# MENTORING UNEMPLOYED YOUNG ADULTS TO DEVELOP EMPLOYMENT AND LIFE SKILLS THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

*Mentor and mentee feedback on the Mentoring 2 Work Project extension*

Prepared by the Centre for Social Impact
The University of Western Australia

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Zoe Callis, Dr Ami Seivwright, Dr Mariana Atkins and Lisette Kaleveld

## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, CSI UWA acknowledges that their operations are situated on Noongar land, and that the Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Authors:

| REPORT AUTHORS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Zoe Callis | Research Officer | zoe.callis@uwa.edu.au |
| Dr Ami Seivwright | Senior Research Officer | ami.seivwright@utas.edu.au |
| Dr Mariana Atkins | Senior Research Fellow | mariana.atkins@uwa.edu.au |
| Lisette Kaleveld | Research Officer | lisette.kaleveld@uwa.edu.au |

## Address for Correspondence

Dr Mariana Atkins
Centre for Social Impact, The University of Western Australia
Business School
The University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Hwy, Crawey, WA, 6009 Australia
mariana.atkins@uwa.edu.au

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## Council on the Ageing, Western Australia

COTA WA is West Australia's peak not-for-profit seniors' organisation. It is an inclusive organisation that promotes the interest of all older Australians and promotes intergenerational contact and support. COTA WA was the backbone organisation for the M2W program, which paired young adults with older mentors.

## Centre for Social Impact

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) is a national research and education centre dedicated to catalysing social change for a better world. CSI is built on the foundation of four of Australia's leading universities: UNSW, The University of Western Australia, Swinburne University of Technology and Flinders University. Our research develops and brings together knowledge to understand current

social challenges and opportunities; our postgraduate and undergraduate education develops social impact leaders; and we aim to catalyse change by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

## Disclaimer

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 This Report

The University of Western Australia, through the Centre for Social Impact (CSI UWA), was contracted by Council on Ageing WA (COTA WA) to evaluate the Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program, a social intervention designed to assist unemployed young people find work through mentoring support. The overall aims of the evaluation were to assess the effectiveness of M2W at achieving outcomes for young adults, as well as the appropriateness of the program for broader rollout. Two types of evaluations were conducted: a Process Evaluation and an Outcomes Evaluation.

The program was delivered in a series of stages: stage 1 to 3 ran for 24 months from June 2018 to June 2020; with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was extended for a further 8 months and ran from October 2020 to March 2021. For the initial stages of the program (Stages 1 to 3) a Process Evaluation (Atkins, Kaleveld & Callis, 2020) and an Outcome Evaluation (Callis, Seivwright, Atkins & Kaleveld, 2020) were conducted. In addition, a Process and Implementation Report (Atkins & Kaleveld, 2021) details the operational process of all the stages of the M2W program (Stages 1 to 4). It outlines how best-practice principles were applied in the design and implementation of the M2W program, and discusses some key learnings that emerged from delivering the program.

This Mentor and Mentee Feedback Report presents the experiences of the mentors and mentees who participated in the post-COVID-19 program extension (Stage 4). The feedback presented in this report is underpinned by the caveat that program activities (mentoring) were continuing beyond the evaluation time period, and therefore the impact of mentoring on mentees is not fully captured.

The report is structured as follows: the background and context of the program is presented; this is followed by a discussion on youth unemployment in Australia; the evaluation methodology is then presented; and this is followed by a demographic profile of the participants; the survey results are then presented and discussed; the report concludes with a discussion on the main outcomes of the program.

## 1.2 Background and Context

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) Try, Test and Learn Fund (TTL) supports new or innovative approaches to assist people at risk of long-term welfare dependence. Using the Priority Investment Approach, which employs actuarial analysis to estimate future lifetime welfare costs and the distribution of those costs across different groups of the Australian population, DSS determined that Tranche 1 of the TTL would focus on young carers, young parents, and students or recent graduates at risk of long-term unemployment. Ideas for initiatives to build capacity and independence among these focus groups were sought between 9th December 2016 and 24th February 2017. Idea submissions were open to any individual or organisation, and thousands of ideas were received. The TTL shortlisted ideas and, over two stages, invited consultants to develop and refine the promising ideas into concrete project proposals.

One idea that was shortlisted was submitted by the Council on the Ageing Australian Capital Territory (COTA ACT). It proposed a mentoring program that matched young unemployed people with mature-aged mentors in order to prepare and encourage young people to engage in the labour force, and support them in the early stages of their employment. In September 2017, the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA) was enlisted by DSS to develop a project proposal for this program, set in Western Australia rather than the ACT as originally conceptualised. Over the four weeks of September, CSI UWA brought together representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups to co-develop a comprehensive project proposal. Co-development workshops

included attendees from community service organisations, employment agencies, peak bodies for business and childcare, as well as potential mentors, employers and unemployed young people[1]. The resultant proposal articulated the vision, mission and values of the now-named Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program and set out clear aims, program objectives, and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Additionally, the program parameters were clearly identified (young adults the program will serve, number of mentors required, duration of program, frequency of meetings, etc.). A program budget was outlined that broke down program costs across the project's timeframe[2].

The proposal was accepted by DSS and the M2W pilot was funded. Council on the Ageing WA (COTA WA) was the backbone organisation for the program, responsible for managing the overall program and contracting community service organisations to help with the operation of the program.

The M2W initiative paired unemployed young adults (aged 18 to 25) at risk of long-term unemployment with a volunteer mentor, who supported them through the processes of identifying a career, searching for work, and preparing for employment. To be eligible to participate, the young person needed to:

- Be aged between 18 and 25
- Have received a welfare payment in the 6 months prior to recruitment, and
- Not have a significant connection to the workforce.

The program commenced in June 2018 and ran over 24 months and had a target of helping 240 young adults. It was delivered in a number of stages: Stage 1 was the pilot phase of the program, established in July 2018. Stage 2 commenced in December 2018 and Stage 3 began in April 2019. The program officially ended in June 2020. In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, the program was extended for a new, fourth cohort (Stage 4). Stage 4 had a target of helping 80 young adults over an 8-month period, ending in March 2021.

Although Stage 4 was intended to be a seamless continuation of the previous stages, there was a three-month gap between the end of Stage 3 and the finalisation of the extension agreement and commencement of Stage 4.  This interruption necessitated a process of recruiting new staff and redesigning the program model to address the short program time-frame, the changed socio-economic environment due to the pandemic and the evaluation findings.

## 1.3 Program Model

The program model outlines the main activities in the program, which lead to the desired outcomes of young adults being in employment or study and having improved wellbeing.  Figure 1.1 presents an idealised version of the program design. In brief:

- Eligible young adults were recruited and screened for program participation as mentees by COTA WA;

- Mentors were sourced through United Way WA (UWWA), a community service organisation, and participated in an induction and training session on the Career Pathway Toolkit (the Toolkit) mentoring resource developed by COTA WA, to prepare them for mentoring;

- Mentors and mentees were matched by program staff;

- Mentees were provided with the Toolkit that guides the mentoring activities;

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[1] Internal documents (29/08/2017)

[2] Final proposal to DSS

- Mentoring sessions occurred over a number of weeks with the mentor lending tailored support and assistance pertinent to gaining employment and addressing the young adult's specific needs;
- Mentors were provided with ongoing professional development opportunities;
- Program staff provided coordination, ongoing support, program management and oversight.
- The expected outcomes of the program are that the mentoring activities lead to young adults being job-ready with skills and motivation. Some young adults continue on to education and training that lead to employment. Young adults will have activated and expanded employment networks, find employment and have improved wellbeing. Mentors gain satisfaction and increased skills and confidence because of participating in the program.

Although Stage 4 followed the basic format of the initial program (Stages 1 to 3), a number of changes were made to address the challenges encountered due to the pandemic. The program was adjusted in response to evaluation findings, and with a view to making the program more scalable in the long term. The key changes were:

- Recruitment was predominantly through social media platforms with fewer face-to-face recruitment and screening sessions;
- The mentor training program and materials were extensively revised and expanded to prepare mentors to mentor young adults through the program;
- Training of mentees was no longer delivered by program staff, instead this was provided by mentors during mentoring sessions.

*Figure 1.1 M2W Program Model*
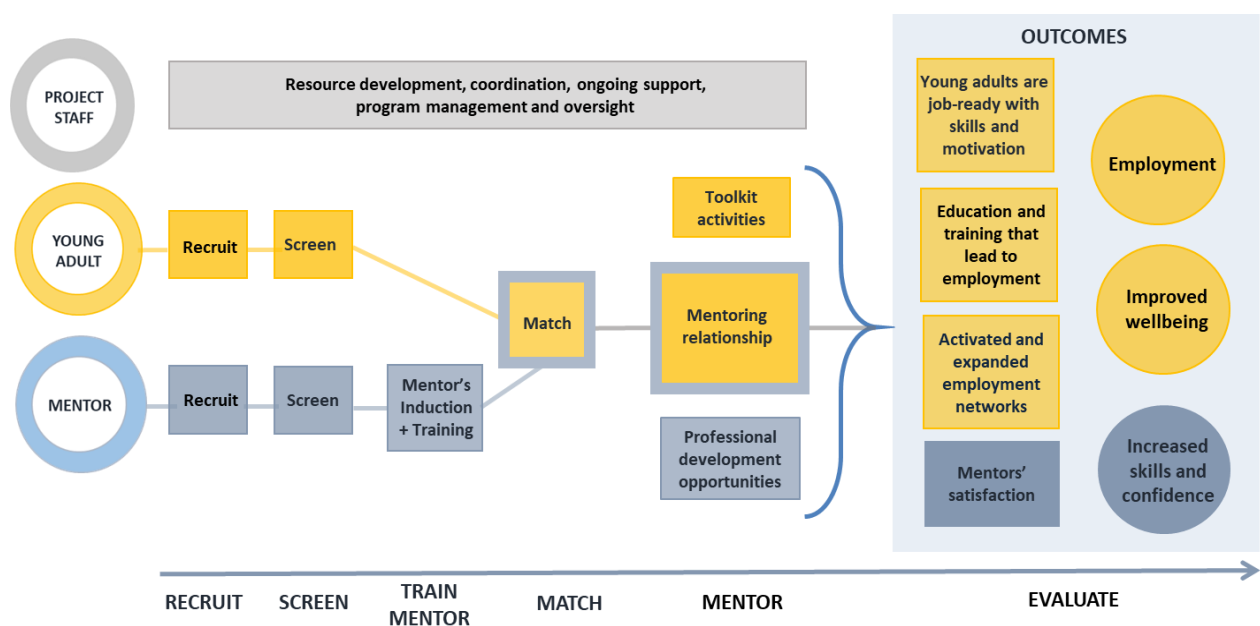
## 1.4 The Evaluation

This report presents the experiences of the mentors and mentees who participated in the program extension. In this evaluation, mentors completed a baseline survey and an exit survey, and mentees completed one survey at the end of the program. It is important to note that the exit and end of program surveys do not represent true exit surveys. They were completed when the program ended, although due to difficulties with recruitment, the mentoring had not been occurring for very long and the majority of mentoring relationships continued beyond the evaluation period. As such, the feedback presented in this report is underpinned by the caveat that program activities (mentoring) were continuing beyond the evaluation time period, and therefore the impact of mentoring on mentees is not fully captured. Table 1.1 presents a breakdown of the surveys collected for the purposes of the feedback report.

*Table 1.1 Surveys collected for the feedback report*

| Mentors Surveyed | |
| --- | --- |
| Completed Baseline Survey | 32 |
| Completed Exit Survey | 32 |
| Completed Both Surveys | 22 |
| Total Mentors Surveyed | 42 |
| | |
| **Mentees Surveyed** | |
| Total Mentees Surveyed | 21 |
| | |
| Both Mentor and Mentee Completed Exit Surveys | 18 |

# 2. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA

## 2.1 Background

Youth employment and wages in Australia have been steadily declining since the 1960s, attributable largely to the restructuring of the economy away from manufacturing and primary industries in the 1970s and the deregulation of the labour market in the 1990s which granted employers more flexibility and employees less bargaining power (Cuervo & Wyn, 2011). Youth unemployment came under the spotlight during the economic recession and downturn during the early 1990s, when it reached a peak of 20% in 1992 (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). In response, a human capital development approach was adopted by the government in which all Australians, but particularly young ones, were encouraged to be in some form of education, training, or employment (Keating, 1994). Somewhat predictably, then, the full time employment rate of 15-24 year olds in Australia declined from 40% in 1995 to 29% in 2015 (Denny & Churchill, 2016), to a seasonally adjusted rate of 24% in August 2020 (ABS, 2020a). At the same time, the proportion of 15-24 year olds in full-time education rose from 32% in 1995 to 51% in 2015 (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). In May 2019, 63% of 15-24 year olds were enrolled in some type of study (ABS, 2019). The August 2020 youth unemployment rate was 14.3%, more than double the overall Australian unemployment rate, as has been the case since before the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (ABS, 2020a; Atkins et al. 2020). Also of concern is the growing proportion of young unemployed people who are long-term (>1 year) unemployed, from 1 in 10 in 2009 to 1 in 5 in 2019 (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019).

Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond (2015) highlight that research and evaluation on youth unemployment is constrained by a number of terminology and definitional issues. For instance, what is youth? Housing affordability crises in many countries and longer periods spent by young people in post-secondary education have seen the definition of youth extended to one's early or mid-thirties in several countries. Further, even taking the ABS definition of 15-24 year olds, the journeys and needs of 15-19 year olds can differ quite substantially from those of 20-24 year olds. Another issue raised by Bowman and colleagues is that "youth transitions" is the term used to describe all processes relevant to becoming an adult, not just the journey from education to employment. This makes it difficult to untangle the factors relevant to particular aspects of youth transition (e.g. factors relevant to employment versus those relevant to social relationships). In addition, the notion of a youth transition assumes a linear progression through life, which can in turn be used to problematize young people who do not follow a theoretical linear path which may not even be possible due to structural and demand-side factors outside of the young person's control (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). Partly as a result of these definitional issues, Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond (2015) lament that there is sparse evidence on what does and doesn't work to address youth unemployment.

Definitional issues notwithstanding, factors affecting youth unemployment can be classed into demand-side (employer and labour market) and supply-side (youth cohort and individual young person) factors. The following sections will outline these factors, followed by a brief overview of recent policy and program responses to youth unemployment. Finally, these factors will be related to the M2W theory of action.

## 2.2 Demand-side Factors

In relation to youth unemployment, demand-side factors are those that affect the demand for young people's labour. These include the number of jobs available, the types of jobs available, expectations of the labour market with regard to qualifications and experience, and the propensity of employers to hire young people.

The Australian Unemployed Workers' Union compares job vacancy data released by the Australian Government Department of Employment with unemployment, underemployment, and hidden

unemployment (those not in the labour force that want to and can work). The August 2020 analysis produced a ratio of 15.39 job seekers per available job, down from 20.69 in June 2020. One might believe that these figures are a result of COVID-19, however, the ratio was 15.57 job seekers per vacancy in December 2018.

Analysis of vacancies to job seekers by the ABS generally consider only those who are unemployed, and sometimes those who are unemployed or underemployed (omitting those who are not in the labour force but want to work). However, these figures still reveal a very competitive job market; in January 2020, the number of unemployed people per job vacancy was 3, and when underemployed people are considered, that figure becomes 7.8 job seekers per job vacancy (Derwin, 2020).

In addition to the competitiveness of the overall labour market, one must consider the types of jobs available. Since the mid-1960s, the number of jobs accounted for by production industries (e.g. agriculture, construction, manufacturing), industries that were historically strong employers of young people, has decreased significantly, replaced by service industry jobs (ABS, 2011). The respective decline and increase in these jobs has been disproportionately skewed to the detriment of the youth labour market, such that substantial decline in young people employed in production industries has been accompanied by only modest growth in youth employment in service industries (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). Accordingly, a significant difficulty for young people is the level of competitiveness for entry-level jobs. Analysing data from employers who hire apprentices, the Australian Government reports that the number of suitable applicants far exceeds the number of vacancies across industries (with the exception of hairdressing). For each apprenticeship in the construction trades, an average of 2.7 suitable applications per vacancy are received; 3.6 suitable applications are received for each electro-tech apprenticeship, 8.2 for those in the engineering trades, and 8.3 in the automotive trades (Department of Small Business and Jobs, 2017).

The human capital development model has led to higher rates of completion of secondary education, and higher participation in post-secondary education (Cuervo & Wyn, 2011). While investment in human capital is a positive thing, that investment has arisen due to a decrease in the number of jobs available for young people and results in an increasingly qualified youth workforce competing for fewer jobs (Stanwick, Lu, Rittie, & Circelli, 2014). In addition, a youth labour force with higher qualifications has the unintended flow-on effect of increasing employers' expectations with regard to these qualifications, which further tightens competition for available roles and excludes many young people (Knott, 2016).

Other structural labour market concerns include the casualization of the workforce and the emergence of the gig economy, both of which disproportionately affect young people. In addition to providing some form of employment to young people (thus reducing official youth unemployment rates), both of these trends offer benefits and opportunities for young people, such as flexibility while studying and the opportunity to refine employment interests and preferences through firsthand, paid experience (Yeates, 2019; Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). However, these trends come with significant drawbacks, including a lack of security, over or underemployment and, paradoxically, inflexibility and missed opportunities because one has to grab any work available irrespective of the opportunity cost (Yeates, 2019).

The final demand-side factor examined here is the willingness of employers to hire younger workers. This factor is difficult to quantify as it refers strongly to broader societal attitudes and, often, generational tensions (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Attitudes to young workers in Australia range greatly from viewing them as entitled and irresponsible (Lathouris, 2020), to an embattled generation regularly receiving the rough end of the economic stick (Silvester, 2020). There is little systematic evidence as to how the attitudes of employers, who are still primarily Baby Boomers or older Generation Xers, are affecting young people's job prospects. However, workplace attitudes have been considered a major obstacle to employment success among older workers for decades (Taylor & Walker, 1994; Chiu et al. 2001; Loretto & White, 2006). Therefore, employer attitudes towards younger workers and their propensity to hire them cannot be discounted as an important factor in tackling youth unemployment.

## 2.3 Supply-side Factors

Supply-side factors in the context of youth unemployment pertain to the characteristics of the overall youth labour force and the characteristics and context of the individual young person. One important characteristic is the size of the youth labour market: in August 2020, there were almost 3.2 million Australians aged 15-24. Almost two-thirds of these (2.04m) were participating in the labour force and, as mentioned above, 14.3% of these were unemployed (close to 300,000 people) (ABS, 2020a). It is important to note that those who would like to work but have been discouraged from working or are temporarily unable to work are not considered as participating in the labour force. Accordingly, official labour force statistics may underestimate the number of young people who want to work.

The supply side and the demand side of youth unemployment inherently affect each other. This is particularly evident in the case of human capital development; an important supply-side factor in youth unemployment is the level of education among the youth labour market, as education is associated with employability (Bowman, Allan & Levin, 2019). However, as highlighted above, an increasingly educated youth labour force makes it more difficult for an individual applicant with the expected qualifications to distinguish themselves, and renders those without a degree uncompetitive - in many cases for jobs where a post-secondary degree has not historically been required (Knott, 2016).

An important and often forgotten aspect of the human capital development model is that education is only one component of human capital. One's upbringing, neighbourhood, household income during childhood, and countless other factors impact the opportunities, economic resources, and social networks and knowledge that one has access to (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007). These are important components of human capital that are, in turn, crucial to attainment of meaningful and sustained employment (Bowman, Allan & Levin, 2019). It is also important to note that the distribution of human capital and opportunities for human capital development are not distributed evenly across geography or socioeconomic status – people born into lower socioeconomic households and areas have fewer opportunities to develop their human capital and experience more difficult transitions from school to work (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2018; Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007).

An individual's context is also filled with supply-side factors that affect their employment. For example, an individual may have physical or mental health conditions or disabilities that require modifications in the workplace or limit the occupations that that individual can work in. Similarly, someone with caring or other responsibilities may require flexible working arrangements that limit their occupational options. In addition, those with trauma, housing instability, and other instability in their lives may be limited in their ability to work due to other survival needs surpassing one's employment goals. Once again, those born into socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely to experience these contextual barriers to employment (Foster & Hagan 2007; Aizer & Currie, 2014; Hedman et al. 2015).
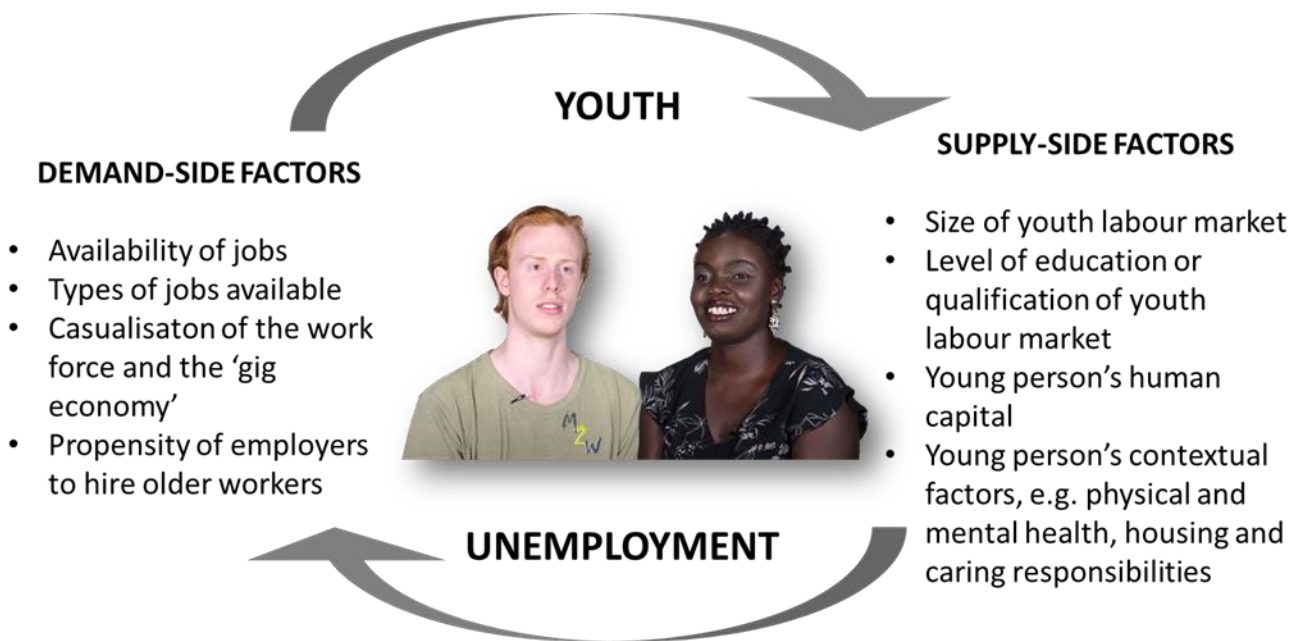
*Figure 2.3: Youth Unemployment Demand and Supply Side Factors*

In sum, youth unemployment is a result of the interaction between demand-side factors such as the availability and type of jobs, structure of the workforce, and attitudes towards younger workers, and supply-side factors which comprise the size and level of qualification of the youth labour market, along with individual-level factors such as a person's human capital (e.g. level of education, economic resources, and social knowledge) and their contextual factors (e.g. health, mental health, housing). The youth unemployment rate in Australia has been double that of the overall Australian population, in spite of increased investment in education and training in and by the cohort, and unprecedented prosperity at the national level. It is recognised that effective policy and program responses require alignment of the demand and supply sides of the equation. The following section will present selected recent examples of policy and program responses to youth unemployment in Australia.

## 2.4 Policy and Program Responses

Youth unemployment has been strong on State and Commonwealth Government agendas since the 1990s. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought it to the forefront of policy, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison warning young people that the employment market they now face is tougher than that of the 1990s recession (McIlroy, 2020), and both governments investing heavily in training and apprenticeships and construction projects to help stem the flow of young people into unemployment and increase economic productivity (Australian Government, 2020; State of Western Australia, 2020). The Australian Government's Priority Investment Approach identified young unemployed students and parents as being at significant risk of lifetime welfare dependence, hence the first tranche of the DSS TTL fund was dedicated to initiatives targeted at this group (of which, M2W was an initiative).

Approaches to address youth unemployment target different points of a young person's life (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). Approaches that target young people when they're still in school are focused on retaining young people in education or training. A policy example of this is the raising of the school leaving age. Some approaches target early school leavers, such as establishment and

funding of alternative educational institutions that provide secondary education equivalents. An example of an approach that targets the transition from school to work is the funding of youth-targeted employment services. Approaches that prepare and move young people towards labour market entry include apprenticeships, training courses and internships. Finally, approaches aimed to help young people who are in the labour market are typically targeted at the demand side, such as employer incentives and subsidies (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). As mentioned above, approaches in Australia have been heavily focused on increasing the education and other qualifications of young people. Below are two examples of innovative programs in Australia that attempt to provide holistic support that addresses both demand-side and supply-side factors impacting youth unemployment.

Bond and Keys (2020) evaluated the Transition to Work Community of Practice. This program positioned the Brotherhood of St Laurence as a 'backbone' organisation, convening 11 organisations delivering transition to work services across 13 sites in Australia. All members of the Community of Practice deliver a common (though flexible and iterative) model that utilises Advantaged Thinking. Advantaged thinking places young people's strengths and aspirations, rather than their problems, as the starting point of service delivery. This allows service providers to identify what interests and motivates the young person, and to devise ways of aligning that with local business and economic needs. To facilitate the latter, Community Investment Committees were formed, comprised of stakeholders of the local business community (including employers), in order to co-design pathways into entry level work that fit with young people's aspirations and local business needs.

Bond and Keys (2020) identified that services that followed the model were significantly more likely to meet or surpass the government's 12-week education/employment outcome than those that did not follow the model as closely. They also found that young people receiving the services reported high rates of participation in coaching, goal-setting, learning job search skills, and preparing for work, and that the overwhelming majority were learning about education or employment, and felt that they were being connected with people who could help them work towards their goals. Feedback on the program from the young people was almost entirely positive. The key success factors identified by Bond and Keys (2020) in their evaluation included the positioning of the Brotherhood of St Laurence as an enabling organisation, a four phase flexible model that activated employers, the use of Advantaged Thinking, the reciprocal "Deal" between service providers and young people, goal setting exercises, group work to alleviate social anxiety, and work skills and tasters.

Coddou, Borlagdan & Mallett (2019) undertook a longitudinal study of the outcomes of Education First Youth Foyers in Australia. Youth First Education Foyers focus on young people at risk of homelessness, providing affordable accommodation contingent on participation in education, training or employment, grounded in the belief that education is key to a sustainable livelihood. To facilitate this, Education First Youth Foyers partner with and/or are located on the premises of educational institutions. Relative to entry, about 70% of Foyer residents had achieved a higher educational qualification or were still enrolled one year after exit. Over one-third (versus one-fifth at entry) of Foyer residents were employed a year after exit. Foyer residents reported that Foyer staff helped them with job readiness, for example by helping them to find internships, work experience, mentors, and jobs. Similarly, Foyer staff helped young people transition into sustainable accommodation through financial assistance for bond and rent, sourcing references for real estate agencies, and facilitating family mediation. Young people's mental health improvement was related to length of stay in the Foyer, with those staying longer experiencing greater improvement.

Coddou, Borlagdan & Mallett (2019) identified the defining characteristics of the Education First Youth Foyer model as partnership and co-location with tertiary education institutions, an 'education first' approach, a focus on capacity and capability building, the Certificate I in Developing Independence, and one-year Post-Foyer coaching and support. In common with the Transition to Work Community of Practice mentioned above, Education First Youth Foyers also employ the reciprocal 'Deal' between participants, staff, and the Advantaged Thinking approach.

## 2.5 The M2W Theory of Action

The M2W program aims to bring the supply side and demand side together via a mentor who, in addition to identifying and building the young person's strengths and interests, help the young person (with or without the use of their own network) find employment opportunities. Figure 1.2 outlines the Theory of Action underpinning the theoretical relationships between M2W program activities and desired outcomes. The matching of engaged young people with enthusiastic mentors creates a supportive mentoring relationship that increases young adults' job readiness, and encourages education, upskilling and job seeking, which in turn leads to sustainable employment and, consequently, long-term independence from welfare.

Underpinning this Theory of Action are the assumptions that the young people want employment, that employment will improve their lives, that suitable jobs are available, and that mentors will remain committed over time. The theory and assumptions are, in turn, affected by external factors including the labour market (e.g. availability of jobs) and the young person's circumstances (e.g. availability of childcare, stability in the household).

*Figure 0.1 Theory of Action*
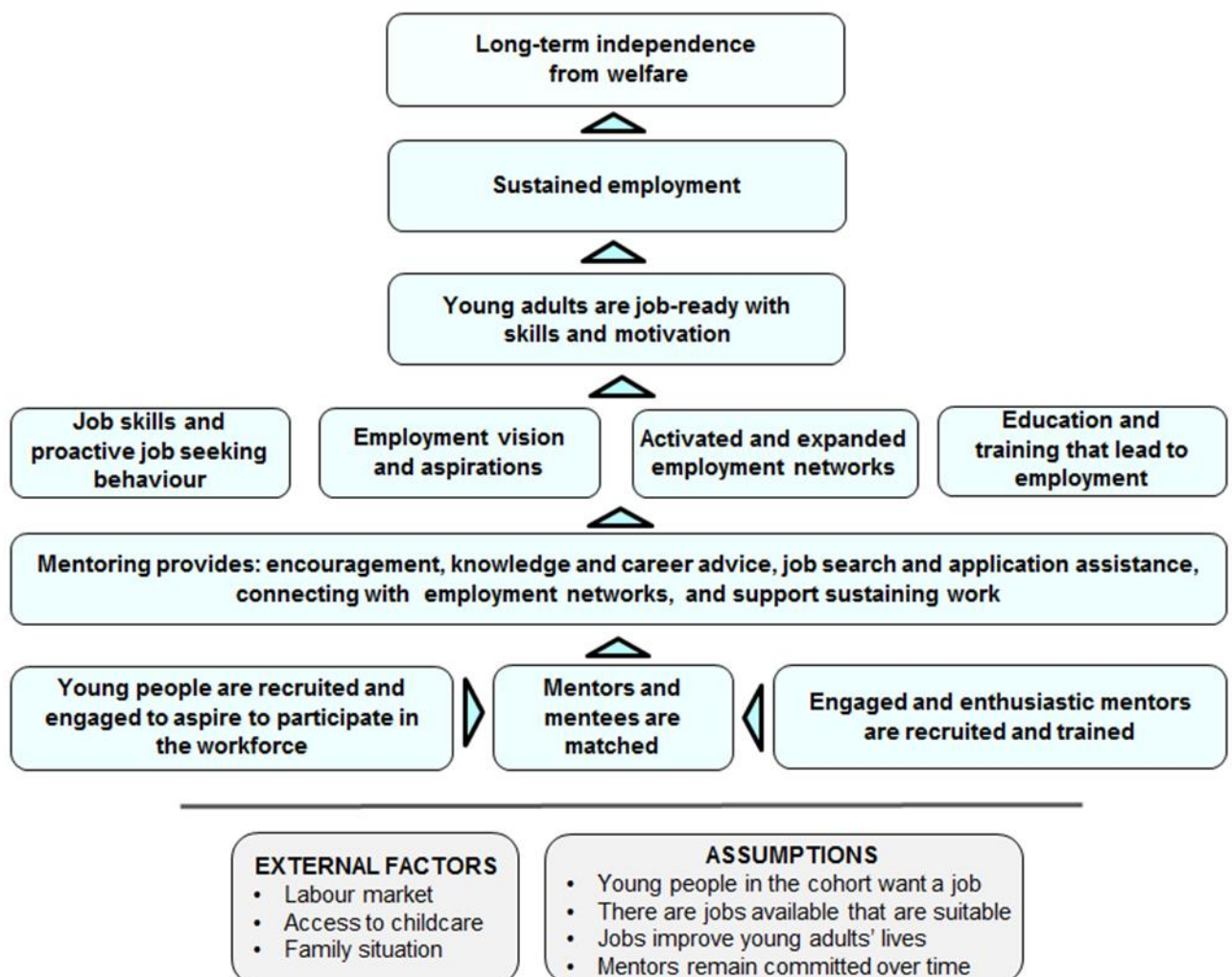
# 3. METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Ethics Approval

Ethics approval for the evaluation was granted by the University of Western Australia (approval number RA/4/20/4922). The following ethical matters were taken into consideration:

- **Informed participation and consent:** The *National Statement for Ethical Conduct in Human Research* states that participant consent must be informed and voluntary. All M2W evaluation participants were provided with Participant Information Sheets outlining the purpose of the evaluation, how the information they provided was going to be used, and the risks and their rights regarding their participation and data. After reading the Participant Information Sheet and having any questions addressed, all participants signed a Participant Consent Form;

- **Privacy and confidentiality:** Participants were assured that no individual would be identified in the reporting of results and that data would be securely stored at CSI UWA;

- **Participant reimbursement:** Young adults were reimbursed with a $40 gift card for their time and any out-of-pocket expenses accrued through participation in evaluation activities (surveys, focus groups and interviews);

- **Cultural and social sensitivity:** the evaluation team were briefed on any cultural, gender or social considerations which may have had bearing on the evaluations.

## 3.2 Quantitative Data Collection

All mentors and mentees who participated in the program were included in the evaluation and invited to complete evaluation surveys. Surveys were developed and distributed on the UWA Qualtrics platform and were analysed using SPSS data software.

- Young adult participants were invited to participate in a survey at the end of the evaluation period, which examined their experiences of the program and their labour market outcomes. All young adults received a $40 gift card for each survey completed.

- Mentors were invited to participate in two surveys: a Baseline Survey at the start of the program that captured their skills, values and expectations of the program, and an Exit Survey that captured their perceptions of the program and provided feedback on program design and implementation.

# 4. PROFILES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1 presents the surveys completed by the mentors and mentees. A total of 42 mentors and 21 mentees participated in the evaluation. With respect to surveys, 32 mentors completed the Baseline survey and 32 mentors completed the Exit survey, with 22 completing both surveys. Mentees were surveyed once during the program and 21 mentees completed this survey. Of the 32 mentors and 21 mentees that completed Exit surveys, there were 18 mentor-mentee pairs where they both completed the Exit survey.

*Table 0.1 Surveys completed by mentors and mentees*

| Mentors Surveyed | |
|---|---|
| Completed Baseline Survey | 32 |
| Completed Exit Survey | 32 |
| Completed Both Surveys | 22 |
| Total Mentors Surveyed | 42 |
| | |
| **Mentees Surveyed** | |
| Total Mentees Surveyed | 21 |
| Both Mentor and Mentee Completed Exit Surveys | 18 |

Table 4.2 outlines the demographic profile of the mentors and mentees that participated in the M2W evaluation. Both groups are demographically similar: there was a slightly higher proportion of female mentees compared to mentors (57% versus 56%, respectively). As per the eligibility criteria, the mentees were aged between 18 and 25 with a mean of 22 years of age. The mentors had a much wider age range from 33 to 80, with a mean of 55 years of age. Many of the mentors were parents themselves, with 78% reporting that they had children. It is important to note that demographic information was collected at Baseline, so these demographic statistics only reflect the 32 mentors that completed the Baseline survey.

*Table 0.2 Demographic profile of mentors and mentees, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)*

| | Mentor | | Mentee | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| Female | 18 | 56 | 12 | 57 |
| Male | 14 | 44 | 8 | 38 |
| Other | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | 32 | 100.00 | 21 | 100.00 |
| | | | | |
| **Age** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| | 55 | 12.90 | 22 | 2.14 |
| | **Minimum** | **Maximum** | **Minimum** | **Maximum** |
| | 33 | 80 | 18 | 25 |

# 5. MENTOR EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

Mentors at Baseline (n = 32) reported that they had, on average, 33.72 years' experience in the workforce (SD = 11.49, minimum = 11 years, maximum = 53 years). To ascertain the types of workplace experiences mentors had had in their lives and the advice they can give to their mentees, mentors were asked to indicate if they had ever experienced certain job searching experiences, career interruptions, unemployment experiences, management activities, and recruitment responsibilities.

## 5.1 Job Searching Experiences

The majority (88%) of mentors had successfully applied for an advertised position. Many mentors (78%) had utilised their networks and found work informally through friends or other contacts. The same proportion (78%) had had a promotion or successfully put themselves forward for a promotion.

*Figure 5.1 Mentor job searching experiences, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
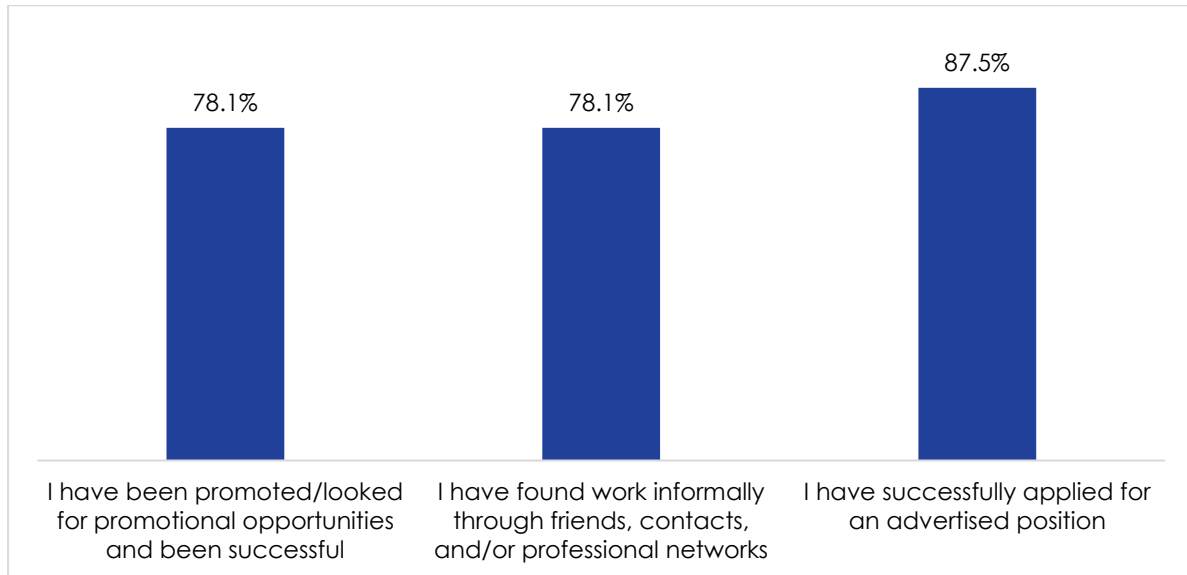
## 5.2 Career Interruption Experiences

The majority (75%) of mentors had changed careers at some point in their lives. Just over half (53%) had retrained or returned to study in a different field as part of that career change. Just under a fifth (19%) had left the workforce for at least a year to take care of their children.

*Figure 5.2 Mentor experiences of career interruptions, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
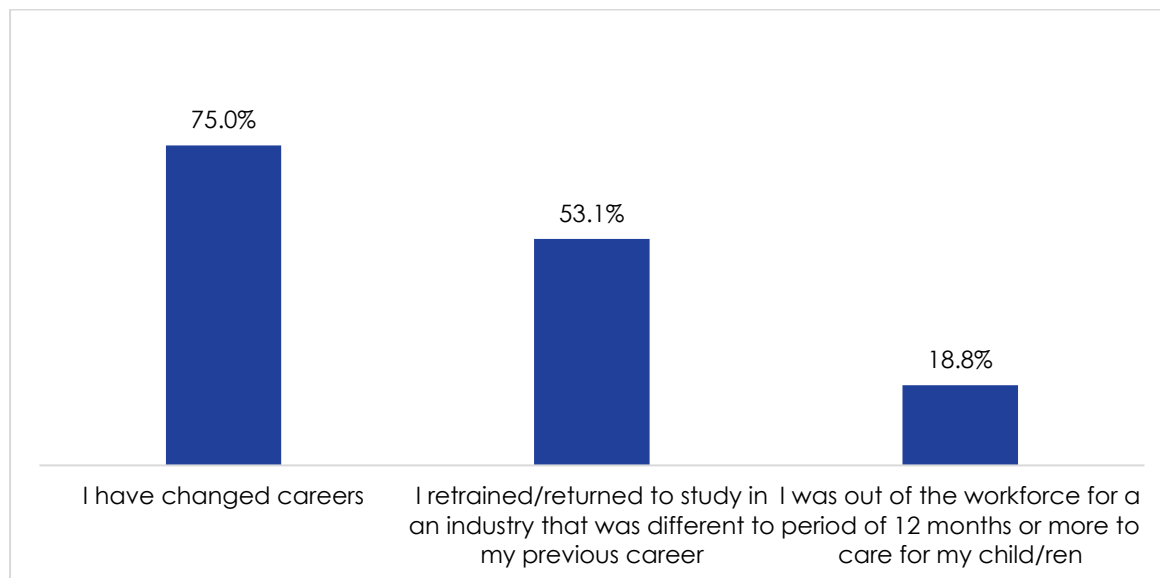


## 5.3 Unemployment Experiences

Just under half (41%) of the mentors had experienced a redundancy and 13% had been fired. Just under half (41%) of the mentors had experienced insecure employment or underemployment, that is an employment situation where they were working less hours than they wanted and/or needed. In terms of long-term unemployment, 13% had experienced a period of 12 months or more where they were able to work, looking for work and available to start work, but were unemployed.

*Figure 5.3 Mentor unemployment experiences, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
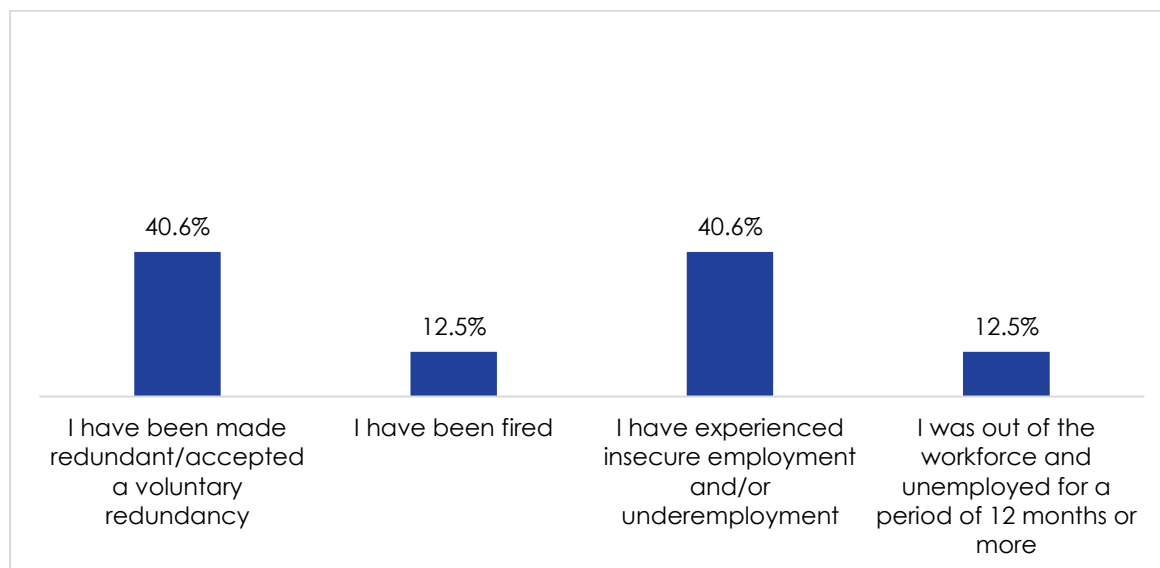
## 5.4 Management Experiences

Almost all (91%) mentors had experience of training new employees in their careers. Similarly, 88% of mentors had experience managing employees. Over half (59%) had had someone (a student or intern) shadow them in their workplace and two thirds (66%) had fired an employee.

*Figure 5.4 Mentor management experiences, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
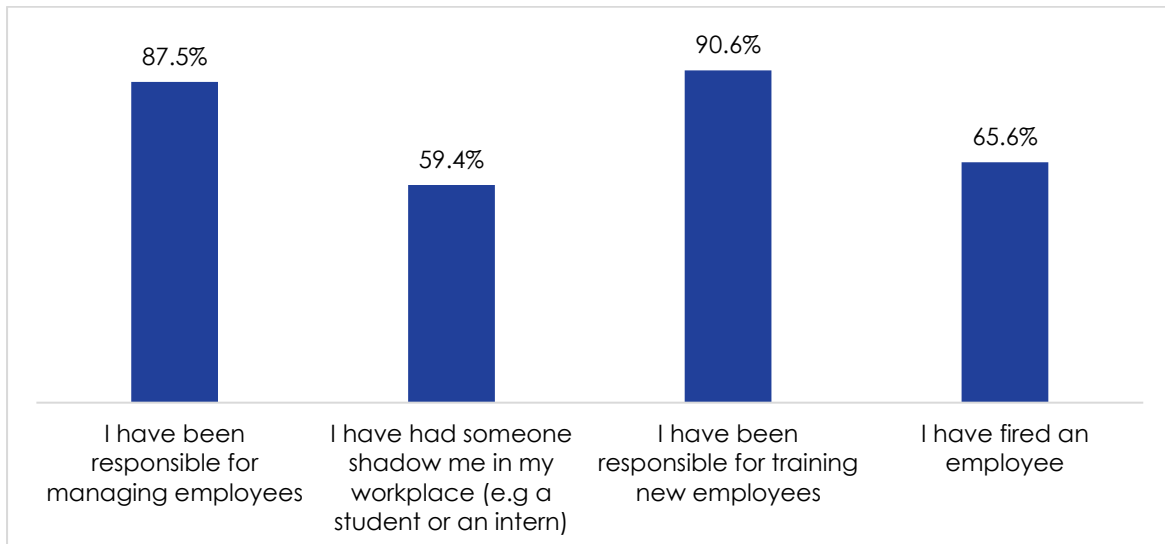


## 5.5 Recruitment Experiences

Two thirds (66%) of mentors had been responsible for writing position descriptions. The majority (84%) had experience reviewing applications. In terms of employee selection, 88% had interviewed a potential employee and 81% had been on a selection panel for the recruitment of an employee.

*Figure 5.5 Mentor recruitment experiences, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
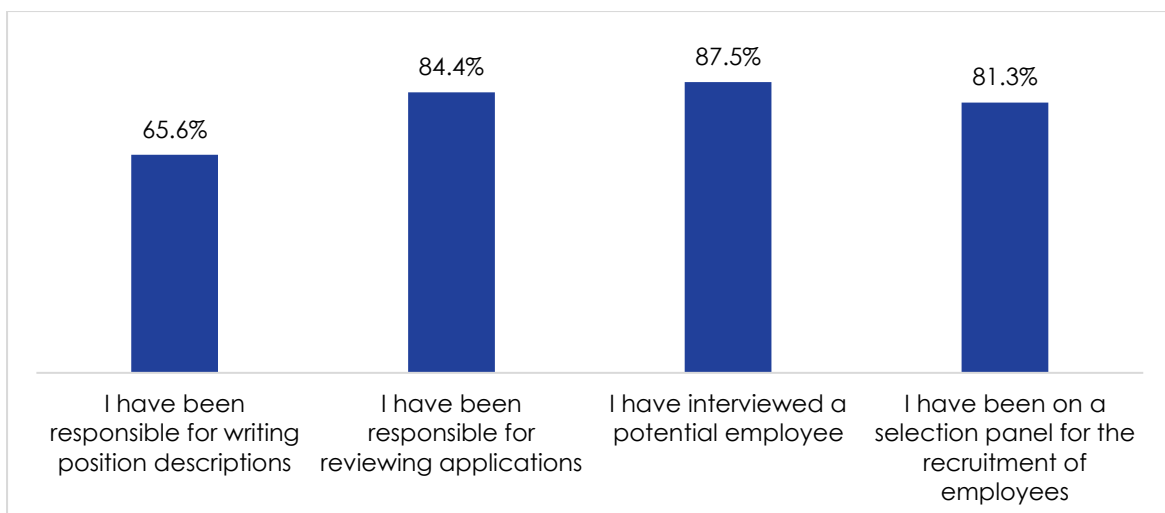
# 6. MENTEE EDUCATION

The human capital development approach to addressing youth unemployment advocates for increased education and training in order to increase the employability of young people (Keating, 1994). The rationale is solid; completing Year 12 (or equivalent) improves social and economic outcomes for young people (AIHW, 2019).

As can be seen in Table 6.1, 95% of the mentees had completed at least Year 12 or equivalent. In this iteration of the M2W program, the mentees reported a Year 12 participation rate higher than the 2018 retention rate to Year 12 of 85% and much higher than the Australian population aged 15-64, of whom 78% have attained Year 12 or equivalent.

*Table 6.1 Mentee highest level of education, Mentee Survey (n = 21)*

|  | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Below Year 12** | **1** | **4.76** |
| Year 11 or equivalent | 1 | 4.76 |
|  |  |  |
| **Year 12 or above** | **20** | **95.24** |
| Year 12 or equivalent | 6 | 28.57 |
| Certificate 2 | 1 | 4.76 |
| Certificate 3 | 5 | 23.81 |
| Certificate 4 | 1 | 4.76 |
| VET/TAFE Diploma | 1 | 4.76 |
| Bachelor Degree | 3 | 14.29 |
| Postgraduate Degree | 3 | 14.29 |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** | **21** | **100.00** |

# 7. MENTEE HOUSING

Housing plays an important role in employment and employability. Living in stable housing means that the young adults have a base from which to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews and, when they are employed, rest and prepare for the day. If young adults are couch surfing, they may have fewer belongings, and limited access to appropriate clothes and other resources for job interviews and work. Problems in their home environment may mean that young adults are unable to get adequate rest or support if they find a job.

## 7.1 Current Accommodation

As can be seen in Table 7.1, all mentees were living in permanent accommodation. The majority (71%) were living with their parents or guardians.

Table 7.1 Accommodation circumstances in the week prior to survey, M2W group and control group, Baseline and Year, Mentee Survey (n = 21)

|  | n | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Permanent Accommodation** | **21** | **100.00** |
| Living with parent/s or guardian/s | 15 | 71.43 |
| Private rental with my partner | 1 | 4.76 |
| Private rental with others | 4 | 19.05 |
| Other | 1 | 4.76 |
| **Total** | **21** | **100.00** |

# 8. MENTEE EMPLOYMENT

Employment is the ultimate goal of the M2W program. It is important to note that the ABS definition of employment counts a person with 1 hour or more of employment as employed.

## 8.1 Labour Force Status

Table 8.1 outlines the labour force statuses of the mentees. Just over a third (38%) were employed. All of the mentees had worked before in their life, however, over one quarter (29%) had been unemployed for more than a year.

*Table 8.1 Labour force status of Mentees and time since last paying job, Mentee Survey (n = 21)*

|  | n | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Employed** | **8** | **38.10** |
| Worked last week | 7 | 33.33 |
| Away from work | 1 | 4.76 |
|  |  |  |
| **Unemployed - Actively seeking work and able to work** | **13** | **61.90** |
| Last paying job two months ago | 2 | 9.52 |
| Last paying job three months ago | 1 | 4.76 |
| Last paying job five months ago | 1 | 4.76 |
| Last paying job six months ago | 2 | 9.52 |
| Last paying job nine months ago | 1 | 4.76 |
| Last paying job more than twelve months ago | 6 | 28.57 |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** | **21** | **100.00** |

## 8.2 Quality of Employment

Table 8.2 presents the numbers and proportions of mentees by the numbers of hours worked in the week prior and whether they wanted to/would be in their job in three months' time. Half (50%) of those who were employed expected to still be in their job in three months' time and 50% wanted to still be in their job in three months' time.

*Table 8.2 Hours worked and employment preferences among those who were employed the week prior to survey, Mentee Survey (n = 8)*

| Hours | | |
|---|---|---|
| | n | % |
| 0-9.5 hours | 1 | 16.67 |
| 10-19.5 hours | 2 | 33.33 |
| 20-29.5 hours | 2 | 33.33 |
| 30 hours or more | 1 | 16.67 |
| Total | 6 | 100.00 |
| | Mean | SD |
| | 17.92 | 11.10 |
| | Minimum | Maximum |
| | 4 | 35 |
| | | |
| **Do you expect to be in this job in three months' time?** | | |
| | n | % |
| Yes | 4 | 50.00 |
| No | 4 | 50.00 |
| | | |
| **Ideally, would you like to still be in this job in three months' time?** | | |
| | n | % |
| Yes | 4 | 50.00 |
| No | 4 | 50.00 |

Note: Hours worked excludes the one mentee who was away from work in the week prior to the survey, and one other mentee who reported that they had worked but did not disclose the number of hours.

# 9. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCES

This section covers the recruitment experiences of mentees and mentors, in particular their referral source and motivations for participation.

## 9.1 Mentee Referral Source

COTA WA utilised multiple recruitment strategies, including targeted Facebook and radio advertisements. Just over half (52%) of the mentees heard about the program on social media (Facebook). Just under a quarter (24%) of the mentees were told about the program by a friend or another person they knew. About a fifth (19%) were referred to the M2W program by a Jobactive consultant and 5% heard about M2W in a newspaper.

*Figure 9.1 Mentee referral source, Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
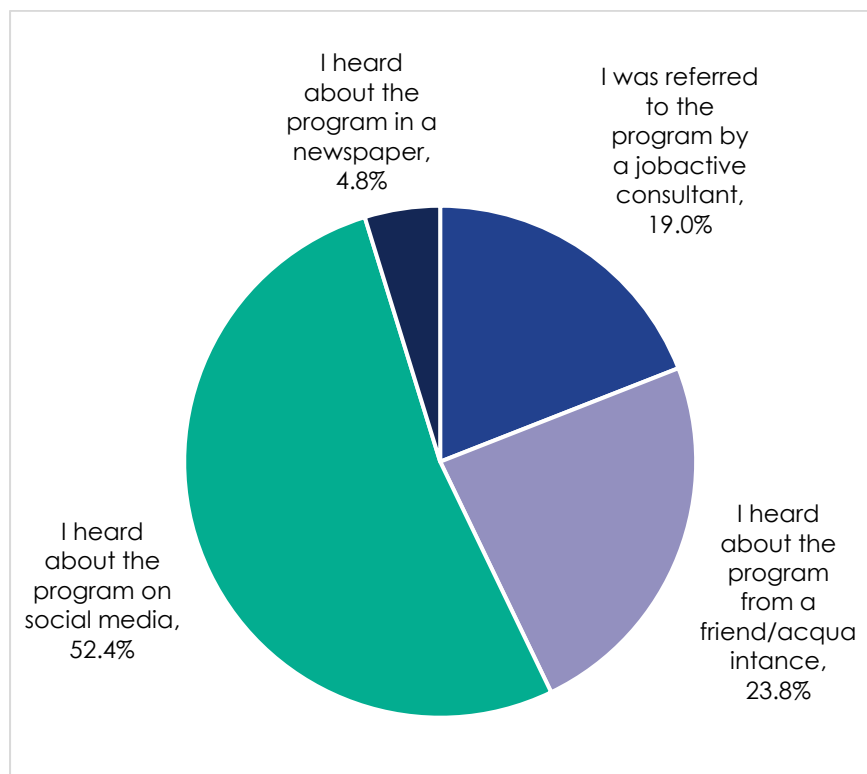
## 9.2 Mentor Referral Source

The mentors heard about the program from a variety of sources. Mentors who had participated in Phase 1 were invited to continue in the program and receive a new mentee. A new recruitment approach was also trialled. An advertising agency was hired to help refine the strategy which involved advertising directly for mentors via radio and social media (Facebook and Instagram). The majority of the categories in Figure 9.2 were created from the "other" text responses. Online volunteering portals such as Seek Volunteering and Volunteering WA were the most common (28%) way mentors found out about the M2W program. Other online sources included Facebook advertisements (9%), LinkedIn posts (3%), and the City of Joondalup website (6%). Some mentors learned about the program at work, either from a colleague (13%) or some other form of advertising (16%; e.g. corporate intranet page, "a flyer on the printer at work"). Other sources included family and friends (6%) and the newspaper (3%).

*Figure 9.2 Mentor referral source, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)*
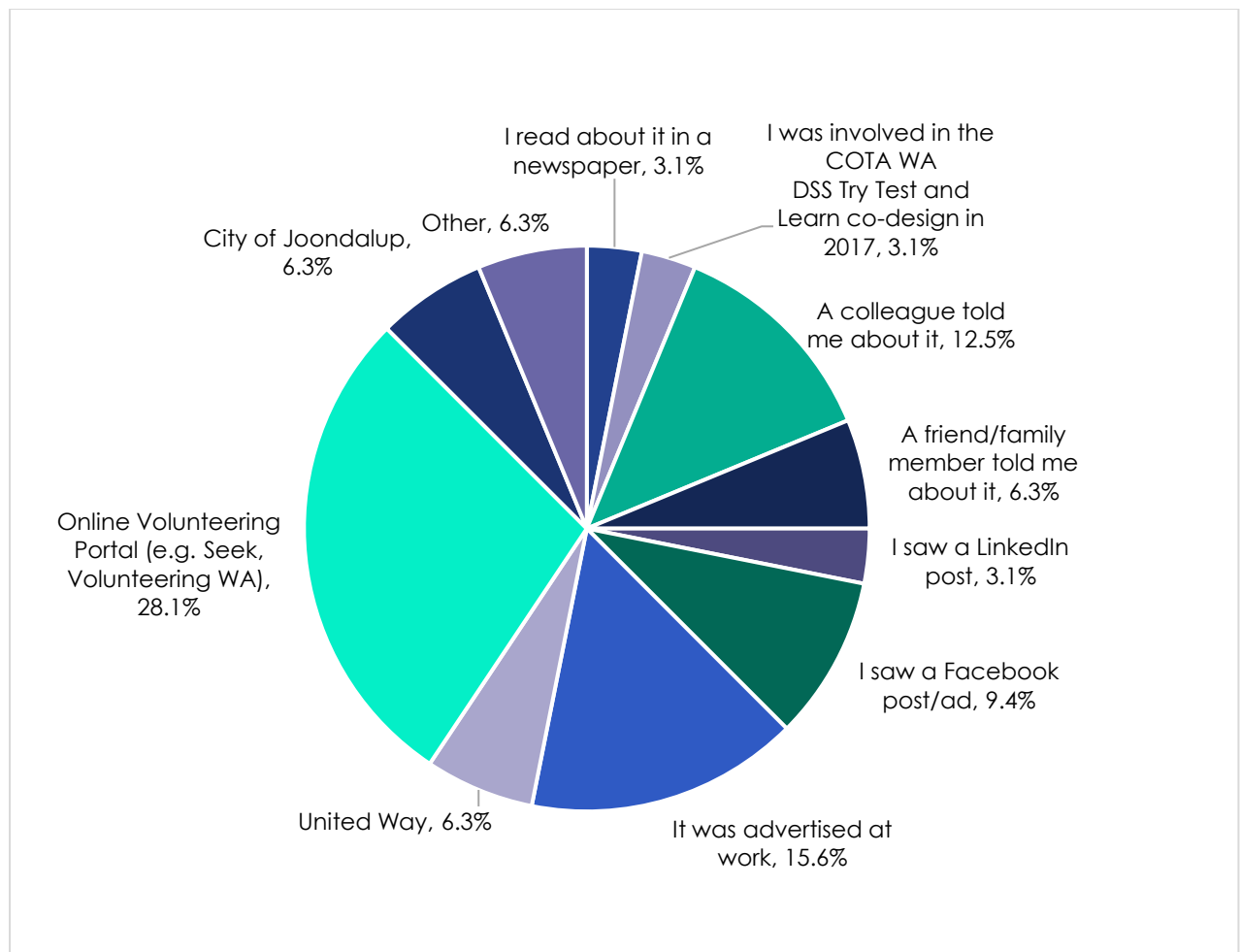
## 9.3 Mentee Motivations

Figure 9.3 below presents a series of statements and the extents to which each was a reason the mentees were motivated to participate in the M2W program[3]. The statements in the figure are ordered from most motivating to least motivating. The biggest motivators to join the program were to gain confidence and have a mentor to help, both with 91% of mentees reporting that these were extremely (67%) or quite a bit motivating (24%) reasons. COVID-19 was a motivating factor, as 52% and 29% of mentees said that getting extra help finding a job in a job market affected by COVID-19 was extremely and quite a bit motivating, respectively. The mentees were least interested in meeting other people in the same situation as them, which worked well for this iteration of the program as there were no social events or opportunities for the mentees to meet.

*Figure 9.3 Motivations of mentees for joining the M2W program, Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
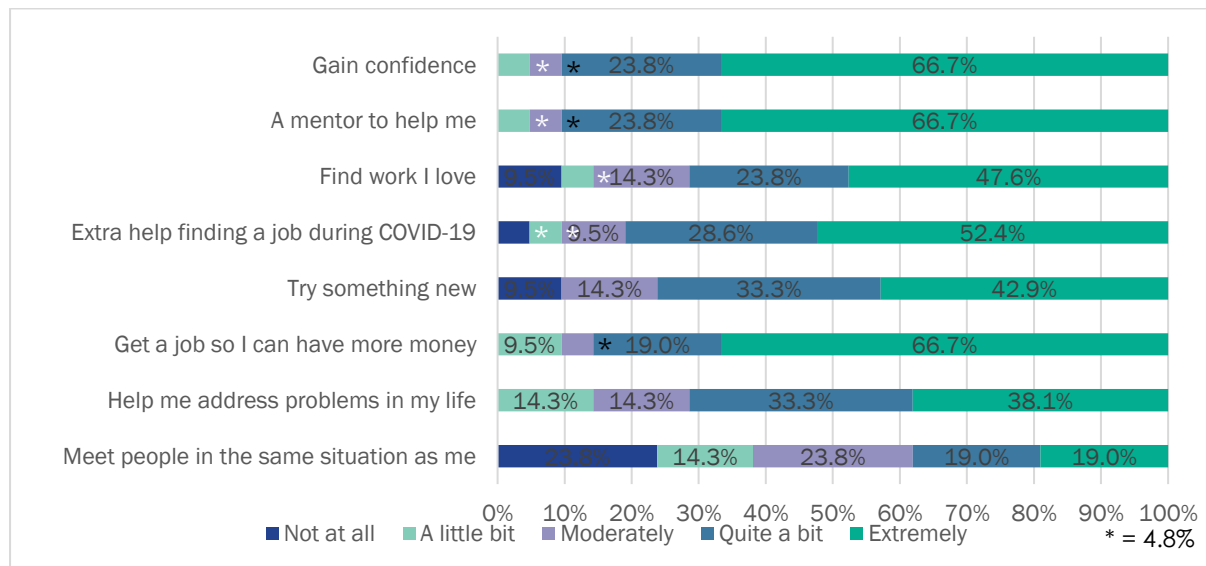


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[3] Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little bit, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, 5 = extremely)

28   *Mentor and Mentee Feedback on the Mentoring 2 Work Project*

## 9.4 Mentor Motivations

The mentors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that particular statements (presented in Figure 9.4) were reasons that they were motivated to join the M2W program[4]. All mentors agreed that they joined M2W because they wanted to help others (69% and 31% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively). The next strongest motivating factors were that they thought it would be enjoyable (13% strongly agreed and 72% agreed) and that they wanted to help young adults affected by the COVID-19 economic situation (22% strongly agreed and 41% agreed). Despite the fact that many mentors learned about the program through colleagues, friends and family, and advertisements in their workplace, most mentors were not motivated to join the M2W program because they were asked to do so by someone they know (34% disagreed and 44% strongly disagreed).

*Figure 9.4 Motivations of mentors for joining the M2W program, Mentor Baseline Survey (n = 32)[5]*



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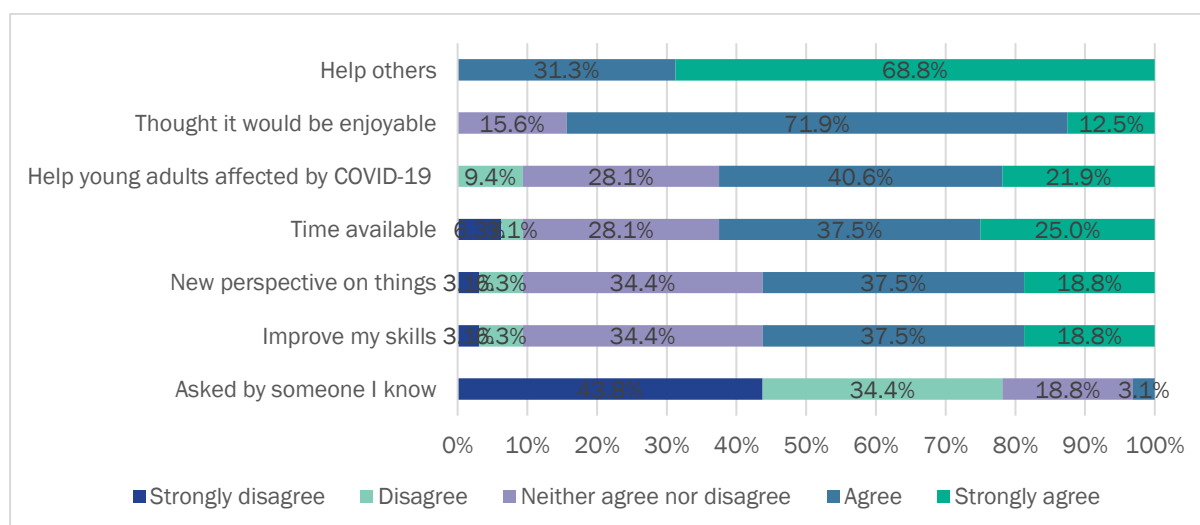
[4] Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)
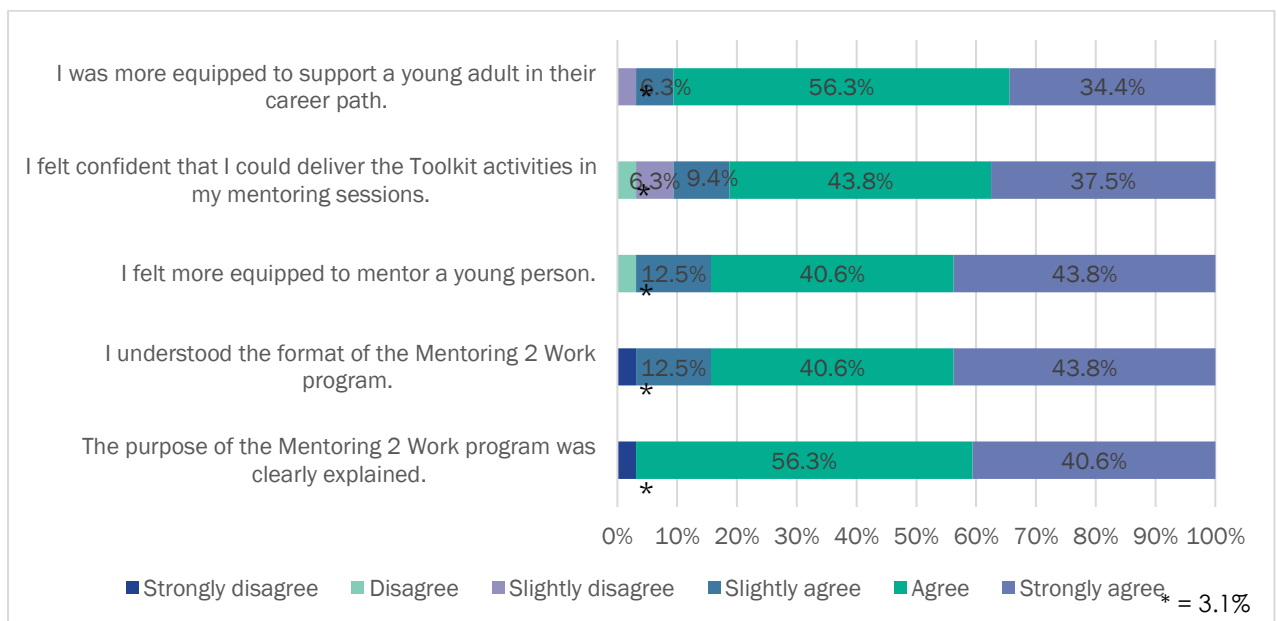
[5] Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

29   *Mentor and Mentee Feedback on the Mentoring 2 Work Project*

# 10. MENTOR TRAINING

Training of mentors and mentees is a critical component of successful mentoring programs (Miller, 2009; Dubois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). In Stages 1 to 3 program staff worked with young adults on the Toolkit activities before being matched with their mentor. In Stage 4 this approach was reversed in order to address the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to test a model requiring fewer resources. In this phase, program staff did not work directly with young adults; instead, they trained the mentors to work through the Toolkit activities with the young adults as part of the mentoring sessions. Mentors were given an Induction and Training workshop where they were provided with key information on the program and were introduced to the Toolkit as a mentoring resource.

Mentors were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements in Figure 10.1 about how they felt having completed the mentor training session[6]. The mentor training was effective. Almost all mentors (98%) reported that the purpose of the program was clearly explained, and the majority (84%) felt they understood the format of the program. The majority (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were more equipped to mentor their mentees and could support them on their career path. Most importantly, the majority (80%) of mentors felt confident that they could deliver the toolkit activities, which in this iteration of the program would not be delivered by the program staff.

*Figure 10.1 Mentor feedback on training workshop, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32)*



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[6] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree)

# 11. MENTOR/MENTEE MATCHING

A critical success factor for mentoring programs is the quality of the match between mentor and mentee, as perceived by both parties.

The matching process for Stage 4 had to be modified from the previous stages. Previously, the matching process was undertaken by program staff after working with the young adults and determining the type of mentor they needed. With a revised program model where program staff no longer trained young adults, matching of mentors and mentees was based on the information provided in the young adult screening process that outlined the key attributes they were looking for in a mentor. Program staff then matched them with as close a fit as possible from the pool of available mentors. Unlike Stages 1 to 3, there was not a formal handover process where program staff, mentors and young adults formally met.

This section covers the level of satisfaction of mentors and mentees with the match, as well as mentors' perceptions of mentee preparedness and receptiveness to mentoring.

## 11.1 Match Satisfaction

Both the mentors and mentees were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the match with each other[7]. As can be seen in Figure 11.1, slightly more mentors were satisfied with the match than the mentees, although the majority of both mentors and mentees (91% and 86%) were satisfied to some extent.

Figure 11.1 Satisfaction with the match by mentor and mentee, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)
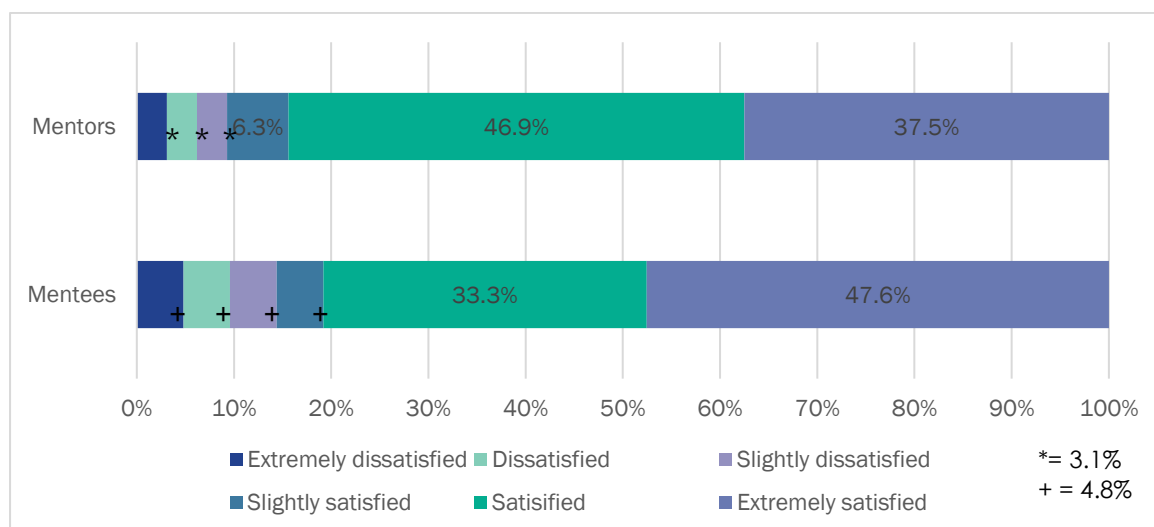


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[7] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = slightly dissatisfied, 4 = slightly satisfied, 5 = satisfied, 6 = extremely satisfied)

The mentees were asked to explain their rating. Just under half (48%) of the mentees commented that their mentor was kind and/or a good person; "My Mentor is a very kind and understanding, she talks to me through things and helps me", "She's very lovely and we get along". Over a third (43%) felt their mentor had "...knowledge inside the industry I am seeking employment...", "...many skills that is [sic] exactly where my dream job is" and "actually helped me find a career that I'm quite interested in!" Just under a quarter (24%) said their mentor provided "...tips to improve my resume and interview" and "...helped me on my resume and cover letter, understood what I was lacking and also helped me with applying jobs." However, 14% felt their mentor "...didn't work or have any connections to the industry I would like" or "similarities or anything in common with my personal goals/ aims/ career prospects." One mentee noted that their mentor was "...usually busy and can be difficult to meet up with when he has too much work" and another felt there were "too many test messages [sic] from the mentor. Came off as pressure on me as a participant. Felt more like an "adult- child" mentorship/ relationship".

> "My mentor has extensive knowledge and experience that someone my own age would never have, so it [was] really valuable to hear what they had been through and what they know."

## 11.2 Mentee Preparedness

In this iteration of the M2W program, the mentees did not complete the tool kit activities with the program staff as they would have in the Stages 1 to 3. As such, the mentors (n = 32) were asked in the Exit Survey how well they thought the mentees were prepared by the program staff to be mentored, when they first met them[8].

Just under a fifth (19%) of the mentors felt the mentees were prepared for mentoring to a great extent. Over half (53%) felt they were prepared to some extent, 13% said a little, and 16% said not at all.

## 11.3 Mentee Receptiveness

The mentors were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statements about the receptiveness of their mentees, presented in Figure 11.2[9].

The strongest statements were that the mentee was respectful (88% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed with this statement) and receptive to advice (81% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed).

A lower proportion, though still the majority, of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that their mentee met the goals set at each mentoring session (53%) and appeared to increased increase job-seeking behaviour (also 53%).

---

[8] Responses were provided on a four-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent)

[9] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree)

*Figure 11.2 Mentor ratings of mentee receptiveness, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32), My mentee..*
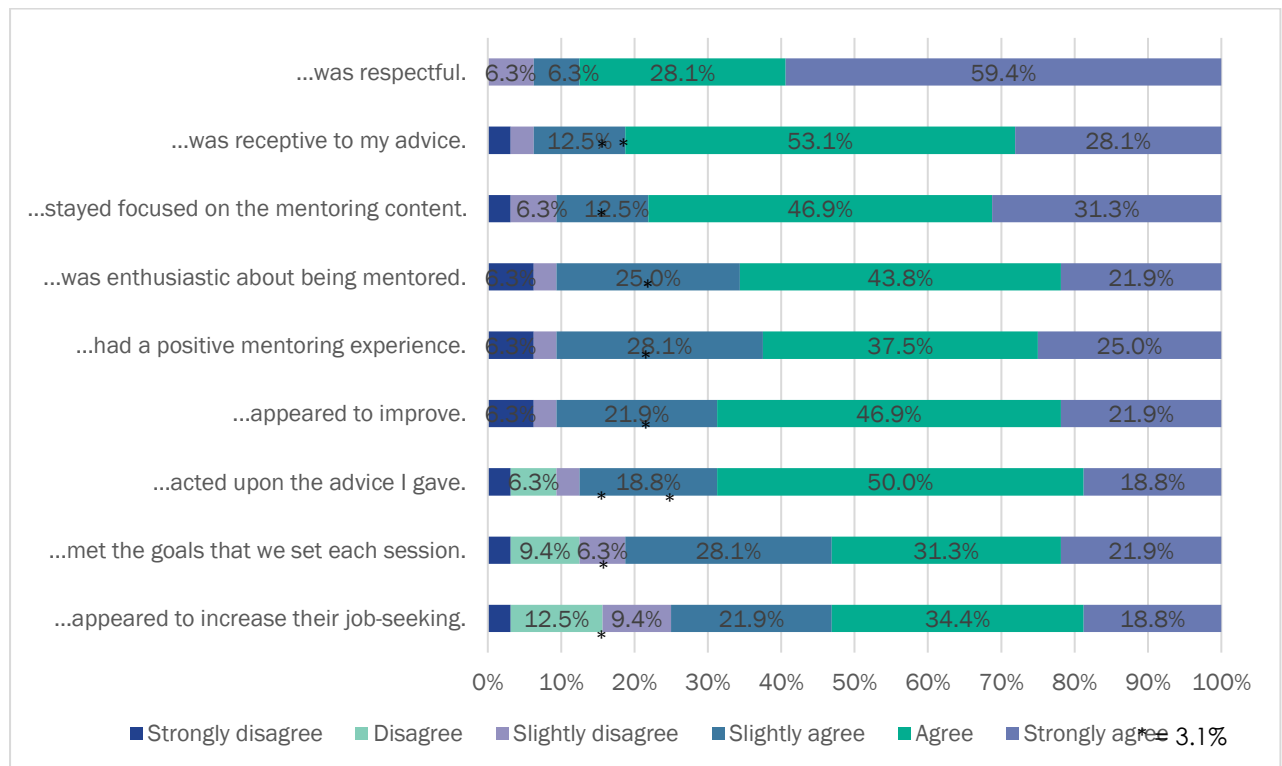
# 12.    CONTACT

The mentors and mentees were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the level of contact they had with each other in the program, such as frequency of meetings, phone calls, messages, and emails[10]. Interestingly, the mentors were slightly less satisfied than the mentees (87% versus 90%). Overall, across the mentors and mentees, most were satisfied to some extent with the amount of contact they had.

*Figure 12.1 Satisfaction with amount of contact, by mentor and mentee, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
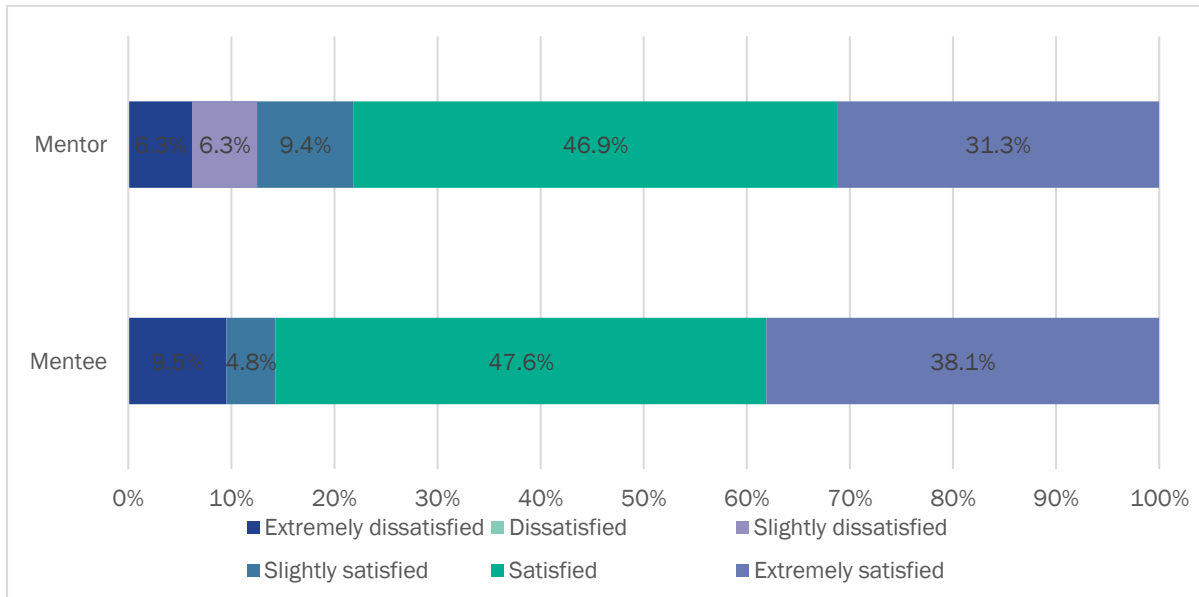


All mentors and mentees were asked whether they would have preferred to have more or less contact with each other. While most mentors (75%) and mentees (71%) were happy with how frequently they had contact, more mentors (25%) than mentees (19%) would have preferred more contact. No mentors indicated that they would have preferred less contact with their mentee, however 10% of mentees would have preferred less contact with their mentor.

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[10] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = slightly dissatisfied, 4 = slightly satisfied, 5 = satisfied, 6 = extremely satisfied)

*Figure 12.2 Contact frequency preference, by mentor and mentee, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)*



| | I would have preferred less contact | I am happy with how frequently we had contact | I would have preferred more contact |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mentor | | 75.0% | 25.0% |
| Mentee | 9.5% | 71.4% | 19.0% |
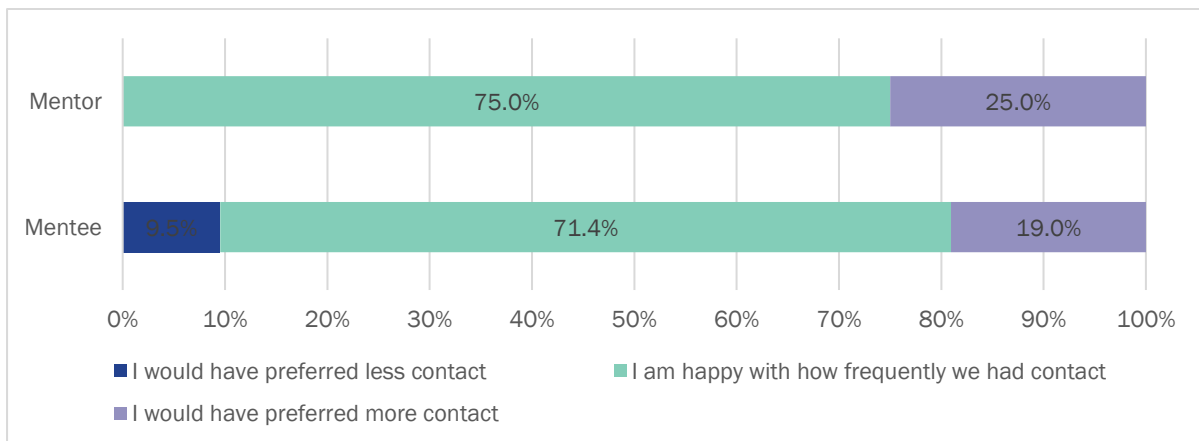
# 13.    MENTORING ACTIVITIES

In this iteration of the M2W program, the toolkit was delivered by the mentors in their mentoring sessions, whereas in previous stages of the program, the mentees would have spent up to eight weeks working through the toolkit activities with the program staff before the first mentoring session. The mentees were asked to rate the extent to which they felt they had greater clarity and understanding of the learning outcomes from each of the toolkit activities[11].

*Figure 13.1 Mentee rating (Mentee Survey (n = 21)) of the extent to which they felt they have greater clarity and understand of...*
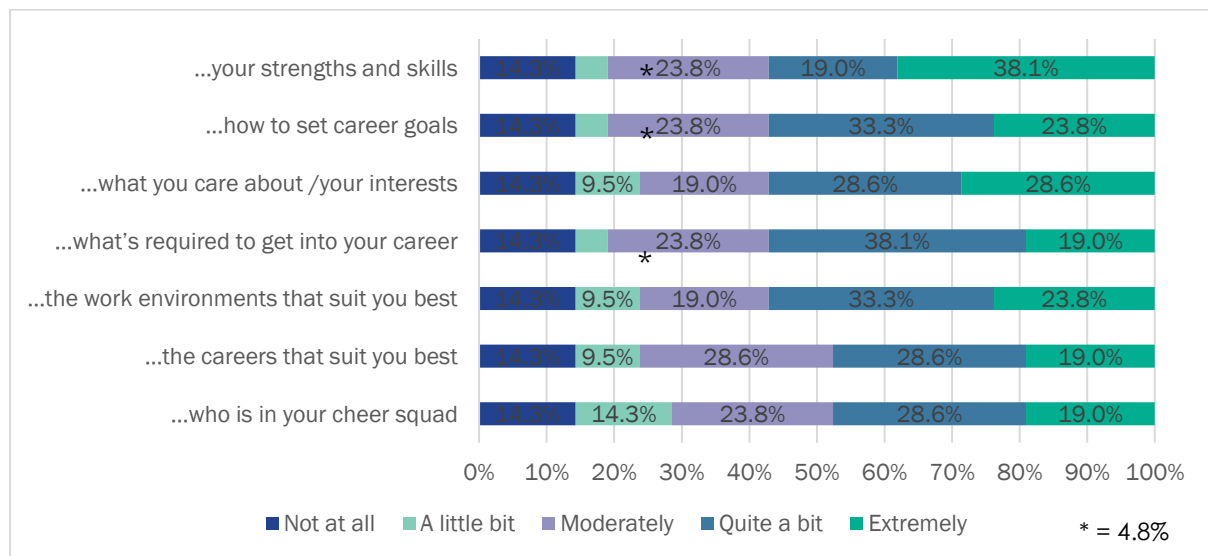


Over half (57%) of the mentees felt that the toolkit increased their clarity and understanding of their strengths and skills, how to set career goals, what's required to get into their career, and the work environments that suit them best 'extremely' or 'quite a bit'. Similarly, 57% felt that the toolkit helped them gain clarity and understanding about what they care about/their interests 'extremely' or 'quite a bit'. Just under half (48%) felt that the toolkit increased their clarity and understanding of the careers that suit them best and who is in their cheer squad 'quite a bit' or 'extremely'.

> *"It has helped me come out with greater knowledge of my own skills and personal brand mainly."*

---

[11] Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little bit, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, 5 = extremely).

# 14.  MENTORING IMPACT

Both mentees and mentors were asked about the impact of mentoring on a range of employment readiness outcomes, and personal and relationship outcomes.

## 14.1 Employment Readiness Impact

To evaluate the employment readiness skills that were developed from the mentoring, the mentees were asked to rate the extent to which they felt their mentors helped them with the items in Figure 14.1[12] and the mentors were asked to rate how effective they felt they were in helping their mentee with those items[13].

In terms of mentee ratings of effectiveness, 76% of mentees felt their mentor helped to improve their job-seeking skills (e.g. CV writing, interview preparedness) and find resources and information to a moderate or a great extent; 86% felt their mentor provided insights into work environments to a moderate or a great extent, and 81% provided clarity about career options to a moderate or a great extent. Over three quarters (76%) of mentees felt their mentors helped them with work skills and maintaining employment to a moderate or a great extent, and 57% felt their mentor helped them with access to employment networks to a moderate or a great extent.

Interestingly, across all employment readiness items, mentees rated their mentors higher than mentors rated themselves, suggesting that mentees felt their mentors were more helpful than the mentors themselves felt that they were.

---

[12] Mentees provided responses on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 2 = To some extent, 3 = To moderate extent, 4 = To a great extent)

[13] Mentors provided responses on a five-point Likert scale (1 = My mentee did not need this, 2 = Not at all effective, 3 = A little effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very effective).

*Figure 14.1 Employment readiness by mentee rating of extent to which mentors helped and mentor rating of effectiveness, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
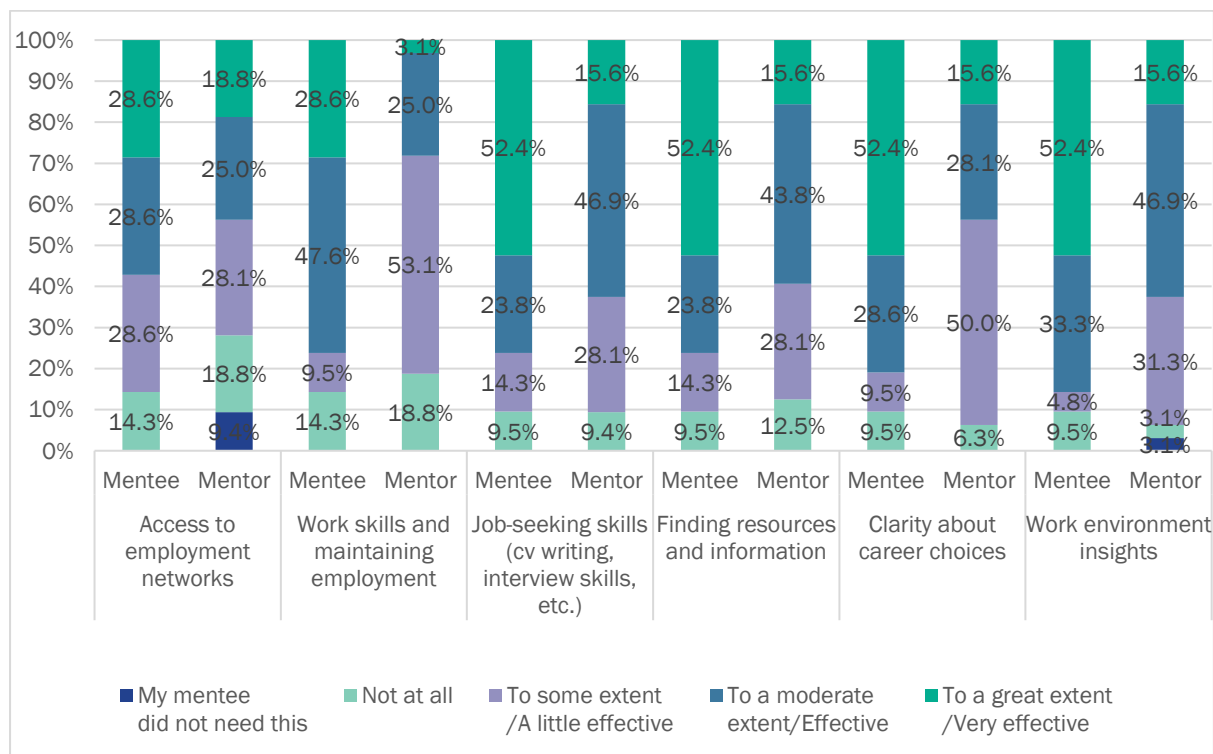


## 14.2 Personal and Relationship Impact

To evaluate the impact of the mentoring on the mentees' life skills and relationship building, the mentees were asked to rate the extent to which they felt their mentors helped them with the items in Figure 14.2[14]. In turn, mentors were asked to rate how effective they felt they were in helping their mentee with those items[15].

Once again, mentees rated their mentors as much more effective than the mentors rated themselves. The disparity between mentee and mentor rating of effectiveness was most apparent with respect to problem solving (76% of mentees versus 28% of mentors rating the mentor as effective or very effective), goal setting (76% of mentees versus 60% of mentors rating the mentor as effective or very effective), and gaining confidence(81% of mentees versus 63% of mentors rating the mentor as effective or very effective).

Ratings were mostly positive and consistent across mentees and mentors for encouragement and inspiration, and guidance and constructive feedback. However, 14% of mentees answered "not at all" when asked to what extent their mentor provided them with a positive relationship based on trust, whereas no mentors felt they were "not at all" effective in providing their mentee with this.

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[14] Mentees provided responses on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 2 = To some extent, 3 = To moderate extent, 4 = To a great extent)

[15] Mentors provided responses on a five-point Likert scale (1 = My mentee did not need this, 2 = Not at all effective, 3 = A little effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very effective)

Figure 14.2 Personal and relationship impact by mentee rating of extent to which mentors helped and mentor rating of effectiveness, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)
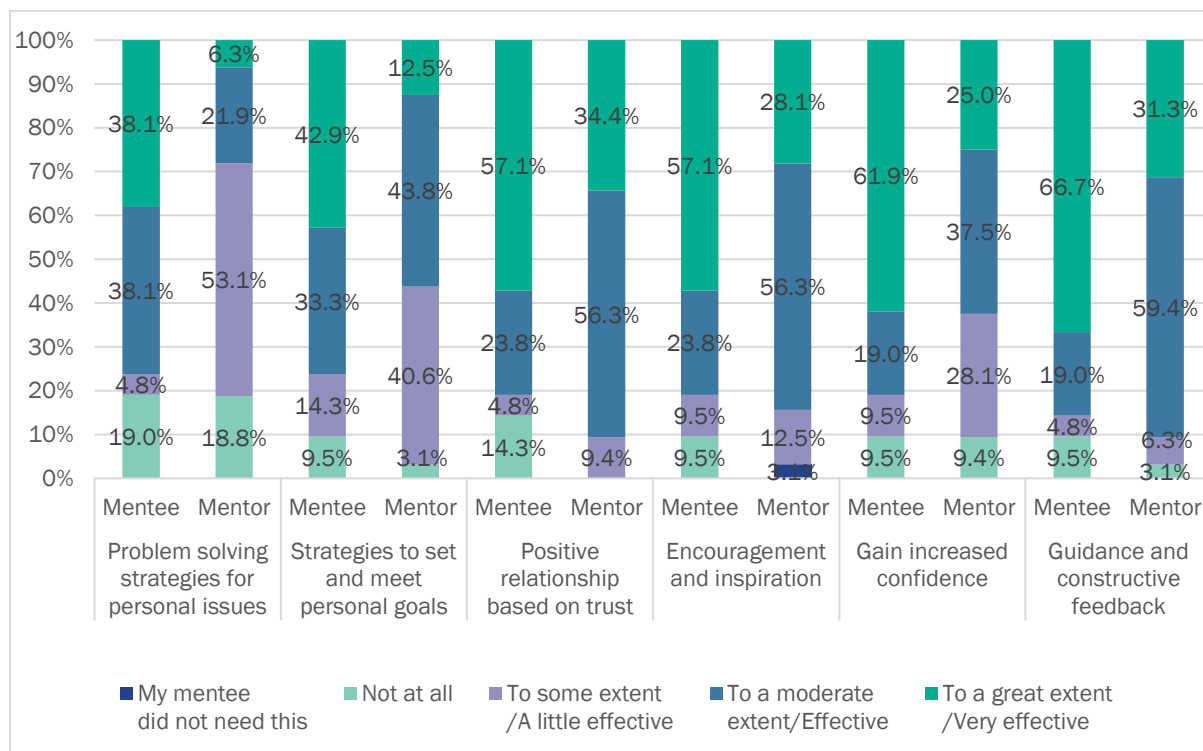
Overall, the personal and relationship impacts of the mentoring were perceived to be positive by both the mentees and the mentors.

"It's made me more aware of my passion and how my experiences have shaped it, and improved my ability to clearly express it so recruiters can identify my reasons for joining and what I can bring to the table."
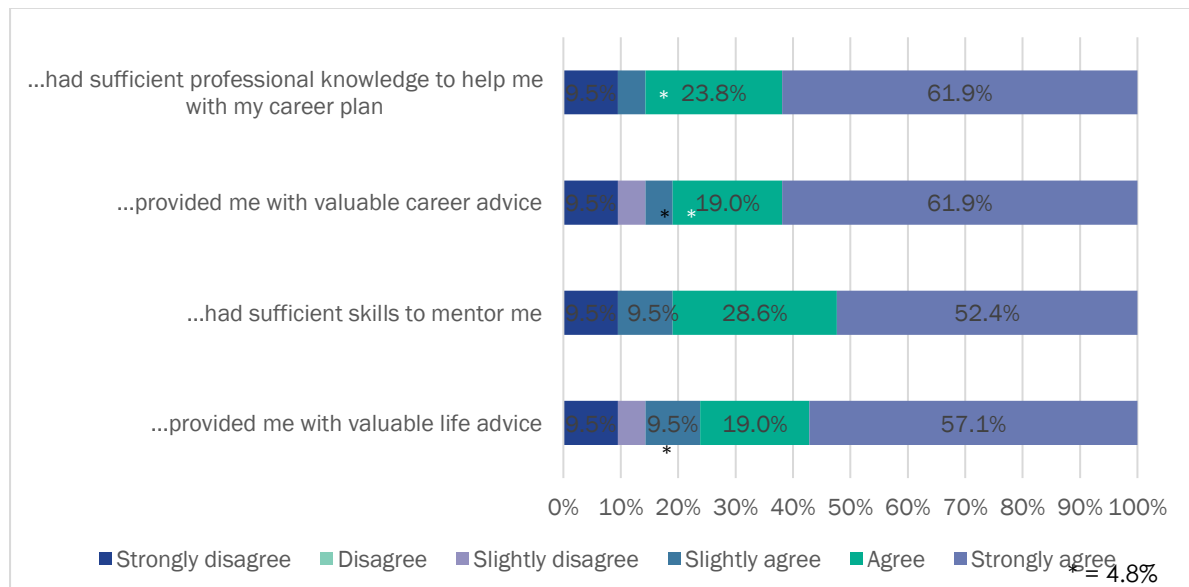
# 15.     MENTOR QUALITIES

Mentees were asked about mentee qualities, specifically the extent to which they agreed that their M2W mentor possessed certain qualities, and the extent to which they agreed certain qualities are important in an ideal mentor.

## 15.1 Mentor Qualities

The mentees were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements presented in Figure 15.1 about their mentor[16].

The statement that garnered the strongest agreement was "My mentor had sufficient professional knowledge to help me with my career plan" with 91% of mentees agreeing to some extent (62% strongly agree, 24% agree and 5% slightly agree). For each statement, 10% of the mentees strongly disagreed, which likely reflects the disappointment of those mentees who felt their mentor did not work in an industry that was relevant to their career goals.

Figure 15.1 Mentor qualities, Mentee Survey (n = 21), My mentor...



> "He had all the qualities that a mentor needs: was patient, a listener, gives constructive feedback, gives challenges and always gets back to me, encouraging and charming."
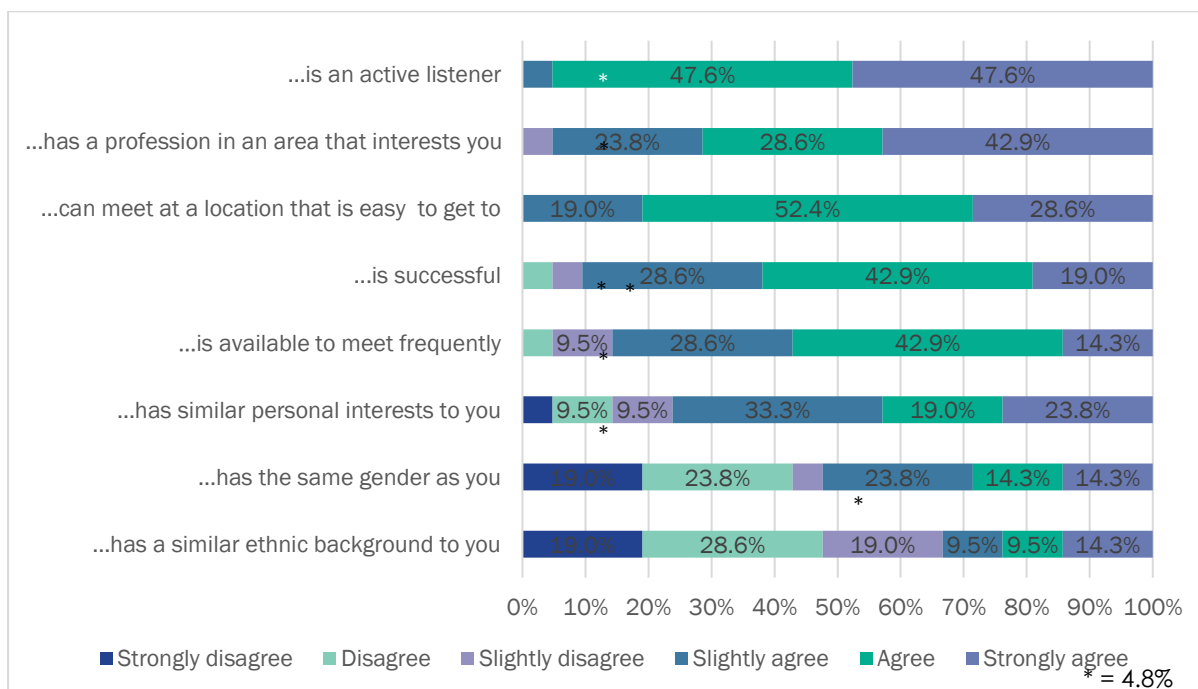
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[16] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree)

## 15.2 Ideal Mentor Qualities

In addition to rating the qualities of their mentor, the mentees were asked to reflect on their mentoring experience and rate the extent to which they agree that it is important that a mentor has any of the qualities listed in Figure 15.2[17]. The most important quality was active listening – all mentees agreed to some extent (48% strongly agreed, 48% agreed, and 5% slightly agreed). Working in a relevant profession and being able to meet a convenient location were also important to the mentees, with 95% and 100% of mentees, respectively, agreeing with the statements to some extent.

Being the same gender or having a similar ethnic background were less important to the mentees, with 48% and 67% of mentees, respectively, disagreeing with these statements to some extent.

*Figure 15.2 Qualities of an ideal mentor, Mentee Survey (n = 21), It is important that a mentor...*



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*"I think mentors should be able to constructively criticise and challenge the ideas of a mentee in a way that allows for personal development and growth"*

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[17] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree)

# 16.  OVERALL IMPACT

To investigate the impact of the M2W program on the young adults' lives, the mentees were asked to rate the extent to program had impacted each of the elements listed in Figure 16.1[18].

The most highly rated statement was "increased my confidence" followed by "gave me clarity about jobs and possible career paths", and "gave me clarity about what work I want to do" with 38%, 38% and 33% answering "to a great extent", respectively. The lowest ranked statements were "widened my friendship group", "increased my employment networks", and "taught me how to keep a job and be more successful at work" with 52%, 24% and 24% answering "not at all", respectively.

*Figure 16.1 Ways in which M2W affected the mentees lives, Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
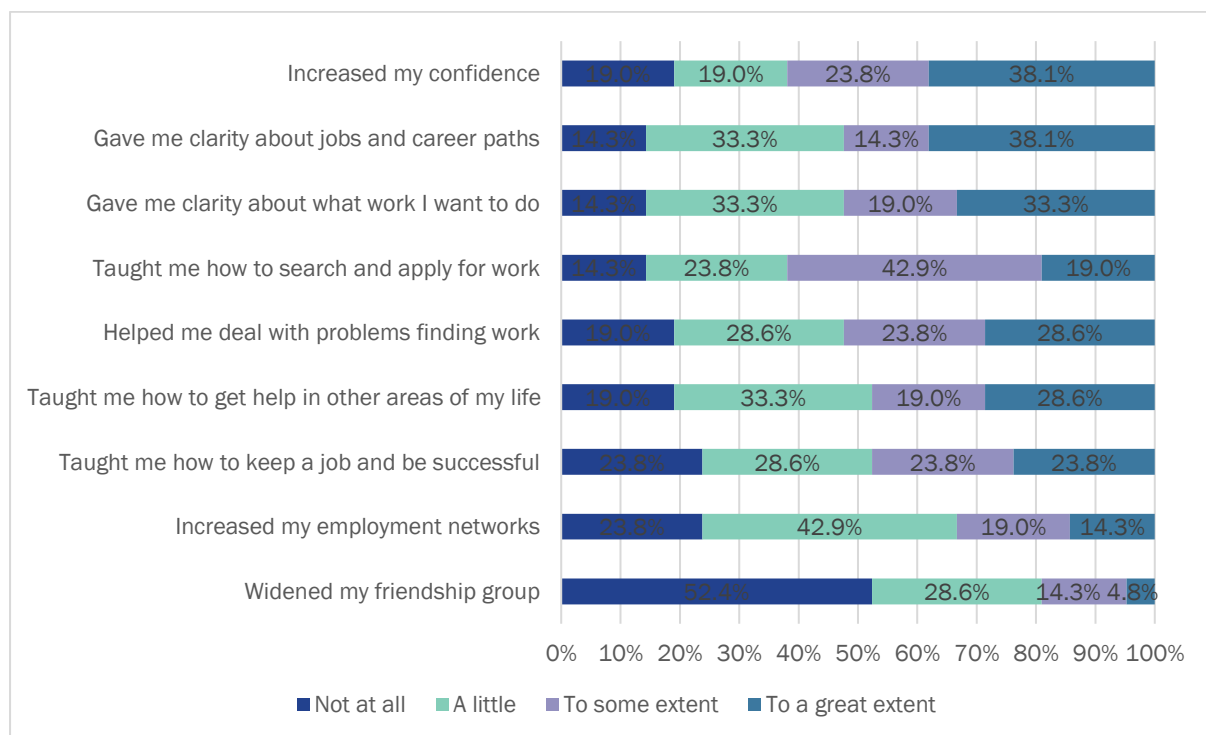


*"I think mentors By being reasuured I am less anxious and worried hence my mental health and overall health has improved"*

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[18] Responses were provided on a four-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent)

# 17.    OVERALL SATISFACTION

As well as assessing perceived outcomes, the evaluation asked both mentors and mentees about their overall satisfaction with M2W, and whether they would recommend the program to others, as well as their suggestions for program improvements.

## 17.1 Satisfaction

Mentees and mentors were asked "Overall, how satisfied were you with the Mentoring 2 Work program?"[19]. Overall, most mentors (94%) and mentees (91%) were satisfied with the program to some extent with 38% of mentors and mentees expressing that they were extremely satisfied with the program.

*Figure 17.1 Overall satisfaction with the Mentoring 2 Work program by mentor and mentee, Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32) and Mentee Survey (n = 21)*
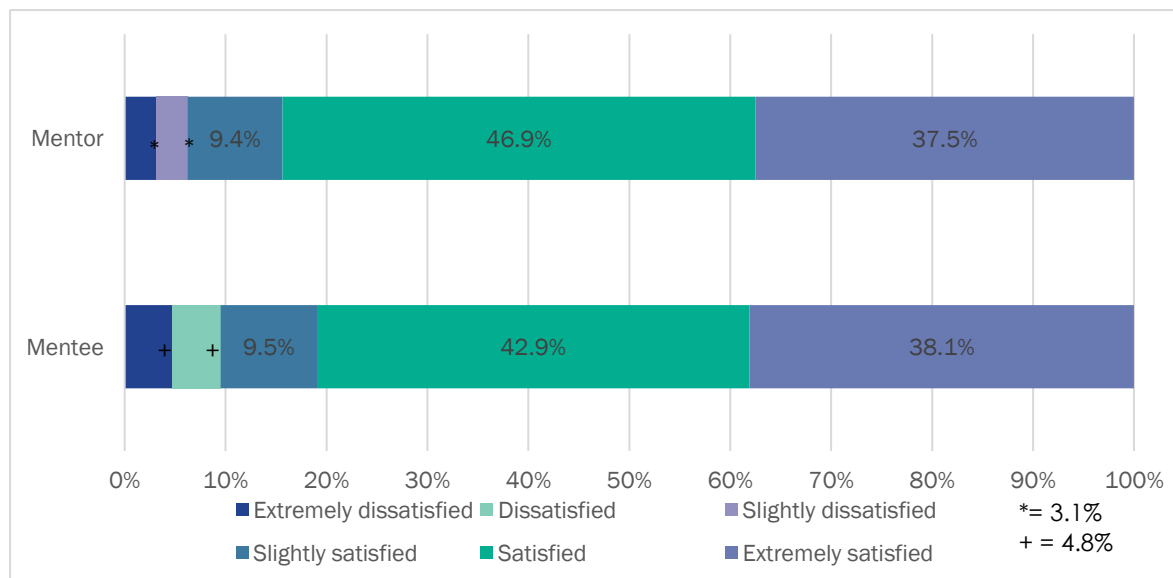


## 17.2 Mentee Recommendations

The mentees (Mentee Survey (n = 21)) were asked if they would recommend the Mentoring 2 Work program to a friend or another young person who was in the same situation as them when they applied, and 95% answered "yes".

The mentees were also asked "Is there anything you would improve about the M2W program to increase benefits for young adults' lives, and/or more lasting changes for young adults?" Just over half (52%) said "there is nothing I would change…". Suggestions included "must provide work experience or some practical experience so people can find work" (10%), "networking opportunities

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[19] Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = slightly dissatisfied, 4 = slightly satisfied, 5 = satisfied, 6 = extremely satisfied)

beyond the mentor" (14%), and "partnering up a mentee up with a mentor that has the work experience in the area the mentee wants" (5%).

There were also comments about the marketing of the program (10%), one mentee suggested "more advertising of the program, possibly" and another suggested "…[reaching] out to graduating high school students so they can start early and gain confidence and direction". Others felt there could be more offerings for more vulnerable young adults (10%) such as a "bigger focus on mental health" and "others who are less fortunate may need more additional support such as interview clothes and things like that".

## 17.3 Mentor Recommendations

The mentors (Mentor Exit Survey (n = 32)) were asked if they would recommend the Mentoring 2 Work program to a friend or colleague who was interested in becoming a mentor, and 100% answered "yes".

The mentors were also asked "Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the program?" Under a third (28%) of the mentors said no. Many (19%) felt there needed to be "more time on training". It was suggested to "Use the time in the training session to focus more on how to structure a program with an individual mentee rather than try and rush through all the content" as "too much time was spent on the theoretical and too little time on the practicalities." Others (19%) felt there needed to be "more training for mentee before starting" as one mentor noted they "felt [their mentee] was at a loss to what the program actually was". "Maybe the mentees would like to experience workshops with other mentors and mentees." "The mentee needs to be aware of the importance of the contract."

Others (6%) felt their needed to be "an initial meeting with both M2W contact person and mentee" as "this may have been beneficial to both parties." Some mentors (9%) suggested "the toolkit could be condensed" as the "focus should be that Mentors use their abundance of experience to pass on to the mentee in the limited time they have."

There were suggestions (6%) for remote delivery of the program as the "Mentor and Mentee relationship doesn't need to be local, this program can be spread to reach other areas with mentors in an alternate location" with use of an "online version of toolkit available, so activities can be shared via email."

# 18.    CONCLUSION

This report has presented feedback from the mentees and mentors of the M2W program extension. The program extension was approved and funded in response to the anticipated and actual economic impacts of COVID-19, and concluded in March 2021.

Mentees (n = 21) completed a survey at the end of the evaluation period, and mentors (n = 42) completed a survey at the beginning of the program (n = 32) and the end of the evaluation period (n = 32). It must be noted that, due to recruitment difficulties, the mentoring aspect of the program was delayed and mentoring was still ongoing when mentees and mentors completed their final survey. As such, the results presented here comprise feedback rather than results or outcomes of the program, because the main program activity (mentoring) was still ongoing when data was collected.

Mentors were 56% female with a mean age of 55 years, and mentees were 57% female with a mean age of 22 years. The vast majority (95%) of mentees had attained education of Year 12 or above, and all had been employed at some point in their life. All mentees were residing in permanent accommodation. Mentees, therefore, were well-placed to take on employment in terms of education, having some form of work history, and stable housing.

In the week prior to their survey, 38% of mentees were employed and 62% were unemployed. Of those who were unemployed, half had been employed 6 months ago or more recently, and half had not been employed for over six months. Of those who were employed, half expected to be in their jobs in three months' time and half wanted to be in their jobs in three months' time.
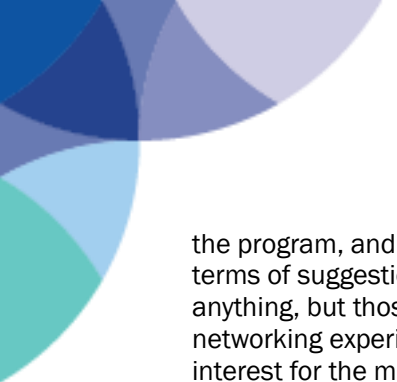
The majority of mentors reported that they had successful job seeking experiences themselves (e.g. finding work through their networks), had experienced career interruptions (e.g. career change, retraining), had management experience, and had participated in employee recruitment activities in their jobs. A reasonable proportion had experience of unemployment, such as through redundancy. Accordingly, the mentors recruited reported rich employment experiences and histories that were relevant to their mentoring role.

In terms of program experiences, over half (53%) of mentees heard about the program on social media, while the referral sources for mentors were more varied and included online volunteering portals, advertisements through work, social media, and friends and family members. The most common motivations for mentees entering the program were to gain confidence and to find a mentor to help them, and the most common motivations of mentors were to help others and because they thought it would be enjoyable. The overwhelming majority of mentors felt the mentor training workshop prepared them for the mentoring experience. Most mentees agreed that the toolkit activities provided them with at least moderately greater clarity and understanding about key job readiness factors, such as their strengths and skills, their interests, and how to set career goals and get into their careers.

Most mentors and mentees (91% and 86%, respectively) were satisfied to some extent with their match. Most mentors (54%) felt that their mentees were prepared for the mentoring, though 28% felt their mentees were only a little or not at all prepared. Mentors generally felt that their mentees were receptive to their mentoring, in particular that their mentees were respectful and receptive to their advice. Most mentors and mentees were satisfied with the amount of contact they had with each other, though mentees were more likely than mentors to report that they would have preferred less contact.

Mentors and mentees rated mentors' effectiveness across employment readiness and personal and relationship outcomes. Mentees rated mentors as much more effective than mentors rated themselves. The majority of mentees felt that their mentors were effective or very effective at providing access to employment networks, work skills, job-seeking skills, and career insights. Similarly, the majority of mentees felt that their mentors built a positive relationship, provided encouragement and inspiration, and helped them to gain confidence to a moderate or great extent.

With respect to the overall impact of the program on mentees, the biggest benefits reported by mentees were increased confidence, clarity about jobs and career paths, and clarity about the work they want to do. Most mentors (85%) and mentees (81%) were satisfied or extremely satisfied with

the program, and 95% of mentees and 100% of mentors would recommend the program to others. In terms of suggestions for changes to the program, most mentees reported that they wouldn't change anything, but those with suggestions sought more work experience or practical experiences, networking experiences beyond the mentor, and ensuring that the mentor works in an area of interest for the mentee. Mentors felt that mentees should receive more training and that the toolkit should be condensed in favour of more imparting of mentor knowledge to mentees.

Overall, both mentors and mentees reported positive experiences of the program. They were highly satisfied with the program overall, as well as their match with their mentor or mentee. Mentees felt that their mentors were effective at providing them with employment readiness and personal and relationship skills. While it is too early to make any conclusions about impacts, given that mentoring was still ongoing, a reasonable proportion of the mentees were employed at the time of survey, and most reported that they had increased confidence and clarity about their future employment.

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