

March 2017

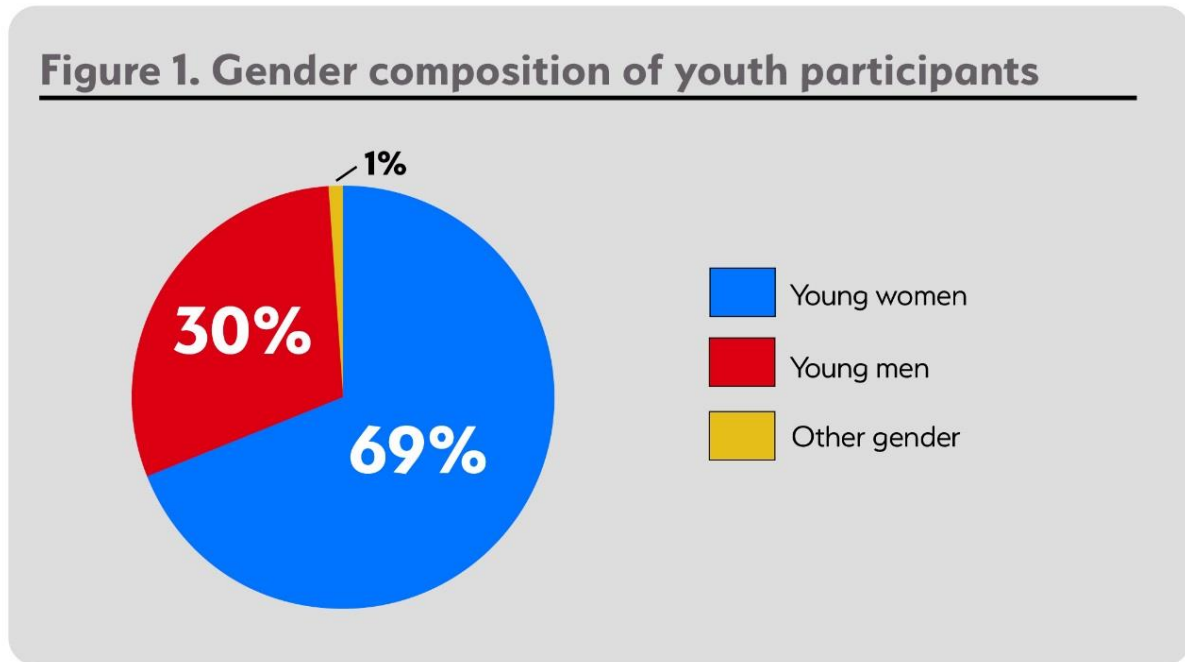
Since 2010, the California Endowment (TCE) has invested in youth leadership and youth-led organizing groups as a key component of its Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. These youth groups have sought to support the healthy development of their members while engaging them in efforts to promote their communities' well-being. As part of a longitudinal evaluation, this report focuses on BHC-affiliated youth programming in the Eastern Coachella Valley. Located in the Inland Empire, the Eastern Coachella Valley is one of 14 BHC sites in California.

This report draws on survey data collected from the core youth members of 9 organizations that engage their members in grassroots organizing and advocacy; media production and the cultural arts; practices that promote healing and well-being; and other activities. These groups include: (1) Building Healthy Communities ECV, (2) Coachella Unincorporated, (3) Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, (4) Council of Mexican Federations (COFEM), (5) Inland Congregations United for Change, (6) Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Coalition, (7) Kounkuey Design Initiative, (8) Raices Cultura, (9) and TODEC Legal Center. A few of these groups are featured in a 2014 report on BHC affiliated youth-programming in the Eastern Coachella Valley.¹

This report contains four main sections. First, we begin by providing a demographic profile of core youth leaders in BHC-affiliated groups. Second, we describe why and how youth came to participate in their BHC group. Building on earlier evidence from this evaluation, we then present self-reports of how youth acquire a range of civic and educational capacities, while also enhancing their own well-being. Lastly, we conclude by briefly summarizing interviews with key stakeholders to show some ways in which BHC-affiliated youth organizations have collectively engaged their youth members in addressing health, safety, educational, and other school and community concerns. In sum, this report provides further documentation of youth leadership efforts just past the midpoint of the 10 year BHC Initiative.

DESCRIPTION OF BHC YOUTH PROGRAM REGULAR PARTICIPANTS

Representing 89% of core youth members, this study draws on 89 surveys collected from young people who regularly participate in BHC youth programs in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The average age of these members is 19, but they range in age from 13 – 25 years. As shown in Figure 1, women outnumber men, representing 69% of participants. Not all participants identify along the gender binary.



Participants are generally representative of the racial/ethnic composition of the Eastern Coachella Valley community. Approximately 94% identify as Latina/o and 3% percent identify as Asian-Pacific Islander. The remaining identify as African-American or White. Most youth (93%) come from immigrant families, meaning that they or at least one parent was born outside of the United States.

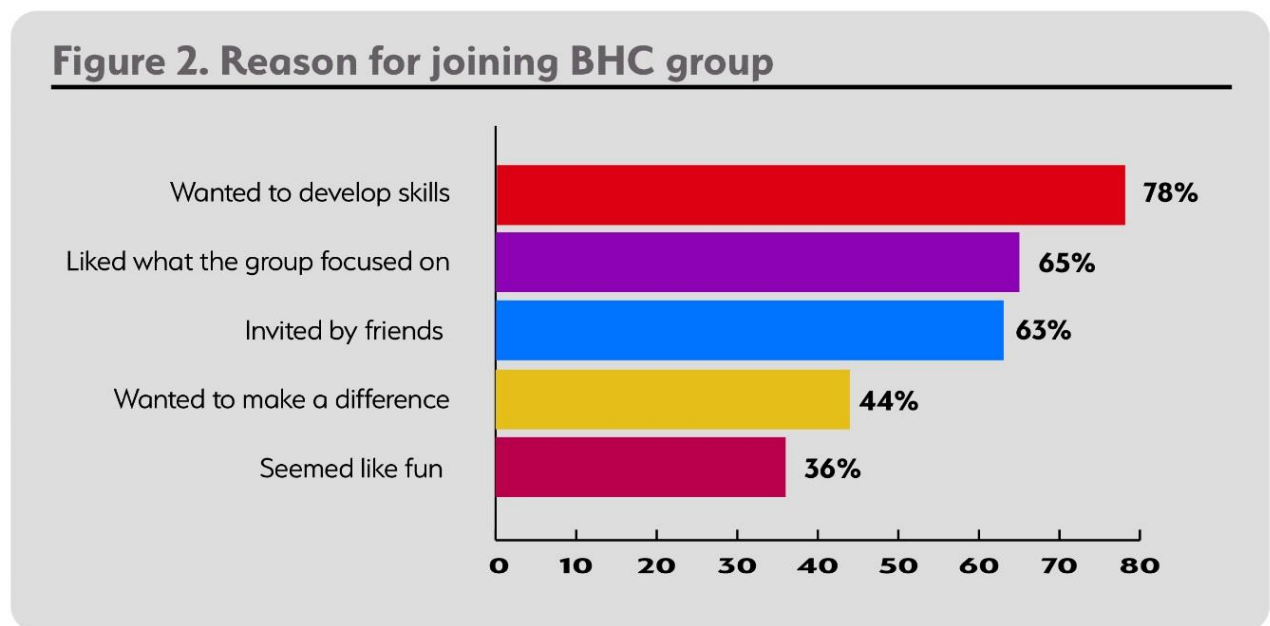
BHC-affiliated youth come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as indicated by the fact that 90% of survey participants are or were eligible for free and reduced lunch in high school and only 6% were raised by a parent with a bachelor's degree.

MEMBERS' INVOLVEMENT

Youth in Coachella vary how long they had been involved in their organizations. Quite notably, nearly two-thirds of study participants— 62%— had been involved in their BHC-affiliated organization for at least a year. This suggests that overall, BHC organizations retain many of their participants, offering them extended opportunities to develop their leadership capacity

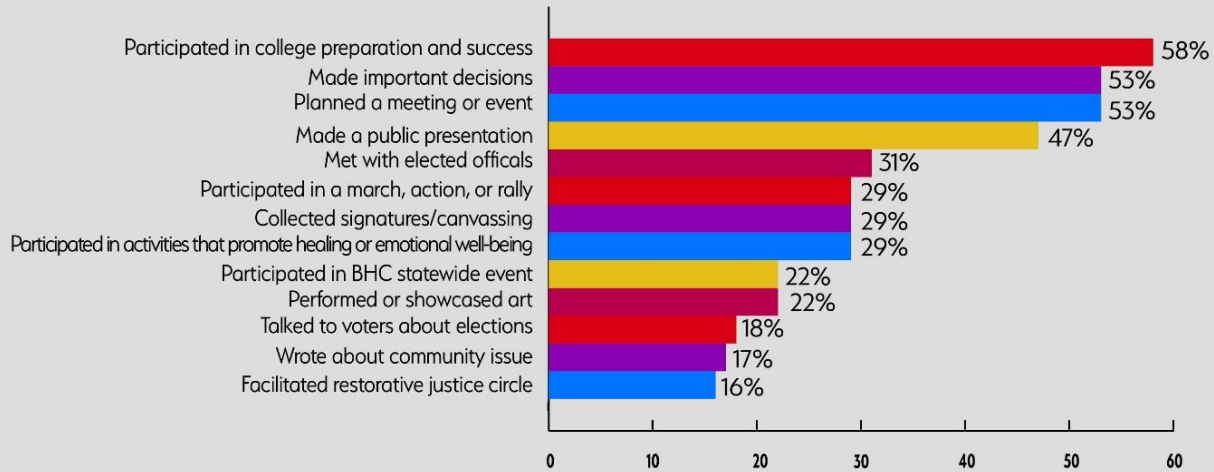
over time. Of the remaining youth, 13% had been involved 6-11 months, and 19% were involved for less than 6 months. A small number did not specify how long they had been involved in their organization.

Members were asked to list up to three reasons they joined their BHC-affiliated youth organization. Figure 2 lists the top reasons for joining. In Coachella, the most common reason given was wanting to make a difference (78%), followed by liking the group’s focus (65%). Other frequently reported reasons for joining their organization included a desire to develop skills (63%), being invited by friends (44%), and having fun (36%). Findings suggest that BHC groups attracted young people who were seeking to improve their community, but were also looking to develop new skills in the company of peers.



Youth in BHC-affiliated youth organizations were asked to report the types of activities that they engaged in as part of their BHC group. The list was based on common activities reported by BHC staff in an earlier survey.² In Coachella, youth most commonly claimed to have participated in college preparation and success (58%), as shown in Figure 3. Fifty-three percent of members reported planning a meeting or event. Similarly, fifty-three percent of members reported making important decisions. Other youth also made a public presentation (47%) and met with elected officials (31%). [THIS PARAGRAPH NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED.] Survey results suggest that BHC-affiliated youth organizations provided youth with high capacity for leadership development.

Figure 3. How youth participated in their BHC group



HOW YOUTH BENEFIT FROM THEIR INVOLVEMENT

As demonstrated in earlier phases of the BHC youth program evaluation, BHC youth organizations contribute to their members' healthy development in a variety of ways and to different degrees.³ In the survey, we asked members to rate the degree to which their group involvement impacted different aspects of their personal development—did it have *no impact*, *very little impact*, *some impact*, or *a lot of impact*? Figure 4 shows the percent of respondents who reported that their organizational involvement had “a lot” of impact on each of the areas of personal development included in the survey.

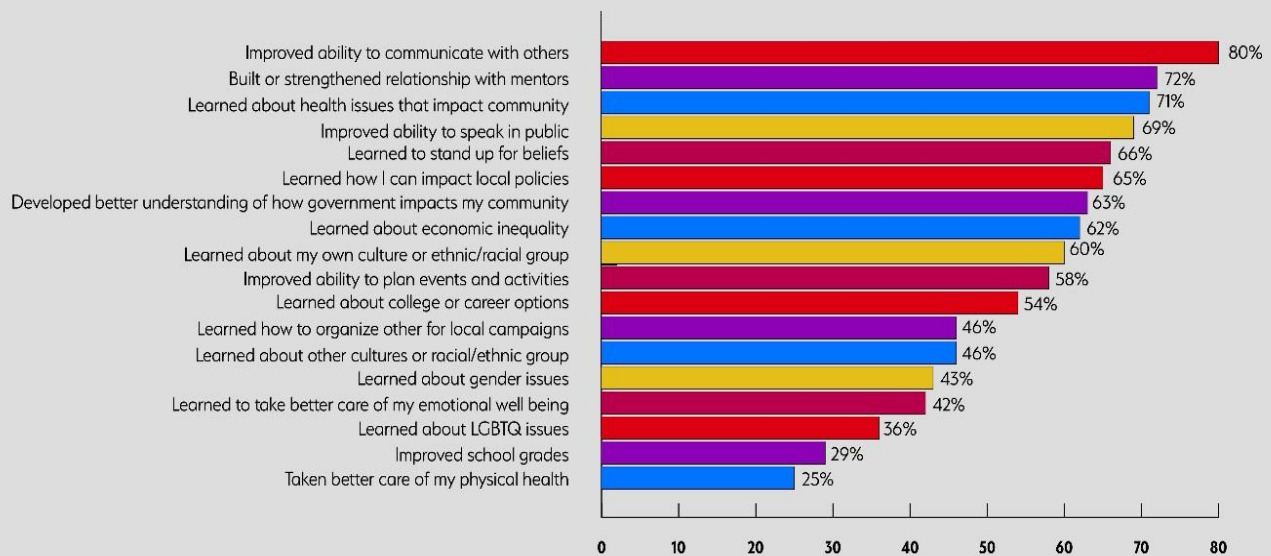
Survey findings suggest that BHC groups are contributing to the leadership and social development of their members: 80% reported that they benefited “a lot” when it came to having improved ability to communicate with others. A significant proportion (72%) also reported building and strengthening relationship with mentors a lot. Participation often made an impact on youths' knowledge on health issues that impact their community (71%) and youth learned to stand up for their beliefs (66%). Youth also reported improving their ability to speak in public (69%) and a better understanding of government impacts their community (63%). Most youth (65%) developed their capacity to impact policy change, 58% reported improving their ability to plan events a lot, and just under half (46%) learned how to organize others to participate in campaigns that benefit their communities.

Youth frequently learned about their own cultures and racial backgrounds and the diversity of the California population. As results show, 60% reported learning about their own culture or

ethnic/racial group, while 46% learned a lot about other ethnic/racial groups. Additionally, 62% reported learning a lot about economic inequality, 43% reported learning a lot about gender issues, and 36% reported learning a lot about LGBTQ issues.

Participation also had implications for youths' health: 42% percent reported taking a lot better care of their emotional well-being and 29% percent reported taking a lot better care of their physical health. More than half (54%) of youth reported learning a lot about college and career options, and 29% improved their grades by a lot.

Figure 4. The degree to which BHC impacts its members: Percent responding "a lot"



COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

In addition to supporting the healthy development of members, most BHC-affiliated youth organizations collectively made a positive impact at the community and state levels. Their efforts addressed the following issues:

- Health Care Access.** Eastern Coachella BHC-affiliated youth have been involved in the statewide #Health4All campaign to increase health care access for undocumented immigrants excluded from the federal Affordable Health Care Act. In a collaborative effort involving elected officials, media outlets, and community-based and health advocate organizations from across California, BHC-affiliated young leaders demanded the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 10. In June 2016, Governor Brown signed SB-10 into law, making California the first state to provide health care access regardless of legal status.

- Expanding Recreational Spaces. The Eastern Coachella Valley faces a shortage of safe public spaces for outdoor recreation, sporting activities, and community gatherings. In response to the lack of recreational spaces, youth conducted surveys and interviews in the community of Oasis to incorporate their views on the potential expansion of a local park. Youth hope that their research will inform their efforts to increase access to recreational spaces in Oasis.
- School Funding Reform: In efforts to further ensure students' academic success, youth, parents, and other community members have sought to have a voice in the K-12 education budgeting process. To this end, they have provided input on the CVUSD Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), which specifies how supplemental funds are spent on supporting the academic achievement and well-being of high needs students. Youth and their adult allies have met with school board members and the superintendent to demand budget transparency and meaningful community engagement in the LCAP process. BHC-affiliated young people conducted a student survey which identified summer school, tutoring programs, greater access to AP and college coursework, and a teacher evaluation process as top priority LCAP spending needs. Survey results informed community demands, which also included funding for restorative justice programming, increased support for students' health needs, improved safety for LGBTQ students, and support for parental engagement. To date, youth and their adult allies secured a 5-year Positive Behavior Intervention Support Mindset Program in which all school assistant principals, teachers and other staff will receive "Healing Circle" and "Restorative Justice" trainings. In addition, the district committed to hiring four part-time restorative justice coordinators in the local middle schools. The hope is that these restorative justice programs will promote positive learning environments, address the root causes of conflict, and reduce school suspensions and expulsions.
- LGBTQ Rights. The needs of the LGBTQ youth in Eastern Coachella Valley have long been neglected. In response, BHC-affiliated youth conducted a needs assessment survey in the spring of 2016 to identify the needs of their LGBTQ peers. On June 4, 2016, they shared their survey results at a community forum. One of the key findings was that LGBTQ youth felt more comfortable at school despite facing bullying and harassment. Youth are using this research to further their demand that schools offer holistic and inclusive approach to preventing bullying and suicide, which disproportionately affect LGBTQ youth. They are also demanding that the county of Riverside fund an LGBTQ center so that young people in the Eastern Coachella Valley can have a place outside of school to feel safe, build community, and access services. While efforts to address LGBTQ youths' needs are still in their early phases, youth have gained support of local community members and have secured adult advisors for the Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA) club at Coachella Valley High school.

THE LASTING IMPACT OF YOUTH’S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Since the inception of the BHC initiative in 2010, affiliated youth BHC organizations have expanded meaningful opportunities for their young leaders to advance their community’s health. These youth leaders are likely to continue their public service and activism as they transition to adulthood. Moreover, youths’ efforts may have a lasting imprint on community health and well-being in the Eastern Coachella Valley.

¹ Saldivar, Aurora Angela Ross, and Veronica Terriquez. 2014. "Youth Leadership in the Eastern Coachella Valley: Results from the Youth Program Evaluation." Los Angeles: USC PERE. Available at:

https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/Eastern_Coachella_Valley_2014.pdf

² Terriquez, Veronica and Abdiel Lopez. 2016. "BHC Youth Program Inventory Survey: Key Findings." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at:

https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/VT_BHC_Youth_Program_Staff_Inventory_Report.2016.pdf

³ Terriquez, Veronica and Gabriela Dominguez. 2014. "Building Healthy Communities Through Youth Leadership." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/per/BHC-youth-leadership/>