New research reveals that women are better represented in the boardrooms of local statutory boards than in the boardrooms of listed companies in Singapore. As of February 2012, female directors held 19.8% of board positions on Singapore’s statutory boards, while only 6.9% of the corporate directors at Singapore Exchange-listed companies were women.

Women were also better represented in the role of chairperson on statutory boards with 16.9% female Chairs, compared to 2.7% on the boards of listed companies.

This research is a new addition to the Singapore Board Diversity Index, which tracks gender diversity in the boardrooms of Singapore-listed firms. The on-going research for the Index is being conducted by the NUS Business School’s Centre for Governance, Institutions & Organisations (CGIO) in partnership with BoardAgender, and sponsored by UBS and SGX. The full report will be released later this year.

The inaugural review of gender diversity in the boardrooms of Singapore’s 65 statutory boards found that three organisations had at least half of their boardrooms made up of female directors: National Parks (50%), the Singapore Pharmacy Council (63.6%) and the Singapore Nursing Board (70.6%).

In contrast, 11 statutory boards did not have a single woman in their boardrooms, despite an average board size of 14 directors. These boards include the Agency for Science, Technology and Research, the Building and Construction Authority and the Council for Estate Agencies.

A large majority of statutory boards (83.1%), however, had at least one female director on their boards. The Singapore Nursing Board had the largest number of women in its boardroom, with 12 out of 17 board members. The study also found there are directors holding multiple directorships on statutory boards, although no individual director holds more than four statutory board directorships.

“As statutory boards represent the public interest, we were pleased to see the higher percentage of female participation. Boards with a diverse composition by gender, age, skills and experience can draw on the diversity of opinion to derive benefits for society in general”, said BoardAgender co-Chairs Junie Foo and Juanita Woodward.

The research into statutory boards follows the launch of the inaugural Singapore Board Diversity Report in October 2011, where Mdm Halimah Yacob, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, said that appointments to statutory boards and government-linked companies would represent a good start in terms of having more women on boards.