New State Bar Attorney Census Captures an Emerging Multiracial Population

In Bar Brief 1, the State Bar reported that recent cohorts of attorneys entering the legal profession are more diverse than in the past. This brief takes a closer look at these changes, calls attention to varying rates of change across different racial/ethnic groups, and spotlights how the State Bar's new approach to data collection produces a more accurate picture of the demographic makeup of California's attorney population.

California's Legal Profession is Becoming More Diverse, but the Rate of Change Varies among Different Groups

Proportion of Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar
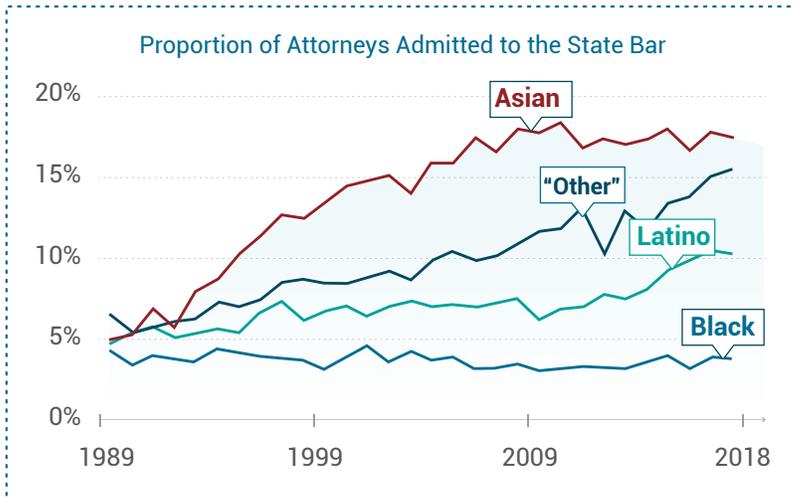
The rates at which nonwhite attorneys are being admitted to the State Bar differs significantly across different groups. The proportion of Latino attorneys admitted each year has doubled from 5 to 10 percent over the last three decades, though it still lags far behind the proportion of Latinos in California. Over the same period, the proportion of Black attorneys admitted has remained stagnant. The rapid growth in the number of Asian attorneys admitted, which began in the 1990s and peaked in 2006, has since leveled off. During the last decade, the largest increase has been in the group classified as "Other."

The Fastest-Growing Group within "Other": Attorneys Who Selected More Than One Racial/Ethnic Group

Attorneys Admitted to the State Bar Selecting Racial/Ethnic Categories Outside Major Groupings
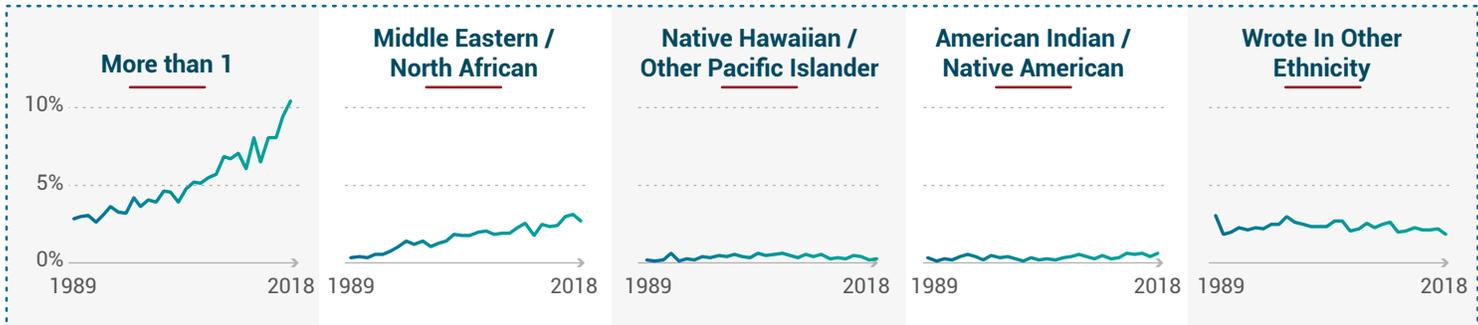
Looking more closely at the self-identification of attorneys that we grouped into the "Other" category above, the fastest-growing segment of this population is made up of attorneys who selected more than one racial/ethnic category.

New Data Collection Methods Capture Emerging Multiracial Reality

The data reflects the changing demographics of the profession and of California as a whole. But the changes would not be visible without the State Bar's adoption of new data collection methods.

The State Bar's attorney census, launched in early 2019, collects data on racial/ethnic self-identification in a manner similar to that of the US Bureau of the Census. Consistent with the Bureau of the Census, the State Bar now offers an option for Middle Eastern/North African, and groups Native Hawaiians with other Pacific Islander populations. Most importantly, the attorney census allows for the selection of more than one category.

The importance of the new data collection method can be seen by comparing the data reported on the attorney census with the data reported by the same attorneys when they originally applied to the State Bar. For example, more than 1,700 attorneys are now able to identify as Middle Eastern or North African. The vast majority of them previously had selected Caucasian.

Similarly, among attorneys who selected more than one racial/ethnic category:

>> About one in three attorneys who previously identified exclusively as American Indian or Pacific Islander on the old form selected more than one racial/ethnic category using the new data collection method.

>> Almost one in five attorneys who previously identified as exclusively Hispanic or Filipino selected more than one racial/ethnic category.

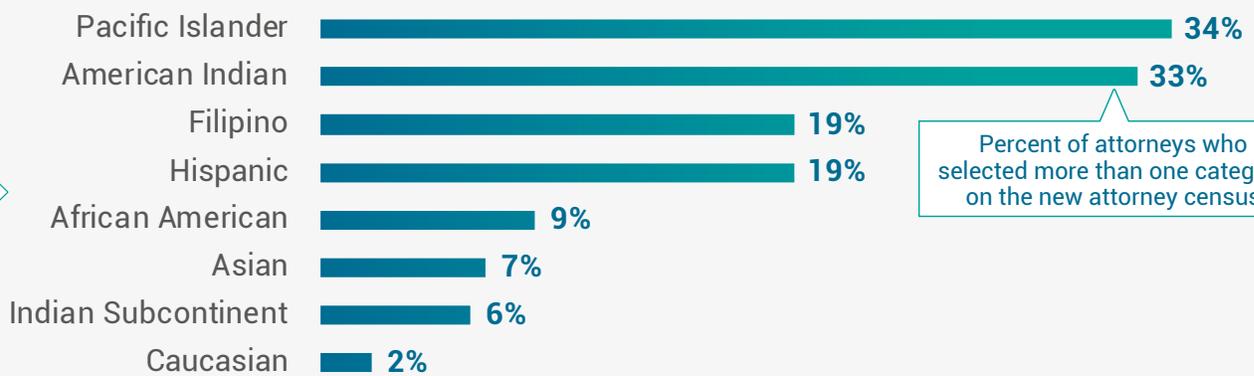## The New Online Attorney Census Question on Race/Ethnicity

With which racial and ethnic group(s) do you identify? ⓘ
Choose all that apply

☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ White
☐ Black or African American
☐ Asian
☐ Middle Eastern or North African
☐ American indian or Alaska Native
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific islander
☐ Other race, ethnicity, or origin (please specify)

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Which Attorneys Selected More Than One Racial/Ethnic Category?

Racial/Ethnic categories used when attorneys applied to the State Bar

Pacific Islander	34%
American Indian	33%
Filipino	19%
Hispanic	19%
African American	9%
Asian	7%
Indian Subcontinent	6%
Caucasian	2%

Percent of attorneys who selected more than one category on the new attorney census

Recommended Practices

Collecting demographic information on the attorney population is an essential part of diversifying the profession. Methods for collecting demographics data need to be reviewed and adapted regularly as standards change.

Any organization seeking to diversify needs to ask the following questions:

>> How does the organization define diversity?

>> Does the organization collect data on race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status?

>> What is the process for ensuring that data collection methods are up-to-date?

>> How often is the data collected and analyzed?

>> Who within the organization is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and sharing the data?

>> How will the data inform diversity initiatives?

>> How is the demographic data connected to organizational goals?

The data provided is for active attorneys only. Numbers are expected to change as new data becomes available.