

Perceptions and misconceptions of the IR gender gap

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Gender equality isn't a battle of sexes but a battle of equality, waged by women and men standing side by side

Elizabeth Broderick, former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner

It is important for us all to understand that it is everyone's responsibility to address gender gaps in the workplace; this is neither a feminist propaganda nor is it simply "political correctness". Indeed, there is a bigger picture and with this in mind, let us explore the evidence as to 'why' it is imperative that we (male and female) must come together to address this issue so as to allow the next generation of female leaders to take centre stage.

McKinsey & Company is a global consulting firm that was established in 1926 to try to address societal challenges. In 2007, McKinsey & Company published the first report on 'Women Matter: gender diversity, a corporate performance driver' [1]. It is a comprehensive report, and chillingly illustrated that across Europe, only 11% of women were represented in the membership of the listed companies (Fig. 1).

It also illustrated that despite Europe having more female university graduates than male (55% vs 45%, respectively), this did not translate into having more female employees in the workplace. Their employment rate is 21% less than their male counterparts and often with a 15% reduction in pay.

Almost a decade later, McKinsey & Company has recently reported that despite having progress, we are still a long way away from achieving gender parity in the workplace [2].

Despite there now being more female university graduates, this has not been translated into gender diversity in the

workplace, suggesting that there is a leak in the pipeline ('leaky pipeline phenomenon' [3]) during women's career progression in both private and public sectors, including healthcare [4]. The 'glass ceiling' [5] experienced by women in the workplace is often multifactorial. The barriers are multitude. The working environments often are male-orientated with 'anytime, anywhere' performance and a 'linear' career progression trajectory which does not allow for career breaks or opting out along the career path easily. The need to master the male codes in order to climb the career ladder is often off-putting for women. In addition, there is general lack of role models and mentoring schemes in place to help women to understand 'how to get there'. Women often have the double burden of responsibility that comes with being a mother, carer etc. and this has further compounded their ability to stay on course during their career [1].

The Harvard Business Review [6] had reported a worrying trend of highly qualified women dropping out of their mainstream career. In a survey of three graduate classes from Harvard Business School, only 38% of female graduates have ended up in full-time jobs; a broad gauge of their MBA graduates had shown that a staggering 33% of white female graduates are in part-time careers in comparison to only 5% of their male counterparts. The authors had also summarised the findings of a private-sector task force, "The Hidden Brain Drain: Women and Minorities as Unrealized Assets" that was sponsored by Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers. This task force carried out a survey specifically designed to investigate the role of off-ramps and on-ramps in the lives of 2,443 highly qualified women with honours in undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees. What they found was 37% of women took a career break, mainly for more 'family time' whilst 24% of men had a career break, mainly for 'changing career path'. As a result of this, women suffered both

financial loss and lost on re-entry at a later date during their career path e.g. 95% of women would like to return, however approximately 74% managed to return with only 40% in full-time jobs [6].

The evidence is compelling that talented women do leak out of their career progression and the question is then why is it important for us all to address workplace gender gaps? The mercenary answer: because more women in the workplace mean a higher GDP growth per capita. McKinsey & Company has reported a staggering potential to increase the contribution towards the GDP: US\$12 trillion could be added to the global economy with gender parity [7]. More importantly, talented women are equipped with diverse leadership skills that have contributed towards better and more effective decision making, thus leading to a positive impact on the organisational culture and performance. Interestingly, organisations that managed to keep talented women also managed to retain more male talent in their organisation [2].

This talk aims to explore whether there is a leaky pipeline phenomenon for female IRs in leadership positions. I thus asked CIRSE to provide the data for the CIRSE Executive Committee appointments over the last 8 year (2009-2017) to give a glimpse of how it looks currently (Fig. 2).

The data has provided an insight into the scale of the challenges facing women in IR. This talk aims to invite constructive debate to help to explore the potential solutions that we (men and women!) can together implement, and how we can keep pace with the changing times and attracted the best and brightest to our ranks in the years ahead. On that note, I am looking forward to seeing you all (male and female) participate in this thought-provoking discussion.

Don't miss it!

**The IR gender gap
Women in IR**

Saturday, September 16, 11:30-12:30
Auditorium 3



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Prof. Tze Min Wah was appointed consultant interventional radiologist at Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust (LHT) in Nov 2003. From 2003 to 2004, she was a COOK interventional fellow and also spent a visiting fellowship thanks to the Stanley Melville Award (awarded by RCR, London) under the supervision of Prof. Peter Mueller at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston to learn how to set up an interventional oncology service at LHT. She is passionate about developing patient-centred IO cancer treatment and IO as the fourth pillar of cancer care. A keen researcher and educator, she successfully defended her PhD in 2014 whilst working full-time as an IR and bringing up two children. She is a champion for female leadership and believes much can be done to improve gender diversity in IR.

References

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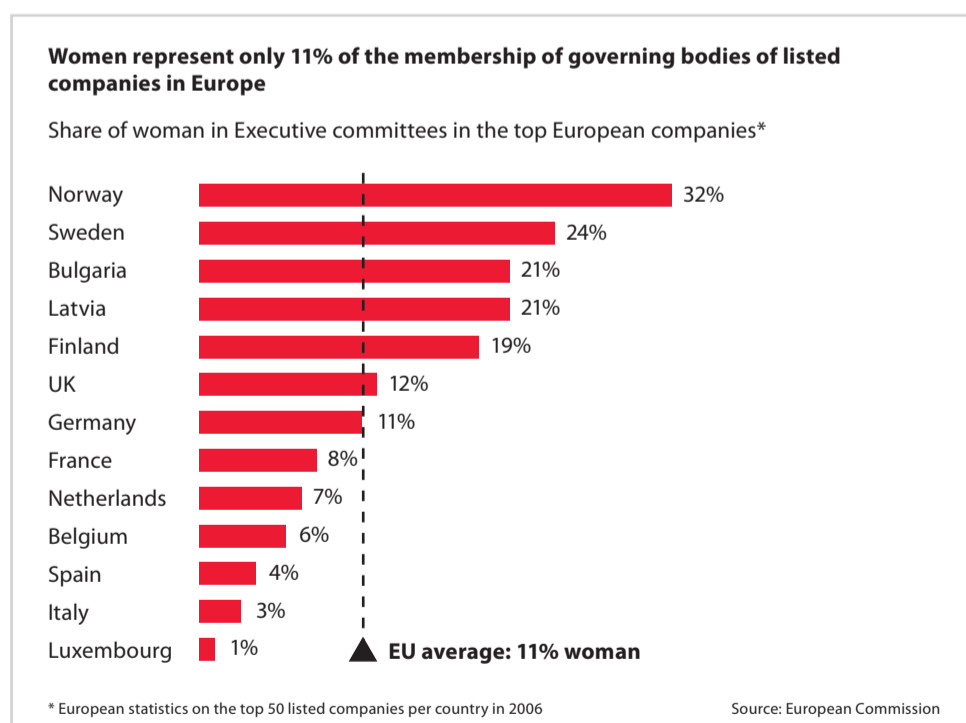


Fig. 1: A large gender gap in the membership of governing bodies of listed companies in Europe [1]

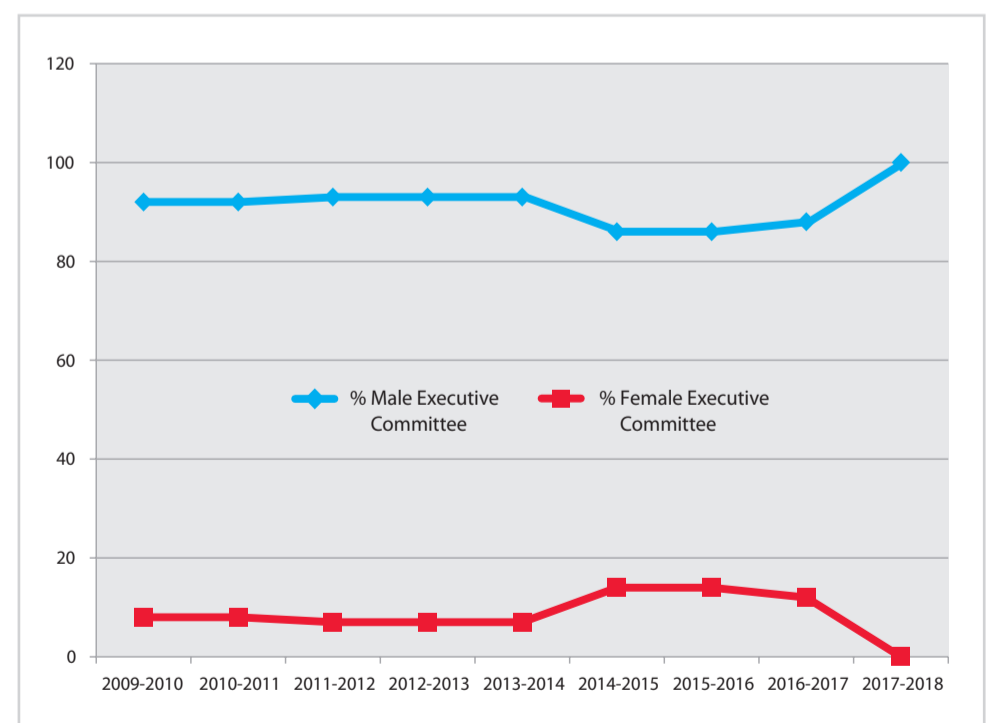


Fig. 2: CIRSE executive committee board appointment from 2009-2017