

# Women missing out on workplace mentoring post #MeToo

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It's well known that mentoring opportunities are critical for development and career advancement, and are associated with greater job satisfaction and increased earnings and promotions.

Yet a recent study co-authored by RMIT University's Professor Andrew R. Timming found women may be missing out on these opportunities due to fears by male managers of potential misconduct allegations.

"Workplace relations between males and females have changed over the past two years. Male managers are significantly less likely than [female managers](#) to mentor or interact one-on-one with [female employees](#)," Timming said.

"We found that male managers were less likely to work one-on-one in an office with the door closed and less likely to have a late-night dinner with female employees."

Despite this trend, the study also found a large portion of female employees reporting a willingness to be mentored by an older male co-worker, many of whom hold senior positions.

The study was co-authored with Professors Michael T. French and Karoline Mortensen at the University of Miami.

More than 2,000 participants in the United States completed the surveys, but Timming said the findings were highly relevant in Australia and other similar countries that have experienced their own #MeToo movements.

"Aside from cultural similarities between the US and Australia, both countries have recently experienced allegations of rape and sexual misconduct," Timming said.

"This research is critical for everyone in the workplace, male and female alike, across Australia."

"We need to ensure that women don't miss out on workplace mentoring

opportunities because males fear misconduct allegations."

The study involved two surveys: one administered to female employees and another distributed to both male and female managers.

The surveys were conducted in the summer of 2018—roughly one year after Hollywood celebrities began accusing powerful men in the film industry of sexual assault and harassment, starting the #MeToo movement.

More than 1,800 female employees were asked to answer questions relating to their level of comfort and willingness to be mentored by an older male co-worker.

From this survey, 38% of [females](#) under 35 years of age reported that their interactions with males were very to somewhat different today than they were 1-2 years ago—prior to the #MeToo movement.

Only 11% of [female participants](#) overall reported an unwillingness to be mentored by an older male co-worker.

"Women are clearly still willing to be mentored by older males, but opportunities for such mentoring may not be as forthcoming—as seen in our second survey."

The second survey presented 12 photographs of employees to more than 200 male and female managers, where they were asked three mentoring questions for each photographed individual.

The female managers reported a greater willingness and likelihood to mentor female employees than male employees.

In contrast, male managers were significantly less likely to mentor

female employees, less likely to work one-on-one with female employees behind closed doors, and less likely to have a late-night dinner with female employees.

"Although we can't say with absolute certainty whether the #MeToo movement caused this reluctance, it seems reasonable to conclude that it may have played a role."

**More information:** Michael T. French et al, A multivariate analysis of workplace mentoring and socializing in the wake of #MeToo, *Applied Economics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/00036846.2021.1896673](https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2021.1896673)

Provided by RMIT University

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