



COHORT 3
SUMMARY RESULTS OF THE
19-YEAR-OLD SURVEY



Prepared by

The South Carolina NYTD Research Team



INTRODUCTION

In Fiscal Year 2019, the third cohort of the National Youth in Transition Database study turned 19 and completed their first of two follow-up surveys. The survey focused on youth's employment, finances, education, health and well-being. For the 19-year-old follow-up survey, 109 of the 227 eligible youth participated (48% response rate) and 22% declined taking the survey (see Table 1). Three-fifths of youth took the follow-up survey via internet (62%), followed by telephone (36%) and then mail (3%).

Table 1. 19-year-old Follow-Up Survey Status (n=227)

| Survey Status | % (n) |
|------------------|-----------|
| Participated | 48% (109) |
| Declined | 22% (51) |
| Incapacitated | <1% (1) |
| Incarcerated | 3% (6) |
| Missing/Runaway | 4% (8) |
| Unable to locate | 22% (51) |
| Deceased | <1% (1) |

Demographically, 59% of respondents were female and 41% were male. Half of the respondents were white and 40% were black, with 3% of respondents having Hispanic ethnicity. On average, these youth were in foster care for 4.2 years (range: 0.2 to 12.8 years) and 44% participated in after care services. During their time in foster care, half of the youth had more than 5 placement changes (range: 0 – 21). For their last placement type, 8% of youth were in a foster home, 36% in a therapeutic foster home, 39% in a group home, and 17% in other placement settings.

During this survey period, we had difficulty reaching several youth. We were unable to locate or survey 29% of the youth for multiple reasons including incapacitation, incarceration, and being unable to find accurate contact information. Furthermore, eight youth were runaways, leaving at some point between ages 17 (after the baseline survey) and 18. Data for this cohort are somewhat incomplete due to the low response rate; even among those who completed the full survey. Many respondents skipped parts of the surveys or had no substantive response for open-ended questions. In that light, reoccurring themes and trends have been identified, but are not generalizable to the cohort at large. However, it is worth noting that the identified themes from open-ended questions in this survey are largely in agreement with findings from previous cohorts.

We examined differences between youth who completed this survey versus those who did not, by looking at foster care-related data and previous survey responses. The only significant difference between those who did and did not complete the follow up survey were participation in after care services (44% for those who participated vs. 20% for those who did not participate).

EDUCATION

While 71% of youth surveyed had earned at least a High School Diploma/GED by the time they took the survey, 30% of youth had not earned any kind of educational degree or certification, and only one youth reported having a degree higher than a High School Diploma/GED. There were no statistically significant differences in education-related outcomes based on time in care, number of placement changes, and last placement type.

Of the 42 of youth who were enrolled in an educational program at the time of the survey, 11 reported receiving educational aid (scholarship, grant, stipend, student loan, voucher, or other type of educational financial aid) to help pay for school. In open-ended responses, funding and financial issues were the most cited challenges for youth attempting to continue their education. Other challenges included transportation and difficulty getting help navigating the financial aid and social welfare systems.

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

In this survey, youth were asked if they are currently employed full-time and/or part-time for wages and if they've received any on the job training. Twenty-one youth were employed full-time and 28 part-time, with three employed both full-time and part-time. Among those currently employed, most had already obtained their high school diploma or GED (one had a vocational license) but few had on the job training in the past year (see Table 2). Fifty-four youth were not employed at the time of the survey, with about half having a high school diploma or GED. There were clear trends in employment status and enrollment in school, with 43% of youth who are employed part-time being enrolled in school and 46% of youth not employed being enrolled in school. Conversely, of the 21 youth who were employed full-time, only four were enrolled in school.

Table 2. Youth Employment compared to education outcomes and job training (n=109)

| | Full-Time (n=21) | Part-Time (n=28) | Employed FT & PT (n=3) | Not Employed (n=54) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Has a HS Diploma or GED | 76% (16) | 86% (24) | 67% (2) | 52% (28) |
| Currently Enrolled in School | 19% (4) | 43% (12) | 33% (1) | 46% (25) |
| On the job training in the past year | 33% (7) | 14% (4) | 33% (1) | 31% (17) |

*Note: 3 youth did not complete the employment-related questions

In addition to the federal questions, we asked open-ended questions about the challenges that they experienced in obtaining employment. The most common reoccurring themes were a lack of experience or poor work history which made it difficult to get through initial gatekeeping in the hiring process and transportation issues. Several youth also mentioned that they lacked the qualifications for the job they wished to obtain.

Few youth reported receiving some form of financial assistance at the time of the survey. Despite nearly a third of respondents expressing concerns of running out of food and not having money for more, only 11 youth were receiving food assistance. Eight youth were currently receiving social

security payments, two were receiving public financial assistance, and two were receiving housing assistance. The largest source of financial assistance came from a family member (biological, foster, or adoptive) or other unknown sources.

HOUSING STABILITY & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Housing stability continues to be a challenge for youth after foster care. Twenty-three youth reported experiencing homelessness (i.e., lived in a car, on the street, or stayed in a homeless or temporary shelter) in the past two years. Seven of these youth (30%) experienced homelessness at some time before turning age 17 as well. Among youth who experienced the adverse outcomes of incarceration, substance abuse referrals for assessment or counseling, or teen pregnancy in the past two years, many also experienced homelessness during the same period (see Table 3). Only two youth experienced homelessness independent of these other outcomes.

Table 3. Percent of youth experiencing homelessness along with other adverse outcomes

| In the past two years, youth who experienced... | Also experienced homelessness: |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Incarceration (n=16) | 50% (8) |
| Substance abuse referral (n=9) | 44% (4) |
| Teen pregnancy (n=9) | 56% (5) |

Among youth who experienced homelessness during this time frame, the average number of placement changes was higher, although not significant (7 vs. 6). Six (35%) of the youth who experienced homelessness had their last placement in a therapeutic foster home and 13 (57%) were placed in group homes. Seventeen percent of youth receiving after care services experienced homelessness between the ages of 17 and 19 compared to 29% for youth who did not receive after care services.

RELATIONAL SUPPORT

Ninety percent of youth reported having at least one person, other than their caseworker, that they could go to for advice or emotional support. This was a slight decline from 95% at age 17. Youth were asked about the supportive people in their lives, both in general, and specifically regarding educational support, and support for when they were at risk of homelessness or had become homeless. Most youth who identified supports in these areas chose family members – not always identifying whether the supporter was foster or biological family. Other youth identified caseworkers as supports, and around educational support, school personnel such as teachers, counselors, and others were mentioned. The question where the fewest youth were able to identify supporters involved youth who had been homeless: the majority of responses from this subgroup of youth indicated that they had no one who they felt comfortable going to for help while they were homeless.

The survey also asked questions regarding the type of support that youth received in general, and educationally. The most common responses fell into the theme of emotional support: acceptance, love, listening, helping with emotional distress, etc. Specific types of educational support received were financial help, transportation help, and encouragement to continue to achieve the youth's educational goals.

PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND RISK BEHAVIORS

The NYTD survey examined four areas related to well-being and risk behaviors: 1) incarceration, 2) referrals for substance abuse assessment or counseling, 3) teen pregnancy within the past two years, and 4) current insurance status. For this survey period, 16 youth had been incarcerated in the past two years, with almost half having also been incarcerated sometime before turning age 17. Two of these youth also had a referral for substance abuse assessment or counseling during the same period. Overall, the percentage of youth with substance abuse referrals did decline, from 32% before age 17 to 9% between ages 17 and 19. Regarding teen pregnancy, 9% of youth reported having at least one child, with 22% of the youth being married to the child's other parent. In the first survey period, 2% of youth had at least one child, none of these youth had another child by the age of 19.

Lastly, most youth maintained some form of health insurance after leaving care, but the rate of coverage is declining. Eighty percent of youth reported being on Medicaid, down from 97% at age 17. Only 7% of youth reported having health insurance other than Medicaid, which was down from 19% at age 17.

LEAVING THE SYSTEM

A series of survey questions asked youth about whether they had chosen to participate in aftercare services after age 18. Youth who chose not to were asked if anything could have been different to encourage them to take advantage of aftercare services and extended placements. Youth who did not take advantage of aftercare and who chose to answer the question demonstrated two strong thematic trends: a rejection of the foster care system and a desire to reconnect with their families. Some youth volunteered that they left at seventeen rather than eighteen, reducing their eligibility for aftercare services. Youth who chose to participate in aftercare services and responded had one strong theme: a desire to take advantage of the benefits they perceived from the system, including support for education, work, and housing.

The survey also asked youth what they would like to see changed in the foster care system. These themes broadly fell into reform in investigations – both initial investigations which led to removal from the home, and investigations into concerns with current placements – a greater sense of autonomy and trust for youth in the system, and more oversight for the facilities and placements for foster youth.

SUMMARY

The follow-up survey for Cohort 3 yielded valuable information on youth shortly after they've left foster care. There were a variety of positive outcomes among respondents, yet many challenges that still need to be addressed. And while participation in after care services can be helpful, its protective effects are limited. As with previous cohorts, youth are struggling to complete their education and develop economic stability. These challenges disadvantage youth as they are entering adulthood, putting them on a trajectory of underearning and further disadvantage throughout their lifespan, making it difficult for them to achieve the levels of success to which they might otherwise aspire.

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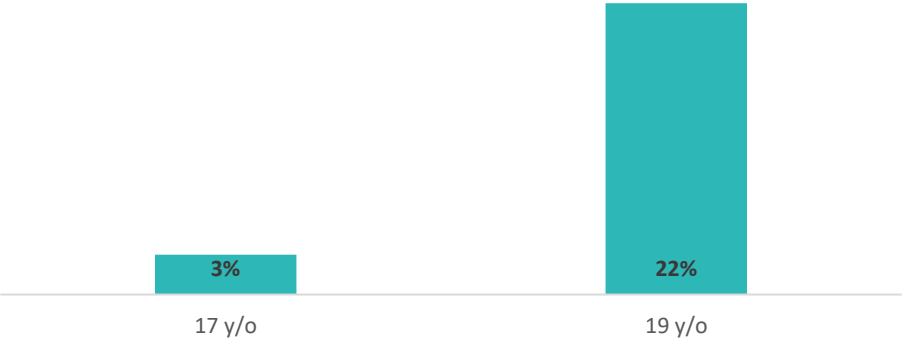
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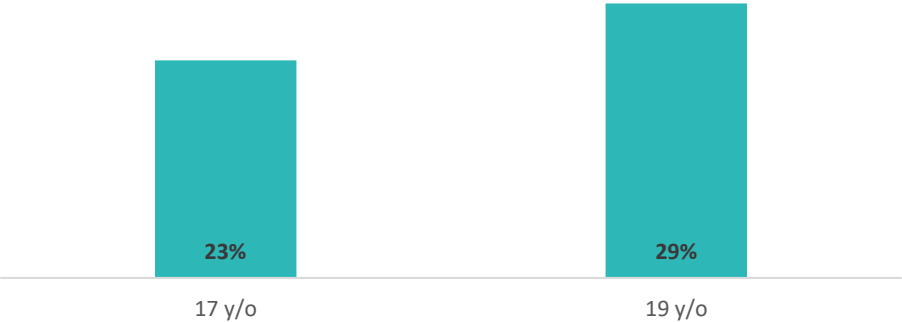
APPENDIX – CHARTS FOR THE FEDERAL NYTD QUESTIONS

In this section, you will find bar graphs for each of the federal NYTD questions answered by youth who took the survey at age 17 **and** at age 19 (n=109).

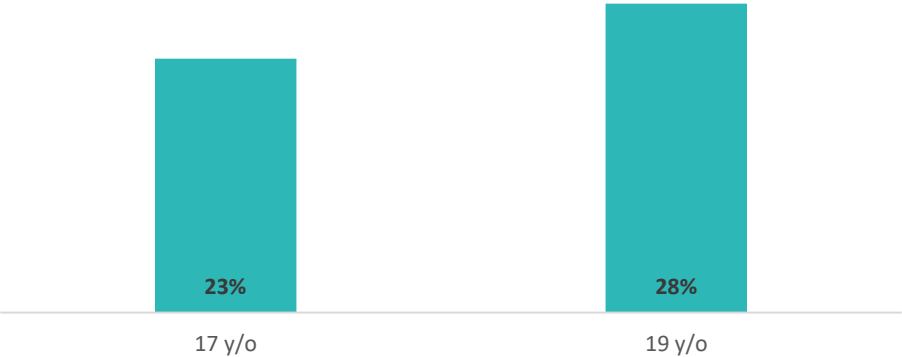
Question 37: Currently employed full-time



Question 38: Currently employed part-time



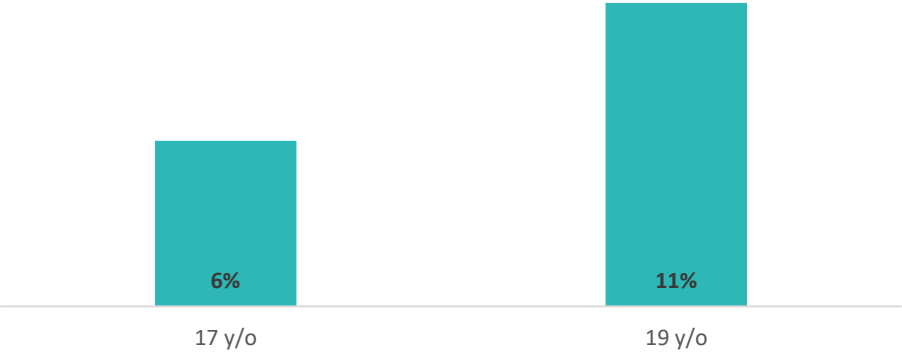
Question 39: In the past year, completed an apprenticeship, internship, or other on-the-job training, either paid or unpaid



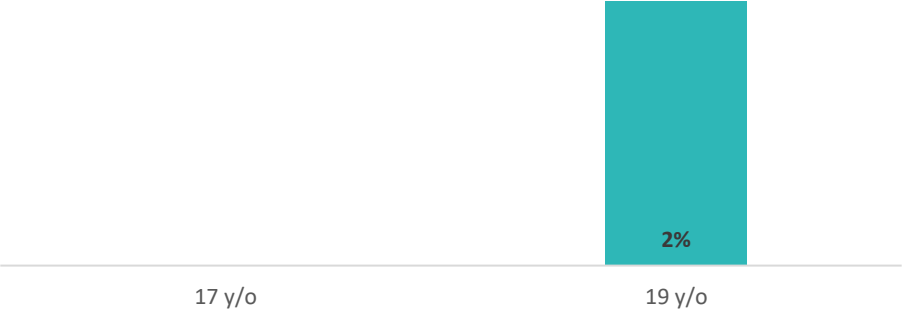
Question 40: Currently receiving Social Security payments



Question 41: Currently using scholarship, grant, stipend, student loan, voucher, or other type of educational financial aid to cover any educational expenses

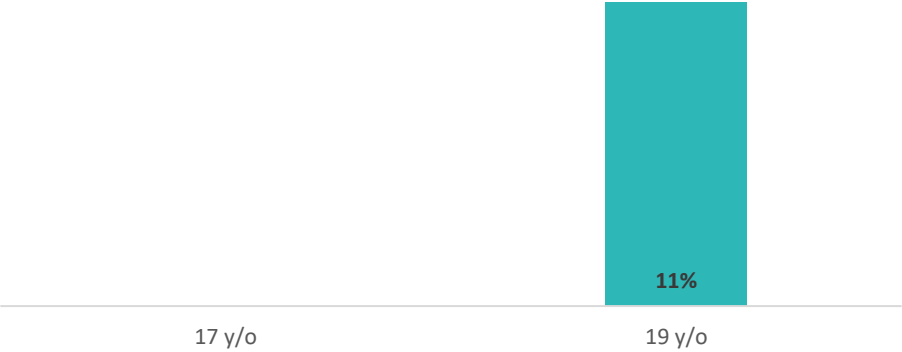


Question 42: Currently receiving ongoing welfare payments from the government to support basic needs*



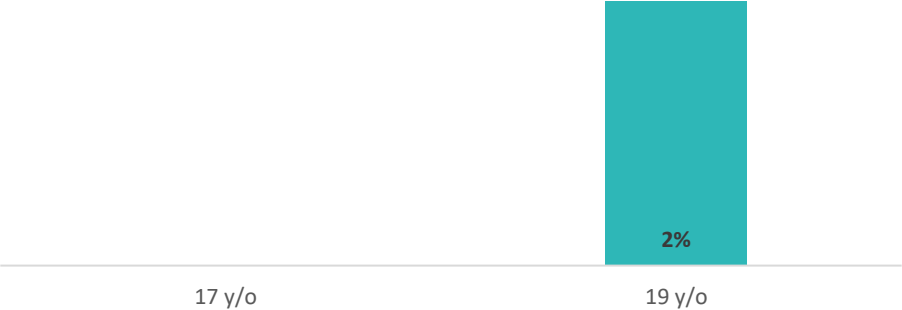
*Youth are not asked this item at age 17.

Question 43: Currently receiving public food assistance*



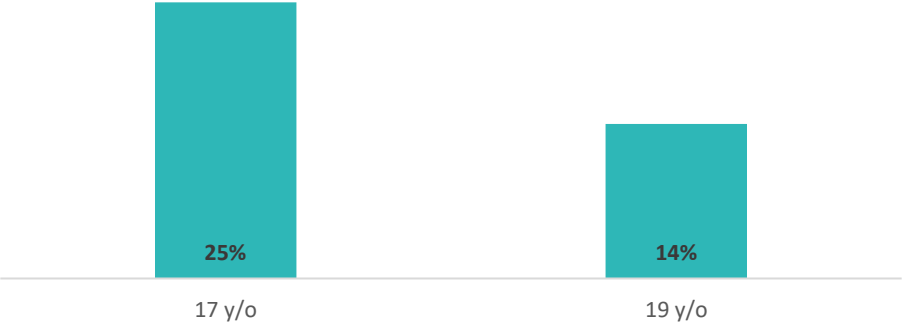
*Youth are not asked this item at age 17.

Question 44: Currently receiving any sort of housing assistance from the government, such as living in public housing or receiving a housing voucher*

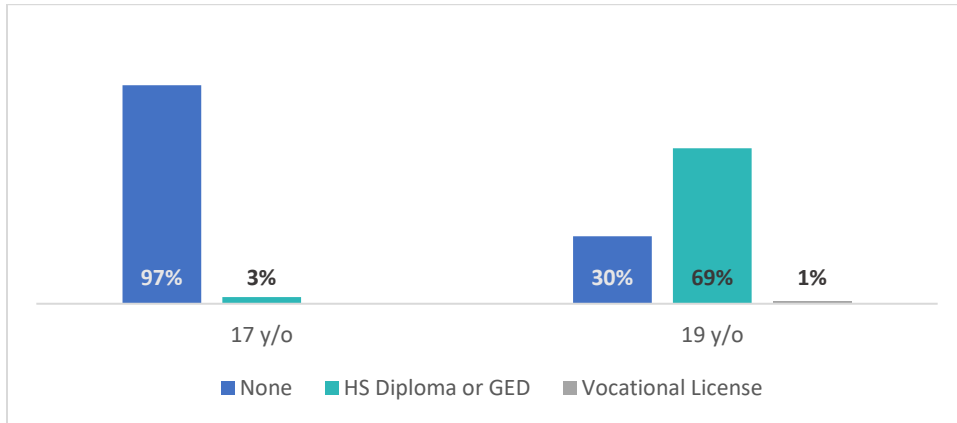


*Youth are not asked this item at age 17.

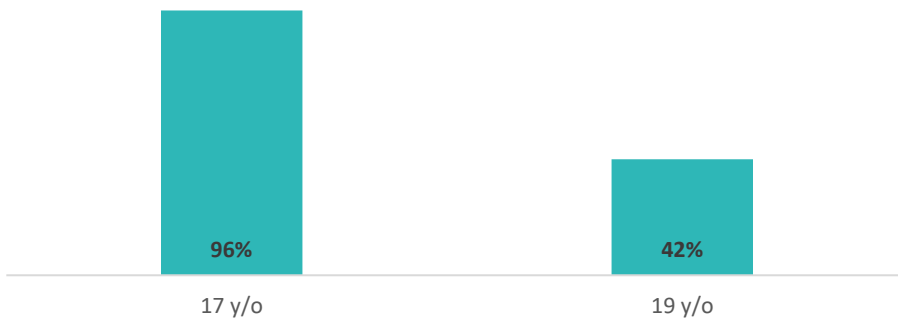
Question 45: Currently receiving any periodic and/or significant financial resources or support from another source not previously indicated and excluding paid employment



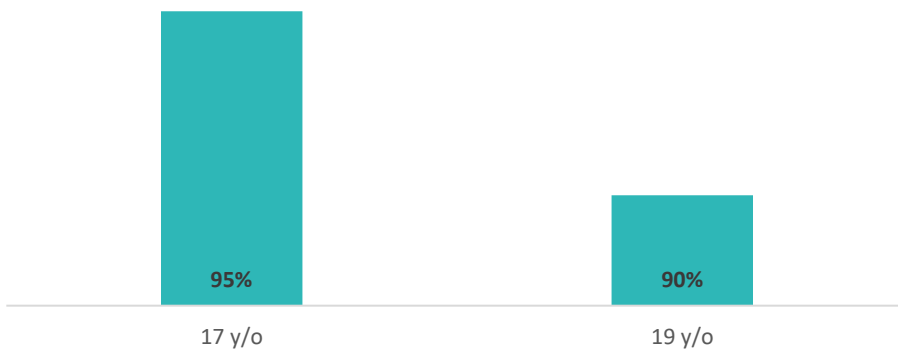
Question 46: Highest education degree or certification you have received



Question 47: Currently enrolled in and attending high school, GED classes, post-high school vocational training, or college



Question 48: Youth currently has at least one adult in their life, other than a caseworker, to whom they can go for advice or emotional support

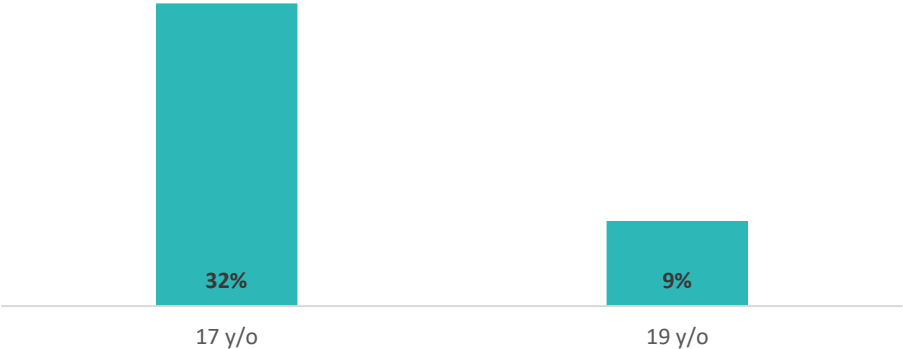


Question 49: Homeless at any time in the past two 2 years*



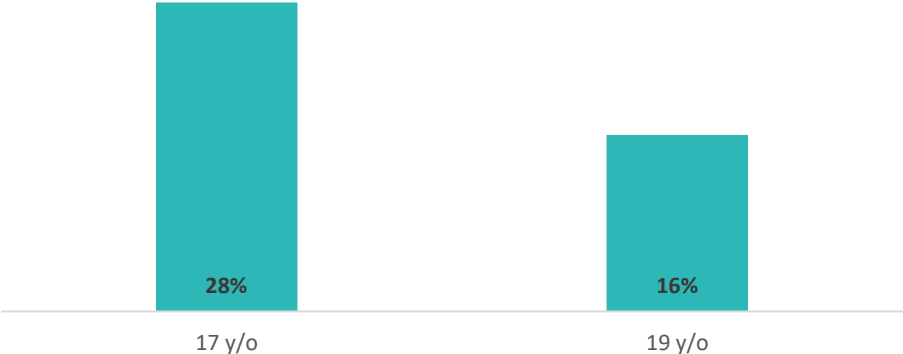
*At 17, youth are asked if they were ever homeless at any time prior to the survey date.

Question 50: In the past two years, referred for an alcohol or drug abuse assessment for counseling by self or someone else*



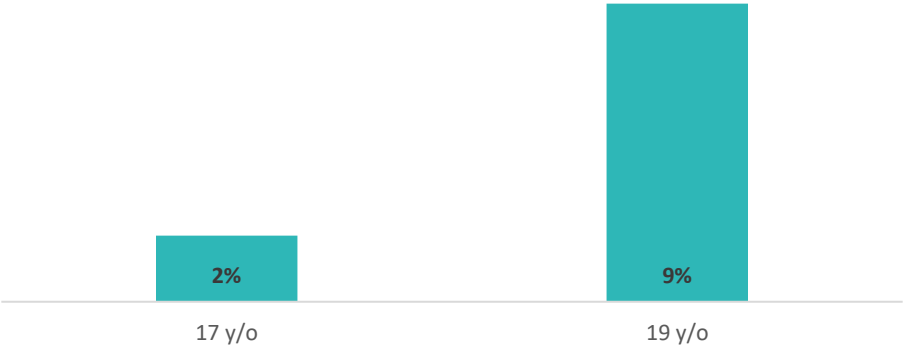
*At 17, youth are asked if they were referred at any time prior to the survey date.

Question 51: In the past two years, confined to jail, prison, correctional facility, or juvenile or community detention facility in connection with allegedly committing a crime*



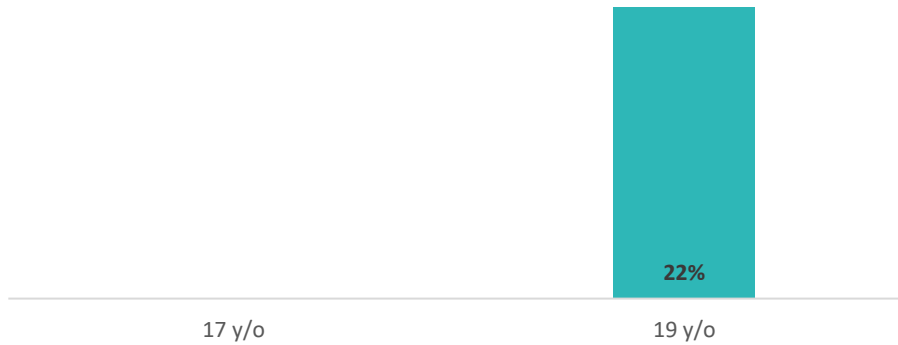
*At 17, youth are asked if they were incarcerated at any time prior to the survey date.

Question 52: In the past two years, gave birth or fathered a child*

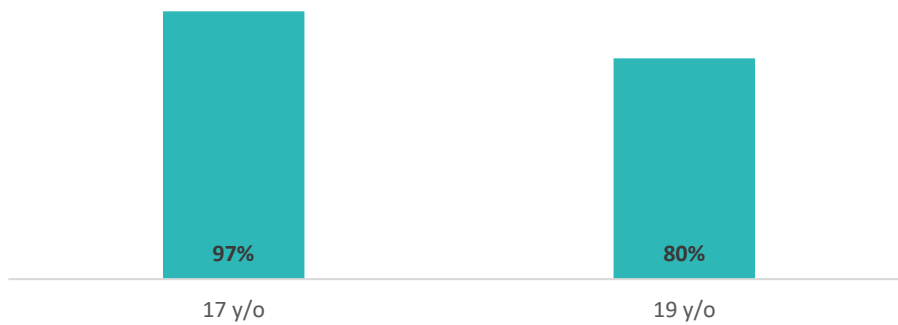


*At 17, youth are asked if they gave birth or fathered a child any time prior to the survey date.

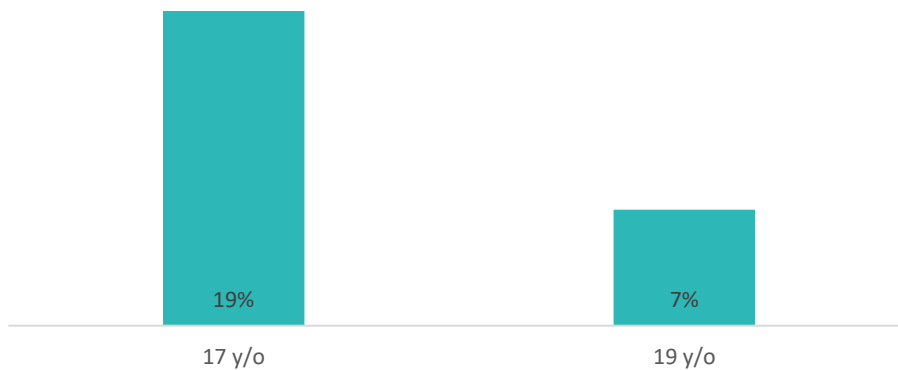
Question 53: Married to the child's other parent at the time each child was born (if yes to question 52)



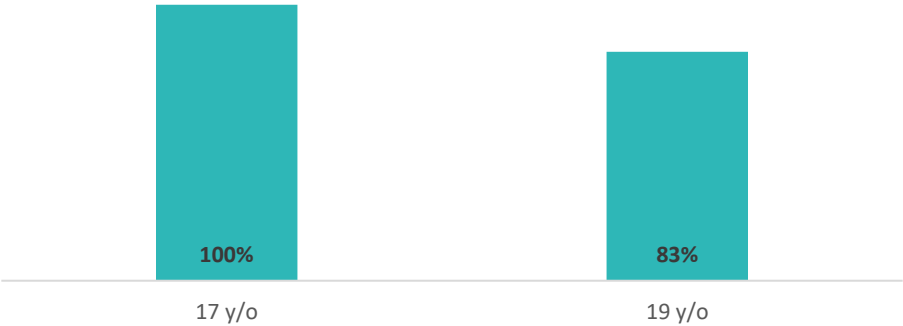
Question 54: Currently on Medicaid



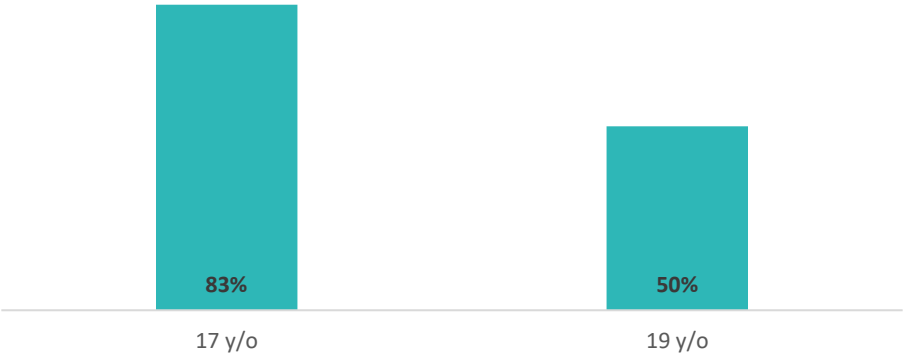
Question 55: Has insurance other than Medicaid



Question 56: Insurance covers medical services (if yes to question 55)



Question 57: Insurance covers mental health services (if yes to question 55)



Question 58: Insurance covers prescription drugs (if yes to question 55)

