

ICA Gruppen and Unilever top gender diversity poll

Retailer ICA Gruppen and manufacturer Unilever are the star performers in the 2019 Gender Diversity Scorecard survey, carried out by LEAD Network in partnership with EY.

The biannual survey, first conducted in 2017, tracks the number of women in senior executive positions within the European retail and consumer goods industry. This year the research covered 32 companies.

In the retail category, Sweden's ICA Gruppen topped the poll for the second time. In 2019, the company had 50% women in leadership roles, up an impressive 10 percentage points from 40% in 2017. "We are incredibly proud that ICA has emerged as the top-scoring retail company for the second time in a row," said Petra Albuschus, Chief Human Resources Officer at ICA. "As a business we have worked on gender equality for a long while, and are convinced it is key to better business results."

Meanwhile, in the consumer goods category, global manufacturer Unilever claimed the number-one spot for the first time. Female executives at Unilever make up 40% of the total. Hanneke Faber, Unilever President, said: "Unilever is honoured and proud to be the top-scorer manufacturer in LEAD's leading European Gender Diversity survey. We set ourselves an ambitious target way back in 2010 to get to 50% female managers by 2020. This public target and 'measure what you treasure' approach were the key drivers for our results today. We look forward to driving gender balance at the very highest levels in Unilever, too; and continuing to learn and be inspired by the LEAD Network".

In an encouraging sign that the industry is making progress towards gender parity, of the companies that participated, the proportion of women in executive positions with responsibilities in Europe rose from 25% in 2017 to 34% this year. Half of the 32 companies repeated the 2017 survey. Of those, three-quarters saw the number of women in executive positions go up (many of which went up "substantially").

However, there is still a way to go. The survey showed that the majority of women leaders continue to serve in areas that are traditionally female-friendly, such as HR, marketing and finance, with far fewer in supply chain, IT and operations.

Elaine Parr, EY EMEIA Market Sectors Leader says, "For EY, creating a diverse and inclusive workplace where all EY people can thrive is a business priority. The awards today shine a spotlight on how organizations are approaching this critical business issue, providing a valuable opportunity to share knowledge and experience. By championing best practice and working collaboratively, organizations can help to accelerate the pace of change."

The full results of the survey were announced at the annual LEAD Network Event: "Doing not Trying: Results Matter" in Madrid on 19th November. This conference is the leading gender diversity event for the European retail and consumer goods industry, bringing together more than 600 men and women to improve gender diversity and inclusion, enhance professional networks and boost personal development.

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What is LEAD Network?

LEAD Network is a non-profit and volunteer-led organisation whose mission is to attract, retain and advance women in the retail and consumer goods sector in Europe through education, leadership and business development. It has a fast-growing membership of close to 7,000 people – both women and men – drawn from 26 countries. Retail companies supporting LEAD Network as corporate Partners include Ahold Delhaize, Costco, ICA, Sonae, Waitrose, Migros Turkey and METRO. Members have the opportunity to build their leadership skills, to widen their circle of contacts, and to be inspired by female role models and male champions in the industry. To date, 18 companies have signed LEAD Network's Pledge on gender diversity.