



**1st International
Care Leavers Convention
2020, India**

Report

Landscape Survey: Care Leavers' response to covid-19



Background

Care Leavers or Care experienced youth are young persons, who have lived in Alternative Care settings (Institutional care, kinship share, foster care, etc.) as a child and have left them at the age of 18 years. Having lived in highly protected and controlled environment till the age of 18, they find it difficult to live independently in the Society. The transition from living in a protective care facility to independent living often brings a host of difficulties, due to the absence of a pivotal family-like ecosystem, minimal community integration, and limited ownership of essential resources, at the care setting like that of a Child Care Institution (CCI). This leaves them with no confidence in their own agency, lacking basic life skills, disrupted education, they are often left with little job opportunities and stop dreaming or aspiring in life. To settle for the early start, they are pushed to get into menial jobs and often stigmatised in the society. It clearly lays out that the condition of female Care Leavers, as compared to their male counterparts is even worse, and may even land them in very difficult circumstances.

They are already a marginalised group who often face significant social and economic disadvantage. And now they are vulnerable to increased risks during the COVID-19 crisis, as people become more and more reliant on close family and friends support. For many care leavers, who have limited social networks, the ongoing and increasing social distancing measures will mean social isolation, which will in turn increase their vulnerability. As a group they are overrepresented in the homeless population and the criminal justice system. Now, as a result of COVID-19, these groups face heightened risks.

The onslaught of covid-19 and its consequences has been unprecedented. With the current nationwide lockdown across countries, the public health crisis is taking the shape of a human rights crisis that is unimaginable at this point of time. There is enough evidence to suggest that the children, women and youth are the most affected by such crisis and the especially the vulnerable groups which experience exacerbated vulnerabilities.

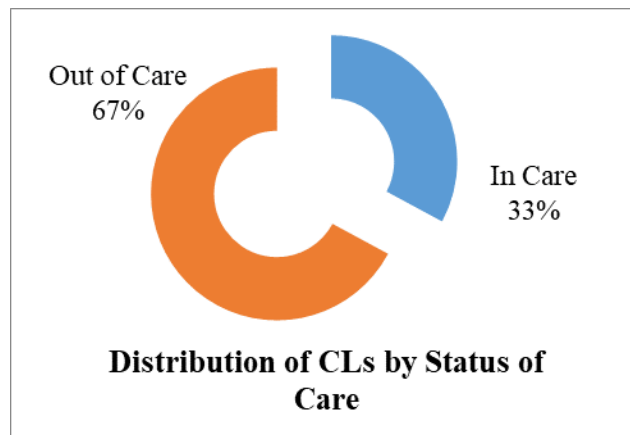
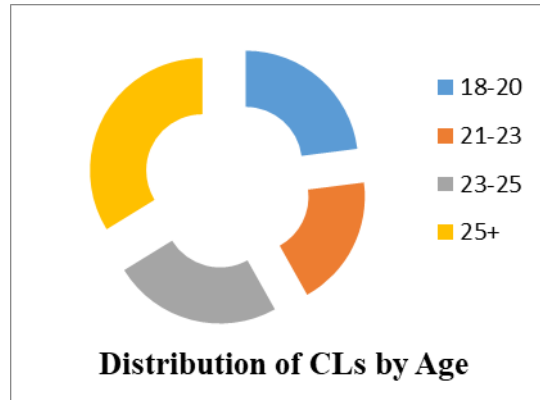
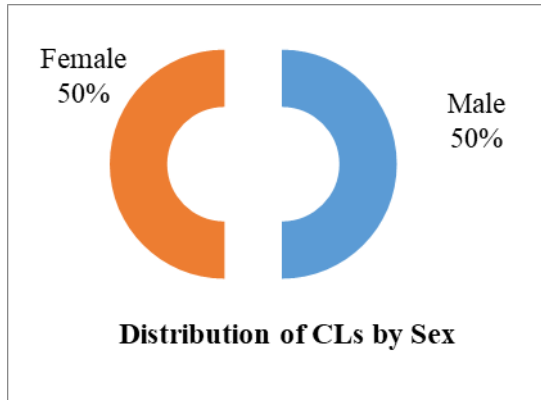
As with many young adults, care leavers (youth exiting Alternative Care settings) will be vulnerable to financial insecurity due to precarious employment and the gig economy. However, some care leavers are at significantly higher risk because they may not have the back-up of family or friends that are able to help. **The impact of social isolation and the understandable increased levels of anxiety surrounding the virus will exacerbate care leavers' vulnerability to mental-health difficulties.** The online world will be a lifeline to combat loneliness and keep care leavers connected to practitioners for vital help.

The organizing committee of the [1st International Care Leavers Convention- India](#) conducted a brief survey to understand the situation of Care Leavers, how they are coping up with the pandemic and what kind of support is being organized for them, if any at all. The survey aimed to capture the dominant thoughts of young people during this time, support organized for them, challenges faced by this vulnerable group and their suggestions on what kind of changes they would like to see for Care Leavers in a post covid-19 world. The following report presents the findings of this survey.



Demographic Profile

The survey received responses from almost 28 countries out of which about 52% belonged to the Indian nationality. The survey sample constitutes of an equal representative sample of male and female Care leavers. All the Care leavers within the ambit of this survey were between the ages of 18 years to 38 years, with 35.71% in the age group of 25 plus years. Of the Care leavers covered under this study, about 67% of them have already exited from Care and are currently living independently.



With the aim to capture the feelings and thoughts of the Care leavers going through these tumultuous times, we were able to divide the survey into common themes highlighted in the answers of the Care leavers and the same have been summarized and presented herein statistically:

Dominant thoughts of the Care leavers during this time

Interestingly, whilst conducting this survey, the dominant thoughts and emotions which have crossed the minds of Care leavers seem to be leaning towards pessimism with almost 52% answers being in the affirmative, however about 21% of the Care leavers seemed hopeful and optimistic about the situation as well. Further, the general worry with regards to the economic



factors, food safety, and unemployment, the Care leavers' seemed to be shrouded with a lot of mental burden since many of them expressed their feelings of depression, loneliness, shaken confidence due to unproductiveness, anxiety, uncertainty, fear of losing one's existence, anger and confusion. One of the Care leavers expressed himself by saying that he was *'feeling a bit less confident than before as the pandemic is not letting us continue our daily productive routine (classes) and don't have anything else to do other than sleep and wonder about my future.'*

It was also noticed that male Care leavers seemed to be slightly more pessimistic and worrisome than female counterparts. Apart from that 25% of the Care leavers did depict their emotion of having mixed or confused feelings about the situation. The same has been depicted herein below in *Table No. 1*.

It is also important to highlight the fact that the pessimism rate of the Care leavers who are out of care was 18% higher than the Care leavers presently in care. This leads on for us to wonder the grave situation the Care leavers out of care maybe facing without much support mechanism and should in turn serve as a wake-up call for us. However, balancing out the feeling, the optimism rate of the Care leavers out of care was also about 7% higher when compared to the in care Care leavers. The same has been depicted herein below in *Table No. 2*.

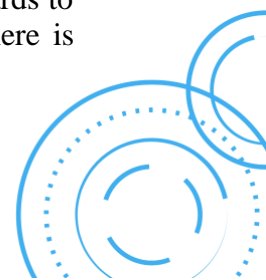
Dominant thoughts by Gender			
Category	Total	M	F
Pessimistic	38	19	17
Optimistic	15	7	8
Confused	10	4	6
Mixed Feelings	8	5	3
Total	70	35	34

Table No. 1

Dominant thoughts by Status of Care			
Category	Total	In care	Out of care
Pessimistic	37	12	25
Optimistic	15	5	10
Confused	10	3	7
Mixed Feelings	8	3	5
Total	70	23	47

Table No. 2

The survey helps to understand that the Care leavers seem to be compassionate and encompassing rather than being self-focused. Coupled with worry and pessimism with regards to the economic factors, food safety, unemployment and the migrant laborers' situation, there is



hope for a better future, an opportunity for self-reflection and an occasion for working towards the needs of other vulnerable groups who are being affected by covid-19.

Challenges faced by the Care leavers

In these challenging times, it is eminent to understand the unique kind of difficulties being faced by the Care leavers. About 65% of the Care leavers answered in affirmative with regards to the problems faced by them. It was also observed that the ratio of male and female with regards to the problems faced was almost 17:15, indicating that male Care leavers are hard hit by the pandemic and in care and out of care Care leavers was 29:41. This has been depicted in Table No. 3 and Table No. 4 respectively.

2.A Challenges faced or not				2.A Challenges faced or not			
	Total	M	F		Total	In care	Out of care
Yes	46	25	21	Yes	46	17	29
No	22	9	13	No	22	6	16
No answer	2	1	1	No answer	2	0	2
Total	70	35	35	Total	70	23	47

Table No. 3

Table No. 4

After establishing the fact regarding the challenges being faced it was imperative to understand what type of challenges are being faced by the Care leavers. Not surprisingly about 39% of the Care leavers are facing economic challenges with regards to exhaustion of financial resources, unemployment, scarcity of food items, and payment of rent amongst others, and 21% of them are facing educational challenges.



CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CARE LEAVERS



"My exam and training was about to be over and I prepared fully for them and I waited for this to happen from a very long time but this pandemic has spoiled all my plans. This makes me depressed and full of negative thoughts. To cope with it, I scheduled my daily routine in a productive way and tried to be busy so I was left with minimum time to think negatively and ultimately it is helping me understand myself even better and I am feeling better from before."

However, it is a delight to see as to how some of the Care leavers, in spite of such challenging times are able to maintain that hopeful spirit. One of the Care leavers pointed out that saying, "My exam (12th class) and training was about to be over and I prepared fully for them and I even planned for getting a job and shift to my new room and I waited for this to happen from a very long time but this pandemic has spoiled all my plans and this gets me a little bit depressed and my mind was getting filled by several negative thoughts. To cope with it, I scheduled my daily routine in a productive way and tried to be busy as much as I can so I was left with minimum time to think negatively and ultimately it is helping me understand myself even better and I am feeling better from before."

Nevertheless, other important hurdles faced by them involve personal, social, health related and psychological challenges such as inability to spend time with other caregivers, lack of communication and awareness about the global pandemic and failure to travel back home due to suspended transportation. It is pertinent to note that the ratio of economic and educational challenges between a male and female is almost 3:2 leading on to the fact that though there might be a slight gender disparity however quantitatively, the female sect is facing almost similar challenges as men. The same can be depicted in *Table No. 5*.

Further it was noticed that Care leavers out of care faced 5 times more economic and psychological challenges compared to in care Care leavers. This data, yet again is a shout out to the government agencies working with Care leavers to make immediate provisions with respect to social, economic and psychological support for the Care leavers out of care. This can be further depicted by *Table No. 6*.

2.B Type of Challenge faced

2.B Type of Challenge faced



	Total	M	F		Total	In care	Out care
Economic	19	11	7	Economic	18	4	14
Personal	6	4	2	Personal	6	2	4
Social	4	4	0	Social	4	4	0
Physical Health	2	1	1	Physical Health	2	1	1
Psychological	6	2	4	Psychological	6	1	5
Educational	10	6	4	Educational	10	9	1
Total	47	28	18	Total	46	21	25

Table No. 5

Mechanisms and

Table No. 6

The survey further purports to the fact as to how the Government and the other authorities have aided the Care leavers and whether have they been able to provide a suitable mechanism for the Care leavers. About 57% of the Care leavers responded in the affirmative citing the noteworthy contributions made by the authorities inclusive of provision of ration through PDS, monetary support, house care facilities, follow up by NGO's regarding the monthly allowance of the Care leavers and social workers visiting the foster families. However, 12% Care leavers have taken upon themselves to cope with the situation and have become their own support system by developing certain coping mechanisms such as writing, binge watching, dancing, cooking, reading, connecting with friends and family, staying away from misinformation, meditation and engaging in other creative activities to soothe the mind.

Interestingly, the survey points out that the aid provided to the Care leavers has been equally provided to both male and female and Care leavers in care and out of care without any disparity. However, it also clarifies the fact that the Care leavers who are self-dependent are all out of care and capable of taking care of themselves. This has been depicted in *Table No. 7* and *Table No. 8* respectively.

3.A Support received by Gender			
	Total	M	F
Received	40	20	20
Not Received	22	11	10
Self-Dependent	9	4	5
Total	70	34	35

Table No. 7

3.A Support Received by Status of Care			
	Total	In care	Out care
Received	40	20	20
Not Received	21	3	18
Self-Dependent	9	0	9
Total	70	23	47

Table No. 8



The survey showcases the type of support the Care leavers have received. Almost 32% of the Care leavers received aid with respect to subsistence needs such as health and nutrition, followed by 17% psychosocial support and housing facilities and about 15% of financial support. It was also noted that the ratio of male and female with respect to subsistence needs was almost 3:2 and financial support was 1:4 respectively, pointing to the fact that women Care leavers are in more arduous need of monetary help. It shall also be conclusively determined that 1 out of every 3 Care leavers who are out of care shall require financial support in comparison to 1 out of every 6 Care leavers who are in care. This purports to the condition of the Care leavers out of care and compels the Government to take immediate action to provide aid to the Care leavers. The same can be depicted by *Table No. 9* and *Table No. 10*.

3.B Type of support received by Gender			
	Total	M	F
Health, food and nutrition	14	9	5
Financial support	6	1	5
Psychosocial support	7	3	4
Social awareness	2	1	1
Housing	7	4	3
Education	2	1	1
No information	3	2	1
Total	41	21	20

Table No. 9

3.B Type of support received by Status of Care			
	Total	In care	Out care
Health, food and nutrition	13	6	7
Financial support	6	1	5
Psychosocial support	7	3	4
Social awareness	2	2	0
Housing	7	5	2
Education	2	1	1
No information	3	1	2
Total	40	19	21

Table No. 10

Advice to fellow Care Leavers

The highlight of this survey was the amount of awareness the Care leavers showcased by enumerating certain tips and tricks for the other Care leavers to follow during this lockdown. It was seen that about 35% of the advice given to other care leavers was regarding health and safety measures and about 18% was about a skill development during this lockdown phase. There was equal amount of emphasis on knowing self and developing social relations at the moment. One of the Care leavers pointed out that One of the Care leavers mentioned beautifully, *"find something you enjoy doing, that can build yourself and others around you. Focus on the positive things that you have achieved as a care leaver. Listen to your inner self, motivate yourself, remind yourself of the destiny ahead of you. If you can take care of others do it. Avoid circumstances that lie to you about your vulnerability. You are capable of changing the society you live in."*



TIPS & TRICKS TO OTHER CLS



"Find something you enjoy doing ,that can build yourself and others around you. Focus on the positive things that you have achieved as a care leaver. Listen to your inner self, motivate yourself, remind yourself of the destiny ahead of you. If you can take care of others do it. Avoid circumstances that lie to you about your vulnerability. You are capable of changing the society you live in."

It was observed that about 76% females advised to develop a skill and almost 56% females advised about health issues. Further, 90% of the Care leavers out of care advised how important development of social care is and almost all the Care leavers out of care promoted campaigning and spreading awareness. The same can be depicted by *Table No. 11* and *Table No. 12*.

4.A Advice to other Care Leavers				
		Total	M	F
Skill development/skill enhancement		13	3	10
Financial security		6	4	2
Social relationships/keeping in touch/networking/bonding		11	9	2
Health knowing self/introspection		25	11	14
campaigning/collectivising		12	6	6
Total		3	2	1
		70	34	35

Table No. 11

4.A Advice to other Care Leavers				
		Total	Incare	Outcare
Skill development/skill enhancement		13	4	9
Financial security		6	2	4



Social relationships/keeping in touch/networking/bonding	11	1	10
Health	25	11	14
knowing self/introspection	12	5	7
campaigning/collectivising	3	0	3
Total	70	23	47

Table No. 12

Hope for the future

Be the current situation as may, however Care leavers have not lost sight about the future and were able to comment on the changes which they are hopeful for after the passing of this global pandemic. Almost 25% of the Care leavers seem to be hopeful for financial support, 14% for self-development and legal support inclusive of effective implementation of the JJ Act and aftercare laws, access to labour contracts and insurance for Care leavers. Further about 17% for better social networking facilities which included destigmatisation of foster care and setting up of network systems with better planning and support for effective interactions. The other things they were hopeful for range from health and nutrition to social awareness. Moreover, one of the Care leavers mentioned, "After the COVID 19 pandemic comes under control I would expect the structure of education to be more friendly and in favour of those who are leaving their homes and are aspiring for building a career. I want the system to be friendly enough so that we get an identity of our own after we leave homes."

Interestingly, the ratio of male and female hopeful for financial support was 1:1, overcoming the gender disparity outlook however about 90% of the females were hopeful for self-development in contrast with males. It is noteworthy here that the Care leavers out of care were almost 45% more hopeful for financial aid, 50% more hopeful for social networking and 90% more hopeful for legal awareness. The same is depicted by *Table No. 13* and *Table No. 14*.

5.A What are they hopeful for in future			
	Total	M	F
Financial Support	18	9	9
Psychosocial and emotional wellbeing	7	4	3
Health and nutrition	3	1	2
Legal and legislative	11	8	2
Social awareness on care	4	2	2
Social networks of Care leavers	12	7	5
Self-Development	9	1	8
Unsure	7	3	4
Total	70	34	35

Table No. 13



5.A What are they hopeful for in future			
	Total	In care	Out care
Financial Support	18	5	13
Psychosocial and emotional wellbeing	7	3	4
Health and nutrition	3	1	2
Legal and legislative	10	1	9
Social awareness on care	4	2	2
Social networks of Care leavers	12	3	9
Self-Development	9	2	7
Unsure	7	4	3
Total	70	21	49

Table No. 14

The organizing committee intends to keep the online conversation with Careleavers a continued process and hopes that the resiliency of care leavers will ensure that they impart this hopefulness at a larger scale if given the chance and deal with the current problem with positivity.

