

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

EXAMINING SUBPOPULATIONS OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Understanding the unique subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness and the specific needs of these subpopulations is necessary in order to end youth homelessness. Subpopulations can be designated based on age, level of risk, or other identifying characteristics. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of subpopulations, rather it is a brief overview of four groups of vulnerable youth. These youth are often marginalized within society at large, and are further disadvantaged when experiencing homelessness.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) YOUTH

LGBT youth make up approximately 5% of the general youth population, but up to 40% of the population of youth experiencing homelessness. Once homeless, LGBT youth are at greater risk than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts for a range of negative outcomes, including victimization, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, and HIV risk behaviors. One of the most frequently cited reasons for homelessness among LGBT youth is family rejection based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. This identity based family rejection is a unique traumatic aspect of LGBT youth's experience. Furthermore, when LGBT youth experiencing homelessness seek services, they may experience harassment, discrimination, or non-affirming program environments.

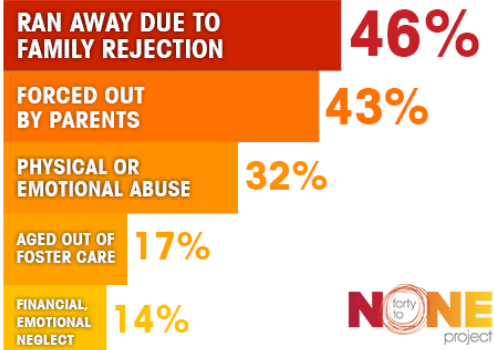
44%: The portion of homeless LGBT youth who reported being asked by someone on the street to exchange sex for money, food, drugs, shelter, or clothes, compared to **26%** of straight homeless youth.

For more information:

True Colors Fund's Forty to None Project: www.fortytonone.org

TOP FIVE REASONS

WHY GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH ARE HOMELESS OR AT-RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS:



Forty to None project
www.fortytonone.org

PREGNANT AND PARENTING YOUTH

According to the National Network for Youth, one-third of unaccompanied female youth have been pregnant. Some become pregnant after becoming homeless, while others are pregnant or parenting prior to their homeless experience. All pregnant and parenting youth have difficulty accessing safe housing and have limited opportunities and supports. Notably, statistics have shown that pregnancy rates among youth are higher for those experiencing homelessness than their housed peers, and the majority of pregnant unaccompanied females give birth to their babies while they are homeless. Thirty five percent of the 3.5 million people who experience homelessness in a given year are families with children. The vast majority of these are single mothers with children. Parenting is stressful for any youth, but youth experiencing homelessness face additional stressors related to living in unstable or unsafe conditions, and having limited access to basic needs. Pregnant and parenting youth need

14%: the pregnancy rate of 13-15 year old girls experiencing homelessness

1%: the pregnancy rate of non-homeless 13-15 year old girls

Levin, Bax, McKean, & Schoggen (2005)

For more information:

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:

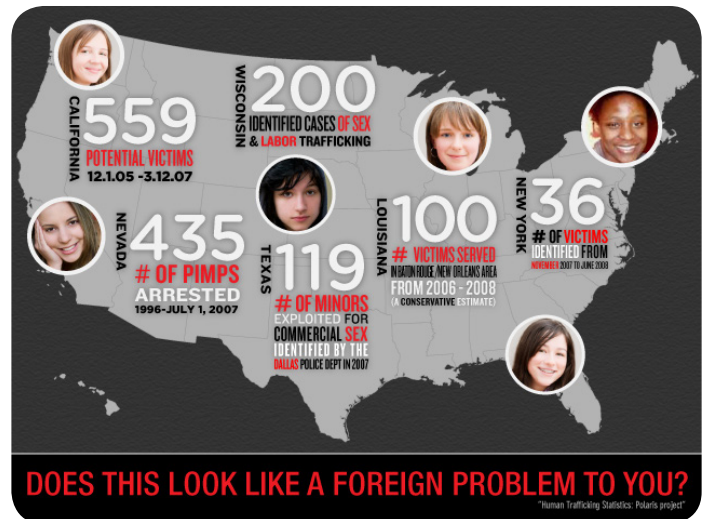
<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/>

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TRAFFICKED YOUTH

Human trafficking is the exploitation of a person for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sex, regardless of citizenship or nationality. There is a grave misconception in this country that human trafficking is a trend relegated to foreign soil. However, human trafficking – one of the world's fastest-growing criminal industries – is a critical issue in this country. It has been reported that 85% of confirmed sex trafficking victims are U.S. citizens, mostly runaway children. Often disconnected from family and friends, youth experiencing homelessness are particularly susceptible to traffickers who will lure them with the promise of food, warmth, and even false love. Though definitive research has yet to substantiate this claim, it is widely reported that within 48 hours of running away, an adolescent is likely to be approached to participate in commercial sexual exploitation. One study estimates 30% of shelter youth and 70% of street youth are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. They may engage or be coerced into prostitution for "survival sex" to meet daily needs for food, shelter, or drugs.



For more information:

Polaris Project: www.polarisproject.org

Covenant House: www.covenanthouse.org

UNDOCUMENTED YOUTH

Each year more than 8,000 undocumented unaccompanied youth are placed into the custody of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Some youth arrive in the U.S. without their parents due to family separation resulting from war, while others come to seek stability and safety after natural disasters. Many additional young people have not suffered direct harm or abuse in their home countries, but come to the U.S. in the hopes of reuniting with family or earning income to send home to family members living in desperate poverty. While some young people arrive in the U.S. unaccompanied, other youth come to the U.S. with their parents, only to be separated from them later as a result of abuse, neglect, abandonment, or parental deportation.



For more information:

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth:

<http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/youth>

Kids in Need of Defense: <http://www.supportkind.org/en/>