



California Child Welfare
Co-Investment Partnership



California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study

Responses from Youth at Age 21

December 2018

The CalYOUTH Study is an ongoing study designed to evaluate the impact of extended foster care (EFC) on youth transitioning to adulthood. Since 2012, the study has been tracking the outcomes of youth at ages 16-17, 19, and 21. Researchers are currently preparing to conduct interviews with this cohort at age 23.

Timeline of Extended Foster Care and the CalYOUTH Study:

- 2008** Federal government passes the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act
- 2010** California adopts the extension of foster care through age 21 with the passage of Assembly Bill 12, The California Fostering Connections to Success Act
- 2012** The law becomes effective on January 1, 2012 and research for the CalYOUTH Study is initiated
- 2014** Results from first wave of study participants are published
727 youth 16-17 years old are interviewed
- 2016** Results from the second wave of study participants are published
611 youth from the original cohort are interviewed at age 19
- 2018** Results from the third wave of interviews are published
616 youth from the original cohort are interviewed at age 21

CalYOUTH Objectives

By conducting this first-of-its-kind comprehensive study, CalYOUTH answers the following questions:

1. Does extending foster care past age 18 influence youth outcomes during the transition to adulthood?
2. What factors influence the types of support youth receive during the transition to adulthood in the context of extended foster care?
3. How do living arrangements and other services that result from extending foster care influence the relationship between extending care and youth outcomes?

Foster Youth at Age 21

Wave 3 Study Participants

616 youth completed Wave 3 interviews.

85% of the youth who completed the Wave¹ interview also completed Wave 3 interviews.

Emerging Themes

Despite the challenges youth experience after leaving care, many of the youth in the study remain optimistic about the future.

Most youth reported being “very optimistic” or “fairly optimistic” about their future. This is evidence of youth’s potential and resilience in spite of the challenges of the transition to adulthood.

Educational attainment is an important predictor of employment outcomes and earnings. Yet, even after making it to college, many foster youth continue to face challenges that impede their continued enrollment.

Foster youth enroll and persist in college at lower rates than their peers. One area of opportunity to improve enrollment and persistence rates is better informing youth about financial aid opportunities and campus support programs.

Gender, race, and ethnicity are factors that continually condition youths’ experiences in EFC.

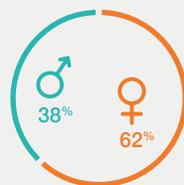
Understanding the different ways that these factors affect youth outcomes creates opportunities to improve equity in the child welfare system, and tailor services and programs to better serve youth from a wide variety of backgrounds and needs.

Demographic Highlights

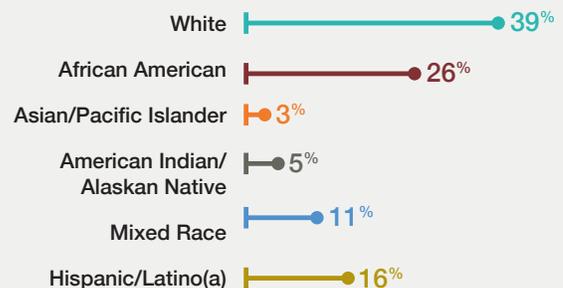
Foster Care Status at Time of 21st Birthday



Gender



Race and Ethnicity



¹ Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., Park, K., Harty, J., Feng, H., Torres-Garcia, A., & Sayed, S. (2018). *Findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of youth at age 21*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Key Findings

Foster Care Status

- Based on state administrative child welfare data and Wave 3 self-report data, the majority of youth surveyed (67.8%) remained in care until age 21.
- About 68 percent of youth who left care before age 21 reported that the main reason for leaving care was wanting to be on their own and having more freedom, and not wanting to deal with some aspect of the foster care system like caretakers and social workers.

Housing Stability

- Almost a quarter of youth (24.6%) reported being homeless (slept in a homeless shelter or a place where people were not meant to sleep because they had not place to sleep) for one night or longer since their last interview.
- Among those who had experienced homelessness, males reported being homeless more times than females.
- More than one-fifth of youth had been homeless five or more times.
- More than half of the youth who had been homeless reported being homeless for more than 30 days since their last interview.
- Youth who remained in care past age 18 were much less likely to have experienced homelessness while in extended foster care

Experiences in Care

- About two-thirds of respondents reported having at least 12 face-to-face visits with their case worker in the past year
- Phone contacts were less frequent; about 56% of youth spoke with the social worker on the phone 12 or more times in the past year
- A greater proportion of African American youth (8.1%) than White youth (0.4%) reported having zero visits during the last year.

- About two-thirds of young people “agreed,” “strongly agreed,” or “very strongly agreed” that they were lucky to have been placed in foster care.
- About 55 percent of youth “agreed,” “strongly agreed,” or “very strongly agreed” that they were generally satisfied with their experience in foster care.

Optimism about the Future

- Most youth responded being very optimistic about their personal hopes and goals for the future with 59.1% of youth responding that they were “very optimistic” and 32.8 responding “fairly optimistic”

Education

- Four in five youth had earned a high school diploma by the time they were interviewed.
- 21.6% of all youth had a vocational or job training certificate or license.
- 11.6% of youth were enrolled in school only at the time of the interview, 39.5% were employed only and 17.5% were both enrolled in school and employed.
- 31.4% of youth were neither enrolled in school nor employed.
- Among those enrolled in school, 67.5% of youth were using some form of scholarship, loan or financial aid to cover educational expenses
- However, only 39.9% of those with a high school credential every received the Chafee education and training voucher (ETV)
- 18% of those youth with a high school credential were not aware of the ETV program

The Impact of Extended Foster Care²

Each additional year in extended foster care was associated with the following outcomes:

	 8%	Increase in the probability that youth completed a high school credential
	 10-11%	Increase in youths' expected probability of enrolling in college
	 1.5 months	Increase in length of time, per year spent in extended foster care, that youth were employed between their 17-and 21st birthdays
	 \$404	Increase in the amount of money youth had in their bank accounts
	 42%	Increase in the odds that youth described a professional (e.g., caseworker, therapist, counselor, etc.) as a source of social support
	 \$700	Decrease in the amount of money received in need-based public assistance (CalFresh benefits)
	 12%	Decrease in the odds of experiencing additional economic hardship (like not being able to pay utility bills) experienced between the ages of 17 and 21
	 28%	Decrease in the odds of being homeless or couch-surfing between the ages of 17 and 21
	 28%	Decrease in the odds that youth became pregnant or got someone pregnant between the ages of 17 and 21
	 41%	Decrease in the odds that youth had been arrested between ages 17-21

What's Next

The CalYOUTH study team, the California Department of Social Services, the California Welfare Directors Association, and the study's philanthropic stakeholders have partnered to conduct Wave 4 of the CalYOUTH Study to measure the outcomes of the study youth at age 23. The objective remains to measure the impact of extended foster care on transition age youth, and to establish an evidence base to help determine the best policies and programs that ensure their success. Additionally, [CalYOUTH In the Loop](#) will conduct separate outreach to youth to establish and test feedback loop methods (i.e. through the use of online surveys, presentations and peer-to-peer outreach) through 2018 and early 2019.

Designed by Natalie Kitamura Design | Produced by *i.e.* communications
Full Report and Additional Materials can be found at:

www.chapinhall.org | www.co-invest.org

2 Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., & Park, S. (2018). *Report from CalYOUTH: Findings on the relationship between extended foster care and youth's outcomes at age 21*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.