



International  
Labour  
Organization

**Women in business  
and management:  
Gaining momentum  
in the Caribbean**



**ACT/EMP**  
The Bureau for Employers' Activities



# **Women in business and management:**

Gaining momentum in the Caribbean

October 2018

Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP)  
International Labour Office

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First published (2018)

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Title: Women in Business and Management  
Subtitle: Gaining Momentum in the Caribbean

English edition  
ISBN: 978-92-2-131706-7 (print); 978-92-2-131707-4 (web pdf)

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Printed in (*Switzerland*)

## Preface

Achieving gender diversity is increasingly seen as necessary for competitive business performance with growing evidence that shows successful companies having a large proportion of women in senior management roles. However, statistics confirm that global progress towards gender diversity is mixed and moving slowly for women who aspire to attain top management positions or serve as chairpersons or members of company board. In addition, most of the readily available research on harnessing gender diversity as an enabler for value creation and business growth focuses on developed economies, and it is difficult for companies in emerging and developing economies to relate that research to their context.

To fill the knowledge gap, the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) embarked on a process of publishing data on the status of women in business and management for ILO member States to demonstrate the benefits of enhanced gender diversity for business outcomes. The first of these efforts resulted in the publication of a global report, *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum* in 2015. Since then, region-specific information and data have been gathered and published in four reports for Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The regional reports provided stratified and localized information for companies and EBMOs to advocate for women in business and management in their own country and regional contexts.

The report for Latin America and the Caribbean was launched in 2017 in Lima. Participating EBMOs from the region noted distinctive labour market characteristics and different realities for companies in the Caribbean. This report responds to the need for further research into women in business and management in the Caribbean to provide companies and EBMOs with the very information they could benefit from. It examines the status quo of women in business and management in the Caribbean, illustrates how further action could be taken to accelerate progress, and reaffirms the global relevance of the business case for gender diversity at all levels.

EBMOs in the Caribbean have an important role to play in supporting their members to unlock the benefits and business gains that gender diversity has to offer. It is our hope that this subregional report will provide the inspiration and impetus for action to business leaders and other stakeholders in the Caribbean to work towards greater gender diversity.

Achieving gender equality and non-discrimination remain a high priority for the ILO and a vital part of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the Women at Work Centenary Initiative which aims to better understand and identify innovative, effective actions towards securing a better future for women at work. As we work towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5 on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, we encourage all EBMOs, companies, governments and other stakeholders to take a proactive and considered approach to achieving this goal.



Deborah France-Massin  
Director  
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## Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC) who advocated for further research to deepen the understanding of women in business and management for the subregion and convened employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) to produce this report. Critically, CEC supported the dissemination of the company survey data by mobilizing the interest of member federations as well as holding a consultation meeting in Saint Lucia on 17 October 2017 to discuss the preliminary findings of the Caribbean company survey. We extend our deep appreciation to Linda Besson, Executive Secretary and Treasurer of CEC, for her commitment and support.

We also gratefully acknowledge the valuable contributions of the following EBMOs in the Caribbean who dedicated their time to reaching out to member companies and prioritizing the issue of women in business and management.

- Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation;
- Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers' Confederation;
- Barbados Employers' Confederation;
- Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Dominica Employers' Federation;
- Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago;
- Grenada Employers' Federation;
- Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry;
- Jamaica Employers' Federation;
- Saint Lucia Employers' Federation;
- Saint Kitts-Nevis Chamber of Industry and Commerce;
- Saint Vincent Employers' Federation; and
- Suriname Trade and Industry Association.

We give our thanks to the companies in the Caribbean subregion that responded to the survey and provided an evidence base data to develop this report.

Specialists of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) played an important role in developing and reviewing this report. In particular, we acknowledge Vanessa Phala, Senior Employers' Specialists and Adam Greene, Senior Advisor for their technical review, and Jae-Hee Chang, Senior Programme and Operations Officer, who led the overall coordination of the report and provided technical oversight.

We thank Linda Wirth, gender expert, who enriched the report. We also acknowledge with thanks Siew Sze Lee, who analysed the company data and Katherine McGregor, who supported the analysis. Finally, we thank Sacoda Serv Limited for executing the survey across the 13 countries and territories in the Caribbean.

We extend appreciation and thanks to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency-ILO partnership programme that provided the funds necessary to complete this subregional report.

## Executive summary

The Caribbean has been a traditionally strong performer for women in the workplace. The subregion outpaces its neighbours, and often the world, in terms of women's employment and representation as managers and at the top of company hierarchies. Despite those achievements and the vast talent pool of qualified women, many gaps and challenges remain. Women in the Caribbean are still underrepresented on company boards and among top corporate executives, and the majority of women managers work in small or medium-sized enterprises, in support functions such as human resources and in the low to middle tiers of management.

This report, *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in the Caribbean* provides new insights into the experiences of women in Caribbean economies. Drawing on the latest research and results of a survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2017 of 675 companies in the private sector across 13 countries and territories in the Caribbean, the report takes stock of progress for women in business and management to date and outlines company initiatives on gender diversity, as well as priority areas for future improvement.

Women in the Caribbean increasingly have the skills, experience and ambition to become leaders in business and management. The Caribbean has a higher rate of female labour force participation (55 per cent) than the world average (49 per cent) and a smaller gender gap in the labour force participation of men and women (19 per cent compared to the world average of 27 per cent). Today, women outnumber men as tertiary graduates in the Caribbean. In Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, and Guyana women represent more than 70 per cent of all tertiary graduates.

As women progress in their careers, they encounter barriers to senior and top executive roles. The Caribbean is a world leader for the share of women managers, with 8 out of 11 countries reporting that 40 per cent or more of all managers are women and Jamaica reporting the highest proportion of women managers in the world at 59 per cent. As the seniority level rises, however, the share of women managers decreases. According to the 2017 survey of Caribbean companies, women represented 30 per cent of managers in junior, middle and senior levels but only 10 per cent of managers in top executive roles. Moreover, the proportion of companies reporting that they had no women managers grew at each stage of seniority, from an average of 16 per cent at junior levels to 34 per cent at the top executive level.

Notably, there remains a gap of women in top corporate leadership across the Caribbean. Results from the 2017 ILO Caribbean company survey found the representation of women in top management positions as follows:

- 27 per cent of chief executive officers (CEOs);
- 25 per cent of board members; and
- 18 per cent of board chairs.

Encouragingly, over 43 per cent of the surveyed Caribbean companies have exceeded the 30 per cent target of women board members that studies show is needed to create a critical mass and reap the benefits of gender diversity. Moreover, nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of Caribbean companies have achieved gender parity on their boards where the proportion of female board members is between 40 to 60 per cent. In addition, the proportion of no female boards in Caribbean companies surveyed is 19 per cent, significantly lower than the global average of 31 per cent. Increasing the number of women CEOs and women on boards is a key leverage point, and can create a multiplier effect for women at all levels of management across the Caribbean.

Much has been written about the business returns that gender diversity brings to company performance and economic growth. Within the Caribbean, nearly half (46 per cent) of companies surveyed reported a positive impact from gender diversity initiatives, with top benefits of attracting and retaining talent and improving company reputation. Among companies that reported a direct impact on profitability, most estimated returns between 5 to 15 per cent. While 87 per cent of companies are implementing at least one gender diversity initiative, efforts tend to focus on maternity leave (which is mandated by law) and human resource practices, with comparatively less uptake of family care policies and flexible work arrangements. Importantly, initiatives in the subregion are underway to promote greater representation of women in management and board positions with a number of EBMOs leading by example.

This report makes the case for companies and EBMOs to aspire to increased gender diversity and balanced representation. It illustrates that more can be done in the Caribbean subregion and improved business outcomes can be attained by working towards gender diversity.

## Abbreviations

ACT/EMP	Bureau for Employers' Activities
CEO	Chief executive officer
CSR	corporate social responsibility
EMBO	employer and business membership organization
GDP	gross domestic product
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics







# 1

## Introduction

Tapping into the talent pool of women in business and management has driven economic growth and development in many countries, including in the subregion of the Caribbean. Women's labour force participation in the Caribbean has been traditionally high and often outperforms neighbouring countries as well as many advanced economies. Despite positive trends, women in the Caribbean continue to face a number of barriers that limit their careers and possibly hold back business and economic growth.

The present report, *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in the Caribbean*, offers the most recent statistics, trends and information from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other sources.<sup>1</sup> The report builds on the regional report, *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Latin America and the Caribbean* to provide data on the Caribbean, including its small island States.

The lack of data on the private sector remains a key challenge in promoting women in business and management for the subregion. Often data for the Caribbean is merged with data from Latin America, making it difficult to assess the unique

1: This subregional report covers countries in the Caribbean where data were available over time according to the International Classification of Occupations or that had data disaggregated by sex.

2:  
The ILO classified companies as small, medium and large depending on the number of employees as follows: small companies employed 1–100 workers; medium companies employed 101–500 workers; and large companies employed over 501 workers. Of total surveyed companies in the Caribbean, 75 per cent were small, 18 per cent were medium and 4 per cent were large. Multinationals represented 21 per cent of companies while 76 per cent were domestic.

situation of women in Caribbean countries. Moreover, most studies on gender diversity and women in the talent pool are conducted in Europe and North America, and there are challenges in data collection and generating convincing evidence in the Caribbean.

This report on the Caribbean subregion aims to fill some of these gaps by combining available secondary data with the findings of the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 conducted by the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP). A total of 675 private sector companies were surveyed in 13 territories of the Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago (see Appendix for survey sample characteristics).

The survey captured the extent to which companies have policies and practices in place to promote women in management. Companies responded to questions about barriers to women's advancement and practical measures they would consider implementing. Much of the research literature on women in business and management focuses on large and multinational companies in developed economies, while the ILO Caribbean company survey included all sizes of companies. The majority of Caribbean respondents were domestic companies with fewer than 100 employees.<sup>2</sup>

The report identifies several barriers to women's advancement in business and management, as well as recommendations on how to overcome these barriers. Though female labour force participation is strong and several Caribbean countries are world leaders in terms of women in management, many gaps and challenges remain. In particular, women are more likely to be at risk of unemployment, to be managers in small enterprises and support functions, and to remain trapped in low to middle tiers of management. Insights from the Caribbean can provide new solutions to help women advance as employees, business leaders, and entrepreneurs.

Chapter 1 sets out the business case for advancing women in management including findings specific to the Caribbean. Chapter 2 provides an overview of women's growing labour force participation, and chapter 3 covers women's representation at all levels of management and tracks country level progress on women as managers, chief executive officers (CEOs) and board members. Chapter 4 looks at the social and cultural barriers to women's leadership, while chapter 5 highlights the expanding talent pool including women catching up as business owners and tertiary graduates. Finally, chapter 6 sets out priority actions that companies and employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) can take to accelerate change.







# 2

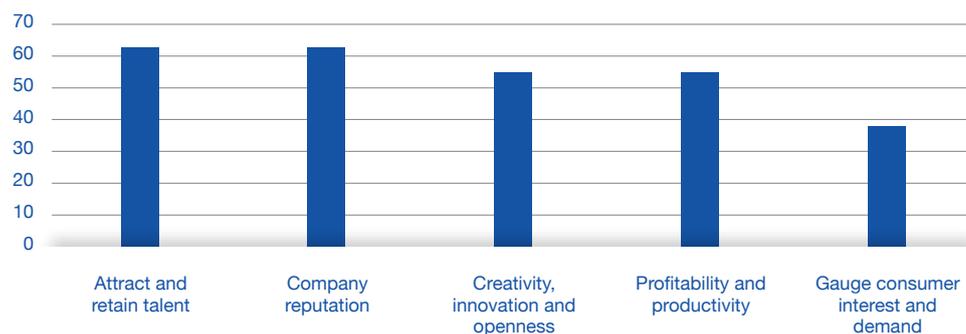
## The business case for advancing women in business and management

There is increasing evidence that companies embracing gender diversity grow their bottom line faster than those that do not. Greater gender diversity enables companies to access talent, improve their reputational status, harness diversity of thought for better decision-making and innovation, and gain better penetration into markets increasingly managed by women.

The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 asked companies whether gender equality initiatives had helped improve their bottom line. Nearly half (46 per cent) of all respondents reported a positive result from gender diversity and equality initiatives. Within those companies, the areas of greatest impact were increased ability to attract and retain talent and enhanced company reputation (figure 1). Of companies reporting a direct improvement in profitability and productivity, the majority estimated returns between 5 and 15 per cent to their bottom line.

3:  
Antigua and Barbuda, the  
Bahamas, Barbados, Belize,  
Dominica, Grenada, Guyana,  
Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint  
Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent  
and the Grenadines, Suriname,  
and Trinidad and Tobago

**Figure 1. Share of Caribbean enterprises reporting positive impacts of gender diversity and equality initiatives on their bottom line, 2017**



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

These findings reflect a growing number of studies that suggest women are an underleveraged resource for business and economic growth. The McKinsey Global Institute (2015) calculates that if women were to participate in the economy identically to men the potential boost to the world economy could be US\$28 trillion or 26 per cent of annual global gross domestic product (GDP). Over half (54 per cent) of this potential boost to GDP is correlated with increasing the labour force participation of women, in addition to more women moving from part-time to full-time work and to higher-productivity sectors. Another study identified women all over the world as the third largest productive and consumer market, and referred to them as the ‘third billion’ after China and India (PwC, 2012).

In a 2017 working paper, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that increasing women’s labour force participation could bring significant gains to GDP in several Caribbean countries. The potential boost to GDP depends on existing levels and patterns of women’s participation in each country. Achieving gender parity in labour force participation could drive GDP growth as high as 18 per cent in Belize, 16 per cent in Suriname, 13 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago, 12 per cent in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 8 per cent in Jamaica, 7 per cent in Saint Lucia and 6 per cent in Barbados. Closing other gender gaps such as equalizing the number of women as employers and self-employed workers, and increasing gender equality across occupational categories could boost GDP even further, ranging from 11 per cent in Saint Lucia up to 27 per cent in Suriname.

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), between 2000 and 2010, the increase in women’s income in Latin America and the Caribbean contributed to reducing extreme poverty by 30 per cent (IDB, 2015). Across the entire region, relative to men, women who are wage earners invest higher shares of their incomes in food, health and education of their families. This has contributed to achieving upward social mobility and breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Investing in the advancement of women in Caribbean economies stands to bring additional benefits to corporate performance and regional growth.

A more recent study by the IDB evaluated the productivity of women-led companies across 13 Caribbean countries<sup>3</sup> (Moore, Presbitero and Rabellotti, 2017). The study found women-led and women-owned companies had the same productivity as comparable companies led by men. The study also countered common assumptions about women’s risk aversion, finding no evidence that women-led companies were any less innovative or less likely to export, two characteristics that have been associated with gender composition in other studies. The research also

suggests that helping women business owners access finance and overcome barriers to growth could drive even stronger GDP gains in the subregion.



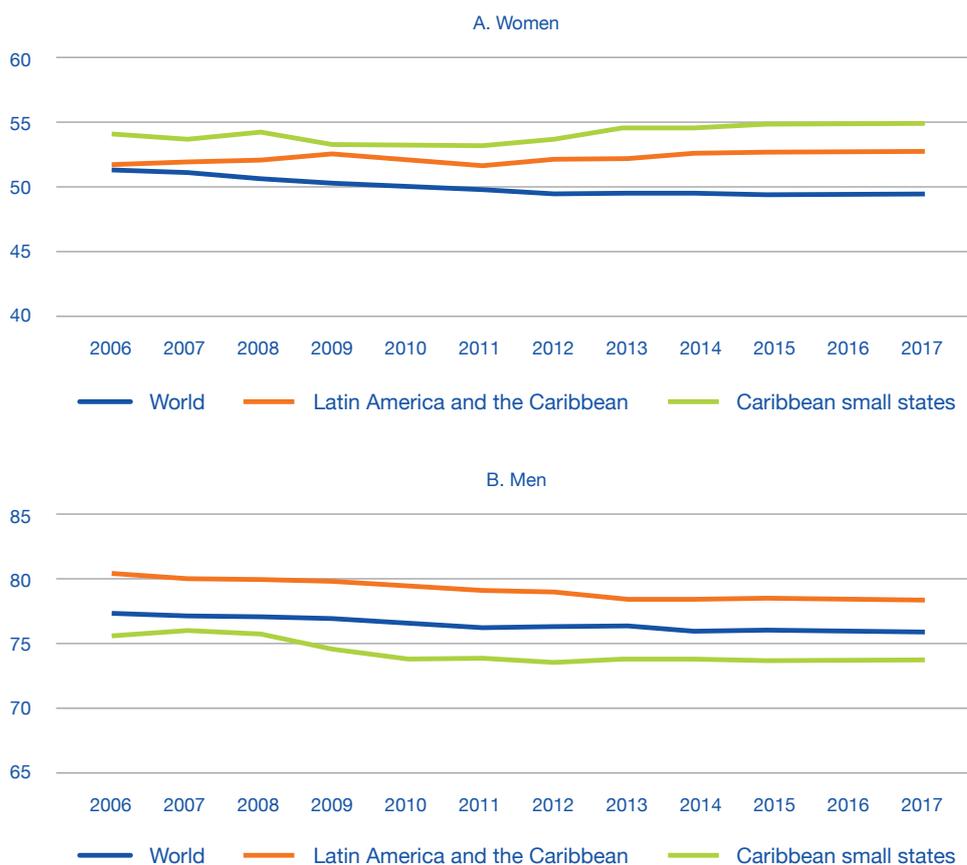


# 3

## Women in labour markets in the Caribbean

The Caribbean has traditionally had strong performance in terms of women's labour force participation. Between 2006 and 2017 women's labour force participation rates changed little and remained high compared to the wider Latin America and the Caribbean region and the world. In 2017, the average labour force participation in the Caribbean was 54.8 per cent for women and 73.9 per cent for men. The participation rate for women is slightly higher in the Caribbean subregion than in Latin America and the Caribbean overall at 52.7 per cent, and the world at 49.4 per cent. Despite increasing labour force participation of women, a gender gap of 19.1 per cent remains between women and men in the Caribbean, which is smaller than the 26.7 per cent gap at the global level.

**Figure 2. Average labour force participation rate by sex, 2006–17, world, Latin America and the Caribbean and Caribbean small States**



Note: Caribbean small States include the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

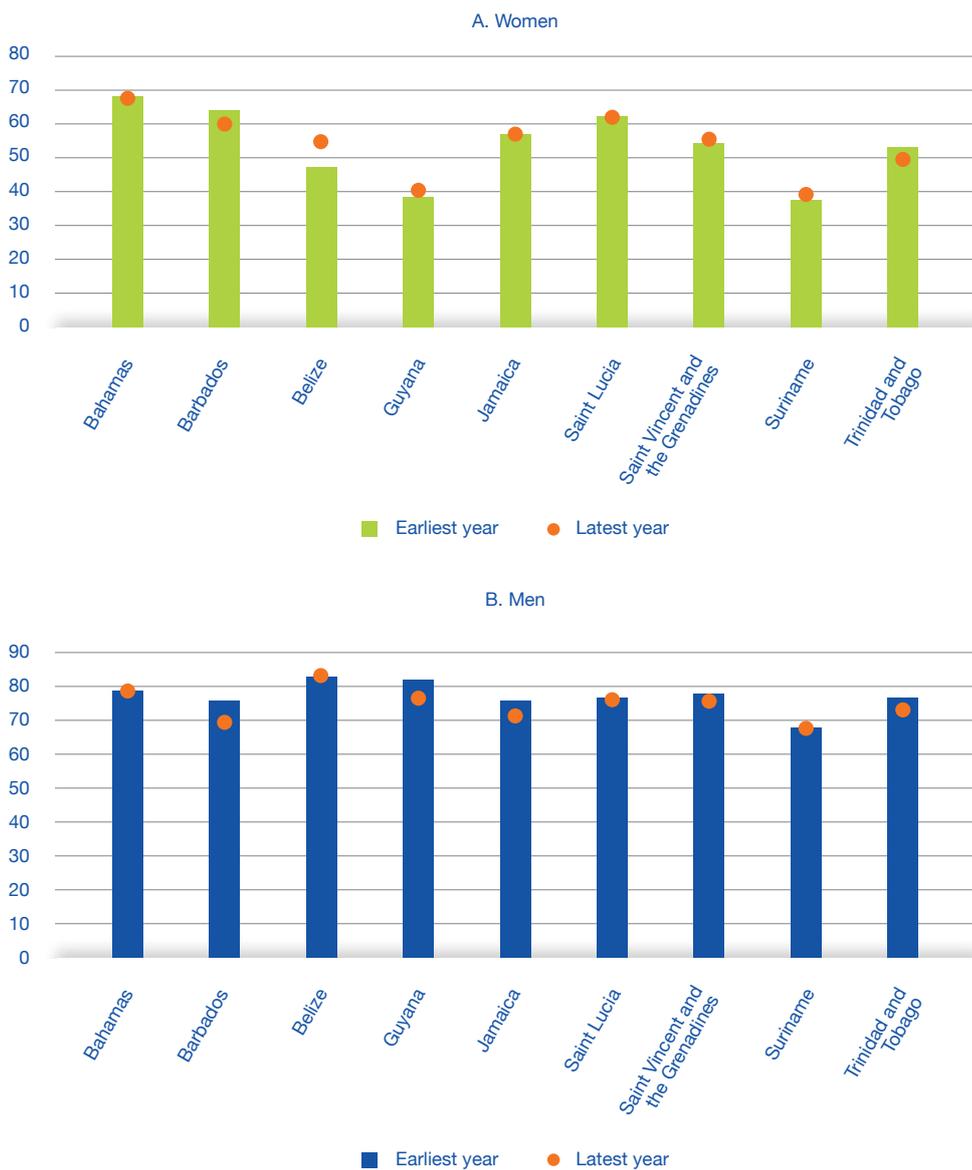
Sources: ILO, 2016a; ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [6 Mar. 2017].

### 3.1 Women’s labour force participation rates increasing in most countries

Women’s labour force participation has increased over the past decade in seven of the nine countries in the Caribbean for which data were available. Overall, women’s labour force participation is highest in the Bahamas, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Jamaica and Belize. It is worth highlighting the increase of 21 per cent in women’s labour force participation in Belize, which rose from 47 per cent to 56.7 per cent over the past decade. However, during this same period, women’s labour force participation decreased in two countries in the subregion, namely Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

Gender gaps in labour force participation remain despite strong female labour force participation in the Caribbean. As illustrated by figure 3 (panels A and B), a larger share of men than women participate in the labour force in the Caribbean, with gender gaps ranging from 8 per cent in Barbados to 35 per cent in Guyana according to the latest data available.

Figure 3. Labour force participation rates by sex, selected Caribbean countries, earliest and latest years

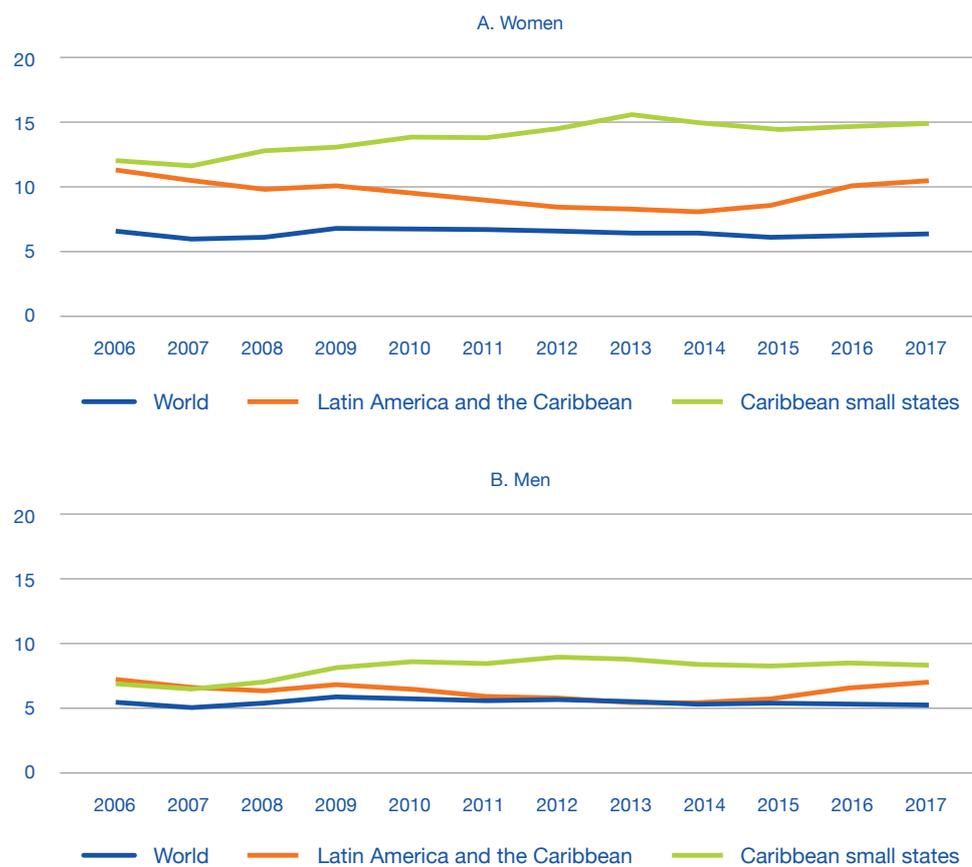


Source: ILO, 2016a; ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [6 Mar. 2017].

### 3.2 Women are more at risk of unemployment

Both women and men in the Caribbean face a higher risk of unemployment compared to the world average. In 2017, the average unemployment rate for women in the Caribbean was 14.7 per cent compared to 8.5 per cent for men. The unemployment rate for women is 10.4 per cent in the wider region of Latin America and the Caribbean, and 6.2 per cent globally (figure 4).

**Figure 4. Average unemployment rate by sex, 2006–17, world, Latin America and the Caribbean and Caribbean small States**



Source: ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [6 Mar. 2017].







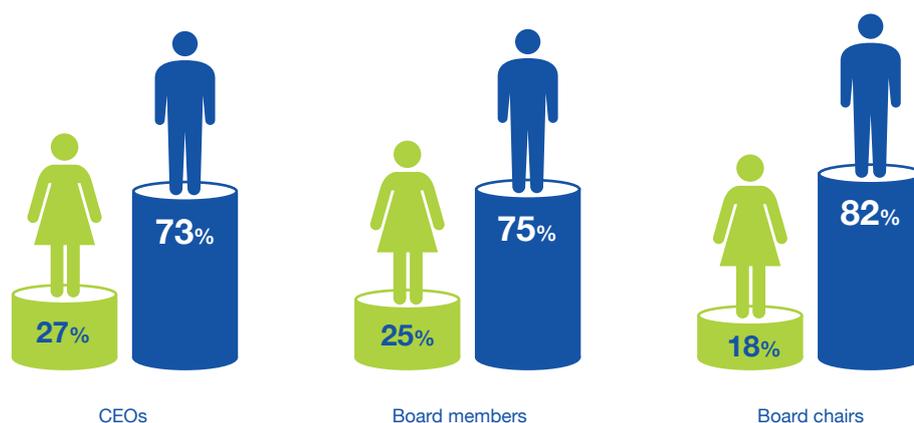
# 4

## Women in business leadership in the Caribbean

The case for increasing the number of women in top management and on company boards to enhance business outcomes builds as new data and research emerge. Despite increasing evidence of the benefits of gender equality, there are challenges to the advancement of women in business and management that indicate enhanced company efforts are necessary. Those challenges perpetuate gender imbalances particularly at the executive level and in decision-making. This chapter outlines progress and remaining challenges, including the leaking pipeline and concentration of women managers in support functions.

Results from the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 found that women in the Caribbean make up 27 per cent of CEOs, 25 per cent of board members and 18 per cent of board chairs (figure 5).

Figure 5. Gender distribution of CEOs, board members and board chairs in the Caribbean



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey 2017.

#### 4.1 Women through the managerial ranks: The leaking pipeline

To ensure that women's career paths lead to senior and executive management, businesses can strategically build the pool of qualified women. This means enabling women to progress into and beyond middle management and gain appropriate experience for advancement to higher echelons. Although many women enter the pipeline that leads to top management positions, many drop out along the way, a phenomenon known as the "leaking pipeline". To overcome this obstacle to achieving gender balance at highest levels of management, the first step is to understand how women's career patterns are different to men's.

The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 provided evidence of the leaking pipeline phenomenon for the subregion (table 1). Few companies reported gender balance (indicated by 41–50 per cent of positions filled by women or men) at different management levels. Moreover, as the level of management rises, so does the proportion of companies reporting no women managers: 16 per cent of companies report no women at the junior manager level, rising to 19 per cent for middle managers, 21 per cent for senior managers and 34 per cent for top executives.

**Table 1. Representation of women at different management levels in the Caribbean, Latin America and the Caribbean and the world, share of total companies, 2013 and 2017**

Level	Gender composition	Caribbean, 2017	Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013	World, 2013
Supervisory or junior management	No women	16	33	10
	Less than 30% women	52	57	61
	Women are 41–50%	10	9	13
Middle management	No women	19	20	10
	Less than 30% women	52	54	62
	Women are 41–50%	13	14	15
Senior management	No women	21	14	21
	Less than 30% women	52	56	71
	Women are 41–50%	13	15	10
Top executive	No women	34	32	34
	Less than 30% women	62	57	74
	Women are 41–50%	12	7	8

Note: Caribbean data include responses from 675 companies in 13 territories. Latin America and the Caribbean data include responses of 63 companies in Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Global data include responses of over 1,300 companies in 39 countries.

Source: ILO Global company survey, 2013 and ILO Caribbean company survey 2017.

The Caribbean is a world leader in women's representation at the top executive level, with 12 per cent of companies reporting gender balance at this level compared to 8 per cent globally. However, the Caribbean underperforms the world average in the recruitment and retention of women through lower levels of management. A higher proportion of companies in the Caribbean had no women at the junior and middle management levels (16 and 19 per cent respectively) compared to the global average of 10 per cent for each category.

A threshold of 30 per cent representation of women is considered the critical mass to yield positive gains from gender diversity. The ILO surveys showed that more than half of respondent companies had not reached this threshold at any level of management, either in the Caribbean or globally. However, 52 per cent of companies in the Caribbean had some women in senior management (but not over the 30 per cent threshold for a critical mass), compared to 56 per cent in the wider region of Latin America and the Caribbean and 71 per cent globally.

### The leaking pipeline varies by country

Across the Caribbean, companies reported an average of 39 per cent women in junior management roles, 38 per cent in middle management, 37 per cent in senior management, and 31 per cent in top executive roles. However, the subregional averages mask significant variation by country and are skewed by a small number of outliers. A more accurate picture of women in management is provided by calculating the median which finds 30 per cent women managers in junior, middle and senior management levels and 10 per cent women in top executive roles. Top performers for women at all levels are Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda, with 33 and 25 per cent respectively of top executive posts held by women (table 2).

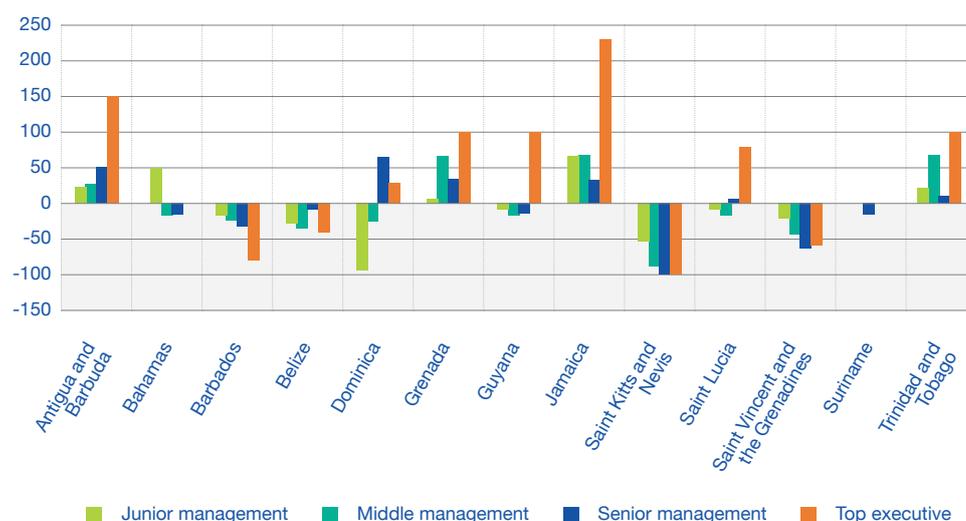
**Table 2. Share of women managers at different management levels and median of selected Caribbean countries, 2017**

Country	Junior management	Middle management	Senior management	Top executive
Antigua and Barbuda	37	38	45	25
Bahamas	45	25	25	10
Barbados	25	23	20	2
Belize	21	20	27	6
Dominica	2	23	50	13
Grenada	32	50	40	20
Guyana	28	25	26	20
Jamaica	50	50	40	33
Saint Kitts and Nevis	14	4	0	0
Saint Lucia	28	25	32	18
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	24	17	11	4
Suriname	30	30	25	10
Trinidad and Tobago	37	50	33	20
<b>Subregional median</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

Country performance on women's representation at each level of management can be measured in terms of its difference from the median for the Caribbean (figure 6). Women are more strongly represented at all levels in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago compared to the median. The small island States of Barbados, Belize, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines tend to perform below the median.

**Figure 6. Share of women managers in Caribbean companies compared to subregional average, 2017**

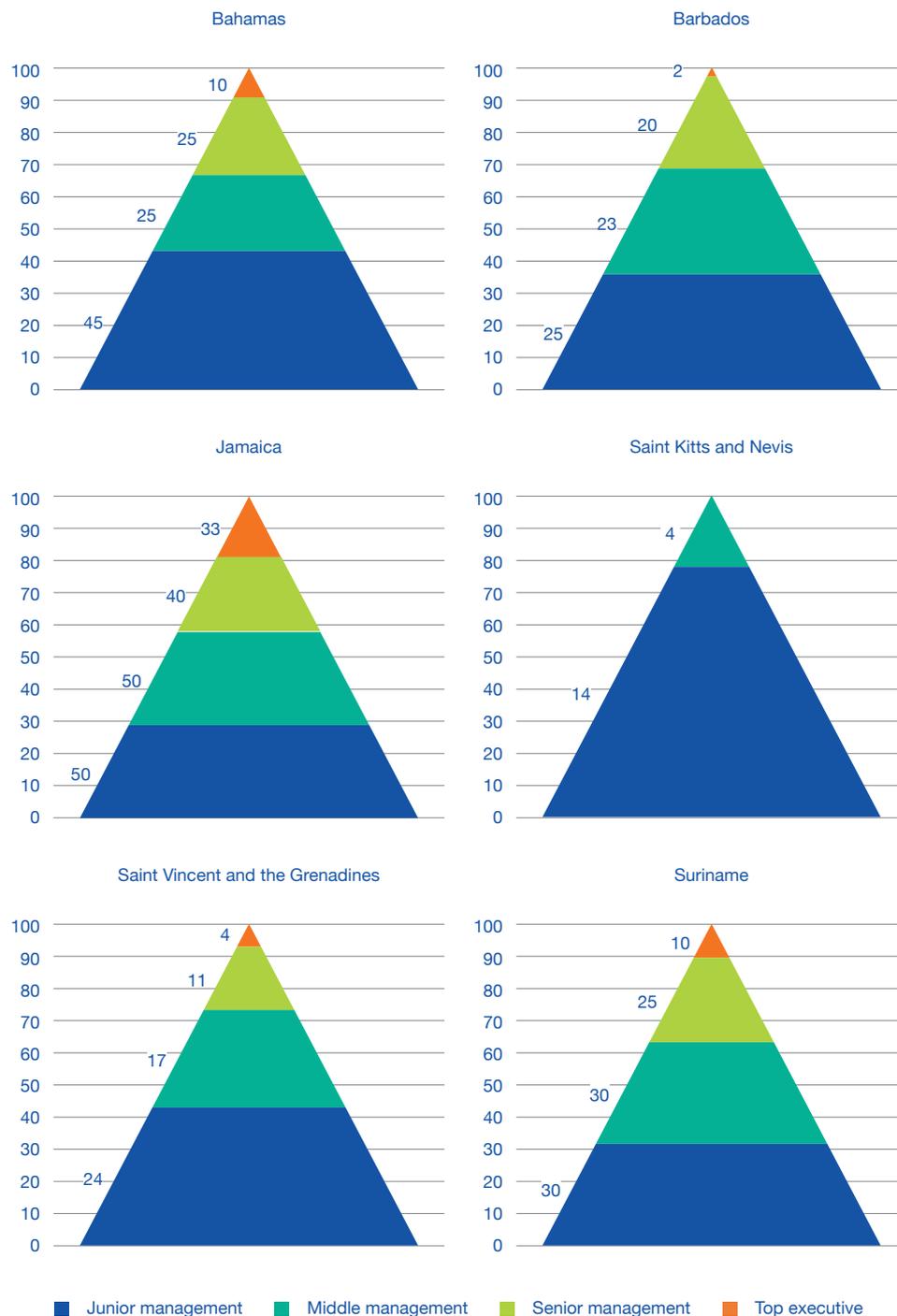


Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

Another way to visualize the problem of the leaking pipeline is to look at the pyramid structure of women in management positions (figure 7). In the majority

of Caribbean countries, as the seniority level rises, the representation of women decreases. This creates a pyramid structure with a strong base of women in junior managerial roles, a smaller share of women in middle and senior management, and an even smaller share of women in top executive roles. The metaphor of a “glass ceiling” is often used to describe the barriers that prevent women from reaching the top of the hierarchy. Data from the Caribbean suggest that women move on to top executive jobs at a lower rate than men do. Ensuring that women progress through the middle of the pipeline along career paths that lead to senior and executive roles remains a challenge in all countries of the Caribbean.

**Figure 7. Pyramid structure of the share of women at different levels of management, selected Caribbean countries, 2017**

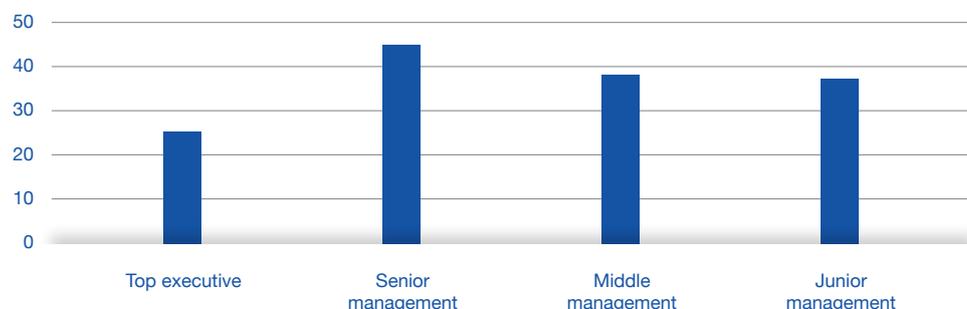


Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

4:  
The number of Caribbean companies surveyed by the World Bank is as follows: Antigua and Barbuda (151), the Bahamas (150), Belize (150), Dominica (150), Grenada (153), Guyana (165), Jamaica (376), Saint Kitts and Nevis (150), Saint Lucia (150), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (154), Suriname (152) and Trinidad and Tobago (370).

The share of women at different levels of management in Antigua and Barbuda does not conform to the pyramid shape. Instead there is relatively higher representation of women in senior management compared to other levels. Nonetheless, the share of women tapers off from the junior to the middle management level, and few women make it to the top executive level (figure 8).

**Figure 8. Share of women at different levels of management, Antigua and Barbuda, 2017**

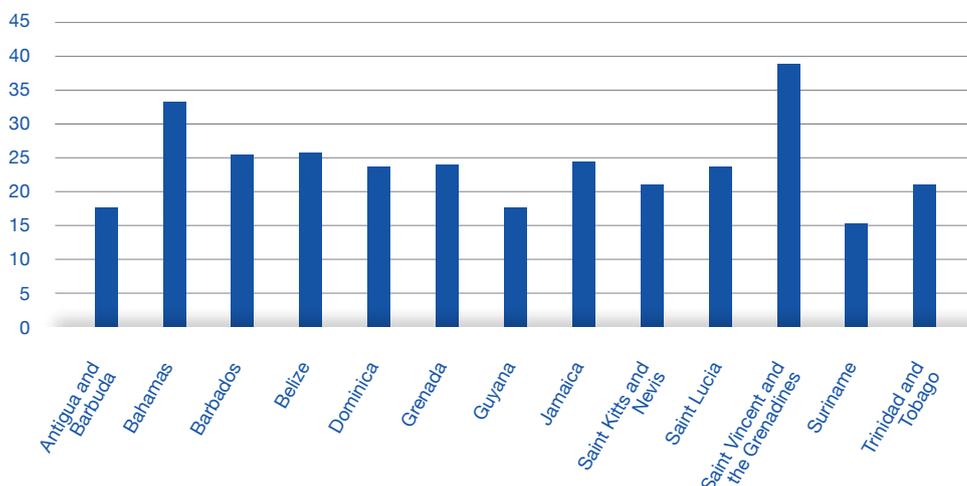


Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

### Female top managers

The World Bank enterprise surveys provide additional insight into the gender composition of managerial levels and cover 131,000 enterprises in 139 countries, including 2,271 enterprises in the Caribbean (figure 9).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 9. Share of enterprises with at least one top female manager, selected Caribbean countries, latest available year**



Note: Latest surveys conducted for Caribbean countries in 2010. Top managers are defined as the highest ranking executives with titles such as chairman/chairwoman, CEO, managing director, president, executive director and executive vice-president, among others.

Source: World Bank, 2017.

Aligned with the ILO Caribbean company survey, the World Bank enterprise surveys found a high share of female top managers in the Caribbean. On average, 23.8 per cent of enterprises in the Caribbean have women as top managers compared to 19.4 per cent for Latin America and 18.6 per cent for the world.

Compared to other world regions, Latin America and the Caribbean has the third highest proportion of enterprises with a woman as a top manager (21.4 per cent). The two higher ranking regions are East Asia and the Pacific and high-income countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), at 31.9 per cent and 22.1 per cent, respectively (table 3).

**Table 3. Share of enterprises with a top female manager by region, latest available year**

Regions	Share of enterprises
<b>Global sample of 139 countries</b>	<b>18.6</b>
East Asia and Pacific	31.9
High income non-OECD	22.1
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>21.4</b>
Europe and Central Asia	18.6
High income OECD	16.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	15.9
South Asia	11.0
Middle East and North Africa	5.1

Note: Groups according to the World Bank country classification, based on latest enterprise surveys.

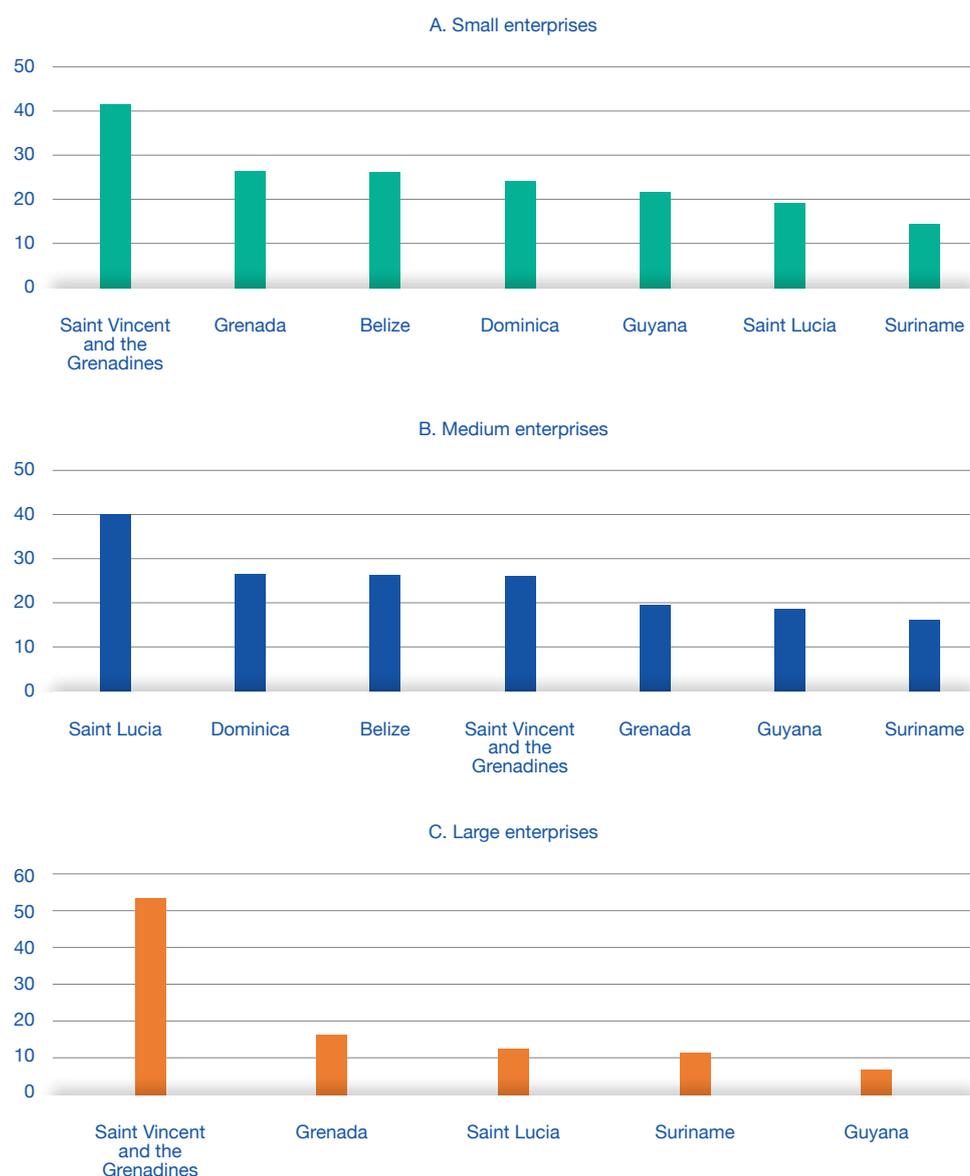
Source: World Bank, 2017.

5: The World Bank classifications of enterprise size are as follows: small (from 5 to 19 employees); medium (between 20 and 99 employees); and large (over 100 employees). Note that the ILO Caribbean company survey classifications differ. In smaller economies, there were proportionally fewer large enterprises in most cases.

### Women are more likely to be top managers in small and medium-sized companies

The enterprise survey data from the World Bank contained roughly similar proportions of small, medium-sized and large enterprises in the sample from each country.<sup>5</sup> The data illustrate that small and medium-sized enterprises in most countries of the Caribbean are more likely to have at least one women in top management than the largest enterprises (figure 10). On average, 24 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Caribbean had at least one women in top management, compared to 20 per cent of large enterprises. It is worth noting the impact of the high share of women top managers in large companies in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, at 53 per cent. When excluding this outlier, the average share of large companies in the remaining Caribbean countries that have a woman top manager decreases to 12 per cent.

**Figure 10. Share of enterprises by size with a top female manager, selected Caribbean countries, latest available years**



Source: World Bank, 2017.

## 4.2 Women CEOs: Few and far between

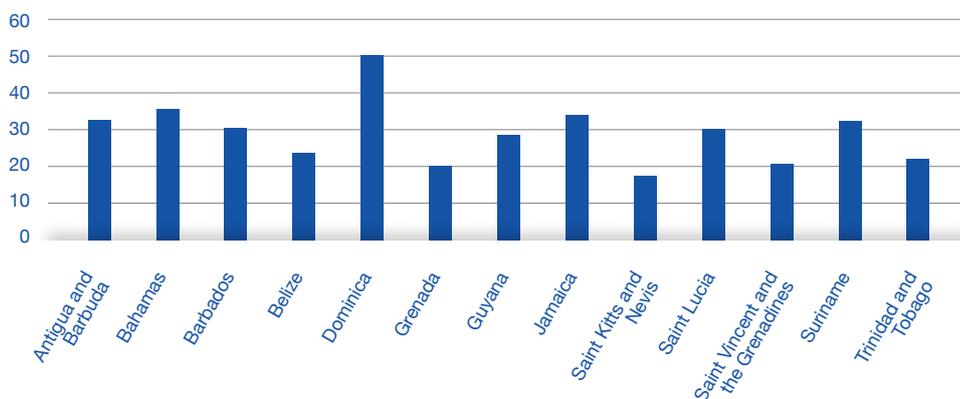
The number of women CEOs remains extremely low around the world, and women have not yet advanced into these roles on a large scale. Increasing the proportion of women CEOs is important for several reasons: CEOs are often members of the board and report to the board; women CEOs provide role models for both men and women in the company; CEOs have a high level of responsibility to deliver on the company's objectives and targets; and the CEO mandate is usually more operational than board membership.

Few studies have provided data on the percentage of women CEOs over time. A 2016 regional study found that only 4.2 per cent 1,259 listed companies in Latin American and Caribbean countries had a female CEO (Flabbi, Piras and Abrahams, 2016, p. 7). In contrast to these findings, a 2016 study conducted by the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF) of its national member companies found that Latin America and the Caribbean was ahead of the other regions when it came to the share of women CEOs. Of its members in the

region, 38.5 per cent had women CEOs, compared to Europe at 19.6 per cent, North America at 18.8 per cent, Asia and Oceania at 7.7 per cent and Africa at 0.0 per cent (ICMIF, 2016).

Similarly, the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 found on average 27 per cent of CEOs were women. Survey respondents in Dominica reported the highest share of women CEOs at 50 per cent. This in part reflects characteristics of the survey sample. Few companies from Dominica reported a corporate structure with the top position of CEO, perhaps because Dominica has a higher share of smaller sized companies or family-run businesses. The share of companies with a female CEO in countries in the Caribbean ranges between 20 and 35 per cent, with the exception of Dominica as explained above and Saint Kitts and Nevis at 17 per cent (figure 11).

**Figure 11. Share of enterprises with a women CEO, selected Caribbean countries, 2017**



Source: ILO company survey, 2017.

### 4.3 The need for more women on boards

Board membership is one of the highest levels of enterprise decision-making. In recent years, the gender balance of company boards, particularly for publicly listed companies on the world's stock exchanges, has come under scrutiny and the low number of women in this role became a cause for concern. Countries have experimented with voluntary initiatives and targets, as well as legislated quotas. Stock exchange institutions issued governance codes requiring public disclosure on the gender composition of company boards and explanations for "why not" if diversity targets were not achieved. These initiatives have resulted in a slow but steady increase in the number of women on company boards over the past decade.

In 2016, IDB examined the gender balance of the leadership of 1,259 listed companies in Latin American and Caribbean countries (Flabbi, Piras and Abrahams, 2016). It found that on average 8.5 per cent of board members were women. Compared to the rest of Latin America, the Caribbean had a higher percentage of female leaders, at 18 per cent of board members and 29 per cent of executives.

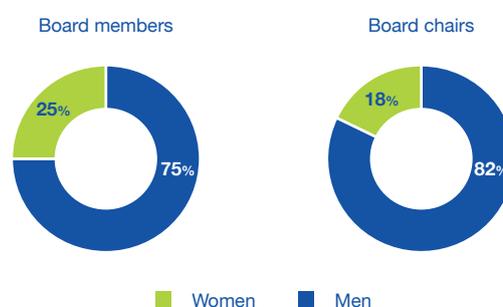
Progress can be seen in Jamaica for example. By April 2017, 22 per cent of 507 directorships for listed companies in Jamaica were held by women, and three of these were chaired by women (Financial Gleaner, 13 Apr. 2017).

Among the 53 companies listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, women make up 17 per cent of board directors. In only two was the chairperson a woman. Of the 10 companies on the Barbados Stock Exchange, 11 per cent of board members were women and on the East Caribbean Securities Exchange, of nine companies listed, 23 per cent of board members were women.

Source: Suzanne Ffolkes-Goldson (ed.), 2016. *Commonwealth Caribbean Corporate Governance* (Routledge).

The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 asked companies to report on the number of men and women in their board level positions (figure 12). It found on average women represented 25 per cent of board members and 18 per cent of board chairs. The representation of women on boards as well as their ability to move into top positions as board chairs is a key metric to understand the advancement of women in corporate leadership.

**Figure 12. Gender distribution of board level management in the Caribbean, 2017**



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

Over 43 per cent of surveyed companies in the Caribbean have exceeded the 30 per cent target of women on boards compared to 32 per cent globally (table 4). Moreover, 24 per cent of Caribbean companies reported having met gender parity on their boards (shown as between 40 to 60 cent women on boards), which is near double the global response of 13 per cent. The share of no women boards was also significantly lower for the Caribbean at 19 per cent compared to 31 per cent globally.

**Table 4. Composition of company boards in the Caribbean and the world, share of total companies, 2013 and 2017**

Share of women on boards	Share of companies	
	Caribbean, 2017	World, 2013
0%	19	31
1-10%	12	12
11-29%	26	25
30-39%	10	9
40-60%	24	13
61-100%	9	10

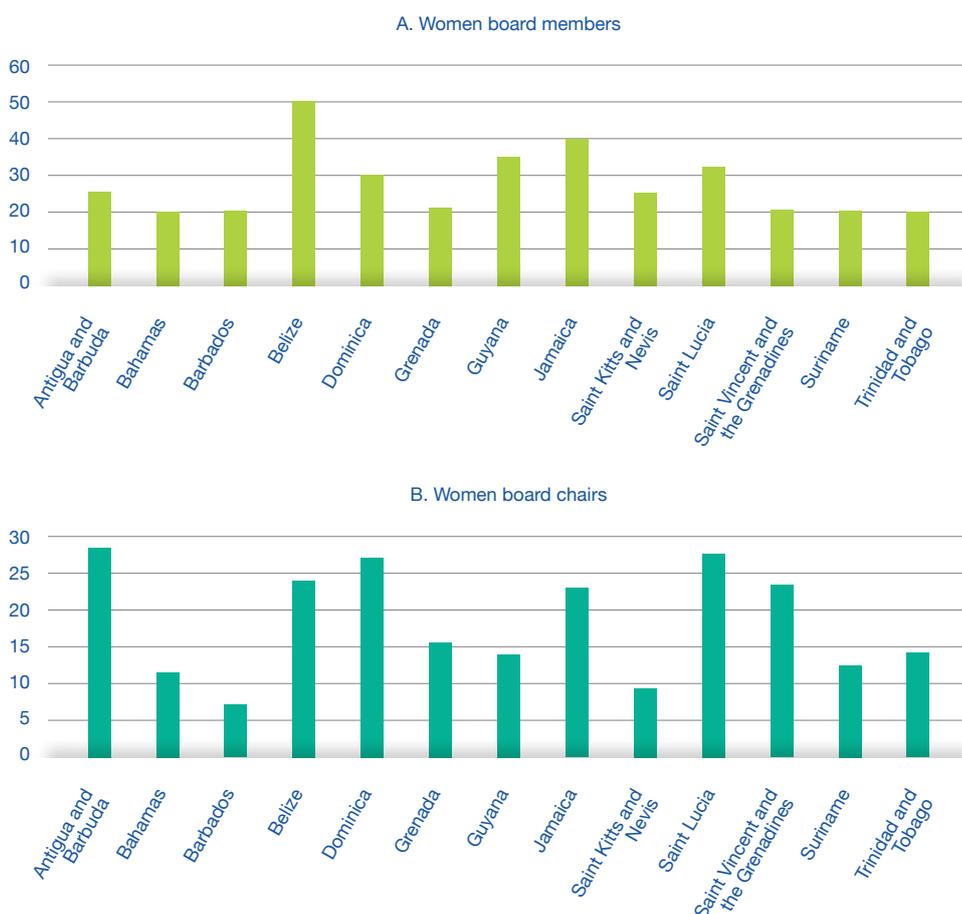
Note: Caribbean data include responses from 675 companies of which 432 responded to the survey question related to company boards. Global data include responses of over 1,300 companies of which 413 responded to the survey question on company boards.

Source: ILO global company survey, 2013 and ILO Caribbean company survey 2017.

## The gender composition of boards varies by country

Across the Caribbean, the ILO survey found a wide variation by country in the gender composition of company boards (figure 13). Five countries have achieved the 30 per cent target of women on boards led by Belize (50 per cent), Jamaica (40 per cent), Guyana (35 per cent), Saint Lucia (32 per cent) and Dominica (30 per cent). All countries in the subregion have reached a minimum of 20 per cent representation of women on company boards, with 7 out of 13 countries reporting averages of 25 per cent or above. The share of women on boards in the surveyed companies appears to be higher the share of women on boards of companies listed on the stock exchange, mirroring the global trend that the bigger the organization or company is, the fewer women there are in top decision-making positions.

Figure 13. Women's representation on company boards as members and board chairs, selected Caribbean countries, 2017



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

In addition to joining the company board, the roles and responsibilities of women board members are an important factor for their advancement and impact on decision making. Caribbean countries surveyed report a relatively high share of women as board chairs led by Antigua and Barbuda (29 per cent), Saint Lucia (28 per cent) and Dominica (27 per cent). Most countries fall within the 10 to 20 per cent range for women board chairs, with the exception of Barbados at 7 per cent.

In many cases, including in the Latin American and Caribbean region, women often become board members of companies run by their family. These women may have merely a token role as members of the board, but it is not necessarily so. Today, many women have the education, skills and experience to take control of the

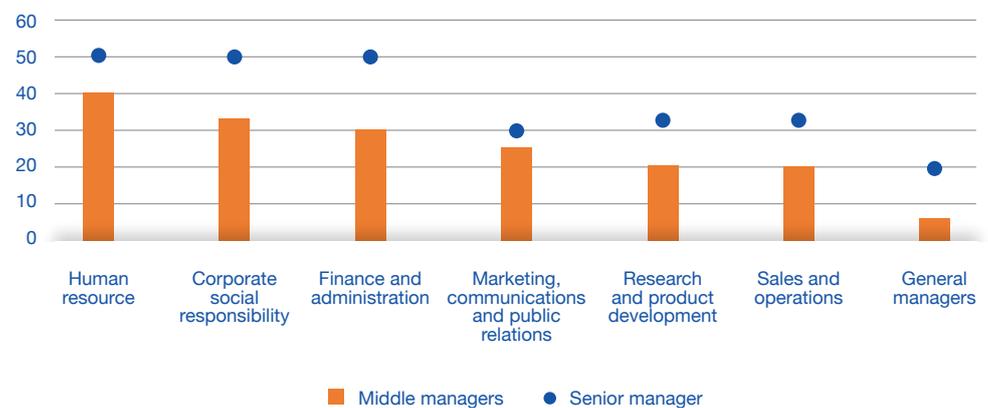
family business. Globally, initiatives like the “30% Club” are gaining momentum with corporate pledges to meet the minimum target of 30 per cent representation of women on boards. Studies show that 30 per cent representation of women on boards is needed to reap the full benefits of gender diversity on business outcomes.

#### 4.4 Women are concentrated in specific management functions

After men and women enter a company or organization, their career paths commonly diverge. Women, even as managers, tend to perform support functions like human resources and administration, while men are more commonly engaged in strategic and operational management. Thus, fewer women are exposed to the range of company operations and few gain general management experience across several functional areas. Exposure to the range of company operations across functional areas is typically required for advancement to the highest levels of management, and in many cases, women’s work experience does not lead to the executive level. This phenomenon is often referred to as occupational segregation or “glass walls” that limit women’s career progression, and it is one of the reasons women are less likely to reach the top executive level than their male peers.

In the Caribbean, as in other parts of the world, women are more likely to perform managerial functions in human resources, corporate social responsibility and finance and administration (figure 14). Women represent half of senior managers in these categories in Caribbean countries, while women represent 30–40 per cent of middle managers. Both in the subregion and globally, few companies have a sizeable percentage of women in operations and sales management, research and product development, and general management. As a result, women managers gain experience, but not in all the areas needed for career advancement to the top of the enterprise hierarchy.

Figure 14. Share of women by managerial role and level in Caribbean companies, 2017



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

The data from companies in the Caribbean show a higher share of women senior managers (20–33 per cent) than middle managers (6–20 per cent) in core functions like research and product development, sales and operations, and general management. The advancement of women into senior management roles can help pave the way for more women to reach the top executive level. However, the lower representation of women among middle managers in those functions shows a gap in the pipeline that leads to the highest levels of management and a smaller talent pool of women in the Caribbean who can climb the corporate ranks.







# 5

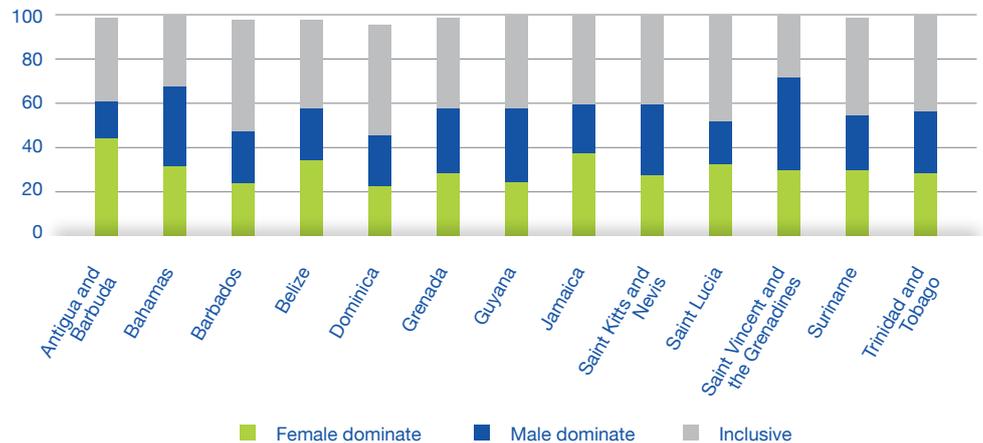
## Social and cultural barriers to women's leadership

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to guide the unequal division of labour between women and men at home and in the workplace. Around the globe many people still believe that women's primary role is to be a wife, mother and homemaker, nevertheless many women prefer to pursue fulfilling careers in addition to their family life. Employers are adapting to those changes and they are beginning to enable their staff, both men and women, to balance work and family life. Companies are adapting, but there is a concern that the cost burden of hiring and promoting women will be greater than men. Some assume that women will eventually leave the enterprise for family reasons and investments in training will be lost. Both conscious and unconscious gender bias in the workplace can create invisible barriers that limit women's career choices and advancement to senior levels of the hierarchy.

Company culture is derived from national culture and leadership practices which impact views on gender diversity. It is this culture that grooms and influences an individual's perception of equality and diversity. Results of the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 suggest that cultures in the subregion provide strong support for gender equality and women's empowerment compared to cultures in other

regions. Of the 675 companies surveyed, 40 per cent identified their corporate culture as being inclusive, while 31 per cent identified as having a female dominated culture and 28 per cent identified as having a male dominated culture (figure 15). Across the subregion, male dominated cultures were more often reported in Saint Vincent, the Bahamas, Guyana and Saint Kitts and Nevis, while female dominated cultures were more often reported in Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Belize and Saint Lucia.

**Figure 15. Perceptions of company culture, selected Caribbean countries, 2017**



Note: Countries that do not reach 100 per cent reflect respondents who did not know or did not respond to this question.  
Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

Concerning women’s leadership abilities, 92 per cent of respondents from the ILO Caribbean company survey agreed that men and women are equally effective as leaders but only 62 per cent believed that women with equal skills and qualifications have the same opportunity to reach top management positions. Despite overall positive trends, 29 per cent of respondents felt that women face greater difficulty than men in reaching the top management level. Within companies with male dominated cultures, 46 per cent of respondents agreed that women face more difficulties. Companies with male dominated cultures also reported fewer women in top executive roles, at an average of 15 per cent compared to 46 per cent for companies identified as having either female dominated or gender inclusive culture. These results point to the many subtle barriers that women must overcome to advance their careers that their male peers do not encounter, especially in male dominated environments.

**Question:** Why is it that when women are being sought for company board positions today in Trinidad and Tobago, they are just not stepping up to these opportunities, even though they are well qualified and their children are already raised?

**Answer:** They just do not “feel good enough”!

Source: ILO interview with Sharon Christopher, Deputy CEO for Operations and Administration, First Citizens Bank Trinidad and Tobago, 2015.

The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 also asked questions about performance requirements that can affect women’s success in the corporate world. A total of 67 per cent of respondents agreed that top level careers demand ‘anytime, anywhere’ availability to work and geographic mobility. The view that women are less willing

to relocate or less able to balance 24-hour availability with family responsibilities is a form of gender bias that works against female candidates for promotion to the top level. The ability to balance work and family life is also impacted by how supportive a company's policies and culture are towards issues like paternity leave, career breaks and flexible work.

The ILO global company survey 2013 asked respondents to rank in order of importance a set of 15 barriers to women's leadership. Among respondents from Jamaica, the highest-ranking barriers were societal gender roles and lack of flexible work solutions (table 5). Male dominated corporate culture was highlighted as another prominent barrier, often manifested through gender bias in recruitment and promotion, and through stereotypes against women in the workplace. Respondents also mentioned work-family imbalances between genders, with women having more family responsibilities than men and men in turn not being encouraged to take on family responsibilities.

**Table 5. Ranking of barriers to women's leadership in Jamaica, 2013**

Ranking	Identified barrier
1	Roles assigned by society to men and women
2	Lack of flexible work solutions
3	Masculine corporate culture
4	Women have more family responsibilities than men
5	Inherent gender bias in recruitment and promotion
6	Lack of company equality policy and programmes
7	Women with insufficient general or line management experience
8	Stereotypes against women
9	Men not encouraged to take leave for family responsibilities
10	Few role models for women
11	Lack of leadership training for women
12	Gender equality policies in place but not implemented
13	Management generally viewed as a man's job
14	No strategy for retention of skilled women
15	Inadequate labour and non-discrimination laws

Source: ILO global company survey, 2013.

Comparing survey results suggests there is a knowledge gap about the challenges women face in reaching top management. While 62 per cent of respondents in the Caribbean believe that women have the same opportunity to reach top management as men, data on women managers show only 12 per cent of companies have a gender balanced representation at top executive level and 34 per cent of companies have no women at the top executive level (ILO Caribbean company survey 2017). Furthermore, although Jamaica is among the top ranked countries in the world for women in management, respondents from Jamaica identify gender roles, masculine corporate culture and biases in human resource practices as some of the top barriers to women's leadership. Taken together, these results suggest there may be a lack of awareness in Caribbean companies about the different ways that social and cultural barriers can prevent women from reaching the top management level.





# 6

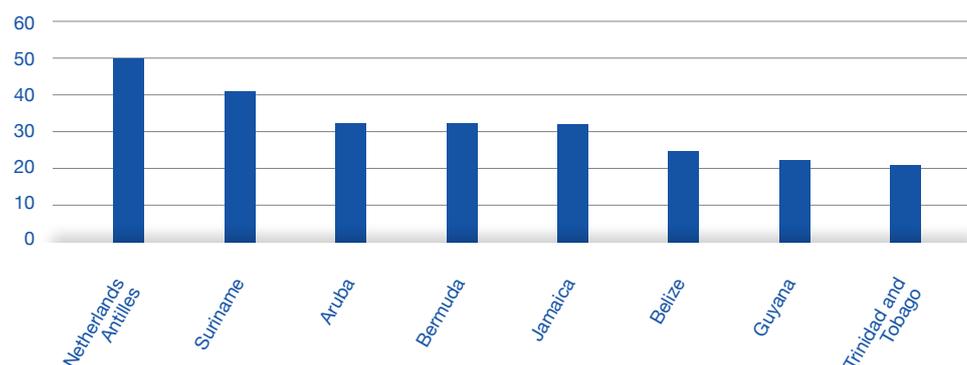
## The expanding talent pool

Globally, employers lament the scarcity of talent and skills in the labour market despite a significant pool of unemployed and underemployed workers. Women may well represent an underutilized talent pool, and gender stereotyping of women's roles and abilities compared to men may mean that companies overlook qualified women. Women have surpassed men in educational levels in the Caribbean as in most other regions and are already a significant proportion of managers and self-employed entrepreneurs. This chapter shows that the number of women in the talent pool of is expanding.

### 6.1 Women advancing as business owners

A gradually increasing number of women have become business owners and employers in the Caribbean. More than 30 per cent of employers are women in more than half the Caribbean countries for which data are available (figure 16). This is higher than the average for Latin America where 20–30 per cent of employers are women.

**Figure 16. Share of women employers in selected Caribbean countries, latest years**

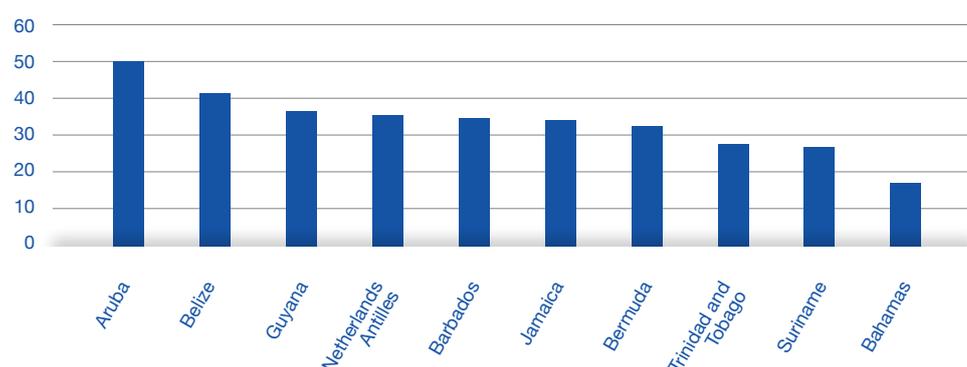


Note: Data are based on official estimates and national surveys: Aruba (2010); Netherlands Antilles (2011); Bermuda, Jamaica (2012); Suriname (2014); Belize, Trinidad and Tobago (2016); and Guyana (2017). Data for Netherlands Antilles and Suriname only refer to urban areas.

Source: ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [15 Mar. 2018].

While an increasing number of women are employers, women also make up a significant proportion of own account workers who run small and micro enterprises. In most countries in the Caribbean for which data are available, around 30 per cent or more of own-account workers are women (figure 17).

**Figure 17. Share of women own-account workers in selected Caribbean countries, latest years**



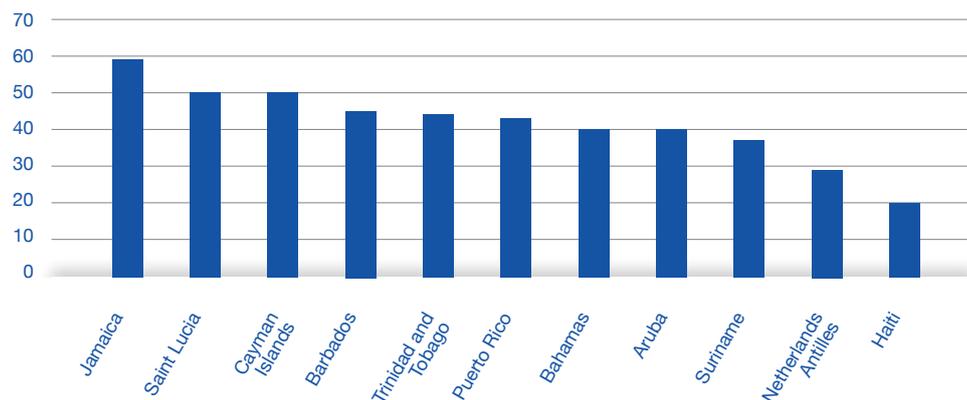
Note: Data are based on official estimates and national surveys: Aruba (2007); Jamaica (2008); the Bahamas, Netherlands Antilles (2011); Bermuda, Jamaica (2012); Barbados (2013); Suriname (2015); Belize, Trinidad and Tobago (2016); and Guyana (2017). Data for Netherlands Antilles and Suriname only include urban areas.

Source: ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [15 Mar. 2018].

## 6.2 More women managers

In 8 of 11 countries for which data are available, 40 per cent or more of all managers are women, a figure that is on par with the most developed nations in Europe and North America. Jamaica has the highest proportion of women managers not only in the Caribbean, but in the world, at 59 per cent of all managers (figure 18).

**Figure 18. Share of women managers in selected Caribbean countries and territories, latest years**



Note: Data are based on official estimates and national surveys: Haiti (2004); Saint Lucia (2004); Netherlands Antilles (2007); Jamaica, Puerto Rico (2008); the Bahamas (2009), Aruba (2010); Suriname (2013); Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago (2014); and Cayman Islands (2015). Data for Netherlands Antilles and Suriname only refer to urban areas.

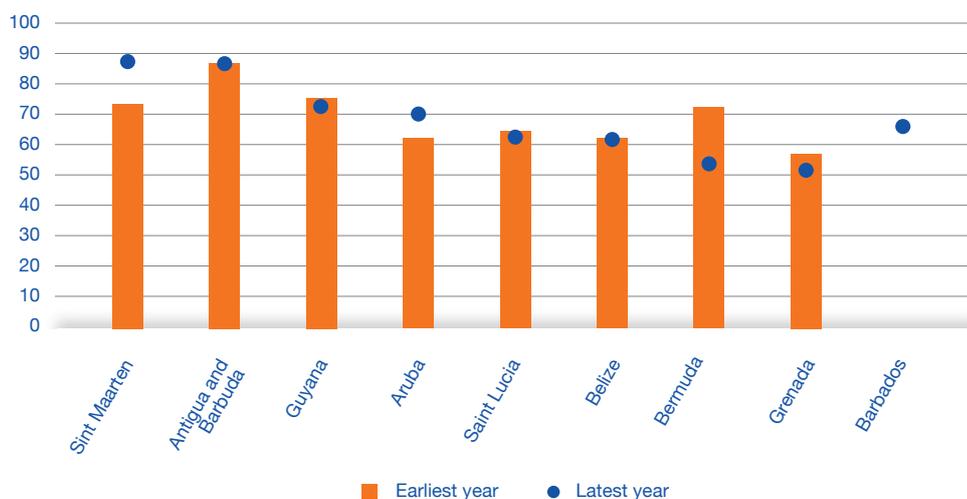
Source: ILOSTAT database of labour statistics. Available at: <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/> [6 Mar. 2017].

Over the past decade, the share of women managers has increased in several countries in the Caribbean. For example, in Barbados the share of women managers increased by 9 per cent over the past decade from 41.6 per cent in 2004 to 45.5 per cent in 2014, based on the latest available data. Similarly, in Trinidad and Tobago the share of women managers increased by 7 per cent from an average of 41.2 per cent in 2009 to 44.1 per cent in 2014 (ILO, 2017a).

### 6.3 Women catching up in education

Women have surpassed men as the majority of tertiary graduates in all countries of the Caribbean for which data were available (shown as over 50 per cent of total graduates in figure 19). In four countries of the Caribbean, more than 70 per cent of tertiary graduates are women, including Sint Maarten (89 per cent), Antigua and Barbuda (88 per cent), Guyana (75 per cent) and Aruba (73 per cent). This trend is one indicator of the growing talent pool of qualified women.

**Figure 19. Women as a share of tertiary graduates (percentage), selected Caribbean countries, earliest and latest years**



Note: Earliest and latest years are as follows Antigua and Barbuda (2011 and 2012), Aruba (2011 and 2015), Barbados (2011), Belize (2011 and 2015), Bermuda 2011 and 2017), Grenada (2015 and 2016), Guyana (2011 and 2012), Saint Lucia (2015 and 2016), and Sint Maarten (2012–15).

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/> [12 Mar. 2018].

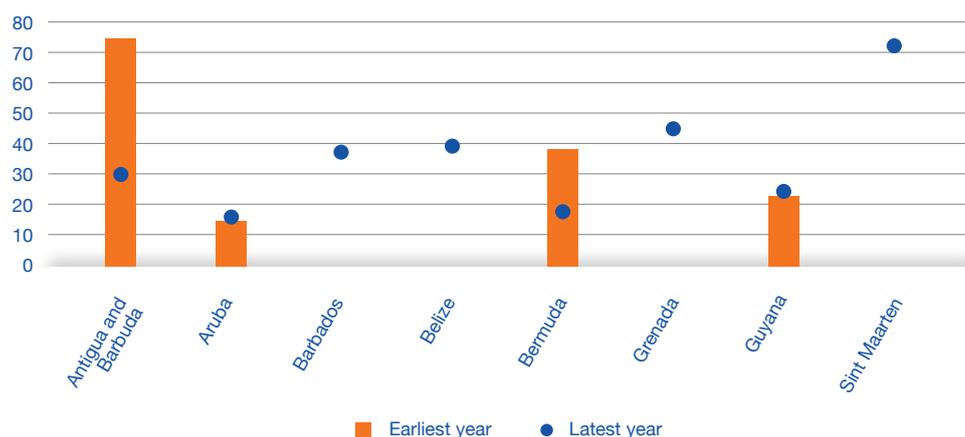
## Women in STEM

Despite strong overall gains in education, women are less likely than men to complete degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The lower enrolment of women in STEM fields reflects traditional gender stereotypes that these occupations are better suited to men. The workplace in STEM fields may also have a male dominated corporate culture, a perception that can discourage women from choosing to embark on a STEM career path.

Little data are available on STEM graduates from Caribbean countries, however the availability is improving. Among Caribbean countries for which data are available, the share of women STEM graduates ranged from 20 to 75 per cent for the latest available year (figure 20). Trends over time show mixed results. The share of women STEM graduates has increased in Aruba and Guyana but it has decreased in Antigua and Barbuda and Barbuda and Bermuda.

These figures have been affected by gaps in data collection over the past several years. Improving the availability and consistency of data from Caribbean countries on STEM graduates would help governments and policy-makers to better understand the problem and design initiatives to increase the share of women in these fields.

**Figure 20. Women as a share of total tertiary STEM graduates (percentage), selected Caribbean countries, earliest and latest years**



Note: Earliest and latest years are mentioned as follows Antigua and Barbuda (2011 and 2012), Aruba (2011 and 2012), Barbados (2011), Belize (2015), Bermuda (2015 and 2017), Grenada (2015), Guyana (2011 and 2012) and Sint Maarten (2015).

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/> [12 Mar. 2018].







## Accelerating change: Breaking barriers

Women in the Caribbean have the skills, experience and ambition to become leaders in business and management. The commitment of top level business managers is critical to unblock the pipeline that leads to the highest levels of management and to achieve gender diversity across all sectors and operations. Governments and EBMOs also have an important role to play in raising awareness, gathering data and supporting companies in their gender diversity initiatives. This chapter sets out priority actions that each actor can take to accelerate change.

### 7.1 What companies can do to support women

Many companies are already attracting and retaining talented and skilled workers by striving to be an employer of choice. To attract and retain qualified women and men, employers need to offer equal opportunities and family friendly workplaces to fulfil the demand for greater work and family balance. The initiatives that companies pursue for gender diversity should form part of a holistic effort to make the workplace more inclusive for all genders and identities.

Respondents to the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 identified initiatives for gender diversity they were currently undertaking (table 6). Across the Caribbean, 87 per cent of companies reported they were offering at least one initiative to promote gender diversity. The most common initiative was maternity leave, reported by 76 per cent of companies, which reflects the fact that this is mandated by law in most countries surveyed. By comparison, only 29 per cent of companies offered paternity leave. The majority of companies are also pursuing gender diversity by reviewing human resource practices in areas such as recruitment, retention, promotion, skills training and remuneration.

**Table 6. Prevalence of initiatives on gender diversity among respondent companies in the Caribbean, 2017**

Ranking	Company initiative	Percentage of companies
1	Maternity leave	76
2	Recruitment, retention and promotion	66
3	Skills training and executive training	64
4	Remuneration	52
5	Mentoring	45
6	Flexible working hours	44
7	Sexual harassment	42
8	Paternity leave	29
9	Part-time working hours	23
10	Remote work or telework	20
11	Career breaks	18
12	Re-entry programmes	14
13	Child care or elder care	6

Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

### Company policies

Leadership on gender diversity starts at the top. It is critical for top level management to support gender equality in consistent and visible ways. One way this can be done is by setting an overarching gender equality strategy for the company. The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 found 71 per cent of companies have an equal employment and opportunity policy or gender inclusion policy. In addition, 42 per cent of Caribbean companies reported having a sexual harassment policy in place. Other than maternity leave, fewer companies reported family care policies such as paternity leave (29 per cent) and support for child care or elder care (6 per cent).

### Human resource practices

A high percentage of Caribbean companies surveyed are integrating gender diversity into their human resources practices. Companies are reviewing areas like recruitment, retention and promotion (66 per cent) and skills training and executive training (64 per cent). Nearly half of companies surveyed (45 per cent) have a mentorship scheme available to women. Far fewer companies have explored career breaks (18 per cent) or re-entry programmes (14 per cent), which can be important areas to ensure that women are not held back by the ‘motherhood penalty’ and are able to resume their jobs after an extended absence. Other practical steps companies can take include holding exit interviews to find out where and why women are exiting

career paths that lead to the top management level, recognizing women leaders through awards programmes and giving women more opportunities to gain broad functional experience through job rotation or stretch assignments.

Nearly 80 per cent of Caribbean companies surveyed reported they did not consider the retention of skilled women a challenge for their business, however, the data show that the leaking pipeline is a present phenomenon in the Caribbean and the share of women managers falls as the level of seniority rises. This suggests there may be a lack of awareness about the consequences of the leaking pipeline and the benefits of attaining a critical mass of women managers.

### **Addressing gender pay gaps**

The 2016 Global Gender Gap report of the World Economic Forum found a gender pay gap in Caribbean countries. It measured the gap as the female-to-male ratio of estimated earned incomes and found a gap of 0.68 in Barbados, 0.61 in Jamaica, 0.55 in Trinidad and Tobago and 0.51 in Belize. Only 21 per cent of respondents to the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 reported a gender pay gap in their company. Of those who identified a gender pay gap, the majority (37 per cent) did not know the size of the gap and most companies reported they did not measure the gap. Those who were able to provide an estimate placed the gender pay gap in their companies at 5–20 per cent. A structured review of pay gaps across the company can help to fill these knowledge gaps and identify areas for improvement.

### **Flexible work arrangements**

The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 found that 63 per cent of companies are implementing some form of flexible work arrangements. It is more common within the Caribbean for companies to use flexible working hours, including part-time hours, as opposed to technology-enabled arrangements like remote or telework. Respondents had mixed perceptions on the role of technology in facilitating flexible work, as technology had not always been made available to employees and is not always seen as enhancing organizational productivity. In other parts of the world, flexible work arrangements are a key element of gender diversity initiatives that help to harmonize work and family responsibilities for men and women. These efforts need to be combined with performance reviews that are based on outputs and results rather than face time spent in the office.

## **7.2 Women in senior leadership: A catalyst for change at all levels**

Women in senior management can help set the tone for the corporate culture and recognize diverse forms of leadership that are more inclusive of women. They can also influence decision-making on a company's human resource practices and their leadership at the highest levels in organizations can inspire other women's career ambitions by demonstrating women's potential. The absence of women leaders as role models is often cited as a barrier to future generations of women in their advancement to senior management. Evidence from the ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 as well as global studies suggests that having more women on boards and in top positions as CEOs and senior executives increases the representation of women across a company's ranks.

### **Women on boards**

Global studies have found that companies with a critical mass of 30 per cent representation of women on the board tend to have more women at all levels of management. The ILO Caribbean company survey found similar evidence in the

subregion. Analysing data from 675 respondent companies, the survey found a statistically significant correlation between companies that had reached 26 per cent representation of women on boards and the likelihood of appointing a female CEO. The relationship was even stronger for companies that had achieved gender parity on their boards. In other words, one of the most effective ways to increase the number of women CEOs is to increase the number of women on boards.

More women on boards has a wide effect on women at all levels of management in the Caribbean. According to survey results, companies with gender parity on their boards had nearly twice as many women in top executive roles (44 per cent) compared to companies where women make up less than half of boards (24 per cent). Having a woman as the board chair generates the same doubling effect on the share of top female executives. Companies with a male board chair reported an average of 26 per cent women in top executive roles, while those with a female board chair reported 44 per cent.

What does this mean for advancing women in business and management in the Caribbean? The data suggest that efforts to increase women's representation on boards will have a multiplier effect on advancing women to chief executive and other top executive roles. At present, less than a quarter (24 per cent) of Caribbean companies surveyed have achieved gender parity on their boards and less than one in five of those boards (18 per cent) is chaired by a woman. Moving the dial for women on boards is a key leverage point to advance women at all levels of management in the Caribbean.

### **Women CEOs**

The gender of CEOs in the Caribbean has an even stronger impact on advancing women in management. The ILO Caribbean company survey 2017 found that companies with a female CEO had three times as many women in top executive roles, increasing from an average of 20 per cent for companies with a male CEO to over 60 per cent for a female CEO. Across the Caribbean, less than one in three companies surveyed (27 per cent) have a female CEO. While this figure places the Caribbean among the world leaders for the share of women CEOs, there is still significant room for improvement. Targeted efforts to identify talented women early on and invest in their career development, leadership, and succession planning is key to ensure more women advance through the pipeline that leads to CEO positions.

### **7.3 The role of employer and business membership organizations**

EBMOs can play a pivotal role in providing their members with information and orientation on the business case for gender diversity. They can also bring tools and resources to their members on how to implement gender diversity through company policies and practices. Acting as champions for gender equality and helping companies tap into the pool of talented women can bring visibility to EBMOs. It can also enhance their reputation and influence in economic and business policy-making, and attract new members such as companies owned by women.

In addition to the Caribbean company survey, the ILO surveyed 13 EBMOs across the subregion in 2017. This survey found that less than 25 per cent of EBMOs are pursuing gender equality as one of their policy priorities. Fewer than half of these organizations reported regular activities to promote gender equality among their members. Most EBMOs cited low demand from member companies as the reason for not engaging on gender diversity issues. There is an opportunity, however, for EBMOs to take on a leadership role and advocate to companies on the business

benefits of gender diversity, and support company initiatives through sharing the latest research, data and best practices.

### **Box 1**

#### **Progress made in women's advancement in the Caribbean for executive and board levels of EBMOs**

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The Jamaican Employers' Federation has achieved a good gender balance in its management structures. Ten of the 18 executive committee members (elected annually) are women. The president and two vice-presidents are men and the CEO is a woman. In addition, 57 per cent of staff managers are women.

The Employer's Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago has made continuous efforts to reach gender parity in its management structure. Seven of the 16 board members are women and a woman was elected Board Chair for first time in 2014. In addition, the first female Executive Director, who served for 20 years, was succeeded by a woman in 2016.

The Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation held general elections in 2017, which proved to be historic. For the first time since the Federation's establishment in 1950, women were elected as President and Vice President. The Executive Secretary is also a woman, thus the executive management team is entirely female.

Source: ILO, 2017b and email exchange between the ILO and Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation.

One area where EBMOs can have a strong influence is to encourage member companies to reach the 30 per cent target of women on boards. According to the ILO Caribbean EBMO survey 2017, only two EBMOs from the subregion – the Dominican Employers' Federation and the Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation – lobby their members to nominate qualified women for board membership. Further, EBMOs can help to educate companies on the benefits of achieving a critical mass of women on boards, and encourage companies to set voluntary targets and report publicly on their progress.

The ILO Global Company Survey 2013 asked respondents to identify priority areas of support for companies on gender diversity. Respondents from Jamaica suggested EBMOs and other stakeholders should focus on facilitating networking opportunities and building the business case for women in management (table 7). Other areas of support are to help companies develop gender diversity strategies as well as advising on how to design specific policies and practices that support women, including mentorship schemes and equal opportunity policies.

**Table 7. Ranking of company expectations for EBMO support in Jamaica, 2013**

Ranking	Priority measure
1	Networking with other companies on good practices
2	Networking with women's business associations
3	Evidence on the business case for more women in management
4	Strategy to promote more women in management
5	Introducing a mentoring scheme
6	Designing an equal opportunity policy
7	Good practice examples of measures and strategies to promote women in management
8	Designing a sexual harassment policy
9	Introducing a sponsorship scheme
10	Guidelines on gender sensitive human resource management systems

Source: ILO global company Survey, 2013.

## **Box 2**

### **Recommendations for EBMOs to promote women in business and management**

Research carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean by various United Nations organizations, including the ILO, led to the following recommendations for EBMOs to improve career opportunities for women:

- promote the participation of women and the establishment of mechanisms for increasing the number of women in management positions;
- strengthen the presence of gender issues on organizational agendas;
- develop or expand experimentation with gender-equity seals to include a larger number of businesses; and
- develop and adopt codes of good practice that include procedures for promoting gender equity in personnel recruitment and selection and in career development, for achieving gender parity in the distribution of decision-making positions, and for developing policies to support staff members of both sexes in dealing with their family responsibilities.

Source: ECLAC, FAO, UN Women, UNDP and ILO, 2013.







# 8

## Conclusion

Women across the Caribbean are joining the ranks of employees, managers and business leaders in increasing numbers. The subregion is a world leader in terms of women's labour force participation rate and the overall representation of women as managers. Women now outnumber men as tertiary graduates in all Caribbean countries for which data are available, and an increasing number of women are choosing to start and grow their careers in non-traditional sectors and managerial functions. As the number of women in the talent pool continues to expand, companies that are able to capture the skills and experience of women will be best placed to thrive in increasingly competitive markets.

The business case for investing in gender balance is well documented and gains strength as new data and research emerge. Nearly half of Caribbean companies surveyed by the ILO in 2017 reported clear benefits from their gender diversity initiatives, but there is more work to be done to build awareness of the business case for women in business and management. Companies cited the main benefits as improving talent retention and company reputation. Many global studies have also shown that company performance and profitability improve when a minimum of 30 per cent of senior leadership positions are held by women. EBMOs in the Caribbean can help to raise awareness about the business case for gender diversity, and encourage their members to commit to voluntary targets to increase the

representation of women on corporate leadership teams as well as report on progress towards those targets.

Having more women on boards is a key leverage point for closing gender gaps across all levels of management in the Caribbean. Evidence from the Caribbean suggests that achieving gender parity on boards and appointing more women as board chairs and CEOs can have a multiplier effect on the representation of women at all levels. Women in senior leadership can help to change mindsets about the leadership ability of men and women, and they can be role models for other women climbing the corporate ranks. While most countries in the Caribbean have reached a minimum of 20 per cent women on boards, fewer Caribbean companies have reached gender parity. Targeted efforts are needed to identify women with talent early on and provide the necessary support, training and succession planning to enable them to move up the ranks.

One of the key obstacles to women's advancement is a phenomenon known as the leaking pipeline. At higher levels of seniority there are fewer women managers. In the Caribbean, as in other parts of the world, there has been some progress in increasing the representation of women at the top level and in entry level positions, however it remains a challenge to build the share of women in middle-tier management. Programmes that build managerial skills such as executive training, mentorships and stretch assignments can help women to develop their careers. The existence of a supportive work environment with family care policies and human resource practices that enable men and women to take family leave and re-enter their careers afterward is also important to ensure women do not face a disadvantage to men, particularly during child bearing years.

The Caribbean has a reputation for its strong progress towards gender equality and support for women's economic empowerment, yet gender bias and masculine corporate cultures are still reported in many companies. The subtle barriers of gender stereotypes and conscious or unconscious bias can restrict women's progress in the workplace. Indeed, women continue to face challenges of higher unemployment and many women managers are stuck in support functions, small companies, or low to middle tiers of management. Lack of information and awareness about gender pay gaps and the low uptake of flexible work arrangements are further obstacles to achieving greater gender balance. There is a clear opportunity for EBMOs to take a leadership role in sharing best practices and advising member companies on gender diversity initiatives to work toward achieving gender balance and press for further progress.



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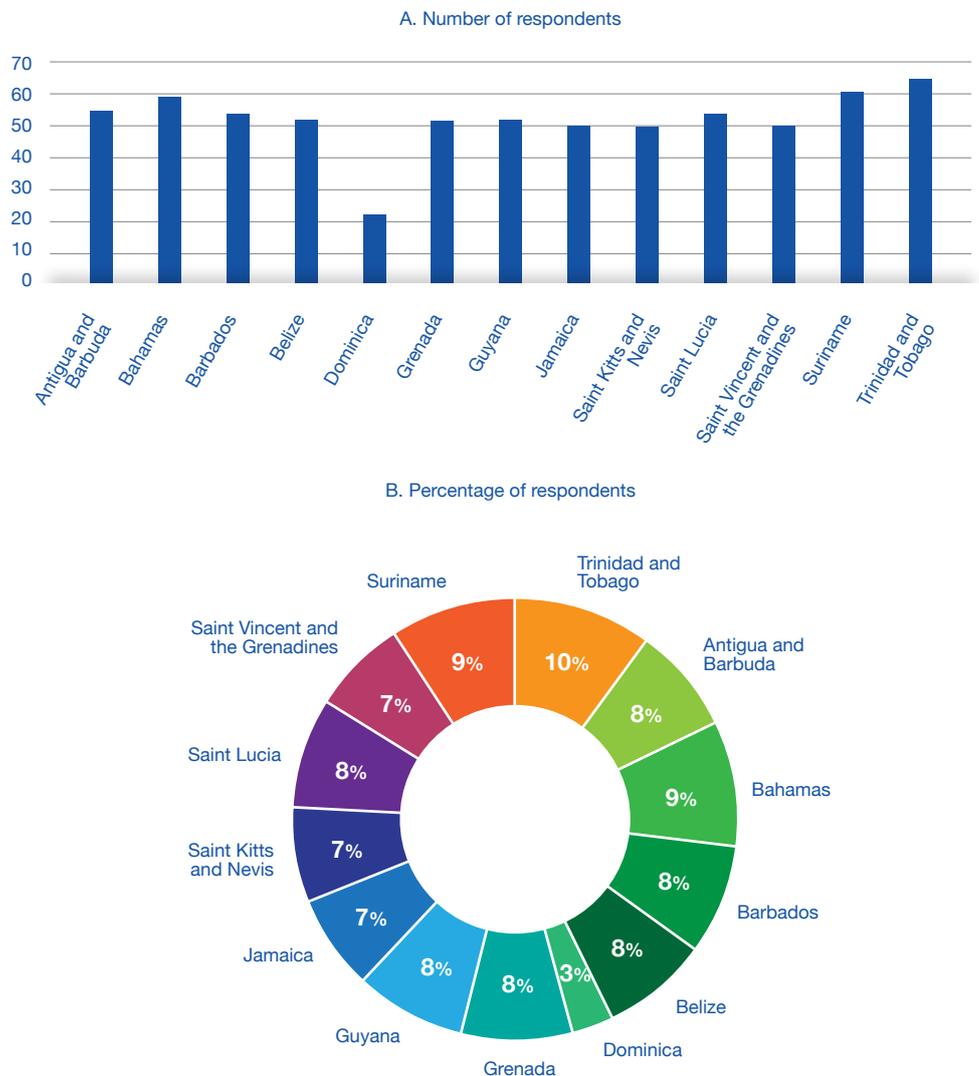
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# Appendix

## ILO Caribbean company survey - Sample characteristics

The ILO Caribbean company survey included responses from 675 private sector companies in 13 territories of the Caribbean. Respondents by country are shown below (figure A1). The survey was conducted through an online survey and telephone interviews for approximately three months from August to October 2017. The targeted audience focused on board level and senior management personnel. A minimum of 50 respondents was targeted per country, which was met in all countries except for Dominica due to the Category 5 hurricane that hit this territory in September 2017.

**Figure A1. Number and percentage of ILO Caribbean company survey respondents by country**

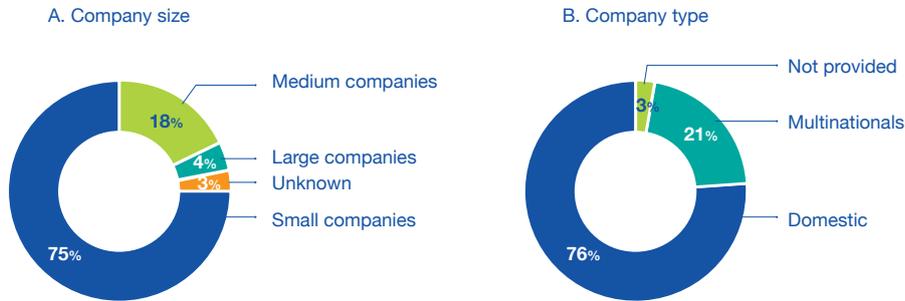


Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

The ILO Caribbean company survey classified companies as small, medium and large depending on the number of employees as follows: small companies employed 1–100 workers; medium companies employed 101–500 workers; and large

companies employed over 501 workers (figure A2). Of total surveyed companies in the Caribbean, 75 per cent were small, 18 per cent were medium and 4 per cent were large. The majority of respondents were domestic companies at 76 per cent, while multinationals represented 21 per cent of the total sample.

**Figure A2. ILO Caribbean company survey respondents by company size and type**



Source: ILO Caribbean company survey, 2017.

*Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum in the Caribbean* presents the landscape of women in leadership position for the subregion by presenting data collected from an ILO company survey conducted in 13 Caribbean countries and territories in 2017. The findings of the survey are supplemented by latest labour market information to provide companies with a deeper understanding on the opportunities available to promote more women in management and board levels.

The report shows that companies in the Caribbean are experiencing concrete business benefits by implementing gender diversity initiatives including increased ability to attract and retain talent as well as improved profitability. Moreover there is ample room to improve business outcomes by increasing the number of female senior executives and women on boards for which less than a third of Caribbean companies report to have reached the 30 per cent threshold that studies show is needed to reap the benefits of gender diversity.

The report also highlights measures companies can take to promote women in leadership positions and underlines actions employer and business organizations can take support businesses in making workplaces more gender equal and diverse.



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ISBN: 978-92-2-131706-7

