



Mentoring Builds Connections

Loneliness and social isolation are increasing public health concerns in Canada. Before the pandemic, 48% of Canadians felt lonely and/or were isolated. Lonely or isolated people are likely to experience negative impacts on their physical and mental health as well as on their finances.¹ According to our study, *Mapping the Mentoring Gap*, 41% of young adults did not have a person they considered meaningful — someone who spent time with them and did good things for them other than their parents — in their lives between the ages of 12 to 18. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially among young people.²

Mentors — including naturally occurring mentoring relationships young people develop with adults in their environment or formal relationships created through mentoring programs — play a pivotal role in helping young people build the connections they need to thrive.

Mentors help youth feel they belong

Young adults who were mentored during their childhood or adolescence were more than twice as likely to feel that they belonged in their local communities compared to their peers who did not have access to mentoring relationships.

68% of Indigenous young adults who were mentored felt that they belonged in their community compared to 46% of those who did not have a mentor.

Young adults who were mentored growing up were also more likely to report having strong social capital compared to their non-mentored peers.

Mentors ease transitions and facilitate adaptation

26% of young people who were mentored during their adolescence adapted to a new school with the help of their most meaningful mentor.

23% reported that their mentor helped them adapt to a new community.

59% of young people who were mentored reported that their most meaningful mentor had a significant influence on their social skills.

Mentors build community and cultural connections

Mentors can build bridges to culture and community. Many **formal** mentors increased youth's connectedness:

55% of youth whose most meaningful mentor was a **formal** mentor connected with services and supports with the help of their mentor.

49% connected to their culture with their mentor's help.

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Connectedness can be especially important for youth experiencing marginalization. Many of the most meaningful mentors Indigenous and Black youth had during their teenage years helped them create connections:

50% of mentored Black youth and 49% of mentored Indigenous youth reported that their mentor, formal or informal, helped them connect to their culture.

58% of Black youth and 54% of Indigenous youth indicated that their mentor helped them connect to services or supports.

Mentoring programs can reduce loneliness and social isolation

Mentoring programs are ideally situated to tackle issues such as loneliness and isolation since they are by design relationship-based interventions. Mentoring programs not only have the potential to provide supportive relationships, but they can also be leveraged to expand participants' social networks beyond the confines of the mentor-mentee relationships.³ Mentoring programs should consider how mentors can help mentees build connections and increase their social capital.

Contact Stacey Dakin at stacey.dakin@mentoringcanada.ca to learn more about how you and your organization can help and close the mentoring gap and reduce social isolation.

1 Angus Reid Institute. (2019). A Portrait of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Canada today <https://angusreid.org/social-isolation-loneliness-canada/>

2 Canadian Mental Health Association. (2021). Third poll in CMHA Ontario series indicates mental health impact of COVID-19 at all-time high. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/news/third-poll-in-cmha-ontario-series-indicates-mental-health-impact-of-covid-19-at-all-time-high/>

3 Keller, T., Perry, M., & Spencer, R. (2020). Reducing Social Isolation Through Formal Youth Mentoring: Opportunities and Potential Pitfalls. *Clinical Social Work Journal* 48: 35-45.

About MENTOR Canada

MENTOR Canada is a coalition of organizations that provide youth mentoring. We are working together to build sector capacity and expand access to mentoring to empower every young person to reach their potential. *Mapping the Mentoring Gap* is one of three studies conducted by MENTOR Canada as part of the State of Mentoring Research Initiative. Between January and March 2020, we surveyed 2,838 young adults aged 18-30 about their mentoring experiences growing up and their current lives.

Learn more about MENTOR Canada and our research at [MentoringCanada.ca](https://mentoringcanada.ca).