Commentary

The voices demanding social change in the area of equality and diversity in Ireland have been encouraged by recent significant events. They include, in 2015 the marriage equality referendum, in 2017 the introduction of paid parental leave and in 2018 the 8th referendum to the Constitution was successfully repealed.

Our current survey coincides with the publication of the General Scheme of the Gender Pay Gap Information Bill, approved by Cabinet and published by Charlie Flanagan T.D., the Minister of State for Justice and Equality and Mr David Stanton T.D., Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration in June 2018. The proposed Bill will allow the Minister to make regulations for employers with more than 250 workers, to publish information on the pay of their employees. The purpose is to show whether there are differences in the pay of male and female employees, and if so, the scale of this difference.

The survey results below indicate that the aviation sector has not yet voluntarily embraced this initiative.

2018 was a very significant year for GDPR, which entered into force on 25th May. I mention GDPR in the context of increasing digitalisation of personal data. Corporate policies aimed at improving and promoting gender and diversity issues now face the challenge of accessing personal data and at the same time preserving employees’ right to privacy. The issue of gender may be one of personal choice, and there are visual markers.

Everyone has the right to privacy and self-determination and for some minorities it is a matter of voluntary disclosure at work, particularly in matters such as economic disadvantaged background, religion and sexual orientation. Where the information is not available, then how are employers to implement and measure change and progress in the area of diversity? Now this raises the issue of unconscious bias and reliance on the unspoken assumptions which can be made based on matters of age, gender and race.

In 2018, the challenge for all business participants is not simply to embrace diversity but to address areas of unconscious bias. Even where application and selection processes for recruitment are digitalised, pre-programming of restrictive conditions, such as education, it may not be to the advantage of employers. Affirmative action campaigns and unconscious bias training continue to be central to employee engagement, policies and training to promote and encourage diversity.

Creating a more inclusive workplace for all will benefit those currently in the industry and those considering entering into this industry being men, women and intersex colleagues. We all have to continue to support our colleagues and workers in the paths they may choose to achieve a greater level of equality in representation and sustainable careers in aviation.

Author
Christine O’Donovan

About the Survey

This is the third year of our survey covering diversity issues in the Aviation industry. Once again we have had an excellent response to the survey, with participants adding some very interesting commentary and we are very grateful to everyone for participating.

The survey was carried out during the summer of 2018. In the survey, we looked at diversity issues such as gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. These issues are increasingly relevant to all businesses, not just those operating in the Aviation industry as business leaders embrace the importance of fostering diversity.
Profile of Participants

Are you male or female?

- Male: 31%
- Female: 69%

What age are you?

- Not stated: 2%
- 20-30: 24%
- 31-40: 44%
- 41-50: 18%
- Over 50: 12%

What business unit do you work in?

- Finance: 21%
- Legal: 18%
- Management: 14%
- Marketing & Trading: 13%
- Engineering & Technical: 10%
- Legal Administration: 9%
- Other: 8%
- Human Resources: 6%
- Insurance: 0%
Glass Ceiling or Sticky Floor?

In our first year of this survey in 2016, we focused on the experiences of females in the Aviation industry. The overwhelming picture in 2016 was of women who were struggling to progress to Head of Function or C-suite levels. In that survey, 69% reported that they believed a glass ceiling exists for women working in the industry.

In our 2017 survey, 64% of respondents stated that the percentage of total employees in their organisations who are female was more than 30% but at senior levels, only 15% put the number of females at more than 30%.

In this year’s survey, the picture has not improved with 56% of respondents put the number of total female employees at over 30% and 16% of those surveyed said that more than 30% of staff at senior levels were female.
Diversity

Diversity is hard to define and can mean different things in different cultures. A diverse workforce should reflect a company’s client base, which is especially relevant for sectors with an international dimension like aviation. Diverse teams of people from different backgrounds can also achieve innovative solutions which can lead to market growth.

For the 2018 survey, we asked participants about the representation of minority groups in the workforce. While the majority of respondents chose not to state if they belonged to a minority group, 1% stated they were from an economically disadvantaged background, 2% stated they were from an ethnic minority group, 3% from a religious minority group and 1% stated they were LGBTQI. Participants also stated that only a small percentage of their immediate superiors were members of minority groups – only 5%. These results suggest that the aviation community in Ireland is a very homogeneous society or perhaps one in which minority groups do not feel confident to disclose such representation.

Many organisations are beginning to address diversity issues by setting up diversity committees, but only 18% of participants reported that their organisation has a diversity committee. 83% stated that their organisation does not have a diversity committee. Amongst this group 49% believed there would be a benefit from such a committee while 33% believed there would be no benefit. This perhaps indicates a need for organisations to better communicate the benefits of diversity to the whole workforce, as well as the benefit to financial performance.

“Difficult to seek promotion when you have a young family”

Do you belong to a minority group such as:

- Economically disadvantaged
- Ethnic Minority eg. Traveller
- LGBTQI
- Religious Minority Group
- People with disabilities

None of the above: 44%
Not stated: 46%
Career Progression

In the 2017 survey, respondents identified issues with the promotion track within their organisations. 58% stated that the promotion track within their organisation was not clear and transparent. However, the 2018 respondents show a slightly more negative picture, with 63% stating that the promotional track is not clear versus 36% stating that it is clear.

However, our respondents identified challenges that may slow their career progression, with the perennial issue of work-life balance still being the issue pinpointed by the majority of respondents.

2018 – Is the promotion track clear and transparent in your organisation?

Yes: 63%
No: 36%
Not stated: 1%

If your organisation doesn’t have a diversity committee, do you believe it would benefit from such a committee?

Yes: 33%
No: 18%
Not stated: 49%
There is also a worrying number of respondents who believe their promotion prospects have been impeded due to their cultural background, disability, family situation, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

“I actually see our industry as being quite progressive and believe it is simply a matter of time before we see more females in leadership roles.”

“At c-level and senior management level 90% of the meetings I attend are with men. I am not sure where the women are though? I am not sure they have been consciously overlooked? How to get them to get to that level - that is the challenge.”

Do you believe your promotion prospects have been impeded due to you cultural background, disability, family situation, gender, religion or sexual orientation?

- Yes: 73%
- No: 25%
- Not stated: 2%
Gender & Diversity Aviation Survey

Gender Pay Gap

The UK has completed its first year of mandatory pay gap reporting for companies with more than 200 employees. In Ireland, mandatory pay gap reporting is likely to be introduced for organisations with over 250 employees, with Cabinet recently approving the Gender Pay Gap Information Bill. Some organisations in Ireland have already begun examining their own pay gap analysis. In the aviation sector, only 10% of participants stated that their employer had carried out a pay gap analysis. 50% stated that no analysis has taken place so far and 40% didn’t know.

It’s essential that, as Ireland introduces a gender pay gap reporting regime, that the benefits of such a regime and what exactly it measures are disclosed and published.

Has your organisation carried out a gender pay gap analysis?

- 10% Yes
- 40% Don’t know
- 50% No

Hiring

In our 2018 survey, there are positive signs in terms of the amount of diversity candidates that have been hired in the last 12 months. 32% reported that the number of diversity candidates hired at entry level was more than 30%. This suggests a greater degree of disclosure and confidence amongst diversity candidates. Over the coming years, it is hoped that this talent pipeline translates into more diversity at management and senior levels, as in this year’s survey only 9% stated the number of diversity candidates hired at management level was more than 30% and 7% reported that the number of diversity candidates hired at senior level (Head of Function, C-Suite) was more than 30%.

Percentage of female or diversity candidates hired at entry level in the last 12 months?

- 18% Don’t know
- 32% >30%
- 30% 0 - 10%
- 20% 10 - 30%

“Aviation is very male dominated, there are opportunities for females but you have to push yourself forward and not stand on the sidelines.”
Percentage of female or diversity candidates hired at management level in the last 12 months?

- 0 – 10%: 20%
- 10 – 30%: 9%
- More than 30%: 9%
- Don’t know: 51%

Percentage of female or diversity candidates hired at senior level in the last 12 months?

- 0 – 10%: 15%
- 10 – 30%: 7%
- More than 30%: 15%
- Don’t know: 69%

“Some jurisdictions do not recognise same sex marriages/relationships and it is preventing same sex couples from relocating to Asia as they cannot get a dependent visa for the accompanying spouse for example.”

“Personal experience of not offering flexible working options mitigates against more females progressing in the aviation industry.”
What Others Say About Us

Our Asset Finance Team
“The level of service you get is excellent.”
Christine O’Donovan
Chambers & Partners, 2017

Christine O’Donovan
Christine is celebrated for her “precise knowledge of the aircraft industry.”
Legal 500, 2018

Our Aviation Team
“They are flexible, always readily available and come back quickly.”
Christine O’Donovan
Chambers & Partners, 2017

Christine O’Donovan
“Authoritative and knowledgeable”
Commentators say “she is renowned for a very pragmatic and commercial view of transactions.”
Chambers Europe, 2018

Our Aviation Team
“Experienced aviation law professionals.”
Christine O’Donovan
Legal 500, 2016

Christine O’Donovan
Christine has been listed as an expert in the area of Aviation in Who’s Who Legal: Aviation 2018.
Who’s Who Legal: 2018

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