



**MENTOR**  
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

# THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

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

Key Findings | 2018

*The Power of Relationships: How and Why American Adults Step Up to Mentor the Nation's Youth* is the most comprehensive picture of what adults think about mentoring kids who are not their own. This is a follow-up to MENTOR's 2014 report, *The Mentoring Effect*, which is the most comprehensive look at young people's views on and engagement with mentoring. The goals?

- Understand adults' attitudes about mentoring young people outside their families and the role mentoring plays in America's future
- Inform strategies to drive investment of time, money, and energy in the mentoring movement

Here is a snapshot of what we learned:

## **MENTORING UNITES US.**

At a time when much of the focus is on what divides us, mentoring clearly unites us. Americans are overwhelmingly crossing racial, economic, and other bridges to mentor young people outside their families.

## **AMERICANS BELIEVE MENTORING IS CRITICAL TO THE NATION'S FUTURE.**

Adults view mentoring as a strategy to make communities healthier and more connected, while also addressing many causes of inequality. Two-thirds of adults consider it highly important for young people to have mentors, and this same population estimates that only a quarter of youth have the mentors they need.

## **THERE IS BROAD-BASED SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN MENTORING.**

Regardless of whether they are mentoring, most Americans are extremely supportive of mentoring young people outside their families and feel that both the government and private sector should invest more in mentoring. Nearly 9 in 10 feel that more mentoring is needed in our country—with more than 8 in 10 supporting the use of government funds to grow mentoring opportunities, especially when charitable support is absent.

## **THERE IS A CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASINGLY ENGAGE THE PUBLIC IN MENTORING.**

Many of the reasons that non-mentors give for their lack of involvement in mentoring are rooted in their opinion that there's a lack of information about how to get involved at the local level—or they simply never have been asked. An estimated 69% of all American adults either are mentoring or are willing to mentor a young person in some capacity.



## A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS ARE MENTORING KIDS OUTSIDE THEIR FAMILY.

A quarter of the nation's adults are currently engaged in mentoring relationships (structured and/or informal). These rates add up to about 24 million individuals mentoring in structured programs (10% of American adults) and 44 million adults mentoring informally in the last year alone. Prior efforts to measure rates of mentoring estimated that only 1 to 2% of the population was volunteering in youth mentoring programs. While our sample certainly captured these types of volunteer mentors, this survey finds large numbers of adults mentoring in programs set in faith institutions, after-school settings, workplaces, and higher education. We feel this "big tent" definition of the mentoring field more accurately captures the involvement of adults in structured mentoring programs for all youth.

## THE MENTORING MOVEMENT IS GROWING AND IS POISED FOR CONTINUED GROWTH.

18- to 29-year-olds are more than twice as likely to report having had a mentor in their life than those over 50. Almost half of today's young adults report having had a mentor and those rates appear to have been rising steadily over the past several decades. And 44% of adults would consider becoming a mentor.

## EMPLOYERS PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN CLOSING THE MENTORING GAP - AND INCREASING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION.

When an employer directly supports youth mentoring, the percentage of their employees who mentor triples in size - from 25% to approximately 75%. We also find strong correlations between higher career satisfaction and higher job satisfaction for employees of companies who support youth mentoring than for those whose employers do not. This held true regardless of whether the individual mentored or not. When employers support youth mentoring, 73% of employees report strong career satisfaction.



**44% OF AMERICANS AREN'T MENTORING YET, BUT ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER IT**

*The Power of Relationships Report* [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)




**WHEN EMPLOYERS SUPPORT YOUTH MENTORING, 73% OF EMPLOYEES REPORT STRONG CAREER SATISFACTION**

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**83% OF AMERICANS SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT INVESTING IN YOUTH MENTORING**

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**MENTORING UNITES US. 73% OF MENTORS ARE MENTORING YOUTH OF A DIFFERENT ETHNICITY**

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This project was generously supported by funding from AT&T. For more information on The Power of Relationships and to view the full report, visit [www.mentoring.org/PoR](http://www.mentoring.org/PoR)