

News Release

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Perceptions of professional gender gaps across major SEA markets highest in Singapore – but Singapore women still prefer to fly solo

A greater proportion of Singapore women believe that female professionals are underrepresented in senior corporate roles compared to peers in Malaysia and Indonesia, but they are more likely to pave their own way in terms of career progression than achieve gender equality as a collective, according to survey from HSBC.

The survey *Mind the gaps: Perceptions of gender equality in corporate Southeast Asia* is a HSBC-commissioned survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit. It involved 300 female executives from Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia and examined their perceptions of gender diversity in the workplace at both senior and mid-levels of management.

Singapore women professionals see greater gender gaps than regional peers

A greater proportion of Singapore women perceive there to be significant gender diversity gaps amongst the senior leadership in their company compared to their south-east Asian peers.

According to the survey, 56% of Singapore professional women believe females are underrepresented in senior management compared to 44% for both Indonesia and Malaysia. Additionally, 34% of Singapore women say there is a diversity gap at their company, while 27% feel there is no gap. Across the region, on average 30% believe there is a diversity gap, and 29% say there isn't.

Singapore women focus on their own professional path rather than that of those around them

Singapore women – particularly those at senior levels – are more likely to focus on their own career progression than the broader gender diversity issue, with the focus increasing the more senior they get.

According to the report, 69% of senior women professionals in Malaysia and 74% in Indonesia feel it is their responsibility to help other women. However, only 54% of Singapore women see it as their responsibility.

The survey also shows 40% of female senior managers say they have often initiated training and mentoring programs, but only 22% of mid-level women agree. Additionally, 55% of mid-level respondents believe that child rearing will impact on career ambitions compared to 41% of senior women

HSBC Singapore CEO, Guy Harvey-Samuel, said: "This is an important piece of research and draws out strong beliefs that Singapore female professionals feel they are under-represented at senior levels as compared to their peers in our neighbouring countries. It is clearly incumbent on all of us at a senior level in the corporate world, whether male or female, to continue to work hard on mentoring and providing equal opportunities for all our female colleagues."

Women professionals believe they need to do more to get equal recognition

The majority of respondents felt that women still had to work harder than their male peers to receive comparable recognition with this feeling strongest amongst mid-level professionals.

More than half of senior Singapore women believe they still have to do more than men to prove themselves in the workplace, with 61% of mid-level women feeling this way.

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In other markets, 58% of Indonesian women feel they have to do more than their male peers and 59% of the Malaysian respondents felt the same way.

The survey was launched as part of the HSBC Women Leaders' Forum – a platform that celebrates the aspirations of female leaders across all fields and coincides with International Women's Day on 8 March 2016 and the HSBC Women's Champions golf tournament that takes place from 3-6 March 2016 at the Sentosa Golf Course.

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Notes to Editors:

About the Survey

The aim of this report, which is written by The Economist Intelligence Unit and commissioned by HSBC, is to examine perceptions of the gender diversity gap among working women in Southeast Asia, at both senior and mid-levels of management. The report looks at women's awareness of gender diversity in their own organisations, asks the ways these women believe any gap can be reduced and explores whether mid-level women feel supported by their senior female colleagues.

The findings are based on a survey of 300 female executives conducted in December 2015, with 100 respondents each from Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. Half of these respondents work in middle management positions, 32% in senior management and 18% at a Managing Director/General Manager or C-suite level. They cover a wide variety of businesses, with 16% working in manufacturing, 10% in financial services or IT, 8% in construction and real estate and 7% in professional services. Just under three quarters of these companies are local, and 26% multinationals. Two in five companies are headquartered in Indonesia, 25% in Singapore, 22% in Malaysia, and the rest across the rest of the world. The organisations also range in size, with 31% of women from firms with between 100 to 199 employees, 56% from firms with between 200 and 999 employees and 13% from businesses with 1,000 or more staff.

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