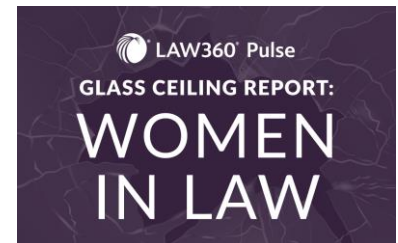


How Firms Stack Up On Gender Equity

By **Gerald Schiffman**

Law360 (August 22, 2022, 11:05 AM EDT) -- The scales of power have long been tilted toward men at law firms, and the latest survey data from Law360 Pulse shows that these dynamics are still in place. Women represented nearly one-quarter of U.S. equity partners in 2021, according to our annual survey of law firms. While this rate is the high-water mark for the sector, it's a reminder that many firms are not yet close to achieving gender parity.

With these findings in mind, Law360 set out to evaluate the representation of female attorneys across the legal industry for the 2022 Glass Ceiling Report: Women in Law. With our own historical surveys and data from the American Bar Association, Law360 refreshed our pipeline scores from last year's report, assessing the proportion of women at firms' equity partner, nonequity partner and associate levels. This year's score also adds in an assessment of firms' female counsel and staff attorneys.



The pipeline scores measure the number of percentage points a firm falls above or below Law360's benchmarks, which are detailed in the methodology section below. Scores vary with the given firm's headcount and gender breakdown at each attorney tier. Firms were ranked within one of four headcount groups for ease of comparison with similarly sized peers. A total of 291 firms were evaluated in this edition.

Where Do Firms Rank?

The top firms in each size category are shown with their pipeline score, as well as their proportion of female attorneys at different levels.

		601+ attorneys		251 to 600 attorneys		101 to 250 attorneys		100 or fewer attorneys	
Rank	Firm	Total Attorneys	Total Partners	Equity Partners	Nonequity Partners	Associates	Other Lawyers	Score	
35	Segal McCambridge	115	23.7%	23.7%		53.7%	10%	-8.9	

Just 7.9% of firms exceed Law360's benchmarks, a total in line with last year's results. Among the small slice of firms that earned positive scores, the majority have fewer than 100 attorneys. More than half of firms missed the benchmarks by more than 10 points, illustrating that much of the industry has not kept

pace with the many female attorneys who could progress through the law firm career track.

The largest 23 firms that are ranked in the Glass Ceiling report all have negative scores. In fact, only two firms with at least 601 attorneys emerged ahead of the benchmarks. Littler Mendelsohn PC led the group in topping the thresholds by 5.6 percentage points. Its proportion of women across all four attorney tiers bested every one of its BigLaw peers. Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart PC ranked second in this size tier, eclipsing the benchmarks by less than one percentage point.

The group of firms with 251 to 600 attorneys also posted few positive scores. The top performers are Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy LLP and Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP, each of which surpass the benchmarks by more than 14 points. The two immigration-focused firms were the only two in the category to report that more than 40% of their equity partners are women. Epstein Becker Green is the only other firm with 251–600 attorneys to better the benchmarks.

Just four firms with between 101 and 250 attorneys exceed Law360 Pulse's thresholds. The leader is Lozano Smith, which surpasses the benchmarks by 9.6 points. The firm is one of two among all 291 participants whose nonequity partners, associates and other attorneys are 60% female. Following No. 2 Kubicki Draper is Withers Bergman LLP, which is one of 10 firms on the Glass Ceiling report where at least half of all equity partners are women.

The top score among all firms was posted by Wilson Turner Kosmo LLP, where more than 90% of associates are women. The 44-attorney firm eclipsed the benchmarks by 28.5 points. Walsworth-WFBM LLP ranked second among firms of 100 or fewer attorneys with a pipeline score nearly 20 points better than the benchmarks. The firms ranked in the next few slots – Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, Fross Zelnick Lehrman & Zissu PC and Nicolaides Fink Thorpe Michaelides Sullivan LLP – are separated by fewer than two points.

Even with a handful of success stories, positive pipeline scores are scant. One reason is that female attorneys more frequently encounter a lack of mentorship and often have a greater caregiving burden than their male counterparts. More at-home responsibilities heighten the importance of flexible work arrangements, which can lead to female attorneys being passed over for a promotion. Moreover, entrenched gender biases affect compensation, assignments and evaluations for female lawyers. For women of color, these prejudices can be even more magnified. The result of these issues is that women tend to leave private practice more often than men.

Several of the firms that performed well on this report have established women-focused programs and policies. But widespread progress is advancing at a slow pace, and it could be years before an equitable gender balance is a reality across the legal industry.

--Editing by Pamela Wilkinson and Kerry Benn. Graphic by Rachel Reimer and Ben Jay.

Methodology

First, to evaluate firms at the associate level, Law360 Pulse computed the 2018–2020 proportion of women among all third-year law students attending schools accredited by the American Bar Association. That figure amounted to 52.4%.

To gauge firms' representation of nonequity partners, Law360 compared firms' 2021 percentage of female nonequity partners to the percentage of female associates and other attorneys reported by all

firms from our 2018–2020 headcount survey submissions. This benchmark comes out to 46.1%.

Then, firms' female equity partner representation was assessed against the aggregated rate of female associates, other attorneys and nonequity partners across the same three years of survey data. That benchmark is tallied at 43.3%. Nonequity partners are included here because that role can be a steppingstone to the equity tier.

The benchmark for other attorneys — a group that's generally composed of counsel and staff attorneys — is computed as the harmonic mean of the three previous values. This figure comes out to 47%.

Two-tier firms that didn't split up their partner data at the equity and nonequity level were evaluated differently. The female attorney rate for their total partners was evaluated against a composite version of the equity and nonequity benchmarks, which was based on the average industrywide split among attorneys across the two levels. This total partner benchmark amounted to 44.5%.

Benchmarks were subtracted from the rate of female attorneys at each level. The differentials were then added for all applicable categories, with each level weighted by its proportion of the firm's total attorneys. Calculations and rankings use unrounded numbers.

To pose an example of the calculation, say that half of a firm's attorneys are associates, one-quarter are nonequity partners and one-quarter are equity partners. Suppose also that 50% of attorneys at each level are women. The firm would be 6.7 points ahead of the equity partner benchmark, 3.9 points ahead of the nonequity partner benchmark and 2.4 points behind the associate benchmark. With the associate differential weighted by half and the two partner scores weighted by one-quarter, the firm's compiled score comes out to +1.5.

Firms that elected not to provide a gender breakdown for their U.S. attorney headcounts were ineligible for the Glass Ceiling report. All data shown uses firm headcounts as of Dec. 31, 2021. More details about data definitions are available [here](#).