



Family Life among Calgary's Street-Involved Youth

Calgary Youth, Health and the Street - Fact Sheet #9

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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.

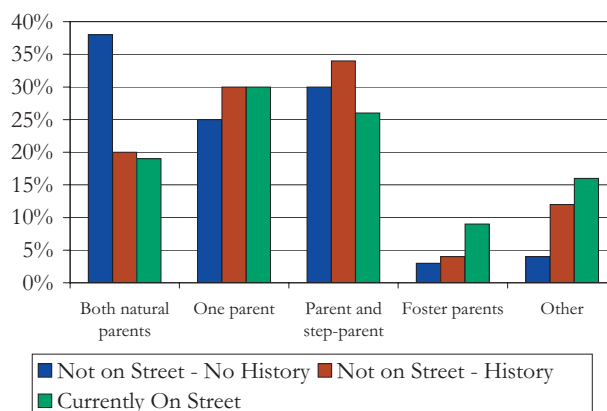
A total of 47% of survey participants were currently living on the street (*Currently On Street*); 33% were not living on the street but had lived on the street in the past (*Not on Street – History*); and 20% were involved with street culture but were not currently living on the street and had not lived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

Family Arrangements

Youth surveyed had a variety of family arrangements. The largest percentage of street-involved youth had one parent and one step-parent (30%), followed by one parent (29%), and both natural parents (23%). A small percentage (6%) came from homes with foster parents, and 12% reported another family arrangement, such as grandparents.

Youth *Not on Street – No History* more often came from families with both natural parents (38%), compared to 20% of those *Not on Street – History* and 19% of those *Currently On Street*. Youth *Currently On Street* more often reported having lived with foster parents (9%) compared to other groups, and a greater percentage reported having other family arrangements (16%). See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Family Arrangement by Level of Street Involvement *



Based on a sample of 335 street-involved youth in Calgary.

* Significance level ≤ 0.05

Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 24

Home Conditions

When asked to describe living conditions at home, participants' responses reflected a variety of living conditions. While 19% of all youth said conditions were very good, 28% said conditions were fairly good, 30% said conditions were somewhat poor, and 23% said conditions were very poor. A significantly greater percentage of youth *Not on Street – No History* said conditions were very good (27%) or fairly good (37%) compared to either those *Not on Street – History* or those *Currently On Street*. This group of youth also significantly less often said conditions were very poor (9%), compared to 28% of those *Not on Street – History* and 26% of those *Currently On Street*. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Conditions at Home by Current Level of Street Involvement *

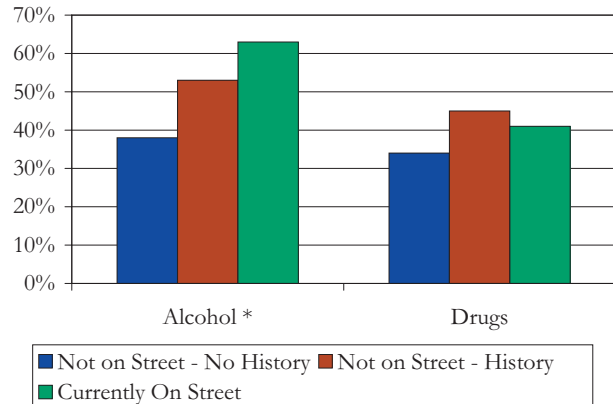


Based on a sample of 332 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 25

Family Substance Use

Participants were asked if alcohol or drug use had ever been a problem with their parents or guardians. Overall, 54% of street-involved youth reported parent alcohol problems, and 41% reported parent drug problems. A significantly greater percentage of those *Currently On Street* reported having parents with an alcohol problem (63%), compared to 53% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 38% of those *Not on Street – No History*. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Parent Substance Abuse by Current Level of Street Involvement



Based on a sample of 337 street-involved youth in Calgary.
* Significance level ≤ 0.05
Source: *Calgary Youth, Health and the Street: Final Report*, Table 26

Sibling substance abuse was also reported by participants. Sibling alcohol problems were reported by 30% of all youth, including 24% of those *Not on Street – No History*, 30% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 34% of those *Currently On Street*. Sibling drug problems were noted by 36% of all youth, including 30% of those *Not on Street – No History*, 39% of those *Not on Street – History*, and 37% of those *Currently On Street*.

Of youth Currently On Street, 63% reported alcohol problems among caregivers.

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