

News Release

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Deloitte: Women joining but not leading boardrooms globally

-More women in board positions, but the number of women chairs remains low globally

8 July 2015 – The representation of women on corporate boards continues to increase, but the number of women leading boards still remains low globally. Overall, women now hold 12 percent of seats worldwide with only 4 percent chairing boards, according to the fourth edition of the [*Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective*](#), report by [Deloitte](#).

The report outlines the efforts of 49 countries to increase the number of women occupying board seats. European countries continue to lead on gender diversity in the boardroom, with Norway, France, Sweden and Italy all ranking high. Regionally, countries in the Americas and Asia Pacific region have progressed the least. According to the report the regional breakdown of women chairs is: Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) (5 percent), the Americas (4 percent) and Asia-Pacific (4 percent).

“The global statistics mask important differences within countries. For example, Scandinavian countries have successful policies that make it easier for women to serve on boards, compared with the Asia-Pacific region which has been slow to implement such policies. The Middle East region in general lags behind most developed nations. So, it’s clear that more can be done. We actively encourage increased collaborative effort from organizations, governments and policy-makers; it is the only way we will begin to see results worldwide and in our region,” said Rana Ghandour Salhab, talent and communications partner at Deloitte Middle East.

“Research shows that women are a key driving force for the GCC economic engine. There is a strong business case for having more women on such leadership platforms as diverse and balanced teams improve an organization’s bottom line. In fact, companies with more women on their boards were found to outperform their rivals,” said Cynthia Corby, [Audit](#) partner, Deloitte UAE.

Additional findings from the research include:

Boardrooms across the Americas region are not highly gender diverse

Progress towards increasing the number of women on boards in the Americas region has been slow.

- In the U.S., only 12 percent of board seats are held by women and 3 percent of board chairs are women.
- At present, in Canada, 13 percent of board seats are held by women. However, the percentage of boards led by women is 6 percent.

Progress across the EMEA varies significantly

- In the UK, there are no quotas in place for women on boards, but all Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 companies have women represented, with 16 percent of board seats held by women, while 4 percent of board chairs are women.
- France reinforced boardroom gender diversity quotas in 2014. As a result, the number of women serving on boards (30 percent) continues to increase, while 3 percent of board chairs are women.



- Italy introduced a 'gender balance' quota in 2011. The quotas have helped to provide a significant increase in the number of women represented on boards, with the percentage of board seats and board chairs currently at 22 percent.
- Germany will introduce a mandatory gender quota from 2016 onward for supervisory boards of about 100 listed companies with employee codetermination (where workers participate in management of the companies they work for). Eighteen percent of board seats are currently held by women and 4 percent of board chairs are women.

Asia-Pacific lags behind other regions

At 6 percent, gender diversity in some of Asia's leading economies is the lowest compared to other parts of the world. Only a few countries in the region have quotas or other approaches to address the issue.

- Many Indian companies have started to introduce women directors to their boards. Currently 8 percent of board seats are held by women and 3 percent of boards chairs are women.
- In Hong Kong, only about 10 percent of the board members of listed companies are women, even though women account for almost half of the total workforce.
- There are no gender quotas in Australia for women on boards or in senior positions; however the numbers are gradually improving. The percentage of board seats held by women is currently 15 percent and 6 percent of board chairs are women.

"We've seen a welcome increase in women on boards globally; however the number of women securing the top spot remains elusive even in the most progressive countries. Of course, in many countries, the chair is an executive position, but this absence of women among chairs is revealing" explains Salhab. "There needs to be more focus on changing perceptions, tackling stereotyping through awareness, learning and role modeling, in addition to the adoption of laws that support gender diversity and introduction of policies that allow women to advance their careers while managing their demanding family roles," she concluded.

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