

# Women in Internal Auditing

Perspectives from Around the World

FUTURE



Closer Look

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**CBOK**

The Global Internal Audit  
Common Body of Knowledge

Sponsored by

Larry Harrington, CIA, CRMA, OIAL  
2015–16 Chairman  
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# About CBOK

## SURVEY FACTS

Respondents 14,518\*  
 Countries 166  
 Languages 23

## EMPLOYEE LEVELS

Chief audit executive (CAE) 26%  
 Director 13%  
 Manager 17%  
 Staff 44%

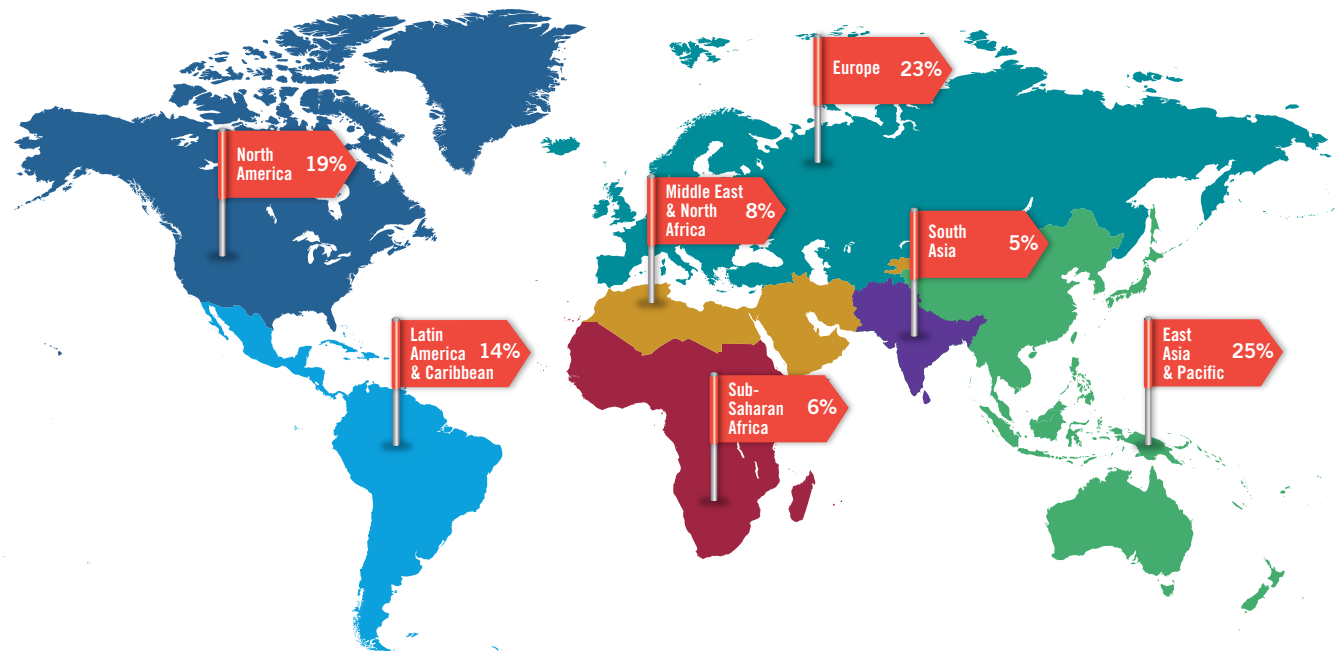
\*Response rates vary per question.

The Global Internal Audit Common Body of Knowledge (CBOK) is the world's largest ongoing study of the internal audit profession, including studies of internal audit practitioners and their stakeholders. One of the key components of CBOK 2015 is the global practitioner survey, which provides a comprehensive look at the activities and characteristics of internal auditors worldwide. This project builds on two previous global surveys of internal audit practitioners conducted by The IIA Research Foundation in 2006 (9,366 responses) and 2010 (13,582 responses).

Reports will be released on a monthly basis through 2016 and can be downloaded free of charge thanks to the generous contributions and support from individuals, professional organizations, IIA chapters, and IIA institutes. More than 25 reports are planned in three formats: 1) core reports, which discuss broad topics, 2) closer looks, which dive deeper into key issues, and 3) fast facts, which focus on a specific region or idea. These reports will explore different aspects of eight knowledge tracks, including technology, risk, talent, and others.

Visit the CBOK Resource Exchange at [www.theiia.org/goto/CBOK](http://www.theiia.org/goto/CBOK) to download the latest reports as they become available.

## CBOK 2015 Practitioner Survey: Participation from Global Regions



Note: Global regions are based on World Bank categories. For Europe, fewer than 1% of respondents were from Central Asia. Survey responses were collected from February 2, 2015, to April 1, 2015. The online survey link was distributed via institute email lists, IIA websites, newsletters, and social media. Partially completed surveys were included in analysis as long as the demographic questions were fully completed. In CBOK 2015 reports, specific questions are referenced as Q1, Q2, and so on. A complete list of survey questions can be downloaded from the CBOK Resource Exchange.

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# Executive Summary

The 2015 Global Internal Audit Common Body of Knowledge (CBOK) Practitioner Survey reveals that women make up a large portion of the internal audit profession around the world; however, women still face considerable challenges as they navigate through their careers in internal auditing. This report has two goals:

- To describe how women currently fit into the internal audit landscape around the world, based on results from the 2015 CBOK Practitioner Survey
- To share perspectives and advice for achieving success as a woman in the internal auditing profession, using interviews and roundtable discussions conducted with chief audit executives (CAEs) from around the world

The 2015 CBOK survey revealed several important differences between men and women in internal auditing that may tend to influence career success. On average, women self-assessed themselves lower in all 10 of the core competencies defined in The IIA's Global Internal Audit Competency Framework, especially early in their careers.

Female participants were also less likely than men to diversify their expertise, either through formal education or through attainment of professional certifications.

There were also notable differences in the tools used by male and female CAEs to assess internal audit quality. Men and women were equally likely to report having a well-defined quality assurance and improvement program (QAIP); but on average, the men were significantly more likely to report the use of balanced scorecards, surveys of audit clients, and peer reviews to assess the quality of their internal audit functions.

Especially at larger organizations, the CBOK survey data indicates that top management positions in internal auditing are more often held by men than by women. But while there is a distinct “gender gap” in internal auditing, that gap seems to be narrowing. On average, the women who participated in the survey held lower-level positions than the men, but they were also generally younger than their male counterparts. This suggests that as the relatively younger female workforce ages, the number of women moving into senior positions in internal auditing may increase.

# Introduction

The 2015 Global Internal Audit CBOK Practitioners' Survey indicates that while women comprise an increasing proportion of the workforce and management positions, they still face considerable challenges as they navigate their careers in internal auditing. This report has two goals:

- To describe how women currently fit into the internal audit landscape around the world, based on results from the 2015 CBOK Practitioner Survey
- To share perspectives and advice for achieving success as a woman in the internal auditing field, using interviews and roundtable discussions conducted with chief audit executives (CAEs) from around the world

More than 5,400 women participated in the 2015 CBOK survey, representing 38% of total responses (31% of CAE responses). The male-to-female ratio varied widely across regions, but in general, women respondents composed a larger proportion of the younger, lower-level workforce (as compared to more senior levels of internal audit management). This suggests that as the relatively younger female workforce ages, more women will move into senior positions; however, survey responses related to professional development indicated that women were less likely to diversify their expertise in school or within professional specializations, and they self-assessed themselves

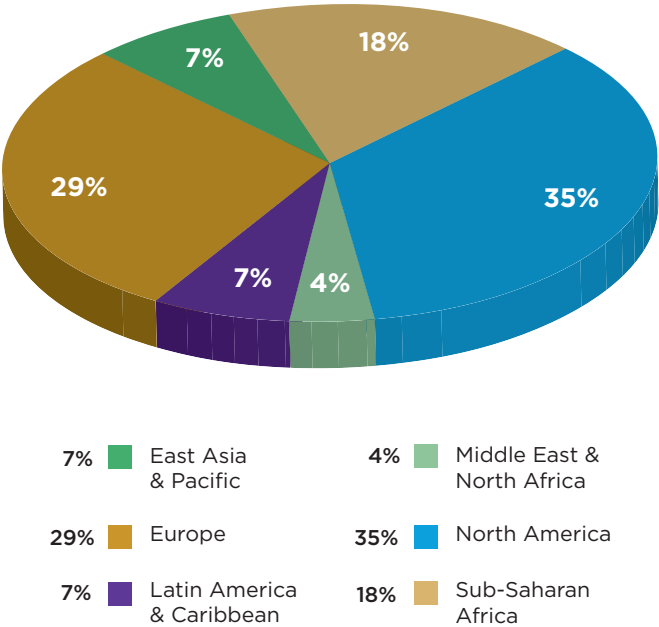
lower in all 10 of the core competencies defined in The IIA's Global Internal Audit Competency Framework\*, especially early in their careers. This suggests that many female internal auditors might benefit from mentoring and career guidance.

Interviews and roundtable discussions were conducted with 28 high-level internal auditors from around the world: 35% in North America, 29% in Europe, 18% from Sub-Saharan Africa, 7% from East Asia & Pacific, 7% from Latin America & Caribbean, and 4% from the East Asia & Pacific. The internal auditors provided insights on the survey results, plus guidance, advice, and strategies for success specifically for women in the internal audit profession. Throughout this report, we include quotes from the interviewees and roundtable participants that reflect the sentiment of the collective group and appropriately summarize the discussion. Although they may refer to an individual's experience in internal audit, these quotes are intended to be viewed as representative of the broader perspective of the group. When quotes may have been specific to the experiences of women in a certain region, they are noted as such. **Exhibit 1** illustrates the global distribution of the internal auditors who shared their insights for this study.

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\* For additional information about self-assessed core competencies, see *Mapping Your Career: Competencies Necessary for Internal Audit Excellence*, James Rose, (Altamonte Springs, FL: The IIA Research Foundation, 2016)

**Exhibit 1 Global representation of Interviewees and Roundtable Participants**



*Disclaimer: All results presented in this report are based on responses to the 2015 CBOK Global Internal Audit Practitioner Survey, and assumes that CBOK respondents are representative of the broader population of internal auditors globally. Insights from interviews are the opinions of individuals based on their own personal experiences and do not necessarily express the views of their respective organizations or The IIA.*

# 1 Strategies for Success for Women in Internal Auditing

The number of women in top business and finance positions is growing; however, recent reports indicate that only about 12% of chief financial officers (CFOs) at Fortune 500 companies are women.\* In contrast, the 2015 CBOK survey data indicates that approximately 30% of CAEs at public companies are women.\*\* There is no doubt that when compared to many other fields, the profession of internal auditing provides excellent career opportunities for women as well as for men.

Women can rise through the ranks in the internal audit profession if they are intentional about their career paths, say the female CAEs who participated in interviews and roundtable discussions for this report. One CAE from the finance industry put it succinctly, “I’ve never considered being female [to be] a barrier to success.”

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**Key Point:** To be successful, women must be intentional in planning their career paths.

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Even in regions where the ratio of women to men in the workforce is quite low, women are filling key roles in internal auditing. From the United States to Europe to South Africa to Japan, female internal audit leaders give

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\* Wechsler, P. (2015) Fifty-eight women CFOs in the Fortune 500: Is this progress? *Fortune.com*. February 24, 2015

\*\* This comparison includes all publicly traded companies. Potentially, a more appropriate comparison to the executive management team at Fortune 500 companies is to consider only U.S.-based organizations with large reported revenues (i.e., greater than \$1,000,000,000). When considering only this sample of firms, 35% of these organizations have female CAEs.

insight about career development for other women in internal auditing.\*\*\*

## **Be Seen; Be Heard; Be Felt (Nigeria)**

A female CAE from Nigeria provided these three rules:

1. Be seen.
2. Be heard.
3. Be felt.

This successful CAE explained that in her experience, in order to succeed, a female CAE must be present and must exude confidence. She also explained that a woman should be heard exhibiting her confidence; therefore, she must invest in herself to establish the right competencies. Finally, she suggested that because women are often expected to be emotional and somewhat maternal, they also are expected to be “felt,” so empathy and compassion are particularly important for female internal auditors.

## **Speak Up; Seek Mentors (United States)**

Shawn Tebben, VP Internal Audit for Vail Resorts, Inc., offers three suggestions for rising through the organizational ranks:

1. If you have even a glimmer of an idea that [CAE] is the career path you want to follow, speak up and make those aspirations known.
2. Be brave in sharing your point of view and your opinions.

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\*\*\* Two virtual roundtables were held on February 23, 2016 and March 1, 2016. Discussions lasted approximately one hour. In addition, interviews were conducted with three female CAEs between October 1, 2015 and October 31, 2015.

3. Seek mentorship from another strong female leader. Relationships help individuals hone in on what they need to experiment with and try; they can help you leverage what others have used to succeed in your own career.

### **Network, Network, Network (United Arab Emirates)**

In addition to seeking mentors, participants from several countries stressed the importance of other types of relationship-building and networking for women in internal auditing. Pritesh Dattani, Group Audit Director, Gulf Marketing Group (UAE), put it simply:

“Be confident in your skills, and network, network, network.”

### **Plan Your Career Deliberately (United States)**

Several CAEs stressed the importance of being deliberate about planning their careers. Sue Ulrey, CEO of SDU Consulting, LLC, believes that in general, women might benefit from being more strategic in their career planning:

“Women often get stuck in that middle management position because they do the job so well... I think that we want to get all aspects of it done well, and are maybe less worried about what a particular project means to our career. We think less about our careers and more about getting the job done. Plan your career.... You need to get the right type of experiences and get them earlier...working on some strategic projects; different types of projects; doing planning as well as execution.... Those things will enable you to feel confident enough to go for those [high-level] positions and quite frankly, get them. So I'd say just plan, plan, plan.”

### **Seek Diverse Experience (United States)**

Another CAE advised professionals to expand their focus:

“[Try] not to focus in one area. This is a profession that requires every competency—every value that you can add to the organization since you don't know when or where you might be required to provide advice. So the more that you explore, the more that you read, and the more that you are exposed to different topics, the better you will be at providing opinions that bring value to the table. Be ready for the unexpected. I think it is very critical to test out different paths and be curious about the possibilities.”

—Mary Ludford, VP Audit and Controls,  
Exelon Corporation

### **Go for It! (United States)**

One roundtable participant summed up career planning this way:

“You can (kind of) have it all. You just have to know to ask for it and when to ask for it, and have the confidence to go after it.”

—Sue Ulrey, CEO, SDU Consulting, LLC

The remainder of this report provides results from the CBOOK survey related to women in internal audit, including comparisons of women to men at all levels of the internal audit profession and across global regions.



# 2 Women in Internal Auditing: A Global View

In the internal auditing profession, as well as in other professions, the ratio of women to men in leadership positions varies widely between regions and between countries within regions. With regard to other professions, a recent report by Grant Thornton shows that in Russia, 40% of senior management positions are held by women, which is the highest percentage of women in leadership globally. In contrast, in Japan, only 8% of senior management positions are held by women.\* Similar differences exist within the internal audit profession.

\* Grant Thornton. (2015). Women in business: The path to leadership. [http://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/1.-member-firms/global/insights/ibr-charts/ibr2015\\_wib\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/1.-member-firms/global/insights/ibr-charts/ibr2015_wib_report_final.pdf)

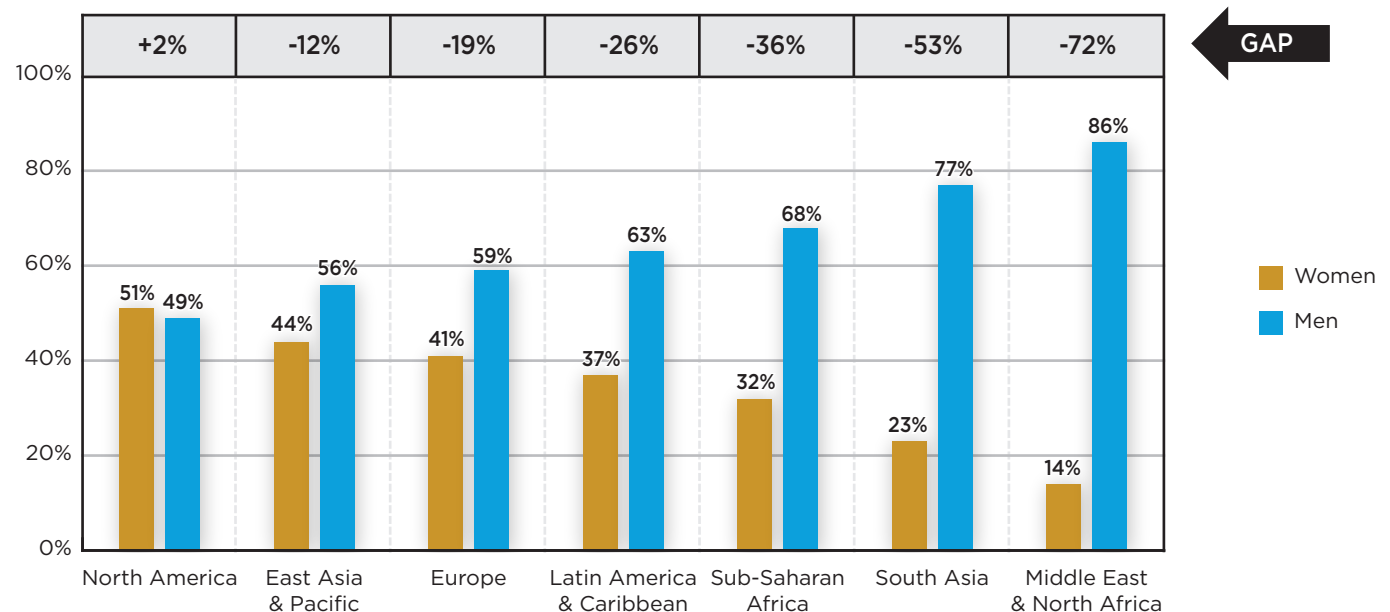
## The Internal Audit Gender Gap: Regional Differences

**Key Point:** There are fewer women than men in internal auditing in all regions except North America.\*\*

Approximately 38% of the participants in the 2015 CBOK survey were women (5,457 individuals). **Exhibit 2** shows the differences in the percentages of men and women in internal audit positions below the CAE level by region. Women represent a smaller percentage of the work

\*\* Unless otherwise noted, all statistics presented in this report are based on responses to the CBOK survey administered in 2015.

**Exhibit 2 The Gender Gap: Regional Differences among Non-CAEs**



Note: Q6: In what region are you based or primarily work? n = 9,134; Global average: Women = 40%; Men = 60%.

force in every region except North America, where 51% of the non-CAE workforce is female. Above the columns for each region, the difference between percentages for women and men (the “gender gap”) is indicated.

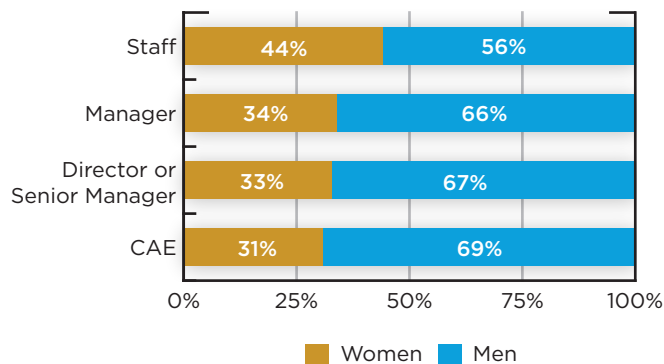
The CBOK survey participants in the Middle East and North African regions reported the smallest percentages of women in internal auditing. There also were relatively few female internal auditors in the South Asian region; however, there were significant differences between individual countries in this region. According to the CBOK report, “Regional Reflections: Asia and Pacific,” only 7% of internal auditor respondents from East Asia (i.e., Japan and Korea) are woman compared to a more balanced 42% in the Pacific and a female-dominated workforce in China, including Chinese Taiwan and Hong Kong, where 53% of internal auditors are women.\*

### Staff Ranks for Men and Women

**Key Point:** The internal audit gender gap becomes more pronounced at each successive level of management. In every region, there are far fewer female than male CAEs.

\* A. Piper, *Regional Reflections: Asia and Pacific: A Component of the CBOK Study*. (Altamonte Springs, FL: The Institute of Internal Auditors Research Foundation, 2016), 1-16

### Exhibit 3 The Gender Gap and Internal Audit Career Levels



Note: Q9: What is your position as an internal auditor in the organization? n = 12,579.

Globally, women represent 31% of the CAEs, 33% of directors or senior managers, 34% of managers, and 44% of internal audit staff (as shown in **exhibit 3**).

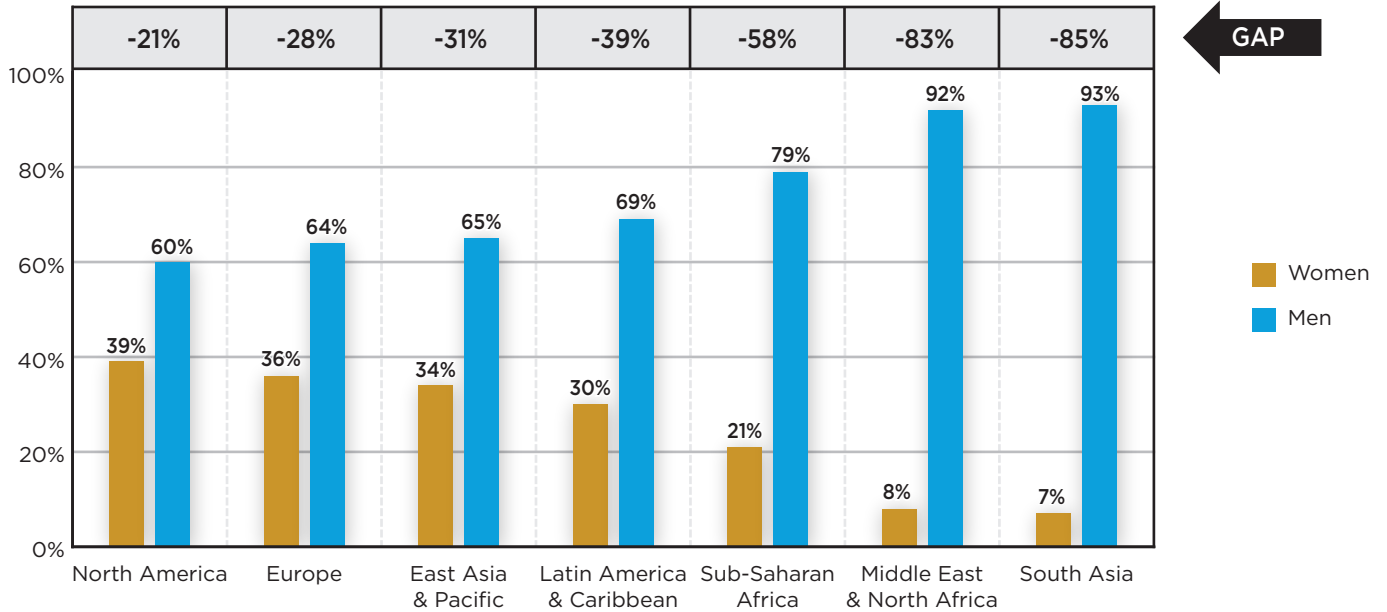
Focusing specifically on the CAE position across regions, **exhibit 4** shows that in all regions, there are far more male CAEs than female CAEs. However, there are interesting differences across regions; in particular, female CAEs are least common in South Asia (7%), and most common in North America (39%).

**Exhibit 5** highlights the differences in the gender gap at the CAE and non-CAE levels across regions. The gender gaps compared here are the same as those displayed in **exhibits 2** and **4**. By comparing these gender gaps, it is clear that the gaps are much larger at the CAE level than at lower levels in the organization. The larger gap at the CAE level may be driven by a variety of factors. For example, it is possible that more women than men may leave the workforce to pursue other priorities. In an interview, Larry Harrington (CAE Raytheon, United States), suggested this possibility:

“This is a huge challenge for our profession. We lose too many quality women before they reach the CAE role... Studies document the value women bring to all senior level positions, and we must work harder to encourage women to stay within internal audit long enough to become CAEs.”

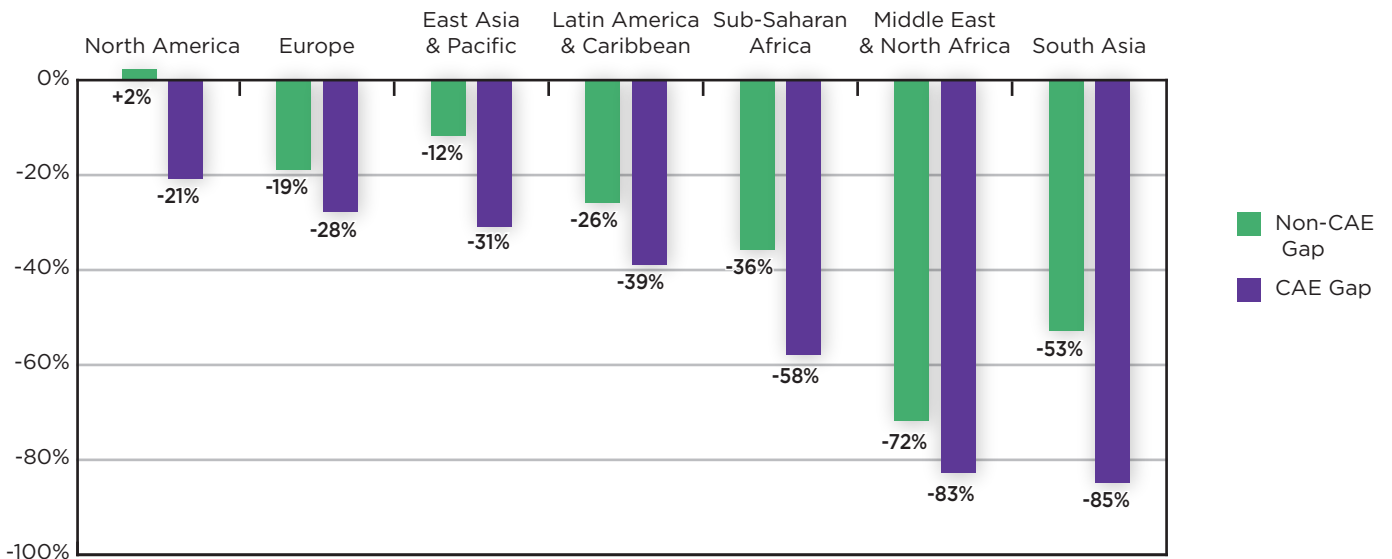
An alternative explanation might be that although the gender gap is closing, there has not yet been time to close the gap at the highest levels of internal audit management. Advancement to leadership positions in any profession requires time. Fewer women entered the workforce in the past than today; and therefore, fewer women than men may have had the time to advance to the highest leadership positions in internal audit.

**Exhibit 4 The CAE Gender Gap: Regional Differences**



Note: Q6: In what region are you based or primarily work? n = 3,272; Global average: Women = 31%; Men = 69%.

**Exhibit 5 The Gender Gap: CAEs vs. Non-CAEs**



Note: Q6: In what region are you based or primarily work? n = 12,579 (non-CAE levels); n = 3,272 (CAE levels).

## The Gender Gap: Age Makes a Difference

**Key Point:** On average, female internal auditors are younger than their male counterparts.

As shown in **exhibit 6**, female survey participants were younger on average than the male participants. In particular, 53% of female internal auditors were under 40 years old, compared to only 45% of male internal auditors. Again, this is likely reflective of the fact that more women have entered the workforce in more recent years than in prior decades.\*

\* For example, statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor indicate that the percentage of women in the workforce increased from 40.5% in 1976 to 47.4% in 2006. (Fullerton, H. 1997. Labor Force 2006: Slowing Down and Changing Composition, *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1997, p. 23-38). Similar trends are seen elsewhere in the world. For example, in the UK, approximately 53% of working-aged women were employed in 1971 compared to 67% employed in 2013. (Office for National Statistics. 2013. Full report – Women in the labour market. September 25, 2013.)

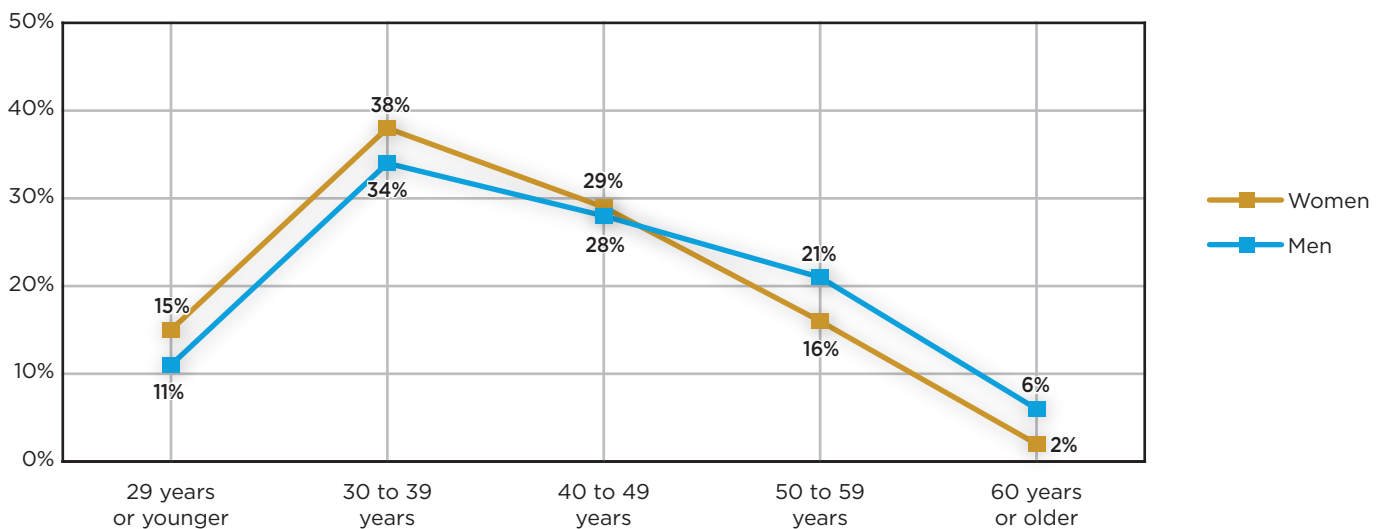
## Comparing Ages of Male and Female CAEs

**Key Point:** Female CAEs are generally younger and have fewer years of experience than male CAEs.

Approximately 69% of surveyed female CAEs were under 50 years old. In contrast, 56% of male CAEs were under 50 years old, and more were at least 50 years old (44% compared to 31% of female CAEs). Again, one possible explanation for this disparity is simply that there were fewer women in the workforce in past decades (see **exhibit 7**).

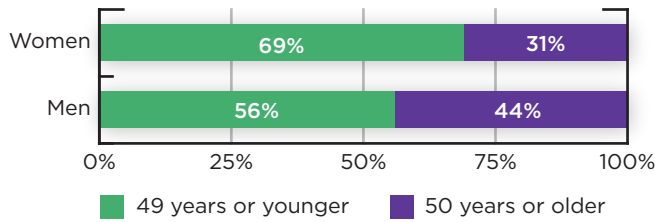
As shown in **exhibit 8**, male CAEs reported more years of experience than their female counterparts. In particular, 37% of the men had at least 16 years of internal audit experience, compared to 27% of the women.

**Exhibit 6** Average Ages of Women and Men Internal Auditors



Note: Q3: What is your age?  $n = 12,744$ .

**Exhibit 7 Average Ages of Female and Male CAEs**

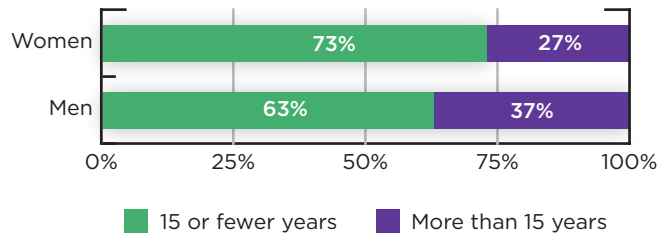


Note: Q3: What is your age? n = 2,968.

An alternative explanation for the larger gender gap found at the CAE level versus the non-CAE level (see **exhibit 5**) is that it is indicative of other social or organizational constraints that women face throughout their careers. For example, many women may leave the workforce to raise their families.\* These constraints are discussed further in Section 7.

\* A recent poll of unemployed individuals in the U.S. conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, New York Times and CBS News, reports that 61% of women indicate that the main reason they are not currently working is because of their focus on family obligations (<http://kff.org/other/poll-finding/kaiser-family-foundationnew-york-timescbs-news-non-employed-poll/>). Similarly, academic research on female labor-force participation in Japan finds that a significant number of Japanese women in white-collar positions leave their jobs after marriage, and even more so after the birth of a child. This is attributed to working conditions that are incompatible with women’s familial responsibilities. The reduction in the female workforce is greater in Japan than in Taiwan, where workplace policies are somewhat more family-friendly; however, even in Taiwan, the percentage of women aged 25-34 in the workplace before marriage is approximately 100%, and drops to approximately 70% after the birth of the first child (Yu, Wei-Hsin (2005) Changes in women’s post-marital employment in Japan and Taiwan. *Demography* 42(4): 693-717).

**Exhibit 8 CAE Years of Experience (Global Average)**



Note: Q10: Total years of experience for internal audit: n = 3,316.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the world, more men than women work in the internal audit profession. Top management positions in internal audit are currently dominated by men, but the gap is narrowing, and in North America, the workforce is equally split below the CAE level. It seems likely that the gender gap in higher levels of internal audit management will continue to shrink in the coming years as the growing number of young women in internal auditing continue to advance in their careers.

# 3 Sectors and Industries with Highest Participation of Women

An examination of various organizational characteristics reveals a few differences in the types of organizations that employ more men versus women in internal audit, as well as between the types of organizations that are more likely to have male versus female CAEs (see **exhibit 9**).

## Ratio of Men to Women by Sector

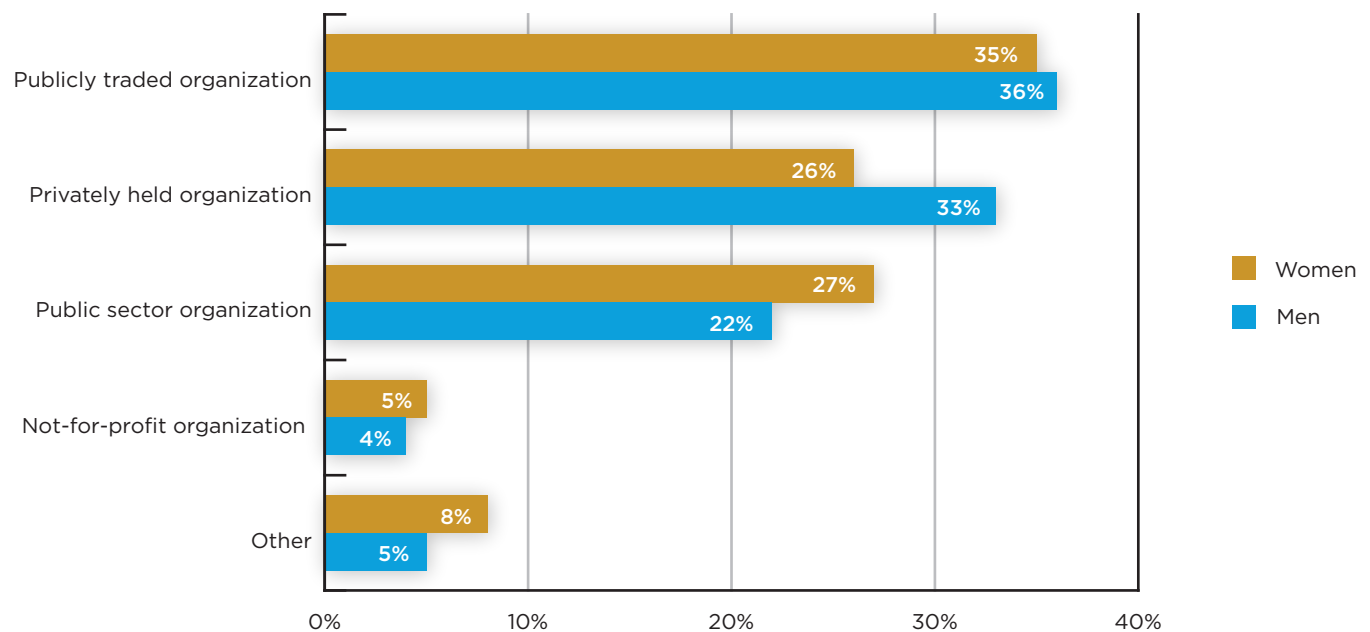
**Key Point:** Men and women in internal auditing are equally likely to work in publicly traded organizations, but significant differences exist at privately held and public-sector organizations.

## The CAE Gender Gap and Organization Types

Public-sector and not-for-profit organizations are significantly more likely to have female CAEs than publicly held or privately held organizations.\* **Exhibit 10** shows the percentage of female versus male CAEs at each type of organization.

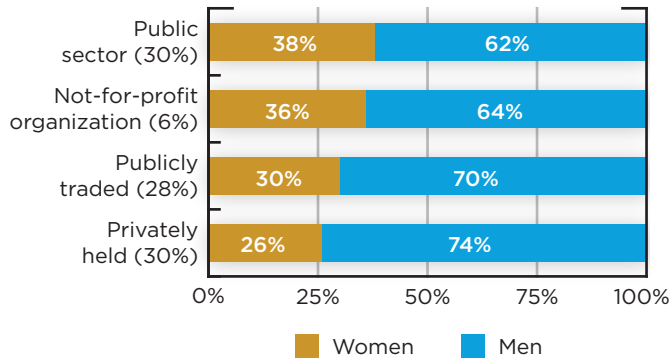
\* Participating CAEs at not-for-profit organizations were located primarily in the North American region.

**Exhibit 9 Organization Types and the Gender Gap (all internal audit positions)**



Note: Q24: What is the type of organization for which you currently work? n = 12,889.

**Exhibit 10 The CAE Gender Gap and Organization Type**



Note: Q24: What is the type of organization for which you currently work? Filtered by CAE n = 3,323.

John Wszelaki, Director of the American Center for Government Auditing at The IIA, provided insights into why public sector organizations might be more likely to have female CAEs than other types of organizations:

“I believe there are several factors that contribute to the statistics, including diversity initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels; the fact that many public-sector entities use diverse hiring panels in the selection process; and that there may be more positions open in the public sector due to retirements and the transitioning of the aging work force.”

These sentiments, especially those regarding the diversity of the hiring panels, are supported by research that finds a greater number of women in executive positions (in general) when the board of directors or other governing body responsible for oversight of hiring and compensation decisions is *not* male-dominated.\*

\* Elkinawy, S. and M. Stater. (2011) Gender differences in executive compensation: Variation with board gender composition and time. *Journal of Economics and Business*. 63(2011): 23-45.

**The Gender Gap: Industry Differences**

**Key Point:** Despite some differences across industries, there do not appear to be any overwhelmingly male-dominated or female-dominated industries in internal auditing.

**Exhibit 11** shows the percentage of women versus men internal auditors within each industry. While there are some differences in gender composition across industries, there are no overwhelming trends of male-dominated versus female-dominated industries. For example, although only 34% of internal auditors in the manufacturing industry are women, they represent 44% of internal auditors in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.

**Key Point:** Most CAEs at educational service organizations are women.

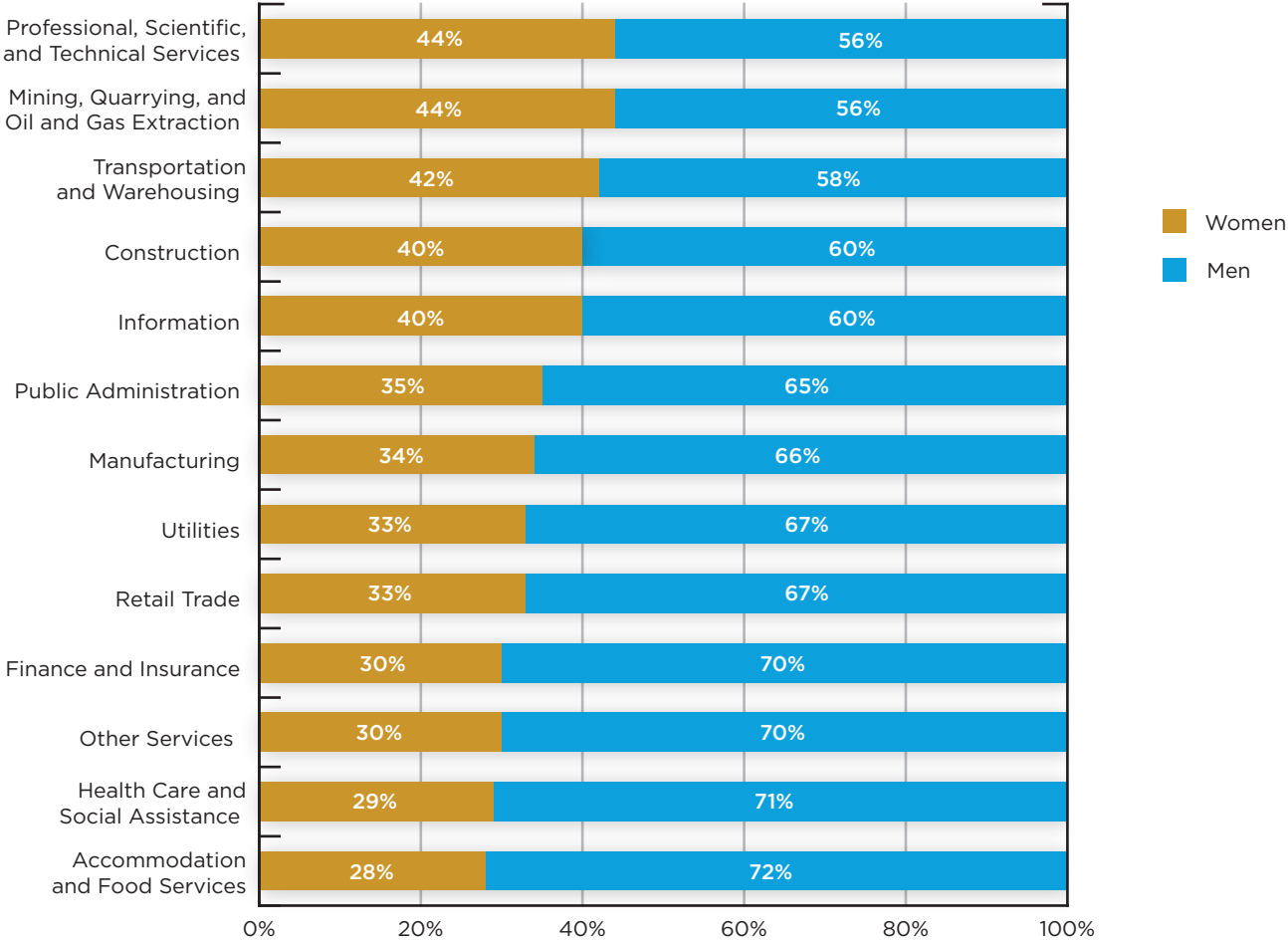
When considering CAEs only, responses provided by the CBOK survey participants revealed a few differences between industries (see **exhibit 12**). Notably, more than 50% of the CAEs at educational services organizations were women. This was the only industry in which a majority of organizations had a female CAE, although 42% of public administration organizations and 40% of organizations classified as “other services” had female CAEs. In all other industries, at least 65% of CAE positions were held by men.

**The Gender Gap: Organization Size and Scope**

As indicated in **exhibit 13**, almost half of female CAEs worked in relatively small organizations (less than U.S. \$100 million in revenues). In comparison, male CAEs were almost evenly split across small, medium (U.S. \$100 million - \$1 billion in revenues), and large (greater than U.S. \$1 billion) organizations.

**Key Point:** Female CAEs are more likely to work at smaller organizations.

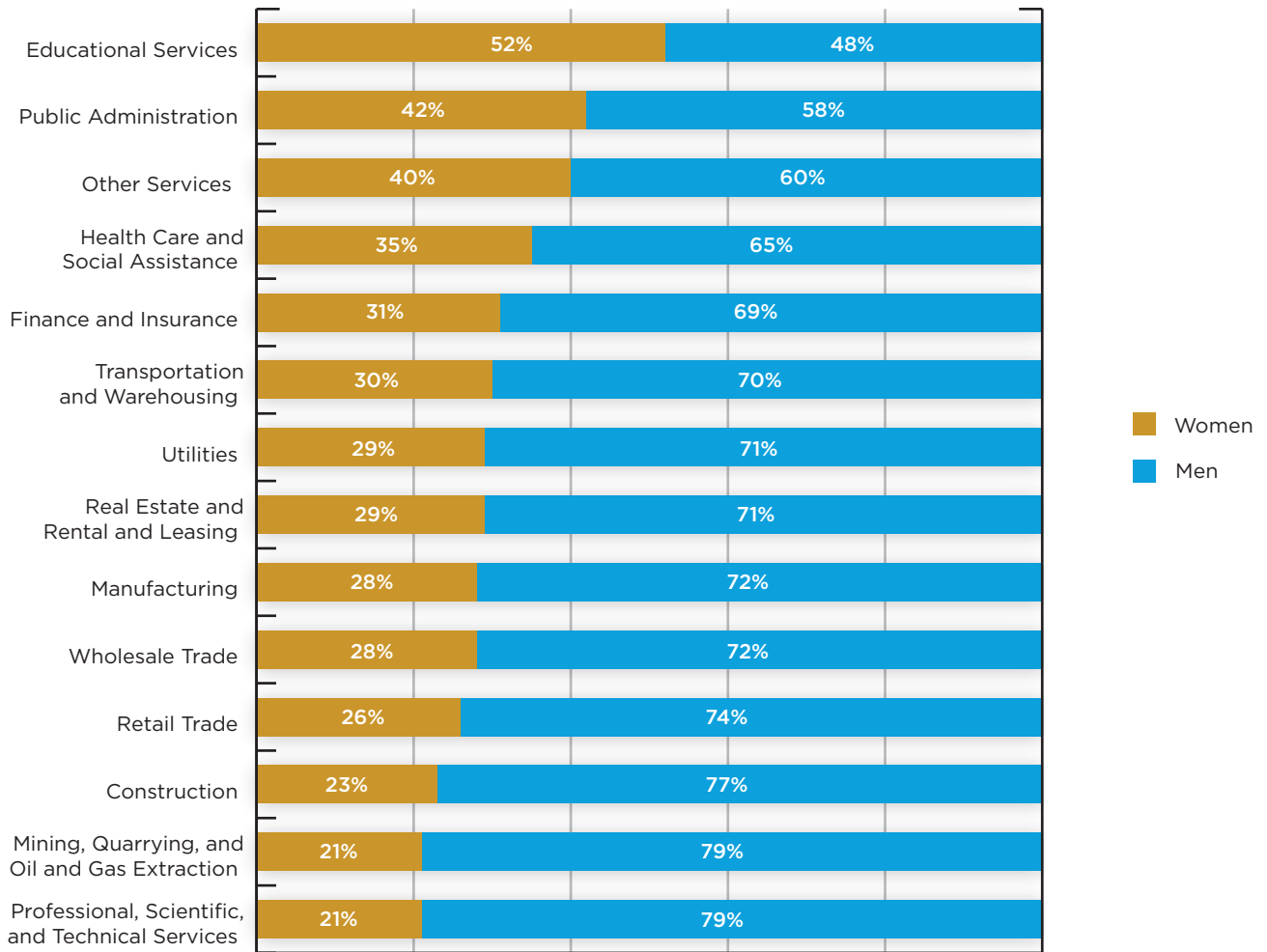
**Exhibit 11 The Gender Gap: Industry Differences**



Note: Q18: What is the primary industry classification for the organization for which you currently work? n = 12,889.

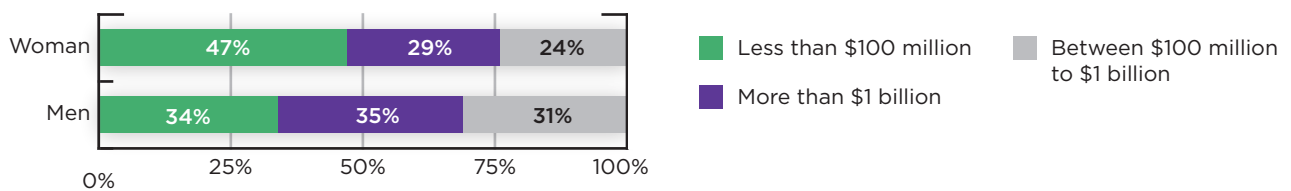


**Exhibit 12 The CAE Gender Gap: Industry Differences**



Note: Q18: What is the primary industry classification for the organization for which you currently work? Filtered by CAE; n = 3,323.

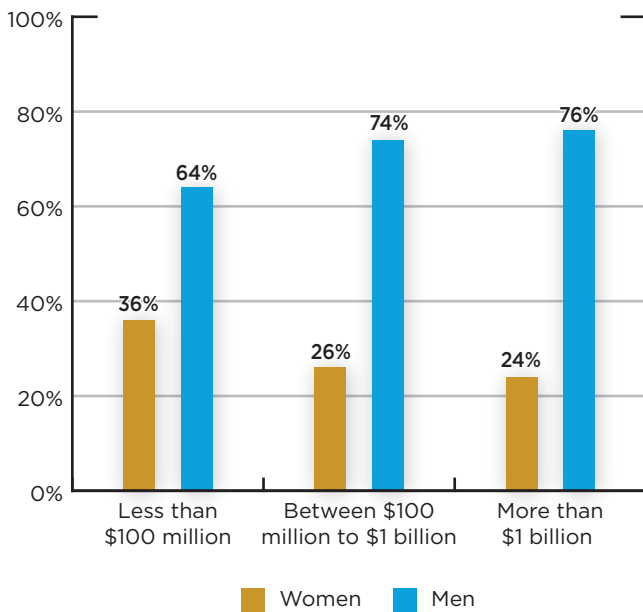
**Exhibit 13 The Gender Gap and Organization Size (total revenue in U.S. dollars)**



Note: Q21: What was the approximate total revenue of your organization in U.S. dollars for the previous fiscal year? n = 2,330.

Regardless of organization size, there are more men than women employed in internal auditing; however, because of the high concentration of female CAEs in organizations with revenues under \$100 million, the gap between men and women is smaller (18%) in those organizations than in organizations with greater revenues. **Exhibit 14** shows that 36% of all small organizations have female CAEs, compared to 64%, who have male CAEs.

**Exhibit 14 The CAE Gender Gap and Organization Size (total revenue in U.S. dollars)**



Note: Q21: What was the approximate total revenue of your organization in U.S. dollars for the previous fiscal year? *n* = 2,330.

A greater percentage of women than men work as internal auditors in organizations with a local or regional scope (31% compared to 26%, respectively). National organizations employ about 30% of both male and female internal auditors; but a significantly greater percentage of men than women work in multinational organizations (43% compared to 36%, respectively). Conversely, a greater percentage of female CAEs lead internal audit departments in organizations with a local scope (19% of women compared to 15% of men), while male CAEs are more common in multinational organizations (37% of men compared to 31% of women). In regional and national organizations, the percentages of male and female CAEs are statistically the same.

**Conclusion**

Although there are no stark differences between the types of organizations that employ women versus men as internal auditors, the CBOK survey revealed some gender differences. In particular, women were more likely to work as internal auditors or to manage internal audit departments in the public sector or in educational services rather than in other industries. Further, women were more likely to be CAEs in smaller organizations and in organizations with a local scope.

# 4 Internal Audit Functions with Female CAEs

The CBOK survey revealed several interesting differences between departments led by female and male CAEs. In particular, differences were noted in the age and size of the internal audit departments.

## Age and Size of Internal Audit Functions with Female CAEs

Male and female CAEs were equally likely to manage internal audit departments that were very young (less than 10 years old); but a larger percentage of female CAEs managed departments that were 10-19 years old (38% and 30% of female and male respondents, respectively). In contrast, a larger percentage of male CAEs (15% men versus 8% women) managed very mature internal audit departments that were greater than 30 years old.

With respect to the size of the internal audit departments, a larger percentage of female CAEs managed small internal audit departments (e.g., 1-3 employees) rather than larger audit departments (see **exhibit 15**). In particular, 50% of female CAE respondents managed departments with 1-3 full-time internal auditors. In contrast, there is little difference in the percentage of female versus male CAEs, who lead internal audit departments of 50 or more auditors.\*

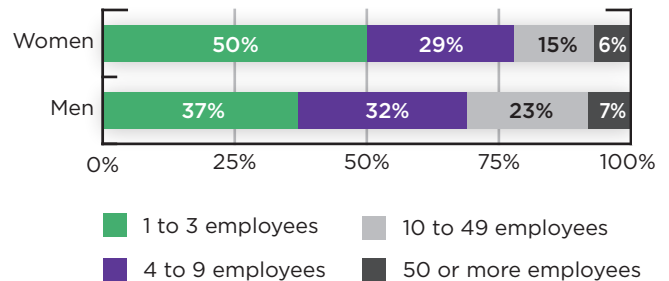
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**Key Point:** Half of the female CAEs surveyed work in internal audit departments with three or fewer employees.

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\* 24% of CBOK respondents worked for organizations with three or fewer full time employees. Across global regions, Europe has the largest proportion of these small internal audit departments (28%), and South Asia has the smallest proportion (9%).

**Exhibit 15 The CAE Gender Gap and Department Size**



Note: Q41: Approximately how many full-time equivalent employees make up your internal audit department? *n* = 3,200.

## Activities of Internal Audit Functions Led by Female CAEs

In general, the 2015 CBOK survey revealed few differences between the specific characteristics and practices of internal audit departments managed by female versus male CAEs; however, there were notable differences in the tools used by men and women to assess internal audit quality.

- Male and female CAEs were equally likely to describe their QAIPs as “well-defined” (34%), or as “in development” (37%); however, male CAEs were significantly more likely to report the use of balanced scorecards, surveys of audit clients, and peer reviews to assess the quality of their internal audit functions.\*\*

\*\* Differences between male and female CAEs regarding use of balanced scorecards and peer reviews were noted in departments of 1 – 3 employees. Differences in the use of audit client surveys were noted in departments with 4 – 9 and 300 – 999 internal auditors.

- Other than the differences in use of quality assessment tools described above, there were no significant differences in the tools or documents used by internal audit departments managed by female versus male CAEs.
- There also were no differences in the percentages of resources allocated to assurance and consulting activities in internal audit functions managed by female versus male CAEs.
- Female and male CAEs reported similar levels of internal audit training formalization (e.g., 54% ad hoc, 46% structured); and the focus of their training programs was largely similar.

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**Key Point:** Male CAEs are more likely than female CAEs to use balanced scorecards, surveys of audit clients, and peer reviews to assess the quality of their internal audit functions.

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With respect to the future, male and female internal auditors report similar career plans, with approximately 75% planning to stay in internal audit, 20% either not knowing or planning to leave the profession, and 5% retiring.

### **Conclusion**

Most female CAEs work in internal audit departments with three or fewer full-time employees. When comparing the characteristics of internal audit departments led by women to those led by men, there is evidence that the internal audit departments are similar in many ways. With the exception of certain tools used to evaluate internal audit quality, men and women use many of the same techniques and tools to manage their internal audit departments.

# 5 A Case for Broader Professional Development

According to the CBOK survey roundtable participants, in order for women to be successful in the internal audit profession, they must seek out opportunities and engage in life-long learning. The CBOK survey results provide new insights into the differences between women and men with respect to education, professional certifications, and competencies.

## Educational Backgrounds

Education levels for men and women are similar. Approximately 90% of both genders have a Master's degree or higher; however, there are differences in the academic foci or major fields of study pursued by men versus women.\* As shown in **exhibit 16**, similar percentages of women and men in internal auditing earned degrees in (or focused on) accounting in college; however, men were more likely than women to report that they focused on other academic fields.\*\*

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**Key Point:** Similar percentages of women and men in internal auditing had an academic focus on accounting, but men were more likely than women to focus on other academic majors.

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\* Academic concentration is based on self-reported college major or significant areas of study.

\*\* These results were based on all responses globally. In Europe, women were slightly more likely than men to have economics concentrations (45% versus 41%). In South Asia, women were more likely than men to pursue a legal concentration (36% versus 27%).

## Technical Specialization

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**Key Point:** Women were more likely than men to report that they had no technical specialties other than traditional internal auditing skills.

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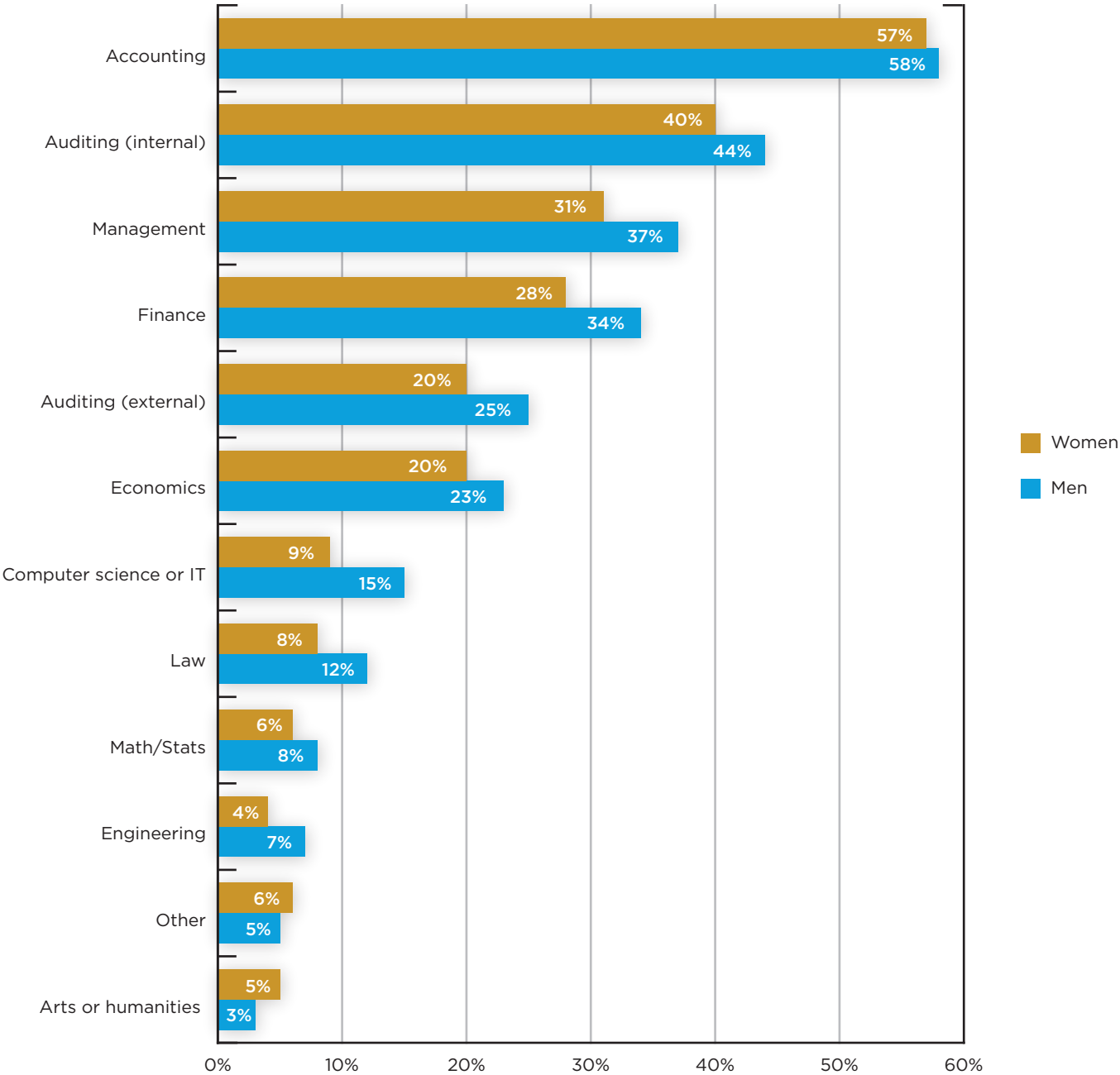
This pattern seems to continue in the workplace. When asked, “In addition to performing general internal audit activities, do you have an area of technical specialization for which you have had formal training AND in which you spend a majority of your time working?” women were less likely to report having a technical specialization (with formal training in which they spend a significant amount of time working) in addition to traditional internal audit skills. Women were significantly more likely to report *no* other specialty; while men were more likely to report specializations in risk management, information technology, financial reporting, and fraud.

Because the data presented in **exhibit 17** relates specifically to areas of specialization outside of general internal auditing, it again suggests that female internal auditors remain particularly focused on general internal audit activities, and either do not pursue or are not provided opportunities to expand their expertise into other more technical areas within their organizations.

## Professional Certifications

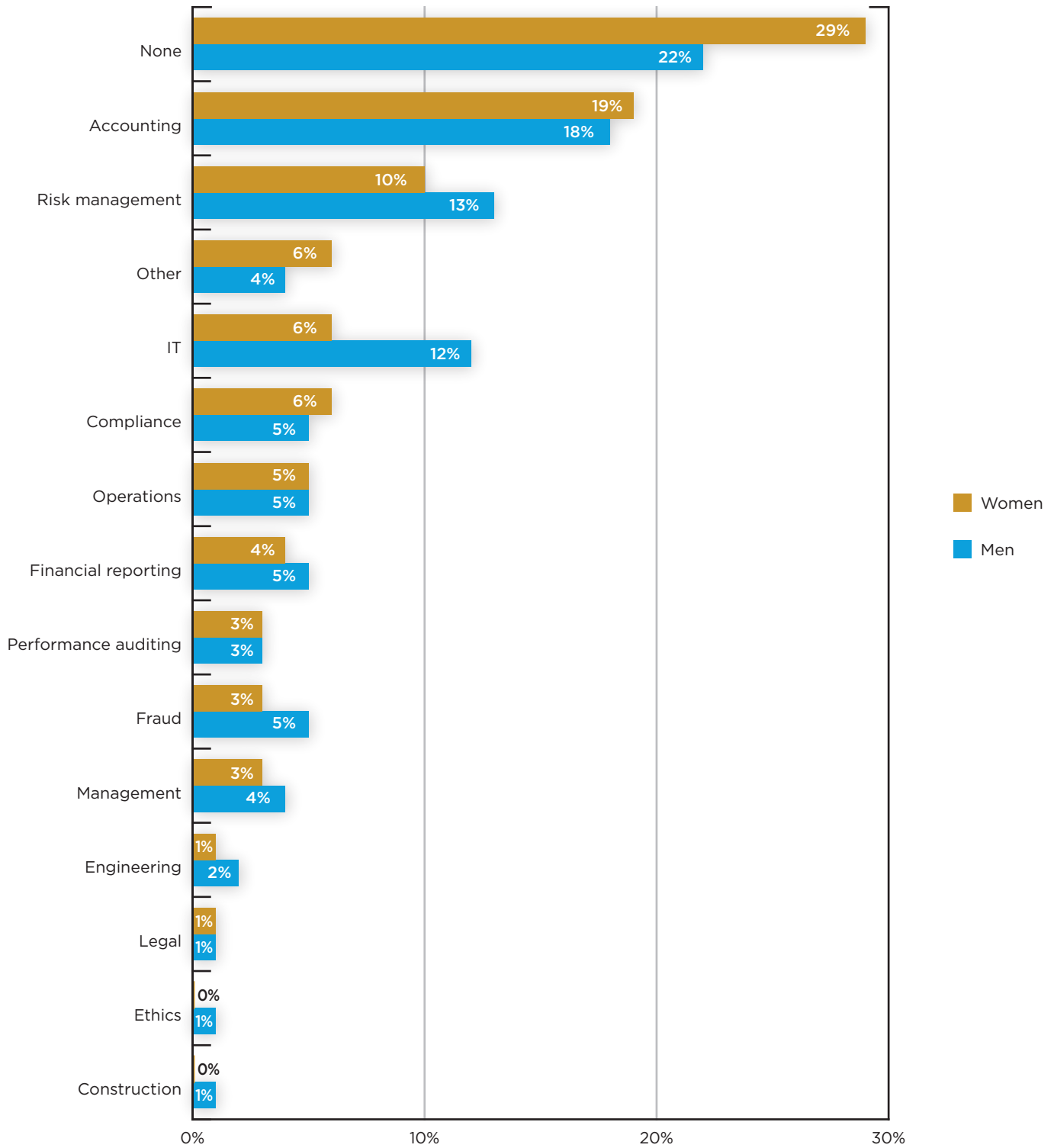
According to the CBOK survey, women and men are similarly likely to become certified in internal audit fields, but women are less likely to become certified in non-internal audit fields. **Exhibit 18** shows the percentage of men and women with each internal audit certification.

**Exhibit 16 The Gender Gap: Academic Majors and Significant Fields of Study**



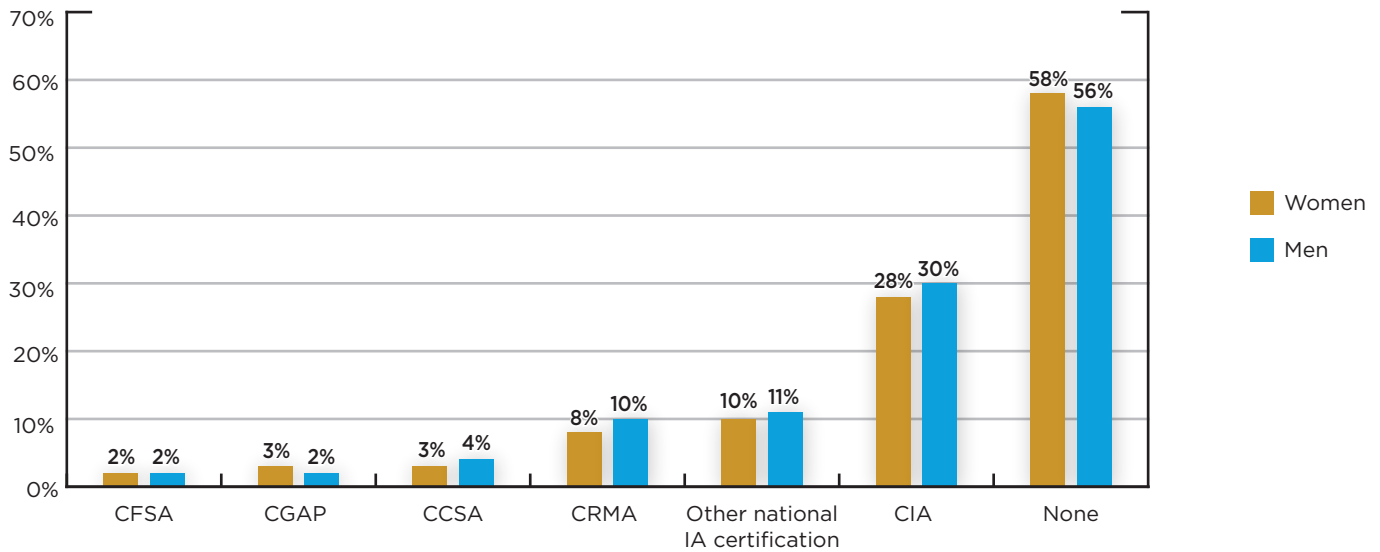
Note: Q5: What were your academic major(s) or your most significant fields of study (Choose all that apply)? n = 14,073.

**Exhibit 17 The Gender Gap and Additional Areas of Specialization**



Note: Q20: In addition to performing general internal audit activities, do you have an area of technical specialization for which you have had formal training AND in which you spend a majority of your time working? n = 13,000.

## Exhibit 18 Internal Audit Certification Rates



Note: Q21: Which professional certifications and/or qualifications do you have related to internal auditing?  $n = 13,012$ .

However, **exhibit 19** shows that 43% of women (as compared to 35% of men) have no additional professional certifications. Further, for each of the other fields, male internal auditors are more likely to have certifications than women.

**Key Point:** Men and women are equally likely to hold internal audit-related professional certifications; but fewer women hold other types of professional certifications.

Larry Harrington, CAE for Raytheon Company (USA) provided the following advice regarding the importance of diversifying one's career experience:

"We should encourage all internal auditors to broaden their experience, and help people understand the importance of career planning and using the many tools available today."

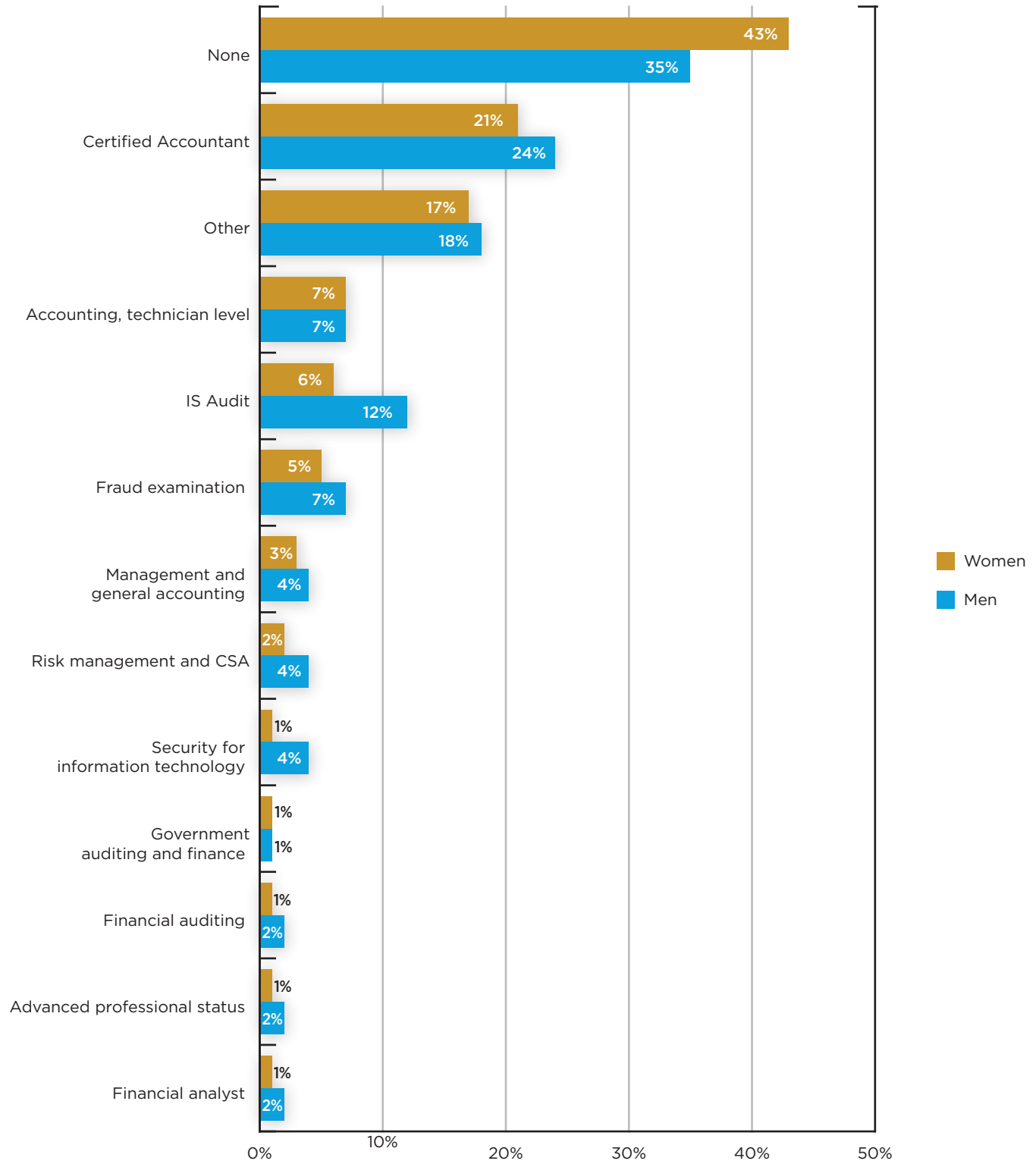
## Self-Assessments for Internal Audit Competencies

**Key Point:** In general, women self-assess their internal audit competencies to be lower than men do; however, the differences tend to be significant, primarily in certain regions.

This collective evidence suggests that at the very least, female internal auditors focus their attention on their internal audit skills. However, the CBOK survey data provides self-reported competency ratings for each of the 10 core competencies required for effective internal audit, as described in "The IIA Global Internal Audit Competency Framework." **Exhibit 20** shows that women report lower competency ratings in each of the 10 core competencies.



**Exhibit 19 Non-Internal Audit Certification Rates**



Note: Q22: Which professional certifications do you have in areas other than internal auditing? *n* = 13,012.

## Exhibit 20 The Gender Gap: Self-Assessed Core Competencies

The 10 Core Competencies	Women	Men	GAP	Percentage of Deficit
IPPF (Standards)	3.07	3.19	-0.12	4%
Governance, Risk, and Compliance	3.32	3.49	-0.17	5%
Business Acumen (Judgment)	3.36	3.58	-0.22	7%
Internal Audit Management	3.42	3.68	-0.25	7%
Improvement and Innovation	3.46	3.64	-0.18	5%
Critical Thinking	3.51	3.68	-0.17	5%
Internal Audit Delivery	3.69	3.84	-0.15	4%
Persuasion and Collaboration	3.72	3.85	-0.13	3%
Communication	3.76	3.89	-0.13	3%
Ethics	3.85	3.99	-0.13	3%

Note: Q79-Q88: Estimate your proficiency for each competency.  $n = 11,233$ .

### Regional Differences in Self-Assessments of Competence

Further examination of competency self-assessments by region yields additional insights. **Exhibit 21** compares the overall self-assessment of men and women in each region to the global average for men and women. The overall self-assessment is a sum of each of the 10 core competencies for which participants provided a self-assessment. From **exhibit 21**, it is evident that there are regional differences for both men and women. For example, in East Asia and South Asia, both genders self-assess overall competencies below the global average. In the Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, North American, and European regions, both genders self-assess above the global average.

An examination of differences between the men's and the women's self-assessments of each specific competency across regions suggests that in several regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa), there are no statistical differences between self-reports.\*

\* It is worth noting that the response rate from these regions is quite small, making it difficult to conclude that there are no statistically significant differences.

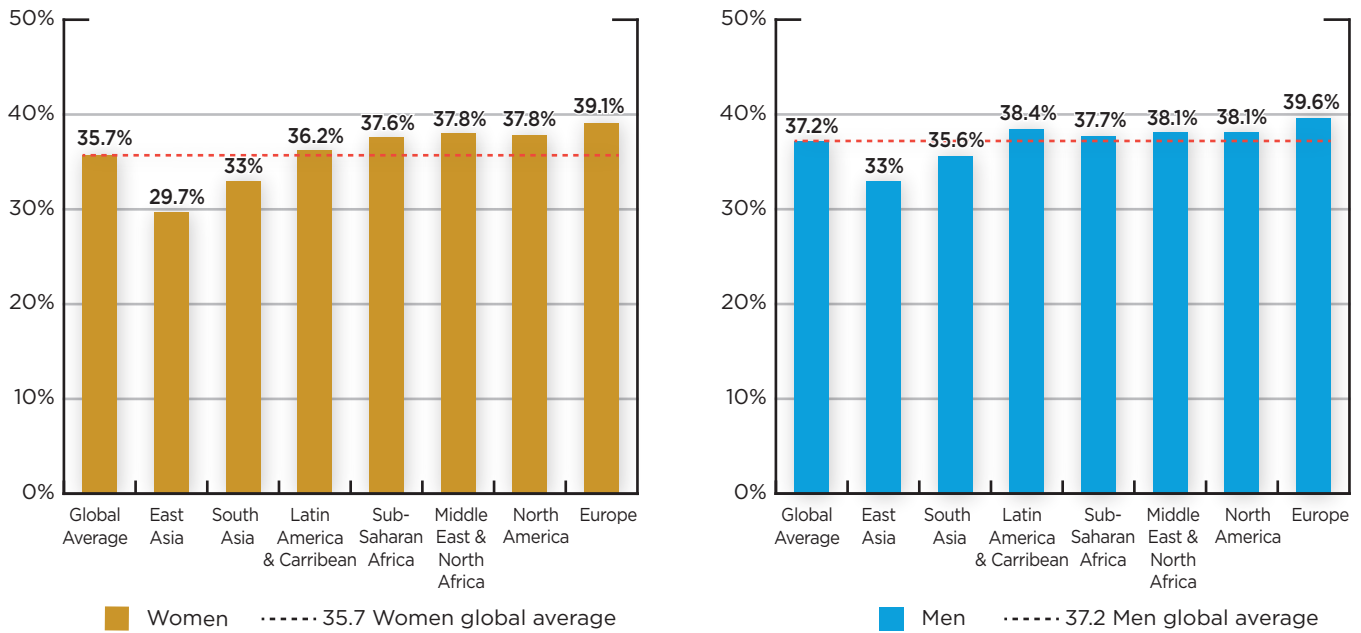
On the other hand, in the East Asia and Latin America & Caribbean regions, men self-assess themselves significantly higher in every area. In South Asia, men assess themselves higher for most, but not all competencies.\*\* In Europe and North America, men assess themselves higher for several, but not all competencies. **Exhibit 22** summarizes the significant differences between these assessments in each region. Notably, in each case where there is a significant difference, men self-assessed their competency higher than women.

### Competency Self-Assessments Compared to Age

**Exhibit 23** is reproduced from the CBOK report, "Mapping your Career," which focuses on the competencies required for internal audit excellence. As shown, most of these differences are driven primarily by internal auditors who are early in their careers, and to some extent, are in the later stages of their careers.

\*\* As described in "Regional Reflections: Asia and Pacific," South Asia is composed of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives. East Asia is composed of Japan and South Korea.

**Exhibit 21 Self-Assessed Competencies: Regional Variations**



Note: Q79-Q88: Estimate your proficiency for each competency. n = 11,233.

At all stages in their careers, women report lower competency than men in both business acumen and internal audit management. Both skills are obviously critical for CAEs and other internal audit leaders. Given that these are merely self-reports, it is unclear whether these differences are driven by true differences in competency, or whether they may instead be driven by the propensity of women to rate themselves lower than men in general. Indeed, academic research reports that women consistently provide lower self-ratings (e.g., Beyer 1990).\* One round-table participant shares the following advice with mentees:

“[Women] express themselves very well, but they express their doubts out loud sometimes. I caution them on this. It is fine to have doubt, and maybe not have that confidence, but they could find a way to not express those doubts to [their] bosses all the time. I think it is natural and normal, and you should have some doubt because it helps you to be a better thinker; but other people don’t see it that way. And until those perceptions change, they need to find another outlet... Find a mentor who can listen and who knows the whole person, but maybe find a separate mentor when looking for an advocate for their careers.”

–Keri Rogers, Assistant Vice President, Manulife (United States)

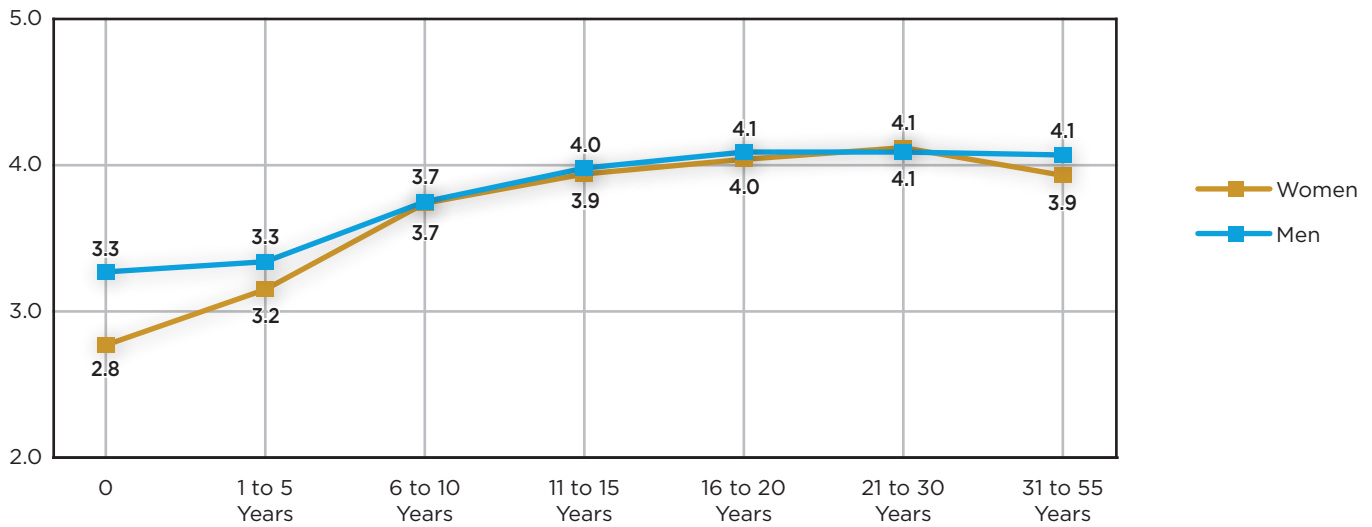
\* Beyer, S. 1990. Gender differences in the accuracy of self-evaluations of performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 59(5): 960-970.

**Exhibit 22 Significant Differences between Male and Female Self-Assessments**

Competency	East Asia	South Asia	Latin America & Caribbean	North America	Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East & North Africa
Ethics	X	X	X				
Communication	X		X				
Persuasion and Collaboration	X		X				
Internal Audit Delivery	X		X				
Critical Thinking	X	X	X				
Internal Audit Management	X	X	X				
Improvement and Innovation	X	X	X	X	X		
Business Acumen (Judgment)	X	X	X		X		
Governance, Risk, and Compliance	X		X	X	X		
IPPF (Standards)	X	X	X				
Overall Competency Self-Assessment	X	X	X				

Note: Q79-Q88: Estimate your proficiency for each competency. *n* = 11,233.

**Exhibit 23 Core Competencies and Years of Internal Audit Experience**



Note: Q79-Q88: Estimate your proficiency for each competency using the following scale: 1-Novice; 2-Trained; 3-Competent; 4-Advanced; 5-Expert. The scores in the exhibit are averages of multiple measures used for each of the 10 core competencies; n = 3,792 for Women; n = 6,457 for Men.

Note: Adapted from “Mapping Your Career,” a component of the CBOK study.

**Mentors and Advocates**

**Key Point:** Effective mentoring can be a key tool to help female internal auditors develop and direct their careers.

The collective evidence from the CBOK survey regarding the female internal auditors’ professional development suggests that as women navigate the profession, they would be well-served to find supportive mentors and advocates (male and female) who can help them gain the right set of experiences. This sentiment was echoed in the roundtable discussions:

“Having a strong mentor relationship—possibly with multiple people—is absolutely critical because it is someone safe that you can bounce ideas off of... Your mentor can be someone who has already done it before... who can share insights into work-life balance, [knows] how to ask for things...be able to negotiate... very important.”

– Sue Ulrey, CEO, SDU Consulting (United States)

With the right mentoring and coaching, professionals can learn which opportunities to seek out, which skillsets will be deemed most valuable, and how to have the career they want. Of course, mentoring takes many forms. In some organizations (e.g., the “Big 4” accounting firms), there are formal mentoring programs, where each internal audit staff member is matched with a more senior internal auditor. In other organizations, it is left up to each professional to seek out their own mentors as needed. A roundtable participant from Nigeria described the benefit of a formalized mentoring program in her organization:

“I benefited a lot from mentoring—[actually] from a man. I found it quite useful. It is helpful when we embed [mentoring] into the program.”  
—Sally Ogwo Okey-Umahi, PwC (Nigeria)

A key component of effective mentoring is active participation from both parties. The mentee must communicate to the mentor what it is that they need from

the relationship and what they are trying to achieve in their professional and personal life. The mentor must be willing to share insights, experiences, and advice. A roundtable participant from El Salvador recognized the importance of mentoring future internal audit leaders:

“Mentoring hasn’t been an objective so far, but I think that it will be in the future. We need to provide that to the new generation... We need to be able to guide them.”  
—Maritza Villanueva, Unicomer Group (El Salvador)

In addition to mentoring, many women benefit from having strong advocates within their organizations. An advocate does more than give advice. An advocate promotes, recommends, and publicly cheers on other employees. One roundtable participant suggested that it might sometimes be advisable to have a mentor to provide support and act as a sounding board for self-doubt, as well as a separate advocate who can act as a champion.

# 6 Benefits Experienced by Women in Internal Audit

In today's world, a growing number of women are choosing to pursue careers in internal auditing. That career decision might serve them well. While there is a gender gap in almost every profession, a career in internal auditing may offer several advantages for women. The 2015 CBOOK survey found that approximately 30% of CAEs at public companies are women. In contrast, only about 12% of CFOs at Fortune 500 companies are women.

Because many women occupy positions as internal audit staff, seniors, and managers, it is important to consider how being a woman has contributed to their success. The women from around the world who participated in the roundtables and interviews all shared a positive and optimistic outlook, and they recognized several ways that being female has provided important benefits throughout their careers. Participants pointed out several key benefits of being a woman in the internal audit profession:

- Women are often collaborative, empathetic, good listeners, and team focused, which is important for client interactions, working or supervising teams, and communicating with management.
- Women can provide a different perspective (from men), and diverse perspectives add value and drive better results.
- When women supervise internal audit departments, they often recognize the importance of work-life balance for all employees.
- Many organizations recognize the importance of having an internal audit department that reflects the clients that they serve.

## Personal Attributes and Work Style

**Key Point:** Women's communication styles and soft skills can be very effective for interacting with clients and auditees.

Many of the roundtable participants described specific attributes and working styles that are typical of women that they believe are a benefit to female internal auditors. In particular, some suggested that women were likely to be collaborative, reflective, empathetic, good-listeners, team-focused, and effective at multitasking. They described how these characteristics were beneficial for client interactions, working in teams or supervising other internal auditors, and in communications with management and the board. The following remarks illustrate how women's personalities can be an asset for internal audit:

"[Women] have great listening skills. They hear beyond the words. And I think when we're doing internal audit, that's really important. I think women have the ability to deliver less than great news with a bit of optimism... 'This'll be okay.' We don't downplay the super important, [but], 'This isn't the end of the world. This is how we'll fix it.' We do tend to be much more nurturing, understanding, and compassionate. We tend to take their point of view into account before we rain on their parade. We see the world broadly—in a more collective sense... so [internal auditing] is a good fit for us."

—Sue Ulrey, CEO, SDU Consulting (United States)

A female CAE from the energy services industry further indicated that auditees seem more open and forthcoming with female internal auditors:

“In the strong technical environment that I’ve been in, for the most part, I’ve found [being a woman] to be an advantage. The different perspectives women bring to the table create rich dialogue, which adds value and drives better results...”

– Mary Ludford, VP Audit and Controls, Exelon (United States)

Several male CAEs also described the benefit of having diversity with regard to perspective on the internal audit team. For example, Pritesh Dattani, Group Audit Director, Gulf Marketing Group (UAE) indicated that having a mix of skills and experiences on an [audit] team was important. Including both men and women on internal audit teams can provide an overall balanced perspective. Larry Harrington (CAE, Raytheon United States) expanded upon this idea:

“... [Women] have the [same] skills and experience [as men]; however, they often bring a different perspective to things, which helps us all think differently. Diversity of thought, experience, country, discipline, etc., all contribute to better outcomes.”

### Promoting Work-Life Balance on Staff

**Key Point:** Female CAEs often lead by example and promote work-life balance to their staff.

As will be described in the next section, maintaining an effective work-life balance is very important for all employees. Several CAEs described how female internal

audit leaders often recognize this importance, are open to working with their staff to maintain acceptable flexibility, and introduce innovative work solutions to best foster work-life balance.

“Work-life balance: there is a bit more sensitivity and awareness, and maybe innovation in trying to make sure that we’re retaining the talented women who might have different priorities that must be balanced with the demands of their careers.”

– Mary Ludford, VP Audit and Controls, Exelon (United States)

A CAE from the public sector in Europe emphasized the importance of being yourself and following your passion, and described how it is often quite natural for a woman to make others in the office feel comfortable enough to have a work-life balance:

“...When women come in, you are allowed to talk about your kids.... It is easier to talk not only about the business side of work, but also the softer issues.... Most women will try to get a good conversation going that gives everyone the comfort to say what they want to say. Sometimes for women, it is a more natural way of working and acting.”

### Gender Diversity

**Key Point:** Many organizations have diversity initiatives that provide opportunities for women in internal audit.

Several interviewees suggested that they do believe that opportunities to advance can be more prevalent for appropriately qualified women because many organizations



prioritize diversity initiatives.\* This is not to imply that unqualified women receive jobs for which they are ill-suited, but rather, that perhaps women are more likely to be included in the recruitment pool or considered for more senior positions in organizations that are specifically seeking out qualified women for interviews.

One CAE from the United States described how a focus on diversity might have an effect on executive-level positions in internal auditing, as opposed to elsewhere in the organization:

“Quite often, CEOs tell their heads of HR that they need at least one woman there, and it’s usually the head of HR or the head of internal audit, or both... So you could say that women in internal audit have actually benefited from that. It may account for the fact that there is a sort of disproportionately large amount of women in CAE roles versus COO or CFO roles.”

Further, these initiatives may ultimately serve to make the leadership of internal audit functions more reflective of the populations they serve. As one CAE noted:

“One of the things that’s driving more equality between men and women in the workforce is [we’re] really taking a look at the diversity of the populations that we do business in, and making sure that we are driving for the same view of diversity. And many times, that drives to more gender equality. So it’s a bit of a deliberate approach to make sure that we are slating and attracting talent based on the geographies that we do business in.”

—Mary Ludford, VP Audit and Controls, Exelon (United States)

This comment suggests that some organizations have recognized that there are benefits to having an internal audit function that mirrors the auditees they will be serving. Other interviewees expanded on this idea:

“In a perfect world, internal audit will reflect the organization’s stakeholders. The makeup of a good internal audit function will reflect society at large: race, religion, language, gender, etc. This implies about 50% female, but it also implies much more.... Reflection is much more than simple representation.... Engaging an appropriate gender mix is clearly a step in the right direction.”

—Michael Parkinson, Internal Audit Consultant  
Michael Parkinson Consulting (Australia)

## Conclusion

According to roundtable participants, women can bring a different perspective to the internal audit profession that can benefit the internal audit department and the organization. Traditionally feminine personality characteristics, such as openness, caring, and thoughtfulness can make auditees and other staff comfortable as they share, confide, and work. Women are also perceived to be understanding about the work-life balance concerns of all employees, and can therefore bring creative solutions and acceptance of various priorities to the workplace.

Roundtable participants also recognized that there are various benefits that accrue to female internal auditors *because* they are women. Many organizations have identified a need for more diversity in general, and a female perspective in particular. Therefore, in some instances, women have been sought out specifically to bring their skillset to the internal audit function.

\* Focus on diversity initiatives is likely to vary across global regions. For example, in some European countries gender quotas have gained popularity. (Rayasam, R. (2016). Why Germany’s New Quota for Women on Boards Looks Like a Bust. *Fortune*. <http://fortune.com/2016/03/11/germany-board-quota-women/>)

# 7 Challenges Experienced by Women in Internal Audit

Interviewees identified several challenges that women face in internal auditing. Some challenges, such as personality and working styles were described as an advantage as well as a challenge. Key challenges include:

- Balancing work responsibilities and family life
- Effectively leveraging differences in personality and work styles
- Overcoming historical or cultural hurdles
- Navigating office politics

## Balancing Work and Family

**Key Point:** For many women, it is difficult to juggle family responsibilities with a fast-paced, often travel-intensive career in internal audit.

Understandably, roundtable participants described the constraints that many women in the workforce feel when trying to maintain an effective work-life balance—especially related to juggling family responsibilities. Long hours, extensive travel, and high-pressure deadlines can make internal audit particularly challenging for women (and men) who also wish to focus on family priorities.

## Adapting

Many of the women who participated in the roundtable discussions described “less traditional” family arrangements. For example, several women are the primary bread winners in their families, with husbands that stay home with their children. One CAE answers the question about how she “has it all” as follows:

“How did [I] manage to do all of this, and bring up children and travel the world? It’s entirely due to the fact that my husband gave up his career a long time ago...”

– Clare Brady, CAE (United States)

Another CAE stated that because she had a “stay-at-home husband” she was able to pursue and accept big opportunities when they arose, even if the opportunities involved moving because she did not have to worry about her husband’s career. This afforded her the flexibility to really take on challenges that accelerated her career.

## Travel

Somewhat related to general challenges stemming from women trying to juggle a career while raising a family, is the fact that often internal audit careers involve a great deal of travel. One U.S.-based CAE noted that in her experience, female internal auditors were more likely to leave industries that required heavy travel (e.g., manufacturing) than industries, such as finance, where less travel may be required. While it is not clear from the CBOK survey data whether or not this is the case, it can be noted that women are less likely to work in manufacturing companies in general (see **exhibit 11.**).

“Because the travel demands are so heavy, as [internal auditors] progress up the ladder... as women begin to have families, they leave the profession... And the women that I see [progressing] generally aren’t raising families. Sometimes when they come back to the profession, which they do, it is because their kids are grown and they have that ability to travel again.”

–Valerie Wolbrueck, Director,  
Lennox International, Inc. (United States)

Many roundtable participants indicated that there have been changes in the profession that have allowed for considerable flexibility in work schedules and travel expectations; therefore, it is much more likely that women can maintain their preferred work-life balance while pursuing a career in internal audit today than in prior decades. For example, Charlotta Hjelm (Chief Internal Auditor, LFAB, Sweden) described how moving into the internal audit profession from a career as a financial officer has improved her work-life balance by allowing *more* time for family and friends.

A roundtable participant from Nigeria looked to the future and predicted that as organizations take advantage of technology, it will enable women to advance to the highest levels in an organization while still maintaining an acceptable work-life balance:

“Looking to the future, I’m not worried for women, because technology does not require that a CAE be physically in an office. A female who is at home or in another office can be a CAE, and she can make sure that she takes care of everyone who is looking at the data without being physically present.”

### Challenges due to Work Style

**Key Point:** Women are often less assertive than men, and can lack the competitive drive that is necessary to advance in the profession.

Differences in women’s personal attributes and working styles can provide benefits, as previously described, but can also provide opportunities for challenges. Several of the CAE respondents described some differences in stereotypical personality and work styles between men and women

that can be a detriment to female internal auditors’ ability to succeed and advance.\*

### Assertiveness

For various reasons (e.g., social norms, personality, culture, etc.) many women can have a tendency to be less assertive and less competitive, and project less confidence than their male counterparts. For example, Shawn Tebben (VP Internal Audit, Vail Resorts, United States) indicated that men can be perceived to be more confident and self-assured than women, and that women’s timidity in comparison can hurt their credibility:

“...[Women] tend to be a little more reflective at times [which] can convey a misconception about our capabilities of being able to make tough calls, being able to take a stand in the face of opposition... So it is incumbent upon us as we grow as leaders, to make sure we are flexing those muscles as well as some of our more natural [tendencies].”

### Givers, not Takers

Another common female stereotype is that women are inclined to be more nurturing and supportive than competitive and opportunistic. In a sense, they may be more likely to be recognized as “givers” than “takers.”\*\* Givers contribute to others or the organization without seeking anything in return. One CAE made this observation about how

\* It is important to note that research shows that female stereotypes have evolved as women are more commonly found in the workplace. In particular, individuals perceive that women in current society are more similar to men (i.e., exhibiting traditionally masculine traits) than were women in the past and that women in the future will be even more so. This holds true for both positive and negative (stereo-typically) masculine traits. (Diekmann, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2000). Stereotypes as dynamic constructs: Women and men of the past, present, and future. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 26(10), 1171-1188.)

\*\* Grant, A. (2013) In the company of givers and takers. *Harvard Business Review*. April 2013.

women's preferences for "getting along" can start at a very young age, and subsequently plays out in the workplace:

"I think a lot of it stems from how young women—young girls—play and learn as opposed to boys... Girls play more social games, and so they develop those skills and are very supportive. So early on in the workforce, [women] are very successful. And these are really good skills to have as an auditor because you are able to take in a lot of information and non-verbal cues and really understand and listen well. But the disadvantage comes when young men in the workforce pick up [social skills] over time, but aren't afraid of being competitive and confrontational; those seem like better leadership skills. So they tend to advance faster. And young women in the workforce want to get along, and they are uncomfortable with those types of skills; they are seemingly okay with stepping back because they don't want to cause difficulties."

—Keri Rogers, Assistant Vice President,  
Manulife (United States)

This observation is supported by academic research that finds that men are taught to be assertive, independent, rational, and decisive, while women are taught to show concern for others and be nurturing and helpful (Hoyt, Simon and Reid, 2009, Brandt and Laiho 2013).\*\*\*

To be sure, research shows that being a giver is an important leadership quality. However as the above quote describes, one must still be tactical and deliberate about advancement in order to succeed in the profession.

\* Hoyt, C. L., Simon, S. and Reid, L. (2009). Choosing the best (wo)man for the job: the effects of mortality salience, sex, and, gender stereotypes on leader evaluations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(2);233-246.

\*\* Brandt, T. and M. Laiho. (2013). Gender and personality in transformational leadership context: An examination of leader and subordinate perspectives. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 34(1): 44-66.

## Cultural/Historical Issues

**Key Point:** Cultural norms play a role in the acceptance of women in the workforce and in management positions.

Cultural and historical issues were described to be particularly important in parts of the world where women have traditionally been viewed as inferior to men (e.g., African and South Asian regions). This supports the results shown in **exhibit 2** and **exhibit 4**, where the gap between men and women is greater in the African and South Asian regions than in the Western regions. As described by a CAE from South Africa:

"[In some cultures] women are viewed as subservient, and cultural issues have a big impact on women actually stepping up."

Somewhat relatedly, Sakiko Sakai, Owner, Infinity Consulting (Japan) noted that female CAEs in Japan are usually working for foreign (e.g., Western) companies, and that it was very unlikely that a female would be made CAE of a local company because that is simply not the culture in Japan.

## Organizational Politics

**Key Point:** Women are sometimes believed to be less adept than men at office politics, which may put them at a disadvantage for career advancement and growth opportunities.

A 2012 study by Robert Half, International found that 62% of North American workers surveyed indicated that it was necessary to participate in office politics to get ahead in the workplace.\*\*\* However, several roundtable participants

\*\*\* Robert Half. 2012. How to navigate office politics: Your guide to getting ahead. [https://www.roberthalf.com/sites/default/files/Media\\_Root/Images/RH-PDFs/RH\\_OfficePolitics.pdf](https://www.roberthalf.com/sites/default/files/Media_Root/Images/RH-PDFs/RH_OfficePolitics.pdf)

expressed the belief that women were less adept at navigating organizational politics than their male counterparts. One Asian roundtable participant put it simply:

“Females, in general, are not so strong on politics... Male auditors do a great job compared to female auditors [in this area].”

—Sakiko Sakai, Owner, Infinity Consulting (Japan)

This sentiment was echoed by a CAE from the African Region:

“A woman might not be able to play the type of politics that men play, and that is a very serious disadvantage for women. “

“Office politics” often has a negative connotation; however, it should not necessarily be negative. Indeed, some academic research has concluded that there are four competencies necessary for *positive* political influence: (1) social astuteness, (2) interpersonal influence, (3) networking ability, and (4) sincerity.\* These competencies do not seem to be unusual for women; however, another U.S.-based CAE pointed out that women may find it especially challenging to fit into a male-dominated workforce:

\* Ferris, G. R., S. L. Davidson, and P. L. Perrewe. 2005. Political skill at work: impact on work effectiveness. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishers.

“Let’s face it; men and women are different, and it is a predominately male workforce. It’s very difficult to break into the “club.” Not that men are trying to be exclusionary... but there’s an awful lot of business that gets done on the golf course... there is an awful lot of business that gets done in a sports setting. That’s just the reality... And those things may or may not appeal to [women], so you lose out on those opportunities for camaraderie. Our interests are different and are probably going to remain different for a long time.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, female CAEs described many challenges that they have faced or observed other women facing in the internal auditing profession. Although it appears that the challenges outnumber the advantages, on balance, the interviewees were very positive and encouraging. Their collective message was that to succeed in the profession, one needs to be courageous, competent, and hard-working. With those characteristics, there are many opportunities for women in internal auditing.

# Conclusion

Evidence from the 2015 Global Internal Audit Common Body of Knowledge (CBOK) survey reveals that women are making a strong impact on the internal audit profession. Globally, women represent approximately a third of the CAEs and over forty percent of internal audit staff, so women are poised to become more influential in the field.

Women in the profession bring many different perspectives, skillsets, and personality traits that are especially important for internal auditing. Internal auditors must wear many hats and interact daily with a variety of stakeholders. Women who are traditionally considered to be strong multi-taskers and thoughtful listeners, may be especially well-suited for these responsibilities; however,

women also face a variety of challenges as they progress in the profession, such as managing an appropriate work-life balance, leveraging traditional “feminine” personality traits, and successfully navigating office politics.

Today more than ever, women constantly face the question of whether they can (or want to) juggle both a challenging career and a fulfilling personal life. Successful female internal auditors provided several key observations for women who wish to advance their careers. Primarily, women should be confident in themselves, their skills, and in the career that they desire. They should seek mentorship to help guide them to the right opportunities and develop an appropriate career plan. Finally, they should “go for it”!

## About the Author

**Margaret H. Christ, PhD, CIA** is an Associate Professor of Accounting and PwC Faculty Fellow at the University of Georgia. Her research focuses on the effects of organizational control systems, including internal audit practices. Dr. Christ has been published in top research journals, such as *The Accounting Review*, *Contemporary Accounting Research*, and *Accounting, Organizations, and Society*. She has written several reports

and monographs for the Institute of Internal Auditors Research Foundation and serves on the Institute of Internal Auditors’ Committee of Research and Education Advisors. She is co-chair of the diversity task force for the Terry College of Business. Before obtaining her PhD from the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Christ was a senior risk consultant with Arthur Andersen and Protiviti.



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## Interviewees

Ravio Bachmann, Head of Service – City Auditor,  
Tartu City Government, Estonia

Karen Begelfer, VP Corporate Audit, Sprint, United States

Clare Brady, CAE, United States

Pritesh Dattani, Group Audit Director,  
Gulf Marketing Group, United Arab Emirates

Faith Egwuenu, Financial Auditor,  
Unified Payments, Nigeria

Polona Pergar Guzaj, Manager, Slovenia

Larry Harrington, CAE, Raytheon, United States

Kiko Harvey, VP Corporate Audit and Enterprise Risk  
Management, Delta Airlines, United States

Charlotta Hjelm, Chief Internal Auditor,  
Lansforsakringar, Sweden

Jenitha John, CEO, FirstRand Bank, South Africa

Lesedi Lesetedi, Director Internal Audit, Botswana  
International University, Botswana

Mary Ludford, VP Audit and Controls, Excelon,  
United States

Kuldar Ojang, Operational Risk Manager, SEB Bank AS,  
Estonia

Sally Okey-Umahi, PwC, Nigeria

Keri Rogers, Assistant VP, Manulife, United States

Sakiko Sakai, Owner, Infinity Consulting, Japan

Shawn Tebben, VP Internal Audit, Vail Resorts,  
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