MENTORING UNEMPLOYED YOUNG ADULTS TO BECOME JOB AND LIFE READY

Outcomes evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

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

June, 2022

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

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by the Try, Test and Learn Fund: An initiative of the Australian Government Department of Social Services. This report was commissioned by Council on the Ageing Western Australia (COTA WA) and was prepared by the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), based on the evaluation findings of the Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program, a social intervention designed to assist unemployed young people find work through mentoring support. The M2W program team and the CSI evaluation team would like to thank the young adult M2W participants, the young adult control group participants and the mentors for their generous engagement in the numerous evaluation activities across the lifetime of the program. Their feedback and insights form the basis of the key learnings presented in this report.

Authors:

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

Address for Correspondence

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

Suggested Citation

Callis, Z., Seivwright, A., Atkins, M.T., & Kaleveld, L. (2022) *'Mentoring unemployed young adults to become job and life ready': Outcomes evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project*. Centre for Social Impact, University of Western Australia. DOI: 10.25916/3m7a-ff36

Council on the Ageing, Western Australia

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

Centre for Social Impact

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

impact leaders; and we aim to catalyse change by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Centre for Social Impact or COTA WA.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Ideas for initiatives to build capacity and independence among these focus groups were sought between 9th December 2016 and 24th February 2017. Idea submissions were open to any individual or organisation, and thousands of ideas were received. The TTL shortlisted ideas and, over two stages, invited consultants to develop and refine the promising ideas into concrete project proposals.

One idea that was shortlisted was submitted by the Council on the Ageing Australian Capital Territory (COTA ACT). It proposed a mentoring program that matched young unemployed people with mature-aged mentors in order to prepare and encourage young people to engage in the labour force and support them in the early stages of their employment. In September 2017, the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA) was enlisted by DSS to develop a project proposal for this program, set in Western Australia rather than the ACT as originally conceptualised. Over the four weeks of September, CSI UWA brought together representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups to co-develop a comprehensive project proposal. Co-development workshops included attendees from community service organisations, employment agencies, peak bodies for business and childcare, as well as potential mentors, employers and unemployed young people[1]. The resultant proposal articulated the vision, mission and values of the now-named Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program and set out clear aims, program objectives, and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Additionally, the program parameters were clearly identified (young adults the program will serve, number of mentors required, duration of program, frequency of meetings, etc.). A program budget was outlined that broke down program costs across the project's timeframe[2].

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

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

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

The program commenced in June 2018 and ran over 24 months, delivered in a number of stages. Stage 1 was the pilot phase of the program, established in July 2018. Stage 2 commenced in December 2018 and Stage 3 began in April 2019. The program officially ended in June 2020.

1.2 Program Model

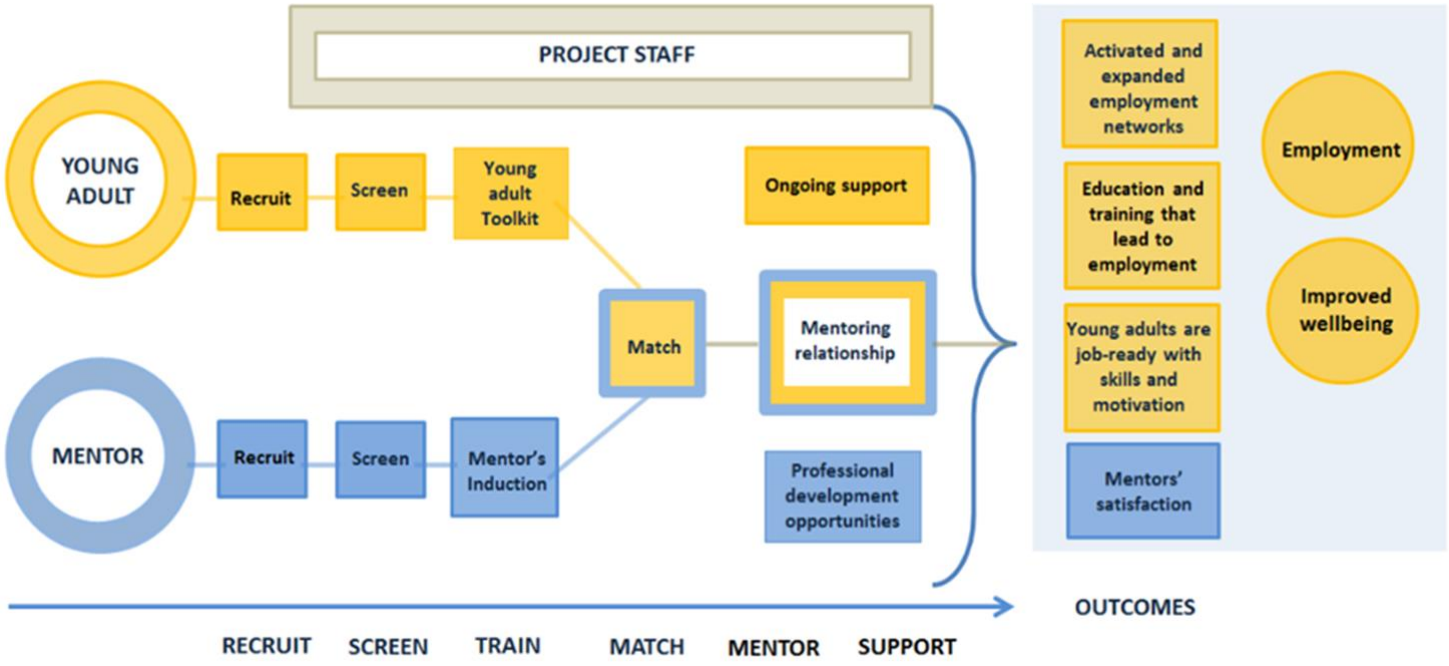
The program model outlines the main activities in the program which lead to the desired outcomes of young adults being in employment or study and having improved wellbeing. Figure 1.1 presents an idealised version of the program design. In brief:

---

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

[2] Final proposal to DSS

- Eligible young adults were referred through employment service providers and screened for eligibility for program participation by COTA WA;
- Mentors were sourced through a community service organisation (United Way) and participated in an orientation and induction session organised by COTA WA;
- Young adults completed a Learning and Support Career Pathways Toolkit (the young adult toolkit), developed by COTA WA, to prepare them for mentoring;
- Young adults and mentors were matched by COTA WA M2W project officers;
- Mentoring sessions occurred weekly for six months with the mentor lending tailored support and assistance pertinent to gaining employment and addressing the young adult's specific needs;
- The mentoring relationship was supported throughout by M2W project officers who played a key role in providing ongoing support and opportunities for professional development.



1.3 The Evaluation

The University of Western Australia, through the Centre for Social Impact (CSI UWA), was contracted by COTA WA to evaluate the program and assess its success in achieving the specified outcomes as well as the appropriateness of the program for broader rollout. The overall aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of M2W at achieving outcomes for young adults. Two types of evaluations were conducted: a Process Evaluation and an Outcomes Evaluation.

The process evaluation (Atkins, Kaleveld & Callis, 2020) sought to identify the key factors in M2W's implementation that resulted in effective running of the program and positive outcomes for its participants.

The outcomes evaluation utilised a quasi-experimental design to measure changing outcomes in both a participant group and a control group in order to determine the differential impact of the M2W program relative to standard support offered through employment services, on the outcomes targeted by the program.

Table 1.1 presents a breakdown of the surveys collected for the purposes of the outcomes evaluation. Three young adults in the M2W did not complete the baseline survey, so they are excluded from the analysis. Responses from the control group have been excluded where the young adult did not meet the eligibility criteria (e.g. aged over 25 at Baseline).

Table 1.1 Surveys collected for the outcomes evaluation

	Baseline	Year 1	Included in analysis
M2W group	127	71	68
Control	285	184	176

1.4 This Report

This report presents background on youth unemployment in Australia, followed by a demographic profile of participants. Then, based on the young peoples' survey responses, outcomes for M2W and control group participants across a variety of domains relevant to employment, namely health, education, housing, wellbeing, job readiness, barriers to employment, and employment are presented. Mentoring experiences are then explored, primarily for the M2W group; however, the control group's experiences of formal and informal mentoring received from sources other than M2W are examined. Finally, a conclusion chapter summarises the findings and comments on the implications for continuation of the program and youth unemployment in Australia.

For both groups, survey responses at Baseline (entry into the evaluation) and Year 1 (one-year post-entry) are presented. We also consider the outcomes of a subset of the M2W group (the mentored group) who had completed the Young Adult Toolkit and had been assigned a mentor. It is important to note that the overall M2W group, while they did not have a mentor, had completed a number of the Young Adult Toolkit activities under the guidance of M2W program staff, meaning that they had received a large proportion of the program's offering. This group spent an average of 18.9 weeks in the program (min: 4 weeks, max: 37.9 weeks). By comparison, the mentored group spent an average of 37.5 weeks in the program (min: 15.0 weeks, max: 53.3 weeks). Table 1.2 outlines the completion of the program stages by the M2W group and the reasons they left the program.

Table 1.2 Stage completed by the M2W group by reason for exit

	Reason for exit					Total	
Program stage	Commenced Employment	Commenced Study	Personal reasons	Not able to be contacted	Completed program	n	%
Toolkit Activity 1-2	0	0	2	4	0	**6**	**8.8**
Toolkit Activity 3-5	3	0	2	5	0	**10**	**14.7**
Toolkit Activity 6-8	1	0	6	7	0	**14**	**20.6**
Mentoring	2	3	3	3	27	**38**	**55.9**
Total n	**6**	**3**	**13**	**19**	**27**	**68**	**100.0**
Total %	**8.8**	**4.4**	**19.1**	**27.9**	**39.7**	**100.0**	

Consequently, the results of the mentored group must be considered carefully. While their outcomes may demonstrate the benefits of fuller participation in the program, there are likely other protective and/or facilitating factors that enabled them to participate more fully than others in the broader M2W group, several of whom left for unspecified personal reasons. Project officers advised that personal reasons included mental health issues, pregnancy, relocation, or no longer interested in the program. This is particularly important given that the program is targeted towards young people most at risk of long-term welfare dependence as it could indicate that the design of the program, while effective for those who are able to fully engage in it, is not well-suited for the ultimate target cohort.

2. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA

2.1 Background

Youth employment and wages in Australia have been steadily declining since the 1960s, attributable largely to the restructuring of the economy away from manufacturing and primary industries in the 1970s and the deregulation of the labour market in the 1990s which granted employers more flexibility and employees less bargaining power (Cuervo & Wyn, 2011). Youth unemployment came under the spotlight during the economic recession and downturn during the early 1990s, when it reached a peak of 20% in 1992 (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). In response, a human capital development approach was adopted by the government in which all Australians, but particularly young ones, were encouraged to be in some form of education, training, or employment (Keating, 1994). Somewhat predictably, then, the full time employment rate of 15-24 year olds in Australia declined from 40% in 1995 to 29% in 2015 (Denny & Churchill, 2016), to a seasonally adjusted rate of 24.2% in August 2020 (ABS, 2020a). At the same time, the proportion of 15-24 year olds in full-time education rose from 32% in 1995 to 51% in 2015 (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). In May 2019, 63.1% of 15-24 year olds were enrolled in some type of study (ABS, 2019). The August 2020 youth unemployment rate was 14.3%, more than double the overall Australian unemployment rate, as has been the case since before the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (ABS, 2020a; Atkins et al. 2020). Also of concern is the growing proportion of young unemployed people who are long-term (>1 year) unemployed, from 1 in 10 in 2009 to 1 in 5 in 2019 (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019).

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

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

2.2 Demand-side Factors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3 Supply-side Factors

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

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

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

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

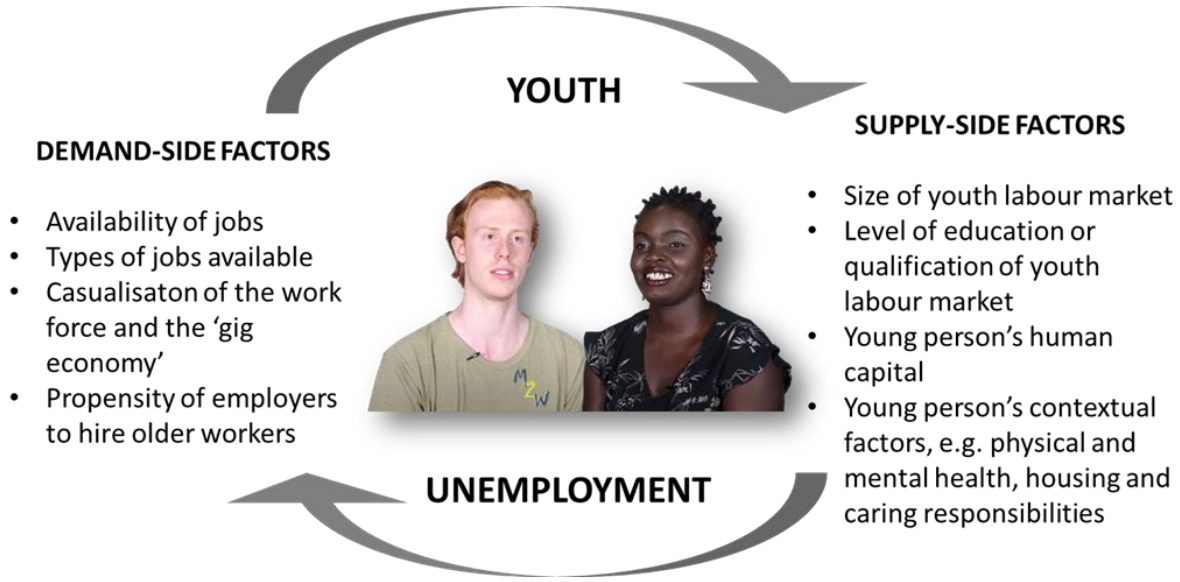


Figure 2.3 Youth Unemployement Demand and Supply Side Factors

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

2.4 Policy and Program Responses

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

Approaches to address youth unemployment target different points of a young person's life (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). Approaches that target young people when they're still in school are focused on retaining young people in education or training. A policy example of this is the raising of the school leaving age. Some approaches target early school leavers, such as establishment and funding of alternative educational institutions that provide secondary education equivalents. An example of an approach that targets the transition from school to work is the funding of youth-targeted employment services. Approaches that prepare and move young people towards labour market entry include apprenticeships, training courses and internships. Finally, approaches aimed to help young people who are in the labour market are typically targeted at the demand side, such as employer incentives and subsidies (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015). As mentioned above, approaches in Australia have been heavily focused on increasing the education and other

qualifications of young people. Below are two examples of innovative programs in Australia that attempt to provide holistic support that addresses both demand-side and supply-side factors impacting youth unemployment.

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

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

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

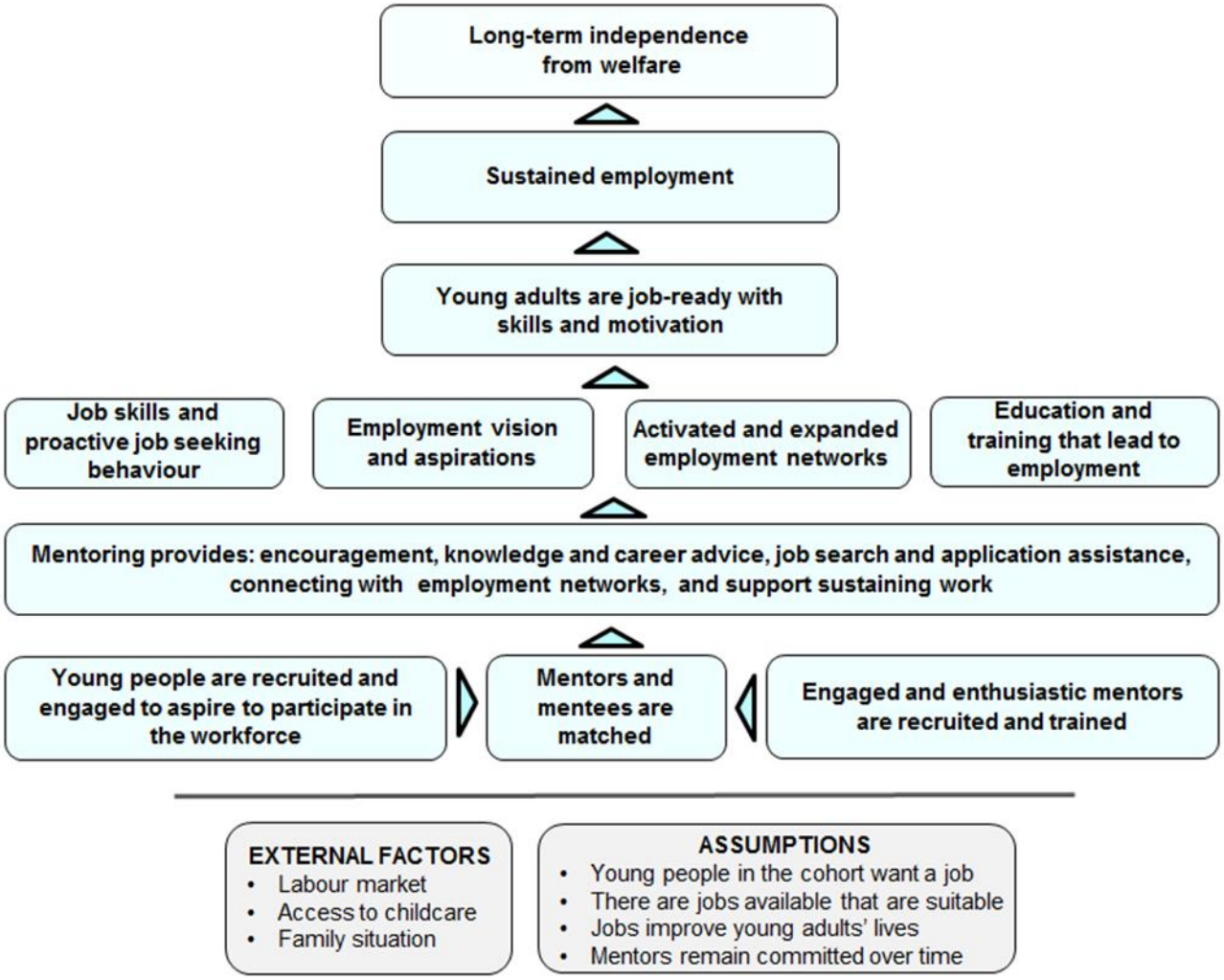
Coddou, Borlagdan & Mallett (2019) identified the defining characteristics of the Education First Youth Foyer model as partnership and co-location with tertiary education institutions, an 'education first' approach, a focus on capacity and capability building, the Certificate I in Developing Independence,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

2.5 The M2W Theory of Action

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

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

Figure 2.1 Theory of Action



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Ethics Approval

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

- **Informed participation and consent:** The *National Statement for Ethical Conduct in Human Research* states that participant consent must be informed and voluntary. All M2W evaluation participants were provided with Participant Information Sheets outlining the purpose of the evaluation, how the information they provided was going to be used, and the risks and their rights regarding their participation and data. After reading the Participant Information Sheet and having any questions addressed, all participants signed a Participant Consent Form;
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** Participants were assured that no individual would be identified in the reporting of results and that data would be securely stored at CSI UWA;
- **Participant reimbursement:** Young adults were reimbursed with a $40 gift card for their time and any out-of-pocket expenses accrued through participation in evaluation activities (surveys, focus groups and interviews);
- **Cultural and social sensitivity:** the evaluation team were briefed on any cultural, gender or social considerations which may have had bearing on the evaluations.

3.2 Recruitment

3.2.1 M2W Group Procedure

Victoria Park was selected as the trial site for Stage 1 and a number of approaches were used to recruit participants, primarily through community organisations. However, this did not generate sufficient numbers and the trial site was expanded to Morley. It was then identified that recruitment should come from employment services, leading to a reconfiguration of the project team from comprising primarily youth and social workers to comprising employment service officers. Relationships were built by the M2W project officers with employment service providers, and the M2W application form was included as part of the young peoples' job plans. Once the young adults completed the application form, they were contacted by the project officers via telephone within 48 hours to set up the induction meeting. This first one-on-one meeting outlined the program and presented the consent forms and enabled the staff to gauge the interest and suitability of the participant for the program.

For Stage 2 and 3, M2W project officers were given permission to present the program to a group of potential participants at Jobactive offices. Expressions of interest were registered during these sessions with the understanding that the project officer would contact them within the next few days to invite them to a one-on-one meeting where the program, and its suitability for the jobseeker, would be discussed further. After these discussions the young adult would either fill in an application and join the program or would be thanked for their time and not participate. As part of this recruitment process, Jobactive providers were regularly updated of the jobseeker's engagement with the program.

3.2.2 Control Group Identification

A quasi-experimental design was employed, in which a comparison (control) group that was as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of Baseline (pre-intervention) characteristics was identified. The control group captured what would have been the outcomes if the program had not been implemented (i.e., the counterfactual). Hence, the program can be said to have caused any difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups.

Control group sites were carefully selected to identify areas with similar socio-economic and employment characteristics. Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA) scores were analysed to identify suburbs with similar characteristics to the ones where the M2W project were being conducted. Using the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) the following control sites were selected: Ascot, Canning Vale, Armadale.

3.2.2 Control Group Procedure

As with recruitment for the treatment group, letters were sent to Jobactive providers operating in the identified areas, asking their assistance in recruiting participants to take part in the program as part of the control group. One company, APM Employment Services, agreed to participate and supported the evaluation team in recruiting the control group across their offices.

The manager of the various APM offices identified suitable recruits from their database according to the age and employment status criteria, which were the same as those for the treatment group. Recruitment flyers were also displayed in their offices. The employment consultants arranged appointments for the jobseekers to meet with the evaluation team to learn about the study in place of their regular employment services appointments. The evaluation team explained to the jobseekers that although participation in the program was not an option since it was not running in their area, if they chose to participate in the control group study they would complete two surveys, one year apart, for which they would receive a $40 Coles gift card for each survey. The voluntary nature of the surveys was stressed. The vast majority of jobseekers took up the offer to participate in the study.

The surveys were administered in the employment service offices directly into Qualtrics on tablets provided by the evaluation team and supplemented by the Jobactive computers where available. Most participants completed the surveys on their own. In some cases, the evaluation team assisted the jobseeker with filling out the surveys. Gift cards were distributed as soon as the surveys were completed.

In total 285 control group Baseline surveys were collected between April, May and June 2019. The one year follow up survey was conducted via email. Participants were invited to complete the survey online and upon completion of the survey they could opt be emailed a digital $40 Coles gift card or be posted a physical $40 Coles gift card.

3.3 Quantitative Data Collection

A number of surveys were conducted at various time points in the program. Surveys were developed and distributed on the UWA Qualtrics platform and were analysed using SPSS data software.

- Young adult participants were invited to participate in three surveys: a Baseline survey (at the start of the program), an exit survey (upon completion of mentoring or when exiting the program) that captured immediate outcomes of the program for the process evaluation, and a post program survey (1 year from recruitment) capturing post program employment experiences and changes in wellbeing. All young adults received a $40 gift card for each survey completed.
- Young adults who were part of the control group were invited to participate in two surveys that provided data for comparison of outcomes with the young adult program participants: a T1 Baseline survey and a T2 post program survey (1 year from Baseline). All young adults received a $40 gift card for each survey completed.
- Mentors were invited to participate in two surveys: a Baseline survey (at the start of the program) that captured their skills, values and expectations of the program, and an exit survey (upon completion of the mentoring relationship or when the young adult exited the program) that captured their perceptions of the program and provided feedback on program design and implementation.

4. PROFILES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Table *4.1* outlines the demographic profile of participants in the M2W evaluation, by group (M2W or control). A total of 68 M2W participants and 176 control group participants completed both the Baseline and Year 1 surveys for the M2W evaluation. Both groups are demographically similar: the M2W has a slightly higher proportion of females than the control group (52.9% versus 48.9%, respectively), and a slightly higher proportion of M2W participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (8.8%) than among the control group (7.4%). Both the M2W and control group comprise a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people than the proportion of Western Australians aged 15-24 who identify as such (5.8%; ABS, 2018). Given that the program was young unemployed people, this likely reflects the higher overall disadvantage and labour market disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (Gray & Hunter, 2005).

While just over two-thirds (70.3%) of Australia's estimate resident population were born in Australia (ABS, 2020b), 88.2% of the M2W group and 85.2% of the control group were born in Australia. This may reflect that many immigrants move to Australia for work, meaning they are less likely to be unemployed; the ineligibility of many migrant classes for Centrelink payments, a criterion for program entry; and lower awareness of and/or eligibility for non-government services (which were recruitment sites for the evaluation) among overseas-born Australians. In line with the high proportions of both groups born in Australia, 95.6% of M2W participants and 90.9% of control group participants spoke English as their main language.

Table 4.1 Demographic profile of participants, M2W group and control group

	Mentoring 2 Work Group		Control Group	
	n	%	n	%
Sex				
Female	36	52.9	86	48.9
Male	32	47.1	89	50.6
Other	0	0.0	1	0.6
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander				
Yes	6	8.8	13	7.4
No	62	91.2	163	92.6
Country of birth				
Australia	60	88.2	150	85.2
Overseas	8	11.8	26	14.8
Main language spoken at home				
English	65	95.6	160	90.9
Language other than English	3	4.4	16	9.1
Total	**68**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**

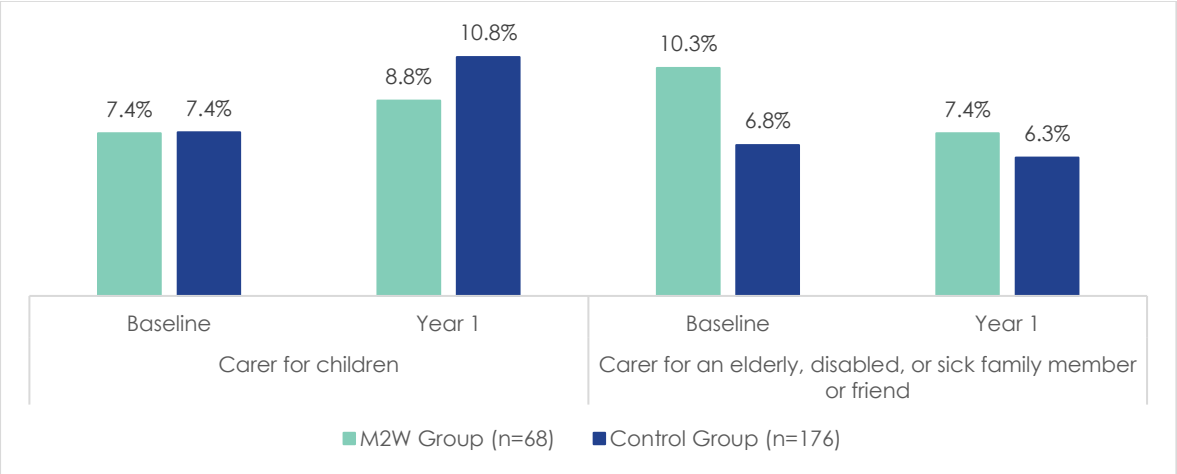
Examining the demographics of the mentored group (n=38), those participants who completed the Young Adult Toolkit and were assigned a mentor, this group is comprised of a higher proportion of females (55.3%) and a lower proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people (2.6%). This indicates that females and, in particular non-indigenous young people were more likely to participate more fully in the program. This perhaps indicates that a specific, culturally appropriate stream and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors are needed to help engage Indigenous young people in the program. Alternatively, given higher levels of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, young people who identified as such may have experienced greater barriers to participation during the program, which nonetheless suggests that strategies should be implemented to help retain young people who experience such barriers. The proportions of the mentored group who were born in Australia (86.8%) and those whose main language at home is English (94.7%) are comparable to the overall M2W group and the control group.

Juggling caring responsibilities and employment is a challenge for many Australians. Figure 4.1 outlines the proportion of M2W evaluation participants who were caring for children and caring for an elderly, disabled, or sick family member or friend at Baseline and Year 1. At Baseline, 7.4% of each group reported that they had children in their care. At Year 1, a higher proportion of both groups – 8.8% of the M2W group and 10.8% of the control group – reported that they had children in their care. This is largely accounted for by an increase in the proportion of both groups that became parents between Baseline and Year 1 (4.4% to 10.3% among the M2W group and 8.0% to 10.2% among the control group), though it is important to note that it is not necessarily their biological children that the young people care for.

A higher proportion of the M2W group than the control group (10.3% versus 6.8%) reported caring for an elderly, disabled, or sick family member or friend at Baseline. This proportion decreased to 7.4% among M2W participants at Year 1, and decreased slightly to 6.3% among control group participants.

This may again reflect the increase in the number of participants who are parents, such that they had to stop caring for family members in order to care for their children. Alternatively, there are a range of contextual variables that could account for this decrease, for example, family members or friends obtaining formal care. Further, both the original proportions that reported acting as a carer and the decrease between Baseline and Year 1 are quite small among both groups so it is difficult to speculate on underlying mechanisms.

Figure 4.1 Proportion of M2W evaluation participants acting as a carer for children and/or family members or friends, by M2W and control group, Baseline and Year 1.



A much smaller proportion of the mentored group were carers for children (2.6%) and elderly, disabled or sick family members or friends (2.6%) at Baseline. At Year 1, 5.3% were carers for children and 2.6% were carers for a family member or friend. Only 2.6% and 5.3% were parents at Baseline and Year 1, respectively. The lower rates may indicate that caring responsibilities were a barrier to the completion of the M2W program

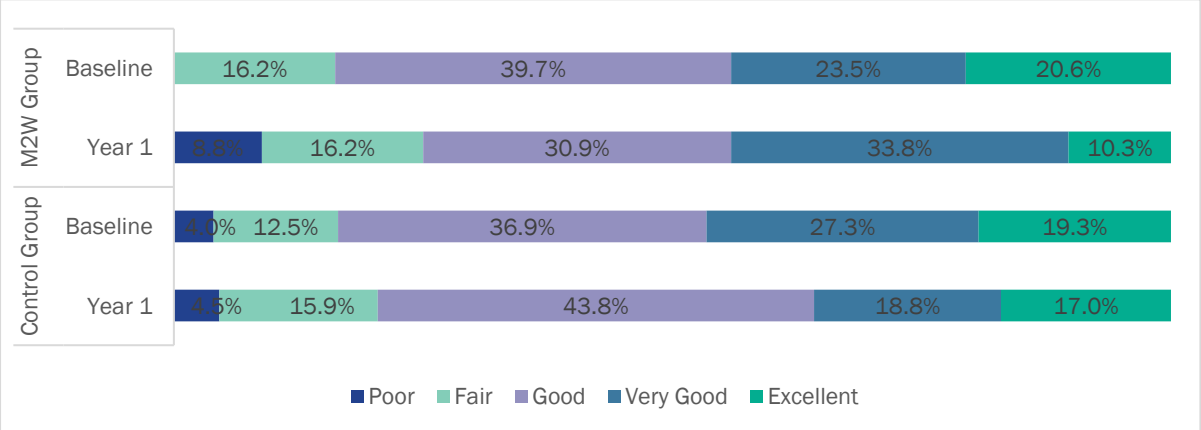
5. HEALTH

The relationship between health and employment is bi-directional: having poor health creates barriers to obtaining and sustaining employment, and employment is related to better health outcomes (Ross & Mirowsky, 1995). This creates a quagmire for people with poor health, such that they face greater difficulties gaining work and, consequently, do not reap the health benefits of employment. Given the young age of M2W evaluation participants, we do not expect ill health to be a particularly prominent barrier to employment. However, this cohort has been identified as being at risk of long-term unemployment and this, along with its additional attendant risks, may increase the relevance of ill health to this cohort (Stronks, De Mheen, Van Den Box, & Mackenbach, 1997).

5.1 General Health

To assess the health of the young adults, a single item, self-rated health question was asked at Baseline and Year 1, "In general, would you say your health is" with the response options "excellent," "very good," "good," "fair," and "poor." Both groups exhibited a slight decrease in perceived general health between Baseline and Year 1 (see Figure 5.1). For the young adults in the M2W group, 44.1% reported that their health was very good or excellent at both Baseline and Year 1, with a decrease in in those reporting excellent health from 20.6% in Baseline to 10.3% in Year 1. None of the young adults in the M2W group reported having poor health at Baseline, but this increased to 8.8% at Year 1. For the young adults in the control group, the proportion of young adults that reported their health was very good or excellent decreased from 46.6% at Baseline to 35.8% at Year 1. Those reporting excellent health decreased slightly from 19.3% at Baseline to 17.0% at Year 1 and those reporting poor health increased slightly from 4.0% to 4.5% from Baseline to Year 1.

Figure 5.1 Self-assessed health status at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and Control Group



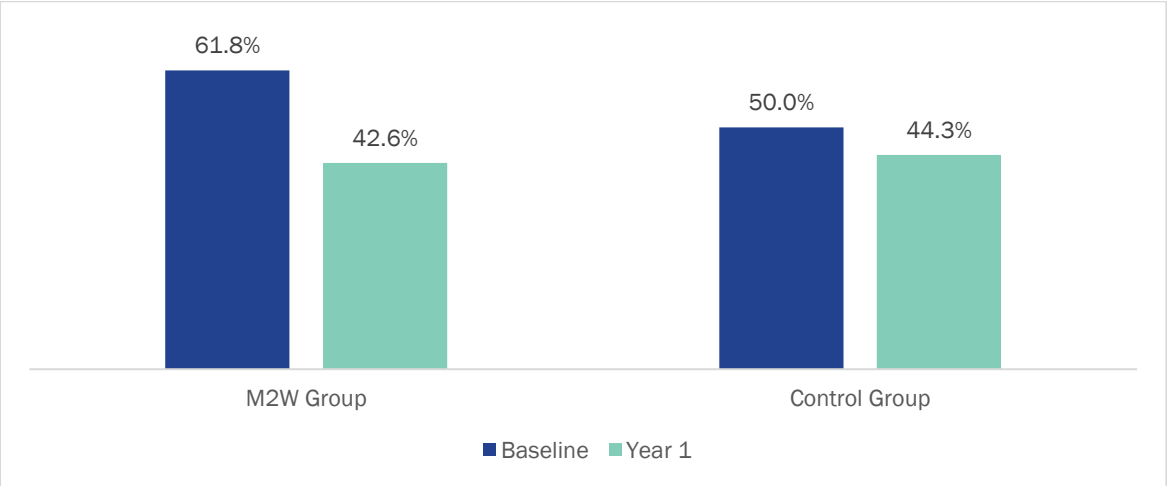
Self-assessed health status among the mentored group was extremely similar to the overall M2W group at Baseline, but improved quite a lot in terms of the proportion that rated their health as 'very good' or 'excellent' (from 44.7% at Baseline to 57.9% at Year 1). However, at Baseline, none of the mentored group rated their health as 'poor', while at Year 1 7.9% rated their health as 'poor'.

It is worth noting that both the M2W group and control group feel less positive about their health than the general Australian population aged 15 and above. Over half (57%) of Australians rated their health as 'excellent' or 'very good' (AIHW, 2018). While the proportion of both the M2W group and control group that report their health as 'good' at both time points is higher than the Australian population (29%), the higher proportion of M2W and control group participants assessing their health as 'poor' and 'fair' and the lower proportions rating their health as 'excellent' or 'very good' at both time points indicate that M2W evaluation participants feel they have poorer health than the average Australian.

5.2 Long-standing Health Conditions, Mental Health Conditions and Disabilities

Serious health conditions can completely remove the possibility of work, reduce the breadth of work options, and/or increase the modifications required of employers by workers. At Baseline, 61.8% of the young adults in the M2W group reported that they had a health condition, mental health condition and/or disability that was likely to last for six months or more. This was much higher than the control group with 50.0% reporting that they had a condition. One year on, the proportion of young adults with a condition in the M2W group reduced to 42.6%, which was slightly lower than the control group (44.3%).

Figure 5.2 Proportion of young adults with health conditions, mental health conditions and disabilities likely to last 6 months or more at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and Control Group.



The proportion of the mentored group with a health condition, mental health condition and/or disability was slightly higher than among the M2W group or control group at 65.8%. However, the mentored group experienced a larger decrease in the proportion reporting such a condition at Year 1, resulting in a lower proportion of the mentored group (42.1%) than the M2W or control having such condition(s) at Year 1.

5.3 Impact of Long Standing Conditions on Employment

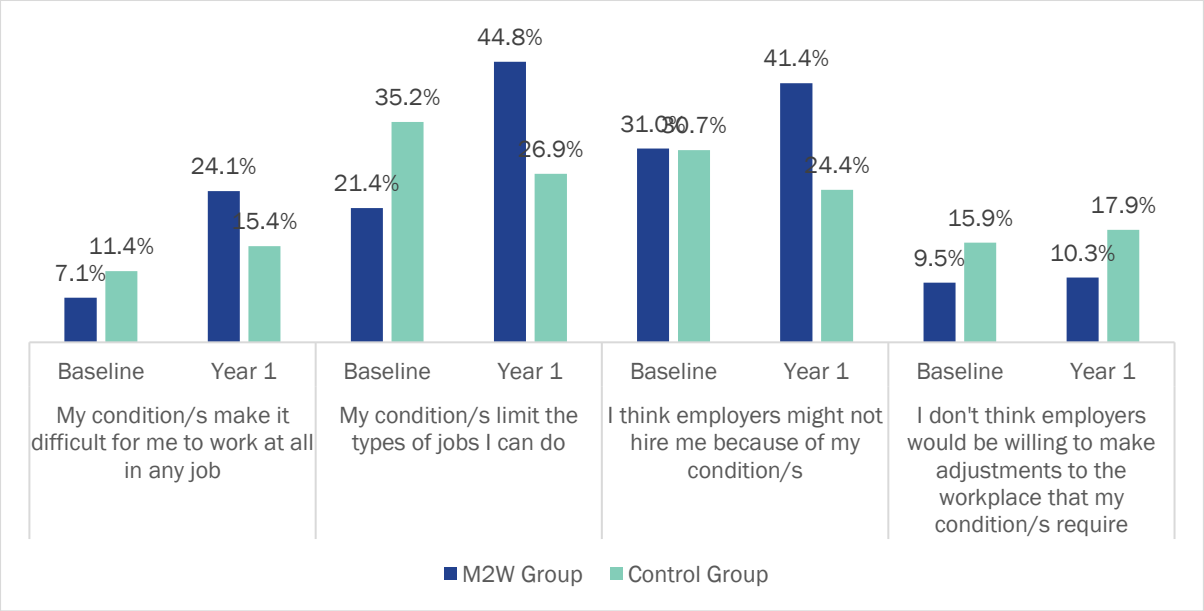
The young adults that reported having a health condition, mental health condition or disability that is likely to last six months or more were asked whether their condition impacted their ability to get or keep work. In the M2W group 57.1% of those with long term conditions at Baseline said that their condition made it hard for them to find or keep work. At Year 1, 72.4% of young adults in the M2W group with long term conditions at the time of the survey reported that their condition made it hard for them to find or keep work.

This increase may be due to several reasons. First, those with long term conditions at Year 1 may have more severe conditions than those with conditions at Baseline. Second, the Year 1 survey was completed during COVID-19, where many industries were impacted by social distancing restrictions and workplace closures, reducing the amount of job opportunities available. The young people with conditions may have felt that the increased competition for limited jobs coupled with a condition that may require some employer support, may have put them at a disadvantage. Third, it may be that those who recovered from their long term conditions between Baseline and Year 1 did not have conditions that impacted their ability to find or get work. Finally, perhaps at Baseline, the young adults were more hopeful compared to Year 1, having just enrolled in the M2W.

Interestingly, the control group saw a small reduction in between the two time points. Of those with long term conditions at Baseline in the control group, 61.4% said their conditions impacted their ability to find or keep work. Whereas 55.1% of those with long term conditions at Year 1 in the control group said their conditions impacted their ability to find or keep work. Examining just the mentored group, 52.0% of those with a longstanding condition found that that condition made it hard for them to get or keep work at Baseline. This proportion increased to 62.5% at Year 1.

Figure 5.3 displays the specific ways in which long term health conditions impacted employment. This figure should be interpreted with caution, as the differences between Baseline and Year 1 may reflect a change in composition, rather than an improvement or deterioration. Specifically, proportions of young adults in the M2W group with long term conditions at Year 1 reporting their conditions make it difficult to work at all (24.1%) or limit the types of jobs they can do (44.8%) are more than double the proportions of young adults with conditions at Baseline, 7.1% and 21.4%, respectively. At Baseline, a third of young adults with chronic conditions in the M2W group (31.0%) and the control group (30.7%), respectively, thought that employers might not hire them because of their conditions. At Year 1, 41.4% of young adults with chronic conditions in the M2W group and 24.4% of those with conditions in the control group felt that employers might not hire them because of their conditions. The proportion of young adults with conditions that believed employers would not be willing to make adjustments to accommodate their conditions did not change substantially between Baseline and Year 1, for either group.

Figure 5.3 Young adults with chronic conditions and their perceived impact on finding and keeping work, by group



When asked if employers would be understanding of their conditions, at Baseline 21.4% of young adults with conditions in the M2W group and 22.7% of those in the control group thought that they would. At Year 1, the proportions decreased similarly across both groups to 13.8% and 14.1% of young adults with conditions in the M2W group and the control group, respectively.

6. EDUCATION

The human capital development approach to addressing youth unemployment advocates for increased education and training in order to increase the employability of young people (Keating, 1994). The rationale is solid; completing Year 12 (or equivalent) improves social and economic outcomes for young people (AIHW, 2019). At Baseline, all young adult participants were asked for their highest level of education. One year on, they were asked to specify if they had completed any further study.

As can be seen in Table 6.1, 77.9% of the young adults in the M2W group and 79.0% of the control group had completed at least Year 12 or equivalent at Baseline. Though quite a high proportion, M2W evaluation participants reported a Year 12 participation rate lower than the 2018 retention rate to Year 12 of 85%. Further, despite relatively recent changes to the school leaving age, the proportion of M2W evaluation participants with Year 12 attainment is only on par with the Australian population aged 15-64, of whom 78% have attained Year 12 or equivalent. One year on, the proportion of young adults with at least a Year 12 (or equivalent) education, increased slightly for both groups: 82.4% of the M2W group and 81.3% of the control group.

Table 6.1 Highest level of education at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and Control Group

	Baseline				Year 1			
	M2W group		Control Group		M2W group		Control Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Below Year 12	**15**	**22.1**	**37**	**21.0**	**12**	**17.6**	**33**	**18.8**
Year 9 or equivalent	4	5.9	5	2.8	3	4.4	4	2.3
Year 10 or equivalent	10	14.7	26	14.8	8	11.8	23	13.1
Year 11 or equivalent	1	1.5	6	3.4	1	1.5	6	3.4
Year 12 or above	**53**	**77.9**	**139**	**79.0**	**56**	**82.4**	**143**	**81.3**
Year 12 or equivalent	23	33.8	36	20.5	21	30.9	30	17.0
Certificate 2 in General Education for Adults	1	1.5	2	1.1	1	1.5	1	0.6
Certificate 3 in General Education for Adults	0	0.0	4	2.3	1	1.5	1	0.6
Certificate 1	0	0.0	2	1.1	0	0.0	2	1.1
Certificate 2	9	13.2	14	8.0	10	14.7	14	8.0
Certificate 3	8	11.8	35	19.9	10	14.7	45	25.6
Certificate 4	2	2.9	11	6.3	1	1.5	11	6.3
Certificate (unknown level)	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.6
VET/TAFE Diploma	4	5.9	6	3.4	4	5.9	6	3.4
VET/TAFE Advanced Diploma/Associate Degree	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.6
University Diploma	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.5	1	0.6
Bachelor Degree or above	6	8.8	27	15.3	7	10.3	30	17.0
Total	**68**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**	**68**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**

Examining just the mentored group, this group had slightly higher Year 12 (or above) attainment (81.6%) than both the overall M2W group and the control group at Baseline. At Year 1, the mentored group reported a larger increase in the proportion who had attained Year 12 or above (to 89.5%). This may reflect the encouragement of mentors for the young people to engage in education, or that the young people in the mentored group had already intended to complete their Year 12 or equivalent studies. Further, it may be that those engaged in study were more able to fully engage with the M2W program.

7. HOUSING

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

7.1 Current Accommodation

As can be seen in Table 7.1, the proportion of young adults who were in permanent accommodation was unchanged between Baseline and Year 1, across both groups. The control group did see a slight decrease in those in homelessness accommodation between Baseline and Year 1, but this was only a reduction of 0.6%. Overall, the vast majority of the M2W group and control group resided in permanent accommodation at both time points.

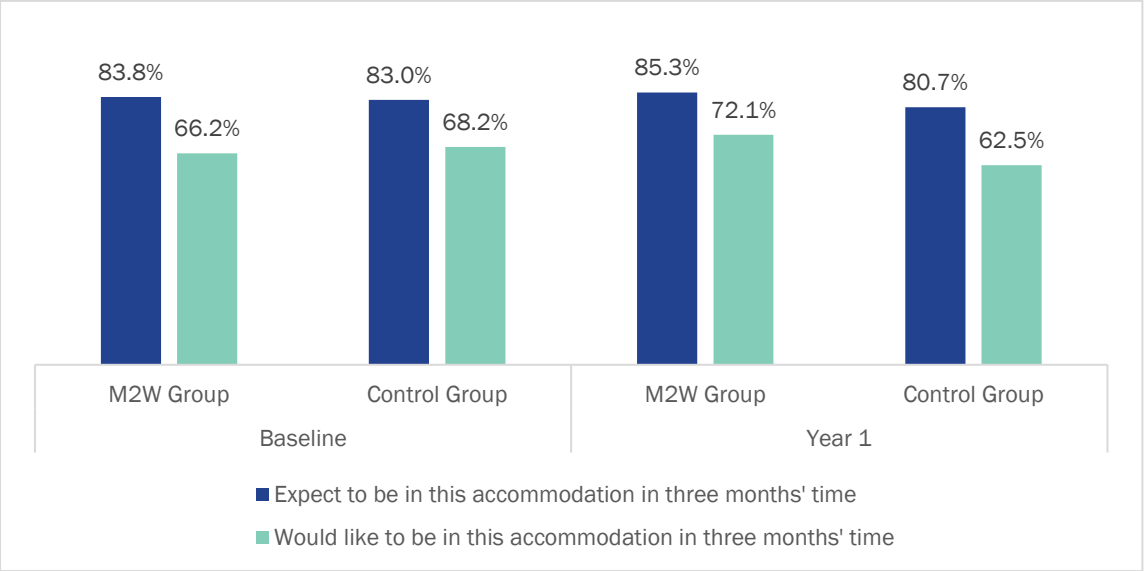
Table 7.1 Accommodation circumstances in the week prior to survey, M2W group and control group, Baseline and Year 1

	Baseline				Year 1			
	M2W group		Control Group		M2W group		Control Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Homelessness Accommodation	**3**	**4.4**	**13**	**7.4**	**3**	**4.5**	**12**	**6.8**
Sleeping rough: out in the open, tent, car	0	0.0	1	0.6	1	1.5	3	1.7
Couchsurfing	3	4.4	12	6.8	1	1.5	8	4.5
Temporary accommodation at a hostel	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.5	1	0.6
Permanent Accommodation	**65**	**95.6**	**163**	**92.6**	**65**	**95.6**	**164**	**93.2**
TAFE or university residential accommodation	0	0.0	1	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Living with parent/s or guardian/s	46	67.6	97	55.1	38	55.9	93	52.8
Public or Community housing (in my name)	1	1.5	5	2.8	0	0.0	2	1.1
Private rental with my partner	4	5.9	13	7.4	12	17.6	18	10.2
Private rental with others	12	17.6	38	21.6	10	14.7	34	19.3
Private rental on my own	2	2.9	5	2.8	4	5.9	10	5.7
I own the house/townhouse/flat that I live in	0	0.0	2	1.1	1	1.5	2	1.1
Informal rental agreement	0	0.0	2	1.1	0	0.0	2	1.1
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.7
Total	**68**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**	**68**	**100.1**	**176**	**100.0**

7.2 Stability of Accommodation

With regard to stability of housing, at Baseline, 83.8% of the M2W group and 83.0% of the control group expected to be in their housing in three months' time (see Figure 7.1). This proportion increased marginally at Year 1 among the M2W group (85.3%) and decreased slightly among the control group (80.7%). Fewer people in both groups wanted to be in their accommodation in three months' time at Baseline (66.2% among the M2W group, 68.2% among the control group. At Year 1, more M2W group participants (72.1%) than control group participants (62.5%) wanted to be in their accommodation in three months' time. Proportions were very similar when considering the mentored group separately: 86.8% at both time points expected to be in their accommodation in three months' time, and 73.7% and 71.1% at Baseline and Year 1, respectively, wanted to be in their accommodation in three months' time.

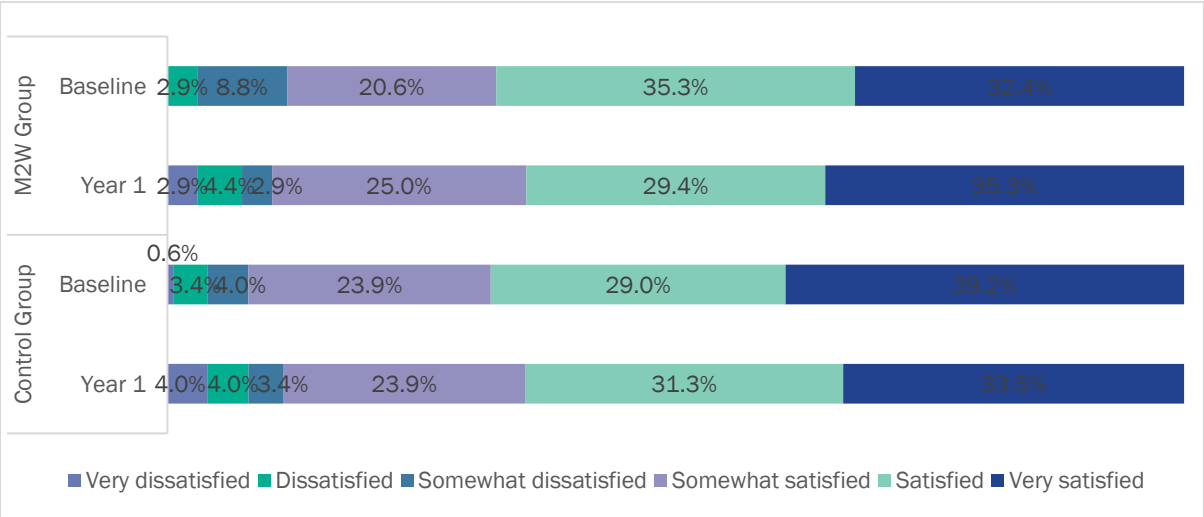
Figure 7.1 Expectations and desire to stay in current accommodation for the next three months at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



7.3 Housing Satisfaction

In terms of housing satisfaction, most people in both groups were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their housing situations at the time of survey. Over two-thirds of the M2W group (67.7%) were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' at Baseline, reducing slightly to 64.6% at Year 1. Among the control group, 68.2% were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their housing situation at Baseline, reducing slightly to 64.8% at Year 1. Very small proportions (<15%) of either group expressed any level of dissatisfaction with their housing situations at any time point. The story is much the same when examining the mentored group alone, with 71.1% at both time points 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their housing situations, and also less than 15% expressing any level of dissatisfaction with their housing situations at either time point.

Figure 7.2 Satisfaction with current accommodation at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



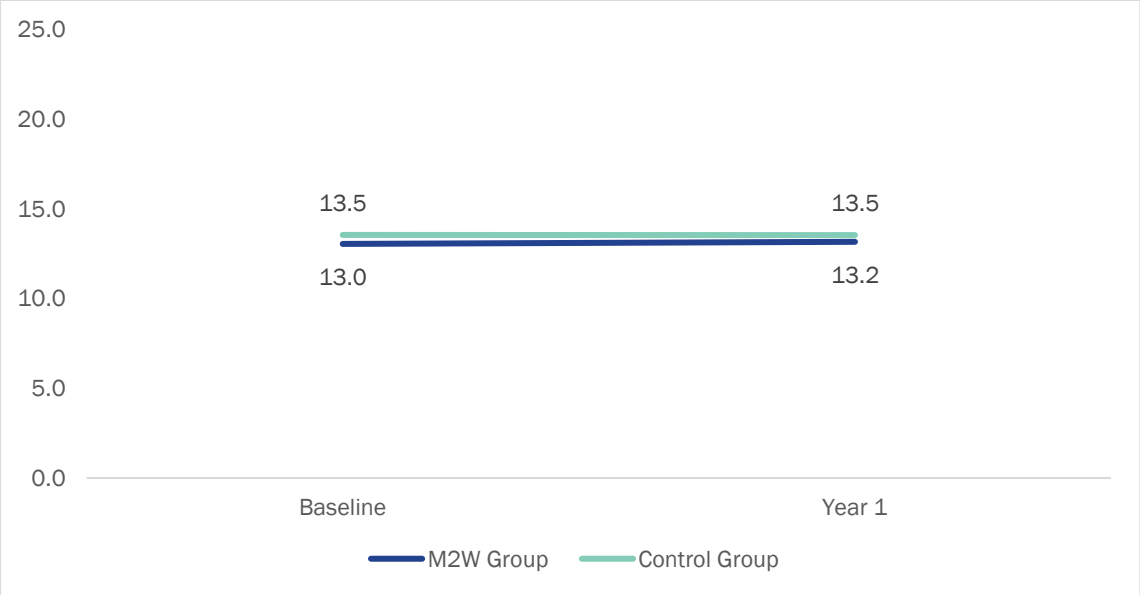
8. WELLBEING

Much like health, employment and wellbeing are bilaterally related, such that wellbeing is an important prerequisite for success in gaining and sustaining employment, and employment positively impacts wellbeing. The M2W evaluation examined mental wellbeing, social support, and self-efficacy in order to assess the impact of M2W on wellbeing.

8.1 Mental Wellbeing

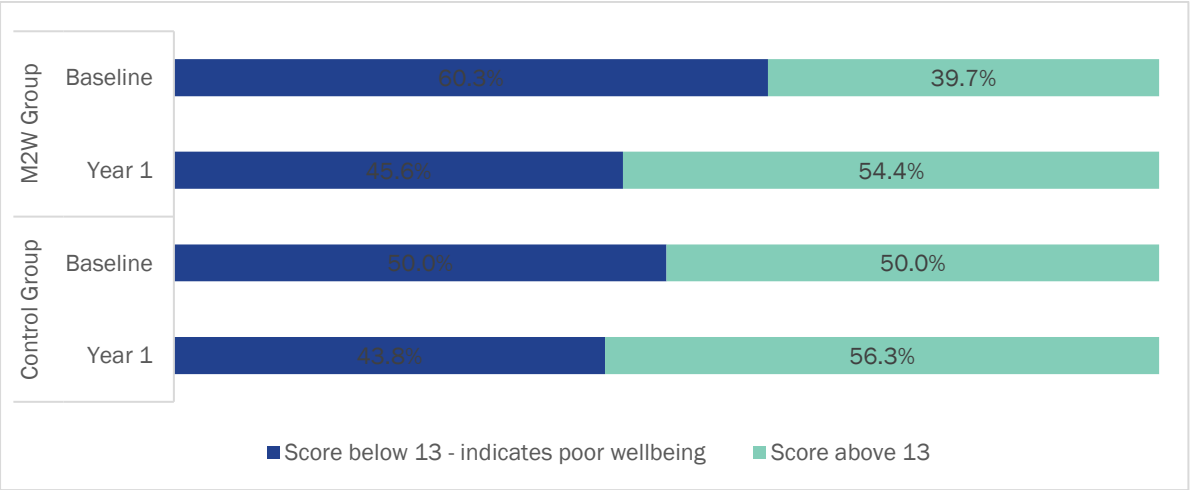
Mental wellbeing was measured with the World Health Organisation – Five Wellbeing Index (WHO-5). The WHO-5 contains a set of five statements about how they have been feeling over the previous two weeks, for example "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits". Responses are provided on a six-point Likert scale (0 = At no time, 1 = Some of the time, 2 = Less than half of the time, 3 = More than half of the time, 4 = Most of the time, 5 = All of the time) and responses are summed to a score between 0 and 25. Higher scores indicate better wellbeing. As can be seen in Figure 8.1, there has been no substantial change in average wellbeing between Baseline and Year 1, for either group. The average WHO-5 score for the M2W group increased ever so slightly from 13.0 at Baseline to 13.2 at Year 1, while the average for the control group was 13.5 at both time points. Among the mentored group, Baseline WHO-5 scores started slightly higher than at 14.0, but decreased to 12.8 at Year 1.

Figure 8.1 WHO-5 Scores at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



While the average scores did not reveal a change in wellbeing between time points and groups, it is worth examining the proportions of those with poor wellbeing. Scores of 12 or below are indicative of poor wellbeing and risk of clinical depression. As can be seen in Figure 8.2, 60.3% of the M2W group had WHO-5 scores that were indicative of poor wellbeing at Baseline, which decreased substantially to 45.6% at Year 1. A decrease was also observed in the control group, although this decrease was relatively less pronounced, from 50.0% at Baseline to 43.8% at Year 1. The mentored group had a substantially less pronounced reduction in the proportion of people with scores indicating poor wellbeing, from 52.6% at Baseline to 50.0% at Year 1.

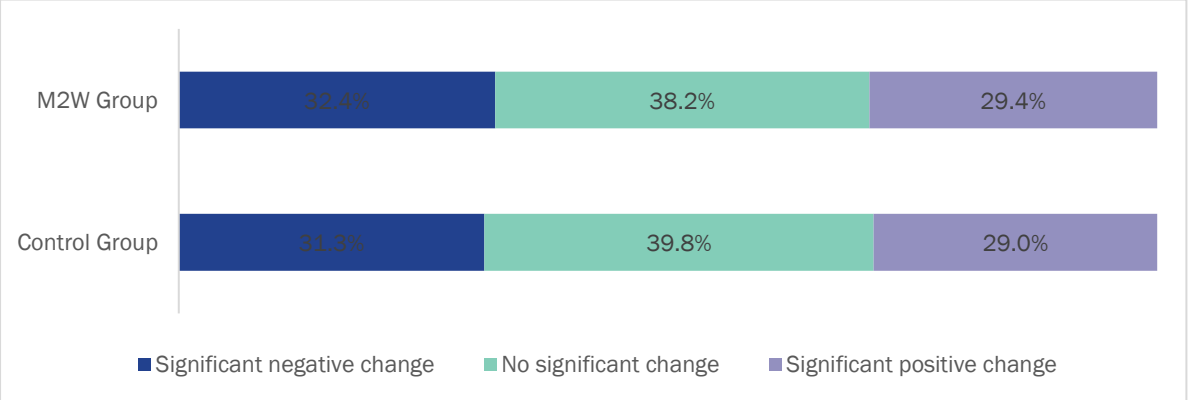
Figure 8.2 Proportion of WHO-5 scores below 13 at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



To examine significant changes in wellbeing between Baseline and Year 1, the WHO-5 scores are converted to a percentage (i.e. multiplied by 4 to get a score between 0 and 100). A difference of 10 percentage points between the two time points is considered to be a significant change. As can be seen in Figure 8.3, the proportion of young adults whose wellbeing changed between Baseline and Year 1 was the same across groups. Less than a third of the young adults exhibited a significant negative change in their wellbeing (32.4% of the M2W group and 31.3% of the control group), over a third had no significant change (38.2% of the M2W group and 39.8% of the control group), and under a third had a significant positive change (29.4% of the M2W group and 29.0% of the control group).

The even split of both groups across significant positive change, significant negative change, and no change in WHO-5 score between Baseline and Year 1 explains the lack of change to the mean scores (Figure 8.1), and reflects individual differences, such that some people's circumstances improve while others' decline. Examining the mentored group, a lower proportion (18.4%) experienced a significant positive change in their WHO-5 score between Baseline and Year 1, and a higher proportion experienced no significant change (42.1%) and a significant negative change (39.5).

Figure 8.3 Significant change in wellbeing between Baseline and Year 1 (based on WHO-5 scores), by M2W group and control group

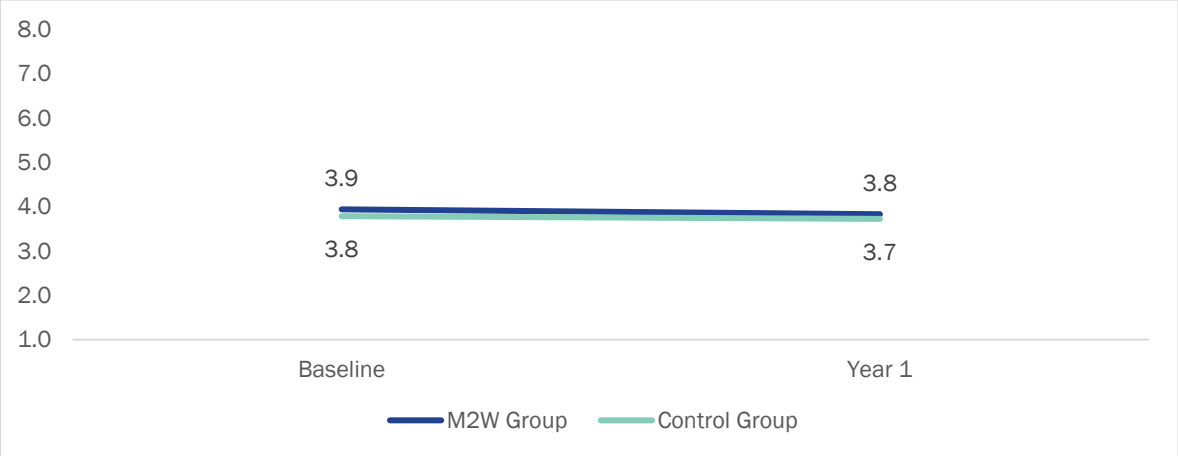


8.2 Social Support

To measure social support, the young adults completed the Duke-UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire (FSSQ). The FSSQ contains a list of eight statements about the different types of support provided by people, for example "I get useful advice about important things in life." The extent to which the respondent is happy with how much of each support they are receiving is indicated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Much less than I would like, 2 = Less than I would like, 3 = Some, but would like more, 4 = Almost as much as I would like, 5 = As much as I would like). Responses are summed and divided by eight to get an average score between 1 and 8. Higher scores indicate higher perceived social support.

As can be seen from Figure 8.4, the average scores were low for both groups, at both time points. Both groups exhibited a very slight decrease between Baseline and Year 1, from 3.9 to 3.8 in the M2W group and 3.8 to 3.7 in the control group. Scores were marginally higher among the mentored group at 4.0, and remained stable between Baseline and Year 1.

Figure 8.4 Scores of social support (based on the FSSQ) at Baseline and Year 1, by the M2W group and the control group

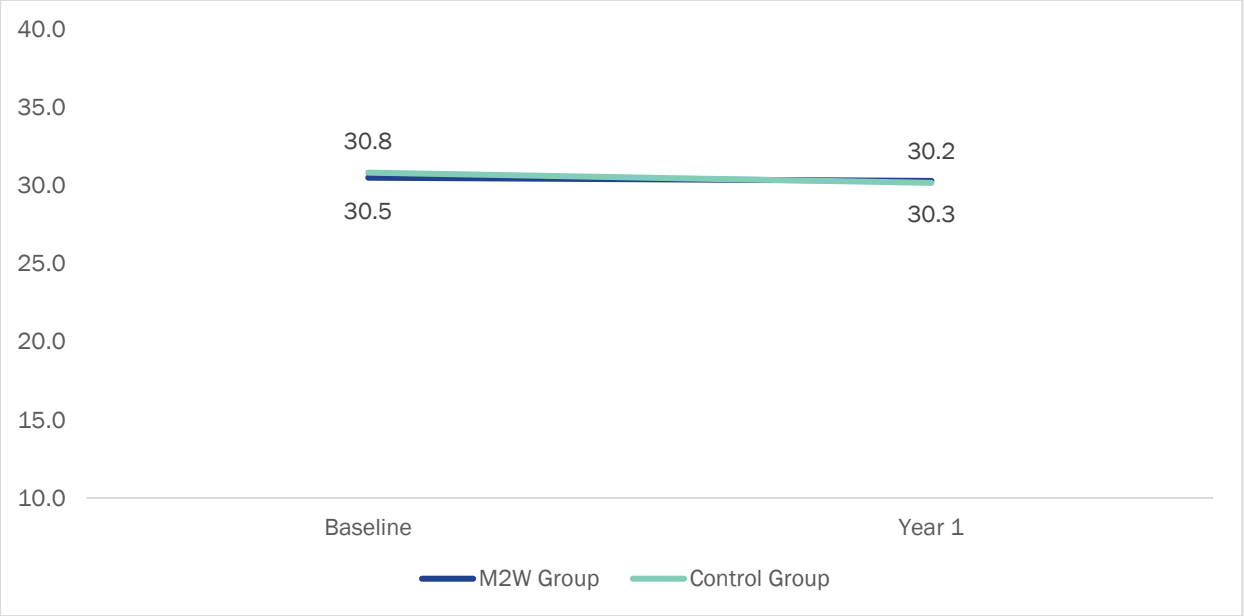


8.3 Self-Efficacy

To investigate the impact of the program on the young adults' self-efficacy, that is, the self-perception that they can complete difficult tasks or manage adversity, the young adults completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). The GSE contains 10 statements that describe the respondent, for example "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough." Respondents indicate the extent to which the statement is true for them on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all true, 2 = Hardly true, 3 = Moderately true, 4 = Exactly true). Responses are summed to create a score between 10 and 40, with higher scores indicating greater self-efficacy.

As can be seen in Figure 8.5, self-efficacy did not increase between time points or between the groups. There was a very slight decrease between Baseline and Year 1 for both groups, with 30.5 to 30.3 for the M2W group and 30.8 to 30.2 for the control group. Self-efficacy did increase marginally for the mentored group, from 30.6 at Baseline to 31.3 at Year 1.

Figure 8.5 Self-efficacy scores (based on the GSE) at Baseline and Year 1, by the M2W group and the control group



9. JOB READINESS

The young people recruited into the M2W evaluation were identified as being at risk of long-term unemployment and therefore welfare dependence. Accordingly, the level of 'job readiness', operationalised here as confidence in undertaking job seeking tasks and confidence that their efforts will result in securing a job they enjoy, varied. Figure 9.2 illustrates the proportions of M2W participants that expressed different levels of confidence in undertaking selected job seeking tasks at Baseline and Year 1.

At Baseline, the M2W group was quite evenly split in terms of confidence engaging in cold calling/cold canvassing: 25.0% stated they were very confident, 27.9% 'confident', 25.0% 'a little confident', and 22.9% felt not at all confident. At Year 1, the proportion of M2W participants who were confident or very confident cold calling/cold canvassing had increased relative to Baseline. The proportions of M2W participants that felt confident or very confident contacting a recruitment agency, enquiring via phone about an advertised job, and organising a volunteering opportunity decreased slightly between Baseline and Year 1. This may be a result of negative job seeking experiences in the year between Baseline and Year 1, or it may reflect COVID-19, such that the young people may be less likely to believe that there are opportunities that are suitable for them due to the fewer jobs available because of COVID-19. The proportions of the M2W group that felt confident in their ability to undertake a job interview either via phone or in person remained stable between Baseline and Year 1, with the majority feeling confident or very confident.

Interestingly, while the proportion of M2W participants that felt 'confident' increased between Baseline and Year 1 for the job seeking activities except organising a volunteering opportunity and contacting a recruitment agency, the proportion that were 'very confident' decreased between Baseline and Year 1 for all job seeking activities. This may reflect a somewhat 'reality check', such that the prospect of undertaking these activities was theoretical at Baseline, whereas at Year 1 the participants had actually undertaken the activities. It could also reflect the feelings of dejectedness associated with longer-term unemployment.

Figure 9.1 Extent of confidence felt by M2W group in their ability to undertake selected job seeking tasks, Baseline and Year 1

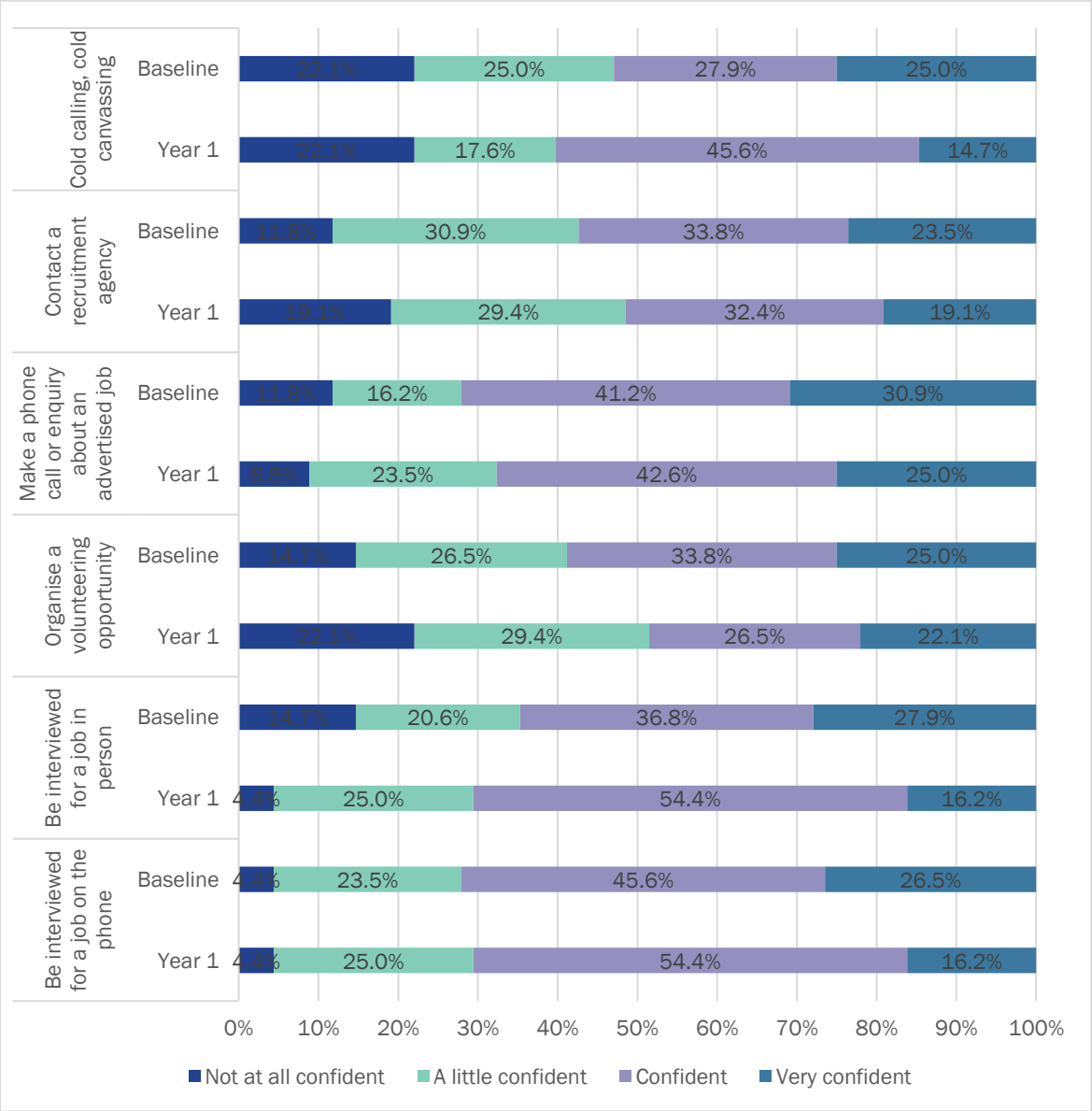


Figure 9.2 depicts the level of confidence in undertaking job seeking activities among the control group. For all job seeking activities – cold calling/cold canvassing, contacting a recruitment agency, making a phone call enquiry about an advertised job, organising a volunteering opportunity, and being interviewed for a job via phone and via person – the proportion of control group participants that felt 'confident' or 'very confident' decreased. The higher levels of confidence among the M2W group than the control group in undertaking job seeking activities, and the increase between Baseline and Year 1 in the proportion of M2W participants that felt 'confident' may reflect the support from the M2W program, such that the M2W program may have acted as a source of encouragement and support for undertaking these activities, which may have also mitigated the negative emotional impacts of long-term unemployment.

Figure 9.2 Extent of confidence felt by control group in their ability to undertake selected job seeking tasks, Baseline and Year 1

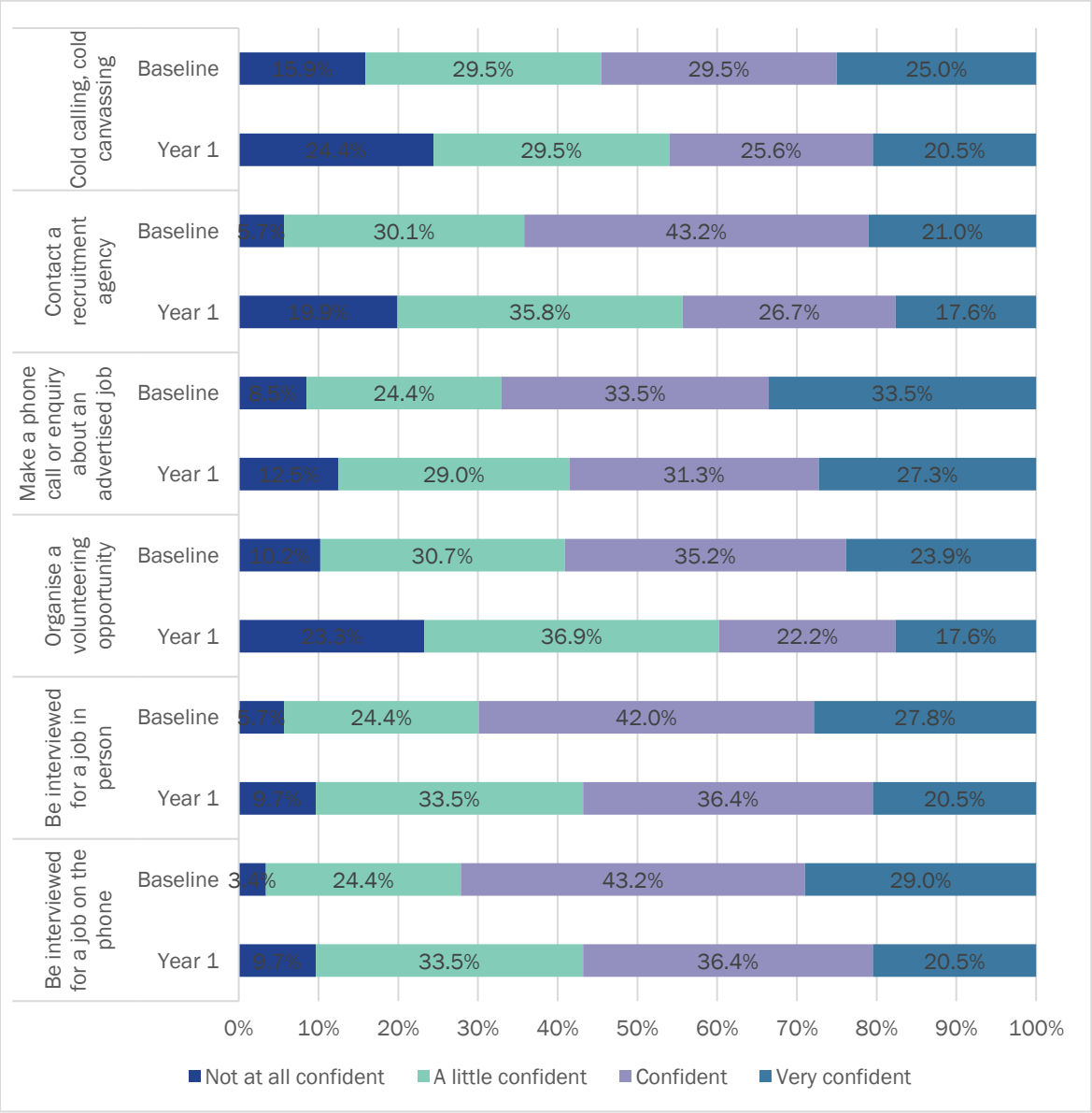


Figure 9.3 illustrates the proportions of the M2W group who felt different levels of confidence in selected dimensions of finding and applying for work. At both Baseline and Year 1, M2W participants were, overall, confident or very confident in their ability to write a resume/CV, submit a written job application, find a job, keep a job, and find work that they love. Confidence increased between Baseline and Year 1 among the M2W group with regard to CV writing, finding a job, and finding work that they love. There was a slight decrease between Baseline and Year 1 in the proportion that felt confident in their ability to submit a written job application and to keep a job. Contrary to the job seeking activities (Figure 9.1), the proportion of M2W participants who were 'very confident' in their ability increased for resume writing, submitting written job applications, and successfully finding work they love. The proportion that were 'very confident' in their ability to keep a job stayed the same between Baseline and Year 1, and the proportion who were 'very confident' in their ability to find a job decreased. The latter may reflect participants' confidence in the job market rather than in themselves.

Figure 9.3 Extent of confidence felt by M2W group in their ability to find and apply for work, Baseline and Year 1

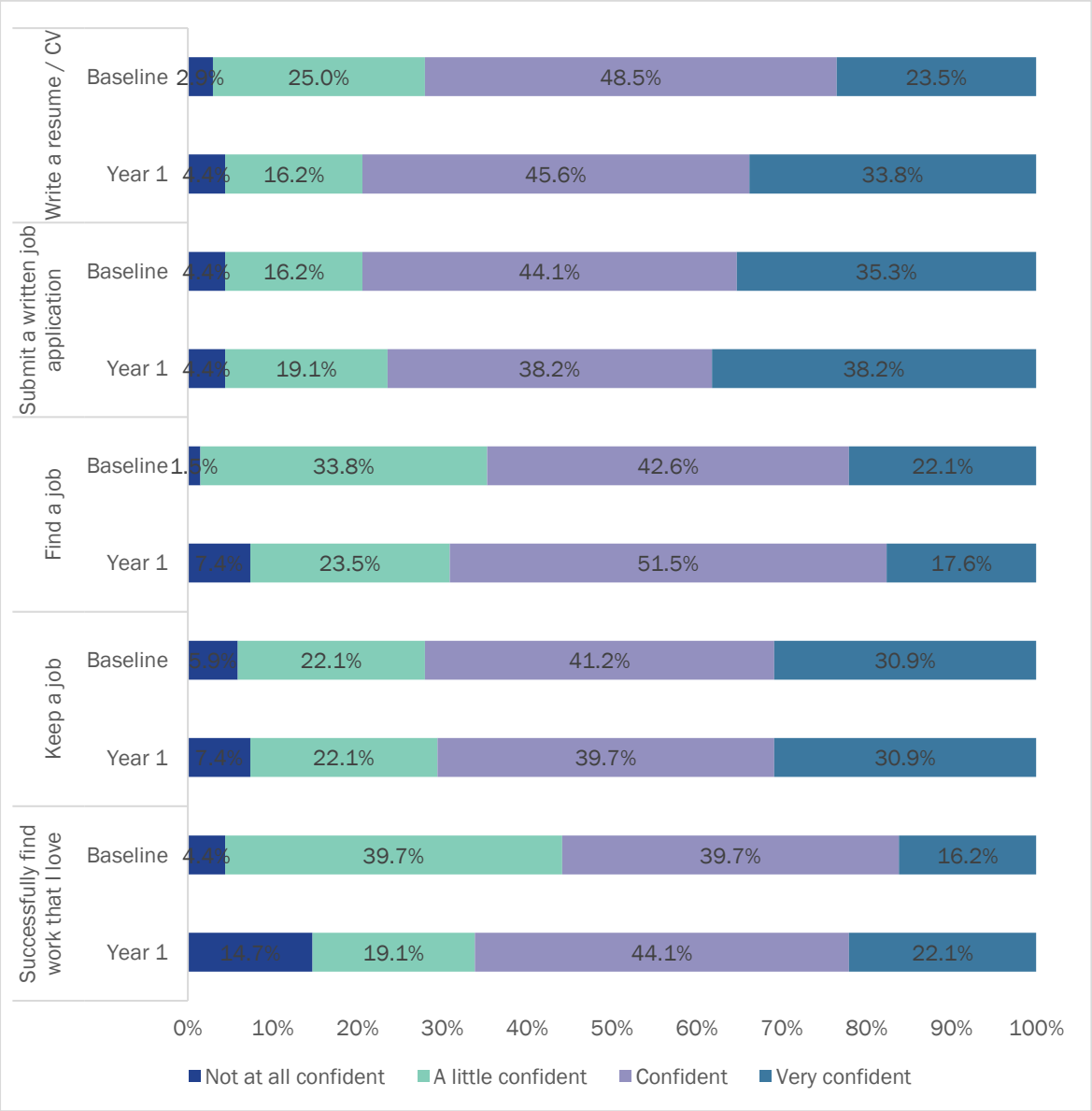
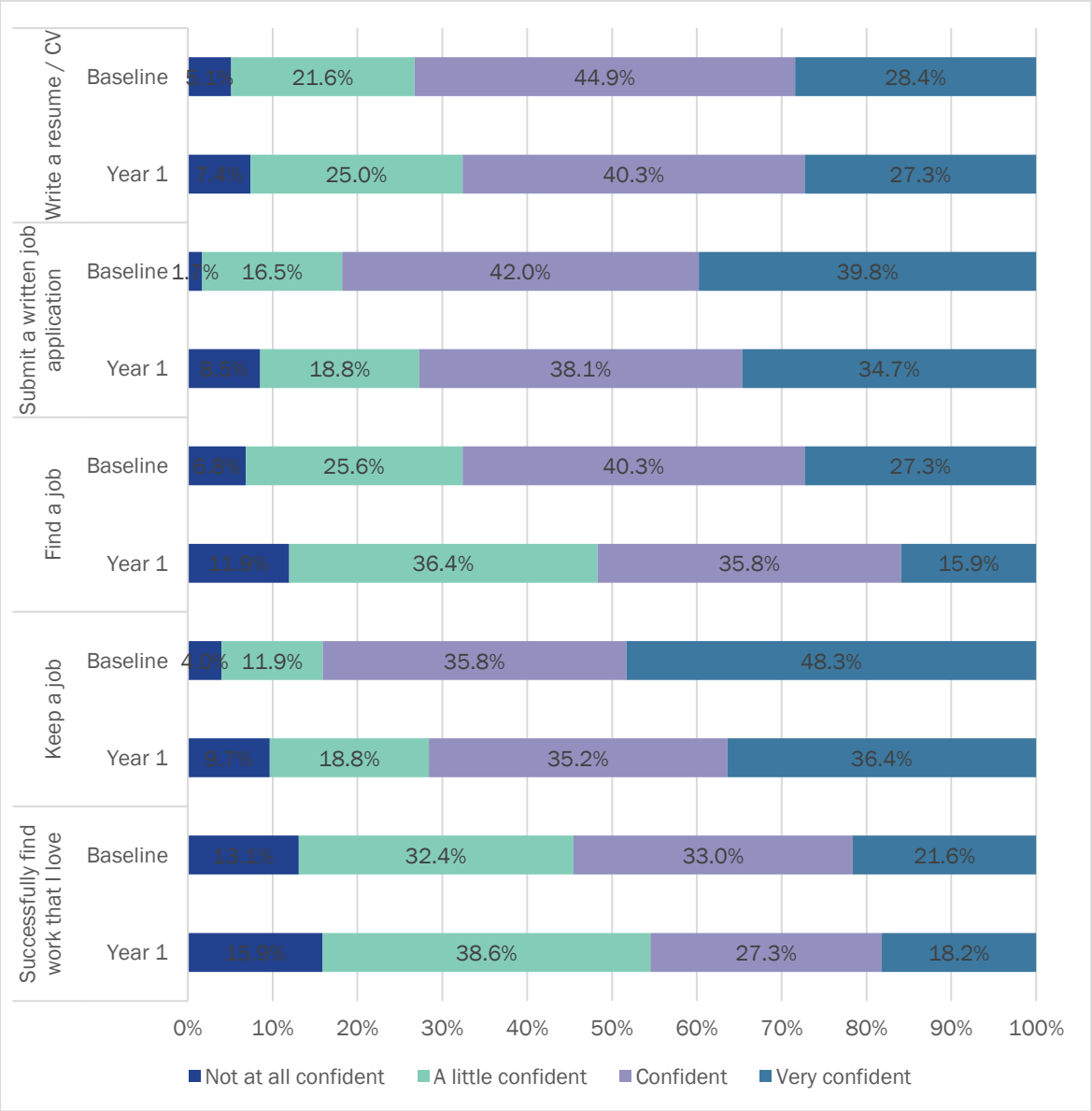


Figure 9.4 outlines the extent of confidence among the control group in their ability to find and apply for work at Baseline and Year 1. While the majority of control group participants were 'confident' or 'very confident' at both Baseline and Year 1 that they could write a resume/CV, submit a written job application, find a job, keep a job, and successfully find work they love – there was a decrease in this proportion between Baseline and Year 1. This likely reflects a combination of the emotional effects of long-term unemployment (discouragement and despondence), and the negative impact of COVID-19 on the job market. Once again, the M2W group's increase in confidence between Baseline and Year 1, compared with the control group's decrease, may be attributable to the support received from the M2W program.

Figure 9.4 Extent of confidence felt by control group in their ability to find and apply for work, Baseline and Year 1



In sum, both the control group and M2W group were confident, overall, at Baseline and Year 1 in their ability to undertake job seeking activities and their ability to find and secure work. The M2W group's confidence increased between Baseline and Year 1, while the control group's decreased. This may reflect the direct support received from the M2W program in undertaking these activities, as well as the indirect effect of the support in terms of mitigating the negative emotional impacts of long-term unemployment.

10. BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Young people experience several barriers to employment, such as the availability and suitability of jobs, employer attitudes, the young person's level of skills and qualifications, and factors in the young person's environment. We examined the prevalence of logistical barriers, personal barriers, and human capital-oriented barriers to employment.

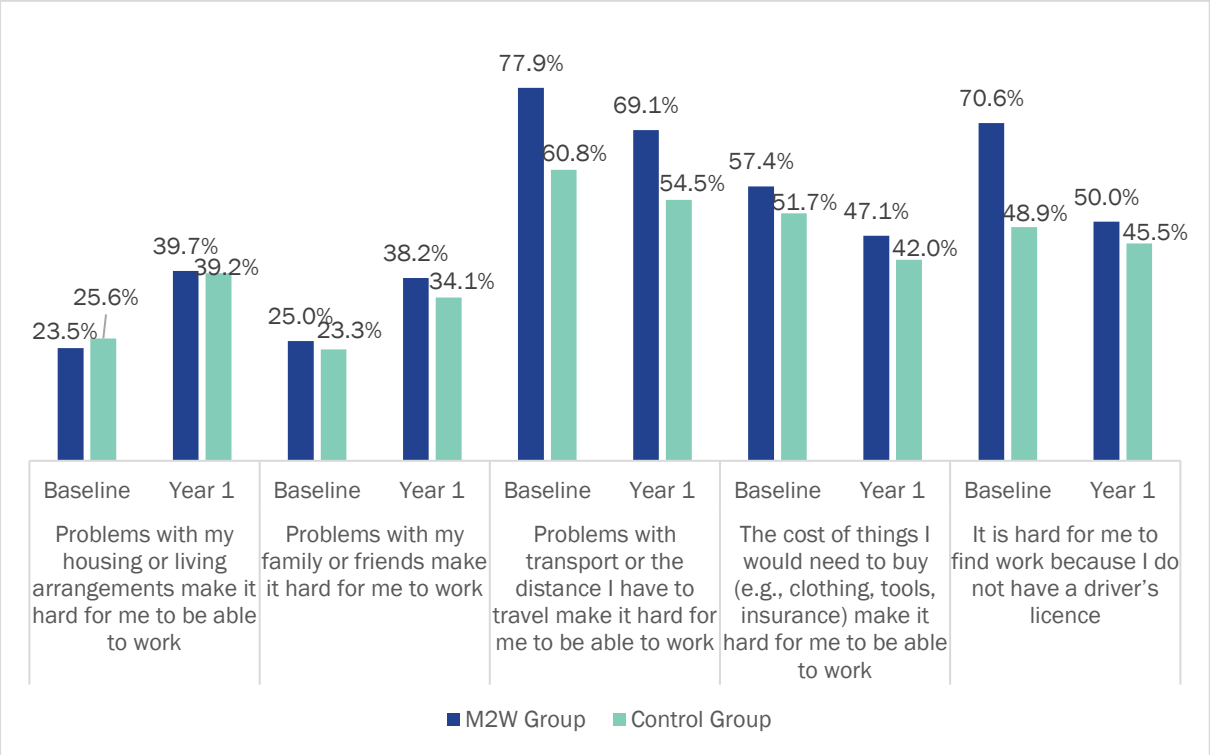
10.1 Logistical Barriers

Figure 10.1 outlines the prevalence of selected logistical barriers to work among the M2W group and the control group at Baseline and Year 1. The proportions presented represent those that identified that each barrier was at least 'a little' of a barrier to them getting work. At Baseline, roughly 1 in 4 among both the M2W group (23.5%) and the control group (25.6%) identified that problems with their housing or living arrangements made it hard for them to be able to work. At Year 1, this increased to 39.7% and 39.2% of the M2W group and control group, respectively. Similarly, the proportion of young people who identified that problems with their friends and family made it hard for them to work increased between Baseline and Year 1, from 25.0% to 38.2% among the M2W group and from 23.3% to 34.1% among the control group.

Higher proportions of both the M2W group and control group experienced the remaining logistic barriers to work – transport, driver's licence, and the cost of work essentials such as clothing, tools and insurance – at both Baseline and Year 1. However, the proportion experiencing each of these barriers decreased between the two time points. At Baseline, 77.9% of the M2W group and 60.8% of the control group reported that problems with transport or the distance they have to travel made it hard for them to work; at Year 1 this decreased to 69.1% and 54.5% among the M2W group and control group, respectively. Similarly, the proportion of young people who reported that the cost of work essentials presented a barrier to work decreased from 57.4% at Baseline to 47.1% at Year among the M2W group and from 51.7% at Baseline to 42.0% at Year 1 among the control group. The proportion of the M2W group who reported that a lack of driver's licence made it hard for them to find work decreased from 70.6% at Baseline to 50.0% at Year 1; 48.9% of the control group at Baseline reported a lack of driver's licence as a barrier to work, decreasing slightly to 45.5% at Year 1.

Logistical barriers to employment are therefore quite prevalent among both the M2W group and control group. This is somewhat unsurprising given that both cohorts were identified as being at risk of long-term unemployment. Some of these barriers – driver's licence, transport, and work essentials – have become less of a barrier between Baseline and Year 1. Given the nature of recruitment to the evaluation (i.e. from the M2W program and from employment services), this perhaps indicates that young people are accessing support to overcome these barriers. Barriers to employment around housing and interpersonal relationships have increased for both groups, which may reflect normal difficulties with the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 1997).

Figure 10.1 Prevalence of logistical barriers to work among the M2W group and the control group, Baseline and Year 1

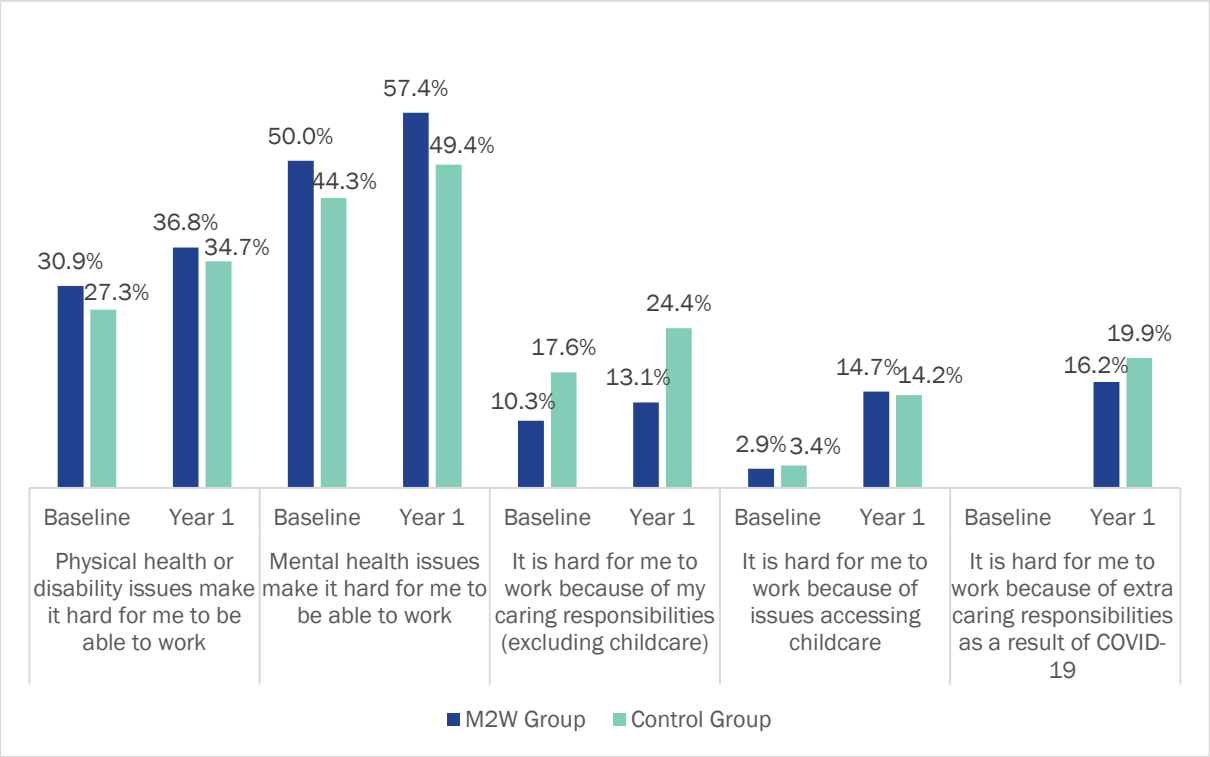


10.2 Personal Barriers

Figure 10.2 outlines the prevalence of personal barriers to work among the M2W group and the control group. Physical health or disability and mental health issues were quite prevalent among both groups, with almost 1 in 3 experiencing physical health or disability as a barrier to work and almost 1 in 2 experiencing mental health issues as a barrier to work. The proportion of both groups reporting these as barriers increased between Baseline and Year 1: among the M2W group 30.9% at Baseline and 36.8% at Year 1 experienced physical health or disability as a barrier to work (27.3% at Baseline to 34.7% at Year 1 among the control group). Half of the M2W group experienced mental health issues as a barrier to work, increasing to 57.4% at Year 1; 44.3% of the control group at Baseline and 49.4% at Year 1 experienced mental health issues as a barrier to work.

Similarly, although lower proportions of both groups experienced each of the remaining barriers (child care and other caring responsibilities), the proportion increased between Baseline and Year 1. The former is attributable to the increase among both groups of the number of parents between Baseline and Year 1. In light of the COVID-19 situation, at Year 1, we asked if the young people had any additional caring responsibilities that formed a barrier to work – 16.2% of the M2W group and 19.9% of the control group reported that this was the case for them.

Figure 10.2 Prevalence of personal barriers to work among the M2W group and the control group, Baseline and Year 1

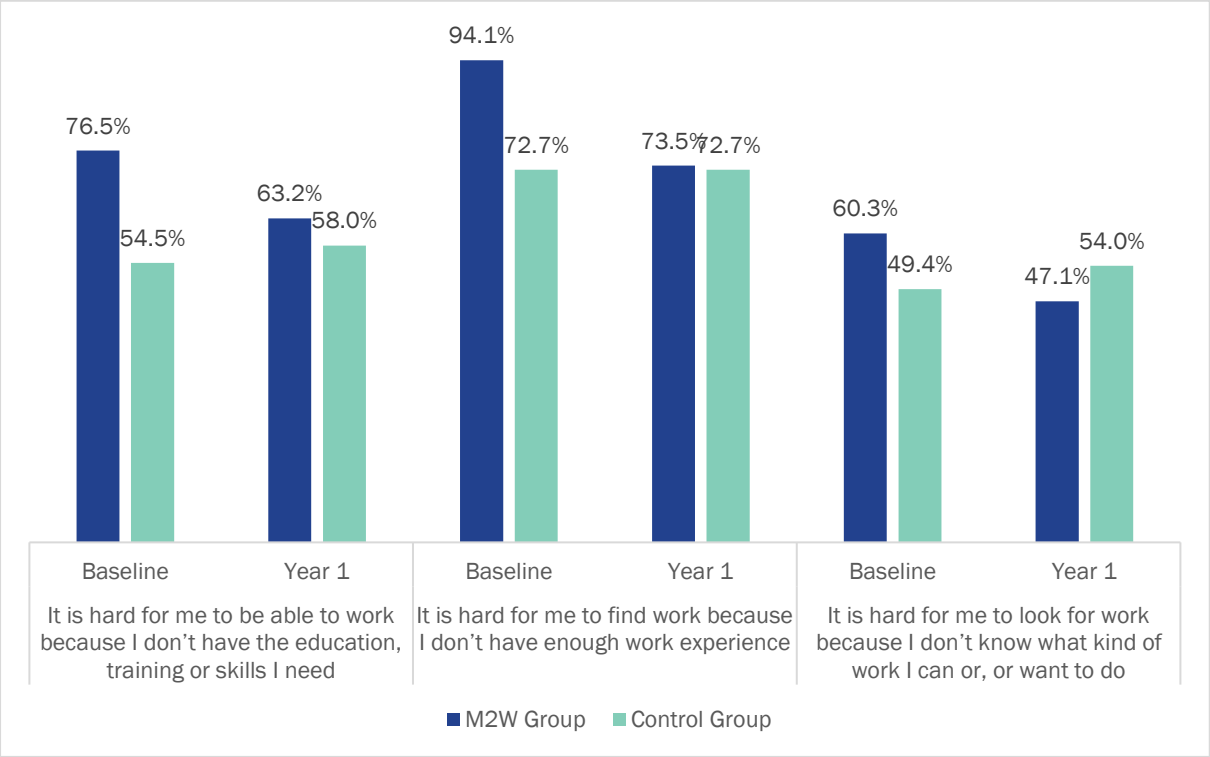


10.3 Human Capital-Oriented Barriers

Figure 10.3 outlines the proportions of each group that reported human capital-oriented barriers to work, namely a lack of education, training or skills, experience, and lack of knowledge of job options, at Baseline and Year 1. These types of barriers were the most prevalent among both groups. At Baseline, 76.5% of the M2W group and 54.5% of the control group reported that it was hard for them to work because they didn't have the education, training or skills they needed. At Year 1, this decreased among the M2W group to 63.2% and increased among the control group to 58.0%. The vast majority (94.1%) of the M2W group and the control group (72.7%) reported that it was hard for them to find work because they didn't have enough work experience at Baseline. This decreased quite drastically among the M2W group, to 73.5% at Year 1, while the control group remained stable at 72.7%. At Baseline, 60.3% of the M2W group and 49.4% of the control group reported that it was hard for them to look for work because they didn't know what kind of work they could do or wanted to do. At Year 1, this decreased among the M2W group to 47.1% and increased among the control group to 54.0%.

Therefore, between Baseline and Year 1, the M2W group has increased their human capital or found ways to overcome the barriers to work associated with their human capital while, over the same time period, a greater proportion of the control group are experiencing human capital-oriented barriers to work.

Figure 10.3 Prevalence of human capital-oriented barriers to work among the M2W group and the control group, Baseline and Year 1



Overall, higher proportions of the M2W group experienced the different types of barriers. This may be attributable to the M2W group having more complex needs, in line with COTA WA's recruitment strategy (Atkins, Kaleveld, & Callis, 2020). It is interesting to note that, with regard to most logistical and personal barriers, both the M2W group and control group followed the same pattern between Baseline and Year 1, such that the proportion of each group experiencing most barriers decreased. Exceptions to this include transport difficulties, lack of driver's licence, and the cost of work essentials such as clothing, equipment and insurance, where the proportion of both groups experiencing these things as a barrier to work decreased between Baseline and Year 1. We posit that this is a result of the support offered by M2W and employment services. Perhaps most interesting, however, are the changes in human capital-oriented barriers between Baseline and Year 1. Among the M2W group, the proportion that experienced a lack of education, training or skills, lack of work experience, and lack of knowledge of job options decreased substantially between Baseline and Year 1. Over the same time period, the proportion of the control group experiencing each of these as a barrier to work increased. This may reflect a particular strength of the M2W program.

11. EMPLOYMENT

Employment is the ultimate goal of the M2W program. It is important to note that the ABS definition of employment counts a person with 1 hour or more of employment as employed. Accordingly, people in both groups could be technically employed at Baseline but underemployed, tenuously employed, and/or still passing the income tests for income support payments, and therefore still meet the eligibility requirements for the M2W program and evaluation. At Baseline, 25.0% of M2W participants and 22.2% of control group participants had never held a paying job. At Year 1, these proportions decreased almost equally, to 16.2% of M2W participants and 14.8% of control group participants who had never held a paying job.

11.1 Labour Force Status

Table 11.1 outlines the labour force statuses of the M2W group and the control group at Baseline and Year 1. At Baseline, 14.9% of the M2W group was employed. At Year 1, this had more than doubled to 32.4%. Among the control group, a higher proportion (27.3%) were employed at Baseline, and this proportion also increased at Year 1, to 42.6%. Therefore, both groups experienced an increase in employment, though the proportional increase among the M2W group between Baseline and Year 1 was higher than among the control group. One in five and one in three M2W group and control group participants, respectively, worked in the week prior to their Year 1 survey. The impact of COVID-19 was present at Year 1, with 10.3% of M2W group and 9.1% of control group participants away from work due to temporary COVID-19 closures in the week prior to their Year 1 survey.

In line with the increased employment rate, the unemployment rate among both groups decreased between Baseline and Year 1 – from 71.6% to 52.9% among the M2W group and from 61.9% to 38.1% among the control group. There was a slight increase between Baseline and Year 1 in the proportion of the M2W group that were not participating in the labour force, from 13.4% to 14.7%. The increase in those not participating in the labour force was higher among the control group, from 10.8% at Baseline to 19.3% at Year 1. This may, once again, reflect the impact of COVID-19, as activity requirements associated with jobseeker payments were removed and the labour market tightened (Services Australia, 2020).

Table 11.1 Labour force status of M2W evaluation participants, by group (Mentoring 2 Work and control group), Baseline and Year 1

	Baseline				Year 1			
	M2W group		Control Group		M2W group		Control Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employed	**10**	**14.9**	**48**	**27.3**	**22**	**32.4**	**75**	**42.6**
Worked last week	10	14.9	47	26.7	14	20.6	57	32.4
Away from work due to COVID-19 temporary closures	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	10.3	16	9.1
Away from work	0	0.0	1	0.6	1	1.5	2	1.1
Unemployed	**48**	**71.6**	**109**	**61.9**	**36**	**52.9**	**67**	**38.1**
Actively seeking work and able to work	48	71.6	109	61.9	36	52.9	67	38.1
Not in labour force	**9**	**13.4**	**19**	**10.8**	**10**	**14.7**	**34**	**19.3**
Actively seeking work and not able to work	4	6.0	0	0.0	3	4.4	6	3.4
Not engaged in work and not actively looking for work	0	0.0	2	1.1	1	1.5	6	3.4
Home duties/caring	1	1.5	5	2.8	2	2.9	9	5.1
Student	3	4.5	6	3.4	4	5.9	11	6.3
Unable to work due to health condition or disability	1	1.5	6	3.4	0	0.0	2	1.1
Total	**67**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**	**68**	**100.0**	**176**	**100.0**

Employment among the mentored group also improved markedly, from 18.4% at Baseline to 44.7% at Year 1. Accordingly, unemployment decreased from 71.1% at Baseline to 42.1% at Year 1. The proportion of the mentored group that were not in the labour force increased slightly from 10.5% to 13.2% between Baseline and Year 1, though this group was comprised of people who were studying and people who were seeking work but not able to work in the week prior to survey.

11.2 Stability of Labour Force Status

Table 11.2 presents employment matrices for the M2W group and the control group in order to demonstrate movements in labour force status among each group. The 32.8% of M2W participants employed at Year 1 were comprised of 10.4% who were also employed at Baseline, 19.4% who were unemployed at Baseline, and 3.0% who were not participating in the labour force at Baseline. Therefore, among the M2W group, the most significant shift to employment at Year 1 occurred among those who were unemployed at Baseline. Conversely, among the 52.2% of M2W participants who were unemployed at Year 1, the vast majority were unemployed at Baseline, while 4.5% lost their employment between Baseline and Year 1 and, for 6.0%, unemployment reflected a movement into the labour force as they were not participating in the labour force at Baseline. The long-term nature of unemployment reflects the broader trend in youth unemployment, though is more pronounced among the M2W group at 2 in 5 young people experiencing unemployment for one year or more

relative to 1 in 5 among the Australian youth population (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019).

Table 11.2 Labour force status matrices, M2W group and control group, Baseline and Year 1

M2W group

		Year 1			
		Employed	Unemployed	Not in the labour force	Total
Baseline	Employed	10.4	4.5	0.0	14.9
	Unemployed	19.4	41.8	10.4	71.6
	Not in the labour force	3.0	6.0	4.5	13.4
Total		32.8	52.2	14.9	100.0

Control Group

		Year 1			
		Employed	Unemployed	Not in the labour force	Total
Baseline	Employed	19.3	4.5	3.4	27.3
	Unemployed	22.7	29.5	9.7	61.9
	Not in the labour force	0.6	4.0	6.3	10.8
Total		42.6	38.1	19.3	100.0

Among the control group, 19.3% who were employed at Year 1 were also employed at Baseline. A little over one-fifth (22.7%) moved from unemployed to employed, and 0.6% were employed at Year 1 who were not participating in the labour force at Baseline. The 38.1% of unemployed control group participants at Year 1 were predominantly those who were also unemployed at Baseline (29.5%), and 4.5% who lost their employment and 4.0% who were not in the labour force. Just under one in ten (9.7%) of control group participants moved from unemployment at Baseline to not participating in the labour force at Year 1, 3.4% went from employment to not participating in the labour force, and 6.3% were not participating in the labour force at both time points. Therefore, while a higher proportion of control group participants than M2W participants were employed at both Baseline and Year 1, the M2W group experienced a greater proportional shift from unemployment and not participating in the labour force to employment.

Stability of labour force status among the mentored group follows a very similar pattern to the broader M2W group: slightly fewer (39.5% among the mentored from versus 41.8% among the M2W group) were unemployed at both time points, 15.8% were employed at both time points (compared with 10.4% in the overall M2W group), and 5.3% (versus 3.0) moved from not participating in the labour force to employment.

As another measure of job stability, participants who were employed were asked if they expected to be in their current job in three months' time, and if, ideally, they wanted to be in their job in three months' time. At Year 1, 64.3% of the M2W group expected to be in their job in three months' time and the same proportion (64.3%) wanted to be in the same job in three months' time. A higher proportion (93.0%) of the control group expected to be in their job in three months' time, but relative to their expectations of employment in 3 months, a lower proportion (75.4%) wanted to be in their job in three months' time.

11.3 Quality of Employment

Table *11.3* presents the numbers and proportions of M2W and control group participants by the numbers of hours worked in the week prior and whether more hours were preferred. At Baseline, none of the M2W group who were employed were working for 30 hours or more; at Year 1 this increased to 57.1% of those who were employed. Within the control group, 14.9% of those employed at Baseline were employed for 30 hours of more, while 45.6% of those employed at Year 1 were employed for 30 hours or more in the week prior to survey. Among those employed in the M2W group and control group, 40.0% and 46.8%, respectively, were employed for 9.5 hours or less in the week prior to their Baseline survey while only 7.1% and 12.3%, respectively were employed for 9.5 hours or less in the week prior to their Year 1 survey. All of the control group (100.0%) and most (90.0%) of the M2W group indicated that they would have preferred more hours than they worked in the week prior to their Baseline survey. At Year 1, this decreased to 57.9% of the control group and 50.0% of the M2W group. Therefore, both groups have experienced a movement into more substantive employment between Baseline and Year 1, with a higher proportion of the M2W group than the control group working 30 hours or more in the week prior to Year 1 survey, and a lower proportion of the M2W group than the control working 9.5 hours or less in the week prior to Year 1 survey.

Table 11.3 Hours worked and preferences for more hours among those who were employed the week prior to survey, M2W group and control group, Baseline and Year 1

	Baseline				Year 1			
	M2W group		Control Group		M2W group		Control Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-9.5 hours	4	40.0	22	46.8	1	7.1	7	12.3
10-19.5 hours	4	40.0	12	25.5	3	21.4	13	22.8
20-29.5 hours	2	20.0	6	12.8	2	14.3	11	19.3
30 hours or more	0	0.0	7	14.9	8	57.1	26	45.6
Total	**10**	**100.0**	**47**	**100.0**	**14**	**100.0**	**57**	**100.0**
Mean		11.5		12.9		30.6		26.8
Prefer more hours								
Yes	9	90.0	47	100.0	7	50.0	33	57.9
No	1	10.0	0	0.0	7	50.0	24	42.1
Total	**10**	**100.0**	**47**	**100.0**	**14**	**100.0**	**57**	**100.0**

With regard to quality of work in terms of hours worked, the mentored group was very much the same as the broader M2W group. While none of the mentored group worked 30 hours or more in the week prior to their Baseline survey, 53.8% did so in the week prior to their Year 1 survey. Just over half (53.8%) of the mentored group would have preferred more hours than they worked in the week prior to their survey.

11.4 COVID-19 Impacts

As the Year 1 surveys were underway when COVID-19 and its restrictions were in place, some impacts of COVID-19 were evident. Of those, some experienced positive impacts: 27.3% and 28.0% of those employed among the M2W group and the control group, respectively, got more hours in a job they already had or got their current job as a result of COVID-19.

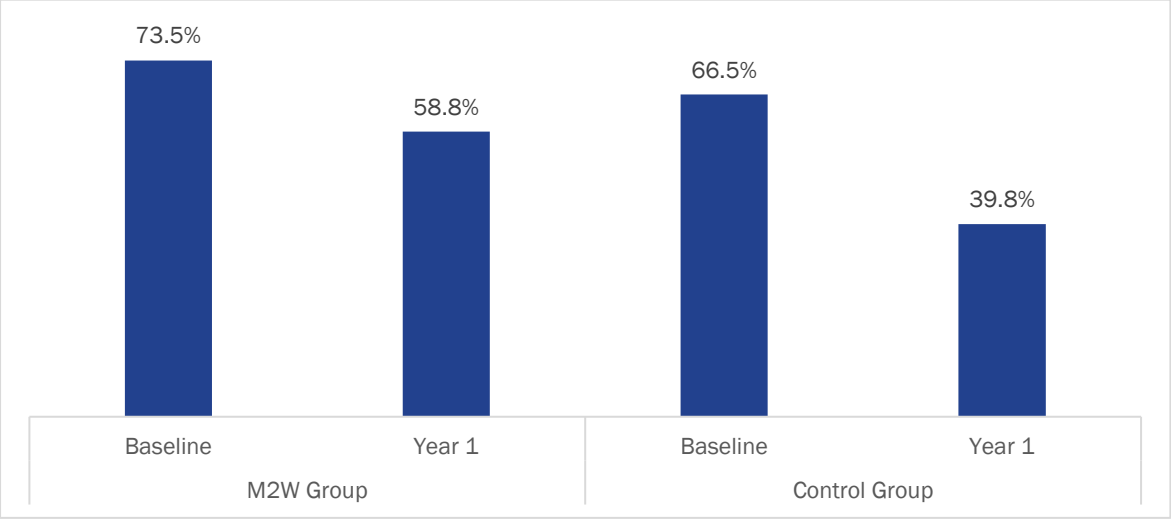
However, some of the impacts were negative: 5.1% of those in the control group who were not employed (unemployed or not in the labour force) in the week prior to their Year 1 survey, reported that their workplace had closed due to COVID-19 and 4.0% of those in the control group who were not employed in the week prior to their Year 1 survey reported that their roles had been made redundant. In addition, 20% of the M2W group and 25.9% of the control group reported that their ability to look for work had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and 35.0% of the M2W group and 27.8% of the control group reported that their motivation to look for work had been affected by COVID-19.

12. MENTORING EXPERIENCE

To investigate the presence of formal and informal mentors in the young adults' lives, the young adults were asked about the career supports they had in their life. Specifically, the question asked was "Would you say there is a person/people in your life - apart from a parent/guardian - who you consider to be a mentor/mentors? (i.e. someone you can go to for support and guidance, and career advice)", at both Baseline and Year 1. At Year 1, those in the M2W group could include their mentor from the M2W program.

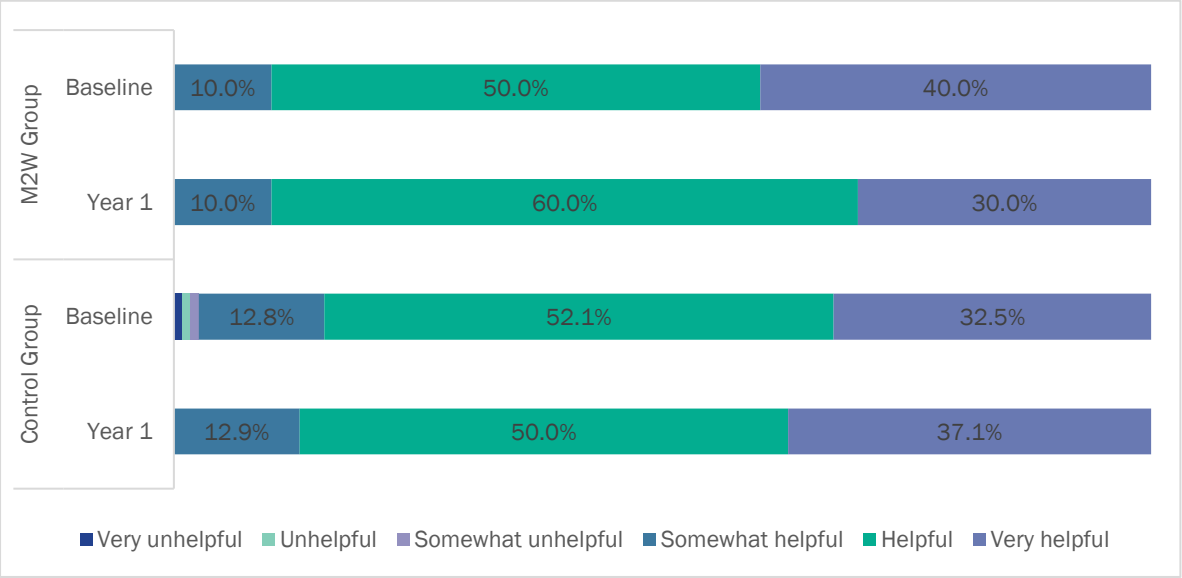
Figure 12.1 below displays the proportions of the young adults that answered "yes" to this question. Interestingly, the proportions of those with mentors in their life decreased between Baseline and Year 1, for both groups, although this decrease was much greater for the control group. At Baseline, 73.5% of the M2W group and 66.5% of the control group said that there were people in their lives that they considered to be mentors. At Year 1, this decreased to 58.8% of the M2W group and 39.8% of the control group. The decrease may be explained by the limited contact associated with the COVID-19 restrictions. The young adults may have felt less connected to their mentors during this time and may have felt that they could not go to them for support. Alternatively, it may be that the experience of long term unemployment has made the young adults re-evaluate the quality of their supports and may no longer consider mentors they identified at Baseline to be mentors at Year 1 due to their inability to change their situation.

Figure 12.1 Proportion of young adults with a mentor in their life at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



The young adults that reported that they did have a mentor in their life were then asked "how helpful is their career advice?" Responses were provided on a six-point Likert scale (1 = very unhelpful, 2 = unhelpful, 3 = somewhat unhelpful, 4 = somewhat helpful, 5 = helpful, 6 = very helpful). Figure 12.2 displays the distribution of the results for the groups at both time points. Between Baseline and Year 1, the extent to which the mentors in their lives provided career advice that was helpful decreased slightly between Baseline and Year 1 as the composition of those that responded with "helpful" and "very helpful" changed slightly. Overall, none of the young adults in the M2W group felt that the support they received from any mentors in their life was unhelpful at Baseline and Year 1. In the control group, the helpfulness of mentor's career advice increased between Baseline and Year 1, which suggests that those who had unhelpful mentors at Baseline, may no longer consider them to be mentors at Year 1.

Figure 12.2 Extent to which career advice provided by mentors is helpful at Baseline and Year 1, by M2W group and control group



12.1 Formal Mentoring Experience

To examine whether the young adults were involved in other formal mentoring programs, they were asked “Are you currently engaged in a mentoring program?” The young adults in the M2W program were asked to exclude their M2W program involvement from their answer. At Baseline, 7.4% of the young adults in the M2W group and 2.8% of the control group said that they were involved in a mentoring program. At Year 1, 2.9% of the young adults in the M2W group and 6.8% of the control group said that they were involved in a mentoring program.

12.2 Impact of the Program

To investigate the impact of the M2W program on the young adults’ lives, the M2W group was asked to rate the extent to program had impacted each of the elements listed in Figure 12.3. Responses were provided on a four-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent). The most highly rated statement was “gave me clarity about jobs and possible career paths” followed by “gave me clarity about what work I want to do” and “increased my confidence” with 41.2%, 39.7% and 32.4% answering “to a great extent”, respectively. The lowest ranked statements were “widened my friendship group”, “taught me how to keep a job and be more successful at work” and “increased my employment networks” with 42.6%, 23.5% and 19.1% answering “not at all”, respectively. The distribution of responses likely reflects the shift in the focus of the mentoring sessions from employment attainment to employment readiness and personal development.

Figure 12.3 Ways in which M2W affected the young adults' lives at Year 1, M2W group

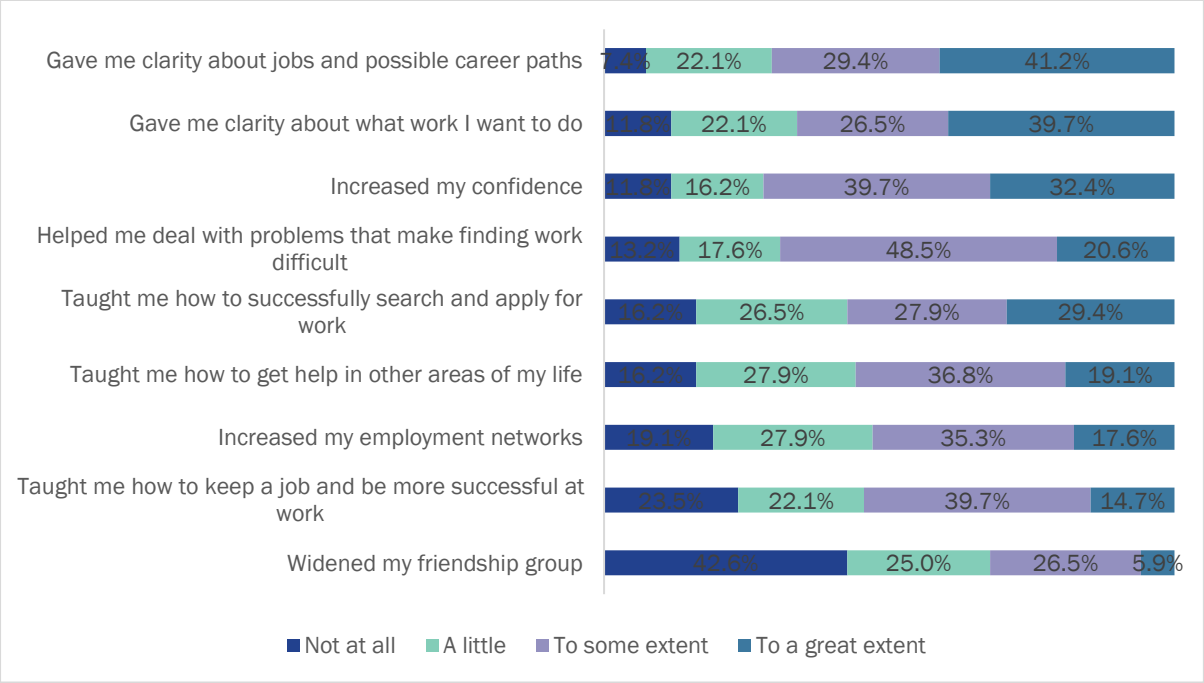
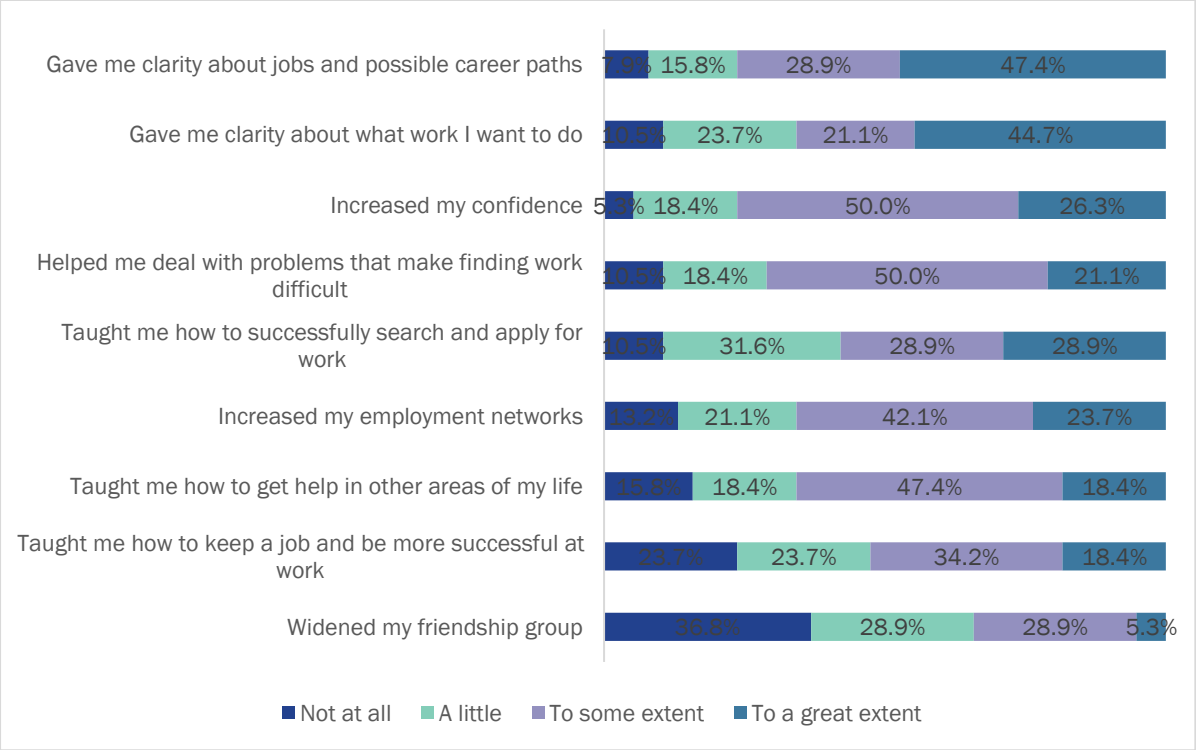


Figure 12.4 outlines the ways in which the M2W program affected the lives of the young adults who received mentoring. While fewer mentored young adults felt that the program had given them clarity about jobs and possible career paths, clarity about what work they want to do, and increased their confidence to 'a great extent', the majority felt that the program had increased these things at least 'to some extent'. Very similar proportions of the mentored group as the M2W group believed the program has taught them how to get help in other areas of their lives, taught them how to keep a job and be more successful at work, and widened their friendship groups. The ranking of these different factors in terms of the extent to which the program had affected them was exactly the same among the mentored group as the overall M2W group.

Figure 12.4 Ways in which M2W affected the young adults' lives at Year 1, mentored group



12.3 Lasting Impact

To investigate the lasting impact of the M2W program, the M2W group was asked "Thinking about how you are at the moment, to what extent has the input from the Mentoring 2 Work program had an impact in the following areas?" The categories (listed in Figure 12.4) were drawn from the discussion topics reported by the mentors after each session. Responses were provided on a four-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent).

As can be seen in Figure 12.4, goals and outcomes, employability, and life skills were the most highly rated categories of lasting impact.

Figure 12.5 Lasting impact of the program at Year 1, M2W group

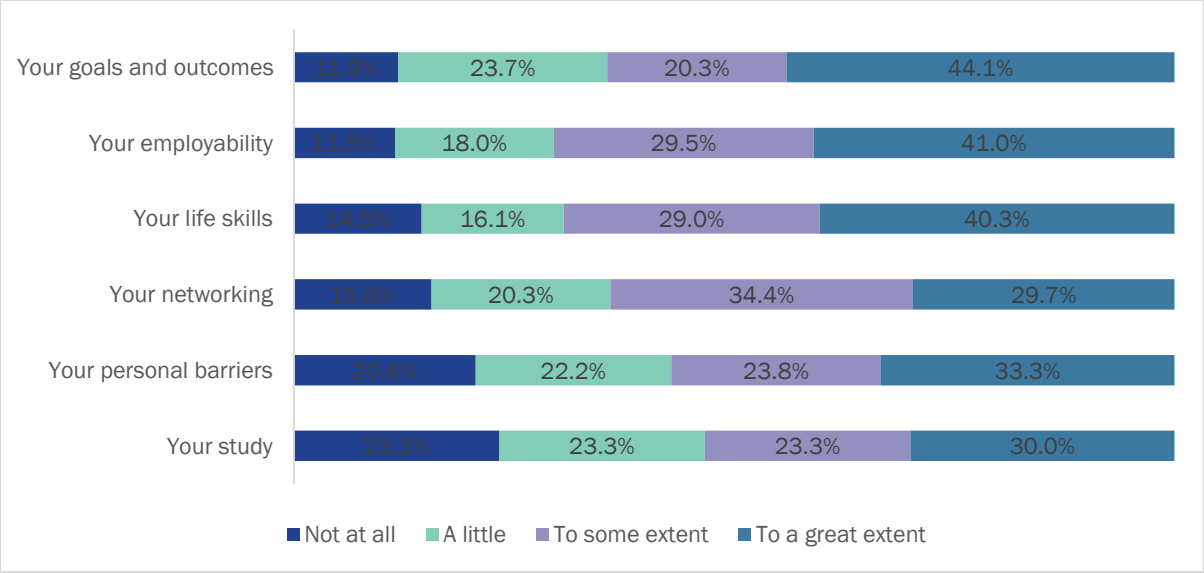
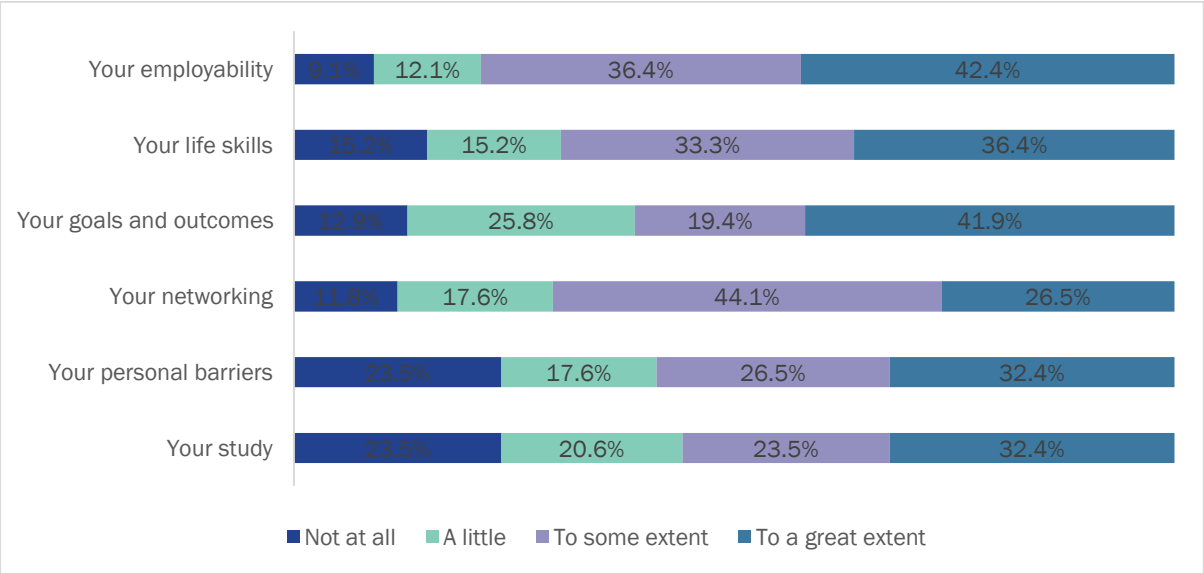


Figure 12.6 outlines the lasting impact of the M2W program on the mentored group. More mentored young adults (78.8%) than young adults in the overall M2W group (64.4%) felt that the program had increased their employability, and the mentored young adults indicated that this was the most prominent impact of the program out of those listed below. The majority agreed that their life skills, goals and outcomes, networking, personal barriers and study had all been impacted by the program 'to some extent' or 'to a great extent'.

Figure 12.6 Lasting impact of the program at Year 1, mentored group



13. CONCLUSION

This report has presented the outcomes of M2W participants relative to control group participants, based on two waves of survey collection (Baseline and Year 1). Outcomes were presented across a number of domains of socioeconomic wellbeing: health, education, housing, wellbeing, job readiness, barriers to employment, and employment. Experiences of mentoring are also presented, with a greater focus on the M2W group due to their participation in the program.

The sample of the M2W group who completed both the Baseline and Year 1 surveys is comprised of 68 young adults, 52.9% of whom were female, 8.8% of whom identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 88.2% of whom were born in Australia. Similarly, 48.9% of the 176 control group participants who completed both the Baseline and Year 1 surveys were female, 7.4% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 85.2% were born in Australia. The majority of both groups had attained education of Year 12 or above, and this proportion increased slightly between Baseline and Year 1. However, the Year 12 attainment of both groups, at 82.4% among M2W participants and 81.3% among control group participants at Year 1, was lower than the 85% retention rate to Year 12 across Australia in 2018 (AIHW, 2018).

Health was assessed at both time points, as poor health can be a barrier to employment and gainful employment can positively affect health (Ross and Mirowsky, 1995). The majority of both the M2W group and the control group, at both time points, assessed their health as at least 'good'. Despite their younger age, relative to the average Australian's rating of their own health, both the M2W group and control group rated their health as poorer. This likely reflects the high proportions of both groups with physical health, mental health, or disabling conditions likely to last 6 months or more: 61.8% at Baseline, decreasing to 42.6% at Year 1 among the M2W group, and 50.0% at Baseline, decreasing to 44.3% at Year 1 among the control group. While there is a substantial decrease in the proportions of young people experiencing chronic health, mental health, or disabling conditions between Baseline and Year 1 (particularly among the M2W group), the proportion of those with such conditions who found their condition(s) to be a barrier to gaining and maintaining work increased between Baseline and Year 1. The most common barriers to employment felt with regard to health were limitations to the types of jobs that could be done (44.8% of the M2W group with chronic conditions and 26.9% of the control group with chronic conditions, at Year 1), and believing employers will not hire them due to their conditions (41.4% of the M2W group with chronic conditions and 24.4% of the control group with chronic conditions, at Year 1).

Stable housing forms an important base from which employment can be prepared for and recovered from. The vast majority (>90%) of both M2W and control group participants, at both time points, resided in permanent accommodation. Between Baseline and Year 1, there was a minor decrease in the proportion of young people in both groups who were living with their parents, in favour of living with a partner and, to a lesser extent, living alone.

Much like health, employment positively affects wellbeing, and poor wellbeing can act as a barrier to gaining and sustaining employment. We assessed mental wellbeing, social support and self-efficacy among both the M2W group and the control group at Baseline and Year 1. Mental wellbeing was assessed with the WHO-5 scale. There was no substantial change among the M2W group nor the control group with respect to average WHO-5 scores. A lower proportion of both groups, but particularly the M2W group, had WHO-5 scores that indicated poor wellbeing at Year 1 relative to Baseline. Both the control group and M2W were quite evenly split into thirds in terms of significant positive, significant negative, and no changes to their WHO-5 score between Baseline and Year 1, explaining the lack of difference in average score between Baseline and Year 1 and reflecting the varying circumstances individuals face. Social support scores were low and unchanging among both the M2W group and the control group at both time points. Self-efficacy did not substantially change between Baseline and Year 1.

Job readiness was measured by how confident the young people felt undertaking selected job seeking tasks, and how confident they felt that they would be able to find and maintain meaningful work. The M2W group was, overall, confident in their ability to undertake job seeking activities (e.g. cold calling, enquiring about jobs) and their ability to find meaningful work. This confidence increased

between Baseline and Year 1. Control group participants were less confident than M2W group participants, and their confidence decreased between Baseline and Year 1. This may reflect the support offered by the M2W program, such that M2W participants were directly supported in undertaking these activities, and this support may have mitigated some of the negative emotional effects of long-term unemployment.

Logistical barriers, personal barriers, and human capital-oriented barriers to work were assessed at Baseline and Year 1 among both groups. Despite sustained permanent housing, more young people in both the M2W group and the control group reported problems with housing and their living arrangements as a barrier to work. Similarly, the proportion of both groups that experienced problems with family and friends as a barrier increased between Baseline and Year 1. The proportion of both groups, but particularly the M2W group reporting issues with transport, a lack of driver's licence, and the cost of work essentials as barriers to work decreased between Baseline and Year 1, likely reflecting the type of support received. Personal barriers, such as physical health, mental health, and caring responsibilities formed more of a barrier for both groups at Year 1 than Baseline. Human capital-oriented barriers to work, such as low education, skills and training, a lack of work experience, and lack of knowledge about work opportunities, decreased for M2W participants and increased for control group participants between Baseline and Year 1. This may indicate that a particular strength of the M2W program is human capital development.

Though the control group had a higher employment rate at both time points, the M2W group reported a more substantial increase in employment rate than the control group between Baseline and Year 1. In line with the increase in employment rates, the unemployment rate decreased substantially among both groups. In terms of movements between Baseline and Year 1, there were higher movements among both groups from unemployment to employment than vice versa. There was greater movement from employment or unemployment to non-participation in the labour force between Baseline and Year 1 among the control group than the M2W group. The quality of work, in terms of hours worked, increased among both the M2W group and the control group between Baseline and Year 1. However, 50.0% of the M2W group and 57.9% of the control group wanted more hours than they worked the week prior. Some positive COVID-19 impacts on employment were present among both groups, such as gaining employment or more hours due to COVID-19, but negative impacts such as reduced motivation, decreased labour force participation, and redundancies/stand downs were also present.

Many young people, in both groups (73.5% of the M2W group and 66.5% of the control group), reported the presence of a mentor in their lives at Baseline. This proportion decreased between Baseline and Year 1, perhaps attributable to the restricted contact resulting from COVID-19. The vast majority (>85%) of both groups with a mentor reported that their mentor's career advice was 'very helpful' or 'helpful'. Among those in the M2W program, 41.2% reported that the program had increased their clarity about jobs and career paths 'to a great extent' and 39.7% reported that the program had increased their clarity about the work they want to do 'to a great extent'. Almost one-third (32.4%) reported that the program had increased their confidence 'to a great extent' while 29.4% believed that the program had taught them how to search for and apply for work 'to a great extent'.

In sum, the greatest difference between the M2W group and the control group are in the domains of job readiness and barriers to employment, such that young people in the M2W group increased in terms of job readiness metrics and decreased in terms of their experiences of barriers to employment. It is important to note that the control group had a higher employment rate than the M2W group at both Baseline and Year 1, however, the M2W group experienced a greater increase. Therefore, a longer time horizon may have resulted in a greater differential impact. There were no substantial changes in either group with regard to health, education, housing, and wellbeing. This may indicate the age of the participants, such that socioeconomic wellbeing is still largely determined by parents and family, and prevalence of health issues is lower than among the general population. Alternatively, there may be a lagged effect between gaining employment and other socioeconomic outcomes. Alternatively again, as this report primarily document changes in averages, it could be that, for a variety of both program-related and non-program-related reasons, some people have substantially worse outcomes while others have substantially better outcomes, and the average (by definition) middles out.

14. REFERENCES

Aizer, A., & Currie, J. (2014). The intergenerational transmission of inequality: maternal disadvantage and health at birth. *Science*, *344*(6186), 856-861.

Arnett, J. J. (1997). Young people's conceptions of the transition to adulthood. *Youth & Society*, *29*(1), 3-23.

Atkins, M., Callis, Z., Flatau, P., & Kaleveld, L. (2020). *COVID-19 and youth unemployment: CSI response*. May 2020. Available from https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi_fact_sheet_social_covid-19_youth_unemployment.pdf

Atkins, M., Kaleveld, L., & Callis, Z. (2020). *Mentoring 2 Work Process Evaluation Final Report.* Perth: The University of Western Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2011). *Australian social trends, December*. Cat. no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2018). *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2019). *Education and Work, Australia, May 2019*. Cat. no. 6227.0. Available from https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/education-and-work-australia/latest-release#data-download

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2020a). *Labour Force, Australia, August 2020*. Cat. no. 6220.0. Available from https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release#data-downloads

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2020b). *Migration, Australia*. Cat. no. 3412.0. Available from https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0Main%20Features32018-19?opendocument&tabname=

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2018). *Australia's Health 2018*. Australia's health series no. 16. AUS 221. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2019). *Secondary education: school retention and completion*. Australia's Welfare series snapshot.

Australian Unemployed Workers' Union. (2020). *Job seekers v job vacancy official data.* Available from https://unemployedworkersunion.com/job-seekers-v-job-vacancy-data/

Bottrell, D., & Armstrong, D. (2007). Changes and exchanges in marginal youth transitions. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *10*(3), 353-371.

Bowman, D., Borlagdan, J., & Bond, S. (2015). *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy: Vic.

Bowman, D., Allan, M., & Levin, I. (2019). *Getting to work? Insights about the transition from education to employment from the Life Chances Study, Stage 11.* Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy: Vic.

Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2018). *An unfair Australia? Mapping youth unemployment hotspots.* Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy: Vic.

Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2019). *Prosperity's children. Youth unemployment in Australia.* Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy: Vic.

Cennamo, L. & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes, and person-organisation values fit, *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23*(8), 891-906.

CK Chiu, W., Chan, A. W., Snape, E., & Redman, T. (2001). Age stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards older workers: An East-West comparison. *Human Relations*, *54*(5), 629-661.

Cuervo, H., & Wyn, J. (2011). *Rethinking youth transitions in Australia: A historical and multidimensional approach*. Melbourne: Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

Denny, L., & Churchill, B. (2016). Youth employment in Australia: A comparative analysis of labour force participation by age group. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, *1*(2), 5-22.

Department of Small Business and Jobs. (2017). *Labour Market for Apprentices.* ACT: Canberra. ISSN: 2206-1363.

Derwin, J. (2020). *There are now three unemployed Australians for every job vacancy. This is why it's your problem.* Business Insider January 8 2020. Available from https://www.businessinsider.com.au/australia-job-vacancies-unemployment-rate-problem-2020-1

Foster, H., & Hagan, J. (2007). Incarceration and intergenerational social exclusion. *Social Problems*, *54*(4), 399-433.

Gray, M., & Hunter, B. (2005). The labour market dynamics of Indigenous Australians. *Journal of Sociology*, *41*(4), 386-405.

Hedman, L., Manley, D., Van Ham, M., & Östh, J. (2015). Cumulative exposure to disadvantage and the intergenerational transmission of neighbourhood effects. *Journal of Economic Geography*, *15*(1), 195-215.

Keating, P. (1994). *Working nation*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra: ACT.

Knott, M. (2016). *Big debts and broken dreams: Students without degrees branded as "failures".* 30 July 2016. Sydney Morning Herald. Available from https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/big-debts-and-broken-dreams-students-without-degrees-branded-as-failures-20160731-gqhh2w.html

Lathouris, O. (2020). *Australia Post job application discourages 'over-entitled millenials'*. 9 News online. January 24 2020. Available from https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-post-job-application-discourages-over-entitled-millennials-warilla-wollongong-nsw/6fd47780-909e-481a-aeed-f775150457dc

Loretto, W., & White, P. (2006). Employers' attitudes, practices and policies towards older workers. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *16*(3), 313-330.

McIlroy, T. (2020). *'This is harder': PM's warning on youth unemployment*. Australian Financial Review. 14 May 2020. Available from https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/this-is-harder-pm-s-warning-on-youth-unemployment-20200514-p54syl

Ross, C. E., & Mirowsky, J. (1995). Does employment affect health?, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *36*(3), 230-243.

Services Australia. (2020). *I'm a job seeker*. Available from https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-and-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/if-you-get-payment/im-job-seeker

Stanwick, J., Lu, T., Rittie, T., & Circelli, M. (2014). *How young people are faring in the transition from school to work.* Foundation for Young Australians. Available from https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NVCER-report-FINAL-single-pages.pdf

State of Western Australia. (2020). *WA Recovery Plan*. Available from https://www.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/WA-Recovery-Plan.pdf

Stronks, K., Van De Mheen, H., Van den Bos, J., & Mackenbach, J. P. (1997). The interrelationship between income, health and employment status. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *26*(3), 592-600.

Sylvester, B. (2020). *'My sense of identity is falling away': young people pay the heaviest price in Covid recession.* The Guardian. 19 September 2020. Available from https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2020/sep/19/my-sense-of-identity-is-falling-away-young-people-pay-the-heaviest-price-in-covid-recession

Taylor, P. E., & Walker, A. (1994). The ageing workforce: Employers' attitudes towards older people. *Work, Employment and Society*, *8*(4), 569-591.

Yeates, J. (2019). *Grey clouds and silver linings: youth unemployment and the gig economy*. Available from https://medium.com/nous-group-thinkdesign-series/grey-clouds-and-silver-linings-youth-unemployment-and-the-gig-economy-e5486137c4bf

CENTRE for SOCIAL IMPACT

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA