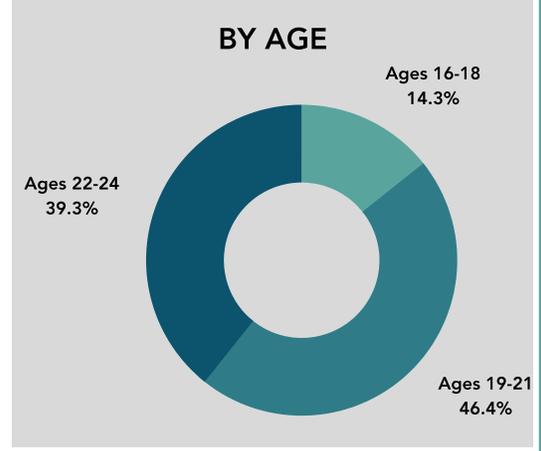
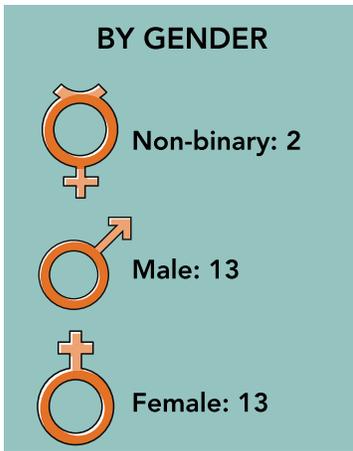


A Summary: How Young Adults View Social Connectedness and Access Resources



what we've learned about social connectedness

In our interviews with 28 young adults between the ages of 16 and 24, we gained valuable insight into how young adults connect to each other and how they reach out to others when needing help or support.

We found that young adults had both virtual and in-person connections. For some, their virtual relationships were where they could be more honest with one another. For others, in-person interactions felt more intimate and "real." Most agreed that there was more control over what was shared online, which was viewed as both a positive and a negative. Several mentioned that they missed non-verbal cues in their online relationships.

Additionally, participants made distinctions between passive online interactions (i.e., scrolling through Instagram) and more active online interactions (i.e., discussions on Discord).



The COVID-19 pandemic appeared to have made it more difficult to connect to new people or reach out in times of need. It was also noted how much some young people valued and missed in-person relationships.



what do you get out of your relationships?

Young adults received many different things from their relationships with peers and members of their support networks. However, the most frequently mentioned ones were related to emotional support and friendship.

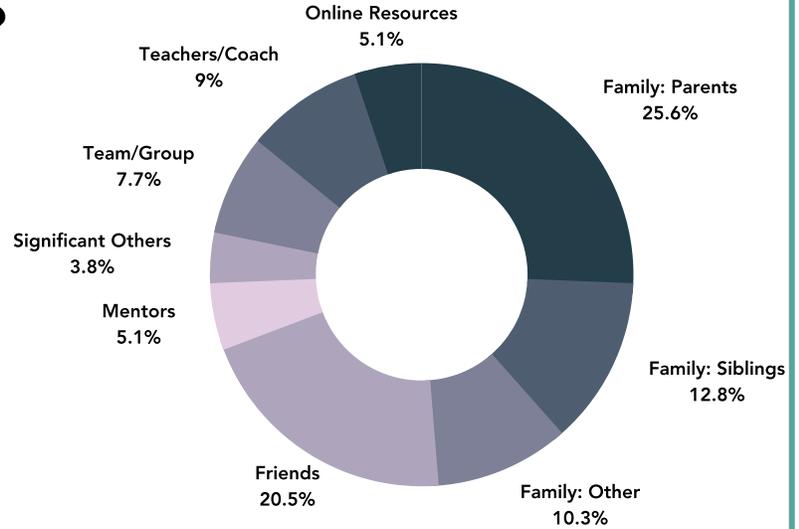
Ensuring that young adults' support networks meet all their needs, not just their emotional support needs, is important.

A Summary: How Young Adults View Social Connectedness and Access Resources

who is in your support network?

Young adults frequently described their social support networks as filled with family members, and friends. Mentors, teachers, and coaches were less frequently mentioned.

However, young adults who needed more out of their support networks often indicated that help with career, school, and life choices weren't currently being met by their support networks, a role that more teachers and mentors (including peer mentors) could fill.



what makes you more likely to accept help or resources?

Trust appears to be a key factor in accepting help or resources. The majority of participants expressed that they are more likely to accept support from people who they view as similar to themselves or from other trustworthy resources.

Younger teens were more guarded about the topics they shared with their support system, but this guardedness subsided with the older youth group. Overall, young adults wanted more genuine relationships in which they were cared for and listened to.

why does it matter?

During this time in their lives, young adults experience many different kinds of transitions as well as relationship conflicts and changes while also discovering their identities and exploring career and educational paths. Having people and organizations able to help them navigate those transitions without judgment while respecting their autonomy and acknowledging their strengths is vital to young people feeling comfortable reaching out and accepting help and support.

POTENTIAL WAYS YOUNG ADULTS ACCESS RESOURCES



In-person interactions



Informal (unvetted) sources of info



Social media



Web-based



From the community

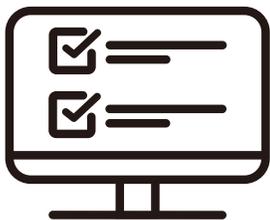


Phone/text/direct message

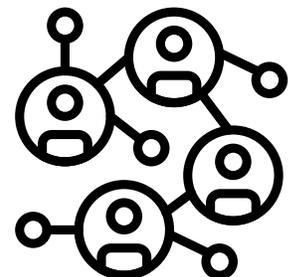


Newspaper/TV

what's next??



This information will help develop a survey tool that young adults can use to understand their current support network and connect them to valuable resources. Both the tool and the data will be shared with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which focuses on the futures of young adults by working to improve their educational, economic, health, and social outcomes.



find out more:

<https://visiblenetworklabs.com/social-support-research-fellowship/>