EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL:
A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON ECONOMIC EQUITY IN EDMONTON

February 2022

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Report Designed by Yasmine Abdel Razek and Tania Ymbi

EYEEC
Edmonton Youth Economic
Ecosystem Collaborative

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We share our gratitude for the original inhabitants and their interconnectedness to this land, where we had the privilege to accomplish this research project. We acknowledge we are all treaty people on Treaty 6 Territory / Metis Region 4 and thus reap the benefits when so many historically and currently still do not. We celebrate and honor Indigenous worldview, culture, and research as legitimate ways of being and existing on this land.

"You cannot reconcile a relationship that never existed. There's no word in Cree for Reconciliation. Only "kwayskahstahsoowin" which means "setting things right." Giving our land back would set things right."

- Maria Campbell

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WHAT EYEEC IS

The Edmonton Youth Economic Ecosystem Collaborative (EYEEC) is a collaborative of members (individuals and organizations) working with youth and other stakeholders to improve economic conditions for young people (15-30 years) in Edmonton, especially youth facing barriers, by supporting changes to systems that will make it easier for youth to access and sustain meaningful employment or entrepreneurship opportunities.

Boys & Girls Clubs | Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area

COMMUNITIES UNITED
Building Prosperity Together

Edmonton

Skillcity Institute

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A partnership of the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service, The Family Centre and United Way of the Alberta Capital Region.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Youth Economic Ecosystem Collaborative (EYEEC) facilitated a youth engagement process in which youth were hired to conduct focus group sessions with Edmonton-area youth facing barriers to economic security. The intent was to hear the voices of groups typically underrepresented in engagements of this nature, including youth who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, newcomers/immigrants, persons of colour, and refugees, as well as youth in care and youth involved in the justice system. A considerable amount of information was gathered and analyzed by youth coordinators hired to lead these sessions. This report contextualizes their work by reviewing the findings through the conceptual lens represented in youth employment literature and formalizing the findings in a report structure.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT COORDINATORS

VICTOR ADEOYE
Youth Engagement Coordinator

I am a recent graduate from the University of Alberta. I majored in sociology and minored in psychology. My favorite part of this project was being able to create space for young people to share their experiences in the world of work and employment. I think it is important that we not only listen to these stories but also use them as a guide to change policies and increase opportunities for young people in gaining meaningful employment.

MARINA CASAVANT
Youth Engagement Coordinator

I am a recent graduate from MacEwan University with a degree in Honours Psychology, and a minor in Creative Writing. I am passionate about working with youth and research and is excited about connecting with youth to help make a positive impact in Edmonton. Through this process of engaging with youth, I have seen the importance of people sharing their experiences with one another and how empowering that can be.

YASMINE ABDEL RAZEK
Youth Engagement Coordinator & EYEEC Collaborative Member

I recently graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (Honors) with a minor in Linguistics. Throughout this process, I have learned a lot about what engaging in meaningful community work entails and how to achieve big results, collaboration is essential. I am so grateful to have had the privilege of being entrusted with young people's experiences and to have worked alongside a great team.

TANIA YMBI
Youth Engagement Coordinator & EYEEC Collaborative Member

I completed a degree in Indigenous Studies with a minor in political science from Concordia University in Montreal. I also completed a diploma in legal administrative assistant from Robertson College in Edmonton. I'm forever grateful for the opportunity to have worked on this project alongside the amazing youth coordinators, supervisors, and youth participants that made this a success. I hope that the findings found in this booklet will be a catalyst for meaningful change in the employment sphere.

FUNDING PARTNERS

EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Edmonton

Alberta

Government of Canada   Gouvernement du Canada
Canada

To support the project, EYEEC sought the participation of 19 youth-serving organizations in Edmonton, of which 14 agreed to participate (see Appendix A for the list of organizations). 140 youth participated in focus group sessions. Of these, researchers captured the ages of 124 participants, the gender identity of 136 participants, and the group identity of 134 participants. The known ages ranged from 14-30, with the distribution shown in Figure 1.
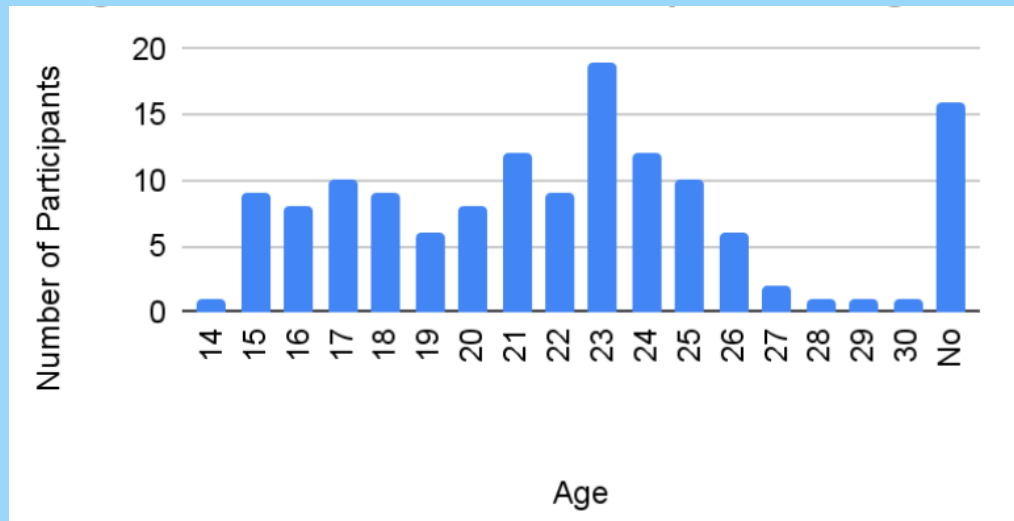

Figure 1. Number of participants and their corresponding ages.

As illustrated in Figure 2, about 51% of participants identified as female, 39% as male, 1% as Two-Spirit, 4% as non-binary, and 1% preferred not to say. There are no data for 3% of participants regarding gender identity.
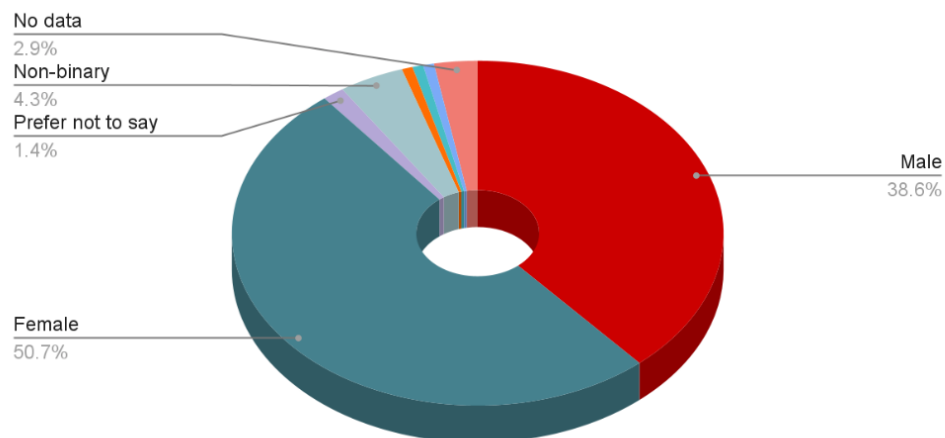

No data
2.9%
Non-binary
4.3%
Prefer not to say
1.4%
Male
38.6%
Female
50.7%

Figure 2. Participants' gender identification.

YOUTH

A total of 12 (9%) participants identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, 16 (11%) as Indigenous, 87 (62%) as a person of colour, 22 (16%) as a newcomer/immigrant, and 3 (2%) as a refugee.
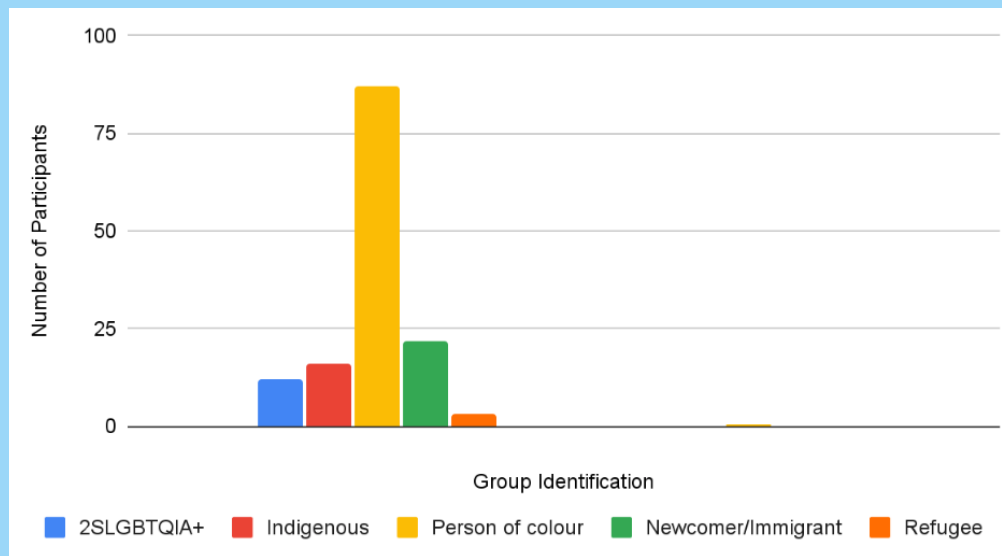
Figure 3. Number of participants and the groups they represent.

OUR METHODS

Four Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs) conducted thirty, two-hour focus group sessions and five peer interviews between September 14 and October 26, 2021. Two of the focus groups were held in person, the remainder were virtual. A capacity-building presentation was provided for each session to increase knowledge of youth resources in the community. Participants were compensated for their time and effort with a $50 value gift card.

QUESTIONS

There were ten questions, as listed below. The number of questions asked depended on the group's size and the extent of the discussion. Answers were recorded in point-form.

Opener: What does meaningful employment/work mean to you?

1. Are there aspects of your experience related to employment that you have found challenging? Why were those aspects challenging?

2. Think/reflect on your first job experience/volunteer experience/leadership role; what helped you get that job? What factors hindered you from getting your first job? (What factors make it difficult for you to obtain your first job?)

3. How has the current Covid-19 pandemic impacted your employment/career goals? (How has it impacted your future career goals?) (What are your feelings about stepping into your dream career at this time?)

4. Have you talked yourself out of applying for a job? If so, why? Have you talked yourself out of an opportunity? Are there any external factors that would hinder you from applying for an opportunity?

5. Think and reflect on past interviews you had with employers. Do you feel like you were able to show off your skills, education, past work experience? What do you find challenging during your interview? (What hindered you from showing off your skills)

6. Can you tell us about your most fun/rewarding job experience? If you don't have previous job experience, please feel free to share about rewarding volunteer or educational experiences as well.

The following were asked if time was available in the session:

7. Do you feel like you have the resources/skills/networks to pursue entrepreneurship as a young person? If you feel less confident in this pursuit, what would be your reason?

8. What is the most important thing you look for when applying for a job or volunteer position?

9. In navigating the employment world, do you feel like you have been able to progress or develop your skills?

INITIAL DATA ANALYSIS

The focus group responses were categorized on a question-by-question basis. All responses to a question were reviewed by the YECs. Key ideas were captured in phrases that could be applied to several participants' responses but that were also very close to the participants' wording. For example, consider a participant mentioning "being passionate about your work" and others describe needing to have work "you enjoy," "that applies to your interests," and that "needs to be important to your life." These responses would fit under the general phrase "being passionate about what you do."

The general phrases were placed in a spreadsheet with each column containing all participants' responses to a question. The YECs then began grouping the phrases into categories or themes. For example, responses to the challenges requested in question 1 included "having to use public transit to get to work" several times. The category "public transportation" was created to capture these responses. The number of responses in each category or theme was recorded as well. For example, "previous volunteer experience" was a theme that was mentioned 16 times under question 2's topic of "What helped to get their first job."

This thematic effort was just beginning when the YEC contracts were ending. Dave Redekopp, a local career development consultant, was contracted to complete this work, as described immediately below.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

The themes identified in the initial analysis were reviewed by Redekopp. The review entailed several steps:

1. Seek themes in a sample of raw data. About 1/5 of the raw focus group notes were reviewed and categorized independently from the initial thematic analysis.

2. Review the focus group findings and categories identified by the YECs. The focus group information was reviewed with an eye to ensure that key themes representing the youth's input had been identified and therefore to assure that all input has been recognized.

3. Compare the identified themes to general knowledge of the area as well as recent local reports. The themes were reviewed from the perspective of how they confirm and/or add to known themes in youth employment. Also, themes that would be expected to emerge but were absent were also identified. This work was done in the context of the themes identified in the literature and recent information provided in the related PolicyWise and Calgary Youth Employment Lab reports provided by EYEEC.

FINDINGS & PRELIMINARY INTERPRETATION

Unless otherwise stated, phrases found in each question's responses are provided below. They are:
- listed in order of most mentioned to least mentioned,
- listed with the percentage of mentions in parentheses after each theme, and
- followed by sub-bullets explaining or providing examples of the phrase when the phrase may not be clear.

Each list of themes is followed by a brief interpretation of the meaning or implications of the themes.

OPENIING QUESTION

What does meaningful employment/work mean to you?

- Being passionate about what you do (20%)
- Creating meaningful change / contributing to society (20%)
- Positive work environment (19%)

The following section indicates a significant drop in the response rate of themes.

- Access to support and resources (9%)
  - this includes pay and benefits
- Connecting with others (8%)
- Opportunities to grow (8%)
- Feeling capable (6%)
- Work-life balance (6%)
- Relevant to education/preparation (4%)
- Personal alignment or "fit" workplace conditions (3%)
  - these include workplace characteristics unique to the individual (e.g., fast-paced environment)
- Ability to be authentic (2%)

The first three themes account for over half of all responses. Youth want work in which they can fulfil their values and interests in purposeful ways, contribute to positive changes, and work within environments that are respectful and supportive. Mentioned far less frequently, possibly due to the phrasing of the question (i.e., "meaningful" is an important qualifier in the question), are other concerns such as remuneration, growth, and relevance to their studies.

THEMES AND MENTAL HEALTH

An interesting feature of the themes is their connection to the components of mental health. There is no universal definition of mental health, but several components cross over many definitions:[1] a life of meaning/purpose, making a contribution to society, engaging in reciprocal relationships, having the capability to manage life, and experiencing satisfaction/happiness.

I want to be able to use those skills and affect change for the better. - Focus group participant
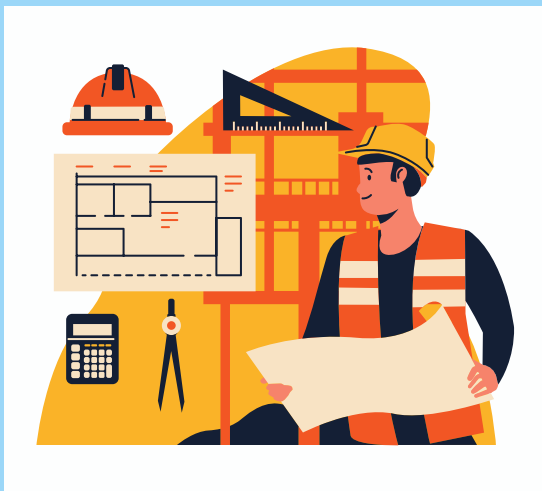
QUESTION 1

1. **Are there aspects of your experience related to employment that you have found challenging? Why were those aspects challenging?**

- **Uncertain how to approach applying for jobs (10%)**
- **Lack of experience (9%)**
- **Conflicting responsibilities (8%)**
    - **e.g., attending school**
- **Being a youth (8%)**
- **Public transportation / transportation (7%)**
- **Discrimination (7%)**
- **Asking for lots of experience / underqualified (5%)**
- **Difficult getting relevant volunteer or internship experience / exploitive / intense (4%)**
- **Pandemic-related challenges (4%)**
- **Limited opportunities (3%)**
- **Age restriction (3%)**
    - **i.e., accepting applications only from 18-year-olds and older**
- **Feeling alienated / don't belong (3%)**
- **No interview / employer feedback (2%)**
- **Becoming discouraged (2%)**
- **Low pay / exploited (2%)**
- **Difficulty getting references (2%)**
- **Miscellaneous (e.g., introverted, language barriers, negotiating wages, unethical treatment, criminal record) (23%)**

The challenges youth have experienced are wide and varied. Unlike the opening question, which had three phrases accounting for more than half of the responses, the challenges identified in this question are spread over a range of issues. The phrase at the top of the list accounts for only 10% of all the responses. The miscellaneous category, a collector for concerns mentioned only once or twice, makes up 23% of the responses.

COMBINING THEMES OF QUESTION 1

Combining some of the phrases into broader themes consolidates several key concerns, as seen below:

Conditions associated with or inherent to being a youth (30%)

- Lack of experience (9%)
- Asking for lots of experience/ underqualified (5%)
- Conflicting responsibilities (8%)
- Being a youth (8%)

Skill sets regarding obtaining work (12%)

- Uncertain how to approach applying for jobs (10%)
- No interview/employer feedback (2%)

These two broader themes capture 42% of the challenges.

The responses here align with much of the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) literature: Youth are often underqualified because they have little experience and, by requesting that candidates have experience, employers exclude youth as a pool to draw from. This exclusion perpetuates the ongoing cycle.

"I've applied to over 40 jobs at this point and it is hard to keep going." - Focus Group Participant

2: Think/reflect on your first job experience/volunteer experience/leadership role; what helped you get that job? What factors hindered you from getting your first job? (What factors make it difficult for you to obtain your first job?)

Helped

- Connections through friends / family / mentor (33%)
- Volunteer experience (16%)
- Got support (9%)
  - e.g., had someone review resume; sought employment help
- Prepared for interview / skilled (6%)
- Individual's strengths (6%)
  - e.g., good at driving, school achievements, good personality, having a degree, leadership, first aid
- Cold calling organizations / emailing / hand out (5%)
- Had networking opportunities (4%)
- Previous experience (4%)
- Approached (2%)
- Location nearby (2%)
- Used tools (e.g., LinkedIn) (2%)
- Was persistent (2%)
- Simple application process (2%)
- Miscellaneous (7%)
  - Open availability, lied about age, racial minority, being overqualified, lack of experience, improved English, transportation provided, was a student
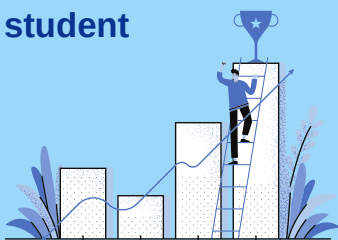
Hindered

- Lack of support from parents / support (12%)
- Young age (9%)
- Lack confidence/self-worth / fear of rejection (9%)
- Lack of skillset (9%)
- Having to stand out from other candidates (8%)
- Ethnic name / BIPOC / piercings / tattoos (8%)
- Having to use public transport (8%)
- Distance of position from home (8%)
- Being a newcomer (6%)
- Working around a school schedule (3%)
- Not having completed degree/diploma (3%)
- Language (3%)
- Miscellaneous (11%)
  - Gender, no room to grow in previous employment, lack of persistence, met bare requirements, did not search for networking opportunities, being hired depends on luck, substance addiction
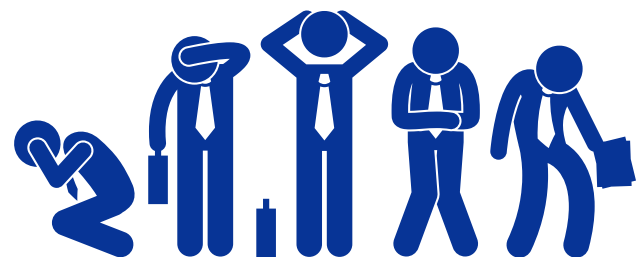
THE ROLE OF CONNECTIONS

These responses about entering the work/volunteer world provide a humbling connection to the research findings of the <u>Resilience Research Centre</u> housed in Dalhousie University: "resilience depends more on what we receive than what we have."[2] Connections count for one-third of responses regarding what helped youth with their progress, and lack of support is mentioned the most as a hindrance. The value of having connections to others and to supports is typically explained in the employment services sector is the access the connections provide to the "hidden job market," the job openings that are filled without being widely posted. There is almost certainly some truth to this, even without resorting to the oft-cited and likely exaggerated claim that the hidden job market accounts for 80% or more of job openings. Connections are important for other reasons, however. Connections help with introductions to people who know an industry or sector and can provide valuable information to a job seeker about the needs of a sector as well as possible and emerging work opportunities, whether widely posted or "hidden."

"I didn't realize it [getting volunteer experience with seniors through a friend's dad] would be the determining factor in my entire career. My program is interdisciplinary so there are many different places you can go but because I had experience with seniors I ended up working with seniors in my practicum." - Focus group participant

Being pointed in the right direction helps youth directly, but there is tremendous indirect support that accompanies the information provided by connections within a network. Connections can, whether aware of it or not, challenge unhelpful beliefs (e.g., "There are no jobs in sector X," "Jobs Y & Z are dead-end jobs," "There's no point in applying to ABC organization") and open the possibility for new beliefs (e.g., "Hospitality work doesn't need to be dead-end," "Industry X isn't as unethical as I thought"). In addition, a person who has been told by a credible source that there are opportunities in an area will be more likely to make efforts to engage in the "helped" list above - prepare, persist when things are difficult, and undertake uncomfortable tasks such as cold-calling - and also to avoid the erosion of confidence that can accompany repeated rejection.

BARRIERS RELATED TO BEING YOUNG

Barriers related to being young are worth attending to here, particularly lack of skill in searching for work, difficulties with transportation, and fragility in confidence.
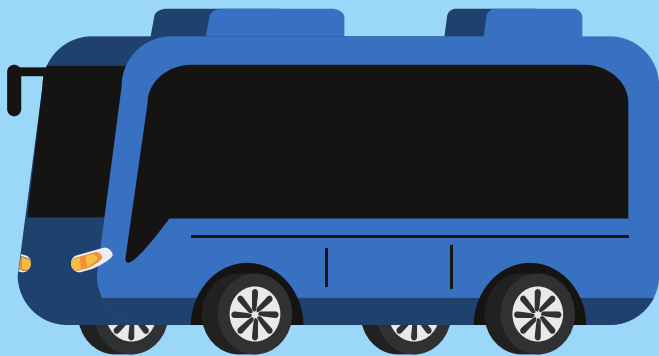
Few participants indicated that they were skilled in work search activities; more indicated that they lacked these skills. Even if they were taught these skills in school, they likely had little chance to practice them or make them relevant to their school-based lives. These kinds of skills can be taught, but they come to life only when applied to a genuine concern. The use of public transportation is not a problem in very large urban centres, but there are numerous locations in Edmonton and the greater Edmonton region that are difficult to access by bus/LRT. Individuals who have been working for a few years can overcome this problem by driving a car they own. Youth who have difficulty accessing employment cannot exercise this option easily. Finally, youth are typically not as secure in their identities and self-concepts as they will be when they have a wide range of experiences behind them. Confidence and self-efficacy are simply more easily eroded when there is not a history of success to draw upon.

QUESTION 3

How has the current Covid-19 pandemic impacted your employment/career goals? (How has it impacted your future career goals?) (What are your feelings about stepping into your dream career at this time?)

NOTE: About half (49%) of the responses are listed within this blue section of the page.

- **Increased job competition / limited job opportunities (11%)**
- **Moved to working remotely (9%)**
- **Frustrations with public health restrictions not being followed / gets anxious leaving home / quarantining means loss of money (8%)**
- **Miscellaneous work search / work readiness concerns (8%)**
  - **Increased number of interviews / application components / more aware of how to locate employment resources / noticeably lower number of call-backs after interviews / did not apply for in-person jobs / application processes for potential employment got delayed / applied rapidly for jobs / some locations not hiring youth/students / can no longer walk in to apply for a position / unable to apply in person / more job postings/opportunities / observed others struggling to gain employment / burnout / unable to find employment / gained experience / began freelancing**
- **Lost employment (7%)**
- **Switched/changed employment goals / chose a new career path / reinvent / revaluate (6%)**

- **Has more free time for other passions (5%)**
- **Miscellaneous lifestyle/wellness concerns (4%)**
  - **Realization of stress levels**
  - **Limited extracurricular activities**
  - **Didn't get to participate in previous activities/hobbies**
  - **Future goals on hold**
  - **Felt isolated / disconnected from extended family**
  - **Less work / life balance / wants to separate work from home life**

- **Limited/lost volunteer opportunities (4%)**
- **Gained employment (4%)**
- **Contact with teachers was limited / unable to get quick feedback from teachers / lost learning opportunities / grades went down / couldn't afford fee (4%)**
- **More difficult to make connections online / social skills diminished / lack of networking opportunities / not connecting with customers/clients / haven't heard from some for a long time (3%)**
- **Demand by employer greatly increased / workload increased / heavily monitored / always-on the clock (2%)**
- **Remote work (learning) opened up other opportunities (2%)**
- **Mental health has improved / appreciates not having to commute to work every day / got more rest and leisure time / enjoys being able to casually dress / likes working remotely (2%)**

- **Learned to adapt to work/learn online (2%)**
- **Hands-on programs became limited in experience they could offer due to restrictions (2%)**
- **Quality of work was negatively impacted / Feels more engaged being in a physical office / Not being able to connect with customers/clients (2%)**
- **Lack of motivation / put a halt on job searching (2%)**
- **Hours got cut / temporarily stop working / worked less (2%)**
- **Felt more confident in school / got better grades in school / able to focus more on school (2%)**
- **Some positions require proof of vaccination (2%)**
- **Miscellaneous education/learning concerns (2%)**
  - **Education/learning unaffected**
  - **Knows others whose education/learning was affected**
  - **Pass/fail grades could impact transcript**
  - **Learned new skills online**
  - **Programs shut down**
- **Miscellaneous workplace concerns (2%)**
  - **Industry dependent on in-person**
  - **Found work easier with fewer clients/customers**
  - **Does not have the space/environment to effectively work from home**
- **Miscellaneous financial concerns (2%)**
  - **Facing student loans**
  - **Benefitted from CERB**
  - **CERB not enough money**
  - **Anxious about prices of products going up**

THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The participants' descriptions of the pandemic's effects align overall with general media reports: Youth have lost work, lost hours, shifted to remote work, and are re-evaluating their career-related goals and aspirations. They are also fearful of COVID, not wanting to spread it, contract it, or need to be quarantined because of it. These kinds of concerns account for about half of the youth's responses to this question.

"The positive thing is I've had time to think about other options and I've found things that I've liked as well. It also changed what I want."
Focus Group Participant

There is great diversity in the list of the remaining half of the responses. Some did better in school; some did worse. Some felt a negative impact on their mental health; others felt an improvement. Some lost opportunities; others saw opportunities grow. In each polarity, though, the number of responses is very low - "some" may refer to only one or two participants.

There are a number of impacts that are mentioned surprisingly few times or not at all. The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), for example, is an historic benefit program for Canada. It is mentioned in less than 2% of the responses. Problems associated with working from home (e.g., distractions, physical space) are mentioned only rarely. Further, benefits of working from home (e.g., more leisure time, less travel time) are mentioned with about the same overall frequency as problems.

Have you talked yourself out of applying for a job? If so, why? Have you talked yourself out of an opportunity? Are there any external factors that would hinder you from applying for an opportunity?

NOTE: About half (44%) of the responses are listed within the blue section of this page.
- **Poor alignment or "fit" (22%)**
  - introverted / long-term commitment; worried wouldn't like it / positions aren't flexible enough / won't fit in with the company / didn't look the part / not mentally equipped / job would be stressful / preferred different demographic / no religious wear / application takes long time to complete / interferes with other important things / position interfered with school / did not properly prepare / not good at job / would be responsible for a lot of people / not relevant to education / criminal record / not able to shine / worried health would suffer / "fast paced"
- **Not qualified (11%)**
- **Poor employer (11%)**
  - employer appears homophobic/racist/sexist / employer asks for 110% / company/organization has negative reviews / previous worker sexually assaulted / takes advantage / doesn't train

- **Fear of rejection / discouraged from previous rejections (6%)**
- **Strenuous application requirements / cover letter requirement / felt resume was weak / portfolio incomplete (6%)**
- **Pay too low / few or inconsistent hours / no benefits / not secure (6%)**
- **Feels like someone more qualified will "get the job"/high competition rate (5%)**
- **Required a driver's licence/car (5%)**
- **Lack of confidence / experienced self-doubt / underestimated abilities (5%)**
- **Does not feel they have ever talked themselves out of applying (4%)**
- **Having to move to work / location too far away (3%)**
- **Likes current job / is worried about change when switching jobs (2%)**
- **anxious for the position / worried things will go wrong / nervous trying something new (2%)**
- **Miscellaneous (each accounting for 1% or fewer of the responses)**
  - Low growth potential: position similar to before/ skillsets too specific to branch out / position asked for 18+ / fear of new position being as bad as previous position / job was in isolation / time management to complete application / job in person or online / opportunity looked suspicious / convinced by others not to apply/go to interview / company takes advantage of workers / lack of determination / social anxiety / working another job / job looks difficult / location unsafe / trying to stay at current position to make it look good on resume

REASONS FOR ABOVE QUESTION

The reasons youth provided for talking themselves out of applying for work are, for the most part, reassuring. Within reasonable limits, it makes sense that youth would not apply for work that is not aligned with their abilities or proclivities, for which they are not qualified, and/or that will have them employed by a poor employer. These three conditions - work that aligns, work they can do, and work in a decent environment - account for almost half of the comments.

"Applying to something where you can't fulfill the description is a waste of your time and the employer's time." - Focus Group Participant

The remaining responses are varied but glimpses of predictable themes can be seen, such as fear of rejection, lack of confidence, the perception of stiff competition, too much effort required, or low pay/benefits. These reasons to not apply for a job are reasonable for work-seekers of any age:

- The first two, fear and lack of confidence, can be mitigated with good supports but likely will hover in the background for most work seekers.
- If done well, focusing one's energy on applications for which competition is less fierce and the application process is manageable is just good risk-management practice. The responses in this study do not reveal if the risks of wasting valuable energy are managed strategically. Answers are therefore not available to questions such as "On what basis are youth deciding the competition is fierce?" "How well do youth know their strengths/assets in comparison to the 'competition'?" "How aligned are youth's perceptions of job application processes with standards within an industry?" "To what degree do youth effectively use the time/energy saved by not applying to certain postings?"
- Avoiding positions that pay poorly and have no or few benefits is almost always a wise choice. There are two main exceptions, however, and the participants' responses do not provide clarity on these. The first exception is when the alternative is to have no job. Not working almost always leaves people worse off in terms of mental health, physical health, and career development, even if the income is not different than what would be received through income assistance programs. The second exception to avoiding low pay positions is when the position offers strategic opportunities to learn transferrable skills, learn about an industry/sector, learn about oneself (e.g, values, interests), learn about other industries/sectors, develop one's network, get experience that can be put on a résumé, get a glowing reference, and/or move to a better position in a desirable industry/sector.

QUESTION 5

Think and reflect on past interviews you had with employers. Do you feel like you were able to show off your skills, education, past work experience? What do you find challenging during your interview? (What hindered you from showing off your skills)

NOTE: About one-quarter of the responses (23%) are listed in this first blue section of the page; The next quarter (27%) is within the white section that follows.

- Felt anxious/nervous in interviews / before interviews; experiences self doubt in an interview; fear of rejection (23%)

- Does not like the strength weaknesses questions; does not like the "where do you see yourself in ten years" question; hates being asked why they want to work there (to earn money); does not know how to answer "tell me about yourself" questions; having to engage with difficult scenario questions (8%)
- Difficult to make one stand out in an interview / difficult to showcase skills in a short, limited time / difficulties showing off transferable skills (7%)
- Interviews can be overwhelming / can be hard to stay on track in an interview / can be difficult to make common ground with the interviewer / hard to speak in high pressure situations / questions are so specific, leave out so much information / struggles with communication (6%)
- Group interviews limit being able to display skills/experience / difficult to stand out in group interviews (6%)
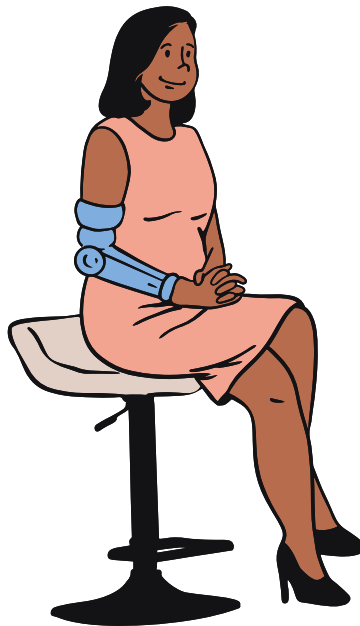
- **Online interview feels harder (5%)**
- **Feels was able to show off skills and experience / properly express themselves (5%)**
- **Was able to practice with a family member/peer/coworker before interview (4%)**
- **Feel like you have to answer questions a specific way (3%)**
- **Feels interviews value experience over education (3%)**
- **Uses Indeed and LinkedIn to display experience/skills; Watched videos to help prepare for the interview; used a resource to help prepare for the interview (3%)**
- **Interview environment causes stress / not comfortable (3%)**
- **Blanking while answering questions (3%)**
- **Online interviews feel easier (2%)**
- **Faces conflicting answers on how to properly answer (2%)**
- **Had classes in school program to prepare for interviews (2%)**
- **Felt experience was weak, impacted the quality of the interview**
- **Did not have resources to help prepare for interview; not prepared for extensive questions (2%)**
- **Prepares specific answers for questions**
- **Employers only want to hear extremely relevant experience**
- **Gets discouraged/tired when there are so many application steps (such as multiple interviews)**
- **Learned to be confident in interviews**
- **Feel like you have to answer questions a specific way / scripted**
- **Feels couldn't express values**
- **Felt that they still messed up, even though they practiced/prepared for the interview**
- **Lack of charisma makes interviews more difficult**
- **Realizing the job is not a good fit halfway through the interview**
- **Tone of interview is difficult to interpret**
- **Low perception in themselves leads to a lower quality interview**

INTERVIEWS

The most dominant response to the experience of being interviewed centres around anxiety and nervousness. If there is anything surprising about a quarter of the responses referring to nervousness, it is that the rate was not considerably higher. Interviews are high-stakes events in which the rules vary from employer to employer. Further, research on the interview process consistently shows that employers are not skilled at conducting them.[3] This lack of competence is particularly visible in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that, by virtue of their size, typically do not have strong HR departments or expertise if they have any at all. Given that about 86% of jobs in Canada are with SMEs,[4] youth should not expect interviewing prowess to improve soon.

The positive side of the dominant responses is that they can all be improved with training and practice. Watching online videos and reading "how-to" information is helpful, but only with repeated practice will youth become less anxious, more confident, and more able to respond the way they want to in the actual interview.

> "Now, I've learned to prepare more for interviews. I look at the job description and the organization itself and its mission and values and history."
> - Focus Group Participant

QUESTION 6

Can you tell us about your most fun/rewarding job experience? If you don't have previous job experience, please feel free to share about rewarding volunteer or educational experiences as well.

The responses to this question were very diverse, with the most frequent response accounting for only 12% of all responses ("Opportunities where they get to help/impact others/ make change in community"). Rather than listing the myriad of responses and their frequency, below find grouped lists of participants' responses.

Contribution (27%)

- Opportunities where they get to help/impact others/ make change in community (12%)
- See the work done having paid off (4%)
- Opportunity to work within their community (3%)
- Being able to teach / lead / help others (3%)
- Content getting views, likes, etc.
- Opportunities that make them feel like they're doing their part in the world
- Found volunteering rewarding
- Making others smile/feel good
- Working for your own money feels good

Personal alignment (25%)

- Being able to do work within their field / relevant to their education / use skills (6%)
- Got to work at a fun job (4%)
- Worked in another province/country/culture / was able to travel somewhere new for work (2%)
- Aims for a corporate position
- Opportunities where they get to utilize other passions
- Everyone in your office being the same gender
- Peaceful work environment
- Employers connected to family
- Returned to teach/lead a camp they once attended as kids
- Working in a position that is not retail/service industry
- Being able to solve problems that others had issues with
- Being able to bring a pet to work
- Flexible work schedules
- Being able to create something
- Working with people who are the same ethnicity
- Looked forward to going to work

- **Relationships (17%)**
  - **Created good relationships with people worked with / getting to connect with others (11%)**
  - **Making friends/long term connections during a volunteer/work opportunity (3%)**
  - **Got to work with friends (2%)**
  - **Created good relationships with other staff**
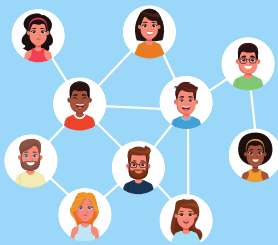
- **Mattering / Being appreciated (16%)**
  - **Had kind/friendly coworkers (3%)**
  - **Having support/encouragement from supervisors (3%)**
  - **When highlighted as a good staff in the company (e.g., employee of the month) (3%)**
  - **Feeling like they were wanted at the job/working for people who are grateful for you (2%)**
  - **Hard work gets noticed and praised by others (2%)**
  - **Being treated like a colleague rather than an intern/junior staff**
  - **Having services recommended to others by previous clients**
  - **Receiving tips**

- **Growth (12%)**
  - **Learned new skills / learned new skills outside a classroom setting (8%)**
  - **Getting to meet those who were highly accomplished in their field**
  - **Getting to talk to others about their life experiences**
  - **Opportunities that present a challenge**
  - **Got to try many things to see what they liked/didn't like**

- **Influence / Autonomy (5%)**
  - **Being able to take the lead on projects / getting responsibility in a position (2%)**
  - **Being involved in conversations**
  - **Being able to organize events**
  - **Being able to show others their culture**

- Miscellaneous (7%)
  - Any experience is rewarding/every job has been rewarding (2%)
  - Has not had rewarding experiences in employment / feels all their employment was just to earn a paycheque (2%)
  - Office/work environment an indicator of success
  - Has not had any/much employment
  - Getting free goodies while they worked

REWARDING JOB EXPERIENCES

There are many possible ways of grouping the responses to the question of rewarding job experiences. The grouping of the responses fell out quite naturally, but the labels for the groupings combine themes from employee engagement and commitment literature,[5] mental health research, and career development theory.

Mental health literature, particularly from a social psychology/sociology perspective, frequently identifies "contribution" as a key component of mental health. This is important irrespective of whether it aligns with one's preferences or skills; one does not need to enjoy the activity that contributes for it to have a positive effect.

"It was really rewarding to give back and make sure you're making a difference." - Focus Group Participant

However, the next category in the list, "personal alignment," brings in a career development lens, showing that working in alignment with one's interests (what one enjoys), values (what one finds important), strengths (skills and inherent characteristics), and aspirations (one's preferred future) is more fulfilling than simply contributing.

REWARDING JOB EXPERIENCES

The third category, "relationships," speaks to human nature and is a key component of mental health. Humans are social beings. It is no surprise that youth want work that affords the opportunity to develop functional, meaningful, and potentially long-term relationships.[6]

"Mattering" is a term from career counselling literature that overlaps closely with Kinlaw's "appreciation" concept. People need to feel like they count for something to somebody; that they are seen and heard. Organizations often trivialize this into gimmicky perquisites (e.g., trophies, gifts) or make it divisive by "appreciating" only those who win competitions (e.g., most sales in a month), and end up doing the opposite of showing that people matter. The youth in this study want to be noticed and recognized for who they are as well as what they accomplish. Perks and tips can be indicators of appreciation, but as or more important are acts such as being treated with respect by others, being supported by supervisors, and being included in discussions/decisions.

It is somewhat surprising that responses referring to "growth" were not more frequent. Growth is a well-known motivator of employees.[7]   Perhaps the potential for growth at work is less visible for relatively inexperienced youth in entry-level positions or it is simply a lower priority compared to the other categories.

The ability to have agency, autonomy, or influence at work is an important one for engagement, but it is not surprising that it came up relatively rarely as a concept with youth. Influence is something that is earned with competence, experience, and trust, all of which require time with an employer.

Do you feel like you have the resources/skills/networks to pursue entrepreneurship as a young person? If you feel less confident in this pursuit, what would be your reason?

NOTE: About three-quarters of responses (76%) are accounted for within the blue section.

- **Feels they do not have the resources, skills, networks (42%)**
  - **E.g., Does not have the time management skills / does not have ideas to start a business**
- **Feels they have the resources, skills, networks (19%)**
  - **E.g., Received schooling in entrepreneurship / has some experience / used Internet resources (e.g., Youtube) / had peer/family support in a startup / was able to connect with a mentor to help with ideas & get business off the ground**
- **Does not see themselves running a business / not interested in pursuing this / fearful/uncertain about taking this avenue (15%)**
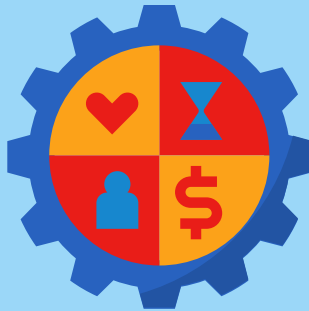
- **Wants to seek resources to help pursue this avenue /is interested in pursuing this avenue (8%)**
- **Feels they could learn with available resources (e.g., Youtube) (4%)**
- **Knows where to look for the resources (4%)**
- **Not sure where to access the resources**
- **Feels entrepreneurship doesn't offer room for POC to thrive**
- **Difficult to find POC support/mentors in this area**
- **POC's businesses get "shadow banned" online**
- **Feels they're too young**

RESOURCES AND EXPERIENCE FOR ENTREPRENURSHIP

Just under half (42%) of the responses to this question refer to not having the internal or external resources to pursue entrepreneurship. This is likely a prudent assessment on the part of the participants: Entrepreneurship requires unique skills and attitudes, and it is very difficult to pursue successfully without support and connections. Entrepreneurship is difficult: In Canada, 38% of businesses that start out with 1-4 employees no longer operate within 5 years.[8] Larger businesses typically last longer, but starting a larger business usually requires financing that is difficult for youth to obtain.

Almost a fifth of the responses (19%) indicate preparedness and some experience with entrepreneurship. For those who are ready, entrepreneurship is a very viable work option particularly when it is not seen in monolithic, stereotypical ways. Entrepreneurship includes the traditional "build a business from the ground up" approach involving infrastructure and staff, but it can also be seen as one end of a continuum that includes self-employment, contracting, talent pooling, work-sharing, job-sharing, multi-tracking, part-time employment, and full-time employment. For youth who are interested in starting a business and have some of the skills to do so, supports are still needed. As the quote below indicates, these supports are not always easy to find.

> "We don't learn about these things. A lot of it just comes with just doing it and you will find the resources you need. When I was looking for stuff for legal things like taxes, trademarks, and licenses, finding people to help me with that has been the hardest part of the process."
> - Focus Group Participant

A group of responses indicating a disinterest in entrepreneurship accounted for 15% of the responses. The degree to which this disinterest came from the same individuals who said they did not feel resourced for entrepreneurship was not analyzed. If these are distinct responses, more than half of the responses indicate a lack of interest or resources to pursue the entrepreneurial path.

What is the most important thing you look for when applying for a job or volunteer position? (Opportunity)

- **Have a positive, welcoming, comfortable work environment (10%)**
- **Positions that offer flexibility (10%)**
- **Pay well (10%)**
- **Positions that don't require a driver's licence / accessible by public transit / close by (6%)**
- **Company's reputation / other employees' experiences / good morals (6%)**
- **Inclusive/multicultural / treat people equally (6%)**
- **Positions that allow them to engage with what they're passionate about / work/life balance (4%)**

- **Share own values (4%)**
- **Safety is top priority/safe work environment / wellbeing comes first (4%)**
- **Kind, friendly coworkers (4%)**
- **Access to benefits (4%)**

NOTE: Each of the following responses was mentioned 1% or less.

- **Job postings where they fit qualifications**
- **Positions that don't require lots of previous experience**
- **Positions that are shorter-term contracts**
- **Positions related to field/education**
- **Positions that offer training**
- **Positions that have room for growth**
- **Positions that might be fun/interesting**
- **Positions that allow time for other passions to be pursued**
- **Positions that offer room/resources for self-care**
- **Positions that allow connection**
- **Positions that allow them to travel**
- **Companies that would be loyal**
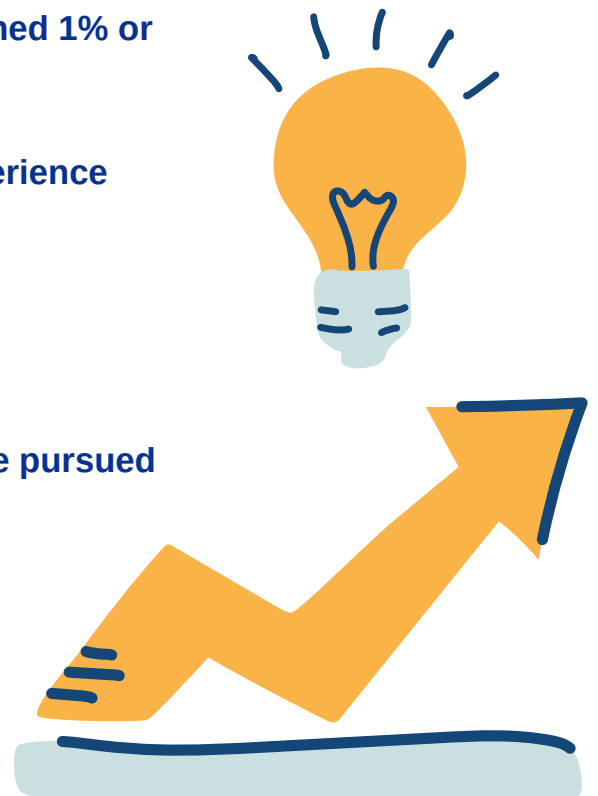
- **Have good management**
- **Value teamwork**
- **Value sustainability**
- **Value/respect employees**
- **Does not care for company values**

AN INTERESTING PARALLEL

The responses to what participants look for in a job closely parallel the responses to the question of rewarding experiences.

QUESTION 9

In navigating the employment world, do you feel like you have been able to progress or develop your skills?

- **Able to develop professional skills / transferable skills (30%)**
  - **Developed communication skills**
  - **Developed public speaking skills**
  - **Learned how to interact with groups effectively / developed facilitation skills**
  - **Able to develop personal skills**
  - **Able to develop entrepreneurial skills**
  - **Learned conflict resolution skills**
  - **Learned how to make skills transferable**
- **Volunteer experience helps / practicum helps / other job experience / doing different roles (15%)**
- **Growing social skills and perspective helps progression (13%)**
- **Feels stuck in current position (6%)**
- **Difficult to get entry level position in field / finding relevant work may require moving (4%)**
- **Was able to build confidence (4%)**
- **Productivity & confidence dropped when working from home (4%)**
- **Rejection emotionally hinders progression**
- **Unable to work in area relevant to education**
- **Has to hide authentic self**
- **Has been able to progress a little in every position (e.g., new skills)**
- **Has not had many employers to help guide them**
- **Difficult to tell if they are progressing**
- **Being involved in creating programs**
- **Bad management/coworkers can make it difficult to progress**
- **Learned they worked well under pressure**
- **Jobs need to provide longer and more thorough training**

WHAT REMAINS UNKNOWN

Although the majority of responses to the question of growth are positive, indicating that youth have learned a range of skills, there is surprisingly scarce mention of employers'/supervisors' roles as mentors/coaches/trainers or as providers of feedback. This gap may exist because there really is a gap, the focus group sessions were running out of time by the time this question was asked, and/or the question does not address how skills were acquired.

FINDINGS BY GROUP

The responses to the questions were sorted by participants' identification as 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, POC, Newcomer/Immigrant, and Refugee, recognizing that some participants could identify as more than one group. This grouping was done with the expectation that some groups would have different general responses to each question than others. A review of the responses, however, reveals very similar patterns across the groups. Where there are differences, they are not sufficiently noticeable to even hint at generalizing more broadly. For example, Indigenous participants were more likely to say they had never talked themselves out of applying for a position than other groups, but this difference was small and could easily be a result of chance.

DISCUSSION

Society is shifting away from either/or labels (e.g., male/female) to perspectives that are multi-faceted, continua-based, group-owned, and recognize intersectionality. In the engagement project described here, the intention was to hear the voices of youth who face discrimination because of attributes (e.g., skin colour) and/or their identification (e.g., sexual orientation). Two findings emerged from their responses, findings that go beyond the content of their responses.

- In general, youth face obstacles to successfully entering the work world that are different than individuals who are older and/or more experienced regardless of how they identify or what group they belong to.
- Although youth share common concerns, each young person's experiences, strengths, needs, characteristics, and contexts are unique, and labelling them in any way risks obscuring this uniqueness.

To put the two findings another way, it appears that transitioning from school to work or unemployment to employment while being young and inexperienced involves a set of powerful and widely-shared concerns that override group differences. The catch-22 situation of having no experience and not being able to get experience because employers hire only experienced individuals, for example, transcends all categories of youth. If this problem was resolved, then issues of further discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics would likely have been discussed far more widely in the focus group sessions. As it is, however, issues of discrimination besides age that the youth in this study experience were mentioned relatively infrequently. Once the dominant issues were discussed (i.e., the concerns that accounted for one-third to one-half of the responses), the remaining responses seemed to be as varied as the participants themselves.

These two general findings should not be taken in any way as a call to ignore the specific concerns of sub-groups within the youth population. Rather, they should be seen as an invitation to (a) change the employment context to better incorporate youth's concerns, which will then allow further, more nuanced investigations to see how various groups of youth's experiences are different; (b) find ways to provide supports that meet the unique needs of each youth, seeing each young person afresh regardless of what becomes known about populations of youth; and (c) generate relevant ways to help youth create and/or broaden their networks. The three parts of this invitation are elaborated on the following pages.

CHANGE THE EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

With regards to changing the employment context, the recent PolicyWise for Children & Families (PolicyWise) report, *Improving Opportunity Youth Employment in Alberta: Strategic Opportunities for Action* offers some ideas for Opportunity Youth that could well apply to all youth. PolicyWise's "Area 2" recommendations, which focus on province-wide collaboration on opportunity youth employment, include the creation of a lead entity that could orchestrate collaboration across sectors, the coordination of employers and youth-serving organizations to apply for Alberta Jobs Now funding, and the development of workforce partnership proposals aligned with Alberta Labour & Immigration. These initiatives could be very helpful because their focus is on changing the demand side of the labour market equation. No single youth or group of youth can change how employers perceive, hire, train, supervise, or develop youth.
This is a massive undertaking that requires focus, relentless nudging, collaboration, funds, and collective will.

The changes in PolicyWise's Area 2 also require finding ways to incorporate the spirit of policies and programs into on-the-ground activities. Wage subsidies, for example, are mentioned by PolicyWise as ways to "incentivize and support employers" to become more likely to hire youth with barriers to employment. Decades of wage subsidy efforts with a variety of disadvantaged groups would question the value of this approach[9] unless the subsidies are accompanied by a variety of supports to the employer and the employee.[10] Even well-intentioned employers need help in executing their role as facilitators of youths' development. Without this help, youth can quickly be seen by employers as only a source of inexpensive labour for the duration of the wage subsidy program.

CHANGE THE EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

There are many ways to change the demand side of the employment equation for youth generally and for youth who are or who have been discriminated against historically.[11] The key idea in the PolicyWise report that can ensure sustainable change is collaboration: government, employers, youth-serving agencies, and youth need to work together on this provincially and locally. Successful examples can be modeled[12] with the recognition that collaborative efforts are relatively easy to initiate but exceedingly difficult to maintain. As the Calgary Youth Employment Lab's Lessons From This Process: A Developmental Evaluation Report points out, there are "big gaps in the perspective between youth, youth-serving agencies and employers." [13] A sustained collaborative approach requires seeing and shrinking these gaps. This requires more than simply sharing information. As the Lab's report points out, safety, personal connection, and trust are essential elements needed to begin the process of understanding each other's perspectives.

The YECs' reflections on their experiences corroborate the Calgary Lab's recommendations regarding creating spaces in which youth can express their concerns, have their voices heard, and see that their ideas are acted upon. They noted the value of voicing concerns in a safe environment and saw the importance of, in one YEC's words, "sharing their experiences with one another and how empowering that can be. Young people often feel alone in their struggles, especially if they are seeing friends or family members succeeding around them in gaining employment." This sharing helped youth find "common ground in each of their different journeys," as another YEC put it. Another YEC illustrated the power of having a venue in which to share by noting a youth's request to be involved in more focus group sessions. Sharing is helpful in and of itself, and its power almost certainly multiplies when others, such as employers and policy-makers, act upon what is shared. This concept is not unique to youth (i.e., all stakeholders want to be understood and have their voices heard) but it is significantly more important to youth than others in the employment system because youths' voices are often unrequested and/or unheard

SUPPORTING YOUTH'S NEEDS

The responses from youth in this study support literature that shows that youth need help learning career development skills, maintaining motivation, and connecting with others in meaningful ways. The school system has largely failed Alberta's youth in this regard. The PolicyWise report points out that the Career and Life Management (CALM) course has been "hit or miss" and that the curriculum should be improved. This is a polite and partially misguided assessment. The CALM curriculum likely could use improvement, but the far bigger problem is the delivery of the curriculum by educators who typically have little interest in the curriculum, little or no training in career development, and little or no competence in facilitating rather than instructing.[14] The "misses" are significantly greater than the "hits." The effort that would be required to change curricula, educational practices, educator competence, and school administration support for career development renders it a non-starter, in this author's opinion. It is far more prudent to assume that most Alberta schools will continue to fail students with regard to career development. It is a better use of energy and resources to plan for this deficit and support youth outside of the school system's curricula.

The supports that youth need should be delivered by the community organizations that youth are already involved with (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs) or that they are likely to reach out to for other concerns (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+ groups, Friendship Centres). Given appropriate funding, training, and measurement parameters, these kinds of organizations can provide training, support, and connections to youth that can move from targeting youth to targeting particular groups of youth (e.g., Indigenous youth, immigrant youth), to working with the individual youth's needs in a learner-centric manner. A key obstacle to this that is not addressed in the PolicyWise report is the set of metrics by which these programs are assessed by the funder. Almost all employment-related funding in Canada is based on helping individuals transition from school to work, unemployment to employment, or unemployment to training. Employment and participation in training are the key variables on which funding is based. The suitability of the employment or training to the individual's needs and aspirations is almost never measured, and neither is progress toward employment, training, or self-sufficiency.[15] Without policy changes, it will be very difficult for community organizations to get the resources they need to help youth learn the competencies they need to better manage their own career paths and learning/work transitions.[16]

Even when employers are eager to hire youth and youth have been supported in acquiring work search skills, many youth may still encounter difficulties obtaining relevant work in a timely manner. Question 2 in the focus group sessions asked about what helped and hindered getting employment and/or volunteer experiences, and the dominant set of responses included having connections to and support from others. Youth often apply to jobs "cold," responding to published/public ads. They need connections so that they can better learn about opportunities, learn about the work contexts/environments they may be entering, and apply to jobs "warm." To quote Wendy Fox, former Manager of the Youth Employment Services Centre in Edmonton: "It used to be that you got a job because of who you know. Then things shifted so that you got a job because of what you know. Now, getting a job depends on answering the question 'Who knows what you know?'" Many youth are not sufficiently connected to ensure that others "know what they know." Nor do many youth feel supported by a relational network, a network that provides youth with the feeling that someone has their back and will be there when needed. Youth can and should be taught networking skills and relationship-building skills, but real change for youth will happen when, on a broad scale, individuals actively reach out to youth to form relationships with them. Youth need much more than programs that connect them with mentors, for example, even though these are invaluable programs. They need to live in communities in which youth development is seen as everyone's concern, youths' neighbours are active career influencers and connectors, and youth are connected/introduced to others based on their proclivities and interests. This author is not aware of a community-based approach to meeting this need.[17] However, the need is real and there would be real value in pursuing ways to address the need in Edmonton's various communities.
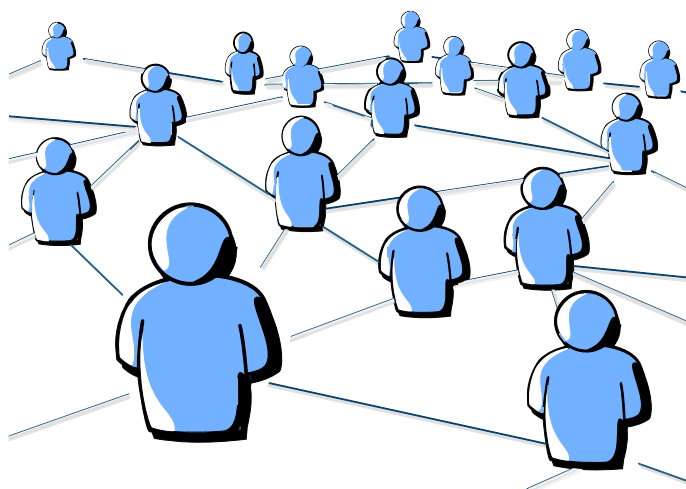
HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUTH

With regards to work, youth want to contribute; do work that is meaningful and aligned with who they are; be treated respectfully in a context of genuine relationships in which they matter; learn and grow; and have a voice.

Youth do not have all the skills they need to manage the work search process, especially as they navigate competing responsibilities.

The combination of the Catch-22 situation of no experience/needing experience and lack of skill can drain motivation to continue with the work search process.

Connections help youth get volunteer experience and work.

Volunteer experience helps youth get work.

Getting support with work search is helpful.

Discrimination such as racism is perceived to be a problem by some (but not to the extent some, such as the author) might expect. (Note: This does not necessarily mean that discrimination is not a problem. It may mean that some youth are resigned to it.)

The pandemic has caused work and volunteer losses, fear, and changes to the work search process, all of which have resulted in some youth re-evaluating their pathways.

Youth do not arbitrarily apply to any opening – they look for alignment or "fit," that they meet the qualifications, and that the employer is reputable.

Youth feel anxious in job interviews, partially because they are uncertain of expectations and how to meet them.

Entrepreneurship is seen as a viable possibility by some but not most youth.

All in all, the youth who participated in this study are doing what they can in very difficult circumstances rather than retreating, complaining, or avoiding the realities of their situation. A little support would go a very long way with these youth. They are ready, willing, and able in many, many ways.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- **Africa Centre**
- **iHuman Youth Society**
- **Indigenous Work Experience Program, City of Edmonton**
- **Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services**
- **Kulan Youth Services**
- **Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative**
- **Riverbend Rocks**
- **Somali Canadian Women & Children Association**
- **St. Oscar Romero Catholic High School**
- **The CHEW Project**
- **The Landing University of Alberta**
- **Youth in Transition Employment Program, Children's Services**

CONSULTANT

Dave Redekopp is a winner of provincial and national awards in career development, Dave has devoted over thirty years to the development of better career development and workplace concepts and practices. His work has addressed a wide array of issues in both career development and leadership, from helping at-risk teens manage their career paths to developing leaders in the corporate world. He has worked with private sector, government, and not-for-profit organizations in a wide range of industry sectors. Dave has been privileged to be invited to work in almost all Canadian provinces and territories and in several countries. His passion for career and leadership development pervades his work, which includes teaching, facilitation, public speaking, product development, and research. Dave, with Michael Huston of Mount Royal University, recently wrote a book on the relationships between career development and mental health: Strengthening Mental Health Through Effective Career Development: A Practitioner's Guide. Dave holds PhD and Master's degrees in Educational Psychology from the University of Alberta, and Bachelor of Education and Arts (Honours) degrees from the University of Winnipeg.

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6. The Gallup organization does a great deal of work regarding the measurement of employee engagement and other organizational variables. The Gallup's Q12 is a 12-question survey that measures employee engagement and is a strong indicator of managerial effectiveness. One of the 12 items is "I have a best friend at work." Answering "yes" to this is positively correlated with engagement and the effectiveness of the employee's manager.
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11. See, for example, Bell, D., Benes, K., & Redekopp, D. (2016). Improving school-to-work transitions: a scoping review. Canadian Career Development Foundation.
12. See Hamilton's "Whole of Community" approach to workforce development for a recent, local example: https://careerwise.ceric.ca/2021/12/01/whole-of-community-approach-creates-transformative-workforce-development/#.YdR5ZSxlBkU. From a much broader perspective, see this comparison of Quebec's and Ontario's approach to youth employment, showing how Quebec's model almost eliminates the differences in the unemployment rates of youth vs. all age groups: Making Policy Work for Youth: Quebec and Ontario.
13. 13. Innes, M. (2019). Lessons from this process: a developmental evaluation report. Calgary Youth Employment Lab, p. 32.
14. This finding was part of an unpublished report (Redekopp, D.E., Cumming, K., Day, C. & Gullekson, D. (2012). *The state of the art in career and financial education*. Alberta Education) that, although a decade old, would almost certainly result in the same finding if replicated in 2022. Similar reports in other provinces show that this is not a problem unique to Alberta.
15. Delicate, S., & Hoyt, A. (2022). *Smoke and mirrors: The illusion of the employment services sector in Canada*. (The author obtained a pre-released version of this book in November, 2021. It is expected to be published in early 2022.)
16. Career development competencies are reasonably well known. Several models have been developed over the years, with the most recent likely being the UK-based Career Development Institute's Career Development Framework.
17. There are many community-based efforts that could be built upon or learned from. Abundant Community Edmonton, Alberta Health Services Community Helpers Program, ChatterHigh, and research on career influencers provide examples that could inform a community-wide effort at engaging community members to actively engage with youth.