

IPMA Education and Training Series¹

Women in Project Management – An Irish Perspective

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Introduction

The Institute of Project Management in Ireland is the IPMA® member association with responsibility for the administration of the IPMA® 4 level certification system. Approximately 3,500 IPMA® Certified Professionals are currently registered in Ireland and the numbers continue to grow strongly each year.

The Institute conducts an annual survey of practitioners who undertake training with the institute. The results of this survey are published through the institute's website, www.projectmanagement.ie.

This paper presents the findings of the 2014 annual survey, specifically examining the responses in the context of the role of women in Project Management in Ireland.

Research Methodology

The Institute of Project Management Ireland delivers a range of Project Management education courses, including courses leading to IPMA certification, PM leadership, and topic specific courses (e.g. Finance for PMs, Lean PM, PMO essentials etc.). Each participant is invited to complete a survey which covers topics such as education level achieved, current experiences of working within the discipline of Project Management, attitude to the importance of PM certification, compensation and work hours, satisfaction with job/career, and career progression prospects.

There were a total of 197 respondents to the 2014 survey. All responses returned have been included in the results presented in this paper.

The full results of the survey have been published as a series of blog articles on the institute's website www.projectmanagement.ie, and can be obtained on request from The Institute of Project Management Ireland.

¹ This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board or other IPMA leaders on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. More information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

This paper specifically analyses the data which is of particular interest from a gender perspective, and presents the results of the survey addressing the role of women in Project Management in Ireland.

Project Management – The Role of Women

Respondents to the Survey

Of the 197 respondents, 41% were women (Fig 1) and is consistent with the proportion of women who attended the courses. Results presented in the remainder of this survey report the % of respondents to each question by gender.

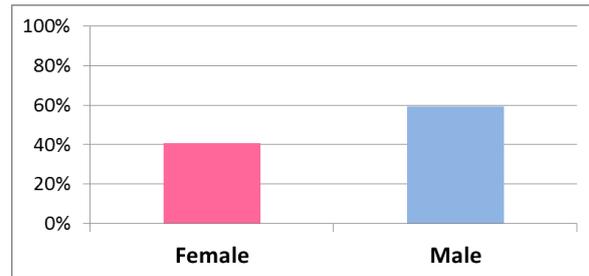


Figure 1: Respondents to Survey - by Gender

The overall age profile of those who attended training in 2014 is given in Fig 2. It shows that women tended to fall into a younger age category than men, with proportionally more women up to age 39, and fewer women aged 40+.

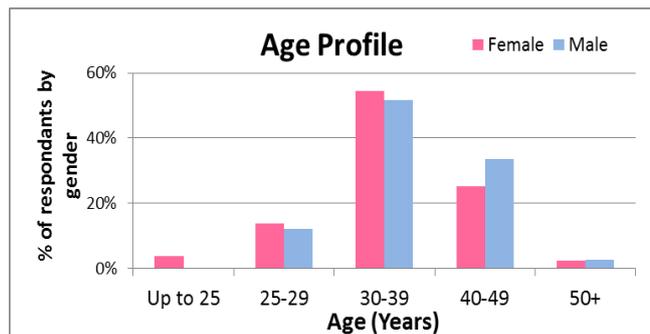


Figure 2:

Education

When it comes to education, women are significantly more likely to have been educated in Business/Management, HR/Social Science/Arts, and Science disciplines, and are significantly under-represented in the IT and Engineering/Construction educational backgrounds (Fig 3). This reflects the more historically traditional education/employment sectors for women in Ireland.

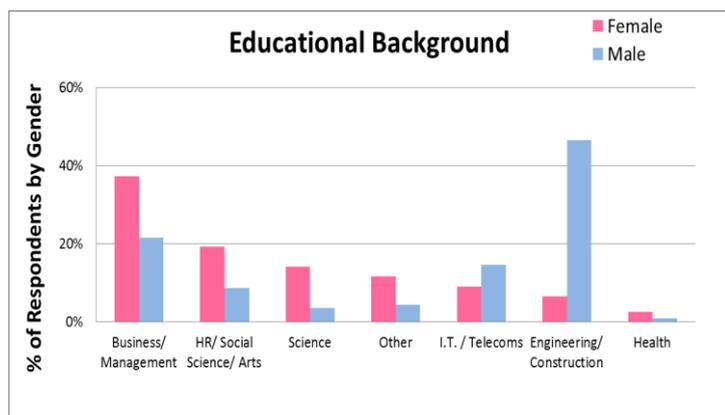


Figure 3

From an academic achievement perspective, women respondents tended to have achieved higher academic qualifications within their chosen discipline, with a higher number of women than men attaining post graduate, Masters or Ph.D. qualifications (Fig. 4).

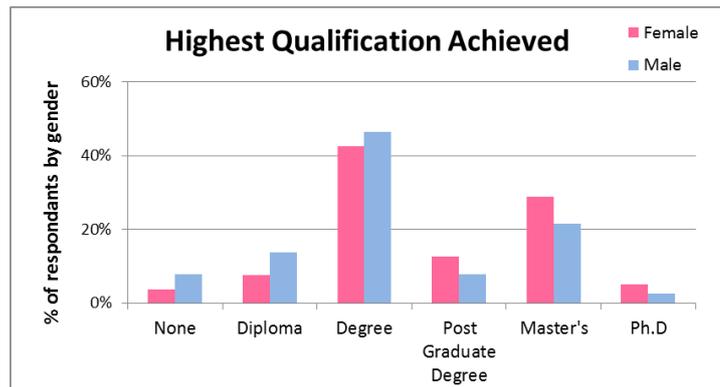


Figure 4

Current Employment: Industry & Projects

When asked in which industry they were currently employed, some interesting anomalies can be observed, with women over-represented in IT and construction (Fig 5), seemingly at odds with their educational background (refer to Fig 3 above). Significantly, women respondents are under-represented in project management roles in the Pharmaceutical, Food & Beverage and Medical Devices industries, which is at odds with gender employment in these industries. Further analysis of these trends would be of interest to fully understand the underlying trends here.

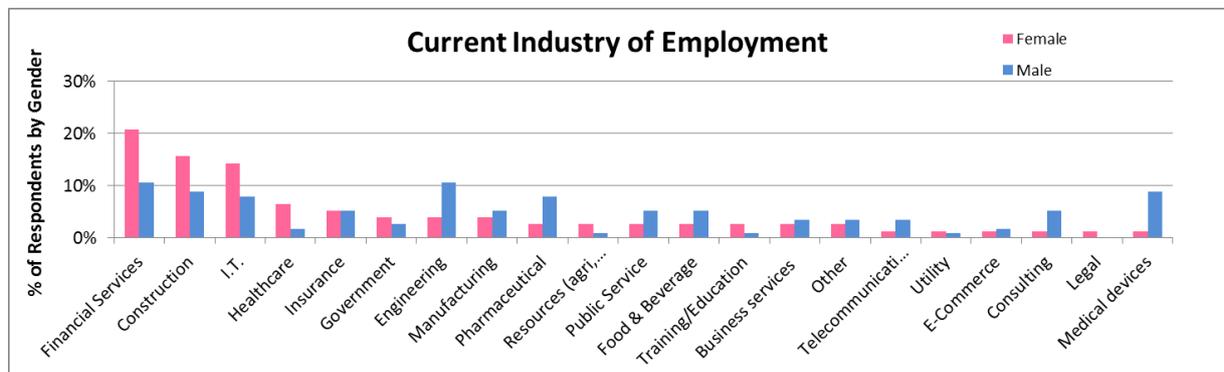


Figure 5

When questioned about their role in Project Management, women were more likely than men to consider project management as their primary profession (Fig. 6), though they were less likely than their male counterparts to work exclusively on projects, being more likely to spend 25-50% of their time working in Project Management related activities, and the remainder of their time in other roles (Fig. 7).

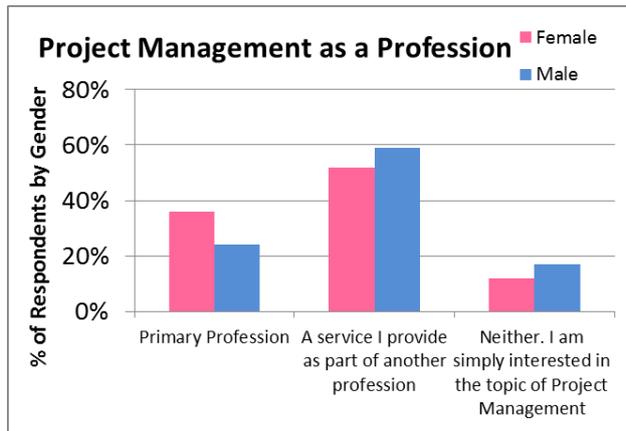


Figure 7

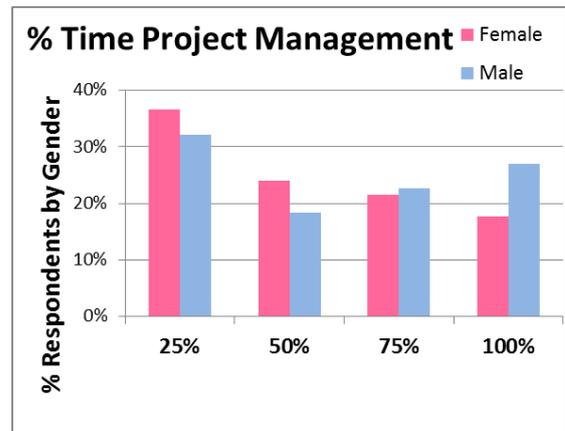


Figure 6

With regard to their role on projects, women are proportionally more likely to have Functional Manager or “Other” roles, and are slightly under-represented at the Project Team Member and Project Manager level (Fig. 8). The smaller number of respondents in senior roles in this survey is most likely a reflection of the experience of persons attending training, rather than a true reflection of the number of persons actually in senior project management roles in organisations.

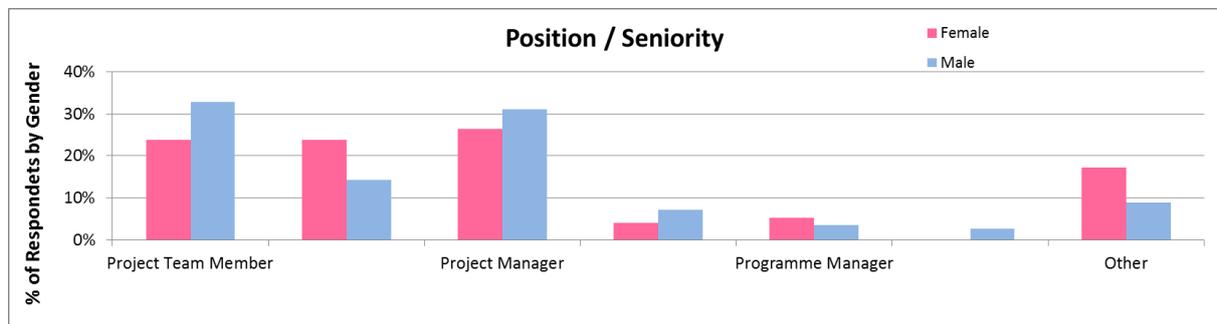


Figure 8

Analysis of responses to the survey relating to remuneration shows that women tend to earn less than their male counterparts, with women being proportionally being over-represented in the categories earning up to €50k per year, and under-represented in categories above €50k (Fig. 9). When averaged, women reported earnings of €55,200 per year, versus €57,400 of their male counterparts (i.e. women on average earned 5% less than men). However, only 75% of respondents disclosed their salary with proportionally more females than males reporting. Therefore, it is probable that the actual

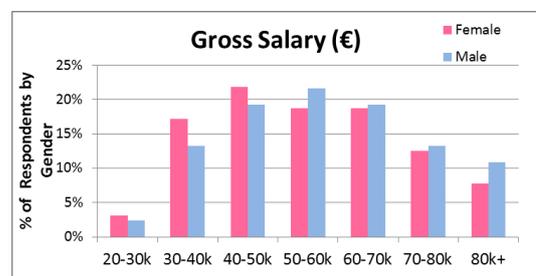


Figure 9

discrepancy in salaries between women and men in Project Management is wider than that reported from this survey.

When questioned about the type and value of projects undertaken, women are more likely to work on projects of a shorter duration and of a lower monetary value than their male counterparts (Fig. 10 and Fig. 11). However, this may be more of a reflection of the service industries in which women are more likely to be employed, with proportionally fewer women employed in high cost projects/industries such as engineering, pharmaceutical, manufacturing, medical devices etc. (refer to previous graph "Current Industry of Employment" above).

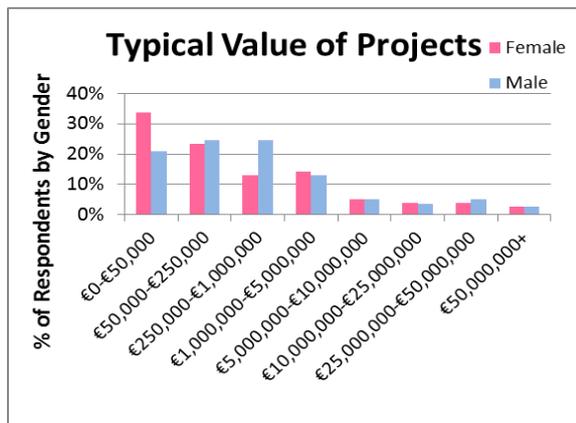


Figure 11

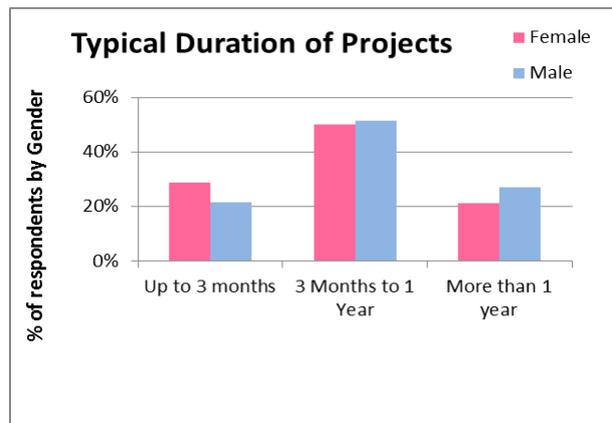


Figure 10

Looking at the variety of projects and teams, women are slightly more likely to work on a wider variety of projects compared to their male counterparts (Fig. 12). However, it is also likely that the teams will be more homogenous, with women less likely to work on multi-disciplinary teams (Fig. 13), again perhaps reflecting the service types of industries in which women are more likely to work.

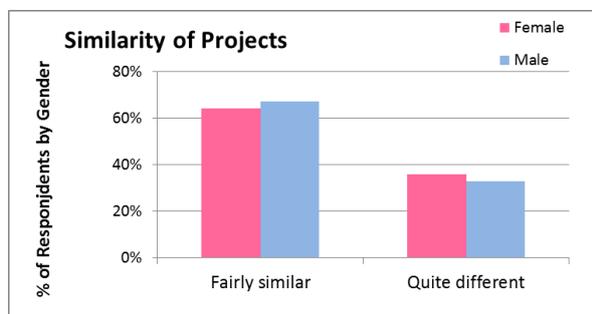


Figure 12

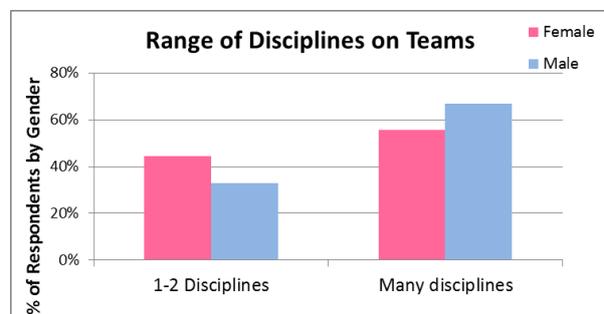


Figure 13

When it comes to geographical location, women are slightly more likely to be working on projects dispersed on a national or international level, rather than on a one city/regional level (Fig. 14).

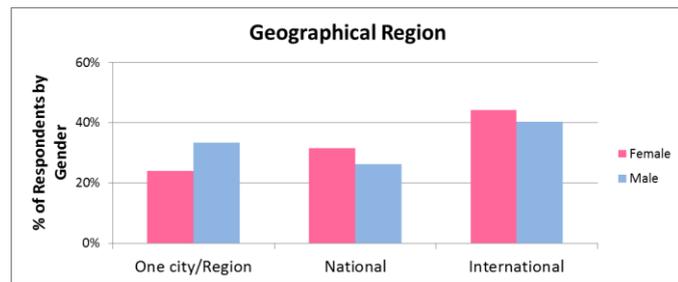


Figure 14

Conclusions

The 2014 survey provides some interesting insights into the role of women in Project Management in Ireland. The author notes that the data has been gathered from persons attending Project Management training, and is not a survey of the general Project Management profession. However, the results indicate that all is not equal with regard to the roles of women in Project Management with women being under-represented in the profession (41%) versus their male counterparts. When compared to their male counterparts, women are more likely to be employed as project management professionals in service type industries, working on shorter, lower monetary value projects, in non-dedicated project management roles, on a national or international level. Women are also more likely to be remunerated at a lower level, despite being more likely to be educated to a higher level.

This survey comes at the end of a period of high economic uncertainty for Ireland, with much instability in terms of employment and projects. The survey results are a snapshot of data gathered in 2014. It will be interesting to see how this data trends compared to previous surveys conducted during the Celtic Tiger and ensuing economically turbulent years, as well as how the role of women in project management will evolve with an improving national economic environment.

About the Author



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Martina Ryan, B.Sc. Ph.D, IPMA-b, PMP is the Managing Director of MRA Consulting Ltd., and a faculty member of The Institute of Project Management Ireland. She is a successful and dynamic transformational leader with more than 20 years industry experience in the areas of Project Management, Lean/6-Sigma and Quality Management as a practitioner, leader, instructor and mentor.

Working initially within the pharmaceutical industry in the UK and Ireland, her leadership roles included R&D, New Product Introduction/Product Transfers, Project Management and Quality/Continuous Improvement (Lean/6-Sigma Black Belt). In 2005, Martina founded MRA Consulting Ltd., a consultancy company dedicated to strategic and tactical change/project management activities in a variety of public and private organisations, including environmental, construction, pharma and service sectors.

As a faculty member of the Institute of Project Management Ireland, Martina contributes to the development and delivery of the training programmes offered by the Institute. Martina can be contacted at www.mra.ie