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Cole Scott Tops the List of Most Diverse Florida Firms

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hispanics are the most prevalent minority group among Florida's eight largest firms

By Dylan Jackson | June 27, 2019

Cole, Scott & Kissane is the most diverse of Florida's eight largest firms and the sixth most diverse firm in the country, according to data from The American Lawyer's [2019 Diversity Scorecard](#).



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(<https://www.law.com/americanlawyer/2019/05/28/the-2019-diversity-scorecard/>)

Shutts & Bowen came in second, ranked No. 19, while Greenspoon Marder and GrayRobinson reported the least diversity among its ranks, coming in at No. 80 and No. 128 respectively.

In a legal landscape increasingly defined by client needs, diversity has become a centerpiece issue as Fortune 500 companies and in-house counsel [continually demand \(https://www.law.com/2019/06/03/frustrated-with-big-law-diversity-many-companies-are-looking-elsewhere/\)](https://www.law.com/2019/06/03/frustrated-with-big-law-diversity-many-companies-are-looking-elsewhere/) more diverse teams on their matters.

At Cole Scott, 28% of attorneys identify as racial minorities, with the majority of lawyers identifying as Hispanic. Out of the firm's 433 attorneys, 93 are Hispanic. In fact, the firm ranks No. 6, and has the highest percentage of Hispanic attorneys of the 225 firms that reported nationwide.

Richard Cole, Cole Scott's managing partner, said that the genesis of his firm's push for inclusion came out of a meeting between the firm's senior partners five years ago.

"As we looked around the room we realized we all looked like each other," Cole said. "That was a real reality check to us that we weren't doing enough."

Shortly after, the firm began making a concerted effort to be more diverse. It started showing up at minority job fairs; it established a diversity committee; and most importantly, he said, it developed a set of written goals that the firm reviews every quarter.

"Once you recognize that you have an issue, getting people to buy in isn't that hard honestly. It's all about getting people out of their comfort zone. Everybody, including us, wanted to do the easier things first and the hard things last."

The diversity score is calculated by adding together the total minority percentage and the minority percentage of each firm's partnership, essentially double-counting partners to stress the importance of promoting diverse attorneys through the ranks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hispanics are the most prevalent minority group among Florida's eight largest firms. United State Census Bureau data shows that Hispanics make up 26% of Florida's population — significantly higher than the national average of 17.6%.

Shutts & Bowen came in behind Cole Scott, reporting that 21% of its 277 U.S. attorneys are minorities. Like Cole Scott, Shutts has developed a written diversity and inclusion plan — a key issue to Shutts diversity committee chair Aliette Rodz.

“Our reality is that we continue to work for greater diversity in our workforce,” she said. “It’s an ever-changing process to meet the needs of our clients.”

After climbing steadily for the past few years, Carlton Fields dropped 12 spots to No. 25, the greatest drop among the Florida firms. Looking at the data, though, the firm lost only four diverse attorneys as its headcount contracted by ten, suggesting that the drop in ranking is as much a product of diversity improvements at other firms as it is backpedaling at Carlton.

“If our national ranking has dropped, it is only because other firms have made great strides over the past year. That is cause for celebration, as it shows collective progress toward the goal we all share. For Carlton Fields, it’s also a cue to redouble our energies in 2019,” said Carlton Fields Chief Diversity Officer Nancy Faggianelli.

Akerman jumped 15 spots to No. 57, marking the biggest improvement in the group. Of the 30 attorneys added to the firm between 2017 and 2018, 14 were diverse attorneys.

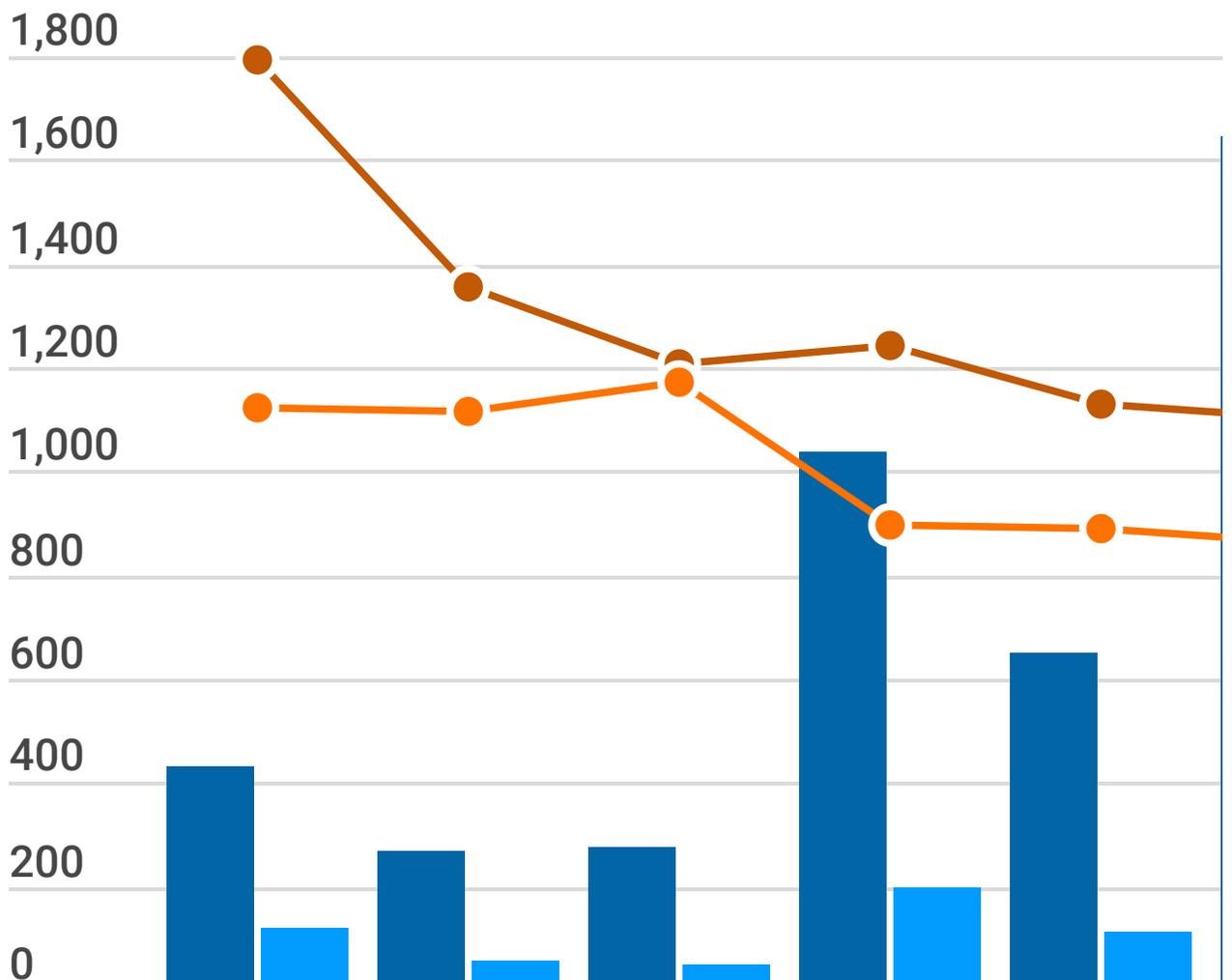
“Our success is the cumulative product of years of work on diversity,” said Akerman Chairman and CEO Andrew Smulian.

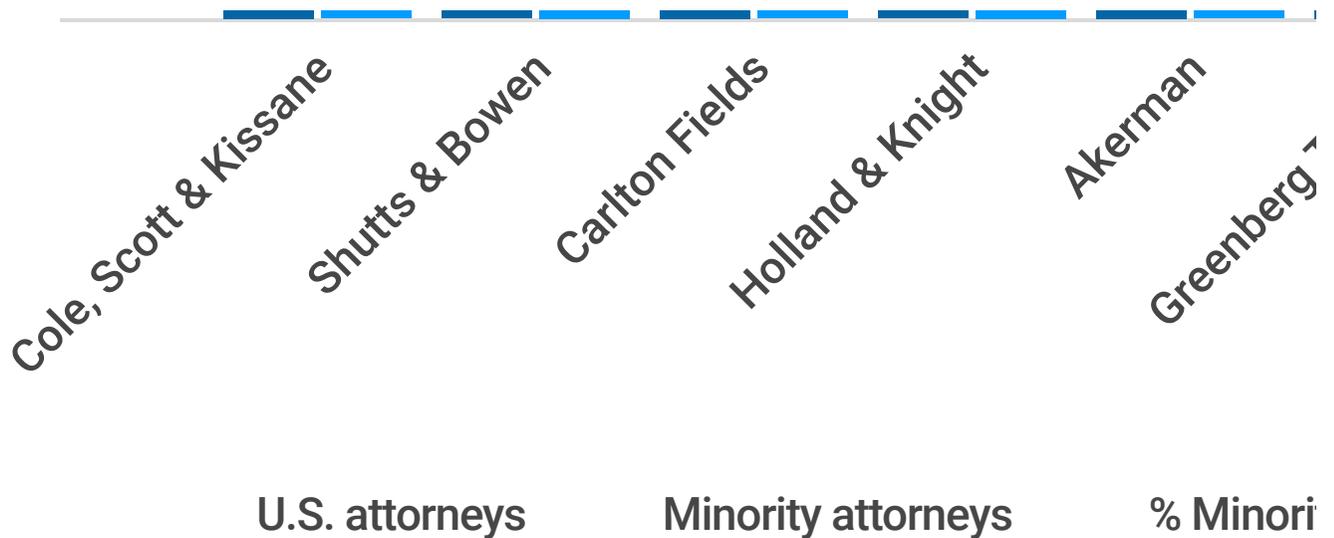
GrayRobinson, the least diverse among the firms, reported that 11% of its attorneys are minorities, ranking at No. 128 — five spots lower than last year. The firm reported only 16 Hispanic attorneys, three Asian American attorneys, four black attorneys and eight attorneys that identified as “other.”

In response to a request for comment, GrayRobinson President and Managing Director Mayanne Downs said the firm continues to make progress on diversity.

“We measure inclusivity to include LGBTQ status, and other diversity factors, such as national origin, and overcoming challenges,” she said. “Currently, 21% of our non-equity attorneys are diverse, an increase of 17% over the last 3 years, which is a reflection of our continued commitment to inclusivity. We recently welcomed a large class of summer associates, 75% of whom are women and or minority students.”

Florida Law Firm D





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