10%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	6%
Advertising pro bono opportunities and soliciting volunteers	50%	55%	64%	71%	50%	0%	42%	59%
Approving major or controversial pro bono matters	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	17%	8%
Approving substantial out-of-pocket costs	50%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	17%	12%
Coordinating pro bono projects, clinics, and matters	75%	70%	86%	57%	38%	25%	42%	69%
CSR	25%	15%	29%	14%	0%	0%	33%	24%
DEI	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	33%	10%
Designing or soliciting new pro bono projects	75%	40%	50%	43%	13%	0%	25%	41%
Directly representing pro bono clients	25%	20%	0%	14%	38%	0%	0%	16%
Establishing, developing, or maintaining contact with legal services and community organizations that are a source of pro bono matters	75%	50%	71%	71%	13%	0%	33%	49%
Meeting with assignment partners or practice group heads who may have some antipathy to pro bono	25%	5%	14%	14%	0%	0%	17%	10%
Meeting with attorneys whose pro bono hours may be excessive	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	4%
Meeting with attorneys whose pro bono hours may be insufficient or who are not participating	0%	10%	7%	14%	0%	0%	8%	10%
Monitoring individual attorney levels of pro bono participation	75%	45%	64%	71%	25%	8%	33%	53%
Other	0%	25%	43%	14%	13%	83%	33%	39%
Philanthropy/charitable giving generally	0%	10%	29%	14%	0%	0%	17%	16%
Philanthropy/charitable giving to entities to which the firm provides pro bono services	25%	0%	0%	29%	0%	0%	25%	24%
Philanthropy/charitable giving to organizations with which the firm collaborates to provide pro bono services to others	50%	30%	36%	43%	0%	0%	25%	33%
Preparing an annual pro bono budget	75%	10%	36%	0%	0%	0%	25%	24%
Preparing an assessment of the firm's pro bono performance on an annual or periodic basis	50%	35%	64%	43%	38%	0%	33%	47%
Racial justice	0%	15%	21%	14%	0%	0%	17%	14%
Reporting to the firm's management committee on the status of the pro bono program	25%	10%	21%	0%	13%	0%	17%	18%
Reviewing, revising, and developing policies regarding pro bono	75%	25%	36%	14%	0%	0%	17%	29%
Screening and approving new pro bono matters	75%	20%	36%	29%	0%	8%	33%	33%
Sponsoring or participating in periodic events, such as department meetings, partner lunches, etc., to report on the firm's pro bono program	75%	40%	43%	43%	25%	0%	17%	39%
Surveying the pro bono areas of interest of firm lawyers	50%	50%	64%	57%	38%	0%	42%	51%

Subject to limitations on analyses based on relevant sample sizes, the data reveals that for pro bono professionals who are not licensed attorneys, pro bono directors and managers play significant roles in the strategic and operational aspects of the firm's pro bono activities. Pro bono specialists appear to focus on outreach and operational support, which is evident from their high involvement in advertising pro bono opportunities (**71 percent**) and establishing relationships with community

<sup>5</sup> Those employed as legal assistants are included in this category throughout the survey and this report.

<sup>6</sup> Those employed as secretaries are included in this category throughout the survey and this report.



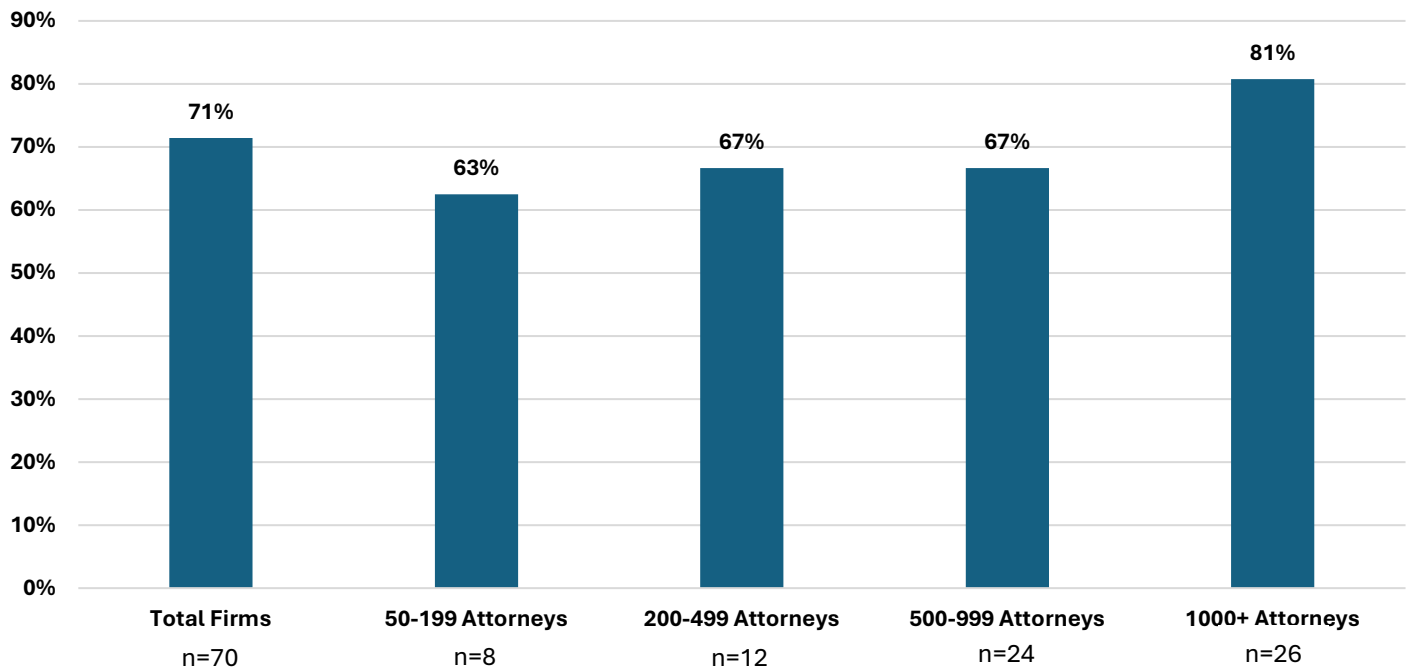
organizations that serve as sources of pro bono matters (**71 percent**). Pro bono coordinators appear to play an essential role in project management, as demonstrated by their significant involvement in coordinating pro bono projects (**70 percent**) and advertising pro bono opportunities (**55 percent**).

While there appears to be more variety in the responsibilities of these professionals, the charts reflect that both groups tend to be responsible for advertising pro bono opportunities, soliciting volunteers, coordinating pro bono projects, monitoring individual attorney levels of pro bono participation, and surveying the pro bono areas of interest of firm lawyers. Other duties of these professionals reported by responding firms include being responsible for aspects of intake and conflicts review and providing administrative or substantive assistance to other pro bono professionals at the firm.

## Pro Bono Professionals Providing Operational and Administrative Support

The data reflects that **71 percent** of responding firms employ pro bono professionals who are responsible for directing the firm’s pro bono program coupled with professionals who support the program from an operational or administrative standpoint. This accounts for a wide variety of circumstances including all firms that employ paralegals and administrative assistants, as well as firms that employ pro bono partners, counsel, and/or directors, alongside one or more coordinators or managers. It also accounts for pro bono coordinators and managers who serve in a primary oversight role who have other professionals on their team providing operational or administrative support. The following chart displays this figure across all firms, as well as the corresponding figures by firm size group:

**Percentage of Firms with Pro Bono Professionals Providing Oversight that Also Employ Professionals Providing Operational or Administrative Support**



Focusing on traditional support staff and factoring out those who focus on the delivery of legal services to pro bono clients, **7 percent** of responding firms reported that they employ paralegals in the operations or administration of their pro bono practice, while **21 percent** of responding firms

reported employing administrative assistants in this capacity. Given the varied roles and titles of those providing operational and administrative support to firms' pro bono teams, these metrics should be viewed in combination with the broader **71 percent** metric of firms employing a professional in a primary oversight role in combination with one or more professionals providing operational or administrative support to the firm's pro bono practice. For example, many firms employ coordinators and managers to provide this type of support. Overall, the data illustrates that law firms value support staff as essential to their pro bono efforts, allowing them to maximize their impact and support the effective and efficient delivery of pro bono legal services.

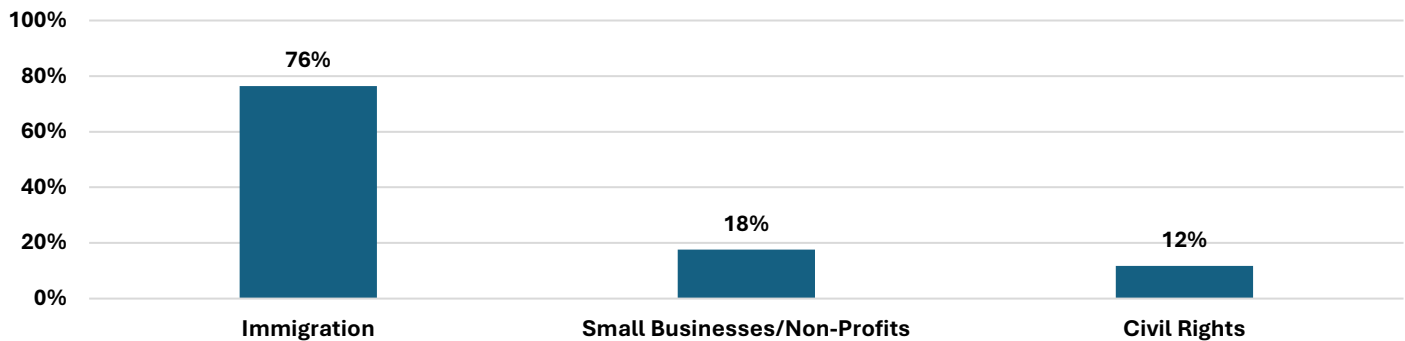
## Pro Bono Professionals with Substantive Focus

### Pro Bono Oversight Professionals with Substantive Focus

Of the respondents employing pro bono professionals, **24 percent** employ one or more full-time professionals who provide oversight in a single practice area. The following percentages of firms employing pro bono professionals in this capacity indicated that they employ professionals spending virtually all their time providing oversight in the following areas:

#### Focus of Pro Bono Professionals Spending Virtually all Their Time Providing Oversight in Single Practice Area

n=17



While immigration, small businesses/non-profits, and civil rights were the three most common areas of practice for these pro bono professionals, other areas of focus included children's rights, family law, LGBTQIA+ rights, and women's rights. Some of these categories were added by respondents manually (children's rights, family law, and LGBTQIA+ rights), so it is possible that more responding firms employ professionals with these oversight areas of focus. There may also be some overlap in the practice areas specified to the extent that some may be considered sub-categories of other broader categories.

### Pro Bono Professionals with Substantive Focus Providing Direct Services

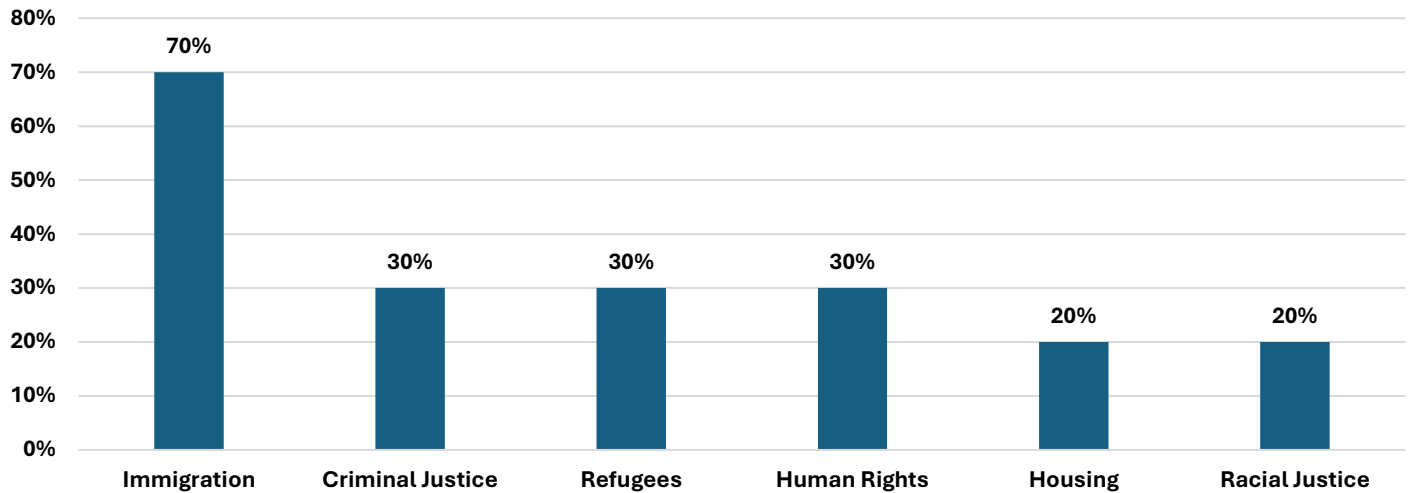
For responding firms employing professionals who spend virtually all their time delivering substantive pro bono legal services (i.e., handling their own cases and supervising or mentoring others in the delivery of substantive legal services, as opposed to providing broader program oversight), **14 percent** indicated that they employ professionals in this capacity. The vast majority of these firms employ a single professional in this capacity. These professionals have a mix of titles at their respective firms, including most commonly counsel, followed by associate. Several respondents

indicated that they also employ interns in this capacity. Some responded that they include the area of specialization in the professional's title, such as "pro bono immigration attorney."

As reflected below, pro bono professionals employed in this capacity most commonly practice in the areas of immigration (**70 percent**), followed by criminal justice, refugees, and human rights (each at **30 percent**), and housing and racial justice (each at **20 percent**).

### Focus of Pro Bono Professionals Delivering Substantive Legal Services

n=10

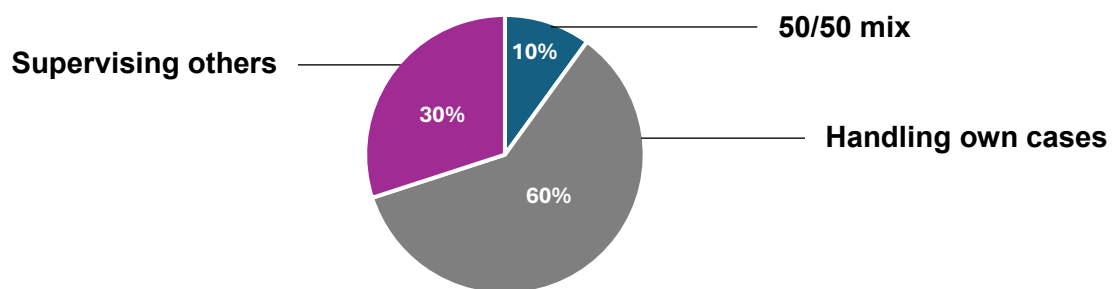


In addition to these areas of practice listed in the survey, responding firms indicated that they also employed professionals delivering substantive legal services in the areas of transactional work, family law, children's rights, and capital punishment.

When it comes to the day-to-day work of professionals who focus all or nearly all their efforts on the delivery of substantive legal services, respondents were asked how these professionals spend most of their time. Specifically, they were asked whether most of their time is spent handling their own cases, supervising the work of others, or a 50/50 mix of both. Their responses indicated that most professionals hired in this capacity (about **60 percent**) spend most of their time handling their own cases.

### Time Allocation of Pro Bono Professionals Delivering Substantive Legal Services

n=10



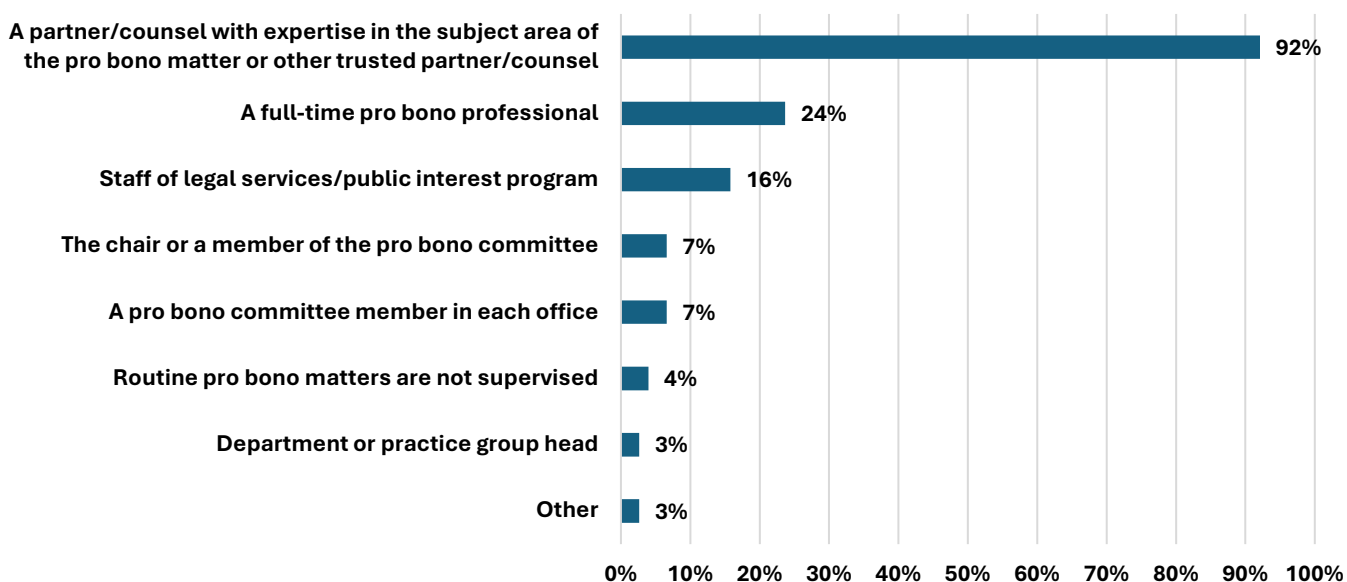
# Pro Bono Program Management

## Supervision

With respect to the supervision of pro bono matters, about **65 percent** of responding firms indicated that they use a single method of supervision, with about **90 percent** of those firms relying on a partner or counsel with expertise in the subject area of the pro bono matter or another trusted pro bono partner or counsel. The remaining firms use a combination of methods, with **92 percent** of them relying on partners or counsel as one of the methods they use. The full variety of methods, by the percentage of responding firms using them (whether as their sole method or in combination with others), is represented below.

### Method of Pro Bono Matter Supervision

n=76

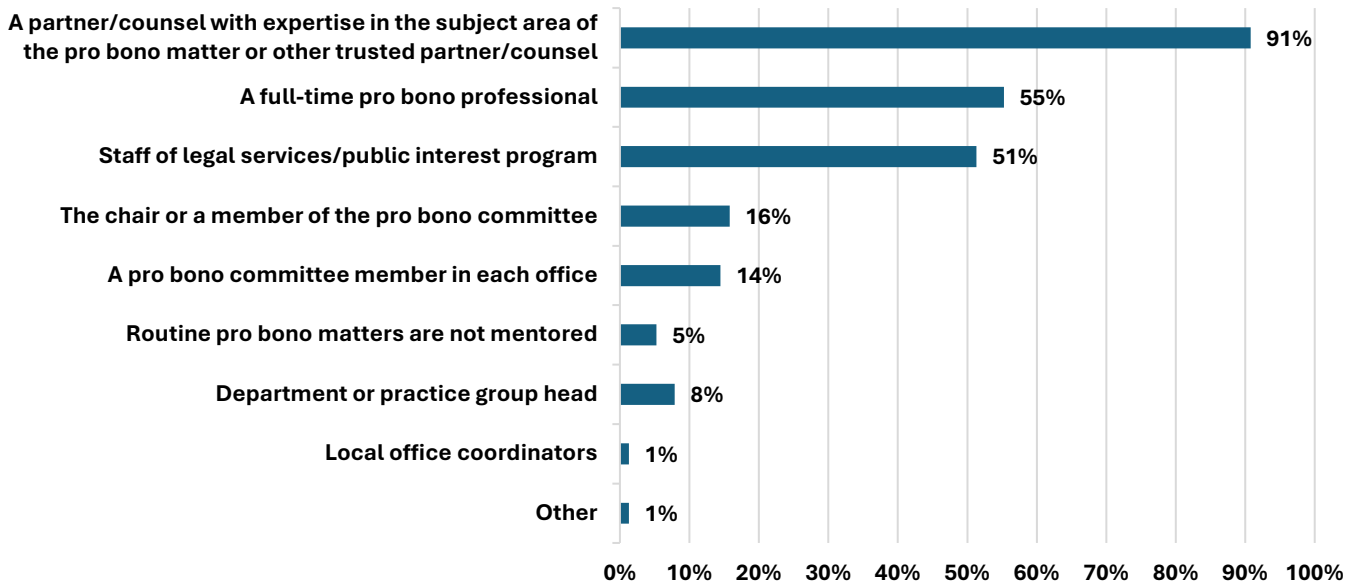


## Mentorship

When it comes to the mentoring of attorneys handling pro bono matters, about **80 percent** of responding firms indicated that they use a variety of approaches. As with supervision, nearly all firms responded that a partner or counsel with expertise in the subject matter or otherwise trusted by the firm is responsible for mentoring lawyers handling pro bono matters at the firm.

## Method of Mentoring Pro Bono Attorneys

n=76

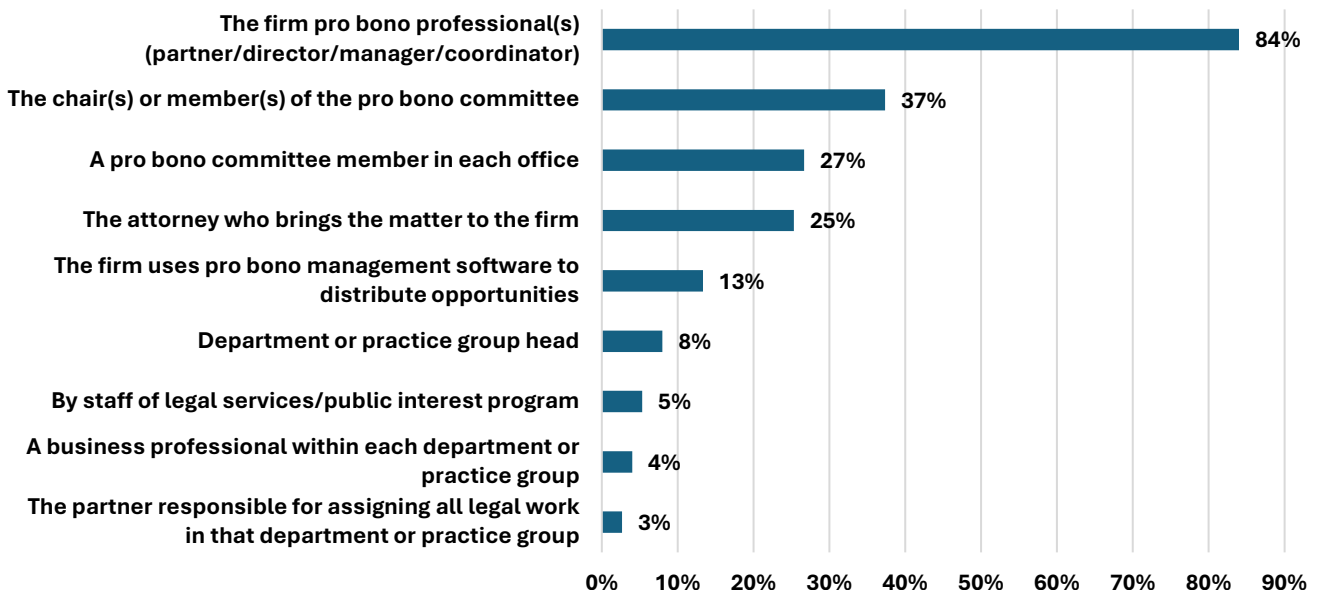


## Sending Out Opportunities

We inquired about which individuals at the firm are substantially involved in sending out pro bono opportunities to volunteers. Responding firms indicated that the firm's pro bono professional generally does this, with **84 percent** of firms that responded to this question indicating that this was within the pro bono professional's purview. The percentages of this and other methods selected by responding firms are reflected below:

## Professionals Involved in Sending Out Pro Bono Opportunities to Volunteers

n=75

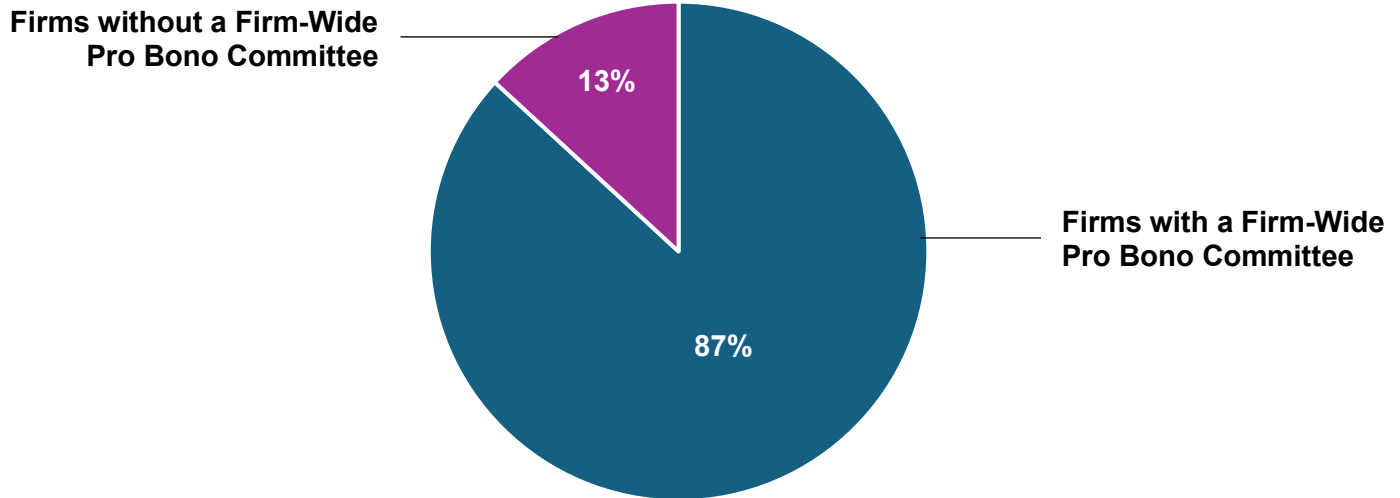


## Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committees

Pro bono committees serve an important role in supporting a thriving pro bono program that effectively engages firm lawyers in pro bono. The majority (**87 percent**) of respondents reported having a pro bono committee that operates firm-wide.

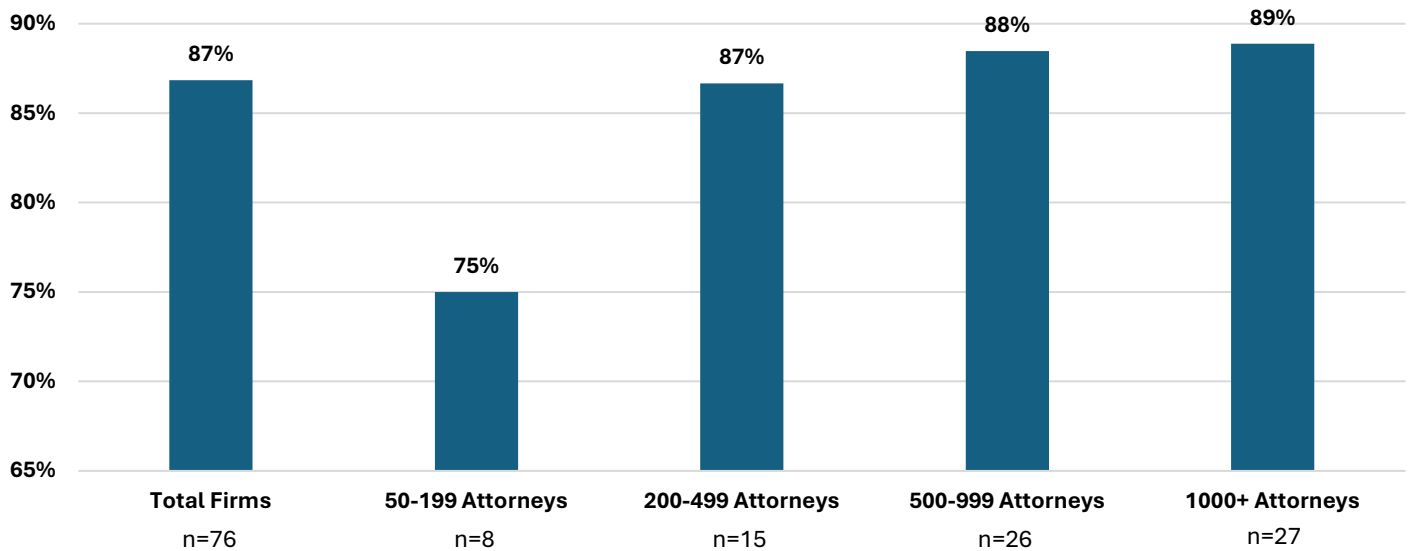
### Percentage of Firms with a Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committee

n=76



Broken down by firm size, the percentage of firms with a firm-wide pro bono committee rises steadily from **75 percent** for firms with 50-199 attorneys to **89 percent** for those with over 1,000 attorneys.

### Percentage of Firms with Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committees by Firm Size

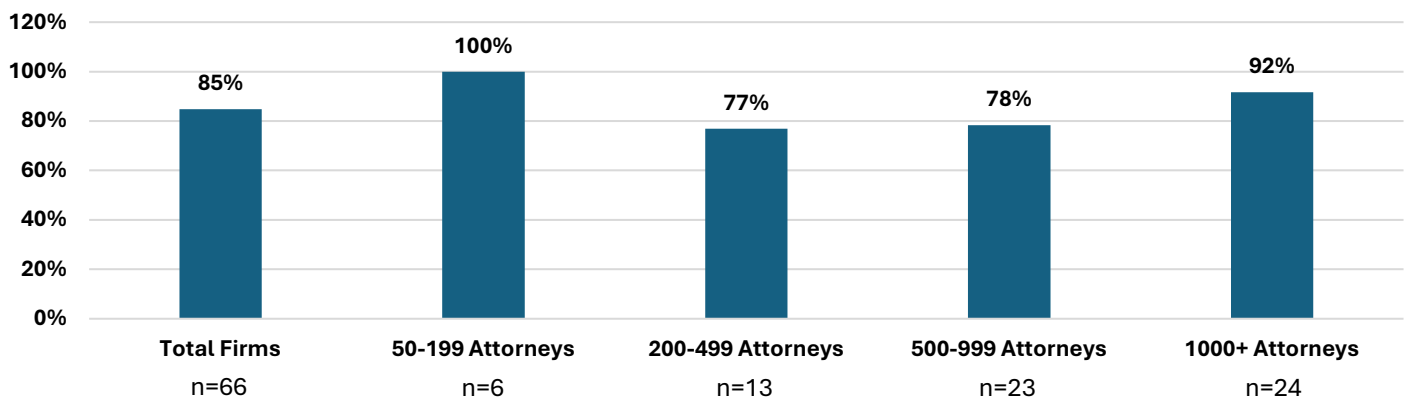


We observed in the data that all responding firms that reported not employing a pro bono professional reported having a firm-wide pro bono committee. This indicates that notwithstanding the decision not to employ a pro bono professional, these firms have created an infrastructure to formalize and manage their pro bono programs.

## Permanence and Status of Pro Bono Committees

The existence of a pro bono committee does not necessarily signal the relevance of the committee within the firm's overall management structure. Recognizing this, we inquired whether the firm-wide pro bono committee has the same permanence and status as other firm committees. Most responding firms indicated that it did, although the percentage dipped for firms with 200-999 attorneys. While firms with 50-199 attorneys were the least likely to have a firm-wide pro bono committee (**75 percent**), it is encouraging to see that the committees at firms in this group all have the same permanence and status as other firm committees.

**Percentage of Firms with Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committees  
Indicating Committee has Same Permanence and Status  
as Other Firm Committees**

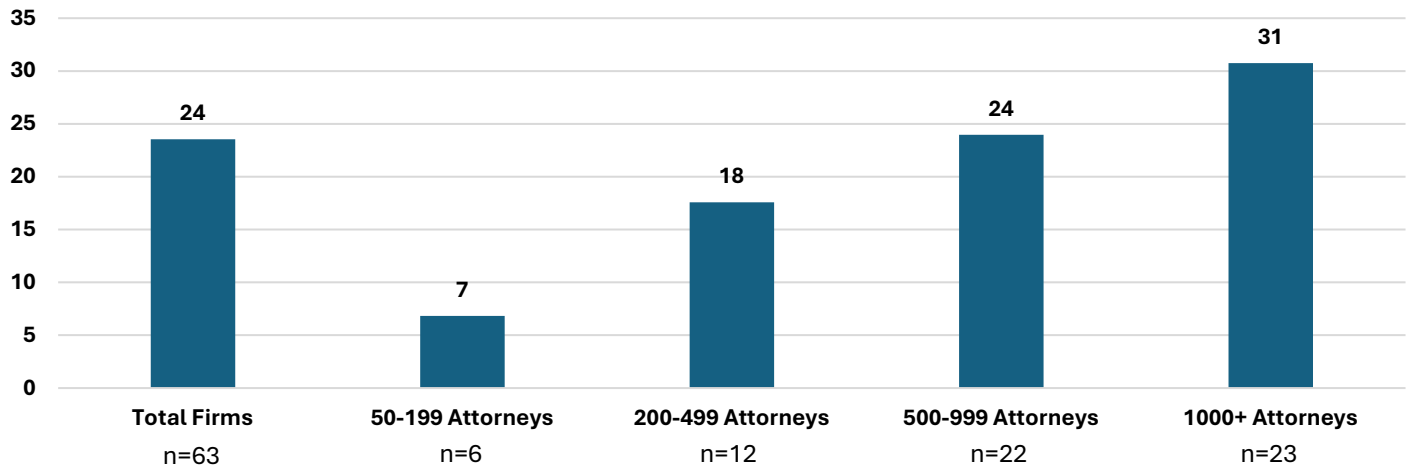


We also inquired as to whether there is any overlap between members of the firm's pro bono committee and members of the firm's management committee and/or committees focused on firm policy. In responding to the question of whether such an overlap exists, firms were almost evenly split, with slightly more indicating that there was such an overlap (**51 percent**) than those indicating there was not (**49 percent**).

## Size of Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committees

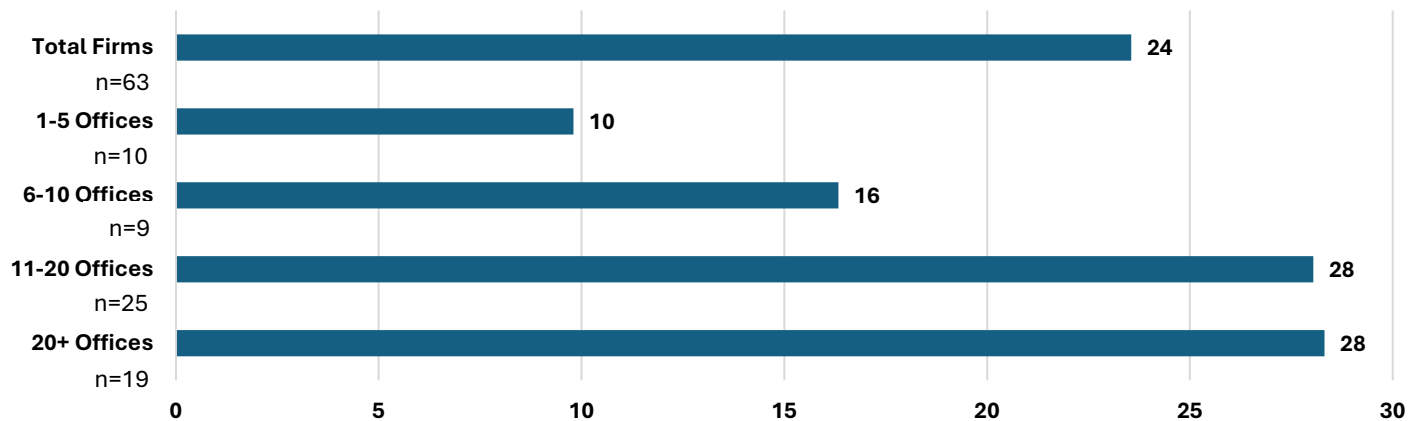
Of the 63 firms that reported on the makeup of their pro bono committees, the average committee had 24 members. Unsurprisingly, the data indicated that the size of a firm's pro bono committee bears a strong relationship with the size of the firm, growing markedly and commensurately with that metric:

**Average Number of Firm-Wide Pro Bono Committee Members by Firm Size**



Similar patterns emerge with respect to the number of offices, with firms with more offices generally having larger pro bono committees:

**Average Number of Pro Bono Committee Members by Number of Firm Offices**

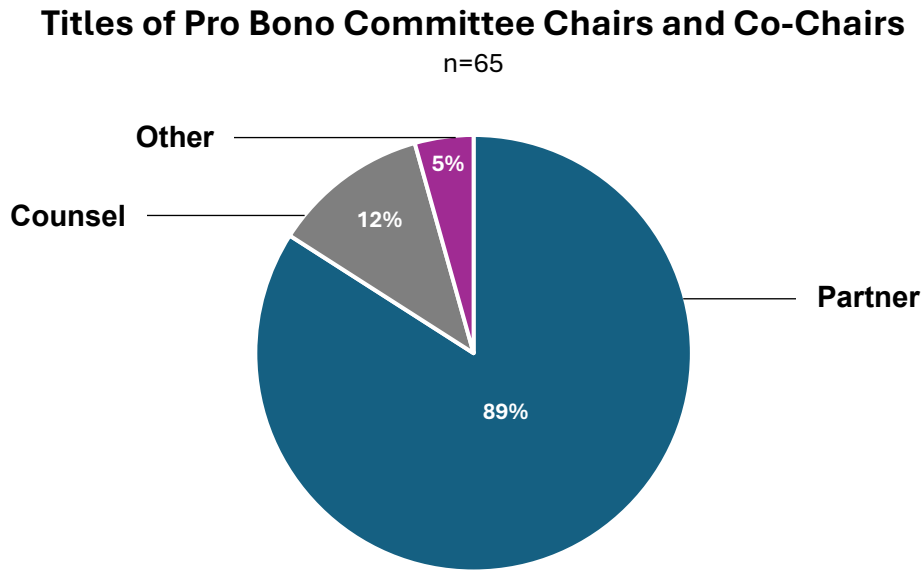


Based on an analysis using the number of lawyers and offices for responding firms with pro bono committees, committee size appears to be more strongly correlated with the number of lawyers at the firm (0.47) than the firm's number of offices (0.23). While both of these correlations are positive, neither is especially strong, indicating the presence of additional factors influencing the size of responding firms' pro bono committees.



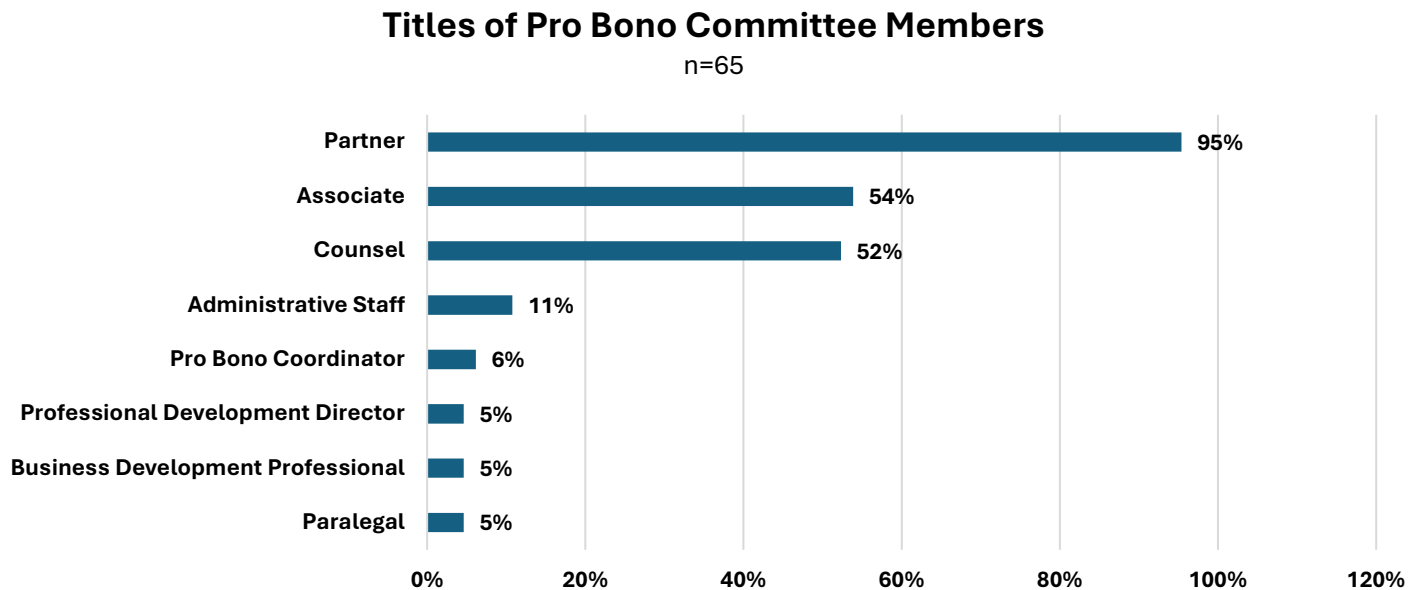
## Titles of Pro Bono Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs

Of the 65 responding firms that reported on the leadership of their pro bono committees, these firms reported that the vast majority of the chairs and co-chairs of their committees are partners (**89 percent**), followed by counsel (about **12 percent**), followed by a small percentage of those with other titles at the firm:



## Titles of Pro Bono Committee Members

Regarding the makeup of pro bono committee membership, the following illustrates the percentage of responding firms with pro bono committee members with titles specified below:



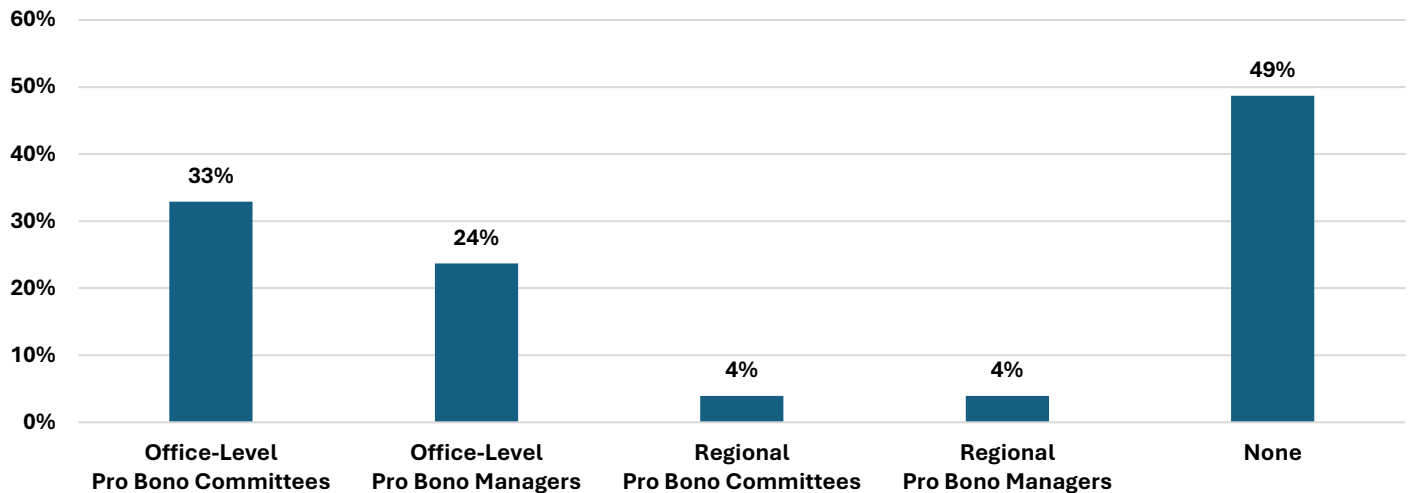
When asked whether all pro bono committee members other than chairs and co-chairs have the same committee-related responsibilities as all other pro bono committee members, about **88 percent** of responding firms indicated that committee members share the same responsibilities. Of the remaining **12 percent** of responding firms that indicated committee members did not have the same responsibilities, a variety of committee dynamics were reported including committee structures where certain approval tasks are limited to partners, and where certain individuals are tasked with serving in a coordinator or liaison capacity to certain offices, practice groups, or other firm departments or groups of lawyers.

## Office-Level and Regional Pro Bono Committees and Managers

From a geographical standpoint, there was nearly an even split of responding firms that utilize formal office-level or regional pro bono committees or managers, with **51 percent** of firms responding in this category indicating that they have such committees or managers and **49 percent** indicating that they do not. The breakdown among responding firms with office-level and regional committees or managers, by percentage of firms with such structure (some firms have more than one structure), is provided below.

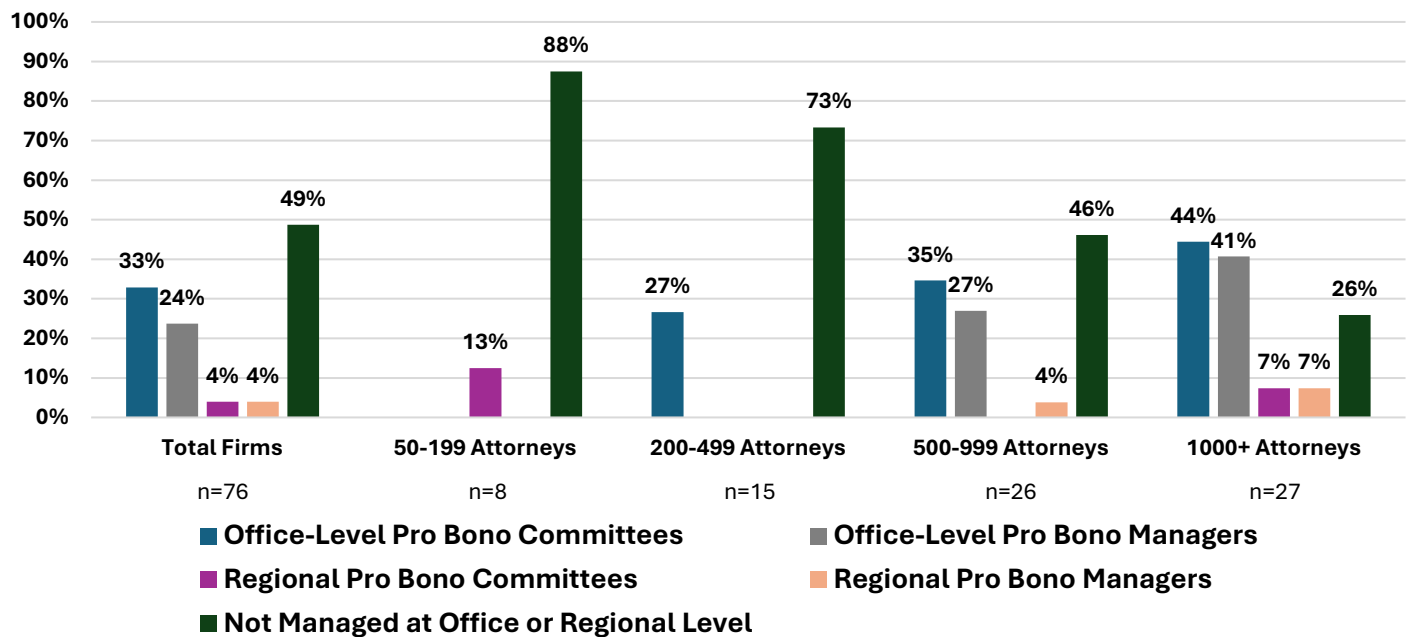
### Firms with Formal Office-Level or Regional Pro Bono Committees or Managers

n=66



Examining the further breakdown of these figures by firm size is also informative<sup>7</sup>:

### Office-Level or Regional Pro Bono Committees and Managers by Firm Size



This data reveals that at nearly every firm size, management from a geographical standpoint is done more frequently by office-level pro bono committees than by office-level pro bono managers. There were no similar patterns present for regional management. With the exception of firms with 1,000 or more attorneys, more responding firms indicated that they did not manage pro bono at the office or regional level than those indicating they employed such an approach.

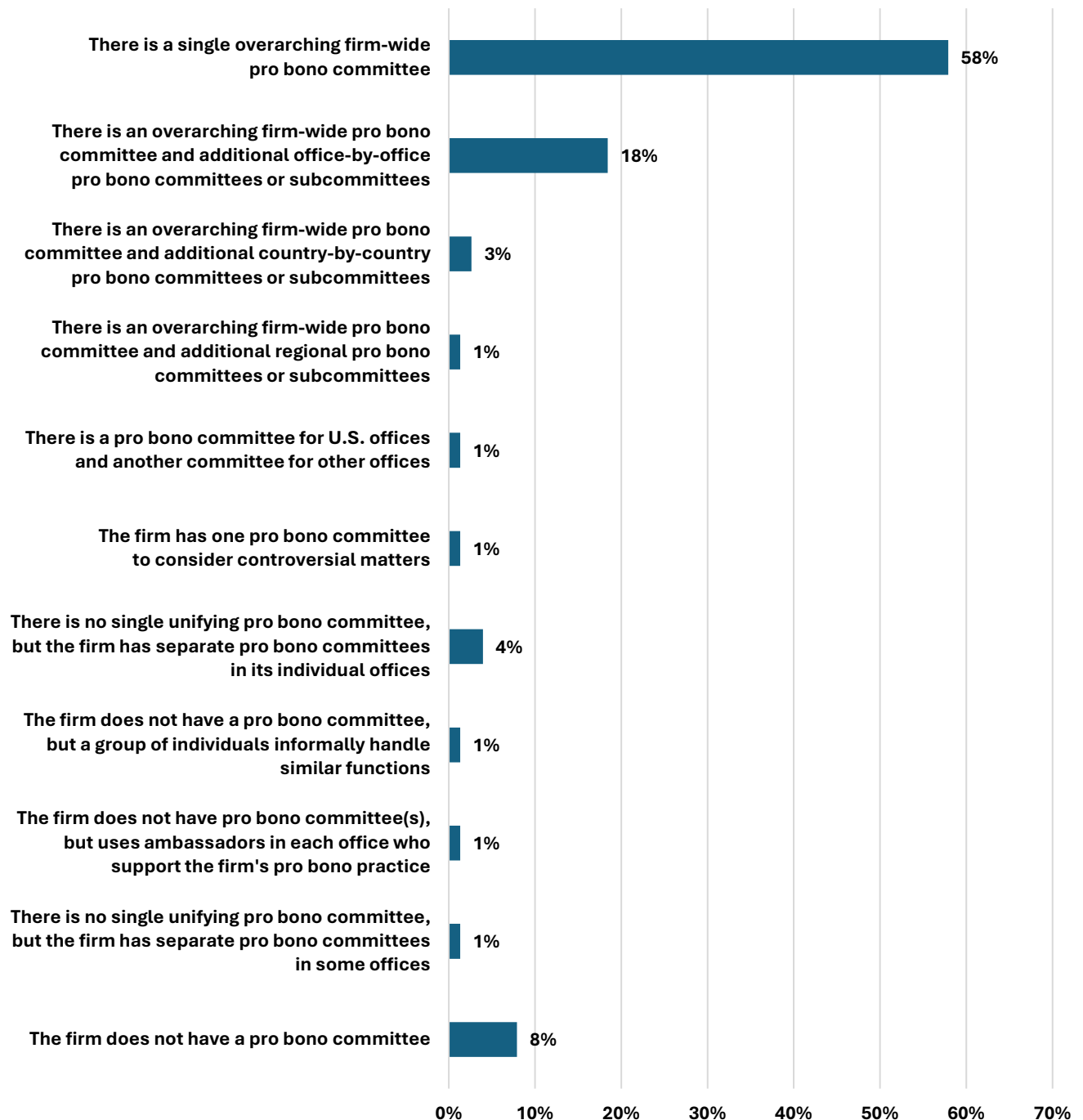
<sup>7</sup> Results of zero percent are omitted from the chart.

## Pro Bono Committee Operations

Responding firms were asked how their pro bono committee operates across the firm. Most responding firms (**58 percent**) indicated that they have a single overarching firm-wide committee. The next most common method of committees operating across the firm is through an overarching firm-wide pro bono committee along with additional office-by-office pro bono committees or subcommittees (**18 percent**):

### Pro Bono Committee Operation Across the Firm

n=76



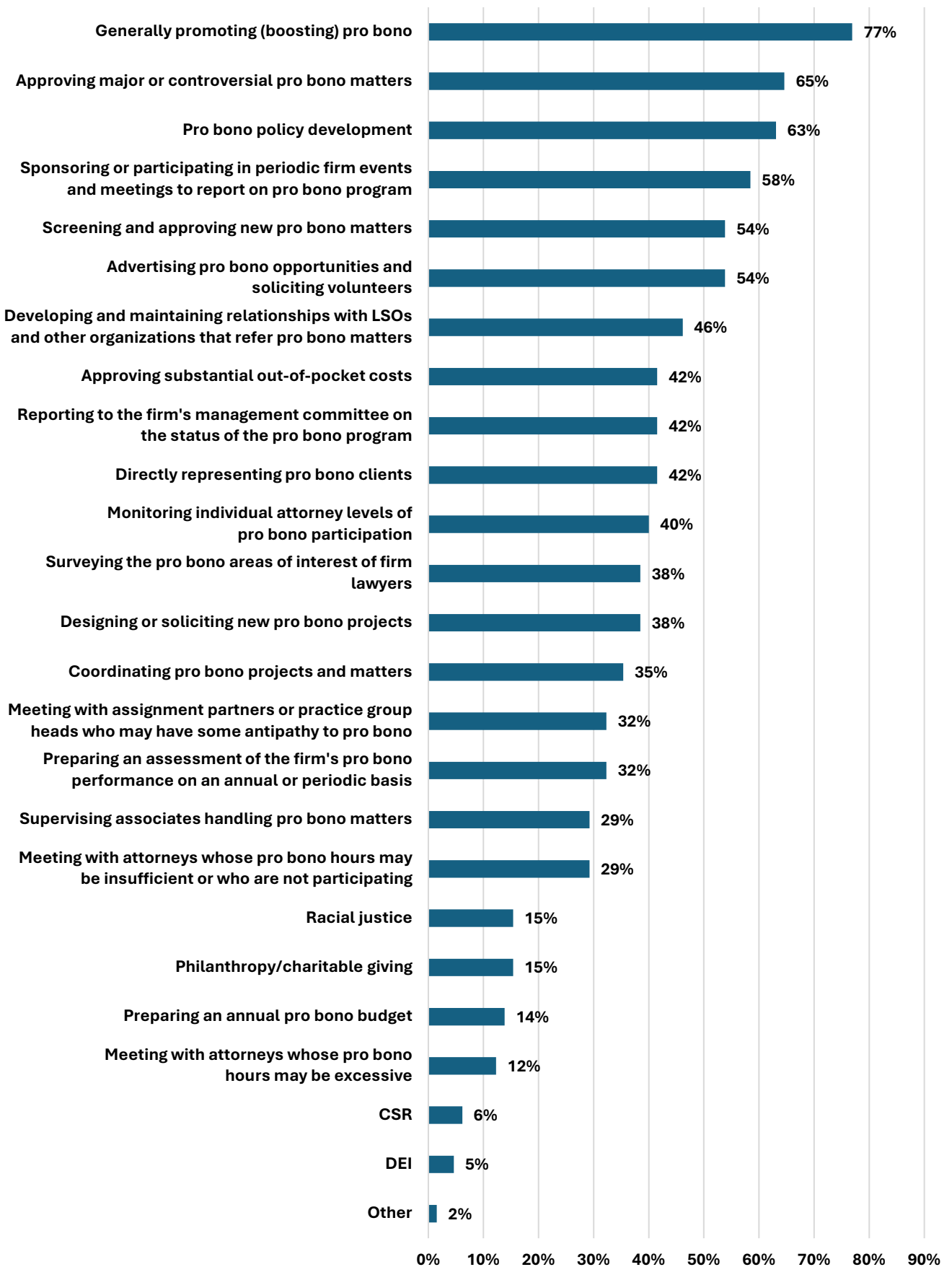
## Pro Bono Committee Responsibilities

With regard to their responsibilities, pro bono committees of responding law firms share many similarities. Over half of responding firms with firm-wide pro bono committees indicated that their committees are responsible for generally promoting and boosting pro bono, approving major or controversial pro bono matters, developing pro bono policies, sponsoring or participating in periodic firm events and meetings to report on pro bono programs, screening and approving new pro bono matters, and advertising pro bono opportunities and soliciting volunteers. The full breakdown of responses regarding the responsibilities surveyed is provided in a chart on the following page.

As the chart demonstrates, the roles of pro bono committees at law firms appear to vary just as much as the roles of pro bono professionals. There is also some limited variation in the name and scope of these committees. While most are referred to as “pro bono committees” within the firm and are tasked primarily with the delivery of pro bono legal services throughout the firm, a very small percentage of firms responded that their committees are broader in scope and encompass non-legal community service.

# Pro Bono Committee Responsibilities

n=65

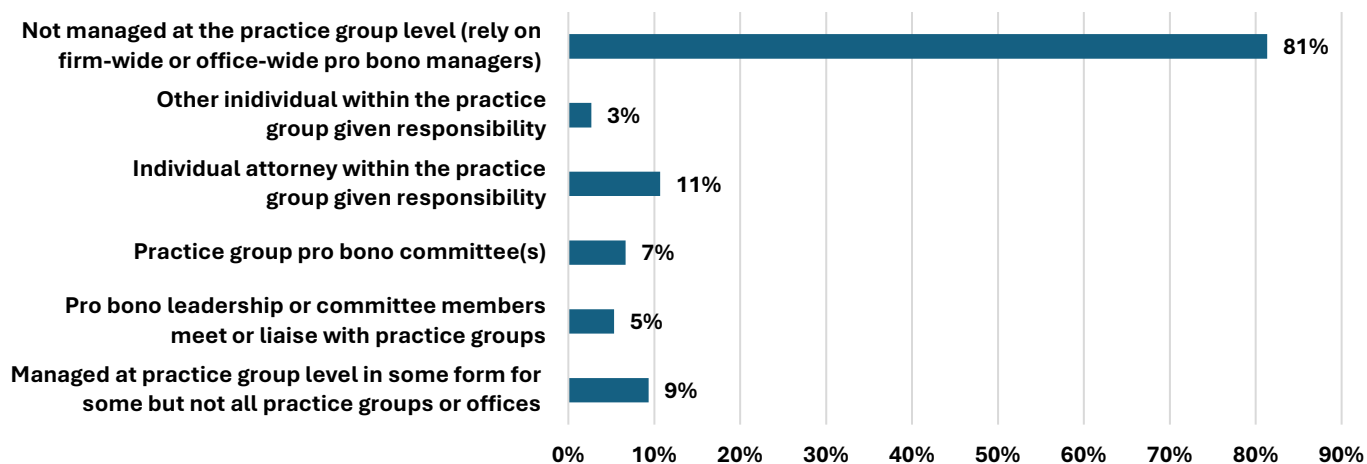


## Practice Group-Level Pro Bono Management

In addition to the role of pro bono committees in liaising with firm management and practice groups, a minority of responding firms indicated that they manage pro bono at the practice group level, while **81 percent** indicated that they do not:

### Method of Pro Bono Management at Practice Group Level

n=75



## Pro Bono Recruitment

The market for hiring pro bono professionals at law firms is experiencing significant growth. Our survey inquired about responding firms' most recent additions to their pro bono teams, seeking information about the title of their most recent pro bono hire and the reason for the hire.

### Recent Pro Bono Hires

Of the firms responding to the Staffing Survey, about **78 percent** responded regarding the title of the firm's most recent pro bono hire. There was substantial variation in the titles listed, but the two most common titles by far were **pro bono counsel** and **pro bono coordinator**, which were tied at **19 percent** each. The next most common titles were **pro bono partner**, **pro bono manager**, and **pro bono attorney**. There were many variations on these titles and additional senior leadership titles, including deputy and director designations, along with variations on titles including designations of associate, assistant, intern, and specialist.

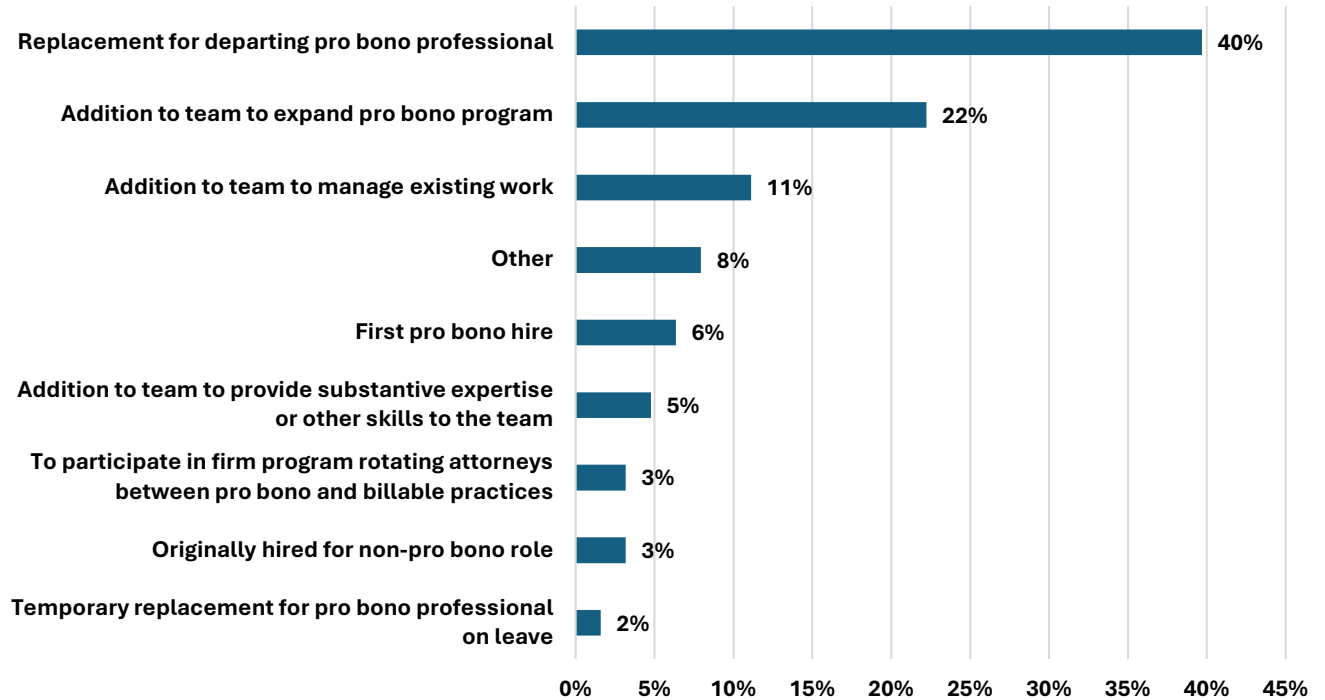
With respect to the reason for the firm's most recent pro bono hire, **83 percent** of responding firms provided this information, selecting from five options: (1) replacement for a departing pro bono professional; (2) addition to team to manage existing work; (3) addition to team to expand pro bono program; (4) addition to team to provide substantive expertise or other skills to the team; or (5) other. The most commonly selected reason was that the individual was hired as a replacement for a departing pro bono professional, with **40 percent** of those responding to this question selecting that option. The next most commonly selected reason was to expand the firm's pro bono program, with **22 percent** of those responding to this question selecting that option.

The chart below reflects that **8 percent** of responding firms selected "Other" as the reason for their last pro bono hire. This figure was originally greater, but respondents' comments allowed us to report on a few additional categories, specifically, where the individual was the firm's first pro bono hire, was

originally hired for a non-pro bono role, was hired to participate in a firm program rotating attorneys between pro bono and billable practices, and was hired as a temporary replacement for a pro bono professional on leave. It is possible that of the **8 percent** of firms that selected “Other” without specifying a reason in their comments, some may fall into these additional categories.

### Reasons for Most Recent Pro Bono Hire

n=63



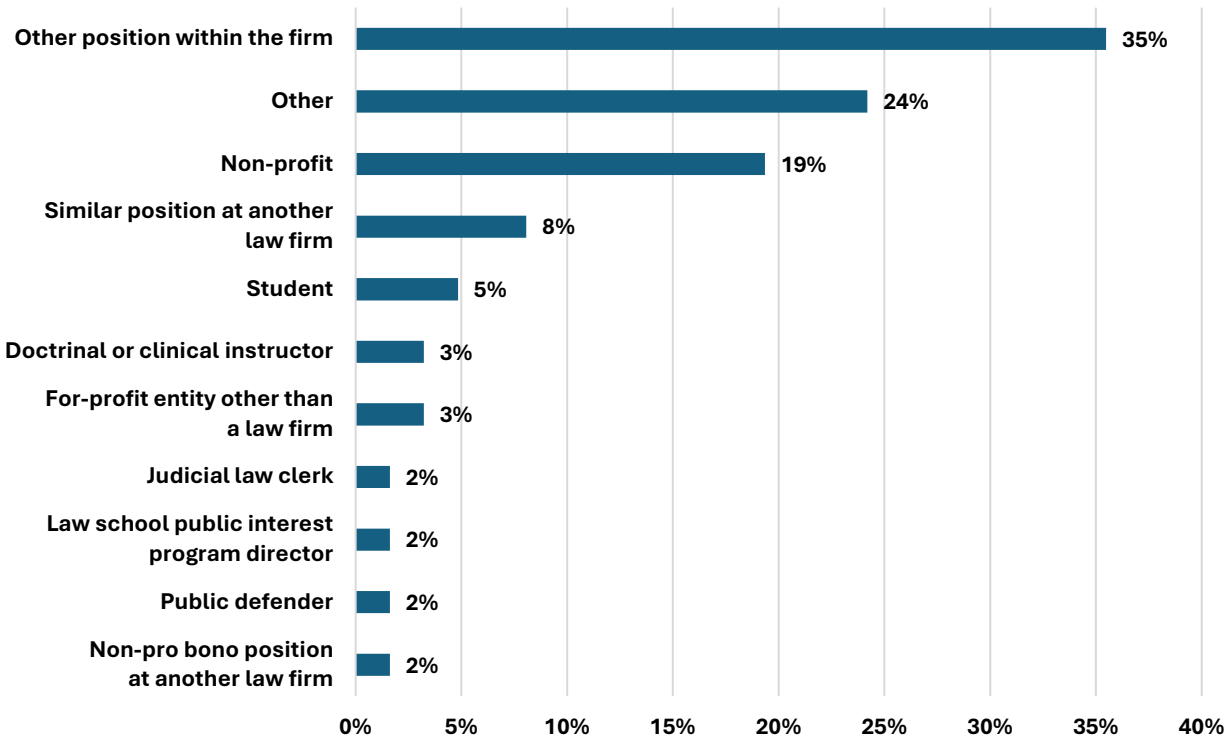


## Background of Recent Hires

When asked about the background of firms' most recent pro bono hires, responding firms indicated that the most common immediate past role was another position within the firm (**35 percent**). The full breakdown of the most common responses is presented below.

### Immediate Past Experience of Most Recent Pro Bono Hires

n=62



The prevalence of “Other” as the second most frequently selected response to this question (**24 percent**) is reflective of the diverse backgrounds of pro bono professionals. While it seems an increasing percentage of pro bono professionals come from law firm environments (whether at the recruiting firm or from another firm), the non-profit sector continues to provide a strong pipeline of pro bono professionals, with **19 percent** of responding firms indicating that their most recent pro bono hire came from the non-profit sector.

## Reflections

As with all things law firm pro bono, when it comes to staffing, the data makes clear that one size does not fit all. While firms employing pro bono professionals may have been more likely to respond to the survey, all responding firms that reported they did not employ a pro bono professional reported having a pro bono committee. This demonstrates that pro bono is embedded into the law firm structure in some manner for all responding firms.

## Diversity in Firm Sizes and Structures

The diversity of responding firm sizes and structures underscores the varying needs and approaches to pro bono staffing. Larger firms tend to have more infrastructure to support dedicated pro bono professionals, whereas smaller firms may rely more on committees, shared responsibilities, and split duties for those they employ as pro bono professionals. Recognizing the operational and administrative needs of responding firms' pro bono practices, we observed that **71 percent** of responding firms employ a team approach with one or more pro bono professionals focused on program oversight coupled with one or more professionals providing operational or administrative support.

The geographical distribution of firms also plays a significant role in the structure of their pro bono practice, with **65 percent** of responding firms having offices or reporting on offices solely in the U.S., and **35 percent** having offices or reporting on offices outside the U.S. Having a global presence influences staffing strategies and the allocation of pro bono resources, reflecting the different legal landscapes and community needs across regions. Several responding firms indicated that they had distinct approaches for staffing in their U.S. offices and their offices in other regions.

## Role and Impact of Pro Bono Professionals

Survey responses confirmed that firms employ pro bono professionals in a variety of capacities, with roles ranging from oversight to substantive representation. The presence of both full-time and part-time pro bono professionals with myriad law firm roles, titles, and responsibilities demonstrates that for most respondents, pro bono is well-incorporated into the structure of the firm, supporting a strong culture of pro bono.

The survey responses also reveal that pro bono efforts in law firms are largely led by lawyers, with strategic decision-making and policy development centralized among partners and counsel. Lawyers in these roles drive firms' pro bono initiatives through a top-down approach, overseeing the overall direction of the pro bono program and ensuring alignment with firm goals. Lawyers with counsel and director titles also play a key role in maintaining external partnerships and community collaborations, ensuring a steady flow of pro bono opportunities for their firms. Meanwhile, pro bono managers and coordinators, who are often nonlawyers, are largely responsible for executing day-to-day operations, coordinating projects, and promoting pro bono work.

## Pro Bono Professionals with Substantive Focus

Of the respondents employing pro bono professionals, about a quarter of them indicated that they employ full-time pro bono professionals providing oversight in a single practice area. The most common practice areas of professionals with this focus include immigration, small businesses/non-profits, and civil rights. Pro bono professionals focused on delivering substantive legal services in a particular practice area most commonly practice in the areas of immigration, criminal justice, refugees, human rights, housing, and racial justice. Some respondents indicated that professionals serving in this capacity span multiple practice areas.

## Supervision of Pro Bono

The survey reveals that most firms use a single method for the supervision of pro bono matters, primarily relying on partners or counsel with expertise in the subject area or who are otherwise trusted by the firm. Partners and counsel also appear to be the greatest source of mentorship for pro bono attorneys at responding firms. Leveraging the experience and expertise of partners and counsel at

the firm ensures that pro bono attorneys receive the support they need to serve their clients and that their clients receive effective service from a collaborative team dedicated to their case. This model also serves to meaningfully engage partners in the firm's pro bono practice through services partners are uniquely equipped to provide.

Several responding firms noted that as associates develop their pro bono practice, they gain substantial expertise in the subject matter of their pro bono cases. In this way, pro bono serves to empower both pro bono clients and volunteers who gain a command of areas of law they may not be exposed to otherwise. This fosters their effective representation of pro bono clients and their broader understanding of the justice system in which they can continue to play a significant role.

## **Pro Bono Committees and Firm Management of Pro Bono**

Pro bono committees are critical to promoting and managing pro bono activities within law firms. The survey data indicates that **87 percent** of responding firms have firm-wide pro bono committees, with an average size of 24 professionals serving on the committee. These committees are responsible for a wide range of activities, including promoting pro bono work, approving major pro bono matters, developing policies, and more. The existence of these committees, even at firms without dedicated pro bono professionals, demonstrates a firm-wide commitment to pro bono work.

The size of a firm's pro bono committee generally increases with both the size of the firm as a whole and the firm's number of offices. This is likely reflective of larger firms and firms with more offices having more extensive pro bono operations, necessitating larger committees to manage the workload effectively.

With respect to the management of pro bono at the practice group level, most firms do not manage pro bono in this manner firm-wide. Many responding firms indicated that they incorporate a variety of approaches to pro bono management, applying practice-group driven approaches in some instances and office-based approaches in others. While there is often an emphasis on the implementation of firm-wide structures and policies, pairing a firm-wide structure such as a pro bono committee with a flexible, tailored approach at the practice group or office level can be powerful, as it allows for more customized management of pro bono work, aligning it with the specific expertise, capacity, and interests of particular practice groups, offices, and individuals.

## **Recruitment of Pro Bono Professionals**

The market for pro bono professionals appears to be growing at major law firms. The most common titles for professionals most recently recruited by responding firms were pro bono counsel and pro bono coordinator. The primary reasons reported for firms' most recent pro bono hires included replacing departing professionals and expanding the firm's pro bono program. Responses to the survey question regarding these professionals' immediate past work experience are reflective of the diverse backgrounds of these professionals, with the most common immediate past experiences including prior law-firm roles and roles in the non-profit sector.

## Conclusion

The Staffing Survey data underscores the integral role of pro bono professionals and pro bono committees in promoting and sustaining impactful pro bono work at law firms. The varied approaches to staffing and management reflected in the report illustrate the unique needs and resources of different firms as well as the unique and shared ways they contribute to their communities. Overall, the survey highlights the ongoing commitment of law firms to pro bono work and the critical role of staffing in achieving access to justice for underserved communities.

PBI welcomes your feedback on the Staffing Survey and this Staffing Report. If there is any additional information or analysis of staffing data that you would find helpful to law firm pro bono programs, please let us know. As we continue our research, we look forward to connecting Staffing Survey data with data obtained through the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge initiative in order to provide deeper insights on connections between law firm pro bono staffing, pro bono hours, and attorney participation.

Finally, PBI would like to thank all of those who contributed to the development of the Staffing Survey, responded to the survey, and assisted in the preparation of this report. PBI extends a special thank you to the members of the Board of Directors of the Association of Pro Bono Counsel (APBCo) who kindly offered their feedback and perspectives, which informed the analyses in this report, as well as Erik J.A. Swenson, recently retired Director of the Law Firm Pro Bono Project, for his valuable contributions to the Staffing Survey and this report.