

Women in Logistics Management

Introduction

Recently, SSM Group Ltd, the local leading training and consultancy firm specializing in Logistics and Supply Chain Management has participated in a market research programme about *Women in Logistics Management* in collaboration with *Europhia Consulting*.

The following is the outcome of the report:

In many developed markets women only make up around 21% of the total workforce. With unemployment within the sector at record lows, what can the logistics sector do more to improve its attractiveness to women? Over 1,100 people participated in Europhia Consulting's online survey on this topic.

Some of the key findings suggest that women globally make up less than 20% of company management positions within the sector. The survey highlights that in the majority of companies, more than 70 % of the workforce are male. The vast majority of participants feel that universities and the industry can do a lot more to encourage women to take up a career within the logistics sector. However, on a more positive note, participants from both genders highlight that opportunities for women to have a career within the sector have never been better.

The fourth module of Europhia Consulting's online Global Logistics HR Survey Series has received participation from over 1,100 logistics and supply chain professionals worldwide. Two thirds of those are females which demonstrate the enormous interest from women in this topic. 49% of the participants currently work in Europe, 41% work in Asia and 10% in the Americas.

Is the logistics sector still male-dominated?

Various articles published over the last months and years confirm that women are still underrepresented in the logistics and supply chain sector. A study conducted by the European Transport Federation shows that only 20.5% of the employees in the transport sector are women. The industry magazine Logistics Today reports that one challenge for the supply chain profession will be in "bridging the gender gap". As example, they point out that in Canada out of the 2,000 members of

The Logistics Institute only 286 are women. A survey conducted by the Ohio State University finds, however, that career opportunities for women in logistics are better today than in the past. Europhia's survey findings are in line with these publications. Europhia's online survey confirms that in the majority of companies, less than 30% of the workforce are female. There is no significant difference between the key markets globally.

Furthermore, the majority of the logistics professionals surveyed say that less than 10% of employees in management positions in their company are women. According to a global McKinsey survey, companies currently face several key supply chain risks. Among these risks availability, cost, and quality of labour is a major concern

in almost every region of the world. The labour markets worldwide have become increasingly tight. At the same time, however, female professionals are still widely underrepresented within the logistics sector. Thus, the industry can do a lot more to better attract, support and retain women within the sector. This point seems key to a successful HR recruitment and retention strategy for companies.

Opportunities for women in logistics

Although the findings outlined above paint a rather negative picture of the situation of women in the industry, logistics professionals are rather positive about recent and expected future developments. Almost three quarters of the logistics and supply chain professionals surveyed feel that opportunities for women to build a sound professional career in logistics are better today than ever.

Better opportunities today than ever	Yes	No	Don't know
Overall	72%	14%	14%
Female	70%	15%	15%
Male	78%	11%	10%

Table 1: Are career opportunities for women in logistics better today than ever?

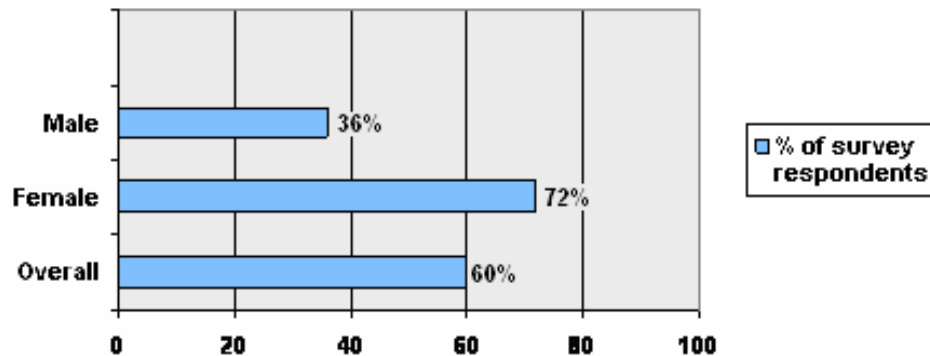
Moreover, 70% are convinced that career opportunities for women in logistics will further improve over the next years. Across regions, men are more optimistic than women when it comes to the current situation as well as to future developments of women's career opportunities (see tables 1 and 2).

Opportunities will further improve in the future	Yes	No	Don't know
Overall	70%	11%	19%
Female	67%	11%	22%
Male	74%	13%	13%

Table 2: Will career opportunities for women further improve over the next years?

However, almost half of the logistics and supply chain professionals still think that working in logistics is harder for women than for men. In addition, 60% are convinced that women need to show higher performance in order to receive the same amount of appreciation. Interestingly, there is a considerable difference in the way men and women respond. Two thirds of the female participants are convinced that women need to show higher performance whereas only one third of the men surveyed agreed to this (see graph).

Women need to show higher performance to receive the same amount of appreciation.

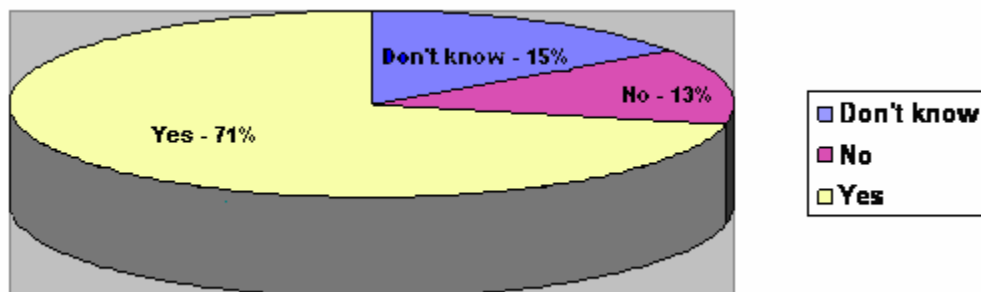


Also, 60% of the logistics professionals feel that women are less often considered for management positions than their male counterparts with equivalent qualifications. There are again similar differences between male (40%) and female (69%) participants.

Gender differences in managing supply chains

Another question arising in this context is: are there differences between male and female logistics professionals in the way they manage supply chains? About two thirds of the participants are of the opinion that women have different style to men in the way they manage supply chains.

Are gender differences in managing supply chains of advantage to companies?



Out of all the logistics professionals who feel that there are gender differences in managing supply chains, 71% say that these differences are of advantage to the company.

Lacking support from schools and the logistics industry

A key concern for the industry is that only 27% of the logistics professionals think that schools and Universities are supportive in promoting the industry to women and only 21% feel that the industry as a whole is supportive in this respect. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that almost half of the professionals surveyed are not sure whether these institutions are supportive or not.

This might suggest that the influence of schools and the industry as a whole on the longer term development of (young) women into the logistics industry is not taken enough into consideration when making strategy decisions for the sector. The most important questions arising in this context are: What can be done to attract more (graduating) women to the industry? And also, who should play a leading role in this? The responsibilities need to be clarified for actions to be taken effectively.

Making the industry more accessible and attractive to women

More programs that ensure work-life balance, gender equality and better career opportunities for women are seen as the most important factors to make the logistics and supply chain industry more attractive to women.

Rank	Overall	Asia	Europe	Americas
	Programmes for Work-Life Balance	Programmes for Work-Life Balance	Programmes for Work-Life Balance	Programmes for Work-Life Balance
1	58%	58%	60%	50%
	More Career Opportunities	More Career Opportunities	More Career Opportunities	More Career Opportunities
2	45%	54%	44%	44%
	Gender Equality	Gender Equality	Gender Equality	Gender Equality
3	41%	39%	39%	31%

Table 3: Ways of attracting women to the industry

There are no major differences between men and women with regards to this topic. The table above emphasizes that the ideas on how to attract more women to the logistics sector are similar globally. Work-life balance seems to be the greatest issue, followed by a lack of career opportunities, which is in line with the findings showing that women are still widely underrepresented in management positions.

As outlined before the different parties active in the sector, such as companies, industry organisations, universities, etc. need to focus more on this issue. There are already a number of initiatives and task forces dedicated to this topic, such as the Canadian Logistics Institute's initiative 'Women in Logistics', which builds awareness of women as an underdeveloped talent pool and creates processes and programs to get more women into the sector.

However, more actions need to be taken to create a better gender balance within the sector. All in all, it seems that responsibilities for actions regarding this topic are not clear. Who should take the lead? What can be done and who needs to be involved? "It is time this topic is more openly discussed within the sector and more initiatives are started to ensure skilled and qualified labour supply for future years.

Companies need to market themselves to better attract female employees and offer more support to women. Schools need to be more supportive in promoting the industry since they have a huge influence on the next generation of professionals. Industry organisations need to ensure that initiatives are started, discussions take place, and actions follow", says Eelco Dijkstra, Director of Europhia Consulting.

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