



EUROPEAN STUDY OF STEREOTYPES AND THE PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN GLOBAL CORPORATIONS

Summary of results from European companies
2018

 **WOMEN
INITIATIVE
FOUNDATION**



INTRODUCTION

GOALS OF THE STUDY AND WHAT'S AT STAKE

The glass ceiling still hasn't been shattered and gender equality is far from being a reality in the workplace, both at SMEs and in international companies. **At the Women Initiative Foundation (WIF), our mission is to become a key player in promoting the advancement of women in the workplace and in the economy.**

This study, in partnership with Engie, BNP Paribas and CentraleSupélec's Industrial Engineering Research department, was carried out in 4 global companies and across 3 European countries: France, Germany and Italy. WIF also had access to similar data collected by the Clayman Institute (Stanford University, CA).

STEREOTYPES

There is no intention to make people feel guilty: men and women have the same stereotypes.



THE FOUNDATION'S STUDIES SET OUT TO:

- **measure gender parity in global companies** beyond boards and executive committees;
- **understand the main hurdles** to gender parity in careers;
- **challenge thinking** in large corporations on policies related to gender, citing the most common obstacles met by women, and differences across countries;
- **influence educational policies** to prepare to improve the situation upstream.

There is no intention to make people feel guilty: men and women have the same stereotypes.

Our aim is to present the facts we observe and to shatter the clichés so as to enable each participating company to plan to improve its future.

The questionnaire was published online in summer 2017.

OUR METHODOLOGY

To get the most representative results possible, a large number of people (both men and women) were invited to participate in the study. A questionnaire was written up **targeting on one hand stereotypes men and women have of men and women**, and on the other hand **perceptions of gender parity and discrimination** in the workplace. The questionnaire was published online in summer 2017 for 4 global companies (L'Oréal, Oracle, Engie and BNPP) across 3 European countries (France, Germany and Italy).

OUR RESEARCH QUESTION

The main question underlying our research is **to identify the obstacles to women's professional development**, and consequently, **to know how to improve gender parity at all levels**.

The study stands out from other research undertakings by several innovative characteristics. We interviewed the people concerned without any filter, and we analyzed differences in perception by age range and by sex. We also considered hierarchical levels (senior executive or not) when analyzing the stereotypes. Finally, **we compare countries** (France, Germany and Italy)

and compare results with the United States for the similarities and differences that seem to us to be the most salient.

Lastly, our research was conducted in collaboration with CentraleSupélec's Industrial Engineering Research department and benefits from university validation, thus reinforcing the validity of our results.

SURVEY RESPONSE

The questionnaire response rate was significant, for both men and women. Over 2400 people responded:

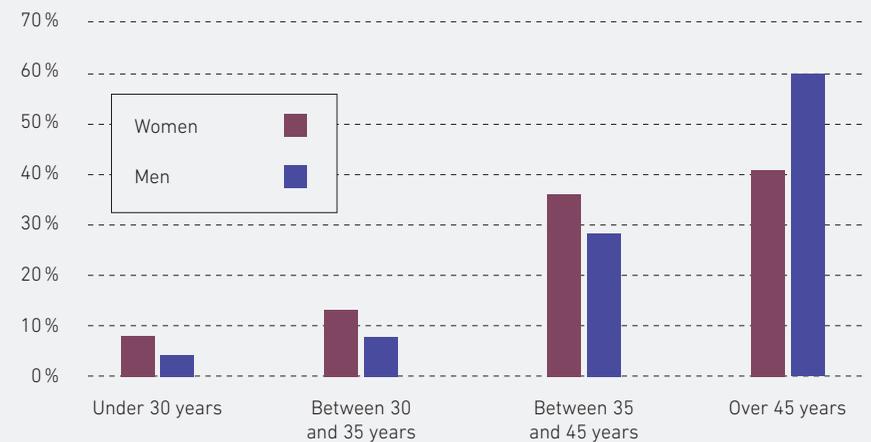
- **roughly 1 000 in France**, of which 72% women and 28% men,
- **roughly 400 in Germany**, of which 53% women and 47% men,
- **roughly 1 000 in Italy**, of which 49% women and 51% men.

The number and the richness of the responses enabled us to conduct **a comparative analysis by country and by company**, with a focus on stereotypes and perception of gender parity in the company.

THE POPULATIONS STUDIED

The sample of respondents offers a good balance, with 59% of women respondents and 41% men.

Fig. 1: Age of respondents



In figure 1 shows that the populations over 35 years old responded more to the survey; their interest reflects the fact that the issue concerns them more.

Concerning the marital status of respondents:

- 18% of the women were single and 37% childless (48% in Germany),
- 12% of the men were single and 24% childless (26% in Germany).

Concerning their profile:

- 66% of the women and 42% of the men work in support functions;
- 34% of the women and 58% of the men work in operational or front-line jobs;
- 40% of the women and 45% of the men are senior executives;
- 92% of the women and 99.5% of the men work full-time.



THE RESULTS

The results concern stereotypes men and women have of men and women, and perceptions of gender parity and discrimination in large corporations.

CONCERNING STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes were measured by presenting a set list of 15 words; respondents ticked one or several words to complete the sentences, "Women/ Men are..."

It turns out that **men and women have stereotypes that are similar in the 3 countries**. Stereotypes are identical for men regardless of hierarchical status, but they vary for women: **women senior executives are seen as behaving more like men**.

The reasons for **women behaving like men are essentially self-censorship, jokes about women, the fact that less women seek power, and promoting women due to affirmative action policies**. The reasons vary from country to country,

A PHENOMENON

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for example self-censorship is less present in Italy. The main differences in stereotypes in Europe are as follows:

→ **In France**, stereotypes vary widely depending on hierarchical levels. Women senior executives are perceived as being quite different from women in general. The attributes associated with them are the same as for male senior executives; women executives become career-minded and don't listen well. These traits are attributed to men regardless of their hierarchical status. There is also a fundamental opposition between clichés of women in general and senior executives.

→ **In Italy and in Germany**, stereotypes do not vary according to hierarchical level. Women and women senior executives are perceived in the same way.

→ **In Germany**, women are equally considered career-minded, but not authoritarian.

→ **In Italy**, women are perceived as equally tenacious and poor listeners.



CONCERNING THE PERCEPTION OF GENDER PARITY

In an attempt to deal with the subject as thoroughly as possible, we addressed the following themes: **work-life balance, company experience, perceived equality, causes for the glass ceiling, and the phenomenon of women senior executives behaving like men**.

Work-life balance is not a real gender issue; in the three countries there is little difference between men and women.

Indeed, **nearly 80% of men and women declare they balance their personal and professional lives**, even if it is far from simple for over half of them:

→ Women declare a little less than men that they balance their lives (-7 points);

→ Men and women who privilege their family lives are in the minority (7% of men, 10% of women);

→ In Germany, only 73% of women say they achieve work-life balance (compared to 80% in Italy and in France) and more women than men

say they prioritize their professional lives (22% compared to 15%). Moreover 48% of them don't have children compared to 25 to 30% elsewhere. In Germany, family obligations are managed very early on!

Finally, **60% of respondents consider their work takes on too much importance**:

→ 58% of men and 62% of women think their work intrudes too much in their family live,

→ Over half of both men and women feel guilty for not spending enough time with their family.

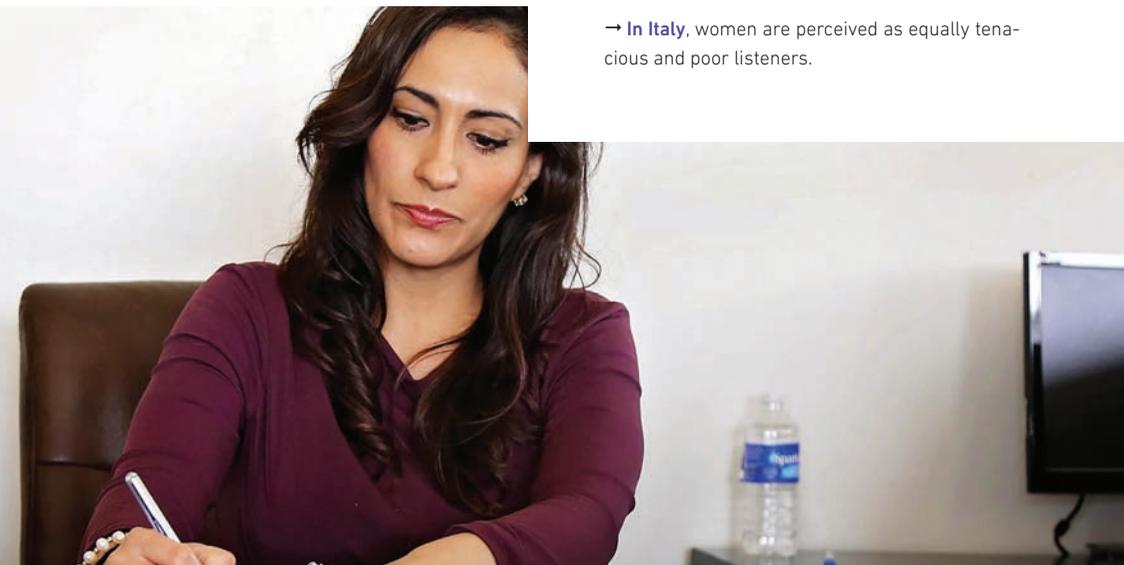
Company experience was studied from four angles: pride in belonging, women in management, the feeling of discrimination, and declining promotions. These are the main findings:

→ **Pride in belonging**: 65% of women and 72% of men would recommend their company (rates higher by 10 points in Italy), while 73% of both men and women are proud of their job;

→ **Women in management**: roughly 35% of women and 25% of men are managed by a woman, with significant variations depending on the company. This situation is thus highly positive.

THE EXPERIENCE IN THE COMPANY

Pride in belonging, women in management, the feeling of discrimination, and declining promotions.



In France equal opportunities are seen as being less favorable by men and women for remuneration, career development and also exemplarity in language used.

→ **The feeling of discrimination** varies widely depending on gender and country: 27% of women declared that they have been victims of negative discrimination, of which 13% several times (40% of the victims in France) whereas 11% of men declared that they were discriminated against, of which 5% several times (5% of the victims in Germany).

→ **Declining promotions is more common for men:** 16% of women and 23% of men have already turned down a post with greater responsibilities (in Germany the rates are higher by 10 points).

The perception of a culture of equality varies widely between countries, and large gaps between men's and women's perceptions is found in all countries.

→ **In France** equal opportunities are seen as being less favorable by men and women for remuneration, career development and also exemplarity in language used: almost 50% of women had heard jokes about women compared to only 15% in Germany and in Italy.

→ However **it's also in France that affirmative action for women is perceived the most** (40% of women and men compared with just 15% to 25% elsewhere).

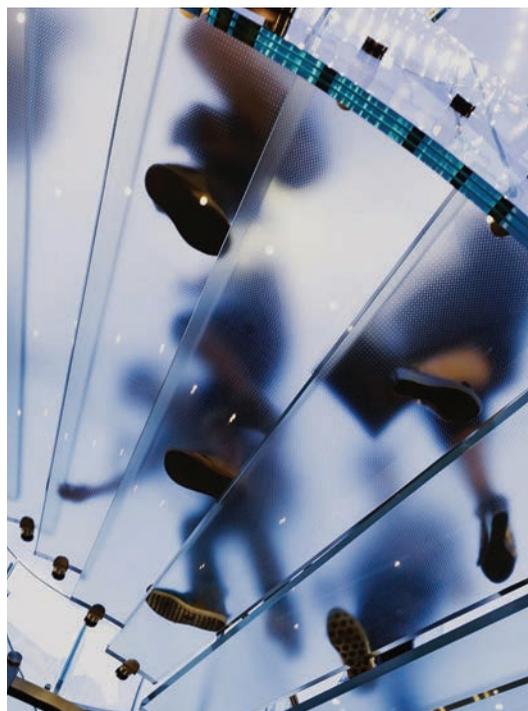
→ **It's in Germany that a culture of equality is felt the most:** over 50% of women perceive equal opportunities for promotions compared to less than a third who don't, and two thirds of women feel in as much demand as their male counterparts. This falls to 38% in France. You will recall though in Germany that women are often (48%) single and childless.

Family constraints are identified by both women and men as the number one reason for the glass ceiling in all countries.

→ **It's in Germany that family constraints have the most impact** (cited by 85% of respondents compared with 70% to 75% elsewhere).

→ **Women needing to prove themselves more than men** is perceived to be the case by over half of Europeans. For men, the glass ceiling is essentially linked to family constraints.

→ In Italy self-censorship by women and the fact that less women seek power is rarely cited,



unlike in France and in Germany. 30% of Italian women compared to two thirds of German and French women cite self-censorship, 18% cite attraction to power compared to 35% elsewhere.

Finally, regarding **the phenomenon of women senior executives behaving like men**, the main points to remember are:

→ 46% of women and 47% of men believe that **women that are appointed to posts of high responsibility end up behaving like men.**

→ In France, 52% of women perceive such male behavior, in Italy 56% of men notice it.

→ This male behavior of women senior executives is essentially seen by the fact that **they become more career-minded than men and tougher in their management style.**

→ The perception of male behavior is linked to stereotypes of women senior executives (in particular in France).

→ This perception makes it **hard for women to project themselves in senior executive posts, and calls role models into question.**

OPENING UP TO THE USA

Using McKinsey&Company's LeanIn report, enriched by discussions with the Clayman Institute (Stanford), we highlight the main similarities and differences between Europe and the United States.

Then main differences concern the lack of an American policy supporting maternity (only 3 countries in the world, of which one is the USA, do not have a maternity support program) and life-work balance. Indeed, **in the USA women still manage the home, even with a full-time job.**

The main similarities are the following:

- stereotypes of women;
- the perception of engagement in companies;
- men (American and Europeans) think the system encourages women more;
- women (American and Europeans) have no intention of leaving their job for family reasons;
- women senior executives behaving like men (huge similarity between France and the USA)
- the feeling of discrimination (40% in France and 37% in the USA).

WOMEN LEADERS

women that are appointed to posts of high responsibility end up behaving like men.

CONCLUSION

We have set out a summary of the main findings and lessons from the study conducted on stereotypes and perceptions of gender parity in large corporations. Detailed results can be found on our website: <http://women-initiative-foundation.com/fr/accueil/>

Conclusions concerning stereotypes are as follows:

- **Men and women have very similar stereotypes in the 3 countries;**
- **Women senior executives often behave like men (senior executive or otherwise).**

Regarding perceptions of a culture of equality in companies:

- **There is little difference between men and women regarding employee engagement and work-life balance;**
- **There are marked differences between men and women regarding perceptions of why the glass ceiling remains and the feeling of discrimination.**

WIF PROPOSAL

Next steps and recommendations:

- **Broaden in the coming year the research to others global corporations.**
- **Next Year, design and roll out an ambitious intercompany mentoring program for under-40-year-old high potential women, initially in Europe, then internationally.**

Aim and Purpose:

- Enable women move on in their careers by helping them to better understand how to improve their opportunities and their visibility.
- The one-year program will offer tailored mentoring for each mentee, with particular attention paid to the choice of men or women mentors.

→ Promoting gender equality policies inside corporations:

WIF will also offer large companies advice and concrete measures to improve gender parity, based on this research and the specificities of each company.

The scope will be France, Europe, Canada and the USA.

→ Acting on Education (from now and in the long term):

Influence educational policies to prepare to improve the situation upstream by speaking about stereotypes from the youngest age possible but showing positive examples and solutions.

KEY REFERENCES

"Women in the Workplace", report by LeanIn.org and McKinsey&Company, 2017.

"Stereotypes and Gender: How to understand and tackle stereotypes in the workplace", Guide published by IMS - Entreprendre pour la Cité, 2012

ABOUT THE WOMEN INITIATIVE FOUNDATION (WIF)

Founded in 2016, WIF brings together, organizes and leads its Global Circle Network, a vast network made up of mentees and mentors, strategic partners, company leaders, experts and friends across France, the rest of Europe and in the United States.

WIF encourages the promotion of women in the world of business and the economy in general. WIF's mission is to become a think tank and to speak out in favour of gender diversity, and for the respect and recognition of women in business.

Beyond its philanthropic sponsorship, WIF conducts research on these themes with Pan-European studies and reports, several publications and university programs such as one developed at Stanford with BNP Paribas. In mid-2017, having successfully run a volunteer support program for women entrepreneurs of growing companies, WIF launched a transatlantic program for both French entrepreneurs wishing to develop their business in the United States, with the support of an American mentor – and American entrepreneurs wishing to set up in Europe, with the help of a European mentors.

WWW.WOMEN-INITIATIVE-FOUNDATION.COM

Contact presse Women Initiative Foundation :
Sibylle de Villeneuve, 06 45 29 58 57, Sibylle@agenceraoul.com
Lucie Vial Blondeau, 06 23 55 56 64, lucie@agenceraoul.com

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