breaking the barriers

women in senior management in the UK

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breaking the barriers – women in senior management

Throughout this report dollar equivalents were calculated at $1.6 = £1. Percentages do not necessarily add to 100 due to rounding, non-responses and other factors.

contents

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to learn about women in senior management positions in the United Kingdom and, on selected topics, to compare women's experiences at the top on both sides of the Atlantic. Like its predecessor studies, undertaken by Catalyst in the US in 1996 and Canada in 1997, *Women in Senior Management in the United Kingdom* explores the strategies which women in senior management consider pivotal for their advancement, as well as the barriers they face in the workplace. It provides information for employers to inform their policies for the recruitment, retention and development of women in their organisations. Specific areas related to women's career development, which the study examines, include:

- **Career choices** – What attracted women to their current organisation and why would they leave?

- **Effective success strategies** – What organisational and individual strategies are seen as critical to success in advancing women in leadership roles?

- **The effectiveness of Equal Opportunity (EO) policies** – To what extent have EO policies enhanced women's opportunities for advancement?

- **Barriers** – What holds women back from advancing to the highest levels of leadership in their organisations?

- **Networking** – To what extent are women included in informal venues and activities that enhance visibility and provide 'insider' information about organisational politics?

- **Personal management style** – How comfortable are men with women's 'different' style?

- **Work/life balance** – What strategies do women use to fulfil their goals and commitments at work and at home?

- **Domestic commitments** – To what extent do domestic commitments impact on women's career development?

A companion survey of chief executives was also undertaken in order to be able to compare the experiences and perceptions of senior women with the perceptions and assumptions of leaders at the top of their organisations, 63 percent of whom are men.

About the Opportunity Now/Catalyst collaboration

Opportunity Now, based in the United Kingdom, and Catalyst, based in the United States, are both organisations working to realise the economic potential and business benefits that women contribute to the workforce. Given their similar aims, Opportunity Now and Catalyst have a fruitful partnership, which led to their collaboration on this study. Catalyst published the first study *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects* in 1996 in response to research which indicated that, despite increasing numbers of women at entry and mid-level management in the US, structural and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement still existed. The study was valuable in informing the thinking of US public and private organisations as they considered the development of human resources. The study was replicated in Canada in 1997. This allowed interesting comparisons of the experiences of women within North America.

Discussions began in 1997 on jointly conducting a survey in the UK and in 1999 a research project was launched, based on the Catalyst model. The results of this research provides valuable knowledge on the view of women at senior levels in UK organisations and also allows comparisons to be made between women's experience and the barriers to their progress in the UK and North America. One difference in methodology between the UK study and the North American surveys is that women and chief executives from the public sector were included in the UK sampling framework, adding yet another perspective to our understanding of women's experiences at the top.

Methodology

Survey of Executive Women

Between November 1999 and February 2000 a 14-page questionnaire was sent to over 3,800 women in organisations which were drawn from the membership of Opportunity Now, Business in the Community (Opportunity Now's parent organisation) and the Financial Times Securities Exchange top 100 companies (FTSE 100). These organisations included large corporations, small and medium size business, higher educational institutions, professional firms, and public sector organisations including government departments and agencies, local and city councils and National Health Service establishments. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the career paths and strategies of women who hold positions no more than five levels below CEO or equivalent. These women were also invited to participate in a telephone interview, with the guarantee of confidentiality. A total of 1188 usable questionnaires were returned; a response rate of 31 percent.

Survey of Chief Executive Officers

During the same time-period, just over 1000 questionnaires were sent to the CEOs (or equivalents) of the same organisations plus companies in the FTSE 500 in order to collect comparative data on a number of topics covered in the senior women's survey. 117 usable surveys were returned, representing a 12 percent response rate. CEOs were also invited to participate in a confidential follow-up interview.

Interviews

A random sample of 56 women was drawn from those who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. The sample represented all types of organisations included in the survey. Telephone interviews were conducted between April and May 2000. Two focus groups with an additional 10 women were held. From the CEOs who volunteered to be interviewed, eight were randomly selected and these interviews were also conducted between April and May 2000. Data from the interviews and focus groups were content-analysed and appear in the form of verbatims and case histories included in the report.

Types of data presented in the report

Senior women's responses. Responses from 1188 women who responded to this survey are presented in figures and tables that focus on senior women's responses only.

Comparisons of senior women's and CEOs' responses. Comparisons of responses from the 1188 women and the 117 CEOs who responded to the survey are presented in figures and tables for questions that were asked of both groups.

Comparisons of senior women's responses by type of organisation. Two types of comparisons are presented in the report:
1) comparisons of women in corporations, professional firms (including accountancy firms, management consultants, law firms and other professional partnerships), and, public sector organisations and higher education establishments (aggregated) are presented in figures and tables where statistically significant differences in responses that were related to employment sector were found.
2) comparisons of women in government, education, and the private sector (an aggregate of responses from women in corporations and professional firms) are presented in text boxes where there appear to be meaningful differences of perspective among women working in the three sectors.

Comparisons of women in different age groups. Comparisons of women aged under 35, 35-49, and, 50 and over, are presented in figures in Chapter 7 for questions where statistically significant differences in responses that were related to age were found.

Comparisons of male and female CEO responses. Comparisons of responses from 74 male and 43 female CEOs who responded to the survey are presented in text boxes where there appear to be meaningful differences in perspective between the two groups.

Comparisons of responses from US, Canadian and UK women and CEOs. Figures and tables comparing data from the three surveys undertaken separately in the US in 1996, in Canada in 1997, and the UK in 1999, are presented in Chapter 8 for selected questions only where there appear to be meaningful differences in perspective related to the country of the respondent.

Profile of survey respondents

Several questions were asked of both senior women and CEOs to develop a personal and professional profile of each group and to compare factors in their background that might shape their responses to other questions in the survey. Findings from responses to those questions are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 Demographic profile: senior women and CEOs.

	Senior women	CEOs
Average age in years	42 years	49 years
Percentage of those married/cohabiting	75%	82
Percentage with spouse/partner employed full-time	81	45

Figure 2 Types of organisations.

	Senior women	CEOs
Service sector	28%	23
Manufacturing sector	8	9
Professional services	23	32
Public sector	27	26
Education	7	9

Personal profile of senior women and CEOs

- The overwhelming majority of senior women (96 percent) and CEOs (95 percent) are white. Small percentages of respondents from each group identified themselves as Irish, Black, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or Chinese.

- CEOs are, on average, seven years older than senior women and are somewhat more likely than senior women to be married (82 percent vs. 75 percent).

- Sixty-three percent of CEOs are men, 37 percent are women (an expanded profile of CEOs by gender follows).

- Senior women are significantly more likely than CEOs to have a spouse/partner engaged in full time work (81 percent vs. 45 percent)

Professional profiles of senior women and CEOs

- Just over one-quarter of senior women (27 percent) and CEOs (26 percent) work in the public sector.

- Senior women and CEOs are almost equally represented in education (7 and 9 percent respectively).

- Senior women (28 percent) are somewhat more likely than CEOs (23 percent) to be working in the service sector, whereas CEOs (32 percent) are more highly represented than senior women (23 percent) in professional firms.

- Senior women survey respondents (45 percent) are three times as likely as CEO respondents (15 percent) to be working in organisations with the largest annual revenues of £3 billion ($4.8 bn) and above. The initial mailing to FTSE 100 CEOs produced a response rate that was quite low.
  A second mailing was sent to FTSE 500 CEOs. The higher response from CEOs in FTSE 101-500 companies may account for the difference in annual revenues of senior women's and CEOs' companies.

Expanded profile of senior women

Senior women were asked a number of additional questions about their professional and personal lives, providing a rich profile of this group. Their responses portray a group of highly educated, seasoned and committed professionals, with a substantial investment in their employing organisations (see Figure 3).

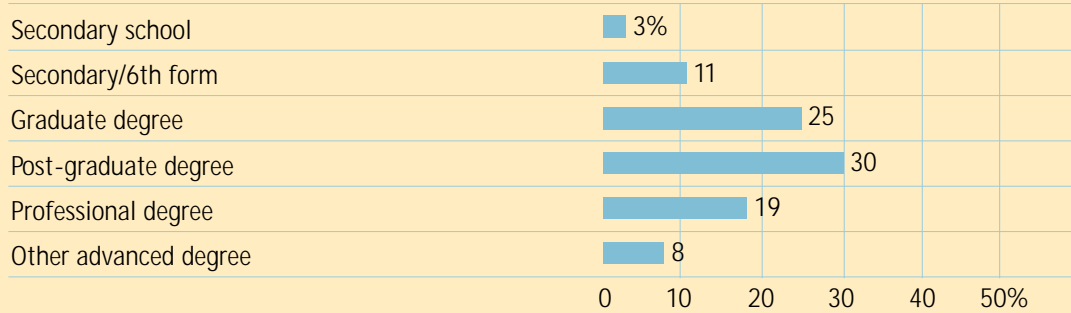**Figure 3a**   Educational attainment: senior women.

Secondary school	3%
Secondary/6th form	11
Graduate degree	25
Post-graduate degree	30
Professional degree	19
Other advanced degree	8

0   10   20   30   40   50%

Figure 3b   Functional responsibilities: senior women.

Line (position with profit or direct client responsibility)	76%
Staff (position without line responsibility)	24

0   20   40   60   80   100%
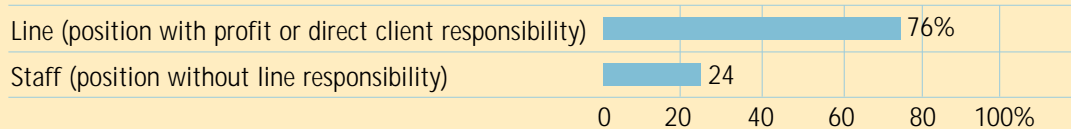
In short, the senior women studied constitute a group of high-performing, loyal professionals and managers whom companies would want to retain and advance. Additionally, their profile is one of women leading complex lives requiring careful management of priorities related to career, family and self.

- **Educational attainment.** Over half (57 percent) of senior women respondents have a post-graduate, professional, and/or other advanced degree.

- **Functional responsibilities.** Just over three-quarters (76 percent) of senior women's positions involve direct customer contact and/or profit responsibility, putting them in the front line of their organisation.

- **Reporting level.** Commensurate with their responsibilities, 69 percent are within one to three reporting levels of the CEO of their organisation; another 20 percent are four reporting levels from their CEO.

- **Hours worked.** Senior women work, on average 47.3 hours a week. Those who have partners in full time work have spouses/partners who work, on average, 44.9 hours weekly.

- **Parental status.** Fifty-five percent of senior women respondents have children; 40 percent have children under 18 living at home.

- **Tenure.** While the average tenure in their current position is 3.3 years, their average tenure in their current organisation is 12.4 years.

- **Remuneration.** They earn on average £60,000 ($96,000) annually and contribute, on average, 68 percent of their household's total income. Annual remuneration varies substantially by employment sector: 78 percent of women in educational institutions and 63 percent of women in the public sector earn less than £45,000 ($72,000) annually compared to only 36 percent of private sector respondents. The average annual remuneration for senior women in corporate organisations, public sector bodies and educational establishments respectively, is £69,000, £44,000 and £41,000 ($110,400, $70,400 and $65,600).

- **Projected retirement age.** The average age at which senior women expect to retire is 54.5.

Expanded profile of CEOs

Thirty-seven percent of CEOs responding to the survey were women, a substantially larger percentage than responded to either the US or Canadian survey. The UK female CEO response provides a unique opportunity, then, to look at how male and female CEOs may differ in terms of their demographics, work experience and perceptions/opinions about senior women's advancement. Professional characteristics of male and female CEOs are discussed below. Responses of male and female CEOs to substantive issues raised in the survey are presented throughout the report whenever marked differences related to gender were observed.

Personal and professional characteristics of male and female CEOs

- Male CEOs (34 percent) are somewhat more likely than their female counterparts (28 percent) to be a corporate head and somewhat less likely than female CEOs to be at the head of a professional firm (30 percent vs. 35 percent); however, male and female CEOs are equally likely to be in government (26 percent of each group) or heading up an educational institution (11 percent male CEOs; 12 percent female CEOs) (see Figure 4).

- With an average age of 49.9, male CEOs are considerably older than their female counterparts, whose average age is 35.2 years.

- Male CEOs (89 percent) are considerably more likely to be married/cohabiting than their female counterparts (68 percent) and female CEOs are almost four times as likely as male CEOs to be separated/divorced (19 percent vs. 5 percent).

- Female CEOs are almost twice as likely as male CEOs to have spouses/partners who are employed full time (69 percent vs. 35 percent).

Figure 4   CEO respondents: type of organisations by gender.

CEOs, female (N = 74)   CEOs, male (N = 43)

1
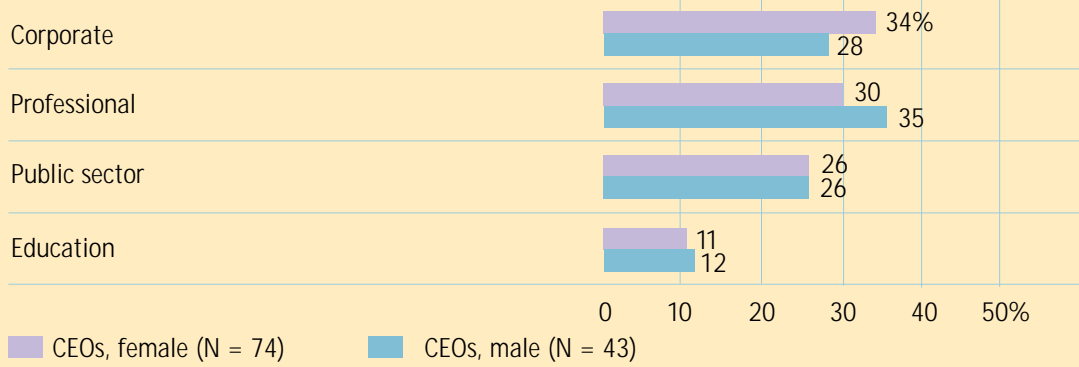
representation of women at the top

- what is women's current representation among senior managers/partners?

- what will women's representation be five years from now?

- is the glass half full or half empty? Differences in perceptions of CEOs and senior women

- assessments about progress for women vary by employment sector

- have employment equality policies helped? Senior women's and CEOs' perspectives

representation of women at the top

With some 72 percent of women of working age in the United Kingdom now classed as economically active, there is a growing recognition among employers of the importance of women as a source of talent as well as their increasing economic power as consumers (Labour Market Trends, Office of National Statistics, August 2000). However, despite growing representation among professionals and managers of private and public enterprises, women continue to be poorly represented at the top of UK organisations. As an example, while women in the UK now hold 22 percent of management jobs, only 9.6 percent of executive directors are women (National Management Salary Survey 2000, Institute of Management).

CEOs and senior women differ in their estimates and assumptions about women's representation at senior levels in their organisations

Senior women and CEOs were asked approximately what percentage of senior managers (officers and executives within three levels of the CEO/Permanent Secretary/Head of Organisation) or partners in their organisations are women. A follow-up question asked each group to project, based on their industry's gender demographics and their organisation's culture and politics, approximately what percentage of their organisation's senior managers or partners they think will be women five years from now.

What is women's current representation among senior managers/partners?

One might expect both senior women and CEOs to know the current number of women senior managers and partners in their organisations. This study did not collect data on the actual number of women senior managers/partners in respondents' organisations. So we do not know whether the responses of either the senior women or CEOs are accurate. What we do know is that senior women's and CEO's perceptions/knowledge about the current representation of women in the senior ranks of their organisations are quite different (see Figure 5).

Figure 5a	Representation of women in senior management, now and in five years: views of CEOs.

Chart data (Figure 5a):

Category	Now	In five years
Less than 10%	41%	16
10-19%	17	22
20-49%	32	53
50% or more	8	8
Don't know	2	1

Scale: 0 15 30 45 60 75%
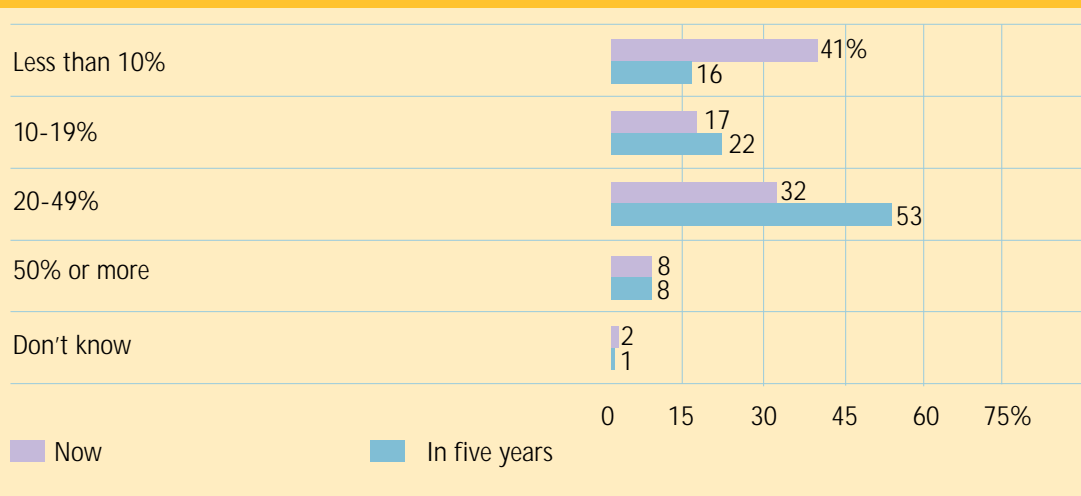
Now ■   In five years ■

Figure 5b Representation of women in senior management, now and in five years: views of senior women.

	Now	In five years
Less than 10%	51%	36
10-19%	15	19
20-49%	18	27
50% or more	5	8
Don't know	11	9

Scale: 0 15 30 45 60 75%

Legend: ■ Now ■ In five years
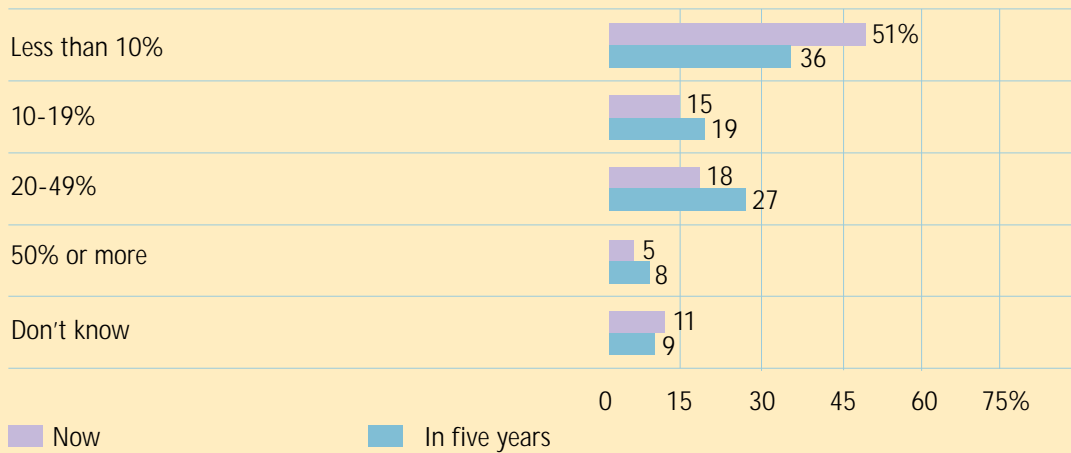
- Eleven percent of senior women reported that they don't know the current representation of women in senior management, whether from lack of interest or lack of available information, vs. no CEOs giving that answer.

- Senior women (51 percent) are more likely than CEOs to believe that the current representation of women among senior leadership in their organisations is relatively low – less than 10 percent – and almost twice as many CEOs (33 percent) as senior women (18 percent) estimated the representation of women at levels from 20 percent to 49 percent.

The following verbatim is from a woman who admits that she doesn't know the answer to this question but *suspects* the representation of women at senior levels hasn't changed in all the years she has worked at her organisation.

> *When I joined the company 17 years ago, there were all these stories around that, now we were going to get it right, we were going to make sure that women would be developing and progressing at the same speed as men and it would only be a matter of time until it got more evenly distributed. I suspect that over the 17 years, nothing has changed within the distribution and the levels at which women appear in the organisation…. although the talk is 'we are going to….' the reality is that it doesn't happen.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

What will women's representation be five years from now?

Again, senior women and CEOs have strikingly different perceptions/expectations about the future representation of women at senior levels in their company.

- Senior women are more pessimistic about what the future holds for women's advancement to the ranks of senior leadership in their organisation – over twice as many women (36 percent) as CEOs (16 percent) believe it will continue to be low, at less than 10 percent.

- CEOs (55 percent) are twice as likely as senior women (27 percent) to believe that, five years from now, the representation of women among top leaders in their organisation will be anywhere from 20 percent to near parity with that of men – at 49 percent.

The responses to this question point to the need for organisations to track their employment statistics in this area and make them known to their managers and professionals. Without accurate information on the representation of women at senior levels, women may assume the worst. By benchmarking women's representation at different levels in the organisation, senior leadership can set goals, track progress and hold managers accountable for results. Letting women know that senior management is committed to improving the representation of women at senior levels will also encourage women who might otherwise be considering leaving the organisation because they do not believe it is possible for women to advance.

Is the glass half full or half empty? Differences in perceptions of CEOs and senior women

CEOs' responses about the current and future representation of women among senior managers or partners may stem from their more positive assessment of changes in the environment for women in the workplace than that of senior women (see Figure 6).

Figure 6   **Opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in respondents' organisations compared to five years ago.**
Senior women's and CEOs' perspectives.

	Senior women	CEOs
Greatly improved	14%	32
Somewhat improved	33	41
Slightly improved	30	18
No change	21	9
Declined	2	0

Senior women (N = 1188)   CEOs (N = 117)
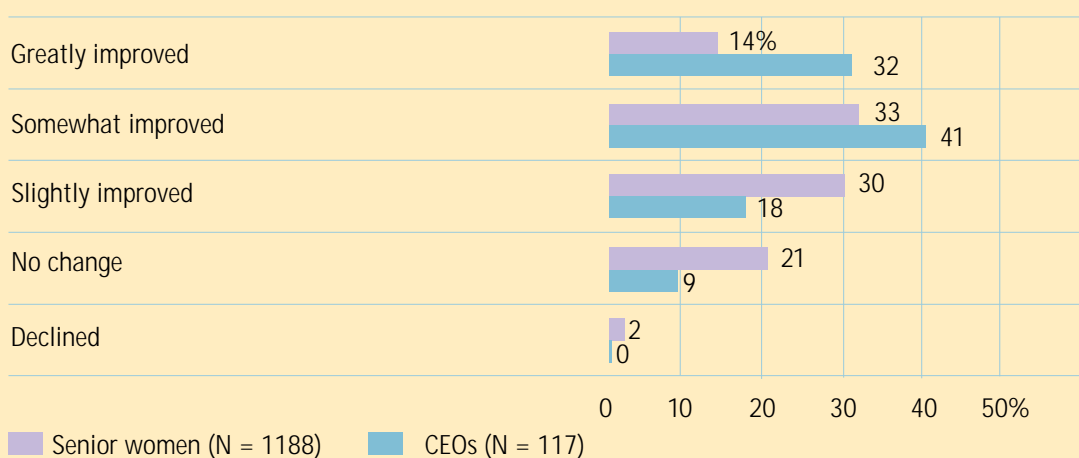
- Ninety one percent of CEOs believe that opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in their organisations compared to five years ago have improved *greatly, somewhat* or *slightly*, vs. no change, or a decline in opportunities.

- CEOs (32 percent) are more than twice as likely as senior women (14 percent) to believe that opportunities for women to advance compared to five years ago have *greatly* improved.

Assessments about progress for women vary by employment sector

Among senior women, there are statistically significant differences in perceptions about whether opportunities for women's advancement have improved over the past five years depending upon employment sector.

- Senior women in professional firms (59 percent) are less likely than women in corporations or public and education sector organisations to believe opportunities have improved *greatly, somewhat* or *slightly.*

Male and female CEOs' views

Female CEOs (26 percent) are somewhat less likely than their male counterparts (32 percent) to believe that opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership/partnership in their organisation have *improved greatly* and are more likely to report that they have seen *no change* in this regard (14 percent vs. 4 percent).

Have employment equality policies helped? Senior women's and CEOs' perspectives

As with their responses on other questions discussed in this chapter, CEOs are significantly more positive than senior women in their assessment of the impact of employment equality policies/practices on women's advancement opportunities (see Figure 7).

Figure 7   **Perceived impact of employment equality policies.**
Senior women's and CEOs' perspectives.

	Senior women	CEOs
Positive	40%	58
Negative	1	2
Positive and negative	44	34
No effect	9	5
Don't know	6	0

0   15   30   45   60   75%

Senior women (N = 1188)   CEOs (N = 117)
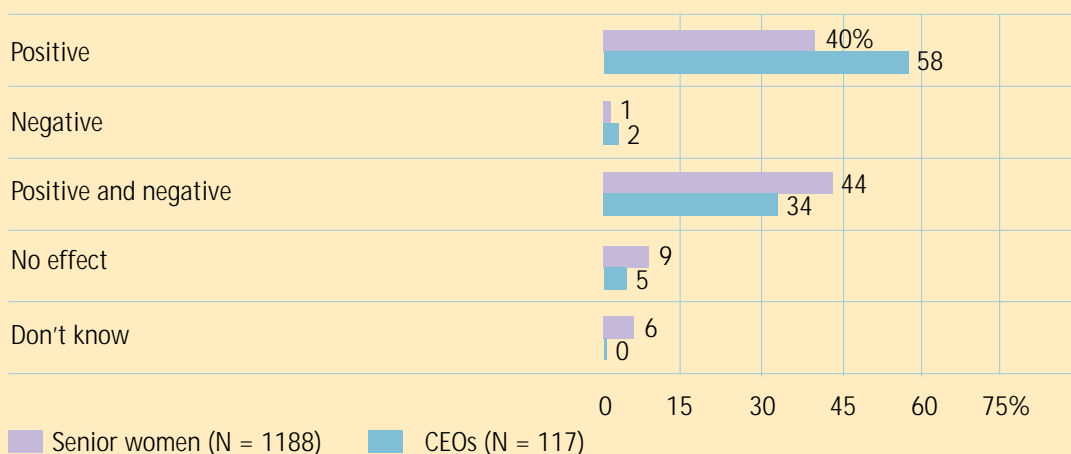
- Although no more than 2 percent of respondents in each group report that employment equality policies/practices have had a negative impact on women's advancement, CEOs (58 percent) are substantially more likely than senior women (40 percent) to believe their impact has been positive.

- In contrast, senior women (44 percent) are more likely than CEOs (34 percent) to report that pain has accompanied the gains that women have experienced, i.e. EO policies/practices have had both a positive and negative impact, or to say that they have had no impact (9 percent).

> *I am concerned that it may well enhance any feelings of stereotyping that people may have about me. I would much rather achieve things on my own merit as an individual rather than be perceived as a woman with women's issues.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Senior women were also asked to assess the impact of employment equality policies/practices on *their own careers.* (This question was not included in the CEO survey.)

- Only 29 percent of senior women believe that the impact on their own career has been positive, although 40 percent believe the impact for women generally has been positive.

- Almost half (49 percent) of senior women say that employment equality policies/practices have had *no impact* on their own careers.

> *The comments I've received as feedback have always been, 'Look at what she's delivered, this is somebody who should go further,' not 'She's a woman manager so we want her to go far.'*
> *Senior woman, private sector*
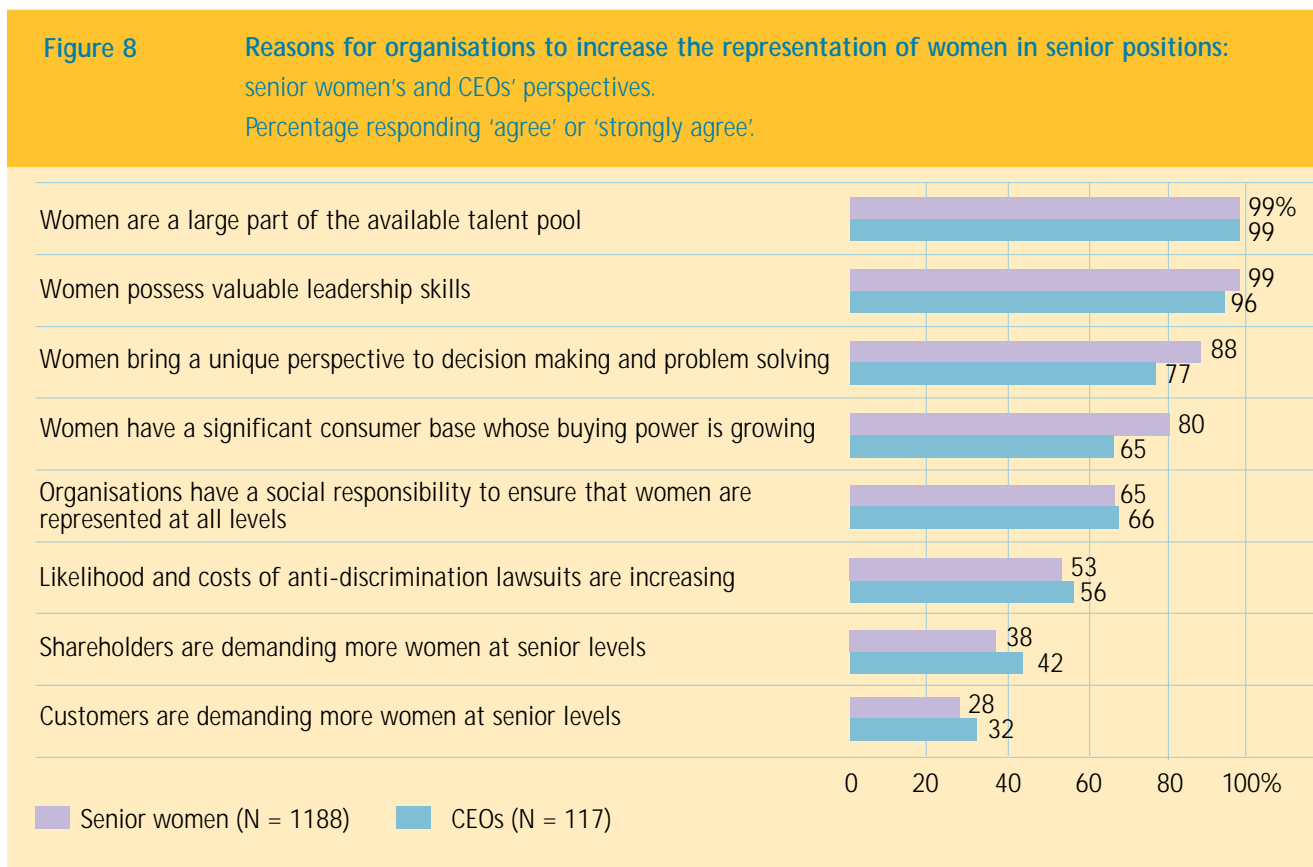
2

women's advancement: a business issue

- CEOs and senior women agree on the business case for increasing women's representation at the top

- CEOs communicate a sense of urgency about moving women up

women's advancement: a business issue

Catalyst's and Opportunity Now's experience working with companies in the US and the UK shows business organisations that have implemented effective gender diversity initiatives have leaders who identify and articulate the business case for retaining and advancing women. The successful have gone beyond the 'generic' business case for gender diversity (i.e. changing demographics) to develop a highly specific and costed rationale for why recruiting, retaining and advancing women will make a positive difference to their organisation's products/services, customers/clients and bottom line. Senior leaders in these companies hold managers accountable for diversity results consistent with their accountability for other business results. Diversity results become 'business as usual' as opposed to business unusual.

CEOs and senior women agree on the business case for increasing women's representation at the top

Both senior women and CEOs were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with eight statements as reasons for organisations to increase their representation of women in senior management or partnership (see Figure 8). The majority of each group agree/strongly agree with six of the eight statements.

Figure 8	Reasons for organisations to increase the representation of women in senior positions: senior women's and CEOs' perspectives. Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

	Senior women (N = 1188)	CEOs (N = 117)
Women are a large part of the available talent pool	99%	99
Women possess valuable leadership skills	99	96
Women bring a unique perspective to decision making and problem solving	88	77
Women have a significant consumer base whose buying power is growing	80	65
Organisations have a social responsibility to ensure that women are represented at all levels	65	66
Likelihood and costs of anti-discrimination lawsuits are increasing	53	56
Shareholders are demanding more women at senior levels	38	42
Customers are demanding more women at senior levels	28	32

Senior women and CEOs are almost identical in their beliefs that:

- Women are a large part of the available talent pool.

- Women possess valuable leadership skills.

- Organisations have a social responsibility to ensure that women are represented at all levels.

- The likelihood and costs of anti-discrimination lawsuits are increasing.

> *If you start running out of people, why are you closing off 50 percent of people?*
> *CEO*

> *I'm afraid that the people who've got into power ... just would not consider employing a woman at a high level, or promoting her to a high level. And I can't understand why that is because you're potentially cutting out 50 percent of your best workers that way.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I think there needs to be an understanding that women look at things differently. They bring different skills and those skills could work together rather than one being right and one being wrong.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Whether women possess a unique 'female leadership style' remains controversial in part because the concept could reinforce or add to existing stereotypes of women, and in part because there have not been enough women at the top to systematically observe or generalise about their style. However, women and CEOs who were interviewed for this study mentioned a number of ways that they believe women managers see and do things differently from male managers.

> *I am a better manager because I am a woman, because I'm much more sensitive, much more intuitive, much more, I wouldn't say committed, but multi-tasked.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *Women tend to be more focused on the process of getting things done and men tend to be focused on the actual task and the product of that. Obviously, you need both or you will never achieve anything ... so basically it's a case of how those skills can be combined.*
> *CEO*

> *There are other things that men are better at, like confidence and self-esteem and stuff like that, but I think one of the things to look at in my role at the moment is the changing of the organisation from this traditional old boy's network – hierarchical management – to a much more matrix-style management. Women find it easier to cope with that than men do. So I think being a woman now is probably even better than it was about 10 years ago.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

CEOs are less likely than senior women to believe that:

- Women bring a unique perspective to decision making and problem solving.

- Women have a significant consumer base whose buying power is growing.

CEOs are somewhat more attuned than senior women to the changing marketplace, namely:

- Shareholders are demanding more women at senior levels.

- Customers are demanding more women at senior levels.

Male and female CEOs' views

Female CEOs are more likely than their male counterparts to see women's increasing buying power; women's unique perspective; and the likelihood of lawsuits, with their related costs to companies, as reasons to increase women's representation at senior levels. They are less likely to agree that companies/firms have a social responsibility to do this.

CEOs communicate a sense of urgency about moving women up

CEOs were asked how important they believe it is for organisations to focus on increasing the number of women in senior leadership positions. (Senior women were not asked this question.) Roughly three-quarters of CEOs say this issue is either *critical* (25 percent) or *very important* (46 percent), with the remainder saying it is somewhat important.

In a follow-up open-ended question, CEOs selecting the *critical* or *very important* response categories were asked what their reasons were for their answer. The written responses of CEOs to this question are consistent with their responses to the closed question on the same subject, and fall into two general categories:

- **Changing demographics.** The most frequently cited reason for increasing women's representation at senior levels – 46 percent of the reasons submitted by CEOs – focuses on the realities of the changing demographics of the labour force/talent pool including: the need for workforce *balance/diversity*; the fact that women make up the *largest part of the workforce*; and the need for organisations to *reflect the make-up of the surrounding community/society.*

- **Improved business results.** 30 percent of CEOs' written responses cited practical reasons why companies should be concerned about the recruitment, retention and advancement of women including: for businesses to continue to *succeed/improve/expand*; to improve *customer focus*; to gain a *competitive advantage*; to project an image of openness and *send a positive message* to the outside world about the organisation's culture; and, specifically relating to the advancement of women, to provide *role models* and encouragement for women in the organisation's talent pool and thus *promote the retention of valued women.*

> *We have moved from a culture of patronage to one of open competition.*
> *For example, it is only in the last couple of years that, despite the people who felt*
> *that women were less likely than men to apply for certain jobs, women are actually*
> *disproportionately successful. We are actually using a pool of people who had been*
> *held back under the old system.*
> *CEO*

> *Culture change is not about opportunity because it is socially nice, but because it*
> *makes good business sense.*
> *CEO*

breaking the barriers – women in senior management

breaking the barriers – women in senior management

3

what holds women back?

- do women lack key attributes/expertise required for advancement to senior leadership in UK organisations?

- critical areas of experience required in CEOs' organisations

- critical areas in which women in CEOs' organisations tend to lack experience

- is there a glass ceiling confronting women professionals and managers?

- organisational barriers to women's advancement – a view from the top

- male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles

- lack of general and line management experience

- lack of mentoring

- CEOs fail to recognise specific manifestations of a hostile organisational culture

- CEOs believe it is a pipeline problem

- organisational barriers to women's advancement: views from different employment sectors

- attitudinal barriers to women's advancement

- women lack specific skills/experience

- women have not spent long in the organisational pipeline

- organisational and attitudinal barriers

- what is holding men back?

what holds women back?

Senior women responding to this study are highly educated and long-serving, with significant responsibilities both in terms of their reporting level and their functional roles within their organisations (e.g. 76 percent are in line positions). A majority of senior women also manage additional responsibilities related to their family commitments.

CEOs acknowledge the need to advance such high-performing and high-potential women to senior leadership roles, citing a number of reasons why this is critical or fairly important for their organisations. Yet, women still hold relatively few top positions in UK corporations, professional firms, the public sector and education. In this chapter we will consider possible explanations for why so few women have advanced to the highest levels of leadership in UK organisations.

Do women lack key attributes/expertise required for advancement to senior leadership in UK organisations?

Is the problem that women just don't have the 'right stuff' to succeed? In order to explore this question, CEOs were asked two open-ended questions:

- What are the most critical areas of experience required of senior executives/partners in your organisation?

Figure 9   Critical areas of experience required of senior executives/partners in CEOs' organisations and areas where women tend to lack experience.

Area	Required	Women lacking
People/team management/communication skills	37%	9
Strategic planning/change management skills	33	14
Technical/specialist expertise	21	7
'Leadership'	18	8
Relevant job experience	18	6
General or line management experience	17	21
Understanding of organisational politics	9	7
International/external experience	6	4
Academic background/additional coursework	7	5
None		24

Required   Women lacking

0   10   20   30   40   50%

- In which of these areas, if any, do women in your organisation tend to lack experience?
  Responses to these two questions were content-analysed and are summarised in Figure 9.

Critical areas of experience required of senior executives/partners in CEOs' organisations

- A third or more of CEOs mentioned *people/team management and/or communications skills*
  (37 percent) and *strategic planning/change management skills* (33 percent) as critical areas of
  expertise required of senior executives/partners in their organisations.

- About one in five CEOs (21 percent) identified *technical/specialist expertise; general or line
  management experience* (20 percent); *'leadership'* (18 percent); and *relevant job experience*
  (18 percent). Other critical areas of expertise – *understanding of organisational politics;
  international/external experience; academic background/additional coursework* – were
  mentioned by less than 10 percent of CEOs.

Critical areas in which women in CEOs' organisations tend to lack experience

- The most frequently cited response to this question was *none* – cited by 24 percent of CEOs.
  No single area of expertise was cited by more than 2 out of 10 CEOs as one where women are
  lacking experience.

- *General and line management experience* (21 percent) and *strategic planning/change
  management skills* (14 percent) were the areas most frequently cited by CEOs where women
  in their organisations lack experience.

- Other areas, mentioned with less frequency, are shown in Figure 9.

Another factor affecting women's advancement, mentioned by a majority of CEOs in one-on-one
interviews, is that women with whom they work or whom they have observed lack self-confidence
and are more self-critical than their male counterparts. According to CEOs, this lack of confidence
manifests itself in a variety of ways that hinder women's career advancement. These include a
reluctance to put themselves forward for promotions and special assignments and a reticence
about calling attention to their achievements.

> *I do think women are less inclined for all sorts of reasons to have that kind of
> self-belief which I think is sometimes absolutely crucial to moving on in that kind
> of career.*
> *CEO*

> *Women tend to be more self-critical. If you are trying to recruit women into a job and
> they look at the advert, a man is more likely to say: 'Well, I can do a, b, and c. I'm
> perhaps not good at d, but what the hell, I'll fill in the application and see what
> happens.' Women are more likely to say, 'I can do a, b, and c, but I can't do d, so it's
> not worth my while applying.' So one thing I would say to any woman, and I do
> actually say it to ones that I have interviewed, is not to be so self-critical; be more
> positive, concentrate on that which you can do and put across your strong points.*
> *CEO*

Is there a glass ceiling confronting women professionals and managers in UK organisations?

Another possible explanation for women's lack of advancement in the UK is that women professionals and managers are confronted with a 'glass ceiling' – typically subtle but corrosive organisational and attitudinal barriers that undermine women's contributions and morale and prevent them from reaching the top. A third possible explanation is that women just haven't been in the pipeline long enough. And, if that is the case, it is just a matter of time until women are well represented at senior levels.

To determine whether there is a 'glass ceiling' or 'pipeline' problem for women in UK organisations, senior women and CEOs were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with a list of 16 possible barriers to women's advancement to senior leadership positions. A comparison of CEOs' and senior women's responses to this question shows how a person's position in an organisation shapes his/her perceptions about the culture and opportunities that may or may not be available to other groups (see Table 1).

Table 1	Barriers to women's advancement to senior levels: senior women's and CEOs' perspectives. Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.		
		Senior women % (N =1188)	CEOs % (N =117)
Commitment to family responsibilities		83	76
Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities		81	65
Lack of senior visibly successful female role models		70	69
Inhospitable organisational culture		69	60
Exclusion from informal networks of communication		66	46
Failure of senior leadership to assume responsibility for women's advancement		65	65
Lack of significant general or line management experience		63	53
Personal style differences		61	26
Lack of mentoring		58	58
Lack of awareness of organisational politics		57	35
Lack of professional development opportunities		54	44
Lack of opportunities for visibility		52	40
Lack of opportunities to work on challenging assignments		45	32
Sexual harassment		40	27
Few women can/want to do what it takes to get to the top		30	23
Not having been long in the pipeline		28	40

Organisational barriers to women's advancement – a different view from the top

The majority of senior women agree or strongly agree that 12 of the 16 possible barriers listed in the question are barriers to women's advancement. In comparison, the majority of CEOs agree that 7 of the 16 items are barriers.

Male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles

While senior women and CEOs agree on the top barriers to women's advancement in UK organisations – *commitment to family responsibilities; male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles and abilities;* and *lack of senior visibly successful female role models* – senior women are considerably more likely than CEOs to view *family responsibilities* (83 percent vs. 76 percent) and, especially, *stereotyping* (81 percent vs. 65 percent) as top barriers. Female CEOs (77 percent) more frequently identify *stereotyping* as a barrier than do their male counterparts (57 percent).

> *My operations managers had a conversation last year. They discussed career progression for every manager and they highlighted certain paths for them. Within that he felt it was necessary to detail the fact that I have got one child already, possible potential to have two, and obviously that should be taken into account with a career path for me ... when the children are at school and whether I could relocate, etc.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *My very first managerial appointment, and I'll quote this for the tape, my manager said to me, 'There is only one thing worse than a female manager and that is a female graduate manager,' with a real waggy finger at me.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I think a lot of the view is that you are either going to mother people or you are going to be their secretary. We have about 70 percent female staff and they think that the organisation is populated by secretaries. Most of the time when people ring up, the phone is answered by a woman and it could be me or one of the people at my level but they have this assumption and you have to overcome that.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

Lack of general and line management experience

The majority of senior women (63 percent) and CEOs (53 percent) also agree that women lack general and line management experience, which was also noted in CEOs' responses to an open-ended question. While 76 percent of the senior women responding to the survey are currently in line positions, they, along with CEOs, talked about the need for organisations to ensure that women get a range of both line and staff experience and for women to recognise the importance of broadening their career paths.

> *I think you should give women general advice which would be exactly the same as you would give a man, which would be to ensure you got a wide range of experience at different jobs ... and make sure you don't get channelled into the sort of soft feely issues that women are channelled into.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *When we look at the gender distribution in different parts of the Department, the 'softer' areas where there are a high proportion of women and the 'harder' areas like finance where there are fewer. I think there was some stereotyping going on on the part of people doing the posting – a certain amount of self-fulfiling prophecy that that is where people's experience is and that they would tend to want to stay in areas where they feel confident. As a general proposition, you might say certain groups lack experience but they lack experience only because they haven't actually been given it.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *Women tend to be in certain service areas and perhaps tend to see their careers as being at the head of a particular service whether it be in education or social work, personnel – the obvious ones – and don't in the course of their career get the experience that would lead them to a broader range of local government work or indeed the corporate strategies or policies. I think that will change because we see services reconfigured to be more cross-cutting and an element of a combination of services happening, and then maybe more women will get that kind of experience.*
> *CEO*

In interviews, several CEOs noted that providing women with a broader range of experience is going to involve risk, or perceived risk, for both the women and their organisations. Male managers, in particular, will need to accept responsibility for supporting women who move into traditionally male-dominated functional areas of their organisations. Yet, failure of senior leadership to assume responsibility for women's advancement was cited by 65 percent of senior women and CEOs as a barrier.

> *I think most men or most people in the more senior jobs have plenty of experience in assessing a young man for particular jobs, and they have very little experience in assessing young women for jobs. So they're more cautious and more uncertain in their assessment of whether someone's suitable for a job, and I think that's one of the reasons why women don't progress much.*
> *CEO*

> *I would have picked out some women who I know could hack it ... persuade them to go and work in an area which is a traditional male preserve and you can start to break things down. But that requires a manager and the chief executive to be a bit brave in turn because failure can ensue, and if you end up in failure you run the risk of reinforcing discrimination. Quite risky ... but provided you have got the right person and you as a manager are prepared to put in the time to help, it can make things happen.*
> *CEO*

Lack of mentoring

Equal numbers of CEOs and senior women (58 percent) agree that lack of mentoring is a barrier to women's advancement.

> *Well, I think I've sort of managed on my own really but it does make life a lot easier if you've got someone rooting for you. I think it gives you a sort of safety net: if you've got that, you can go forth with confidence because you know if you have an issue you raise it with someone who you hope will be supportive of you.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

In interviews and focus groups both senior women and CEOs discussed the difference between a mentor who provides guidance and advice, and a sponsor who can also help career progression, and the importance of women having access to both.

> *A lot of men seem to get somebody behind them, somebody senior behind them to sponsor them from one job move to another. Most women do have to do more on their own.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I think one of the roles of the mentor is actually to almost nudge you into position to make sure you are given opportunities, so it is a bit more than mentoring.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I've had quite a few mentors but unfortunately they themselves were not in the right place at the right time to secure the kind of jobs that I would have liked.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

CEOs fail to recognise specific manifestations of a hostile organisational culture

• Beyond these items of general agreement, there are substantial differences in the perspectives of CEOs and senior women about the other barriers that are hindering women's advancement. Most pronounced differences concern perceptions about three barriers: *women's exclusion from informal networks of communication* (66 percent of senior women vs. 46 percent of CEOs); *personal style differences* (61 percent of senior women vs. 26 percent of CEOs); and *lack of awareness of organisational politics* (57 percent of senior women vs. 35 percent of CEOs).

It is interesting that these areas of disagreement all relate to manifestations of the organisational culture – so whilst 60 percent of CEOs recognise the problem of an inhospitable culture they do not actually understand how this manifests itself in their organisations. In contrast, women are able to identify these subtle aspects of the culture that are career management issues for them; for example, the difficulty women experience developing a personal style that is accepted by men in the organisation came up repeatedly in interviews and focus groups with senior women.

> *I think a lot of the view is that you are either going to mother people or you are going to be their secretary.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

> *I think if women come across as too strong, even if they are very similar to their male colleagues, that is considered too much. They are supposed to be more relaxed and be better to people than their male colleagues.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

> *Perceptions are terribly important and I think women who serve those long hours are seen as over-achievers.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

> *I've been called blunt whilst men are inclined to be called assertive.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

CEOs believe it is a pipeline problem

- Finally, 40 percent of CEOs but only 28 percent of women agree that women just haven't been in the pipeline long enough. This suggests that CEOs think the passing of time will solve the problem of women's advancement in their organisations, perhaps because they believe that most women in their organisation are in middle management positions and will automatically rise to senior levels over time.

Male and female CEOs' views

Male and female CEOs have distinctly different perceptions about the extent to which several factors listed in the question are barriers, differences that mirror those between senior women and CEOs as a group. The largest areas of lack of agreement are:

	Male %	Female %
Stereotyping	57	77
Organisational politics	19	58
Exclusion	34	63
Style	11	49
Harassment/discrimination	16	42
Mentoring	49	72
Lack of development opportunities	35	54

Even when they belong to the same organisation, senior women and male CEOs can have markedly different perspectives. Perhaps male CEOs' relative isolation from staff at lower levels in their organisations prevents them from seeing barriers in the organisational culture or attitudes/ behaviour of male managers that hinder women's development and advancement. Male CEOs are also less likely to have spouses/partners who work outside the home and may have experienced

barriers in their own career advancement. In contrast, female CEOs probably experienced many of these barriers firsthand in their climb up the organisational ladder and are more likely to be aware of the barriers women face.

Organisational barriers to women's advancement: views from different employment sectors

Statistically significant differences were found in the responses of women working in different types of organisations regarding the strength of their agreement that each of the 16 items is a barrier (see Table 2).

- The majority of women in each type of organisation agree that most of the barriers listed in the question are obstacles to women's advancement.

Table 2	Barriers to women's advancement to senior levels: senior women by type of organisation. Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.		
	Corporate % (N = 492)	Professional % (N =291)	Public & education% (N = 405)
Commitment to family responsibilities	83	83	83
Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities	82	75	84
Lack of senior visibly successful female role models	76	63	67
Inhospitable organisational culture	65	66	76
Exclusion from informal networks of communication	64	61	72
Lack of significant general or line management experience	59	58	67
Failure of senior leadership to assume responsibility for women's advancement	60	63	70
Personal style differences	60	63	70
Lack of awareness of organisational politics	57	59	54
Lack of mentoring	55	63	58
Lack of professional development opportunities	51	58	54
Lack of opportunities for visibility	50	51	56
Lack of opportunities to work on challenging assignments	41	44	50
Sexual harassment	36	37	48
Few women can/want to do what it takes to get to the top	33	35	23
Not having been long in the pipeline	30	26	25

- Corporate women and women in public sector organisations and education were more likely than professional women to agree that male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles are a barrier.

- Corporate women were more likely than women in the other two sectors to cite a lack of senior visibly successful female role models.

- Women in public sector organisations and education were more likely than corporate or professional women to agree that a number of the barriers listed were preventing women's advancement including: an inhospitable organisational culture; exclusion from informal networks of communication; lack of significant general management or line experience; failure of senior leadership to assume responsibility for women's advancement; and sexual harassment.

> *There is no transparency in the system and therefore you have a culture of favouritism – all of the worst things that I think you used to get that you don't get lower down because the system, for all its imperfections, has checks and balances at that level. But there are no checks and balances at my level, and therefore the worst features tend to prevail.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *We've had some speakers from commercial organisations and they seem to be prepared to take a bit more positive action to make things happen. Whereas, as I said, we worry about equal opportunities all the time and everybody is frightened to do anything.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

Barriers for women working in government vs. education.
Percentage who 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

	Government %	Education %
Family responsibilities	85	74
Lack of role models	64	82
Lack of general line management experience	57	71
Lack of professional or executive development opportunities	51	64
Lack of opportunities for visibility	53	67

Attitudinal barriers to women's advancement

Men's attitudes about women in the workplace are a critical factor in women's advancement potential. Several items in questions included in the survey specifically focused on men's attitudes about women as leaders and professional colleagues (see Figure 10).

An encouraging finding is that large majorities of senior women (89 percent) and CEOs (90 percent) agree that men and women in their organisations are equally qualified to assume senior level positions. However, senior women report difficulties related to the attitudes of men with whom they work:

Figure 10   **Agreement with statements about women and men in the workplace:** senior women and CEOs.

	Senior women (N=1188)	CEOs (N=117)
Men and women are equally qualified	89%	90
Men have difficulty being supervised by women	52	37
Male managers are frequently intimidated by or experience difficulty managing women	47	34
Men are concerned with reverse discrimination	36	34

■ Senior women (N=1188)   ■ CEOs (N=117)
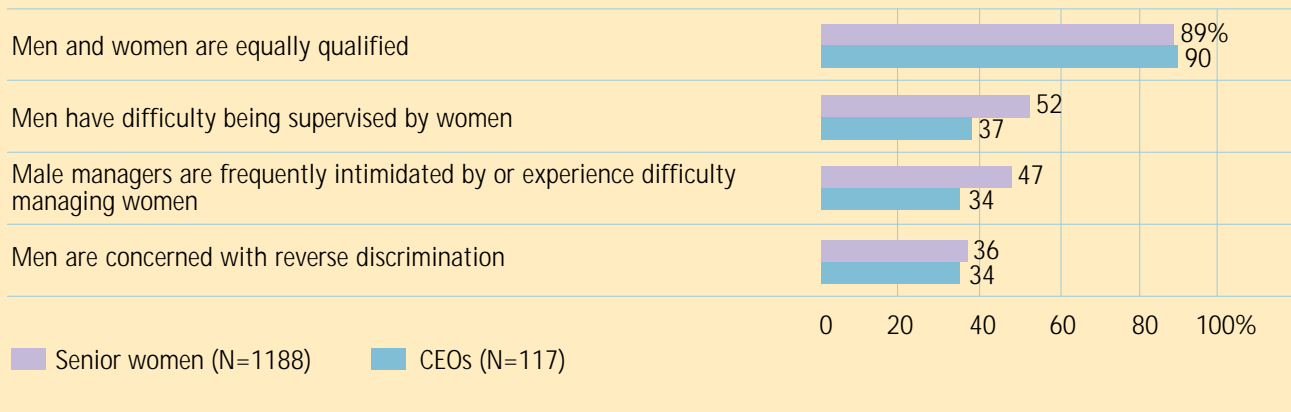
- More than half of senior women (52 percent) compared to 37 percent of CEOs agree that men have difficulty being supervised by women.

- Close to half of senior women (47 percent) compared to 34 percent of CEOs agree that male managers are frequently intimidated by – or experience difficulty managing – women.

- About one-third of each group agree that a significant number of men in their organisation are concerned with positive action for women (36 percent senior women; 34 percent CEOs).

Male and female CEOs' views
Female CEOs are more likely than male CEOs to agree with the statements about:

	Male %	Female %
Male backlash	27	44
Male difficulty with female supervisors	28	51
Male difficulty with managing women	28	44

In interviews and focus groups, a number of women talked about difficulties they have experienced managing men.

> *There have been occasions when people have obviously been rather hostile to me and I have thought that it was because they didn't like having a woman in charge.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

37

... unwillingness to accept my authority, unwillingness to do things for me or making it uncomfortable for me to do my job in some cases. I see it as their problem more than mine, to be honest with you. You just have to try and rise above it.
Senior woman, public sector

I think I have occasionally had trouble managing men – the main problem was they didn't actually want to do the job they had been paid to do. It has made it slightly more difficult and I have noticed they have used strategies like trying to by-pass the manager and network to the next level up who is male, which I have had to be quite corrective about dealing with.
Senior woman, focus group

Men having difficulty being supervised by women

Senior women in educational institutions (66 percent) are much more likely than their counterparts in government (54 percent) or the private sector (49 percent) to report that *men have difficulty being supervised by women.*

In this chapter we have presented data related to differing hypotheses of what is holding women back from advancing to senior leadership posts in UK organisations.

Women lack specific skills/experience

One hypothesis for women's lack of advancement is that women lack the specific skills/experience required of senior managers/partners in their organisations.

- Responses of senior women and CEOs to a fixed-response question on possible barriers to women's advancement suggest that majorities of both CEOs and senior women believe women lack general and line management experience (53 percent of CEOs and 63 percent of women). Lack of general and line management experience was also identified as the top area of expertise that women in their organisations lack by CEOs responding to an open-ended question.

- Comments from CEO interviews suggest women are viewed as lacking self-confidence and are too self-critical in assessing their strengths.

The kind of experience that women are identified as lacking cannot be addressed by training alone. Rather, organisational leaders will have to take what they perceive as a risk in providing women with meaningful general management and line experience. This involves identifying high potential and high performing women early enough in their careers to enable them to develop the range of experience required to compete with men for senior level positions. It also requires holding managers accountable for the development of women whom they supervise. In order that women may gain broader experience organisations will also have to address the need for work/life programmes and flexible working to assist women in balancing their multiple commitments.

Women have not spent long in the organisational pipeline

A sizeable percentage of CEOs (40 percent) but fewer senior women (28 percent) believe that women lack something else – tenure in the pipeline of their organisations. This belief needs to be challenged since it leads to the assumption that time alone will solve the problem of women's lack of advancement.

Organisational and attitudinal barriers

A number of organisational and attitudinal barriers were identified that prevent women's advancement. CEOs, along with senior women, acknowledge a number of these barriers including women's commitment to family responsibilities and male stereotyping. However, they frequently fail to see the more subtle manifestations of a hostile organisational culture, such as the personal style issues and exclusion from networks, that impede women's progress. The web of organisational and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement outlined in this chapter will not be eliminated by one-shot programmes. Rather, they will require comprehensive culture change with leadership from the top of UK organisations.

What is holding men back?

Men hold the overwhelming majority of senior posts in UK organisations. Nonetheless, we were interested in learning what organisational or attitudinal barriers senior women and CEOs believe prevent men from advancing in their organisations. Table 3 presents comparative data for both groups, showing the percentages of senior women and CEOs who either agree or strongly agree that the specified barrier is one that prevents men's advancement. This list of barriers is identical to that used in the question about barriers for women.

- While sizeable majorities of senior women and CEOs agreed that a number of barriers were preventing women's advancement, much smaller percentages of each group considered that these were also barriers to men's advancement.

- CEOs and senior women generally agreed on the top barriers to men's advancement – lack of significant general or line management experience; lack of awareness of organisational politics; personal style differences; and lack of mentoring.

- Almost twice as many senior women (20 percent) as CEOs (11 percent) agreed that *commitment to family responsibilities* is a barrier to men's advancement. This may be because senior women are more likely than CEOs to have a partner in full-time work and are more aware of the stress that juggling career and family commitments places on both partners.

- Though the percentages are small, senior women were also twice as likely as CEOs to agree that men face barriers to their advancement due to *exclusion from informal networks* (16 percent vs. 7 percent of CEOs) and an *inhospitable organisational culture* (15 percent vs. 8 percent of CEOs).

Table 3	Barriers to men's advancement to senior levels: perceptions of senior women and CEOs. Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.	Senior women % (N = 1188)	CEOs % (N = 117)
Lack of significant general or line management experience		53	48
Lack of awareness of organisational politics		43	26
Personal style differences		39	36
Lack of mentoring		38	49
Lack of professional development opportunities		26	25
Lack of opportunities for visibility		23	12
Commitment to family responsibilities		20	11
Exclusion from informal networks of communication		16	7
Inhospitable organisational culture		15	8
Few men can/want to do what it takes to get to the top		11	11
Lack of opportunities to work on challenging assignments		10	8
Failure of senior leadership to assume responsibility for men's advancement		9	11
Female stereotyping and preconceptions of men's roles and abilities		8	6
Sexual harassment		5	0
Lack of senior visibly successful male role models		4	3
Not having been long in the pipeline		1	2

4

factors affecting the retention of women professionals and managers in the UK

- are UK organisations at risk of losing female talent?

- what attracted senior women to their current organisation and why would they consider leaving?

- why women would leave - what CEOs think

- senior women's expectations about their own advancement

factors affecting the retention of women professionals and managers in the UK

Private and public sector organisations in the UK are increasingly effective at attracting female talent. However, an emerging concern is how employers can retain this important talent pool given the organisational and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement noted in this report. Increasingly organisations are coming to recognise that a gender gap in turnover exists in many UK organisations and the attrition of high-potential junior women as well as seasoned, high-performing senior women is costly: estimates suggest that it costs £5,000 ($8,000) to replace a bank clerk, £10,000 ($16,000) for a supermarket deputy manager and £50,000 ($80,000) for an Inland Revenue inspector. (Work life strategies for the 21st century, The National Work Life Forum 2000). Beyond these obvious costs of recruiting, training and replacing an employee who leaves, there are also the 'invisible' costs. These include lack of continuity with customers/clients and its attendant impact on customer satisfaction; loss of intellectual capital and the possibility that a former employee may become a future competitor; and the impact on the morale and productivity of co-workers/team members.

Turnover of senior women is particularly damaging to organisations because women's progress up the ranks is linked to an organisation's ability to retain female talent. Women in senior positions, still scarce in most UK organisations, are often closely watched by women at lower levels as indicators of their own opportunities for advancement. When talented women are hired or promoted to leadership positions, this sends an encouraging message to others throughout the organisation; when they are bypassed, the opposite is communicated. More directly, when successful women leave an organisation, the female pipeline is depleted, leaving behind a shallower pool of promotable women. Thus, it is important for organisations wishing to foster gender diversity at all levels to understand and pay attention to turnover.

Are UK organisations at risk of losing female talent?

- Sixty percent of senior women in this study have contemplated leaving their current organisation. Considering that these women represent the highest-achieving women in UK organisations, with an average of 12+ years tenure, it is important to understand what might cause them to leave and what would assist in their retention.

- Statistically significant differences were observed among women working in different sectors regarding whether they have considered leaving their current organisation: 73 percent of corporate senior women vs. 63 percent of women in professional firms and 69 percent of women in the public sector and education report they have considered leaving their current organisation.

What attracted senior women to their current organisation and why would they consider leaving?

Reasons for why senior women respondents joined their company and why they might consider leaving are presented in Figure 11.
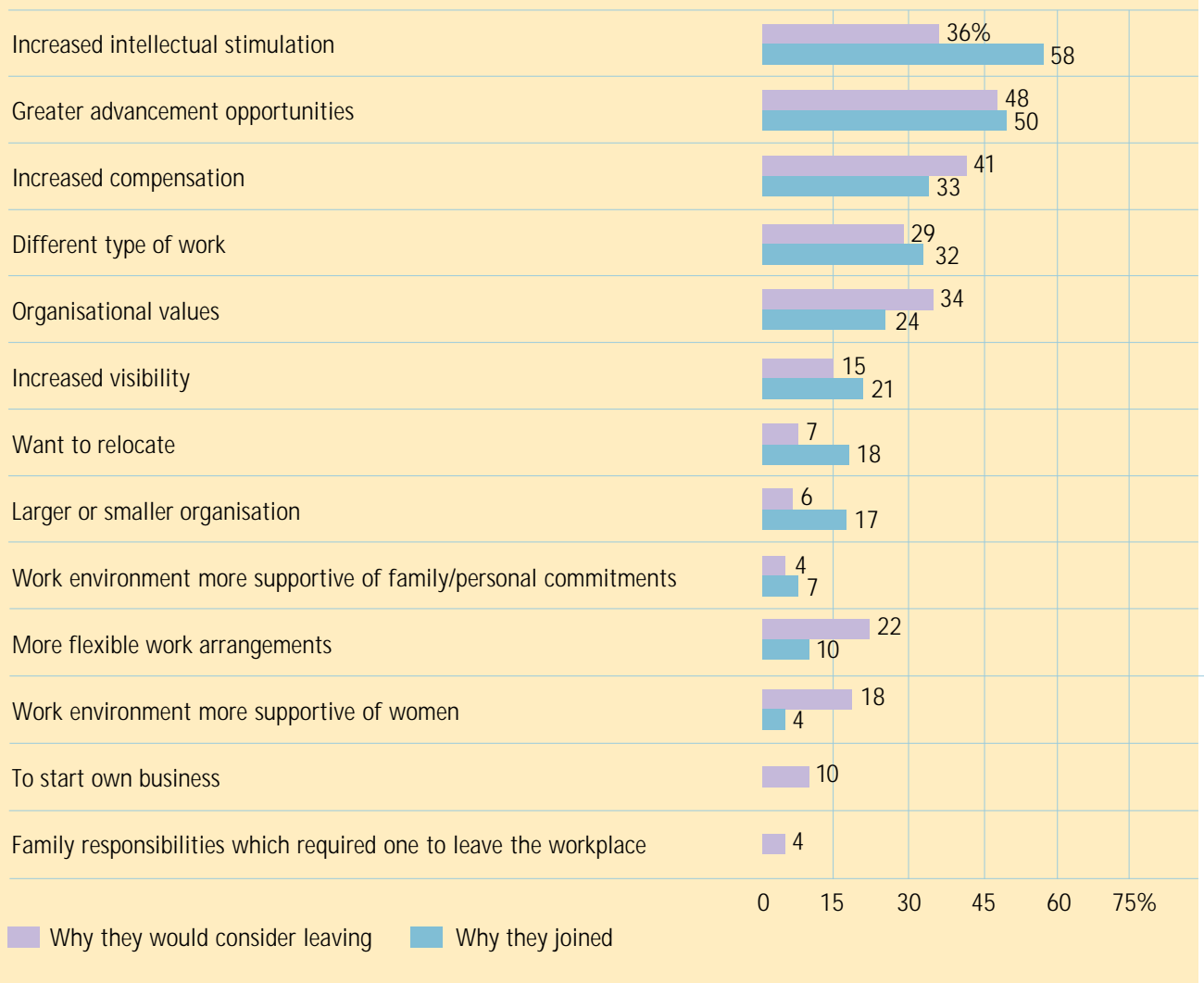
- The top five reasons why senior women say they joined their company are also the same reasons why they might consider leaving – increased intellectual stimulation; greater advancement opportunities; increased compensation; to do a different kind of work; and more compatible organisational values.

> *I plan my career by asking 'What are the skills and competences that people would regard as important and how do I get those?' If I can get them where I am and I'm still happy and enjoying it then I'll stay with my present employer. If I don't and there's a gap that I think can't be filled, then I'll move on.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

- Looking at the top three reasons cited, senior women are far more likely to have joined their current organisation for increased intellectual stimulation than to consider leaving for that reason. On the other hand, more women report they would leave for increased remuneration than joined their organisation for that reason.

Figure 11   Reasons for joining and leaving their organisations:
senior women's responses.
Percentage giving reasons as one of the top three.

Reason	Why they would consider leaving	Why they joined
Increased intellectual stimulation	36%	58
Greater advancement opportunities	48	50
Increased compensation	41	33
Different type of work	29	32
Organisational values	34	24
Increased visibility	15	21
Want to relocate	7	18
Larger or smaller organisation	6	17
Work environment more supportive of family/personal commitments	4	7
More flexible work arrangements	22	10
Work environment more supportive of women	18	4
To start own business	10	
Family responsibilities which required one to leave the workplace	4	

0   15   30   45   60   75%

- Why they would consider leaving   - Why they joined

43

It is noteworthy that increased remuneration is among the top three reasons given by senior women for joining or leaving an employer because much of the literature on women and work suggests that compensation is less important to women than other factors. One of the assumptions that male managers make about women whom they supervise is that because they have partners in full time work, they don't really have to work, or don't need to be compensated at the same levels as male colleagues. This finding suggests otherwise. Employers who are seeking to retain high-potential as well as experienced female talent need to monitor their organisation's remuneration practices and, where disparities are found, eliminate systematic biases in rewarding male and female managers' and professionals' performance/contributions.

Employers need to address this urgently as, on average, female employees working full time in the UK in 1999 earned just 81 percent of the average gross hourly earnings of their male counterparts. (Women's Income Over the Lifetime: A report to the Women's Unit, Cabinet Office, The Stationary Office 2000.) Compensation for senior women in the study varies dramatically by sector, with women in corporate and professional organisations earning far more than women in the public sector and education: £70,000 ($112,000) and £68,000 ($108,800) respectively, vs. £43,000 ($68,800), presenting a particular retention issue for these organisations.

The following verbatim comments from interviews with senior women illustrate the range of reasons why compensation is important to women:

> *A lot of people actually leave my organisation because they can get much better pay for doing comparable work in the private sector and I would not be able to say whether these were specifically women's issues as opposed to just earning £30,000 a year issues.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I had a mother who didn't work and I remember my father passing the money over the table in the morning and I think I have always equated financial independence as being an important thing.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I was a single parent with children aged 3 and 4, and for 12 or 13 years I have been entirely responsible for me and the two kids, so financial security was a vital part of my career perspective. I work in the sort of organisation where there are rigid pay scales and you climb up them, pay agreements are negotiated nationally and you would do well to understand them let alone to argue about them.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I knew if I built a really good career then I could earn a lot more money and it would be very easy for me to pay somebody to do the things I really hate. I'd be better using my time doing something I'm good at than wasting it doing ironing or something. So I've always happily paid for support in that area.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *There are possible areas of discrimination where if people take time off for maternity they miss out on increments. With the current pay scales, it is hard to catch up once you are down, so you are always going to be behind your colleagues but you might actually be doing exactly the same job as them.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

- Data presented in Figure 11 also show that flexibility and family-friendly policies/programmes and a work environment that is supportive of women are tools for retaining women professionals and managers. While relatively few women joined their organisation for flexible work arrangements (10 percent) or a supportive work environment (4 percent) about two in 10 women would consider leaving for these reasons.

> *I have the feeling that there's a long-hour culture that makes a lot of the male senior managers around the place work very long hours – till 9 or 10 at night ... e-mails from their home at 6 in the morning; e-mails from Tuscany, for example. It think it creates that feeling that if you want to be successful, that's what you have to be prepared to put in.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Women in educational institutions were considerably less likely to have joined their organisations for increased compensation – 19 percent vs. 33 percent of women in government and 36 percent of women in the private sector who gave this as a reason.

Why women would leave - what CEOs think

CEOs were asked to respond to the same list of possible reasons why women might consider leaving their organisation. A comparison of the top reasons given by senior women and CEOs is shown in Figure 12.

- CEOs share senior women's views on the importance of *increased compensation* (41 percent and 42 percent respectively) and *increased advancement opportunities* (48 percent and 57 percent respectively).

- CEOs underestimate the importance of other reasons women might consider leaving their organisation including: increased intellectual stimulation; more compatible organisational values; more flexible work arrangements; and a work environment that is supportive of women.

Figure 12   **Top reasons why senior women would leave:**
senior women's and CEOs' responses.

Reason	Senior women	CEOs
Increased intellectual stimulation	36%	11
Greater advancement opportunities	48	57
Increased compensation	41	42
Organisational values	34	16
More flexible work arrangements	22	15
Work environment more supportive of women	18	12

Scale: 0 15 30 45 60 75%

■ Senior women (N=1188)   ■ CEOs (N=117)
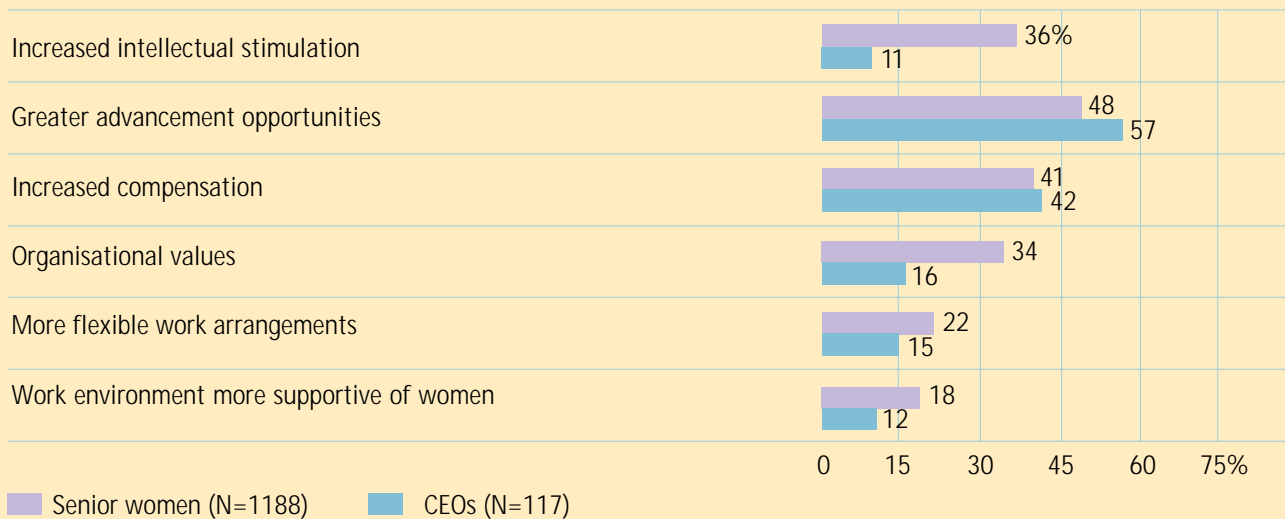
Women in educational institutions (38%) were considerably more likely than women in the public sector (23%) or the private sector (25%) to say they would leave their current organisation for greater advancement opportunities; they were less likely (5%) than women in the public sector (15%) and the private sector (16%) to say they would leave for more compatible organisational values.

Female and male CEOs – differing perceptions of why women would leave their organisation

Female CEOs are more likely than male CEOs to believe that senior women in their organisation would leave for the following reasons:

- Organisational values compatible with their own (21 percent vs. 11 percent)

- Increased visibility (21 percent vs. 10 percent)

- To start their own business (14 percent vs. 5 percent)

Female CEOs (37 percent) are less likely than their male counterparts (46 percent) to believe women would leave for increased compensation.

Senior women's expectations about their own advancement

Despite their recognition of barriers to women's advancement discussed earlier, senior women have high expectations for their own career prospects in their organisation. Two questions were used to probe senior women's aspirations:

Do you aspire to a higher level or position in your organisation?
When do you expect to achieve this position or level?

- A sizeable majority – 69 percent – of senior women reported that they aspire to higher levels or positions in their organisation.

- More than half of women who expect to move up think they will attain this goal in less than three years. Only 11 percent expect never to achieve their desired promotion.

- Corporate women (77 percent) were significantly more likely to aspire to a higher level/position, in contrast to women in professional firms (62 percent) or women in the public sector and higher education (65 percent).

- Among the employment sectors represented here, women in the public sector and education were least optimistic about reaching their goal in less than three years (39 percent vs. 48 percent of corporate women and 44 percent of women in professional firms).

The fact that so many senior women expect to advance in their current organisations should be an encouraging finding to companies, firms and other organisations represented in the study. This is a long-tenured group of seasoned professionals and managers, with 12+ years at their current organisations, who are looking forward to further progress in their careers. Failure to address organisational and attitudinal barriers to their advancement will put their organisations at risk of losing this valuable pool of talent.

breaking the barriers – women in senior management

5

individual and organisational strategies that foster women's advancement

- individual career strategies of successful women

- importance of individual career strategies in different employment sectors

- personal attributes that contribute to career success

- organisational initiatives that foster women's advancement

- views of organisational strategies held by women in different employment sectors

- availability of organisational strategies in different employment sectors

- advancement strategies for the next decade

- who needs to change?

individual and organisational strategies that foster women's advancement

Given the solid business case for retaining and advancing women in UK organisations, it is important to look at the factors that help women advance to senior levels. Data presented in this chapter reveal that both women's own career strategies and their employers' policies and practices have been critical to their success. These findings provide a practical guide for women seeking to attain senior positions, as well as for organisations that recognise that women are a critical business resource.

Individual career strategies of successful women

Senior women were asked to assess the importance to their own career success of 15 individual strategies. The majority of respondents regarded 11 of these strategies as critical or fairly important (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 **Career strategies used by women to advance to senior levels:**
senior women's responses.
Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Strategy	%
Consistently exceeding performance expectations	96%
Developing a style with which male managers are comfortable	94
Developing and adhering to own career goals	92
Gaining line management experience	78
Seeking out difficult or highly visible job assignments	76
Networking with influential colleagues within the organisation	76
Initiating discussion with manager(s)/partner(s) about career aspirations	66
Moving from one functional area of the company/firm to another	63
Having an influential mentor or sponsor	56
Attaining a high level of business development	55
Upgrading educational credentials	52
Being able to relocate	40
Changing companies/firms	36
Developing leadership skills outside the office	35
Gaining international experience	23

Senior women (N =1188)

50

- The top career strategy for women's advancement – cited as critical or fairly important by 96 percent of senior women – was *consistently exceeding performance expectations*. The importance of hard work, going above and beyond the call of duty, and knowing the technical aspects of one's job were also reiterated by women and CEOs in interviews and focus groups.

> *By working very hard; and by making sure that I deliver exactly what is expected of me and a bit more, probably.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *Someone asked me a couple of weeks ago, how do you think you've got where you've got, through luck, through vision, or plain hard work? I think I got there through the plain hard work route.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *You have just got to be really good at what you do, I think you've got to deliver, and you've got to perhaps make sure you are doing things better than most of the men around you. You've got to take opportunities and do training and just make sure you are doing everything to the highest possible standard.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Considerable research suggests that women may, in fact, be too focused on performance to the exclusion of other behaviours that contribute to career success, such as networking, visibility, and becoming more knowledgeable about organisational politics. At the same time, it can be argued that women put so much emphasis on performance and proving themselves because access to other vehicles for advancement, e.g. networks where people obtain mentors/sponsors and 'insider' information, are generally not fully open to them.

> *I worked in a very big organisation which is hierarchical and very traditional and I think quite often what matters is understanding the system and understanding how to play the game. It is invaluable to have somebody else to go to and say, 'I really don't understand this; I'm not picking up the signals right here'. Just use them as a sounding board to see if you have done things right and work out how to deal with problems.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *Men are brilliant at saying 'Yes, that was me actually, didn't I do a fantastic job?' … much more naturally good at self promotion and I think investing more time in getting visibility.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

- Senior women consider developing a style with which male managers are comfortable (94 percent) to be almost as important to women's success as hard work:

> *I guess when you meet a male manager who you instinctively know is of the traditional old school, I probably instinctively adopt a more traditional way of dealing with him, slightly formal … what I would do with somebody from another culture.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

In interviews, male CEOs reiterated the importance of this style issue for women.

> *I think women need to take risks and get the balance right between assertive and aggressive.*
> *CEO*

This finding and other research carried out by Catalyst and Opportunity Now suggest that these senior women, many of whom are the first women to reach high level positions in their organisations, had to walk a fine line in order to succeed in a world created by and for males. They had few role models and, lacking mentors and access to critical networks, they figured it out for themselves. In so doing, they blazed trails for other women coming along behind them.

- Career strategies mentioned by 6 or 7 out of every 10 women were: gaining line management experience; seeking out difficult or highly visible job assignments; networking with influential colleagues within the organisation; initiating discussions with managers about career aspirations; and moving from one functional area of the organisation to another.

> *I think people shy away from jobs which are quite specifically driven by demanding targets and you either do them or die. My view in life is that if you put yourself in those positions, and you are seen to perform them, there is no disputing the fact you have performed.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

In interviews and focus groups women also talked about the importance and challenge of gaining visibility. While this is traditionally achieved through assignment to prominent projects and committees, women recognise they have to work harder than men to position themselves and get their contributions noticed. Men more frequently have access to informal networks that promote visibility and contacts with influential persons within the organisation that are associated with career advancement:

> *You have to screw up your courage and go and see your boss when you think you are ready and say, 'Look, I have been doing this job. I know you think I'm doing it well. I am now thinking about a career move – where are my opportunities here?*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *Decide what you want to do, and where you want to be, and just do not let anybody stop you. You have to blow your own trumpet … you have to take things forward and say, 'Look at what I have done, what I have achieved,' and you have to do it constantly and regularly, and find somebody who will support you.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *You see quite a lot of women who don't understand the need to promote themselves. That might sound terribly strange, but I think women are much less good at putting themselves forward than men. Men of fairly mediocre standing will always be there at the front of the queue, putting themselves forward for committees or working groups, or projects, or anything like that, and I think my advice would be that women need to be more self aware.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

Women also recognise that visibility can be a double-edged sword:

> *Your gaps are very visible as well as your achievements.*
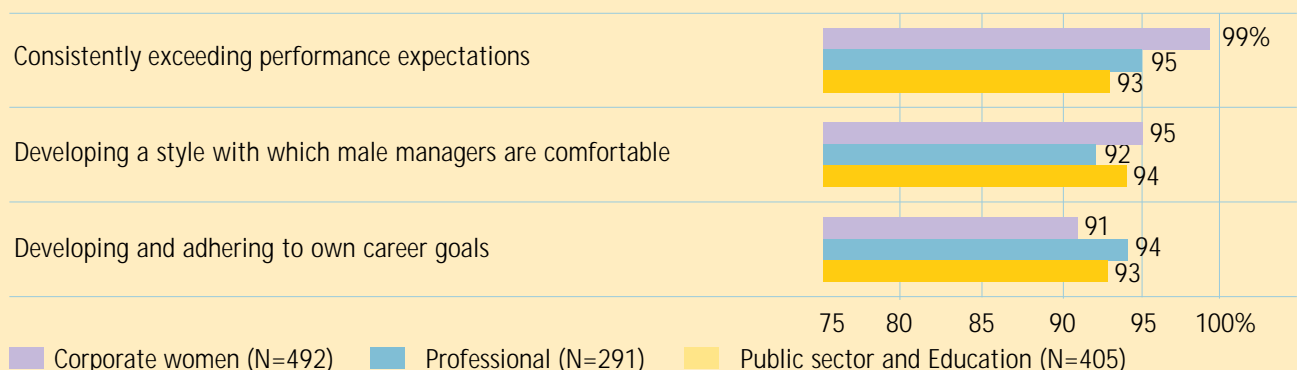> *Senior woman, focus group*

> *The positive thing is that you are noticed because you work in a predominantly male environment. The negative is that because you are noticed, your every word is listened to and I feel that there is more pressure on you to excel.*
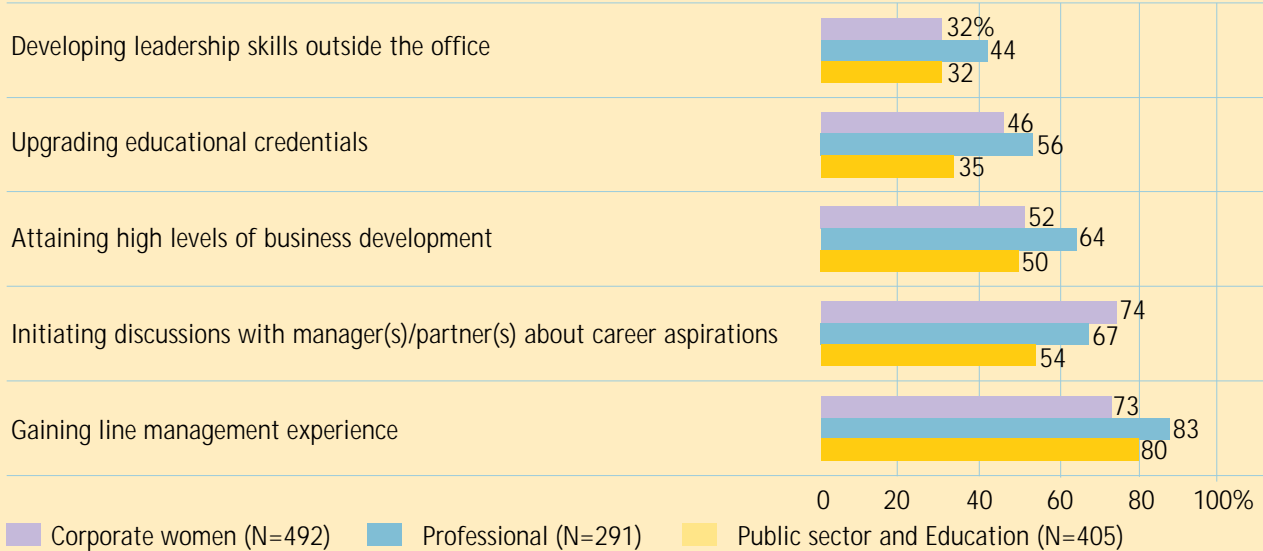> *Senior woman, private sector*

Importance of individual career strategies in different employment sectors

Responses to this question from women working in different sectors are shown in Figures 14 and 15. There is fairly widespread agreement across sectors with the top three strategies shown in Figure 14. However, statistically significant differences in the responses of women were found on several items, shown in Figure 15.

Figure 14   **Career strategies used by women to advance to senior levels:**
by type of organisation.
Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Consistently exceeding performance expectations — 99%, 95, 93

Developing a style with which male managers are comfortable — 95, 92, 94

Developing and adhering to own career goals — 91, 94, 93

75   80   85   90   95   100%

■ Corporate women (N=492)   ■ Professional (N=291)   ■ Public sector and Education (N=405)

Figure 15 — Distinctive career strategies used by women to advance to senior levels: by type of organisation. Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Developing leadership skills outside the office: 32%, 44, 32
Upgrading educational credentials: 46, 56, 35
Attaining high levels of business development: 52, 64, 50
Initiating discussions with manager(s)/partner(s) about career aspirations: 74, 67, 54
Gaining line management experience: 73, 83, 80

Corporate women (N=492)   Professional (N=291)   Public sector and Education (N=405)

These response differences highlight some of the unique career development challenges and the strategies employed to meet them by women in different employment sectors:

• Corporate women are more likely to cite *initiating discussion with manager(s) about career aspirations; having an influential mentor or sponsor,* and *being able to relocate* as critical or fairly important career strategies.

• Professional women more often cite *gaining line management experience; attaining a high level of business development; upgrading educational credentials;* and *developing leadership skills outside the office.*

• Women in the public sector and higher education tend to cite all of these strategies with less frequency with the exception of *gaining line management experience.*
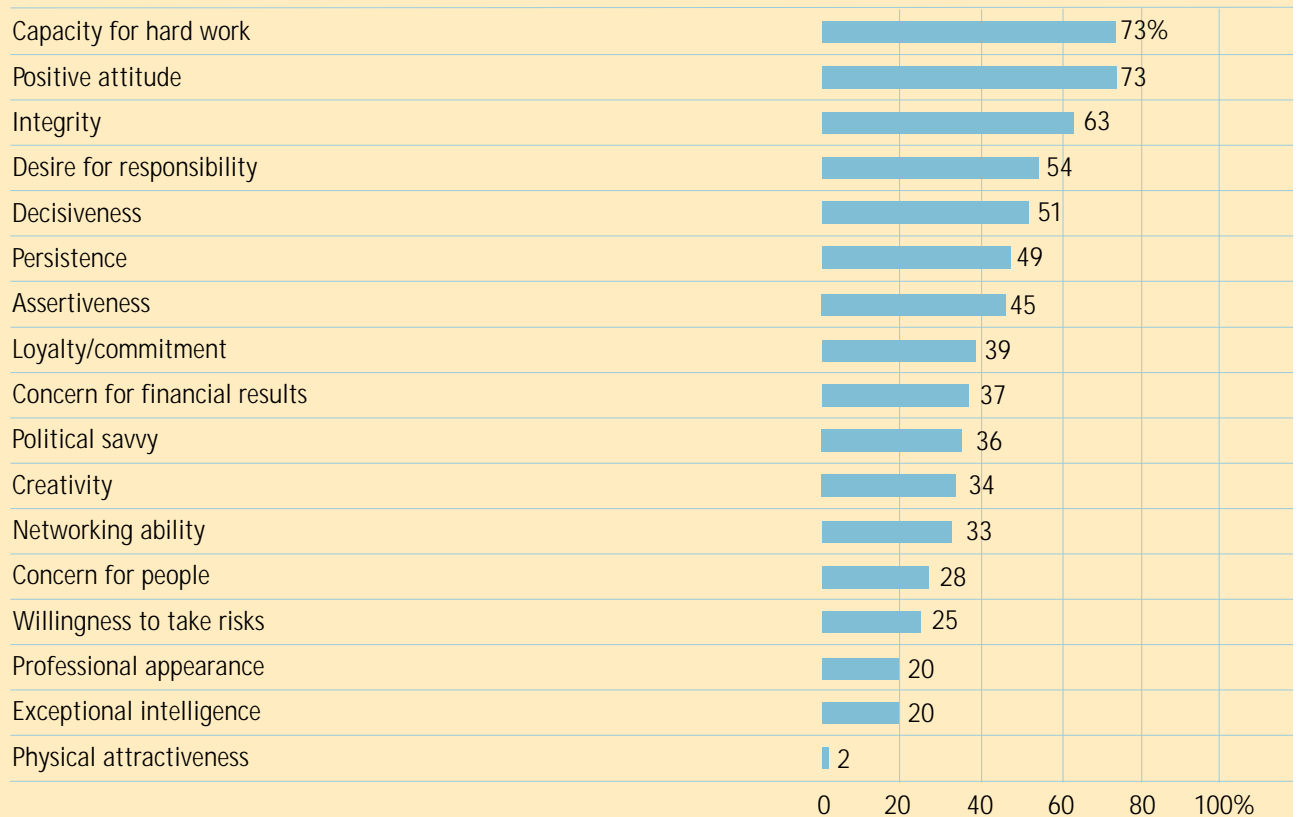
Key differences in importance of individual career strategies – women in education, government and the private sector.

	Education %	Government %	Private sector %
Networking within organisation	82	71	77
Initiating discussions with managers	52	54	72
Functional rotations	51	68	63
Mentor/sponsor	48	47	61
Upgrading educational credentials	65	53	49
Changing organisations	54	34	35
International experience	40	13	25

Personal attributes that contribute to career success

In addition to the career strategies cited above, senior women are clear that several personal characteristics are also critical to women's success (see Figure 16).

Figure 16	Personal attributes critical to advancement:
	senior women's views.
	Percentage citing attribute as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

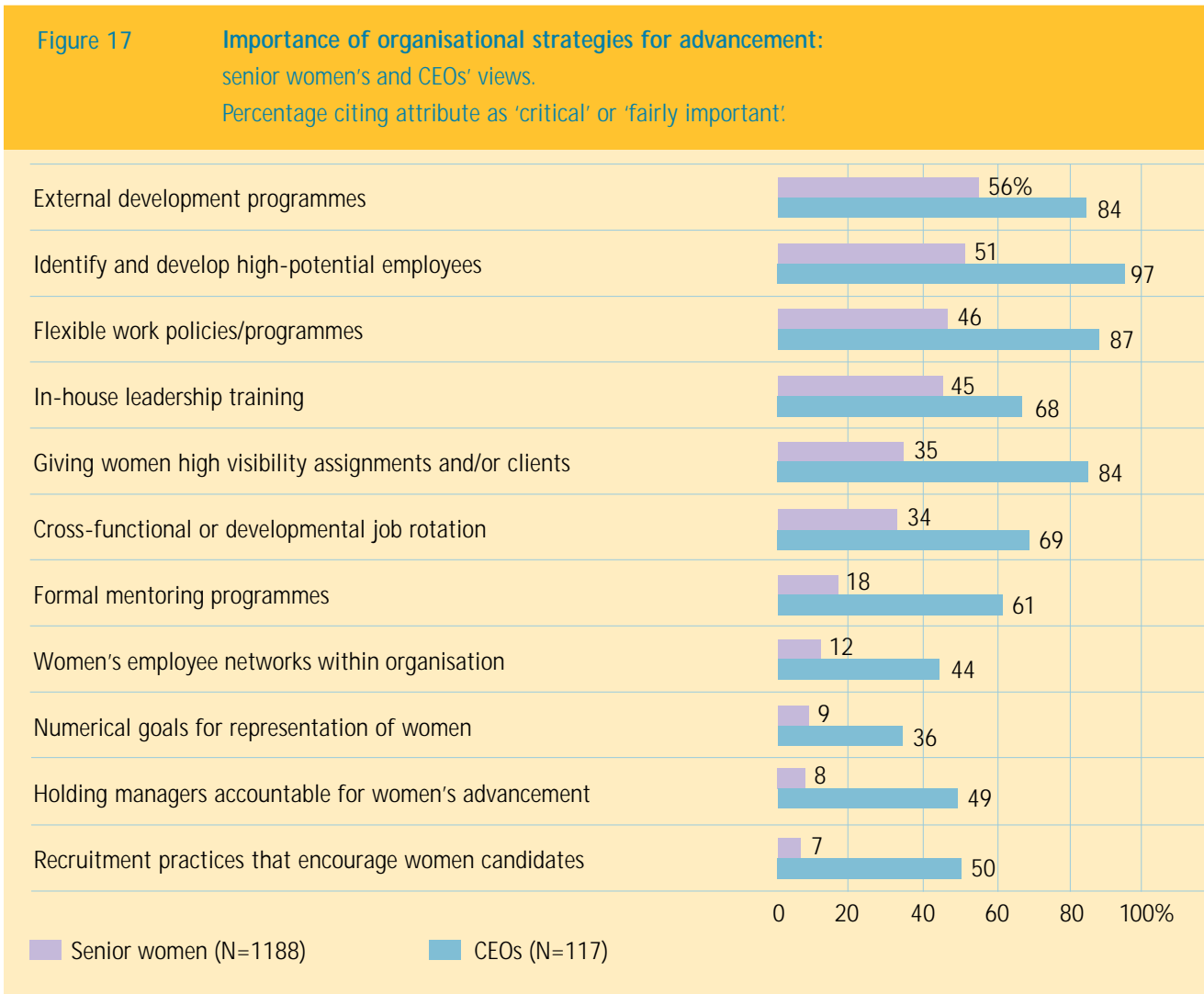| Attribute	Percentage
Capacity for hard work	73%
Positive attitude	73
Integrity	63
Desire for responsibility	54
Decisiveness	51
Persistence	49
Assertiveness	45
Loyalty/commitment	39
Concern for financial results	37
Political savvy	36
Creativity	34
Networking ability	33
Concern for people	28
Willingness to take risks	25
Professional appearance	20
Exceptional intelligence	20
Physical attractiveness	2

0 20 40 60 80 100%

- Presented with 17 personal attributes and asked to rate their importance to women's opportunities for advancement and general career success, the majority of women pointed to five key attributes – *capacity for hard work, positive attitude, integrity, desire for responsibility,* and *decisiveness.*

- The fact that *capacity for hard work* headed the list of personal attributes parallels an earlier finding that *consistently exceeding performance expectations* is the most essential strategy for success.

- Between 49 percent and 28 percent of respondents cited several other attributes as critical or very important: *persistence; assertiveness; loyalty/commitment; concern for financial results; political savvy; creativity; networking ability;* and *concern for people.*

These findings are consistent with other research that shows that successful women have individual career strategies in common which contribute to their acceptance by male co-workers and supervisors and their promotion to senior positions. However, responsibility for career development does not rest only with the individual. The organisations that will benefit from women's skills and perspective, and ultimately retain the best and brightest women, will have to provide a work environment and the necessary resources to support women's career success. Many organisations acknowledge this and have implemented a variety of programmes to ensure women's retention and career advancement.

Organisational initiatives that foster women's advancement

Senior women and CEOs were asked to consider 11 strategies that organisations could implement to foster women's career success or, in the case of senior women, were important to their own career advancement (see Figure 17).

Figure 17	Importance of organisational strategies for advancement: senior women's and CEOs' views. Percentage citing attribute as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Bar chart data:

Strategy	Senior women (N=1188)	CEOs (N=117)
External development programmes	56%	84
Identify and develop high-potential employees	51	97
Flexible work policies/programmes	46	87
In-house leadership training	45	68
Giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients	35	84
Cross-functional or developmental job rotation	34	69
Formal mentoring programmes	18	61
Women's employee networks within organisation	12	44
Numerical goals for representation of women	9	36
Holding managers accountable for women's advancement	8	49
Recruitment practices that encourage women candidates	7	50

■ Senior women (N=1188)   ■ CEOs (N=117)

- CEOs are far more likely than senior women to view each of the organisational strategies listed as either critical or fairly important **in advancing women to senior management/partnership,** with majorities of CEOs rating 7 of the 11 strategies as such.

- Top organisational strategies for CEOs include: *identification and development of high-potential employees* (97 percent), *flexible work policies/programmes* (87 percent), *external development programmes,* and *giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients* (84 percent each).

- In contrast, only two organisational strategies are seen as critical or fairly important to the senior women in terms of **their importance to their own career advancement:** *external development programmes* (56 percent) and *identifying and developing high-potential employees* (51 percent). Flexible work policies/programmes were also cited as critical or fairly important by almost half of senior women.

Male and female CEOs' views.

Female CEOs are considerably more likely than their male counterparts to agree that in-house training (77% v. 62%) and external development programmes (91% v. 80%) are either critical or fairly important organisational strategies for advancing women.

One possible explanation for the disparity between the responses of CEOs and senior women on some of these questions is that senior women fear that organisational initiatives targeted at women will provoke resentment among male co-workers and fears of reverse discrimination.

> *I'm just concerned that it may well enhance feelings of stereotyping that people may have about me. I would much rather achieve things on my own merit as an individual rather than being perceived as a woman with women's issues.*
> *Senior women, public sector*

> *They talk a lot about equality of opportunity and things, but we've got a senior management group that is all male, and I think there is almost a backlash in the organisation – you know, 'We've had women, we've had women's initiatives, what about us men? We're missing out here' – that sort of thing.*
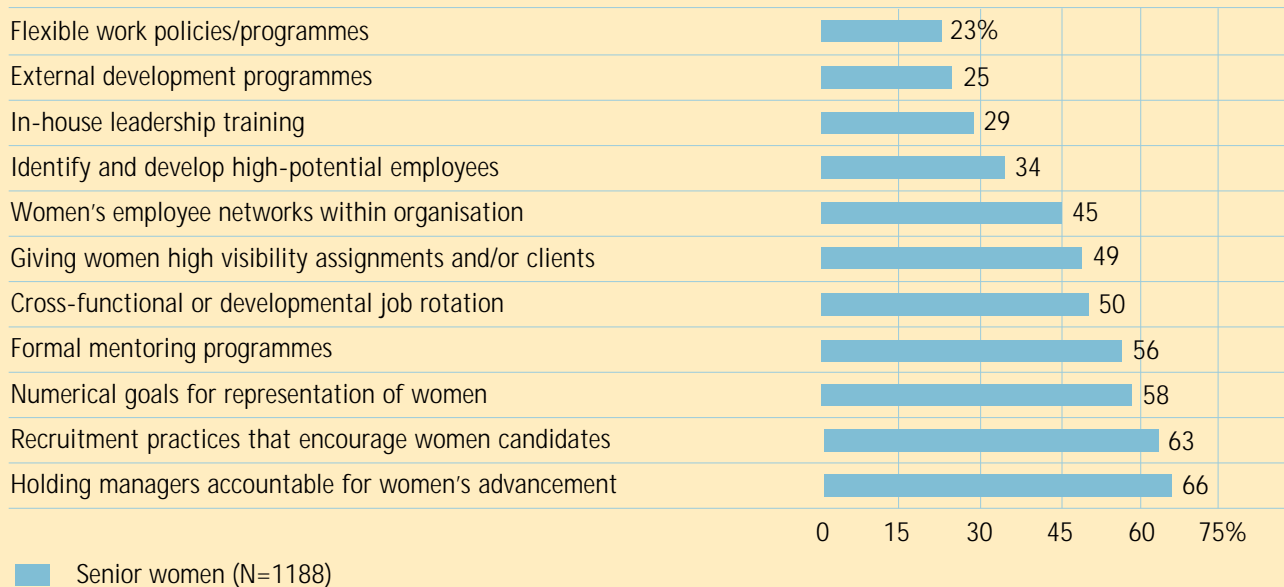> *Senior woman, private sector*

Another explanation is that many of the organisational programmes listed in the question were/are not available in the senior women's organisations (see Figure 18).

- Strategies that are most frequently cited as *not available* in senior women's organisations are: holding managers accountable for women's advancement (66 percent); recruitment practices that encourage women candidates (63 percent); and numerical goals for representation of women (58 percent).

- Organisational strategies that are *least likely* to be reported as unavailable are flexible work policies/programmes (23 percent); external development programmes (25 percent); and in-house leadership training (29 percent).

Whilst training/development and flexibility are important components of an effective gender diversity initiative, Catalyst's and Opportunity Now's research shows that such programmes alone do not contribute to systematic and lasting changes in the culture of organisations; they are only part of the solution. Unfortunately, a number of strategies that Catalyst's and Opportunity Now's research shows are effective in retaining and advancing women – strategies that involve top-down support and line management accountability for results – are widely unavailable in UK organisations.

Figure 18 Organisational strategies for women's advancement.
Senior women reporting that strategy is not available to them in their organisations.

Strategy	Percent
Flexible work policies/programmes	23%
External development programmes	25
In-house leadership training	29
Identify and develop high-potential employees	34
Women's employee networks within organisation	45
Giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients	49
Cross-functional or developmental job rotation	50
Formal mentoring programmes	56
Numerical goals for representation of women	58
Recruitment practices that encourage women candidates	63
Holding managers accountable for women's advancement	66

Senior women (N=1188)

Views of organisational strategies held by women in different employment sectors

Statistically significant differences were found on all but two organisational strategies – *numerical goals for the representation of women* and *cross-functional or developmental job rotation* – in comparing the responses of senior women by the type of organisation in which they work (see Figure 19).
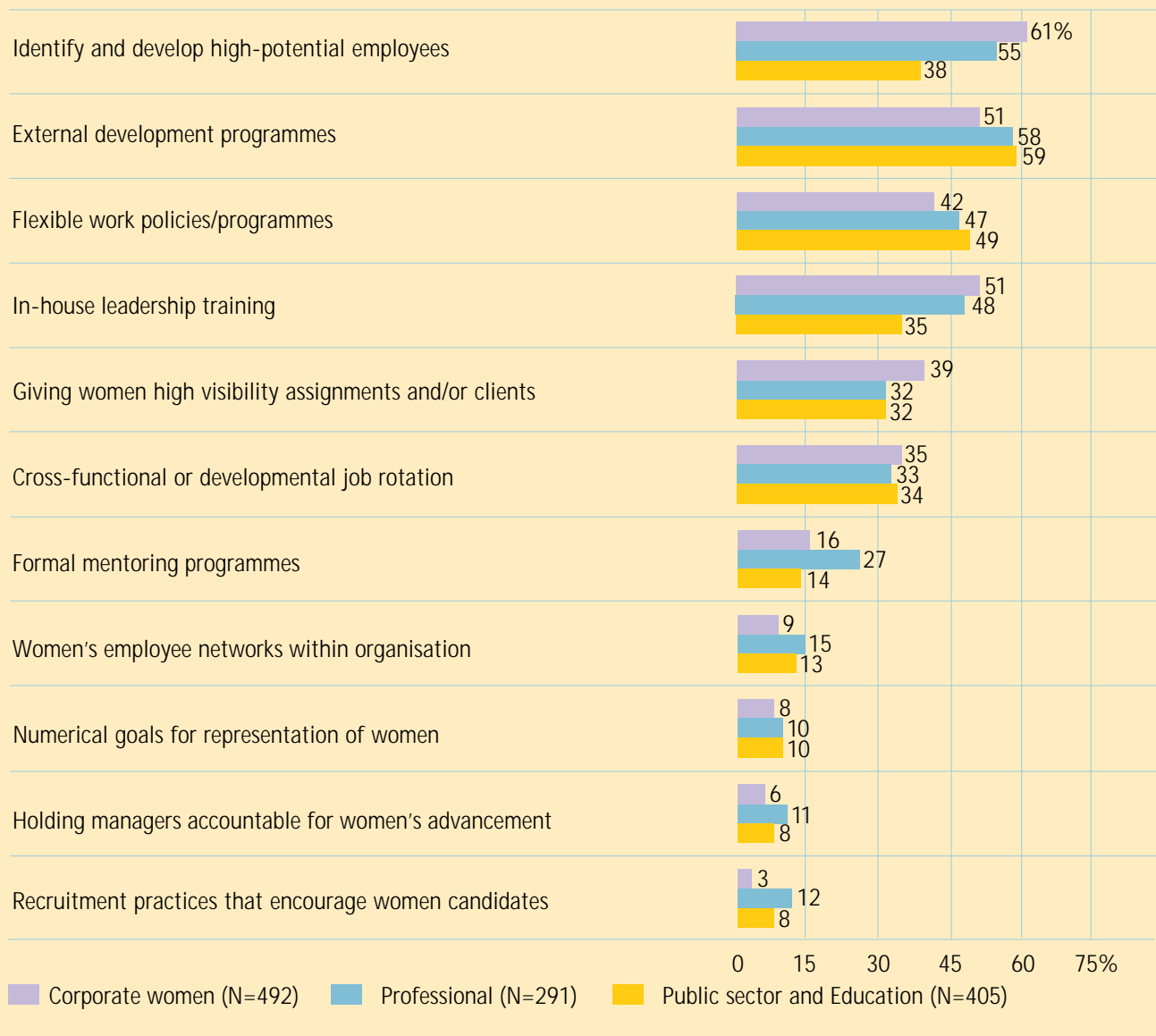
Several differences in response that are quite marked include:

- Senior women in corporations and professional firms were significantly more likely than women in the public sector and education to cite *identification and development of high-potential employees* and *in-house leadership training* as critical or fairly important to their own advancement.

individual and organisational strategies that foster women's advancement

- Senior women in professional firms were almost twice as likely as women in the other two employment sectors to report *formal mentoring programmes* as critical or fairly important.

Figure 19   **Importance of organisational strategies for advancement:**
senior women by type of organisation.
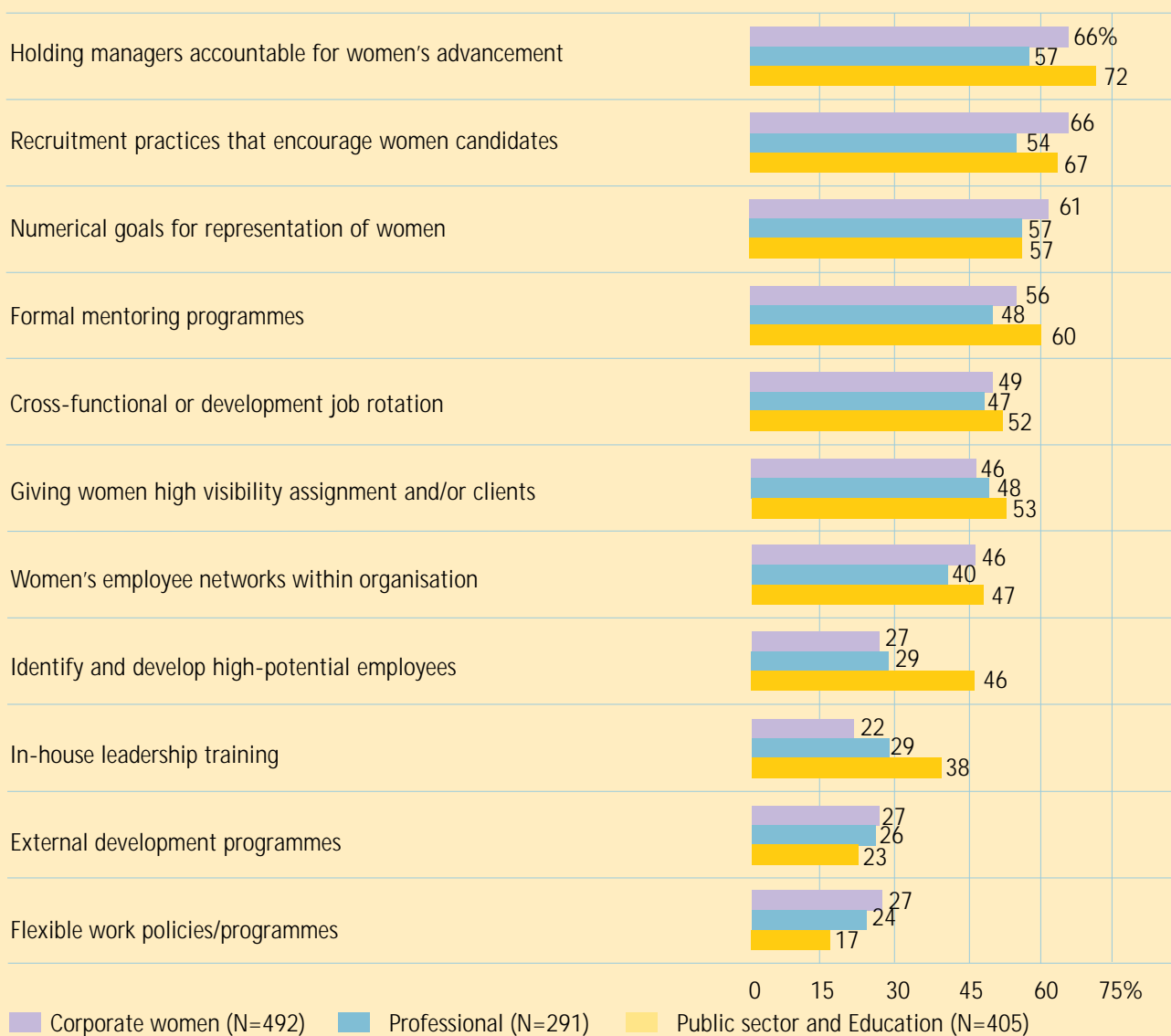Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Strategy	Corporate women (N=492)	Professional (N=291)	Public sector and Education (N=405)
Identify and develop high-potential employees	61%	55	38
External development programmes	51	58	59
Flexible work policies/programmes	42	47	49
In-house leadership training	51	48	35
Giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients	39	32	32
Cross-functional or developmental job rotation	35	33	34
Formal mentoring programmes	16	27	14
Women's employee networks within organisation	9	15	13
Numerical goals for representation of women	8	10	10
Holding managers accountable for women's advancement	6	11	8
Recruitment practices that encourage women candidates	3	12	8

0 15 30 45 60 75%

■ Corporate women (N=492)   ■ Professional (N=291)   ■ Public sector and Education (N=405)

Organisational strategies.

Women in educational institutions are less likely than women in government or the private sector to agree that the following organisational strategies are critical or fairly important to women's advancement:

- *Identification and development of high-potential employees* (31% vs. 39% and 58% respectively)

- *In-house leadership training* (19% vs. 39% and 50% respectively)

59

Availability of organisational strategies in different employment sectors

Responses of senior women to this question suggest the availability of organisational programmes to address the recruitment, retention and advancement of women professionals and managers varies by employment sector (see Figure 20)

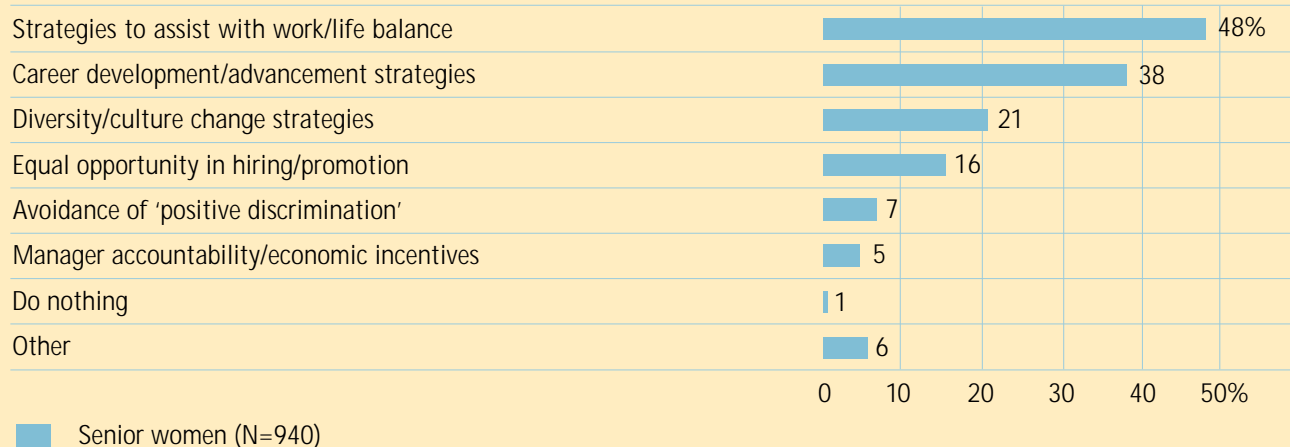| Figure 20	Organisational strategies for women's advancement; women reporting that strategy is not available to them by type of organisation giving reason as first, second and third most important.

Holding managers accountable for women's advancement
66%
57
72

Recruitment practices that encourage women candidates
66
54
67

Numerical goals for representation of women
61
57
57

Formal mentoring programmes
56
48
60

Cross-functional or development job rotation
49
47
52

Giving women high visibility assignment and/or clients
46
48
53

Women's employee networks within organisation
46
40
47

Identify and develop high-potential employees
27
29
46

In-house leadership training
22
29
38

External development programmes
27
26
23

Flexible work policies/programmes
27
24
17

0   15   30   45   60   75%

■ Corporate women (N=492)   ■ Professional (N=291)   ■ Public sector and Education (N=405)

- Women in professional firms were significantly less likely than those in the other employment sectors represented in the study to report that several organisational strategies were not available to them including: *holding managers accountable for women's advancement; recruitment practices that encourage women candidates;* and *formal mentoring programmes.*

- Women in the public sector and higher education were more likely than women in corporations or professional firms to report that *identification and development of high-potential employees; giving women high-visibility assignments;* and *in-house leadership training* were not available in their organisations.

Advancement strategies for the next decade

Senior women were asked, through an open-ended question, what specific strategies organisations should implement within the next 5 to 10 years to accelerate women's advancement. Respondents could give more than one answer. Altogether 940 comments on strategies were received from respondents (see Figure 21).

Figure 21	**Organisational strategies for women's advancement that should be implemented in the next 5-10 years.**
	Percentage of women recommending specific strategies.

Strategies to assist with work/life balance	48%
Career development/advancement strategies	38
Diversity/culture change strategies	21
Equal opportunity in hiring/promotion	16
Avoidance of 'positive discrimination'	7
Manager accountability/economic incentives	5
Do nothing	1
Other	6

0   10   20   30   40   50%

Senior women (N=940)

- Almost half (48 percent) of senior women's written responses pointed to the need for organisations to do more to help women manage work/life commitments.

> *I think the organisation could look at more flexible working for women, or for anybody in terms of working at home. I think you should be able to deliver to your objective in any way that you can. If it means going home to collect children at 5 and then picking up your work at 8 when they have gone to bed, as long as you get your work done, then why not?*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Having in place flexible working programmes is not enough. Organisations must change their culture so that employees who use them are valued equally. Only then will they be effective. Many of the written comments focused on the need for organisations to move away from a culture of 'presenteeism,' also referred to as 'face time,' where long hours at work are used as measures of success, commitment and productivity. In this type of culture, part time workers, typically women, are seen as less committed than their full time colleagues and people who work

long hours are favoured for promotions and special assignments, regardless of their actual contributions.

Respondents recommending the need for more flexibility in work organisations also repeatedly cited the importance of both men and women using these arrangements so as not to marginalise this practice as a 'women's issue'.

> *They won't pay for you to have equipment at home. I have got a laptop but it wouldn't have any connections through the internal e-mail system and they won't pay for phone bills or for you to have an extra line at home. Their idea is that all the equipment is at work so you should get to work to use it.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *In our office it is very much that if you leave at 5, people think you are not doing your job.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I think it is the example that is set by male managers too about the way in which they behave, the way in which they get the best out of people and all that sort of thing. Even down to the stuff like one thing which plagues us now – e-mails sent at 10 at night – and the real content, whatever the overt content, 'I was here, where were you?'*
> *CEO*

- *Career development/advancement strategies* were the next type of strategy most needed to advance women in the future (38 percent).

- The next most needed strategies were *diversity/culture change strategies* (21 percent) and *equal opportunity in hiring/promotion* (16 percent).

- Smaller percentages of respondents cited the need for other types of organisational strategies.

Who needs to change?

Senior women and CEOs were asked to respond to two statements about whose responsibility it is to make the adjustments necessary for women to succeed in their organisations (see Figure 22).

- Nearly all CEOs (93 percent) compared to 72 percent of senior women say that it is the organisation's responsibility to adapt to help meet the needs of management and professional women.

> *I think the onus has got to be on the employer and on the organisation to actually maximize the abilities of their staff in general, but there are still all sorts of assumptions operating.*
> *CEO*

> *My boss ought to say to them, 'You know the culture and the values of this organisation are that we encourage personal development at every level. You know that's what the bloody mission statement says and I am concerned that you as a manager are not doing that.'*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

- A majority of senior women (58 percent), perhaps based on their personal experience, say that it is up to women to adapt to fit into the organisational culture. Somewhat fewer CEOs – 43 percent – agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Figure 22 **Who needs to change: senior women's and CEOs' views.**
Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.
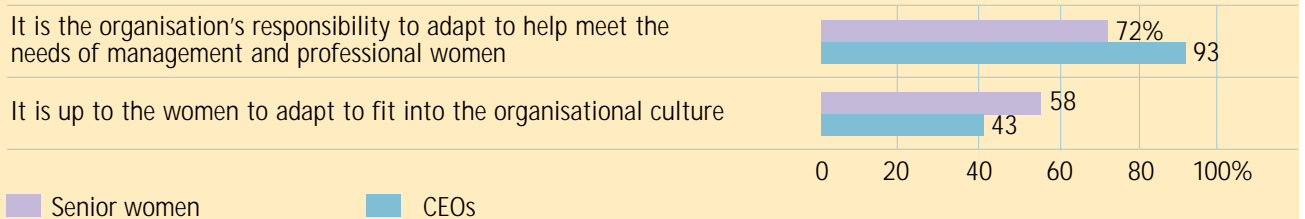
This difference in the responses of senior women and CEOs may be explained by women's reluctance to have special efforts targeted toward them which might, in turn, provoke male backlash. In response to another item on the same question, 44 percent of women said that a significant number of men in their organisation resent positive action for women.

6

managing work and life commitments

- the impact of family responsibilities on women's careers

- perceived impact of children and other family responsibilities on women's career progression

- response differences by sector

- achieving balance: challenges and coping strategies

- curtailing personal interests

- employing outside help

- supportive spouses/partners

- limiting commitments

managing work and life commitments

The impact of family responsibilities on women's careers

The quest to establish rewarding careers and to lead fulfilling personal and family lives can be a tricky balancing act for both women and men. Today in the United Kingdom more women are working than ever before. In 1971 only 57 percent of women were economically active. By the late 1990s this figure had risen to 72 percent, largely due to the numbers of mothers with children who work (Labour Market Trends, Office of National Statistics, August 2000). These figures represent a significant improvement in opportunities for women in the paid work force in the UK, but also indicate that more women than ever before are trying to find some compromise between work and personal/family priorities.

Over 50 percent of mothers with children under the age of five are now working, in addition to caring for their family (General Household Survey, Office of National Statistics, 1998). This balancing act affects both men and women, but it remains particularly significant for women who frequently must juggle multiple roles. These problems have been exacerbated in recent years by the increase in lone parent families in the UK – one in five families is now headed by a single parent and the majority of these parents are women (General Household Survey, Office of National Statistics, 1998).

Of the senior women in this study, 75 percent are married or cohabiting, 55 percent have children and 40 percent have children under 18 living at home. On average they work 47 hours per week. Their spouses/partners work, on average, 45 hours a week. It is not surprising, then, that the issue of commitment to family responsibilities appeared in an earlier chapter as one of the most important barriers affecting women's advancement.

Perceived impact of children and other family responsibilities on women's career progression

Responses to several statements in the questionnaire about the impact of family and childcare responsibilities provide additional information on women's opinions on this subject (see Figure 23).

- Sizeable majorities of senior women (83 percent) and CEOs (76 percent) agree or strongly agree that *commitment to family responsibilities is a barrier to women's advancement.*

- Fewer than half as many CEOs (34 percent) as senior women (72 percent) agree with the statement *Advancement in my organisation depends on putting career before personal/ family life.*

- Seventy-one percent of senior women compared to only 44 percent of CEOs agree that *having children hinders a woman's ability to advance.*

> *It is very difficult to balance family life with a career and a lot of women just give up on it.*
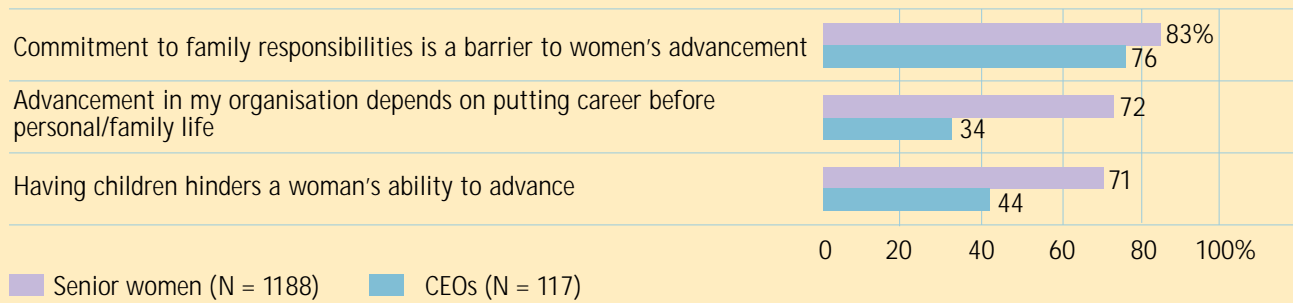> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I probably see my little boy for half an hour a day during the week, which is not very good. I'd like to spend a bit more time with him. He's in bed at 7.30 and I am home at 9.00.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

Figure 23	Perceived impact of family and personal responsibilities on women's advancement: senior women's and CEOs' views.
	Percentage responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Commitment to family responsibilities is a barrier to women's advancement — 83% / 76

Advancement in my organisation depends on putting career before personal/family life — 72 / 34

Having children hinders a woman's ability to advance — 71 / 44

0 20 40 60 80 100%

■ Senior women (N = 1188)   ■ CEOs (N = 117)

The differences in the responses of senior women and CEOs to these items are striking and consistent with differences in their personal situations. Almost twice as many senior women as CEOs have spouses/partners in full time work. Though their spouses/partners may be supportive, they have far less flexibility to assist with child care and household tasks than do the spouses/ partners of a majority of CEOs, who are more likely to work part time or not to work outside the home at all. In their interviews, senior women often reported that most of their male co-workers also had wives who were at home caring for children. From these women's comments it appears that, even today, some men are simply opposed to women working outside the home. Cultural differences in men's opinions on women's roles related to UK geography were also mentioned:

> *I had the situation relatively recently where I was working with a group of men who all had wives at home looking after children and they could not understand why I wasn't doing the same. I actually don't have children but they couldn't understand why I didn't have children and was not at home looking after them.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *If I had stayed in the North of England for my career, I would not have obtained the position I have now because the culture there was very much that you were going to get married, have children and you were going to give up work. That has changed some but there are still not the opportunities in the North that there are in the South.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

It is also interesting that a number of women reported in interviews that to succeed in their organisations, their husbands had to give up their careers to stay at home and manage domestic chores and care for children. Some women even selected a spouse/partner with this criterion in mind. And, like the men they work with whose wives/partners do not work, earning power was a key consideration in the decision. Also, for a number of the spouses/partners of these senior women, this arrangement was preferable to pursuing a career and having others care for their children.

Response differences by sector

- There is universal agreement across the three employment sectors represented in the study that commitment to family responsibilities hinders women's advancement.

- Corporate women are significantly more likely to agree that advancement in their organisations depends upon putting career before personal or family life (see Figure 24).

Figure 24	Perceived impact of family and personal commitments on women's advancement: senior women's views by type of organisation. Percentage responding as 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Commitment to family responsibilities hinders women's advancement — 83%, 83, 83

Advancement in this organisation depends on putting career before personal/family life — 76, 69, 69

Having children hinders a woman's ability to advance — 73, 69, 70

Corporate women (N=492) Professional (N=291) Public sector and Education (N=405)
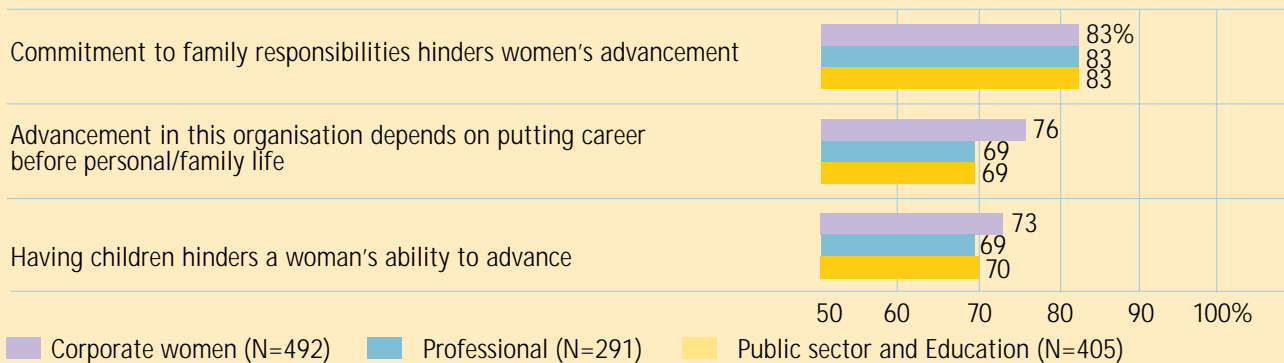
Women in education and government disagree with private sector women.

Women in educational institutions (46%) and government (49%) are considerably less likely than private sector women (64%) to agree with the statement It is up to women to adapt to fit into the organisational culture.

Achieving balance: challenges and coping strategies

How have the senior women in this study, who along with their partners work long hours, managed the demands on them of employer, spouse/partner, children and their own personal interests/needs? Their answers are instructive for organisational practice as well as for other women pursuing business and professional careers.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the importance of 16 strategies to manage their lives (see Figure 25).

Curtailing personal interests is a key strategy for senior women

Responses to this question show that more often than not, when senior women are confronted with conflict managing their multiple priorities, they respond by curtailing their personal interests (e.g. fitness, hobbies, community activities). This response is consistent with considerable anecdotal data, as well as studies on women and stress: confronted with the demands of their employers, and the needs of children and other family members, women forego acting on their own needs.

managing work and life commitments

| Figure 25 | Choices women made to balance career and personal life: senior women's responses |

Curtailed personal interests (e.g. fitness, hobby, community activity) — 76%
Employed outside services for domestic help — 72
Relied on supportive spouse or partner — 58
Used external childcare services (e.g. childcare centres) — 31
Used in-house childcare services — 28
Developed strong inter-personal networks outside work — 25
Postponed having children — 25
Worked part-time or flexible hours — 24
Worked at home — 22
Took leave of absence for personal or family related reasons — 18
Decided not to have children — 18
Pursued personal interests (e.g. fitness, hobby, community activity) — 17
Left paid workforce for a period of time for personal/family related reasons — 15
Delayed marriage — 8
Did not marry — 7
Created own business opportunity/became self employed for a period of time — 6

0   20   40   60   80   100%

■ Senior women (N = 1188)

This is an important finding, not only because such outside activities are healthy and fulfiling, but also because they can lead to business, professional and networking opportunities that benefit women's advancement.

> *I combine my interests and my career, which I'm very much able to do. So I'm not burningly conscious of missing anything. I'm just conscious of the fact that I have a very one-dimensional life, because so much of it is work.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *The balance in terms of actual hours per week … you could argue that my life was out of balance because I spend more time at work than I do at home.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

> *Basically, either I'm working or I'm looking after the children. Things I used to try and do like keep-fit after a fashion, or evening classes, I don't do any of that. I would like to make room for that, but even working four days a week, I have a feeling that my time is either for work or for family and that I don't have much time for myself. It's an interesting debate I have about my one day off a week, that I actually don't make time for myself on that day. I find myself doing things that need to be done for everybody. I'd like to do more voluntary things, but I'm cautious about doing anything that involves continuing commitment because of the joint pressures I feel from home and work, that I would be worried about doing something where I was being relied on in a third place, that could then get squeezed out.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I don't have a life. It's all work, so I am giving it all up … to get a life. I have done this for 17 years and then 10 years before, so I have decided to get a life. I am so tired and have no time for friends or no time to talk with them … I actually get irritated if they phone me at 9 at night.*
> *Senior woman, focus group*

Employing outside help

- Since this is a highly remunerated group, it is not surprising that the second most frequently cited strategy for balancing career and personal life is making use of outside services for domestic help (72 percent).

- Far fewer women report using either external or in-house child care services (31 percent and 28 percent respectively) or other possible strategies presented in the question. This may be due, in part, to the fact that some women were forced by circumstances or organisational policies to take a career break when they had their children. Others have family members who care for their children.

Supportive spouses/partners

- The next most frequently cited strategy was relying on a supportive spouse/partner.

> *When I'm not there, he does everything and I have complete faith that he will do everything and do it completely reliably, and at least as well as I can do it myself, probably better.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

Limiting commitments

- Some women minimized the stress of juggling multiple roles by delaying or not taking on additional commitments beyond their careers, postponing (25 percent) or not having children (18 percent) and delaying (8 percent) or not getting married (7 percent).

> *I didn't get pregnant until I was 39, so in a sense I managed it by delaying it until my career was very secure. I was well-established and I also divorced one man and got a new husband who I knew by instinct – and in practice turned out to be – an excellent father, a more equal parent. He now stays at home and has stayed at home for the last 12 years looking after them.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *Yes, I think it would have been difficult to manage a career with children the way I've managed my career.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

> *I do believe that having children and a very demanding job is almost impossible and the vast majority of women I work with that are senior don't do it, they can't. They either have a family or they have a decent career and I've been very, very fortunate in having both. But also I suppose I was very determined and picking a certain kind of husband to do it with. Sounds dreadful. But anyway, that's what I did.*
> *Senior woman, public sector*

- A fairly sizeable percentage of women reported that they took breaks in their careers in order to start families. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that at the time that the oldest women in the group had their children, there were few formal programmes to encourage them to continue in their careers and, in some cases, women were actually required to resign their positions.

From interviews and the quantitative data above, it appears that today many more organisations have flexibility programmes, crèches, telecommuting, and other options to retain women and enable them to maintain career continuity. However, women using these programmes have identified some problems with their implementation, in particular, that part time and telecommuting arrangements do not always function as negotiated in terms of time commitment and remuneration.

> *I am doing practically a full time job and I am not compensated enough. If I am going to carry on doing what I am doing, I would expect the pay to be nearer to a full time equivalent; otherwise, I want to go to a proper three-day week.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

> *I went part time but all that meant was I got paid less and worked at home a lot and still covered a full time job. We are not at all good at accepting that you can reorganise things to give people half or three-quarters of a job and the world won't fall apart. Senior woman, focus group*

> *We have a lot of home workers and lots of us have been kitted up to be able to work from home, so it creates an expectation that you will work at home and you can take it home and do a bit later.*
> *Senior woman, private sector*

The findings presented in this chapter show that women continue to struggle with work/life commitments. While organisational programmes to help employees manage conflict in this area are among the most prevalent approaches to gender diversity that UK organisations have implemented (see Chapter 5), more will need to be done to address this issue in terms of providing options such as on-site crèches, subsidising existing community-based child care facilities, and especially, implementing flexible working. Furthermore, qualitative data from interviews and focus groups shows that it is not enough to have these programmes if women feel they will be penalised for using them.

The business case for implementing work/life programmes is clear. Over 50 percent of women with children under five are now working in the UK. A majority of senior women in this study – women with demonstrated career commitment and contributions to their organisations – have children. Large majorities of them report a career 'penalty' in their organisation associated with having a family. About one-fifth of them reported that they would leave their current employer for more flexibility and/or a work environment more supportive of women (see Figure 11, Chapter 4).

Many senior women also have spouses/partners who work full time. Catalyst research shows that both men and women in dual-career couples want more flexibility in when and where they work. (Catalyst, Two Careers, One Marriage: Making it Work in the Workplace, 1998). This is not just a 'women's issue.' With two incomes to support their families, dual-career couples have a 'safety net' that facilitates leaving a current employer for better opportunities elsewhere; hence, they pose a unique retention challenge for their organisations. For all of these reasons, UK employers need to assess what further programmes are needed to address the needs of women and men employees who are juggling work/life commitments and to assess the organisational climate to ensure that employees feel it is safe to use existing programmes. As one CEO noted in an interview, this just makes good business sense.

> *I think a lot depends on the attitude of the employer and the prevailing cultures. We have got allegedly family-friendly legislation in place but in the main the work culture, certainly in the 90s and to a less extent in the late 80s, penalises people who are 'not flexible' and who have to leave to pick up kids or whatever. If you are a sensible employer and recognise that it is not actually a lot different from giving people lunch breaks, you can manage around it.*
> *CEO*

7

differences among generations of women in the UK workplace

- younger women have 'raised the bar' on what they expect from employers

- younger women are less constrained by the traditional 'psychological contract' between employer and employee

- younger women expect equality and flexibility

- younger women employ different individual career strategies

- high potential and mentoring programmes are viewed as important organisation strategies by younger women

- younger women are pessimistic about the possibility of work/life balance

differences among generations of women in the UK workplace

Today, at least three generations of women are working together in the UK workplace. Their ages range from early 20s to late 60s or early 70s in a few cases. The women in these different age groups have had strikingly different experiences in terms of the size of their cohort, historical events they have experienced, and cultural phenomena that have shaped their perspectives toward and expectations about work and the workplace. As one researcher characterised this situation:

> *At no other time ... have so many different generations been asked to work shoulder to shoulder without seeing eye to eye.*
> *(Zemke, Ron, et al. Generations at work: managing the clash of veterans, boomers, xers, and nexters in your workplace, AMACOM, 2000)*

The findings reported below suggest possible systematic differences in the attitudes, behaviours and expectations of employees in different age groups. Employers will need to address these differences as older women professionals and managers move toward retirement and younger cohorts of women move through the professional/management pipeline.

Younger women have 'raised the bar' on what they expect from employers. Younger women are significantly less likely to believe that opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in their organisation have improved (either *greatly* or *somewhat* or *slightly*). See Figure 26.

Figure 26	Opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in respondents' organisation compared to five years ago: senior women by age.
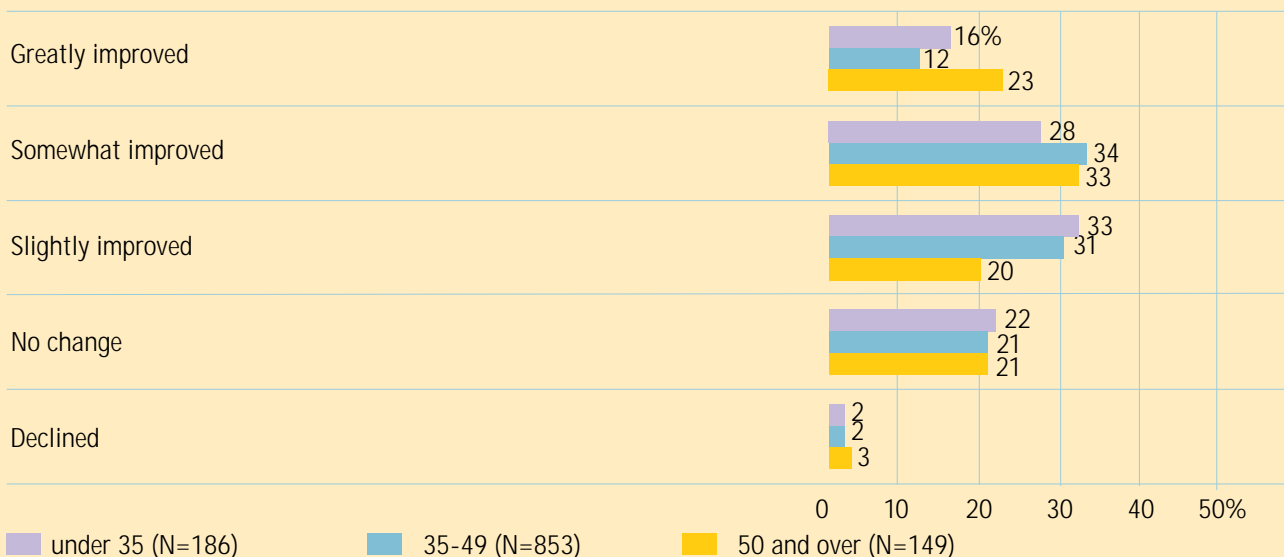
	under 35 (N=186)	35-49 (N=853)	50 and over (N=149)
Greatly improved	16%	12	23
Somewhat improved	28	34	33
Slightly improved	33	31	20
No change	22	21	21
Declined	2	2	3

Younger women are less constrained by the traditional 'psychological contract' between employer and employee. Women in the under 35 and 35-49 age groups (69 percent and 72 percent respectively) are more likely than women aged 50 and over (57 percent) to say that they have considered leaving their organisation. Unlike generations before them, women in these

age groups, especially those under 35, have grown up hearing that they should expect numerous changes in the employers and even the industries they will work for in the course of their careers.
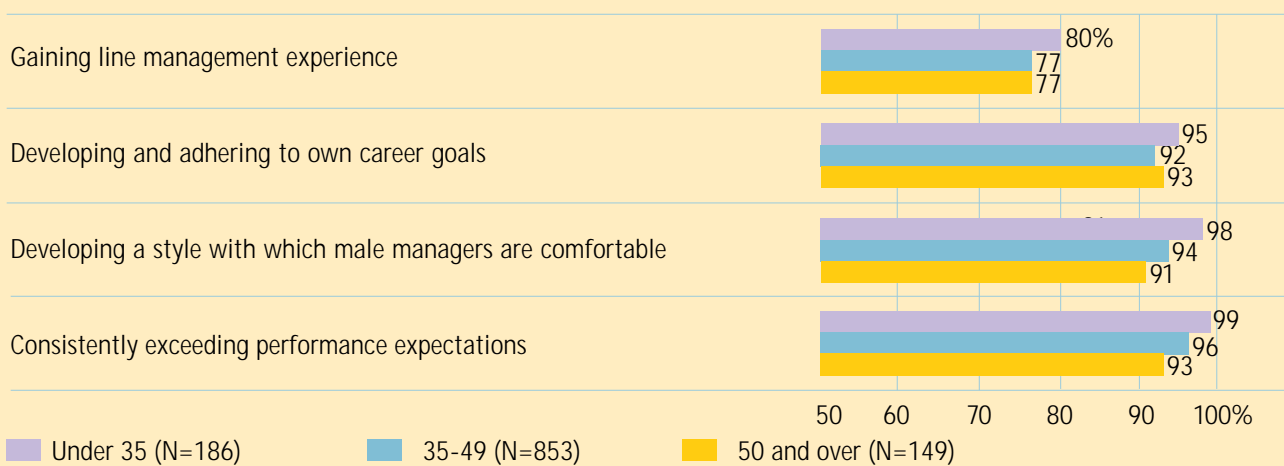
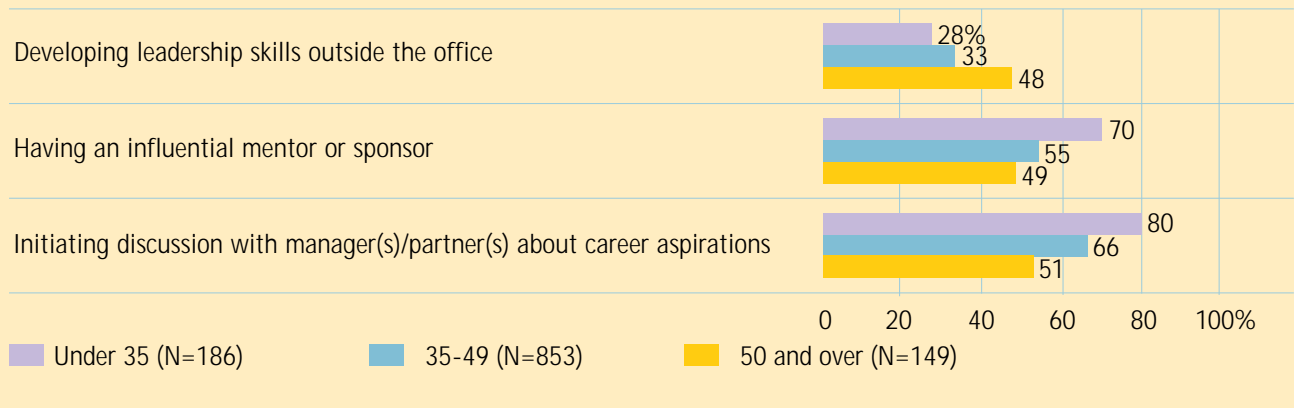| Figure 27	**Main reasons to consider leaving organisation:** senior women by age. Percentage citing reason as one of top three in importance.

Increased compensation
- 56%
- 40
- 38

Greater advancement opportunities
- 46
- 50
- 39

More flexible work arrangements
- 30
- 22
- 16

Increased intellectual stimulation
- 29
- 37
- 41

Compatible organisational values
- 27
- 35
- 34

Work environment more supportive of family/personal commitments
- 20
- 20
- 8

Increased visibility
- 19
- 15
- 16

Different type of work
- 18
- 31
- 29

To start own business
- 15
- 10
- 7

Want to relocate
- 8
- 8
- 5

Family responsibilities that require leaving workforce
- 4
- 4
- 5

Larger or smaller organisation
- 2
- 5
- 10

Work environment more supportive of women
- 2
- 4
- 2

0 15 30 45 60 75%

under 35 (N=186)   35-49 (N=853)   50 and over (N=149)

Younger women expect equality and flexibility. Women in the youngest age group are much more likely to say that they would leave their current organisation for increased compensation and/or for more flexibility in work arrangements. Along with women in the 35-49 age group they are also more likely than older women to have considered leaving for greater advancement opportunities (see Figure 27). Women aged 50 and over were significantly more likely to report that they would leave for increased intellectual stimulation.

Younger women employ different individual career strategies. Senior women in different age groups are in agreement on the top individual career strategies that have contributed to their advancement (see Figure 28). However, statistically significant differences in the responses of the different age groups were found on other career strategies (see Figure 29). Women under 35 are significantly more likely than women in the other age groups to have used two strategies to advance to senior levels: *initiating discussions with manager(s)/partner(s) about career aspirations*; and *having an influential mentor or sponsor.* Women aged 50 and older were significantly more likely to have *developed leadership skills outside the office.*

Figure 28   **Common career strategies used by women of differing ages to advance to senior levels.** Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Gaining line management experience — 80%, 77, 77

Developing and adhering to own career goals — 95, 92, 93

Developing a style with which male managers are comfortable — 98, 94, 91

Consistently exceeding performance expectations — 99, 96, 93

Under 35 (N=186)   35-49 (N=853)   50 and over (N=149)

Figure 29   **Distinctive career strategies used by women of differing ages.**
Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Developing leadership skills outside the office
28%
33
48

Having an influential mentor or sponsor
70
55
49

Initiating discussion with manager(s)/partner(s) about career aspirations
80
66
51

0   20   40   60   80   100%

Under 35 (N=186)   35-49 (N=853)   50 and over (N=149)

High potential and mentoring programmes are viewed as important organisational strategies by younger women. Senior women's responses also differ by age with regard to whether or not they report that certain organisational strategies have been important to their advancement. Women under 35 are more likely than older women to report that i*dentification and development of high-potential employees* and *formal mentoring programmes* were critical or very important to their advancement. Though the percentages are low, women aged 50 and over were more than twice as likely as the youngest women to report that *women's employee networks within their organisations* were critical or fairly important to their advancement (see Figure 30).

Figure 30 **Importance of organisational strategies for women's advancement:**
senior women by age giving reason as first, second or third most important.
Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

Identify and develop high-potential employees — 63%, 51, 45

In-house leadership training — 50, 45, 42

External development programmes — 46, 57, 58

Flexible work policies and programmes — 47, 45, 45

Giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients — 39, 35, 34

Cross-functional or development job rotation — 36, 35, 38

Formal mentoring programmes — 27, 16, 19

Women's employee networks within organisation — 7, 11, 16

Numerical goals for representation of women — 7, 12, 9

Recruitment practices that encourage women candidates — 5, 7, 12

Holding managers accountable for women's advancement — 4, 8, 13

0   15   30   45   60   75%

■ under 35 (N=186)   ■ 35-49 (N=853)   ■ 50 and over (N=149)

Younger women are pessimistic about the possibility of work/life balance. Women under the age of 35 are significantly more likely than women in the other, older, age cohorts to believe that *commitment to family responsibilities is a barrier to women's advancement.* Women aged 50 and over are significantly less likely to believe that *having children hinders a woman's ability to advance* (see Figure 31).

Figure 31	**Perceived impact of family on women's advancement:** senior women by age. Percentage responding as 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Commitment to family responsibilities hinders women's advancement
89%
83
81

Advancement depends on putting career before personal/family life
72
71
72

Having children hinders a women's ability to advance
77
71
66

0   20   40   60   80   100%

■ under 35 (N=186)   ■ 35-49 (N=853)   ■ 50 and over (N=149)

8
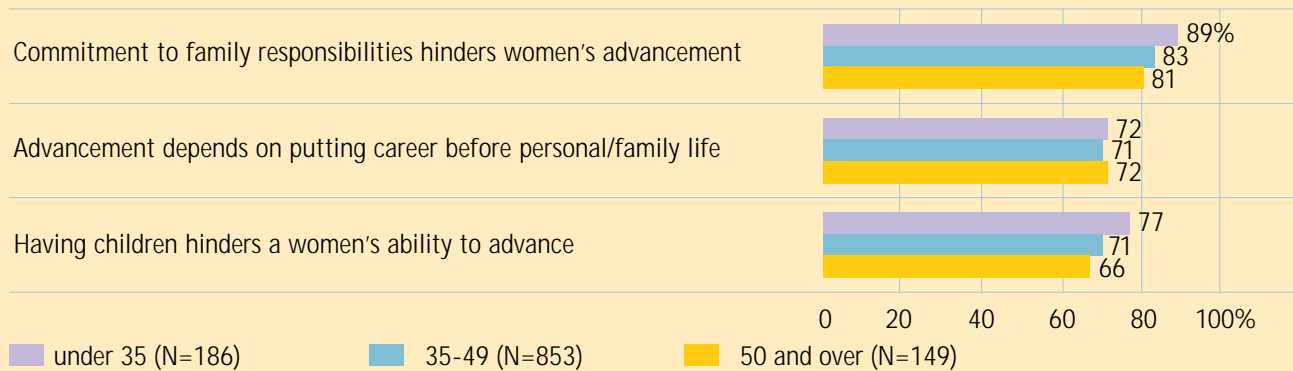
women in senior management in the US, Canada and the UK

- assessments of opportunities today compared to five years ago

- perceived impact of employment equality policies/programmes on women in the US, Canada and the UK

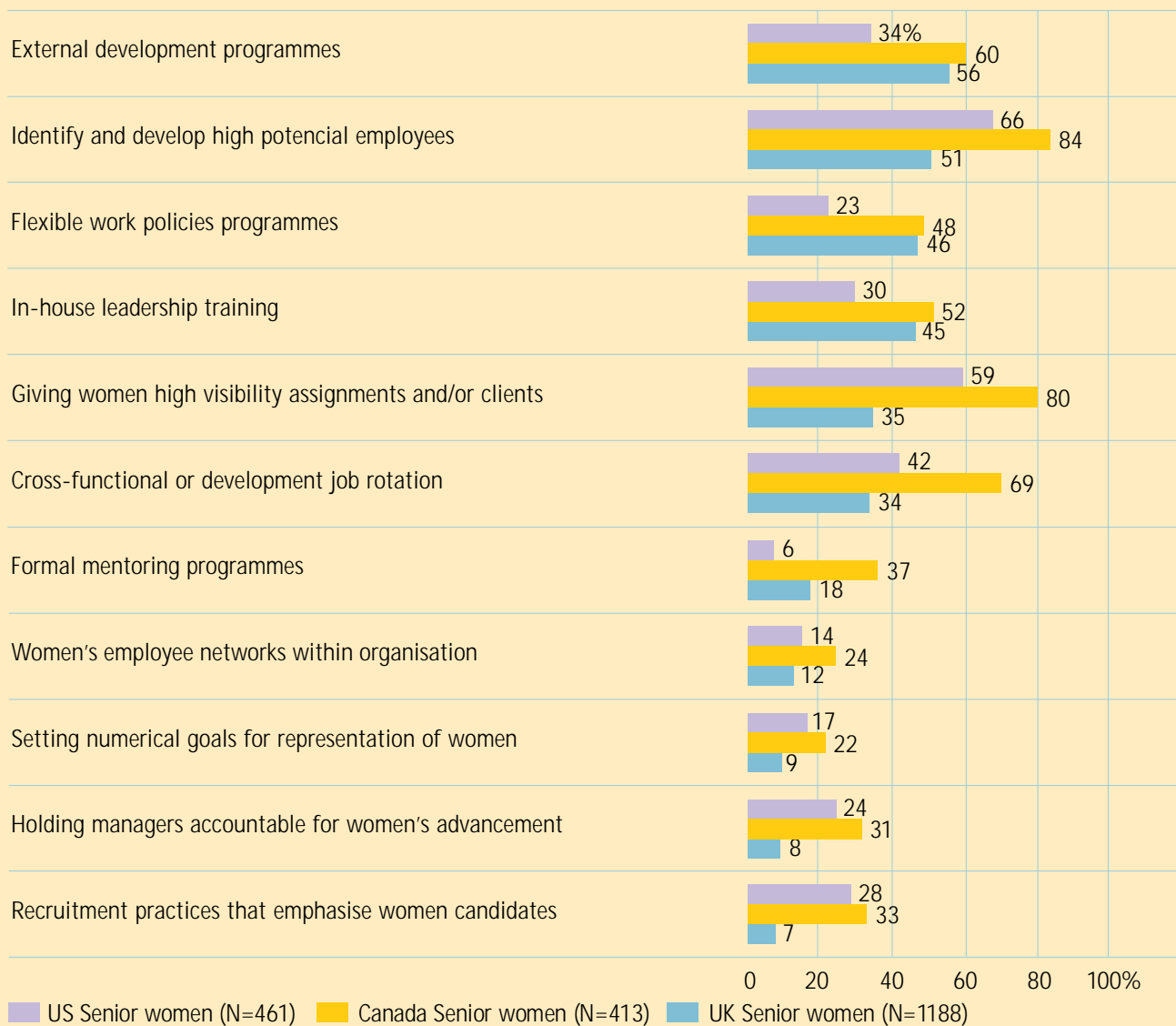- successful career advancement strategies of senior women in the US, Canada and the UK

- the importance of organisational strategies to the advancement of women in the US, Canada and the UK

- CEOs in the US, Canada and the UK are less aware than senior women of negative behaviours of male managers/employees

- barriers to women's advancement in US, Canadian and UK organisations

women in senior management in the US, Canada and the UK

In 1996, Catalyst surveyed senior women and CEOs of Fortune 1000 companies about issues relating to women's retention and advancement in their organisations. The study was replicated in Canada in 1997. The 1999 replication of the study in the UK provides an opportunity for comparisons to be made between women's experience and the barriers to their progress in the UK and North America. This chapter provides cross-country comparisons of several key issues covered by the study.

Assessments of opportunities today compared to five years ago

- Senior women in the US are more likely than senior women in Canada and the UK to report that opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership positions in their organisations have improved *(greatly, somewhat* or *slightly)* compared to five years ago; they are considerably more likely than their Canadian and UK counterparts to report that opportunities have improved *greatly* (49 percent vs. 27 percent and 31 percent respectively). See Figure 32.

Figure 32	Opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in respondents' organisations compared to five years ago: US, Canadian and UK CEOs.
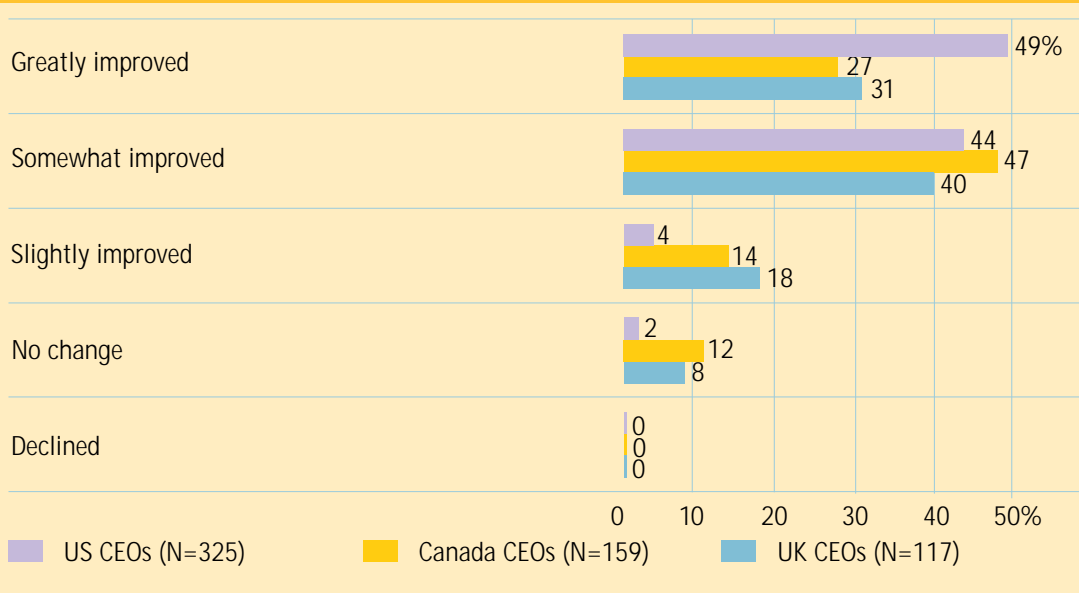
	US CEOs (N=325)	Canada CEOs (N=159)	UK CEOs (N=117)
Greatly improved	49%	27	31
Somewhat improved	44	47	40
Slightly improved	4	14	18
No change	2	12	8
Declined	0	0	0

Perceived impact of employment equality policies/programmes on women in the US, Canada and the UK

Impact on women in the workplace generally

- Senior women in the UK (40 percent) are much more likely than Canadian senior women (18 percent) to assess the impact of employment equality policies/programmes as positive. (This question was not addressed to US women.) See Figure 33.

- Canadian senior women (50 percent) were more likely than UK senior women (41 percent) to report that the impact on women generally of employment equality policies/programmes was mixed (both *positive* and *negative)*, or that such policies/programmes had had *no effect* (16 percent Canadian, 9 percent UK senior women).

Figure 33   Perceived impact of employment equality policies/programmes:
US, Canadian and UK senior women's responses:
in the workplace generally.

Positive	0%, 18, 40
Negative	0, 6, 1
Positive and negative	0, 50, 41
No effect	0, 16, 9
Don't know	0, 11, 6

Axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50%

US Senior women: question not asked   Canada Senior women (N=413)   UK Senior women (N=1188)
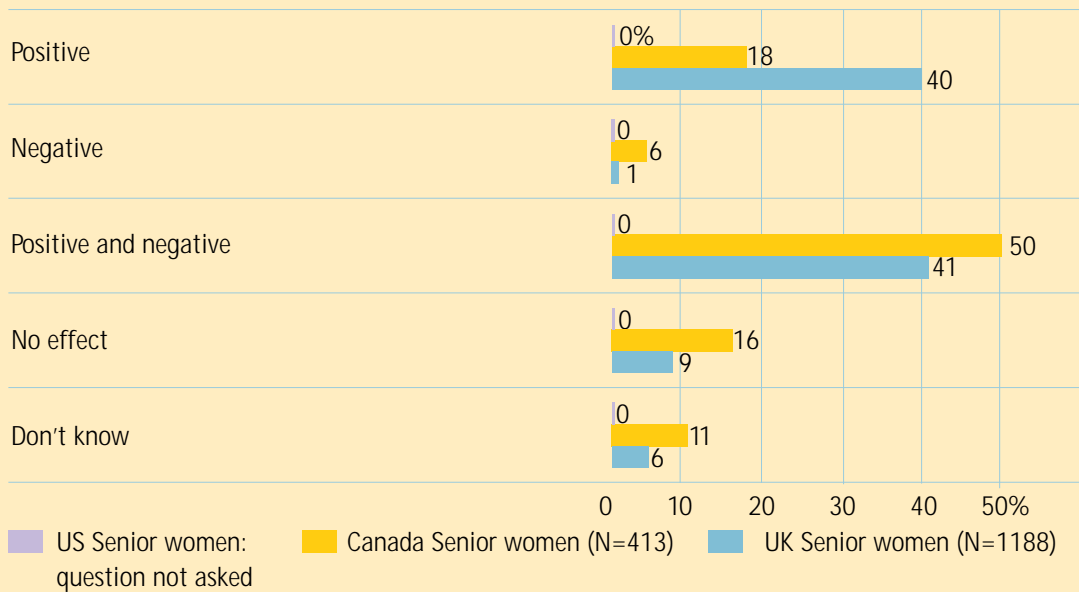
Impact on respondents' own careers

• Senior women in all three countries were more likely to report that employment equality
policies/programmes had had *no effect* on their own careers than to give any other answer to
the question; however, Canadian women were considerably more likely to give this response –
70 percent vs. 49 percent of UK, and 44 percent of US senior women. See Figure 34.

Figure 34   Perceived impact of employment equality policies/programmes:
US, Canadian and UK senior women's responses: on own career.

Positive	33%, 13, 29
Negative	1, 1, 1
Positive and negative	22, 9, 11
No effect	44, 70, 49
Don't know	0, 8, 10

Axis: 0 15 30 45 60 75%

US Senior women (N=461)   Canada Senior women (N=413)   UK Senior women (N=1188)
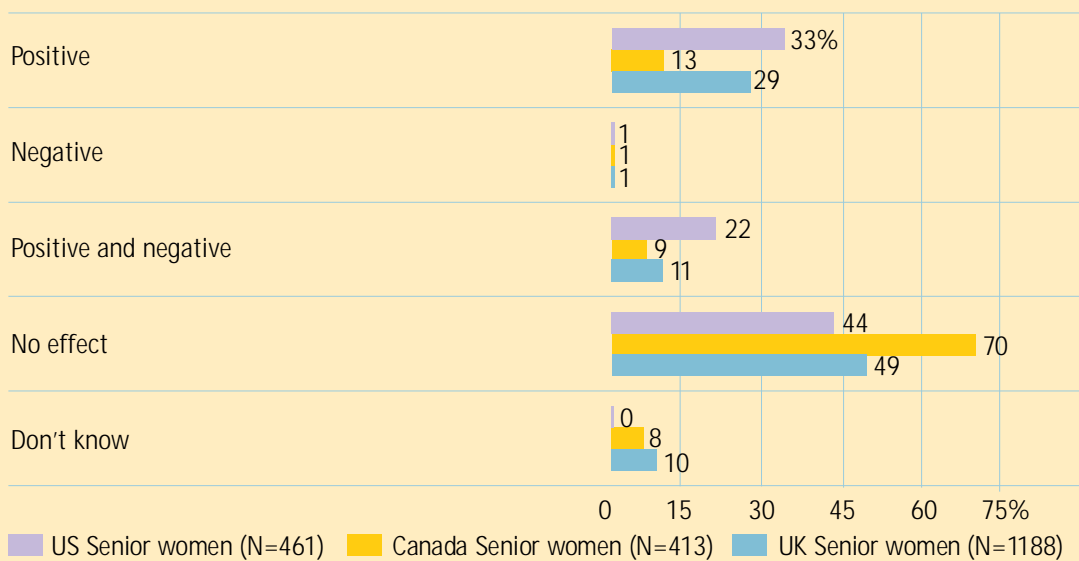
- Senior women in the US (33 percent) and the UK (29 percent) were twice as likely as Canadian senior women (13 percent) to evaluate the impact of employment equality legislation on their own careers as *positive.*

Successful career advancement strategies of senior women in the US, Canada and the UK

- *Consistently exceeding performance expectations* and d*eveloping a style with which male managers are comfortable* are the top career advancement strategies used by senior women in all three countries to advance to senior levels. See Figure 35.

- *Developing and adhering to own career goals* was not included in the list of strategies used in the US survey. UK senior women mention using this strategy with greater frequency than Canadian women do. UK women also more frequently cite *gaining line management experience* as a career strategy they used – 78 percent vs. 67 percent of Canadian women and only 54 percent of US women.

- US senior women (94 percent) were considerably more likely than Canadian (84 percent) or UK women (76 percent) to have used *seeking out difficult or highly visible job assignments* as a career advancement strategy.

- US (81 percent) and Canadian (76 percent) senior women were more likely than UK (56 percent) senior women to have used *having an influential mentor* and *developing leadership skills outside the office* (52 percent of US and Canadian women respectively, vs. 35 percent of UK women) as career advancement strategies.

- UK (52 percent) and Canadian women (53 percent) were more likely than US women (45 percent) to have *upgraded their educational credentials.*

The importance of organisational strategies to the advancement of women in the US, Canada and the UK

- Senior women's responses on this question vary considerably by country, perhaps reflecting the differing availability of strategies in US, Canadian and UK private and public sector organisations. See Figure 36.

women in senior management in the US, Canada and the UK

Figure 35	Career strategies used by women to advance to senior levels: senior women's responses – US, Canada and UK.
	Percentage citing strategy as *'critical'* or *'fairly important':*

Consistently exceeding performance expectations
- 99%
- 99
- 96

Developing a style with which male managers are comfortable
- 96
- 90
- 94

Developing and adhering to own career goals
- 79
- 92

Gaining line management experience
- 54
- 67
- 78

Seeking out difficult or highly visible job assignments
- 94
- 84
- 76

Networking with influential colleagues within the organisation
- 84
- 82
- 76

Initiating discussion with manager(s)/partner(s) about career aspirations
- 62
- 66
- 66

Moving from one functional area of the company/firm to another
- 57
- 59
- 63

Having an influential mentor or sponsor
- 81
- 76
- 56

Attaining a high level of business development
- 66
- 55

Upgrading educational credentials
- 45
- 53
- 52

Being able to relocate
- 36
- 31
- 40

Changing companies/firms
- 36
- 39
- 36

Developing leadership skills outside the office
- 52
- 52
- 35

Gaining international experience
- 24
- 31
- 23

0 20 40 60 80 100%

■ US Senior women (N=461) ■ Canada Senior women (N=413) ■ UK Senior women (N=1188)

85

Figure 36 **Importance of organisational strategies for advancement: senior women's responses – US, Canada and UK.**

Percentage citing strategy as 'critical' or 'fairly important'.

External development programmes
34%
60
56

Identify and develop high potencial employees
66
84
51

Flexible work policies programmes
23
48
46

In-house leadership training
30
52
45

Giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients
59
80
35

Cross-functional or development job rotation
42
69
34

Formal mentoring programmes
6
37
18

Women's employee networks within organisation
14
24
12

Setting numerical goals for representation of women
17
22
9

Holding managers accountable for women's advancement
24
31
8

Recruitment practices that emphasise women candidates
28
33
7

0   20   40   60   80   100%

■ US Senior women (N=461)   ■ Canada Senior women (N=413)   ■ UK Senior women (N=1188)

- Organisational strategies that were of greatest importance to the career advancement of the majority of UK senior women are *external development programmes* (56 percent) and *identification and development of high-potential employees* (51 percent).

- The majority of US senior women cited two organisational strategies as critical or fairly important to their advancement: *identification and development of high-potential employees* (66 percent) and *giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients* (59 percent).

- In contrast to senior women in the UK and US, the majority of Canadian women identified a larger number of organisational strategies as critical or fairly important to their career advancement, including: *identification and development of high-potential employees* (84 percent); *giving women high visibility assignments and/or clients* (80 percent); *cross-functional or developmental job rotation* (69 percent); *external development programmes* (60 percent); and *in-house leadership training* (52 percent).

women in senior management in the US, Canada and the UK

CEOs in the US, Canada and the UK are less aware than senior women of negative behaviours of male managers/employees

Figure 37 shows the extent of agreement of senior women in the US, Canada and the UK with statements about male managers'/employees' attitudes toward women in the workplace. Figure 38 shows CEOs' agreement with the same three statements.

Figure 37	**Agreement with statements about women and men in the workplace:** US, Canada and UK – senior women's responses.

Men are concerned with reverse discrimination — 40%, 31, 36

Male managers are frequently intimidated by or experience difficulty managing women — 54, 42, 47

Men have difficulty being supervised by women — 41, 43, 52

0 15 30 45 60 75%

■ US Senior women (N=461) ■ Canada Senior women (N=413) ■ UK Senior women (N=1188)

Figure 38	**Agreement with statements about women and men in the workplace:** US, Canada and UK and CEOs' responses.

Men are concerned with reverse discrimination — 20%, 31, 34

Male managers are frequently intimidated by or experience difficulty managing women — 31, 30, 34

Men have difficulty being supervised by women — 31, 26, 37

0 10 20 30 40 50%

■ US CEOs (N=325) ■ Canada CEOs (N=159) ■ UK CEOs (N=117)

- CEOs in the UK (34 percent) and Canada (31 percent) are largely in agreement with UK (36 percent) and Canadian (31 percent) senior women that *men are concerned with reverse discrimination.* In the US, far fewer CEOs (20 percent) than senior women (40 percent) agreed with this statement.

- US senior women (54 percent) are more likely than senior women in the UK (47 percent) and, especially, women in Canada (42 percent) to agree that *male managers are frequently intimidated by – or experience difficulty – managing women.* Considerably fewer UK (34 percent), Canadian (30 percent) or US (31 percent) CEOs agreed with this statement.

- UK senior women (52 percent) are considerably more likely than their Canadian (43 percent) or US (41 percent) counterparts to agree that *men have difficulty being supervised by women.* Again, the CEOs in each country were considerably less likely than the senior women to agree with this statement.

Barriers to women's advancement in US, Canadian and UK organisations

Senior women's responses

- Top barriers to women's advancement cited by UK senior women were *commitment to family responsibilities* (46 percent), and *male stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities* (40 percent). See Table 4.

Table 4	What prevents women from advancing to senior leadership: US, Canadian and UK senior women and CEOs (percentage of US women and CEOs responding 'yes'; percentage of Canadian and UK women and CEOs selecting barrier as one of top three in importance)					
Barrier	US		Canada		United Kingdom	
	Senior women	CEOs	Senior women	CEOs	Senior women	CEOs
Commitment to family responsibilities	18%	23%	32%	31%	46%	29%
Male stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities	52	25	45	30	40	33
Inhospitable corporate culture	35	18	19	13	27	31
Exclusion from informal networks of communication	49	15	29	11	22	14
Lack of general management/line experience	47	82	34	50	20	25
Few women can or want to do what it takes to get to the top	15	16	13	11	14	10
Lack of awareness of organisational politics	19	4	13	2	12	7
Lack of mentoring	30	34	22	31	10	8
Women have not been in the pipeline long enough	29	64	9	35	8	19

- Top barriers for Canadian senior women were *male stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities* (45 percent), and *lack of general management/line experience* (34 percent).

- Top barriers for US senior women include: *male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles and abilities* (52 percent); *exclusion from informal networks of communication* (49 percent); and, *lack of general management/line experience* (47 percent).

- US senior women (18 percent) were far less likely than UK (46 percent) or Canadian senior women (32 percent) to cite *commitment to family responsibilities* as a barrier preventing women from advancing to senior leadership.

- Canadian (9 percent) and US (29 percent) senior women are far less likely than CEOs in their respective countries to agree that *women have not been in the pipeline long enough.*

CEOs' responses

- UK CEOs are largely in agreement with UK senior women about top barriers to women's advancement to senior leadership – *male stereotyping and preconceptions* (33 percent) and *commitment to family responsibilities* (29 percent).

- In contrast, Canadian and US CEOs report top barriers to women's advancement to be *lack of general management/line experience* (50 percent and 82 percent respectively) and *women have not been in the pipeline long enough* (35 percent and 64 percent respectively).

breaking the barriers – women in senior management

9

conclusions and recommendations

conclusions

- representation at the top

- the business case

- the need for change

- the barrier of skills and experience

- the barrier of organisational culture

- the balancing act

- do women have a unique management style?

- why women leave

recommendations

- demonstrate commitment

- make the investment

- change behaviour

- communicate ownership

- share ownership

conclusion and recommendations

As this study demonstrates, a breakthrough generation of UK women have attained senior management roles in the nation's most prominent public and private sector organisations and educational establishments. They primarily attribute their success to a combination of consistently delivering superior business results, developing a style with which male managers are comfortable, and steadfastly adhering to their career goals. These women are pioneers; they constitute just 22 percent of all managers in the UK and 9.6 percent of executive directors (Institute of Management Salary Survey 2000). While these numbers have improved somewhat over the last five years (figures in 1995 were 10.7 percent and 3 percent respectively), this study clearly shows that, as far as senior women are concerned, this progress is too slow.

This study is intended to speed up this process. It paints a complex picture of women's participation at senior levels in the work force. There are no 'quick fixes' to the barriers which they face. Organisational and personal strategies will remain ineffective for many women unless they are accompanied by a deeper cultural change. The conclusions and recommendations of this report provide a guide for those organisations seeking to effect such a change in order to maximize the talent and enthusiasm of the women that they employ.

Conclusions

Representation at the top

Chief executives are more optimistic than senior women about the progress that has been made in advancing women to senior leadership roles in UK organisations.

- Chief executives are more likely than senior women to believe that opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership in their organisations compared to five years ago have improved greatly. Senior women are more likely to believe they have improved only slightly, or that there has been no change in women's opportunities.

- Chief executives are also more likely than senior women to believe that employment equality policies have had a positive effect on the advancement opportunities for women in the UK workplace. Senior women are more likely to believe the impact has been mixed (both positive and negative).

- A majority of senior women believe that employment equality policies/programmes have had no effect on their own careers.

These striking disparities between the perceptions of senior women and CEOs are troubling. In some cases, CEOs' belief in their ability to effect organisational change through top down initiatives appears to be obscuring the problems of implementing these initiatives in an inhospitable organisational culture. Many fail to recognise the difficult balancing act for senior women: pioneering organisational change, whilst assuaging male colleagues' fears of reverse discrimination. As more women move through the pipelines of organisations, initiatives to bridge gaps in understanding between male and female senior managers and between managers at different levels will become essential ingredients to building successful teams and effective communication.

The business case

Both CEOs and senior women identified a compelling business case for UK organisations to increase women's representation at senior levels, including:

- Demographics – women are a large and growing percentage of the available workforce in the UK.

- Improved business results – women bring a unique perspective to decision making and problem solving.

- Improved management – women possess valuable leadership skills.

- Economic and social change – women's power as a consumer base is significant and growing.

The need for change

The majority of senior women and CEOs believe that organisations, as well as women, need to change to address women's needs. However, despite the widespread acceptance of the business case, this study shows that organisational initiatives to bring about systematic and comprehensive culture change are often not working effectively, or, in some cases, not even available in organisations.

- CEOs identified a number of organisational strategies as critical or fairly important to women's advancement. Senior women reported that many of these strategies are not available in their organisations.

- Senior women reported that a number of personal career advancement strategies had contributed to their success. In contrast, very few organisational strategies were identified by senior women as having contributed to their success.

- Forty percent of CEOs but only 28 percent of senior women believe that women have not been in the pipeline long enough, suggesting that CEOs believe time alone will resolve issues related to women's lack of advancement to senior levels in their organisations.

If organisations fail to address the barriers which are preventing the effective implementation of change, they risk loosing their high-potential staff. Time alone will not be sufficient to break down these barriers. This survey suggests that younger women in particular no longer recognise the traditional pipeline. Their expectations have been raised by the implementation of gender equality programmes and other organisational change initiatives and they expect to benefit from them.

The barrier of skills and experience

Organisational 'glass walls' can prevent women from attaining the breadth of experience necessary to compete for senior leadership roles:

- One in five CEOs identified a lack of significant general management or line experience as a barrier to women's advancement in their organisation. This has profound implications for women's advancement.

- The importance of breaking through the glass wall is recognised by senior women in this study, 76 percent of whom are in line positions themselves and 78 percent of whom rated this as an important or critical strategy for their career success.

Until female executives routinely have charge of businesses with substantial profit and loss responsibilities, the pipeline to corporate leadership will continue to lack a critical mass of women. And a critical mass will not be attained until organisations fix the 'leaks' in the pipeline, resulting from failure to retain high-potential women blocked from functional and managerial experience. Organisations need to identify high-potential women early in their careers and plan their development and experience to equip them for senior management.

The barrier of organisational culture

Senior women described an inhospitable organisational culture with few visibly successful female role models.

- 81 percent of women considered male stereotyping and preconceptions about women's roles and abilities as a barrier to advancement.

- Negative male attitudes relating to being managed by, or managing, women and perceptions of reverse discrimination contribute to women's lack of career advancement.

- CEOs understand the importance of culture but many fail to recognise the diverse ways in which an inhospitable culture can manifest itself as a barrier to women's development. Examples are: the exclusion of women from informal networks of communication, personal style differences, and a lack of awareness of organisational politics.

This study demonstrates that barriers to women's advancement cannot be addressed solely by widening their training and development opportunities. The implication is that private and public sector organisations in the UK are in need of a cultural transformation. Younger women in particular will not wait forever for the barriers identified by this study to be eliminated.

The balancing act

A majority of senior women have succeeded in combining career achievement with family responsibilities by employing outside help, relying on supportive spouses/partners and other family members, curtailing their personal interests, and limiting their commitments.

- Over a quarter of senior women postponed having children; 18 percent took a leave of absence for personal or family-related reasons; and 16 percent stepped out of the paid workforce for a period of time for personal or family-related reasons. As a group, their childbearing rate is considerably lower than that of the general population.

- Although flexible work policies emerge as the most widely available strategy for women's advancement in place in organisations, the majority of senior women in the study reported that advancement in their organisation still depends upon putting career before personal or family life.

- Greater flexibility is among the top changes women would like to see in their organisations in the future, with both men and women working flexibly to achieve work/life balance, career continuity, and advancement.

The apparent contradiction between the availability of flexible working practices and the demand from senior women for a better work/life balance illustrates the complexity of tackling the barriers to women's career progression. Instituting flexible working practices in an organisation is not enough. This strategy must be accompanied by a transformation of the organisational culture so that different ways of working are valued and the personal commitments of all employees are respected. Until this is the case, women will continue to believe that taking advantage of flexible working options will damage their long-term career prospects.

Do women have a unique management style?

The issue of personal and management style emerged as a key area for senior women in the survey.

- CEOs rated women's complementary leadership skills highly, explicitly citing the traditionally perceived areas of strength for women managers: interpersonal, communication and people-management skills.

- Senior women themselves, particularly the younger ones, rate developing a style with which men are comfortable as second only to sheer hard work as a career strategy.

The women interviewed for the study provided no consistent formula for developing a 'right' management style. This depends on the situation and the organisation. Each woman must judge this for herself, in the same way that each male manager does. However, this study reveals that women are handicapped by the fact that they have difficulty accessing the information needed to do this. Cultural barriers in organisations mean that they are often excluded from informal networks and lack access to mentors who could guide them in this process.

Until organisations can tackle the deeper issues involved in transforming an organisational culture, women will continue to struggle to find the right style, and talent will be lost. Style will cease to be a barrier when organisations have developed a true culture of diversity in which the talents of all employees are recognised and developed for the benefit of the business.

Why women leave

Despite the clear business case for the retention and development of women, UK organisations are at risk of losing valuable senior female talent.

- A majority of senior women report that they have considered leaving their organisation.

- The top reasons why women would leave are greater advancement opportunities, increased remuneration, and increased intellectual stimulation.

If organisations want to retain talented women they must develop strategies which allow women to realise these goals. Women require unfettered access to tools available for advancement in organisations, such as networks, mentors and development programmes. They also need working practices that allow them to manage their professional and personal commitments.
Employers should not forget, however, that women's career aspirations are for better pay, better promotion prospects and more interesting work. Providing flexible working, or indeed any other organisational strategy, as an end in itself rather than as a route to achieving these goals, will not be sufficient for organisations hoping to recruit and retain female talent.

Recommendations

Along with barriers preventing women's advancement, this study points to ways that organisations can improve the retention and advancement of women managers and professionals. Catalyst's and Opportunity Now's research on corporate best practices to recruit, retain, and advance women shows that creating real change for women is difficult and cannot be achieved by implementing a few isolated 'women's programmes.' The types of barriers identified by this study are deeply rooted in organisations and require more systematic change initiatives. The diversity challenge faced by business today results from organisational structures and systems established yesterday, in a time prior to women's full-scale entrance into the workforce. Across many types of organisations, gender diversity initiatives have been disadvantaged by the permanence of a culture where a structured and rigid environment reinforces out-of-date behaviours.

Catalyst's research shows that diversity change initiatives have these essential elements in common: (Catalyst, *Advancing Women in Business – The Catalyst Guide,* Jossey-Bass, 1998).

- Committed senior leadership driving change

- Change motivated by and articulated through business strategy rationale

- Both long- and short-term goals

- Established evaluation processes to guide efforts and measure results

- Internal support through education and communication

- Clear accountability for results

- Ongoing evaluation and reassessment

Similarly, Opportunity Now's annual Benchmarking Index demonstrates five key areas for culture change:

- Demonstrating commitment

- Making the investment

- Changing behaviour

- Communicating ownership

- Sharing ownership.

Organisations with successful, established diversity initiatives approach diversity as a systematic, ongoing process driven by leadership's vision of a new culture. They create targets and flexible goals – success measures, not quotas. They make gender equality a key part of their business strategy, not an isolated or ad hoc set of activities, in which achievement of diversity goals is treated like other business results. Specific recommendations in the five key areas for culture change arise from this study. They are detailed below.

Demonstrate commitment:

It is important to make a clear and unequivocal commitment to gender equality, starting at the very top of the organisation:

- Establish a board level responsibility for gender issues.

- Develop and articulate the business case for gender equality in your organisation.

- Link diversity strategies to short- and long-term business imperatives and strategic business plans.

- Articulate the value gender diversity adds to customer focus, the development of product/ services, marketing, and sales.

- Identify the costs of turnover of high-potential and high-performing managers and professionals.

- Cultivate executive champions to lead the change and continuously drive home the business case.

Make the investment

The extent of your organisation's investment, whether financial, time and/or human resources will have a significant impact on your success with gender issues. This investment is necessary to enhance access to opportunities and provide developmental support.

- Identify high-potential women, ensure that they understand your commitment to investing in their careers, and create tailored development plans with shared accountability for results.

- Support professional women's networks within and outside your organisation.

- Implement a formal mentoring programme and consider using both internal and external mentors (with whom women may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive workplace issues).

- Provide cross-functional rotations that give women equal access to developmental assignments that will broaden their range of experience.

- Ensure that women have equal access to external development programmes.

- Monitor rewards systems to ensure that women's contributions are recognised and remunerated on an equal basis to men's.

- Analyse written performance review summaries to evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of the feedback women receive from supervisors.

- Hold managers accountable for women's development.

Change behaviour

Progress towards goals for gender issues will be measured by changes in organisational culture to allow more flexible and inclusive working practices.

- Demonstrate leadership commitment to providing greater work/life balance.

- Adopt 'best practice' policies and programmes for workplace flexibility as fully as possible.

- Address cultural resistance to flexibility through targeted education, celebration of role models, and leadership.

- Provide information, guidance, and support for supervisors who need help changing supervisory habits and clarity about existing support systems and programmes.

- Provide systems and structures that support flexibility and reasonable job demands such as alternatives to head count and billable hour systems, performance ranking and rating systems that emphasise face time, and rigid career path criteria and time frames that are out-of-sync with changing employee needs.

- Focus on work productivity, empowering employees to exercise appropriate discretion, and control over work schedules.

Communicate ownership

The extent to which your goals for gender activities are communicated is an essential factor in achievement. It is important to build executive and employee awareness of gender issues and foster a more inclusive work environment.

- Work with executives and key individuals to develop a strong core of champions to lead the change and serve as role models.

- Create multiple forums for education and discussion of gender diversity issues in the workplace.

- Leverage network groups to advise leaders and create forums for employee education, e.g., panels, speakers, websites, newsletters, and discussion groups.

- Use employee surveys, focus groups, and post-departure interviews to assess the extent to which barriers to women's advancement identified in this study exist in your organisation.

- Benchmark best practices in addressing the relevant barriers.

- Develop and implement an integrated strategy that builds on best practices.

Share ownership

Listening to employee views helps to ensure that the organisation will achieve its gender issue goals by keeping a track of what really makes a difference. Gender policies and practices should be dynamic, and constantly monitored and re-evaluated. Benchmarking the retention and advancement of women professionals in your organisation provides essential data for the evaluation of gender equality programmes.

- Establish the current status of women professionals and managers in your organisation, including their representation by level and functional area and retention and promotion rates for women compared to those for men.

- Benchmark against best practice organisations and industry peers.

- Communicate the results of benchmarking research and your organisation's commitment and goals for increasing the representation of women at senior levels.

- Collect employee feedback through surveys, focus groups, exit interviews etc.

- Regularly feed back employee views to the board and senior management for action.

- Disseminate feedback widely within your organisation.

10

appendix

- examples of best practice from Opportunity Now and Catalyst award winners

- Catalyst board of directors

- Opportunity Now Leadership Team

- lead authors

- acknowledgements

appendix

Examples of best practice from Opportunity Now and Catalyst award winners

BAE Systems

BAE Systems at Prestwick has been developing a 'Standard of Excellence' championed by chief executive, John Weston. An Equal Opportunities Working Group meets monthly to monitor targets set out in its action plan. The plan recognises the importance of work/life balance and aims to raise the profile of available family-friendly working practices within the organisation. The group's work is measured against standards set by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) business excellence model. Support for the initiative has been achieved from all sectors of the workforce, men and women. One of the women aircraft fitters visits her old school to encourage girls to consider a career in engineering. In the past year, BAE Systems has moved from 74th to 23rd in the Employer of Choice league table.

Baxter Healthcare Corporation

The US-based Baxter Healthcare Corporation set out in 1994 to develop a long-term work and life strategy. The effort began with an 18-month study entitled *Work and Life Strategic Initiative*, which identified and refuted commonly held beliefs about work/life balance. The study's findings led Baxter to develop the four-level 'Work and Life Pyramid of Needs,' which rests on a base of Respect (the company's attitude toward the employee's needs) and rises through Balance (the employee's goal) to Flexibility (what the company wants to help the employee attain) and to Programs (the specifics that the company provides).

By incorporating the pyramid's approach into the company's Shared Values (principles guiding employee behaviour) and championing it at board level, Baxter successfully fostered a corporate culture and business practices that support work/life flexibility. The CEO himself disseminates a newsletter peppered with familiar anecdotes. Some examples include the following. All job postings must now indicate whether a position can accommodate an alternative work arrangement. As a result, the percentage of employees using alternative work arrangements has increased from 7 percent to 14 percent. Work/life issues are now an integral part of job performance and appraisal reviews. Since 1996, women's representation at the manager level has increased 17 percent, nearly 18 percent at the director level, and almost 30 percent at the vice president level.

BBSRC - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

Following the 1998 pay settlement, management and unions undertook a joint Equal Pay Audit. The salary structure of all staff in all grades was studied and measured against comparable salaries in the private sector. This was done in parallel to revising the Standard Pay Point system (SPP) and together these were aimed at eliminating gender bias in pay.

At the start of the initiative, the pay of some 60 percent of the BBSRC's staff fell below the SPP. This proportion has since fallen to 32 percent, and is being regularly reviewed. Retention and loyalty of staff has increased. The attitude to part-time working within the organisation has improved significantly and this option is increasingly being taken up by women scientists. The idea that promotion is viable only for full-timers is fast disappearing. All directors are keen to identify areas for further improvements. The BBSRC's 'Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value' message is prominent in all its recruitment information. The Equal Pay Audit is monitored annually by a joint committee of management and unions.

Benefits Agency

The 'Parents at Work in the BA' scheme is designed to help secure childcare for Benefits Agency staff and to improve equality of opportunity for working parents. Some 17 Childcare Champions have been recruited from within the Agency, to launch and implement the scheme's nine-point action plan. The initiative formed part of the BA and DSS 1999/2000 Business Plan.

As a result, some 50 new holiday play scheme partnerships were up and running by December 1999, and a further 70 were planned. Women report that since the scheme began, the Benefits Agency has become a better place to work. Some felt the project had encouraged them to stay with the organisation, and also to return to work after maternity leave. Many said that they felt more comfortable about asking for changes in their working patterns or requesting time off at times of family crisis. Managers have recorded fewer absences during holiday periods, and productivity has been maintained during these periods. Women's needs are acknowledged and acted on, ensuring that those with families feel more confident.

BT Cardiff Software Engineering Centre

The 'Freedom to Work' programme allows employees to design their own flexible working package. A written agreement is drawn up, and line managers can only refuse changes which would cause operational problems. A team of senior volunteers monitors progress and guidelines on everything from occasional home working to local caring facilities have been produced. Freedom to Work has board level support.

The introduction of the scheme has removed the stigma attached to working outside the 'nine to five' time frame. Women involved in the scheme report better morale and motivation, and say it has given them a greater sense of managing their own time. The introduction of Freedom to Work prompted some employees to stay with BT, rather than take up better-paid jobs elsewhere. A staff survey showed 100 percent believed there was a more trusting culture and increased loyalty to BT. Managers report better team performance, and are paying out less in overtime because of more flexible working arrangements. BT has also enhanced its reputation as an Employer of Choice.

Causeway Health and Social Services Trust

Since the introduction of its management training programme in 1995, the ward managers have seen their roles dramatically enhanced. Individuals are encouraged to take part in diploma or postgraduate courses in management, funded by the Trust. Staff feedback shows that the ward managers are more approachable as line managers, working even more closely with consultants on patient care. There are better links with the community nursing teams. All the ward managers involved in the scheme felt their views had been 'listened to'. Women involved in the management training course have established a forum both for exchanging information and for consultation on key issues. The Trust has benefited from increased efficiency, as ward managers take responsibility for their budgets and do not spend money without considering the financial implications and quality of service. Many of the women involved have opted for extra training and all say they feel more valued by the Trust.

Cummins Engine Company Limited

Cummins Engine Company is a leading manufacturer of diesel engines, power generation products, filtration systems and turbochargers, structured as a global business operation. Its anti-harassment policy introduced in 1997 was part of a drive to attract talented women and others from under-represented groups, and demonstrate policies which create a harassment-free workplace. The policy was backed by rigorous training for all staff. A code of conduct was also drawn up and linked to performance reviews; each employee was held responsible for its enforcement. The company monitors progress through its employee surveys.

As a result, the number of women managers has increased by 34 percent since the policy was introduced, and 2 percent more women are employed overall within the company. Women state that the work atmosphere is better. Male as well as female colleagues are challenging unacceptable behaviour in the workplace. The company knows that its image as an employer has been enhanced, and is able to pick from a wider pool of talent. The current environment fosters better teamwork and is backed by top level commitment within the company.

Glaxo Wellcome PLC

The company has set aside £250,000 ($400,000) to pump prime diversity projects through its 'Diversity Forum'. Everyone appointed to a managerial position has to have diversity training, and promotion criteria are designed to be 'gender-neutral' – based solely on competence and merit. This has broken new ground for staff who have not followed traditional career paths and has led to promotion from secretarial grade to managerial positions, based solely on ability. The company has a flexible working programme, and a range of policies on career breaks, part-time working and phased return to work after maternity leave. The composition of the workforce is being measured at all levels, and systems are being devised to track the progress of individuals throughout their employment.

As a result, the number of women employed in senior management grades rose from 13 percent to 16 percent in one year, with the numbers in middle management posts increasing from 27 percent to 32 percent. Glaxo Wellcome UK has just appointed a third woman to its board. Creating a diverse workforce is seen as a responsibility that rests with all managers, not just the Human Resources department. There is a high rate of return (93 percent) from maternity leave, and part-time staff are valued for their skills and experience. Women surveyed for their views have confirmed that flexible working is no bar to their promotion or job content. The board of Glaxo Wellcome actively discusses the under-representation of women, and the Managing Director openly acknowledges the issues he faces, balancing work and personal life. This creates a safe environment for others to do the same.

Halifax PLC

The company's 'Fair's Fair' programme was designed to change the culture of the organisation and to promote equality of opportunity for all. The centrepiece is a video training package designed to encourage everyone to discuss discrimination values and behaviours, reflect on personal feelings and experiences, and to devise equality action plans to change behaviour within teams.
All initiatives are measured and evaluated. Focus groups provide feedback and ideas.
The company's commitment to equal opportunities is now written into business plans and forms part of staff appraisal.

The proportion of staff who recognise their responsibilities for equal opportunities increased from 25 percent to 90 percent. The number of staff who work flexibly has increased significantly and currently stands at over 80 percent. Over 75 percent of women return after maternity leave with 50 percent choosing to work part-time. A mother of three was recently recruited onto the Executive whilst still on maternity leave. Some women managers have increased their productivity by as much as 20 percent after switching to home-based working. Staff now feel more confident in their dealings with managers and more willing to challenge decisions that cause them concern.

HSBC Bank PLC

Bill Dalton, the Chief Executive, is committed to gender equality within the bank, and the 'High Level Awareness Programme' was designed to ensure that all staff know of its importance. This included a meeting with staff involved with equal opportunities issues, including those investigating harassment, a London Network Forum for women, a diversity video, and a women's development course. There is a mentoring programme for senior women, part time and flexible working, and a Gender Business Champion. Women are positively encouraged to speak up for changes in business practices and say that they feel more valued. In the last three years the proportion of female staff taking professional exams has risen from 30 percent to 52 percent. The programme is part of a wider process of cultural change throughout the bank, designed to value diversity and improve business practice.

IBM Corporation

The 'Executive Women's Diversity Task Force', championed by CEO Lou Gerstner, was one of eight task forces at IBM that began in July 1995. It had an ambitious mandate: to promote significant culture change in the organisation both nationally and globally, by improving women's opportunities for development and advancement. The task force began by asking women leaders about their perceptions regarding the barriers to advancement. Out of this, a number of task forces, networking groups and programmes evolved, which empowered, developed, and advanced diverse individuals throughout IBM. Accountability at IBM is strong: managers are accountable for meeting diversity results; Gerstner in turn reports results directly to IBM's Board of Directors. Evaluations for both executives and managers include sections on commitment to diversity efforts. As a result of these initiatives, representation of women at executive level has increased from 1 to 8 percent in the Asia-Pacific region, from zero to 5 percent in Latin America, and from 2 to 8 percent in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In North America, women's representation has grown from 14 to 21 percent.

Inland Revenue

The Inspector of Taxes training is essential for promotion to most senior management jobs in the Revenue. The 'Challenging Preconceptions' programme, which began in 1998, is aimed at boosting the numbers of women taking this training. Features include home study modules, distance learning and help with childcare costs. Recruitment literature has been redesigned to target women. Role models used include a visibly pregnant office manager. Audits and other measures are used to monitor developments, including customer feedback. Deputy chairman Tim Flesher wrote personally to all managers asking for their support for this initiative.

As a result, most trainee Tax Inspectors on this year's Inspector Training Programme are women (58 percent), and there are now specific support structures in place designed to ensure that life cycle changes are no bar to a woman's career progress through the Revenue. The first female part-time Tax Inspectors have been appointed, one in the Special Compliance Office – traditionally regarded as the 'hard end' of tax investigation. Chairman Nick Montagu takes personal responsibility for ensuring that Equal Opportunities issues are mainstreamed, and take high priority at all levels of the organisation.

Leeds Metropolitan University

In 1995, the University established an Equal Opportunities Working Group, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Human Resources Director. It developed a senior management development programme, which included a mandatory 'Valuing Diversity' module. This was piloted by the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Board before it was cascaded through the management structure. Mentoring, internal secondment schemes and staff development programmes have been established. The working group has agreed to set goals for increasing percentages of under-represented groups among staff, and students help individuals with life and career planning, assertiveness and positive thinking.

Networks established for women, managers, and people with disabilities are proving to be successful in raising and dealing with equality and diversity issues. Female cleaners have moved into administration jobs as a result of internal secondments, operating at all levels. Women report that using mentors has boosted their confidence. The University has a nursery, play scheme, baby-sitting service and five days 'domestic emergency' paid leave a year.

NHS Executive

The NHS adopted an 'Improving Working Lives' campaign, a national change programme operating at regional and local level to increase uptake of flexible working. The aim was to help increase the numbers of nurses, doctors and other health professionals, and to make the NHS a better place to work. A major new recruitment drive was launched two years later. The NHS Executive has drafted an Improving Working Lives Standard and Kite-mark scheme so that 'family-friendly' NHS employers can be recognised. The scheme will be used to promote and evaluate the campaign in every part of the service.

Around 5,000 nurses have already taken their first steps back into the NHS, and 60 percent of these are working flexible hours or part-time. A more recent recruiting exercise elicited 40,000 phone calls, and a further 1,500 nurses have expressed an interest in returning to the NHS. Each returning nurse undergoes a personal development programme. The first stage of compliance with the new Standard requires an explicit commitment to improving the working lives of staff, and an action plan to implement specific goals. Working Lives 'toolkits' have been produced to help NHS Trusts comply with the Standard. Annual staff satisfaction surveys are now undertaken across the NHS in England.

Procter and Gamble UK

Procter and Gamble's 'Sex@work.shop' programme looks at differences in behaviour among men and women at work. The training sessions focus on the reasons for this, using language which is light-hearted and fun. The aim is to make people think about why men and women have different approaches and the value of both. Interviews with staff show that a change in culture is taking place. Women now feel they do not need to be 'table thumpers' to be heard at meetings, and different management styles are appreciated. Women know how to handle differences with managers, who in turn can appreciate and accept the skills they have to offer.

Procter and Gamble uses a 'scorecard' to measure performance of key targets, like sales, efficiency and new business. Two diversity targets have been added to the monthly statistics and these are discussed at senior business meetings, illustrating the importance the company places on these figures. The initiative is designed to lead to an equal rate of promotion for women and men across all grades. The statistics allow the company to measure the results of several equality initiatives and make sure they have an impact. The number of women at Associate Director level has risen from 13 percent to 19 percent since 1996.

TD Bank Financial Group

In 1994, a group of senior women met with TD Bank Financial Group executives to convey their concern about the lack of women at the highest levels of the organisation. In response, TD created the 'Task Force for the Advancement of Women'. The Task Force evolved into 'Advancing Together', a multi-tiered, systemic initiative that focuses on career development, succession planning, respect and flexibility. One goal is to identify high-potential women and help them with planning their career paths, filling educational/skill gaps, mentoring, and increasing their visibility to senior executives. Now thoroughly integrated into the fabric of the organisation and broadly applicable to all TD employees, the initiative maintains a special concentration on advancing women.

A major result of Advancing Together has been the increase each year in the number of women in senior management from 8 percent in 1994 when the task force was established to 19.2 percent in 1999. Regular, ongoing communication to employees, an HR Advisory Council made up of a diverse group of senior representatives drawn from across the bank, and continued commitment from the top, all confirm TD's belief that women in leadership roles make good business sense.

University of Bristol

Up to 200 senior women from Bristol and neighbouring academic institutions meet regularly to network, hear influential speakers and role models. Academics and women from the administrative departments are included in the network. Women who use the network are widening their connections outside their immediate jobs, increasing their chances of eventual promotion. News about the network appears in the university newsletter, ensuring that students and staff are aware of the effort to create a culture of equality.

Women involved in the network say the culture and atmosphere at work has changed significantly in the last three years. Participants see the meetings as an opportunity to 'legitimise talking about issues facing senior women at work' and to increase their own confidence. A group has been set up to review contract research policy, and line managers are certain that retention would not be as high without the network.

Catalyst board of directors

108

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