



YOUTH
RESEARCH
ACADEMY



YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF CARE IN METRO VANCOUVER 2026 UPDATE

A report prepared for TRRUST Collective Impact



**McCreary
Centre Society**

We acknowledge that the work of TRRUST takes place on the ancestral, traditional, and shared territories of many Indigenous peoples, including 10 local First Nations: qícəy̓ (Katzie), q̓ʷɑ:ńł əń (Kwantlen), k̓ʷik̓ʷəł əm (Kwikwetlem), máthxwi (Matsqui), x̓ʷməθk̓ʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), se'mya'me (Semiahmoo), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), scə́waθən məsteyəx̓ (Tsawwassen), and səlílwətaʔt (Tseil-Waututh).

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PROJECT TEAM

This report was prepared by two alumni of McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA), Shanae Nadary and Azorius Baylis, with support from the McCreary staff team, and members of Cohort 10 of the YRA.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the youth, policy makers, and service providers who helped to develop the *Youth Transitioning Out of Care* survey.

Thank you to all the youth with care experience who are participating in the study.

Ethics approval

The *Youth Transitioning Out of Care* study was approved by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development's Ethics Review Committee.

For further information about the *Youth Transitioning Out of Care* study, or to schedule a presentation of the results presented in this report, contact: erin@mcs.bc.ca.

To learn more about TRRUST Collective Impact, visit mcs.bc.ca/trrust or contact trrustmanager@mcs.bc.ca.

Copies of this report are available at: mcs.bc.ca/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_study.

For inquiries about this report, please email: mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

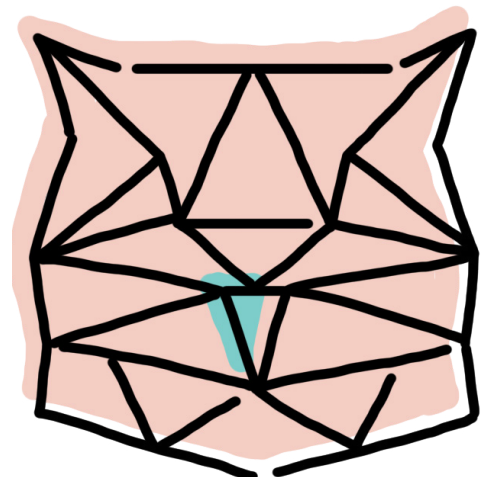


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRRUST Collective Impact aims to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver. This is the third report prepared for the collective using data from McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy's longitudinal study on youth transitioning out of care. The report includes data from 310 Metro Vancouver youth who had experienced government care and/or alternatives to care, including foster homes (65%), Youth Agreements (64%), and group homes (45%).

Findings among youth who had transitioned out of care include:

- Around two thirds (66%) went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food. Youth who had their basic needs met were more likely to report positive health and well-being, including hope for their future (e.g., 47% who never went to bed hungry felt hopeful vs. 27% who went to bed hungry at least sometimes).
- A quarter of youth were currently living with pets. Among youth with a pet, most reported that their pet made them feel safer (89%) and improved their overall well-being (93%). However, 55% reported that having a pet made it challenging for them to access housing.
- The majority of youth (60%) were in school. Over the course of the study, there has been a decrease in youth leaving high school before graduating, and an increase in those attending post-secondary and in those who received a tuition waiver. However, there was also an increase in youth leaving school during post-secondary (e.g., from 10% in 2022–2023, to 36% in 2024–2026).
- Over half of youth often or always felt stressed and anxious. However, youth were less likely to feel anxious around six months after transitioning out of care than before their transition from care. Most youth felt hopeful for their future at least sometimes (90%), felt good about themselves (87%), could think of something they were good at (81%), and had goals for the next six months (86%); but less than half felt satisfied with their life.
- Youth were less likely to participate in sports or other physical activities around a year after transitioning from care compared to before their transition out (42% vs. 79%; among those who completed surveys at both time points). Among those who had transitioned out, youth who participated in physical activities at least weekly were more likely than those who participated less often to rate their physical health (75% vs. 42%) and mental health (46% vs. 21%) as good or excellent, and to feel good about themselves (31% vs. 14%).
- Youth who accessed cultural supports in the past six months, and those who regularly participated in cultural or traditional activities, were more likely than those who did not to report good or excellent spiritual health. They were also more likely to feel connected to their community and culture.
- Youth who had access to needed supports and services while still in care were more likely to report positive health and well-being after they left care. For example, youth who had accessed youth employment supports they found helpful while still in care were less likely to experience barriers to getting or keeping a job around six months after transitioning from care. Similarly, those who had the support of a helpful youth worker while they were in care were more likely than those who did not have this support to feel prepared to live independently, access needed health care, pursue their education, and find a job around six months after they had transitioned out of care.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2019, McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA) have been carrying out a longitudinal study of youth transitioning out of government care and alternatives to care (e.g., a Youth Agreement) across BC. The results are intended to provide policy makers and service providers with current and relevant information about what is working well and what is challenging for youth transitioning out of care, to support young people to experience the most successful transition possible.

The study was co-developed by the YRA with input from key policy makers and service providers. Participants in the study complete a survey every six months starting approximately six months before their 19th birthday, through to their 27th birthday. The surveys have been modified over time as needed. For example, questions about the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys to Empowerment (SAJE) program were added in the spring of 2024 to reflect the introduction of this program. However, many of the core questions have stayed the same to allow for comparisons over time. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Erin at erin@mcs.bc.ca.

The current report focuses on youth transitioning out of care and alternatives to care in Metro Vancouver. It was prepared for TRRUST Collective Impact. TRRUST partners work collaboratively with young people to improve outcomes in all areas of health and well-being. The current focus of the collective is on addressing food security and housing, and supporting youth with pets. The collective has also done work to address some of the challenges youth transitioning out of care face in the areas of education; employment; meaningful connections; and health, wellness, and culture.

Youth Research Academy

McCreary's YRA are a group of youth between the ages of 16 and 27 with government care experience. They gain skills to carry out research and community-based projects that are relevant to youth in and from care and the agencies that serve them. To learn more about the YRA, visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_academy or email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

TRRUST Collective Impact

TRRUST is a Collective Impact initiative that began in 2014. TRRUST is now comprised of over 80 organizations and 400 members, including non-profits, government agencies, and young people with experience in government care. The goal of TRRUST is to achieve systems-wide improvements in outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver. To learn more about TRRUST, please visit mcs.bc.ca/trrust or email trrustmanager@mcs.bc.ca.

If you are aged 18–20 with care experience and may be interested in participating in the *Youth Transitioning Out of Care* study, please contact yicstudy@mcs.bc.ca to receive a survey link.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the third report that focuses on youth with care experience in Metro Vancouver and includes data from 310 youth who completed a baseline survey up to February 2026. To date, 43% have completed a follow-up survey(s), and a total of 638 surveys were included in the analyses. Some youth were not yet eligible to complete a follow-up survey because they had filled out a baseline survey less than six months earlier.

Comparisons were carried out between youth who were nearing their transition out of care and those who had transitioned out. Percentages were similar between the two groups, unless otherwise noted. Comparisons were also carried out to track any changes in youth's experiences before and after their transition out of care. Percentages were similar across time points, unless otherwise noted. Additional analyses assessed if there were any changes over the course of the study (from April 2019 to February 2026).

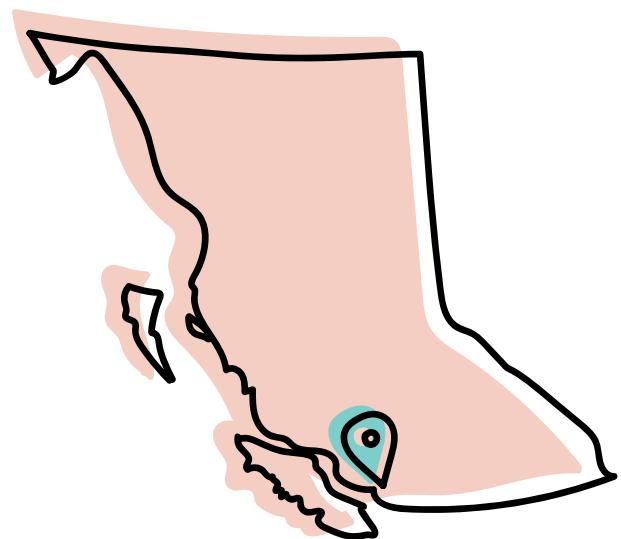
Survey data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Comparisons in this report are statistically significant at $p < .05$. This means there was less than a 5% likelihood the results occurred by chance. Percentages that represented a very small number of youth were not releasable, and where appropriate were reported descriptively instead of quantitatively.

All findings are among youth in Metro Vancouver who had transitioned out of care, unless otherwise noted.

All quotes are from youth who completed a survey within the past 18 months.

LIMITATIONS

Findings in this report reflect the experiences of Metro Vancouver youth who have participated in the study, and may not be representative of all youth in Metro Vancouver with experience of government care or an alternative to care. As the sample of youth who have completed multiple surveys is relatively small, some longitudinal comparisons of pre- and post-transition out of care may not have been statistically significant, and therefore were not reported.



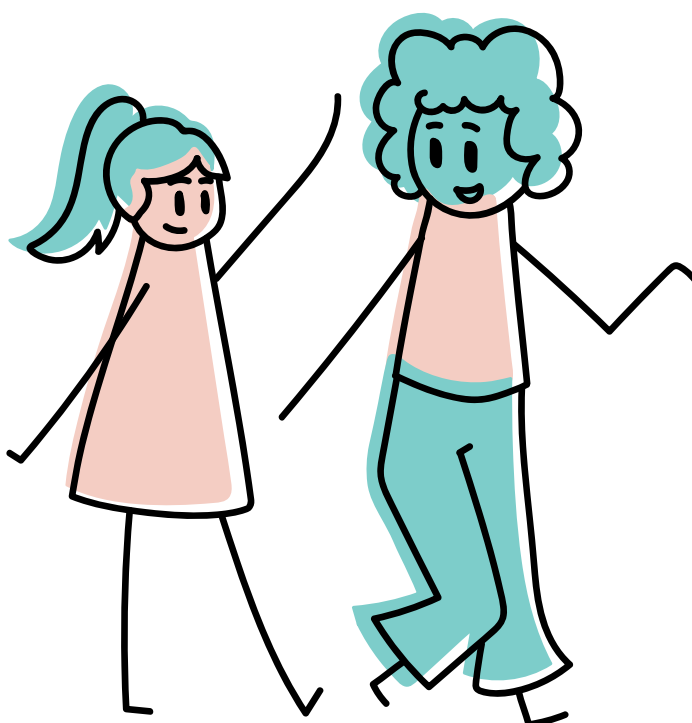
METRO VANCOUVER SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Youth aged 18–27 with care experience or experience of an alternative to care (such as a Youth Agreement) are participating in the study. This includes youth with experience in the care of an Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency (ICFSA).

Around 6 in 10 youth (64%) identified as female, 28% as male, 5% as non-binary, and 3% were not sure of their gender identity or identified as something else (e.g., Two-Spirit).

When asked about their sexual orientation, 61% identified as straight, 20% as bisexual, 6% as gay or lesbian, and 2% indicated having no attractions. Another 5% were not yet sure of their sexual orientation, and 5% specified a sexual orientation not among the list of options (e.g., pansexual).

Most survey participants (93%) had lived in Canada for at least six years (including their whole life). Around a third of youth (34%) identified as Indigenous; and among Indigenous youth, 75% identified as First Nations, 23% as Métis, and 8% as another Indigenous background (e.g., Inuit; they could mark all that applied). The majority of Indigenous youth (56%) could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language (e.g., Chilcotin, Cree, Shuswap), including 12% who could have a conversation and 7% who were fluent.



GOVERNMENT CARE

The majority of youth had been in care for at least three years (32% between three and five years, and 31% for six years or more). Another 22% had been in care between one and two years; 10% for less than a year; and 5% were unsure of how long they had been in care.

Most youth (84%) had received services through MCFD, and 22% from an Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency such as VACFSS (50% among Indigenous youth).

The majority of youth had been in a foster home and/or on a Youth Agreement at some point. Youth still in care or an alternative to care were most commonly currently on a Youth Agreement (43%), in a foster home (27%), or in a group home (17%).

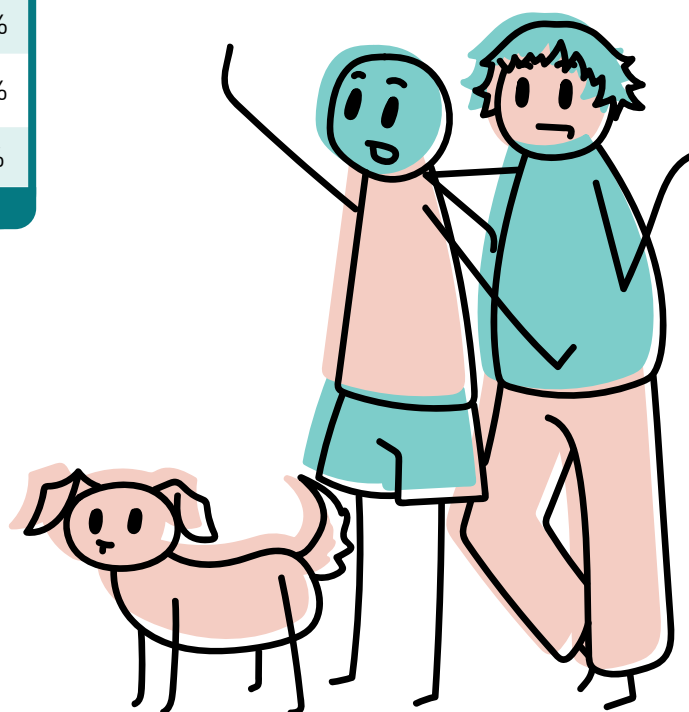
Youth in government care in BC are entitled to have a written care plan, which is developed within six months of their entry into care and includes input from the young person. The plan identifies the young person's needs and goals, and how these will be addressed. Around three quarters of youth approaching their transition out of care (74%) reported having a care plan, while 13% did not have one, and 13% did not know if they had one.

Among youth who had transitioned out of care, 57% reported having a care plan while they were in care, while 27% did not have one, and 15% did not know if they had one.

Types of government care/alternative to care Metro Vancouver youth had ever experienced

Foster home	65%
Youth Agreement	64%
Group home	45%
Placed with friend or relative through MCFD/through ICFSA	35%
Custody centre	10%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



THE EXPERIENCE OF TRANSITIONING OUT OF CARE

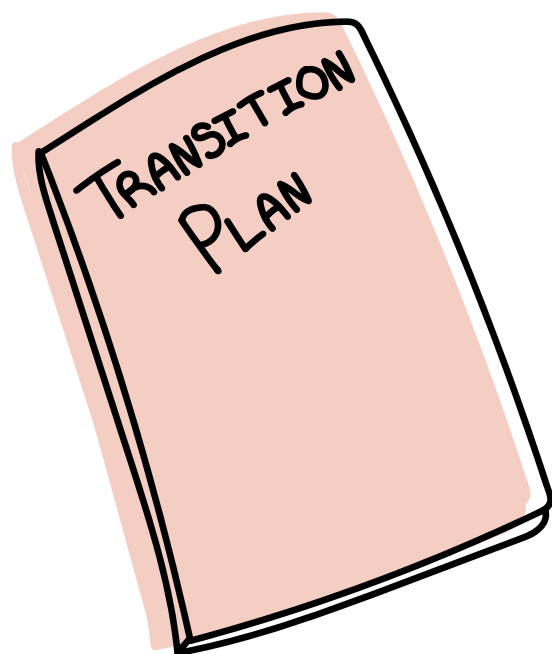
In addition to having a care plan, youth who are preparing to leave care should have a transition plan that identifies their post-care plans and goals, and that supports them to develop the skills necessary for independent living. Among Metro Vancouver youth nearing their transition out of care, 53% reported they had a transition plan, 31% did not have one, and 16% did not know if they had one.

Among youth who had transitioned out of care, 42% had a transition plan while they were still in care, 40% reported they did not have one, and 17% did not know if they had one. The percentage who reported having a transition plan has increased over the course of the study (e.g., 54% in 2025–2026 vs. 32% in 2023–2024).

PREPAREDNESS

Youth who had transitioned out of care were asked how prepared they had been for their transition, knowing what they know now. Around a quarter (24%) reported they had been quite or very prepared to transition out of care, 30% felt somewhat prepared, and 46% felt they had been only a little or not at all prepared.

When asked to explain, some youth commented they felt prepared to transition out because they had adult support finding housing and other resources. Other youth explained they felt unprepared for the transition because there was no plan in place for them, and they did not know where to go for advocacy support. Several youth also described not having the skills needed to live independently, and experiencing challenges to finding housing.



Comments from Metro Vancouver youth on how prepared they had been to transition out of care (among those who had transitioned out)

"I felt that they supported me well in finding a home and showing me how to access supports, but I felt unready as I hadn't been taught well how to live on my own and hold myself responsible."

"I was in a stable home but would have liked more information on different resources available."

"My social worker was very helpful for transitioning."

"I didn't realize how much more work it would take as an adult out of care on my own to do tasks and advocate for myself."

"I had absolutely no skills on how to live on my own. I didn't know how to cook, didn't know what budgeting was/how to shop according to a budget. I didn't have any hobbies because I was just trying to find a place to sleep at night."

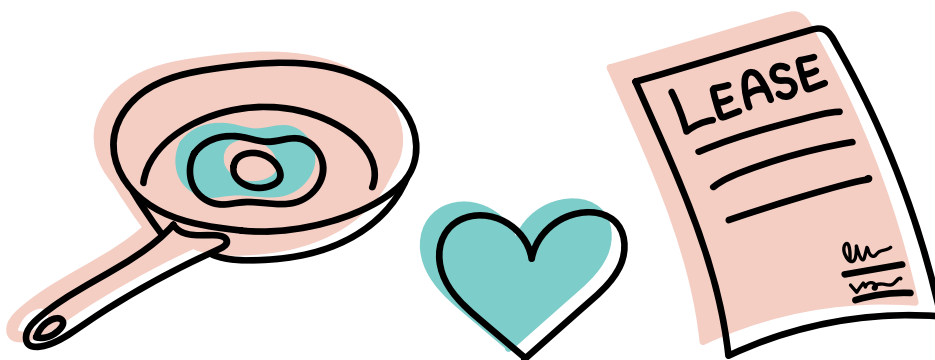
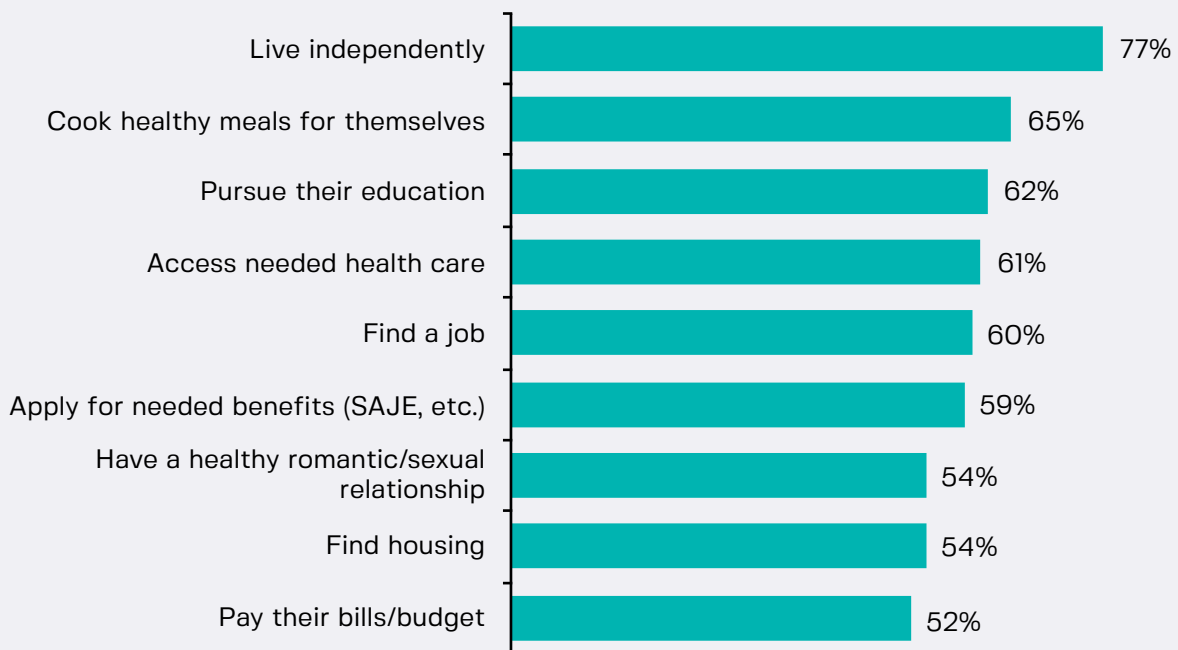
"No transitioning out of care program made with social worker when I was about to age out, left homeless, with no way to get any advocacy support like outreach workers, or more preferably a social worker after being aged out."



Youth were asked how prepared they felt with specific tasks and skills relating to independent living. Youth who had transitioned out of care were less likely than those still in care to feel quite or very prepared to find a job (60% vs. 76%). However, youth were more likely to feel quite or very prepared to live independently around six months after transitioning out of care than they had been before transitioning out (93% vs. 69%; among those who completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care).



Metro Vancouver youth who had transitioned out of care and felt quite or very prepared to ... (among those who felt they wanted or needed the skill)



Among youth still in care, those who had a transition plan were more likely than those without a transition plan to feel quite or very prepared to live independently (77% vs. 59%) and to apply for needed benefits (69% vs. 41%).

Also, six months after transitioning from care, youth who had developed a transition plan while in care were more likely to feel quite or very prepared to live independently (100% vs. 67% of youth who had not had a transition plan); to have healthy relationships (94% vs. 33%); and to apply for SAJE or other benefits (89% vs. 40%).

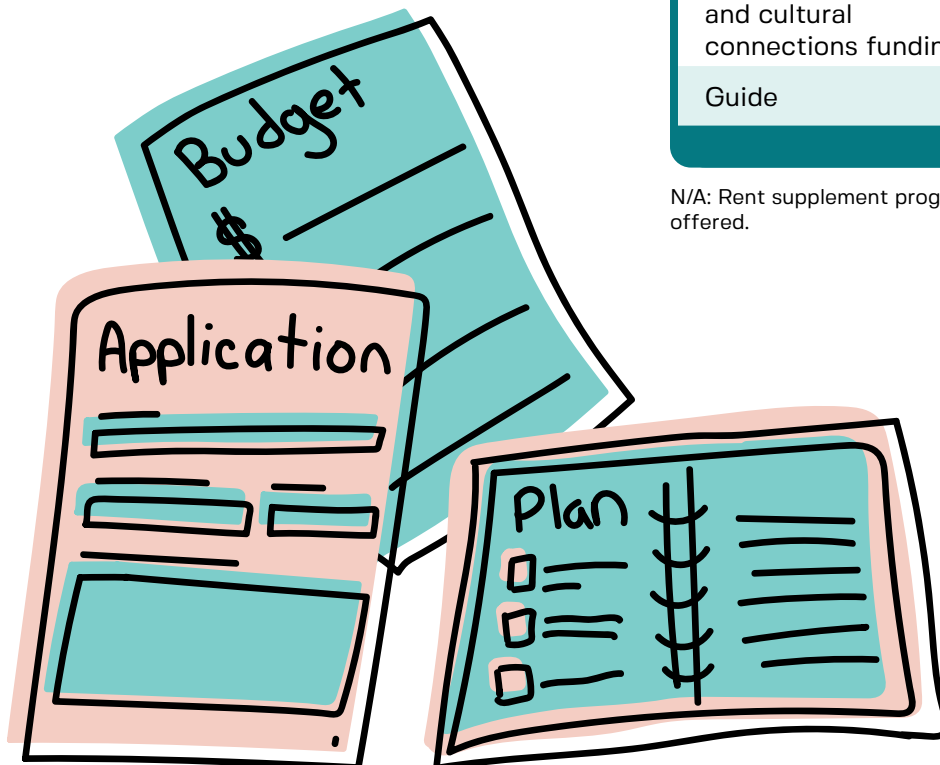
Among youth who had transitioned out of care since the SAJE program was introduced, around three quarters (74%) had heard of the program. Following full implementation of the program, 66% of youth who had transitioned out of care had accessed it, including 49% who were accessing SAJE at the time of their most recent survey.

Youth were asked about specific SAJE supports they had accessed, and most commonly reported accessing income supports.

Metro Vancouver youth who accessed SAJE supports (among those who had transitioned out of care)

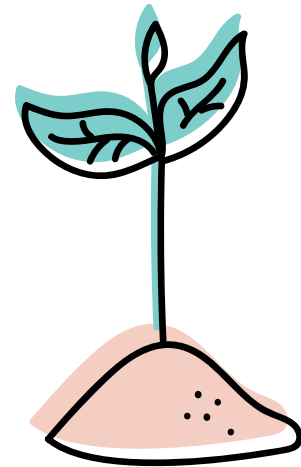
	Ever	Currently
Income supports	51%	38%
Rent supplement program	47%	N/A
Navigator	42%	29%
Health and wellness supports/benefits	41%	28%
Life skills, training, and cultural connections funding	34%	24%
Guide	32%	18%

N/A: Rent supplement program is not currently being offered.



YOUTH'S VIEWS ON SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRANSITION OUT OF CARE

Youth were asked an open-ended question about how young people can be better supported in their transition out of care. Youth who were nearing their transition out of care emphasized the importance of having a transition plan and information about the supports and services they can access. Help with income, housing, and learning life skills was also mentioned.



Comments from Metro Vancouver youth nearing their transition out of care on how young people can be better supported with this transition

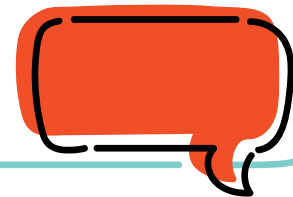
"[We need] better information and better plans to transition out."

"I think being provided with more information about where to receive supports [would be helpful]."

"Foster parents should be required to teach life skills, not just provide a bed. Start SAJE earlier and explain it better."

"Actually help them learn skills they will need when aging out of care instead of just handing everything to them."

"I think young people need more financial support and help with developing life skills, like how to budget, apply for a job, and network. There also needs to be more affordable housing near post-secondary schools."



Youth emphasized that transitioning out of care should be a gradual, well-supported process rather than an abrupt end to services at age 19. Many described the importance of having a comprehensive transition plan, ongoing relationships with workers, and regular check-ins after leaving care. Youth valued consistent and clear communication, noting that frequent changes in social workers made it more difficult to navigate their transition from care because they did not have consistent support. They also highlighted the need for individualized, wrap-around support that reflects each young person's unique goals and needs.

Youth identified needing assistance to secure safe and affordable housing as a priority before transitioning out of care. They also identified the need for support with education, employment, life skills, health care, and accessing benefits (e.g., SAJE, PWD). Many wanted help learning practical skills such as filing taxes, obtaining identification and other essential documents, and applying for available services.

Comments from Metro Vancouver youth who had transitioned out of care on how young people can be better supported with this transition

"Having a solid care plan, knowing the supports that are around & available to youth. Keeping in touch with youth workers & supports past their 19th birthday & honestly just developing a relationship with youth & just ask them!!!"

"Don't just cut us off at 19. The support needs to fade out, not fall off a cliff. More help with actual housing, not just a list of websites. Real, practical life skills stuff before we age out."

"Opportunities for education and skill-building. Clear information about benefits, SAJE, and other supports. Mentorship programs. More guidance and help finding housing and jobs."

"More readily accessible information about services and more help applying to them."

"Being given one consistent guide for the whole journey, less paperwork, and clearer information about all the benefits available from the start."

"Clear and transparent communication and support with finding mental and physical health care practitioners (doctors/psychiatrists/physiotherapists)."

"Disability-related programs and resources, especially signing up/having help/knowing about PWD or other assistances. Help with medical support/knowing what services they are/how to apply."

"Having proper documents to be able to work and apply for housing. Instructions on taxes would help too. I still don't know how to do taxes."

"More support with transition workers, help finding jobs, etc. Wrap-around supports for youth aging out such as substance use workers, counsellors, housing workers, employment, etc. (full wrap-around supports depending on the youth and their needs)."

"For many young people emerging from government care, housing and transportation can be major challenges in getting on their own feet. Therefore, the provision of affordable housing and public transport services is very important."



FINANCIAL SITUATION

Youth were asked about their sources of income (97% of youth who had transitioned out of care reported at least one source of income vs. 87% of youth still in care). For youth still in care, common sources of money were a legal job (39%), Youth Agreement (30%), family members (23%), and through a youth program (15%). Common sources of money for youth who had transitioned out of care included a legal job and SAJE.

Youth who had transitioned out of care more recently were more likely to report getting money from a legal job (e.g., 71% in 2026 vs. 38% in 2024). Youth were also more likely to be getting money from Income Assistance (43% in 2026 vs. 8% in 2019–2025). Most youth who had transitioned out of care reported having a bank account (97% vs. 84% of those still in care), including 90% who had an active bank account (vs. 71%).

Most common sources of income (among Metro Vancouver youth who had transitioned out of care)	
A legal job	53%
SAJE	46%
Bursary/scholarship	19%
PWD (Persons with Disabilities) benefits	13%
Family	11%
IA (Income Assistance)	11%
A youth program	10%
Honoraria	9%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



FOOD SECURITY

Around two thirds of youth who had transitioned out of care (66%) went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food (vs. 55% of youth still in care), including 14% who went to bed hungry often or always. A minority of youth (9%) always ate three meals a day (vs. 17% of those still in care). While the majority (63%) always ate dinner, fewer youth always ate breakfast (20%) and lunch (29%).

Youth who were more likely to go to bed hungry at least sometimes included those who:

- Experienced challenges to finding housing (69% vs. 40% of those who did not have this experience).
- Were in debt (74% vs. 50%).
- Lacked supportive adults in their life. For example, those who did not have a helpful youth worker were more likely to go to bed hungry (100% vs. 58% of those who had a helpful youth worker).

Youth experiencing greater food security were more likely to report positive health and well-being. For example, youth who never went to bed hungry were more likely to feel they had a good life (60% vs. 34% of those who went to bed hungry at least sometimes) and to feel hopeful for their future (47% vs. 27%).

It can be challenging for youth to be in school, employed, or involved in extracurricular activities when their basic needs are not met. Youth who consistently had access to three meals a day were more likely than those who did not have access to three daily meals to be enrolled in school (92% vs. 57%) and involved in sports or other physical activities on a weekly basis (64% vs. 26%). These youth were also more likely to rate as good or excellent their physical health (79% vs. 49% of those who did not always have access to three meals a day), mental health (71% vs. 24%), and emotional health (71% vs. 23%).



DEBT

Around 6 in 10 youth who had transitioned out of care reported being in debt (63% vs. 25% of youth still in care). Youth were more likely to be in debt after transitioning out of care compared to while they were still in care (e.g., 62% were in debt two years post-transition vs. 8% pre-transition; among those who had completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care).

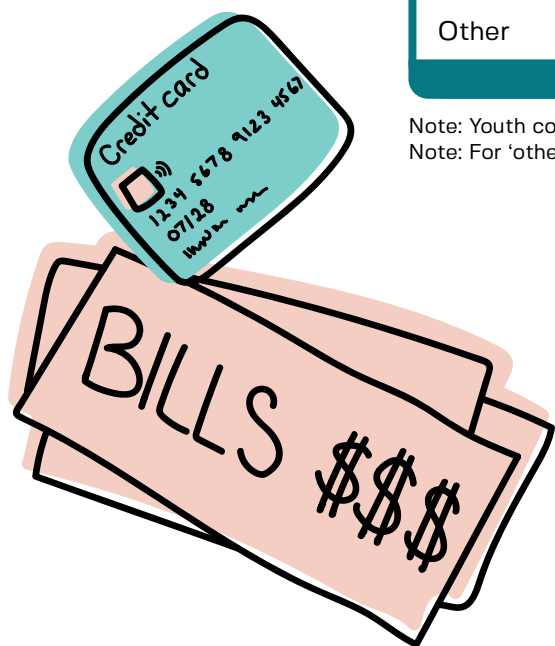
The percentage of youth who had transitioned out of care and experienced debt was higher among those who joined the study more recently (80% who joined in 2024 onwards vs. 52% who joined earlier).

Among those who reported being in debt, credit card debt was the most common for youth who had transitioned out of care (56%), while owing money to a friend or family member was the most common for youth still in care (48%).

Types of debt reported by Metro Vancouver youth (among those who had transitioned out of care & were in debt)

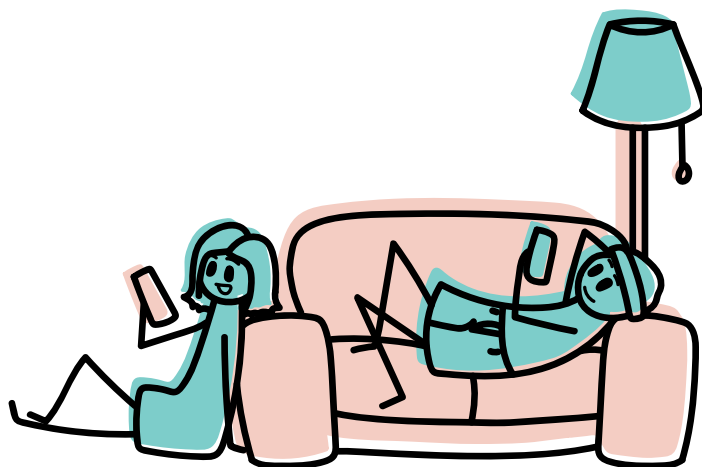
Credit card	56%
Unpaid bills (internet, cell phone, etc.)	49%
Owed money to a friend or family member	29%
Owed money to a loan agency	27%
Student loan	25%
Overdraft	19%
Fine	8%
Other	6%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.
Note: For 'other,' youth commonly specified car payments.

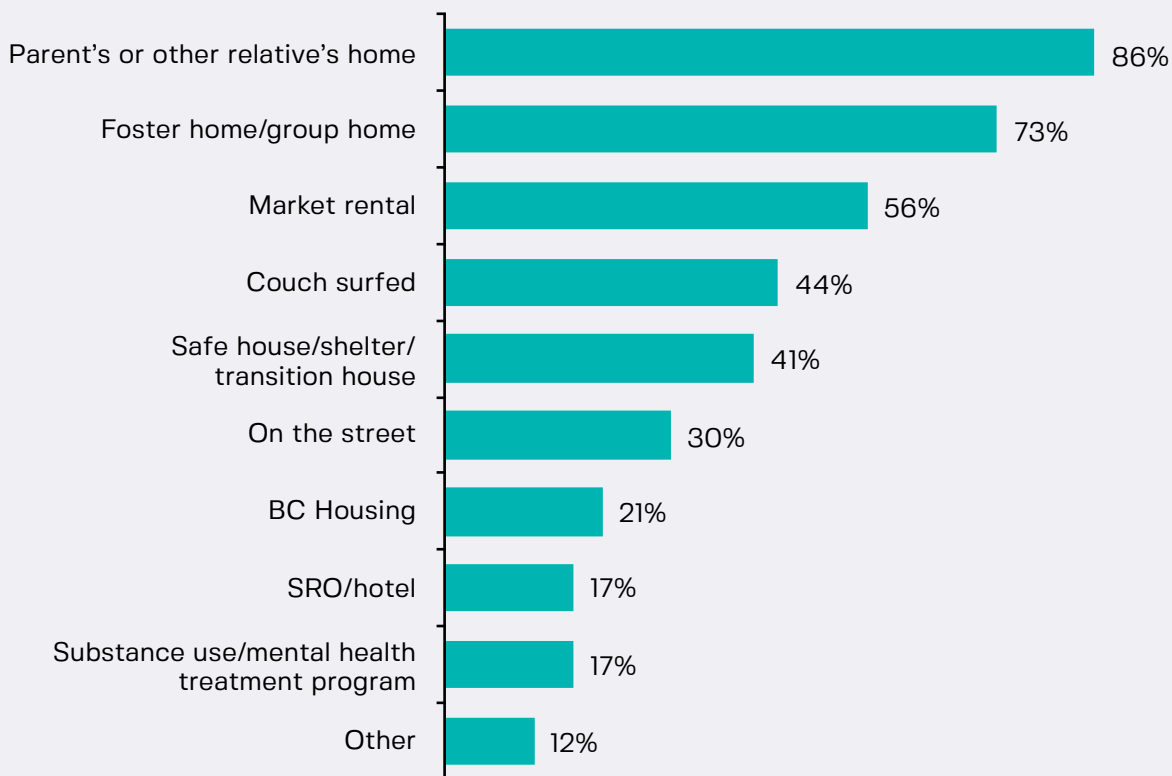


HOUSING

The majority of Metro Vancouver youth with care experience had lived in their parent's or other relative's home, and in a foster home or group home at some point in their lives. They had also experienced a variety of other living situations. Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely to have couch surfed (49% vs. 36% of youth still in care).



Where Metro Vancouver youth with care experience had ever lived



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

CHALLENGES TO FINDING HOUSING

Most youth who had transitioned out of care (87%) had experienced challenges to finding housing, and 65% had experienced these challenges in the past six months. Among youth who experienced recent difficulties to finding housing, most identified being unable to afford housing, and a shortage of safe and affordable housing.

Youth who had transitioned out of care were less likely than those still in care to have an adult to help them find housing (47% vs. 66%). However, when youth had an adult to help with housing, they were less likely to have experienced barriers to finding housing (78% vs. 94% of those who did not have this type of adult support).

Metro Vancouver youth's challenges to finding housing in the past six months (among those who had transitioned out of care & had trouble finding housing)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

CURRENT LIVING SITUATION

Half of youth who had transitioned out of care (50%) had moved in the past six months, including 19% who had moved multiple times. Youth were most commonly currently living in a market rental (38%), followed by their parent's or other relative's home (13%). Also, 7% were living in BC Housing and 6% were couch surfing.

There was an increase over time in youth reporting they were currently couch surfing (14% who completed a survey in 2025–2026 vs. 4% who completed a survey earlier).

Forty percent of youth reported currently living with a friend, romantic partner, or roommate(s), and just over a quarter (27%) were living alone.

Who Metro Vancouver youth were currently living with most of the time (among those who had transitioned out of care)	
Friend/romantic partner/roommate	40%
Live alone	27%
Adults not related to them	14%
Biological family	13%
Their own child/children	6%
Children/youth not related to them	4%
Foster family	3%
Adoptive family	NR
Other	7%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.
NR: Percentage could not be released.

Thirty-six percent of youth had ever been in a youth housing program, including 8% who were currently in one (vs. 17% of youth still in care).

Most youth (86%) felt at least somewhat safe where they were currently living, including 59% who felt quite or very safe (vs. 72% of youth still in care).

Youth who felt quite or very safe where they were currently living were less likely than those who felt less safe to have moved in the past six months (33% vs. 69%), and were more likely to feel their life was going well (60% vs. 18%).

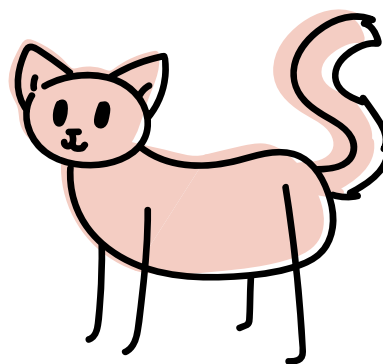
KNOWLEDGE OF TENANCY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Before moving into their current accommodation, 72% of youth had signed a tenancy agreement and 37% had completed a Condition Inspection report with their landlord (47% had not completed one and 16% did not remember if they had completed one).

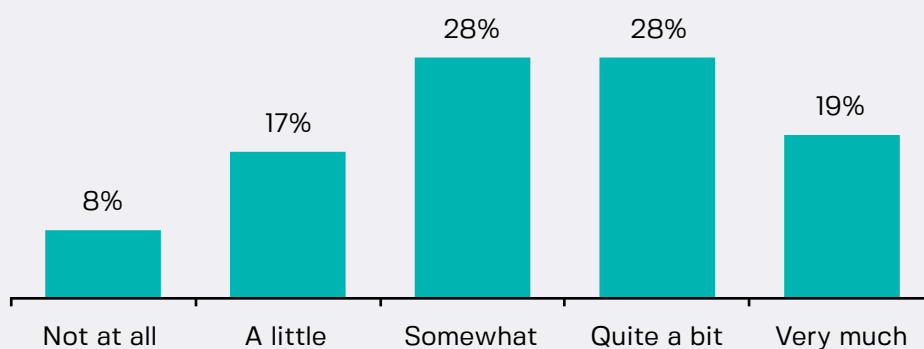
Around two thirds of youth (65%) reported they had understood their tenancy rights and responsibilities before moving into their current accommodation.

LIVING SITUATION MEETING YOUTH'S NEEDS

Three quarters (75%) of youth who had transitioned out of care felt their current living situation met their needs at least somewhat (vs. 93% of youth still in care). When asked to specify, youth described feeling safe where they were living; their accommodation was pet-friendly and affordable; and it was in a desired community.



How much Metro Vancouver youth felt their living situation met their needs (among those who had transitioned out of care)



Metro Vancouver youth's comments about their current living situation meeting their needs (among those who had transitioned out of care)

"I feel safe and get my own space as my partner respects my boundaries and is aware of what I need to feel 100% comfortable."

"I love where I live. It's one of the safest places in Vancouver area and I never feel unsafe when I leave my home."

"It is secure, purpose-built for students, and allows focus on academics."

"I was very fortunate to find a place that was pet friendly and affordable."

"It provides me with shelter and food and other services I might require, like Income Assistance."

"Indigenous housing in a new building. Security is great."



Youth who reported that their living situation did not meet their needs commonly explained that it was too expensive, it was not equipped with needed appliances, they felt unsafe, had no privacy, and they had challenges with roommates.

Metro Vancouver youth's comments about their current living situation not meeting their needs (among those who had transitioned out of care)

"I'm at a shelter and it provides a bed and a roof. But privacy none."

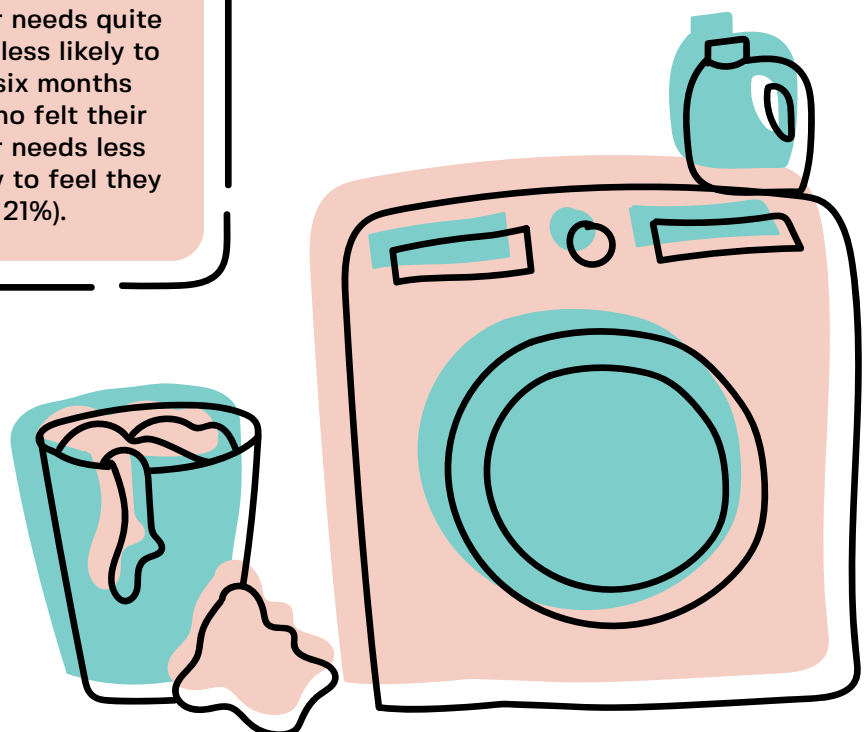
"It's so expensive, I can't afford to eat after paying rent. Also, the landlord refuses to fix issues in the suite."

"My two roommates always bring people over which makes it hard for me to study. I would love to have my own quiet space."

"No in-suite laundry, no fridge, no washroom of my own."



Feeling their living situation met their needs was associated with housing stability and positive well-being. For example, youth who felt their current living situation met their needs quite a bit or very much were less likely to have moved in the past six months (41% vs. 61% of those who felt their living situation met their needs less so), and were more likely to feel they had a good life (65% vs. 21%).



LIVING WITH PETS

A quarter of youth who had transitioned out of care were currently living with pets (25% vs. 11% of youth still in care). Among youth with a pet, most reported that their pet made them feel safer (89%) and improved their overall well-being (93%). In response to an open-ended question about their experience with pets, many youth stated that their pet provided them with companionship and motivation, and had a positive impact on their mental health.



Having a pet is something that has probably kept me alive in some ways. Having the responsibility of a little animal to care for helps give me purpose when I don't have lots of close connections, like at least she needs me if no one else does."



[Having a pet gives me] motivation to keep going."

I had a dog—made a big difference for mental health."

For the majority of youth, having a pet made it challenging to access housing (55% of those who had transitioned out of care reported such challenges as a result of having a pet). They also described a lack of pet-friendly accommodation in Metro Vancouver. Some youth also noted they had not realized how expensive pet ownership and a pet deposit would be.



I can't find pet-friendly housing."



I'd love a cat for company but my building doesn't allow pets."



[Having a pet] is a lot more expensive than I was expecting!"



I really really miss having a dog. I hope to one day (soon) be in a better financial position where I could meet my basic needs and afford a dog."



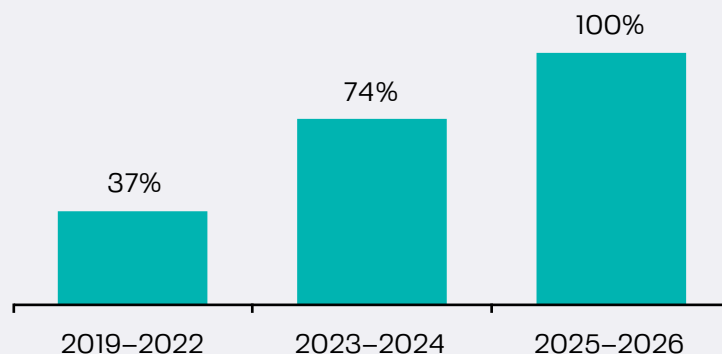
EDUCATION

Among youth nearing their transition out of care, 67% were currently enrolled in school (36% in high school and 31% in a post-secondary program). Similarly, 60% of youth who had transitioned out of care were in school (53% in post-secondary and 8% in high school or the equivalent).

There was a decrease over time in youth leaving high school before graduating (e.g., from 31% in 2019–2020, to 15% in 2024–2026), and the percentage who were currently enrolled in a post-secondary program was higher in 2025–2026 than when the study started (52% vs. 26% in 2019–2020). However, there was also an increase in youth leaving school during post-secondary (e.g., from 10% in 2022–2023, to 36% in 2024–2026).

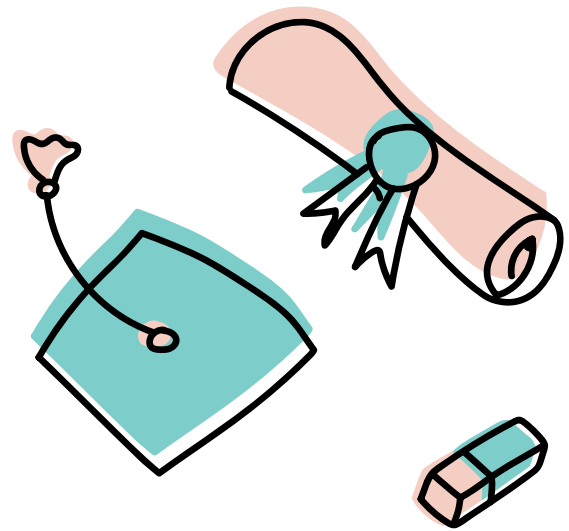
The percentage of youth in post-secondary who had received a tuition waiver has steadily increased since the study began. Overall, 46% of youth who had transitioned out of care had received a tuition waiver.

Metro Vancouver youth in and from care who had received a tuition waiver (among those currently in a post-secondary program)

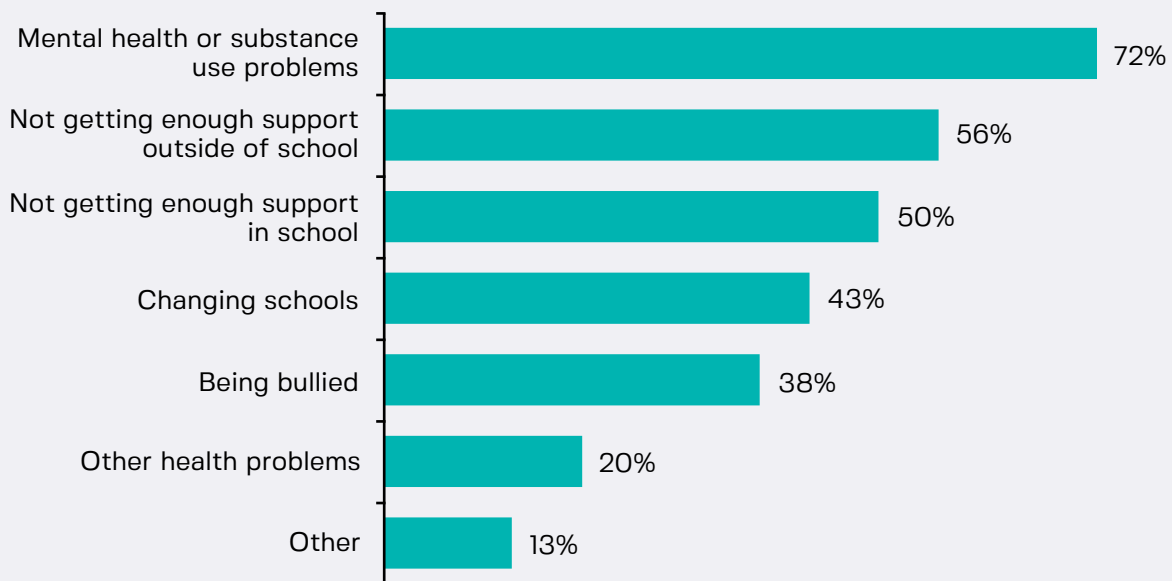


CHALLENGES GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

Three quarters of youth who had transitioned out of care reported they had experienced challenges to graduating from high school. Their most commonly reported challenges were with mental health or substance use problems, followed by not getting enough support outside of school and inside of school. Thirteen percent of youth identified barriers to graduating from high school that were not among the list of options. These commonly included challenges such as conflict with their family, homelessness, and having been expelled from school.



**Metro Vancouver youth's challenges to graduating from high school
(among those who had transitioned out of care & had experienced such challenges)**



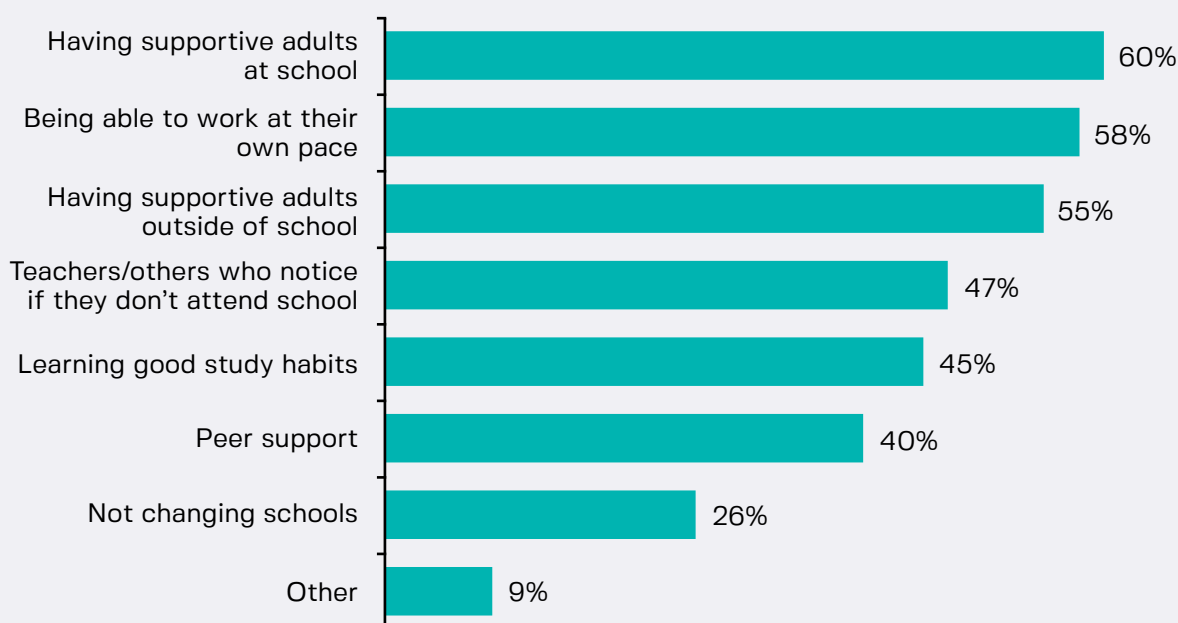
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

EDUCATION SUPPORTS

Most youth who had transitioned out of care (89%) identified supports that had helped them to do well in school. Around 6 in 10 reported that having a supportive adult at school had helped them to succeed, as well as being able to work at their own pace.

Around 4 in 10 youth who had transitioned out of care had an adult to help them with applying for school (39% vs. 70% of youth still in care) and to help with school work (37% vs. 67%).

Types of supports that helped Metro Vancouver youth to do well at school (among those who had transitioned out of care & felt the question applied to them)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

When youth had an adult to help them with their school work, they were less likely to experience challenges to graduating from high school (56% vs. 88% of youth without this type of support). They were also more likely to feel prepared to continue on with their education, including six months after they had transitioned from care (92% vs. 46% of those who did not have this type of adult support; among youth who completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care).

Findings were similar for youth who had an adult to help them with applying for school (e.g., 77% felt prepared to pursue their education vs. 47% of youth who did not have this type of adult support).

EMPLOYMENT

The majority of youth who had transitioned out of care (59%) were currently working (vs. 47% of youth still in care). This included 27% who worked 20 or more hours a week (vs. 14% of youth still in care), 22% who worked 5–19 hours a week, and 10% who worked less than 5 hours a week.

Youth were more likely to be working at a paid job around a year after transitioning out of care than they had been before transitioning out (53% vs. 21%; among those who completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care). Just over half of youth (52%) were actively looking for a job.

Youth who joined the study in 2025–2026 were more likely to be working than those who joined in 2023–2024 (69% vs. 47%), but equally likely to be working as those who joined the study in 2022 or earlier.

Around 4 in 10 youth who had transitioned out of care had an adult to help them with finding a job (38% vs. 63% of youth still in care).

CHALLENGES FINDING & KEEPING A JOB

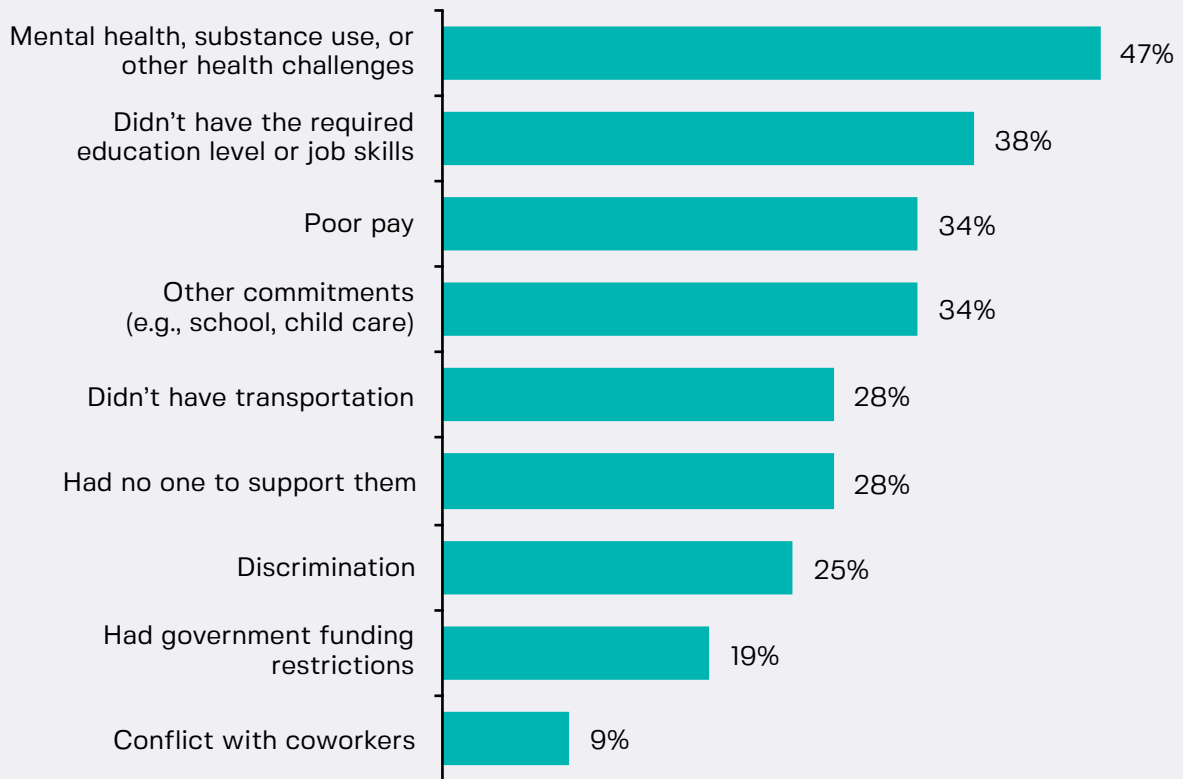
Most youth (91%) had experienced barriers to getting a job. Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely than those still in care to have experienced challenges to getting a job because they did not have transportation (50% vs. 36%) and had government funding restrictions (19% vs. 9%).

Also, most (88%) had experienced barriers to keeping a job. Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely than those still in care to have experienced challenges to keeping a job because the pay was not enough to support them (59% vs. 32%); they had mental health, substance use, or other health challenges (56% vs. 37%); and they experienced discrimination (34% vs. 18%).

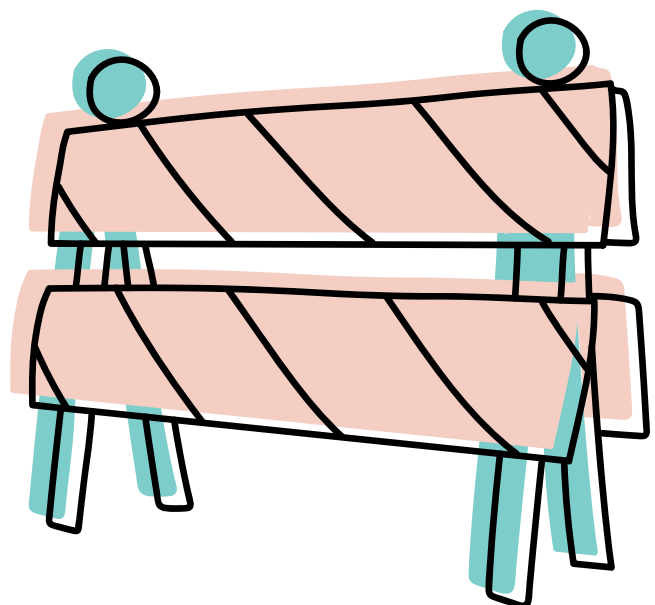
Around 6 in 10 youth who had transitioned out of care (62%) had experienced at least one barrier to getting or keeping a job in the past six months.



Barriers to getting or keeping a job in the past six months (among Metro Vancouver youth who had transitioned out of care & experienced such barriers)



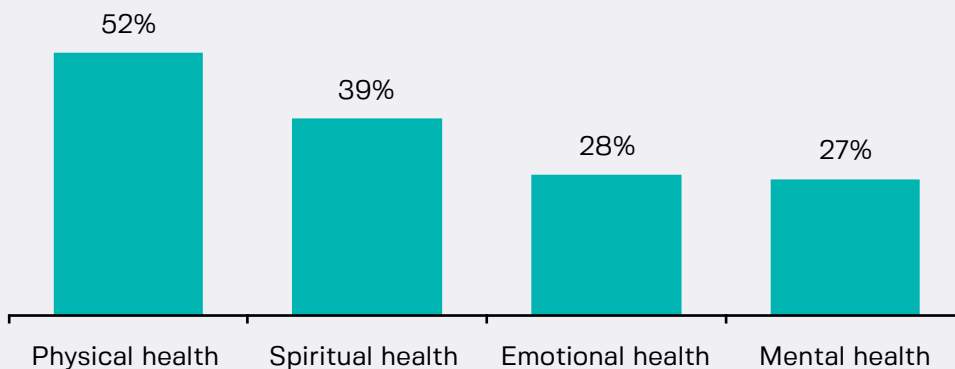
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



HEALTH, WELLNESS, & CULTURE

Just over half of youth who had transitioned out of care reported good or excellent physical health, while fewer youth rated their spiritual, mental, and emotional health this way.

**Metro Vancouver youth who rated their health as good or excellent
(among those who had transitioned out of care)**



Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely than those still in care to report having a health condition or disability (76% vs. 59%). Around two thirds of youth reported having a mental health condition (66% vs. 49% of youth still in care). Also, 24% had a learning disability; 19% had a substance use addiction; 19% had a long-term or chronic medical condition; and 8% a physical and/or sensory condition. Fifteen percent of youth reported having a health condition or disability not among the list of options, and most commonly identified having a developmental disability (e.g., Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, FASD).

Among youth with a health condition or disability, 72% reported that it kept them from doing things other youth their age could do (vs. 49% of youth still in care).



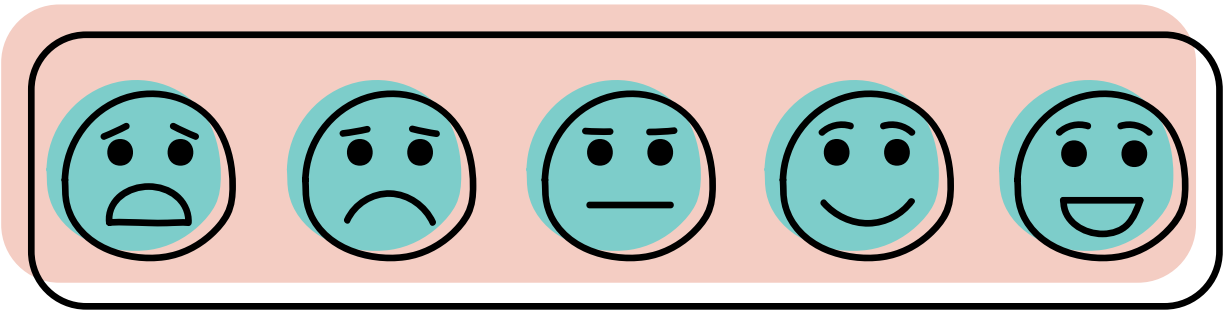
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Youth were asked how often they experienced various emotions. Over half felt stressed and anxious often or always, but most also felt safe and happy at least sometimes.

Youth were less likely to often or always feel anxious around six months after transitioning out of care than before leaving care (40% vs. 63%; among those who completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care).

How often Metro Vancouver youth felt ... (among those who had transitioned out of care)			
	Never/Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often/Always
Stressed	3%	41%	56%
Anxious	9%	39%	53%
Safe	5%	51%	44%
Lonely	10%	51%	39%
Frustrated	10%	57%	32%
Sad	7%	69%	23%
Happy	6%	77%	18%
Angry	21%	66%	13%

Note: Percentages in each row may not total to 100% due to rounding.



VIEWS ON LIFE & SELF

Less than half of youth felt satisfied with their life, such as feeling they had a good life (44%), their life was going well (43%), and they had what they wanted in life (25%). Also, 45% wished they had a different life. Youth were less likely to wish they had a different life around six months after transitioning out of care than before their transition from care (20% vs. 50%; among those who completed surveys both before and after transitioning out of care). However, those who joined the study more recently were less likely to feel they had what they wanted in life (15% who joined in 2024–2026 vs. 32% who joined earlier).

Most youth (87%) reported feeling good about themselves at least sometimes, including 19% who often or always felt this way. Also, 63% felt they got along with people around them.

Around 8 in 10 youth (81%) could think of something they were good at. When asked to specify, youth commonly reported being good at sports, drawing, music, and writing. Some also identified interpersonal or personality traits, such as their adaptability, resilience, adventurousness, problem-solving, and ability to communicate with others.

When asked what they were most proud of, many stated they were proud of what they had achieved in their life despite the challenges they had experienced. Others were proud of education and employment successes (e.g., getting accepted into post-secondary, finding a job), as well as coping with their mental health and substance use challenges and finding stable housing.

Comments from Metro Vancouver youth about what they were most proud of

“That I keep trying and I do my best to bring light and joy into the world and to strangers even though I’m suffering.”

“Gaining admission to university and successfully navigating my first year independently, despite the systemic cliff-edge at age 19.”

“I am most proud of advocating for people in my community and being a recipient of a scholarship at one of the most elite post-secondary institutions in BC.”

“Finding a job as a youth worker to ensure financial stability for myself and my children. I now have savings in case of an emergency which I did not have a year ago.”

“Overcoming my mental health & substance abuse issues is what I am most proud of in life.”

“That I’ve been in my current apartment for 8 months straight. It’s the longest I’ve ever stayed in one place since I was a kid.”

“Staying strong while navigating all those transitions.”



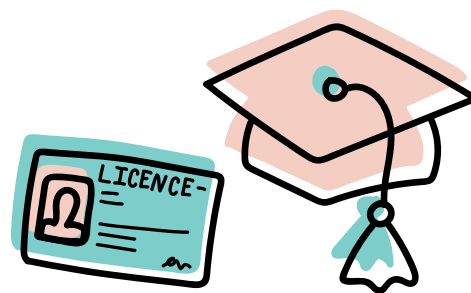
HOPEFULNESS & GOALS

Most youth (90%) reported feeling hopeful for their future at least sometimes, including 34% who felt hopeful often or always.

Also, 86% of youth reported they had goals for the next six months. They commonly reported goals related to employment, education, finances, and life skills.

Youth who joined the study more recently were less likely to often or always feel hopeful (20% who joined in 2024–2026 vs. 43% who joined earlier). However, they were more likely to have goals for the next six months (97% who joined in 2025–2026 vs. 83% who joined earlier).

Youth who had transitioned out of care were more likely than those still in care to report barriers to achieving their goals (66% vs. 46%; among those who had set goals for the next six months). Common barriers included mental health challenges and financial barriers.



Comments from Metro Vancouver youth about their goals for the next six months

"I am just starting school again for the first time in many years, so focusing on that and trying to make it as manageable as possible for myself. Which is part of my larger goal of getting out of poverty."

"I want to get a part-time job, continue going to school, and find a nice, affordable apartment that is close to the post-secondary institution I am transferring to in the fall."

"Find full-time work. Build confidence. Learn how to save and budget."

"Acquire my licence back from ICBC, start a new home owners TFSA account."

"Learn to cook nice meals."

"To become more stable financially."

"To find a place that's accessible and affordable."

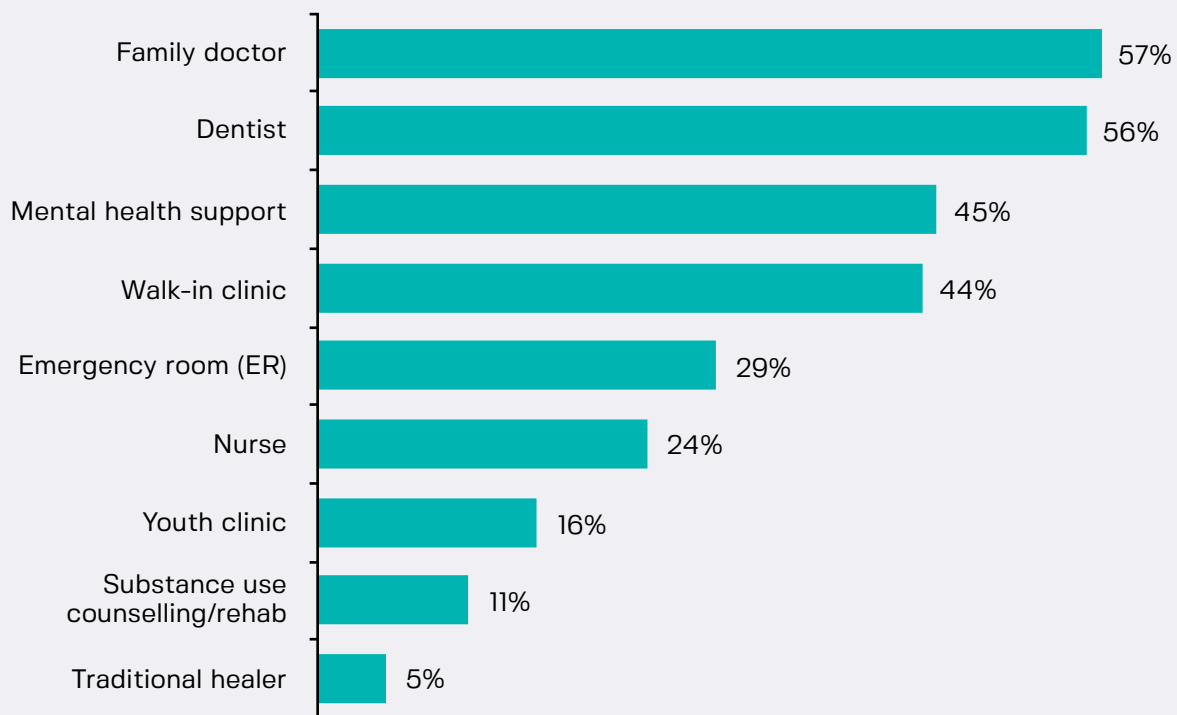


ACCESSING SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Around two thirds of youth (66%) reported they needed medical help in the past six months because they were sick or hurt, and 38% of these youth did not get the help they needed. Similarly, 69% reported they needed mental health services in the past six months, and 56% of these youth did not get the services they needed. The majority of youth had visited a family doctor and/or a dentist in the past six months.



Health-related services and supports most commonly accessed in the past six months (among Metro Vancouver youth who had transitioned out of care)



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Youth who had transitioned out of care also accessed supports and services beyond health care in the past six months. These included youth employment programs/supports (36% vs. 50% of youth still in care), life-skills support (32%), online supports (30%), and youth drop-in centres (25% vs. 40%). Most youth who had accessed these supports found them helpful. For example, 86% found the life-skills support they accessed to be helpful, and 75% found the youth employment programs/supports to be helpful.

Accessing useful supports while still in care was associated with benefits after transitioning out of care. For example, youth who had accessed life-skills supports while in care were more likely to feel prepared to cook healthy meals for themselves around one year after transitioning out of care (83% vs. 31% of youth who had not accessed life-skills supports).

Similarly, youth who had accessed youth employment supports they found helpful while still in care were less likely to experience barriers to getting or keeping a job around six months after transitioning from care. They were also more likely to feel prepared to find a job around 18 months after leaving care.

Just over a quarter of youth who had transitioned out of care had accessed services to get ID in the past six months (27% vs. 44% of those still in care). Most reported they had the ID they needed (e.g., birth certificate, BC Services Card). However, 16% did not have needed ID, including 8% who did not know how to get it.

Around three quarters of youth had access to the technology they needed (74% vs. 97% of youth still in care). When youth were asked to specify what technology they needed, the most common response was a laptop.



SUPPORTS YOUTH CURRENTLY NEEDED

The majority of youth (58%) who had transitioned out of care reported they needed services and supports in the past six months but did not get them (vs. 42% of youth still in care). When asked what they currently needed, many identified mental health supports (e.g., counselling), followed by other health services (e.g., family doctor, dentist, optometrist). Youth also specified a range of services beyond health care, including help with employment, housing, life skills, finances, and cultural connections; and to have an adult who could help in these areas.

Youth were asked if there were any life skills they wanted to learn or to improve. Many wanted to learn or improve their budgeting, cooking, relationship skills (e.g., boundary setting, navigating conflict, communicating), and self-care (e.g., stress management).

Comments from Metro Vancouver youth on supports & services they needed now (among those who had transitioned out of care)

“Desperately in need of housing. Having a lot of trouble finding advocacy like a social worker since I’m aged out. Been trying to use all the resources I can to get housing, but it’s utterly impossible.”

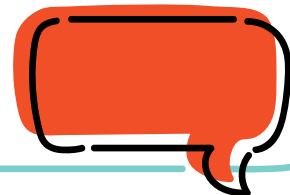
“Honestly, [I need] my youth worker [back]. I have a tendency to isolate myself and she would go above and beyond to get a hold of me, get me out of my house, make sure I had groceries and was eating, and get me other supports that I needed.”

“Family doctor and easier access to psychiatrist as wait times are years’ long.”

“Social Worker or Occupational Therapist. Someone VERY hands-on.”

“Mostly just eye doctors, glasses, and prescriptions and such.”

“Mental health, life skills, and cultural connection.”



Life skills that Metro Vancouver youth reported wanting to learn or improve (among those who had transitioned out of care)

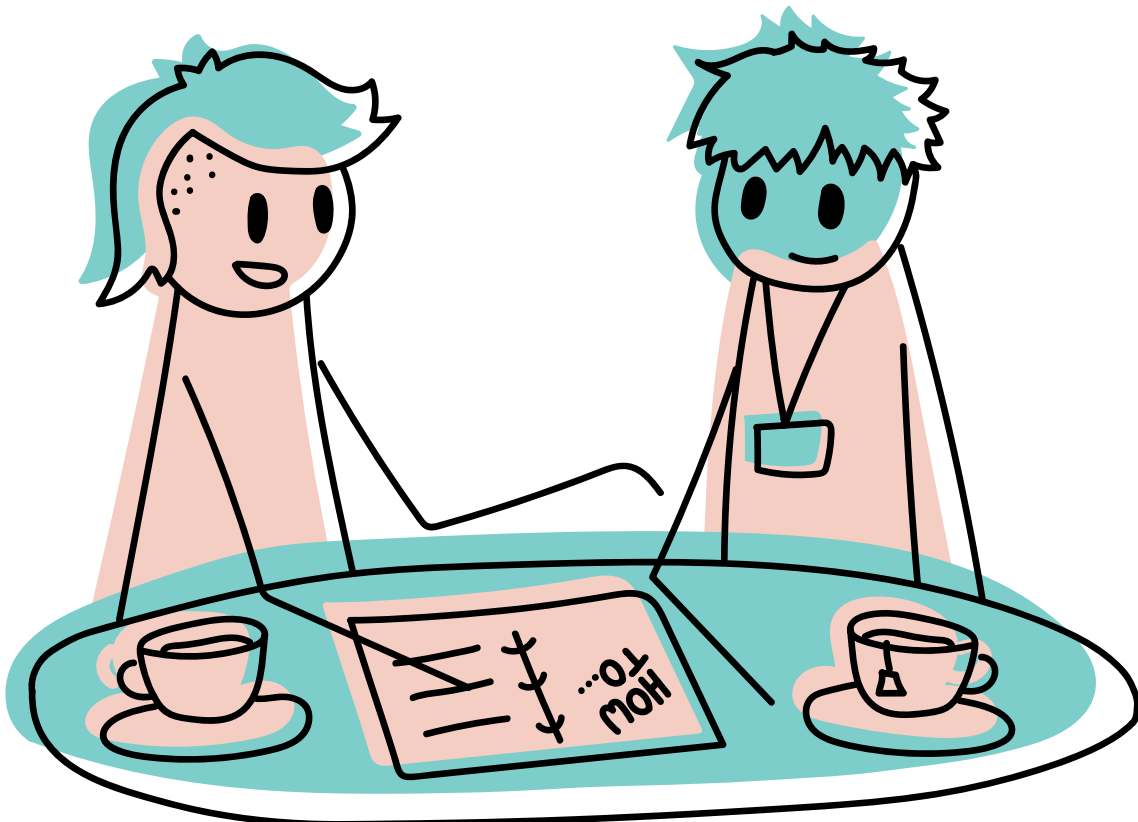
"For real, I need to get better at budgeting. My money disappears too fast. And cooking beyond just pasta and microwave stuff. Would help me eat better and save cash."

"I want to improve my cooking skills to make healthier meals. I'd also like to learn how to budget and save money. I would also like to learn how to access resources to help with my living expenses and enable me to gain access to experiences that I cannot afford because I lack financial security."

"Creative thinking, vehicle maintenance (how to change a tire, for example), coping with stress and self-care, and advocating for myself in a health-care setting—this one is particularly important as after I aged out, I no longer had youth workers willing to advocate for me to my health care team."

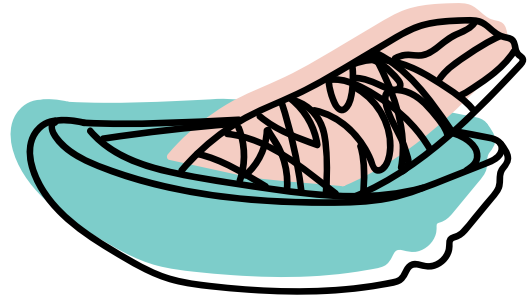
"Learning to do taxes, good study habits, healthy lifestyle (waking up on time, being active, etc.), and how to have motivation."

"Boundary setting, communication, acceptance of self + mistakes, how to keep a job, how to do taxes."



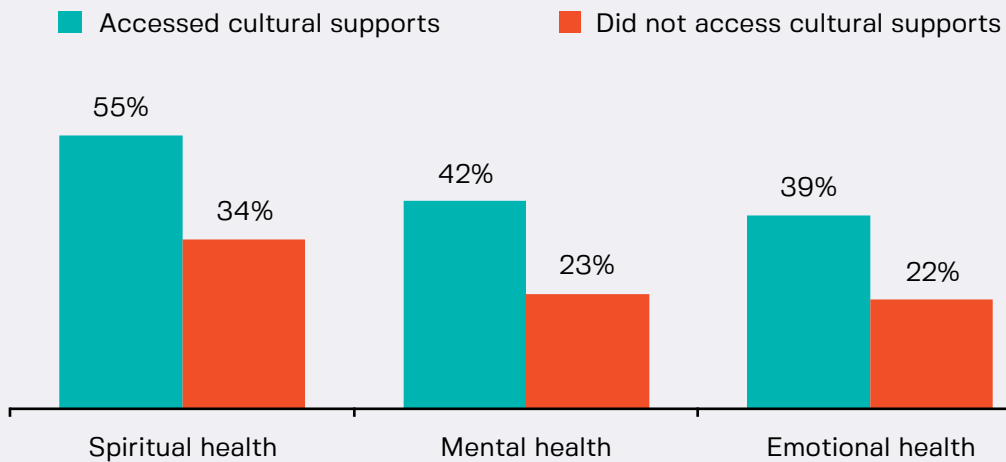
CULTURAL SUPPORTS

Around a fifth of youth (21%) had accessed cultural supports in the past six months, and 79% of these youth had found them helpful. Among Indigenous youth, 41% had accessed cultural supports, and 82% of these youth found the supports helpful.



Youth who accessed cultural supports in the past six months were more likely than youth who did not access these supports to rate their mental, emotional, and spiritual health as good or excellent. They were also more likely to feel at least somewhat connected to their community (79% vs. 48%) and their culture.

Youth who accessed cultural supports in the past six months were more likely to rate their health as good or excellent (among those who had transitioned out of care)



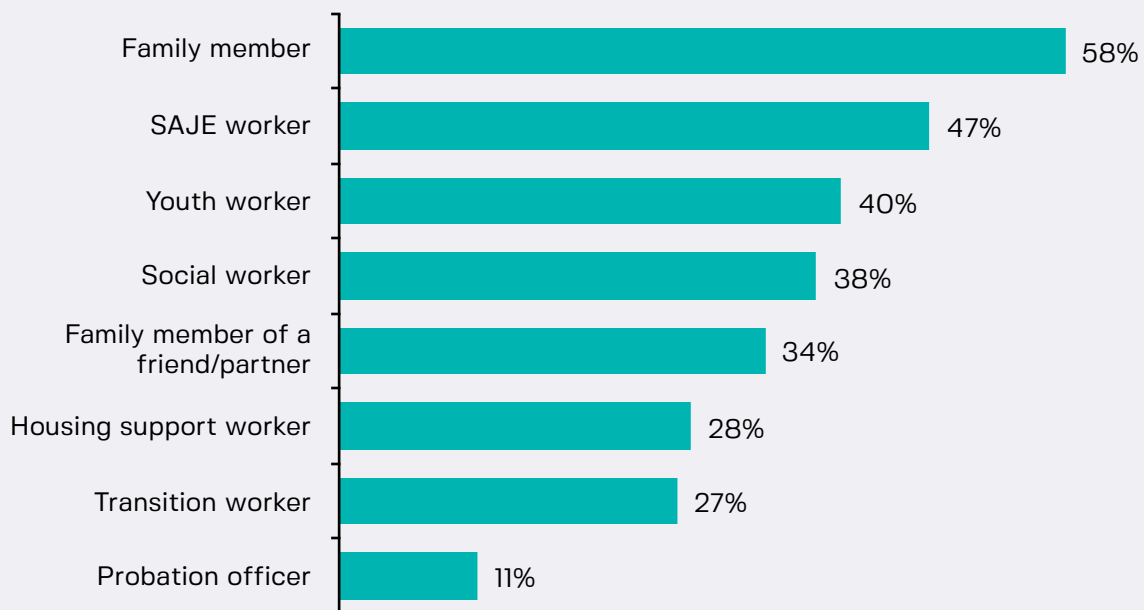
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

Most youth (85%) felt there was an adult in their life who cared about them. Also, 59% had an adult they could talk to if they were having a really good or bad day. This included an adult they knew socially (49%), and an adult they had met through services (23% vs. 39% of those still in care).

Around 6 in 10 youth had approached a family member for help in the past six months. Youth who had transitioned out of care were less likely than those still in care to have approached various people for help in the past six months, including a family member (58% vs. 70%), youth worker (40% vs. 72%), social worker (38% vs. 65%), family member of a friend or partner (34% vs. 54%), housing support worker (28% vs. 53%), and probation officer (11% vs. 24%).

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



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

The majority of youth who had approached someone for help found the support helpful. For example, most found helpful the support they received from a youth worker (87%), transition worker (83%), housing support worker (76%), and social worker (71%).

Having helpful workers was protective for youth who had transitioned out of care. For example, youth who found their transition worker helpful were more likely than those who did not find the support helpful to feel prepared to apply for needed benefits and to cook healthy meals.

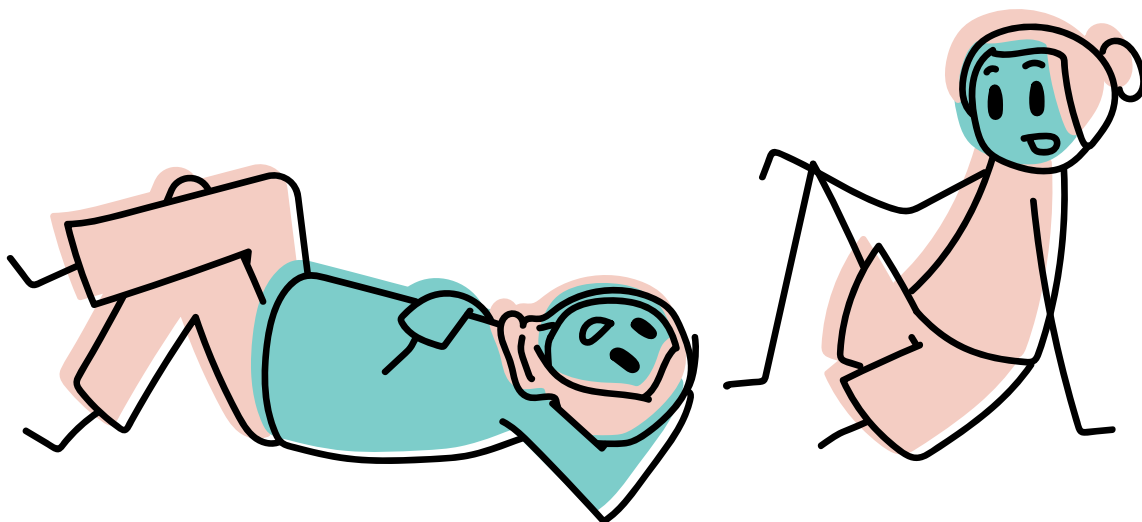
Similarly, youth who found their youth worker helpful while still in care were more likely than those who did not find the support helpful to feel prepared to live independently, access needed health care, pursue their education, and find a job around six months after transitioning from care. Having a helpful social worker while in care was also associated with positive outcomes after transitioning from care, including feeling prepared to apply for needed benefits and to access needed health care around 18 months after leaving care.

PEERS

Most youth reported having at least one close friend (88% vs. 94% of those still in care), including 41% who had three or more close friends. Around half of youth (48%) had at least one friend who also had government care experience, including 16% who had three or more such friends.

Four in ten youth (40%) had another youth they could talk to if they were having a really good or bad day. Around three quarters (77%) had asked for help from a friend or partner in the past six months, and 92% of these youth had found the support helpful.

Having a supportive peer or friend was associated with positive well-being. For example, youth who had another young person to talk to if they were having a really good or bad day were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent (37% vs. 23% who did not have a young person to talk to). They were also more likely to feel happy often or always (26% vs. 12%), and were less likely to usually feel lonely (29% vs. 45%).



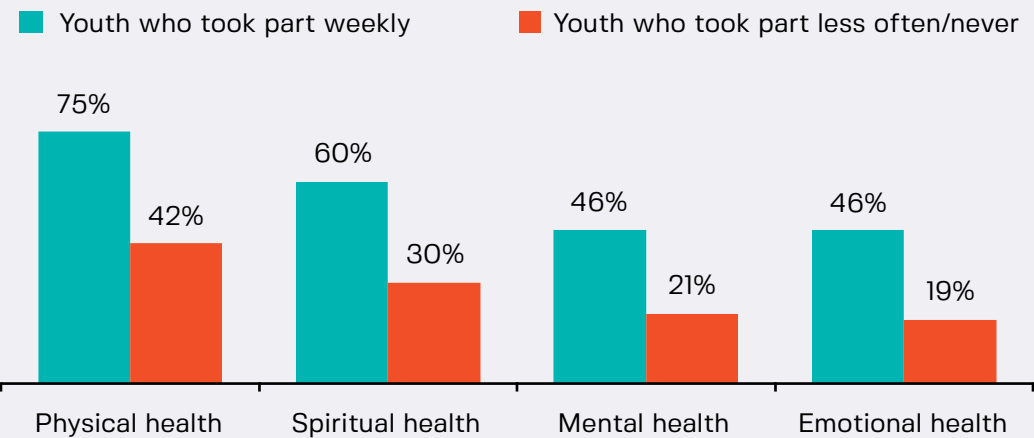
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONNECTION

Youth reported participating in a range of community activities in the past six months. They most commonly took part in arts-based activities (e.g., art, drama, music; 32%) and sports or other physical activities (29%). They also took part in clubs or groups (13%), and in volunteering without honoraria (9%) as well as with honoraria (6% vs. 17% of youth still in care).

Among youth who completed a survey both before and after their transition from care, they were less likely to participate in sports or other physical activities around a year after transitioning from care compared to before their transition out (42% vs. 79%). Similarly, they were less likely to take part in arts-based activities (32% vs. 79% while still in care).

Taking part in community activities was linked to positive health and well-being. For example, youth who participated in physical activities at least weekly in the past six months were more likely to rate their physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional health as good or excellent. They were also more likely to often or always feel good about themselves (31% vs. 14% of those who did not take part in weekly physical activities).

Metro Vancouver youth who took part weekly in sports or other physical activities in the past six months were more likely to report good or excellent health (among those who had transitioned out of care)



ENGAGEMENT IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

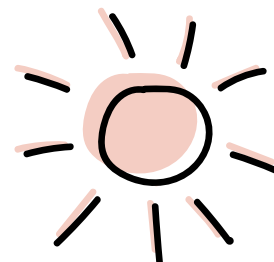
About half of youth (53%) participated in cultural or traditional activities in the past six months (59% among Indigenous youth), including 12% who participated on a weekly basis.

Youth who participated in cultural or traditional activities at least weekly were more likely than those who participated less often to report feeling good about themselves (45% vs. 15%), and quite or very connected to their community (60% vs. 11%) and culture. They were also more likely than youth who took part less often to rate their spiritual health as good or excellent (75% vs. 34%).

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Around a fifth of youth (18%) reported feeling quite or very connected to their community, while 38% felt somewhat connected, and 44% felt not at all or only a little connected (vs. 33% of those still in care).

Youth who felt quite or very connected to their community were more likely to rate as good or excellent their spiritual health (75% vs. 31% of those who felt less connected), mental health (54% vs. 23%), and emotional health (54% vs. 21%).



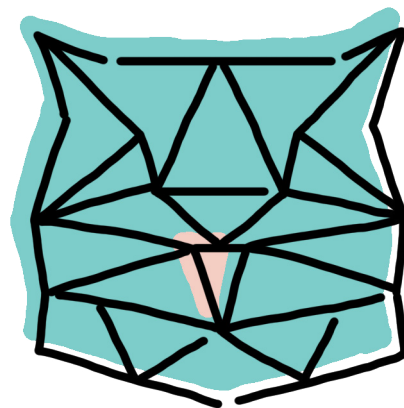
FINAL THOUGHTS

Since 2014, TRRUST partners have worked collectively to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver. Findings in this report suggest that there has been significant progress in some of the areas that TRRUST has focused on, including improvements in youth being employed and receiving income from a legal job, as well as youth being more likely to access needed benefits, complete high school, attend post-secondary and receive a tuition waiver. Additionally, more youth are leaving care with a transition plan. Whether or not any of these changes are a direct result of the work of TRRUST, it is encouraging to see progress.

The report findings also highlight the benefit to youth who have transitioned out of care of having their basic needs met; access to needed ID; access to safe and affordable housing, including pet-friendly housing; and access to cultural supports and activities. It also shows the value of connecting youth to supports and services—such as youth employment supports, life-skills supports, and helpful transition workers/SAJE workers—while young people are still in care to increase their likelihood of positive health and well-being after they transition out of care.

TRRUST's current focus on food security, housing, and improving services for youth with pets is supported by the data. The findings show that these are all areas where youth experience challenges and where collaborative systems change is needed. The report also highlights additional areas which TRRUST partners could focus on. For example, while there has been an increase in youth going to post-secondary and receiving a tuition waiver, there has also been an increase in the percentage dropping out of post-secondary education. This suggests that care leavers could benefit from more support throughout their time in post-secondary.

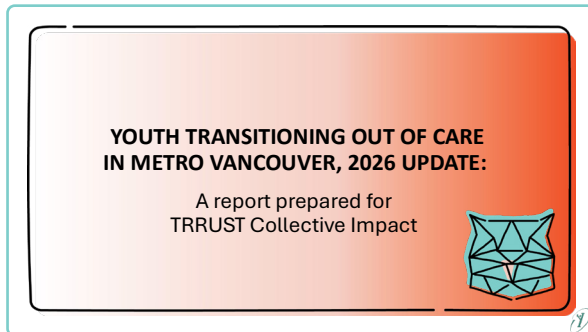
Also, taking part in sports or other physical activities on a regular basis was associated with improved connectedness and well-being. Finding ways to support youth to learn about and access these types of opportunities in the Metro Vancouver area could also be helpful for youth transitioning out of care.



RESOURCES

Presentations

Members of the Youth Research Academy are also available to do presentations of the results from this report.



Youth Transitioning out of Care in BC study

Youth aged 18 to 20, with experience of government care or an alternative to care, are invited to take part in the study. The goal is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of BC youth as they transition out of care. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete, and youth receive a **\$30 e-gift card** for completing their first survey, as well as additional **\$35 e-gift cards** if they choose to complete follow-up surveys every six months.

Participation in the study is anonymous, confidential, and voluntary. If you are a youth with care experience who may be interested in participating in the study, please email yicstudy@mcs.bc.ca to receive a survey link.

If you have any questions about the study, email erin@mcs.bc.ca or check out mcs.bc.ca/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_study.

TRRUST Collective Impact

The goal of TRRUST is to achieve systems-wide improvements in outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in Vancouver, BC. To learn more about TRRUST, to get involved, or join the weekly newsblast mailing list, contact trrustmanager@mcs.bc.ca.



Supporting youth with pets is one of TRRUST's current projects.

To access a guide for youth on owning and caring for a pet, visit: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/trrust_youth_pet_guide.pdf.

To view a guide for youth service providers who are supporting

youth with pets, go to mcs.bc.ca/pdf/trrust_pets_guide_service_providers.pdf.

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 experiences of homelessness, substance use challenges, and government care. For more information or to apply, please visit mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.

