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Summary

SEX-SEGREGATED CAREER LADDERS IN
NEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT:
A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

October 1979

Foreword

In 1955, John Smith began his career as a grade 3 mail clerk for the State of New York earning about \$2600 per year. Mary Jones began working for the State that same year as a grade 4 stenographer. Her job paid about \$2700 per year. John is now a grade 32 bureau director for the Department of Social Services. Mary is a grade 12 principal stenographer working for the Department of Labor. John earns about \$33,000 per year and Mary makes \$14,500.

The above scenario is real. The names are changed, but comparable situations do exist for thousands of women who work for New York State.

Statistics collected by New York State show that women hold a healthy share of the State civil service jobs. Equality of employment, however, has not been achieved. Women are vastly over-represented in low-paid positions and are not moving up within the civil service system.

The Center for Women in Government was founded in 1978 as a catalyst for eliminating sex discrimination in government. Its goal is to identify barriers preventing women, like Mary, from advancing. With this purpose, in a study funded by the Ford Foundation, the Center examined the structure of jobs in selected agencies within the New York State civil service system. This was done in order to determine whether the way in which these jobs are organized keeps women from achieving equality of employment.

The study, conducted by the Center research staff and reported in, "Sex-Segregated Career Ladders in New York State Government Employment: A Structural Analysis of Inequality in Employment," by Sandra Peterson-Hardt and Nancy D. Perlman, examined the relationship between sex-segregation on career ladders and opportunities and requirements for advancement. It found that, for example, female dominated ladders offer less

opportunity for advancement than male dominated ladders.

Improving this situation is imperative for several reasons.

First, when State government, which sets standards for other public and private employers, fails to meet its equal employment obligations, the message to both business and local government is clear: There is no mandate to move from rhetoric to action.

Second, one underlying tenet of good government is that it should represent the public it serves. When less than one percent of all female State employees are in public policymaking positions, and a majority of women in government are segregated in low-paying dead-end jobs, government is failing to reflect and to represent the citizenry as a whole.

Third, this problem is not solely a women's issue. Although the lack of opportunity for career advancement is shown by this study to be more severe for women, a significant number of men are also employed on low ceiling ladders. Therefore, we must not only decrease the level of sex-segregation in ladders, but must change the very structure of the ladders themselves.

Finally, equal employment opportunity is a precondition to realizing the goal of increasing the productivity level of all public employees. In times of shrinking State revenues, when increasing productivity is becoming more crucial, it is essential to take full advantage of the skills of employees currently within the system. Both taxpayers and employees will benefit if an employment system is created which utilizes people's fullest potential.

Linda Tarr-Whelan
President of the Board
Center for Women in Government

Highlights of the Report

SEX-SEGREGATED CAREER LADDERS INNEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT:A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

In spite of the fact that in 1977 women comprised 45% of the New York State government work force, it is incorrect to assume that equality of employment exists. Other statistics reveal that within State government employment, men dominate higher paying job categories such as officials/administrators and professionals, while women are found in lower paying categories such as office/clericals and paraprofessionals. Furthermore, within certain categories such as technician and service/maintenance, the median salary for women is lower than that of men. Overall, 59% of the women earn less than \$10,000 per year compared to only 36% of the men.¹

One possible explanation for women's lower level of occupational achievement is that jobs are sex-segregated,² and that "female" jobs offer less opportunity for advancement: They dead-end at lower grade levels than do "male" jobs. Put somewhat differently, each sex, in choosing different types of entry level jobs would, in actuality, be choosing differential opportunity systems. The implication of this explanation is that, over time, parity between the sexes would be unlikely to occur.

¹ 1977 Ethnic Survey of the New York State Government Workforce,
New York State Civil Service Department, 1977.

² In other words, certain jobs are predominantly occupied by men while others are predominantly occupied by women. For additional definitions see Appendix A.

Moreover, requirements for entry to and promotion on career ladders may differ by sex-type of ladder, i.e., female ladders may have higher entry level and/or advancement requirements. This would also explain women's lower level of occupational achievement. The implication of this explanation is that requiring higher level skills or education for female jobs would make it more difficult for women to advance. Again, over the long run, this would make equality between the sexes unlikely.

In this study, an analysis was undertaken to see to what extent these explanations apply to women employed by New York State.¹ In the first part of the study, research questions were developed around the topic of sex-segregation in employment and its impact on opportunities for advancement. These questions included:

1. Are career ladders in New York State government sex-segregated? Are women found on certain ladders and men on others?
2. Do male and female ladders differ in their entry grade level? Do female ladders begin at lower grade levels?
3. Do male and female ladders differ in the grade level at the top or the "peak" of the ladder? Do female ladders peak at lower levels and thereby offer less opportunity?
4. Where are the majority of women employed in State government? Are most of the women on low opportunity ladders, while men are on high opportunity ladders?

A second focal point of the study was the impact of sex-segregation on requirements for mobility up career ladders. Research questions dealing with this topic included:

5. Do male and female ladders differ in their requirements for entry level jobs? Do the entry level jobs on female ladders have "harder" entry requirements?
6. Do male and female ladders differ in their requirements for advancement? Are female ladders harder to climb?

¹ In order to determine whether the situation faced by minority women is more difficult, data was collected separately for minority and white women. Meaningful analysis, however, was impossible because of the small number of minority women in the sample.

7. Where are the majority of women in State government employed? Are women on hard-to-climb ladders while men are found on easy-to-climb ladders?

Agencies Studied

The work of New York State government is carried out in agencies which vary in many characteristics. The study was conducted in four agencies¹ selected to insure a mix of characteristics such as size, growth, decentralized versus centralized structure, number and percent of women employed, and presence of an agency women's group. The four agencies analyzed were:

- The Division for Youth which focuses on delinquency prevention, youth development and rehabilitation services. The DFY in 1977 employed 1,850 people, 38% of whom were women. Although this agency grew over the decade, the proportion of women did not significantly increase.
- The Office of General Services, which provides support services to other State agencies including maintenance of State buildings, personnel services, and administrative analysis. The OGS employed 3,230 people in 1977, 30% of whom were women. This agency also grew over the decade but the proportion of women declined.
- The Department of Transportation which is responsible for maintaining a balanced and integrated transportation system for the State. The DOT employed 12,521 employees in 1977, 9% of whom were women. This agency declined in the number of employees over the decade but the proportion of women remained stable.
- The Department of Labor which seeks to protect and ensure the well-being of all workers in the State. The DOL employed 9,026 workers in 1977, 56% of whom were women. Although it grew only 1% over the decade, the 3% increase of female employees kept pace with that of state government as a whole.

¹ The analysis of mobility requirements was carried out only in the Division for Youth. All State agencies are governed by the same civil service procedures; therefore, it is assumed that the results apply to other departments as well.

Results of the Study

The major findings regarding the impact of sex-segregation on opportunities for advancement are:

1. Career ladders in New York State government are indeed sex-segregated. Figure 1 shows that from 92% to 98% of the career ladders were sex-typed either male or female, and that the majority were male.
2. Female career ladders begin at lower entry levels than male ladders. Figure 2 shows that in all four agencies the majority of female ladders begin at low levels as compared to less than one third of the male ladders.
3. Female ladders also offer less opportunity for advancement. Figure 3 shows that the percent of female ladders offering high opportunity levels ranged from 0% to 13% compared to 31% to 41% of male ladders.
4. A greater proportion of men than women are employed on high opportunity ladders. Figure 4 shows that the percent of men on such ladders ranged from 27% to 55% while the percent of women on these ladders ranged from 4% to 42%. In all four agencies, the percent of men on high opportunity ladders exceeded that of women.

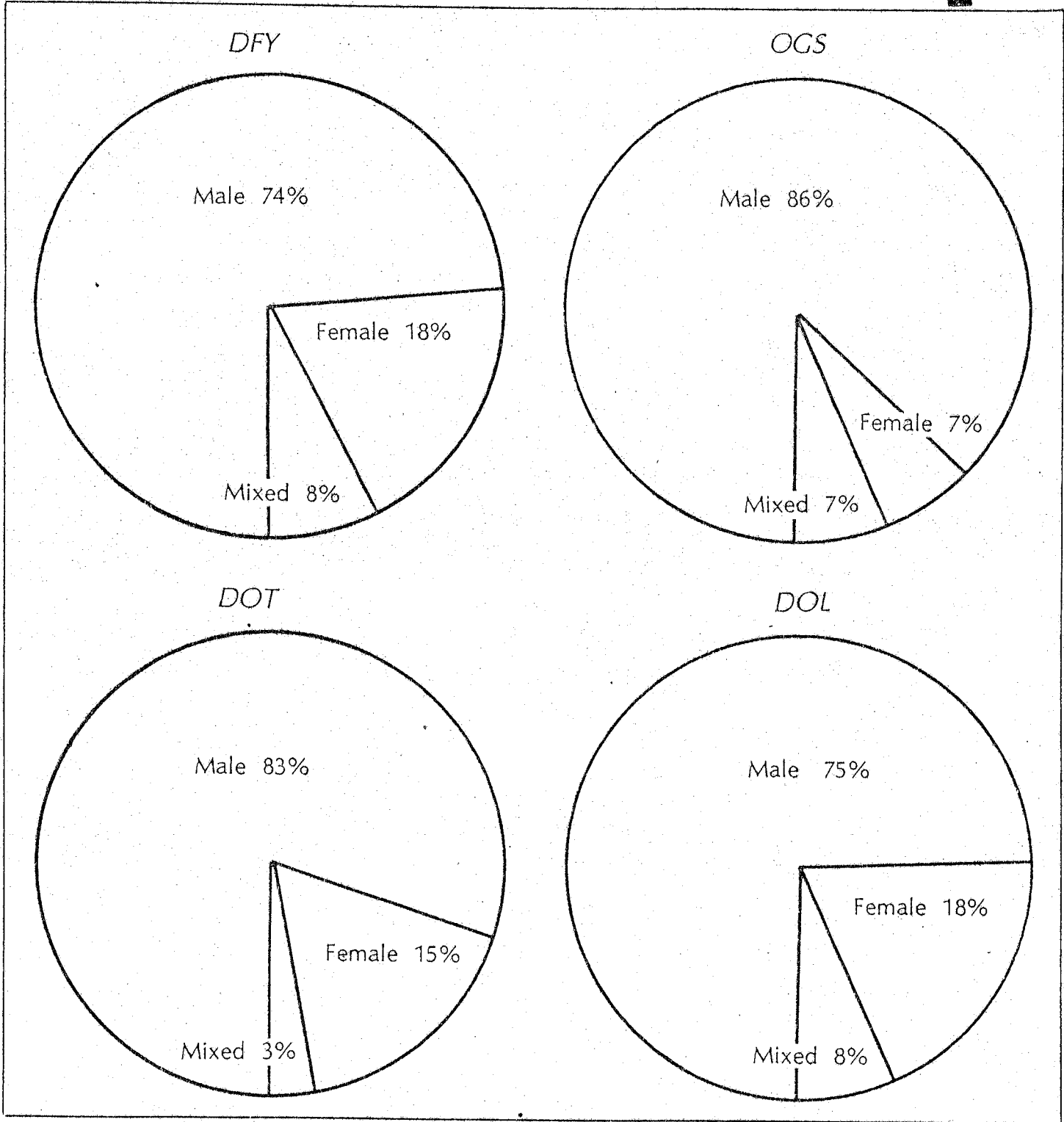
The major findings regarding the relationship between sex-segregated career ladders and requirements for mobility are:

5. Overall, little or no difference in total job requirements¹ exist by sex-type of ladder. As seen in Figure 5, ladders with higher entry levels do have higher requirements, but there is no difference by sex-type of ladder.
6. Examination of specific requirements for entry level, however, did reveal some differences by sex-type of ladder. Figure 6 shows the differences in requirements for entry to low level professional ladders by sex-type. As can be seen, more male ladders require a college degree while more female ladders require a specific skill. A further analysis of the educational requirements of all jobs in the study agency reveal that 90 percent of all jobs at the professional level require a minimum of a college degree. Consequently, without a college degree it is virtually impossible to advance to professional level jobs.

¹ See Figure 6 for types of requirements rated.

Sex-Type Of Career Ladders In Four N.Y. State Agencies

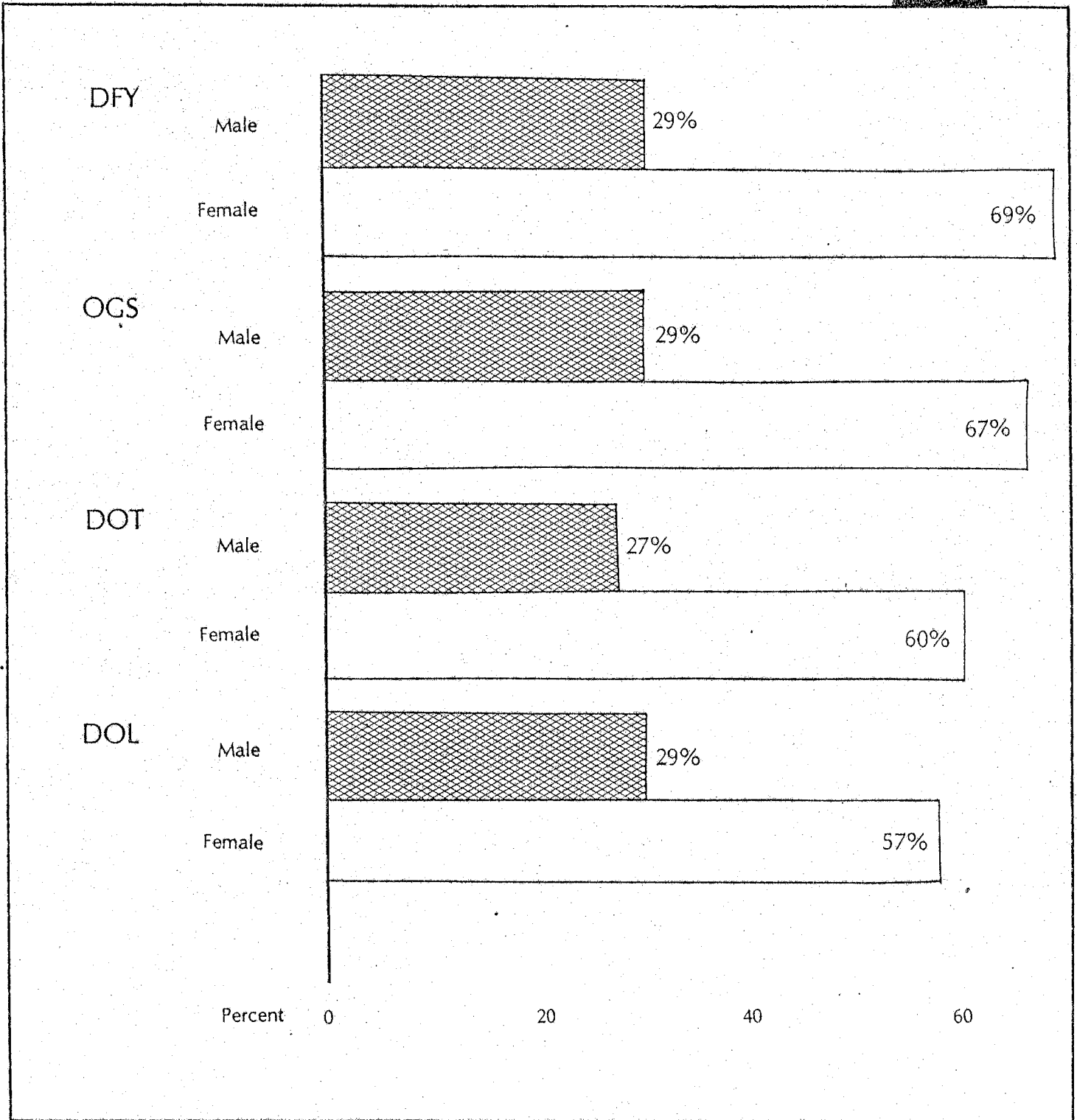
1



Career Ladders Are Sex-Segregated And Most Are Male Sex-Typed.

% Of Ladders With Low Entry Levels By Sex-Type

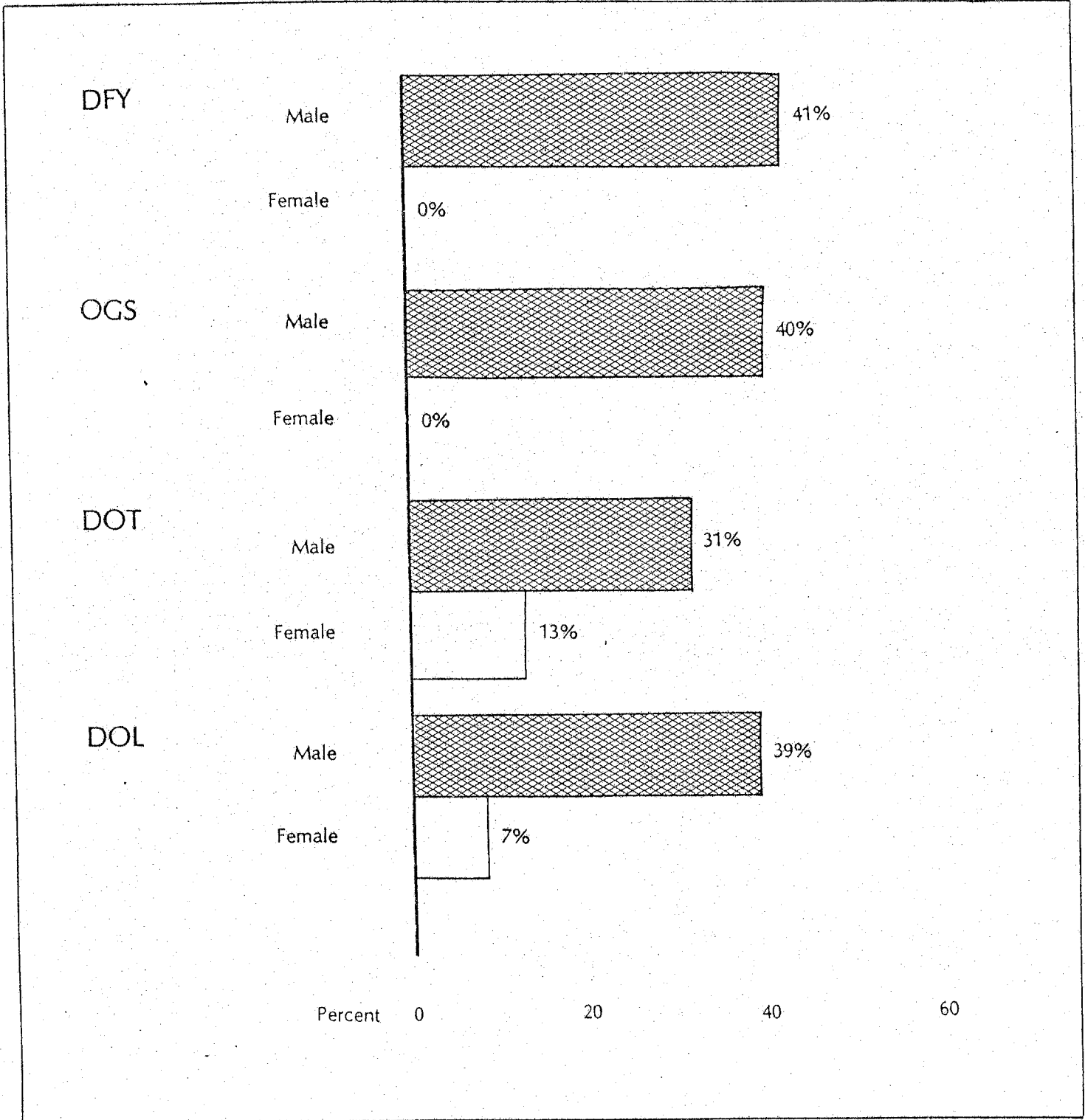
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More Female Career Ladders Have Low Entry Levels

% Of Career Ladders With High Opportunity Levels By Sex-Type

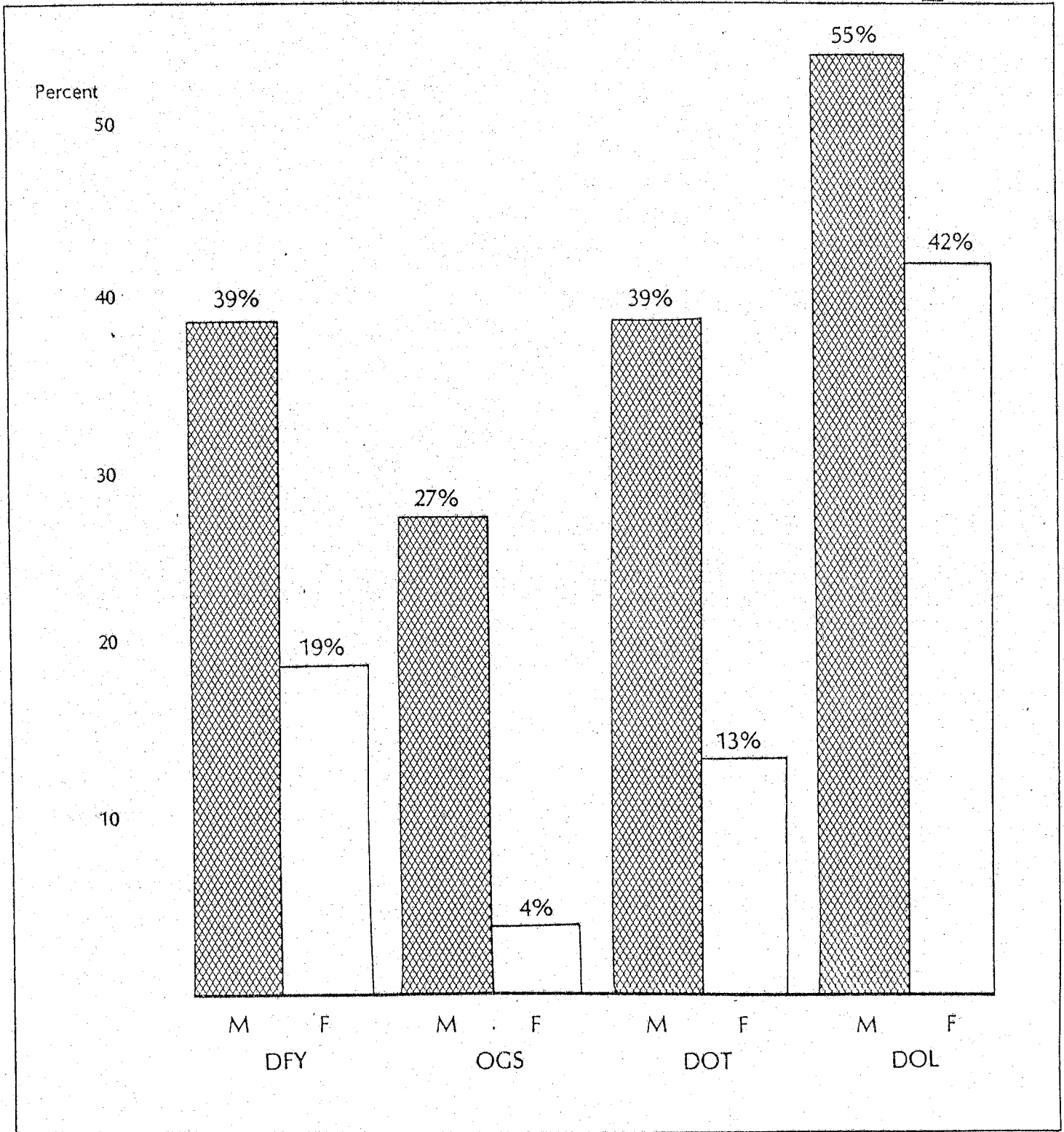
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More Male Career Ladders Have Higher Opportunity Levels

% Of Male And Female Employees
On High Opportunity Career Ladders—

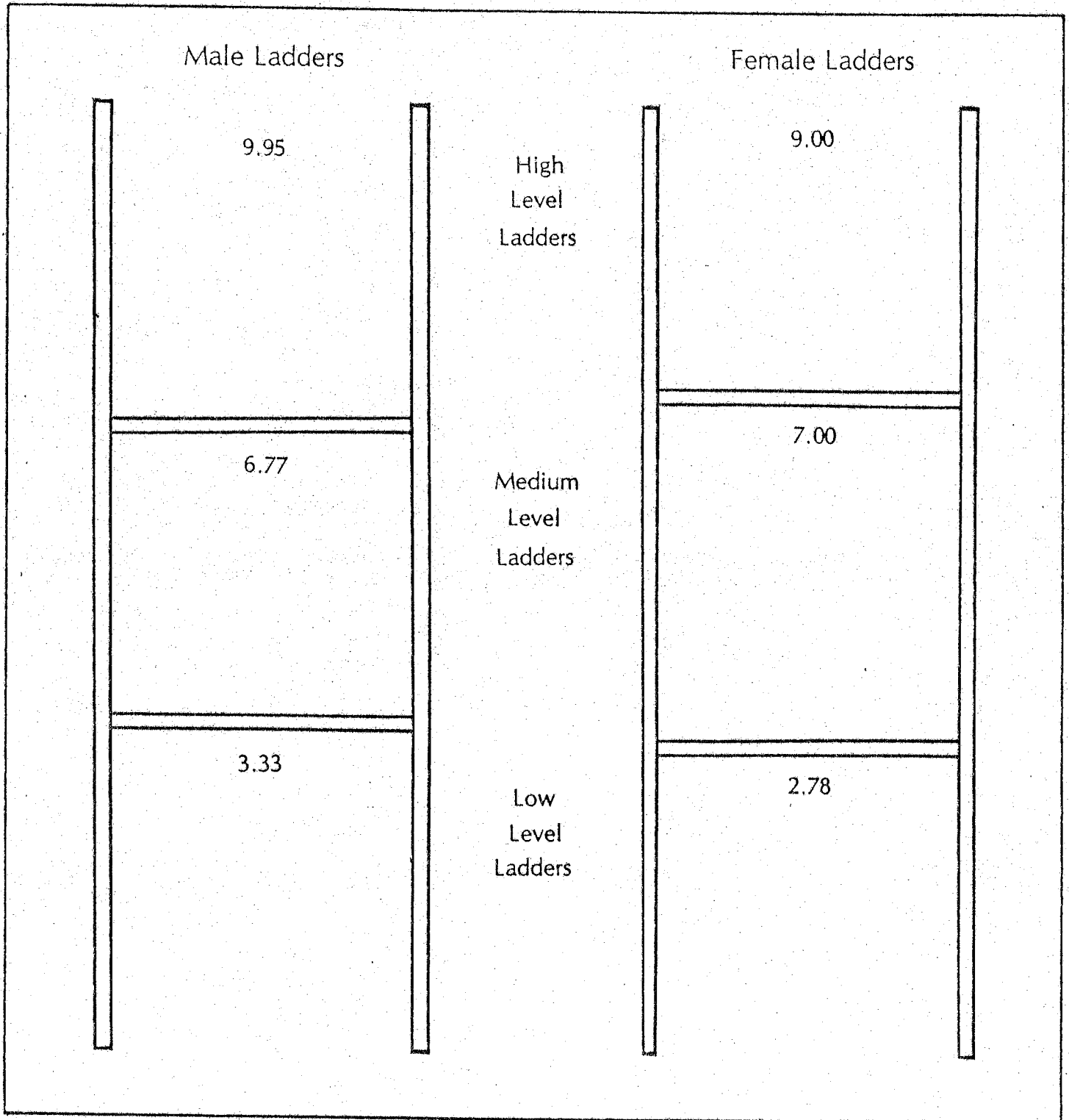
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More Men Are On High Opportunity Ladders

Mean Job Requirement Score
By Entry Level And Sex-Type Of Career Ladder
Study Agency

5



Sex-Segregated Ladders Do Not Differ in Overall Entry Level Requirements

6

ENTRY LEVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADES 13-16 LADDERS

BY SEX-TYPE OF LADDER

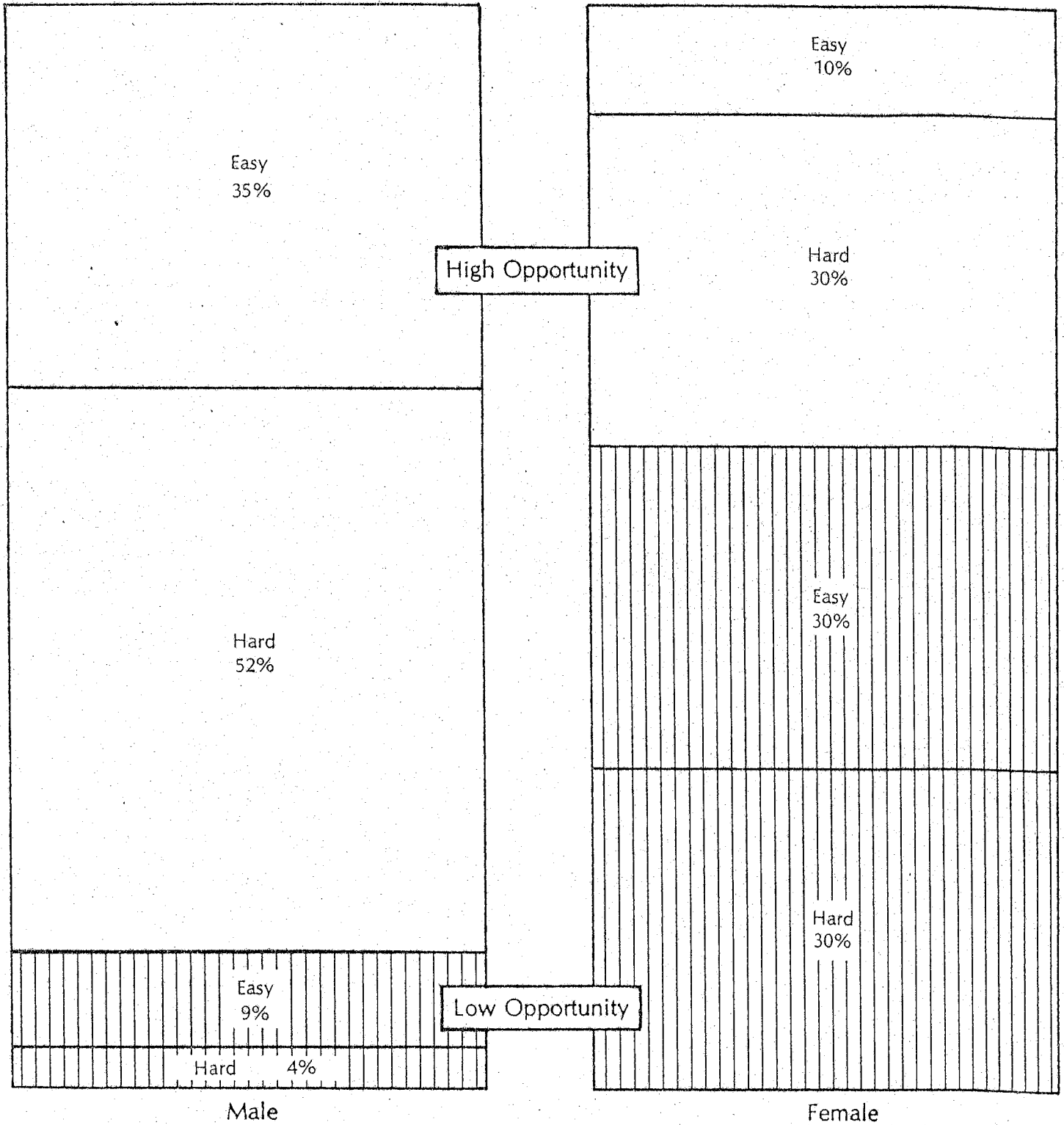
STUDY AGENCY

Entry Level Requirement	Sex-Type	
	Male	Female
	%	%
Bachelors or more	67	25
2 years or more experience	44	50
Skill	67	100
Accessible by prior State employment	33	25
Exam	78	50

Male Ladders at Low Grade Professional Entry Require More Education

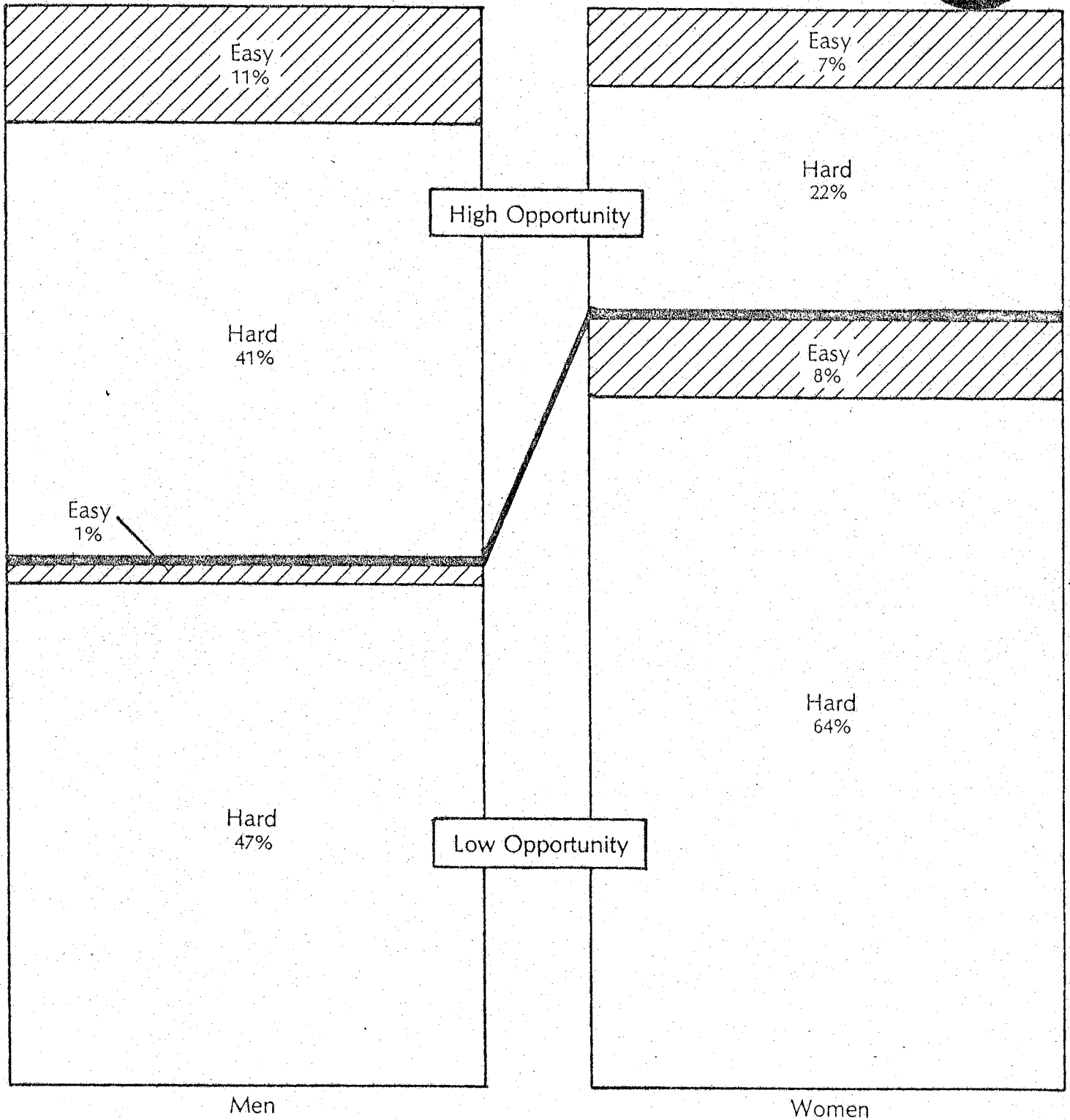
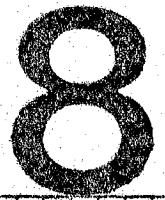
Distribution Of Career Ladders By Ease Of Mobility And Sex-Type Study Agency

7



Female Ladders Tend To Be Low Opportunity/Hard To Climb

Distribution Of Employees By Ladder Characteristics Study Agency



More Female Employees Are On Low Opportunity/Hard To Climb Ladders

7. When ladders are examined along two dimensions simultaneously-- ease of mobility and level of opportunity--a higher percentage of male ladders were found at one extreme (high opportunity/easy-to-climb) while more female ladders were found at the opposite extreme (low opportunity/hard-to-climb). This is shown on Table 7.

Implications of the Study

This study indicates that there are structural barriers to the advancement of women in New York State government employment. For equality of employment between the sexes to become a reality, these barriers must be removed. In order to begin this process, consideration should be given to the possible courses of action described below:

1. Since more female ladders peak or dead-end at lower levels than male ladders, equality of opportunity does not exist. In order to correct this situation, the Civil Service Department and individual agencies should give particular attention to adoption of the following strategies:
 - a. increasing the number of "bridge" jobs which offer connections between low and high opportunity ladders
 - b. increasing mobility by grouping occupational families and creating opportunities for horizontal movement to higher opportunity ladders
2. Since a significant number of men and a majority of women are employed on ladders which both dead-end and are hard-to-climb, it is clear that the issue of mobility is not solely a women's issue. In order to take advantage of the skills and motivation of all employees, a structure must be designed which allows workers to progress from the bottom to the top of the civil service system without encountering artificial barriers and based on their ability to perform.

Career ladder routes should not only be established by agencies and the Civil Service Department. Employees, themselves, should be encouraged to determine target jobs, and training programs should be developed to make their aspirations a reality.

3. Since more female ladders begin at lower grade levels, those who fill "women's" jobs begin their careers at lower salary levels. A further study of the assignment of grade levels to jobs is necessary to determine why this disparity exists.
4. Since sex-segregation of ladders is so widespread and is related to opportunity for advancement, it is important to determine whether sex-segregation is the result of personal choice or the result of "chilling" or disuasion of females from entering traditionally male jobs. Particular attention, in this analysis, should be given to monitoring the recruitment, screening and selection processes performed by the Civil Service Department and individual agencies.
5. Since the college degree requirement for entry to professional level ladders has an adverse impact on women (as well as Hispanics and Blacks), attention should be given to the following corrective strategies:
 - a. the development of alternative selection processes which do not have an adverse impact. These may include credit for paid and unpaid/part and full time experience as well as performance related skills examinations.
 - b. The creation and expansion of on-work-site education and training programs related to promotional opportunities.

Appendix A

Definition of Terms Used in the Study

Career Ladder refers to jobs of a related nature grouped together based on first 3 digits of a civil service code in common.

Ease of Mobility refers to differences in composite score of requirements necessary to move up a career ladder. Each job was coded on the following dimensions:

Education
Experience
Skill
Prior State Service
Exam
Whether Available by Promotion

Jobs where the requirement scores between the entry level and peak level differed by two points or more were defined as "hard to climb". All others were defined as "easy".

Entry Level jobs were scored on the basis of the civil service grade assigned for the first job on the career ladder. The bottom one-third were defined as "low entry level", the top one-third as "high entry level", the residual as "medium entry level".

Opportunity Level jobs were scored on the basis of the civil service grade assigned to the top or peak job on the career ladder. The bottom one-third were defined as "high opportunity level", the bottom one-third as "low opportunity level", the residual as "medium opportunity level".

Professional Career Ladders refers to career ladders which begin at Grade 13 or above.

Professional Jobs refers to jobs which are at Grade 13 or above.

Sex-Segregated Career Ladder refers to ladders where the sex-ratio of employees is 60/40 or more. Ladders where the sex ratio was between 59/41 were defined as "mixed ladders".

Sex-Type refers to the sex which is dominant in a sex-segregated career ladder.

Total Job Requirements refers to the sum of all job requirements (see Figure 6) as defined under ease of mobility. The scoring key may be found in Appendix F in the full report of the study.