

The Driving Workplace Equity Series

Five ways to develop diversity (without relying on recruitment)

Actionable data and insights from the experts, employers, and advocates raising the bar for all women in the workplace



About the Series

WORK180's Driving Workplace Equity Series is designed to provide regular data and guidance to help organizations better understand, identify, and remove barriers for women and marginalized individuals in the workplace.

About the data

Supported by external data, the reports present transparent findings from WORK180's platform, network of experts and employers, and — crucially — voices from a wide range of women* in our community.

About the author

WORK180 promotes organizational standards that raise the bar for women* in the workplace. It does this by endorsing and supporting great workplaces for all women, and making it easy for women to find them.

**by women, we mean all who identify and/or experience oppression as a woman (including cis, trans, intersex, non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals).*

It's all about enabling workplaces to do better, while empowering women to expect better



Empower women to expect better

100% of women surveyed for the [WORK180 What Women Want Report 2021](#) stated that they consider gender equity a workplace priority.



Enable workplaces to do better

According to [McKinsey & Co](#), companies with more women at the top outperform those with few or no women in their leadership teams.



The world will be better, for everyone

McKinsey & Co also report that unleashing the full potential of all women who wish to work could add **11% (USD 12 trillion)** to our GDP by 2025.

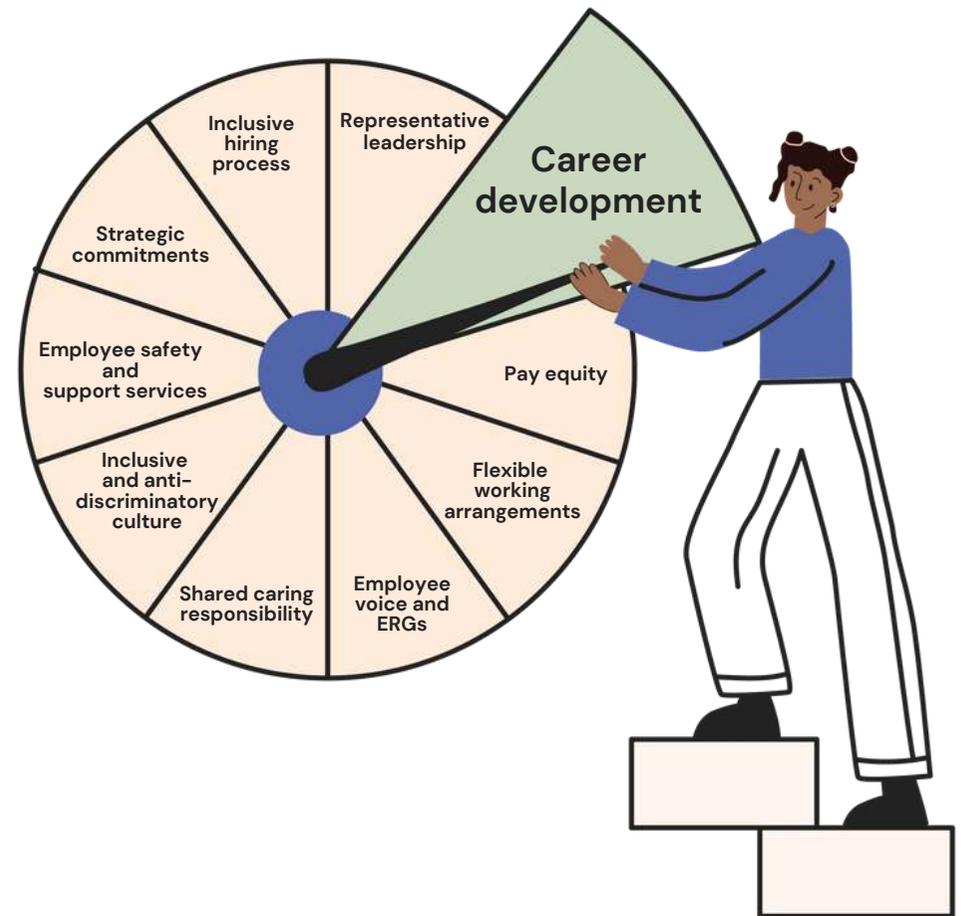
Each monthly report focuses on one or more of WORK180's 10 key standards for driving workplace equity.

These standards are informed by diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) experts; our community of women and employers; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As a result, they provide a clear focus for any company committed to creating a workplace where all women can thrive.

For a clear understanding of how each of these standards helps drive equity in the workplace, please visit the [WORK180 website](#).

This month's focus: Career development

If companies are serious about creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization, they can't rely on hiring alone. Employers must invest in the upward mobility and retention of women and marginalized individuals already in their organization, which is best achieved through career development programs.



There's a reason leading employers don't rely on recruitment alone to drive diversity. In fact, there are several...



For example

1

Progress is being made. However, systematic discrimination such as sexism, racism, and ableism continues to cause the underrepresentation of women and marginalized individuals in certain sectors and levels of leadership. This means that competition for such candidates can be fierce among even the most attractive employers.

Women in the [US](#) earn [50% of science and engineering degrees](#). Yet, they only represent 35% of the country's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) employees. This is even lower for women within marginalized groups; Latina, Black, and Indigenous women represent less than 10%.

2

But, this isn't merely a "talent pool problem". In fact, in some cases, issues of representation are not present in educational institutions and only begin to occur when it comes to the workplace. This suggests that, despite best efforts and intentions, persistent biases and barriers within hiring processes are putting candidates off or pushing them away.

Similarly, according to a [2021 report by the Australian government](#), men who graduated in STEM five years ago are 1.8 times more likely to be working in a STEM-qualified occupation compared to their women peers.

3

Last but not least, hard-earned hires won't stay long in an organization if their new employer hasn't created an environment where they can thrive.

In the UK, [several large-scale data sets](#) also reveal that throughout their early and mid-career years, women with STEM degrees were more likely than their male peers to be;

- employed in 'lower status' professional positions
- less likely to hold managerial positions

Question: So, where are leading employers investing their efforts (and is it working)?

Answer: Career development (and, yes, it's working)

In many organizations, women are entering the workforce at the same rate as men. However, systematic biases and barriers (such as the myth busted in [our previous report](#) that women will deprioritize their careers for motherhood) and societal pressures (such as those holding women back from self-promotion) mean they're;

- a. not entering departments that many companies are trying to increase representation in, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM);
- b. not receiving career development opportunities at the same rate as their male peers



A study of 30,000 management-track employees from a large retail chain found that [women were 14% less likely to be promoted](#) than their male counterparts, despite receiving higher performance ratings on average.

These biases and barriers can result in a “leaky pipeline” that’s causing workplaces to lose women and marginalized individuals at every step of the career ladder.

The proportion of women at each rung of the career ladder

according to [Mercer’s analysis](#) of over 1,100 organizations across the world in 2020



Investing in career development can fix the leak and strengthen your overall diversity strategy

Investing in the career development of your current workforce creates upward mobility for women and marginalized groups. This not only helps your company increase representation in different departments and roles but also creates an ongoing virtuous cycle that will continue to strengthen your diversity strategy.

Provide career development, which retains talented women and marginalized individuals already in your team

94% of employees say they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their learning and development, according to [LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report](#).

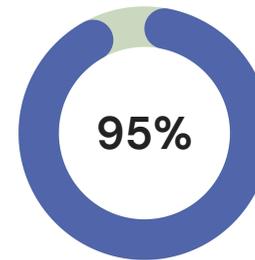
This increases representation, which helps to attract more women and marginalized individuals

Supporting and promoting current employees can inspire others who see themselves represented in different departments and senior positions across your organization.

Become an employer of choice for women, and reap the rewards

Filling your organization with a rich range of perspectives, opinions, and experiences across all levels and departments drives innovation and productivity.

What will happen if your organization doesn't invest in career development?



of 722 respondents to a global WORK180 poll told us they **would look for another job if their current company lacked career opportunities**

Note: When citing this statistic, please link to and credit WORK180's report, [Five ways to develop diversity \(without relying on recruitment\)](#)



"We have so many amazing ideas to bring to the table and we are capable of flourishing in senior leadership roles, so companies need to provide that chance."

Feedback from a participant in [WORK180's What Women Want 2021 survey](#)

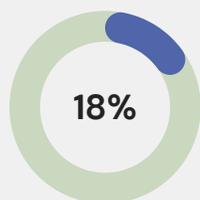
Five ways your company can boost diversity through career development

Combining guidance from our [esteemed DEI Board](#) with first-hand experience from leading employers in varying industries, here are five tried and tested ways to improve diversity through career development.

1. Ensure equitable access to internal and external training and education

There are obvious business advantages to providing employees with the tools and training they need to thrive and progress. However, it's likely that invisible barriers and biases within your workplace are holding women back from accessing the resources and opportunities you currently offer.

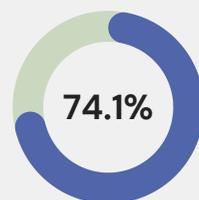
The Knowledge Academy consulted and combined research from a number of European bodies to find the following:



Companies are **18% more likely to send men in their company on work-related training** than women



Those who received job-related training were **54% more likely to have gained a new job or been promoted** in the last five years



74.1% of men's professional training was sponsored by their employer, compared to 68% of women's training

Questions to ask yourself in order to assess whether your training opportunities are inclusive

- Is the training we provide offered flexibly or within hours accessible to primary caregivers (who are disproportionately represented by women)?
- Is the training we provide advertised and offered to part-time employees (who are disproportionately represented by women)?
- Are managers actively identifying and offering individuals training and development opportunities?
- Are our training facilities delivered in a way that is accessible to employees of all physical abilities?
- What other barriers could be putting women and marginalized groups off accessing our training opportunities?

2. Coach, mentor, and sponsor women and marginalized individuals

Definitions

Coaching: A structure that sees a trained coach setting, tracking, and supporting an individual to achieve a specific career goal.

Mentoring: A relationship in which a senior individual uses their own experience and position to guide their mentee through their career.

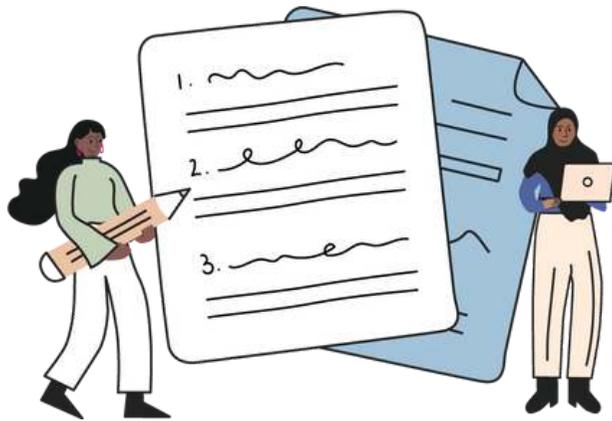
Sponsorship: A relationship in which a senior individual uses their position and power to actively advocate for recognition, raises, and promotions for a junior protege.



Coaches, mentors, and sponsors are proven to positively impact employees' careers. For example, according to [Gartner's study](#) of 1,000 Sun Microsystems employees, mentees are reportedly five times more likely to be promoted than those without a mentor. They're also six times more likely to be promoted than their coworkers.

And there are benefits to organizations too:

- Retention rates among the 1,000 Sun Microsystems employees studied across a five-year period were much higher for mentees and mentors than those not in the program:
 - **72%** for mentees
 - **69%** for mentors
 - **49%** for those not in a mentoring program
- 51% of companies with a strong coaching culture report higher revenue than their industry peer group, according to the [Human Capital Institute](#)
- [Research reported in the Business Harvard Review](#) reveals that, on average, mentoring programs boost the representation of Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American women, and Hispanic and Asian-American men by 9% to 24%



However, finding and setting up such programs can prove more difficult for women and marginalized groups whose networks don't already include individuals in certain sectors or senior positions.

The difference in background and experience between marginalized mentees and the white men who currently dominate certain departments and senior roles also cause additional communication barriers. As business and workplace psychology expert Vivian Giang explains [in an article for Fast Company](#), "A lot of people simply don't feel comfortable giving feedback to others who aren't like them because they don't know what to expect." This is a theory supported by Sherry Sims, founder of the Black Career Women's Network, shared in an interview with [Girlboss](#):

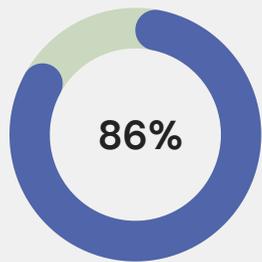


"Eighty percent of my clients prefer to be mentored by another African American woman that is currently working in a position they aspire to be in. Most often these women desire to be in a C-suite position and seek mentors currently in these roles. Unfortunately, they have limited access to these women due to a lack of representation in those roles."

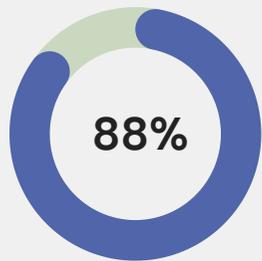
Sherry Sims
Founder of the Black Career Women's Network



Leading employers are committed to helping women and marginalized groups established and benefit from fruitful connections



86% of WORK180 Endorsed Employers offer coaching programs



88% of WORK180 Endorsed Employers offer mentoring opportunities

What else the experts are saying



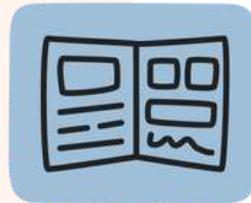
“We need more sponsors; fewer than a third of Black workers report having sponsors and fewer than 25 percent report receiving “quite a bit” or “a lot” of support to make it to the next level. Sponsorship is more than meeting for an occasional coffee—it’s about providing honest coaching and feedback, creating career opportunities, and raising their name and profile when openings are being discussed at the senior level.”

Bryan Hancock, [Why sponsorship is key to helping Black employees advance—and more takeaways from our new research](#)

3. Offer internal secondments in new business functions and environments

Definition:

Secondment: The chance to temporarily work within a different team or department, internally or externally.



Secondments provide employees with the opportunity to develop new skills, experience new environments, and overcome the challenges necessary to advance their careers. From an employer's perspective, they're a great way to nurture and engage and retain valued employees.

These programs are particularly important for the upward mobility of women and marginalized individuals who — due to existing societal barriers and biases — are likely to have had less access to such opportunities.

A quick case study: Retaining talented employees through secondments

Darcie Bailey is a woman in tech who joined Endorsed Employer NAB via its exciting internship scheme. The organization paid for Darcie to receive accredited BA training, making her a certified Agile BA. However, 18 months later, this valuable employee wanted a change — an opportunity that NAB was able to offer through their secondment program.

The result:

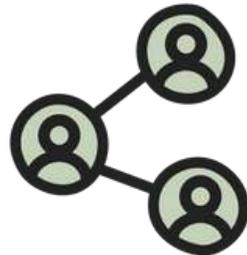
While Darcie describes her Analytics Analyst secondment as a great experience, it ultimately helped her realize her passion for her original role. As such, Darcie reapplied and returned to her current position as a Senior Business Analyst.

Today, thanks to NAB's flexible and proactive approach to career development, Darcie is a loyal employee and brand advocate. She has not only [shared her positive experience at NAB publicly](#) but also acts as a mentor for other young women in the organization.

[\[Read the full story.\]](#)



4. Equitable access to promotion-worthy projects



Your company may have worked hard to ensure it provides a fair and equitable performance evaluation process. However, like most organizations, the results of this process are likely skewed by a disparity in the distribution of opportunities to gain accolades and promotion. More specifically, the opportunity to take on projects that will lead to promotion.

In an [article for the Harvard Business Review](#), Professor Joan C. Williams describes this as the unfair distribution of “housework” and “glamor projects”.



“[N]ot all assignments are equal. In every organization, in every field, there are multiple types. Some can set you up for promotion and skyrocket you to the top of your company — we call them glamor work.

Other assignments are necessary but unsung. We call them office housework. Some are actual housework — getting the coffee for the morning stand-up, or cleaning up after a lunch meeting — and some are the unsung operational or administrative work that keeps the company rolling along.

Studies, including our new research, show that women and people of color do more office housework and have less access to glamor work than white men do. If leaders are going to make a dent in their organizations’ diversity problems, they have to address this disparity.”

Professor Joan C. Williams in the HBR article, [For Women and Minorities to Get Ahead, Managers Must Assign Work Fairly](#)

What women are saying about opportunities in the workplace



of Black women surveyed by the UK organization [Black Women in Leadership Network](#) said they do not believe they're offered the same career advancement opportunities as their non-Black female colleagues



Less than half of women with disabilities who participated in a [2020 study by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company](#) said they feel they have equal opportunity for advancement



"I feel like I've had to work harder. Compared to my peers, I've had to do more to prove myself and to show that I'm worthy of advancement. I feel like the bar for me is higher when it comes to just getting recognized. I also think that I have this reputation of, 'Oh, she'll be able to fix it.' And maybe it's because they expect that I'm probably going to work myself to death to get something done. I just feel like the expectation is different."

An anonymous respondent to the [Women in the Workplace](#) study who is identified as Southeast Asian, an immigrant, a Vice President, and has children under 10

Questions to ask yourself in order to assess whether your training opportunities are inclusive

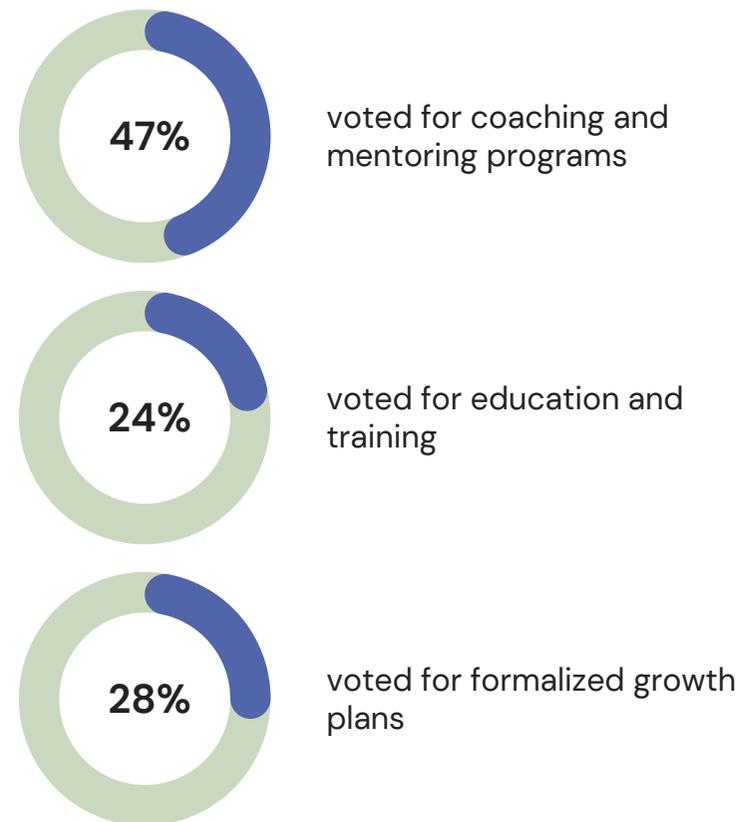
- Are current "housework" tasks divided equally and formally recognized in our current review process?
- Could the unfair distribution of current "housework" tasks be putting women within the organization off taking on promotion-worthy projects? If so, how can this be addressed?
- Could your next "glamor project" be led and performed by a part-time employee (a demographic we know is over-indexed by women)?

5. What else experts say you should offer

- Funding to attend conferences and events
- Financial contributions towards external qualifications
- Providing membership to professional or industry associations
- Procedures that incentivize, reward, and promote individual career development:
 - Performance bonuses
 - Grade-based improvements to salary or title
 - High performer incentive schemes
 - Loyalty schemes rewarding time served at the business

Plus, here's what women say they want

Out of three popular career development opportunities, we asked our global community to vote for the one that excites them the most.



Note: When citing this statistic, please link to and credit WORK180's report, [Five ways to develop diversity \(without relying on recruitment\)](#)

Let's get started

Use the following questions to audit your current career development programs and identify opportunities for improvement

- Does your company capture internal promotion data?
- How many individuals in your organization received an internal promotion within the last 12-months?
- What percentage of these individuals identify as women?
- Does your use organization have either formal performance review processes or individual growth plans?
- How does your company incentivize, reward or promote individual career development?
- Does your company have a formal succession planning process in place at any level?
- Which level roles does your company have formal succession planning in place for?

Looking for a more holistic view and actionable insights?

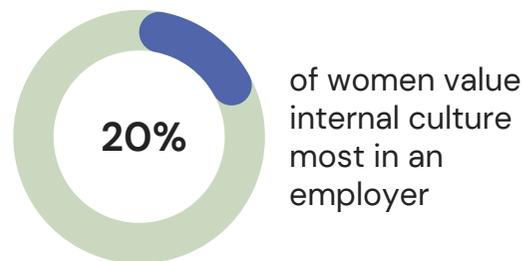
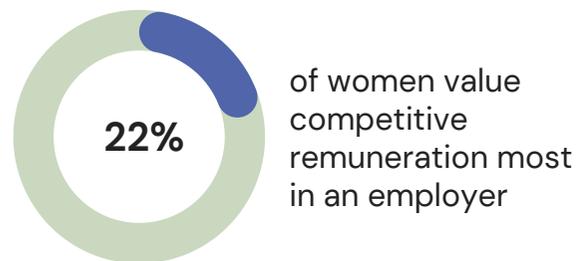
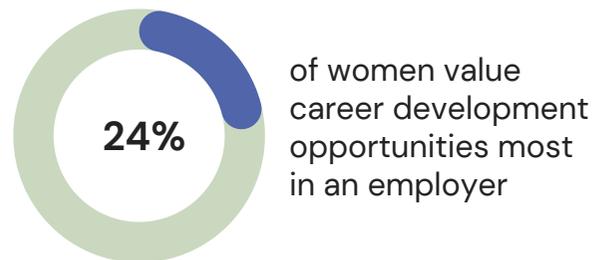
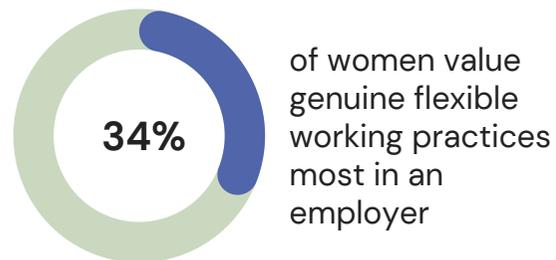
WORK180's Equity Audit will review your organization against each of the 10 key standards for driving workplace equity. Use it to identify strengths, weaknesses, and a tangible metric to track, measure, and prove your company's DEI efforts.

[Find out more](#)

And don't forget to shout about your efforts

With high competition for candidates in many sectors and an increasingly strong [business case for diversity](#), career development opportunities are a competitive advantage in the employment market.

Remember, in our global [2021 What Women Want Survey](#), respondents listed career development opportunities as one of the most sought-after offerings from an employer. In fact, it was among the top four important offerings.



Note: When citing this statistic, please link to and credit [WORK180's What Women Want Report 2021](#)

Find out how we're helping organizations show off what their industry has to offer

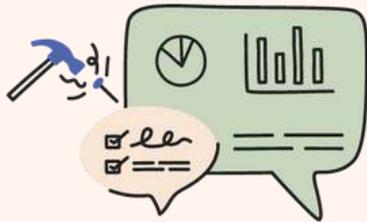


“With WORK180, we’re able to change people’s perceptions of what’s possible for women in the financial service industry, and hopefully inspire other organizations to come along the way.”

Kate Llewellyn
Inclusion Manager at Lloyds Banking Group

[Read the full case study](#)

Ready to break down workplace barriers and have a real impact?



For more great guidance on creating a workplace where all women can thrive, explore our [employer resources library](#).



Keep an eye out for next month's report to learn all about building an inclusive hiring process.



Take five minutes to find out whether your workplace is ready to receive WORK180's support and be endorsed as a great workplace for all women.

[Find out today](#)

Never miss an update

To ensure you and your team are kept up-to-date with this topic and receive our next report straight in your inbox, sign up to our HR mailing list today.

[Join our HR mailing list](#)

Want to lend your voice as a woman in the workplace? Join our community to have your say, feel supported, and help create a working world where all women can thrive.

[Join our community mailing list](#)



Find out more by visiting the [WORK180 website](#)