The State of Youth in Toronto

What Toronto's published record can — and cannot — tell us about its young people

The published record — the state of the city's young people, and the response, in one short read

This optional volume gathers the study and the Toronto Youth Alignment Plan into one continuous read, in this order: the question, the answer, the evidence, the response, the proof, the solution, the limit. The scorecard and the companion open it, unchanged. The approved standalone documents are unchanged by it, and the Technical Appendix is not reprinted here — it is referenced where its detail sits. Nothing in this volume replaces the standalones unless the author decides it does.

Swabir Shariff
Toronto, Canada

November 2026
Compiled from published sources, November 5, 2026

THE QUESTION · THE ANSWER · THE EVIDENCE · THE RESPONSE · THE PROOF · THE SOLUTION · THE LIMIT

The State of Youth in Toronto — Scorecard

Swabir Shariff · Toronto, Canada · November 2026

Toronto cannot say whether its young people are better off, because the numbers are published in pieces that don't add up. Where they do add up, most are moving the wrong way.

HOW TO READ THIS PAGE **Then** = the earliest published figure. **Now** = the latest. **WORSE** = moved the wrong way. **CAN'T TELL** = no fair comparison exists. **MIXED** = some better, some worse — or better overall, with the youth share unknown.

AREA	THEN	NOW	RATING
MONEY **1 in 4 Toronto children lives in a low-income household** Children in low income, ages 0 to 17, Toronto — census family low-income measure, after tax	**16.8%** 2020	**25.3%** 2022 — 117,890 children Median income, ages 15 to 24: **$20,500** (2020) → **$14,100** (2024) (Toronto CMA, constant 2024 $)	**WORSE** The 2020 figures include temporary pandemic transfers.
HOME **People counted homeless on a single night — all ages, and most are adults** People counted experiencing homelessness, Toronto — the city's street needs count	**7,347** Apr 2021	**15,418** Oct 2024 Latest count: **12,196** (Oct 2025)	**CAN'T TELL** The counts were taken in different months and conditions; the 2024 count included 6,350 refugee claimants.
FOOD **About 1 in 3 children lives in a home that struggles to afford food** Children in food-insecure households, under 18, Toronto — each figure combines two years	**28.4%** 2019–2020, combined	**32.0%** 2023–2024, combined	**WORSE** Combined figures are not a trend; rated worse at low confidence — every combined window sits higher than the last on the same measure. No single-year Toronto rate is published.
HEALTH **More than 1 in 3 students say their mental health is fair or poor** Youth reporting fair or poor mental health, grades 7 to 12, Toronto	**27.1%** 2019	**37.0%** 2023	**WORSE** Two points from the same survey — the cleanest comparison in the study.
SCHOOL **87 in 100 TDSB students graduate within five years** Five-year graduation rate, Toronto District School Board	— no like-for-like earlier rate	**87.4%** cohort that began Grade 9 in 2019–20; Catholic board 91.5%, Ontario 89.5%	**CAN'T TELL** Earlier rates appear in other publications on different bases; none matches this one closely enough to call a trend.
SAFETY **Shootings and homicides both fell in 2025** Shootings and firearm discharges · homicides, all ages, Toronto	**462 · 85** 2024	**263 · 45** 2025	**MIXED** No victim-age breakdown is published — how much of the improvement reached young people is unknown.
WORK **Nearly 1 in 5 young people looking for work can't find a job** Unemployment rate, ages 15 to 24, Toronto and surrounding area	**12.3%** 2019	**18.0%** 2025	**WORSE** The survey table was replaced in 2025 — a break in the series, marked in the study; Toronto publishes no series for young people who are not in work, school or training.

THE RESPONSE **More money, spent in silos.** SafeTO alone was funded at **$43 million in 2025**. No published total for youth exists.

Prepared from published sources only. Figures as published in *The State of Youth in Toronto* (November 2026) and its Technical Appendix. This page may be circulated on its own. **Sources:** 2021 Census of Population; Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (taxfiler data); City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment, 2021, 2024 and 2025; Public Health Ontario (Canadian Income Survey, pooled two-year estimates); Toronto Public Health student survey; TDSB and TCDSB Student Achievement Plans; Toronto Police Service; Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

COMPANION TO THE STATE OF YOUTH IN TORONTO

What a youth scorecard would need

Four published measures would let Toronto answer, each year, whether its young people are better off.

For city staff and councillors · Swabir Shariff · Toronto, Canada · November 2026

The State of Youth in Toronto (November 2026) reads the published record on the city's young people and finds that, on most of what can be measured twice, they are worse off than they were — and on the rest, the record cannot say, because the figures are published in pieces that do not add up. The study itself makes no recommendations. This page is separate from it: it sets out the four things the published record would need for a youth scorecard to work.

1. A published youth total

One figure, published each year, for what Toronto spends on young people — so the response can be weighed against the conditions it is meant to change. Today the published totals stop one level above youth, and no total exists.

2. Victim-age fields for shootings and homicides

Toronto Police Service counts improved sharply in 2025 — 263 shootings and firearm discharges, down from 462 in 2024; 45 homicides, down from 85 — but neither dataset publishes victims' ages, so the city cannot say whether young people shared in the improvement.

3. A Toronto NEET series

A NEET series is a yearly count, published for one place, of the share of young people in none of employment, education or training — the group that work and school statistics each miss. Ontario publishes one: 13% for ages 15 to 29 in 2025. No Toronto series exists at city or CMA (census metropolitan area) level, so the city cannot count its own.

4. One shared outcome measure across programs

Programs now report in their own units — visits, spaces licensed, calls, dollars allocated — and no row publishes whether a young person's life improved. One shared outcome measure, reported by every funded program, would let results be compared and added up.

None of the four requires a new program. Each is a field, a series, or a total that an existing publisher could add to what it already releases — and each would be published on the same terms as the rest of the record: with its age band, geography, and year printed beside it.

Companion to *The State of Youth in Toronto* (November 2026) and its brief, *The State of Youth in Toronto — in brief*. Figures above are as published in the study. Swabir Shariff · Toronto, Canada

Contents

OPENING PAGES

The scorecard — the verdict page (as published) 4

The companion — what a youth scorecard would need (as published) 4

PART 01 · THE QUESTION AND THE ANSWER

The question and the answer 5

PART 02 · THE EVIDENCE

The conditions 8

Body and mind 11

School and safety 14

Work 17

PART 03 · THE RESPONSE

The published response 20

Toronto in the field 23

PART 04 · THE PROOF

The City's own count 26

PART 05 · THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

What the record does not contain 28

How this study was compiled 29

What I take from this record 29

About the author 30

PART 06 · THE SOLUTION — THE TORONTO YOUTH ALIGNMENT PLAN

The proposal, in one place 31

1. The problem: money without a promise 33

2. Toronto today: four programs, four kinds of promise 39

3. The model it follows: New York buys after-school by the place 42

4. What's broken in New York 45

5. The five fixes 47

6. Who runs the sites: three honest options 50

7. Three scales 52

8. The price, built in the open 54
9. The ledger and the verdict 56

PART 07 · THE LIMIT

10. What this plan will not claim 60
The standard the record was read to 61
What would let Toronto answer 61
Sources 62

THE FULL RECORD

Where the full record sits 64

Page numbers are this volume's. The opening pages are the published scorecard and companion, carried unchanged; their own page furniture is theirs. Cross-references inside the plan's sections are to the plan's own sections, as published.

How to read this

HOW TO READ THIS

Every figure prints its age band, geography, and year — the band, place, and year its source used. Figures are never added together across different bands, places, or years.

Ratings — WORSE / MIXED / CAN'T TELL say what changed and how much weight the comparison can carry. Each carries a confidence note.

Figure numbers and source lines — every chart and table is numbered (Figure 1, Figure 2, …) and carries a source line directly beneath it.

An absence is a finding — where no figure is published at the study's standard, the study says so. Absence of public reporting is not absence of service or impact.

The City of Toronto last published an integrated report card on its children in the early 2000s. No Toronto-wide assessment of young people's condition — across income, housing, health, schooling, safety and work — has been published since.

A note on the title

The State of Youth in Toronto is an independent, published-source assessment of how Toronto's young people are doing, what governments publish about the response, and where the public record falls short. It rates seven areas of young people's lives — money, home, food, health, school, safety and work — using only figures governments and public bodies have themselves published, and it treats what is not published as a finding in its own right.

It is not a youth consultation report, an advocacy platform, or a wellbeing survey, and it makes no recommendations. It differs from Canada's federal State of Youth Report (2021), which is national and

built from engagement with young people, and from the City of Toronto’s own Toronto Report Card on Children, the integrated children’s report card the City last published in the early 2000s. It complements the City’s Investing in Youth Outcomes framework (2021): that framework guides how City programs measure themselves internally; this report asks what the published record allows the public to know.

PART 01

The question and the answer

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.

PART 01 · THE CONDITIONS

The scorecard

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 CMA, 2025	**10%** of people surveyed in the 2024 homelessness count (a sample of those counted) were aged 16 to 24 — Toronto, 2024

Money

Children in low income, ages 0 to 17, Toronto (CFLIM-AT)

16.8% 2020 → **25.3%** 2022 — 117,890 children

WORSE

Confidence: moderate. Same measure both years; the 2020 starting point includes temporary pandemic income supports, which the source prints as a reason 2020 is not directly comparable.

Home

People counted experiencing homelessness, all ages, Toronto (Street Needs Assessment)

7,347 → 15,418 Apr 2021 → Oct 2024 → **12,196** latest count, Oct 2025

CAN’T TELL

Confidence: none on a trend. Single-night counts in different months and conditions — not a like-for-like trend; the 2024 count included 6,350 refugee claimants in shelters.

Food

Children in food-insecure households, under 18, Toronto (PHO pooled)

28.4%
2019–2020, pooled

→

32.0%
2023–2024, pooled

WORSE

Confidence: low. Pooled estimates are not a trend; no annual Toronto child rate is published. The one single-year rate — 18.5%, ages 1–17, 2019, TPH — is a different measure and is never joined to this row.

Health

Youth reporting fair or poor mental health, grades 7 to 12, Toronto (TPH)

27.1%
2019

→

37.0%
2023

WORSE

Confidence: high. The same Toronto survey, the same question, four years apart.

School

Five-year graduation rate, Toronto District School Board

—
no like-for-like earlier rate

→

87.4%
cohort that began Grade 9 in 2019–20

CAN'T TELL

Confidence: none. Earlier rates exist in other publications, on different bases that do not match this record closely enough to support a comparison. The Catholic board stands at 91.5% and Ontario at 89.5%.

Safety

Shootings and firearm discharges · homicides, all ages, Toronto (TPS)

462 · 85
2024

→

263 · 45
2025

MIXED

Confidence: high on the counts. **None** on whether young people shared in the improvement: victims' ages are not published for either count.

Work

Unemployment, ages 15 to 24, Toronto CMA (LFS)

12.3%
2019

→

18.0%
2025

WORSE

Confidence: high. The same survey both years; its table was replaced in 2025 (series break in 2025) and the change is marked in the study.

THE RESPONSE

Spending is not the gap — SafeTO alone was funded at **$43 million** in 2025, and Toronto's Social Development figure works out to approximately $236 per resident aged 5 to 24 — 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. What is missing is a shared account of results: each program reports in its own units — visits, spaces, calls, dollars — and no published total for young people exists.

Prepared from published sources only, and may be circulated on its own. The full record behind every figure — sources, methods, and the figures that could not be found — is in The State of Youth in Toronto (November 2026) and its Technical Appendix. Swabir Shariff · Toronto, Canada

Sources: 2021 Census of Population; Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (taxfiler data); City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment, 2021, 2024 and 2025; Public Health Ontario (Canadian Income Survey, pooled); Toronto Public Health student survey; TDSB and TCDSB Student Achievement Plans; Toronto Police Service; Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

PART 02

The evidence

PART 02 · THE EVIDENCE

The conditions

Who they are. Toronto counted **581,210 residents aged 5 to 24** in the 2021 Census — 20.8% of the city's population, out of a total of 2,794,356. Counting from birth, 704,760 residents were aged 0 to 24, or 25.2% of the city. Children aged 0 to 14 numbered 384,300, or 13.8% of the population, down from 14.6% in 2016. Young people aged 15 to 24 numbered **320,460**, and the largest single band under 25 was ages 20 to 24, at **185,650**. Between the 2016 and 2021 censuses, the population under 25 fell by 33,645. Every figure in this paragraph comes from that one census, counted on Census Day, May 11, 2021. The city's total population of 2,794,356 was 2.3% higher than its 2016 Census count. The sources that follow publish their own age bands and their own geographies — some cover the city, some the wider Toronto census metropolitan area (CMA) — and each figure below keeps the band, place, and year its source used.

581,210
residents aged 5–24 — Toronto, 2021 Census

25.3% · 117,890
children aged 0–17 in low income (CFLIM-AT) — Toronto, 2022

15,418 vs 7,347
people counted homeless, Oct 23, 2024 vs Apr 21, 2021 — Toronto

$1,456 vs $390
monthly bachelor rent vs Ontario Works shelter allowance — 2024

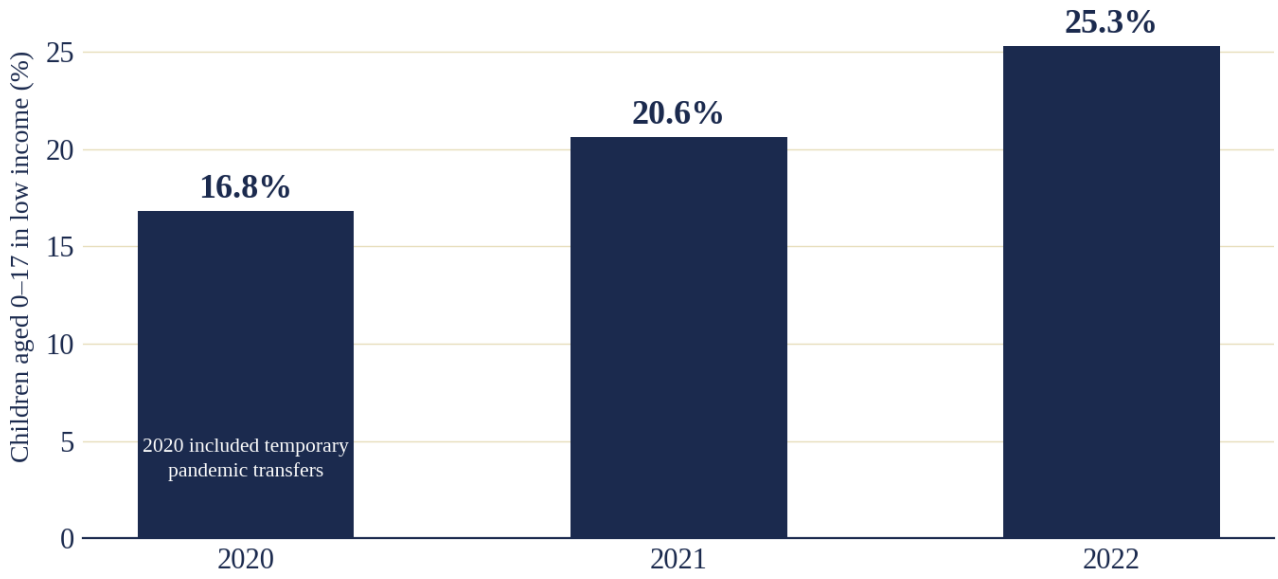
KEY FINDING

Three published measures give three different child low-income values for Toronto — 14.7% (LIM-AT, 2020), 25.3% (CFLIM-AT, 2022) and 10.0% (MBM, Toronto CMA, 2020). They are three measures side by side, not a trend; no one of them continues another.

Money. Toronto has no single child poverty number. Three published measures give three values, and each describes a different measure, population, geography, or year. On the Low Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT), 14.7% of Toronto children aged 0 to 17 lived in low-income households in the 2020 income year, as reported in the 2021 Census; that year included temporary pandemic transfers, which the source prints as a reason 2020 is not directly comparable with adjacent years. On the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT — the census-family version of the measure), 25.3% of children aged 0 to 17 were in low income in the 2022 tax year — 117,890 children — on taxfiler data rather than the census. On the Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's official poverty line, the rate was 10.0% in 2020, for all ages across the Toronto CMA (the city and surrounding area), not the city alone. These are three measures side by side, not a trend; no one of them continues another. Within its

own series, the CFLIM-AT rate rose from 16.8% in 2020 to 20.6% in 2021 and 25.3% in 2022, and children in one-parent families had a CFLIM-AT rate of 50.6% in 2022.

Figure 1 — Child low income, Toronto, Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax



Children aged 0 to 17 in low income, Toronto, one series only: the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (taxfiler data). The Low Income Measure, After Tax (14.7%, 2020) and the Market Basket Measure (10.0%, 2020, Toronto CMA, all ages) are different measures and are not plotted here — three measures side by side, not a trend.
Source: Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (taxfiler data), 2020–2022.

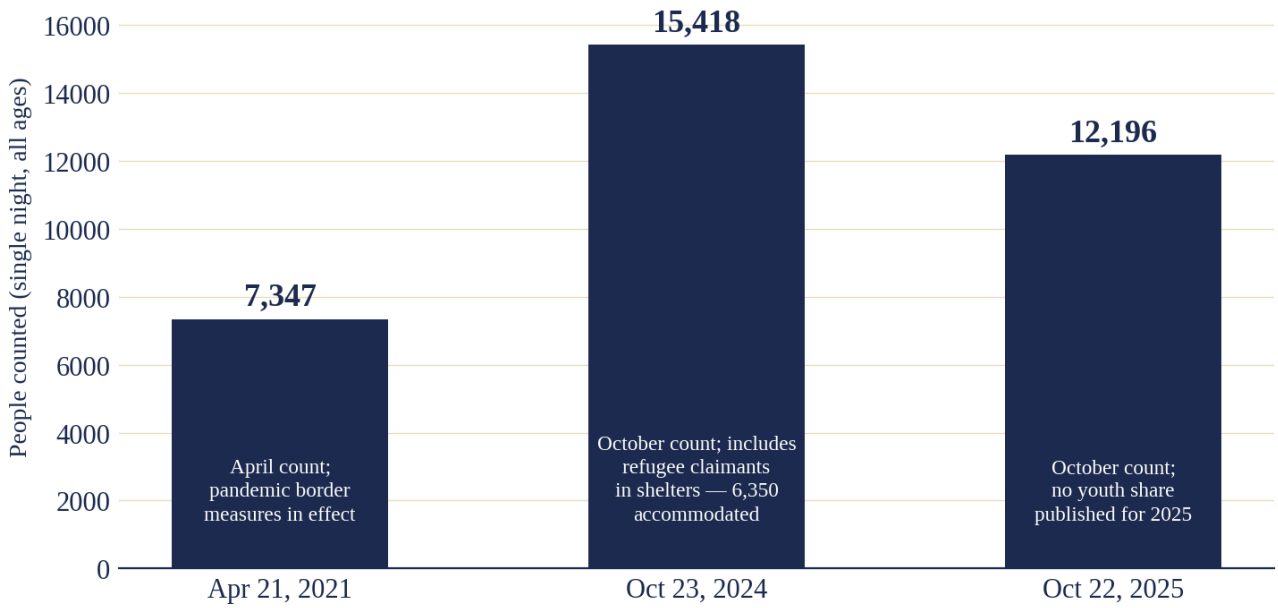
Below city level, and by equity group, the published record is uneven: the one-parent-family rate above (50.6%, 2022) is the deepest published split for child low income. No child-specific Market Basket Measure rate is published for the city or the CMA, and no youth core-housing-need rate is published. **Not published:** a child poverty rate for Toronto on the official (MBM) measure, and any neighbourhood-level child low-income series at this study's standard. Toronto's median total household income was $84,000 for the 2020 income year, the lowest median among the regions of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area in the City's backgrounder.

Young people's own incomes are published for the Toronto CMA, not the city. Among residents aged 15 to 24 who had income, the median total income was **$14,100** in 2024, in 2024 constant dollars, down in real terms from $20,500 in 2020 — the first year of a series that fell each year, starting from the income year that included pandemic transfers. Median employment income for the same band was $12,800 in 2024. In Ontario, the general minimum wage is $17.95 per hour from October 1, 2026, and the student minimum wage for students under 18 is $16.90 per hour for the same period. The depth of low income is published by family type: in 2022, the gap between the CFLIM-AT line and the median after-tax income of low-income one-parent families with two children was $15,495. Student debt is published by province of study, not for Toronto: among Ontario bachelor's graduates of the class of 2020 who owed money for their education, the average debt at graduation was $30,800, and 59% of Ontario bachelor's graduates owed debt to some source.

Housing. Toronto's 2024 point-in-time count found **15,418 people** experiencing homelessness on October 23, 2024, more than double the 7,347 counted on April 21, 2021. Both counts are single-night

counts from the City's Street Needs Assessment, and they come with the City's own cautions: the 2018 and 2021 counts were held in April and the 2024 count in October; the 2021 count was taken while pandemic border measures were in effect; and the 2024 count included a large number of refugee claimants in the shelter system, 6,350 accommodated as of the count date. On the 2024 count night, 12,304 people were in City-administered sites, 1,615 were outdoors, and 1,499 were in provincially administered institutions. The count does not include hidden homelessness, such as temporarily staying with friends or family. Youth aged 16 to 24 were 10% of people surveyed in the 2024 assessment, and the City estimates that more than 1,500 young people aged 16 to 24 experience homelessness on a given night in Toronto; the City does not publish the basis for this estimate. The 2025 count, held October 22, 2025, found 12,196 people, all ages; the City published no youth share for it.

Figure 2 — People counted experiencing homelessness, single-night counts



People counted experiencing homelessness on a single night, all ages, City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment. Counts only; no rate. The bars are not joined and are not a trend series: the counts were taken in different months and conditions, as annotated on the chart. Youth aged 16 to 24 were 10% of those surveyed in 2024; the City estimates that more than 1,500 young people aged 16 to 24 experience homelessness on a given night, and the City does not publish the basis for that estimate.

Source: City of Toronto, Street Needs Assessment 2021, 2024 and 2025.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Without a youth count on a comparable footing, no one in a city office can say whether youth homelessness is rising or falling — only that the overall count is in the tens of thousands.

Toronto had 25 youth shelters at the end of the third quarter of 2025. Average youth-shelter bed capacity was 699 beds across the first quarter of 2024 to the third quarter of 2025, and 57% of youth were reported as having been unable to access a shelter bed when they tried in the past year. Rents are published for the Toronto CMA: in October 2025, the average rent was $1,761 per month for a one-

bedroom apartment and $2,045 for a two-bedroom, with a vacancy rate of 3.0% overall. A separate City-published series prints the average market rent for a bachelor unit in Toronto as **$1,456 per month** in 2024, against a maximum Ontario Works shelter allowance of **$390 per month** for a single person in the same year. Almost one in five Toronto households was in core housing need in 2021 — **215,225 households**, 19% of households examined — including 29% of renter households and 11% of owner households. In the Toronto CMA, 47% of young adults aged 20 to 34 lived in the same household as at least one parent in 2021.

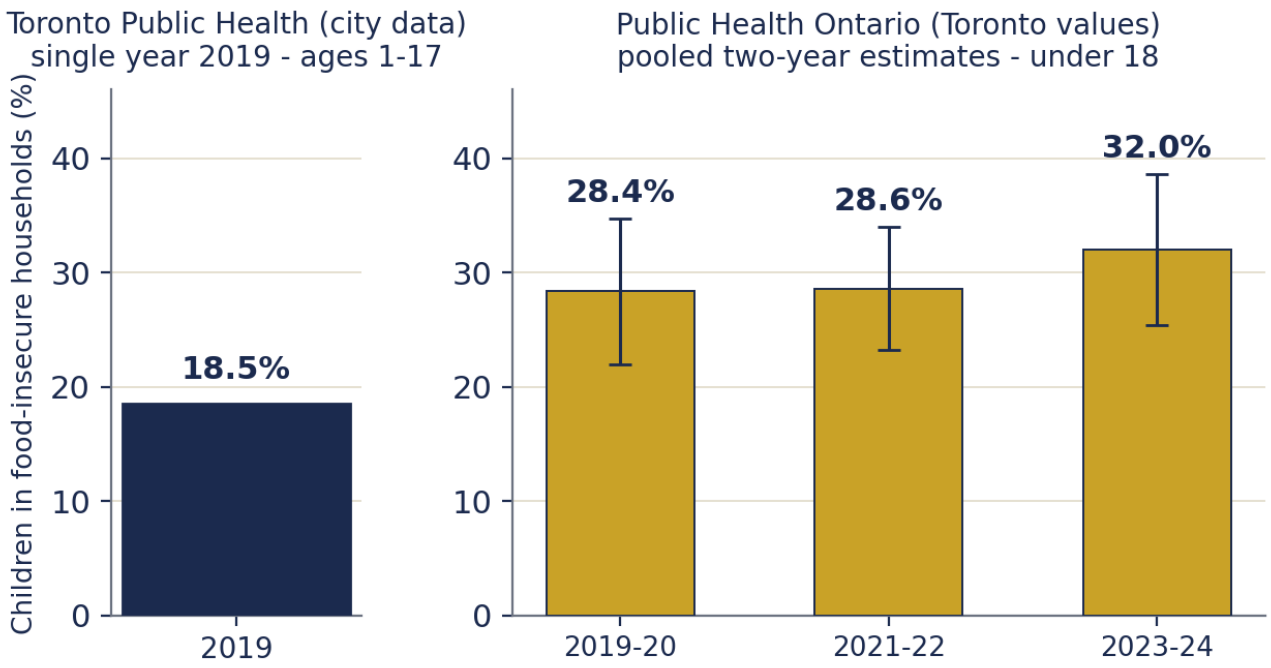
PART 02 · THE EVIDENCE

Body and mind

Food. About one in four Toronto households was food insecure in the most recent published city estimate: **24.9%** of households, over 753,000 people, in the Who's Hungry 2024 report, which cites Statistics Canada's Canadian Income Survey as analysed by PROOF at the University of Toronto. The successor report, Who's Hungry 2025, prints the updated value as 24.7% of Toronto households in 2024. Both rates cover all households and all ages; neither report publishes a Toronto rate for children or youth specifically.

A Toronto rate for children and youth was published once. Toronto Public Health's Population Health Profile (February 2023) prints that 18.5% of Toronto children and youth aged 1 to 17 experienced household food insecurity in the past year, on 2019 data; the figure counts individuals, not households, and includes marginal, moderate, and severe insecurity. Public Health Ontario now publishes Toronto child values only as pooled multi-year estimates, from the Canadian Income Survey: 28.4% for 2019–2020, 28.6% for 2021–2022, and 32.0% for 2023–2024 as two-year combined estimates, and 33.4% for 2023–2025 as a three-year rolling estimate. No annual Toronto child value is published for any single year. The two sources use different surveys and different reference periods, so their figures are not one series and do not show a trend.

Figure 3 — Children and youth in food-insecure households, Toronto



Toronto children and youth living in food-insecure households, in two panels because the two sources measure differently and are not one series. Left — Toronto Public Health (2023): 18.5% for 2019, a single year, ages 1–17. Right — Public Health Ontario (2026): children under 18, published only as pooled two-year estimates — 28.4% (2019–2020), 28.6% (2021–2022), 32.0% (2023–2024); whiskers are the published 95% confidence intervals. No annual Toronto child rate is published for any recent year.

Source: Toronto Public Health (2023); Public Health Ontario (2026), Canadian Income Survey.

Two sources, two different measures, plotted apart on purpose: the single-year figure on the left and the pooled estimates on the right are not one trend, and the chart does not join them.

Toronto food banks recorded **4,124,313 client visits** in the fiscal year April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, across the Daily Bread and North York Harvest member agency network — an **18% increase** over the previous year's 3,488,351 visits. Visits count attendances, not unique individuals. Children were **25% of Toronto food bank clients** in 2024–25. The Student Nutrition Program is a coverage record, not a prevalence record: in 2024–25, 819 student nutrition programs receiving municipal funding were located in 620 school communities, and approximately 73% of Toronto's public schools had a community-based student nutrition program. By Phase 1 of the program's expansion (Winter 2025), 686 school communities received funding, which Toronto Public Health states includes reaching 81% of Toronto's public schools.

37.0%
fair or poor mental health, grades 7–12 — Toronto, 2023 (27.1% in 2019)

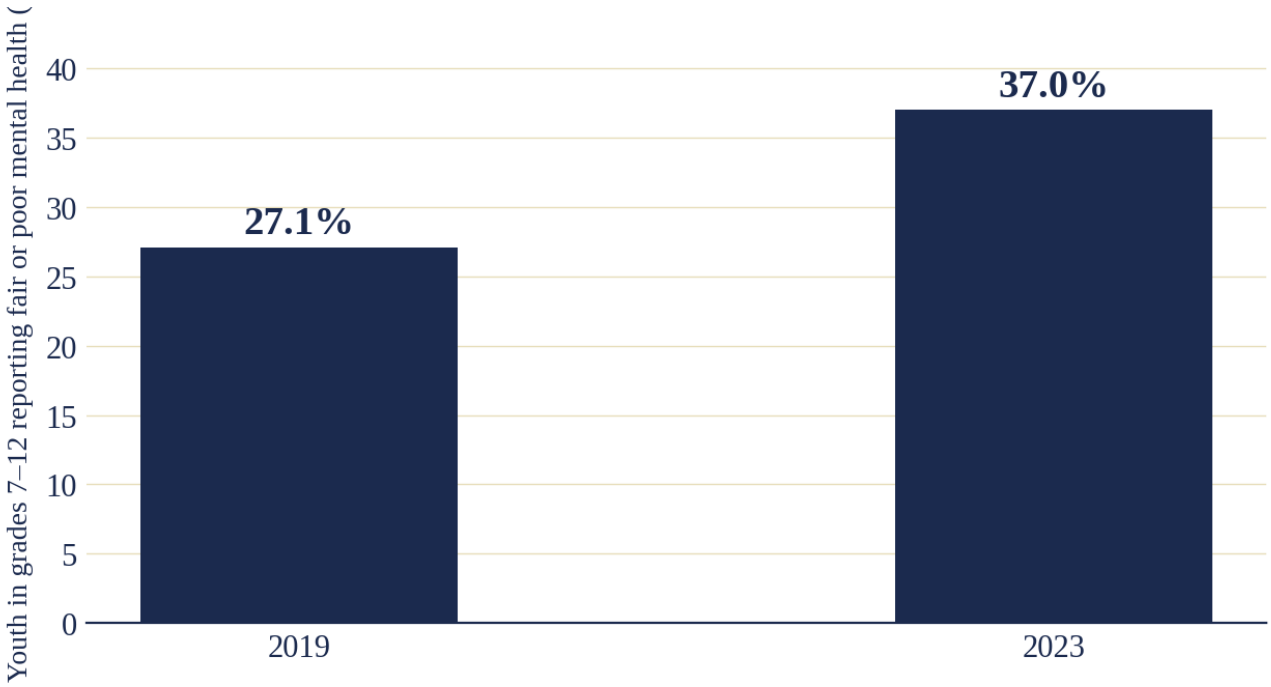
32.0%
child food insecurity, PHO pooled — Toronto, under 18, 2023–2024

4,124,313
food bank client visits — Toronto, Apr 1, 2024–Mar 31, 2025

105 days
average wait for intensive treatment — Ontario, 2023/24 (in the Technical Appendix)

Mental health. The Toronto series is Toronto Public Health's student survey. Toronto Public Health reports that **37.0%** of Toronto youth in grades 7 to 12 reported fair or poor mental health in 2023, up from 27.1% in 2019. In the same Toronto series, 18.0% of youth in grades 7 to 12 reported in 2023 that they seriously contemplated suicide in the past year, against 16.7% in 2019, a change the source describes as stable.

Figure 4 — Fair or poor mental health, Toronto youth, grades 7–12



Toronto youth in grades 7 to 12 reporting fair or poor mental health, Toronto Public Health student survey. The Ontario CAMH series is a different publisher and a different population, is not plotted here, and appears in the Technical Appendix.

Source: Toronto Public Health, student survey, 2019 and 2023.

The Ontario-wide and national series — CAMH's Ontario student survey, the Ontario opioid figures for ages 15–24, and Ontario treatment waits — appear in the Technical Appendix.

Health care. The clinical record is thinner for Toronto youth specifically, and several of its series are not youth-only. Toronto's rate of emergency department visits for intentional self-harm was **100.3 per 100,000** in 2022, up from 86.9 per 100,000 in 2013 — a series for people aged 10 years and older,

not restricted to youth, and no youth-specific Toronto rate is published. Toronto Public Health publishes opioid-toxicity deaths for all ages only: **523 deaths in Toronto in 2023**. No Toronto-specific wait time for child and youth mental health treatment is published. Among Toronto youth in grades 7 to 12, past-year substance use in 2023 was 29.4% for alcohol, described as stable against 31.7% in 2019; 16.4% for cannabis, against 14.6% in 2019; and 2.6% for tobacco in both 2023 and 2019.

Getting around. Children aged 12 and under ride the TTC free, a fare in place since March 1, 2015. Youth aged 13 to 19 pay a concession single fare of $2.35 on a PRESTO card set to the Youth fare type, or $2.40 in cash, against an adult fare of $3.30 on PRESTO. Since September 1, 2026, riders in all fare categories, including youth aged 13–19, stop paying after 47 paid fares in a calendar month under monthly fare capping. The City's Fair Pass Transit Discount Program, the income-based fare discount, is published for Toronto residents aged 20 to 64 years only; no youth eligibility line is published for the program, and Toronto has no operating TTC U-Pass program. On road safety, the City's Vision Zero reporting publishes no killed-or-seriously-injured figure for any age band under 20. In 2025, 39 people were killed on Toronto roads, all ages, and 649 School Safety Zones were completed by the end of 2025. On air exposure, Toronto Public Health's traffic-related air pollution work records that **50%** of Toronto's child care centres and **43% of Toronto's schools** are located within at least one of its mapped exposure zones. Those are site-location shares — the share of buildings that fall inside a modelled zone — not measurements of any individual child's exposure.

> The Student Nutrition Program is a coverage record, not a prevalence record

PART 02 · THE EVIDENCE

School and safety

263	45	87.4%	129,000
shootings and firearm discharges — Toronto, 2025 (462 in 2024)	homicides — Toronto, 2025 (85 in 2024)	five-year graduation rate — TDSB	teen visits (accesses — a returning teen counts again), TPL Youth Hubs — Toronto, Jan–Aug 2025

KEY FINDING

The counts improved sharply in 2025 — 263 shootings and firearm discharges, down from 462 in 2024, and 45 homicides, down from 85 — and the published record contains no victim-age breakdown for either, so it cannot say how much of that improvement reached young people.

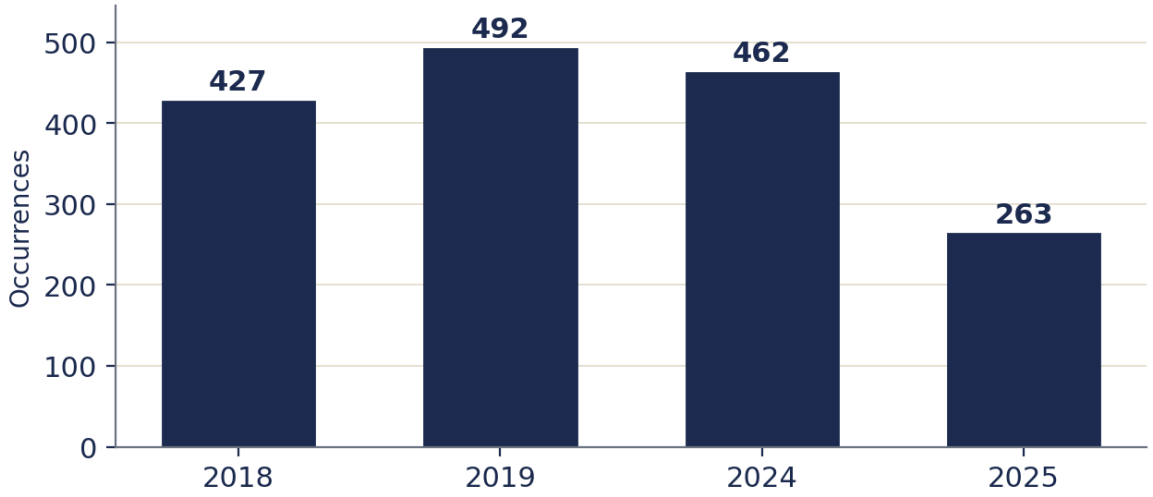
School. In the latest Student Achievement Plans, the five-year graduation rate was **87.4%** at the Toronto District School Board and **91.5% at the Toronto Catholic District School Board**, against

89.5% for Ontario. The five-year rate is the share of students graduating with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) within five years of starting Grade 9; those figures are for the cohort that began Grade 9 in 2019–20, measured to 2023–24. The four-year rate counts graduation within four years of starting Grade 9, and for the cohort that began in 2020–21 it was 81.8% at TDSB and 88.4% at TCDSB, against 84.9% for Ontario, as of August 31, 2024. The two rates describe different cohorts. The board boundaries match the City of Toronto, but the figures are enrolment populations, not the city's resident population: some Toronto students attend the French-language boards or private schools, and some board students live outside the city.

Progress through school shows in the credit figures. By the end of Grade 10, the share of students earning 16 or more credits was 73% at TDSB and 85% at TCDSB in 2023–24, against 80% in Ontario. Suspensions run lower in the Toronto boards than across the province: the suspension rate counts students in Grades 4–12 suspended at least once in the data year, and it was 2.13% at TDSB in 2023–24, against 3.84% in Ontario, and 2.86% at TCDSB in 2022–23. Grade 6 results from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) are the share of students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard: reading 84% and writing 83% at TDSB, and reading 86% and writing 84% at TCDSB, against 86% and 85% for Ontario. Ontario ended Grade 9 streaming from September 2021, so from 2021–22 the academic/applied split in Grade 9 mathematics no longer exists as an enrolment category. What happens after graduation is thinner in the record: the most recent published TDSB-linked transition analysis covers ten Grade 9 cohorts, 2006–2015 starters, each followed five years (n = 156,580), and of graduates in those cohorts a board-wide average of 16% did not make a direct transition to postsecondary education. The same report prints that 24.5% of graduating students completed no Grade 12 University-preparation course; of those students, 23.1% transitioned to college and 70.9% did not apply to postsecondary at all. Apprenticeship transitions are not measured in this dataset, and no Toronto-level postsecondary participation rate is published.

Violence. Toronto Police Service counted **263 shootings and firearm discharges** in the City of Toronto in calendar year 2025, down in count from 462 in 2024 and below the 492 recorded in 2019, the highest total in the 2015–2025 series. The 2025 total consisted of 95 shootings and 168 firearm discharges, with **101 people non-fatally injured** and **20 people killed**. TPS counted **45 homicides** in 2025 — 20 by shooting, 14 by stabbing, and 11 recorded as other types — against 85 in 2024 and 98 in 2018. The study publishes these figures as counts only and makes no statement about why they changed.

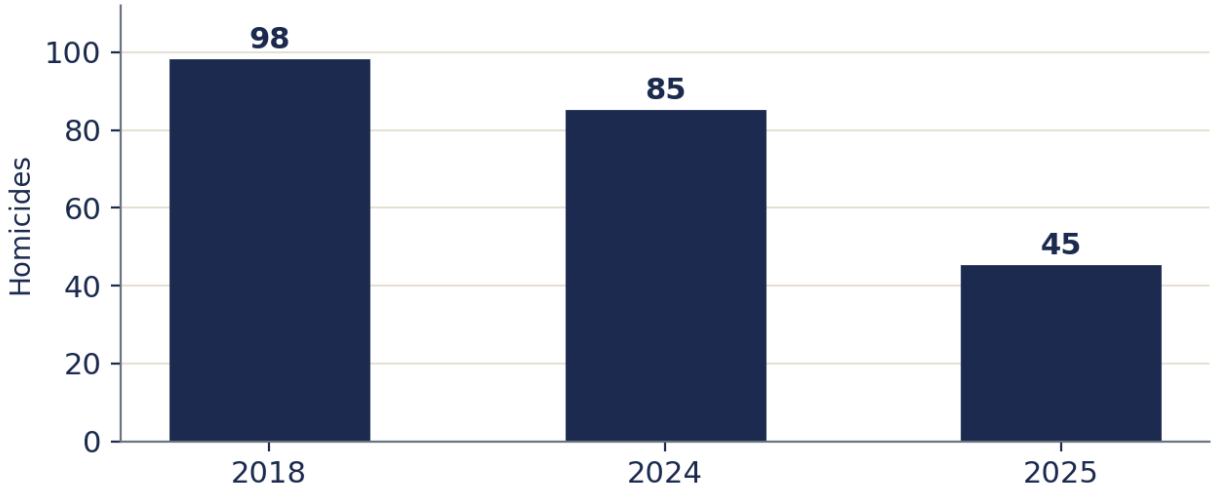
Figure 5 — Shootings and firearm discharges, City of Toronto



Shootings and firearm discharges, total occurrences, City of Toronto, calendar years (Toronto Police Service, 2026). Counts only — the study publishes no rate and no statement about why the counts changed.

Source: Toronto Police Service, 2026.

Figure 6 — Homicides, City of Toronto



Homicides, City of Toronto, calendar years (Toronto Police Service, 2026). Counts only.

Source: Toronto Police Service, 2026.

The age picture inside the violence data is partial, and its two blocks are never combined in this study. Derived from TPS open data, 1,818 persons aged under 18 were recorded as persons arrested and charged in Toronto in 2024, 5.7% of accused persons of all ages; the count was 1,746 in 2019 and 1,698 in 2025. Under the firearm-related subtype, 166 persons aged under 18 were arrested and charged in 2024, and under the murder subtype, 4; a person charged under more than one category or subtype appears in each, so the rows overlap and must not be summed. In the separate victims dataset, which records identified victims of crimes against the person aged 12 to 17, the count was 2,951 in 2024, dividing by subtype into assault 1,412, sexual violation 704, robbery 435, and other 400. That dataset contains no firearm subtype and no homicide subtype, so it cannot be used as a shooting-victim or

homicide-victim series. What the record does not contain is a victim-age breakdown for shootings or homicides: the TPS shootings dataset has no victim-age field and no accused-age field, and the homicides dataset's field list contains no age field for victims and no field for accused persons at all. No TPS-published table of homicide victims or accused by age, and no TPS-published table of shooting victims by age, was located. That absence is part of the record.

Justice. Youth justice — the Ontario and Canada series on charges, diversion, courts and custody — appears in the Technical Appendix. No Toronto city-level series is published at any stage of the system.

Belonging. Belonging — Youth Hub accesses, school connectedness and sense of belonging — appears in the Technical Appendix.

> That absence is part of the record.

PART 02 · THE EVIDENCE

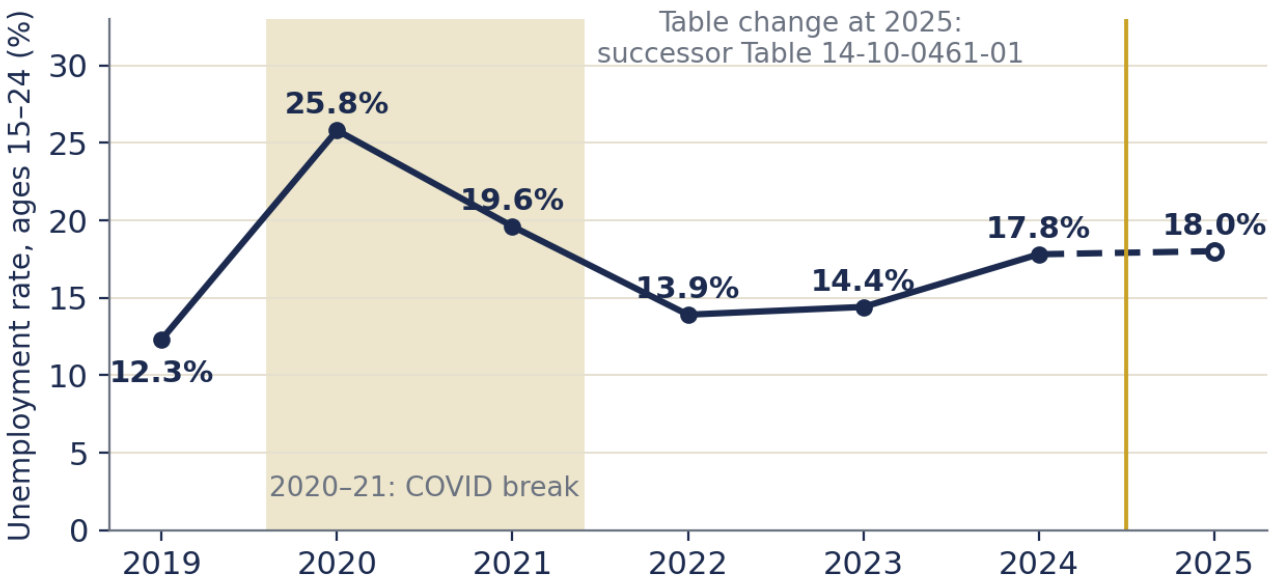
Work

18.0%	13%	10,000
unemployment, ages 15–24 — Toronto CMA, 2025	NEET rate, ages 15–29 — Ontario, 2025 (no Toronto series published)	additional youth to be hired by summer 2026 — City Council motion goal

Jobs. **18.0%** of Toronto CMA's labour force aged 15–24 was unemployed in 2025, against 12.3% in 2019. The employment rate — the share of the population aged 15–24 that is employed — was **44.8% in 2025**, the participation rate **54.7%**, and the population itself **937,900**.

These are Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey annual averages for Toronto CMA, ages 15–24, both sexes. The CMA is the city plus surrounding suburban municipalities, so these are CMA figures, not figures for the central city alone. Values for 2019–2024 come from Table 14-10-0385-01; the 2025 values come from its successor, Table 14-10-0461-01, which carries revised population controls. The two tables' rates for overlapping years reconcile within 0.1–0.2 percentage points, but their population levels differ — the successor table prints 961,600 for the 2024 population, against 1,008,400 in the archived table — and the two are not mixed without saying so.

Figure 7 — Unemployment rate, Toronto CMA, ages 15–24



Unemployment rate, Toronto CMA, ages 15–24, Labour Force Survey annual averages: 2019–2024 from the archived Table 14-10-0385-01 (Statistics Canada, 2025b); 2025 from the successor Table 14-10-0461-01 (Statistics Canada, 2026c), plotted as a dashed segment after the marked table change. 2020–21 shaded: the COVID break, marked, not smoothed.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Tables 14-10-0385-01 and 14-10-0461-01.

> The survey table behind this series was replaced in 2025 (marked); the rate barely moved, but the population counts behind it were revised.

The survey table behind this series was replaced in 2025, and the chart marks the change: 2019–2024 values are from the archived table, the 2025 value from its successor, which carries revised population controls.

The series runs: unemployment 12.3% in 2019, 25.8% in 2020 and 19.6% in 2021 — years the study marks as a break and does not smooth — then 13.9% in 2022, 14.4% in 2023, 17.8% in 2024 and 18.0% in 2025. The employment rate was 50.1% in 2019, fell to 40.1% in 2020, and stood at 44.2% in 2024 and 44.8% in 2025. In the five years before the break, unemployment fell from 15.1% in 2015 to 12.3% in 2019, and the employment rate rose from 48.0% to 50.1%. The population behind the rates moved within the archived table too, from 917,900 in 2023 to 1,008,400 in 2024. The CMA table publishes ages 15–24 only; splits into 15–19 and 20–24 are published at Ontario and Canada level, in a different table.

Not in school or work. **13%** of Ontarians aged 15–29 were not in employment, education or training in 2025. The Canada rate was **12%**.

The NEET rate measures the share of a youth population that is in none of employment, education, or training in the survey reference period. Statistics Canada's standard NEET population here is ages 15–29 — an older band than the 15–24 band above. The series (Table 37-10-0196-01) is published as whole percents: 11% for both Canada and Ontario in 2019; 14% for Canada in both 2020 and 2021, and 14% then 15% for Ontario, in the years marked as a break; from 2022 to 2025 the Canada rate ranged from

11% to 12% and the Ontario rate from 10% to 13%. Ontario's 13% in 2025 is the highest Ontario value of the post-break years shown.

A second measure, NEETEST — NEET measured over a full calendar year from linked administrative data — counts youth who were NEET for a full calendar year, excluding unpaid caregiving. For Canada, ages 20–29, the NEETEST rate was 7.6% in 2022, against a snapshot NEET rate of 12.5% the same year; the article behind it puts NEETEST between 7% and 8% throughout 2017–2022, while the snapshot NEET rate was usually 13% to 14% over those years outside the pandemic. It is a different measure, not a continuation of the series above. No Toronto-level NEET series is published: the table appears at Canada and province level only.

The commitments. **10,000** additional equity-deserving youth, ages 15–24, hired by summer 2026 — that is the goal a City Council motion carried in December 2024, as published by the City of Toronto.

The motion, MM24.2, proposed a Toronto Youth Employment Program strategy with that goal, and was referred to committee with "the target of up to 10,000 additional summer jobs for young people by 2026." A later staff report, EC25.7, "Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment," was adopted by Council on December 16–17, 2025; it directs that the goal of creating new youth employment opportunities be included in the Youth Employment Table's terms of reference, directs the Table to set youth-employment-opportunity targets, and requires annual progress reporting beginning May 5, 2026. The City also publishes that more than 16,000 youth are employed across the City system each year — stated in a City news release dated November 25, 2025, and in the EC25.7 summary for ages 15–29, a different band from the motion's 15–24. The documents do not state whether a young person hired under two programs is counted once or twice; the column's counting basis is not published.

Separately, and labelled as what it is: the commitment to create 15,000 new youth jobs — "Create 15,000 new youth jobs through the Toronto Youth Employment Strategy" — is a campaign commitment, published in Mayor Olivia Chow's 2026 re-election campaign materials in October 2026, following a campaign announcement on October 15, 2026 — a campaign commitment, October 2026; no City costing published. The campaign text states no completion date and no breakdown of job type — full-time, part-time, summer, or placement. No City of Toronto document, timeframe, or costing for the 15,000 figure is published in the sources recorded.

One warning the study carries: a "2,120 youth hired in 2023" figure in City budget notes is a division-wide measure for Social Development, Finance and Administration, across Social Development youth programs. It is not a Toronto Youth Job Corps figure, and the study does not attribute it to that program, whose published age band in the study's record is 15–30, for youth who are out of school and out of work.

> It is a different measure, not a continuation of the series above.

PART 03

The response

PART 03 · THE RESPONSE

The published response

Three levels of government publish a response to the conditions in this study — in their own units, on their own year bases, and with their own verbs. City figures are calendar years; Ontario and federal figures are fiscal years running April 1 to March 31.

$43 million
SafeTO funding — Toronto, 2025

≈$236 vs ≈$1,113
per resident aged 5–24 — Toronto (upper bound) vs New York

40,943
licensed before- and after-school spaces — Toronto, Dec 2025

≈$29–35 million/yr
the after-school ledger, modelled total (published components $17.3–22.3M) — Toronto

≈1,800
guaranteed places (ARC registered places, ages 6–12) — Toronto, 2025

KEY FINDING

Toronto publishes no youth total.

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; all services — no youth slice published)	DOLLARS ALLOCATED
	Youth Hubs (Toronto Public Library) — 129,000 teen visits (Jan–Aug 2025; visits, not unique teens — a returning teen counts again)	VISITS
		CALLS
	Toronto Community Crisis Service — 17,000+ calls (2025)	
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.

The City. SafeTO, the City's community safety and well-being plan, was funded at **$43 million** in calendar 2025 and **$49 million in calendar 2026**, nominal. Each total includes a $5 million component for youth violence prevention in that year — inside the total, not in addition to it.

Social Development, the division that runs SafeTO and the City's main community grants, had a gross budget of **$157.3 million** in calendar 2026. Inside it, the Community Safety & Well-Being service line was $50.7 million and the Community Partnership and Investment Program — the division's all-services

grants total — was **$33.4 million**. The division publishes no youth or after-school slice of that grants program, and the service line is not a youth-only line.

Toronto Public Library's Youth Hubs — staffed drop-in spaces for teenagers — numbered 31 in calendar 2025 and recorded 129,000 teen visits in January–August 2025, alongside 2,330 programs offered and 17,700 program participants. Visits are the published unit: a teenager who comes back is counted again. No total cost for all 31 hubs is published; a modelled figure of about $9.2 million per year, built from a published expansion cost of about $296,000 per hub per year, is labelled in the study as modelled, not as a budget.

The Toronto Community Crisis Service, a non-police mobile crisis response for people aged 16 and older, coordinated by Social Development and delivered by community anchor partners, operating city-wide since July 8, 2024, received more than 17,000 calls in calendar 2025, resulting in over 14,000 dispatches. Its cumulative record from March 2022 to December 31, 2025 was more than 41,000 calls responded to, over 34,000 teams dispatched, over 9,500 referrals, and more than 1,600 individuals (people, not events) connected to case management. It has no standalone published budget; its spending sits inside the service line above. The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, adopted in 2014 as a five-year strategy with 110 actions for youth aged 13–29, was last accounted for in a January 2020 briefing note — $103.3 million invested over calendar 2015–2019. No standalone reporting was found after that date.

Ontario. Toronto had **40,943 licensed before- and after-school spaces** in December 2025. That is licensed capacity — spaces licensed to exist. It is not registrations and not children enrolled; Ontario publishes no enrolment figure, and no Ontario public budget figure for delivering these programs in Toronto.

The Youth Opportunities Fund, funded by the province and administered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, carries an Ontario allocation of **$16.8 million per year**. In fiscal 2024–25, $13.4 million was awarded to 38 projects. Allocated and awarded are different published concepts; the two figures are not summed, and the fund publishes no Toronto total.

The Black Youth Action Plan was announced in March 2017 as $47 million over four years, to increase access to supports for 10,800 Black children, youth, and families. For fiscal 2025–26, the only stream figure published is $16.5 million for the Economic Empowerment program, supporting 6 initiatives comprising more than 40 community-based programs. It is one stream in one year, not the plan's total, and no Toronto share is published for it. This is the one program in the published response aimed at a named equity group; no Toronto-level figure for it is published. The Ontario After School Program runs on **$14.6 million per year** province-wide, within $43.9 million over three years, reaching about 13,000 children and youth per year province-wide. Toronto's share — budget, sites, participants — appears nowhere in the published record.

Canada. The Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS), led by Employment and Social Development Canada with 11 other federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations, serves youth aged 15–30. ESDC's own YESS Program activity had planned spending of **$149.910 million** in fiscal 2025–26, with a target of 5,240 youth served by ESDC; delivery partners overall expect to serve approximately 20,000 youth that year. The $149.910 million is one department's portion of one activity, not a whole-of-government total. Total federal funding allocated since the strategy's start on April 1, 2003 is $10,410.36 million — a cumulative figure, not an annual budget. Budget 2025 proposes $307.9

million over two years starting in fiscal 2026–27, labelled in the study as a proposal. No Toronto allocation or participant total for YESS is published.

Canada Summer Jobs, a program under YESS, provides wage subsidies to employers hiring youth aged 15–30. In summer 2025 it recorded more than 75,000 jobs created, Canada-wide. Its budget for fiscal 2025–26 is published on two separate bases, never added: $200.5 million under Budget 2024 to maintain 70,000 job opportunities, plus a $25 million reallocation for up to 6,000 more — 76,000 jobs in that release's own total — and, separately, planned spending of $323.301 million in the departmental plan, with a target of 70,000 youth served. Budget 2025 proposes $594.7 million over two years to support around 100,000 summer jobs in summer 2026. No Toronto total for Canada Summer Jobs is published.

PART 03 · THE RESPONSE

Toronto in the field

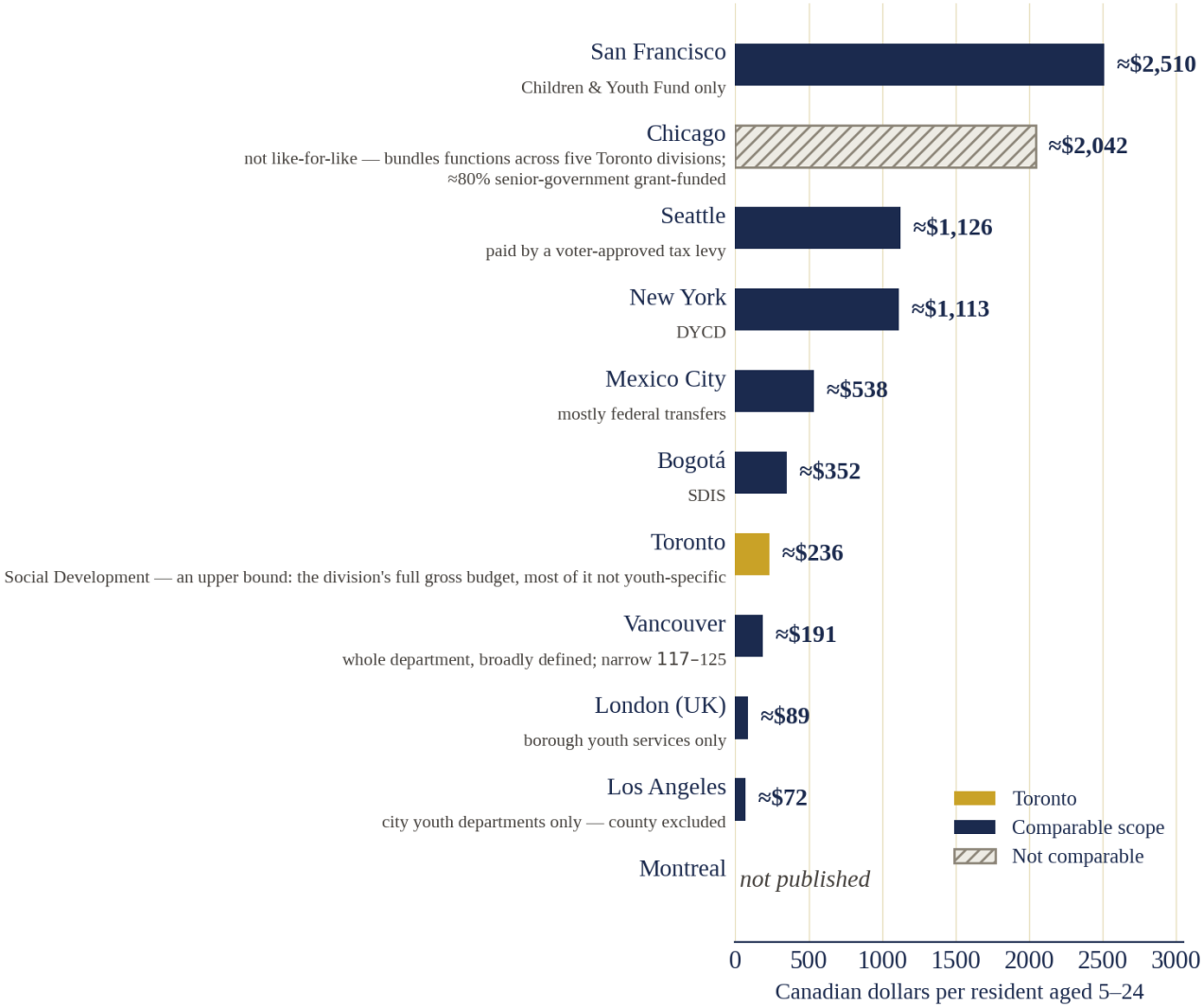
The published totals stop one level above youth — the finding the response section carries, stated once there.

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. One finding runs through all three levels: the published totals stop one level above youth.

The numerator is the Social Development gross budget of $137.3 million; the denominator is 581,210 residents aged 5–24, City of Toronto, 2021 Census. A later-year budget divided by a 2021 count held constant makes this an upper-bound style figure — the denominator is not a 2025 population count — and the study prints it with that caveat. The division behind it is ≈89–95% City own-source money, and the figure is 0.73% of the City of Toronto operating budget.

Every city in the field is measured the same way: its published youth-serving department or function budget, divided by its residents aged 5–24, converted at US$1 = C$1.40 and £1 = C$1.88 (November 5, 2026) where a figure crosses a border. New York's figure is **≈$1,113 per resident** (Department of Youth and Community Development adopted budget, US$1,514.1M, fiscal 2026; 91.9% City tax levy), on a denominator of 1,904,234 residents aged 5–24. Vancouver's is **≈$191 broad**, or $117–$125 narrow (Social Policy function, $22.262M broad; 116,335 residents aged 5–24, 2021 Census). Los Angeles records ≈$72 — city tier only, since the County runs most social services there. Seattle records ≈$1,126 and San Francisco ≈$2,510 for its Children & Youth Fund only. London (UK) records ≈$89 gross, on a narrower line than the other rows. Bogotá records ≈$352 and Mexico City ≈$538, the second printed with a federal-transfer caveat.

Figure 9 — Published youth budget per resident aged 5–24, Toronto in the field



Published youth-department or function budget per resident aged 5–24, Canadian dollars; Each bar is that department's total published budget from all funding sources combined — city, senior-government and dedicated-levy money together — not municipal own-source dollars only; the funding mix differs by city and is tabled per city in Chapter 20. denominators: residents aged 5–24 (Toronto 581,210, 2021 Census). FX: US$1 = C$1.40, £1 = C$1.88 (November 5, 2026). Chicago hatched — approximately 80% grant-funded, not like-for-like. Montreal: not published. Toronto's figure is an upper bound: the division's full gross budget, most of it not youth-specific. Full table and caveats: Chapter 20 of the Technical Appendix (Study research library, 2026).

Source: published departmental and function budgets as cited in Chapter 20 of the Technical Appendix; 2021 Census denominators.

> The bars are not measured the same way: each city counts a different bundle of services, so read them as orders of magnitude, not a league table.

Chicago's figure, **≈$2,042**, is not like-for-like: its department bundles functions spread across five Toronto divisions and is ≈80% senior-government grant-funded, so it is printed for completeness and

not compared with the other rows. Montreal's figure is not published — its social-development department's budget is not published separately, so no figure can be computed.

The funding source travels with the level. The cities at or above New York's level on comparable scope — Seattle and San Francisco — fund the commitment through dedicated revenue: a voter-approved levy, a charter-mandated set-aside. New York, Toronto and Vancouver fund through annual general-fund appropriation, which re-competes every year. Chicago's scale rests on senior-government grants, and its fiscal 2026 proposed departmental budget fell 32.5% as pandemic grants expired.

The after-school ledger, kept on the same basis, is smaller than any of these totals. Strictly published, like-for-like components total $22.3 million per year — or $17.3 million, because no City document states whether the Summer Safety Plan's $5 million and SafeTO's $5 million youth-violence-prevention component are the same $5 million counted once or two counted separately; the study prints both and presents neither as resolved. Two modelled components sit apart from the published tier: Youth Hubs at approximately $9.2 million per year, and the Toronto share of the Ontario After School Program at $2.2–$3.7 million per year, modelled because no Toronto share is published. With them, the modelled total is approximately **$29–35 million per year**. Of the provision counted in the ledger, about 1,800 places are guaranteed places — the After-School Recreation and Care registered places in 2025, for ages 6–12. Licensed capacity and visits are not converted into places, and are not added to that figure.

PART 04

The proof

PART 04 · THE PROOF

The City’s own count

The response, as published, can also be tested against the City's own attempts to count it. Twice — in 2021 and again in 2025 — the City has inventoried its own youth programs, and both documents were read in full for this study. What they contain, and what they leave out, shows how the City itself sees its youth effort.

The 2021 inventory. The Youth Program Inventory, published in June 2021 as part of the Youth Service Review, Investing in Youth Outcomes, lists **47 programs and program categories** for young people aged **12 to 29**, across eight divisions, agencies and corporations, from Parks, Forestry and Recreation to the Toronto Police Service. For 46 of the 47 it gives a reach figure — participants served per year — but the figures rest on mixed bases: some count 2019, some 2020, some 2021; some are estimates; some count visits and others contacts, so they cannot be added into a single reach total. Money is another matter. A full reading of the document finds no budget figure in it for any program. Results are absent in the same way: programs are filed under the outcome areas of the Youth Outcomes Framework, but the inventory carries no outcome or results field. It is also a snapshot of one moment — program statuses as of June 1, 2021, mid-pandemic — and by the review's own design it covers only programs the City delivers directly or in partnership, so the grants field sits outside it entirely.

The 2025 inventory. Four years later the City counted again, this time jobs only. The Youth Jobs Inventory, adopted with Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment in December 2025, lists **40 youth employment programs** across ten organizations, and its one reach column records more than **16,000** young people employed in 2025. The documents do not state whether a young person hired under two programs is counted once or twice; the column's counting basis is not published. The pattern repeats: no budget column and no dollar figure in the attachment, no target ages program by program, and no field for outcomes, retention or completion. The staff report carrying it names the underlying problem in its own words — "limited and inconsistent data collection" makes it "difficult to track outcomes, identify who is being left out, and scale what is working." One element is new. Council, by amendment, directed Social Development's Executive Director to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee on the progress and outcomes of the Youth Employment Table on **May 5, 2026**, and annually after that: a standing duty to report outcomes, set by Council itself. The first report under that duty has since arrived, and it can be read against the duty's own words. It came as item 2026.EC29.10, dated **May 26, 2026** — three weeks after the date Council set — bundled with a second subject, the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program, and the committee received it for information on June 9, 2026. For the Table, it reports a **projected 2,800** new opportunities identified across the City and its partners, and counts of activity from January to May 2026: **11** career and job-fair events engaging **1,085** young people, providing **250** job opportunities. No numeric target set by the Table appears in the item's published summary, and no outcomes series — no placements achieved, no retention, no wages — appears in the summary or in the report's case-study attachment. (The report body and its framework

attachment could not be retrieved for this study; the absence is stated for the published summary and attachments read.) The first test of the new duty produced a projection and a count of events.

City inventory	Programs counted	Budgets published	Outcomes published
Youth Program Inventory (2021)	47	None	None
Youth Jobs Inventory (2025)	40	None	None

Read the two rows side by side: each inventory counts the programs carefully, then stops at the same two fields — what the programs cost, and what they changed.

The framework. The Youth Outcomes Framework, adopted with the 2021 guide, was built to close the outcomes gap: shared outcome areas and survey-based measures that City youth programs would choose from and report against. Five years on, the published record shows the machinery and not its output — the mentions that exist describe how the framework works, and none reports results from it: no program-by-program measures, no aggregated percentages, no list of the programs applying it. Figures in circulation that credit the framework with application across 23 programs in six divisions, with 2,811 young people providing survey feedback, could not be verified in any published City document.

Outcomes across the register. For this study, the City's youth effort was enumerated program by program — roughly sixty programs and funding streams across the divisions, Toronto Public Library and Toronto Community Housing. Published outcome measures — evidence that a program changed something for the young people in it, rather than a count of money spent or people reached — exist for five of them: the Community Healing Project; the library's Leading to Reading; the Scarborough youth subset of FOCUS Toronto; Toronto Community Housing's Pre-Apprenticeship; and the Toronto Youth Job Corps, whose contract carries targets and a published history. The rest publish budgets, counts, or neither. The full register is printed in the Technical Appendix.

One floor, not a total. The grants program does yield one youth figure from the City's own categories. In the Community Funding Unit's 2024 reporting, the lines the City itself labels youth — its youth services category, its youth grant streams and its youth-led crisis-response projects — sum to **$6,140,520**, or 21.7 per cent of that unit's 2024 allocations. That is a floor for one year of one funding universe. It is not a youth total, and it cannot grow into one: the published recipient lists record organization, ward and amount, with no field for purpose or age, so youth-serving work funded inside all-ages categories stays invisible in them. A total would require the lists to say what the money was for. They do not.

Neither inventory was produced for this study, and neither was built to test it. Each is the City organizing its own youth effort for its own purposes — and each reproduces, inside the City's own paperwork, the pattern the published response shows from outside: programs counted, reach counted in units that cannot be combined, and the money and the outcomes missing. The gap is not an artefact of looking from outside. It sits in the instruments the City wrote for itself.

PART 05

The accountability gap

PART 05 · THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

What the record does not contain

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.

PART 05 · THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

How this study was compiled

This study is compiled from published sources only. Every figure in it was verified in a primary published document, opened during compilation, and is printed with the age band, geography, and year its source used. Where sources disagree, the disagreement is shown rather than resolved silently. Where a publisher changed what it counts — a survey table replaced, a call-count universe widened — the break is marked on the series, never smoothed. Where no figure is published at that standard, the study says so, and treats the absence as a finding. Figures in different units, age bands, or year bases are never added together. The study makes no recommendations. The complete technical record behind this edition — the full source chapters, the methods appendix, and the full references — is published with it as The State of Youth in Toronto: Technical Appendix.

The author is the founder and executive director of The Good Guides, a youth non-profit in Scarborough.

In their own words

From where we sit in Scarborough, the gap in this record is not abstract. The young people we work with are not waiting to be consulted — given real authority, they run things: they plan, they decide, they carry the work, with mentors who look like them and come from their own neighbourhoods standing behind them, not in front of them. Nobody is a guest in their own community, and nobody is a passenger.

What the published record cannot do is meet them there. A young person in Scarborough moves through programs funded by different divisions, different levels of government, different organizations — and no one, anywhere, adds it up. Not what was spent on her. Not whether any of it worked. We see the pieces every day. The pieces are real, and some of them are good. But a system that cannot describe its own effort cannot claim to know whether the young people inside it are better off — and on the ground, they can tell the difference.

PART 05 · THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

What I take from this record

I started The Good Guides because I watched services that were supposed to help people I grew up with — my friends, my brother — never reach them. Years later, putting this record together, I found the same problem at city scale, in print: the help exists in pieces, the pieces don't connect, and nobody publishes whether the whole of it is working.

That is what I take from this record. It is not that Toronto does nothing for its young people — the spending is real, and some of it is good. It is that Toronto cannot say, from its own published numbers, whether its young people are better off than they were five years ago. Where the numbers do add up, most are moving the wrong way. Where they don't add up, that is not a technical problem. A city that gives young people a seat at the table but keeps the keys — to the budgets, the data, the decisions — has not actually shared anything.

Young people don't need to be counted as guests in their own city. They need the whole house: real authority, real support behind them, and a public record honest enough to say whether any of it worked. Counting is the least of it. We should start there.

PART 05 · THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

About the author

Swabir Shariff is the founder and executive director of The Good Guides, a Toronto non-profit he founded in 2020 that has mentored more than 10,000 young people across Scarborough. He advises institutions on youth, mentoring and violence prevention, and was named one of the Queen Elizabeth II Commonwealth Trust's 100 Young Leaders for 2026. This document is his personal work, published independently.

Suggested citation: Shariff, S. (2026). The State of Youth in Toronto: What Toronto's published record can — and cannot — tell us about its young people. Working paper. Toronto, Canada.

> Where no figure is published at that standard, the study says so, and treats the absence as a finding.

PART 06

The solution

PART 06 · THE SOLUTION — THE TORONTO YOUTH ALIGNMENT PLAN

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan

About this plan

How to read the numbers. Three kinds of numbers run through this plan, and they are never mixed. A guaranteed place is one child promised a spot for the program year, with set hours and set staffing — the strongest promise a city can make. A registration is a sign-up for a course; one child can hold many, and one can last a few hours. A drop-in visit counts a young person once each time they walk through an open door. Most of what Toronto buys today is the second and third kinds.

Money is Canadian dollars unless marked US$. US dollars are converted at US$1 = C$1.3961 (Bank of Canada, November 4, 2026) wherever this plan converts them, and at US$1 = C$1.40 in the published city comparisons, as those sources state. Figures are published, sourced, or labelled as estimates where they appear. The price at the centre of the plan is a model, built line by line in Section 8, and it is called a model every time it appears.

THE TORONTO YOUTH ALIGNMENT PLAN AT A GLANCE

~1,800	234,408	$3,680	$31.8M
guaranteed places Toronto buys today — all in one small City program (2025)	children aged 5 to 13 in Toronto (2021 Census)	modelled price of one guaranteed place, per year (Section 8)	a year for the proposed priority system — 8,643 places (Section 7)

Toronto spends real money on its young people. It just does not spend it as a system. Sixteen streams of funding chase the same effect — supervised, structured programming outside school hours — and between them they guarantee a place to about **1,800 children** in a city with 234,408 children aged 5 to 13.

New York built the system Toronto does not have. Its Department of Youth and Community Development buys after-school places from community organizations by contract — a written specification, a published price, set hours, set ratios, an independent evaluator — and it has run that system, through four mayors, for two decades. New York also got documented things wrong: it pays its providers late, badly; children attend about half the hours their places offer; and its re-bidding rounds have cut loose the neighbourhood organizations the system depends on.

This plan takes the model and designs out the flaws, using fixes Toronto has already proven somewhere in its own system: payment in advance, the way the City already pays its child-care agencies; contract sizes small organizations can hold; a set price with competition on quality; published results as a contract term. It prices the result from Toronto wages and Toronto's school calendar, at three scales, and it states its verdict at exactly the strength the evidence supports — including a section, near the end, on what the plan will not claim.

The companion study, The State of Youth in Toronto (Shariff, 2026), records the conditions this plan responds to. Nothing in this document commits any government.

THE PROPOSAL, IN ONE PLACE

One buyer, one published price, one count, one promise.

Toronto spends real money on its young people. It just does not spend it as a system. Sixteen streams of funding chase the same effect — supervised, structured programming outside school hours — and between them they guarantee a place to about **1,800 children** in a city with 234,408 children aged 5 to 13.

The plan that follows proposes the system Toronto does not have: the City buys guaranteed after-school places from community organizations by contract — a written specification, a published price, set hours, set ratios, published results — priced from Toronto wages and Toronto's school calendar at three scales. It takes the working model, New York's, and designs out its documented flaws, using fixes Toronto has already proven somewhere in its own system. The price at the centre of the plan is a model, built line by line in Section 8, and it is called a model every time it appears.

1. The problem: money without a promise

Per young person, Toronto commits less than New York — and more than Vancouver or Los Angeles publish.

Toronto spends real money on its young people. It just does not spend it as a system. Ask what the city does for young people and you will get a long list: after-school programs, library hubs, recreation, summer jobs, safety grants, youth employment. The list is real. What Toronto does not have is a single system — one buyer, one count, one promise a family can rely on.

The spending that chases one effect — supervised, structured, adult-led programming for school-age young people outside school hours — moves through 16 named streams, at least 10 funding streams, and 8 authorities (City of Toronto, 2025). Each runs its own application cycle, its own eligibility rules, its own reporting format, and its own definition of success. No two streams count the same thing. The honest total is about $29–35 million a year, and only $17–22 million of that can be pointed to in a published figure; the rest rests on two clearly labelled estimates, and two real streams — Toronto Community Housing and the school boards — spend something that cannot be counted at all.

Three kinds of numbers — do not mix them

Almost every argument about after-school care in Toronto goes wrong in the same place: three different kinds of counts get treated as if they were the same thing.

A guaranteed place. One child is promised a spot in a program for the whole program year — a set number of hours, a set number of children per staff member, a program that must exist whether or not any particular child shows up on any particular day. This is the strongest promise a city can make.

A registration. A child signs up for a course or a program — a swimming class, a recreation course. A registration can be a few hours long. One child can hold many registrations.

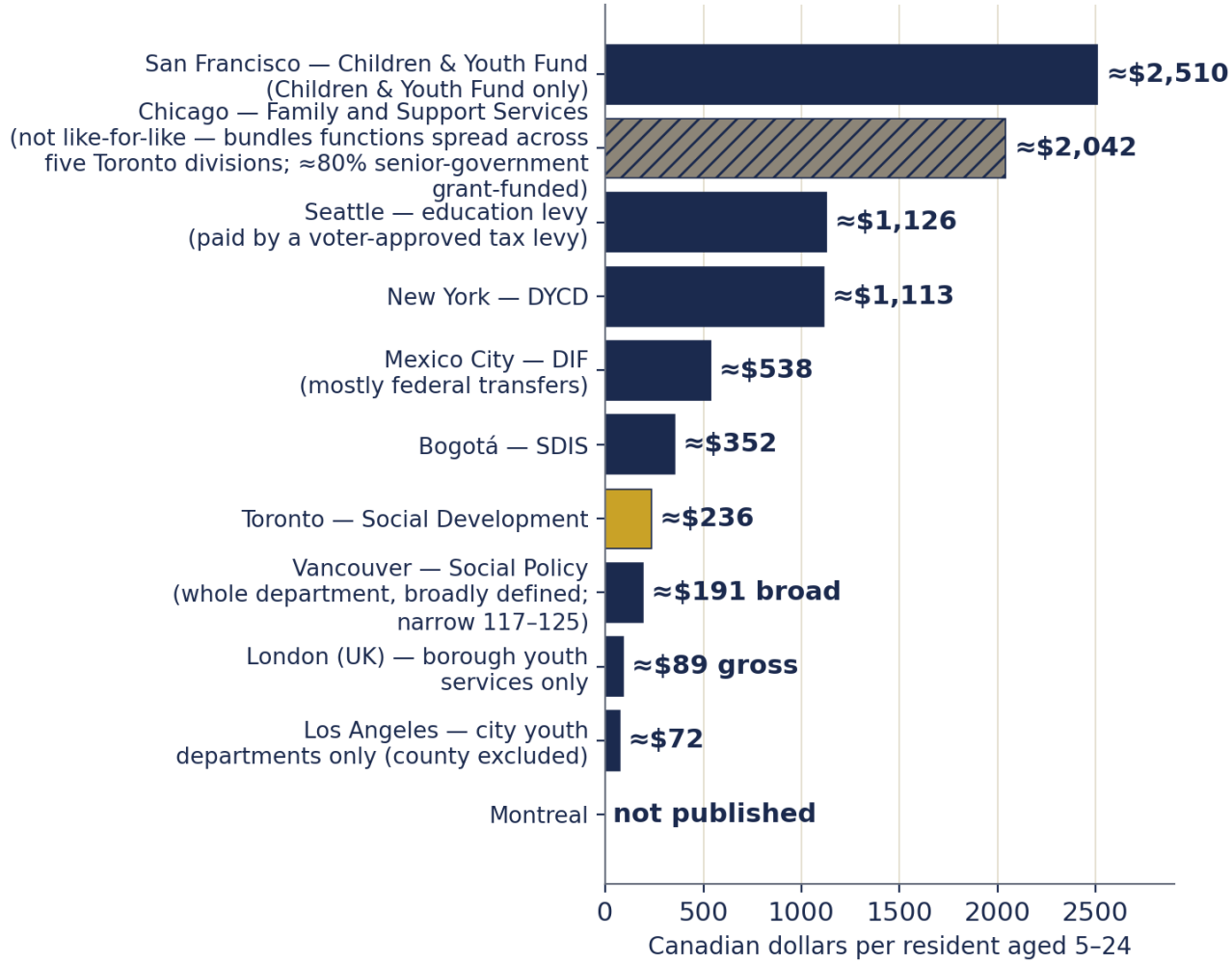
A drop-in visit. A young person walks into a space that is open — a library youth hub, a drop-in centre — and is counted once for that visit. The same teenager, visiting three times a week, is counted three times a week. Nobody was promised anything; the door was open and they came.

> A registration is not a place. A visit is not a place. Only a contracted place — named child, known hours, a staffed ratio, a price — is a promise a family can plan a work schedule around.

Most of what Toronto buys today is the second and third kinds. That is not a criticism of the programs. It is a description of the promise.

Figure 10 — Per young person, Toronto commits ≈$236 — an order of magnitude below New York's ≈$1,113 — in a field each city measures differently

The bars are not measured the same way: each city counts a different bundle of services, so read them as orders of magnitude, not a league table.



Canadian dollars committed per resident aged 5–24, through the department that holds the community/youth mandate. Toronto: Social Development, Finance and Administration, 2025 budget $137.3M over 581,210 residents aged 5–24 (2021 Census). Toronto's figure is an upper bound: the division's full gross budget, most of it not youth-specific. New York: Department of Youth and Community Development, FY2026 adopted budget US$1,514.1M. Vancouver: Social Policy and Projects, 2025, broad definition ($22.3M), narrow $117–$125. Los Angeles: city tier only. Chicago: hatched, not like-for-like, roughly 80% grant-funded. Montreal: not published. Each bar is the department's total published budget from all funding sources combined, not municipal own-source dollars only; funding mixes differ by city. US$1 = C$1.40.

Budget shares can mislead — cities are different sizes, with different numbers of young people. So divide each department's budget by the number of residents aged 5 to 24, and the comparison sharpens. Through the one department that holds the mandate, Toronto commits about $236 per young person — an upper bound (the mandate department's full gross budget over 2021 Census residents) (City of Toronto, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2022). New York commits about $1,113 in Canadian dollars (New York City Department of Youth and Community Development [DYCD], 2026). Vancouver's broad

measure and Los Angeles's city-tier figure sit lower than Toronto's; Montreal does not publish a figure at all.

The guarantee gap

Set the money beside the promise it buys. Across the whole envelope, the number of guaranteed places is about **1,800** — the registered places in one small City program that charges fees — in a city with 234,408 children aged 5 to 13 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Everything else buys registrations, drop-in visits, summer engagements, or grants that count young people "reached." No other Toronto program can promise a named child a place next September.

> **~1,800** guaranteed places in the whole envelope — every one of them in After-School Recreation Care, the City's small fee-charging program, out of 234,408 children aged 5–13 (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Inside Toronto's own budget, the division that holds the youth mandate is the smallest major division there is: Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) takes 0.73% of the City's operating budget (City of Toronto, 2025). New York's DYCD takes 1.31% of its city's budget (DYCD, 2026). The cities that commit the most built one buyer, one price, and one promise; Toronto built sixteen streams and no promise at all.

Fairness requires the other half of the picture. Toronto's commitment per young person is rising — up 58% in real terms from 2019 to 2025, with the division's share of the city budget climbing from 0.55% to 0.73% over the same span (City of Toronto, 2025). Anyone who says the commitment is falling is wrong on the published numbers. Much of the growth is scope rather than youth investment — a machinery transfer in 2020 and the community-safety build-out grew the division around youth work faster than the youth work itself grew. The honest framing is rising, and still far behind.

None of this is a new diagnosis. In 2012, City Council adopted the Middle Childhood Strategy (CD16.2), which called the provision "fragmented" — split across licensed child care, recreation, non-profits, schools, private providers, and informal care, with "no shared standards of quality" (City of Toronto, 2012). The strategy had the language of a system: common standards, shared funder requirements, a central database, coordinated planning. It built none of the machinery that makes those nouns real — no buyer, no price, no contract, no committed funding, no accountable owner. Its tangible delivery outcome was an expansion of the City's own program by eighteen sites. By January 2017, four years after adoption, the coalition that originated the strategy was writing to Budget Committee pleading for one dedicated full-time staff person to oversee implementation. Toronto adopted this diagnosis in 2012 and produced eighteen sites and a plea for one staff person. The difference a real system would make is not the diagnosis. It is the machinery.

Figure 11 — Toronto spends more per young person than it did — $236 in 2025, up from $149 in 2019 in today's dollars — and still far less than New York's $1,113

Toronto SDFA budget per resident aged 5 to 24, 2019 to 2025, in 2025 dollars

Social Development, Finance and Administration gross budget per resident aged 5–24, restated in 2025 dollars (Statistics Canada CPI, all-items, Canada, annual average). Labels under each year: the division's share of the City operating budget. Denominators are census counts held between censuses — 2016 Census (602,405 residents aged 5–24) for 2019, 2021 Census (581,210) for 2022–2025 — so the recent years are upper bounds if the youth population has grown since 2021. 2020 and 2021 are not charted: no single published adopted total was located for those years on a consistent basis. Nominal figures: $123 (2019), $159 (2022), $180 (2023), $220 (2024), $236 (2025). Real-terms rise 2019 to 2025: 58%. Source: City of Toronto adopted budgets; the research file behind this plan — per-youth series (PER-YOUTH.md, sections 7–8).

More money. More services. Worse outcomes.

The money rose. The division that holds the youth mandate grew from **$74.3 million** in 2019 to **$137.3 million** in 2025 — from **$149** to **$236** per young person in today's dollars, a real rise of 58%, and from 0.55% to 0.73% of the City's operating budget. SafeTO, the community safety plan, carries **$43 million** in 2025 and **$49 million** in 2026. The division's staff complement roughly doubled over the period, from 170 positions in 2020 to **365** in 2025 (City of Toronto, 2025).

Most of the growth is not youth work. The two biggest step-changes in the series are a machinery transfer — Human Services Integration moved into the division in 2020 — and the community-safety build-out: SafeTO and the Toronto Community Crisis Service, launched in 2022. The division grew around youth work faster than the youth work itself grew. Of the $137.3 million, only about **$10 million** can be identified as youth programming in published lines. The City publishes no youth total at all; that absence is a finding, not a footnote (City of Toronto, 2025).

What grew was the response system. Crisis response, safety programming, grants machinery, and drop-in access all expanded for real: Library Youth Hubs grew from 8 branches in 2017 to **31 branches** in 2025, recording **129,000 teen visits** in the first eight months of 2025 (Toronto Public Library, 2025). But the build-out is reactive, and it is counted in activity — visits, calls, dispatches — not in outcomes. Across the whole system, the number of guaranteed places a family can rely on is still about **1,800**.

Over the same years, the conditions young people live in moved the other way. Child low income on the taxfiler measure (CFLIM-AT) rose from 16.8% in 2020 to **25.3%** in 2022 — **117,890 children**; the 2020 figure includes temporary pandemic income supports, so the rise is read with that caution (Campaign 2000, Family Service Toronto, & Social Planning Toronto, 2024). The share of Toronto youth rating their mental health fair or poor rose from 27.1% in 2019 to **37.0%** in 2023; the share who had seriously contemplated suicide moved from 16.7% to 18.0%, a change Toronto Public Health describes as stable (Toronto Public Health, 2025). **24.9%** of Toronto households were food insecure in the Who's Hungry 2024 report (Daily Bread Food Bank & North York Harvest Food Bank, 2024). The City's one-night homelessness count more than doubled, from 7,347 people in April 2021 to **15,418** in October 2024 — the two counts were taken in different seasons, and the later count includes a large number of refugee claimants (City of Toronto, 2025). Youth unemployment in the Toronto CMA stood at **18.0%** in 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2026).

One thing improved, and it matters. Violence fell hard in 2025: shootings and firearm discharges fell from 462 to **263**, and homicides from 85 to **45** (Toronto Police Service, 2026). It is one year, after a 2024 count that still stood near the 2019 peak of 492, and no published evaluation attributes the fall to any program. The City states that its 2025 efforts "contributed to" a 40% summer reduction in gun

violence (City of Toronto, 2025); that claim is the City’s, and this plan neither adopts it nor dismisses it. The published record supports neither credit nor blame.

Money grew. Machinery grew. Activity grew. What was never built is a system that promises a young person a place — and reports whether their life improved. That is the gap this plan exists to close.

2. Toronto today: four programs, four kinds of promise

Toronto does not have an after-school system. It has four different answers to the after-school question, owned by four different authorities, counting four different things. Each is a real program doing real work. Read together, they show what a guarantee is — by showing what happens without one.

After-School Recreation Care: the City runs a small version itself

After-School Recreation Care (ARC) is the City's own after-school program, run by City recreation staff in schools and community centres, for children aged 6 to 12, from the end of the school day to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. Parents pay fees; a City subsidy, the Welcome Policy, reduces the fee for low-income families. ARC began in 2006 as a pilot at 21 sites in priority neighbourhoods. In 2025 it ran **44 programs**, with about **1,800 children** registered (City of Toronto, 2025).

On cost, the record goes quiet. ARC's last published budget figure is from 2013 — $2.3 million gross, and $2,556 per child. Adjusted for inflation, that 2013 figure is about $3,600 in 2026 dollars. The City stopped publishing the program's cost after 2013, and its results are not reported publicly.

What ARC guarantees, it genuinely guarantees. A registered place in ARC is a real place: a named child, a known program, known hours, City staff. It is the closest thing Toronto has to a guaranteed place — and the whole of it fits about 1,800 children. ARC proves Toronto can run a real place, in Toronto schools, with Toronto staff. **It also proves** that a program without a published price and published results stays small and unaccountable, because nothing in its structure requires anything else.

> **Runs it:** The City — City recreation staff, in schools and community centres
> **Ages:** 6 to 12
> **What it counts:** A guaranteed place — a registered place is a real place
> **Scale:** 44 programs, about 1,800 registered places (children registered; City of Toronto, 2025) (2025)
> **Cost:** Last published 2013 — $2.3 million gross, $2,556 per child (about $3,600 in 2026 dollars)
> **The promise:** A real guaranteed place — for about 1,800 children.

Library Youth Hubs: an open door, honestly counted

Toronto Public Library runs Youth Hubs: staffed drop-in spaces for teenagers inside library branches, open weekday afternoons (3:30–7 p.m.) for young people roughly 13 to 19 — homework, computers, programs, or simply somewhere safe and warm. The hubs grew from 8 branches in 2017 to 31 branches in 2025. The library counts use precisely: **129,000 teen visits** between January and August 2025, with 2,330 programs offered and 17,700 program participants (Toronto Public Library, 2025).

The library does not publish a total cost for all 31 hubs. The 2025 expansion shows the unit plainly — three hubs, 7.0 staff positions, $0.887 million a year, roughly $296,000 per hub — and multiplying that published unit across the network gives an estimated $9.2 million a year. An estimate, labelled as one wherever it travels.

A visit is not a place. The 129,000 figure counts visits, and the library, to its credit, says "visits" and means it. Any teenager may come; no teenager is promised a place, a program, or a result, and the hubs serve teenagers only — they do nothing for the elementary years, when the after-school gap opens first. Notice, though, why the hubs report so well: they were approved the way a contract is approved, as a discrete expansion with a staff count, a budget, and expected visits written down in advance. Given a written expectation, Toronto's own institutions report against it.

Runs it: Toronto Public Library

Ages: Roughly 13 to 19

What it counts: Visits — 129,000 teen visits, not places

Scale: 31 branches (2025), grown from 8 in 2017

Cost: Total not published — about $296,000 per hub (2025 expansion); an estimated $9.2 million a year for the network

The promise: An open door — no teenager is promised a place.

Ontario Before-and-After School Programs: the province sets the duty, parents pay

Provincial law requires school boards to make sure a before- and after-school program is offered for children from junior kindergarten to Grade 6 where parents want one. Licensed child-care operators and school boards deliver the programs, in schools. Licensed capacity in Toronto was **40,943 spaces** in December 2025 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025).

Read that number carefully: it is spaces licensed to exist, not children in them. How many children actually hold places is not published. Parents pay the fees, and the fees are expressly unregulated — around Toronto's largest board they run about $26 to $42 per school day, roughly $4,900 to $7,900 over a school year. Toronto administers the child-care fee subsidy that helps some families pay; at December 31, 2025, 16,367 children were on its waitlist, all ages, not just school-age (City of Toronto, 2025). That waitlist is evidence of pressure on the subsidy system. It is not an after-school demand figure, and it should never be quoted as one.

So a program must be offered — but no child is guaranteed a place their family can afford, at a regulated price, to a common standard, with published results. This is the largest after-school "system" Toronto has, and it is mostly a market. It proves demand beyond argument: families are already paying private prices for after-school care. It does not guarantee anything.

Runs it: Licensed child-care operators and school boards, under a provincial duty

Ages: Junior kindergarten to Grade 6

What it counts: Licensed spaces — spaces licensed to exist, not children in them

Scale: 40,943 licensed spaces in Toronto (December 2025); children actually holding places — not published

Cost: Parents pay unregulated fees — about $26 to $42 per school day (roughly $4,900 to $7,900 over a school year)

The promise: A program must be offered — no child is guaranteed a place.

Toronto Youth Job Corps: the contract proof

The Toronto Youth Job Corps (TYJC) is a full-time, paid employment program for young people aged 15 to 30 who are out of school and out of work and facing serious barriers: about five weeks of intensive group training, then a supported employer placement for up to 16 weeks, then continued support. Participants are paid minimum wage, up to 35 hours a week, in every phase. Community agencies deliver it under contracts awarded by competition — the City buys this program rather than running it.

Because the City buys it by contract, the targets are written down. The 2024–2028 contracts total **$18,036,434** — $15,227,669 from the federal government and $2,808,765 from the City — about $4.51 million a year (City of Toronto, 2025). The contract targets 1,152 young people over four years, of whom 692 are expected to be employed and 230 back in school. And a longer record exists to argue with: for 2009–2023, the City published 4,105 young people trained, 1,947 employed, and 774 returned to school.

The second half of the lesson matters as much as the first, and leaving it out would forfeit the point. Results against the current contract are not published. And the Social Development division's own budget notes print a different figure for the same program — 2,120 "youth hired" in 2023 alone, a number that cannot describe the same program as a contract targeting 1,152 youth over four years. The two City numbers sit side by side in City documents, unexplained and unreconciled. The contract created the target; nothing created the duty to publish against it. Job Corps is youth employment, not after-school programming, and it sits outside the spending totals in this plan. **Its role here is the contract lesson:** targets without published results are half a contract.

Runs it: Community agencies under City contracts awarded by competition — the City buys it, rather than running it

Ages: 15 to 30, out of school and out of work

What it counts: Contract targets — 1,152 young people over four years

Scale: 2024–2028 contracts; 4,105 young people trained over 2009–2023

Cost: $18,036,434 over 2024–2028 — about $4.51 million a year

The promise: Targets are written down — results against the current contract are not published.

3. The model it follows: New York buys after-school by the place

New York City does not run after-school programs. It buys them — the way it buys road repair: a written specification, a published price, a contract, an inspection.

COMPASS: one buyer, one price, one count

The Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS) is New York's after-school system for children from kindergarten to Grade 8: homework help, sports, arts, science activities, leadership — in a school, a community centre, a place of worship, a public-housing building or a park facility, free to the family, every school day. It is ordinary, developmental programming, not crisis response: supervision and structure in the hours between the end of school and the end of the workday.

The buyer is DYCD, the city department for youth and community programs. DYCD runs no programs itself. It writes the specification, runs a competition — a request for proposals (RFP), a formal process where organizations bid for the work — and signs contracts with community-based organizations to deliver. The current contracts run six years (2026–2032), long enough for a provider to hire staff and plan. To bid, an organization needs at least three years' experience; proposals are scored, with the quality of the program plan worth 40 points. DYCD's own program managers each cover about 20 sites — visiting programs, approving plans and budgets, reviewing attendance and financial reports, and ordering fixes when a provider falls short. One web-based system, DYCD Connect, holds registrations, attendance and invoicing for every provider. DYCD has also hired an outside research firm, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), to evaluate the system independently (DYCD, 2026).

The system began in 2005 as Out-of-School Time, at US$46 million, and was renamed COMPASS in 2014. It now comprises more than 820 programs, at about US$447.6 million a year for **102,104 guaranteed places** (DYCD, 2026). The contracts do not just buy a child's presence. They buy a dose: elementary contracts require 1,020 hours of programming a year, and staff-to-child ratios are set in the contract. Every elementary program runs against a published attendance benchmark — a Rate of Participation of 80% — tracked in the system's own data, so "did children actually show up?" is answered from records, not impressions.

COMPASS, by the contract	Figure
Programs	820+
Guaranteed places	102,104
Funding	~US$447.6M a year
Elementary price	US$4,800 per child (school year)
Middle-school price (School's Out NYC — SONYC)	US$3,900 per child
Elementary contracted hours	1,020 a year
Rate of Participation benchmark (elementary)	80%
Contract term	Six years (2026–2032)

Four mayors carried this system. Bloomberg created it, de Blasio scaled it, Adams funded the expansion, and Mamdani is executing it. That run is the point: a baselined contract system survives elections, because each successive budget re-enacts it. An envelope of grants, renewed program by program, has no such protection.

SONYC: the middle-school years, treated as their own problem

School's Out New York City (SONYC) is the middle-school model inside COMPASS — Grades 6 to 8, roughly ages 11 to 13. It exists as a separate model because middle school is where after-school usually falls apart: children who attended happily at age 9 vote with their feet at 12. SONYC's answer is to stop running the program like a class. It is structured as clubs — sports, arts, leadership — and young people choose how they spend their time. It launched in 2014 as the centrepiece of the COMPASS expansion, a US$145 million investment. The middle-school contract requires 540 hours of programming a year, a deliberately lighter dose than the elementary 1,020, at a published price of US$3,900 per child (DYCD, 2026). New York reports SONYC inside the COMPASS totals; it does not publish a separate current budget or place count for the middle-school model alone.

AIR evaluated the expansion year independently. Registration went from 18,702 young people to 58,745 in one year, participants attended 13 million hours in total — an average of 236 hours per participant — and program quality was rated high across 2,300 hours of direct observation (American Institutes for Research [AIR], 2016). In the same evaluation, 98% of surveyed parents said their child liked the program. That last figure needs its label: it is perception-grade evidence. It proves families valued the service, which matters for take-up and durability. It proves nothing about outcomes, and satisfaction must never be allowed to stand in for impact.

What the evidence actually shows

Start with what the system-level evidence is: it documents implementation and participation, not test-score impact. Policy Studies Associates (PSA) evaluated the earlier citywide out-of-school-time system with a matched comparison group and found that participants reported strong academic benefits and motivation — but their standardized test-score gains were not significantly different from matched non-participants (Policy Studies Associates [PSA], n.d.). A later PSA study found something a buyer can act on: when DYCD required academic content in after-school programs, program quality and coordination with schools improved (PSA, 2015). Quality, participation and family outcomes are documented. A test-score effect is not.

No evaluation has shown a test-score effect; the proven returns are places delivered, hours attended, quality, family satisfaction, and — for summer jobs — safety.

SYEP: the summer-jobs sibling, and the safety evidence

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is DYCD's second flagship: for six weeks each July and August, New Yorkers aged 14 to 24 hold real, paid summer jobs, placed through community organizations under contract, with the city paying the wages. It is not after-school care, and nothing here counts it as any. It belongs in this plan because it carries the strongest causal evidence in the field — places were allotted by lottery, so researchers could compare winners and losers who were alike in everything but luck. SYEP has served more than 100,000 young people every summer from 2022 through 2025 (DYCD, 2026).

Gelber, Isen and Kessler followed 294,580 applications from 2005–2008, linked to tax, incarceration and mortality records (Gelber, Isen and Kessler, 2014). Earnings rose in the program year itself — about $876 net, even after counting the other work participants would likely have done anyway. The study found no effect on college enrolment, and a modest earnings decrease of about $100 a year across the three years after the program year. The durable results were about safety: the probability of incarceration was about 10% lower across all applicants — the much larger figure of about 54% applies only among 19–21-year-olds, and it should never be quoted without that qualifier — and mortality from external causes was about one-fifth lower. Read whole, the study says something precise: the proven long-run return of a guaranteed summer job is safety, not schooling and not earnings. That evidence belongs to paid places for older youth. It is not evidence about after-school places for ten-year-olds, and this plan does not present it as such.

4. What's broken in New York

New York's system works. Its failures are documented too — in its own comptroller's counts, its own evaluations, and its own re-bidding rounds. Toronto's design takes the machinery and designs the failures out. Each one below is a reason the Toronto version is written the way it is.

The city pays late — badly

In 2024, over 90% of New York's human-services contracts were registered late. First payments from DYCD averaged more than a year after the contract started (NYC Comptroller, 2025). Non-profits — organizations whose costs are mostly payroll, paid monthly — borrowed money to make payroll while waiting for the city that hired them. Providers financing the government is not an administrative blemish. It lands hardest on the smallest, most neighbourhood-rooted organizations, the ones a system like this claims to want, and it breaks the staffing chain that quality depends on at its first link. Toronto's counter-design already exists in Toronto: the City's children's-services system pays its agencies in advance — child care monthly in advance, EarlyON quarterly in advance. The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan’s contracts pay quarterly in advance, with the City's own payment record published beside the providers'.

Children attend roughly half the hours offered

A contracted hour is not an attended hour. SONYC's evaluated expansion offered 540 hours and delivered an average of 236 attended hours per participant — 43.7% of the offer (AIR, 2016). Across systems, realized dose runs at roughly 40–60% of contracted hours. New York's 80% Rate of Participation is a site-level fill measure, not a per-child dose: a site can hit its benchmark while the average child receives half the offer. None of this makes the places worthless — 236 attended hours is a real service — but any honest system budgets and reports both numbers: hours contracted, and hours attended, per child. A plan that reports places as if they were doses will be found out by its own evaluation, and the verdict will be that after-school doesn't work, when what actually happened is that the dose was never delivered as described.

> **236 of 540**
>
> hours attended on average in SONYC's evaluated expansion year — 43.7% of the hours the contract offered (AIR, 2016). The contract has to be written for that reality, not for the brochure.

Re-bidding severs relationships

When DYCD re-ran its competitions for the 2026 cycle, long-standing providers lost programs at dozens of schools. In one Manhattan district, 12 programs changed hands from a single provider. Parents campaigned to get "their" organizations back. A contract system treats providers as interchangeable; after-school quality lives in relationships — a staff member who knows a child's life, an organization rooted in a neighbourhood — and a re-bid can cut exactly that. The fix is not to abandon competition. It

is to design turnover: tiered contract sizes small organizations can hold, transition protections so a family's registration and records move through the shared data system when a provider changes, and competition rules that weigh rootedness alongside the program plan.

Price discipline: what Toronto adds

New York's price is a published total — the city states what it will pay, and providers compete on the quality of their program rather than on who can promise to do it cheapest. Toronto's design keeps that discipline and states its price differently: built bottom-up, line by line, from Toronto wages and Toronto's school calendar, so every component can be argued with in the open. Toronto also adds two contract terms. The first is indexation: the price adjusts annually with the consumer price index, so a six-year contract does not quietly squeeze providers as costs move — a fixed price held for six years is not saved by anyone; it is spent in turnover and unfilled ratios. The second is a contracted participation benchmark: the 80% Rate of Participation written into the Toronto contract as a term, with attended hours per child published under it, rather than carried as a system description. A published price, on its own, does not protect a contract against time or against the gap between hours offered and hours attended. Toronto's terms are written against both.

Results are published unevenly

New York does evaluate: AIR's independent work on COMPASS and SONYC is the reason this plan can describe the expansion year in attended hours and observed quality at all. But evaluation commissioned for a program is not the same as results published as a standing term — and SONYC's own numbers disappear inside the COMPASS totals, so the hardest-to-serve age group can vanish inside a system-wide average. Toronto does not need to travel to learn this lesson; Section 2’s Job Corps record is the local version of the same failure. So in the Toronto Youth Alignment Plan, publishing is a contract term, not a favour: quarterly publication of registrations, attendance and fill rates from the shared data system, an annual public report against the contracted targets, and an independent evaluation funded as an explicit line item — whether the results flatter the program or not.

5. The five fixes

NEW YORK · FLAW		TORONTO · FIX
NEW YORK · FLAW 1 **The city pays late.** Over 90% of human-services contracts were registered late in 2024; first payments averaged more than a year.	→	TORONTO · FIX 1 **Payment in advance.** Quarterly advances, 30-day terms, interest on late City payment — the way Toronto already pays its child-care agencies.
NEW YORK · FLAW 2 **Compliance squeezes out small organizations.** Fixed costs fall hardest on the rooted, neighbourhood providers.	→	TORONTO · FIX 2 **Contract sizes they can hold.** Tiered lots, a reserved small-organization share, anchor partners for back office and data.
NEW YORK · FLAW 3 **Cheapest-wins and lock-in.** Price competition thins quality; re-bids sever the relationships quality lives in.	→	TORONTO · FIX 3 **A set price, quality competition.** Six-year terms, district caps, a new-entrant reserve, transition protections for families.
NEW YORK · FLAW 4 **Buyer-designed rigidity.** A central specification can flatten what local providers do best.	→	TORONTO · FIX 4 **A city floor, provider design.** The contract sets hours, ratios, safety, price, reporting — and nothing above it. A protected grant layer stays beside it.
NEW YORK · FLAW 5 **Results are an afterthought.** Targets without published results are half a contract.	→	TORONTO · FIX 5 **Publishing is a contract term.** Quarterly results, an annual public report, independent evaluation funded at 1.5% of contract value — and never pay-by-results.

New York built the machinery Toronto needs. It also showed, in plain sight, how that machinery can hurt the very organizations it depends on. Each fix below starts from a documented New York failure and answers it with a practice Toronto already runs somewhere in its own system. Nothing here is invented from whole cloth.

Fix 1 — Late payment becomes payment in advance, with enforceable terms

New York pays late, badly. In 2024, more than 90% of its human-services contracts were registered late, and a provider's first payment from the Department of Youth and Community Development took, on average, more than a year after the contract started (NYC Comptroller, 2025). Non-profits borrowed money to make payroll while waiting for the city that hired them.

Toronto does not need to invent the answer. Agencies holding a City service agreement in the children's system “may receive payments in advance of delivering services” — child-care funding monthly in advance, EarlyON Child and Family Centre funding quarterly in advance (City of Toronto, 2026). EarlyON is delivered by 50 organizations at 232 locations under City agreements, so the plumbing is not a pilot. It is ordinary practice in one part of the City, missing in another.

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan’s contracts therefore specify quarterly advances against the schedule of places, 30-day payment terms on reconciliations, and interest owed on late City payment, written into the agreement itself. Terms a provider can enforce, not courtesies a division can extend. The provider never finances the government.

Fix 2 — The squeeze on small organizations

Fixed compliance costs fall hardest on small, rooted organizations. Track-record minimums, insurance, data systems, audited statements — the bill is much the same whether an organization runs one site or twenty. When New York re-ran its competitions for the 2026 cycle, long-standing providers lost programs at dozens of schools, and parents campaigned to get “their” organizations back.

The design answers with contract sizes small organizations can actually hold. Contracts are let in lots of different sizes — school-cluster lots a single-site organization can hold, district lots for multi-site providers — with compliance requirements scaled to the size of the lot. City procurement rules require open competition above $133,800 and allow invitational processes below it, so lot design works with that structure rather than around it. The City's Social Procurement Program already steers purchases of $3,000 to $100,000 toward certified diverse suppliers (City of Toronto, 2026).

A stated share of places in each district is reserved for organizations under a size threshold, competing among themselves at the same set price. Where a neighbourhood's organizations are all small, one anchor partner holds the contract, the data system and the back office while neighbourhood groups deliver. That is the exact structure of the Toronto Community Crisis Service — five anchor partners, each assigned its area (City of Toronto, 2025).

One warning comes from Ontario's employment-services rebuild, and the design takes it seriously. When an intermediary layer holds the funder relationship, the relationship can drift away from the neighbourhood agency. The counter is direct: delivery contracts and site identity stay with the organizations doing the work. The anchor is their service provider, not their replacement.

Fix 3 — Cheapest-wins and lock-in

The price per child is set by the City from a published cost model. New York already does this — its competitions state the price and award at that price. Providers compete on quality instead. New York scores the program plan at 40 points. The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan scores quality, neighbourhood rootedness and staffing plans, at a fixed price.

Lock-in gets its own machinery. Terms run six years, with a mid-term performance review. No provider can hold more than a capped share within a district. Each re-competition carries a new-entrant reserve. And when a provider does change, a family's registration and records move through the shared data system, so a change of contractor does not orphan families — the harm families felt in New York's 2026 re-bid, designed out in advance.

Fix 4 — Buyer-designed rigidity

A contract can smother the thing it buys if the buyer specifies too much. So this one specifies the floor — hours, ratios, safety, price, reporting — and nothing above it. Curriculum, cultural design and program identity stay with providers. New York's own flexible model shows a buyer can contract for flexibility and still know what it bought.

The system is deliberately a hybrid. A parallel grant stream continues for experimental and hyper-local work that cannot be specified in units — the layer where grants genuinely beat contracts. In Toronto terms, the Community Partnership and Investment Program and the SafeTO youth-violence-prevention grants are not raided to fund this system. They are re-anchored as its innovation layer.

Fix 5 — Publishing results is a contract term, and evaluation is a budget line

Toronto Youth Job Corps carries written targets in its contracts, yet no results against the current contract are published, and its own division's budget notes print numbers that cannot describe the same program. The pattern repeats across the city. Where money leaves by contract or by a formal expansion case, outputs get written down. The standing patchwork reports inputs.

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan writes the remedy into every contract: quarterly publication of registrations, attendance and fill rates from the shared data system; an annual public report against the contracted targets; and an independent evaluation funded as an explicit line item — 1.5% of contract value, inside the system layer priced in Section 8 — following New York's precedent of contracting the American Institutes for Research to evaluate its system.

Payment is for delivery to specification. Sacramento's Advance Peace contract worked that way: pay for faithful delivery of a defined intervention, evaluate the outcomes separately (City of Sacramento, 2017). The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan does not pay by results for child outcomes. That model's documented failure is the United Kingdom's Troubled Families programme, which paid on self-reported proxy measures, reported 99% “success,” and produced a success rate its own national evaluation could not find (United Kingdom, 2016). That is the clearest warning in the research, and the design heeds it.

The machinery the fixes run on

Fixes need a machine to run on. Three pieces carry the weight.

One named buyer. A dedicated youth services unit inside Social Development, Finance and Administration — the City's social-development division — writes the specification, runs the competitions, holds the price list, employs the monitors, runs the data system and publishes the results. The division already buys rather than delivers: of its $137.3M gross budget, $62.2M is purchased services (City of Toronto, 2025). Contracting with community organizations is its normal way of working.

Two bands, bought to a standard. The elementary band runs at 1 staff member to 10 children for 596 school-year hours. The middle band runs at 1 to 15 for 540 hours, in the club-shaped form older children will actually attend. Both ratios sit deliberately above Ontario's licensed floor of 1 to 13 for kindergarten and 1 to 15 for primary and junior school-age children. The design buys the higher standard and prices the difference openly.

One data system, with a public dashboard. Every provider registers children, records attendance and invoices inside a single City system — the pattern Toronto already requires of shelter providers. City monitors, each covering about 20 sites, visit programs, approve plans and budgets, and direct fixes when a provider falls short. A paid junior-staff layer for local young people aged 16 to 24 adds hands and opens a first-job pipeline. Junior staff never count toward the ratios, and no child is supervised by anyone under 18.

6. Who runs the sites: three honest options

Everything so far assumes one answer to a question worth asking out loud: who employs the people at each site? There are three honest options. They differ in who delivers. They do not differ in what is guaranteed, because the guarantee lives in the layer above delivery — the standards, the hours, the monitors, the data system, and the published results.

Contract — buy

Employs the staff: community organizations, under contract to the City.

Accountability: the contract — competition to lose, terms to enforce.

The guarantee: City layer — standards, hours, monitors, data, published results. This is the model the plan prices.

In-house — build

Employs the staff: Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the way it runs ARC today.

Accountability: management — no competition, no agreement to enforce.

The guarantee: the same City layer, applied to the City's own sites. ARC's record — about 1,800 children, cost unpublished since 2013 — is the caution.

Tandem — share the floor

Employs the staff: shared — the division's space and junior staff layer; community organizations deliver the programming.

Accountability: split — and the split has to be named in advance, or the model fails.

The guarantee: the same City layer across both kinds of site. Same price band as the contract model — the gains are avoided duplication, not a lower price.

The contract model is the base case, and the one priced in this plan. The City buys the whole service from community organizations, as New York does. Providers hire the staff, run the sites, and answer to the contract. Parks, Forestry and Recreation hosts programs where they use its spaces. This model carries two decades of New York evidence behind it.

The in-house model has Parks, Forestry and Recreation run the system with its own staff, the way it runs the After-School Recreation and Care program — ARC — today. No competition, no providers. Accountability runs through management, not contract: there is no competition to lose and no agreement to enforce. ARC's record shows what that has meant in practice. After years of City operation it reaches about 1,800 children, and its cost per child was last published in 2013. Nothing about in-house delivery requires smallness or silence. Nothing in it has prevented either.

The tandem model splits the work. The City buys the guarantee layer. Parks, Forestry and Recreation contributes space at permit prices, and its workforce — roughly 9,000 to 10,000 part-time recreation workers a year, about 80% of them aged 14 to 29 — feeds the junior layer for workers aged 16 to 24. Community organizations deliver the programming itself: the qualified staff who count toward the ratios, the program design, the neighbourhood relationships.

A note on tandem costs, because this is where plans like this usually start to bend. Tandem removes real duplication — paying market rent for rooms the City already owns, paying a contractor to recruit animators the City already employs. But it cannot beat the contract model on headline price, because the base price never charged those duplications in the first place. Space is already costed at permit rates — $200 per child per year in the elementary band, $150 in the middle band, not market rent and not zero. Wages are already benchmarked to the City's own ARC grid. So the gains from tandem are stated in words, never converted into invented dollars: avoided duplication, a ready hiring pipeline, better use of public rooms. No per-place figure below the modelled $3,680 appears in this comparison, and none should be quoted unless it is one day built bottom-up the way Section 8 builds the base price.

Four flags stay attached to tandem, in plain language. Whether guaranteed, ratio-bound program work sits inside existing collective-agreement scope is a determination for City staff and labour relations to make. This document cannot assert it, and the model should not be sold as if it were already settled. If a site fails, the agreements must say in advance whether the provider or the division answers — shared delivery with blurred accountability is worse than either clean model. Rooms and staff redeployed into guaranteed places stop doing something else, and that trade has to be named site by site. And ARC is both the proof of life and the scale warning: City staff can run a real place, and left without a guarantee layer, a real place stayed at 1,800 children.

> The guarantee is the product; who employs the animator is a delivery choice.

7. Three scales

Scale talk goes wrong when the denominator is soft. So the denominator comes first, from the census, and every option that follows is the same coverage rate applied to a different geography.

Toronto has 234,408 children aged 5 to 13 (City of Toronto / Statistics Canada, 2022). The count is built from the 2021 Census five-year bands: the 5-to-9 band, 129,040 children, counted in full; plus ages 10 to 13, 105,368 children — four-fifths of the 10-to-14 band. The bands sum exactly to the census backgrounder's published total for ages 0 to 14. Inside the total, elementary ages make up 66.3% and middle ages 33.7%.

New York's transferable number is a rate, not a count. Its 102,104 places against 830,714 resident children aged 5 to 13 (US Census Bureau, 2024) give a coverage rate of 12.29% — about one child in eight. That rate is what “New York-equivalent” means for a smaller city.

Option	Children in scope	Guaranteed places	Sites (modelled)	Cost per year (modelled)
(a) Priority neighbourhoods first	70,322	8,643	~79	$31.8M
(b) Citywide, half-scale	234,408	14,406	~131	$53.0M
(c) Full New York equivalent, citywide	234,408	28,811	~262	$106.0M

Option (a) rests on an assumption, and it is called one every time it appears: that **30%** of Toronto's children aged 5 to 13 live in the priority neighbourhoods. No government publishes that share. The direction is grounded — priority neighbourhoods run higher child shares than the city as a whole — but the number itself is assumed, and option (a) moves in direct proportion to it. At 25%, the priority system is 7,203 places and $26.5M a year. At 35%, it is 10,084 places and $37.1M a year. The first job of a design phase is the census count that replaces the assumption with a count.

Figure 12 — The same guaranteed place at three sizes: 8,643 places for $31.8M a year, 14,406 for $53.0M, or 28,811 for $106.0M

Guaranteed places and annual cost at three scales

All three options buy places at the modelled blended price of $3,680 per place (Section 8) and at New York’s coverage rate of 12.29% of children aged 5–13 within each geography (102,104 places among 830,714 children, American Community Survey 2024). Option (a) is restricted to the priority neighbourhoods; its 70,322 children in scope rest on the stated assumption that 30% of Toronto’s 5–13 population lives there — at 25% the option is 7,203 places and $26.5 million, at 35% it is 10,084 places and $37.1 million. Options (b) and (c) use the census count for the whole city: 234,408 children aged 5–13 (2021 Census).

THE PHASE-IN

The phase-in is a ramp, not a switch. Year 1 stands up the buyer unit and the data system and opens about 2,200 places, at roughly $8M. Year 2 reaches about 5,200 places, at roughly $19M, and publishes

the first results report. Year 3 completes the priority system at 8,643 places and $31.8M, with the mid-course evaluation published. Years 4 and 5 move to citywide half-scale at $53.0M only if Council chooses — a decision informed by the Year 3 evaluation, not an escalator built into this plan.

Figure 13 — The phase-in: three years to the priority system

Guaranteed places by phase-in year

Places and cost per year at the full year of each phase, at the modelled blended price of $3,680 per place. Years 1–3 build the priority-neighbourhood system (option (a), Section 7). *Years 4–5 move to citywide half-scale (option (b)) only if Council chooses, on the evidence of the Year 3 evaluation. Source: the design’s phase-in table (Section 9).

8. The price, built in the open

The price in this plan is a model. It is called a model every time it appears, because nobody has tendered it and pretending otherwise would hand critics their easiest win. What a model can do — what this one does — is print every assumption, so anyone can change one and watch the price move.

Assumption	Value	Basis
Front-line pay	$22.00/hr elementary; $23.00/hr middle	The City's own ARC site-coordinator posting rate (City of Toronto, 2026); program leaders post at $19.76
Site coordinator / site director	$30.00/hr / $38.00/hr	Model, benchmarked to City and non-profit postings
Payroll burden	+22%	Model
Paid time beyond program hours	×1.15	Model — set-up, clean-up, planning, training
Food	$1.75 per child per day (snack); $3.50 on summer days	Model
Supplies	$150 per child per year	Model
Space	$200 per child per year elementary; $150 middle	Model — permit rates; cheap, not free
Provider administration	+12%	Model
City system layer	+6%, including the 1.5% evaluation line	Model
Program days	194	Ontario school-year regulation: 187 teaching days, up to 7 PA days

The elementary build is the heart of it. Front-line staffing for 596 hours at 1 to 10 comes to $1,840 per place. Coordination adds $314, direction $132, food $340, and supplies and space $350 — a direct cost of $2,975. Provider administration and the City system layer take it to $3,532 for the school year. A summer block of 240 hours adds $1,389, for a year-round elementary price of $4,921. The middle band, at 540 hours and 1 to 15, prices at $2,604. The high-school bridge prices at $1,325; it is described for completeness and sits outside the three costed options. Blended at 66.3% elementary and 33.7% middle, with half of elementary places taking the summer add-on, the modelled price is **$3,680** per place.

Cross-check	Price	Toronto model
New York elementary, school year	US$4,800 ≈ C$6,701	$3,532

Cross-check	Price	Toronto model
New York elementary, year-round	US$6,800 ≈ C$9,493	$4,921
New York middle school (SONYC)	US$3,900 ≈ C$5,445	$2,604
New York blended	US$4,384 ≈ C$6,120	$3,680 — about 40% below

All conversions use US$1 = C$1.3961 (Bank of Canada, 2026), the daily rate for November 4, 2026. Toronto comes out below New York for stated reasons, none of them magic: fewer mandated hours, Toronto wage levels, and Toronto space costs at permit rates.

One Toronto check matters more than the currency table. ARC — the City's own registered after-school program — last published a cost of $2,556 per child, in 2013. Restated for inflation, that is about $3,600 in 2026 dollars, within roughly 2% of the modelled elementary price. The match is a sanity check on order of magnitude, not a proof of precision, and it always travels with its date attached: 2013, because the City stopped publishing the figure after that year.

Sensitivity tells Council where its real choices sit. Raising elementary hours toward New York's package, to 800 school-year hours, lifts the elementary price to $4,461 — up 26%. Tightening the ratio to 1 to 8 lifts it to $4,078, up 15%. Paying front-line staff $25 an hour lifts it to $3,830, up 8%.

KEY FINDING

The price is moved by dose decisions — how many hours, how many children per adult — not by overhead assumptions. A council that wants New York’s dose can have it. It should vote for the price that comes with it, in the open.

One number is retired here, on purpose. Dividing Parks, Forestry and Recreation's $289.9M budget by its 483,000 registrations gives roughly “$600.” That figure prices a registration — one course sign-up, often a few hours, for a person of any age — not a child holding 596 guaranteed hours. It appears in this plan only so that nobody uses it as a cost. A registration is not a place.

Figure 14 — How the $3,532 price of one elementary place is built, line by line (school year)

Waterfall build of the elementary school-year price

The elementary school-year build, per place: 596 program hours at one staff member to ten children, front-line pay at $22.00 an hour (the City’s ARC site-coordinator posting rate). Direct cost $2,975; provider administration at 12% adds $357; the City system layer at 6% adds $200; the design prints the resulting price as $3,532. Summer add-on $1,389; year-round elementary price $4,921; middle-school place $2,604; blended price $3,680. All figures are model lines from the cost build in this section — a model, stated as one.

9. The ledger and the verdict

Before anyone asks whether Toronto can afford a guaranteed system, count what Toronto already spends chasing the same effect: supervised, structured programming for school-age children outside school hours. The ledger counts only that effect, and it counts in tiers, so nothing rests on a hidden estimate.

Figure 15 — What Toronto already spends each year, stream by stream — the biggest single stream is $10.0M

Toronto after-school spending by stream

The largest streams in the ledger, per year. Navy: published figures. Gold: estimates, labelled as in the ledger — the Youth Hubs figure is extrapolated from the published cost of a three-hub expansion ($0.887 million a year for three hubs); the Ontario After School Program's Toronto share is modelled at 15–25% of the province-wide $14.6 million, which the province does not break out by city. ARC is carried at its last published figure (2013). The Summer Safety Plan's $5 million may sit inside SafeTO's wider envelope; the overlap is unresolved in the published sources, which is why the published tier of the ledger is stated as $17–22 million. Two real streams — Toronto Community Housing and the school boards — spend amounts no published source counts, and are not in this figure.

Source line: City of Toronto, Toronto Public Library and Ontario published figures, as itemized in the ledger table in this section; the full stream-by-stream ledger is in the companion record document.

Tier	What goes in	Total per year
Published, like-for-like only	Figures anyone can point to in published documents	$17–22M — the $22.3M and $17.3M pair turns on whether the Summer Safety Plan's $5M sits inside SafeTO's envelope, which published sources do not resolve; both are printed
Published plus two labelled modelled components	Add Library Youth Hubs at ≈$9.2M, extrapolated from a published three-hub expansion unit, and Toronto's share of Ontario's After School Program at $2.2–3.7M, modelled because the province does not publish it	≈$29–35M
With ARC restated	ARC at modelled current scale instead of its last published 2013 figure	Toward ~$39M

WHERE THE PRIORITY SYSTEM FINDS ITS MONEY

The spread matters as much as the sum. The ledger names 16 streams, at least 10 funding streams, and 8 authorities. Each runs its own application cycle, eligibility rules, reporting format and definition of a unit. No two rows count the same thing. And across all of it, the number of guaranteed places — a named child promised a defined number of hours at a defined standard next September — is about 1,800.

Where the priority system finds its money

Source	Per year	Honest note
Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth envelope conversion	~$12M	Reallocation candidate — hard. A labour-relations and service-continuity negotiation, not a journal entry. The staff in that envelope are the natural site coordinators and monitors of the new system
Ontario After School Program, formalized Toronto allocation	~$3M	Negotiated transfer. The ask is naming Toronto's share of money the province already spends, not new provincial money
SafeTO and Community Partnership and Investment Program alignment	~$5M	Partial reallocation. Only the after-school-hours portion aligns with places; the rest stays in the protected grant layer
Federal streams	$0 in the base case	Episodic money never bases a standing system. Federal contributions count as acceleration, never as base
New City money — what remains	≈$12M	About 0.06% of the City's $18.9B operating budget (City of Toronto, 2026)

One exclusion is stated flatly. Children's Services' $1,672.5M is not in this stack and cannot be. It is child-care money flowing under federal-provincial rules, and it is not available for a school-age system no matter how large the number looks in a budget book. Any version of this proposal that “finds” its funding there is not being honest.

> Comparable money for categorically more guaranteed output. It is not shown to be cheaper — and the design does not need it to be.

The supports are plain. The envelopes are the same order of money: **$31.8M** for the priority system — at the stated 30% priority-share assumption of Section 7 — against roughly $29–35M identifiably spent now. The outputs are not the same category, which is why “cheaper for the same output” is undefined — the status quo does not produce the output being priced. What the guarantee itself costs, beyond program delivery, is the system layer of about 6%, roughly $1.9M a year at priority scale: the monitors, the data system and the evaluation whose absence is exactly why the current system's results cannot be stated.

Stress the numbers and the verdict bends without breaking. Under a harsh combination — New York-level dose and tighter ratios, with current spending read at its strictly published low end — the priority system rises toward ~$42M against ~$20M of provable spend: roughly double, for a guaranteed system against an unguaranteed patchwork, and the verdict holds in the form printed above. Push both breaks together — the priority share at 35% and the New York dose at once — and option (a) reaches ≈$48–52M, where the honest sentence changes: roughly double to two-and-a-half times provable current spending, for a categorically different product. In no version does consolidation pay for itself. Anyone who claims it does is overclaiming, and this plan does not.

For roughly what Toronto already spends — money that today guarantees a place to 1,800 children — the City can guarantee 8,643 places, publish the attendance, pay the providers on time, and be audited

on all of it; the evidence supports exactly that promise, and this proposal makes no promise the evidence doesn't support.

PART 07

The limit

10. What this plan will not claim

A plan earns trust by what it refuses to promise. This closing section states the limits plainly — what the evidence supports, what it does not, and what this proposal therefore does not say.

This plan does not promise test scores. No system-scale evaluation anywhere has shown that after-school provision raises them. New York's own evaluator found participants' test-score gains no different from matched non-participants (Policy Studies Associates, n.d.). What structured programs with trained, stable staff do improve, on the evidence, is engagement, school-day attendance and course progression. Those are the outcomes the funded evaluation will measure and publish.

This plan does not promise a percentage reduction in youth violence from after-school places, because no such estimate exists. What the record does establish is timing. Juvenile violent crime and victimization peak in the risky hours — 3 to 4 p.m. on school days. Supervision in those hours is the intervention aimed at them. Aim is not an effect size, and this plan does not dress it up as one.

The summer-jobs evidence is stronger, and this plan claims it at exactly its strength, and only for older youth. Assignment to a supported summer job cut violent-crime arrests by roughly **two-fifths** over 16 months in the original Chicago trial (Heller, 2014). Later and larger trials found smaller, less certain reductions, and the pooled post-program violence effect across studies is not statistically distinguishable from zero — so the durable claim is the direction, not the size. New York's lottery evidence found incarceration about 10% lower across all applicants — about 54% only among 19-to-21-year-olds, a qualification that travels with the figure every time — and deaths from external causes about one-fifth lower (Gelber, Isen and Kessler, 2014). None of it is evidence about ten-year-olds, and none of it is presented here as if it were.

Attendance is promised at levels that can be proved. Children attend roughly half the hours a place offers — in New York's evaluated middle-school expansion, an average of 236 of 540 hours. So the contract sets an 80% participation benchmark, publishes attended hours, and is judged on them. The arithmetic is honest about the gap between an offer and a dose: $5.60 per contracted hour, and about $7 per attended hour at the benchmark the contract enforces.

This is not a savings claim. Section 9 makes the point once and this section will not belabour it: comparable money, categorically more guaranteed output, and under harsh assumptions roughly double the strictly published spend. The case rests on what the money buys, not on a promise that it costs less.

Two labels stay on, in plain sight. The price is a model — $3,680 per place, built line by line from published wage postings in 2026–27 dollars, not a tendered or observed price. And the 30% priority share is an assumption — no government publishes it, the sensitivities at 25% and 35% are printed in Section 7, and replacing it with a census count is the design phase's first job.

Toronto has adopted this idea before, in words: the 2012 Middle Childhood Strategy named the same patchwork, in the same language, and stopped at eighteen sites (City of Toronto, 2012). What this design adds is not another diagnosis. It is a named buyer, a costed unit, committed money, and an owner whose name is on the results.

PART 07 · THE LIMIT

The standard the record was read to

This study is compiled from published sources only. Every figure in it was verified in a primary published document, opened during compilation, and is printed with the age band, geography, and year its source used. Where sources disagree, the disagreement is shown rather than resolved silently. Where a publisher changed what it counts — a survey table replaced, a call-count universe widened — the break is marked on the series, never smoothed. Where no figure is published at that standard, the study says so, and treats the absence as a finding. Figures in different units, age bands, or year bases are never added together. The study makes no recommendations. The complete technical record behind this edition — the full source chapters, the methods appendix, and the full references — is published with it as The State of Youth in Toronto: Technical Appendix.

PART 07 · THE LIMIT

What would let Toronto answer

Four published measures would let Toronto answer, each year, whether its young people are better off. They are set out on the companion page that opens this volume:

1. A published youth total
One figure, published each year, for what Toronto spends on young people — so the response can be weighed against the conditions it is meant to change. Today the published totals stop one level above youth, and no total exists.

2. Victim-age fields for shootings and homicides
Toronto Police Service counts improved sharply in 2025 — 263 shootings and firearm discharges, down from 462 in 2024; 45 homicides, down from 85 — but neither dataset publishes victims' ages, so the city cannot say whether young people shared in the improvement.

3. A Toronto NEET series
A NEET series is a yearly count, published for one place, of the share of young people in none of employment, education or training — the group that work and school statistics each miss. Ontario publishes one: 13% for ages 15 to 29 in 2025. No Toronto series exists at city or CMA (census metropolitan area) level, so the city cannot count its own.

4. One shared outcome measure across programs
Programs now report in their own units — visits, spaces licensed, calls, dollars allocated — and no row publishes whether a young person's life improved. One shared outcome measure, reported by every funded program, would let results be compared and added up.

None of the four requires a new program. Each is a field, a series, or a total that an existing publisher could add to what it already releases — and each would be published on the same terms as the rest of the record: with its age band, geography, and year printed beside it.

Sources

- American Institutes for Research (2016). Independent evaluations of COMPASS and SONYC, including the SONYC expansion evaluation (Year 1 findings released April 11, 2016). New York: Department of Youth and Community Development.
- Bank of Canada (2026). Daily Digest, November 4, 2026 — US$1 = C$1.3961.
- Campaign 2000, Family Service Toronto, & Social Planning Toronto. (2024). Fighting for our future: Child and family poverty report card, Toronto 2024. https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2024-Toronto-Report-Card.pdf
- City of Sacramento (2017). Advance Peace Sacramento contract — payment for faithful delivery of a defined intervention, outcomes evaluated separately.
- City of Toronto (2012). Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- City of Toronto (2025). Adopted operating budgets and budget notes — Social Development, Finance and Administration; Parks, Forestry and Recreation; Toronto Public Library. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- City of Toronto (2026). Adopted operating budgets and budget notes, 2026 budget cycle; and seasonal and part-time recreation job postings, including ARC Program Site Coordinator, Area Coordinator and Program Leader rates. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- City of Toronto, Children's Services (2025). Early Years and Child Care Service Plan 2025–2030. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- City of Toronto / Statistics Canada (2022). 2021 Census Backgrounder: Age, sex at birth and gender, and type of dwelling. Toronto: City of Toronto.
- Daily Bread Food Bank & North York Harvest Food Bank. (2024). Who's Hungry 2024: Trapped in poverty — Unprecedented hunger in Toronto. https://northyorkharvest.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Whos-Hungry-Report-2024-1.pdf
- Gelber, A., Isen, A. and Kessler, J. (2014). The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence from New York City Lotteries. NBER Working Paper 20810. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Heller, S. (2014). Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth. Science — the One Summer Chicago randomized trial.
- New York City Comptroller (2025). Nonprofit, Nonpayment: An Analysis of Payment Delays for the City's Human Service Contractors (April 2025). New York: Office of the Comptroller.
- New York City, Department of Youth and Community Development (2026). FY2026 Adopted Budget and COMPASS Expansion request-for-proposals materials. New York: DYCD.
- Ontario, Ministry of Education (2025). Before- and after-school program licensed capacity release, December 2025; and Child Care and Early Years Act licensed ratio rules; Ontario minimum wage schedule. Toronto: Government of Ontario.
- Policy Studies Associates (2015). COMPASS literacy study. New York.
- Policy Studies Associates (n.d.). Citywide out-of-school-time evaluation. New York.
- Shariff, S. (2026). The State of Youth in Toronto. Working paper, Toronto.
- Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0461-01; Table 18-10-0005-01 (Consumer Price Index). Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
- Toronto Police Service. (2026a). 2025 Chief's Annual Report (June 2026). https://www.tps.ca/files/download/1784815335/46017/

- Toronto Public Health. (2025b). Our Health, Our City: Annual Progress Report 2025, Attachment 1: Substance Use and Mental Health Data Updates (Board of Health item HL29.1, November 24, 2025). https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-259912.pdf
- Toronto Public Library (2025). Youth Hubs program figures, January–August 2025 (budget notes). Toronto: Toronto Public Library.
- United Kingdom, Department for Communities and Local Government (2016). Troubled Families programme — national evaluation, commissioned by the UK government.
- US Census Bureau (2024). American Community Survey 2024, 1-year estimates.

Where the full record sits

This volume is a reading edition. The complete record behind it is published as a set of standalone documents, each carrying its own title page, byline, and sources, and each unchanged by this volume:

- **The scorecard** (1 page) — the verdict page: the seven areas rated in plain language. It opens this volume, and it also circulates on its own.
- **The brief** (4 pages) — The State of Youth in Toronto — in brief: what each rating rests on, the response, and the accountability gap, in the ten-minute read.
- **The study** (28 pages) — The State of Youth in Toronto: the flagship study, Parts 01–03 as published.
- **The companion** (1 page) — What a youth scorecard would need. It opens this volume with the scorecard, and it travels with the brief.
- **The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan** (33 pages) — the proposal as its own document, with its own cover, contents, and sources.
- **The Technical Appendix** (90 pages) — the full technical record behind the study: chapters 1–20, methods, what is not published, and the complete Toronto youth census register. It is the study's evidence volume, and it is not reprinted here; where this volume's text points to methods detail, it points there — the program table behind Figure 8, the Ontario and national series behind the Health and justice sections, and the city-comparison table behind Figure 9 are all printed in it.
- **The master volume** (159 pages) — the complete set in one volume: the citation and archival master.

Suggested citation: Shariff, S. (2026). The State of Youth in Toronto: What Toronto's published record can — and cannot — tell us about its young people. Working paper. Toronto, Canada.