



Hawai'i KIDS COUNT E-Bulletin

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Center on the Family | University of Hawai'i at Mānoa-CTAHR

Street Youth Study Special Edition

The University of Hawai'i Center on the Family, Waikiki Health and Hale Kipa just released the first comprehensive research study of its kind since the 1980s on homeless and runaway youth in Hawai'i. The study offers a detailed snapshot of homeless and unaccompanied youth on O'ahu, allowing for a more current and relative understanding of this population's experiences and service needs.

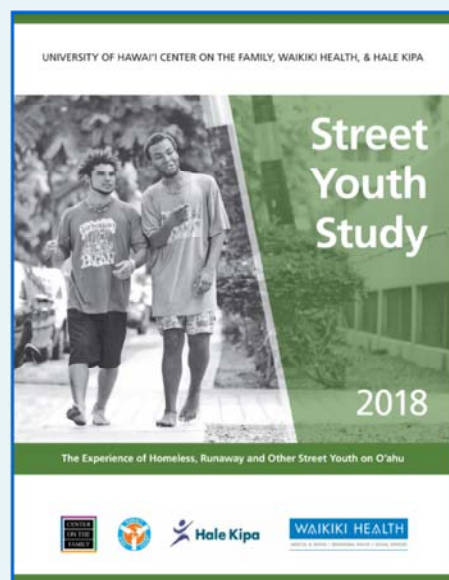
Homelessness among youth is a serious and complex problem, with research showing that youth aged 12–17 are at higher risk than adults of becoming homeless. Older youth between 18 and 24, considered as transition-aged youth, are one of the fastest growing homeless populations. Nationally, most of the unaccompanied youth (89.0%) in the point-in-time estimates of homelessness were between the ages of 18 and 24. Transition-aged youth are still developing as young adults and need support until they are able to care for themselves. They require unique housing and services that are different than those tailored for adults or families.

Hawai'i's 2017 homeless point-in-time count reported 319 unaccompanied youth, with 82.0% of these youth living unsheltered and 92.0% of them between the ages of 18 and 24. In fiscal year 2016, the state's homeless service system served a total of 624 unaccompanied youth and almost all of them (93.6%) were transition-aged youth. Among service users, unaccompanied youth aged 18–24 had the lowest rate of permanent housing placement with only 26.1% exiting to a permanent home compared to 49.0% of all homeless service users.

The *Street Youth Study* includes data that describes the basic demographics, homeless and runaway experiences, risk factors, well-being, and service utilization and needs of O'ahu's unaccompanied youth.

This study reveals a range of demographic backgrounds and experiences among street youth:

- Almost half (44.4%) of those surveyed were Hawaiian or part Hawaiian.
- The majority of the respondents (58.9%) were male.
- Nearly a fifth (17.2%) identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning.
- About a quarter (24.5%) had dropped out of school, and approximately half were considered idle (neither in school nor employed).



Youth reported a variety of living arrangements:

- 59.6% were living unaccompanied, 33.1% in a family household, and 7.3% as the household head with their own children.
- At some point in their lives, all of them experienced homelessness and sought temporary places to sleep at night (such as the streets, cars, abandoned buildings, emergency or transitional shelters, and transitional housing).

Respondents offered a picture of their homeless experiences:

- Almost half (48.0%) had their first homeless experience with their families.
- The average age of the first homeless episode was 14.1 years.
- Almost three-fourths (72.2%) were currently homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.
- 59.4% reported being homeless for one year or more.
- Nearly a fifth (17.9%) also considered themselves current runaways or throwaways.
- The most common reasons for currently being homeless or having been homeless were family discord, lifestyle choice, disagreeing with rules at home, and being kicked out.

The majority of respondents experienced some risk factors for youth homelessness, including:

- 39.7% had interactions with foster care system and 48.3% with juvenile detention.
- Over half (50.3%) had been exposed to parental substance abuse, 60.9% to parental incarceration, and 22.5% were from military families.
- Over three-quarters (77.5%) experienced abuse.

Respondents' health issues are of concern:

- About a quarter (26.2%) described their health as "fair" or "poor" compared to just 5.6% of youth in general U.S. population.
- 13.9% reported having a physical or developmental disability, or been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
- 88.1% had used substances in the past 30 days, and 32.5% had been admitted to a drug treatment program.
- 31.8% had committed self-harming acts such as cutting or burning themselves.
- 39.7% had suicidal thoughts and 58.3% of them had attempted suicide—indicating that some youth could benefit from treatment that addresses their physical, emotional and psychological health issues.

The types of services that teens and young adults sought can provide insight into the priority of their needs:

- Services accessed by the majority of respondents included hot meals (75.5%), clothing and hygiene supplies (69.5%), showers (69.5%), laundry facilities (52.3%), and clinic services (50.3%).
- Respondents preferred services that met basic needs over ones such as airfare assistance for family reunification (4.6%), treatment for substance use (13.9%), and GED classes (15.9%).

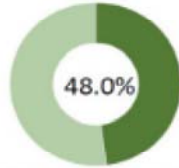
Given the complexities of this population's experiences, services and supports could benefit from taking multidimensional approaches to address their needs. A fully resourced service delivery system requires a range of supportive and housing service components specific to the unique and varied needs of homeless youth. This study serves as a starting point for further discussion and research. The data provided paints a picture of street youth on O'ahu, but only in broad strokes. Being able to accurately describe the breadth of youth homelessness across the state is imperative for providing effective supports that will transition youth from the streets and toward a brighter future.

To read the report, please visit: http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/3ff7d_Street%20Youth%20Study-013118_FINAL.pdf.

Homeless Experiences

All youth interviewed reported having homeless experiences. The average age of the first homeless episode was:

14.1
years

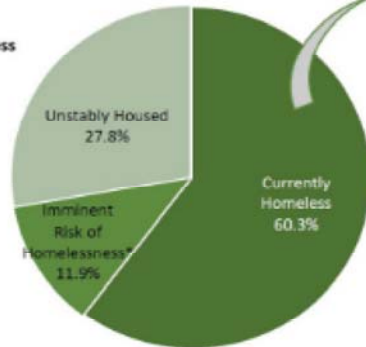


had their first homeless experience with their families

Runaway or Throwaway Experience



Currently Homeless



* Imminent risk of homelessness means their current residence would be lost within two weeks, no subsequent residence had been identified and they lacked the resources or support networks to obtain permanent housing.

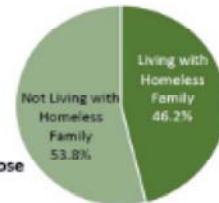
Homeless Youth Whose Family is Homeless

59.3%

of all homeless youth had been continuously homeless for a year or more

28.6%

of all homeless youth reported that their family is currently homeless

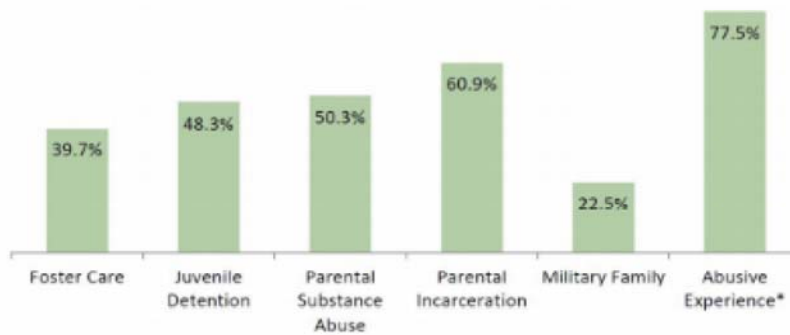


Risk Factors for Youth Homelessness

Interactions with Systems

Family-based Risk Factors

Abuse



* include verbal/emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

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