

Special Report

Gender Diversity at Malaysia Law Firms

2022



Legal**Media** 360



Introduction

Legal industry rankings are an important benchmarking tool for buyers of legal services. They offer a clear indication as to which law firms and lawyers are most active, have the highest market reputation, and are working on the most significant legal matters – an independent seal of quality and assurance.

Increasingly, diversity and inclusion policies have become a consideration in the selection of outside counsel. Using data driven analysis of the latest rankings, this **Legal Media 360** special report assesses gender diversity at the largest multi-practice domestic law firms in Malaysia.

The report examines data at three levels: **1)** firm wide; **2)** by practice area; and **3)** by individual lawyer rankings. It will reveal:

- Which firms are most gender diverse;
- Whether gender diverse firms are more successful than male dominated firms;
- Whether female lawyers are being afforded the same opportunities as men; and
- If rising star data implies a more gender balanced future.



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Methodology

Results are based on the analysis of lawyer rankings in the following international publications: *asialaw*, *Benchmark Litigation*, *Chambers and Partners*, *IAM1000*, *IFLR1000*, *IP Stars*, *Legal 500*, and *World Trademark Review 1000*. These have been selected based on their multilateral research process, where peer and client reviews as well as submissions are used to determine the rankings.

For the purposes of this report, due to the variance in the categorization at atomic levels, lawyer rankings have been reclassified by **Legal Media 360** to bring them together in a common scale without distorting the differences in the range of the values. This has been achieved by referring to the definitions provided by the publications.

Lawyers have been grouped on a five-tier scale:

- **Senior Statesperson:** Retired/semi-retired influential lawyers with close relationships with major institutional clients. Mainly work as a consultant.
- **Tier 1:** Leading lawyers who have an outstanding reputation and a strong track record for leading the most significant matters.
- **Tier 2:** Highly regarded lawyers who are active on significant matters.
- **Up and Coming Lawyer:** Lawyers establishing their reputation and have been recognised for assisting on significant matters. Potential to be a tiered lawyer in the future.
- **Notable Practitioner:** Lawyers who have had some market recognition and been on some notable matters. Not yet a tiered lawyer.

The 2022 dataset covers rankings published from June 2021 to June 2022. This timeframe ensures that similar matters submitted by the firms and evaluated by the above publications fall into the same research cycle.



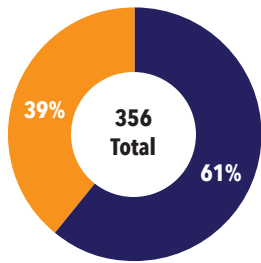
Findings

Overall Gender Statistics

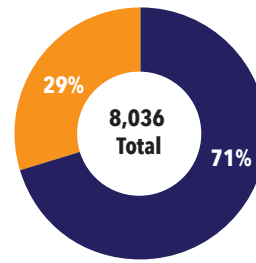
In the eight publications examined, a total of 356 lawyers in Malaysia were recognized.

The national average male to female ratio for Malaysia law firms is 61 to 39 percent which, as can be seen from the charts, is significantly better than the overall Asia average of 71 to 29 percent:

Male to Female Ratio: Malaysia

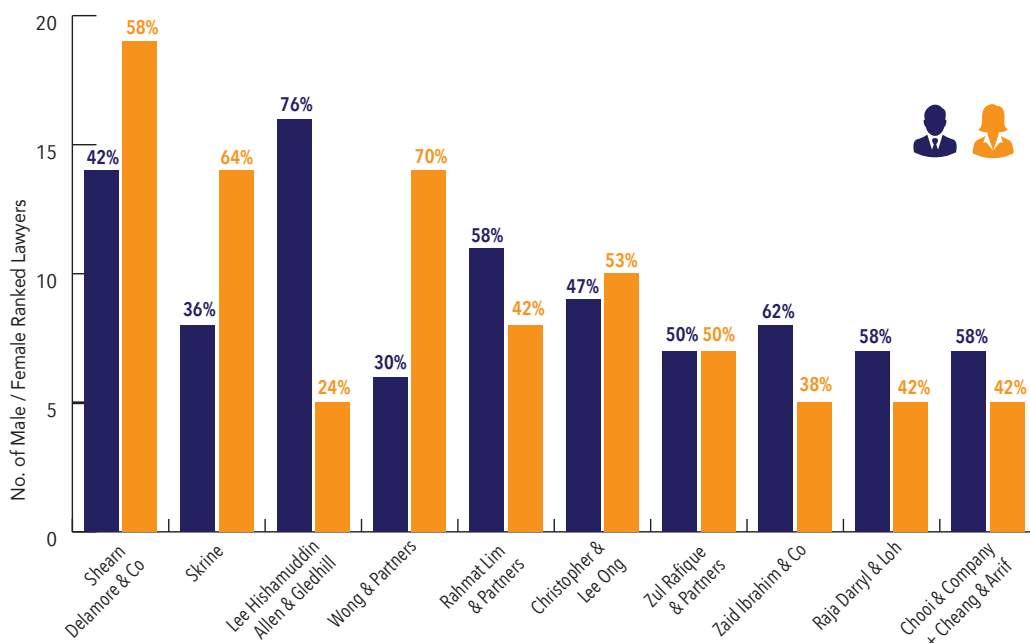


Male to Female Ratio: Asia



Firm Level

Top 10 Firms with the Most Lawyer Recognitions





Commentary: Examining the law firms with the greatest number of lawyer recognitions reveals:

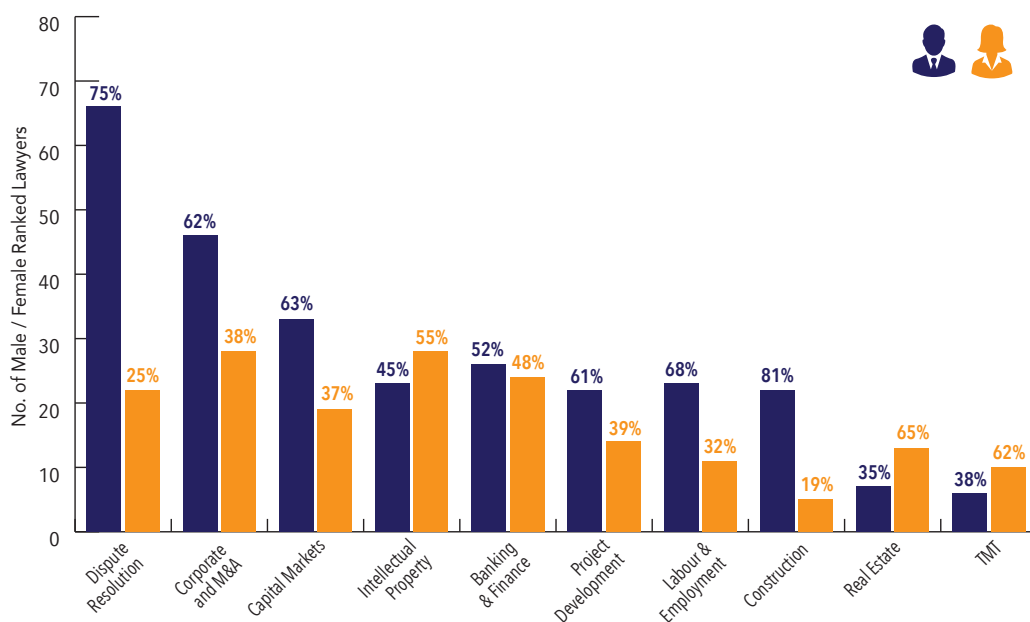
- Eight of the top 10 firms have better gender diversity ratios than the national average.
- Lee Hishamuddin Allen & Gledhill has the greatest overall gender imbalance in favour of men.
- Wong and Partners has the greatest overall gender imbalance in favour of women.

When asked to comment on their gender diversity policy and its impact on firm success, Zul Rafique & Partners told **Legal Media 360**: “At Zul Rafique & Partners, we strive to provide equal opportunities for everyone irrespective of gender. When evaluating an individual’s work, we look at the quality of the work on its own without any bias. We strive to make sure that we create an inclusive workplace by providing mentorship and professional development opportunities for all irrespective of gender.”

Yon See Ting, managing partner at Christopher & Lee Ong (CLO), commented: “We believe the success of our firm lies in the diverse mix of individuals with different perspectives, culture, background, and life experiences. We continue to push forward our Diversity & Inclusion agenda through our policies, practices and procedures, promoting a working environment where our colleagues feel safe and connected, as well as advocating for the equal opportunities for development and career progression. This agenda, assimilated into our operations, has translated for better outcomes for our clients and people.”

Practice Area Level

Gender Representation by Practice Area



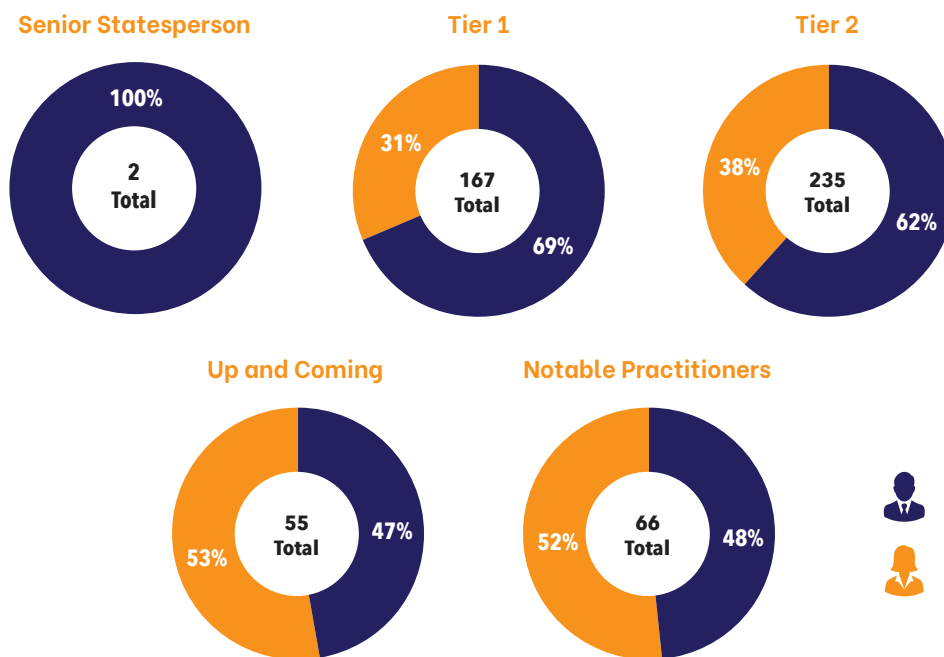
Commentary: The above chart shows the top 10 practice areas by recognized lawyer count. Taking the national gender ratio into consideration, it is clear from the data that women lawyers are



under-represented in five out of the 10 practice areas, with diversity clearly lacking in Construction and Dispute Resolution. Interestingly, men are underrepresented in two practice areas, namely in Real Estate and TMT.

Lawyer Levels: Gender

Breakdown of Gender by Tier



Commentary: The lawyer tiers can be seen to reflect the development cycle in a lawyer's career. Senior Statesperson represents those lawyers in their senior years. Tier 1, 2 and Notable Practitioners are lawyers at partner level, while Up and Coming Lawyers reflect the future representation of a law firm.

The above figures clearly shows that aside from Senior Statesperson category, the gender ratio in Malaysian law firms is better than the Asia average and for the Up and Coming and Notable Practitioners categories is (overall) gender neutral.










Top Lawyers by Practice Area with the Greatest Number of Tier 1 Rankings

Banking and Finance

-  **Deepak Sadasivan**, Adnan Sundra & Low
-  **Mei Mei Loh**, Zul Rafique & Partners
-  **Adrian Meng Yang Chee**, Adnan Sundra & Low
-  **Lilian Liew**, Zaid Ibrahim & Co
-  **Swee Loong Chung**, Albar & Partners

Corporate and M&A

-  **Brian Chia**, Wong & Partners
-  **Grace Yeoh**, Shearn Delamore & Co
-  **Adrian Meng Yang Chee**, Adnan Sundra & Low
-  **Andre Gan**, Wong & Partners
-  **Christopher Lee**, Christopher & Lee Ong
-  **Janet Lai Heng Looi**, Skrine
-  **Pui Yee Moy**, Rahmat Lim & Partners

Intellectual Property

-  **Kherk Ying Chew**, Wong & Partners
-  **Michael Soo**, Shook Lin & Bok
-  **Bahari Yeow**, RDS Partnership
-  **Bong Kwang Teo**, Wong Jin Nee & Teo
-  **Guan Huat Khoo**, Skrine
-  **Karen Abraham**, Shearn Delamore & Co

Capital Markets

-  **Adrian Meng Yang Chee**, Adnan Sundra & Low
-  **Lily Chea Li Tan**, Albar & Partners
-  **Mei Mei Loh**, Zul Rafique & Partners
-  **Brian Chia**, Wong & Partners
-  **Deepak Sadasivan**, Adnan Sundra & Low
-  **Lilian Liew**, Zaid Ibrahim & Co
-  **Swee Loong Chung**, Albar & Partners

Dispute Resolution

-  **Cecil Abraham**, Cecil Abraham & Partners
-  **Chee Wee Lim**, Lim Chee Wee Partnership
-  **Lambert Rasa-Ratnam**,
Lee Hishammuddin Allen & Gledhill
-  **Ambiga Sreenevasan**, Sreenevasan
-  **Christopher Leong**,
Chooi & Company + Cheang & Ariff
-  **Malik Imtiaz Sarwar**, Malik Imtiaz Sarwar
-  **Rabindra Nathan**, Shearn Delamore & Co
-  **Robert Lazar**, Sreenevasan Young
-  **Tommy Thomas**, Tommy Thomas

Commentary: A breakdown of the top lawyers with the most Tier 1 recognitions shows that (apart from Dispute Resolution) the number of recognitions and appearance of the best female lawyers is comparable to their male counterparts. This means female lawyers in Malaysia are leading the most significant cases or deals which is rare when compared to other Asian countries.

When asked to comment on this by **Legal Media 360**, Yon See Ting of Christopher & Lee Ong said: “In Malaysia, gender equality starts from home and both daughters and sons are pushed to excel academically resulting in more women than men at universities.

The Malaysian government has also continuously made commitments towards achieving gender equality that are in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”

Zul Rafique & Partners commented: “We believe that Malaysia outperforms other countries in respect to gender balance due to the diverse talents that exist within the legal community and the many leaders and senior members of the Bar that have paved the way for all lawyers regardless of gender.”

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