



THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

How and Why
American Adults
Step Up to Mentor
the Nation's Youth

July 2018



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FOREWORD



With the release of this comprehensive new report, **MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership** has provided the field with important new data about the scope of mentoring in the United States.

This report advances our understanding in several important ways. First, it moves beyond a simple head count to explore Americans' motivations for, obstacles to, and beliefs about mentoring. Second, unlike the many surveys that focus on youth's perspectives, this study explores the perspectives of adult mentors (as well as adults who do not mentor). In doing so, it provides a depth of new understanding and a clear path toward fuller, more satisfactory engagement with caring adults. Of particular importance, this report contains the most comprehensive survey of informal mentors to date. Given that far more adults serve as natural, informal mentors, and efforts—by both MENTOR and our Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring—to support, enlist, and train informal mentors are underway, this information is sorely needed.

The sheer volume of data presented here may feel a bit overwhelming, so we highlight what we consider to be some of the more interesting trends. First, as Michael Garringer and Chelsea Benning point out, MENTOR's survey results suggest that previous studies have vastly underestimated the scope of structured mentoring in the United States. Most notably, a recent analysis of census data (Raposa, Dietz, & Rhodes, 2017), suggested that only about 1% (roughly 2.5 million) adults serve as ongoing structured mentors, far fewer than the (10%) or



roughly 25 million adults found in this survey. Garringer and Benning explain that the discrepancy is the result of their “bigger tent” definition of structured mentoring and, to a certain extent, variations in how major constructs are defined often accounts for differences across studies. In particular, the census report focused specifically on volunteers (not paid staff) whose main volunteer activity was mentoring and who served 36 hours or more within the past year (i.e., at least one hour per week for one academic year). Although this dosage aligns with the Elements of Effective Practice, it skewed the findings toward more traditional mentoring approaches. In contrast, the MENTOR survey did not stipulate a minimum dosage, capturing a wider variety of structured mentors in a range of settings. The MENTOR survey findings are closer to, but still more than double, census rates of any volunteer structured mentoring, irrespective of time commitment (4.5% of Americans).

Consistent with most previous observations of both volunteering in general, and formal mentoring in particular, a larger fraction of volunteer mentors in the census report were women (57%). In contrast, MENTOR's survey found that more than 60% of structured mentors were male, which may come as a surprise to anyone who has served or worked with a mentoring program. Other interesting differences emerged, most notably that structured mentors tended to be younger, more affluent, and more politically conservative than previously believed,





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suggesting that the MENTOR report may be tapping into a different sector of structured mentors. Indeed, only 4% of structured mentors reported that they were actually engaged in a formal mentoring program. Rather, many more reported mentoring through other youth development programs, such as after-school and tutoring programs (37%), faith-based organizations (21%), or work-force development (21%). When 96% of formal mentoring is occurring outside of structured mentoring programs, it raises important definitional questions. It is likely that most structured youth mentoring captured in this survey occurs in group contexts, and that staff in youth development, tutoring, the workforce, and even religious institutions are defining their roles, at least in part, in terms of structured mentoring. Taken together these findings highlight the need to conduct additional research on adult-youth relationships in non-mentoring program contexts, and to provide evidence-based training on effective mentoring approaches to the adults across a wide array of settings.

In addition to providing new insights on structured mentoring, this report contains an extensive audit of informal mentors, whose perspective has rarely been included in existing studies but who make up the majority of mentoring activities. Cumulatively, respondents spent 655 million hours engaging in informal mentoring, compared to about 486 million hours of structured mentoring. Compared to structured mentors, informal mentors, as a whole, are older, less ethnically diverse, more politically balanced, and more likely to live in a suburban area. While formal mentors tended to cite general motives about helping their communities and the next generation, informal mentors often said they saw a particular need in a certain youth or were directly asked by someone (possibly the youth or their parents) to mentor. Finally, it is notable that, compared to structured mentors, informal mentors were more likely to report mentoring youth from the same ethnic and socioeconomic background. This is consistent with previous studies examining youth-reported informal mentoring relationships and suggests that such relationships, while providing important types of support, may not always diversify and stretch youth's networks in ways that could contribute to upward social mobility.

These are just a few nuggets contained in *The Power of Relationships*. We look forward to engaging in the discussions, insights, and future endeavors that will inevitably be stimulated by this important report. In fact, along with Professor Samuel McQuillin, we have embarked on a series of studies that will draw on this treasure trove of data to further explore the characteristics and motivations of today's mentors. We look forward to sharing these findings in the years ahead.

—Jean Rhodes and Matthew Hagler,
University of Massachusetts, Boston

INTRODUCTION



Ask any American adult if they think mentoring the next generation is important—to individual children, to communities, to the nation’s economy—and you are likely to hear many affirmative comments that speak to just how deeply notions of role modeling and “paying it forward” through volunteering have seeped into the popular culture and national discourse around caring for youth in our society. Many of us can think back, almost instinctively, to a time when an adult who was not our parent, or even a close relative, took us under their wing and gave us advice or helped us learn a skill we carry with us today.

Youth mentoring has enjoyed widespread support from both policymakers and the general public over the last 25 years. Growing investments from the public and private sectors, as well as popular press, have taken mentoring from a historically niche service (most often offered to youth from single parent homes or to those in trouble with the law) to being a cornerstone intervention and prevention strategy for the broader youth development, education, counseling, and workforce development fields. Our society is one in which mentoring is seen as a way to both help individual youth succeed in and out of school (such as in the deep investments made of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) and to collectively help address societal-level inequities (such as through former President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative). We even have explicit mentoring roles embedded in our popular culture, such as in televised singing compe-

titions (e.g., *The Voice*) and mainstream motion pictures (Yoda and Obi Wan Kenobi, of *Star Wars* fame, are perhaps our most widely understood mentoring examples). One could say that for the last quarter century: mentoring is having a moment.

But in spite of this popularity, we know surprisingly little about how Americans go about mentoring the next generations in terms of the volume and details of their involvement, their motivations for mentoring others, and what they think young people get out of the experience. And unlike the unified responses one is likely to get when asking whether Americans like mentoring, asking them to define mentoring may lead to myriad distinct and conflicting answers. To some, mentoring is about a deep friendship-like relationship, while others place more emphasis on the skill-building, role-modeling, or teaching aspects of mentoring relationships. Others may value the problem-solving and practical support a mentor can offer a young person. While most Americans seem to think mentoring is a good idea, it is unclear if there is even a common understanding of the thing they all support, or how far they would go to support it.

These gaps in our understanding of widespread public opinion about mentoring are critically important to the work of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR). As the nation’s leading advocacy, training, and public awareness organization for youth mentoring programs and relationships, we have recognized over the years that a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the landscape of public opinion on mentoring (and youth in general) helps us hit the mark in everything we do.

This need for more information was driven home in MENTOR’s 2014 report *The Mentoring Effect*¹, which asked young adults about the mentoring experiences they had growing up. This landmark study was our organization’s first attempt to quantify the



mentoring “gap”—the number of young Americans growing up without a mentor outside their families—as well as to get first-person reports of the longer-term benefits of mentoring during childhood and adolescence. This survey, conducted with a nationally representative group of young adults, revealed many positive findings confirming that mentoring helps youth academically and socially, builds leadership skills, and prepares them for healthy transitions into adulthood. By our definition, about 30 million American youth report having experienced a mentoring relationship while growing up (out of a total of around 46 million).

It also revealed some sobering statistics. About one in three youth report having had no non-parental adult role model to guide them or support them on their life journey. The absence of mentors was even more pronounced for youth who reported growing up with the highest levels of individual and environmental risk, even though those same youth wanted a mentor most of all. The sheer volume of young people for whom mentoring was absent fuels the intensive public awareness work of MENTOR today.

But those findings also revealed something meaningful about where youth find their mentoring: Only 15% of all youth had a programmatic mentor while growing up. Informal mentors, those who entered into a mentor-like relationship with a child outside of a formal volunteer program context (e.g., a Big Brothers Big Sisters), were responsible for the vast majority of mentoring that the nation’s youth received. Of those who said they had a mentor growing up, the vast majority report that this mentor was an informal one. Less than a quarter (23%) indicated they had a program mentor (and if mentoring programs are, in part, an attempt to fill an absence of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, it’s worth noting that only 6% of mentored youth exclusively had a mentor through a program).

These findings are cause for reflection. If we want to grow mentoring relationships and fill this mentoring gap, what is the best approach, given the relatively small reach of programs reflected in the data? Structured mentors often provide services and supports that are beyond what informal mentors can provide (our survey participants indicated this), so clearly scaling their program-based efforts is needed. But MENTOR also realized that we needed more information about both those informal mentoring relationships—who is stepping into that role, why, and for whom—as well as a clearer understanding of what prevents Americans from volunteering more in structured mentoring programs. We heard from the nation’s young people about the mentoring they had experienced, but we needed to hear the adult side of the story.

Which leads us to this current survey and results presented in this report, the culmination of a year-long research effort designed to gather information at a national level about why and how American adults engage young people in mentoring relationships. As with *The Mentoring Effect*, some of the results have been a pleasant surprise, while others

Please note that throughout this report, we present comparative findings that are statistically significant, meaning they are unlikely to be the result of random chance and are indicative of a real trend. References to findings being more or less “likely” for some groups compared to others, or “significant” differences in responses all indicate statistical significance. Significant findings in the figures of this report appear with a blue arrow to indicate the direction of the difference.





have provided food for thought and action. The rest of this report details the research project itself and our findings about structured mentoring, informal mentoring, and how Americans think about our movement to bring meaningful mentoring relationships to every child who needs one. It grapples with the question: What is *the power of relationships*?

About the *Power of Relationships* Study

This research project largely consists of a survey of American adults ages 18 and older about their mentoring experiences and opinions. This project was generously supported by funding from AT&T, which allowed us to not only explore questions related to national engagement in mentoring, but also ask more detailed questions about the role that employers play in connecting individuals to mentoring opportunities. We thank AT&T for making this work possible and for being a leader in growing the mentoring movement.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The work began by developing clear objectives that guided the development and implementation of our national survey and the analyses that have informed this report:

- Measure Americans' engagement in mentoring relationships outside their families, both in and out of programs
- Examine differences and patterns in engagement across demographic groups
- Determine motivations and barriers to participating in mentoring relationships or in supporting mentoring programs locally
- Examine perceptions and opinions about mentoring and youth generally, including how these predict engagement in the mentoring movement
- Understand the impact of corporate engagement in mentoring on employee job satisfaction and their level of involvement in mentoring relationships

Our hope was that by exploring questions related to these objectives we would find valuable information to strengthen our public awareness efforts encouraging adults to volunteer in programs or otherwise step up for youth, as well as find information that could influence leaders in the public and private sectors to invest more in mentoring initiatives. Ideally, MENTOR hoped this project would yield information that could help close that mentoring gap by maximizing the public's involvement in both programmatic and more "natural" mentoring relationships. Given that this was our first investigation of these topics in well over a decade, this survey represented an opportunity to set a fresh baseline upon which our efforts and the growth in mentoring can be measured.

It should be noted that there have been other efforts to measure the volume and characteristics of mentoring at a truly national level in recent years. Please see the box on page 12 for more details about other studies that serve as a point of comparison for this report.

METHODOLOGY

Work on survey development began in March 2017 through a series of conversations led by MENTOR's Director of Knowledge Management involving other MENTOR leadership, noted youth mentoring researcher Dr. Jean Rhodes (University of Massachusetts Boston), and our research partners from the Custom Insights Division of Pacific Market Research, the strategic consulting arm of the public opinion and consumer research firm based in the Seattle, Washington, area. A final version of the survey was completed in June 2017 and disseminated to respondents shortly thereafter (see "Description of the Sample" on page 9). This final version of the



survey is included in Appendix A (available as a separate download on the MENTOR website).

Defining Mentoring

One of the major challenges in developing our survey was creating definitions of the types of mentoring we wanted to learn about that would be understandable by the population broadly. As noted above, adults likely have many different, if not incompatible, views about what is and is not a mentoring relationship or the contexts in which an adult slips out of one role (e.g., a coach or teacher) and into that of a mentor.

Ultimately, we settled on the two definitions presented here for the two broad types of mentoring we wanted to learn about. It was important that we capture not only mentoring that happens in dedicated mentoring programs, but also the wide variety of informal mentoring that can also happen in the context of a youth-serving setting or institution. As one can see in the definitions, we decided that the best delimiter of structured mentoring was the programmatic intentionality of the relationship itself: these mentors had formally signed up to work with a young person as a mentor. Other mentoring relationships, regardless of whether they were in a programmatic context (e.g., Boy Scouts or a chess club) fell into the informal mentoring category, as did purely organic relationships that had developed in the community (e.g., mentoring a child who lives next door or the child of a family friend).

Also of note in these definitions is the age range of “youth.” We extended the range of youth for the purposes of this survey to include young adults up to the age of 24 to better reflect the range of mentees across the spectrum of youth mentoring programs, which have in recent years expanded mentoring as a transition-focused service for older youth entering higher education, the workforce, and independent living. We felt this age range reflected the full spec-

DEFINITIONS OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS:

The following definitions were provided to survey respondents before completing and at various points throughout the survey.

Structured Mentoring

Someone who is currently or within the past year mentoring a youth between the ages of 6 and 24 through a structured mentoring program. Structured mentoring is defined as a program or organization whose main mission and focus is to connect adults and youth in meaningful relationships where the adult acts as a mentor.

This would be a program for which one signed up for the purpose of becoming a mentor to one or more young person(s).

Informal Mentoring

Someone who is currently or within the past year mentoring a youth outside of immediate family between the ages of 6 and 24 in an informal way. Informal mentoring is defined as a less structured or totally unstructured mentoring relationship that comes about naturally or as the result of involvement with an organization such as a school or other institution that works with young people. This could include mentoring relationships that occur between an adult and young person who live in the same neighborhood, attend the same place of worship, are members of an extended family, and/or participants in an after-school or youth program.

This would be any situation where an adult and a youth are connected for reasons other than mentorship, but whereby a mentoring relationship is developed.



trum of mentoring from “cradle to career” and would provide the most insight into how Americans support the next generations as they come up.

It is important to remember when reading the findings in this report that these definitional challenges and decisions were not just a theoretical exercise—they had a profound impact on the findings themselves. As we explain in subsequent chapters, casting this wide of a net, and defining mentoring relationships the way we did, painted a compelling and often unexpected portrait of what youth mentoring looks like in America. These definitions allowed us to see the mentoring movement in a new light and to better capture the full range of mentoring relationships American adults have with young people outside their immediate families.

Once definitions were established, the remaining survey development work consisted of determining specific questions and response options for the categories of structured mentoring experiences, informal mentoring experiences, views on youth and society, employee perspectives, and more. With so many areas of interest, overall survey length was a concern, but the average survey time was 23 minutes across our sample, which falls well within the range of acceptable lengths for ensuring response integrity.

Sourcing of the Sample

Respondents to the survey were sourced from the Online Panels of Survey Sampling Inc. (SSI). SSI panel sources are diverse and are focused on inclusion of historically underrepresented populations. Respondents are recruited from thousands of sources to maximize reach and representation. The recruitment policy is broad in scope and is combined with quality controls and checks to ensure all potential respondents are eligible to take a survey and every respondent is fully authenticated.

Description of the Sample

A total of 1,700 detailed interviews among the adult American public were conducted. All interviews were conducted online and were self-administered. Respondents were recruited to participate through SSI (see “Sourcing of the Sample” above). Invitations to participate were distributed proportionately to their match on census demographics to ensure that the final data set of responses reflected an accurate composition on income, age, gender, race, and ethnicity. As responses were returned, demographic profiles of the research data set were continually generated and monitored, and invitations to participate were adjusted on a dynamic basis to ensure the responding sample population matched the demographics of the American public. Census figures from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2015 were used for all proportions.

Of the 1,700 total, 1,317 were general population interviews. In addition, oversamples were completed to reach:

- Individuals who self-identified as American Indian/Native American or Alaskan Native (122 individuals).
- Individuals who speak Spanish as their first language (119 interviews conducted). These respondents were given the option of completing the survey in Spanish or English
- Individuals who were adults engaged in youth mentoring (either structured or informally) that is connected to, or supported by, their employer in some fashion (221 individuals).

The margin of error (based on n1700) is +/- 2.38%.

A stratified sampling plan for geographic representation was incorporated for the nine regions across the United States (Pacific, Mountain, West North Central, East North Central, West South Central, East South Central, South Atlantic, mid-Atlantic, and New England).



Potential respondents were subject to self-selected screening to ensure they were:

- a resident of the United States,
- age 18 or older,
- able to complete the survey in English or Spanish and via a computer, tablet or smart phone.

The data set was weighted post hoc to balance the population on gender, age, Hispanic self-identification, race, income, region, and involvement with mentorship. All research results presented herein reflect weighted data to balance for any oversamples. This ensures that the data reflects the correct proportions of the total while also ensuring a large enough segment size for subpopulations to allow for detailed analysis at more granular levels.

A convenience-based sample of opt-in online panel members was used for all data collection. While every effort was made to ensure that the sample matched American census figures on demographics (gender, age, race, ethnicity, income, and region), including sample balancing to correct for over and under representing subgroups due to their proclivity or lack thereof toward participating in research, additional non-sampling bias beyond our understanding may exist.

The sample frame was intended to be all American adults 18 years of age or older; however, Americans without online access to conduct the survey were unable to be included in this study. The questionnaire was optimized for mobile devices, meaning that surveys could be taken on smartphones with only cellular data connections. It should be noted, surveys optimized for mobile are inherently different in the ways in which long question text is presented. This bias cannot be measured or quantified.

Surveys were self-administered without the benefit of a researcher being present. Therefore, research

participants used their own experiences and self-biases to interpret and respond to questions in ways that the researchers may not have intended.

The survey instrument contained a mix of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended responses underwent sentiment analysis at the 3% level, meaning that if at least 3% of the participants provided this response, it was given its own code. Responses that occurred less frequently were summarized as “other” and their individual level detail may not be represented.

See Appendix B for more details about data analysis procedures and limitations of the data.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The many compelling findings from this survey’s data set are detailed throughout the rest of this report. There were several key highlights that speak to the goals and objectives of the project worth noting here:

Meaningful numbers of adults are engaged in mentoring the nation’s youth, both in and out of programs — A quarter of the nation’s adults are currently engaged in mentoring relationships (structured and/or informal) with young people outside their immediate families and an additional 45% of adults would consider becoming a mentor. These rates add up to about 24 million individuals mentoring in structured programs and 44 million adults mentoring informally in the last year alone. These numbers highlight American adults’ tremendous opportunities to walk alongside a young person on their journey.

Rates of mentoring seem to be increasing over time — We find that 18- to 29-year-olds are more than twice as likely to have had a mentor in their life than those over 50. Almost half of today’s young adults report having a mentor and those rates appear to have been rising steadily over the past several de-



acades. It may be that younger Americans are more familiar with mentoring concepts and more likely to label a caring adult as a mentor. But given the large-scale growth in programmatic mentoring over the last several decades², it is likely that actual relationships have grown significantly. This growth mirrors earlier research commissioned by MENTOR and others and is discussed in more detail in the “Mentoring Rates and Profiles” chapter.

There is a larger volume of structured mentoring happening than prior efforts to measure rates of mentoring have captured — We found that almost 10% of all American adults report mentoring a young person in a structured program in the last year. Prior efforts to measure rates of mentoring in dedicated youth mentoring programs (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters) estimated that only 1 to 2% of the population was volunteering in those types of programs. While our sample certainly captured these types of volunteer mentors, this survey finds large numbers of adults mentoring in programs set in faith institutions, after-school settings, workplaces, and higher education. We feel this “big tent” definition of the mentoring field more accurately captures the involvement of adults in structured mentoring programs for all our youth.

Americans have very strong support for youth mentoring — Regardless of whether they do it or not, we find that most Americans are extremely supportive of mentoring young people and feel that our government and the private sector should invest more in mentoring. Two-thirds of Americans consider it highly important for young people to have mentors, but this same population estimates that only a quarter of youth have the mentors they need. Nearly nine in ten adults feel that more mentoring is needed in our country—with more than eight in ten supporting the use of government funds to grow mentoring opportunities, especially when charitable support is absent.

There is a critical opportunity to increasingly engage the American public in mentoring — Many of the reasons that non-mentors give for their lack of involvement in mentoring are rooted in their opinion that there’s a lack of information about how to get involved at the local level or simply never having been asked by someone to get involved. Learning more about the impact of mentoring, and what’s happening to provide that locally, might move more adults to action. For those only mentoring informally, a surprising 31% indicate that they haven’t mentored through a program because they simply have never thought of it, while another 19% don’t know how to get involved. These public awareness-related reasons lead us to believe that we can grow the volume of mentoring in the years to come by reaching out to these groups with even more campaigns and recruitment efforts that give all adults the reasons and more sophisticated information they need to step up for a young person in their community through mentoring.

At a time when Americans may be feeling a lack of unity or are questioning our commitment to one another as citizens, MENTOR feels tremendous hope and pride in the information presented here. Americans clearly care deeply about young people and want to both support their individual growth and also strengthen the nation and find their own sense of meaning and purpose through acts of mentoring. We also found evidence that we can grow this movement even more, closing the mentoring gap and using the power of relationships to heal, solve problems, and form a more perfect union.



PREVIOUS EXAMINATIONS OF RATES OF MENTORING

While the *Power of Relationships* study represents MENTOR's most recent efforts to establish an adult-reported baseline of the prevalence of mentoring relationships across the nation, there have been previous efforts to examine rates of mentoring, both in the United States and in Canada, that are worth noting here.

- ***Trends in Volunteer Mentoring in the United States: Analysis of a Decade of Census Survey Data*** — This 2017 study⁴ by mentoring researchers Elizabeth Raposa, Nathan Dietz, and Jean Rhodes examined data from the Volunteering Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among the many types of volunteer activities tracked by this supplement are those related to volunteering in youth-serving programs, including dedicated mentoring programs. Respondents were considered “mentors” in this study if they indicated that the main activity of their volunteer placement was mentoring and if they had volunteered for more than 36 hours in the previous year in this context (this is a more rigorous definition than used in our report here, but as noted previously, we wanted to capture a more comprehensive range of mentoring relationships and behaviors). Analyses of this data found that rates of volunteer mentoring had remained largely steady at around 1% of the population between 2006 and 2015, with higher rates of mentoring among women, Whites, and college graduates. Thankfully, these rates of mentoring seemed to be holding steady over the decade, a time in which Americans volunteered overall at rates that plummeted due to economic recessions and a variety of other social factors. But the study did reveal some cause for concern, such as a growing reliance on school-age “peer” mentors and an ongoing disparity between the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of those serving as mentors and those being served in programs. This study represents the largest and potentially most accurate examination of volunteer mentoring in the types of programs mostly commonly associated with mentoring. The full article can be found online here: <https://www.rhodeslab.org/publications/>
- ***Mentoring in America 2005: A Snapshot of the Current State of Mentoring*** — This 2006 report⁵ from MENTOR surveyed 1,000 adults to try and determine how many adults were engaged in a mentoring relationship with youth and their motivations and challenges in doing so. This survey did not calculate an overall percentage of all adults who mentor, but it did find (as we have here) rates of mentoring higher among men, those with children in the home, and those who are college graduates. This survey also asked about informal mentoring, which proved to comprise 71% of all mentoring relationships (almost identical to the ratio of informal/formal mentoring found here).



- ***Volunteers Mentoring Youth: Implications for Closing the Mentoring Gap*** — This 2005 publication⁶ from the Corporation for National and Community Service examined the same census data explored by Raposa and colleagues. This report only examined American adults who volunteered in some capacity and did not include a comparison to the adult population as a whole. This report found that approximately 11.5 million adults volunteered as mentors in the year examined, accounting for more than 17% of all volunteers. These raw numbers do not include informal mentors, but the volume of mentors suggests a rate of programmatic mentoring of around 5% of the adult population (our survey here found 10%, although we captured a wider variety of structured mentoring in our current results).

There have been numerous attempts over the years, in addition to MENTOR's *The Mentoring Effect* study, to try and assess the prevalence of mentoring from the self-reports of youth. Most of these studies have drawn from data produced by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a national study of health and health behaviors among adolescents and their impact into their adulthood. These studies indicate that around four in five Add Health participants reported having an important non-parental adult (a mentor) in their lives, with rates varying between 72 and 86% across socioeconomic classes⁷. These studies have examined the inequitable distribution of mentors across class and racial lines^{8,9,10} and the impact of mentoring on these youths' life trajectories in terms of academic performance in high school, college completion, workforce engagement, and myriad behavioral and mental health outcomes^{11,12,13,14,15,16}. Unfortunately, none of these studies attempted to estimate the number of adult mentors serving these young people. But the youth-reported rates of mentoring tend to roughly fit what we would expect to see given the number of mentoring relationships reported by our adult respondents here.

AMERICANS' VIEWS ON YOUTH MENTORING



One of the core goals of the Power of Relationships survey was to gain a better understanding of the opinions that Americans have about mentoring—both in general and from their own experiences—as well as their level of support for growing the mentoring movement through public, charitable, and corporate investment. What we find is encouraging to say the least. Mentoring seems to be one of the few aspects of our culture and values that Americans of all types generally agree is valuable and worth the nation’s time and energy.

General Support for Youth Mentoring

We find that 65% of all Americans rate mentoring as “vitally important,” with only 5% indicating they feel mentoring is, essentially, unimportant (rating its importance between 0–4 in our scale, see Figure 1).

Americans also feel that youth are currently lacking these vital mentoring relationships. They estimate that only 26% of the nation’s young people have a

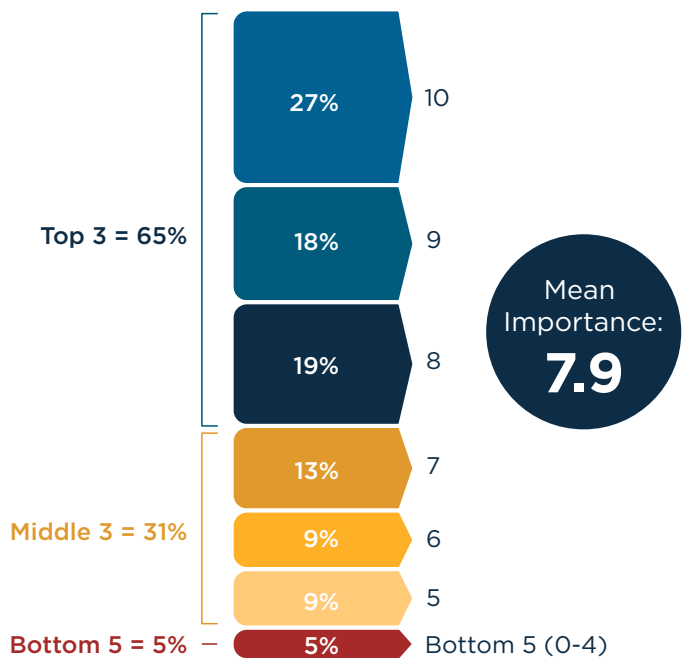


Figure 1. The Importance of Mentoring Relationships

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700
10 = Vitally important, 0 = Not at all important
Note: Some numbers may not add up precisely due to rounding.

mentor to guide them. An impressive 88% believe that more mentoring is needed in America, with 40% indicating a need for “significantly more” mentoring.

It’s worth noting that there is broad support for mentoring across just about every demographic group we examined. There seem to be almost no groups of Americans, generally speaking, that dislike mentoring or think that it’s not worth providing to youth. There are, however, some groups that are more enthusiastic about mentoring than others.

When examining those who feel mentoring is highly important, we find that Hispanic adults, those with children in the home, and those living on the East or West coasts place greater importance on the value of mentoring. Political conservatives, those with higher incomes, and those who are heavily involved in religious organizations also rate mentoring as being more important when compared to others within those demographic categories (see Figure 2).

We also asked respondents how much they agree or disagree with a number of statements about mentoring. We find strong support for statements indicating a need for more mentoring and relatively weak agreement with statements indicating that youth have enough mentors in their lives.

- Parents today are less involved with their children, which increases the need for mentors—**65% agree**
- Growing up in today’s society is harder than it used to be; therefore, more mentors are needed—**64% agree**
- My community needs more quality mentors for youth—**64% agree**
- My community needs more quality mentoring programs for youth—**59% agree**

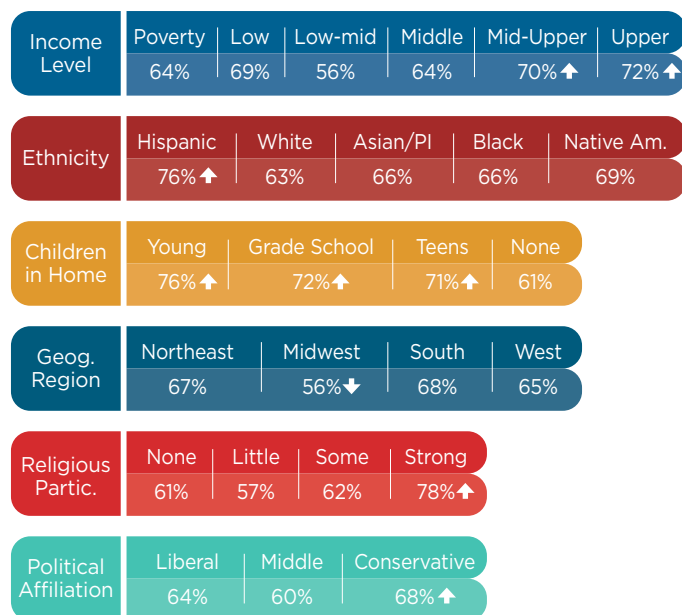


Figure 2. **Support of Mentoring across Groups**
(% who strongly agree mentoring is important)

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

In addition to these statements about mentoring, we also asked our respondents a number of questions about how they generally view young people, the education system, and the direction of the nation as a whole. Please see “Opinions on America and its Young People” at the end of this chapter.

Benefits of Youth Mentoring

In addition to asking about broad support of mentoring, we also explored the benefits that Americans feel youth get from mentoring experiences. We wanted to understand why they felt mentoring was important. As shown in Figure 3, respondents report a wide variety of benefits for youth who have a mentor. This list includes items related to academic growth, identity development, cognitive growth, and healthy and ethical behavior. Clearly, Americans think mentoring is a flexible and adaptable way of helping youth.

“We wanted to understand why Americans felt mentoring was important.”

Critically, these responses show that Americans don’t just conceptualize mentoring as being about one goal or outcome—the average respondent endorsed over six items from the list presented in the survey. In doing so, they reiterate a key insight from recent research syntheses on mentoring: mentoring relationships can support a young person’s growth and development in multiple domains simultaneously. Few interventions for young people can show impact across multiple areas of need, making mentoring an excellent broad-based and personalized form of support. We find that people across America share this view of mentoring’s effectiveness based on their own observations and experiences.

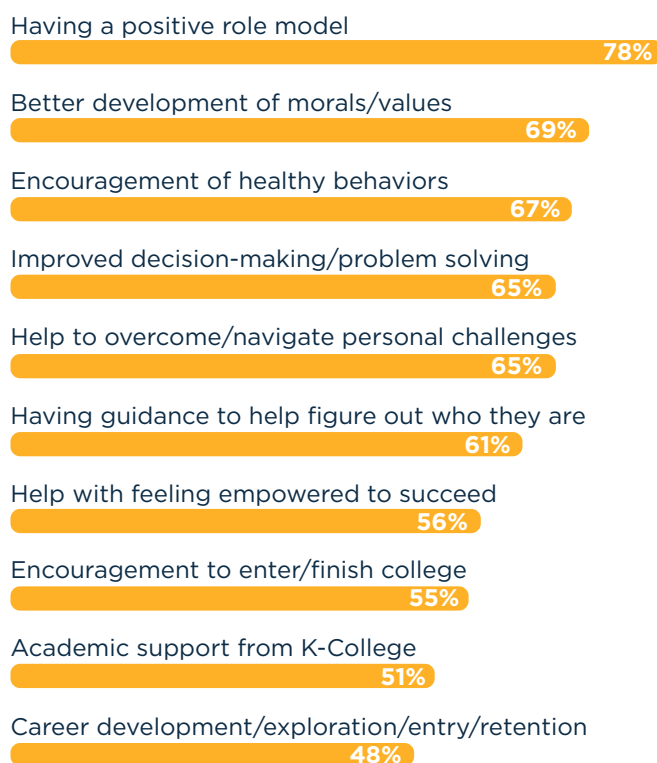


Figure 3. **Youth Benefits from Mentoring Relationships**

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700



Interestingly, we find some statistically significant differences in perceptions of the benefits of mentoring between mentors in structured programs, informal mentors, and those who don't mentor at all. As shown in Figure 4, informal mentors and non-mentors are more likely to say that youth benefit from mentoring relationships in every potential benefit we asked about in the survey, compared to mentors in structured mentoring programs.

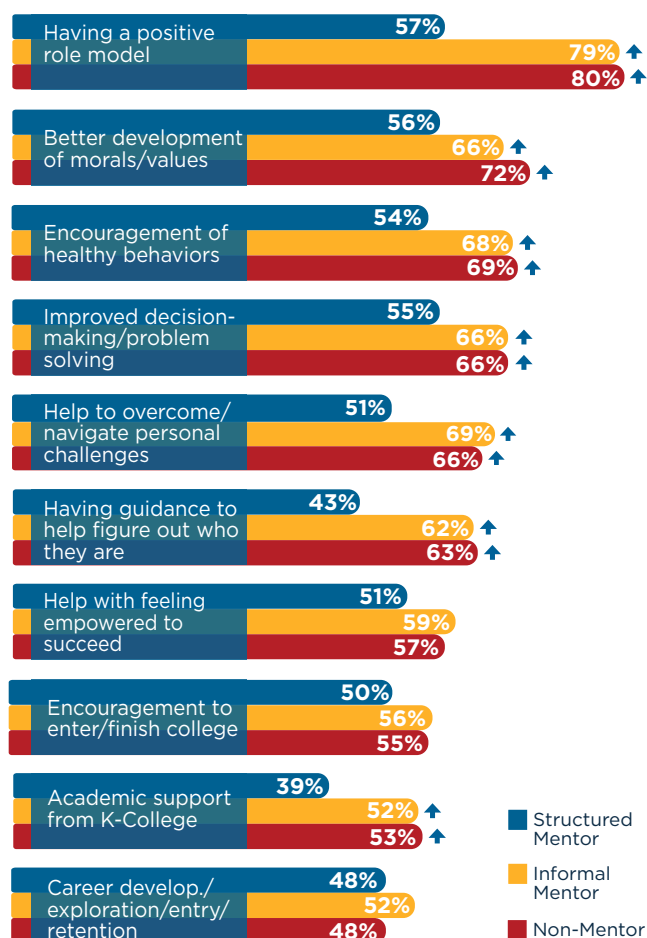


Figure 4. Benefits of Mentoring by Mentor Type

(Base: Total Respondents, n=1700, Structured Mentors n=211, Informal Mentors n=393, Non-Mentors n=1150)

This finding prompted some concern, as it seems to suggest that those who volunteer in the nation's mentoring programs are less enthusiastic about the potential good to come from their efforts. But a few points are worth keeping in mind:

- Structured mentors do think youth benefit from mentoring in a variety of ways, with outcomes such as development of better values, overcoming personal challenges, and college access and completion all being endorsed by a majority of structured mentors as a key benefit of mentoring. So even though they have a more tempered view of these benefits, they still rate mentoring as effective across a wide variety of domains.
- Structured mentors placed the highest value on mentoring relationships: They rated the importance of mentoring higher than informal and non-mentors, respectively (see Table 1). So while they reported fewer specific potential benefits, no one places more value on mentoring relationships overall than those doing this work with youth through a program.
- Structured mentors were also most likely to contribute their money or other resources to mentoring programs and to advocate for mentoring programs, compared to all other adults.

	Structured Mentors	Informal Mentors	Non-Mentors
Importance of Mentoring	8.7	8.2	7.7

Table 1.
Ratings of Mentoring Importance by Mentoring Type

It's worth remembering that structured mentors are often working with youth with elevated levels of individual or environmental risk. As demonstrated in MENTOR's 2016 report *Examining Youth Mentoring Services across America*¹⁸, the nation's formal youth mentoring programs serve young people who have myriad challenges in their lives, from academic struggles and behavioral issues to serious substance abuse and mental health needs. Unlike informal mentoring, which may be offered to young people across the spectrum of need, youth in formal mentoring programs may be facing many serious concerns



that a mentor is tasked with addressing. We ultimately conclude that mentors in structured programs may rate the potential benefits of mentoring slightly lower because they are actually more acutely aware of the struggles that young people with multiple risk factors face and because they see just how hard it can be to overcome these types of challenges, even with the support of a mentor. They know better than anyone that mentoring is not a panacea and that the support of a mentor is often just one part of a constellation of factors that need to be addressed for a young person to ultimately find success and overcome hurdles.

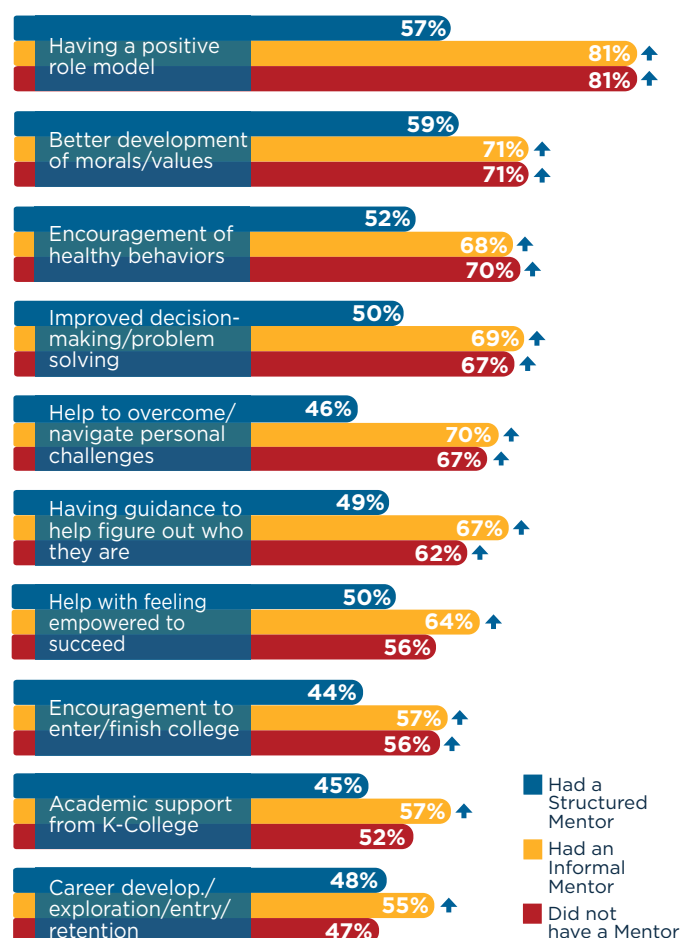


Figure 5. Benefits of Mentoring by Respondent's Own Mentoring History

(Base: Total Respondents, n=1700, Had Structured Mentor n=218, Had Informal Mentor n=366, Had No Mentor n=1148)

Supporting this interpretation is the fact that we found a remarkably similar pattern about perceived benefits of mentoring from those individuals who had a structured mentor themselves when they were young. Figure 5 illustrates that those who had a structured mentor growing up are less likely to report potential benefits of mentoring. Once again, this may be an indication that they more realistically understand what mentors can do for a young person and the limitations that may be in place when we ask mentors to fully address problems that are complicated, systemic in nature, or beyond what one caring adult can help overcome. Rather than suggesting that experiences with program-based mentoring dampen enthusiasm for these relationships, this finding more accurately serves as a caution for practitioners and policymakers to not overpromise on the impacts of their programs and of the relationships they create and support. The nation's structured mentors understand this better than anyone.

Benefits to the Nation from Youth Mentoring

We also asked respondents about the benefits that communities and the nation as a whole gain from mentoring young people. Once again, we see a wide variety of positive impacts endorsed by the public (see Figure 6), although at a lower rate than they endorsed the benefits to youth. It is worth noting, however, that the average respondent selected about five distinct benefits that they felt the nation receives when youth are mentored.

Educational outcomes seem to be top of mind when thinking about societal-level benefits from mentoring, with both "Higher educational achievement of students" and "Promoting equal educational opportunities" placing in the top five. Respondents also rate equality of economic opportunity similarly high, suggesting that Americans see mentoring as a way

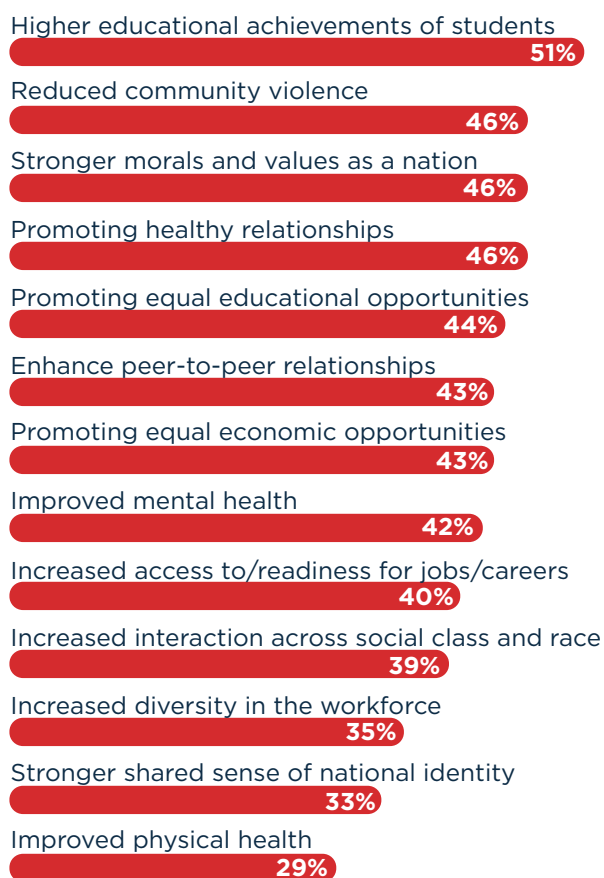


Figure 6. Benefits to the Nation from Mentoring Young People

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

to address systemic inequities and “level the playing field” for youth growing up in disadvantaged circumstances. They also endorse mentoring’s role in decreasing community violence and improving youth’s relationships with peers and adults. These overall findings suggest that Americans view mentoring as a strategy to make communities healthier and more connected, while also addressing root causes of inequality.

As with views of individual benefits of mentoring, we see a pattern of current structured mentors being the least likely to say that mentoring benefits the nation in just about every category we asked about. As Figure 7 shows, non-mentors and informal mentors tend to endorse more benefits to the nation than those mentoring in structured programs. As ex-

plained previously, we feel that this represents structured mentors’ recognition that mentoring does have limitations when applied to complex and systemic national issues, such as community violence, inequities in the educational system, and/or getting Americans to interact more across race and class lines.

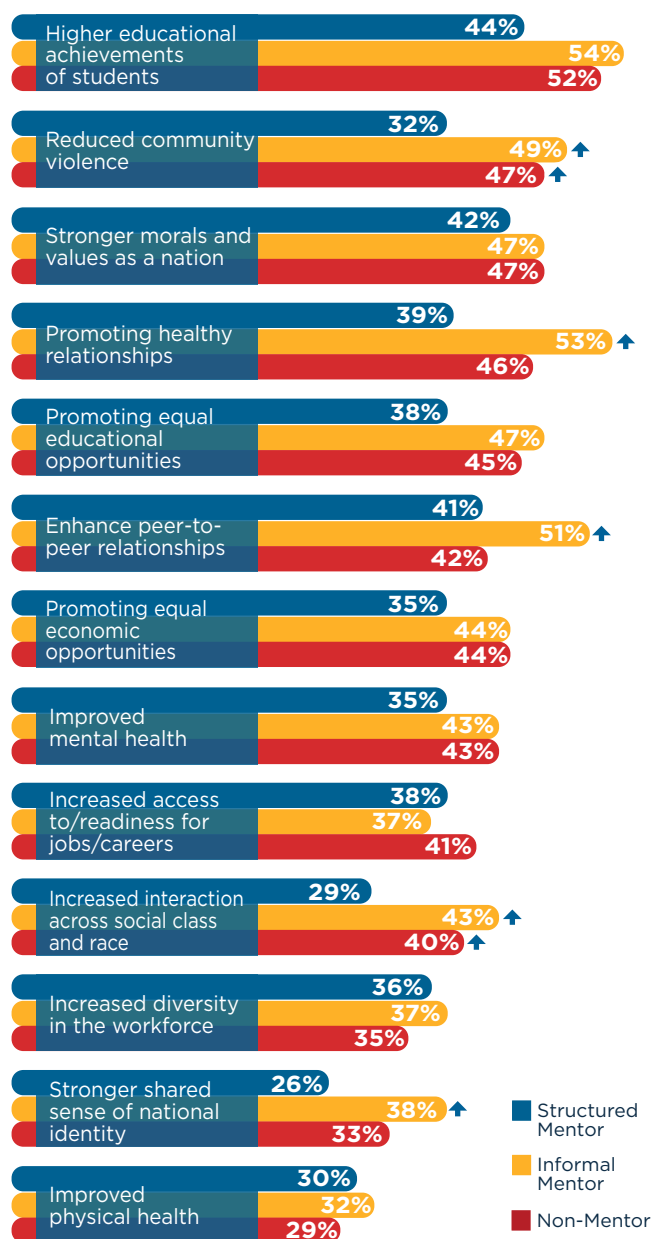


Figure 7. National Benefits of Mentoring by Respondent's Own Mentoring History

(Base: Total Respondents, n=1700, Structured Mentors n=211, Informal Mentors n=393, Non-Mentors n=1150)



Having had a mentor as a youth also has an influence on perceptions of the nation's benefits from mentoring. As with individual benefits, we found a similar pattern of those who were mentored in a structured program during their childhood being less enthusiastic than others about the potential benefits of mentoring at a national level. But the real surprise is that those who were informally mentored during their childhood are significantly more likely to indicate that the nation benefits from mentoring in many categories, including reduced community violence, promotion of healthy relationships (including those with peers), and improved mental health and career readiness. They also feel that mentoring is a strategy to increase cross-race and cross-class interactions, by a healthy margin.

Taken as a whole, adults who were mentored themselves in informal relationships seem to be most enthusiastic about the benefits that both individuals and the nation receive from mentoring. Perhaps this is a reflection of the potential for longer—and more fondly remembered—mentoring relationships in informal contexts¹⁹, or that mentors in informal relationships may spend more time providing social-emotional support and discussing personal problems compared to relationships happening in structured programs. Certainly, data presented later in this report suggests that informal mentoring relationships have different characteristics and activities than their structured counterparts. Perhaps this influences these individuals' belief in the power of mentoring.

There were only a few other differences across our sample in terms of how different groups viewed the impact of mentoring (both structured and informal) on the nation:

- Older respondents were more inclined to mention several benefits to the country, particularly using mentoring to promote equal economic

opportunity. Fifty-one percent of respondents over 50 years of age endorsed this benefit, compared to only 34% of those 18 to 29.

- Native Americans were more likely to believe that mentoring builds stronger morals and values for the nation (63% felt this way, whereas every other ethnicity was below 48%—with only 41% of Blacks thinking that mentoring helped the nation's values).
- Black respondents also gave significantly lower ratings to the notion that mentoring addresses economic inequality (31% agreed) and increases communication and collaboration across race and class lines (32%). For comparison, White adults were much more likely to cite benefits around economic equality (45%) and cross-racial communication (40%). It is worth acknowledging that recent critical theory on the youth mentoring movement in America has detailed the many ways in which structured mentoring has been presented to the Black community in ways that are culturally unresponsive or even aligned with systems of oppression and inequity²⁰, so perhaps these findings are unsurprising. In general, people of color are far less likely to report large benefits to individuals or the nation than are Whites, even though they comprise about 75% of those served by the nation's mentoring programs, according to one study .
- Wealthy Americans, meaning those in the highest income brackets in our sample, were most likely to believe that mentoring supports the high educational achievement of students (59%), something that only 42% of our lowest-income respondents agreed with.

In general, Americans strongly believe that individual youth are helped in a variety of ways through mentoring relationships, while also believing that



“Taken as a whole, adults who were mentored themselves in informal relationships seem to be most enthusiastic about the benefits that both individuals and the nation receive from mentoring.”

the country benefits from mentoring in meaningful ways. While there are differences in how various groups of Americans view these benefits, we were surprised by the apparent agreement across groups that mentoring is a positive and beneficial activity. Even non-mentors think that youth, communities, and the nation get a lot out of mentoring. This suggests that there are many public awareness and recruitment messages about mentoring that might draw more individuals to serve in programs or reach out to a child in an informal relationship in the future. The fact that Americans find many good reasons to support mentoring is certainly good news to our movement.

Views on the Investment in Mentoring

We also asked our sample about the role that they want government to play in supporting youth mentoring programs, including specifically through the expenditure of public funds.

When asked whether the government should play a role in supporting youth mentoring, as opposed to leaving such support to charitable donations, 80% of Americans express moderate to strong support for the government investing in mentoring—35% had strong agreement, with only 14% indicating a strong disapproval toward government involvement in mentoring.

We find even higher levels of support when asking specifically about the use of government funds

for mentoring (see Figure 8). When asked directly about spending taxpayer dollars on youth mentoring, 83% of all Americans express some agreement,

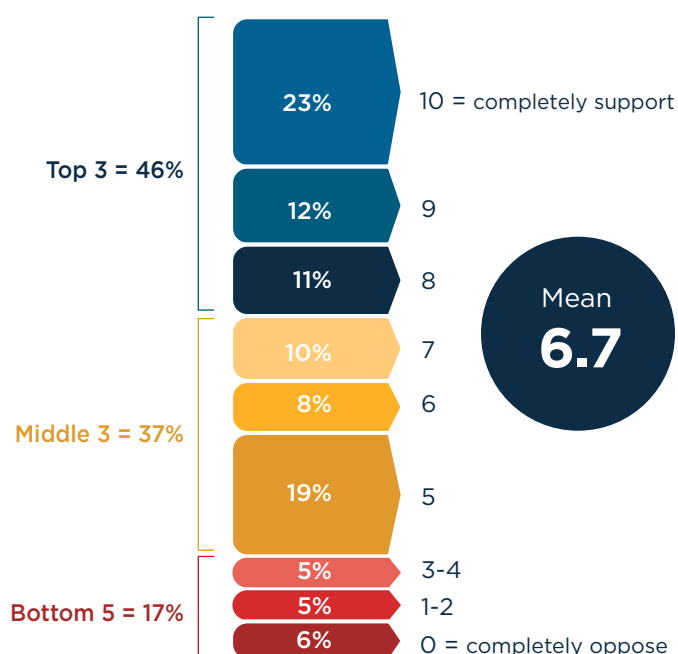


Figure 8. Support of Use of Government Funds for Mentoring

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

with only 12% indicating a strong preference not to.

The level of support does vary slightly by political persuasion. Support of government funds to aid mentoring is highest among those identifying as “liberal” in their politics (59%), with conservatives (39%) and those in the middle politically (40%) showing less support. It is encouraging, however, to note that almost two in five conservatives support the use of tax dollars to support mentoring programs. This is in line with other recent research indicating that a healthy percentage of Republicans would like to see increased government investing in programs to support low-income and other disadvantaged groups—a recent Pew study²² found that 26% of Republicans favored increased investment in programs for the poor. Generally speaking, con-



servatives in American politics are not in favor of having the government play a large role in supporting social programs, yet their stated willingness to have the government play that role, even if a smaller one, in growing mentoring opportunities for youth is extremely helpful in making the case for increased public investment in the work of the mentoring movement.

We also find higher levels of support for government investment in mentoring from Hispanic and Black adults and those with children in the home—this held true regardless of how old the children were, with only empty nesters being less likely to be supportive of the use of government funds (even then, 41% approved).

Very few Americans, it seems, favor mentoring being a purely charitable endeavor. We are encouraged by this broad support for public investment in mentoring as it indicates that Americans generally agree that citizens and the nation are weaker when we don't invest in mentoring programs and relationships.





OPINIONS ON AMERICA AND ITS YOUNG PEOPLE

To get a sense of how respondents' answers to questions about mentoring might be influenced by their overall opinions about young people and American society as a whole, we also asked about their perceptions of several aspects of American culture and current events. Among our findings:

- **Of our respondents, 65% feel like the country is on the wrong track**
 - Structured mentors – 44%
 - Informal mentors – 63%
 - Non-mentors – 67%
- **Only 23% give the U.S. public school system high marks (average of 5.4 out of 10)**
 - Structured mentors – 6.6
 - Informal mentors – 5.5
 - Non-mentors – 5.2
- **Only one in five Americans feel that their community is meeting the needs of at-risk youth at a high level; more than one-third give their communities a low rating (average was 5.1, which is not encouraging).**
 - Structured mentors – 6.6
 - Informal mentors – 5.2
 - Non-mentors – 4.9

We asked about the respondent's agreement with a variety of other statements related to politics and social justice, but analyses found little in these responses that offered insight into why Americans might mentor or whether they feel mentoring is important.

We did, however, note an overall trend discussed further in the next section of this report: In general, those most engaged in mentoring, particularly those in structured programs, seem to be individuals who feel the country is going in the right direction and, perhaps unsurprisingly, are doing well in their own lives, with higher paying jobs, spouses and children at home, and a supportive community (often of faith) around them. This mirrors the general research on volunteering, which suggests that those with more robust resources and social capital are most likely to have the ability to volunteer²³. Those struggling to get by in their own lives may be less likely to volunteer in a time-intensive activity like mentoring.

But there is also an interesting irony at the heart of these responses: Americans as a whole feel like the nation, its schools, and its young people are in peril, but we find in our survey results that those who are, in theory, stepping in to address those issues via mentoring are the least likely to feel that sense of crisis. They may be motivated more by personal reasons or the needs of a specific young person than by macro-level concerns about the nation or institutions.

See the following chapter for further discussion on the profiles of structured, informal, and non-mentors to illuminate the broad demographic and psychographic trends that define how and why Americans engage in mentoring activities.

MENTORING RATES AND PROFILES



One of the major motivations for conducting the *Power of Relationships* survey was to try and assess how many American adults were actively engaged in mentoring relationships, both in and out of structured programs. And for those who were not mentoring at all, or only in certain ways, we hoped to learn about the barriers that kept them from being more involved (and if those barriers were likely to be removed and how). The following section details the general rates of mentoring across the adult population and how we might begin to deepen their engagement in mentoring.

Overall Rates of Mentoring

As shown in Figure 9, around 10% of all American adults indicate that they mentored at least one young person in a structured mentoring program in the last year, with 18% reporting participating in at least one informal mentoring relationship. A small

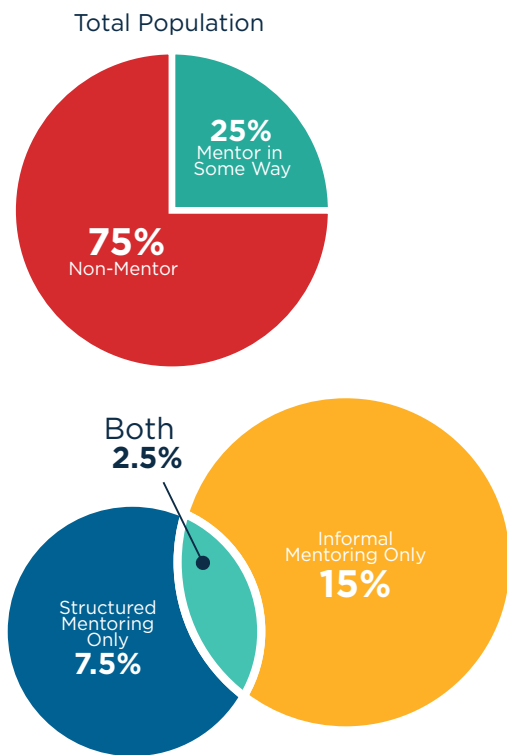


Figure 9. Rates of Mentoring in the Last Year

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

percentage of adults (2.5%) are both structured and informal mentors.

We also asked about whether adults had ever mentored a young person. Almost one in five adults reports doing so in a structured program, while nearly two in five report having mentored informally (see Figure 10).

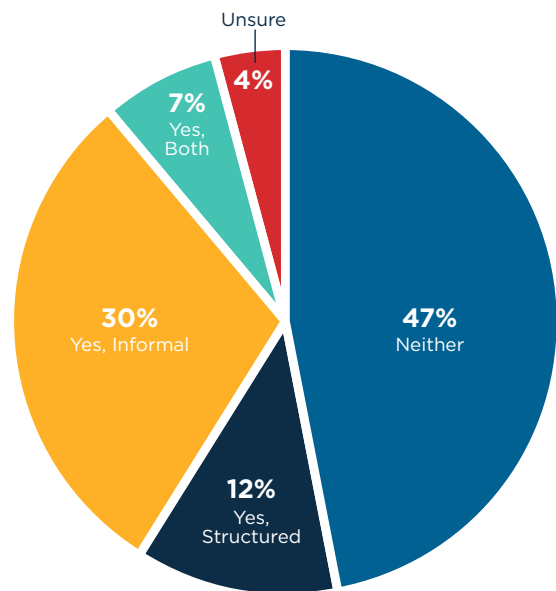


Figure 10. Engaged in Youth Mentoring in the Past

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

A more comprehensive portrait of engagement in mentoring can be found in Figure 11. This graphic illustrates that almost half the adult population is either currently a structured mentor or would be willing to consider it. An additional 20% of all adults are willing to be an informal mentor, but feel that structured mentoring isn't right for them.

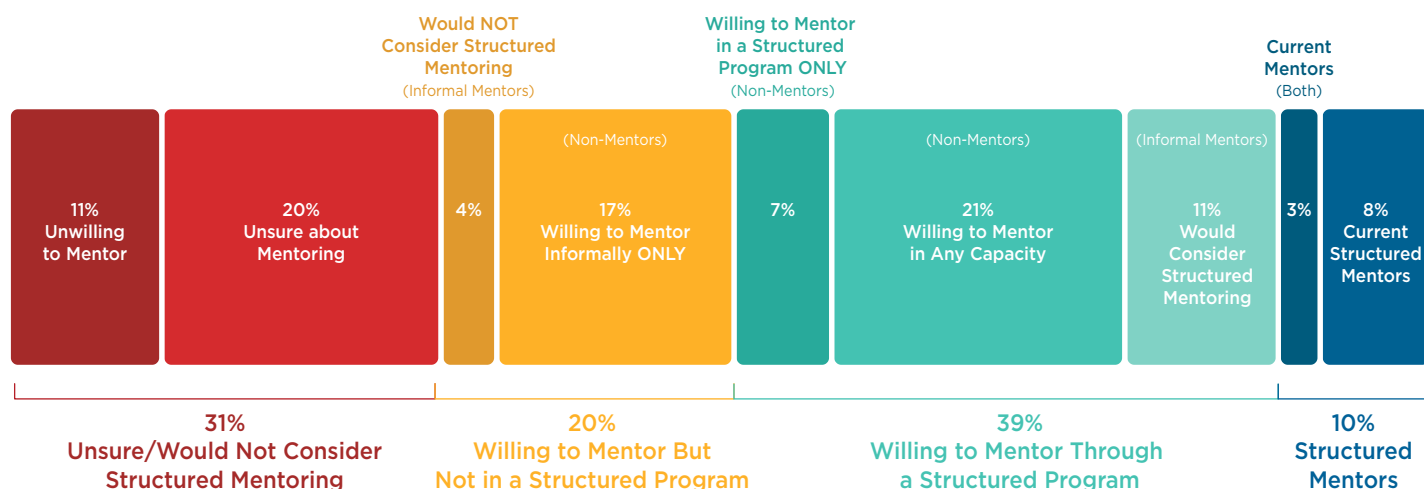
When you add all these categories up, an estimated 69% of all American adults either are mentoring or are willing to mentor a young person in some capacity. On top of that, another 20% might be willing to consider doing so if their circumstances changed or they had more information (see page 33 for



Figure 11. Mentoring Engagement and Consideration Across All Adults

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

Note: Some numbers may not add up precisely due to rounding.



additional details about the barriers and solutions for non-mentors). This leaves only 11% of adults as unwilling or unable to serve in a mentoring role. When we talk about closing the mentoring gap, it is this roughly 65% of adults who are not currently mentoring, but would consider doing so, that represents the potential growth of the movement. These are the individuals who can step into mentoring for the first time, or take on new mentoring roles in new contexts, and bring mentoring to more young people.

Historical Comparisons for Rates of Structured Mentoring

As noted in the introduction to this guide, these rates of mentoring, at least in structured programs, are much higher than previous estimates. The 2005 Corporation for National and Community Service report estimated that 11.5 million Americans had volunteered as mentors in some capacity in the prior year²⁴. The 2017 work of Raposa and colleagues²⁵ estimated that 2.59 million adults had mentored youth in a volunteer program in 2015—and had done so at a level that many would consider to constitute the duration and intensity we commonly associate with a meaningful programmatic mentoring relationship (36 hours of

mentoring over the course of the year). Through this survey, we estimate that approximately 24 million adults engaged in structured mentoring. And while we didn't designate a number of hours as a benchmark for what was considered a "meaningful" mentoring relationship, those who reported being a structured mentor indicated that they spent around 20 hours a month mentoring one or (frequently) several more youth in these contexts.

So why the large jump in rates of structured mentoring seen here? The most likely explanation for this higher rate is that this general population survey captured structured mentoring that is not typically counted in more focused examinations of volunteer youth mentoring.

We received large numbers of responses from mentors who were in mentoring relationships in structured programs offered through their workplace (e.g., an employee mentoring program serving new hires under the age of 24), through their place of worship (e.g., a church youth group that provided group mentoring experiences), and in various affinity groups and recreational settings (e.g., a rock hunting club where experienced "rock hounds" are matched with youth to mentor them in reading terrain and digging for gems



and to be a general support as they grow up). These are institutional settings for programs that may have been underreported in previous efforts to track rates of mentoring, which may have defined mentoring differently or focused solely on volunteering in a non-profit youth-serving organization context.

For example, almost 21% of our structured mentors reported doing so in a workplace program, in which they may be doing structured mentoring as part of their job duties, not as an off-the-clock form of volunteering. Another 16% of structured mentors reported mentoring in a faith-based program, which also may have fallen into a different categorization if volunteers did other tasks in addition to mentoring (or not have counted as mentoring at all if, as in the Raposa study, the volume of hours spent mentoring was small over the course of the year—e.g., a once-a-week church program over a summer may not have counted in that study).

Clubs, hobby groups, and recreational programs accounted for another 21% of our structured mentors. And clearly some of our structured mentors are engaged with young people as part of their jobs within a youth-serving organization. The use of paid staff in a mentoring role, both in schools and community nonprofits, has increased in the last few decades (with the growth of organizations like Friends of the Children and models like Check and Connect making use of compensated employees as mentors) and we see here that many structured mentors in schools, after-school programs, and youth development organizations report mentoring large numbers of youth for a considerable number of hours every month. Clearly, these are unlikely to be typical volunteers—not many American adults have the free time to spend dozens of hours mentoring multiple youth every single week. These are likely employees who mentor youth as part of their job duties.

Thus, the likeliest explanation for these higher rates of structured mentoring is that we have more comprehensively captured what American adults consider to be their structured, program-based mentoring experi-

ences. Deeper analysis of the results did not indicate that we had “contamination” across our sample in terms of those in informal mentoring relationships mistakenly placing themselves in the “structured” category. For example, analysis of write-in answers for the question of what type of program adults mentored in did not reveal significant conflation of structured and informal mentoring: For the most part, when adults name the program or type of program, they most often cite “brand name” youth mentoring programs or other organizations known to offer formal, structured programs. Respondents’ descriptions of informal mentoring relationship settings also seem to corroborate that those mentoring experiences are not part of a formal program, even if they happened in an institutional context. The one notable exception was the Boy Scouts of America, which was named as both a structured program and as an informal mentoring setting by a small handful (less than 20) respondents. But it is unclear as to whether some Boy Scout chapters around the country offer more formal, structured mentoring programs as part of their services or whether these mentors were perhaps considering their informal relationships to be part of a “structured program” and viewed scouting as primarily about mentoring. But the volume of these potentially mislabeled responses was so small that we did not re-categorize them to one type of mentoring or the other. In the end, we were not in a position to define individuals’ mentoring experiences for them.

For these reasons, the authors of this report are confident that these mentoring rates accurately reflect how American adults quantify their structured mentoring experiences. We have little reason to doubt that 10% of all adults see themselves as mentoring a young person in a program where their explicit role is to be a mentor in a structured way. Prior estimates focused on purely nonprofit volunteer mentoring are certainly captured within this larger pool of mentors, but we have also found what appear to be previously under-recognized types of structured mentoring here as well. These are programs that are often not represented in the nonprofit field’s estimates of its scope and reach. Those who work in this field tend to con-



ceptualize mentoring programs as being very much about one-to-one matches, supported by a nonprofit, in the vein of a Big Brothers Big Sisters type service. And while that type of mentoring program is certainly captured here, we feel that our more holistic view of the structured mentoring universe is helpful to consider. Not only does this suggest that more mentoring is happening than previously thought, but it also means that more Americans are open to the idea of doing this type of structured mentoring than previously thought. While the census data clearly suggests that we have struggled to grow high-quality volunteer mentoring over the past decade, we have succeeded in growing structured mentoring in other environments and roles. Our findings here indicate that em-

ployers, faith organizations, and myriad other groups are embedding formal mentoring programs into their work and that many Americans are finding a pathway to these types of mentoring opportunities, even if they are still hesitant to walk into a local youth-serving organization or a school and sign up to mentor in that more traditional way.

Clearly, more work is necessary to confirm these mentoring rates and to further delineate structured mentoring programs from other mentoring that happens in institutional contexts. But MENTOR is excited about this opportunity to reframe the definition and scope of our field and to bring a wider variety of programs under the umbrella of the mentoring movement.





Who Mentors? Comparing Structured, Informal, and Non-Mentors

In addition to overall rates of mentoring, we examined who exactly is filling the roles of structured or informal mentor for the nation's youth. We note some interesting differences between the characteristics of those who mentor through structured programs and those who do so informally (see the comparison table on page 31 for details).

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRUCTURED MENTORS

When looking at the demographic profile of structured mentors, they are more likely:

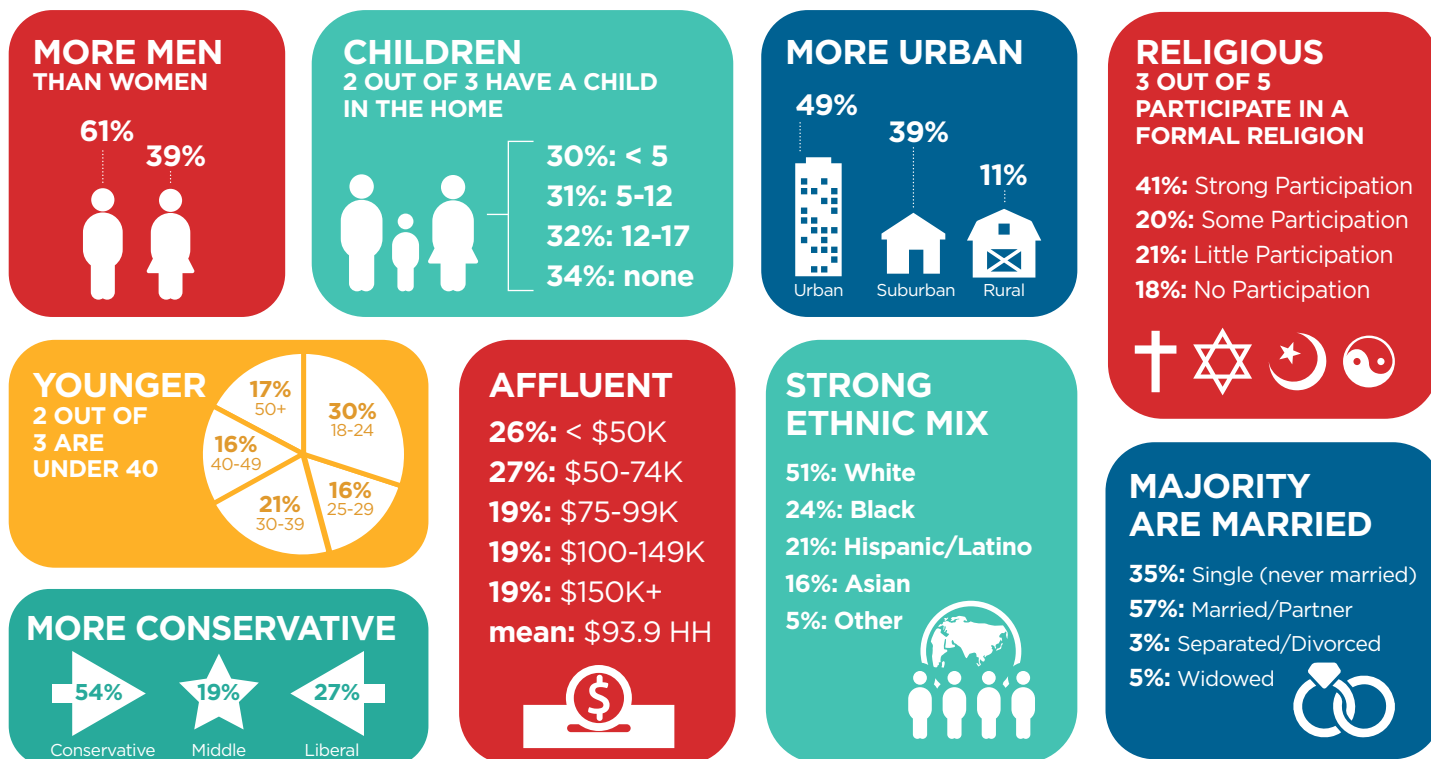
- Male (61%)
- Relatively young compared to informal and non-mentors
- Married or living with a long-term partner (57%)
- Someone with a child in the household
- Fairly affluent (57% have a household income over \$75K a year)
- Living in an urban area
- Ethnically diverse (only 51% White)
- Define themselves as politically conservative (only 27% liberal)

Figure 12 offers more details into these characteristics.

We also find that structured mentors:

- Are likely to have had a mentor as a youth (56% had a structured mentor, 22% had an informal mentor, 29% had no mentor)
- Tend to think the country is going in the right direction (56%)
- Generally rate the public school system as above average (43% rate it very highly)
- Generally rate their community as above average in meeting the needs of at-risk youth (45% rated their community very highly)
- Think mentoring relationships are highly important (average of 8.7)
- See a need for more mentors and mentoring programs in their community (7 in 10)

Figure 12. Characteristics of Structured Mentors





CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMAL MENTORS

When looking at informal mentors' demographics, we find that they tend to be:

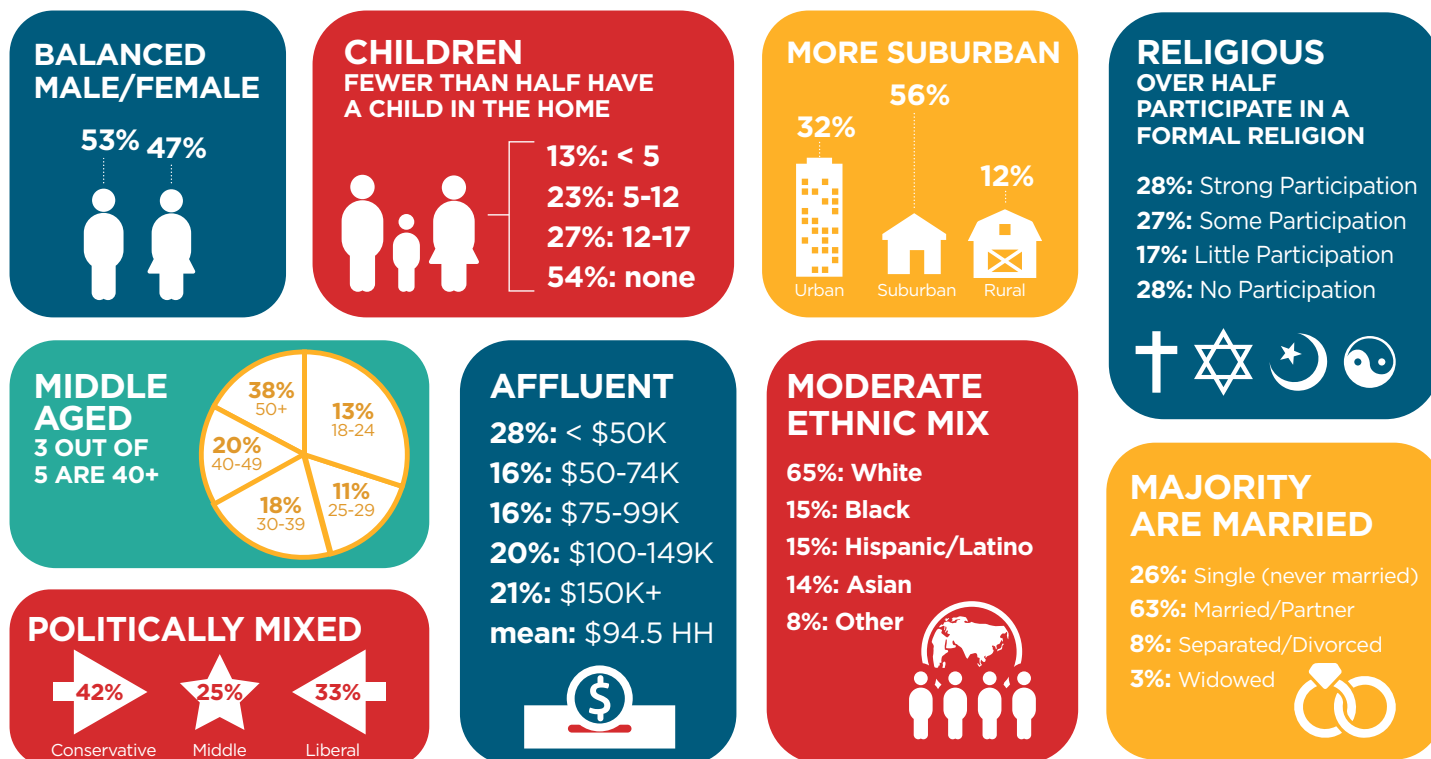
- Fairly balanced between male and female (53% and 47%, respectively)
- Middle age (58% are over 40 years of age, only 24% are under 30)
- Married or living with a long-term partner (63%)
- Less likely to have a child in the household (54% do not)
- As affluent as structured mentors (57% have a household income over \$75K a year)
- Suburban (56%)
- Less ethnically diverse than structured mentors (63% White)
- Fairly evenly split across the political spectrum

Figure 13 offers more details on these demographic breakdowns.

Looking at their psychographic profile (attitudes, opinions, activities, and so on), we find that informal mentors:

- Are not likely to have had a structured mentor growing up (only 12%, with 55% reporting no mentor)
- Do not think the country is going in the right direction at all (63% feel it is not)
- Rate the public school system as mediocre (only 27% rate it very highly)
- Rate their communities as doing a mediocre job of supporting the needs of at-risk youth (only 27% think they do an exceptional job)
- Think mentoring relationships are highly important (average of 8.2)
- See a need for more mentoring and more mentoring programs (7 in 10)

Figure 13. Characteristics of Informal Mentors





CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-MENTORS

Those who are not mentoring at all differ in some key ways demographically from those who do mentor (structured or informal):

- They tend to identify as female more than either mentor group (53%)
- They are much older (almost 50% are over 50 years of age)
- The majority are married (53%) but a significant minority is divorced or separated (13%)
- Only 27% have a child in the household
- They are less likely to be affluent, with only 29% reporting a household income above \$75K
- They are more likely to live in suburban (48%) or rural areas (22%)
- Seventy-five percent of non-mentors are White
- They mirror informal mentors in terms of political values (33% identify as liberal, 40% conservative)

Additional details about these demographics can be found in Figure 14.

In terms of other characteristics of non-mentors, we found that they:

- Were least likely to have had a mentor as a child (76% indicated that they had no mentor at all)
- Are most likely to think that the country is heading in the wrong direction (67%)
- Rate the public school system poorly (only 20% rate it very highly)
- Rate their communities as below average in meeting the needs of at-risk youth (only 17% rate their community highly)
- Are least likely to think mentoring relationships are important (a still positive 7.7. on average)
- Are least likely to think more mentoring and more mentoring programs are needed in their community (6 in 10 indicated more is needed)

Figure 14. Characteristics of Non-Mentors

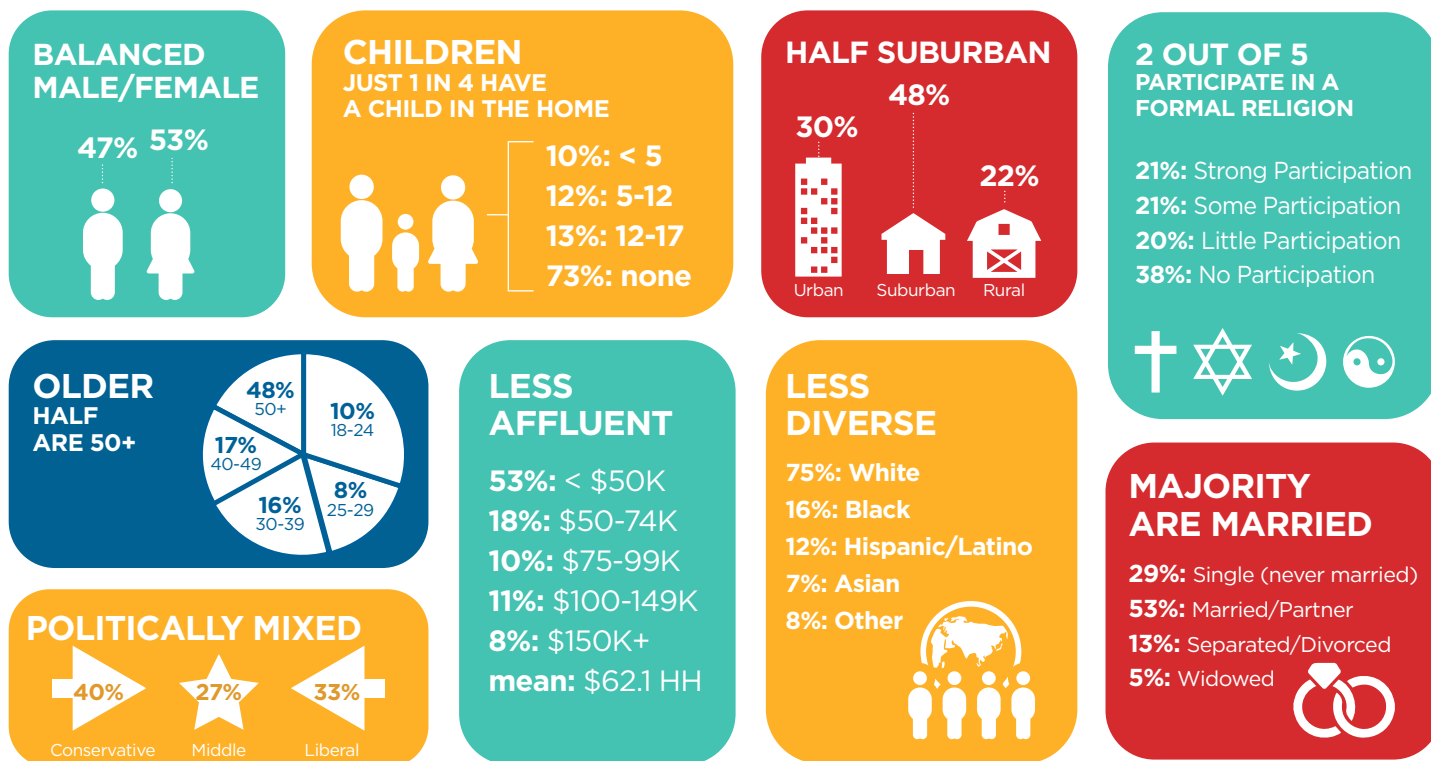




Table 2 can be helpful in comparing structured mentors, informal mentors, and non-mentors across these demographic and psychographic categories. In looking across these many traits, we find a pattern discussed in the previous section on views about mentoring starting to emerge:

- **Those who are most engaged in mentoring are more affluent, younger, and much more likely to have children in the home**, although there is a hint that perhaps empty nesters gravitate toward informal mentoring once their children are out of the house. Those with school-age children in the house are more likely to be engaged in issues that impact youth and certainly have more opportunities to mentor in structured contexts (e.g., volunteering in programs at their child's school) or through natural relationships (e.g., mentoring a friend of their child or a neighbor the family knows).
- **Adults are less likely to mentor if they are struggling in their own lives or are disillusioned about the direction of the country.** Clearly, non-mentors indicate they have much lower incomes on average than either mentoring group and one can surmise that associated challenges that come with being in a lower socioeconomic status make it harder to find the time and resources to care for others. And paradoxically, the more concerned one is about the direction of the country, the less likely they are to step up and try to change that through mentoring relationships. It may be that these individuals are heavily involved in other efforts to get the country back, in their opinion, on track. But so often, volunteering and engagement in community activism is spurred by deep concerns about the direction of community or country. In the case of mentoring, it seems that this is a form of giving back preferred by those who are most likely to think that things are going well. Some of this is explained by other factors, but it may also be that mentoring is an activity that appeals most to those who want others to share in the prosperity they are experiencing.

- **Being mentored as a youth leads to greater involvement in mentoring as an adult.** It is remarkable that a sizable majority of those who mentor in a structured program were mentored themselves as youth. In fact, a shockingly high percentage (56%) indicate that they were mentored through a structured program experience, given that other research cited in this report has found the reach of these programs to be relatively small²⁶. Certainly, a sizable percentage of these adults were mentored in faith or workplace contexts as a young person (in fact 22% of structured mentors said that they were mentored in the program in which they now volunteer). But in general, we see a trend that those who were mentored, even informally, as a young person are the most likely to engage in this work as an adult. This fact, more than anything, illustrates the power of relationships and highlights that mentoring a young person can lead to meaningful benefits for others as that child grows into a caring and charitable member of society.





Table 2. Comparing Structured, Informal, and Non-Mentors

Characteristics	Structured Mentors	Informal Mentors	Non-Mentors
Gender			
Male	61%	53%	47%
Female	39%	47%	53%
Age			
18-24	30%	13%	10%
25-29	16%	11%	8%
30-39	21%	18%	16%
40-49	16%	20%	17%
50+	17%	38%	48%
Ethnicity (respondents could choose multiple)			
Asian	16%	14%	7%
Black	24%	15%	12%
Hispanic/Latinx	21%	15%	16%
White	51%	65%	75%
Other	5%	8%	8%
Marital Status			
Married/Partner	57%	63%	53%
Separated/Divorced	3%	8%	13%
Widowed	5%	3%	5%
Single (never married)	35%	26%	29%
Children in Home			
Children under 5	30%	13%	10%
5-12	31%	23%	12%
12-17	32%	27%	13%
None under 18 in home	34%	54%	73%
Type of Community			
Urban	49%	32%	30%
Suburban	39%	56%	48%
Rural	11%	12%	22%



Table 2. Comparing Structured, Informal, and Non-Mentors (Continued)

Household Income			
<\$50K	26%	28%	53%
\$50K-\$74.9K	17%	16%	18%
\$75K-\$99.9K	19%	16%	10%
\$100K-\$149.9K	19%	20%	11%
\$150K or more	19%	21%	8%
Political Identity			
Liberal	27%	33%	33%
Middle	19%	25%	27%
Conservative	54%	42%	40%
Religious Participation			
Strong participation	41%	28%	21%
Some participation	20%	27%	21%
Little participation	21%	17%	20%
No participation	18%	28%	38%
U.S. Moving in Right Direction?			
Yes	56%	37%	33%
No	44%	63%	67%
Had a Mentor as Youth			
Had structured mentor	56%	12%	8%
Had informal mentor	22%	38%	18%
Had no mentor	29%	55%	76%
Importance of Mentoring			
Average (out of 10)	8.7	8.2	7.7
Support of Government Spending on Mentoring			
Average (out of 10)	7.8	6.9	6.5



Barriers to Mentoring

While the higher-than-expected rates of mentoring detailed in this report are cause for optimism, the reality is that most Americans are not currently engaged in a mentoring relationship at this time. MENTOR wanted to learn more about the barriers non-mentors face in engaging in mentoring relationships, what prevents informal mentors from doing similar work in program contexts, and what might help both groups grow their participation over time.

Barriers for Non-Mentors

Non-mentors express a variety of reasons for not mentoring either in structured or informal relationships (see Figure 15). Some of these reasons reflect practical barriers related to a lack of time or ability—too busy with their own children, career demands, health issues, and so forth.

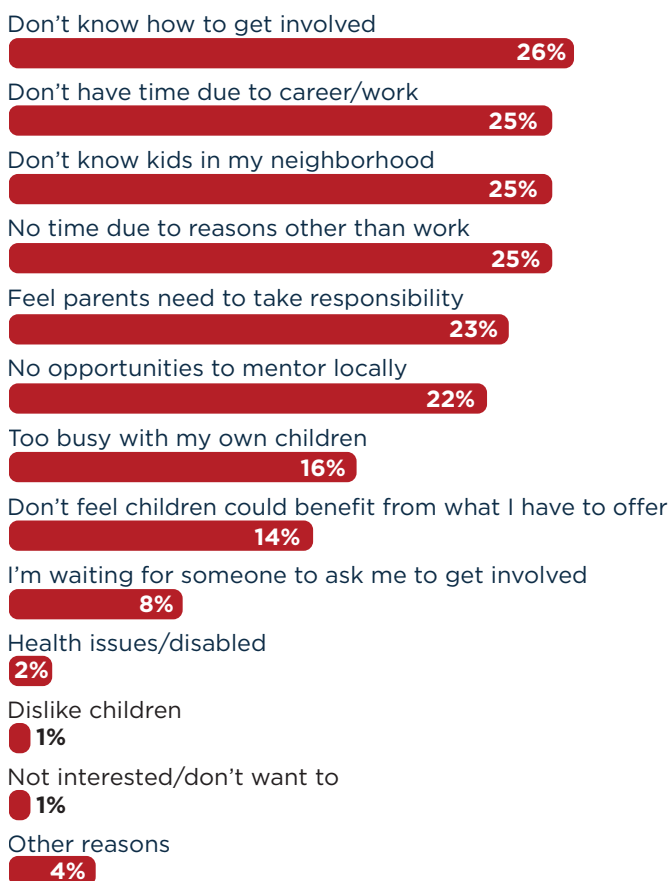


Figure 15. Reasons For Not Mentoring

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150

But a surprising number of highly endorsed reasons are related to a lack of information: 26% don't know how to get involved, 22% believe there are no local opportunities, and 8% are simply waiting for someone to ask them. This indicates that we can get more individuals who are not engaged at all with the mentoring movement to take steps toward being a mentor with increased public awareness campaigns and promotional work at the local level. There are few communities in America where there are no structured mentoring opportunities nearby, and informal relationships can form anywhere institutions and other societal structures bring adults and youth together. We feel that many of these non-mentors are essentially under-informed potential mentors, not outright rejecters of our movement.

...a surprising number of highly endorsed reasons are related to a lack of information

We do note that there are small percentages of adults who dislike youth (1%), don't think they have anything to offer a young person (14%), or who simply don't want to mentor (1%). But those groups are a small fraction of those who do not mentor. Perhaps most distressing about these findings are the 23% of non-mentors who do not do so in part because they feel parents need to take responsibility for their children. The mentoring field should reinforce messaging opportunities to change the perception that mentors are substitute parents or that their role is to supplant or negate bad parenting—and to make clear what mentoring actually is and looks like. But in general, it is heartening to know that most non-mentors seem quite open to the possibility of becoming a mentor someday.

These reasons for not mentoring vary across some demographic and psychographic factors. We exam-



ined almost every aspect of the survey responses to see if there were trends in terms of who was less likely to mentor. The only differences that reached statistical significance are:

- **Ethnicity:** Hispanics are more likely to mention not knowing how to get involved, and less likely to mention not having the time due to non-work-related reasons. Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely to mention not having the time due to work responsibilities.
- **Household income:** Those with more income are more likely to mention not having the time due to work responsibilities. Low income respondents are more likely to mention no local opportunities or having health issues or disabilities that prevent them from mentoring.
- **Political affiliation:** Liberals and “Middles” are more likely to not know how to get involved. Liberals are also more likely to mention not having the time due to work responsibilities. Conservatives are more likely to feel like parents need to take responsibility for their kids.
- **Age:** Younger Americans are more likely to not know how to get involved. Older Americans are less likely to mention not having the time due to work responsibilities. Those in their forties are more likely to cite not having time due to non-work-related reasons, and those in their thirties or forties are more likely to be too busy with their own children.

Barriers for Informal Mentors Serving in Structured Programs

We also wanted to understand why those who are engaged in informal mentoring relationships do not also mentor youth through a program. These adults clearly care about young people and view mentoring as an activity that is important to themselves and the nation, yet they are not currently mentoring a young person in a structured program. Their reasons, and whether they can be addressed or

not, might be constraining the growth of mentoring programs across the country, something which the census-related research discussed previously²⁷ clearly shows to be an issue, with almost no growth over the last decade.

The good news is that 76% of informal mentors who do not already mentor in a program would consider doing so. As with non-mentors, their reasons for not doing so already are numerous, but many are also potentially solvable. As shown in Figure 16, one of the most common reasons for not mentoring (31%) is that they simply have not thought to do so, with another 19% stating they don’t know how to get involved and another 15% likely mistaken that there are no programs in their area. Once again, these are public awareness issues that can be addressed by campaigns that specifically reach out to informal mentors and get them to consider applying their relationship skills in a new context.

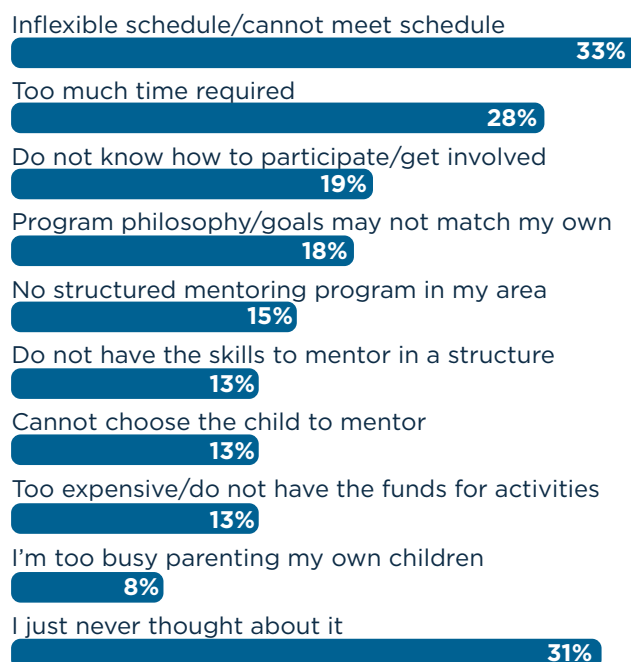


Figure 16. Reasons Informal Mentors Have Not Mentored in a Structured Program

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, but DO NOT also engage in Structured Mentoring n=339



There are a few barriers to programmatic mentoring that may be harder to address. Time concerns are as much of a barrier for informal mentors as they are for non-mentors. In fact, for those who indicate they will not consider structured mentoring in the future, 51% cite the time required as an insurmountable barrier. Additionally, 35% of those who say they will not consider a structured program express concern that the program might not reflect their personal philosophy or goals in working with a child. And Figure 16 shows that some informal mentors (13%) express some dissatisfaction with the fact that most programs do not allow you to choose which young person you are matched with, something that is not a concern when informal relationships develop organically. These barriers are somewhat inherent in the nature of structured mentoring opportunities and would be challenging for many programs to address.

We also find some key differences based on income level in whether informal mentors will consider structured mentoring. Lower-income Americans are more likely to cite schedule and time demands as a barrier, are more likely to say they don't know how to get involved, and are most likely to be concerned about the cost of mentoring activities in a program context—which is somewhat surprising considering that most programs have set rules limiting activity costs, whereas informal relationships tend to navigate those issues on their own. This also speaks to a lack of information about what mentoring through a program entails.

But while many of these barriers may be impossible to address, MENTOR is very encouraged by the fact that the vast majority of informal mentors might be willing to work within a program if the opportunity was right.

Willingness to Mentor in the Future and Potential Levers of Engagement

As noted above, about three-fourths of those who are informal mentors would be willing to mentor in a structured program. When looking at non-mentors, we also find that the majority would be willing to consider mentoring in the future (see Figure 17).

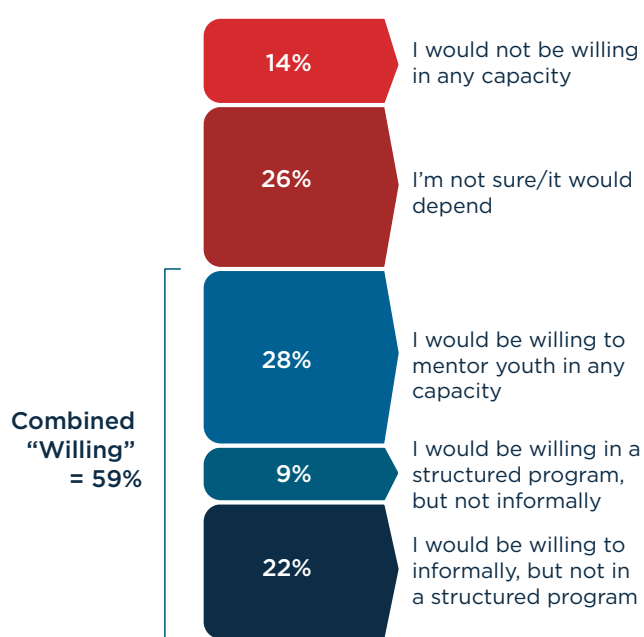


Figure 17. Non-Mentors' Willingness to Mentor in the Future

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150

We also see a few statistically significant demographic differences within this group in terms of how likely they would be to mentor in a structured and/or informal relationship:

- **Those under 50 years of age** (76%) are more likely to consider mentoring in the future (Figure 18)
- **Hispanics** are significantly more likely to consider mentoring (73%), with Whites least likely (57%)
- **Liberals** (65%) are more likely than moderates (54%) and conservatives (58%)

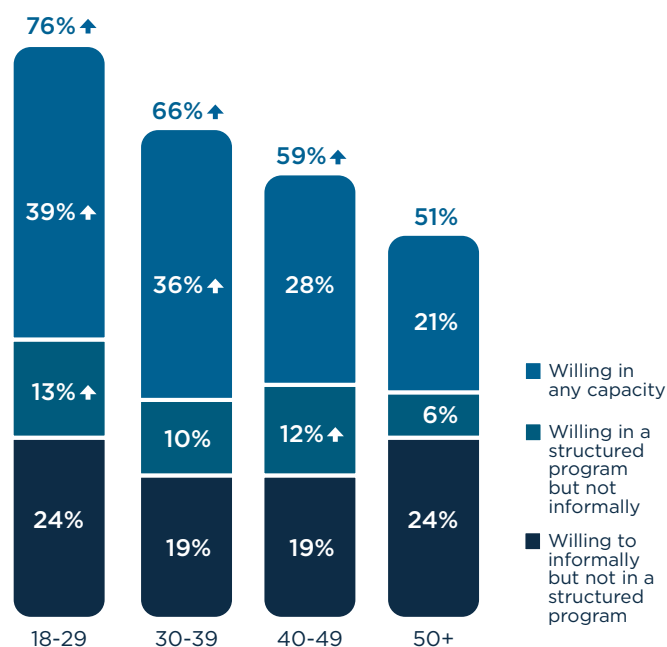


Figure 18. Non-Mentors' Willingness to Mentor in the Future by Age

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150; By Age: Ages 18-29 n=159, Ages 30-39 n=201, Ages 40-49 n=204, Age 50+ n=590; By Ethnicity: Hispanic n=178, White n=876, Asian/PI n=62, Black n=123, Native American n=89

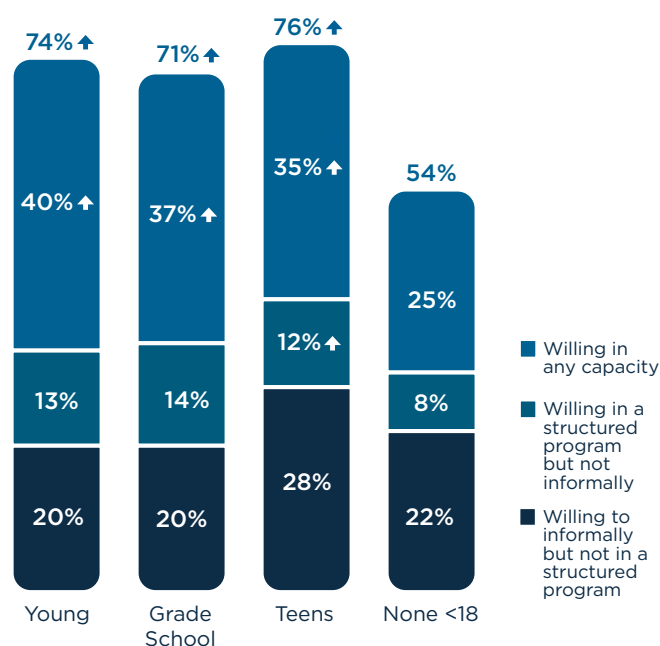


Figure 19. Non-Mentors' Willingness to Mentor in the Future by Children in the Household

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150; By Children in HH: Young n=103, Grade School n=136, Teenagers n=152, None <18 n=829; By Income: Poverty n=142, Low n=306, Low-Mid n=178, Mid n=216, Mid-Upper n=126, Upper n=153

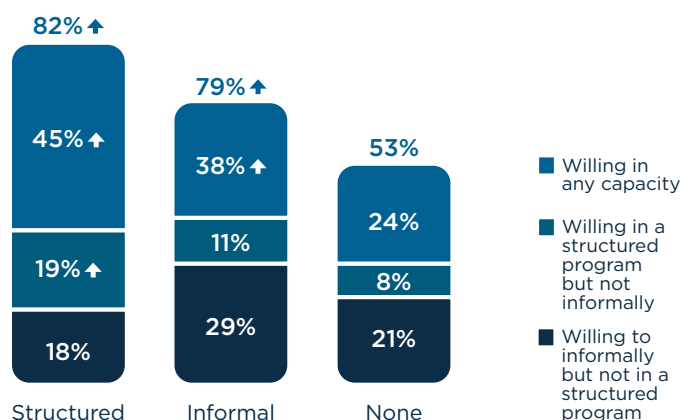


Figure 20. Non-Mentors' Willingness to Mentor in the Future by Receiving Mentoring as Youth

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150; By Political Affiliation: Liberal n=387, Middle n=316, Conservative n=447; By Mentored as Youth: Structured n=81, Informal n=190, No n=893; By Religious Participation: None n=414, Little n=245, Some n=249, Strong n=242

- **Those with children** in the household, regardless of age of the children, are more likely to consider mentoring (Figure 19)
- **Those in the middle-upper and upper income brackets** are most likely (65% and 67%, respectively), while only 54% of those close to or in poverty might consider mentoring
- **Those who are employed or self-employed** are more likely to mentor in the future (69% and 71%, respectively) compared to the unemployed. See the “Role of Businesses and Employers in Mentoring Participation” section that follows for more details about how engagement in mentoring is strengthened for employees when their employers are directly involved in youth mentoring.
- **Managers (76%) and executives (81%)** are most likely to consider mentoring compared to other roles in companies.
- And unsurprisingly, **those who had a mentor themselves** growing up are most likely to become mentors in the future (Figure 20).



Non-mentors also offer some insights into what changes to their life or circumstances would facilitate their consideration of mentoring. This information is invaluable for both public awareness efforts and for encouraging institutions, businesses, and government to support mentoring with policy and human resource solutions.

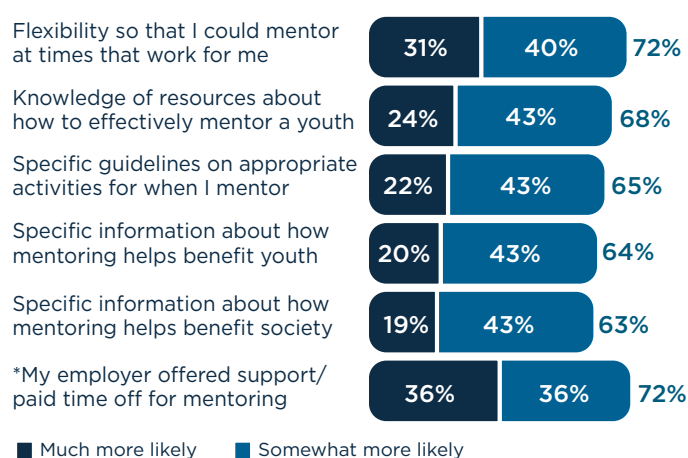


Figure 21. Non-Mentors' Factors that Might Impact the Decision to Mentor in the Future

Base: Not Currently Mentoring, n=1150

*This statement was filtered on those Not Currently Mentoring and Employed, n=492

Note: Some numbers may not add up precisely due to rounding.

As seen in Figure 21, non-mentors indicate that a number of factors might encourage them to become a mentor or otherwise support mentoring programs. At the top of the list are greater flexibility in terms of when mentoring is scheduled and paid time off from their employer to engage in mentoring activities (72% of non-mentors indicate these would make a difference in their potential involvement). These factors clearly point to the concerns that many potential mentors have about mentoring being too time-consuming or needing to happen at specific times or locations. Clearly, the mentoring field needs to better communicate the variety of mentoring opportunities available to individuals and the likelihood that they will be able to find something that fits their busy schedules. These findings are also a strong confirmation that MENTOR's work with the corporate sector to get employees en-

gaged in mentoring can make an impact on overcoming these time-related concerns.

The other notable theme that emerges from this list is just how many American adults don't mentor because they doubt their own skills and abilities to do so. In Figure 15, we see 14% of non-mentors were willing to admit that they don't think they have anything to offer a child. While we didn't ask specifically about their mentoring skills, one could interpret this reason for not getting involved as, in part, being a reflection of their own perceived lack of skills or knowledge about how to mentor. They may not be able to picture themselves being a meaningful mentor because they aren't sure what that entails and assume they can't do it. Thus, it's not terribly surprising that more information about how to be an effective mentor and more guidance around appropriate activities are rated as being potentially impactful for getting non-mentors involved. If they have more information about what mentoring looks like in action, what will be asked of them, and how that benefits youth and their communities, they might feel more effective in taking on that role. At the very least, their non-involvement would be a more informed decision.

In general, these findings paint a picture of a large number of Americans who support mentoring conceptually, and would be willing to consider serving as a mentor themselves, but who need practical solutions to concerns about their schedules and who lack the information they need to find the motivation and courage to step into the mentor role. Hopefully these findings can help MENTOR and others more effectively reach out to non-mentors, ease their fears about the experience, and help them see that being there for a young person is both doable and tremendously rewarding.

“The mentoring field needs to better communicate the variety of mentoring opportunities available to individuals”



The Role of Businesses and Employers in Mentoring Participation

One of the areas we wanted to explore in this survey was the role that corporate and employer engagement plays in getting more adults to mentor. To get a better sense of this—and knowing that both the overall rates of mentoring and the number of employers who support mentoring were likely to be low across the entire adult population—we decided to oversample those who were employed and those who indicated that their employer supported their mentoring efforts in some way. The results clearly speak to the powerful influence that employers have on the mentoring engagement of their employees.

We find more than a quarter of employed Americans (28%) report that their employer supports youth mentoring in some way and that 45% of employed mentors indicate that their company supports their own mentoring work with youth. The forms of support engaged in by companies included a variety of activities involving both financial support of programs and connecting employees to mentoring opportunities (see Figure 22).



Figure 22. Types of employer support for mentoring

Base: Employer Involved in Mentoring n=381

While it's encouraging to see these levels of engagement, the real story comes when looking at the impact: When an employer directly supports mentoring, the percentage of individuals who mentor, both in a structured program and informally, triples in size (Figure 23).

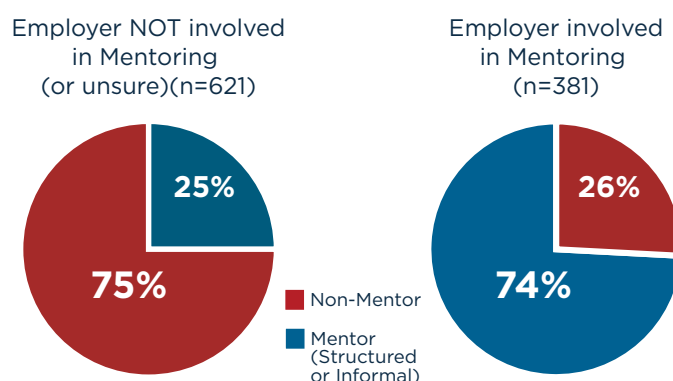


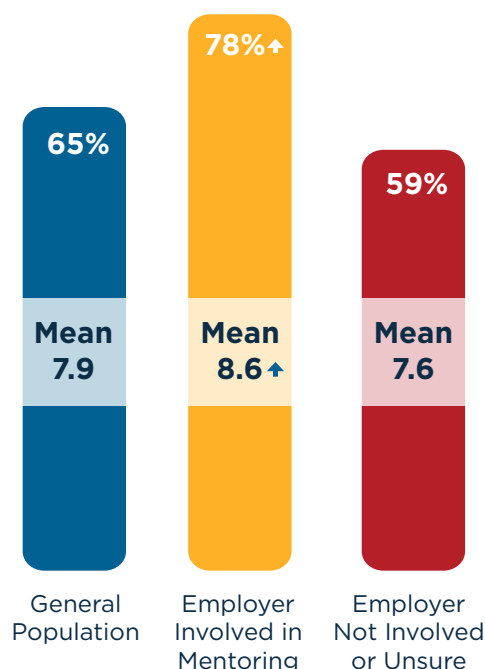
Figure 23. Rate of Mentoring Among Those Employed

(Base: Total Employed Respondents, n=1002; Employer Involved in Mentoring n=381, Employer Not Involved/Unsure n=621)

Additionally, we find that when an employer does not directly support mentoring, their employees who do mentor are more than three times likely to do so informally, not in a program, meaning that they still find those organic relationships, but are disconnected from structured mentoring. But when an employer does support mentoring, not only does it increase structured mentoring, it also increases the amount of informal mentoring that their employees do. Taken as a whole, we find that when employers are involved in mentoring and share that involvement with their employees, the amount of all forms of mentoring done by those employees dramatically increases, both in and out of programs. Clearly, in light of this research, employers can play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of mentoring for adults, and bringing more mentoring to all youth across the nation. They can triple the rates of mentoring.



Importance of Mentoring to Youth Percent Rating 8/9/10



Support Mentoring of Youth in These Ways

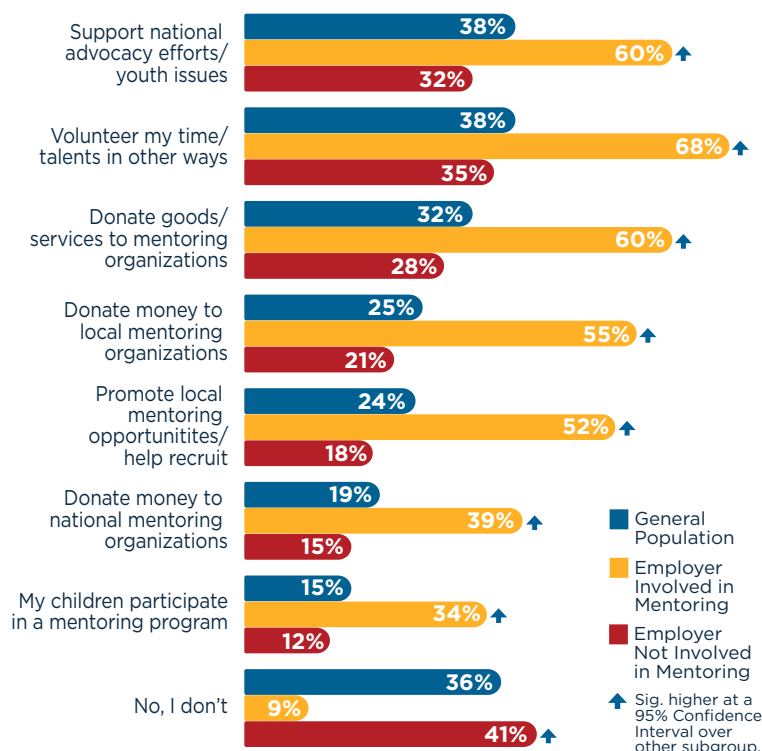


Figure 24. Employees' Perceptions and Support of Mentoring by Employer Engagement

Base: Total Employed Respondents, n=1002; Employer Involved in Mentoring n=381, Employer Not Involved/Unsure n=621; Total Respondents/- General Population, n=1700

As shown in Figure 24, we also find that employer support of mentoring increases their employees' perceptions of the value of mentoring and their support of mentoring and youth causes, regardless of whether those employees mentor or not.

Best of all, we find statistically significant correlations between higher career satisfaction and higher job satisfaction for employees of companies who support mentoring than for those whose employers do not. This holds true regardless of whether the employee mentors youth or not.

These findings should offer plenty of motivation to the nation's corporations and small businesses to engage in the mentoring movement in some way.

Just over a third of all adults (37%) indicated that they feel it is important for companies to support mentoring (this rose to 58% for those already working at a company that does). So not only do the nation's workers want corporate America to be more involved in mentoring, we now know that when they do, actual rates of mentoring increase dramatically in their communities and their employees experience greater job satisfaction. To MENTOR's ears, that sounds like a win-win approach to closing the mentoring gap.

Other Forms of Engagement in Mentoring

While our main emphasis in this survey was to quantify adults' engagement in actual mentoring relationships (or even the willingness to enter into



one), we did ask about other ways in which they might support mentoring. While 36% of Americans indicate that they did not support mentoring in any way, we find meaningful percentages of Americans indicating they support national advocacy efforts for youth issues in general (38%), volunteer in other ways in organizations that support youth (38%), and donate goods and services (32%) or money (25%) to local mentoring and youth organizations.

Structured mentors are more likely than informal or non-mentors to mention supporting mentoring in every way we asked about (see Figure 25). Similarly, informal mentors are more supportive of mentoring organizations than non-mentors. Thus, there seems to be a hierarchy of mentoring engagement where those who think mentoring is most valuable

serve as structured mentors and support structured programs, while those who think mentoring is less important don't really serve as mentors or support mentoring in other ways. And in the middle is a large pool of informal mentors who could potentially deepen their engagement with programs one way or another.

As with the decision to mentor in the future, many of the things respondents indicate could deepen their support of mentoring programs more generally come down to needing more information or overcoming a practical barrier—for example, 68% of all adults indicate they might donate more to mentoring causes if they simply had more money. Figure 26 shows how important more information about the impact of mentoring and clearer paths to getting involved can be when individuals think about increasing their support of mentoring programs. More work needs to be done across the mentoring movement in sharing such information and creating simple pathways for engagement based on these findings.

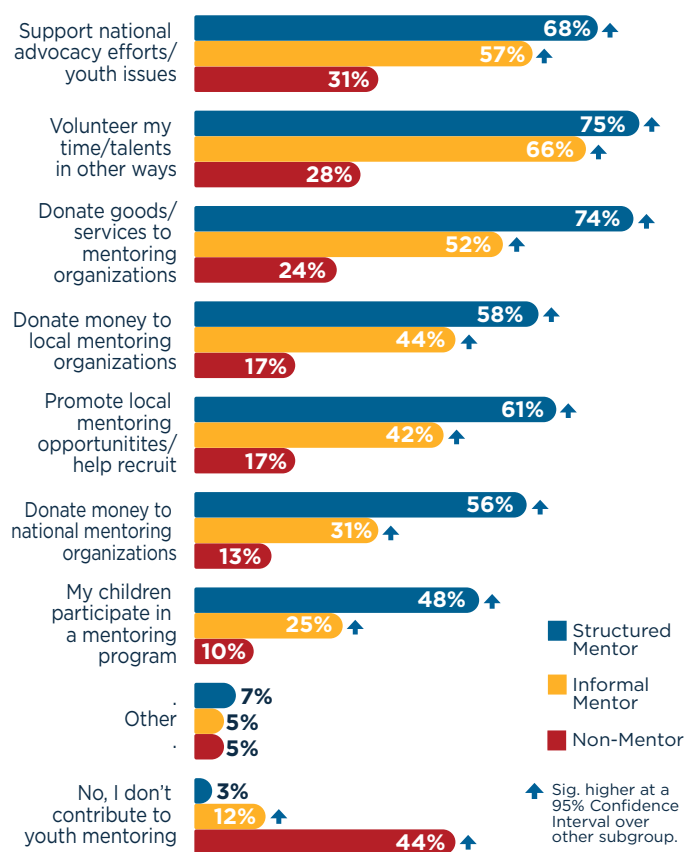


Figure 25.
Support of Mentoring Programs by Mentor Type

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700, Structured Mentors n=211, Informal

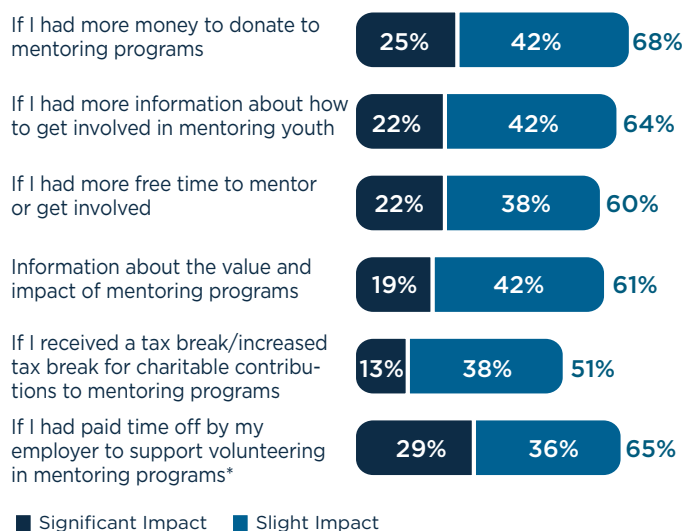


Figure 26. Factors Influencing Increased Support of Mentoring Programs

*Only those with employer shown – those not employed/self-employed removed.

Base: Non-Mentor and Do Not Support Mentoring Programs, n=539



Experiences Receiving Mentoring

The prevalence of mentoring seems to be increasing over time. When asked if they had a mentor themselves when they were young, 12% of all adults indicated they had a structured mentor and 21% reported having an informal mentor, leaving 68% reporting having no mentor. But Figure 27 shows a clear trend in rates of being mentored increasing over time. Our youngest respondents were more than twice as likely to report having had a mentor in their lives.

Age (Yes, had a mentor)			
18-29	30-39	40-49	50+
48% ↑	40% ↑	31% ↑	21%

Figure 27. Factors Influencing Increased Support of Mentoring Programs

Base: Total Respondents, n=1700

While some of this may be explained by older Americans either forgetting about the influence of mentors many years ago or perhaps not being as aware of mentoring as a specific role or activity, other research seems to confirm that younger adults today are more likely to have received mentoring than in years past. A 2017 study of adults in Alberta, Canada²⁸, found a similar pattern of mentoring across their population. In Figure 28, we see a similar pattern of mentoring being far more prevalent among younger Albertans than in those who are older. While their rates of mentoring are higher than those reported in the United States across each age group, that study found a similar split between receiving structured mentoring (12% in the United States, 16% in Alberta) and informal mentoring (21% in the United States, 38% in Alberta). The two surveys used remarkably similar definitions of formal (structured, in our terminology) and informal mentoring, so while it may be that Albertans have done slightly more mentoring over time than adults in the United States, we see a similar pattern in rates and

types across the age spectrum. The authors of the Alberta study also note that it is unclear if actual rates of mentoring or *perceptions of mentoring* as a distinct role are increasing over time, but they also conclude that younger Albertans are more supportive of mentoring and more likely to want to mentor themselves, something we also find in our American sample.

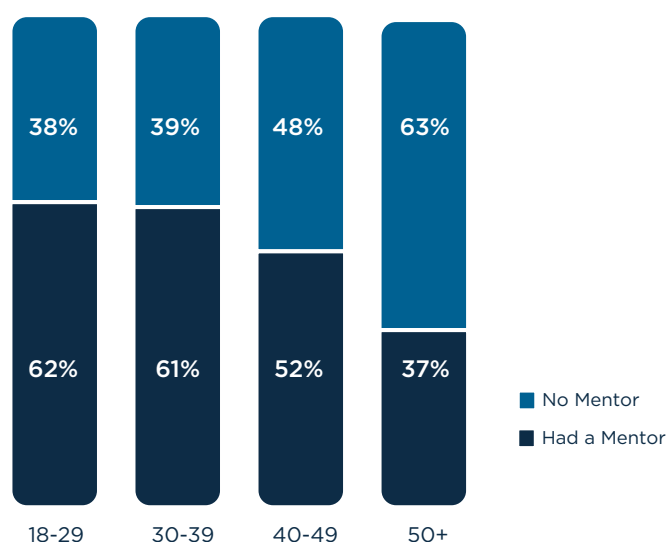


Figure 28. Reported Rates of Being Mentored Growing up in Alberta

n=1,208

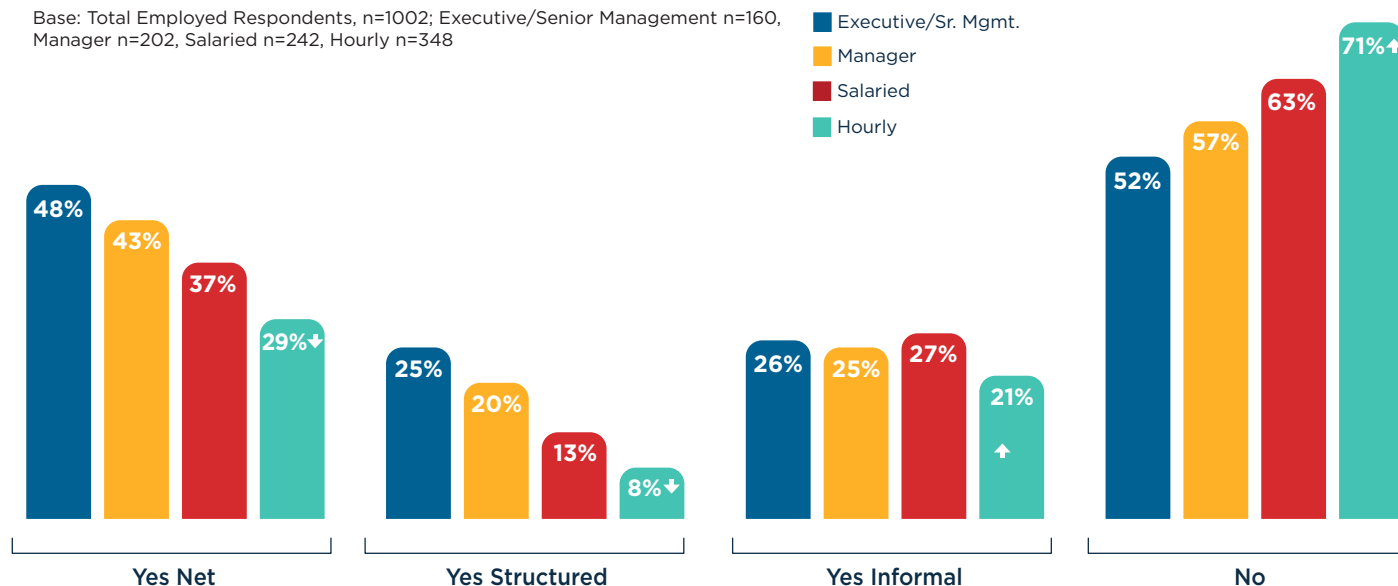
There are, however, other studies that suggest rates of mentoring may not be increasing. The aforementioned *Mentoring Effect* report by MENTOR²⁹ found that two-thirds of 18- to 21-year-olds reported having had a mentor growing up (these young people would be roughly 23 to 26 years old today). While that rate is higher than what we found here for 18- to 29-year-olds, that may be explained by the differences in definitional language between that study and this one, or by other demographic influences across the two samples. The same may be true of the Add Health data mentioned previously, where various analyses have indicated that between 64%³⁰ and 73%³¹ of respondents reported having a mentor of any kind growing up (the differences across studies are the result of varying inclusion criteria from



Figure 29.
Prevalence of Being Mentored Growing Up by Current Career Level

Base: Total Employed Respondents, n=1002; Executive/Senior Management n=160, Manager n=202, Salaried n=242, Hourly n=348

Executive/Sr. Mgmt.
Manager
Salaried
Hourly



study to study). Participants in Add Health are now in their thirties and forties, making their reported rates of mentoring higher than what we found here among their same-age peers.

While there are clearly challenges when comparing rates of childhood mentoring experiences across all of these studies, the two that are most recent and most similar in terms of their definitions of mentoring—this report and the Canadian one from 2017— both show a clear trend that younger adults are more likely to report having had a mentor. The degree to which this reflects changes in the volume of mentoring or just more awareness or understanding of mentoring as a distinct form of help is unclear. But our findings elsewhere in this report on the connections between being mentored in the past, finding mentoring to be valuable today, and reported rates of now being a mentor lead us to believe that the two trends go hand in hand. Those who had a mentor are more likely to both be aware of and value mentoring and they, in turn, do more of it themselves today. Perceptions of receiving mentoring and subsequently giving mentoring to others later in life seem to be linked and we have reasons to believe, based on this survey, that both of those rates have

been growing in the United States over time.

There were some other demographic differences in our findings in terms of who was more likely to report having had a mentor:

- Black and Native American adults are significantly more likely to have had a mentor of any kind (44% and 39% respectively, with Whites reporting the least at 28%)
- Strong religious participants (42%) are most likely to report being mentored (only 28% of religious nonparticipants had a mentor)
- Those living in the Pacific and South Atlantic regions are most likely to report having had a mentor (39% and 37%, respectively).

Differences as Adults among Those Mentored and Those Who Were Not

We looked to see if those who reported having had a mentor as a young person differed from those who did not in terms of life outcomes now that they are adults. It should be noted that we did not do analyses that would indicate that being mentored is responsible for these differences, but we did find some intriguing



statistically significant differences between those who were mentored as a youth and those who were not.

- Those who were mentored as a youth (either by structured or informal mentors) have a higher household income than those who were not mentored (\$77K versus \$67K)
- Possible explanations for this income difference might be found in the fact that those mentored as youth (especially in structured programs) are more likely to be employed and living in an urban area. Those who are employed at the salaried level or above were most likely to have had a mentor (of either type) growing up (Figure 29), which also might partially explain the differences in income levels.
- Those who had a structured mentor are also more likely to have children in the household, have conservative political views, and be strong religious participants.
- And those mentored in structured programs, in particular, tend to be the strongest supporters of mentoring as adults in a number of ways: They rate mentoring as more important, are more likely to currently be a mentor, are more approving of spending tax dollars on mentoring, and are more likely to have supported mentoring programs or youth generally in the last year. But there are contradictions with this group, as well, as these same individuals are least likely to say more mentoring is needed, most likely to say youth today have enough mentoring, and, as discussed in the “Americans’ Views on Youth Mentoring” chapter, were less likely to think that youth benefit from mentoring in every category we asked about. So while those who benefited from structured mentoring may be the most committed to the work of the nation’s mentoring

programs, they are, paradoxically, the least likely to be clamoring for more mentoring.

MENTOR sees many causes for optimism in these new data on the rates of mentoring, the willingness of Americans to consider becoming a mentor, and in the ways in which we might remove barriers to more adults mentoring. It is heartening to know that American adults are willing to set aside their time and their resources to directly support a young person or get involved in other ways.

The following chapters of this report focus on the experiences of structured and informal mentors in more detail, offering further insights into what might sustain and even grow these mentoring rates.



STRUCTURED MENTORING EXPERIENCES



Because much of MENTOR’s work involves creating awareness and encouraging adults to volunteer in the nation’s structured mentoring programs, we had a keen interest in learning more about what current structured mentors said about their experiences so that we might more effectively convince other Americans to get involved. The *Power of Relationships* survey allowed us to learn a great deal about where American adults mentor, what motivated them to engage in mentoring, and how they view their experiences mentoring in a structured program context.

Pathways to Structured Mentoring

To start understanding the experiences of structured mentors, we asked how they found the program where they currently mentor. The most common pathway to structured mentoring is through a friend, colleague at work, or a family member (38% of mentors indicated this was how they learned about their program). Employers, as noted in the previous chapter, also play a big role, with 23% of mentors indicating that they learned about their mentoring opportunity through the workplace. A smaller number of mentors said that they saw an ad (12%) or couldn’t recall how they heard about the program (6%).

Most surprising, however, were the 22% of structured mentors who said they learned about the program they mentor in because they were a mentee in the same program when they were young. As noted in the “Mentoring Rates and Profiles” chapter, those who were mentored themselves as youth are much more likely to be mentors today—and apparently many of them give back to the very program that supported their development. Those mentoring in faith-based settings were by far the most likely to note this connection (41% of faith-based mentors said they had been mentored in the program). This makes sense given the long-term engagement over generations that faith institutions generally promote. We even see an impressive number of mentors

(20%) in school and after-school programs coming back and contributing as mentors as adults. This suggests that mentoring programs might find their time well spent keeping track of alumni and maximizing the ongoing engagement of the individuals who know best just how helpful their services can be to a young person in need.

Locations and Types of Structured Mentoring

As noted in the previous chapter on the rates of mentoring, structured mentoring happens in a wide variety of locations. Figure 30 illustrates the types of structured mentoring programs that adults mentor in, and it goes a long way toward explaining where mentoring is happening. The biggest grouping of programs comes in the after-school, youth development, and tutoring and other educational programs space—41% of mentors said they mentor in a program in these types of settings. The majority of the types of dedicated nonprofit mentoring programs that we commonly think of (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs or Big Brothers Big Sisters) reside in this

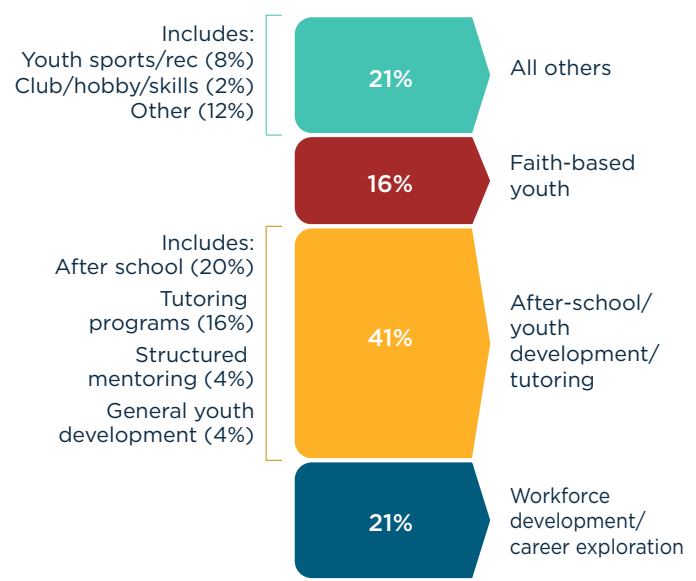


Figure 30. Types of Programs Reported by Structured Mentors
Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211



category, so it's unsurprising that it is the most referenced type of program among respondents.

But surprisingly, these types of well-known mentoring programs don't represent the majority of structured mentoring programs. We find relatively large percentages of mentoring happening in workplaces and workforce development programs, faith institutions, and various other contexts, such as in sport clubs, hobby groups, and other institutional contexts where adults and youth interact in meaningful ways.

We have reason to believe that this accurately reflects the full array of structured mentoring happening in the United States. The last decade has seen a proliferation of mentoring services being embedded into a wide variety of institutional contexts, for example:

- A general youth development program that offers a wide array of services, including mentoring
- Transitional services supporting youth aging out of the foster care system
- Schools deploying mentors specifically to combat chronic absenteeism
- Workforce development programs that recognize the need for mentors to teach young people about workplace culture and improve “soft skills”

In none of these examples would we describe the institution housing the program as definitively being a “mentoring program,” yet we find that the majority of mentoring relationships are happening in programs embedded in these contexts. There will always be a need for dedicated mentoring programs that focus intently on that service alone, often with an emphasis on the broad development and growth of the “whole child.” But it is interesting to see just how many other institutions and program types have decided that the role of a mentor is a value-add to their work and that mentors are doing more focused work within a specific context. This speaks to the power and adaptability of the mentor role.

The other way of looking at the location of mentoring services is to ask mentors *where they meet with their mentees*. Figure 31 illustrates that mentors meet with their mentees in a variety of locations, with the average structured mentor indicating that they meet in at least two of these locations (respondents were limited to three choices, so they may likely meet in even more locations). The variety of meeting locations is encouraging as it suggests that site-based programs, such as those housed in a school or a workplace, do a good job of getting out and exposing youth to other contexts. One can easily think of examples like a school-based program occasionally taking field trips to local events or exhibits or a workplace program allowing men-

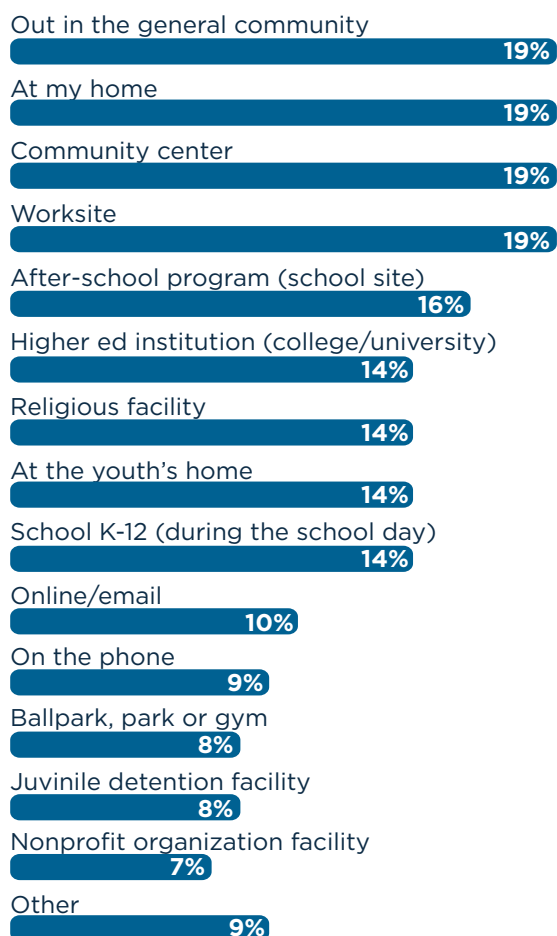


Figure 31. Meeting Locations of Structured Matches

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

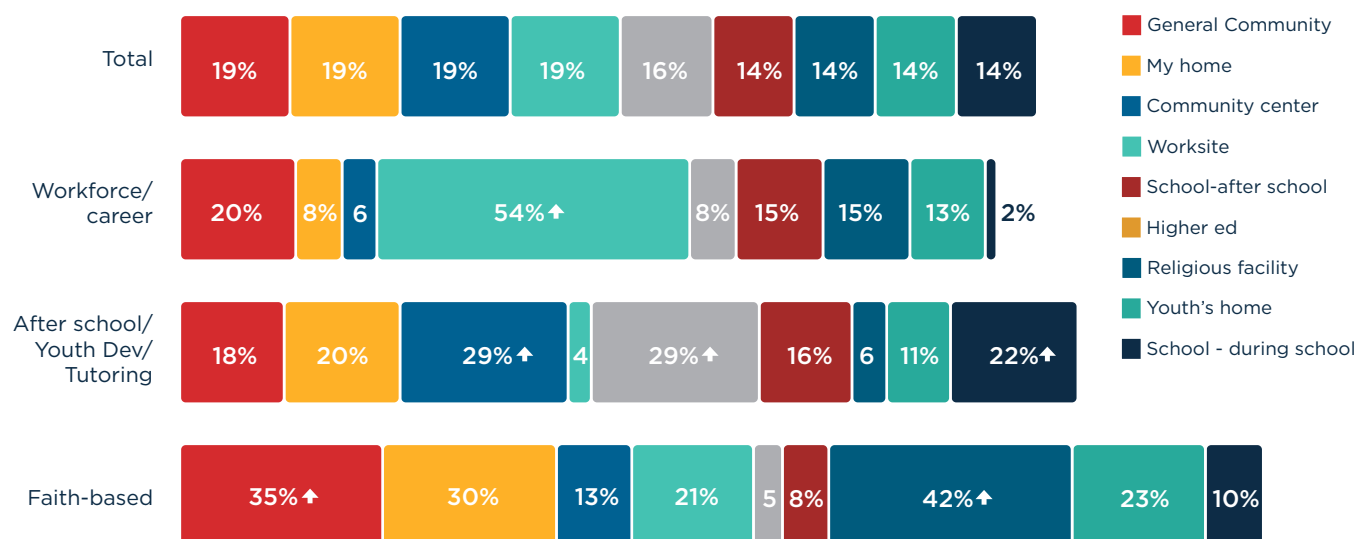


Figure 32. Meeting Locations by Program Type

(Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; By Program Type: Workforce n=50, Afterschool/Youth Development n=89, Faith-Based n=26, All Others n=46)
 *Responses 10% and under at Total not shown. Multiple responses allowed.

tors and youth to meet out in the community or to attend a work-related conference. This indicates that most structured mentors are exposing their mentees to a wide variety of experiences and supports.

As one might expect, there are differences across the broad program types about where mentors and mentees meet. Figure 32 illustrates some of these common-sense correlations, such as workforce and career mentoring programs being much more likely to meet in the workplace or faith-based programs being more likely to meet in religious institutions or in the community, while spending very little time meeting in schools.

Demographic Differences in Structured Mentors' Program Types

We did find some statistically significant differences in who is mentoring in certain types of programs:

- Those ages 30–39 are more likely to be mentoring in after-school or youth development programs—51% of mentors in this age range do so in these programs.
- Participation in faith-based programs is higher

for individuals living in the Midwest (28% mentoring in a faith setting) or the South (23%). Individuals in the Northeast and the West are more likely than the rest of the nation to mentor in the sports/recreations/hobby/club types of programs that comprise our “other” category. There are not significant differences in the other program types based on region of the country.

- Unsurprisingly, participation in faith-based programs is highest among those who rated their level of religious participation as strong.
- Individuals are also more likely to be mentoring in a faith-based program when they have teenagers living in the home—21% of structured mentors with a teen in the home mentor through their faith institution.
- Faith-based programs are more popular among those with lower income levels, but not the extremely poor. Those in the “lower” and “low-mid” ranges are most likely to mentor in faith contexts, as shown in Figure 33. This Figure also illustrates the popular forms of mentoring across all income levels.

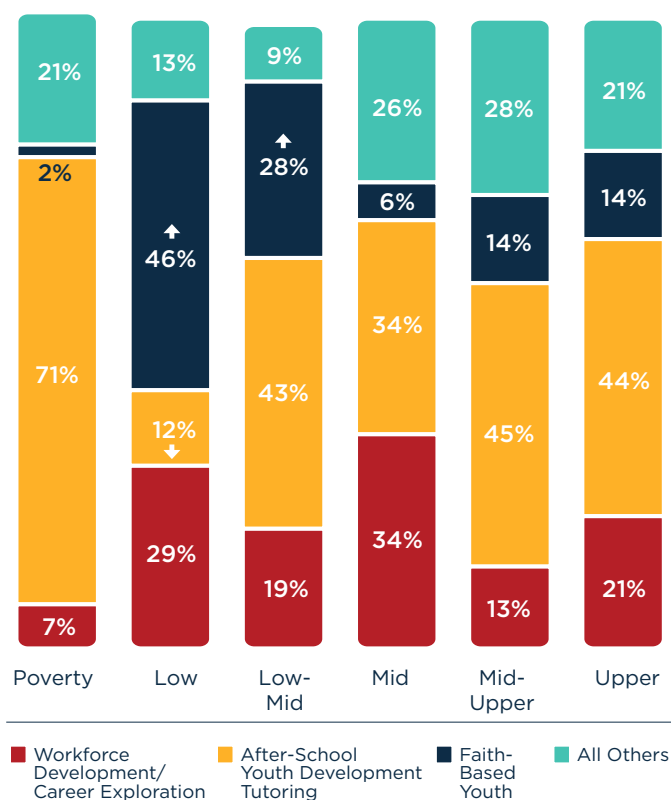


Figure 33. Involvement in Program Types by Mentor Income Level

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; By Income Level: *Poverty n=11, Low n=23, Low-Mid n=23, Mid n=43, Mid-Upper n=48, Upper n=60

Youth Served by Structured Mentors

One of the more surprising findings from this study is the high percentages of structured mentors who reported mentoring three or more young people. While recent research by MENTOR has pointed out the growing prevalence of group mentoring models—19% of programs in one survey reported using a group model, reaching 35% of all mentees, which was actually a slightly higher figure than pure one-to-one programs reach³²—it was a bit shocking to see the high numbers of youth that mentors reported serving. As shown in Figure 34, high percentages of mentors in all program types reported working with three or more youth at a time, with the average number in workforce programs approaching ten youth and the average in after-school programs reaching almost eight youth.

Clearly, these are group- or cohort-based approaches where individuals are encouraged to provide mentoring to large groups of young people simultaneously. It is unclear whether these mentors are simply engaged in a number of one-to-one matches at once or if they tend to meet with multiple mentees at a time (both approaches are likely well-represented in our sample).

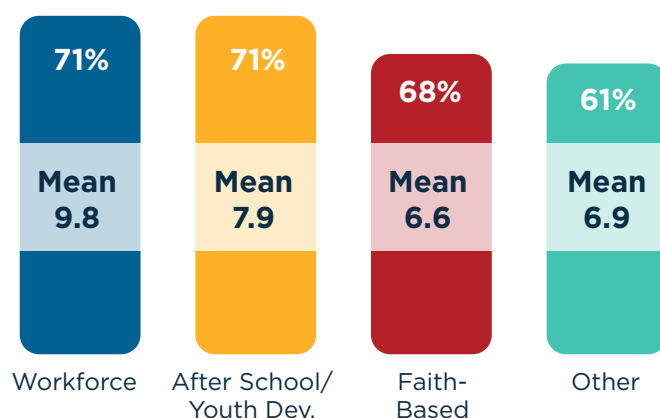


Figure 34. Percentage of Mentors Working with Three or More Youth (w/ Average Number) by Program Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; By Program Type: Workforce n=50, Afterschool/Youth Development n=89, Faith-Based n=26, All Others n=46

Because of the high numbers of youth mentored in group or multi-match programs, we find that the average structured mentor is devoting a lot of time each month to mentoring activities (Figure 35). We see that those mentoring in after-school and youth development contexts spend the most total hours-per-month mentoring, while those in faith settings or in the sports, hobby, and recreational groups that comprised the “other” category spend the least amount of time mentoring, perhaps a reflection that those groups simply meet less often than would be possible in a school or workplace setting.

When multiplying the 24 million individuals that our data suggest are serving as structured mentors by the average number of hours they reported a month, we wind up with a staggering *485,662,400 hours* of mentoring offered to the nation’s youth through

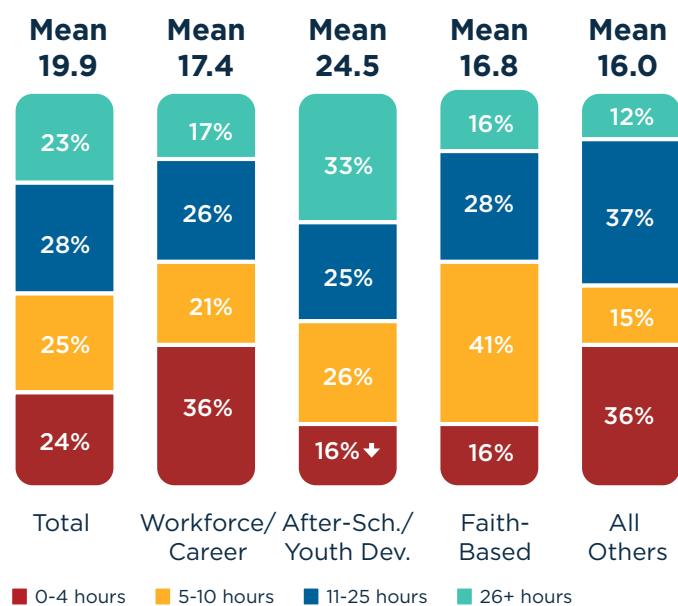


Figure 35. Percentage of Mentors Working with Three or More Youth (w/ Average Number) by Program Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Workforce Development, n=50, Afterschool/Youth Development n=89, Faith-Based, n=26, All Others, n=46

programs *each month*. While it is certainly possible that this number is a bit overinflated and skewed by group mentoring models where each individual youth might not be getting individualized mentoring every month, it is still an impressive number that speaks to just how involved the nation's adults are in mentoring. They don't just think mentoring is valuable, they are walking their talk by showing up for young people in literally millions of hours of mentoring every month.

Mentoring Youth from Different Ethnicities and Socioeconomic Levels

One of the challenges that the mentoring field has struggled with is the equitable distribution of mentoring across society. There has been considerable research pointing to the fact that youth in low-income communities not only are more likely to report never having a mentor growing up³³, but when they do get a mentor they are more likely to report being mentored by an extended family member or someone who themselves is a lower-income adult (See Robert Putnam's seminal book, *Our*

Kids: The American Dream in Peril, for a detailed breakdown of how youth in the lowest household income quartile are least likely to be mentored by an adult who is a high-end professional or who brings high-level networking and social capital resources to the relationship. These findings are also reiterated in recent analyses of Add Health data by Raposa and colleagues³⁴.)

Structured mentors are quite likely to mention mentoring across race and class lines. Over 70% of structured mentors report mentoring a youth from a different ethnicity (73%) or a different socioeconomic status (77%). In fact, structured mentors are more likely than informal mentors to mention mentoring those from a different ethnicity (61% for informal mentors) or income level (70%).

Unfortunately, we did not ask additional questions that would have allowed us to more accurately assess just who is giving and getting mentoring services. Knowing that most structured mentors tend to be from the upper income levels, it is highly likely that many wealthy structured mentors are mentoring youth who may be of a different socioeconomic level, but who are still from relatively highly resourced families. Conversely, we might find many lower income adults mentoring youth who are in abject poverty. We simply did not collect enough information to know how well-structured mentoring programs reach youth in the lowest income levels.

But it is worth noting that there were not significant differences in response to these questions based on the mentor's own ethnicity or income level. In other words, we have little reason to believe that only White or wealthier individuals mentor youth from different ethnicities or classes. This shatters one negative stereotype about mentoring programs, as we find that all mentors reported relatively high levels of mentoring youth who were different than them in terms of their ethnic background and household income.

Ages of Youth Served



We also see differences in the ages of youth served by the type of structured program mentors are working in. What's notable in Figure 36 is that many mentors indicate that they work with mentees in several age ranges. But there are some predictable patterns here: Mentors in workforce and career programs are much more likely to report mentoring older youth; those working in school and after-school programs reach the younger ages but drop off in mentoring youth who have moved on to higher education.

Motivations for Participation in Structured

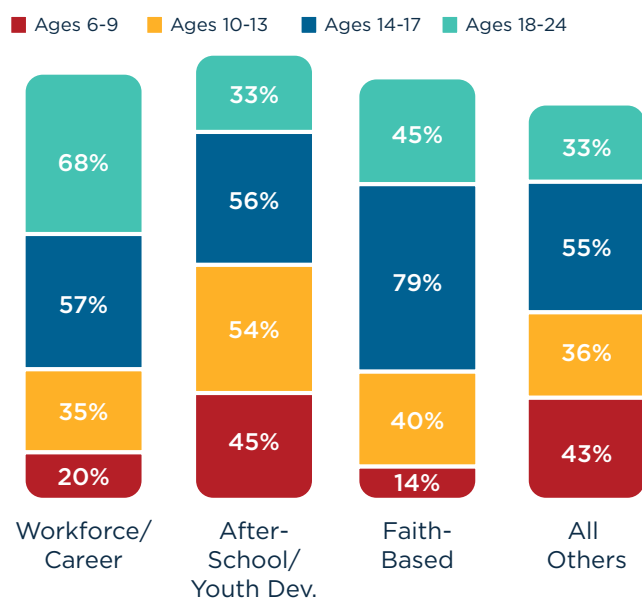


Figure 36. Age Ranges Served by Structured Mentors across Program Types

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; By Program Type: Workforce n=50, After-school/Youth Development n=89, Faith-Based n=26, All Others n=46

Mentoring

We asked respondents a series of questions related to their motivation to mentor. If we can understand what has drawn current mentors to the programs they serve in, we are more able to craft public awareness messages that speak to these motivations and grow the numbers of adults who find their way to a structured program.

As shown in Figure 37, there were some major reasons that adults said they mentor in a structured program, with the most resonant being:

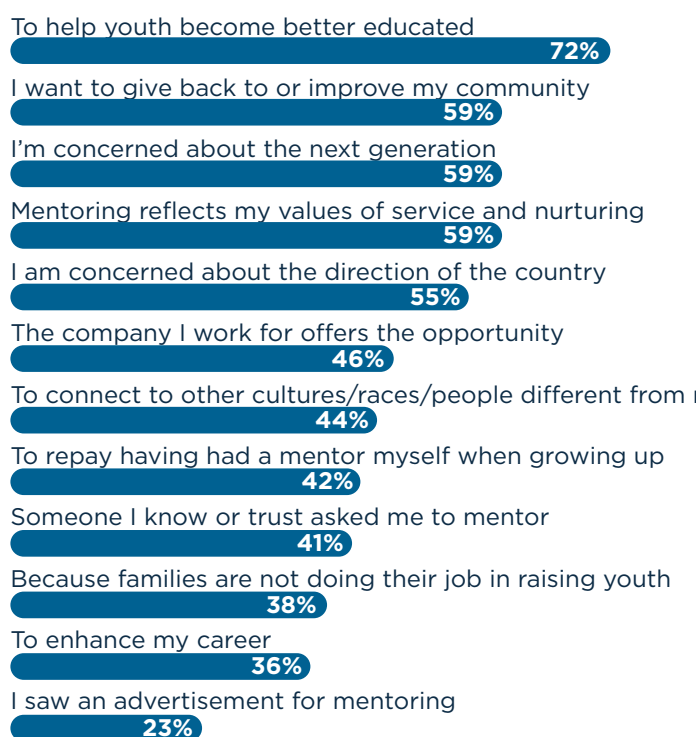


Figure 37. Major Reasons for Structured Mentors' Engagement

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

- Mentoring helps youth become better educated.
- Mentoring is a way to give back and improve your community.
- Mentoring allows an active participation in shaping the success of future generations.
- Mentoring allows you to serve and nurture others.

When looking more broadly at motivations to mentor, the average mentor cites almost six major reasons they were motivated to mentor—and over nine reasons if we include “minor” ones. Thus, it seems that most mentors' decision to mentor is not based on just one factor, but rather a constellation of many motivations.



There are only a handful of differences in these motivations across demographic categories. In general, Black adults are more likely to list more reasons for mentoring (with “helping youth become better educated,” “concern about the next generation,” and “giving back to or improving my community” each cited by more than 70% of Black respondents. Asian and Pacific Islanders were least likely to cite a number of motivations for mentoring, with significantly low endorsements of “giving back or improving my community” (39%), “concern about the direction of the country” (32%), or “to enhance my career” (14%).

Women are more likely than men to mention that mentoring reflects their values of service and nurturing (69% compared to 52% of men) or that they mentor to repay having had a mentor themselves as a child (54% to only 34% of men).

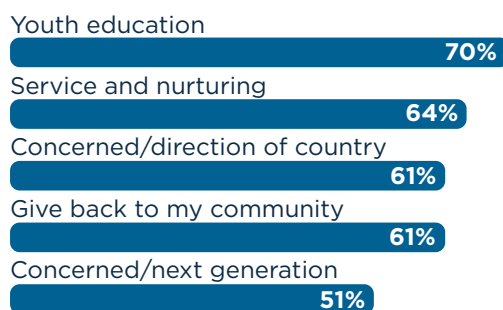
Mentors living in the South were more likely to cite being motivated by giving back to the community (72% of mentors in the South cited this) and career enhancement reasons (45%). Mentors in the Midwest were more likely to be motivated by being directly asked by someone they know or trust (58%, with no other area of the country rising above 43%).

Figure 38 illustrates some of the differences by age, showing the differences in the top five choices for each age range. It’s worth noting that younger and older adults are more likely to be concerned about the direction of the country, while those in middle age are more motivated by their employer’s involvement or by the opportunity to connect to other races and cultures.

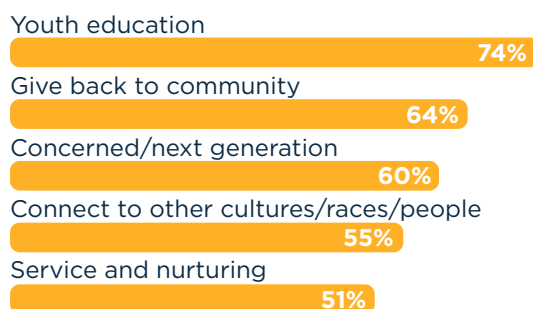
Goals and Activities of Structured Mentors

As noted many times in this report, mentoring is being applied in many diverse contexts and settings, with often very disparate goals for youth from program to program. To get a better sense of what matches are focused on, we asked mentors how

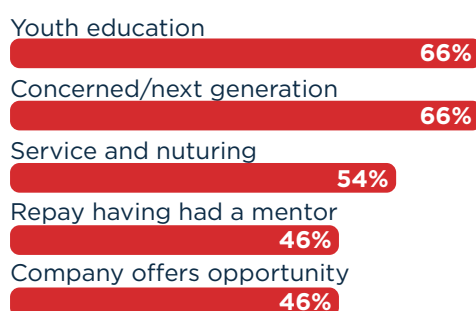
Ages 18-29



Ages 30-39



Ages 40-49



Ages 50+

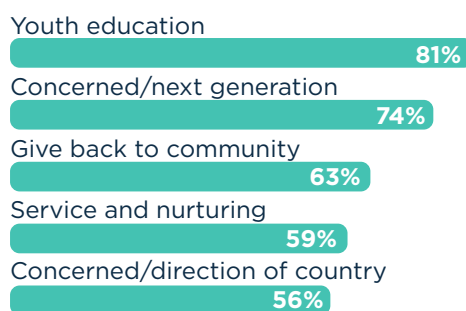


Figure 38. Top 5 Structured Mentor Motivations by Age

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; By Age: Ages 18-29 n=66, Ages 30-39 n=68, Ages 40-49, n=37, Ages 50+ n=40



they spend their time with mentees.

As shown in Figure 39, structured mentors report a number of activities in their mentoring relationships that speak to the issues and concerns where mentors most often offer their guidance and support. Almost half of structured mentors spend their time helping youth set and achieve goals, as well as offering emotional and social support. Other popular activities are related to types of mentee skill development: educational support (40% of mentors), learning new skills (38%), and career employment skills (32%).

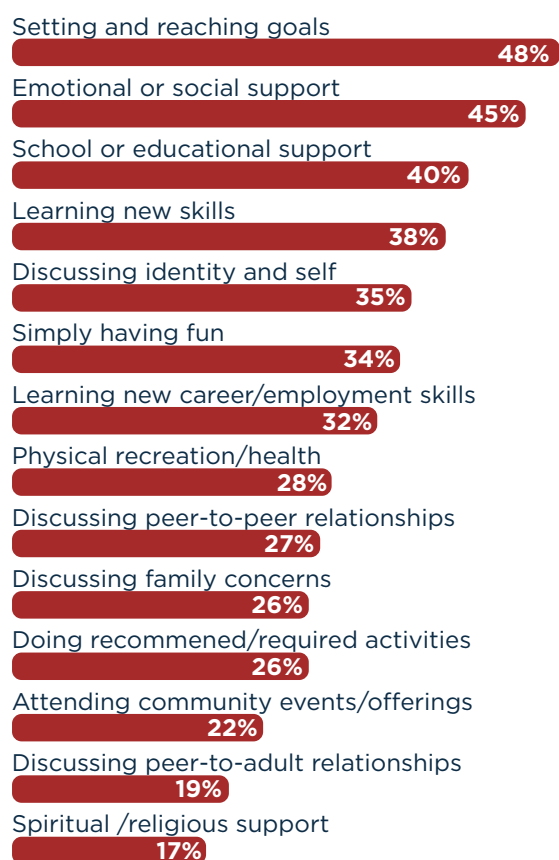


Figure 39 - Structured Mentoring Activities

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

Perhaps surprisingly, only 26% of structured mentors indicated that they spend their time doing activities that were required (or highly recommended)

by the program. In a recent survey of the nation's mentoring programs, MENTOR found that half of the responding programs indicated they used a set curriculum to guide match activities³⁵. The lower percentage reported by mentors here may indicate that more programs are allowing mentors and mentees the freedom to choose whatever activities seem appropriate than we suspect, although it might also be true that the question was misinterpreted or that they didn't feel the suggested activities of the program qualified as "required."

As expected, we find some statistically significant differences in activities across program types:

- Spiritual support is much more prominent in faith-based programs (57% of mentors in these programs said they spend time offering this) than in other programs.
- Workplace/career mentors spend relatively little time on educational support (15% of mentors in these settings) or discussing peer relationships (9%). They are, however, the most likely to support the growth of job skills (53%) compared to mentors in other program types.
- Mentors in faith programs are least likely to spend time focused on helping youth learn new skills (only 16% cited this activity).

Mentor demographics and psychographics also correlate with some activity selection:

- Strong religious participants are four times more likely to offer spiritual or religious support to their mentees than are mentors with no or little religious participation.
- Liberals are twice as likely to focus on skill development with their mentees, and they join with "moderates" in being twice as likely to provide educational support compared to conservatives (who, in turn, are twice as likely to offer religious support to youth).



- Asian and Pacific Islander mentors in structured programs are twice as likely as other ethnicities to offer educational support, enhance mentees' career skills, and engage in recommended or required program activities.
- More affluent structured mentors are more likely to help youth set and reach goals, learn new skills generally, or grow their career- or job-related skills.

The patterns we find around activities generally cluster the way one might expect: workplace mentors emphasize career skills and have a goal-oriented approach, mentors in educational settings emphasize educational skills and relational support, and mentors in faith settings focus more on spiritual and religious support of young people. But it is worth noting that we found mentors in every type of program indicating that they offer every kind of support we asked about. In fact, the average structured mentor said that they did about 4.4 of the activities we asked about. So while there are general trends that may be predicted by the type of program or the mentor's own background, it is once again apparent that mentors wear many hats and often shift their work as mentors based on the needs of the child they are working with. Structured mentors are, if anything, highly flexible and responsive in what they emphasize in their work with young people.

Structured Mentors' Benefits and Challenges

While knowing how mentors came to the programs they serve in and what motivated them to sign up to mentor can be helpful in future recruitment efforts, the most effective selling points for mentoring might come from the benefits that structured mentors say they get from the experience. As shown in Figure 40, structured mentors reported a wide variety of benefits from their experience. Finding a sense of purpose, feelings of giving back and investing in the next generation, and simply having new and fun experiences were the most commonly cited benefits by structured mentors.



Figure 40 - Benefits to Structured Mentors

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

We did allow mentors to tell us in their own words about the benefits they receive from mentoring. Their quotes illustrate what mentors feel they have gained from their experiences in their own words:

- *"I feel a connection with them and to guide them in a positive lifestyle makes not only the community a better place to live but I feel better about myself as well." (Age 33)*
- *"[I mentor] to give young people additional chances like I got." (Age 46)*
- *". . . it is also good therapy for me and helps me feel better about myself . . ." (Age 39)*
- *"It is a great thing to do for your fellow man. I love it." (Age 57)*

But mentoring in a structured program is often not easy, especially when working with youth or families that bring significant needs to the relationship or who face challenges in supporting the work of the mentor. In fact, these concerns are among the most cited by structured mentors: 67% of them note both issues communicating with the mentee's family or a lack of support from the mentee's family, with 70%



also citing the severe needs of the child or family as being a concern. Figure 41 notes how challenges are rated in terms of being major or minor in nature.

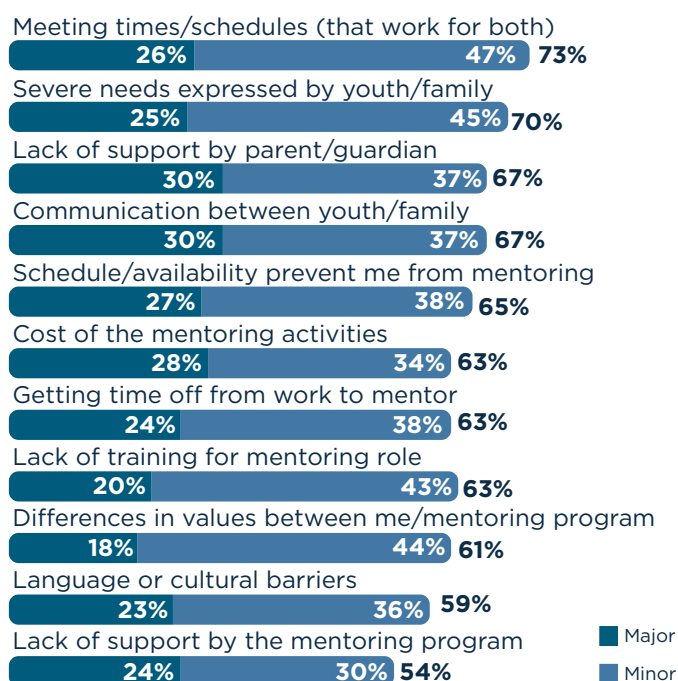


Figure 41 - Major and Minor Challenges Reported by Structured Mentors

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211
Note: Some numbers may not add up precisely due to rounding.

It is also worth noting that the amount of time and the scheduling of mentoring meetings, as well as issues in getting time off from work, are all noted as challenges by a majority of structured mentors. Combined with the findings in the previous chapter on the role that time and schedule concerns play in non-mentors' lack of engagement, it does seem that the logistical barriers of being a mentor to a child through a program still remain after making the commitment. The reality might be that most mentors simply accept that the time constraints of mentoring are just part of the effort that goes into being there for a young person. But, as noted previously, things like paid time off from employers might go a long way toward alleviating these time-related challenges.

The average structured mentor reports only facing two or three major challenges, with only 18% indicating that they experience six or more of the challenges on this list. Like all human relationships, these mentoring relationships have a few issues that consistently need ironing out. When thinking about recruitment of new mentors, programs may be wise to not understate these challenges, but instead emphasize the program support they offer that can alleviate the impact of these ongoing challenges.

Perceptions of Impact and Mentor Satisfaction

Knowing that many structured mentors are motivated by perceptions that they are improving their community or giving the next generation a helping hand, we wanted to see if they felt like they were being successful.

The answer is a resounding "yes." As shown in Figure 42, almost 80% of mentors feel that they are making a big difference in the lives of the youth they mentor. These perceptions do not vary significantly by any type of mentoring program, nor do they

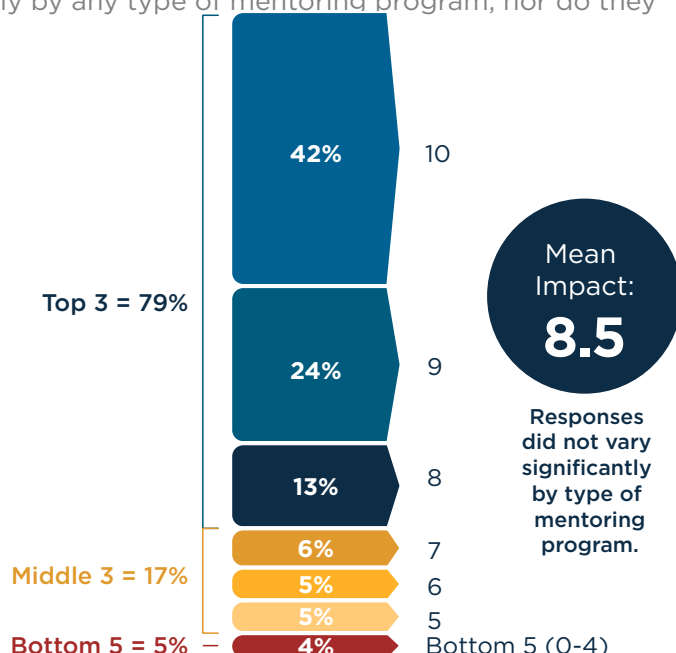


Figure 42. Perceptions of Structured Mentors' Impact

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211



differ based on the number of years a mentor has been mentoring, whether their mentee was from the same ethnicity or socioeconomic class, the number of youth mentored, or even other factors like whether the mentor was mentored themselves as a young person. The mean level of impact for all structured mentors is 8.5, suggesting that most mentors, regardless of background or experience, feel that the investment of their time and skills as a mentor is well worth the effort.

We also asked structured mentors how they feel about their current mentoring relationships and, if they are mentoring more than one youth, to consider their most recent mentee. As shown in Figure 43, mentors rate their relationships as very close, which other research suggests is an important precursor to youth benefiting from the mentoring experience³⁶.

Structured mentors also rate their satisfaction with the relationship around the same levels as they do the closeness. The average rating of relationship

satisfaction is 8.3 with 70% of structured mentors rating their satisfaction in the top three levels. We found a significant correlation between closeness and satisfaction (a correlation coefficient of 0.61) indicating that one is rarely present without the other. This suggests that even though many of these mentors are working with more than three young people at a time, they are still working hard to develop personal connections and genuine closeness with the youth they mentor.

Keys to Successful Mentoring

When asked about what they felt helped make their mentoring relationships successful, structured mentors cited a number of key ingredients. This was an open-ended question where respondents could write whatever they felt was most pertinent in their own words. We then coded their responses into several categories, as illustrated in Figure 44. Generally, concepts like providing leadership and enrichment, open communication and listening, and simply providing love and caring were among the most common responses. Below we offer some direct quotes from mentors about what they felt has made their work successful:

- “Giving them an outlet of an adult they can talk to outside of parents or authority figures. Someone they can trust.” (Age 32)
- “Connecting with the person and understanding their needs and goals. Being a good listener and teacher and pacing things so the person feels they are grasping the new skills they are learning.” (Age 42)
- “Dignity and respect working collaboratively; supporting and encouraging; understanding readiness and motivation.” (Age 73)
- “Relating and listening to the person without being judgmental.” (Age 56)

Support from the Mentoring Program

Knowing that structured mentors reported a wide

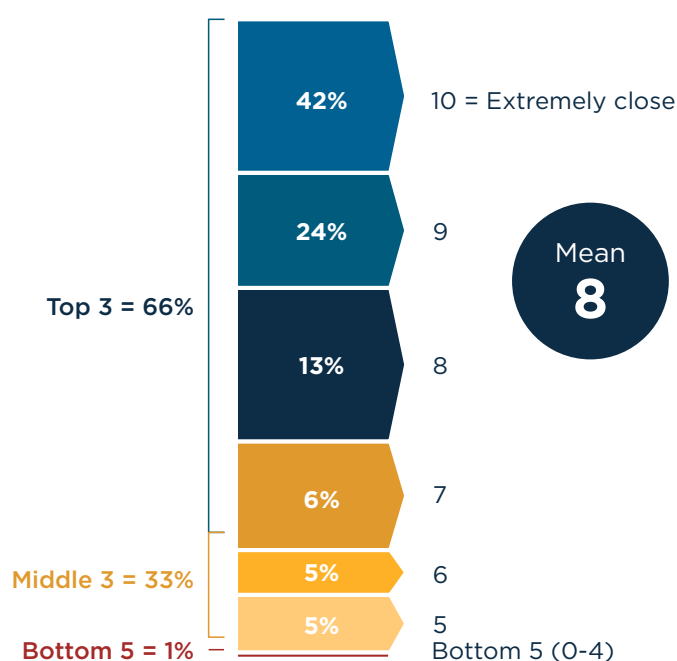


Figure 43. Perceptions of Relationship Closeness (Structured Mentors)

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

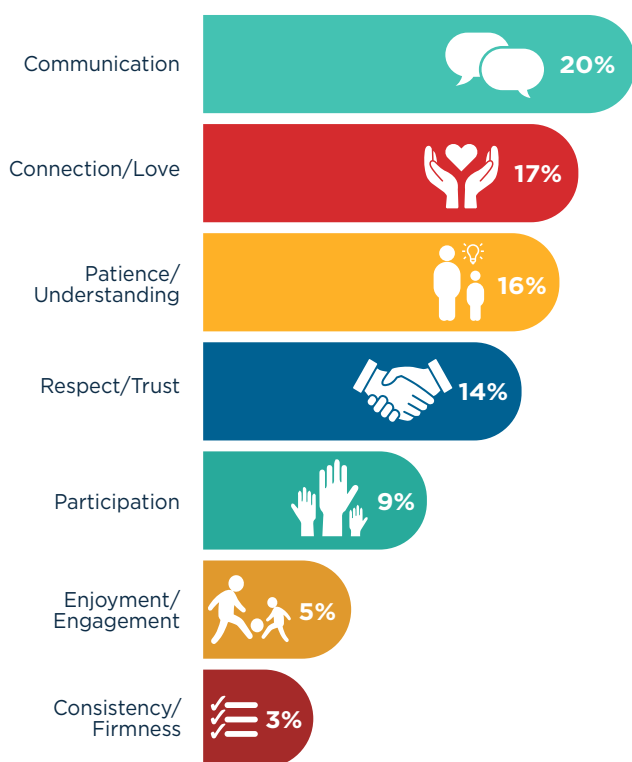


Figure 44. Structured Mentors' Keys to a Successful Mentoring Relationship

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

variety of challenges in their mentoring relationships, we were interested in exploring the role that their program staff and infrastructure play in supporting their mentoring and helping them smooth over those challenging moments.

As shown in Figure 45, structured mentors rate both the amount and quality of support they have received from the program they mentor in very highly. However, those who cited “lack of support by the program” as a major challenge were more likely to rate the amount of support lower (but not the quality, suggesting that the sporadic support they did get from the program was, in fact, helpful).

Unfortunately, 27% of structured mentors rate either the level or quality of program support as medio-

cre or worse (six or lower on our scale). This suggests that about a quarter of the nation’s mentors in programs are not getting the support they need to overcome challenges and barriers to their ongoing involvement. Those mentoring in after-school and youth development contexts were least likely to rate the amount of support highly, which is surprising considering that these programs are likely to be those most associated with what might be considered a traditional youth mentoring program. Those mentoring in our “other” category of programs (sports/recreation/hobby/club programs) were the most likely to rate the amount of support received highly by a statistically significant margin.

Likelihood of Continuing to Mentor or Recommending Mentoring to Others

Given that structured mentors feel both strong perceptions of success, but also some challenges and occasional frustration with the level of support they receive, we asked about whether they were likely to continue mentoring in the future or would recommend mentoring to someone else in their life. Can mentoring programs retain these valuable individuals over time? And will these mentors serve as that much-needed “army of recruiters” to get their friends, family, and coworkers to also mentor in a program?

The good news for the nation’s mentoring programs is that the vast majority of structured mentors answered yes to both questions. As shown in Figure 46, the average ratings of likelihood to continue and likelihood to recommend are 8.7 and 8.5, respectively. Very few mentors (2% or less) feel so negatively about the experience that they are not willing to keep doing it or recommend it to others.

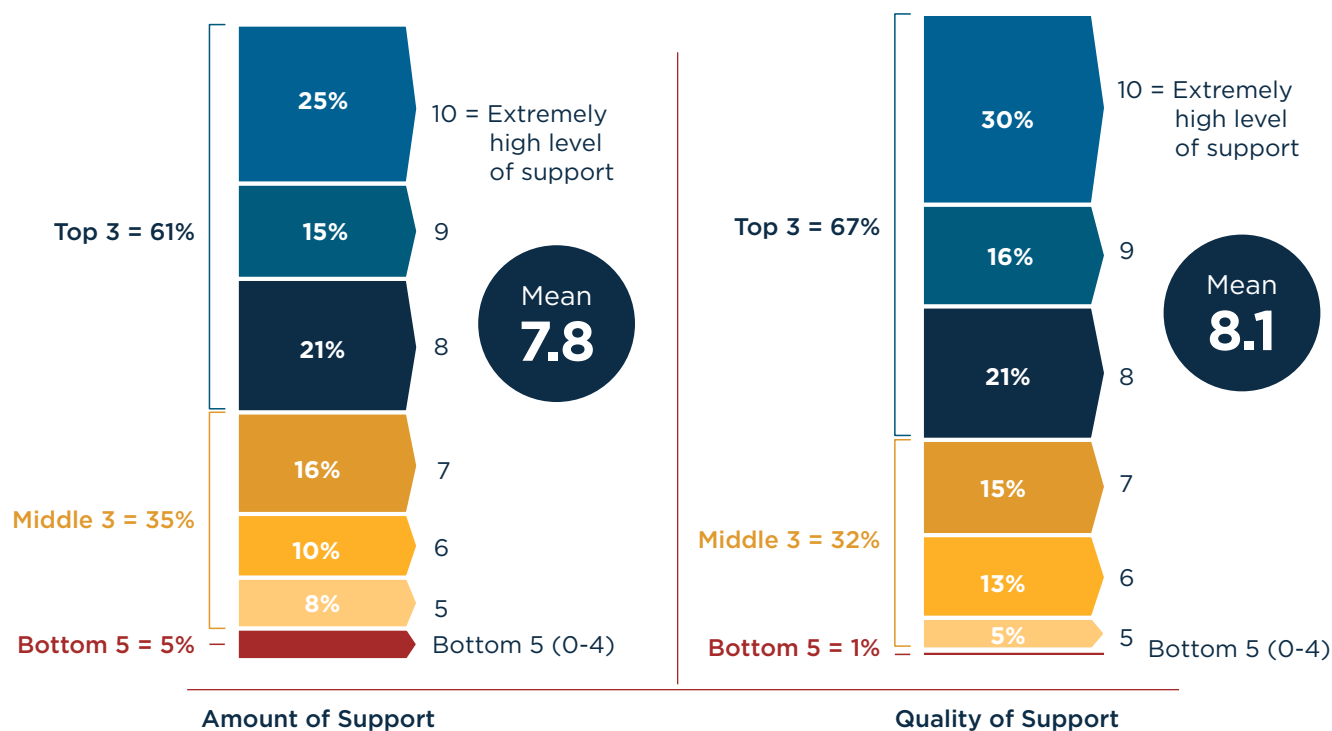


Figure 45. Amount and Quality of Structured Mentors' Program Support

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211

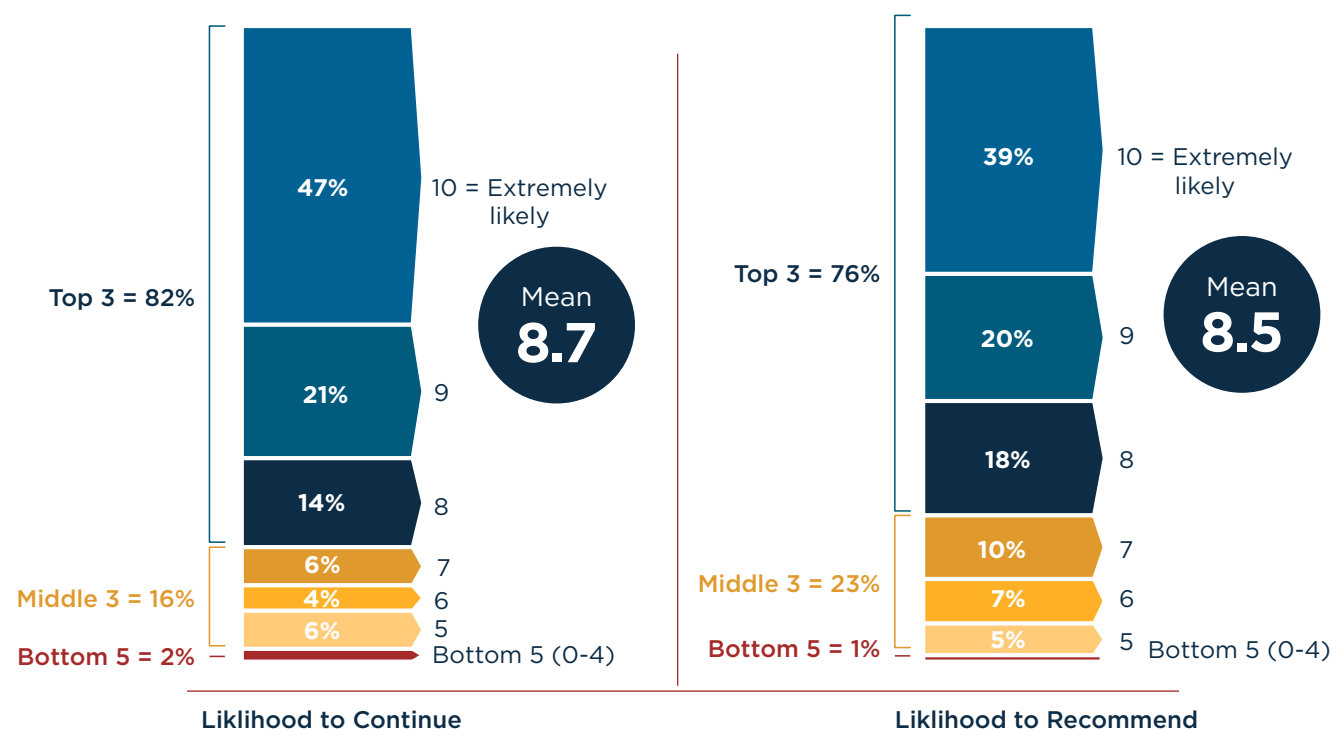


Figure 46. Likelihood to Continue and Recommend to Others (Structured Mentors)

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211



There were a few differences based on program type:

- Mentors in workforce/career programs are the least likely to continue (8% of these mentors rated their likelihood in the bottom 5 levels)
- Mentors in faith-based programs are the most likely to recommend mentoring in the program to others (81% rated their likelihood in the top 3 levels)

And thankfully, we do get some evidence that mentors are supporting that recruitment: seven out of ten say that they have helped their mentoring program recruit new mentors.

We also tried to predict, out of the many demographic, psychographic, and experiential factors we asked respondents about, if there were key things that led individuals to be more likely to continue mentoring or recommend to others. To that end, we conducted some regression analyses that attempted to identify the factors that might keep mentors in programs or enable them to recruit others.

Predictors of Likelihood to Continue

As shown in Figure 47, our statistical model determined a cluster of factors that predicts whether mentors say they will keep mentoring in the future. While this analytical technique attempts to separate the effects of each variable into discrete measures, it must be recognized that all five of these factors work together to explain the decision to continue mentoring. These five reasons combined predict about half of the likelihood that a mentor will continue.

As we can see, the quality and amount of support received through the program certainly play a role, with a number of other factors playing a lesser role. Mentors are more likely to continue if:

- Youth or their families have higher levels of need
- The youth is of a different race or ethnicity
- The mentor has more years of experience mentoring

The remaining 53% of variables behind mentors' decision to continue mentoring were not captured by this "best fit" model. In other words, these five factors were the ones that stood out the most. Hopefully this information will help programs think more about the many factors that may influence mentor retention. It does seem, however, that many programs are putting considerable effort into mentor retention: the average structured mentor in this study has been a mentor for 4.4 years, with 20% indicating they have been doing it for six years or more.

Predictors of Likelihood to Recommend to Others

We had more success using analyses to predict which mentors might be willing to recruit others to the program. As illustrated in Figure 48, we were able to account for 60% of a mentor's likelihood to recommend the program to others based on only three factors:

- The quality of support offered by the program
- Mentoring a youth from a different socioeconomic status
- The support of the youth's parents

These factors work together to explain over half of a mentor's decision to bring others into the program. But it is perhaps most useful to programs and practitioners as a caution about what might hinder using mentors to recruit others. A surprising 43% of the decision to recommend is driven by the quality of support they receive from the program staff. This means that while mentors may not quit mentoring



Quality of support and amount of support work together, with more impact gained by quality of support. Satisfaction with quality of support rarely exists without satisfaction with amount of support, though the converse is not true.

While this analytical technique attempts to separate the effects of each variable into discrete measures, it must be recognized that all five of these factors work together to explain the decision to continue mentoring. When controlling for the effect of length of time mentoring, mentors working in challenging situations may not be more likely to continue mentoring.

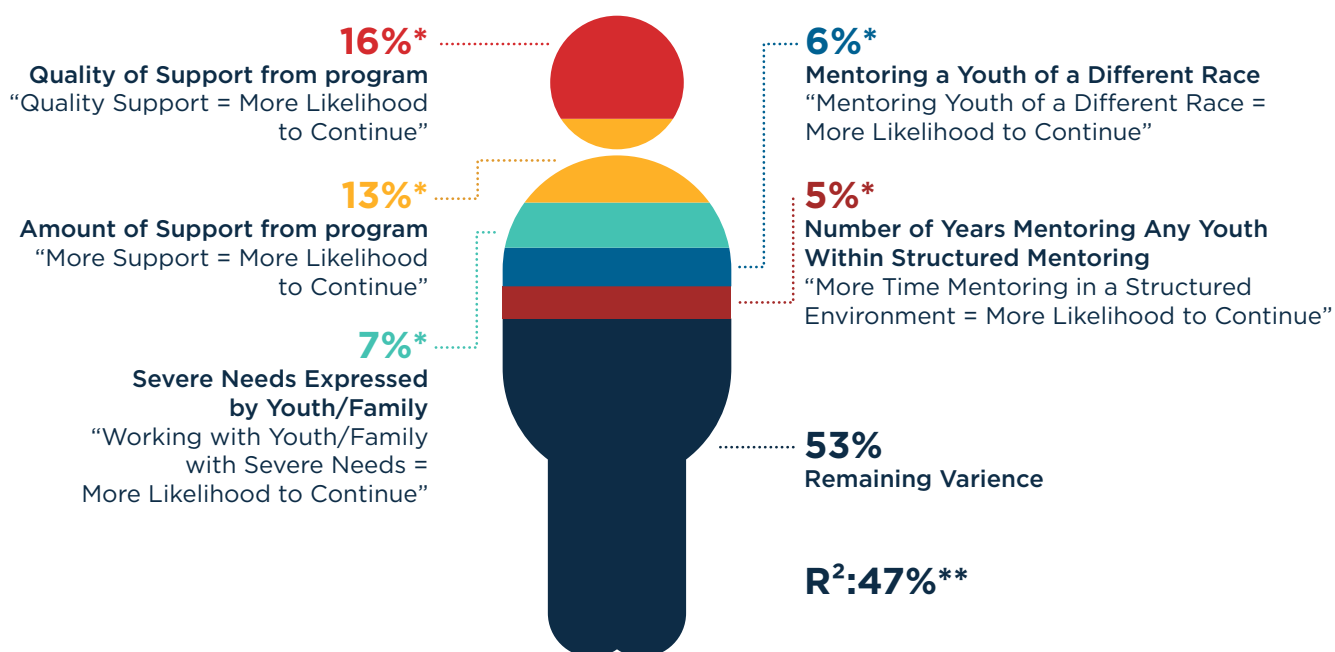


Figure 47. Predictors of Structured Mentors' Likelihood to Continue Mentoring

R Square (R²) and Beta Coefficient based on Stepwise Regression.

*Index Score based on the Beta Coefficient. Beta Coefficient refers to the relationship between the independent variable (e.g. Quality of Support) and the dependent variable (e.g. Likelihood to Continue Mentoring). **R Square (R²) metric is the amount of variability that can be explained by the individual factors. For example, .47 means that 47% of the likelihood to continue is explained by individual factors.

in the future when staff support is low, they are very unlikely to recommend the experience to others if they are unhappy with the help they have received from the program when they have encountered challenges.

In fact, one of those challenges also appears in this model: a lack of support from the youth's parents. When programs are unable to work with parents in a way that turns them into partners in the mentoring relationship, mentors feel that lack of support and are less likely to ask a friend, family member, or coworker to endure that same experience.

These collective findings on structured mentors paint a portrait of a group of Americans that come to mentoring programs for a variety of meaningful reasons, who meet youth where they are at and offer a tremendous variety of supports and opportunities. They teach skills, they model positive behavior, and they provide love and happy moments to the lives of young people. They feel like they get as much out of the experience as the youth do, and find their relationships to be close and fulfilling, in spite of the challenges and the ups and downs.



Self-assessment of the “difference” made in the youth’s life and level of closeness with the youth did not have a measurable impact on the decision to continue mentoring or the likelihood to recommend structured mentoring.

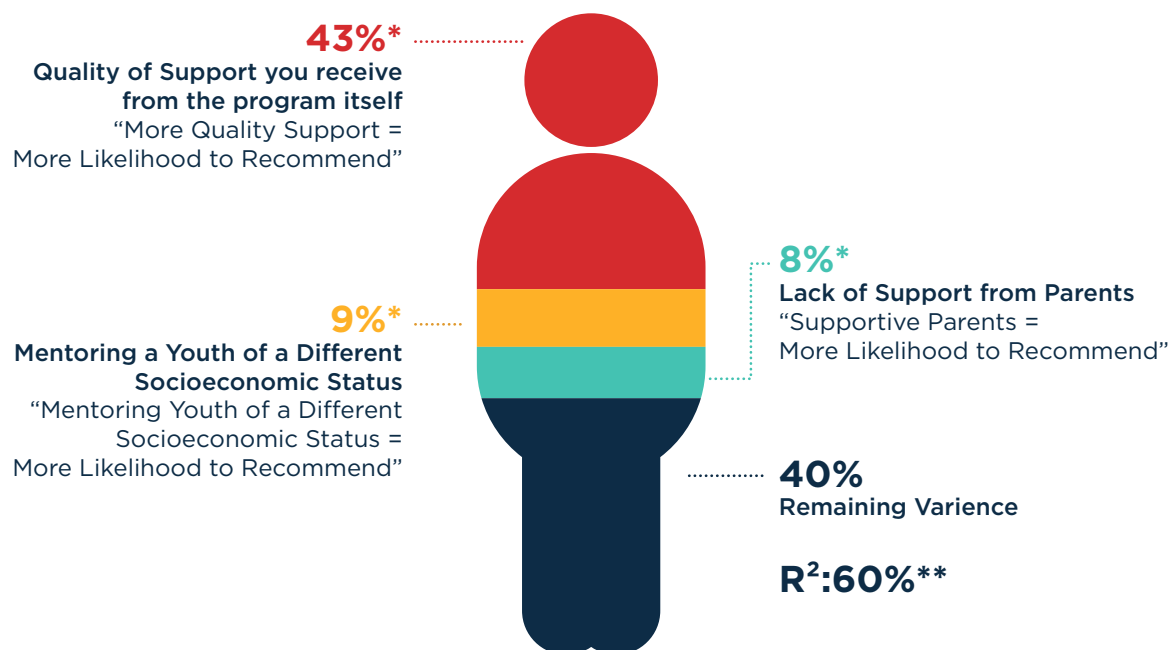


Figure 47. Predictors of Structured Mentors' Likelihood of Recommending the Program to Others

R Square (R²) and Beta Coefficient based on Stepwise Regression.

*Index Score based on the Beta Coefficient. Beta Coefficient refers to the relationship between the independent variable (e.g. Quality of Support) and the dependent variable (e.g. Likelihood to Recommend **R Square (R²) metric is the amount of variability that can be explained by the individual factors. For example, .60 means that 60% of the likelihood to continue is explained by individual factors.

But they also make it clear that they need support from the parents of the youth they serve and from the program staff as well to keep doing this work. MENTOR is encouraged by the positive affirmation from the American public that being a mentor in a program is a rich and rewarding experience. These findings also give us good reason to keep doing our work to strengthen the quality of mentoring programs and to give mentors the tools and strategies they need to maximize their effectiveness in this role they so clearly value.

INFORMAL MENTORING EXPERIENCES



As noted in the introduction of this report, one of the main motivations MENTOR had in conducting this survey was to better quantify and understand the large volume of informal mentoring that youth receive outside of the auspices of a structured mentoring program. Based on our previous research, it seems clear that the majority of mentoring that youth experience throughout their childhood and adolescence happens through these informal means. Additionally, recent research has emphasized that the “web of support” that surrounds a young person—often in the form of informal mentors—can play a huge role in keeping young people on track academically and as they enter young adulthood³⁷. This survey represents a conscious effort to better understand and support informal mentoring relationships across the country and to make sure that we include these mentors when we think about the mentoring movement as a whole.

Rates and Volume of Informal Mentoring

As noted in the “Mentoring Rates and Profiles” chapter, the survey results indicate that about 18% of all American adults are currently serving as an informal mentor or have within the last year. This adds up to approximately 44 million individuals stepping into that role without the support of a program.

As with structured mentors, the average informal mentor has been serving in this role for about four years, with 22% reporting they have been an informal mentor for six years or longer. Informal mentors tend to spend less time mentoring each month than structured mentors: informal mentors spend 15.1 hours mentoring per month on average (compared to 19.9 for structured mentors). We also find fewer informal mentors spending more than 10 hours per month mentoring (36% of informal mentors indicated this, compared to 49% of structured mentors). As one might expect, informal mentors who met their mentee through a community connection (e.g., being neighbors or family friends) are much more like-

ly to be mentoring one or two mentees than those who met their mentees in an institutional setting, such as a school or workplace. On average, those mentoring through community connections average 3.9 mentees while institutionally connected mentors average 7.3.

When we add up these rates and hours, we estimate that informal mentors spend 655 million hours informally mentoring young people every month. This is a truly impressive and inspiring number and it reflects Americans’ capacity to be there for youth in their communities and the way that mentoring naturally fits into the lives of our citizens. But it also represents an area for growth and improvement. As discussed later in this chapter, informal mentors, much like their structured counterparts, expressed some needs and challenges. Too often, these caring adults face those barriers to mentoring a child alone.

How Informal Mentors Meet the Youth They Mentor

One of the aspects of informal mentoring we wanted to better understand is how these adults first

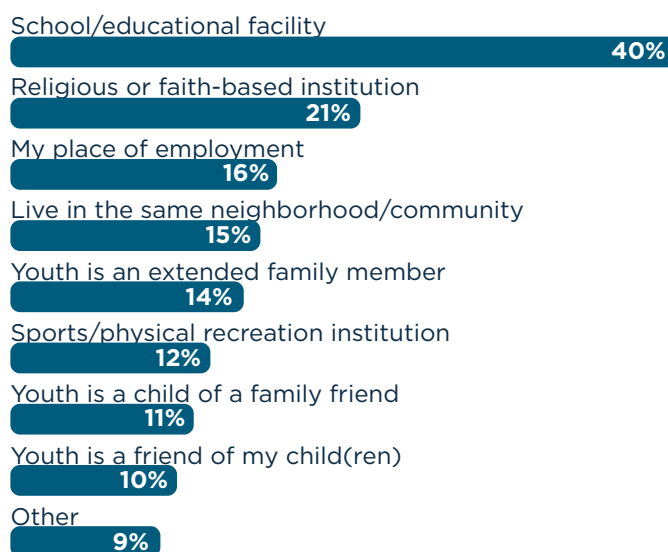


Figure 49- Means of Introduction to Mentored Youth (Informal Mentors)

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

Note: Multiple responses were permissible for means of introduction



met the youth that they eventually wound up mentoring—knowing the places where these relationships are likely to develop can help us support both adults and youth in those environments to maximize their mentoring opportunities and skills.

Figure 49 illustrates the ways informal mentors indicated they met their current mentees. Note that respondents could choose multiple options here to reflect the mentoring they do with several youth or to reflect that a youth might fall into more than one of these categories. Overall, 59% of informal mentors indicate that they met the youth they mentor through an institutional connection, with the remaining 41% citing a more “organic” connection, such as mentoring the child of a family friend or a friend of their own child.

Differences in activities engaged in based on how these connections were first made are discussed later in this chapter.

Ages and Demographics of Youth Served

Figure 50 shows that there are few differences in the age ranges of those served by informal mentors based on how they met. However, compared to structured mentors, informal mentors tend to report working with teenagers and young adults more: half of informal mentors are mentoring someone 14 to 17 years of age and over 40% are mentoring a young adult. This suggests that these mentors are especially relied upon by youth during the transition into adulthood and that, as we discuss later in this chapter, they frequently help adolescents wrestle with the types of serious and complicated issues that can make that transition perilous.

As with structured mentors, we also find that informal mentors are frequently serving youth from ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds different than their own. As a whole, 61% of informal mentors indicate they are mentoring a youth of a different ethnicity, with Asian and Pacific Islanders and Native

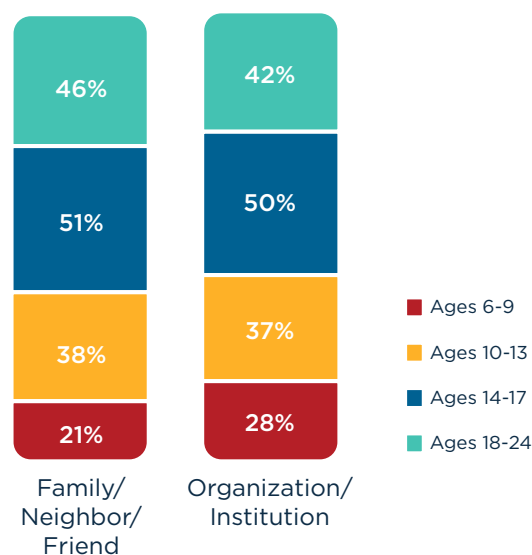


Figure 50. Age Ranges Served by Structured Mentors across Program Types

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393; Family/Neighbor/Friend n=161, Org/Institution n=280

American mentors most likely to indicate cross-ethnicity mentoring. But none of the differences were statistically significant based on the ethnicity of the mentors. Informal mentors of all ethnicities are likely to mentor youth who are different in this way.

There are, however, a few significant differences when looking at mentors’ own socioeconomic status. As shown in Figure 51, informal mentors at the lower income levels are significantly more likely to be mentoring a youth in the same socioeconomic level. Those in the upper income levels are most likely to be mentoring a youth of a different (presumably lower) socioeconomic level. So, while 70% of all informal mentors indicated they were mentoring across socioeconomic lines, it is the wealthier informal mentors that are doing it the most. This trend makes sense in that many informal mentoring relationships happen among individuals who are essentially neighbors, living in the same parts of town and interacting at shared localized community settings. One would assume that individuals living in close proximity would be likely to be of a similar economic status even if they are mixed ethnically—espe-



Mentor Youth of Different Socioeconomic Level

	Total	Poverty	Low	Low-Mid	Mid	Upper-Mid	Upper
Different	70%	32%	54%	60%	67%	83%↑	79%↑
Same	30%	68%↑	46%↑	40%	33%	17%	21%

Figure 51. Percentage of Informal Mentors Mentoring Youth of Same or Different Socioeconomic Level (by mentor income)

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393; By Ethnicity: Hispanic n=68, White n=261, Asian/PI n=44, Black n=53, Native n=26; By Income: Poverty n=25, Low n=56, Low-Mid n=43, Mid n=75, Mid-Upper n=71, Upper n=106

cially since much of the geographic “self-sorting” of American society over the last few generations has been along socioeconomic lines³⁸, not racial ones.

We do not find any differences in terms of mentoring youth of a different socioeconomic status along other dimensions, such as mentors’ political affiliation or level of religious participation.

Motivations for Being an Informal Mentor

Much like their structured mentor counterparts, informal mentors cite numerous reasons for being in this role. Figure 52 highlights many of their common motivations (respondents could pick more than one option), including:

- Feeling they could help with a specific need of the child they are mentoring
- Promoting educational success
- Feelings of giving back and nurturing the next generation or the community itself
- Concern about the next generation and the direction of the country itself

It is worth noting that a significant percentage of informal mentors (41%) indicated that being directly asked to mentor by someone they know or trust was a major influence on their decision. This suggests that recruitment campaigns for mentoring programs that use structured mentors to ask informal mentors

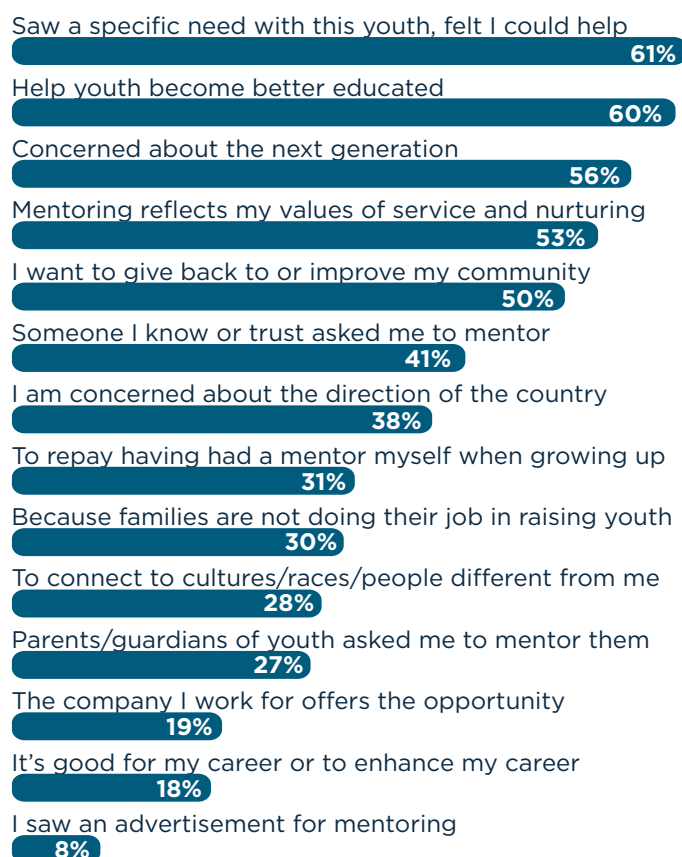


Figure 52. Major Reasons for Engaging in Informal Mentoring

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

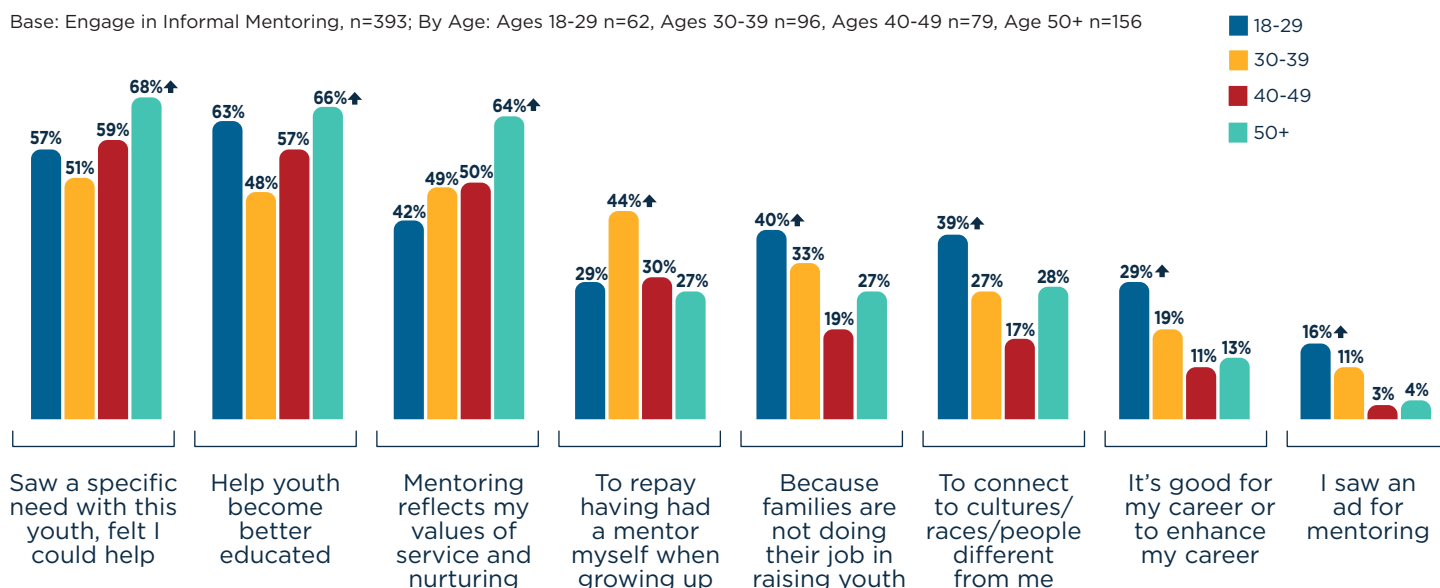
they know in their circle of friends, family, and colleagues might be effective in getting some of these informal mentors to bring their skills to a structured program. That “ask” by a trusted friend or family member is clearly a powerful motivator to get more involved with a young person in need. It also is a strong indicator that facilitating more youth-initiated mentoring—in which youth are trained to seek out valuable adults and start and maintain mentoring relationships—might dramatically increase the number of adults who transition into a mentoring role. A direct request from a young person is a hard thing to turn down.

There are several differences in motivations for informal mentoring across different ages. Figure 53 illustrates that younger Americans are more inclined



Figure 53.
Major Reasons for Informal Mentoring by Mentor Age

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393; By Age: Ages 18-29 n=62, Ages 30-39 n=96, Ages 40-49 n=79, Age 50+ n=156



to mentor out of a desire to connect to other races and cultures or because they saw an ad. Older Americans are more likely to mentor because they saw a need, they wanted to support education, or because it reflects their values. Interestingly, and speaking to a trend noted earlier in this report, individuals in their thirties are much more likely than older adults to report mentoring a youth today to repay a mentor they had in their youth. This suggests that perhaps these youth had more mentoring themselves growing up than previous generations. It will be interesting to see if these trends in “paying it forward” stay steady or even grow over time.

Locations and Activities of Informal Mentors

Given that informal mentoring is by definition untethered from a program that provides structure and, often, a meeting space, we wanted to learn more about where informal mentors most often met with their mentees. Figure 54 shows the wide variety of informal mentoring locations reported by our survey respondents. As with the parallel question posed to structured mentors, this one asked respon-

dents to limit their answers to three choices that were most prominent.

We note that there are some statistically significant differences in meeting location depending on whether the mentor and mentee met through an organization or institution or whether they met through a family or community connection. Unsurprisingly, institutionally connected mentors were much more likely to meet at a school or worksite, while those family/friend connected pairs were more likely to meet in one of the participants' homes, out in the community, or over the phone. This suggests that, for informal mentors who build these relationships at an institution they frequent, their relationships rarely move beyond the walls of those physical locations.

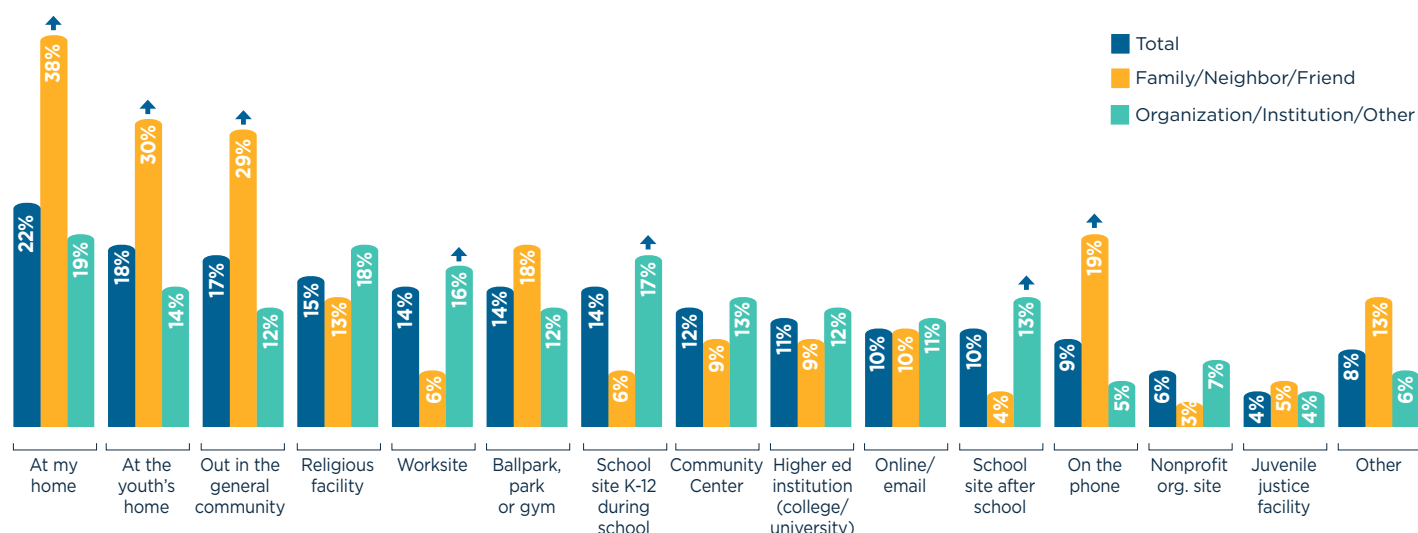


Figure 54. Informal Mentoring Locations by Connection to Youth

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393; Family/Neighbor/Friend n=161, Org/Institution n=280

Informal Mentoring Activities

The fact that institutionally connected mentors may do most of their mentoring at the school, workplace, or other settings where they originally met their mentee also seems to have an impact on mentoring activities. We find (see Figure 55) that informal mentors from the family/neighbor/community type of connection are significantly more likely to spend time with their mentee:

- Showing emotional or social support
- Discussing family concerns
- Discussing identity and self
- Discussing the youth's relationships with other adults
- Simply having fun

It seems that informal mentors in these institutional contexts have some challenges in discussing certain topics or providing more emotional support. They may lack the physical space for private conversations or face schedule demands that make it challenging to delve into more difficult conversations with their mentees. It should be noted that these adults often have other primary roles in working

with youth: teacher, coach, pastor, supervisor. There may be many good reasons why these adults are hesitant to, or are precluded from, building a more intimate mentoring connection with a young person, the type which would allow for discussions about more personal issues or open the door for “off-hours” communication any time the young person needed support. But it is also a bit of a missed opportunity to meet youth where they are at. Based on these findings, it seems prudent to encourage institutionally connected informal mentors in these settings to support their mentees in finding additional mentors outside of where they met who can provide the types of activities and supports they cannot based on the limitations of their role or the setting.

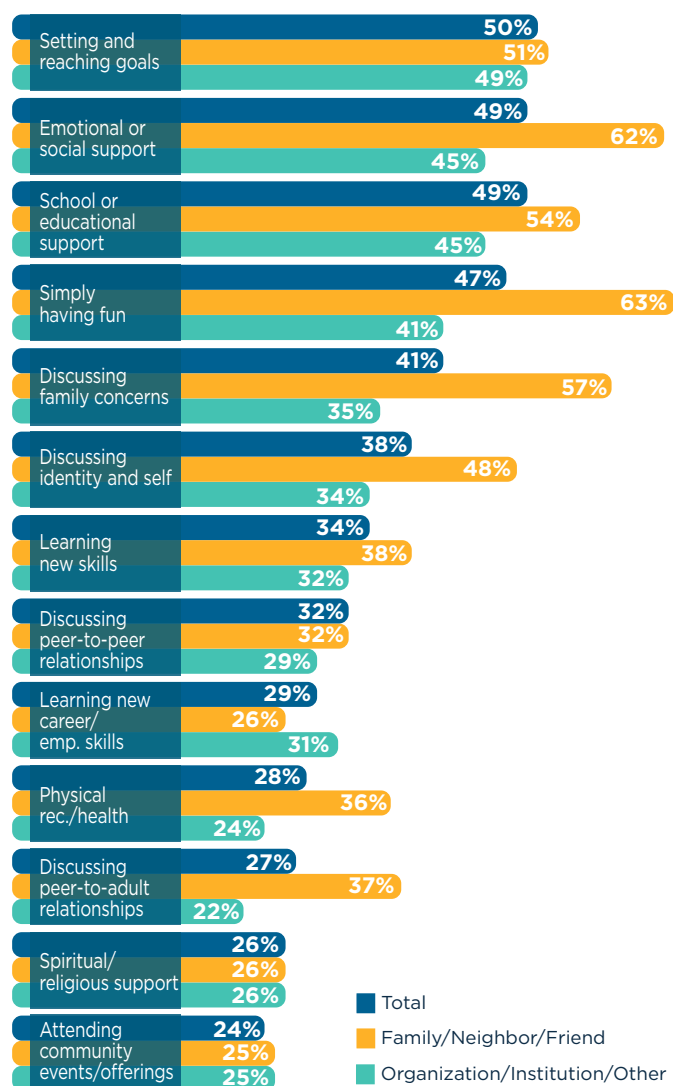


Figure 55. Informal Mentoring Activities by Connection to Youth

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393; Family/Neighbor/Friend n=161, Org/Institution n=280

- “Girls in their teen years need a mature adult woman to help them get through the anxieties and angst they experience. I can do that. These two girls love me and I love them back, and I want to help.” Age 45
- “I have benefited from the scouting program my whole life and choose to volunteer to give back as a scout leader.” Age 63
- “It makes me feel good to share my knowledge to express myself through them . . . it keeps me feeling like they are my kids and I’d teach them anything I can.” Age 18



Figure 56. Mentors' Benefits to Informal Mentors

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

Informal Mentors' Benefits and Challenges

Informal mentors report a wide range of rewards from their mentoring experience. These largely mirror the responses of structured mentors in terms of the key themes of “sense of purpose,” “giving back/investing in next generation,” and simply “having fun/new experiences.” Figure 56 shows the major benefits of informal mentoring and we include a few of the write-in quotes from informal mentors themselves here:

Informal mentors also express several challenges in their work with young people. Figure 57 shows the details of the major and minor challenges they indicate. What’s notable here is that informal mentors are much less likely to cite a number of challenges than their structured counterparts. Informal mentors report far fewer difficulties with challenges like lack of parental support, paying for mentoring activi-



ties, language or cultural barriers, or even a lack of training for the role. It seems that those who step into the informal mentoring role are perhaps often better positioned to define the relationship in terms that work for them and may face fewer cross-race or cross-class challenges because they are working with a familiar child, family, and community. To that point, almost half of our informal mentors reported no major challenges at all. Figure 58 details the differences in major challenges between structured and informal mentors.

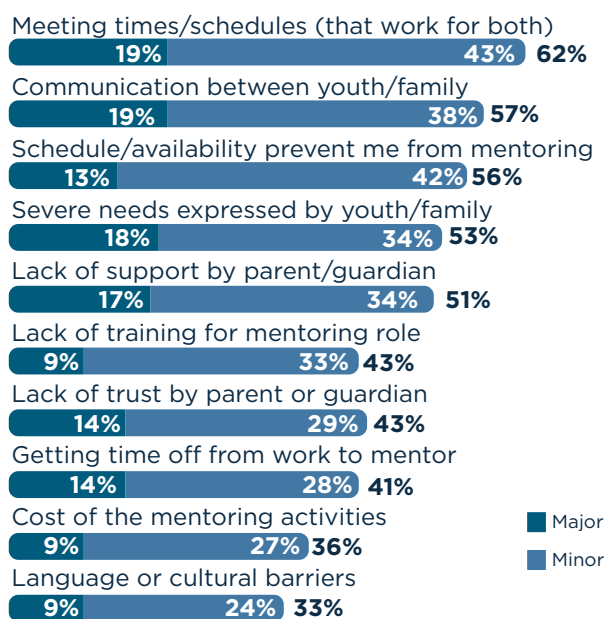
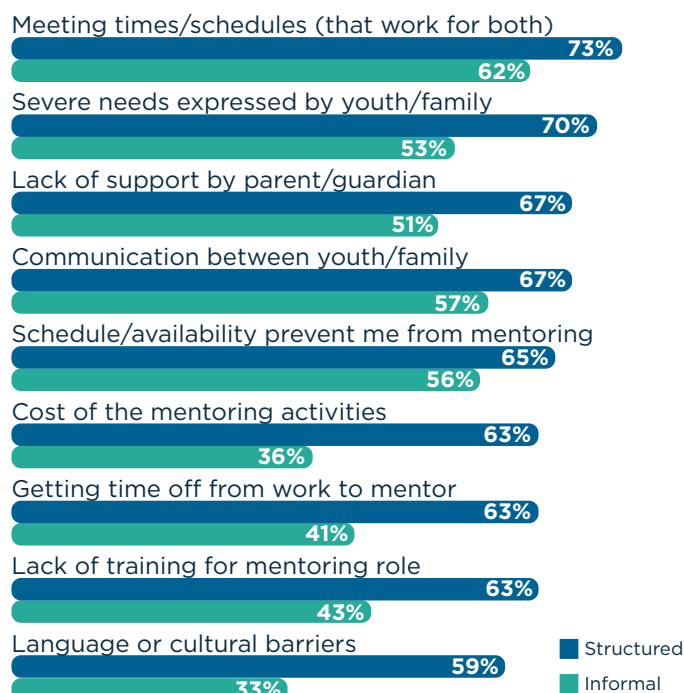


Figure 57. Major and Minor Challenges Reported by Informal Mentors

Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393
Note: Some numbers may not add up precisely due to rounding.

Informal Mentors' Perceptions of Impact and Satisfaction

In general, informal mentors feel very impactful in their mentoring roles. About three in five report that they feel like they have made a huge difference in the lives of the youth they mentor. The average rating of impact was 7.8 on our 10-point scale. These feelings of impact did not differ significantly by how the mentor met the youth they work with.



Note: Structured mentors also mentioned differences in values between themselves and the mentoring program (61%) and lack of support from the program (54%). Informal mentors mention lack of trust by parent/guardian (43%). These potential responses were unique to the Structured or Informal mentors' questionnaire sections.

Figure 58. Comparing Major and Minor Challenges by Mentor Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

As with structured mentors, informal mentors rated their relationships with youth as close and satisfying. About 60% of informal mentors rated the closeness of their relationship highly and, as Figure 59 illustrates, 77% find their relationship experience to be satisfying.

There are differences, however, in perceptions of match closeness based on how informal mentors met their mentees. Those who met through a family/friend/neighbor/community connection rated the closeness of their relationships as 8.1 (with 77% rating it in the top 3 levels), compared to a rating of 7.4 for institutionally connected mentors (only 54% of whom rated their relationship closeness in the top 3). This is another potential indicator that mentors

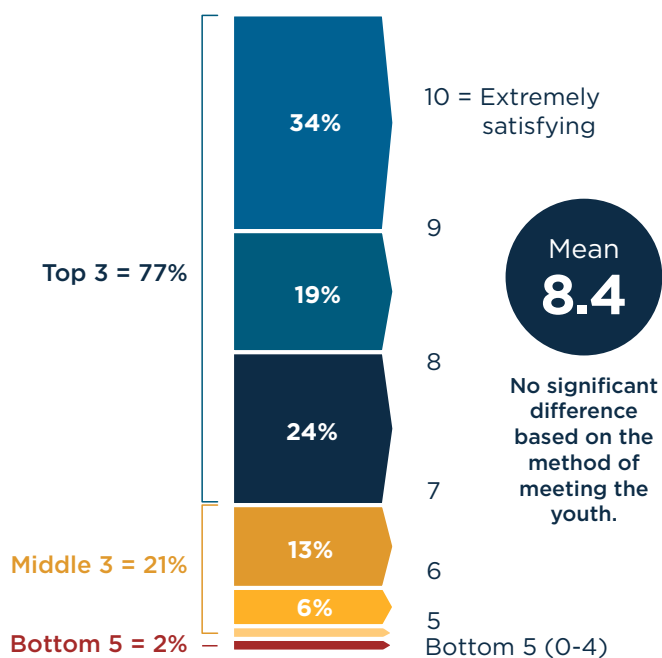


Figure 59. Informal Mentors' Relationship Satisfaction
Base: Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

who mentor youth through that organizational context face barriers in building closeness with youth (as noted above, often for good reason).

It is clear, however, that informal mentors of all types value and enjoy the mentoring experience and that they feel they are doing good work in spite of these challenges. When asked if they plan to keep mentoring informally, 79% said they were extremely likely to. And 74% said they would recommend informal mentoring to others as a worthwhile activity. Both likelihood to continue and to recommend to others were equally true for both institutional and family/friend/neighbor types of informal mentors.

Keys to Informal Mentoring Success

Lastly, we asked informal mentors what they found to be keys to successful mentoring relationships. Their responses largely mirror those of structured mentors, with factors like providing leadership and enrichment, effective communication, offering respect and trust, and providing love and a real con-

nection being the most popular keys cited. Below we offer a few representative comments that illustrate what these mentors felt made them successful in reaching young people:

- *"Being able to have communication with the child and doing it in such a way that they trust you and listen to what you say." Age 62*
- *"I try to build rapport and never give advice until I have built some rapport or if they ask for it. I have heard just about everything [about challenges in their home lives] and I never disapprove or confront because all that does is make them defensive . . . All I can do is be there and never judge. The kids need to trust me and they've heard lecturing already from other adults." Age 53*
- *"I offer the children experiences they would seldom have the opportunity to participate in. They enjoy themselves and get appreciation for their work contribution and enjoy the rewards of a job well done." Age 63*
- *"A lot of patience, talk without being bored, teach interesting subjects, always look for the interest of the other side, show your own experience, set examples, talk from the heart, be honest." Age 64*
- *"The person you are connected with feels able to share anything with you. They know you are there for them at any time." Age 29*

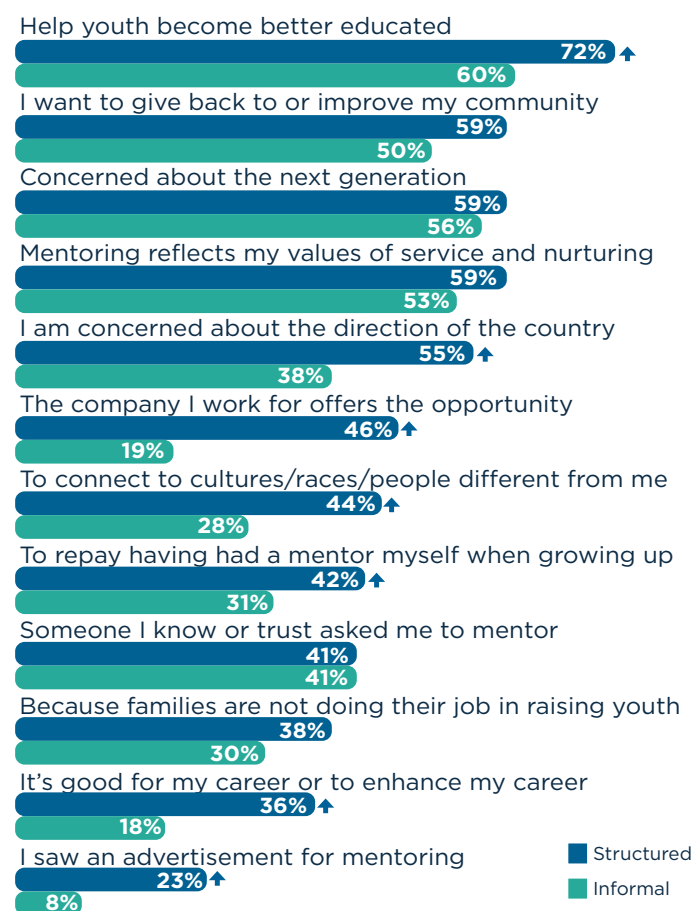


Comparing Informal and Structured Mentors

While the previous chapters have detailed many similarities and differences between structured and informal mentors, we wanted to include some figures that more clearly illustrate the statistically significant differences between the two groups.

MOTIVATIONS

Figure 60 illustrates that structured mentors are significantly more likely to be motivated by some key reasons, including their employer offering the opportunity, concern about the direction of the country, and repaying having had a mentor themselves.



Note: Informal mentors are also motivated by seeing a specific youth in need (61%) and parents/guardian of youth asking them to mentor (27%). These potential responses were unique to the Informal mentors' questionnaire section.

Figure 60. Motivations for Mentoring by Mentor Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

ACTIVITIES

As shown in Figure 61, informal mentors are much more likely than structured mentors to engage in fun activities, to have personal conversations about topics like the family and relationships with other adults, and to offer emotional support. This largely mirrors the institutional/family connection divide within informal mentoring and suggests that mentors who come to youth through a structured program or other institution may feel hesitant to provide emotional support or forge a deeper connection with their mentees.

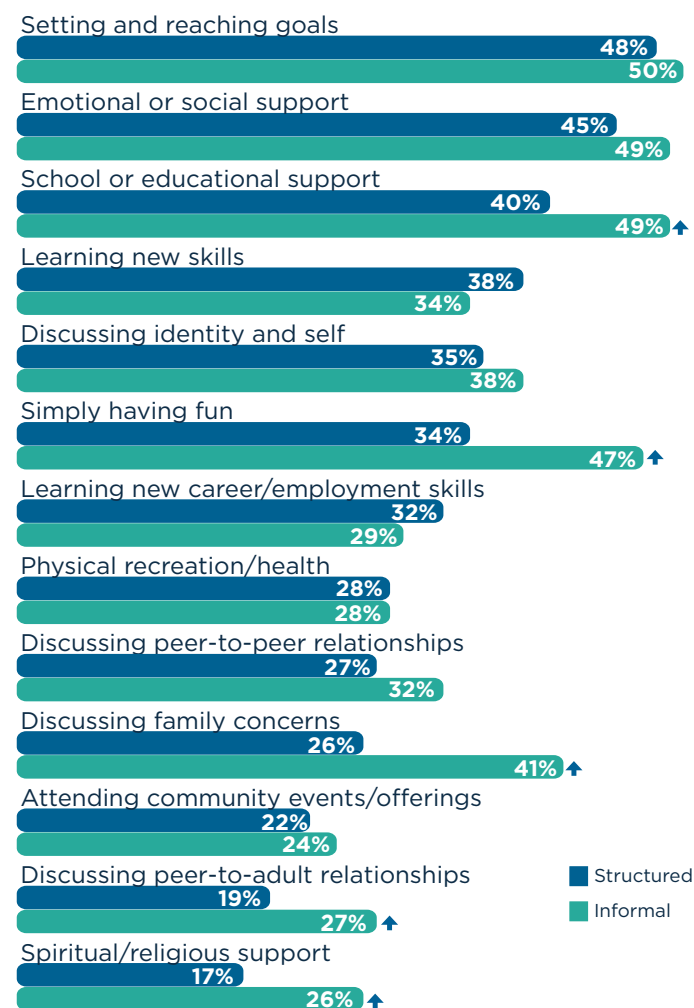


Figure 61. Activities Engaged in by Mentor Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393



BENEFITS

Informal mentors are more likely to say (Figure 62) that they gain a sense of purpose, a sense of investing in the next generation, and that they see the new relationships with others in the community as a benefit of mentoring.

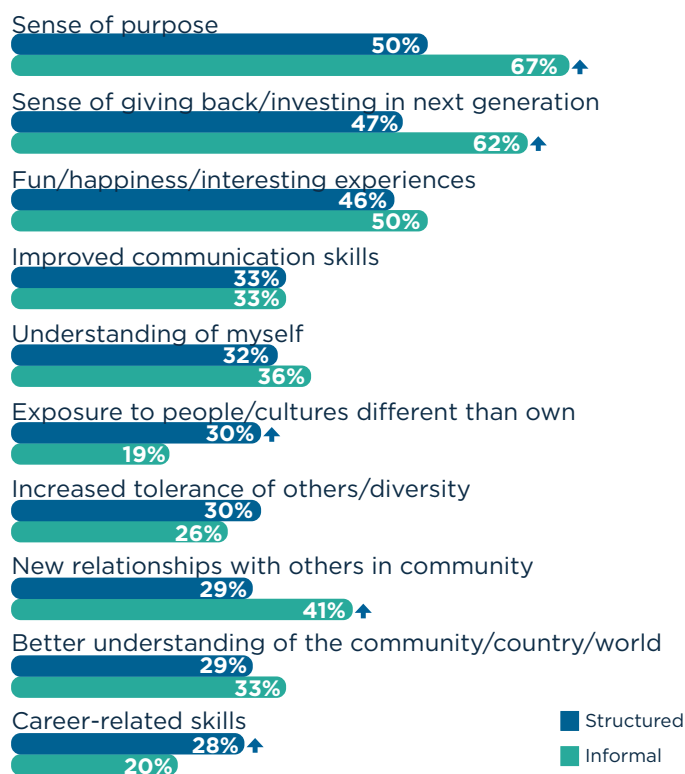


Figure 62. Benefits of Mentoring by Mentor Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

TYPES OF HELP NEEDED

We also asked both types of mentors what kinds of tools and resources would be helpful to them in doing their mentoring work more effectively. As shown in Figure 63, informal mentors are significantly more likely to need guidance on navigating difficult conversations (which is concerning given that they appear to be more willing than structured mentors to have them). But they are also more likely to feel that they already have the skills and tools they need, something expressed by only 5% of structured mentors.

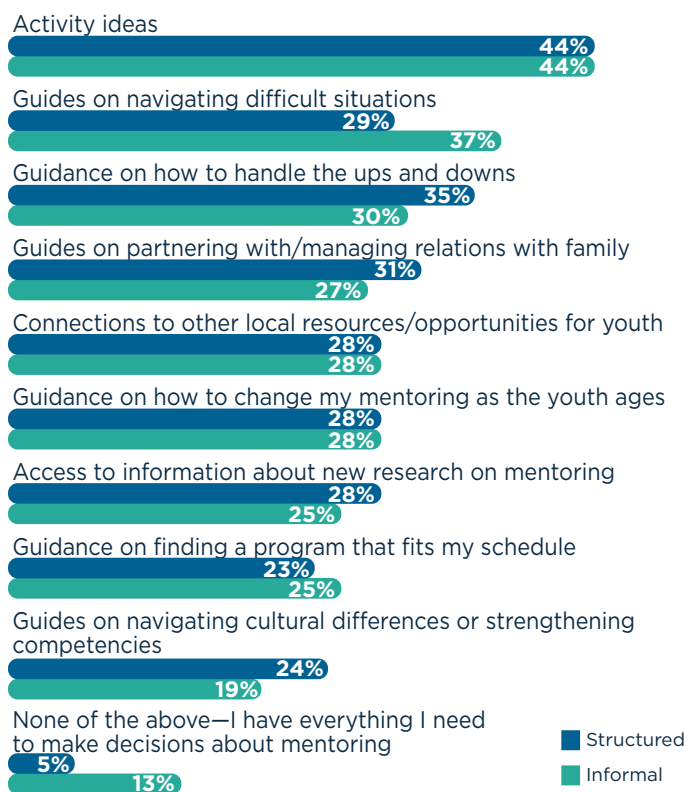


Figure 63. Types of Tools and Resources Needed to Mentor by Mentor Type

Base: Engage in Structured Mentoring, n=211; Engage in Informal Mentoring, n=393

CONCLUSIONS AND PATHS FORWARD



This report offers perhaps the deepest examination to date of the ways that American adults mentor young people in our nation—what motivates them, their frustrations, the perceptions they have about the difference they are making—and, if they aren’t mentoring yet, what might get them to step up for a young person. At MENTOR, we are excited by what we have found in this study and feel it offers actionable information for not only our work but the work of all mentoring providers as well.

While it can be challenging to tease out the most important findings from a data set as rich and nuanced as this, we offer some main conclusions here, as well as potential paths forward in growing the mentoring movement and bringing mentoring to the lives of every young person in America.

1. Americans care deeply about mentoring relationships and want to be involved in the lives of youth to provide a wide variety of supports.

MENTOR feels that the findings of this survey send a positive message to the mentoring movement: Americans believe in our work. At a time when many Americans may be questioning the strength of our union and wondering how their fellow citizens view their obligations to one another, these findings paint a picture of a movement that is bringing people together—often across political, economic, and racial lines—to work together in support of the next generations. Instead of highlighting differences and divisions, these findings show that Americans generally agree on the value of mentoring, and citizens from all walks of life are giving their time and resources to

support the movement. We find bipartisan support for both investment in mentoring and for stepping into a mentor role to work directly with a child.

The volume of mentoring reported here, both in and out of programs, is staggering and speaks to the heart and belief in service of the American people. We also find evidence here that being mentored during childhood leads adults to giving that gift back later in life, suggesting that we can grow—and indeed have grown—this movement exponentially over time. And while everyone may be motivated to mentor for a variety of personal and idiosyncratic reasons, Americans are strongly unified in their support of mentoring and their desire to see more of it in our culture and institutions. It is refreshing to see that the social contract is still being honored in deeply meaningful and personal ways when Americans engage in the mentoring movement and invest in youth in their communities.

2. The nation’s mentors (and potential mentors) need support from key institutions and infrastructure to maximize their engagement in mentoring.

For all that good news about how Americans support mentoring, there is, however, also a thread in this report that suggests mentors need several forms of support to spur them to mentor and to make their mentoring relationships effective. We find evidence that support from employers is one key to facilitating engagement in mentoring, as employers are well positioned to help alleviate time constraints and provide a culture of mentoring among their employees. Americans also feel that the government should be investing in mentoring programs, recognizing that charity alone cannot bring mentors to every child who needs one. And today’s mentors also express a need for more tools and resources that can help them navigate the ups and downs of their relationships and that the quality



of support they get from the program they serve in greatly influences whether they will continue to mentor or bring others to the movement. Today's mentors express tremendous love and optimism for mentoring. They also report real challenges and a clamoring for mentoring "infrastructure" to match their "fervor", as scholar Marc Freeman points out in his seminal mentoring book *The Kindness of Strangers*.

MENTOR will continue to do considerable work in the areas of employer engagement, government advocacy, and improving program quality and mentor resources. These findings suggest that much of our organization's work is already on the right path, but we hope that knowing just how supportive the nation is of youth mentoring will bring other key partners and stakeholders to the movement. There is an opportunity to get the best practices, infrastructure, and tools into the hands of informal mentors in a more systematic way too. We must all work together to give caring adults the tools and resources needed to get involved and to make mentoring relationships meaningful.

3. The current rates of mentoring are impressive, but there is plenty of room for growth in our movement

We were pleasantly surprised to find that rates of structured mentoring are perhaps higher than the nonprofit field may have previously imagined. There is a "big tent" of institutions, faith organizations, worksites, and educational and youth development programs out there offering structured mentoring services to youth. It is gratifying to see mentoring moving beyond dedicated programs to find itself embedded in myriad settings and contexts, meeting young people where they are at with a caring adult mentor. And having a better sense of the millions of Americans who find themselves in informal mentoring relationships helps us recognize the myriad, meaningful benefits they bring to the lives of youth

and allows us to paint the most comprehensive picture of the mentoring movement to date.

But we are perhaps even more excited about the potential growth in these numbers. Sizable percentages of informal mentors seem to be willing to mentor in programs, especially if some minor barriers can be removed and they have enough information to make a decision about bringing their mentoring talents to that context. And many of those who aren't mentoring at all also seem interested in becoming a mentor in the future. These individuals cite a lack of information or understanding about what's happening in mentoring in their community. Increased public awareness efforts might give these individuals the confidence, motivation, and information they need to get involved for the first time.

And still more Americans are willing to support mentoring in ways other than directly mentoring a child. Our work in the years to come must find innovative ways of reaching these Americans who very much support and value the work of mentors, but whom, for a variety of reasons, have not yet become directly engaged in mentoring. It is extremely gratifying to know, however, that the mentoring movement is both larger than we might have assumed, and also primed for growth in the years to come. In working together, and building on the strong support of mentoring across our diverse citizenry, we can continue to narrow the mentoring gap and ensure that all young people have the mentors they need to thrive.

APPENDIX A

DATA ANALYSIS AND LIMITATIONS



ANALYSIS PLAN

Following the completion of the data collection period, a detailed process of data review, preparation, and tabulation was performed. Sentiment analysis on all open-ended verbatim responses was completed and the results were merged into the final data set.

Data was reviewed for quality of responses, out of range values, and inconsistent and contradictory responses, and new variables to capture combinations of segments were programmed and inputted. Data cleaning rules were prepared, vetted, and implemented. All data preparation and data management were performed using SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (v21).

The unweighted distribution of the final data set was evaluated on key demographic variables. For variables that differed significantly from the actual proportions of the population (source: 2015 Census Community Survey Estimates) sample balancing (e.g., weighting) was used to correct for this variation and ensure that findings are reflective of the general U.S. population.

In addition to standard tests of variance described above, multivariate analysis was performed on subsets of the population:

Regression Analysis, specifically stepwise multivariate regression, was used to determine the key factors that explain why a mentor would continue to mentor and/or recommend mentoring to others.

Factor Analysis was used as a data reduction technique to help us understand the underlying constructs, attitudes, motivations, or benefits sought within a longer list of items.

Segmentation Analysis was used to help understand and classify the total population into like-minded homogeneous groups, which act, think, feel, or behave in similar ways. This allowed us to size the population by support and willingness to engage in mentoring.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The margin of error is +/- 2.38% on the total population. Some percentages presented in this report are not based on the total sample, and thus margin of error may be significantly higher for smaller populations. Base sizes vary and are noted throughout this report. If a base size is less than 100n (margin of error of +/- 10%) it is followed by a notation of small sample size. Care should be taken when interpreting these small sample size results and they should be perceived as directional only.

Tests for statistical significance between subgroups (z tests for proportions and t tests for means) were performed at the 95% sensitivity level. Meaning that 95% of the time, the difference is due to actual variance in the populations studied and not due to chance. For brevity, we refer to these differences as statistically significant or even just significant. Other differences of interest, which are not statistically significant, are not noted and/or are described as directionally different.

Figures presented in charts and graphs may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Rounding follows the convention of rounding up .5 to the next whole number.

APPENDIX B

FINAL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



Click here for the Final Survey Questionnaire:

<http://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Questionnaire-for-the-Power-of-Relationships-Study-Final.pdf>

Appendices are available as a separate download on www.mentoring.org

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