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## NINE QUESTIONS TO ELKE HOLST

# »Better career opportunities for women will help lower the gender pay gap«

1. For years now, the share of women in management positions in Germany has been considerably lower than that of men. Has the likelihood of women occupying a management position improved at all? During the observation period—from 2001 to 2014—women's chances did not improve compared to the base year, at least not statistically significantly. With the exception of the last two years, however, men's odds were consistently better than in the base year.
2. In which sectors is there the greatest disparity? The gender leadership gap—in other words, the difference between the share of all employees who are women and the share of women in senior management positions—is particularly high in the financial sector and in the sectors grouped under “public administration” in our report.
3. What stands out about the financial sector? In the financial sector, the likelihood of holding a senior management position is particularly good, since this sector offers many leadership positions overall. But it is primarily men who benefit from this advantage. This applies to a lesser extent to the sectors grouped under the heading “public administration.”
4. What is the situation in other sectors? Taking into consideration individual characteristics that are important for climbing the career ladder, women have a lower probability of holding a senior management position in virtually all sectors. Gender inequality is highest in the financial sector.
5. In which sectors is there the highest probability of women occupying senior management positions? Women have the best prospects in the retail, transport, and storage sector. Here, men still have a higher probability of occupying a senior management position, however—in fact, almost as high as in the financial sector.
6. What role do availability constraints due to children and family obligations play in the gender leadership gap? Full-time work still plays a key role for climbing the career ladder. Senior managers are expected to devote as much time as possible to their jobs: they have to be available for the company and regionally mobile. If mothers are still able to work full-time, children and family are less likely to hold them back in their careers.
7. Do women who are available to work full-time also find it more difficult to be promoted to senior management positions? Yes—we have established this in other studies. Even among those employed full-time, when factors that are important for climbing the career ladder are controlled for, the probability of women occupying a senior management position compared to that of men is similarly low to the ratio reported in this Economic Bulletin.
8. How could career barriers for women be dismantled? It is of increasing importance to change gender-stereotypical mentalities and structures as well as address blind spots related to disadvantages for women. This applies to existing legislation just as much as it does to regulations and practices in companies and organizations in general. This is how we can counteract a constant perpetuation of the inequality of opportunity between women and men.
9. How does Germany compare to other countries? We know from a recent study that Germany is one of a group of countries characterized by especially low shares of women on executive boards in the financial sector—and a particularly slow pace of change over the past few years. We know from European country comparisons that the gender pay gap is especially high in the financial sector. Better career opportunities for women will help lower the gender pay gap overall.

Interview by Erich Wittenberg



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