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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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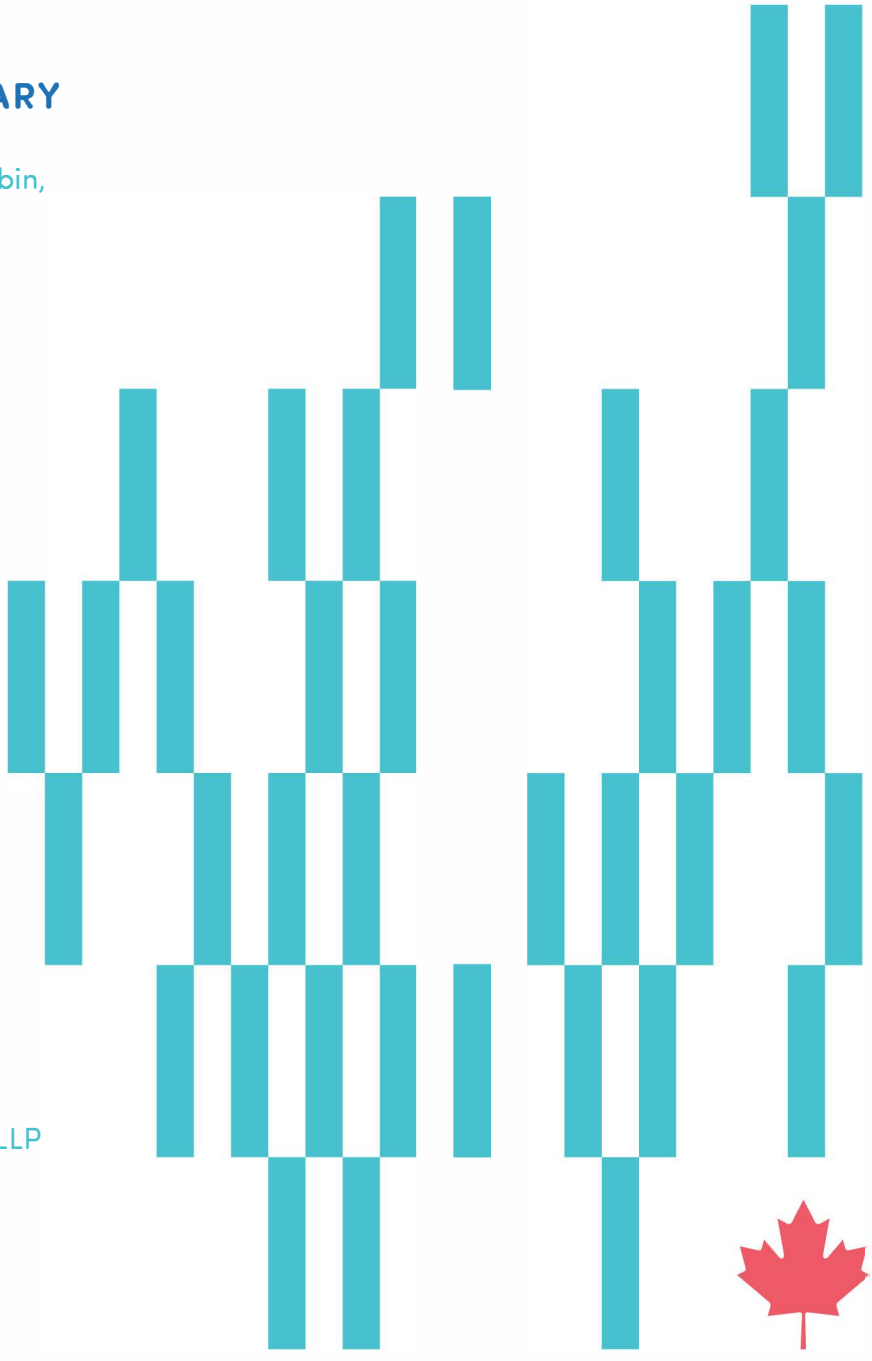

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada prides itself as a multicultural nation that values racial/ethnocultural and gender diversity. Yet even though governmental policies promote the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians,[1] diversity in senior ranks of the white-collar workplace remains elusive. Highly qualified people of colour, Indigenous peoples, and women simply are not getting proportional representation in top executive ranks.[2]

The Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) has found in study after study that people of colour and women benefit from the backing of senior leaders who are willing to advocate for their next key role or promotion, and who can propel and protect them through the perilous straits of upper management—in other words, they need sponsors.[3] In order to attract, win, and retain sponsors, talented people of colour and women must reciprocate as active protégés: with outstanding performance, unflagging loyalty, and a distinct personal brand. This robust relationship drives ambition, engagement, and retention, especially for people of colour.[4]

Yet in this new study, our data uncovers that sponsorship is incredibly rare in Canada, especially compared to what CTI has seen in the US and UK. Senior leaders do support more junior talent, but aren't providing robust sponsorship. Instead, they are giving differentiated support. For example, we find that senior leaders in Canada tend to give meaningful advocacy to white employees, while people of colour are more likely to receive nurturing advice—less helpful in securing the next promotion.

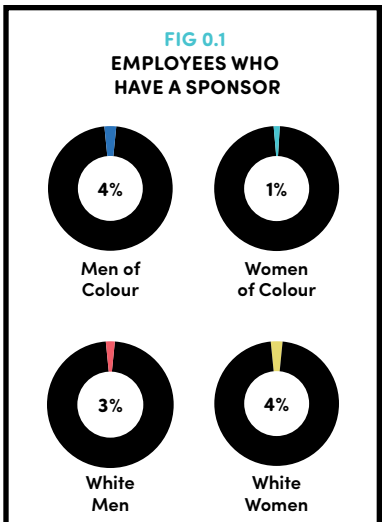
This study consisted of a cross-industry national survey of 752 university-educated respondents between the ages of twenty-one and sixty-four working full-time in white-collar professions in Canada, followed by targeted focus groups and numerous one-on-one interviews. The most salient findings:

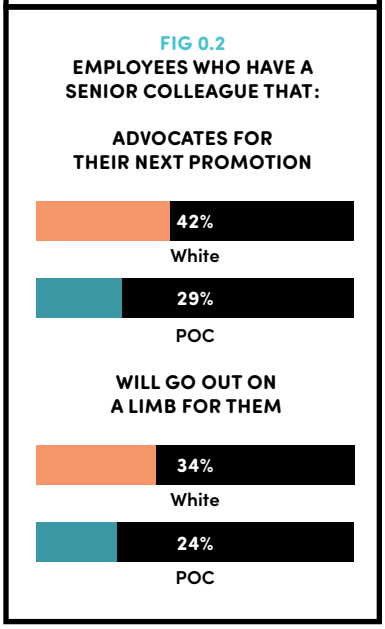
■ Despite being ambitious and willing to "go the extra mile" at work, very few Canadian professionals of colour and women have sponsors: only 3 percent of people of colour (4 percent of men of colour and 1 percent of women of colour) have sponsors. And the experience for white professionals isn't much better: only 3 percent of white men and 4 percent of white women have sponsors. [Fig. 0.1]

■ A deeper look into our results reveals a sharp divide in the kinds of support white professionals and people of colour get from senior colleagues. For white professionals, senior leaders are more likely to provide advocacy: 42 percent of white vs. 29 percent of professionals of colour say a senior colleague advocates for their next promotion; 34 percent of white vs. 24 percent of professionals of colour say a senior colleague will go out on a limb for them [Fig. 0.2]; and 20 percent of white vs. 10 percent of professionals of colour say a senior colleague will "defend me when I stumble."

■ For professionals of colour, senior colleagues are far more likely to give nurturing advice that focuses on how they can "fix" the so-called "soft" elements that affect how they are perceived: 22 percent of professionals of colour vs. 13 percent of white professionals say senior colleagues give them "honest/critical advice on appearance/grooming"; 16 percent of professionals of colour vs. 5 percent of white professionals say they receive "advice on how to achieve gravitas"; and 24 percent of professionals of colour vs. 16 percent of white professionals say their leaders give them "advice on how to inspire others."

■ Why are people of colour and women less likely to have support for their career progression? To begin with, it's difficult to find leaders willing to advocate across lines of difference. The majority of those in senior positions—white men—who self-identify as sponsors tend to sponsor people like themselves: 74 percent of men who hold senior management positions (or above) say that at least one of the people they sponsor is of the same gender and 66 percent of senior white respondents say they sponsor someone of the same race/ethnicity. [Fig. 0.3]





- Many think leadership attributes are defined by white male standards. Although only 34 percent of white men think this is true at their companies, the numbers grow when we look outside of that group: fully 40 percent of white women, 41 percent of men of colour, 47 percent of women of colour, and a whopping 58 percent and 64 percent respectively of Indigenous women and men. Because of this common perception that leadership attributes are set by white male standards, people of colour and women may not be seen as potential leaders, so sponsorship may not be offered to them.
- Approaches to networks—and the availability of networks—vary across gender lines. We find that women tend to use networks differently than men, both white men and men of colour. Only 12 percent of white women and 13 percent of women of colour say they find it "very easy" to ask a close friend to help them land a job, compared to 30 percent of white men and 26 percent of men of colour. [Fig. 0.4] This may come from women's discomfort with transactional requests, or perhaps from a sense that such requests are unlikely to bear fruit. Either way, such "asks" rarely happen.

Implications of findings

We conclude from our study that sponsorship is a nascent concept in Canada, a lever to leadership that isn't fully cultivated, deployed, or fully understood. Yet sponsorship could be the most effective antidote to unconscious bias and entrenched leadership norms that serve as career obstacles for people of colour and women.[5]

Acts of sponsorship do occur, and the few who receive them are aware of the advantages. Yet we heard that senior leaders rarely intentionally sponsor protégés and that it's even rarer across lines of difference. Similarly, few Canadian professionals we interviewed knew how to seek out sponsors or build on acts of sponsorship.

As Canada becomes increasingly multicultural, sponsorship across race, ethno-cultural, and gender differences is a crucial tool to bringing diverse perspectives to the table—and making them heard.

FIG 0.3

74%

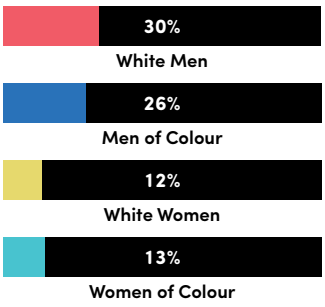
of men who hold senior management positions and above say they sponsor at least one person of the same gender.

66%

of white professionals who hold senior management positions and above say they sponsor at least one person of the same race/ethnicity.

FIG 0.4

EMPLOYEES WHO FIND IT VERY EASY TO ASK A CLOSE FRIEND TO HELP THEM LAND A JOB



ENDNOTES

1 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s 27, Part I of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11, http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html.

2 McKinsey Global Institute and McKinsey & Company Canada, "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Canada," June 2017, vi, https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-canada; The Greater Toronto Leadership Project, "DiverseCity Counts 3: A Snapshot of Diverse Leadership in the GTA," Diversity Institute at the Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University, 2011, ii, http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/diversity/AODAforms/Publication/Special/Counts_2011%20AODA.pdf.

3 Sylvia Ann Hewlett with Kerrie Peraino, Laura Sherbin, and Karen Sumberg, *The Sponsor Effect: Breaking through the Last Glass Ceiling* (Cambridge: Harvard Business Review, 2010); Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall, and Laura Sherbin, with Barbara Adachi, *Sponsor Effect 2.0: Road Maps for Sponsors and Protégés* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2010); Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Lauren Leader-Chivée and Karen Sumberg, with Catherine Fredman and Claire Ho, *Sponsor Effect: UK* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2012); Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Maggie Jackson, and Ellis Cose, with Courtney Emerson, *Vaulting the Color Bar: How Sponsorship Levers Multicultural Professionals into Leadership* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2012); Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *(Forget a Mentor) Find a Sponsor* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).

4 Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Maggie Jackson, and Ellis Cose, with Courtney Emerson, *Vaulting the Color Bar: How Sponsorship Levers Multicultural Professionals into Leadership* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2012), 40–42.

5 Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Ripa Rashid, and Laura Sherbin, *Disrupt Bias, Drive Value* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2017), 25.