



THE GENDER GAP:

Why is it happening
and what can we do about it?

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OF WORK**
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Introduction

“Female talent remains one of the most under-utilised business resources, either squandered through lack of progression or untapped from the onset.”

World Economic Forum

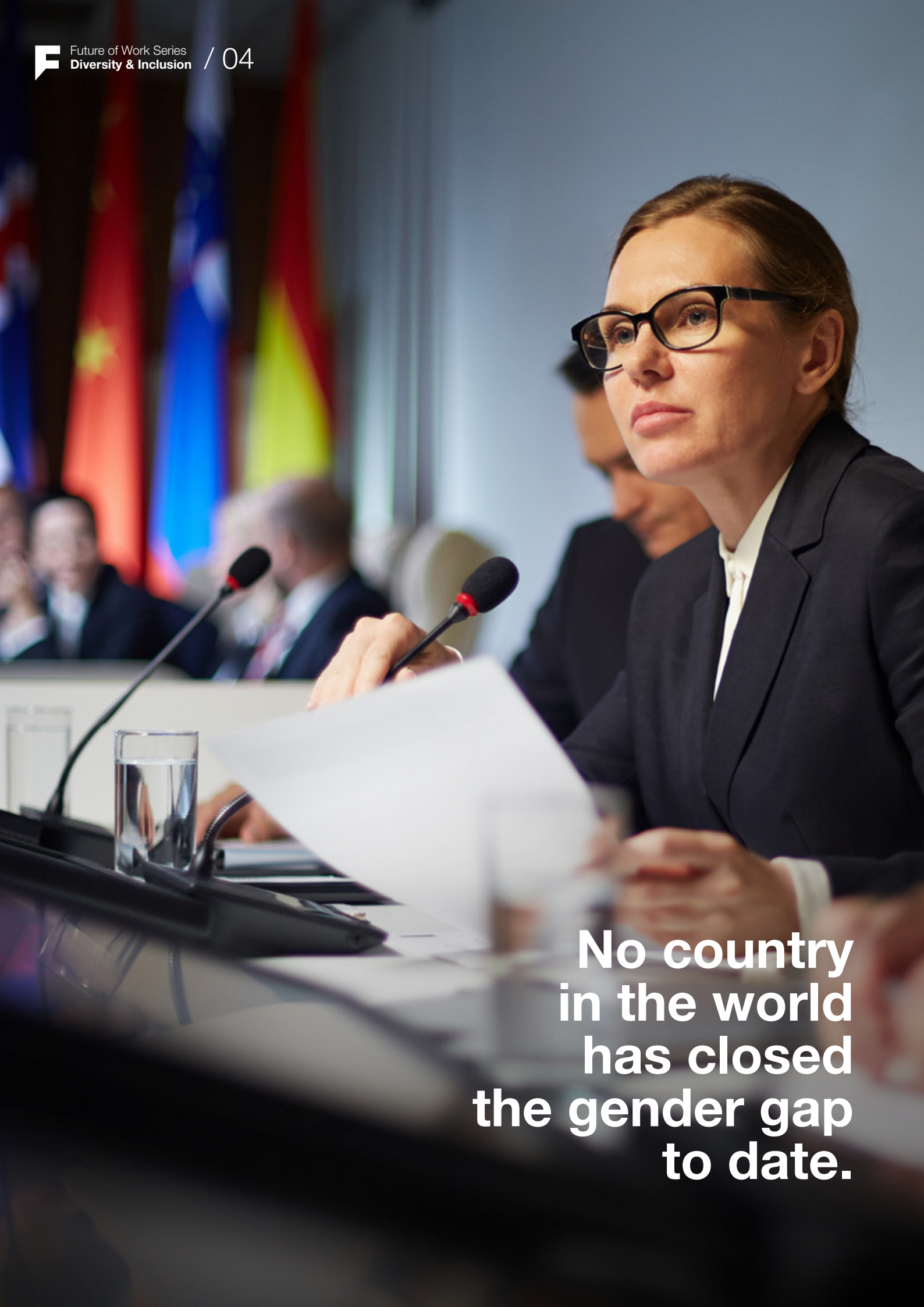


When it comes to the gender equality issue, much of the focus is on the pay gap. While this is a critical issue in achieving professional equal footing, it is not the only issue at play. Ireland is set to make gender pay gap reporting mandatory, following in the steps of the UK which did the same in 2017. It is a critical first step for a nation whose progress has faltered of late when it comes to the gender gap. However, we also need to ensure that women have the same career prospects as men – be it a promotion, bonus or simply being asked to lunch with the C-suite. It is about making sure that women are seen, heard and valued.

It makes good business sense to challenge the status quo and bring about gender equality in the workplace. Not fully utilising women in the global workforce means that businesses miss out on skills, ideas and perspectives that are essential for innovation and tackling global challenges.

If we are to create dynamic and inclusive economies, we need to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities.

So, what is the gender gap and what can we do to help eliminate it?



**No country
in the world
has closed
the gender gap
to date.**

What is the Gender Gap?

The gender gap describes the global disparity that exists between men and women across a number of areas including political representation, economic participation, education and health.

According to the World Economic Forum, the global gap currently stands at 32% compared to 31.7% last year. Western Europe has a gender gap of 25%, while the Middle East and North Africa have gaps of approximately 40%.¹ The gender gap is currently widening, and the WEF maintains that it will be another 217 years before women have the same career prospects as men. No country in the world has closed the gender gap to date.

The disparity is particularly discernable when we look at the business world. In 2017, women accounted for 17% of corporate board members and 12% of executive committee members in the top 50 listed G20 companies.

In Ireland, women occupy 40% of junior management positions and only 17% of CEOs are female.²

Tackling this disparity in workforce participation and equality has become a major talking point when it comes to closing the gender gap. Female representation in government, the legal system and educational institutions also needs to be considered when looking for solutions. No real change can come without dealing with these critical social factors – as we shall see later when looking at what other countries are doing to tackle this global disparity.

32%
global gap

¹ www.womenkind.net/insights/2015/1/9/91-of-women-say-advertisers-dont-understand-them-and-4-ways-to-fix-that

² www.30percentclub.org/assets/uploads/Ireland/PDFs/women_in_management_the_leadership_pipeline_2016.pdf

What is the Gender Pay Gap?

A key aspect of the gender gap is the gender pay gap. It is an issue that has become even more pressing after executive pay controversies at the BBC and RTÉ. More recently, the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have encouraged 48% of companies to review their pay policies.³

The gender pay gap describes the imbalance of pay across an entire company or the entire economy – i.e. when the pay of *all* women is compared to the pay of *all* men. And because women often occupy less-senior and C-suite roles, and often work contract or part time roles, their collective pay ends up being much less.

It is important to distinguish between the gender pay gap and the equal pay gap (which is already legislated for). Equal pay for equal work ensures that everyone gets the same pay for the same work in the same company. The difference here is often minimal – less than 1%.⁴ So why is there a gender pay gap? Equal-pay legislation focuses on equal pay for equal work – however, it doesn't legislate for the fact that women often occupy less-senior positions and thus earn less than men on average. It also doesn't legislate for the gender bias that prevents women from being promoted or accessing the same opportunities for advancement or pay increases.

For example, Goldman Sachs' London office reported that while men and women begin at the same wage, men ultimately make on average 56% more than women. Why? Women only occupy 15% of the highest-paid, more senior positions. In a statement, the company admitted as much, saying: "The real issue for our firm and many corporations is the under-representation of women and diverse professionals both in magnitude and levels of seniority".⁵

Ireland has seen its gender pay gap widen from 12% in 2014 to 14% in late 2017, according to Central Statistics Office figures – even though women received more tertiary degrees than men. By contrast, in Belgium – where women earn 3.3% less than men – they fare the best under the gender pay gap.

³ www.money.cnn.com/2018/02/28/pf/gender-pay-gap/index.html

⁴ www.kornferry.com/press/as-us-equal-pay-day-approaches-korn-ferry-issues-gender-pay-index-analyzing-reasons-behind-inequalities-in-male-and-female-pay/

⁵ www.goldmansachs.com/media-relations/press-releases/current/announcement-march-2018.html

What Starbucks and Salesforce are Doing to Tackle the Gender Pay Gap

Starbucks achieved **100% gender pay parity in 2018** for all employees in similar roles and the company is encouraging its corporate partners to do the same. Starbucks has banned the 'current salary' question from hiring practices because the company wants to avoid importing gender pay inequity into its culture.

Salesforce has **spent around \$3 million to raise women's salaries to be equal to men's**. CEO Marc Benioff believes that to be a great CEO you have to commit to gender equality. The company reviewed employee compensation to ensure that no gaps existed. They also plan to standardise the process for setting salaries so that new hires are at parity from day one. Benioff has also focused on visibility within the organisation: he has refused to hold any meetings unless 30% of those participating were women.



Why is there a Gender Pay Gap?

The 'Child Penalty' and the Cost of Starting a Family

A 2018 Danish report using data from 1980-2013 found that most of the remaining gender inequality in earnings is due to having children. It leads to a 20% difference in wage overall, in what is called the 'child penalty'.⁶ We can see a clear pay gap emerging during women's 20s and 30s – which is when many have children. In Ireland, female employment is roughly equal until there is a permanent drop-off between the ages of 29 and 39.⁷

One explanation for this is the division of labour in the home. One person focuses on their career while the other carries out the bulk of the household tasks – which only serves to reinforce the pay gap and inequity. Women with children and partners are 5.5 times more likely to do all or most of the household work than men in the same family situation.⁸ It is easy to see why many women often opt to work more family-friendly hours.

Many mothers feel that they are viewed as less committed by their employers. Michelle Budig is a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts and has studied the parenthood pay gap for fifteen years. Her studies have shown that mothers are seen by employers as more distracted and having priorities elsewhere. This is evident in their salaries. She has found that on average women's earnings decreased 4% for each child they had, while men's earnings increased more than 6% when they had children.

In a study run by Cornell University, researchers sent fake CVs to hundreds of companies. The CVs were identical except for the inclusion of participation in parent-teacher groups. This was included to suggest that the applicant was a parent. In the study, mothers were half as likely to be called back, while fathers were called back slightly more often than those men who had not mentioned parenthood on their CV.

The Pivotal Role of Bias

Unconscious bias has become a major roadblock for women and their careers. It is a difficult problem to pinpoint and solve as so many of our decisions and behaviours are driven by our unconscious mind – perhaps about 90%.

20%
'child penalty'

6 www.henrikkleven.com/uploads/3/7/3/1/37310663/kleven-landais-sogaard_nber-w24219_jan2018.pdf

7 [www.ibec.ie/IBEC/DFB.nsf/vPages/Social_affairs~Consultations_and_submissions~public-consultation-on-measures-to-address-the-gender-pay-gap-in-ireland-04-10-2017/\\$file/Ibecs+observations+on+the+measures+to+address+the+gender+pay+gap+in+Ireland.pdf](http://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/DFB.nsf/vPages/Social_affairs~Consultations_and_submissions~public-consultation-on-measures-to-address-the-gender-pay-gap-in-ireland-04-10-2017/$file/Ibecs+observations+on+the+measures+to+address+the+gender+pay+gap+in+Ireland.pdf)

8 www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/still-looking-for-room-at-the-top-ten-years-of-research-on-women-in-the-workplace



“Women tend to receive less credit than men for success and more criticism for failure”

The Performance-Evaluation Bias

Women tend to receive less credit than men for success and more criticism for failure. This manifests itself clearly in performance reviews. A linguist studied 248 performance reviews from 28 companies ranging in size and found that female reviews were less constructive but more critical. He found recurring personality criticism like “watch your tone” and “stop being so judgemental”. 87% of the reviews received by women had

negative feedback, compared to 59% negative feedback for males.⁹ This lack of useful, constructive feedback is preventing women from progressing in organisations as they are not given the opportunity to address mistakes and improve their performance. Personality criticism can also be damaging to their self-confidence.

⁹ www.fortune.com/2014/08/26/performance-review-gender-bias/

30%
more likely
to be labelled bossy,
aggressive or intimidating

The Double Bind

A Korn Ferry survey of 786 male and female executives found that 43% of them thought that bias against female chief executives was the main reason more women didn't progress to the top position.¹⁰ For example, when a woman is too nice or uses stereotypical feminine vocal characteristics she is often not taken seriously or is not deemed to have what it takes. But if she is too assertive then she's seen as bossy and abrasive. This is called the 'Double Bind'.

A Lean In/McKinsey & Company survey from 2016 found that when women negotiated for promotions they were 30% more likely to be labelled bossy, aggressive or intimidating compared to men.¹¹ How female leaders are perceived within a company can have lasting implications for their success and progression to the top.

Jill Abramson was *The New York Times'* first female executive editor. She was fired in 2014, and how the media reported on her leadership reveals a lot about societal bias towards women in power. Steve Jobs and Jeff Bezos, for example, were often described as difficult personalities to deal with – but this never defined them or undermined their leadership and creative reputation. Despite Abramson's many wins (eight Pulitzer Prizes, increased female representation under her leadership and digital innovation) the main point of media focus when she left was that she was 'pushy' and 'mean'.

Bias in the Technology Industry

It is widely known that **women are vastly underrepresented in tech**. 20% of employees at Apple are female, 17% at Google, and 10% at Twitter.¹² Men in tech are generally found to be more dominant, visible and respected even as women continue to protest against sexism across the board.

The bias against women's abilities in technology was clearly demonstrated in a study of submissions on GitHub, a platform where developers write and submit code for projects. On this site women are seen as better coders than men, but only when they hide their gender. Computer scientists from Polytechnic State University and North Carolina State University chose to research the acceptance rate of code submitted by GitHub members and found that among the 3 million submissions, female-written code had a 78.6% acceptance rate and male-written code had a 74.6% acceptance rate. However, if a **woman disclosed her gender her acceptance rate fell to 62.5%**.¹³ These are all contributing factors as to why only 18% of women choose a career in tech.¹⁴

¹⁰ <http://graphics.wsj.com/how-men-and-women-see-the-workplace-differently/>

¹¹ www.nytimes.com/2017/07/21/sunday-review/women-ceos-glass-ceiling.html

¹² www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/women-are-seen-as-better-coders-than-men-but-only-if-they-hide-their-gender

¹³ www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/women-are-seen-as-better-coders-than-men-but-only-if-they-hide-their-gender

¹⁴ www.money.cnn.com/2018/07/03/pf/women-mid-career-mentors/index.html





The Arguments for Change

The gender gap describes the global disparity that exists between men and women across a number of areas including political representation, economic participation, education and health.

The Power of 'Gender Glasses': Increased Diversity Improves Company Performance

Credit Suisse found that companies in the top percentile for gender diversity are 27% more likely to outperform their national industry average in terms of economic profit. Those on the opposite end of the spectrum tend to have lower profits.

Iris Bohnet, Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, says that "the evidence

is very strong that diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams, whether these are all-male or all-female teams". Diversity creates what is called 'collective intelligence' as it brings together various perspectives across creative problem-solving, analytical and communication skills.

Iceland's largest power provider, Reykjavik Energy, was forced to fire a third of its workforce after the economic crash. The company used this as an opportunity to become a gender-equal employer. It began to put on 'gender glasses' before taking every single decision. This boosted the proportion of women in management positions from 29% to 49% over five years. Over the same period, its gender pay gap shrank from 8.4% to 2.1%. It now stands at 0.2% in favour of women.¹⁵ CEO Bjarni Bjarnason says that the net outcome has been "more open discussions, higher productivity, greater job satisfaction, improved decision-making, higher morale, and an all-round far better atmosphere".

"Companies in the top percentile for gender diversity are 27% more likely to outperform their national industry average"

¹⁵ www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/20/iceland-equal-pay-law-gender-gap-women-jobs-equality

An Answer to the Global Talent Shortage?

People remain at the centre of business success, and access to people with the right skills and talent is among the key issues that CEOs are concerned about. 77% of those surveyed in the recent World Economic Forum CEO survey voiced concern that skills shortages could threaten their organisation's growth.¹⁶

25%
of those working
in STEM industries in Ireland
in 2015 were women



Korn Ferry found that shortages across finance, media, technology and manufacturing could lead to 85.2 million unfilled jobs and nearly \$8.5 trillion in unrealised revenue by 2030.¹⁷ The industries worst affected by the talent gap include those identified by Korn Ferry above. Yet in manufacturing, IT, engineering and skilled trades, women are also grossly underrepresented. For example, in 2015 only 25% of those working in Ireland's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries were women.¹⁸

Companies need to focus on increasing female labour participation as well as nurturing the employees they already have if they are to navigate the skills gap successfully. Upskilling high potential applicants and staff, offering more flexible working arrangements, or helping people progress within their organisation, can help prevent any drop off. It would also encourage more interest from those wanting part-time hours or remote working contracts.

Irish company Skillnet is tackling the talent shortage through its Women ReBOOT programme. This supports women in returning to work after taking a career break through training that is in line with currently in-demand skill sets. Another Irish initiative addressing the skill shortage is Springboard+, which provides free college-level courses for those who are unemployed, returning to the workforce, or were previously self-employed. Candidates who are already employed can avail of Springboard+ courses for just 10% of normal course fees. This allows people to bring their careers to the next level by learning new skills or enhancing existing skills. With such a significant skills shortage, more such initiatives are needed.

¹⁶ www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/4-concerns-that-keep-ceos-awake-at-night/

¹⁷ <http://ir.kornferry.com/news-releases/news-release-details/korn-ferry-study-reveals-global-talent-shortage-could-threaten>

¹⁸ www.ria.ie/sites/default/files/report_final_version-1.pdf

What Can be Done about the Gender Gap?

The Role of Government

Labour policies and business practices have not caught up with the rise of female breadwinners and dual-income households, as well as households reliant on one parent. Work is still designed for family and economic structures that existed half a century ago. That world no longer exists. So what can the government do to help close the gap, and what has worked for countries around the globe?

Ireland Makes Progress in Legislating for the Gender Pay Gap

The Irish Government is planning to make it mandatory for companies to report gender pay gaps, as in the UK. They are “committed to gender equality”, says Charlie Flanagan, Minister for Justice and Equality. Initially, the plan is to compel companies with more than 250 employees to be transparent about any wage differences between genders – with fines of up to €5,000 for those who don’t comply.

Companies will have to report on differences in bonus pay, part-time pay, and the pay of men and women on temporary contracts. Any discrepancies in hourly pay, bonuses and part-time workers’ pay will have to be disclosed in an annual report. The information on pay will also have to be broken down by job classification. The Workplace Relations Commission will be tasked with ensuring compliance through on-site inspections and information gathering.

67% of Irish employers are concerned about the risk to their reputation once they go public with their pay rates. 34% are even worried that their gender pay gap is worse than the national average.¹⁹ As a result, we are seeing an increased allocation of budget towards tackling the issue. For example, businesses that budget €50,000 under this heading increased from 9% last year to 15% this year, with the majority of the money going into events and sponsorship.

Gender equality generates much discussion, but there is a considerable lack of progress to back it up. 50% of companies support the Government’s proposed regulation, but 70% of companies haven’t even begun to examine their own gender pay gaps.²⁰ Publishing gender pay is a positive initiative that will help highlight areas for improvement and give stakeholders a benchmark to work from. It also has the positive benefit of fostering awareness among young women that certain subjects lead to higher salaries.

“67% of Irish employers are concerned about the risk to their reputation once they go public with their pay rates”

¹⁹ www.mercer.ie/newsroom/two-thirds-of-companies-in-ireland-concerned-about-reputational-risks-of-gender-pay-gap-reporting.html

²⁰ www.mercer.ie/newsroom/two-thirds-of-companies-in-ireland-concerned-about-reputational-risks-of-gender-pay-gap-reporting.html



“Encouraging men to take parental leave enables mothers to reintegrate into the workplace”

IBEC has suggested that these changes be phased in over 12 months, and that the larger organisations with over 250 employees should start first so that any lessons learned can be rolled out afterwards. They are in support of the proposals as they feel the figures reported will empower stakeholders to take the necessary action to bring about gender parity.

Shifting Norms Through Tax-Funded Parental Leave

Sweden offers two months' paid leave

exclusively for fathers, and 85% of fathers avail of it.²¹ In 2007 Germany tweaked Sweden's model, reserving two out of 14 months of paid leave for fathers. Within two years, the number of fathers taking parental leave surged from 3% to more than 20%.

It is important to encourage more fathers to take leave: a study published by the Swedish Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation has shown that a mother's future earnings increase on average 7% for every month the father takes leave. Encouraging men to take parental leave enables mothers to reintegrate into the workplace by reducing the dependence on them as principal caregiver.

Until this becomes the norm, the situation for working mothers will not change. Therefore, it's vital that the Government plays a key role in changing social expectations regarding paternity leave. It can do this

²¹ www.slate.com/business/2018/02/even-in-denmark-children-are-career-killers-for-working-moms.html

18%

**of those graduating
with a BA in computer
science and engineering
are women**

through informational campaigns to break down stereotypes and increase men's involvement in caregiving. In Sweden, ads for cleaning products rarely portray women as the homemaker, and preschools screen their books for any gender stereotypes. There has been a national shift in norms and stereotypes as a result.

Increased Political Representation

After Iceland elected its first female president in 1980, there was a domino effect of positive change for gender parity there. Today, Iceland has closed more than 87% of its overall gender gap and has ranked number one for gender equality nine years in a row.

Increased political representation in government has helped to achieve that. Implementing quotas and placing female candidates higher at voting stations led to a surge in female MPs. Women's issues were flagged on the political agenda by various parties as a result.

Quotas are often put forward as a measure to propel female leadership. France and Norway both have legally binding quotas. Canadian PM Justin Trudeau proudly announced that he had a 50-50 quota in his cabinet "because it's 2015".

The main argument against quotas is that it leads to token hires, as opposed to hiring by merit. It is also said that they don't help to train leaders or build their capacity. However, it is difficult to argue against

the results. Eight countries have quotas on female board membership, which has resulted in between 33-40% female board membership today. The average for G20 countries is 17%.

Is the Education System to Blame?

Do the degree choices that women make adequately prepare them for the labour market? Despite more women graduating with tertiary degrees than men, the gender gap is not closing. Women are more likely to enrol in humanities as opposed to STEM, a choice that is impacting on female representation in STEM industries. Only 18% of those graduating with a BA in computer science and engineering are women.²²

There is a large amount of research pointing towards socio-cultural factors influencing the subjects that women choose to study. Women have the technological and mathematical proficiencies, but unconscious bias is influencing society's recognition of their abilities in those areas.

This was demonstrated in Japan recently when one of the country's most prestigious medical schools admitted that it had been manipulating exam scores for its female students for more than a decade in an attempt to ensure that more men became doctors. For 2018, 8.8% of male applicants were accepted versus 2.9% of women. Female acceptance rates are higher in most other university subjects, but trail in medicine due to the belief that women wouldn't commit to working for 24 hours. Also at play is the long working-hours culture in Japan, as well as gender norms that dictate that women should bear sole responsibility for household tasks and childrearing.

A study by the American Educational Association found that teachers consistently underrated girls' maths skills even if they both got the same results as boys. A teacher, for example, can unconsciously call on the boys more frequently to solve problems or answer questions. There is a prevalent culture telling young girls

22 <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/press-releases/>



40%

**less funding
goes to female researchers
than their male counterparts**

that maths is not for them. Talking Barbie once uttered “math is hard”, while the shop Forever 21 once sold a t-shirt that said ‘Allergic to Algebra’. These are small examples, but they often have larger unconscious effects.

Female underrepresentation at academic level is impacting not only acceptance rates, but also decisions regarding research funding. In the UK, 90% of the funding for engineering and physical sciences projects go to male-led projects. The funding that female researchers receive is also 40% less than male counterparts. Why? Women only make up 17% of the engineering and physical sciences academic community, a factor that affects the number of women on the panels deciding who gets the grants.²³ In Britain, women make up fewer than a third of review-panel members.

Many parents are influencing their daughters’ college choices. In a survey of 500 parents in Ireland and the UK, only

one in seven felt that they were adequately informed about careers in STEM. The Central Statistics Office estimates that fewer than 25% of the 120,000 people working in this field are female. This has inspired a campaign to inform parents about STEM and the benefits of pursuing such a career, ultimately helping to boost female applicant numbers at tertiary level.

The Role of Companies

Companies need to accept some of the responsibility for underwhelming female participation. Ultimately, it comes down to helping all people bring their best selves to work – not just women.

Improving Hiring and Retention

Atlassian’s Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Aubrey Blanche, worked on removing bias from the company’s candidate evaluation process. They tweaked a few aspects and were able to increase the female representation of their intern class to 44%. They also standardised interview questions and structures, ensured that hiring panels were gender-diverse, and trained all their employees in unconscious bias.

This training focused on dispelling myths like ‘women aren’t interested in technology’. They switched ‘culture fit’ to ‘values fit’ – so that the focus was on hiring people who shared their goals, and not necessarily those who had the same viewpoints or background.

Because of the talent shortage, many companies are focusing not only on their hiring practices but also on developing existing staff. Instead of saying “she doesn’t have the experience”, ask “what do we need to do to make it work?”.

It is also crucial that organisations make it easier for parents to have a child and return to work again. 90% of women who leave the workforce want to come back, but only 40% of them can. To help them return to work, companies are dedicating themselves to building mothers’ professional and

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²³ www.theguardian.com/education/2018/aug/10/female-scientists-urge-research-grants-reform-tackle-gender-bias

“If we are to encourage and keep more women on the track to leadership then companies need to put their desire for gender parity into practice”

personal confidence. LinkedIn's Dublin HQ has launched a ReturnIn Programme, which helps people re-enter the workforce after a career break. Participants receive training, onboarding and mentoring to ensure a smooth transition back into working life. Sharon McCooey, Head of LinkedIn Ireland, has said that “I see a pool of talent out there that don't know how to get back into the workplace and I really see this as a way of developing talent”.

More Transparency, Less Managerial Discretion

Many organisations pride themselves on their ability to choose the right candidate based on merit. However, MIT has found that meritocratic principles often favour men over ‘equally performing women’.

L’Oreal has a certification process with third-party organisations to validate its policies, promotions and pay. This means that it is held to account by the wider marketplace and not just its own interpretation of success. L’Oreal even posts its female representation figures online. Over the past 20 years, female board membership has increased to 46%.²⁴

At Proctor & Gamble, women make up 45% of managerial positions. This was the result of a ‘promote-from-within’ culture and a commitment to career planning for women and men.²⁵ They measure everything from performance to how many years it takes for employees to gain a promotion.

Offering More Flexibility

It is vital that companies acknowledge that people have lives outside of work, and that they are able to support their workers holistically. While 42% of leaders believe that flexible working is key to getting more women into leadership, it should not be a female-centric concern.²⁶ Men can also care for dependents who require them to work from home occasionally, or start work later in the day.

At present, many workplaces are not flexible enough for caregivers – be they caring for children, elderly parents or the sick. Unfortunately, this often has more of a negative impact for women when it comes to their careers. Women often end up opting out as they cannot maintain a fulfilling work-life balance.

“The gender gap in pay would be considerably reduced and might vanish altogether if firms did not have an incentive to disproportionately reward individuals who labored long hours and worked particular hours,” argues Claudia Goldin, Harvard labour economist and leading scholar on women and the economy.

If we are to encourage and keep more women on the track to leadership then companies need to put their desire for gender parity into practice. Companies and teams can help ease the pressure on caregivers by distributing the workload between workers who need more flexibility or cannot work certain days.

Encouraging Parental Leave

Pharmaceutical company MSD is offering flexible paternity leave – enabling dads to work from home or only work a certain number of days each month. This allows them to manage the workload at home while also maintaining a presence at work. PwC empowers its staff to take a leave of absence for 16 consecutive weeks for parental leave or other reasons. They can then transition back into work without it negatively impacting on their career.

²⁴ www.money.cnn.com/2018/03/30/pf/companies-gender-equality/index.html

²⁵ <http://graphics.wsj.com/how-men-and-women-see-the-workplace-differently/>

²⁶ www.manpowergroup.com/wps/wcm/connect/77c2ae4b-c850-44ee-b2b8-6d95e6eab8a5/Seven+Steps+to+Conscious+Inclusion.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Twitter, Deutsche Bank, Kohl's Corp and Bank of America have all hired coaches for men and women before, during and after their parental leave, making sure that they can manage home and work life without burning out. "One of the surefire ways for an individual to feel overwhelmed and burned out is to take on an overwhelming share of housework and child-care responsibilities in addition to their regular job", says Karen Rubin, MD of Talking Talent, which runs these coaching sessions for companies. Encouraging and enabling fathers to fulfil more of their parental obligations gives mothers more opportunities in the workplace.

Tackling Bias with Artificial Intelligence

Once we are made aware of our biases we can act against them. Increasingly, companies are investing a considerable amount in bias training. Artificial intelligence (AI) is being used to help. When it comes to screening CVs, male candidates are

preferred to female candidates, and 'white'-sounding names preferred to 'ethnic'-sounding names. Interestingly, men and women both prefer a male applicant even when the academic record of the candidate is exactly the same. Such unconscious bias is difficult to combat because of its very nature. Blendoor hides a candidate's name, age, employment history, criminal background and photo so that the employer can see their qualifications. Interviewing.io hides the applicants' voices. Text.io makes job apps more gender-neutral or uses words that might appeal more to women.

Joonko differs from the rest as it doesn't focus on the hiring stage, but on tackling bias in the everyday work environment. It acts as a diversity coach, highlighting bias that many would not often pick up on. AI sends an alert to managers, encouraging them to offer opportunities to someone who may be overlooked or alerting them to



“Sponsors are emerging as a crucial factor in tackling the obstacles facing women in the workplace”

anyone who is not being assigned critical tasks due to bias. Joonko argues that to ensure retention, companies should focus on making sure the candidates feel included and have access to the same opportunities as everyone else.

However, it is worth noting that AI does have its limits and is often at the mercy of those who engineer it. Bias often ends up in the ‘genes’ of the software or is created through its interactions with humans. For example, when Twitter released its AI-driven chatbot Tay, it very quickly took on a sexist, pro-Hitler personality. This was because it was taught to mimic human behaviour. Google Translate was also accused of sexism when it didn’t recognise the word *programmatrice*, the Italian word for a female programmer. Instead, it suggested using the male version of the word. This is worrying when we consider that algorithms are already making decisions on who organisations decide to interview or hire.

Creating Leadership Programmes

Jenny Dearborn, Chief Learning Officer at SAP, aims to equip women with the skills they need to make it to the top. SAP’s Leadership Excellence Acceleration Programme brings together 400 women ready for a promotion. They participate in a 12-month virtual course in which they all receive assignments and homework. At the end of the course it is expected that they will have expanded their networks and gained the confidence to take risks. Resulting from the first course, 23% became first-level managers and 11% moved on to director roles.²⁷

Visibility, feedback and interaction are important for getting ahead – and men are much more likely to get all three. Some companies have launched shadow programmes to help women obtain more access and visibility. Adobe, Amex and Cisco Systems Inc all pair participants with executives across the world. At Amex, 30 high-potential women shadow senior executives. This helps women to access opportunities and receive the critical feedback they need to progress.

Encouraging More Male Sponsors and Mentors

Sponsors are emerging as a crucial factor in tackling the obstacles facing women in the workplace – from visibility to pay negotiation to confidence. The main difference between sponsors and mentors is that mentors act as more of a sounding-board than an activist. Sponsors, however, often work for the same company and stick their necks out for their protégé. Sponsors are proven to be more effective because they know the internal politics of the company and can provide more effective guidance.

A recent survey by LeanIn.Org and SurveyMonkey shows that almost half of male managers are now uncomfortable participating in one-on-one work activities with women, including working alone and mentoring. Only 30% of male mentors are mentoring women, whereas 73% of female mentors are providing support to develop women.²⁸ Employers should make it easier for men to help their female colleagues. LeanIn founder Sheryl Sandberg argues that this is a reaction to increased reports of workplace sexual harassment. However, if men start to avoid one-on-one time with female colleagues then this will be a massive setback for women. As Sandberg noted, “the last thing women need right now is even more isolation”.

Bank of America, American Express and Target are among some US companies that focus on initiatives giving female employees opportunities for sponsorship and leadership to which they often have no access.

²⁷ <http://graphics.wsj.com/how-men-and-women-see-the-workplace-differently/>

²⁸ www.hrmasia.com/content/sheryl-sandberg-launches-mentorher-campaign

Taking Ownership of your Own Career

Government initiatives and company policy can only go so far. **Women also need to take ownership and ensure that they are visible and getting those invitations or creating their own opportunities.**

Stacy Brown-Philpot was a former rising talent at Google and is now CEO of TaskRabbit, a site that connects people with freelance labour. At Google she was told that if she completed a number of objectives she would be promoted. When she did that, however, she didn't get the promotion. She was instead told that it would happen in the next cycle, as others were in line first. Instead of waiting, she asked vice presidents two and three levels above her why her performance didn't result in a promotion. "I felt I deserved the opportunity", she said. They agreed and relayed their feedback to her manager. It was a reminder for her "how important it was for me to take care of my career".



Conclusion

It is important to remember that while gender empowerment is critical, so too is diversity for all. Research often reveals a positive correlation between higher female representation on boards, and in companies in general. But this positive correlation comes from diversity in communication, ideas and perspective, not just from female influence. This will be the most effective argument to bring about change.

Educating people and admitting that the problem exists is the first battle. The real challenge that we face is unconscious bias. Societal structures and norms are so ingrained in all of us that it will be difficult to challenge the biases skewing attitudes towards parental leave, preventing women from pursuing certain careers, and creating roadblocks for female leaders. Educating more people on their inherent biases and the repercussions of those biases will be key to securing long-lasting change.

This will require cooperation from all sides – government, companies and individuals themselves. This is working in Iceland and Sweden: both countries are focusing on improving political representation, challenging societal norms, supporting a more balanced household, and inspiring each element of society to work towards a more equitable future.

We need to look at incorporating more women at every level of society and every rung of the career ladder so that their



“In a global talent shortage, companies should be working on retaining existing staff and keeping them engaged, as well as looking to new means of sourcing the best”

voices can be heard and impactful change can occur. More female representation at executive level and in the C-suite has a far-reaching ripple effect within an organisation, and it is central to reducing the gender pay gap. It has already been seen to be a key driving force in returning-to-work initiatives and mentorship programmes.

Diverse representation also leads to new perspectives and keeps a check on bias and ‘groupthink’. To achieve all this, companies will need to work around their staff: work needs to be redesigned so that everyone, not just women, can achieve more balance as well as career fulfilment. Moving away from the long-hours culture and presenteeism is in everyone’s benefit. In a global talent shortage, companies should be working on retaining existing staff and keeping them engaged, as well as looking to new means of sourcing the best.

Clearly, achieving gender balance will be a lengthy process requiring a lot of cross-collaboration and patience. Perhaps the World Economic Forum’s estimation that gender parity is 217 years away might be an overestimation. If we can continue to focus on the real issues at play, be transparent about our efforts, and remain accountable to one another then perhaps we can get there a bit sooner.



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