Mentoring in the Workplace 2022

Use mentoring programs to develop leadership, engage employees, and improve organizational performance

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Executive Summary

The concept of mentoring has been around for ages. In fact, the word originates from a character in Homer's classic poem "The Odyssey," which dates back to three millennia ago.

But that doesn't mean that the concept has been static. Traditional mentoring relationships have often formed naturally, with older people often passing along knowledge and wisdom to younger ones.

Structured mentoring programs in organizations have become a powerful tool for learning and development. A core set of best practices have emerged to guide organizations.

To better understand this evolution and current trends, the HR Research Institute partnered with the Art of Mentoring, an organization that specializes in mentoring program delivery and design. In this study, we explore a variety of related topics:

- the global state of mentoring today
- the characteristics and purpose of mentoring programs
- success and satisfaction with mentoring programs
- the various types of mentoring and how they are delivered
- how organizations with more successful mentoring programs tend to differ from organizations with less successful ones

Below is an overview of the top findings from the study:

Major Finding **1**

A majority of organizations use mentoring programs of some sort, either formal or informal.

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents have a mentoring program. Large organizations are more likely to have a program (69%) compared to small (51%) and mid-size (41%) companies. This represents a large increase from when a similar survey was run in in 2017 on the same topic. At that time, only one third of surveyed organizations had a mentoring program in place.

- Many mentoring programs are informal. In fact, 20% say that they only offer informal programs, whereas 18% say they only offer formal ones. The rest (26%) offer a combination of formal and informal programs.

- A third (33%) have just one mentoring program but almost half (47%) report having two to three programs.

- Although almost half (47%) of all survey participants have general mentoring programs (open to all employees), two out of five also have mentoring for high potential individuals (40%) and peer mentoring (39%).

- Mentoring relationships are primarily one-on-one as opposed to a group-based structure.

Major Finding **2**

Mentoring is happening both virtually and in person.

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents report using a hybrid approach in their mentoring programs, with mentors and mentees meeting both virtually and face-to-face.

- This hybrid model is more prevalent in large organizations (74%) in comparison to mid-size (57%) companies and especially smaller (39%) firms. Half of smaller organizations state that mentoring is still occurring only face-to-face.

Major Finding **3**

Most mentoring programs have an internal program manager.

- Eighty-six percent have an internal program manager for their mentoring program.

- Over forty percent (44%) of respondents report that the person overseeing the mentor program spends 1-2 hours per week (27%) or 3-9 hours per week (24%) on related tasks.

Major Finding **4**

There are five key characteristics shared by most mentoring programs.

- Program administrators match mentees and mentors (54%).

- Training for mentors (54%).

- Training for mentees (45%).

- Designated program manager (45%).

- Formal application process for mentees (42%).

- Large organizations use a wide range of practices and provide more resources to mentors and mentees than do small and mid-size companies.

Major Finding **5**

The most important factors for success are commitment, training, and the quality of mentor-mentee matching.

- Almost two-thirds (65%) say the most important factor for success is mentors' and mentees' willingness to spend time on the relationship.

- Full commitment from participants upfront is also cited as important (46%).

- Over half (56%) cite the quality of mentor-mentee matching.

- Educating mentees (52%) as well as mentors (46%), and training mentors in effective mentoring skills (42%) are also key success factors.

Major Finding 6

The top three purposes for mentoring programs are to increase leadership capability, employee skills and employee engagement.

- Two-thirds seek to develop leadership capability in their mentees and to increase employee skill levels.

- Sixty-three percent aim to increase employee engagement.

- Large organizations place relatively more emphasis on mentoring to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Major Finding 7

Only a little over half of respondents are satisfied with their mentoring programs, indicating there is much room for improvement in this area.

- Only 14% of respondents are very satisfied with their mentoring programs and another 41% are satisfied. This leaves the rest saying they are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied or neutral.

- Both small and large organizations report they are satisfied/very satisfied at much higher numbers than mid-size companies at 64%, 57% and 43% respectively.

- The primary reason for dissatisfaction is a lack of structure, followed by program inconsistencies, inadequate measurement, and low participation on the part of both mentees and mentors.

Major Finding 8

Some organizations do not measure the effectiveness of mentoring programs at all and, among those that do, metrics are typically based on participant feedback rather than on employee data such as retention and engagement.

- The majority of survey respondents rely on verbal participant feedback (59%) and participant surveys (58%), to measure the success of the mentoring program.

- Feedback from sponsors, trainers, program facilitators and managers (39%) are also used as a tool to measure the success of mentoring programs.

- Only 24% say they use employee data (e.g., retention) or improved performance reviews (22%) to assess the success of the program.

- 13% report they do not measure at all.

Major Finding **9**

Organizations that are more satisfied with their mentoring programs tend to have more structured programs, provide greater support to the mentoring programs and take a more formal approach to mentoring.

- The study refers to organizations that are satisfied with their mentoring programs as mentoring leader organizations and those that are not satisfied as mentoring laggard organizations.

- Four out of five (82%) mentoring leader organizations have an internal program manager contrasted with only 60% of laggard organizations. Over a third (38%) of laggard organizations have no program manager.

- Forty-one percent of mentoring laggard organizations rely exclusively on informal mentoring compared to only 17% of leader organizations.

- Leader organizations offer more types of mentoring programs than do laggard organizations.

- Sixty-three percent of leader organizations have an administrator who matches mentoring pairs, compared to only 51% of laggard organizations. Laggards are more likely to use self-matching – 32% versus 19% in leader organizations.

- Twice as many mentoring leader organizations (70%) train mentors compared to laggards (40%). Almost two thirds (64%) of mentoring leader organizations provide mentee training compared to only a quarter (29%) of mentoring laggard organizations

- Overall, leaders have put key measurement tools into place to assess the success of the mentoring program. As an example, 59% of leaders use program evaluation surveys compared to only 18% of laggards.

The State of Mentoring Today

The survey on which this report is based defined mentoring so that study participants would be able to answer the questions with a common frame of reference:

Mentoring is a learning relationship, involving the sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise between a mentor and mentee through developmental conversations, experience sharing, and role modelling. Sometimes a mentee is known as a protégé or mentoree. In "reverse mentoring," the mentor may be a more junior team member who shares knowledge, expertise and skills (e.g., technical skills) with a more senior person.

The Usage of Mentoring Programs

Finding: Almost two-thirds of survey respondents report that their organization has a mentoring program

Mentoring is recognized as an important component of employee development, especially in today's highly competitive labor market. We find it encouraging that almost two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents report having some sort of mentoring program in their organization, but there is clearly much room for improvement in this area.

Responding organizations are about equally likely to say they have strictly formal mentoring programs (18%) as strictly informal ones (20%). A plurality, however, say that they have both formal and informal mentoring programs (26%). This suggests that organizations approach mentoring in a variety of ways and that there is no consensus about which ones are optimal.

By Size of Organization

Large organizations (69%) are more likely than small or mid-size organizations to have a mentoring program. Large organizations are also most likely to have strictly formal mentoring programs: 25% compared with just 7% of small organizations and 16% of mid-size ones. Large organizations may favor a more structured approach so that mentoring is consistent across a bigger and often geographically dispersed employee population. Large organizations may also have more resources per employee to implement formal programs.

36% of organizations say they don't have any type of mentoring program

Survey Question: Does your organization have any type of mentoring program?

Yes, both formal and informal ones	26%
Yes, INFORMAL ones	20%
Yes, FORMAL ones	18%
No, but we are considering implementing such programs	20%
No	16%
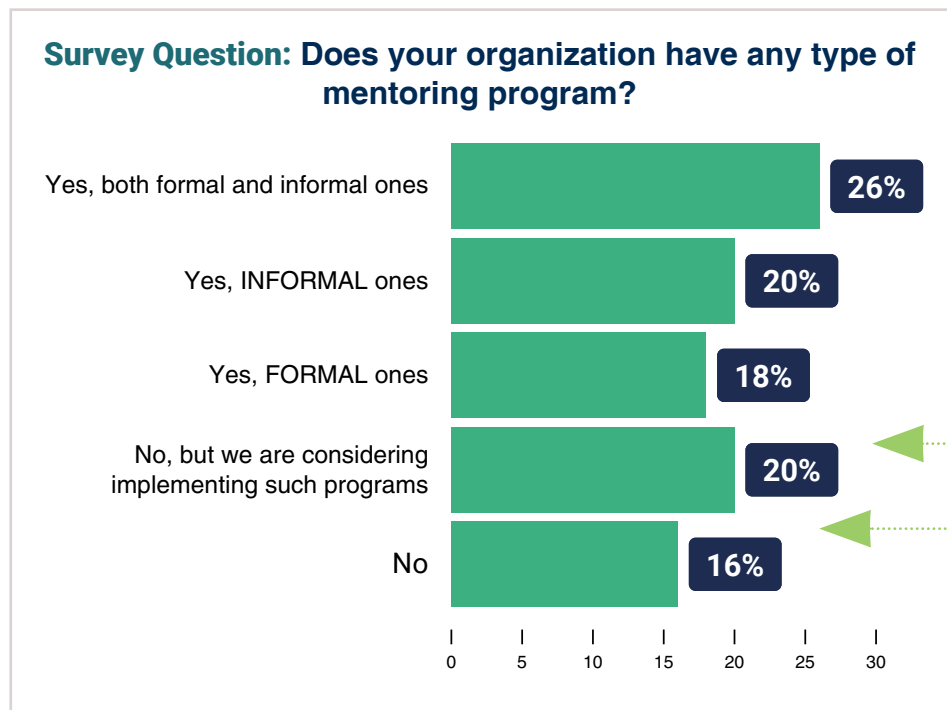
Defining Small, Mid-sized and Large Organizations

For the purposes of this report, we've defined small organizations as having less than 100 employees, mid-size organizations as having between 100 to 499 employees and large organizations as having 500 or more employees.

Finding: Two-thirds of organizations with mentoring programs have more than one

Of the survey respondents whose organizations have a mentoring program, a third (33%) have just one mentoring program while the rest have two or more. The largest cohort manages two to three programs (47%). This could mean multiple *types* of mentoring programs, or it could mean that similar types of mentoring programs are implemented in multiple locations. Large organizations are most likely to have more than one mentoring programs.

20% of organizations have four or more mentoring programs

Survey Question: How many different mentoring programs does your organization have?
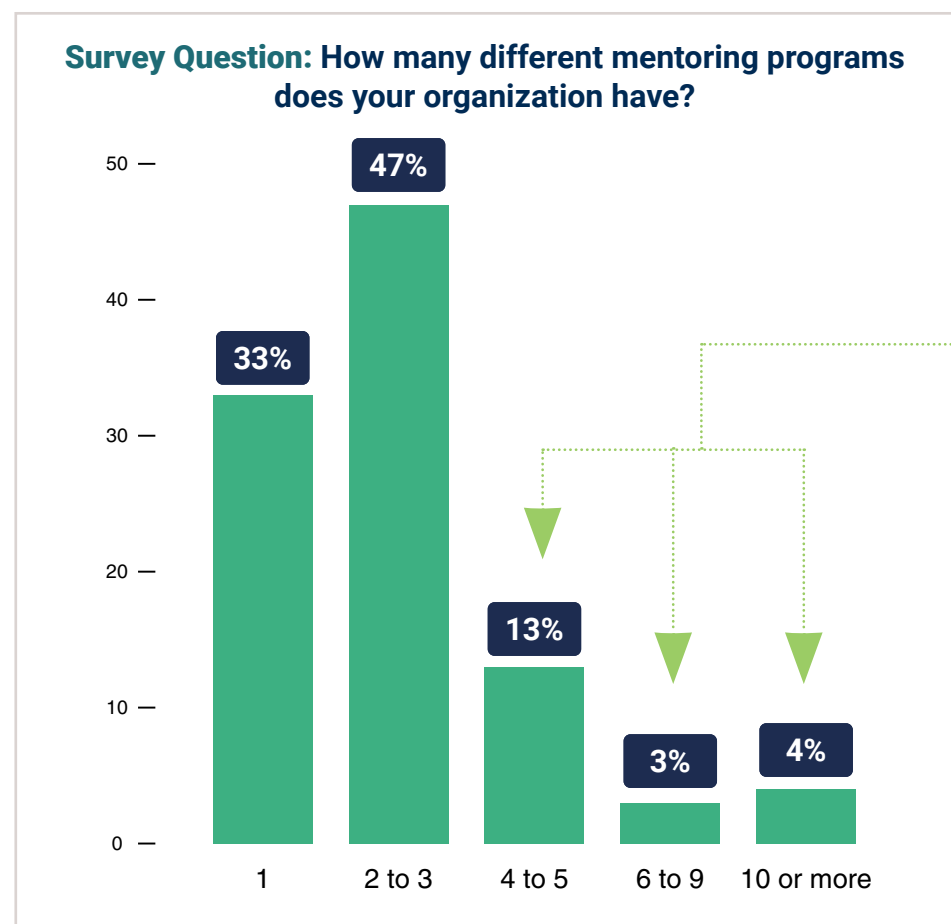
Finding: Over half of organizations have 21 or more matched participants

One indication of the scope of a mentoring program is the number of matched participants: that is, mentees that have been formally paired with mentors. Nearly half (47%) have fewer than 20 matched participants, but some organizations have much larger numbers. Indeed, about a quarter have at least 51 matched participants, and 14% have more than 100.

As expected, large organizations report a higher number of matched participants. Most small (82%) and mid-size (57%) organizations say they have fewer than 20 matched participants.

About a quarter have 51 or more matched participants

Survey Question: How many participants do you have in your mentoring program?

47%	29%	10%	10%	4%
Less than 20 matched participants	21-50 matched participants	51-100 matched participants	101-500 matched participants	501 or more matched participants

Editor's Note: The above data excludes "Don't Know" responses, which were 12% of the original responses to this question. If an annual program, participants were asked to choose the average number for a typical year.

The Types of Mentoring Programs

Finding: In addition to general mentoring, mentoring for high potential individuals and peer mentoring are the most common types of programs

This study illustrates that there are a variety of mentoring programs available in today's organizations, suggesting that mentoring remains an evolving development tool with which organizations continue to innovate. Almost half (47%) of survey participants have general mentoring programs, which are open to all employees. About two-fifths engage in mentoring for high potential individuals (40%) and peer mentoring (39%).

Less commonly used types of mentoring programs are diversity mentor programs (23%), group mentoring (18%), graduate mentor programs (17%), reciprocal mentoring (14%) and reverse mentor programs (9%). Large companies offer a wider variety of mentoring programs, including diversity mentoring, group mentoring, and graduate mentoring.

Reverse mentoring programs are the least likely to be offered

Survey Question: Please select the types of mentoring programs your organization offers. (select all that apply)

Program	Percentage
General (anyone can participate)	47%
Mentor program for high potential talent	40%
Peer mentor program	39%
Diversity mentor program (e.g., women)	23%
Group mentor program (mentoring in groups rather than pairs)	18%
Graduate mentor program	17%
Reciprocal mentor program (mentoring pairs mentor each other)	14%
Reverse mentor program	9%
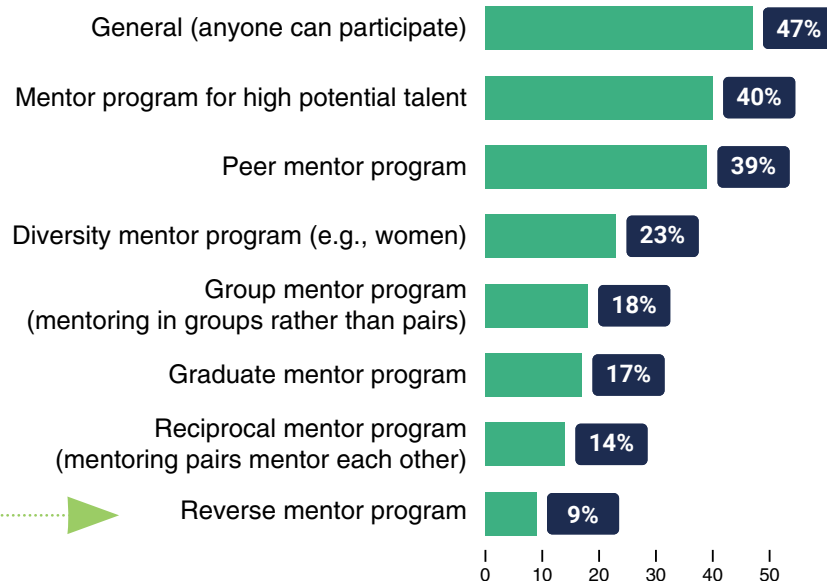
The Delivery of Mentoring Programs

Finding: Mentoring is happening both virtually and in person

With the increasing usage of remote work as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems natural that mentoring adjusted. Indeed, almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents report using a hybrid approach in their mentoring programs, with mentors and mentees meeting both virtually *and* face-to-face. Note that respondents answered this question from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

By Size of Organization

In large organizations, the hybrid model is the prevalent method, cited by 74%. This contrasts with 57% at mid-size and 39% at smaller firms. Small organizations are most likely to state that mentoring is still occurring only face-to-face. This is probably because smaller organizations are likely to be in one location making face-to-face mentoring easier.

Nearly a fifth of organizations *only* use a virtual mentoring program

Survey Question: How is your organization's mentoring program delivered? (select the one that best applies)

- Through a hybrid of virtual and face-to-face: **64%**
- Virtual program (i.e., events and/or mentoring relationships are conducted online): **19%**
- Face-to-face (i.e., events and mentoring relationships are held in one location): **18%**

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Finding: Mentoring relationships are primarily one-on-one

Despite the fact that most organizations with mentoring programs have more than one program and often have multiple *types* of programs, the mentoring relationships themselves still tend to be one-on-one. We asked respondents to answer this question from the perspective of their mentoring program with the largest number of participants. Fully 93% say that their program is one-on-one, whereas only 19% say there is "one mentor with a group of mentees" and just 16% say mentoring occurs "within a group of peers."

From this perspective, mentoring tends to fall into the traditional mentor-mentee dynamic, but the fact that nearly one in five say one mentor sometimes works with a *group* of mentees indicates other dynamics have emerged.

Nearly a fifth say that they have a program in which one mentor works with a group of mentees

Survey Question: Which of the following describes the mentoring relationships in your program? (select all that apply)

One-to-one (i.e., one mentor with one mentee)	93%
There is one mentor with a group of mentees	19%
Within a group of peers	16%

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.
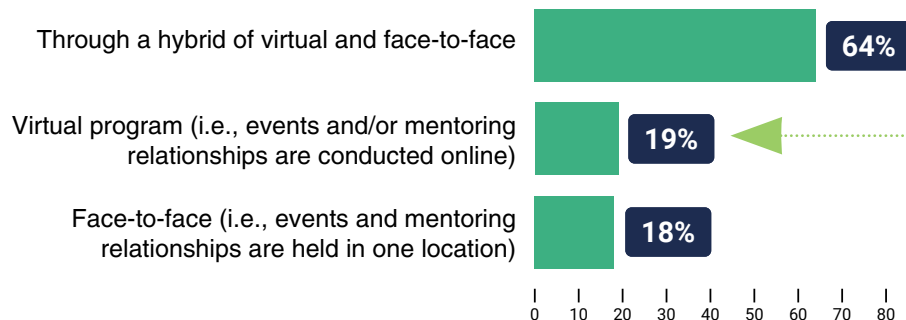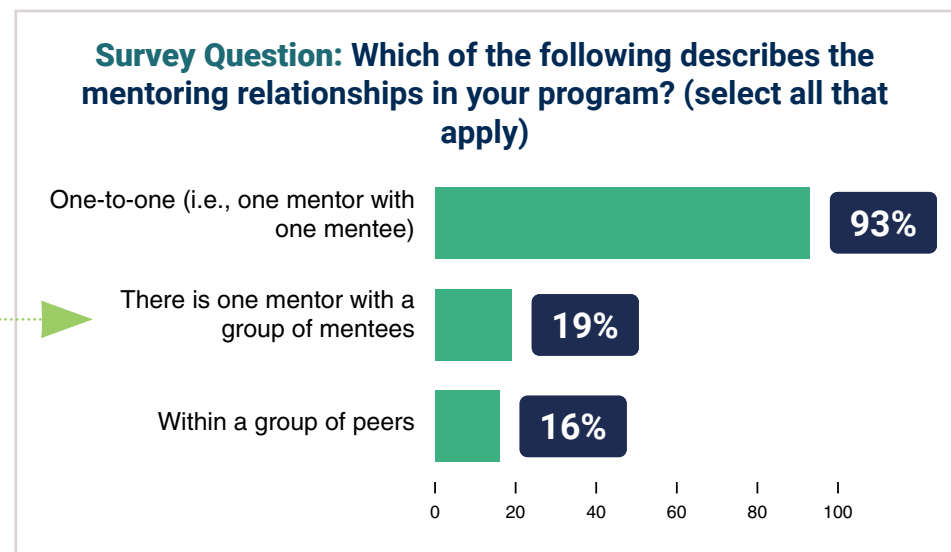
Finding: Although most mentoring programs have a national or regional footprint, 23% offer programs in two or more nations

Most survey respondents report that their mentoring program takes place nationally (35%) or regionally (26%). However, 15% say they have global programs and another 8% offer programs in two or more nations. Large companies are, of course, far more likely to have programs that extend into at least two nations: 30% compared with 14% and 11% for small and mid-size organizations respectively.

About two-fifths have national programs, though some of those are delivered regionally

Survey Question: Please select where your program is delivered. (select the answer that best applies)

Category	Percentage
National program (one country only)	35%
Regional program only (i.e., city, region or state)	26%
Global program	15%
Program offered in 2-5 countries	8%
National program with regional delivery	4%

Editor's Note: The data in this graph does not include those who responded "Don't know," who were 6% of the original respondents. It also does not include "Other" responses, which often represented "local" offices/locations. Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

The Management of Mentoring Programs

Finding: Most have an internal program manager for their mentoring program

Most organizations with mentoring programs report the use of an internal program manager (86%), making this by far the most widely use management approach. Other approaches include a volunteer steering committee (29%) and online mentor program administration software (19%). In the comments, several respondents noted the deep involvement of executives and department/division leaders in their organization.

A majority of organizations of all sizes use an internal program manager, but large and mid-size organizations are more than twice as likely as small firms to have a volunteer steering committee.

Almost one out of five companies use online mentor program administration software

Survey Question: Who or what is involved in the implementation, management, and/or administration of your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

Internal program manager	86%
Volunteer steering committee	29%
Online mentor program administration software	19%
External administration service provider	13%
External mentoring consultant	9%

Note: The data in this graph does not include those who responded, "Don't know" or "Other," which were 8% and 11% of the original responses. The most common "Other" response was that HR plays the key role. Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.
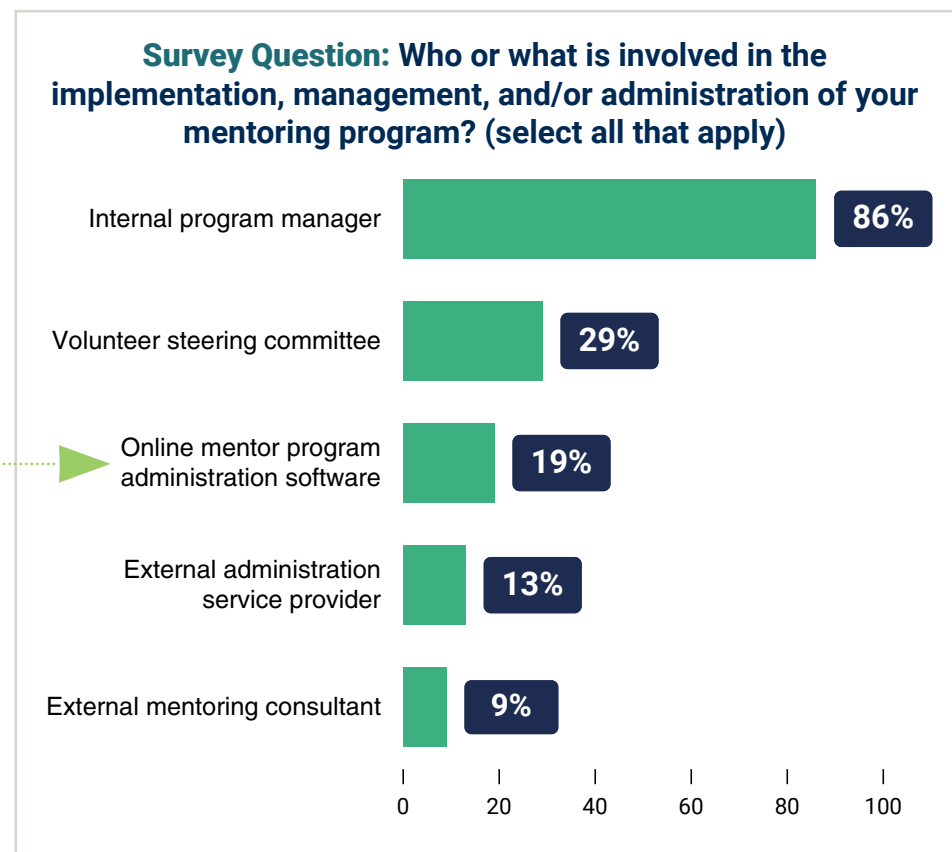
Finding: For most organizations, the mentor program manager is a part-time role

Only 7% of participants say that the manager of mentor programs in their organization represents a full-time position. Meanwhile, 30% say the manager spends just 2 hours or less per week on these duties, and 24% say they have no mentor program manager. Only 21% devote more than ten hours per week.

This suggests that these important programs are not very strongly managed in most organizations. Perhaps many programs are seen as largely "self-organizing," with the management mostly being done by the mentors themselves.

About a quarter of respondents say that have no mentor program manager

Survey Question: How much time does the Mentor Program Manager devote to the mentoring program(s)?

Response	Percentage
None	3%
1-2 hours per week	27%
3-4 hours per week	14%
5-9 hours per week	10%
10-19 hours per week	11%
20-29 hours per week	2%
30-39 hours per week	1%
It's a full-time role	7%
We do not have a program manager	24%
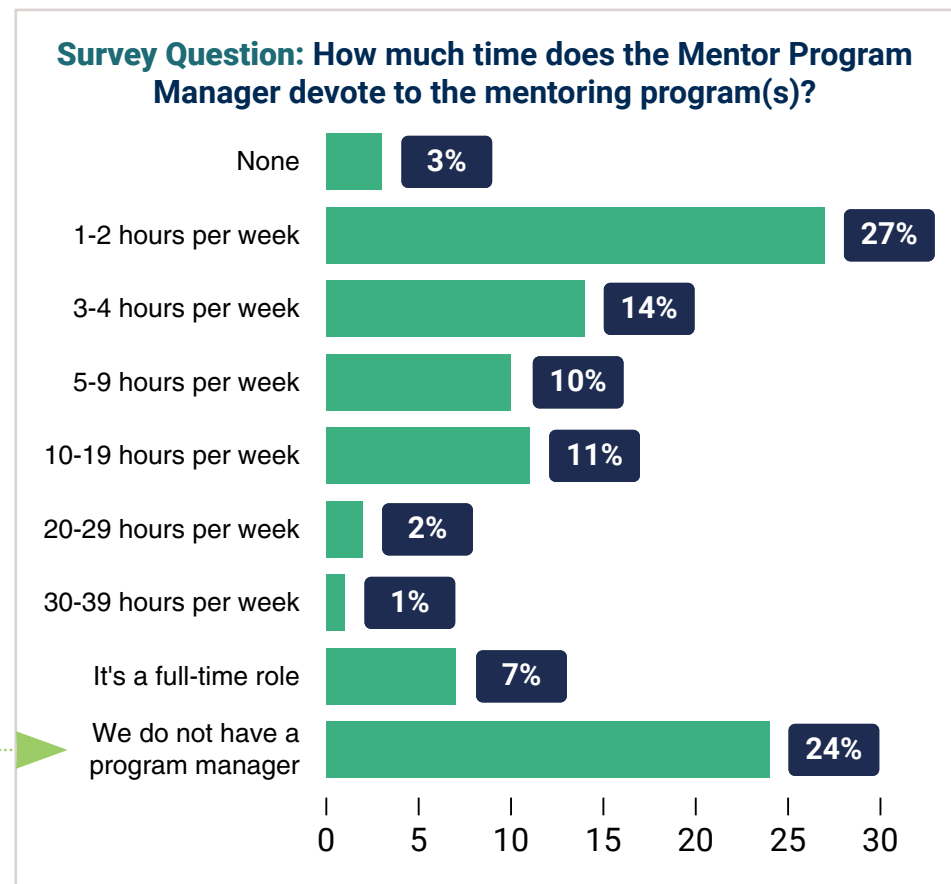
Editor's Note: In the graph above, we have removed the data for "Other," which was originally 13% and recalculated the data. This influences the percentage who say they do not have a program manager. Most of those write-in responses either indicated that participants don't know the answer to the question or that the manager works less than one hour per week but still spends a small fraction of time on it.

Characteristics and Purposes of Mentoring Programs

Finding: There are five key characteristics shared by most mentoring programs

There are many potential characteristics of mentoring programs. For example, they may begin with a published code of conduct and program launch, progress into participant training, engage in the mentoring itself, and follow up with surveys and a program close event.

But which programs characteristics are most common? Five characteristics emerge as most common to the design of mentoring programs:

1. Mentors and mentees are matched by an administrator (54%)
2. Training or briefing for mentors (54%)
3. Training for mentees (45%)
4. A designated program manager (45%)
5. Formal application process for mentees (42%)

This does not mean that other characteristics are not crucial to some programs, but it does suggest that these five are seen as especially important to success.

Comparison by Organization Size

Large organizations are more likely to cite certain characteristics than are small and mid-size companies. For example, half do one or more program evaluation surveys compared to only 30% of mid-size and 22% of small organizations. Large companies are also more likely to have a formal application process for both mentees and mentors. Over half (52%) require formal application for mentors, while only 27% of mid-size and 19% of small organizations do.

Survey Question: Which of the following characteristics are included in your mentoring program design? (select all that apply)

Characteristic	Percentage
Mentors/mentees matched by administrator	54%
Training/briefing for mentors	54%
Designated program manager	45%
Training for mentees	45%
Formal application process for MENTEES	42%
One or more program evaluation surveys	39%
Formal application process for MENTORS	38%
Informal feedback to administrator by email	37%
One or more progress review events	34%
Program launch event for participants	29%
Published code of conduct for the program	28%
Mentors and mentees self-match	25%
Program close event	25%
Database of educational & support resources	24%
Online program management platform	17%
Other matching process	13%

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Only 39% use one or more program evaluation surveys

Finding: Allocating enough time to the process, is the factor most closely linked to success

We asked respondents about the top five factors that are key to the success of the mentoring program. By far the most common answer, cited by 65% of survey participants, is the willingness of mentors and mentees to spend time on the relationship. A corporate culture that incentivizes time spent on mentoring may pay large dividends in terms of program success.

The other top responses often reflected the most common program characteristics cited in the finding on the previous page. That is, in successful programs there is a focus on proper matching and training. Over half cite the quality of mentor-mentee matching (56%). The next four most widely cited items are educating mentees and educating mentors, fully committing to the process, and maintaining regular contact among participants.

Therefore, the most widely regarded variables driving the success of programs are high-quality matching and training willingness to fully commit to the process. This could be achieved by incentivizing mentors for committing time to the program.

Survey Question: Based on the list below, what do you think are the top five factors that are key to the success of the mentoring program(s)?

Factor	%
Mentors & mentees willing to devote time	65%
Quality of mentor-mentee matching	56%
Educating the mentees for their roles/responsibilities	52%
Educating the mentors for their roles/responsibilities	46%
Full commitment from participants upfront	46%
Regular contact with participants	46%
Continuous improvement of the program	42%
Train mentors in effective mentoring skills	42%
Good quality resource materials	34%
Help mentoring partners if problems arise	19%
Good software platform	10%

Quality matching and training participants are seen as key to success

Finding: The most widely cited purposes of mentoring programs are to develop leadership capability and boost employee skill levels

Mentoring is clearly seen as a key leadership development practice. When respondents were asked about the purpose of these programs, two-thirds cited "to develop leadership capability." But mentoring isn't *only* a leadership practice. Just as many respondents say the purpose is "to increase the skill levels of employees."

The only other purpose cited by more than half of participants is "to increase employee engagement." This suggests that mentoring may be widely viewed as a key employee development tool but that it's also a way to influence the attitudes and work approaches of employees, helping to make them more engaged in their jobs.

Comparison by Organization Size

The focus of a mentoring program can also differ depending on the organizational size. Smaller companies, for example, report that increasing employee skill levels is most important (75%). Larger companies place more importance on mentoring to support diversity, equity and inclusion (48%) as compared to mid-size (40%) and small (21%) organizations. The results suggest that most organizations are underutilizing the mentoring programs by focusing mostly on leadership development and increasing employees' skills and engagement levels. Mentoring programs can offer benefits on all the surveyed parameters if utilized properly.

Survey Question: What is the purpose of your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

Purpose	Percentage
To develop leadership capability	66%
To increase the skill levels of employees	66%
To increase employee engagement	63%
To boost employee retention rates	45%
To boost employee performance	44%
To increase diversity, equity and inclusion	41%
To increase employee promotability	38%
To break down organizational barriers or silos	36%
To improve employee productivity	33%
To facilitate employee mobility	21%
To attract talented employees	16%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Only one in five report facilitating employee mobility as the purpose of their mentoring program
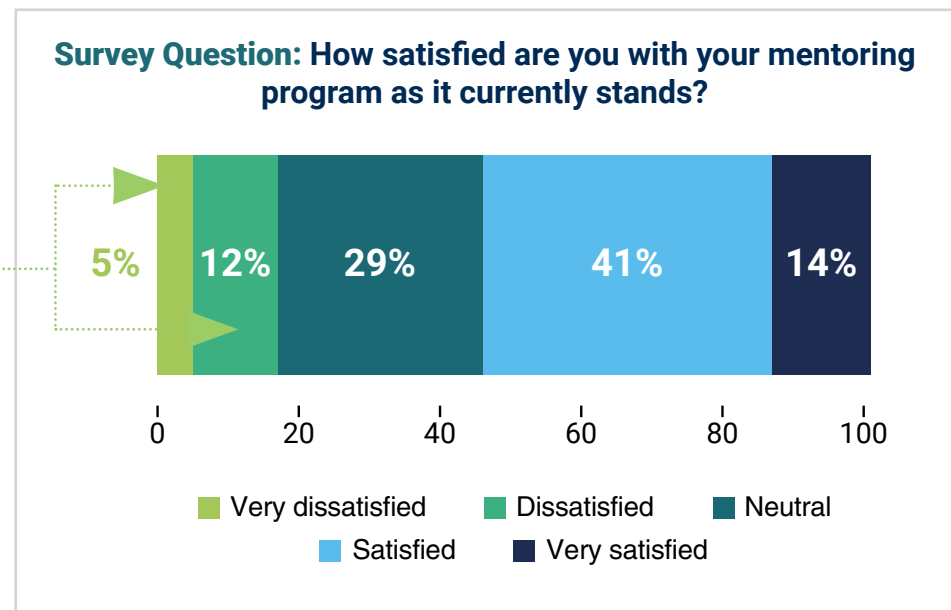
Satisfaction with Mentoring Programs

Finding: Although a little over half are satisfied with their mentoring program, few are very satisfied

While over half (55%) of survey respondents report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their organization's current mentoring program, 46% say they are neutral, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Moreover, just 14% say they are very satisfied. This indicates there is much room for improvement in today's mentoring programs.

17% are actively dissatisfied with their mentoring programs

Survey Question: How satisfied are you with your mentoring program as it currently stands?

| 5% | 12% | 29% | 41% | 14% |

0   20   40   60   80   100

- ■ Very dissatisfied
- ■ Dissatisfied
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Satisfied
- ■ Very satisfied

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization. Note that numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Finding: The top reasons for satisfaction are that the program creates strong relationships and gets positive feedback

Four out of five survey participants who report satisfaction with their mentoring program attribute it to the fact that it creates strong relationships (81%) and receives good feedback from participants (80%). That is not to say, however, that other goals are not important. Almost two-thirds say it is because their mentoring program meets their goals (65%) and the goals of the program participants (64%).

Survey Question: Why are you SATISFIED with your mentoring program?(select all that apply)

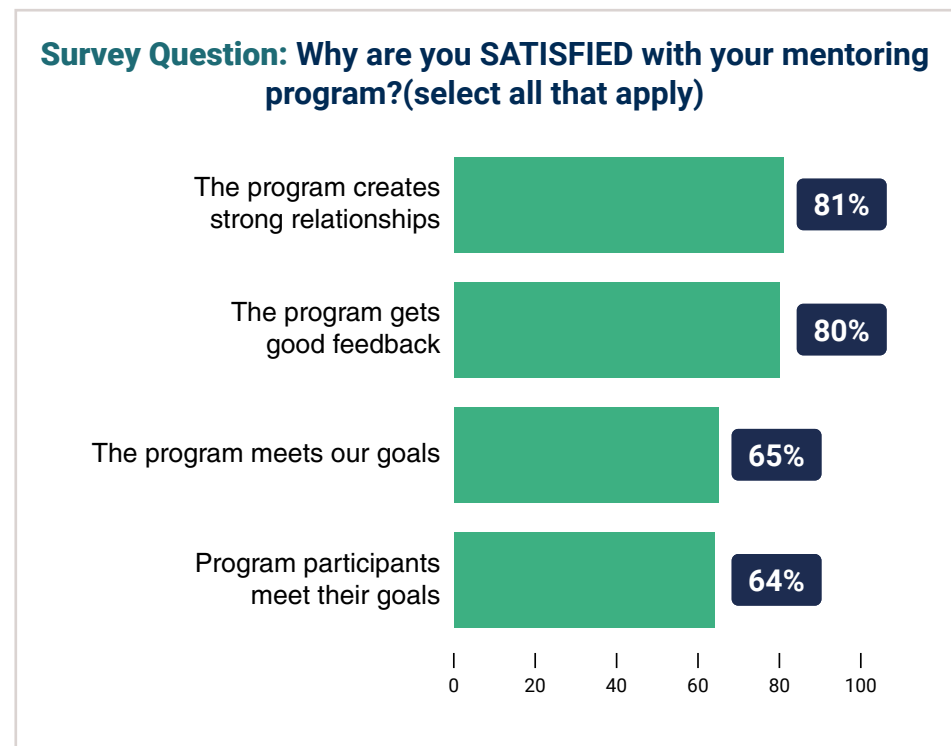|	
The program creates strong relationships	81%
The program gets good feedback	80%
The program meets our goals	65%
Program participants meet their goals	64%

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Finding: Those who are not satisfied with their programs give a range of reasons

Of the survey respondents who are dissatisfied with their mentoring program, 59% shared their thoughts via write-in answers. Among these write-ins, various problems are identified, including a lack of program structure, inconsistencies with how the programs are operated, inadequate metrics and low participation on the part of both mentees and mentors. Among the other options listed, it was the inability of the program to meet goals or to create strong relationships that are most widely cited.

Survey Question: Why aren't you SATISFIED with your mentoring program?(select all that apply)

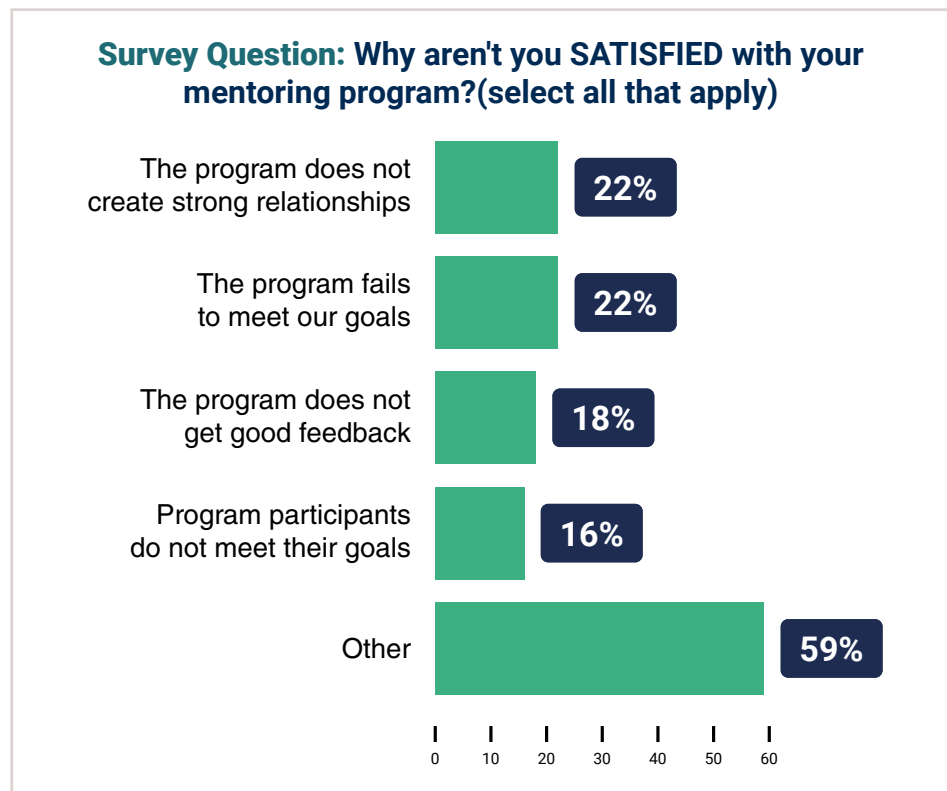| Reason	Percentage
The program does not create strong relationships	22%
The program fails to meet our goals	22%
The program does not get good feedback	18%
Program participants do not meet their goals	16%
Other	59%

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Key Benefits of Mentoring Programs

Finding: The most widely cited benefits of mentoring programs are higher engagement levels and improved leadership capabilities
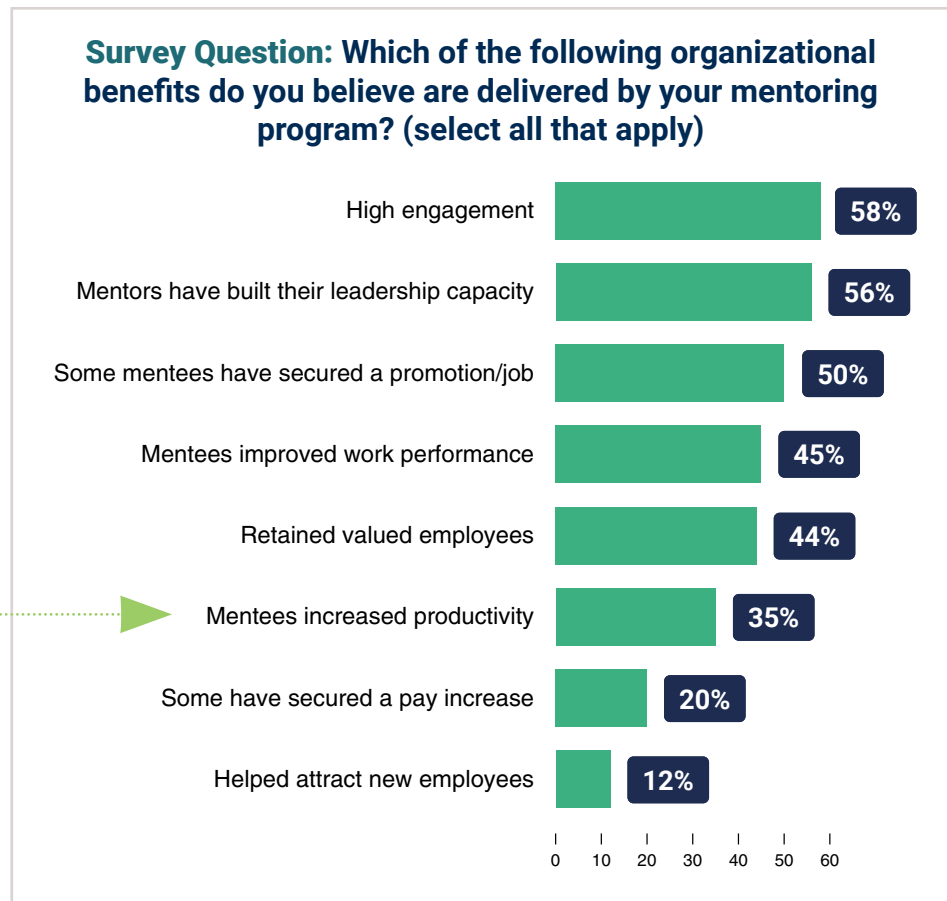
More than half of survey respondents believe that mentoring programs benefit their organizations in term of higher engagement (58%) and greater leadership capacity among mentees (56%). Both benefits match the answers received when we asked survey participants, "What is the purpose of your mentoring program?" In that question, 62% say that employee engagement is the goal and 65% say developing leadership capability is most important.

Although only 37% state that securing mentees new job opportunities (e.g., promotion, job rotation, transfer) is the *purpose* of the mentoring program, in this question, half state they believe it is a *benefit* of the program. Therefore, even though securing new job opportunities may not be a primary purpose of mentoring programs, it may well be one important benefit.

Survey Question: Which of the following organizational benefits do you believe are delivered by your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

Benefit	Percentage
High engagement	58%
Mentors have built their leadership capacity	56%
Some mentees have secured a promotion/job	50%
Mentees improved work performance	45%
Retained valued employees	44%
Mentees increased productivity	35%
Some have secured a pay increase	20%
Helped attract new employees	12%

Over a third believe that mentees enjoy enhanced productivity

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Comparison by Organization Size

While over half of all respondents believe higher engagement is a result of the mentoring program, 61% of those in larger organizations agree versus 54% and 57% in small and mid-size organizations respectively. More than half (58%) in large companies also believe that mentees secure better job opportunities because of the mentoring program, as opposed to 46% of mid-size and 36% of small companies. Compared to those mid-size (43%) and large (44%) organizations, survey respondents from smaller organizations are more likely to believe that mentees' work performance improves with mentoring (57%).

Ways of Measuring the Impact of Mentoring Programs

Finding: The most widely used methods to measure success are verbal feedback and surveys

Most employers (87%) with mentoring programs measure the success of those initiatives. Survey respondents say that the two most common methods to measure the efficacy of mentoring programs are verbal participant feedback (59%) and participant surveys (58%). Feedback from sponsors, trainers, program facilitators and managers are also incorporated (39%).

Fewer organizations, however, use metrics that are not linked to participant opinions. That is, just 24% say they use employee data such as retention or engagement, and just 22% link mentoring to improved performance reviews. We believe that many organizations could make a stronger case for mentoring programs if they link it to changes in employee behaviors and performance goals.

13% do not measure the success of the mentoring program at all

Survey Question: What instruments do you use to measure the success of your mentoring program?

Verbal participant feedback	59%
Participant surveys	58%
Feedback from sponsors, trainers, program facilitators and managers	39%
Line manager feedback	27%
Employee data (e.g., employee retention or engagement)	24%
Improved performance reviews	22%
We do not measure success	13%
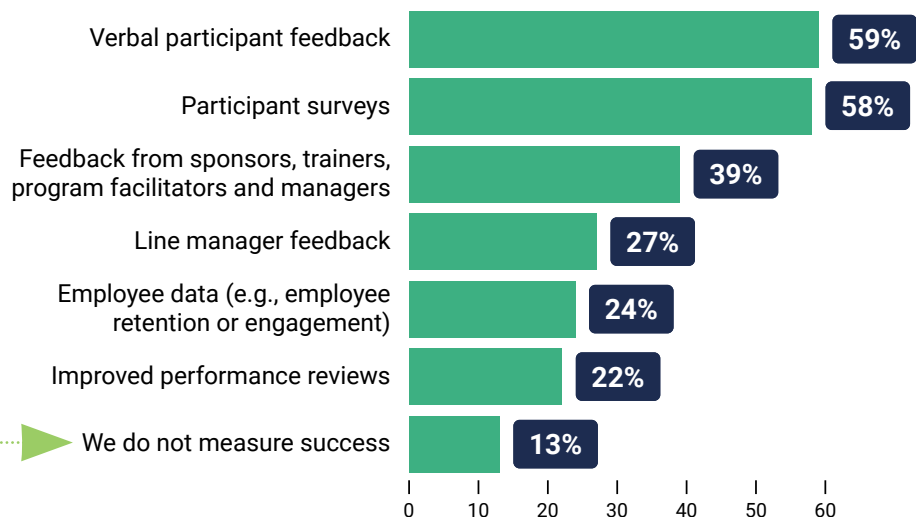
Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

How Mentoring Leaders Differ from Laggards

We wanted to take a closer at what differentiates organizations that are successful at managing their mentoring programs from those who are less successful. To do this, we separated our sample into two cohorts:

Mentoring leaders: respondents who say they feel satisfied or very satisfied with their organization's mentoring program.

Mentoring laggards: respondents who say they feel neutral, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their organization's mentoring program.
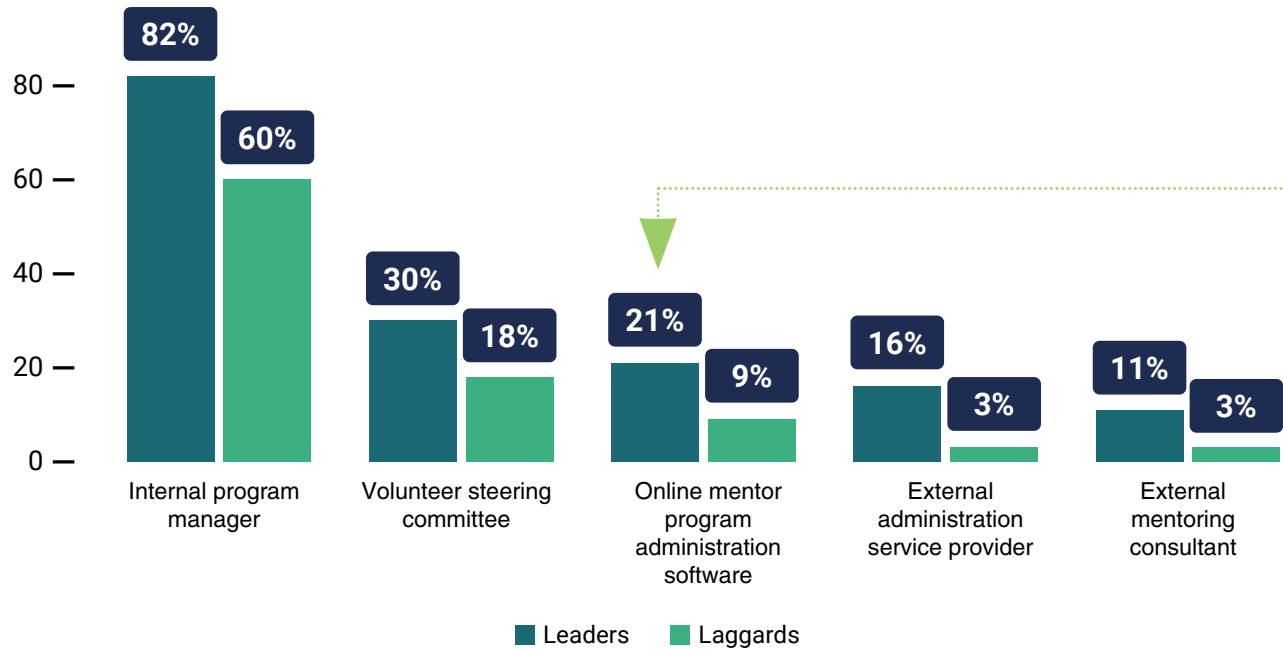
Correlation does not necessarily indicate causation, of course, but these relationships may provide clues about useful practices related to effective mentoring programs.

Finding: Mentoring leaders tend to devote more management personnel and tools to their mentoring programs

Four out of five (82%) leaders have an internal program manager, contrasted with only 60% of laggards. Twice as many leaders as laggards have volunteer steering committees and use online mentor program administration software, and five times more use external administration service providers.

Survey Question: Who or what is involved in the implementation, management, and/or administration of your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

Bar chart showing responses by Leaders and Laggards:

- Internal program manager: Leaders 82%, Laggards 60%
- Volunteer steering committee: Leaders 30%, Laggards 18%
- Online mentor program administration software: Leaders 21%, Laggards 9%
- External administration service provider: Leaders 16%, Laggards 3%
- External mentoring consultant: Leaders 11%, Laggards 3%

Legend: ■ Leaders ■ Laggards

Mentoring leaders are twice as likely to use online mentor program administration software

Finding: Mentoring leaders are far more likely to have a mentor program manager

Whereas 38% of mentoring laggard companies lack a program manager for mentoring programs, only 7% of leader organizations do. Moreover, in mentoring leader organizations, program managers tend to spend more time on the program than in laggard organizations. For example, whereas 30% of leader firms say their program managers work at least 10 hours per week on mentoring programs, only 6% of laggard firms do.

Survey Question: How much time does the Mentor Program Manager devote to the mentoring program(s)?
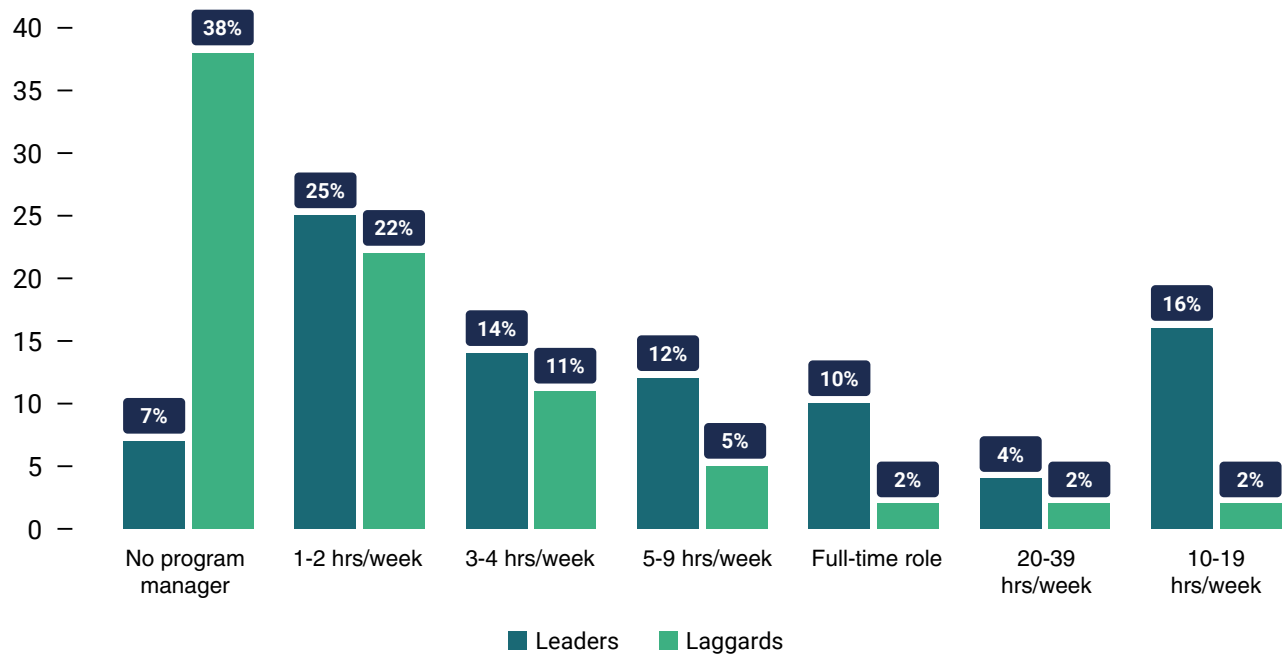
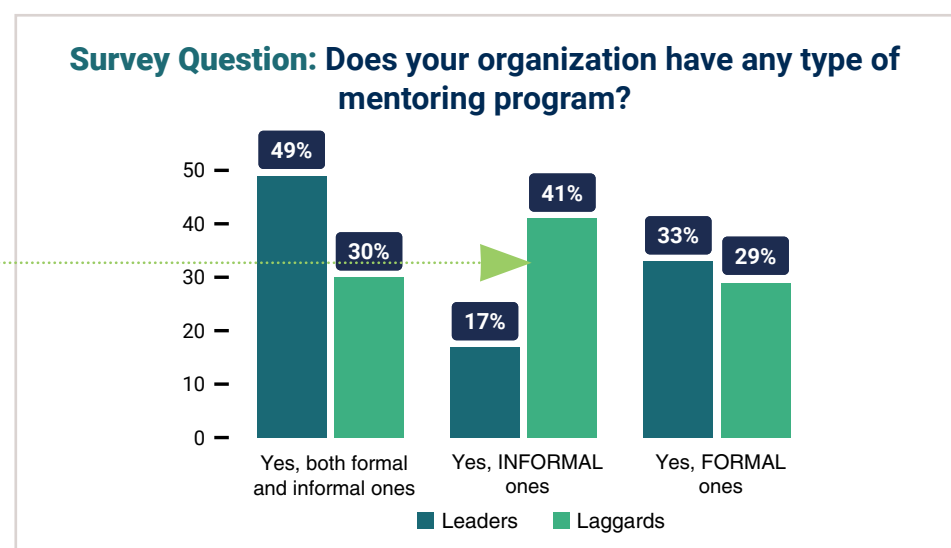# Finding: Mentoring leaders are more likely to have formal mentoring programs

Should mentoring programs be formal, informal or some combination of both? This study suggests that having a formal component is associated with greater success. A third of mentoring leaders report that their programs are formal, and almost a half (49%) say their mentoring program is both formal and informal. In other words, 82% have some formal component.

By comparison, 41% of laggards report that their program is completely informal. Such informality may be a red flag. For example, in an informal program, there may be no procedure for matching mentees and mentors. This can have an impact on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), since people tend to navigate towards people who look like them and who share the same cultural characteristics. This can impair the success of any mentoring program.

Further, introverts may have challenges in an informal mentoring program since they are less likely to reach out and request mentoring.[1] Formal programs also provide a 'safe' environment within which cross-gender pairings can flourish without questions asked about the appropriateness of their meetings.

Laggards are about two times more likely to have mentoring programs that are entirely informal

Survey Question: Does your organization have any type of mentoring program?

	Leaders	Laggards
Yes, both formal and informal ones	49%	30%
Yes, INFORMAL ones	17%	41%
Yes, FORMAL ones	33%	29%

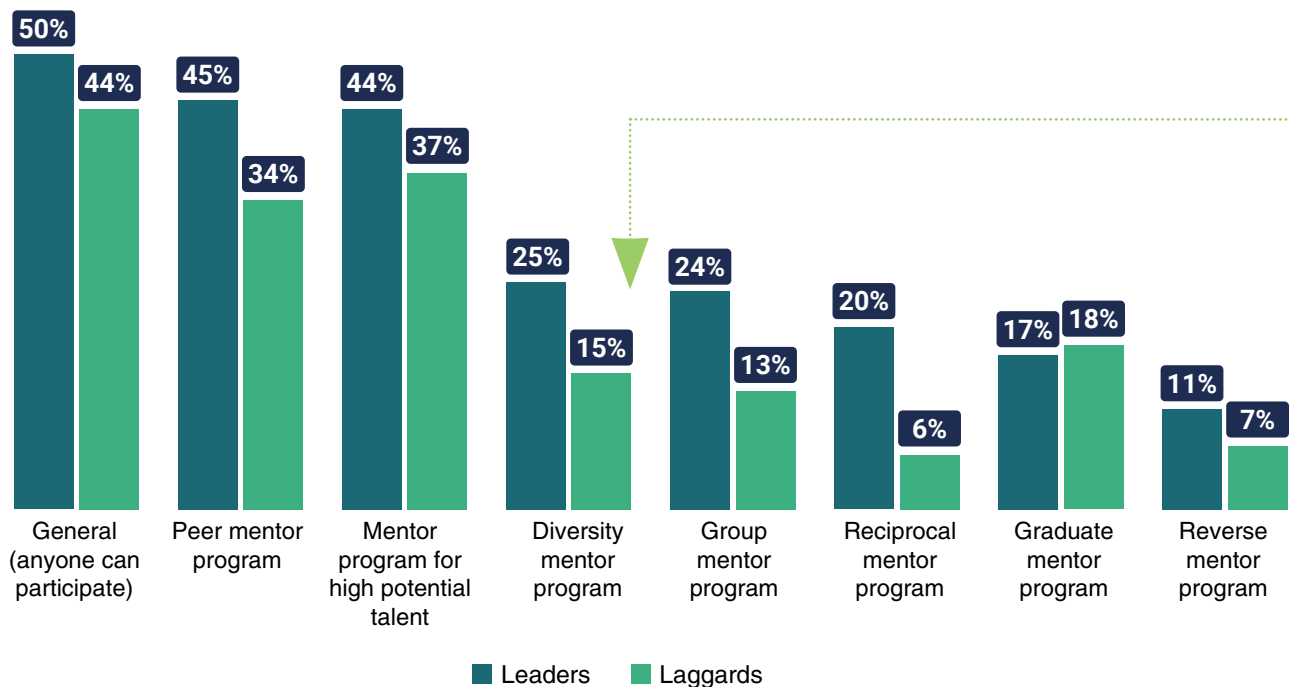Editor's Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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1   https://artofmentoring.net/the-importance-of-formal-mentoring-for-high-potential-introverts/

Finding: Mentoring leaders tend to offer more types of mentoring programs

Although both leaders and laggards are most likely to offer general mentoring programs, leaders tend to offer a great variety of other programs. Mentoring leaders are, for example, more likely to have mentor programs aimed at high potential individuals than laggards (44% vs. 37%). Forty-five percent of leaders offer peer mentor programs whereas only a third of laggards (34%) do. The proportional size of the gaps become even more pronounced when comparing diverse mentoring, group mentoring and reciprocal mentoring.

Survey Question: Please select the types of mentoring programs your organization offers. (select all that apply)

	Leaders	Laggards
General (anyone can participate)	50%	44%
Peer mentor program	45%	34%
Mentor program for high potential talent	44%	37%
Diversity mentor program	25%	15%
Group mentor program	24%	13%
Reciprocal mentor program	20%	6%
Graduate mentor program	17%	18%
Reverse mentor program	11%	7%

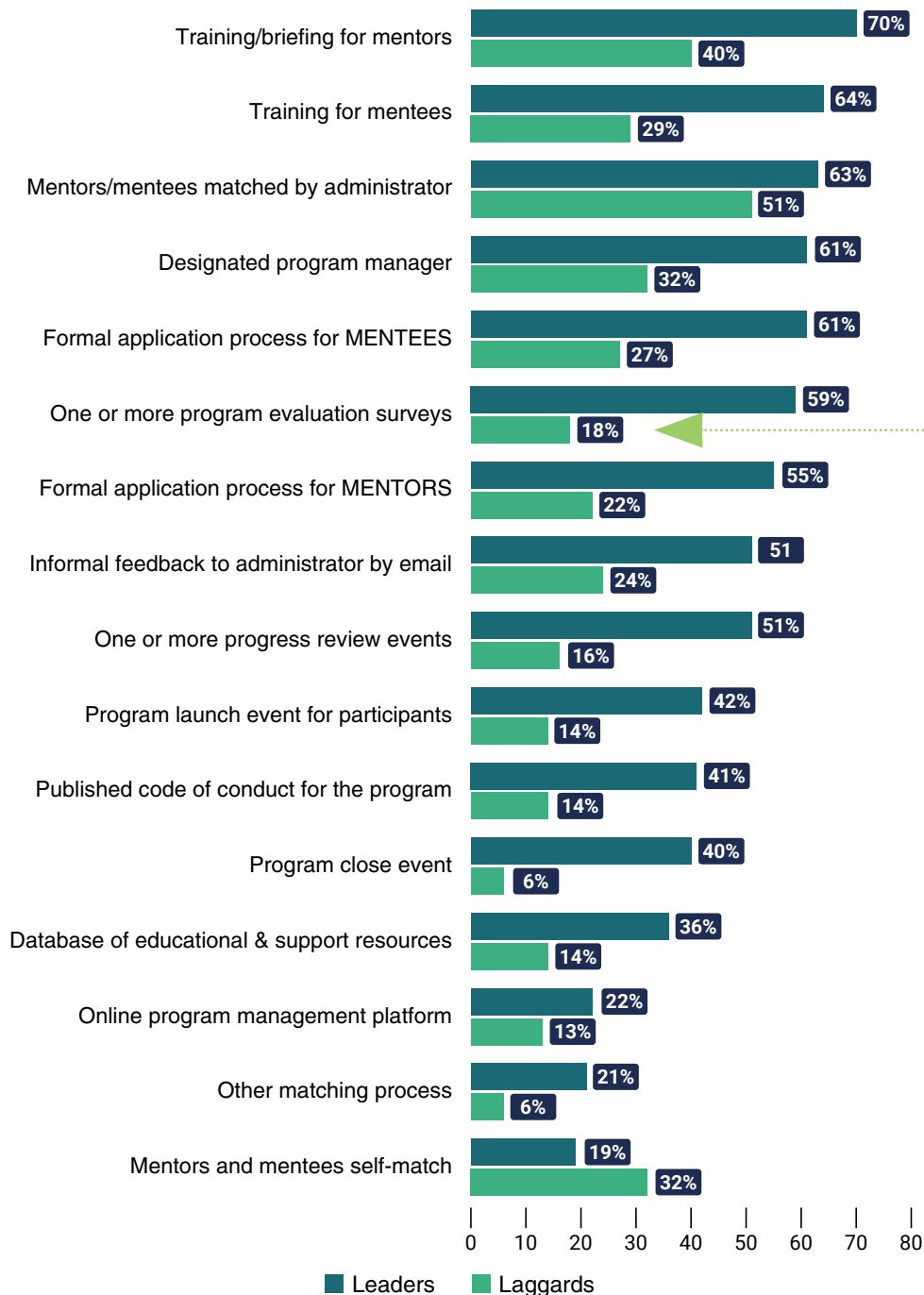**Only 15% of laggards offer diversity mentoring programs**

Finding: Mentoring leader programs are far more likely to include a variety of key steps in the mentoring process

Mentoring leaders are considerably more likely than laggards to engage in most of the practices listed in the graph on the following page, but in many cases the differences are especially striking; leaders are two or three times more likely to follow certain program components. Here are some of the most striking differences between mentoring leaders and laggards.

- **Mentor pair matching.** Almost two-thirds (63%) of leaders have an administrator to match mentoring pairs, compared to only 51% of laggards. Laggards are more likely to use self-matching – 32% versus 19% in leader organizations.

- **Training.** A successful mentoring program is more likely to provide adequate training for both mentors and mentees. Most mentoring leaders report doing this. Seventy percent train mentors versus only 40% of laggards. Almost two thirds (64%) of mentoring leaders provide mentee training compared to only a quarter (29%) of laggards.

- **Designated program manager.** Three out of five (61%) mentoring leaders say they have someone who provides dedicated support to their mentoring program. Only 32% of laggards say they have a program manager.

Survey Question: Which of the following characteristics are included in your mentoring program design? (select all that apply)

Characteristic	Leaders	Laggards
Training/briefing for mentors	70%	40%
Training for mentees	64%	29%
Mentors/mentees matched by administrator	63%	51%
Designated program manager	61%	32%
Formal application process for MENTEES	61%	27%
One or more program evaluation surveys	59%	18%
Formal application process for MENTORS	55%	22%
Informal feedback to administrator by email	51	24%
One or more progress review events	51%	16%
Program launch event for participants	42%	14%
Published code of conduct for the program	41%	14%
Program close event	40%	6%
Database of educational & support resources	36%	14%
Online program management platform	22%	13%
Other matching process	21%	6%
Mentors and mentees self-match	19%	32%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

■ Leaders ■ Laggards

Editor's Note: Respondents were asked to answer from the perspective of the mentoring program with the largest number of participants in their organization.

Only 18% of laggards use program evaluation surveys

Finding: Mentoring leader organizations are far more likely to measure the performance of their programs

Mentoring leaders are considerably more likely to put key measurement tools into place to assess the success of the mentoring program. As an example, 59% of leaders use program evaluation surveys, compared to only 18% of laggards. Even informal feedback to the program administrator from mentees and mentors is higher in leader organizations – 51% versus only 24% in laggards.

When we asked about specific measurement instruments, we found that, compared to mentoring laggard organizations, leader organizations are over three times more likely to use feedback from sponsors, trainers, program facilitators and managers. Moreover, they are over four times more likely to use employee data such as retention and engagement numbers.
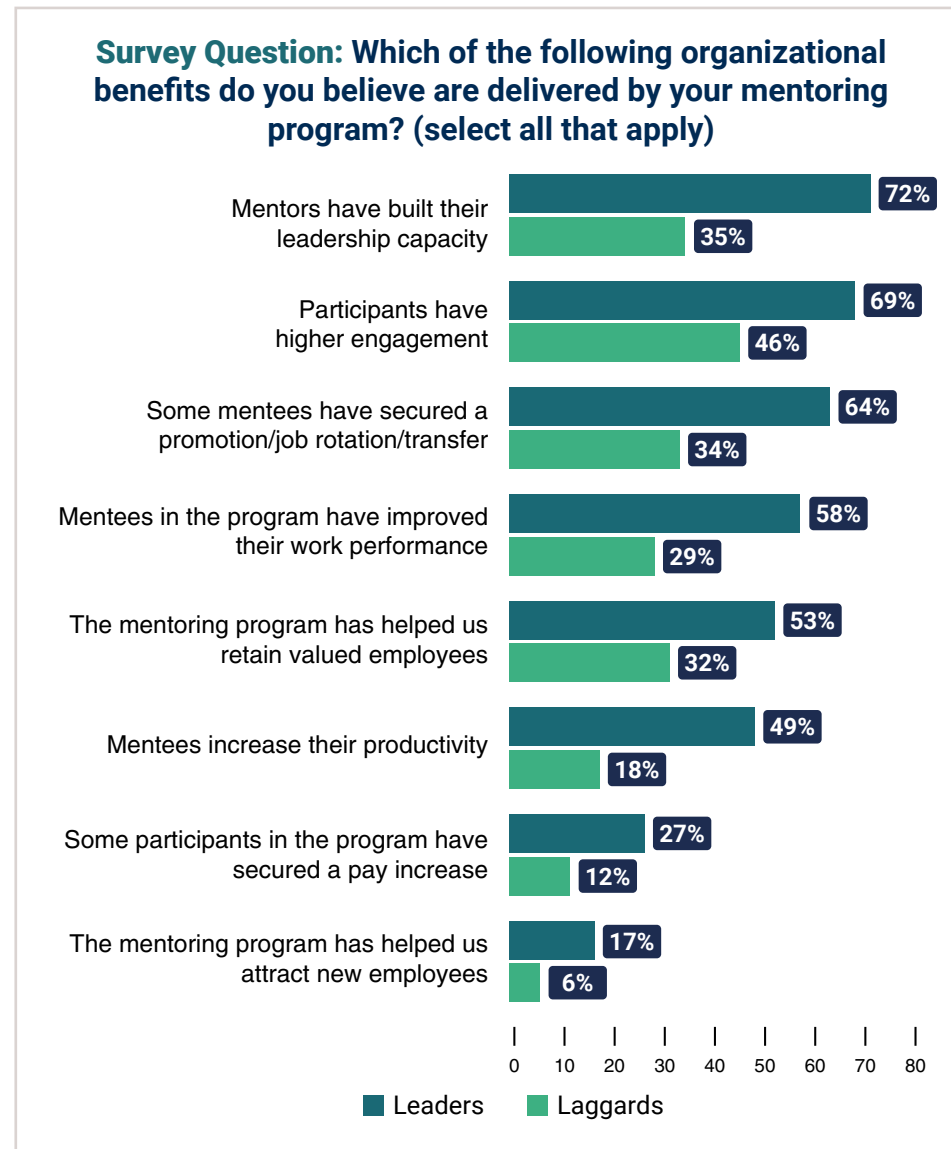
Survey Question: What instruments do you use to measure the success of your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

Instrument	Leader	Laggard
Verbal participant feedback	72%	42%
Participant surveys	72%	41%
Feedback from sponsors, trainers, program facilitators & managers	56%	17%
Line manager feedback	31%	22%
Employee data (retention, engagement)	35%	9%
Improved performance reviews	26%	17%
We do not measure success	2%	27%

Finding: Leaders are more likely to see benefits across the board

As we would expect, mentoring leaders are more likely to believe their mentoring programs are delivering significant benefits across the board. For example, they are over twice as likely to say mentees increase their productivity as a result of mentoring programs.

Survey Question: Which of the following organizational benefits do you believe are delivered by your mentoring program? (select all that apply)

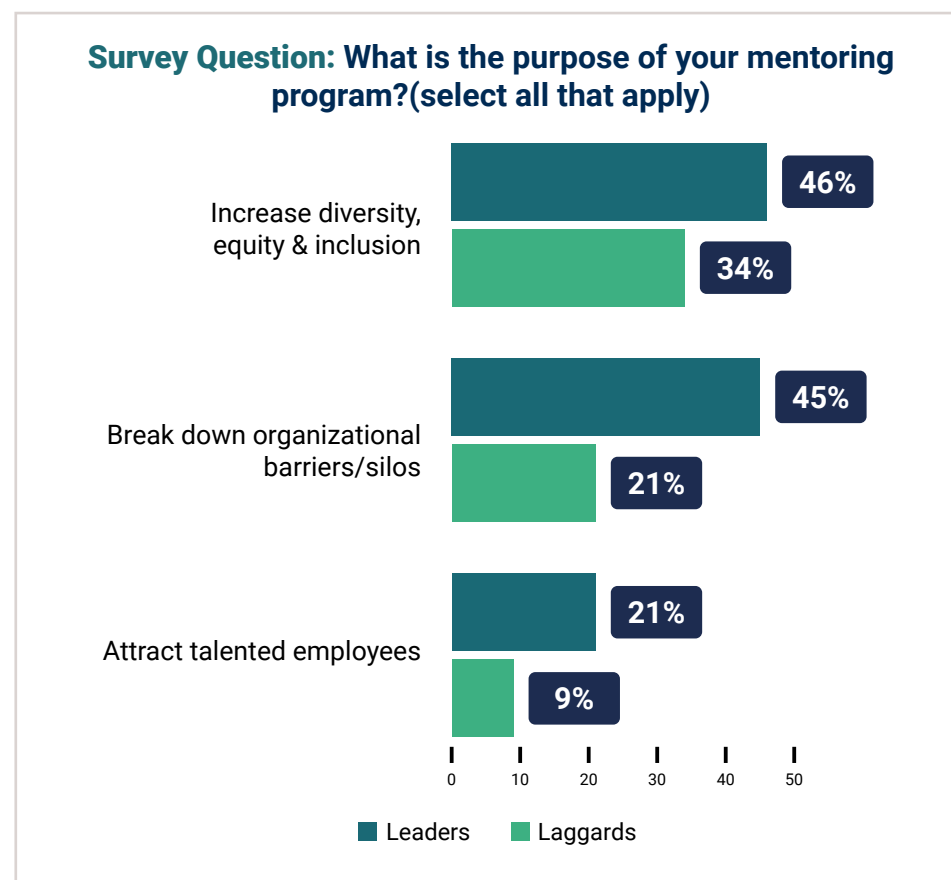| Benefit	Leaders	Laggards
Mentors have built their leadership capacity	72%	35%
Participants have higher engagement	69%	46%
Some mentees have secured a promotion/job rotation/transfer	64%	34%
Mentees in the program have improved their work performance	58%	29%
The mentoring program has helped us retain valued employees	53%	32%
Mentees increase their productivity	49%	18%
Some participants in the program have secured a pay increase	27%	12%
The mentoring program has helped us attract new employees	17%	6%

■ Leaders   ■ Laggards

Finding: Mentoring leaders are considerably more likely to say the purpose of their mentoring programs are to increase DEI, break down barriers, and attract quality candidates

When we asked about the purpose behind mentoring programs, we found that mentoring leaders and laggards tend to share similar goals for their programs. Yet, leaders are, as noted above, far more likely to see the actual benefits from those programs.

There are, however, three areas where their purposes are most likely to diverge. One area is DEI. Mentoring leaders are considerably more likely to say that increasing DEI is one of the purposes of their programs. Moreover, leaders are twice as likely to say their programs are designed to attract talented employees and break down barriers between organizational silos.

Survey Question: What is the purpose of your mentoring program?(select all that apply)

Purpose	Leaders	Laggards
Increase diversity, equity & inclusion	46%	34%
Break down organizational barriers/silos	45%	21%
Attract talented employees	21%	9%

■ Leaders ■ Laggards

Key Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, below are recommendations for how organizations can increase the impact of their mentoring programs.

Key recommendation **1**

Work with executives and stakeholders to create a clear purpose and business case. Leaders in this study were clear on program goals and measured against them. Mentoring can't be just a "nice to have" program. It must advance the organization's business objectives. This purpose—be it to build leadership capability, develop employee skill levels or increase employee engagement—must convince senior leadership that the program will make the organization more successful. Without leadership support, participation in these programs will likely falter.

Key recommendation **2**

Create programs with good resourcing. One of the factors that is key to the success of mentoring programs is the funding and resources provided by the management. Not only does this signal the commitment by management to the mentoring program, but also affects the willingness for mentors and mentees to spend time on the program. Further, good funding can allow for better training to be provided to both mentors and mentees, provide access to quality resource materials and software platform and even allow for continuous improvement of the program. As illustrated earlier, all these factors are critical to the success of the mentoring program.

Key recommendation **3**

Create a program with appropriate structure. Organizations with good mentoring programs are more likely to have formal elements associated with their programs. They are also more likely to have program managers associated with mentoring. Four out five respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with their program have an internal program manager, even if that person only devotes a few hours a week. A program manager can facilitate creation of high quality mentor-mentee pairs, communicate regularly with mentees and mentors, and intervene if there are problems. A well-designed formal mentoring program also makes sure that both mentors and mentees are prepared to engage and commit to the mentoring relationship. Even informal programs benefit from making high quality resources available to prepare people for their mentoring experience. Self-match programs need careful design so that pairs choose wisely and mentor selection does not become a popularity poll.

Key recommendation **4**

Use specific criteria to match mentors and mentees. The defined purpose of the mentoring program (driven by the business case) should shape the criteria used to pair mentees and mentors. Effective matching of the mentors with mentees is stated as one of the three most important factors of success according to survey participants. In fact, over half (56%) of organizations that are satisfied or very satisfied with their program cite the quality of mentor-mentee matching as a reason for their satisfaction.

Key recommendation 5

Offer more than the traditional mentoring model. The labor market today is in flux, and many employees are restless and unwilling to commit long-term to an organization. During the pandemic, most people worked from their homes and not in a traditional physical shared office space. This can cause employees to feel unanchored to the organization. Mentoring can be a powerful tool for engaging and retaining such employees. Further, the workplace today is diverse with people from different generations, cultures and races among a variety of other diversity elements. Mentoring creates a sense of belonging for all employees involved in the process. In addition to traditional senior-junior mentoring, peer mentors and group mentoring models are options. Mentoring can bring together diverse perspectives to build an overall organizational culture that supports learning and development.

Key recommendation 6

Provide training for mentors and mentees. Survey respondents list training as one of the most important success factors for a mentoring program. This suggests that employers should not skimp on the training of mentors and mentees. The participants in these programs should understand goals, processes and mentoring best practices. Training may also be able to increase participants' commitment to the process by revealing how seriously the organization takes mentoring.

Key recommendation 7

Measure results. The path to failure is often littered with unasked questions. What could have been done better? What can we do differently going forward? Are we getting a return on our investment in mentoring? Program evaluation surveys can help answer those questions and should be linked to the overall purpose and business objectives of the program. Metrics can, however, also go beyond surveys. For example, some organizations link mentoring programs to talent-management goals such as retention, engagement and performance.

Key recommendation 8

Use mentoring for reskilling. The traditional mentoring model puts a senior level mentor and a junior level mentee together. But today's workers sometimes want to learn new skills or even switch careers. How can you use your mentoring program to keep these employees within the organization? Mentoring can facilitate the retention of these employees by helping them understand the different options and career paths available to them within the same organization, informing them on variety of skill-building opportunities and allowing employees to grow laterally as well as vertically.

Key recommendation 9

Gain commitment upfront. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents say the most important factor for success is mentors' and mentees' willingness to spend time on the relationship. Full commitment from participants upfront is also cited as important. One way to achieve this is to build a formal application process that can evaluate this level of commitment. Program organizers must ensure that participants clearly understand the time commitment required, and without training or good program communications, this is often a forgotten step. Organizations must also build systems in place that allow mentors and mentees to take the time to connect. This might include briefings for managers of the program participants to ensure they encourage their people to make time for mentoring. Visible senior leader participation in mentoring programs sends a clear signal that mentoring is an expected requirement of all leaders and managers. Performance goals must be linked to the mentoring relationship so that employees understand that the mentoring process is a priority.

About Art of Mentoring

Servicing over 26 countries, the team at Art of Mentoring are thought-leaders in mentoring program design and delivery. Our subject matter experts draw on decades of mentoring program experience and set the benchmark for client support to achieve success.

We combine evidence-based mentoring expertise with the latest technological innovations to enable companies, membership and government organizations to develop impactful, scalable and cost-effective mentoring programs.

Embedded into Art of Mentoring software is our world-class training for mentors, mentees and program managers to maximize success. Completed by over 80,000 people globally, we know what it takes to create great mentors and effective mentoring relationships.

We are a proud member of Coaching & Mentoring International (CMI), a global network of mentoring, coaching and developmental dialogue specialists, some of whom appear regularly as a part of our popular webinar series. We contributed to the development of the International Standards for Mentoring and Coaching Programmes (ISMCP, championed by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council). We are also proud partners of the Center for Mentoring Excellence based in Seattle.

Visit us at **www.artofmentoring.net**

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