

2020

YOUTH + HOUSING + SURREY

A summary of the findings from the Connecting Community to Surrey Youth Aging Out of Care Project's 2019 Youth Housing Survey.

THE CONTEXT

Of the approximately 700 youth in BC who leave government care on their 19th birthday each year, anywhere from 50 to 70 youth “aging out” every year call Surrey their home. In 2016, the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition identified youth who had “aged out” of the government care system as a key demographic to support, noting the increased risk of poverty for these young people. They set out on a mission to “wrap the community around youth”, and radically rethink the ways youth are supported by the broader community as they transition from the care of the Ministry of Child and Family Development into independence when they turn 19.

Over three years, the Coalition led work in three areas: research, building community, and youth leadership development. Project activities were supported by the collaboration of diverse community members and key stakeholders through an overall Project Planning Committee, a number of distinct Working Groups, and the Youth Advisory Committee.

THE SURVEY

Bringing together service providers from youth-serving agencies, along with other key stakeholders, the Preventing Poverty working group completed research on housing models and funding structures, advocated for rent supplements for youth, and supported the development of a housing resource list for young people.

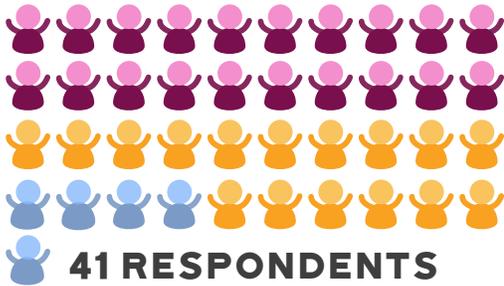
Complementing the general research on existing youth housing models, we also developed a youth housing survey, which was completed by 41 Surrey youth with care experience. The objective of the survey was to get a sense of preferences youth have for their living arrangements to inform potential housing developments in the future.

Between September and December 2019, members of the Preventing Poverty working group shared the survey with their colleagues and youth they work with directly. Respondents were given the option of completing a written survey, or submitting responses via an online form. All respondents were given a monetary gift card for their participation.

While the responses are not statistically significant, they do provide some insight on what youth in/from care need and prefer, in terms of housing options after they turn 19.



THE RESPONDENTS



- 5 between the ages 13-15
- 16 between the ages 16-18
- 20 between the ages 19-25



currently in government care



respondents, all between the ages of 19-25, identified as a parent/caregiver.



respondents reported they currently owned a pet.

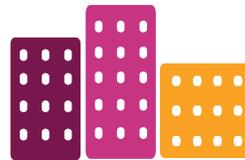


respondents said they were connected to one or more youth-serving agencies: Options, PCRS, FRAFCA, SOS Childrens Village, Aunt Leah's, MCFD, VACFSS, or Sources.

Only 6 respondents said they were not connected to one or more of the local youth-serving agencies, likely because surveys were primarily distributed through agencies.

THE PREFERENCES

Respondents were asked to rank their preferred housing options (choices included independent/alone, with a roommate(s), room share in a house, with biological/chosen family, with staff support, other).



- 41%** respondents chose "living independently/ alone" as their preferred housing option;
- 29%** of respondents chose "with a roommate" as their first option;
- 24%** chose "with biological/chosen family" as their first option.

Of the **41%** of respondents who chose "living independently/ alone" as their preferred housing option, more than half did not rate any other housing options, demonstrating a clear preference or need to live independently. **65%** of the respondents who chose independent housing were respondents between the ages 19 - 25.

Age Matters



Approximately 50% of youth aged 19 - 25 said they would prefer to live alone. In contrast, in the 16 - 18 age range, there was no consistency in responses; each available option was chosen as the preferred option at least once.

Over half of the respondents who chose "with a roommate" as their first option stated they could not afford to live alone, or that having a roommate decreased the cost of housing.

Respondents identifying as parents either chose living independently or living with their biological/chosen family as preferred options, signalling that group living is not desirable for youth who are caregivers.

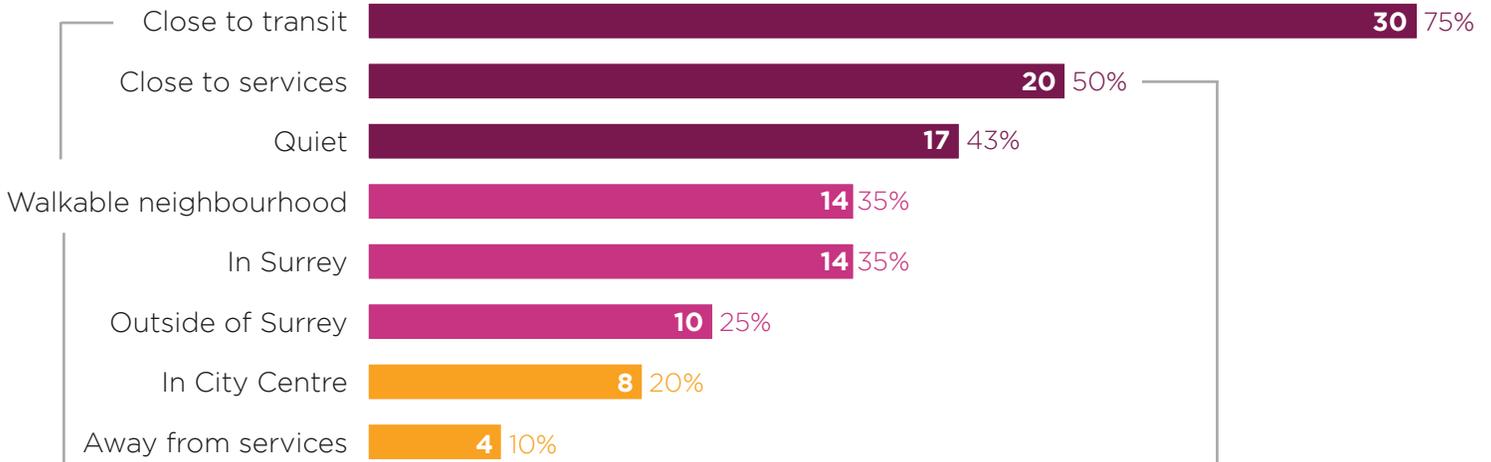
When asked why they ranked the options the way they did, the written responses fell under the following 4 general categories:

- ✓ Preference to be alone
- ✓ Wanting company
- ✓ Perception of safety
- ✓ Cost



What is important to you in terms of housing location?

Check all that apply and add any we missed.



Both the 16 -18 and 19 - 25 respondent groups widely selected "close to transit/walkable" as important preferences.

Age Matters

There is a marked difference between the number of 16 -18 year olds and 19 - 25 year olds who selected "close to services". It is important to note that we did not define "services", and could have been interpreted differently by youth.

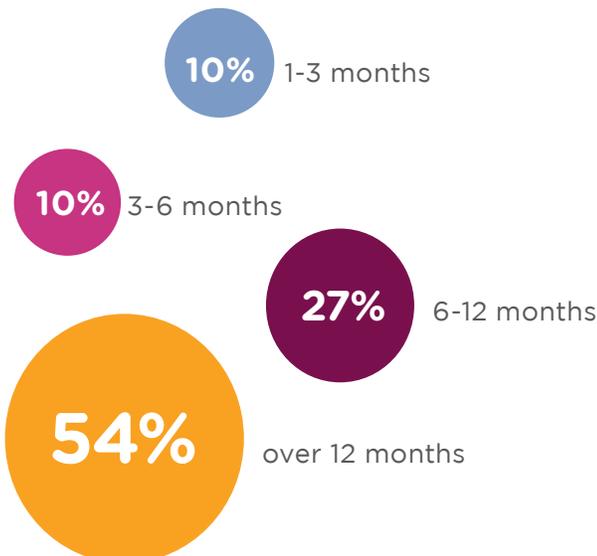


70% of the 19 - 25 age group selected "close to services" as important, and only 3 respondents selected "away from services" as a preference.



In the 16 - 18 respondent group, 31% selected "close to services" as a preference. This may speak to the fact that youth are more closely connected with paid adults or adults in the care system while 18 and under, but when they turn 19, the ability to access youth-serving or non-profit agencies for services becomes increasingly important.

Preferred length of stay in a housing program:

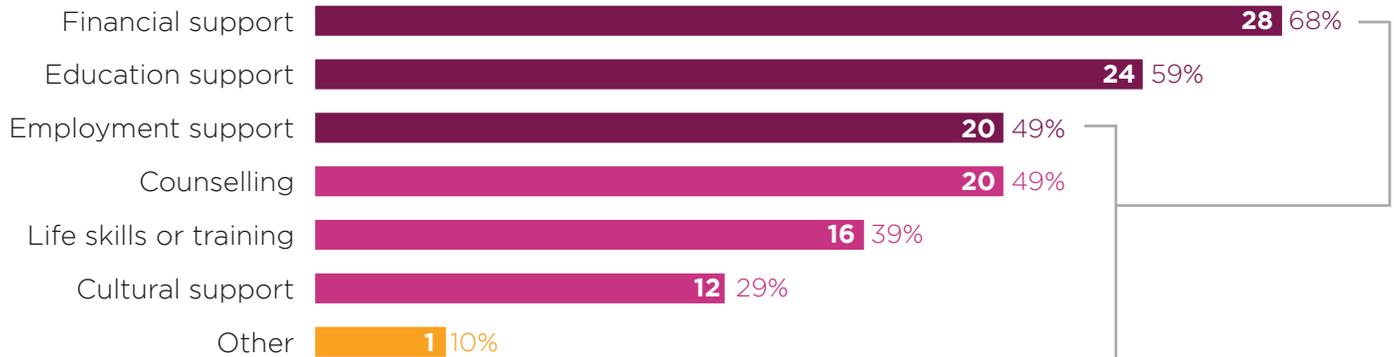


THE NEED

Preferred services offered through housing

What services would you like to be offered through your housing?

Check all that apply and add any we missed.



Age Matters

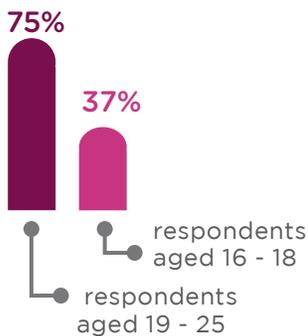
There was a significant difference, however, between these age groups for Education Support and Counselling. A similar difference appeared in support for Cultural Support.

Among a variety of possible reasons, this could be that youth aren't thinking about education support until they are older, or that youth 19+ have more of a need for counselling and cultural support as their access to support services decreases after they transition out of the care system.

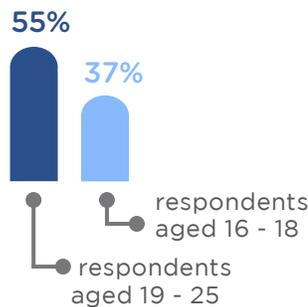
There was no pattern in the 13-15 range, with respondents selecting a wide range of services.

Both the 16 - 18 and 19 - 25 respondent groups selected Employment Support and Financial Support at high numbers. (68% and 75% respectively for Financial Support and 56% and 50% respectively for Employment Support).

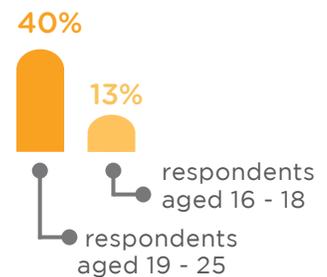
EDUCATION SUPPORT



COUNSELLING

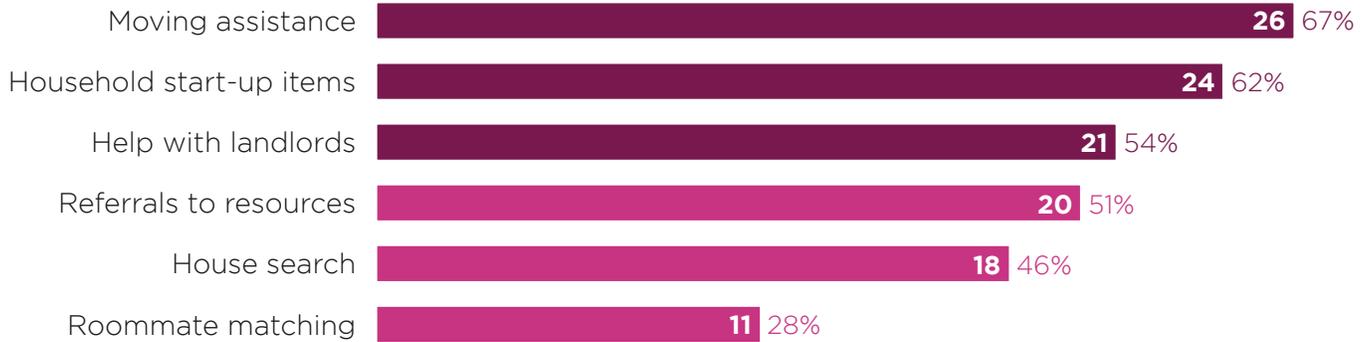


CULTURAL SUPPORT



What would help you feel more confident in regards to housing?

Check all that apply and add any we missed.



What does home mean to you?



TRISTAN MILLER 2020