

5 inspiring reflections to foster equality

From strengthening female representation to tackling stereotypes and the pay gap, there are many ways to boost women's leadership.



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A better world is possible, but it requires women's participation at all levels. IESE has long sought to promote women's leadership — and women's research. This year, for [International Women's Day](#), we offer a selection of recent content by and for women that demystifies the

persistent inequalities and offers inspiration for the rising female leader.

More female representation on boards

Among the boards of directors of Spain's listed companies, there are 390 women, compared with 815 men. Although there has been progress on female representation — at 32.37% — it is still almost 8 percentage points below the 40% target set by the EU. But there is good news: the companies that make up Spain's IBEX-35 benchmark index are ahead of the curve and likely to reach this goal in 2024. Even so, only one company has more women than men on its board, and there are only three female chairs in the IBEX-35. This analysis comes from the 2023 edition of the annual report on female board representation, led by [Nuria Chinchilla](#), holder of the [Carmina Roca and Rafael Pich-Aguilera Women and Leadership Chair](#). More information in [our writeup of the report](#).

Real-life role models to empower other women

Going beyond the data to the lived experience, Adriana Dominguez, CEO & Chair of the Adolfo Dominguez fashion brand, is one of 15 women to share her advice and experience in a book of inspirational reflections by top female professionals. Compiled by Nuria Chinchilla, Pilar Garcia Lombardia and Esther Jimenez, it collects the testimonies of female leaders who have broken barriers, demonstrated expert leadership and proved that personal and professional lives can coexist. There is also advice for avoiding imposter syndrome, resources for breaking through the glass ceiling and practical tips for delegating effectively. Read more at [10 lessons for women to break through barriers](#).

More keys to work-life balance

Does the ideal worker exist? For businesses in the 21st century, the best workers may well be those who can reconcile the many different facets of their lives. A healthy work-life balance is enriching, as is amply demonstrated in [The new ideal worker](#) edited by [Mireia Las Heras](#) and Nuria Chinchilla. The evidence is clear: sidelining family to prioritize work isn't beneficial to organizations; in fact, it can have a negative impact. Even so, many continue to find achieving this balance a challenge. Get the whole story at [5 characteristics of the new ideal worker](#).

The pay gap remains to be closed

German women earn 13% less than men. In Japan, it's almost 26%. Although some attribute such wage disparities to the different nature of the jobs that men and women do, these stats are for women performing the same job as men within the same company. [Marta Elvira](#) and two IESE PhDs participated in this global study published in [Nature Human Behaviour](#), which sheds light on how gender continues to be a source of pay discrepancies. Check what percentage of lost earnings that gender accounts for, within the same job, in 15 developed economies, in [Gender pay gap: valuing women's work](#).

Avoid stereotypes

Stereotypes make it difficult to spot talent. And for many women, stereotypes make it challenging to transform the work environment. Falling prey to negative stereotypes can lead to missing out on hidden opportunities, says [Africa Ariño](#), albeit in the context of [a broader commentary about doing business in Africa](#), but the principle still stands. Leaders would do well to set their assumptions aside. Doing so can open up new perspectives on your strategy — and on how you treat other people.

MORE INFO: Visit the webpage [IESE Women Win](#) and discover more tools and ideas for promoting diverse, inclusive cultures where everyone is able to thrive.

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