



Research Report

Cals Model United Nations 2017

“Creating pathways to new opportunities”



Forum: GA 2: Economic and Financial (ECOFIN)

Issue: *Enhancing the economic position of women and taking measures against the glass ceiling effect*

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Introduction

“I never approached any assignment that, ‘Oh, I’m a woman.’ My gender doesn’t really factor into my thinking as I come into the room.”¹ These words were said by Susan Wojicki, who is Chief Executive Officer of YouTube and also one of the women who have broken the glass ceiling effect. When we speak about the glass ceiling it can either refer to women (what applies to the issue) but the glass ceiling can also refer to race and other forms of discrimination.

Why would women not be able to lead a company? Can we define the barriers which are holding women back? How has the glass ceiling effect even started? Those questions probably come up to your mind while thinking about the issue. Answers to some of those questions are hard to find, otherwise the issue would already have been solved. In order to solve the issue, it is necessary that you are aware of the fact that the glass ceiling is often hard to reveal. The term ‘glass’ refers after all to the unseen barrier that is blocking women in advancement.



Figure 1 Source: wonder women

¹ <http://www.tharawat-magazine.com/grow/10-female-business-leader-quotes/#gs.XZAhj80>

Definition of Key Terms

Glass ceiling effect:

An unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.² The term was introduced in the 1980's.

Discrimination:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.³

Barrier:

A circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress.⁴ In this case we have some common barriers: a social barrier, an international business barrier and government barriers.

General Overview

As has been stated above, there are a few common barriers. Of course do they not stand for all the obstacles women are facing in our current society, however they would cover most of them.

1. Pay inequity. The higher up the ladder you go the greater disparity between male and female wages.
2. Less experience in the workforce due to childbirth and child rearing absences in employment – most women are unable to return to the level of employment they held prior to pregnancy and are often not kept in the loop during their absence.
3. Women comprise the bulk of the part-time workforce thereby gaining lower hourly rates and less accumulated superannuation.
4. Lack of valuing the work that women perform. For example, traditional women's roles in community services is underpaid.⁵

A woman is (of course) the one to carry and bear a child, and therefore she gets maternity leave. However, there are two countries in the world which do not offer women cash benefits during their maternity leave: The United States and Papua New Guinea. In contrast we have countries, such as Sweden, who also offer the upcoming father maternity leave.

² https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/glass_ceiling

³ United Nations. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 1

⁴ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/barrier>

⁵ <http://glassceiling.info/barriers-for-women/>

“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate the nation.”⁶ In order to enhance the economic position of women we need to work on the difference in education between men and women. Women are more often illiterate and are less likely to go to school than men. Primary education is necessary to be able to read and write. It is impossible for women to participate in society without being educated. A secondary education is prior as well, since the top functions in organizations as well as companies ask for specialized employees. University diplomas are often a requirement for applying for a job.

One of the side problems of the differences between men and women in workplace is caused by religious beliefs and cultural values. For example, in countries in the Middle East, where women are heavily dictated by their men and religion. They are not allowed to drive cars, to go out without a male family member etc. Consequently, barriers are formed which make it harder for women to find an equal position in society as well as on the work floor.

According to the statistics (which can be found on the next page), New Zealand is the best country in the world to work as a woman. Japan and South Korea are the worst (although a woman is now president; Park Geun-hye). They have done their research based on five indicators:

1. the number of men and women respectively with tertiary education
2. female labor-force participation
3. the male-female wage gap
4. the proportion of women in senior jobs
5. and net child-care costs relative to the average wage.

The last indicator has less weight in the statistics than the other four, since not all working women have children.

To end this overview, I will point out a quote from Ban Ki Moon from 2014 during International Women’s Day: “Countries with higher levels of gender equality have higher economic growth. Companies with more women on their boards have higher returns. Peace agreements that include women are more successful. Parliaments with more women take up a wider range of issues - including health, education, anti-discrimination, and child support.”⁷

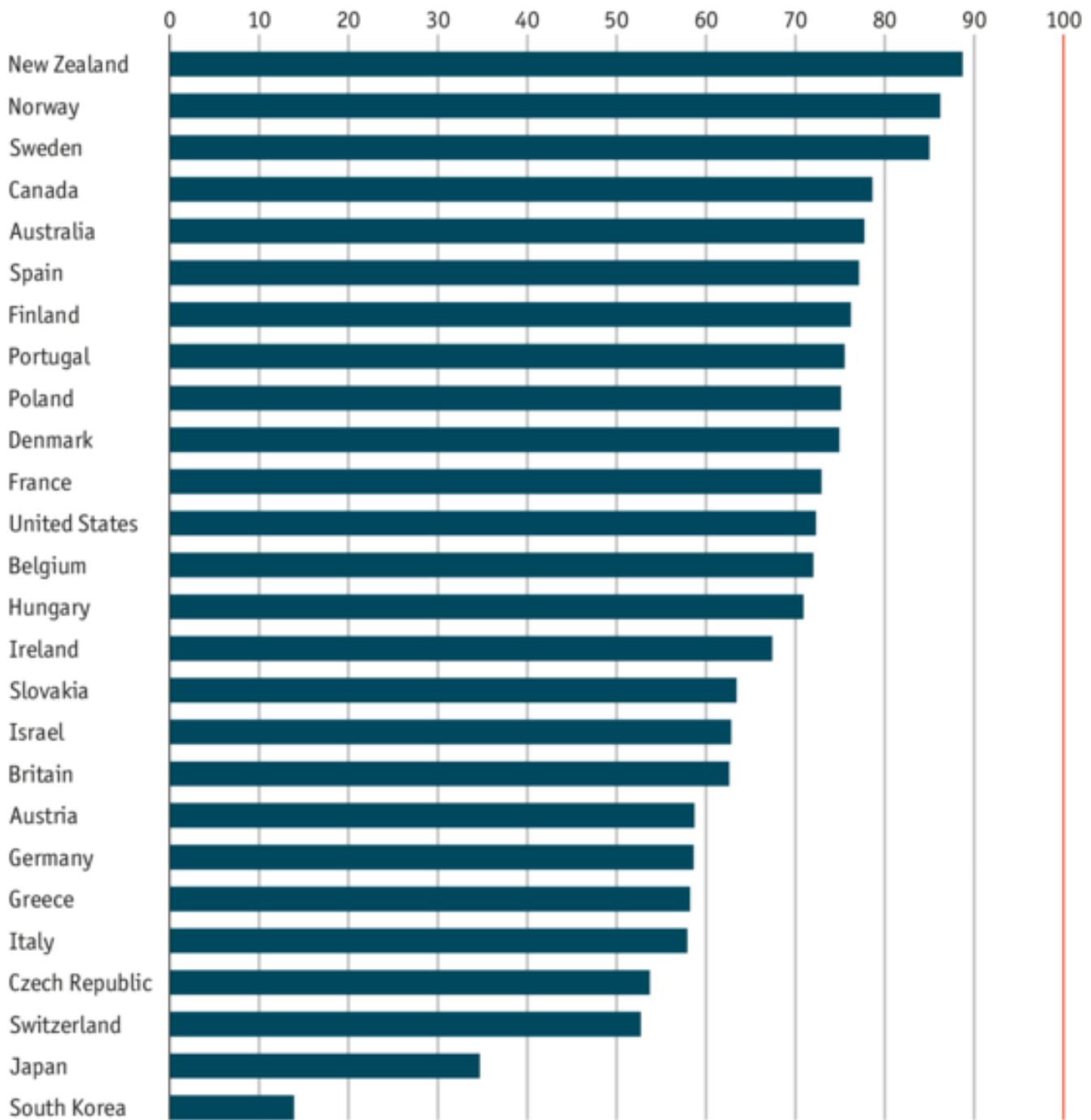
⁶ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/wom1541.doc.htm>

⁷ Secretary-General’s remarks at annual commemoration of the International Women’s Day, March 17, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7510>, accessed January 5, 2016.

Glass-ceiling index

Weighted average of five indicators*, 2011 or latest, 100=best for working women

Out of the following 26 countries



*Weighting of 23% for: difference between female and male population with tertiary education; female labour-force participation; difference between female and male median earnings of full-time employees; women in senior management as % of total. Weighting of 8% for: net child-care costs as % of average wage

Sources: OECD; ILO; Catalyst; *The Economist*

Economist.com/graphicdetail

Figure 2 Source: *the Economist*

Major Parties Involved

Belgium:

In Belgium they have 'Equal Pay Day', which is copied from the United States of America. 'Equal Pay Day' means the day that women have earned the same amount of money as men have in one year. So for example, Equal Pay Day was in 2014 at the 18th of March, which means that women had to work 2.5 month longer than men had to earn the same.

New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark:

The best countries to work in for women are those countries according to the statistics.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):

UNESCO is trying to expand the access of women and girls to education, which is a key to educate people about gender equality.

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund):

The UNFPA has as main purpose to create a world where 'every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled'.⁸ They are working together with countries to collect data from analysis, which is critical for gender equality. This data reveals the progress of projects and where action drops behind.

UN Women:

In 2010 the United Nations set up UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. By doing so, they accelerated the equality goals and the women empowerment. The main goals of UN women are the following:

1. To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
2. To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
3. To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.⁹

United States of America:

During the campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the run for president, Hillary used the glass ceiling effect as a theme in order to be elected as the first female president and in order to break the governmental barrier of the glass ceiling effect in the United States. Many American citizens claim that, since Trump has won the elections, the glass ceiling in the United States will only become worse.

⁸ <http://www.unfpa.org/about-us>

⁹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

When we take a closer look at differences in income, we can find that women earned \$34.700 in one full year, while men earned \$42.800 for exactly the same amount of working hours (statistics from 2010).

Timeline of Events

1970-2012 - The ratio of women in workplaces has grown from a third in the 1970's to a half of all workforce in 2012.

1979 - Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1991 - The US Congress discovered that, although the amount of women in workplaces was growing, women were underrepresented in the higher positions of business and that there were unknown barriers which were holding them back from those positions.

1995 - The Glass Ceiling Commission releases a report identifying four barriers for women, which are the following:

1. The manner in which businesses fill management and decision-making positions
2. The developmental and skill-enhancing practices used to foster the necessary qualifications for advancement into such positions
3. The compensation programs and reward structures currently utilized in the workplace
4. The creation of an annual award for excellence in promoting a more diverse skilled workforce at the management and decision-making levels in business. ¹⁰

2005 - The World Summit reaffirmed the importance of gender equality for advancing development and creating peace.

March 8th, 2016 - International Women's Day

March 11th, 2016 - Equal Pay Day in Belgium

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979. However, there were some countries who have not ratified the convention. Such countries include Iran, Somalia, Sudan and the United States. Following was the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995.

¹⁰ "Civil Rights Act of 1991." Public Law 102-166. Section 202.

Also the United Nations have set up the Millennium Goals. Especially goal 3 is important for our issue, which reads to 'Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women'. Via this goal they promote the importance of equal education.

Women have already had some successes via ways as transparency in recruitment and promotion, flexibility measures and mentors for women. However, there is still a lot to be done and a lot to improve.

Possible Solutions

First of all, it is necessary to start with a solid basis. All children should be educated about gender equality in order to let them understand there is not a difference between men and women. Women are not only on this planet to bare children and take care of them, they can also lead big companies. They can even run for president. It is important to make little girls aware of the opportunities they have, and to let them fulfil their ambitions and dreams.

Secondly, we have to do better research. We have to clarify the barriers which are holding women back from the higher positions in organizations and companies.

Last but not least, the issue can be tackled by investing in unconscious bias training, equitable parental leave for women and men, and active pro-bono or community investment programs.

Useful Documents

<http://perspectives.ahima.org/breaking-the-glass-ceiling-structural-cultural-and-organizational-barriers-preventing-women-from-achieving-senior-and-executive-positions/>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en>

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/13/opinion/sunday/the-glass-ceiling-holds.html? r=0>