

# **Glass Ceiling Effect in Lithuanian Private Sector: What Holds Women Back From Moving to the Top Positions**

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The study explores the relationship between glass ceiling perceptions, promotion, and leadership opportunities for workplace middle-management positions in Lithuania. For this study, data was collected using an online questionnaire distributed using the LinkedIn social network. The total number of participants was 725, of which 521 were females (72%), and 204 were male (28%). Of the 725 participants, 379 (52%) agreed or somewhat agreed that there is gender inequality in the workplace in Lithuania. While the results suggest the perception of a glass ceiling still exists in Lithuania, the results were not highly explicit as many of the responses fell between the "somewhat agree" and "neutral" range. The European Institute for Gender Equality suggested that if Lithuania would improve gender equality, it could lead to a 12% increase of GDP by 2050 through creating additional jobs for women (EIGE, 2019). To test the economic influence for the Lithuanian economy in the face of the glass ceiling, almost 300 out of 725 (41%) of the participants agreed that they would not remain in their job if the amount of gender inequality increased, even choosing that it would lead to their choice of leaving their job or, in extreme cases, leaving Lithuania. Additionally, there were no significant differences between male and female perceptions about leadership and promotion. Finally, both genders valued flexible work schedules and "work-life," as well as recognition for achievements they bring to the company.

*Keywords: gender inequality, mid-level management, glass ceiling, women leadership, promotion opportunities*

## **Introduction**

The glass ceiling is a phenomenon that creates a barrier to reach top positions in organizations based on the person's gender. The glass ceiling can be looked at from different angles since it has multiple factors that can cause it. Interestingly, invisible barriers that stand in front of women when reaching higher positions can be based on attitudes, stereotypes, and devaluation of women's skills. The Scandinavian Bank, Swedbank Lithuania, economist Laura Galdikienė suggested that gender discrimination happens unconsciously. When society sees working women, they tend to value her less and do it automatically, without even realizing it (Juskauskaitė, 2017).

Although this is suggested to be done sub-consciously, the results are still very real. For example, the unadjusted gender pay gap by economic control in Lithuania in 2019 was 13% in the private sector, and the percentage has constantly grown since 2009 (Lithuania Statistics Department, 2020). Because of this, eliminating the gender gap is one of the top priorities of gender-related policies at both the European Union and national levels. In addition to anti-discrimination legislation at the national and international levels, there continues to be ongoing discussions and legal changes globally addressing equal pay and rights for all the people, and not based on their gender. The European Institute for Gender Equality is calculating that by diminishing the gender-related differences in a workforce, Lithuania could increase the GDP of the country 12% by 2050. "Gender equality has strong, positive impacts on GDP, which grow over time and can exceed the impacts of other labor market and education interventions." (EIGE, 2019)

### **Theoretical Background**

#### **Situation in Lithuania – was there no change since 2005?**

To understand the complexity of the glass ceiling in Lithuania, it is important to look at the historical context. The European Institute for Gender Equality released an index in 2019 that measures the progress of gender equality in the European Union countries. Its core domains are work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health, which create 31 indicators and compares them between 28 European Union countries for five times since 2005. In this index, Lithuania holds 23<sup>rd</sup> place with an index of 55.5% (European Union average is 67.4%). Interestingly, the same reported index back in 2005 was 55.8%. Given that information, it suggests that not only has there been no substantive progress, but there has actually been a decline by .3%. This decline was clearly identified and underscored that Lithuania was the only country in the European Union that made no progress. "Lithuania was the only Member State, with Gender Equality Index scores lower than the EU whose scores declined as the EU average increased, widening the gap as a result" (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019, p. 26). Interestingly, although the country had a two-term woman president, based on the equality index, Lithuania is performing the worst in the financial and governmental sectors when it comes to gender equality.

Understanding that Lithuania became an independent nation again in the early 1990s, the newfound independence brought with it a desire to understand the social statuses perceived by Lithuanian citizens regarding gender differences in the workforce. In 1994, a survey was conducted in Lithuania asking people if they agreed that in a workplace shortage, the priority is for men to be hired. Not surprisingly, the results yielded that 72% of men and 54% of women agreed with this statement and prioritized working men over women. In 2014, the same study was replicated with substantially different results. In the 20 years that passed from the original study, the mindset of Lithuanians surveyed stated only 19% of men and 10% of women agreed with the prioritization of men over women in employment opportunities (Skardžiūviene, 2019).

Currently, there is a relative balance when it comes to gender in the workforce. The working population in Lithuania division by gender is almost equal with 733.2 thousand men and 739.8 thousand working women (Lithuania Statistics Department, 2020). Although employment is reasonably similar, with more women in the workforce, the main inequality in the labor market is seen as the "wage gap." In a report released in 2020 by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, there was a notable difference in average income between men and women in 2019, with women earning an average annual gross earnings – 14,625 Euro, and men – earnings 16,479 Euro, an 1854 Euro difference in earnings that favored the men. (Statistics Lithuania, 2020). Additionally, while the employment rate in Lithuania for both women and men is almost equal (women - 70.2%; men - 70.6%) , it is important to provide some additional context. When considering persons 18 to 64 years of age who were unemployed due to parental leave, the number of women is four times larger with 66.3% women and 15.4% men unemployed for 1-3 year periods due to some sort of parental leave (Statistics Lithuania, 2019).

The Global Gender Gap (World Economic Forum, 2020) research identified some possible reasons why there is a gender pay gap in Lithuania. The first issue found suggested that a pay gap exists due to professional career track choice. The study reported, women do not choose STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) studies, where there is greater potential for pay equity. Additionally, the report cited STEM education statistics that show in education programs in this area, the student populations have a disproportionate interest between men and women, with only 12.3% of women participating in STEM, while 47.23% of men participate in STEM in some educational sphere (World Economic Forum, 2020). Additionally, four times more men are working in science, technology, engineering, and math fields. The second reason identified by the report suggested, women are choosing to work fewer hours, or in less challenging work, just to have a more flexible schedule. More flexible hours give an ability to control how much and when a person is working; it affords them greater control over their "work-life balance". The study reported that part-time employment favored women at 28.37%, in comparison to their male counterparts at 17.05% (World Economic Forum, 2020). These two factors contribute the most to the overall gender pay gap. Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker in his book "*A treatise of the family*" (1993) identified that people marry one another for comparative advantage. The economist assumes that women are better at taking care of the household and bearing children, while men are financial providers, focusing on the labor market. As Becker (1993) suggested, it is advantageous for both genders to combine the strengths and make an alliance. In a survey of equal opportunities in Lithuania, 58% of respondents agreed that *a wife's duty is to take care of her husband and household*, and 53% agreed that *men should focus on their careers more than women should* (Skardžiūvienė, 2019). This historical information suggests that while opportunities for employment may exist in Lithuania, the change in mindset for a "woman's role" is still changing at a slower rate, and more than half of the population still believe that women should do most of the work at home.

### **Nordic countries – Top in gender equal rights**

Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) typically rank high on this type of index and can be an example for other countries. The reasons why Scandinavian countries are at the top are the introduced quota and an equal number of employment opportunities across gender. Legislation, maternity, and paternity leaves are created for work and push the country forward to a more equal environment. "They were among the first countries in the world to provide women with full voting rights" (Nordic Council of Ministers, p.1, 2018). Nordic countries are proof that legislation for gender equal rights can lead them to being one of the world's most gender-neutral countries. The significant difference is Nordic countries' public sector, which is highly represented in many gender equalities sectors, serves as a model for the private sector which still lags in some regards. Sorgel (2020) stated "Women have flourished in the Nordic public sector – the prime ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway are women, as is 47% of Sweden's parliament. But the private sector is a different story." (Soergel, 2020). However, a study completed by Einarsdottir et al. (2018) cast a different light on the perception women have in the private sector. They found that women could not identify themselves with top management positions since they assumed it to be a closed world for them. When considering the higher position in a company, women felt that they should adopt some of the masculine gender role traits. The most telling conclusion noted by Einarsdottir et al. (2018) was the conclusion that "barriers still hinder the career progress of women in Icelandic organizations, and the only way that these women see around these barriers is to change themselves to become more like men" (p. 11). This research gives few reasons why it is hard for women to move up with their career seeing that men create relationships outside work such as watching sport games, going to the bar for a beer, and other informal settings; it is considered acceptable and needed for men to foster these relationships for professional opportunities. Einarsdottir et al. (2018) suggested that for men, it comes out to be natural, but for a woman to enter this "club" is rarely possible. Also, jobs are created to fit male traits and it is hard for a female to adopt "manly" traits in order to feel like they

fit in. A final, more mentioned reason, was the combination of work and duties at home. Women working a "double shift a day" does not provide them with the opportunity to focus on their careers and seek promotions.

### **Higher education**

An interesting approach is that more women seek and higher education. "In European Union in 2016, women accounted for an estimated 54.1% of all higher education students in all Europe countries (28 countries)" (Eurostat, p. 58. 2017). In Lithuania the percentage of women enrolled in the higher education is even higher, there is 60.8% women compared to 39.2% men seeking higher education.

Beaudin (2018) studied the correlation between academic performance in university and workplace position after graduation where alumni were asked to answer questionnaires adding their demographic information and answers related to their grade point average (GPA) and the current industry and position that they work in. The results suggested that women are less likely to have a higher position in the organization.

### **Family life balance**

Psychological factors also have a significant influence on women when speaking about their career life. A study conducted in Canada by Ezzedeen et al. (2015) sought to understand the challenges women face in the workforce in relation to their home commitments. The results of the study suggested that women indicated that they feel personal limitations and obstacles when it comes to work-life choices. However, Ezzedeen et al. (2015) also suggested that a pipeline mentality is beginning to emerge, and posited, "Conversely, the pipeline perspective holds that more women in middle management will push more women into the executive ranks, thus, it is only a matter of time before equality prevails." (Ezzedeen, et al., p.3 2015 ).

The example of a gender related inequality and childcare is presented using Danish administrative data from 1980 – 2013. One of the more dominant pieces of the discussion can be found in the loss of pay or promotion opportunities for women based on having children. Kleven et al. (2018) suggested that women who have children and provided direct care through maternity leave or other programs resulted in a 20% long-term gap in pay and promotion. In Lithuania, women often take two years of maternity leave to raise children, while at the same time their colleagues grow and move up the corporate ladder. Lithuanian Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's research reported an important point on the perception of a woman's "traditional role" by detailing that 58% agreed with the statement that "The wife has to take care of her husband's life" (Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson in Lithuania, 2019). House care is predicted to be done by women, which led to an unequal number of hours doing housework.

### **Women's beliefs**

Women's beliefs are related to their future success and can be one of the main factors holding them back from reaching the top positions. "Women in the Workplace" is the largest study about the corporate state of women in America. This study has been conducted annually since 2015 and gives a summary of what has changed during the years. McKinsey and Company (2019) reported an interesting trend that " more women are being hired at the director level and above than in past years. Second, "senior-level women are being promoted on average at a higher rate than men" (p.12 ). The study suggests that while that the glass ceiling is cracking and it becomes easier for women to reach the top, a new term "broken rung" has been presented. McKinsey and Company (2019) described this as resulting "in more women getting stuck at the entry-level and fewer women becoming managers." (McKinsey & Company, p.7, 2019).

### **Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes affect not only critical thinking about oneself but also the future results for people. Research about gender beliefs by Angelica Moe (2009) explored the concepts surrounding the influence of an assumption given before doing a task and the task result. For this research, people were divided into six groups and given different instructions for doing the Mental Rotation Test (MRT). The divided subjects received one of the three specifications about the task and gender: men are better at doing it; women are better at doing it; no comment about gender role. The task was done better by those women that heard a positive note about their performance and the results were equal to men's. This A. Moe reserach (2009) found that the stereotype threat works in life in many different situations and effect the way people react to different situations.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

- Q1: *What is the level of inference of a glass ceiling existence or perception of a glass ceiling in Lithuania?*  
 Q2: *How does the apparent or perceived glass ceiling effect influence the Lithuanian economy?*

### **Sample**

The research was designed to investigate the glass ceiling effect in Lithuania private sector companies when taking into consideration observations from both female and male counterparts. The population of this study is working-age people that have several years of work experience and can comment on possibilities to receive/apply for a higher position in their organizations. The targeted audience was from 25 to 65 years old, and working in middle management positions in their organizations.

The working population size for this research was extracted from the Lithuanian statistics department. Using data from the government, the total population of people from ages 21 to 65 was 1,593,708. (See appendix D for information of on age groups) According to the same statistical information, there are 371,500 people working in the public sector, leaving a total population of 1,222,708 for this study. For this population size to have an ideal sample size with a 99% confidence level and margin of error 5%, the ideal sample size was 663 participants. This research received a total number of answers from 747 participants. 22 participants were removed from the survey, because they stated that they are working in public sector and this research focus is on private sector companies. The total number of 725 participants were applicable for this research.

Data was collected using an online Google forms questionnaire program consisting of 17 questions. The direct link with the instructions was sent via direct message on LinkedIn using the private account of the researcher. The participants had to evaluate questions using a Likert scale. (Table 1.)

### **Results and Discussion**

To test the hypothesis and research questions, both genders were addressed and asked to participate in this research. Of the participants, the majority were females (521) which comprised 72%. Male participants comprised the remaining 28% with 204 respondents. Since the topic of a glass ceiling is gender-related, it is visible in the results where more than two-thirds of volunteer participants were women. Participants were divided into categories according to their age groups. The two main groups that made more than 80% of the participants were from 25 – 45 years old (age group 25 – 36 had 341 participants representing 47% of the sample; age group 36 – 45 had 258 participants representing 36% of the sample). According to the statistics department information, this is the main category for working-class people (more than 600,000 in this age group). Since the glass ceiling is most likely to occur for people with a higher education degree, participants were asked to select their highest level of education obtained. Ninety-six percent of the participants have received a higher education diploma.

The participants were asked: “Your employers' head of the company gender is”. The results of the study disclosed that two-thirds of the responses – 484 participants, had a male company director or CEO, while only one-third – 241 participants – had a woman leading their organization. The interesting finding, in this case, is that even though two-thirds of the participants were females, when speaking about the highest level in a company women are one third. It suggests that at the top strategic levels, one out of three women can participate in strategic meetings of big companies.

To answer this research questions, a Likert scale was used for scaling the research answers (Table 1): 1 meaning agreement, 3 meaning neutral, 5 meaning disagreement with the statement. Participants were asked to express their opinion to whatever they agree that there is gender inequality at work in Lithuania. The mean for this question is 2.56, which indicates that society, in general, does not have strong beliefs about gender inequality at the workplace in Lithuania. The standard deviation is 1.36, the distance from the mean is relatively leaning more towards the agreement side. To get a better understanding of beliefs about gender inequality, participants were divided by gender. This shows that while men (mean – 3.08) have no opinion and lean more towards the fact that there is no gender inequality at work, women tend to agree with the statement (mean – 2.35). From a literature review (Poushter, Fetterolf, 2019) it is posited that males tend to ignore and not notice gender inequality occurrence at work, and when they do not see it, they do not address it as a problem. The agreement (strongly agree/agree) for the question about the beliefs if there is a gender inequality was answered by 379 people out of 725 (52%), which indicates that more than half of people admit to the fact that inequality exists.

**Table 1** - Likert scale meaning

<b>Response value intervals</b>	<b>Perception level</b>
1.0 – 1.8	Very important/Agree
1.8 – 2.6	Important/Somewhat agree
2.6 – 3.4	Neutral
3.0 – 4.1	Somewhat unimportant/Somewhat disagree
4.2 - 5	Unimportant/Disagree

Throughout the survey, participants were given basic stereotypes about gender that are heard and often believed in society. “Women should cook and do housework”, “Men should be in charge at home and work”, “Women should earn less money than men”, “Men are smarter than women,” “Men are taking the job and their career more serious”, “Women are better at staying at home and raising children”, “Women do not possess required skills for some professions” or “I don’t believe with any of this statement”. In addition, they could add a comment about their choice regarding the stereotypes. Ninety-seven participants agreed that women are better at staying at home and raising children. Some commented that it is women who have a gift of giving birth so it is their duty to take care of children, but at the same time, for a strong woman, a child is not a problem to receive a higher position at work. Eleven participants agreed that men are taking their job and career more seriously and that division of work at home is agreed at every household individually, but it is expected that women take care of the home. Ten participants agreed that women should cook and do household work. Four agreed that men are in general smarter than women. Some other stereotypes received not more than one vote for it while the majority of participants expressed that they do not agree with any of these stereotypes. These participants expressed that there are no stereotypes because every person is individual and it depends on personality and not gender. Some men can be a great cook and take care of household and children, while some women can have many traits to have a better career and to take their career seriously.

**Table 2 - Promotion**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
I believe I should receive a promotion		2.94	1.36
	<i>Female</i>	2.90	
	<i>Male</i>	3.05	
How important are future opportunities for career development		1.62	0.85
	<i>Female</i>	1.57	
	<i>Male</i>	1.72	
There is an unequal salary based on gender		3.66	1.45
	<i>Female</i>	3.54	
	<i>Male</i>	3.94	
There is an unequal opportunity to grow based on gender		3.75	1.43
	<i>Female</i>	3.65	
	<i>Male</i>	4.01	
There is an unequal opportunity for promotion based on gender		3.76	1.42
	<i>Female</i>	3.66	
	<i>Male</i>	4.02	
Men are promoted more quickly than women with equivalent qualification		3.41	1.51
	<i>Female</i>	3.28	
	<i>Male</i>	3.71	
Women are not given equal opportunities to voice their opinion and decision making		4.09	1.28
	<i>Female</i>	3.96	
	<i>Male</i>	4.39	
Your gender has played a role in you missing out on a raise, promotion, key assignment		4.01	1.33
	<i>Female</i>	3.87	
	<i>Male</i>	4.33	

Table 2 presents the information about the participant's opinions about gender and promotion opportunities; Table 3 shows the Spearman's correlation between these variables. The participants could choose from agreeing or disagreeing with various statements. "There is an unequal salary based on gender." The mean for this question of all participants is 3.66 suggesting that on average people are neutral and lean more to the disagreement side. When looking at this question and division by gender, it reveals that men tend to disagree with this statement more; the majority at least somewhat disagree with this statement. Two hundred ten participants completely or partially agreed with this statement, which is almost one-third of all. Similar results are with the statement "There is an unequal opportunity to grow based on gender." All participants mean is 3.75 suggesting that people lean towards disagreement with this statement and, when looking at its division by gender, it is divided in that men lean towards higher disagreement with it (mean: men – 4.01; women – 3.65). The statement, "There is an unequal opportunity for promotion based on gender" received almost the same results as a previous question, all participants mean – 3.79 (female 3.65, male 4.02). The statement with the speed of the promotion received a slight increase towards agreement compared to other questions: "Men are promoted more quickly than women

with the equivalent qualification” (mean 3.41). This shows neutrality with somewhat disagreement (mean: female 3.28, male 3.71). With the following statement “Women are not given equal opportunities to voice their opinion and decision making” all participants mean was 4.09 which shows somewhat disagreement or strong disagreement. In this case, both genders agree that women can express themselves and make decisions the same way as men do. (mean: female – 3.96, male – 4.39). The statement with equal opportunities for women “Women are not given equal opportunities to voice their opinion and decision making,” all participants mean was 4.09 which shows that participants disagreed with this statement. The gender difference is visible for the means, men disagree with this statement more firmly. (female – 3.96, male – 4.39). The question about gender influence on receiving a more important task “Your gender has played a role in you missing out on a raise, promotion, key assignment,” mean – 4.01 making this response somewhat disagree. For this statement men were stronger about their opinion and expressed that they barely have received gender-related discrimination towards them, while women would not be so firm about disagreeing and some of them had felt it. (mean: female – 3.87 male – 4.33.)

Overall, these means and division by gender suggest that men tend to disagree more with gender-related statements. According to the composite mean, the difference for people to get promoted based on gender barely exists. As well, they have rarely experienced gender inequality towards themselves.

**Table 3 - Spearman’s correlation for promotion**

Self- Perception	Career Development	Salary	Professional Growth	Promotion	Qualification	Voice Recognition	Speci Assign
Spearman's Self- Perception							
1.000							
Career Development							
.028							
Salary							
.067	.774**						
Professional .081* Growth	.802**	.870**					
Promotion							
.058	.688**	.732**	.776**				
Qualification							
.064	.637**	.699**	.713**	.703**			
Voice .086* Recognition	.638**	.653**	.650**	.646**	.696**		
Special .145** Assignments	-.015	-.033	.007	.002	.026	.018	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

## Leadership Opportunities

Table 4 represents the questions asked regarding their perception of leadership traits and importance for them and table 5 shows the Spearman's correlation between these variables. The participants were asked how important it is for them to be recognized for their expertise at work and the mean – 1.4 and standard deviation 0.66 meaning that everyone needs to receive recognition for work that they do. An interesting factor is for women to be recognized at work is more important than for men, female mean – 1.29 and male mean – 1.68. This might be due to the fact



that the majority had a higher manager man and for women, it is important to feel accepted by workers. Another question regarding being the leader of a team, overall mean – 2.23 and standard deviation 0.99 indicates that being a leader is somewhat important for people. When dividing it by gender, the female mean is 2.25 and the male mean is 2.17, suggesting that more men are seeking leadership positions at work, and it is more important for them to have a team of their own that they can control. One more question was regarding taking risky decisions to gain more for the company; the mean for all is 1.92 and standard deviation 0.93 shows that it is somewhat important to gain more for them and the company even if the task or decisions made are riskier. When looked at more closely and divided by gender, the numbers suggest a different story. In response to the question regarding taking risks, the mean score for women was 1.97 while their male counterparts scored 1.81. These results suggest that women are less tolerant of risky decisions and fewer of them are willing to take risks. The question regarding having a high status in the society seemed neutral for participants mean – 2.53, standard deviation 1.09; this could indicate that for people, their status in society is an additional value, but not the one that has a high priority. Status is more important for females; their mean is 2.5 and the male mean is 2.61. This could be due to the fact that it is harder for women to reach a higher status in society so it becomes an ambition to have one.

**Table 4 - Leadership**

	<i>Gender</i>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Being recognized for the expertise at work		<b>1.4</b>	.66
	<i>Female</i>	1.29	
	<i>Male</i>	1.68	
Being the leader of a team		2.23	0.99
	<i>Female</i>	2.25	
	<i>Male</i>	2.17	
Taking the risks to gain more for the company		1.92	0.93
	<i>Female</i>	1.97	
	<i>Male</i>	1.81	
To hold a high status in the society		2.53	1.09
	<i>Female</i>	2.5	
	<i>Male</i>	2.61	

Participants expressed a flexible working schedule as a really important factor (mean – 1.67), the balance between work and other areas of life (mean – 1.48). This information could be useful for employers that want to attract a highly skilled worker. People want to work by their schedule and be able to plan their day to day activities themselves. Meeting personal and family needs was found to be important for everyone, as was the freedom to schedule daily activities based on daily needs. When receiving control of personal life and work, people tended to increase their productivity and focus on tasks. Often, mothers are the ones that leave the job when the child is sick or called to the school. Due to a strict working hours culture in Lithuania, it is hard for most women to balance between these things, so it can lead to working part-time. Adjusting working hours and working from home could be a possibility for women to stay full time at work. One more interesting comment from the open-ended questions is regarding the experience of different employees' perceptions when leaving a job early to care for children. If a woman leaves a job early to take a child from school, it is perceived that she is irresponsible; if a man leaves a job

for his children, he is pictured as a good parent. These are two completely different opinions of an employees' actions taken for the same situation. Perhaps this would not occur if there were more flexible work schedules for employees to choose.

**Table 5** - Spearman's correlation for leadership

		Recognition	Leadership	Decision-making	Status
Spearman's rho	Recognition	.1.000			
	Leadership	.241**	--		
	Decision-making	.255**	.519**	--	
	Status	.231**	.488**	.359**	1.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

### Economic Influence

The questions regarding a person's willingness to leave a job or a country for felt gender inequality are important for the Lithuanian economy and companies' ability to attract professional workers. Of the stated participants, 330 respondents answered they would consider leaving a job if they felt that there is gender discrimination against them. The open-ended question gives an insight into felt gender inequality at work that could lead to a decision to move away from Lithuania. Colleagues with equal expertise and work experience were both approached by headhunters and asked to interview for an open department head position. After the interview, the men were offered a job and a woman received an offer to work as his assistant (half a salary) with a comment that having two children would make her not flexible for work in the higher position. The woman also added that she felt that she needs to prove herself all the time, to increase her voice, and to go the extra mile to be heard and recognized for work that she does.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the perception of glass ceiling gender inequality existence in the workplace is a thing that is felt and described more by women since men do not routinely acknowledge and see it. Both genders are moderate about their leadership and promotion opportunities in their workplace. To be recognized for work that is done for a company is described to be the top priority for participants, as well as to have a balanced work with personal life and flexible schedule. Some open-ended questions added that in their opinion, what holds women back is their personal beliefs about gender inequality at work. Women accept lower pay and status themselves; in many situations, they tend to lower their voices and keep away from saying anything and standing up for themselves. Another mentioned aspect is that women have to go the extra mile and do more to be heard and recognized at work. Especially working in male-dominated sectors, women feel the need and pressure to go past typical negative stereotypes of appearance to be successful. Additionally, it is not uncommon for men to underscore even the smallest of accomplishments while women take a more humble, pragmatic approach to self-recognition of task accomplishment. Companies are working towards changing their work ethics and moving to a more open and gender attentive place, but the change should start in the people's attitude. The change that starts at home and moves to society is the one that will stick and be implemented to other levels in life.

One of the open-ended answers sums up the personal experience and situation in a workplace in Lithuania. Although the effect of a glass ceiling is beginning to become less and less visible, the progress as of now is not enough. It was found that a woman right after graduation is usually hired only for administrative and lowest levels because she has no relevant work experience. A woman with experience, however, is viewed with the perception that she is a liability as she will

get married and have children, therefore she is turned down for a higher position. Most likely, women will go on maternity leave and the period for them re-entering the job market is exceptionally hard because employers assume they are out of the job market and market innovations for too long, leaving women to pick up where they left off or rejoin in lower positions within the organization in terms of salary and career opportunities. It is also perceived that having children means not prioritizing work and can lead to a less carried workload. After several years, if not improving and not keeping up with market trends, the knowledge is not applicable to the job market.

### Future Research

Based on the open-ended questions, many topics provide the opportunity to be discussed and examined deeper. While this study focused primarily on the glass ceiling from a woman's perspective in line with theoretical frameworks, it would be interesting to evaluate the counter position of men in woman-dominated business spheres. Based on a response from a male participant, the individual stated a challenge for men to gain employment in Human Resources, and how one heard in several interviews he would not be accepted because his gender, as the HR team in the company consisted only of female employees. Even when a man does get a position in such a company, he is left out from team building activities or discussions because coworkers are speaking "ladies' stuff." To see the perspective from a man working in the female-dominated sphere (such as: nurses, HR, social workers, teachers, administrative assistants) would be an interesting turn to determine if there is a glass ceiling for these men.

In addition, future research should consider checking more variables and comparing them with the Spearman correlation method, doing various combinations and for example, checking the difference between leadership and promotion based on the level of education that a person holds. In open-ended questions, it was repeatedly mentioned that being a parent has substantial influence on women and their future careers. An interesting factor to look at would be the effect having children has on perceptions about careers, the importance of promotion, and leadership. An important question to add to the dynamic of the study would also be to evaluate how parenthood changes priorities in life, the importance of a career after starting a family, and how employers view the concepts and realities of maternity and paternity leave.

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