

# Industry Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



## Gender Diversity explored for International Women's Day

While gender diversity continues to be a hot topic in the aviation sector, airlines continue their slow and regionally inconsistent progress on gender diversity in C-level roles. According to the [International Air Transport Association](#) (IATA) – which represents 290 member airlines, the proportion of women in C-suite is just 3%.

In this digest, [Nadine Itani](#) provides further insight.

Have a great weekend!



## Women barely scratching the sky-high glass ceiling in the airline industry

### Nadine Itani

The airline industry with 3% of chief executives being women tends to significantly lag the wider economy. Airlines are below the 6% gender mix seen among S&P 500 companies, while the UK FTSE 100 companies have 8% of female chief executives – way ahead of the airline industry.

The latest annual C-suite survey by Flight Global revealed a regional disparity where North America continues to lead the way in terms of female representation among airline executives, the next best performer is Europe, followed by Asia Pacific and leaving behind the Middle East, Latin America and Africa with three, two and no females respectively taking on executive roles.



“

The image of a male pilot and a female flight attendant has long been standard, and the executive ranks don't look much different

”

While gender diversity might not have been a top priority for airlines when they were in survival mode during the pandemic, but carriers are now recovering and moving forward with their plans. Many airlines look to emerge from the pandemic with leaner and more sustainable business models, allowing them to be well-positioned to tap into financing opportunities supported by their ESG performance (environment, social, corporate governance). Among ESG targets the 'S' stands for the social dimension where diversity is being examined in terms of its direct impacts on the organisation's competitiveness. Talks on a proposed diversity legislation might speed up the race where airlines will find themselves mandated to report on gender, race, ethnicity status of leadership and various measures to increase board-level diversity.

In the longer-term, there could be two routes to diversifying the upper ranks of airlines. The first requires recruitment of women into the executive pipeline accompanied by on-the-job mentorship. While the second involves more patience through introducing air transport management into the dictionary of young girls so that when they are considering careers, it appeals to them like any other field.

**Two further opportunities to recognise International Women's Day:**

*On the bright side of motherhood (looking at motherhood and professional potential) by Dr Tracy Xu  
will be published on 8th March in the Academic Digest*

*An exhibition celebrating Women in SHTM- March–September 2022: The exhibition will be held in Austin Pearce Building, 2nd floor, along the corridors of SHTM staff offices. It will feature women role models from our students, staff, alumni and partners*