

Women in Business 2019

A lot done, more to do for women in business

By Orla Hearn

Irish-owned enterprises are lagging behind their international equivalents when it comes to female representation at senior executive level.

In May, Ireland's Central Statistics Office (CSO) released the findings of the first ever survey of gender balance in business, setting out benchmark statistics on gender representation at the most senior levels of large Irish enterprises (ie: those with 250 employees or more).

The results included a gender breakdown of chairpersons, boards of directors, CEOs and senior executive teams in such firms.

It found that women account for just one in 9 CEOs in large Irish enterprises.

The survey also revealed that just 7% of those chairing boards of directors were female and that the average large company board of directors is comprised of a 20/80% split between female and male members respectively.

ively. The survey further found that 28% of senior executives in large Irish enterprises are women.

Overall women occupied 12% of CEO positions, 7% of board chairpersons, 20% of board membership and 28% of senior executive positions.

The balance of genders would appear to be slowly changing however, as in the second half of 2018 and the first half of 2019 one-third (34%) of senior executive appointments in Ireland were women and two-thirds (66%) were men while 30% of the appointments to boards of directors were women during the same period.

A comparison with the figures for 2014 further illustrates the rise — albeit slow — of women in business in Ireland.

Five years ago, women accounted for 25% of the appointments to senior executive roles and 17% of board of director appointments.

The CSO survey found that the construction industry had the lowest representation of women



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just 9% of board of director appointments being female.

In the services, women accounted for 22% of

board membership and in industry they made up 17% of board members.

Interestingly, there was a higher representation

of women in foreign-owned enterprises than in Irish ones, with the senior executive team comprised of 31% female

representation and women accounting for 21% of board members in the former.

In Irish-owned enter-

prises, females accounted for just 26% of the senior executive team and 19% of the make up of boards of directors.



While it would appear that Irish women's career ambitions have never been higher, a survey undertaken by Think Business.ie — an online information resource for Irish business owner and managers — shows that business women are still juggling major challenges as they vie for career success.

Irish business women struggle with guilt

By Orla Hearn

Irish women have made huge progress in recent decades in breaking through the "glass ceiling" — the renowned metaphor used to describe the barrier that has traditionally kept the fairer sex from rising beyond a certain level in the business world hierarchy.

Women are slowly starting to feature more at managerial levels in business but they are also making great strides as entrepreneurs.

In fact recent figures from the Local Enterprise Office, show that approximately 1,000 women in Ireland start a business every month.

While it would appear that Irish women's career ambitions have never been higher, a survey undertaken by ThinkBusiness.ie — an online information resource for Irish business owner and managers — shows that business women are still juggling major challenges as they vie for career success.

Guilt, lack of confidence, a lack of time for themselves and struggl-

ing to be taken seriously were among the key themes that emerged from the survey that was conducted among Irish female entrepreneurs.

It suggests that women are ruled very much by their emotions in their professional dealings.

The most frequently recurring word in the survey responses was "guilt".

For many this emotion presented itself in relation to the challenge of splitting their time between their business, their family and themselves.

And all too frequently it seems that women put their own need for "me time" last and often run the risk of pushing themselves beyond the limits.

Interestingly, while guilt mainly manifested itself in terms of regretting not having more time to give to others there was also an element of feeling guilty for having career ambitions and dreams.

Those surveyed also expressed a shared experience of not being taken seriously as business professionals which in turn impacts the other

overriding challenge expressed by Irish business women which is a lack of confidence.

The women surveyed spoke about their fear of failure and the pressure of being perceived as the person who has all of the answers.

But it's not all negative.

There are lots of positive emotions associated with being in business.

Those that undertook the ThinkBusiness.ie survey spoke about the great personal joy and pride they take in doing something for themselves and of the empowerment that is to be felt in building a strong network of other, trusted business owners around them.

The survey participants were all members of the Women's Inspire Network Facebook group which was founded to offer real practical and emotional support to female entrepreneurs in a safe and welcoming environment.

It is one of several Irish business women's networking groups working to even the playing field for the fairer sex in the business world today.