

FIREARM INJURY & POLICY
RESEARCH PROGRAM

UW Medicine

Walk About Yakima Program Evaluation Report

July 2023 – June 2025

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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In 2023, the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention (OFSVP) funded several youth-focused community violence intervention (CVI) programs and contracted with the University of Washington's Firearm Injury & Policy Research Program (FIPRP) to evaluate them.

This report focuses on Walk About Yakima (WAY), which serves youth and young adults who are most vulnerable to being killed or incarcerated due to gun violence and gang activity in Yakima County. WAY seeks to reduce gang-related gun violence by providing direct intervention to individuals, with a focus on principles of restorative justice and community violence intervention, healing harm, fostering accountability, and addressing root causes of violence.

Methods

The evaluation – which focused on learning and capacity building – was conducted as a collaborative partnership between FIPRP and WAY staff with the goal of ensuring cultural relevance and shared ownership. Together, members of the FIPRP and WAY teams co-developed quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures for youth/participants and staff and contributed to the collection and interpretation of data.

Data collection:

- Mentees/participants: 56 surveys, 8 interviews
- Mentors/staff: 8 surveys, 8 interviews

Quantitative data were summarized descriptively; qualitative data were analyzed inductively, using open coding and thematic analysis and rapid qualitative analysis to identify emerging themes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results

Many WAY mentees/participants experienced difficulty meeting their basic needs and had high exposure to violence, suggesting WAY is engaging a high-need population at elevated risk for violence involvement. Mentees shared the value WAY provided in terms of addressing basic needs and providing trusting mentors, which may be critical for deeper and sustained change. There was evidence of positive growth over time among mentees in several areas, including access to resources, life satisfaction, connection to positive role model (especially WAY mentors), and violence and criminal legal system involvement. Staff perspectives highlight the value of lived experience, consistency, and cultural relevance in driving change.

Implications

WAY is providing meaningful and culturally grounded support to youth at elevated risk for violence involvement. Key implications and opportunities include:

- WAY's investments in basic needs are addressing important gaps, and WAY should be supported to continue providing or coordinating these essential services.
- Results suggest WAY's focus on consistent, relationship-driven mentoring is critical to supporting youth and navigating life transitions.
- Additional investments in systems coordination and professional development opportunities for staff could enhance impact.

Overall, WAY is authentically supporting youth with histories of trauma. With additional investment and supports, it could enhance its impact.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Background on partnership and purpose of evaluation

In 2023, the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention (OFSVP) funded several youth-focused community violence intervention (CVI) programs in Washington State. OFSVP contracted with the University of Washington Firearm Injury & Policy Research Program (FIPRP) to conduct a social impact evaluation and assessment of these programs. This brief report—focused on Walk About Yakima—summarizes the methods, results, and lessons learned from the resulting collaborative evaluation. The University of Washington Institutional Review Board deemed this project program evaluation and not human subjects research.

About Walk About Yakima

Walk About Yakima (WAY) aims to reduce gang-related gun violence in Yakima County by providing direct intervention to individuals who are most vulnerable to being killed or incarcerated due to gun violence and gang activity. The program integrates principles of restorative justice and community violence intervention, focusing on healing harm, fostering accountability, and addressing root causes of violence. Appendix Table 1 describes WAY activities in more depth according to a previously co-developed theory of change for community violence intervention (Schleimer, 2024).

Methods

METHODS

Overall approach to evaluation

While the collaboration between FIPRP and WAY originated from a state contract, we strove for genuine partnership and power-sharing throughout all aspects of the project. This meant that WAY staff and FIPRP team members were co-leaders in the evaluation design and implementation, processes were adapted to the capacity and insights of WAY staff, and evaluation measures were designed to be culturally relevant and reflect the true work of WAY.

Together, members of the FIPRP and WAY teams co-developed quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures for mentees (i.e., youth participants) and mentors (i.e., staff) through an iterative process of question generation, reflection, and refinement that prioritized the expertise of WAY staff and the needs of those they serve. These evaluation measures were informed by a previously co-developed theory of change for community violence intervention (Schleimer, 2024); WAY staff selected constructs from the theory of change to measure, and survey and interview questions were co-developed and collected for these constructs. The final quantitative (i.e., survey questions) and qualitative measures (i.e., interview questions) are included in the Appendix. Once evaluation measures were finalized, WAY program staff and FIPRP team members worked together to collect data. WAY staff collected quantitative and qualitative data from their participants with support and technical assistance from the FIPRP team (who had no direct contact with participants). FIPRP collected quantitative and qualitative data from staff. FIPRP conducted analyses, and WAY staff contributed to the interpretation and implications of the findings.

METHODS

Mentees/participants

Quantitative

Data collection

WAY staff collected longitudinal survey data from mentees during phases 1, 2, and 3 of the program (per their 3-phase program model). Phase 1 is approximately 3 months long (from 0-3 months), phase 2 is approximately 6 months long (from 3-9 months), and phase 3 is approximately 3 months long (from 9-12 months). Each phase has a different focus area, from relationship building and intensive support and mentorship to increasing focus on independence. Survey questions differed slightly across phases to ensure more sensitive questions were only asked once mentors had built and gained trust from mentees (which is important for the validity of responses and to not interfere with mentors' hard work of gaining trust and building relationships).

Mentees completed surveys via Google Forms and received a \$20 physical gift card after survey completion. To track responses longitudinally over time, mentees included their unique, de-identified "mentee ID #" when submitting their responses. They were provided informed consent language (e.g., indicating the purpose of the survey and that it was voluntary) and told that responses would remain confidential and no individual-level information would be published or shared with anyone outside WAY and the evaluation partners at FIPRP.

In total, there were 56 responses from 40 individuals. Due to the timing of data analysis relative to the start of the project, no mentees took all three surveys, and 16 mentees took 2 out of 3 surveys (10 mentees took both phase 1 and phase 2 surveys, 5 mentees took both phase 2 and phase 3 surveys, and 1 mentee took both phase 1 and phase 3 surveys).

METHODS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

The average time between the phase 1 and 2 surveys was 99 days (about 3 and a half months), and the average time between the phase 3 survey and the one prior was 105 days (about 3 and a half months).

Data analysis

Data were described with standard summary statistics (e.g., percentages) at each time point. In addition to overall results among all mentees (n=40), we also presented results among the subset of people who took multiple surveys—comparing responses at phase 2 to phase 1 among those who took both phase 1 and 2 surveys (n=10) and comparing responses at phase 3 to phase 2 among those who took both phase 2 and 3 surveys (n=5). This approach avoids the possibility that changes over time were simply the result of compositional changes to the sample (i.e., while it does not use all available data, it provides a more valid measure of change over time).

Importantly, analyses in this evaluation do not assess the effect of the WAY program on participants since the evaluation design is not suited to causal inference (e.g., there is no comparison or control group).

Qualitative

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews with 8 mentees were conducted by WAY mentors using a guide co-developed by the FIPRP team and WAY staff to ensure cultural and contextual relevance. Youth were provided with informed consent language (e.g., indicating the purpose of the interview and that it was voluntary) and received a \$30 physical or electronic gift card after interview completion.

METHODS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Interview recordings were transcribed by WAY staff using the software Otter.ai, and de-identified transcripts were shared with the FIPRP team.

Data analysis

A thematic approach was used to analyze mentee interview responses, following a multi-stage process to ensure rigor, transparency, and community involvement.

Two FIPRP team members independently conducted open coding on a subset of transcripts to identify emergent concepts and patterns. This inductive process allowed for an exploration of mentee experiences. These preliminary codes informed a draft codebook (see Appendix), which included code names, descriptions, and examples of direct quotes. The codebook was shared with WAY staff who had expertise in the program's context and population to ensure relevance and accuracy, and it was revised based on their input.

Using the finalized codebook, all the transcripts were closed coded independently by two coders using the qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti. The two coders met to group related codes, identify overarching themes, and align findings with the program context. Themes were refined collaboratively with WAY staff.

Themes are included below, along with select representative quotes to illustrate the themes and ensure the analysis remained grounded in mentees' voices.

METHODS

Mentors/staff

Quantitative

Data collection

In collaboration with the WAY director and program coordinator, we invited all 8 WAY staff via email to take an anonymous survey about their experiences with the WAY program. All 8 completed the survey. Surveys were administered electronically via RedCap (supported by the University of Washington Institute of Translational Health Sciences, which is funded by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under award number UL1TR002319). Staff were provided informed consent language (e.g., indicating the purpose of the survey and that it was voluntary) and told that responses would remain confidential and no individual-level information would be published or shared with anyone outside WAY's evaluation partners at the University of Washington. Staff received a \$20 electronic gift card after completing the survey.

Data analysis

Data were described with standard summary statistics (e.g., percentages).

Qualitative

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom by a FIPRP team member, using an interview guide co-developed with WAY staff.

METHODS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Prior to the interview, staff were provided informed consent language (e.g., indicating the purpose of the survey/interview and that it was voluntary). Recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai and reviewed for accuracy and to de-identify any personal information. Staff received a \$30 electronic gift card after interview completion.

Data analysis

A rapid qualitative analysis (RQA) approach was used to evaluate staff feedback efficiently while maintaining analytical rigor. This method supported the timely generation of findings to inform ongoing program development and decision-making. Instead of relying solely on full transcripts, structured summary templates were used to extract key points aligned with core topics (domains) from the guide. These summaries were analyzed using a matrix-based approach, with rows representing participants and columns corresponding to thematic domains. The matrix included key insights, recurring ideas, and illustrative quotes. Themes were developed inductively from the matrix, with attention to both frequency and salience of ideas. Themes were refined collaboratively, and illustrative quotes were selected to capture staff perspectives and support the findings.

Results

RESULTS

Mentees/participants

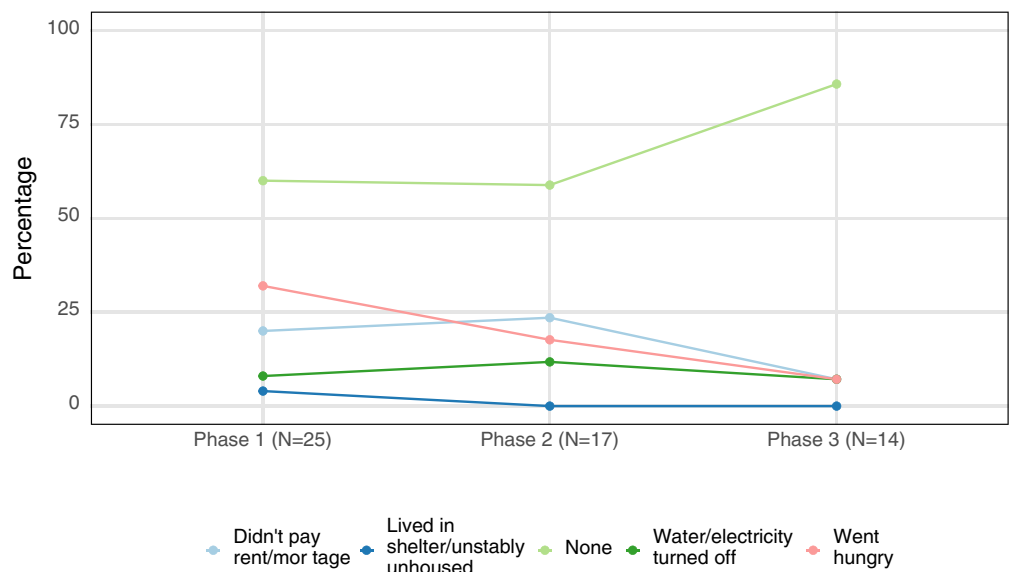
Quantitative

Table 1 includes a description of WAY mentees in terms of sociodemographic characteristics and program participation. Results, organized into theory of change constructs, are summarized below, with additional figures in the Appendix. Given the relatively small sample size, particularly for the subset who completed multiple surveys (n=15), results should be interpreted with caution.

Ability to meet basic needs, progress towards personal goals

At phase 1, 32% of mentees said that they went hungry because they did not have enough money, and 20% did not pay rent/mortgage, 8% had their water/electricity turned off, and 4% lived in a shelter or were unstably housed because they did not have enough money. By phase 3, 7% of mentees said they went hungry, did not pay rent/mortgage, or had water/electricity turned off, and none lived in a shelter or were unstably housed, reflecting a striking decrease.

In the past 6 months, did any of the following happen because you didn't have enough money?

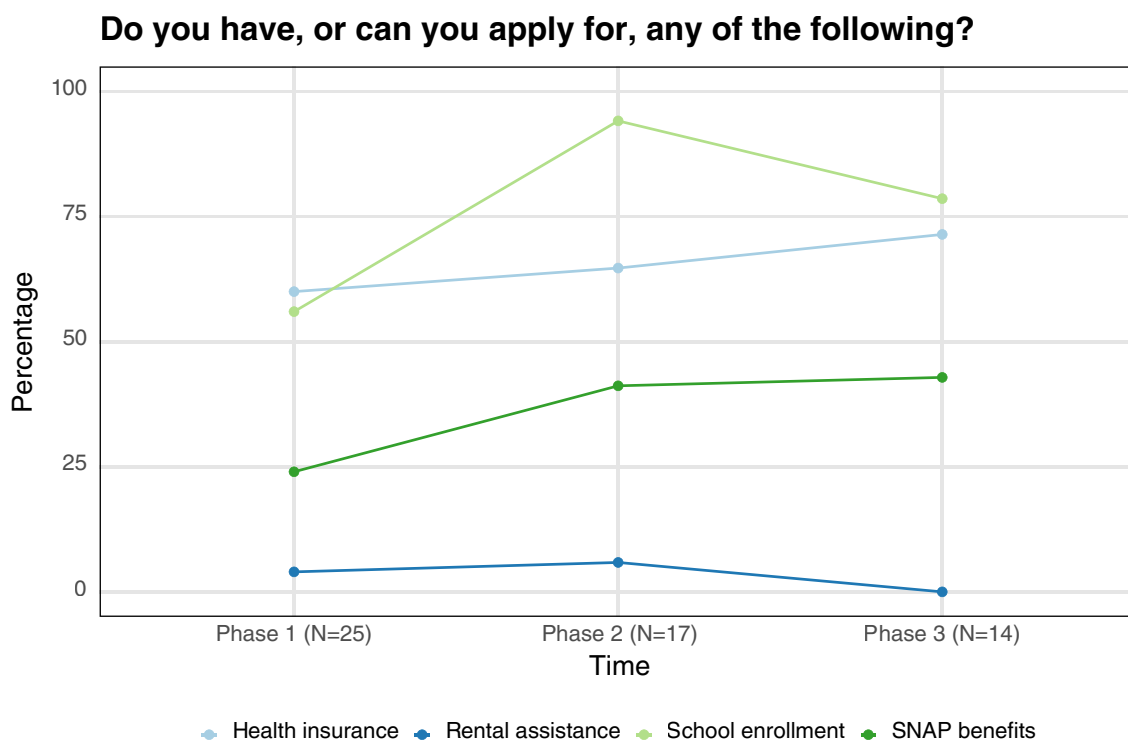


RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

At phase 1, when asked whether they have or can apply for certain resources, most mentees said they had/could apply for school enrollment and health insurance, whereas less than half said they had/could apply for SNAP benefits or rental assistance, which could reflect either a lack of access or lack of need for these particular services. However, of those who said they went hungry because they didn't have enough food at phase 1 (n=8), only 25% (n=2) said they had/could apply for SNAP benefits, suggesting a lack of access. Likewise, the one mentee who said they lived in a shelter or were unstably housed at phase 1 said they did not have access to rental assistance at that time.

Promisingly, when comparing responses over time from phase 1 to 3, there was an increase in the proportion of mentees reporting access to health insurance, SNAP benefits (including among those who experienced food insecurity), and school enrollment. The increase in school enrollment and SNAP benefits (but not health insurance) remained when focusing specifically on the subset of people who took multiple surveys.



RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Collectively, these results suggest two findings. First, many WAY mentees experienced difficulty meeting their basic needs at phase 1, especially in terms of food access (1 in mentees went hungry because they did not have money) and housing stability (1 in 5 mentees did not pay rent/mortgage because they did not have money). This indicates that the WAY program engaged a population in need of support (as intended). Second, many WAY mentees gained increasing access to resources to meet their everyday needs throughout the course of their participation, consistent with the goals of the program.

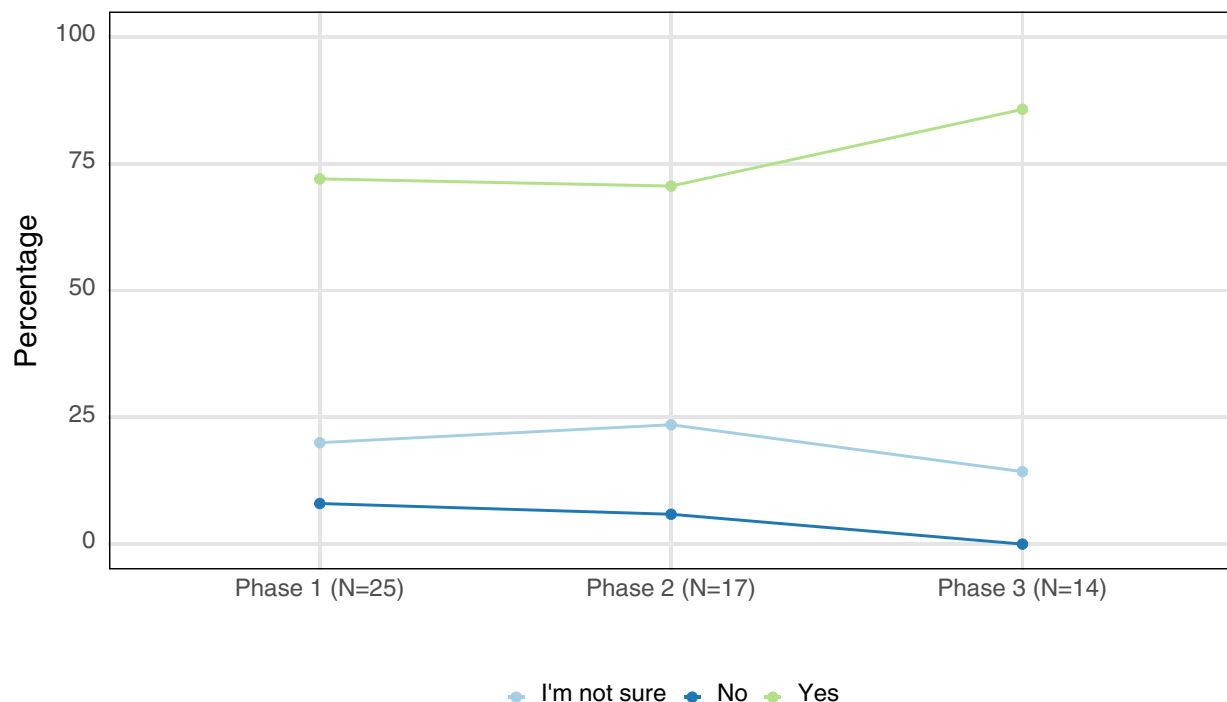
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Economic resources, employment, and education advancement

When asked about their main source of income, most mentees said a family member or friend supports them. Mentees had several goals for employment or education. The most common goals were to have a job (between 78-94% across phases) and to get a certification or learn a new skill (between 29-50% across phases). The least common goals were to go to college (between 14-24% across phases) and to complete a vocational/technical program (0% for all phases). In general, there was no clear pattern of change over time in the goals that mentees reported. However, overall and among the subset of people who took multiple surveys, there was an increase from phase 2 to 3 in the proportion of mentees who said they had the resources to achieve their employment or education goals.

Do you have the resources you need to achieve your employment or education goals?



RESULTS

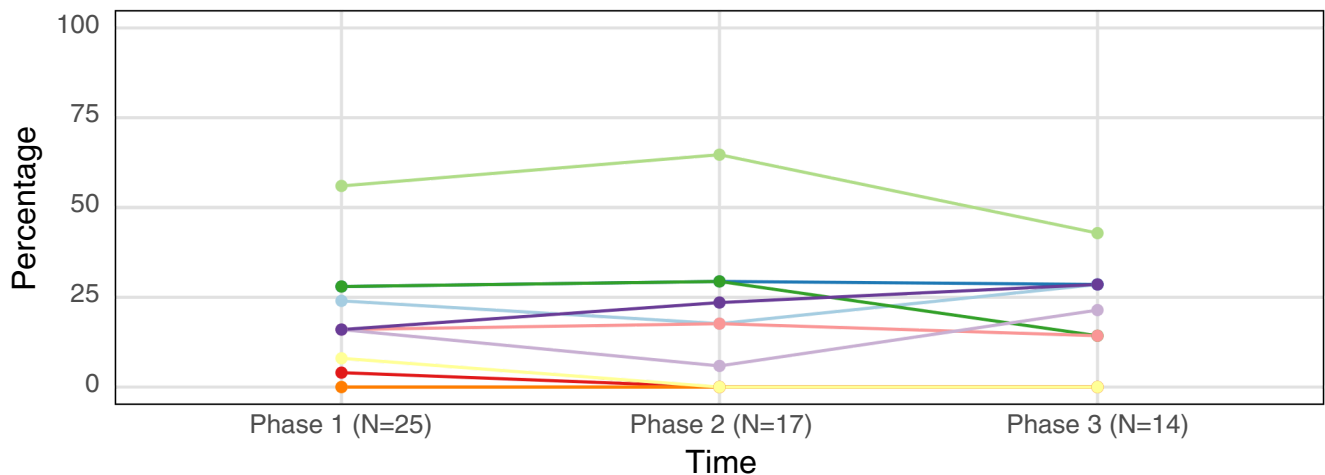
Mentees/participants (Continued)

Behavioral health, self-efficacy

When asked about how they deal with strong emotions, most mentees said they ignore or bottle up their feelings (between 43-65% across phases). Other common coping strategies were eating too much or too little (approximately 29% across phases) and lashing out at other people (between 14-29% across phases), while the least common coping strategies were self-harming (between 0-4% across phases), drug use (0% across phases), and withdrawing from social interactions (0% across phases).

Among mentees who took multiple surveys, there was a decrease in the proportion reporting that they criticize themselves, eat too much or too little, keep themselves busy, lash out at other people, and self-harm.

How do you deal with strong emotions?



- I criticize myself or have negative self-talk.
- I eat too much or too little.
- I ignore my feelings.
- I lash out at other people.
- I procrastinate or avoid my responsibilities.
- I self-harm.
- I use drugs to cope.
- I withdraw socially.
- I work too much or keep myself constantly busy.
- None of the above.
- Other.

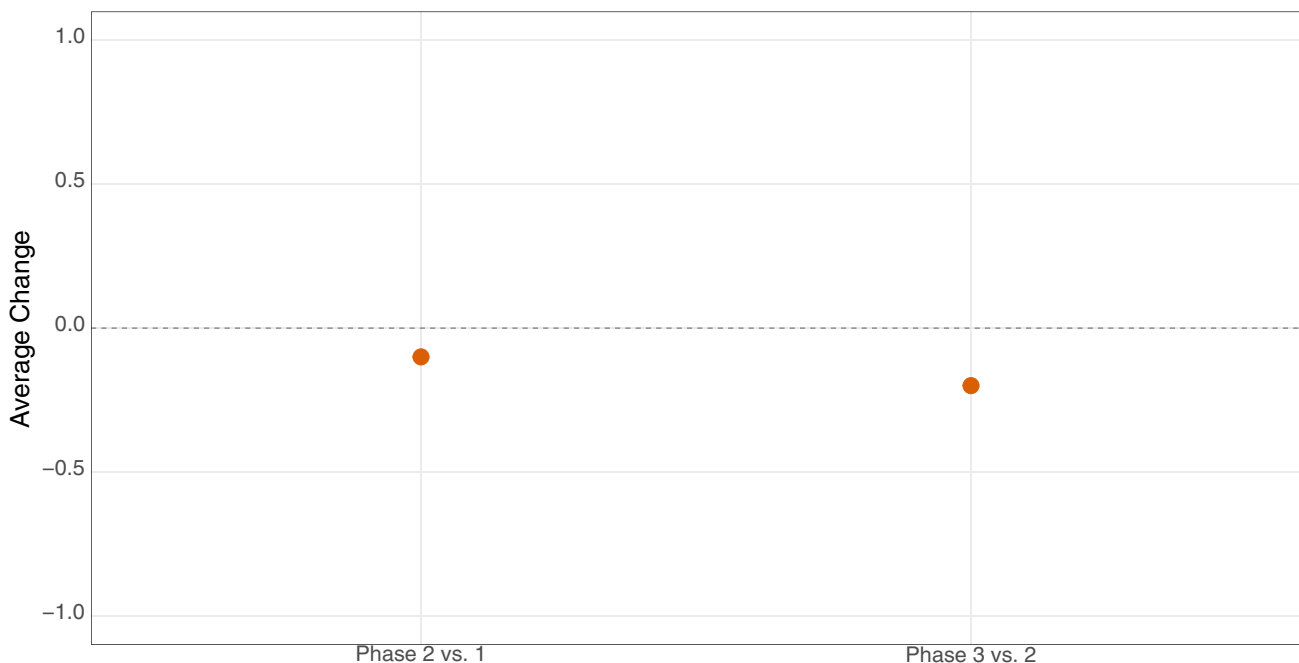
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

At phase 1, about half of mentees reported using drugs other than prescription medication, and drug use decreased slightly over time, especially among the subset of mentees who took multiple surveys.

Among mentees who took multiple surveys:

In the past 6 months, have you used drugs other than prescription medication?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion using drugs, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion using drugs.

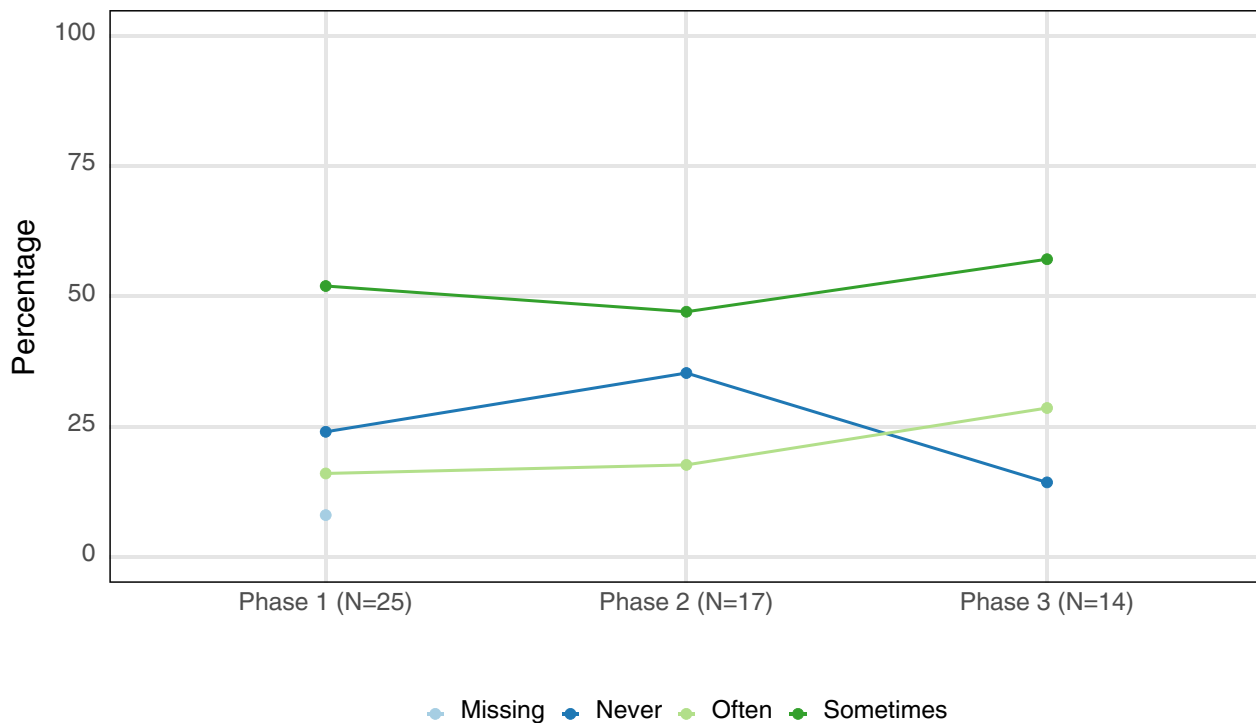
Across phases, 71-82% of mentees said they often or sometimes feel satisfied with life, and over 90% said they often or sometimes liked most parts of their personality. Over time, among those who took multiple surveys, there was a slight increase in life satisfaction, while the proportion who said they liked most parts of their personality remained high (with no change).

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

At phase 1, about half of mentees said they sometimes feel like they belong to a community, and 25% said they feel like they never do. Overall, and among the subset of mentees who took multiple surveys, there were increases in the proportion of mentees who said they feel like they belong to a community, especially by phase 3. This could indicate the importance of WAY's 3 phases, which allow time for gradual changes in social dynamics.

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you belong to a community (like a social group, school, or church)?



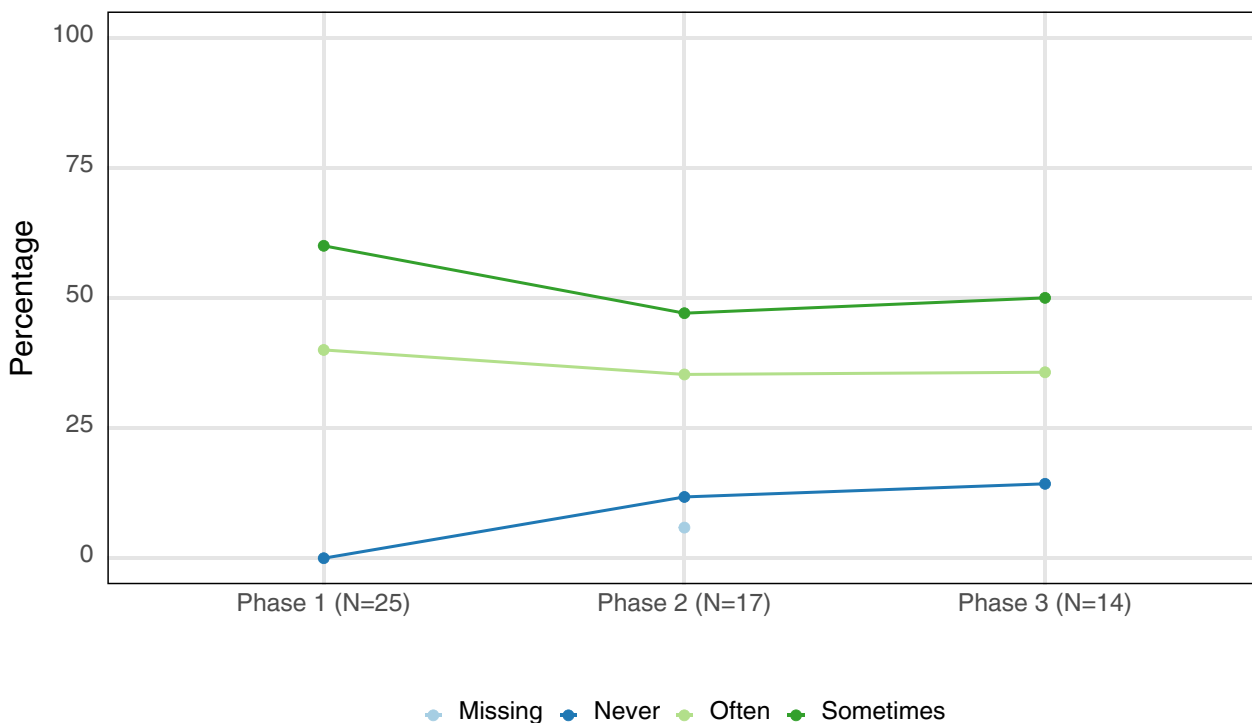
Mentees' perceptions that society is becoming a better place for them fluctuated notably over time. Most mentees reported either sometimes or often feeling confident to express their ideas or opinions. However, among the subset of people who took multiple surveys, there was a decrease in confidence over time, which could reflect shifting mindsets and evolving ideas and opinions.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Among all mentees and the subset who took multiple surveys, mentees increasingly reported they are *not* good at managing the responsibilities of daily life over time (especially from phase 1 to 2), which could indicate increasing and new responsibilities (e.g., as mentees make strides towards goals like having a job) and a need for additional support in managing them.

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you're good at managing your responsibilities?



Overall, decreases in some harmful coping strategies and drug use and increases in life satisfaction and perceived belonging suggest positive change. Changes in perceptions of society, confidence in expressing ideas/opinions, and ability to manage responsibilities could reflect expected shifts and growth throughout the course of mentees' participation while potentially shedding light on opportunities for additional support.

RESULTS

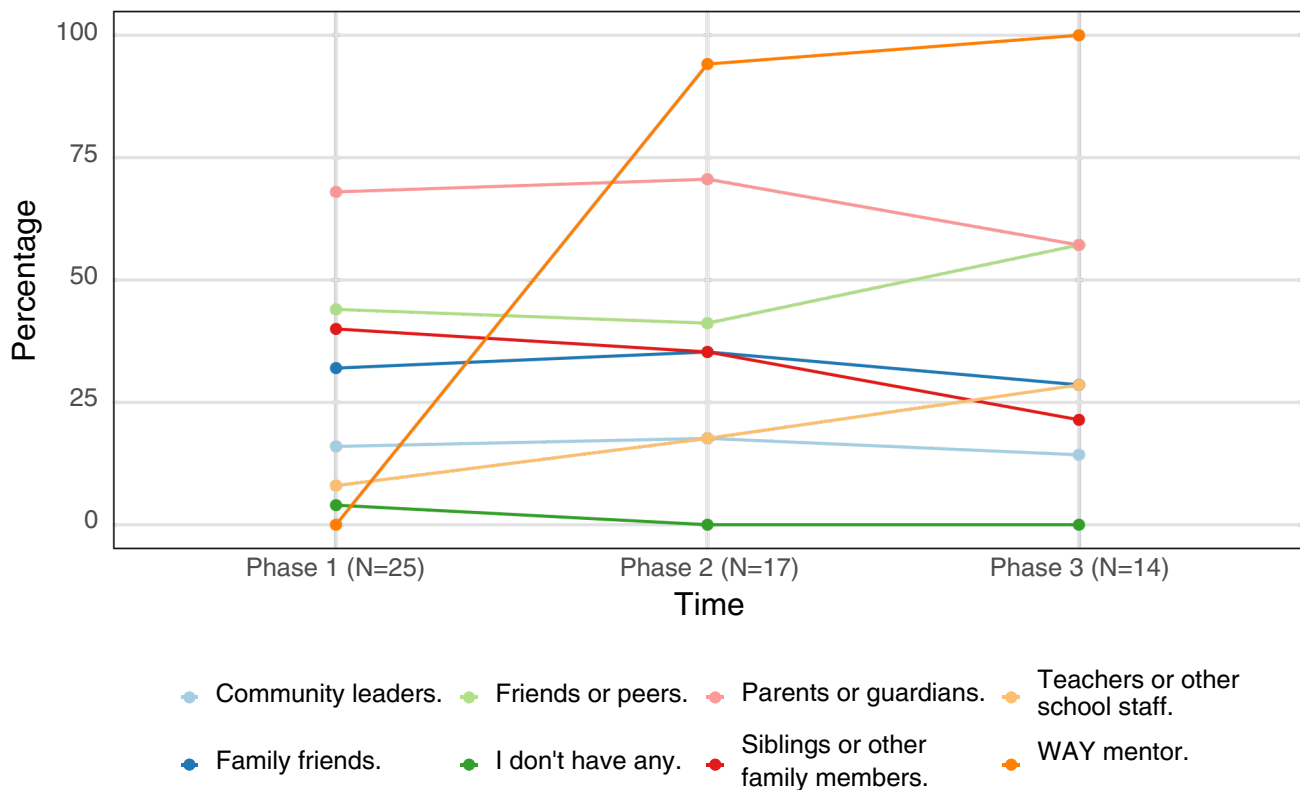
Mentees/participants (Continued)

Connection, positive role models, supportive relationships

Across phases, the most common number of role models that mentees reported was 1-3 (between 50-65% across phases). Over time, there was a decrease in the proportion of mentees reporting zero positive role models, and—among all mentees and the subset who took multiple surveys—the average number of role models per person consistently increased (e.g., from 2.7 to 3.6 from phase 1 to 3 among all mentees).

At phase 1, role models were often parents or guardians, friends or peers, and siblings/other family members. By phase 2, almost all mentees reported their WAY mentor as a positive role model, and this rose to 100% by phase 3.

Who are your positive role models?



RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Among those who took multiple surveys, the proportion of mentees reporting friends/peers as role models decreased while the proportion of mentees reporting teachers/other school staff and family friends as positive role models increased slightly. These findings could reflect shifting role models and away from previous peer groups and towards more positive and trusted adults.

Additionally, there was an increase from phase 1 to 2 in the proportion of mentees reporting having an adult in their life they feel comfortable asking for help. However, among mentees who took multiple surveys, there was an increase in the proportion reporting they were not sure where to go for help in their community, and there was a decrease in the proportion who said they felt they could go to school or religious communities for help. These findings underscore the need to better understand where youth feel comfortable going to help and increasing access to those spaces.

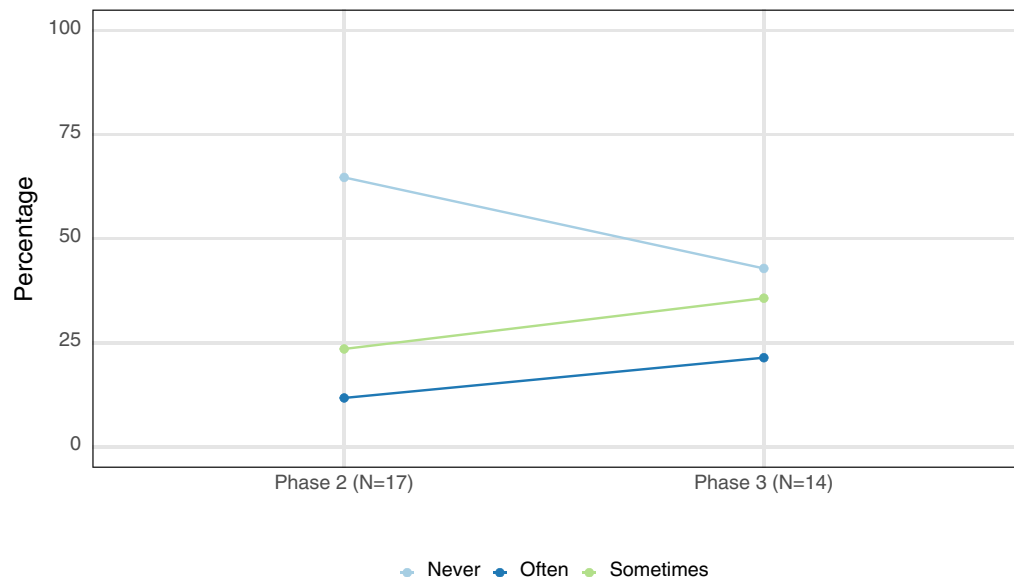
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Safety, including from gun violence

At phase 2 (the first time the question was asked), 65% of mentees said they never felt unsafe due to gun violence. Over time—both overall and among the subset who took multiple surveys—mentees increasingly reported feeling unsafe due to gun violence. This could reflect a shift in mentees' perceptions of what safety looks and feels like and increased awareness of the risks they face.

In the past 6 months, how often have you felt unsafe due to gun violence?**



At phase 2 (the first time the questions were asked), 65% said they or someone close to them had recently (within the past 6 months) been impacted by gun violence, 76% of mentees said they often or sometimes see pictures or conversations about guns on social media, and 65% said it would be very or kind of easy to get a gun if they wanted one. Further, 18% said someone had recently pulled a gun on them, and 41% said they had recently seen someone pull a gun on another person.

**only asked in phases 2 and 3

RESULTS

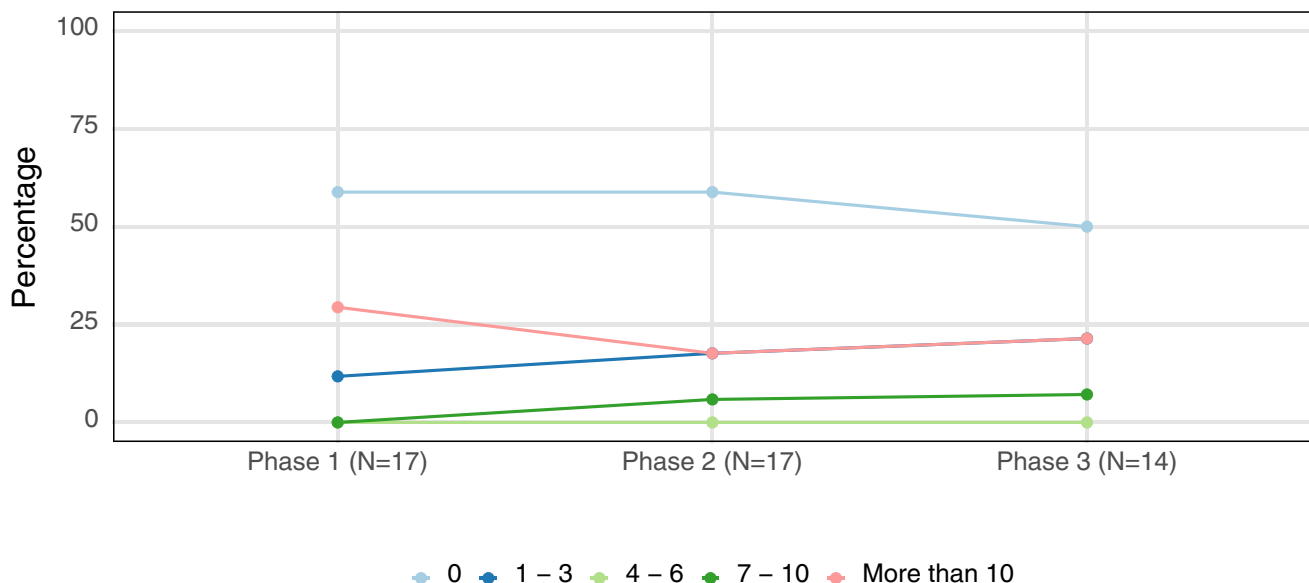
Mentees/participants (Continued)

About 41% of mentees reported that they felt the need to carry a gun at least once in the 6 months before they joined the WAY program (with 29% saying more than 10 times), and 18% said they felt the need to carry at least once to school.

These high percentages suggest WAY is engaging a group at high risk of gun violence, as intended.

Further, the percentage reporting that they felt the need to carry a gun more than 10 times declined slightly (from 29% in the 6 months before joining WAY among all youth to 21% in phase 3), suggesting risk reduction.

How many times have you felt the need to carry a gun in the 6 months before you entered the WAY program and in the past 6 months?**



In phase 2, mentees were asked both about the 6 months before entered the WAY program (which we recoded as phase 1 to show change over time) and the past 6 months (which we kept coded as phase 2).

**only asked in phases 2 and 3

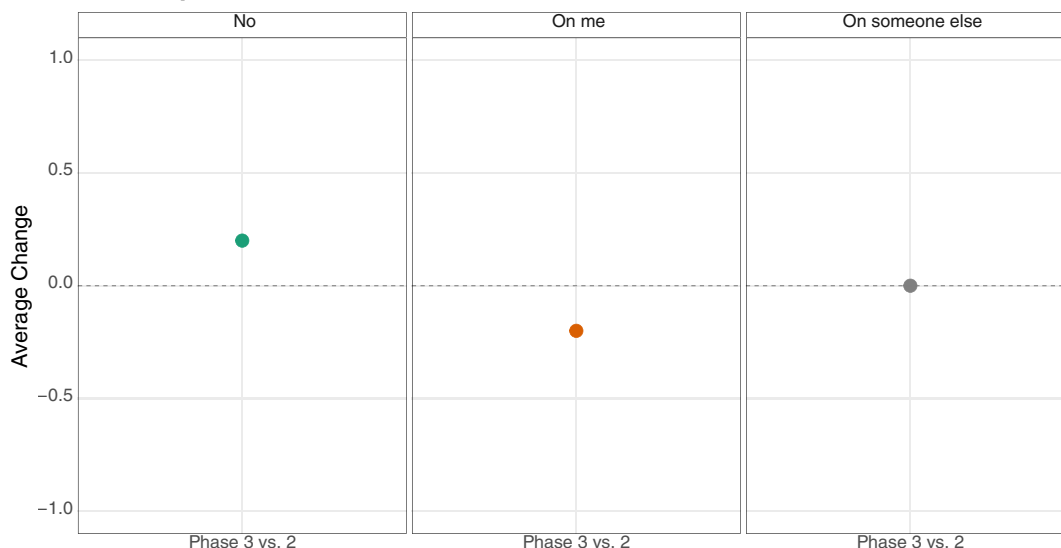
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Among the subset of mentees who took multiple surveys, there were increases over time in reported exposure to guns on social media and ease of accessing guns, as well as the proportion reporting they or someone close to them was impacted by gun violence. Among this subset, there was, however, a decrease in the proportion who said someone had pulled a gun on them, and the frequency of feeling the need to carry a gun to school (but not in general) decreased.

Among mentees who took multiple surveys:

In the past 6 months, have you seen somebody pull a gun on another person?**



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting this, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting this.

These findings could suggest that while gun violence and related risks increased around WAY mentees (e.g., as reflected on social media), mentees were less likely to be involved themselves, reflecting increased safety/reduced risk.

Changes (e.g., in perceived ease of firearm access) could also reflect increases in mentees' willingness to respond to questions honestly.

**only asked in phases 2 and 3

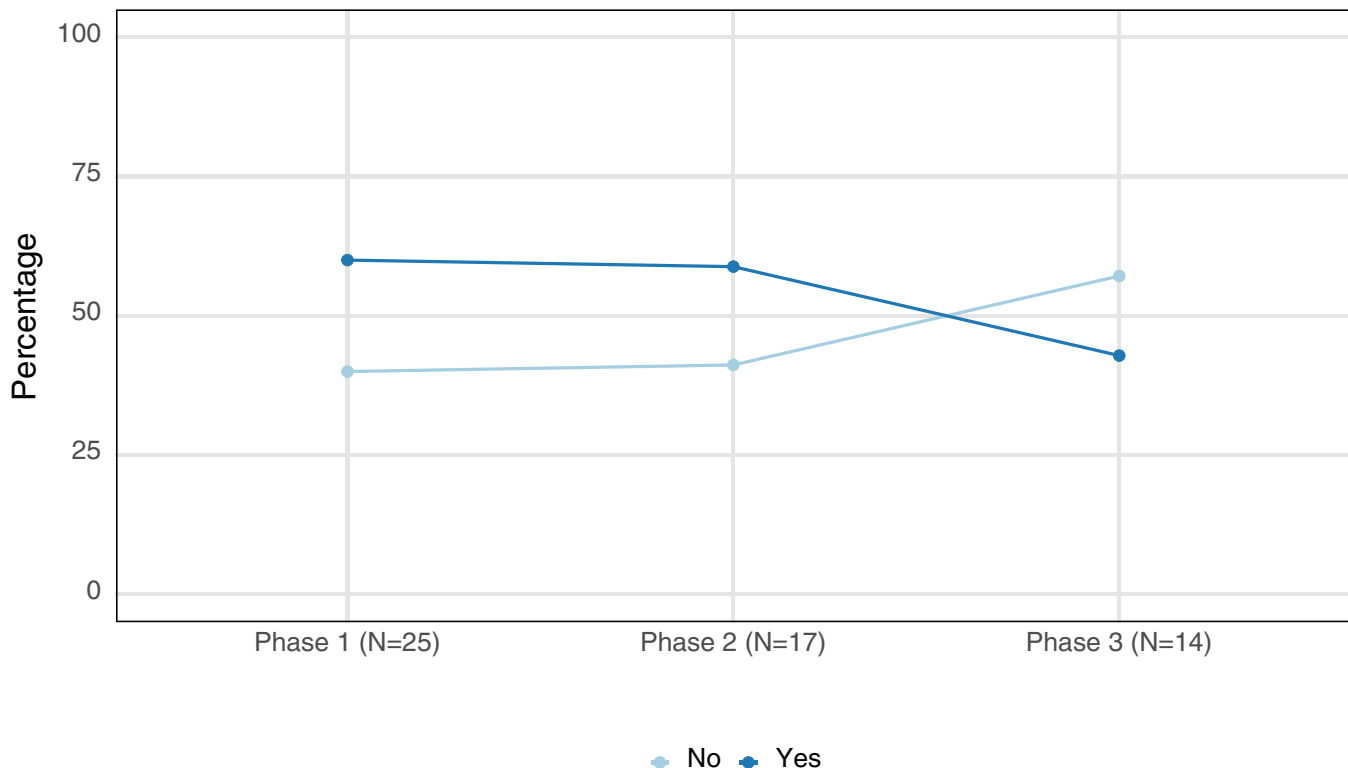
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Freedom from incarceration

At phase 1, over 50% of mentees said they had recently (within the last 6 months) pled guilty to charges or been convicted of charges, suggesting WAY is working – as intended – with those involved in the criminal legal system. Notably, the proportion of mentees who said they had recently pled guilty to charges/been convicted decreased from phase 2 to 3 (overall and among the subset who took multiple surveys), such that by phase 3, most mentees said they had not recently pled guilty to charges/been convicted.

In the past 6 months have you pled guilty to charges, or been convicted of charges?



RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

From phase 1 to 3—among the subset who took multiple surveys—there was also a slight decrease in the proportion of mentees who said they had recently spent time in juvie, jail, or prison, while there were slight increases in the proportion who said they were recently on probation or parole and that someone close to them had been incarcerated. Finally, most mentees said it was very important to them to avoid incarceration in the future.

These findings collectively suggest that WAY mentees were motivated and increasingly able to avoid criminal convictions and incarceration over the course of their participation with WAY, even when incarceration among people close to them increased.

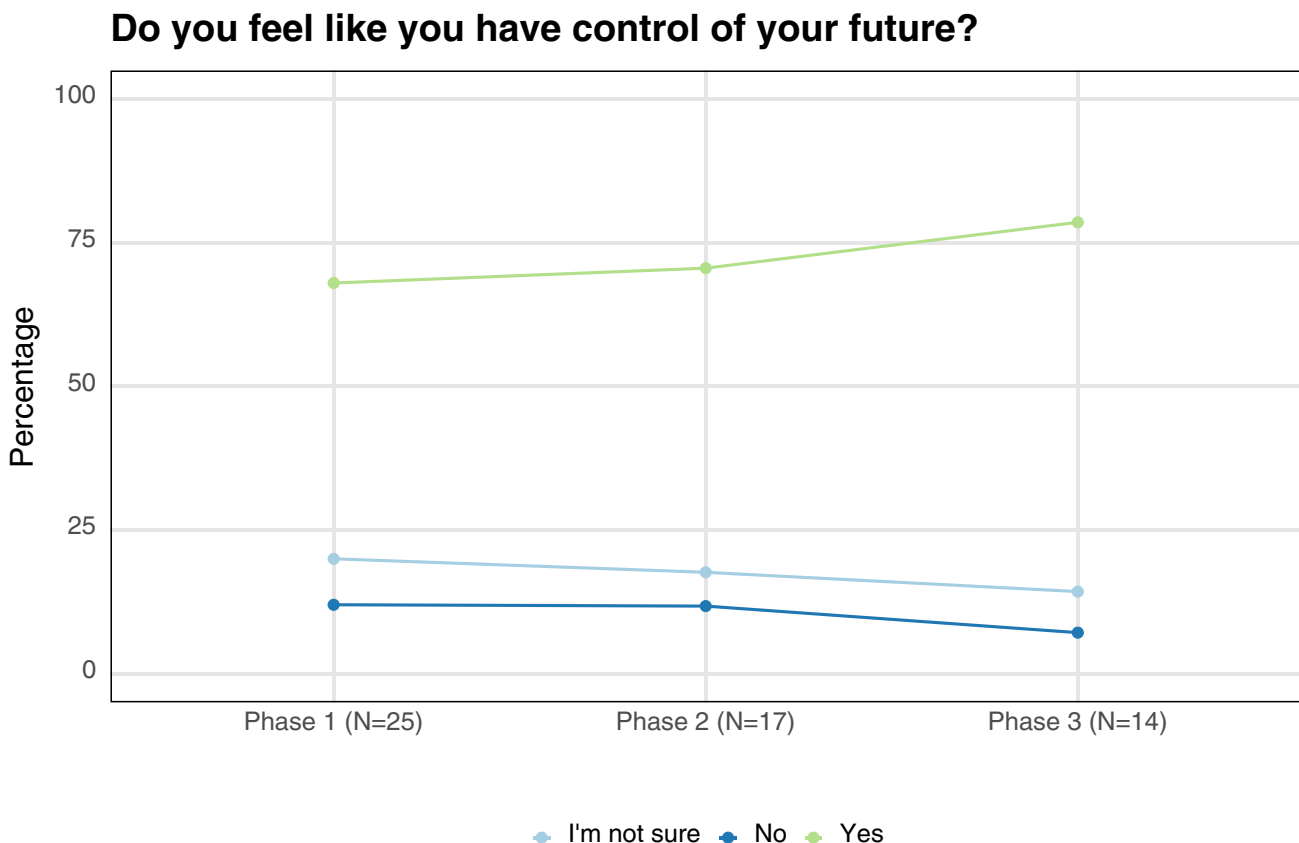
RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Self-determination

Most mentees felt they had control over their future and agreed more with the statement: “I have different options for my future; I can choose my own destiny” vs. “I am stuck on one path.” While proportionately fewer mentees agreed with the statement “I have different options for my future; I can choose my own destiny” over time (overall and among the subset who took multiple surveys), and proportionately more mentees (who took multiple surveys) reported feeling “stuck,” mentees increasingly reported feeling like they have control of their future.

These nuanced results could reflect shifts in mentees’ social dynamics and perceived opportunities as they navigate transitions and growth.



RESULTS

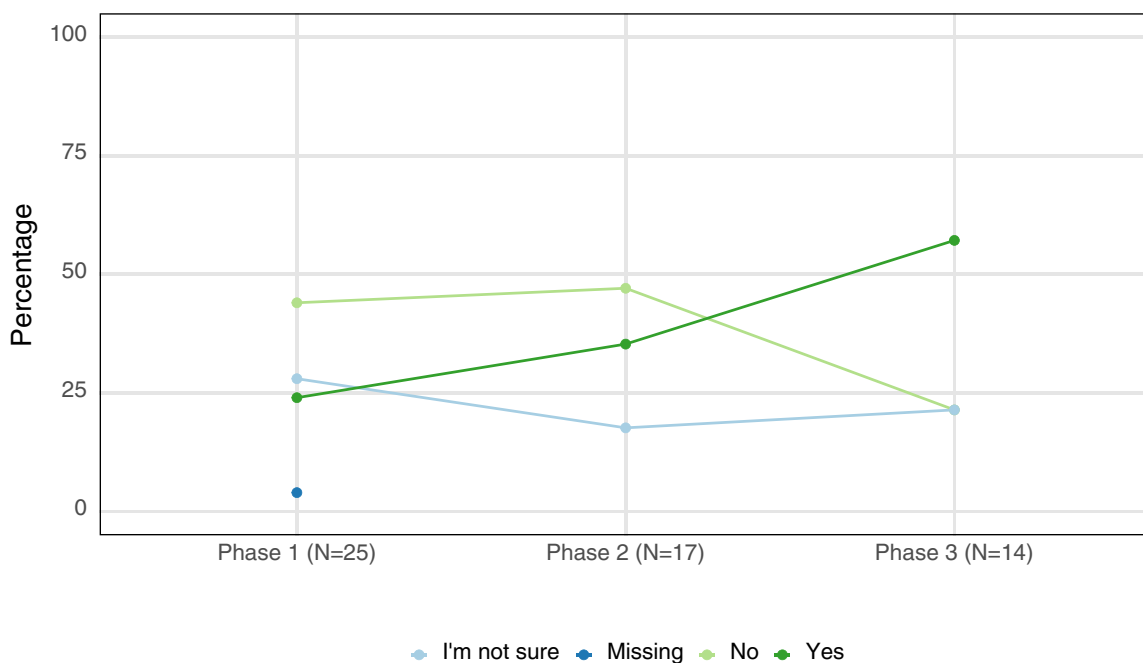
Mentees/participants (Continued)

Economic stability

At phase 1, almost 25% of mentees said the statement “I am making enough money for the future” was not true at all. Notably, over time (overall and among the subset who took multiple surveys), there was an increase in the proportion of mentees who said this was true. Likewise, while at phase 1, 80% of mentees said they were not able to save at all for a long-term goal (like a car or apartment), the proportion who said they were not able to save decreased to 50% by phase 3.

While only 25% of mentees at phase 1 said they had the financial resources they need to achieve their long-term goal, this increased notably over time among all mentees and the subset who took multiple surveys.

Do you have the financial resources you need to achieve your long-term goals?



These results collectively suggest WAY mentees experienced positive growth towards long-term economic stability during the course of their participation with WAY.

RESULTS

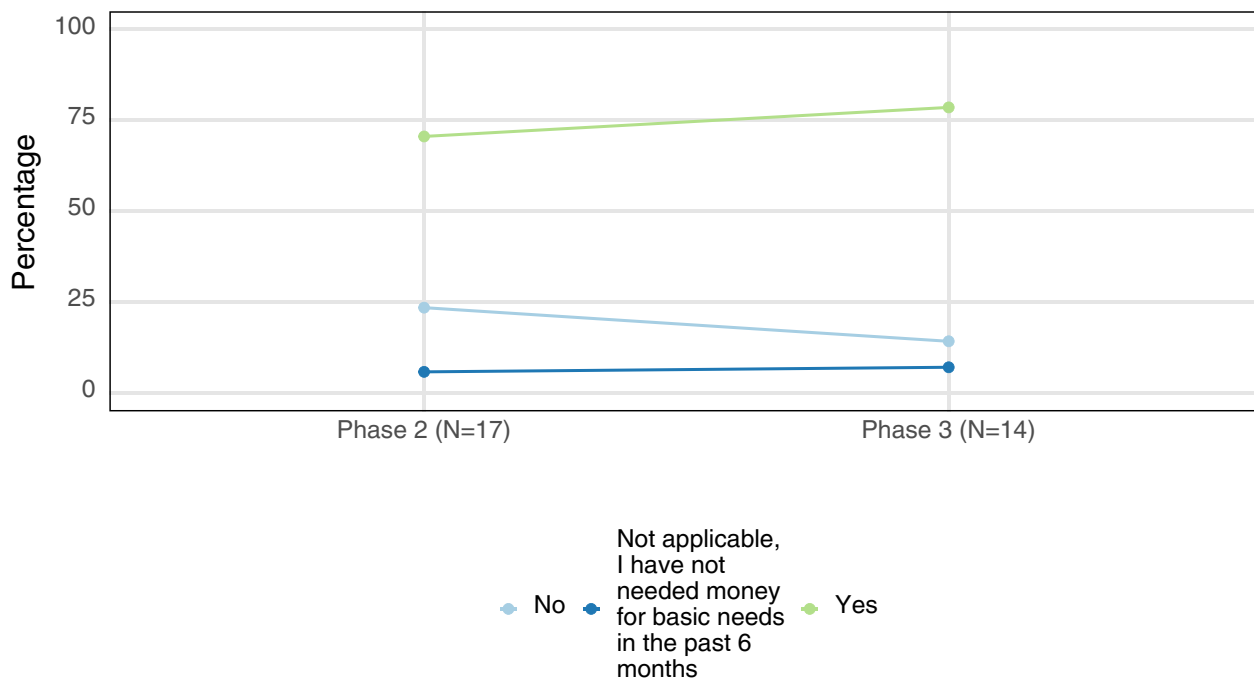
Mentees/participants (Continued)

Experiences with WAY

Overall, many mentees reported that WAY supported them and made them feel valued. At both phases 2 and 3, at least 75% of mentees said they received money or other support for their basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from WAY or an organization that WAY referred them to. Further, 100% of mentees at both phases 2 and 3 said they often felt that their mentor and WAY staff cared about them.

These results suggest that the WAY program and mentors effectively supported mentees socioemotionally and in material ways.

In the past 6 months, have you received money for your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred you to?**



**only asked in phases 2 and 3

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Table 1. Description of WAY mentees/participants

	Total, N = 40
Graduated or separated?*	
Custody pause	3 (7.5%)
Graduated	13 (32%)
Separated	3 (7.5%)
Still enrolled	21 (52%)
Age in years at enrollment	
Median (25 th and 75 th percentile)	17 (15, 17)
Sex	
Female	7 (18%)
Male	29 (72%)
Unknown	4 (10%)
Race and ethnicity	
American Indian and Alaska Native	2 (5%)
Hispanic and Latino/a/x	24 (60%)
Two or more	4 (10%)
White, non-Hispanic or Latino/a/x	6 (15%)
Unknown	4 (10%)
Incarcerated (expected to be incarcerated long term)*	
Yes	4 (10%)
No	36 (90%)

*As of June 2025

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Qualitative

Thematic Analysis of WAY Mentees' Experiences

The following section presents key themes that emerged from in-depth conversations with youth participating in the WAY program (n= 8). These themes reflect their lived experiences, challenges, and insights, as well as the impact of the program on their lives. Direct quotes are included to illustrate participants' perspectives in their own words.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 1: Dissonance of Experiences		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
This theme reflects a disconnect between youths' lived experiences and how others, such as the media, broader public, or individuals with different upbringings—understand or judge their realities. Youth described being misunderstood, especially by people who haven't experienced similar challenges. Several youth also discussed how media, especially online platforms, contribute to this gap in understanding. Youth feel their realities are misrepresented or simplified by outsiders, and that their actions are not always seen within the context of their environment.	"Some people don't really get all the chances they had early on, or they had good role models to look up to. So, they can't really judge, because they didn't grow up the same way. They already had whatever they wanted when they were kids." "You're on the internet, and you see videos—people think it's [gun violence] a game. Like, that stuff can't happen to them. But it can. People don't realize that. It can literally happen to you too, and you're just laughing at it."	• Youth feel misunderstood by outsiders who haven't shared their lived realities. • Media and public perceptions often distort or oversimplify their experiences. • This disconnect reinforces judgment and isolation, instead of empathy and support.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 2: Desensitization to Violence		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Youth described violence as a regular part of their environment, something seen and experienced so often that it had become normalized. This sense of routine exposure led many to express that violence no longer provoked a strong reaction, instead being accepted as part of everyday life. The phrase "it is what it is" came up frequently, signaling a resigned understanding of their circumstances rather than a dramatic or emotional response.	"I mean, it's been going on for years now. I grew up in that, so it's kind of something I got used to. I mean, you never get used to gun violence, but it's kind of something you got to live with especially here." "Just because... I'm not really good at changing my mind on something I'm already fully into. I don't think I'll ever stop doing this, but I think I'll definitely calm down...eventually I'll do something that gets me locked up again."	• Constant exposure to violence leads to emotional numbness and resignation. • Youth see violence and incarceration as normalized, expected parts of life. • While this mindset can make behavior change more difficult, for some youth it can serve as a tipping point prompting them to make the necessary changes to avoid serious consequences.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 3: Trying Not to Die		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
This theme describes how youth adopt a survival-oriented mindset rooted in the persistent threat to one's life and well-being due to unmet basic needs, lack of systemic support, and exposure to violence. When essential needs like safety, food, and stable housing are unmet their main goal becomes just staying alive. However, once those basic needs are addressed, youth can think about other goals—like education, jobs, or building healthier relationships—that help them move away from environments where violence, fear, and instability are the norm.	"I was worried about the rent. I was worried about how I'm gonna take care of this. I was worried about how I'm gonna pay for schooling. That program [WAY] took all those stresses away. They told me not to worry about it. They were gonna help me get into school, and that's what they did. They helped me get my GED now they're helping me go get my CDL license, and they just been helping me a lot, man... you know, I come from a dark place. These guys make me feel like I see light at the end of the tunnel."	• Survival takes priority when basic needs (housing, food, safety) go unmet. • Programs that meet those needs help youth shift from survival mode to future goals. • When stress is lifted, youth can focus on education, jobs, and personal growth.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 3: Trying Not to Die (Continued)		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	"I'm just always looking out. Always got my head around, my eyes over my shoulder. Better safe than sorry." "Well where I come from, lot of people try to get me. I don't want to get got. Just want to protect myself."	

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 4: Defining the Roots of Violence		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
This theme explores how youth come to understand what violence is, what it looks like, and what it means in their lives. Their views are shaped by personal experiences and the messages they receive from family, media, school, and their communities. These influences help form their beliefs about what kinds of behaviors are considered violent, when violence feels justified or normalized, and how it fits into everyday life.	"Been watching blood and gore since I was a kid. Anything that could be in the movie 300 to another... gangster films that they produced...I grew up watching all these movies... been influenced my whole life. So I've been seeing it on TV, and I grew up now I see it in my real life." "I was always getting abused, and I was always... growing up to fight because my anger issues and stuff started getting up so high. I always wanted to beat people up... I wanted to hate the world so much... that's how violence affected me when I started growing up more and more and more."	• Youth understand violence through personal experience, family, media, and community. • Many normalize or justify violence based on context or learned behavior. • Violence is seen not just as physical but also emotional, relational, and generational and deeply tied to cultural influences, including gang culture, which shapes the perceptions of many youth mentees.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 4: Defining the Roots of Violence		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	"My whole family is like, gang members, and I've seen and heard stories on why they did stuff. So I know... I have a feeling there's reasoning behind violence, but I do still think it's bad."	

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 5: Change Through Relationships		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Positive change often begins when youth feel connected to others who care about them. This theme reflects how strong, supportive relationships—with mentors, family, or trusted adults—can inspire youth to make better choices and work toward a different future. For some youth, recognizing support and learning how to accept help takes time, especially if they've grown up without consistent guidance or trust in adults.	There's a lot of opportunities here. Started a new journey. I started a new chapter in my life. Started new stuff. Family members are helping me out. I'm going to Bible study. Lots of things is helping with me, staying out of trouble." "That's how you guys move. If that makes sense. Like you guys want to help me, so it makes me want to help myself too, you know." "I just feel more comfortable with myself now, a little bit. Like I just, I just feel like I actually trust myself a little bit, you know, because before I didn't, I was like, I don't know what I could get into these days, but now I feel like I got this."	• Positive, consistent relationships inspire hope, self-worth, and behavior change. • Mentors, family, and supportive adults help youth feel seen and motivated. • Trust-building is essential for helping youth move away from harmful environments.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

Theme 6: Positive WAY Impact		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
This theme captures youths' direct reflections on their positive experiences with the WAY program. These quotes highlight the impact of the program's support, mentorship, and guidance on their lives. Whether it's feeling seen, gaining trust in adults, or finding motivation to change, these statements offer insight into how WAY helps individuals build hope, shift perspectives, and move away from cycles of violence.	"They've helped me in many ways, and they've helped me also accomplish a lot of goals in my life that I didn't ever think I was gonna be able to accomplish." "Everything's been going great since I've joined this program, everything's been uplifting in my life. I haven't had no stress. The WAY program told me they were gonna take away some of this stress. They did that. My life honestly has been a lot better since this program."	• WAY provides structure, stress relief, and real, tangible support (e.g., school, housing). • Youth report feeling more hopeful, emotionally stable, and goal-oriented. • The program helps break cycles of violence and isolation by offering purpose and connection.

RESULTS

Mentees/participants (Continued)

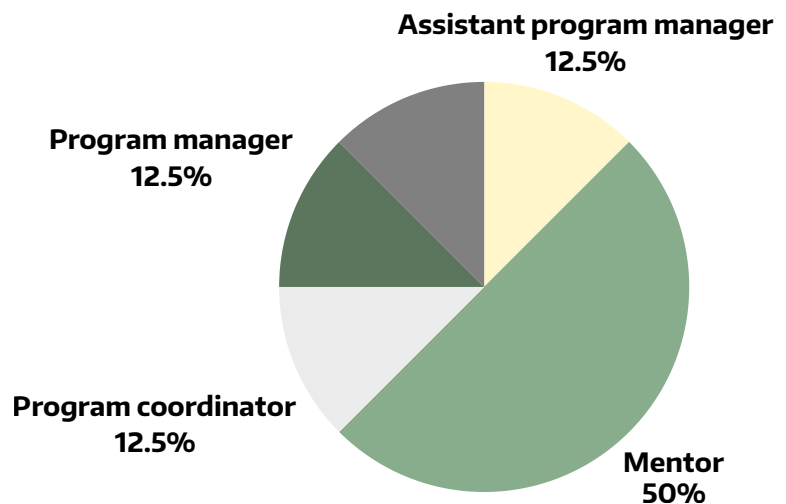
Theme 6: Positive WAY Impact		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	"I've seen big amounts of change in my life. I'm talking about change that I wouldn't have been able to do by myself. I needed this program to help me and push me in the right direction, because the route that I was going was not... it was not a pretty route." "Everything's been green since I joined this program. I have been feeling less stressed. I'm not so angry, no more. I don't feel hate when I wake up. Usually when I wake up, I'm mad and I hate the world. Now I wake up with a smile on my face. I feel better. I feel like I'm actually doing something. I feel like I belong somewhere."	

RESULTS

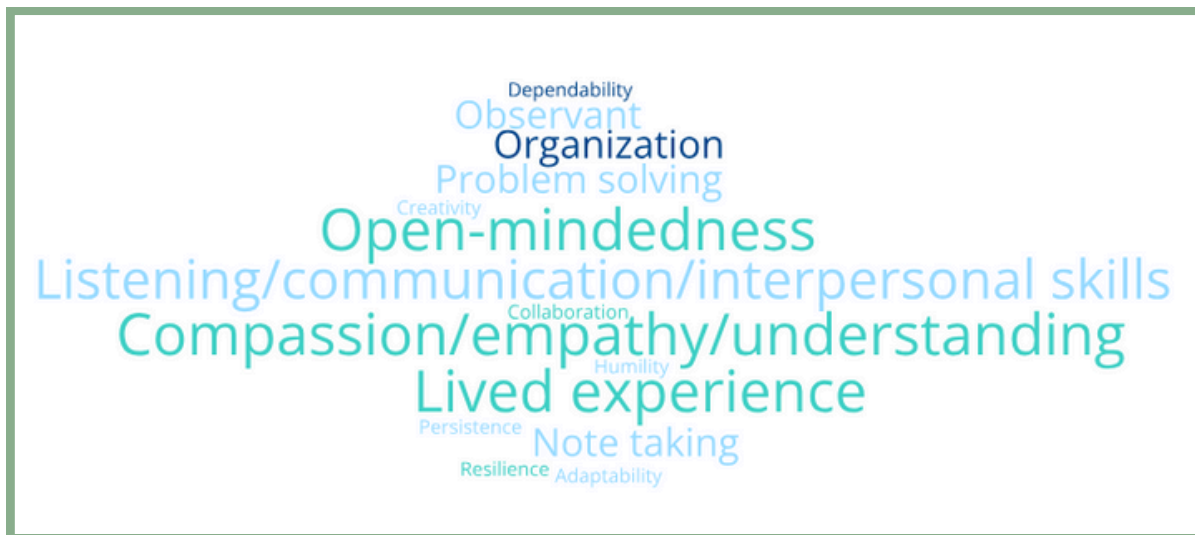
Mentors/staff

Quantitative

Of the 8 staff who completed the survey, 4 (50%) were mentors, and 1 (25%) each was an assistant program manager, program coordinator, program manager, and systems manager. About 25% had been in their current role for less than 1 year, 38% for 1-2 years, 25% for 3-5 years, and 12% for more than 5 years (Table 2). Half of the 8 staff members had 3 or more years of experience working in community violence intervention/prevention (regardless of role or organization).



Staff reported several qualities or skills someone in their role should have, including listening/communication, persistence, having relevant life experiences, problem-solving, dependability, and open-mindedness.



Word cloud showing responses to the question: "what are the most important **qualities** or **skills** someone in your role should have?"

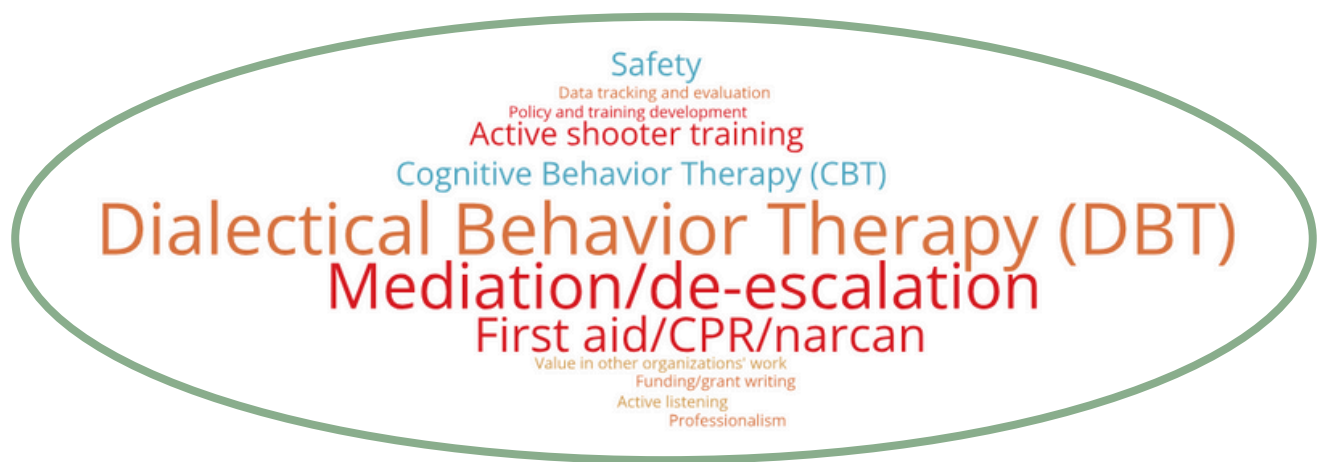
RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Staff also indicated various things that someone in their role should be trained on, including active listening, active shooter training, dialectical behavioral therapy, grant writing, mediation, use of Narcan/first aid/CPR, and policy development.

All staff indicated that they were trained on the top 3 things that they listed – except for policy development – suggesting an opportunity to further support staff.

*Word cloud showing responses to the question: “what are the top 3 things someone in your role should be **trained** on?”*



Additionally, all but one staff member said they had received support from WAY for their personal well-being and mental health, and all said that they have regular meetings with their supervisor. Further, all staff said they feel supported by other staff, that they have professional development opportunities, that they are respected, that they are making a difference in the lives of the people they work with, and that supervisors/management have the interests of staff at heart.

These results suggest mentor wellness and growth are prioritized at WAY along with mentee wellness and growth.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Table 2. WAY staff survey responses

	Total, N = 8
How long have you been in your current role?	
< 1 year	2 (25%)
1-2 years	3 (38%)
3-5 years	2 (25%)
More than 5 years	1 (12%)
How long have you worked in community violence intervention/ prevention (regardless of your role or organization)?	
< 1 year	1 (12%)
1-2 years	3 (38%)
3-5 years	2 (25%)
More than 5 years	2 (25%)
Have you received support from your organization for your personal wellbeing and mental health?	
Yes	7 (88%)
No	1 (12%)
If you have a supervisor, do you have regular meetings with your supervisor (either 1:1 or in a group)?	
Yes	8 (100%)
No	0 (0%)
Not applicable; I do not have a supervisor	0 (0%)
If you supervise others, do you have regular meetings with the people you supervise (either 1:1 or in a group)?	
Yes	2 (25%)
No	0 (0%)
Not applicable; I do not supervise anyone	6 (75%)
How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel supported by other staff within my organization (e.g., I have someone to go to for help or to ask questions).	
Strongly agree	8 (100%)
Agree	0 (0%)
Disagree	0 (0%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Table 2. WAY staff survey responses (Continued)

	Total, N = 8
How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I have professional development opportunities that will help me learn and grow within my organization.	
Strongly agree	4 (50%)
Agree	4 (50%)
Disagree	0 (%)
Strongly disagree	0 (%)
How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I am respected and appreciated within my organization.	
Strongly agree	5 (62%)
Agree	3 (38%)
Disagree	0 (0%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I'm making a difference in the lives of the people I work with.	
Strongly agree	7 (88%)
Agree	1 (12%)
Disagree	0 (0%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
How much do you agree with the following statement: Supervisors/management in my organization have the interests of staff at heart.	
Strongly agree	8 (100%)
Agree	0 (0%)
Disagree	0 (0%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Qualitative

Thematic Analysis of WAY Staff Members' Perspectives

This section highlights key themes from interviews with WAY staff members (n=8), offering insight into the impact of the program, the role of lived experience, and the challenges and successes of CVI work. Through thematic analysis, eleven themes emerged: (1) Lived Experience as a Bridge for Connection, (2) Commitment to Service, (3) Empowering Change by Meeting Basic Needs, (4) Personal Fulfillment through Shared Healing, (5) Navigating Risk in Complex Environments, (6) Working Against Systemic Barriers with Limited Resources, (7) Practical and Relational Training to Support Growth, (8) Sustaining Passion through Team Support and Balance, (9) Expanding Community Impact Through Shared Vision and Support, (10) Need for Early Intervention & Culturally Responsive Approaches, and (11) Community Support & Broader Impact. The tables that follow provide a detailed breakdown of each theme, including: a concise definition, illustrative quotes drawn directly from mentors' narratives, and key implications.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 1: Lived Experience as a Bridge for Connection		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors' lived experiences—particularly those involving personal adversity, such as gangs, substance use, violence, incarceration or systemic challenges—serve as a powerful foundation for building authentic connections with youth. These shared experiences help youth feel seen and understood. For mentors, their past challenges also become a source of purpose and motivation, as they use their stories not only to inspire change but to model what growth and transformation can look like.	"Those kinds of experiences build a connection...They don't look at you just as some adult [instead] they look like an adult that maybe has overcome some of the things that they are actually going [through]" "I think it's all about your lived experience...It's not something that you can just like, open up a textbook, read, and then, you know, be able to do your work. And also...the more that we open up or have these kids open up with us...it's easier to relate to these kids when you've gone through the same things that they have."	• Mentors lived experiences enhance trust, credibility, and connection with youth. • Staff draw motivation and purpose from overcoming personal adversity. • Consistent, relatable support builds strong, healing relationships with youth.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 1: Lived Experience as a Bridge for Connection (Continued)		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	"If they know that certain individuals that have been within the community, whether or not they were using substances, or they were participating in acts of violence, or they were stealing cars, or all the above... But if they actually physically see that person not in in a green suit or a gray suit or an orange suit, and they have a job, and they're actually lending a hand, you know, in a way of like actual support, and, like the person, comes to trust them much faster."	

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 2: Commitment to Service		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors expressed a desire to give back—to support the same communities they once harmed or were harmed by. This drive often stemmed from a sense of purpose and responsibility to help others navigate personal hardships and systemic adversity they themselves have also experienced.	“I want to help people out of a dilemma of the life I came from right. And so, I wanted to give back to my community versus take from my community.”	• Mentors feel a deep responsibility to give back to communities they were once disconnected from or harmed by. • Personal history with injustice strengthens their drive to support others and through this work, mentors often find a sense of redemption and healing.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 3: Empowering Change by Meeting Basic Needs		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors reflected on the importance of addressing basic needs—such as food, shelter, and emotional support—when empowering youth to make positive changes in their lives. By first ensuring youth feel safe, valued, and cared for, mentors create a foundation for growth and progress.	“You know, when you see a kid that hasn't had a haircut in, you know, 6 months... it's impactful to take them for that haircut and have them feel validated... You know all those things that they need just to feel human, the human needs that a human needs to have... I think you get so wrapped up in your own life you forget that there's kids out there that are couch surfing... That's been what's been so impactful to me and seeing that within my community and seeing those needs that need to be met has been huge.”	• Addressing food, shelter, and emotional safety is foundational to helping youth grow. • Even small steps forward are seen as major wins in youth progress.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 4: Personal Fulfillment through Shared Healing		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors emphasized how deeply rewarding this work is—not just for the youth, but for themselves and their communities. The work provides a sense of purpose and strengthens communal ties.	“The thing that really made me open up my eyes and showed me that I'm making a difference in these kids' life is the trust and the loyalty that they have with me...I've had some kids that have gone to some events that I've had for myself at my church. They've gone there to show their support and love towards me. They have opened up with very deep sensitive conversations with me about their life that not even their parents know so...that made me feel really good knowing that they feel very comfortable around me, and they feel safe.”	• Mentors gain emotional healing and meaning from youth relationships. • Feeling valued by youth strengthens mentors' sense of purpose and belonging.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 4: Personal Fulfillment through Shared Healing (Continued)		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	“Well, I mean, you hate to say that people put you in a box...But when you're a part of that lifestyle, you know you do the things that give you the accreditation that is going to keep you safe... so it really comes down to a position of survival and need when they're in that state... And then you have somebody who comes in with a little bit of insight...and you can see them for who they are. There's some walls that come down... And no matter who it is, we're not going to judge them...and even if they do slip up, we try to be there...and so truly building that relationship and making that connection, it's probably the most beautiful thing I've ever got to be a part of.”	

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 5: Navigating Risk in Complex Environments		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors operate in high-risk settings and have to carefully navigate personal safety and the safety of mentees. The emotional toll of working with youth in crisis and navigating family, gang, and court-related dynamics adds further complexity.	“We have to really make sure we take [mentees] in areas where there wouldn't be any oppositions or any risk of running into an opposite gang. So, we take these calculated decisions... we usually meet them in the community, whether it's a restaurant or, you know, a Starbucks where we could sit and talk or something and so we always have to make sure we're staying in an area where we're gonna be safe.”	• Mentors must make strategic decisions to ensure both their own and their mentee's physical and emotional safety—particularly in environments where the risk of assault or being shot is real. • Because mentors are often former gang members, they must navigate these spaces with heightened caution. • Operating in high-risk environments adds pressure and complexity to their work, making safety a constant priority.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 6: Working Against Systemic Barriers with Limited Resources		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors and programs often feel unsupported by larger systems and are forced to fill gaps with limited budgets, time, and infrastructure, especially when youth are transitioning out of their program or are turning 18.	The conversation around scalability versus sustainability is really important for us, because we are aware that if we were to expand, especially if we were to expand too quickly, then there would be a degradation of the services that we are able to provide." "Sometimes when they're not in your program and you do hand them off to somebody else...that community partner takes so long to like help the person with the resources when they need it...They have to do all this other stuff like there's so many hoops and loops that they have to jump through before they could even get the help. So that makes it a stressor for them. And so, what do we, as a mentality of the street, is like, man? I'm going to go back to what I know best."	• Limited funding and service gaps undermine long-term youth support. • Bureaucratic delays and age-based cutoffs hinder smooth transitions for youth.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 7: Practical and Relational Training to Support Growth		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors consistently found the training they received to be highly useful—both in strengthening their ability to connect with youth and in responding to real-life safety and crisis situations. Mentors also appreciated the program’s flexibility in offering ongoing and adaptive learning opportunities—including peer-led development and trainings tailored to staff and youth needs.	“I learn things. And then I’m like, okay, how can I dumb it down to where a youth could understand it? So one of the trainings that I went through was a credible messenger training. And so what I did with that was I learned it and then we facilitate in a different way. So what I grabbed was facilitation and grabbed mediation, and then I mixed them together and then grabbed DBT and CBT and then combined it all together [and I] called it Circle. And so we not only facilitate and show kids how to deescalate with CBT training, DBT training, but we’re also teaching as well.”	• Practical, flexible training improves youth engagement and crisis response. • Peer-led and adaptive learning opportunities are especially valued. • Staff are eager to grow professionally and see themselves as future trainers/leaders. • Lived experience is vital, and educational opportunities could deepen mentor impact.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 8: Sustaining Passion Through Team Support and Balance		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors are deeply committed to their work with youth, often pushing themselves to the limit due to their passion and sense of responsibility. A healthy work culture—marked by strong team collaboration, respectful communication, and understanding leadership—plays a crucial role in helping mentors sustain their energy and prioritize their own well-being. When mentors feel supported, they are better equipped to manage stress, navigate challenges, and maintain their long-term commitment to the work.	“She's [executive director] very understanding, very accommodating of self-care, and is very encouraging to us to take self-care days. But, on the other hand, we're just not good at doing it. We like what we do. We want to be at work. We tend to push ourselves, even if we shouldn't.” “I'm not on my own to make any of these decisions or figure out how to fix something...as a team we work together, we combine all of our ideas and find the best output.”	• Staff value self-care but struggle to prioritize it due to deep commitment to youth. • Supportive leadership encourages balance, though follow-through is inconsistent. • Strong team cohesion fosters collaboration, problem-solving, and emotional resilience. • Open, respectful communication prevents workplace toxicity and burnout.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 8: Sustaining Passion Through Team Support and Balance (Continued)		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
	"I've worked in some toxic workplaces where everybody's always arguing with each other, and nobody backs each other up, and it's your word against my word and that kind of thing doesn't happen here... of course, we have disagreements but just knowing that there's somebody behind me to support me and even if they don't agree with me, they're going to listen to what I have to say and they're gonna have a civil conversation with me about it. That's huge."	

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 9: Expanding Community Impact Through Shared Vision and Support		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Many mentors shared a collective vision for expanding the program's reach, impact, and infrastructure. They are motivated to help WAY grow its services into surrounding towns, include support for young adults and re-entry populations, and build stronger networks of community partnerships—grounded in a deep love for their city and desire to break cycles of incarceration and violence. However, mentors realize that this requires sustainable resources and consistent outreach.	"And so it's like, how can we work together as a program to help other programs like evolve... It's about the community around us like it's about our city. Do we really love our city? Do we really want to help the people that are in our city? And that's where I'm at. That's where my heart's at. It's to help our city, you know, and to give back to our community because you have generations to come." "If we could get essentially the hood connected in a way of where they're trusted with us in the sense that like instead of putting a gun in their little homies hand, they're giving them one of our cards."	• There's a shared vision to expand impact across communities and systems. • Stable funding is essential to maintain program quality, staff capacity, and services. • Trust-building and outreach—specifically with local gang members/leaders—are central to expansion efforts as gang leaders can refer younger members ("lil homies") to the WAY program.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 10: Need for Early Intervention & Culturally Responsive Approaches		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Mentors recognize that intervening earlier with youth is more effective. They also acknowledge the need to adapt their model based on cultural dynamics (e.g., gang culture, Hispanic communities) and real-time community feedback.	"As a team, we say the earlier we can get to them the better. And I think I tend to see that in our mentees as well, like usually when we can successfully intervene with the younger ones, we can get them on the straight and narrow a lot easier than the older ones, because the older ones are already so entrenched in that culture and that lifestyle." "He's [program manager] so familiar with gang culture and with Hispanic culture, and he is really good at identifying the ways that those things overlap...So, for us, being aware of the intersection of those 2 cultures is a huge part of our approach. And then we've kind of adjusted our model over time. Based on what we've observed has been working and what has not."	- Intervening earlier yields better outcomes and prevents deeper entrenchment in violence. - Tailored approaches based on cultural and community-specific realities improve results.

RESULTS

Mentors/staff (Continued)

Theme 11: Community Support & Broader Impact		
Definition	Quotes	Key Implications
Despite many community members not being familiar with WAY, there is a growing effort to safely connect with the community, ensuring mentors are not put at risk. Staff are aware of the wider societal impact of their work—especially around reducing violence and addressing unmet basic needs (e.g., housing, food, safety).	“I’ve talked to many other people from the community here in Yakima, and just about every person that we’ve ever talked to, they support what we do... And I actually had a kid not too long ago, actually, about 2 weeks ago that said, since he’s been in part of our program, he has felt less of a need to carry a gun.”	• While community members recognize and value the program’s role in reducing violence, many are still unfamiliar with the WAY program. Efforts to connect with the community must be carefully planned to ensure safety for both mentors and mentees, particularly in areas influenced by cartel activity. • Mentorship can shift youth away from carrying weapons, encouraging safer behaviors and alternative paths away from violence.

Summary & Implications

SUMMARY & KEY IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Results suggest many WAY mentees experienced difficulty meeting their basic needs at program enrollment and had high exposure to violence, suggesting WAY engaged a high-need population at elevated risk for violence involvement. Comparing responses over time revealed several positive changes among mentees. For example, mentees gained increasing access to resources, greater sense of belonging, and more positive role models—especially WAY mentors (who mentees said provided essential supports)—throughout their participation in the program. Likewise, there were decreases in some harmful coping strategies, drug use, gun carrying to school, and criminal conviction. Collectively, these results suggest meaningful progress. Other changes were nuanced (some decreasing and other fluctuating over time), which could reflect expected shifts and growth, while potentially shedding light on opportunities for additional support as youth take on new goals and responsibilities.

Youth interviews revealed that basic needs like safety, housing, and food must be met before deeper change is possible. Many youth described violence and instability as normalized, making trusted relationships—especially with mentors who share similar lived experiences—essential for building hope and shifting behavior. Staff perspectives highlight the value of lived experience, consistency, and cultural relevance in driving change. However, these factors likely require sustained investment and coordination to be effective.

SUMMARY & KEY IMPLICATIONS

Key implications

WAY's Investments in Basic Needs and Wraparound Services are Addressing Important Gaps Among Youth With High Levels of Need

- Addressing housing, food, safety, and educational access may be foundational to WAY's success in helping youth meet their goals and achieve positive behavior change. WAY should be supported to continue providing or coordinating these essential services.

Long-Term Mentorship & Sustainable Growth are Key.

- Results suggest WAY's focus on consistent, relationship-driven mentoring are critical to supporting youth. Individuals with direct experience in street or justice-involved systems are crucial to building trust and promoting transformation. WAY's three-phase model allows opportunity for growth and positive relationship building, with may realistically take time as youth transition away from prior groups/friends.

WAY Mentees are Making Positive Life Changes but May Need Additional Support Youth Managing Transitions and New Responsibilities

- WAY mentees showed positive changes, for example in terms of meeting their basic needs, getting long-term economic resources, and reducing drug use, some harmful coping strategies, gun violence involvement, and criminal conviction. However, results suggest that mentees may face uncertainties in navigating this growth and new responsibilities, pointing to opportunities to further support youth.

SUMMARY & KEY IMPLICATIONS

Key implications (Continued)

Strengthen System Coordination

- To expand its potential impact across Yakima, the WAY program should consider strengthening coordination with local systems, schools, and neighborhoods. By building trust through culturally grounded approaches, WAY offers credible alternatives to violence that resonate within the community.

Invest in Additional Professional Development Opportunities

- WAY staff bring invaluable lived experience and a strong desire to lead within their communities, yet continued growth in their roles is essential for maximizing their impact. Investments to ensure WAY has the resources to provide additional professional development opportunities will help ensure that staff can effectively engage youth, build trust, and foster long-term change.

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Appendix

APPENDIX

- **Summary of WAY activities**
- **Mentee quantitative survey questions**
- **Mentee qualitative interview questions**
- **Mentor quantitative survey questions**
- **Mentor qualitative interview questions**
- **Results of mentee quantitative survey data analysis**
- **Mentee qualitative codebook**

APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1. Summary of WAY activities

	Description
Overview	
Population served	Youth and young adults who are most vulnerable to being killed or incarcerated due to gun violence and gang activity in Yakima County
Program overview	The Walk About Yakima (WAY) program creates alternatives to incarceration for youth and young adults by rebuilding our communities through committed relationships centered on love, compassion, and consistency. The program is aimed at reducing gang-related gun violence in Yakima County by providing direct intervention to individuals. It integrates principles of restorative justice and community violence intervention, focusing on healing harm, fostering accountability, and addressing root causes of violence.
Theory of Change Activities	
Community engagement	Partnership and one-on-one engagements with law enforcement, juvenile court, probation, schools, and other community organizations doing similar work.
Case management	Individualized support via needs assessment, including referrals for housing, education, transportation, mental health, etc.
Stipend, direct financial support	Financial support for basic needs (food, clothing, etc.) as needed, incentives for mentee goal attainment

Note. table continues on the next page

APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1. Summary of WAY activities (Continued)

	Description
Employment, education, and life skill development	Individualized support including education, job readiness, life skills training
Cognitive behavioral interventions	Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and other therapeutic interventions
Conflict mediation, crisis intervention and response	De-escalation training, Restorative Circle meetings, nonviolent communication
Mentorship, relationship-building	Persistent 1:1 mentorship from trained mentors with lived experience; trust-building is foundational
Staff services, professional development	Professional development in trauma-informed care, DBT, NVC, suicide prevention training, first aid/CPR/Narcan, and other evidence-based models

APPENDIX

Mentee/participant quantitative survey questions

- Do you have, or can you apply for, any of the following?
 - SNAP benefits (food stamps)
 - Health insurance
 - Rental insurance
 - School enrollment (in-person or online)
- In the past 6 months, did you do any of the following because you didn't have enough money? Select all the apply.
 - You went hungry because you couldn't afford food
 - You or your family didn't pay their rent/mortgage in full
 - Your water or electricity was turned off because the bill wasn't paid
 - You lived at a shelter, in your car, couch surfed, or were unhoused
- What is your main source of income?
 - I have a job
 - A family member or friend supports me
 - I get government assistance
 - Other: _____
- What goals do you have for employment or educational? Select all the apply.
 - I want to have a job
 - I want to go to college
 - I want to complete a vocational or tech program
 - I want to get a certification or learn new skills
 - I want to start my own business
 - Other: _____
- Do you have the resources you need to achieve your education or employment goals?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure
- If you answered "No" or "I'm not sure" to the previous question, describe what resources you need:
- How true is this statement? I am making sure I have enough money for the future.
 - Very true
 - Kind of true
 - Not true at all
- In the past 6 months, how often were you able to save for a long-term goal, like a car or apartment?
 - Almost every month
 - One or two months
 - Not at all

APPENDIX

- Do you have the financial resources to achieve your long-term goals?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure
- Do you feel like you have control of your future?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure
- Choose the statement that feels most correct for you:
 - I have different options for my future. I can choose my own destiny.
 - I am stuck on one path. I couldn't change my future even if I wanted to.
- How often do you feel like you're stuck between two bad choices, and you are forced to pick one?
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- How do you deal with strong emotions? Select all that apply.
 - I ignore my feeling or bottle them up
 - I eat too much or too little
 - I use alcohol, marijuana, or drugs to cope
 - I lash out at other people
 - I self-harm
 - I procrastinate or avoid my responsibilities
 - I work too much or keep myself constantly busy
 - I criticize myself or have negative self-talk
 - I withdraw from social interactions
 - Other (please specify): _____
 - None of the above
- In the past 6 months, how often did you feel ...?
 - Satisfied with life
 - That you belonged to a community (like a social group, your city, your school)
 - That our society is becoming a better place for you and your peers
 - That you liked most parts of your personality
 - That you're good at managing your responsibilities
 - Confident to express your ideas and opinions
- In the past 6 months have you...?
 - Used drugs other than those required for medical reasons
 - Felt bad or guilty about your drug use

APPENDIX

- In the past 6 months have you...?
 - Pled guilty to charges, or been convicted of charges
 - Yes
 - No
 - Been incarcerated (spent time in juvie, jail, or prison)
 - Yes
 - No
 - Been on probation or parole
 - Yes
 - No
- How important is it for you to avoid incarceration in the future?
 - Very important
 - Kind of important
 - Not important at all
- In the past 6 months, has anyone close to you been incarcerated?
 - Yes
 - No
- How many positive role models do you feel you have in your life?
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-10
 - 10+
- Who are the positive role models?
 - WAY mentor
 - Parents or guardians
 - Siblings or other family
 - Teachers or other school staff
 - Community Leaders
 - Friends or peers
 - Family friends
 - I don't have any
 - Other: _____
- Is there an adult in your life who you feel comfortable asking for help?
 - Yes, very comfortable
 - Yes, kind of comfortable
 - No, there are no adults I feel comfortable asking for help
- Where can you go for help in your community?
 - School
 - Community groups
 - I'm not sure
 - I don't have any anywhere to go for help
 - Other: _____

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- In the past 6 months, have you received money for your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred to you? **
 - Yes
 - No
- In the past 6 months, have you received other support meeting your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred you to? **
 - Yes
 - No
- In the past 6 months, how often have you felt that your mentor and WAY staff care about you? **
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- In the past 6 months, how often have you felt unsafe due to gun violence? **
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- In the past 6 months, have you, or has anybody close to you, been impacted by gun violence? **
 - Yes
 - No
- In the past 6 months, how often have you seen pictures or conversations about guns on social media? **
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- In the past 6 months, have you seen somebody pull a gun on another person? Select all that apply. **
 - Yes, somebody pulled a gun on me
 - Yes, somebody pulled a gun on someone else
 - No
- Have you ever owned a gun? **
 - Yes
 - No
- If you wanted a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one? **
 - Very easy
 - Kind of easy
 - Not easy at all

APPENDIX

- How many times in the 6 months before you entered the WAY program did you feel the need to carry a gun?***
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-10
 - 10+
- How many times have you felt the need to carry a gun in the past 6 months?**
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-10
 - 10+
- How many times in the 6 months before you entered the WAY program did you feel the need to take a gun to school?***
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-10
 - 10+
 - I don't go to school
- How many times have you felt the need to take a gun to school in the past 6 months?**
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-10
 - 10+
 - I don't go to school

** only asked in phases 2 and 3

*** only asked in phase 2

APPENDIX

Mentee/participant qualitative interview questions

Safety and Gun Violence

- How do you feel about guns?
 - Why do you feel that way?
 - How do you think other people feel about guns?
- How do you feel about gun violence in your community?
 - Why do you feel that way?
 - How do you think other people feel about gun violence?
- How do you think most of your homies feel about guns and gun violence?

Behavioral Health and Coping Mechanisms

- How do you handle your feelings?
 - Tell us about a time when you handled your feelings in a healthy way.
 - Tell us about a time when you handled your feelings in an unhealthy way.
- What helps you manage your feelings?
 - (if needed can give examples): things like resources, people, new habits/skills

Freedom from Incarceration

- Are you worried about being locked up in the future?
 - If yes: Tell me more about what your worries are.
 - What steps are you taking to avoid going to jail or prison in the future?
 - If no: Why aren't you worried?

Positive Role Models

- Do you have positive role models that you trust in your life?
 - If yes: How have your positive role models influenced you?
 - If yes: What are some specific examples of how they have supported you?
 - If no: What does a positive role model look like to you?

Employment and Educational Goals (Mentors: you decide whether to ask about employment, education, or both, depending on how this mentee is progressing)

- What are your employment goals?
 - What inspired you to pursue your employment goals?
 - What steps have you taken toward your employment goals?
 - What gets in the way of you meeting your employment goals?
- What are your education goals?
 - What inspired you to pursue your education goals?
 - What steps have you taken toward your education goals?
 - What gets in the way of you meeting your education goals?

APPENDIX

Food and Housing Insecurity

- How has our program helped you in getting your food, housing, or utilities needs met?
 - Have you or your family had trouble paying for food or housing?
 - If yes: How did you deal with that?

Sense of Belonging and Life Satisfaction

- How would you describe your connection to the Yakima community?
 - If they feel connected: What kinds of things have made you feel connected?
 - If they feel disconnected: What kinds of things have made you feel disconnected?

Access to Community Assistance

- Can you share a time when you received help from a person or an organization?
 - How has getting help from a person or an organization affected you?
- What made you feel comfortable getting help?

Context Questions (youth/family, staff/organizational, community, and society)

- Can you describe a time at school where you witnessed a violent incident?
 - How did the teachers and staff respond to the incident?
 - How did this situation impact your view of violence?
- What school policies or practices have influenced your understanding of violence or safety?
- What do you think are some common beliefs about violence in your community?
 - How do these beliefs affect you and your peers?
- How do you see violence portrayed in movies, TV shows, or social media?
 - What have you seen on TV, movies, or social media that either “reinforce” or “challenge” people’s beliefs about violence?
- What kinds of experiences have you had in your own family that affect how you feel about violence?
 - How would you describe your family’s attitude about violence?
- How do you think adults (e.g., police, teachers, community leaders) could better support you and your friends?
- Can you describe a challenge that you have faced within your friend groups?
 - How did that challenge affect you and the people around you?
- How would your friends respond if you told them you owned a gun?
- How would your friends respond if you were in a fight?

Is there anything else that I haven’t covered that you would like to talk about?

APPENDIX

Mentor/staff quantitative survey questions

- What is your current role: _____
- How long have you been in your current role?
 - < 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - More than 5 years
- How long have you worked in community violence intervention/prevention (regardless of your role or organization)?
 - < 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - More than 5 years
- What are the most important qualities or skills someone in your role should have? _____
- What are the top 3 things someone in your role should be trained on?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- Have you received training in [a] as part of your current role?
 - No
 - Yes
- Have you received training in [b] as part of your current role?
 - No
 - Yes
- Have you received training in [c] as part of your current role?
 - No
 - Yes
- Have you received support from your organization for your personal wellbeing and mental health?
 - Yes
 - No
- If yes to #9, please describe the support you have received:
- If no to #9, please describe the support you want/need:
- If you have a supervisor, do you have regular meetings with your supervisor (either 1:1 or in a group)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, I do not have a supervisor

APPENDIX

- If you supervise others, do you have regular meetings with the people you supervise (either 1:1 or in a group)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, I do not supervise staff
- How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel supported by other staff within my organization (e.g., I have someone to go to for help or to ask questions).
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I have professional development opportunities that will help me learn and grow within my organization.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I am respected and appreciated within my organization.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- How much do you agree with the following statement: I feel like I'm making a difference in the lives of the people I work with.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- How much do you agree with the following statement: supervisors in my organization have the interests of staff at heart.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

APPENDIX

Mentor/staff qualitative interview questions

- Please describe your main responsibilities and how they relate to the work you do in community violence intervention/prevention.
- What motivated you to work in community violence intervention/prevention?
 - Probe: What types of things (i.e. political climate, personal experiences) affect your motivation and engagement at work?
- *How do you feel about your relationship with youth and families?
 - Probe: Do you feel that your team/organization makes it easy for you to foster relationships with youth and family?
 - If yes, what do you feel has been most effective in fostering trust and engagement?
 - If not, what changes or support would help make this process easier or more effective?
- What do you feel has been the most impactful part of your work?
- What have been some key experiences or challenges you've faced in your role during this time?
- What kind of training have you received and how has it influenced your work?
- How do you take care of yourself and your well-being in your role?
 - Probe: In what ways could your organization better support your mental health and wellbeing?
- What kind of support do you receive from your team/organization that has helped you in your role?
 - Probe: Can you describe any situations where you felt staff interests were not prioritized?
 - Probe: How does the support or guidance you receive (or lack of) in your role affect your ability to do your work and contribute to your team's success?
- What types of professional development opportunities have been most beneficial to you?
 - What other types of support or resources do you feel would help improve your effectiveness in your role?

*Direct service staff only

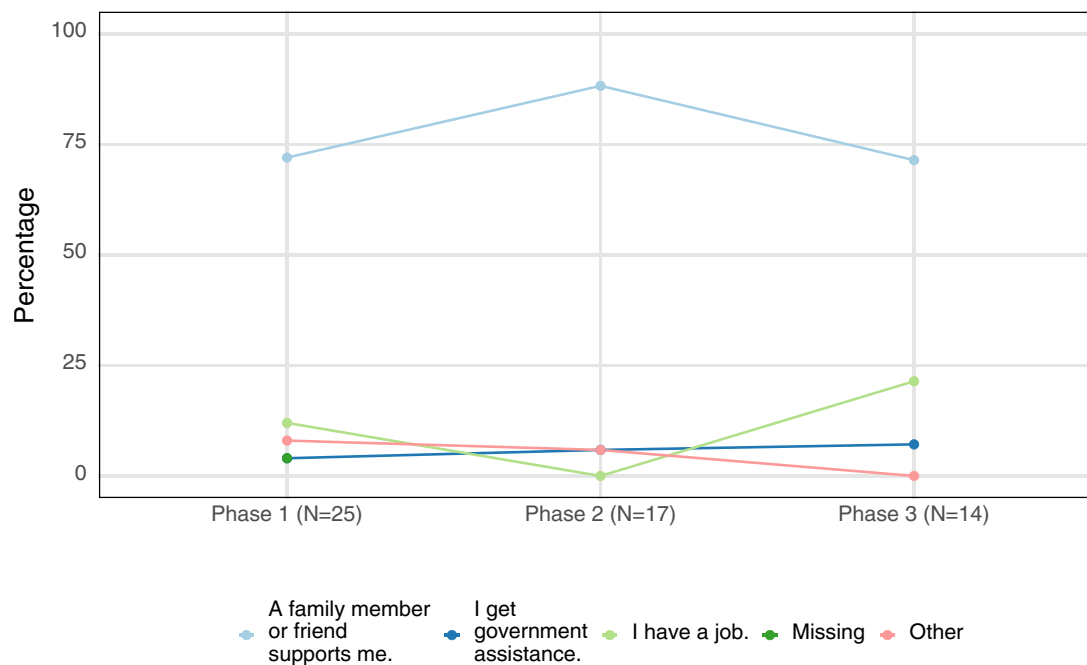
APPENDIX

Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

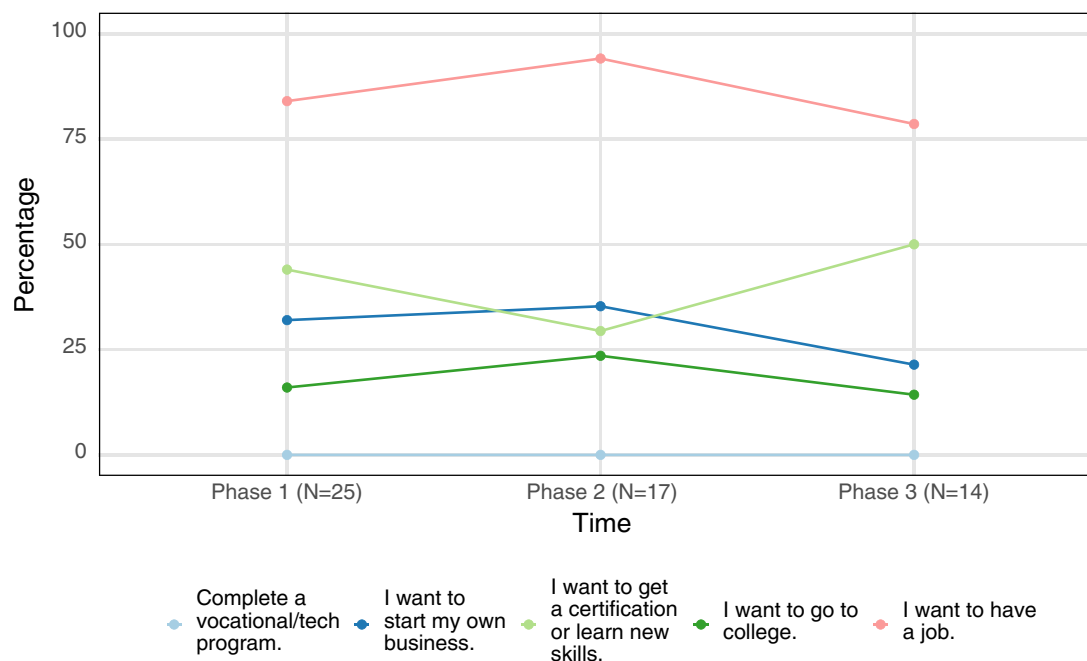
Average change among all participants

Economic resources, employment and education advancement

What is your main source of income?



What goals do you have for employment or education?



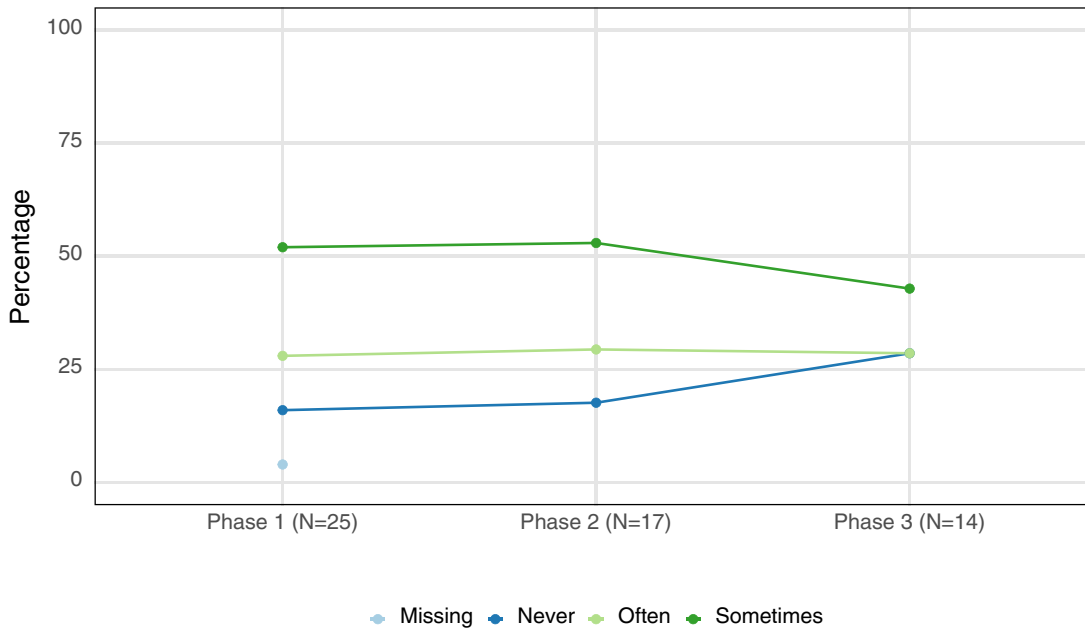
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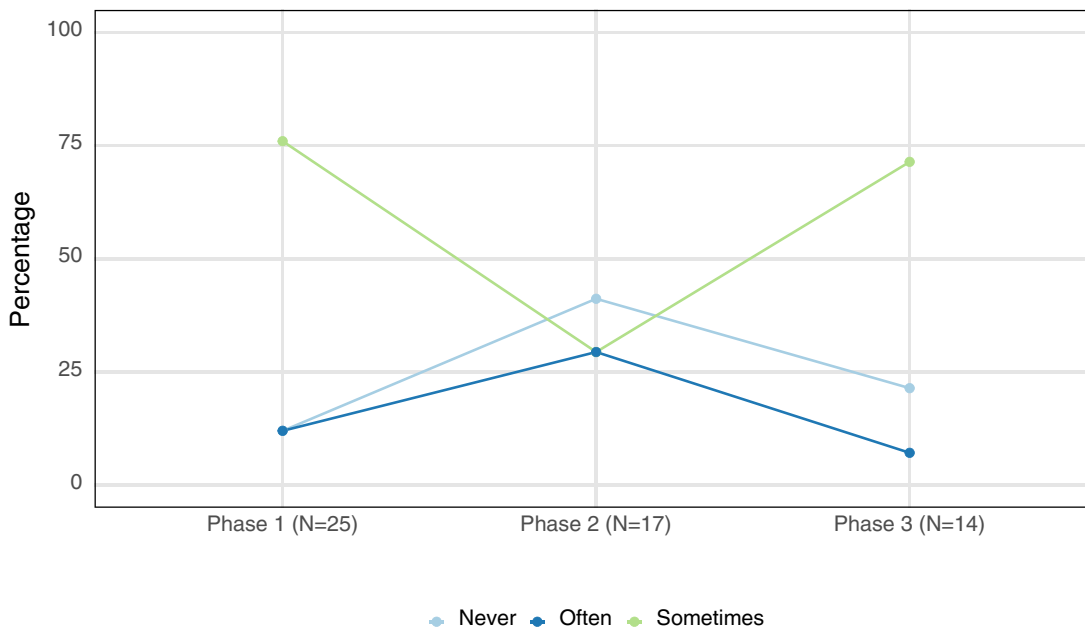
Average change among all participants

Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel satisfied with life?



In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that society is becoming a better place for you and your peers?



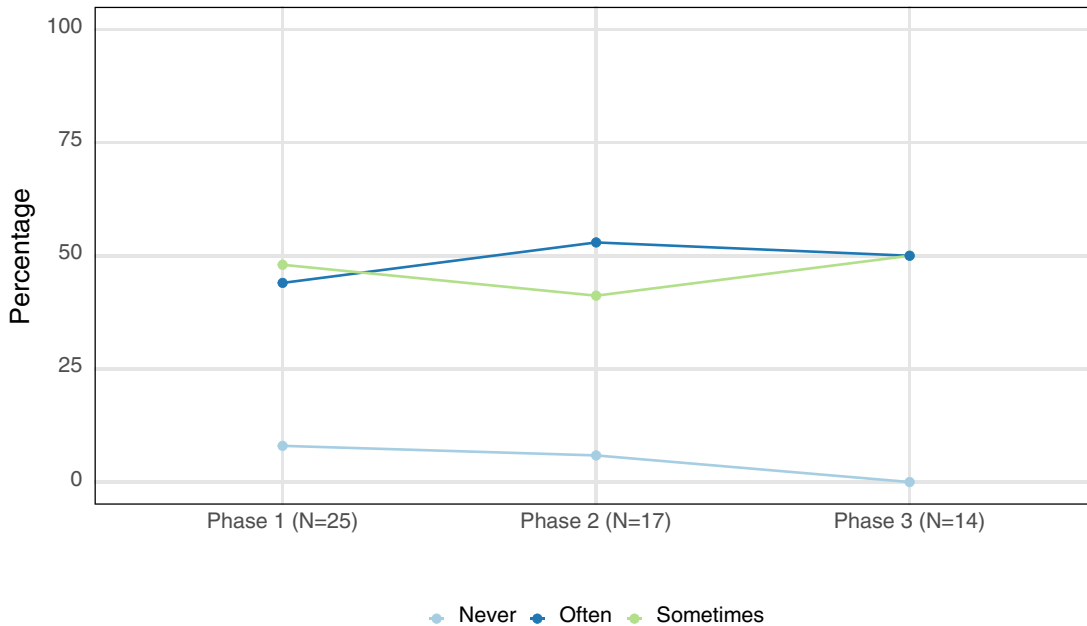
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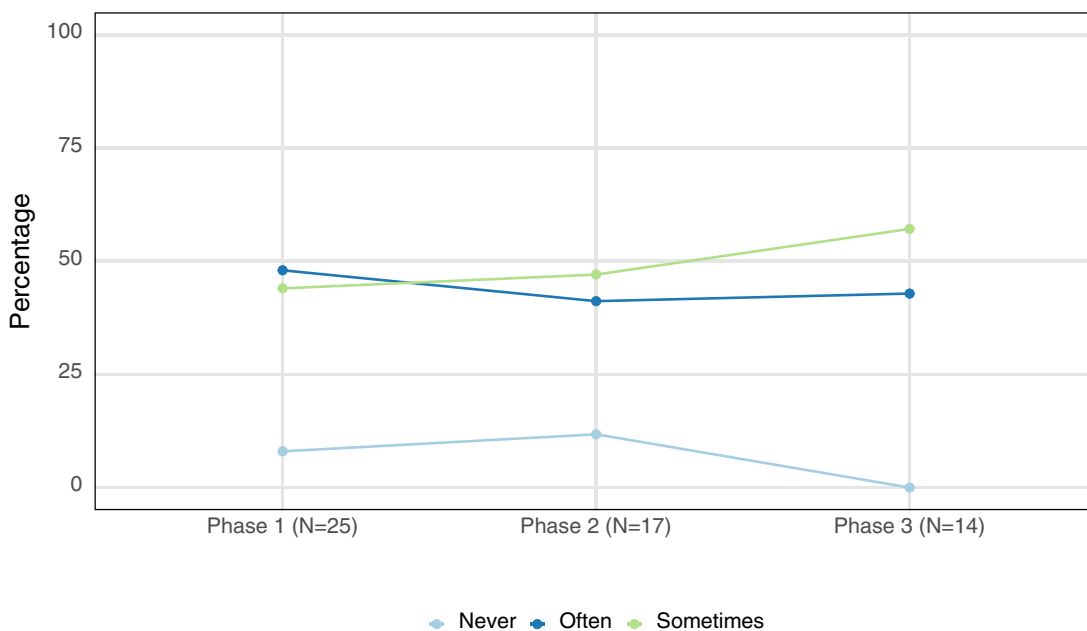
Average change among all participants

Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you liked most parts of your personality?



In the past 6 months, how often did you feel confident to express your ideas and opinions?



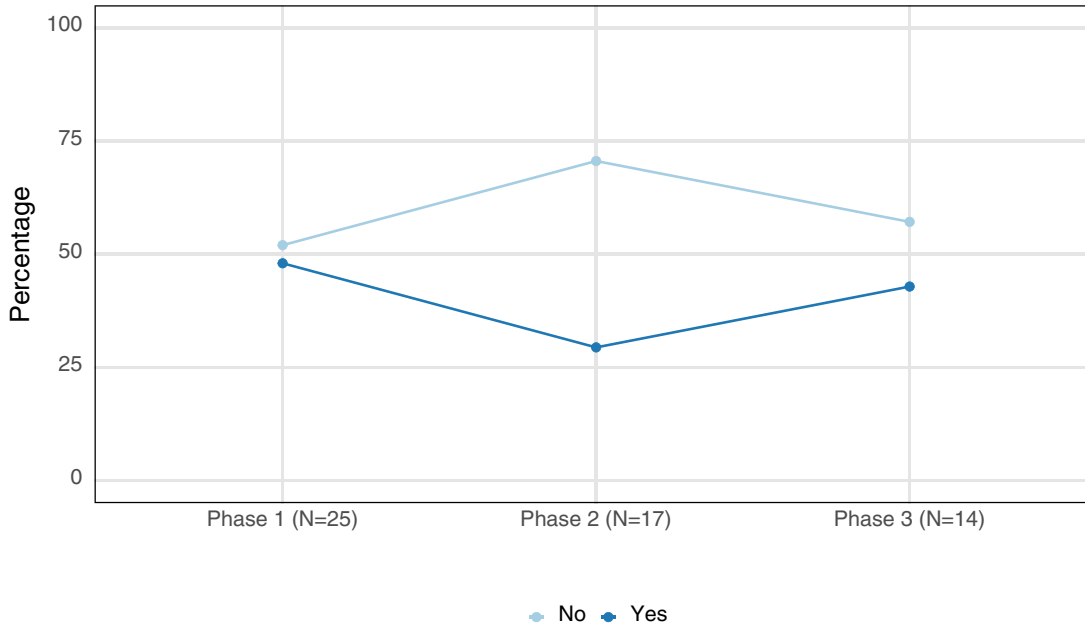
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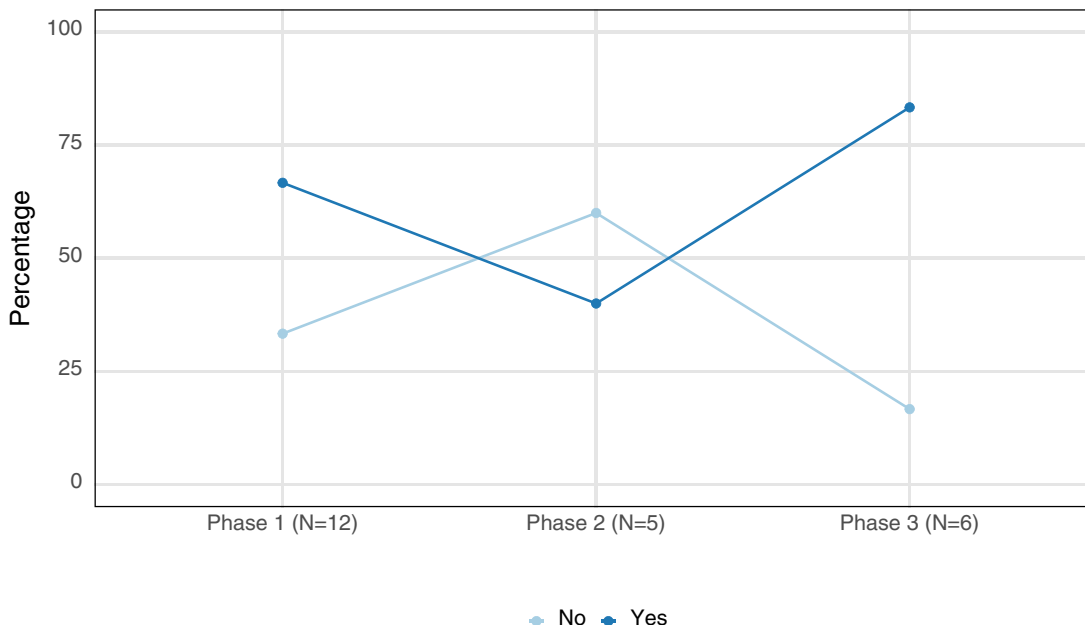
Average change among all participants

Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, have you used drugs other than prescription medication?



In the past 6 months, have you felt bad or guilty about your drug use?



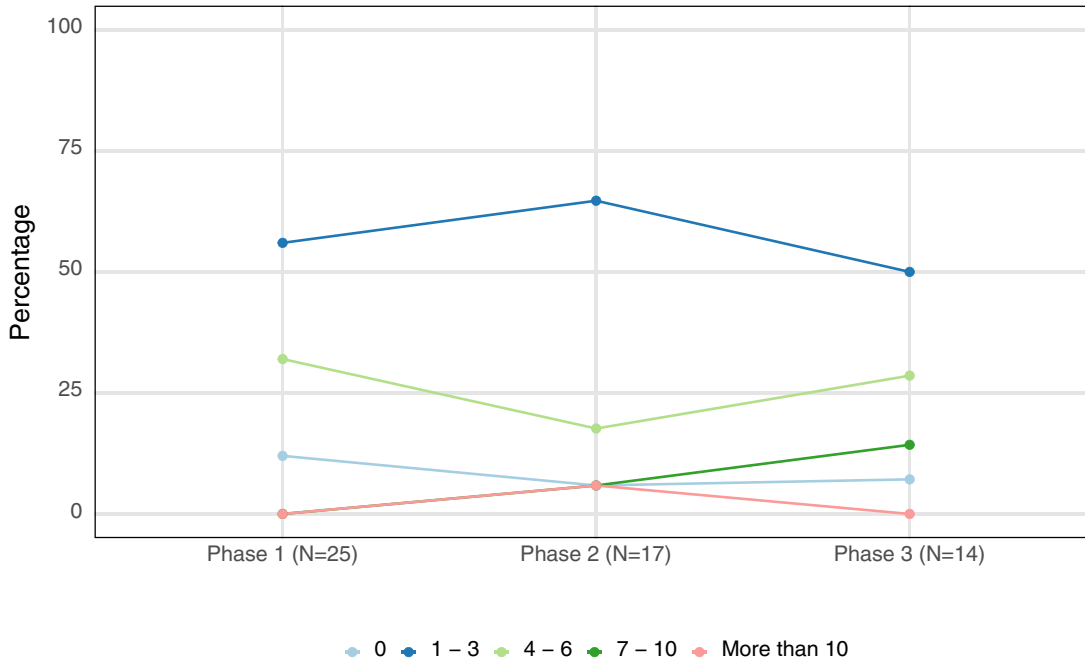
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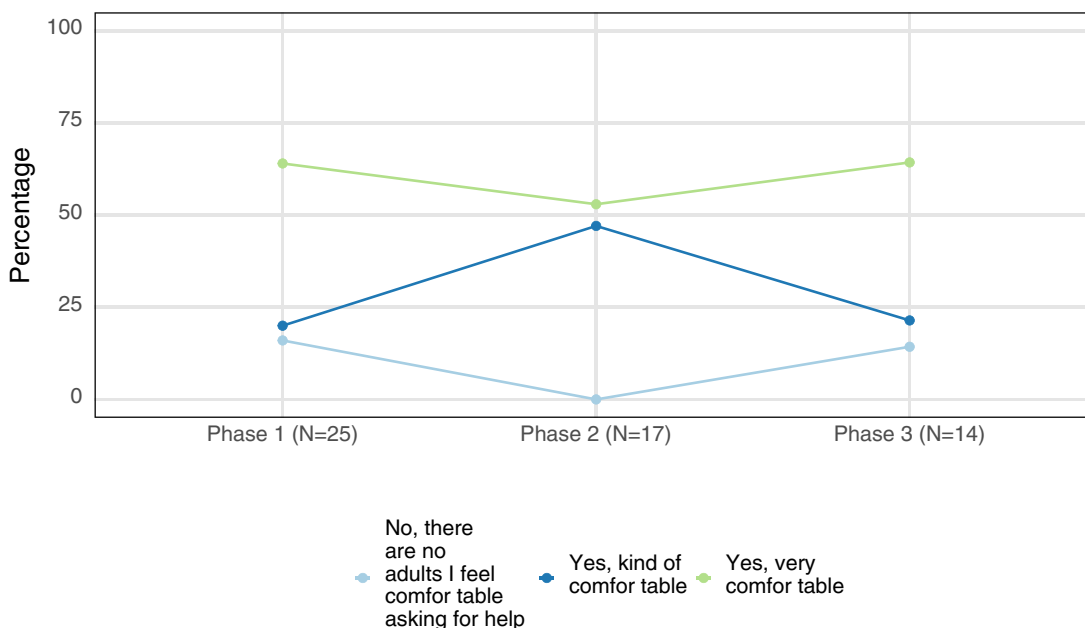
Average change among all participants

Connection, positive role models, supportive relationships

How many positive role models do you have in your life?



Is there an adult in your life who you feel comfortable asking for help?



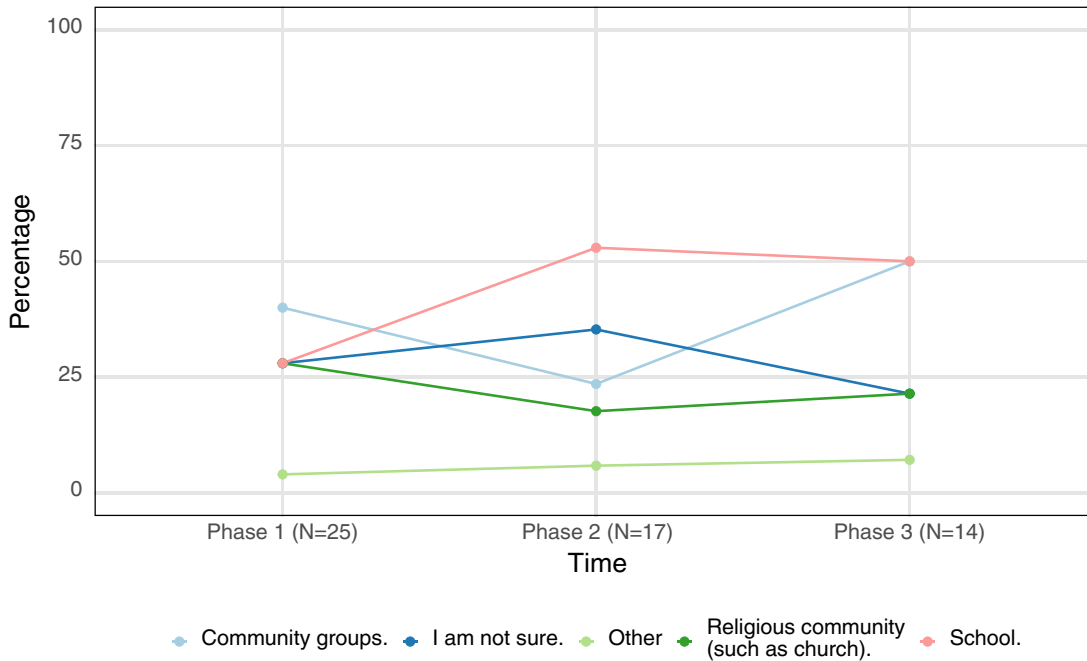
APPENDIX

Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among all participants

Connection, positive role models, supportive relationships

Where can you go for help in your community?



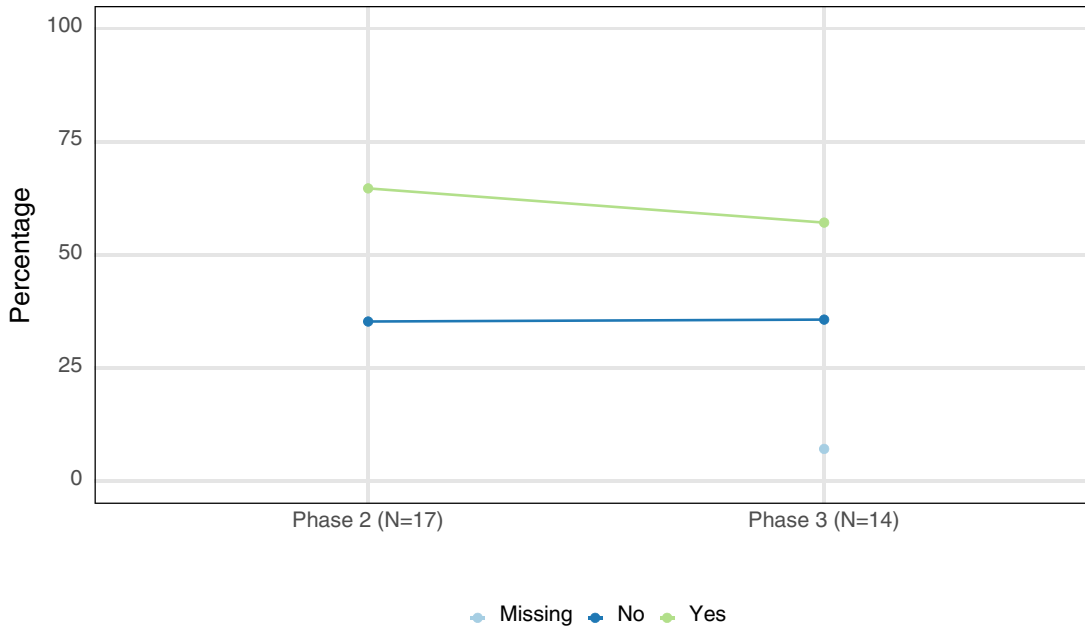
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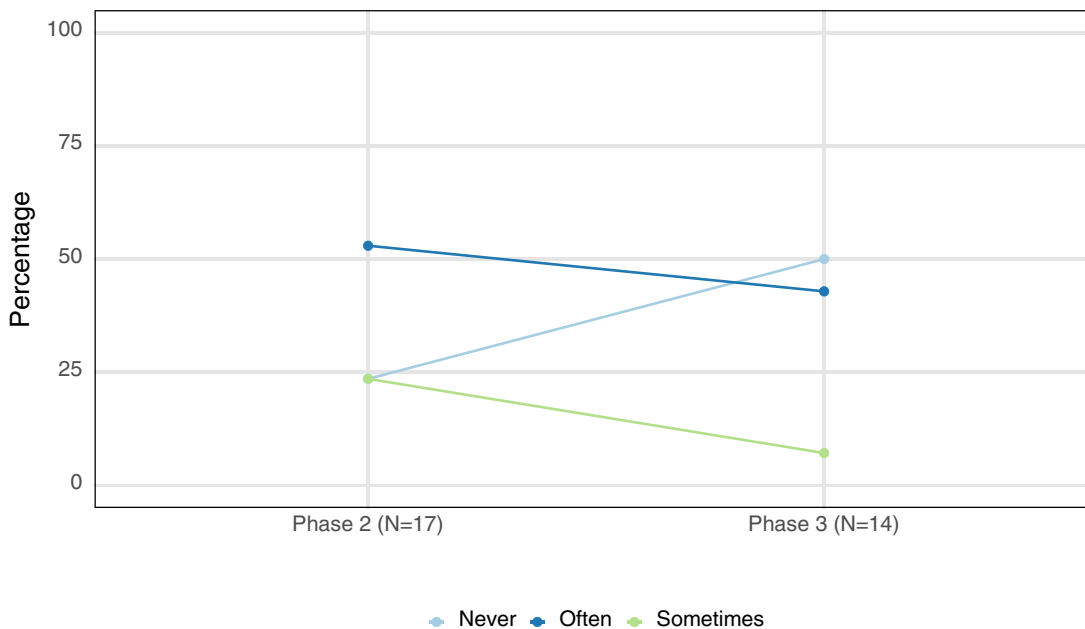
Average change among all participants

Safety, including from gun violence

In the past 6 months, have you, or has anybody close to you, been impacted by gun violence?**



In the past 6 months, how often have you seen pictures or conversations about guns on social media?**



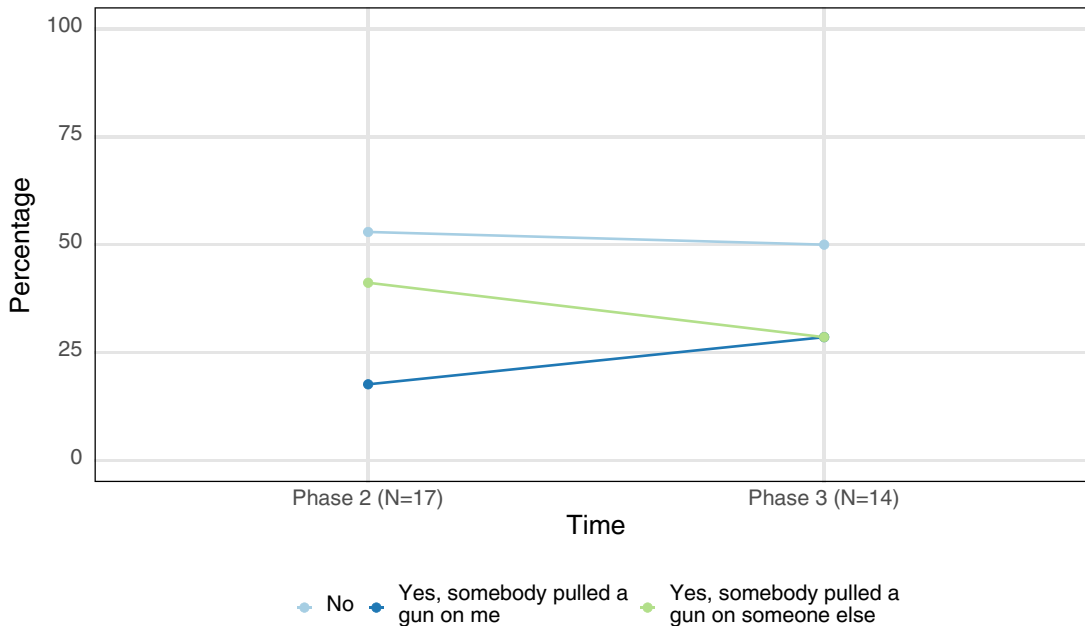
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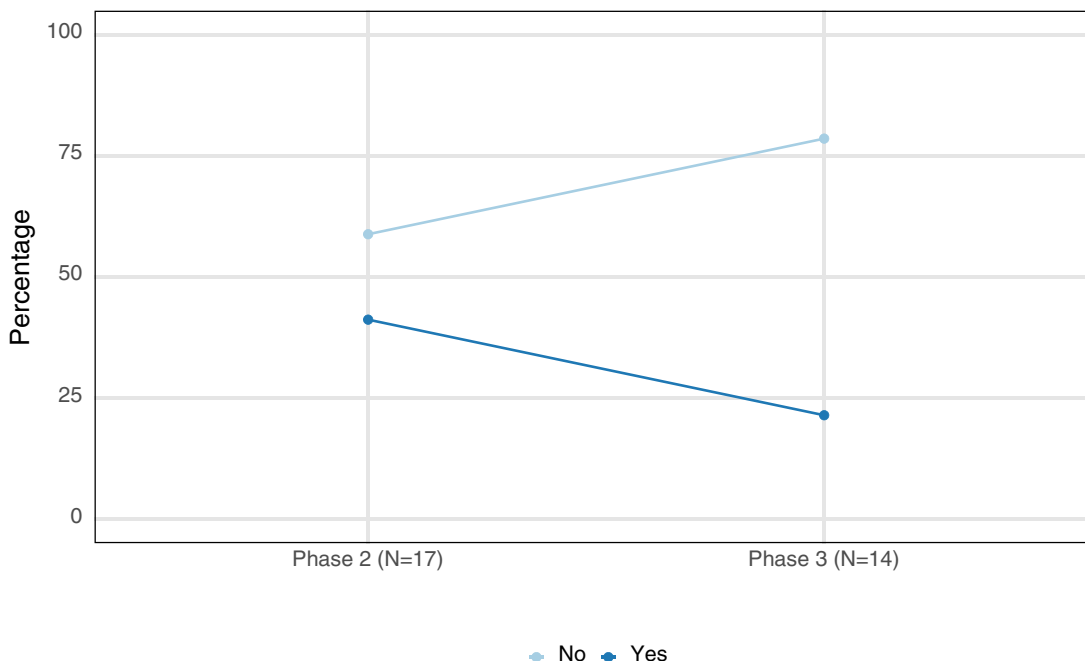
Average change among all participants

Safety, including from gun violence

In the past 6 months, have you seen somebody pull a gun on another person?**



Have you ever owned a gun?**



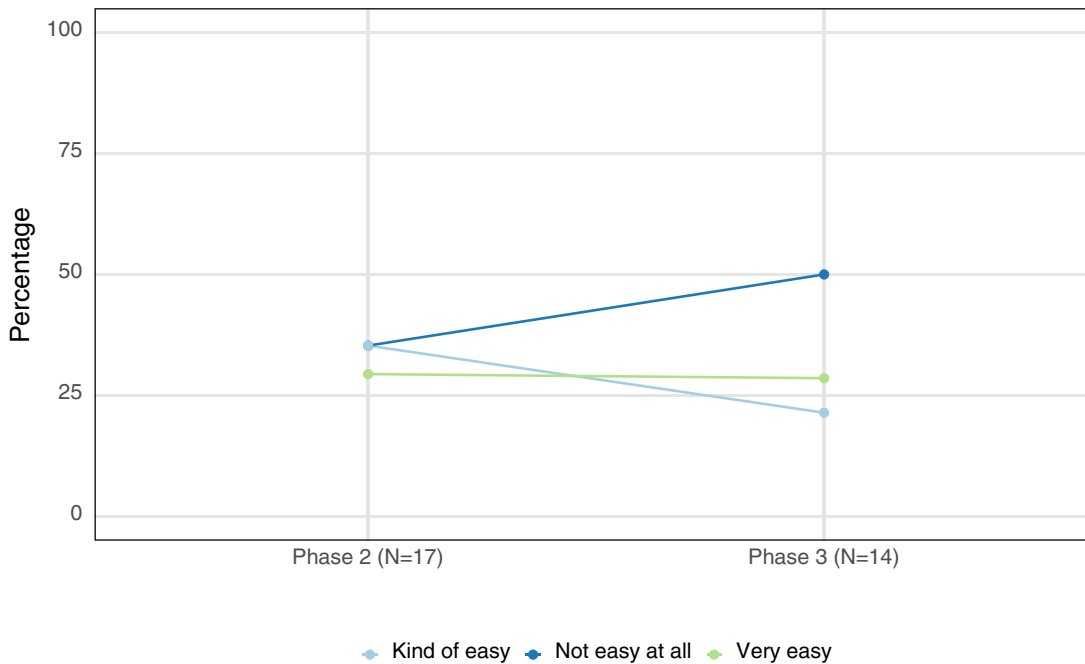
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Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

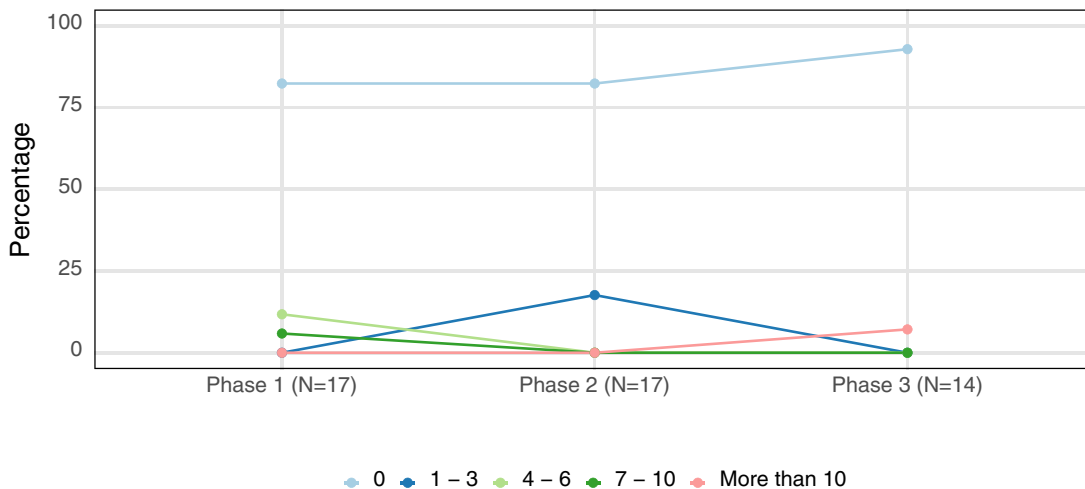
Average change among all participants

Safety, including from gun violence

If you wanted a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?*



How many times have you felt the need to take a gun to school in the 6 months before you entered the WAY program and in the past 6 months?*



In phase 2, mentees were asked both about the 6 months before entered the WAY program (which we recoded as phase 1 to show change over time) and the past 6 months (which we kept coded as phase 2).

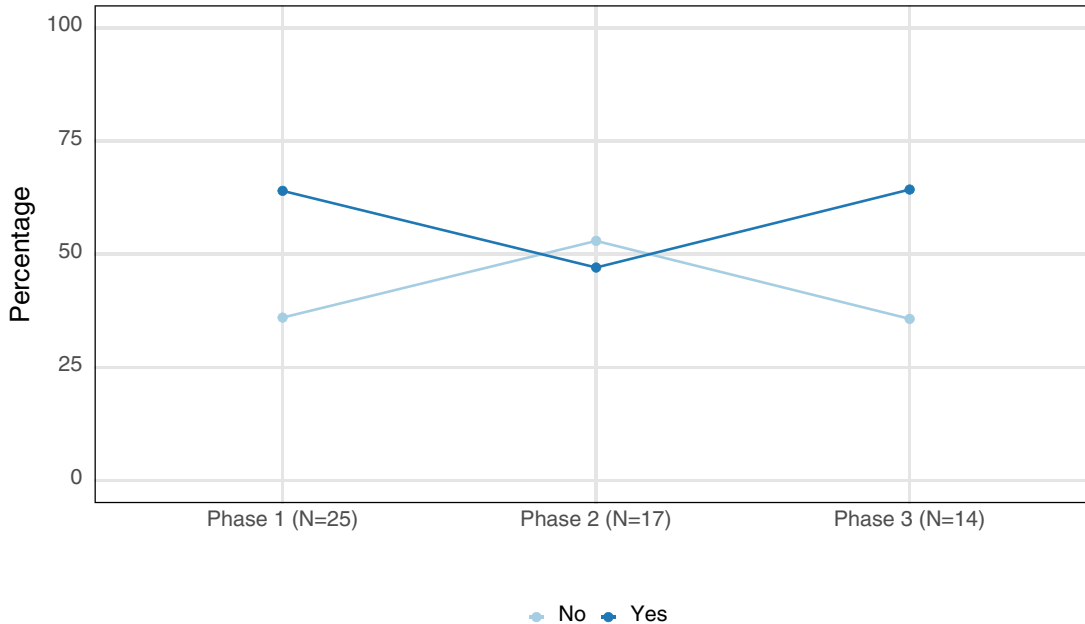
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Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

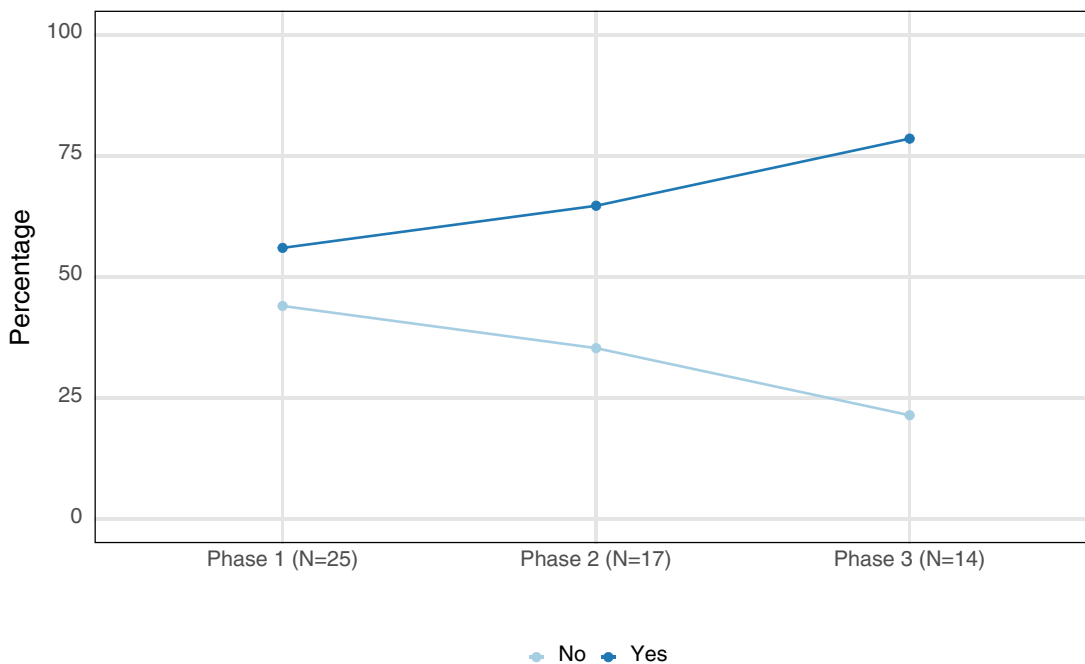
Average change among all participants

Freedom from incarceration

In the past 6 months have you been incarcerated (spent time in juvie, jail, or prison)?



In the past 6 months have you been on probation or parole?



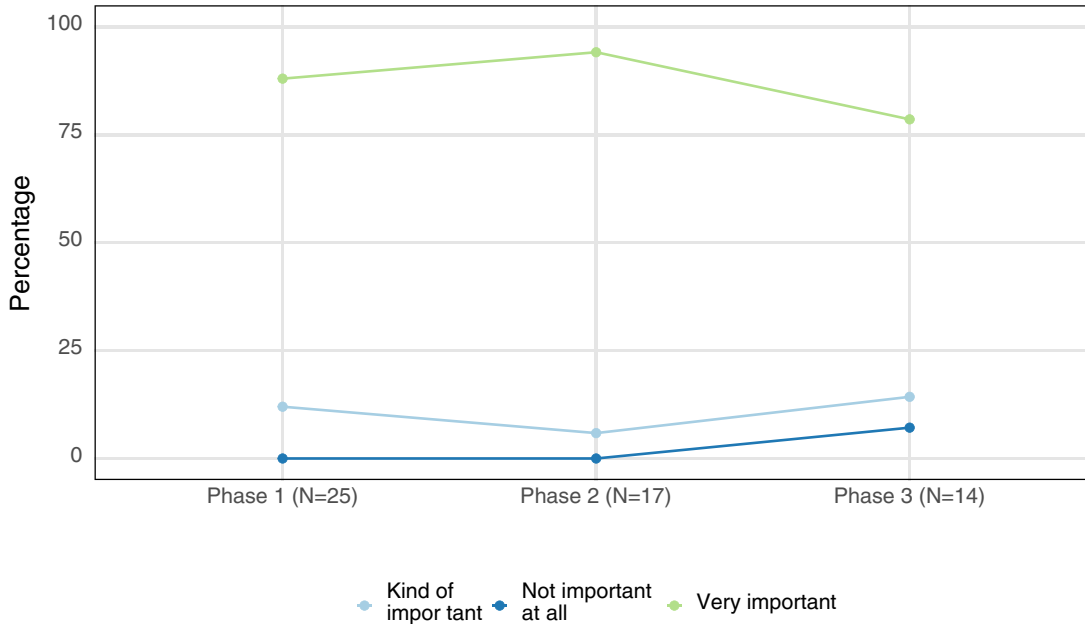
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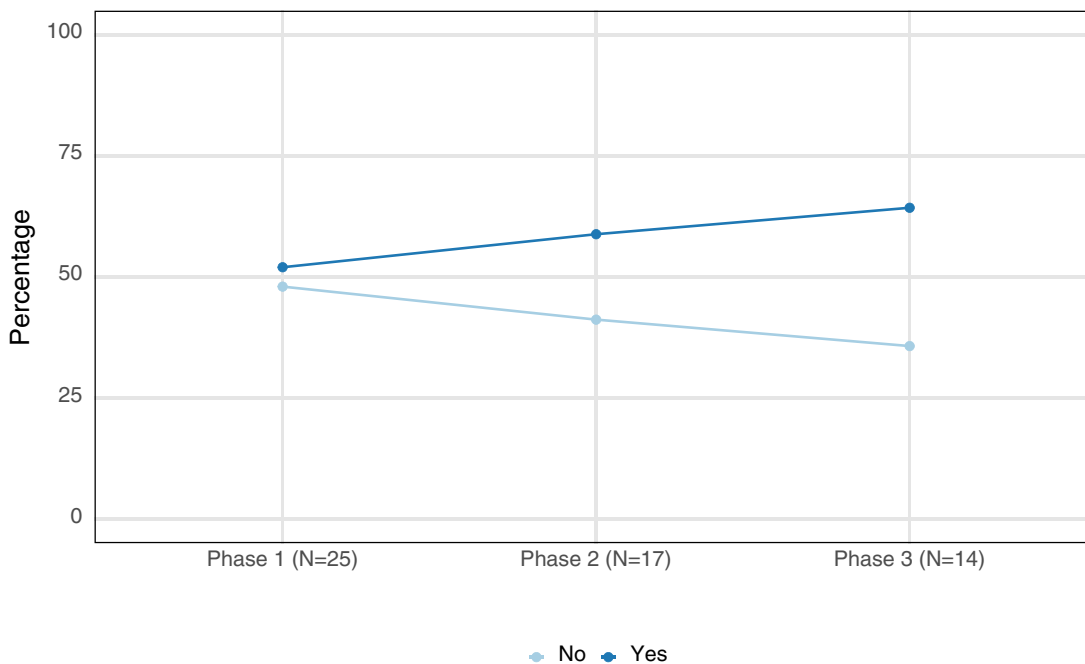
Average change among all participants

Freedom from incarceration

How important is it for you to avoid incarceration in the future?



In the past 6 months, has anyone close to you been incarcerated?



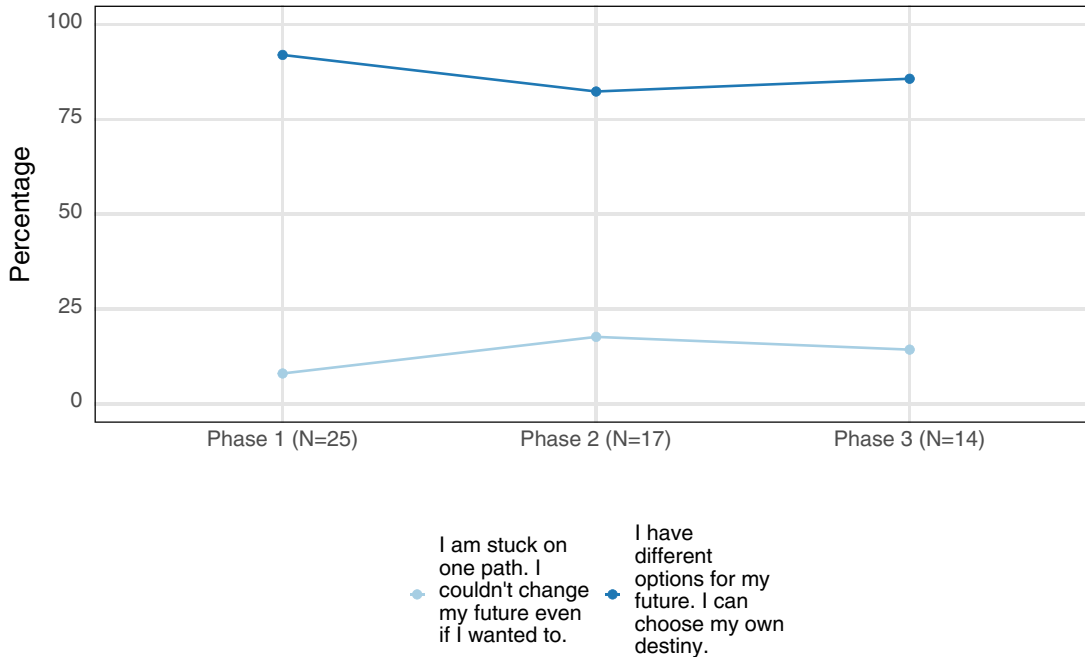
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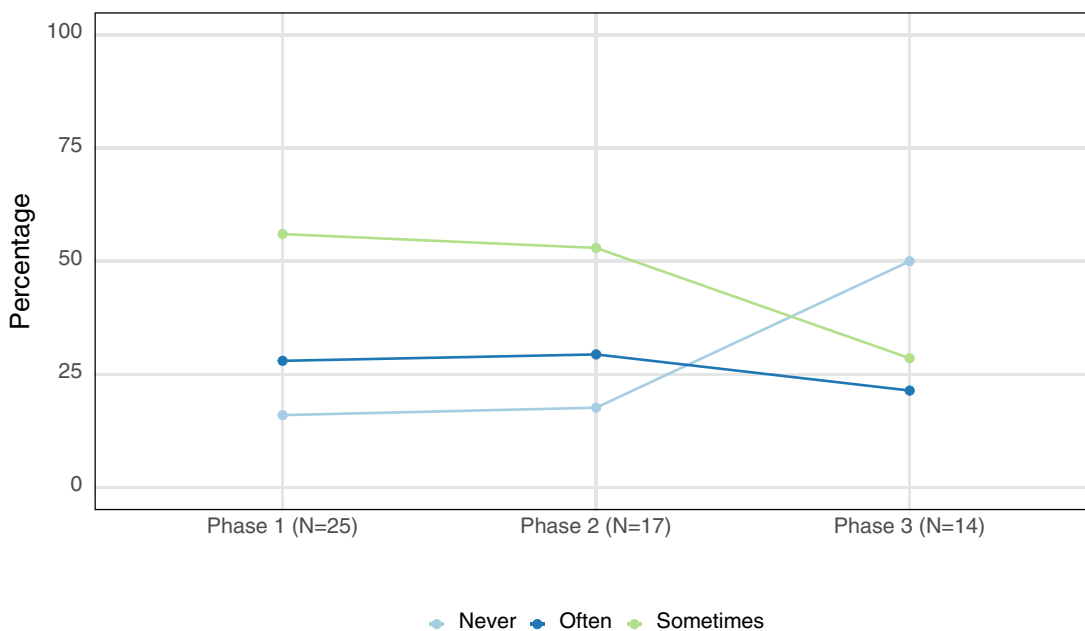
Average change among all participants

Self-determination

Choose the statement that feels most correct for you:



How often do you feel like you're stuck between two bad choices, and you are forced to pick one?



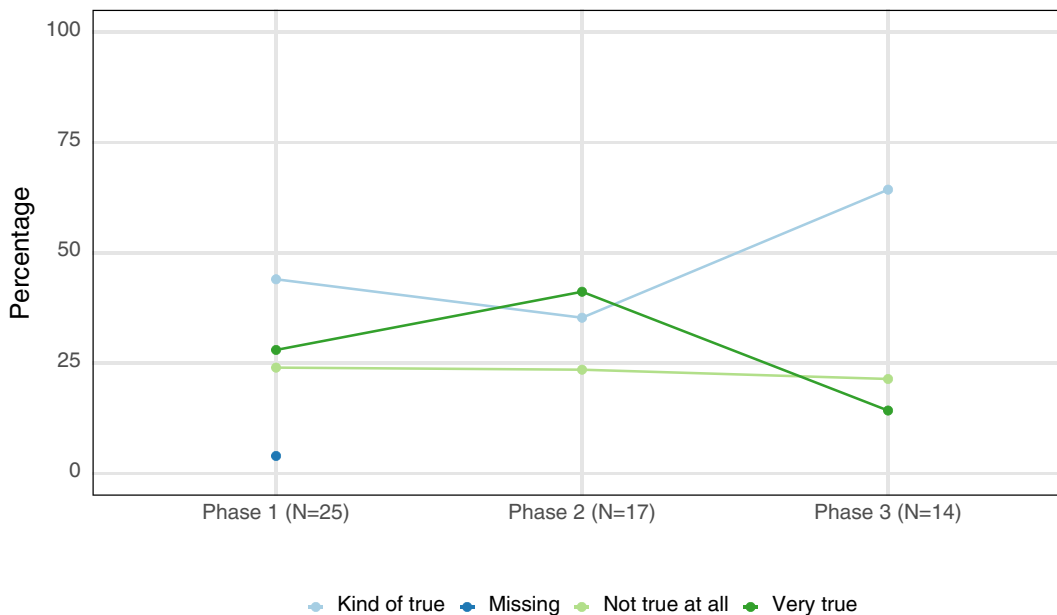
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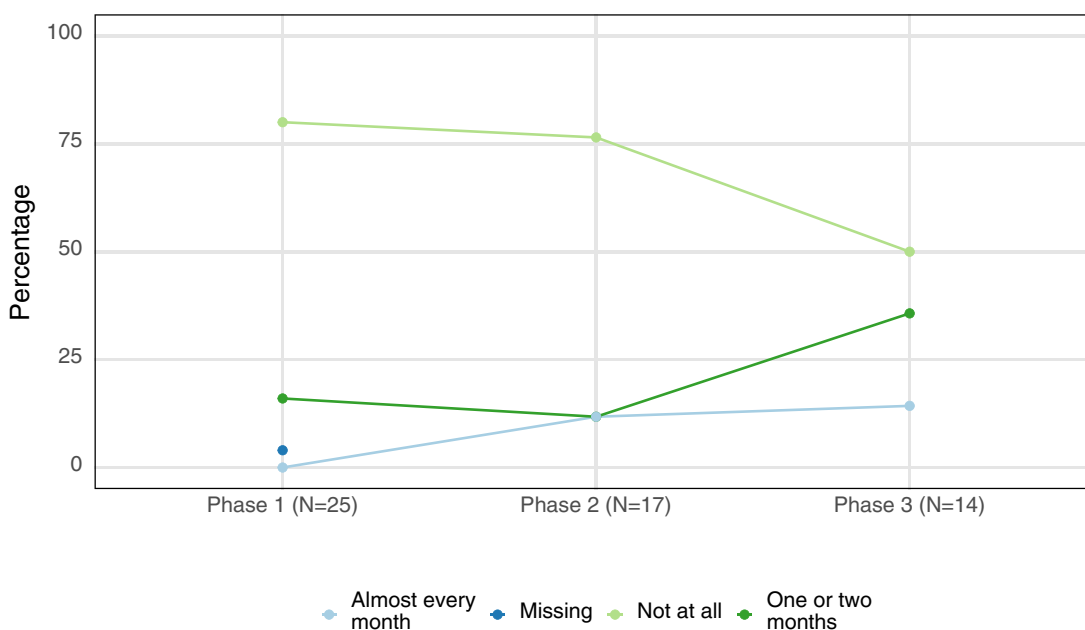
Average change among all participants

Economic stability

How true is this statement? I am making sure I have enough money for the future.



In the past 6 months, how often were you able to save for a long-term goal, like a car or apartment?



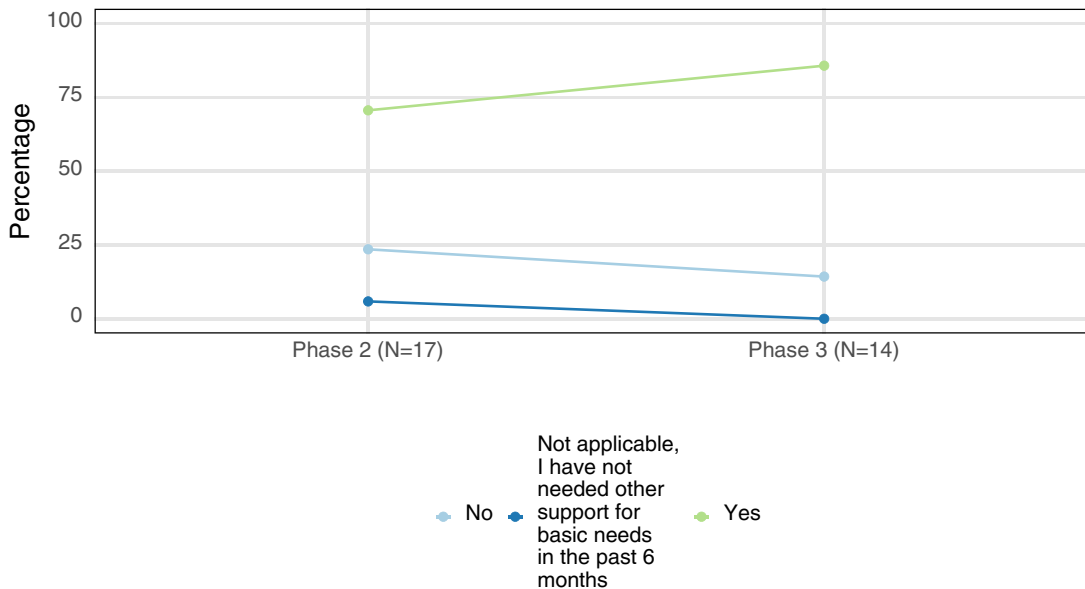
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Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

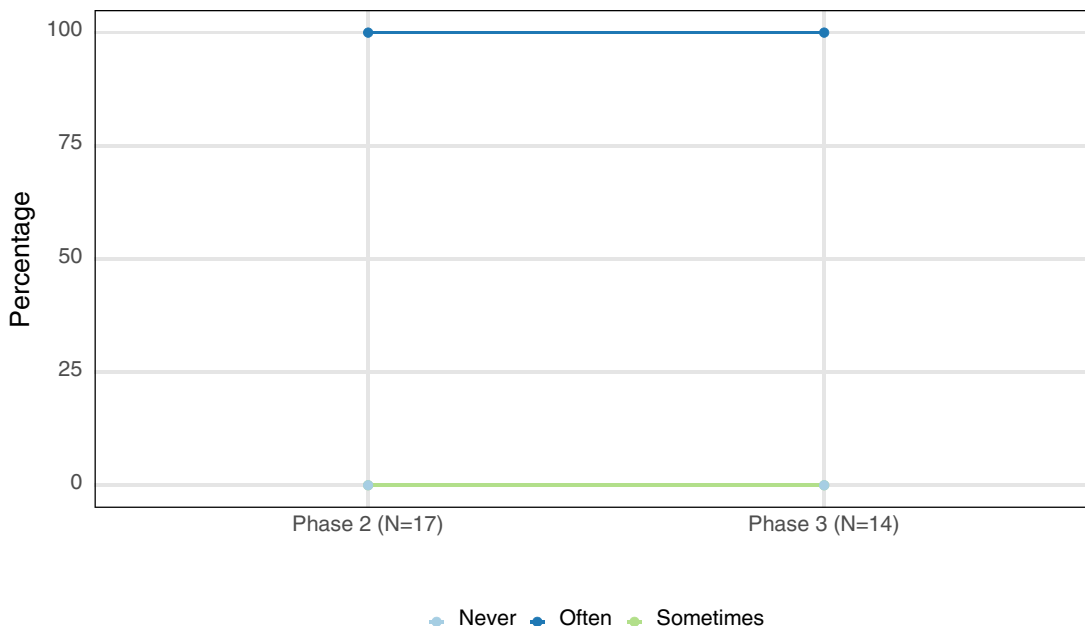
Average change among all participants

Experiences with WAY

In the past 6 months, have you received other support for your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred you to?**



In the past 6 months, how often have you felt that your mentor and WAY staff care about you?**



APPENDIX

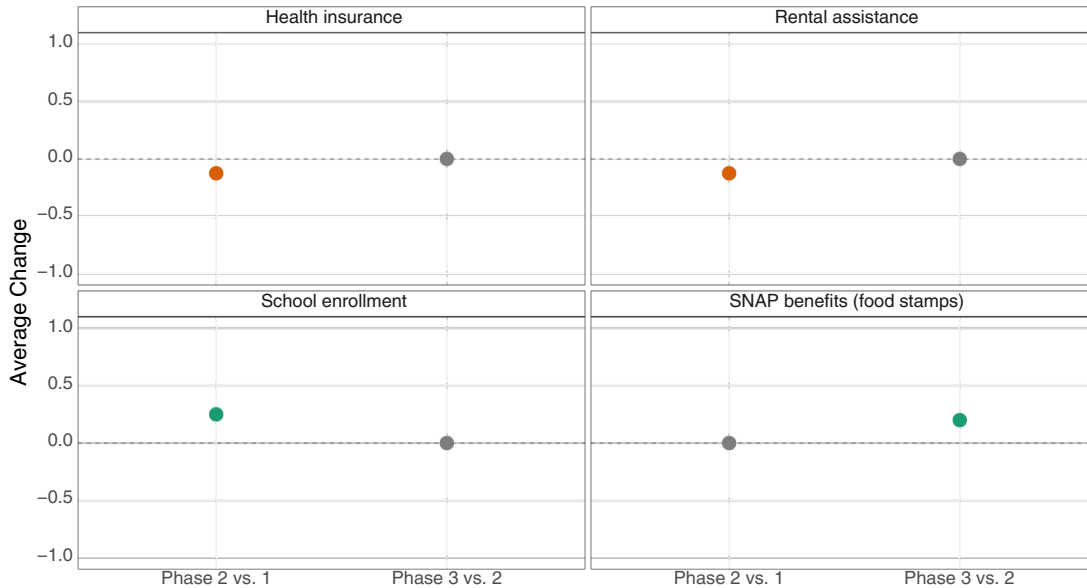
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

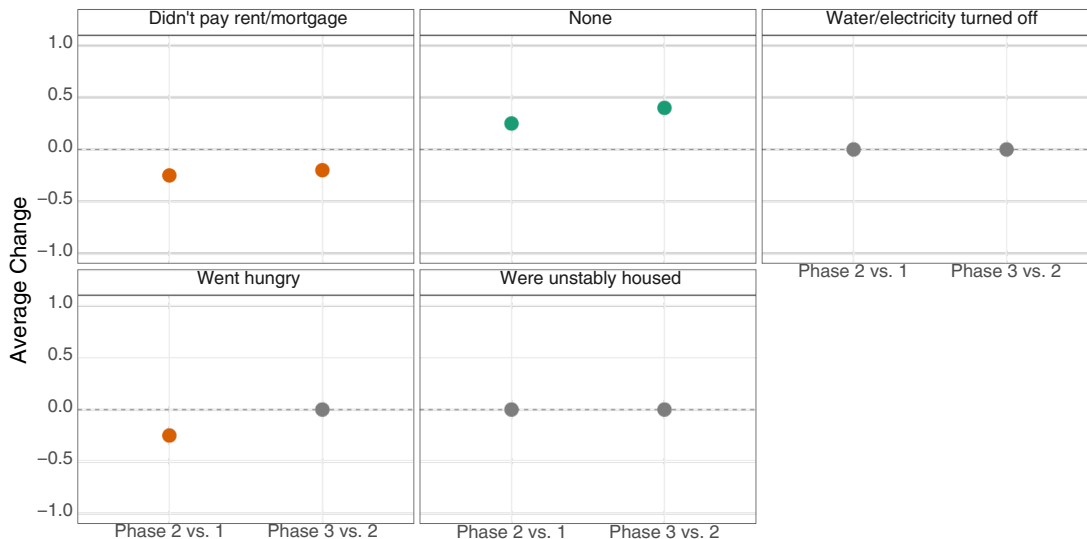
Ability to meet basic needs, progress towards personal goals

Do you have, or can you apply for, any of the following?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion with access, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion with access.

In the past 6 months, did any of the following happen because you didn't have enough money?



Response options are yes this happened (coded as 1) and no this didn't happen (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting these things, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting these things.

APPENDIX

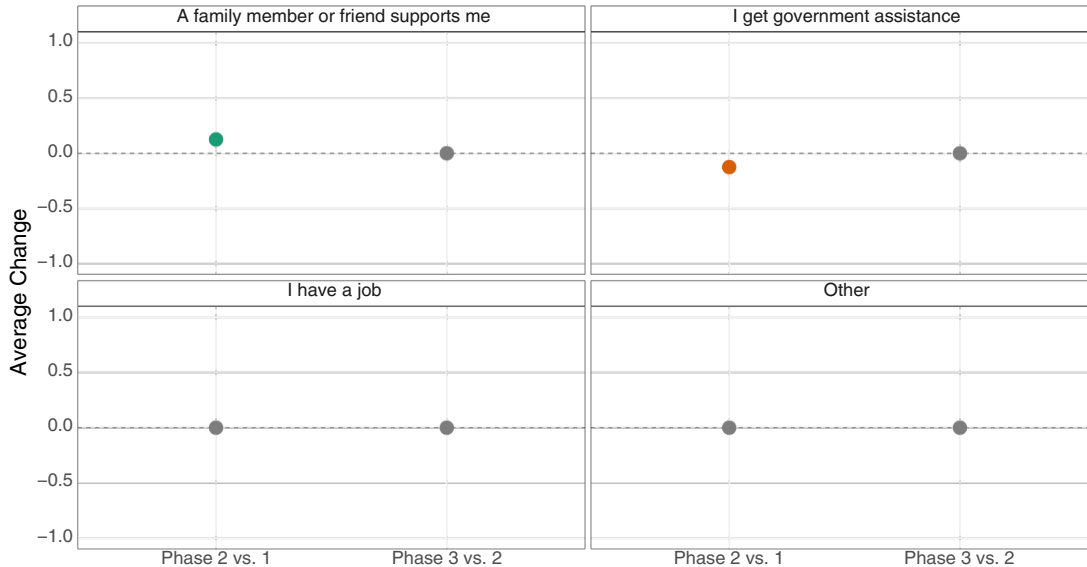
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

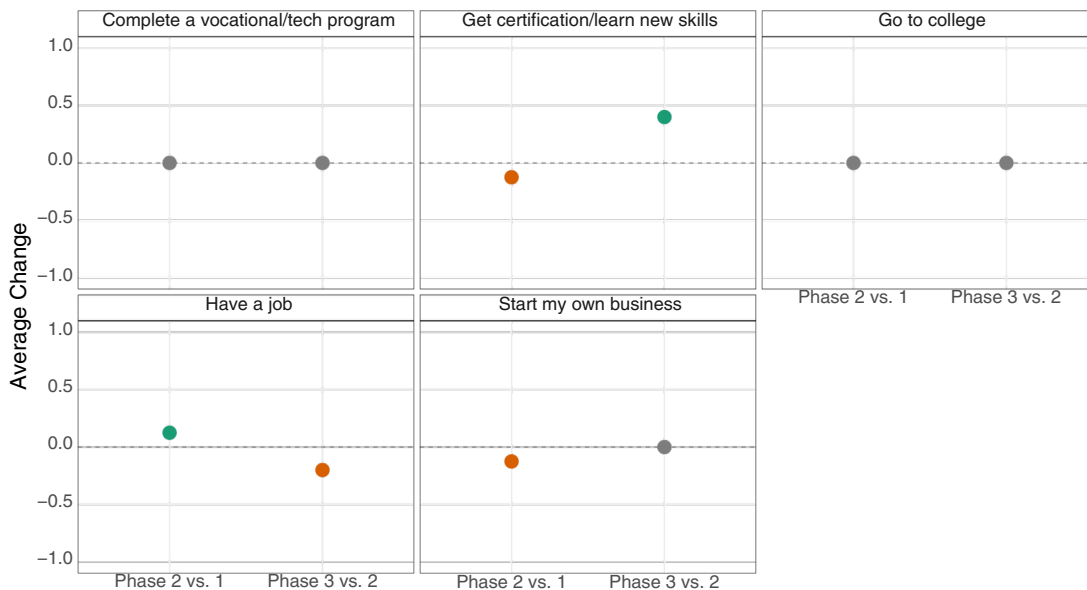
Economic resources, employment and education advancement

What is your main source of income?



Response options are source of income (coded as 1) and not source of income (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting this source of income, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting this source of income.

What goals do you have for employment or education?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion with this goal, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion with this goal.

APPENDIX

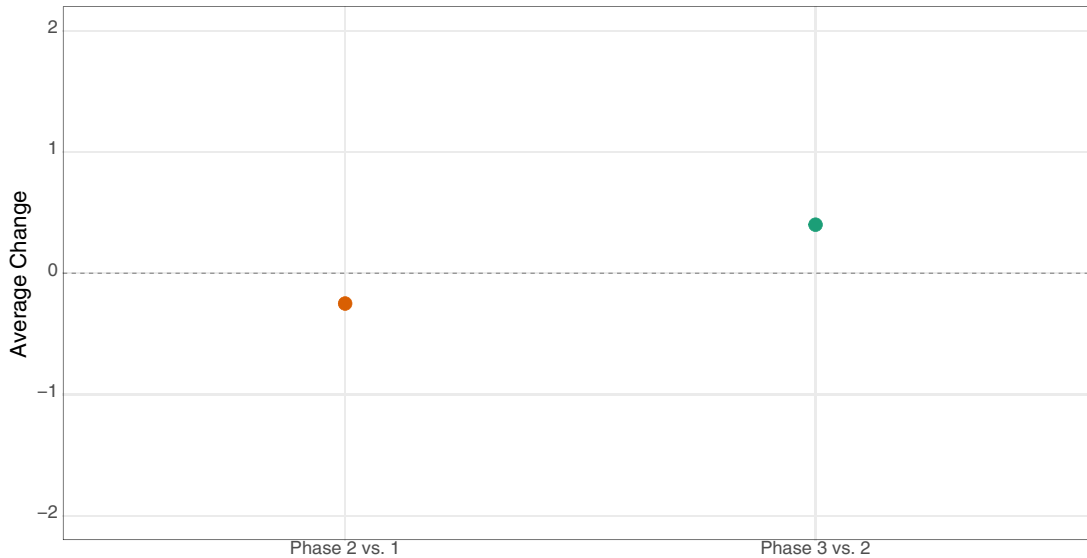
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Economic resources, employment and education advancement

Do you have the resources you need to achieve your employment or education goals?



Response options are yes (coded as 2), not sure (coded as 1), and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in resources, values below 0 indicate a decrease in resources.

APPENDIX

Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

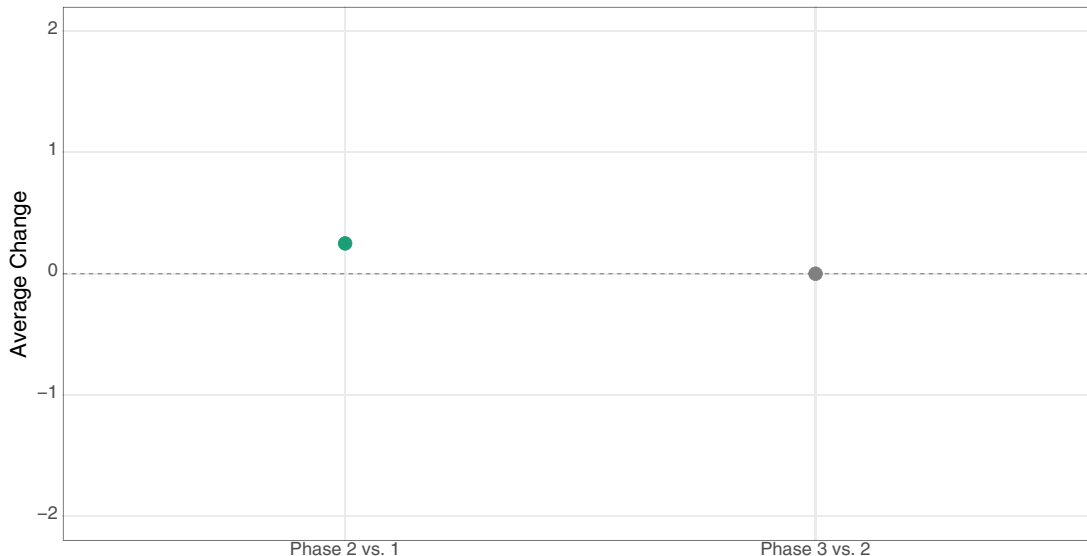
Behavioral health, self-efficacy

How do you deal with strong emotions?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion using this coping mechanism, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion using this coping mechanism.

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel satisfied with life?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in satisfaction, values below 0 indicate a decrease in satisfaction.

APPENDIX

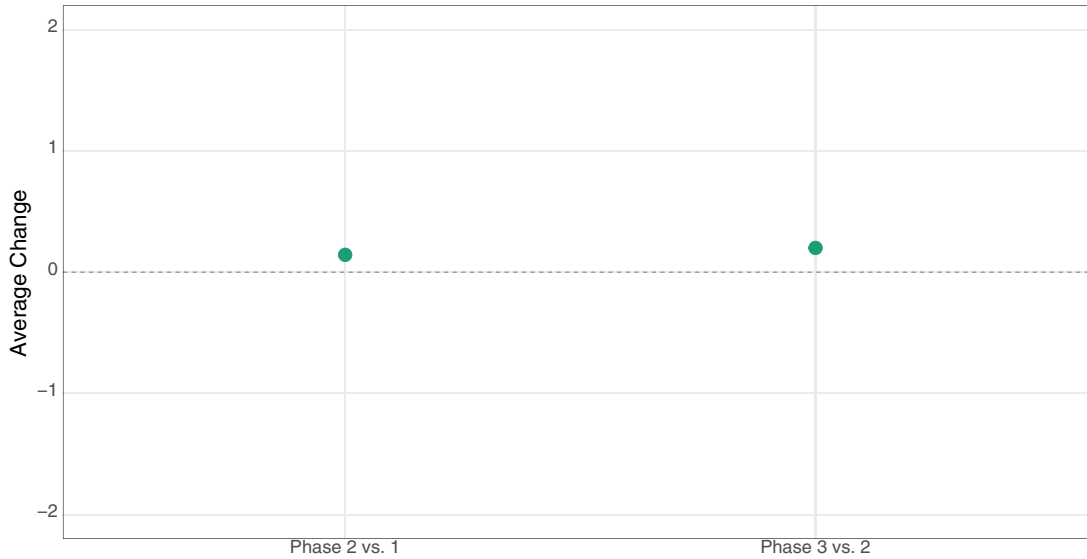
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

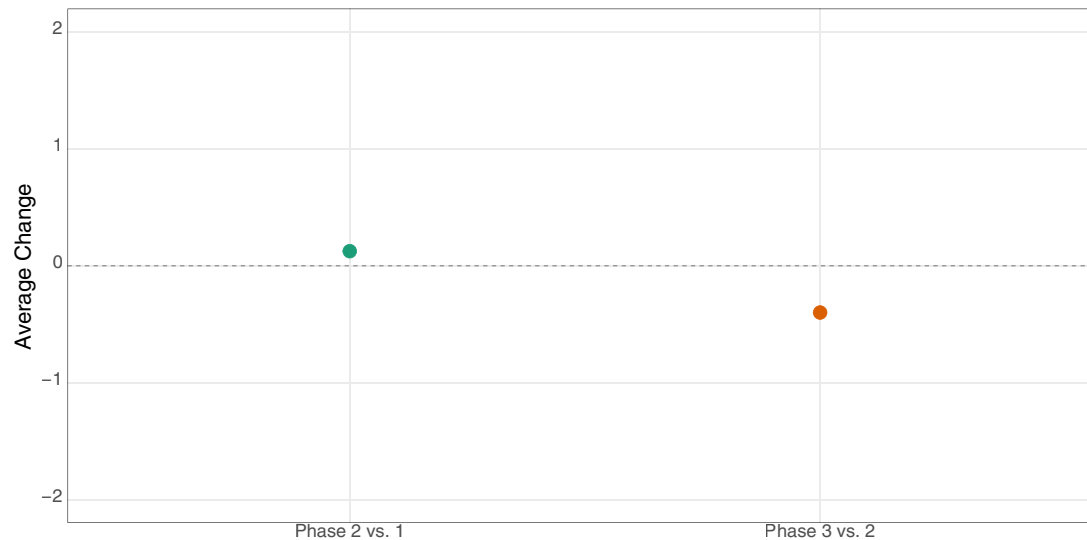
Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you belong to a community (like a social group, school, or church)?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in belonging, values below 0 indicate a decrease in belonging.

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that society is becoming a better place for you and your peers?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in feeling society is a better place, values below 0 indicate a decrease in feeling society is a better place.

APPENDIX

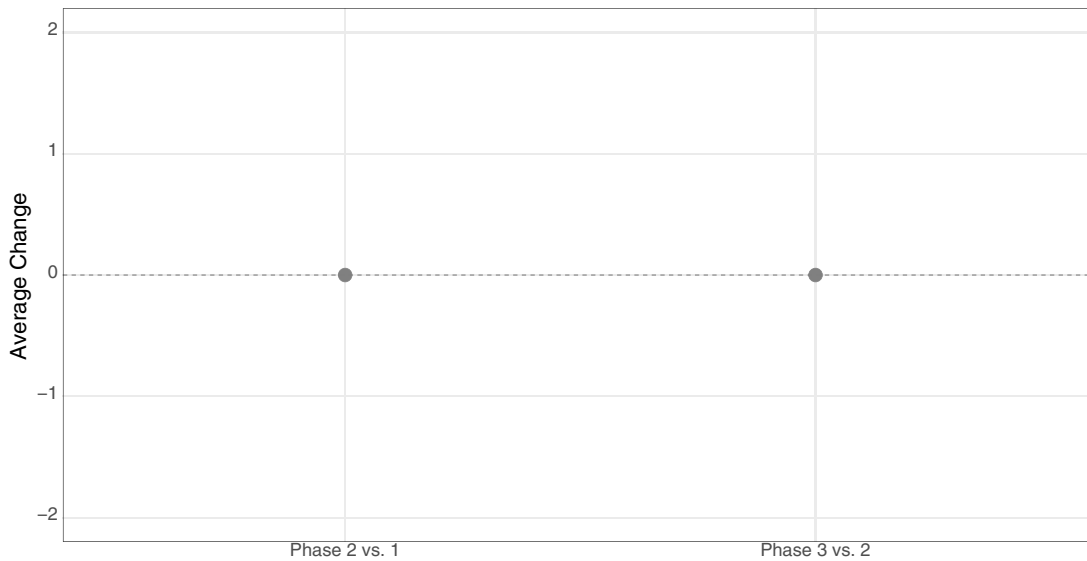
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

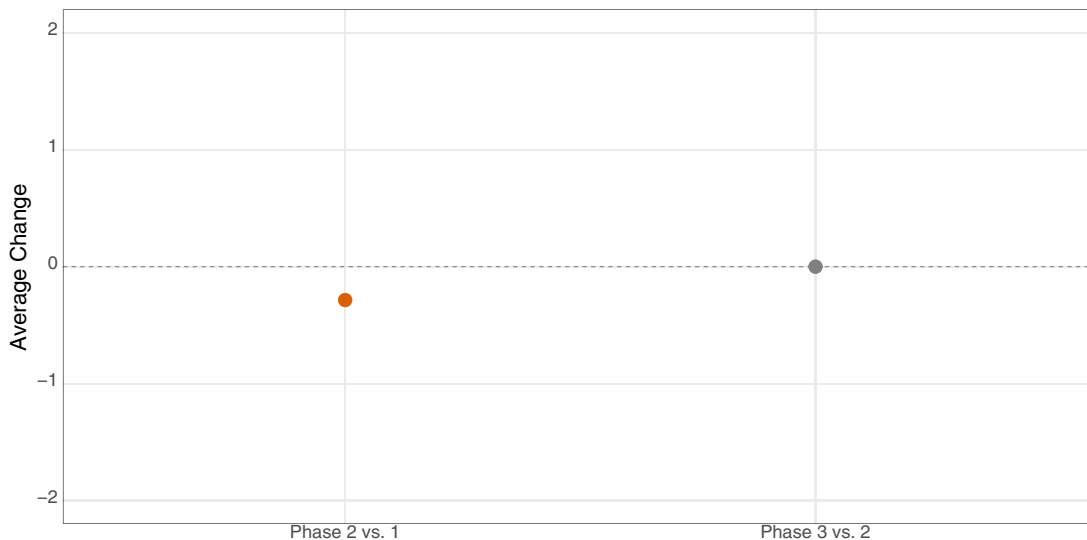
Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you liked most parts of your personality?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in liking your personality, values below 0 indicate a decrease in liking your personality.

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel that you're good at managing your responsibilities?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in managing responsibilities, values below 0 indicate a decrease in managing responsibilities.

APPENDIX

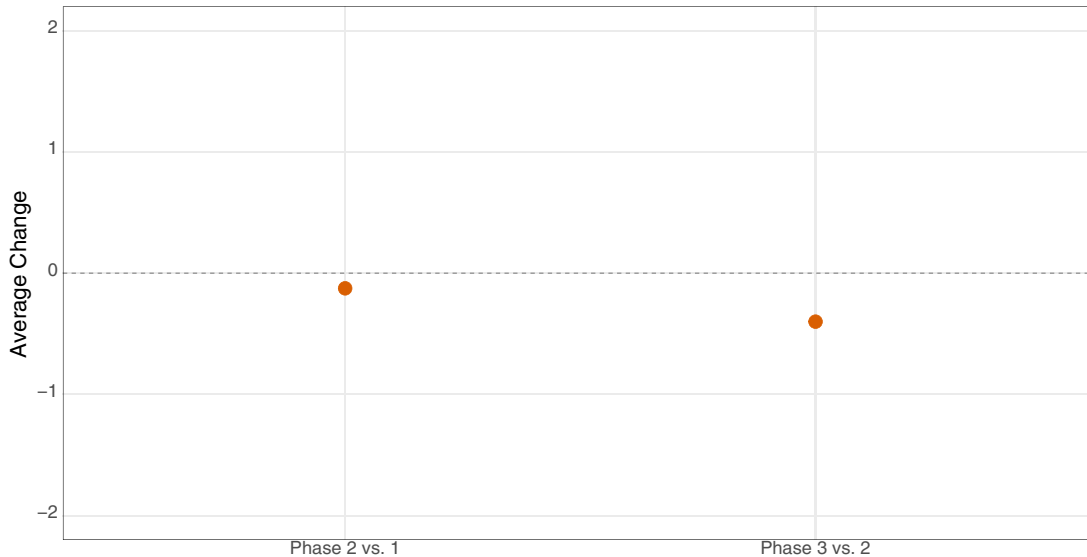
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

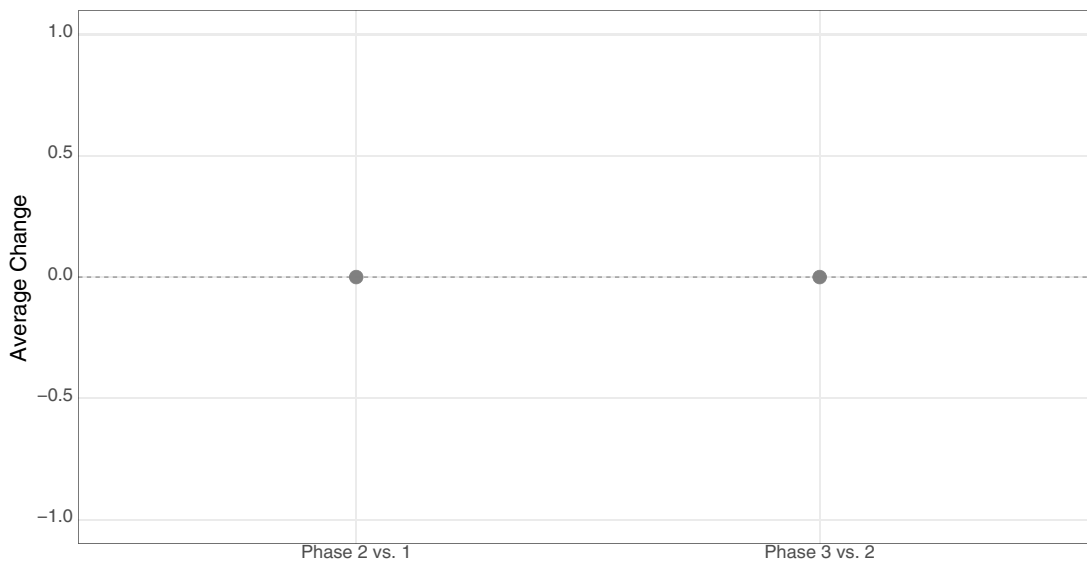
Behavioral health, self-efficacy

In the past 6 months, how often did you feel confident to express your ideas and opinions?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in confidence, values below 0 indicate a decrease in confidence.

In the past 6 months, have you felt bad or guilty about your drug use?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting guilt, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting guilt.

APPENDIX

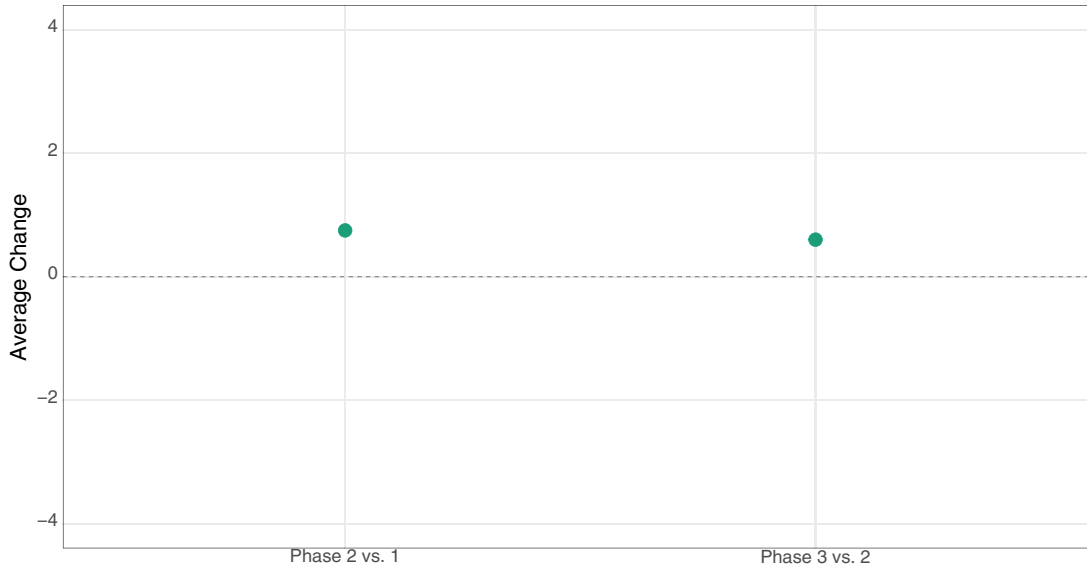
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

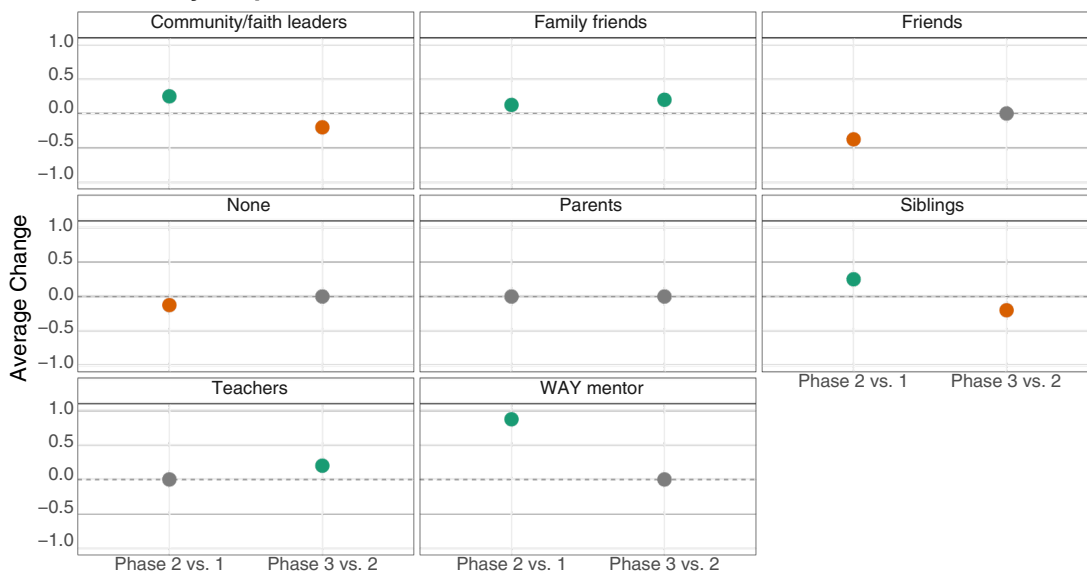
Connection, positive role models, supportive relationships

How many positive role models do you have in your life?



Response options are more than 10 (coded as 4), 7–10 (coded as 3), 4–6 (coded as 2), 1–3 (coded as 1), and 0 (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the number of role models, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the number of role models.

Who are your positive role models?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting this person as a role model, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting this person as a role model.

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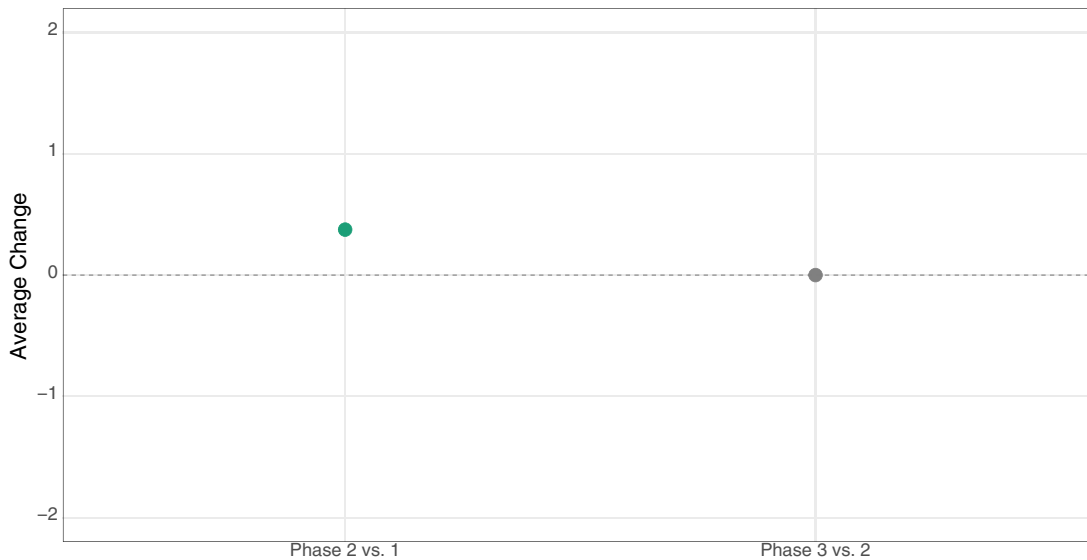
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

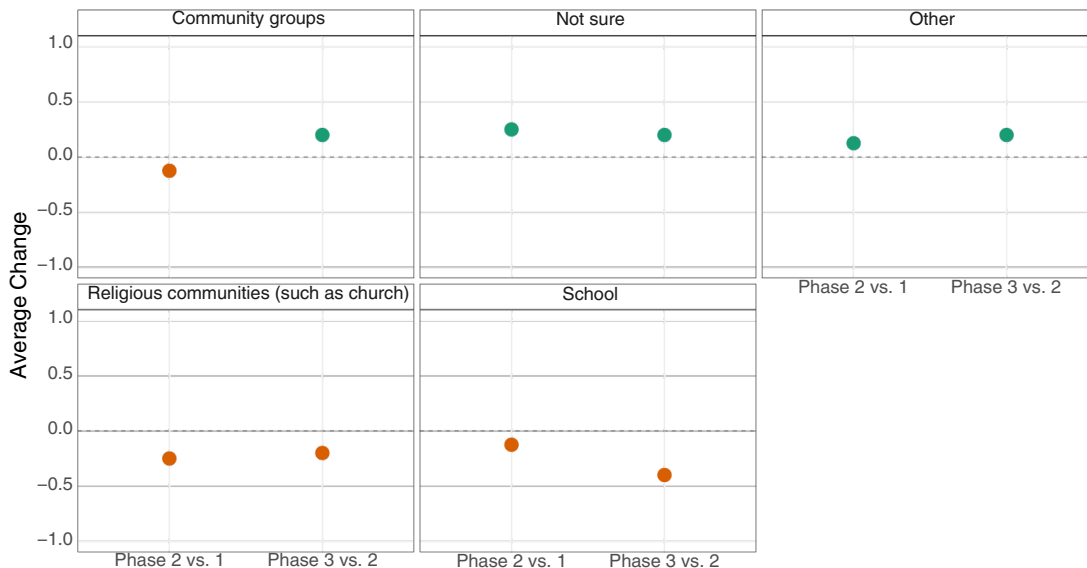
Connection, positive role models, supportive relationships

Is there an adult in your life who you feel comfortable asking for help?



Response options are very comfortable (coded as 2), kind of comfortable (coded as 1), and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate increasing comfort, values below 0 indicate decreasing comfort.

Where can you go for help in your community?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting this as a place to go for help, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting this as a place to go for help.

APPENDIX

Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

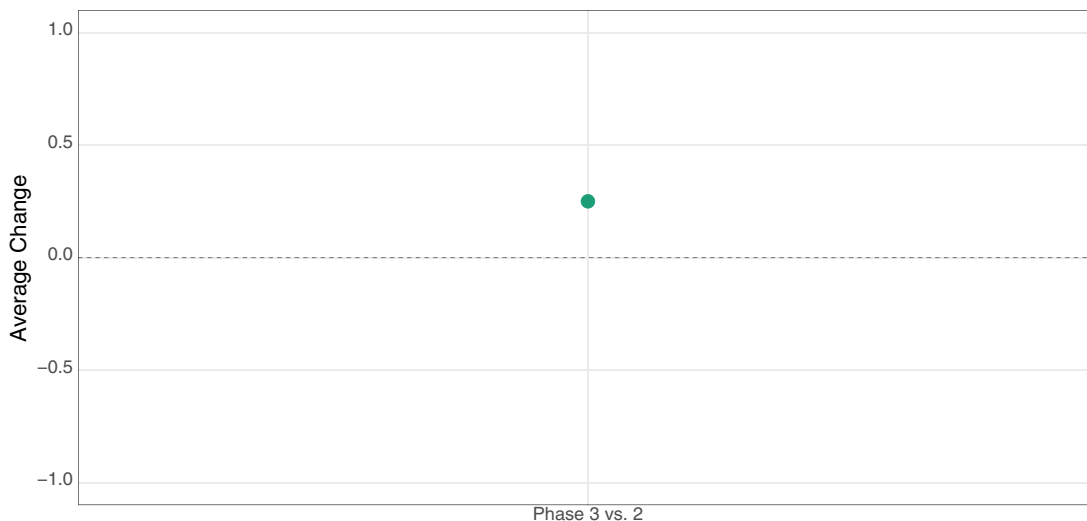
Safety, including from gun violence

In the past 6 months, how often have you felt unsafe due to gun violence?**



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in feeling unsafe, values below 0 indicate a decrease in feeling unsafe.

In the past 6 months, have you, or has anybody close to you, been impacted by gun violence?**



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting they or someone close to them has been impacted, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting they or someone close to them has been impacted

APPENDIX

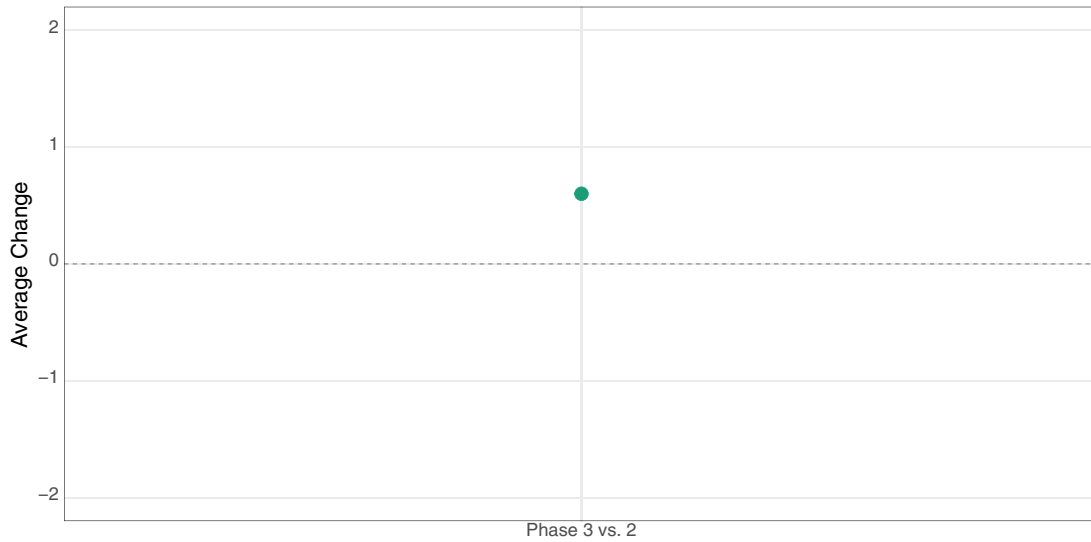
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

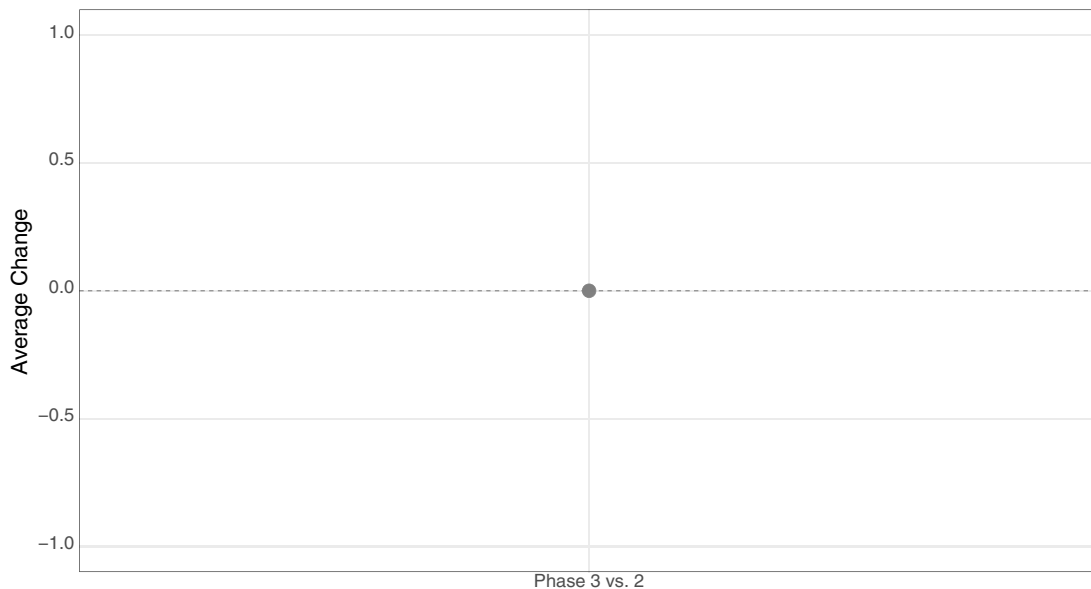
Safety, including from gun violence

In the past 6 months, how often have you seen pictures or conversations about guns on social media?**



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in pictures/conversations on social media, values below 0 indicate a decrease in pictures/conversations on social media.

Have you ever owned a gun?**



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion saying they owned a gun, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion saying they owned a gun.

APPENDIX

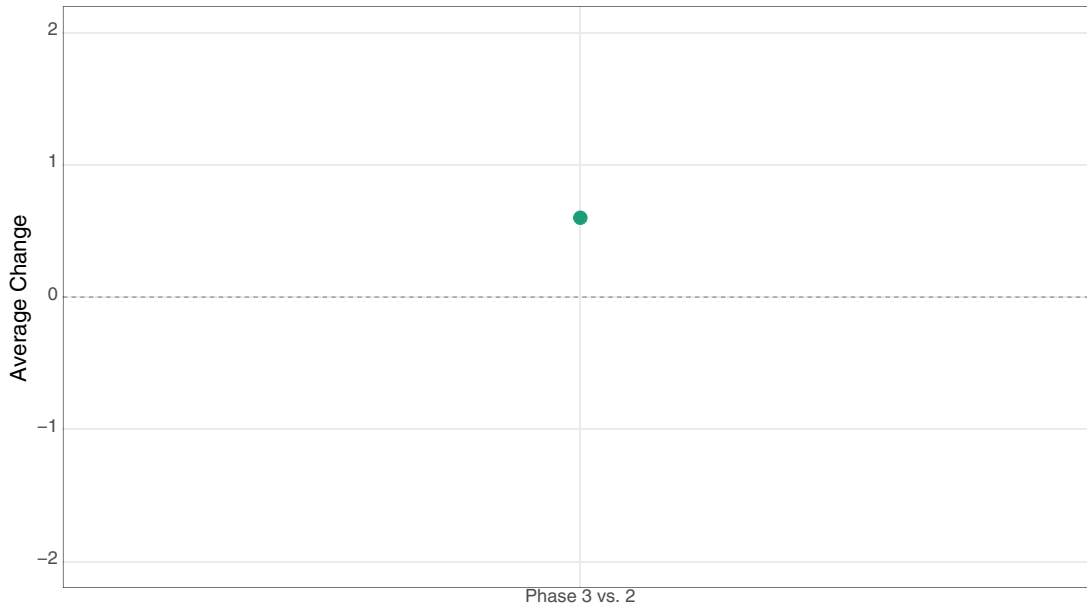
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

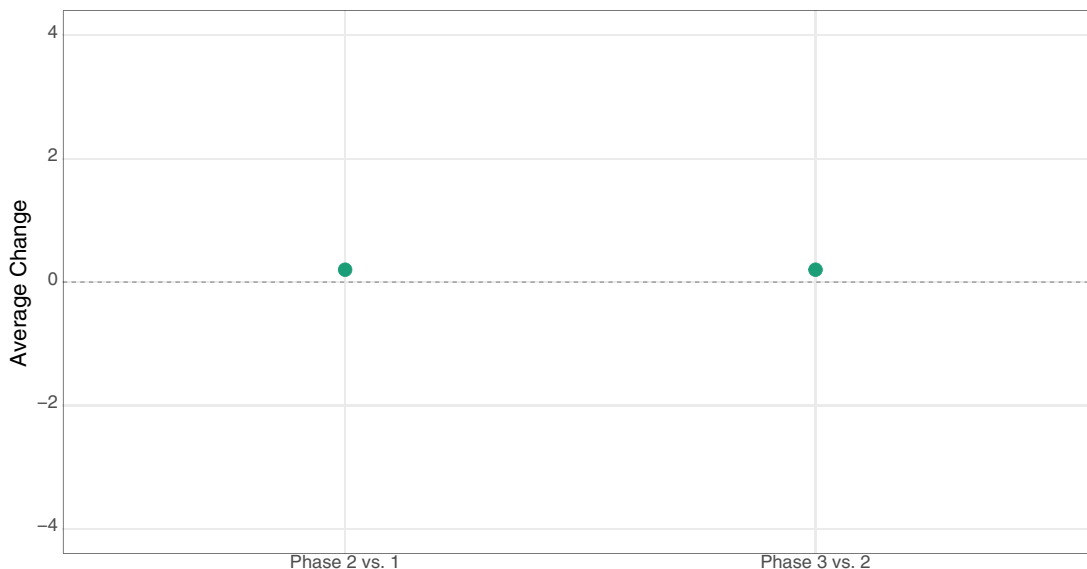
Safety, including from gun violence

If you wanted a gun, how easy would it be for you to get one?**



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate it became easier, values below 0 indicate it became harder.

How many times did you feel the need to carry a gun?**



Response options are more than 10 (coded as 4), 7–10 (coded as 3), 4–6 (coded as 2), 1–3 (coded as 1), and 0 (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the need to carry, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the need to carry.

APPENDIX

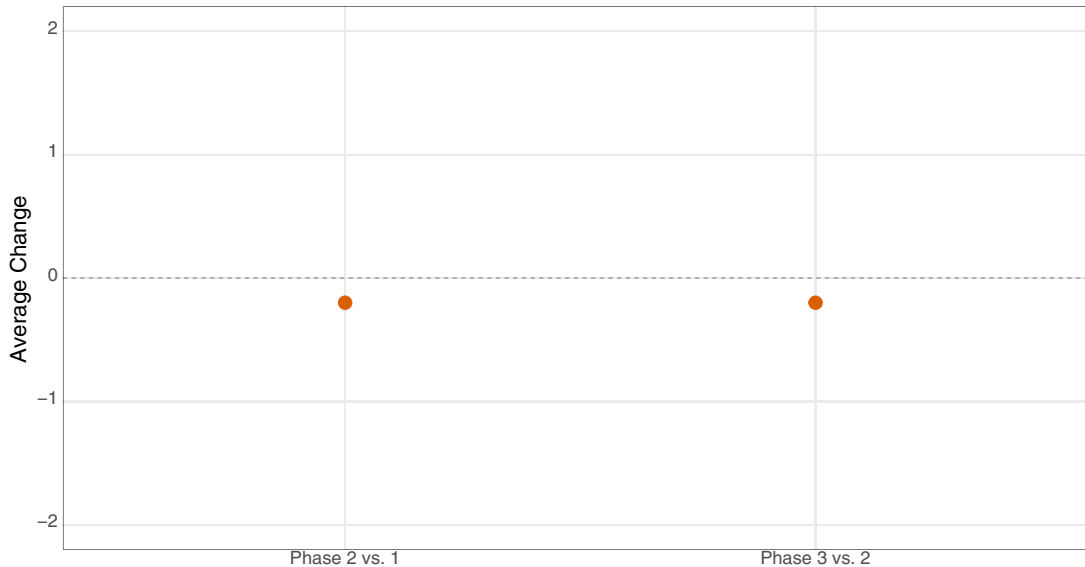
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Safety, including from gun violence

How many times did you feel the need to take a gun to school?**



Response options are more than 10 (coded as 4), 7–10 (coded as 3), 4–6 (coded as 2), 1–3 (coded as 1), and 0 (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the need to carry, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the need to carry.

APPENDIX

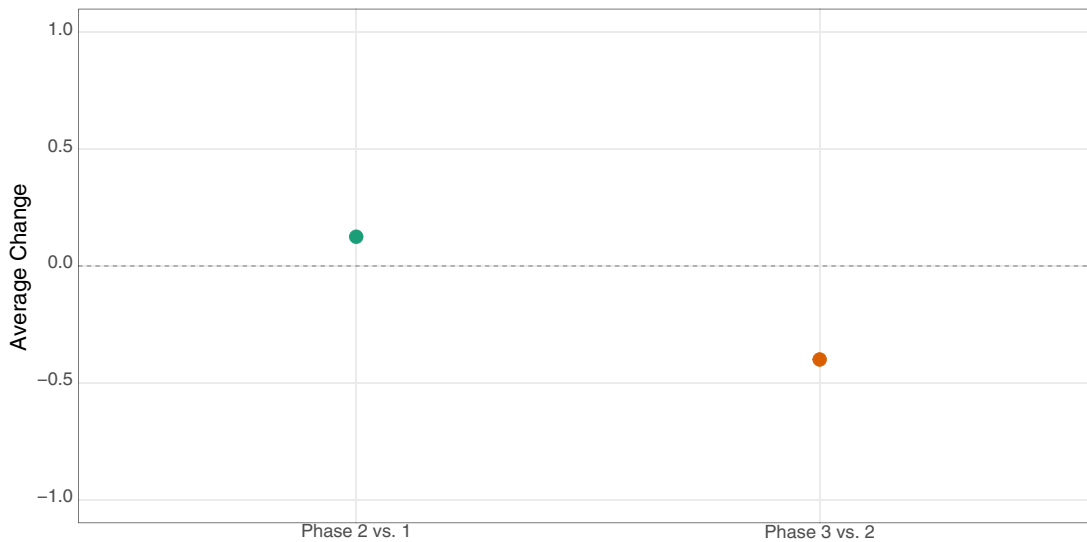
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

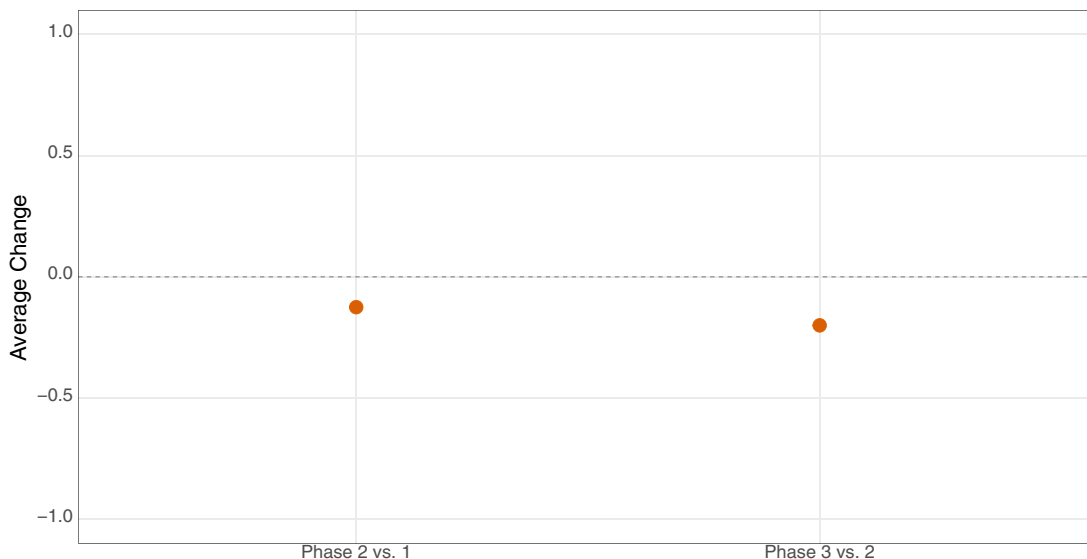
Freedom from incarceration

In the past 6 months have you pled guilty to charges, or been convicted of charges?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion who pled guilty to charges/were convicted, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion who pled guilty to charges/were convicted.

In the past 6 months have you been incarcerated (spent time in juvie, jail, or prison)?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting incarceration, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting incarceration.

APPENDIX

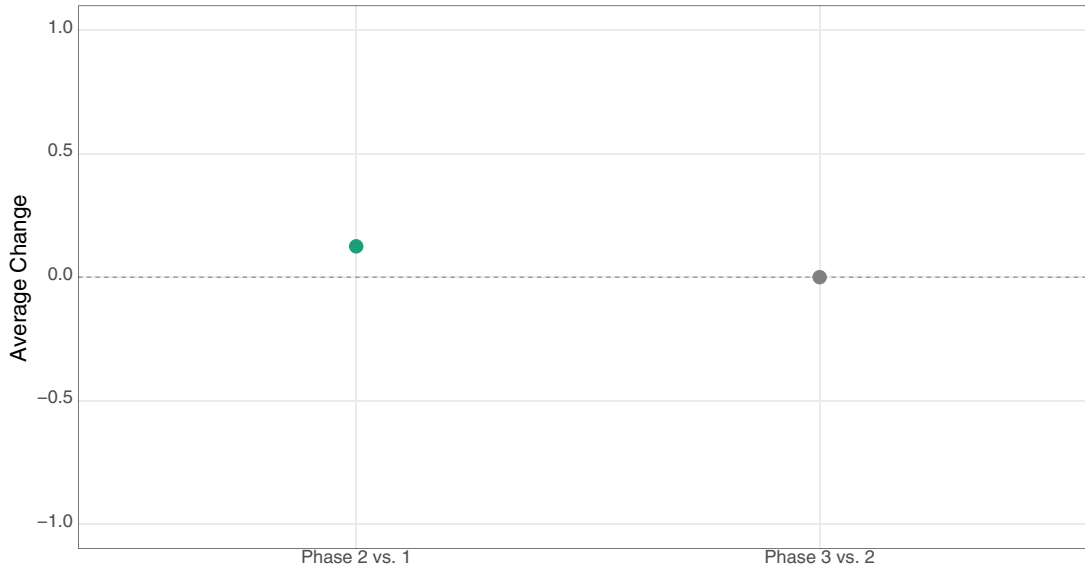
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

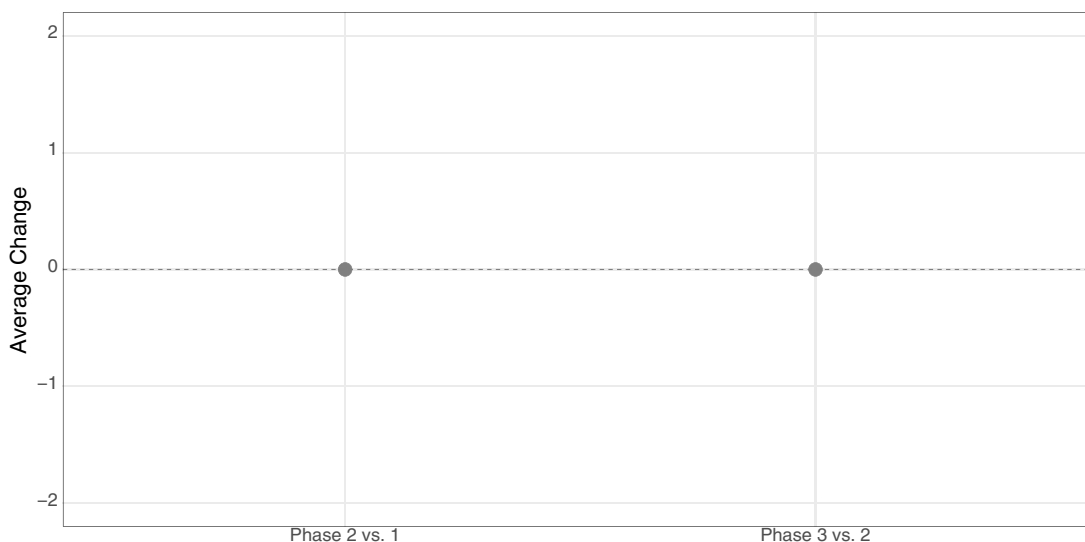
Freedom from incarceration

In the past 6 months have you been on probation or parole?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting probation/parole, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting probation/parole.

How important is it for you to avoid incarceration in the future?



Response options are very important (coded as 2), kind of important (coded as 1), and not important at all (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in importance, values below 0 indicate a decrease in importance.

APPENDIX

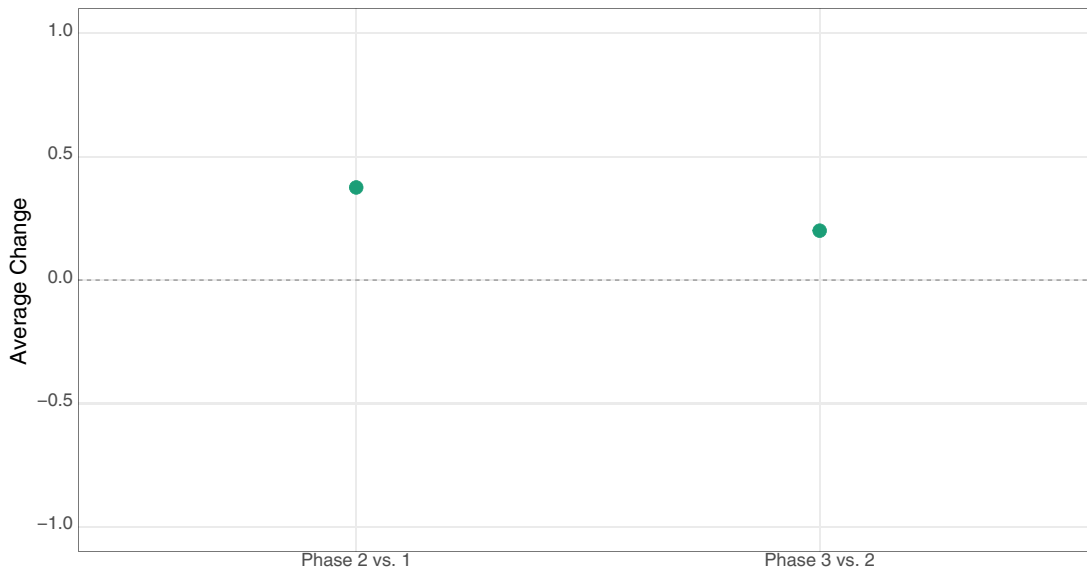
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Freedom from incarceration

In the past 6 months, has anyone close to you been incarcerated?



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion reporting someone close to them was incarcerated, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion reporting someone close to them was incarcerated.

APPENDIX

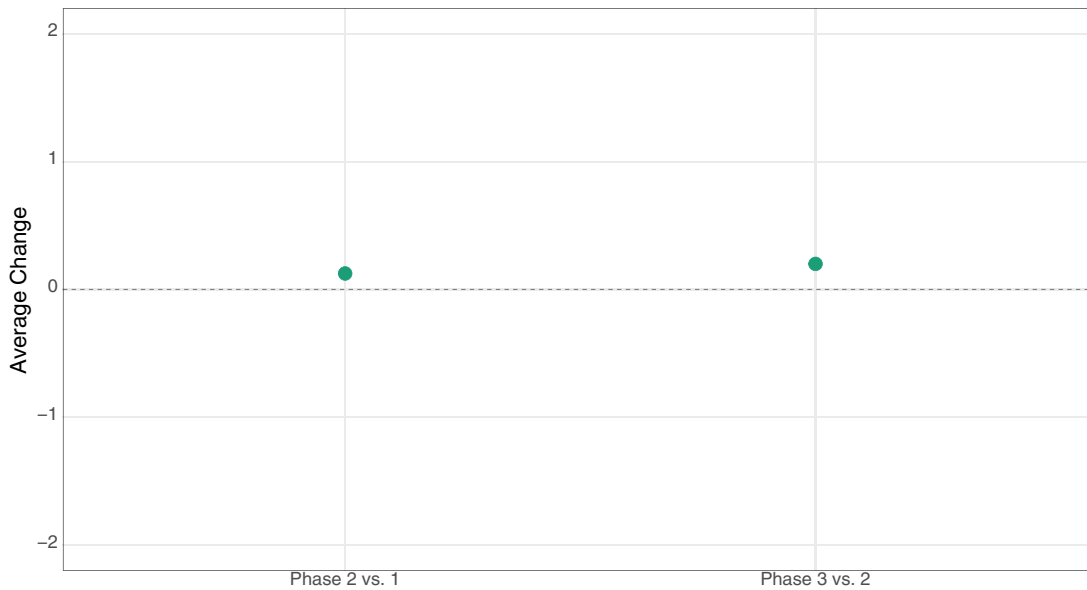
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Self-determination

Do you feel like you have control of your future?



Response options are yes (coded as 2), not sure (coded as 1), and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate this is more true, values below 0 indicate this is less true.

Choose the statement that feels most correct for you: I can choose my own destiny vs. I am stuck on one path



Response options are I can choose my destiny (coded as 1) and I am stuck on one path (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion who say they choose their own destiny, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion who say they choose their own destiny.

APPENDIX

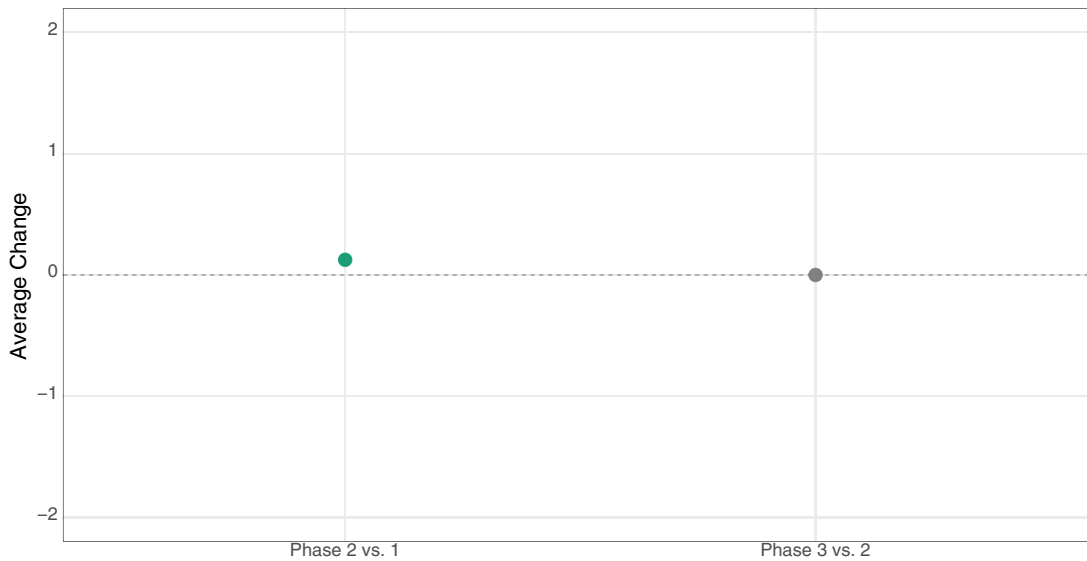
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Self-determination

How often do you feel like you're stuck between two bad choices, and you are forced to pick one?



Response options are often (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 1), and never (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in feeling stuck, values below 0 indicate a decrease in feeling stuck.

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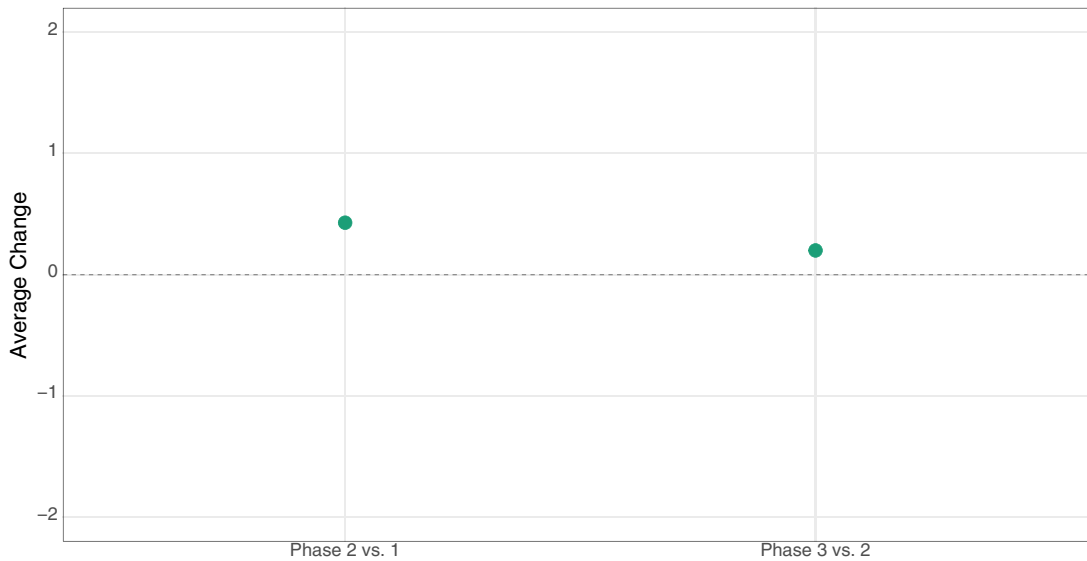
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Economic stability

How true is this statement? I am making sure I have enough money for the future.



Response options are very true (coded as 2), kind of true (coded as 1), and not true at all (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in resources, values below 0 indicate a decrease in resources.

In the past 6 months, how often were you able to save for a long-term goal, like a car or apartment?



Response options are almost every month (coded as 2), one or two months (coded as 1), and not at all (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate this happened more often, values below 0 indicate this happened less often.

APPENDIX

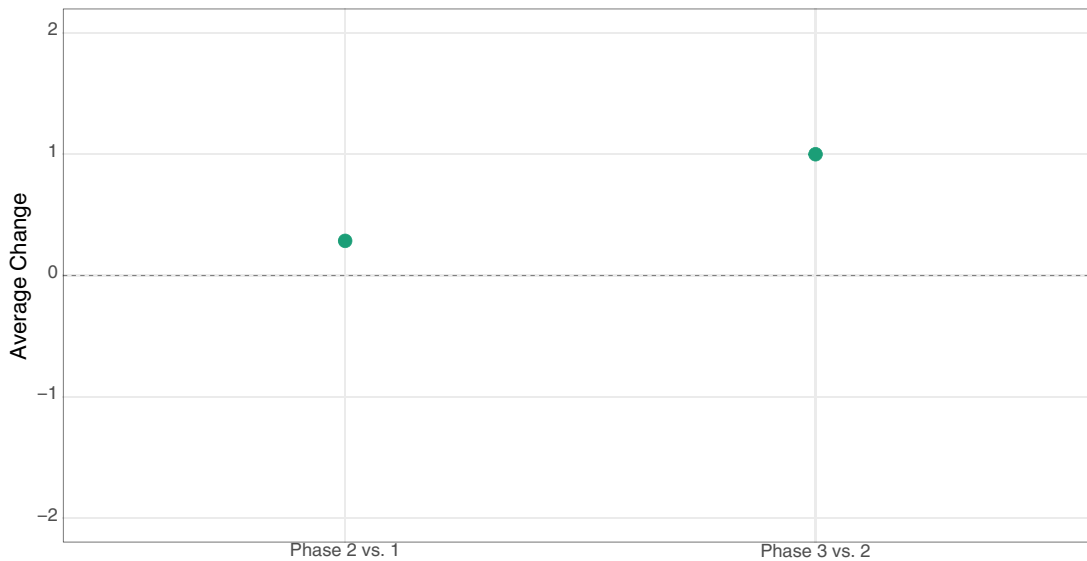
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

Economic stability

Do you have the financial resources you need to achieve your long-term goals?



Response options are yes (coded as 2), not sure (coded as 1), and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate this is more true, values below 0 indicate this is less true.

APPENDIX

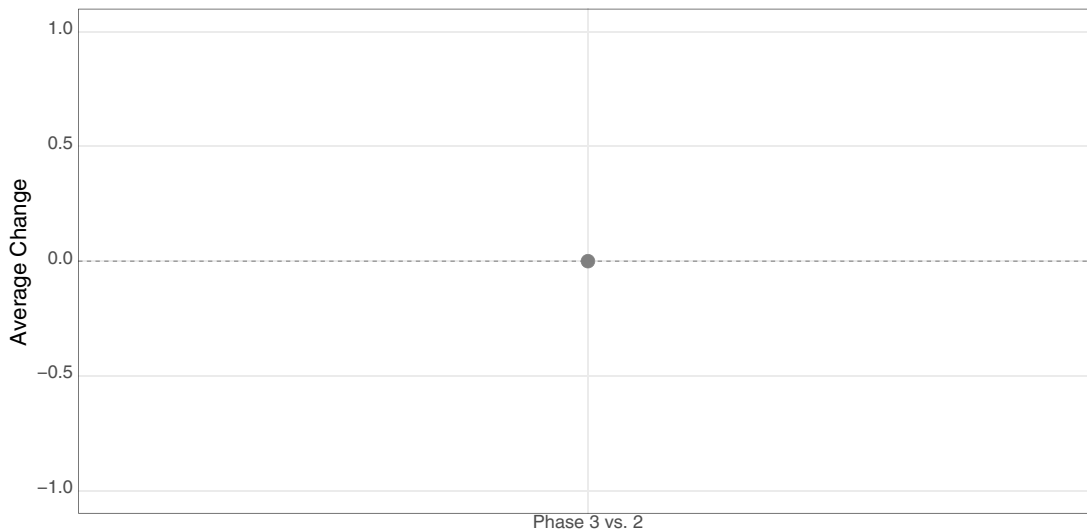
Results of youth quantitative survey data analysis

Average change among participants who completed multiple surveys

Note: 15 people have taken a survey twice.

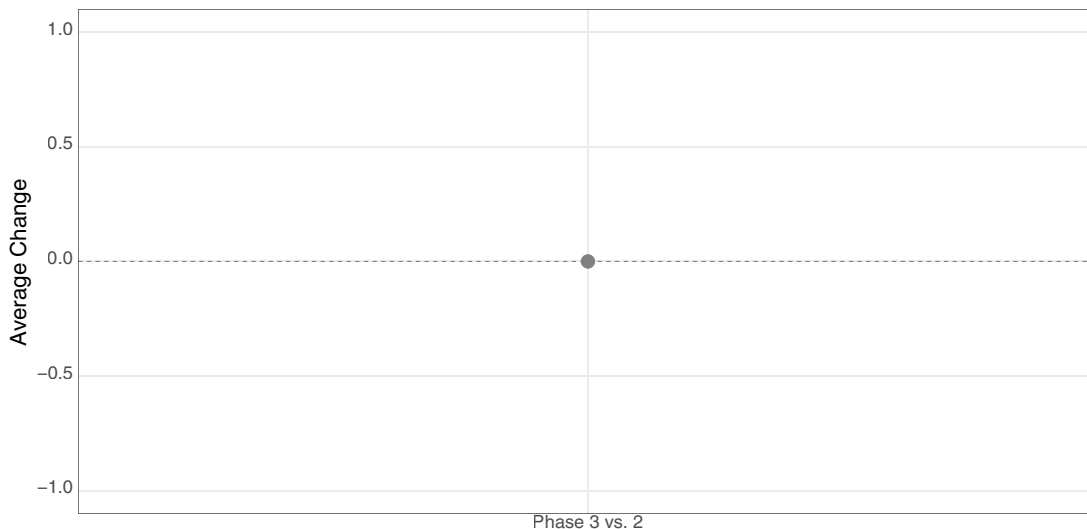
Experiences with WAY

In the past 6 months, have you received money for your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred you to?*



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion receiving money, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion receiving money.

In the past 6 months, have you received other support for your basic needs (like housing, food, or transportation) from the WAY program or an organization we referred you to?*



Response options are yes (coded as 1) and no (coded as 0). Zero indicates no change over time, values above 0 indicate an increase in the proportion receiving support, values below 0 indicate a decrease in the proportion receiving support.

APPENDIX

Mentee qualitative codebook

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition	Quote
Support systems	Good role models are those with lived experience	This code captures how youth view effective role models as individuals who have personal lived experiences similar to their own. These role models are seen as relatable and credible, which makes it easier for youth to connect with and be influenced by them.	"Knowing they've been through the same things I've been through."
	Positive relationships	This code refers to relationships that youth identify as supportive, encouraging, or emotionally beneficial. These relationships may contribute to a sense of stability, safety, or personal growth.	"Mine, I feel like my dad would be my role model, because he's always, you know, sat there and been with me, you know, since, like, since, like, day one. Since, like, of course, day one. But like, since, like, I was on the streets, he sat there and gave me cash while he was on the streets. He sat there, you know, gave me clothes, gave me all that I needed, gave me advice about, you know, certain things that you know, a son would need."
	Recognizing helpful adults/support	This code reflects youth's awareness and ability to identify, seek out, and utilize supportive adults or systems. It includes moments when youth acknowledge the importance of guidance, mentorship, or emotional support.	"I think everybody needs to stop acting like all of those things are cops. Like, the cops are cops, but like, teachers aren't cops, firemen aren't cops. The judge ain't a cop. Everybody ain't a cop, bro. And I think some of those people actually can be helpful. Like, what if you're fucking dying, and then saying, fuck the cops, but the ambulance is trying to fucking save you, and you're being a dumb ass bro like that would piss me off."
Coping mechanisms	Unhealthy coping skills	This code describes the use of coping strategies that may provide temporary relief but have negative or harmful long-term effects (e.g., substance use, aggression, avoidance).	" Like smashing out, you know, on the guard or something? I like... smashed that fool out."
	Healthy coping skills	This code describes the use of adaptive, constructive coping strategies that help youth manage stress, emotions, or challenges in positive ways (e.g., talking to someone, exercising, journaling).	"Probably just breathing, you know, just thinking, you know, my choice... thinking on my choices on how this might affect me."

APPENDIX

Mentee qualitative codebook (Continued)

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition	Quote
Fears and motivations	Doing better for family	This code captures youth's motivation to improve their behavior or circumstances (e.g., achieving goals, avoiding incarceration) out of a desire to support their family, make them proud, or provide for them.	"Bro, what I've always been saying ever since I had my baby, is, like, I might have a kid now, but like, I'm still the same person. I'm not, like, I'm not NOT [tag name] anymore. I'm still [tag name], and I'm just worried about wrong place, wrong time, you know, especially if I'm with her, like I'm gonna react. I don't even know how I would react, bro, I can't even tell you."
	Anticipating incarceration	This code describes the fear or expectation of incarceration, even when youth are actively trying to avoid it. In some cases, incarceration is perceived as inevitable due to environmental or systemic factors.	"Just because I don't... I'm not really good at like, I'm not really good at, uh, changing my mind on something that I'm already fully like, into. I don't think I will ever stop doing this, but I think I'll definitely calm down, but I don't think I'll ever stop and eventually I'll do something that gets me locked up again."
	Basic needs being met increases motivations	This code reflects the idea that when youth have their basic needs met (e.g., food, housing, safety), often through programs like WAY, they feel more motivated to work toward goals or stay out of trouble.	"Yeah, like I said before, the stress went away. Like I don't really have to worry about a lot of stuff, and especially with the case and stuff, it was just a lot easier. I haven't had to worry about if I'm gonna miss court, how am I gonna get to court or probation, or food or anything like that."
Perceptual reasons for violence	It's a result of where we live	This code reflects the belief that violence and other challenges are largely shaped by the youth's geographic environment or neighborhood. Violence is seen as a product of their surroundings rather than individual choice.	"That I feel like it's because of where we live. It's necessary and, not really necessary, but it's just, there's no going away from it, like with how it is nowadays, you're always gonna need one. Hey but the way I'm living, I feel like I'm always gonna need one, but I feel like other people could still live here and not need one, and but it's still... Like they're, they're always going to be around, but we, we're still against it, for sure"
	Trying not to die	This code captures the belief that engaging in violence is sometimes a means of survival. Youth may describe violent behavior as a way to protect themselves or avoid becoming victims in dangerous environments.	"In my mind, if someone like me was carrying a gun, I would assume it's because they are not scared but worried about their safety just being out in public....trying not to die"
	Family history of violence	This code reflects the perception that violence is normalized or passed down through family history. Youth may view violence as expected or unavoidable because it has been a consistent part of their family environment.	"My whole family is like, gang members, and I've seen and heard stories on why they did stuff. So I know... I have a feeling there's reasoning behind violence, but I do still think it's bad. I think you shouldn't. I think you shouldn't."

APPENDIX

Mentee qualitative codebook (Continued)

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition	Quote
Perception of the outside	Our actions have reasons	This code refers to the recognition or belief that human actions are intentional and have underlying causes or motivations. It acknowledges that every action, whether positive, negative, or neutral, is driven by some form of reasoning, which could be conscious or subconscious.	"It's not for no reason. It's like, there's a reason behind everything that we do and, not saying that it makes it better or makes it good, but there's reasoning, and we don't just do stuff to do stuff, that would be stupid. I mean, it's stupid at the end of the day, but just not that stupid."
	Lack of understanding/misunderstanding	This code captures situations where a lack of understanding or a fundamental misunderstanding leads to conflict or misconceptions. It refers to instances in which individuals, groups, or communities fail to accurately interpret or empathize with the perspectives, behaviors, or intentions of others.	"Bro, you get looked at like fucking... well, at least me, bro, I get looked at everywhere go. Like, I got a fucking bomb strapped to my head. Bro, I'm about to, like, take off my backpack and throw it and fucking blow everybody up. But, like, not even just that, like when I was running away all the time and shit, and I was couch surfing, I was trying to find somewhere to go. I was constantly getting kicked out because everybody was like, no, I don't want that around my house. I don't want my house to get hit up, you know. And that shit was just like, damn, everybody fucking wants me to get away because I look like a target. So that's something hard to struggle with. But once you find people that like, actually under like, understand, you know, just look at you because of that, and they know that you're just a kid, bro, so that's different. "
	Dissonance of experiences	This code reflects the struggle to reconcile or navigate conflicting viewpoints, different lived experiences, or social realities.	"Some people don't really get, like, all the chances they get early on. So they go... or their role models to look up to that, that are good, so they can't really judge because they didn't grow, grow up the same, you know? They like, they already had, like, whatever they wanted when they were kids. Like, all that stuff, you know what I mean?"

APPENDIX

Mentee qualitative codebook (Continued)

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition	Quote
Impacts of media on violence	Media dramatizes violence	This code focuses on the portrayal of violence in the media in a heightened, exaggerated, or sensationalized manner. It reflects how media outlets can amplify or embellish violent acts, making them appear more dramatic or extreme than they may be in reality. This can contribute to distorted perceptions of violence and may influence how individuals understand or react to violence in society.	"I feel like way more drama and dramatic like, you know, like [inaudible] The Walking Dead you're getting yourself into... You see, you see that they're always fighting against different people, or you see different TV shows arguing with somebody else, and say, like they end up fighting like just different things, because they're getting themselves into some chaos. And it's way different than, you know, real life, because it might be way different in real life, or it just depends on, on who the the, the author is of the creation, like, you know, like if they want to make it similar to real life, on how they want people to fight, or any of that they could."
	Disconnect between media and reality	This code refers to the gap between how violence is depicted in the media and the actual lived experiences of violence. It encompasses the difference between media representations and the true nature of violent events or consequences.	"I hate the internet, bro. I wish the internet wasn't a thing, because violent things that happen sometimes they get recorded and they get fucking blasted on the internet, and people treat it like it's not someone's kid, bro. You know, shit like that just gets to me. But it's way different than real life, not the same thing."
Impacts of schools on violence	Schools enables violence	This code refers to situations where certain factors or environments within schools perpetuate violence, either directly or indirectly. It could involve a lack of adequate safety measures, insufficient conflict resolution strategies, or a culture of tolerance toward violence.	"I mean everybody... I mean maybe like joking around, wise, like, you know, playing around, you know, some people like play fighting, or they sit there and be like, like, face smack you, or just play around like that. I mean, that's how, you know, some of my friends play around, you know, that's how they see... I mean, I don't, I don't think they use that as like violence. But, you know, it can be something like that. I mean, if it gets too serious and say like you accidentally land something like you, you land a punch on them or something, then maybe... might be in a bad mood."
	Schools dismissive framing of violence	This code refers to the way in which violence may be downplayed, ignored, or inadequately addressed by educational institutions, authorities, or individuals. It involves can involve language, policies, or attitudes that fail to recognize the seriousness of the situation; contributing to a lack of proper intervention or prevention efforts.	"If something crazy happens in Yakima, and they [the school], like, bring it up or something, and they'll point at us and be like, we don't want this happening to you. Like, no shit. We don't want that happening to us either, bro. But like, you just telling me that's not gonna make it like that, you know?"

APPENDIX

Mentee qualitative codebook (Continued)

Parent Code	Child Code	Definition	Quote
WAY direct impact	Positive WAY quotes	This code captures quotes, statements or expressions that highlight positive experiences, feelings, or perspectives directly related to a the WAY.	"And like, the WAY program y'all helped me, even though I was like, they knew I was gonna come in here and stuff. So they're, like, they're trying to help me get a job and stuff. But before I came in here, but like they're trying to help me get a job and like get good grades in school and stuff." "Yeah, they helped me get food. And then, like, they would tell me to talk to my mom if they need to get bills paid, like, the lights and stuff like that. And they would, they bought me a phone when the cops took my phone, so I wouldn't be all around, you know, and all that stuff. And they would ask me if I want to get clothes, and they'll take me to go buy food and all that. " "Yes, they've actually helped me with my... they helped me with my mental health and, like, I can, you can open up to them, you know, like, if you're, if you're really going through something, you really need to get your mind off of things. You know, the WAY program is always a way to, to really open up to and really, like, say, you need a break from parents or something. And, you know, like, you just, you just going through a lot this week. The WAY program is just a way, you know, to get your stress off of things."
	Negative WAY quotes	This code captures quotes, statements or expressions that highlight challenges, setbacks, or unfavorable views, and may serve to express dissatisfaction or concerns.	None