

A Count of Unaccompanied Homeless Youths in New York City

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for the
New York City Coalition on the Continuum of
Care

Introduction

- HUD's annual *Point in Time* counts have made significant progress in estimating the general homeless population size.
- *Point in Time* counts less successful in counting homeless youths.
- Through collaborative efforts homeless youths were encouraged to visit a drop-in center, at least one being located in each borough to gather survey data for this study

Continuing Trends in Homeless Youth Population

- While methodology prevent these survey results from being directly be compared with the *Empire State Coalition's 2007 Count of Homeless Youth* (last count of homeless youth in New York City), overall patterns are consistent
- More stigmatized youth (e.g. LGBT/Race/Ethnicity) have greater risk of homelessness.
- Also, homelessness is associated with other problems, such as dropping out of school, incarceration and unemployment.

Purpose

- Accurate data is needed to understanding the nature and scope of youth homelessness.
- Data is important for developing programs tailored to the needs of homeless youths.
- For example, data provides information on reliable strategies for understanding:
 - 1) where unaccompanied homeless youth gather
 - 2) homeless youth risk-factors
 - 3) homeless youths engagement with services and institutions

Methodology

- Marketing through flyers, social media, and informing stakeholders began December 2012.
- MetroCards, food, and activities were used as incentives to attract youths.
- The count was held on the night of January 28th between the hours of 10:00pm and 4:00am.
- A 27 question survey was administered to the 182 youth who visited one of the facilities at that time.

-This was not federally funded project.

Common Approaches to Sample Homeless Youth

- 1) sampling youths in shelters
- 2) sampling youth at general social service centers
- 3) sampling youth in public spaces where homeless youths are known to congregate
- 4) sampling the general population to ask if they have ever experienced a spell of homelessness
- 5) *sampling youths in drop in facilities or residences targeted for homeless youths*

Survey Design

- Several meetings and phone conferences were held that included the authors of this report and representatives from the NYC CCoC.
- The instrument that was used in the 2007 survey was consulted
- A final survey instrument was constructed to determine if homeless youth requirements were met as well as to gather several demographic indicators

Definition

- Respondents were classified as a homeless youth if they were; (1) unaccompanied by their parents, (2) under the age of 25, and (3) either spent the previous night in a place not considered habitable for humans or had moved at least two times in the past 60 days

Limitations with Generalizability

- This sample is not a probability sample
- Only the homeless youths present during given time were counted
- Sample may differ from typical service users due to marketing and incentives to take part in survey

Sample Selection Bias

- Some ways in which youths sampled at drop in centers or residences in this survey may differ from general population of homeless youths:
 - Point in time survey may miss youths not currently having a homeless spell (seasonal or timing effects)
 - Youths at drop in facilities or residences typically have more experience with homelessness
 - Youths who use drop in facilities or residences may differ in important and unknown ways from youths who do not
- Although not a random survey, this survey provides some details on a largely hidden population for which information is hard to gather

Demographic Results

- 73% of the youths (132 out of 182 surveyed respondents) met the definition of homelessness
- Average age was 21, and 29% of the sample was between 16-19
- Mean duration of homelessness 927 days (close to 2.5 years); median duration 730 days (close to 2 years)
- Survey results show that homeless youths come from the more stigmatized populations in New York City:
 - 42% of the survey respondents were Black
 - 48% of the survey respondents were Latino
 - 34% (44%) were Lesbian, Gay or bisexual
 - 6% (20%) were transgendered

Results on Education and Employment

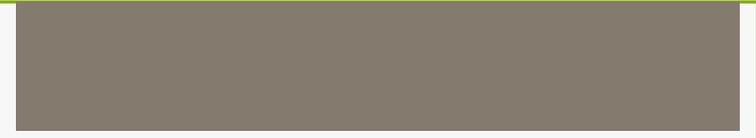
- 47% had less than a high school diploma
- 21% were currently enrolled in school
- 22% were employed
- 63% were disconnected (not in school and not employed)
- 53% of the youths graduated from high school, which is nearly the same proportion that has experience with the criminal justice system

Results on Conflict with Parents and Reasons for Homelessness

- Fighting frequently with your parents—34%
- Kicked out of your home—31%
- Physical, mental or sexual abuse—34%
- Neglect or parent not meeting basic needs—26%
- Not willing to live by parents rules—20%
- Parents use of drugs or alcohol—20%

Frequented Answers Where Respondent Stayed Last Night

- With a friend—25%
- Subway—13%
- Relative's home—12%
- Outdoor/street/park—10%
- Youth shelter—10%
- Shelter (emergency, temporary)—6%



Frequented Other Places Stayed Last Night if Stay was Less Than 5 Days (multiple responses allowed) N = 59

- With a friend—46%
- Outdoor/street/park—22%
- Subway—20%
- Relative's home—17%
- Bus/train station—14%
- Youth shelter—10%

Results on Mobility, Runaway, Foster Care, and Pregnancy

- 51% moved five or more times in last 2 months
- 66% had runaway or lived apart from parents before age 18
- 42% had been placed in foster care or a group home
- 25% were pregnant or parenting
- 8% had a child living with them

Race/Ethnicity Characteristics				
	N = 42	Percent	N = 63	Percent
	Black		Hispanic/Latino	
<i>Sex assigned at birth/ Sexual Orientation/Transgender Status</i>				
Male	23	58.97	43	71.87
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Other	17	40.48	25	39.68
Transgendered/Other	6	14.29	14	22.22
<i>Educational Attainment/"Disconnected"</i>				
Attained HS Diploma/GED or more	24	57.14	28	44.44
Disconnected (~in School/Employed)	21	54.76	43	68.25
<i>Run Away, Foster Care, Adult Shelters, Jail, and Juvenile Justice Detention Centers</i>				
Run away/been away before 18	24	57.14	44	70.97
Foster care or group home	13	30.95	32	51.61
Stayed in a jail/juvenile justice facility	15	35.71	40	63.49

Sex Assigned at Birth Characteristics				
	N = 81	Percent	N = 41	Percent
	Male N=81		Female N=41	
<i>Sexual Orientation/Transgender Status</i>				
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Other	25	30.86	29	70.73
Transgendered/Other	11	13.58	10	24.39
<i>Educational Attainment/"Disconnected"</i>				
Attained HS Diploma/GED or more	42	51.85	23	56.09
Disconnected (~in School/Employed)	52	64.20	23	60.98
<i>Run Away, Foster Care, Adult Shelters, Jail, and Juvenile Justice Detention Centers</i>				
Run away/been away before 18	51	63.75	28	68.29
Foster care or group home	34	42.50	15	36.59
Stayed in a jail/juvenile justice facility	48	60.00	17	41.46

Sexual Orientation Characteristics				
	N = 73	Percent	N = 59	Percent
	Straight		Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual	
<i>Transgender Status</i>				
Transgendered/Other	10	13.70	16	27.12
<i>Educational Attainment/"Disconnected"</i>				
Attained HS Diploma/GED or more	35	47.95	35	59.32
Disconnected (~in School/Employed)	42	57.53	41	69.49
<i>Run Away, Foster Care, Adult Shelters, Jail, and Juvenile Justice Detention Centers</i>				
Run away/been away before 18	51	70.83	35	59.32
Foster care or group home	33	45.21	22	37.93
Stayed in a jail/juvenile justice facility	42	58.33	28	47.46

Transgender Status Orientation Characteristics

	N = 106	Percent	N = 26	Percent
	Not Transgendered		Transgen/DK/Quest	
<i>Educational Attainment/"Disconnected"</i>				
Attained HS Diploma/GED or more	53	50.50	17	65.38
Disconnected (~in School/Employed)	66	62.26	17	65.38
<i>Run Away, Foster Care, Adult Shelters, Jail, and Juvenile Justice Detention Centers</i>				
Run away/been away before 18	72	68.57	14	53.85
Foster care or group home	45	42.45	10	19.18
Stayed in a jail/juvenile justice facility	54	51.43	16	61.54

Conclusion

- Results of this survey are generally consistent with other research on homeless youths.
- Homeless youths tend to be among the more socially stigmatized segments of society
- Homeless youths often have a host of other disadvantages that compound their vulnerability.

Acknowledgements

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NYC Dept. of Youth & Community Development

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