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Youth transitions from care to adulthood: messages from research in Catalonia-Spain

The starting point

- There can be no question that over 40% **unemployment** among young people constitutes a very serious issue in Spain.
- However, the situation of those belonging to **disadvantaged groups** of the population constitutes a priority.
- Such is **the case with care leavers**, that is, those leaving or who have left the public care system.
- The YIPPEE project: **no data available** regarding YPLC, especially their pathways to education
- In Catalonia there is a **Post-care Department** since 1994 (Government)

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

The research project aims

- To **assess the types of interventions undertaken** from 1994 to 2012 and their impact on care leavers (from the child protection system) through secondary analysis of official data
- To address the **current situation and challenges from the perspective of 18-22 year-old care leavers and professionals in the field.**
- We have analysed the **educational pathways** of YPLC, their family and **social support** received, **financial** situation, **health, housing** and **leisure time**, in order to **identify facilitators** and **obstacles** to their **transition** to adulthood and promote their **social inclusion**.

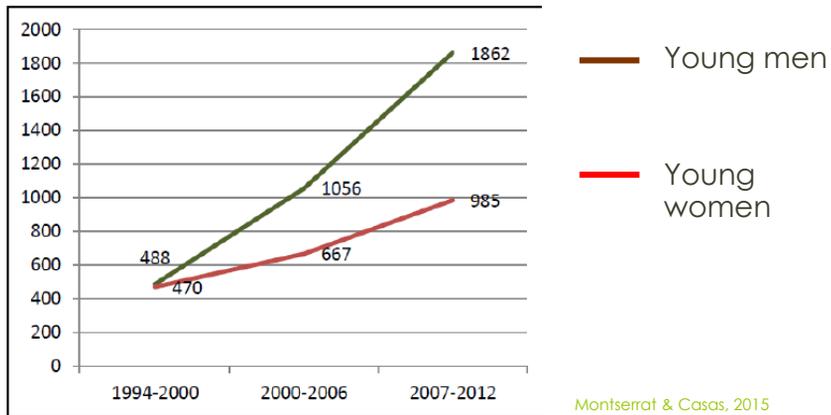
Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Method and Sample

- A **quantitative-qualitative** method:
- **Secondary analysis** database (N= 5,538 young people's records)
 - **Questionnaires** administered to professionals (N=218)
 - 4 **focus groups** with care leavers (N=49)
 - **In-depth interviews** with care leavers (N=15)
 - 1 **focus group** with professionals (N=10)

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Number and gender of young people in the post care service



Participation in several programs

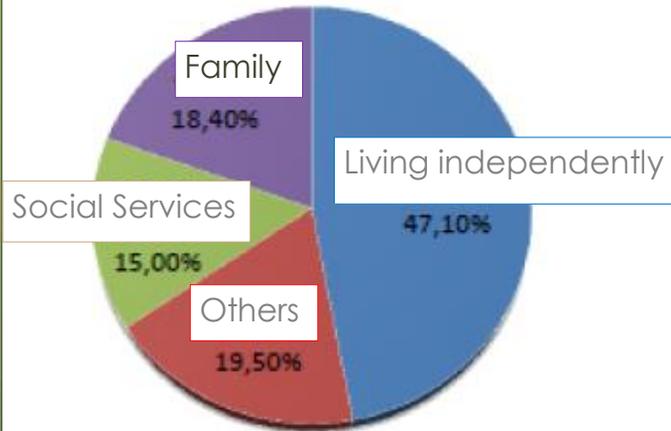
In the first period, the housing program carried the most weight, and the others appeared gradually. Over the years participation has been as follows:

- **Housing Program:** 2,372 young people
- **Economic support:** 1,978
- **Social-workplace integration:** 1,113
- **Legal advice:** 859

Those who have spent two or more years in one of these programs have experienced greater success than those who have spent less time in one.

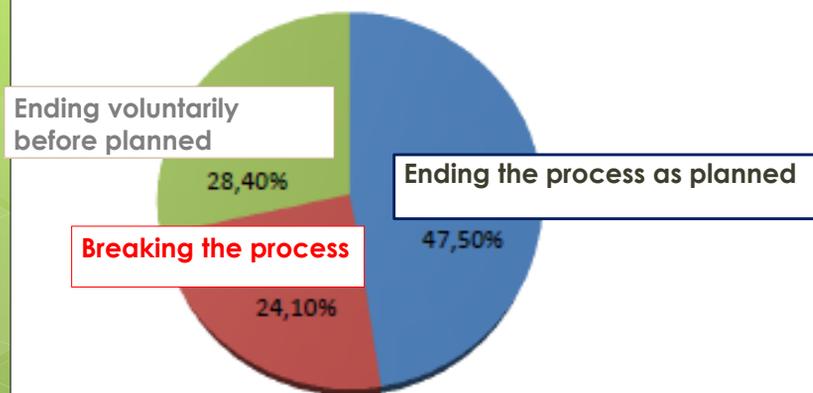
Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Where did they go after being in the post care service?



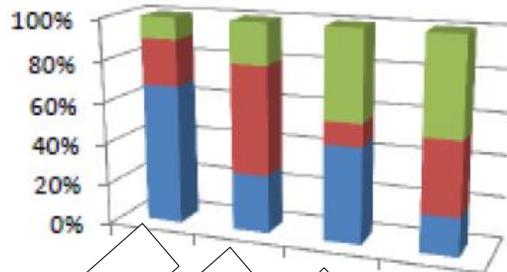
Montserrat & Casas, 2015

How did they end the process at the post care service?



Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Crossing where and how



Breaking the process

Ending voluntarily before planned

Ending the process as planned

Going to live independently

Returning to biological family

Referral to social services

Other

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Education + financial support

- **The training being done by young people who receive economic aid is having very positive results.**

Of the 478 young people who found themselves in this situation in December 2012:

- 8.6% were at university,
- 9.8% were doing advanced vocational training,
- 49.6% were in formal post-compulsory secondary education (upper secondary education – academic or vocational).

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

Advice from young people

- The advice these young people would give **to adolescents** who are still in a residential home is **to take the opportunity to study, establish a positive relationship with educators, control their behaviour and learn to be responsible for themselves and take the opportunity to go to live in protected accommodation (post-care), if offered.**
- The advice they would give **to educators** in the residential homes is **to have a lot of patience, listen to the adolescents and be empathetic, treating them differently, obliging them to study and not overprotecting them.**

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

“They should understand them, they’d know that the kids need them. They should have a little empathy, children need the mother or father figure they did not have. Educators need to be trained to be this figure” (young boy)

From the perspective of care leavers and professionals

It is necessary to give importance to factors related to

- participation
- avoiding stigmatization
- providing stability
- consistency
- high expectations
- mentoring
- awarding **priority and support to formal post-compulsory education with financial support** is the best combination to aid their transition to adulthood.

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- ***“They don’t expect kids like us to have an academic career either, very few make it”*** (young girl).
- ***“They’re short courses that are no use afterwards (informal and short apprenticeship). Most of the kids from the homes are doing these courses and at 18 have problems finding work”*** (young boy)
- ***“I think if I had been forced a little more (in secondary education), now I would be very grateful”*** (young girl)

Recommendations for services (1)

- **Maintain current programs offered by the post-care department and related bodies**, as results show that:
 - Data for the period 1994-2012 report positive results.
 - Young users of this service rate it very positively.
 - Generally speaking, so do the professionals who work there.
- Improve the **data collection system** in order to evaluate the future process and results.
- **Support professionals** in work aimed at **managing the emotions of young people**.
- Make young people the **main protagonists** of their own pathways, which does not mean leaving them alone (or abandoning them)

Montserrat & Casas, 2015

“I would be really bad if they had not given me the opportunity to have a flat. I hope they never take it away” (young girl)

Recommendations (2)

- Increase work towards personal and social **autonomy** for adolescents in some residential homes, making them more **responsible for and participants in their own process**.
- Prioritize the inclusion of young people in **formal compulsory and post-compulsory education**, reducing the high rates of pupils on non-formal tracks. This challenge involves the post-care department and associated bodies, but also the Departments of Education and Child protection, making the school system and residential care more suited to the specific needs of children in care. Results indicate that the combination of **support for education + financial support** fosters the social inclusion of young people.
- Promote more personalized care and establish **close and stable bonds** between adolescents and educators.

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“In my residential home, for example, they gave us absolutely everything so afterwards when I left I was completely disoriented, the truth is I didn’t know anything at all. They practically did everything for us...” (young girl)

Recommendations (3)

- **Diversify the services on offer** in order to **reach more young people** leaving the care system (young people with disabilities, mental illness, behavioural problems or other) and help them to cope satisfactorily with the transition to adulthood. Increase the supply of **accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18**.
- **In light of the results, continuing to provide these services means investing in support for the autonomy and education of young people at vulnerable ages and therefore working effectively and efficiently towards their social inclusion.**

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- ***“The most useful thing is asking me how I am and helping me think about myself (...) encouraging me a lot and listening to me”*** (young boy)

- Some of these recommendations can be introduced without changing the structure of existing protection systems, but others involve more profound changes.

When for?

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