A DECISION BRIEF FOR CITY STAFF AND COUNCILLORS

The State of Youth in Toronto — in brief

The published record on Toronto's young people: the conditions, the response, and what the record does not contain.

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Toronto can't tell whether its young people are better off, because the numbers don't add up across systems. Where they do, most are moving the wrong way. The absence of published data is itself a finding.

581,210 residents aged 5 to 24 — Toronto, 2021 Census	**20.8%** of the city's population — Toronto, 2021 Census	**25.3%** of children aged 0 to 17 in low income — Toronto, 2022	**37.0%** of youth in grades 7 to 12 report fair or poor mental health — Toronto, 2023	**18.0%** unemployment, ages 15 to 24 — Toronto area (CMA), 2025	**10%** of people surveyed in the 2024 homelessness count (a sample of those counted) were aged 16 to 24 — Toronto, 2024

THE SEVEN AREAS, AT A GLANCE

4 areas are worse — Money · Food · Health · Work

1 is mixed — Safety: the counts fell, but the record cannot say whether young people shared in it

2 cannot be told — Home · School: no fair comparison exists

Seven areas were rated. Four moved the wrong way: more children in low-income households (1 in 4 in 2022), more children in homes that struggle to afford food (about 1 in 3), more students reporting fair or poor mental health (more than 1 in 3), and more young people who cannot find work (nearly 1 in 5 of those looking). Shootings and homicides fell — but the record cannot say whether young people shared in that, because police publish no breakdown by victims' ages. For housing and for graduation, no fair comparison exists at all: the counts were taken in different seasons, and no earlier graduation rate is published.

The one-page scorecard carries every rating; this brief explains what sits behind them.

THE RECORD BEHIND THE RATINGS

What the ratings rest on

Money — WORSE. 25.3% of Toronto children aged 0 to 17 were in low income in 2022 (the census family low-income measure, CFLIM-AT) — 117,890 children, up from 16.8% in 2020; the 2020 starting point includes temporary pandemic income supports (the 2020 income year included temporary pandemic transfers), which the source prints as a reason 2020 is not directly comparable with adjacent years. The median income of Torontonians aged 15 to 24 who had income was $14,100 in 2024, down in real terms from $20,500 in 2020 (the figures are for the Toronto CMA, in constant 2024 dollars).

Home — CAN'T TELL. The City's point-in-time counts found 7,347 people experiencing homelessness on a single night in April 2021, 15,418 in October 2024, and 12,196 in October 2025 — counts in different seasons; not a like-for-like trend. The 2024 count included 6,350 refugee claimants in shelters.

Food — WORSE. A Toronto rate for children and youth was published once: 18.5%, ages 1 to 17, in 2019. Public Health Ontario now publishes Toronto child values only as pooled estimates — each figure combines two years of surveys: the pooled estimates stood at 28.4% (2019–2020) and 32.0% (2023–2024); pooled estimates are not a trend. No annual Toronto child rate exists. Why WORSE, then, at low confidence: each pooled window sits higher than the one before it on the same measure, and the city's food banks recorded 4,124,313 client visits (attendances, not unique individuals) in the year to March 2025 — the direction is consistent even though the pooled figures cannot prove a year-by-year trend.

Health — WORSE. 37.0% of Toronto youth in grades 7 to 12 reported fair or poor mental health in 2023, up from 27.1% in 2019 — the same Toronto survey, the same question, four years apart.

School — CAN'T TELL. The five-year graduation rate was 87.4% at the Toronto District School Board and 91.5% at the Toronto Catholic board, against 89.5% for Ontario. Earlier rates exist in other publications, on different bases; none matches this record closely enough to compare.

Safety — MIXED (better on the counts; the youth share is not published). Toronto Police Service counted 263 shootings and firearm discharges in 2025, down from 462 in 2024, and 45 homicides, down from 85. The published record contains no victim-age breakdown for either, so it cannot say how much of that improvement reached young people.

Work — WORSE. The Toronto CMA (the city and surrounding area) unemployment rate for ages 15 to 24 was 18.0% in 2025, against 12.3% in 2019 (series break in 2025 — the survey table behind the series was replaced). Ontario's NEET rate — young people not in employment, education or training — was 13% for ages 15 to 29 in 2025. No Toronto NEET series is published.

THE RESPONSE

More money, spent in silos

The problem is not an absence of spending. SafeTO alone was funded at $43 million in 2025. The problem is how the money is arranged: program by program, level of government by level of government, each reporting in its own units — visits, spaces licensed, calls — with no shared measure of what a young person receives, and no published total for youth at all.

Toronto's **≈$236 per resident aged 5–24** is an upper bound: the division's full gross budget, most of it not youth-specific, divided by the 2021 Census count of residents aged 5 to 24. The denominator is the 2021 count held constant, not a 2025 population count. Read against other cities as orders of magnitude, not a ranking: New York's figure is ≈$1,113 per resident on the same basis. Chicago's ≈$2,042 is not like-for-like — its department bundles functions spread across five Toronto divisions. Montreal publishes no figure that can be computed.

Figure 8 — The published response, by level of government and the unit each program reports in

Read the last column: each program reports in a different unit — dollars, visits, calls, spaces — so the rows cannot be added up, and no row reports whether a young person's life improved.

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	PROGRAM — AND THE FIGURE IT PUBLISHES	WHAT IT REPORTS — THE UNIT
City of Toronto	**SafeTO** — $43M (2025)	DOLLARS ALLOCATED
	Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) grants — $33.4M (2026)	DOLLARS ALLOCATED
	Youth Hubs (Toronto Public Library) — 129,000 teen visits (Jan–Aug 2025; visits, not unique teens — a returning teen counts again)	VISITS
	Toronto Community Crisis Service — 17,000+ calls (2025)	CALLS
Ontario	**Before/after-school licensing** — 40,943 spaces (Dec 2025)	SPACES LICENSED
	Youth Opportunities Fund — no Toronto total published	NOT PUBLISHED
	Ontario After School Program — Toronto share not published	NOT PUBLISHED
Canada	**Youth Employment and Skills Strategy** — no Toronto figure published	NOT PUBLISHED
	Canada Summer Jobs — no Toronto figure published	NOT PUBLISHED

Where the money overlaps: SafeTO's $5M youth-violence component sits inside the Social Development budget that also carries the CPIP grants, so those two rows share money and cannot be added. The full program table is printed in the Technical Appendix.

No row publishes whether a young person's life improved.

Source: program figures as printed in the text; the full program table is printed in the Technical Appendix.

One finding runs through all three levels of government: the published totals stop one level above youth. Toronto publishes no youth total.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

What the record does not contain

Each measure below was sought in the published record and not found at the standard the study applies; nothing here has been estimated or modelled.

Victims by age

NOT PUBLISHED

The Toronto Police Service publishes no count of shooting victims by age, and no count of homicide victims by age; its Homicides dataset carries no age field.

A Toronto youth justice series

NOT PUBLISHED

No city-level series for charges, diversion, or custody is published at any stage of the system.

An annual Toronto food-insecurity rate

NOT PUBLISHED

Published once: 18.5% of children and youth aged 1 to 17 in 2019. Public Health Ontario publishes Toronto children-under-18 values only as pooled estimates (32.0% for 2023–2024).

A child poverty rate for Toronto

NOT PUBLISHED

No child-specific Market Basket Measure rate is published for the city or the CMA; no youth core-housing-need rate either (published figure is all-household, 19%, 2021).

A Toronto NEET series

NOT PUBLISHED

None exists at city or CMA level; no Toronto CMA split of the youth labour force into ages 15–19 and 20–24; no Toronto total for Canada Summer Jobs.

The 15,000 jobs paper trail

NOT PUBLISHED

No primary City source: no City release, budget document, or costing publishes it; verifiable only as an October 2026 campaign commitment.

Youth-level response detail

NOT PUBLISHED

No youth slice of CPIP ($33.4M, 2026); no standalone Toronto Community Crisis Service budget; OASP Toronto share and YOF Toronto aggregate not published; Before/After School enrolment not published — licensed capacity (40,943 spaces, December 2025) is the published figure.

Road deaths and injuries under 20

NOT PUBLISHED

The City's Vision Zero reporting publishes no killed-or-seriously-injured figure for any age band under 20.

WHAT THE DATA DOESN'T TELL US

Absence of public reporting is not absence of service or impact. These tiles record what is not published — they say nothing about whether the work is happening. A program can be running, and helping, and still leave no public record a reader can check.

THE COMPANION

A one-page companion — *What a youth scorecard would need* — sets out the four published measures that would let the city answer, each year, whether its young people are better off. It accompanies this brief.

This brief summarises *The State of Youth in Toronto* (November 2026), compiled from published sources only; the full record is in the study and its Technical Appendix. The study makes no recommendations. Swabir Shariff · Toronto, Canada