



# What is stopping women from moving into leadership?

Women's Transition Barriers study  
MARCH 2018

Transitions into leadership are highly risky times which are pivotal to retention and leader success. This study identifies Barriers that stop women from moving into these roles so that actions can be taken to remove them.

What is stopping women from moving into leadership? CEOs consistently identify "having the talent I need to drive my business" as one of their top three imperatives. To achieve their goals in a complex business environment, they need the best men and women leaders. To create a solid, sustainable leadership pipeline, organisations have to leverage their female talent pool. While women represent over half the available talent pool, organisations struggle to retain and grow talented women. Often times there is a mismatch between the perceptions of women and those of senior leaders regarding the challenges women face to move up.

So what is stopping women from moving into leadership? To learn that, we went to the source. We asked women what they need to move up. The Women's Transition Barriers survey aimed to measure the unique challenges women perceive when pursuing leadership roles. By understanding the barriers, both women's and organisations can take actions to reduce them.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Women's Transition Barriers survey was completed by over 1000 women in the JUMP network and this report summarizes the results. This report answers the following questions:

- Do self-limiting beliefs and behaviour hold women back from pursuing leadership roles?
- Do women perceive that their employer is well equipped to develop & promote women to leadership roles?
- Do women believe they are prepared for a transition into a next level role?

## PARTICIPANTS PROFILE



# KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Women's barriers to leadership positions

The survey examines three types of barriers: individual, organisational and transitional barriers. Each of these barriers captures a grouping of sub-barriers stopping women from moving into leadership roles. The stronger the barriers are, the greater the risk index score. The risk index score measures the risk of organisations losing female talent from the leadership pipeline, either because they give up or because they leave the organisation too close find better opportunities elsewhere. Each barrier has an equal share in the overall risk index.



## 1. INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

**Personal Life:** assesses if women think it is difficult to combine a more senior role with their personal commitments.

**Self-Promotion:** assesses women's propensity to create their own barriers in their professional lives.

**Societal Expectations:** assesses how social and cultural norms affect women's decision-making.

**Awareness:** assesses the level of women's recognition of the benefits and rewards that can come from taking the next career step.

Overall score:

**25%**  
low risk

women in the survey have few individual barriers that prevent them from moving up in the organisation.

## 2. ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

**Performance Evaluation:** assesses women's perception of how their performance is valued and how their capabilities are rated in the organisation

**Management Attitude:** assesses what the perceived attitude of management is towards women aspiring to actively move ahead in the organisation

**Organisational Support:** assesses how the organisation backs women to move up

Overall score:

**47%**  
medium risk

women experience quite strong organisational barriers that prevent them from moving up in the organisation.

## 3. TRANSITIONAL BARRIERS

**Support Network:** assesses the strength of supportive relationships in the women's professional life.

**Manage Issues:** assesses women's ability to make decisions in unclear circumstances, their ability to rapid prototype to arrive at solutions, and their ability to manage conflict in order to resolve issues.

**Resilience:** assesses women's ability to stay calm under pressure and to manage stress effectively.

**Manage Yourself:** assesses women's level of individual awareness and their ability to quell negative thoughts and replace them with positive thinking and action.

Overall score:

**44%**  
medium risk

women perceive quite strong transitional barriers to their career progression.

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

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### WOMEN FEEL PERSONALLY READY TO MOVE INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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78%

can accommodate changes to professional and personal schedules quickly

56%

ask for what they need from their boss no matter what the circumstances

68%

do not let pressure from family & friends dictate professional choices

55%

do not feel guilty if they have less than 100% balance

### WOMEN LOVE CHANGE BUT ARE AFRAID TO MAKE MISTAKES BECAUSE THEY ARE OFTEN JUDGED MORE HARSHLY THAN MEN

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78%

thrive on change

57%

find it challenging to appear confident unless they are 100% prepared.

52%

find it challenging to learn from mistakes

46%

find it difficult to bounce back quickly when they receive negative feedback

### WOMEN PERCEIVE THE BIASES IN THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM AS A MAJOR BARRIER

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58%

believe they are not paid same as male peers for similar performance in same role

45%

feel they need more education and qualifications than male peers to be considered for promotion

43%

believe women are not routinely considered for promotions

### WOMEN LACK THE ROBUST NETWORK WHICH IS CRITICAL FOR CAREER PROGRESSION

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58%

do not have a group of trusted advisors

53%

believe men at the office have a larger network than women

40%

lack supportive relationship in their professional life

## SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

*With change comes mistakes. With mistakes comes learning and growth*

- Be open to making mistakes that come with change
- Step into personal power and manage limiting beliefs
- Work on reducing biases from performance and talent management processes
- Build an organisational culture where it is okay to make and learn from mistakes

*Cultivate strategic communication capabilities in order to improve equity*

- Keep record of your achievements successes and your contribution to the organisation
- Ensure all candidates are evaluated on non-biased, objective criteria and required job skills
- Make your achievements visible and positively influence others' perception of your capabilities

*Weak networks limit sphere of influence*

- Identify and seek out the most influential people in the firm
- Build a strong network of supporters inside and outside the organisation
- Encourage participation in employee and women's network
- Actively mentor and/or sponsor female talent

## ABOUT US

# JUMP

Promoting gender equality,  
advancing the economy

JUMP is the leading social enterprise working with organisations and individuals to close the gap between women and men at work, achieve sustainable corporate performance and create a more equal society.

Each year, JUMP carries out thought-provoking surveys: Female entrepreneurship in Belgium, Women leaders speak out !, Women in Science and Technology , Pioneering dads reverse traditional roles, ...

[www.jump.eu.com](http://www.jump.eu.com)

Contact: [info@jump.eu.com](mailto:info@jump.eu.com)



LEVERAGE is a team of qualified coaches, facilitations and consultants.

They implement solutions to create diverse leadership teams and specialise in transitioning talented women to the top.

They have trained and coached countless women and consulted with some of the most notable Fortune 500, Fortune 100 companies and NGOs across the US and Europe.

The LEVERAGE team positively impacts the percentage of talented women staying in the leadership pipeline.

LEVERAGE your top talent!

[www.leveragehr.com](http://www.leveragehr.com)

Contact: [info@leveragehr.com](mailto:info@leveragehr.com)

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