

Special Report

# **Gender Diversity at Hong Kong SAR Law Firms**

2023



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 domestic law firms in Hong Kong SAR.

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 six-tier scale:

- **Senior Statesperson:** Retired/semi-retired influential lawyers with close relationships with major institutional clients. Mainly work as a consultant.
- **Band 1 (1.0 to 1.9):** Leading lawyers who have an outstanding reputation and a strong track record for leading the most significant matters.
- **Band 2 (2.0 to 2.9):** Highly regarded lawyers who are active on significant matters.
- **Up and Coming Partner:** Partner level lawyers establishing their reputation and have been recognised for leading/assisting on significant matters. Potential to be a tiered lawyer in the future.
- **Rising Star:** Junior 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 worked on some notable matters. Not yet a tiered lawyer.

The 2023 dataset covers rankings published from January to December 2022.



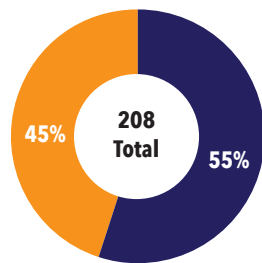
# Findings

## Overall Gender Statistics

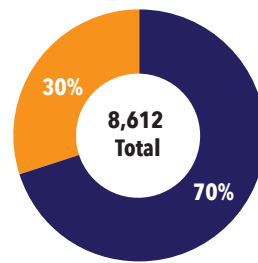
In the eight publications examined, a total of 208 lawyers in Hong Kong SAR were recognized.

The national average male to female ratio for Hong Kong SAR law firms is 55 to 45 percent which, as can be seen from the charts, is well above the overall Asia average of 70 to 30 percent:

Male to Female Ratio: Hong Kong SAR

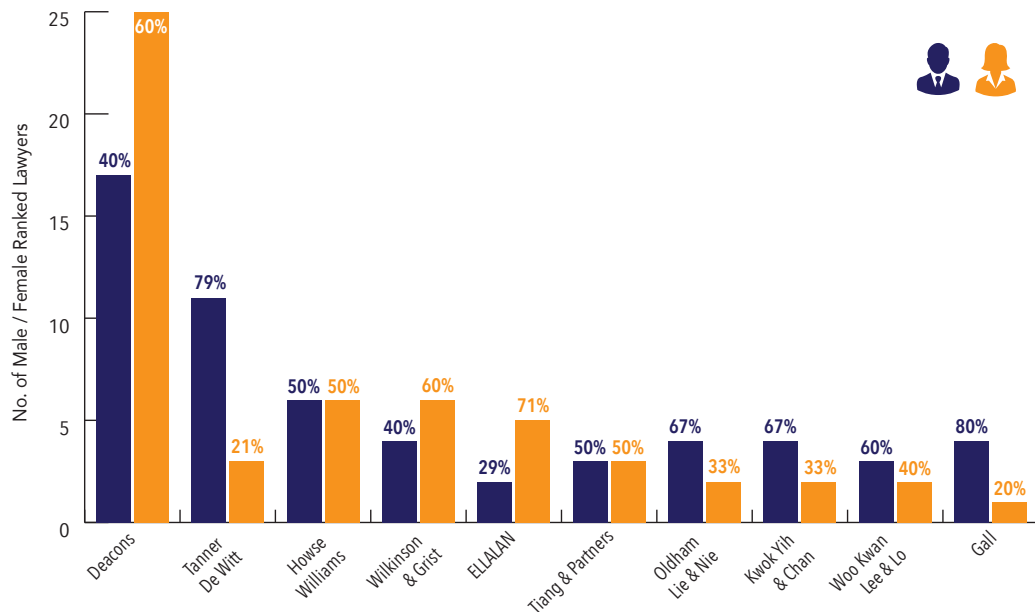


Male to Female Ratio: Asia



## Firm Level

### Top 10 Firms with the Most Lawyer Recognitions



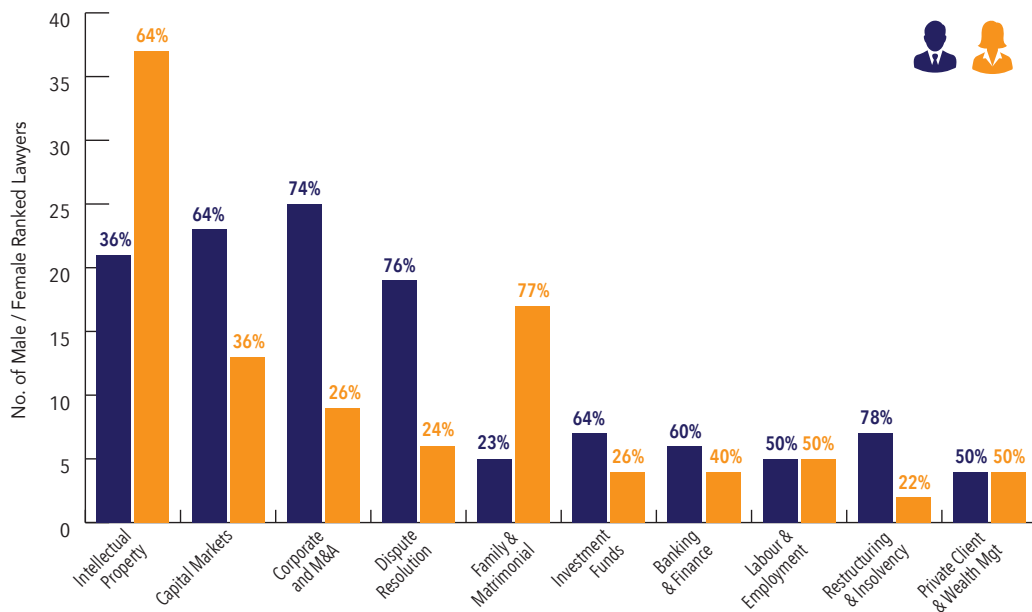


**Commentary:** Examining the law firms with the greatest number of lawyer recognitions reveals:

- Eight of the top 10 firms have a better gender diversity ratio than the average for Asia;
- Tanner De Witt and Gall data show the most significant gender imbalance of the top 10 firms;
- ELLALAN data show the greatest gender imbalance in favour of women.

## Practice Area Level

### Gender Representation by Practice Area



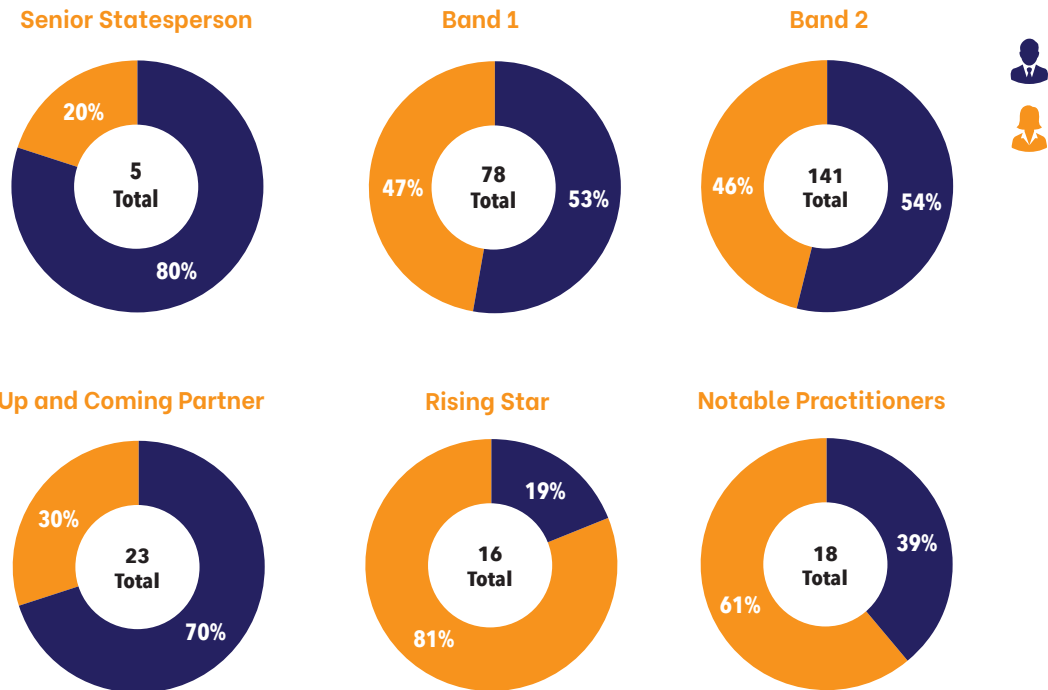
**Commentary:** The above chart shows the top 10 practice areas by recognized lawyer count. It is clear from the data that in Hong Kong the gender balance is fairly neutral.

However, women lawyers are significantly under-represented in three practice areas (Capital Markets, Dispute Resolution and Restructuring and Insolvency). At the same time, men are underrepresented in Family and Matrimonial law.



## 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. Comparing the data from other countries in Asia, it is common for lawyers at Senior Statesperson level to be predominantly male, however it is unusual for there to be such a gender imbalance in favour of women at Rising Star level and it suggests in future there should be more women leaders.

In addition, if the ranked lawyer data is a reflection of the gender diversity at law firms as a whole, it suggests that Hong Kong law firms have been gender diverse for many years before D&I initiatives became a trending theme.



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