

# The Pathways to Resilience Project

## Resilience Research Centre in collaboration with North-West University

### South African Service Users Summary

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Pathways to Resilience Project is a research study being conducted by the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University in collaboration with North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) to better understand what patterns of formal services and informal supports from family and community work best in reducing risk and increasing well-being among youth. Services include health services, social services, educational services, and cultural or spiritual services to which young people are referred. The primary focus of this study is to investigate how resilient and non-resilient youth negotiate for, and navigate towards, the individual, family, and community resources and supports that make it possible for them to do well even when facing adversity. These resources and supports include internal and external assets such as personal strengths, secure attachments to caregivers, a sense of belonging to their community, adequate housing and educational opportunities. The study is taking place in Atlantic Canada, with sites in Nova Scotia and Labrador and internationally in China, South Africa, New Zealand and Colombia. In South Africa, the research sites are found in the QwaQwa and Bethlehem areas, located in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality in the in Free State province. The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is made up of five local municipalities, each composed of a number of towns. QwaQwa and Bethlehem form part of the local municipalities of Maluti-a-Phofung and Dihlabeng, respectively.

This research was conducted through partnerships with social services agencies, educational institutions, as well as non-governmental community organisations in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. Youth nominated by these service providers were invited to participate. These youth were administered a questionnaire, the Pathways to Resilience Youth Measure (PRYM). The PRYM explores aspects of resilience and risks well as patterns of service use and satisfaction with services. It includes validated scales of risk and resilience that allow us to reliably establish profiles of the youth in the study. Service use measures adapted for this study helped us understand service use patterns and the availability of social supports. All participants were between the ages of 13 and 19 upon entering the study, and were identified as multiple services, and thus, nominated to the study by frontline staff working within each service.

This report summarises the findings relating to all the youth who were referred through various service providers (201 in total) in the Bethlehem and QwaQwa areas.

**Regarding service use, we worked with 201 youth who agreed to participate. Based on our survey research with this sample, we have found:**

- The average age of participating youth involved with Services is 15 years.
- Service using youth have high levels of resilience. Many have very positive things happening in their lives.
- 26.9 % of youth indicated that they are currently living in a children’s home, and 30.5 % of the youth indicated that they are currently living with a single parent (mother). 15.0 % of the youth are currently living with a guardian, and 19.8 % are living with both biological parents.
- 79.7 % of youth feel they have received services that are right for them, and 74.9 % of youth feel that they could access services when needed.
- 55.5 % of youth have received services from a doctor more than once, and 59.2 % have received services from a nurse more than once.
- 62.4 % of youth report having received extra help from a teacher more than once. 68.9 % of youth involved with Services report having involvement in a special recreation program or holiday program at least once
- 63.2 % of youth report receiving services from a social worker, therapist or psychologist at school at least once –more specifically, 49.7 % of youth have received services from a social worker more than once, and 47.8 % of youth report being involved in intensive family intervention at least once
- 52.5 % of youth report using services from a traditional healer at least once, and 57.5 % of the youth have received services from a pastoral or spiritual leader at least once. 53.0 % have received services from a religious or cultural leader more than once, and 58.5 % of the youth have received services from a community elder at least once.
- Youth feel they have a strong sense of personal agency as 74.0 % feel they had a say in how the services were delivered to them, and 77.4 % of the youth showed an overall satisfaction with the services.
- Overall, youth are coping well even though they face challenges.

## **THE PARTICIPANTS**

A total of 201 service-using youth completed the PRYM survey. The average age of the youth surveyed was 15.4. Of the participants in this survey, 47.5 % of the youth were female, and 52.5 % of the youth were male. Most of the youth in this sample are currently completing grade seven. 19.8 % of the youth in this sample indicated that they are currently living with both biological parents, 30.5 % of the youth are currently living with a single biological parent (mother). 15.7 % of the youth indicated that they are currently living with a guardian, and 1.5 % of the youth in this sample are currently living with foster parents. 26.9 % of the youth were currently living in a children’s home, and 3.6 % were currently living in a child headed household, 1.5 % currently live with foster parents and 0.5 % of the youth currently live in a shelter. Table 1 lists the demographic information.

**Table 1: Demographics of service using youth**

Demographics	Service using youth
Mean age	15.47
Female	47.5 %
Male	52.5 %
Grade	7.44 (mean)
Currently living in a children's home	26.9 %
Currently living in a child headed household	3.6 %
Currently living with biological parents (both)	19.8
Currently living with single biological parent (mother)	30.5
Currently living with single biological parent (father)	1.5
Currently living with a guardian	15.7
Currently living with foster parents	1.5
Currently living in a shelter	0.5

## SERVICES AND INTERVENTIONS

### Service Use

In the PRYM questionnaire, youth are asked about their use of specific services in healthcare, education, social services, and cultural or spiritual services over the course of their lifetime. For each of these service providers, youth were asked to indicate how often they had used specific services on a scale of 0 to 3 (0=Never needed it, 1=Once in my life, 2=A couple of times, 3=Three or more times). Table 2 to 6 show how service using youth services reported on use of specific services by each service provider.

### Health Service Use

Service using youth reported their use of health services, (see Table 2). 74.9 % of service using youth report seeing a family doctor at least once, and 77.1 % of the youth report seeing a nurse at least once. Less than half of the youth, 33.3 %, report seeing a dentist more than once, and just over half, 51.1 %, report never needing emergency services. 67.8 % of the service using youth report receiving services from a clinic more than once, and 44.7 % of the youth report receiving home based care at least once. Regarding health services, the youth in this sample make use of nurses and family doctors, and clinics more often than other health services.

**Table 2: Service using youths' use of health services (n=201)**

	How often have you used each of these services?	Never	Once in my life	A couple of times	Three or more times
<b>Health Services</b>	Nurse	22.9 %	17.9 %	25.7 %	33.5 %
	Family doctor	25.1 %	19.3 %	22.8 %	32.7 %
	Dentist	50.9 %	15.4 %	18.3 %	15.4 %
	Emergency services	51.1 %	17.8 %	13.3 %	17.8 %
	Clinic	19.4 %	12.8 %	28.9 %	38.9 %
	Home based care	43.1 %	12.2 %	21.5 %	23.2 %

### School Service Use

In terms of school service use (see Table 3), 79.0 %, of the service using youth reported using a support educator at least once in their life. More than three quarters of the service using youth reported receiving extra help from a school teacher more than once (80.3 %), and 63.1 % of the youth report making use of services from a social worker, therapist or psychologist at school more than once. 55.6 % of the service using youth report never needing special school services, and 61.7 % of the youth report never needing services from a speech therapist, and just over half of the youth (56.7 %) reported never needing services from an occupational therapist. Regarding the school services, the youth in this sample make use of extra help from a teacher after school, a support educator, and a social worker, therapist, or psychologist at school more than other school services that are available.

**Table 3: Service using youths' use of school services (n=201)**

	How often have you used each of these services?	Never needed it	Once in my life	A couple of times	Three or more times
<b>Educational Services</b>	Support Educator	21.0 %	19.8 %	25.7 %	33.5 %
	Occupational Therapist	56.7 %	17.4 %	11.8 %	14.0 %
	Extra help from a teacher after school	19.7 %	18.0 %	29.8 %	32.6 %
	Special School	55.6 %	12.3 %	9.4 %	22.8 %
	Speech Therapist	61.7 %	12.0 %	13.7 %	12.6 %
	Social worker, therapist or psychologist at school	36.9 %	16.8 %	22.9 %	23.5 %

## Social Service Use

Service using youths' use of social services is shown in Table 4. 65.1 % of the service using youth report having seen a social worker at least once during their lifetimes. 45.6 % of the service using youth report being placed in foster care at least once. 41.3 % of the youth reported accessing a drop-in centre at least once, and 65.8 % of the youth reported being involved with an intensive family intervention program at least once during their lifetimes. 40.7 % of the service using youth reported using homeless shelters more than once, and 68.9 % of the youth report having attended a special recreation program or summer camp through child and youth family services. Regarding social services, this sample makes more use of social workers and special recreation or holiday programs, as well as family interventions more than other social services.

**Table 4: Service using youths' use of social services (n=201)**

	How often have you used each of these services?	Never needed it	Once in my life	A couple of times	Three or more times
<b>Social Services</b>	Social worker	34.9 %	15.4 %	20.0 %	29.7 %
	Foster placement	54.4 %	15.0 %	15.6 %	15.0 %
	Foster home	54.9 %	12.0 %	18.5 %	14.7 %
	Drop-in centre	58.7 %	9.5 %	11.7 %	20.1 %
	Home based care	42.6 %	17.0 %	15.9 %	24.4 %
	Intensive family intervention	34.3 %	18.0 %	22.5 %	25.3 %
	Homeless shelter	49.2 %	10.1 %	12.8 %	27.9 %
	Special recreation program or holiday program	31.1 %	17.8 %	17.2 %	33.9 %

## Cultural or Spiritual service use

Service using youth's service use is shown in Table 5. Just over half, 52.5 %, of the youth involved with services report using the services of a traditional healer at least once during their lifetimes, and 58.5 % of the youth report using services from a community elder at least once during their lifetimes. 53.0 % of youth report using services from a pastoral or spiritual leader, and 72.9 % of the youth report seeing a religious or cultural leader at least once. Looking at the three or more times column below in Table 5, the youth in this sample make more use of services from religious or cultural leaders and community elders than services from pastoral or spiritual leaders and traditional healers.



**Table 5: Service using Youth's use of cultural / spiritual services (n=201)**

	How often have you used each of these services?	Never needed it	Once in my life	A couple of times	Three or more times
<b>Cultural / Spiritual services</b>	Traditional healer	47.5 %	17.3 %	15.6 %	19.6 %
	Pastoral or spiritual leader	42.5 %	18.4 %	20.7 %	18.4 %
	Religious or cultural leader	27.1 %	19.9 %	24.3 %	28.7 %
	Community elder	41.5 %	16.4 %	17.5 %	24.6 %

### **Service Satisfaction**

In the PRYM, youth are asked 14 questions relating to their level of satisfaction with the services they received from their referring service. Based on the youths' responses, a service satisfaction score is generated on a scale of 0 to 5. Table 6 reports the youths' satisfaction with services.

In terms of personal agency, 65.5 % of youth felt they were able to choose their services, and 74.0 % of the youth reported that they felt they had a say in how services were delivered to them.

Overall, the service using youth reported substantial positive experiences with staff. 74.1 % of youth involved with services report that the people helping them stuck with them, and 77.9 % of youth report that they had someone within the program to talk to when they were in trouble. 74.2 % of the youth involved with services reported that staff spoke in a way that they could understand, and 70.6 % of the youth felt that staff respected their family's religious and spiritual beliefs. When asked whether staff were sensitive to their cultural and ethnic background, 71.1 % of the youth reported that staff were sensitive, with 16.2 % disagreeing, and 12.7 % undecided.

79.7 % of the service using youth reported that they received services that were right for them, and 75.2 % of the youth reported that the services they received were the services they needed.

In terms of the accessibility of services, 74.9 % of the service using youth reported accessing services when they needed services. 70.2 % of the service using youth reported that the location of the service was convenient. 55.5 % of the youth reported that there was a service they needed but could not get, while 33.0 % of the youth disagreed.

76.4 % of the youth involved with services reported that as a result of the services they received, they are now better able to cope when things go wrong, with 14.9 % of the youth disagreeing. Overall 77.4 % of the youth reported that they were satisfied with the services they received, with 16.5 % of the youth disagreeing, and 6.0 % undecided.

**Table 6: Youth Satisfaction with Services**

<b>PERSONAL AGENCY</b>			
I helped choose my services	No	Undecided	Yes
	21.5 %	13.0 %	65.5 %
I had a say in how this service was delivered to me and could ask for what I wanted	No	Undecided	Yes
	17.0 %	9.0 %	74.0 %
<b>EXPERIENCE WITH STAFF</b>			
The people helping me stuck with me	No	Undecided	Yes
	16.2 %	9.6 %	74.1 %
I felt I had someone within the service to talk to when I was in trouble	No	Undecided	Yes
	12.0 %	10.1 %	77.9 %
Staff respected my family's religious and spiritual beliefs	No	Undecided	Yes
	18.2 %	11.2 %	70.6 %
Staff spoke in a way that I understood	No	Undecided	Yes
	13.2 %	12.6 %	74.2 %
Staff were sensitive to my cultural and ethnic background	No	Undecided	Yes
	16.2 %	12.7 %	71.1 %
<b>STABILITY OF SERVICE</b>			
I received services that were right for me	No	Undecided	Yes
	9.7 %	10.7 %	79.7 %
This was the service I needed	No	Undecided	Yes
	16.2 %	8.6 %	75.2 %
<b>I COULD GET THE SERVICE WHEN I NEEDED IT</b>			
I could get the service when I needed it	No	Undecided	Yes
	14.4 %	10.8 %	74.9 %
The location of the service was convenient	No	Undecided	Yes
	15.7 %	14.1 %	70.2 %
There was a service I needed, but I couldn't get	No	Undecided	Yes
	33.0 %	11.5 %	55.5 %
<b>EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICE</b>			
I am now better able to cope when things go wrong	No	Undecided	Yes
	14.9 %	8.7 %	76.4 %
Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received	No	Undecided	Yes
	16.5 %	6.0 %	77.4 %

## RISK AND RESILIENCE

### Resilience

We define resilience as a learner's ability to get the resources he or she needs to do well when facing life challenges. Resilience is their capacity, and the capacity of others to provide for young people, so they can improve their well-being in ways that make sense to them. Scores on measures of resilience and risk are presented in Table 7. The resilience measure is designed to reflect individual capacity, available relationships, connection to culture, contextual resources in the lives of youth, and youth engagement in pro-social behaviour. The risk measure shows the level of youth engagement in problem behaviours (i.e. theft, aggression, vandalism and substance use), a youth's ability to form age-appropriate relationships and levels of depression. Both resilience and risk scales have a range of 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher resilience or risk. Resilience and risk are inversely related; as resilience increases, risk is expected to decrease.

**Table 7: Resilience and risk scores**

Services	Mean
Resilience Score (out of 100)	80.319
Risk Score (out of 100)	27.604

The average resilience score for the service using youth is 80.3%. The average score suggests that, in general, the youth who participated are resilient. They have individual strengths, and are supported to do well by positive relationships, connection to culture, contextual resources (like effective schools), and engagement in pro-social activities.

**Table 8: School learners**

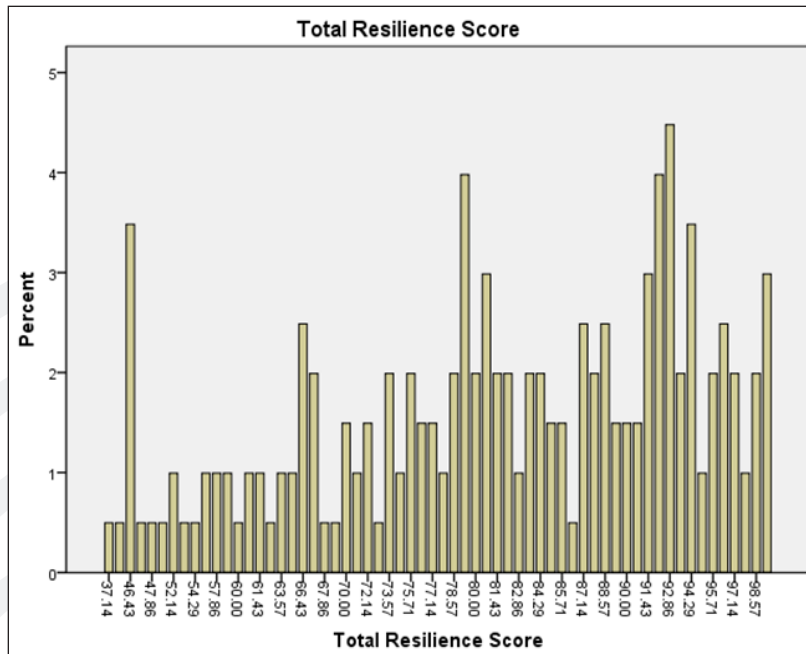
Individual Resilience (range 10-50)	35.756
Relationship with Primary Caregiver (range 6-30)	23.218
Relationship with Peers and Community (range 3-15)	11.472
Context (range 7-35)	33.139

Table 8 communicates that, on average, the youth who participated are mostly supported towards resilience by their primary caregivers and their context. They are least supported by relationships with their peers and community and by strengths within themselves (like assertiveness, or hopefulness).



Individual resilience scores range from 37.14 to 100.0. Graph 1 below summarises the resilience scores of the Services participants:

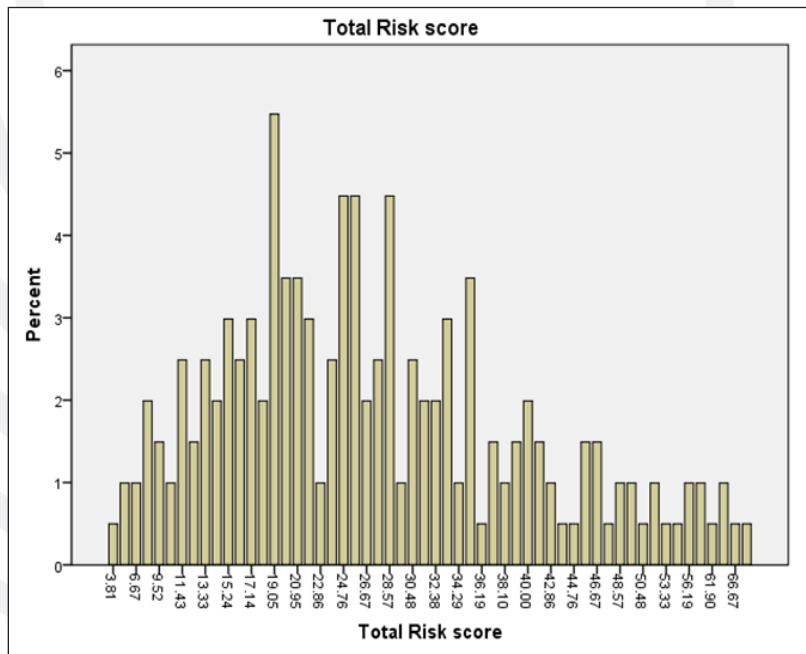
**Graph 1: Total resilience score**



**Risk**

Shifting our focus from resilience to risk, we found that the average risk score for the Services is 27.6% (out of 100) and individual scores range from 3.81 to 67.62 (out of 100) (see Graph 2 below). The lower the score, the fewer risks a youth faces.

**Graph 2: Total risk score**



## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate how resilient and non-resilient youth negotiate for, and navigate towards, the individual, family, and community resources and supports that make it possible for them to do well even when facing adversity. Despite such risks however, these youth displayed high levels of resilience.

Service using youth reported high levels of service use; showing high use of social services, school services, health services, and social and cultural / spiritual services. Services youth had highest scores for health service use, followed by school service use, and cultural or spiritual service use.

Youth showed high satisfaction with the services received, indicating accessibility of services and the ability to help choose services. The youth were also likely to report positive experiences with staff in terms of feeling that they were respected by staff, staff speaking in a way that the youth understand, and the sensitivity of staff towards the cultural and ethnic background of the youth.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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