

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR
ADVANCED MANAGEMENT

Women in the Global Workforce

A SURVEY OF STUDENTS AND ALUMNI OF THE BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN THE
GLOBAL NETWORK FOR ADVANCED MANAGEMENT

MARCH 2017



INTRODUCTION: ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN GLOBAL BUSINESS.

Great strides towards equality in the workforce have been made in recent decades. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in business leadership roles worldwide, and intriguing variation across the globe and even across industries within the same country suggests that there is more to blame than a monolithic culture of patriarchy. In different countries, women participate in the workforce at different levels and with different roles and expectations. Our survey of business school students and alumni worldwide uncovers some of the factors that affect the careers of women in the global workforce.

SEEKING EXPLANATIONS: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A survey to assess the attitudes and beliefs of students and alumni at top business schools around the world.

To understand what continues to hold women back in their professional lives, and why they are hindered more in some areas more than others, the Global Network for Advanced Management surveyed students and alumni from 28 schools in the network. The resulting sample of 3,370 students and 1,511 alumni represents workplace experience in more than 100 countries. Three political scientists, Frances Rosenbluth, Gareth Nellis, and Michael Weaver, embedded a set of experiments in the survey intended to get past respondents' "social desirability bias" (the impulse, perhaps, to sound more "gender-enlightened" than they actually feel). In addition to providing answers to a battery of questions about their demographics and business experience, survey respondents were asked to choose one of two hypothetical candidates for promotion in their workplace with randomly scrambled attributes including gender, age, assertive or reserved personality, prior experience, and time availability.

Finding #1:

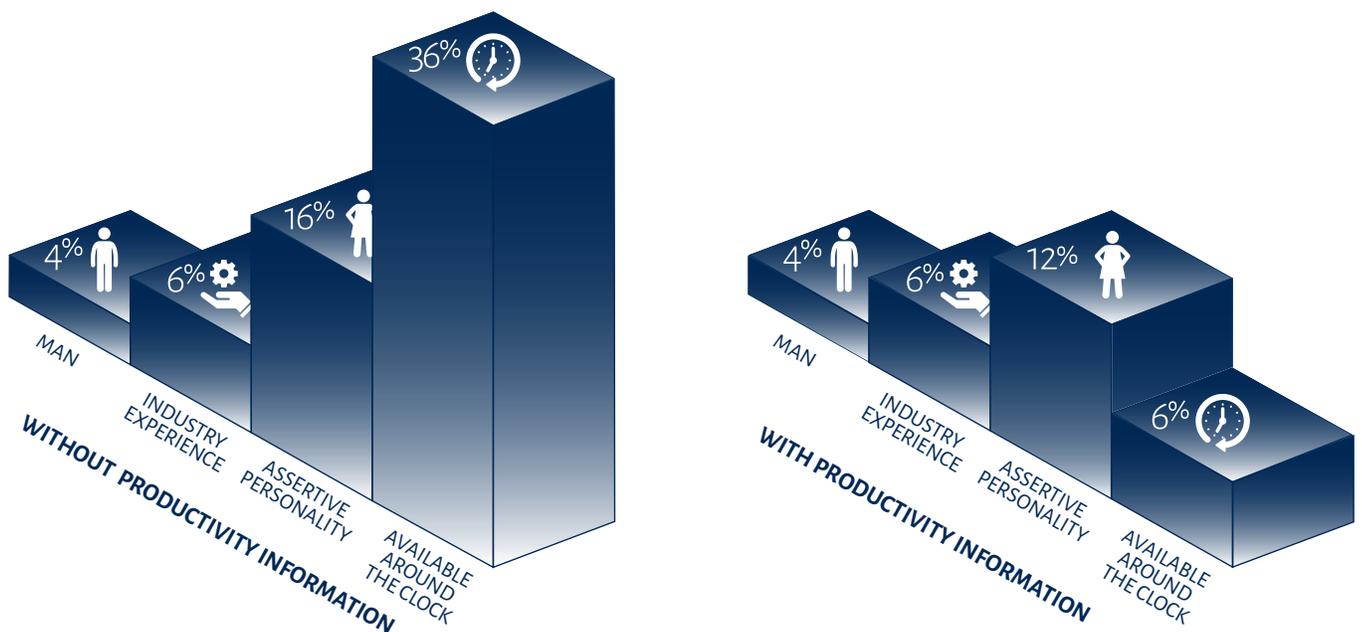
Time is Money

In making promotion decisions, respondents greatly favored candidates who were available to work around the clock. However, when shown productivity data for these candidates, respondents no longer put much weight on availability.

It is striking that survey respondents showed virtually no preference for a candidate for promotion based on gender. Equally striking, however, is that respondents were 36% more likely to recommend for promotion the candidate who could be “available to work at any time, including nights and weekends.” Given the disproportionate burden for family work that women bear in most societies, the requirement to be available around the clock can be as starkly negative for women as if employers were biased against women.

This is where things get more interesting. When respondents were told about the productivity for both candidates (high, medium, low), the preference for around-the-clock availability virtually disappears. In jobs and professions in which productivity is hard to attribute to a particular person in a team or process, time availability can become a noisy signal of productivity rather than an input of productivity itself. Cheap proxies for worker evaluation of this kind are costly not only to women, but also to men who may prefer a better career-family or work-life balance.

INCREASE IN LIKELIHOOD OF PROMOTION WITH AND WITHOUT PRODUCTIVITY INFORMATION



Finding #2:

Workplaces Favor Assertive Women (and Men)

Respondents to this survey believe that both women and men with assertive personalities are more likely to be promoted than individuals with reserved personalities. However, the preference for assertive personalities varies significantly across countries.

WORKPLACE FAVORS ASSERTIVE WOMEN AND MEN



MEN
15%



WOMEN
15%

It is understandable that families in societies with male-dominated labor markets would socialize their daughters to excel in the marriage market by being congenial, docile, and companionable rather than being competitive and assertive in preparation for the labor market. Our survey findings reveal, however, the vicious cycle that socialization of this kind may produce. If employers give higher marks to an assertive personality—according to our survey, substantially more than experience, although with some differences across countries—professional women face a trade-off: the very characteristic that helps them at work may harm them in their social relationships. It is important that families, schools, and firms understand what female workers are up against.

Finding #3:

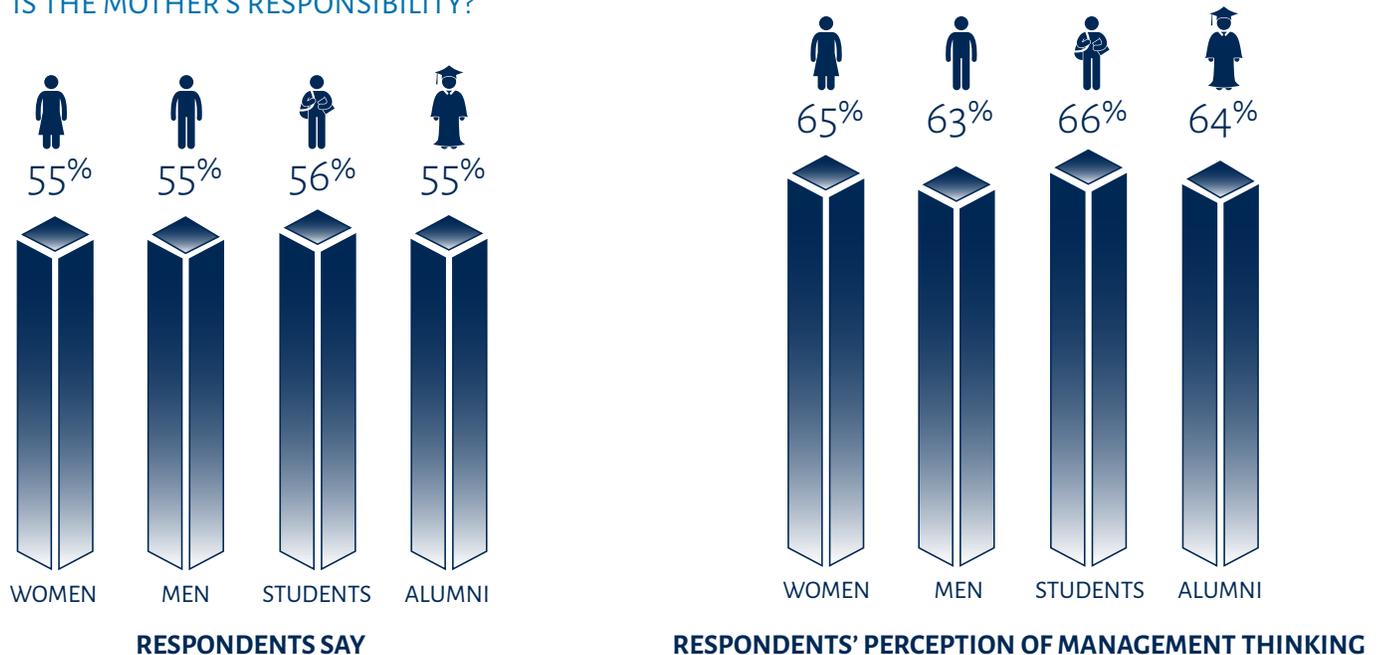
Who's Responsible for Childcare?

Across the board, respondents expected women to take on slightly more of the responsibility of childcare. Respondents also reported the belief that senior managers in their firms expected women to take on an even greater proportion of childcare.

Do employers and workers agree about women's and men's responsibilities at home? We asked respondents questions both about their "own views" about childcare responsibility and the "views of senior management in [one's] workplace" as far as they could tell.

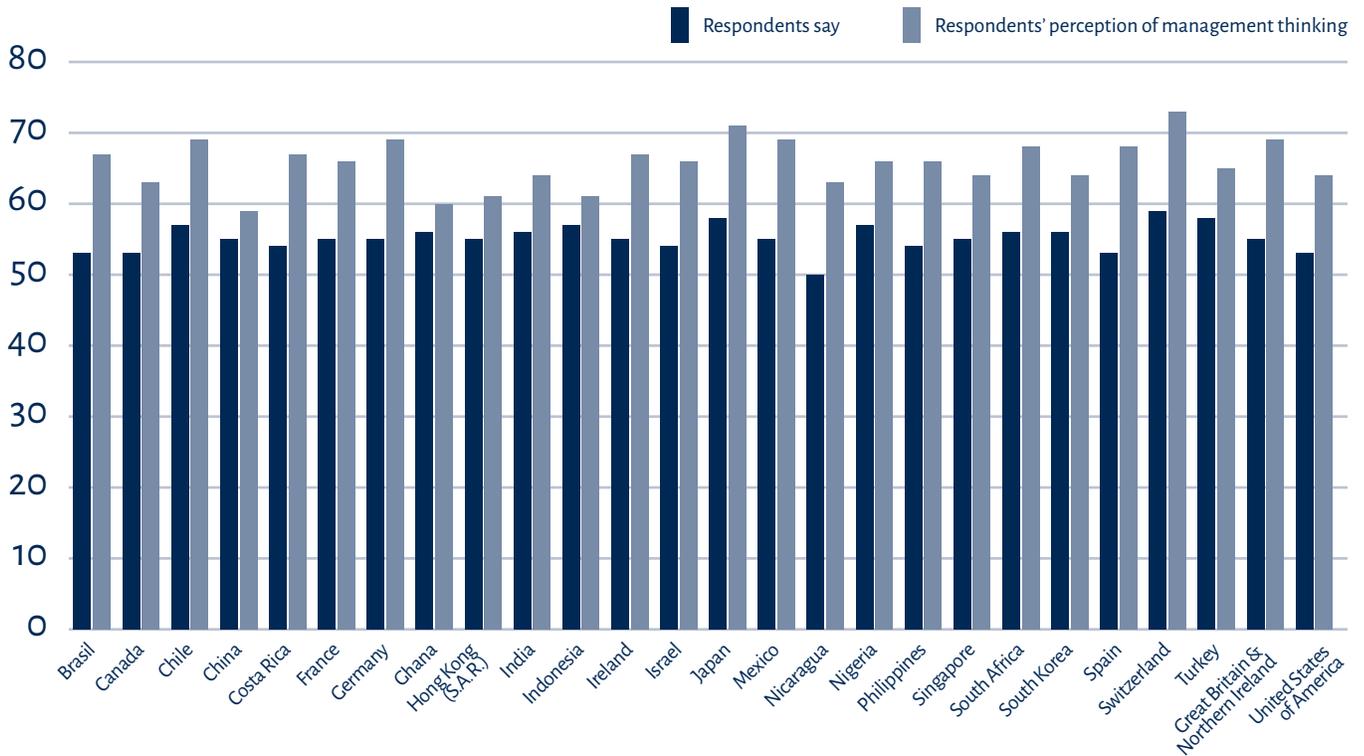
Employees on average thought that a mother should be responsible for 55% of childcare, but they believed that "senior management" expected mothers to be responsible for 65% of childcare. Whether or not their employers intend to send these signals, female employees are likely to be on the horns of a dilemma: spending hours at work might help them get promoted, but their boss (and everyone else) may at the same time dislike them for bucking societal expectations. Male employees who choose to invest time in their careers may face less disapproval for reducing time devoted to childcare.

HOW MUCH CHILDCARE IS THE MOTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY?



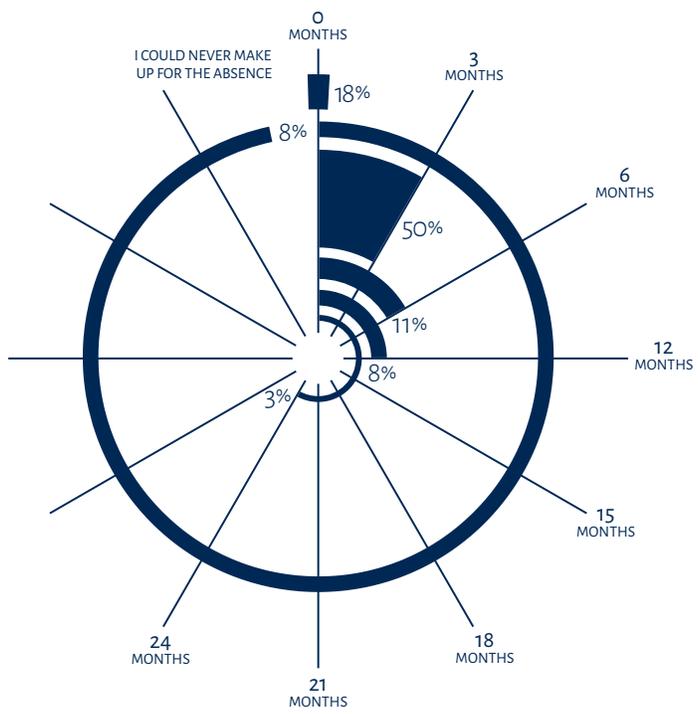
Around the world the presumption is that the mother should bear more than 50% of the responsibility for childcare.

PERCENT OF CHILDCARE THAT SHOULD BE THE MOTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY



A related insight from the survey is that 41% of respondents believe that taking an extended leave, such as parental leave, would adversely affect their long-term career, and 82% think it would take at least three months to make up for a six-month leave.

MAKE-UP TIME REQUIRED AFTER A SIX-MONTH LEAVE



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<http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/maternity-protection/publications/maternity-paternity-at-work-2014/lang—en/index.htm>

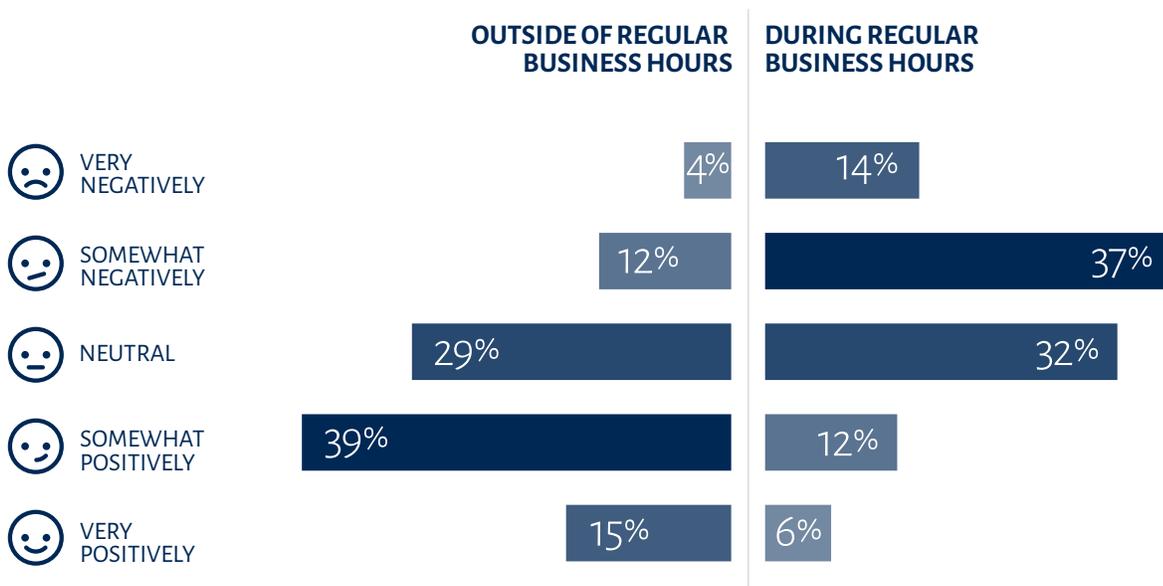
Finding #4:

Working Remotely Extends the Workday

Survey respondents report that working remotely during regular business hours is viewed negatively, while working remotely outside nine to five is a plus. Rather than create more flexibility, technology may be extending the hours people are expected to work.

Technology that allows people to work remotely extends the workday for many of our respondents. Working remotely outside of regular business hours is viewed very or somewhat positively in the workplace, according to 54% of the respondents. This is in contrast to the view of working remotely during regular business hours, which 51% of respondents said was viewed very or somewhat negatively. This suggests that working remotely tends to be viewed as working less in many cases. This may be changing, however. France, for example, recently passed a law giving workers the “right to disconnect” as a counter to pressures to log additional hours online after the regular workday.

VIEWS ON WORKING REMOTELY



CONCLUSIONS

Women are often caught in a double whammy: societies give them a disproportionately large family role and rewards for pleasing personalities, whereas workplaces reward long hours on the job and assertiveness.

Armed with this knowledge, employers can take measures that make for stronger, more attractive workplace environments. Our key findings suggest that the following steps may be helpful:

- 1) Reward productivity, not hours worked in the office;
- 2) Support personality differences, acknowledging the value of diversity, and reward non-assertive but effective approaches;
- 3) Encourage fathers who may want to be more involved in childcare than is assumed in order to counter the perception that childcare is primarily a woman's responsibility;
- 4) Use the ability to work remotely to allow for workplace flexibility rather than as a limitless extension of the office. Consider the positive and negative effects of the ability to work remotely on employees.

Companies that develop a culture that supports women in the workplace also encourage a healthy work-life balance for all employees. Such a culture could prove an advantage in the competition for the best talent.

