

# Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

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## A qualitative exploration of the leaky pipeline for women in law

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Although women are making great strides within the educational arena and are roughly equally represented in most areas of graduate and professional school, they are not reaching parity within leadership roles. For a number of reasons, they are “leaking” out of the promotion pipeline at various steps along the way. This phenomenon has been termed the “leaky pipeline effect”. Within the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and medical fields a great deal of research has explored predictors of the leaky pipeline. However, within the legal field the leaky pipeline phenomenon has not been explored. In this qualitative study we investigate the applicability of previous research on the leaky pipeline to the legal field. We find that women’s choices to leave the legal field appear to be driven by many of the same factors as men’s (misfit between the needs/values/goals of the individual and the working environment) but constrained or pushed by powerful societal and familial gender roles that also act on men, constraining their choices as well.