

Position of women in the Icelandic fisheries sector from the perspective of companies and organizations.

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Summary

This report presents the conclusions of a study carried out by Gallup and the research centre RHA of the University of Akureyri at the request of the Association of Women in Fisheries (KIS). The objective of the study was to map the situation of women in fisheries by gathering statistical data on women and examining attitudes towards them in the sector. After defining and classifying fisheries enterprises, an Internet survey was sent to the management of 445 enterprises/institutions in November and December 2016. The response rate was 45.2%.

Participants were asked to estimate the proportion of women among senior executives, owners and directors on the boards of companies and institutions in the fisheries sector. The senior executives and managing directors include a considerably greater number of men than women; e.g. only 15% of enterprises stated that there were women among their senior executives while 64% of enterprises said men held the top management position. The proportion is more equal in middle management, while in a considerably greater number of enterprises (57%) women handle office work than men (22%).

One-third of enterprises (34%) had no women owners, while women held stakes of 51% or more in only 14% of enterprises. Women were most likely to be among the owners of fisheries enterprises if they were family companies or smaller companies (based on annual turnover). Similarly, women were more commonly directors on the boards of family companies than other enterprises. There are significant correlations with the category of the enterprise. Enterprises in fishing and processing are more likely to have a greater number of women as owners, senior executives or directors of the enterprise/institution than enterprises classified as services, ports, suppliers and others. There was also a correlation with the type of enterprise, as support companies are more likely to have women as senior executives than fisheries enterprises. While this might appear to be in contradiction with the greater power of women in enterprises in fishing and processing, the explanation may lie in the intersection in the enterprise classification and type of enterprise. Sales companies, fish markets, aquaculture firms and fisheries feedstuffs producers are classified as fisheries enterprises under type of company, but as others in the classification of enterprises. It could be supposed that sales companies and fish markets are more likely to be owned by men and managed by them than are enterprises in fishing and processing, and therefore reduce the influence of women in the class fisheries enterprises, but this needs to be examined more closely.

An examination of hiring reveals that enterprises in fishing and processing have a higher proportion of women in permanent employment and also a greater number of women in full-time positions than others. Women of foreign origin were employed in half of the enterprises/institutions. They were more likely to work outside the capital area, to work for enterprises rather than institutions, and in such cases most often in enterprises which carry out fishing and processing.

Responses to the question of how employees were hired for work in fisheries revealed that hiring for management and specialist positions was most often done through a general application received by the enterprise and least often through a recruitment agency. Fisheries enterprises were regarded as more likely than support companies to hire employees through networking. Women and individuals under the age of 40 were significantly more likely to regard networks as important, both in fisheries in general and in enterprises and institutions. In responding to questions concerning flexibility at work, persons who had a university education and were under 40 years of age were most likely to think their jobs were flexible.

A few questions focused on attitudes towards women in fisheries; these were in the form of statements with which respondents were to agree or disagree. When asked whether men possessed more expertise than women, 42% disagreed while 20% agreed. When asked whether men had greater abilities than women there were more who disagreed, 53%, and fewer who agreed, 5%. Respondents with a university education were more likely to disagree that men possessed greater expertise and abilities than women in fisheries. It is, however, worth noting how large a proportion, 40%, responded “neither agree nor disagree” - and therefore expressed neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement.

When asked whether more women were needed in fisheries and whether they should have greater influence there was a large majority in favour, over 70% in both instances, and there were few who disagreed. Here, however, approximately one-quarter did not take a position. University educated respondents and those under 40 years of age were more likely than others to feel there was a need for more women in fisheries. Female respondents were more likely (84%) than male (72%) to agree that women should have greater influence in fisheries than they do.

When asked whether women and men had comparable pay in their workplace, 95% of respondents felt that this was the case. Over one-third of respondents felt that systematic efforts were made to increase the expertise and abilities of women in fisheries. When asked whether women and men were offered the same opportunities within the enterprise/institution 73% said they were, while 9% disagreed. In addition, 69% felt that emphasis was placed on gender equality while 7% disagreed with this. When asked whether the enterprise had a written policy on gender equality 38% said this was the case while 25% replied in the negative. Just over one-third neither agreed nor disagreed. There was a gender difference in the replies concerning gender equality: women were less likely than men to agree that both genders were given the same opportunities for career advancement, that emphasis was placed on gender equality and that a written gender equality policy existed in their enterprise/institution.

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that men and women sought different types of work (61%) and half of the participants (52%) considered that men and women differed in their career ambitions (52%). Somewhat fewer, 42.5%, were of the opinion that women were less likely to aim at management positions than men.