

# A new Stock Market Index is challenging bias against women, empowering female leadership globally

There's an overwhelming amount of research that consistently proves female leaders are exceptional leaders: companies led by women not only regularly outperform the market average but also exhibit remarkable metrics, including a 20% surge in stock price momentum, a 6% uptick in profitability, and 8% larger stock returns.

---

Surprisingly, despite these proven advantages, a mere 7% of companies worldwide are currently run by women - a figure that has only increased by 1% since 2023.

Even worse, studies conducted at esteemed institutions like Northwestern University and elsewhere reveal a troubling trend: when a female CEO takes the helm, the market often responds negatively, causing share prices to plummet by 2-3%.

The question remains: why?

Why are women, who have demonstrated their effectiveness as business

leaders, still vastly underrepresented in corporate leadership? And why do investors retreat from companies appointing female leaders?

The answer boils down to one word: bias.

Researchers agree that bias against women is the reason why so few companies are run by women, and why investors sell their shares of women-led companies. This bias not only defies financial logic but also deprives society and the world of valuable contributions:

1. This bias makes no financial sense. Both investors and businesses (should) care more about their potential profits than the gender of the person leading the companies they invest in. That's part of their fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders.
2. By undervaluing female leadership, society misses out. Investing in women and closing the gender gap would raise GDP per capita by 20%, according to UN Women. Harnessing the economic power of women isn't just a nice thing to do – it's essential for progress.

All of this is why we at AKQA, in partnership with Thematic and UN Women NL, have created Pink Chip.

Pink Chip is a collection of indices that track the performance of women-led companies. Its first index, Pink Chip US, tracks 44 companies led by CEOs who identify as female, have a market cap of over \$2b, and have all delivered at least 8% compound annual revenue growth over the past three years. As we consider Blue Chip companies for reliability and Green Chip companies for sustainability, we will be placing Pink Chip companies right there alongside these categories, shining a spotlight on businesses empowered by exceptional female leadership.

## Why an index?

To get investors to invest in more women, we need to show them irrefutable evidence of the value women bring to the table. We can't just appeal to their pathos with pleas for gender equality or depend on them to do their own research and act accordingly. Pink Chip bridges this gap, offering hard facts and transparent company lists that speak volumes.

Pink Chip is the first index of its kind to be supported by UN Women NL, and the first to operationalise a large body of research that documents the bias against women that exists in today's markets and business world. Recognising the power of women's leadership is crucial to the pursuit of gender equality, especially in a world where financial and economic systems are built to exclude women.

By publishing the full list of Pink Chip companies on pinkchip.org and partnering with DEGIRO, Europe's leading online brokerage, for accessibility, we're democratising investment opportunities and fostering a global dialogue on the indispensable role of female leadership. With new indices due to launch soon for the UK and European markets, this conversation will grow even louder as we progress with our mission to undo the bias that holds women – and society – back.

Sam Rowlands is Senior Creative Lead at [AKQA Netherlands](#).

---

Article by SAM ROWLANDS