

CONCLUSION

As in past years, the 2010 census shows that women occupy only a small minority of the board and top management positions in California's 400 largest corporations. Among these companies, there is variation in the representation of women in the board seats and highest-paid executive positions, ranging from no women at all (141 firms, or 35% of the sample) to equal shares of men and women (1 firm, or 0.25% of the sample). This variation can be attributed partly to differences in the primary industries, headquarters locations, and sizes of firms. Firms in the high-tech industries and located in Silicon Valley tend to include fewer women on the board and in top management. The largest firms tend to have more women directors and managers. These results are consistent with the findings from previous years.

Time Trend

Examining the census results over time, there is relatively little variation. For the past five years, the percentage of women on the boards of California's largest 400 firms has hovered around 10%. Although not reported in 2010, the proportion of women in the top management teams of these firms has fluctuated around slightly less than 12%. This year we report the share of women among the highest-paid executives, which has wavered just below 9% in the last four years (using previously unreported data). See the accompanying graph, page 26.

It appears that individual companies are slow to change. Approximately 91% of the 342 firms included in this and last year's census had the same number of women directors in 2009 and 2010. Approximately 96% of the firms included in this and last year's census had the same number of women highest-paid executives. Although 19 firms had more women on their boards this year than last year, 11 firms had fewer women on their boards. Additionally, while 8 firms had more women in their highest-paid management teams this year than last year, 7 had fewer. This stability was reflected in the correlation between the representation of women in 2009 and 2010 among the firms in our census in both years. The correlation between the numbers of women directors in the two years was 0.94 (where a correlation of 1.0 represents a perfect association). The correlation between the numbers of women highest-paid executives across the two years was also 0.94.

A Sign of Hope?

Although there has been relatively little change in the representation of women on the boards and top management teams of California's largest 400 firms over time, the little change that is visible points towards greater incorporation of women in the leadership of California's largest firms.

The firms in our sample hired 274 new directors this year, which was offset by 212 director positions vacated this year. Of the new directors, 12.4% are women. Thus, when firms added new directors, the likelihood that they chose a woman exceeded the percentage of women directors in the full population.

Similarly, 79 of the highest-paid executives in our census are new to the category this year, and 12.7% of these newly highest-paid executives are women. Thus, when an individual became one of the highest-paid executives (whether through promotion, enlistment, or attrition) the likelihood of that individual being female exceeded the percentage of women in this category in the full population. These observations show that firms have been increasing the representation of women, albeit at an extremely modest pace. Whether this modest trend will accelerate, hold steady, or stall is an open question for our census in future years.