



# THE PURSUIT OF INCLUSION: EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN ATTORNEYS

## An In-Depth Exploration of the Experiences and Perspectives of Native American Attorneys in the Legal Profession

The National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) conducted this research in order to provide the first comprehensive picture of the issues confronting Native American attorneys across all settings, including private practice; government practice in state, federal and tribal arenas; the judiciary; corporate legal departments; and academia. Ultimately, NNABA and others will use the findings in this study to develop educational materials and programs that will help improve the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of Native American attorneys in the legal profession.

The study is about Native American attorneys and their pursuit for full inclusion in the legal profession.

**This summary focuses on the findings related to the experiences of Native American women.**

### Quantative Survey

527 Native American attorneys took the survey, a 20% participation rate of the approximately 2,640 Native American attorneys in the U.S.

**Women comprised 57%, and men comprised 43%.**

### Length of Practice

**71% of women compared to 45% of men** practiced less than 15 years. **55% of men compared to 29% of women** practiced more than 15 years.

### Marital Status

Women were twice as likely to be single/ never married than men (**16% to 7%**). Women were less likely to be married than men (**71% to 81%**).

### Professional Development

More men than women practiced in the private law firm of less than 50 (**16% to 7%**). More women than men (**25% to 19%**) practiced in the tribal sector.

## Satisfaction, Inclusion & Alienation

Men were more likely than women to be “extremely satisfied” with their careers (**48% to 27%**)

Women were more likely than men to report:

- demeaning comments and/or harassment based on gender (38% to 3%)
- discrimination based on gender (35% to 4%)
- denial of advancement or promotional opportunities due to gender (21% to 3%)
- denial of appropriate compensation due to gender (29% to 1%)
- a lack of access to information necessary to be effective (13% to 1%)
- challenges due to parenthood

## Causes of Attrition

More women than men reported the following as influencing their attrition from the law:

- lack of access to informal or formal networking opportunities (35% to 14%)
- lack of advancement or promotional opportunities (58% to 21%)
- lack of appropriate compensation (46% to 20%)

- lack of information necessary for effective performance (30.4% to 0%)
- demeaning comments/harassment (35% to 15%)
- gender bias (33% to 0%)
- barriers to professional advancement unrelated to skills, competence and/or experience (52% to 33%)

One surprising differential between men and women, perhaps generationally influenced, is that 60% of men in comparison to 48.14% of women cited the desire to obtain greater **work/life balance** as having strongly influenced their decision **to leave the law**.

## Takeaways

Read this report in conjunction with the ABA’s Visible Invisibility series.

When women’s voices are not heard and valued, workplaces don’t work as well...for everyone.

Gender issues are not just about “work-life balance” or “work-family conflict.”

True inclusion requires an open dialogue on the types of exclusion that women face regardless of their family dynamics.



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