Mapping the Mentoring Gap

Report

The State of Mentoring in Canada

May 2021

A report by:

Mentor Canada is a coalition of organizations that provide youth mentoring. Our goal is to build sector capacity to expand access to quality mentoring across Canada. Our work is focused in four areas: research, technology, public education, and the development of regional networks. MENTOR Canada was launched by the Alberta Mentoring Partnership, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, and the Ontario Mentoring Coalition.

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The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate new programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing these policies.

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FOREWORD

Young people must be at the centre of Canada's post-pandemic recovery. MENTOR Canada firmly believes that mentoring is a key tool to foster a more equitable and inclusive recovery.

Research has demonstrated that connections and safe, supportive, and nurturing relationships play an integral role in young people's healthy development and resilience. The social isolation many of us experienced as a result of the pandemic provided us with first-hand experience of how critical relationships are for our mental health and well-being. Disconnected, we languish.

In 2019, shortly after MENTOR Canada was created, we undertook a comprehensive research project about the state of youth mentoring in Canada. As part of The State of Mentoring Research Initiative, we conducted three studies to 1) map the mentoring gap and understand which young people had or did not have access to mentors growing up, 2) capture the mentoring landscape and increase our understanding of the prevalence and scope of mentoring programs and services across the country, and 3) raise the profile of mentoring and examine adults' views on the place of youth mentoring in Canadian society and understand what motivates them to mentor or, conversely, what prevents them from doing so. Our goal was to gather information that MENTOR Canada, and the youth mentoring sector more broadly, could use to guide our efforts to build sector capacity and, ultimately, increase young people's access to quality mentoring opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic not only forced us to make some changes to The State of Mentoring Research Initiative, it endowed it with new meaning.

The pandemic disrupted young people's ability to access supportive relationships outside of their immediate family. Social distancing guidelines and other public health measures such as school closures impeded many young people's access to informal mentors, many of whom are teachers and coaches, as well as formal mentors since programs suspended their operations or shifted to virtual settings. Although many emphasized a need to stay socially connected despite physical distancing, some of our most vulnerable young people faced additional barriers that prevented them from doing so.

Over the last decade, a robust body of international research has shown that mentoring can have a significant effect on a wide range of young people's outcomes, including their social and emotional development as well as their educational and vocational attainment. This is true for both natural or informal mentoring relationships as well as mentoring relationships that develop through formal programs. Our State of Mentoring research findings showed that young adults who have been mentored while they were growing up are more likely to report positive educational outcomes such as high school completion and pursuing further education after high school than their non-mentored peers. They are also more likely to report positive career-related outcomes. They are more likely to report feelings of belonging to their local community and being able to count on people to support them (social capital). They are more likely to report positive mental health than their non-mentored peers.

Mentoring must be integrated into holistic approaches to empower youth to fulfil their potential and increase opportunities at home, school, and in the workforce in the post-pandemic world.

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INTRODUCTION

Many of us can think of a person outside our immediate family who went the extra mile to support us at some point in our lives. This person may have taught us new skills, offered some counsel, or been there for us through our ups and downs. At the time or with hindsight, many of us may have concluded that this person was our mentor.

Mentoring relationships can develop organically with aunts and uncles, family friends, teachers, coaches, and many other individuals in our social circles. In other cases, mentoring relationships can develop more formally through a mentoring program.

Mentoring, whether it is natural or formal, relies on the power of human connection to engender change at an individual as well as a societal level. It is a prevention and intervention strategy that can support young people who may be facing individual challenges but also help them – and our society as a whole – address social inequities. As such, it is a promising approach to maximize young people's chances of leading healthy and productive lives.

Too often, the formation of mentoring relationships is left to chance. Some children and youth can count on a number of adults or older peers to support and guide them on their journeys towards adulthood while others cannot. This mentoring gap has negative consequences not only for children and youth but also for their communities and for our society.

In recent years, young people across the country voiced demands for more mentoring opportunities to help them do well in school, prepare for employment, and get involved in their communities. In each of these instances, youth argued that having access to mentors would help them realize their potential and overcome barriers.[1]

Until now, we had limited knowledge of which young people across Canada have, or do not have, access to supportive and caring mentoring relationships while growing up. We also had a limited understanding of the wide-ranging impact these relationships may have had on the development and lives of children and youth across the country.

THE STATE OF MENTORING RESEARCH INITIATIVE

As an advocate for youth mentoring, the recently created MENTOR Canada undertook exploratory research to better understand the current state of mentoring in the country. MENTOR Canada worked with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to execute *The State of Mentoring Research Initiative*. The research advisory committee, comprised of academics, practitioners, and young people, provided insights into the development, administration, and analysis of the research. The research initiative is inspired by similar studies conducted by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (USA) and the Alberta Mentoring Partnership.

The State of Mentoring Research Initiative is a critical piece of foundational work intended to inform quality improvement and decision-making around future directions for the field. It comprises three distinct studies:

- Mapping the Mentoring Gap

  This study seeks to understand young adults' access to mentors and the barriers to accessing mentors they may have encountered during their childhood and adolescence. The study also explores young people's experiences of mentoring and the effect of having had a mentor on their current lives.

- Raising the Profile of Mentoring

  This study seeks to measure adults' engagement in mentoring relationships outside their immediate families and identify their motivations and barriers to engaging in mentoring. This study also examines adults' opinions about the role mentoring relationships should play in Canadian society.

- Capturing the Mentoring Landscape

  This study seeks to better understand the prevalence, scope, structure, strengths and challenges of youth mentoring programs and services across Canada.

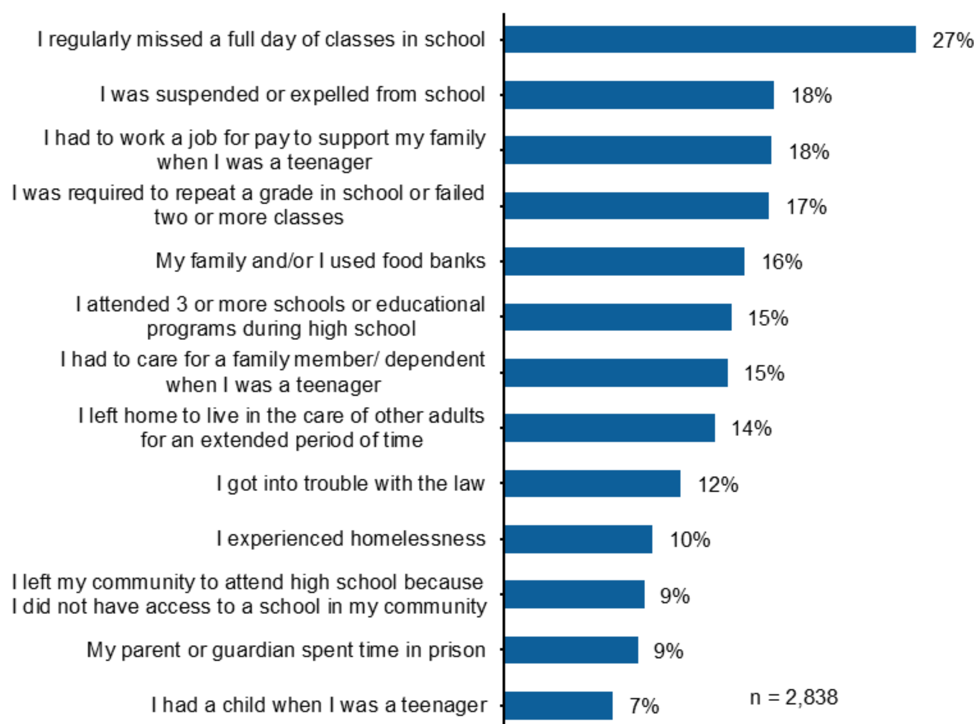
The findings from these three studies will guide MENTOR Canada's efforts to attract new partners, advocate for increased investment, support existing programs and services, and develop a long-term strategy to enhance youth mentoring. Together, we can build a Canadian mentoring movement.

MAPPING THE MENTORING GAP

A total of 2,838 young adults between the ages of 18 to 30 participated in a nationally representative online survey between January and March 2020.[2] Survey participants, who were born roughly between 1990 and 2002, reported on their experiences growing up and on their current life circumstances. The respondents' profiles reflected the diversity of the Canadian population (see Appendix B for full sample descriptives):

- Over 10 percent identified as Indigenous;
- 37 percent identified as racialized or having diverse ethnocultural identities (not including Indigenous identities);
- Just over two percent of respondents identified as non-binary, Two-Spirit, or belonging to another cultural gender minority;
- Over four percent identified as transgender or under the trans umbrella;
- Close to 20 percent identified as part of the LGBTQ2S+ community;
- 14 percent of respondents lived in rural areas;
- 57 percent of respondents faced at least one risk factor growing up, 29 percent faced two or more risk factors (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Prevalence of Risk Factors During Childhood and Adolescence



To supplement the survey findings, we conducted one-on-one interviews with 19 young people between the ages of 18 to 30 in the summer of 2020. Although interview participants were likely not representative of all young people in Canada, they had a wide variety of demographic characteristics, identities, and lived experiences (see Appendix B for full sample descriptives).

The information provided by interview and survey participants helped us answer the following questions:

1. DEFINITION. How do young people define mentoring? How is it defined across cultures and contexts?
2. ACCESS. Who has access – or does not have access – to mentors while growing up in Canada? What proportion of youth has access to formal mentors through structured mentoring programs?
3. BARRIERS. How many young adults recall wanting a mentor but did not have access to one? What barriers prevent children and adolescents from having access to mentors?
4. SUPPORTS. How do young people experience mentoring relationships in childhood and adolescence? What supports do they receive from their mentors?
5. OUTCOMES. What are young people's perceptions of how mentoring has influenced their lives? Did access to mentors influence youth's educational and vocational outcomes? Did it influence their mental health and well-being?

It is MENTOR Canada's hope that the findings from the Mapping the Gap study can support and guide the efforts of all actors of the youth mentoring sector to better support our young people on their journeys towards adulthood. Together, we can get closer to achieving our shared goal of helping more children and youth access quality mentoring opportunities across the country.

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MENTORING?

According to young people, a mentor is someone who:

- takes a mentee under their wing;
- shows a mentee the ropes;
- acts as a sounding board for a mentee;
- joins a mentee's personal journey;
- serves as a role model or a reference figure for a mentee; and,
- connects and networks on a mentee's behalf.

> "I think a mentor is someone who isn't there to necessarily coach you on your journey, but to kind of be on that journey with you. And I think there's a pretty big difference. A coach, they're focusing on the end result and they tell you what to do to get there. Now, a mentor is different because I think a mentor is someone who's part of that journey. They don't care as much about what your destination is, but more so how you get there."
>
> - Interview participant

Young people consider a mentor to be someone who is accessible and available; someone they can reach out to when needed. Interview participants emphasized the importance of having a mentor who is genuinely willing to help, outside of any job-related or other obligation. It is a sign that someone is indeed a mentor if a young person's thoughts go straight to them when faced with a challenge or a success.

> "I think the mentors were like advocates. It was like an extension of an arm and they were able to speak on my behalf. So oftentimes and when I spoke it would seem like people would kind of come into thought with all these biases - the general assumption is like, this kid doesn't know shit. But, when adults spoke on my behalf, it kind of got rid of that, and allowed an opportunity for my thoughts to be considered without all these external factors."
>
> - Interview participant

In a mentoring relationship, a mentor listens, pays attention, and spends time together with a young person. Interview participants said that a mentor is someone who truly gets to know them, understanding their personality, mindset, ideas, thoughts, hopes, and dreams. The mentor guides, helps, supports, encourages, and motivates their mentee, leading by example along the way. The mentor shares and transmits knowledge and answers their mentee's questions. A mentor may be someone who holds a mentee accountable. A mentor may advocate for their mentee, using their own voice to elevate and lend credibility to a young person's voice.

One of the features that sets mentoring apart from other relationships in a young person's life is the fact that a mentor and mentee develop an intentional, meaningful personal connection, with a relationship that lasts long-term. Instead of focusing on one single area of a young person's life, a mentor guides a mentee in all aspects of life, including education, career, spirituality, and social relationships. The relationship is reciprocal and bi-directional, with both the mentor and mentee learning from and teaching one other. A mentor allows the mentee to lead and avoids telling the mentee what way to go in life. When a mentor shares advice, a mentee is free to take what they want and leave what they do not. A mentoring relationship is non-judgemental and unconditional. There is an aspect of fun to the relationship.

THE IDEAL MENTOR

Interview participants' views on the attributes and actions of an ideal mentor confirm that they perceive mentoring as an approach that can provide mentees holistic social supports, such as emotional support, informational support, tangible support, and companionship support.

Interview participants explained that simply having someone to talk to was valuable. They also valued mentors who could provide a break or a distraction from a stressful situation, who could provide emotional support, who could help them navigate relationships with friends and family, and who could help them develop their social skills or help build healthy habits.

Interview participants thought that an ideal mentor could provide a variety of supports related to their academic, professional, and personal success. These included learning strategies, help selecting educational or career pathways, support to prepare for an interview or write a resume, connections to job opportunities and to networks, and financial guidance.

They valued mentors who could help youth explore and develop their identities, help them navigate transitions, help them adapt to a condition or disability, or help newcomers adjust to life in Canada.

Overall, young people value a range of qualities in a mentor including approachability, authenticity, trustworthiness, and compassion. Most importantly, young people value mentors who validate their feelings, maintain appropriate boundaries, create safe spaces, and speak to their mentees as an equal.

> "You have to like, feel safe, heard and seen and validated... That someone noticed you as a person."
>
> - Interview participant

> "So I think it was almost as much of a learning opportunity for me as it was a guidance opportunity and it kind of became a two-way street. And for me, the idea of being able to be an active part of his life and something useful for him. So not just I'm not just a task ... He feels like he's helping. Like the fact that he can benefit from it definitely interests me more in having that relationship… after that title was taken away with that feeling of being able to give some benefit to him, too. And even as a child, if I'd had that relationship with someone older would have been the feeling of I'm bringing something good to their life... It's there's something real there and there's a back and forth, back and forth I think with be the biggest part of it. And just the feeling of you're here because you want to be not because you're told."
>
> - Interview participant

MENTORING AND CULTURE

Culture shapes the way adults and young people relate to one another in the mentoring context. Interview participants explained how their culture influences their mentoring experiences. The concept of mentoring is consistent with Indigenous approaches to learning. There is a long history of mentoring in Indigenous communities, including intergenerational knowledge transmission. In some cultural communities, adults give firm direction to young people and conversations between adults and young people are highly task-oriented. In these instances, mentoring may be less about exploration and letting the mentee lead, and more about a mentor telling a young person what to do. Mentoring from an adult outside the family is not common or desired in some cultures. Ultimately, mentors must be culturally competent. Interview participants stressed how crucial it was for mentors to be aware of norms and acceptable behaviour in different cultures so as to not behave inappropriately. Interview participants also emphasized that mentors must be able to acknowledge the realities of racism and discrimination and understand how these realities impact young people's lives. Mentors may also need to understand the impacts of intergenerational trauma, especially if they are building a mentoring relationship with Indigenous youth.

> "I really started learning about the native way of knowing and doing as well, which in some contexts they call it, they'll talk about getting a degree on the land, like it's a different way of learning. And mentorship is huge. Like, that's such an important way to knowledge transmission, and inter-generational transmission as well."
>
> - Interview participant

> "Cultural competence is important. It's really important that a mentor not invalidate their mentee's experience just because they don't understand them… I think people come from such different backgrounds, and sometimes when you talk to people who come from a different background, it can feel like they're invalidating your experience. So, I like having people who are aware of that diversity and embrace that diversity is really important."
>
> - Interview participant

When mentors and mentoring programs do not acknowledge the systemic forces and institutional practices that marginalize many mentees, they risk sending the message that assimilating to White and middle-class values will help them move into spaces deemed more successful by their mentors' standards. Mentors lacking cultural competence risk increasing their mentees' alienation and marginalization by communicating that their communities and contexts are not as valuable as those of the dominant culture. By contrast, culturally competent mentors can work with their mentees to address the root causes behind young people's marginalization and empower them to develop their critical consciousness and leadership skills to be agents of change in their communities and in society at large.[3]

QUESTION 2: WHO HAS ACCESS TO MENTORING?

ACCESS TO MENTORS

The survey asked respondents if they could recall having a relationship with a person they consider a mentor during their childhood (6 to 11 years old) and during their adolescence (12 to 18 years old).

Access to mentors during childhood

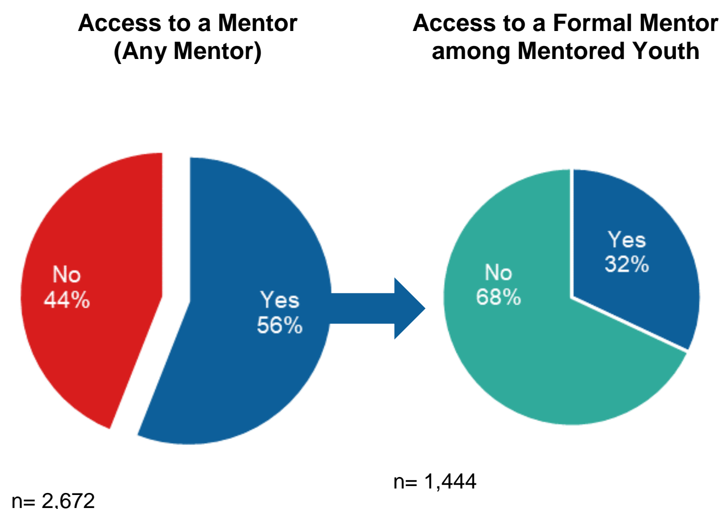
- 39 percent of respondents recalled having at least one mentor at some point between the ages of 6 to 11;
- Approximately 10 percent of all respondents had a formal mentor, through a structured mentoring program, during their childhood.

Access to mentors during adolescence

- 41 percent of respondents had at least one person they consider a mentor between the ages of 12 to 18;
- Approximately 12 percent of all respondents had a formal mentor during their adolescence;
- On average, mentored youth had 2.5 mentors (mean) during their adolescence.

Across both age groups collectively, 56 percent of respondents recalled having at least one mentor while they were growing up and 44 percent did not have a mentor. The same percentage of men and women recalled having a mentor. A little under one in three (32 percent) mentored youth had at least one formal mentor. This means that approximately 16 percent of all respondents had access to a formal mentor at some point during their childhood or adolescence (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Access to Mentoring (Ages 6 to 18 Collectively)



Definitions

The survey provided the following **definition of a mentor**: "Someone other than your parent(s) or guardian(s) who is usually older with more experience than you, who you could count on to be there for you, believed in and cared deeply about you, inspired you to do your best, and influenced what you do and the choices you made then or make now." **Formal mentoring** was defined as "when an organization like a school or a community group matches a young person with an adult with whom they develop a relationship in a structured manner through regular meetings and activities." **Informal mentoring** was defined as "when someone comes into a young person's life and a mentoring relationship develops naturally."

Categories of analysis

In our analyses we examined young people's **access to mentoring in general**, which includes natural/informal mentors and formal mentors (this category is referred to as 'any mentor'). We also examined **access to formal mentoring** in the context of a structured program that matched a young person with a mentor (this category is referred to as 'formal mentor').

Since the 'formal mentor' category is a subset of the 'any mentor' category, data pertaining to access to formal mentors is also included in the any mentor category.

Access to mentoring may have increased in Canada in recent decades. Data collected through the Raising the Profile of Mentoring study which surveyed 3,500 adults over the age of 18 in Canada shows that younger respondents are more likely to recall having a mentor than older respondents. Approximately 38 percent of the respondents between the ages of 18 to 29 recalled having a mentor while they were growing up compared to only about 20 percent of respondents aged 30 and over.[4] Although it is possible that some older respondents forgot if they ever had a mentor during their childhood and adolescence, it is probable that awareness and understanding of mentoring as well as access to mentors has increased in Canada. This trend coincides with the proliferation of programs and increased investments in mentoring by governments, the private sector, and schools since the late 1990s.

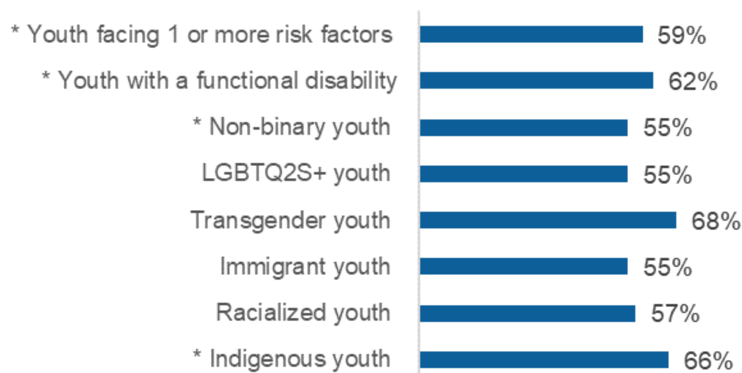
WHO HAS ACCESS TO MENTORING?

We examined if certain demographic characteristics, identities, or lived experiences had an influence on young people's odds of having access to mentors. Youth from rural and remote communities were not more or less likely to have access to mentors (both any mentor and formal mentor) compared to youth from urban communities. The odds of immigrant or newcomer youth of having access to mentors (both any mentor and formal mentor) were also comparable to those of youth that were born in Canada. Finally, youth who identify as LGBTQ2S+ were also comparatively as likely to have access to mentors (both any mentor and formal mentor) than youth who identify as heterosexual. However, other demographic characteristics or experiences were shown to have an influence on youth's odds of having a mentor (see Figure 3).

Statistics accompanied by an asterisk (*) throughout the report are statistically significant, with at least 95 percent confidence. (See Appendix A for more details on the study's methodology.)

- Youth who identified as non-binary were 50 percent* less likely to have access to mentoring (any mentor) compared to youth who identified as women;
- 66 percent of respondents who identified as Indigenous recalled having a mentor. Indigenous youth were 39 percent* more likely to have access to mentoring (any mentor) compared to non-Indigenous youth. They were twice* as likely to have access to a formal mentor;
- 59 percent of young people who experienced at least one risk factor during their youth – such as family interaction with the law, school troubles, or economic disadvantage – had access to a mentor. They were 31 percent* more likely to have a mentor, and twice* as likely to have a formal mentor compared to respondents who did not have such experiences;
- 62 percent of youth with a functional disability[5] recalled having a mentor. They were 44 percent* more likely to have access to mentoring (any mentor) than youth who do not have a disability;
- Men were 72 percent* more likely to have access to a formal mentor than women. 39 percent of men had a formal mentor compared to 24 percent of women.
- Transgender youth (compared to youth who do not identify as transgender)*, and racialized youth (compared to White youth)* were also more likely to have access to a formal mentor.

Figure 2 Access to Any Mentor by Demographic Subgroup



QUESTION 3: WHAT BARRIERS PREVENT YOUTH FROM ACCESSING MENTORS?

Although many young people had access to at least one mentor while they were growing up, a large number of them still reported that there were times when they wished they had a mentor but did not have one (this category is referred to as 'unmet needs: access to mentors') and many young people faced barriers accessing formal and informal mentors.

UNMET NEEDS: ACCESS TO MENTORS

The great majority of young people value mentors and the supportive relationships they provide. The survey and interviews responses highlight that many wish to have several mentoring relationships. Overall, 54 percent of survey respondents indicated that they could recall at least one time between the ages of 6 to 18 when they did not have a mentor but wished that had one (or if they already had one mentor, they wished they had additional mentors). Young people reported more unmet needs during their childhood (50 percent) than during their adolescence (44 percent). 62 percent of respondents who had access to at least one mentor reported unmet needs compared to 45 percent for the respondents who did not have a mentor at any point while they were growing up. In sum, while roughly 1 in 5 respondents did not have a mentor – nor did they feel like they needed one – almost 2 out of 3 youth who had access to mentoring wished they had more mentors.

The Mentoring Gap in Canada

- More than 2 out of 5 of young adults in Canada grew up without the support of a mentor.
- 54 percent of young adults can recall a time during their childhood or adolescence when they wished they had a mentor but did not have access to one.
- Youth who faced at least one risk factor growing up were twice* as likely to recall a time when they wanted a mentor but did not have one than youth who did not face risk factors.

Having access to one mentor may not be sufficient to close the mentoring gap: young people want several supportive relationships – mentoring and otherwise – to help them stay on the path to healthy and productive adulthood.

Our evidence also suggests that access varies considerably among different demographic groups and many young people face barriers accessing the right mentors at the right time (see Figure 4):

Figure 4 Unmet Needs: Access to Mentors by Demographic Subgroup

- 57 percent of women and 51 percent of men reported unmet needs;
- 61 percent of Indigenous respondents recalled at least one time when they wished they had a mentor but did not have one;
- 74 percent of transgender youth also reported unmet needs with regards to access to mentors;
  69 percent of LGBTQ2S+ youth reported unmet needs. They were 39 percent* more likely to report unmet needs than heterosexual youth;
- 69 percent of youth with a functional disability reported unmet needs. They were almost three times* more likely to report unmet needs compared to youth who do not have a disability;
- 62 percent of youth who faced at least one risk factor during their youth reported unmet needs. They were twice* as likely to report unmet needs than youth who did not experience risk factors.

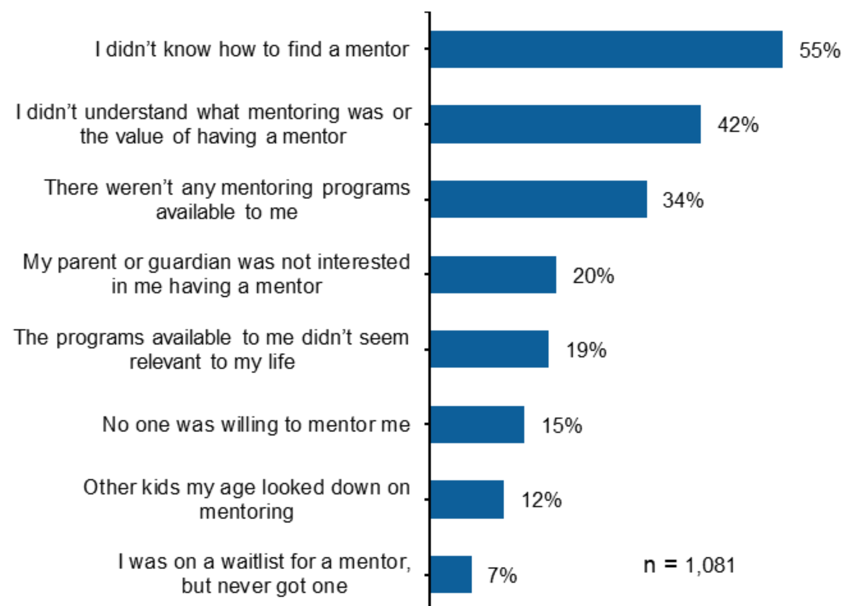
In hindsight, several interview participants shared that they would have been interested and open to having a mentor during their childhood and teenage years, especially during periods of transition.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTORS

Approximately 38 percent of respondents reported that they faced barriers accessing a mentor during their adolescence. These barriers were remarkably consistent across the country and across demographic subgroups (see Figure 5). The most common barrier included not knowing how to find a mentor (55 percent), not understanding what mentoring was or the value of having a mentor (43 percent), and the lack of availability of mentoring programs (34 percent).

Indigenous youth, transgender youth, LGBTQ2S+ youth, or youth having experienced risk factors also reported that these were the most common barriers they encountered. They were also the top three barriers reported by youth living in Northern communities.[6]

Figure 5 Barriers to Accessing Mentors (ages 12-18)



Awareness is an important barrier preventing children and youth from accessing the support of a mentor. The great majority of interview respondents were not aware of what mentoring was in their childhood, most first learning about it during their teen years. Young people may not have a clear understanding of what mentoring is. Some interview participants explained that they had confused mentoring with other activities like babysitting, tutoring, or counselling. Others mentioned that they did not think that it applied to them and that they thought mentoring was mostly for children who were either excelling or facing adverse life circumstances. A few interview participants also mentioned that they found the concept of mentoring to be intimidating and that it could be helpful to demystify mentoring or come up with a less intimidating term. Young people who are new to Canada may be less likely to be aware of mentoring programs, especially if they or their parents are facing language barriers.

"So I think a big challenge is definitely being aware, especially if your parent, you know, don't necessarily speak English or they're not like from Canada. There's no way for them to even know certain things exist on what someone else tells them. And like, they're not proficient in English. They can't just Google it. They can't, you know, search it up or, you know, call the community centre and ask about some thing like that. So, definitely like figuring out ways to get messages across to first generation immigrants. It's like a big way to help solve things."

- Interview participant

However, some interview participants stated that they were hesitant to have a mentor and mentioned that they were suspicious of a potential mentor's motives. Mentoring may be seen as transactional, or for the mentor's benefit. Young people's ability or inability to seek help can also influence their interest in mentoring. Stigma, fear of judgement, feelings of shame, shyness, and awkwardness may leave some young people uninterested in mentoring. Some young people have been conditioned to think asking for help is a sign that there is something wrong with them.

Young people may also be influenced by their parents' perception of mentoring. 20 percent of respondents who faced barriers accessing a mentor reported that their caregivers were not interested in them having a mentor. Interview participants confirmed that some parents may not be willing to allow their child to have a mentor. This may be because they value self-reliance and independence, or they fear that their parental authority would be diminished.

It wasn't up until that point where that 'official' relationship ended that I seemed to personally care for it. So, at that point, he kept reaching out more as a friend rather than a mentor. And at that point, I was like, OK, well, if he's not doing it because he has to. And at that point, it's kind of like getting the opportunity to get to know him and become friends. And that's really when the relationship formed itself. So up until that point, when that title was taken away, I honestly was kind of against it.

- Interview participant

I probably would have never reached out because I still thought it was taboo. Kind of like if you're reaching out to that kind of stuff, it's because you need it in the sense that there's something wrong... instead of being, you know, I'm working through issues which everybody's got something they can work through. It was more like you're broken and you need extra help… back then I thought like, oh, I don't need this, I'm not broken, I'm not behind.

- Interview participant

The Mentoring Gap: Comparing Canada and the United States

The mentoring gap appears to be more pronounced in Canada than in the United States. Fewer young adults in Canada recalled having a mentor while growing up and a greater proportion recalled a time when they did not have a mentor but wished they had one. However, a similar proportion of young people appear to be participating in formal mentoring programs.

	Canada (2020)	United States (2013)
Access to any mentor	56%	66%
Access to a formal mentor	16%	15%
Unmet needs: access to mentors	54%	46%

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership conducted a nationally representative survey with 1,700 young people aged 18-21 in July and August 2013. A mentor was defined as a supportive adult who works with a young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person's positive and healthy development over a period of time. Formal mentoring was presented as: "One way that a young person can receive mentoring is through a structured program. An organization like a school, a community group, or a faith-based organization matches an adult with a young person with whom they develop a relationship in a structured manner through regular meetings and activities". Informal mentoring was presented as: "A second type of mentoring is when an adult comes into a young person's life and they naturally develop an informal mentoring relationship. The adult could be a friend of the family or a teacher with whom the young person maintains a relationship outside of the classroom". To measure unmet needs, survey respondents were asked to reflect back from their adult perspective and report on whether or not they could have used a mentor growing up but did not have one.

Source: Bruce, Mary and Bridgeland, John (2014). The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.

QUESTION 4: HOW DO MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE?

41 percent of respondents indicated that they had at least one mentor at some point between the ages of 12 to 18. On average (mean), they had 2.5 mentors during that period. Survey respondents provided detailed information about one of their mentoring relationships. If they had more than one mentor, they shared details about the mentoring relationship they deemed the most meaningful. 80 percent of respondents indicated that their most meaningful mentor was an informal or natural mentor, most often a teacher or other school staff, family friend, or other adult relative. Several respondents from Indigenous communities considered an Elder or an Auntie to be their most meaningful mentor. 95 percent of mentored youth reported that their most meaningful mentoring relationship was a positive relationship.

DYNAMICS OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Mentoring is a relationship-based prevention and intervention approach characterized by flexibility. Mentored youth's responses show that meaningful mentoring relationships can be structured in a variety of ways and respond to young people's unique needs and preferences.

Mentoring relationships were most often initiated by the mentor (32 percent) or by parents or caregivers (26 percent) but almost one-fifth (19 percent) of relationships were initiated by youth. Young people who experienced at least one risk factor while growing up were 53 percent* more likely to seek out a mentor than youth who did not experience risk factors. Young people who sought a mentor explained that they did so because they wanted someone to talk to (41 percent), because they were struggling with their mental health (24 percent) or because they wanted help planning their academic future (21 percent), or their career (20 percent).

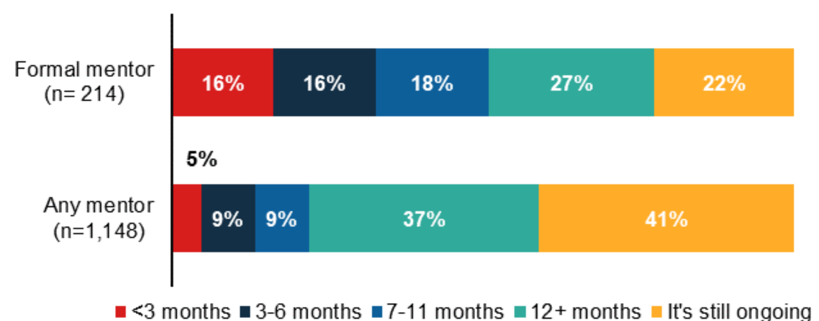
Most meaningful mentoring relationships tended to be long-lasting (see Figure 6):

- 37 percent of mentored respondents indicated that it lasted one year or more (any mentor);
- 41 percent reported that the relationship is still ongoing (any mentor).

Relationships tended to be shorter when the most meaningful relationship was with a formal mentor (see Figure 6):

- 51 percent of relationships lasted less than a year (formal mentor);
- 27 percent lasted one year or more (formal mentor);
- 22 percent reported that the relationship is still ongoing (formal mentor).

Figure 6 Duration of Most Meaningful Mentoring Relationship



Nevertheless, survey respondents confirmed that some shorter relationships can be impactful.

55 percent of most meaningful mentoring relationships were one-on-one relationships (any mentor and formal mentor) but survey respondents also showed that relationships can be meaningful even if they involved other young people (see Figure 7). Many mentees met with their mentors at school or out in the community. Almost half of mentees whose most meaningful mentor was a formal mentor met with them at school (see Figure 8).

Most meaningful mentors tended to be significantly older than their mentees, with two-thirds reporting that their mentor was 6 or more years older than them. A higher proportion of formal

mentors were closer in age with their mentees: 21 percent of them were only one to two years older. This may be due to the growing popularity of cross-age peer-mentoring programs for youth.

Most meaningful mentors largely spoke the same language and shared similar racial or ethnocultural backgrounds as youth (see Figure 9). Formal mentors tended to share fewer similarities with their mentees compared to mentors overall (any mentor).

Matching a young person to a mentor is a complex process for most mentoring programs and current research on how to create lasting matches is limited.[7] Responses from interview participants stressed that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to matching a young person to a mentor. Some interview participants preferred mentors closer in age whom they thought would be more relatable, while others preferred older mentors with more experience. Some preferred mentors who had similar cultural backgrounds or life experiences and can be an example of a "success story", while others preferred mentors with different perspectives and experiences who can broaden a young person's horizons. Despite their different views on what similarities or differences with a mentor may be desirable, interview participants overwhelmingly agreed that youth's voice and choice were critical and that their preferences need to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Figure 7 Most Meaningful Mentoring Relationship Type

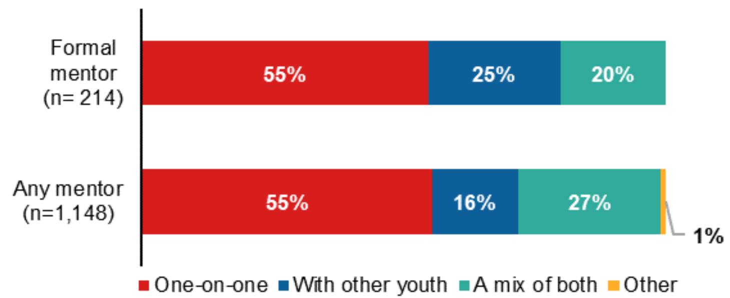


Figure 8 Meeting Location of Most Meaningful Mentoring Relationship

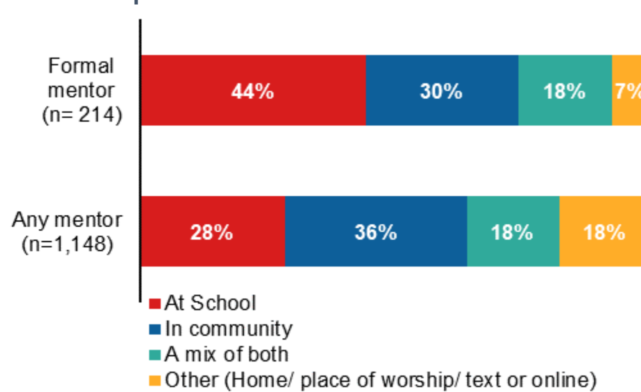
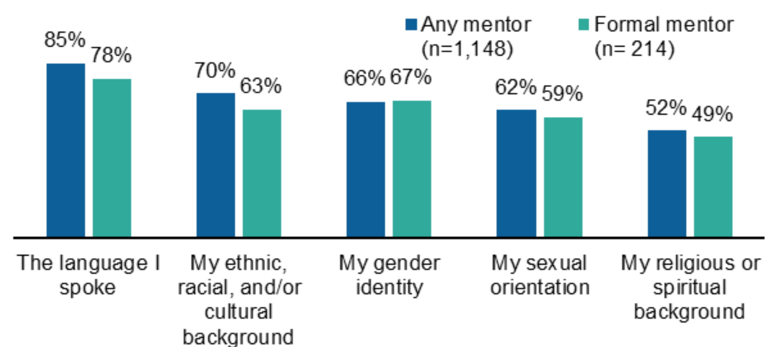


Figure 9 Similarity in Characteristics with Most Meaningful Mentors



> "When a person has a shared life experience, you are able to learn from how they overcame the same struggles you face, and you can see how they succeeded. You can see that you'll be OK too."
>
> \- Interview participant

> "It's really, really nice to have a mentor who comes from a different background because you are able to learn more about other fields that you might not have considered before… A lot of people don't realize the value of having someone come from a diverse background than who you are, and a lot of times, the lessons you learned from mentors are universal."
>
> \- Interview participant

THE VALUE OF MENTORS

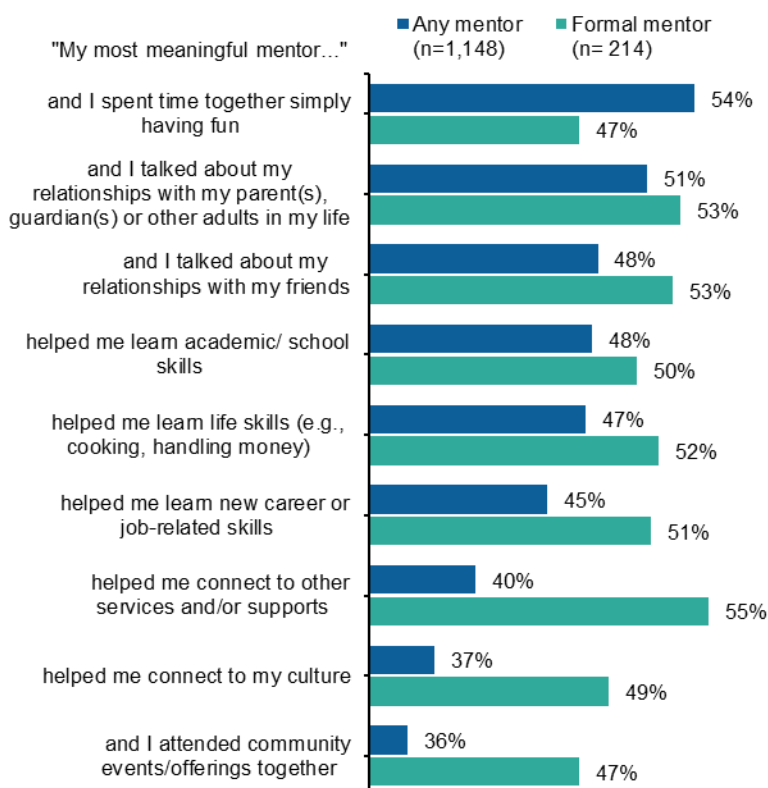
Beyond spending time together simply having fun, mentors – formal and informal – provided youth with a wide range of supports which can have a positive impact in multiple areas of a young person's life. Our evidence suggests that formal and natural mentoring relationships provide complementary benefits for children and youth. Formal mentoring relationships were more likely to focus on providing mentees with educational support (62 percent compared to 55 percent for any mentor) whereas mentoring relationships overall were more likely to focus on providing mentees with emotional or social supports (71 percent for any mentor compared to 57 percent for formal mentors).

Just under half of mentored respondents reported that their mentors (any mentor) helped them learn academic skills, life skills, and/or career-related skills (see Figure 10). Mentors also provided their mentees with socio-emotional support and spent time discussing youth's relationships with their parents, other adults and with their friends.

Data from the Raising the Profile of Mentoring study which asked 266 current mentors to report on how they support their mentees showed somewhat similar levels of support:

- 67 percent of current mentors stated that they supported their mentee by helping them learn life skills;
- 58 percent indicated that they helped their mentees learn career-related skills;
- 53 percent helped them learn academic or school-related skills;
- 58 percent supported their mentee by spending time talking about their relationships with friends and 49 percent their relationships with their parents.

Figure 10 Supports Provided by Most Meaningful Mentors

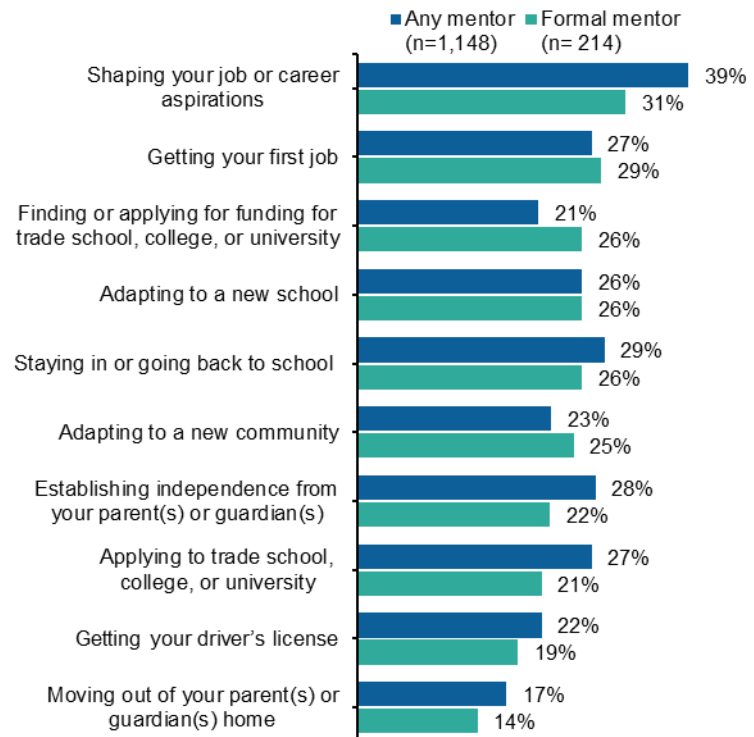


On the whole, formal mentors may provide slightly more supports to their mentees compared to mentors overall (any mentor): more than half of the respondents who indicated that their most meaningful mentor was a formal mentor reported that this mentor helped them build their skills and navigate interpersonal relationships. Formal mentors acted as connectors – to culture, to other services and supports, to community – in greater proportion than mentors overall.[8] By connecting youth to services and support, to their community, or to their culture, mentors can help their mentees strengthen their ecosystem of supportive relationships and their social capital.

Transitions can be challenging for young people. Mentoring relationships can provide youth with extra support and help make these transitions a little easier. Our evidence shows that most meaningful mentors played an important role supporting youth during transitions (see Figure 11). Several mentors helped youth on their path to employment. They also supported youth's educational journeys. Close to one-fifth to one-quarter of mentors helped youth apply to trade

school, college, or university and a similar proportion of them helped their mentees find or apply for funding for their education or training. A number helped youth become more independent. Several interview participants shared that they would have wanted a mentor to support them when they transitioned from high school to post-secondary education. Many found academic institutions to be impersonal, making it difficult to form connections. Others would have wanted a mentor when they moved to a new city and started at a new school or when they were placed in out-of-home care.

Figure 11 Transition Supports Provided by Most Meaningful Mentors



Even years later, adolescents who were mentored recall that their most meaningful mentor had a notable influence on many aspects of their lives (see Figure 12). Mentors often had a positive influence on young people's self-confidence and self-love, on their optimism and hope for the future, and on their ability to develop a sense of identity and of knowing where they wanted to go in life.

The information provided by the 266 current mentors who participated in the Raising the Profile of Mentoring study about their perceived level of influence on their mentees corroborates these findings:

- 71 percent of mentors believed they had quite a bit or a lot of influence on their mentees' confidence in their own abilities;
- 61 percent believed they had an influence on their mentees' sense of pride;
- 61 percent thought they influenced their mentees' hope for the future;
- 55 percent thought they influenced their mentees' ability to know who they are;
- 53 percent believed they influenced their mentees' understanding of where they want to go in life.

Figure 12 Most Meaningful Mentors' Influence on Youth

Mentored youth showed continued interest in mentoring. This is a powerful testament to the value of mentoring and a strong indication that mentored youth are empowered to make a positive contribution to the

world around them. Mentored youth (any mentor) were twice* as likely to be interested in mentoring others in the future compared to non-mentored youth. They were also 2.6 times* more likely to have already served as a mentor since turning 18 compared to non-mentored youth.

QUESTION 5: WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF MENTORING?

Over the last decade or so, a robust body of international research has confirmed that informal and formal mentoring relationships have positive effects on a wide range of youth outcomes, including the social, emotional, behavioural, as well as the academic and vocational areas of youth development.[9] By comparing the results of the young adults who participated in our survey who had been mentored to those who were not mentored, we were able to determine that access to mentoring is associated with a large number of positive outcomes.

Young adults who had access to mentoring (any mentor) while they were growing up were more likely to report positive outcomes related to their mental health than non-mentored youth:

- They were 53 percent* more likely to report good or excellent mental health;
- They were more likely* to report positive mental well-being.[10]

They were more likely to report positive outcomes associated with their connectedness:

- They were over two times* more likely to report a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community;
- They were more likely* to report having strong social capital.

They were more likely to report positive educational outcomes:

- They were over twice* as likely to have completed high school;
- They were 95 percent* more likely to have pursued further education after high school.

They were more likely to report positive professional and career-related outcomes:

- They were 59 percent* more likely to have an occupation (either employed and/or studying);
- They were more likely* to report feeling positive about their career planning.

Young people who had access to formal mentors were also more likely to report positive outcomes compared to their non-mentored peers:

- They were almost three times* more likely to report good or excellent mental health;
- They were 83 percent* more likely to report a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging;
- They were 78 percent* more likely to have an occupation (either employed and/or studying);
- They were also more likely* to report feeling positive about their career planning;
- They were more likely* to report positive mental well-being.

Interview participants confirmed the lasting effects of their mentoring relationships. Some shared that mentors fostered a growth mindset in young people and helped them feel more hopeful. Mentors inspired them to be more confident and feel empowered to try new, or even hard, things. Mentors also had an influence on their help-seeking behaviours: through mentoring, young people realized that there is help if they need it. Interview participants also explained how their mentors had a positive influence on their mental health and helped them feel less anxious.

Some interview participants shared that they still carry the lessons and tools they learned from their mentors with them many years later.

> "She sat down beside me, and said, we've all struggled with our skills, you know. Learning is hard. And if it's really important to you, don't give up. And I remember she had a poster on her wall that she always pointed to all the time and students would be struggling with something and they'd say, I can't. But the poster was numbered and there was the worst one: I don't. And then it went up to like: I won't. And then there's: I can't. And then there's: I'll try. And then: I will, I can, and I do. And so she would stop someone when she heard one of those like red flag words and be like, where are you on the scale right now? Where do you want to be? I remember a lot of them and that helped me in an awful lot of contexts throughout my life, like at school."
>
> \- Interview participant

CONCLUSION

The vast majority of the 2,838 young people who participated in the Mapping the Mentoring Gap study confirmed that children and youth need and want mentors to help them stay on the path to a healthy and productive adulthood. **Mentoring can and should be integrated into holistic approaches to empower youth to fulfil their potential and increase opportunities at home, school, and in the workforce.**

Young people's belief in the power of mentoring is borne out in their interest in serving as a mentor. Indeed, 28 percent of all respondents had already been a mentor since turning 18 and 59 percent of them were interested in serving as a mentor in the future. This commitment to mentoring is even stronger among youth who have benefited from mentoring themselves. Mentored youth were more than twice as likely to have served and be interested in serving as a mentor than non-mentored youth.

Yet, Canada's mentoring capacity, both formally and informally, needs to expand to meet the needs of our young people. A large proportion of young people grow up without the support of mentors:

- 61 percent of respondents could not recall having had a mentor during their childhood;
- 60 percent did not remember having a mentor during their adolescence.

Overall, more than two out of five respondents did not have any mentor while they were growing up. More importantly, over half of young people could recall a time growing up when they did not have a mentor but wished they had one. This is also true of young people who had at least one mentor. This is particularly true for young people who have certain demographic characteristics, identities, or lived experiences.

The mentoring gap is concerning since children and youth who do not have access to mentors while growing up risk missing out on a number of important benefits. Indeed, our study confirmed that mentors provide young people with wide-ranging supports: they help young people navigate interpersonal relationships, provide emotional support, and help them acquire skills to do better in life, in school, and in their careers. Moreover, compared to their non-mentored peers, young people who have mentors are more likely to report a number of positive outcomes in early adulthood, including positive mental health as well as educational and vocational achievement.

Our findings demonstrate that many young people want access to multiple, evolving mentoring relationships to accompany them through childhood and adolescence. Indeed, 62 percent of youth who had a least a mentor stated that they wished they had more mentors growing up. Moreover, youth facing at least one risk factor and youth with a functional disability were more likely to have access to a mentor compared to youth who did not have these experiences, but they were also more likely to report that they could recall a time when they wished they had a mentor but did not have one. **As such, our findings corroborate recent efforts in the mentoring field to reconceptualise how we define the "mentoring gap": from having access to one mentor at one point to having access to multiple and evolving supportive and caring relationships – mentoring and otherwise – throughout childhood and adolescence.** Giving each young person a single mentor will not close the mentoring gap. Instead, to close the gap, we need to ensure that every young person who wishes to have a mentor, or mentors, is able to access the right mentors capable of responding to their unique goals and needs at the right time.

Children and youth's access to supportive relationships, including mentoring relationships, cannot be left to chance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Together, we can begin to address the gaps and barriers identified through the Mapping the Mentoring Gap study and increase young people's access to the support of mentors. In the coming weeks, MENTOR Canada will work with youth representatives and key stakeholders from the mentoring sector to co-create a set of calls to action based on the findings from the State of Mentoring Research Initiative.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Our analyses do not allow us to conclude whether mentoring causes or leads to young people having better outcomes. We were able to demonstrate a clear correlation (statistical association) between access to mentoring during childhood or adolescence and several positive outcomes for young adults but cannot establish causation. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to note that participants in the qualitative interviews shared positive perceptions about the influence of mentoring in their lives, which does support the survey findings in this area.

The analyses presented in this report are based on a cross-sectional survey of young people at one time. Respondents were in many cases retrospectively describing their experiences during their childhood and adolescence (ages 6 to 18), which may be prone to recall bias. The same is true for participants in the qualitative interviews. Furthermore, 69 percent of respondents who were mentored during their adolescence reported that they had 2 or more mentors. Respondents who had more than one mentor during that period were asked to provide details about the mentoring relationship they deemed the most meaningful. As such, their responses are likely to be positively biased and their other mentoring relationships might not have been as positive. Nevertheless, only 5 percent of mentored respondents (and 4 percent of respondents who had a formal mentor) indicated that their mentoring experience was either neutral or negative which suggests that in many cases mentoring experiences are inherently positive.

To date, our analyses do not reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of young people's identities and lived experiences since many demographic variables were recoded into binary categories to facilitate the statistical analysis. Further analysis using an intersectional framework may help shed light on the different experiences of individuals who belong to sub-groups within these binary categories. In addition, while key characteristics like age, gender identity, and province of residence were largely similar to the Canadian population, extrapolating the results to the entire youth population in Canada may not be suitable.

Our sample of respondents included a very small number of youth from the Territories (n=10). Our analyses do not adequately include the experiences of young people living in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. In part as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to engage respondents from the Territories using an open-link survey were not successful (see Appendix D).

LEARN MORE

Learn more about *The State of Mentoring Research Initiative's* two other studies:

- Capturing the Mentoring Landscape: This study seeks to better understand the prevalence, scope, structure, strengths and challenges of youth mentoring programs and services across Canada;
- Raising the Profile of Mentoring: This study examines adults' opinions about youth mentoring and its place in Canadian society. The study also explores adults' experiences as mentors: their interest and capacity to become mentors as well as the barriers and facilitators to mentoring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MENTOR Canada respectfully acknowledges that the lands upon which we operate are the traditional territories of the respective First Nations, Métis Nations, and Inuit who are the long-time stewards of these lands.

MENTOR Canada would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their contributions to *The State of Mentoring Research Initiative* and the *Mapping the Mentoring Gap* study:

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation for their expertise and diligence in the development, execution, and analysis of the survey and qualitative research. The research team led by Dr. Christina Hackett included significant contributions from Sinwan Basharat, Dominique Léonard, Dr. Geneviève Màk, and Dr. Jennifer Rae.

The Research Advisory Committee provided thoughtful guidance on the development of the survey questionnaires and analysis of the data. MENTOR Canada wishes to express gratitude to Adar Abdulkadir, Ashley Bach, Caitlin Baikie, Mark Cabaj, Julie Chacra, Dr. Gilbert Emond, Virginia Gluska, Dr. Simon Larose, and Dr. Renée Spencer.

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Finally, MENTOR Canada's founding partners were instrumental in the successful execution of *The State of Mentoring Research Initiative*. We would like to express our gratitude to:

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- Matthew Chater, Megan Vella, Norah Whitfield, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada;
- Cathy Denyer, Beth Malcom, and the Ontario Mentoring Coalition.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

SURVEY DATA

Young people between the ages of 18 to 30 were recruited by Maru Matchbox, a market research firm with a panel of individuals across Canada. Eligible participants were invited to complete an online survey between January and March 2020. 3,100 young adults participated in the survey; however, 262 individuals were excluded from the analysis since they had immigrated to Canada after the age of 18. Their experiences were deemed to be less reflective of the Canadian mentoring landscape. The final survey sample included responses from 2,838 individuals.

Survey respondents' age, gender identity, and province of residence were similar to the youth population in Canada. Therefore, survey results were not weighted, as it would have reduced the power of statistical tests.

Descriptive statistics were used to show the full spread of responses to survey questions. Due to sample sizes across categories, it was not feasible to keep all sub-categories when conducting and reporting on various statistical tests and analyses. Characteristics were re-coded into binary responses to ensure there were enough cases when conducting multivariate analyses. While all questions were mandatory, "Prefer not to say" or "Don't know" responses were treated as missing values and were not included when conducting statistical tests.

To assess which factors are associated with access to mentorship, all (recoded) demographic factors were first tabulated with the two composite measures for mentoring between ages 6 to 18 inclusively. Chi-squared tests were used to determine whether there was a varied distribution of access to mentoring among different demographic factors. In addition, odds ratios were calculated to show the direction of association, with both 'access' measures, 'access to any mentor' and 'access to any formal mentor'. Since it is possible any observed associations could in fact be due to confounding effects of a limited set of variables, we also performed multivariate analyses. Multivariate analyses can assist in identifying the key characteristics in this sample which are associated with significant differences in access to mentoring. Results provided in this report are based on the findings from the multivariate analyses.

First, univariate logistic regression models were used to assess the independent association of each demographic factor on both 'access' variables. Second, the factors that resulted in a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$) at a univariate level were entered into an adjusted multivariate model. Some demographic factors were statistically significantly associated with 'access to any mentor' but not with 'access to a formal mentor', and vice versa. For developing the fully adjusted multivariate logistic regression model, we considered any demographic factor that showed some statistical significance for either of the two outcomes. The demographic factors shown to be significantly associated with access to mentoring were: age (treated as a continuous variable), gender identity, Indigenous identity, transgender identity, racialized identity, having a functional disability, and exposure to risk factors. This approach ensured that models for both 'access' measures remained similar. In these two multivariate models, odds ratios show the effect of the specific demographic factors, adjusted by all other factors, on access to mentoring.

Univariate analysis was used to determine which demographic factors may be associated with higher or lower likelihood of unmet needs: access to mentors. Multivariate regression was also conducted, controlling for demographic factors with a statistically significant association with access to mentoring.

Respondents reported on several outcomes related to their lives during childhood and adolescence and since turning 18. Most of these outcomes were recoded into binary outcomes, but three outcomes were based on a series of questions. For these outcomes, three composite scores were generated by summing the totals. In the univariate analysis, 'access to any mentor' and 'access to a formal mentor' were treated as the exposures (explanatory variables). For binary outcomes, logistic regression was used and for the three composite outcomes, linear regression was used. These univariate models assessed the crude (unadjusted by other factors) effect of 'access to any mentor' or 'access to any formal mentor' on the various outcomes.

Thereafter, multivariate models were tested to assess the effect of mentoring on the various outcomes, after controlling for different demographic factors. In these models, we adjusted for the same set of demographic factors that were shown to be significantly associated with access to mentoring in earlier tests and could be confounding the effect of mentoring on outcomes of interest. For the binary outcomes, odds ratios were calculated to indicate the likelihood of the outcome among those with and without access to mentoring. For the composite measures, only direction of association and significance was reported. Due to complexity in interpretation, significantly higher or lower scores for the composite outcomes among respondents with and without a mentor may not suggest a meaningful difference. Caution should be used when making inferences related to these results.

Given the higher prevalence of mentoring overall, compared to formal mentoring specifically, it is likely statistical tests relating to mentoring overall (any mentor) are more robust.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Analysis of qualitative data was aligned with a general inductive approach based in grounded theory.[11] Grounded theory allows themes to emerge inductively, grounded in data that is systematically collected and analyzed.

A researcher began by reviewing and quality-checking transcripts by cross-referencing audio files. The researcher then created a summary table to condense raw data according to a series of overarching themes, which were based on the pre-established research objectives. The table included themes and subthemes, descriptions, and illustrative quotes from participants (see Appendix C). The researcher then used this summary table as the basis for creating a written narrative account of the qualitative findings, part of which is presented here in this report.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVES

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	No.	%	Characteristic	No.	%
Age			**Community Type**		
18 to 20	598	21.1%	Urban	1,380	49.8%
21 to 22	352	12.4%	Suburban	931	33.6%
23 to 24	377	13.3%	Rural	408	14.7%
25 to 26	473	16.7%	Remote	54	2.0%
27 to 28	469	16.5%	Total	2,773	100.0%
29 to 30	569	20.1%	**Indigenous Identity**		
Total	2,838	100.0%	I don't identify as Indigenous	2,313	81.5%
Province of residence			First Nations	185	6.0%
Alberta	353	12.4%	Métis	106	3.7%
British Columbia	347	12.2%	Inuk (Inuit)	13	0.5%
Saskatchewan	87	3.1%	Unsure	120	4.2%
Manitoba	95	3.4%	Prefer not to say	111	3.9%
Ontario	1,097	38.7%	Total	2,838	100.0%
Quebec	610	21.5%	**Born in Canada**		
Nova Scotia	60	2.1%	Yes	2,378	83.8%
New Brunswick	67	2.4%	No	417	14.7%
Newfoundland and Labrador	33	1.2%	Prefer not to answer	43	1.5%
Prince Edward Island	14	0.5%	Total	2,838	100.0%
Northwest Territories	3	0.1%	**Gender Identity**		
Yukon	6	0.2%	Woman	1,434	50.5%
Nunavut	1	0.0%	Man	1,341	47.3%
Outside of Canada	37	1.3%	Non-binary	48	1.7%
Unsure	7	0.3%	Indigenous or other cultural minority	21	0.7%
Prefer not to say	21	0.7%	Prefer to self-describe	11	0.4%
Total	2,838	100.0%	Prefer not to say	21	0.7%
			Total	2,838	100.0%

Characteristic	No.	%	Characteristic	No.	%
Ethnocultural Identity					
South Asian	182	6.4%	**Identify as transgender/ trans/ trans-umbrella**		
Chinese	193	6.8%	Yes	126	4.4%
Black	177	6.2%	No	2,650	93.4%
Filipino	82	2.9%	Prefer not to answer	62	2.2%
Latin American	110	3.9%	Total	2,838	100.0%
Arab	79	2.8%	**Sexual orientation**		
Southeast Asian	82	2.9%	Heterosexual	2,121	74.7%
West Asian	34	1.2%	Lesbian	43	1.5%
Korean	37	1.3%	Gay	72	2.5%
Japanese	37	1.3%	Bisexual, pansexual, or queer	291	10.3%
White	1,833	64.6%	Asexual	42	1.5%
Other	106	3.7%	Two-Spirit	17	0.6%
Unsure	50	1.8%	Questioning or unsure	59	2.1%
Prefer not to say	93	3.3%	Prefer to self-describe:	46	1.6%
Total	2,838	100.0%	Prefer not to say	147	5.2%
Disability (reduced functional activity)			Total	2,838	100.0%
Yes	1,193	42.0%	**Having risk factors during youth**		
No	1,395	49.2%	None	1,209	42.6%
Unsure	177	6.2%	1 or more	1,629	57.4%
Prefer not to say	73	2.6%	2 or more	1,106	39.0%
Total	2,838	100.0%	Total	2,838	100.0%
Disability (professional diagnosis, if yes to reduced functional activity (n=1,193))					
Yes	727	60.9%			
No	403	33.8%			
Unsure	52	4.4%			
Prefer not to say	11	0.9%			
Total	1,193	100.0%			

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

For the qualitative interviews, we sought to recruit a diverse sample of young people aged 18-30, currently living in Canada. In total, 19 people participated in the interviews.

- 12 interview participants identified as women, 6 as men, and 1 as two-spirit;
- 2 participants lived in rural or remote areas, including 1 participant in a northern community;
- 3 participants identified as francophone;
- 2 participants identified as having English as a second language;
- Most participants identified as BIPOC, including 2 participants who identified as Indigenous, 2 as Asian, 1 as Korean, 1 as Indian and South Asian, and 1 as a Black Canadian;
- 7 participants identified as newcomers or immigrants;
- 2 participants identified as part of the LGBTQ2S+ community;
- 1 participant had experienced homelessness in their childhood and adolescence;
- 1 participant had experienced gender-based violence;
- 1 participant had lived experience of severe mental illness and suicidality;
- 1 participant had experienced out-of-home care;
- 2 participants identified as differently abled, including 1 participant who identified as neuro-divergent and 1 participant who had an acquired brain injury.

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF THEMES FROM YOUTH INTERVIEWS

Defining mentorship across cultures and context, ages and stages of life

The meaning of mentoring

- A mentor takes a mentee under their wing; shows a mentee the ropes; is a sounding board; joins a mentee on the mentee's personal journey; is a role model; acts as a connector; a networker; is accessible and available; has a genuine willingness to help with no ulterior motive.
- A mentor truly gets to know their mentee; guides, helps, supports, encourages, motivates; shares knowledge; advocates; listens; leads by example.
- A mentoring relationship is personal; long-term; intentional; applies to all aspects of life; non-judgemental; hands-on; reciprocal and bi-directional; led by the mentee, not the mentor.
- Young people can help identify a new, more welcoming term for 'mentor' like touchpoint, connection, friend.

Cultural and contextual considerations

- Parents may be considered mentors; mentors external to the family may be discouraged; help-seeking may be stigmatized; culture shapes the ways adults and young people relate to one another.
- Young people do not want to be assigned an identity and put into a culturally-specific program; young people are keen to learn culture and language form their mentors, whether or not they share the same culture.
- Mentoring is consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing; mentors must be culturally competent; acknowledge lived experiences of racism, intergenerational trauma.

Barriers and facilitators of having access to a mentor

Awareness of mentoring

- Young people may not become aware of mentoring until their teens; may be mentored without realizing it.
- Young people may think mentoring is comparable to daycare/babysitting, tutoring, guidance counselling, or therapy; or that mentoring is only for certain types of people who are either excelling or struggling.
- Newcomers/their parents/guardians may not be aware or face language barriers.
- Young people suggest advertising mentoring through creation of a central information hub; religious or cultural centres, settlement offices; libraries, YMCAs, community centres, government websites, buses and subways, assemblies at school; and introductory YouTube videos.

Interest in having a mentor

- Many young people are interested in having a mentor, especially during times of transition.
- Some young people are hesitant to have a mentor because they are suspicious of motives; weary of transactional relationships; averse to authority figures; or experiencing stigma or shame around help-seeking.
- Young people may be particularly hesitant to accept mentoring from a teacher.
- Some parents may not consider mentoring for their child because they value self-reliance; prefer to be the only influence in their child's life; think external mentoring is a negative reflection on their own parenting.

Facilitators to accessing mentoring

- To meet a mentor, young people may prefer a 'light touch' introductory approach, based around a group activity; personalized outreach through small gestures is appreciated; academic-focused mentoring may eventually lead to a more holistic mentoring relationship; reaching out to parents/guardians first fosters trust; a universal approach may reduce stigma and normalize mentoring.
- School is emphasized as an ideal place for mentoring relationships to form because it is accessible; young people may meet mentors through faith-based communities and community volunteering initiatives; young people are open to the idea of virtual mentoring.

Barriers to accessing mentoring

- There is a shortage of mentors, including male mentors and mentors with specific qualifications or expertise; language barriers; cost; age-cut offs; transportation is an issue in small communities; time constraints are a reality for mentors and mentees; parents/guardians may not be available to supervise or bring a child to extra-curricular activities where mentoring takes place; concerns about appropriate boundaries and 'stranger danger' may be a deterrent; young people in crisis may not be able to participate in mentoring.

Dynamics of mentoring relationships

The focus of mentoring relationships

- Professional development; career guidance; networking; financial guidance; academic help; social skills; relationships; emotional support; adapting to a disability; a break; navigating times of transition; staying out of trouble; finding the right path; exploring identity; language and culture; settlement; teaching one another; just spending time together; sharing food; cultural activities.

Matching mentors and mentees

- Factors that could be relevant to a mentor-mentee match include language, culture, gender, sexual orientation, career/field/program of study, disability, newcomer status, passions and interests, coming from the same local community; and more generally, "*background*".
- Some young people prefer older mentors with life experience, some prefer younger mentors who are more relatable. Histories of trauma, bias, discrimination and racism may influence preferences for a match.
- Mentors who are similar to mentees offer a success story and shared values. At the same time, mentors who are different are appreciated as learning and growth opportunities.
- Young people want to be engaged in the process of choosing a mentor; they want freedom to switch a mentor if needed; when discussing mentor preferences, confidentiality is important.

Qualities of an ideal mentor

- Young people value a range of qualities in a mentor, relating to a mentor's personal attributes, what a mentor knows, how a mentor acts, and how a mentor makes a mentee feel. Young people want mentors to validate their feelings; maintain boundaries; create safe spaces; enjoy their mentee's company, have fun; speak to their mentee as an equal; reach out to mentees and foster two-sided interactions; be non-judgemental.

Features of an ideal mentoring relationship

- Mentoring should be softer, lighter, easy going, dynamic, and fluid; young people have different ideas about how frequent mentors and mentees should meet and where; young people want mentors to be supported too.

Outcomes associated with mentoring

- Mentorship can change mindsets; foster personal growth; increase confidence; push young people to reach their potential; inspire, motivate; improve social skills; increase help-seeking; help newcomers settle; lead to better decisions; give young people lessons and tools to carry with them throughout their lives.

APPENDIX D: NORTHERN YOUTH OUTREACH

Ten young people from the Territories participated in the panel survey. In an effort to increase the number of responses from youth living in northern communities, MENTOR Canada contacted elected officials and other groups and organizations in northern communities and asked them to share an invitation to participate in an open-link survey with young people in their networks. MENTOR Canada also reached out to elected officials by phone to encourage them to share the invitation to the open-link survey. The open-link survey was available from April to July 2020. As an incentive to complete the survey, respondents were entered in a draw for six gift cards totalling $2750. Unfortunately, only 30 individuals from the north responded to the survey. As the final sample of northern responses was small, we were unable to confidently provide responses to the research questions specifically for young people growing up in the north. The responses from the 10 young people who participated in the panel survey were included in the national level findings but no regional analyses have been conducted.

NOTES

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[1] Students Commission Canada. Canada We Want (2020). The Future of Public Education in Canada. https://www.studentscommission.ca/assets/pdf/en/node-reports/conference-reports/canada-we-want-2020/Future-of-Public-Education_CWW-Report_06-09-2020.pdf. Canada Service Corps (2018). Understanding Barriers and Solutions to Youth Service. Phase 2 Report. Government of Canada (2017). 13 Ways to Modernize Youth Employment in Canada: Strategies for a New World of Work.
[2] Respondents' age, province of residence, and gender identities were comparable to the national youth population (18 to 30) according to data published by Statistics Canada. While some inferences may be made to the national youth population and their mentoring experiences, generalizing overarching findings related to mentoring access and experiences should be cautioned against. See Statistics Canada. Population estimates 2019, by age and sex. Available from: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501
[3] Weiston-Serdan, Torie. (2017). Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide. Stylus Publishing.
[4] The difference between the 56 percent of 2,672 respondents between the ages of 18 to 30 who recalled having a mentor from the **Mapping the Mentoring Gap** study and the 38 percent of 469 respondents between the ages of 18 to 29 from the **Raising the Profile of Mentoring** study who recalled having a mentor may be due to the latter study's smaller sample size. Additionally, while both studies used the same definition of mentoring, the **Raising the Profile** study only asked respondents if they recalled having a mentor 'while growing up' once whereas respondents to the **Mapping the Gap** study were asked the question twice: once for the 6-11 years-old period and once for the 12-18 years old period. A composite measure was created to account for any respondent who had access to a mentor at some point between the ages of 6 to 18.
[5] Self-reported functional disability refers to reduced activity and does not require a professional diagnosis.
[6] Based on the information provided by northern respondents in the panel and open-link surveys. See Appendix D for more details.
[7] National Mentoring Resource Centre. Mentoring Practice Reviews: Matching Strategies Informed by Participant Characteristics https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/what-works-in-mentoring/reviews-of-mentoring-practices.html?id=321
[8] Results based on descriptive statistics. No statistical significance test was performed to determine if formal mentors were more or less likely to provide certain supports. The relatively small differences in the percentages may be explained by the difference in sample sizes as the formal mentor sample is smaller (n=214) than the any mentor sample (n=1,148).
[9] Raposa, E. B., Rhodes, J., Geert Jan, J. M. S., Card, N., Burton, S., Schwartz, S., . . . Hussain, S. (2019). The effects of youth mentoring programs: A meta-analysis of outcome studies. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 48*(3), 423-443. DuBois, D., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. (2011). How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91. Van Dam, L., Smit, D., Wildschut, B., Branje, S., Rhodes, J., Assink, M. and Stams, G. (2018), Does Natural Mentoring Matter? A Multilevel Meta-analysis on the Association Between Natural Mentoring and Youth Outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 62: 203-220.
[10] The career planning, social capital, and mental well-being measures are composite measures. To determine if access to mentoring had an effect on the respondents' results, we generated a score based on the respondents' answers and performed a multivariate linear regression. For more details about the methodology, see Appendix A.
[11] Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing Grounded Theory: 2nd edition. SAGE Publishing. Thomas, D. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation,* 27(2).