

Hybrid work model is unlocking the benefits of mentoring programs for women professionals but there is still an opportunity for businesses to drive development through mentorship

24% of Women Professionals Lack Access to Any Type of Formal Mentorship Program by their employers

Toronto, ON, October 1, 2024 – A new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of TD finds that access to formal mentorship programs in the workplace is greater in companies where a hybrid work model dominates. Among women working in office and professional settings, eight in ten (83%) of those working in the hybrid model have access to some type of formal mentorship, while 70% of women who only work remotely and 73% who work fully in-office do. In terms of access to highly-coveted one on one mentorship opportunities, half of the same surveyed women who work only remotely (51%) or only in-office (53%) have access, compared to six in ten (62%) of women working in a hybrid role.

Notably, a total of 37% of the professional women surveyed were working in a hybrid model, compared to 45% in-office and 18% fully remote.

A call to action to employers to create important developmental opportunities

Nearly all women mentees in the survey group describe their mentors as helping them achieve the things they wish to achieve at work with more than 9 in 10 saying their mentor is doing "very well/fairly well" (93%) in this regard. But around a quarter (24%) of the surveyed women working remotely, hybrid or in-person an office or professional setting report that formal mentorship programs are not offered by their employers. More than half of the women in our survey who don't currently have a mentor (55%) say they would take part in formal mentorship if it was available.

However, a further element of the survey results suggests that offering programs is not enough; it is equally important to structure work to allow employees to take advantage of them. In the study, a slim majority (53%) of women working in office or professional settings (in all work models) who were currently without a mentor say they would *not* be likely take part, even if formal mentorship was offered through their employer, and the main reason (26%) was lack of time during their working hours.

Differences between women and men around the perceived benefits of mentorship

Looking more closely at what respondents report about their satisfaction with specific benefits of mentorship, our study found that among the surveyed women who have a mentor, nearly 9 in 10 say their mentor is doing "very well/fairly well" helping them identify and build new skills (89%), deal with challenges in the workplace (89%), and build confidence (88%), and the women placed greater emphasis than their male counterparts did on the role of mentors or mentorship programs to drive

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these personal development and performance enhancement benefits, ranking highly the importance of the mentor's role in building their confidence (86% women vs 82% men), helping them deal with challenges they are facing in the workplace (89% women vs 84% men), improve their soft skills (87% women vs 82% men) and navigate their organization (85% vs 81% men).

Conversely, men and women are at relative parity in valuing the role of mentors in advocating for them. They rank the importance of a mentor's help in working toward promotion equally (both 76%) and as well as helping them expand their professional network (both 81%)—mentorship benefits commonly described as sponsorship.

When ranking satisfaction with their current mentors against the specific benefits associated with sponsorship, the gender divide reappears. 73% of women respondents say their mentor is doing "very well/fairly well" at helping them work towards a promotion, whereas 81% of men reported the same. 82% of women ranked their mentors as doing "very well/fairly well" at helping them connect them to opportunities within their organizations, whereas 87% of men felt the same.

From mentorship to sponsorship

When we asked respondents of both genders to rank how well their mentors are doing specifically setting them up for the next steps in their careers, we found an interesting correlation. 88% of those who say that in addition to a mentor they also have a formal *sponsor* (i.e. someone who uses their influence or leadership status to advocate for an employee) feel their *mentors* are doing "very well/fairly well" at helping them work toward a promotion. Only 73% of respondents *without* sponsors report that their mentors are doing "very well/fairly well" at the same task. It appears sponsorship can actually be perceived to boost the efficacy of mentorship.

The lift sponsorship provides to mentees is even more dramatic if we consider mentees of both genders who assessed their mentor as performing "very well." 38% of men and women without sponsors felt their mentors were doing "very well" at helping them achieve the things they want to achieve at work (including all options for specific benefits). But among respondents who have formal sponsors, that percentage jumps to 72% choosing "very well" to describe their mentors' overall performance.

Our study reflects that formal sponsorship is rare in the workplace, particularly for women: seven in ten (71%) women say they have never had a sponsor at work (vs 62% men).

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 9 and 26, 2024, on behalf of TD. For this survey, a sample of 2,453 working Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed, including 1579 people working in office/professional settings, and 935 women in office/professional settings.

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Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.3 percentage points among working Canadians, ± 2.8 percentage points among Canadians working in office/professional settings, and ± 3.7 percentage points among women in office/professional settings, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ in these groups been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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