



Education among Calgary's Street-Involved Youth

Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Fact Sheet #14

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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.

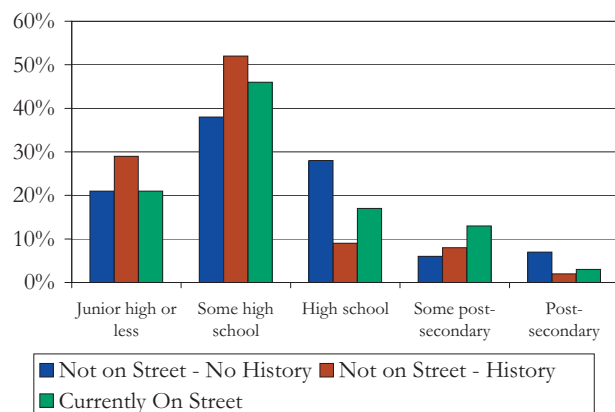
Between June and December 2005, 355 surveys were completed by street-involved youth on their street experiences in Calgary, and 40 interviews were conducted to provide a more in-depth look at these experiences. Youth targeted for the study were between the ages of 14 and 24, and involved in the street 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*).

Level of Education

When asked what level of education they had completed, the largest percentage of youth said some high school (46%), followed by junior high or less (23%), high school (17%), some post-secondary (10%), and post-secondary (4%). Compared to other youth, a greater percentage of those *Not on Street - No History* said they had completed high school (28%) or post-secondary education (7%), while a greater percentage of those *Not on Street - History* said they had completed junior high or less (29%), or some high school (52%). Youth *Currently On Street* more frequently reported having completed some post-secondary education (13%), compared to 8% of those *Not on Street - History*, and 6% of those *Not on Street - No History*. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Education Level Completed by Current Level of Street Involvement *



Based on a sample of 344 street-involved youth in Calgary.

* Significance level ≤ 0.05

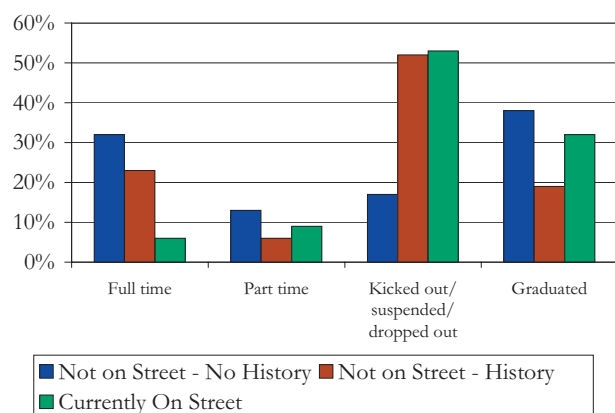
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 61

School Attendance

School attendance varied by level of street involvement, with the largest percentage of youth not in school, having been either kicked out, suspended, or dropped out (45%). Another 29% had graduated from school, while 17% were attending school full-time, and 9% part-time.

Youth *Not on Street – No History* more often attended school full-time (32%) or part-time (13%), or had graduated (38%). Youth *Currently On Street* more frequently reported being kicked out of school, suspended, or dropped out (53%), and less frequently reported attending school either full-time (6%) or part-time (9%). See Figure 2.

Figure 2: School Attendance by Current Level of Street Involvement *



Based on a sample of 328 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 60

Extracurricular Activities

Participants reported some involvement in extracurricular activities, with 56% of all youth involved in such participation. Examining extracurricular involvement by level of street involvement, 59% of those *Not on Street – No History* said they were involved in extracurricular activities, compared to 51% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 59% of those *Currently On Street*. No significant differences were found between groups.



Learning Disabilities & Special Education

Over one third of youth (37%) of youth reported having had a learning disability when growing up, including 33% of those *Not on Street – No History*, 44% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 34% of those *Currently On Street*. When asked if youth had been in special classes at school, 46% of all youth said they had. By current level of street involvement, 38% of those *Not on Street – No History* said they had been in special classes, compared to 56% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 41% of those *Currently On Street*. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Learning Disabilities and Special Education by Current Level of Street Involvement



Based on a sample of 265 to 307 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Tables 31, 63

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>



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