



Family and Children's Services

Annual report 2023-2024



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Message from the Director

To: Tracy-Anne McPhee

Minister of Health and Social Services

Government of Yukon

Dear Minister McPhee,

Please accept the 2023-24 Family and Children's Services' annual report which details the work undertaken by the Family and Children's Services (FCS) branch to deliver services under the *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)* and the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

This annual report departs from previous reports by increasing the focus on quantitative data, including monthly data over the reporting period. Based on annual point-in-time data we draw trends across the years. Similarly, based on the monthly data, we explore trends over the reporting period and infer trends that we expect to see in the future.

Additionally, the report highlights a new program we launched, as well as milestones in our relationships with Yukon First Nations, Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), and other partners.

The progress and achievements detailed in this report could not be possible without the tireless efforts of FCS staff. I extend my deepest gratitude to all the frontline workers, supervisors, managers, and administrative staff for their hard work. Our successes are a testament to their dedication to children, youth, young adults, and families in the Yukon.

Thank you,

Leeann Kayseas,

Director, Family and Children's Services



Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the services and supports provided to children, youth, and families by the Family and Children's Services (FCS) branch of Health and Social Services (HSS) from January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. The primary focus of this report is the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA), but it also provides information on the work done by FCS under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and the services delivered to all Yukoners through FCS' Family Resource Program.

The figures included in this report detail the service use trends of the various supports and services offered by FCS. Some of these noteworthy trends include:

- A decrease in the number of children in care or custody by 63.3 per cent from 2009 to 2023. In 2023, the total number of children in out-of-home care were the lowest they have been since the CFSA came into effect in 2010.
- The majority of children in out-of-home care (approximately 60 per cent) stayed with extended family members in 2023.
- Over the reporting period, the number of children placed with extended family members and community members decreased. This resulted in more children being placed in group care; in fact, the number of children in group care increased by 44.4 per cent from January 2023 to March 2024.



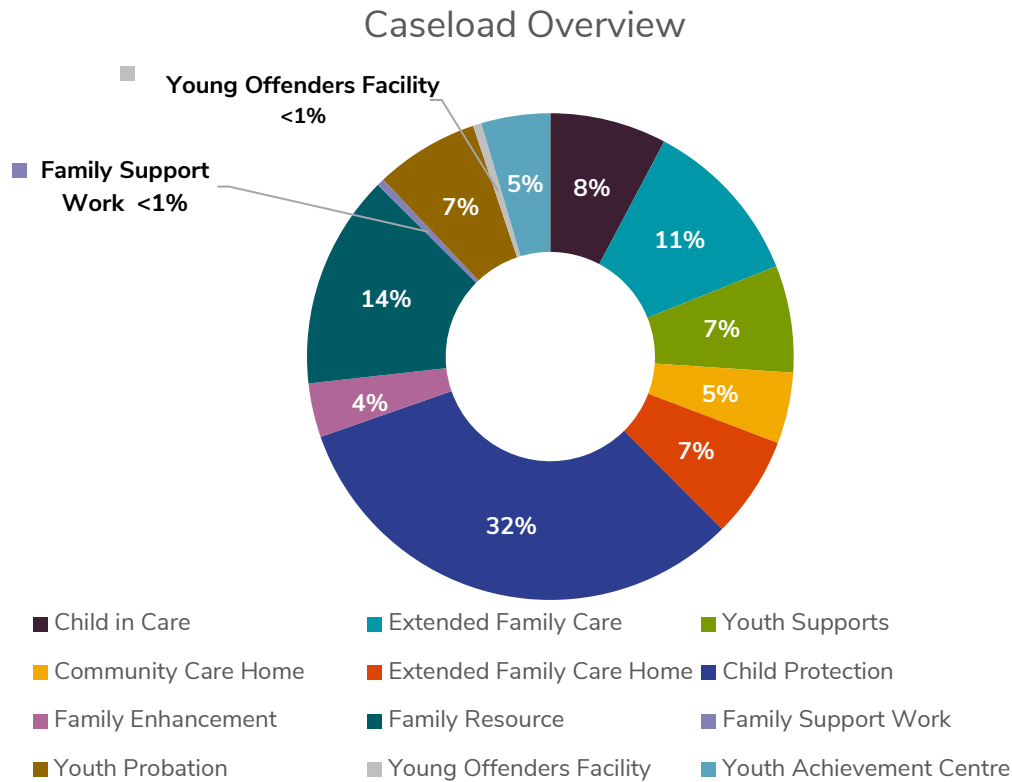


Figure 1 Percentage breakdown of total unique FCS cases over the reporting period by file type. Note: This data speaks to the number of unique cases, not unique individuals served. Due to the nature of the data and services provided, some individuals may be double-counted if they have accessed services/supports under more than one file type over the reporting period.

In addition to data on FCS programs and services, this report briefly highlights FCS’ response to the 2023 Yukon Coroner’s Inquest related to the death of a child, as well as milestones in FCS’ relationships with Yukon First Nations, the RCMP, and the Department of Education.

Purpose of the report

According to s. 187 of the CFSA, the Director of FCS must submit to the Minister of HSS an annual report on the provision of services under the CFSA. The two previous reports to the Minister summarized service delivery from 2017 to 2019 and 2020 to 2022, respectively. This reporting period begins January 1, 2023, and goes to March 31, 2024, to align the FCS annual report with the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year. Subsequent FCS annual reports will follow the fiscal year.



Continuum of programs and services

FCS provides a continuum of programs and services to support Yukoners. It starts with preventative programming designed to support all families in the Yukon. When child protection concerns regarding the safety of children arise, FCS delivers Family Support Services under the CFSA to keep children with their families. If the child protection concerns cannot be mitigated to create safety for children, then children are placed in out-of-home care temporarily until they can be reunified with their parents. FCS also delivers specialized programming for youth from 16 to 19 years of age who cannot live with their parents and for those from 19 to 26 years of age who were previously in out-of-home care.

Preventative programming for all families

FCS prioritizes keeping families together and in their communities by building on their strengths. FCS' Family Resource Unit (FRU) provides resources for families outside of the confines of the legislated mandate of the CFSA. These programs are voluntary and are available to all families who have children aged 0 to 19. Programming offered through FRU ranges from one-on-one supports to group events and structured parenting programs. Examples of group events offered by FRU include crafting groups, lessons on self-care, and many more.

The number of families working with FRU has continued to increase since 2017 (Figure 2). However, numbers have shown no significant changes from 2022 (203 families) to 2023 (202 families). Seven (7) of these families accessed FRU's Family Support Work program.

These numbers are anticipated to increase in the coming year, as the average number of families served during the remainder of the reporting period (January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024) was 204. The noticeable drop in the number of families working with FRU in 2022 and 2023 is largely due to improvements in how this data is now captured and reported. Additionally, FRU data for subsequent years will be captured following the fiscal year in order to align with future annual reports.



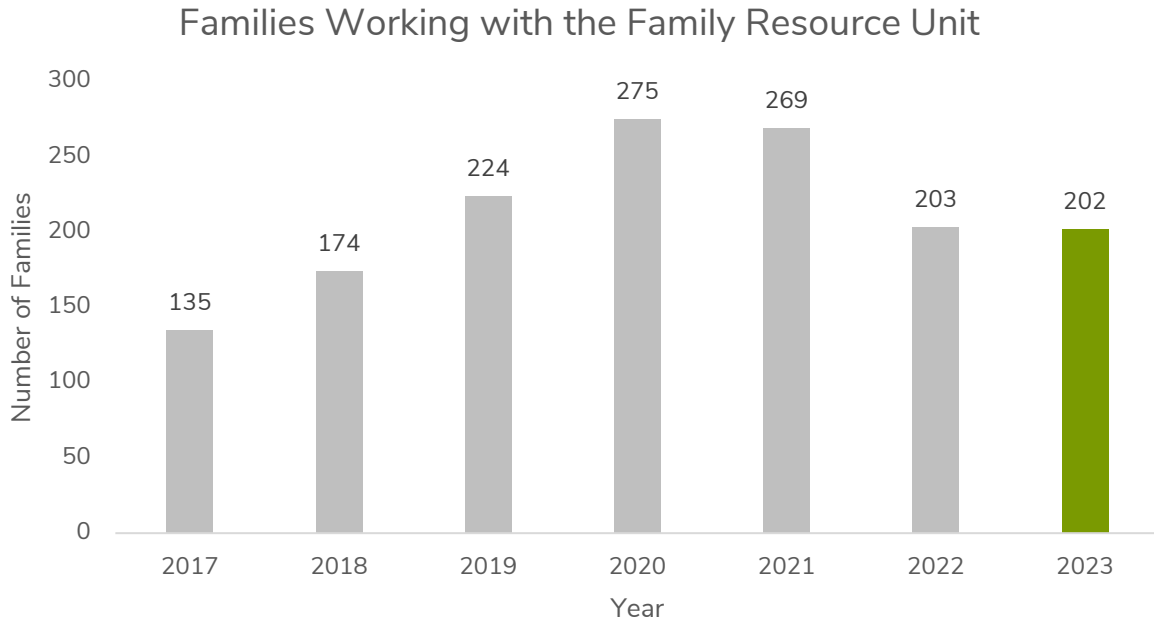


Figure 2 Number of families working with the Family Resource Unit from 2017 to 2023. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green. Note: FRU service use data is cumulative for each calendar year.

Over the 2023 calendar year, FRU hosted 274 events with a total of 2,542 participants. This represents an increase of 33.7 per cent in the number of events held when compared to the 2022 calendar year.

Family Support Services

When child protection concerns are identified, FCS works with the families to address the underlying issues. There is a range of services and supports, listed in the CFSA, that can be provided to families based on their individual needs. These include services for children, counselling, in-home support, out-of-home care, homemaker services, respite care, parenting programs, and supports for children who witness family violence. FCS also provides financial supports and connects families with the necessary community resources to create safety for the child(ren) in the family home.

Over the reporting period, FCS served 456 families with identified child protection concerns. Additionally, FCS served 51 families with children that were likely to be exposed to child protection concerns.



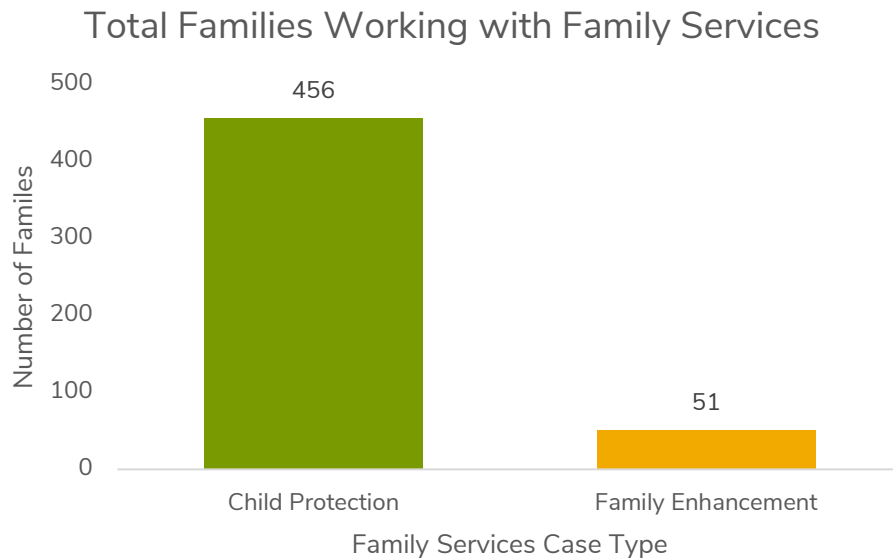


Figure 3 Total number of unique families with a Family Services case open at some point during the reporting period. Note: Open cases include both those receiving ongoing services and cases in the Investigation/Assessment stage.

Out-of-home care programs

When Family Support Services cannot mitigate the child protection concerns for the child in the family home, then the child requires out-of-home care. In such cases, placing the child with an extended family member is prioritized. If no extended family members are available, then the child may be brought into care and placed with a community caregiver or in group care.

Although there is variation over the years, the following overall trends in out-of-home care can be seen:

- A decrease in the total number of children in out-of-home care, from 215 in 2009 to 183 in 2023, which represents a 14.9 per cent decrease.
- With the introduction of extended family care, the number of children in the Director's care or custody has decreased from 215 in 2009 to 79 in 2023, which represents a 63.3 per cent decrease.



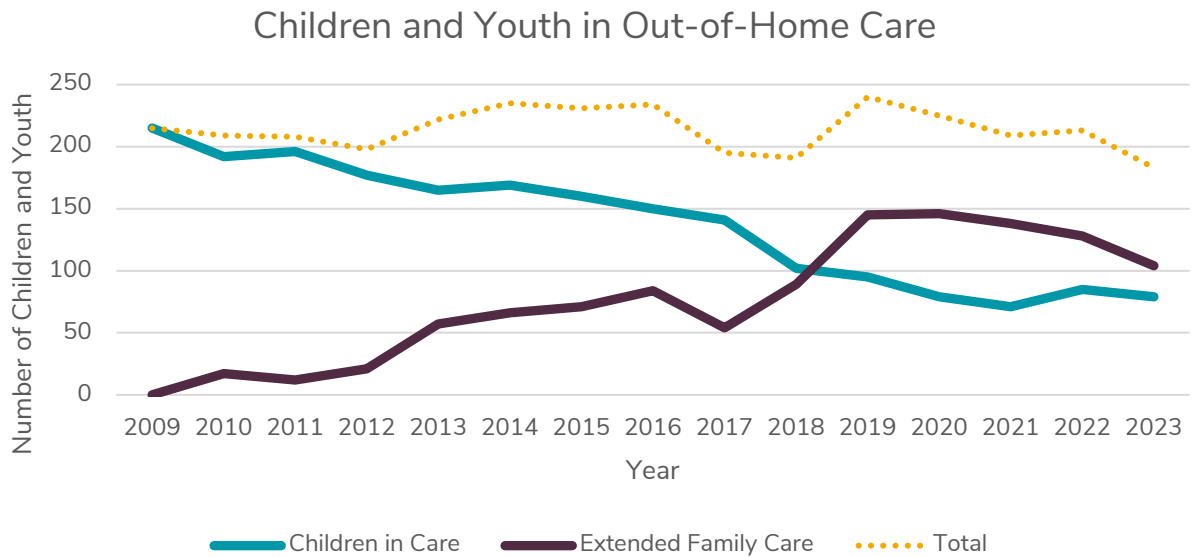


Figure 4 Number of children and youth in both types of out-of-home care from 2009 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports.

- Percentages of children in out-of-home care based on placement type (that is, with extended family members, community caregivers, and group care) have remained relatively stable since 2019.



Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care by Placement Type

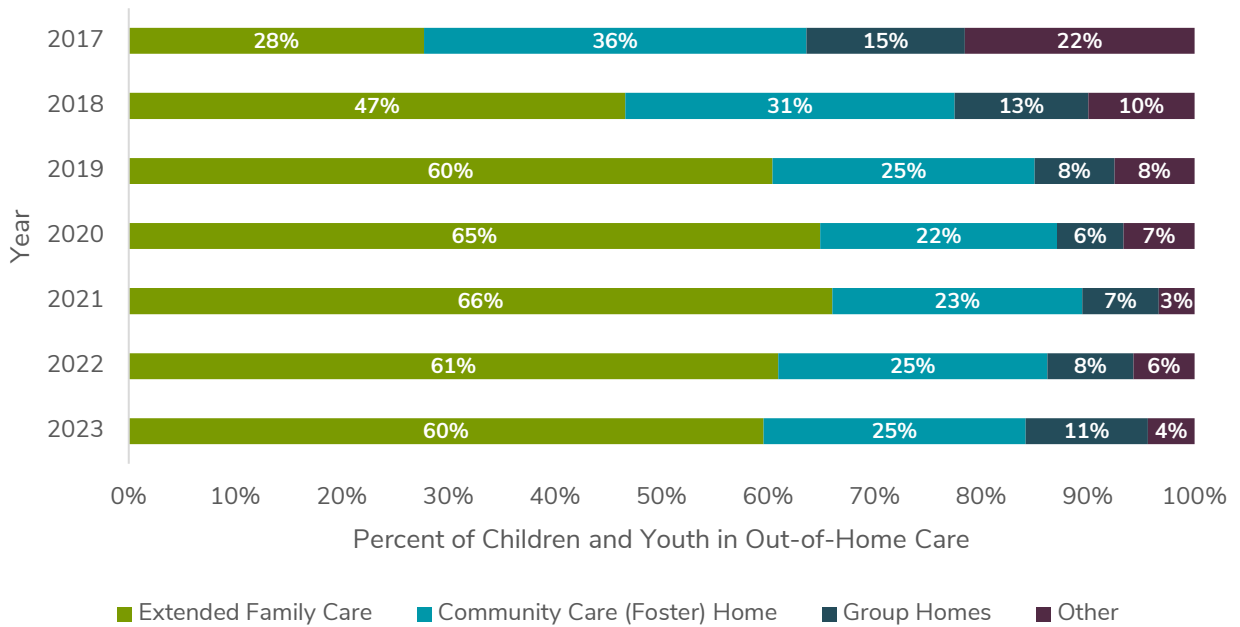


Figure 5 Percent of children and youth in out-of-home care placement types from 2017 to 2023. Other placement types could include many placement types, such as extended visits with family, out of territory placements, or medical placements. Note: September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports.

For the current reporting period, there were a total of 269 unique out-of-home care cases, with extended family care cases representing the majority (59.1%).

Approximately 55 per cent of children in out-of-home care were between 12 to 15 years of age and the average age of children in out-of-home care was just under 11 years old.



Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care by Age Group

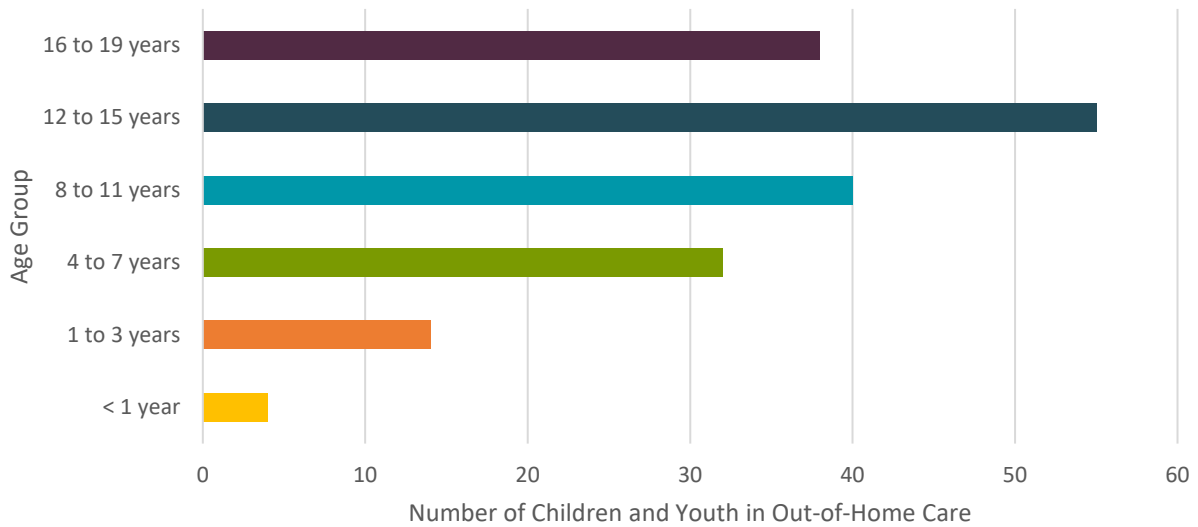


Figure 6 Number of children and youth in out-of-home care by age group. September caseloads were used due to the nature of this data and to remain consistent with the other point-in-time statistics included in this report.

Extended family care

The first choice for out-of-home care is placement with an extended family member, which allows the parents to keep the custody of the child and for the child to keep their connection to family, community, and culture.

The majority of children and youth in extended family care identified as Indigenous (96%), with most identifying as Yukon First Nation (82%).



Reported Identities of Children and Youth in Extended Family Care

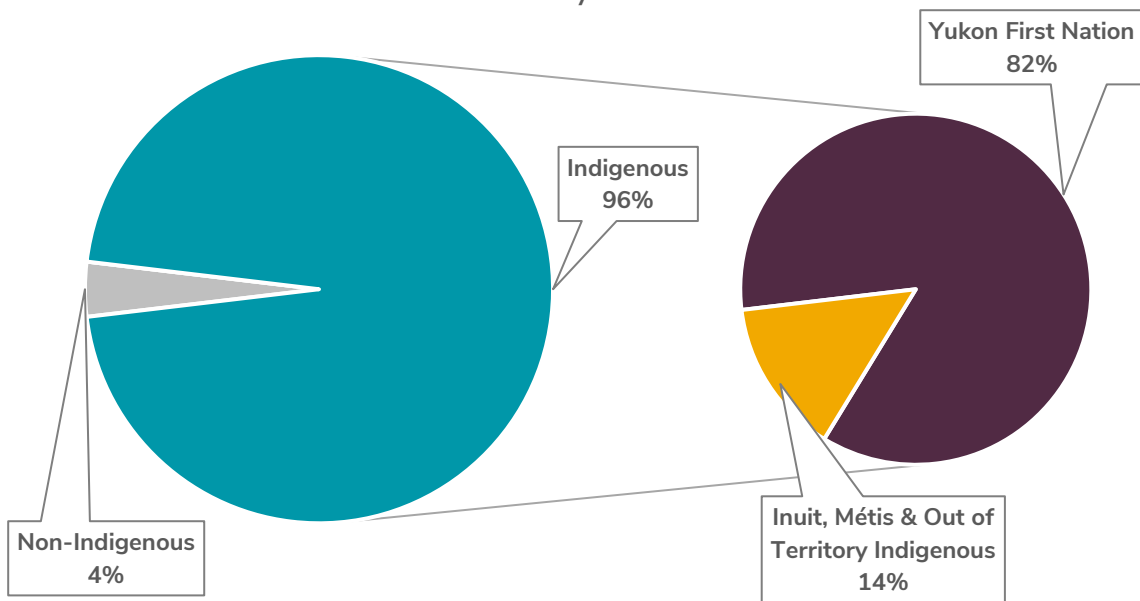


Figure 7 Self-reported identities of children and youth in extended family care during the reporting period. The chart on the left speaks to the general demographic identity, including overall Indigenous representation, of those in extended family care. The chart on the right provides a breakdown of Indigenous representation, including those who identified as Yukon First Nation.

The number of children in extended family care continues to decrease both annually and monthly over the reporting period. As demonstrated in Figures 8 and 9, the number of children in extended family care has decreased by 18.7 per cent from September 2022 to September 2023, and the number of children in extended family care decreased by 17.1 per cent from January 2023 to March 2024.



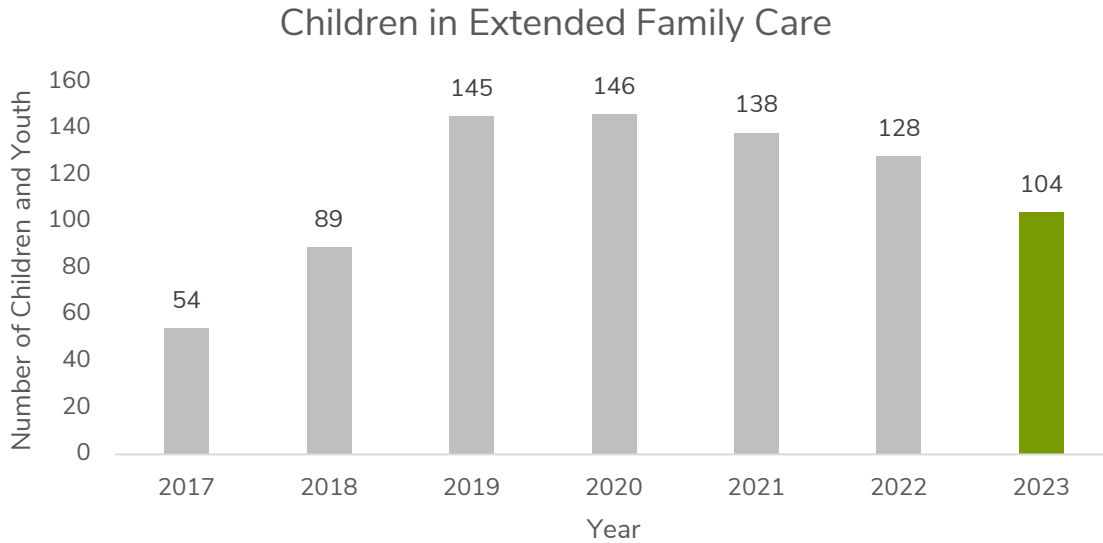


Figure 8 Number of children and youth in extended family care from 2017 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green.

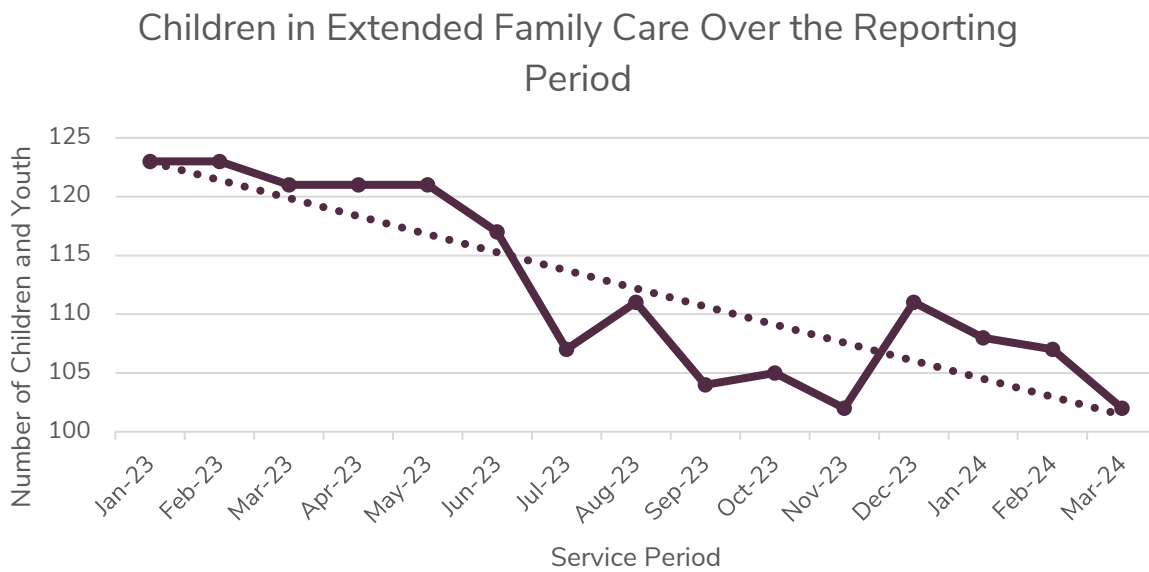


Figure 9 Number of children and youth in extended family care during each month of the reporting period. The dotted line showcases the overall trend over the reporting period.



Children in care

When extended family care is not possible, children come into the care or custody of the Director and are placed with community caregivers or in group care. The Director may also place children in care with extended family members, but unlike extended family care discussed above, the parents will not have custody of the children.

Similar to extended family care, most children in care identified as Indigenous (93%), with the majority identifying as Yukon First Nation (63%).

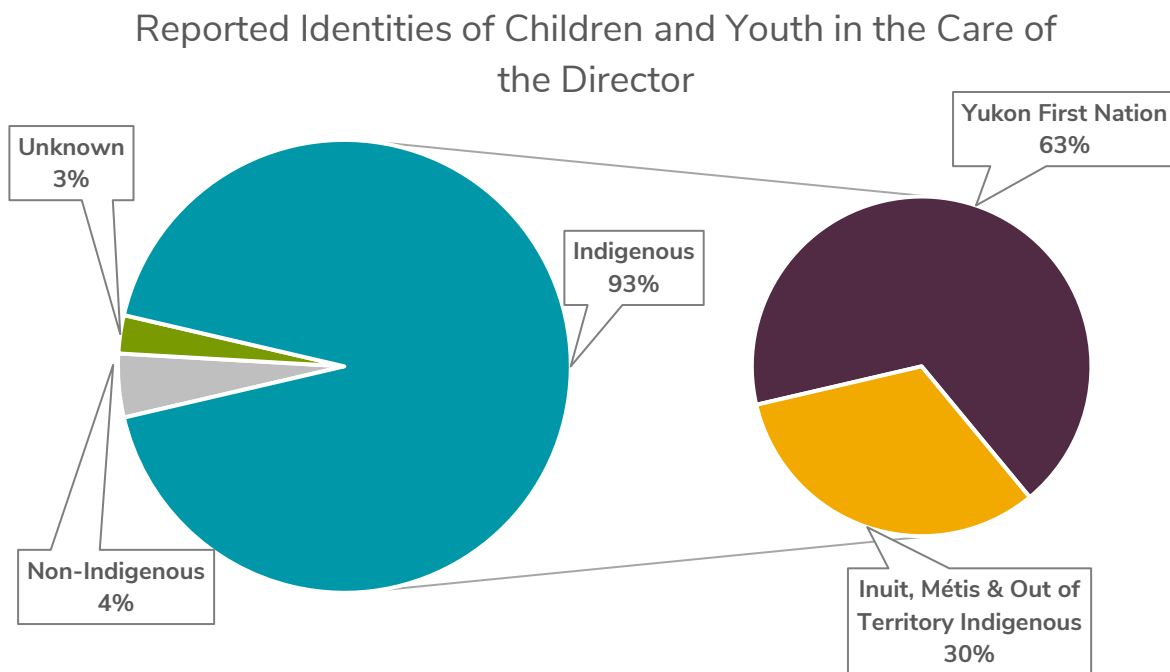


Figure 10 Self-reported identities of children and youth in the care of the Director during the reporting period. The chart on the left speaks to the general demographic identity, including overall Indigenous representation, of those in the care of the Director. The chart on the right provides a breakdown of Indigenous representation, including those who identified as Yukon First Nation.

While Figure 11 shows that the annual counts of children in care decreased, as point-in-time counts from September of each year, Figure 12 below shows that the monthly counts of children in care during the reporting period increased from 80 in January 2023 to 87 in March 2024.



Children in the Care of the Director

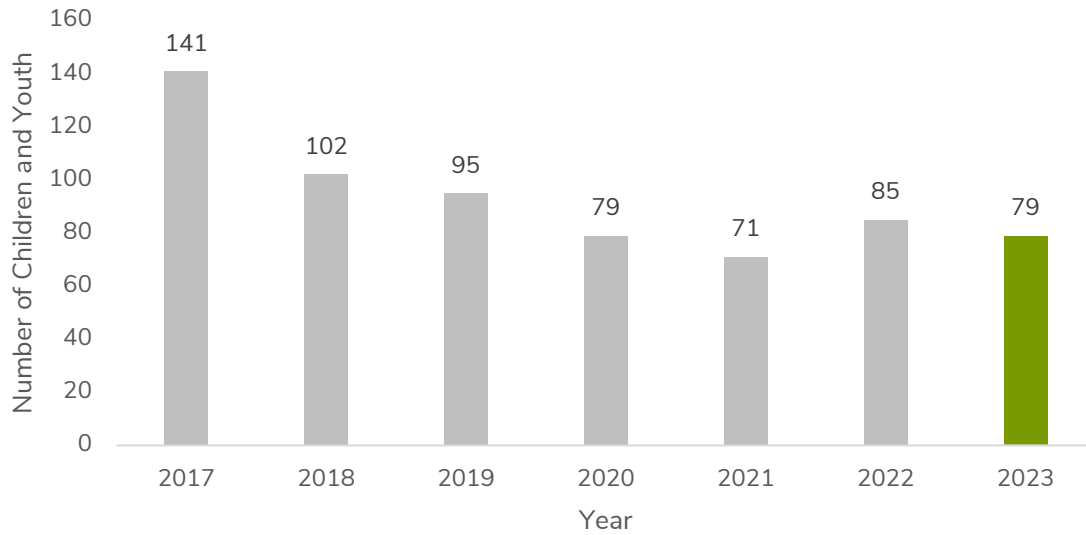


Figure 11 Number of children and youth in the care of the Director in all placement types from 2017 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green.

Children in the Care of the Director Over the Reporting Period

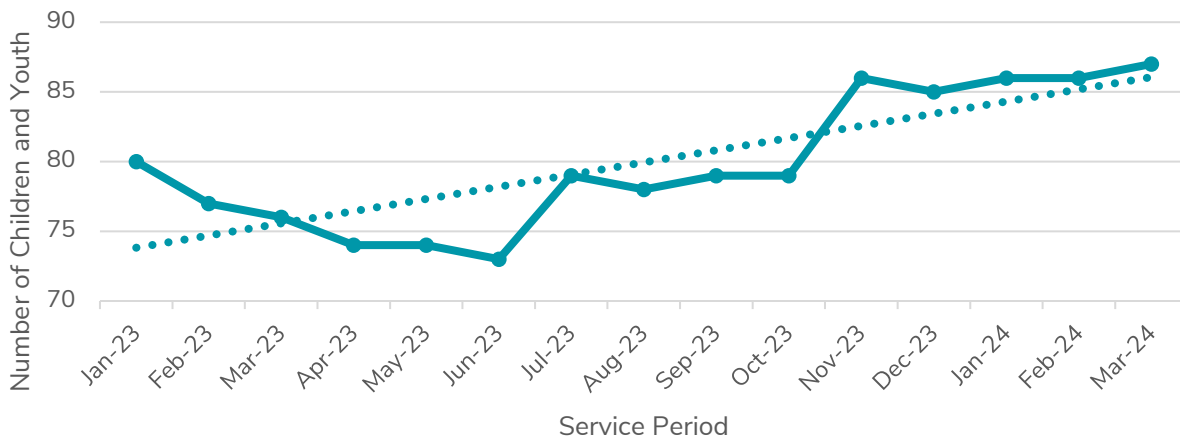


Figure 12 Number of children and youth in the care of the Director during each month of the reporting period. The dotted line showcases the overall trend over the reporting period.



Community caregiver program

Community caregivers, formerly referred to as foster parents, provide a home environment for children in the care or custody of the Director. Under the guidance of the Director, they are responsible for the day-to-day care of the children placed with them. These caregivers can provide emergency, short- or longer-term care, depending on their caregiving capacity.

When comparing point-in-time counts from September of each year (Figure 13) and comparing the monthly numbers over the reporting period (Figure 14), the number of children placed with community caregivers has decreased. From 2022 to 2023, there was a 20.8 per cent decrease and from January 2023 to March 2024, there was a 10.2 per cent decrease.

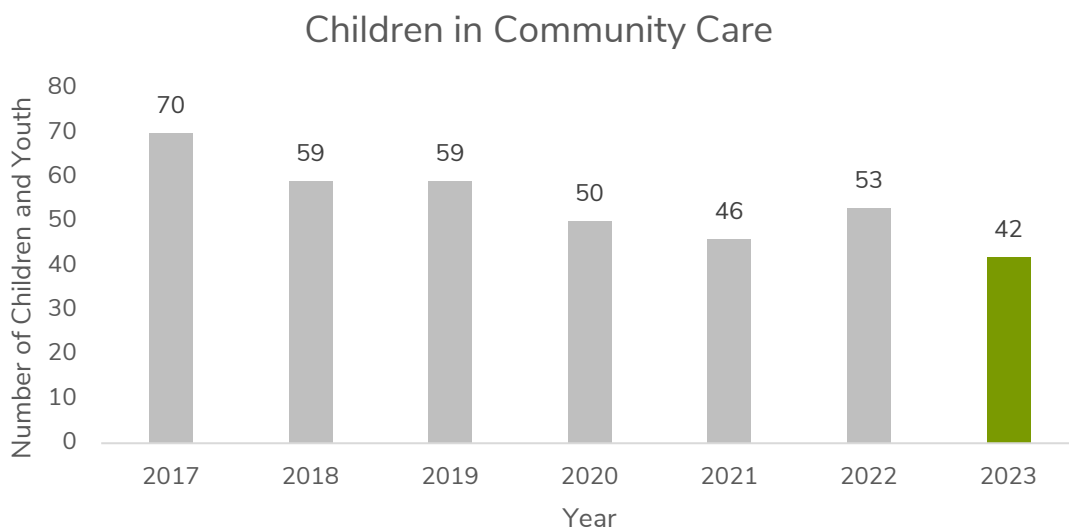


Figure 13 Number of children and youth in the care of the Director who were in community care from 2017 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green.



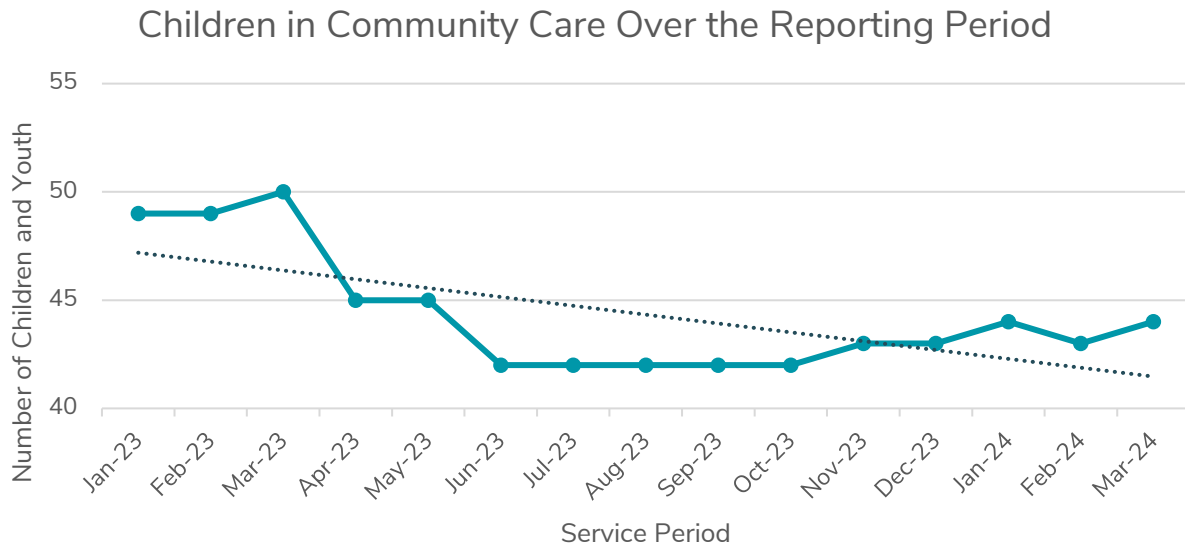


Figure 14 Number of children and youth in the care of the Director residing in community care homes during each month of the reporting period. The dotted line showcases the overall trend over the reporting period.

Decrease in the number of extended family caregivers and community caregivers

The decrease in the number of children placed with extended family caregivers and community caregivers is likely due to two reasons: an overall decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care and a caregiver shortage.

As exemplified in Figure 4, for the last 14 years, the number of children in out-of-home care have slowly decreased. This is likely due to the increased focus on prevention services by FCS, Yukon First Nations, CYFN, and other community resources to either prevent children from coming into contact with the Yukon’s child protection system, as well as the increased focus by FCS to keep children with their families and reunify children in out-of-home care with their families.

We have also seen a steady decline in the amount of both community and extended family caregivers. The retirement of some longer-term community caregivers and lower interest seen during caregiver recruitment initiatives has contributed to the current caregiver shortage.



Individuals are finding it more difficult to serve as caregivers given the rise in cost of living, complex needs of children in out-of-home care, and other daily challenges that prevent caring for a child. To address this, FCS is working with Yukon First Nations to implement the Caregiver Strategy Action Plan that aims to recruit, retain, train, and support caregivers.

Transitional Support Services

In the absence of extended family caregivers and community caregivers, children in need of out-of-home care are placed in group care, managed by FCS' Transitional Support Services (TSS) program. Group care is a 24/7 staffed living environment where qualified workers are available to meet the day-to-day caregiving needs of children.

Although the number of children and youth residing in TSS group care generally decreased from 2017 to 2020, the number of children increased by 23.5 per cent from 2022 to 2023 (see Figure 15), continuing the trend that began in 2020.

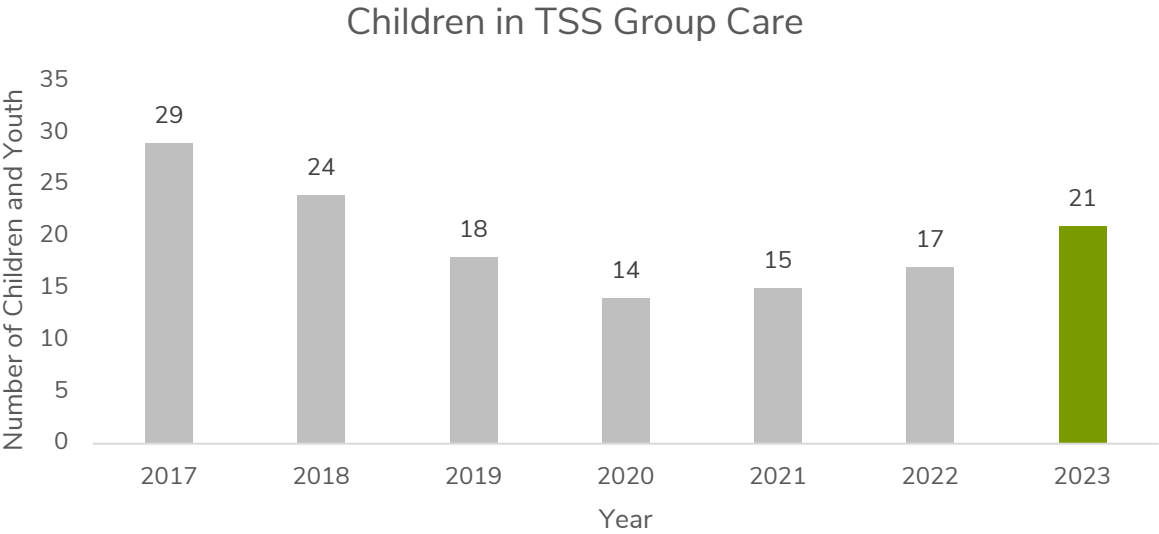


Figure 15 Number of children and youth in care living in group homes from 2017 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green.



When reviewing the monthly data over the reporting period, the number of children in group care increased by 44.4 per cent from January 2023 to March 2024 (Figure 16).

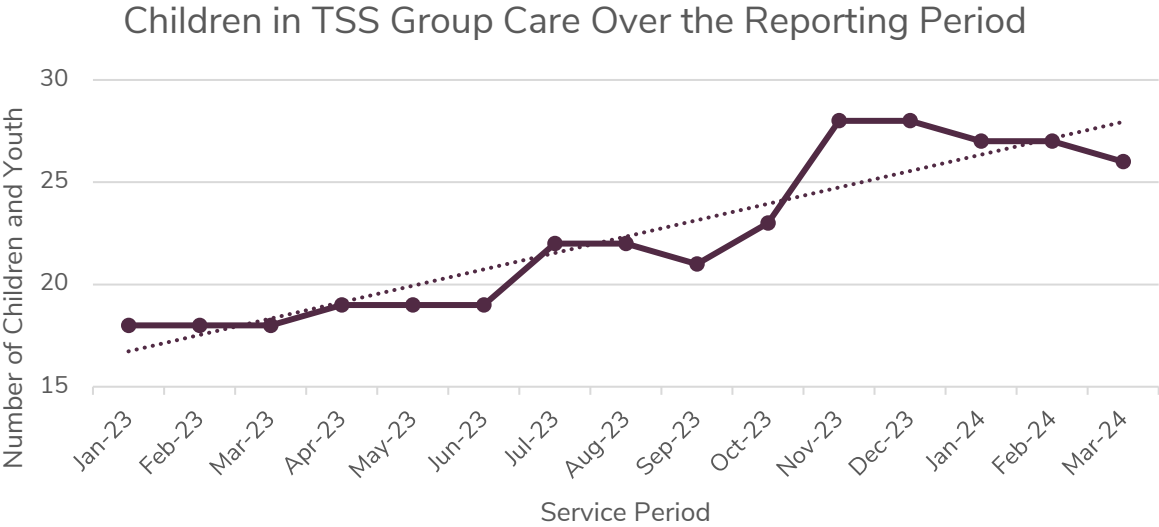


Figure 16 Number of children and youth in the care of the Director residing in TSS group homes during each month of the reporting period. The dotted line showcases the overall trend over the reporting period.

As the number of extended family caregivers and community caregivers decrease, more children requiring out-of-home care are placed in group care.

Programs and services for youth and young adults

When youth and young adults have access to programs and supports that help build necessary life skills and connection to natural support networks, they are more likely to succeed out of care. To help facilitate the successful transition to independence and lasting connections, FCS provides two programs for those from 16 to 26 years of age: Agreements for Support Services for Youth and Agreements for Transitional Support Services.

Through Agreements for Support Services for Youth, FCS provides supports to youth aged 16 to 19 who cannot live with their parents. These supports include financial



assistance for necessities such as housing, food, and clothing, alongside social supports aimed at developing life skills and addressing concerns such as mental health, substance use, or returning to school.

Young adults aged 19 to 26 who were previously in out-of-home care but have transitioned to independent living are able to receive similar supports through Agreements for Transitional Support Services.

Most youth and young adults supported through these two types of agreements identified as Indigenous (84%), with over half identifying as Yukon First Nation (63%).

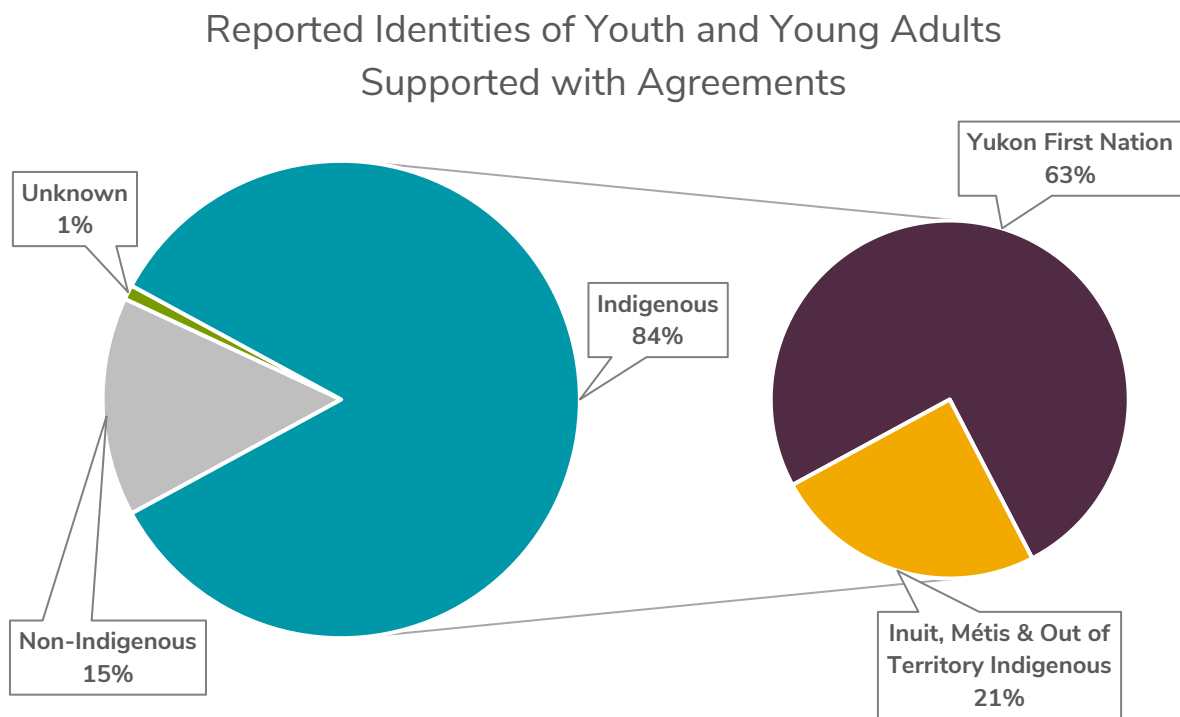


Figure 17 Self-reported identities of youth and young adults supported with agreements during the reporting period. The chart on the left speaks to the general demographic identity, including overall Indigenous representation, of those supported with agreements. The chart on the right provides a breakdown of Indigenous representation, including those who identified as Yukon First Nation.

The number of youth and young people supported with agreements has continued to increase from 2019 onwards. However, numbers have shown no significant changes from 2022 to 2023 (see Figure 18).



Youth and Young Adults Supported with Agreements

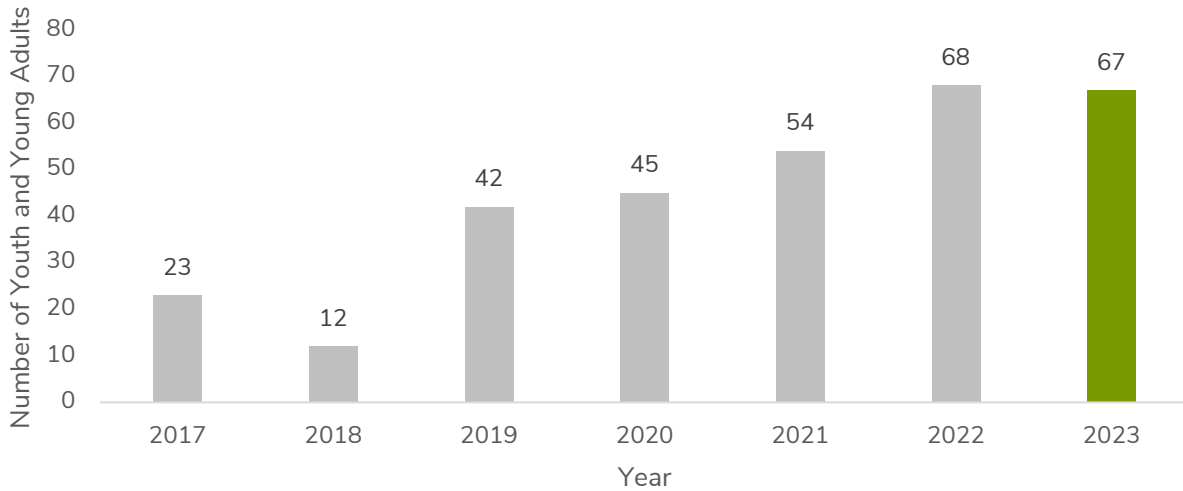


Figure 18 Number of youth and young adults supported through agreements from 2017 to 2023. September caseloads were used for each year due to the reporting structure of the previous case management system and to remain consistent with previous annual reports. The data for the reporting period is highlighted in green.

When comparing monthly data over the reporting period, there is a slight downward trend (see Figure 19).



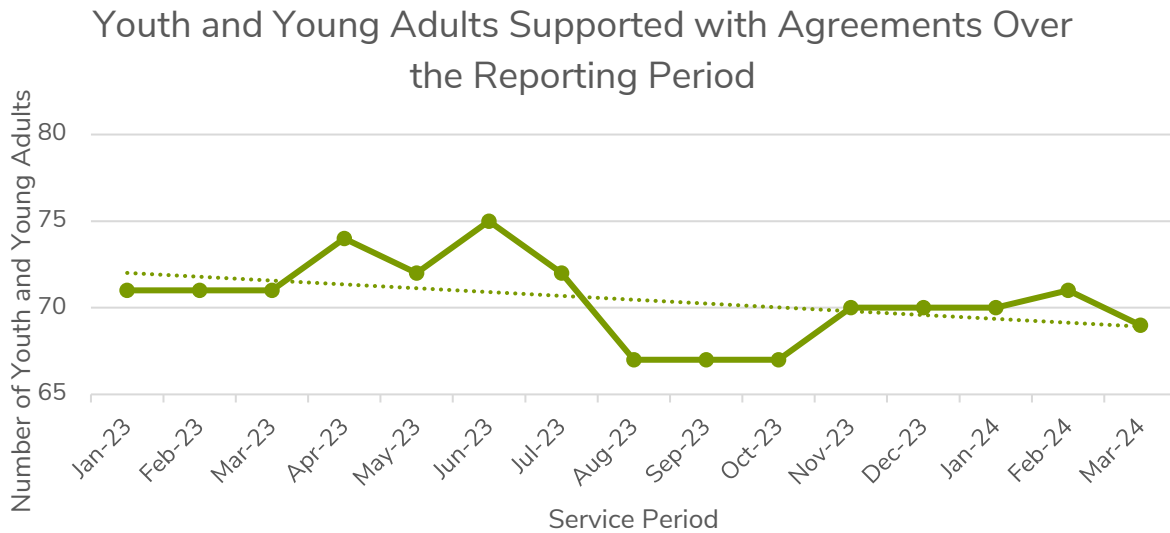


Figure 19 Number of youth and young adults supported with agreements during each month of the reporting period. The dotted line showcases the overall trend over the reporting period.

Youth Justice

The Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) and s. 174(3) of the CFSA establish the Director of FCS as the territorial Director of Youth Justice within the Yukon. Youth Justice is responsible for delivering three programs under the YCJA to serve youth who are, or are likely to be, in conflict with the law, all under the guidance of the Director of FCS. The three programs are as follows: Youth Probation, the Young Offender Facility, and the Youth Achievement Centre.

Youth Probation

Youth involved with the criminal justice system in the Yukon continue to work with either Whitehorse-based probation staff or mobile probation officers, in partnership with Yukon First Nations. Over the last few years, the number of youth involved in the justice system has continued to decline. Most notably, there has been a significant decrease in the number of youth serving time in a secure facility, as opposed to in-community probation services.

During the reporting period, the Youth Probation office supervised 98 court orders, including extrajudicial sanctions (both pre-and post-charge), bail orders (undertakings



and release orders), and sentenced orders (probation, conditional discharge, intensive support and supervision, deferred custody and supervision orders, and the community portion of custody and supervision orders)¹. However, this does not mean 98 unique individuals were served, as some youth were subject to multiple orders during the reporting period.

Court Orders Supervised by Youth Probation Office

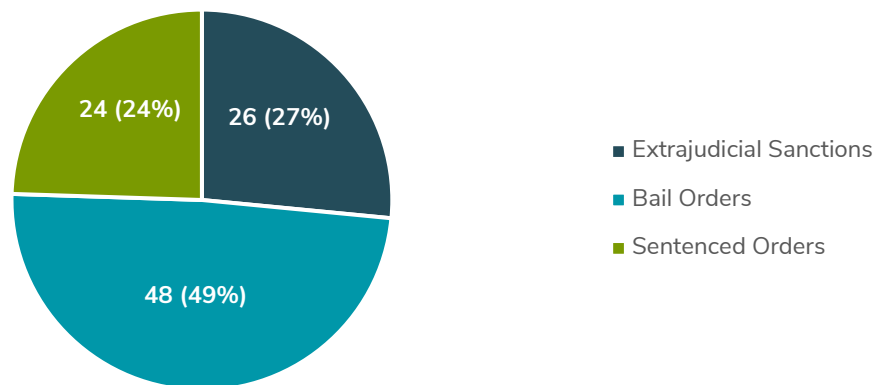


Figure 26 Number of orders supervised by the Youth Probation office during the reporting period, by order type.

Young Offenders Facility

The Young Offenders Facility (YOF) provides custodial supervision of youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of offence under the YCJA, ensuring the safety and security of youth and the community. During the reporting period, YOF saw a total of eight admissions from five unique youth.

Youth Achievement Centre

The Youth Achievement Centre (YAC) provides programs for youth aged 12 to 17 who are involved in the youth justice system, at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system or require support that cannot be provided through Yukon’s education system.

¹ Please see Appendix 1 for descriptions of the order types supervised by the Youth Probation office.



Over the reporting period, 65 unique youth attended a total of 3,905 hours of programming provided by YAC. Approximately 80 per cent of these youth attended YAC programming because they were at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system or required additional educational support. Only 21.5 per cent of youth attending YAC programming were involved with the youth justice system.

New programs launched during the reporting period

In March 2023, FCS launched the Nts'äw Chua – Semi-Independent Living Suites program, which delivers independent living skills training and housing supports to youth aged 19 to 26 who are receiving support from the Director. Four suites are available for youth who require additional day-to-day support before they transition to independent living.

Coroner's Inquest

In June 2023, the Yukon Coroner's Service held an inquest into the accidental death of an infant who was receiving services from FCS. Based on the testimony heard, the Jury made 13 recommendations to prevent such a tragedy in the future, with eight of the recommendations directed to FCS. As of April 8, 2024, four of the eight recommendations have been fully implemented (recommendations 5, 6, 7, and 13) and work is underway to implement the remaining recommendations (recommendations 8, 9, 10, and 11).

Relationships with partners

In April 2024, the Director of FCS signed the *Memorandum of Understanding on the concurrent investigations of child abuse and other related matters between the RCMP and FCS*. This carves a clearer path forward for FCS and RCMP to coordinate efforts and ultimately reduce the impact of investigations of children and families.

As a part of the Government of Yukon's *Safer School Action Plan*, FCS supported the development of the Joint Agreement between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services regarding interdepartmental operations and



communication when a child's safety is, or is likely to be, at risk, which was also signed in April 2024.

Relationships with Yukon First Nations

FCS continues to work together with Yukon First Nations and CYFN to deliver services under the CFSA to Indigenous children and families in the Yukon. Over the reporting period, FCS met with Yukon First Nations bilaterally numerous times to discuss issues specific to their communities.

FCS also regularly provided updates on child protection service delivery at the Yukon First Nation Health and Social Development Commission meetings.

At the Trilateral Table on the Wellbeing of Yukon First Nations Children and Families, FCS worked side-by-side with the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nations, and CYFN to share information and make decisions related to service delivery under the CFSA.

Over the reporting period, FCS, the Department of Justice, and Executive Council Office worked with the Government of Canada and Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) to develop a coordination agreement that would support IRC to deliver Inuvialuit law governing child and family services for Inuvialuit children and families in the Yukon. Negotiations for this coordination agreement between the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada, and IRC are ongoing.

In June 2023, the Government of Yukon and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provides a framework to collaborate on the implementation and delivery of services under the CFSA to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in children and families.

Looking forward

Child protection systems across Canada are evolving at a rapid pace as First Nations and Indigenous governing bodies exercise authority over child and family services. The Yukon is no different and Yukon First Nations have also expressed their interest in exercising similar authority.



As Yukon First Nations occupy jurisdiction in the area of child and family services, FCS is committed to continuing a collaborative approach and offering any support possible to help Yukon First Nations build capacity and work together to ensure that children, youth, young adults formerly in out-of-home care, and families all experience the best possible outcomes.



Appendix 1

This appendix details the various order types commonly supervised by the Youth Probation office.

Order Name & Type	Description
Undertaking (Bail)	When a youth is charged with a criminal offence they can be released on an Undertaking to an Officer in Charge (RCMP). The undertaking will identify a court date and may include conditions such as reporting to a bail supervisor, curfew, no contact with person(s) or address etc.
Release Order (Bail)	When a youth is charged with a criminal offence, they can be released from court on a Release Order issued by a Judge under the YCJA. The Release Order will identify the next court date and any conditions the Judge deems appropriate. These conditions may include: reporting to a Bail Supervisor, residency conditions, programming expectations, curfew and no contact orders. A Release Order may include a surety or cash deposit if deemed necessary by the court.
Extrajudicial Sanction (Diversion)	Referrals for Extrajudicial Sanctions are received from Crown Prosecutors or the RCMP and, after completing assessments, are referred to the Youth Justice Panel to craft an Extrajudicial Sanction (diversion) suitable for the young person's circumstances. For this form of diversion, the following must occur: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The young person accepts responsibility for the alleged offence and there is sufficient evidence to proceed with the prosecution of the offence. 2. The young person consents to participate. 3. The young person is advised of their right to be represented by counsel and has a reasonable opportunity to so. 4. The sanctions are deemed to be appropriate to meet the needs of the young person and the interests of society.
Probation Order (Sentence)	A court ordered sentence for a young person who has pled or been found guilty of a criminal offence. Youth Probation Orders cannot run longer



	<p>than two years and typically contain conditions to guide the youth's rehabilitation and reintegration while addressing public safety.</p>
<p>Conditional Discharge (Sentence)</p>	<p>A court ordered sentence for a young person who has pled or been found guilty of a criminal offence. With this sentence the young person is not given a criminal conviction if they meet certain conditions set out by the court, such as counseling or community service hours, and comply with all conditions set out.</p>
<p>Deferred Custody and Supervision Order (Sentence)</p>	<p>A court ordered sentence for a young person who has pled or been found guilty of a serious criminal offence. Instead of serving time in a youth facility, the youth is placed under strict supervision in the community with conditions such as regular reporting to their probation officer and attending programming and counseling for a time not exceeding six (6) months. In the event of a breach of conditions the young person may be subjected to a period of detention in a youth facility for up to 48 hours, at the discretion of the Territorial Director.</p>
<p>Custody and Supervision Order (Sentence)</p>	<p>A court ordered custody sentence for a youth who has pled or been found guilty of a criminal offence. The youth serves the first two-thirds of their sentence in a youth custody centre, either in an open or secure setting, and is then supervised in the community for the remaining third of their sentence. The Territorial Director is responsible for determining which conditions the youth will be subject to while supervised in the community.</p>
<p>Intensive Supervision and Support Order (Sentence)</p>	<p>A court can order this type of sentence as an alternative to custody. This sentence provides more intensive support and supervision of the youth when compared to a Probation Order.</p>



Intensive Rehabilitative Custody and Supervision Order (Sentence)	A court can order this sentence for serious charges such as murder and aggravated sexual assault for a youth who suffers from a mental, psychological, or emotional disorder. This type of sentence is meant to have a treatment component and requires willingness from the youth to engage in a treatment plan.
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