

Surviving Crime and Violence:

Street Youth and Victimization in Toronto



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STREET YOUTH
syIs
LEGAL SERVICES

Surviving Crime and Violence

Street Youth and Victimization in Toronto

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What we did:

- Research conducted at 14 street youth serving agencies
- Surveys and interviews with 244 street youth
 - questions about criminal victimization
 - questions about policing

Key Findings:

When young people become homeless, they are much more likely than housed youth to be victims of crime and violence.

Categories of Criminal Victimization

Offence	Description
Violent Victimization	
Sexual Assault	Forced sexual activity, an attempt at forced sexual activity, or unwanted sexual touching, grabbing, kissing, or fondling.
Robbery	Theft or attempted theft in which the perpetrator had a weapon or there was violence or the threat of violence against the victim.
Physical Assault	An attack (victim hit, slapped, grabbed, knocked down, or beaten), a face-to-face threat of physical harm, or an incident with a weapon present
Property Crimes	
Theft	Theft or attempted theft of personal property such as money, credit cards, clothing, jewellery, a purse or a wallet (unlike robbery, the perpetrator does not confront the victim).
Break and Enter	Illegal entry or attempted entry into a residence or other building on the victim's property.
Vandalism	Willful damage of personal or household property.



Victim Characteristics	Victim of Violent Crime					Victim of Property Crime				
	TOTAL Victimization	TOTAL Violent Crime	Assault	Sexual Assault	Robbery	TOTAL Property Crime	Theft	Vandalism	Break and Enter	
Total	76.3% (180)	63.6% (145)	48.2% (106)	18.6% (39)	32.9% (70)	56.5% (126)	41.5% (88)	25.8% (54)	12.0% (25)	
Sex										
Females	85.9%	73.9%	52.2%	38.2%	38.8%	66.7%	48.5%	34.8%	13.8%	
Males	71.8%	57.9%	46.4%	9.7%	31.0%	51.0%	38.2%	21.7%	11.2%	
Age										
16-17 years old	87.5%	75.0%	62.5%	35.7%	46.7%	66.7%	57.1%	7.1%	14.3%	
18-19 years old	86.7%	77.8%	57.8%	28.9%	38.6%	62.2%	50.0%	37.8%	12.0%	
20-25 years old	71.8%	57.4%	42.2%	15.3%	28.0%	52.1%	39.3%	25.2%	10.4%	



Key Findings:

When homeless youth are victims of crime, their networks of support are weak

Who victims told about the most serious crime committed against them,

Victim Characteristics	No one	A friend	Partner	Social worker, counsellor, Teacher	Lawyer	Family member	Police
Sex							
Females	20.0	49.1%	29.1	25.5	9.1	25.6	40.0
Males	25.5	38.8	15.5	11.7	9.7	18.4	8.7
Age							
15-17 years old	43.8	43.8	6.3	0.0	6.3	6.3	25.0
18-19 years old	16.7	52.8	33.3	19.4	13.9	36.1	33.3
20-25 years old	26.6	41.7	17.7	18.8	9.4	19.8	15.6
Sexual Orientation							
Straight	24.0	43.0	19.6	14.9	9.9	23.1	19.0
LGBTQ	15.8	42.1	18.4	21.1	10.5	13.2	18.4
Race & Ethnicity							
White	21.6	48.6	25.7	13.5	8.1	21.6	28.4
Black	33.3	40.0	13.3	20.0	16.7	20.0	13.3
Aboriginal	30.4	56.5	26.1	26.1	17.4	26.1	4.3
Born outside Canada	16.1	48.4	25.8	25.8	6.5	29.0	18.8
Total	23.0	41.8	19.4	16.4	10.3	20.6	19.4



Key Findings:

Homeless youth are unable to take appropriate measures to protect themselves.

Strategies street youth engage in to protect themselves from crime

Q: In order to PROTECT yourself or your property from crime, do you or have you done any of these things in the last 12 months?	Street involved youth	Female	Male	Age Left Home	
				16<	>16
... changed your routine, activities or avoided certain places	49.8% (107)	47.0%	50.4%	49%	45.7%
... carried your possessions with you at all times.	40.1% (85)	39.4%	39.1%	40%	38.5%
... taken a self defence course.	10.5% (22)	9.2%	10.9%	7.5%	4.5%
... tried to look as tough as possible so people will leave you alone	20.5% (43)	20.0%	19.6%	24.5%	13.3%
... changed your phone number	20.4% (43)	30.3%	16.7%	17.9%	20.0%
... obtained a dog	5.7% (12)	6.2%	5.1%	8.5%	2.2%
... obtained a gun	6.2% (13)	4.6%	7.3%	4.3%	8.9%
... changed residence or moved	33.2% (70)	46.3%	25.5%	40%	26.4%
... decided to carry a weapon regularly	16.6% (35)	9.1%	19.6%	13.7%	13.2%
... I don't do anything special to protect myself	27.5% (52)	28.1%	27.8%	36.4%	36.7%



Key Findings:

Young homeless women in particular are much more likely to be victimized, and report high levels of sexual assault.



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Key Findings:

*Young homeless women
report high rates of partner abuse.*



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Intimate Partner Abuse amongst Street Involved Female Youth

Form of abuse	%
ASSAULT	
Percent who reported at least one incident of assault	34.8%
Of those who reported physical violence (any kind), the percent who experienced it on more than one occasion	83.3%
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	
Percent who reported at least one incident of Emotional Abuse	52.9%
Of those who reported emotional abuse, the percent who experienced it on more than one occasion.	73.0%
INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE (including violence and emotional abuse): TOTAL	
Percent who reported Intimate Partner Abuse at least once during the past 12 months	55.7%
Of those who reported Intimate Partner Violence (total), the percent who reported it Percent who experienced Interpersonal Violence and Abuse: (more than once)	79.5%



Key Findings:

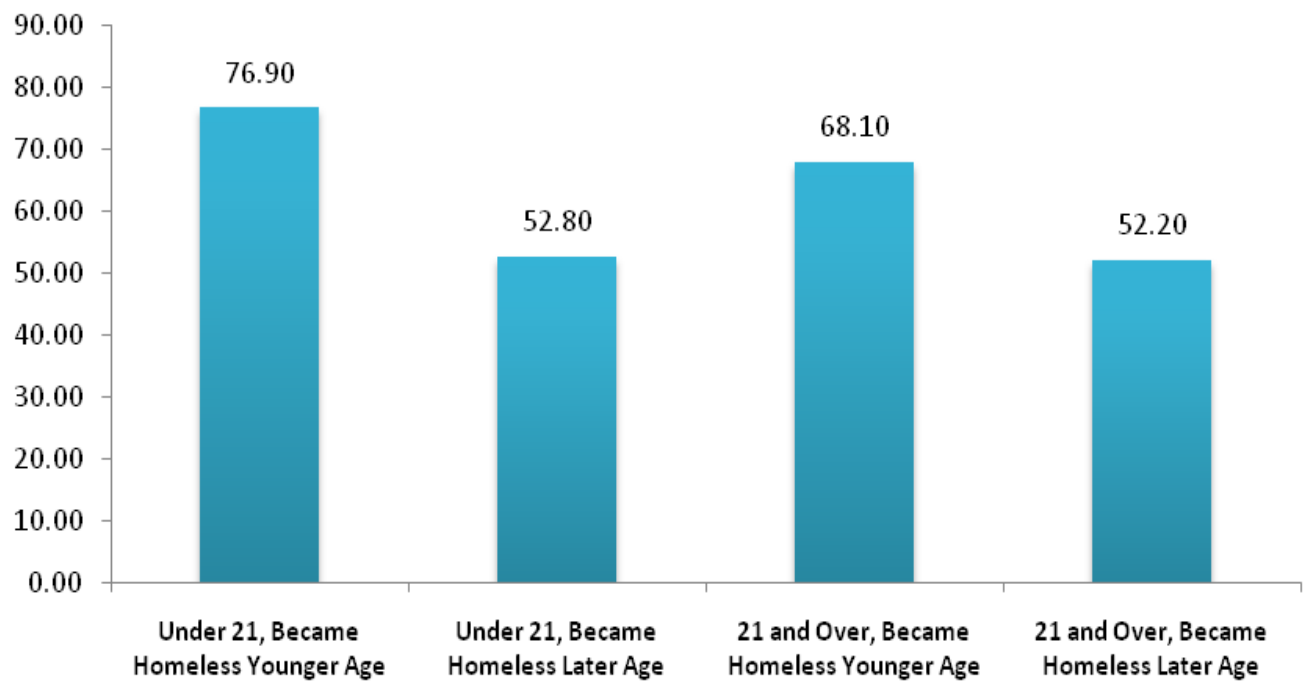
The younger you are and the earlier you leave home, the more vulnerable you are to criminal victimization.



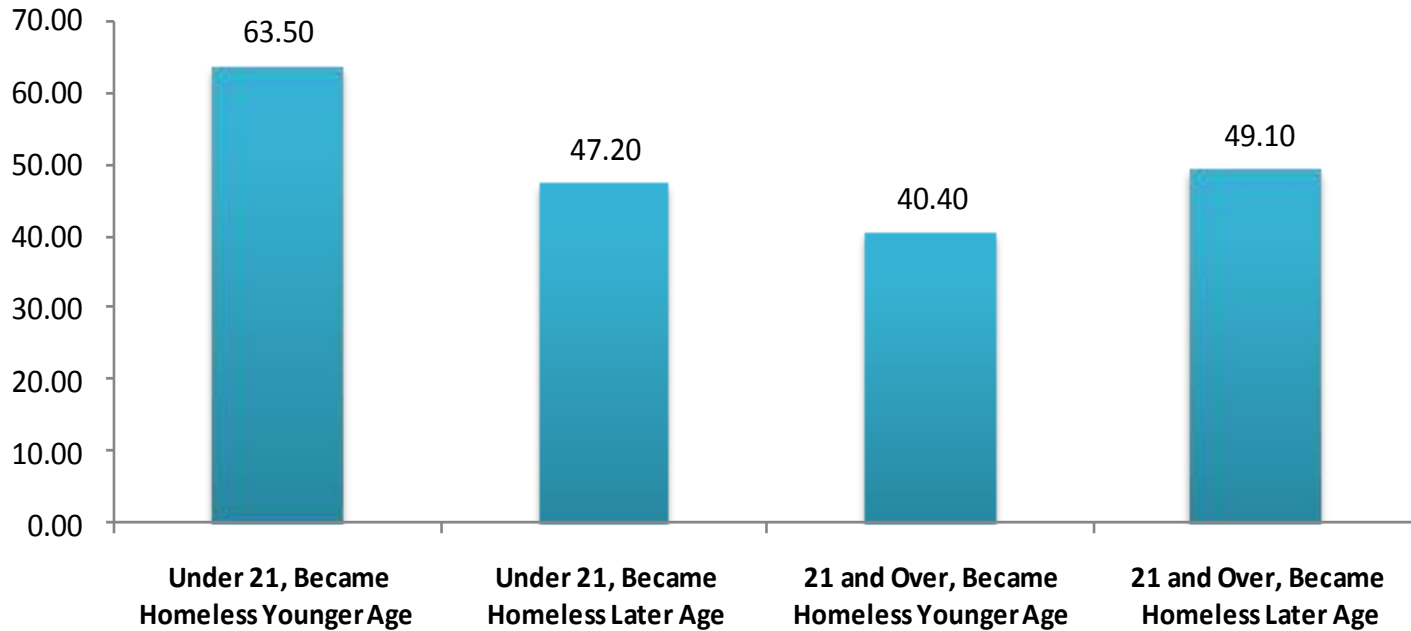
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Age Left Home and Current Age by Total Violent Victimization



Age Became Homeless and Current Age by Total Property Crime Victimization



Key Findings:

The solution to this problem lies in changing the way we address youth homelessness.

Recommendations



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1. Government of Canada

1.1 The Government of Canada, as part of its Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), must adopt a strategy to end youth homelessness.

1.2 Led by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy and Status of Women in Canada, all levels of government must develop and implement a strategy to respond to the needs of young women who are homeless.

2. Provincial Government(s)

- 2.1 The Province of Ontario must develop a strategy to end youth homelessness that includes a focus on prevention.
- 2.2 The Child and Family Services Act should be amended to enable young people to continue their involvement with Children's Aid Societies to a more appropriate age.
- 2.3 The Province of Ontario should establish an inter-ministerial committee to develop an effective intervention strategy to reduce the number of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who wind up homeless and to ensure seamless access to appropriate services.

2.4

Regional health authorities across Canada (in Ontario, the LHINs) and the mental health sector must, in partnership with the youth homelessness sector, develop and adopt a targeted strategy to address youth homelessness.

2.5 The Government of Ontario in partnership with Legal Aid Ontario, must ensure ongoing funding and support for Justice for Children and Youth's Street Youth Legal Services (SYLS) program.

3. Municipal government

(City of Toronto)

- 3.1 The City of Toronto (and other municipal governments across Canada) must develop a strategy to end youth homelessness.
- 3.2 The City of Toronto should support street youth serving agencies in developing strategies to meet the needs of young people who are victims of crime.
- 3.3 The City of Toronto should open separate shelters (with daytime programming) for young women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- 3.4 Street youth serving agencies should be funded to remain open to young people twenty four hours a day.**
- 3.5 The City of Toronto should work with street youth serving agencies to develop and host a series of workshops aimed at preventing intimate partner violence and criminal victimization.**
- 3.6 Toronto Police Services must establish a Youth Homelessness Safety strategy.**

NEXT REPORT



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Street Youth, Policing and the Criminalization of Homelessness

Fall, 2010

Context:

- *Prejudices against the poor*
- *Gentrification*
- *The Safe Streets Act*
- *The Canadian Response to Homelessness*

Key Questions:

*The Safe Streets Act:
What has been its impact
in Toronto?*

Key Questions:

What attitudes do street youth have about the criminal justice system (police, courts and corrections)?

Key Questions:

How do these attitudes and experiences differ from Canadian youth who are not homeless?

Key Questions:

What are the concrete experiences and encounters that homeless youth have with the police, private security guards and TTC security?



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Key Questions:

What factors play a role in accounting for any variation that may exist in these attitudes and experiences?

Questions?