



THE MENTORING EFFECT

The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring was commissioned by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership with support from AT&T, and written by Civic Enterprises in partnership with Hart Research. This report is informed by the first-ever nationally representative survey of 1,109 young people on the topic of mentoring, as well as a literature and landscape review with insight from a variety of experts from the mentoring and youth development field.

Methodology

A nationally representative survey was conducted by Hart Research Associates. A total of 1,109 young adults ages 18 to 21 participated in this survey in July and August 2013. To reach out broadly to this highly mobile and technologically savvy group, young adults were contacted and interviewed in three ways: by telephone (landline and cell phone), online, and through in-person interviews. The in-person interviews were conducted with 102 "at-risk" young adults, who tend to be more difficult to reach using traditional survey methods. To reach this highly mobile group, researchers conducted the in-person interviews at 10 diverse locations in four regions across the United States. None of the "at-risk" young adults interviewed in-person completed a college degree. Slight weights were applied to ensure that the sample matched characteristics of young adults in the United States. We are confident that the survey sample, once weighted, represents a true national sample of young adults ages 18 to 21.

At-Risk Youth

There is no field consensus for what factors make a youth "at-risk." For purposes of this survey, an at-risk youth is a respondent who is, at the time of taking the survey, disconnected (out of school and out of work) and/or has experienced any of the risk factors reflected in the survey screening tool that have been identified as barriers for achieving economic and social mobility. This term was not defined for survey respondents. Respondents were asked if they experienced these conditions (risk factors) when they were in middle or high school:

- Incarcerated parent or guardian
- Regular absenteeism
- Poor academic performance
- Behavioral problems in school
- Delinquency
- Teenage pregnancy
- Homelessness

Informal/Unstructured v. Formal/Structured Mentoring

The survey considered two different types of mentoring relationships and defined these terms for survey respondents. In both structured and informal mentoring relationships, the adult is supportive and works with the 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."

Informal/Unstructured: In this type of mentoring 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.



Formal/Structured: In this type of mentoring 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. An example of a structured mentoring program is Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Insights

Insight Area 1: Mentoring's Connection to Aspirations and Outcomes

Youth with mentors are more likely to report positive behaviors and less likely to report negative ones.

- At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to aspire to enroll in and graduate from college than those who did not have a mentor (76 percent versus 56 percent).
- At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor (45 percent versus 29 percent).
- At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to report participating regularly in sports or extracurricular activities than those who did not have a mentor (67 percent versus 37 percent).
- At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to hold a leadership position in a club, sports team, school council, or another group than those who did not have a mentor (51 percent versus 22).
- At-risk young adults who had a mentor are more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities than those who did not have a mentor (48 percent versus 27).

Insight Area 2: The Value of Mentors

Young people believe mentoring provides them with support and guidance to lead productive lives.

- Youth report that formal mentoring programs provide a variety of benefits, and most commonly offer that they receive advice about school, get help with school issues and/or schoolwork. They also make reference to receiving help to address life problems, assistance in getting a job, choosing a career and getting into college – though these benefits were less commonly reported.
- Youth in informal mentoring relationships commonly offer that their mentors provided developmental, more than academic, support. These mentors conveyed advice and encouragement to help them make good decisions, taught young adults how to make the right decisions and follow the right path and become motivated.
- Nearly nine in ten respondents who were mentored report they are interested in becoming mentors. In addition to confirming the value of mentoring, this desire to become a mentor also strengthens the earlier finding that mentoring is linked with higher rates of leadership and volunteering and offers a pool of future mentors to be activated.

Insight Area 3: The Availability of Mentors

The field of mentoring has grown significantly but a mentoring gap exists.

- One in three young people overall (34 percent) and even more at-risk youth (37 percent) report they never had an adult mentor of any kind (naturally occurring or structured) while they were growing up.
- Nationwide, that means today approximately 16 million youth, including 9 million at-risk youth, will reach age 19 without ever having a mentor.



- Youth who struggled with attendance, behavior, and course performance are 10 percentage points less likely to have an informal mentor than those without these risks (57 percent versus 67 percent). Four in five (79 percent) youth with these off-track indicators do not have a structured mentor.
- Encouragingly, an estimated 4.5 million at-risk young people will have a structured mentoring relationship while growing up.

Paths Forward

With input from industry stakeholders and thought-leaders, the report outlines opportunities for the nation to work together to build a society where all young people have access to a quality mentoring relationship and the support they need to succeed in school, work and life.

- Utilize mentoring to address national challenges.
- Ensure that young people most in need have a quality mentoring relationship.
- Expand local, state and federal public policies that advance quality mentoring.
- Ensure all structured mentoring is quality mentoring.
- Support and increase private sector engagement in mentoring.
- Facilitate connections between research and practice.
- Explore innovations to close the mentoring gap.

For more information about the Mentoring Effect, visit www.mentoring.org.