

Gender Diversity Across The World

By

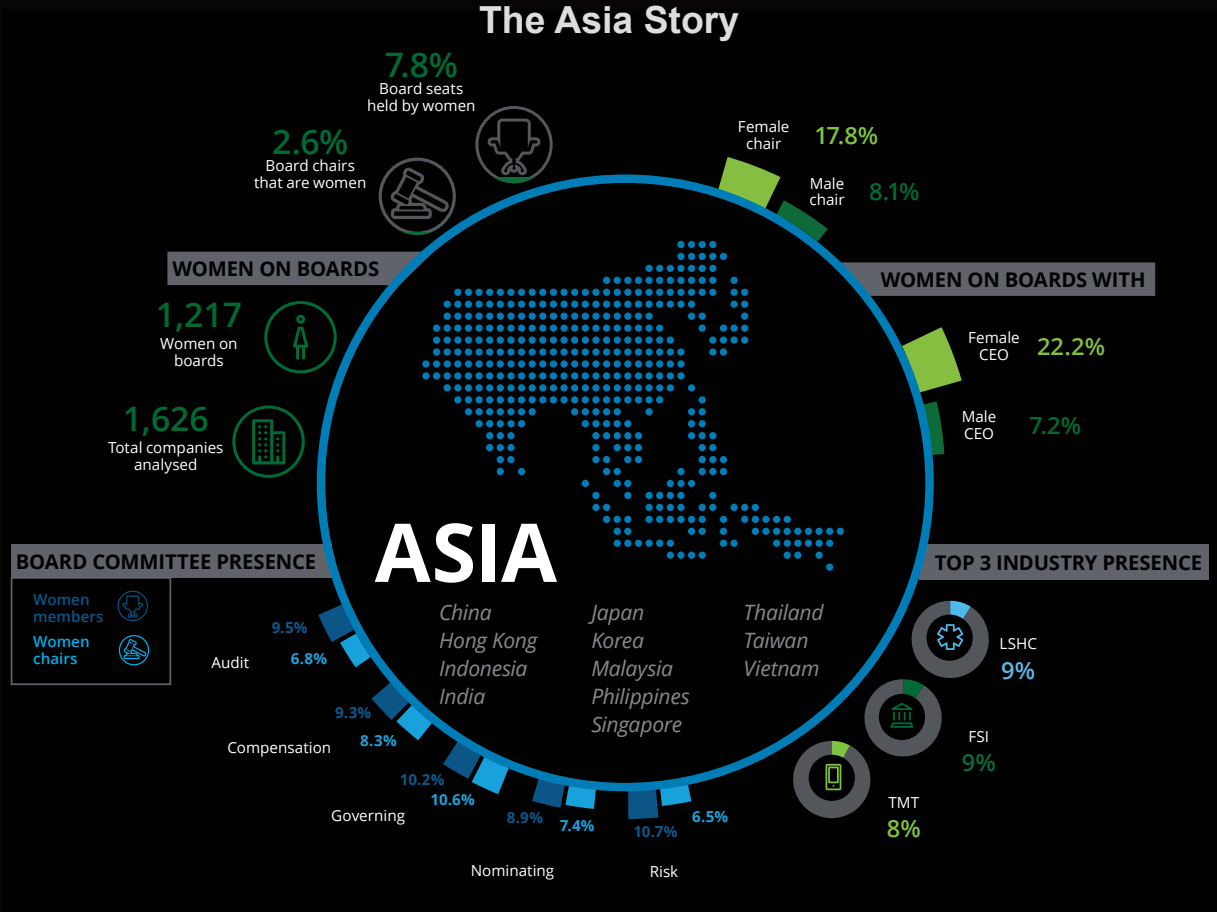
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The 2017 edition of *Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective* publication by Deloitte was released in June 2017. It explores the efforts of 64 countries in promoting boardroom gender diversity and reveals that gender diversity on boards doubled in organisations with female leadership. Below are more key findings from the latest edition.

Key findings

- Fifteen per cent of all board seats globally are taken up by women, representing only a modest improvement over the 12 per cent reported in the 2015 edition of the publication. While many may find this an unacceptably small improvement, a three per cent uptick in two years can be seen as significant given the slow turnover among many boards and the continued preference for directors who are sitting or recently-retired CEOs.
- Italy, Norway, Australia, UK and Canada saw an approximately five per cent increase in the number of women serving on boards, beating the global average of three. Outdoing these five nations are New Zealand (10 per cent), Belgium (nine per cent) and Sweden (seven per cent).



The Singapore Numbers

	Percentage	Percentage change
Percentage of women directors	11.0	1.3 (2015)
Percentage of board seats held by women	9.4	1.1 (2015)
Percentage of boards with two or more female directors	12.0	1.9 (2015)
Percentage of women on boards	9.9 (2015)	1.5 (2014)

- Closer to home, the results are not as stellar: Only an average of 7.8 per cent of board seats in Asia are occupied by women, compared to North America (14.5 per cent) and Europe (22.6 per cent). Strong leadership is needed to change the board's composition by focusing on identifying capable and board-ready individuals, so that the glass ceiling for women on boards in Asia can be broken.
- In Singapore, the percentage of board seats held by women has increased by 1.7 percentage points to 10.7 per cent whereas board chairs comprising women have declined by 1.6 percentage points to 5.4 per cent.
- Organisations with a female chair have almost doubled the number of board seats held by women as compared to boards led by male chairs (28.5 per cent versus 15.5 per cent, respectively). The numbers are nearly identical when looking at female CEOs and the number of women serving on their boards as compared to male CEOs (28.8 per cent versus 14.5 per cent, respectively). All these point to a direct correlation between female leadership (CEOs and board chairs) and board seats held by women.
- This correlation illustrates an important trajectory – as the number of female CEOs and board chairs climbs, it is likely to spur greater board diversity. Yet, the percentage of women securing top leadership roles remains very low, with women holding only four per cent of CEO and board chair positions globally.
- Many countries have found that it is not enough to focus on gender diversity. They have broadened their advocacy efforts to include other types of diversity. This can be seen in various corporate governance code recommendations that give other diversity criteria such as competencies, experience and ethnicity.
- At a higher level, there is an inexorable rise in the number of women serving on boards around the world and the desire for a more inclusive kind of growth and capitalism. Bridging the gender divide in the workforce is not only a matter of fairness, but also to effect good governance and inclusive economic growth. ■