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## ***Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed***

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### **The Hard Facts**

- The glass ceiling is firmly in place:
  - Women hold 50.3 percent of all management and professional positions.
  - Yet, only 7.9 percent of Fortune 500 top earners and 1.4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. Why?
    - Prior Catalyst research shows that senior women executives consistently point to gender-based stereotyping as a top barrier to their advancement.
- ***Women “Take Care,” Men “Take Charge:” Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed:*** The first in a series of Catalyst studies on stereotyping and its effects on women’s advancement in the workplace.

### **KEY LEARNINGS**

- Men consider women to be less skilled at problem-solving, one of the qualities most associated with effective leadership.
- Since men far outnumber women in top management positions, this male-held stereotype dominates current corporate thinking.
  - This problem-solving stereotype may contribute to the fact that although women hold more than 50 percent of all management and professional positions, they make up less than 2 percent of Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 CEOs.
- Exposure to women leaders isn’t sufficient; often people with the *most* exposure to women leaders hold even *more* stereotypical views.
  - The study, therefore, recommends that organizations educate managers and executives about the often latent influence of stereotyping and ways to override automatic tendencies to use stereotyping.

*[For a full text of the report, visit: [www.catalyst.org](http://www.catalyst.org)]*

### **Perceptions of Women Leaders vs. Reality**

- Perceptions of men and women leaders map to gender stereotypic traits, not to reality and fact-based information.
- Both women *and* men considered more women to be superior to men at “take care” behaviors such as supporting and rewarding.
- Both women *and* men considered significantly more men superior to women at “take charge” behaviors such as delegating and influencing upward.
- Respondents were asked about their perceptions about women’s and men’s leadership behavior, not about style.

### **Problem-Solving: Key to Advancement**

- Women and men stereotype leaders in similar ways except in judgments about one key leadership behavior: problem-solving.
  - Women respondents said that more women were better at problem-solving than men.
  - Men respondents said men were most superior to women in problem-solving effectiveness.
- But because men far outnumber women in top management positions, the male-held stereotype—that women are poor problem-solvers—dominates current corporate thinking.
- Problem-solving is crucial: It’s the competency most commonly associated with effective leadership and hallmark trait of a CEO. In fact, it’s the embodiment of “take charge” leadership.
- For women in business, it’s a real “catch-22:”
  - Because stereotyping causes people to lose faith in women’s problem-solving competence, they may be reluctant to follow the directions of women leaders. With their problem-solving skills undermined, women lose *interpersonal power*.
  - This means that instead of using their credibility or expertise to influence followers, women may have to rely on their *status* or *position* to influence others. But as women comprise only 15.7 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officers, women tend to have lower status position than their male counterparts.

### **“Extreme Perceptions” Make It Even Harder**

- Being exposed to women leaders doesn’t necessarily lessen stereotyping; often, it reinforces stereotyping, creating even more “extreme perceptions” of differences between men’s and women’s leadership.
- This is especially true for women who work in traditionally “masculine” occupations where their problem-solving skills are judged particularly harshly by their own subordinates—those they rely on most to implement their plans.

- Stereotyping, therefore, often makes the demands on leadership much greater for women than for men.

### **A Call to Action**

- Hiring more women executives or instituting more gender diversity programs isn't enough.
- The study makes clear that unless organizations take active steps to eradicate this bias, women leaders will forever be undermined and misjudged, regardless of their talents and aptitudes.
- To combat the insidious influence of stereotyping, companies can:
  - Institute more rigorous and transparent performance evaluation processes.
  - Implement a series of checks and balances to safeguard against stereotyping.
  - Educate managers and executives about the latent influence of stereotyping and ways to override it.
  - Showcase the achievements of women leaders, particularly those in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Take time to visit [www.catalyst.org](http://www.catalyst.org) and view today's event [webcast](#). You can also [download the full report](#) and view presentation materials from today's event.

### **About the survey**

The survey analyzed the responses of 296 corporate leaders (128 men and 168 women), of whom 34 percent were CEOs, 41 percent were one reporting level from the CEO, and 10 percent were two reporting levels from the top. In total, approximately 85 percent of those surveyed held positions within two reporting levels of the CEO, giving a solid foundation for understanding the experiences of women leaders in the top ranks.

### **About Catalyst**

Catalyst is the leading research and advisory organization working with businesses and the professions to build inclusive environments and expand opportunities for women at work. As an independent, nonprofit membership organization, Catalyst uses a solutions-oriented approach that has earned the confidence of business leaders around the world. Catalyst conducts research on all aspects of women's career advancement and provides strategic and web-based consulting services on a global basis to help companies and firms advance women and build inclusive work environments. In addition, we honor exemplary business initiatives that promote women's leadership with our annual Catalyst Award. With offices in New York, San Jose, and Toronto, Catalyst is consistently ranked No. 1 among U.S. nonprofits focused on women's issues by The American Institute of Philanthropy.