

# Middle East law firms market report and salary guide

2022-2023

## Introduction

# Welcome to the Middle East law firms market report and salary guide for 2022-2023.

As the world continues to move on from the pandemic, growth is firmly back on the agenda for law firms, despite the impact of the global geopolitical uncertainty triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and soaring energy prices.

The Middle East was able to bounce back earlier than Europe post Covid and continues to push forward with ambitious state-backed investment plans. This has inevitably been a focus for many firms across the region who are hoping to capitalise on these investments and hang onto growth projections for the coming year.

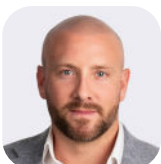
This relatively young region boasts over 50 of the top international, magic circle and US firms who operate in an ever changing and developing market, offering a refreshing and exciting change from working in more established international legal markets like London or Singapore.

The majority of expat lawyers in the region are from major common law jurisdictions like the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa and enjoy the opportunity to work on a mix of top-quality international work as well as get involved in client development. The region can also offer top performing lawyers in mid-level international or regional firms in their respective countries take a step up to more globally recognised practices.

Recruitment needs of firms in the Middle East vary from year to year, however, the majority of roles which exist are for lawyers with between two to six years' experience.

More junior and senior roles do exist, and we are very happy to speak to those lawyers interested in making the move to the region.

Please do get in touch for a more detailed and confidential discussion around your own particular situation.



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## Market overview

The Middle East recruitment market continues to be an attractive option for international lawyers, offering superb career opportunities. It is fast paced, exciting and continues to attract global organisations to the region. It offers lawyers cutting-edge legal work, great client contact, relatively small but high-quality teams and impressive salary packages.

The hosting of Expo 2020 was a key driving force behind the UAE's continued construction demand, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Other economic policies including full foreign ownership of companies and loosened restrictions on Dubai's remote working visa continue to drive growth particularly relating to infrastructure projects across the region such as those connected to Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and Saudi Vision 2030.

Whilst Covid showed how well firms were able to adapt and be flexible with working arrangements, personal interaction with Partners and colleagues is key, particularly for junior lawyers and new joiners. It is encouraging that firms have now taken a firmer stance on ensuring their lawyers are in the office 2 or more days a week, whilst maintaining flexibility with many firms still allowing their lawyers to work remotely for extended periods during the summer months.

The United Arab Emirates has experienced several significant legal developments in recent times, including the (legal) acceptance of cohabitation of unmarried couples and reforms to intellectual property rights and laws. There has also been marked changes to labour law for the private sector allowing more flexible working for employees and less red tape for businesses, as well as the Ministry of Finance (MoF) announcement of the introduction of federal corporate tax effective from financial years starting on or after 1 June 2023. These reforms will further bolster the economy as the authorities continue efforts to create a more favourable business environment and improvements to social equality.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi continue to act as key legal hubs in the Middle East and both international and domestic law firms have had a very active year to date.

Practice areas that remain consistently busy for law firms include corporate M&A, construction disputes/arbitration, projects, TMT and project/asset finance, although we have also seen an uptick in the demand for employment and real estate lawyers in recent months.





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Salaries have been a hot topic of discussion with Partners and HR, in terms of attracting talent as well as part of a wider retention plan for their own lawyers. The result has been a push for the Middle East offices of firms operating in the region to level the playing field with the ever-advancing UK market.

In a price sensitive market like the Middle East, this has not always been possible however, most firms have increased Associate pay well into double figures along with healthy bonuses.

Regardless, salaries in the Middle East continue to be very competitive and have the significant benefit of being tax free, with lawyers from heavily taxed jurisdictions doubling or sometimes tripling their take home income. This complements a very attractive lifestyle and allows families to thrive, with ten UAE schools having been named among the top 100 private schools in the world, as part of the 2022 Spear's Schools Index.

It's fair to say the post Covid hiring boom of the last 18 months has begun to plateau ever so slightly. However, firms remain optimistic and are continually on the lookout for talent to further strengthen and bolster their capability in the region.

Now is the ideal time to get in touch to discuss your career, what options are available to you and where Taylor Root can help.



## Partner search and recruitment

Lateral Partner search is a long and engaged process at the best of times and firms will naturally be assessing the validity of business cases as they look to build and future proof their regional business.

With the market in a current upswing and regional opportunities abounding, firms are monitoring and implementing their future growth strategy for the upcoming decade.

Whilst established partners with significant proven books of business will always be able to find willing interested parties, firms continue to be interested in commencing conversations with up and coming salaried Partners, or those that are at high level Senior Associate or Counsel level who may be blocked for whatever reason within their current firms, but still possess a reasonable book of business and contacts to build upon.

With our widespread coverage and depth of knowledge of the market, we are well placed to advise upon strategy and market mapping initiatives to make sure a firm is well placed to explore opportunities which exist in the coming period, as well as advising individuals or teams looking to test the market and assess different platforms.



## Law firms' salaries

The results of this year's survey have culminated from a number of increases introduced during the post pandemic recovery, as markets have recovered and the demand for talent across global markets has increased rapidly.

Firms still remain watchful of the market and often have to remain adaptable within their bands to both attract and retain lawyers, particularly given the current shortage of suitably qualified individuals.

	International law firms (AED)	Magic circle firms (AED)	US law firms (AED)
NQ	400,000 – 440,000	450,000 – 500,000	500,000 – 700,000
1 - 2 PQE	440,000 – 520,000	490,000 – 580,000	550,000 – 750,000
2 - 5 PQE	460,000 – 660,000	550,000 – 760,000	625,000 – 960,000
5 - 7PQE	600,000 – 800,000	700,000 – 875,000	700,000 – 1,200,000
8 PQE +	750,000+	800,000+	800,000+



## Roles we recruit



### Partners and teams

Partner Search is core to our business and Taylor Root has long been established as a global market leader. Every year, our Partners and Directors are responsible for brokering and negotiating many of the headline lateral Partner moves in the global legal market.

Over the last 30 years, our international, domestic and boutique law firm clients have retained and partnered with us when seeking to make senior strategic hires. It is these long-standing relationships that are fundamental to our success. We also represent individual Partners and Teams who seek our guidance when exploring targeted lateral opportunities, as well as Senior Associates and Special Counsels looking to move vertically into Partner roles.



### Associates in law firms

Taylor Root has been recognised as the market leading organisation for recruiting Associates, Senior Associates and Special Counsels into law firms for over three decades. We believe that the strength and quality of our relationships with our law firm clients is unmatched in the market.

We connect the best lawyers with the broadest range of opportunities at law firms, domestically and internationally. Our specialist teams of mainly legally qualified consultants, recruit lawyers for the world's leading law firms including top-tier, mid-tier and boutique law firms, both domestic and international.



### Paralegals and document review

Hiring paralegals to undertake administrative, routine or process-driven work can have a huge impact on the efficiency of a department in a law firm. It maximises the profitability of the work being undertaken and ensures that qualified lawyers have time to focus on complex work and also to dedicate time to developing client relationships. Our team recruits paralegals on both an interim and a permanent basis.

We are regarded as one of the leading providers of document review professionals and have supplied teams of between one and thirty lawyers and paralegals at short notice to a large number of law firms. Our expert and efficient service ensures that our clients can quickly resource a document review project with the correct specialist skills.

## About Taylor Root

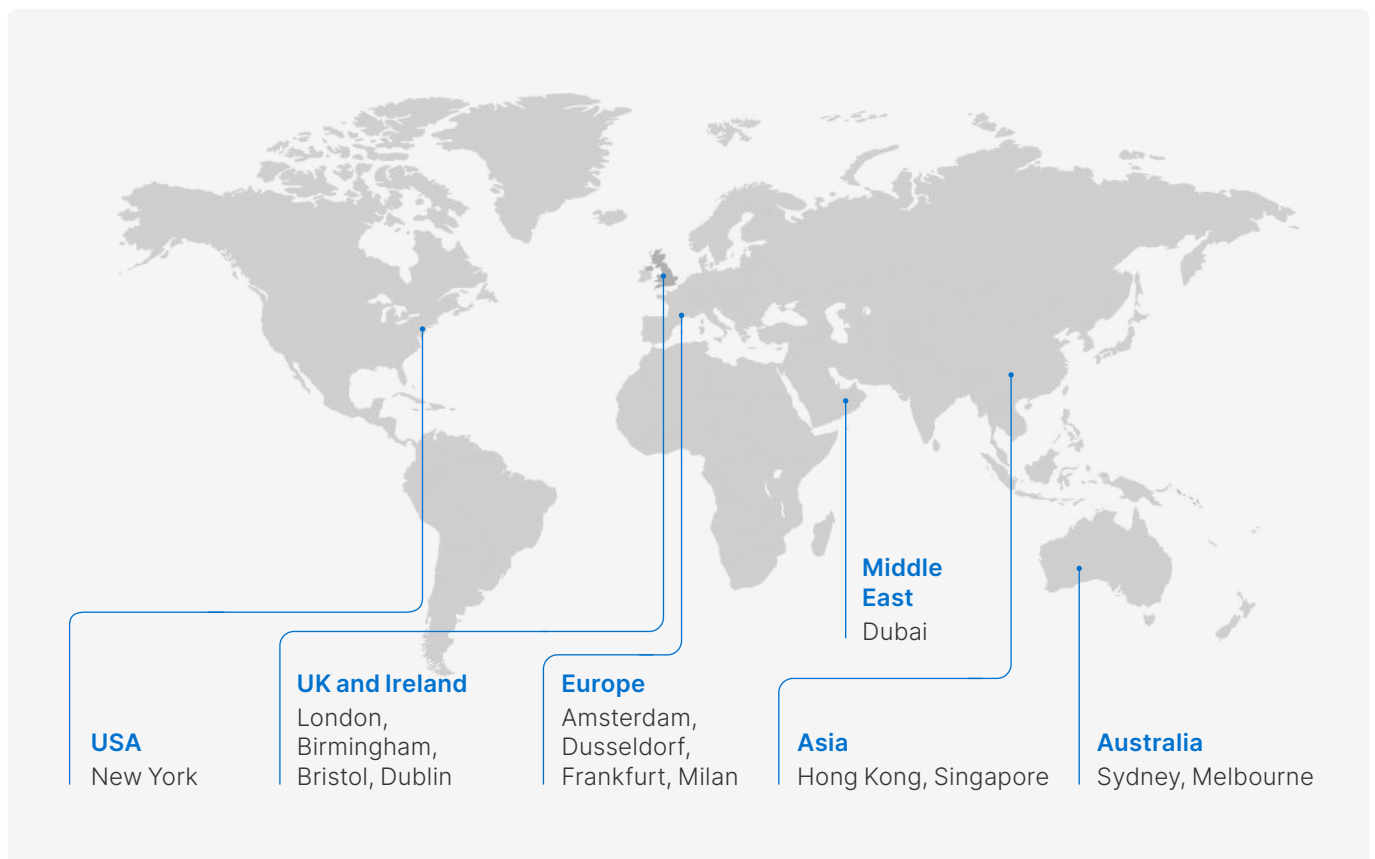
Established in London in 1989, and operating out of Dubai since 2007, Taylor Root is the world's leading legal and compliance recruitment consultancy.

With offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, London, Birmingham, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Milan and New York, our international presence attracts candidates from the world's leading law firms, financial institutions and multinational organisations.

We work with businesses across multiple industries within commerce, financial services and banking with clients ranging from FinTech start-ups through

to global investment banks. We assist non-qualified legal professionals - including ISDA Negotiators - as well as qualified solicitors through to General Counsel and Chief Legal Officers.

Our reputation is built on the performance of specialist teams of recruiters who pride themselves on providing honest, professional and effective advice to clients and candidates.





## Meet the team

Contact one of our expert consultants – they have an extensive understanding of every global market that we cover.



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