

Coming of Age

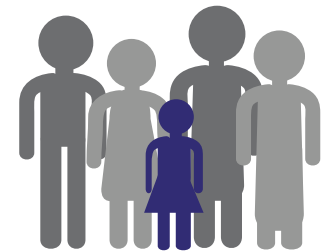
Reimagining the Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada

Stephen A. Gaetz

Research Summary

What is this Research About?

This research examines Canada's responses to youth homelessness. Unlike the United Kingdom, Australia and even the United States, which look at youth homelessness as an issue separate and distinct from adult homelessness, Canada is lagging behind and tends to create "homelessness junior" services. The research, responses and programs that the author evaluates and examines in this report show that there are innovative and unique ways of responding to youth homelessness that recognize the diverse needs of homeless youth.



1 in 5

shelter users are youth

What Did the Researchers Do?

The author draws on an existing base of research in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, in order to identify effective approaches to youth homelessness policy and practice. The goal of the report is to present an argument for approaching how we can respond to youth homelessness in a new way.

The author built upon existing research to create a typology of youth experiencing homelessness. He also provided clear recommendations on how youth homelessness can be addressed building upon existing examples from both inside and outside of Canada this includes developing a systems response, focusing on prevention and rapid re-housing, connecting youth to their families (when safe) and assisting youth through the development of outreach, harm reduction, employment, education/training and housing programs.

What You Need to Know

Growing up in Canada is not the same today as it was twenty or thirty years ago. A one-size-fits-all solution will not solve the crisis of youth homelessness in Canada. Ending youth homelessness means eliminating a broad social problem that traps young people in an ongoing state of homelessness.

Summary of Statistics

A third key piece is the researcher has pulled together research from a variety of sources into one document that really help us look at that diversity and the ways in which our responses and systems are failing youth. While this data has all been available (at least to those in the academe) it hasn't always been made available at a mainstream level. Some key points:

- **1 in 5** shelter users in Canada are youth and males outnumber females **2:1**.
- **42.3%** of young people aged 20-29 **live with their parents** (known as failure to launch if they haven't yet left home or the boomerang generation if they have left and returned due to high costs of housing/low income). **This compares to only 26.9% in 1981.**
- **1 in 3** homeless youth **graduate high school** compared to **9 in 10 housed youth.**
- **More than half** of homeless youth have been in **jail**, a youth **detention centre** or **prison.**
- **About 43%** of homeless youth were in **foster care** or **group homes.**
- **40-70%** of homeless youth have **mental health issues.**
- **25-40%** of homeless youth are **LGBTQ.**
- **Aboriginal youth** are **disproportionately represented** in the youth homelessness population, and in Toronto **so are black youth.**



More than half of homeless youth

have been in jail, a youth detention centre, or prison



25% - 40%

of youth experiencing homelessness self-identified as LGBTQ



1 in 3

youth experiencing homelessness graduate high-school vs. **9 in 10** housed youth

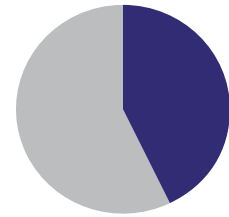


Keywords:

Youth Homelessness
Aging Out
Systems-Responses
Child Welfare
Discharge Planning
Shelters

How Can You Use this Research?

The key arguments are intended to help inform decision-making in government, communities, and social service agencies. As a research document, it provides an evidentiary base for creating more effective responses to youth homelessness. As a public document, it is intended to inspire change and innovation, with the ultimate goal of contributing to real and effective solutions to youth homelessness in Canada.



41 - 43%
of youth experiencing homelessness were in foster care or group homes



40 - 70%
of homeless youth have mental health issues compared to **10 - 20% of housed youth**

About the Researcher

Stephen Gaetz is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University and Director of the Canadian Homelessness Research Network (Homeless Hub). He is committed to a research agenda that foregrounds social justice and attempts to make research relevant to policy and program development. His research interests include homelessness, youth culture, criminal victimization and community development. He has published numerous articles in a wide range of journals as well as books, blogs and other publications about homelessness in Canada. His research on homeless youth has focused on their economic strategies, health, education and legal and justice issues.

Find the full report at:
www.homelesshub.ca/comingofage

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