

Women have friends at work but not the networks to get ahead

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"Rising to the top comes in part from informal networks and it helps if your network contains high-status people," McGuire said.

When it comes to the informal networks developed at work, women are at a disadvantage. Gail McGuire, chair of the Department of Sociology and [Anthropology](#) at Indiana University South Bend, found in her study that because women are typically in lower-status positions, they do not receive assistance that will help with future career goals.

"We have laws that prohibit discrimination and enforce equal pay, but that only touches the surface," McGuire said. "We need to look at informal professional structures, not formal ones. These are the real sources of inequality."

McGuire conducted this research because the informal connections people make at work help in the long run because employees exchange important resources with their [network](#) ties.

Background: McGuire studied one of the largest financial services organizations and evaluated its informal network support. The financial services organization is a major employer of women, but women tend to be located in lower-status positions. The men, who are of a minority at this organization, occupy higher-ranking positions, McGuire said. "Since men have higher status positions, they are hoarding and monopolizing critical resources," McGuire said.

Women received more social support, especially from their female colleagues, than men. But, McGuire warns, this has less of a career pay-off for [women](#) in the long-term.

Provided by American Sociological Association

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