

WORK-INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (WISE) PROJECT FOR TRAINING AT-RISK YOUTH



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

A FIVE-YEAR WISE LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH PROJECT [2017-2022]

A REPORT OF YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2 TO-DATE

TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- **Prof. Marcelo Vieta** (project PI) will introduce the project.
- **Dr. Andrea Chan**, project postdoctoral researcher, will present our findings to date.
- Questions and answers.

OVERVIEW

- Our project's data should provide a good picture of the impact of work integration training programs for youth over three years.
- Employment and Social Development Canada is interested in research on the effectiveness of work integration social enterprises (WISEs) for delivering work training to marginalized communities.
- Our project focuses on youth (17-35) facing employment barriers in Ontario.
- This project is part of various social economy- and work-focused research, education, and community outreach of the Centre for Learning, Social Economy & Work (CLSEW) at OISE, University of Toronto
- Part of a broader interest in social enterprise at CLSEW and OISE since the early-2000s (e.g., Prof. Jack Quarter's SSHRC-CURA-funded Social Economy Hub, SSHRC-funded Social Purpose Businesses, etc.).

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

- The goals of this longitudinal research project are to follow youth over time who are trained for workforce integration by a group of organizations and to obtain information on whether their circumstances are improving economically, socially and psychologically.
- In addition, we intend to help the partner organizations to assess via social accounting whether the return (economic and social) is commensurate with the investment.
- In this presentation, we will present the first look at our baseline data
- Surveys administered near the beginning when the participants joined the programs:
 - Who the participants were, in terms of demographics
 - Their economic or financial situation
 - Their reasons for entering the training program at the organization as well as their aspirations for the future
 - Their satisfaction with different aspects of life (Asset Matrix)

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Objectives

1. Assess how WISEs training at-risk youth for workplace integration are achieving this goal over time.
2. Compare the impacts of WISEs for training at-risk youth with more conventional government-funded programs.
3. Analyze whether the economic and social return of WISEs are commensurate with the investment.
4. Build capacity in our partner organizations

Outcomes

1. Understand *the participants of WISE at-risk youth training programs* and their experiences and learning dimensions in the programs.
2. Understand *participants' efforts to integrate into the workforce.*
3. Understand *the impact on organizations and funders* by accounting for social impacts of investments.
4. Facilitate capacity building in the sector via social accounting workshops with organizations, community café's, regular webinars, other knowledge mobilization methods.

METHODOLOGY

Approach

- Longitudinal, quantitatively driven, mixed methods study
- Baseline survey from Sept 2017 to Dec 2018 (completed)
- Follow-up survey after six months, one year, two years and three years (in-process)
- A small portion of participants are being interviewed as well (in-process)

The survey instrument

- Demographics
- Current status on family, employment, and schooling
- Challenges for securing employment
- Personal satisfaction on different aspects of life, including financial, family situation and access to services

The sample

- Youth between 17-35 who are taking skills & employment training programs in Ontario
- Working with 8 different partner organizations
- We originally aimed to reach 500 baseline participants
 - We have actually reached 619 participants.
- Currently we have a 55% retention rate (from baseline) at 6-month follow-up, and 88% (from 6-month) at 1 year follow-up
- Current status:
 - Baseline completed December 2018
 - 288 6-month and 131 1-year follow-up surveys completed


PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Social enterprises

- Youth Opportunities Unlimited (London)
- Operations Come Home (Ottawa)
- Eva's Phoenix (Toronto)
- Furniture Bank (Toronto)

Non social enterprise nonprofits providing employment & skills training programs

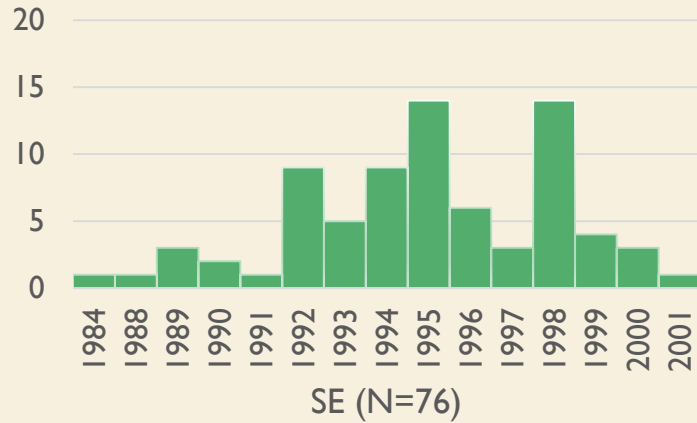
- YMCA (GTHA)
- ACCES Employment (GTA)
- The Centre for Education & Training (TCET) (GTA)
- St Stephen's Community House (Toronto)



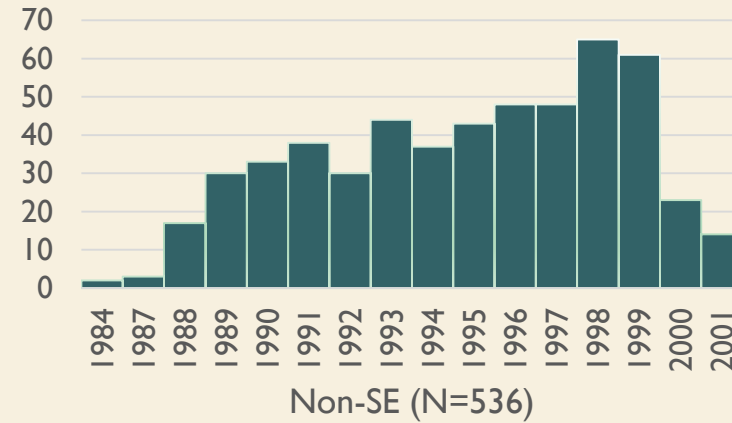
FIRST LOOK
AT BASELINE
SURVEY DATA

THE PARTICIPANTS

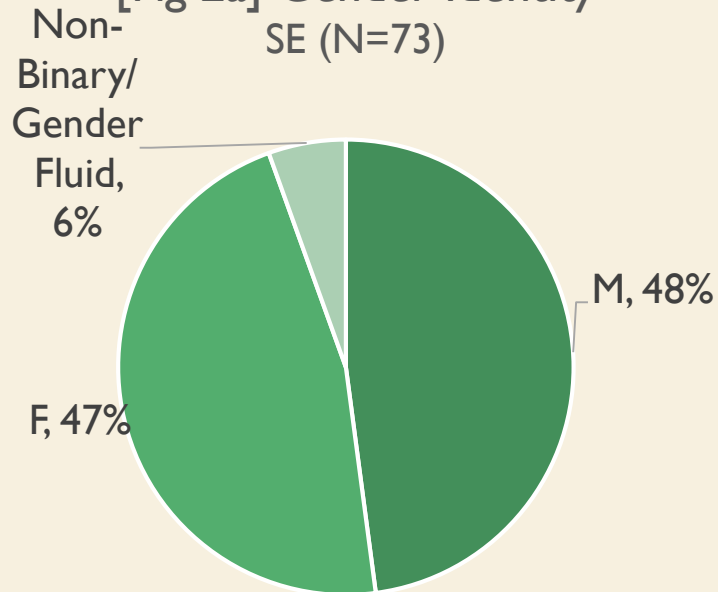
[Fig 1b] Year of Birth



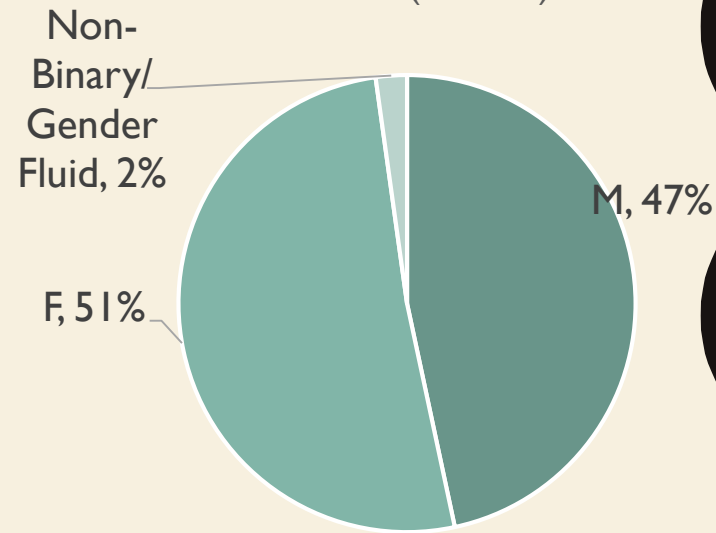
[Fig 1a] Year of Birth



[Fig 2a] Gender Identity
SE (N=73)



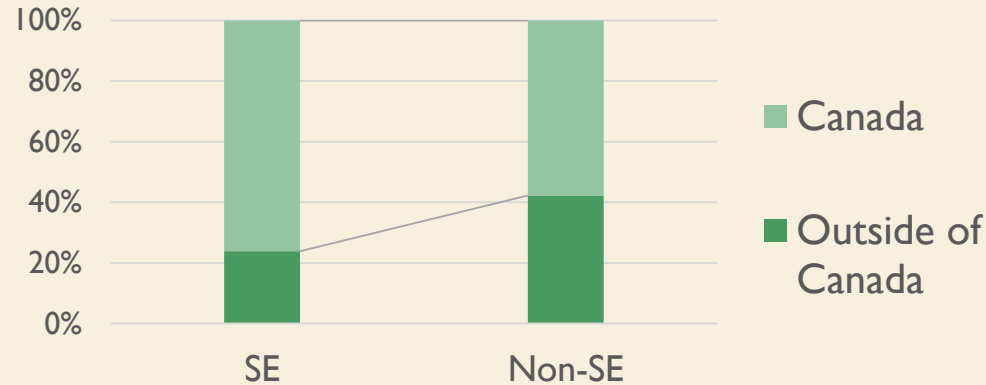
[Fig 2b] Gender Identity
Non-SE (N=534)



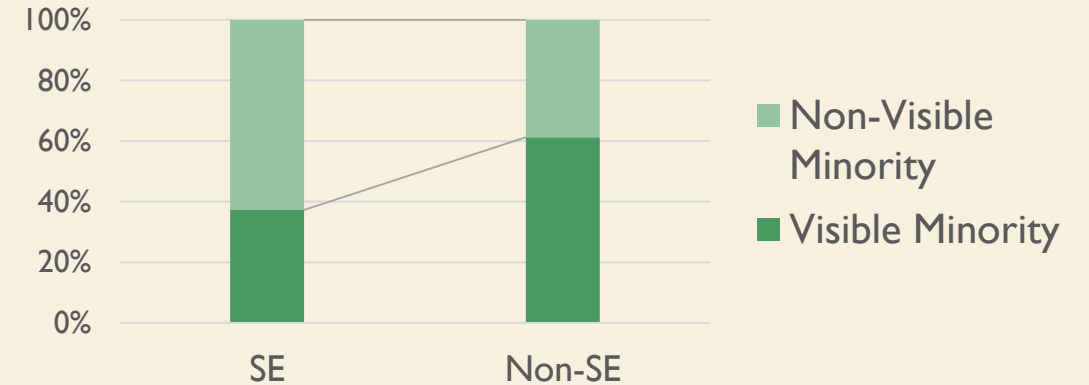
- 619 participants completed the baseline survey between Sep 2017 and Dec 2018.
- Average age for both the SE and non-SE group is 22/23 years
- A greater proportion of SE participants identified as non-binary or gender fluid

THE PARTICIPANTS (CONT'D)

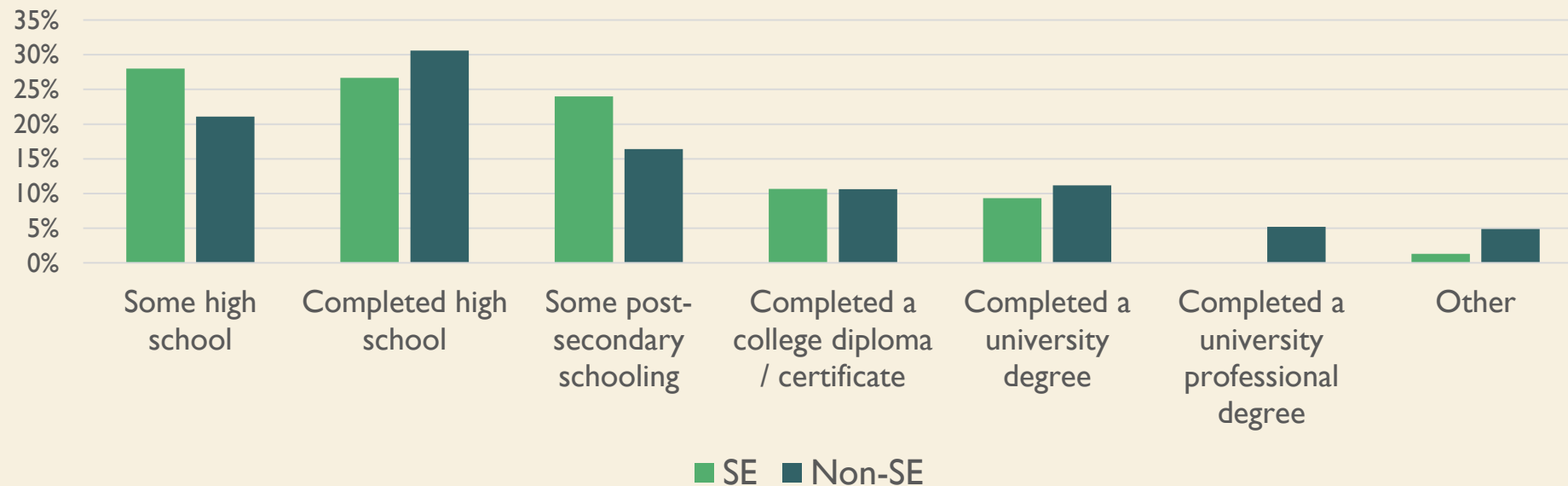
[Fig 3] Country of Birth
Non-SE N=508 SE N=71



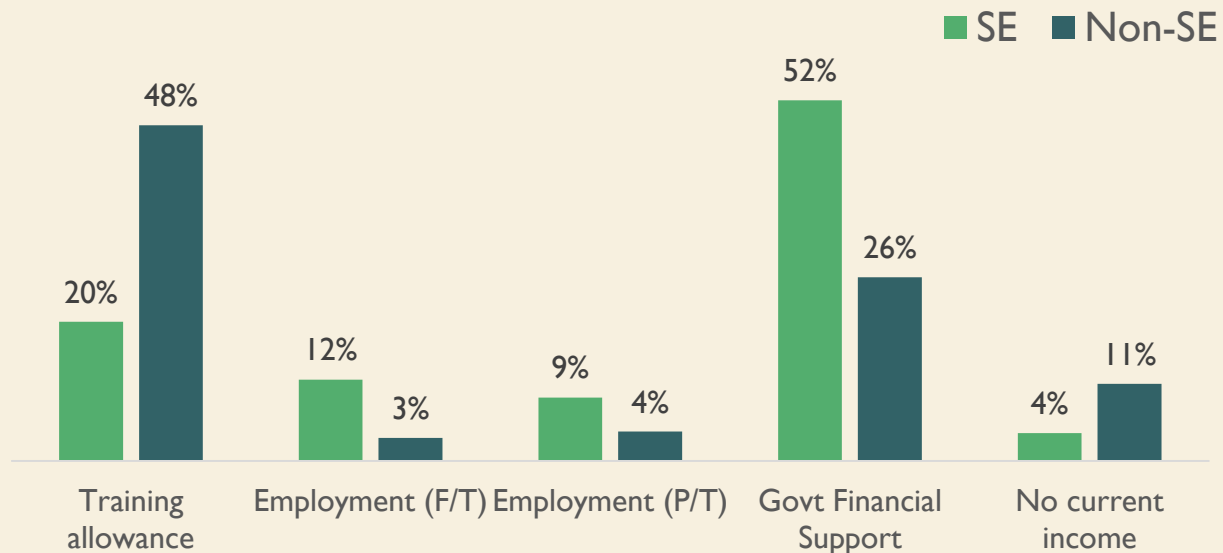
[Fig 4] Visible Minority
SE N=67 Non-SE N=482



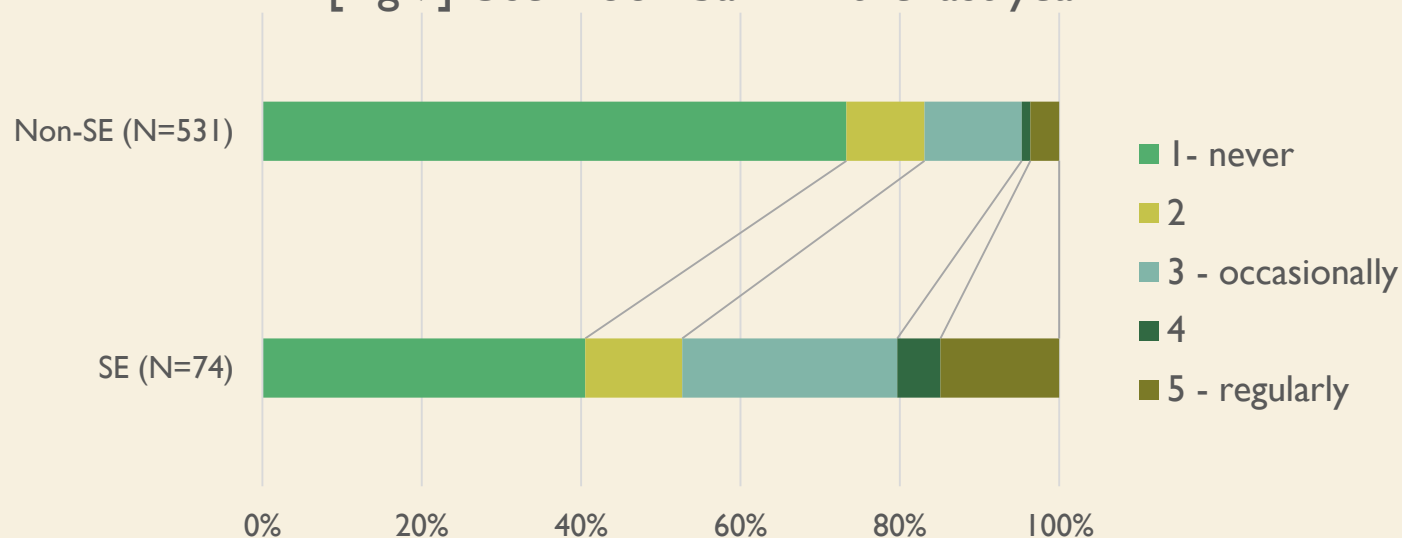
[Fig 5] Highest level of schooling



[Fig 6] Income sources*



[Fig 7] Used food bank in the last year

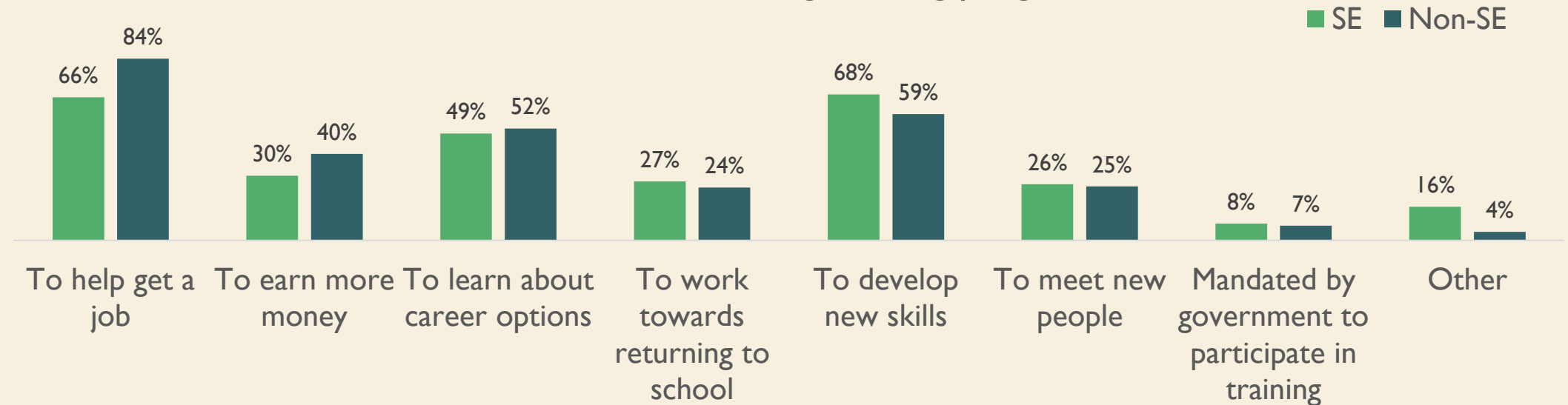


ECONOMIC SITUATION OF PARTICIPANTS

- A much larger portion of non-SE participants reported receiving training allowance, while a much larger portion of SE participants reported receiving financial assistance; *note missing data and reliability issue with income question
- Among those who reported their training allowance, the training allowance accounted for the majority of their income.
- The proportion of participants who reported at least an occasional use of food bank or other similar services was much higher for the SE group (47.3%) compared to the non-SE group (16.9%)
- Housing:
 - For Non-SE participants, 37% rent, 48% live with family, 3% couch-surfing/ staying in shelter
 - For SE participants, 47% rent, 18% live with family, 18% are couch-surfing/ staying in shelter

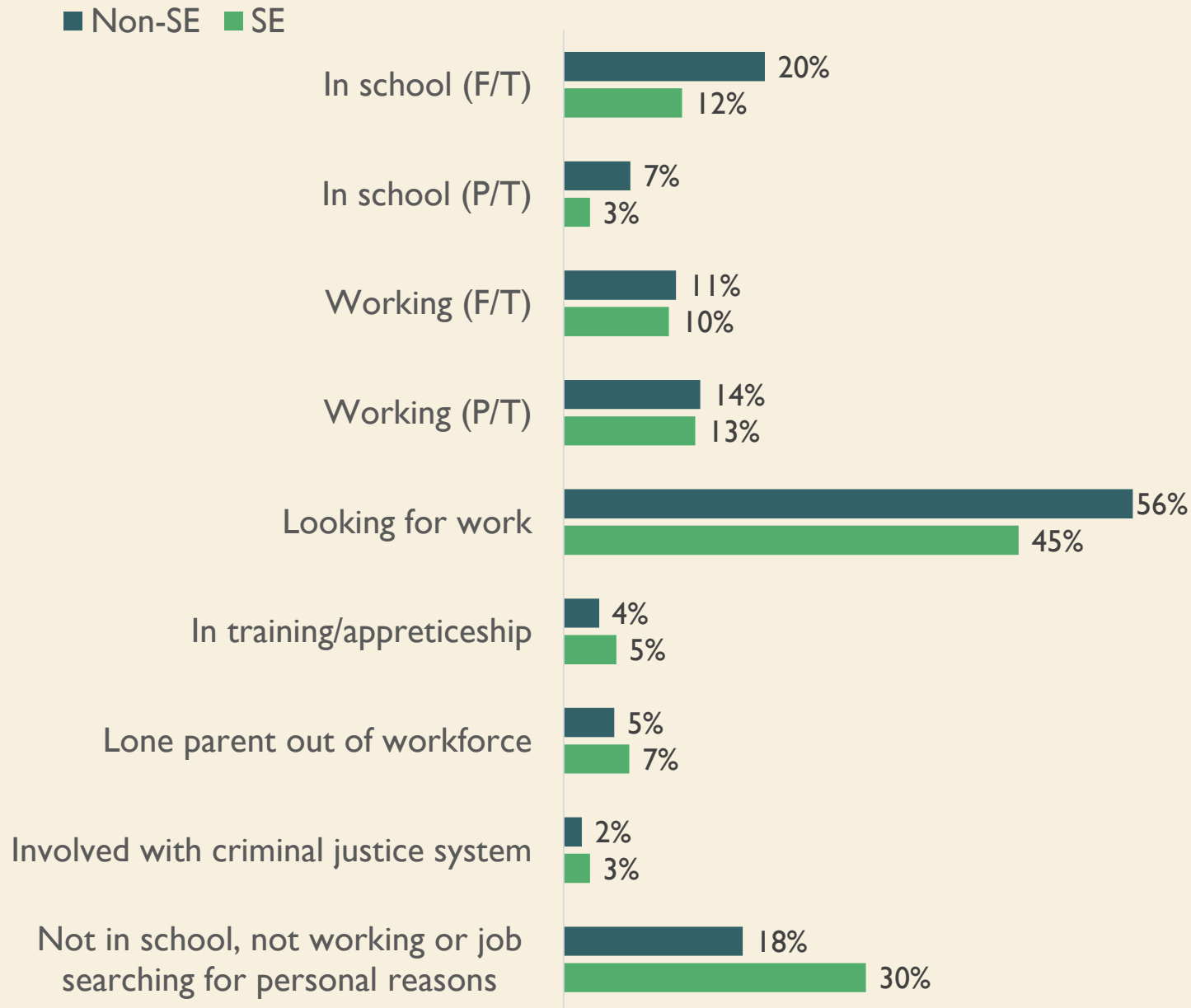
TRAINING, JOB SEARCH AND THE FUTURE

Reason for entering training program



- Other reasons for entering program given by SE participants include getting sector-specific experience, getting back into a routine, and personal development; for non-SE participants, reasons included language development & supportive environment
- The participants talked about a wide range of work that they would like to be doing in three years' time, including social and community service, healthcare, business, entrepreneurship and construction/trades.
- The definitions of success were extremely varied for the participants from personal happiness and wellbeing to financial stability.
- Income expectations in three years were in the range of \$20-40 per hour for most of the participants. After three years, many of the participants would like to complete some level of post-secondary education.

Prior to entering training program, participants were:



TRAINING, JOB SEARCH AND THE FUTURE (CONT'D)

- Smaller proportion of SE participants were in school or looking for work prior to entering their training program, compared to non-SE participants
- A greater proportion of SE participants noted they were not in school, not working, and not job-searching for personal reasons prior to starting their training program, as compared to the non-SE participants

Barriers to employment/job search



TRAINING, JOB SEARCH AND THE FUTURE (CONT'D)

- The biggest differences between the SE and non-SE groups lie in the much higher proportions of SE participants who indicated they fear losing government financial assistance, mental health challenges, interview anxiety, access to a computer, and lack of schooling as barriers to their employment or job search
- A greater proportion of non-SE participants noted language barrier and lack of Canadian work experience as barriers to employment; this reflects the higher proportion of non-Canadian born in the non-SE group

LIFE SATISFACTION

Asset Areas	SE M(SD)	Non-SE M(SD)	df	t
Financial Wellbeing	2.26(.84)	2.46(.84)	591	1.79
Personal Wellbeing	3.04(.84)	3.39(.90)	605	3.11*
Access to Services	3.41(.83)	3.65(.92)	600	2.39*
Human Capital	3.34(.81)	3.53(.78)	600	1.92
Family & Community Relations	3.17(.77)	3.42(.85)	598	2.27*

* $p < .05$

Examples of the items participants rated under different Asset Areas

Financial Wellbeing Scale

- Personal income
- Household income
- Savings
- Ability to borrow money
- How much money you owe others
- Ability to pay for food
- Ability to pay for housing
- Enough money to pay bills

Personal Wellbeing Scale

- Motivation
- Self-confidence
- Ability to speak out
- Optimism
- Self worth
- Stress level
- Health

- Using a scale of 1-5, the participants rated their level of satisfaction on a series of items belonging to 5 areas of wellbeing: Financial Wellbeing, Personal Wellbeing, Access to Services, Human Capital, Family & Community Relations
- For each asset area, the item scores were averaged into a scale score for each participant (i.e., each participant had a score for each of the 5 areas of wellbeing)
- Across all 5 asset areas, the SE group had lower ratings (i.e., less satisfied with all 5 asset areas) as compared to the non-SE group
- In independent samples t-tests, the difference between the SE and non-SE groups were statistically significant for the 3 areas: Personal Wellbeing, Access to Services, Family & Community Relations

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

In our sample, there is marked differences in profile between youth who are supported in social enterprises and youth in more conventional, classroom-based training programs

The overall picture suggests that participants from SEs as a group were in greater precarity at baseline (i.e., higher proportion of SE participants who had less schooling, accessed food banks at least occasionally, experienced barriers to employment relating to mental health and fear of losing government financial assistance, as compared to participants from non-SE participants; SE participants also expressed lower satisfaction with the different areas of wellbeing examined)

Non-Canadian born and less-precarious groups tend to use non-SE programs over SE programs

NEXT STEPS

- 6-month and 1-year follow-up surveys are underway
 - 6 month surveys end June/July 2019 and 1 year surveys end Jan 2020
- 6-month survey data will provide updates on people's employment status, their perception of the helpfulness of the training program they attended, and satisfaction in the 5 asset areas
- Comparison between baseline and 6-month data will present how people's perception of their wellbeing changed in the 5 five asset categories