

# MY LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE



**“MY LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE”:  
A PERSPECTIVE OF YOUNG CARE  
LEAVERS ON THEIR CARE EXPERIENCE.  
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE  
PROCESS OF EVALUATION OF THE  
BRAZILIAN NATIONAL PLAN OF THE  
RIGHTS OF CHILDREN TO LIVE IN  
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.**

## **REALIZATION**

**National Movement of the Rights of Children  
to Live in Family and Community**

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# **PRESENTATION**

At the beginning of 2018 the Brazilian Movement for the Right of Children to Live in Family and Community (MNPFCF), in partnership with the international organization SOS Children's Villages Brasil, launched a campaign under the banner: "The Right to Live in Family and Community: a National Priority". The MNPFCF is a consolidated movement of non governmental organizations and centres of research that formed the working group that wrote the Brazilian National Plan for the Promotion, Protection and Defense of the Rights of Children and Adolescents to Live in Family and Community in 2006. Since its publication the movement has been key to its implementation and mobilization across Brazil. With the publication of the annual resolution of the UN General Assembly on the Rights of the Child in the 73rd Session in December 2018 that focussed on children without parental care, the need to undertake a national evaluation and update in Brazil of the National Plan of the Rights of Children to Live in Family and Community (PNCFC) became both timely and necessary. In July 2019, a partnership was formalized with the Brazilian National Secretariat for Social Services (SNAS) which led to the laying out of a plan of actions for the evaluation of the PNCFC which was further strengthened by collaboration with the Brazilian Institute of Applied Economic Research to carry out a multi-dimensional study of the plan and out of home care services, prevention policy and child centred adoption.

During the evaluation process all parts agreed that there was a need to involve and listen to young care leavers and to understand their impressions and views based on their first hand experience and involve these "young experts" formally in the evaluation of the PNCFC and its subsequent revision. With the redesign of the evaluation process in the context of the pandemic, the MNPFCF undertook the responsibility for carrying out the study and invited the research psychologist Dr. Luciana Cassarino-Perez, as a leading specialist in the subject to head up the project. She was ably supported by members of the Fazendo História Institute and offered further assistance by the professionals from the Brazilian National Secretariat of Social Services. Our very special thanks to them all, but particularly to Dr. Luciana Cassarino-Perez, who undertook the enormous challenge voluntarily and with absolute professionalism.

This research is undoubtedly a very significant step forward and the first of its kind as a national undertaking in Brazil. By hearing and listening to these young people, not only are their opinions valued and given the necessary legitimacy, but they also expose the urgency for progress in formulating specific policies for care leavers in Brazil. Our expectation is that we can contribute to the advancing of young care leavers in their transition to adult life, learning to promote services more consistent with these young people's needs and choices, and as such we are honoured to present this study.

Faternally

**Patrick Reason**

*National Secretary of the National  
Movement of the Rights of Children  
to Live in Family and Community*

Curitiba, Southern Brazil, 4th of November 2020

# THE STUDY

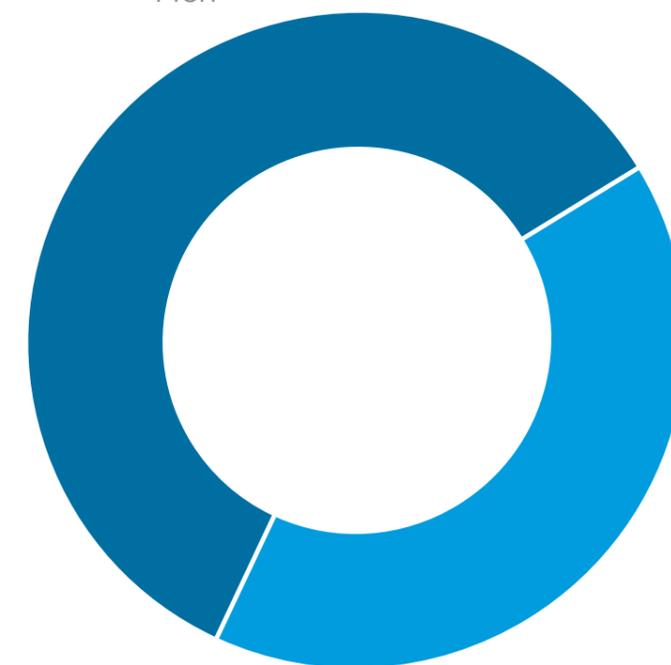
This study aimed to understand care-leavers' perspective, highlighting positive and negative experiences in relation to the three main dimensions of the PNCFC: (1) support for the family and prevention of family separation; (2) reorganization of alternative care services; and (3) adoption centered on the best interests of the child and adolescent.

The research heard the opinions of twenty-seven young people who had been in care services for children and adolescents, from the five different Brazilian macro-regions. This took place during the months of August and September 2020, using focus groups and individual interviews. All of these were carried out online respecting the implications of social distancing imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

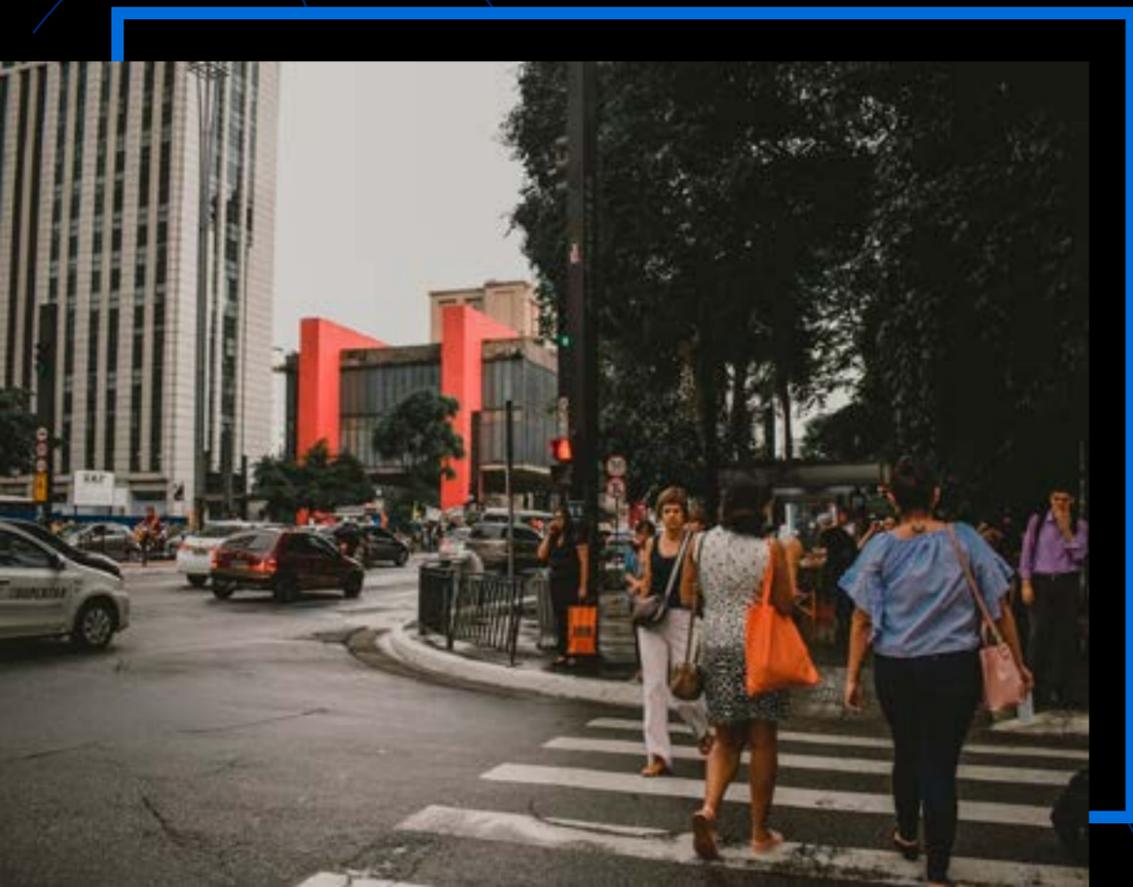
## CHARACTERIZATION OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

### GENDER

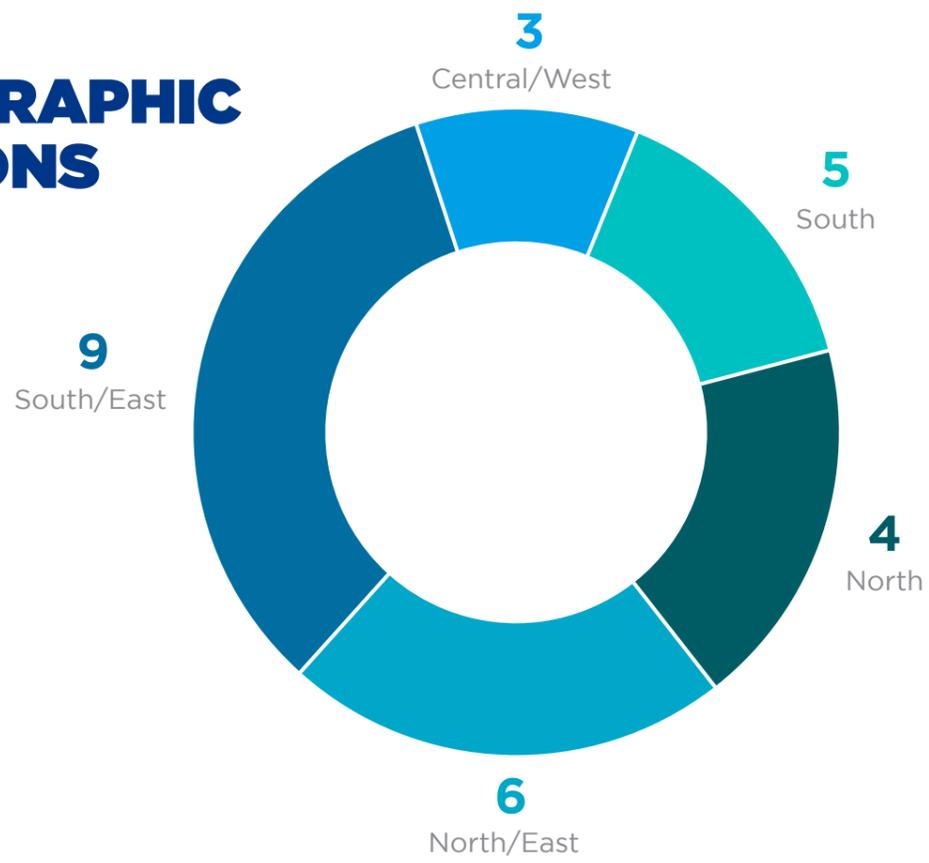
16  
Men



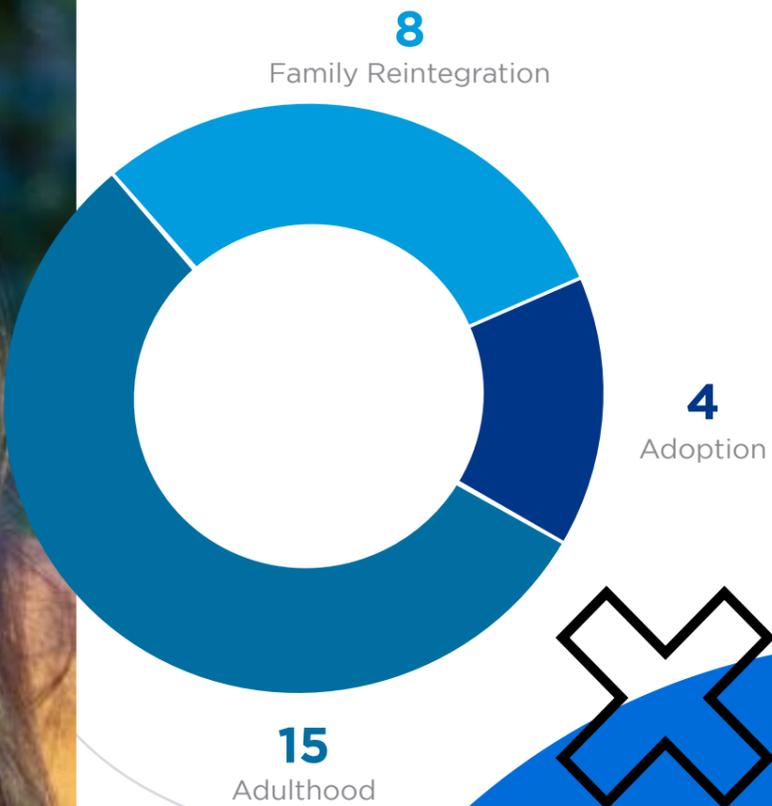
11  
Women



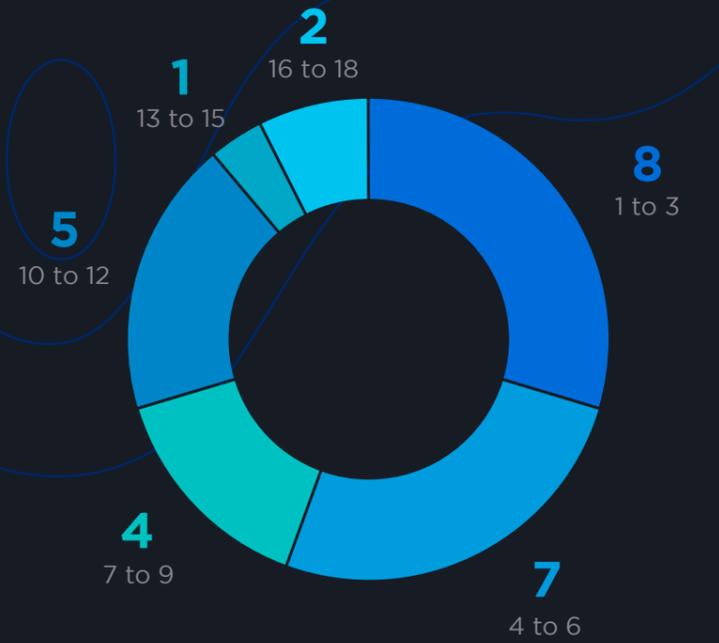
# GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS



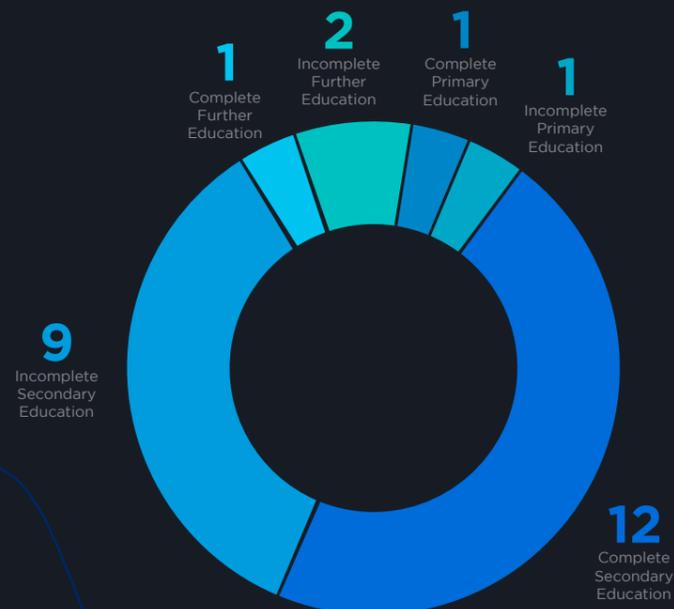
# MOTIVE FOR LEAVING CARE



# TIME IN CARE (YEARS)



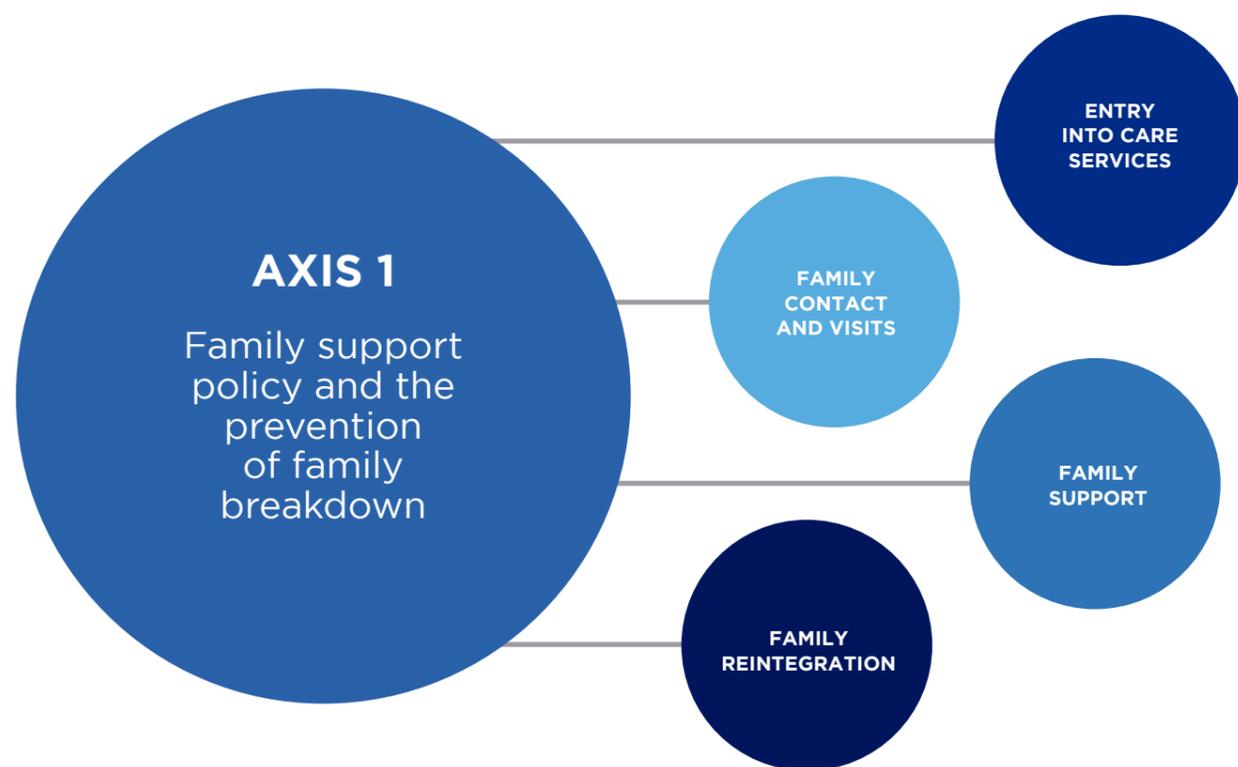
# SCHOOLING



# RESULTS

The results of this research were obtained through systemic analysis of the data collected in the focus groups and interviews. They are described below in the three thematic axes of the National Plan, with corresponding categories

and subcategories. These categories are described and represented by excerpts from the statements of the young people. The names of the participants were replaced by pseudonyms in order to preserve their identities.



## ENTRY INTO CARE SERVICES

For most of the young people interviewed, entry into alternative care services happened abruptly and without being aware at the time of the reasons for their removal from their family. According to the majority, the first contact made with their families before being taken into care was when the situation was already “very critical”.

*“No, there was no [preventive work]. (...) Then they arrived at my home, talked with my mother, they talked to me, and they took my things, and they already took me to the shelter. Get it? They got there and they just took me away”.*  
(Tulip, from Pará, 18 years old)

*“... My brothers and sisters and I were separated at the time, I had five siblings, with me there were six. They separated us. I have two sisters who were adopted and haven't seen for ten years. I have one that is still in care and there are others who are already adults and have left care”.*  
(Dorado, from Minas Gerais, 19 years old)

## FAMILY CONTACT AND VISITS

Many of the young people said that they did not receive visitors when they were in care, nor visit their relatives. Others mentioned that the visits took place sporadically and a few others stated that contact was maintained throughout their time in care.

*“... I felt very alone when in care, a visit makes such a difference, such a difference, and I felt alone. I saw time passing and I had no one to be able to talk or to say what was going on, so it was very difficult”.*  
(Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)

*“... I wasn't separated from my family, unlike others my family came and visited (...) and today my grandmother, I call her my mother, she is very grateful to them (the carers and professionals) because I have become the woman that I am today”.*  
(Jasmin, from Amazonas, 25 years old).

## FAMILY SUPPORT

Young people were very critical of the monitoring and support by social services for their families during the period in which they were in care. Many complained about the absence of this support and the consequences of this for them and the benefits that could have helped their family if this had happened consistently and with quality.

*“... if they had searched for him at the beginning when I went into care it could have been different. It could be that my father would have tried harder and want to stay with me. It could have been that it would be a different outcome, but it took too long to happen”.*  
(Lynx, from Pernambuco, 20 years old)

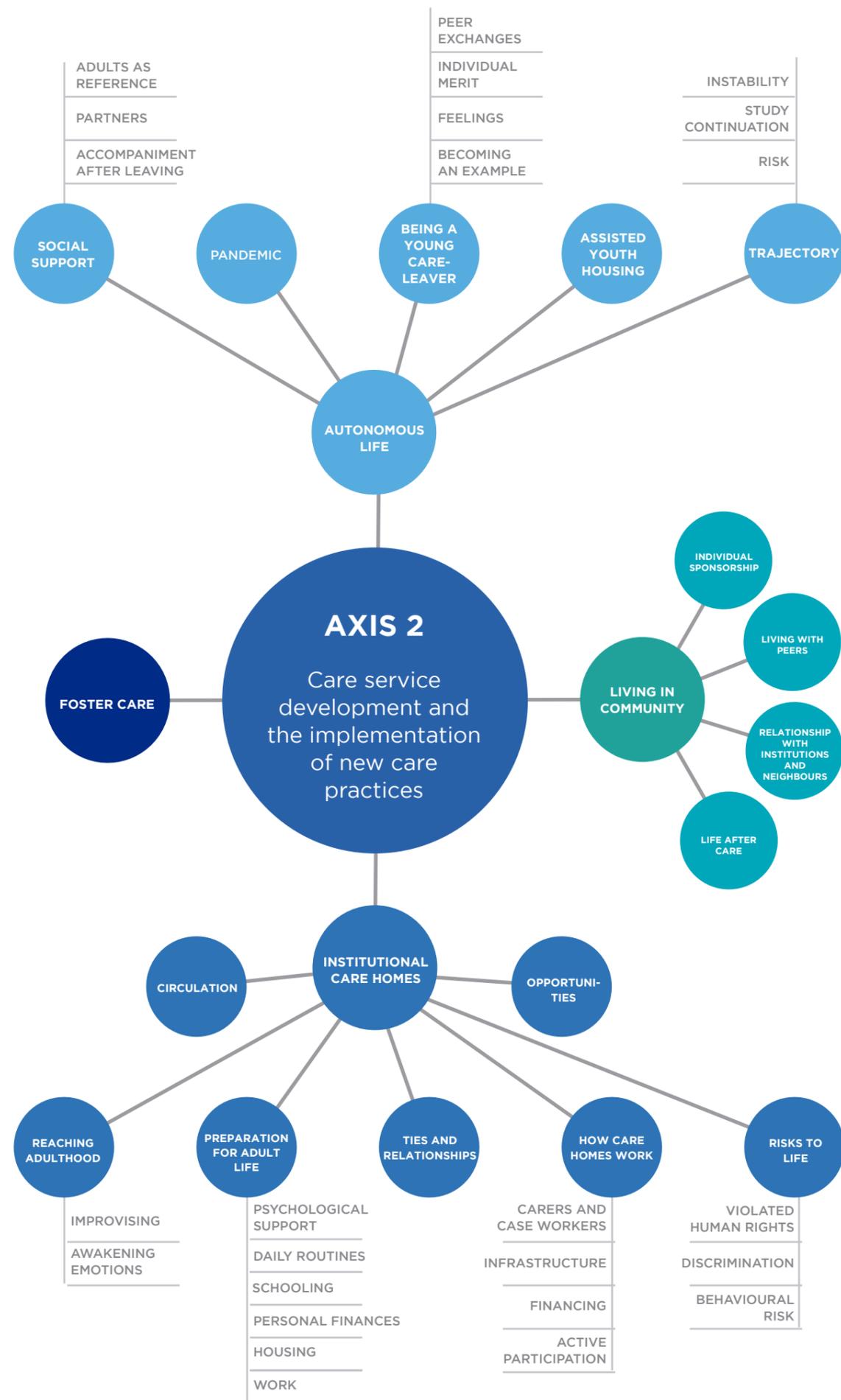
*“The difference that the [name of the institution] makes is this. The support that the visiting case worker gives to families can be to go to the health center with them, to help them get a job, to help with school, even help those children who have already left care”.*  
(Dorado, from Minas Gerais, 19 years old)

## FAMILY REINTEGRATION

Attempts to strengthen ties with family members was highlighted by the young people. Some reintegration experiences were not successful, carried out in an arbitrary manner, without a proper psychosocial study and in some cases without listening to and getting the consent of the child or adolescent. Successful reintegration with the families of origin was always after the continued monitoring of families.

*“... the team of social workers, they get desperate, focused solely on the return of the child or adolescent to the family, they end up being blind to other things. They focus only on strengthening ties between the teenagers and their relatives and they end up not seeing what's really going on”.*  
(Volans, from São Paulo, 19 years old)

*“So far, since I left [name of institution] it's been eight years already and even now they still call me, visit my house, see how I am, and see how the ties with the other family members is going. (...) their concern is not only if I'm still with my family, if I have a roof over my head or if I have food, their concern is with me and with my future going forward”.*  
(Lepus, from Ceará, 20 years old)



## INSTITUTIONAL CARE HOMES

The theme of institutional care was intensely debated by the young people in this study. There were countless experiences, opinions and suggestions given, as all 27 participants lived in at least one institutional care home. A very impactful aspect of the experiences reported was the large circulation of children and adolescents between different services. Many of the interviewees went through two, three, four or more care homes.

*"I went into care when I was 12, I spent time in five shelters in the city of Recife and one more there in Igaracu, in the metropolitan area".*  
(Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)

Regarding the infrastructure of shelters and homes, there were reports of services with excellent infrastructure, but also others in precarious conditions. There was also a number of young people who reported that they lived in institutions that housed more than 20 children in one care home.

*"I think so. A care home that has a high number of children something bad will always happen, because that's how it is. In a house with four children you already go crazy, imagine 37 children and teenagers together!"*  
(Serpens, from Minas Gerais, 23 years old)

*"The last care home that I lived in the bathrooms were disgusting, they stank. In the fourth home there was a leak (...) cleaning things lacked, things were ugly, not enough mattresses, some even had to sleep on the floor because they didn't have enough beds for the teenagers who arrived. Security was low and at one of the care homes the TV wasn't even working".*  
(Jasmin, from Amazonas, 24 years old)

During their time in care, the young people established ties and friendship with several members of the staff, that were, for some until now, crucial sources of support. But in some cases the unpreparedness of these professionals, excessive hours and overworked, and lack of motivation affected negatively the care offered.

*"Then it's a child screaming, a mess here, then an argument ... It's a family, it's the same as a family! Only a very large family, with a lot of people".*  
(Camélia, from São Paulo, 18 years old)

*"... the caregivers who took care of us, all were very involved and exercised a maternal role really. They were there for love. (...) unlike other people that are there, but sometimes their heart is not, and even do wrong and bad things. In our case in particular, there were very good people who were there wholeheartedly, and gave everything".*  
(Pegasus, from Tocantins, 20 years old)

*"An idea for improvement is better trained professionals, since only completing secondary education is too unspecific".*  
(Apus, from São Paulo, 31 years old)

A fundamental aspect to the quality of care provided by the teams was related to the ability to listen and to involve the active participation of those in care. The young people stated that often their opinions were not taken seriously and that they were not seen as protagonists in making decisions about their own lives. In addition, they pointed out the need that children and adolescents be better educated about their rights, about their judicial and social processes and the services or policy support for those in care.

*"... the question of participation that is very important for young people to participate in your own choices, that would be a great improvement and this issue of working out the possibilities that young people have, you know (...) to have an option of choice and study also, right? Talk to the young person to know his dreams".*  
(Cetus, from São Paulo, 21 years old).

*"... I learned that I could get help from welfare, this kind of thing, help with rent and everything else that I had a right to have after I left care. I only found out when I had already left. It's like I didn't have that right, I didn't even know I had that right".*  
(Rosa, from Distrito Federal, 24 years old).

Gradual preparation for autonomous living during care was another point raised by the young people. In general, they revealed that services prioritize insertion into the

workplace, whilst devoting little attention to other topics such as study, hobbies, daily life, money management, amongst others. The young people who had positive preparation for adulthood also stressed the importance of social and emotional support during this process.

*"So, almost nothing had been worked on before leaving. A lot I had to learn the hard way and I was scared. Right, I'm going to be 18 years old, how am I going to get by out there?"*

*(Taurus, from São Paulo, 20 years old)*

*"... we have to improve on the issue of training, because life out here is not easy (...) they need to take a time once a week to teach us how to make rice, teach how to make beans, teach how to make a meal! Teach to wash clothes, you know? All of this is really important to learn when in care, because when I left I suffered a lot because of this".*

*(Orion, from Paraná, 20 years old)*

*"... they give us all the structure, right, psychological help, all this is really necessary for leaving care, especially when you're 18 years old. So as I say, the psychological preparation is very important! I had a good psychologist and a good social worker and I had a good structure in [name of the service] and excellent follow-up support after I left".*  
*(Sirius, from Rio Grande do Sul, 20 years old)*

It is interesting to note that for none of the young people, institutional care was an entirely positive experience. All highlighted points to be improved and in some cases, situations were reported with serious rights violations happening within the care homes. However, for the vast majority, care fulfilled its protective function and offered opportunities that they wouldn't have had outside of services.

*"... As a gay man, I grew up in a religious care home (...) I grew up continuously hearing the Pastor and other people saying that my attitudes were not right before God, that I had to be a real man. As such, growing up there didn't do me any good, because it took me a while to have no problem opening up and saying, 'Wow, I'm gay', you know?"*

*(Serpens, from Minas Gerais, 23 years old)*

*"... the things they taught, both about faith and in preparation to leave and such, the friendships, things I learned like craft and hobbies. Help to form my character was one really cool thing".*

*(Pegasus, from Tocantins, 20 years old)*



## FOSTER CARE

Foster care was addressed by all the young people, but most did not live in family based care and some hadn't even heard of the existence of this type of care. Three participants shared their experiences of foster care. For one of them, the foster family was the way to a gradual and supported transition to adult life.

*"Then I went to a foster family for only a short time (...) I met this foster family that helped me get out of care-home. At first I thought that they were going to help me out for a while and then I'd leave, but then they talked to me and we ended up deciding that I will stay here for as long as I want. (...) Several things are falling into place little by little".*

*(Azaléia, from Goiás, 18 years old)*

The experiences reported by the other two young people with foster care experience were completely different. One described it as positive, but the other reported having been a victim of abuse in the two families that fostered her. These two young people were fostered by four or more families. They believe that variation is common, given the way the system is set up.

*"It's the foster family that chooses the profile of the child. They want a child that's like from 5 to 10 years old. After you complete that age you go to another family. Each family is prepared to accommodate that way, like a certain age, you see? Then you swap families".*

*(Rigel, from Santa Catarina, 24 years old)*

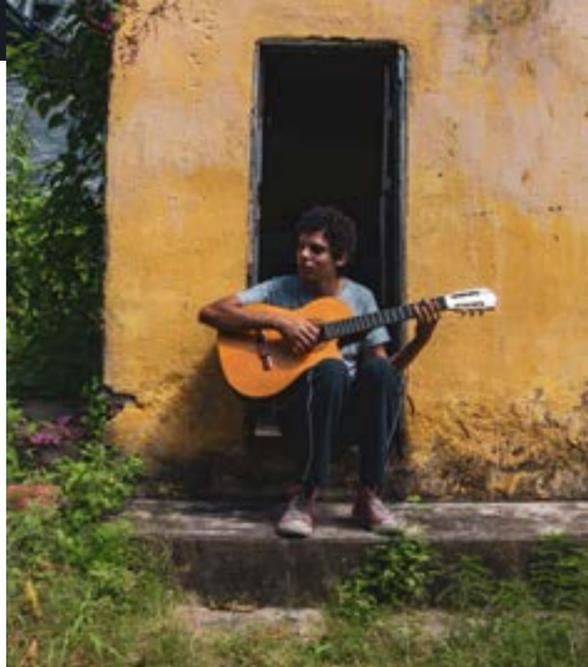
*"I learned a lot in each foster family. (...) and today I still keep in touch with four of the foster families. I think it was a really great experience that I spent time with them and I really like them (...) you can keep contact with that family. You get used to it and build more and better ties. When in a care-home you just pass through and in a little while you won't be there anymore and you're never with the same person".*

*(Rigel, from Santa Catarina, 24 years old)*

*"Actually I got a foster family (...) I stayed with this family for months. I was humiliated a lot in this strange people's house. I often cried in silence for not being able to return to the care-home where I had lived. I went through four foster families, the last one I lived with I suffered so much because I was being raped by a friend of the family and when I went to tell the social worker they didn't believe me. To this day I hate everyone who doesn't believe me".*

*(Jasmin, from Amazonas, 25 years old)*





## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Although the right to living in community is a child's and adolescents' right during the time in care, the young people related a lack of access and relationships established outside of the care and foster homes. For many, sponsorship programmes was a great opportunity to access the community, but in regards to making friends and meeting colleagues, having access to public services and institutions, neighbours etc., the opportunities were very restricted. Some young people said they felt trapped during their time in care and revealed the desire to be seen and given access to society in general.

*"I was 17 when I met my sponsor, right, through the sponsorship programme. I met her at a bad time, like you know when you want to give up on life and give up everything in life? (...) she was the light at the end of the tunnel, my anchor".*  
(Rosa, from Distrito Federal, 24 years old)

*"... I never had the opportunity to take my friends from school to sleep at home, a totally normal experience for every teenager, right? I didn't get to do that because I lived in care".*  
(Íris, from São Paulo, 30 years old)

*"I participated in a campaign (...) where a team that has a partnership programme in Recife with the Child Courts, they gave the opportunity to take kids in care to the countryside. I was one of the selected and participated in the campaign, it was very important for me, I felt I was being noticed".*  
(Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)

## AUTONOMOUS LIFE

The young people discussed the main challenges and fears they felt during the transition process from teenagers in care to adult life, as well as the positive support that helped them in this. The support from adults of reference was highlighted as fundamental to life after leaving care. The young people cited sponsors, older siblings, carers, case workers, foster parents, and adoptive parents as the main sources of support.

*"... the care-home where I lived, they didn't pay attention to the people who lived there (...) the achievements that I had. I have to thank my godmother, which I met at the sponsorship programme. She was always at my side and stands by me".*  
(Rosa, from Distrito Federal, 24 years old)

*"This is the best part, to be able to think back and talk like we are [about the carers]. To know that we have someone who knows you. Because often you leave [care], like in my case, totally separated from my family, so, like this, it's easy to get lost".*  
(Hortênsia, from Rio Grande do Sul, 30 years old)

Although some have relied on educators and carers as the reference in their transition processes, the young people explained that they did not have formal support they needed from the care services where they lived.

*"... in a structured family when the teenager reaches 18 years, the mother doesn't close the door in his face: "Bye, now you're on your own!". But if you're in care, that's what happens, regardless if you've been there for 10 years, or one month, it's goodbye! From now on, it's you and that's it. So I think it should be better accompanied after leaving care".*  
(Íris, from São Paulo, 30 years old)

*"... I am very grateful to the case workers who took care of me, however when I turned 18 they forgot me, (...) I think that when you turn 18 it's when the person has to work even more with you, you know? Like ... 'Look, do you need anything? You want help? Can we help you look for something?... 'and they didn't do that for me and it left me feeling really bad. I think that was what was missing, you know?".*  
(Rosa, from Distrito Federal, 24 years old)

Youth Supportive Housing was cited by three of the young care leavers as being important for a more gradual transition to autonomy. The majority of the young people were not given this opportunity, and many did not even know that it existed. Those who had the chance to live there defended the increase in the number of Youth Supportive Housing. But they believe that the rules in these services should be more adaptable and that there should be more monitoring from professional teams.

*"... several friends said they would like to live in Youth Supportive Housing, but there weren't enough houses for everyone, see (...) some Housing closed, those for young men, so like it's not enough for so many young care leavers".*  
(Taurus, from São Paulo, 20 years old)

*"... arriving at the Youth Supportive Housing they presented to us with a world of opportunities. I was 18 when I arrived at the huge property. I had no carer to pester me. Only it was different than I imagined. They told us the rules, what to do and so on, but that was it. Just get on with it, you know, they didn't do anything with us".*  
(Dorado, from Minas Gerais, 19 years old)

With or without Supportive Youth Housing, with or without welfare support, coming of age all the young people had to manage on their own after leaving care. Most of their experiences were not calm, typically marked by financial instability, a constant change of jobs and housing. For many it became difficult to continue studying as the priority became paying the bills. And for some, their trajectories also included dangerous behavior and risk, such as the use and / or trafficking of drugs, prostitution and unwanted pregnancy.

*"Many young people that I saw leaving care(...) after a while they were not in a good place. They had spent all money they had saved, and they were not living in the same place anymore. I managed to save my entire salary when I was in care, but today I basically don't have anything left and I'm not even living where I first lived when I left care".*  
(Taurus, from São Paulo, 20 years old)

*"... it's really easy for you to return to crime. If you're unemployed and have the opportunity to earn easy money (...) I know many young people who left care and went into crime and today a number of them have died".*  
(Sirius, from Rio Grande do Sul, 20 years old)

*"... girls left and got involved in alcohol and drugs, and many of them still young, like 15 or 16 got pregnant out there, so today they are bringing up the child on their own".*  
(Gérbera, from Goiás, 19 years old)



## ILLEGAL ADOPTION

When telling their stories of time in care, some young people talked about their experiences of illegal adoptions.

*"... I was in a very difficult precarious situation in another family who were not my biological parents, who I never met. I was brought up in a family that was not my biological family, I actually quite liked them, but the family had little means". (Volans, from São Paulo, 19 years old)*

*"... the Child Protective Services were looking for my family, and they managed to find them because of my name. My adoptive mother failed to register me under her name. So I've still got the name of my biological mother". (Tulipa, from Pará, 19 years old)*

## LATE ADOPTION

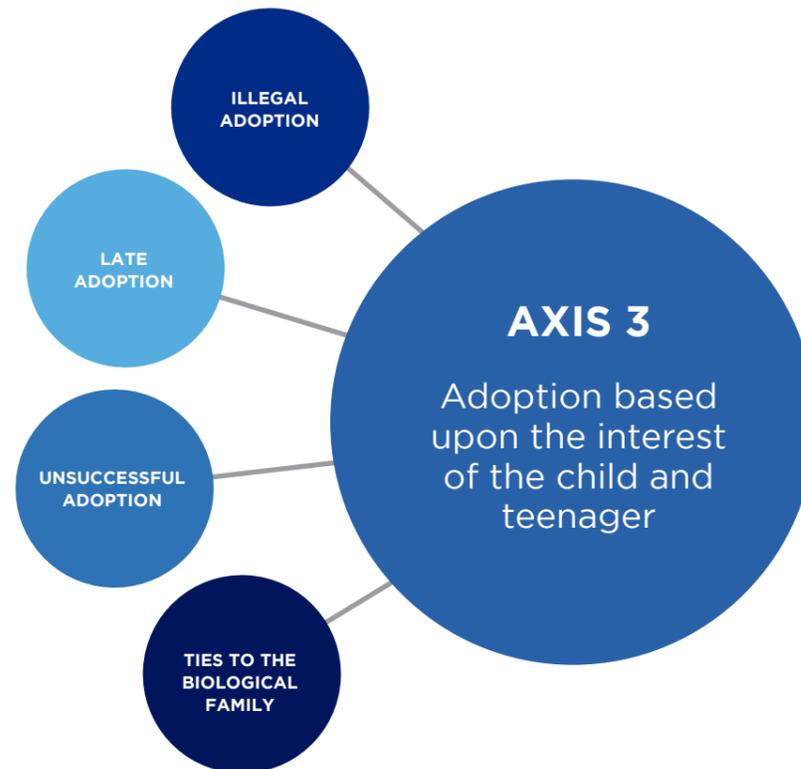
Three of the young people were adopted after 16 years old. They believe their cases are exceptions to the rule, as this type of adoption is very infrequent. Regarding their experiences in the adoptive families, they varied significantly. Two of the young people keep contact with their adoptive parents to this day and count on them in their daily lives, but the other does not maintain any contact with the family that adopted him.

*"... there was a great difference amongst us [between biological and adoptive children]. (...) and I didn't want to leave because I thought, I'm going to be 18 and I have nowhere to go, I'm already here, and the care home is not better. Better I stay here". (Serpens, from Minas Gerais, 23 years old)*

*"After I got to my family I took a giant leap forward. I've already managed to take several courses, I've already finished my high school and today I'm at college. I always have my parents here chasing me up and supporting me". (Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)*

## UNSUCCESSFUL ADOPTION

The topic of unsuccessful was touched upon frequently by the young people. There were several reports of the so-called "returns" that occurred after at least one year of placement in the adoptive family. When asked about the reasons for these failures the young people in general reported that the relationships "didn't work out" and that the families had mistaken expectations of them.

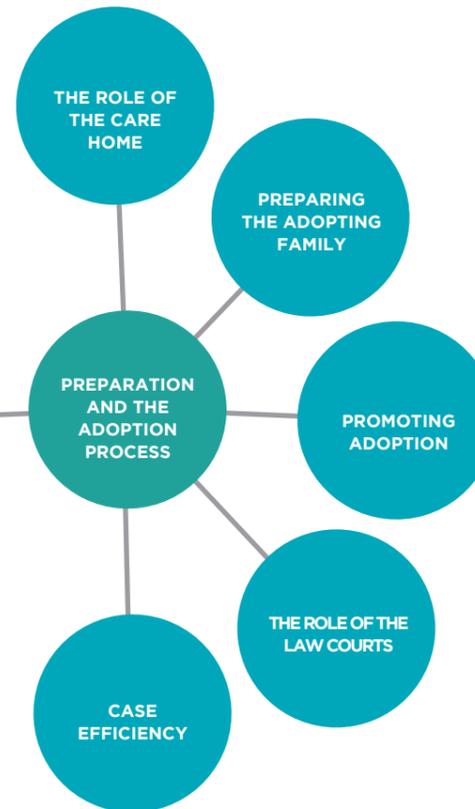


*"Then my brother stayed there for about three years, then she [the adoptive mother] gave him back. He returned to the care home, saying he 'wasn't what they wanted'. Then I went to a different family, but it didn't work out either as I wasn't the age they wanted, I wasn't a child. They didn't want a teenager because they're hard work, that's how it was". (Azaléia, from Goiás, 18 years old)*

*"It's something I never want for children, never, because you already have trauma, then you leave with more. Until you realise that it's not your fault that you couldn't do differently (...) So, if you're not fully committed, really, understanding that adoption is the same as being a mother or a real father, do not adopt. Be foster parents. Do not adopt, because sometimes you destroy a child's life". (Serpens, from Minas Gerais, 23 years old)*

## PREPARATION AND THE ADOPTION PROCESS

The work done by the Child and Youth Courts before, during and after formal adoption was assessed positively by the young people. However the absence of monitoring by the care homes and their teams was regularly mentioned.



Some young people believe that the adoption process should be less bureaucratic, others understand that over facilitating the process can be harmful. There was a general consensus that there is the need to prepare better both the adopters and adoptees in order to avoid separation after adoption. The young people also stressed the importance of proactively seeking families for older teenage adoption.

*"... you really have to be better prepared. Who tries to adopt has to understand that a child takes their emotional baggage with them and it will not be easy. An adopted child is not a robot that you can just clean the memory and it will be reconfigured". (Serpens, from Minas Gerais, 23 years old)*

*"... the role of the Child Court I can evaluate, but what the care home did I cannot evaluate as they basically did nothing. What they did do was just let me know and that was it". (Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)*

*"... the judge called me and asked me how I was (...) I said, 'yeah I'm fine'. He shut my case. Then I asked, 'and my adoption, is it going to go through?'. As I had turned 18 and I was still not adopted, just a provisional protection order, nothing definitive. Everything's so slow and difficult!". (Pegasus, from Tocantins, 20 years old)*

*"I participated in a video that I made with my friends. This video reached my mom and she saw the video; she related to me, saw that I was to be her son and that I was just waiting for her. My adoption was a result of that campaign". (Lynx, from Pernambuco, 22 years old)*

## TIES TO THE BIOLOGICAL FAMILY

Even after a completed adoption, some young people kept in touch with their biological families. The most common experience being with their siblings. Some young people also kept in touch with other members of their biological families and saw this in a positive light.

*"This last Father's Day I went with my adoptive parents to my biological dad's house to give him a father's day gift. (...) shortly after, I got corona, and my biological father heard about it. He wanted to know what he could do for me and I found that very cool because we had no longer had contact as father and son for about 10 years. For me it was really cool, you know, seeing him and he making himself available, saying that if wanted I just needed to call". (Pegasus, from Tocantins, 20 years old)*

# IN SYNTHESIS...

## AXIS 1

### STRENGTHS

- Removal from family of origin as a last resort;
- Promotion of accompanied reintegration into the family;
- Preservation and strengthening of ties;
- Intervention with families that are vulnerable.

### WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Ensure the shortest possible time in care;
- Removal from family as last resort;
- Better support for children as they leave their family and enter care;
- Develop standards for preventive, social and family support;
- Encourage the active participation of children in decisions regarding their reintegration into the family.

### NEGATIVES

- Failure to preserve family ties;
- Social and family support only happens in some services and contexts and not in others;
- Abrupt removal from the family of origin without due preventive work;
- Family reintegration without listening to the children.

## AXIS 2

### STRENGTHS

- Support of adults of reference such as sponsors, educators, older siblings or adoptive parents in the experience of leaving care;
- Efforts to promote community living giving visibility and empowerment;
- Foster care favouring the transition process to adult life.

### NEGATIVES

- Majority of care homes house children in large groups;
- Children feel “stuck” without interaction or access to services and opportunities outside of care;
- Carers and technical staff have excessive work demands;
- Discontinuity and insecurity in relation to caregiver and location of care with high circulation between different care services;
- Lack of active participation by those in care and little information about their rights;
- Care leaving without due planning;
- Little preparation towards a gradual autonomy;
- Few foster family services;
- Foster families with little interest in welcoming teenagers;
- Rights abuse by foster care families;
- Few Youth Supportive Housing for care leavers;
- Youth Supportive Housing without necessary support from professional teams.

### WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Ensure that no care home exceeds the maximum recommended number of twenty children per home;
- Offer and enforce training for carers and professional team;
- Increase the use of the local network of services and participation in the community;
- Reduce the circulation of children amongst different care homes;
- Undertake care leaving gradually;
- Increase the number of foster families with proper training and monitoring by professional teams;
- Increase the number of Youth Supportive Housing as an alternative for the young care leavers;
- Increase the listening to and participation of children and adolescents in making decisions about their processes and plans for the future;
- Inform children and adolescents about their rights, the progress of their legal processes and services with which they can count on after leaving care;
- Develop and implement specific measures to facilitate the transition out of care to adult life;
- Guarantee good working conditions for carers and professional staff;
- Promote the networking of young care leavers in order to increase their peer to peer social support network and facilitate youth participation.

## AXIS 3

### STRENGTHS

- Adoption as an alternative only when the possibilities of retaining ties with the biological family are fully exhausted;
- Active promotion in the search for adoptive families for older children and teenagers;
- Maintaining communication with members of the family of origin after adoption;

### NEGATIVES

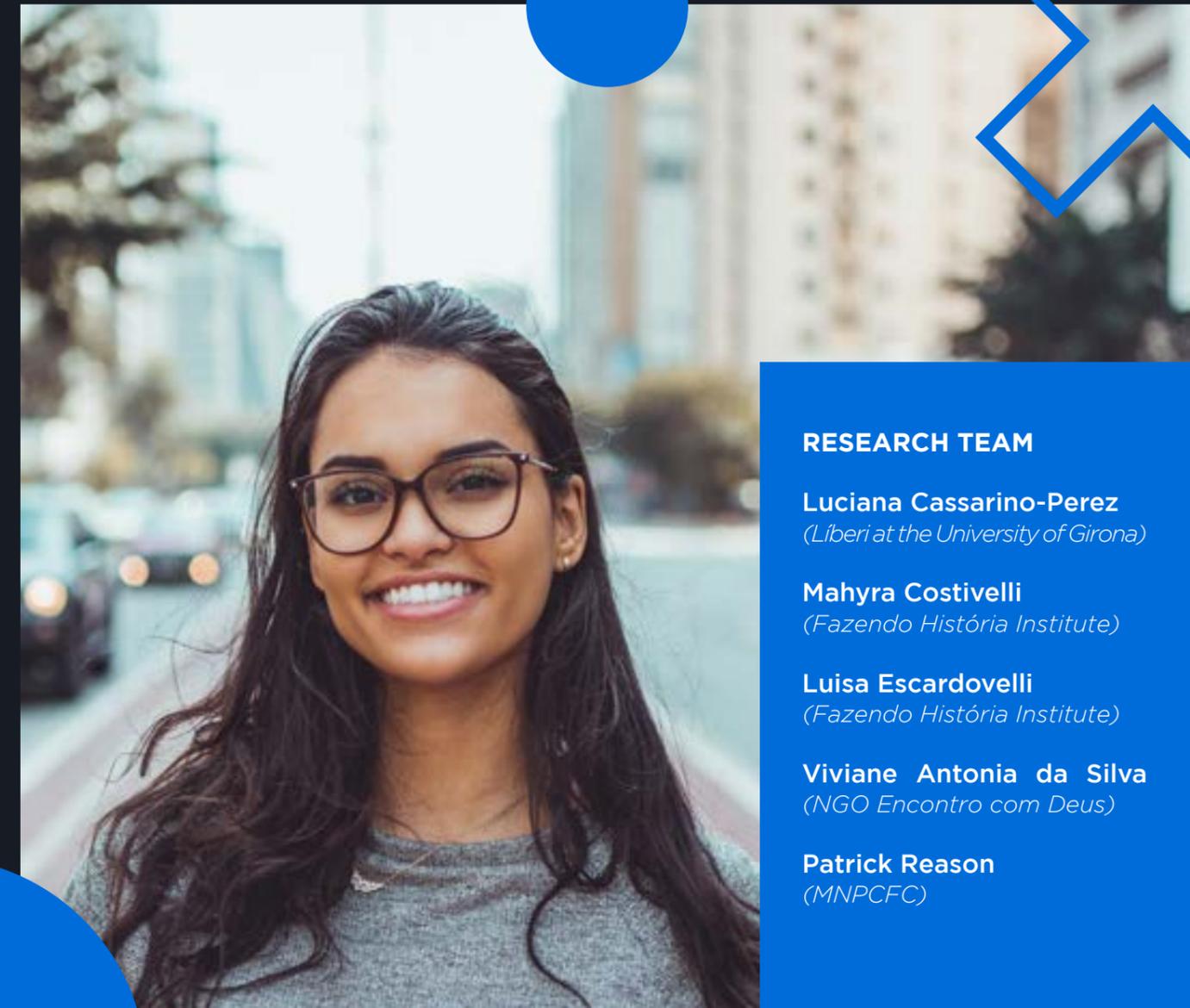
- Lack of involvement of teams from care homes in the process of adoption;
- Lack of preparation of adopters in relation to expectations regarding adoption;
- Lack of preparation and management of the expectations of children and adolescents during their adoption processes;
- Little articulation between care homes and Child and Youth Courts in monitoring adoption processes;
- Few families interested in adopting teenagers;
- Excessively bureaucratic processes in some cases and decisions taken with too little information.

### WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Improve the communication between care homes, Child and Youth Courts and Adoption Support Groups;
- Develop a methodology for the monitoring of adoption processes by care services which prioritize listening to the opinion of the child;
- Offer care and listening to siblings who have not been adopted and want to remain in contact;
- Expand the active searching for adopting families for older children and teenagers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank the 27 young people who participated in this important work. Thank you very much for sharing experiences, opinions and suggestions with us. Our hope is that this work can contribute to the implementation of the rights of children and young people leaving care, just as you all desire so clearly. Above all, we hope that this research will contribute to the development of policies that promote the gradual autonomy and transition to adult life for young care leavers.



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**“MY LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE”:**

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUNG CARE  
LEAVERS IN THE EVALUATION OF  
THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL PLAN OF  
THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN TO LIVE IN  
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY**

