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## An investigative analysis on female presence and highly ranked positions in professional kitchens in Ireland

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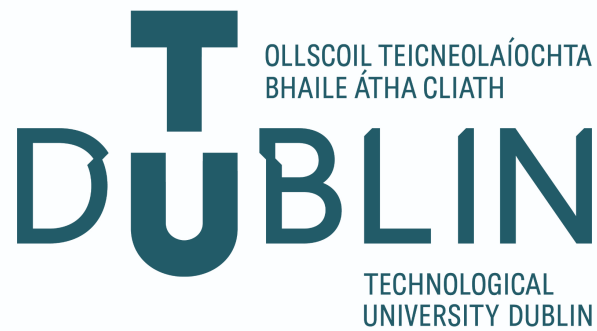
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Funder: N/A



**An investigative analysis on female presence and highly ranked positions in professional kitchens in Ireland**

An Investigative Study

Submitted by:  
Roann Byrne

A dissertation presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements  
for the B.A. (Honours) in Culinary Arts

Presented to the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology,  
Technological University of Dublin, Grangegorman

Supervisor: Dr. Mark Farrell

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## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of BA Culinary Arts (Hons) is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for graduate study by research of the Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution. The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the TU Dublin's guidelines for ethics in research.

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**Signed: Roann Byrne**

**Date: 28th April 2022**

## **Abstract**

This study aims to gain an understanding of the state of the cheffing industry currently, to analyse whether there is a lack of women within the industry particularly in positions of high power. This research intends to understand the causes for the lack and showcase possible solutions and recommendations for this.

It exists as a role of advocacy; hoping to inspire more people into the career of cheffing, and to retain women within it. It aspires to challenge and thus forth change the narratives that have pushed many people, particularly women, out of this work for so long. This research aims to be a voice of change, not criticism.

This research holds value in its benefits to the currently struggling restaurant and hospitality industry. It aims to open a conversation about the problems present, and the ways in which they can be solved.

This paper reflects on past literature, both historical and modern, to compile a wide unbiased perspective. Topics such as the history of a woman's place in the kitchen, gender differences in haute cuisine, the origin of the brigade system, gender inequality and the exploitation of women through capitalism and the patriarchy, are all investigated.

Triangulation research was used within primary research, in order to remove bias, cross check evidence, provide a better industry wide perceptive and enhance validity of findings. Through findings from past literature, survey and interview questions were created. A survey of eighty chefs was completed along with detailed interviews with four key industry chefs. Thematic analysis was used to find key themes and commanilites present within these results.

From key findings made within this work, through primary and secondary research, the author made recommendations in regards to how businesses can encourage women into the industry. Recommendations made include work - life balance, pay grades, physical support systems, working conditions, education, reporting policies and a culture of respect.

As a better industry for women, means a better industry for everyone.

## **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank the following people for their consistent support and guidance throughout this degree and dissertation.

Firstly to my best friend since the first week in Cathal Brugha Street, Kyla Dempsey. This second degree is ours shared. Without your friendship and support I would have never gotten to where I am now. You always inspire me to push myself beyond my mental limits. You will do great things with your time on earth and I feel blessed to share it at the same time as you. Days spent laughing and discovering the city together are my favourite memories, here's to more.

To my Dad, my biggest cheerleader, you inspire me to never give up and to follow all of my wildest dreams. You have always taught me to reach for the stars and to treat people with kindness, always. I am eternally grateful for you, and again, this degree is ours shared, thank you for always protecting me.

To Polly and Matthew, I will never thank you enough for always having an open door when I need you both, morning, noon or night. You are all the family I need. This degree is again shared with you both, I stand on the mountain you have built for me my whole life and see new horizons.

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Thank you to my lecturers throughout my time in T.U.D, your encouragement and words of recognition lit a fuel of passion for this industry. Thank you to my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Mark Farrell, your support was invaluable.

‘You have to enjoy it, even when you're in the shits, we enjoy it. Otherwise you'll quit, anyone would’

**Extract from Interview with Chef 1, Drogheda, April 2022.**

‘I came into a new generation of kitchens, so i just heard the stories’

**Extract from Interview with Chef 2, Drogheda, April 2022.**

‘To be a female in this industry who thrives, you have to be ‘faster, better, smarter than everyone else’, that's the only way.’

**Extract from Interview with Chef 4, April 2022.**

## **Glossary**

*SCAFT*: School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology

*Brigade System*: Hierarchical System found in restaurants and hotels employing extensive staff

*'Pulling Rank'*: 'To use one's superior rank or position unfairly, to obtain a special privilege, force obedience, or the like.'

*TU Dublin*: The Technological University of Dublin, formerly known as the Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T)

*Haute Cuisine*: Known commonly as fine dining.

*Michelin*: 'A mark of distinction awarded by the Michelin travel guides in recognition of the high quality of its cooking'.

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# **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

# **An investigative analysis on female presence and highly ranked positions in professional kitchens in Ireland.**

## **1.1 Aims**

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of the state of the cheffing industry currently, to analyse whether there is a lack of women within the industry particularly in positions of high power.

This work intends to understand the causes for this lack and showcase possible solutions and recommendations for this. It exists as a role of advocacy; hoping to inspire more people into the career of cheffing, and to retain women within it.

It aspires to change the narratives that have pushed many people, particularly women, out of this work for so long. This research aims to be a voice of change, not criticism.

## **1.2 Objectives**

1. To investigate and analyse the current state of the industry through a review of past and present literature from an array of media sources, thus compiling the most complete and thorough view, as not solely academic sources, but real world accounts and experiences also.
2. Investigate whether there is a lack of women in the industry and why using first and second hand research; interviews and surveys, gaining an understanding of the reasons why this is happening
3. Using research compiled: develop recommendations to help solve this issue and develop an ideal kitchen model and H.R protocols that would encourage a better work environment for all

### **1.3 Introduction**

This research aims to analyse the possible lack of female presence in the professional kitchen, particularly in high status positions such as head chef in Ireland and the causes behind this. Many issues present currently in the cheffing industry will be investigated throughout this review.

It is obvious there are currently many issues prevalent within professional kitchens such as the gender pay gap, lack of progression for women into higher positions, sexism and a lack of resources made available to encourage more women into the industry. It is the aim of this research to investigate further into female presence in the professional kitchen in Ireland with a focus on highly ranked positions and analyse whether there is a lack of diversity and representation.

Ultimately it is possible the issues present within the current environment of Ireland's professional kitchen have led to the lack of female presence in high positions but this research will be conducted with an unbiased view so that the most likely conclusion can be reached without any personal views. It is important to note that certain issues mentioned are also often struggles male chefs face throughout their careers.

The distinct difference between the long outdated belief that a 'woman's place is in the kitchen' and the lack of female chefs in the professional kitchen is evident. Throughout the following literature review possible factors deterring women from this career will be analysed and discussed.

To perform this research, the researcher will look into secondary research such as articles of personal experiences, statistics from government agencies, pay scales and any relevant literature found related to women in the professional kitchen.

#### **1.4 The Head Chef Position.**

The head chef is defined as the person who controls and oversees the whole kitchen, they manage kitchen staff, control costs aiming to keep them as low as possible, which includes speaking with suppliers and ordering stock, and creating the restaurant's menu. There is a hierarchy of the professional kitchen (Chef's Resources, 2020). Within this kitchen structure the executive or head chef is at the top, depending on the size of the establishment many restaurants only require a head chef.

The sous chef is second in charge, directing how food is presented and ensuring high standards of work around the kitchen. Under this is a chef de partie, also known as a line chef who is in charge of one section of the kitchen for example fish. A commis chef is an apprentice who is trained by everyone in the kitchen to gain experience. Kitchen porters assist chefs with tasks and wash all the dishes for service.

Female chefs such as Grainne O'Keeffe sous chef in Pichet Dublin (Lovin Dublin, 2016) and Jennifer Walsh head chef of Pink restaurant on South William Street, are exceptional role models to young chefs, especially women.

These women have worked within the industry for numerous years, dealing with issues mentioned within this research, it is due to their hard work and determination kitchens are beginning to change for the better and more women are excelling into positions of power within Irish kitchens. Having such inspiring women in high positions across kitchens in Ireland sets the basis for the next generation of young chefs, hopefully walking into a more equal, diverse and healthy kitchen environment.

## 1.5 The Lack of Female Chefs in Ireland

In an online survey conducted by Step up to the Plate in 2016, it was seen that within the chef profession there were 69% men and 31% women (Central Statistics Office, 2016), this displays a very large gender imbalance during this time.

More recently, in a 2018 article by the Irish Times, it was reported that the ratio of male to female chefs in kitchens throughout Ireland had increased to 2:1 (two male chefs to every female) (Irish Times, 2018). Within Dr. Mary Farrell's PHD on gender inequality within the chef profession it was found that 90.5% of all executive head chefs in Ireland are men (The Irish Times, 2021).

During the Covid-19 pandemic the hospitality industry was 'economically flattened' according to Adrian Cummins of the Restaurant Association of Ireland (RTE, 2021). Throughout numerous lockdowns and restrictions the industry has suffered massive losses, but a major issue was staff shortages. 70,000 people have left the restaurant sector since the pandemic began (Restaurant Association of Ireland, 2021).

Previous research into the lack of female chefs in Ireland, found that many papers brought up the issue of the 'industry's reputation' [and if it is] still putting women off', (Hospitality Ireland, 2016). It is well known that cheffing as a career traditionally involves long hours with pay not reflecting the time, skill and effort required until promoted over time. Good pay only comes with many years of experience within the industry and a track record of progression of skill. It requires a huge commitment to the job.

Following an extensive search on social media regarding the personal experiences of female chefs within Irish kitchens some personal anecdotes stated that they can be a 'very macho environment' and another felt they were 'not treated fairly for the work that [she] did compared to male chefs' (The Irish Times, 2021).

## **1.6 Sexism**

Seventy-five per cent of women in Ireland feel they have experienced sexism in the workplace (The Journal, 2012). Women working within professional kitchens in Ireland have described it as 'brutal', and spoke about dealing with constant condescending comments, sexist remarks and comments on their appearance.

The atmosphere many women feel within kitchens in Ireland and all over the world is that you must be 'butch or babes', meaning they feel they must be quiet, never speaking out on problems or masculine and 'tough', pushing away the natural femininity of kindness to fit in (The Irish Times, 2016). Chef Kayla Osborn, winner of the 2017 Rising Star Award spoke about how this issue doesn't just lie inside the kitchen, that general managers and front of house have had issues with female chefs, thinking you should be quiet or not have an opinion (2018).

Courses such as sexual harassment classes for both men and women should be done just as manual handling is, basic procedure. A positive introduction was the Dignity at Work Act which is now compulsory at many employee inductions.

The Health Management Institute of Ireland offers a 'Bullying and Harassment Training for All' which is an online one hour course which aims to eradicate bullying and harassment from the workplace. (HMI, 2020). Everyone regardless of age, gender, disability, religion or ethnicity deserves a safe and respectful working environment.

## **1.7 The Gender Pay Gap**

In America, the gender pay gap lies at 24.6% for chefs, the second-highest in the country. This could be caused by a lack of women entering and staying in the industry, leading to a lack of promotions and higher pay for women. In the EU, women, on average, are paid 16% less per hour than men. It is estimated that if current trends continue, it would take up to one hundred years to close the gender pay gap (Accountancy, 2019).

At the beginning of a worker's career, the pay gap starts relatively small, hence people debate that it doesn't exist anymore, but the problems lie as time passes. Throughout a worker's career, the pay gap expands (NBC News, 2019). Sullivan says that the solution to overcoming the gender pay gap is women reviewing their pay more, and understanding their market value. An employee's market value can be calculated by dividing the firm's net income by the number of employees, although this method only gives the worth average for all employees not catered to each individual (Investopedia, 2019).

It is imperative women are encouraged to stay within this industry and given the support to progress further with the chef profession to a better rate of pay, as this would help filter down through the workforce over time.

## 1.8 Women's Liberation

The marriage bar was abolished in Ireland in 1973, a law which forced women to quit their jobs in the public sector as soon as they got married. Women being unable to work as recently as forty-nine years ago shows how slow times change; it is less than forty years ago that the expectation of a woman was to be a homemaker or housewife. A housewife is defined as a 'woman whose main occupation is caring for her family, housework and managing family affairs' (Oxford Dictionary, 2022).

Modern technology has played a huge role in allowing women to not be confined to the home to do numerous laborious chores. The first electric powered washing machine was invented in 1908 by the Hurley Machine Company of Chicago, Illinois and was known as 'The Thor' (Golden States Laundry Systems, 2015).

Appliances such as this saved hours of work daily that would have generally been done by the women of the house, leaving them with more time for education and other aspects of life. It is said that 'these innovations changed the lives of women' (Professor Cardia, 2009). In 1900 five percent of married women had jobs, and by 1980 it had become fifty one percent (University of Montreal, 2009). These figures became vastly different in less than a century.

Between 1908 to 1973 more and more appliances were made widely available, giving women more time out of the home thus boosting education, jobs and the economy. Women originally had to go meat and grocery shopping daily before the introduction of the fridge and freezer. Technologies allowed women to leave the home and pursue other things, but due to this only being possible in the last fifty years progress is still slow.

Traditionally men were more likely to become the sole breadwinner when a couple had children, and so this trend is surprisingly resurfacing today as childcare has become so expensive that many women are making the decision to stay home. Sadly women tend to be on the lower salary much of the time and the cost of childcare accounts for most of this.



## 1.9 Kitchen Structures

It is no secret the world is built, tested on and designed for men. From medicines, to seat belts to stab vests nothing quite fits us the same way, it is no surprise this would fall through into the professional kitchen environment.

Home kitchens were actually built to scale historically around the woman's body (Quartz, 2015) going by average height and size, scaling everything to make 'kitchen work less back-breaking'.

The 'female work curve' was measured; analysing the normal and maximum working area, including measurements of where and how far each arm travels while cooking (Project Muse, 2018).

These specifically designed kitchen models were marketed to men as 'new kitchens built to fit your wife' with cabinets built specifically to 'fit the woman' (Discovery UCL, 2018).



*Figure 1: Photographs of a study of a woman's 'work curve' being analysed to design kitchen structures around (Discovery, UCL, 2018).*

Yet professional kitchens are built much more around men and a taller physically stronger body. This may be due in part to the 'Kitchen Brigade' or the 'Brigade System'. The Brigade System was based on the French military design, with the head chef as the 'General'. The idea was brought about from Georges Auguste Escoffier (Lightspeed, 2020). Where women didn't fit into the traditional military, they didn't fit into the professional kitchen, because it wasn't built for or around them like it was for men.

Professional kitchens tend to involve hard, sweaty, exhausting, constant physical labour. During a shift a chef may have to lift deliveries of fresh produce multiple times, ten litre buckets of oil, huge pots of hot water/ food. Equipment in a kitchen tends to be very large and upwards of 8kg, for example pots, mixers and blenders.

Storage in kitchens may be tight and so many use above fridge/ shelf space. The average height of a woman in Ireland is 5'4 to 5'5 (Insider, 2019). This makes a lot of kitchen life extremely difficult for women, the annoyance of constantly having to ask for help and the general lack of accessibility. In terms of upwards progression in the industry, it is unfair if the head chef cannot reach / lift equipment she may need, hindering women's drive and ambition within cheffing.

## 1.10 Lack of Progression for Female Chefs

Gender will become a factor no matter what at some point in a chef's professional career. Based on career progression, women who want children may have to work twice as hard to succeed and climb the ranks as much as possible, in a shorter amount of time. Many end up fulfilling one dream while the other suffers, between a family or promotion.

While women may be able to fully commit at the beginning of their career over time they are much less likely to be promoted as they may become pregnant thus affecting their workload and manual labour abilities as well as hours available to work. Head chefs can typically work up to fifty hours per week, including weekends and holidays. This is not viable for many people.

In an article written by Renee Morad for NBC News (2019), Zalis stated that “there truly is a ‘mommy penalty’”. The motherhood penalty is defined as a range of systematic disadvantages in pay, promotional opportunities and benefits in comparison to women without children. An OECD study in 2012 showed that Irish women begin to earn less after they have children.

The pay gap seen for families with one or more children was 22%. The report showed that the gender pay gap affects a woman's life drastically over the duration of their life, ‘women over 65 are today one and a half times more likely to live in poverty than men in the same age bracket’ (OECD, 2012).

For these reasons, it may even be that being a chef is just not financially viable for many women, as the long hours with low pay may not compensate for the cost of childcare needed during their working day. Maternity leave may not always be easily granted for chefs and their positions can just be filled by someone else. Many chefs have also admitted to not hiring women of child bearing age over men because they don't want to deal with maternity leave and similar issues.

Both men and women make many sacrifices to pursue a career in the industry. Many men give up time and miss important moments due to their work, ‘I’ve seen male chefs taking a half-day off when their wives had babies and then they’re back at work —that’s wrong!’ says Jess (Irish Examiner, 2016)’. Although they may not suffer at the same level or suffer the same impacts on career progression, both are important and work should be done to change this.

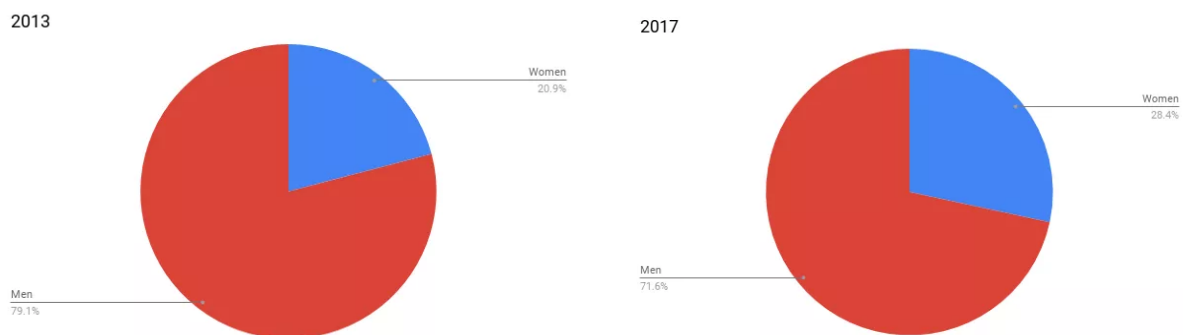
An interesting aspect on the issue of treatment of women in the industry was made by Lindsay September in an Eat Out article in 2018, in that singling out women for accomplishments (awards) but not any other historically disadvantaged groups takes away from the actual accomplishment made (Eat Out, 2018).

Specifically, highlighting only female chefs points out that it is a woman winning the award, this does the opposite of what women in the industry want, equality in all aspects, including awards. If there was both a Best Male and Female Chef award this would also leave out those

that identify as non-binary, therefore an overall best chef award leaves no room for discrimination (Eat Out, 2020). Chef Jackie Cameron summarises the issue on awards by saying ‘in the kitchen, I’m a chef, and cheffing is not gender specific’ (2018).

It seems to be a common occurrence that men win high-status awards in the industry, this could be because currently the deserving winners are men and everyone should be judged purely on the food they produce, not their gender. But, it is interesting to note that women are rarely given the same progression opportunities or recognition that men are. This could be a contributing factor to the fact that many women are not currently given the opportunities and chances to reach positions high enough to be recognised for such awards.

Figure 2: These diagrams represent the James Beard Award finalists on the left 2013, right 2017.



Key: Red: Male Winners. Blue: Female Winners. (Photo Source: Eater, 2017).

Women can also tend to be grouped down into one singular role such as a ‘pastry chef’ where there is less room for progression within their career. Female chefs are also known to not ‘talk themselves up’ as confidently as men do. Typically men tend to be overconfident about a possible role whereas women take a step back and won’t apply unless they meet all the criteria.

Hewlett- Packard Enterprise wanted to investigate why there aren’t more women in top management and made the discovery that ‘women working at [their company] applied for a promotion only when they believed they met 100 percent of the qualifications listed for the job. Men were happy to apply when they thought they could meet 60 percent of the job requirements’ (Forbes, 2014). This seems to be a common trait with women in the professional world, consistently underestimating themselves.

## 1.11 Education

In Ireland the main most highly regarded culinary school is the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology, Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street, now located in the Central Quad, Grangegorman. This college is the place to go in terms of building a career in the culinary world.

Anyone who's anyone nearly always attended this college, such as Roisin Gillen who won Rising Star of the Year at the 2019 Food and Wine Awards and Tara Gartlan a chef at the two Michelin starred kitchen at the Greenhouse on Dawson Street (Image, 2020), but it has an interesting history.

In 1941, St. Mary's College of Domestic Science was opened in Cathal Brugha Street. The college would run from 1941 to 1966, and its first principal was a woman, Kathleen O'Sullivan. This college was ahead of its time in terms of female education in Ireland, and much of it was centred around home economics education. Some of the courses provided were nutrition and dietetics, tearoom cookery, institutional management, hotel cookery for girls and apprentice chefs for boys (History of C.B.S, 2021).

At the time of St. Mary's existence, the ideology that women must work in the home was the view of most of Ireland's society, even women, as it was all they had ever known. This college existed to ensure women performed their daily home duties to an impeccable level. In 1937 De Valera cemented women's place in home in the new Irish constitution by stating in Article 41.2.2 that 'mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home' (History Ireland, 2016).

During the 1950s the college transitioned into the college of hospitality that it became, growing more and more every year, in the 1980s the number of full time students went from 500 to 1,000. It is interesting the college began with such a patriarchal backdrop and today has housed many extremely talented female students who have gone on to change the industry for the better.

Roisin Gillen, D.I.T graduate, awarded rising star of the year in 2019, is very active in her work on the lack of female representations in kitchens. Gillen ran a pop up dinner with Ailish O'Neill where they served an amazing seven course menu inspired by their favourite chefs across the globe. They plan to run more of these.

A note to make currently, in the culinary arts school in TU Dublin, is the ratio of male and female students in certain degrees. For example, the Baking and Pastry Arts course is almost always extremely female heavy, with as few as three or four boys in a class of thirty girls. Whereas the Culinary Arts cheffing course tends to be very fifty-fifty in terms of gender balance, if the culinary schools aren't lacking female presence, what is happening in industry?

In terms of a more global perspective, women represent more than half of culinary school graduates, but take up only 21% of head chef roles in America, (Eater, 2018). The Culinary Institute of America, one of the top culinary schools in the U.S.A, did not accept women until 1970, currently, 44% of their students are women, this is a clear signifier as to the difference made in the last few decades (Sixty and Me.com, 2019).

Things have greatly improved in women's education, particularly in the culinary sector but more can be done in terms of encouragement for women into the industry. Workshops with female industry leaders, grants and scholarships aimed at encouragement into high profile kitchens, for example the new 2022 Gather and Gather scholarship which provides a three thousand euro scholarship to one graduate student entering the industry.

## 1.12 Women in Today's Industry

Young female chefs who want to enter this somewhat gruelling industry are seeing so few female role models. There is a lack of media representation particularly in the world of Michelin stars. There have only been four women to receive Michelin stars in Irish restaurants, Danni Barry, Michael Deanes Epic in Belfast, Myrtle Allen, Ballymaloe House, Cork, Catherine Healy, Dunderry Lodge, Meath and Kei Pilz, Shiro, Cork.

In 2018, there were fifty stars awarded, two went to women led restaurants, this prompted things like the hashtag 'MichelinToo movement', a documentary about the inequality of the cheffing world (Independent, 2018).

Many chefs and journalists believe it's the 'manliness' and roughness of kitchens that puts many women off before they even enter. Alan Richman spoke in his opinion page in The New York Times; 'Macho Men in the Kitchen Keep Women Down' about how 'excessive manliness' is rampant, and given the choice, a man will choose to promote a male over a female chef as 'he will feel humiliated if passed over by a woman'. Bringing this back to the issue of men's ego and how women suffer for it.

The main issue isn't that women aren't talented enough to earn these prestigious awards, it's that they're not able to get high enough on the ladder to be seen and acknowledged for them. The facilities, encouragement and support needs to be put in place and backed by male voices. This poor judgement over many years has driven many women out of the chef profession, due to the current chef shortages businesses are now feeling the effects of these actions.

Influential women are taking a stand and making huge changes in the industry. Elena Azark is a Spanish chef, the joint head chef of a three Michelin starred restaurant and was named the best female chef in the world in 2012. Arzaks kitchen model is made up of mainly women and she implements flexible working hours to fit in with childcare, a huge barrier for women in the kitchen.

Implementing features such as flexible hours and gender quotas would mean that these basic barriers such as childcare would become less of an issue for both men and women. Chefs typically work extremely long days, reducing the time they get to spend with their children and putting a lot of the child-rearing duties on their partner. This isn't sustainable or healthy, and so these features would help all chefs work-life balance.

The 'glass ceiling' is an issue often spoken about in terms of female chefs in the industry. Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer at Facebook, made the point that 'as men get more powerful they get more liked by men and women, and as women get more powerful, they're less liked' (2016). It is often commented that women will have to work twice as hard and twice as fast as male chefs to get to the top in the professional kitchen.

It is a common trait for women to feel they have to prove themselves to the 'lads' in the kitchen. This idea of kitchens having a 'boys club attitude' is debated in some circumstances, generally based on personal experiences. Smyth, previously the head chef at Restaurant Gordon Ramsey believes that 'gender has nothing to do with it' and that both genders experience the same challenges (Women in White, 2016).

A reality of this is that many women choose not to follow a career as a chef fully due to wanting to pursue a family, and so a culture of putting more time and mentoring into men has developed over time. Women can often feel unheard or gaslighted when speaking about the issue of the glass-ceiling because it is, in theory, invisible, but to female chefs it is a very real, very present feature in their working lives that they experience daily.

Kitchens in Ireland are changing for the better with time, and the industry is seeing the results of the better workplace culture already. Many chefs are thankful 'kitchens aren't what they used to be'. The old outdated ways of yelling at staff members, mistreatment of women and bad working conditions will hopefully fade out over the next decade. It seems to be that it very much depends on the type of people and environment you get to work in, some are very much still masculine boys club kitchens while restaurants like Elena Azark's have women heavy kitchens and a better healthier environment, so everyone's experience and opinion on this issue varies.

### 1.13 ‘The War of Women’ - Internalised Misogyny in the Kitchen

Internalised misogyny is whereby women subconsciously project sexist ideas onto other women and even unto themselves (info.umkc, 2018). It can be deep rooted in women's minds due to being brought up in a more patriarchal world, being surrounded by misogyny/ sexism and / or little positive female role model / influence.

The majority of kitchens were and still are male heavy, with a ratio of two men for every female chef (Irish Times, 2021). This created a culture in which men take up the space, dominating it. This can lead to sexist jokes, a ‘boys club’ attitude and just general unfriendly spaces. Many women describe kitchens as ‘trenches’, feelings of eat or be eaten.

To survive in this world women have to play into internalised misogyny or often be considered a ‘feminazi’ or ‘outspoken’. To listen to small sexist jokes, possibly harassment and ‘boys being boys’ women have had to play nice or not be liked, risking promotion and so on. Being liked by the men in the kitchen is a huge part of survival, if you're liked you will most likely be assisted more throughout service, supported or even be more favourably considered for a promotion.

*“I learned early and quickly that rising professionally meant that I needed to make myself more palatable; that adding charm, a little flirt, and occasionally pretending to not know what I was doing went a long way to keep myself in the category of acceptable and nonthreatening.”*

*The message I heard from the men around me was clear: **It’s ours, and if we don’t like you, we won’t let you in.**” (Eater, 2018).*

The reality is women shouldn't have to dig into internalised misogyny to be able to do well in their jobs, but unfortunately it rings true for many. As Sheryl Sandberg said “as men get more powerful they get more liked by men and women, and as women get more powerful, they’re less liked.” The reality women face is they must be likeable, pretty, smart but not intimidatingly smart and everything in between if they want to progress.

Chefs have also compared being a woman in a kitchen to being a short skinny white man. Similar jokes, mistreatment and attitudes in the kitchen are felt by both. People of colour are also not to be forgotten in this narrative as racism can be an issue in many high up professional kitchens (Eater, 2020).



## **1.14 Summary**

In conclusion, previous evidence based in this field highlights inequality throughout the chef profession. This research provided a lens through which to explore the phenomenon. As an industry, it presents an extremely challenging environment for all, much of this being a factor in the current chef shortage. Through an analysis of further research work can be done to aid these problems and hopefully start an industry wide self reaction and change.

Many of these issues, although they may impact women more, are issues both genders face. Due to the findings of research already done on this topic, the researcher will be ensuring both genders' opinions and views are taken on, to ensure a well rounded, unbiased piece of work. The next chapter will explain the rationale of this research and why it is so needed to improve the industry.

## **Chapter 2 - Justification**

## 2.1 Rationale of the Study

This work aims to challenge traditional powers and the 'status quo' of kitchens through a critical theory lense. The industry is burning out along with its staff, the age old saying 'that's kitchens for you' or 'that's just how it's always been' is ageing badly and will kill the great roots that make this industry what it is. Despite the negative lifestyle associated with pursuing a career in cheffing, thousands of people still pursue this dream, and they deserve this long needed change.

In the 'Handbook of Research Methodology' written by Dr. Shanti Bhushan & Alok, Dr. Shashi, it is stated that one of the objectives of research (number four) is to 'test a hypothesis of a reasonable liaison between different variables (this type of research can be grouped into hypothesis - testing research)'. This work presents the hypothesis: the lack of women in high positions in the professional kitchens, using reasonable liaison: the statistics behind this statement, between different variables: the factors, causes and possible solutions.

Through the insights seen in the review of past literature, a methodical approach to quantitative and qualitative research including interviews and surveys, and an analysis of results seen from these, this work will stand as a platform for women's voices within the restaurant industry and be a light and guidance for change over the next five years.

This research could benefit the culinary industry greatly. It can help encourage people back or into kitchens. This work is based on theories created to encourage women either to begin a career in cheffing or encourage those who left to return, but aims to expand into an industry wide change. An industry led change is needed in the professional kitchen to ensure that it is a safe, fair environment that is enjoyable for all to work in.

It could be used by restaurant owners to take a second look at their staff in terms of gender balance, turnover, work culture and environment. This research aims to investigate female presence in the professional kitchen across Ireland, focusing on highly ranked positions and analyse whether there is a lack of diversity and representation. It is hoped that this research would encourage the industry to take a look at the current situation and analyse whether changes are needed in any areas, to ensure equality and a safe workplace for all.

In regards to culinary courses and colleges such as Cathal Brugha Street, this research could highlight areas that require change and areas that are doing well. Culinary education could look at gender imbalance and the possibility of providing grants to encourage more female students to pursue it as a career. The Colorado Chapter of Les Dames d'Escoffier offers two one thousand euro scholarships to female students enrolling in a culinary arts program (Scholarships. Com, 2020). Such scholarships exist in Ireland but more funding needs to be driven into them.

This research is needed as chefs have stereotypically for many years had a 'name for themselves', from the 'boys club attitude' to blatant sexism women have experienced, terrible working conditions and issues such as the gender pay gap. This research will go forth in trying to prove or disprove aspects of these stereotypes.

Overall this research is needed to start the conversation on how to bring change to kitchens.

## **Chapter 3 - Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter two aims to analyse and investigate the current standing research and literature regarding the topics surrounding the possible reasons for the lack of female presence in the professional kitchen in Ireland, whether it is in agreement or against. The researcher aims to seek out a wide range of research on this topic, in an attempt to be as unbiased as possible.

The overall aim of this research is to investigate whether there is a lack of female presence in the professional kitchen and thus draw forth the possible causes and resolutions for this issue. This will be done through literature review, methodology, findings and a review of results. In many past reviews on similar topics, sexism was the dominant issue spoken on, whereas this dissertation plans to delve deep into the many roots of why there aren't enough women in modern kitchens.

Older and more modern literature will all be investigated as much as possible, all pertaining around the influences keeping many women from kitchens. Mary Farrell's 'An Analysis of Gender Inequality in the Chef Profession' is of huge importance to this area as it is a wealth of research around gender inequality in kitchens today. Historical and modern work will be compared in the 'History of Women's Place in the Kitchen'.

In many opinions, the 'outdated' Brigade Style kitchen system will be touched on in terms of its military links and attitudes it has caused. The ways in which capitalism and the patriarchy; two influences that present themselves in many kitchens today for both men and women, will be looked at in relation primarily to the exploitation of women. Finally, the gender differences found throughout a career in haute cuisine will be explored through current literature.

It is hoped that this review of past and current literature will give an unbiased overview of the many works already done surrounding the topic of women in kitchens, aiding to build the readers knowledge and awareness of these issues.

### **3.2 What is a Restaurant**

Cambridge dictionary defines a restaurant as a 'place where meals are prepared and served to customers' (2022). France is said to be the birthplace of what we know today as a 'restaurant'. Following the French revolution after 1799, the older ways of eating whereby cooks were employed to a family in a household were diminishing. Prior to the French revolution people went to an 'ordinary', a place where a set dish was chosen daily, provided with fresh bread and a drink, no menus or customer selection.

### 3.3 The Brigade System

The Brigade System or ‘Brigade de Cuisine’ is defined as a system for hiring and organising restaurant kitchen staff to maximise efficiency’ (Lightspeed, 2020). European military organisations have deep routes in the creation of the Brigade system.

During the fourteenth century, armies travelling long distances had to be fed in large numbers, soldiers were picked and they would become cooks. These soldiers would feed high kings and queens during times of peace, it was considered a great honour to work for the aristocracy (The Austin Chronicle, 2002).

The double breasted white chef coats were developed in times where the chefs were serving kings, as they may be called into battle at any time. In the 1820s, chefs uniforms were specifically designed similarly to soldiers within the Turkish army, with long cuffed sleeves, a double buttoned breast and a just below the belt fit.

*Figure 3: A depiction of 1840's Turkish military uniforms, note: similarity to the basis of chef whites today (Stock Photo, 2020).*



Chef Georges - Auguste Escoffie developed the modern brigade system in London's Savoy hotel during the late nineteenth century. He decided to use a hierarchical breakdown of staff to maximise efficiency within the kitchen, this was segregated by; level of authority, responsibility and function (The Austin Chronicle, 2022). Auguste was both influenced by the military and the ‘efficiency movement’.

The efficiency movement (Taylorism) was a major movement within Britain and the U.S.A that sought to ‘seek out, find and eliminate all areas of waste’ within manufacturing companies (DBpedia, 2022). Frederick Taylor was the father of the movement and he had a key focus on getting more work done, cheaper and quicker. These ideals were designed for large scale manufacturing with machines, not the organisation of human beings. Due to this, use of this theory takes no concern for human behaviours.

The executive or head chef is considered the General, followed by his second in command, sous chef, and subordinates, chef de parties, who are assisted by commis chefs. In large scale kitchens it can be very common to have numerous line cooks all with a specific purpose - saucier (sauces), poissonner (fish) and patissier (pastries).

In 'Oui, Chef!' a sociohistorical analysis of organisational culture in the American fine dining kitchen brigade and its effects on health, 1903-2019, written by Cassandra Gonzalez, the detrimental issues on chef's health by the brigade system is evaluated (Oui, Chef!, 2019).

This well written piece of literature begins with some very striking quotes, which draw the reader in, immediately alerting them to a comprehension of just how serious this issue is, even if they have never worked in kitchens. One segment reads;

*'So you want to be a chef? You really, really, really want to be a chef? If you've been [accustomed to] holidays off, regular sex with your significant other, [used to] being treated with some modicum of dignity, spoken to and interacted with as a human being, [a] multidimensional entity with hopes, dreams, aspirations - [then] maybe you should reconsider whenever you graduate'* - Anthony Bourdain, former chef at Les Halles in New York, 2000.

This small paragraph gives a dark insight into kitchen life and culture, all of which originally derives from the original brigade system. It has been described as 'an abusive system from the beginning' (Anthony Bourdain, graduation speech at the Culinary Institute of America). Bourdain speaks about how it was built to take the 'losers and misfits' the 'lost children' and then break them through extreme pressure and hazing.



### **3.4 Mary Farrell - An Analysis of Gender Inequality in the Chef Profession**

In this field of study, Doctor Mary Farrell dominates much of the research out there, and for good reason, her work throughout her PHD is very well researched and puts together a great overview of modern Irish kitchens and women's experience in many of them. Her strong media presence is also very present and this has caused many conversation doors to open with regards to the role of women in kitchens.

Farrell's thesis (2020), delves into many important issues - one being the 'historical development of gendered culinary division of labour'. Through the use of a diagram, she documents the stages at which the division of labour has been segregated by gender.

Beginning in seventeenth century liberalism (defined as the belief in freedom, equality, democracy and human rights, Wikipedia, 2022), labour is divided into 'masculine public realm' and feminine private realm'.

For the feminine this continues into cooks, mothers and nurturing roles, divided again between the middle and working class. Middle class women have opportunities of education and become housewives while the working class become domestic servants of education, the upper class and mothering roles.

For the masculine they become the breadwinners, working professionally outside the home, many become chefs who then hold access to education and cookbooks, before joining restaurants and so forth into the 'brigade system' (Farrell, 2020).

This historical analysis of the breakdown of traditional gender roles within society is an example of how deep the roots of the issue of male domination within the chef profession are and how long it may take to reverse a centuries long issue.

Doctor Farrell's work also speaks on first wave feminism, which is defined in the Oxford dictionary (2022) as 'the work of first feminist activists in the early 1800s up to and including the suffragists' describing them as having 'laid the groundwork for future feminists by fighting for the conditions that enabled them to go to university, vote and achieve economic independence'.

They campaigned for equal cultural rights, which meant giving women the opportunity to pursue any career or life choice (Oxford, 2022). These feminists believed that women were not inferior to men but that they 'appear to be only because they lack education' (Farrell, 2020). Education is crucial in the acknowledgement of issues such as equality to view it through as lens such as critical theory.

### 3.5 The History of a Woman's Place in the Kitchen

A derogatory statement that has been used to isolate women's place within the home domestic environment for many years has been 'a woman's place is in the kitchen', in other words telling women to 'stay in their lane' or 'know your place'. The irony found in so much of this research is the male ego and how it impacts female success rates in the workplace. Men in many cases are happy to come home to a woman cooking them a full meal but not when they're in the professional kitchen. What causes this change of attitude?

Historically, men were the 'breadwinners' and women the 'breadmakers'. Women were honoured for their role as a caregiver and nourisher. When these gender roles collapsed come the 1980s-2000, this pre-industrial view of woman's place in the kitchen became a 'disgust' to many modern feminists, although the male equivalent 'male hunter / provider' doesn't attract the same negative views (The Philosophy of Motherhood, 2019).

Both of these nourisher vs. provider roles are self-sacrifice and so the reason for the different attitudes is widely unknown, does it boil down to how society views women? Was the breakdown of the traditional home and rise of feminism and working women so recent that women have yet to truly find their feet in society? Does this in turn relate to the internalised misogyny seen in women in many professional kitchens, the feeling of not quite fitting in and imposter syndrome?

Within modern literature today this issue is also seen through the ways in which female and male chefs are viewed. In an article by Eater in 2018, Megan McCarron describes the 'gendered disconnect' that became 'poisonous' throughout the rise of molecular gastronomy (Eater, 2018). New innovative concepts, science and confidence around changing food became the 'elite' in the culinary world at this time. While these attributes are thought to be heavily male based, breaking rules and tradition. The domestic feminised view of a traditional home kitchen with comfort family centric food became almost a burden that was laughed at, and not thought to be 'real' cooking.

Harris (Eater, 2018) speaks about how many chefs when interviewed about their first cooking influences mention a female presence in their lives, but in the following article or piece the writer will almost always go on to how they 'surpassed' this influence, as if they're influence couldn't be solely admired, it had to be beaten.

### 3.6 The 'Pink Dungeon'

Women can often tend to be grouped as 'followers of tradition' or 'upkeepers', not likely to break boundaries to cause a rucas. They can be grouped as producers rather than artists, in turn leading into the question of is this why women are pushed into pastry cheffing over hot kitchens more often than men? Is this why most bakers are statistically women, because they can follow set recipes like orders?

Written in an Eater article in 2018 the author says 'women chefs are praised for being dutiful stewards of tradition'. This quote in few words sums up the box many people set women into a kind of one track lane that they will be shunned from straying from. Where men are considered 'bold and rebellious' women are given small minimal adjectives to describe their work, such as 'precision and no creativity' or 'tiny inventions' (Eater, 2018).

In a 2018 article written by Lisa Jennys, eight female pastry chefs spoke on breaking out of the 'pink dungeon' (Restaurant Hospitality, 2018). The 'pink dungeon' or 'pink ghetto' is a term used within kitchens to describe the 'box' many women feel are unwillingly pushed into whereby they are encouraged to only focus on pastry and have no input on hot kitchen, it is seen as an area where women are accepted, but remains stagnant, facing difficulty when moving beyond or upwards (2018). Hot kitchen is summed up as 'the part of a kitchen where raw materials are prepared and cooked' (PrueLeith, 2022).

Within Irish kitchens, research has stated that 73% of pastry chefs are women (Irish Times, 2021). While pastry is dominated by women mainly, within the media this isn't recognised in the same way. On Netflix' show the 'Chef's Table: Pastry' three of four candidates were male, with one female.

### **3.7 The Exploitation of Women; Capitalism and The Patriarchy**

The Patriarchy is defined as ‘a society controlled by men in which they use their power to their own advantage’.

Capitalism is defined as ‘an economic, political and social system in which property, business and industry are privately owned, directed towards making the greatest possible profits for successful organisations and people’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

The oppression of women is an age old issue, it existed before capitalism but is not safe from it (Comanne, 2020). Rising childcare costs brought about the need for two household incomes and due to this many women were forced out of the home and into the workforce. The general consensus many women experience is that they are still responsible for most of the childcare and household duties, as well as their full time job.

The rise of feminism for many brought more hardship, as more weight was placed on women. Essentially women now play the role that both male and females would have in the dark ages. It is seen as normal for women to do their ‘natural activities’ which involve extra labour such as childcare and household chores, whereas it is normal for men to do productive fun activities such as building or sport. Comanne speaks about how women are overworked and underpaid first within the workplace and then again in the home.

Society's view on women and their societal value varies among cultures and time periods, for example within Ancient Ireland, women were worshipped, there were many female gods and high priestesses. Celtic women could bear arms, partake in politics and become Druids. Moyra Caldicott states that “one of the things [she] finds so refreshing in Celtic myths is that women are honoured as much for their minds as for their bodies” in *Women in Celtic Myth*, 2000.

In Ancient Greece, a different situation was occurring; in which they differentiated the masculine and feminine by using the terms ‘hot’ and ‘cold’. Aristotle believed that ‘the masculine is hot, associated with fire and positive value; the feminine is cold, associated with water and a negative value’. This is an interesting annotation as fire generally brings destruction and water is necessary for survival (Dense Comanne, 2020).

Money is power and traditionally this was controlled by men, even today the ‘pink tax’ (gender based pricing) is a financial power held over women, it costs more just to physiologically be a woman. As true equality would mean men paying for these items also, equity is needed. In 2010, consumer reports showed that in America, women pay up to fifty percent more than men for similar products, eg. deodorant (Healthline, 2020). Combined with the gender pay gap this financial exploitation stops women from obtaining wealth as easily as men. Along with the other issues facing women within the professional kitchen this is an extra obstacle.

### **3.8 Gender Differences throughout a Career in Haute Cuisine**

Haute cuisine is the French term for ‘high cuisine’, which was created in France by chef George Augustine Escoffier during the 19th century (Let it Wine, 2022). The key elements of haute cuisine is elegant presentation with an extremely high attention to detail and the consent pursuit of high quality, fresh produce and technical abilities.

Zopiatis (2010) found that chefs must be a ‘culinary craftsman and active business manager’, with the necessary skills differing as the rank is increased, eg. a head chef would require a different skill set than a commis chef. In research involving the reasons fewer women progress to the top in restaurant kitchens, it was found that ‘perceptions of work related expectations - values, attitudes and behaviours’ all differed depending on the age variable (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016).

Within careers in haute cuisine, success can be greatly influenced by gender, seen within the Michelin guide classification; out of the one hundred and ten restaurants given their third Michelin star in 2017, six were female chefs (Garrigos, et al, 2020).

Within this academic article, recommendations were given on how women can help break into haute cuisine, including industry exposure in high profile restaurants, training under great chefs, displaying a high level of commitment and dedication, the willingness to sacrifice, a passion for food and the ambition to succeed. While fighting daily barriers set against them it is said that ‘women in male dominated occupations can be confident about their skills [and] remain in their jobs whilst facing various obstacles’ (Garrigos, et al, 2020).

Media exposure can be a huge career progression for a chef, but interestingly it is stated that ‘self promotion could negatively impact women aspiring to leadership positions, [that] women are expected to show modesty’ (Eagly and Carli, 2007). If this is to be believed, it is an unfair disadvantage that both genders cannot promote themselves in the same way.

Famously, male chefs in the media such as Gordon Ramsay are known for their brash outspoken mannerisms, which drove them to fame, for example Ramsay ‘slapped’ two pieces of bread around a female chef’s face and forced her to call herself an ‘idiot sandwich’, this is now a huge viral meme and Gordon has received very little backlash for it (Dictionary, 2019). Men can be radical and loud for attention, but famously female chefs are peaceful, relaxed, poised and well dressed, such as Nigella Lawson, who most couldn’t picture screaming at someone.

### **3.9 Summary**

The use of both older and more modern literature gave many varied perspectives, from the beginnings of the invention of restaurants within France to the creation of the brigade system. The brigade system was created for efficiency and yet it is known today as ‘an abusive system from the beginning’. *Oui Chef* is a modern work that investigates the negative effects of this system on chefs' health.

Gender roles, feminism and a woman's place in the kitchen were analysed through history, leading into Mary Farrel's PHD thesis. The presence of the nourisher vs. provider roles, fed into a culture of men being the main earner in the past. Capitalism and the patriarchy have both led to the oppression of women, even when in kitchens, females can be pushed / heavily guided into pastry.

Haute cuisine plays a role in the treatment of women within the industry also, with large bodies such as Michelin recognising a very low amount of women. Media exposure and a lack of female role models also plays a part within this. The next chapter will discuss the methodology of this research.

## **Chapter Four - Methodology**

## 4.1 Research

The meaning of the term research is to seek out information on a particular topic, it is an art of 'systematic investigation' (Mishra & Alok, 2017, p. 1). All research comes from a need, hence this research and the justification thereof. In the 'Handbook of Research Methodology' written by Dr. Shanti Bhushan & Alok, Dr. Shashi, they state that research includes defining a problem, formulating a hypothesis or suggested solutions; collecting, organising and evaluating data and thereafter reaching conclusions determining whether they fit the hypothesis.

## 4.2 Triangulation Research - Mixed Methodology

Triangulation research refers to the use of multiple methods when addressing a research question (Scribbler, 2022). A mixed-method approach will be used for this research including both qualitative and quantitative research.

Using a triangulation research method aims to:

- ❖ Remove any bias that may occur from one method
- ❖ Cross check evidence
- ❖ Provide a better overall industry perspective
- ❖ To enhance validity

Quantitative research is defined as the process of collecting or analysing numerical data, this can be done through averages and statistics. It is related to something that can be 'expressed in terms of quantity or can be counted' (Mishra, Dr. Shanti Bhushan & Alok, Dr. Shashi, p. 3, 2017). It is in theory easier to analyse as it can easily be laid out and graphed, showing clear results.

Qualitative research is the collection and analysing of non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions or experiences (Scribbler, 2020). This type of research is used when investigating human behaviours and the motivations fuelling choice and desires.



### 4.3 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research will be carried out through surveys. This is the most common form of quantitative research. A survey will be compiled of twelve questions. The sample size chosen to be distributed was determined using Survey Monkeys 'sample size calculator'. This measures the population size against the confidence level and the margin of error.

#### 4.3.1 Survey

Creswell (2012), describes survey designs as 'procedures in quantitative research in which you administer a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people (the sample) to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviours or characteristics of a large group of people (the population).

The population size of chefs in Ireland is close to 20,000 (Irish Times, 2020). With a confidence level of 95% and a margin of 5%, survey monkeys predicted a minimum sample size of 377 to compile accurate statistical results (Survey Monkey 2020).

The ease of the link to encourage respondents to answer and of survey monkeys analytical features make it the most viable option. The link to the survey will be emailed out to chefs within the Irish restaurant industry through the S.C.A.F.T email, shared on LinkedIn and on social media. These three methods of sharing aim to encourage respondents of many age demographics, genders and place of residence, to get a wider, more accurate sample size.

The survey will be compiled of twelve questions, each relating back to a topic mentioned within the literature review. The respondents age, gender and years of experience will also be asked to be able to categorise the demography of the respondents e.g man, over ten years experience. Both genders will be encouraged to partake in this survey as they make up the industry, and may help provide diverse ideas and perspectives on how to encourage female chefs into the kitchen (See Appendix 1).

The results of respondents' opinions on the state of the industry, open questions of personal experiences and multiple-choice demographic questions will be totalled up and analysed against current findings to test accurately against real-world experience. This is the best method as it will give the researcher a view of a wide range of questions over a reasonably large demographic.

## 4.4 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research will be carried out through focussed interviews (field research) with male and female chefs within the industry. Focused interviews are that which ‘focus attention upon a given experience and its effects’ (Mishra, Dr. Shanti Bhushan & Alok, Dr. Shashi, p. 3, 2017).

Qualitative research gives much more scope to investigate and explore experiences and thoughts more so than quantitative. A survey cannot fully convey emotion as it can’t observe reactions, body language or facial expressions (Survey Anyplace, 2020). For this reason, the researcher chooses a survey, interviews and the use of a personal academic journal to measure results and get a clearer, more defined picture of the state of the industry as it stands.

### 4.4.1 Interview

To get an accurate view, interviews will be conducted with two female and two male chefs with diverse levels of years of experience in the industry. By interviewing both genders, of two age demographics, it is aimed to get a more accurate view of the old kitchen styles and behaviours and compare this to today.

These chefs will be chosen through ‘stratified sampling’, whereby they are picked based on having a particular characteristic trait or interest to the research, in this case: gender and experience. Four chefs will be chosen, two men and two women all varying ages and experience levels. These will be contacted by email and social media and the interviews will be held and recorded over zoom.

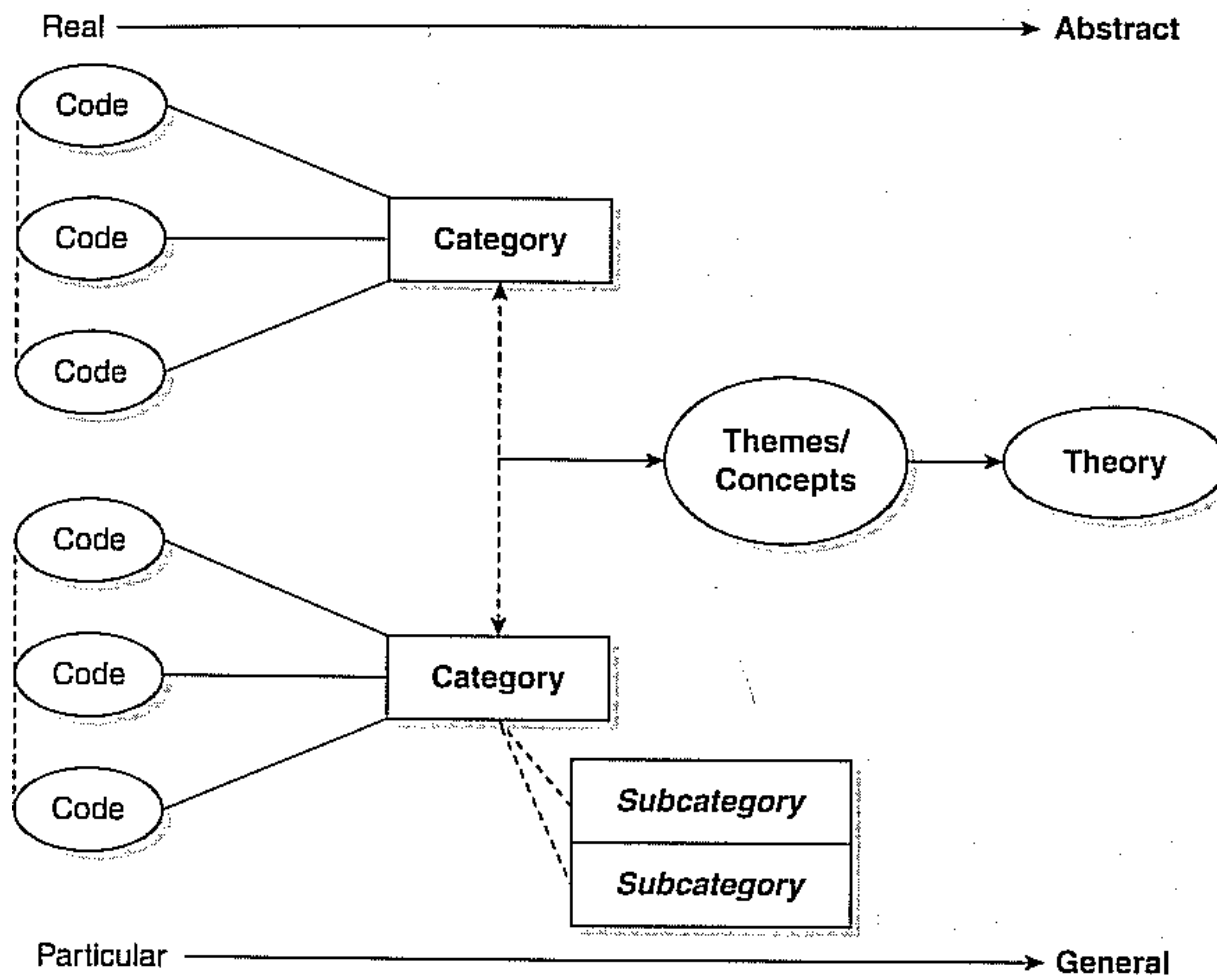
The interviews will be ‘semi-structured’, meaning a mix of semi-structured and unstructured interview questions. This is whereby the interviewer has an idea of the questions they will ask, but the exact phrasing and order of the questions is not set (Scribbr, 2022). This is a good option as it will allow the researcher to ‘investigate different facets of the research question’ (2022).

A template interview will be drawn up and reviewed by a third party, uninvolved with this research, before being finalised for use. There will be two demographic style questions involved; gender and years of experience within the restaurant industry (See Appendix 2).

Questions after this will pull from the literature review topics, to gauge how relevant this information is in comparison to current real world experience. Thematic Analysis will be used within data analysis to find commonalities throughout interview answers.

Its goal is to ‘identify key themes or patterns found that are important or interesting in order to address or say something about an issue’ (Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. (2017)). A good thematic analysis does not simply summarise, it makes sense of it. This links closely with sensemaking.

Figure 4: Thematic Analysis Process Diagram



This diagram represents the process of thematic analysis within research. The ‘codes’ represents the interview data collected, this is divided into ‘categories’, meaning by question. These categories are compared against one another as are the codes, which divulge into commonalities or themes found, represented above by ‘themes/concepts’. Finally, the end ‘theories’ are developed, whereby the research has been successful and answers were found.

Source: (Semantic Scholar, 2009)

#### 4.4.2 Personal Academic Research Journal

A personal journal is a kept 'record of observations, feelings and reflective experiences' (Suny Empire State College, 2022). The researcher has kept this journal since beginning this work in 2020, compiling thoughts, developments and ideas they wished to include within this, constant improvements and new experiences helped shape it.

This work has developed from simply an observational study to a fully rounded piece of work which aims to change the industry for the better.

## 4.5 Critical Theory

Critical theory is a social and political philosophy or theory that is centred around the 'reflective assessment and critique of society and culture in order to reveal and challenge power structures' (Wikipedia, 2021). Its main aim is to understand and move past the societal structures in which people are controlled and oppressed.

Max Horkheimer, a Frankfurt school member, wrote that 'a theory can only be considered a true critical theory if it is explanatory, practical and normative'. The theory must explain the social problem that exists, offer practical solutions for how to respond to them and abide by the norms of criticism established by the field'. Horkheimer also spoke on the failures of works that do not question power and the status quo (ThoughtCo., 2019).

As a young person who is part of 'Generation Z'; typically known as advocates for change, this ideology of critical theory is very important to the researcher. It is important to analyse current world issues and have the determination and passion to want to drive change for the future. Critical theory will play an important role throughout this work.

The researcher will be offering real world possible solutions to issues faced. This work will not be a negative commentary on the state of the restaurant industry; but an advocacy for the changes needed to make them a more enjoyable sustainable work environment.

Often, within the cheffing industry, people can use the phrase 'that's kitchens for you' or 'kitchens have always been this way'. The exhaustion and burnout seen within this career can lead many people to turn a blind eye to issues seen out of the need to push on and keep going. Challenging the 'status quo' and high powers (eg. Michelin) within the food industry is important to change the narrative of what kitchens are and what they can be and the researcher will be doing this throughout this work.

Often, due to the fewer female chefs within the restaurant industry, their voices can be drowned out or unheard. This work aspired to play an advocacy role for the marginalised.

## **4.6 Research Limitations**

A limitation that may occur from the researcher personally drawing up the survey is that the questions may hold some underlying bias/be skewed due to personal feelings on the matter. This could be mitigated by having a second objective party proofread the questions.

A second concern would be respondents having a personal bias or hidden agenda. As the survey will be about women in the chef industry, men may feel unrepresented and choose not to answer, causing a gender imbalance in results.

The researcher may have a narrow focus when completing the interviews, having only the end goal in mind, possibly not asking all the relevant questions that could lead to interesting points or results. This may be avoided by asking the interviewee if they feel they have any important issues or experiences they would like to bring forth and discuss.

Limitations in terms of interviews may include the Covid-19 pandemic, depending on current government guidelines in place at the time interviews may have to be held over zoom. Restrictions enforced can include no out of county travel or nonessential meetings (Gov. ie, 2020). Online interviews tend to be less intimate and comfortable, as both parties are not in the same room and getting the chance to formally meet. Problems may arise due to internet connection.

## **4.7 Access to Data**

Throughout this field research the five principles of research ethics will be followed. Minimising the risk of harm, obtaining informed consent, protecting anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding deceptive practices and providing the right to withdraw (Aerd, 2022).

Respondent anonymity will be a top priority. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, all data protection principles will be adhered to, ensuring information gathered is used ‘fairly, lawfully and transparently’. (Health Research Board, 2018). It is a priority that respondents feel comfortable answering the survey.

Survey Monkey responses are anonymous, a link is received by the survey creator and the answers are analysed and displayed on the account. Using this method of online surveys encourages respondents to answer truthfully as there will be no fear of repercussions from management etc after speaking out and sharing their experiences. As this topic can be a sensitive area we will ensure all respondents feel confident their data is safe.

## **4.8 Ethics**

It is the researchers legal and ethical responsibility to uphold all data protection policies in place. A consent check will be the first question within the survey, in which the response will be asked to confirm that they are comfortable sharing this information with the researcher anonymously.

During the interview process participants will be informed that they will not be named and will remain anonymous. In all cases the participants will retain their right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. All participants were also informed that their interview recordings would be wiped when the research is complete.

## **4.9 Summary**

This chapter explained the concept of research and the methods used - triangulation (mixed), quantitative [surveys], qualitative [interviews and personal academic research journal]. Critical theory is explained briefly and a description of how it is implemented within and throughout this work. The research limitations, access to data and ethics are also discussed. The next chapter will delve into the primary research findings and complete an analysis of these.

**Chapter 5 -  
Primary Research Findings and Analysis**



## **5.1 Introduction**

Within this research, personal experiences and feelings are very present and important to the scope of understanding the issues presented and possible solutions to them.

To gauge a wide audience of numeric answers around these topics, a short survey was completed of eighty past and present chefs of all age groups, levels of experience, genders and chef grades. This provided a wide demographic of chefs to find the wider opinions that may link to the general chef population.

To better analyse and understand the emotional and personal experience of chefs, three interviews of five chefs were completed. These interviews consisted of two male and three female chefs, ranging from the ages of twenty four to fifty. This range of gender and experience gave a very large scope particularly around the industry changes over the last twenty years.

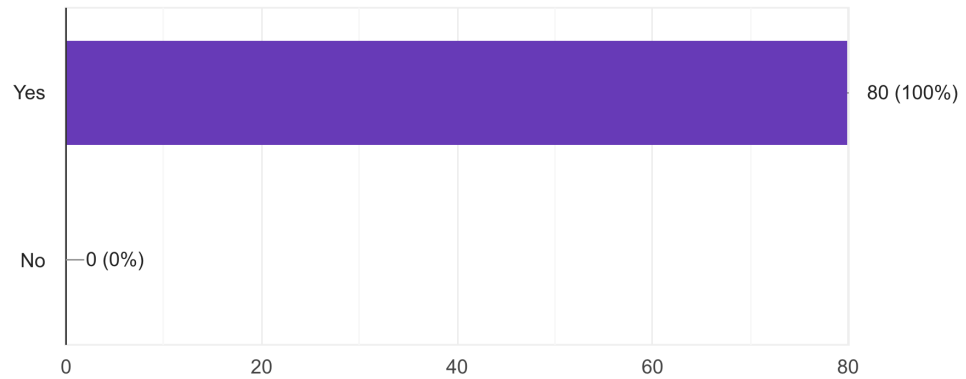
Both the interview and survey questions (see appendices) were based from direct points within the literature review done within this research to ensure all questions were relevant, modern and had a background.

## 5.2 Results and Discussion of Survey

**Table 1: Survey Question 1 - Consent**

Do you consent to taking part in this survey?

80 responses



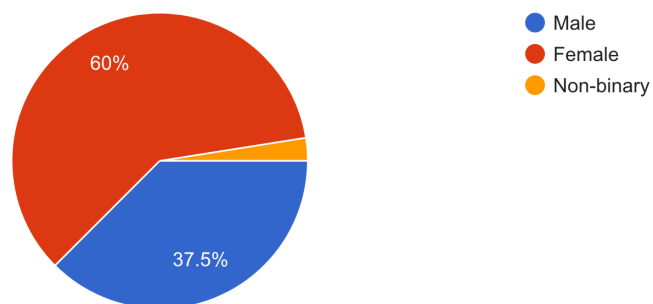
All eighty respondents gave their consent to taking part in this survey. Within the bio, all participants were made aware of their right to withdraw consent at any time throughout the survey.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 2: Survey Question 2- Gender**

What is your gender?

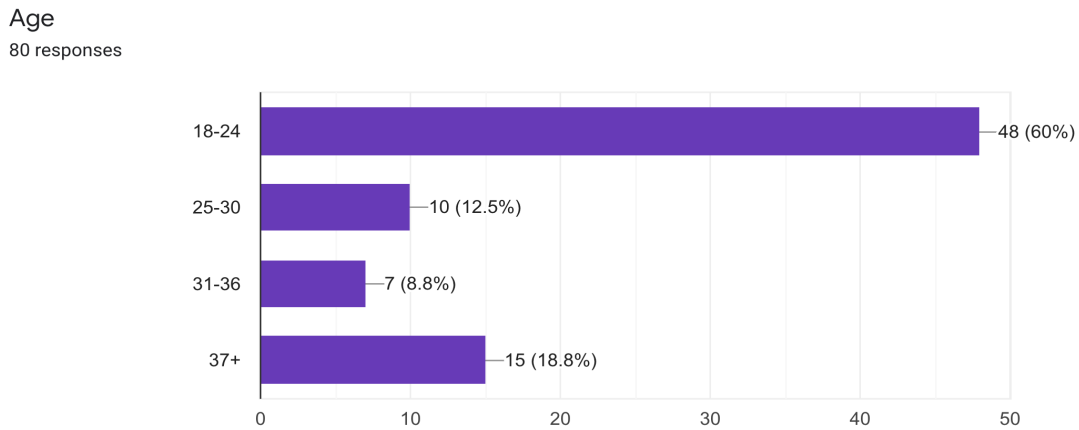
80 responses



60% of respondents were female, 37.5% male and 2.5% non binary.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 3: Survey Question 3 - Age**



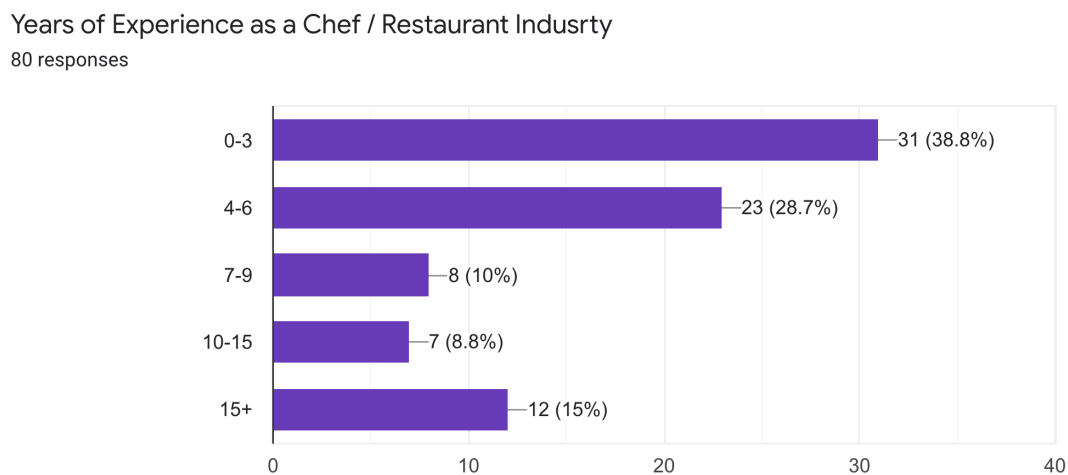
The survey received a wide range of age of respondents.

60% were 18-24, 12.5% were 25-30, 8.8% were 31-36 and 18.8% were 37+.

The age ranges were kept minimal in size so as to clearly gauge differences between age, level of experience and thus experiences felt in the industry over time.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 4: Survey Question 4 - Years of Industry Experience**



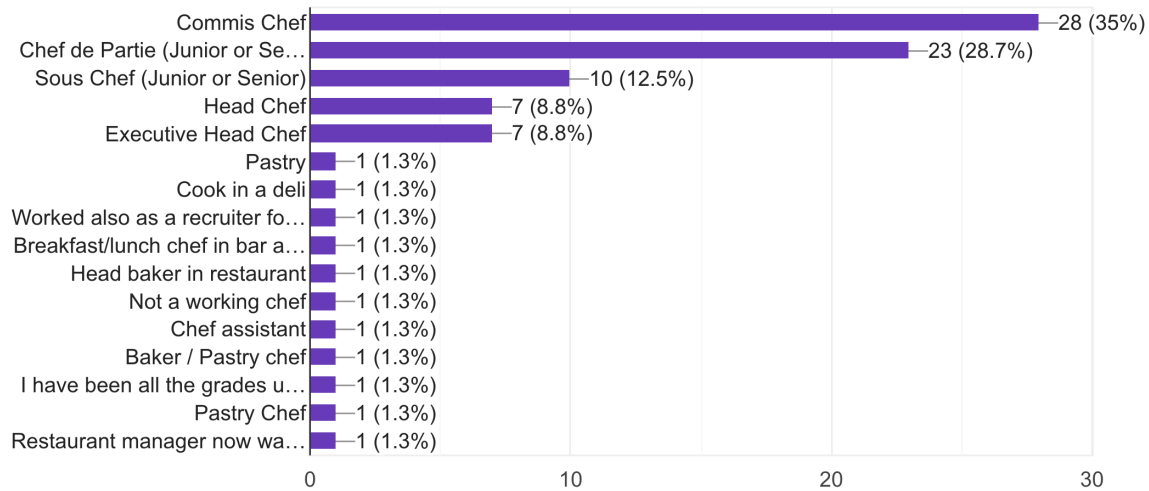
This survey received a wide range of respondents who have varied years of industry experience.

38.8% have 0-3 years of experience, 28.7% have 4-6 years, 10% have 7-9 years, 8.8% have 10-15 years and 15% have 15+ years. Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 5: Survey Question 5 - Chef Grade (most recent / current)**

What Grade are you / were you as a Chef?

80 responses



- ❖ Commis Chefs: 35%
- ❖ Chef De Partie (Junior or Senior): 28.7%
- ❖ Sous Chef (Junior or Senior): 12.5%
- ❖ Head Chef: 8.8%
- ❖ Executive Head Chef: 8.8%
- ❖ Other: Chef Assistants (1%), Pastry Chefs (3.9%), Deli Cooks (1.3%), Restaurant Managers (1.3%)

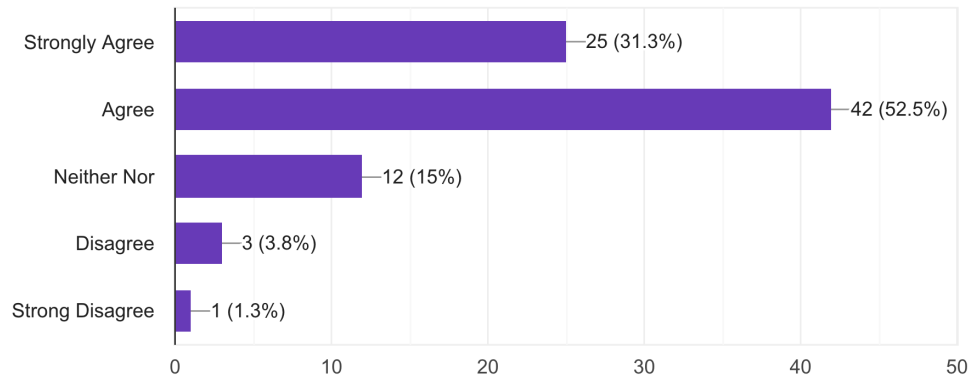
There were respondents from numerous chef grades and levels, which was very positive in terms of ensuring a good industry perspective, seeing the views and experiences from all levels.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 6: Survey Question 6 - Pastry Chefs Gender**

Research shows 73% of pastry chefs are women, would this reflect your experience?

80 responses



Within the review of literature, a statistic was found which stated 73% of pastry chefs are women currently.

This question was presented in order to investigate whether chefs felt this was an accurate reflection within day to day industry life. Baking and pastry cheffing can typically be very female heavy areas.

This statistic was found to be true by 83.3% of respondents, with 31.3% strongly agreeing and 52.5% agreeing. 15% felt it was neither nor. 5.1% disagreed overall.

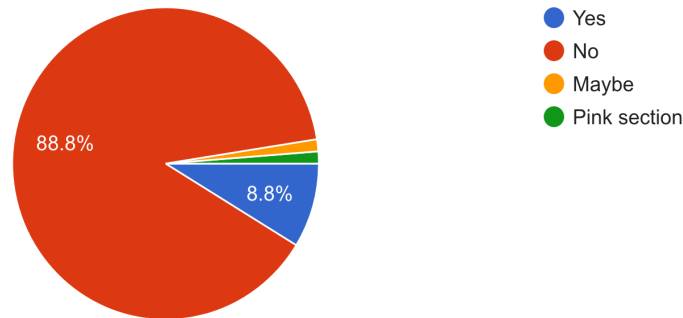
Generally these answers pertain to the fact that within industry, the area of pastry is still heavily female dominated.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 7: Survey Question 7 - Pastry Section Terminology or ‘Slang’**

Have you ever heard of / referred to the Pastry Section as the 'Pink Dungeon' or 'Pink Ghetto'?

80 responses



Research found that some chefs have referred to or heard the pastry section being called the ‘pink dungeon’ or ‘pink ghetto’. This is typically seen as a derogatory ‘slang’ name which is used as generally pastry sections are female dominated (as seen in survey question 6).

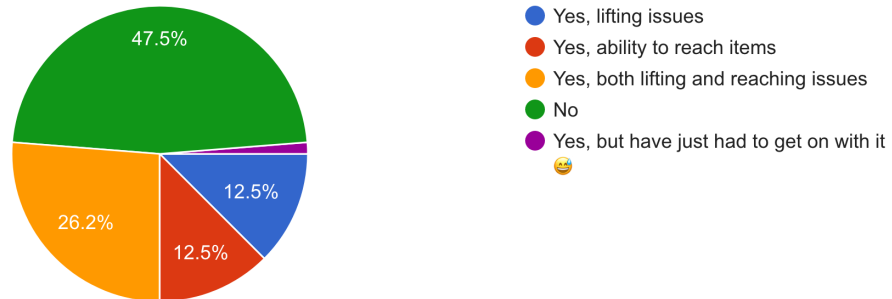
This question aided a positive result, with 88.8% of chefs not having heard / used this term. 8.8% have and 1% maybe. One respondent said they heard it known as the ‘pink section’. The fact such a high proportion have not heard or used these terms is an industry positive.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 8: Survey Question 8 - Physical Set Up of a Kitchen**

Do you ever struggle with the physical set up of a kitchen?

80 responses



As seen within the introduction (1.9 Kitchen Structures), the physical set up of a professional kitchen is very much based on the male physical form, with heavy equipment and ingredients to be lifted and moved and high shelving.

All respondents were asked ‘do you ever struggle with the physical setup of a kitchen?’. 52.4% (over half) said that they do struggle with elements.

Respondents Answers:

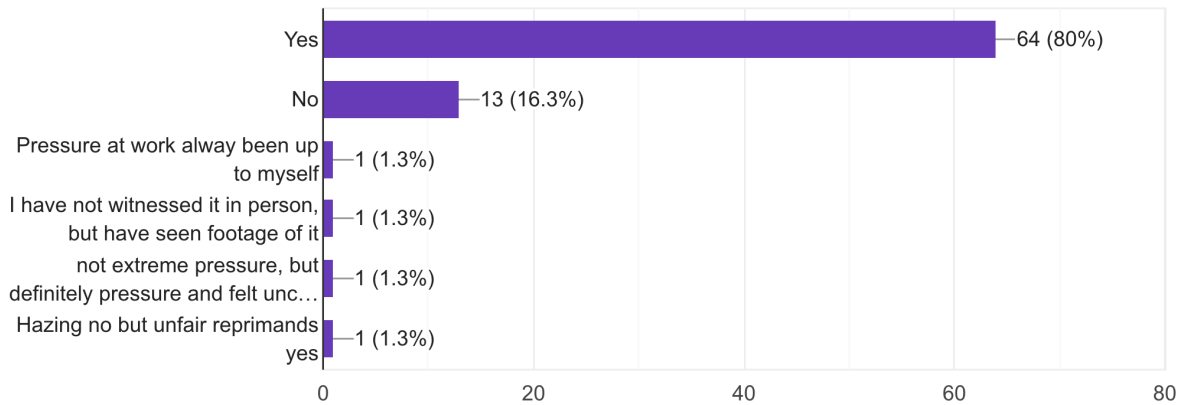
- ❖ Ability to reach items: 12.5%
- ❖ Lifting Issues: 12.5%
- ❖ Both Lifting and Reaching Issues: 27.4%
- ❖ No: 47.5% felt they don't struggle with lifting or reaching issues

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 9: Survey Question 9 - Extreme Pressure / Hazing**

Have you experienced and/or witnessed extreme pressure and hazing throughout your time as a chef?

80 responses



Extremely high levels of pressure and stress are sometimes seen as ‘norms’ of kitchen and chef life, which is vastly promoted by the media through shows such as ‘Hell's Kitchen’ by Gordon Ramsey.

This was an important question within this research in order to understand if these pressurised environments still exist within Irish kitchens today. The results weren't shocking, but very disappointing.

80% of respondents said they have witnessed / experienced high pressure and hazing, while only a small 16.3% chose no. 5.2% made various comments such as the pressure being self-inflicted, seeing footage of these incidents and ‘unfair reprimands’.

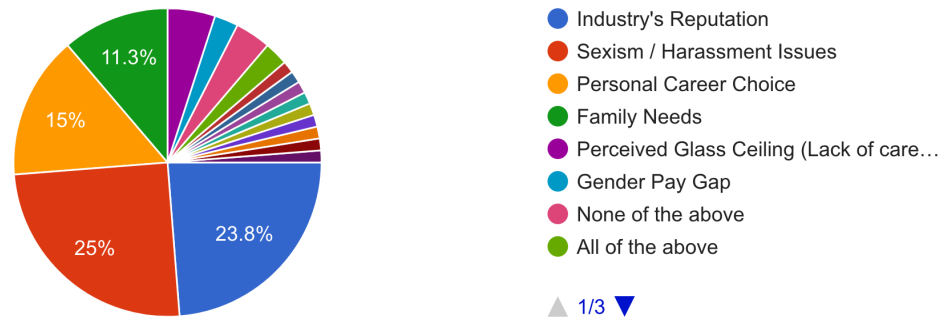
Source: Google Forms, 2022



**Table 10: Survey Question 10 - Reasons for a Lack of Female Presence in Cheffing**

In a 2016 survey, it was found that 69% of Chefs are men. What do you think are the reasons for the lack of female presence in the industry?

80 responses



- ❖ Industry's Reputation: 23.8%
- ❖ Sexism / Harassment Issues: 25%
- ❖ Personal Career Choice: 16.2%
- ❖ Family Needs: 12.5%
- ❖ Perceived Glass Ceiling (lack of career progression / promotion): 6.2%
- ❖ Gender Pay Gap: 3.7%
- ❖ None of the Above: 3.7%
- ❖ All of the Above: 3.7%

This data varied greatly. Nearly all answers were considered issues by respondents, with the two largest being the industry's reputation and sexism / harassment issues, with nearly a quarter of respondents choosing each of these.

**Industry Reputation:** This shows a large industry problem with its outward perception - this may be a media influenced issue, bad media coverage showing only famous angry male chefs and a lack of female role models can stray many young people away from pursuing such a career.

**Sexism / Harassment:** Unfortunately this has been the experience of many women throughout the industry, the head chef at the Bay Tree spoke of having to sack a male chef under gross misconduct after the '[nibbled] the ear of a female sous chef' (Independent, 2012).

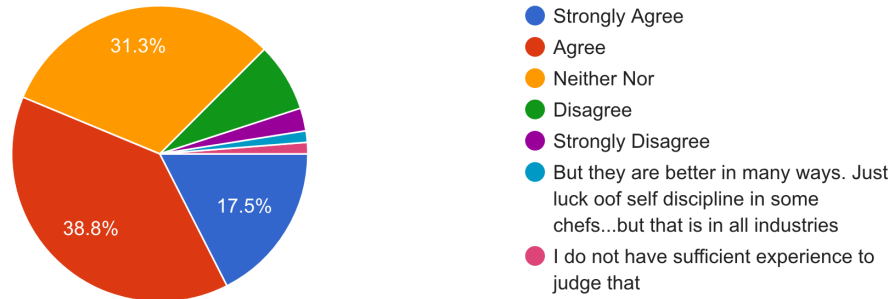
Many of these issues can be solved through new ideas and processes implemented (which will be discussed later within recommendations).

Source: Google Forms, 2022

**Table 11: Survey Question 11 - Statement: ‘Kitchens aren’t what they Used to Be?’**

Do you agree with the statement 'Kitchens aren't what they used to be?'

80 responses



57.5% felt that they agreed with this statement. 32.5% felt neither nor and 10% disagreed.

This is a positive indication of an industry felt change within Ireland - to see such a high portion of people (57.5%) feel the industry isn't following old potentially worn out ways means change is possible, and happening.

Naturally humans can fear and resist change, possibly eluding as to why 10% disagreed, it is important to management (head chefs, executive head chefs, restaurant owners) to be an example of positive change and a reassurance guide through it.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

## **Table 12: Survey Question 12 - What can be done to Improve Kitchen Conditions for Everyone?**

*This question had an open answer box, to allow for personal views and expansion of answers / reasonings. (See Appendix 6)*

### Key Points Mentioned:

1. Better Work - Life Balance
2. Pay Increases
3. Physical Support Systems - *ergonomic layouts, lifting aid equipment, lower shelving*
4. Enforced Codes of Conduct - *reporting systems and workplace policies*
5. Encouragement into Industry - *starting in education*
6. Equality - *in pay, employee treatment, job progression*
7. Culture of Mentorship
8. Training Improvements - *respect training*
9. Incentives - *health insurance, chef pensions*
10. Improvement of Working Conditions - *better ventilation, natural lighting*

By far, the largest issue mentioned was working hours. Numerous respondents mentioned being expected to work fifty to sixty hours a week as the norm. This is a massive issue as the current chef shortage crisis is impacting this currently also.

This amount of hours is illegal, unsustainable and unhealthy for a human being. By gradually implementing an industry four day week (mentioned within answers), chefs could work four 10 hour shifts (40 hours), with three days off. Due to the physical and mental impacts of the job this route could address many of the issues chefs face, and deliver the better work-life balance so many crave.

The introduction of physical support systems would enable and empower far more chefs to do their job with speed, safety and confidence. An ergonomically designed layout would support everyone as it would feed into manual handling, work flow process and in many cases HACCP systems (no underneath of fridges). Lifting equipment would aid the transportation and use of heavy items, ingredients and pots safely around the kitchen.

Better equality can be introduced by gender quotas, fair promotion process' - whereby a hiring committee must be able to prove their reasons for choice. Annual pay reviews could over time eliminate a possible gender pay gap.

An improvement of working conditions could aid the mental wellbeing of chefs, natural lighting and ventilation could prevent issues such as 'bakers lung' - a lung condition due to a high level of flour / dust inhalation.

Source: Google Forms, 2022

### 5.3 Results and Discussion of Interview

#### 1. What is your gender, age, years of experience and current chef grade?

Chef 1:	Male, 36, 21 Years of Experience, Head Chef
Chef 2:	Male, 27, 10 Years of Experience, Sous Chef
Chef 3:	Female, 50, 30 years of Experience, Executive Head Chef
Chef 4:	Female, 30, 10 years of experience, Pastry Chef

#### 2. Have you ever experienced extreme pressure / hazing throughout your time as a chef?

Chef 1:	Absolutely, now I am in charge I ensure it doesn't happen.
Chef 2:	Numerous times, on a daily basis. You just learn to control it better.
Chef 3:	Yes, in a busy kitchen, absolutely you're under extreme pressure. Now with hazing, I haven't had a bad experience with it, I've never worked Michelin, I would assume it's more common there and hotels.
Chef 4:	<p>Personally I haven't witnessed much hazing, but extreme pressure, yes. I lost twenty pounds during a college work placement. I would get up at half five and get home at one in the morning. You weren't allowed anything except for one meal a day and water, no tea or coffee allowed in the kitchen.</p> <p>There is nothing more stressful than working in a one star Michelin restaurant the month before getting a second star.</p>

#### Analysis of Answers:

Interestingly all agreed to being exposed to extreme pressure throughout normal kitchen life. This coincides with the survey (question 9) result of 80% of respondents. Two of the chefs, both female, felt they had not witnessed hazing, could be that hazing is more common to male chefs.

### 3. What is your opinion on the saying ‘kitchens aren't what they used to be?’

Chef 1:	True, it is totally different. There is more paperwork, more hassle. Less physical abuse (when asked for examples, they said ‘burning, kicking, pencils, clingfilm, pots, pans, bottles thrown)
Chef 2:	I came into the new generation of kitchens, so I’ve just heard the stories. Things have changed in terms of attitudes of chefs and a stronger HR presence. Less verbal abuse.
Chef 3:	I would think that's definitely true. They are better places to work now for many people than they were 20 years ago. They can still be stressful, and I think there are issues around how kitchens are run and managed. A good thing is that people are now more aware of issues and there is much less bullying and harassment than there was.
Chef 4:	I have such mixed feelings about this. When I first started, there were a lot of older chefs who I learned from. One of the best things I was told was ‘it doesn't matter if you're a boy, girl, man, woman, you have to do your job’. Ten years ago when I first started, people were kind of better at sharing their experiences, all the best chefs I've worked with were ten years ago.

#### Analysis of Answers:

A key factor that most interviewees mentioned is the lack of physical abuse, bullying and harassment happening today as opposed to fifteen / twenty years ago. One mentioned it being a ‘new generation’ of kitchens, indicating a rebirth of sorts. Chefs attitudes, a presence of HR and good management seem to be behind this change.

**4. Do you think kitchens / chefs are changing for the better, and if yes, do you feel you are participating in this change? (in terms of management style, attitude, culture)**

<p>Chef 1:</p>	<p>Yes for the better, but in some ways they could be less ‘laxy’, a bit more regimented, but that's just me. But we do it in a calmer way, militaristic in work process and flow, not with attitude. More organisation and more structure. [when asked how they maintain good standards when training without the violence seen years ago] they said show them three times.</p> <p>You have seen me. I will do everything, I’ll get down and scrub the floor, wash the dishes; this is how you show staff what the kitchen is about, no one is above any job.</p>
<p>Chef 2:</p>	<p>Yes, but I agree (with the above comment) it could be more militaristic. Less chaos [when working more militant]. A better flow is important, the main thing. Leading by example is vital.</p>
<p>Chef 3:</p>	<p>I certainly do feel I am participating, I run my own kitchen and it is very much based on that we're all learning, and we work as a team and there is a good [gender] balance, any issues that come up we can sit down and talk about them. Issues will come up, it's how you deal with them.</p> <p>There are plenty of kitchens doing that, but also plenty that are not, those are who we need to tackle. I am active and public about industry issues and what needs to change through programs such as ‘fair kitchens’. I would also like to work with government bodies to help.</p>
<p>Chef 4:</p>	<p>[Due to the current chef shortage] there is an inconsistency of standards across the board. The people who are still stuck in the industry, whether they're good at their job or not, are still getting work.</p> <p>I feel like no one has a drive anymore, there's a ‘do I have to’ attitude. If you work hard, you’ll do well, but people look at me and ask why I'm working so hard, it's because I take pride in what I do.</p>

Analysis of Answers:

The key point found within these answers was the importance of good management. A militaristic ergonomic work flow / process, with an emphasis on treating people well. Within the kitchen hierarchy, setting a good example from the top down is important when displaying good leadership and running a healthy kitchen environment.

**5. 69% of chefs are men, would you agree with this statement? Have you worked in many female heavy kitchens?**

Chef 1:	Me? No, I'd disagree, I've worked with so many women. I have worked in kitchens where I was the only man. There are a lot of girls coming into the industry now, so it's balancing out, it's good. It depends on where you're going, how many women you'll see.
Chef 2:	I would say, in the older generation there were more women. Now it's very male dominated, whereas when I started off there were a lot of older ladies.
Chef 3:	I haven't worked in many female heavy kitchens. Currently there are more women than men in my kitchen but it wasn't always this way. It would have been about 70% men, 30% women, for sure and the head chefs were always men. In some it was just all men. That statistic was the same in 2011 and 2016, so things didn't change much during that time.
Chef 4:	<p>In my personal experience it's more of an 80% male to 20% female ratio, and even then, I've been in a kitchen of ten people and I'm the only girl. I've never worked in a single female heavy kitchen.</p> <p>I find in hotels there's more females - breakfast chefs, pastry chefs, function chefs all female, because they work different hours, home earlier. It suits childcare, and I find men who have kids are breakfast chefs.</p>

Analysis of Answers:

It is interesting to see the link between gender and role / position in a kitchen. Chef 4 mentioned most functional chefs, breakfast chefs and pastry chefs. This allows them better hours in terms of childcare. Chef 1 also mentioned that it depends where you're going, how many women you will see.

**6. What do you think are the reasons for the lack of female presence? (if yes to 5)**

<p>Chef 1:</p>	<p>I don't know what would encourage anyone in, because it's a struggling business at the moment, there is no incentive [currently] to go into this. A work life balance would be good, but it's very hard in this industry, because you need to keep staff low, to make profits.</p> <p>If you don't do that it will fail. A lot of people can't handle the stress of low staff. The [nature] of kitchens puts people off. Its high pressure, hardcore, not for soft people, male or female. I've seen males crack and snap under the pressure and then I've seen females still working harder.</p>
<p>Chef 3:</p>	<p>There are loads, family issues can be one especially after a womens second child. Research shows family needs are an issue but it doesn't explain why so many are leaving younger than this, what is the reason for that?</p> <p>A big issue with high up kitchens is they don't accommodate their needs, and then they are pushed out into different kitchens. Pay is an issue, just as it is for men. It is a low paid job, so if you can get better work, why would you do it?</p> <p>A lot of women go into culinary school but diverge into different industry routes which are probably better pay, hours and working conditions. Interestingly, a lot of women enter, but there is no way of knowing if they will stay, if they find it difficult starting they might say I'm out of here. Certain types of places (hotels, fine dining) can be male dominated and harder to work in, especially for women.</p>
<p>Chef 4:</p>	<p>Well when I was starting, there were only two or three females at most, that I could kind of look at and go, oh well she did it. There's no one else, really, or if there is you don't hear about them. I never had a woman in a kitchen, I had male role models, and always had a male head chef.</p> <p>I was lucky, aswell, I never had many issues during the start of my career, and I think if you don't have issues in the start of your career, you can hold yourself well and deal with confrontation or issues a bit better. If you don't start out that way, it kind of makes it harder to move forward.</p>

Analysis of Answers:

- Lack of female chef role models to look up to
- Bad first kitchen experience
- Family Issues
- Needs not being met - pay, hours



## 7. What do you think can be done to improve kitchen conditions for everyone?

<p>Chef 1:</p>	<p>Through the management, people leave the management, people don't leave jobs. This kitchen has very little [staff] turnover, compared to other kitchens, because of the management. It's a balance of being strict and enjoying your work at the same time.</p>
<p>Chef 3:</p>	<p>We need a body to oversee the cheffing industry at the moment, as it is in a crisis. Things are changing too slowly. There should be a body that would allow chefs to make complaints or highlight issues anonymously. There needs to be an investigative body that can look into these complaints.</p> <p>This is a way of mitigating against issues within a kitchen culture. It also holds for accountability, if you have a kitchen that isn't working you know someone will be coming in to have a good look at you. If we have EHO's it makes sense to have something similar for culture. There should also be minimum grade pay rates.</p> <p>Improving media coverage of young female role models within the public domain is vital to inspire young women. Neven Maguire is a great chef, fair play, but we need women with the same amount of coverage.</p>
<p>Chef 4:</p>	<p>I do feel like kitchens were built more for a male anatomy. I'm short, I have to climb benches to reach stuff or jump.</p> <p>Ross Lewis has been a big pioneer of this kind of thing, he used to bring in speakers to talk to employees on different topics. There were talks on addiction, insomnia and handling interprofessional situations. He was way ahead of his time. He wants to bring this back now.</p> <p>He banned fizzy drinks, and encouraged drinking more water, while discouraging any caffeine. He aims for healthy staff food because it's fuel - no fried foods, just vegetables and salads and a good protein source. If you look after someone's physical being and if they're happy, long term it will pay off and that's why he has high staff retention.</p>

### Analysis of Answers:

- Good management
- Better ergonomic kitchen layout
- Media coverage of female chefs
- Taking care of mental and physical welling - healthy staff food and training talks on common issues of chefs

**8. Would you consider yourself different to older chefs (10-20 years ago) in style, attitude, work process', etc?**

Chef 1:	I would, yes, 100%, I'm calmer. You have to enjoy it, even when you're in the shits, we enjoy it. Otherwise you'll just quit, anyone would.
Chef 3:	Absolutely. I would find it hard to work with chefs now who don't have a good management system and take care of their staff. We all have lots of responsibilities, but there has to be a two way process, there should be a good round communicational flow.

**9. Where do you see yourself in ten years?**

Chef 1:	Retired. Doing my own thing.
Chef 3:	Retired, sitting in the sun somewhere.
Chef 4:	I have actually just set up a business as a sole trader selling a line of gluten free luxury chocolates. In ten years I hope to be a successful business woman. I'll be out of Michelin within the year.

**10. Where do you see the industry in ten years?**

Chef 1:	Can't call it, totally up in the air.
Chef 3:	<p>A better work culture as the standard, bad kitchens the mintory. Good work culture kitchens being where chefs want to work, even Michelin should be a good environment.</p> <p>There will be a high amount of immigrant chefs due to the shortage and we have to be accommodating and welcoming to these cultures. We have to hope we are moving towards 50/50 gender levels in the industry and good equal conditions for everyone, especially women and immigrants.</p>
Chef 4:	Right now the industry is completely broken, the morale is so low, due to being understaffed after covid. I think it's going to crash, where we won't have the people to achieve standards. But at the same time food in Ireland is at an all time high, we have more Michelin stars than ever before, but this standard isn't sustainable.

	I think after it crashes. Hopefully more restaurants are going to start making some lifestyle changes - work life balance, better staff pay and working with employees on schedules. It's time for change.
--	--

**11. What advice would you have for anyone joining the industry, particularly young women?**

Chef 1:	Be strong, firm, be your own person, but don't let anyone walk over you. Don't overstep either, when you do that, that's when shit happens. Know the boundaries of what you're doing, think about what you're saying before you say it. I've been there myself, I've overstepped and just after that, it's complete hell.
Chef 3:	Be confident, you're always going to make mistakes, things will happen. Be careful about where you work, make sure there are good places, because that's where you're going to stay and sustain your career in the industry. Don't be afraid to speak up, believe in yourself and don't put up with bad behaviour.
Chef 4:	Do not make your gender your flagship, don't rely on that solely. But what I will say is that to be a female in this industry who thrives, you have to be 'faster, better, smarter than everyone else', that's the only way.

**Specified Question to Chef 3: Do you apply critical theory? And do you think it is the way forward to reduce inequality and break down barriers within kitchens?**

Answer: I think as you get older you realise it's important to always reflect, I look at my own behaviours and kitchens and think how can I do it better. I ask and involve my staff in ways it can be better. Critical thinking is fundamental.

**Specified Question to Chef 4: Have you ever heard of the pastry section known as the 'pink section' or 'pink dungeon'?**

Answer: No I haven't, but pastry chefs are often called 'spongemonkeys', because we make sponge, and even a monkey could make a sponge.

### 5.3.1 Key Commonalities found within Interviews

Management was found to be a vital aspect of running a healthy kitchen, in terms of employee retention, work process, business profitability, etc. Having a healthy leadership means a better overall work system.

Hazing is less common in modern Irish kitchens, although still a threat, possibly affecting more men than women. Extreme pressure is still very much a huge factor of modern kitchen life in Ireland, this issue was seen in both the interview and survey results gathered.

Kitchens are improving, physical abuse is becoming a thing of the past. New lifestyle changes such as better working hours and incentives may help encourage chefs into the industry.

### 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion the findings of both the survey and interviews with current chefs in the industry reflected some of the previous literary research done on this topic so far. The survey provided a wide array of answers from a large portion of chefs, gaining statistical data and opinions.

The interviews provided an in-depth personal perspective from current key industry figures allowing the researcher to gauge an accurate depiction of how these issues affect people in their daily lives and how they think it can be improved upon.

Using a triangulation form of research meant both sources can be supported by the other, as was seen with many answers reflected back to the other source, commonalities and recurring themes were found.

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

## **6. 1. Conclusions in terms of Objectives**

### 6.1.1 Objective One

*‘To investigate and analyse the current state of the industry through a review of past and present literature from an array of media sources, thus complying the most complete and thorough view, as not solely academic sources, but real world accounts and experiences also.’*

This objective was met as over sixty nine sources were referenced and used to compile this research. These sources compile academic journals, online articles, books, previous interviews and historical research.

Triangulation and thematic analysis were both key methods in the primary researching process in order to have as many reliable data sources as possible. A survey was done which received eighty chefs' responses. This was made up of questions pertaining to information found within the review of past literature, thus solidifying these findings to be true in the majority.

Interviews were done with current Irish chefs in the industry, two female, two males of varying ages, ranks, and years of experience. These allowed a personal insight into the opinions and experiences behind the information gathered previously, putting faces in front of the lense.

A lense of critical theory was used throughout analysing all primary and secondary research, in order to avoid bias, and find the real information. Many of these issues have been present for a long period of time and so this perspective was vital in breaking the stigma of change and challenging the status quo.

### 6.1.2 Objective Two

*'Investigate whether there is a lack of women in industry and why using first and second hand research; interviews and surveys, gaining an understanding of the reasons why this is happening.'*

Through research of past statistics, it was found that the industry is made up of 69% men (2016). Within interviews, a key commonality was the feeling that kitchens are still very male dominated today.

It was also found that the amount of women can depend on the type of work such as breakfast chefs, function chefs and pastry chefs, which the survey within this research showed that pastry is very much dominated largely by women.

The industry's perceived reputation was the biggest reason found for the lack of female presence in the survey. After this came sexism / harassment issues, personal career choice and then family needs.

The issue is, if business' dont meet these needs and make lifestyle changes they will continue to deter women from the industry. This may not have felt like a large issue before, but within the current shortage crisis, it is imperative changes are made.

### 6.1.3 Objective Three

*'Using research compiled : develop recommendations to help solve this issue and develop an ideal kitchen model and H.R protocols that would encourage a better work environment for all'*

#### New Style Brigade System

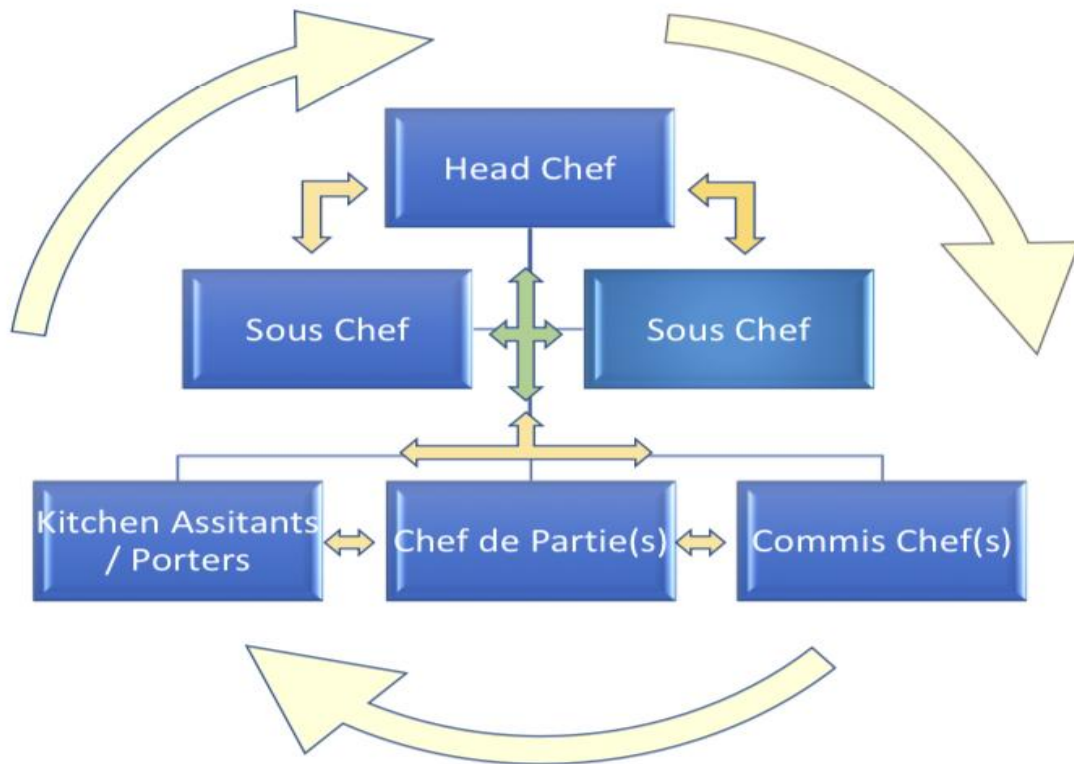
A new system of the organisation of chefs within professional kitchens can be made in place of the older 'Brigade System'. This would be a militaristic efficiency organisational flow and work process in order to properly manage the divisions of labour needed within a kitchen.

It would have a strong emphasis on the mental and physical health of its 'comrades'. Young modern chefs have needs, and now options. They can choose where they want to work and leave just as easily. This means businesses must compete to be better and maintain staff retention.

Within the kitchen the head chef should be a strong leadership figure that strongly supports and advocates for his staff, with levels of respect through all levels. Chef grades - bar head and sous, may be kept quiet, only used for promotional / pay needs. This discourages anyone from feeling 'less than' / 'pulling rank'. This would encourage a strong well rounded team style that supports one another.



Figure 4: New Bridge Style System Layout



Key:

- Rank / Chef Grade
- Flow of respect
- Mentorship
- Organisation wide flow of respect / positive work culture / system of support
- Lines of hierarchy

## 6.2 Recommendations

Where there is a problem (industry crisis), there are solutions. The main recommendations for the sustainable continuation of the restaurant industry are as follows:

### 6.2.1 Work-life balance:

One of the main things found throughout this research is a culture of overworking and a historical pride of that. Understandably, due to the nature of the industry and the type of work involved, long hours are often quite necessary.

This is being tackled currently by some restaurants in a full time four day week, whereby employees get a full salary but work ten/eleven hours over four days. This is a very clever solution as a rotation of staff can be put in place, for example:

#### A mock model of a busy seaside fish restaurant:

8 members of kitchen staff, 5 full time (4 day week), 3 part time (2 day week). 5 services a week, Thursday through Monday.

Figure 5: Mock Staff Rotation Example of a 4 Day Week

Staff Type	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Full Time					
Part Time					

Key:

Full time staff: Employee 1 - | Employee 2 - | Employee 3 - | Employee 4 - | Employee 5 - |

Part Time Staff: Employee 1 - | Employee 2 - | Employee 3 - |

## 6.2.2 Pay

By the use of minimum pay grades for chef ranks (chef de partie, commis chef), a more universal pay division would take form, whereby the stigmatised conversation of pay is a thing of the past.

This may also help the issue of the gender pay gap during job progression, as the grade must meet the pay set. The universal pay of each grade is a minimum, based on the business type, income and level of work, it can be exceeded if chosen. The pay scales may change based on area, eg. Dublin City centre due to higher living costs in the city.

Where the grade is exceeded, each business should be able to prove why someone is paid more than another of the same grade, if an issue arises. This structure may also help training and work standards, as the drive to earn more income coincides with a motivation to work hard and be promoted.

## 6.2.3 Physical Support Systems and Working Conditions

As kitchens are moving slowly away from being fully male dominated, it is important to ensure the conditions are as accessible as possible for women, especially in the context of health and safety. Improvements to physical conditions will benefit everyone who enters.

Implementations such as:

- ❖ Lifting aids / equipment for anything over 8kg
- ❖ Any new built kitchens with accommodations for a shorter / smaller body type and ergonomic layouts
- ❖ Natural light / windows where possible and a good source of ventilation

## 6.2.4 Education

The implementation of an industry led education system to train chefs could help solve the current shortage. A work based programme whereby students work three days a week and go to college for two could get people into the industry fast.

By industry and educational bodies working in tandem and communicating they could both offer perspectives on what they need. For example, industry may want more chefs trained in modern Asian cuisine to cater for growing markets, and universities may want students to receive practical training on fryer use within their job.

By offering one to two year courses in this style, the uptake may be far greater as it is less commitment and they receive an income, something many full time college students may struggle with as time progresses.

### 6.2.5 Reporting Policies and a Culture of Respect

Within a healthy organisation, the flow of respect should flow down throughout a hierarchy as well as up in a 360 degree flow. Training on how to deal with workplace scenarios such as interprofessional training, 'train the trainer', leadership and management, reporting and addiction could all be implemented in order to meet the mental needs for employee wellbeing.

By meeting the physical needs of employees such as workplace conditions and combining this with wellbeing training, employees are given the tools to be happy and successful in themselves, thus creating a better working team and conversely increasing business success.

Through having a safe system of reporting for employees, issues can be dealt with calmly and employees will feel confident management are supporting them. Hospitality can be a very strenuous stressful job and this system of a wellbeing culture and a flow of respect can rule out bad behaviours, reducing workplace stress.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Do you consent to taking part in this survey? \*

Yes

No

2. What is your gender? \*

Male

Female

Non-binary

Other:

3. Age \*

18-24

25-30

31-36

37+

4. Years of Experience as a Chef / Restaurant Industry \*

0-3

4-6

7-9

10-15

15+

5. What Grade are you / were you as a Chef? \*

Commis Chef

Chef de Partie (Junior or Senior)

Sous Chef (Junior or Senior)

Head Chef

Executive Head Chef

Other:

6. Research shows 73% of pastry chefs are women, would this reflect your experience? \*

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Nor
- Disagree
- Strong Disagree

7. Have you ever heard of / referred to the Pastry Section as the 'Pink Dungeon' or 'Pink Ghetto'? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other:

8. Do you ever struggle with the physical set up of a kitchen? \*

Multiple Answers can be selected here. Lifting refers to the difficulty of lifting heavy equipment / ingredients. Reaching refers to the ability to reach items needed.

- Yes, lifting issues
- Yes, ability to reach items
- Yes, both lifting and reaching issues
- No
- Other:

9. Have you experienced and/or witnessed extreme pressure and hazing throughout your time as a chef? \*

- Yes
- No
- Other:

10. In a 2016 survey, it was found that 69% of Chefs are men. What do you think are the reasons for the lack of female presence in the industry? \*

- Industry's Reputation
- Sexism / Harassment Issues
- Personal Career Choice
- Family Needs
- Perceived Glass Ceiling (Lack of career progression / promotion)
- Gender Pay Gap
- None of the above
- Other:

11. Do you agree with the statement 'Kitchens aren't what they used to be?' \*

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Nor
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Other:

12. What do you think can be done to improve kitchen conditions for everyone? \*

Open Answer Box



## Appendices 2: Interview Questions

Basic Interview Layout Questions - [Extra questions were asked throughout interviews based on conversational flow and interviewee answers]

1. What is your gender, years of experience and current chef grade?
2. Have you ever experienced extreme pressure / hazing throughout your time as a chef?
3. What is your opinion on the saying 'kitchens aren't what they used to be'?
4. Do you think kitchens / chefs are changing for the better, and if yes, do you feel you are participating in this change? (in terms of management style, attitude, culture)
5. 69% of chefs are men, would you agree with this statement? Have you worked in many female heavy kitchens?
6. What do you think are the reasons for the lack of female presence? (if yes to 5)
7. What do you think can be done to improve kitchen conditions for everyone?
8. Would you consider yourself different to older chefs (10-20 years ago) in style, attitude, work process', etc?
9. Where do you see yourself in ten years?
10. Where do you see the industry in ten years?
11. What advice would you have for young women joining the industry?

Appendix 3: Photograph of 1940's Turkish Military Uniform

Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/turkish-army.html> (2022)

Appendix 4: Photograph of a Study of a Woman's 'Work Curve'

[https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1519930/19/Penner\\_project\\_muse\\_692167.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1519930/19/Penner_project_muse_692167.pdf) (2018)

Appendix 5: Thematic Analysis Process Diagram

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Coding-Manual-for-Qualitative-Researchers-Saldaña/583c3a3460bd5c98068cfc46236414b1bb89ef5e/figure/0> (2009)

Appendix 6: Survey Results, Question 12: What do you think can be done to Improve Kitchen Conditions for Everyone

What do you think can been done to improve kitchen conditions for everyone?
Equality
Less snowflakes in kitchens
Increased focus on professionalism
Equal gender pay grade
Better work condition - long Working hours, unsociable working hours & days, increase wages
A more open environment in which chefs can be comfortable in the work environment they work in, which may involve connections with other chefs, clean area, top-notch tools to perform their job.
Personally lower shelves , easier ways to move heavy things I keep doing my back in constantly because most things are too heavy
Pay , conditions ,work life balance and hours
Always communicate and help out each other
Get men to stop being so misogynistic and creepy
More training about equal work and less harassment on women
Working as a team
Better pay particularly for junior chefs, any where I,Ãve worked (3 different kitchens, 2 Ire and one in England) there is always one or two key chefs and if they,Ãre not in the attitude is the kitchen can,Ãt survive which places pressure on these chefs and makes others feel inadequate, more staff which is nobody,Ãs fault it,Ãs a worldwide issue after the pandemic
Make the environment less hostile and more of a learning environment and allowing time to adapt to the workflow without the use of gender or ethnic jokes.
Codes of behaviour/respect programmes in workplaces
Better work life balance, better pay
More staff
Educating chefs who are in training to treat everyone with the same respect. Many male head chefs pass on their misogynistic and toxic traits to those working beneath them
Better equality
girls are treated differently in the kitchen in my experience and are normally treated like they can do less or aren,Ãt capable as the boys
Work/life balance
Improved atmosphere ( if possible )

People to learning to respect eachother more
Flour bags being 15kg instead of 25kgs. Mixing bowls easier to lift and maneuver from one point to another. Educating Some chefs perspectives that throwing food on a plate is exceptable and correcting / looking for a neater finish is having too high a standard and should be lowered to fit in with others in the kitchen (this could because there is so many untrained chefs in a kitchen I work in)
Nothing. Always go for a trail. Don't like it don't take the job. Choose the right kitchen
Reduction of hours, to keep stress down. Would need more people becoming chefs.
Less pressure, too intense
4 day work weeks, enforced lunches and breaks
Better working hours. More realistic expectations of the staff from management.
better pay and better sops
More recognition for people who are willing to learn and want to learn I find that gets brushed under and it, " just about getting the work done it doesn't matter who does it. You could be putting yourself there endlessly but it goes unnoticed all the time
Better pay and work/life balance
Improve culture
I think its starting to get better, non acceptance of bullying etc Hours need to be more balanced - work life balance Benefits for chefs like in other jobs and industries
Better pay and training to keep them in the industry
Create a better work life balance so you don't have to do 60+ hours a week, make it so then sexism etc is punishable without question - I know that, "s hard but many bosses just don't care which makes the staff not care, create passion in young people to cook to help the job crisis, pay increases which I know is incredibly hard to do but certain positions could take a cut to help other positions reap the benefits of all the hard work they do.. for instance I was doing the same work as a male and he was on nearly ~£5 an hour extra just because he had a title to his role Give better insentives
Ergonomic layout
Treating everyone equally and fairly
treating woman the same as men in the kitchen
Better working hours and employers offering pensions, health care deals maybe RAI or IHF can do a deal with VHI or some pension group for hospitality and catering employees
To be more inclusive and open minded when it comes to training/hiring female staff
Less pressure from senior chef, however I find that many young chefs don't care enough and don't have the proper manners when it comes to working in the kitchen team so that needs a lot of work. Tough love is definitely often required in this line of business.

Less use of fear to keep up standards, verbal abuse and harassment are still a bit issue
Flexibility around family. Better wages.
Make the physical aspect such as lifting and reaching easier for shorter/weaker people. As well, we should start to take sexism and harassment very seriously in the kitchen. We can, "let things like this keep sliding in the kitchen, and letting people use excuses to justify their actions
Respecting each other would be a good start
Better Pay, Tax Incentives, Better Hours, More Perks like Office Jobs, Better Social Understanding..
Dealing with understaffed kitchens (leading to wearingly long hours)
Stricter laws around work environments in kitchens
Have strong mentoring practices in place and appropriate conduct as the blueprint
.
Better working hours and treatment
Breaks
Working hours, and some male chefs treatment towards women
I think in general making them appear more approachable and shedding the stereotypes portrayed on television. In my kitchen, I try to focus on a balance between work, life and enjoying what the chefs do on a day to day basis. This has helped us attract new team members and I think could improve kitchens for everyone.
More windows in the premises, good management, communication between staff.
Equal pay
Not sure, equality maybe
I think there is an old fashioned idea among many chefs, managers and restaurant owners that kitchens are different from other workplaces and aren't subject to the same policies on harassment and bullying. That is what needs to change, these outdated mind sets of people already in the industry.
Teaching about more female chefs/ referee their recipes, method, restaurants etc.
Equality in the kitchen
Measures put in place by authority to ensure kitchens maintain professionalism and that there is support for anyone suffering from work place harassment/bullying of any kind.
No tolerance policy on any form of hazing or harassment
Mutual respect
Improved work conditions and reasonable work hours
Not sure what the question is asking.. Physical conditions or other
Better conditions and pay
Pay increase and proper shifts of 8 hours not expecting the staff to always work 9 to 13 hour shifts

which is just based on my experience
<p>Improve fresh air circulation in kitchens</p> <p>Cap the working week at a 4 day week</p> <p>It is also my opinion there is not enough done by either third level institutes or training boards to encourage people to enter the industry to become a chef and make it a career. The level of shortages of chefs and trainee chefs is at an all time high in Ireland, while there is no emphasis on encouraging people to enter the industry which would in turn relive not only the workload but the physical and mental pressure experienced in the industry .</p>
More personnel and less micro managing better salaries
Holding chefs accountable for their actions, legal requirement for HR in restaurants.
share the positives about the kitchen life, put in place measures for any harassment
Men only
N/A
It,Ãs the culture, men usually hire men and also for some women can be seen as a tough exterior role dominated by men and so may not go down tbat oath
Equal pay and equal job progression in females and males
Modernise systems and remove stigmas
Better pay equal sharing of tips better equipment
A better approach to work life balance. 50+ hour weeks should be seen as normal anymore