Youth Mentoring Sector Insights

NZ Youth Mentoring Network

OCTOBER 2025

Contents

Executive summary

This report provides a view of the youth mentoring sector in New Zealand, drawing on academic research, Statements of Service Performance (SSPs) from charities in the NZ Youth Mentoring Network, and social return on investment (SROI) analyses of programmes analysed by ImpactLab. Together, these perspectives offer both a network-level landscape view and programme-level insights into the scale and impact of youth mentoring in Aotearoa.

While the organisations that engaged with the Network invested $544m across youth mentoring and other services, only 30% of the charities explicitly reported on mentoring in their SSPs, with limited data available to understand their impact. Analysing the 14 initiatives that had programme level data available provides a clearer picture of how mentoring impacts New Zealand's youth. Serving 3,600+ participants, these programmes generated over $27m in social value, driven largely by improvements in education and wellbeing, and reduced risky behaviours.

Together, these findings highlight both the strengths and the gaps in the current evidence base. Where evidence is available, youth mentoring demonstrates strong potential to deliver significant and lasting benefits for young people and society. However, the sector's data is fragmented, with significant variability in what organisations collect and report. This means we have only a partial view of the true scale, reach, and outcomes of youth mentoring in New Zealand.

What is clear is the opportunity: with stronger and more consistent data, the sector can build a deeper, more comprehensive picture of its impact. This would help support providers to demonstrate value, attract investment, and promote best practice in the industry. It would also help connect the work being done by service providers with the tangible difference youth mentoring makes in the lives of young people.

The analysis reinforces the importance of the role organisations such as the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network have in continuing to strengthen and coordinate a sector-wide view. By connecting providers, building capability, and advocating for consistent measurement, the Network can help ensure youth mentoring is recognised as a critical contributor to positive youth development in New Zealand.

This report is an early but important step in painting that picture. It demonstrates the impact youth mentoring already achieves, while pointing to the significant potential that can be unlocked through more robust data and collective action.

ImpactLab

The ImpactLab Team

About us

 New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network

NZ Youth Mentoring Network provides networking, training, and support for hundreds of organisations that work with youth, to help foster intentional youth mentoring in Aotearoa.

 ImpactLab

Impact Lab works with charities and community organisations, connecting decision-makers with trusted information they can use to help them to know, show, and grow their impact.

Acknowledgements

1. Setting the scene
A brief introduction

Report background:
Grounds this Sector Analysis report within the broader landscape of the youth mentoring sector and the questions it seeks to answer.

Defining youth mentoring:
Outlines of how youth mentoring is defined in the literature, providing a shared understanding of the scope this analysis is focused on.

The New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network:
Introduces the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network, their role in the youth mentoring sector, and their purpose for commissioning this report.

The data sources:
Explains the three key data sources underpinning the analysis in this report, including what they are, how they have been used, and their limitations.

Report background

The New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network partnered with ImpactLab to demonstrate the impact of the youth mentoring sector. While there are strong anecdotes of impact from those who deliver and receive youth mentoring, there is a lack of objective data to quantify these experiences, particularly at a whole-of-sector level. This report helps to address this gap, creating a bird's eye view of the wider sector by illustrating key evidence and data which tell the story of the impact of youth mentoring.

In New Zealand, many youth mentoring providers are small organisations with limited data available, making it difficult to answer questions around the size and scale of the sector, what outcomes they help drive for young people, and what their wider story of impact is. Answering these questions is important to ensure ongoing support for the sector, encourage mentor volunteering, and, most crucially, identify and promote best practice to providers.

This report aims to address these questions, drawing on **3 sources of evidence or data.**

Academic Evidence	**Statement of Service Performance (SSP)**	**GoodMeasure Programme Data**
A synthesis of the global and New Zealand evidence base on youth mentoring	Self-reported organisation performance data from the Charities Register	Aggregated, quantifiable social impact data from 13 participating organisations

Each of these sources approaches youth mentoring through a different lens. They each focus on their own layer of youth mentoring, have differing levels of data availability, and their own story to tell.

The analysis in this report synthesises these three data sources to paint a comprehensive picture of what is known about New Zealand's youth mentoring sector, while also highlighting where the knowledge gaps lie. In doing so, it supports the goals of strengthening the case for investment in the youth mentoring sector, giving mentor providers the confidence to scale their efforts, and inspiring broader participation to amplify youth mentoring nationwide.

The New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network

The NZ Youth Mentoring Network is a charitable trust that serves as the national hub for New Zealand's youth mentoring sector. They deliver training, and they support youth mentoring providers by facilitating connections, advocacy, professional development, and research. The Network is not a membership organisation, a decision made very early in its formation with the intention of being as inclusive as possible and removing any barriers for organisations, both small and large, to engage.

The Network is guided by the principle that providing young people with intentional and structured support can help them to establish a sense of identity, develop positive aspirations for their future, and flourish. As opportunities for informal community mentoring have declined, structured and purposeful youth mentoring programmes have arisen to provide young people with these connections. The Network acts as a bridge between these services, seeking to uplift the sector as a whole.

The NZ Youth Mentoring Network are directed by four strategic goals: Strengthen Networks, by fostering connections between mentoring providers; Build Capacity, through training and developing providers and promoting youth participation; Share Resources, including those published by the Network and others; and Provide Advocacy, through specialised advice, communicating evidence, and informing the community.

This sector analysis report is just one of many initiatives the Network has taken to achieve their vision, that youth mentoring in New Zealand is culturally located, informed by best practice and is strong, effective and safe. To the best of the NZ Youth Mentoring Network's and ImpactLab's knowledge, this is the first analysis of its kind, drawing on a range of data sources to build a sector-level view of the scope and scale of youth mentorings' impact in New Zealand. It therefore represents an important step in the ongoing journey of strengthening and empowering New Zealand's youth mentoring sector.

Youth mentoring definition

"Youth Mentoring is generally defined as a supportive relationship between a young person and an older and more experienced adult, but within this there are several models that describe that relationship: some by the outcomes it produces, some by the interpersonal dynamics, and some in terms of equity. We take a fairly inclusive view of youth mentoring in Aotearoa recognising that, on top of academic definitions from overseas, we have several cultural models of mentoring that are unique to us … What different models of mentoring have in common is a focus on the growth and wellbeing of the young person, and recognition of their voice and intrinsic strengths."

- James McGoram, General Manager New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network

Defining youth mentoring

Youth mentoring interventions nurture the growth, wellbeing, and strengths of young people. They centre on a supportive relationship between a young person - the mentee - and an older, more experienced guide or adviser - the mentor. These interventions can take diverse forms depending on cultural context, goals, and setting, but they are all built on the same foundations: the mentee has a need or aspiration which the mentor can help them achieve through their skills and resources.

Mentoring is a developmental relationship which supports personal and vocational growth in respect of different goals (Dominguez & Kochan 2020). Traditionally, mentoring is viewed as a dyadic relationship (Hackman & Malin 2020) between a mentor, or a person possessing experience relevant to the mentees' goals, and the mentee, who receives guidance and support towards these goals (DuBois et al 2011, Koven 2024). However, mentoring can take many forms.

Mentoring may be formal or informal, group or individual, and can take place across highly varied settings, such as academia, healthcare, education, justice, community, and professional vocations (Bhatti et al 2020; Koven 2021). How mentoring is deployed across different domains highlights its diversity and flexibility. For example, mentoring in academic settings typically focuses on structured activities, directivity, and goal-setting to improve definite academic outcomes (Haqqee et al 2020; Larose et al 2010). In contrast, mentoring for youth in the justice system may focus on improving self-efficacy, enhancing socioemotional skills, building social capital and developing life skills (Ryan 2025; Tolan et al 2013). While both are mentoring, the definitions, models and forms of the mentoring are very different.

Youth mentoring applies this relational approach to personal development and growth to young people. Youth mentoring interventions typically target children and adolescents aged between 5-25 with a potential risk for poor outcomes in domains like academics, risk-taking behaviours, and health (DuBois et al 2011, Farruggia et al 2010, Raposa et al 2019), however all youth, regardless of their potential risks or background, can experience positive outcomes from supportive, high-quality mentoring relationships (Goldner & Ben-Eliyahu 2021; Van Dam et al 2018).

Often, mentors are volunteers from the community who have some experience or expertise relevant to the young persons' goals or needs. They supplement the natural mentors that youths may have in their familial relationships, and can deliver benefits not found in these spaces. For example, youth mentors can support young people as they build their autonomy and independence, provide different perspectives and kinds of role-modelling, or provide "bridging" social capital by connecting youths to opportunities that their families may not have access to or knowledge of (Van Dam et al 2018). Through these structured, trusting and role-modeling bonds, mentors help mentees to navigate life's challenges and achieve their aspirations.

Because of its flexibility and cost-effectiveness, youth mentoring has become a popular intervention strategy (DuBois et al 2011). Youth mentoring interventions can take many different formats (group mentoring, one-on-one mentoring, peer mentoring, etc.), in a variety of settings (schools, youth centres, marae, community-based, virtual, etc.), in pursuit of diverse goals (educational or vocational, positive role-modelling, justice-based, behavioural, etc.). Regardless of how a programme is designed, however, all youth mentoring interventions draw on the importance of trusting, reliable, and reciprocal relationships for young people.

The data sources

This analysis draws on three distinct sources of data and evidence: academic evidence, Statement of Service Performance data (SSP) and GoodMeasure programme data. Individually, these data sources only tell a snapshot of the larger impact story. Combining these sources and synthesising their insights allows a more robust and comprehensive view of the impact of youth mentoring to be built.

Academic evidence

A synthesis of the global and New Zealand evidence base on youth mentoring

There is a robust body of academic literature exploring the impact of youth mentoring on diverse outcomes, such as psychosocial wellbeing, behavioural outcomes, and academic achievement. This evidence base demonstrates the role that youth mentoring can play in promoting positive youth development, while also providing insight into the variables that can impact the realisation of positive outcomes, such as intervention length, strength and stability of mentoring relationships, or programme design and participant targeting.

While this evidence base is strong, most studies are conducted on programmes delivered internationally, with relatively few published studies on programmes delivered in New Zealand. This limitation does require a cautious approach when applying international studies to the sociocultural landscape of New Zealand, and more home-grown studies would help to strengthen the application of evidence to programme design and delivery.

Insights from the academic evidence base have been integrated throughout this report to supplement and support key data analyses. These research insights help to inform where New Zealand's youth mentoring sector is aligned with identified best practice, as well as areas where service improvements, or refinements in approach or data collection, may enhance the sector's impact.

Statement of Service Performance (SSP)

Self-reported organisation performance data from the Charities Services Register

Statements of Service Performance (SSPs) contain, among other things, measurable data around the work a charity does. SSP data contains the most robust available dataset on New Zealand's youth mentoring interventions. NZ Youth Mentoring Network supplied ImpactLab with a list of youth mentoring organisations that have engaged with the network. These SSPs were accessed through the Charities Register, analysed to extract measurable metrics in the form of numbers and their related descriptions, and categorised. Financial and employee/volunteer information was extracted from the Charities Register via an application programme interface (API) and categorised.

This report has extracted quantitative SSP data from relevant organisations for the purposes of:
- Showing the scale of New Zealand's youth mentoring sector
- Aggregating data on interventions identified as youth mentoring
- Aggregating data on interventions which have not explicitly been identified as youth mentoring, but which deliver activities that overlap with youth mentoring.

SSP reporting requirements are flexible, designed to meet the data capabilities of diverse charities. The way that data is captured and presented in an SSP is highly variable, depending on the kinds of activities an organisation delivers and their data availability, presenting some limitations for analysis.

From a list of charities provided by the NZ Youth Mentoring Network, 92 had extractable data available in the Charities Register and measurable outputs included in what they reported. Of those 92 charities, 29 reported on metrics relating specifically to youth mentoring, which is the focal point of this analysis. The other 63 either reported on activities to do with either youth or mentoring, but not both, or other kinds of activities such as wider whānau support and health services.

Where possible, these numbers are reported separately but have been intentionally included in our analysis to help paint a picture of the broader impact of the sector.
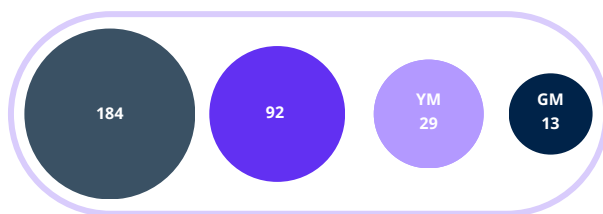
184 organisations engaged with the NZ Youth Mentoring Network

92 with extractable data & measurable outputs

29 reported on youth mentoring specific data

13 organisations with GoodMeasure impact analysis

GoodMeasure Programme Data

Aggregated, quantifiable social impact data from 13 participating youth mentoring providers

GoodMeasure is ImpactLab's flagship social return on investment (SROI) analysis tool. It combines provider data, including data on participants and service delivery, with public data and academic evidence to estimate the social value that a programme achieves for its participants and its SROI.

GoodMeasure is a standardised yet adaptable toolkit that delivers comparable metrics through a rigorous methodology. This report includes an aggregate analysis of the GoodMeasure metrics from 14 youth mentoring programmes delivered by 13 organisations, most of which regularly engage with the NZ Youth Mentoring Network. While this represents only a small sample of all youth mentoring interventions delivered across New Zealand, the analysis provides a detailed snapshot into programme delivery and outcomes.

GoodMeasure analyses are limited by data availability, including that of the providers. A key benefit of the GoodMeasure process is how it helps organisations to understand and evaluate their data, and identify ways which data collection may be strengthened. The metrics analysed in this report reflect a baseline of value, which may be improved with enhanced data collection.

2. Understanding the NZ Youth Mentoring Network
A data snapshot

Scale of Youth Mentoring in New Zealand:
Quantifiable metrics of the organisations identified, using data available to understand the scale of youth mentoring.

Youth Mentoring Snapshot:
A focus on organisations that reported youth mentoring metrics to understand the impact of mentoring on New Zealand's youth.

Potential outcomes:
Some of the possible benefits that people may receive from youth mentoring based on analysis of contextual information.

Scale of Youth Mentoring in New Zealand

Understanding the scale and nature of organisations that engage with the NZ Youth Mentoring Network provides an initial view of how youth mentoring is delivered in New Zealand, alongside the many other services these organisations may provide.
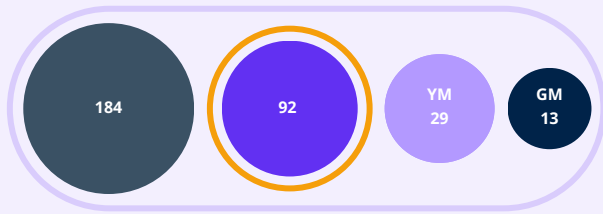

The size of the Network

More than half the organisations in the network invested between $125k-$2m in their communities per year (tier 3 charities), with only three investing more than $30m (tier 1 charities) and only one less than $125k (tier 4 charities).

While the mid sized tiers 2 & 3 charities are spread proportionally across the regions, the larger organisations operate only in the Central and South Island regions. As a result, the total investment into the Central and South Island regions outstrips the number of organisations operating there.

Although organisations operating nationally make up the second largest group, they received the lowest investment.
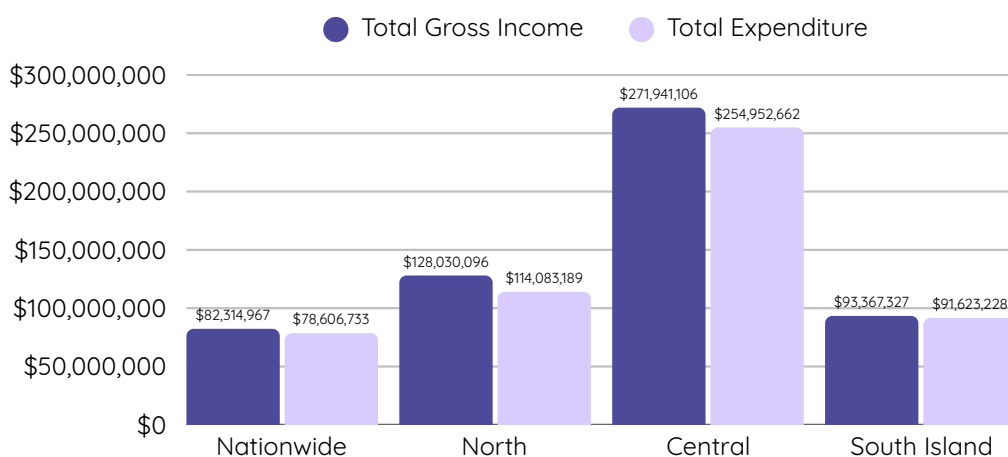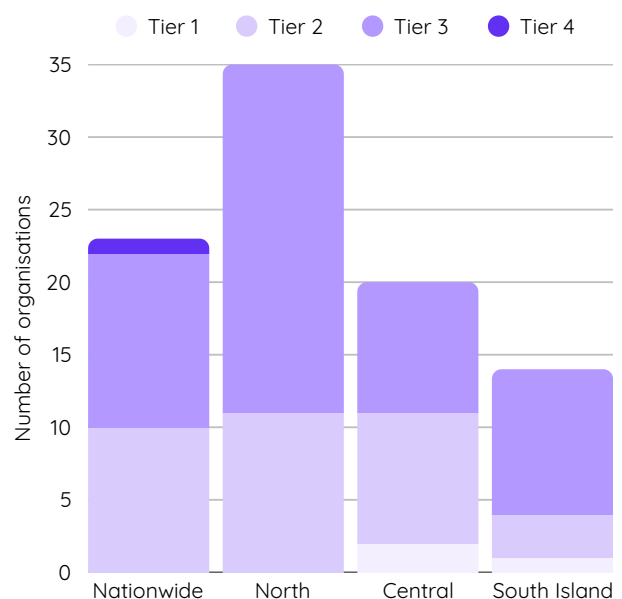
$544m
Total expenditure

~2%
of total charity sector expenditure

Organisations have been grouped into the following regions:
- Nationwide - operating across all or most of New Zealand
- North - Northland, Auckland
- Central - Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu-Wanganui, Wellington
- South - Nelson, Marlborough, Tasman, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, Southern, Chatham Islands

Some organisations may overlap with other regions and have been included in their main area of operations.

Scale of Youth Mentoring in New Zealand

Who delivers youth mentoring

While the organisations operating nationally received the lowest investment, they were able to draw on a significant volunteer base to support their paid staff.

Volunteering is a critical driver that can lower costs, embed programmes within their communities and provide diverse skills and perspectives. However, without robust training and support, relying on volunteer driven delivery can also come with challenges around consistency, reliability and the quality of service delivery. Note: The number of volunteers are based on the average number per week whereas staff numbers are reported as annual totals.
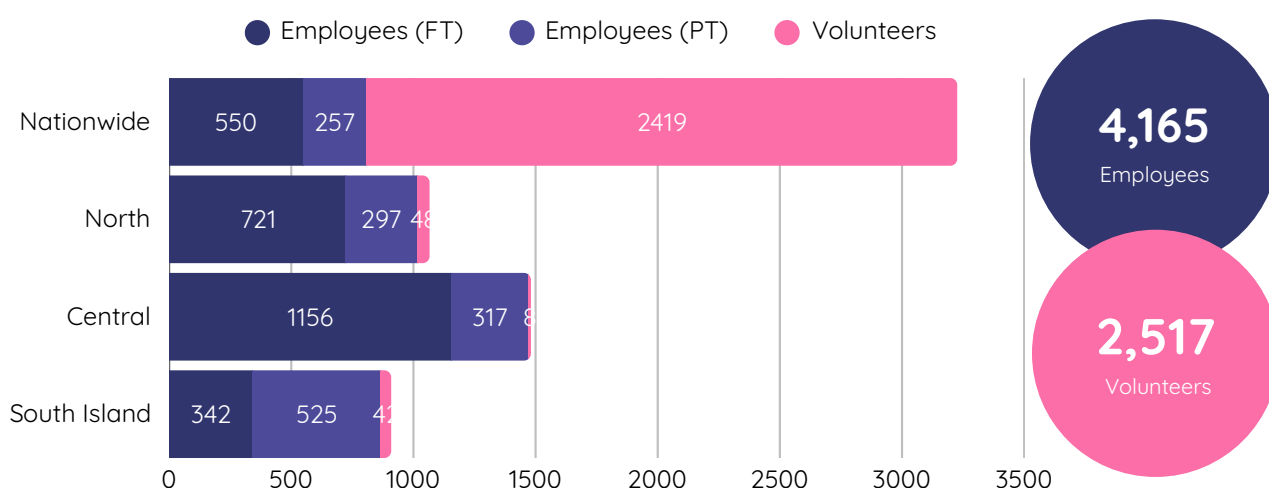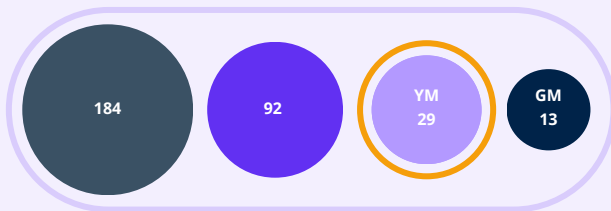

Reach of the Network

Reach was more likely to be reported by 'individuals', where each individual mentee or mentor is captured just once, rather than 'events', which captures the total number of consultations, sessions, or referrals held.
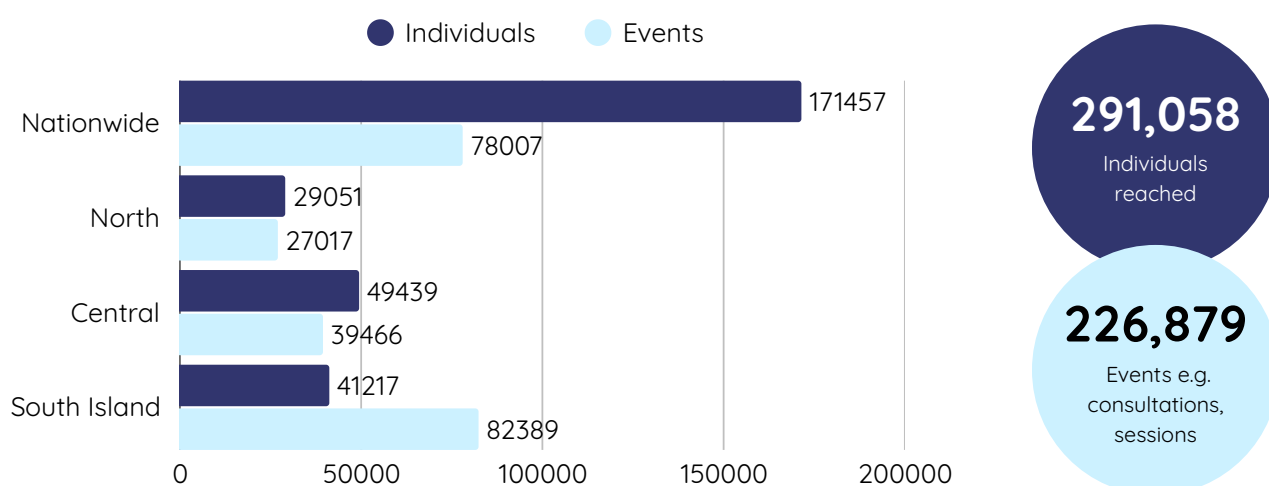
Some organisations report on just one of these metrics, where others report on both, or neither. This variability in reporting can make it difficult to build a comprehensive view of the true scale of the population reached by the organisations that are engaged with the Network. However, by considering both events and individuals, the available data indicates that the organisations operating nationwide have the broadest reach, followed by the South Island region.

Youth mentoring snapshot

Some of the charities engaged with the NZ Youth Mentoring Network reported specifically on youth mentoring in their SSP. Focusing on the mentoring-specific data provides a better picture of the impact that youth mentoring can have in New Zealand, outside of the many other services these organisations may provide.
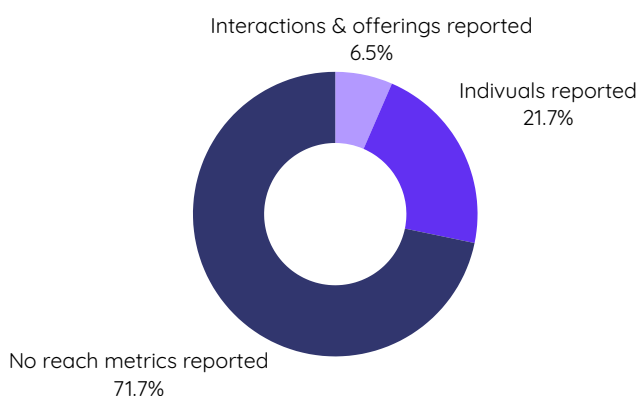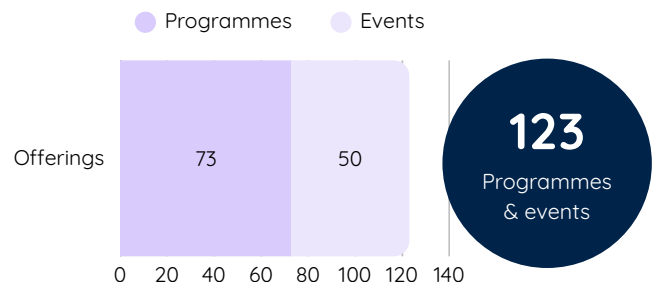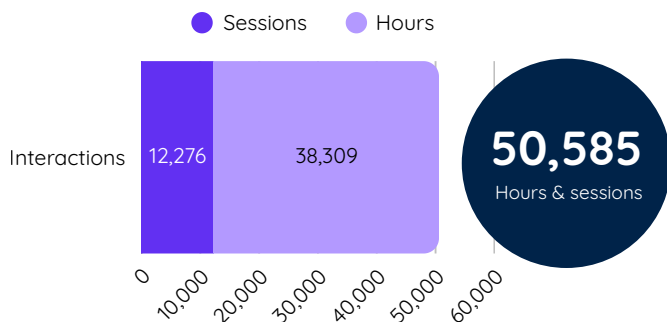

184   92   YM 29   GM 13

Mentoring reach

20 organisations engaged with the Network reported on the number of mentees they supported.

Together, they reached a total of 3,707 young people, averaging 185 young people supported through mentoring per organisation. Reporting on mentors is less common, with only 3 organisations counting the number of mentors they engaged with. Between them, they worked with 134 mentors, an average of 45 per organisation.

A further 4 organisations reported only on their mentoring offerings and 2 reported only on interactions, without specifying how many individuals they reached.

Direct support   Referral

3,069

3,707 Mentees

Mentees   Mentors

Sessions   Hours

Interactions   12,276   38,309

50,585 Hours & sessions

Programmes   Events

Offerings   73   50

123 Programmes & events

Interactions & offerings reported
6.5%

Indivuals reported
21.7%

No reach metrics reported
71.7%

Insight:

Capturing both how young people are supported as well as the number of individuals across the sector can provide a better view of the reach of youth mentoring in New Zealand. However, the limited data provides only a snapshot of the true reach of the sector.

With more organisations reporting on metrics like these, the true impact of youth mentoring can be better demonstrated.
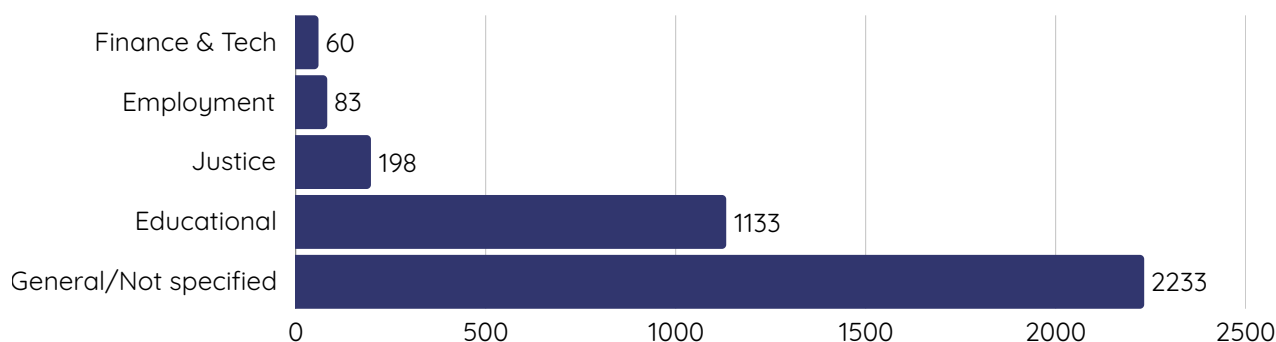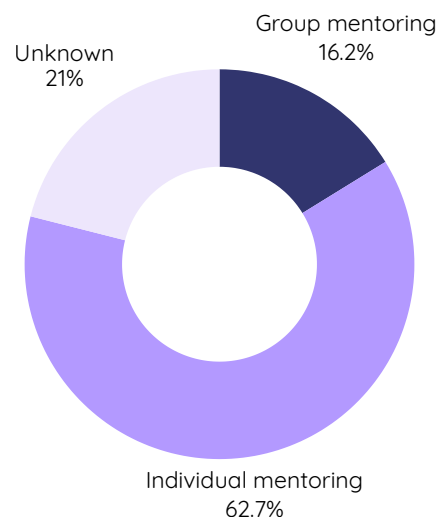
Youth mentoring snapshot

How young people are supported

While most of the mentees received individual support, it's not uncommon that mentoring is offered in group settings.

The type of supports delivered range from a broad focus on general wellbeing to supporting young people with specific life challenges, such as academic performance, employment readiness or offender rehabilitation. 40% of mentees received mentoring that had a specific focus beyond their overall wellbeing, with majority of them focused on education.

Group mentoring
16.2%

Unknown
21%

Individual mentoring
62.7%

Category	Value
Finance & Tech	60
Employment	83
Justice	198
Educational	1133
General/Not specified	2233

Case study: Using data to show impact

One organisation reported on the outcomes resulting from their programmes, quantifiably demonstrating the impact and flow-on effects of the work they do. They reported on:

- 5 tailored programmes offering different types of youth mentoring across areas of employment or youth justice support
- Breakdown of other services offered and who had what combination e.g. counsellor, social worker, youth mentor, or all three across each of the programmes.
- What each participant did or received, including individualised employment plans or mentor allocations.
- The number of young offenders who did not reoffend after engaging with their mentoring programme.

Capturing who they reached, what participants engaged in and what outcomes participants achieved after leaving the programme demonstrates how youth mentoring can impact young people in New Zealand.

210
participants were allocated a youth mentor

23
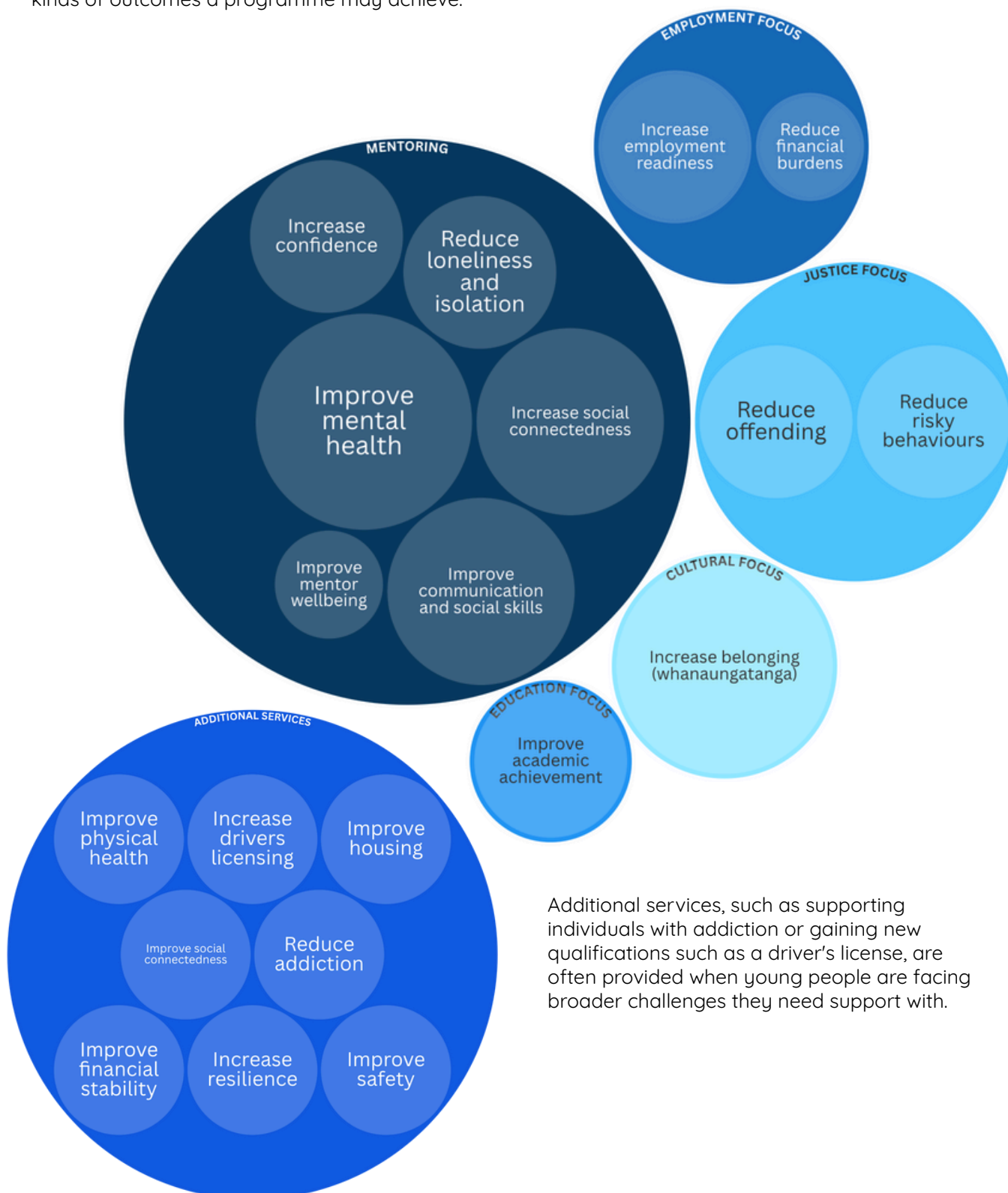individualised employment plans made for rangatahi

163/166
young offenders went on to not re-offend after mentoring

Potential outcomes

While there was limited outcomes data reported through SSP, combining the available data with the academic research can indicate some of the possible benefits people may receive from participating in youth mentoring.

Impact can be broad and varied based on who the organisation works with and what kinds of services they provide. Understanding what kind of the support is provided alongside mentoring and whether mentoring has a particular focus alongside improving general wellbeing can be a first indicator of the kinds of outcomes a programme may achieve.

Additional services, such as supporting individuals with addiction or gaining new qualifications such as a driver's license, are often provided when young people are facing broader challenges they need support with.

3. The impact of youth mentoring

Insights from GoodMeasure analyses of youth mentoring programmes in NZ

Background and limitations:
How the sample for this analysis was selected and key limitations to consider when analysing and comparing social interventions.

Intervention key characteristics:
Information around the programmes and organisations across the sample outlining how youth mentoring is being delivered.

Who they serve:
Understanding who is being supported by youth mentoring and what challenges they face.

How they generate impact:
Aggregate analysis around the outcomes and social value being created by youth mentoring and the cost it takes to deliver these programmes.

The impact of youth mentoring

This section presents aggregated, anonymised data and insights from ImpactLab's GoodMeasure SROI analyses of a small sample of youth mentoring programmes in New Zealand. With permission from these organisations to share their information in aggregate, this analysis offers a clear and detailed view of the impact these programmes create. Although the sample is limited, SROI analysis provides a rigorous, in-depth understanding of the impact of youth mentoring in New Zealand and demonstrates the value of robust data collection.

The aggregated data is from individual SROI analyses conducted on **14 youth mentoring programmes* across 13 organisations**. These organisations represent 7% of the known organisations in the youth mentoring sector in New Zealand (using NZYMN size as a proxy). Note: Not all of the organisations in the sample engage with the NZ Youth Mentoring Network.

Youth mentoring sector in New Zealand
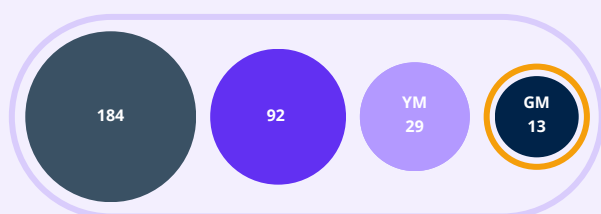
13 organisations in scope that have done a GoodMeasure SROI analysis of their youth mentoring programme.

Limitations and considerations

As articulated above, the data in this section comes from a small sample of organisations delivering youth mentoring programmes. While not representative of the whole sector, the insights provide a useful, high-level view that can guide further exploration. Please keep in mind the following limitations and considerations:

- Themes in this section are based on observed correlations and provide broad conclusions rather than tight causative claims.
- Programme intervention practices are determined via narrative and operational data provided by an organisation. It does not include observation of programmes, and as such does not capture variation in programme practice (e.g. workforce skill or programme fidelity across locations).
- Comparisons should be considered indicative only, as metrics can be influenced by a variety of factors, including data quality or scoping decisions.
- Many aspects of social impact cannot appropriately be quantified in dollar terms, and SROI findings should be considered alongside other important sources of information.
- Estimates have varying confidence levels due to the differing quality and availability of data inputs. The GoodMeasure methodology takes an approach of using the data that is available in order to support ongoing data improvement.

*Selection for inclusion in the sample was based on ImpactLab's internal definition of mentoring as an intervention, which considers interventions that promote positive youth development through relationships with a mentor figure. Mentoring interventions can take place in 1:1 relationships, or in group relationships, often involve fostering long-term relationships lasting >6 months, and often target youths experiencing need or vulnerability in a particular area, such as education, and experience of traumatic events.
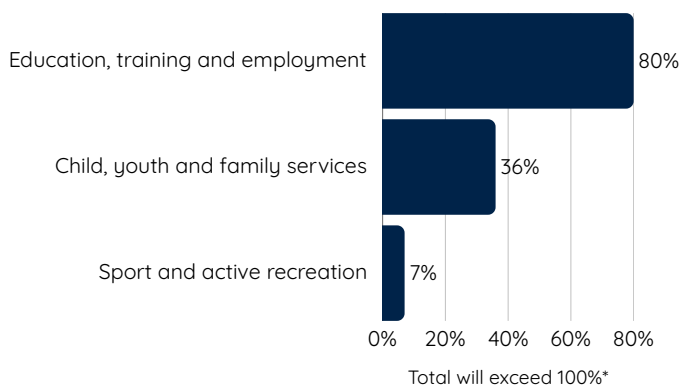
Intervention key characteristics

Organisations that deliver youth mentoring are far from a monolith — they vary widely in what they do and how they do it. This section highlights the sectors they operate in and the diverse ways in which they deliver youth mentoring programmes.

Diversity of organisations

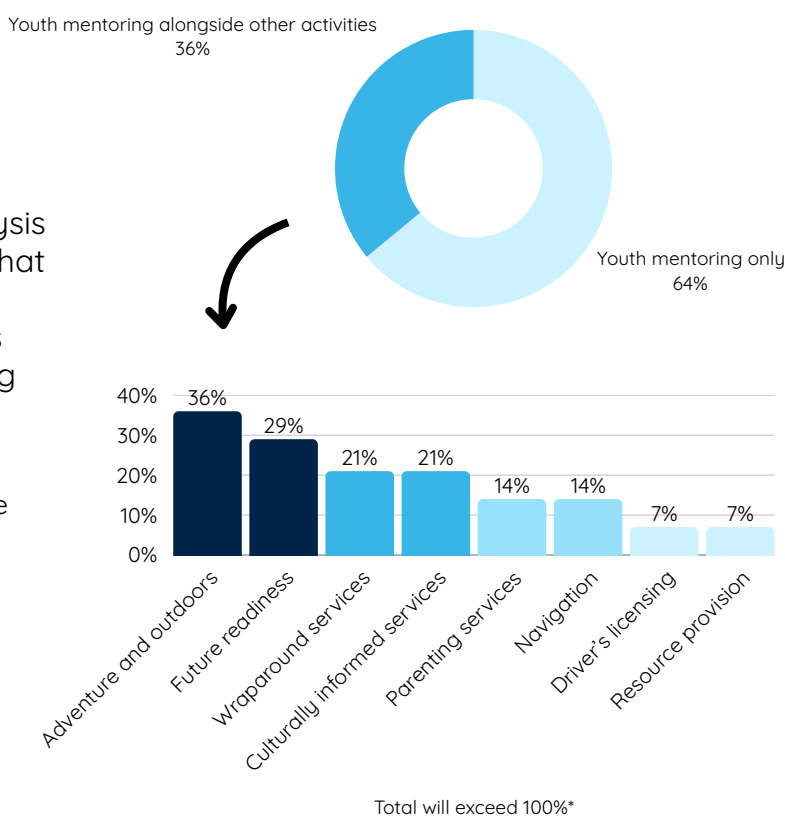Programmes involving youth mentoring are delivered by organisations from a range of sectors.

While you might expect most youth mentoring programmes to fall under 'Child, youth, and family services' the majority in this sample actually sit within the 'Education, training and employment'.

Education, training and employment — 80%
Child, youth and family services — 36%
Sport and active recreation — 7%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Total will exceed 100%*

Youth mentoring alongside other activities
36%

Approaches to delivery

64% of interventions in this analysis are delivered by organisations that provide youth mentoring as a stand-alone programme, versus 36% that deliver youth mentoring alongside other activities.

There is significant variety among the additional supports provided alongside mentoring, highlighting the diverse ways mentoring is delivered. Activities that focus on preparing youth for future success (such as education) or addressing their wider needs were commonly combined with mentoring.

Youth mentoring only
64%

Adventure and outdoors — 36%
Future readiness — 29%
Wraparound services — 21%
Culturally informed services — 21%
Parenting services — 14%
Navigation — 14%
Driver's licensing — 7%
Resource provision — 7%

Total will exceed 100%*

Why this matters

Mentoring programmes focused on vocational or educational outcomes have been found to be more effective when incorporating psychological and interpersonal goals (Farruggia et al 2011; Tolan et al 2013). However, mentoring programmes that focus on improving educational achievement in New Zealand can improve psychological measures without improving academic performance (Irving, Moore & Hamilton, 2003). This finding indicates that mentoring can provide benefits even if academic goals are not met, but also that meeting academic goals requires direct, targeted support.
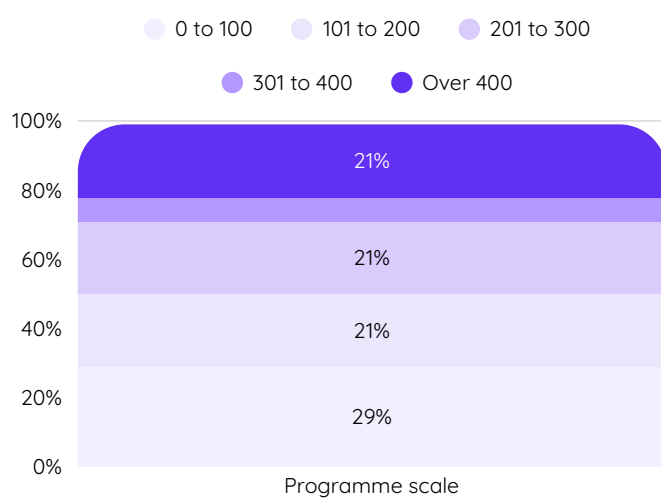
Intervention key characteristics

Of the 3,500+ participants reached by the youth mentoring programmes in scope, 88% engaged meaningfully, speaking to the effectiveness of the programmes.

Programme size

In a one-year period, the 14 youth mentoring programmes in this sample reached over 3,500+ people.

3,648
Total participants reached by these programmes

Legend:
- 0 to 100
- 101 to 200
- 201 to 300
- 301 to 400
- Over 400

Programme scale	
21%	(Over 400)
21%	
21%	
21%	
29%	

Programmes varied significantly in the scale of their reach, ranging from 23 to 906 participants.

Meaningful engagement

Within these programmes, **88%** of participants engaged meaningfully and did not exit early.

Meaningful engagement indicates whether or not a mentee has engaged long enough to benefit from a youth mentoring programme - it's the inverse of what may be thought of as an early exit.

Why this matters

A strong, secure relationship between mentor and mentee is central to the effectiveness of mentoring interventions. Mentoring relationships that end prematurely may have negative results for youthful mentees (Grossman & Rhodes 2002) and be a reason why some mentoring programmes fail to achieve their objectives or produce unintended negative effects (Rodriguez-Planas 2014). Various reasons have been suggested for why this occurs, including unfulfilled expectations (Goldner & Mayseless 2009), abandonment (Spencer et al 2014) or rejection (Grossman & Rhodes 2002).

Foreknowledge and expectation of mentor relationships ending can help to reduce these potential negative results (DeWit et al 2016). Further, matching mentor and mentee relationships based on common interests and goals can help to ensure the development of a genuine, mutually beneficial relationship (Raposa et al 2018).
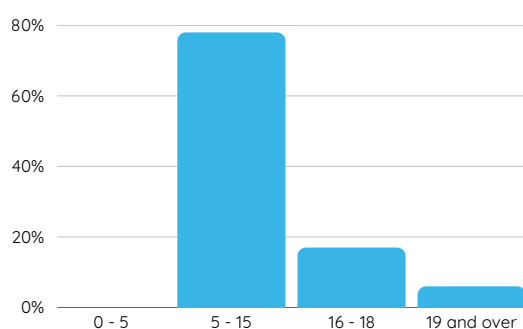
Who youth mentoring interventions serve

Demographic data from the sample showed notable skews in participant age and ethnicity, providing an initial indication of who youth mentoring programmes are reaching.
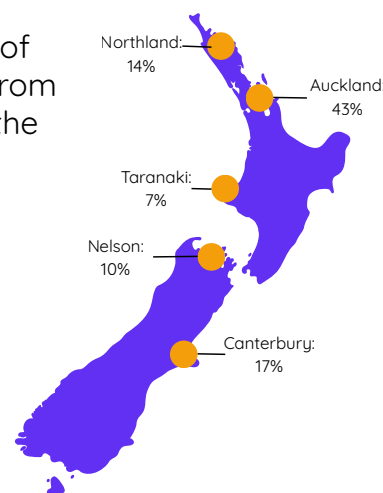
Age

78% of programmes worked with participants aged between 5 to 15 years old.
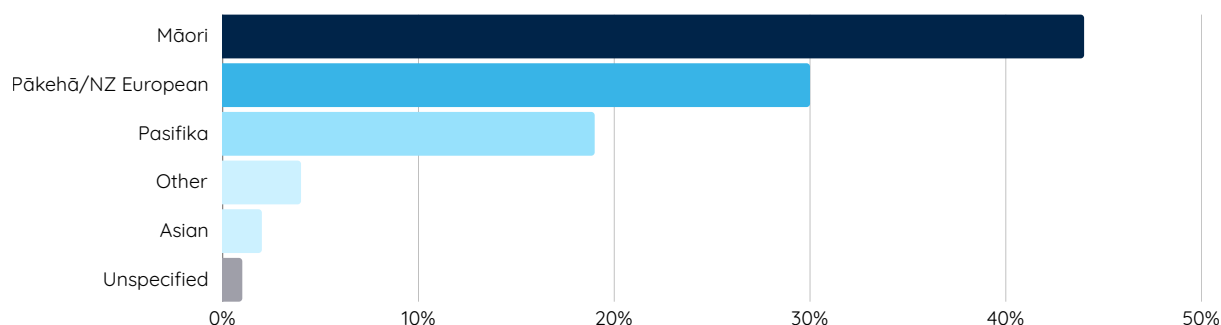

Location

The majority (92%) of participants came from 5 locations around the country.

The other 8% were from a range of location across the lower and central North Island.

Northland: 14%
Auckland: 43%
Taranaki: 7%
Nelson: 10%
Canterbury: 17%

Ethnicity

People identifying as Māori made up the largest proportion of participants.

Why this matters

Evidence indicates that culturally responsive design and training improves mentoring programme effectiveness. Demographic data, such as ethnicity, offer a starting point for understanding who programmes are reaching and where cultural adaptation may be needed. This helps ensure overseas models are translated effectively for New Zealand, with design, training, and resourcing that reflects local communities.

Mentoring programmes based on overseas models and implemented in New Zealand can be effective if they are adapted to a New Zealand context, and culturally translated (Deane et al 2023; Noonan et al 2012). This can be achieved through culturally responsive design and evidence-informed training (Owen et al 2018), model fidelity (Noonan et al 2012), and ensuring sufficient resources for low-decile or rural settings (Taulaulelei & Kavanagh 2015).

Who youth mentoring interventions serve

Lived experience or challenges faced by participants

The lived experiences of participants and the challenges they face provides deeper insight into who youth mentoring interventions serve. This sample highlights the range of individuals being supported.

Participants in youth mentoring interventions often have multiple or complex needs regarding their lived experience or situational factors. The data below are weighted averages of those sample organisations that had available data.

11% had been impacted by **family or domestic violence**

28% experienced involvement with **Oranga Tamariki**

30% experienced **poor mental health** prior to engagement

29% displayed **behavioural issues, or experienced involvement with the police**

37% of participants experienced **educational challenges**

Why this matters

The finding that 30% of participants began the programme with poor mental health underscores the potential value of mentoring interventions, which have been shown to reduce behavioural problems and improve social and coping skills among youth facing psychosocial challenges.

For youth exhibiting behavioural difficulties, mentoring interventions lasting 12 months or more have demonstrated a range of positive psychosocial outcomes, such as fewer behavioural problems, fewer anxious and depressive symptoms, fewer internalising and externalising behaviours, and stronger social and coping skills (DeWit 2016; Meyerson 2013). Mentoring seems to be best suited for youth experiencing mild-moderate complexities; while youth with deep-rooted difficulties may benefit from mentoring, it is important that mentoring is not treated as a substitute for more intensive therapeutic or educational interventions (DuBois et al 2011).

Why this matters

Close to a third of the participants among the sample programmes began their engagement with behavioural challenges and prior police contact, underlining the potential impact of mentoring on reducing recidivism and facilitating successful reintegration.

For those who have been in contact with the justice system, mentorship involving mentors with similar lived experiences has been proven to be particularly effective (Matthews 2021; Sells et al 2020). Mentoring creates important communication links and helps construct a favourable post-release environment (Koschmann & Peterson 2013). The quality of this relationship is particularly crucial, as supportive relationships can lead to identity transformation and increased capacity for desistance (Kenemore & In 2020). Mentoring has been demonstrably shown to be more effective than controls at reducing juvenile recidivism (DuBois 2022).

How youth mentoring creates impact

Depending on the area of focus and the breadth of support provided alongside mentoring, programmes can achieve a broad range of outcomes. Improvements in mental health, academic achievement and behavioral outcomes are the most commonly applied outcomes across youth mentoring programmes.

Key outcomes contributing to social value

Future readiness support is a key impact driver of youth mentoring, with academic achievement and pathways into employment contributing over 40% of the social value estimated across these programmes.

Other outcomes 25.3%

Increase academic achievement (NCEA 3) 32.1%

Increase employment 8.7%

Reduce offending 13.1%

Improve mental health 20.8%

Improvements in mental health and reductions in offending contribute a further 35% of these programmes' estimated social value. The remaining 25% of social value is split across a range of 14 outcomes, affecting child safety, skill attainment, risky behaviours, benefit dependency, their home environment and health improvements.
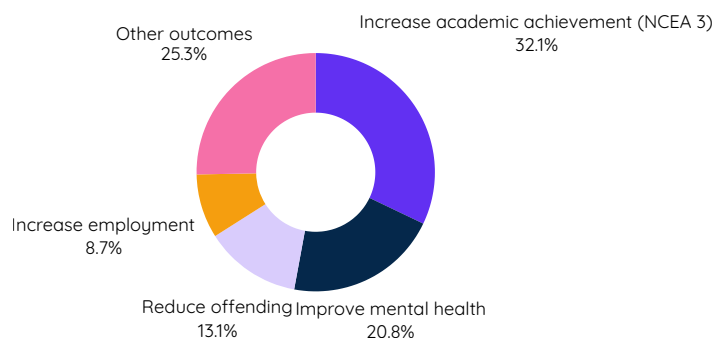
Where social value is estimated

Another way to look at impact is by considering what the social value can be attributed to. Across these programmes, 49% of the estimated social value was attributable to improvements to personal income or savings, primarily as a result of increased educational attainment. A further 23% was estimated to be intrinsic value as a result of improvements in personal wellbeing and 28% in future cost savings for 5 government ministries that can be attributed to a wide range of outcomes.
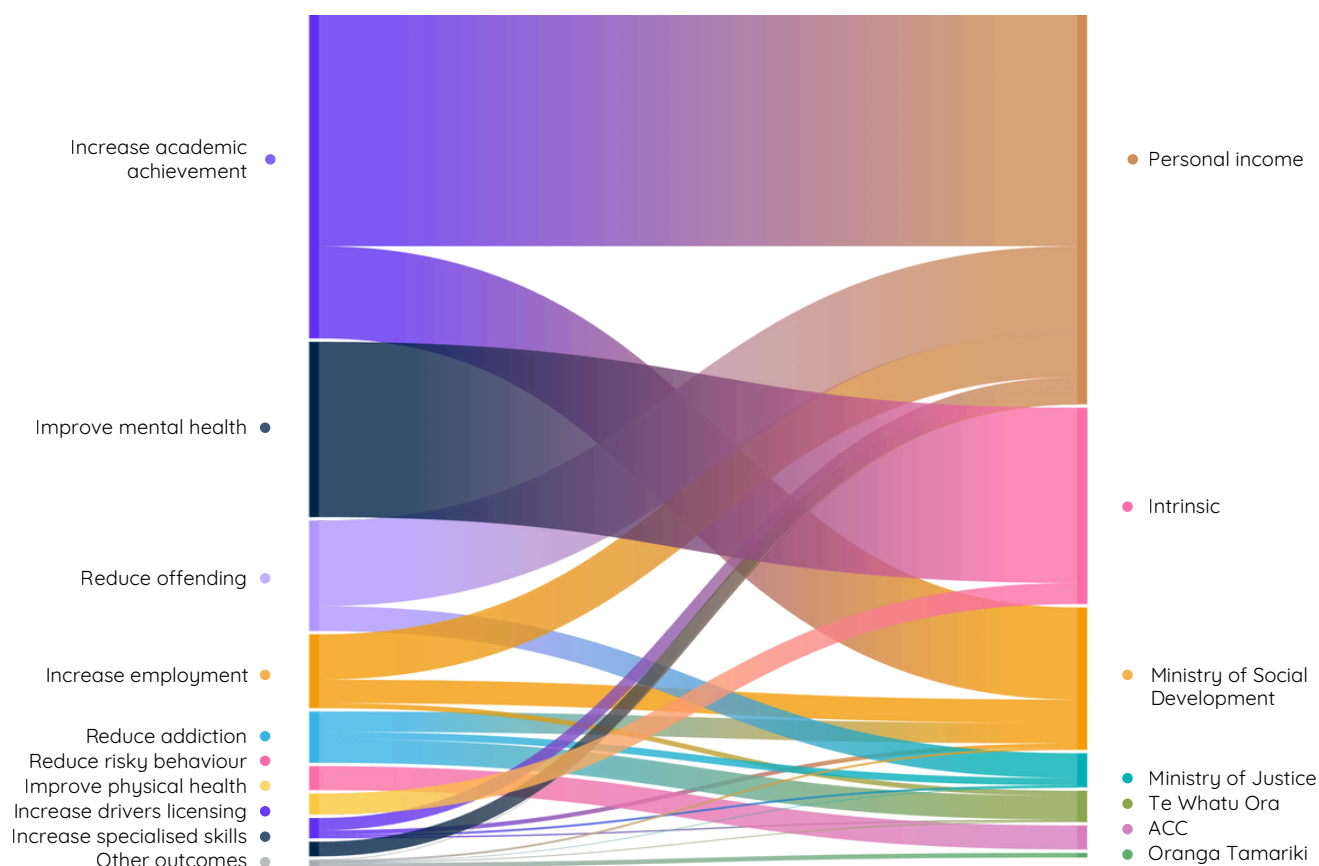
Delivery cost and estimated social value

Youth mentoring is delivered through diverse formats, ranging from relatively light-touch interventions to more intensive programmes. This diversity is reflected in the broad range of investment it takes to deliver programmes, and the social value they can generate.
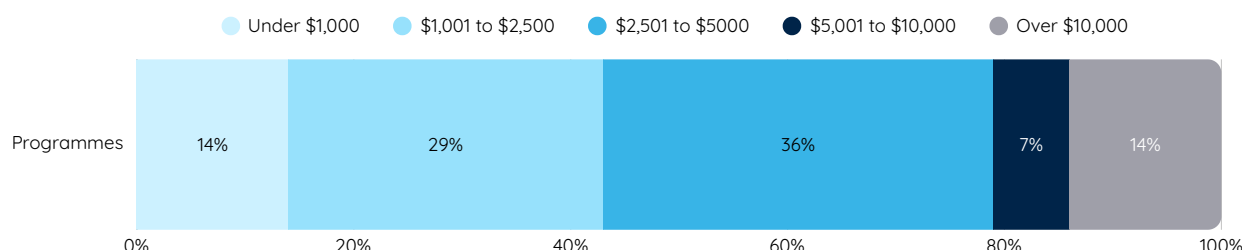
Cost of delivery

Across the 14 programmes, almost $12 million was invested in supporting New Zealand's youth through mentoring.

The average cost ranged widely, from less than $700 per person to over $18,000 per person, with 50% of programmes costing less than $3,000 per person. While intensity, duration and breadth of support all play a role in the cost of delivery, some youth mentoring programmes extend their resources to working with the young persons' wider family, reaching more people at a lower cost per person.

Total investment

The combined total investment of the programmes in this sample was:

$11,822,679

Under $1,000	$1,001 to $2,500	$2,501 to $5000	$5,001 to $10,000	Over $10,000

Programmes

14%	29%	36%	7%	14%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
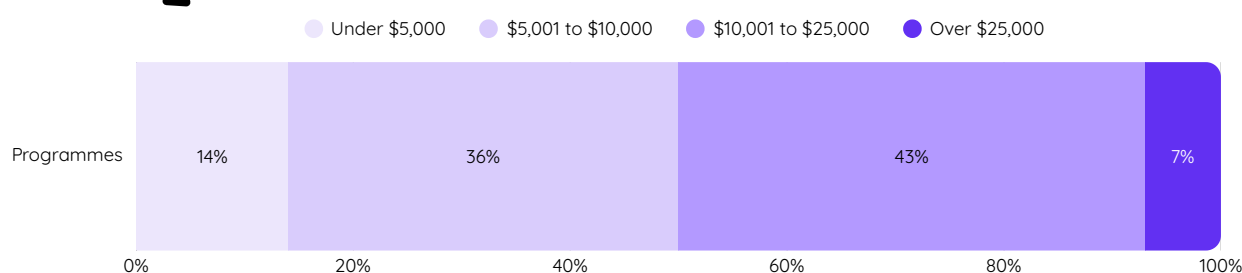
Total social value

The combined total social value of the programmes in this sample was:

$27,159,600

Social value estimated

The programmes had a combined impact of more than $27 million for New Zealand's youth.

The average social value per person can vary based on breadth and depth of support as well as the complexity of needs the young people experience, with 50% of programmes generating social value of more than $10,000 per person.

Under $5,000	$5,001 to $10,000	$10,001 to $25,000	Over $25,000

Programmes

14%	36%	43%	7%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Impact breadth and depth

Across the impact sector, programmes are delivered on a spectrum of scale, depth and breadth of need, with three distinct investment approaches emerging. Mapping programmes as broad, balanced or deep impact helps to understand each approach's strengths and opportunities for greater impact.

Most mentoring programmes sat in the broad impact spectrum for cost and social value per person.

These tend to be moderate investment programmes that deliver widely varied social value, depending on the comprehensiveness of support and complexity of the population served.

While there is no right or wrong way to invest, understanding how scale, social value and cost per person influence a programme's social return can help decision-makers identify where their programmes sit and make data-supported decisions about how to invest for greatest impact.

79% of the sample programmes were **balanced impact**

Deep impact   Balanced impact   Broad impact
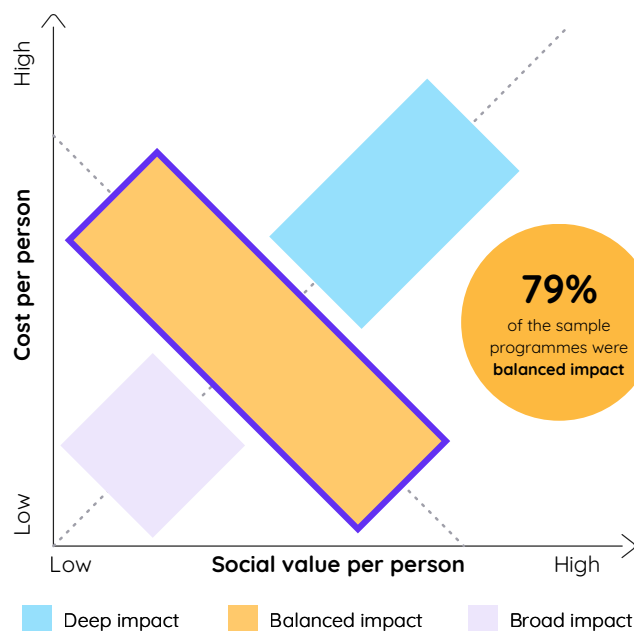
While mentoring programmes are diverse and adaptable, the sample reveals some common features across each cluster.

Deep impact	• Often have more targeted criteria for participation with a focus on high and complex needs. • Often require a wider array of supports and more intensive programme engagement with a focus on 1:1 mentoring for small cohorts. • Delivery staff often require specialist training. • Often more time and resource intensive to deliver effectively.
Balanced impact	• Tend to focus on "at-risk" youth with a focus on accessing their future potential and addressing current risk factors. Youth are often at risk as a result of their environment, such as family separation, gang affiliation, or financial challenges. • Mentoring can be a single component of larger intervention/programme, and a mixture of group and 1:1 mentoring with flexibility to be youth led. • Often utilise more informally trained delivery staff or volunteers.
Broad impact	• Tend to be prevention focused with low access barriers and larger cohorts. • Likely to have a more narrow delivery focus requiring less resources to operate. • Utilise both individual and group mentoring formats. • Often solely focus on the delivery of mentoring interventions.

Appendices

References:
A list of all academic literature referenced in this report.

Glossary & Definitions:
Explanation of technical terms and GoodMeasure outcomes definitions.

How ImpactLab calculates social value:
Explanation of how ImpactLab defines social value in the context of interventions enabling a change in peoples wellbeing trajectories.

Disclaimer:
Key considerations relevant to the creation of this report.

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Glossary & Definitions

Engagement: Engagement refers to a level of participation in a programme which is likely to yield a measurable effect or long-term change.

GoodMeasure Outcomes: An outcome in the context of a GoodMeasure is a positive change in state in the life of a participant or participant group which is then quantified in dollar terms.

Intervention: An intentional process through which a defined group of people have the opportunity to create a positive change in their life trajectory.

Intervention type: A categorisation to group similar interventions based on their activities (i.e. how resources are used). These categories have been developed by ImpactLab based on academic literature and the input of organisations participating in the SROI process.

Organisation: The organisation delivering the programmes measured.

Participant: A person or group of people for whom a programme exists to make a positive difference.

Programme: The unit of measurement of an SROI, which consists of one or more interventions.

Reach: When a provider connects with a person directly, either counted as individual people or multiple times e.g. 'sessions'.

Sector: The part of the charity or social sector within which the organisation primarily operates. This is an organisation-level categorisation.

Social value: The social impact in dollar terms that the amount invested achieves for participants over their lifetime. The social value is calculated by combining impact values with a service delivery quality score, the size of the opportunity to support a population, and the number of people supported

GoodMeasure Outcome	Definition
Increase academic achievement	measures increased income and government savings associated with different levels of academic attainment.
Increase driver's licensing	measures increased income and government savings associated with holding a full licence.
Increase employment	measures income and government savings associated with moving to employment.
Improve mental health	is an intrinsic measurement of an improvement in mental health
Improve physical health	intrinsic measurement of an improvement in physical health
Increase specialised skills	measures increased income from improvement in transferable and human skills
Reduce addiction	measures government costs associated with addiction
Reduce offending	measures increased income and government savings associated with reduced offending
Reduce risky behaviour	measures government costs associated with risky behaviour

How ImpactLab calculates social value

Some of the long-term outcomes that youth mentoring programmes help create can be measured in dollar terms. ImpactLab does this by quantifying the 'social value' of a programme in terms of income impacts, future government cost savings, and improved wellbeing.

Social value is the estimated social impact in dollar terms that a programme achieves for participants over their lifetime.
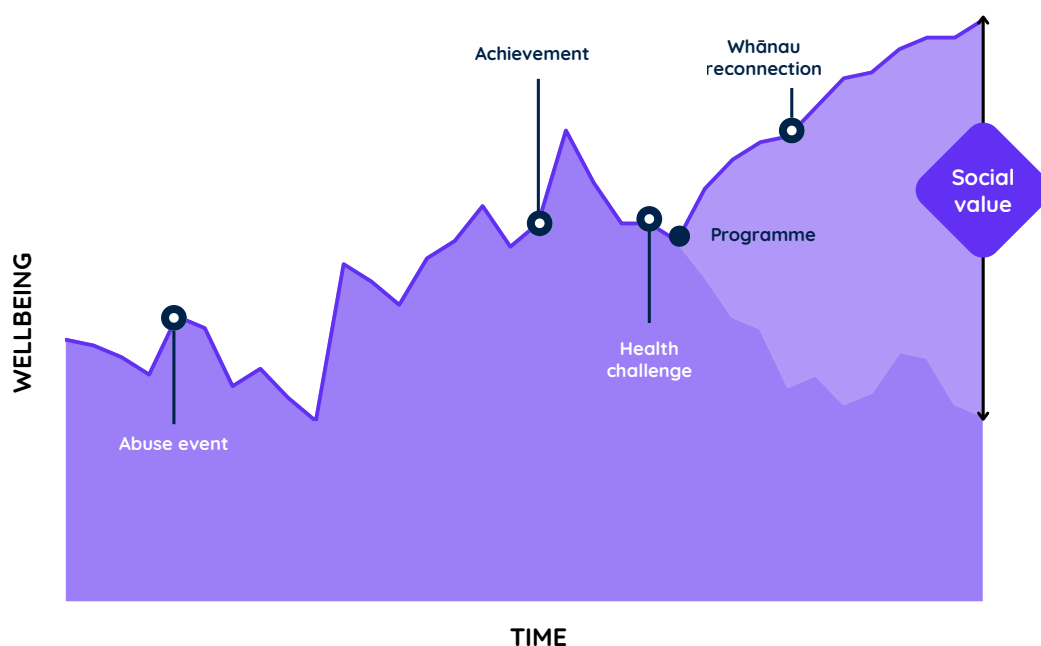
Throughout our lives, different events occur that impact our overall wellbeing journey. ImpactLab estimates how a programme supports positive changes in a person's life and measures the impact on their wellbeing across multiple domains. For each positive change, we establish an expected outcome.

ImpactLab quantifies outcomes in terms of both positive benefits (such as increased income or wellbeing) and avoided costs to government (such as reduced health system cost). From the time an outcome occurs, we follow the New Zealand Treasury's guidelines and conservatively attribute up to 5 years of lifetime value as a result of the programme.

It is important to note that there are things we cannot measure in dollar terms, and the social value captured through this GoodMeasure reflects just the measurable part of the value this programme is creating. However, it enables us to compare the outcomes to the investment that goes into the programme, which is useful for decision making. ImpactLab has developed a method for doing this that is conservative, consistent, and uses the best available data.

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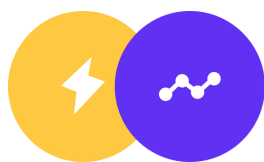
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