

# FINAL EVALUATION REPORT – SEPTEMBER, 2012

## Watari's Transitions to Independence Program for Pregnant and Parenting Youth (TTIP-II)

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Cover design by Taraneh Erfan King, from Whole Picture Thinking. Produced during the TTIP celebration event and focus group sessions on March 21, 2012.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Watari's Transitions to Independence Program for Pregnant and Parenting Youth (TTIP-II) provided supported independent living for youth with addiction and mental health issues who are pregnant or parenting young children. Goals of the program included reduced substance use or abstinence, increased access to and utilization of needed services (e.g., pre- and post-natal care, vocational services), increased confidence in parenting abilities, improvements in life skills (e.g., budgeting, stress management, problem-solving skills, self-care), and an increased ability to maintain housing.

McCreary carried out an independent evaluation of the TTIP-II program, using a mixed-methods approach of surveys and focus groups (with youth, staff, and other stakeholders). Consistent with findings from the interim reports (March 2010 and April 2011), results of this final evaluation indicated that Watari's TTIP-II program targeted the intended population of youth and served the needs of a diverse group of young people, including Aboriginal and sexual minority youth.

Results also indicated that the TTIP-II program provided young people with the support and services they needed to find and maintain housing. Participants demonstrated greater housing stability over the course of their participation in the program, as well as improved life-skills and psychosocial functioning. One year after intake into the program, all youth reported improved confidence in parenting, and most reported improvements in their parenting skills, due to their involvement in TTIP-II.

Focus group participants felt that youths' improvements in various areas resulted from their basic needs being met. The consensus was that once youth had stable housing, improvements in other areas would follow. Participants also acknowledged that supportive Watari staff, assistance with life-skills, connections to other community resources, and subsidized transit to access needed resources played a role in youths' improvements and in the program's success.

Focus group participants suggested that more youth housing programs should adhere to the TTIP model of providing youth with a subsidy to obtain safe market housing, coupled with the support and life-skills training they need to maintain their housing.

The incorporation of focus groups into the evaluation methodology was a useful way to supplement the survey data, particularly because the number of completed surveys markedly decreased at each time-point. The mixed-methods approach provided rich information, and results indicated that Watari's TTIP-II program met its goals. The program was successful in providing pregnant and parenting youth with the support and services they needed to find and maintain housing, and to ultimately live independently.

## **BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Watari's Transitions to Independence Program for Pregnant and Parenting Youth (TTIP-II) provided supported independent living for youth with addiction and mental health issues who are pregnant or parenting young children. The project built on the success of Watari's existing Transitions to Independence Program (TTIP-I), by providing a specialized focus on pregnant and parenting youth. The expected length of participation was 18 months. The program consisted of two components: a monthly rent supplement to enable youth to rent a safe and affordable apartment, and support services provided by a youth housing outreach worker, including group sessions with other youth in the program. Youth received support to learn and master skills needed for independent living, as well as to ensure they were connected to mental health and substance use treatment services. Program participants were provided with assistance to connect to pre-natal and post-natal care.

Goals of the program included reduced substance use or abstinence, increased access to and utilization of needed services (e.g., pre- and post-natal care, vocational services), increased confidence in parenting abilities, improvements in life skills (e.g., budgeting, stress management, problem-solving skills, self-care), and an increased ability to maintain housing.

## **METHODOLOGY**

McCreary Centre Society carried out an independent evaluation of TTIP-II from June 2009 to August 2012. The evaluation consisted of a mixed-methods approach of youth and staff surveys, as well as a focus group with youth and staff.

### **Surveys**

Following consultation with Watari staff and some pilot testing with youth, McCreary developed a youth self-report survey and a similar survey for Watari staff. The youth survey included some questions that have been used in other McCreary studies, and tapped the following: pregnancy and parenting; housing experiences; perceived safety in current living accommodations; community involvement/activities; community support/resources; discrimination; mental health and coping; substance use; school and work; money management; criminal justice involvement; sexual behaviour; health; family connectedness; and direct evaluation questions pertaining to the Watari program. (For further details, please see the table at the end of this section.)

The staff survey canvassed staffs' perceptions on how safe the youths' living accommodations were, obstacles the youth have faced in finding and maintaining housing, and the youths' money management skills.

Watari staff distributed the youth surveys at intake (Time 1, baseline measure) and every six months until youth left Watari so that changes over time could be assessed. However, youth could complete a final survey (Time 5) regardless of the length of time they spent in the program, so that their experiences and feedback could be included in the final evaluation report.

Surveys were completed by young people in the new Transitions to Independence Program for Pregnant and Parenting Youth (TTIP-II), as well as by individuals in the original TTIP program

(TTIP-I) so that their experiences could be compared. Survey distribution began in June 2009, and as of August 31 2012, the following surveys were completed:

<b>Youth Survey</b>	<b>Number Completed</b>
Time 1	37
Time 2	17
Time 3	9
Time 4	4
Time 5	2

### **Focus Groups**

Given the decrease in the number of surveys completed over time, focus groups with a total of 30 youth participants, Watari staff, and referring agencies were carried out to supplement the quantitative survey data with qualitative information. The focus groups were held on March 21, 2012 as part of Watari's TTIP celebration event.

Three focus groups took place simultaneously and consisted of a combination of youth participants, Watari staff, and staff from referring agencies (approximately 10 individuals in each group). Each focus group had a facilitator and note-taker, and addressed five questions which had been prepared by McCreary. The goal was to canvass participants' feedback on the program, get their input on some of the survey results, and discuss lessons learned and directions for future initiatives.

After the smaller group discussions, participants came together to share their ideas with the larger group. A graphic artist attended this event and depicted participants' thoughts and ideas in an illustration that is included in this report.

## Youth Survey Variables:

Section	Variable/Measures	Description
1. Demographic information	McCreary items	Age; gender; ethnicity; living in government care; children/pregnancy involvement; discrimination in the past year, based on race, having children, etc.
2. Pregnancy & Parenting	Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC; Johnston & Mash, 1989)	Widely used measure of parental self-efficacy. Consists of three factors reflecting satisfaction with being a parent, parenting efficacy, and interest in parenting (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2008). 17 items rated on a six-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). <b>Relevant only for participants who already have children.</b>  <b>In addition, 4 items adapted for participants who are currently pregnant.</b>
3. Housing	Items from McCreary surveys	Items ask about housing accommodations currently, in the past six months, past 3 years, and lifetime. Questions also ask about number of moves (past 6 months), length of time in current location, perceptions about why they have had difficulty finding housing.
4. Feelings about life, hopefulness	Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS; Beck et al., 1974)	20-item scale that is reliable and valid, and has been shown to predict eventual suicide. Respondents are asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements that assess pessimism/optimism for the future. A sample item is "I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm."  Questions about perceptions of current life situation and where youth see themselves in five years.
5. Community involvement/activities	<p><i>Community Connectedness.</i> From the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY; Statistics Canada, 2006).</p> <p><i>Volunteering.</i> Items from McCreary surveys</p> <p><i>Leisure activities.</i> Items from McCreary surveys</p>	<p>4 items tap involvement in one's community, rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Sample items are "I feel like a member of my community" and "I belong in my community."</p> <p>5 items (yes/no) assessing if youth helped others without pay in the past 6 months.</p> <p>7 items tapping involvement in physical activities, hobbies, clubs, groups.</p>
6. Community support/resources	Items from McCreary surveys	Whether participants accessed relevant community services, and if these were helpful. Also, who participants sought help from and how helpful it was; who do they talk to if faced with a problem.
7. Mental health and coping	<i>Coping.</i> Adolescent Coping Scale, Short Form (ACS; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993).	A well validated measure of coping. The Short Form consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "Not at all" to "A great deal." A sample item is "I turn to others for support [when faced with a problem or difficulty]."
	<i>Sense of competence.</i> McCreary item; PSOC	Asks youth what they are "really good at." PSOC is specific to parenting (explained above).
	<i>Self confidence.</i> Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSE; 1965)	The RSE is the most widely used and validated measure of self-esteem. It is considered a reliable and valid measure of global self-worth (Gray-Little et al., 1997) and includes 10 items, rated on a 4-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Section	Variable/Measures	Description
	<p><i>Anxiety.</i> Ontario Child Health Study scales (OCHS; Offord et al., 1992, 1987).</p> <p>McCreary item</p>	<p>4 items tapping anxiety, rated on a 3-point scale. Questions ask about behaviours and experiences in the past 6 months. This is a measure with good psychometric properties (Boyle et al., 1987, 1993) which was developed based on DSM-III (APA, 1980) descriptions of childhood disorders and items contained in the widely used and well-validated Youth Self Report (Achenbach &amp; Rescorla, 2001). A sample item is "I feel anxious or fearful."</p> <p>Taps strain, stress, pressure in the past month</p>
	<p><i>Depression.</i> OCCHS</p>	<p>8 items tapping depressive symptoms. A sample item is "I am unhappy, sad or depressed."</p>
	<p><i>Anger.</i> State-Trait Anger Inventory (STAXI)</p>	<p>Widely used anger inventory. 5 items, rated on a 3-point scale</p>
	<p><i>Suicidal thoughts &amp; attempts.</i> Adapted from Reynolds' Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ; Reynolds, 1988).</p>	<p>This measure is commonly used with youth. 4 items tapping suicidal thoughts are rated on a 3-point scale ranging from "Never or Not True" to "Often or "Very True." Suicide attempts rated to measure frequency in the past six months.</p>
	<p><i>Deliberate Self-Harm.</i> Inventory (DSHI; Gratz, 2001)</p>	<p>Validated measure, designed to measure non-suicidal deliberate self-harm behavior. 1 item will be used in this project, and rated to assess frequency of self-harm in the past 6 months.</p>
8. Substance use	<p>Items from McCreary's custody survey, marginalized &amp; street-involved youth survey, and Adolescent Health Survey.</p> <p>Additional question about drug of choice</p>	<p>Items from McCreary's Adolescent Health Survey (AHS) and Street Involved Youth survey that have been validated with youth will be used to assess frequency of alcohol and drug use (marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens, ecstasy, mushrooms, inhalants, amphetamines, crystal meth, heroin, injection drugs, steroids and prescription pills with a doctor's consent).</p>
9. School & work	<p>Items from McCreary surveys</p>	<p>School attendance, type of school program, why not currently attending school (if not attending), when youth expect to finish their education. Hours worked at legal job in past month; sources of income; money management</p>
10. Criminal justice involvement	<p>Items from McCreary's custody survey and marginalized &amp; street-involved youth survey.</p>	<p>Questions about frequencies of criminal charges/convictions in the past six months; being held in a custody centre; and arrests.</p>
11. Sexual behaviour	<p>Items from McCreary surveys</p>	<p>Sexual orientation. Safe sex, pregnancy prevention, unsafe sex due to substance use</p>
12. Physical health	<p>Items from McCreary surveys</p>	<p>Health conditions or disabilities; perceptions of own health.</p>
13. Family connectedness	<p>Items from McCreary surveys</p>	<p>4 items are included, tapping closeness with mother and father figures, and participants' satisfaction with the relationships.</p>
14. Feedback about the program	<p>Developed by McCreary</p>	<p>Taps what participants like most/least about the program, etc.</p>

## INTAKE AND CLIENT INFORMATION (PROVIDED BY WATARI)

The following information about TTIP-II was obtained from Watari and reflects the period between February, 2009 and September, 2012. Evaluation and survey administration began in June, 2009.

There were a total of 52 intakes into TTIP-II, and 54% of these youth (n=28) had open files with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services (VACFS).

Among youth who had an initial intake interview, 79% (n=41) proceeded to take part in the program. Reasons for youth having an intake but not taking part in the program included not following through in meeting with a worker to find and maintain housing, or youth not attending their appointments with Vancouver Coastal Health to complete the 30 day assessment.

Most participants (68%) found housing with help from the program, and the majority of these youth (19 out of 28) maintained this housing. Nine youth had difficulties maintaining housing primarily due to substance misuse or not meeting tenancy expectations. These youth lost their housing, had interruptions to their housing, or left the program early.

Participants' reasons for leaving early included not meeting program expectations (e.g., not meeting with their worker); difficulties functioning and adhering to tenancy guidelines due to substance misuse; or entry into a treatment program. Additionally, three youth left early because they successfully secured accommodations through BC Housing or Native Housing.

Program information	
Intakes	52
Program participants	41
Youth housed through the program	28
Youth who left early	12

## FINDINGS

Findings were based on surveys received by August 31, 2012. Graphs reflecting the various time-points were included only when sufficient data were available. Some graphs could not be included because sample sizes were too small to report the data in such a way that would ensure youths' anonymity.

Given the small number of completed surveys at Time 4 (n=4) and Time 5 (n=2), responses from those surveys were reported only as descriptive information.

As previously mentioned, surveys were completed by young people in the original TTIP-I program as well as by individuals in TTIP-II so that their experiences could be compared.

### Demographics

Thirty-seven youth completed a Time 1 survey (32 females, 5 males). A comparable number of young people were from the original TTIP program (TTIP-I; 15 females, 3 males) and the newer TTIP program for pregnant and parenting youth (TTIP-II; 17 females, 2 males).

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years, and the average age was 21.2 years. Youth in the two Watari programs did not differ in terms of average age.

Most participants reported their ethnic or cultural backgrounds as European (51%) or Aboriginal (49%). The majority of youth in TTIP-I indicated European heritage (61%), whereas the majority in TTIP-II indicated Aboriginal heritage (63%).

Youth identified their sexual orientations as heterosexual (72%), bisexual (19%), gay/lesbian (3%), or questioning (6%).

### Pregnancy and Parenting

At intake into the program, 75% of youth reported having been pregnant or having caused a pregnancy at some point in their lives (100% of those in TTIP-II vs. 50% of those in TTIP-I), and 11% were currently involved in a pregnancy. Among youth with pregnancy involvement, 81% were heterosexual and 19% were bisexual.

Forty-nine percent of participants reported having children (95% in TTIP-II vs. 0% in TTIP-I). Among those with children, 72% had one child, 17% (n=3) had two children, and the remaining 11% had three or more children.

*Youth who had children or were currently involved in a pregnancy (Time 1):*

Program	No children, but currently involved in pregnancy		
	Have child	No children, but currently involved in pregnancy	No children and not pregnant
TTIP-II (Parenting and pregnant youth)	18	1	0
TTIP-I	0	1	17

At intake, 61% of participants with children had custody of all their children whereas 11% had custody of some of their children, and 28% did not have custody of any of their children. Twelve

months after intake (Time 3), 71% of youth had custody of all their children, and at Time 4 this rate was 100% among the four youth with children who completed a survey.

	Have custody of all their children	Have custody of some of their children
Time 1	61% (n=11)	11%
Time 2	50% (n=4)	0%
Time 3	71% (n=5)	14%
Time 4	100% (n=4)	0%

Among participants with children, the majority felt like competent parents. Most agreed at all time-points that they had the skills needed to be a good parent; that being a good parent was a reward in itself; and that being a parent was manageable and any problems were easily solved.

After one year in the program (Time 3 survey), 88% of participants with children reported improvements in their parenting skills, and 100% reported improvements in their confidence in parenting, which they attributed to their involvement in TTIP-II.

Focus group participants felt that these improvements in parenting skills and confidence resulted from the TTIP-II program taking care of youths' basic needs in the form of a rental subsidy. Once youths' housing was taken care of, their stress was reduced and they were able to focus on parenting. Also, those who did not have custody of their children before entering the program were more likely to gain custody once the program helped them to find housing. Further, participants pointed out that it was important to feel safe where they were living. Once they were housed in an environment they felt was safe, they were able to parent more effectively.

In addition to being safely housed, youth identified learning life-skills through the program as an important factor that helped to improve their parenting skills and confidence.

Feeling supported within the program was also identified as contributing to improved confidence in parenting. Youth in the focus groups explained that they felt comfortable turning to TTIP-II staff for support, and having staff who were parents themselves made it easier to connect with them. Youth said that support and guidance from staff as well as from other program participants helped to bolster their confidence in parenting because of the encouraging and welcoming environment that was created.

Youth added that TTIP-II staff assisted in connecting them to community resources (e.g., food bank) which helped with parenting. In addition, the transit passes provided by Watari greatly facilitated youths' ability to access these community services with their children.

A focus group participant pointed out that even if youth did not have custody of their children, their role as a parent was celebrated and respected, and they were supported, honoured and treated with dignity within the program.

“How can you focus on anything when you're not meeting your basic needs?”

“Safety is key, it gives you the ability to be a good parent.”

“The life-skills groups are a good tool in helping with parenting skills.”

Youth provided suggestions on how the community could change to better support pregnant and parenting young people. Some suggestions pertained to prevention of teen pregnancy, including the need for better sexual education classes in high school. Other suggestions were to offer more drug and alcohol services to pregnant youth to increase their likelihood of abstaining from substances while raising a child.

Youth also recommended parent drop-in centres and other forms of social support for young parents, including peer mentors who have gone through similar experiences. Recommendations also included more affordable housing for young parents, higher welfare rates for single mothers, longer paid maternity leave, and free good-quality daycares. There was also a suggestion to offer more support to young fathers.

Several participants pointed out that services for parenting youth, such as addiction counseling, should offer free child-care while youth attend meetings. Youth also stated that parenting young people should have access to schools that have free daycare services for their children.

Changes needed in the community (sample of youths' survey responses)...

"Make sure that people struggling with addiction who have kids have a rehab where kids can go too!"

"Help them find school with daycare in it so they can finish their education."

"More affordable housing!"

"Prenatal parenting groups drop-ins."

"Job training programs."

"Change the stereotypes of youth involved in pregnancy."

"More government help for single parents or fundraising for single parents and un-wealthy families."

"Increase welfare rate for unemployed mothers - \$910 is a farce in this city given the cost of living."

"More classes or groups aimed toward younger moms! I was a teen parent and I didn't feel accepted in that part of my community until I found a teen-mom high school program."

"More support for fathers."

## Discrimination

At intake, the majority of youth (81%) had experienced at least one form of discrimination in the past year, with similar rates among youth in both TTIP program. They most commonly reported discrimination due to substance use or mental health difficulties (50%), their physical appearance (31%), race or skin colour (22%), pregnancy involvement (19%) or having children (19%).

Participants in TTIP-II were more likely than those in TTIP-I to have been discriminated against because of having children (39% vs. 0%) and for having been in government care (22% vs. 0%). Rates of discrimination were comparable at intake and at later time-points.

## Living Situation and Housing

The majority of youth who responded to these items at intake had lived in their parents' or other relatives' home, in a safe house or shelter, or had couch surfed at some point in their lives. Most had also stayed in a treatment program. Around half had lived on the street or in a hotel.

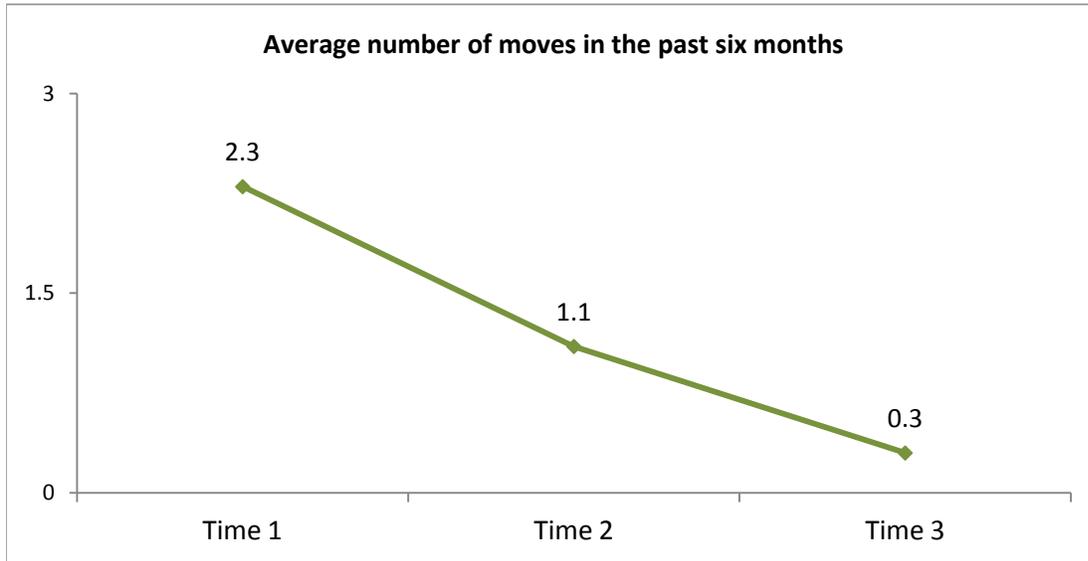
Fifty-percent of youth had been in government care (group home or foster home), and 24% had been on a Youth Agreement at some point.

The majority of youth reported currently living in a house or apartment, but 12% did not indicate where they were currently living.

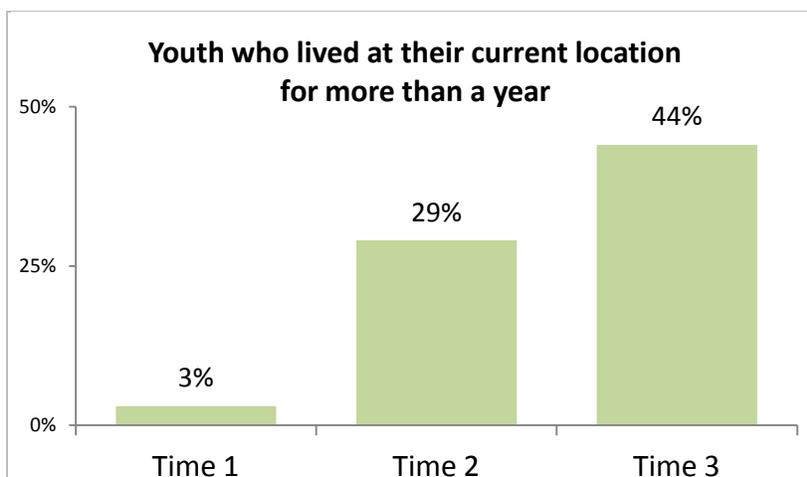
<b>Living Situation (intake survey)</b>				
	<b>Live here NOW</b>	<b>Lived here IN PAST 6 MOS</b>	<b>Lived here IN PAST 3 YRS</b>	<b>Lived here IN LIFETIME</b>
House / apartment	76%	84%	89%	100%
Parent's home	6%	26%	46%	94%
Living nowhere / all over (couch surfing)	6%	11%	42%	72%
Treatment program	0%	13%	46%	71%
Safe house/ shelter	0%	14%	42%	64%
Other relative's home	0%	15%	29%	59%
Street	0%	3%	31%	51%
Hotel	0%	11%	29%	49%
Foster home	0%	0%	11%	47%
Transition house	0%	6%	18%	32%
Group home	0%	0%	3%	31%
Abandoned house or building	0%	0%	16%	28%
Tent	0%	3%	11%	26%
Car	0%	0%	6%	9%

Note: Column totals do not equal 100% due to missing data or to youth marking more than one response.

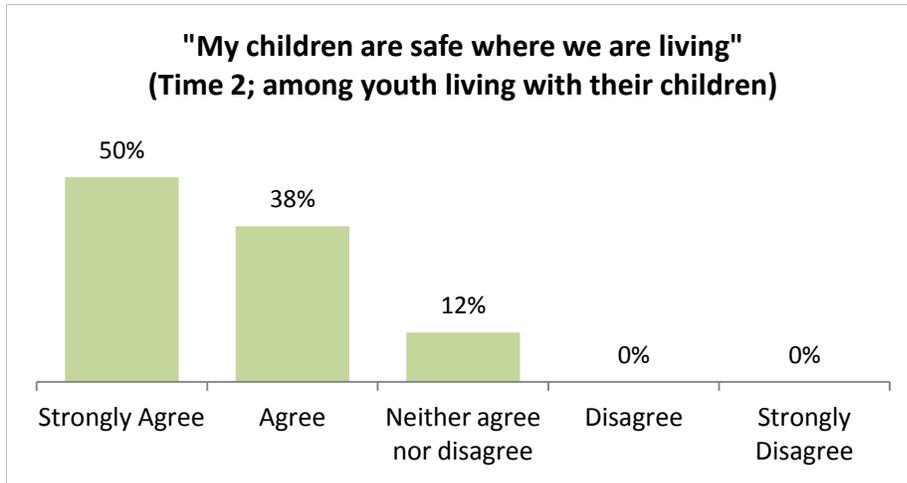
At Time 1, youth moved between 0 and 13 times in the past six months, with an average of 2.3 moves. Participants reported moving significantly less at Time 2 than at Time 1 ( $p=.02$ ), with an average of one move in the past six months, and a range between 0 and six moves. At Time 3, the average number of moves was also significantly lower than at Time 1 ( $p=.01$ ), and ranged from 0 to 2 moves. This low rate of moves was maintained at Time 4 and Time 5, however too few youth completed surveys at these later time-points to conduct meaningful analyses and to report the rates.



At Time 1, most participants (65%) had been living at their current location for two to six months. At Time 2 and Time 3, youth demonstrated greater stability and were more likely than at Time 1 to have been living at their location for more than a year ( $p < .05$ ). The stability was maintained at later time-points, with no youth living at their current location for less than two months, and youth most commonly indicating having lived at their location for more than a year at Time 4 and Time 5 (cell sizes too small to report).



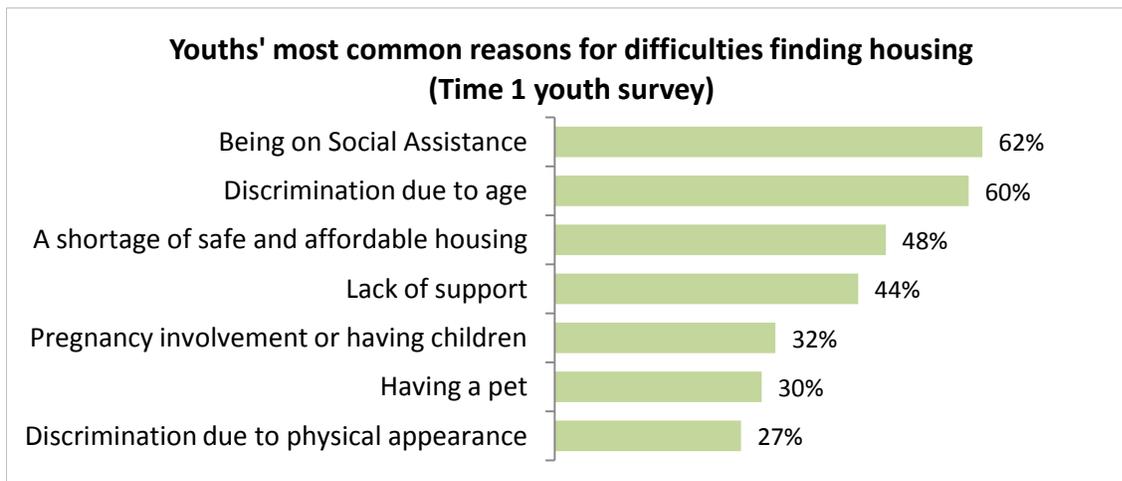
The majority of youth felt safe in their living accommodations at Time 1 (81%), as well as at later time-points. Further, the majority of youth who had children living with them felt that their current living accommodations were safe for their children, across all time-points.



One year after intake (Time 3), 62% of youth reported that their knowledge of rental rights and responsibilities increased 'quite a bit' or 'very much' as a result of their involvement in their TTIP program.

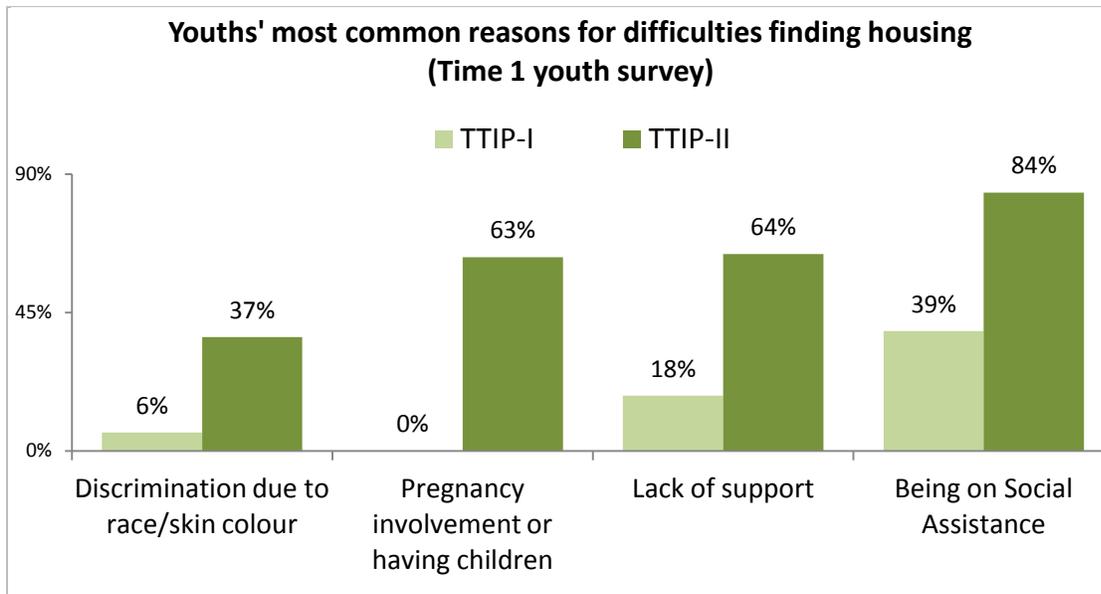
*Difficulties finding housing*

At Time 1, virtually all youth reported difficulties finding housing in their lifetime, and provided a number of reasons for these challenges (they could mark more than one reason). Discrimination due to age and being on Social Assistance were the most common reasons. Watari staff most frequently identified a shortage of safe and affordable housing (38%), youths' mental health issues or addictions (33%), and being on Social Assistance (29%) as common barriers for finding housing.



Note: Youth could mark more than one reason.

Youth in TTIP-II were more likely than those in TTIP-I to report past difficulties finding housing because of their pregnancy involvement or having children; lack of support; discrimination due to race/skin colour; and being on Social Assistance ( $p$ 's < .05).



Although participants reported challenges finding housing in the past, the majority indicated not having difficulties finding housing after intake into Watari (i.e., at later time-points).

After one year in their TTIP program (Time 3 survey), 89% of youth attributed improvements in their housing situation to their involvement in Watari. Participants in the focus groups explained that Watari staff offered youth guidance, helped with housing searches, and prepared youth for meetings with landlords by teaching them interview skills.

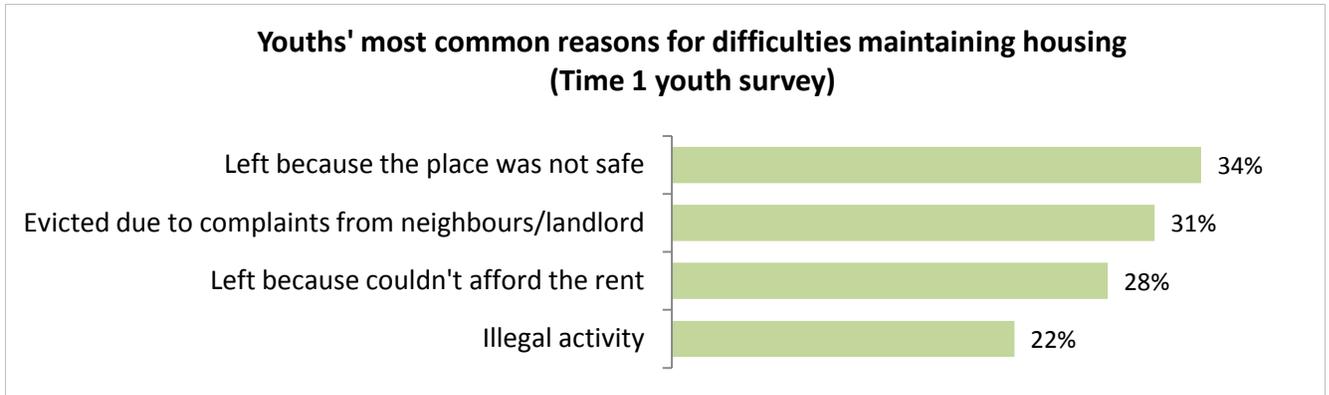
Further, focus group participants explained that TTIP staff accompanied youth to the initial meeting with a landlord. Staff acted as the youth's advocate, explained to the landlord what the program was about, and was there to emotionally support the youth. Youth in the focus group said they appreciated having staff with them for support and encouragement. They added that they learned how to talk to landlords and find housing as a result of the worker first modeling this behaviour. Also, both youth and staff said that having the worker there helped to increase landlords' acceptance of young people and reduce their concerns about renting to youth. Landlords were also reassured that they could speak to staff if there was ever a problem with the youth tenant. Youth would then return on their own for a second meeting to secure the unit. Some youth said they secured housing within a week as a result of the worker accompanying them on the first visit.

“Being supportive, having your back, and advocacy. These are the big things that can help you find housing in Vancouver, especially when you don't look ‘mainstream.’”

*Difficulties maintaining housing*

Youth also provided reasons for their difficulties maintaining housing in their lifetime. The most common were leaving because the place was unsafe, being evicted due to complaints from neighbours or the landlord, and leaving because they could not afford the rent. There were no statistically significant differences between young people in TTIP-I and TTIP-II in terms of challenges maintaining housing.

At Time 1, staff identified communication problems with the landlord (19%) and mental health issues or addictions (19%) as the most common reasons for youths' problems keeping housing.



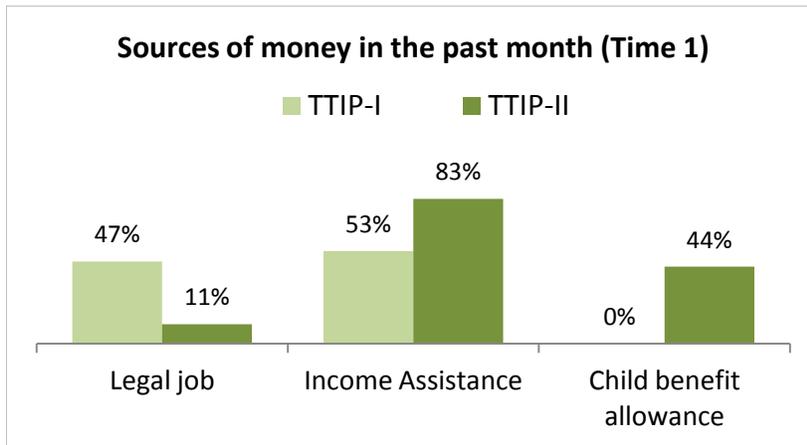
Although participants reported difficulties keeping their housing in the past, the majority indicated not having these difficulties after intake into Watari. Focus group participants credited their ability to maintain housing to the support they received from TTIP staff and the life-skills they learned through their program. Also, staff pointed out that many youth moved to a different geographic location when they started the program, which distanced them from negative peer influences and risky activities, and in turn increased their chances of successfully maintaining their housing.

**Work and Money Management**

At intake, 44% of youth reported being legally employed in the past month, with the majority of these youth (69%) working 20 or more hours a week. Rates of past-month employment were comparable for youth in TTIP-I and TTIP-II. These rates were also comparable at all time-points.



At Time 1, most of the young people (69%) identified Income Assistance as at least one of their sources of money in the past month, while 29% reported receiving money from a legal job, 26% from their family, and 23% received child benefit allowance. Virtually no youth reported obtaining money from illegal activity, such as theft or drug dealing. As illustrated in the following graph, some rates differed among youth in the two TTIP programs. Rates were not significantly different at later time-points.



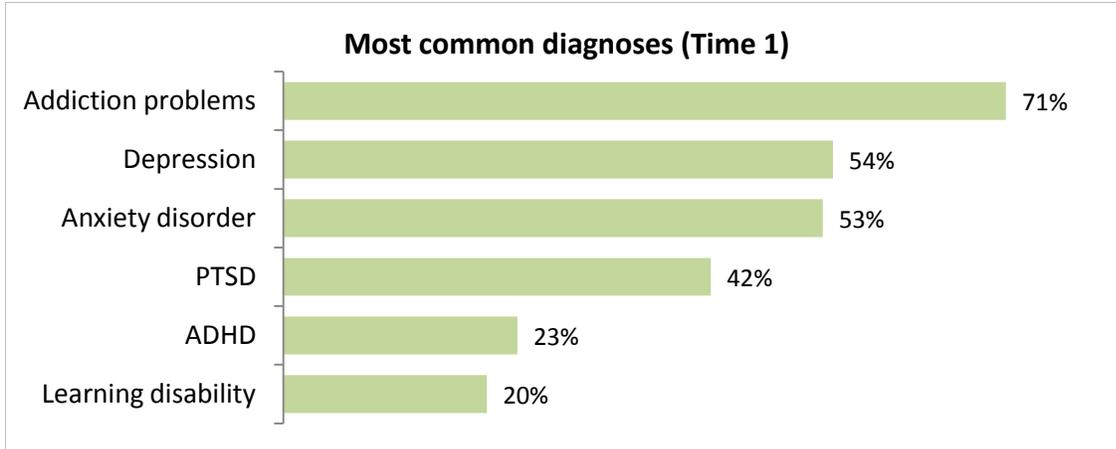
At intake, the majority of youth indicated difficulties with money management in that they were managing their money ‘fairly well’ or ‘poorly’ (as opposed to ‘well’ or ‘very well’). In contrast, at later time-points the majority of youth indicated managing their money ‘well’ or ‘very well’, although this change was not statistically significant.

One year after intake (Time 3), more than half of youth (56%) reported improvements in their budgeting and money-management skills due to their involvement in Watari. Youth in the focus groups voiced appreciation for learning these skills through their TTIP program, and one stated that “knowing how to manage money helps to build confidence.”

### Physical and Emotional Health

At intake, 42% of youth indicated having a health condition or disability that prevented them from engaging in activities that others their age participated in, with 36% reporting a mental or emotional health condition (56% in TTIP-I vs. 17% in TTIP-II) and 6% reporting a long-term illness (e.g., diabetes, asthma).

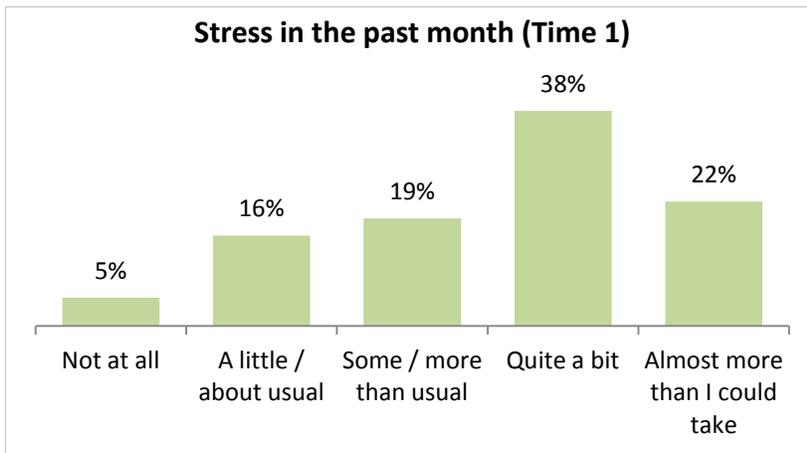
Youth reported receiving various diagnoses from doctors or psychiatrists, and the most common were addiction problems, depression, and anxiety. Rates of diagnoses were comparable for youth in the two TTIP programs.



At Time 1, approximately half of youth rated their health as ‘good’ or ‘excellent.’ At later time-points, the majority of youth rated their health as good or excellent. Ratings were comparable for youth in the two TTIP programs.

*Stress and depression*

Most youth experienced at least some stress in the past month, and there were no significant differences in stress levels among youth in the two TTIP programs or at the various time-points.



However, after one year in their TTIP program (Time 3), 68% of youth reported improvements in their stress-management skills which they credited to their involvement in Watari.

Levels of worry and depression were comparable for youth in the two TTIP programs, and across time-points.

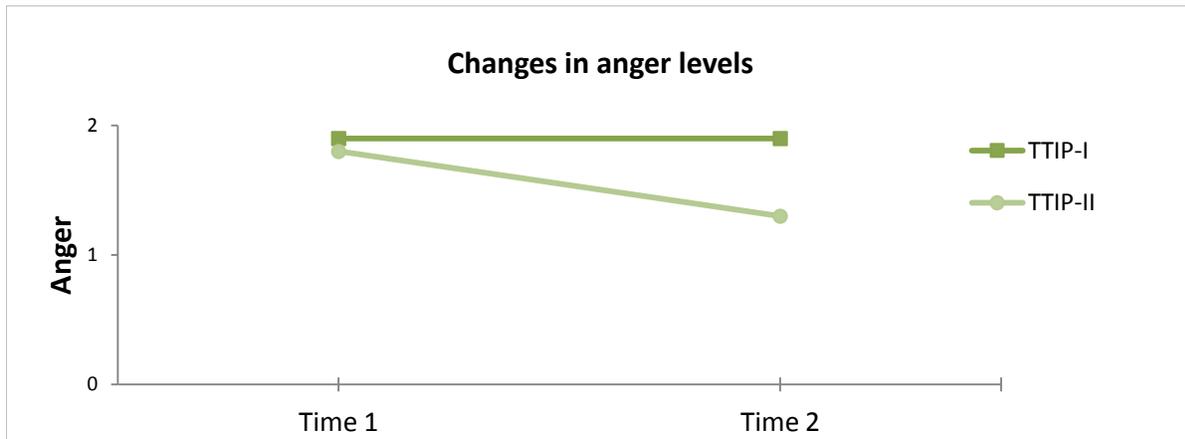
*Suicide attempts and self-harm*

Rates of suicide attempts were close to zero at all time-points. However, 100% of youth who thought about suicide indicated at Time 3 that their involvement in Watari helped to reduce their suicidal ideation.

Youth were also asked if they had cut or injured themselves on purpose without trying to kill themselves. At intake, 14% reported self-harming in the past six months, which was similar to the rate at later time-points. Rates were comparable for youth in TTIP-I and TTIP-II.

### *Anger*

Anger was assessed by questions tapping frequency of anger, resentment, annoyance, and aggravation in the last six months. Youth in TTIP-I and TTIP-II experienced comparable levels of anger at intake. At Time 2, youth in TTIP-II reported lower levels of anger than at intake, and lower levels than youth in TTIP-I ( $p$ 's  $\leq .01$ ). Youth in TTIP-I demonstrated no significant changes in anger between Time 1 and Time 2.



Some focus group participants were surprised by the finding of reduced anger among youth in TTIP-II because they had not expected that a housing program could contribute to these reductions. However, this finding confirmed many participants' belief that "if you take care of housing, other things will start to follow."

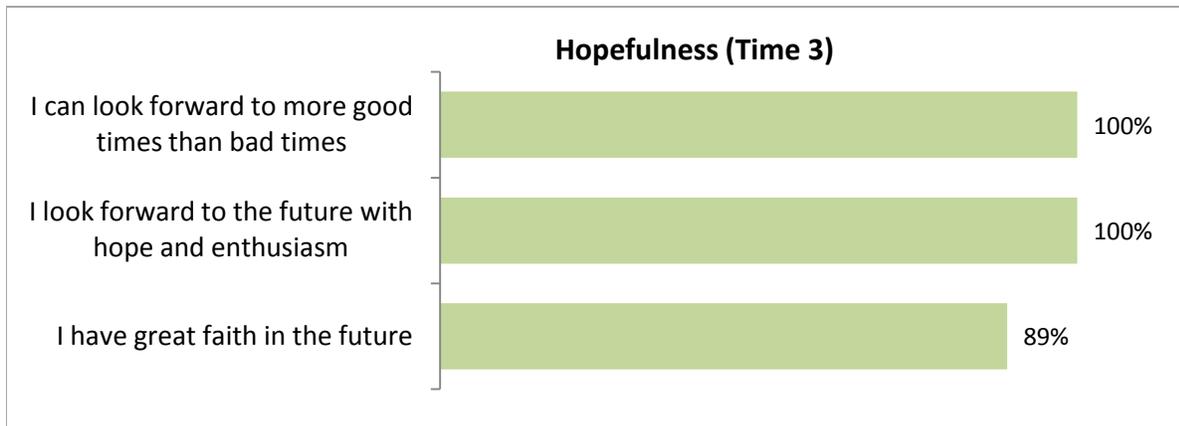
Sample sizes at Time 3 and beyond were too small to conduct repeated-measures analyses. However, one year after intake (Time 3), the majority of youth (68%) reported improvements in their anger-management skills which they attributed to their involvement in Watari.

### *Coping*

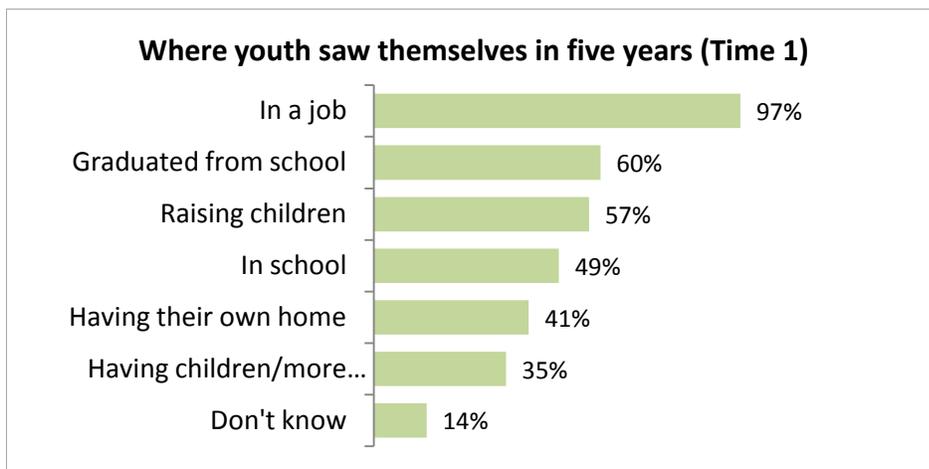
At intake, youth reported relatively good coping skills when faced with a problem. For example, the majority turned to someone for support (60%), worked at solving the problem to the best of their ability (62%), and thought about the situation in a way that helped them stay calm (57%). Coping skills at all time-points were comparable, and there were no differences between youth in the two TTIP programs.

### *Hopefulness*

Across all time-points, the majority of youth in both TTIP programs reported feeling hopeful for their future. One year after intake (Time 3), 89% of youth indicated that their hope for the future markedly increased due to their involvement in their TTIP program.



When asked where they saw themselves in five years, at intake the majority envisioned having a job and/or having graduated from school. Many also saw themselves attending school, having a home of their own, raising children, or having more children. Virtually none of the youth foresaw bleaker circumstances such as being in prison, living on the street, being dead in five years. Youth in TTIP-II were more likely than those in TIPP-I to anticipate raising their children (95% vs. 17%) or having more children (63% vs. 6%). Youths' positive aspirations were not significantly different at later time-points.



### *Sense of competence*

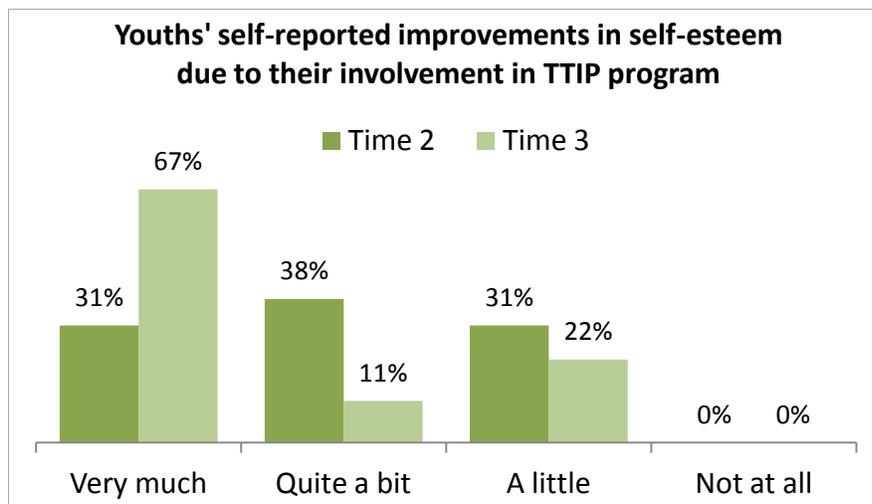
Feeling competent in any domain is a protective factor which is linked to healthy outcomes. At intake, 85% of youth felt they excelled in certain activities or areas, and the rate was 100% at later time-points. Youth identified a wide range of competencies, including the arts (e.g., poetry, music, painting); being a parent and other relational skills (e.g., helping others); housekeeping and other life-skills (e.g., cleaning, cooking, budgeting); school and working with numbers (math, data analysis); job-specific skills (e.g., make-up artistry, dog training, customer service); and sports and other physical activities (e.g., skateboarding, hiking).

*Some responses to what youth felt they were good at...*

- “Being a Mom ♥ ”
- “Artistic stuff, painting, making things, cooking”
- “Making people laugh”
- “Helping others, setting boundaries, asking for help”
- “Math, Guitar, Skateboarding, Parenting”
- “Most creative things, Math, Training dogs”
- “Keeping focused on my goals”
- “Being myself ”

*Self-esteem*

One year after intake (Time 3), 78% of youth reported that their self-esteem improved ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ because of their involvement in their TTIP program. Moreover, a greater proportion of youth rated their self-esteem as ‘very much’ improved at Time 3 than at Time 2.



Youth in the focus groups said that finding housing was key to improving their self-esteem and overall emotional health. They explained that once their housing needs were met, they started feeling more stable and confident, and developed a sense of ownership of their space.

Focus group participants added that the support and life-skills training they received from TTIP staff (e.g., money-management) helped to build their self-esteem and confidence in their ability to live independently.

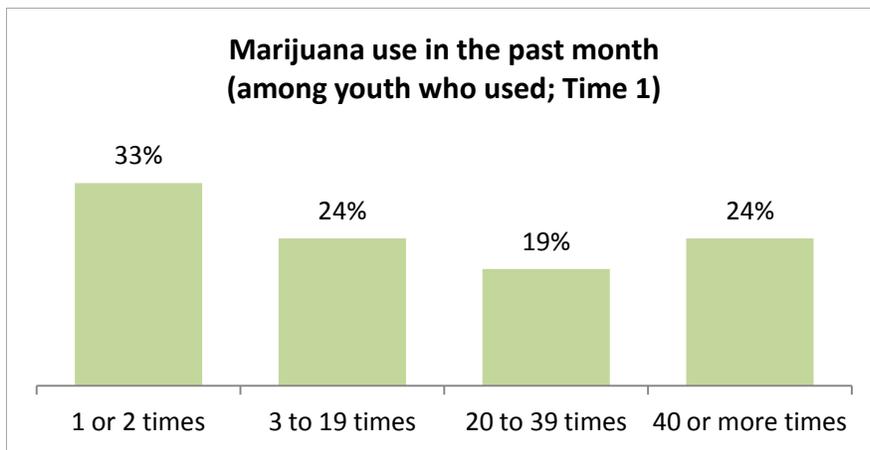
“Housing is the first thing you need to take care of.”

## Substance Use

At intake, virtually all youth reported drinking alcohol at some point, and 56% of these youth drank in the last month (81% among youth in TTIP-I vs. 33% among youth in TTIP-II). Those who drank in the past month most commonly reported doing so on one or two days (37%), whereas virtually none drank on 20 or more days. Rates of alcohol use were similar at later time-points.

Further, 57% of youth did not binge drink in the past 30 days (binging was defined as having four or more drinks in a row for females, and 5 or more drinks for males). Those who did binge drink most commonly did so on one or two days in the past month (47%). These rates were comparable for youth in both programs, and across time-points.

At intake, virtually all youth had used marijuana at some point and 58% of these youth had used marijuana in the past month. Rates were similar among participants in the two TTIP programs and across time-points.



Youth also reported at intake having used substances other than alcohol and marijuana, as illustrated in the following table. The majority had used cocaine, ecstasy, mushrooms, crystal meth, and prescriptions pills without a doctor's consent at some point in their lives, and almost half had used speed and hallucinogens. However, a markedly smaller percentage of youth had used these substances in the past month, and virtually none reported using these drugs in the past week.

There were no difference between youth in the two TTIP programs with the exception that youth in TTIP-I were more likely than those in TTIP-II to have used cocaine in the past six months (50% vs. 11%).

Substance Use (Time 1 survey)	Used in past week	Used in past month	Used in past 6 months	Ever used
Cocaine	3%	17%	31%	89%
Ecstasy	3%	11%	22%	83%
Mushrooms	0%	3%	6%	78%
Prescription pills without doctor's consent	3%	8%	22%	64%
Crystal meth	0%	3%	14%	61%
Speed	0%	0%	8%	47%
Hallucinogens	0%	0%	6%	47%
Heroin	0%	3%	8%	44%
Inhalants	0%	0%	3%	39%
Injected illegal drug	0%	3%	8%	19%
Steroids without doctor's prescription	0%	0%	0%	3%

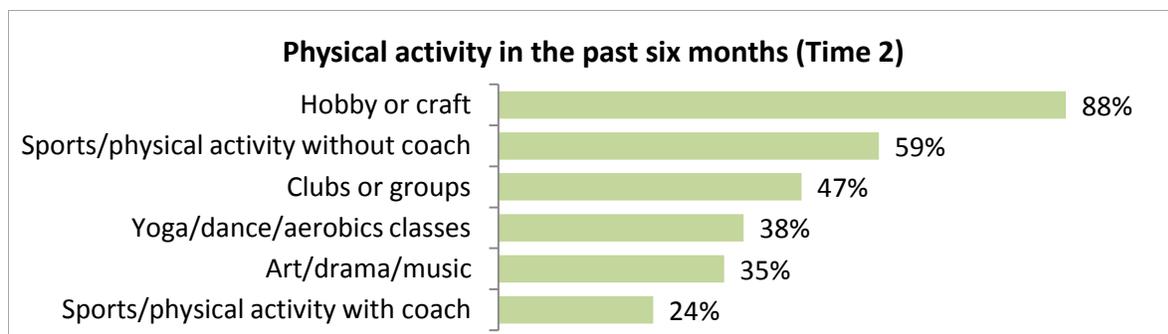
After a year in their TTIP program (Time 3 survey), virtually no youth reported using these substances in the past six months. Further, at Time 3 the majority of youth (89%) reported reductions in their substance use which they attributed to their involvement in Watari.

New questions pertaining to substance use were added to the final survey (Time 5) in an attempt to capture a wider range of changes in youths' substance use behaviours since starting their TTIP program (e.g., changes in the number of substances they mixed; in perceived control of their drug use; and in when, where and with whom they used). However, this information could not be reported due to the small number of youth who completed the final survey.

"Watari has assisted me in my sobriety."

## Sports and Leisure Activities

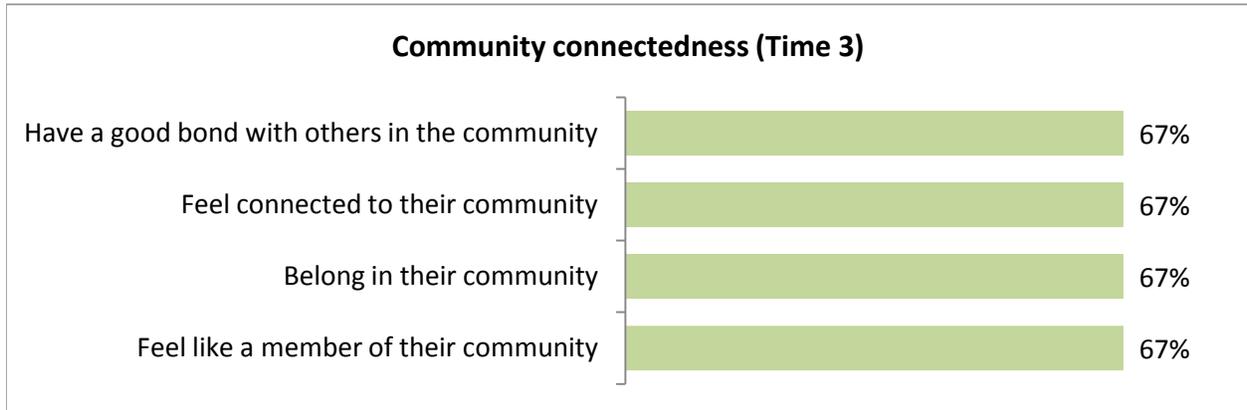
Youth at intake reported taking part in various activities in the past six months. Many took part in activities at least once a week, such as a hobby or craft (54%; drawing, writing, jamming, etc.), sports or physical activity without a coach (45%; biking, road hockey, skateboarding, etc.), and involvement in a club or community group (35%). Activity involvement was similar among youth in both TTIP programs.



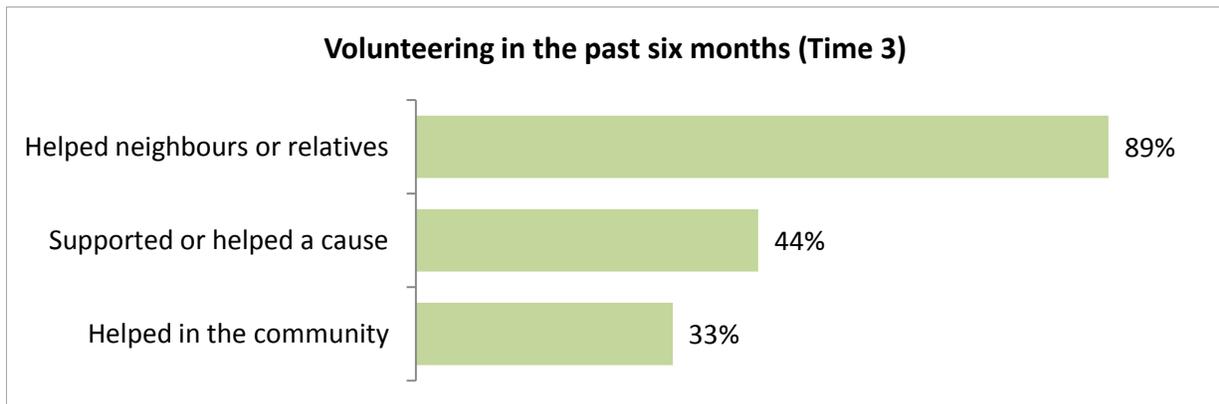
One year after intake (Time 3), 75% of youth who completed a survey reported improvements in their recreational and social opportunities due to their involvement in their TTIP program.

### Community Connectedness and Volunteering

At intake and six months later, around half of youth reported feeling like a member of their community, belonging in their community, feeling connected to it, and having a good bond with others in their community. One year after intake (Time 3), the majority of youth who completed a survey felt this way. Further, most youth who completed a Time 3 survey (67%) reported increases in their community connectedness due to their involvement in Watari.



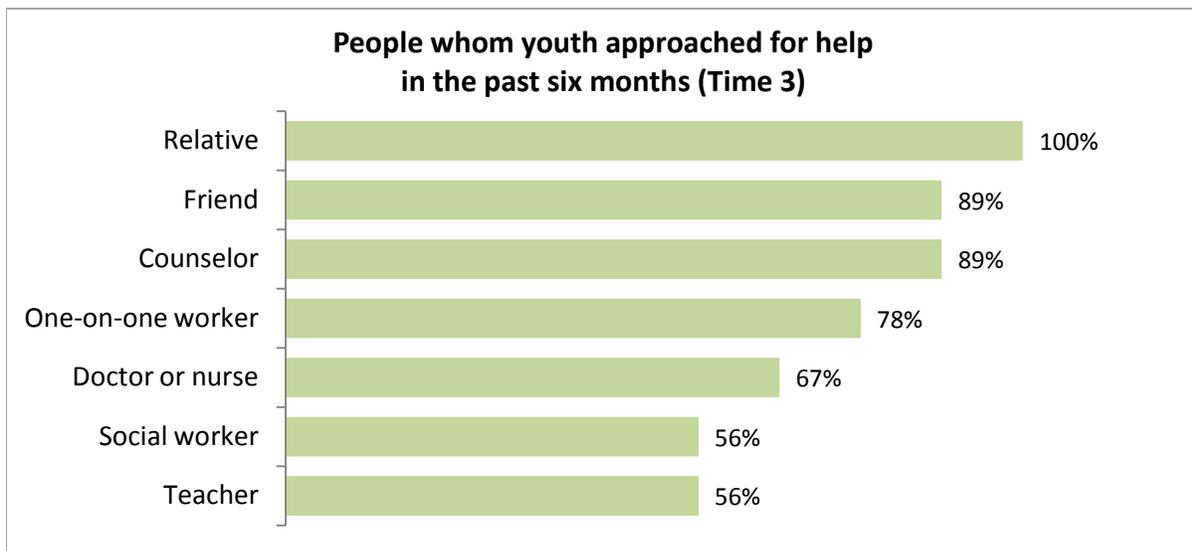
Many participants reported at intake that they had volunteered in the community over the past six months. Their volunteer activities included helping neighbours or relatives (e.g., babysitting, cutting grass), supporting or helping a cause (e.g., food bank, charity fundraising), and helping in the community in other ways (e.g., hospital volunteering). Across all time-points, youth most commonly volunteered by helping neighbours or relatives. Rates were similar for youth in both TTIP programs and over time.



## Supports and Services

Youth in both TTIP programs indicated that they would feel comfortable talking to certain adults when faced with a problem. One year into the program (Time 3), they most commonly indicated that they would feel comfortable turning to a counselor (89%), Watari staff (78%), parents (56%) or another relative (78%). Rates were comparable across time-points.

In addition to indicating whom they would feel comfortable turning to, participants reported on whom they actually turned to for help in the past six months (see following graph). Rates were similar over time and among youth in the two TTIP programs. The majority of youth who sought support found it helpful, a finding that was consistent across programs as well as over time.



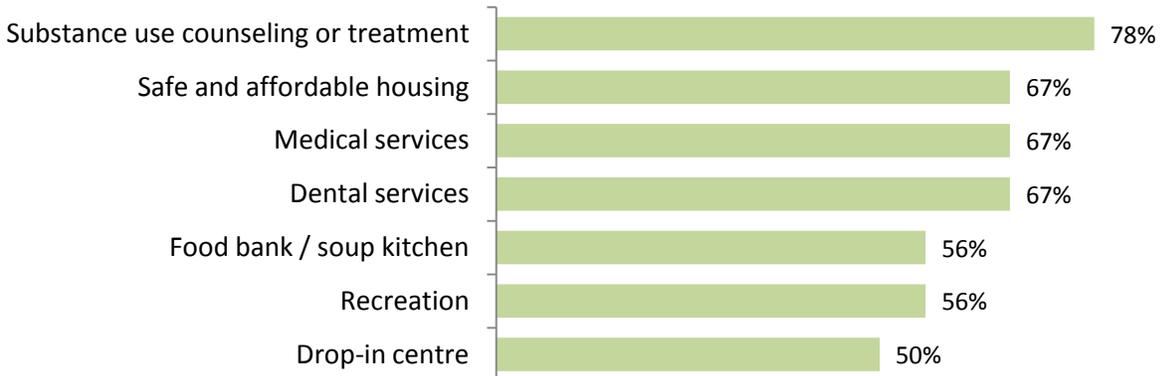
Youth also reported accessing a number of services in the past six months, and the majority of those who access services found them helpful. Although there were no differences in accessing services across time-points, there were differences between youth in the two TTIP programs.

At Time 1, youth in TTIP-II were more likely than those in TTIP-I to access drop-in centres (94% vs. 50%), pregnancy classes/support (39% vs. 0%), and parenting classes/support (56% vs. 0%). Youth in TTIP-I were more likely than those in TTIP-II to access mental health counseling or treatment (72% vs. 28%).

Six months into the program (Time 2), youth in TTIP-II were still more likely to access drop-in centres (100% vs. 33%) but were as likely as those in TTIP-I to access pregnancy or parenting classes/support. However, they were more likely to now access affordable childcare/babysitting than their peers in TTIP-I (67% vs. 11%).

One year after intake into the program (Time 3), youth in TTIP-II were more likely than their peers in TTIP-I to have accessed a food bank or soup kitchen in the past six months (83% vs. 0%).

### Most commonly accessed services in the past six months (Time 3)



“The TTIP-II program isn’t just housing – it’s also a support network to help access other services.”

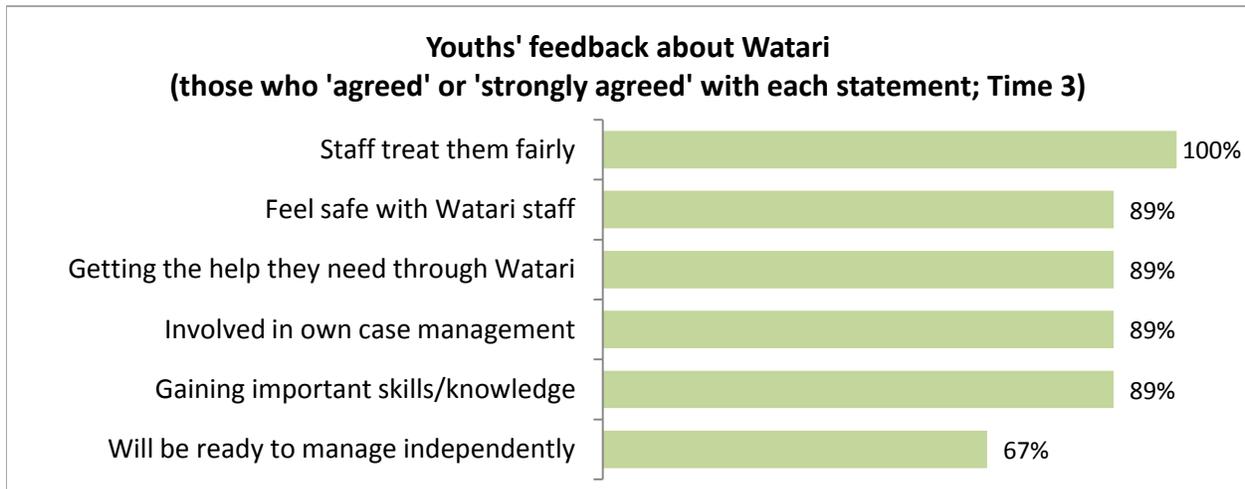
Youth were asked about supports that would be helpful to them after leaving Watari. They commonly stated that ongoing counseling, including drug and alcohol counseling and one-on-one workers, as well as support groups (e.g., parenting groups; women’s groups) would be helpful. They also identified access to a food bank, help with employment and education, and connections to recreational activities as services that would be beneficial after leaving Watari. Further, many stated that having “ongoing support from Watari” in the form of “aftercare” and counseling would be helpful.

Some youth identified social and political changes that would be helpful, including more safe and affordable housing, “a government dedicated to lowering housing costs,” student loan relief, and more “government support for addiction/mental health” services.

Staff identified ongoing counseling (alcohol and drug counseling; support worker), mental health and medical support, financial support, education, and job training as services that would be beneficial to youth after leaving the program.

## Feedback about Watari

Youth were asked direct questions about their experience with Watari, and the vast majority provided positive feedback. At all time-points, most agreed or strongly agreed that they were getting the help they needed from Watari; staff treated them fairly and they felt safe with staff; they were gaining important skills and knowledge; they were involved in their own case management; and they would be ready to manage independently, without help from Watari, once they completed the program.



Participants in the focus groups stated that the TTIP programs helped youth to feel more independent. Not only did Watari assist youth in developing life-skills that helped them to live independently, but the rent subsidy offered to youth gave them the freedom to attend school, rather than work full-time, which further fostered their sense of autonomy.

Youth in the focus groups said they would recommend the TTIP programs to their friends because their own experience at Watari was very positive and beneficial.

### Youths' comments:

"Please keep TTIPS, it's a lifesaver. I would be homeless or in an SRO otherwise!"

"I think Watari deserves the utmost recognition for their ethics and attitude. Ultimately the best housing and life skills program I have ever seen. The Watari program is making a huge positive difference in my life."

"This program is so helpful."

"Thanks for taking care of me."

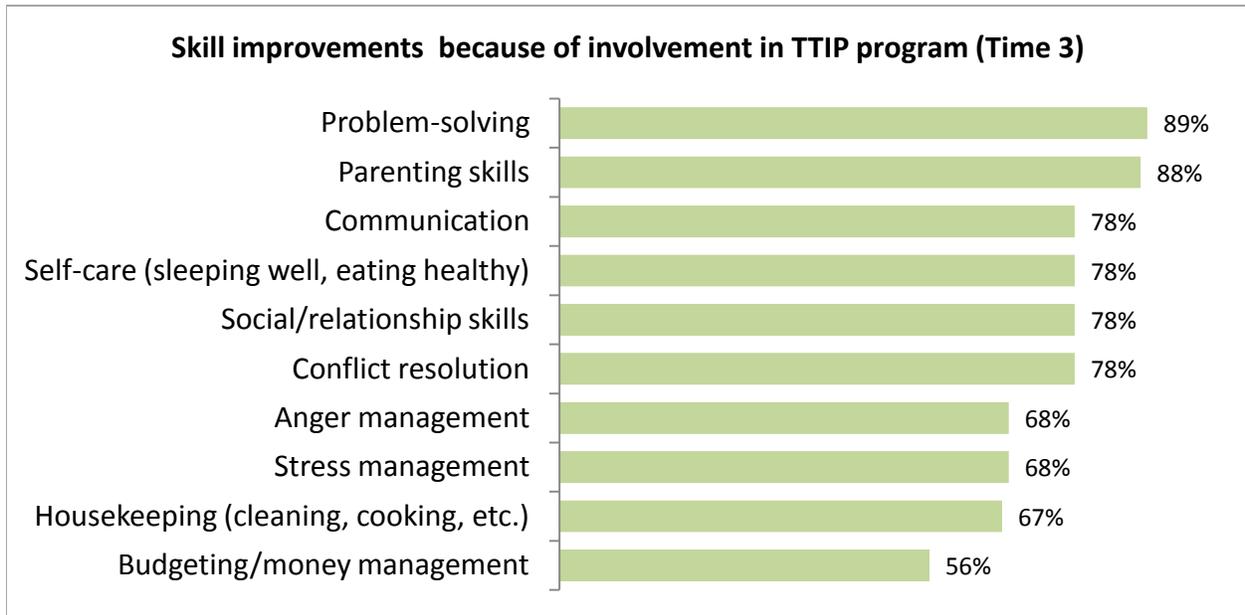
"[TTIP-II] helped me become a better mom, person, friend...  
I'm happier and secure."

"This really is a fantastic resource and at the moment I feel really involved and very excited about my life. The Watari program and staff are a huge part of that ☺"

### *Improved functioning*

Youth reported that their involvement in Watari helped to improve their functioning in a number of areas. As described in earlier sections of this report, most participants indicated one year after intake (Time 3) that participation in their TTIP program led to improvements in their housing situation, hopefulness, self-esteem, anger- and stress-management skills, community connectedness, recreational and social opportunities, parenting skills and their confidence in parenting (among those with children).

Most youth also indicated skill improvements in other areas, including social skills and self-care, which they attributed to their involvement in Watari.



The majority of participants also reported at Time 3 that their involvement in Watari helped to reduce risk behaviours, including substance use (89%), suicidal ideation (100%; among those who had thought about suicide), and criminal activity (100%; among those who had taken part in illegal activity).

### *What youth found helpful*

When asked what they found helpful at Watari, a common response was the supportive staff. Youth felt that staff were helpful and reliable, and they could turn to staff for support whenever they needed to, including emergency situations.

Participants in the focus groups expressed appreciation for the one-on-one time that staff spent with youth, including going out for coffee as a helpful way to connect.

Other aspects that youth identified as helpful were the group and one-on-one sessions, life-skills training, housing support and rental top-up, learning about their rights as a renter, the food bank, and the overall supportive environment. Youth also stated that the program helped them to meet their goals.

Youth in the focus groups voiced appreciation for the social events that Watari organized, including the Christmas party. They described these events as positive experiences because of the warm and safe atmosphere that Watari created.

What youth found helpful at Watari...

- “Staff are friendly and helpful and provide lots of resources to better my future.”
- “The staff are helpful. If I find myself in an emergency I'm able to reach someone.”
- “The staff were easy to relate to.”
- “People getting together to talk about how to live better.”
- “Learning how to pay rent, my rights as a renter.”
- “The life skills classes.”
- “Information about Tenancy Act. Free Food! Genuine human contact and interaction.”
- “The food donations and relationships there. The life skills.”
- “Showing up on a daily basis and looking forward to staff. Even though I didn't want do the outings I ended up loving it.”
- “The top up program and my support worker.”
- “Getting myself back on track.”
- “The constant support, staff, environment, groups.”
- “The housing support.”
- “Without the financial support I get from the program, I wouldn't have a place to live because I cannot afford it.”
- “It's helped me get back out in the work force.”
- “They've helped me live independently.”

## Participants' Suggestions

### *Suggestions for how Watari could change*

Youth were also asked what they found unhelpful and how Watari could change to better meet the needs of young people. The majority responded that they found “nothing” unhelpful and that the program is “great as it is.” Although youth provided overall positive feedback about the TTIP programs, some also offered suggestions on how the programs could build on their strengths and improve. Stakeholders who took part in the focus groups also offered some suggestions.

- Youth expressed divergent views about the group sessions. Some wished for these to be optional and remarked that groups sometimes conflicted with their work schedule. However, others felt that groups should take place more frequently and there should be “more repercussions for those who regularly miss program.”
- Some youth suggested holding group sessions in the evening to reduce the likelihood of conflicting with participants’ daytime work schedules.
- A few youth felt there was not enough time to “get down to issues” but only to check-in, and recommended offering more one-on-one time with staff.
- Some youth commented about their peers in the program. One felt that others in the program were “disruptive,” and another suggested separating youth in abstinence-based programs from those in harm-reduction programs because of difficulties these groups have interacting with one another.
- A few youth suggested that Watari staff should “get more input from the youth” in terms of what the youth would like to learn. Staff would then be able to provide each youth with information that he or she finds helpful, and perhaps offer individualized life-skills sessions.
- As noted in the interim evaluation report, an idea was for youth to receive funds for transportation, such as a transit pass or bus tickets. In fact, Watari senior management subsequently secured funding to supply youth with transit tickets. Youth in the focus groups voiced appreciation for this support and said that it helped them in accessing needed community resources, commuting to school, and getting around with their children.
- Some youth wished the program was longer. Staff who took part in the focus groups agreed and stated that ideally the program would be a minimum of two years.
- Youth also expressed a desire for after-care support from Watari after leaving the TTIP program. In addition, one participant suggested that Watari still pay some of participants’ rent after they leave the program, and gradually pay less, because youth will have difficulty when they must suddenly pay their rent on their own.
- Some participants who took part in focus groups felt that the TTIP programs should hire more staff, if funding was secured, to enable Watari to provide after-care support.

*Focus group participants' suggestions to improve youth housing in Vancouver*

Many focus group participants agreed that more safe and affordable housing was needed in Vancouver, and there should be fewer barriers for youth to get housed. They said that the current waitlist for BC Housing was three years, which created stress and frustration among youth who were trying to find housing. They added that once youth find housing, they should receive the support they need to stay housed.

Participants added that longer-term housing programs are ideal for youth to get the support and gain the skills they need to ultimately live independently and maintain their housing. They felt that youth housing programs should last a minimum of two years.

It was noted that the TTIP programs address the continuum of needs in terms of youth housing, and that more programs should do so. There was also a suggestion to engage young people in more dialogue on what the full continuum of housing needs is, and to ensure that youth are offered the services that best suit their needs.

Some stakeholders also felt there should be more opportunities for young people in housing programs to choose who they live with. They explained that this approach would enable a family unit to be supported rather than only an individual participant, and engaging the entire family would increase the likelihood of success.

Focus group participants articulated that there should be more youth housing programs in the community, and particularly more programs that adhere to the TTIP-II model. Specifically, more programs should provide youth with a subsidy to obtain safe market housing, coupled with the support and life-skills training they need to maintain their housing.

Senior managers felt that a comprehensive evaluation of housing programs in Vancouver should be undertaken to identify the components within housing programs that predict successful outcomes. They felt that this type of overarching cross-program evaluation could help to inform funders on the types of housing programs that are most likely to succeed, and would promote promising practices that reduce youth homelessness.

“There needs to be more programs specifically using this [TTIP-II] model.”

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Consistent with findings from the interim evaluation reports (March 2010 and April 2011), results from this report indicate that Watari's TTIP-II housing program served the needs of a diverse group of young people, including Aboriginal and sexual minority youth. Further, the program targeted the intended population of youth, specifically those who were pregnant or parenting and who had challenges with substance use, mental health, and with finding and maintaining housing.

Youth entering the two TTIP programs had a history of unstable housing. For example, most had lived in a safe house or shelter or had couch surfed at some point, and around half had lived on the street, in a hotel or had been in government care. Youth also listed a number of challenges they had experienced in finding and maintaining housing in the past. However, they demonstrated greater housing stability over the course of their participation in their TTIP program. For example, at later time-points compared to intake, they reported fewer moves and were more likely to have been living at their current location for more than a year. Also, most youth did not indicate any challenges maintaining their housing once they were involved in their TTIP program. Participants credited their improved housing stability to the rental subsidy they received through the program, coupled with the guidance, support and life-skills training they received from TTIP staff.

All youth in TTIP-II had experience with pregnancy or parenting, and reported improved confidence in parenting due to their involvement in the program. Most youth also reported improvements in their parenting skills which they credited to their participation in TTIP-II. Participants indicated improvements in other areas as well, including their social and emotional functioning (communication skills, problem-solving, self-esteem, hopefulness, anger- and stress-management, etc.). They also indicated improvements in housekeeping and self-care, and reductions in risk behaviours (e.g., substance use, criminal activity), as a result of their involvement in the program.

In the previous evaluation report, only half of youth reported improvements in their money-management skills, and it was suggested that staff could provide participants with more training around budgeting if appropriate. In the current report, a higher percentage of youth indicated improvements in this area. Further, youths' comments in the focus groups suggested that staff had focused more on bolstering youths' money-management skills. Youth said they appreciated learning these skills through the program and that knowing how to manage their money helped to increase their self-confidence.

Focus group participants explained that youths' improvements in various areas resulted from their basic needs being met. Specifically, the safe and stable housing they received through the program contributed to a number of improvements in their lives. The consensus was that once youth had stable housing, improvements in other areas would follow.

In addition to stable housing, participants acknowledged that supportive Watari staff, assistance with life-skills, connections to other community resources, and subsidized transit to access needed resources all played a role in youths' improvements and in the program's success. Focus group participants suggested that more youth housing programs should adhere to the TTIP-I and TTIP-II model of providing youth with a subsidy to obtain safe market housing, coupled with the support and life-skills training they need to maintain their housing.

Youth provided very positive feedback about Watari and their experience in their TTIP program. Most reported receiving the help they needed; feeling safe with staff and being treated fairly by them; gaining important skills and knowledge through the program; being involved in their own case management; and that they would be ready to manage independently, without help from Watari, once they completed the program.

Although the majority of youth anticipated that they would be ready to manage independently after leaving, some youth and staff recommended that Watari provide after-care support when youth finish the program. A related suggestion was for Watari to hire more staff so that this support could be offered. Focus group participants also stressed the importance of funding youth housing programs for a minimum of two years (see Participants' Suggestions, p.30, for other recommendations offered by stakeholders).

The repeated-measures survey methodology, which entailed distributing youth surveys every six months, provided informative data. However, a major limitation was the survey-completion attrition rate. Fewer youth completed surveys at later time-points because of their reduced contact with the program due to increasing independence and less need of support. This situation reflected the program's success in facilitating participants' transition to independent living. However, it resulted in sample sizes at Time 4 and Time 5 that were too small for conducting statistical analyses, and therefore findings from these surveys were reported only descriptively. Additionally, relatively small sample sizes even at earlier time-points likely resulted in reduced statistical power to detect differences over time.

New questions were added to the final survey (Time 5) which directly tapped changes in youths' substance use (e.g., changes in the number of substances they mixed, and in when, where and with whom they used). New questions about nutritional intake were also added. However, the data could not be reported given that only two youth completed a final survey. The evaluation methodology was strengthened by the implementation of focus groups. These focus groups provided more in-depth qualitative information to supplement the survey data.

Perhaps future evaluations of TTIP-II could entail the evaluators distributing the surveys to youth during one of their group sessions at Watari and for youth to complete and return the surveys at that time (rather than youth being asked to complete the surveys on their own time). This approach would likely increase the number of surveys that youth complete. Further, interviews could be incorporated into the methodology to ask youth directly about any changes in their behaviours (e.g., substance use) due to their involvement in the program. Interviews could be an effective way of collecting rich qualitative information that survey data may not capture. In addition to interviewing youth participants, landlords could be interviewed and asked for their feedback about the program.

In sum, results of this evaluation indicated that Watari's TTIP-II program met its goals of helping to improve youths' psychosocial functioning and life-skills, and of reducing their substance use and other risk behaviours. The program was successful in providing pregnant and parenting youth with the support and services they needed to find and maintain housing, and to ultimately live independently.