

**Last night while you were home in your bed... Over 3,800 young people were homeless in New York City;**

**1,600** of those young people spent the night outside, in an abandoned building, at a transportation site or in a car, bus, train or some other vehicle;

**150** of our children spent the night with a sex work client.

For the first time New York City has a comprehensive look at its young homeless population and the results are startling. In July of 2007 Empire State Coalition surveyed over 1,000 youth who were either homeless or at-risk for homelessness. The surveys were done at youth programs, at runaway shelters and transitional living programs, at adult homeless programs, on the street, and at other miscellaneous sites. The survey consisted of 55 questions including questions about age, reasons for homelessness, sexual orientation, history of foster care, educational attainment, current living situation and age when they first began living away from their parent/guardian. Surveys were done by trained volunteers who had received certification to do research on human subjects by the Institutional Review Board of Columbia University, the same Board that approved the study.

Surveys were done in July of 2007 and turned over for analysis to the project researchers, Dr. Darrick Hamilton, New York for Social Research and Dr. Lance Freeman, Columbia University. Preliminary findings were released this week and a final report will be available on Empire State's website in the near future. The researchers used a multiplier approach that took into account the use of multiple services by some youth and the ratio of youth in homeless programs versus the numbers interviewed during the reporting period. The result is a minimum number of youth at a point in time.

Over 1,000 surveys were completed There were 7 duplicates and a number of unusable surveys which left a net of 945 surveys to be analyzed.

Slightly more females than males were interviewed.

The overwhelming majority of youth are from minority groups 28% of youth identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual and an addition 11% either were unsure of their sexual orientation or were not comfortable answering the question 5% of youth interviewed stated they are transgender and another 18% were unsure or chose not to answer the question The vast majority of youth surveyed were born in the USA or Puerto Rico (81%)

For those outside the US:

5% were born in the Caribbean; 1% were born in South America, Europe, and Africa others were born in North and Central America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Middle East, and Mexico.

Foster care youth and youth from the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems are overly represented in the homeless youth population Almost 30% of youth had been in foster care at some time in their lives Over 40% had been in the juvenile justice system or in jail or prison The median age of the youth interviewed was 20 almost 30% of youth

reported that they were thrown out of their homes 15% said they had runaway 28 % reported some other reason without specifying other reasons for homelessness included:

- parents having moved
- parents being incarcerated
- discharged from jail or a hospital into homelessness
- left foster care
- Youth spent time at various placed over the course of a month including:
  - At shelters and transitional programs
  - Drop-in centers
  - In hotel rooms
  - With clients
  - In a place of business
  - Outside
  - In a train or bus station
  - On a train or in a bus or car
  - In an abandoned building
  - With a foster family
  - In their own place in a hospital
  - In a house of worship

Over one-half of homeless youth do not have a high school diploma and an additional 23% were continuing with their education in school or a GED program 48% of youth have had contact with runaway and/or homeless service providers 35% of youth have used services at a drop-in center youth who use services tend to use multiple services There were a great deal of challenges in trying to undertake a survey of this magnitude. While volunteers reached out to as many locations and service providers as possible, many agencies were reluctant or unable to assist in locating young people who might have qualified for an interview. Large sections of the city were not visited and the vast majority of street interviews took place in Manhattan. The project was largely unsuccessful in finding and interviewing younger runaways. Anecdotally we have been told by school guidance counselors and others of the numbers of youth who are couch surfing and making do. Due to the timing of the survey (July) it was impossible to begin to outreach to this younger group as they were not in school and not in touch with traditional runaway services. Continued work needs to be done to find and engage this younger population before they become street-involved. Empire State Coalition is grateful to each of the youth who took the time to speak to one of our interviewers. There youth were amazingly honest and generous with us and were interested in helping the next generation of homeless youth find safe and supportive services and avoid the troubles and struggles they have suffered and continue to suffer.