

The Reykjavík Index for Leadership

2025–2026

Measuring society's perceptions of
gender and leadership since 2018

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Foreword

The Reykjavík Index for Leadership is a measure of how society views men and women in terms of their suitability for leadership.

Established in 2018 at the launch of the first Reykjavík Global Forum, it is now established as an international authority on gender bias in leadership, towards men as well as women, across the public, private and civil society sectors.

The Index was founded at a moment of international cultural positivity regarding the journey to gender equity. Our first findings in 2018 showed the scale of the gap that needed to be closed to achieve equity in leadership. What we thought, however, was that The Reykjavík Index would chart our shared progress into future years.

Overall, this has not been the case. Instead, we have seen progress halt, and in some countries, we have seen it reverse. Today, we believe that the data shared in this year's report provides us with the insight we need to align and re-energise, to protect all that has been achieved to date, and pursue the next stage of the journey to equality that should be the basis of leadership in all spheres of society.

The Reykjavík Global Forum empowers women to attain and retain positions of power, influence, and leadership across every sector of society. By bringing together global leaders, it transforms knowledge into impact and ideas into concrete, actionable plans for meaningful change. The Reykjavík Index is central to this mission, tracking progress and providing vital data that informs action and drives that change.



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Reykjavík Global Forum



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Verian Group

Measuring society's perceptions of gender equality in leadership since 2018

The Reykjavík Index for Leadership is a measure of how women and men are viewed by society in terms of their suitability for leadership. A score of 100 indicates that society views men and women as equally suited to leadership.

When our research began in 2018, the G7 average was 72. This gradually declined between 2021 and 2024. What this means is that gender prejudice has increased across the G7, in terms of how gender is perceived to influence the ability of someone to lead.

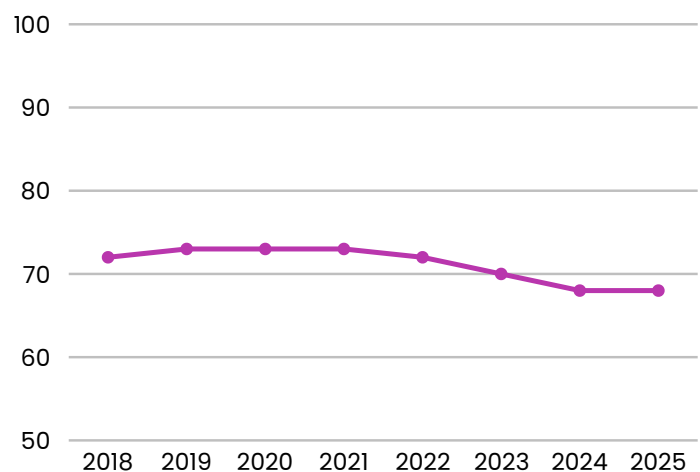
This prejudice is not just against women. We have also seen the increase in prejudice against men in the sectors of the economy that has historically been viewed as associated with women.

In the last year, the average G7 Index has not changed, remaining at 68. However, if we compare country-level data with last year:

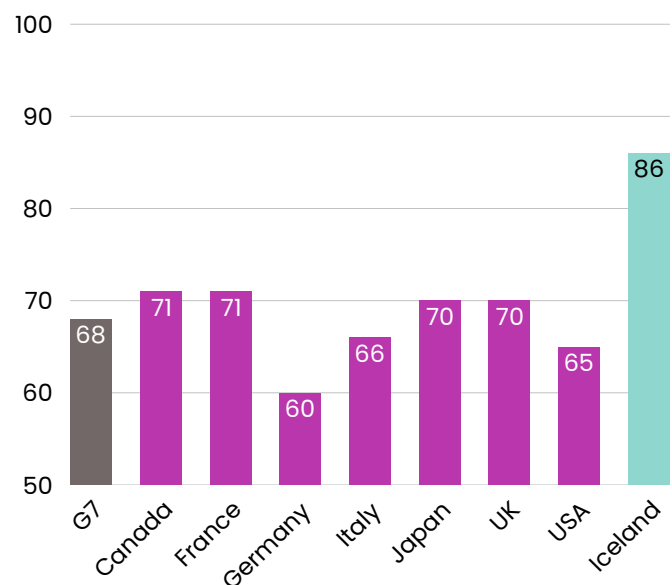
- Japan increased by 4 points.
- France and Italy each increased by 2.
- Germany, the UK and the US declined since last year.
- Canada held steady at 71.

Of all the countries included in this year's report, Iceland continues to lead the way with a score of 86. However, this is not immune to the global trend and has declined since our research began there in 2021.

Average G7 Reykjavík Index over time

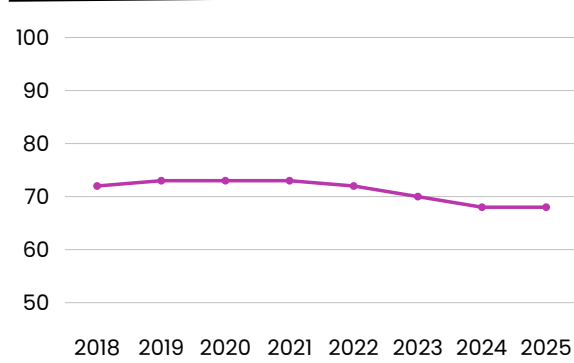


2025 Reykjavík Index by country

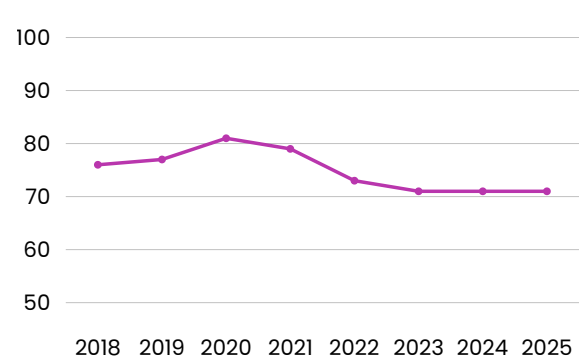


No change to G7 average Index in 2025, but big differences between countries

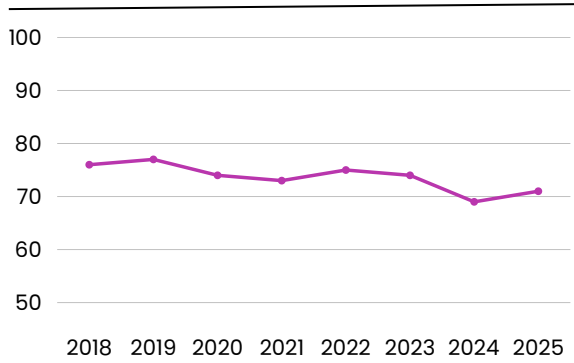
G7 average



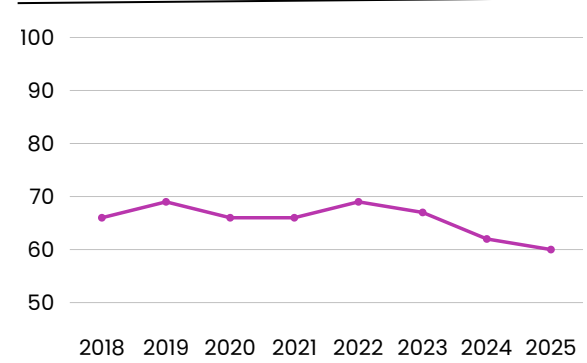
Canada



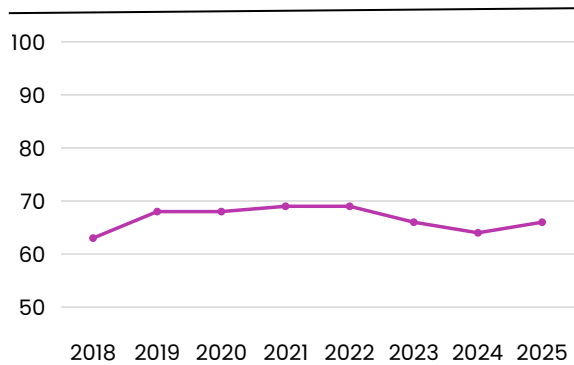
France



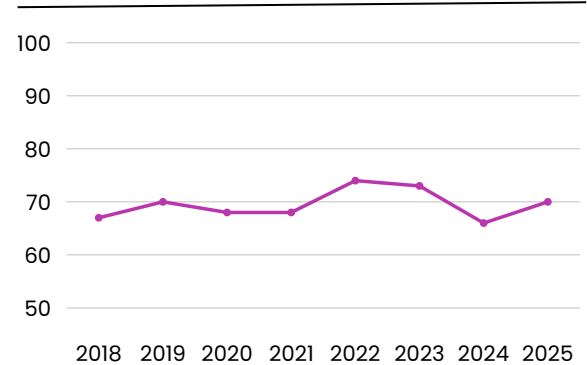
Germany



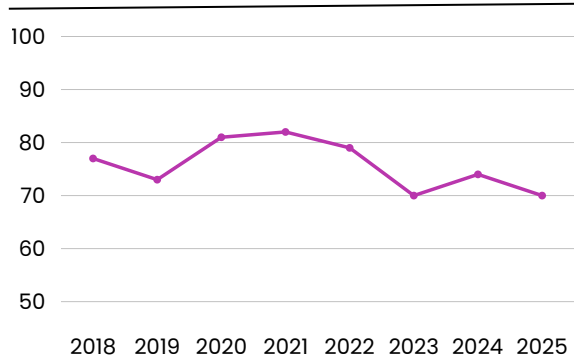
Italy



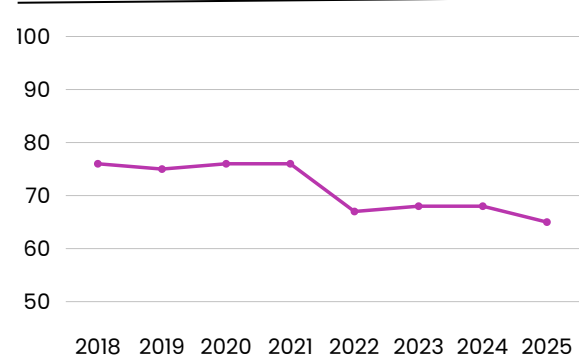
Japan



United Kingdom



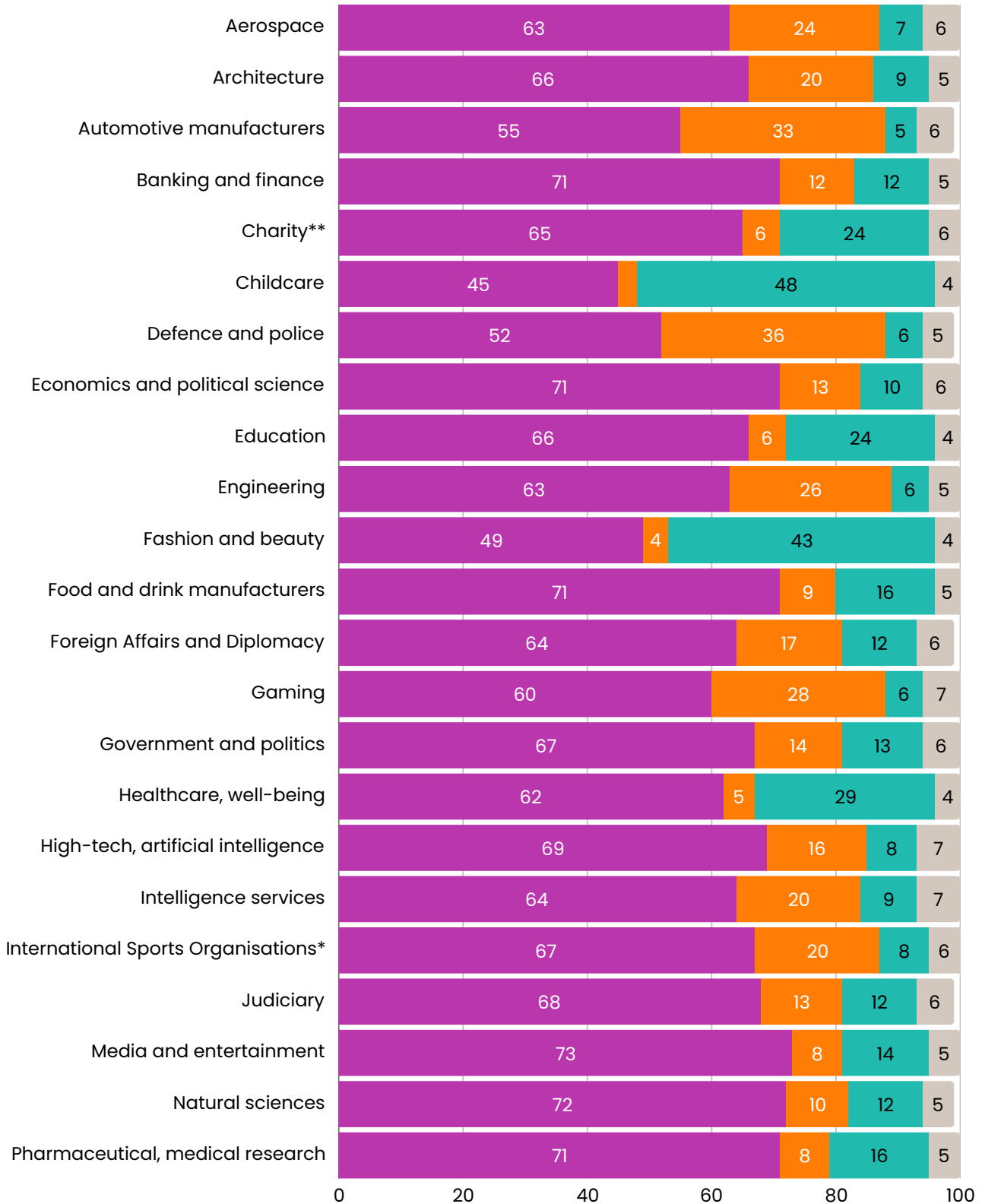
United States



Perceptions of leadership suitability in the G7 vary based on sector

Q: For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?

Both equally A man A woman Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

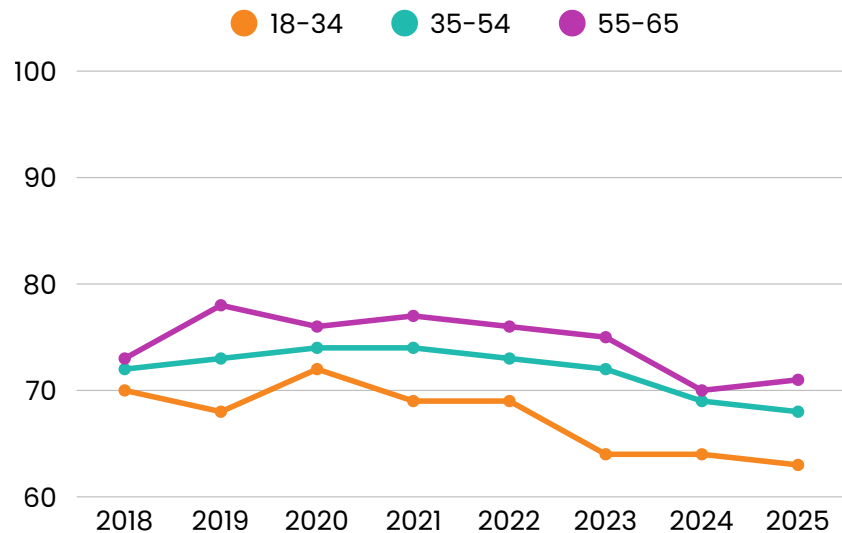
In most G7 countries, fewer young people see men and women as equally suited for leadership, compared with older age groups

This cohort issue was apparent in our very first data, back in 2018, but since then it has widened to become increasingly important. It signals a wider paradigm shift in many G7 countries, as we see young people no longer having more 'progressive' attitudes than their parents. However, it is important to remember the nuance in this data. Within it, there will be polarised views including segments of young people who hold similar, or even more progressive, views than older generations.

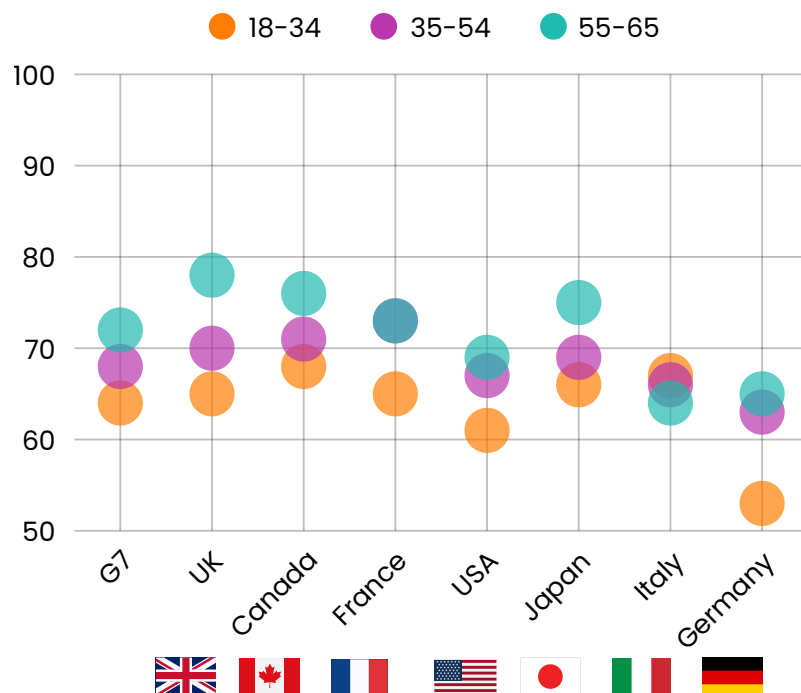
In 2025, the most significant contrast can be seen in Germany, where there is an 11 point gap between 18-34 and 35-54 year olds.

Italy is an outlier this year, with little difference based on respondent age.

Reykjavík Index by age of respondent over time, G7.



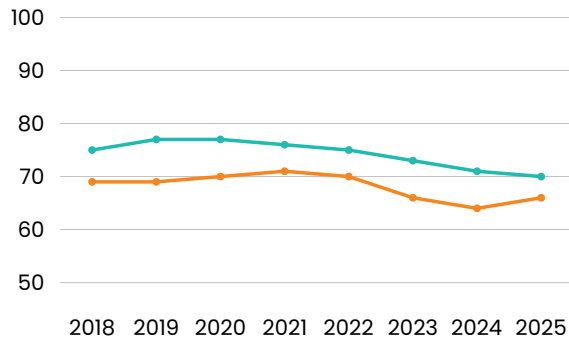
Reykjavík Index by age of respondent and country in 2025.



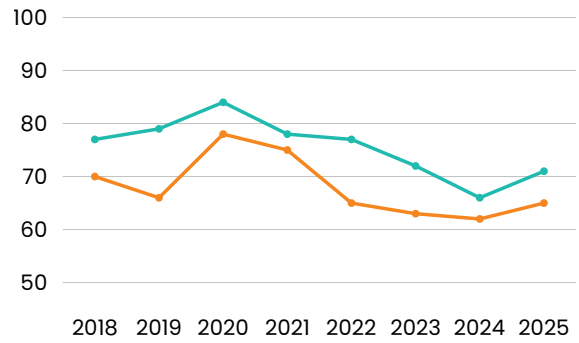
The differing views of young men and young women on gender equality is not a recent phenomenon.

Reykjavík Index over time, by gender and age of respondent ■ Women 18-34 ■ Men 18-34

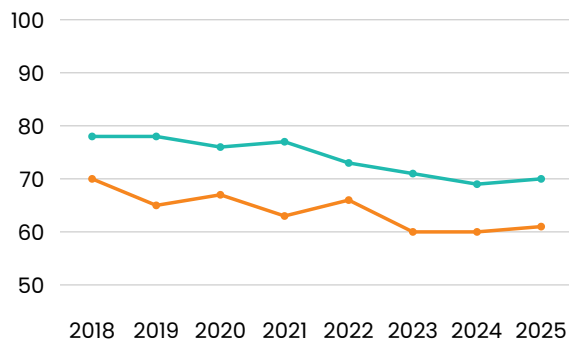
Young men and women in the G7



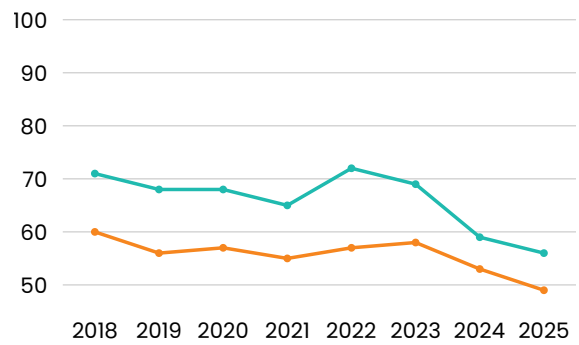
■ Young people in Canada



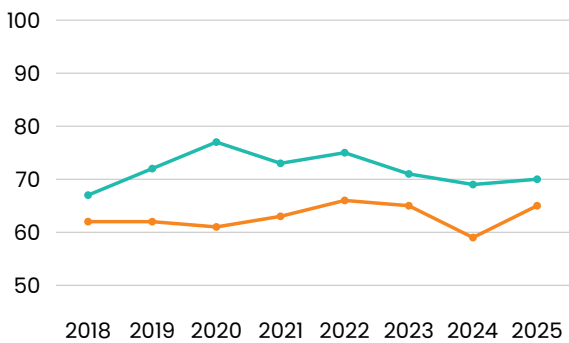
■ Young people in France



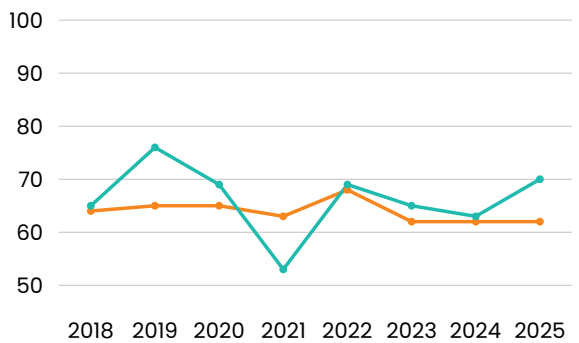
■ Young people in Germany



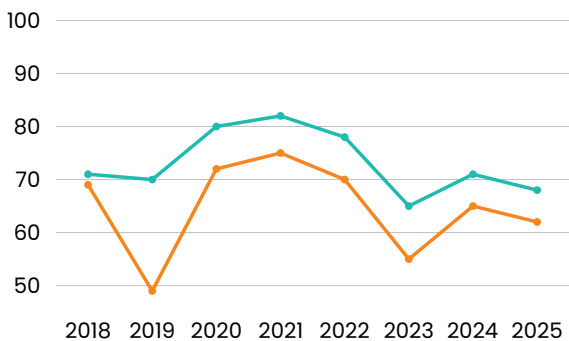
■ Young people in Italy



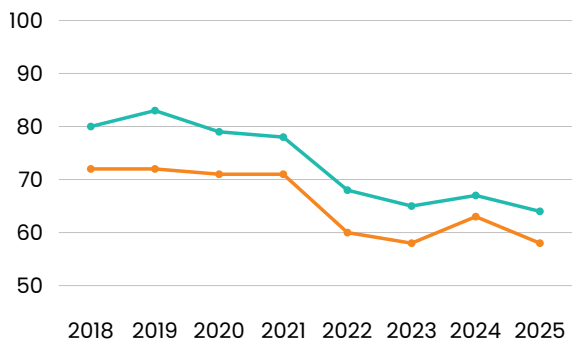
■ Young people in Japan



■ Young people in the UK



■ Young people in the USA





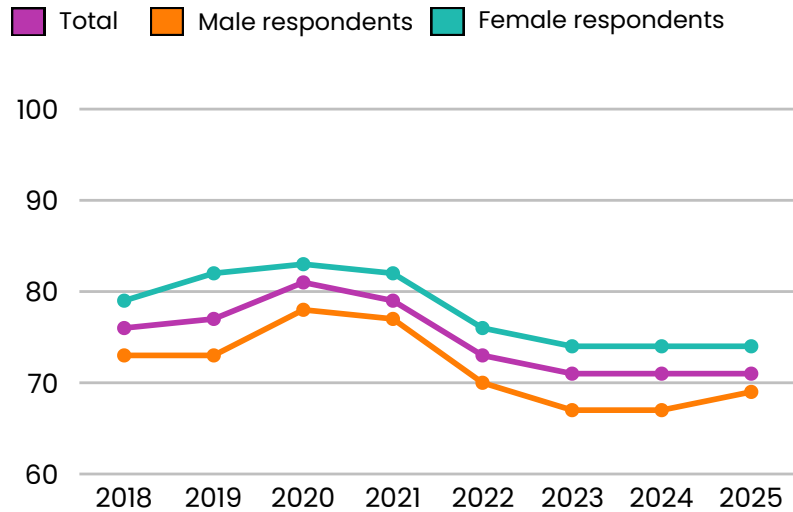
G7 Countries

In Canada, the data has remained stable in the last year



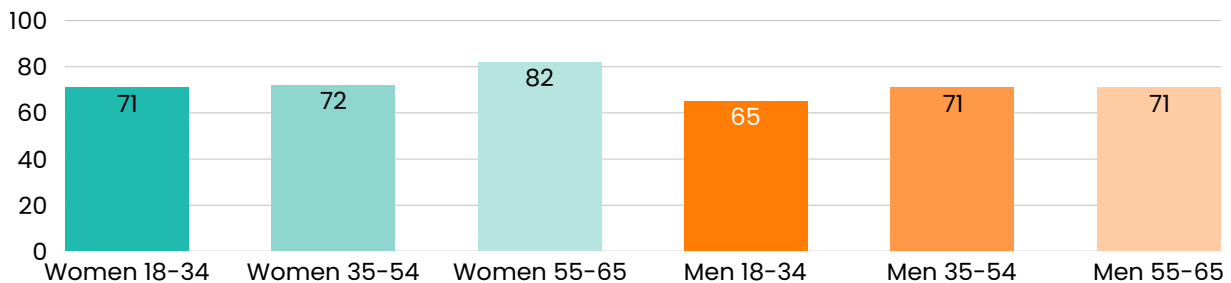
Currently with the highest Index score in the G7, Reykjavík Index scores have declined overall since 2018 but remained stable in the last year. However, there are differences in perceptions according to age and gender. Women aged 55-65 hold the least gender bias, with an index score of 82. Young men, as in several other countries studied this year, have the lowest index score at 65.

Canada's Reykjavík index score remains stable in 2025



Source: Canada Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

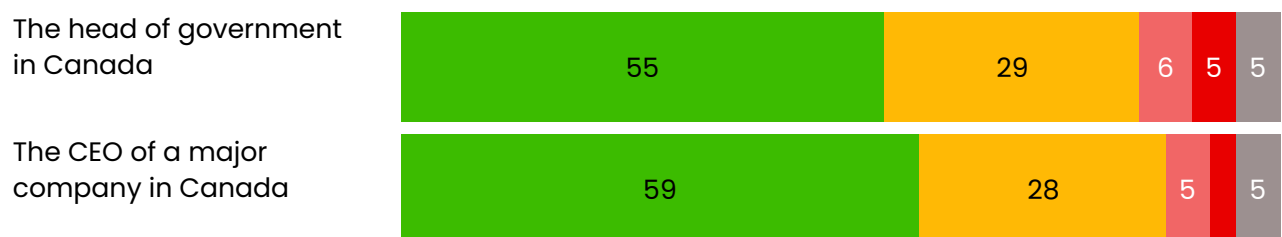
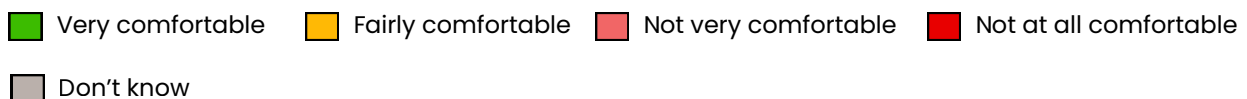
In 2025, women between 55-65 years old lead the way



Source: Canada Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Most Canadians are comfortable with senior female leadership in both public and private sectors

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

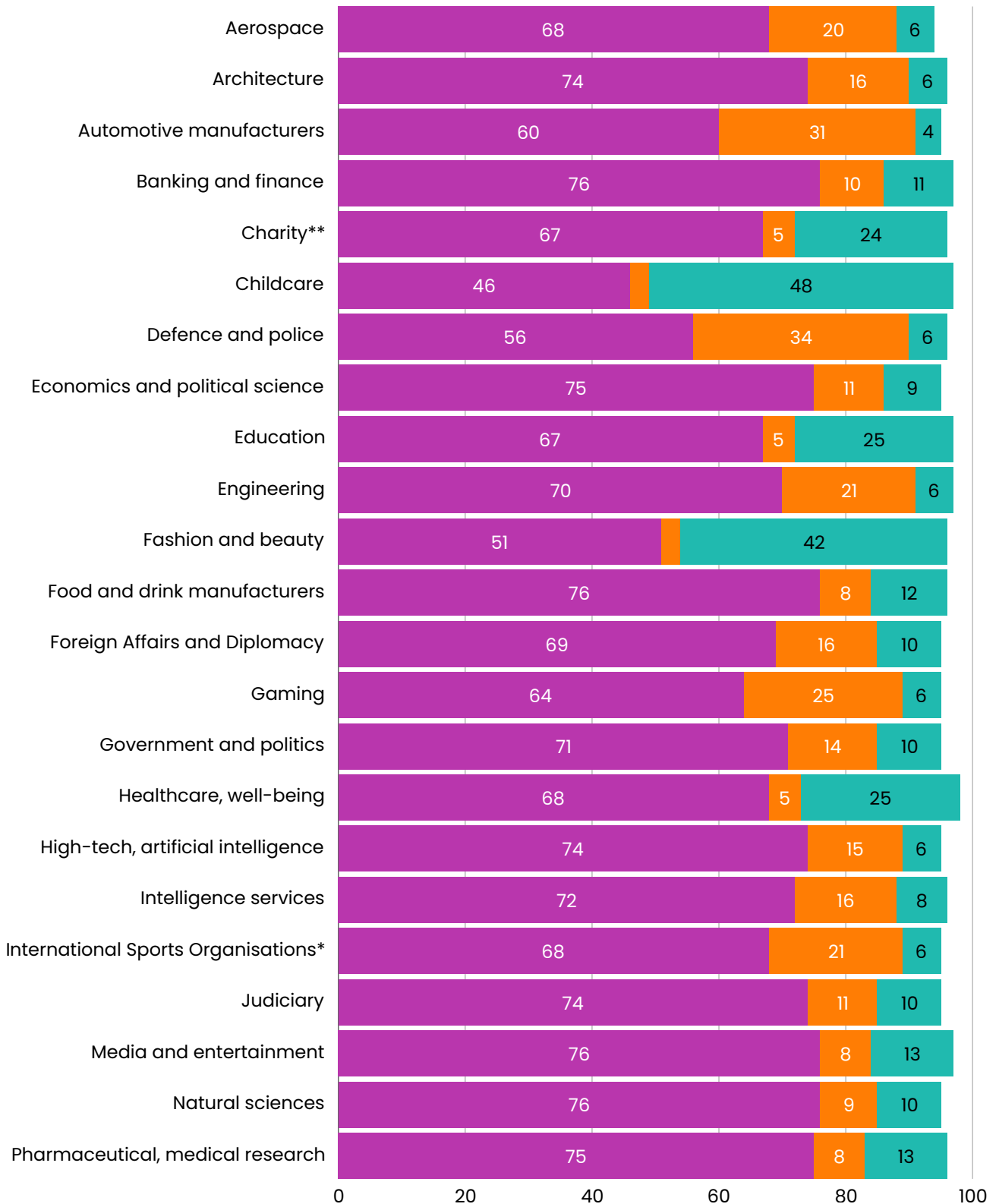


In Canada, cultural barriers remain for both men and women in certain sectors



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

■ Both equally
 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
 ■ Don't know



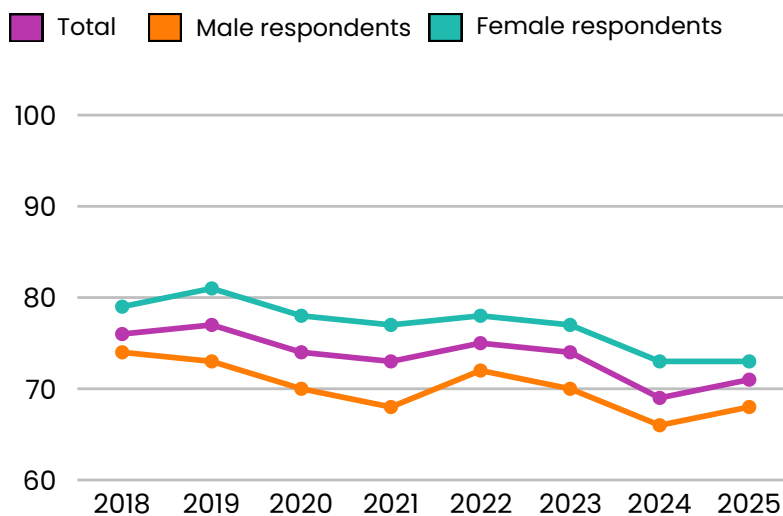
* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

French attitudes towards gender equality in leadership have seen positive changes this year



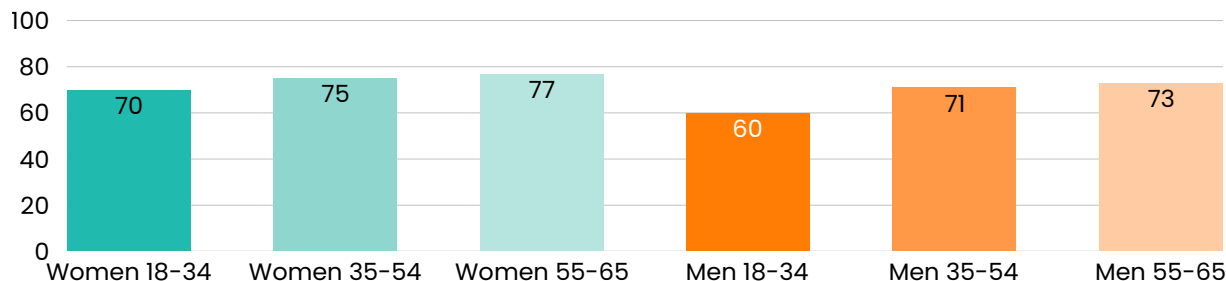
As with many other countries, French women are significantly more likely than French men to perceive that women are as equally suited to leadership. In France, the difference between young women and young men is striking. As in other countries, young people are less supportive of gender equality in leadership than older people. This is particularly so for young men.

France's Index increased in 2025 compared with 2024.



Source: France Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

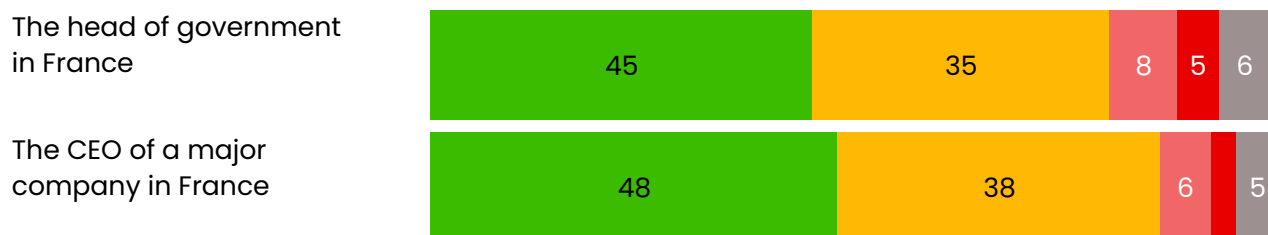
In 2025, young men are the least likely to see women and men as equally suited for leadership



Source: France Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

In 2025, fewer than 50% of people are 'very comfortable' with senior female leadership in France

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

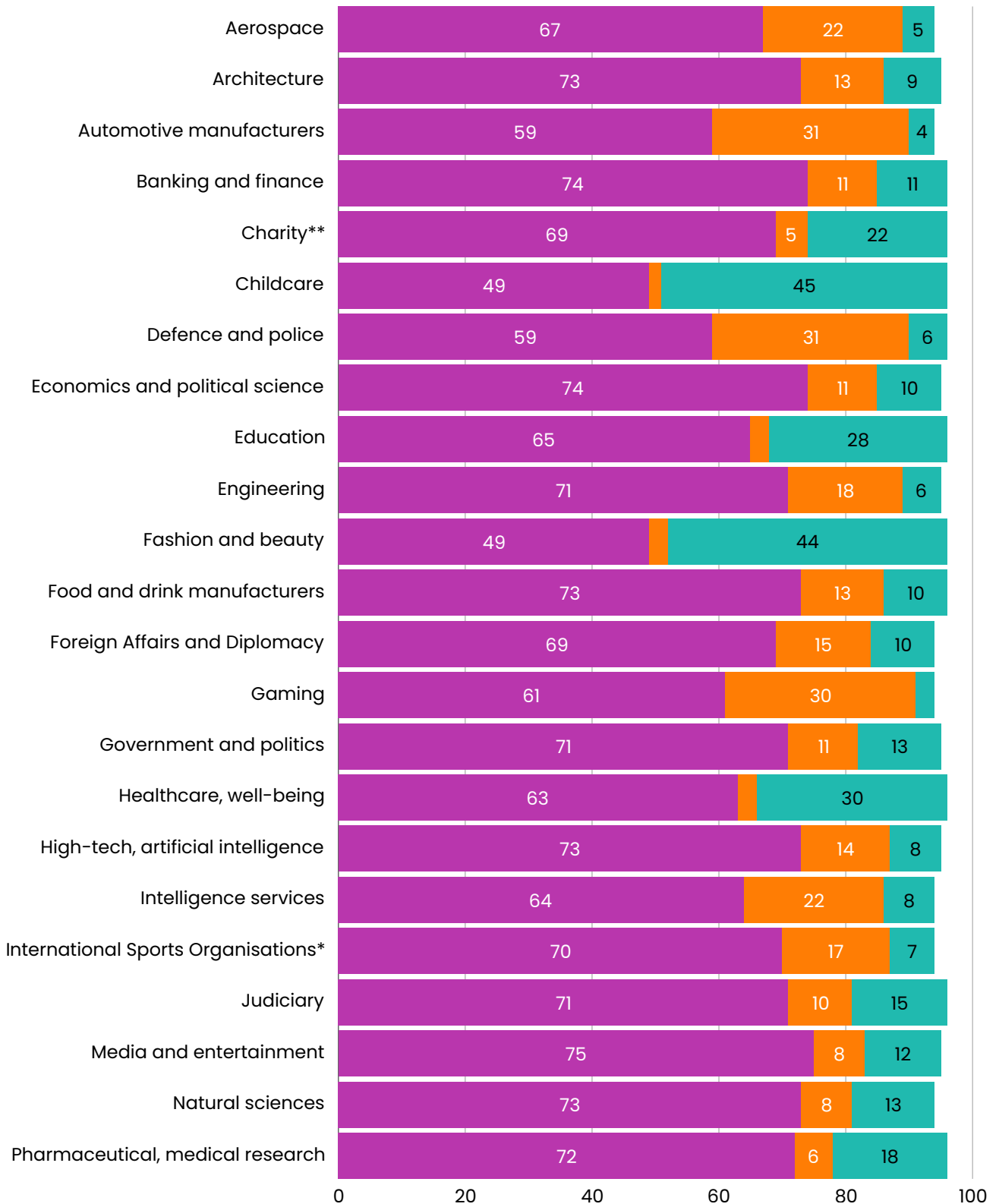


Cultural barriers remains for both men and women in France. For men, this is significant in childcare, healthcare and fashion; bias against women in strongest in defence, manufacturing and gaming.



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

Both equally A man A woman Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

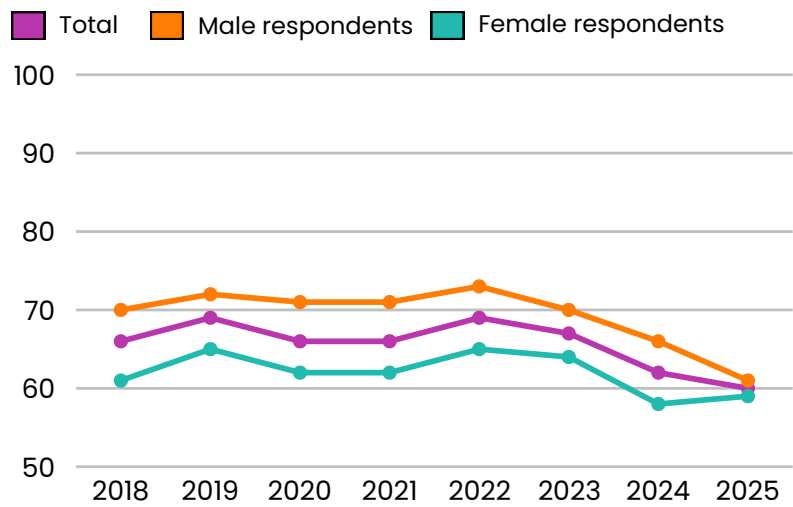
Germany lowest in G7



Germany has one of the lowest Reykjavík Index scores amongst the G7 Group, and it has also been declining since 2022. It shows the same intergenerational shifts as other countries, and this is particularly the case for young men.

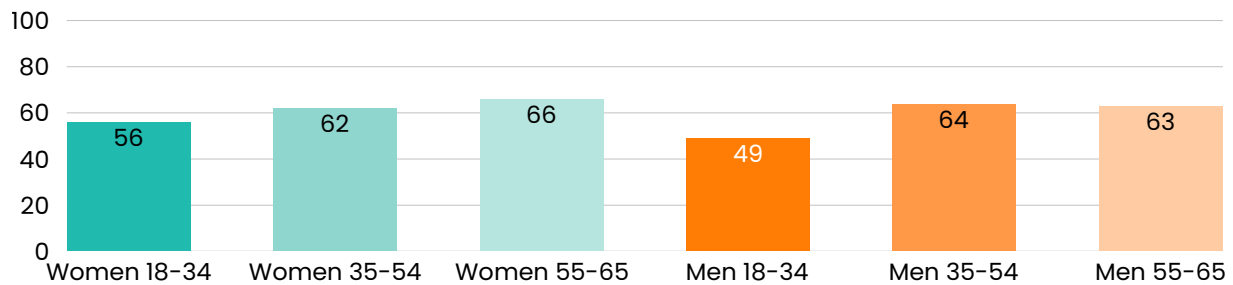
Only 38% of respondents were very comfortable with a female leader either as a head of state, or as the ceo of a major German company.

Germany's Index continues to fall



Source: Germany Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

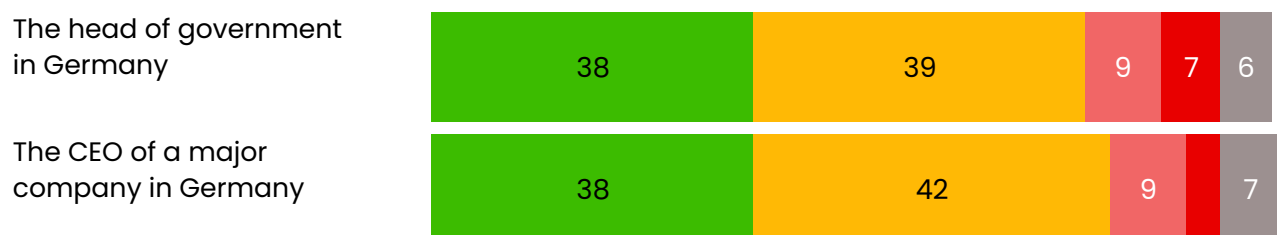
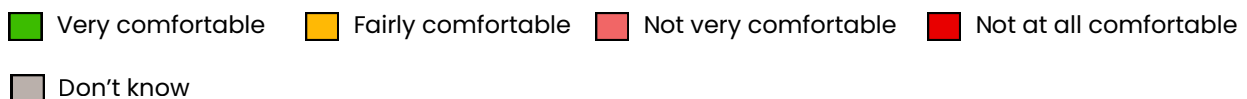
In Germany, we see generational differences in attitudes to gender equality in leadership in 2025



Source: Germany Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

In Germany, a minority of people are “very comfortable” with senior female leadership in 2025

We asked respondents “How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as...” Chart shows shares in %.

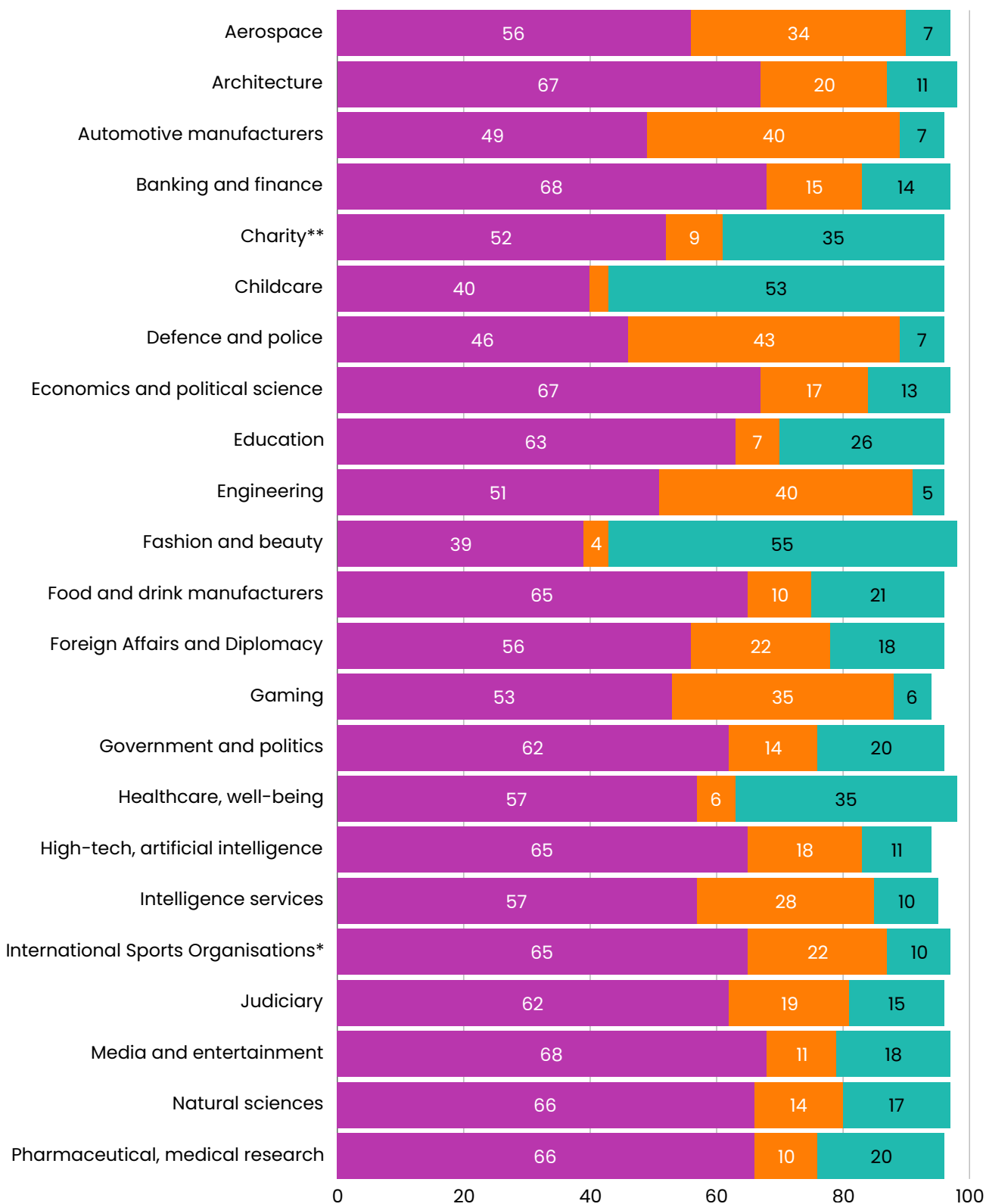


In Germany, women face particularly strong cultural barriers in engineering, defence and police, and automotive manufacturing



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

■ Both equally
 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
 ■ Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

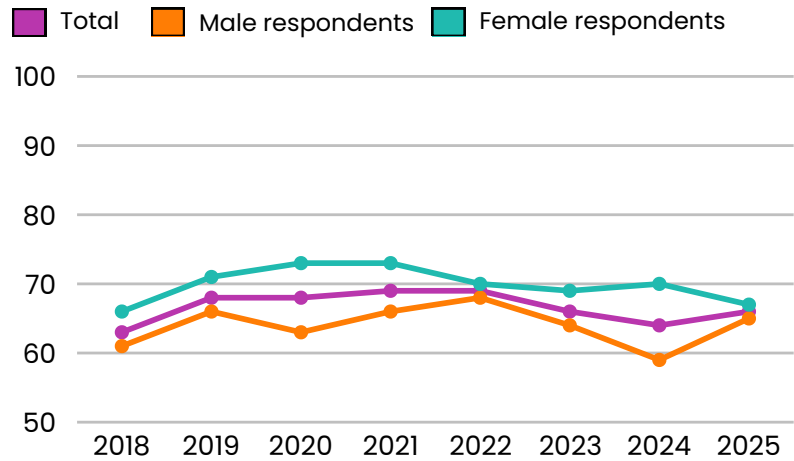
Italy's Index increased this year compared with 2024



Italy's findings differ from 5 other members of the G7. Whilst it started off as one of the lowest scores in the G7 in 2018, it has shown a small improvement over time. Furthermore, in Italy, younger people are leading the way.

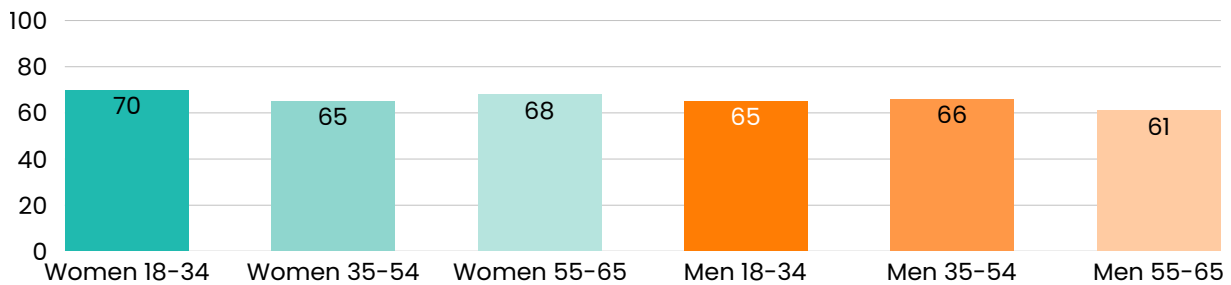
However, scores overall remain below the G7 average for The Reykjavík Index overall.

In 2025, the gap between perceptions of Italian men and women has narrowed



Source: Italy Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

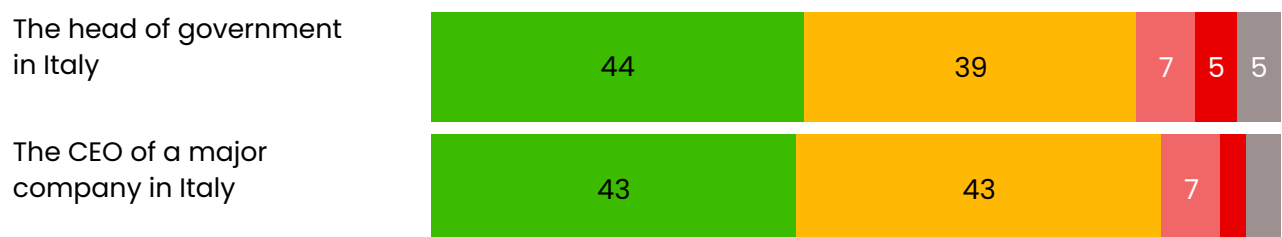
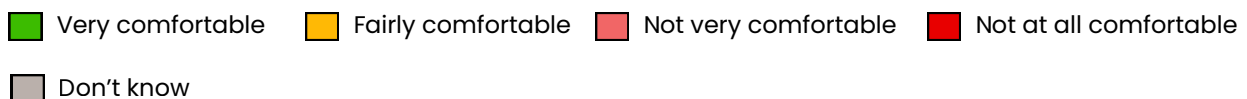
In 2025, more young women in Italy see men and women as equally suitable for leadership, although there are not stark differences between attitudes



Source: Italy Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Comfort levels with female leadership are similar in government and business

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

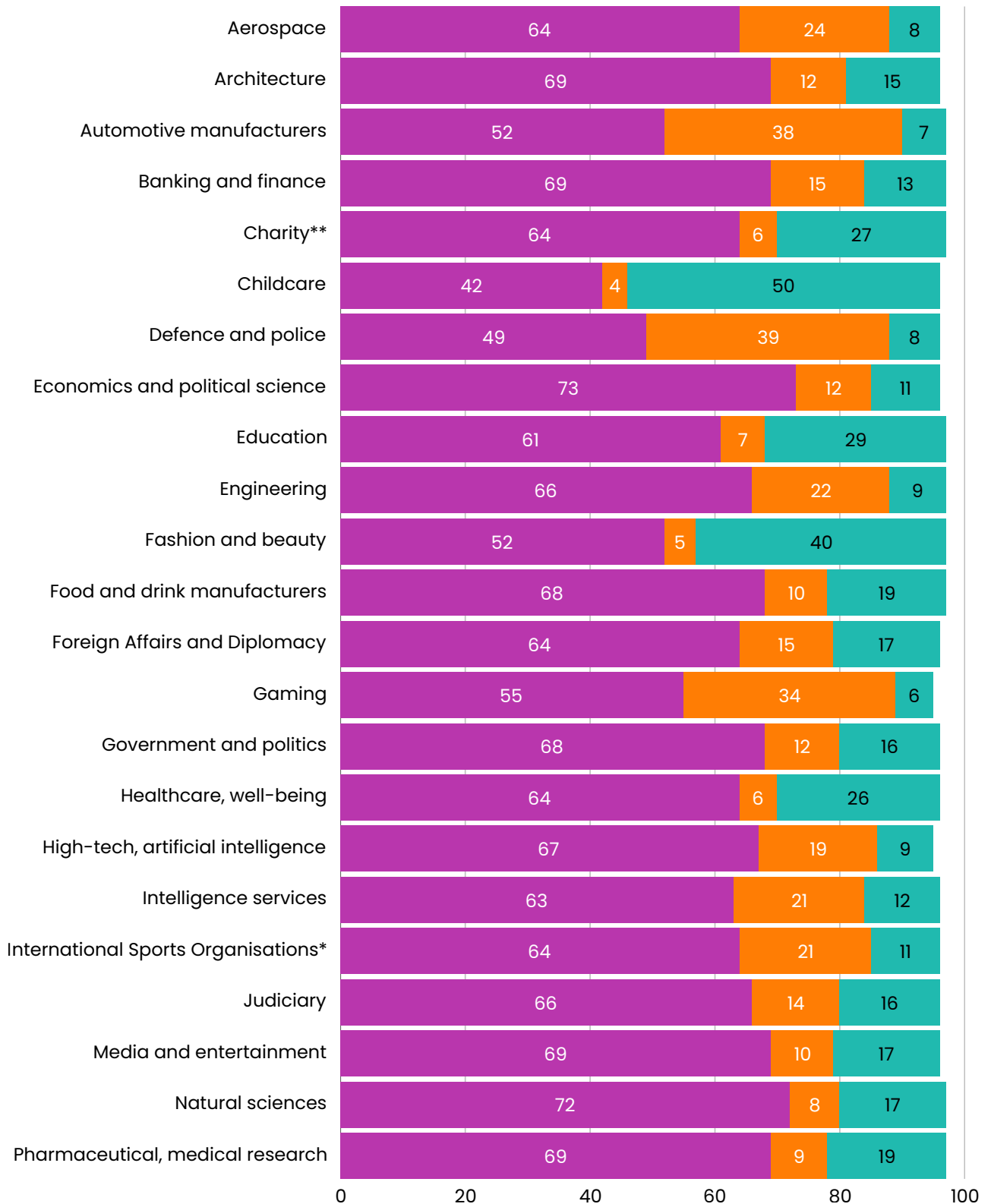


In Italy, cultural barriers remain for men and women in certain sectors. As with other countries, Italian men experience significant prejudice in the childcare sector, and in fashion and beauty.



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

Both equally A man A woman Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

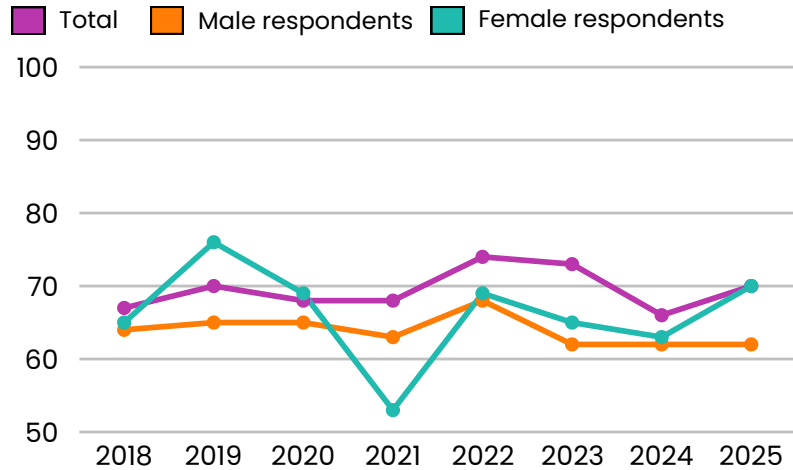
In Japan, perceptions of gender equality in leadership have positively changed



Of all G7 countries, Japan has seen the largest Index increase in 2025. Interestingly, the score for male respondents has not changed since 2024 so this increase has been driven by the changing perceptions of Japanese women.

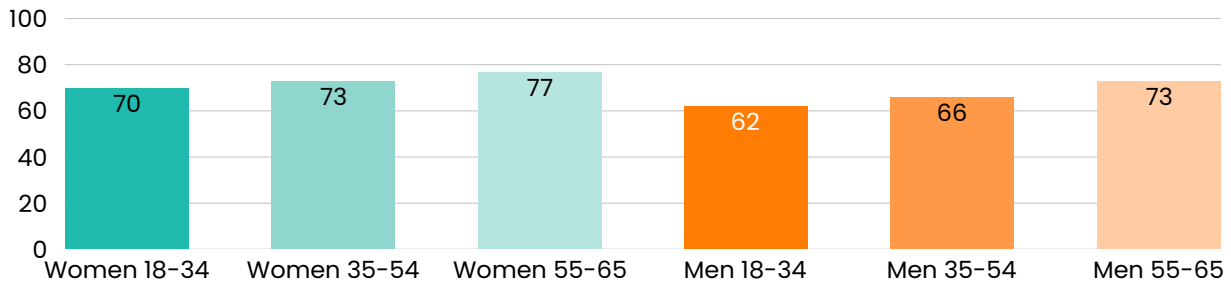
Despite this, female Heads of State, and CEOs, face extremely high levels of prejudice in Japan compared to the rest of the G7

Japan's Index Score has increased in 2025, driven by attitudes of women



Source: Japan Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

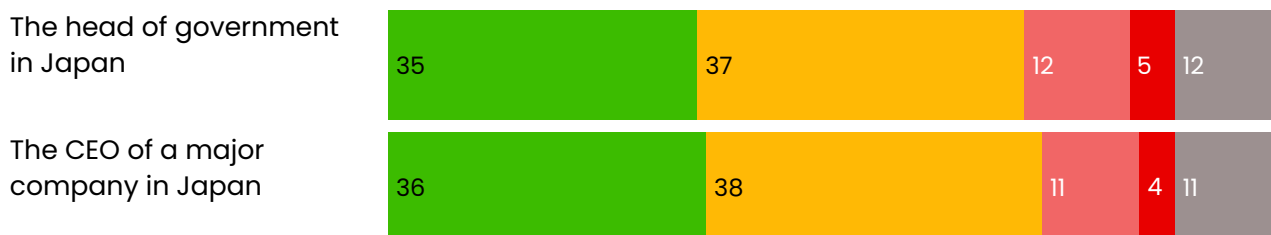
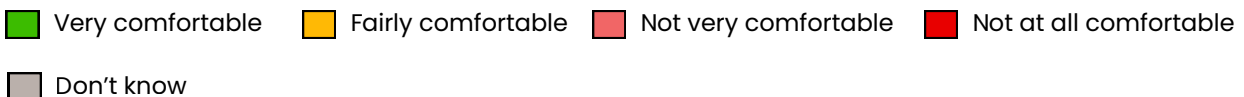
In 2025, fewer young men in Japan see men and women as equally suited for leadership, with an 8 point difference between attitudes of 18-34 year old men and women



Source: Japan Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Women face high levels of prejudice compared to the rest of the G7: only 35% of respondents were 'very comfortable' with a female country leader.

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

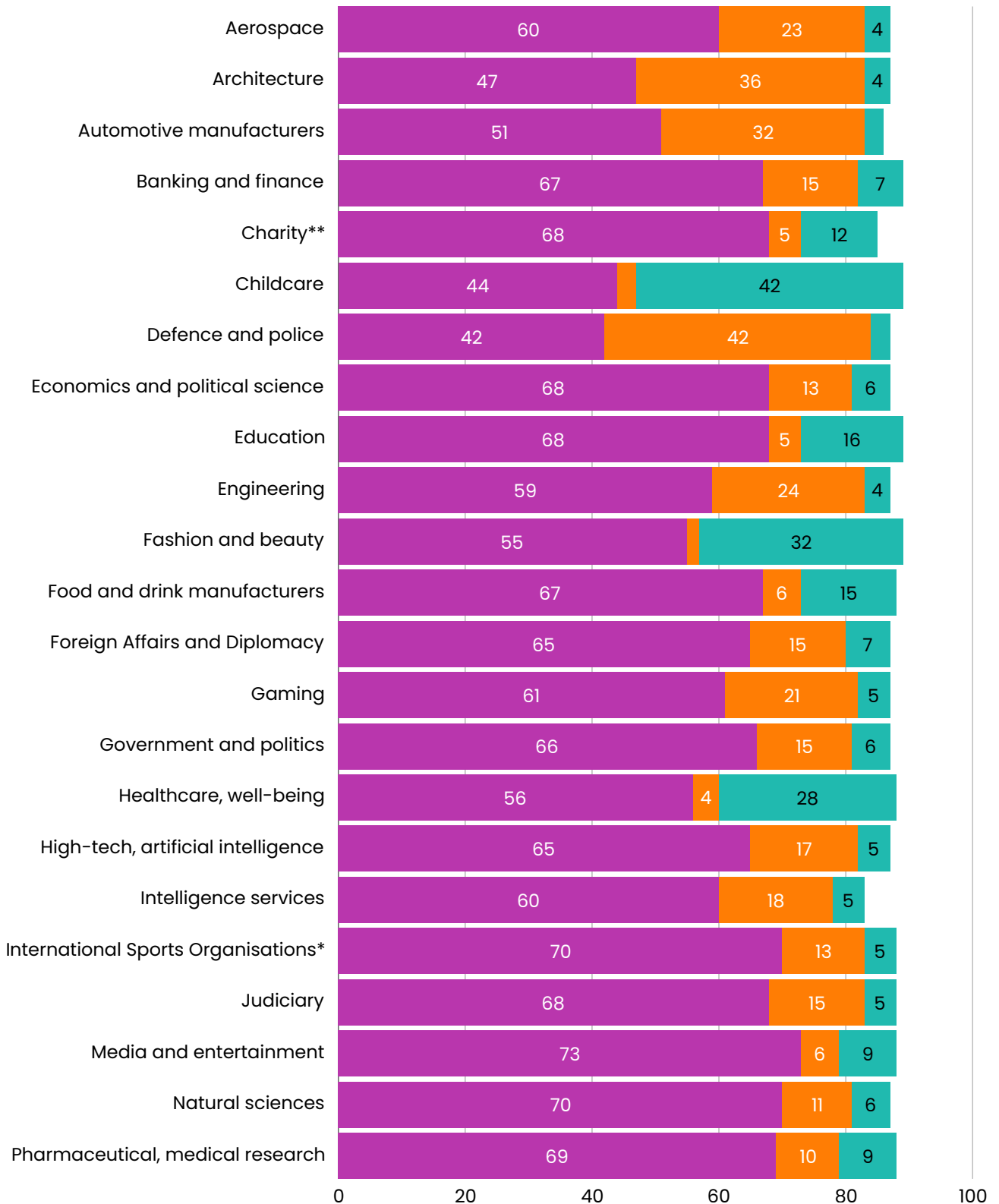


In Japan, cultural barriers remain particularly high for women in sectors such as defence and police



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

■ Both equally
 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
 ■ Don't know



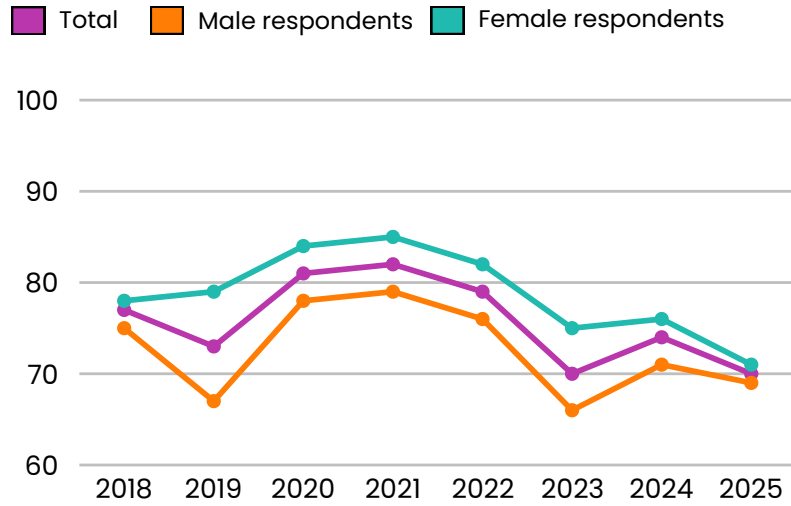
* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations

In 2025, UK attitudes towards gender equality in leadership have declined



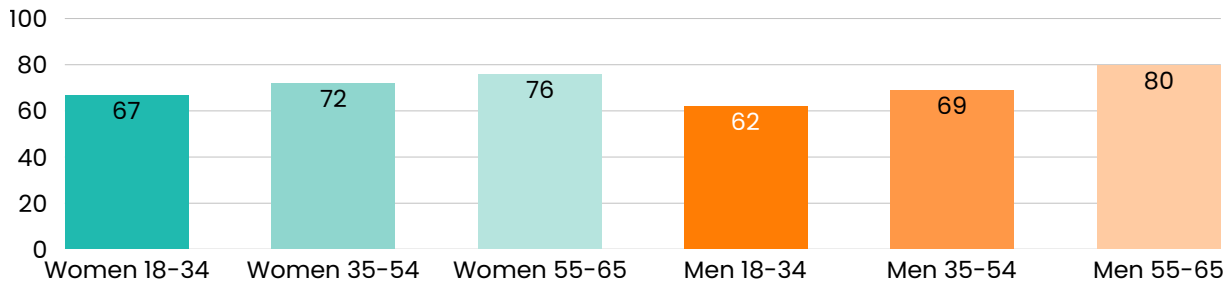
Since 2024, the UK's Index has declined by 4 points to 70. This is a 12 point fall since the UK's peak score of 82 in 2021, which was the highest Index in the G7. This pattern of change in the UK follows the one we have observed in the US. Overall, the gap between perceptions of men and women has narrowed in the last year, with men at 69 and women at 71. However, we see nuance within age groups.

The UK's Reykjavik index score has fallen to 70 in 2025.



Source: UK Reykjavik Index over time, by gender of respondent

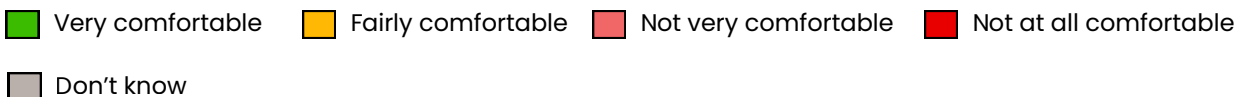
In 2025, fewer young people in the UK see men and women as equally suited to lead compared with older people



Source: UK Reykjavik Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

British people's comfort levels with female country leaders and CEOs remains relatively high compared to other G7 countries

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

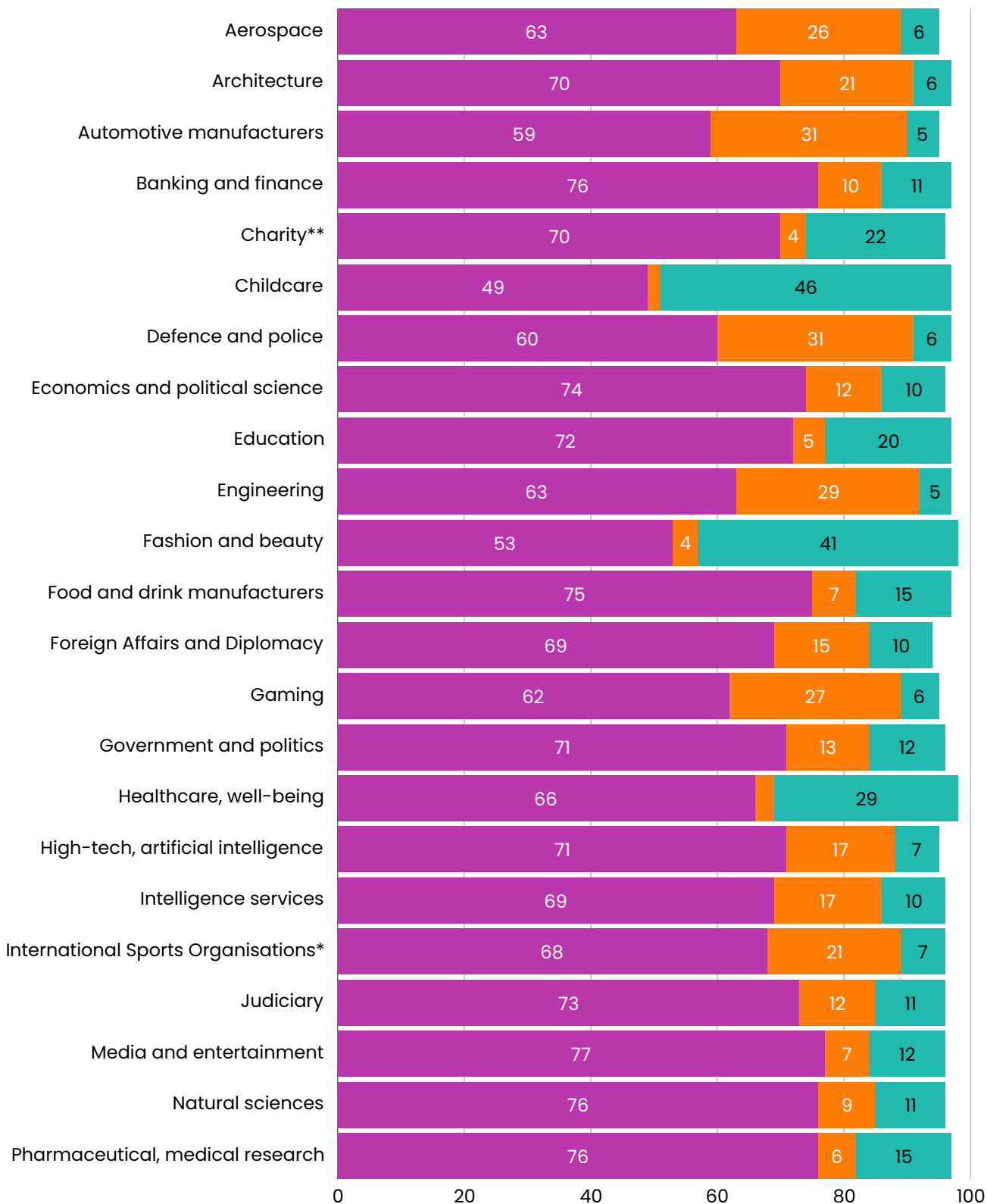


In the UK, cultural barriers remain for both men and women in certain sectors such as childcare



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

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 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
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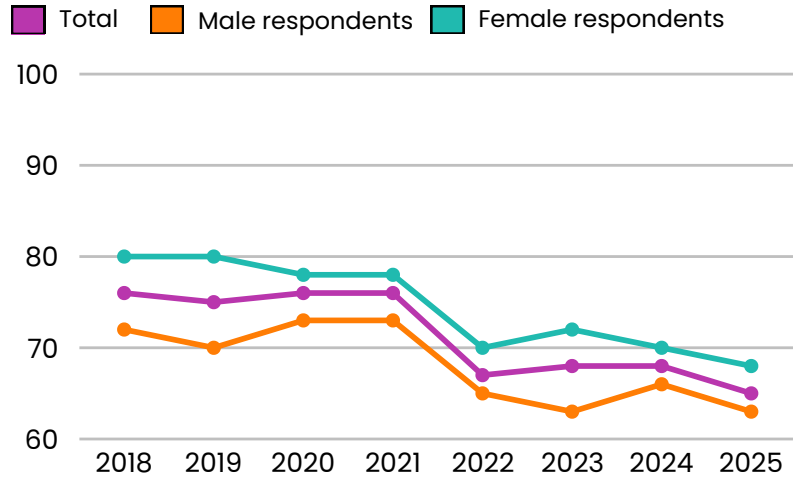
The United States is experiencing a cultural shift



In the US, comfort with gender equality in leadership has reduced significantly since 2018. Similarly to other G7 countries, young men are showing the lowest levels of belief that gender is not a factor in leadership.

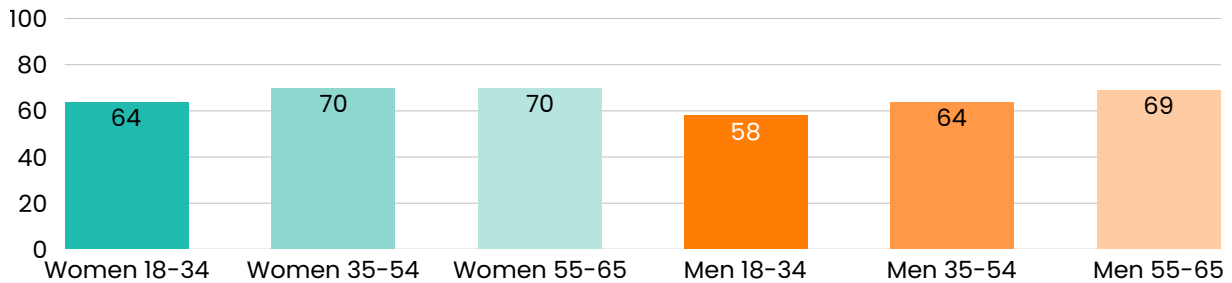
The percentage of Americans who are 'very comfortable' with a woman as head of state has fallen from a peak of 62% in 2020 to 48% in 2025.

American views on gender equality in leadership have changed significantly since 2021



Source: United States Reykjavik Index over time, by gender of respondent

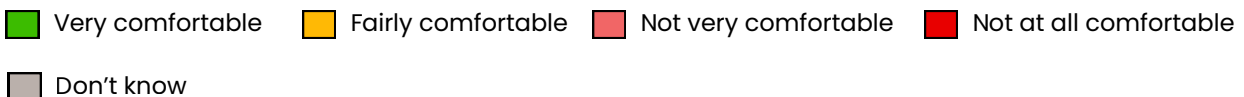
In 2025, fewer young people in the United States of America see women and men as equally suited for leadership than previous generations



Source: United States Reykjavik Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Less than half of Americans in 2025 are comfortable with a female President – a similar percentage to our research in Fall 2024.

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

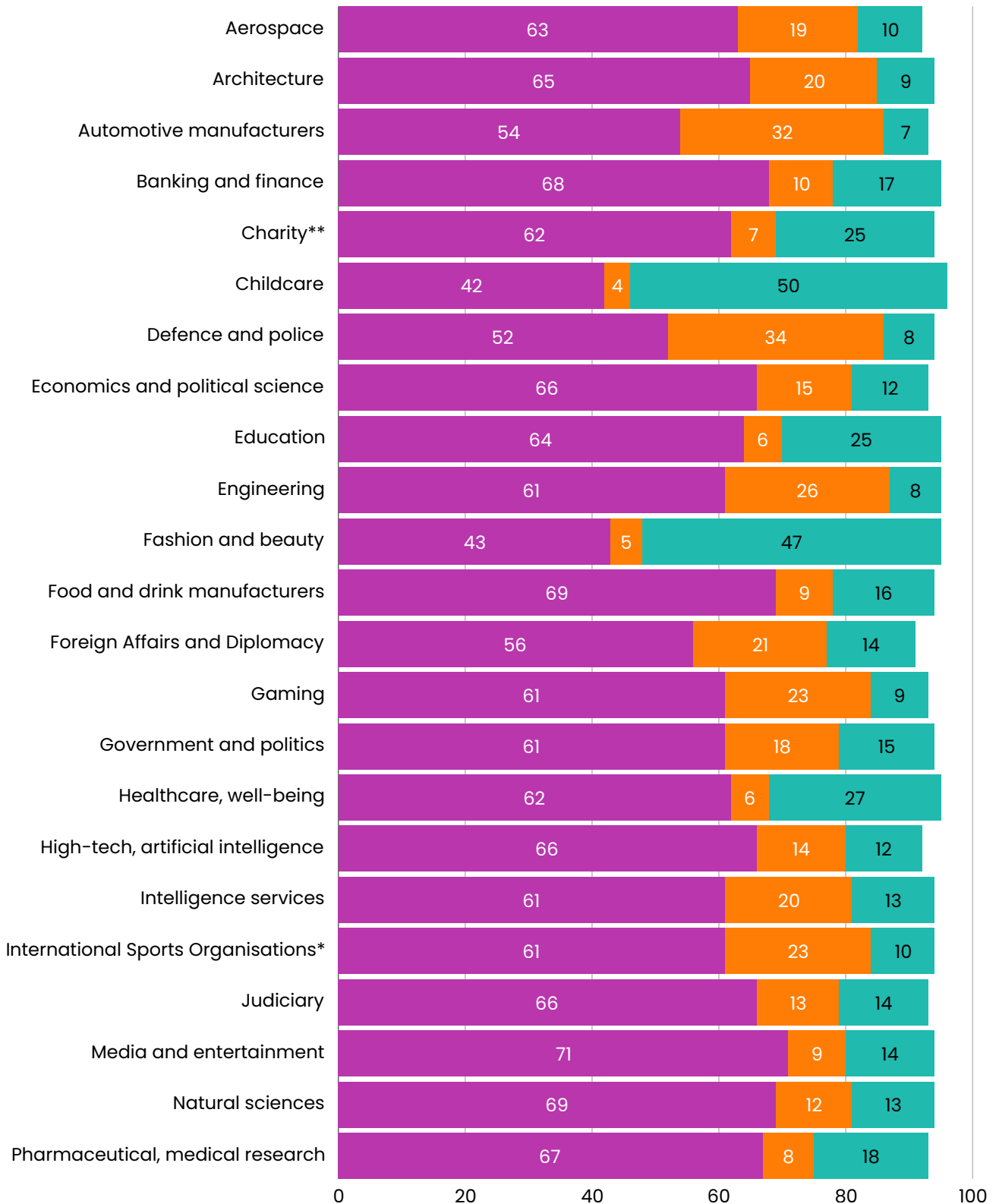


Cultural barriers remain for American men and women in sectors such as childcare and defence and police



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

■ Both equally
 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
 ■ Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations



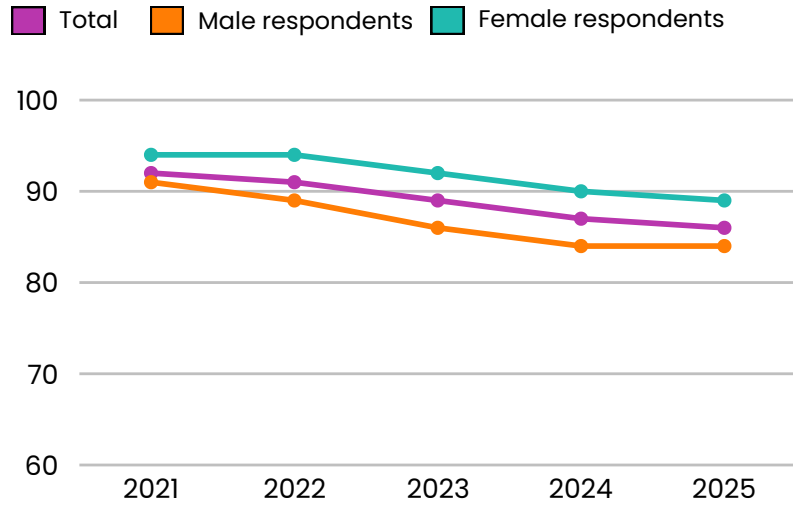
Iceland

Iceland continues to lead the way on perceptions of gender equality in leadership



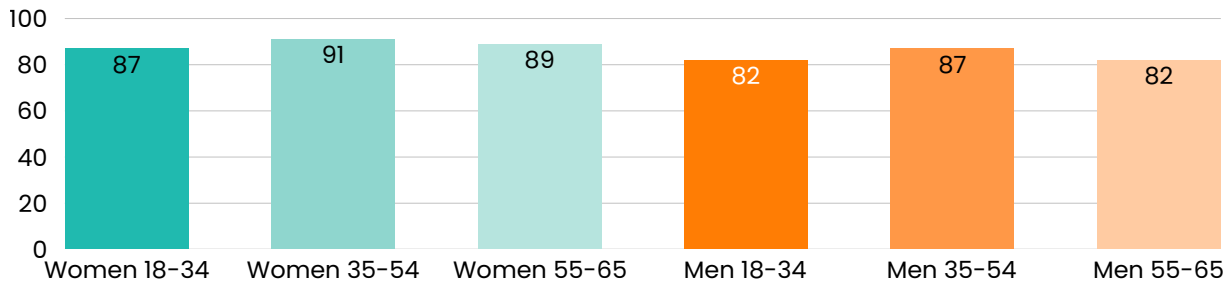
Iceland continues to have the highest score recorded of The Reykjavík Index. Yet, they are not immune to from the social and cultural trends that we have seen elsewhere. Iceland’s Index has fallen to 86 in 2025 from 92. Unlike some of the other countries measured, this is not being led primarily by young people and the difference between generations that we have seen elsewhere is not apparent.

We are seeing a gradual decline in Iceland’s Index



Source: Iceland Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

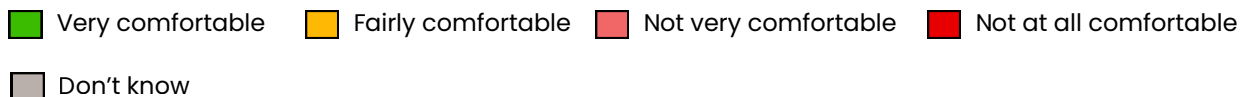
While Iceland’s Index is high in 2025, young men and women have a lower score than those aged 35-54.



Source: Iceland Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

The majority of people in Iceland are comfortable with female leadership in both government and business

We asked respondents “How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as...” Chart shows shares in %.

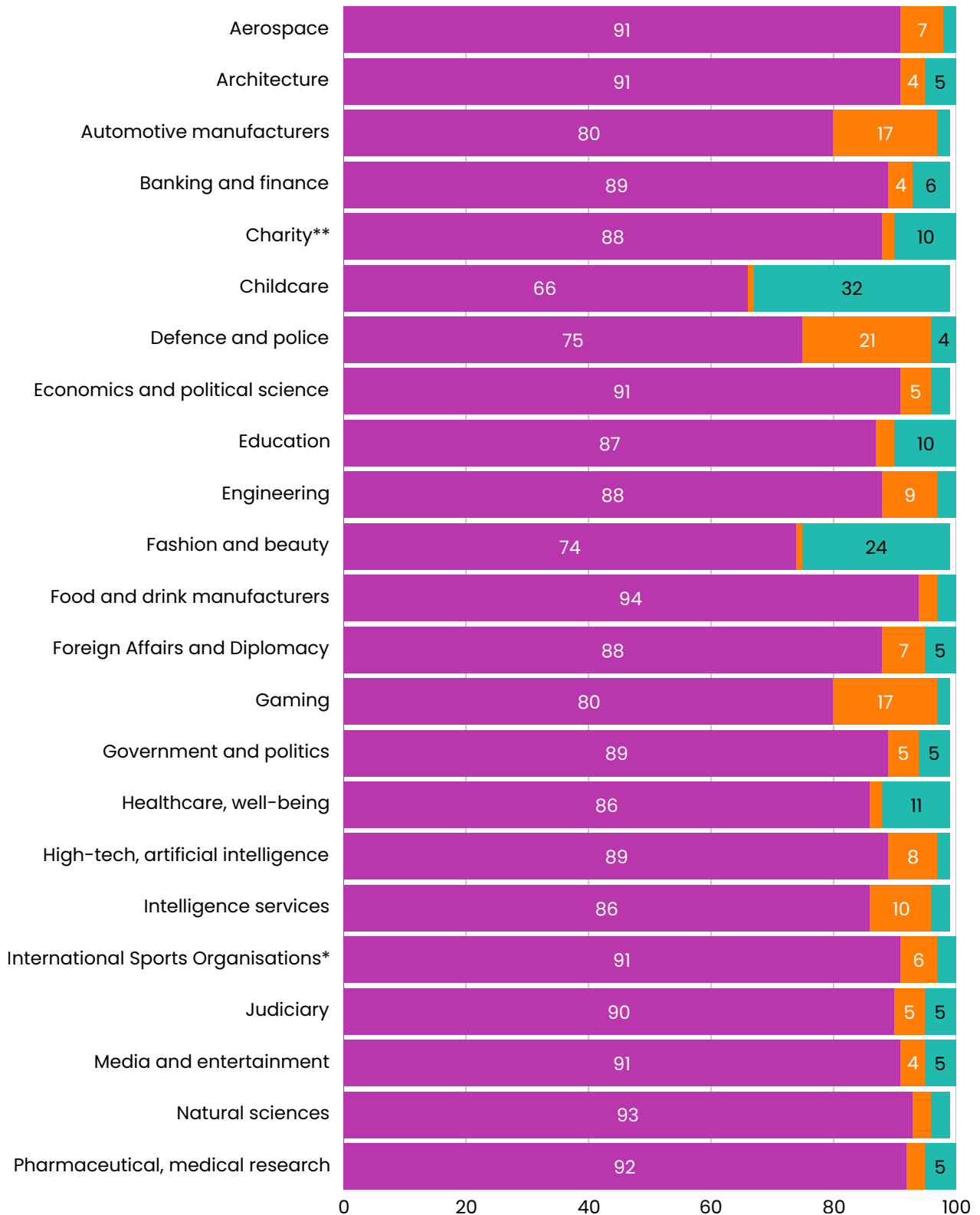


Even in Iceland, some traditional ‘norms’ persist: namely, prejudice against men in the childcare sector is significant, as is remaining bias against women in defence and police



“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

■ Both equally
 ■ A man
 ■ A woman
 ■ Don't know



* International Sports Organisations/Federations ** Charity and other not-for-profit organisations



Nigeria and Kenya

Research in these countries was made possible through the generous support of the Gates Foundation.

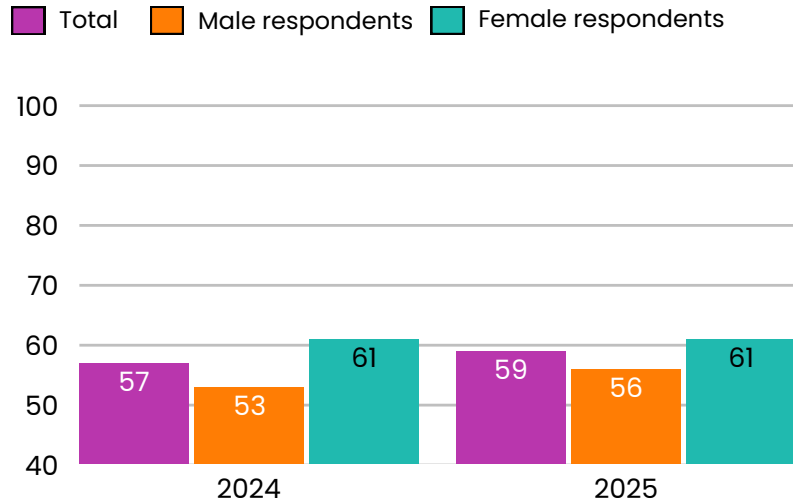
In Nigeria, the Index has increased by two points since last year



Nigeria's Reykjavík Index score for 2025 is 59, up from 57 in 2024, indicating a slight improvement in societal perceptions of gender equality in leadership.

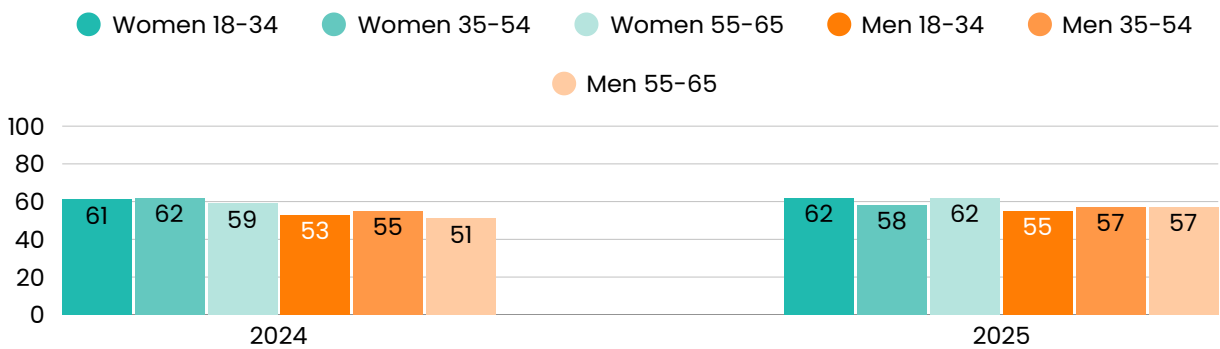
Although men are behind the small positive move in Nigeria's Index since last year, women still hold more progressive views.

Nigeria up by two points, a change driven by men



Source: Nigeria Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

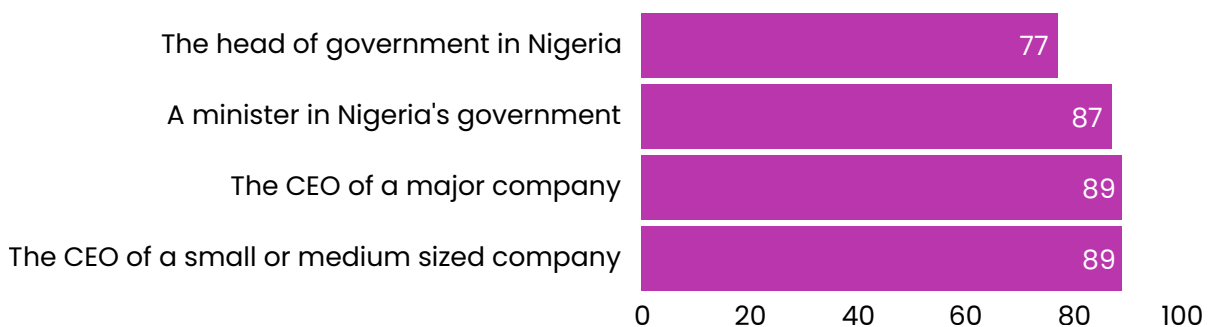
There are slight increases in all three age groups this year when it comes to men



Source: Nigeria Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Comfort levels with female leadership in Nigeria remain relatively strong

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

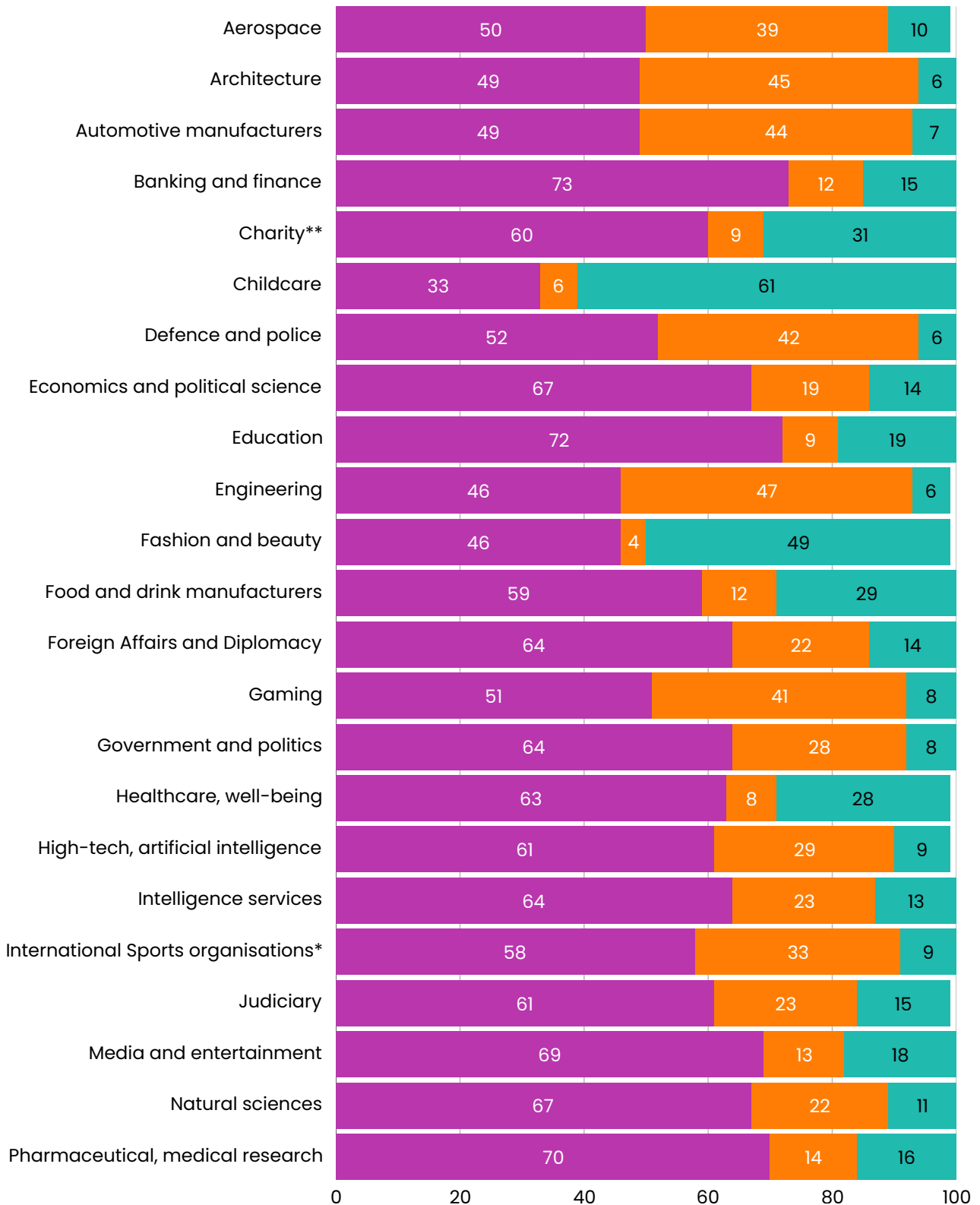


In Nigeria, major divides persist across sectors, as childcare and engineering remain the most biased



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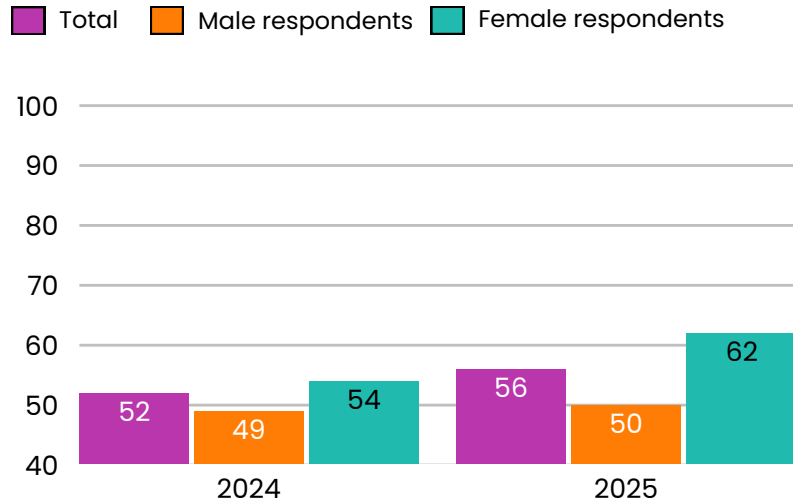
Kenya has seen a four-point increase since 2024, a change led by women



Kenya's Index score in 2025 has increased by 4 points since last year.

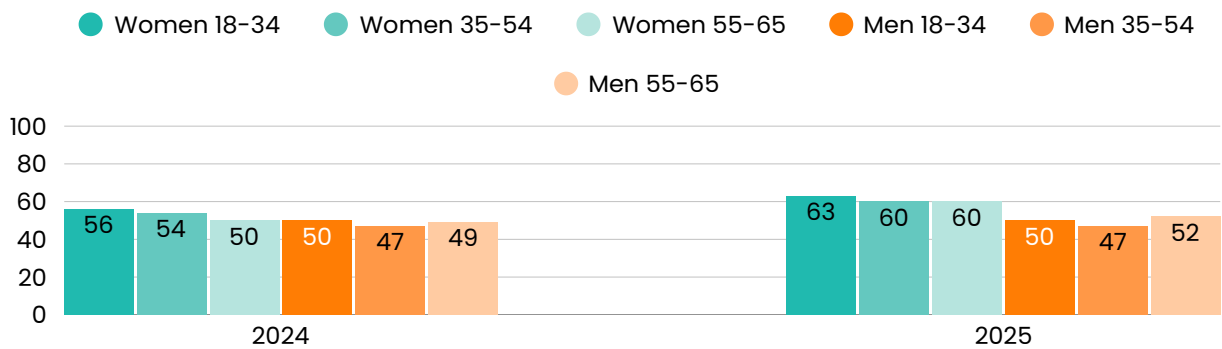
The results show a more noticeable gap between the views of women and men. Women in Kenya have an index score of 62 (up from 54), compared to men who have a score of 50 (more or less unchanged from 49 in 2024).

Progress since last year largely driven by Kenyan women



Source: Kenya Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

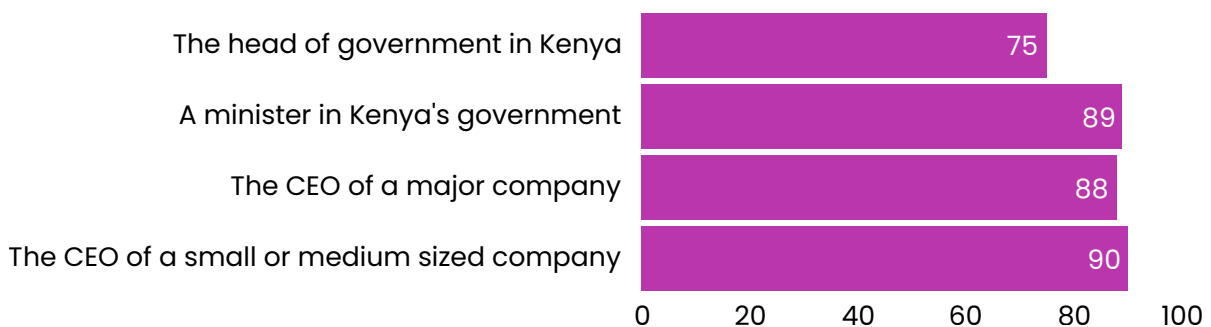
Men's perceptions remain largely static



Source: Kenya Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Three quarters of people (75%) in Kenya are 'very' or 'fairly' comfortable with having a woman as head of government in 2025

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

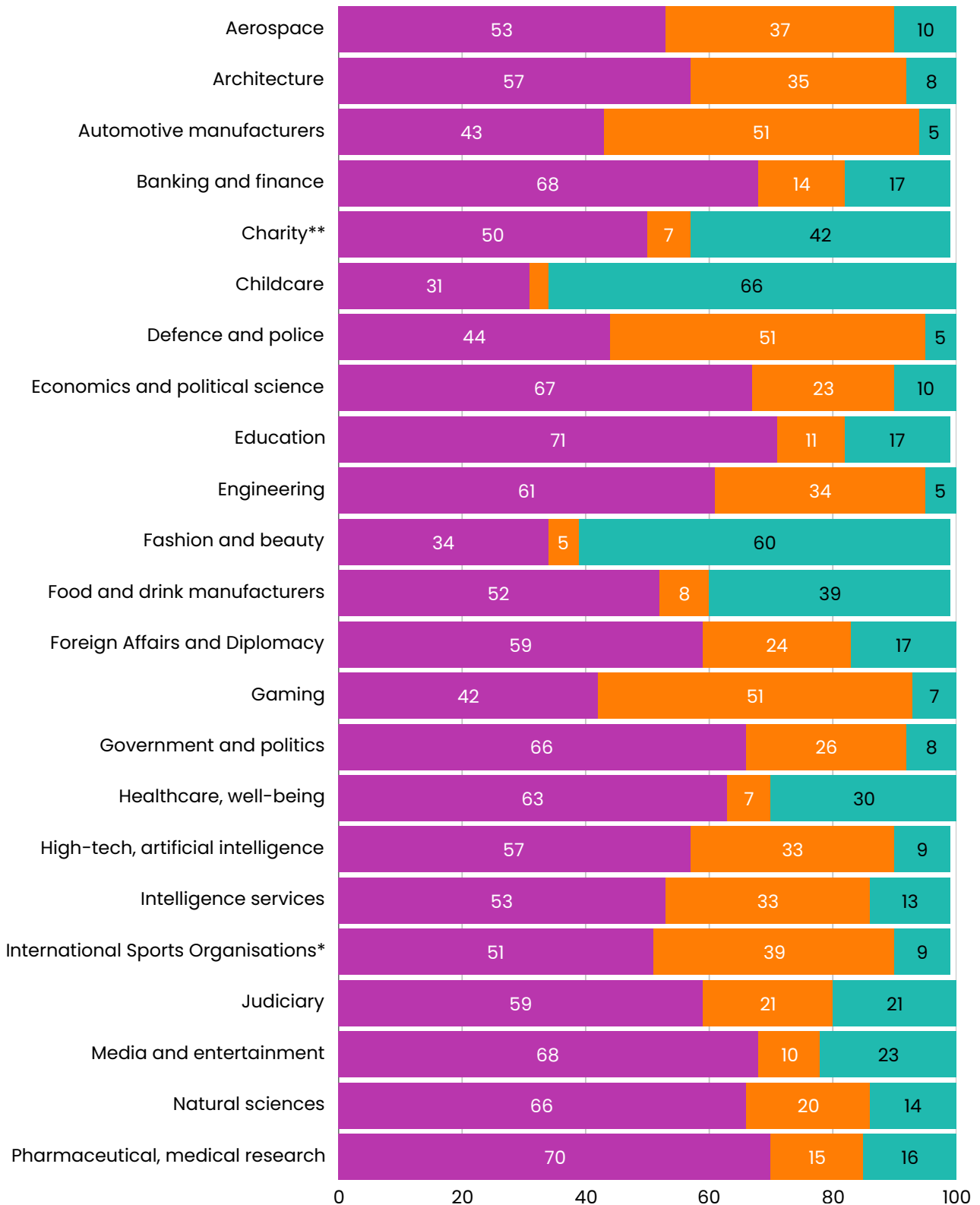


The education sector is at the forefront of equality in Kenya, though barriers remain in other sectors

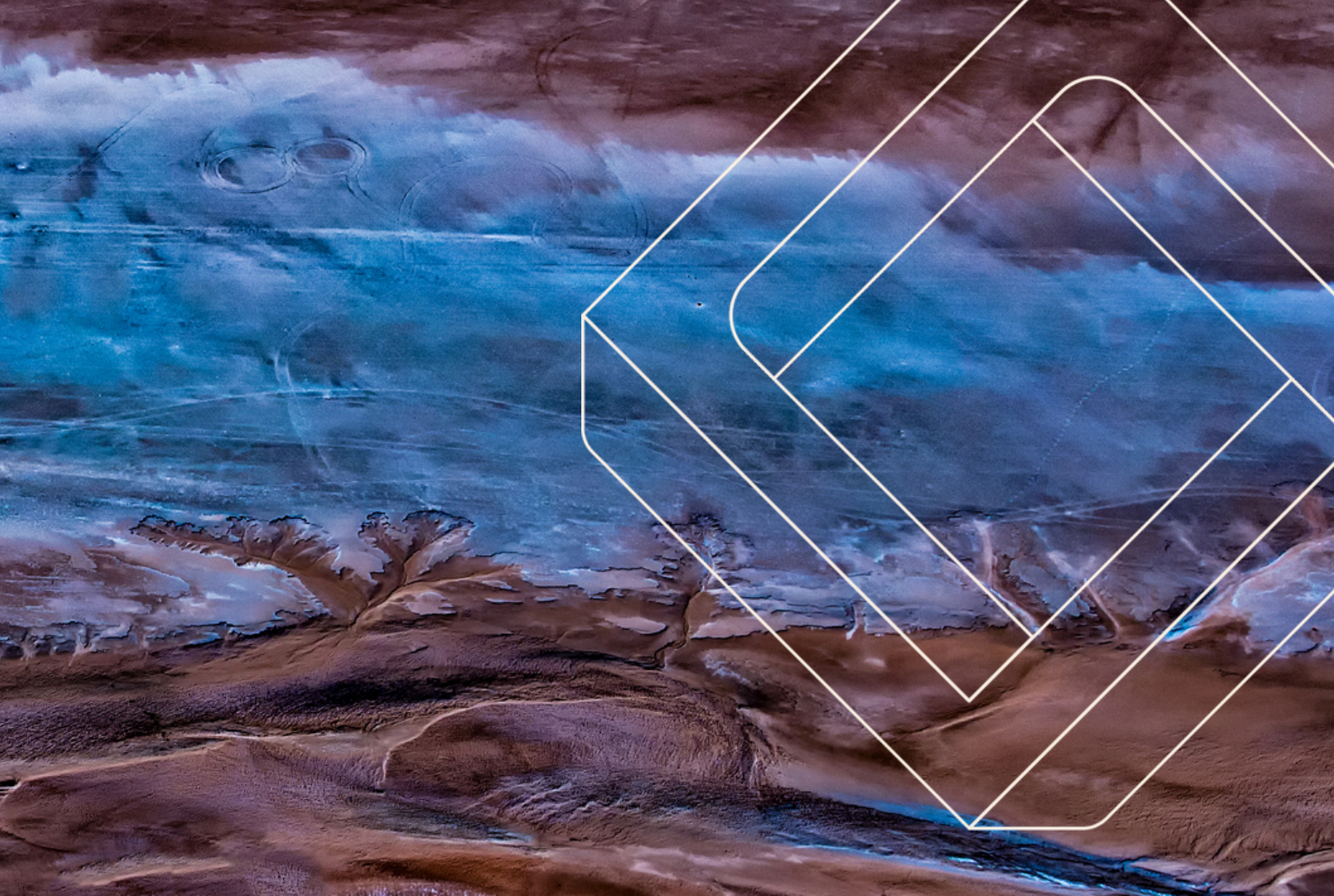


“For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”

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Australia and New Zealand

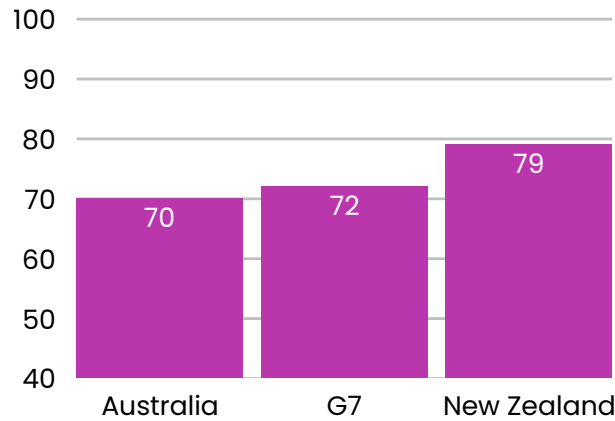
Australia has an Index of 70, a similar score to the G7 average



This year, Verian also undertook research in Australia.

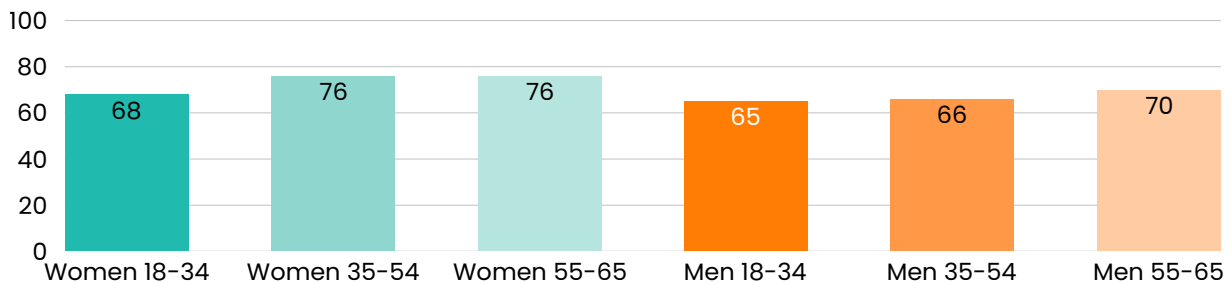
Australia has an Index of 70 in 2025, a similar score to the G7 average

The overall Index of 70 is similar to the G7 average of 71. Stated comfort levels with female leadership are also similar to G7 and slightly lower than neighbouring New Zealand. Just over half (51%) of Australians are 'very comfortable' with a woman as head of government.



Source: Australia, G7 and New Zealand Reykjavík Index 2025

Younger Australian women have a lower Index than those over 34



Source: Australia Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Just over half of Australians are 'very comfortable' with female leadership in both government and business

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

- Very comfortable
- Fairly comfortable
- Not very comfortable
- Not at all comfortable
- Don't know

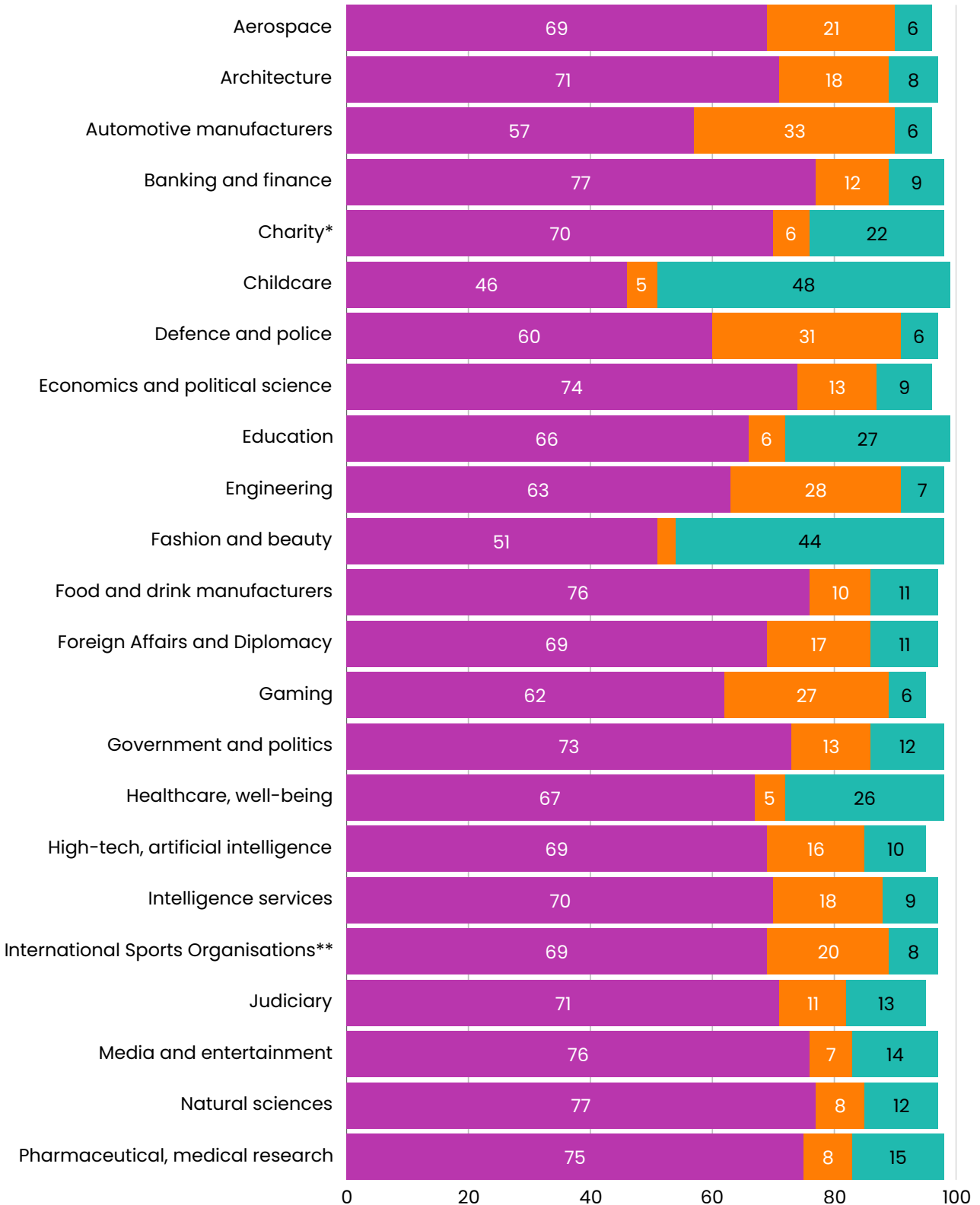


In Australia, cultural barriers remain for both men and women in certain sectors



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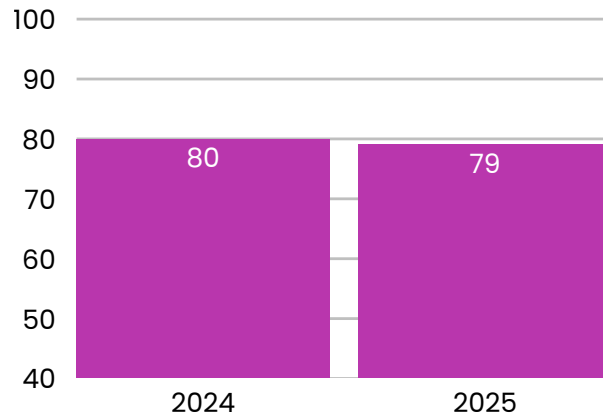
New Zealand has a relatively high Index of 79 in 2025



New Zealand views remain stable

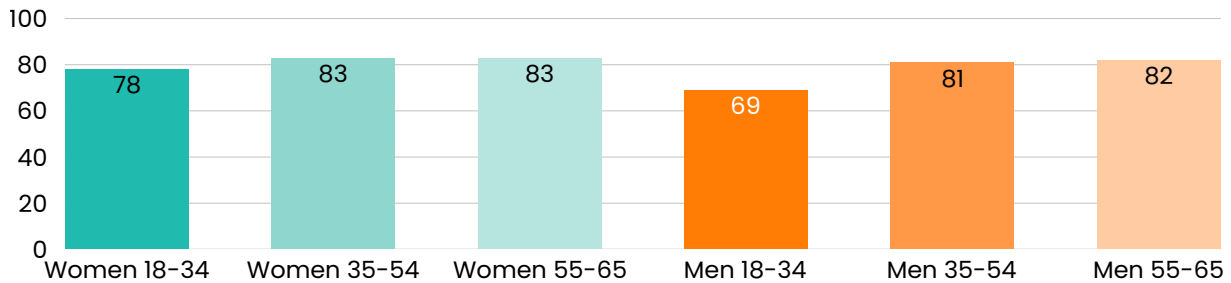
After Iceland, New Zealand has the next highest Index of the countries measured in 2025. At 79, this is only 1 point lower than in 2024.

However, we see similar patterns to other countries with regards to the views of young people. Indeed, the Index for men age 18-34 fell five points since last year - from 74 in 2024 to 69 in 2025.



Source: New Zealand Reykjavík Index over time, by gender of respondent

In New Zealand, young men have much lower scores than other groups



Source: New Zealand Reykjavík Index 2025, by gender and age of respondent

Comfort levels with female leadership in New Zealand are high

We asked respondents "How comfortable do you or would you personally feel about having a woman as..." Chart shows shares in %.

- Very comfortable
- Fairly comfortable
- Not very comfortable
- Not at all comfortable
- Don't know

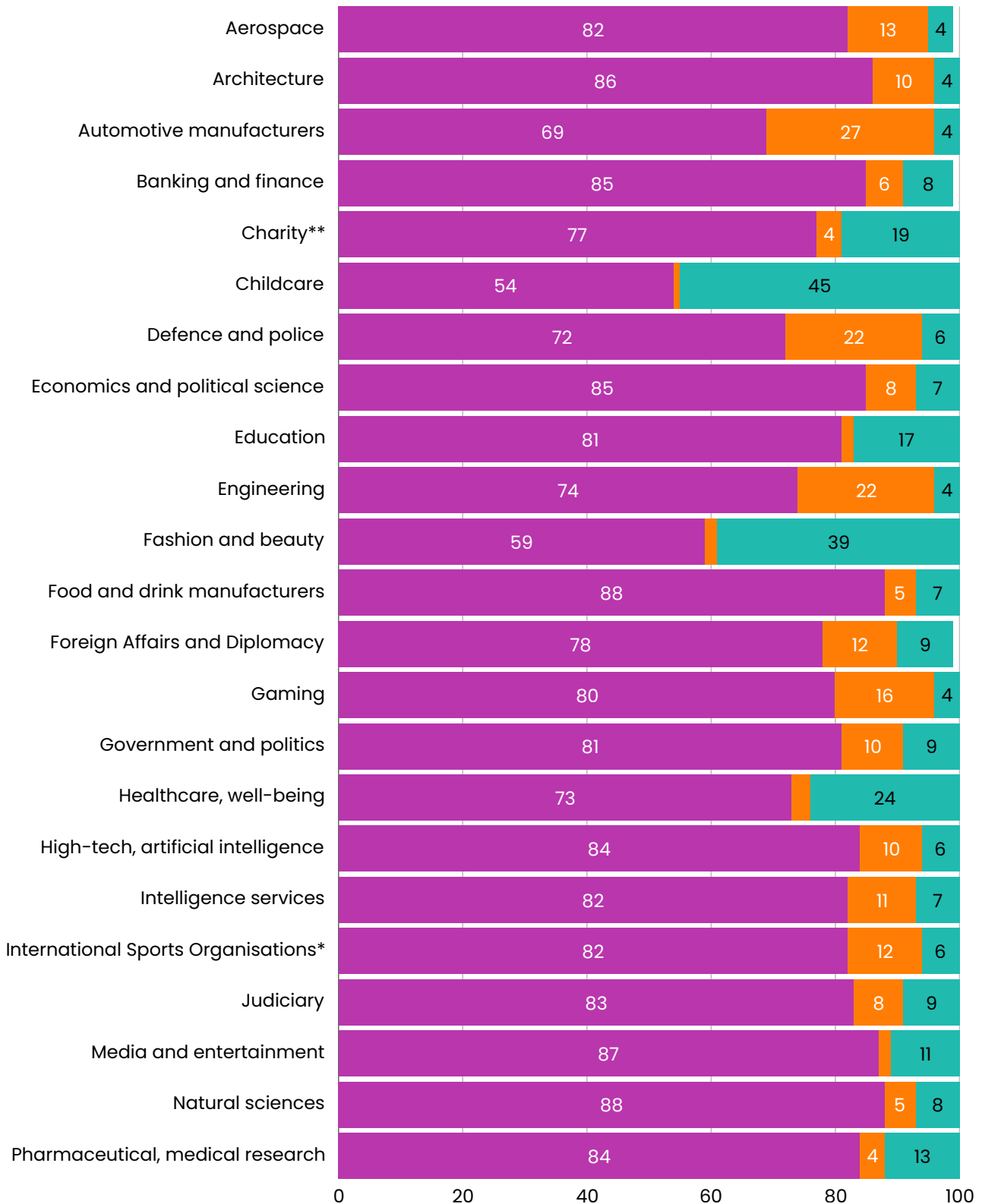


In New Zealand, there are barriers for men in childcare, healthcare, and fashion and beauty



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Methodology

The Reykjavík Index for Leadership has been constructed based on research exploring the question: “For each of the following sectors or industries, do you think men or women are better suited to leadership positions?”.

This question allows responses of ‘men’, ‘women’ ‘both equally’ and ‘don’t know’ for 23 different economic and professional sectors. A response of ‘both equally’ results in a point for that country within the Index, while a response of ‘men better suited’, ‘women better suited’ does not. Don’t know’ are excluded from the Index score.

A country’s Reykjavík Index for Leadership is equal to the average proportion of people selecting ‘both equally’ across the 23 economic sectors. This is a measure of the extent to which, across society, men and women are viewed to be equally suitable for leadership. When average scores are presented (e.g., G7), each country’s index is weighted equally regardless of population size.

G7

- Web survey collected through online panel provider
- 1000 per country, weighted by gender, age and education
- Field work period: September - October 2025

Iceland

- Web survey collected through the University of Iceland’s Social Science Research Institute’s panel
- 1000 responses, weighted by gender, age and education
- Field work period: September-October 2025

Kenya and Nigeria

- In Nigeria, 1082 online interviews were collected by trusted local partner Yucca Consulting, using Random Digit Dialling.
- In Kenya, 1075 interviews were collected by trusted local partner Apex Research Solutions, using Random Digit Dialling
- The samples have been weighted so that each country’s gender and age profile match the relevant population profile. Efforts were made to collect responses from all regions in Kenya and Nigeria.
- Data collected September - October 2025
- Research in these countries was made possible through the generous support of the Gates Foundation

Australia

- Web survey collected through online panel providers
- Responses weighted by gender, age and location
- Field work period: October 2025

New Zealand

- Web survey collected through online panel providers
- 779 respondents, weighted by gender, age, ethnicity, region and education
- Field work period: November 2025

About The Reykjavík Index for Leadership

Developed in partnership between The Reykjavík Global Forum and Verian, The Reykjavík Index for Leadership is the measure of how women and men are perceived in terms of their suitability for leadership. A score of 100 would mean that women and men were viewed by society as equally suitable for leadership. Launched in 2018, with the support of the Icelandic Government, the Index measures perceptions of women and men as leaders across 23 economic sectors.

About The Reykjavík Global Forum

The Reykjavík Global Forum works alongside some of the world's most visionary thinkers and change-makers from politics, business, civil society, academia, the arts, and media.

Each year, the invite-only Forum welcomes 500 global leaders, offering an unparalleled platform to exchange ideas and explore practical solutions that promote parity across sectors. The annual Forum serves as the flagship event of the Reykjavík Global Community. Since its 2018 launch, the event has been co-hosted by the Government and Parliament of Iceland – a nation recognised for its global leadership in equality. The Forum offers a front-row seat to proven strategies, bold innovations, and global collaboration.

reykjavikglobal.com

About Verian Group

Verian Group is a world leading, independent research, evidence, evaluation, and communications agency, providing services to government and the public realm. It works with clients to help solve the next generation of public policy challenges. With offices across Europe, APAC and in the US, Verian consultants and researchers are supported by a unique global data ecosystem. Verian provides gold standard data on the economy and society to decision makers and engage directly with many millions of citizens each year on their behalf. Combining expertise in human understanding with advanced technologies and data science, Verian's work with clients creates policy interventions, designs better public services, and unlocks behaviour change.

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