



**2023 INTERNATIONAL TRANSITIONS FROM CHILD PROTECTION SYMPOSIUM**

# Why are we here?

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Canadian Observatory on Homelessness  
Making the Shift – Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab  
York University

**October 12-13  
2023**



**Understanding**

**Youth**

**Homelessness**

# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

*in*

# CANADA

BY THE NUMBERS

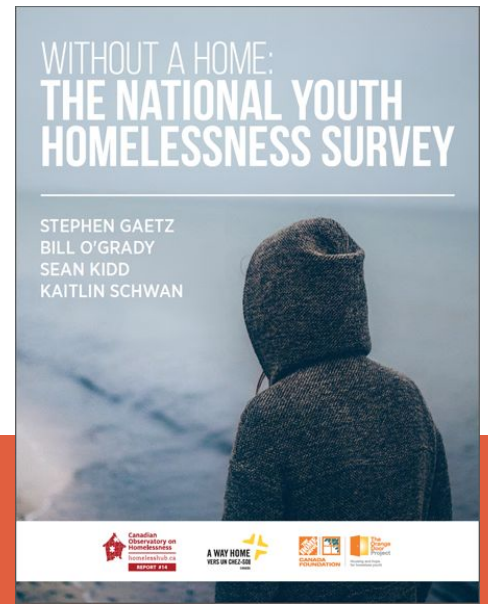
- 40,000 over the course of a year
- 7,000 on any given night

## YOUNG PEOPLE

*aged 16-24*

MAKE UP ABOUT 20%  
OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION.

# DIVERSITY



**29.5%**

*identified as  
LGBTQ2S*

**30.6%**

*identified as  
Indigenous*

**28.2%**

*identified as  
racialized*

**16%**

*identified as  
Black*

**10.1%**

*identified as  
newcomers*

# Mental Health and Well-Being

Findings indicated that a total of 85.4% (942) of the youth fell in the 'high' symptom/distress category. This is indicative, in the general Canadian population, of youth midway between inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care levels.

**85.4%**

*of youth fell in the  
'high' symptom/  
distress category*

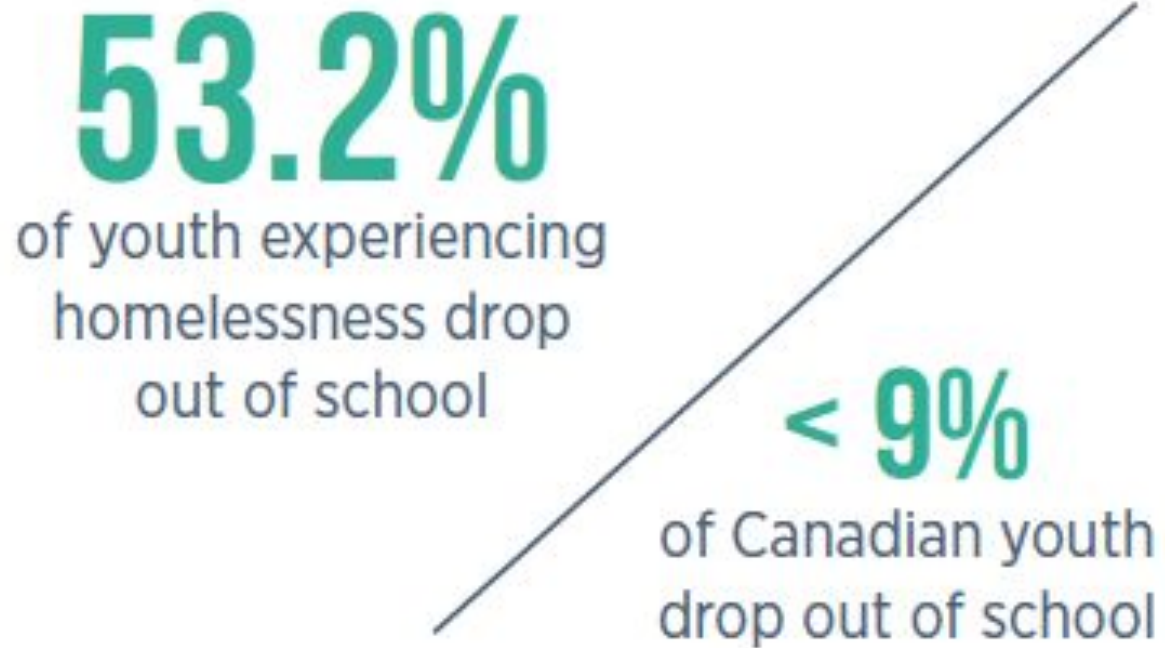
**42%**

*reported at least  
one suicide attempt*

**35.2%**

*reported at least  
one drug overdose  
requiring hospitalization*

# Dropping out?



This is not a result of their lack of desire or motivation, as 73.9% of those who have dropped out would like to return to school at some time.

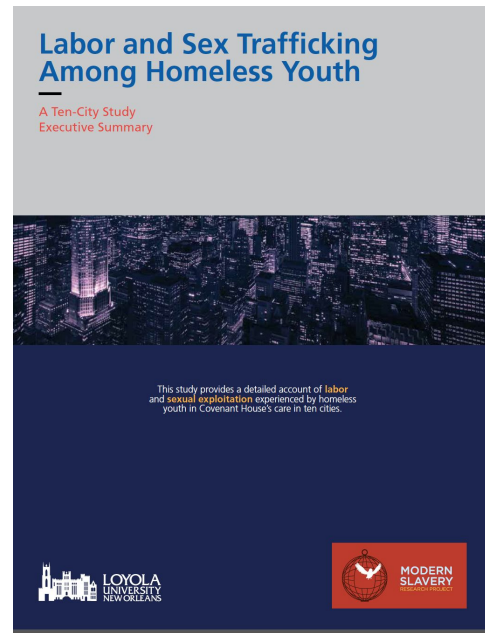
# Criminal Victimization

## PROLONGED EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

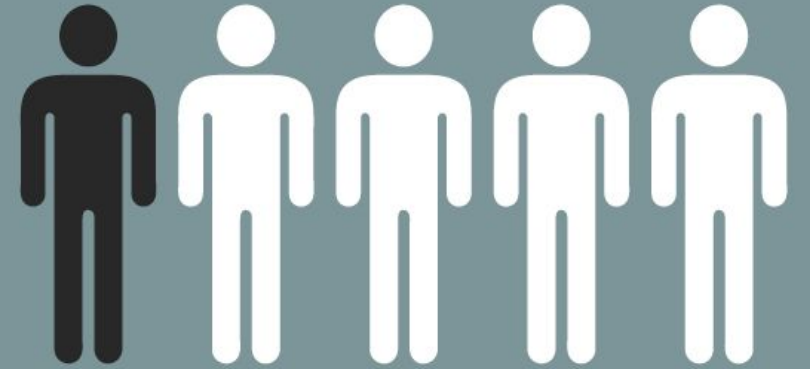
Exposure to street violence makes the impact of pre-street adversity much less relevant. This suggests that whether prior to becoming homeless young people were exposed to adversity or not, experiencing violence while homeless has a 'leveling' effect on youth mental health risk.

***Exposure to sexual and physical violence on the street made youth over three times as likely to be in the high mental health risk group.***

# Exploitation and **Sex** **Trafficking**



Nearly  
1 in 5



(19%) of interviewed youth were identified as victims of some form of human trafficking.



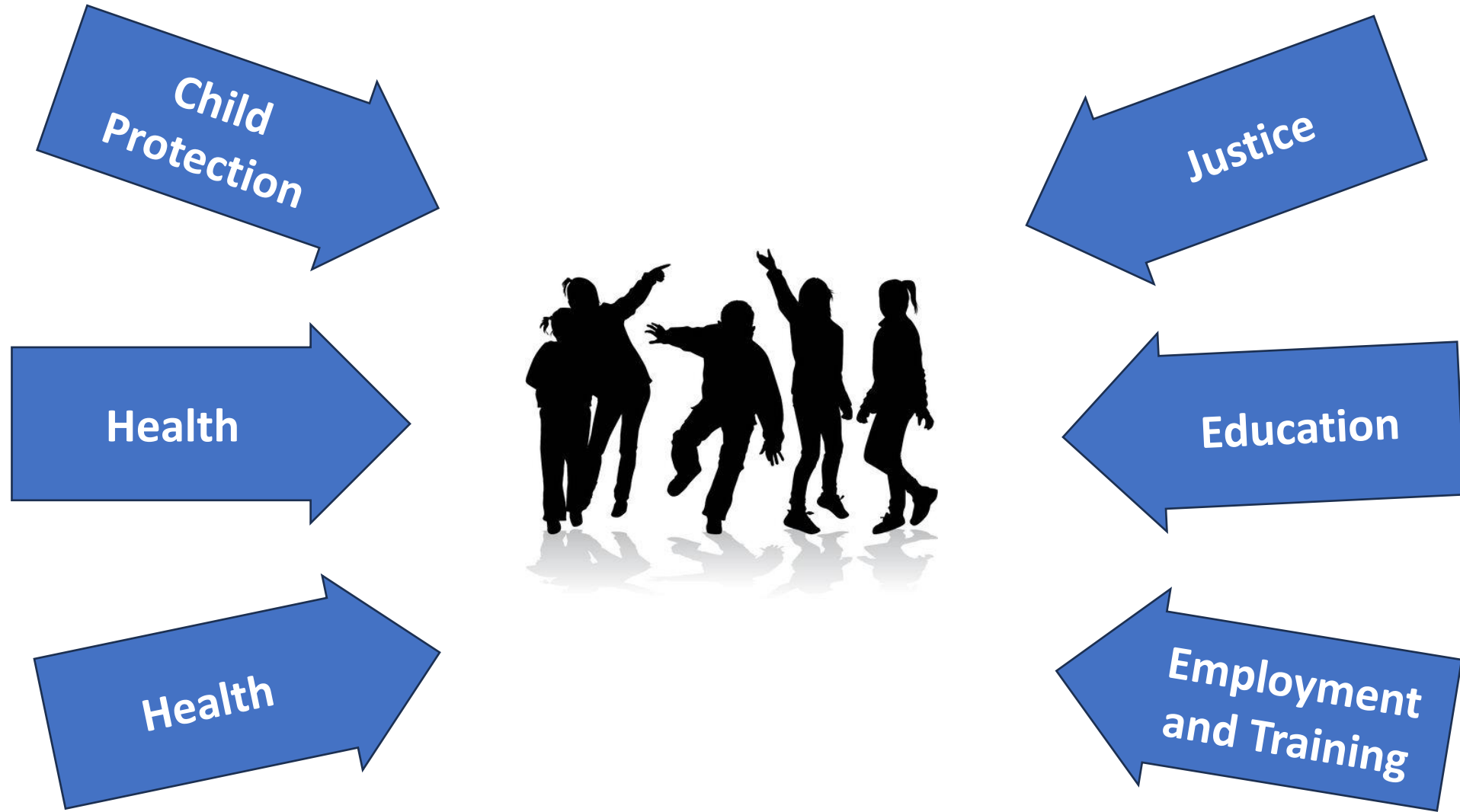


**Pathways off the streets**

**and**

**Exits from Homelessness**

# Youth Experiencing Homelessness generally have a history of interacting with many public systems



# Involvement with **Child Protection services**

**57.8%**

*indicated some kind of  
involvement with child  
protection services in the past*

**47.2%**

*had a history of  
placements in foster care  
and/or group homes*

30.9% were in group homes

***Homeless youth are 193 times more likely  
to have been involved with the child  
welfare system than the general public.***

# Involvement with **Child Protection services**

In the province of Quebec, [Goyette et al. \(2019\)](#) also found that 20% (n = 138) of youth who aged out of care experienced residential instability being either on the street, in ad-hoc shelters, or in emergency shelters, compared to 8% of youth still in care.

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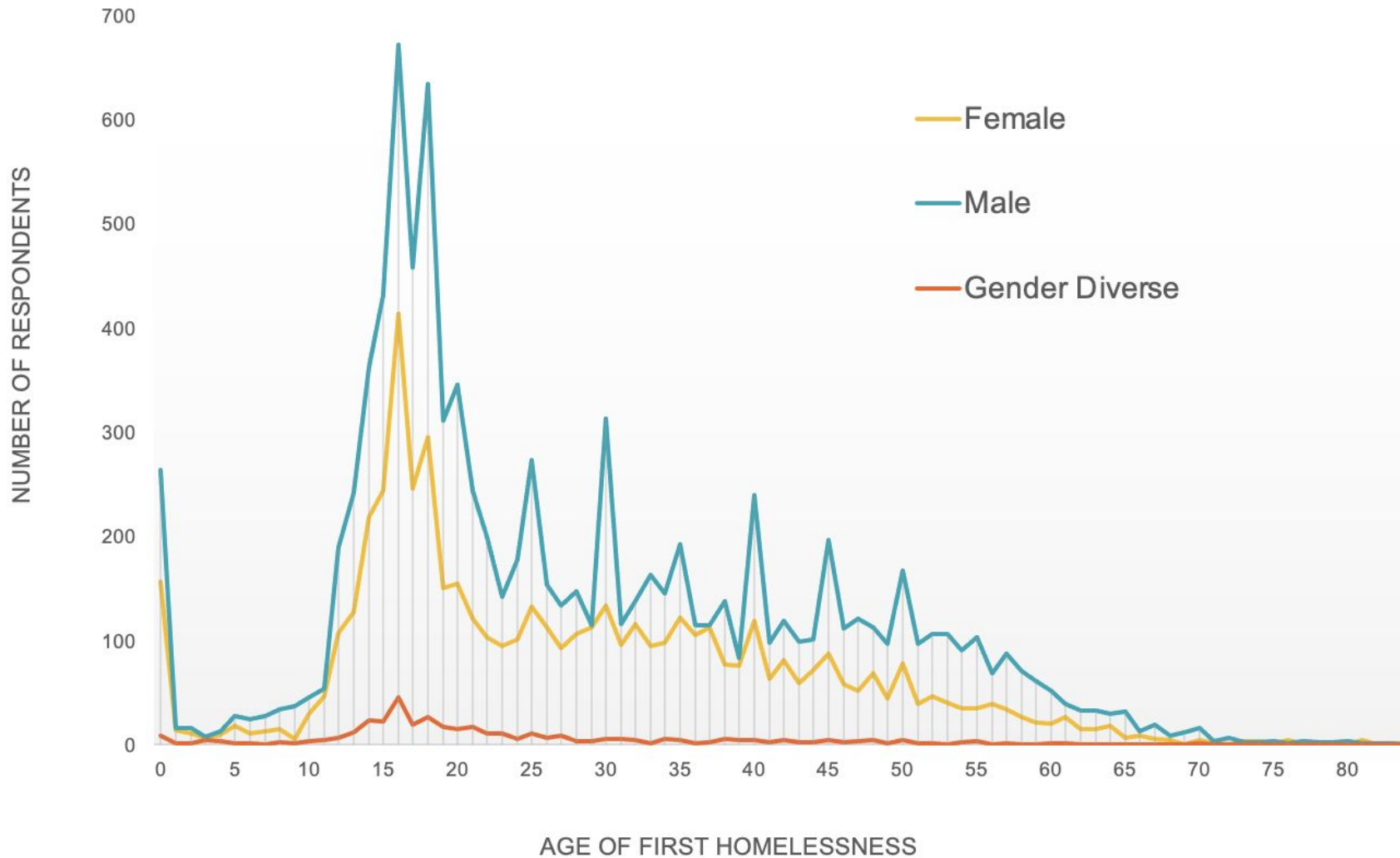
**First**

**Experience of**

**Homelessness**



## Selected research findings on youth (PiT 2018)



The 2018 PiT Count survey asked respondents at what age they first experienced homelessness.

Half of all respondents first experienced homelessness under the age of 25. This percentage was still high among older adults (aged 50-64) and seniors (aged 65+), with 25% first experiencing homelessness before 25.

# Age of first experience of homelessness

Many homeless youth become homeless before they were 16, and youth who leave home at an earlier age experience greater adversity on the streets.

40.1%

*were younger than 16 when they  
first experienced homelessness*

# Age of first experience of homelessness

## Early experiences of homelessness and involvement with Child Protection services

- *73.3% of youth who became homeless before the age of 16 reported child protection involvement.*
- *They also reported higher rates of placement in foster care and/or group homes (62%) compared to youth who first left home between 16-18 (39.7%) or 19-24 (28.7%).*



**Across Canada, youth shelter eligibility is limited to young people who are over 16 years of age, unless they have been placed temporarily in a youth shelter by the child welfare system due to insufficient housing placement options (Nichols, 2014; 2016a).**

**Youth under 16 years of age, or those with young children themselves, may seek to avoid interaction with the child protection system and/or other institutional authorities (e.g., health care workers, social workers, and police officers), making them particularly vulnerable.**

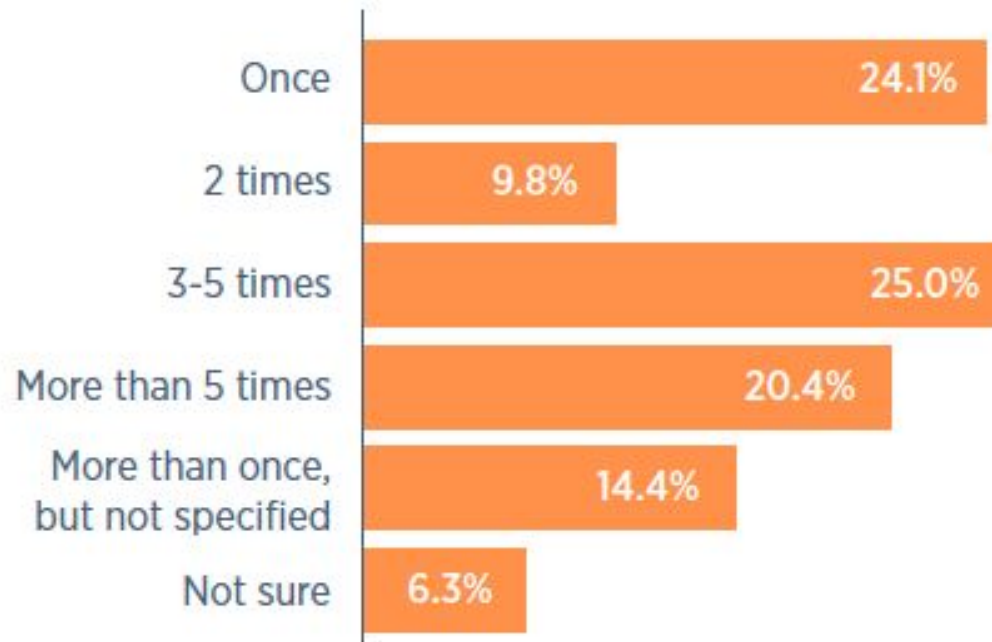
# Age of first experience of homelessness

## THOSE WHO LEAVE HOME AT AN EARLY AGE ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- Have more adverse childhood experiences
- Experience multiple episodes of homelessness
- Become chronically homeless WHILE they are youth
- Be involved with child protection services
- Be tested for ADHD
- Experience bullying
- Be victims of crime once homeless, including sexual assault
- Have greater mental health and addictions symptoms
- Experience poorer quality of life
- Attempt suicide

# Age of first experience of homelessness

## Number of experiences of homelessness



**24.1%**  
*reported being homeless only once*

**75.9%**  
*had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness*

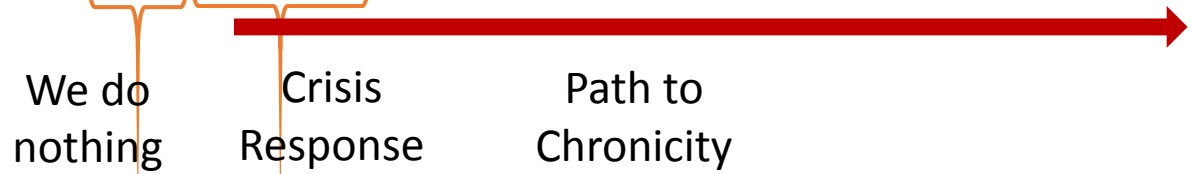
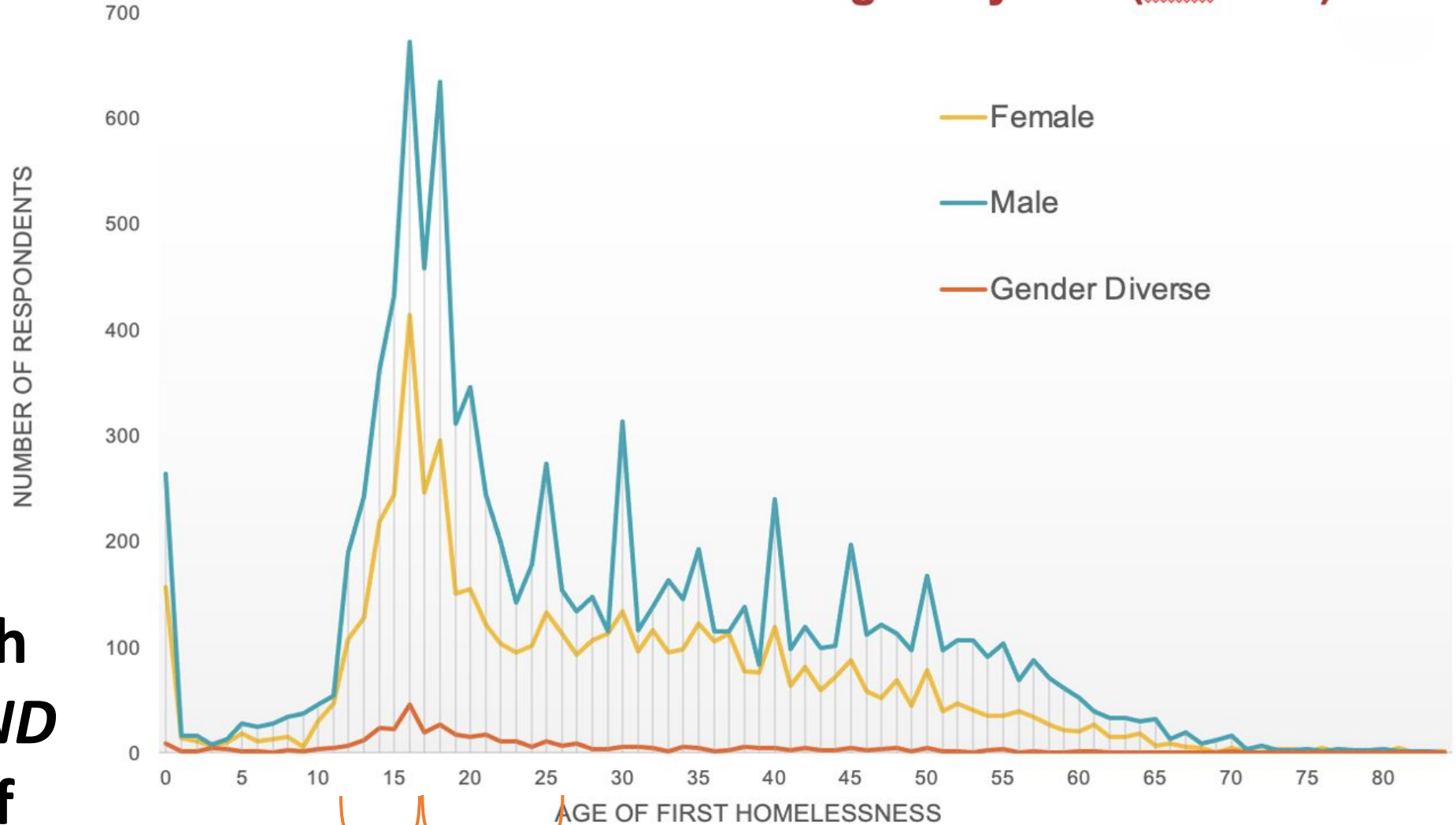
Research has shown that some youth experience housing instability while in care, often shifting between various foster care homes, group homes, friends' homes, childhood home(s), and various other locations (Nichols, 2014).



# Selected research findings on youth (PiT 2018)

## Response to Youth Homelessness in Canada

Can we end youth homelessness *AND* the production of chronicity?





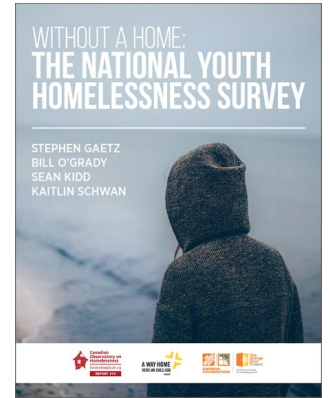
**Involvement  
with  
Child  
Protection**

# Involvement with **Child Protection Services**

Youth participants described many different forms of involvement with the child welfare system

(e.g., investigations, voluntary supervision and/ or care agreements, and non-voluntary custody and care orders).

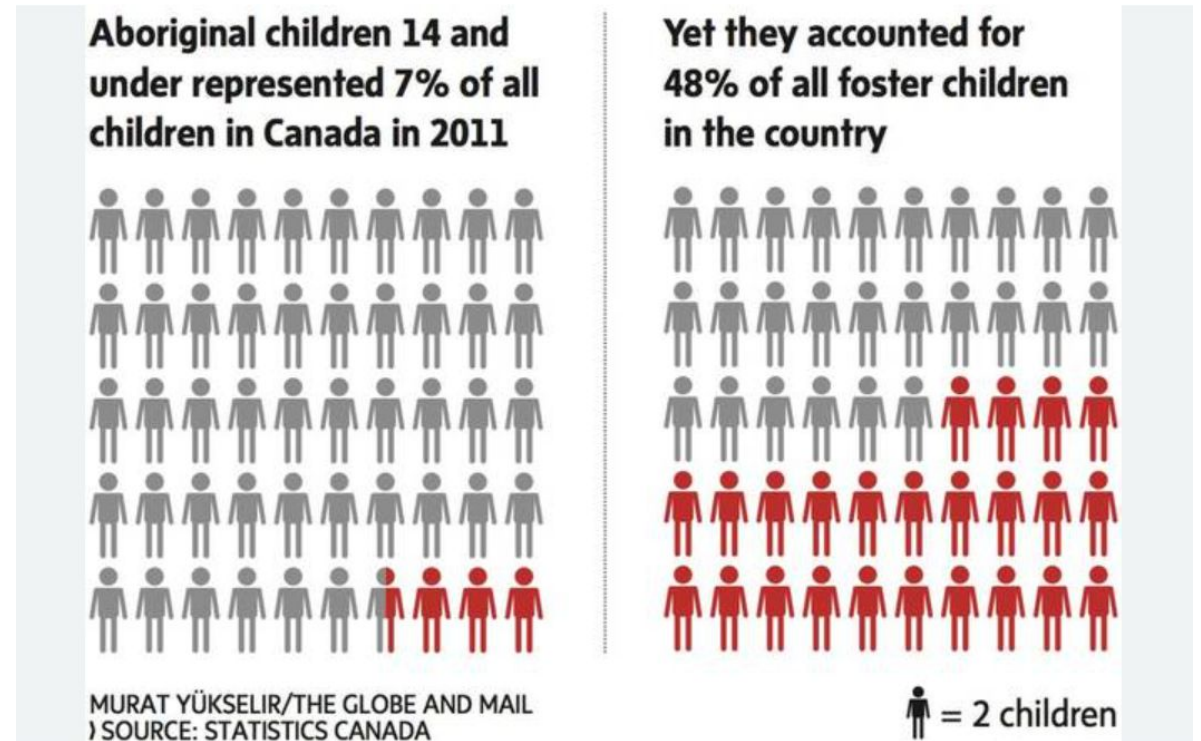
On average, young people reported initial encounters with the child welfare system at 8.5 years of age and the termination of the relationship at 12.5 years of age.



# Indigenous youth and Child Protection

Indigenous populations (i.e., First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) are almost four times more likely to have been involved with CPS than non-Indigenous populations (Alberton et al., 2020).

Contributing factors to child welfare involvement and youth homelessness among Indigenous groups can be seen in the context of the Canadian history of colonialism, including practices aimed at eradicating Indigenous cultural traditions, such as Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop, as well as ongoing racism against Indigenous youth (Thistle, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).



# Indigenous youth and Child Protection

In the Without a Home (2019) study 34.9% of the CPS group were self-identified as Indigenous, and CPS involvement was more than twice as likely to be seen among the Indigenous population.

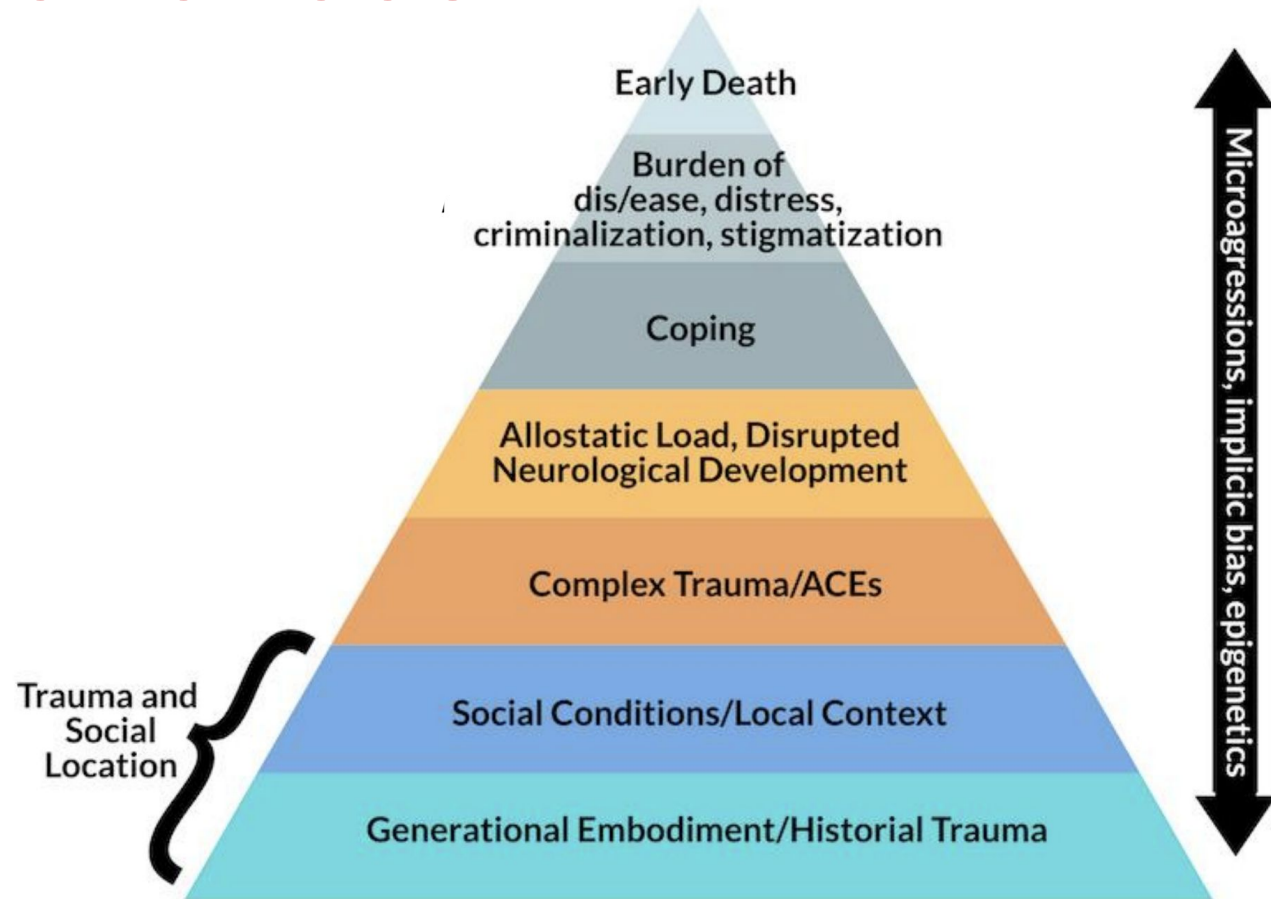
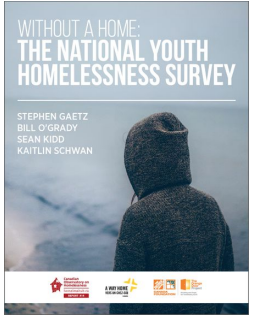


*The Shawls Project, 2016.*  
Photo: Eric Kozakiewicz.



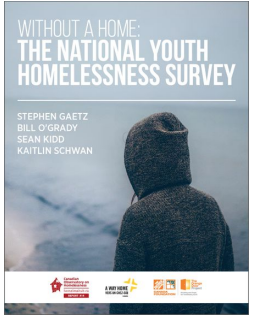
# Involvement with **Child Protection Services**

# Adverse Childhood Experiences



# Involvement with **Child Protection Services**

## **A**dverse **C**hildhood **E**xperiences



On average, youth with a history of CPS involvement were found to have been exposed to a greater number of adverse childhood experiences

With a history of CPS involvement - **4.78**

With NO history of CPS involvement - **3.42**

# Involvement with **Child Protection Services**

## **Health Outcomes**



**In the 2019 Without a Home study, having a history of CPS involvement was associated with increased frequency of drug or alcohol overdose, suicide attempts, and hospitalization.**

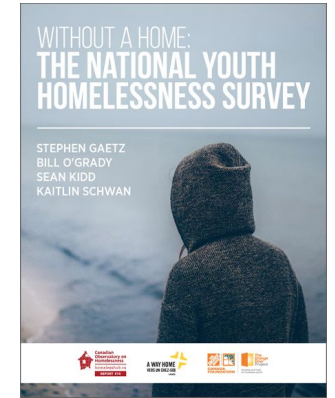
More specifically, 38.8% of the CPS group reported at least one episode of drug or alcohol overdose in comparison to 29.0% of the non-CPS group. Among youth involved with CPS, 59.6% reported suicidality, and 52.4% reported having spent at least one night at the hospital. Similar observations emerged regarding youth involvement

# Involvement with **Child Protection Services**

## **Education**

**Youth with a history of child protection involvement are more likely to:**

- **Report lower levels of educational attainment**
- **Have a diagnosis of learning disabilities**  
(57.3% vs. 35.0%)



4

**Transitions**

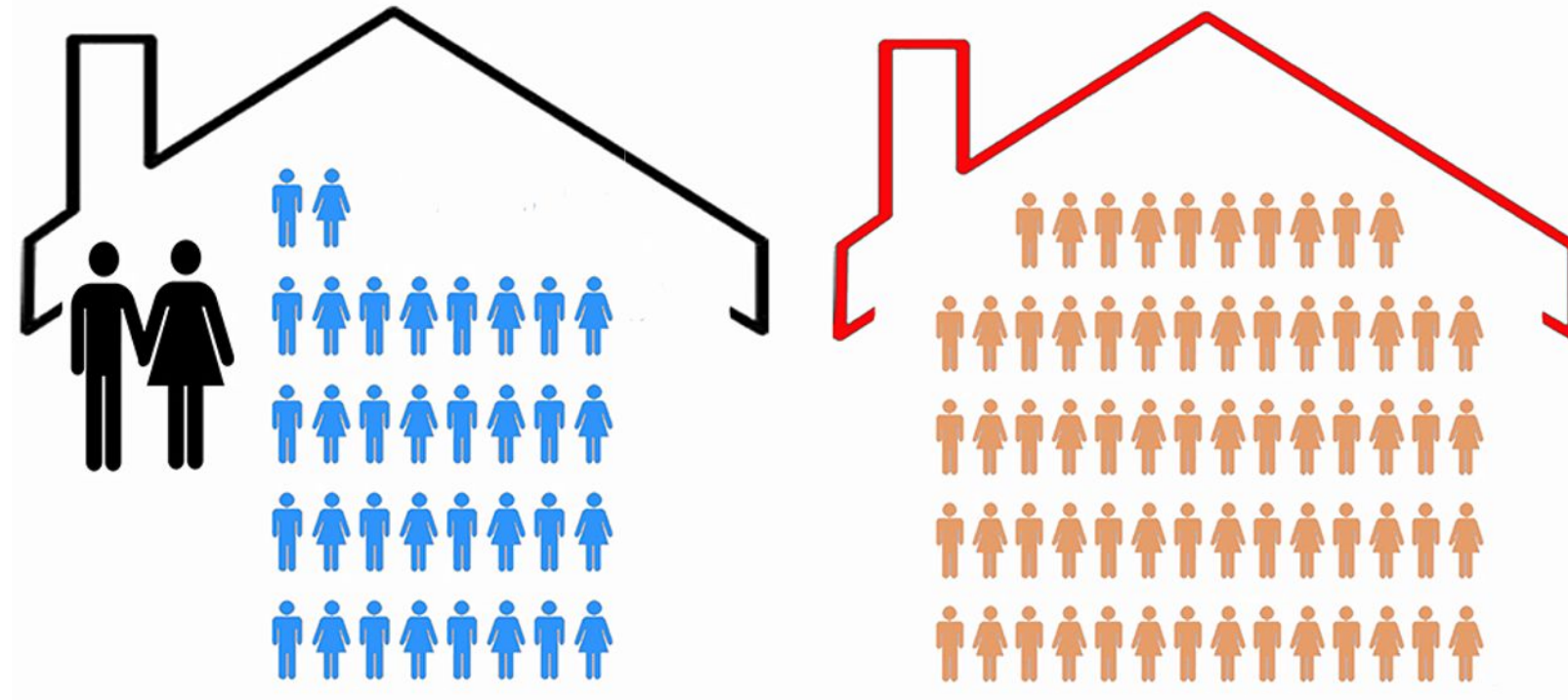
**from**

**Care**

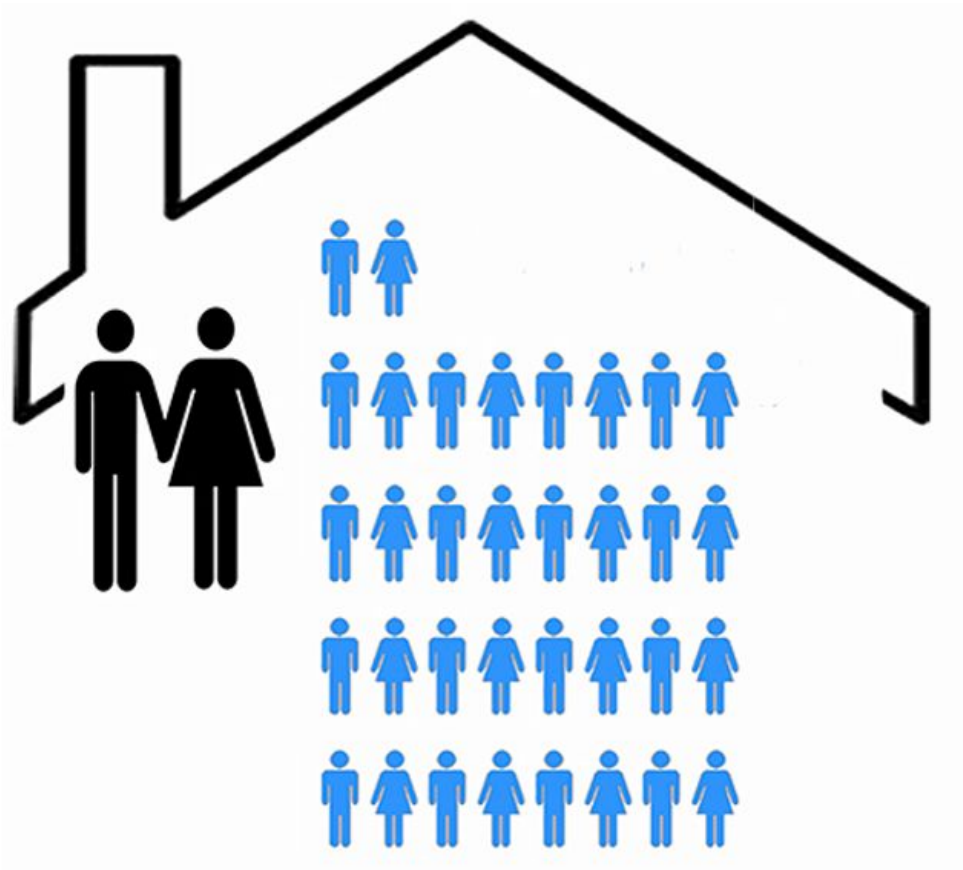
# Leaving Home in Canada



# 35% of young people aged 20-34



***Live with their parents!***



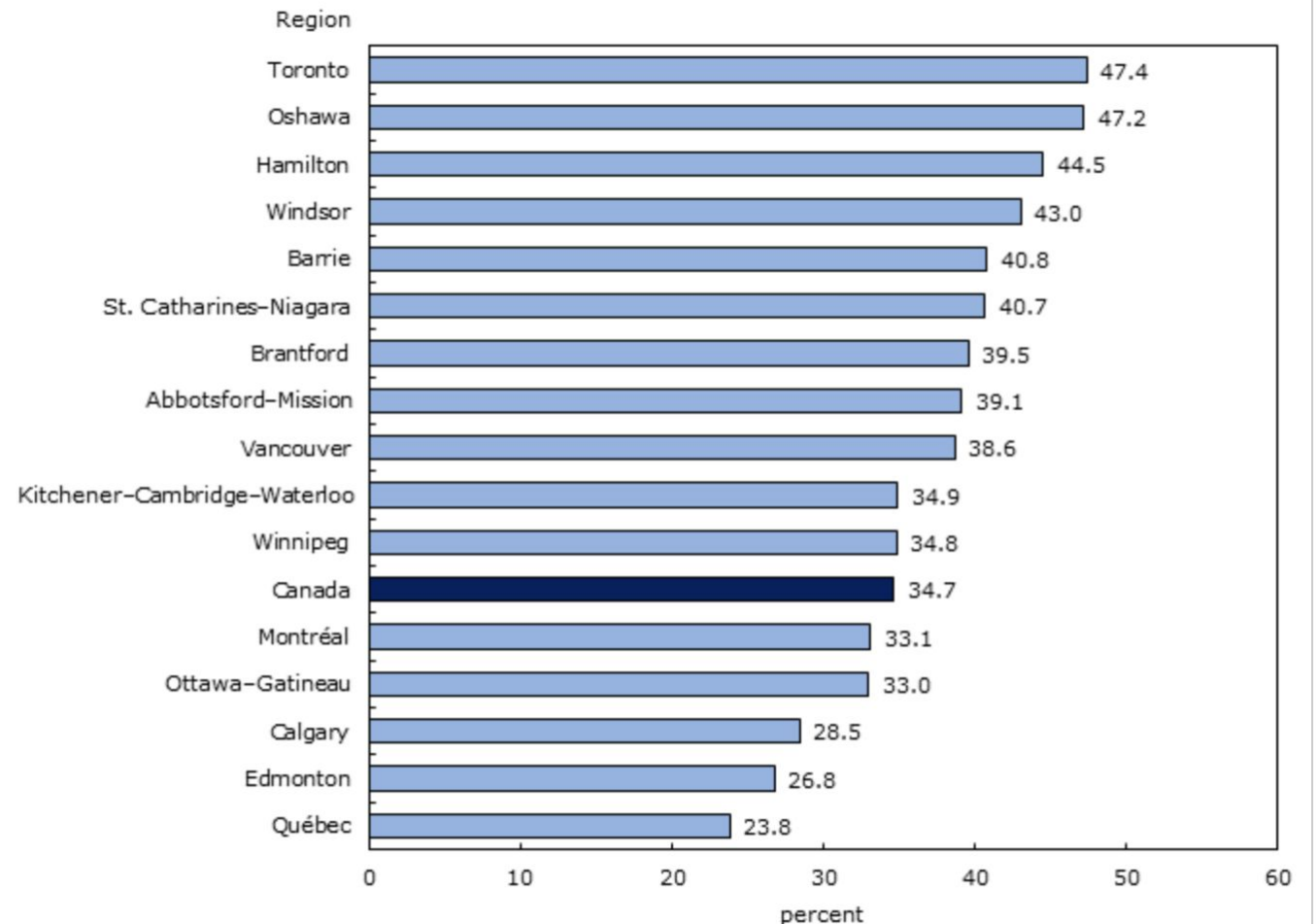
**For those aged 20-24:**

**62.6% are living  
with parents**



**In Toronto and surrounding areas, almost 50% of young people between 20-34 live with parents.**

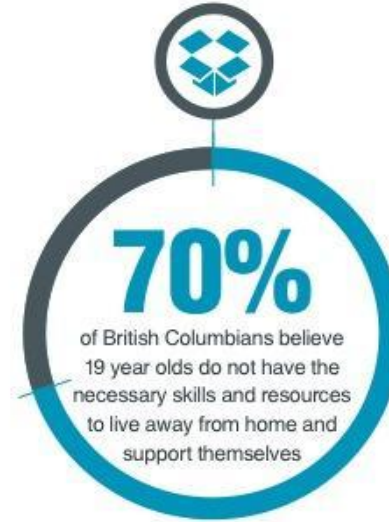
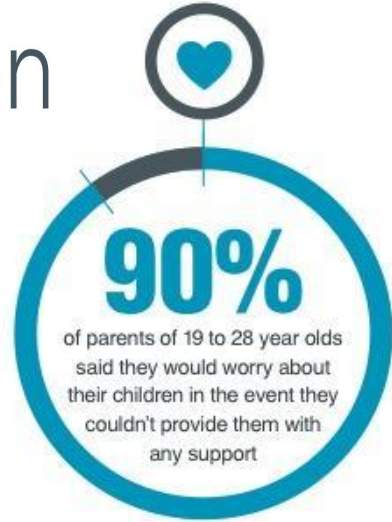
**Chart 2**  
**Proportion (percentage) of young adults aged 20 to 34 living with their parents, Canada and selected census metropolitan areas, 2016**



**Note:** Included are all CMAs with a total population of 500,000 or more and smaller CMAs that had a proportion higher than the proportion for all CMAs (36.2%): Oshawa, Windsor, Barrie, St. Catharines-Niagara, Brantford and Abbotsford-Mission.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

# How BC Residents Think About Their Own Kids



# Transitions from **CARE**

In the Without a Home study, youth cite numerous reasons for leaving care, including the fact that they 'aged out' (26.3%), or were returned to their family (12.3%).



Importantly, of the 18.8% of youth who chose to leave care of their own accord, 16% explicitly referred to a 'bad experience' in care as driving their decision.

## Transitions from **CARE**

# Receiving **Transitional Supports**

Youth reporting they received help from a caseworker to plan their departure from foster care, group homes or both.

**Yes - 30%**

**No – 49%**

**Not sure – 21%**

(Without a Home 2019)

Only 13.7% of the participants indicated that they were aware whether their risk of homelessness was assessed before transitioning from care.

## Transitions from **CARE**

# Receiving **Transitional Supports**

**For those who received support, it was in the following areas:**

- reconnecting with family or a relative (35.5%)
- support around life skills training (45.70%)
- budgeting (44.2%),
- planning for school (46.4%)
- employment preparation (44.9%).



**Solving problems through**

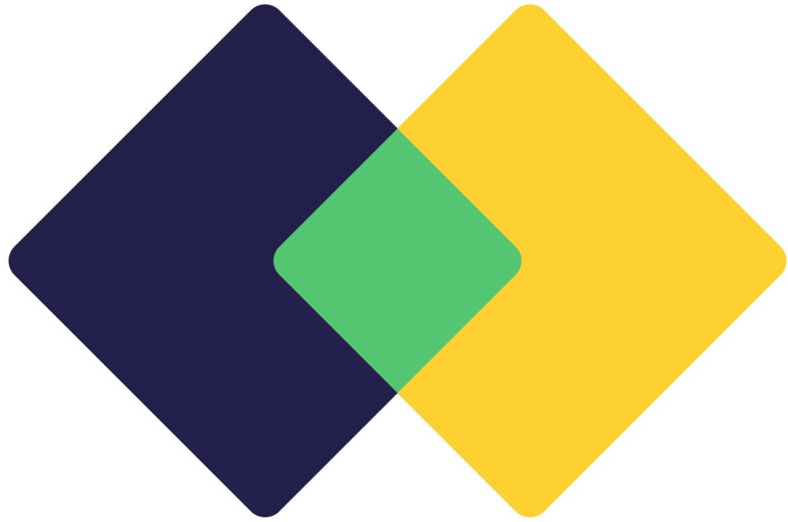
**Social**

**Innovation**



MAKING  
THE SHIFT

**Youth  
Homelessness  
Social Innovation Lab**



# MAKING THE SHIFT Funded Research

Making the Shift has funded **39 research projects** across Canada focusing on the prevention of youth homelessness







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2019-2020 OPEN CALL 

Enhancing Outcomes for Indigenous Youth

## One House Many Nations: A Community First Approach to Address Homelessness Amongst First Nation Youth

Alex Wilson, University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



2019-2020 OPEN CALL — ROUND 2 

Enhancing Outcomes for Indigenous Youth

## Decolonizing Transitions from Care for Indigenous Youth

Cynthia Puddu, MacEwan University

Edmonton, Alberta





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**2019-2020 OPEN CALL** ⓘ

Enhancing Outcomes for Indigenous Youth

## **Ai'aoskiikowaata (Providing Guidance to Youth): Supporting Healthy Transitions from Government Care to Independent Living**

Janice Victor, University of Lethbridge

Lethbridge, Alberta



**2022 OPEN CALL** ⓘ

Enhancing Outcomes for Indigenous Youth

## **Youth Leaving Care – From State Care into Homelessness: Prevention and Early Intervention**

Barbara Fallon, University of Toronto

Elena Lifshits Carrera, Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO)

Toronto, Ontario





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**2019-2020 OPEN CALL** ⓘ

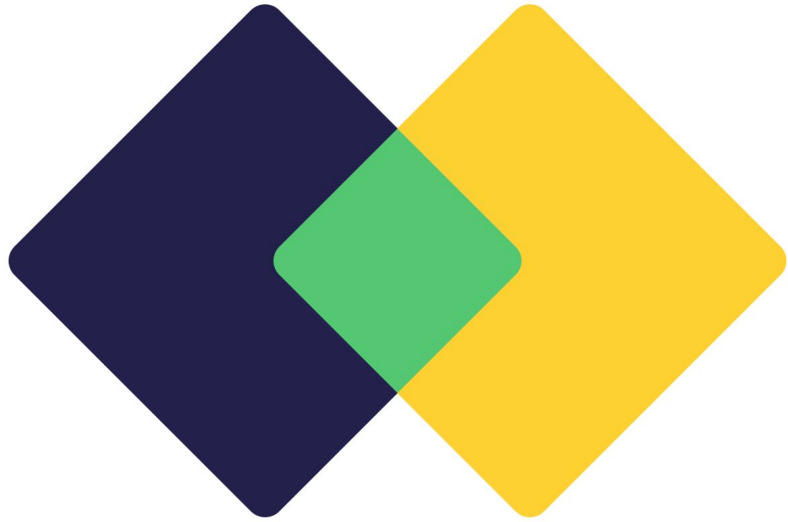
Shifting to Prevention through Early Intervention

## **Youth Transition from Child Welfare to Precarious Living Conditions: A Mixed Methods Longitudinal Study of Risk and Protective Factors in Nova Scotia**

Michael Ungar, Dalhousie University

Halifax, Nova Scotia





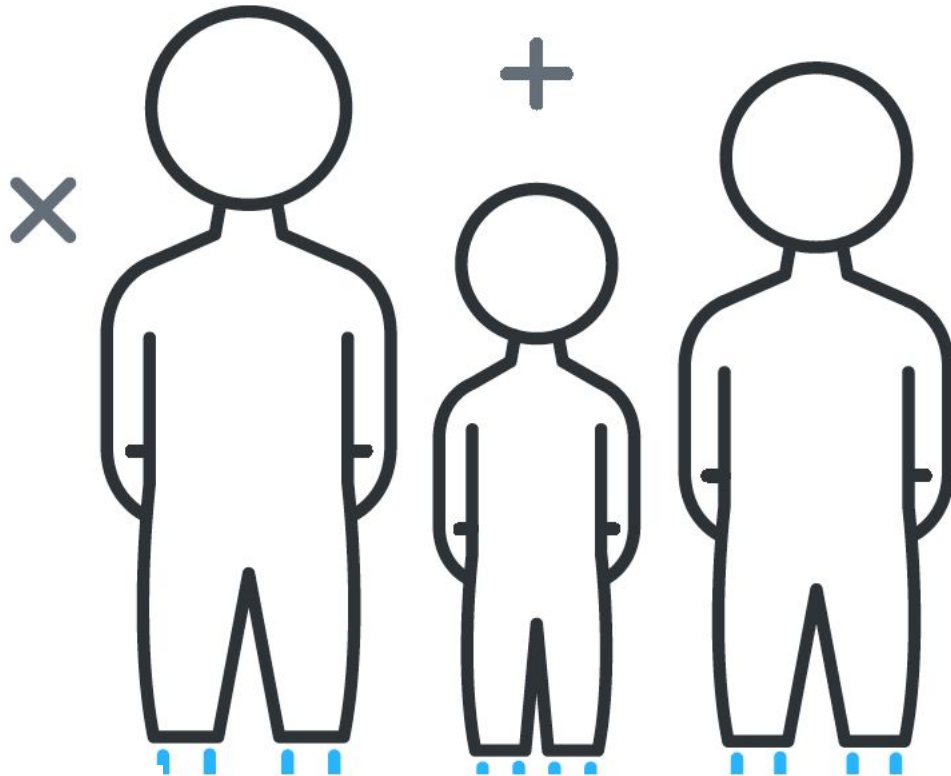
MAKING  
THE SHIFT  
**Demonstration  
Projects**

Employing design thinking, our ***demonstration projects*** are intended to expand our knowledge and understanding of innovative approaches to preventing and ending youth homelessness by identifying, developing, prototyping, testing, evaluating, and mobilizing innovations in policy and practice.

**Demonstration Project Models:**  
Upstream, Youth Reconnect, Family and Natural Supports (FNS), Housing First for Youth (HF4Y)

# 1

## Enhancing Family and Natural Supports



“My trauma led me down a wrong path, and I didn’t know that I had ... places where I could go to access help for that. And my family didn’t know how to support me with my mental health. So they ended up giving up on me because they didn’t know... how. And they didn’t have... anyone show them or teach them how to take care of someone with those circumstances.”

**Kamloops Youth**



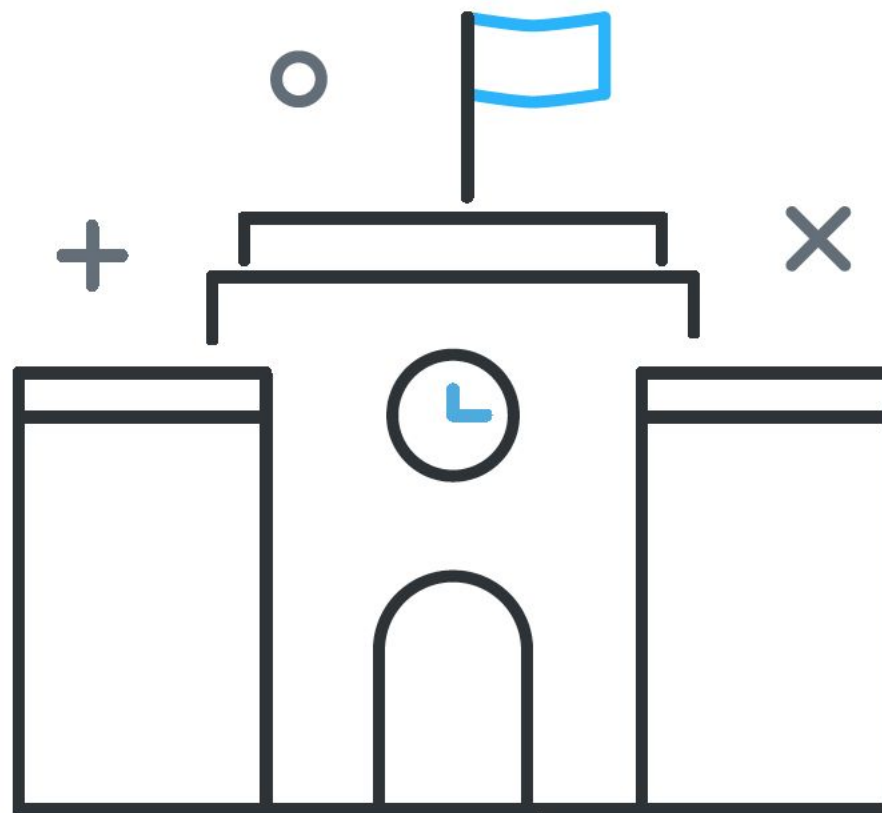


# 2

## SCHOOL-BASED Early Intervention

“Almost everyone has, like, the one teacher that they really trusted and liked, or the one school counsellor that was cool and not scary. So it would be nice if just they got this basic training and also like, signs to look out for. And like, how to approach a student and be like, “hey, you know, how’s everything at home, everything going okay?”

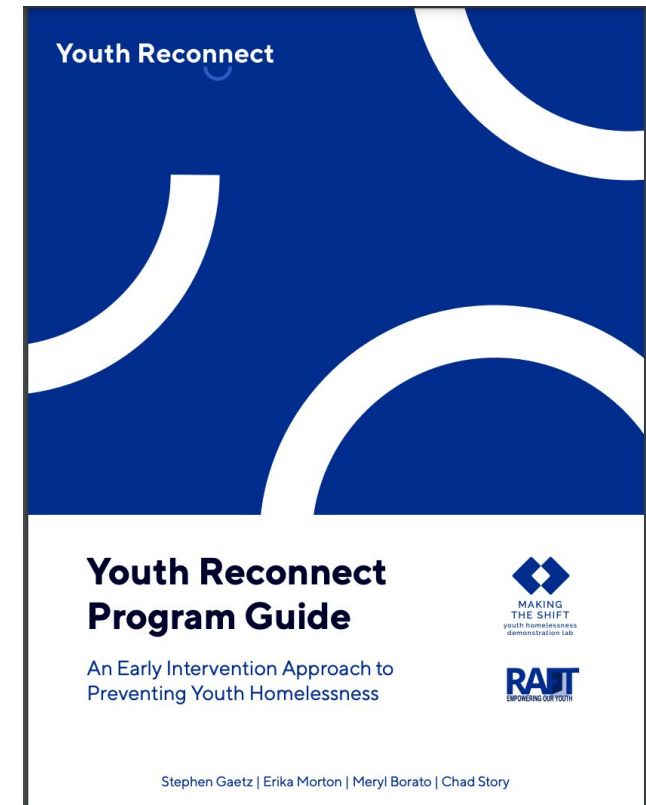
**Vancouver Youth**



# Reconnect

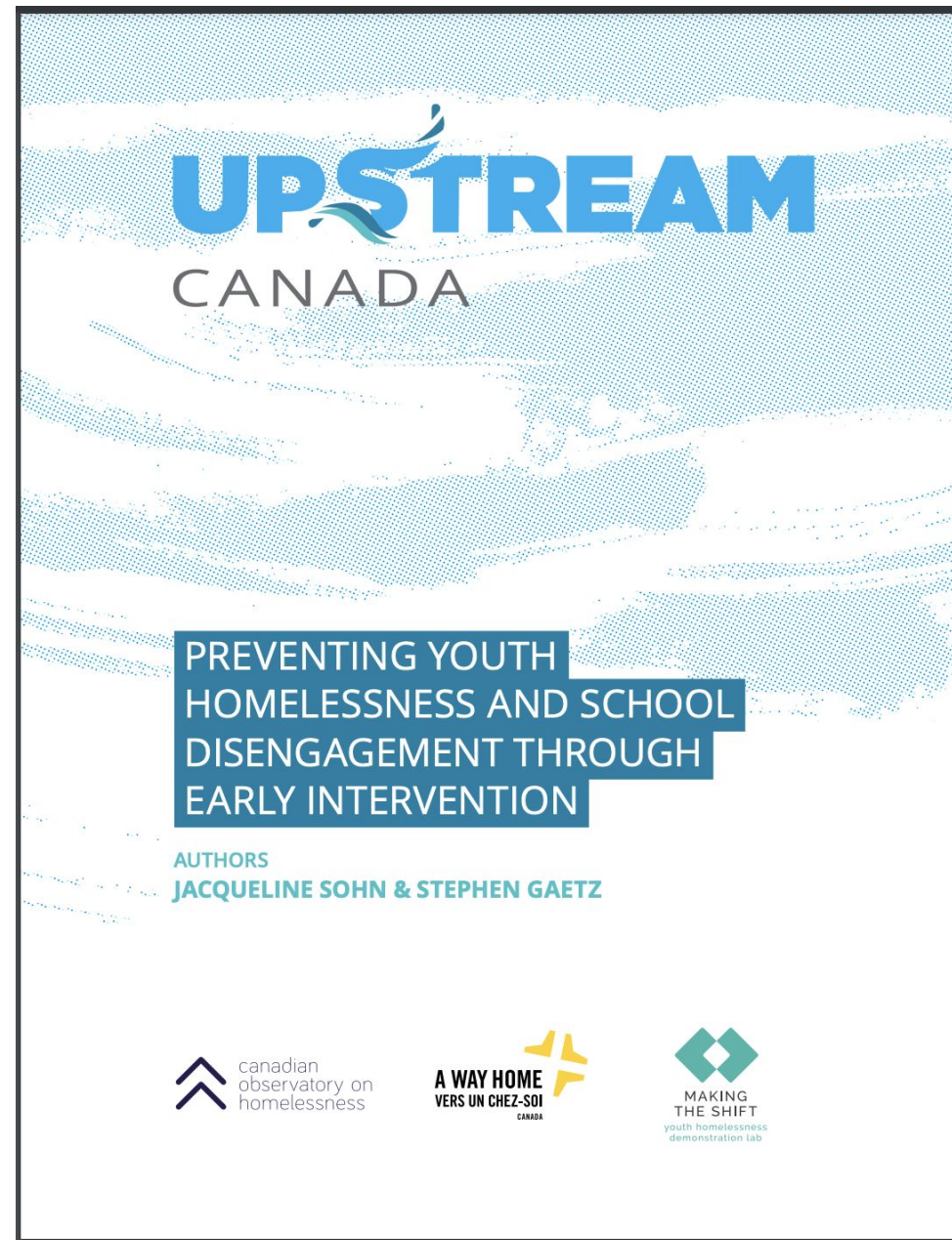
Keeping young people  
in place through

School ↔ Community  
Partnerships





# THE UPSTREAM PROJECT CANADA



**3**

# Helping youth *exit* homelessness for good!

Housing First  
*4 Youth*



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# The Core Principles of HF4Y

---

Promoting housing stabilization, well-being, social inclusion and positive transitions to adulthood.



1. A Right to Housing with No Preconditions



2. Youth Choice, Youth Voice, and Self-determination



3. Positive Youth Development and Wellness orientation



4. Individualized, Client-driven Supports with no Time Limits



5. Social Inclusion and Community Integration

# Housing First 4 Youth

1

**Currently  
homeless  
youth**

2

**Early  
Intervention:  
youth leaving  
care**

3

**ENDAAYAANG  
Supporting  
Indigenous youth**



**TYPE:**

Free 2 Be, Youth

**DESCRIPTION:**

WoodGreen Community Services addresses the needs for coordinated housing and community-based services for young people transitioning out of the child welfare system in Toronto.



# Housing First for Youth Leaving Care

# Making the Shift

## HF4Y Demonstration Projects

### Hamilton: Endaayaang



#### Target:

- Indigenous-identifying youth, aged 16-24
- Exiting systems (care, justice, hospital, etc.)

#### Goals:

- Indigenous-led
- Infusing the program model with culture
- Drawing from the Circle of Courage, and Seven Grandfather Teachings



6

**Final**

**Thoughts**

ANY  
QUESTIONS?

