

EuSARF2025

TRANSFORMATION, TRANSITION AND INNOVATION IN CHILD WELFARE

Date

**8-12 September
2025**

Preconferences

**8-9 September
2025**

Main conference

**10-12 September
2025**

**University of Zagreb Faculty of Education
and Rehabilitation Sciences
Zagreb, Croatia**

Organizers: European Scientific Association on residential
and Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EuSARF) and
University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences
EUSARF2025 is under the auspices of the University of Zagreb



EuSARF

EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION
ON RESIDENTIAL AND FAMILY CARE
FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



Employment pathways of care-leavers in South Africa

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10 September 2025



Introduction to youth employment in South Africa

- ❖ High rates of youth unemployment
 - SA (Jan-Mar 2025, age 15-24): 62.4%
 - Croatia (Mar 2025, 15-24): 16.1%
- ❖ Employment pathways shaped by race and sex
- ❖ Massive inequality
- ❖ Very limited job creation and job-seeking programmes

So, what are the **pathways of employment** for care-leavers in South Africa?



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TOWN**

Healing Heartbroken Children



20 YEARS
— 2005-2025 —

Our Future. Reimagined.



Methodology



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Our Future. Reimagined.

- ❖ Growth Beyond the Town, longitudinal study, 2012–2024 (12 years)
- ❖ 2020 – focused study on employment pathways (job timelines)
 - ❖ 63 participants interviewed in late 2020 / early 2021
 - ❖ 34 had a work history = study sample
- ❖ Supplemented & validated with data from annual interviews, up to 2024
- ❖ Descriptive analysis
- ❖ 6 female, 28 male
- ❖ Aged out at ~17.7 years (mode 18, range 15–19)
- ❖ Out of care for ~6.8 years (range 3–9)
- ❖ ~4.7 interviews each (range 1–8), including pathway interview

Coding employment pathways

3 component characteristics



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1. **Focus** - coherent focus across their jobs vs diverse, disconnected jobs
 - ❖ Two-thirds had focus
 - ❖ *Over a seven-year period of out of care, Ramond was engaged in handyman work, employed in a series of short-term jobs, replacing lights for the city, painting, renovating a garage, installing pre-paid water meters, more painting and building the foundations for a house.*
2. **Sustainability** - steady flow of work, with few/short unemployment
 - ❖ Half had sustainability
 - ❖ *Jacob has held 14 different jobs over nine years (one of the two longest participants out of care). Some of these were brief - two for 2 months and 2 for 6 months. However, he has managed to hold down some jobs for longer periods - 1 year detailing high-end cars and repairing leather seats, and 1 year as a floor manager at a fast-food restaurant.*
3. **Progression** - quality, skill, remuneration improves over time
 - ❖ Less than a fifth had progression
 - ❖ *Nhlanhla had a series of unskilled brief jobs. Five years out of care she started her own small business, which closed. Then started another business*

Employment pathways

building on the three components



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Path	Description
Stalling	No components evident: Mostly short-term unskilled jobs, with periods of unemployment and little to no consistency in career focus
Hatching	One component evident: Only one of a consistent career focus, sustained work or emerging future potential, suggesting a tentative potential employment pathway emerging
Advancing	Two components evident: Suggesting advancement towards a successful employment pathway
Cooking	All three components evident: A successful employment pathway characterised by a clear career focus, sustained work and actual or immanent advancement

Stalling – One fifth (n=7)



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Andile	8 years out of care	Employment Pathway: Stalling
Date	Employment	Description
2012		Disengaged from care, age 18
2013	Unemployed	Unemployed
2013	Formal	Waiter at a restaurant (2 months), earning R2000/week – fired for coming late repeatedly (3 warnings)
2014	Formal	Waiter at a coffee shop (4 months)
2014	Formal	Field marketer for a retail company
2014	Formal	Modelling
2014	Unemployed	Unemployed, because “God told me I do not have to work”
2015	Formal	Waiter at a coffee shop
2015	Formal	Personal trainer
2015	Formal	Sales for an online retail company
2015	Formal	Customer consultant on nutrition and sports at a health shop (6 months)
2016	Formal	Logistics, then sales, then admin at one legal firm (2.5 years) – fired due a conflict that escalated to physical violence
2018	Formal	Sales for a health insurance company (9 months)
2019	Unemployed	– Fired
2020	Informal	Cleaning cars (1 month)
2020	Unemployed	Currently unemployed and living in a shelter

No criteria met:

Despite various jobs and several potential careers (paralegal), none came to fruition. After 8 years, unemployed & unhoused

Hatching – One quarter (n=9)



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Riyaad	8 years out of care	Employment Pathway: Hatching
Date	Employment	Description
2015		Disengaged from care, age 15 (note the early disengagement from care)
2017		Unemployed, not studying
2017	Formal	Wiring and electrical work for electrical company
2018	Formal	Same electrical company (a few months)
2018	Formal	Lighting, sound & staging for an events company
2019	Formal	Air conditioning company (5 months)
2019	Formal	Supermarket (4 months)
2019	Formal	Lighting, sound & staging for the previous events company (several months, until COVID-19 lockdown)
2020	Formal	Painting company (7 months)
2022		Unemployed
2023	Formal	Welder for an agency working to develop communities

Focus :

Little unemployment, focus on electrical and maintenance work, but all in short-term jobs and no progression after 8 years

Advancing – A little under half (n=14)



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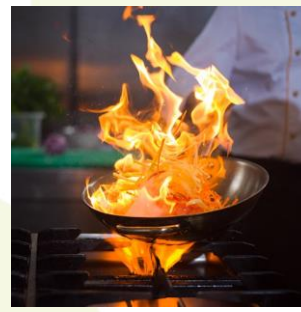
Our Future. Reimagined.

Lucy	8 years out of care	Employment Pathway: Advancing
Date	Employment	Description
2016		Disengaged from care, age 17
2017	Formal	Worked as a hairdresser (1 year)
2017	Formal	China Shop at a supermarket
2018	Formal	Home-based care (1.5 years)
2019		Unemployed at time of interview
2019	Formal	Worked in a China shop (2 years)
2019		Unemployed
2020	Formal	Worked in a supermarket (2 weeks)
2020	Formal	Working as a hairdresser (a few months)
2022	Formal	Working as a cashier at the same supermarket as in 2017
2024	Formal	Still a cashier at the same supermarket

Focus & Sustainability:

Employed most of the time, focus on service industry, but all in low-income, unskilled jobs

Cooking – One tenth (n=4)



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Roland	7 years out of care	Employment Pathway: Cooking
Date	Employment	Description
2013		Disengaged from care, age 19
2014	Formal	Till operator at department store
2015		Unemployed
2016		Unemployed
2017		Studied a chef diploma course, Earned a small stipend
2018	Formal	Chef de partie at a high-end restaurant
2019	Formal	Chef de partie at the same high-end restaurant
2020	Formal	Chef de partie at the same high-end restaurant

Focus, Sustainability & Progression:
Slow start, studied, now 4-5 years as Chef de Partie

Implications



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Our Future. Reimagined.

- ❖ Diversity in employment pathways

- ❖ About half progressed well (advancing or cooking)
- ❖ About half not progressing (stalled or hatching)
- ❖ Quick entry into work does not predict better pathways later on

- ❖ Key lessons for aftercare support:

1. Support to complete or continue education and training
2. Education on the three components and 4 pathways
3. Employment agents to get back into work swiftly after exiting a job
4. Mentoring to maintain longer-term jobs
5. Employment counselling on how to climb the job ladder

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