
**HERE AND NOW:
Youth Homelessness, Employment
and Covid-19 in Toronto**

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Background

Youth experiencing homelessness face **stigma** when looking for employment

Covid-19 had **disproportionate negative effects** on specific populations & exacerbated existing issues

Young people are often '**last through the door, first out**' in times of crisis

Q: How has this crisis differed for housed vs. unhoused young people?

Youth Homelessness Facts: Canada and Toronto

20% of the Canadian homelessness population are youth between 13 and 24

More than a third of young people who experience homelessness in Canada are from Ontario

1 in 5 shelter users in Canada are youth

28% of homeless people in Toronto are youth

On any given night, **1500-2000** youth in Toronto are homeless

3300 to 10,000 youth experience homelessness over the course of a year (**1 in 100 youth**) in Toronto

22%

Youth Unemployment Rate (ON - 2020)

2020 - the present: What happened

2020

Sharp decline in employment (overall) between Feb - May 2020

Ontario youth unemployment at historical 22%

2021

Youth (age 15-24) had greatest increase in employment (+10.2%)

June 2021: Ontario surpassed pre-Covid employment rate

“When you ask young people what they want to do or what they’re interested in, they don’t have any idea anymore...the question is what is available. It’s not, what can I do, what do I want to do. It’s ‘what is available?’”

Advocacy Report // CCYP Fellowship

Topic: the relationship between covid-19, youth employment + youth homelessness in Toronto

Timeline: Nov 2020 - May 2021

Methods: Mixed-methods

- **Qualitative:** Youth Focus Groups (Feb-March 2021)
- **Quantitative:** Youth Survey (March 2021)
 - 120 respondents



Survey Findings: Youth Homelessness

- **120** respondents
- **51%** currently homeless
- **64%** past homelessness
- **45%** more than 1 type of homelessness

- 'Couch-surfing' + 'accessing shelter' most common
 - 95% of those who have experienced 'sleeping rough' are White-identified
 - POCs more likely to experience 'couch-surfing'
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Survey Findings: Employment

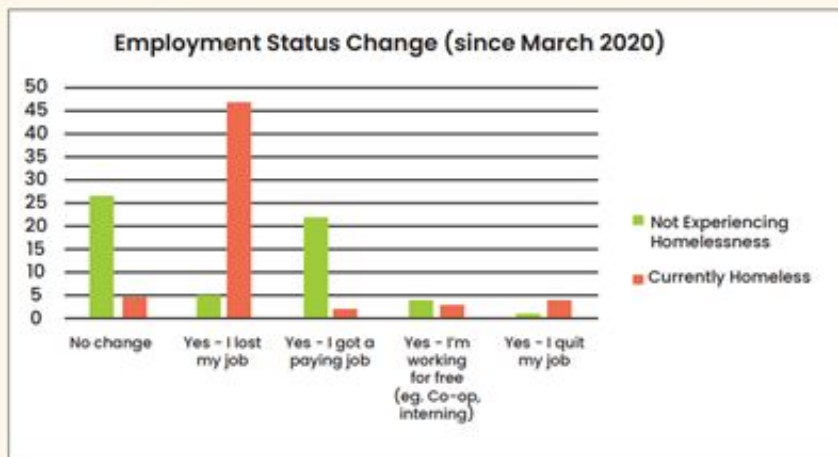


Figure 1: Employment Status Change (since March 2020)

77% un-housed youth **lost their job** compared to just 8% of housed youth

37% of housed youth **got a paying job** compared to just 3% of un-housed youth

69% of housed youth have **paid employment** compared to 37% of un-housed youth

57% of un-housed youth are **currently looking for work**

Survey Findings: Income

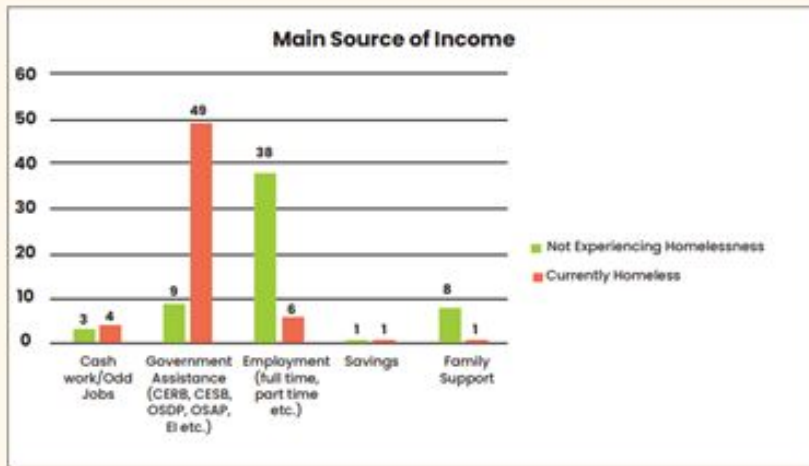


Figure 3: Main Source of Income

80% of unhoused youth use government assistance as their main source of income

64% of housed youth use employment as their main source of income

Housed youth are more likely to have **family support** as a main source of income

Survey Findings: Covid-19

The biggest barriers to employment for youth experiencing homelessness are a combination of **Covid19 restrictions** (63%), **short-term job placements/contracts not renewed** (50%) and moving, unstable housing or **no fixed address** (93%)

Focus Group Themes

Youth Homelessness Themes

- Meaningful work
- Stigma / Negative stereotyping from employers
- The role of service providers
- The role of employment programs
- Toronto's geography

Covid-19 Themes

- Privacy
- Community / Work Spaces
- Virtual work challenges
- Health and safety
- Internet access
- An unexpected break

“I found that because it was mostly young people, [managers] felt like they could just kind of replace us with other young people. So, like it was kind of like a threat every day in a way.”

“I had the opportunity, but I didn’t have the right set-up. Okay, so you need a phone, you need an Internet connection, you need on a safe space, but in the room that I was given they didn’t have like an ethernet chord or Internet plugin or they didn’t have like a landline so I’m like, how is this going to work?”

“I’m not gonna say it’s good that a pandemic occurred, but it was good in the sense, where there was something that happened, where I actually like took some time away from work.

We kind of got a breather and I got to sort through all this stuff in other areas that I needed to get done for a long time that I put to the side because I’m just trying to work to make money and save up.”

Conclusions

It is not uncommon for young people and their families to experience more than one type of homelessness

The Toronto shelter system indirectly perpetuates barriers to employment

Youth experiencing homelessness have experienced significant employment losses during the pandemic compared to housed youth

What needs to happen / Call to Action

- Promote local employment opportunities
- More long-term/permanent jobs for youth
- De-stigmatize youth homelessness / increased education for employers
- More flexibility for un-housed youth looking for employment or housing
- Increased access to strong internet/wifi
- Person-centred approaches to employment for youth experiencing homelessness
- More access to private work spaces for youth in shelter



Questions?

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