

## The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth from Foster Care A National Poll

May 13, 2020

### SUMMARY

Over the past several months, FosterClub has received an increase in calls and social media outreach from young adults from foster care who are struggling as a result of COVID-19. FosterClub conducted a poll in late March ([results here](#)) and an additional poll in early May to gain a better sense of how young people are doing. This second poll, summarized below, included 613 respondents from 44 states between the ages of 18 and 24. On average, the young adults have spent 7 years in care, and some are still in care. The poll looked at access to stimulus aid, employment, housing, food security, health and connections. The findings suggest that COVID-19 has negatively and significantly affected young people from foster care who are in the early stage of transitioning to independent adulthood by causing them to lose employment and housing, have food insecurity, struggle to get health care, and become isolated as many do not have significant relationships they can rely on for financial or emotional support.

### Key Findings

- **Employment:** Nearly 65 percent of transition-age youth from foster care who were working before the pandemic have lost employment; half of those who applied for unemployment benefits did not receive assistance.
- **Stimulus Checks:** More than half of the young people from foster care reported they did not receive the stimulus check (52%).
- **Food Insecurity:** Nearly 1 in 5 young people, or 19% of those questioned, reported they have run out of food.
- **Housing Stability:** 23% of young people reported that they are being forced to move or fear being forced to leave their current living situation. Several young people noted that they were able to return to a previous foster home, although they recognized that was a temporary solution. Many young people in this age group indicated that their housing was tied to their schooling, and worried where they will go if school does not reopen in the fall.
- **Guidance from Adults:** Just 37% of the transition-aged youth from foster care have family members (legal or chosen) to rely on during the crisis. One in 5 youth reported that they are entirely on their own.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### Employment

For those transition-age youth who were employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (391), 65 percent reported that they have lost employment, gig work, or have been laid off because of the pandemic. Of those affected, 26% were laid off, and 29% have seen their hours (24%) or gig work (5%) decreased. About 8% are unsure of the impact of the virus on their work. Slightly more than 27% have not had their employment status affected.

How has COVID impacted your employment (for those who were employed)	# Responses	% Total
I am not sure yet of the impact	32	8.2%
I was laid off because of the crisis	141	36.1%
My employment status has not been impacted	106	27.1%
My gig work has decreased	18	4.6%
My hours have been severely cut	94	24.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**“Forced to leave my college where my job was.”**

— 21 year old from Indiana

### Unemployment benefits

Of those whose work has been affected by COVID-19, 31% applied for unemployment.

Did you apply for unemployment?	# Responses	% Total
No	170	44.0%
Not applicable	97	25.1%
Yes	119	30.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**“I applied for unemployment 5 weeks ago and haven't heard back.”**

— 19 year old in Oklahoma

Of those who lost work because of COVID 19 who also applied for unemployment benefits, half did not receive benefits. 41 percent did receive unemployment benefits.

Did you receive unemployment?	# Responses	% Total
No	53	50.0%
Not applicable	10	9.4%
Yes	43	40.6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of those who applied but did not get benefits, respondents reported they had trouble getting through the forms, getting the information they needed, not understanding how to apply and that they were told they were ineligible.

**“I applied for unemployment on April 3 and still haven't been contacted.”**

— 20 year old from New York

What challenges did you face in applying for unemployment (of those who applied, but did not receive)	# Responses	% Total
I couldn't get through or get the info I needed	40	48.2%
I didn't understand how to apply	15	18.1%
I was told I'm not eligible.	28	33.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Stimulus Checks

Slightly more than half of the young people reported they did not receive the stimulus check (52%) while slightly less than half of the respondents reported that they had received it (48%). Of those who tried to get stimulus funds (381 respondents), 42% were unsuccessful.

Of those young adults who were unable to get the stimulus funds, they reported not knowing what's needed to get the funds. 38% were unable to get funds because they didn't file taxes in 2018 or 2019, and a third reported they were unable to get funds because someone else had claimed them on taxes last year. Approximately 40% weren't even sure whether they were eligible.

**“I have no money to buy food.  
I haven't ate in 48 hours just trying to  
stay hydrated.”**

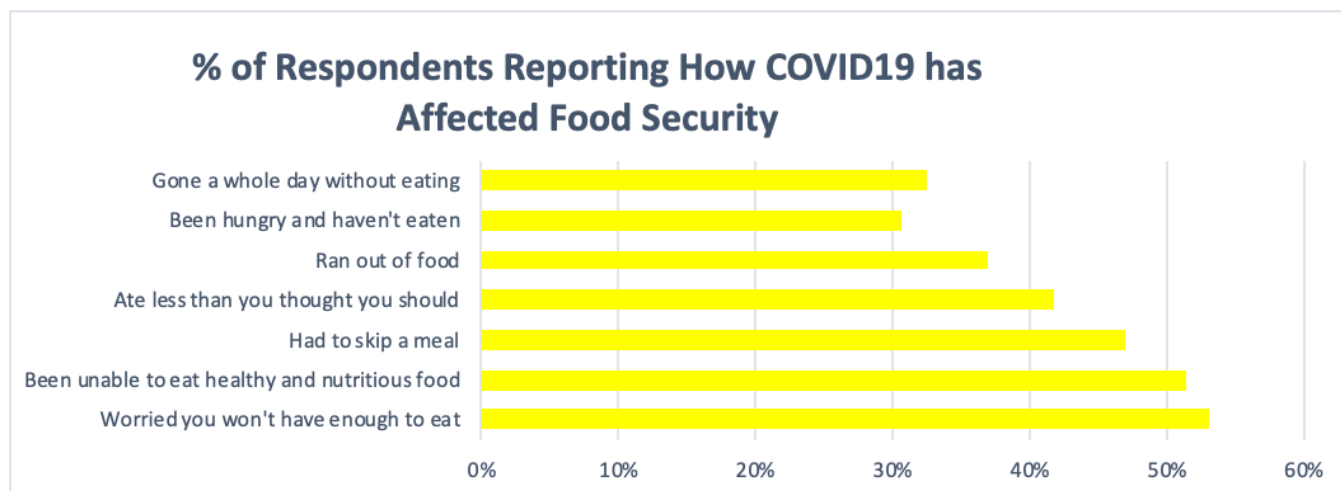
— 21 year old from New Jersey

## Food

Nearly 1 in 5 young people, or 19% of those who responded, reported they have run out of food. Of the 613 respondents, 51% reported having some challenges with food security because of COVID. Of those 311 respondents, more than half were worried they wouldn't have enough to eat (53%), and about half reported they have been unable to eat health and nutritious food (51%). About 47% of the subgroup facing food insecurity have had to skip a meal, 42% reported eating less than they thought they should, 31% reported being hungry and not having eaten. 32% reported having gone a whole day without eating, while 37% reported they had run out of food.

**“I was rejected for CalFresh and am  
currently trying to reapply.”**

— 19 year old from California



**“Former foster parents agreed to let me  
stay, but it's not a permanent solution...”**

— 21 year old from Indiana

## **“My foster mom has sepsis and if she gets sick then I will have to leave.”**

— 18 year old from Iowa

### **Housing**

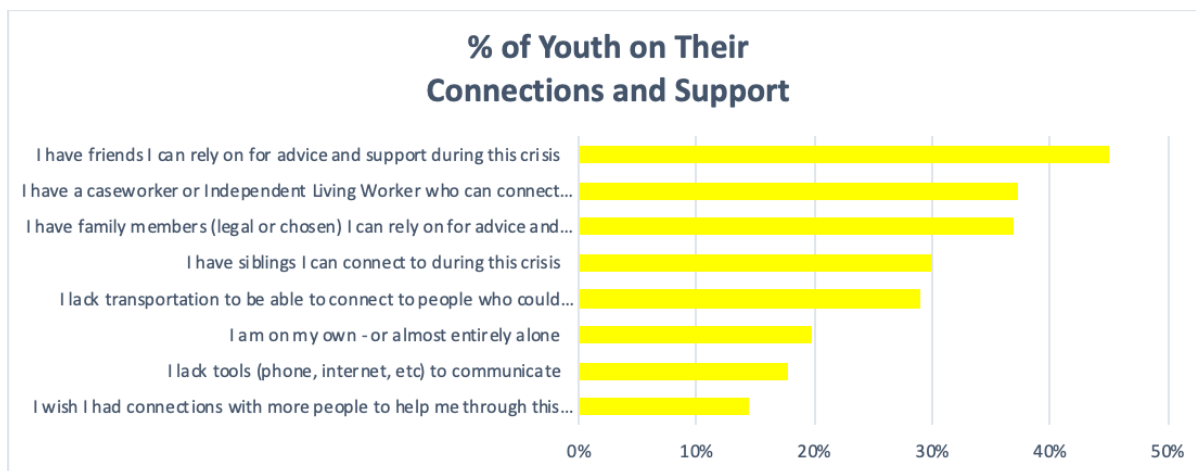
It appears that many young have landed, at least temporarily, in some kind of housing situation, with 77% reporting their current living situation as “seems stable”. However, 23% reported that they are being forced to move or fear being forced to leave their current living situation. Several young people noted that they were able to return to a previous foster home, although they recognized that was a temporary solution. Many young people in this age group indicated that their housing was tied to their schooling, and worried where they will go if school does not reopen in the fall.

## **“I’ve actually been staying with my boyfriend; none of my relatives are able to take me in.”**

— 20 year old from Wisconsin

### **Connections & Support**

Only 37% of the young people who responded have family members (legal or chosen) to rely on during the crisis. Less than half indicated they have friends they can rely on for advice and support (45%). 1 in 5 youth reported that they are entirely on their own.

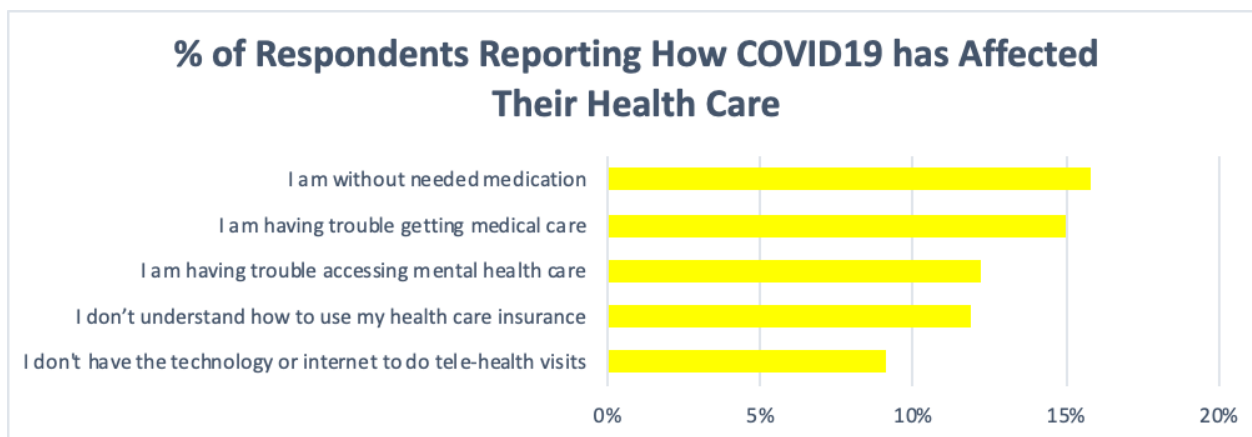


## **“I haven’t heard from a social worker yet.”**

— 18 year old from California

### **Health care**

Approximately 82%, or 502 of the 612 respondents, reported that they have health care insurance, however, 18% did not have health care or were unsure whether they had it. About 15% say they are having trouble getting medical care, 12% are having trouble accessing mental health care, 16% said they are without needed medication, 12% don’t know how to use their health care insurance; and 9% don’t have technology or internet to do telehealth visits.



## **“I’m unable to obtain my inhaler and my ADHD meds because we’re on such a tight budget right now.”**

— 23 year old from Minnesota

## METHODOLOGY

Between May 1-May 8, FosterClub conducted a national poll of youth who were in foster care to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their employment, housing, food security, health and connections. A call through FosterClub’s networks, emails and social media was made to identify respondents, and a convenience sample was obtained. FosterClub received 613 valid responses from young people who completed the questions. Each young person who provided a valid response received \$25 for their participation. Respondents who did not complete the questionnaire completely, those who had duplicate entries or payment information and those who were not from foster care were excluded from the final analysis. Due to a technical difficulty with SurveyMonkey, most demographic information was not recorded. The average age of respondents was 20 years old, and respondents ranged from 18 to 24 years old. The average length of time in foster care was 7 years. The poll included respondents living in 44 states.

Survey respondents were from 44 states, including:

Alabama	Minnesota
Alaska	Missouri
Arizona	Montana
Arkansas	Nebraska
California	Nevada
Colorado	New Hampshire
Connecticut	New Jersey
Delaware	New York
District of Columbia (DC)	North Carolina
Florida	North Dakota
Georgia	Ohio
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Idaho	Oregon
Illinois	Pennsylvania
Indiana	South Carolina
Iowa	Tennessee
Kansas	Texas
Kentucky	Utah
Louisiana	Virginia
Maryland	Washington
Massachusetts	West Virginia
Michigan	Wisconsin

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