

Advancing Women to Senior Positions Within the Municipality and Municipally Owned Corporations



In Israel, women are the majority of higher education students, they participate in high numbers in the labor market, and are engaged in diverse fields and occupations that were limited or considered not suitable for them in the past.

As in other countries, Israel has passed laws that prohibit gender-based discrimination in the workplace, as well as laws to guarantee adequate representation, primarily at public institutions.

Despite that, gender gaps still characterize the Israeli labor market. Among other things, there is gender segregation that includes two dimensions.

The first is **horizontal segregation** – whereas men are concentrated in 'male' professions (such as computer sciences), women are concentrated in 'female' professions (such as education and nursing), which are considered less prestigious and lower paying.

The second is **vertical segregation**—women are often at the bottom of the power hierarchy in organizations, in junior or marginal positions, whereas men are usually at the top – as managers and in key influential positions.

→ In the Israeli economy, women account for only about 20% of all CEOs (The Gender Index, 2021).

The fact that women are not represented enough in positions in which policy and strategy decisions are made means that the unique voices of those who have had different life experiences are often not heard and prioritized. In a public institution, this is of utmost importance. Furthermore, many research studies have shown that diversity has economic value: in the corporate world, the advancement of women to senior positions leads to increased profits and to successful companies.

This chapter, led by the Human Resources Division, the Municipally-Owned Corporations Bureau, and the Municipal Resilience and Social Equality Authority, analyzes the state of women's representation at the highest senior professional management level at the Municipality and at municipally owned corporations. It presents a review of the literature on the barriers to the advancement of women to senior positions, and cites best practices from Israel and around the world. The chapter adopts action items designed to foster an aware and nurturing organizational culture that will lead to an increased share and greater participation of women employees in senior ranks and in decision-making forums, or in places where they are underrepresented. The Municipality has further set measurable targets for equal representation in senior management positions at the Municipality, as well as for board chairpersons and CEOs at municipally owned corporations.

Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality¹

The Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality seeks to advance women to the senior management levels and is committed to taking the needed action to achieve women's full representation.

→ The majority of the Municipality's employees are women – about 66%. Women represent 51% of overall management (department managers and higher-ranking); 41% of senior management level (division heads and higher-ranking); and around 42% of the Director General's Forum (7 women, 11 men). In addition, women hold about 43% of senior statutory positions² at the Municipality.

Similar to the labor market in general, at the Municipality there is a significantly higher concentration of women, whether as employees or managers, in traditionally 'female' administrations (Social Services and Education, and also in the Legal Service and Finance Administration). Accordingly, in occupations that have traditionally been considered 'male', men account for the majority of the staff, and in particular among senior management. However, there are numerous trends of change, such as the appointment of a woman to head the Construction and Infrastructure Administration and the appointment of women at the Engineering Administration and at the Operations Division.

¹ July 2022 data.

² The positions include Director General, City Engineer, Legal Advisor, Treasurer, City Auditor, Director of the Education Department, and the Mayor's Advisor on the Advancement of the Status of Women.

A Comparative Perspective

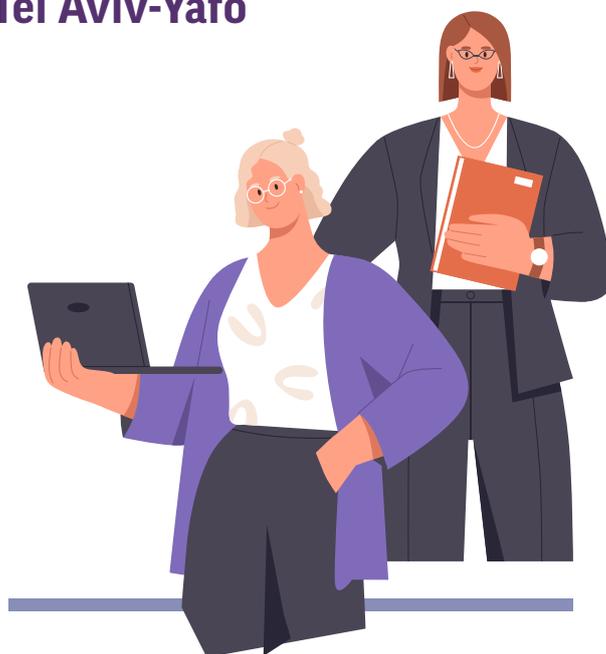
2019 data regarding the **Civil Service** in Israel show that 62% of government workers are women, but their representation declines as hierarchy progresses: at the most senior level, only 24% are women.

As for other local authorities, the comparative data on women in senior positions is incomplete, and it is difficult to compare **local authorities** due to the differences between them in how management positions and their areas of responsibility are defined. Having said that, the current state of human capital in local government (August 2020) indicates that women make up about 46% of all employees at the local authorities, but that percentage decreases the higher you ascend on the organizational ladder: women account for approximately half of the department managers and 31% of the division managers. Recently, as part of the Ministry of Interior's "Nekudat Reut" project (2021), it was reported that only 20% of the senior positions at the local authorities are filled by women. The highest percentage of women, apart from the position of the Mayor's Advisor on the Advancement of the Status of Women, can be found in the position of Director of the Education Department.

Municipally Owned Corporations in Tel Aviv-Yafo

For about a decade now, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality has set a goal that 50% of the municipal boards of directors will be women. The steps it has taken have led to success:

- 57% of the serving board members are women, if City Council members are not factored in, and 50% are women if City Council members are factored in³.
- 42% of the board chairs are women and around 45% of the CEOs are women⁴.



Mapping the Barriers

The literature and research in Israel and worldwide on the subject of gender segregation in the labor market have identified barriers faced by women to advancing to management and leadership positions, which include:

- **Barriers at the individual level:** research studies show that women are less inclined to advance themselves and promote themselves than men because they are less self-confident. Some studies show that women feel as confident about their abilities as men do – but fear a negative counter-reaction and the way their work environment will perceive them if they display it (a practice of 'self-exclusion').
- **The gender division of labor at home and at work,** coupled with the caregiving obligations borne by women more than men, lead in most cases to a situation where women are the ones who forgo employment opportunities due to considerations related to family obligations.

3 August 2022 data relating to 28 municipally owned corporations.

4 August 2022 data. The data pertaining to the board chairpersons relate to 19 municipally-owned corporations and the CEO data relate to 22 municipally-owned corporations. When calculating the data, a number of municipally owned corporations were excluded, such as corporations where the mayor serves as chairperson of the board, those where the position of the chairperson is a national government appointment and those that operate under a management agreement with another municipally owned corporation.

A survey found that in Israel, prior to COVID-19,

WOMEN WORKED IN UNPAID HOUSEHOLD AND CARE WORK 16 MORE HOURS EVERY WEEK THAN MEN

(43.3 as opposed to 27.4), whereas men worked for a wage outside the house about 11 more hours than women (49.9 as opposed to 38.5).

(Gender Index, 2019).



According to a poll conducted by the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel in 2018,

OVER 50% OF THE WOMEN NOTED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED, AND 6 OUT OF EVERY 10 WOMEN WHO WERE SEXUALLY HARASSED EXPERIENCED THE HARASSMENT AT THEIR WORKPLACE OR IN THE ARMY.

In 44% of the cases of sexual harassment at the workplace, the women were harassed by someone in a more senior position, but only 5% reported it or filed a complaint against the harasser.

- Women are exposed to sexual harassment, which constitutes a genuine barrier to their integration, and surely to their advancement in the labor market.
- Gender stereotypes are still prevalent in society and could lead to bias and discrimination in recruitment and selection processes, and also in employee evaluation and performance reviews that are conducted for promotion purposes. For the most part, executive positions are still identified with 'masculine' traits of assertiveness, dominance, boldness and strength. Consciously or unconsciously, women are often perceived as lacking those traits, and when they do display them, they are judged unfavorably.
- The lack of mentorship and sponsorship, which are an integral part of career tracks at workplaces in a still male-dominated world of management, are a significant barrier faced by women. Furthermore, women rely more on networks comprised of women. In general, the research conducted in recent years indicates that, compared to men, women lack networks that can facilitate their advancement in the workplace (in the Israeli context – military service provides men with important networking).

The research indicates that women pay a penalty for negotiating a promotion or a raise.

THEY ARE MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO RECEIVE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK THAT THEY ARE 'INTIMIDATING', 'TOO AGGRESSIVE' OR 'BOSSY'

(LeanIn. Org and McKinsey, 2019).



The research also indicates that

WOMEN ARE JUDGED BY DIFFERENT STANDARDS, THEY FACE HARSHER CRITICISM AND BLISTERING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS.

They are also penalized for their caregiving responsibilities – for example, when they take advantage of flexible working arrangements or work from home.

(LeanIn. Org and McKinsey, 2020).



What did we learn from other parts of the world?



In **Canada, the City of Vancouver** introduced a strategic plan in 2018 designed to advance gender equity in the city. One of the five priority areas that were chosen is women's leadership and representation. The objective was to give women equal access to opportunities, senior positions and professions in which they are underrepresented. Another goal was to adopt specific initiatives aimed at supporting women's leadership. The city government set quantitative targets and took a variety of steps, such as working with focus groups of women in senior positions, collecting and conducting a gender analysis of information, and holding trainings for recruitment and screening staff.



In **Michigan, United States**, the 16/50 Project was launched in 2018 after it was found that only 16% of the local chief administrative officers across the state were women. The project includes three focus areas: (a) educational activities and raising awareness about the matter among local elected officials; (b) professional support and development for women as part of a leadership and mentoring program; (c) proactive outreach to women who can be tomorrow's generation of professional leaders in local government.

In **Israel**, a number of steps have been taken to increase women's representation in government senior jobs. In 2014, the Stauber Committee on the Advancement of Women in the Civil Service published an extensive list of recommendations for setting targets and policies regarding the recruitment, hiring and training of women, posting and filling available positions, the revision of salary components, an improved work-life balance, and other matters. The committee's recommendations were adopted in a government decision. In 2020, another decision set an additional advancement target for the adequate representation of women, stipulating that women must fill at least 50% of all senior positions.

➤ A survey conducted in 2019 by the Gender Equality Division at the Israeli National Civil Service Commission asked middle-level women managers what is preventing them from advancing and what can help them overcome the obstacles on the way. It found the following: 20% feared aggravating the home-work conflict; over 30% of the women felt that they were not yet ready and feared they would not pass the various screening stages, even though the data show that the performance of women at pre-employment assessment centers is not lower than that of men; and more than 40% reported that they need backing from their office in order to apply for the position, either in the form of a declaration or from their immediate superior.



In 2019-2021, the **Israeli Ministry of Interior** spearheaded an initiative to introduce a human capital monitoring policy at the local authorities. Under that initiative, a team, which also included representatives from the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, worked on the issue of women in senior management positions at the local authorities. The team sought to examine why women refrain from applying for senior management positions and found that the lack of organizational support and backing from their immediate superiors were among the main reasons. The team's recommendations included: setting a numerical target, creating an egalitarian organizational culture led by the mayor that encourages women to apply for the jobs, management development programs for women sponsored by the Ministry of Interior, an improved recruitment process, greater transparency, and more.

Action Items for Creating Change in Tel Aviv-Yafo

Achieving Equality Within Five Years

Representation in all decision-making platforms and forums at the Municipality

- A policy announced by the Mayor and Director General, which contains equality targets 
- Gender mainstreaming in recruitment and screening processes 
- Ensuring equal participation and gender equality content in management courses 
- Initiatives to promote work-life balance
- Forming a follow-up committee headed by the Director General to track targets advancement 

Gender equality at municipally-owned corporations

- Consulting with the Mayor's Advisor on the Advancement of the Status of Women or someone on her behalf when drafting job postings
- Participation of the Mayor's Advisor on the Advancement of the Status of Women or someone on her behalf as an observer on CEO search committees
- Special and ongoing training on gender equality topics at municipally-owned corporations



*Already in progress

[Click here to read the introduction and the other chapters of the plan >>](#)

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