

Mass Mentoring Counts 2022

Survey Findings

The State of Youth Mentoring in Massachusetts June 2022

Research Conducted By
University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute
In Collaboration with Mass Mentoring Partnership

UMassAmherst | Donahue Institute



Research Overview

Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP), the state-wide training, research, and advocacy organization for Massachusetts mentoring and youth serving organizations, is committed to ensuring that every young person in the state has access to quality mentoring relationships. At the core of the youth mentoring field is the belief that empowering youth-adult relationships is central to the healthy growth and development of young people, enabling them to reach their full potential. As such, MMP seeks to gather information on the current state of the mentoring field in order to identify areas of strengths and challenges, to better understand the needs of the field, and to work collectively to improve and mobilize our network to best serve the young people of the Commonwealth.

Mass Mentoring Counts

Launched in 2006 by MMP and the UMass Donahue Institute, Mass Mentoring Counts (MMC) is a biennial initiative that highlights current landscapes and trends of structured youth mentoring programs across the state. The MMC survey collects consistent information to develop a current profile and snapshot of the field. This year's survey also included a number of questions about the impact of COVID-19 on these mentoring programs to better understand the challenges they have faced, the ways in which they altered or pivoted their programming, the needs of the field both now and moving forward, and lessons learned to support programs and the young people they serve.

This survey was distributed in February and March of 2022 to 220 youth serving organizations with structured mentoring programs. One hundred organizations completed MMC 2022, providing information on single or multiple programs. As such, this report highlights key findings from the **120 structured youth mentoring programs run by these 100 organizations**, representing a 45% organizational response rate. This report is organized into the following sections:

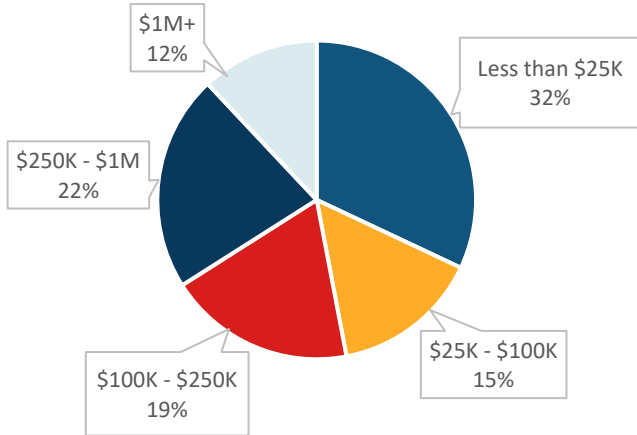
- **Snapshot of MMC 2022 Programs:** As in prior years, MMC collects information on program structure, model, size, location, intended program goals, annual number and profile of youth participants served and individuals serving as mentors, and program waiting lists.
- **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic:** COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. Mentoring program staff were asked to reflect on the challenges and impacts that the pandemic has had on their funding, staffing, programming, participation, and relationships across the last two years.
- **Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** This section presents key takeaways and lessons learned over the last two years that mentoring programs plan to bring forward, as well as program forecasts and recommended next steps to support them through this transition.

Throughout this report, we refer to this year's survey as MMC 2022. It should be noted that annual numbers served are based on the most recently completed program year; in many cases their most recent program data was from 2021. The report also provides comparisons to prior MMC surveys, the latest being MMC 2019, which was distributed to programs three years ago during February-March of 2019 and serves as a pre-COVID point in time comparison in cases where MMC 2022 did not include specific questions about changes due to the pandemic.

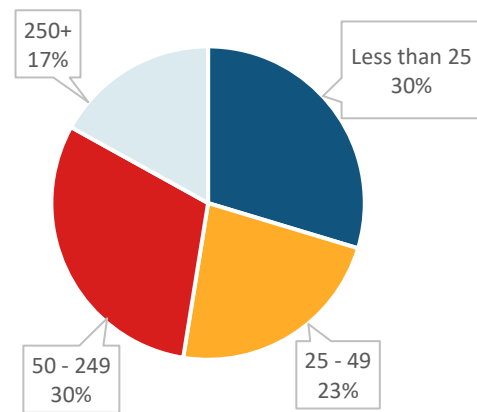
MMC 2022 Program Profile

Every mentoring program is distinct and unique – in terms of structure, model, intended goals, size, and number of youth served. These differences are evident when exploring the characteristics of programs that completed MMC 2022. Program budgets ranged from less than \$10,000 to well over \$1 million and program sizes ranged from 2 to more than 3,300 youth, for an average of 154 and a median of 40 youth.

Annual Program Budget



Number of Youth Served



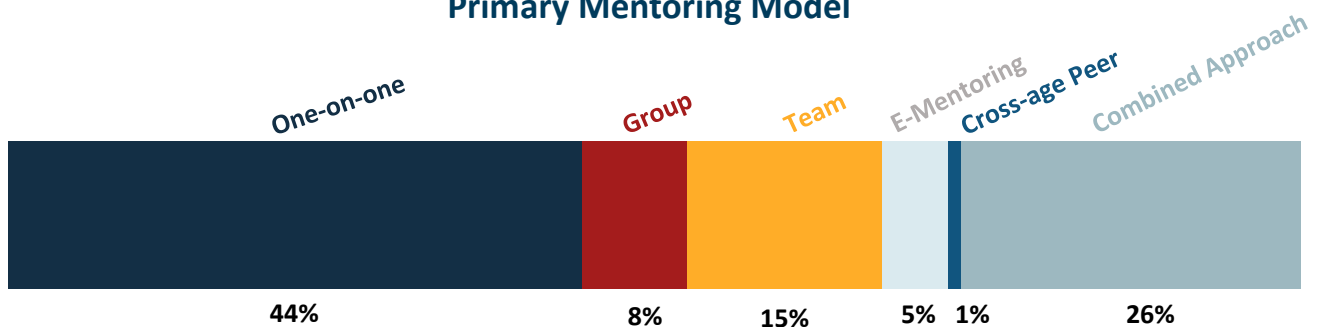
Mentoring Program Structure



While the majority of mentoring programs are components of larger organizations, the parent organizations themselves vary widely, including youth serving organizations, schools, colleges and universities, businesses, faith-based organizations, and government agencies.

Finally, while one-on-one mentoring continues to be the most commonly practiced mentoring model, there has been an increasing shift to using a combined approach over the last three years.

Primary Mentoring Model



One-on-one: One adult (18+) mentor with one young person; **Group:** One adult mentor to more than one young person; **Team:** More than one adult mentor with more than one young person; **Cross-age peer mentoring:** Structured relationships where older youth mentor younger youth; **E-Mentoring:** One adult with one young person meeting on a specific platform for mentoring. This is a formal planned mentoring model rather than a means of communication. **Combined approach:** Combination of the above mentoring approaches. Match activities are not counted as mentoring model.

Mentoring Location

Mentoring typically takes place in:

48%
site-based



35%
community-based



17%
virtual/
e-mentoring



When asked where their mentoring typically takes place, nearly one-half of programs indicated they are primarily site-based. **The majority of site-based mentoring takes place at K-12 schools or nonprofit facilities/community centers.**

While site-based remains the most common setting, there has been a **significant shift in mentoring location from site-based to virtual/e-mentoring.** In MMC 2019, approximately two-thirds of programs were site-based and only 1% were virtual/e-mentoring. This finding was echoed in this year's survey, with **58% of programs reporting that their mentoring location changed over the last two years due to COVID-19.**

Site-Based: Program/meetings primarily take place in a designated location; **Community-Based:** Meetings are not based at a specific site. Youth and mentoring meetings take place in different locations throughout the community; **Virtual/E-Mentoring:** Meetings are primarily facilitated through technology.

COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on where mentoring relationships have and continue to take place. During the first year of the pandemic, the vast majority of programs reported that their mentors and mentees were connecting fully or primarily virtually/remotely. Mentoring programs have **slowly begun to transition back to in-person programming during the second year of COVID-19**, with a more even distribution between in-person and remote means of connecting.

While the majority of those who reported changing mentoring location believe this change is temporary, **nearly one-quarter of programs indicated that their change in setting will be permanent moving forward** with many highlighting benefits to a hybrid model.

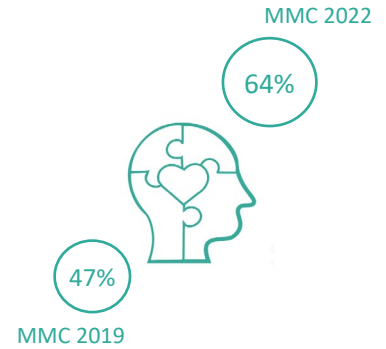
How Youth and Mentors Connected

| COVID Year One March 2020-Feb 2021 | COVID Year Two March 2021-Feb 2022 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 63% Fully virtual / remote | 18% Fully virtual / remote |
| 19% Primarily virtual / remote | 26% Primarily virtual / remote |
| 8% Evenly split | 13% Evenly split |
| 7% Primarily in-person | 23% Primarily in-person |
| 3% Fully in-person | 20% Fully in-person |

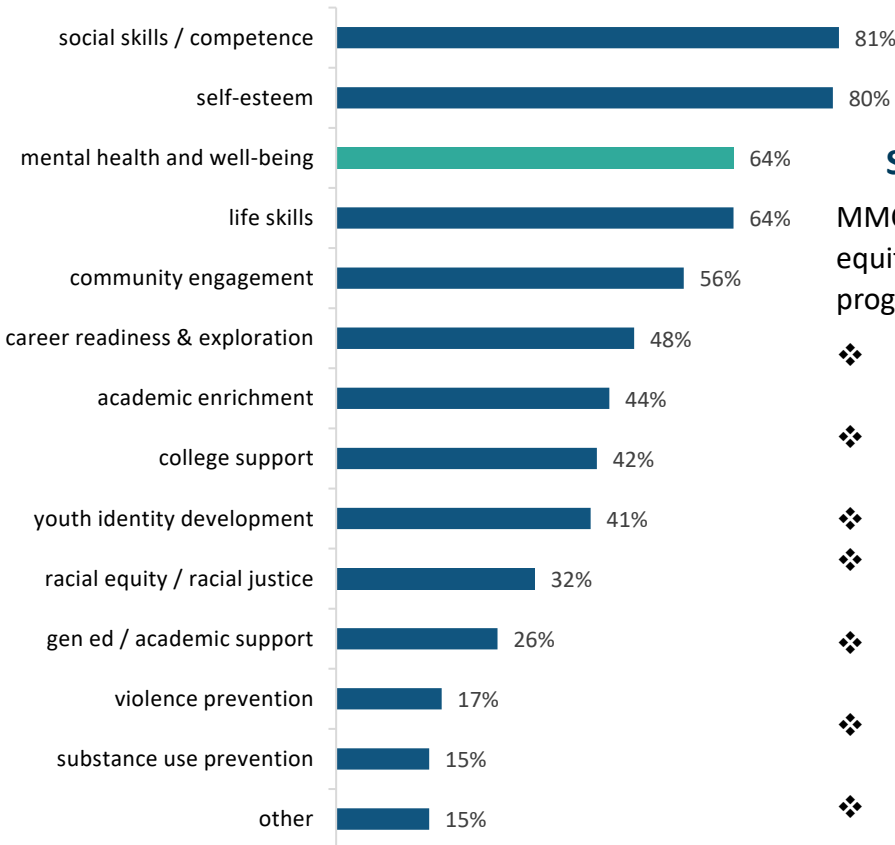
Mentoring Program Goals

The most frequently cited intended goals of youth mentoring programs in MMC 2022 are increasing social skills and improving self-esteem of youth served. Comparison to the prior MMC survey reveals an **increasing trend of mentoring programs focusing on mental health and well-being**, with nearly one-half of programs listing it as an intended program goal in MMC 2019 compared to nearly two-thirds in MMC 2022.

Programs Addressing Mental Health and Well-Being



Intended Program Goals



Strategies to Prioritize Racial Equity

MMC 2022 marks the first survey in which racial equity and justice was included as an intended program goal. Strategies to incorporate include:

- ❖ revising communication, recruitment, hiring, & pay equity policies
- ❖ DEIJ training for mentors, staff, & board members
- ❖ creating DEIJ work groups & affinity groups
- ❖ providing safe spaces for transparent conversations
- ❖ implementing new programming with intentional focus on race and racial equity
- ❖ intentional matching prioritizing race, ethnicity, culture, & lived experience
- ❖ connecting families with community resources with a trauma-informed lens

32% of programs reported racial equity / racial justice as an intentional goal

Created an Equity Committee focused on DEI issues within the organization and our program

Safe, respectful space and opportunity for members struggling with the current racial climate to discuss challenges and concerns around race and equity

Created a new Racial Equity Guide ... for mentors with helpful resources, tools, and exercises to approach conversations about race and equity ... from a safe, strengths-based perspective

Implemented Freedom Talks, a program and community town-hall designed to discuss Race, Class, Healing, and Reconciliation

Teen mentors developed a Youth Participatory Action Project ... focused on racial and social justice issues

Monthly drop in discussions around 'Dismantling Systemic Racism'

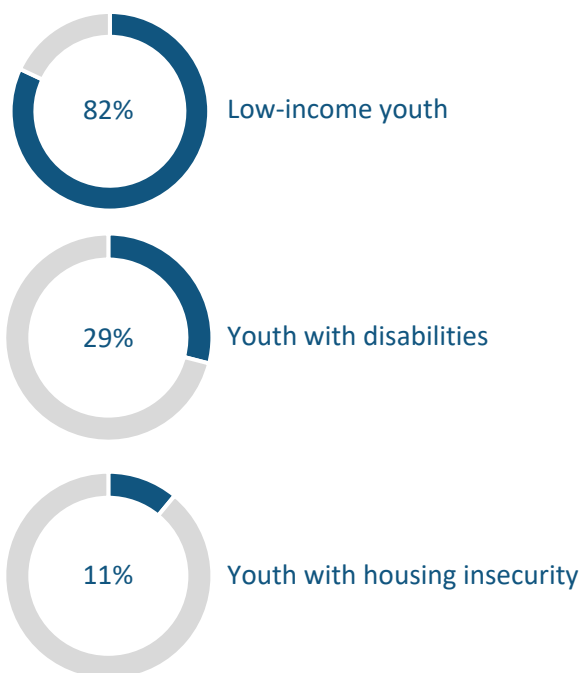
Snapshot of Youth Mentees

More than 17,500 Massachusetts youth, aged 6-24, participated in structured mentoring relationships across 114 programs providing this data in MMC 2022. As depicted by this sample, **both female and male youth are well represented** in mentoring relationships.

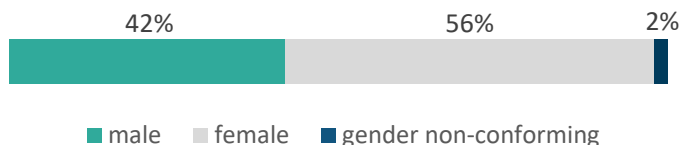
Youth of all ages participate, with strong representation across those middle and high school-aged. Programs responding to MMC 2022 served a substantially larger proportion of older youth compared to prior MMC surveys. Lower representation of elementary aged youth could be related to the pandemic and the model/format of programming available or specific to the sample of programs responding.

Youth of color are substantially more likely to be engaged in mentoring relationships. Eighty-four percent of those mentored are youth of color, with the majority being Hispanic / Latinx and African American / Black.

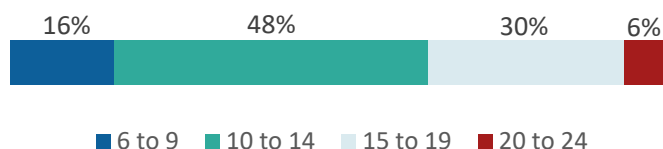
Youth Mentee Sub-Populations



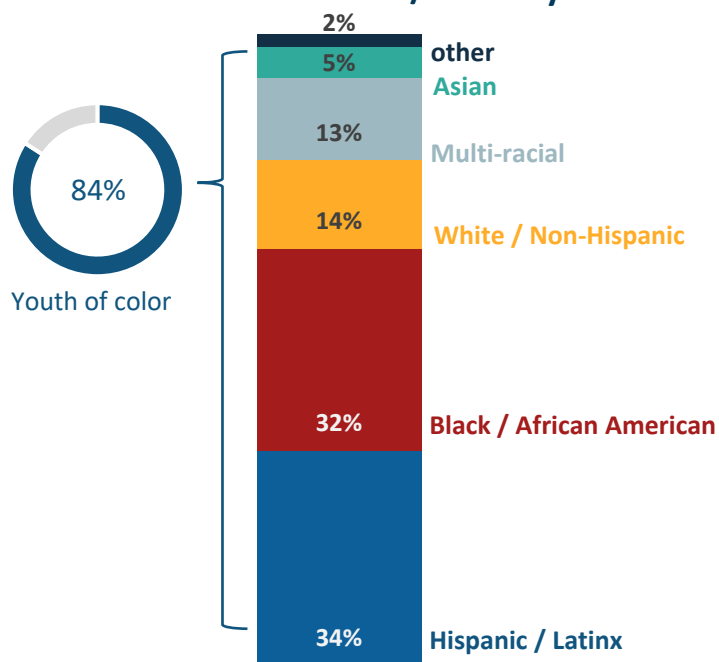
Youth Mentee Gender



Youth Mentee Age



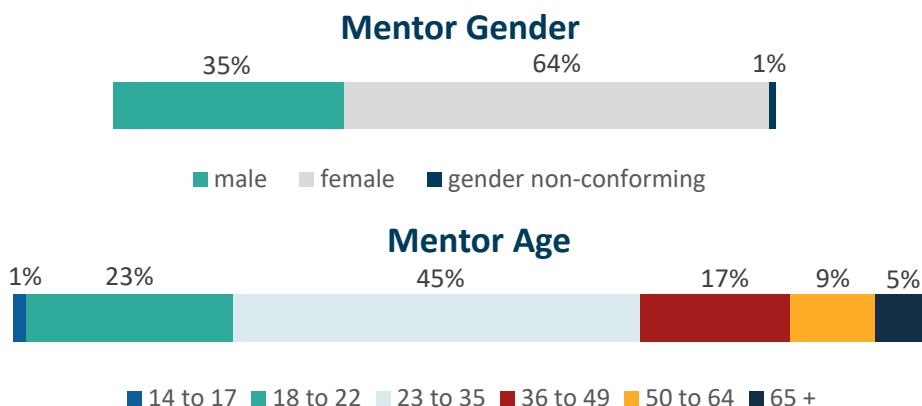
Youth Mentee Race/Ethnicity



Mentoring programs are reaching a variety of youth sub-populations. More than 80% of the youth matched in structured relationships documented through this survey are **low-income**. Moreover, nearly 30% of the youth in mentoring relationships are youth with disabilities and more than 10% of the youth mentees are experiencing housing insecurity (e.g., homeless, unstably housed).

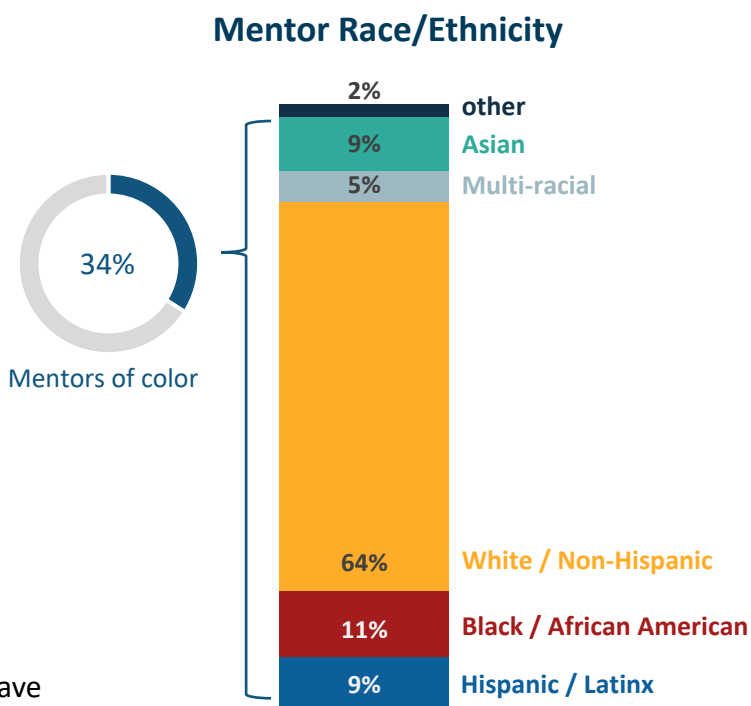
Snapshot of Mentors and Waiting Lists

More than 11,000 individuals, aged 14 or older, served as mentors across 116 youth mentoring programs providing this data in MMC 2022. Approximately two-thirds of mentors are female, and the vast majority are between the ages of 18-49.



Mentors do not adequately represent the diversity of the youth mentees they serve. Nearly two-thirds of mentors are White/Non-Hispanic compared to only 14% of youth in these programs.

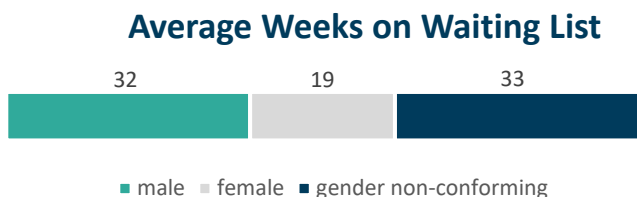
While the majority of mentors are White, there has been a shift over time resulting in increased representation of mentors of color, with proportions increasing from 24% in MMC 2008 to 34% in MMC 2022.



Programs with Waiting Lists

A waiting list is defined as a list of youth who have expressed an interest and are in the queue for the next available mentor.

More than one-third of mentoring programs reported maintaining a waiting list. Based on the 39 programs providing data, there are **more than 2,300 youth currently waiting to be matched.** While male and female youth are equally likely to be placed on program waiting lists, **male youth and gender non-conforming youth spend substantially longer lengths of time, on average, waiting to be matched.**



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

This year's MMC survey included a number of questions to learn more about the impact of COVID-19 on youth mentoring programs and the young people they serve. The aim of these questions was to better understand the challenges the field has faced, the ways in which youth mentoring programs altered or pivoted their programming, and the needs of the field both now and moving forward. This section includes the following:

- **Impacts on the Young People Mentoring Programs Serve**
- **Impacts on Youth Mentoring Programs, including**
 - Financial Challenges
 - Staffing Challenges
 - Challenges with Adapting Programming
 - Changes in Youth and Mentor Participation
 - Changes in Mentoring Connections and Relationships

Impacts on the Young People Mentoring Programs Serve

Mentoring programs described how the stress and social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic **detrimentally impacted young people's mental health and social and emotional well-being**. Moreover, many described how the pandemic **exacerbated long-standing racial and economic inequities** in mentee and their families' employment and income, education, housing stability, health care, food insecurity, and access to resources, disproportionately impacting the very youth and communities that benefit from mentoring in Massachusetts.

"What we heard..."

It has changed the landscape and level of need in our youth, increased depression and anxiety dramatically, increased suicidality and self-harm rates dramatically, and increased students failing one class or more.

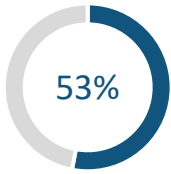
Their mental health and the amount of stress they are under has increased dramatically causing many to breakdown, become silent and difficult to contact.

... increased mental health issues, academic concerns – [including] learning loss/academic performance, readjusting back to school after virtual school and relearning and refreshing social skills with peers ..., mourning for loved ones lost to Covid, increased financial challenges in the home, parental stress, and disengagement and negative impact on mentoring relationships.

We are also seeing post-pandemic effects as youth return to school in-person. ... We have seen an increase in kids, especially middle school aged, getting in fights at school and resorting to violence and struggling to access supports.

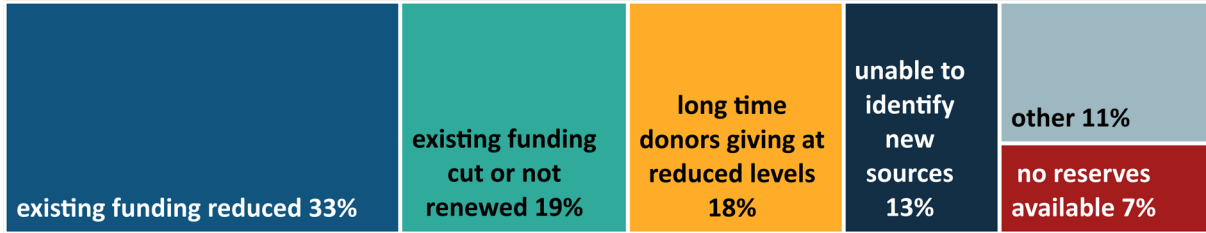
Social injustices co-occurring with this pandemic has only exacerbated their social-emotional well being.

Financial Challenges



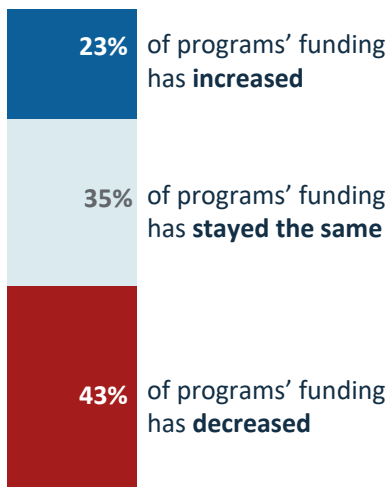
of MMC 2022 programs reported experiencing funding challenges during the last two years; many of which noted experiencing multiple challenges. The most commonly cited financial challenge was a reduction in existing funding streams, followed by funding sources that had been fully cut. ‘Other’ challenges cited include funding shifts to emergency resources, cancellation of fundraising events, and difficulty obtaining new funding due to late notice and quick spend-down timelines or requirements.

Financial Challenges due to COVID-19

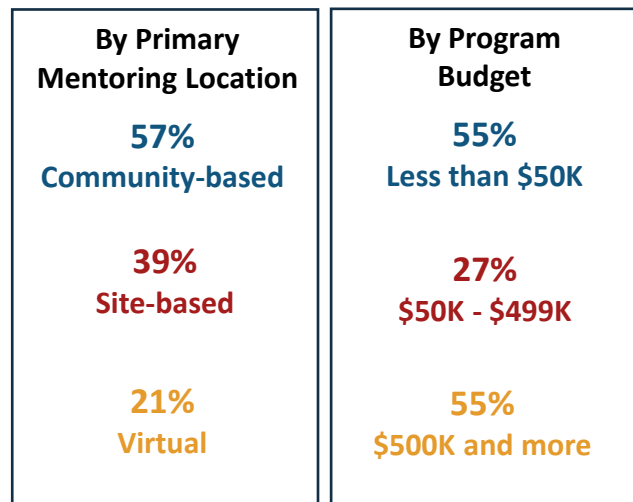


Programs reported varied experiences with funding over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. As depicted below, more than two-fifths of MMC 2022 programs reported funding losses, while approximately one-third remained stable, and the remaining quarter of programs noted growth in funding. **Further analyses revealed differences in changes in program funding by primary mentoring location and program budget.** Community-based programs were notably more likely to report funding losses compared to site-based or virtual programs. Programs with small and large budgets were more likely to report funding losses than those programs with mid-sized budgets.

Program Funding Compared to 2 Years Ago, Pre-COVID

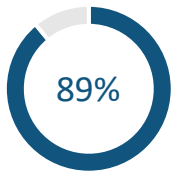


Characteristics of Programs with Reduced Funding



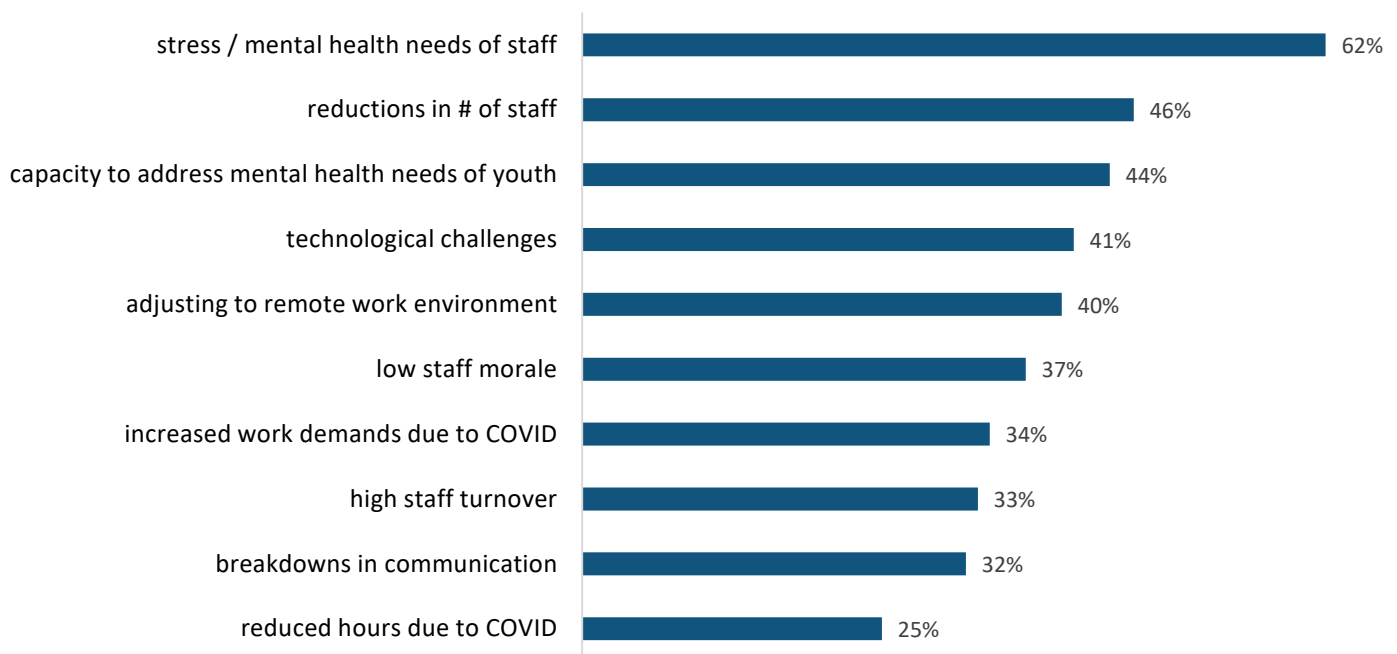
For those programs reporting decreased funding, financial losses varied widely, with one-half of these programs reporting reductions of less than 20%; one-third reporting losses between 20 and 49%; and fifteen percent citing losses of 50% or higher. **Programs with small budgets experienced the deepest cuts.** Three-quarters of programs with budgets less than \$50K reported financial losses of at least 20% compared with only one-quarter of programs with larger budgets.

Staffing Challenges



of programs reported experiencing staffing challenges during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic; the majority of which cited facing multiple of these challenges. The most frequently cited challenge – reported by nearly two-thirds of programs – is **addressing and supporting the stress and mental health needs of their staff**. Coinciding with the increased stress and work demands, nearly one-half of programs reported experiencing loss of staff or reductions in total number of staff during the last two years of the pandemic, with reported average staff declines of 43%. Programs further identified a wide range of challenges related to staff capacity, technological challenges, adjustments to remote work environment, and workplace culture.

Staffing Challenges due to COVID-19



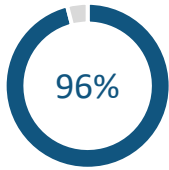
“What we heard...”

Covid-19 has impacted our program and staff in a significant way. ... We dealt with staff turnover, mental health challenges, and personal challenges.

The level of need in our youth ... [has also] increased compassion fatigue for staff, ...added duties and stress to their workloads without being able to increase compensation accordingly, while the cost of services ... is increasing dramatically. We are unable to keep up at all, risking child safety as staff turnover is a constant risk.

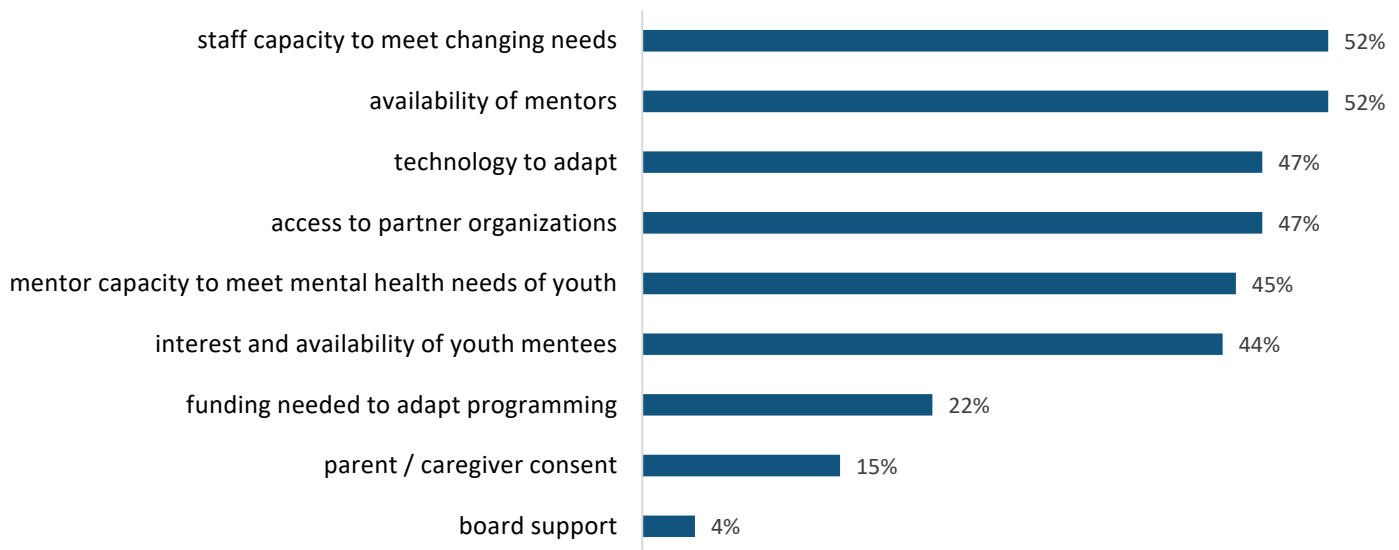
Extreme staff shortage led to dramatic staff burnout. Families and youth were concerned about their health which led to decreased involvement in the community setting. Increased organization precautions led to not allowing outside people into the organization (ie., no outside volunteer mentors).

Challenges with Adapting Programming



of programs reported facing challenges with adapting programming as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of which cited facing multiple of these challenges. The most commonly identified challenges included staff and mentor capacity to address increased needs of youth, mentor/volunteer availability, access to partner organizations (e.g., K-12 schools and corporate partners) and technology necessary to adapt to a remote setting.

Challenges with Adapting to Programming due to COVID-19



Despite these challenges, many survey respondents also highlighted their program and staff’s resiliency to find innovate ways – using technology, adjusting mentoring model, and adding new activities – for youth, mentors, and staff to connect.

“What we heard...”

COVID-19 has drastically impacted the mental health and school progression of our young people ... our staff only had so much capacity, training, and resources to offer to combat the vast disparities that our young people faced.

The biggest challenge is the loss of partners due to programs or classes being shut down completely during COVID. We have found that most programs that are still running have curtailed outside guests or field trips which is a large part of how we provide services.

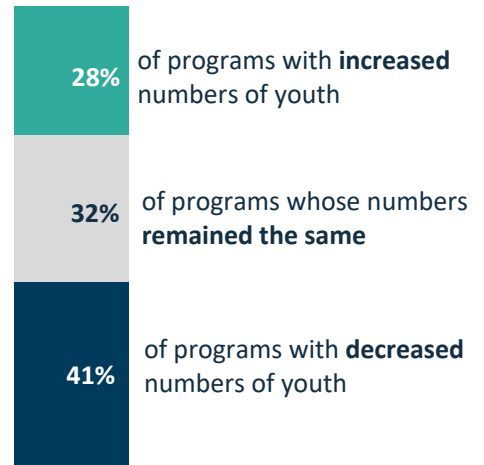
Provided new activities through virtual means, ... texting, Facetime, phone calls, ... snail mail, ... and outdoor activities soared.

Online programming can be a tremendous tool for increasing 1:1 mentoring interactions between staff and youth, for engaging teens who are attracted to technology, and for gathering large groups with greater frequency, despite the physical distance which separates participants.

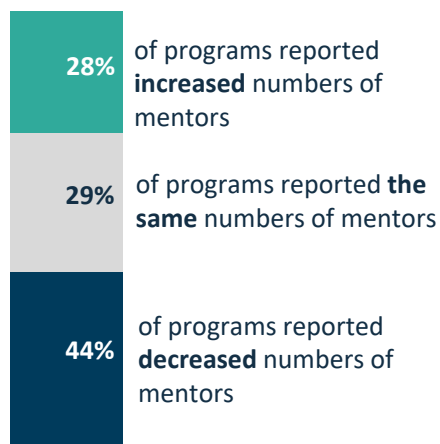
Changes in Youth and Mentor Participation

Mentoring programs were asked whether the annual number of youth they serve has changed due to COVID-19. **Programs reported varied experiences with youth participation over the past two years of the pandemic.** While the plurality reported decreases, substantial proportions cited stability and increases in number of youth served compared to two years ago.

Youth Participation Numbers Compared to 2 Years Ago, Pre-COVID



Mentor Participation Numbers Compared to 2 Years Ago, Pre-COVID



Programs also reported varied experiences with mentor participation over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the plurality of programs reported a decrease in their annual number of mentors, a substantial proportion of programs reported both stability and an increase in mentor numbers compared to two years ago.

K-12 school-based mentoring programs were most likely to report decreases in mentor numbers due to COVID-19. 76% of school-based mentoring programs reported decreases in mentor participation compared to 35% of other programs. In addition, programs providing e-mentoring or team mentoring approaches were more likely to cite increases in mentor numbers; while those offering one-on-one or combined approaches were more likely to report mentor decreases.

Open-ended responses provided further explanations for changes in mentor participation. Commonly cited reasons for reductions included safety and health concerns, decreased interest/engagement in virtual mentoring, and program partner closures that halted or reduced mentoring opportunities. Descriptions about increases in mentor participation noted how remote programming increased the pool of mentors due to reduced conflicts in geography, scheduling, time, and transportation.

“What we heard...”

When COVID closed down the schools, that closed down our program ... as most of our volunteers were not interested in volunteering virtually. When schools went back in person, it made it even more difficult to continue the remote connections we were able to make because they were no longer a captive audience.

Being remote has allowed us to connect with people all across the world, which has increased the number of youths that we serve.

Leveraging new technology expanded our pool of... mentors, who are no longer limited to Boston-area.

Decreases in Youth Mentee Participation

Programs reporting decreases in annual youth mentee numbers compared to two years ago (pre-COVID) were asked to provide the percentage change in youth served as well as to identify key reasons why youth participation declined during the COVID-19 pandemic.



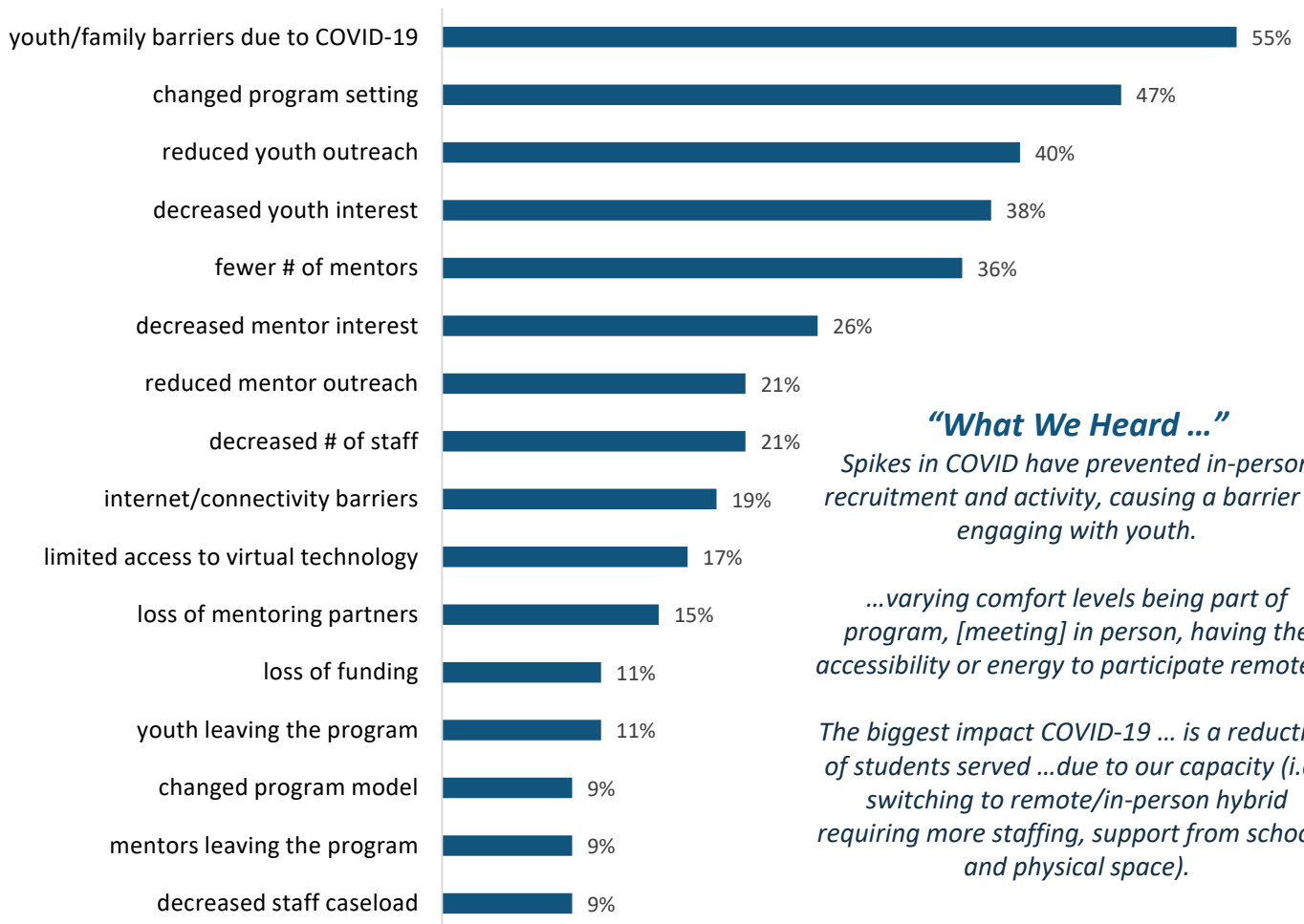
Programs reported youth participation declines ranging from 5 – 100%, or an average decrease of 45% over the last two years. Based on the 38 programs providing data, **this decrease represents a loss of 5,610 youth in mentoring relationships since the start of COVID-19.**



School-based mentoring programs were more likely to report decreases in youth numbers due to COVID-19. 58% of school-based mentoring programs reported decreases in youth participation compared to 36% of other MMC 2022 programs.

The most frequently reported reasons for lower youth participation included direct challenges related to COVID-19 for youth and their families, changes to program setting (e.g., school-based to virtual) and decreases in youth outreach and interest. Many programs identified multiple reasons for decrease.

Reasons for Decreased Youth Mentee Numbers



“What We Heard ...”

Spikes in COVID have prevented in-person recruitment and activity, causing a barrier to engaging with youth.

...varying comfort levels being part of program, [meeting] in person, having the accessibility or energy to participate remotely.

The biggest impact COVID-19 ... is a reduction of students served ...due to our capacity (i.e., switching to remote/in-person hybrid requiring more staffing, support from schools, and physical space).

Increases in Youth Mentee Participation

Programs reporting increases in annual youth mentees numbers compared to two years ago (pre-COVID) were asked to provide the percentage change in youth served as well as to identify key reasons why youth participation grew during the COVID-19 pandemic.



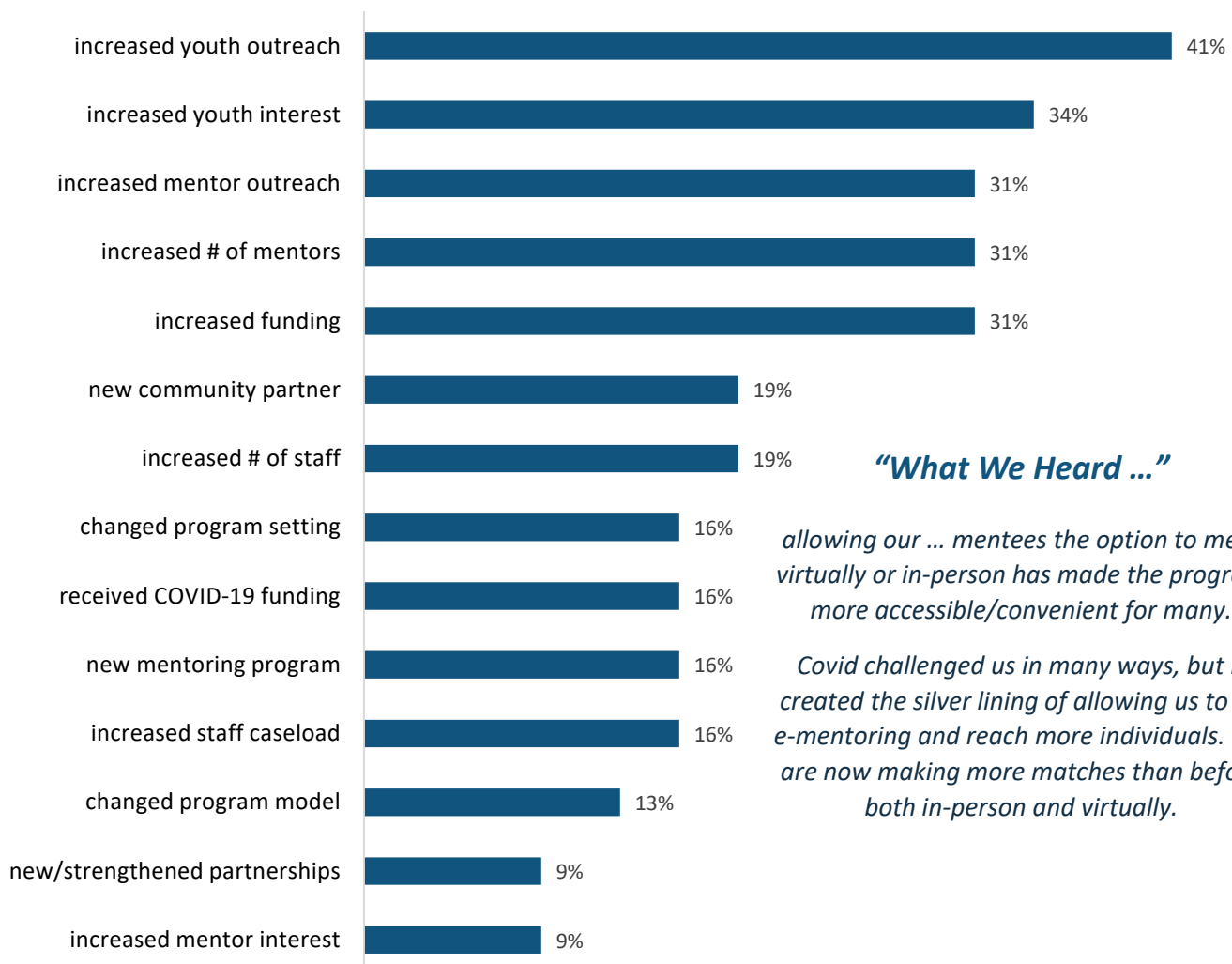
Programs reported youth participation growth ranging from 5 – 150%, or an average increase of 46% over the last two years. Based on the 22 programs providing data, **this increase represents an additional 900 youth in mentoring relationships since the state of COVID-19.**



Programs where mentoring typically takes place virtually were more likely to report increases in youth numbers due to COVID-19. 53% of programs where mentoring primarily occurs virtually reported increases in youth participation compared to 23% of programs providing in-person mentoring.

The most frequently reported reasons for higher youth participation included increases in youth outreach and interest, followed by increases in mentor outreach, numbers of mentors, and funding.

Reasons for Increased Youth Mentee Program Numbers



“What We Heard ...”

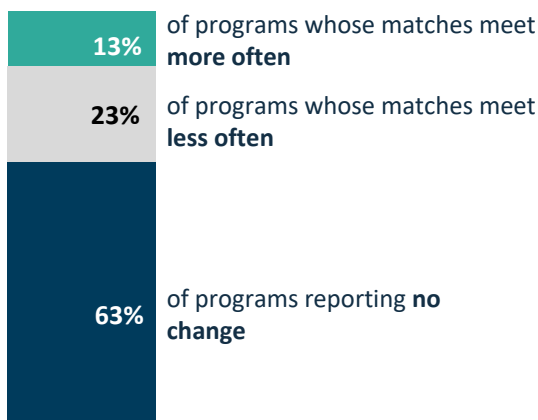
allowing our ... mentees the option to meet virtually or in-person has made the program more accessible/convenient for many.

Covid challenged us in many ways, but it created the silver lining of allowing us to do e-mentoring and reach more individuals. We are now making more matches than before both in-person and virtually.

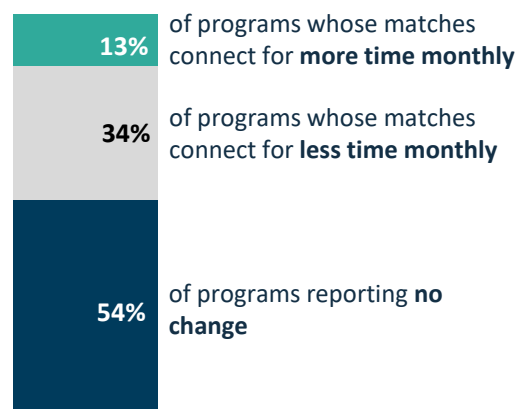
Changes in Mentoring Connections & Relationships

While the majority of programs reported that youth/mentor meeting frequency and amount of time connecting has not changed, approximately one-quarter of programs indicated their matches currently met less frequently and one-third connected fewer hours monthly compared to pre-COVID. In open responses, some programs shared that the switch to virtual programming and remote communication often led to briefer meetings and exchanges. Many noted that lengthy virtual meetings were generally less effective, especially as many young people were already experiencing Zoom fatigue during the school day. In fact, a few programs noted these changes as intentional, recognizing that their young people needed more contact over shorter lengths of time.

Meeting Frequency Compared to 2 Years Ago, Pre-COVID



Amount of Time Connecting Compared to 2 Years Ago, Pre-COVID



In open-ended responses, some staff described the impact of COVID-19 and the switch to virtual programming on the mentoring relationships themselves. While the majority of responses highlighted the obstacles to developing and strengthening relationships virtually, others highlighted benefits of continued or virtual connection. Moreover, staff generally felt that the switch to virtual mentoring was more challenging for elementary school aged youth as compared to high school or college-aged youth. There were varying opinions on effectiveness for middle school-aged youth as highlighted below.

“What we heard...”

They became part of each others "bubbles".... reinforced their deep connections ... gave both mentors and mentees a much-needed distraction from the everyday stress of the pandemic.

We saw that our middle school students tended to be more authentic, comfortable, and willing to communicate candidly with peers and mentors when meeting remotely on-line. We feel that this is a result of being in their own comfortable space, away from school, and being "protected" by a remote participation.

Rapport and community-building negatively impacted by COVID due to virtual format (e.g., lack of nonverbal cues, less comfort between mentor/mentee).

It is hard to build a strong relationship with just Zoom!

Middle grades youth were forced to navigate a time in their identity development that typically happens alongside their peers ... While technology on the surface has incredible power to connect, ... social media can drive feelings of isolation. Young people in the schools my program serves were starving for attention, connection, and closeness.

Key Lessons Learned

COVID-19 has intensified the need for and importance of high-quality, impactful mentoring relationships and supports. When asked about the key takeaways or lessons learned from COVID-19 that programs will bring forward, the following themes emerged:

- **Resilience of mentoring programs, staff, volunteers, and youth.** While describing the myriad of challenges caused and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents also noted the resilience, strength, passion, hard work, and dedication of their program staff and volunteers.

Our staff is amazing, creative and adapted quickly to many changes and challenges. We were successful in supporting our matches and providing additional support and resources to families in need.

Realize that volunteers WILL go the extra mile to fulfill their commitments with youth and we MUST go the extra mile with support.

Our staff have gone above and beyond to identify resources for families, provide guidance for mentors, and manage their own needs in the hopes of avoiding compassion fatigue and burnout.

- **Remain flexible to quickly adapt to best meet the needs of youth and families.** This flexibility and **innovation** may look different from program to program. Many respondents recommended being open to and thoughtful about **how virtual technology could be used effectively** moving forward. Programs recommended exploring continued use of virtual technology for mentor recruitment activities, interviews and trainings, and guest speaker series, such as career panel speakers and internship hosts. It was cautioned that programs planning to embrace virtual platforms further, must **be thoughtful about the equipment and access to internet required** for the youth, families, mentors, and staff as well as necessary tech-related education and skill development.

Furthermore, many programs noted plans to continue using a **hybrid approach moving forward**. For some that will mean a mixture of in-person and virtual meetings. Others will offer a distinct virtual group, in addition to their in-person programming, to support those who feel more comfortable communicating and engaging online. Similar statements of flexibility were made in relation to mentoring format with a number of programs noting they may use a more combined mentoring model approach, providing a mixture of one-to-one, group, team, and/or e-mentoring.

We have to continually educate ourselves on ways technology can enhance mentoring instead of shying away from innovation. The same goes for mentoring formats. ... [Need] greater openness to change in general and, with guidance, exploring opportunities to reach more kids through group mentoring experiences.

Continue to find new and creative ways to program and engage students as well as adults. Allow time in programming for the challenges that both adults and students are facing.

We increased student choice in our program. We will likely continue to have a virtual component of the program, even when we are able to go back to being in-person.

Key Lessons Learned and Forecast

- **Strength of in-person connection.** While many urged flexibility, innovation, and an openness to change, a parallel recurring theme was that “the value of in-person connection ... is paramount.”

Virtual programming CAN work and actually brings some added value in some cases such as flexibility in scheduling, scaling up, and allowing for fewer absences, but in-person programming remains the gold standard.

- **Communication is key.** A few programs noted the importance of consistent communication among and between program staff and mentors, youth, and their families.

To be more consistent with keeping in contact with all mentors. Some mentors were not aware that we were going to reopen when we closed, and therefore moved on.

We all need to create more time to communicate, build relationships, and creating safer spaces to allow us to understand the complexity of experiences with covid.

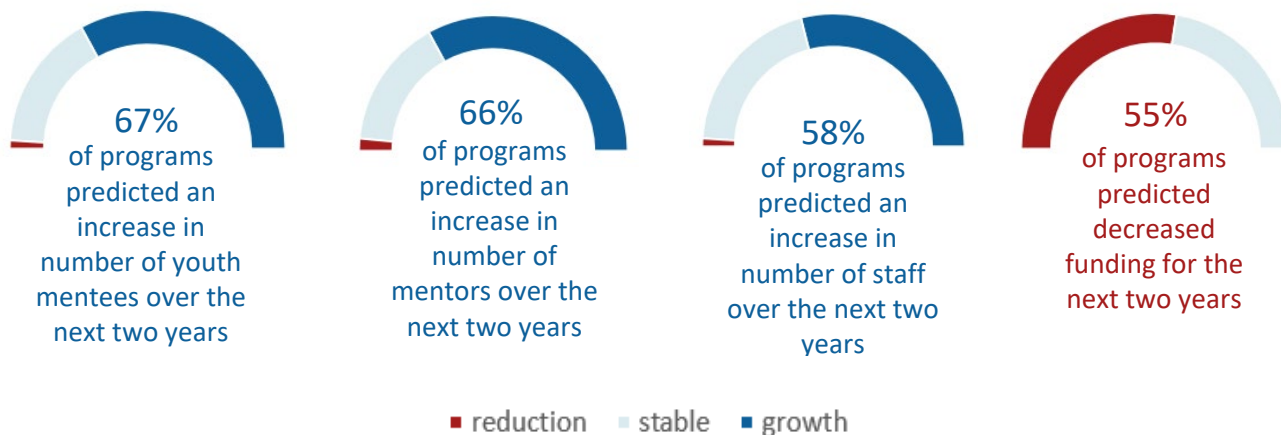
- **Promote and expand mental health supports.** Finally, many programs highlighted a need to prioritize self-care and behavioral and mental health resources and supports for youth, families, mentors, and staff alike.

We needed to adapt our programming to address the emerging, significant needs of youth – adding self-care elements to community programming including yoga, meditation, journaling and art therapy.

We should prioritize self-care and teach our youth how to do the same. Burnout was and is real and it impacts our students and staff performance.

Forecast for Mentoring Field

MMC 2022 programs reported a relatively consistent forecast for growth with approximately two-thirds predicting increases in the number of youth participating, individuals serving as mentors, and staffing of these programs over the next two years. However, there was not a similar forecast for programs’ finances. In fact, **no mentoring programs predicted an increase in funding over the next two years and more than half predicted funding reductions.**



Next Steps

Findings from the MMC 2022 survey display the dramatic impacts that COVID-19 has had on mentoring programs, their staff, mentors and the young people they serve. While findings also highlighted the resiliency and innovation of these programs, a collective effort – including, but not limited to funders, donors, MMP, and the leaders of youth service and mentoring organizations – is critical to support programs and the youth they serve as they heal and recover from the COVID-19 health crisis. Mentoring programs commonly and consistently shared the following recommended next steps:

- **Increase and diversify funding streams.** Corresponding with increased needs exacerbated by the pandemic, mentoring programs require stable or increased financial support as they work to rebuild staffing, increase youth and mentor recruitment and participation, and continue to adapt programming to respond to the needs of young people, including addressing technology limitations and barriers.

Diversifying unrestricted funding even more is key.

We MUST find a way to pay staff more, and we MUST train them better for social emotional needs of youth. We must see our positions as social workers and hire as such to maintain child safety and programmatic success in the same ways now. This may look like reduction in services for a while and we NEED funders to acknowledge this and allow us to do what we need to do with the same funding or increase our access to funding.

- **Provide Additional Training and Supports to Staff and Mentors.** Given the myriad of challenges that COVID-19 has created or exacerbated on young people's mental health, academic progress, and social-emotional development, many programs expressed the need for additional training, resources, and supports for both their staff and mentors. More than a third of programs requested further information on the following content areas: diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in mentoring relationships, youth mental health, and trauma / healing informed practices.

Resources to better support staff and volunteers with the families that we work with.

Recognizing that we should probably always offer self-care and mental health support. Our mentors and youth were really thirsty for it.

- **Proactively develop and strengthen partnerships.** Finally, a number of programs highlighted the importance of intentionally and proactively strengthening and formalizing relationships with their community partners as a critical pipeline for youth and mentor recruitment as well as an important resource for funding and programming as a key lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to find key players in each organization we are partnering with as COVID has shown high turnover and communication gaps. Identifying key players ensures that we have foresight to change before it occurs.

Additional partnerships are key to reach additional stakeholders and funding opportunities.

There is a need for a more responsive model that can adapt to shifting school-based and youth needs. ... [We] did not have these systems in place and they take time to build. We can't take for granted that these programs may not be needed again in the future; we have to learn to anticipate challenges and provide multiple points of entry for young people in need of this kind of support.

