



HOMELESSNESS LINKED TO INCREASED STIS AMONG STREET YOUTH

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- In Canada, there are upwards of 150,000 street-involved youth. Along with physical and psychological health problems such as trauma, mental illness, and substance abuse, sexual and reproductive health issues are common among these young people.
- In fact, the rate of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is ten times that of the general adolescent population in the country.
- By learning what factors put street youth at such high risk of HIV and STIs, it may be possible to develop more effective prevention programs.

QUICK FACT

STUDIES SHOW THAT BEING HOMELESS OR LIVING IN POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS IS LINKED WITH RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.

FINDINGS

- Studies show that being homeless or living in poor housing conditions is linked with risky sexual behaviour.
- Youth who were living in shelters or single room occupancy hotels had on average 65% more sex partners in the past six months, compared to youth who were living in more stable housing conditions.
- Also, fewer than half the young people who were homeless or living on the street reported using condoms consistently with their sex partners.

IMPLICATIONS

- These studies demonstrate that safe, stable and accessible housing options are urgently required to cut the high rates of HIV and STIs currently affecting street-involved young people.
- This research also shows that a scale-up of condom programs and other harm reduction activities should be considered, especially for youth who are living in shelters or on the street.

Marshall BDL, Kerr T, Shoveller JA, Patterson TL, Buxton, JA, Wood E. **Homelessness and unstable housing associated with an increased risk of HIV and STI transmission among street-involved youth.** *Health & Place*, 2009; 15(3): 753-760.

Marshall BDL, Kerr T, Shoveller JA, Montaner JSG, Wood E. **Structural factors associated with an increased risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infection transmission among street-involved youth.** *BMC Public Health*, 2009; 9: 7.

