

# **TRRUST COLLECTIVE IMPACT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

**February 2018**

**Prepared by McCreary Centre Society's  
Youth Research Academy**

## **TRRUST Collective Impact**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A youth employment survey was designed to gain a better understanding of the employment experiences and challenges for youth aging out of care in Vancouver. The survey was created by members of McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy under the guidance of the TRRUST Collective Impact's education and employment cluster. The survey was conducted in the Fall of 2017.

In total, 92 young people completed the survey (64% identified as female, 34% as male, and 2% as other gender identities). Thirty seven percent were under 19 years of age, and 80% were currently living in the Vancouver Coastal region.

Findings showed that around half (49%) of survey participants had a health condition or disability. These youth were more likely than their peers without a disability to experience challenges finding employment. These included mental health and substance use challenges, not having a phone and not having support. They were also more likely to identify that having a peer or adult mentor to support them at work was important to them (74% vs. 47% of their peers without a disability).

Nearly half (48%) of participants reported not currently working. Among these youth, 57% were looking for part-time work and 17% were looking for full-time employment. Among youth who were currently employed, 75% had one job and 25% had two or more jobs.

The majority of youth (89%) had looked for employment, and had most commonly done so through websites like Craigslist, Kijiji, Monster, and Raisin (70%), and by handing out their résumé (65%). However, the most common ways youth had found their current job was through a friend or family member (38%) and online (28%).

The most commonly reported barriers to getting a job were not having the required education or skills and being worried a job would get in the way of school or other things.

Around half of youth (51%) who had ever had a job worked for a wage, while 38% worked for tips, and a third received honoraria. Also, almost half (48%) indicated they had worked illegally at some point.

A third of youth with employment experience had held a job for at least a year, whereas 18% had not stayed in the same job for more than three months.

The majority of respondents (86%) indicated they had experienced barriers to maintaining employment. Among these youth, the most commonly reported barrier was having mental health challenges (47%).

Most youth had experienced losing a job and 63% had quit. Substance use, mental health challenges, other health issues, and a hostile work environment were commonly reported reasons for leaving a job.

When asked what they wanted from an employer, 89% wanted a liveable wage and 78% wanted flexible hours. Almost half of youth (46%) felt their employer should have knowledge of the care system.

Youth commonly reported earning around minimum wage in their most recent job. For around half (49%) of youth, there was no difference between their most recent wage and what pay they felt they should earn, based on their education and skill level.

Seventy-nine percent of youth reported they had attended a class in school to help prepare them for employment, such as Planning 10 or Grad Transitions, although almost half of these youth did not find the experience helpful. When asked what would have made the class more helpful, youth indicated having more real-world experience, hands-on learning, and learning about employment rights and taxes.

Fewer youth had accessed employment programs outside of school. For example, 7% had accessed AYA life skills training and found it helpful, and around half (49%) wanted to access it but had not had the opportunity.

When asked to comment on what supports they needed to achieve their employment goals, youth indicated needing financial support, academic support to complete their education, emotional support, housing assistance, work experience, skills training, and mentorship. The survey results also indicated that youth may need mental health supports and peer mentorship to maintain employment.

The findings suggest that employment preparation should begin in high school. The current curriculum may need to be tailored to make it more useful to youth aging out of care. It should include areas such as conflict resolution, employment rights, filing taxes and hands-on experience. Youth also indicated they prefer employment preparation programs where they can build relationships with staff.

## INTRODUCTION

The Vancouver-based Collective Impact initiative TRRUST (Transitions in Resources, Relationships and Understanding Support Together) is seeking to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care. To achieve this aim, TRRUST has five clusters (sub committees) that are focused on different priority areas: Housing; education and employment; opportunities for growth; meaningful relationships; and shared measurement. Each cluster consists of a youth and adult co-chair and has representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies.

As part of a journey mapping exercise, youth participants in TRRUST identified a number of challenges accessing employment opportunities. The education and employment cluster wanted to explore this topic in more detail, to better understand the challenges and opportunities available to youth in and from care in Vancouver, and to establish how services could better meet their needs.

The cluster partnered with McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA) to develop a youth employment survey. The YRA are a group of youth aged 16-24 with government care experience who, with the support of McCreary staff, develop, analyze, and disseminate research projects of interest to youth with government care experience and service providers.

The employment survey was piloted and modified before it was launched in Fall 2017. It was available on-line for six weeks, and the link was sent out through email and social media to relevant groups, organizations and programs. Paper copies of the survey were circulated by members of the cluster, the wider TRRUST collective and the YRA. The survey was also made available at various events and locations where youth in and from care were in attendance.

The YRA entered and analyzed the survey data using SPSS. They wrote up the results and shared a draft of the report with the cluster. Additional analyses were conducted at the request of cluster members before the report was finalized in February 2018.

### **Limitations**

Although this survey was circulated widely to agencies serving youth with government care experience and through youth networks, it may not be representative of the experience of all youth with care experience in the Lower Mainland.

Additionally, about two thirds of the survey respondents were female. Although some gender differences were identified, the relatively small sample of males made it difficult to statistically detect differences.

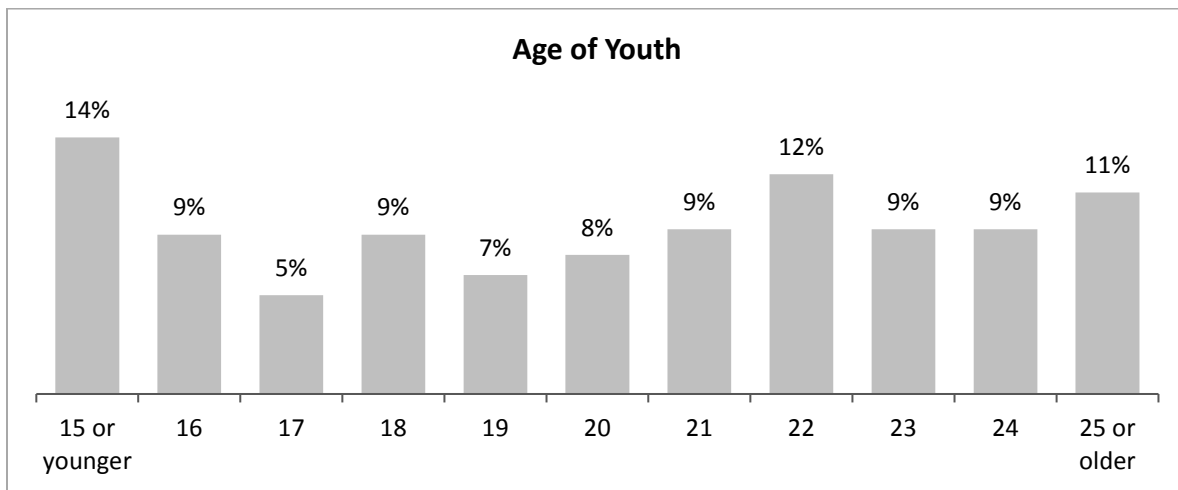
Among the 92 youth who completed the survey, not all survey respondents answered every question on the survey. This may have impacted some of the results, as there may not have been statistical power to identify differences, such as age or gender differences. Almost 1 in 5 youth skipped the questions which asked about what they wanted from an employer and what supports they needed to find and maintain employment. This may have been because the questions did not apply to them or they may have skipped these questions for another reason.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Background

In total, 92 young people completed the survey. Sixty-four percent identified as female, 34% as male, and 2% as other gender identities. Seventy-percent of youth identified as straight, 18% as bisexual and the remaining 12% as gay, lesbian, questioning, or asexual.

Thirty-seven percent of youth who completed the survey were under 19 years of age, and the remainder were 19 or older.



Most youth lived in the Vancouver Coastal region (80%), while 18% lived in Fraser and the rest in other parts of British Columbia. Ninety percent of youth had lived in Canada for more than six years.

Youth most commonly identified as having European (48%) and/or Aboriginal/Indigenous (40%) backgrounds. Half of youth (50%) identified as having a mixed background.

| Background of Youth                              | %   |
|--|-----|
| European   | 48% |
| Aboriginal/Indigenous                            | 40% |
| East Asian                                       | 19% |
| Latin American, South American, Central American | 9%  |
| West Asian                                       | 8%  |
| African  | 7%  |
| South Asian                                      | 6%  |
| Other  | 6%  |

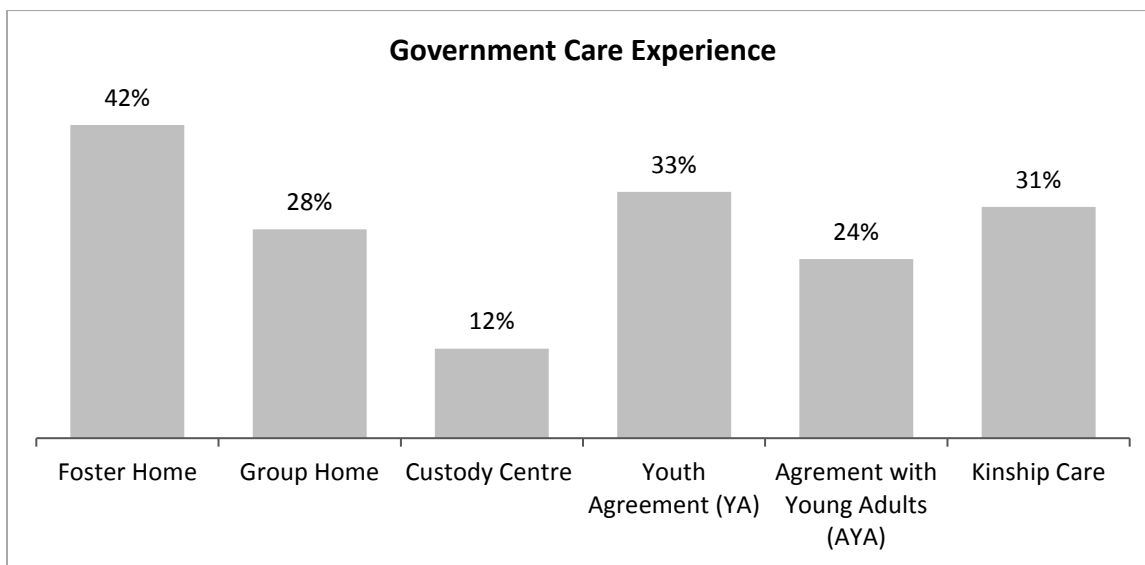
Note: Youth could choose more than one response. The percentages for Southeast Asian and Australian/Pacific Islander' were too small to report.

### **Health conditions**

Nearly half (49%) of participants had a health condition or disability. There were no significant differences based on age or gender.

### **Government care experience**

Survey participants had experienced various forms of government care. For example, 42% had lived in a foster home, a third had been on a Youth Agreement, and around a quarter had been on an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA). Thirteen percent had experience one type of care, 22% had experienced two different types, 15% had experienced three types, and 14% had experienced four or more types of care.



**Note.** Youth could choose more than one response.

### **Benefits**

About a fifth of youth (21%) were currently receiving Income Assistance (IA), 19% were receiving Person with Disability (PWD) funding, 16% were on Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and 10% were accessing the Youth Educational Assistance Fund (YEAF).

### **Education**

Forty-one percent of youth were currently enrolled in high school and 24% in post-secondary, while around a third of youth (36%) were not currently enrolled in education.

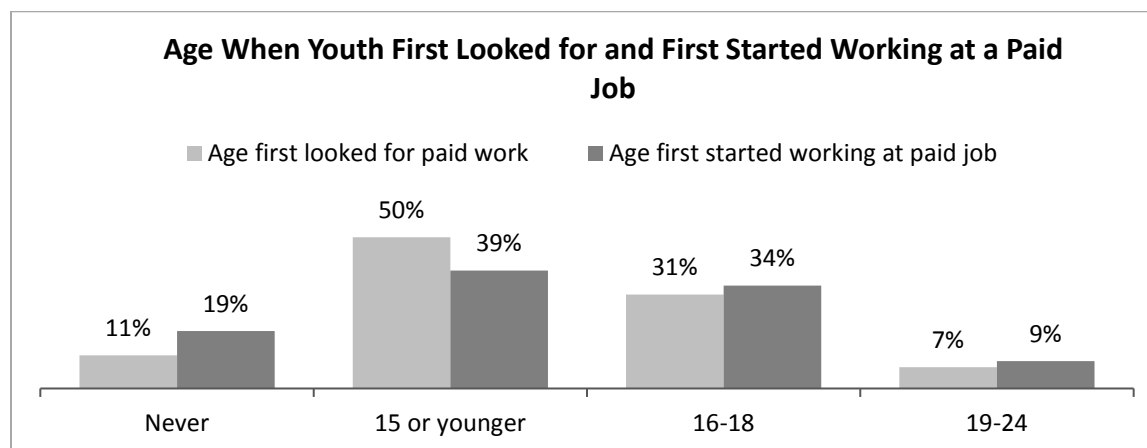
Among youth not currently attending school, 46% had stopped attending after graduating from high school and 25% had stopped part-way through post-secondary.



## Finding Paid Employment

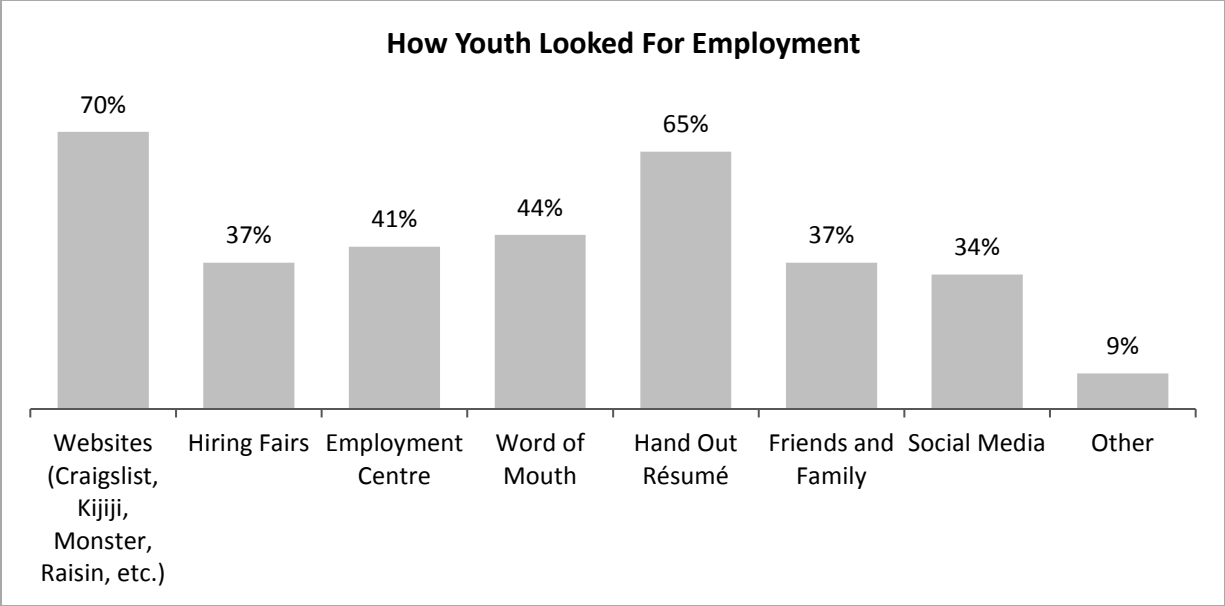
The majority of youth (89%) had looked for employment and most had applied for a paid job (85%). More than 1 in 3 youth (38%) had applied for ten or more jobs. Half of youth had looked for their first job before the age of 16, although not all these youth were successful at finding employment at that age (39% had first started working before the age of 16).

Twenty-four percent of youth had held six or more paid jobs, while 19% never had a job. As would be expected, older youth were more likely to have had a greater number of paid jobs.



The most common ways youth looked for work were by utilizing websites like Craigslist, Kijiji, Monster, and Raisin (70%), and by handing out their résumé (65%). Youth were less likely to use social media (34%), go to hiring fairs (37%), or contact employed friends or family (37%). There were no gender differences in the ways youth looked for employment.

Youth with a health condition or disability were more likely to use websites to look for employment compared to youth without such a condition (85% vs. 54%).



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

**Barriers to finding employment**

Six percent of survey participants reported that they had never experienced problems getting a job. However, most youth had experienced at least one barrier. The most common barriers were not having the required education or skills and being worried a job would get in the way of school or other things. Lack of transportation was also a barrier for 41% of youth, particularly for those who were currently living outside the Vancouver Coastal region (67% compared to 34% who lived in Vancouver Coastal). There were no gender differences in the types of barriers youth identified.

| Most Common Barriers Faced When Getting a Job                    | %   |
|--|-----|
| Didn't have required education level or job skills               | 52% |
| Worried about a job getting in the way of school or other things | 46% |
| Lack of transportation   | 41% |
| Mental health, substance use, and other health challenges        | 39% |
| Lack of supports   | 38% |
| Lack of work appropriate clothing                                | 34% |
| Didn't have stable housing                                       | 32% |
| Didn't have an active phone number                               | 24% |
| Lack of job availability in my community for young people        | 23% |
| Didn't have a résumé   | 18% |
| Discrimination <sup>†</sup>                                      | 14% |
| Didn't have access to a computer/Internet                        | 13% |
| Lack of ID or Social Insurance Number                            | 11% |
| Having government funding restrictions                           | 10% |
| Lack of childcare  | 8%  |

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

<sup>†</sup>Among youth who noted discrimination as a barrier, the most common type they reported was age discrimination.

Youth with a health condition or disability were more likely to experience challenges finding employment than their peers. For example, 69% reported mental health, substance use, or other health challenges as barriers to getting a job (a rate about seven times higher than among youth without a health condition); 54% reported lack of supports as a barrier (vs. 23% without a health condition/disability); and 36% indicated not having an active phone number was a barrier to getting a job (vs. 13%).

Most youth (65%) had never turned down an offer of employment. Among those who had refused a job, insufficient pay was the most common reason (20%). Other common reasons included scheduling conflicts and safety concerns.

***Entry level employment***

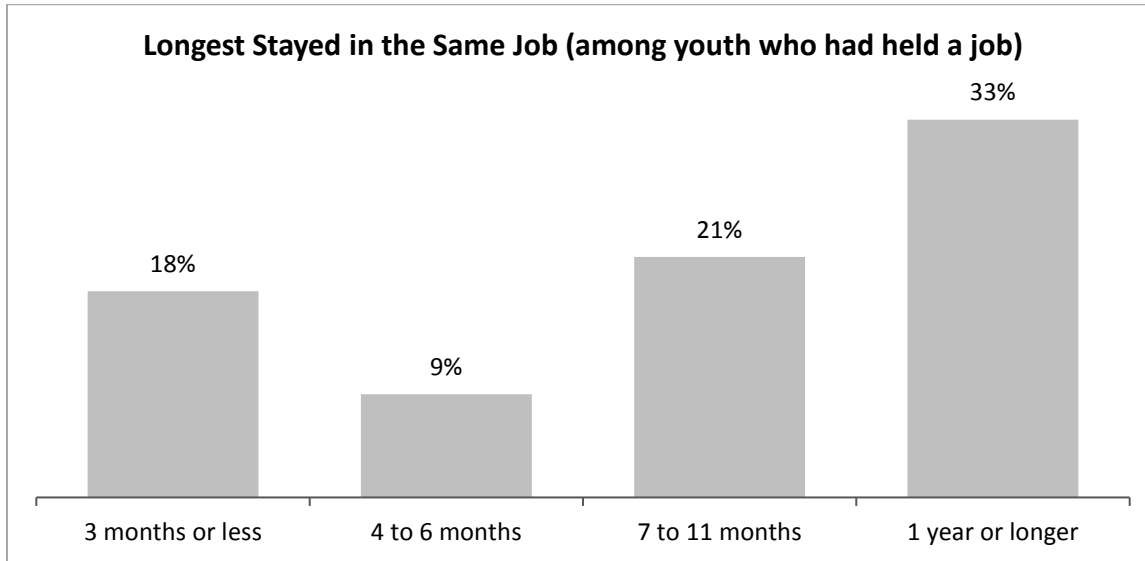
Survey participants were asked about their perspectives on entry level jobs. The majority of youth (87%) saw these jobs as a stepping stone to help them to get a better job in the future.

| <b>Youth think entry level jobs are...</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--|----------|
| A stepping stone                           | 87%      |
| Something I would do for now               | 49%      |
| Something youth get stuck in               | 33%      |
| Something I would be happy to do long term | 8%       |

Note: Youth could choose more than one response. The percentage for 'Not something I'd do' was too small to report.

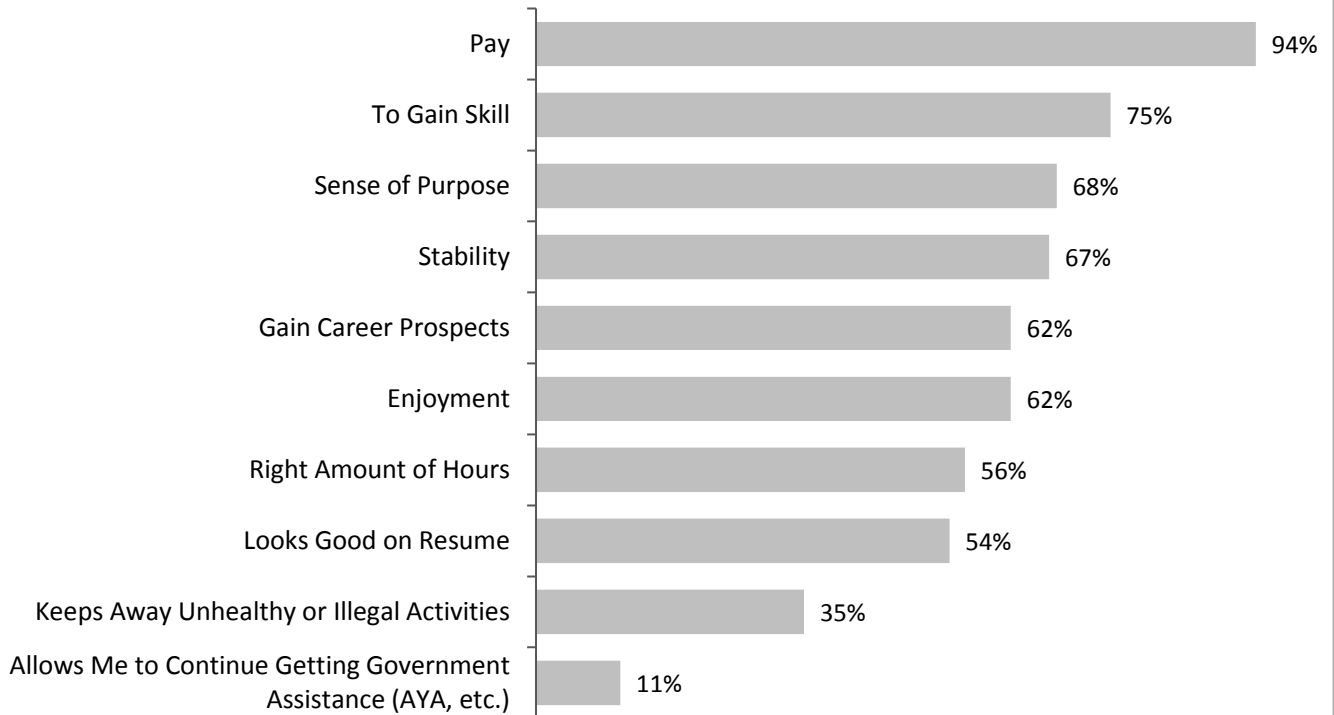
## Experiences Keeping a Job

A third of youth with employment experience had held a job for at least a year. However, nearly a fifth (18%) had not stayed in the same job for more than three months. Youth with a health condition/disability were less likely to have been in long-term employment. For example, 57% had held a job for more than six months, compared to 81% without a health condition; among those who had held a job).



Youth were asked about their reasons for staying in a job. Among those who had ever been employed, the most commonly reported reason for keeping a job was pay (94%). Other common reasons included gaining skills (75%), that their their job gave them a sense of purpose (68%), stability (67%), it helped with career prospects (62%), and it gave them enjoyment (62%).

### Reasons for Keeping a Job (among youth who had held a job)



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

A third (33%) of youth with employment experience reported having a job they wanted to quit but were unable to leave. Among these youth, 81% felt they were unable to quit because they needed their wages to pay rent. There were no gender differences in reasons for being unable to quit.

| Reasons for feeling unable to quit a job          | %   |
|---|-----|
| Needed to pay rent                                | 81% |
| Needed to take care of family responsibilities    | 38% |
| No other jobs available for their education level | 33% |
| Other   | 24% |

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

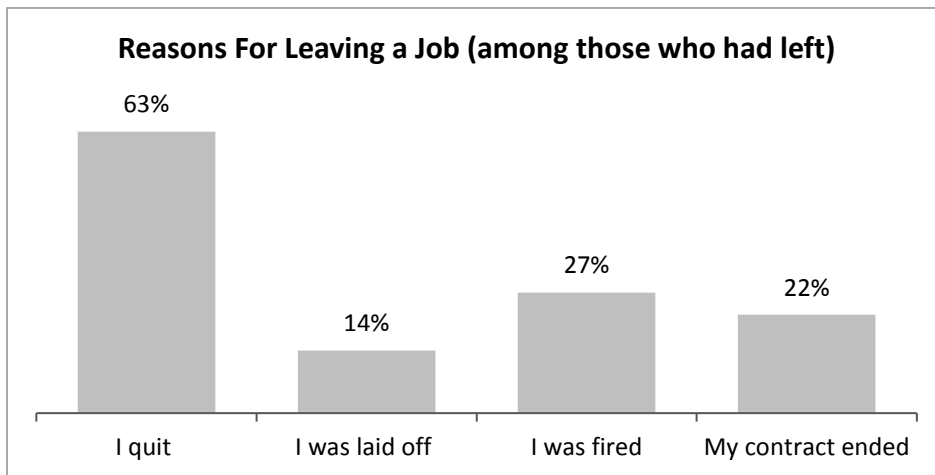
Most youth who had been employed had experienced barriers to keeping a job, and only 14% reported they had never experienced barriers. Almost half of youth (47%) who had experienced barriers identified mental health challenges as a barrier to keep a job. This barrier was more common among youth with a health condition/disability (68% vs. 19% without a health condition/disability). Having physical health challenges was also a barrier to remaining in employment for 41% of youth with a health condition/disability.

| <b>Barriers to Keeping a Job (among those who had held a job)</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|----------|
| Mental health challenges  | 47%      |
| Scheduling conflicts  | 39%      |
| Challenges with co-workers  | 34%      |
| The pay wasn't enough to support me                               | 34%      |
| Transportation challenges   | 30%      |
| It wasn't what I had expected                                     | 25%      |
| Physical health challenges  | 25%      |
| Conflicts with supervisor   | 23%      |
| Didn't know who to talk to if I needed help or advice             | 19%      |
| Didn't know employee rights                                       | 16%      |
| Experienced discrimination in the workplace                       | 9%       |

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

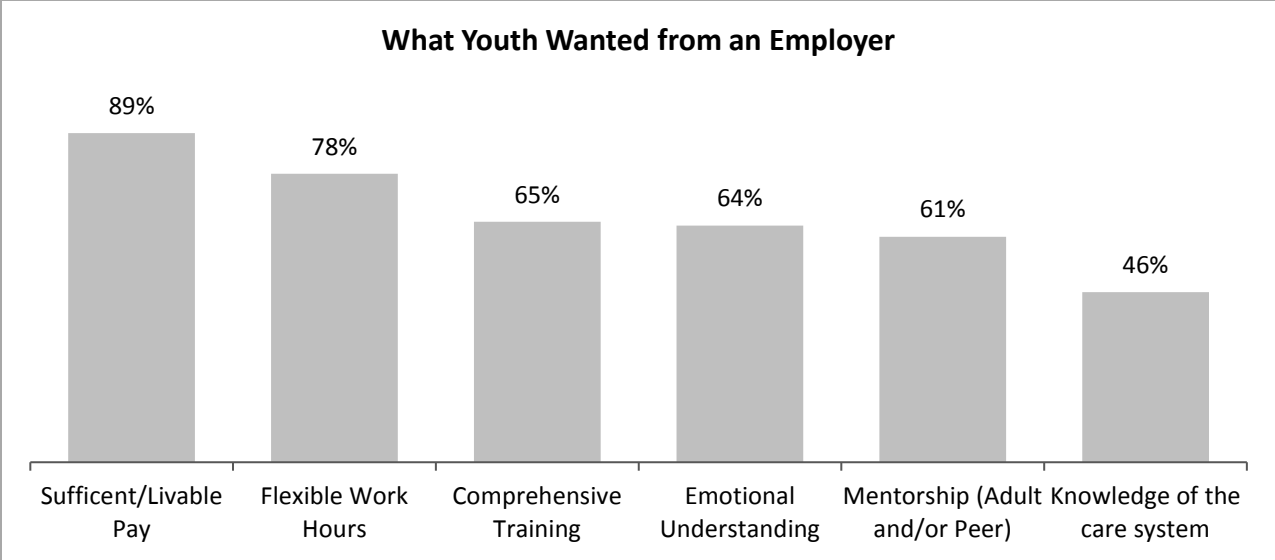
Eleven percent of youth with employment experience were still in their first job. However, most youth had experienced losing a job and 63% had quit. Substance use, mental health challenges, other health issues and a hostile work environment were common reasons for leaving a job.

Survey participants were asked what would have helped them to keep their job. Common responses included mental health supports, understanding from their manager and employer, a supportive supervisor they could talk to, more comprehensive training for supervisors and employees, and mentorship. Youth also reported that they would like the ability to grow and develop in their job, earn higher wages and have more autonomy within their work space.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

When asked specifically what they wanted from an employer, most males and females reported wanting a liveable wage, as well as flexible hours. Having a peer or adult mentor at work was particularly important for youth with a health condition or disability (74% vs 47% of their peers without a disability). Almost half of youth felt their employer should have knowledge of the care system.



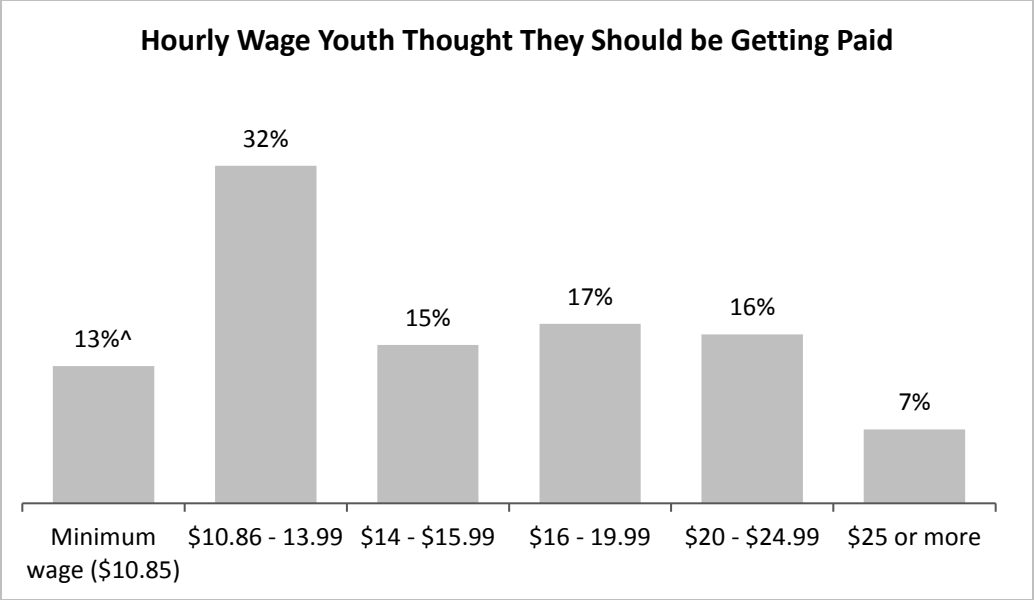
Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

### Work Hours and Pay

During the time period when survey data collection was underway, the minimum wage rose from \$10.85 to \$11.25. Most youth made around minimum wage in their most recent job, as 42% made between \$10.85 and \$13.99. However, 7% earned below \$10.85 an hour and 10% earned above \$16 an hour.

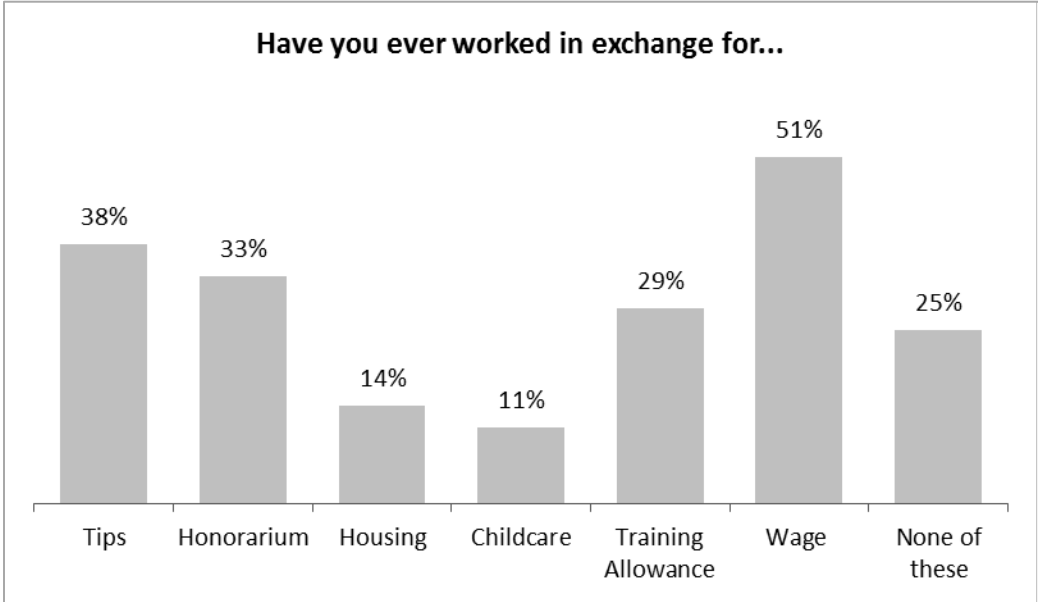
Based on their education level, work experience and skills, 32% of youth thought they should be making \$10.86 to \$13.99 per hour. For almost half (49%) of youth, there was no difference between their most recent wage and what pay they felt they should earn, while 22% felt they should get one pay level higher, 16% felt they should get two pay levels higher, and 10% felt they should get three to five pay levels higher than their most recent wage.

Older youth were more likely than younger ones to think they should be on a higher wage, as were youth who were in post-secondary compared to youth in high school or not currently in school. For example, youth aged 19 or older were less likely than those 18 or younger to feel \$10.85 was sufficient pay considering their work experience and education level. Most participants aged 18 or younger (45%) felt they should get \$10.86 - \$13.99 per hour.



Note: ^ Minimum wage rose from \$10.85 to \$11.25 in September 2017 after the survey had been distributed.

Among youth who had held a job, they most commonly (51%) worked for a wage, while 38% worked for tips, and a third received honoraria.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

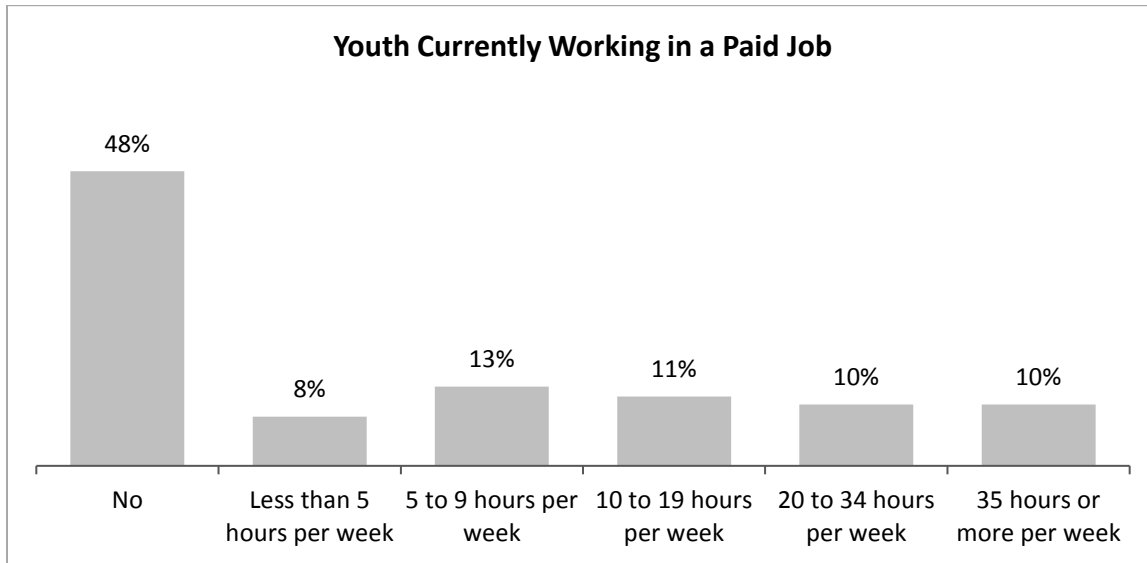
Survey participants were asked if they had ever worked illegally. Among youth who had held a job, almost half (48%) indicated they had worked illegally at some point, 44% had not, and 8% were unsure. The most common reason for working illegally was that it was the only employment the youth could get



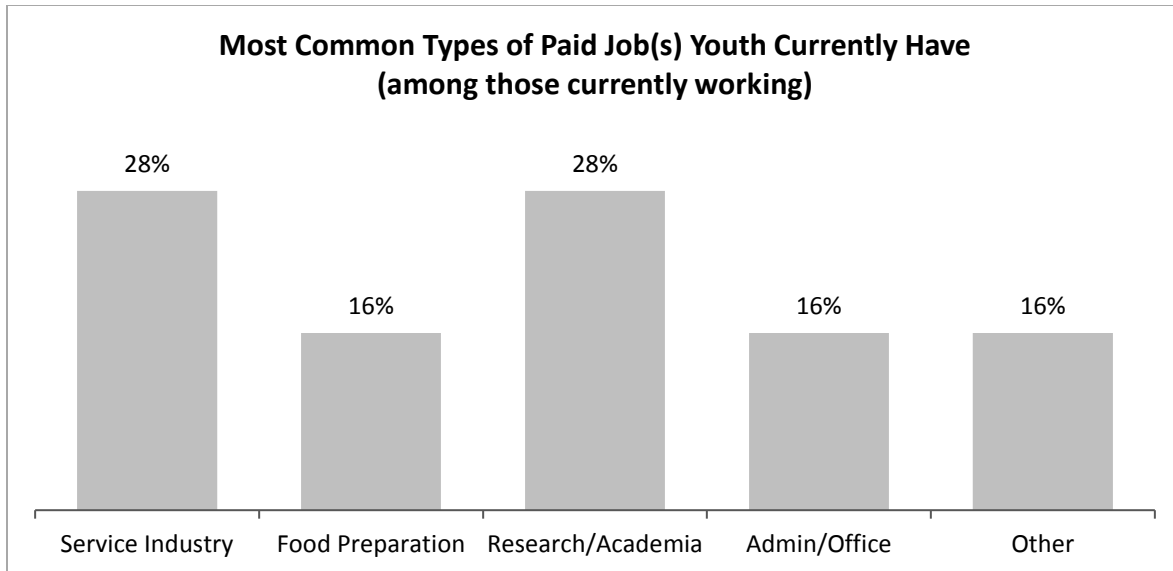
(77%). One in five worked illegally because they did not want to lose their income assistance or other funding.

### Current Employment

Nearly half (48%) of participants reported not currently working. Of those who were working, 10% were working 35 or more hours per week. Among youth not currently working, 57% were looking for part-time work and 17% were looking for full-time employment, whereas the remaining 33% were not currently looking for work.



Among youth who were currently employed, 75% had one job and 25% had two or more jobs. The most common types of jobs female youth were employed in were in the service industry. No males who completed the survey were in the service industry. There were no other gender differences in job type, nor were there any differences by whether youth had a health condition/disability.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response. Percentages for trades, the arts and social services were too small to report. No one had a job in media/technology.

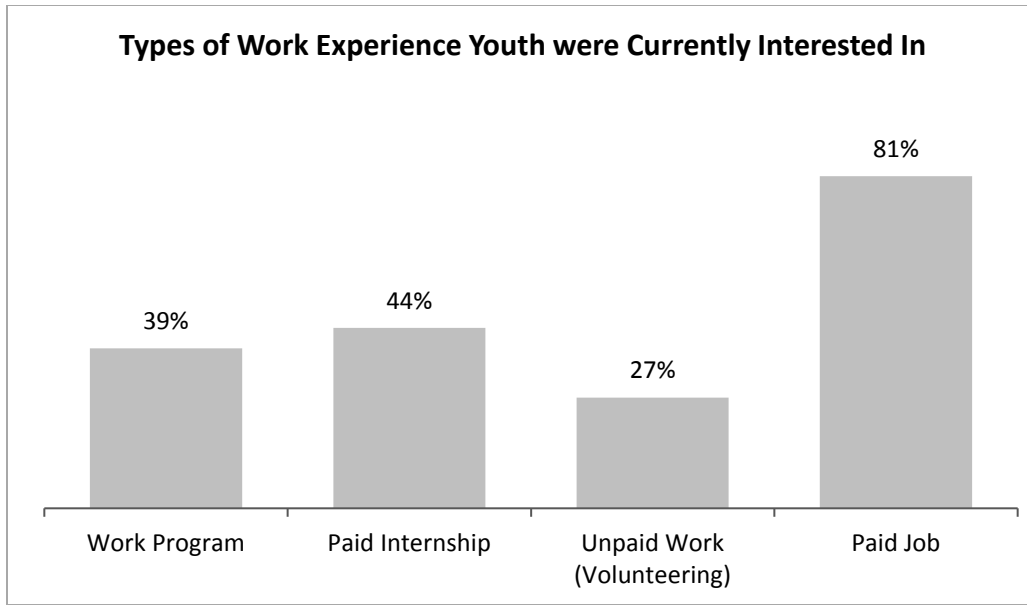
The most common ways youth had found their current job was through a friend or family member (38%) and online (28%). They also indicated finding jobs through counsellors, word of mouth, and university employment programs. Although using websites was the most common way of looking for a job, only a third of youth who looked for jobs online actually found their current job this way.

Among youth with a current job, 47% were satisfied with their job, 34% were very satisfied, and 19% reported neutral feelings (none reported dissatisfaction with their job).

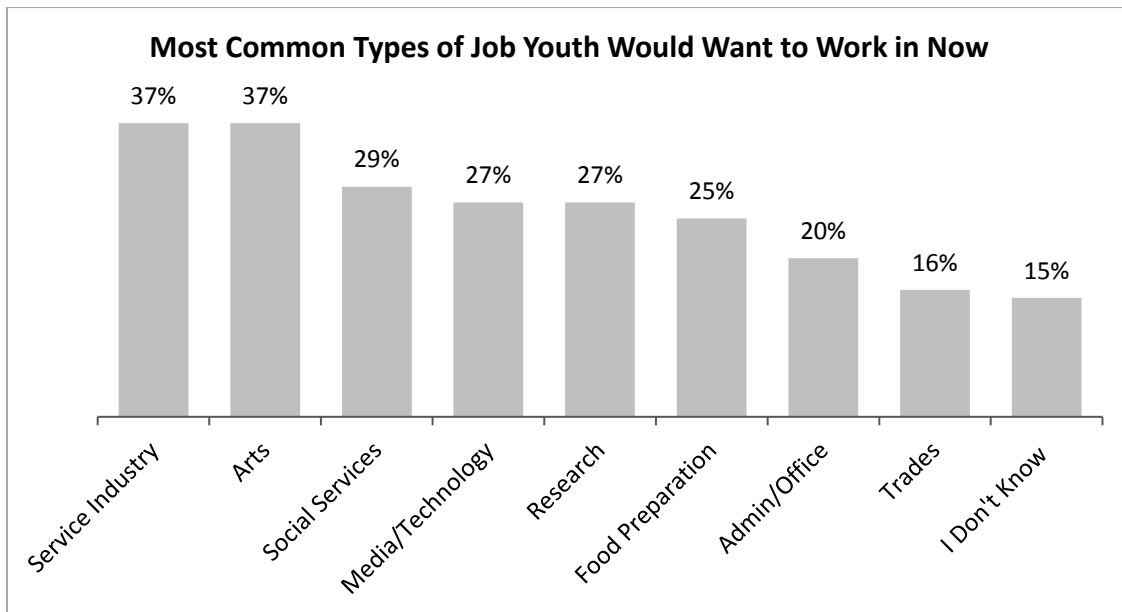
Thirty-nine percent of youth with a health condition or disability had told their employer about their condition. Of those who had told their employer, 90% indicated that their needs were accommodated.

Youth were asked about different work opportunities, such as paid and unpaid employment and volunteering. At this point in their life, they were most commonly interested in looking for a paid job (81%). Just over a quarter of youth were interested in volunteering, and 65% of these youth already had a job.

The type of work experience youth were looking for did not differ if they had a disability, or by gender or age, except females and younger youth were more interested in volunteer work.



Youth were also asked about the types of job they would want to work in right now if they could, given their current education and skill level. The most common were the service industry and the arts. There were no gender differences except over half (52%) of males wanted to work in the arts, compared to 27% of females.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

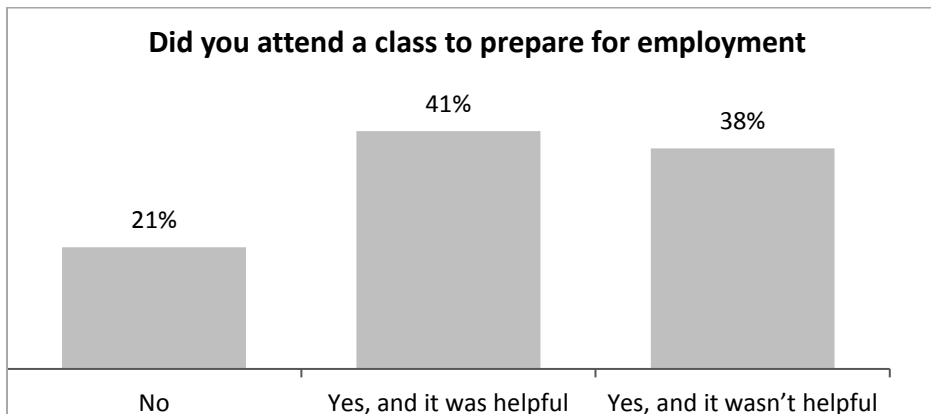
When comparing the type of job youth currently held and the type they wanted to work in now, 63% of those currently working in the service industry indicated they wanted to be working in the service industry. Similarly, 60% of those currently in the food industry wanted to be in that industry. Among youth who were working in research/academia, 89% wanted to work in this area.

## Employment Programs and Supports

### **Employment programs**

Seventy-nine percent of youth reported they had attended a class in school to help prepare them for employment, such as Planning 10 or Grad Transitions, although almost half of these youth did not find the experience helpful.

When asked what would have made the class more helpful, youth indicated having more real-world experiences and hands-on learning, such as ‘Take your kid to work day’ and handing out résumés, and learning about employment rights and taxes.



Fewer youth had accessed programs outside of school. For example, only 7% had accessed AYA life skills training and found it helpful, whereas around half (49%) wanted to access it but had not had the opportunity.

|  | <b>Never Accessed but Wanted to</b> | <b>Accessed and Helpful</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Youth employment program/job supports      | 23%                                 | 33%                         |
| Work BC or other employment service centre | 36%                                 | 24%                         |
| AYA life-skills training                   | 49%                                 | 7%                          |

### **Areas of support**

Youth received support in a number of areas relating to finding and keeping a job. The most common had to do with getting a job, such as résumé writing and interview preparation.

| Ever received support with...        | %   |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Writing a résumé and/or cover letter | 83% |
| Preparing for job interview          | 68% |
| Time management                      | 67% |
| Finding work-appropriate clothing    | 60% |
| Learning employment rights           | 55% |

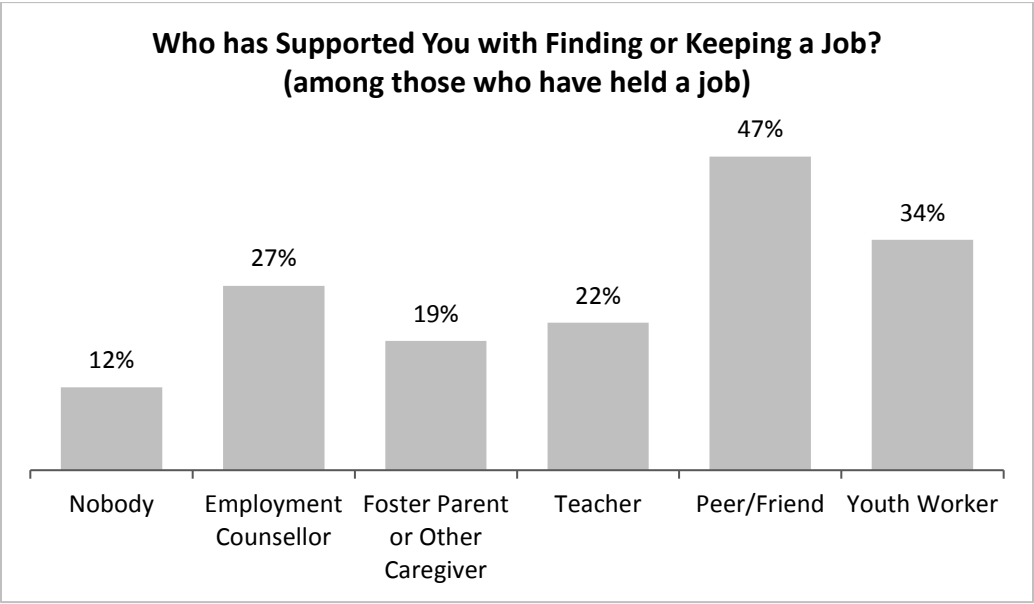
Nearly 8 in 10 youth (79%) who received support on résumé writing found it helpful. Between 55% and 59% of youth felt the support they received was helpful in the areas of preparing for a job interview, finding work-appropriate clothing and time management support. Less than half (47%) of youth found learning about their employment rights helpful.

Around half of youth (51%) indicated that they knew their employment rights, while 28% did not, and 20% were unsure. Seventy-six percent of youth who had received support with learning about employment rights felt they knew their rights, compared to 21% of youth who had not received support in this area.

Youth were asked an open-ended question about helpful employment programs or employment supports they had received. They mentioned accessible programs and specifically programs such as those run by Strive and Work BC. They also noted that it was helpful when they had the chance to build relationships with staff of employment programs they attended.

**Supportive people**

When asked who had supported them to find or keep a job, the most common response was a peer (47%), followed by a youth worker (34%).



Note: Youth could choose more than one response. The percentage who had received help from a social worker was too small to report.

## Career Goals

All youth who filled out the survey were interested in having a career in the future. Females were more likely than males to be interested in careers in social services (48% vs. 21%), the service industry (21% vs. 0%), and health care. Males were more interested in careers in media/technology (42% vs. 19%).

| <b>What types of future careers youth were interested in</b>                              |     |
|---|-----|
| Arts ( <i>actor, fashion, make-up artist, writer, etc.</i> )                              | 41% |
| Social services ( <i>youth worker, social worker, etc.</i> )                              | 41% |
| Education ( <i>teacher, support worker etc.</i> )   | 30% |
| Law/Law enforcement ( <i>lawyer, police officer, custom agent, etc.</i> )                 | 28% |
| Media/Technology ( <i>web developer, app developer, computer programmer etc.</i> )        | 26% |
| Hospitality ( <i>restaurant/hotel management, event planning, travel planning, etc.</i> ) | 20% |
| Trades ( <i>construction, mechanic, hairdressing etc.</i> )                               | 19% |
| Business/Finance ( <i>accountant, financial advisor, etc.</i> )                           | 19% |
| Admin/Office  | 18% |
| Health Care ( <i>doctor, dentist, nurse, etc.</i> )                                       | 18% |
| Research/Academia   | 18% |
| Food Preparation ( <i>cook, baker etc.</i> )  | 16% |
| Science/Engineering/Math ( <i>biologist, chemist, etc.</i> )                              | 16% |
| Service industry ( <i>sales, cashier server, Barista</i> )                                | 14% |
| I don't know  | 7%  |

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

When youth were asked to comment on what supports they needed to achieve their employment goals, youth indicated needing financial support, academic support to complete education, emotional support, housing assistance, work experience, skills training, and mentorship.

*"Employers who care."*

*"Finishing my high school, getting into college and finding stable housing."*

*"Free education to get post-secondary so I can get the qualifications I need for the job!"*

## YOUTH RESEARCH ACADEMY RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people face multiple barriers when trying to find and keep a job and indicated needing many types of support to achieve their employment goals. Youth would benefit from a supportive person to help with the needs and hurdles that come with finding/keeping a job: Someone to help with finding resources, or that they can come to with issues they might be having.

- Youth want support from their employer in various ways such as sufficient pay, emotional understanding, flexible hours, comprehensive training, and mentorship. Youth also think knowledge and empathy of being in and from care would be beneficial for them and the employer. In our experience, it would make the path of finding a job easier and would help youth from care to stay in a job.
- Mental health challenges were one of the biggest barriers to finding and maintaining employment. Youth need more support in this area.
- About 4 in 10 youth reported that employment classes at school were not helpful for them. Schools should do more to prepare youth better. For example, they could offer part-time support programs that fit with youth's individual schedule, and are tailored to the jobs that they are specifically interested in. This could be provided by skill building/training, or a job shadow with someone who was in that specific field of interest.
- A sizable proportion of youth reported wanting to access out of school employment programs but haven't done so. Some youth who did access them did not find them helpful. Future research should explore the disconnect between what employment programs currently offer and what youth say they need so that a higher percentage of youth achieve their employment goals.

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