



# Housing Issues among Calgary's Street-Involved Youth

## Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Fact Sheet #13

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### Background to the Study

Street-involved youth have been identified as an at-risk group for numerous health issues, including alcohol and drug abuse, STIs and HIV, pregnancy, and suicide. Working in partnership with many youth serving agencies, AIDS Calgary and researchers from the University of Calgary developed the *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street* study to examine the health and HIV risks, coping mechanisms, and service needs of the broad spectrum of street-involved youth. This fact sheet is one in a series highlighting key findings from the study.

Between June and December 2005, 355 surveys were completed by street-involved youth on their street experiences in Calgary, and 40 interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth look at these experiences. Youth targeted for the study were between the ages of 14 and 24, and involved in the street to varying degrees. Thus, in this study the term 'street-involved youth' included youth who were currently living on the street; youth who were not living on the street but who had lived on the street in the past; and youth who were involved with street culture but were not currently living on the street and had no history of living on the street. This last group primarily included youth who spent time on the street or in public places during the day.

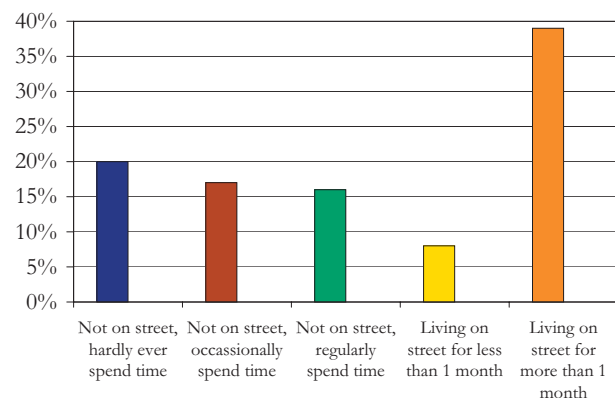
A total of 47% of survey participants were currently living on the street (*Currently On Street*); 33% were not living on the street but had lived on the street in the past (*Not on Street – History*); and 20% were involved with street culture but were not currently living on the street and had not lived on the street in the past (*Not on Street – No History*).

### Street Involvement

Nearly half of all participants (47%) were currently living on the street at the time of the survey. Of youth not currently not living on the street, 64% said they had lived on the street in the past. Youth reported a range of time spent on the street, from hardly ever spending time on the street (20%) to living on the street for over a month (39%). See Figure 1.

When youth were asked how many times they had lived on the street in the past for more than one night, 43% said one or two times, 15% said three or four or "a few" times, and 42% said five or more or "many" times. In addition, 19% said they had lived on the street for less than a week, 14% for one week to one month, 21% for one month to six months, 10% for six months to a year, and 36% for over a year.

Figure 1: Time Spent on Street



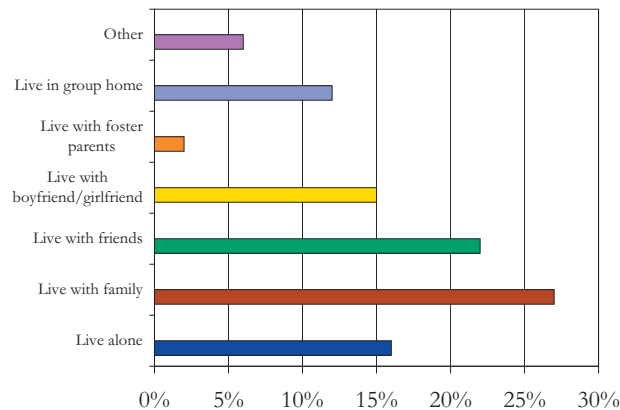
Based on a sample of 351 street-involved youth in Calgary.  
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 3

## Living Arrangements

Youth were asked about their current living arrangements, whether living on the street or elsewhere. When asked where youth had spent the previous night if living on the street, 28% said in a shelter, followed by outside in a cardboard box or camping (12%), with friends or couch surfing (11%), on the move (4%), at a shared motel (2%), in all-night shops or restaurants (2%), in other buildings like churches and detention centres (2%), or in a van or car (1%).

For those youth not currently living on the street, over a quarter (27%) were living with family, followed by friends (22%), living alone (16%), with a boyfriend or girlfriend (15%), in a group home (12%), and with foster parents (2%), while an additional 6% had other living arrangements. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Not on Street Living Arrangements**



Based on a sample of 203 street-involved youth in Calgary.  
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 8

## Affordable Housing

A large percentage of youth currently living on the street said that finding affordable housing was an issue for them. In total, 63% of youth mentioned problems finding affordable housing in Calgary, while 20% said it was not a problem. Many participants advocated for more shelters and long-term affordable housing options (18%).

## Street Locations

The majority of street-involved youth reported spending most of their time on the streets of downtown Calgary (79%), including 91% of those *Currently On Street*, 76% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 56% of those *Not on Street – No History*. Other youth reported spending most of their time in the Marlborough area (19%), in Forest Lawn (17%), at Chinook (16%), in Bowness (9%), and at the Southland LRT station (7%).

Youth were asked if they had spent time on the street in other cities. Over half of all youth said they had (52%), including 66% of those *Currently On Street*, 50% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 21% of those *Not on Street – No History*. Participants indicated having spent time in a variety of locations, including the major Canadian cities of Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, or Vancouver (47%), in Alberta (17%), British Columbia (8%), Ontario (7%), Saskatchewan or Manitoba (2%), Eastern Canada (2%), all over Canada (9%), and across North America (8%).

*Of youth currently living on the street, 83% had been on the street for over a month, 28% had spent the previous night in a shelter, and 63% mentioned having problems finding affordable housing in Calgary.*

This fact sheet is based upon the report, Worthington, C., MacLaurin, B., Huffey, N., Dittmann, D., Kitt, O., Patten, S., & Leech, J. (2008). *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street – Final Report*, Calgary: University of Calgary.

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For more information, please visit the following websites:  
<http://www.aidscalgary.org>, <http://fsw.ucalgary.ca>