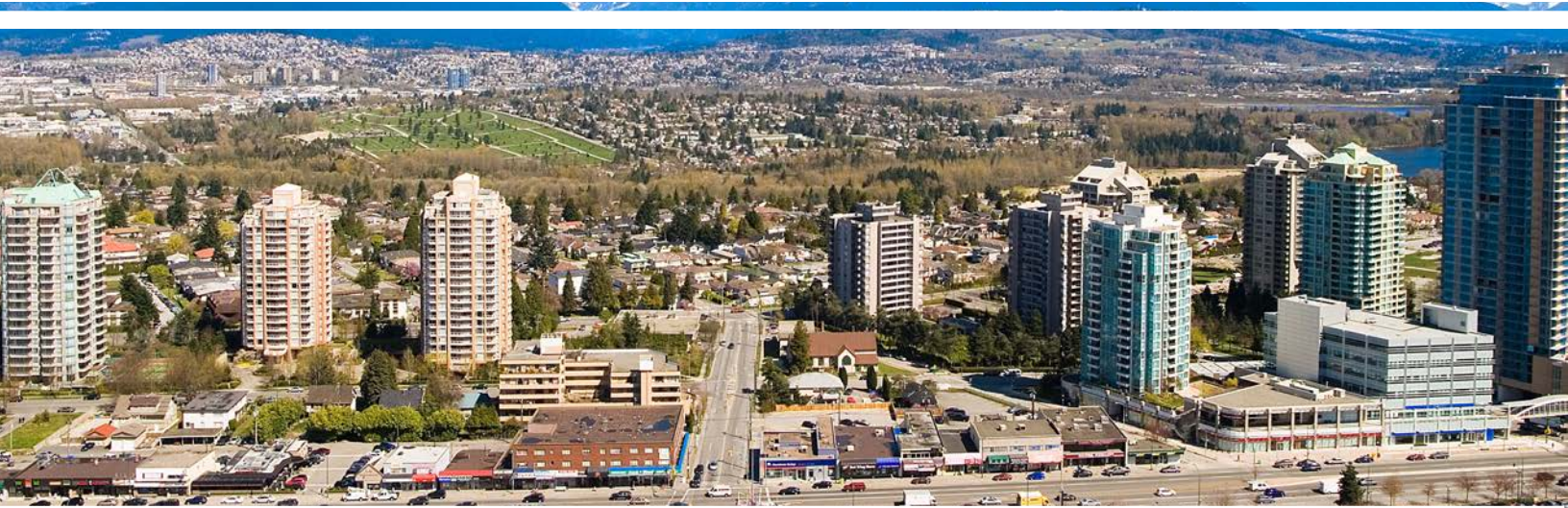




Negotiating the Barriers to Employment for Vulnerable Youth



We would like to sincerely thank the following agencies for allowing us to host a focus group at their site, and for assisting us to recruit participants.

NORTHERN

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George
Prince George Youth Custody Centre, Prince George
Quesnel Employment Services, Quesnel

FRASER

St. Leonards Youth and Family Services, Burnaby
Totally Beautiful and the C.R.E.W., Surrey
Abbotsford Community Services, Abbotsford

VANCOUVER COASTAL

Directions Youth Services Centre, Vancouver
Watari Counselling and Support Services Society, Vancouver
Sea to Sky Community Services, Squamish

VANCOUVER ISLAND

Nanaimo Youth Services Association, Nanaimo
Nanaimo Youth Services Association, Courtenay

INTERIOR

The Bridge Youth and Family Services Society, Kelowna
Interior Community Services, Merritt
YMCA WorkBC Employment Services Centre, Penticton

INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of a project which canvassed the experiences of young people from marginalized populations in finding and keeping employment. The full report is available on the BC Centre for Employment Excellence website at <http://www.cfeebc.org/research-innovation/youth-employment/study-vulnerable-youth>.

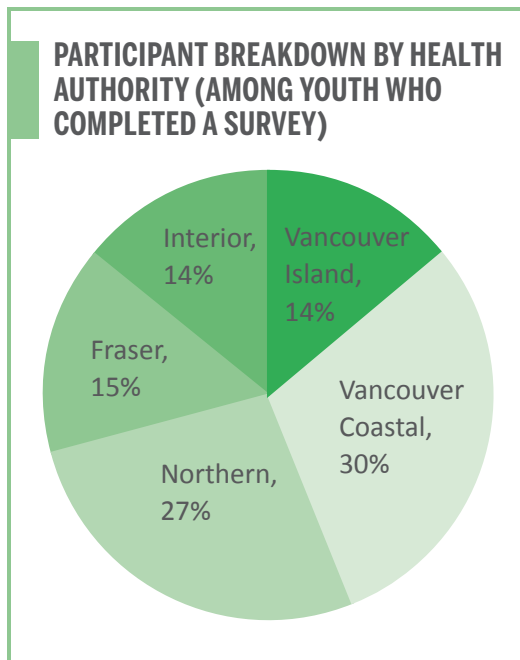
This project engaged 150 young people from across BC to identify the barriers they faced to finding and keeping a job, as well as the helpful supports they had received to find and maintain employment. Youth who participated in the project came from diverse backgrounds and included young people from rural and remote BC communities, Aboriginal youth, homeless and

street-involved youth, young people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, youth with government care experience, young people with disabilities, youth with mental health conditions, and youth with substance use challenges.

Participants were invited to participate in a focus group or an interview and to complete a survey. Through activities and group discussion, participants discussed the effectiveness of current employment supports, the accessibility of employment programs in their communities, and ways in which programs could better serve young people. They also offered recommendations for improving access to employment for young people.

Quantitative analyses of the survey data was conducted using SPSS statistical software. All group differences described in this report were significant at $p < .05$ which means there is up to a 5% likelihood that the results occurred by chance.

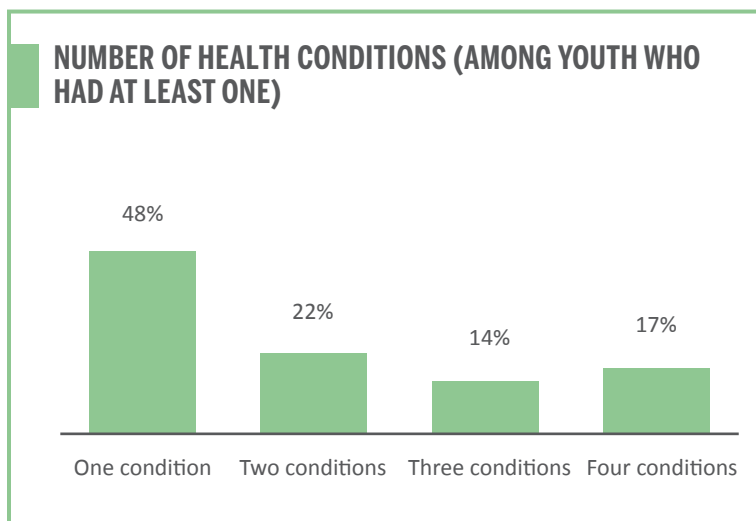
PARTICIPANTS



A total of 150 youth between the ages of 15 and 29 took part in the project. Participating communities were Abbotsford, Burnaby, Courtenay, Kelowna, Merritt, Nanaimo, Penticton, Prince George, Quesnel, Squamish, Surrey, and Vancouver.

- Among youth who completed a survey, 67% were from urban areas and 33% were from rural communities across the province.
- Youth who completed a survey (54% males) were between 15 and 29 years old, and were most commonly aged 17 to 19 years old (46%).
- Almost 1 in 5 (19%) identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Young people most commonly identified as European (59%) and/or Aboriginal (50%), and 4% identified as African (youth could select more than one background on the survey).
- The majority of participants (95%) were born in Canada.
- More than half (55%) had been homeless and 40% had stayed in a shelter or safe house.
- 46% stayed in a foster home and 34% in a group home at some point in their lives, and 9% were currently in one of these types of government care.

- 32% had been on a Youth Agreement (10% were currently on one) and 23% had stayed in a custody centre.
- 41% went to bed hungry sometimes because there was not enough money for food at home, and 11% had this experience often or always.
- 61% were not currently attending school, while 29% were in high school and 10% were attending post-secondary education. Among those not in school, around half had stopped attending before graduating from high school.
- Participants experienced multiple, overlapping barriers. For example, more than 1 in 5 participants (22%) reported having a mental health condition, substance use addiction, and having lived in precarious housing.
- 64% reported having at least one health condition or disability. The most common was a mental or emotional health condition (64% of females vs. 32% of males).



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

Most male and female youth (84%) reported having had at least one job at some point, and they most commonly had five or more jobs previously.

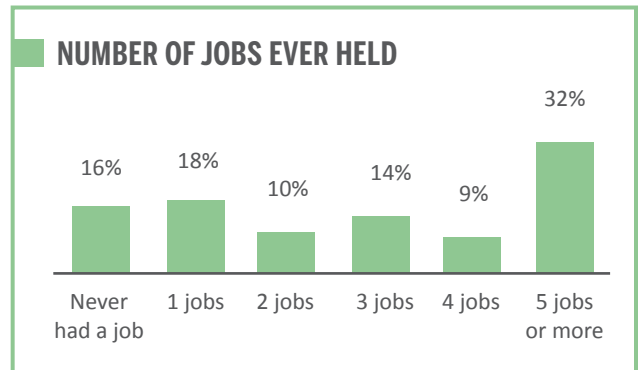
There was no difference among different groups of youth in rates of ever having worked.

However, some young people were more likely to have had five or more jobs. These included youth with a health condition or disability (e.g., mental health, substance use or behavioural challenge; 51% had five or more jobs vs. 20% of youth without such a condition), those who had stayed in a custody centre (65% vs. 35%), and youth with homelessness experience (64% vs. 14% of youth who were never homeless).

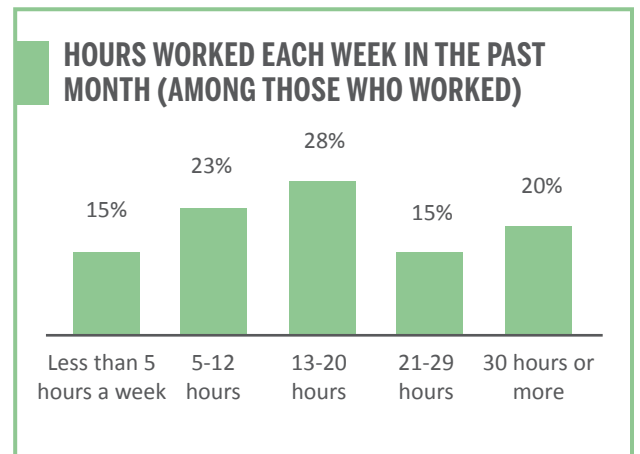
The longest time participants had stayed at the same job ranged from less than one month to a year or more.

Forty percent of youth were currently employed. Those who worked in the past month most commonly reported working between 13 and 20 hours each week.

Around half of youth who had ever had a job (51%) received minimum wage at their current or most recent job, while 39% were paid above minimum wage, and the rest were paid below minimum wage or were unsure about the pay they received.



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

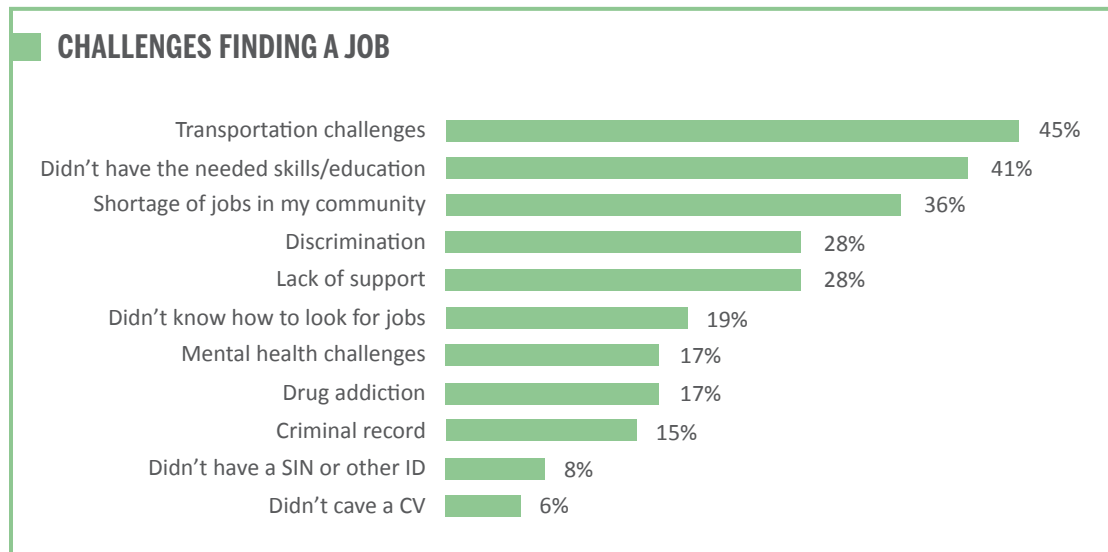


Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

EXPERIENCES ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT

All participants had experienced some difficulties in accessing or maintaining employment. Although there were regional differences in the type and availability of employment, there were many common themes that emerged across the province.



Note: Participants could mark all responses that applied.



In the focus groups, youth expanded on the barriers they identified on the survey and identified additional barriers not captured in the survey:

Lack of accessible employment programs: Youth often could not access employment programs, for example because of long waiting lists, age limits, a difficult interview process, and not having completed a Grade 10 education.

Transportation: Most employment opportunities which were available to youth, such as construction and food industry jobs, started before public transit was running or required them to have their own vehicle or a driver's licence.

“ You need a job to get a vehicle, but you need a vehicle to get a job. ”

Interpersonal skills and self-confidence: Many youth felt they did not have the interpersonal skills or confidence to apply for and successfully work at a job. For example, they felt they did not have the skills or confidence to approach a potential employer even to request an application form. They also said they would not know how to behave in an interview. Youth also expressed feeling unprepared and unable to manage relationships with customers, co-workers and their supervisor.

Personal motivation and peer influence: Participants spoke of getting demoralized after taking qualifications and attending employment programs. They felt that however qualified they were, there would always be another candidate with more experience. Additionally, if their friends were not working, finding the motivation to look for employment was difficult.

Restricted opportunities: Youth felt that there were no opportunities to get anything except a minimum wage job because when other positions became available, many qualified and experienced older people applied. This situation meant that youth did not get the opportunity to be interviewed.

Needing qualifications: For many, the cost of education made it unattainable to them. Even when they had achieved their GED, youth noted that an undergraduate degree was often the minimum requirement for positions where a degree was not necessary to do the job (e.g., cashier).

“ It's like you don't have experience so you can't get a job, so then you can't get experience. ”

Employers discriminating against youth: Many youth felt they had been discriminated against because of their age or their appearance. Some groups of youth felt they experienced additional discrimination. These included youth who identified as Aboriginal, LGBTQ2S, young parents, those with a disability, those with a criminal record, or youth who had challenges with substance use and addictions.

“**Employers like hiring older people because it’s a time saver, you only have to explain the job, not explain how to have a job.**”

Need identification, a phone, and an address: Homeless youth in particular talked about feeling caught in a position where they could not get a job because they had no address or phone, but could not get these because they had no job to pay for them. Several were unsure about how to get identification and what steps they should take to get a SIN card.

Access to job postings: Some youth said they did not know where to start looking as there seemed to be few available jobs listed in their local newspaper. Others found it difficult to use online sources because they did not have regular computer access, were not comfortable with computers, or had literacy challenges.



ADDITIONAL BARRIERS FACED BY SOME GROUPS OF YOUTH

While youth shared many common experiences in terms of barriers to employment, some youth also faced additional challenges. These included:

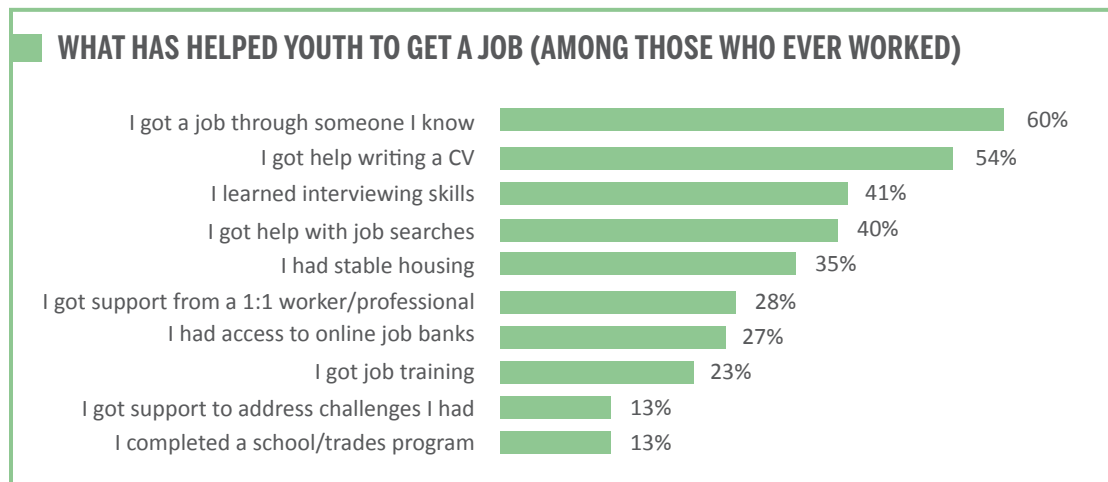
- Child care responsibilities and prohibitively expensive child care.
- The lack of a stable home and positive role models who were employed, among youth with government care experience.
- Poverty, which prevented youth from buying necessary work uniforms and supplies, or from having sufficient food to have the energy to work.
- Health conditions and disabilities such as cognitive challenges, mental health issues, behavioural problems and physical disabilities.
- The legacy of a criminal record, lack of legal work experience, and peer pressure to make money illegally, among youth with a history of conflict with the law.
- Youth in rural communities often faced the choice of staying in their community with no employment prospects or leaving their home and family to find employment.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Survey participants with employment experience identified various factors that have helped them to find a job, and most commonly listed getting a job through someone they knew (e.g., a relative).

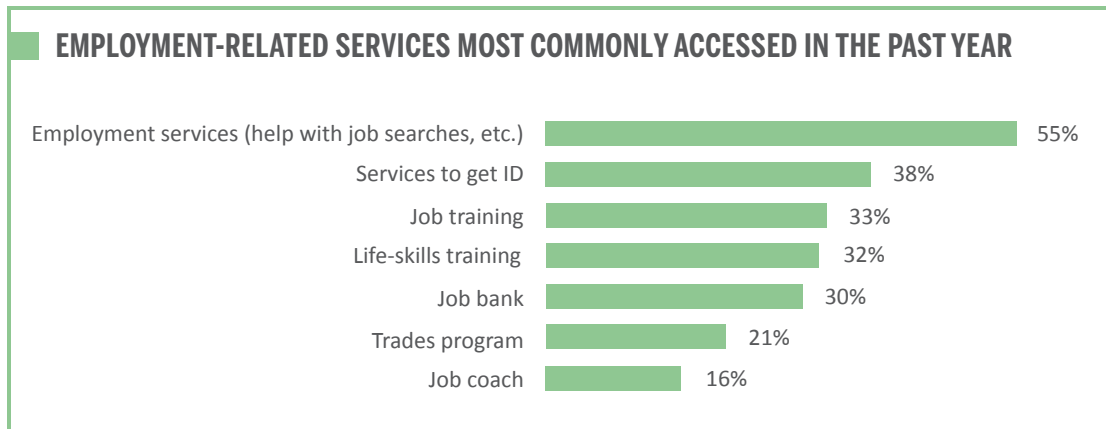
working to indicate that learning interviewing skills helped them to find a job (56% vs. 30%), as well as getting support from a one-on-one worker or other professional (38% vs. 20%), and having stable housing (49% vs. 25%).

Among those who ever worked, participants who were currently employed were more likely than those not currently



Note: Participants could mark all responses that applied.

Youth reported accessing a variety of employment-related services in the past year. They most commonly accessed employment services or supports that assisted with job searches, writing a résumé, and other areas relating to finding a job. The majority of youth who accessed services found them helpful.



Note: Participants could mark all responses that applied.

In the focus groups, youth felt that the most helpful employment supports they had received had been youth-focused, individualized to their specific needs, and tailored to the jobs available locally. Helpful programs extended beyond creating a résumé or sharing job postings, and did not assume youth knew how to tackle an application form or job interview.

Youth's most common complaint about the employment supports they had accessed was that they had wanted to learn how to cope with anger and have healthy professional relationships but these topics had not been part of the program. They were appreciative of programs that offered the

services of a career counsellor who could relate to young people, would listen to their questions, and would talk through the available job opportunities and what was required in them. Having an assigned worker at an employment program was helpful for youth who wanted to build a relationship and work with the same individual to learn skills to access employment.

Participants spoke highly of employment programs that were located in buildings with other supports they were accessing. They also appreciated programs that allowed them to build related skills, such as getting their driver's licence.

Casual work programs were particularly welcomed by youth struggling with homelessness, mental health issues and substance use problems because they allowed youth to work when they were able but did not pressure them to come in on days when they were not up to it.

Aboriginal youth were appreciative of programs that focused on Aboriginal participants. They felt these programs created a safer and more welcoming atmosphere for them to learn and participate in, and where they could build relationships and a support network.

In addition to specific employment programs, some youth had learned skills to access employment at school in Planning classes and through pre-employment programs.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT

Youth had often needed the support of a youth worker, social worker, drug and alcohol counsellor or family member to supplement what was offered at an employment support service. They had also received practical support from these individuals, such as rides to interviews, opportunities to practice interview skills, and assistance to write and print up their résumé.

Youth who received financial support through Persons with Disabilities and MCFD's Agreements with Young Adults programs reported that the funding allowed them to pursue the qualifications they needed to secure employment in their field of interest.

Programs like Katimavik were considered useful as employment preparation programs. The program taught job and interpersonal skills and was considered to have a good reputation which would impress employers.

YOUTH'S SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT:

- Offer one-on-one individualized support to help youth search for and apply for a job.
- Offer employment support services on a drop-in basis rather than only by appointment.
- Offer paid job placements where youth can be introduced to different potential careers and can learn employment skills.
- Keep youth and adult employment supports separate.
- Assist youth to buy clothes for an interview or to buy a uniform and tools if these are required for a job.
- Have a place where youth can sign up for odd jobs as a way to get employment experience.
- Assist youth to get picture identification.
- Have employment centres and agencies like Income Assistance work more closely together to support youth into employment.
- Offer incentives to employers to hire and train local youth.
- Ensure youth in care have a stable home and a supportive adult in their lives who is employed. This person can act as a role model who can demonstrate to youth the benefits of working.
- Offer child care which is safe and affordable, and assist young people to access child care benefits.
- Offer job fairs targeted at different groups of youth, so they would know that the employer would not discriminate against them.





Training programs and skill development

Youth also made suggestions for increasing access to training programs and employment related skill development:

- Reduce waiting lists for current employment programs.
 - Offer youth-specific job training programs in every community (without adult participants).
 - Offer employment training that reflects the employment opportunities available locally.
 - Advertise job shops and other employment services where youth will see them including at the mall, the gym, and grocery stores.
 - Pay youth minimum wage while they train. This will ensure they can meet their basic needs.
- Regularly offer different courses of varying lengths at each employment centre so that youth can find a program to meet their needs.
 - Ensure career classes are mandatory and are delivered across different educational settings and to different age ranges. (They are currently an optional class in some school settings.)
 - Ensure school Planning classes teach life skills and social skills which are useable in the workplace and at an interview.
 - Teach youth how to file their taxes and similar skills they need when they are employed.
 - Assist youth with literacy challenges to undertake hands-on employment training for positions.

EXPERIENCES MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

BARRIERS TO MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

“ Getting a job in this economy isn't the hardest part, it's keeping a job.

Seventy-three percent of survey participants who had ever worked reported having left a job. Reasons included quitting because they were not treated fairly (36%), because they felt the job was not interesting or meaningful (27%), or they found another job that paid better (25%). Twenty-six percent reported they had been terminated (fired) by their employer, while 22% had been laid off, and 21% indicated that their contract ended.

Youth with mental health challenges or behavioural problems were more likely to have quit a job because they felt they were not treated fairly. Youth with substance use addictions were more likely than their peers without such addictions to have been fired from a job (52% vs. 20%).

Many of the barriers identified by youth for accessing employment were repeated when asked about maintaining employment. However, some were specific to maintaining employment and were common across different groups of youth in the province.

Low wages: Most youth with employment experience only had experience with low paid work, such as in retail, food service or construction. Experiences also included being paid below minimum wage, being let go just before they were entitled to a pay rise and having wages and tips withheld from them.

Staying motivated: Youth reported that it was difficult to stay motivated to attend a low paying job which was often monotonous. The routine of getting up for work five days a week was a challenge to many youth who had struggled to attend school or who had dropped out altogether.

“ I'm not passionate about coffee and doughnuts.

Poor working conditions: Youth felt that employers would hire young people to do jobs no one else wanted, such as heavy manual work. Many felt that employers would give them just enough hours so they were under full-time, or make them take breaks in the day so they would not qualify for over-time. This meant that youth would not qualify for certain benefits and could not apply for EI if they lost their job.

Shift patterns: Youth felt they often got the worst shifts because they were the newest employees. Challenges committing to those shifts included changing circumstances (such as moving), no consistent schedule, and transportation not running when they were trying to get to or from their job.

““ **You never have the same schedule three weeks in a row.**

Relationships with co-workers: Challenges with communication skills, professional boundaries, and conflict resolution skills were barriers to maintaining employment. Youth talked about not feeling respected by co-workers and not knowing how to deal with different colleagues' personalities. Youth also did not understand or know how to set workplace boundaries.

““ **It wasn't the money that made me quit, it was the people.**

Harassment: Harassment was particularly common among female youth who reported being sexually harassed in a wide range of job positions. Perpetrators of the harassment had included supervisors, business owners, co-workers and customers.

Hostile work environment: These were a particular concern in the restaurant trade. Youth also reported increased hostility if co-workers found out about their history of addiction or other challenges. There was also a lack of training and instruction, which made it difficult for the youth to complete the tasks required of their position.

““ **The younger you are the more you're belittled in your job.**



Safety concerns: Youth spoke about working in unsafe environments and felt that they could not raise their concerns because they would be let go, particularly during their probationary period. They felt that on the surface, places said they followed safety guidelines but unofficially they pressured workers to work quickly and ignore basic safety requirements. Participants felt safety rules which were applied to older people were ignored by their supervisors when it came to youth.

Not getting proper training created safety risks for youth. Most participants felt that employers did not have time to teach young people on the job, even though they looked for people who were willing to learn.



They want you to do more, faster so you take risks to be fast.

Seasonal and short-term employment: For youth in some communities, employment was not available year round. Youth in tourist resorts in particular spoke of the challenges of maintaining a job. This was a challenge not only in the winter, when there were many layoffs, but also in the summer months when there was an influx of non-local people ready to work for lower wages than the youth could live on. They felt that if they made a mistake or refused to take a shift they were replaced by someone else.

There were also examples given of employers hiring youth on back-to-back short term contracts but never making them full-time employees. This meant youth were responsible for paying their own income tax at the end of the year which was challenging for young people.

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS FACED BY SOME GROUPS OF YOUTH

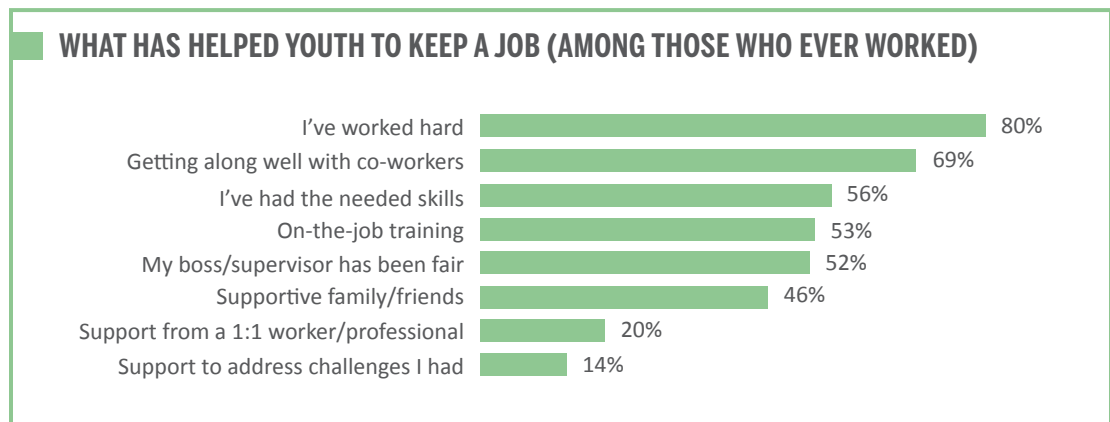
Government care experience: Being in government care negatively affected youth’s ability to maintain employment because they were often moved from one foster home to another, which meant they could no longer keep their job. The lack of structure created by not having parents or other family members around to ensure they attended school meant that youth got into a pattern of behaviour that made it difficult to deal with routine. One said: “People aren’t supported to thrive in life according to the Ministry, only to survive.”

Pregnancy: This was identified as a barrier to maintaining employment. Youth felt employers discriminated against them for being pregnant or because they were no longer able to perform their job requirements because they were too tired.



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Youth who completed a survey identified factors that had helped them to keep a job, and the most common were working hard and getting along well with co-workers.



Note: Participants could mark all responses that applied.

In the focus groups, youth who were currently employed were asked to identify supports that helped them to keep their current position. Many listed skills they had learned, such as communication, developing positive workplace friendships, and teamwork. Others mentioned a liveable wage, opportunities for advancement, and having their basic needs met (such as housing and food).

Youth who were employed in jobs they found menial or boring reported that having a plan helped to keep them employed. For some youth, that plan was simply to have a period of stable paid employment and get a good reference on their résumé. Whereas

for others, it involved working with their employer towards advancement within their workplace or to develop transferable skills.

Whether youth were looking to advance within their job or to simply maintain the position they had, they found it helpful and motivating when they got the opportunity to check in regularly with their supervisor. This either reassured them that they were doing a good job or gave them the opportunity to improve aspects of their work that they would not otherwise know needed improvement.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

Challenges getting along with co-workers, employers and customers was identified as one of the major barriers to getting and keeping a job. It was therefore not surprising that when asked about the supports which were helping youth to stay employed, participants mainly focused on relationship building.

For youth with mental health concerns, behavioural problems or a history of family problems, ongoing counselling had helped them to learn to work through issues and to separate their work life from the other pressures they were facing.

Similarly, having an ongoing support worker ensured they had someone they could speak to if they were having a bad day, or who could remind them of skills to manage conflict in the workplace. This support helped to prevent them from getting so overwhelmed that they quit.

For many youth, high school or post-secondary institutions such as Douglas College and BCIT had offered support for them to learn the social skills necessary to keep a job.



Counselling can be helpful. It matters how you treat customers and co-workers. You have to be able to smile.

YOUTH'S SUGGESTIONS FOR MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

“ Get it into kids’ heads that work and school really mean something.

Participants suggested the need for services that supported youth to transition from school into employment and that also continued through youth’s early years in the job market. They agreed there needed to be more of an emphasis on teaching youth the skills required to keep a job, which one youth described as “Knowledge programs that show you how to keep a job, like if you get angry to walk away but not walk out.”

Other suggestions were:

- Teach youth organizational and budgeting skills so they do not get overwhelmed trying to juggle their job and other responsibilities. This way they can keep on top of tasks such as laundry and purchasing transit tickets.
- Assist youth with accessing the practical supports that they need, such as an alarm clock and access to laundry facilities.

- Offer funding to youth who are supporting themselves in a low paying job to allow them to upgrade their skills. For example, offer time off or financial support to help youth without a GED to upgrade while they are employed.
- Employers who hire youth with learning disabilities should undergo training to understand the challenges these youth face, and the best way to support them in their job.

“ Don’t give up on us, we learn differently. Be patient, take time and show me.

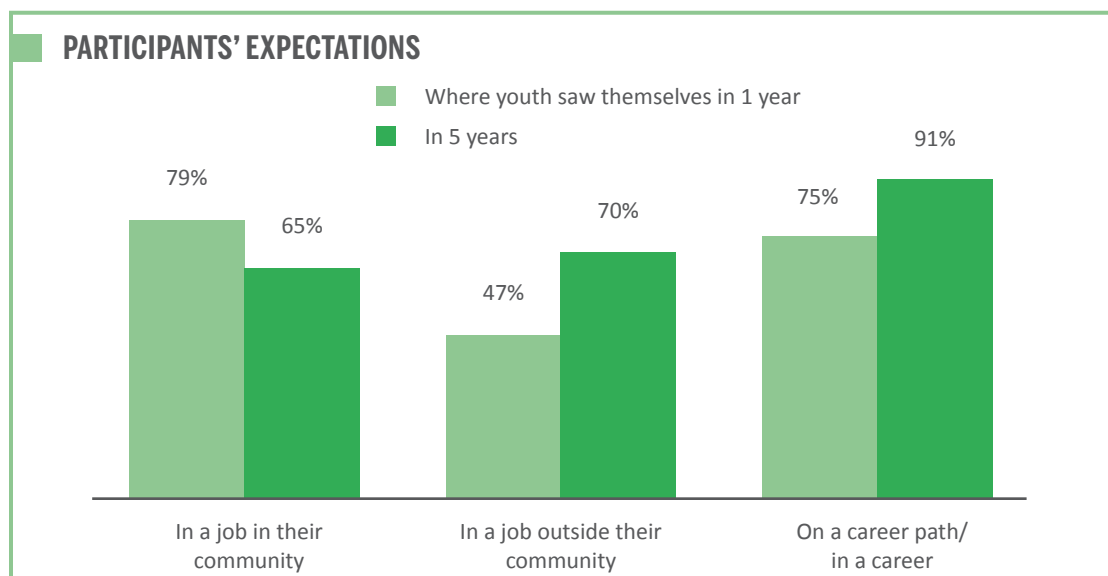
LOOKING FORWARD

When asked on the survey where they saw themselves in a year, most youth envisioned having a job in their community, being in school or graduated from school, and on their way to having a career or in a career. A little under half (47%) expected to have a job outside their community (57% of males vs. 33% of females). However, when asked where they saw themselves in five years, youth were less likely to anticipate having a job within their home community, and were more likely to foresee having a job outside their community and to be on a career path (or in a career).

In the focus groups, the vast majority of youth remained optimistic that they would find well paid employment in a field that interested them. Their plans included

returning to education, taking specialist training and moving to communities where opportunities were perceived to be more abundant. Many felt that this would happen for them when they were more financially stable and/or when they were connected to a supportive adult who could help them navigate entrance requirements and other hurdles.

Almost none were interested in owning their own business. The primary reasons were not wanting to manage employees or to deal with workplace conflict, as well as not feeling qualified to run a business or not feeling that they could afford to do so.




Note: Participants could mark all responses that applied.

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL PROGRAMS

Five programs that had helped focus group participants to overcome barriers to employment were selected as case studies. The programs all target different populations of youth and have different specialties but also address the core common barriers that marginalized young people face. All provided individualized mentorship and support throughout the program, as well as the opportunity for youth to learn practical skills in an employment setting.

1. BLADERUNNERS

BladeRunners is an employment program designed to assist out-of-school, unemployed, at-risk youth between the ages of 15 and 30 to enter into the labour force. The program is open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth and includes Aboriginal cultures, practices, and traditions within the program.

 **[BladeRunners] is really good, it helped me get back to work when I needed it.**

Participants are taught life skills such as budgeting, time management, and conflict management, as well as employability skills such as résumé/cover letter development, interview skills, professional conduct and workplace communication. Participants gain

provincially certified skills, practical knowledge, and documented work experience. They receive support to find and maintain appropriate work placements.

Evaluation findings noted the financial incentive combined with the support of a mentor was helpful in ensuring youth stayed engaged in the program.

Elements of the program youth found most helpful included receiving a stipend during training and earning a wage during the work experience component of the program; gaining certificates such as WHMIS, Food Safe and First Aid; receiving financial support for transportation and equipment; and getting hands on training as well as life skills training and emotional support. Also, some Aboriginal youth felt safer and more engaged because of the Aboriginal focus.

2. CAREER PATH

Career Path is operated in the Lower Mainland by PLEA Community Services. The program targets youth aged 15 to 18 who are gang involved or at high risk of becoming gang involved. The program places youth into a full-time ten week job placement where they receive intensive one-on-one support and supervision from Career Path staff. Employers also receive training and support.

Youth are placed in a meaningful job placement that matches their career interests. They receive on-the-job training, gain certificates that relate directly to their job placement, and earn minimum wage.

Evaluation results indicated that the program was targeting the intended group of youth and that the majority had not been engaged in legal employment previously. Most youth reported improvements in various work-related skills because of their participation in the program (as well as improvements in other areas). Many were successfully employed in legal jobs following their involvement in the program, and saw themselves on a career path because of the program.

Elements of the program youth found most helpful included starting their work placement immediately, receiving minimum wage, receiving relevant work-related certificates, having a supportive employer, and on-going support from a PLEA worker.

 **[It was] one of the best work programs I've been in.**

3. GASTOWN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Gastown Vocational Training is a Vancouver-based employment centre. It provides support to young people with mental health to find employment or enter into school programs.

 **It's been the most helpful, outside of recovery.**

The program provides one-on-one support; group counseling; job skills training, such as résumé preparation and practice with interviews; and job placements or job shadowing. The program focuses on addressing mental health concerns that may be keeping youth from finding and maintaining employment. The program is flexible in length, tailoring the pace and duration to the needs of the individual.

The parts of the program youth found most helpful in negotiating barriers to employment included short and achievable work placements (8 weeks); offering a diverse range of employment opportunities; providing support for mental health challenges; and the way the program is tailored to youth's individual needs.

4. RUTLAND SENIOR SECONDARY PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

This program, located in Kelowna, is designed for students aged 15 and older who struggle academically and are interested in developing job-related skills. Youth alternate a week in school with a week of unpaid work experience. Upon completion of the program, students obtain an Evergreen School Leaving Certificate. Work placements last a minimum of four weeks, after which youth can change jobs if they wish, giving them the opportunity to try a variety of jobs with different employers.

“ It gets you references for jobs you like.

Youth participants appreciated that they can learn valuable skills and gain experience in a variety of employment areas without leaving school, that they gain references for their résumé, and make connections in their field of interest.

5. STREET YOUTH JOB ACTION (SYJA)

SYJA at Directions Youth Services Centre in Vancouver supports at-risk and homeless youth to gain employment skills and experience through paid work.

For four hours every day, youth are paid to do jobs such as garbage removal, graffiti paint-over, poster removal, needle sweeps/condom pick-up and disposal, event clean up, and other community enhancement services.

Youth liked that the program is low barrier and flexible. They appreciated learning about punctuality, teamwork, a good work ethic, and communication. They also liked gaining experience that enhances their résumé, and that the program includes the option of working toward becoming a Team Leader.

“ If you have a bad day or if you don't show up you will still be able to work when you are ready.



OTHER PROGRAMS

Other examples of programs that helped youth to negotiate the barriers to employment included:

- **ACE-It program**, which is an introductory trades program.
- **Custody Centre Work Program**, which allows youth to use their time in custody to build their work skills.
- **Frog Hollow Youth Employment Centre**, which offers youth a caseworker and one-on-one help with employment preparation.
- **Get Youth Working program**, which connects youth to jobs by providing employers with an incentive to hire youth.
- **Jumpstart**, which is a 12 week program that allows youth to earn wages while learning about finding and keeping a job and gaining interview skills.
- **Milieu**, which is a program that offers youth volunteer opportunities to get work experience. After a “trial run” at the job, the employer will decide whether or not they will hire that person.
- **Mission Possible**, which is a six-month transition program to support people experiencing homelessness into work.
- **Work BC**, which provides resources for youth to look at job postings and provides assistance with writing résumés and cover letters. They also put on a three-day program that youth said helped with interview skills.



POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Youth were asked to design their ideal employment program. The ideas generated by participants were integrated with data from the case studies to create a potential employment support pilot project.

The proposed program included the following elements:

- Six to 12 months in duration (with some flexibility)
- Served youth aged 15-24 (with some flexibility)
- Offered a training wage/subsidized travel/necessary equipment and clothing
- Provided a mentor/key worker who worked with youth on an on-going basis to support them with their individual challenges and goals
- Provided additional support a youth may need, such as child care and learning modifications
- Offered concrete and relevant employment skills
- Offered a realistic assessment of available jobs locally
- Offered interpersonal skills training
- Offered a variety of work placements and other hands-on experience



- Offered the opportunity to gain qualifications relevant to youth's field of interest and to available local jobs
- Taught skills relating to finding employment, such as résumé writing, interview skills, and how to apply qualifications and skills
- Staffed by professionals skilled in working with vulnerable youth
- Minimal entrance requirements and rolling admission dates

Some of the components of this potential employment program would not meet the needs of all groups of youth who participated in this project. For example, some youth were not able to commit to a program of six to 12 months duration due to mental health challenges or homelessness, and these youth would benefit from a program with a more individualized and flexible structure. This suggested program would therefore be recommended only as one of a range of options.

The full report is available on the BC Centre for Employment Excellence website at: <http://www.cfeebc.org/research-innovation/youth-employment/study-vulnerable-youth>.



McCreary Centre Society



McCreary Centre Society

The **McCreary Centre Society** is a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education and community-based projects. Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to identify and address the health needs of young people in the province.

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