



Acronis

WHITE PAPER

FOMO at work: The opportunity gap between men and women in tech

Survey shows
men and women
view women's IT
opportunities and
careers differently

Executive summary:

Focus: Perception gaps between men and women regarding women's opportunities and careers in IT.



Key findings

Equal opportunities: Only 60% of women believe men and women have equal access to career development vs. 75% of men.

Work-life balance: 63% of women say work-life balance challenges "significantly" or "extremely" affect career progression for women, while only 49% of men agree.

Gender-specific impact of work-life balance: 42% of women say work-life balance "significantly affects women," but only 34% of men agree.

Long hours and career advancement: 67% of women believe they must work longer hours to advance, while 56% of men believe women have to spend more time working to get ahead.

Gender bias perception: 41% of women vs. 33% of men cite bias and stereotypes as the main barrier keeping women from starting cybersecurity careers.

Leadership barriers: 41% of women vs. 36% of men identify bias as the biggest barrier to women pursuing tech leadership roles.

Impact of women in leadership: 82% of women vs. 74% of men believe increasing female leadership would positively impact workplace culture.

Concern about missing professional events: 52% of women are very or extremely concerned about missing work events due to family responsibilities vs. 42% of men.

Development initiatives for women: 70% of women prioritize leadership development programs for women vs. 56% of men.

Advocacy vs. mentorship: Women prefer advocacy from male colleagues (43%) over mentorship (17%), while men more strongly favor mentorship approaches (23%).

FOMO at work: Big gaps in numbers and perception among men and women in IT

Women make up a little more than a quarter of the technology workforce worldwide.¹ It stands to reason, then, that the newly benchmarked Acronis Women in Tech report, “FOMO at work: The opportunity gap between men and women in tech,” broadened its scope this year.

The 2025 report, which explores women in IT careers, now aligns more closely with global patterns in representation and opportunity. Based on results of a global survey, the FOMO report offers a critical lens into how trends in gender equity manifest in real workplace experiences.

About the 2025 FOMO report

In 2024, Acronis conducted its first Women in Tech report titled “The new FOMO: Females fear missing opportunities in IT.” The report surveyed 327 full-time female employees in the U.S., U.K., Spain and Switzerland to learn how women working in IT experience fear of missing out (FOMO) on career opportunities. The results revealed powerful insights into the barriers, trade offs and pressures women face in advancing their careers, including challenges with work-life balance and missed opportunities in leadership development.

For 2025, Acronis chose to expand the scope of the survey according to the demographics of the IT workforce. The 2025 survey included both men and women in IT, broadened the scope to cover eight countries (United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Singapore and Japan) and doubled the respondent pool to more than 650 participants.

The results had a male to female ratio of 71% to 29%, mirroring data on the global tech workforce. According to the World Economic Forum, only about 28% of global tech employees worldwide are women.

These numbers reflect reality and raise important questions about where women stand in the technology industry in 2025. How do men and women in cybersecurity see opportunities, biases and challenges differently? The 2025 Acronis Women in IT report provides answers to those questions and many more.

Women remain underrepresented in tech, as the survey shows

One of the most notable findings in the survey results was the differences in responses between men and women, which this report explores in detail. Acronis asked both men and women about women’s status in the tech industry, rather than the status of both men and women. The report begins with responses reported separately for men and women and then moves into statistics that include all genders. There is also a regional breakdown of particularly interesting numbers.

The data shows that women’s perceptions of their own career opportunities and paths can differ significantly from the perceptions men have of women in tech. This report provides a roadmap for organizations to confront bias, expand access to leadership and create workplaces where all talent can thrive.

¹ Ebru Özdemir, “Why It’s Time to Use Reskilling to Unlock Women’s STEM Potential,” World Economic Forum, January 13, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/why-it-s-time-to-use-reskilling-to-unlock-women-s-stem-potential/>.

Survey responses broken down by gender: Key insights from the report

- 1

Perception gap: Women are more likely to perceive gender bias and its impact.
- 2

Work-life balance: Men had differing views from women about how much work-life balance impacts women's careers.
- 3

Solution focus: Women would like more leadership development programs by and for women.
- 4

Career anxiety: Women express higher levels of concern about missing professional events due to family responsibilities.
- 5

Support mechanisms: Women would rather men advocate for them than mentor them.

IT tech pros' views on bias differ by gender, but not by much

Men and women demonstrated notable, although not striking, differences in how they saw their relative roles and opportunities. A few categories of questions stood out for the notable divergence of answers between the genders, beginning with the most obvious subject of all: bias and stereotypes.

The limiting impact of gender bias

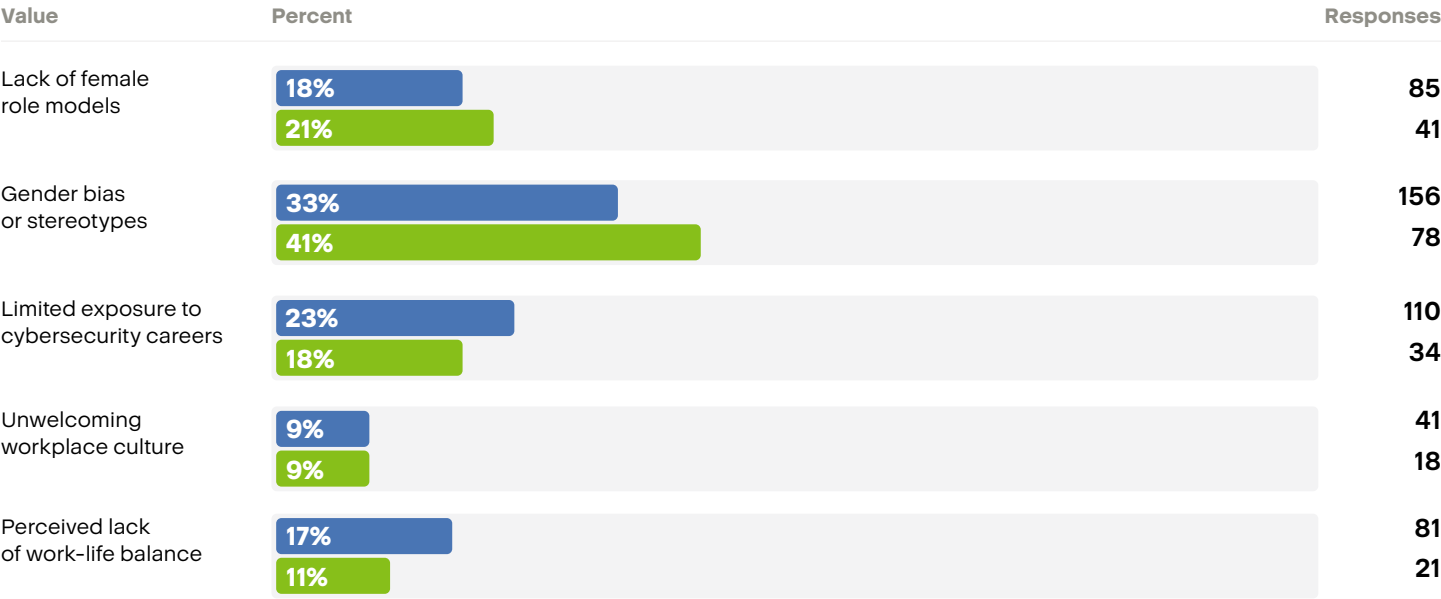
Women noted the impact of both stereotypes and conventional gender roles on IT careers. They identified gender bias as the primary factor discouraging women from cybersecurity careers — a view shared by men, though to a lesser extent. In response to the question, “What do you think is the main reason women might be discouraged from pursuing careers in cybersecurity?” 33% of men said gender bias or stereotypes were the biggest factors, compared to 41% of women.

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What do you think is the main reason women might be discouraged from pursuing careers in cybersecurity?

Male ♂

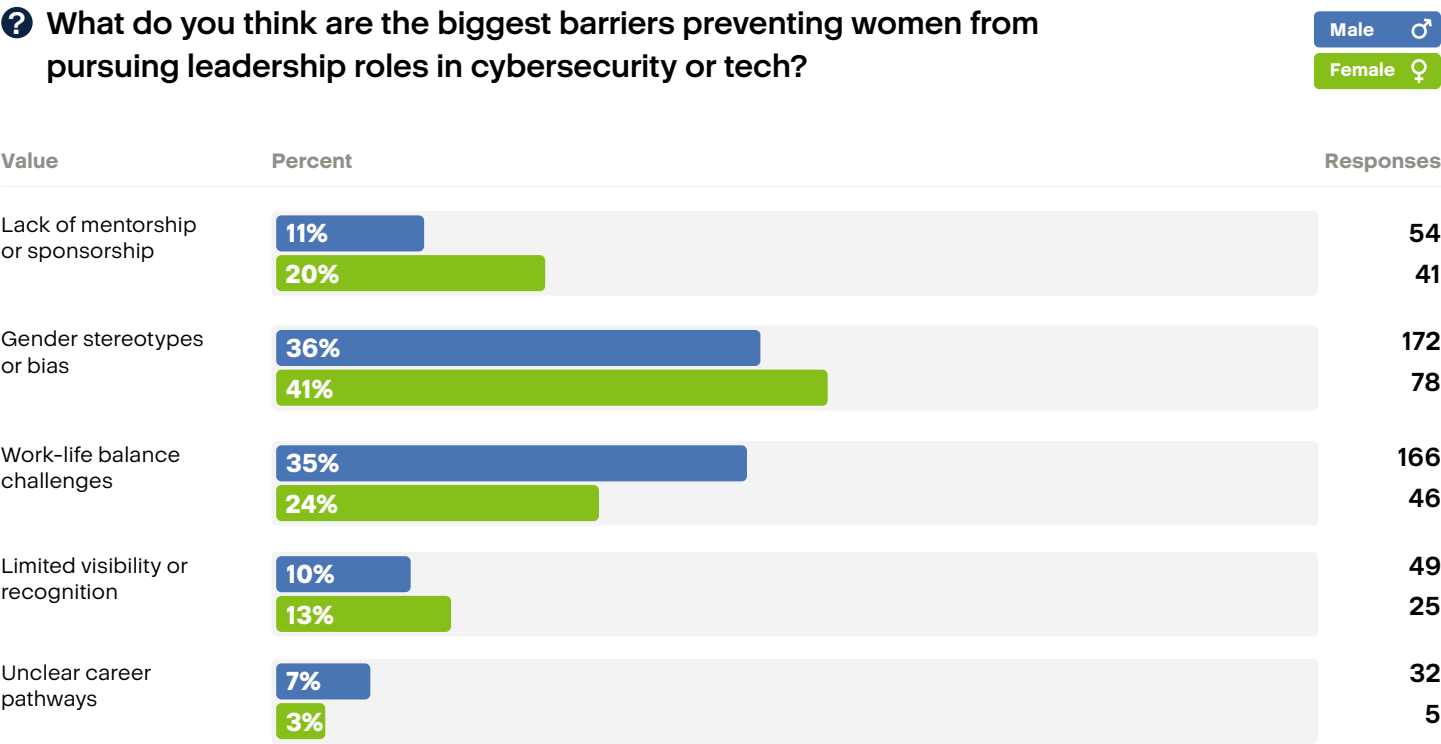
Female ♀



Still, stereotypes and bias were, among both men and women, the most popular answer to the question about why women might not pursue cybersecurity careers. The response beat out lack of female role models (second choice among women, third among men) and limited exposure to cybersecurity careers (third among women, second among men).

Barriers to cybersecurity leadership

Bias and stereotypes proved a popular culprit again in a question about leadership: “What do you think are the biggest barriers preventing women from pursuing leadership roles in cybersecurity or tech?” Again, 41% of women cited bias and stereotypes. This time, a larger percentage of men, 36%, agreed.



However, men identified work-life balance challenges as the biggest limiting factor to leadership for women, with that option receiving 35% of the male vote and nearly equaling bias and stereotypes. By contrast, only 24% of women identified work-life balance as the biggest barrier to leadership, while 20% pointed to a lack of female sponsorship or leadership.

Work-life balance is an area of gender divergence

Some hints of traditional gender roles appeared in answers regarding work-life balance, with women generally saying they struggle with it more than men think they do.

The need to work long hours

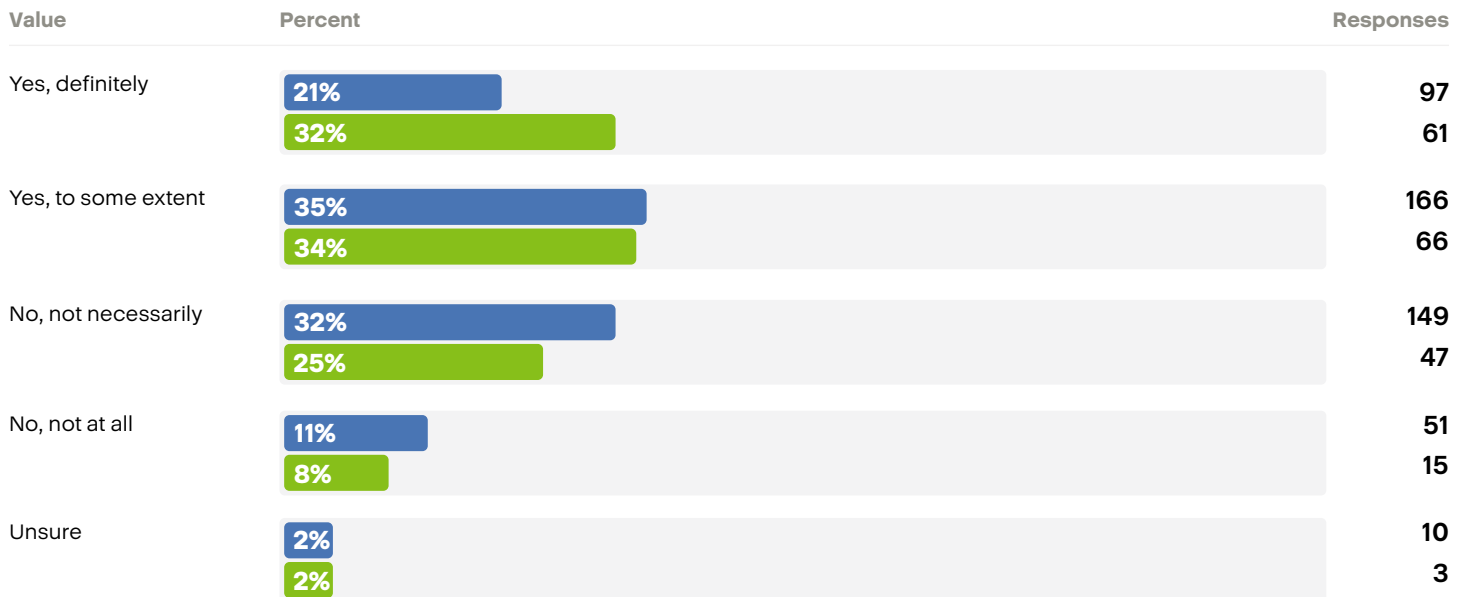
One of the biggest areas of divergence revealed itself in a question about work hours: “Do you think women have to work longer hours to more quickly advance their careers?” Two-thirds of women said yes, while only 56% of men agreed. The “no” answer revealed another difference in opinion. About 43% of men said women didn’t have to work longer hours to advance, but only 32% of women agreed.



❓ Do you think women have to work longer hours to more quickly advance their careers?

Male ♂

Female ♀



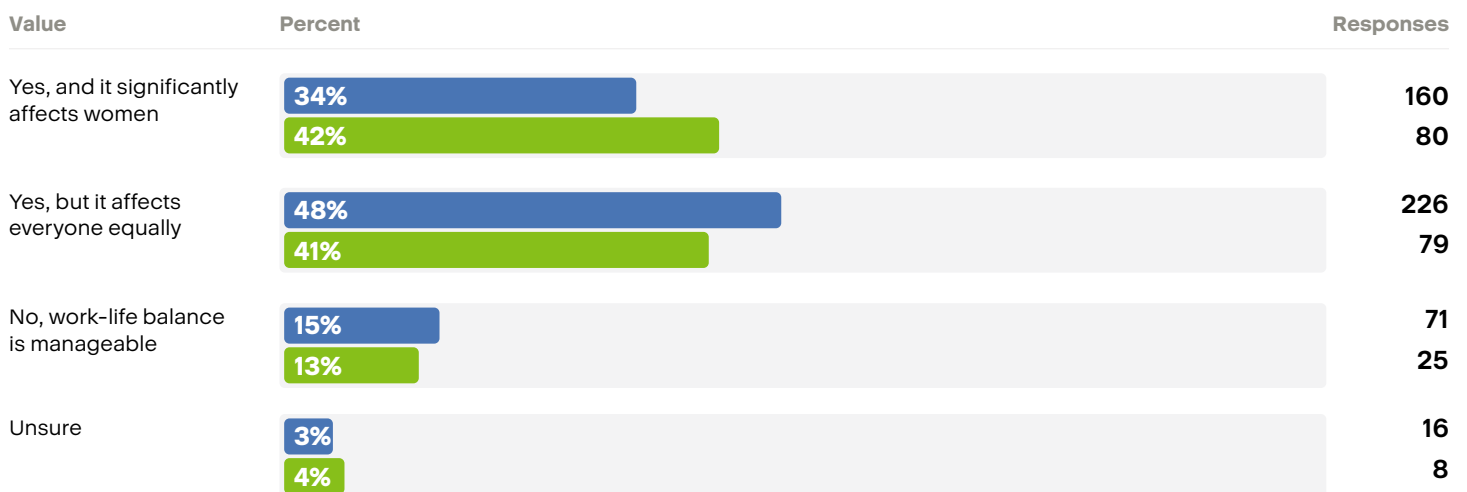
Work-life balance in the tech industry

One question got right to the heart of the issue of work-life balance in an industry known for long hours and workers on call: “Do you think that the tech industry has an issue with work-life balance, and if so, do you believe this disproportionately affects women?” Men were more likely to see balance as problem for both genders, with 48% saying work-life balance is an issue but affects everyone equally.

❓ Do you think that the tech industry has an issue with work-life balance, and if so, do you believe this disproportionately affects women?

Male ♂

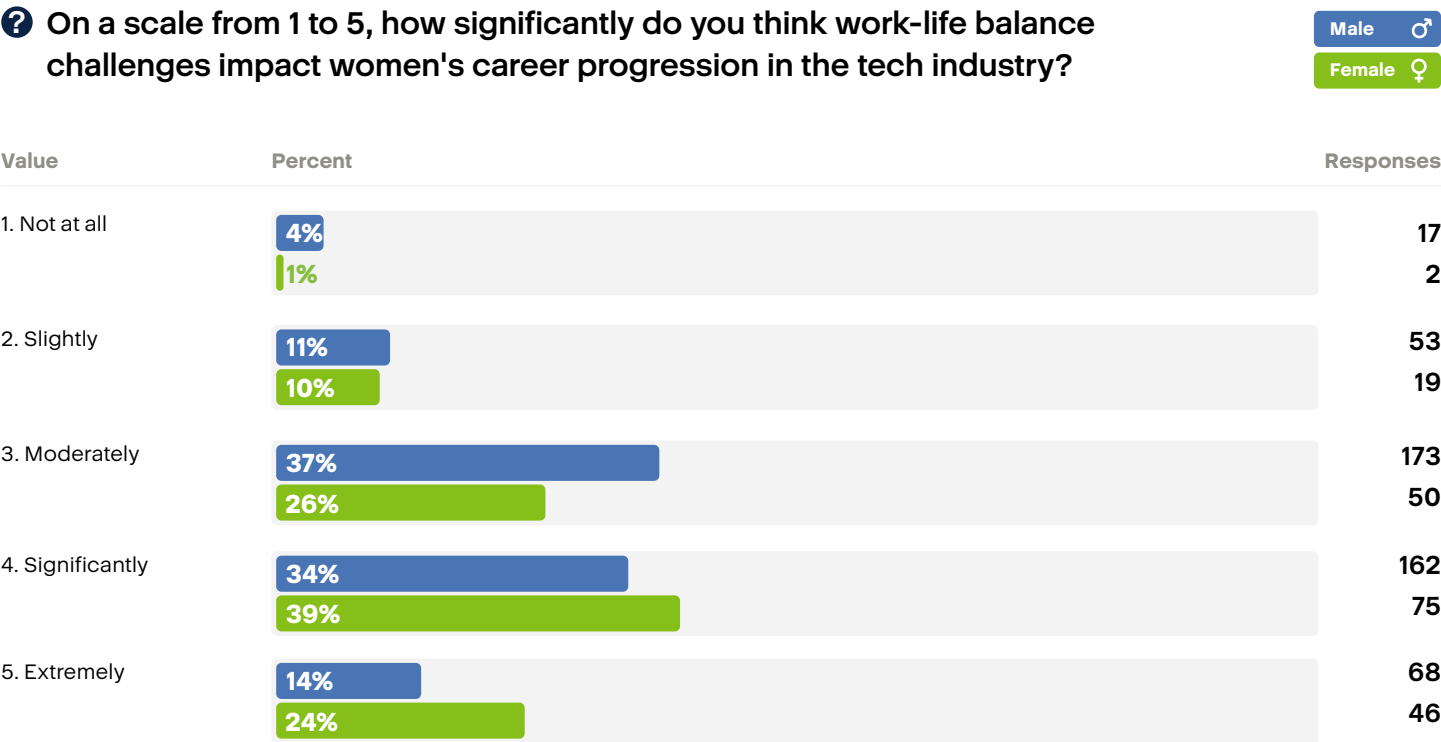
Female ♀



Women weren't so sure. Only 41% of female respondents said work-life balance issues had an equal impact on the two genders. On the other hand, they were far more likely to say that balancing work and personal time "significantly affects women," 42% to 34%. Notably, only 28% of combined respondents identified work-life balance as manageable.

The severity of work-life balance issues

One of the biggest points of gender divergence in the survey concerned just how difficult work-life balance really is to manage: "How significantly do you think work-life balance challenges impact women's career progression in the tech industry?"



Among women, 63% of respondents said the challenge of balance "significantly" or "extremely" affects them. Fewer than half of men agreed; only 49% said the effect of managing work and personal life was significant or extreme for women. This 14-point gap stands out in a survey where many other responses were relatively aligned between men and women.

Opportunities missed due to work-life balance issues

Despite the other results, the numbers of people who said they've "turned down a promotion, training or new responsibility out of concern it might affect your work-life balance" were surprisingly similar between men and women. While 19% of women said they had turned down opportunities multiple times, 18% of men gave the same answer.

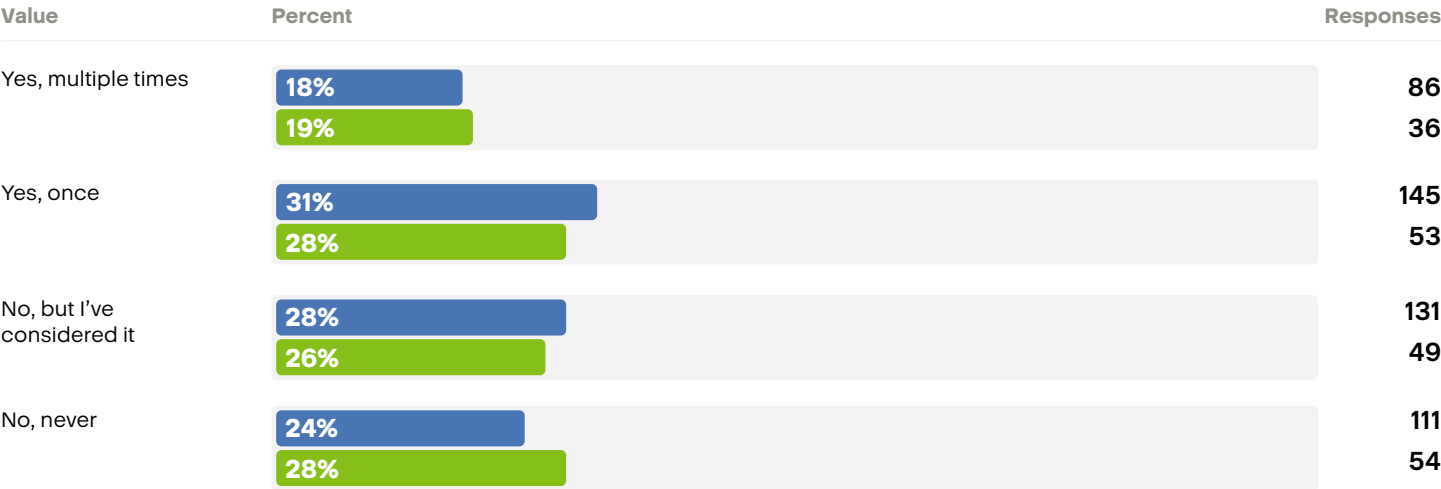


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Have you ever turned down a promotion, training or new responsibility out of concern it might affect your work-life balance?

Male

Female



In fact, men were slightly more likely to have turned down just one advancement opportunity (as opposed to many), 31% to 28%. Women were also less likely to turn down chances to advance, with 28% of female respondents saying that had never rejected an opportunity out of concern for work-life balance. Among men, only 24% had never turned down an opportunity.

Women are more pessimistic about their access to career opportunities

Are men less sensitive to women’s career struggles than they could be, or are they just generally unaware of the issues women face? Or is neither true? It’s impossible to say, but what is clear is that there is a gap between how the genders perceive career opportunities for women.

Access to career opportunities

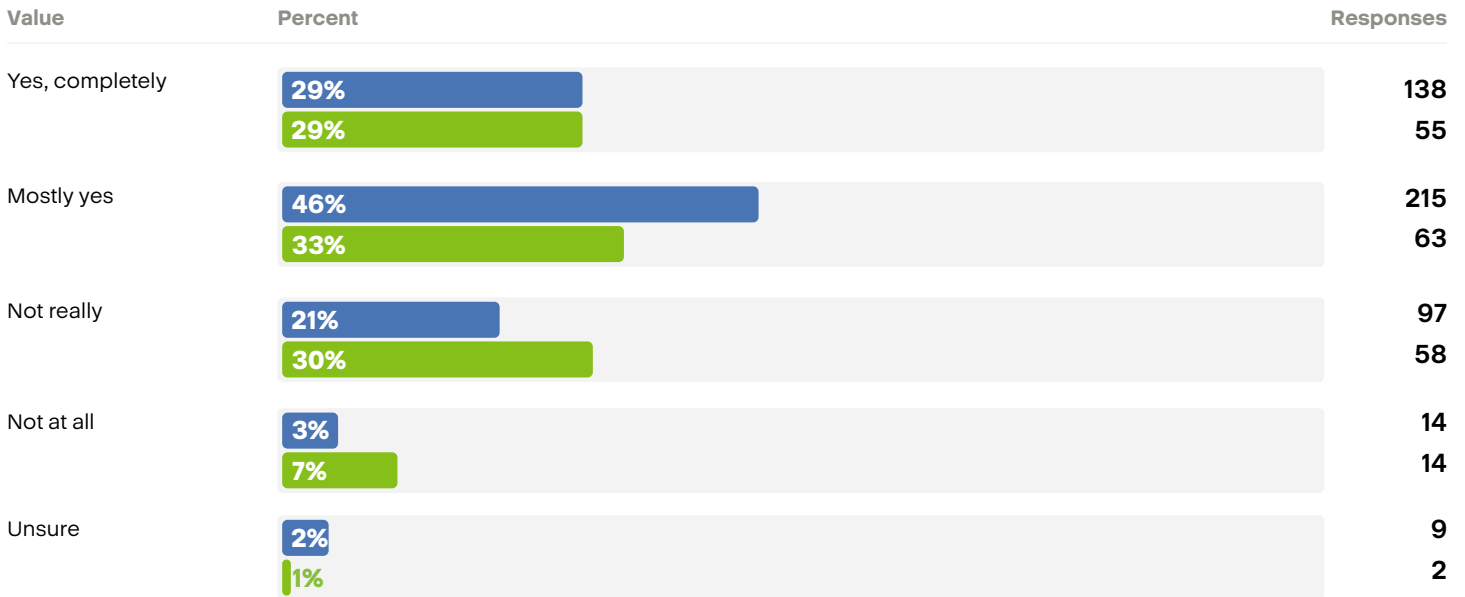
One question was simple but powerful: “Within the tech industry, do you believe men and women have equal access to career development opportunities?” For starters, 29% of respondents from both genders said career opportunities are “completely” equal. The answers diverged from there. About 60% of women said opportunities were either completely or mostly equal compared to 75% of men.



❓ Within the tech industry, do you believe men and women have equal access to career development opportunities?

Male ♂

Female ♀



Along those same lines, 38% of women said career opportunities were not equal, but only 24% of men agreed. The gulf of perception between men and women on this issue is obvious.

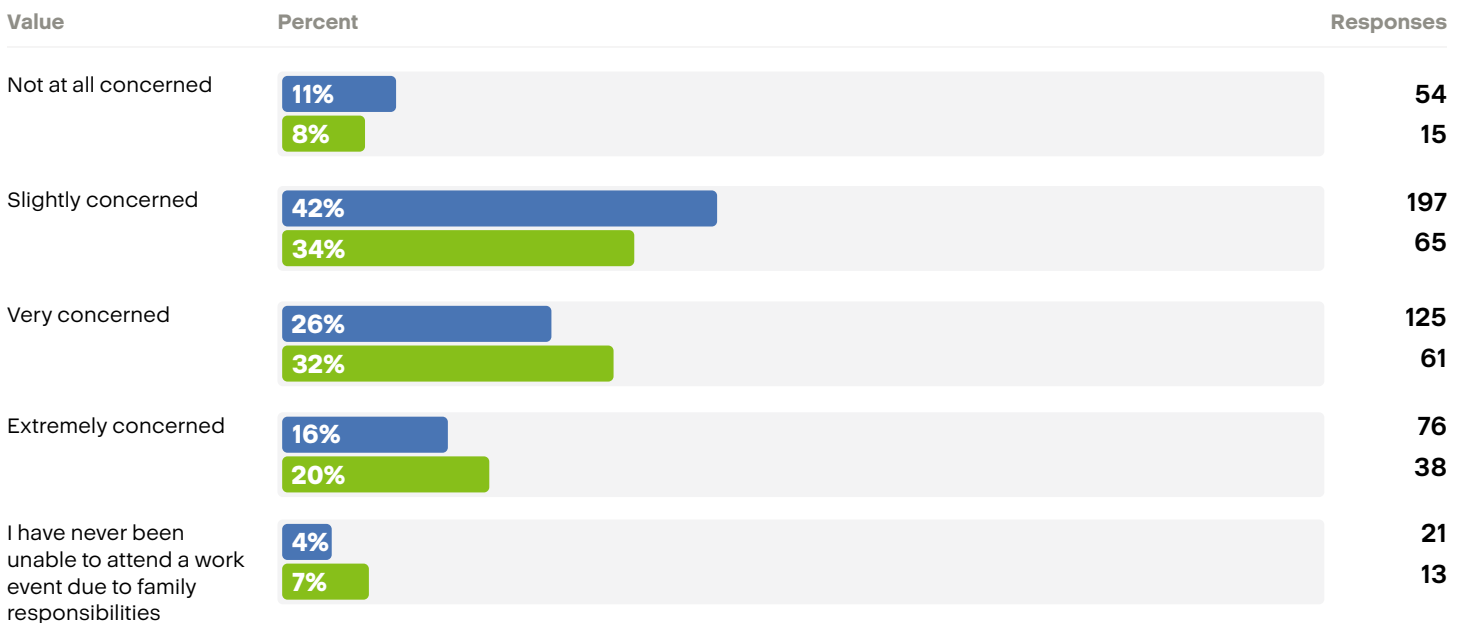
Attendance at professional events

Women showed greater concern than men for missing professional events in response to the question: “When unable to attend work events due to family responsibilities, how concerned are you about the potential impact on your career progression?”

❓ When unable to attend work events due to family responsibilities, how concerned are you about the potential impact on your career progression?

Male ♂

Female ♀



More than half of women, 52%, reported being very or extremely concerned, while 42% of men gave the same answer. On the other side, only 8% of women said they were “not at all concerned” about missing events for family, while 11% of men answered the same way.

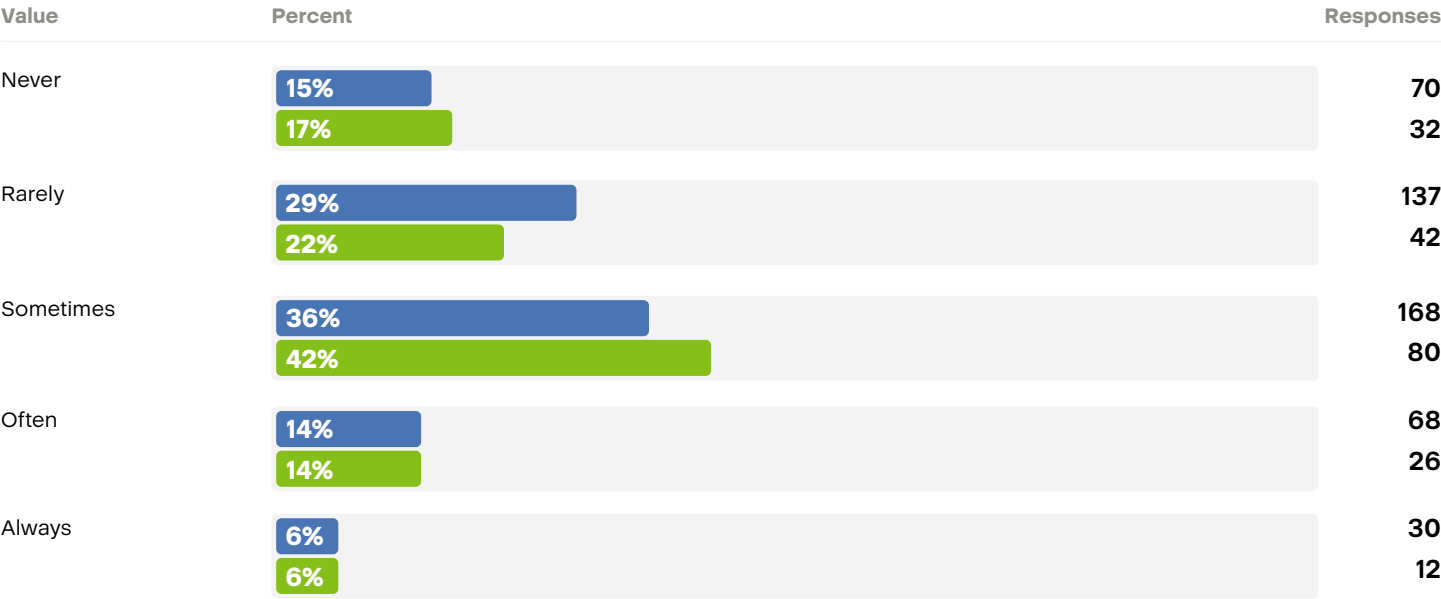
One gap that does seem to be closing is how often men and women have to miss events due to family issues. The response question, “How often do you feel like you're missing out on career advancement opportunities (e.g., promotions, leadership roles) due to family responsibilities?” revealed that half of men sometimes or often feel as though they're missing out, while the number for women was not dissimilar at 55%.

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How often do you feel like you're missing out on career advancement opportunities (e.g., promotions, leadership roles) due to family responsibilities?

Male

Female



Women are more likely to advocate for leadership for and by women

While women were not broadly dissatisfied with organizational diversity efforts, they expressed a desire for women to play more prominent roles in leadership and professional development.

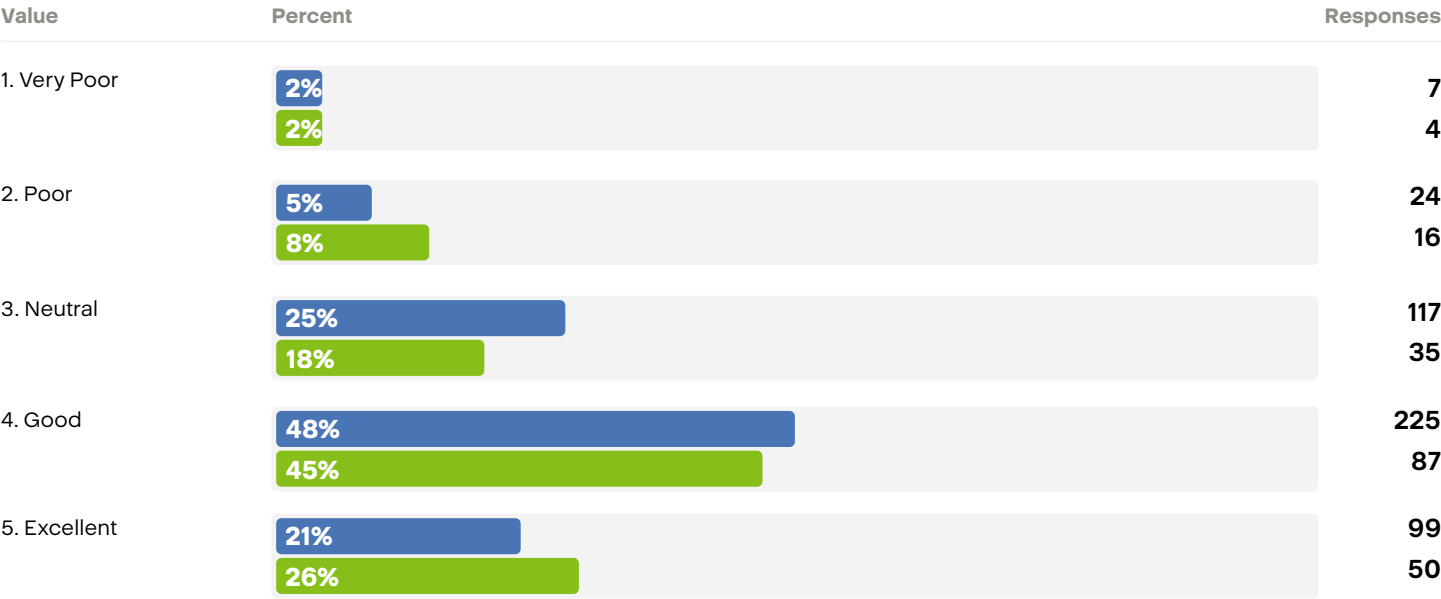
Organizational gender diversity efforts

Gender diversity programs were marginally more popular with women than with men,. When asked, “On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall efforts your organization makes to ensure gender diversity in the workplace?” a majority women (71%) and men (69%) generally agreed that programs were either good or excellent. Notably, though, 26% of women considered diversity efforts excellent, compared to 21% of men.



❓ On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall efforts your organization makes to ensure gender diversity in the workplace?

Male ♂
Female ♀



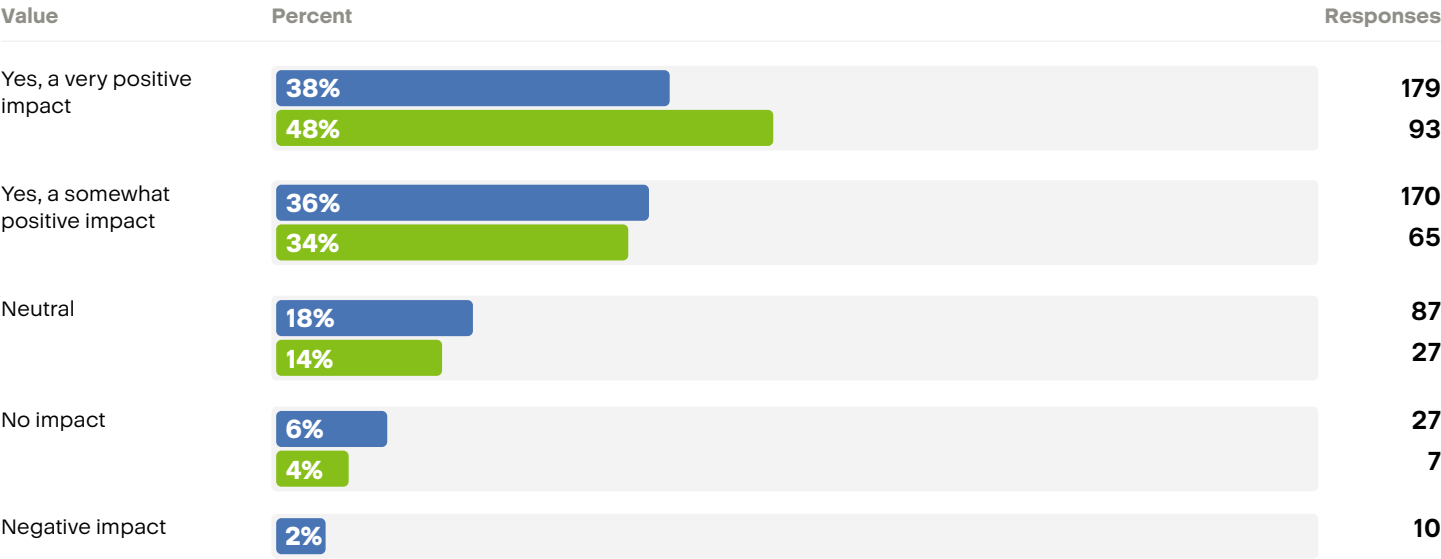
Then again, 10% of women found diversity programs either poor or very poor, while 7% of men saw them that way. So, there is slightly greater satisfaction and dissatisfaction among women with gender diversity programs than among men.

Impact of women in leadership

When questions about leadership arose again, women reported being far more optimistic about the overall impact of female leadership than men did. The question, “Do you believe that increasing the number of women in leadership roles would have a positive impact on workplace culture in the tech?” produced some divergence in responses.

❓ Do you believe that increasing the number of women in leadership roles would have a positive impact on workplace culture in the tech industry?

Male ♂
Female ♀



Strong majorities on both genders said increasing the presence of women in leadership would have a positive impact, with 82% of women supporting the statement along with 74% of men. But women were more likely to identify the potential impact as “very positive” (48%) than men (38%). And 2% of men said increasing the number of women in leadership would have a negative impact compared to 0% of women.

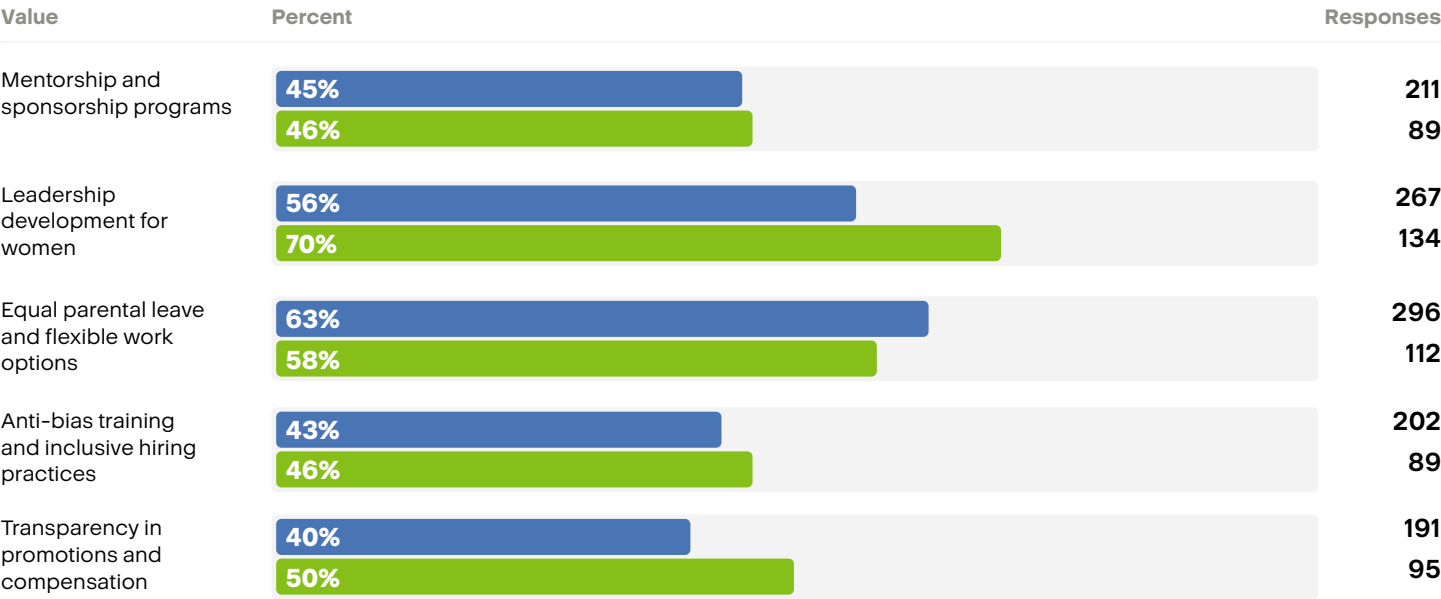
Professional development initiatives

One major area of divergence came in response to the question: “What initiatives could improve gender equality in cybersecurity and tech workplaces?” Men and women seemed interested in pursuing different solutions. While 70% of women cited leadership development for women, only 56% of men gave the same answer.

What initiatives could improve gender equality in cybersecurity and tech workplaces? (Select all that apply)

Male ♂

Female ♀



More men than women were in favor of equal parental leave and flexible work as initiatives that could benefit women in cybersecurity, with 63% of men choosing the option compared to 58% of women. By contrast, women were more supportive of transparency in promotions and compensation by 10 percentage points, 50%–40%.

How everybody can support women in technology

Both men and women strongly claim to support women in their technology careers. How they offer that support can differ from one gender to the other.

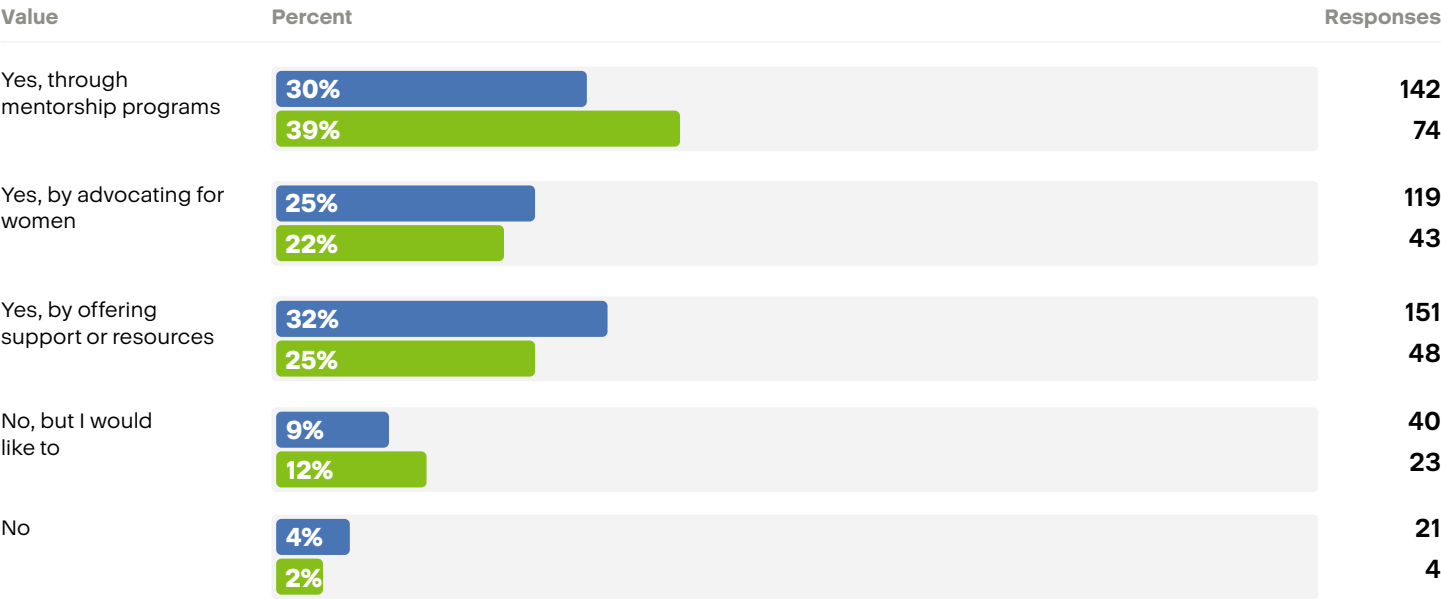
Active support for women in tech

The question, “Do you actively support efforts to mentor women in the tech industry? If so, in what ways?” received a largely positive response from both men and women, with only 14% of women and 13% of men saying they don’t offer mentorship.

❓ Do you actively support efforts to mentor women in the tech industry?
If so, in what ways?

Male ♂

Female ♀



Women were more likely, by nine percentage points, to offer support through mentorship programs. A quarter of men said they advocated for women, a slightly higher number than 22% of women who advocated for themselves.

Though the number of respondents was very small, it's notable that twice as many men (4%) as women (2%) said they did not actively support mentoring efforts for women.

Support for women from men

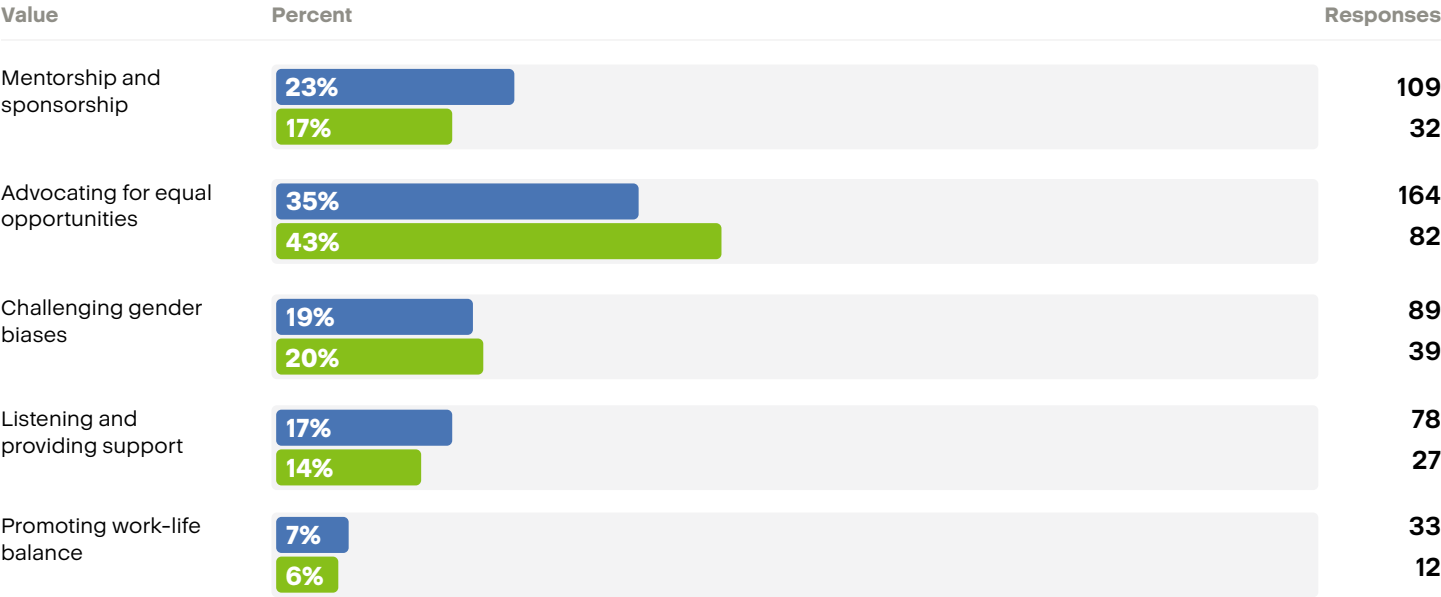
Responses to the question, “How can men in the tech industry better support their female colleagues in achieving career growth?” indicated that women are more interested in advocacy than mentorship from men.



❓ How can men in the tech industry better support their female colleagues in achieving career growth?

Male

Female



Among women, 43% chose advocating for equal opportunities as an effective way for men to support women. Only 35% of men chose that option. On the other hand, 23% of men could support women through mentorship and sponsorship. Women were less enthusiastic, with only 17% seeking mentorship from men.

The gap between men and women in IT isn’t just about numbers

The survey data reveals that a perception gap exists between men and women in IT in multiple areas. The differences between how women see their own IT careers and how men see women in IT is at times striking.

Women are more likely to identify bias against women than men are, and women have a more negative view of career opportunities for women than men do. Work-life balance remains an area where the genders diverge.

The gap between men and women in IT is significant — both in numbers and perceptions.

Methodology

- Sample size:** 666 respondents
- Geography:** Global, with representation from United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Singapore and Japan.
- Respondent profile:** 71% male, 29% female; majority employed full-time; age range diverse (25–64).