



*The World Information and Technology and Services Alliance
(WITSA)*

WITSA Statement - Women in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

Capitalizing on an untapped global resource

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The growth of Internet use and the impact of this use on the global economy are astonishing. A recent study by Booz & Co¹ states that “*In 1990, there were 100 million personal computers worldwide, 10 million mobile phone users, and less than 3 million people on the Internet. Most of them used dial-up modems.*” Currently, according to most recent data² around one third of the world’s population – over 3.4 billion people – are connected to the Internet; other projects, slightly more conservative, still acknowledge that there will be approximately 3 billion people who are connecting to the Internet in 2016. While roughly 50% of the world’s population are women and girls, the facts and figure about who is connecting are less balanced.

Women comprise half of the world's working population but they only generate about 37 percent of GDP today. Statistics provided via UN Women note that only 43% of women are connected. As discussions take place on how to connect the next billions, WITSA supports a strategic focus and calls for actions to narrow the gender gap.

¹ <http://www.strategy-business.com/article/00127?gko=efe69&cid=20120904enews>

²

https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/media_entertainment_strategic_planning_4_2_trillion_opportunity_internet_economy_q20/

A 2012 Booz & Co [report](#) states that nearly 1 billion women around the world could enter the global economy during the coming decade. Yet this Third Billion has not received sufficient attention from governments, business leaders, or other key decision makers in many countries. There is compelling evidence that women can be powerful drivers of economic growth, in both developing and developed economies. According to the Booz & Co. referenced above, raising female employment to male levels could have a direct impact on GDP of 5 percent in the United States, 9 percent in Japan, 12 percent in the United Arab Emirates, and 34 percent in Egypt.

A September 2015 McKinsey study³ noted that, if women reached parity with men in the workforce, it would add up to \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, to annual global GDP in 2025 compared with a business-as-usual scenario. A "best in region" scenario, where every country matched the progress towards gender parity of its fastest-improving neighbour, global GDP growth would amount to as much as \$12 trillion annually by 2025, equalling the economies of Japan, Germany and the U.K. combined.

Earlier studies, such as the 2013 "European Commission survey on women active in the ICT sector"⁴, shows that bringing more women into EU digital sector would bring about a €9 billion annual GDP boost. Challenges in economic opportunities are significant: For instance, today, only 29 per 1,000 women in the EU have an ICT related degree (compared to 95 men per 1,000 men). Compounding the problem, women leave the tech sector mid-career much more frequently than men - much more so than in other industry sectors: In the EU, only 19.2% of ICT-sector workers have female bosses, compared to 45.2% of non-ICT workers. Only 9 percent of women over 45 with ICT-related degrees remain in the sector.

Similarly, the United States, the number of young women completing engineering and technology programs has dropped significantly over the past 30 years, and a report from the National Center for Women & Information Technology suggests that a little more than half of all US women who do enter technology fields leave their employers midcareer⁵. Despite earning the majority of bachelor's degrees, U.S. women earn only 12.9% of computer science degrees, according to the Computing Research Association⁶. These statistics have serious implications for the economy and for women at large. By 2020, U.S. jobs in computer science are expected to grow nearly two times faster than the national average, totalling nearly 5 million jobs⁷. Yet today, women hold only 26% of all tech jobs, according to the American Association of University Women.

According to a September 2015 study by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey entitled "Women in the Workplace"⁸ it will take more than 100 years for U.S. corporations to reach gender parity based on current trends.

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http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/growth/how_advancing_womens_equality_can_add_12_trillion_to_global_growth

4 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-905_en.htm

5

http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/business_technology/Recruiting_and_retaining_more_women_in_IT_organizations?cid=mckwomen-eml-alt-mip-mck-oth-1511

6 <https://www.aauw.org/files/2015/03/Solving-the-Equation-report-nsa.pdf>

7 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/12/how-u-s-tech-sector-jobs-have-grown-changed-in-15-years>

8 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/women_in_the_workplace?cid=mckwomen-eml-alt-mip-mck-oth-1509

In relatively egalitarian Denmark, only 10 percent of top business leaders are female and at the current rate it will take Denmark 534 years to achieve equal pay.

Even in Singapore, where pro-business policies and a flourishing venture capital (VC) market have made this tech hotspot an ideal destination for start-ups, only 5 percent of tech start-ups are headed by women, according to the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap Report" released in October 2014.

Facts and figures can guide social and public policy. These facts are clear. It is time to take action – action in the private sector; action by governments at local and national levels, and action at the global level. Thus WITSA proposes a set of policy principles, consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, and calls for collaborative action to advance gender opportunity and gender parity.

About WITSA

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) is the leading recognised international voice of the global ICT industry, whose members from over 80 nations represent more than 90 percent of the world ICT market. WITSA thus represents a critical stakeholder in discussions on Internet policy, regulation and governance.

WITSA's members and stakeholders comprise national associations, multinational corporations, institutions and organizations, researchers, developers, manufacturers, software developers, telecommunication companies, suppliers, trainers and integrators of ICT goods and services. As such, they represent a large and obviously critical constituent group for whom international trade in ICT products and services underpins business development and economic activity.

Advancing Gender Parity through Collaborative Action on Policy Principles

WITSA recognizes the importance of and applauds the United Nations September 2015 ratification of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, all of which have varying degrees of focus on progress for women and one which specifically [calls for gender parity](#) and full empowerment for all women and girls.

Several key changes are needed to achieve the full potential of women in the workforce: gender equality in society, economic development and a shift in attitudes. A mixture of various interventions may be needed to meet these goals, including financial incentives and support; technology and infrastructure; the creation of economic opportunities; capability building; advocacy and shaping changes in attitudes; and updating and reforming national laws, policies, and regulations to create the supporting and enabling environment needed to advance the goal of gender parity and equality of opportunity.

As the leading global ICT industry alliance, WITSA strongly believes that having a gender balanced workforce across the IT sector strengthens the sector's ability to retain its market position as the cornerstone of industry across global markets. Today, the ICT sector, and indeed other industrial sectors are limiting the talent pool, and bypassing some of the best and brightest by limited opportunities that affect half of the world's population. By widening the talent pool to be more inclusive, the IT sector will continue to thrive and grow in both size and influence.

As a fundamental principle, WITSA believes that by encouraging women to enter or return to the tech industry at all levels, the ICT sector will become more robust, more competitive and more innovative. WITSA and its members around the world are committed to this cause and have endorsed a set of principles:

1. WITSA members will actively promote Equal Access for Women to both Education and Employment.
2. WITSA members will actively support Equal Opportunity for Women in Job positions and Job remuneration.
3. WITSA members will contribute to culture change in our industry and economies in favour of gender equality and parity of treatment.
4. WITSA members will support and encourage educational programs that provide Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities for girls from a young age and for women of all ages, as returning workers.

Statement of Position

The ICT industry is not the future, it is the present: Information technology is transforming and revolutionizing every industry sector and by not capitalizing on the vast untapped resource that is women, we risk losing many of the economic, political and social gains we have made over decades. As stated by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, "Women are the most underutilized economic asset in the world's economy."

Call to Action

As the global voice of the ICT industry, WITSA challenges businesses in the following areas:

Women in Corporate Leadership: Businesses of all sizes must aim to get more women into corporate boardrooms by including female talent in their short lists and by bringing women together with role models and mentors who offer the confidence and network to get them there.

Parity for Women in the Workplace: We challenge businesses to follow best practice in attracting, retaining and sustaining female talent, demonstrating progress in the workplace, at all levels of their businesses.

Re-Entry into the Workforce: We encourage businesses to offer employment opportunities to women who have left the tech industry after a career break to return to the workforce.

Girls and Technology Education: WITSA encourages businesses to support the programs, developed by its members around the world, as well as by other organizations, designed to inspire and equip girls to pursue further education and careers in technology, and to actively engage in these partnerships by assisting with mentoring, training or in other ways to ultimately facilitate employment opportunities.

Education and Life Long Learning: WITSA encourages the establishment of programs that can advance new skills in digital areas for women of all ages, returning to the workforce in mid or later life. Technology competence is not age related and digital skills can be acquired at any age, enabling and enhancing economic opportunities for the middle aged worker, as well as the young.

Engaging policy makers at the national and global levels about changes in public policy, legislation, key funding initiatives, and the benefits of changes at the national level that affect competitiveness and social and economic contributions that such enabling of women in the digital workforce must also be a priority – reaching national parliaments, and Ministries.