

# FACT SHEET: MENTORSHIP

**EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS:** We spoke to women leaders across Canada about gender barriers in the workplace, how these barriers show up and continue to persist, and what supports and conditions empowered them to challenge gender discrimination. Our participants included 21 women leaders working in a variety of sectors including finance, health care, technology, fisheries, pharmaceuticals, biotech, applied research, international business, media, supply chain management, ecosystem development, innovation and more. The barriers they experienced were often taken for granted as the nature of the work, the culture of the industry or profession, or just acceptable practice within workspaces.

*Helping others live up to their potential, just seeing them do it [...]. It's been an absolute light in my life."*

## FIRST VOICE ACCOUNTS

- *"Having mentors who are empathetic and can help you alleviate some of the work pressure. [...] You're more happy at work if you have people around that you feel actually care about your well-being."*
- *"Having another female validate your concerns and thoughts as a female in this space, it goes a long way for me personally. [...] To have someone else come back and say, "No, this is not acceptable; here's what I would do, or here's why I think so" – that type of feedback goes a long way."*
- *"I met this person who was really wonderful – kind and encouraging and willing to take me under her wing. She helped shift my perspective [...] My decision to go back to school was largely informed by this person, who was so encouraging and wrote me recommendation letters everywhere I applied."*

## THE ROLE OF MENTORS

- *"A lot of times, the most helpful thing mentors have said to me has been, "Why not this? Why do you have to do it that way? Can you ask for this instead?" The really effective mentors are the ones that pushed me."*
- *"[Good mentors] were frank about, you know, "Let's share conversations about what you're struggling with and what would help you." [...] People who would help find solutions together, and share their insights about how they grew."*
- *"I had a mentor who's in an industry that I'm not even in at all [...] but she still was super supportive, and in terms of where I wanted to go in my career. She had some great general advice that I could translate over [...] it's just another support system that I found really helpful."*

*Discrimination based on gender is the leading form of discrimination reported in Canada. After decades of progress on gender equity, the barriers that continue to exist are systemic, deeply rooted in cultural norms, and often hard to identify. Our findings point to durable and self-perpetuating nature of systemic gender barriers.*

**MENTORSHIP:** Guidance from someone who has overcome challenges and found a pathway to success is enormously helpful. Some mentors come through organized programs. Others simply agree to offer time when asked. Some may only meet once or twice, others provide ongoing contact for years. Mentors can be a great source of personal or professional empowerment.

## WHAT MENTORS CAN DO

- Advise about career next steps, including training, assignments and opportunities.
- Help navigate difficulty and avoid pitfalls.
- Help evaluate opportunities and open doors.
- Make introductions and help build networks.
- Give developmental feedback and advice.
- Help build confidence, assertiveness and ability to speak up and be heard.



Prudentia Institute is a purpose driven, charitable research and development organization with a mission to empower and develop youth in Atlantic Canada. The institute supports the inclusive development and empowerment of youth through research and knowledge mobilization. To learn more, visit [www.prudentiainstitute.ca](http://www.prudentiainstitute.ca) or email [info@prudentiainstitute.ca](mailto:info@prudentiainstitute.ca).