



Building on Belonging:

Impact of Licensing Advisors and Mentors

Overview

In February 2020, NCARB and NOMA launched the initial [Baseline on Belonging survey](#) to gather information about experiences and impediments along the path to licensure, with the goal of better understanding pain points and barriers for underrepresented groups in the architecture profession.

Now, NCARB and NOMA have released an action plan to address some disparities found in the initial survey results, and we're conducting follow-up research in specific areas to better inform our work.

During their careers, many candidates choose to connect with peers or more experienced professionals to guide them through professional development or licensure goals. These can include [architect licensing advisors](#)—volunteer students, licensure candidates, architects, and educators who help provide personalized, local support to emerging professionals—as well as professional mentors. NCARB recently conducted a brief survey exploring the experiences candidates and architects have had with their licensing advisors* and mentors.

The survey findings demonstrate three related issues faced with candidates' experience with licensing advisors and mentors:

1. Only one in every five candidates connected with a licensing advisor or someone they considered a licensing advisor while working toward earning a license. Of those candidates, many indicated their licensing advisor did not provide significant support—with common issues related to a lack of advisors' knowledge of resources or responsibilities and scheduling conflicts.
2. Candidates were more likely to receive support from their mentors and were more likely to find their mentors to be knowledgeable about the licensure process. Despite this, more than half of respondents said their advisor or mentor did not help them become licensed.
3. Women and candidates of color may face greater difficulties when it comes to connecting with a licensing advisor and/or mentor, especially one who is knowledgeable and supportive.

NCARB is in the middle of a multi-year effort to re-envision the process of becoming an architect. Over the next several years, our expert volunteers will explore how best to measure and assess competency on the path to licensure—including opportunities to improve how candidates earn experience and make the current core licensure requirements more flexible. The findings from this survey will help inform their work, guide NCARB's efforts to strengthen the licensing advisors community, and assist in the development of new resources to support licensing advisors and mentors in understanding their responsibilities to guide candidates successfully as they become licensed architects.

*Note: Based on open-text responses, many survey participants were not specifically referring to an [architect licensing advisor](#) when responding to survey questions about "licensing advisors."

Survey Findings: Accessibility of Licensing Advisors and Mentors

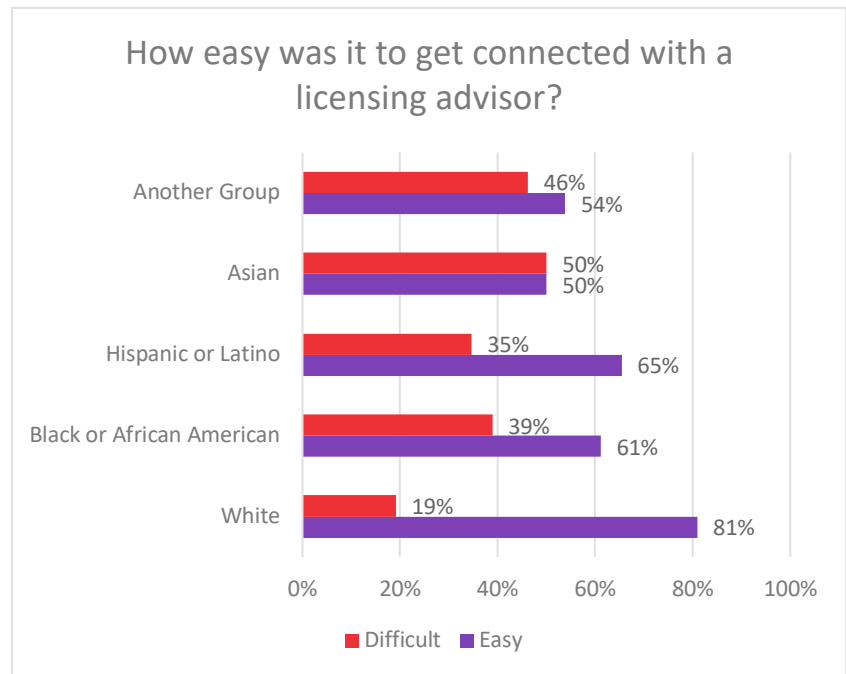
The survey explored candidates’ experiences with the accessibility, knowledge, and support offered by licensing advisors and mentors. Explore the findings based on responses from over 900 candidates.

ACCESS TO LICENSING ADVISORS

When asked if they had worked with a licensing advisor during their licensure process, 64% of respondents indicated they had not and 14% were unsure. Only 21% of respondents worked with a licensing advisor during their licensure process. Of those, 62% of respondents said their advisor was at their firm, 21% at the architecture school (including faculty or a fellow student), 8% at their jurisdiction’s American Institute of Architects (AIA) chapter, and 24% said other.

Men and women were nearly equally likely to have worked with a licensing advisor; however, there were slight disparities when viewed by race and ethnicity. At 23%, Black or African American respondents were among the most likely to say they had an advisor as a licensure candidate.

When asked if they felt licensing advisors and mentors were easily accessible along their licensure journey, disparities between demographic groups grew. Although more Black or African American respondents were most likely to work with a licensing advisor, white respondents were most likely to find it somewhat or very easy to connect with one. Of those who had worked with a licensing advisor, 75% of respondents thought it was somewhat or very easy to find a licensing advisor. White respondents were much more likely to indicate it was somewhat

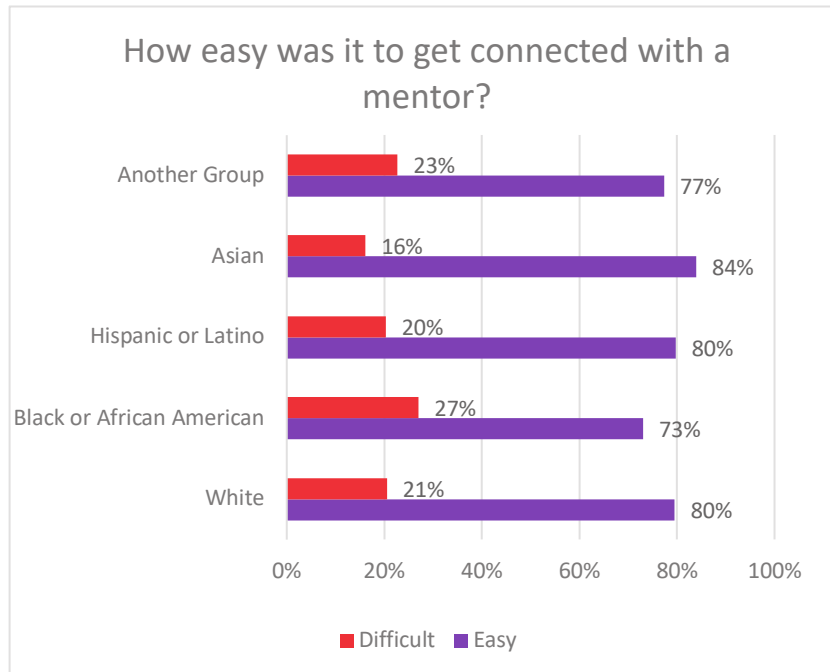


or very easy to find a licensing advisor at 81%—30 percentage points more likely than Asian respondents (50%) and 20 percentage points more likely than Black or African American respondents (61%). Of all racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic or Latino respondents were much more likely to report it was very difficult to find a licensing advisor (27%).

Of respondents who worked with a licensing advisor, most found their licensing advisor through their firm (62%). Men were more likely to find their licensing advisor through official channels such as school programs, AIA chapters, and firm support programs, while women were more likely to find their advisor through personal connections. However, women were much more likely than men to indicate that it was easy to access an advisor.

ACCESS TO MENTORS

While just 21% of respondents worked with a licensing advisor during their licensure process, nearly half (48%) of respondents said they worked with a mentor. Black or African American respondents were the most likely to say they worked with a mentor (52%), while Asian respondents were the least likely (34%). Men and women were nearly equally likely to have worked with a mentor during their licensure journey.



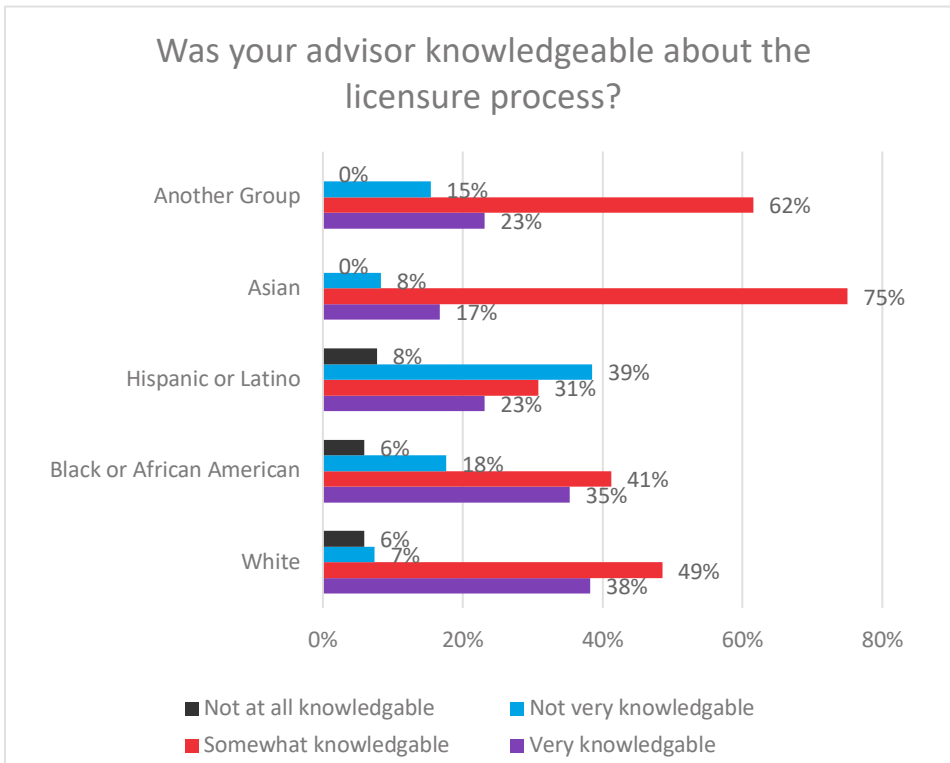
Nearly half of respondents (48%) found their mentor through a professional connection, and 39% found their mentor through a firm program. Black or African American respondents and women were 5% and 6% more likely, respectively, to report that they found their mentor through a personal connection.

Overall, 80% of respondents found it somewhat or very easy to connect with a mentor, with less disparities seen among demographic groups compared to ease of connecting with an

advisor. Those who found connecting with a mentor difficult most notably identified challenges such as lack of support, lack of options, and their mentor's ability to commit time to them.

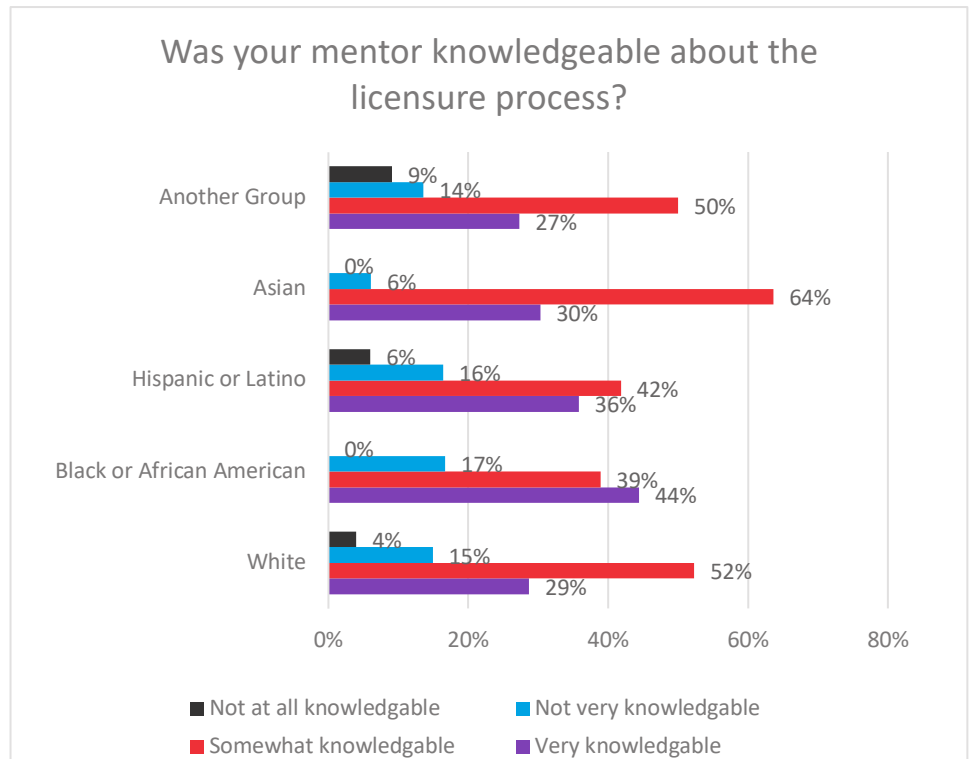
KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT

When asked if they felt their advisor was knowledgeable, more than a third (36%) of respondents said their advisor was very knowledgeable about the licensure process, while nearly half (43%) said their advisor was somewhat knowledgeable. Twenty percent of respondents indicated that their advisor was not knowledgeable about current programs and licensure requirements. Of all racial groups, Hispanic or Latino respondents were most likely to say that their advisor was not very knowledgeable.



Of the support received from licensing advisors, respondents were mostly likely to receive AXP support (49%) and licensure information (44%) from their licensing advisors. Although there was little variation across genders, white respondents were much more likely to indicate they received networking support than any other racial group.

When asked if they felt their mentor was knowledgeable, less than a third (30%) indicated their mentor was very knowledgeable about the licensure process, and more than half (51%) said that their mentor was somewhat knowledgeable. Asian respondents were most likely to indicate they felt their mentor was very or somewhat knowledgeable, while women were more likely than men to indicate that their mentor was not knowledgeable.



Of the support received from mentors, respondents were most likely to receive general guidance (78%), licensure information (27%), and access to study materials (22%). However, Black or African American respondents were 14 percentage points less likely to receive access to study materials compared to white respondents. Additionally, men were more likely to receive networking connections than women.

Finally, respondents were also asked if their advisor or mentor helped them become licensed. More than half (54%) of respondents indicated that their advisor or mentor had no impact on their licensure journey. Black or African American respondents were most likely to indicate their advisor helped them get licensed (54%). Hispanic and Latino respondents and those from some other racial or ethnic group were most likely to indicate that their advisor or mentor did not help them become licensed, making up 69% and 63% of respondents, respectively. Women were also more likely to say their mentor or advisor did not help them become licensed compared to their male peers.

