

Special Report

Gender Diversity at Indian 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 law firms in India.

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.



LegalMedia 360

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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.

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
- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Up-and-Coming Lawyer
- Notable Practitioner

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.

Lawyer Tier Definitions

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.



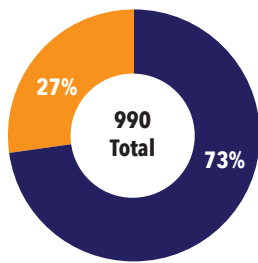
Findings

Overall Gender Statistics

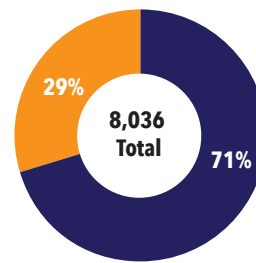
In the eight publications examined, a total of 990 lawyers in India were recognized.

The national average male to female ratio for Indian law firms is 73 to 27 percent which, as can be seen from the charts, is slightly below the overall Asia average of 71 to 29 percent:

Male to Female Ratio: India

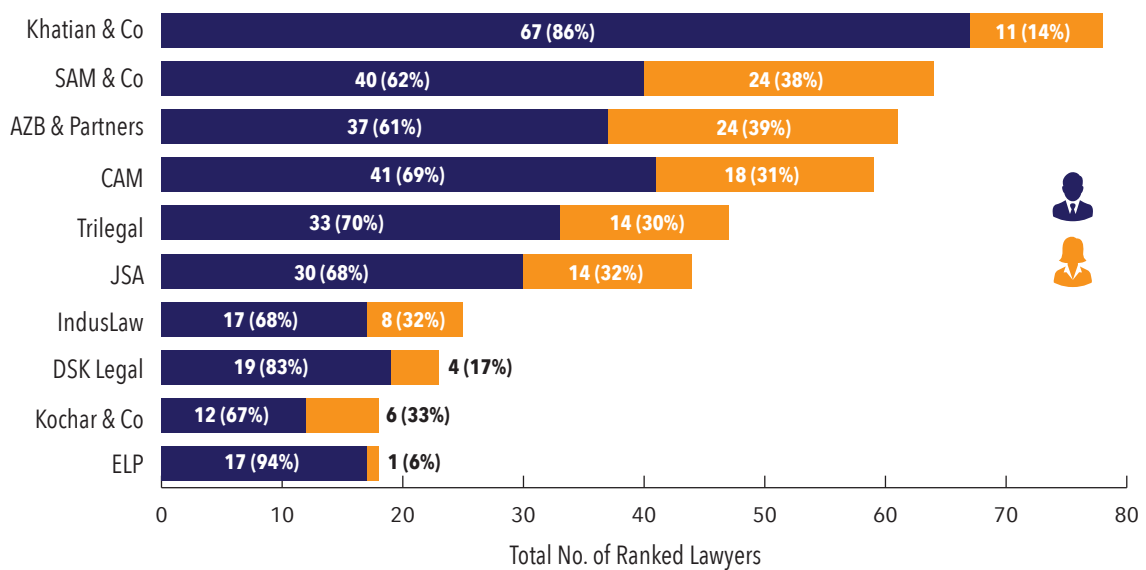


Male to Female Ratio: Asia



Firm Level

Top 10 Firms with the Most Lawyer Recognitions



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



- Seven of the top 10 firms have better gender diversity ratios than the national average;
- AZB & Partners and Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co are the most gender balanced firms; and
- Khaitan & Co, DSK Legal and Economic Laws Practice have the greatest overall gender imbalance.

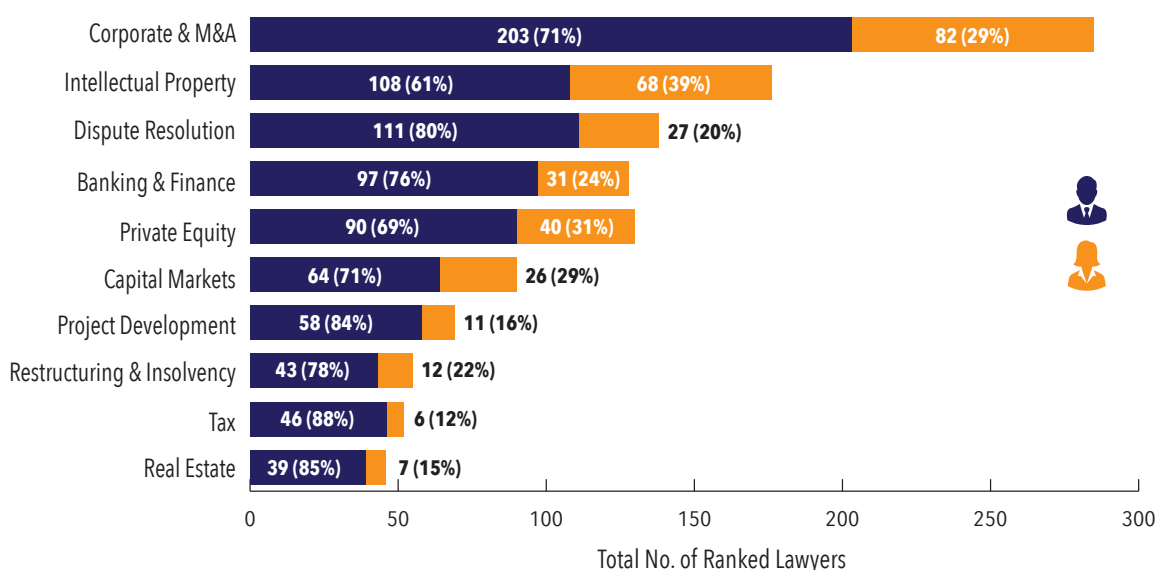
When asked to comment on their gender diversity policy and its impact on firm success, a spokesperson for Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co said: “We are wary of the industry trends, particularly in the Indian context, where women leave jobs because of domestic challenges and to combat these roadblocks, the firm has formulated adequate policies and support system to enable women to continue with their career path and fulfil their personal responsibilities and commitments.

The firm has initiated ‘*the SAM Diversity Collective (SDC)*’ and undertakes formal and informal dialogues and seminars for its members to understand the concept of D&I from a holistic perspective, including areas of gender (particularly LGBTQ+), caste, economic background, and special-abled persons.”

Sridhar Gorthi, partner and member of the management committee at Trilegal, said: “Diversity, along with meritocracy and equal opportunity have been the biggest contributors to our firm’s success. Our D&I policies include equal opportunity for employment, pay parity, compliance with anti-discriminatory laws, structured feedback mechanism for grievance redressal, and awareness programmes to understand and celebrate diversity. We are signatories to the UN WEPs and our inclusive culture has been recognised by leading platforms such as *Women in Business Law Asia* and *Vahura*.”

Practice Area Level

Gender Representation by Practice Area

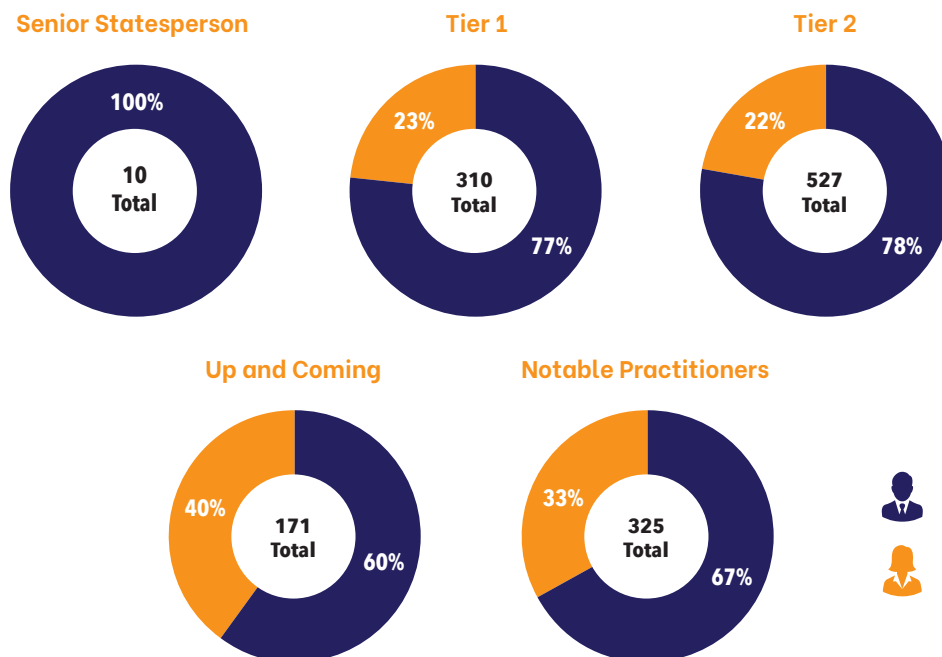




Commentary: The above chart shows the top 10 practice areas by recognized lawyer count. It is clear from the data that women lawyers are under-represented in six out of the 10 practice areas, with diversity clearly lacking in Dispute resolution, Project development, Tax, and Real estate. This trend is not unique to India and the statistics are similar when compared with the overall statistics for Asia.

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, Tier 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 show a shift towards better gender equality within the younger generation of lawyers.

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

Banking and Finance

- Aashit Shah, JSA
- Bahram Vakil, AZB & Partners
- Cyril Shroff, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas
- Dina Wadia, JSA
- Shardul Shroff, SAM & Co

Corporate and M&A

- Ajay Bahl, AZB & Partners
- Cyril Shroff, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas
- Haigreve Khaitan, Khaitan & Co
- Rajiv Luthra, Luthra and Luthra Law Offices
- Zia Mody, AZB & Partners



Dispute Resolution

-  **Anand Desai**, DSK Legal
-  **Bobby Chandhoke**, DSK Legal
-  **MP Bharucha**, Bharucha & Partners
-  **Pallavi Shroff**, SAM & Co
-  **Rajendra Barot**, AZB & Partners

Intellectual Property

-  **Ashwin Julka**, Remfry & Sagar
-  **Hemant Singh**, Intl Advocare
-  **Mohan Dewan**, RK Dewan & Co
-  **Pravin Anand**, Anand and Anand
-  **Saikrishna Rajagopal**, Saikrishna & Associates

Private Equity

-  **Ajay Bahl**, AZB & Partners
-  **Ashwath Rau**, AZB & Partners
-  **Gautam Saha**, Talwar Thakore & Associates
-  **Haigreve Khaitan**, Khaitan & Co
-  **Zia Mody**, AZB & Partners

Commentary: A breakdown of the top five lawyers with the most Tier 1 recognitions shows that female representation at the top level is at, or close to, zero. This suggests that even at more gender diverse firms, female lawyers are not leading the most significant cases or deals in India. This pattern also holds true of the other practice areas analysed by **Legal Media 360**.

Conclusion

In India, the data shows no distinct correlation behind the success of a law firm and the gender diversity within a firm. Although more gender balanced firms are rated more often than their male dominated counterparts, firms such as Khaitan and Co demonstrate that a firm with low female representation can also be very successful.

Top Five Firms with the Most Tier 1 Firm Rankings

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co	55
Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas	51
Khaitan & Co	49
AZB & Partners	44
Trilegal	38

An analysis of Up-and-Coming Lawyer data reveals there is more gender equality amongst the younger generation of lawyers. Time will tell whether this will be reflected at the top level as their careers progress.

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