

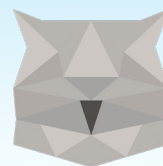
YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF CARE IN BC:

March 2022 update

A youth-led study by McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy



**McCreary
Centre Society**



**YOUTH
RESEARCH
ACADEMY**

We acknowledge that the McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy is located on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We also acknowledge the ancestral and continuing connection to this land of the Métis Nation.

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**McCreary
Centre Society**



**YOUTH
RESEARCH
ACADEMY**

Copies of this report are available at: www.mcs.bc.ca.
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**The Youth Research Academy
were supported by the
McCreary staff team**

Thank you

Thank you to all the youth with care experience who have joined this study, and for your ongoing participation. Quotes from survey participants are included throughout the report.

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- Office of the Representative for Children and Youth
- Options Community Services
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- PLEA Community Services Society of BC
- Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia
- St. Leonard's Youth and Family Services Society
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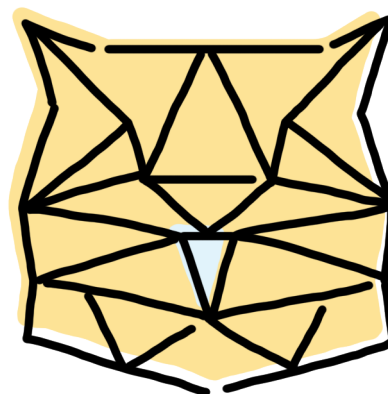
FOREWORD

We—McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA)—are a group of youth between the ages of 16–24 who have experience in the government care system. We are trained to carry out research and we focus on projects that are of interest to youth in and from care.

The findings in this report are from a longitudinal study we are conducting of the aging out process that youth in government care and alternatives to care in BC experience when they turn 19 and leave the system.

Our work on this study is a continuation of the work done by previous cohorts of the YRA, and it has been one of our main priorities since joining the sixth cohort of the YRA in June 2021. We reviewed the preliminary report of findings released by the previous YRA cohort and discussed ideas on how to increase youth's participation in the study. Throughout most of the fall we were focused on recruitment efforts for the study in hopes to increase the number of youth participating. In November, we worked on our analysis plan, and then after the analyses were completed, we reviewed the results, and identified key findings. Future cohorts of the YRA will continue to support data collection and analysis of the findings as more surveys come in.

We hope this report shines a light on the experiences that youth transitioning out of care face, and on how policy makers, service providers, and other adults in the community can support youth's transition out of care. We feel it is important to consider the findings within the context of the experiences of most other youth aged 18 to 20 in BC. For example, how many youth without care experience feel prepared to live independently and pay bills once they turn 19, and how can youth in and from care be best supported in this area? Lastly, when reading this report, we hope you consider that behind each statistic are unique young people, and that the needs, goals, and strengths of youth in and from care are diverse. We also hope you consider each youth's individual strengths and resiliency when interacting with them and when supporting their transition out of care.



KEY FINDINGS

- Most youth with care experience could identify something they were proud of, such as their educational achievements, perseverance, and desire to create a better life for themselves and other youth in and from care.

Challenges youth experienced during their transition out of care:

- Less than half of youth approaching the transition out of care were aware they had a transition plan (47%), and felt prepared to pay their bills and budget (45%) and to find housing (43%). When youth who had left care reflected back, 17% felt they had not been at all prepared for the transition and 29% had felt only slightly prepared.
- Youth who had recently transitioned out of care experienced financial challenges in the past six months, including being unable to afford housing; and a shortage of safe and affordable housing. Also, 52% were in debt (vs. 19% of youth nearing their transition), including 42% who had credit card debt (among those in debt).
- The majority also experienced mental health challenges. For example, 72% who had recently transitioned out of care felt they needed mental health support in the past six months. Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely than those who had not yet transitioned to have missed out on the support they felt they needed (66% missed out vs. 43% of those still in care).
- Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 86% had experienced challenges to finding housing in the past six months. Also, 46% had moved in the past six months, including 18% who had moved two or more times.

Helpful supports during the transition out of care:

- Youth who had their basic needs met reported better health and well-being. For example, youth approaching their transition out of care who always ate three meals a day were more likely than those who did not eat regular meals to rate as good or excellent their physical health (75% vs. 49%), mental health (46% vs. 27%), emotional health (57% vs. 26%), and spiritual health (71% vs. 34%).
- Youth identified that having supportive adults at school and outside of school helped them to do well at school. Among youth who needed help with their school work, 71% of those approaching their transition out of care reported having an adult who helped them in this area, compared to 49% of youth who had recently transitioned out of care.
- Having close friends was protective. For example, youth approaching their transition out of care who had at least one close friend with care experience were more likely than those who did not have such friends to often or always feel hopeful (31% vs. 16%) and were less likely to often or always feel stressed (48% vs. 68%).
- Adult support was also important. For example, among youth nearing their transition out of care who asked a social worker for help in the past six months, those who had found their social worker helpful were more likely to feel prepared to apply for needed benefits (65% vs. 39% who had not found this support helpful) and to pay bills and budget (53% vs. 31%). Similarly, those who had an adult who helped them with making or getting to appointments were more likely to have accessed mental health support in the past six months (71% vs. 33% of youth who did not have this type of adult assistance; among those who felt they needed this type of support).

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Since 2019, McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA) have been conducting a longitudinal study of British Columbia (BC) youth transitioning out of government care and alternatives to care (e.g., on a Youth Agreement), including youth transitioning out of the services of Delegated Agencies.

The goal of the study is to better understand the experiences of BC youth as they go through the process of transitioning out of care. The results of the study are intended to provide policy makers and service providers with up-to-date and relevant information that can identify what is working well and what is challenging for these young people, and ensure youth are supported to experience the most successful transition possible.

In 2019, members of the YRA invited key policy makers and service providers to join them in developing the survey topics for a questionnaire that youth could complete every six months starting approximately six months before their 19th birthday, through to their 24th birthday.



Once the YRA had gathered previously validated items and developed potential new items, the 62-item baseline survey was piloted with youth who had experience of the BC care system. The baseline survey was modified and shortened for administration at later time points to reflect the changing circumstances of young people leaving care, while keeping many of the core questions to allow for comparisons over time. The surveys were modified in Spring 2020 to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Questions on the surveys ask about youth's background, health (including mental health and substance use), experiences in care, living situations, education, employment, finances, goals, access to services and supports, strengths and needs, and more recently about experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data collection started in spring 2019 for surveys from youth approaching their 19th birthday and the transition out of care or an alternative to care, and in fall 2019 for youth who had recently transitioned out of care. Surveys can be completed online or in paper format.

It is intended that each cohort of the YRA will create and disseminate an annual updated report that includes data collected from youth throughout their transition out of government care and into adulthood.

If you know of youth who are eligible and may be interested in participating:

For BC youth in care who are 18, and for those who are joining the study at 19 or 20 and have had their supports extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic:
form.simplesurvey.com/f/I/YouthTransitionTIME1

For BC youth with care experience who are 19 or 20 and have transitioned out of care in the past year: form.simplesurvey.com/f/I/YouthTransitionTIME2

If you have any questions about the study, or wish to request paper copies of surveys, please contact Karen. Email: Karen@mcs.bc.ca; Phone: (604) 291-1996, ext. 230

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the second report to be published from the YRA's youth-transitioning-out-of-care study, and includes survey data collected up to the end of November, 2021. It builds on findings that were included in the first report published earlier in 2021 (mcs.bc.ca/pdf/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_preliminary_report.pdf)

The report reflects analyses from a total of 222 surveys, including baseline surveys from 150 youth. Twenty-six young people who would otherwise have transitioned out of care completed a survey while they were receiving extended government supports due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A brief profile of their unique experiences is included on pages 43 and 44. It is hoped that more quantitative analyses of this group of youth will be possible in a future report as the sample size increases.

ANALYSES

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Percentages were similar between youth who were nearing their transition and those who had transitioned out of care unless otherwise noted.

Any comparisons in this report are statistically significant at $p < .05$, which means there was less than a 5% likelihood the results occurred by chance.



LIMITATIONS

The findings in this report reflect the experiences of youth who have participated in the study, and may not be representative of all youth with experience of government care or an alternative to care in BC.

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact recruitment for this study. Nearly all surveys since the onset of the pandemic have been collected online, in comparison to a greater mix of paper surveys and online surveys that were collected prior to March 2020.

Due to the relatively small number of youth who have so far completed a survey before and after transitioning out of care, comparisons pre- and post-transition out of care are cross-sectional (as opposed to longitudinal), and will be updated with longitudinal findings when they become available.

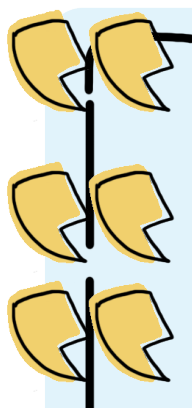
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

To date, the majority of youth who completed a baseline survey prior to transitioning out of care were 18 years old, and 12% were still in care beyond their 19th birthday. Around 6 in 10 participants (62%) were female, 33% were male, and 6% were non-binary.

Survey participants reported a range of sexual orientations, including 63% who identified as straight, 23% as bisexual, and 4% as gay or lesbian. Another 5% were not yet sure of their sexual orientation, while 3% indicated having no attractions, and a few youth specified a sexual orientation not listed on the survey.

Nearly 4 in 10 participants (38%) identified as Indigenous. Among Indigenous youth, three quarters (75%) were First Nations and 25% were Métis. The majority of Indigenous youth (58%) could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language (e.g., Chilcotin, Cree, Shuswap), including 14% who could hold a conversation.

Most survey participants (89%) had lived in Canada for six or more years (including their whole life). They were currently living across all five regions of BC, specifically Vancouver Coastal (39%), Fraser (23%), Vancouver Island (20%), the Interior (10%), and the Northern region (7%).



Thank you for having this [survey] because youth in care need a voice and sometimes it's hard for us to speak up and I really think this helps."

Thank you for letting us answer questions like this, it's another way for us to know someone is still listening."

Thank you for the chance of being able to share information like this in order to help youth and adults."

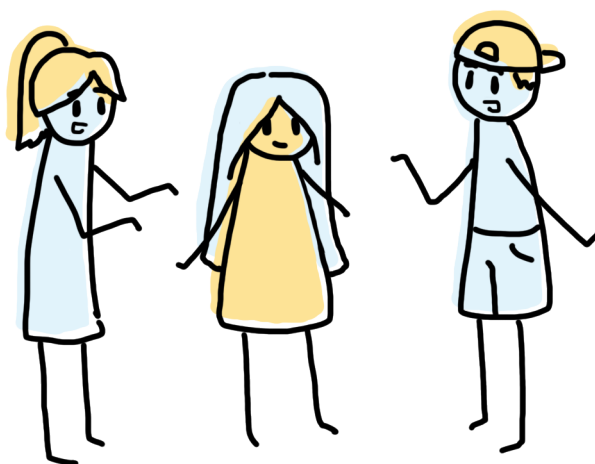
EXPERIENCES IN GOVERNMENT CARE

Results in this section are among youth who completed the baseline survey before their 19th birthday unless otherwise specified.

Among the 85% of youth who knew where they had received services from, most (71%) reported they had received services exclusively from MCFD, 6% exclusively from a delegated Indigenous agency (e.g., Métis Nation BC, VACFSS), and 24% from both MCFD and a delegated agency. Among Indigenous youth, 54% had received services from a delegated Indigenous agency, including 12% who had exclusively received services from a delegated agency.

One in twenty youth (5%) were unsure how long they had been in care. Among youth who knew, 34% had been in care for at least six years, 31% had been in care between three and five years, 21% between one and two years, and 14% for less than a year.

More than 8 in 10 youth had contact with a member of their birth family (e.g., 88% of those who had recently transitioned out of care, and a similar percentage among those nearing their transition).

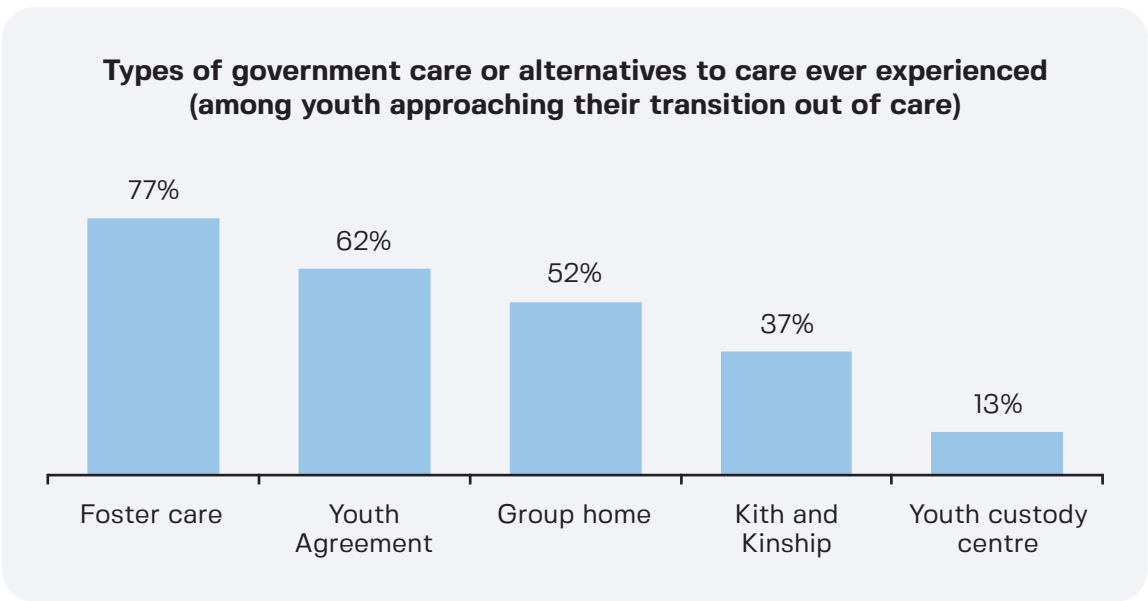


TYPES OF CARE

Youth were asked about the different types of government care or alternatives to care they had experienced. Around 4 in 10 (42%) were currently on a Youth Agreement, 28% were currently in foster care, 21% were in a group home, 7% were on a Kith and Kinship Agreement, and 4% were in a youth custody centre. Most youth had been in foster care and/or on a Youth Agreement at some point. Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 57% had accessed an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA).

CARE PLAN

All youth in government care in BC are entitled to a written care plan, which is developed within six months of their entry into care and includes input from the young person. The plan identifies the young person's needs and goals, and how these will be addressed. Around 7 in 10 youth (69%) approaching the transition out of care had a care plan, 18% did not have one, and the remainder did not know if they had one.



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Half (50%) of youth approaching the transition out of care had experienced three or more types of care (e.g., foster home, group home, and a Youth Agreement), 27% had experienced two types, and 23% had experienced one type of care.

Since April 2020, around 4 in 10 youth (42%) who had transitioned out of care indicated they had received some level of support through MCFD or a delegated agency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TRANSITION PLANNING

Youth who are preparing to leave care should have a transition plan that identifies their post-care plans and goals, and supports them to develop the skills necessary for independent living. Among youth approaching the transition out of care, 47% had a transition plan, 31% did not have one, and 22% did not know. Among youth who had transitioned out in the past year, 44% reported having had a transition plan, 40% indicated not having had one, and 15% did not know if they had a transition plan.

Youth who were approaching the transition out of care were asked how prepared they felt with tasks and skills relating to independent living and emerging adulthood. Most felt prepared to live independently, cook healthy meals, pursue their education, and find a job. Less than half felt prepared to pay their bills and budget, and to find housing.



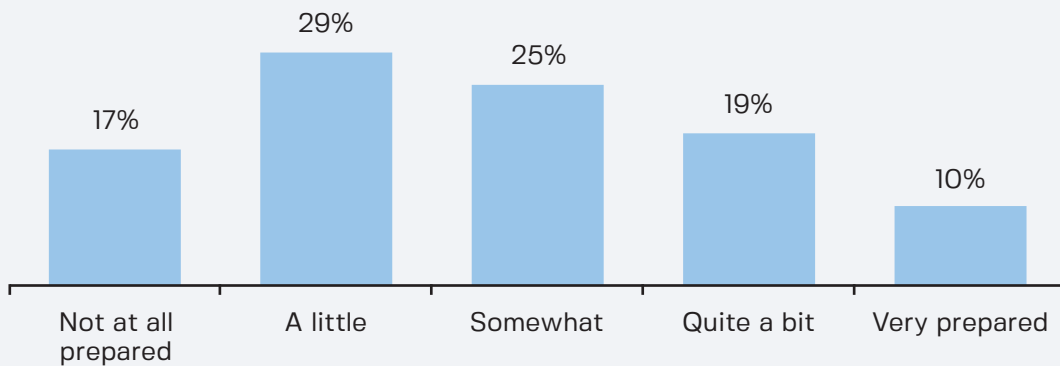
Youth who felt quite or very prepared to ... (among youth approaching their transition out of care who felt this was a skill they wanted or needed)

Live independently (laundry, cook, shop)	75%
Pursue education	69%
Find a job	69%
Cook healthy meals	69%
Have a healthy romantic/sexual relationship	57%
Apply for AYA/income assistance/other benefits	54%
Pay their bills/budget	45%
Find housing	43%

Youth who had transitioned out of care in the past year were asked how prepared they had been for the transition, knowing what they know now. Just under half felt they were not at all or only a little prepared, while around 3 in 10 felt quite or very prepared.

When asked to explain, some youth indicated they had a supportive worker who had helped to prepare them for transitioning out of care. Others noted they had developed some independent-living skills, but still felt anxious about leaving care because of the supports they would lose (e.g., social worker). A few commented they had felt prepared to transition out at 19 because they transitioned to an AYA, and therefore continued to receive support through MCFD.

How prepared youth had been to transition out of care, knowing what they know now (among those who had recently transitioned out)



Comments from youth who had transitioned out of care on how prepared they had been for transitioning out ...

"Although I had the funds to move out and places to reach out to for further help, moving out of care was still scary and I missed talking with my social worker as well as counsellor provided by the ministry."

"I didn't get very much support from my social worker and I lost my youth worker, therefore, I didn't have much support during the transition period. I was only a bit prepared because I was used to doing things on my own."

"I feel I was somewhat prepared. I had been on a Youth Agreement [and] had been living alone and learning lots. I feel I could have been more prepared and learned more about tax credits and other real life skills that I didn't really have access to."

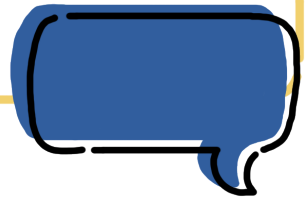
"I got my Agreement extended so I was able to have help with getting into school and now that I'm officially aged out, I am still able to contact my youth worker and she has helped me tremendously."

"I had a great youth transition worker who guided me throughout the process which helped me become more prepared. However, I was still a bit nervous and felt somewhat prepared."

"I was mostly just scared of losing support. I had no work, and wasn't prepared to continue my studies to qualify for AYA. If not for my extended family I would not have found my course, or had the support I needed to apply for my post secondary course, which allowed me to be approved for an AYA."

"I was very prepared to transition out of care because I switched to an AYA and am currently in university, still receiving funds while I'm in school so I was not nervous to transition out, I still have support from my social workers."

"My social worker stopped speaking to me 6 months before I aged out of care. I was still on a Youth Agreement during those 6 months."



Youth were asked an open-ended question about how young people can be better supported to transition out of care. Youth who were nearing their transition out of care commented on the importance of having a comprehensive and individually tailored transition plan. They also stated it was important for adults to help prepare them ahead of time for their transition out of care, including learning about various supports (e.g., mental health, financial) they could access after leaving care.

Many youth stressed how beneficial it would be for young people to continue to be supported by a worker after they left care. Some who had turned 19 but were still in care, due to the extended measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, expressed how valuable it was to still receive support from their youth worker.

Comments from youth nearing their transition out of care on how young people transitioning out can be better supported ...

"In my experience, my transition is rarely talked about if at all. Talking about it as soon as possible is the best way to set up a youth aging out of care for success. I think I'm very under-prepared for aging out, but my social worker and their organization is lucky that I'm self-sufficient, I will have to learn as I go."

"I think young people transitioning out of care need to have a living plan before moving out, so knowing how to budget and what are needs rather than wants, knowing support systems when things get tough. Showing youth how to plan things out for the month I think is a good idea before them aging out of care. Also making sure that youth are able to find a stable job or attend school before moving out."

"More options known to them before being almost 19. Having a solid social worker with them throughout their years and not getting a new one every few weeks/months, allowing to form at least a small professional relationship."

"Young people should have more supports in place for when we turn 19. Maybe give us a transition worker for 3–6 months [after we transition out] who checks in on us and helps us with budgeting and grocery shopping and to teach how to apply for cable/wifi and hydro."

"By having someone actively involved in their lives before and after."

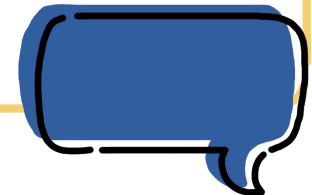
"An environment where they are checked on regularly, and get help if there is something wrong. Feeling supported. Feeling they are able to do and succeed in anything their more privileged peers can do."

"Have their social worker help them get in contact with support workers. Job training for youth. Life training skills."

"Keeping youth workers and advocates accountable for supporting their youth properly. Going the extra mile and not just doing the bare minimum. Making sure workers prepare their youth with all the necessary skills to live as an independent adult."

"Having long term connections is helpful for general guidance during the early stages of independence. Individual adults are a more preferable option than services."

"Consistent reviewing, connecting and communicating between housing programs, B.C. housing landlords, and youth ... in order to set youth up when transitioning to feel confident in taking on more responsibility for themselves and the skills learned while in care."



Similarly, youth who had transitioned out of care suggested that young people should receive more support in transition planning starting a few years before their 19th birthday—including learning life skills (e.g., budgeting) and learning about various grants and available services.

There should also be more continuous supports after a youth leaves care (e.g., same youth worker and access to the same supports pre and post transition), and youth should have access to a range of supports, including housing, mental health, employment, education, life skills, and financial.

Comments from youth who had recently transitioned out of care on how young people transitioning out can be better supported ...

“It would be very beneficial to begin supporting transitioning youth at age 17. It is pretty tough for youth to learn everything necessary for transition within one year.”

“Sitting down and creating a realistic budget plan for when you age out, and what to expect in your local housing market if you’re planning on moving out on your own.”

“I think a better understanding of how the real world works. Things like banking information and budgeting skills would be really helpful.”

“If we received more info on government grants and options before aging out.”

“Making sure that social workers/youth workers lay out a plan for youth transitioning out so [youth] understand it properly, and stay in touch in case youth need help.”

“More continuous support; housing and job supports; having someone to check up on you every so often for well-being.”

“More connection between pre-transition and afterwards. For example, being able to keep the same youth worker for 6 months after aging out. Also, more support in everyday tasks such as making appointments.”

“An AYA support plan that identifies and meets the particular needs of the individual, and not simply ‘money help’ for school as it currently stands.”

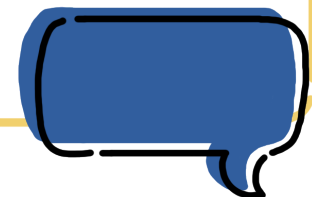
“More resources such as housing, mental health, and employment programs. It’s important for trusted adults such as social workers and youth workers to inform youth about these resources as well.”

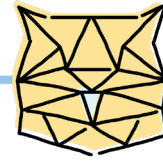
“Having a way better grace period with foster parents instead of making them feel as though they have to move out right away, as well as extended counselling past the age of 19.”

“Follow up with kids who age out. Have transition housing options for people who age out.”

“Help us to find a job and support ourselves.”

“Have mental health supports in place!”

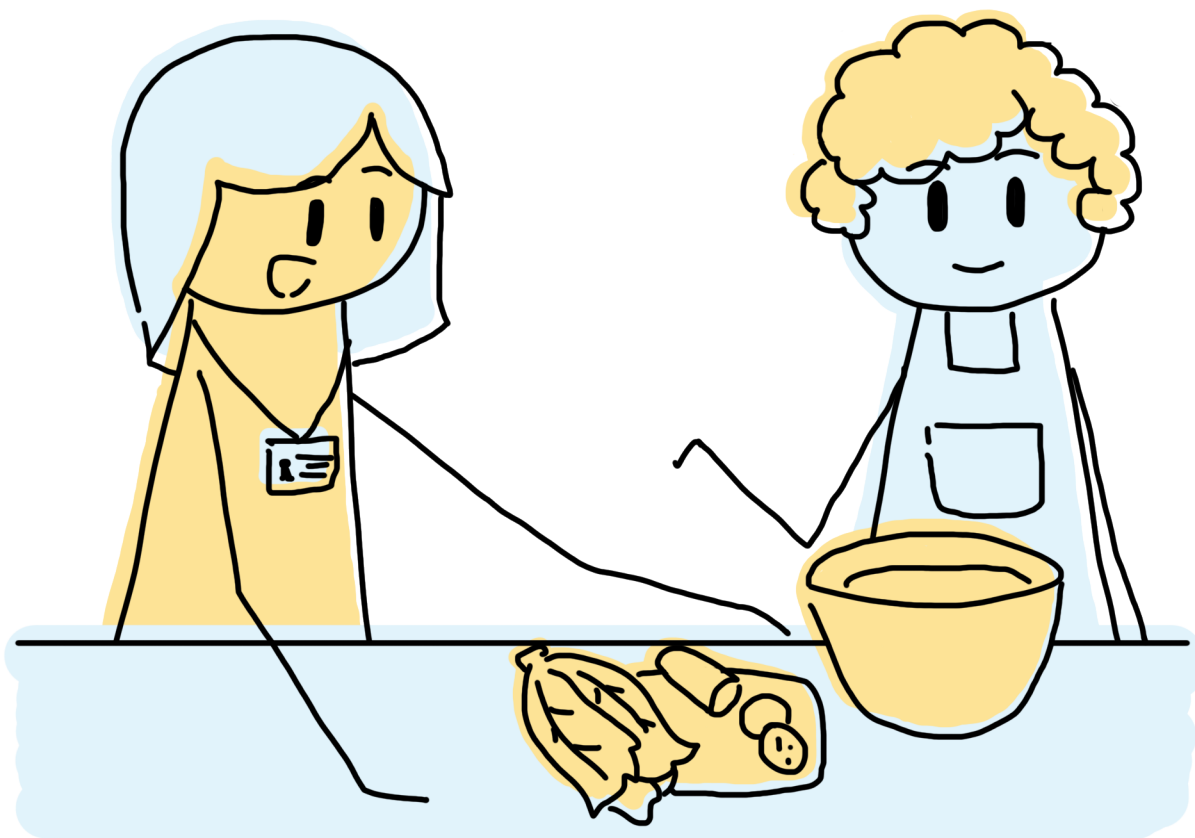




YRA reflections

All youth transitioning out of government care or an alternative to care should have a transition plan which they have input into. Also, social workers should have more discussions with youth about their care plan to ensure youth's needs and best interests are being met. Such discussions can support youth to prioritize the areas they need to work on to gain the skills and knowledge they will need for a smoother transition out of care.

Youth in and from care could also benefit from having opportunities to connect with mentors or other supportive adults to help them gain knowledge and skills relating to independent living, and who can share information and advice. For example, adults should support youth to learn more about nutrition and how to make healthy meals for themselves, in addition to youth getting support to access healthy food options.



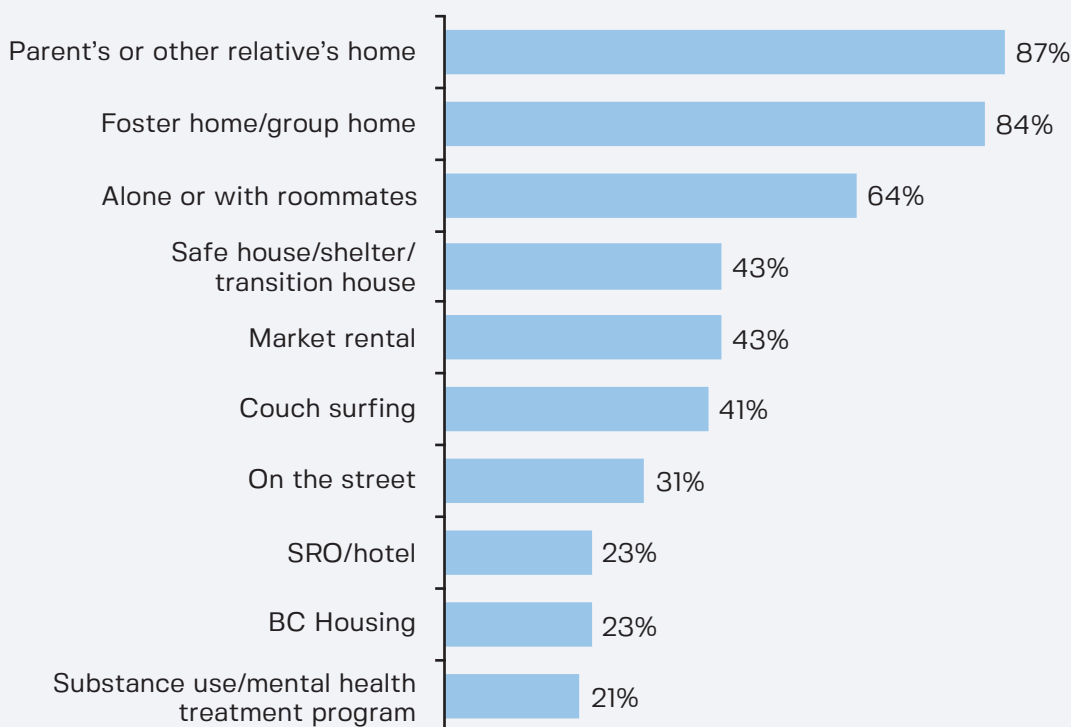
HOUSING EXPERIENCES

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Youth had experienced a range of living accommodations at some point in their life, including precarious housing such as staying on the street, in a shelter, SRO/hotel, and couch surfing. Also, around 1 in 5 had stayed in a substance use or mental health treatment program.



**Where youth had ever lived
(among those approaching their transition out of care)**



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Youth approaching the transition out of care most commonly reported they were currently living alone or with roommates (39%) and in a foster home or group home (36%). Just under a quarter (23%) were currently in a market rental, 10% were living with relatives, and 6% were in BC Housing (they could mark all that applied). A very small minority (numbers too small to report) indicated they were currently experiencing precarious housing, such as couch surfing, staying on the street, or in an SRO/hotel.

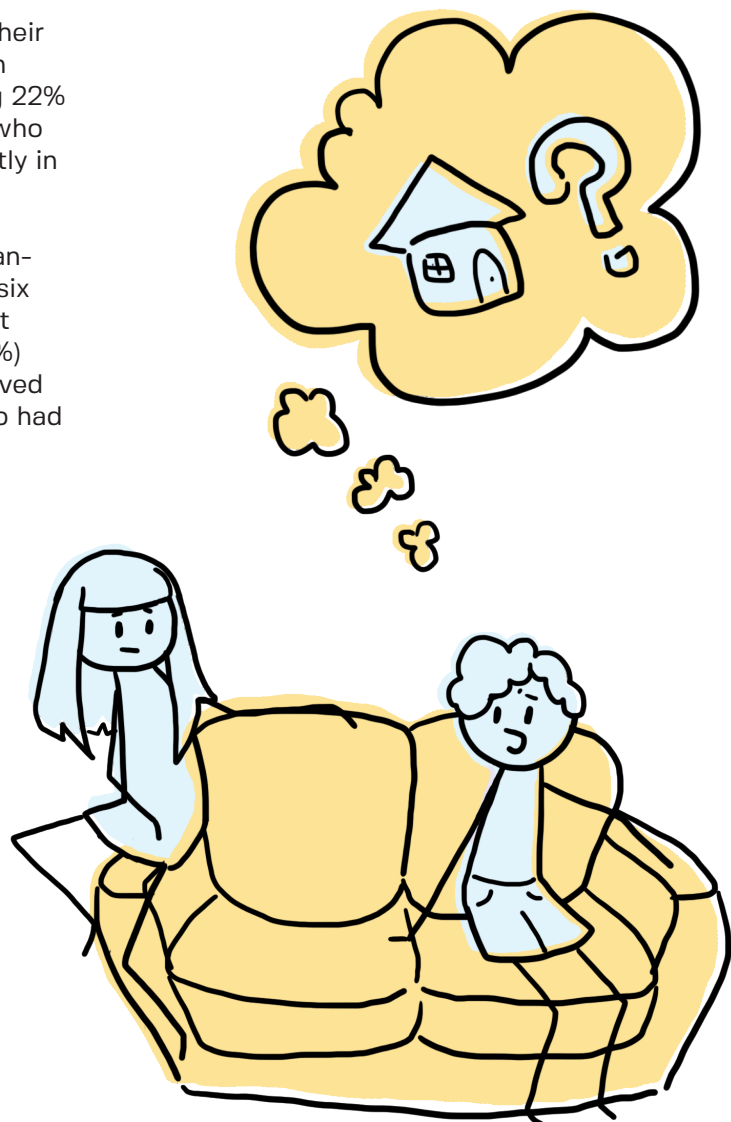
Youth who had recently transitioned out of care were most commonly living alone or with roommates (61%), followed by a market rental (33%), and/or with relatives (20%; they could mark all that applied).

Forty-six percent of youth approaching their transition out of care had been in a youth housing program at some point, including 22% who were currently in one. A few youth who had transitioned out of care were currently in a youth housing program.

Over half of youth (58%) nearing their transition out of care had moved in the past six months, including 28% who had moved at least twice. Just under half of youth (46%) who had transitioned out of care had moved in the past six months, including 18% who had moved two or more times.

SENSE OF SAFETY WHERE LIVING

Most youth who had recently transitioned from care (72%) felt quite or very safe where they were currently living, while 12% felt somewhat safe, and 16% felt only a little or not at all safe. Percentages were similar among youth approaching their transition from care.

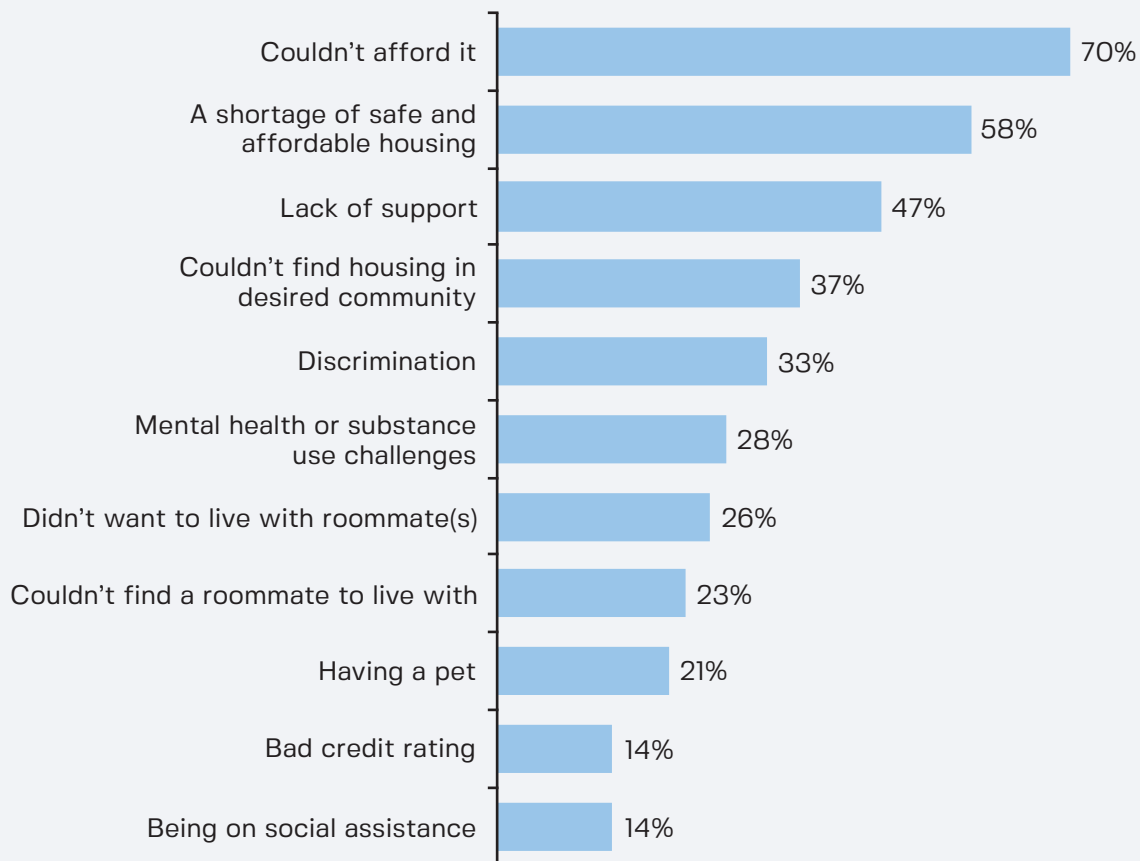


CHALLENGES TO FINDING HOUSING

Around 3 in 4 youth (76%) nearing their transition out of care had experienced challenges to finding housing at some point. Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 86% had experienced challenges to finding housing in the past six months. Most of these youth identified being unable to afford housing as well as a shortage of safe and affordable housing as challenges.



Youth's challenges to finding housing in the past six months (among those who had recently transitioned out of care and had trouble finding housing)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

TENANCY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care and lived in a rental accommodation, 76% reported they had understood their tenancy rights and responsibilities before moving into their current rental accommodation.

Around three quarters (74%) of those who had transitioned out and lived in a rental accommodation had signed a tenancy agreement before moving into their current accommodation (and the remainder had not signed or did not remember if they had signed one). Fewer than half (45%) had completed a Condition Inspection report with their landlord (and 17% did not remember if they had completed one). Findings were similar among youth approaching their transition out of care who currently lived in a rental accommodation.



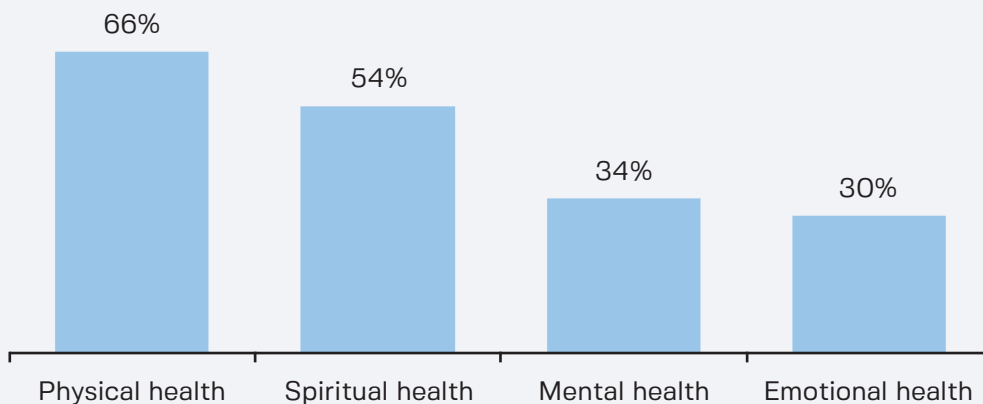
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Percentages were similar between youth who had recently transitioned out of care and those who were nearing their transition out, unless otherwise noted.

Most youth who had recently transitioned out of care rated their physical health as good or excellent, while a minority rated their mental health and emotional health this way.

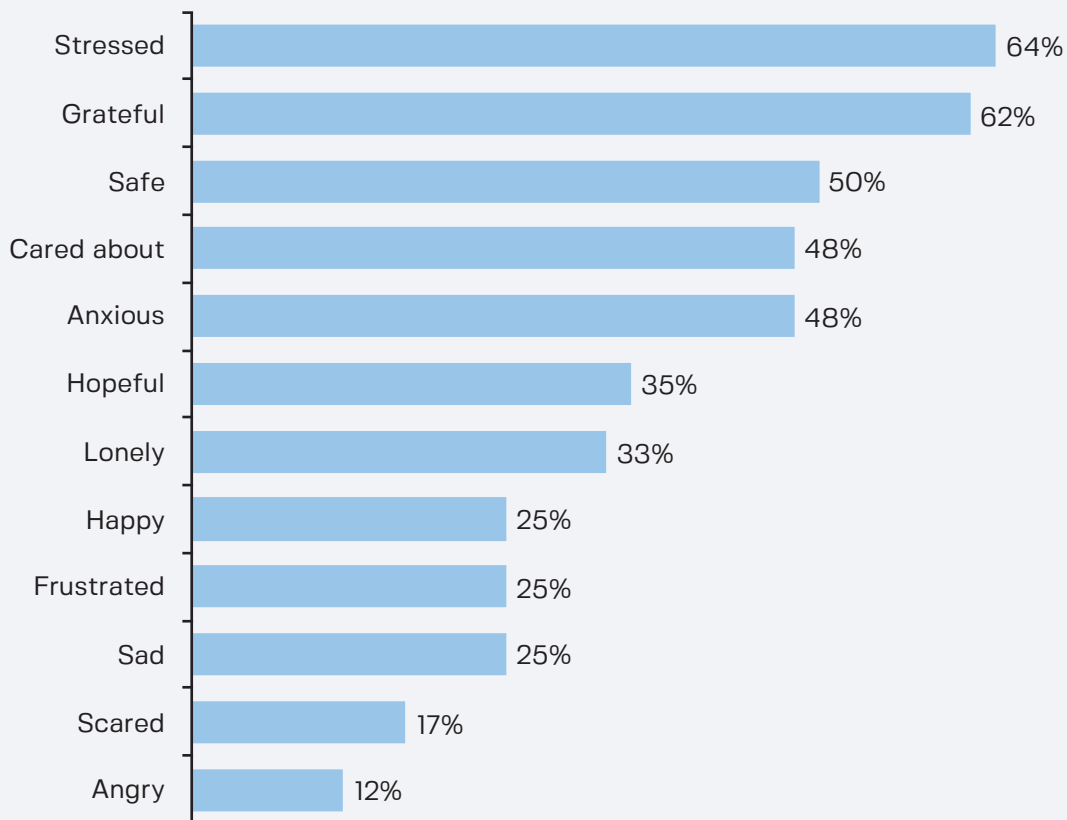
Most youth (62%) who had recently transitioned out of care reported having a mental health condition, which was higher than the percentage among youth approaching their transition from care (45%). Also, 26% who had transitioned out had a learning disability, 15% a long-term/chronic medical condition, and a few had a physical or sensory disability.

**Youth who rated their health as good or excellent
(among those who had recently transitioned out of care)**



Youth were asked how often they experienced a range of different emotions. The majority who had recently transitioned out of care reported often or always feeling stressed, as well as grateful.

**Youth who often or always felt ...
(among those who had recently transitioned out of care)**



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



LIFE SATISFACTION

Around half of youth who had recently transitioned out of care (52%) reported having a good life, while less than half (42%) felt their life was going well, and a third (33%) felt they had what they wanted in life. Just over a third (37%) wished they had a different life.

POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF

Just over a quarter of youth who had recently transitioned from care (27%) reported often or always feeling good about themselves.

Also, 83% could name something they were good at. When asked to specify, they commonly listed sports, art, cooking, music, video games, and academics. Other youth specified they were good at supporting others, making people smile or laugh, inspiring others, listening, building relationships, and staying positive.

Some of what youth identified they were good at ... (among those who completed a survey before and/or after transitioning out of care)

"Staying positive and helping others do the same in difficult times."

"Understanding others, making others feel welcomed, being myself."

"Supporting my friends."

"Very loyal and dependable."

"Adapting to my environment."

"I'm good at school and being organized and motivated."

"Being empathetic."

"Making others happy."

"I'm incredibly patient and compassionate."

"Helping people resolve their issues or identify their mistakes and make them into positives."

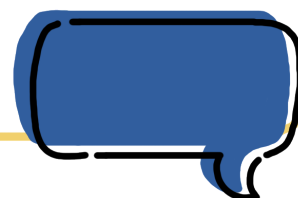
"Sports, making others laugh."

"Art and swimming."

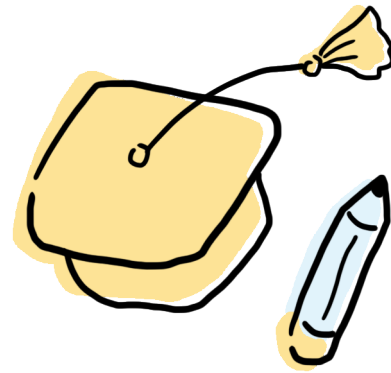
"Art, basketball, music."

"Academics."

"Baking/cooking."



Before and after their transition out of care, youth were asked what they were most proud of. Many stated they were proud of how far they had come in life (e.g., with their education, their health and well-being) despite facing numerous challenges. Some commented they were proud to be a positive support and role model for others. Other youth listed internal assets, such as resilience, empathy, and strength, as attributes they were most proud of.



Some of youth's comments on what they were most proud of ... (among those who completed a survey before and/or after transitioning out of care)

"Graduating. Doing better in school and wanting to continue with my education. Doing better with my mental health."

"I am most proud of being able to work a part-time job and go to university at the same time and achieve good grades."

"Working towards becoming a youth worker."

"How far I came since I've been in the system of being in their care, since I was 15. I'm finishing up my post-secondary program with the support of my AYA and MCFD."

"Being able to give my friends advice from my experiences."

"How far I have come throughout the challenges that I have faced since being in care ... Through all of that I still accomplished to graduate a semester early and now will be attending university. I live on my own very sufficiently and I'm happy with who I have around me."

"Making it through foster care up until I aged out and being a role model for younger youth."

"I'm proud of how far I have come, life in general is a struggle but being in care makes things complicated especially when it comes to others who don't understand the foster system. I struggle with mental health issues like depression anxiety and PTSD. I have overcome a lot of barriers in my life which I know many youth struggle with."

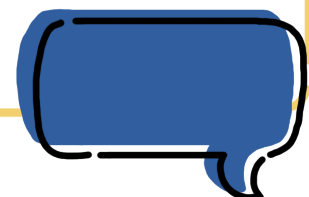
"My ability to persevere."

"Reaching out and getting the help I needed."

"My individuality, my maturity, and my sense of responsibility when needed."

"My daughter. My transitions from being homeless to living with her father and her under one roof."

"How far I've made it with little help or support from anyone and how in the last almost 6 months I've grown and changed as an individual."



PASSIONS AND GOALS

Youth approaching their transition out of care were asked what they were passionate about. Several identified a passion for helping people, including other youth in and from care. They specified they wanted to help others through a profession such as medicine; spreading awareness on emerging issues; participating in advocacy work; and/or improving their communities.

Youth also identified a wide range of activities and hobbies they were passionate about, such as sports, art, volunteering, academics, cooking, reading, music, and nature. They also identified health and wellness as an area they were passionate about.

Youth's comments on what they were passionate about ... (among those who were nearing their transition out of care)

"I'm passionate about helping other people in care because I know how hard it is when you don't get the support you need."

"Becoming a doctor and I really would like to help other youth in care!"

"The nursing field, I wish to help others and make a difference."

"Helping youth like me, animals, cooking, learning to use my voice."

"Furthering my post-secondary education."

"Art and my native culture."

"Music, writing, art and history. Making another person's happiness valued."

"Being a good [parent], having a successful career and raising my daughter in a loving and stable home."

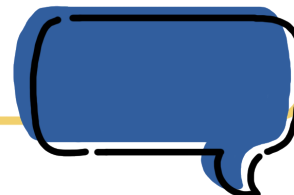
"Making a difference in the world."

"School, work, advocacy, spreading awareness about Indigenous people."

"I lost my father to ... cancer and, ever since then, I have spent time volunteering to help raise awareness and funds for cancer research."

"Healthy relationships, mental and physical health, spirituality, education, being active."

"I'm passionate about understanding other people and learning to be empathetic towards people."



The majority of youth had set goals for themselves for the next six months (e.g., 88% of youth who had recently transitioned out of care had set goals). When asked to specify their goals, many described education-related goals (e.g., to start school or return to school, or to complete a post-secondary program). Other youth planned to find full-time or part-time employment; to gain independent-living skills (e.g., cooking, time management, budgeting); to move out on their own; to get their driver's license and a vehicle; to improve their health and well-being; and to establish some structure and stability in their lives.



Some of youth's goals for the next six months ...

Among youth who completed a survey before transitioning out of care:

"Being able to cook balanced meals and being more organized with my time."

"To be stable in my own place."

"I want to finish my first year of the [post-secondary] program with good grades and hopefully move out into my own house."

"To graduate high school. To apply for a better position at work. To apply into post-secondary studies. To apply for tuition waiver and AYA."

"Get a part time job, continue exercising and maintaining a healthy, balanced diet."

"To find a stable job and pay for everything and not having to over draft from the bank."

"I am currently working on getting my GED in order for me to continue my education."

"Enroll in school, seek help with my mental and physical health."

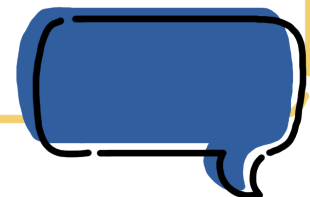
"Get a job. Get a bank account. Learn how to handle bills."

"Finish school, get a job, become sober 100%."

"To start university again, have my car up and running again and better my mental health."

"Find a new rhythm of life during this pandemic."

"Work on my mental health and physical health, find a new job, continue to develop healthy life skills."



Among youth who completed a survey after transitioning out of care:

"I plan on finding a full-time job to support myself over the summer; waiting for the right deal to come my way for my first vehicle. Also, pass my road test for my N."

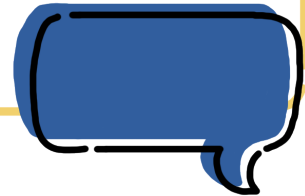
"To get a job or volunteer position related to science or research in the summer."

"I am working to finish my practicum and schooling through the AYA program."

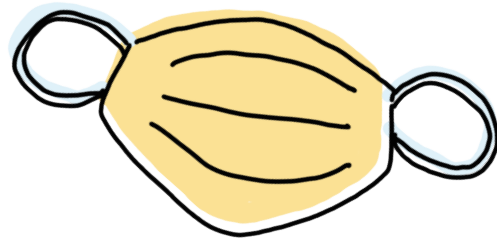
"To stay in my post-secondary program and complete it in 2022."

"I hope to continue doing what I am now to maintain healthy living."

"Secure a new full-time job and save for a down payment for a house."



Among youth with goals, 48% of those who had transitioned out of care in the past year had faced challenges to achieving their goals. Youth were also asked an open-ended question about any barriers that might get in the way of them reaching their goals in the next six months. Common responses included mental health challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic, financial challenges, and lack of support.



Some identified barriers to youth achieving their goals ... (among those who completed a survey before and/or after transitioning out of care)

"Not having enough mental and emotional supports."

"Lack of mental health supports, and lack of work opportunities."

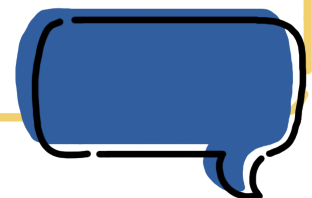
"Lack of money."

"Trouble getting what the ministry said they could give me."

"COVID-19!!!"

"Money; I have to have a job by the summer because I won't be in school at that time, therefore I will be cut off my AYA throughout summer."

"Financial and mental health struggles."



ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

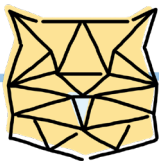
Just over half of youth (55%) who had recently transitioned out of care had needed medical help in the past six months, and 31% of those who needed medical care did not get it (17% overall).

Also, 72% of youth who had transitioned out in the past year felt they needed mental health services in the past six months. Around two thirds of these youth (66%) did not receive the services they needed (47% overall), which was higher than the 43% of youth who were nearing their transition from care (27% overall).

Around 4 in 5 youth (82%) who had recently transitioned out of care had accessed health care services or providers in the past six months.

Health care services and providers accessed in the past six months (among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)	
Family doctor	43%
Walk-in clinic	41%
Dentist	41%
Emergency Room (ER)	38%
Counsellor	36%
Youth clinic	25%
Nurse	23%
Traditional healer	0%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



YRA reflections

When youth are looking for supports, it's likely they are ready and motivated to immediately access the supports they need. If they are put on a waitlist, they may not feel as motivated to access the supports when the supports become available, and there's a greater risk their condition will worsen. Reducing waitlist times for youth in and from care can therefore support them to access the health care they need, when they need it.

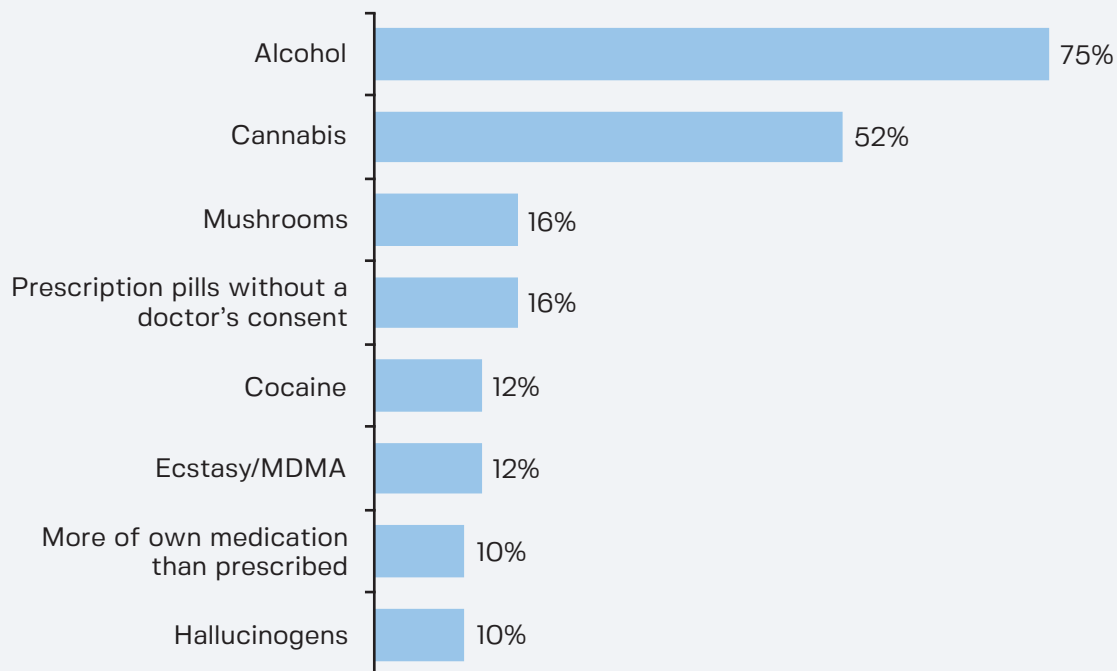
SUBSTANCE USE

Percentages were similar between youth who had recently transitioned out of care and those who were nearing their transition out, unless otherwise noted.

When asked about their substance use in the past six months, youth who had recently transitioned from care had most commonly used alcohol and cannabis.

Around 1 in 5 youth (21%) who had recently transitioned out of care reported having an addiction to alcohol, cannabis, or another substance.

**Most commonly used substances in the past six months
(among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)**



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

ADULT, PEER, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Percentages were similar between youth who had recently transitioned out of care and those who were nearing their transition out, unless otherwise noted.

Most youth (80%) who had recently transitioned out of care had at least one person they could talk to if they were having a really good or bad day, including another youth (45%), an adult they knew socially (43%), and an adult they met through services (37%).

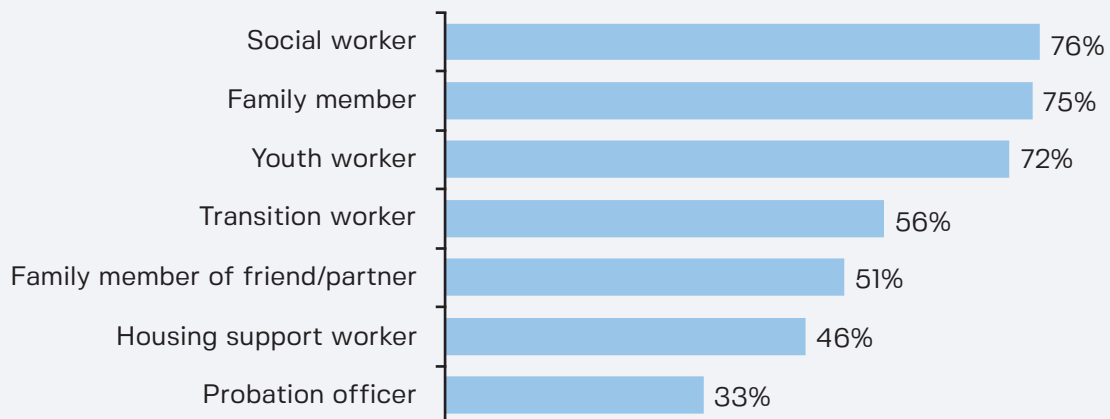
Around six in ten youth (59%) had stayed in contact with someone they had been connected with through services before transitioning out.

Also, 86% of youth who had recently transitioned out of care felt there was at least one adult in their life who cared about them.

ADULTS WHO YOUTH APPROACHED FOR HELP

Youth were asked if they had approached various people for help in the past six months, and if so, if they found the experience helpful. Most youth who had recently transitioned from care had approached a social worker, family member, and youth worker. Also, over half had approached a transition worker for help. The majority of youth who had approached someone for help felt the support was helpful. For example, 80% of those who had approached a transition worker felt it was helpful.

**People youth approached for help in the past six months
(among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)**



ADULT WHO HELPED YOUTH WITH TASKS

Most youth who had recently transitioned out of care had an adult in their life who helped them with applying for school or jobs, making or getting to appointments, and with finding housing (among those who felt they needed this support). Around half had an adult who helped them with school/college work, which was lower than among youth who were nearing their transition out of care (49% vs. 71%).

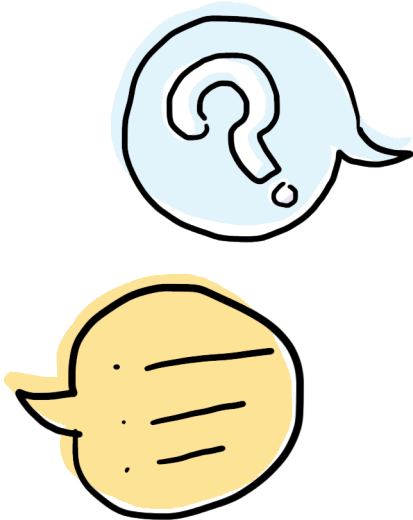
PEERS

Most youth (94%) who had transitioned out of care had at least one close friend, including 40% who had three or more close friends. Over half (55%) had at least one close friend with care experience, including 14% who had three or more such friends.

Most youth who had recently transitioned out (84%) had sought help from their friends or their partner in the past six months, and the majority of these youth (93%) found it helpful.

Had an adult who helped youth with ... (among youth who had recently transitioned out of care and felt they needed help in these areas)

Applying for school or jobs	65%
Making or getting to appointments	60%
Finding housing	59%
School/college work	49%



HELPFUL COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

In addition to various individuals they had approached for help, youth identified having accessed a range of supports and services in the past six months. Youth who had recently transitioned out of care most commonly accessed education support (65%), while youth who were approaching their transition from care most commonly accessed mental health support (62% vs. 42% among those who had recently transitioned out).

Most youth who had accessed these supports and services found them helpful. For example, 95% of youth who had transitioned from care found the AYA life-skills support they had accessed to be helpful, and 100% found helpful other life-skills support they had accessed (budgeting etc.).

Most common supports and services accessed in the past six months (among youth approaching their transition out of care)

Mental health support	62%
Education support	50%
Services to get ID	47%
Youth employment programs/supports	45%
Youth drop-in centre	40%

Most common supports and services accessed in the past six months (among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)

Education support	65%
Services to get ID	51%
Youth employment programs/supports	44%
Mental health support	42%
AYA life skills	39%

Youth approaching their transition out of care were also asked if they had needed any of these supports and services in the past six months but did not get them. Around 3 in 10 youth (31%) indicated they had not accessed at least one of the services or supports they felt they needed, while 48% got the help they needed, and 21% reported they had not needed any of the services listed.

Youth who had recently transitioned out of care were asked an open-ended question about other supports or services they currently needed. Most responses focused on mental health supports. A few identified housing and education supports, as well as support from youth workers and from social workers for youth on AYAs. Access to dentist/orthodontist services was also identified.

Services or supports that youth who had recently transitioned out of care felt they currently needed ...

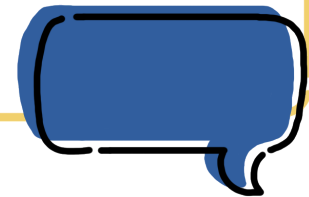
“Mental health and eating [disorder] supports either via hospital or outpatient.”

“Mental health support, housing support, educational support.”

“My youth worker back pls.”

“One on one counselling would be very beneficial. The only counselling [my city] offers is group counselling and I am really not ready for that.”

“Orthodontist.”

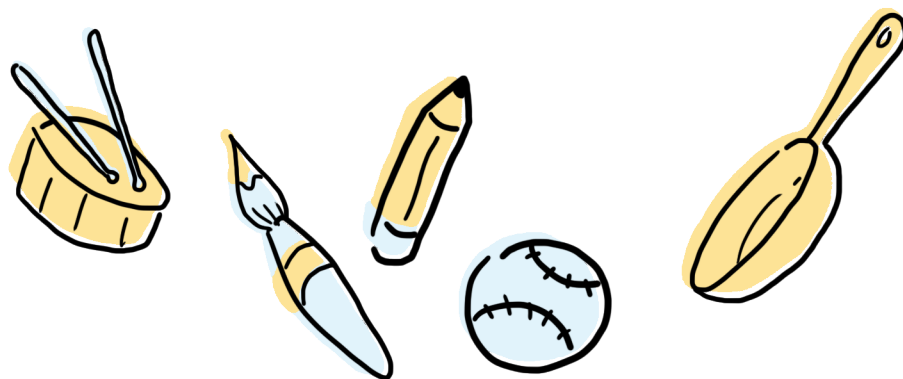
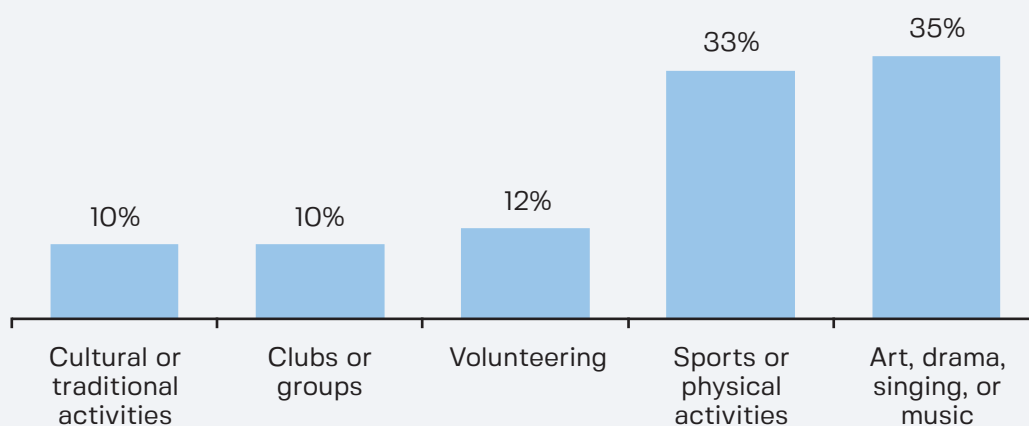


COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Percentages were similar between youth who had recently transitioned out of care and those who were nearing their transition out, unless otherwise noted.

Youth reported participating in a range of community activities in the past six months. For example, at least one in three had participated in sports or other physical activities on a weekly basis.

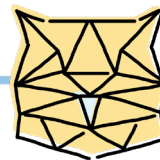
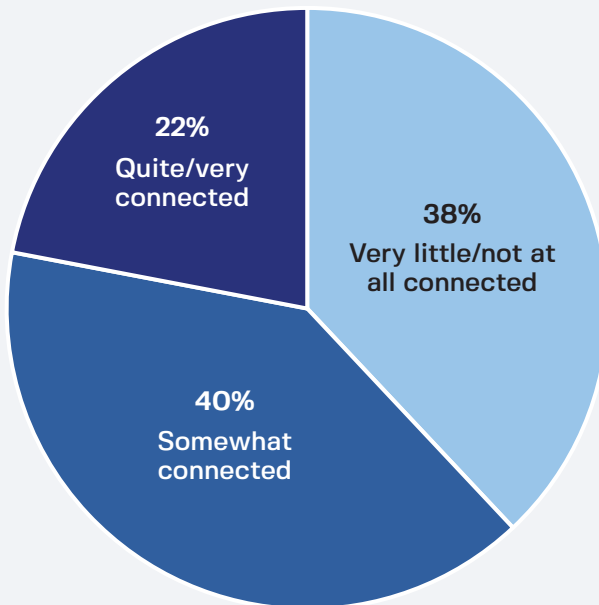
**Weekly involvement in extracurricular activities in the past six months
(among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)**



Around 1 in 5 youth who had recently transitioned out of care felt quite or very connected to their community, while around 2 in 5 felt only a little or not at all connected. Also, 33% often or always felt connected to nature.



How connected youth felt to their community (among those who had recently transitioned out of care)



YRA reflections

Services and agencies can support youth in and from care to feel connected to nature by offering them opportunities to take part in outdoor activities, such as hikes. Spending time outdoors doing activities they enjoy can not only help youth to meaningfully connect to nature but can also help to improve their well-being.

EDUCATION



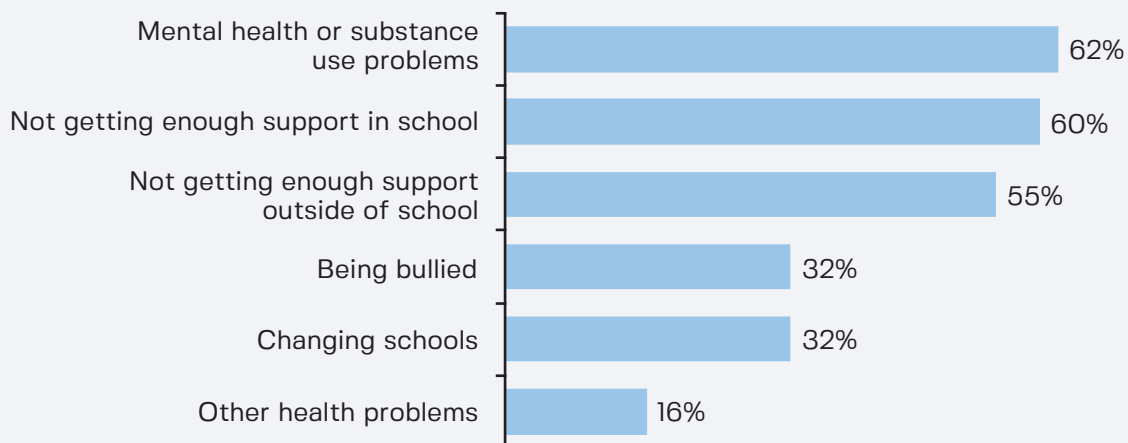
The tuition waiver program has helped me in so many ways and will continue to do so until I graduate.”

Among youth nearing their transition out of care, around two thirds were currently in school (44% in high school or the equivalent and 23% in a post-secondary program). Among those not in school, 63% had stopped going once they finished high school, 30% stopped before graduating from high school, and the remainder stopped sometime after beginning a post-secondary program.

Among youth who had transitioned out of care, 74% were currently enrolled in school, including 56% who were in post-secondary and 18% who were in high school or the equivalent. Among those not in school, the majority (85%) had stopped going sometime after they had finished high school.

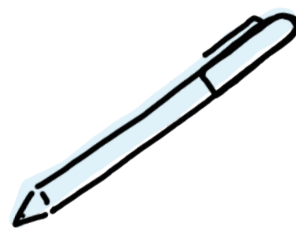
Youth nearing their transition out of care were asked about challenges they were experiencing or had experienced to graduating from high school. Around 4 in 5 youth (78%) experienced such challenges, and their challenges most commonly pertained to mental health or substance use problems, as well as not getting enough support inside and outside of school.

Challenges youth experienced to graduating from high school (among youth approaching their transition out of care who had experienced such challenges)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Also, 85% of youth nearing their transition out of care identified supports that had helped them to do well at school. Most of these youth identified having supportive adults at school and being able to work at their own pace as contributing to their success at school.



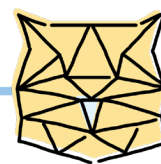
Supports that helped youth do well at school (among those approaching their transition out of care who felt the question applied to them)

Having supportive adults at school	68%
Being able to work at their own pace	57%
Having supportive adults outside of school	49%
Teachers/others who noticed if they did not attend school	46%
Peer support	44%
Learning good study habits	44%
Not changing schools	30%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Nearly half (48%) of youth approaching their transition out of care were aware that Adult Basic Education was free, including 15% who had accessed it. Among youth who had transitioned out in the past year, 30% had accessed it.

Sixty-four percent of youth nearing their transition out of care were aware of the tuition waiver program, including 6% who had applied and received a tuition waiver and 8% who had applied but had not received a waiver. Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 42% had received a tuition waiver and 12% had applied and were waiting to hear about their application status.



YRA reflections

Ensuring youth in and from care have adult supports in school—such as a worker who specializes in working with youth with care experience, or supportive teachers—can help youth excel in school and can provide them with an environment more conducive to their success. Also, ensuring youth have access to supportive adults outside of school can help them with completing homework and studying, and also in other areas (e.g., transportation, making appointments) so they have the opportunity to focus on their school work with fewer stressors on their mind.

EMPLOYMENT

Around 9 in 10 youth (86%) ever had a paid job, and half were currently working (comparable for those nearing their transition and those who had recently transitioned out of care).

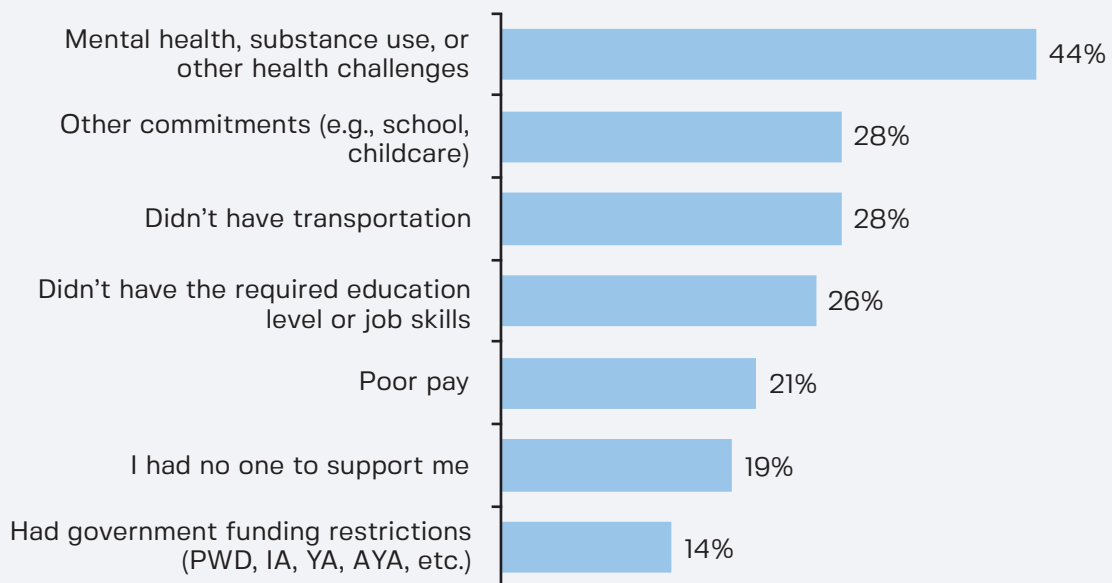
Most youth who were not currently in a paid job were looking for work (e.g., 60% of youth who had recently transitioned out of care).

Youth approaching their transition out of care reported barriers they had experienced to finding and keeping a job. Their most commonly identified barriers to finding a job (among those who had looked for one) were not having the needed education level or job skills (41%); being concerned that a job would get in the way of school or other commitments (40%); mental health, substance use, or other health challenges (35%); and not having transportation (33%); they could mark all barriers that applied).

In terms of barriers to keeping a job, at least a quarter of youth who had been employed identified scheduling conflicts (32%); the pay being insufficient to support them (32%); conflict with their supervisor or coworkers (29%); transportation challenges (29%); and mental health, substance use, or other health challenges (25%); youth could mark all that applied).

Youth who had recently transitioned out of care were asked about barriers they had experienced to finding or keeping a job in the past six months. Their most commonly identified barrier was mental health, substance use, or other health challenges.

Most commonly identified barriers to getting or keeping a job in the past six months (among youth who had recently transitioned out of care and had ever looked for a job)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

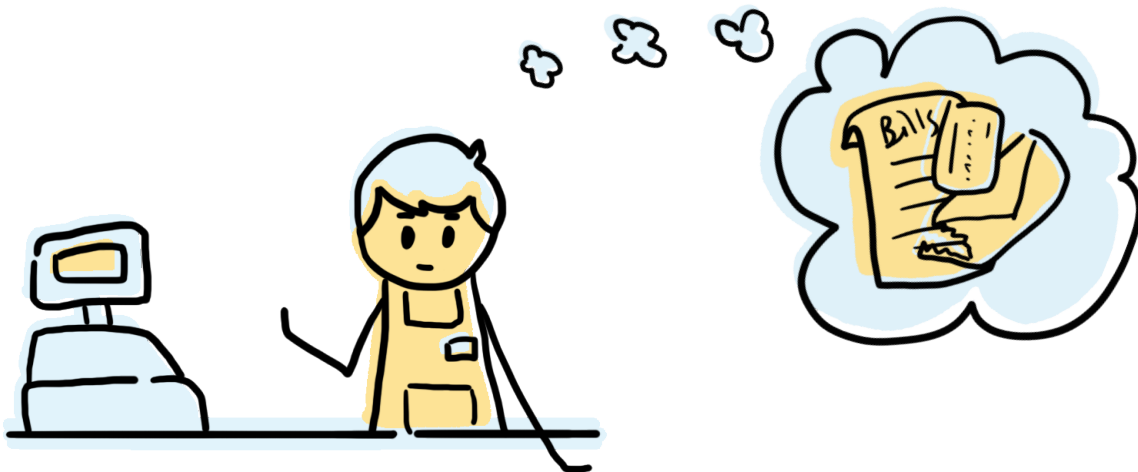
The majority of youth had at least one source of income (e.g., 96% of youth who had recently transitioned out of care were receiving income). For those still in care, common sources included a legal job (41%), Youth Agreement (34%), family members (24%), honoraria (15%), and a youth program (14%; they could mark all that applied). For those who had recently transitioned out, common sources of income were an AYA and a legal job.

The vast majority of youth who had recently transitioned out of care reported having a bank account (96% vs. 83% of youth approaching their transition out of care). Youth who had recently transitioned out were more likely to be in debt than youth who were nearing their transition out of care (52% vs. 19%).

Sources of income
(among youth who had recently transitioned out of care)

AYA (Agreement with Young Adults)	48%
A legal job	44%
Bursary/scholarship	20%
Family	12%
Income Assistance	12%
PWD (Persons with Disabilities) benefits	12%
YEAF (Youth Education Assistance Fund)	10%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



Among those in debt, credit card debt was the most common type for youth who had recently transitioned out of care (42% vs. 16% among youth approaching their transition), whereas owing money to a friend or family member was the most common type of debt for youth approaching their transition out of care (50%).

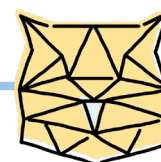
A student loan was a cause of debt for around 1 in 5 youth who had recently transitioned out of care and were in debt.

Around 6 in 10 youth (58%) who had recently transitioned out of care went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food, including 10% who went to bed hungry more often. Also, 14% always ate three meals a day (25% always ate breakfast; 27% lunch; and 60% always ate dinner). Percentages were generally similar among youth nearing their transition out of care.

Most commonly reported causes of youth's debt (among those in debt who had recently transitioned out of care)

Credit card	42%
I owe money to a friend or family member	31%
Unpaid bills (Internet, cell phone, etc.)	31%
Student loan	19%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



YRA reflections

Many youth participating in this study reported challenges to meeting their basic needs. This situation can be improved by increasing financial supports to youth in and from care so they don't go to bed hungry, can afford three meals a day, and can live in a safe location. Also, the amount of these financial supports should be increased as the cost of living rises (e.g., rent, groceries).

Increased funding for AYAs would better support youth who have transitioned out of care and would reduce their worry about making ends meet.

In addition to providing youth with the funds they need, they should have opportunities to learn more about budgeting and finances, including how credit cards work, such as by meeting with a financial advisor or taking part in financial literacy workshops. For example, it could be helpful for youth to learn what questions to ask when looking to get a credit card, and to gain a better understanding of debt and paying it off.

EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In April 2020, questions about youth's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were added to the surveys. Youth were asked if they had experienced declines, improvements, or no changes in a range of areas due to the pandemic.

Youth who had recently transitioned out of care were more likely to report declines in their access to professional supports than youth who had not yet transitioned out (65% vs. 44%). There were no other significant differences between the two groups in reported impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most youth who completed a survey reported no changes due to the pandemic in their access to a phone and data plan, access to Internet/WiFi, housing stability, and use of a food bank.

**Changes in supports and services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
(among youth approaching their transition out of care)**

	Decreased/ worsened	Stayed the same	Increased/ improved
Access to mental health care	52%	42%	6%
Job stability	51%	40%	9%
Relationships with friends	47%	41%	12%
Access to health care	44%	50%	6%
Access to professional supports (social worker, youth worker, etc.)	44%	43%	13%
Financial support/stability (receiving government benefits, being able to pay rent/bills, etc.)	36%	51%	13%
Relationships with biological family	34%	53%	13%
Use of a food bank or donated food	27%	65%	9%
Access to a phone and data plan	27%	65%	9%
Housing stability	27%	69%	4%
Access to Internet and WiFi	21%	65%	15%

Note: Not all rows equal 100% due to rounding.

Youth were also asked an open-ended question about how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted them so far. Several youth stated that the pandemic had negatively affected their mental health and well-being. In particular, youth reported worsening symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as increased feelings of loneliness. Youth also commented on how the pandemic had negatively affected their education, as well as their ability to secure employment which in turn had a negative impact on their finances.

However, some stated that the pandemic had not impacted them, while a few commented they had experienced positive effects, such as an opportunity to reflect on what was important in life, and time on their own which they described as beneficial to them.

**Youth's comments on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted them ...
(among those who completed a survey before and/or after
transitioning out of care)**

"Covid-19 has made it so my anxiety and depression have worsened again because I can't go out and do the things I was doing before to help my mental health."

"It has made me more depressed and lonely."

"Haven't been able to get a job."

"It's reduced my income and prevented me from going out properly."

"In short, the pandemic has made it extremely difficult to transition back into school full time. It's very challenging and overwhelming."

"Life has become more difficult. Everything is going up in price and it's hard to find a job."

"Difficulty finding supports such as counseling as I prefer them to be in person."

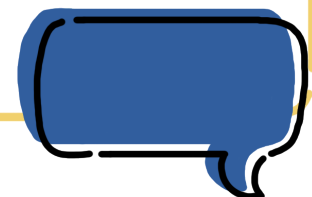
"The pandemic put an intense strain on an already unstable relationship."

"Many of my family members suffer from substance addictions ... and it has negatively impacted the entire family."

"The meal plan and shopping list have changed a lot, and I also learned some money-saving techniques."

"Mostly positively, gained a lot of self-confidence and self-esteem with the much needed seclusion and solitary [time]."

"Gave me a lot of time to think and made me understand the importance of relationships, connections, time management and other concepts that I wouldn't have time, normally, to think about."



SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH WHO HAD TURNED 19 AND WERE RECEIVING EXTENDED SUPPORTS

Results in this section focus on youth who remained in care past their 19th birthday—due to the COVID-19 emergency measures that were introduced in March 2020.

To date, 26 youth who would otherwise have transitioned out of care have completed a survey while accessing extended supports introduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the small sample, findings are reported qualitatively.

- Just over half of youth who were receiving extended supports were currently on a Youth Agreement. The remaining youth were currently in foster care, a group home, or on a Kith and Kinship agreement.
- Around two thirds reported having a care plan and just under half reported having a transition plan.
- The majority felt quite or very prepared to live independently, to cook healthy meals for themselves, to pursue their education, to find a job, to pay bills and budget, and to apply for benefits if they needed them. Also, around half felt prepared to find housing, and fewer felt prepared for healthy romantic relationships.
- Youth were living in a range of situations including alone, with roommates, with foster parents and with biological family members. Half had moved in the past six months, and the majority felt safe where they were currently living.
- Most youth accessing extended supports felt they needed help for their mental health in the past six months, and half of these youth reported they got the help they needed.
- Youth remaining in care were more likely than those who had recently transitioned out to have accessed mental health supports. They also reported accessing a range of other services during the past six months, including services to get ID, youth employment programs or supports, cultural supports, online supports, youth drop-in centres, substance use counselling or rehab, and life skills programs.
- Half of youth accessing extended supports were currently in school and a little under half were working at a paid job.
- Around half of youth reported that because of the COVID-19 pandemic they had experienced declines in their job stability, relationships with friends, access to professional supports, and access to physical health care and mental health care. Most reported the pandemic had not impacted their access to Internet/WiFi, housing stability, access to a phone and data plan, financial support/stability, and use of a food bank or access to donated food.

I was able to keep my youth worker due to my aging out being postponed. This has been so, so incredibly helpful, especially since my first college semester started right as I was supposed to age out."

I'm getting all the help I need so I think I'm currently being supported as best as possible."

I couldn't study very well because it was online and it was my first time to study online and now I am so worried because I am attending school and I feel not safe. I [would] like to continue my education online."

Was supposed to attend university in 2020 but due to covid that deferred till 2021 but now not attending."



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Results in this section are among youth who completed a baseline survey before they were scheduled to transition out of care, including those accessing extended supports, unless otherwise noted. The pattern of findings was similar among youth who had recently transitioned out of care.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

Ensuring that youth in care are supported to meet their basic needs is important for their health and well-being. For example, youth who did not go to bed hungry due to lack of money for food were more likely than those who experienced this level of hunger to feel their life was going well (53% vs. 32%), and to often or always feel happy (35% vs. 18%) and hopeful (37% vs. 17%). Also, youth who always ate three meals a day were more likely to rate as good or excellent their physical health (75% vs. 49% of youth who did not eat three meals a day), mental health (46% vs. 27%), emotional health (57% vs. 26%), and spiritual health (71% vs. 34%).

Youth who experienced stable housing generally reported greater well-being. For example, youth who had not moved in the past six months were more likely than those who had moved to rate their emotional health as good or excellent (44% vs. 23%) and were less likely to have needed mental health services in the past six months (51% vs. 74%). They were also less likely to often or always feel stressed (41% vs. 65%), lonely (25% vs. 43%), and angry (13% vs. 28%).

Also, youth who felt safe where they were living were more likely than those who did not feel safe to often or always experience a general sense of safety in their life (61% vs. 17%) and to usually feel good about themselves (24% vs. 0%).

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

Everyone should feel safe, cared for and have a sense of belonging.”

Youth who had positive relationships and connections with adults and peers tended to report better health and well-being.

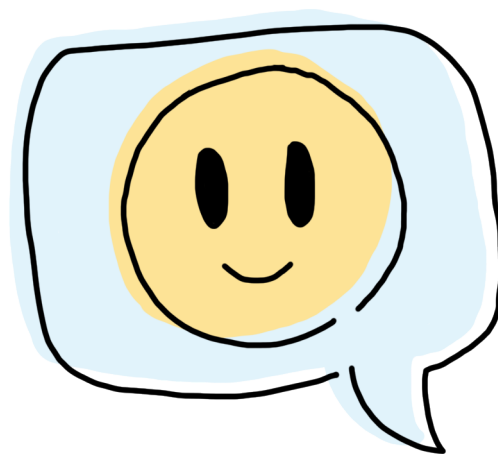


● Caring adults

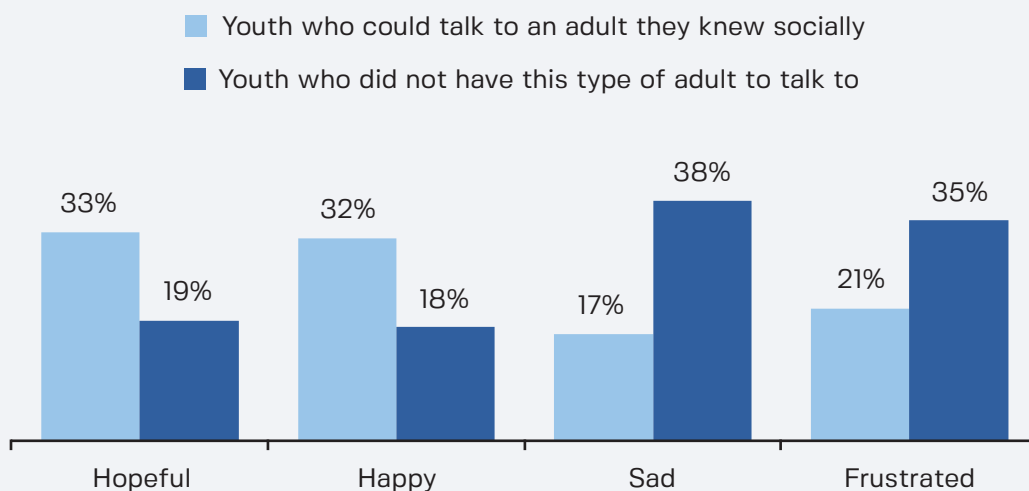
Youth who had someone they could talk to (if they were having a really good or bad day) were more likely than those who did not have this type of person in their life to often or always feel cared about (38% vs. 0%) and safe, and were less likely to feel sad (25% vs. 48%) and scared (16% vs. 38%).

If they had an adult they could talk to, specifically who they knew through services they accessed, they were more likely to often or always feel grateful (62% vs. 44% of youth without such an adult), and were less likely to feel frustrated (16% vs. 35%). Findings were similar if they had an adult they knew socially who they could talk to (e.g., friend's parent), and these youth were also more likely to feel satisfied with their life (e.g., 59% felt they had a good life vs. 30% of youth who did not have an adult they knew socially who they could talk to).

Youth who felt there was an adult who cared about them were more likely to feel satisfied with their life, and were less likely to wish they had a different life (44% vs. 73%).



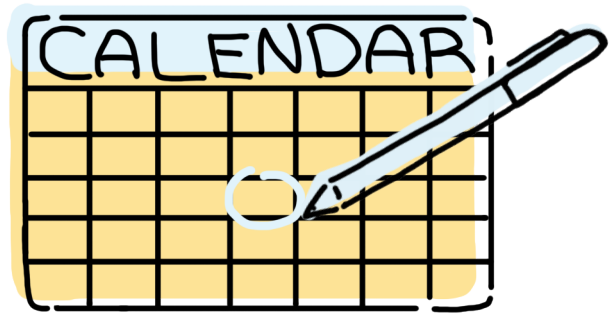
Having an adult to talk to whom youth knew socially in relation to often or always feeling ...



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.

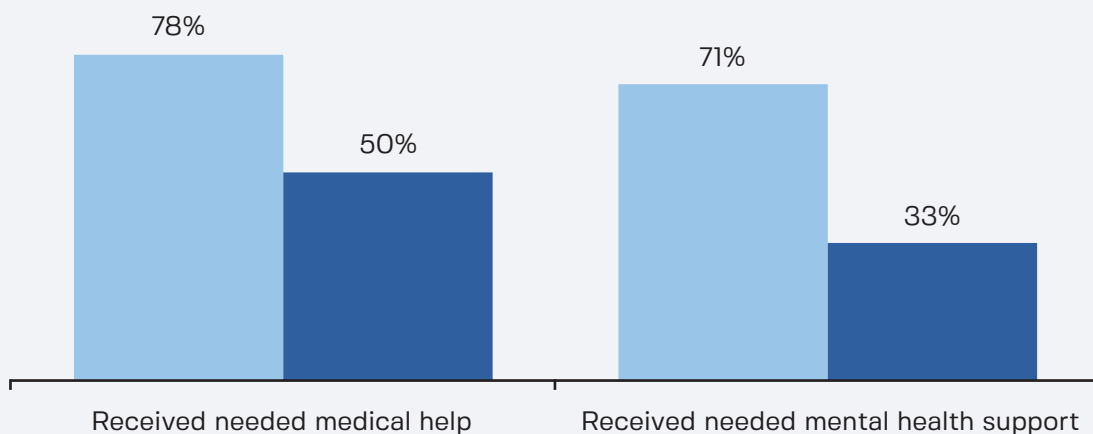
○ Support with making or getting to appointments

Youth who had an adult who helped them with making or getting to appointments were more likely than those without this type of adult support to have accessed the medical help and mental health support they felt they needed in the past six months, and were more likely to report good or excellent mental health (36% vs. 16%).



Having an adult who helped with appointments in relation to youth accessing needed health care in the past six months

- Youth who had an adult who helped with making or getting to appointments
- Youth who did not have this type of adult support



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.

● Friends

Connections with peers was linked to enhanced well-being. For example, youth with three or more close friends were more likely than those with fewer friends to often or always feel happy (36% vs. 16%), safe (61% vs. 43%), and cared about (42% vs. 24%).

In addition, youth with at least one close friend who was also in government care were less likely than youth without friends in care to often or always feel stressed (48% vs. 68%), and were more likely to feel hopeful (31% vs. 16%).

● Connection to community

Youth who felt connected to their community were around four times as likely as youth who did not feel this way to report feeling good about themselves, and were twice as likely to feel hopeful (38% vs. 19%). They were also less likely to often or always feel lonely (24% vs. 49%) and sad (12% vs. 45%).

● Connection to nature

Feeling connected to nature was linked to more positive spiritual health. For example, 68% of youth who often or always felt connected to nature rated their spiritual health as good or excellent compared to 18% of youth who hardly ever or never felt connected to nature.



ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

● Housing supports

Youth who had an adult who helped them with finding housing were more likely than youth who did not have this type of adult support to feel prepared to live independently (84% vs. 60%). They were also less likely to have ever had trouble finding housing (72% vs. 90%).

Similarly, youth who asked a housing support worker for help in the past six months and found it helpful were more likely than those who did not find the support helpful to feel prepared to live independently (83% vs. 60%), and were less likely to have moved recently (57% vs. 84%).

● Employment supports

Youth who accessed youth employment programs or supports in the past six months were more likely than their peers who did not access such supports to be currently working at a paid job (60% vs. 42%), and were less likely to have moved in the past six months (47% vs. 66%). They were also more likely to rate their quality of life positively (e.g., 35% felt their life was going just right vs. 19% of youth who had not accessed employment supports).

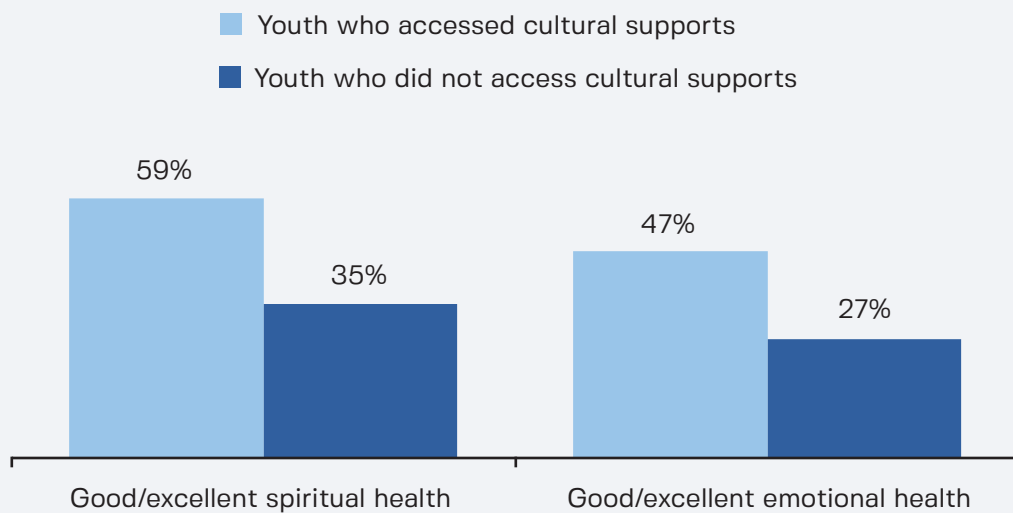
● Education supports

Youth who accessed education supports in the past six months were more likely to be currently enrolled in school (78% vs. 57% of youth who had not accessed education supports). Those who had an adult in their life who helped them with school or college work were more likely to be aware that Adult Basic Education is free (57% vs. 32%), and to feel their life was going well (51% vs. 13%).

○ Cultural supports

Youth who accessed cultural supports in the past six months were more likely than youth who did not access these supports to rate their spiritual health and their emotional health as good or excellent.

Accessing cultural supports in the past six months in relation to health



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.



● Substance use supports

Among youth who reported having an addiction to alcohol or other substances, those who accessed substance use rehab in the past six months were more likely to rate their physical health as good or excellent (78% vs. 33% of youth who had not accessed rehab).

● Life-skills supports

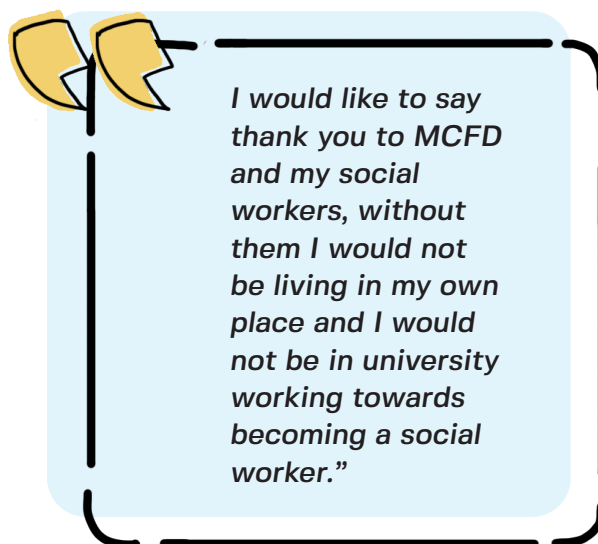
Youth who accessed life-skills supports in the past six months were more likely than those who did not access these supports to report feeling prepared to cook healthy meals for themselves (83% vs. 61%). They were also more likely to feel their life was going well (52% vs. 35%).



HELPFUL PROFESSIONALS

● Social worker

Among youth who asked a social worker for help in the past six months, those who found the experience helpful were more likely than those who did not find it helpful to report they felt prepared to apply for benefits if they needed them (65% vs. 39%) and to pay bills and budget (53% vs. 31%). They were also more likely to rate as good or excellent their emotional health (40% vs. 10%) and spiritual health (53% vs. 20%).

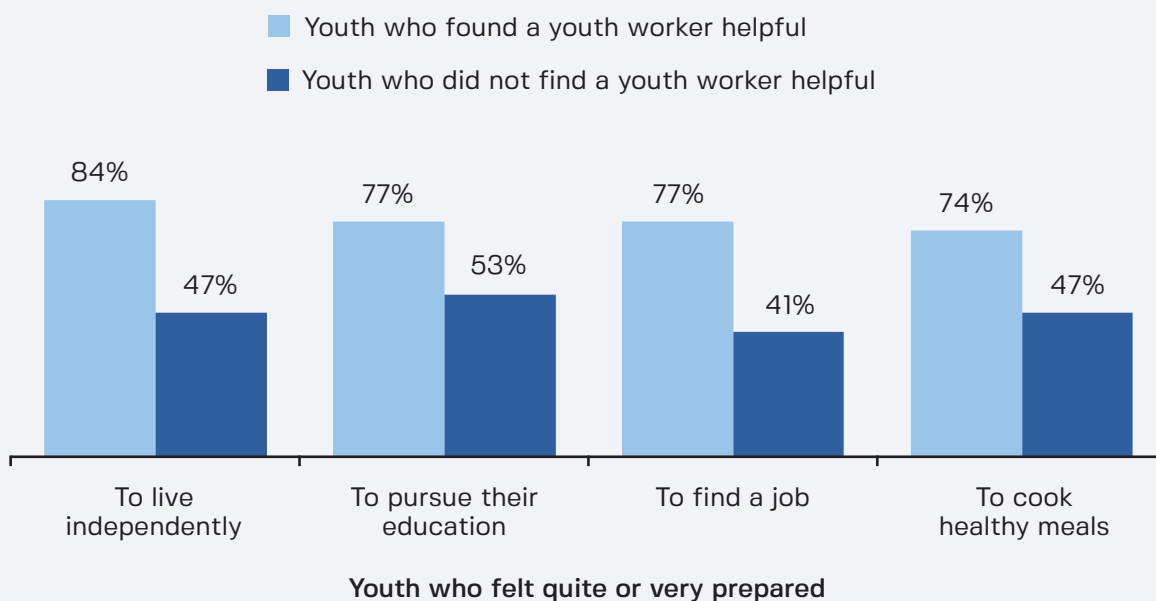


● Youth worker

Youth who found a youth worker helpful were more likely to report feeling prepared for different aspects of young adult life. For example, they were more likely to feel prepared to live independently, to pursue their education, find a job, and cook healthy meals for themselves. They were also less likely to often or always feel lonely (29% vs. 65%) or sad (24% vs. 53%).



Helpfulness of a youth worker in relation to feeling prepared in various areas (among those who approached a youth worker for support in the past six months)



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.

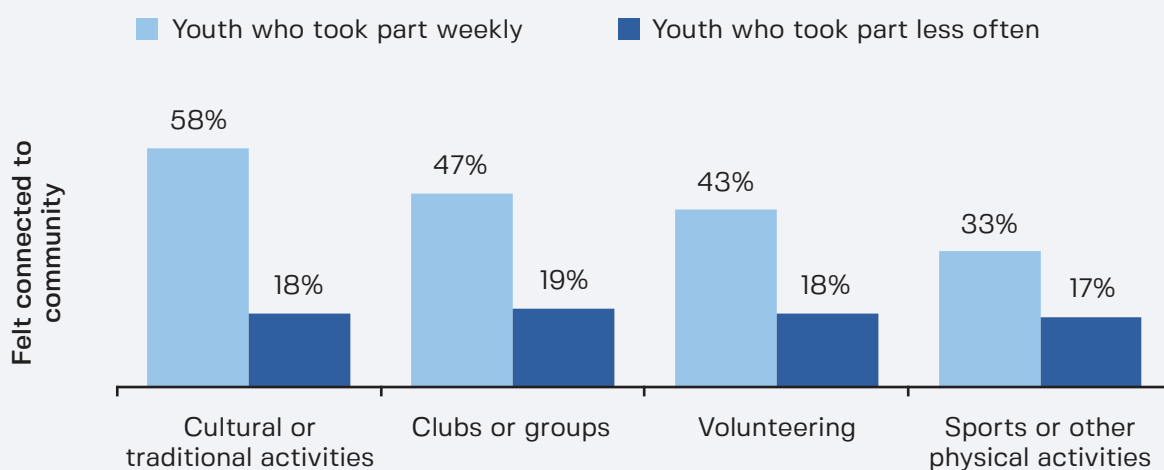


I was recently diagnosed with ADHD, and I would never have gotten the help I needed for it had I not had the support of my youth care worker and counsellor. It's important to have a consistent worker to gain your trust and open up to; it was incredibly difficult to accept help from them to start but I wouldn't be in such a good place now without them."

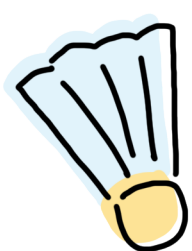
ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Youth who were engaged in the community through sports, cultural activities, clubs or groups, or volunteering in the past six months were generally more likely to report positive health and well-being than youth who were not involved in these activities. For example, youth who took part in any of these activities on a weekly basis were more likely to report feeling connected to their community.

Taking part in community activities in the past six months in relation to feeling connected to the community



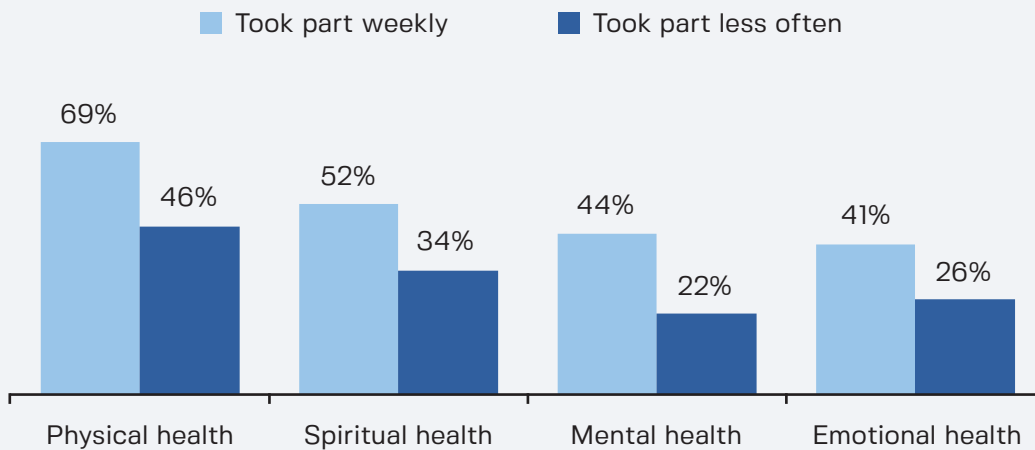
Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.



Youth who took part in sports or other physical activity on a weekly basis were more likely than those who took part less often to rate their physical, mental, and spiritual health as good or excellent. Weekly participation in cultural or traditional activities was also linked to good or excellent spiritual health (68% vs. 36% of youth who did not take part in these activities on a weekly basis).

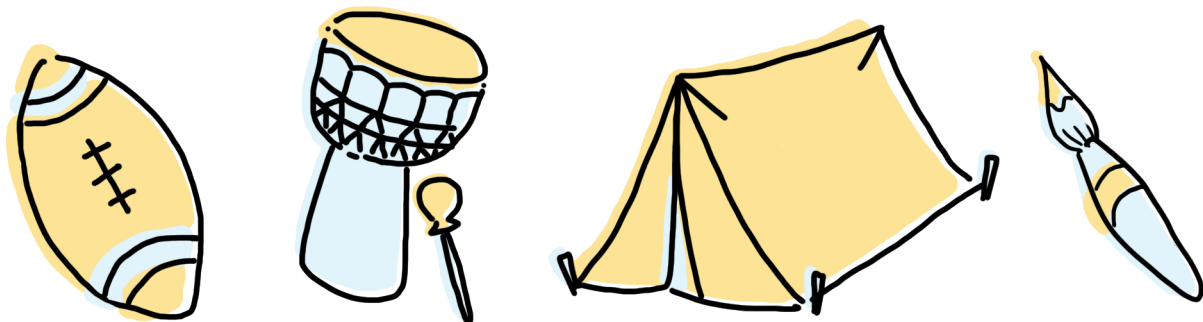
Youth who did any volunteering in the past six months were less likely to report feeling lonely, and those who were involved in clubs or groups (e.g., community groups) were more likely than those who were not involved to rate as good or excellent their physical health (65% vs. 45%), mental health (44% vs. 20%), emotional health (42% vs. 24%), and spiritual health (52% vs. 32%).

Youth who took part in sports or other physical activity in the past six months in relation to good/excellent health ratings



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.

Note: For emotional health, the difference was not statistically significant between youth who took part weekly and those who took part less often.



PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION OUT OF CARE

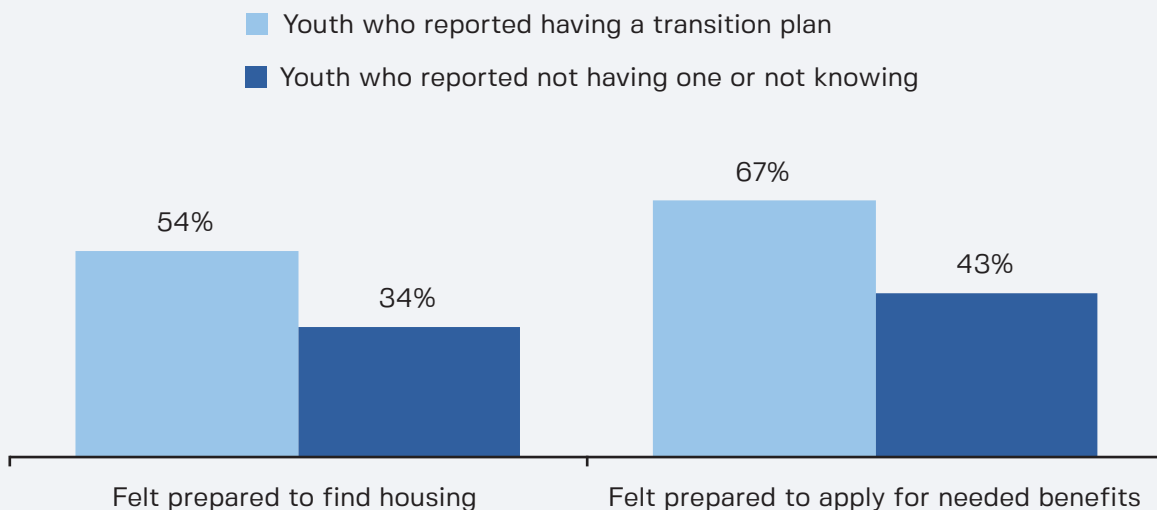
Among youth approaching their transition out of care, those who knew they had a transition plan were more likely than those who reported not having one or not knowing if they had one to feel prepared to find housing and to apply for needed benefits.



Among youth who had transitioned out of care, knowing they had a transition plan in place prior to transitioning out was associated with benefits. For example, these youth were more likely to feel safe where they were living after they had transitioned out of care (86% felt quite or very safe vs. 60% of youth who reported not having had or not knowing if they had a transition plan).

Also, youth who had transitioned from care who indicated having had a transition plan were less likely to report they had experienced barriers or challenges to achieving their goals (e.g., 65% of youth without a transition plan reported challenges to achieving their goals vs. a small minority of youth with a transition plan). Having a transition plan was also linked to youth feeling more hopeful and good about themselves.

Awareness of transition plan in relation to feeling prepared for independent living



Note: Among youth nearing their transition out of care.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The findings show the strengths of young people transitioning out of care, as well as the challenges they experience and supports they find helpful. The report also identifies the differences in experiences of youth nearing their transition out of care and those who had recently transitioned out. For example, youth who had recently transitioned out were more likely to report having a mental health condition, to have missed out on needed mental health services, to be in debt, and to report declines in their access to professional supports during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following is a summary of suggestions from youth who have taken part in this study to date (some of these suggestions have also been described earlier in the report):

- Each youth should have an individually tailored transition plan, and be involved in creating it.
- Youth should be supported to begin preparing for their transition out of care at least a couple of years before their 19th birthday. For example, they should be taught life-skills and about various supports and services available to them after leaving care.
- Youth should continue to be connected to a worker after leaving care, and ideally the same worker they were connected to while in care, who can regularly check in with them and help them to access needed services and supports.
- Youth who have transitioned out of care should have access to a range of supports, including housing, mental health, employment, education, life-skills, and financial supports.
- More mental health supports should be available beyond regular work hours, so that youth who are employed or in school can access the supports they need without having to miss work or classes.
- It could be helpful for there to be a platform for youth in and from care to connect with and support one another (e.g., they can share healthy coping mechanisms they use to manage stress).
- The financial supports offered to youth with care experience, or alternatives to care, should be increased to reflect the cost of living (e.g., rental costs).



Just because I'm a child in care doesn't mean I'm the same as another kid in care. We are all different and should be treated as such."

I think it is important that if we want youth to thrive, we need to give them the budget to do it."

NEXT STEPS

We hope that all individuals, organizations, and service providers working with youth in and from care in BC are able to review this report and consider the findings. For example, in addition to social workers and youth workers reading this report, we hope the findings are shared in school settings so that teachers, counsellors, and other school staff can better understand the experiences of youth nearing their transition out of care and those who have transitioned out.

We encourage service providers and organizations that work with youth in and from care to carefully review the findings from this report and to reflect upon them in individual and group settings (with both staff and youth with care experience). We invite you to consider ways that you can contribute to improving the experiences and outcomes of youth as they transition out of care, and to then collaboratively work on implementing those changes.

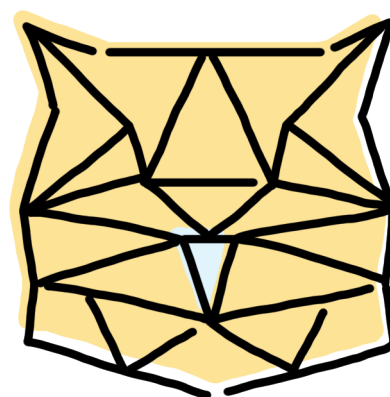
We also encourage those working with youth within a year of transitioning out of care to let them know about the study and to share the details of how to join the study if they are interested (links to the surveys are on page 7).

Presentations and workshops

The YRA are available to present findings from this report and to host workshops based on the findings. The workshops are designed to be interactive and to facilitate discussions with youth and with adults who support youth in and from care. To schedule a presentation or workshop, please email Karen@mcs.bc.ca or phone (604) 291-1996, ext. 230.

How to join McCreary's YRA

The Youth Research Academy (YRA) is a group of youth aged 16–24 with government care experience who gain research skills and learn about carrying out research projects of interest to youth in and from care and the organizations that serve them. McCreary Centre Society employs eight youth each year for a ten-month period, and the next cohort is scheduled to start in June 2022. To learn more about the YRA or how to join, please visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_academy or email Katie@mcs.bc.ca.

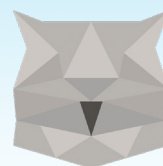


Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants

The Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants are available to BC youth (up to age 29) wanting to carry out projects to support BC youth facing barriers, including youth with experience of homelessness, substance use challenges, and government care. For more information or to apply, please visit mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.



McCreary
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YOUTH
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