

# LAW FIRM EQUITY INITIATIVE

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**2022 Report**

**ENGAGE. INSPIRE. TRANSFORM.**

## Mission

The mission of the IWL at Marquette University is to advance women's leadership locally and globally through pioneering research, innovative programming, and collaborative engagement.

## Vision

The vision of the IWL is one of intersectional inclusivity and gender equity. As advocates for justice, we will engage, inspire, and transform students, faculty, staff, and community leaders.

As part of our vision of intersectional inclusivity and gender equity, in 2020, IWL launched the Law Firm Gender Equity Initiative. The initiative seeks to understand gender inequity in legal leadership, form relationships with legal professionals, and create and implement a plan to address these inequities.

# THE STUDY

Much like the efforts to track women on boards, this study seeks to make transparent the number of women in leadership in the Milwaukee legal community. We hope to expand this initiative nationwide, demonstrating over time how transparency, candid conversations, and innovative reform can help Milwaukee become a leading city for female attorneys.

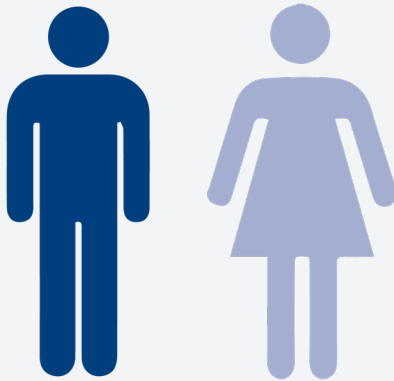
This report tracks the progress of women in the Milwaukee legal community. Like last year, this survey was sent to 49 law firms in the Milwaukee area who employ ten (10) or more attorneys, including at least one female attorney. This report reflects data contributions from the 32 law firms that participated, a 65% response rate. Of note this year, all of the top 15 law firms in Milwaukee have responded to the survey.<sup>1</sup> Many of these firms maintain offices located both in and outside Milwaukee; however, the data collection focused solely on the firms' numbers at their Milwaukee office location. The survey asked a variety of questions about demographics at the firms, including progression, rank and leadership roles, and the determination of compensation.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/subscriber-only/2021/01/22/largest-milwaukee-area-law-firms.html>

# TOTAL REPRESENTATION

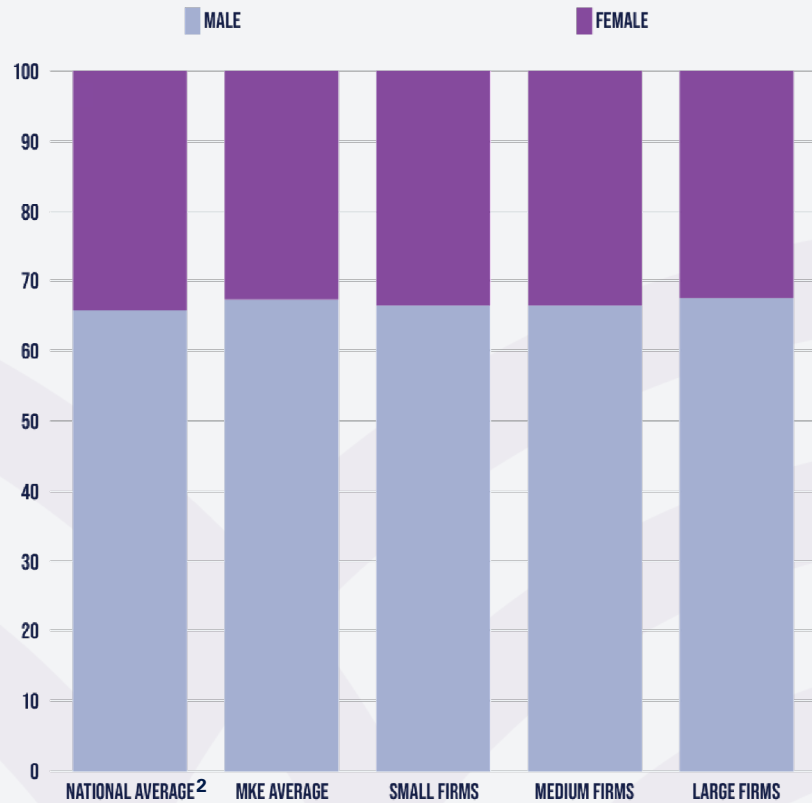
These 32 Milwaukee law firms are comprised of 1,390 attorneys. Based on those firms that provided information, 67.4% of the attorneys are men, while 32.6% are women. For purposes of this study, small firms are those with 1–20 attorneys; medium firms are those with 21–60 attorneys; and large firms are those with 61 or more attorneys.

## Representation Breakdown by Gender



934 Male Attorneys

456 Female Attorneys



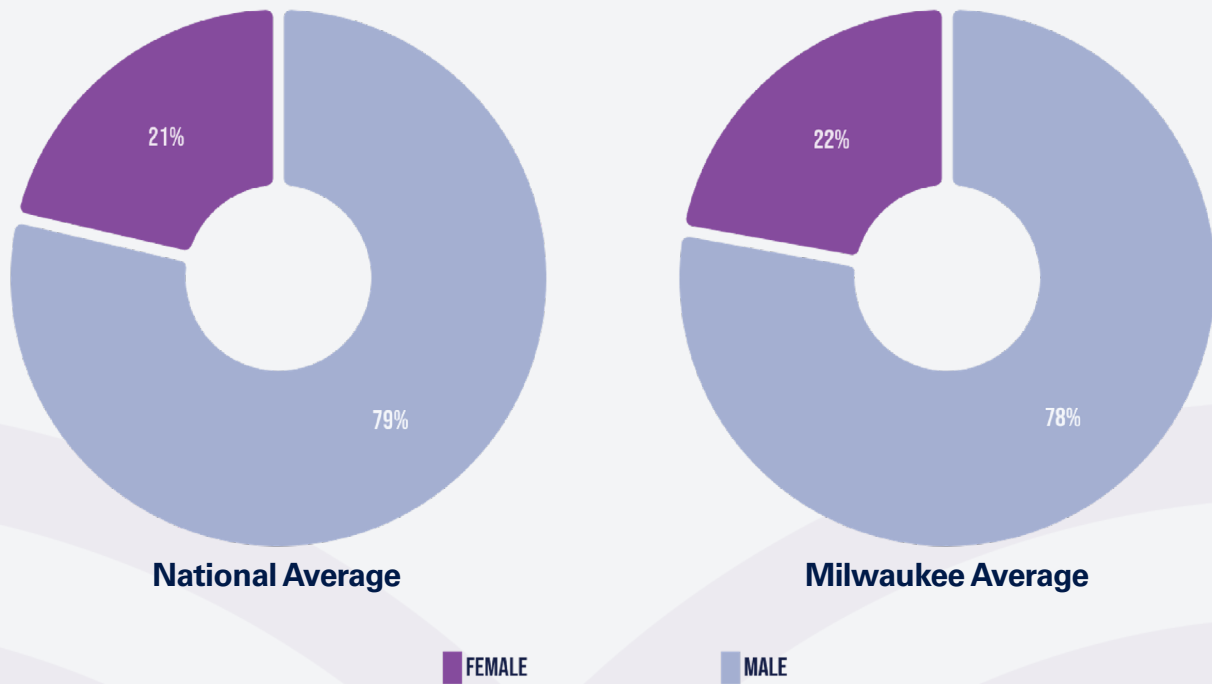
## Average Representation by Gender in Firms

2 <https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2021NALPReportonDiversity.pdf>

# EQUITY PARTNERS

IWL's finding on the Milwaukee female equity partners mirrors those of the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL), which, in its most recent report, found that women comprise 21% of all equity partners in all the law firms.<sup>3</sup> The average percentage of female equity partners in Milwaukee was 21.8%, and this number varied slightly depending on law firm size, with small firms averaging 22.8%, medium firms averaging 19.8%, and large firms averaging 21.7%.

## Equity Partners by Gender



***“Over the years, we have been encouraged by the number of female attorney applicants that have demonstrated such a high level of skill, drive, and dedication sought by any employer in our industry...[W]e have come to recognize the importance and benefits of nurturing and developing these specialized professional skills in our female attorneys. We are proud to have put together a successful team of pre-eminent litigation professionals, which includes a majority of female attorneys leading both our law practice and management of our firm.”***

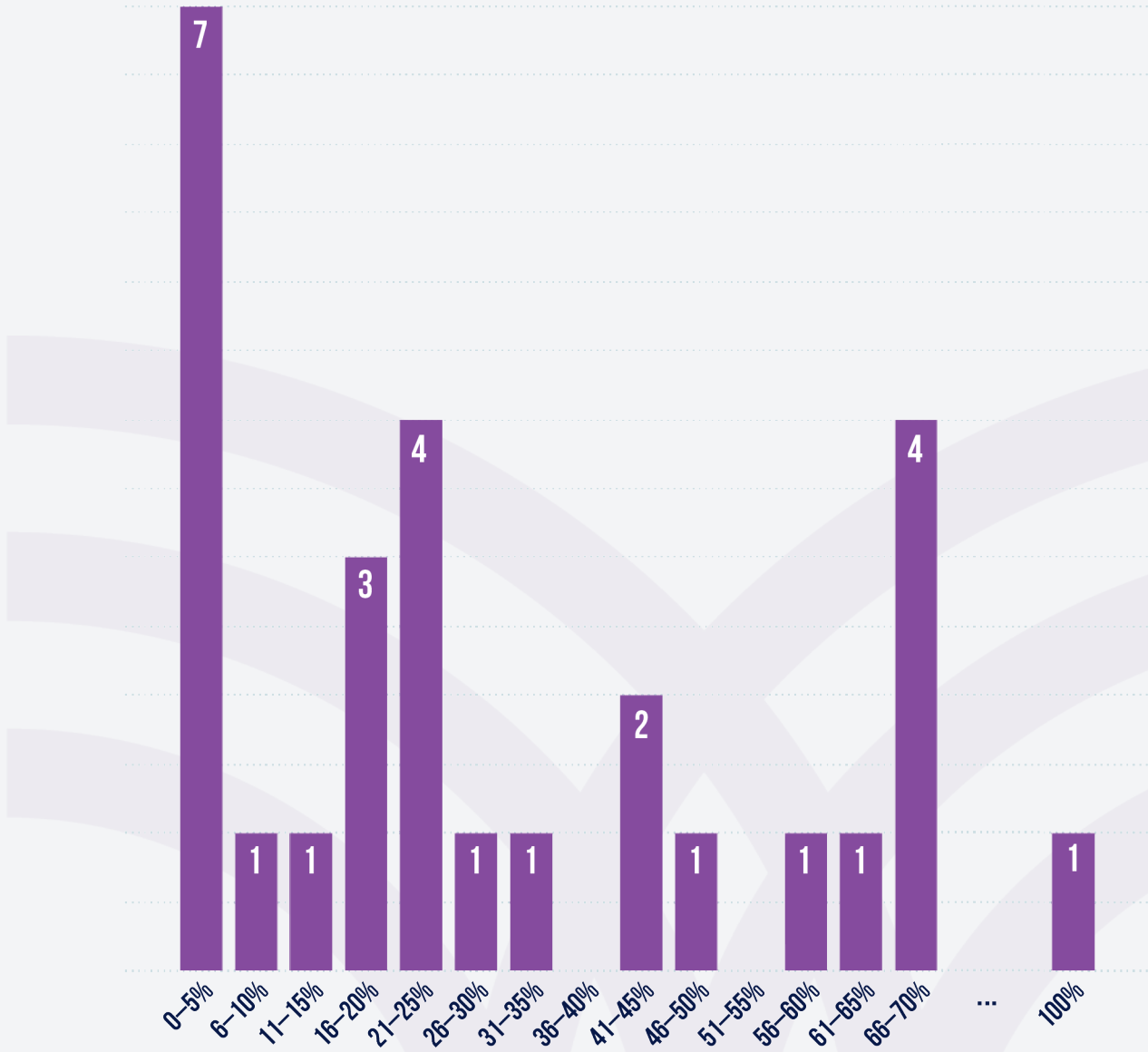
***– Christine M. Rice, Shareholder Attorney at Simpson & Deardorff, s.c.***

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nawl.org/p/cm/ld/fid=2019>

While the Milwaukee average is approximately 22%, 8 of the 32 firms had 10% or fewer female equity partners. On the other hand, 12 of the 32 firms exceed 25% of female equity partners. The graph below shows the number of firms falling in different percentages of female equity partners, demonstrating the variation among law firms in Milwaukee.

***"I take personal pride in being part of Buelow Vetter where recruiting efforts focused on skill, talent, and experience have created an environment where gender diversity thrives. In my early years as a lawyer, I wondered whether a place existed for women to balance their work and home lives alongside their ambition and skill, especially in private practice. Our law firm is the example I wish I had known about when I was a law student, and a younger lawyer. But, I eventually found my way here. I am very proud, and equally humbled, to now call it my professional reality."***  
– Jennifer Williams, Senior Counsel at Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet, LLC

### Female Equity Partner Representation

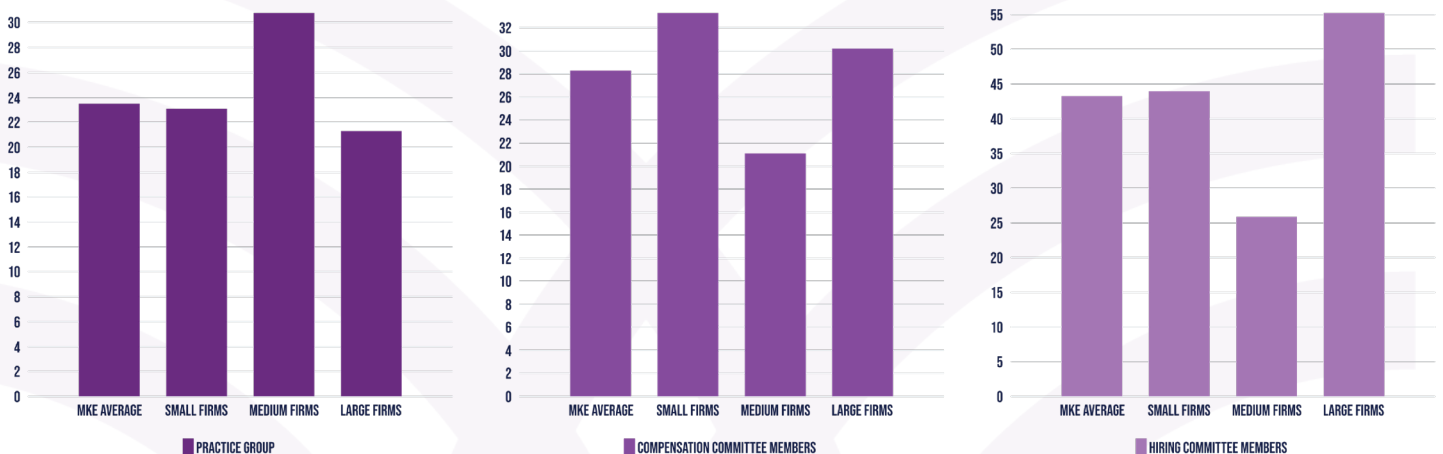


# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Nationally, women make up 25% of practice group leaders.<sup>4</sup> In the past year, Milwaukee women have seen a great change for the better in their representation in leadership roles. Comparing the firms that participated in both the 2021 and 2022 Reports, there has been an increase in female practice group leaders in Milwaukee. In the 2021 Report, 16.4% of practice group leaders were female; currently 22.3% of practice group leaders are female. Additionally, compensation committees have also seen the same shift. In the 2021 Report, Milwaukee women accounted for 26.9% of compensation committees; currently women account for 28.2% of compensation committees. Small law firms have a 33% representation rate of women on their compensation committees; medium-size firms have 21%; and large firms have a 31% representation rate.

Similar to last year, the largest percentage of women in leadership roles comes in their representation on hiring committees. This is true regardless of firm size. Overall, women make up 43.3% of hiring committees in Milwaukee firms. The percentage of women on hiring committees at large firms is even greater at 55.3%, while the percentage of women on hiring committees at medium-sized firms is 25.9%, and 44.0% at small firms.

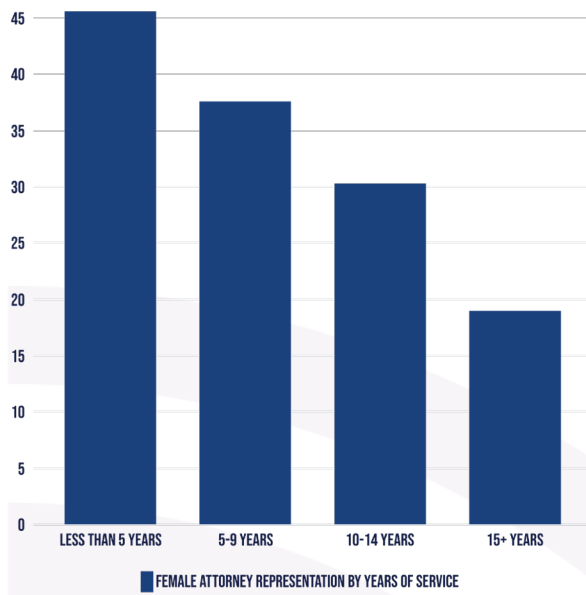
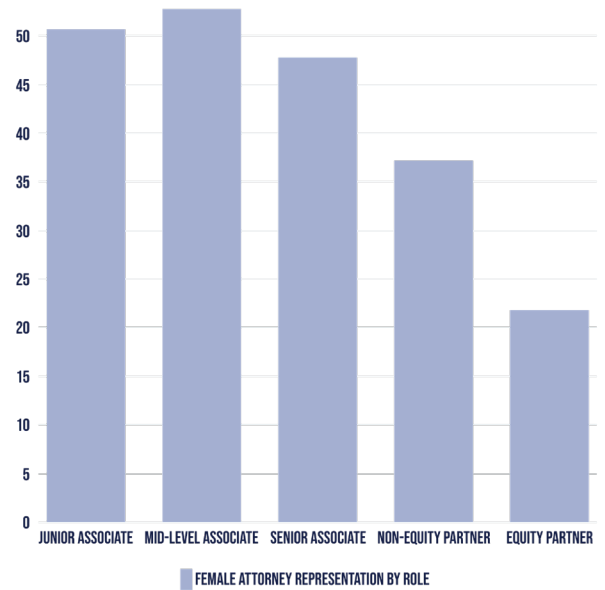
Finally, out of the 32 firms that responded to the survey, 13 of them had a female managing partner, firm president, or the equivalent in the last decade.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nawl.org/p/cm/ld/fid=2019>

# CAREER PROGRESSION

Both last year and this year's reports show that the number of women decreases as the rank increases. Women account for 50.7% of the junior associates, which ranks Milwaukee slightly ahead of the national average where women make up just 47% of associates.<sup>5</sup> Numbers hold relatively steady through the associate ranks at an average of 52.8% of mid-level associates and 47.8% of senior associates. However, as we move to the partner level, the number decreases significantly where women represent 37.2% of non-equity partners and 21.8% of equity partners.<sup>6</sup>



The same pattern exists in the progression of tenure. Of the attorneys in Milwaukee that have been at their law firm for less than 5 years, 45.6% are women. Similar to the 2021 Report and depicted with the 2022 data in the graph to the left, the percentage of female attorneys drops as the number of years increases: the percentage of women remaining at a firm after 5–9 years decreases to 37.6%, then drops further to 30.3% of those with 10–14 years of service, before plummeting to 19.0% of attorneys who stay at the same firm for 15 or more years.

Interestingly, the range in percentage of female attorneys at the firm for 15+ years is quite large and appears to be somewhat correlated to firm size. While firms exhibit retention rates of 0%–66.7%, that range is actually 12.9%–27.8% for large firms, 0%–41.7% for medium-sized firms, and 0%–66.7% for small firms.

***“One of the key factors for us in attracting, developing, and retaining female attorneys is that they can see the path to career growth and leadership all around them. Women and diverse attorneys serve in leadership positions across the firm. We had one of the first female chairs of an AmLaw 200 firm, four of our 10 office managing partners are women, women lead four of our national practice groups, women are prominent in several other leadership roles across the firm and half of our new partner classes the past two years were women. As a female attorney, you see people like you succeeding, and you see them doing it in a variety of ways. That’s important because it sends a message that the commitment is real here.”***

***– Katrene Zelenovskiy, Managing Partner at Quarles & Brady LLP, Milwaukee Office***

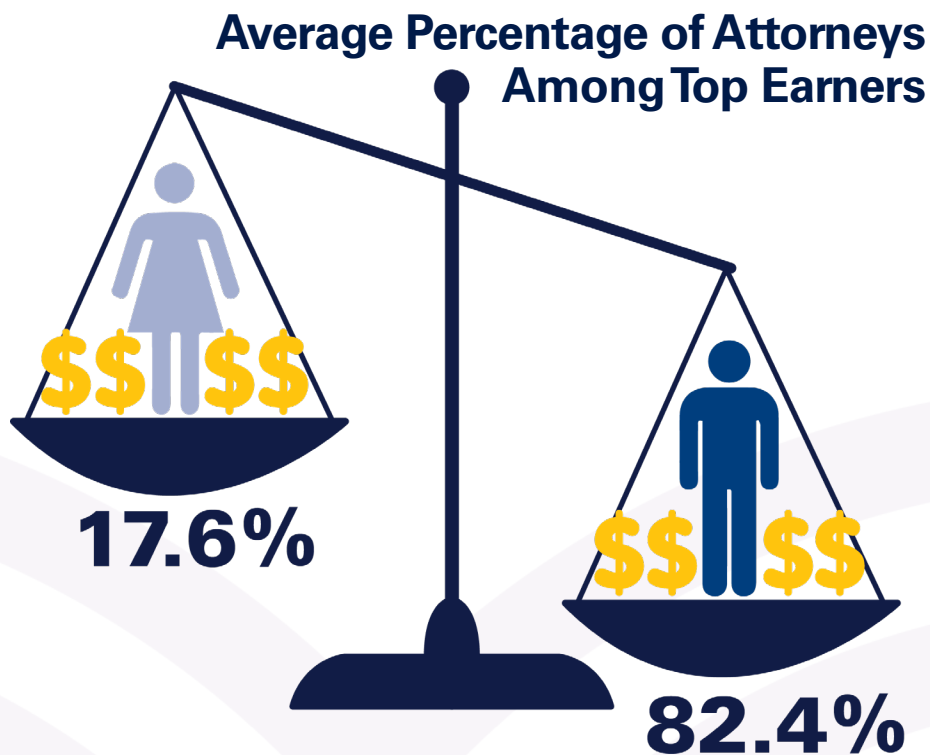
5 <https://www.nawl.org/p/cm/ld/fid=2019>

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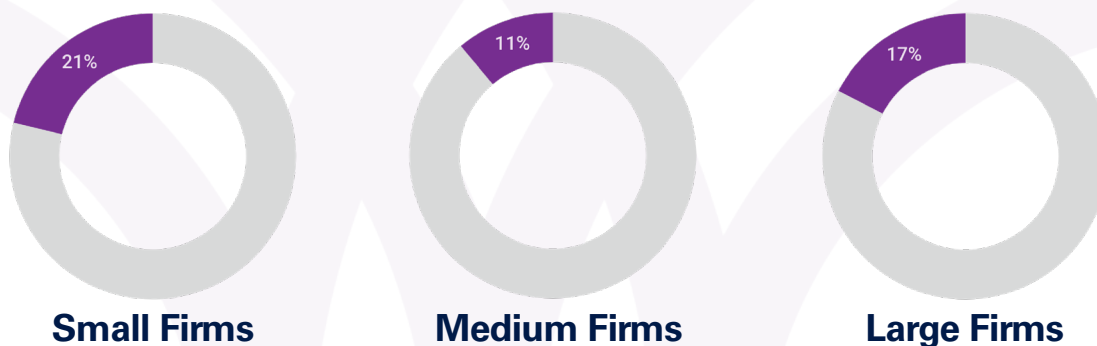
# WOMEN'S EARNINGS

## Women in the Top Fifth of Earning Partners

Another way of measuring success is by looking at the top earners in each firm. This was examined in three ways. First, the percentage of attorneys who achieve this was reviewed. Of all women attorneys included in this year's survey, 6.8% of women were in the top fifth quintile while more than double that number— 15.5% —were men. Second, the overall percentage of the top fifth earners by firms was reviewed. On average, 17.6% of this quintile are women and 82.4% are men. Breaking this down by firm size, the graphic at the bottom of the page shows the percentage of female attorneys in the top quintile. Finally, each firm's representation could be examined. Notably, a majority of law firms (51.6%) do not have any women in the top fifth of earners.



### Female Attorney Representation Amongst Top Earners by Firm Size

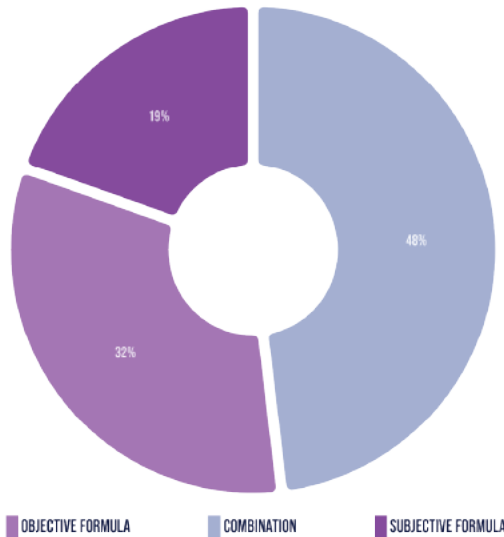




# COMPENSATION DETERMINATION

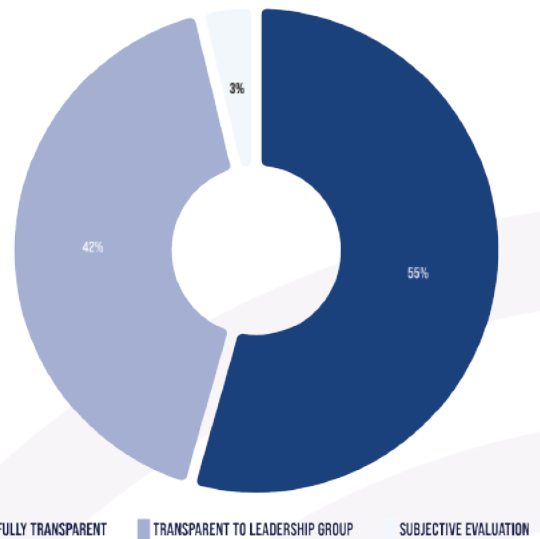
This year a question on compensation was added to explore the argument that the method of compensation and the transparency thereof impacts gender equity.

**Partner Compensation Methods**



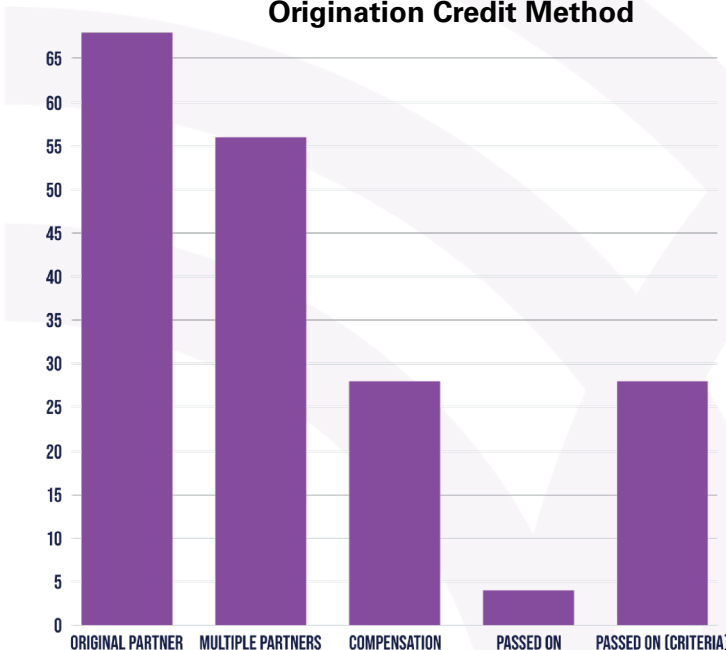
The data shows that the most common partner compensation method that Milwaukee firms use is a combination of an objective formula and subjective evaluation by a compensation committee (48.4%) or an objective formula only (32.3%). Moreover, firms seem almost evenly divided on the extent to which compensation information is transparent to all employees. A majority of firms (54.8%) in

**Partner Compensation Data Transparency**



Milwaukee share partner compensation data among all partners; while 45.2% of Milwaukee firms share such data only with a specific group of people, such as a leadership group (42.0%) or only individuals making compensation decisions (3.2%).

**Origination Credit Method**



The 2022 Report also investigated origination credit to determine if the methods of origination credit methods impacts gender equity. Further research into compensation method and transparency will be conducted and shared in the future.

*Thank you to the following law firms\* for participation in this year's survey.*

Andrus Intellectual Property Law, LLP  
Axley Attorneys  
Boyle Fredrickson, S.C.  
Buelow, Vetter, Buikema, Olson, & Vliet, LLC  
Crivello Carlson, S.C.  
Davis & Kuelthau, S.C.  
DeWitt, LLP  
Foley & Lardner, LLP  
Fox, O'Neill, & Shannon, S.C.  
GassTurek, LLC  
Gimbel, Reilly, Guerin, & Brown, LLP  
Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.  
Halling & Cayo, S.C.  
Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP  
Husch Blackwell, LLP  
Kasdorf, Lewis, & Swietlik, S.C.  
Kohn Law Firm  
Linder & Marsack  
Michael Best & Friedrich, LLP  
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak, & Stewart, P.C.  
O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing, S.C.  
Quarles & Brady, LLP  
Reinhart Boerner Van Duren  
Rose & DeJong, S.C.  
Simpson & Deardorff, S.C.  
SmithAmundsen, LLC  
Sterling Law Offices, S.C.  
The Previant Law Firm, S.C.  
von Briesen & Roper, S.C.

\*Some of the participating law firms asked to remain anonymous.

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