

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



No Safe Place to Go - LGBTQ Youth

Homelessness in Canada:

Reviewing the Literature

Key Details

KEY WORDS

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ), homeless youth, substance use, health status, LGBTQ Aboriginal Youth Homelessness, Homophobia and Transphobia, Shelter System, Support Services

POPULATION GROUP

LGBTQ

STEPPING UP THEMES

Health and Wellness; Co-ordinated and Youth-friendly Communities

RESEARCH ORIGIN

Ontario, Canada

SOURCE

Academic

“LGBTQ youth have needs and challenges that differ from their heterosexual peers and despite this knowledge, there are no specialized shelters that meet their needs in Toronto, or in Canada. Without the proper services in place, LGBTQ youth who are homeless may be on the streets for longer and have a harder time getting off of the streets than their heterosexual counterparts.”

1. What is the research about?

This research examined the unique needs of LGBTQ homeless youth in Canada and created a comprehensive profile of the struggles, gaps and support barriers that homeless LGBTQ youth encounter. The research provides recommendations for youth shelter and service providers, and policymakers in order to address the needs of these youth.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research was a desk research literature and policy review intended to identify gaps and barriers in services for homeless LGBTQ youth in Canada. The author draws on peer-reviewed and gray literature from Canada, England, and the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

This research is about LGBTQ homeless youth in the province of Ontario, Canada.

4. How was the research done?

This research was an extensive literature review of research on the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness within Canada. In order to generate insight into the challenges that LGBTQ youth face, the researcher also reviewed international research studies and writings on the subject, and produced recommendations for service providers and policy makers.

5. What are the key findings?

The researcher categorized key findings according to the following seven themes: Street Life, Substance Use, Health Status, LGBTQ Aboriginal Youth Homelessness, Location and Mobility, Homophobia and Transphobia in the Shelter System and on the Streets, and Support Services.

1. **Street youth** have very limited access to shelter, employment, social capital and healthy lifestyles. LGBTQ street youth often encounter criminal victimization, ridicule, and physical assault due to homophobia or transphobia.
2. Social stigma and discrimination has been linked to **substance use** patterns among LGBTQ homeless youth. Homelessness was the main reason why youth resorted to drug use.
3. LGBTQ youth find it hard to access **health care services** due to barriers such as social discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia. Transgender Youth do not find easily accessible health care services that are specific to their needs. They

turn to unmonitored street suppliers for transition-related treatments, which can lead to severe health complications.

4. LGBTQ **Aboriginal Youth** are homeless primarily because of a lack of family acceptance of their sexual orientation. LGBTQ Aboriginal homeless youth reported a lack of culturally sensitive support services.
5. LGBTQ youth do not feel safe in the shelter system so they tend to **move and change their location** frequently.

6. Why does this research matter for youth work?

This research matters for youth work because there is a huge gap between the needs of homeless LGBTQ youth and the support services that they have access to.

Key recommendations from this research include:

- Shelters across the system must create safe spaces that are free from discrimination so that LGBTQ youth find safety in accessing services
- Services should take a harm-reduction approach
- Shelter staff need access to training and educational resources to support them to adequately support the unique needs of homeless LGBTQ youth
- Given the lack of Canadian research on issues affecting homeless LGBTQ youth, additional research is needed specifically on issues related to intersectionality (e.g. LGBTQ and Aboriginal identity, and LGBTQ and immigration status).



Abramovich, I. A. (2012). No safe place to go-LGBTQ youth homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the literature. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth/Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse*, 4(1), 29-51.