




# Healthcare Leadership and Gender

A 2013-14 Study by  
the Diversified Search  
Healthcare Practice and  
the Women's Leadership  
Center at Kennesaw  
State University

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Diversified Search, founded in 1974 and one of the nation's top ten executive search firms, has completed a new research study on Healthcare Leadership and Gender. The purpose of the research was to examine gender differences in the career experiences of healthcare leaders including Chief Executive Officers and other C-suite positions, Vice Presidents and Director Levels. Participants included 157 female leaders and 125 males working for healthcare systems, hospitals, medical centers and other types of facilities in a broad range of sizes throughout the U.S. The survey, which was conducted jointly by Diversified and the Women's Leadership Center through the Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University, found striking differences between the women and men in their career paths, earnings, responsibilities, perceptions about career/family help and support, and views on barriers to career advancement.

## Major findings are:

**Career Path:** A significantly greater number of women than men were promoted from within their organizations, while men were more likely to be hired from outside. This appears to relate to another finding in this survey that men are more willing to relocate for jobs than women. Men also have different work histories: 66% of the males report a background in medicine, finance or general administration, while 44% of the women have nursing backgrounds.

**Compensation:** In our sample, compensation for women was considerably lower, by an average of 35%, than for men in similar positions. This may reflect the type of experience they bring to the table as well as the perceived value of external candidates versus internal candidates. Staff supervision seems to be associated with the differential in compensation, with the men reporting that they supervise twice as many employees as the women participants.

#### Major Findings:

- ▶ **Career Path**
- ▶ **Compensation**
- ▶ **Career Satisfaction**
- ▶ **Valuable to Career Success**
- ▶ **Challenges to Career Advancement**

**Career Satisfaction:** Women derive significantly more satisfaction than men do from a sense of meaningful work/contributing to society. In fact, the study shows a higher rate of women in leadership roles in religious not-for-profit organizations. These organizations have community-based or faith-based missions which women may prefer as more purposeful and fulfilling work.

**Valuable to Career Success:** More women than men cited the following factors as helpful to their careers: access to flexible work practices, support from family members, networking within their organizations, leadership abilities, involvement in professional/community groups, and having sponsors to endorse them. It seems clear that as primary managers of their families, women value flexibility and support. And, in a traditionally male culture, women need more sponsorship than do men from within their organizations. A greater number of men, on the other hand, cite willingness to relocate as a factor helpful to their careers.

**Challenges to Career Advancement:** Significantly more women reported the following as barriers to their careers: lack of supportive supervisors, exclusion from informal networks, lack of senior role models, inhospitable culture/biased attitudes and failure of senior leadership to help in advancement. The culture of the organization is clearly important to women and they feel that if the environment is exclusionary, it will hold them back in their careers. Women also mentioned the need to prioritize family over work as a challenge.

The following presentations based on this research are available:

- The Shifting Healthcare Leadership Pipeline
- Women and the Future of Healthcare Leadership

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