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Canada 

Hidden in Our Midst: Homeless Newcomer Youth in Toronto

Presented by: Helen Thang and Cheyanne Ratnam

Presentation Overview

- Research Objectives
- Methodology
- Data Collection Process
- Preliminary themes from the Data Analysis
- + ■ Next Steps



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Definitions used in this study:

- Homeless
- Newcomer
- Youth





Research Objectives

- Identify pathways to homelessness for newcomer youth in Toronto
- Identify service and support needs
- Evaluate current services and supports
- Identify service gaps and possible promising practices



+ Methodology

- Informed by Participatory Action Research (PAR)
- Recruitment of a group of youth Peer Researchers who have lived experience of being a newcomer and homeless in Canada
- Recruitment of a Community Advisory Group made up of staff representatives from diverse social service organizations

Development and Administration of Research Tools

- Focus group/interview guide
- Demographic questionnaire

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+ Youth Focus Group & Interview Data Collection Process

- 2 focus groups in West Toronto (Etobicoke)
- 1 focus group in North York
- 1 focus group in Scarborough
- 5 focus groups in downtown Toronto
- 3 interviews in downtown Toronto

+ Focus Group Summary

- 69 individuals participated in the focus groups
- 3 individuals participated as interviewees
- 9 focus groups were conducted in total
 - 3 focus groups were women-only
 - 1 focus group was men-only
 - 4 focus groups were attended by both women and men
 - 1 focus group was conducted in Spanish





Preliminary Themes from an Analysis of the Focus Group and Interview Data



PERSPECTIVES – Disappointment that life in Canada is not as prosperous as they had pictured

- *“When I was back home, I was having my own job, I was having my monthly payment, I was having my own car, home... I was like, working, got good pay ...my experience, I’m starting from like zero.”*

-Focus group participant

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+ BARRIERS - Housing Access - Discrimination from landlords

- *“Even if we give them money to pay right there and then, they’re still not renting to us. But they try to scare you, cause you can’t say, “oh, I lived in a shelter before”, or they’ll show you the door... Yeah, being a single female, they don’t want you. Being black on top of that, they don’t want you.”*

– Focus group participant

+ BARRIERS- Employment Access

- *“...as a newcomer, sometimes you can’t work yet, so the job postings are not relevant to you. Because you don’t have your medical paper, you don’t have a work permit...”*

-Focus group participant

+ BARRIERS – Service Access – Racial discrimination from social service workers

- *“I feel bad, because supposedly I go to them to help me - not to be discriminated and for them to not help me.”*

– Focus group participant

GAPS in SERVICE – Limited number of organizations that cater directly to newcomer youth

- *“I went to a center that doesn’t deal with refugees and they helped me apply. That doesn’t make sense to me... that’s not their area, but they are helping me...all the centers...that’s their area, they’re too busy...staff is changing over... a lot of people are coming...if I’m a newcomer and the place that’s supporting newcomers has no room for me, where do I go?”*

+ -Focus group participant

+ Next Steps

- Completion of Data Analysis
- Development of Service Provider Survey
- Development of Policy Recommendations

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