

Existing Measures of Youth in or from Government Care or Alternatives to Care

TRRUST Collective Impact 2020

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Caring Connections

At School

British Columbia

- In 2016-2017, elementary students with care experience were less likely than students without this experience to feel welcome at school all the time or many times (64% for youth in care (YIC) vs. 69%). Similarly, among high school students, 55% of YIC felt this way compared to 64% of students without care experience (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- Less than half (49%) of elementary-aged YIC reported feeling they belonged at school compared to 56% of their peers without care experience. Similar results were seen among high school-aged youth (34% for YIC vs. 48% for non-YIC) (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- High school-aged YIC were less likely than their peers without care experience to report having adults at their school that treat all students fairly (57% for YIC vs. 65%). Among elementary-aged youth, the YIC and non-YIC students reported having such adults at their schools at similar rates (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- 64% of elementary-aged YIC students reported having three or more adults at school that care about them, which is above the rate for non-YIC elementary-aged students (61%). Among high school students, YIC were less likely than youth without this experience to report having three or more adults at school that care about them (52% vs. 54%) (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- Among youth in or from government care, 71% reported that they felt that adults cared how well they did at school and 80% reported that adults expected them to succeed at school (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- Among youth in or from government care, the majority of youth agreed or strongly agree with the following statements: I feel safe at school (65%), school staff treat me fairly (63%), I'm happy to be at my school (55%), my teachers care about me (55%), and other school staff care about me (55%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- Youth in or from care who felt supported were more likely than those who did not feel support to report being happy at school (81% vs. 28%), feeling safe at school (81% vs. 48%) and feeling like a part of their school (62% vs. 16%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- 37% of youth reported that their foster parents knew what was going on for them at school and 39% reported that their social workers knew. Youth were asked if they felt these adults should know what was going on at school, to

which 90% of youth felt foster parents should and 85% felt social workers should (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).

Other Connections

British Columbia

- Around half (51%) of young people felt comfortable approaching their social worker about their needs. The same percentage reported that their social worker informed them of their rights (Wilson et al., 2016).
- A little over half (55%) of young people felt their foster parents were supportive (Wilson et al., 2016).
- Around 1 in five (19%) youth reported having 7 or more social workers (Wilson et al., 2016).
- Youth (under 19) were more likely than young adults (aged 19-24) to feel they could turn to a social worker for support (37% vs. 19%) (Wilson et al., 2016).
- Among youth in or from care, Indigenous young people were more likely than non-Indigenous youth to feel very connected to their culture (31% vs. 10%) (Wilson et al., 2016).

United States

- In a national study of 18-23-year-olds who are currently in foster care or who have aged out of care, 59% of youth reported having reliable access to a computer during the COVID-19 crisis (Greeson et al., 2020).
- 33% of young adults reported wishing they had connections with more people to help them during the COVID-19 pandemic (Greeson et al., 2020).

Employment and Education

Educational Profile

British Columbia

- In 2016-2017, 50% of students with care experience had diverse needs compared to 10% of students without such experience (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- In 2014-2015, continuing custody order (CCO) students represented less than 1% of the total student population (BC Representative for Children and Youth (BCRCY), 2017).
- In 2014-2015, grade seven students with a CCO were less likely than their peers without a CCO to meet or exceed expectations in numeracy on the FSA (34% among CCO students vs. 73%) (BCRCY, 2017).
- In 2016-2017, grade four and seven students with a CCO were less likely than students without a CCO to meet or exceed expectations in numeracy on the FSA (38% among CCO students vs. 75%). Results for meeting or exceeding expectations in reading were similar (54% among CCO students vs. 79% among students without a CCO) (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- In 2014-2015, 40% of students with a CCO achieved a C+ to A on grade 10 courses they took on time compared to 71% of students without a CCO (BCRCY, 2017).
- Youth in or from care aged 19 or older were more likely than younger youth to feel it was important to go to school regularly (90% vs. 57%). Similarly, youth aged 19 or older were more likely to feel it was important to graduate (97% vs. 65% for younger youth) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- Most youth in or from care reported that the amount of sleep they got affected how well they did at school (94%) and that getting enough sleep was a factor that helped youth in care succeed at school (92%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- Most youth (94%) in or from care felt that learning at their own pace was a factor that helped youth do well. Many (78%) also felt that learning good study habits contributed to school success (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- Youth in or from care were asked which adults they most commonly asked for help with their education. Most youth asked a family member (72%, of which 64% found helpful), a teacher (71%, of which 88% found helpful), a school counsellor (63%, of which 72% found helpful) or a social worker (60%, of which 56% found helpful) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).

- The top three barriers youth in or from care identified to accessing or completing post-secondary education are mental health challenges (45%), lack of guidance on how to apply (38%), and having to work to survive (36%) (Wilson et al., 2016).
- One in three young people were unaware of financial opportunities available for post-secondary (Wilson et al., 2016).

Graduation

British Columbia

- In 2014-2015, students with a CCO were less likely than those without to complete graduation requirements within six years of entering grade eight (51% with a CCO vs. 90%) (BCRCY, 2017).
- In 2016-2017, 46% of students with a CCO completed graduation requirements within six years of entering grade eight, which is an improvement from 37% in 2012-2013 (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- Among students with a CCO, 44% of Indigenous students and 61% of non-Indigenous students graduated from high school within six years of entering grade eight (BCRCY, 2017).
- In 2016-2017, 17% of students with care experience transitioned into post-secondary three years after high school completion compared to 48% without care experience (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- Among youth in or from government care, the most commonly identified reasons for returning to high school after leaving include wanting to pursue post-secondary (65%), not wanting to work low-paid jobs (60%), wanting a high school diploma (60%), wanting a career (55%), and wanting a sense of accomplishment (55%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).
- The most common challenges to graduating high school that youth identified include mental health problems (85%), teachers not understanding youth's situation (72%), substance use problems (66%), changing schools (64%), lack of encouragement to stay in school (64%), lack of support with homework (62%), and being bullied (57%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2017).

Employment
British Columbia

- Among the youth in or from government care surveyed, 21% were currently receiving Income Assistance, 19% were on Person with Disability (PWD) funding, 16% were on Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) and 10% were on Youth Educational Assistance Fund (YEAF) (TRRUST Collective Impact (TRRUST), 2018b).
- 38% of the youth in or from government care surveyed had applied for ten or more jobs. Half of youth had looked for their first job before the age of 16, although only 39% of youth had started working before the age of 16 (TRRUST, 2018b).
- In applying for work, youth primarily used websites like Craigslist (70%) and/ or handed out their resume (65%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- 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%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- Most youth in or from government care faced barriers to getting a job, including not having required education or skills (52%), conflict with other commitments (e.g. school) (46%), lack of transportation (41%), and mental health, substance use and other health challenges (39%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- Most youth (65%) in or from care had not turned down an offer of employment. Among those who had refused work, the most common reason was insufficient pay (20%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- When asked about their perspectives on entry level jobs, youth in or from care most commonly reported that they were steppingstones to other employment (87%) and/or something non-permanent (49%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- Notably, a third of youth (33%) had held a job for at least a year (TRRUST, 2018b).
- Most youth who had employment (86%) had experienced at least one barrier to keeping a job, including mental health challenges (47%) and scheduling conflicts (39%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- When asked what they wanted from an employer, most youth wanted sufficient/ livable pay (89%), flexible work hours (78%), comprehensive training (65%), emotional understanding (64%), and mentorship (61%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- Most youth in or from care with paid employment worked in the service industry (28%) and/or research/ academia (28%) (TRRUST, 2018b).
- When asked about receiving support, 83% of youth had received help with writing a resume and/or cover letter, 68% with preparing for job interview, 67%

with time management, 60% with work-appropriate clothing and 55% with learning employment rights (TRRUST, 2018b).

- 51% of youth in or from care knew their employment rights (TRRUST, 2018b).
- 62% of youth reported they were taught how to find a job while in care, but only 42% reported they were taught how to keep a job (Wilson et al., 2016).
- Less than 3 in 10 young people reported always having enough money to buy food, pay their bills and buy needed clothes (Wilson et al., 2016).
- 54% of youth reported sometimes having enough money to buy food, while 17% reported never having enough money to do so (Wilson et al., 2016).
- A little over half (55%) reported being taught how to budget/ manage their money while in care (Wilson et al., 2016).

Housing

Homelessness

Vancouver, B.C.

- 50% of the respondents from the metro Vancouver youth homeless count were currently or had been previously in care (BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), 2018).
- Of the 681 youth surveyed during the 2018 youth homeless count in Vancouver, 94% were unaccompanied youth (BCNPHA, 2018).

British Columbia

- Among youth with care experience, 76% reported unsafe family home experiences as the issue that led to their first experience with homelessness/ housing insecurity. Other issues that led to this experience include substance use or mental health problems (45%), not being eligible for a youth agreement or other income supports (33%), inappropriate or unsafe foster home (30%), and aging out (29%) (BCRCY, 2020).
- According to the 2014 Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Survey, 51% of youth reported that they had lived in a foster home or group home at some point, and 14% were currently in one of these placements. Ten percent of males and 17% of females were currently on a Youth Agreement. Other forms of care that youth had experienced were custody centres, with 21% of males and 14% of females having stayed in such a place at some point (Smith et al., 2015).

Canada

- A Canada-wide study found that 58% of homeless youth had been or were currently involved with child protection services (Gaetz et al., 2016).

Housing Security

Vancouver, B.C.

- When asked to identify different housing situations youth in or from care had experienced, the most common responses were couch surfing (88%), shelter or safe house (88%), market housing (58%), on the street (52%), and mental health facility (48%) (TRRUST Collective Impact (TRRUST), 2018a).
- 56% of the youth in or from care surveyed had moved at least twice in the past year (TRRUST, 2018a).

- The most common barriers youth in or from care reported to finding housing were unsafe housing for LGBTQ2S (92%), lack of support (60%) and a shortage of safe, affordable housing (56%). In terms of barriers to keeping housing, youth identified discrimination (42%), unsafe space (33%) and lack of support (29%). Notably, 25% of youth in or from care surveyed reported having no trouble keeping housing (TRRUST, 2018a).
- Youth were asked about helpful resources to secure housing after transition. 76% of youth reported that they wanted an adult to help them find somewhere to live, safe and affordable housing, and to know their rights as tenants (TRRUST, 2018a).
- When asked about what would be their ideal housing, 61% of youth mentioned proximity to public transit and 48% mentioned an apartment (TRRUST, 2018a).
- 26% of young people reported never having enough money to pay rent and 38% reported sometimes having enough (Wilson et al., 2016).
- When asked what would have been helpful when transitioning out of care, 78% of youth aged 19-24 said housing supports would've been helpful. A little less than 7 in 10 (68%) of youth said care past 19 would've helped them (Wilson et al., 2016).

Other Housing Considerations

British Columbia

- Youth living in a foster home were more likely to feel safe than youth living on their own (97% felt very or quite safe vs. 71% of youth living on their own) (Wilson et al., 2016).
- When asked what was the most moves they had done in one year, 22% of youth reported moving between 4 and 6 times in one year (Wilson et al., 2016).
- 35% of youth reported learning about to maintain housing while in care (Wilson et al., 2016).

United States

- In a national study of 18-23-year-olds who are currently in foster care or aged out of foster care, 7% of youth reported couch-surfing or being homeless as a result of COVID-19 (Greeson et al., 2020).
- In 2020, 43% of young adults reported COVID-19 having a negative impact on their living situation, including being forced to leave their living situation, fearing being forced to leave, or experiencing homelessness/ housing instability (Greeson et al., 2020).

Meaningful Experiences

Activities

British Columbia

- Most young people with care experience (83%) faced barriers to participating in extra-curricular activities. The most common barrier was lack of money (61%), followed by lack of time (41%) (Wilson et al., 2016).

Health, Wellness and Culture

Health

British Columbia

- In 2016-2017, elementary-aged students with care experience were more likely than their peers without this experience to report having a good night's sleep (52% among YIC vs. 46%). Among high school aged students, 25% of students with care experience reported having a good night's sleep compared to 18% without this experience (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- For both elementary- and high school-aged students, youth with care experience were less likely to report having regular access to nutritional foods (59% among elementary-aged YIC vs. 62% and 42% among high school-aged YIC vs. 53%) (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- A province wide study revealed that 43% of the young people who felt they needed mental health help reported not getting the support they needed (Wilson et al., 2016).

United States

- In a national study of 18-23-year-olds who are currently in foster care or aged out of foster care, 56% of young adults reported clinically significant levels of Depression or Anxiety as a result of COVID-19 (Greeson et al., 2020).

Injury

British Columbia

- In 2018-2019, there was a total of 1,249 critical incident reports involving 630 youth in care. Of those incidents, there were 833 where harm was found, which includes physical/ sexual assault, self-harm, motor vehicle incidents, etc. (Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia (PGTBC), 2020).
- Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia
- Of the 1,249 critical incident reports, 64% involved youth aged 15-18 years old (PGTBC, 2020).
- In 2016-2017, 207 children or youth in care suffered 'in-mandate' critical injuries, of which 161 were between the ages of 13 and 18 (BCRCY, 2018).
- In 2016-2017, 6 children or youth in care died (BCRCY, 2018).
- In 2015-2016, sexualized violence was the most common type of critical injury involving children and youth in care (at 21%) (BCRCY, 2016).

- Of the 121 children and youth who disclosed sexualized violence between 2011 and 2014, 109 were girls and 12 were boys. Two thirds of these children and youth were Indigenous (BCRCY, 2016).
- Youth with care experience died at five times the rate of the regular population of young people in BC (BC Coroners Service (BCCS), 2018).
- One quarter of youth who enter care by agreements with parents and 75% are admitted to care by removal and subsequent custody orders (BCCS, 2018).
- Between 2011 and 2016, there were 200 deaths of youth aging out of care, of which 61% were due to accidental causes and 24% due to suicide (BCCS, 2018).
 - 34% of the 200 deaths were Indigenous youth (BCCS, 2018).
 - Most of the accidental deaths (72%) were related to illicit drug overdoses (BCCS, 2018).
 - A subsample of 82 of these 200 decedents revealed that 76% of the youth had less than Grade 12 education or their education level was unknown (BCCS, 2018).

Other Considerations

British Columbia

- In 2016, Indigenous children and youth were fifteen times more likely to be in care than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Grand Chief Ed John, 2016).
- As of 2016, Indigenous children and youth were more likely to be in care than their non-Indigenous counterparts due to neglect (74% among Indigenous vs. 64% among non-Indigenous) (Grand Chief Ed John, 2016).

Other Measures

Profile

British Columbia

- In 2018, seven of every 1,000 child aged 0 to 18 years old were children and youth in care. Among Indigenous children and youth, 46 of every 1,000 child was in care, while 3 of every 1,000 non-Indigenous child is in care (Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), n.d.).
- In 2018, trends in adoption rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous eligible children and youth in care (CYIC) were improving but the adoption rate for Indigenous children was lower than that for non-Indigenous children. This, in part, is due to Indigenous children being more likely to have siblings, requiring common placement, as well as the importance of ensuring their cultural connectedness (MCFD, n.d.).
- Over the twelve-month period of April 2017 to March 2018, 11% of Indigenous CYIC moved 2+ times compared to 6% of non-Indigenous CYIC (MCFD, n.d.)
- Most young people (76%) reported having at least one health condition or disability, of which the most common was a mental health condition (63%) (Wilson et al., 2016).
- In a 2016 survey, 50% of youth aged 16 to 18 felt ready to transition out of care (Wilson et al., 2016).
- Slightly less than three quarters of youth (73%) reported feeling quite or very involved in making decisions about their life. Around half (48%) felt their voice was respected when speaking to others about their situation (Wilson et al., 2016).

Qualitative and Other Reports

Qualitative Reports

British Columbia

- *Fostering Success: Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in/from Care* (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016).
 - Report offers a qualitative look of the youth perspective on school and the education system in BC.
 - Youth discuss barriers and facilitators to education and completing secondary school.
- *Relationships Matter for Youth 'Aging Out' of Care: Research Report* (Doucet, 2018).
 - Report elevates the voices of youth to understand their supportive relationships, the pathways to those relationships and how policy might be adapted to foster those relationships.

Recommendations in the Grey Literature

British Columbia

- *Opportunities in Transition: An Economic Analysis of Investing in Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Summary Report* (Shaffer et al., 2016).
 - Report outlines how to improve educational, economic, social and wellness outcomes for youth aging out of government care in BC.
 - Report calculates costs associated with improving supports for youth aging out and balances costs against current adverse outcomes and experiences.
- *Oversight of Contracted Residential Services for Children and Youth in Care* (BC Auditor General, 2019)
 - Report describes how the ministry of children and family development failed to have proper frameworks and evaluations in place to monitor and manage their contracted residential services (i.e. family places, group homes, etc.).
 - Report offers four recommendations to MCFD (p. 12), among which is the recommendation to improve partnership with the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies and Indigenous communities by creating a specific strategy and standards.

Other Reports

British Columbia

- *Fostering Change: 2016 Youth Transitions Survey: Early Results* (Fostering Change, 2016).
 - Report reveals public perception on policies relating to youth in or from government care.
 - Report offers quantitative data.
- *BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness: COVID-19 & Youth Homelessness Special Report* (BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, 2020).
 - Report offers scan of youth serving organizations and the barriers/challenges they and their youth are facing as a result of COVID-19.

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