

DIGITAL COULD CLOSE GENDER GAP AT WORK

Accenture, the global professional services company, has created the Accenture Digital Fluency Model, a tool that enables the company to analyse our digital world in terms of 'digital fluency' and its effect on gender equality throughout the career lifecycle.

It describes digital fluency as "the extent to which people embrace and use digital technologies to become more knowledgeable, connected and effective".

Accenture asked nearly 5,000 women and men in 31 countries about their use of digital technologies — the devices they have access to, from smartphones to wearables, and how and when they used them. The survey also asked specifics about their education and career.

This resulted in Accenture's report '**Getting To Equal - How Digital is Helping Close the Gender Gap at Work**', where Ireland ranks 8th out of 26 countries in terms of 'Accenture Digital Fluency Model Overall Scores for Women'.

The report examines gender equality in the workplace through three specific areas: how women use education in preparing for work; how they do at finding and keeping a job; and how they do in advancing in their careers.

Almost half of the working women surveyed said they use digital to work from home and to access job opportunities: 41 percent said digital helped them balance their personal and professional lives, and to access job opportunities.

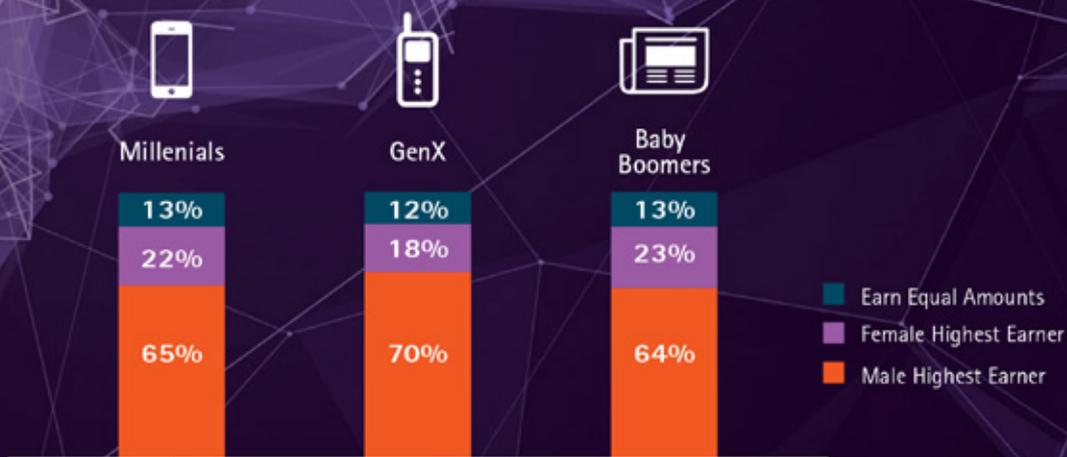
This highlights the importance of digital fluency in helping countries progress toward equality in the workplace. Differences in the digital fluency of men and women, and between countries today, mean every country is at a different stage of this journey and must address a different set of priorities. For example, Japan has high levels of digital fluency but low gender advancement rates, which tells of a cultural issue that must be addressed before "they can truly maximise their female talent".

Nations with higher rates of digital fluency among women have higher rates of gender equality in the workplace. The US, Netherlands, UK and Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) have the highest digital fluency scores in the sample and rank among the top performers on workplace equality. India has the lowest overall score of all the countries in the model, and these low scores are affecting women's progress in employment. India also has one the largest gaps in the overall score between men and women. Saudi Arabia and UAE are the only countries where these gaps are greater.

Accenture expects gender advancement to improve as more millennial women and digital natives move into management — "our research found nearly six in 10 millennial women surveyed aspire to be in leadership positions".

It was also found that, while digital fluency is having a positive impact on pay for both men and women, the

Men are Dominant Earners by Household



Source: *Getting to Equal: How Digital is Helping Close the Gender Gap at Work*, Accenture 2016

gap in pay between genders is still not closing. Men are, by far, the dominant earners by household across all three generations — Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers.

Positively, digital fluency is also creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs and women who are considering rejoining the workforce. For example, many women want to be entrepreneurs and know that digital fluency will help them achieve those goals. This is particularly true in the emerging markets, where women are more than twice as likely as those in developed markets — 61 percent versus 29 percent — to say they want to start a new business in the next five years.

It also found that digital fluency is removing many of the barriers that non-working women said kept them from working. For instance, almost 60 percent of women who are not currently employed said that working from home or having more flexible hours would help them find work.

Perhaps most encouraging, nearly three quarters (71 percent) of men and women alike said that “the digital world will empower our daughters”. Clearly, the changes we are seeing in women’s lives as a result of digital fluency are here to stay and will become more pronounced with future generations.

Part of the solution to the barriers women face in the workplace, including societal and family restrictions, lies in what Accenture research calls “the liquid workforce”. The ‘Accenture Technology Vision 2016’ reports that

organisations must focus on enabling people — consumers, workers and ecosystem partners — to accomplish more with technology. This growing use of technology will help everyone balance their personal and professional lives and access new opportunities in an evolving work environment.

The report says, “at the current rate of digital adoption, developed nations likely won’t achieve workplace gender equality until 2065, and developing nations until 2100. **But if governments and businesses can double the pace at which women become frequent users of technology, we could reach gender equality in the workplace by 2040 in developed nations and by 2060 in developing nations**”.

It concludes digital fluency is no cure-all, and is only one factor helping to narrow the gender gap in the workplace. But “we have ample evidence that it is a key factor and acts as an accelerant in every stage of a person’s career — powerful in both education and employment, an increasingly important as women advance into the ranks of leadership”.

To access the full report visit: Accenture.com

“THE DIGITAL WORLD WILL EMPOWER OUR DAUGHTERS.”

