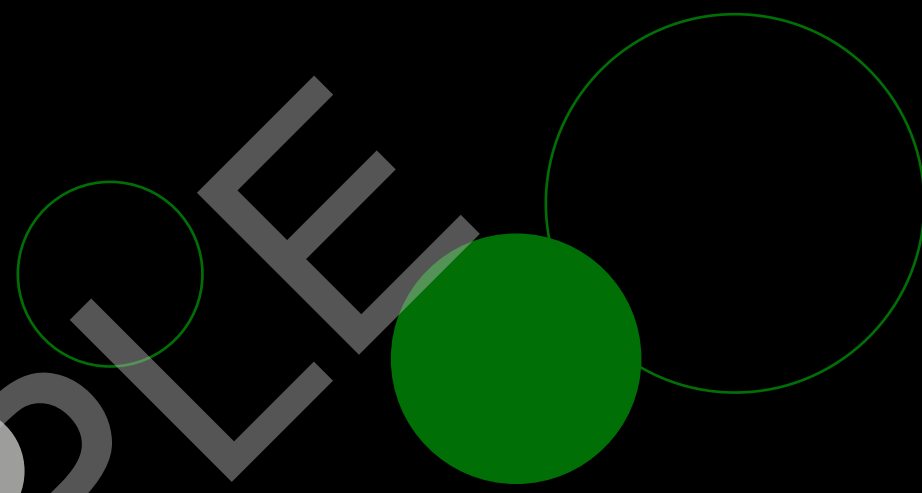


SAMPLE



**BOUTIQUE/SPECIALIST FIRMS  
UK MANAGING PARTNERS' CLIENT SATISFACTION REPORT 2021**

# The Managing Partner's Client Satisfaction Report 2021

## Welcome to the Managing Partner's Client Satisfaction Report for the UK, 2021.

In this comprehensive examination of client perception of law firm service across the UK, we have worked with Legalease Research Services to assess the strengths and weaknesses of law firms across a range of criteria, setting out clients' appraisal of the quality of the teams they work with, the value they believe they get from law firms, and their confidence in the industry knowledge their legal advisers bring to the work they do for UK companies.

With over 150,000 clients contacted in the UK every year providing scored data assessments of law firm service, we are uniquely able to define objective, benchmark scores by jurisdiction and practice area, making this report the most reliable evaluation of client satisfaction available on the market.

This report is exclusively available to legal500.com profiling firms, and represents the largest survey of its kind ever conducted.

All Managing Partner Client Satisfaction Reports are prepared to statistically valid standards, facilitated by the unparalleled access to the vast datasets generated in the course of our annual research. Those datasets allow us to build scientific indicators of relative law firm performance, measured against the entire market and within specific peer groups and practice areas.

This report focuses on law firm performance among boutique, specialist firms. The tables on the following pages set out relative client satisfaction levels against the wider market, and report how clients in your part of the UK believe the services they provide stand up compared to national benchmark figures.

We're proud to be bringing objective assessments of client satisfaction to the UK legal market for the first time, part of legal500.com ongoing ambition to help law firms provide the very best service to their clients and fine tune the outstanding UK legal profession's engagement with the market.

All findings in this report are guaranteed accurate and correct (within the statistical parameters specified). This is objective data.◆

**Georgina Stanley**  
Editor, The Legal 500 United Kingdom



# The Managing Partner's Client Satisfaction Report 2021

## Criteria and assessment

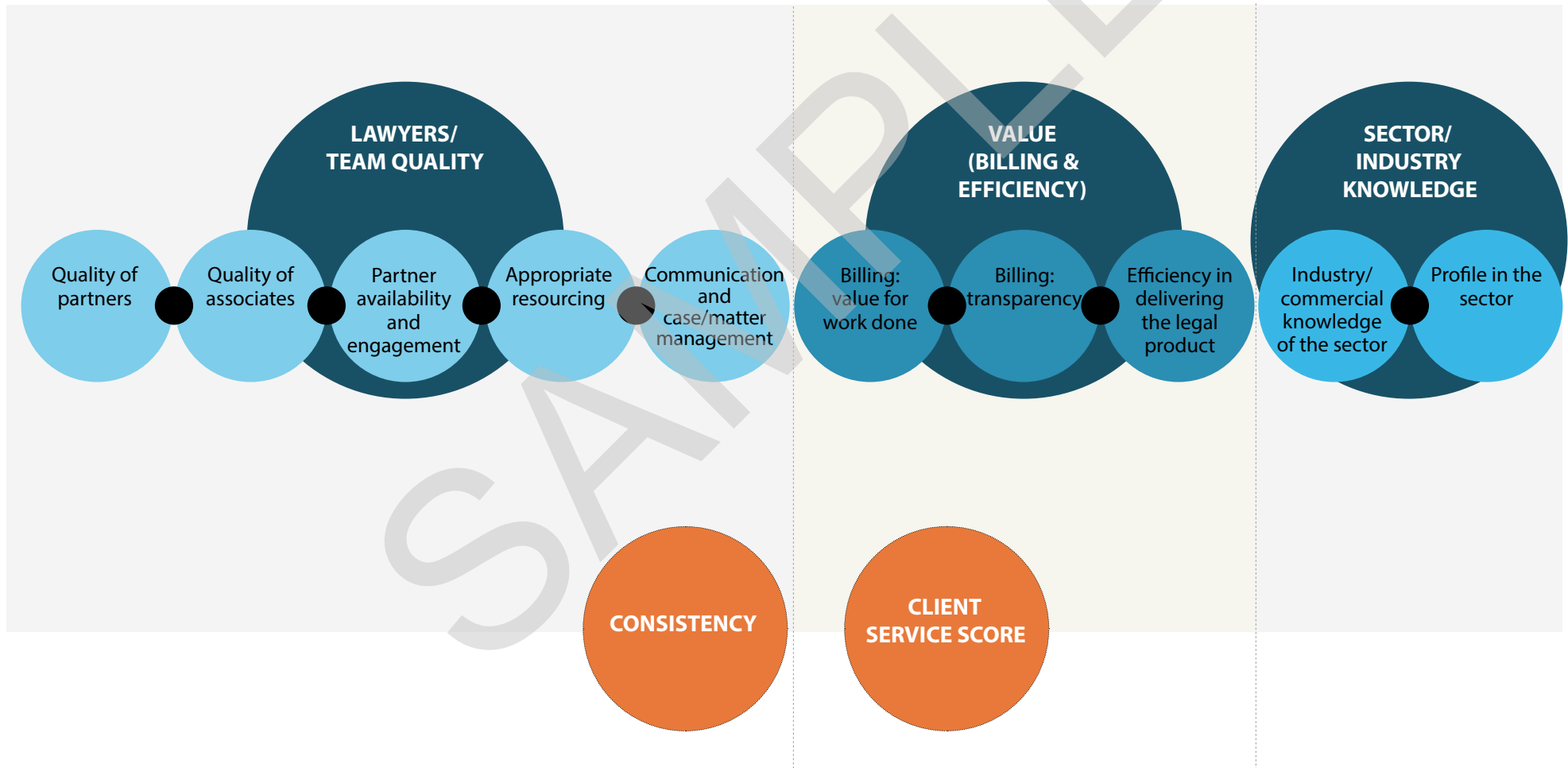
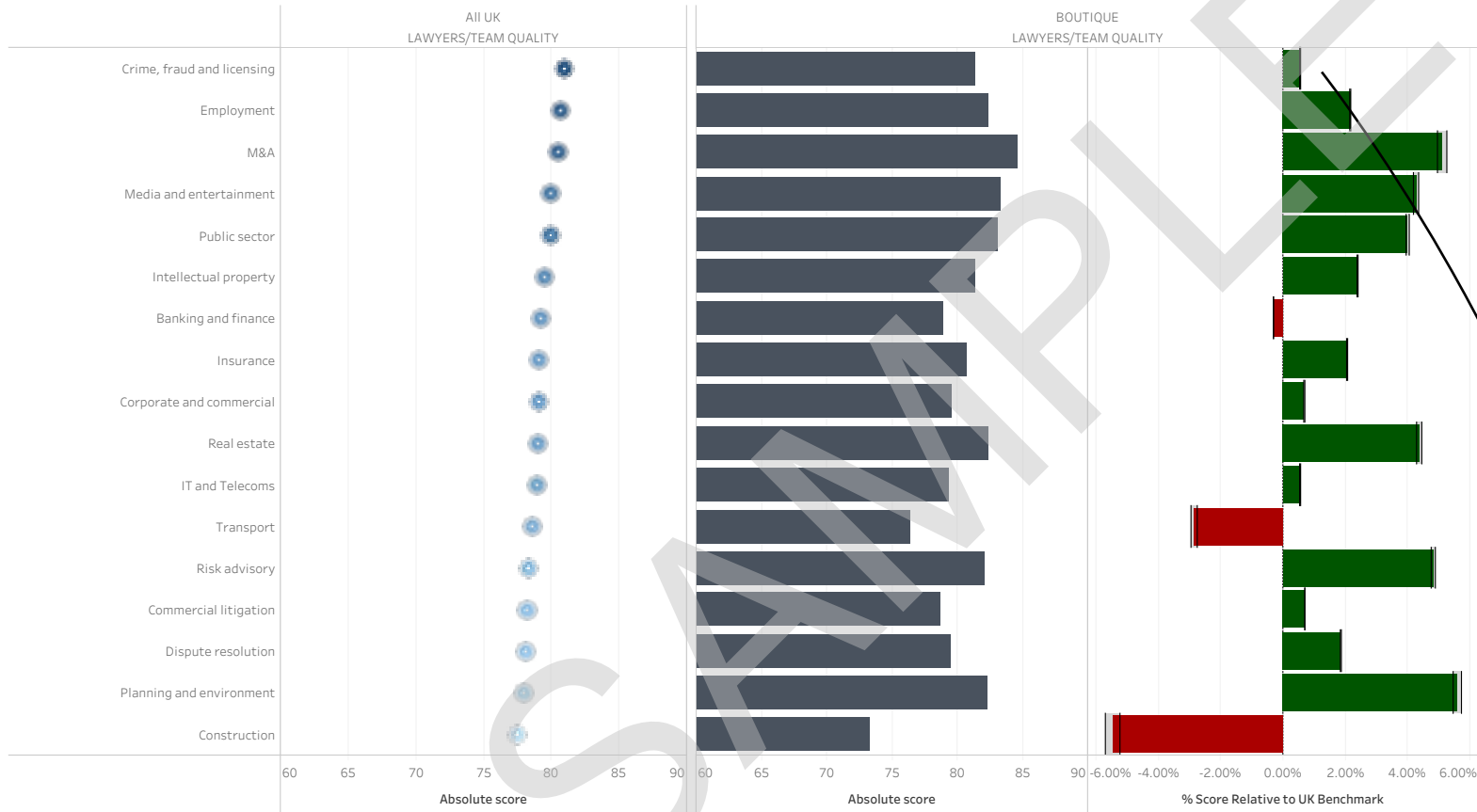


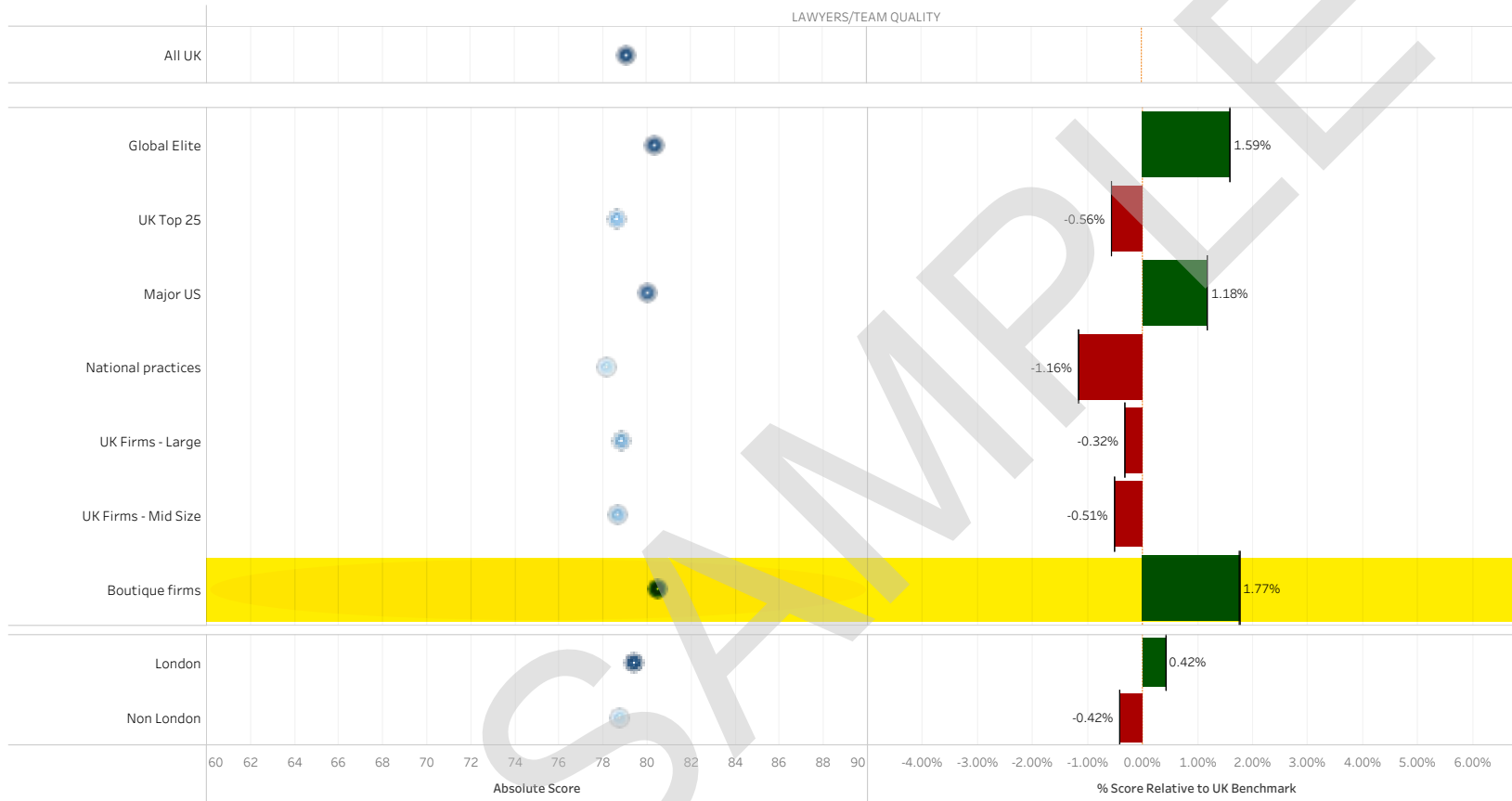
Fig 3.1 Client service by practice area compared to UK Benchmark | LAWYERS/TEAM QUALITY OVERALL



This series of charts breaks down performance by business practice area within boutique firms. The grey bar charts in the middle show the absolute scores, while the red and green bars to the right indicate more specifically how each of those scores relates to UK Benchmarks for each business practice area (illustrated by blue pin markers to the left). The first chart shows firms' performance for overall Lawyers/Team Quality, with the strongest teams perceived to be found in the M&A, planning and environment, risk advisory and real estate practice areas, and the least well-received teams found within transport and construction law departments.

Note that while boutique firms' absolute score for Crime, fraud and licensing in this criteria is fairly high, this score is only marginally above the UK benchmark for the practice area, which nationwide is the best performing sector for team quality.

Fig 4.1 Client criteria scores compared to rest of UK | Lawyers/Team Quality overall



Part 4 measures UK firms' performance across each client criteria against other peer groups, including firms outside London.

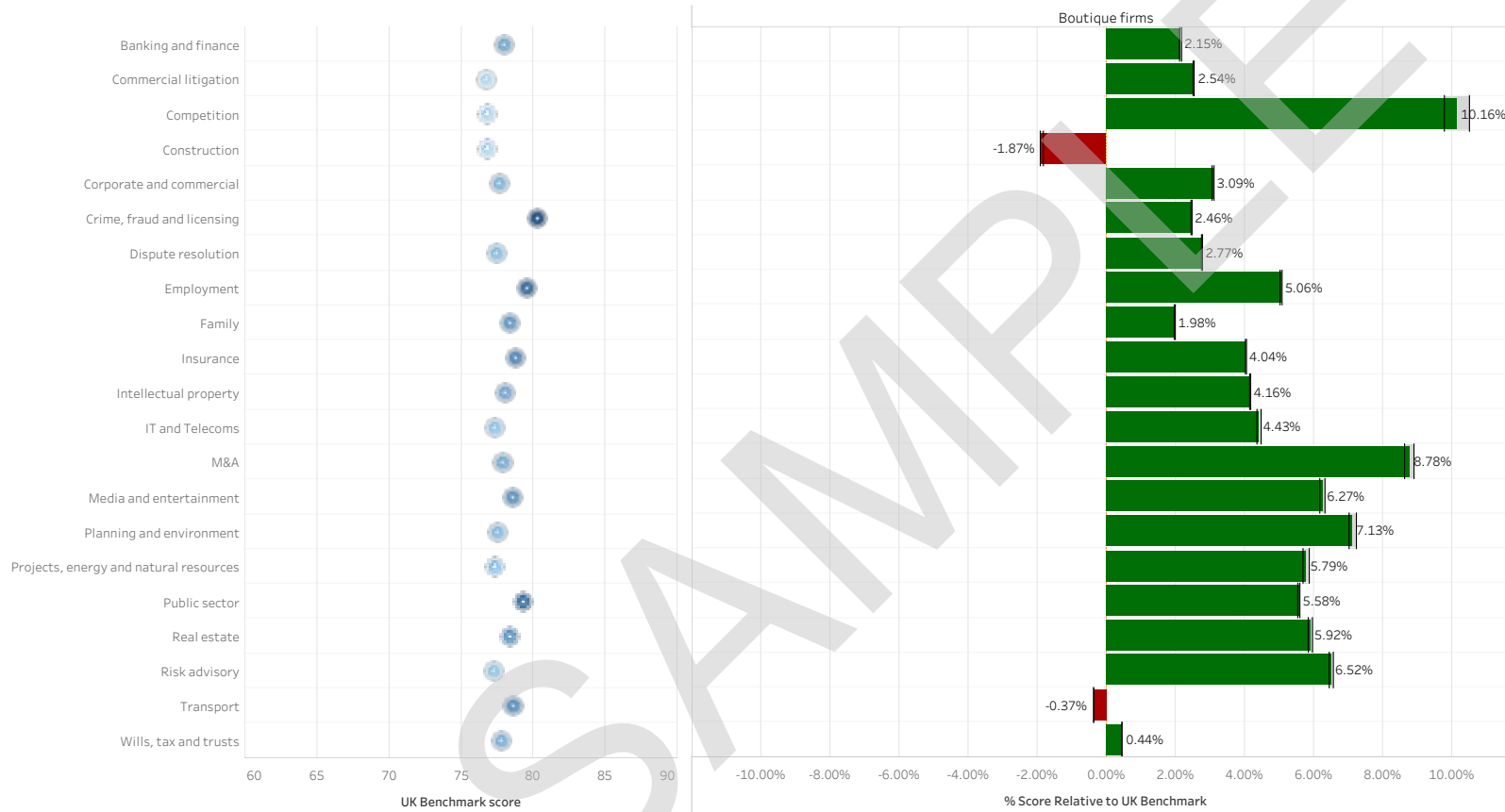
The pin markers to the left represent the absolute scores with the UK Benchmark at the top of the graph. The bars to the right indicate percentage scores relative to that benchmark.

Boutique firms' scores are highlighted in yellow on each chart. Here they indicate scores significantly higher than UK Benchmark levels.

The data shows better quality teams are perceived to be found among Global Elite and Major US firms than among leading UK-focused firms. Specialist offerings at smaller boutique practices also score highly.

London firms perform better overall than their peers across the UK.

Fig 5.1 Client Service Score compared to UK Benchmark | All practice areas

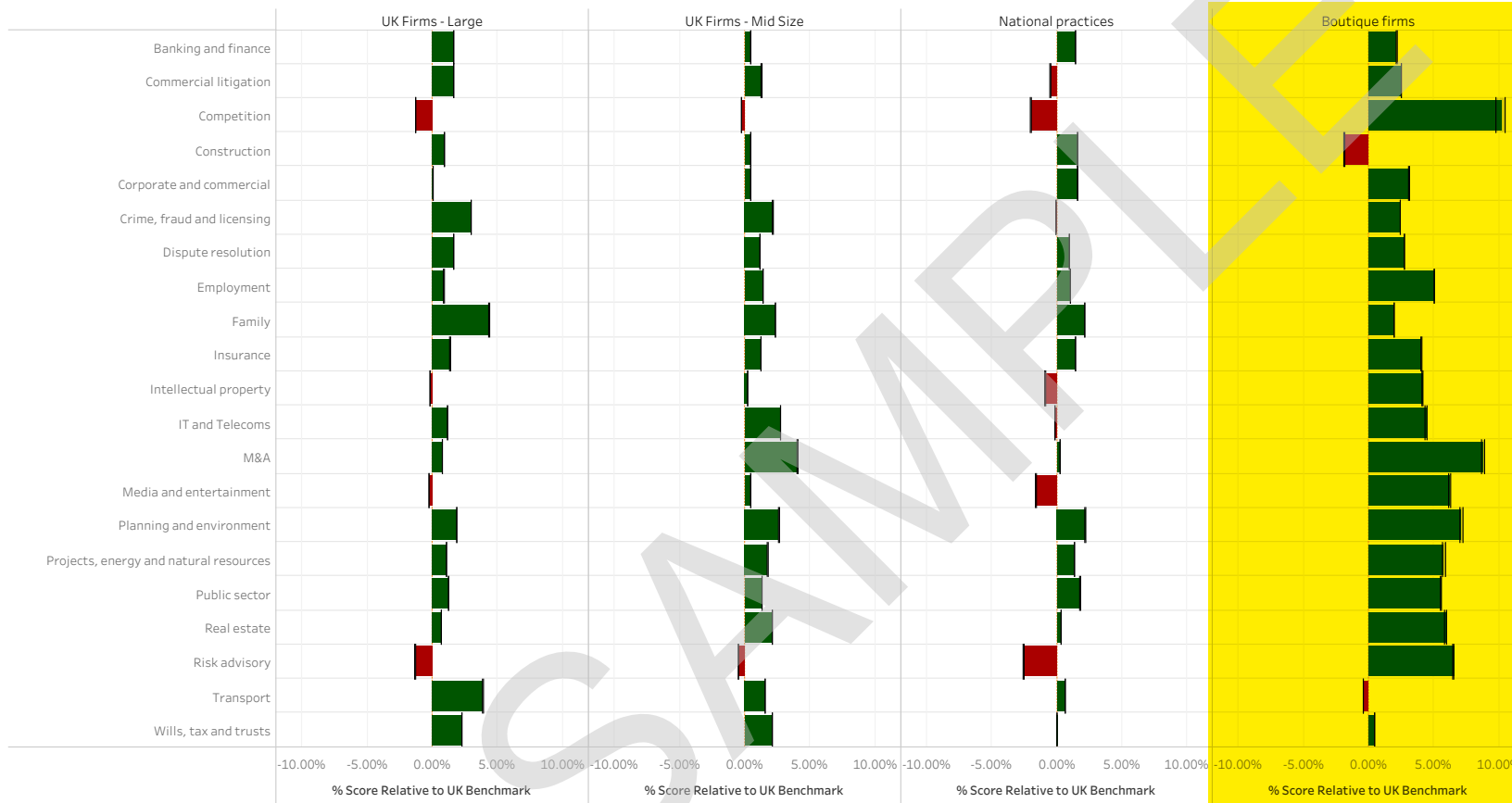


Part 5 of our report assesses the relative performance of different parts of the UK in more detail, breaking overall Client Service Scores down to practice area level.

Boutique firms' leading practice areas are comprehensively set out here. Competition and M&A departments score highest in the peer group for overall client service.

By contrast construction and transport law practice areas score least favourably.

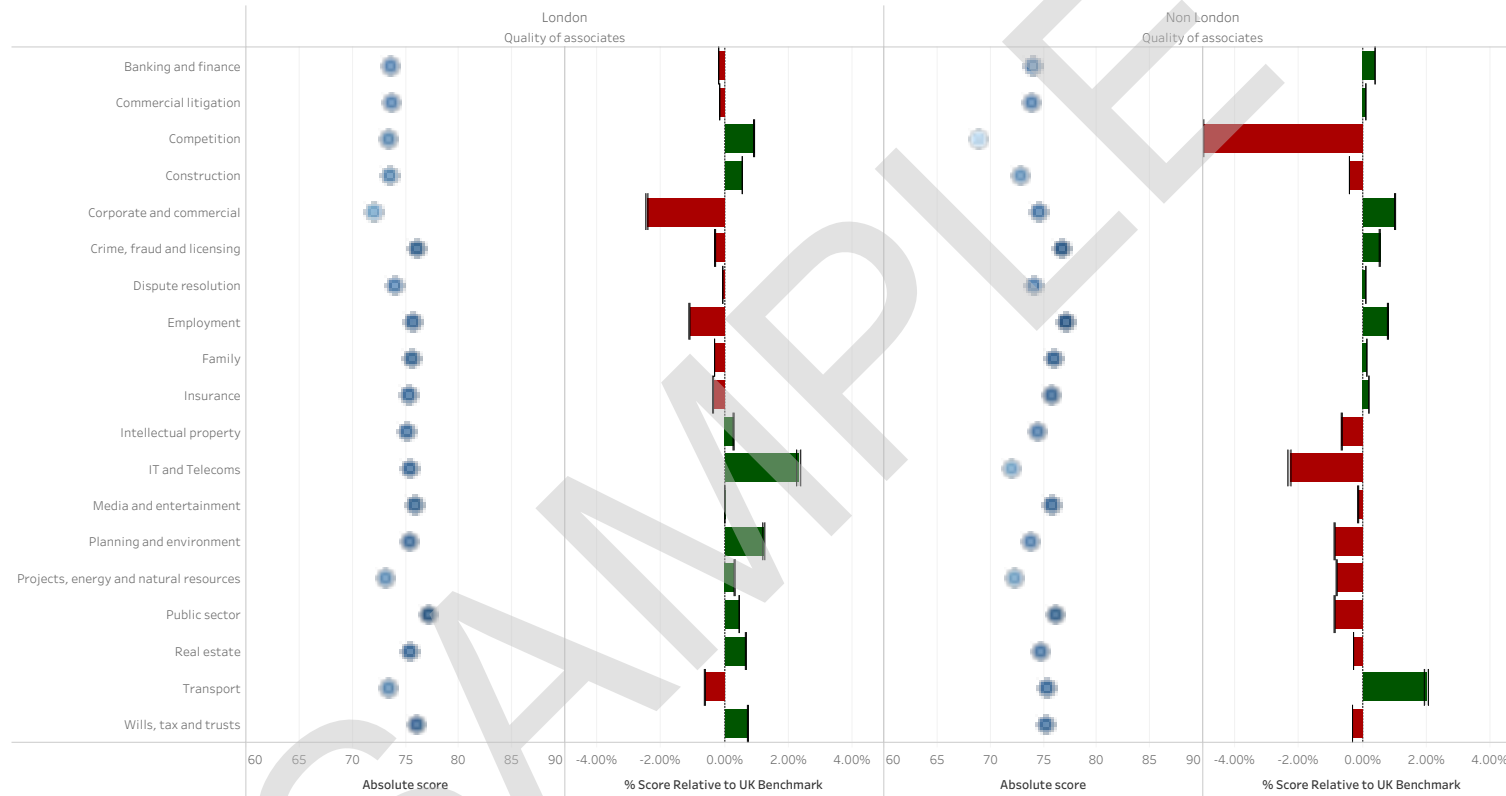
Fig 5.2 Client Service Score compared to UK Benchmark | All practice areas



It is demonstrably harder to please clients across the UK in some practice areas than others. Risk advisory teams record lower scores generally than other practices manage, and there are notable shortfalls in scoring for competition departments (here the contrast in the perceived service levels felt to be offered by boutique firms is marked).

Meanwhile some practice areas attract high levels of client satisfaction regardless of the size of the firm. Planning and environment law records scores above Benchmark levels for all peer groups. The same is true for commercial litigation teams outside of national practices.

Fig 7.1.2 London firms v firms outside London | Quality of associates



Associates at firms in London significantly outscore those at firms outside the capital in around half listed practice areas, with those on IT and planning teams in particular recording scores considerably higher than UK Benchmark levels.

Also scoring substantially higher than UK Benchmark scores, transport associates perform better at non-London practices than at London firms, and the same is true for corporate and commercial associates

(mirroring the perceived performance recorded in the data for their more senior colleagues.) and those engaged in crime, fraud and licensing and employment teams.



Fig 9.1 Peer group comparative year on year client service scores 2019-20 | LAWYERS/TEAM QUALITY OVERALL



Part 9 of our report scrutinises regional differences between year on year performance across client criteria for all practice areas.

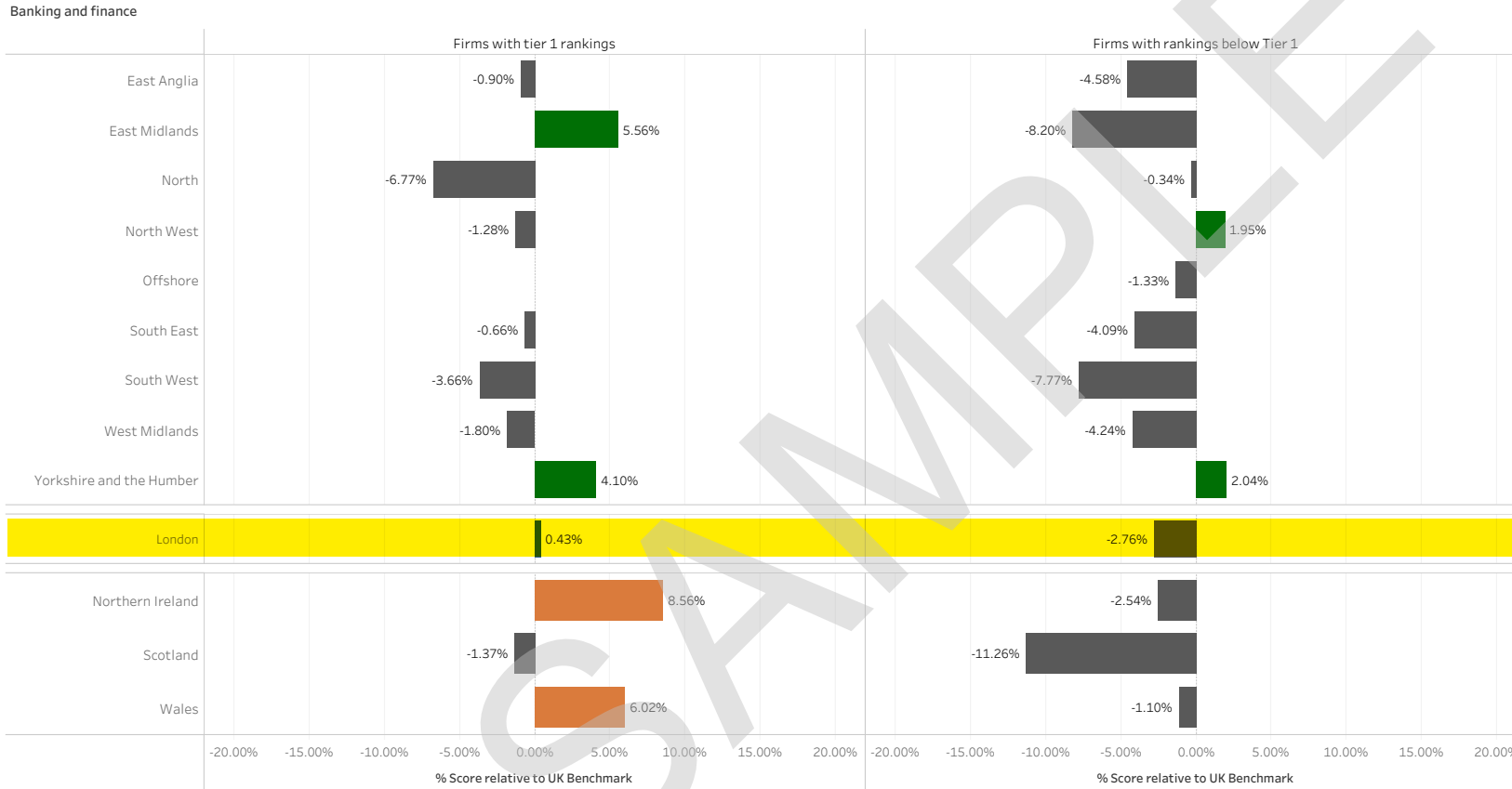
The data visualised here reveals that larger UK firms have been consistently squeezed by client scoring for Global Elite and major US offerings at one end of the spectrum and by boutique, specialist firms at the other, over a three year period.

Among UK firms generally the most noticeable decline in scores comes with communication and case/matter management, while quality and availability of partners has remained largely static over three years of scoring.

Meanwhile partner quality and engagement is the Global Elite and Major US firms's greatest strength.

Overall firms in London outscore those outside, but the gap has narrowed appreciably since 2018.

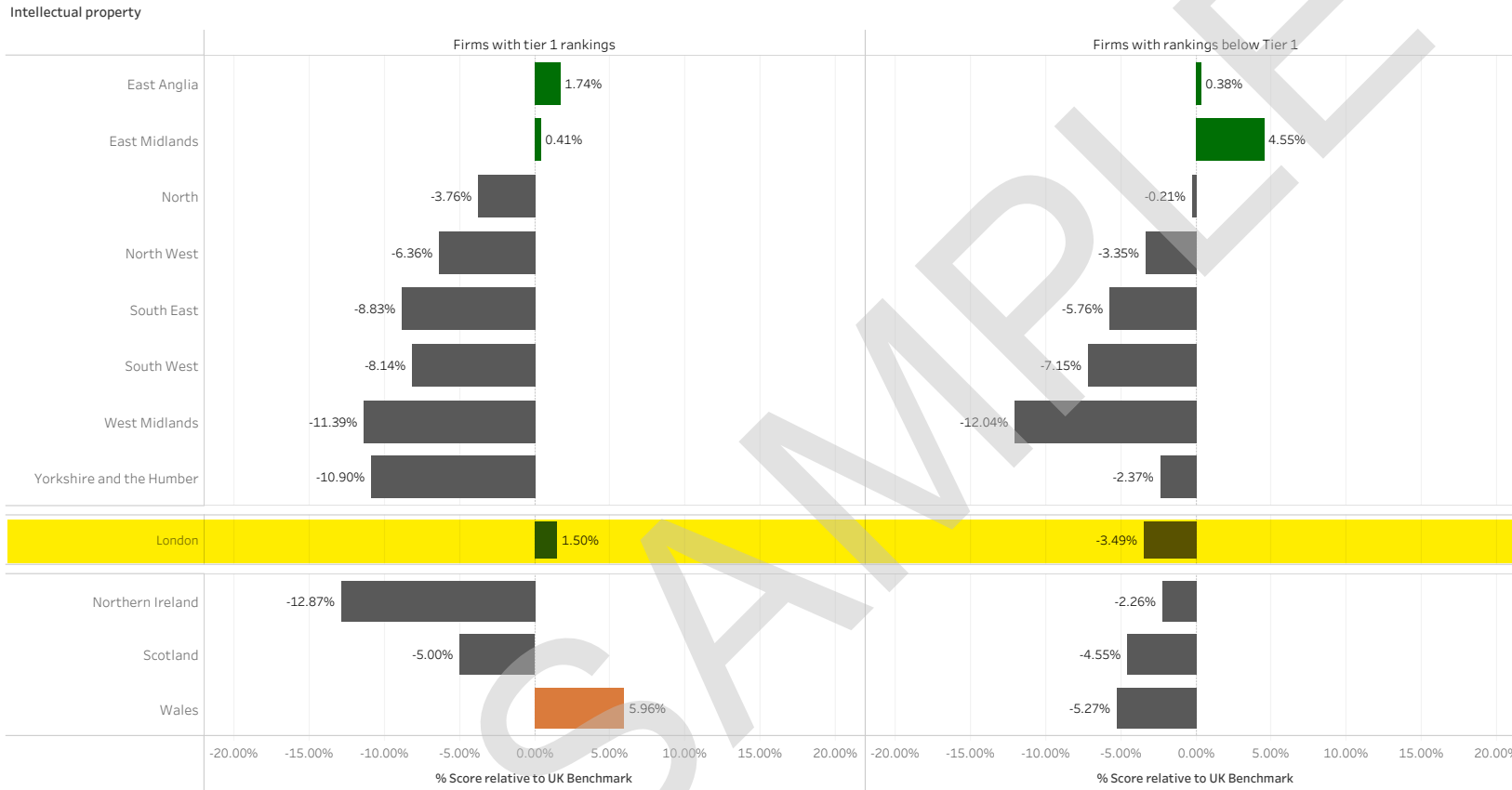
Fig 10.2 Regional/National Client Service scores for top tier and other tier firms compared to UK Benchmark | Banking and finance



Banking teams with tier 1 rankings (bar chart to the left of the visualisation) score significantly less well in the North and North West of England than do firms in lower tiers. With that exception, the experience of clients is shown either to be largely similar or substantially better among top tier teams.

Banking and finance practices with top-tier London rankings score fractionally above UK Benchmark levels, while the gap between top-tier scores in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is substantial.

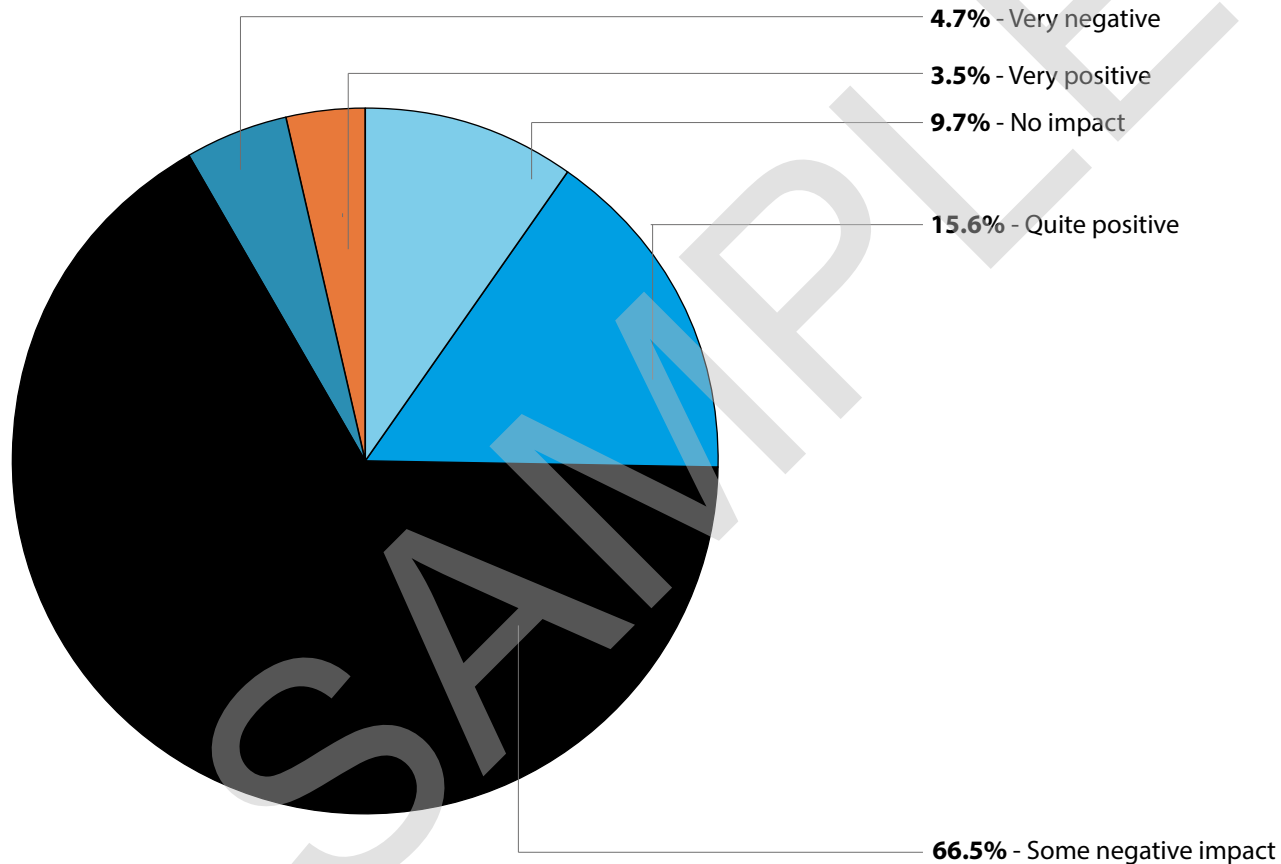
Fig 10.11 Regional/National Client Service scores for top tier and other tier firms compared to UK Benchmark | Intellectual property



Outside London, Northern Ireland, Wales, Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands, top-tier and lower-tier IP teams closely track one another in terms of Client Service scores.

With regional scores relatively low across the board for this practice area, the strong performance in East Anglia, the East Midlands, Wales and top-tier London firms stands out from the crowd.

Fig 11.1 What impact has Covid-19 and the ensuing recession had on your firm so far?



**“Costs sensitivities have increased and are likely to remain a big driver for client work placements for at least 12-24 months”**

Subscribers to *fivehundred* magazine, made up of partners and senior lawyers at the UK's top law firms, were invited to participate in a short survey designed to assess the impact of the Covid-19 led recession on the legal market in 2020, and to give their views on likely ongoing effects on client service and the law firm client relationship.

The overwhelming majority of those surveyed indicated they had already felt a moderately negative impact on their firms from the pandemic and ensuing recession.

Nevertheless a healthy proportion - some 16% - felt that from their firm's perspective the impact had been quite positive.

Relatively few of those surveyed felt that the consequences for their firms had been extreme at this stage. But there were notes of caution: “the bigger challenge is in building new relationships and winning new work in this climate”.