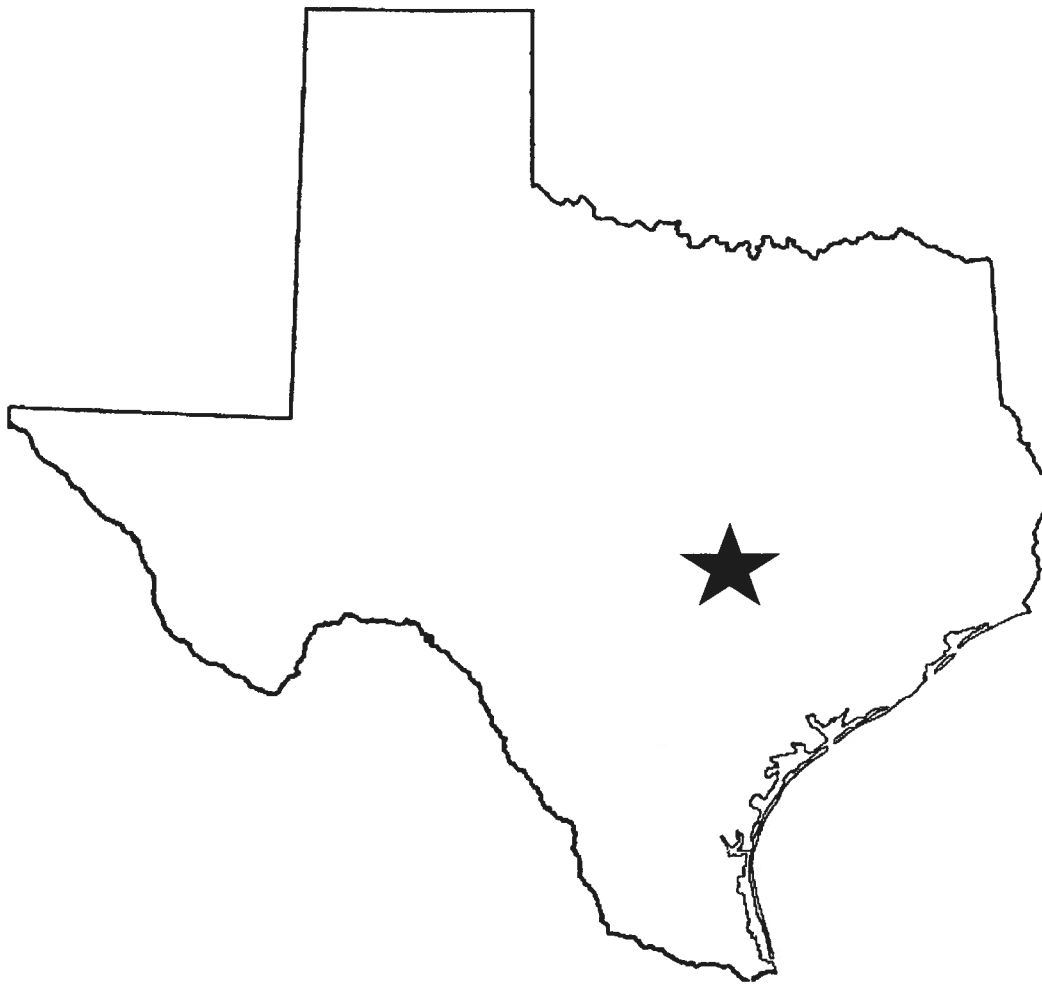


STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM DATA COLLECTION PROJECT AUSTIN REPORT 2013



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Many thanks to Lifeworks in Austin for their collaboration in this study. It certainly would not exist without them. A special thanks to Will Hancock, our project supervisor, who provided structure and sound advice in the field. Thanks to Miriam Umana and Melissa Wheeler, the hardworking interviewers, both of whom spent many hours setting up appointments, meeting potential participants, interviewing young people, and tracking paperwork. This project was a success because of their hard work and dedication. We hope that the information provided in this report will inform programs, funding, and decisions that will benefit young people experiencing homelessness in Austin.

INTRODUCTION:

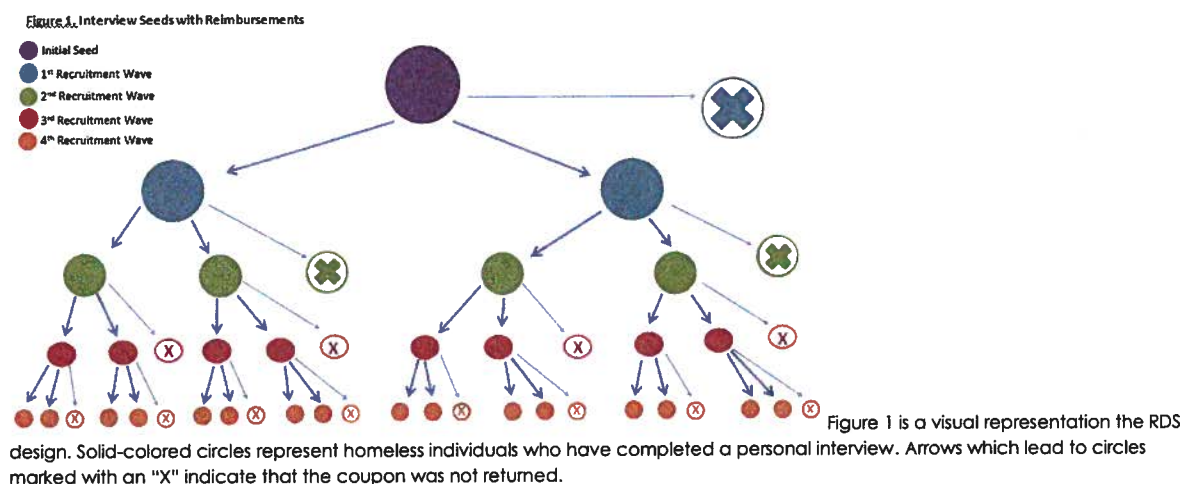
STUDY METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes data collected in Austin as a part of the Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project. This 11 city data collection effort was funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The project aimed to learn more about the lives and service needs of homeless and runaway young people (aged 14-21 years). The ultimate goal is to use this data to inform service design to better meet the needs of street youth who obtain and access services through street youth outreach programs. To achieve these goals, each city administered questionnaires via Computer Assisted Personal Interviews and conducted focus groups with homeless young people.

The Sampling Strategy

The goal of this project was to utilize Respondent Driven Sampling methods to recruit interview participants. There is no method for sampling homeless people that has been verified to be unbiased. Many studies have clearly documented the difficulty associated with any attempt to enumerate homeless populations (e.g., Burt & Taeuber, 1991; Dennis, 1991; Rossi, Wright, Fisher, & Willis, 1987; Wright & Devine, 1992). Because of this and the fact that we wish to access a subpopulation of homeless individuals, we proposed a Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) approach (Heckathorn, 2002; Heckathorn et al., 2002), which has been used in other studies to sample homeless populations (Coryn et al., 2007; Gwadz et al., 2010). The research team in Austin recruited four initial "seed" respondents who were experiencing homelessness and between the ages of 14-21 years. Initial seeds were reimbursed with a \$20 gift card for their interview and then were asked to give three recruitment "coupons" to other homeless youth that they know. Seed respondents were given an extra \$10 gift card for each peer who returned a coupon and completed an interview. Each new survey participant was offered three recruitment coupons.

In Austin, Respondent Driven Sampling techniques proved to be quite effective. However, Respondent Driven Sampling did not yield as many participants as we originally hoped in other cities. To supplement the Respondent Driven Sampling Techniques, we also added a convenience sampling approach. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where subjects are recruited based on their proximity and convenience to the interviewers. Participants recruited through convenience sampling may have been found at the agency or in outdoor areas. Participants who completed the questionnaire were reimbursed with a \$20 gift card.



Questionnaire: Computer Assisted Personal Interview

In Austin, 61 questionnaires were administered via computer assisted personal interviews. These interviews were conducted in private rooms. Interviewers read most questions aloud to the participant and recorded their responses in Voxco survey software. A short series of especially sensitive questions were not read aloud by the interviewer. Rather, for these "self-administered" questions, the interviewer gave the computer to the respondent to read the questions silently to himself or herself (or to listen to the question read aloud via headphones) and click on his or her response choice. The questionnaires included questions about service needs, service access, service utilization, life history, feelings, and drug use. After each interview, project staff synchronized the Voxco survey software, which uploaded the completed interview to a secure University of Nebraska-Lincoln server that is only accessible by certain project staff members and is password protected.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used to obtain richer qualitative information regarding the homeless history, personal characteristics, future goals, and service utilization. Two project interviewers served as moderators for the four focus groups, which lasted about one hour on average. Focus groups were recorded on a digital audio recorder and sent back to the University of Nebraska for transcription.

Interviewer and Supervisor Training

In January of 2013, all of the project interviewers and supervisors from each of the eleven cities came to Omaha, Nebraska to attend a five day training on interviewing techniques, respondent driven sampling protocols, administering the interview, and moderating focus groups. After training, project staffers returned to their home cities to complete practice interviews and the institutional review board CITI human subjects training certification. Because of the considerable delay the project experienced between training and OMB approval to begin data collection, project interviewers and supervisors also completed a short "training refresher course" before data collection began.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

An informed consent was read to each young person before they could participate in the project. These young people were given the opportunity to ask any questions about the project and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate. If the person agreed to participate, he or she was given a copy of the consent form to keep and asked to sign a consent form that the research team kept in a locked filing cabinet. These consent forms were sent via Fed-Ex delivery to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). When received at UNL, the consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

Data Collection Period in Austin

From March 2013 through August 2013, sixty-one young people in Austin, TX who were experiencing homelessness were interviewed for this project. Twenty-three of these interviews were done using convenience sampling methods and thirty-eight of these interviews were done using Respondent Driven Sampling techniques.

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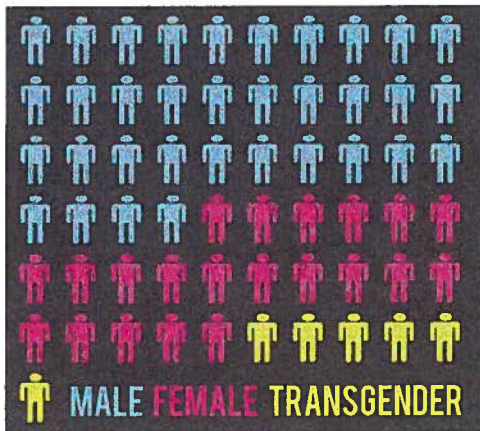
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2013

STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM DATA COLLECTION PROJECT: AUSTIN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

61 YOUNG people experiencing
HOMELESSNESS
were interviewed as part
of this research project.

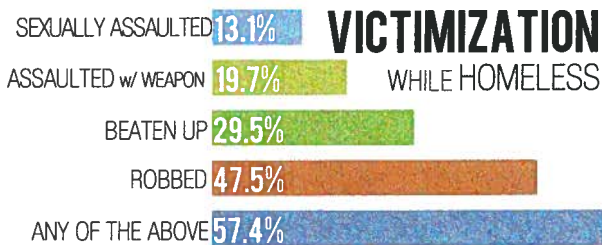


on average,
participants were
HOMELESS for
23.8
TOTAL MONTHS

72.1%
SLEPT OUTSIDE
at least **ONCE** while
homeless.

65.6%
reported
high levels
(CESD \geq 16) of
**DEPRESSIVE
SYMPTOMS**

75.4% have a high school
DIPLOMA OR GED



“ Lifeworks is a very good program. I know like in two months just being at the shelter I've got a lot of things done...it happened in such little time...it's very supportive. ”

—FEMALE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

TOP 3 SERVICE NEEDS

1. Need more **CLOTHING**.
2. A place to hang out during the day.
3. Access to **laundry** facilities.

TOP 3 BARRIERS TO SHELTER

1. THE SHELTER WAS FULL.
2. Didn't know where to go for shelter.
3. Didn't like the other shelter clients.

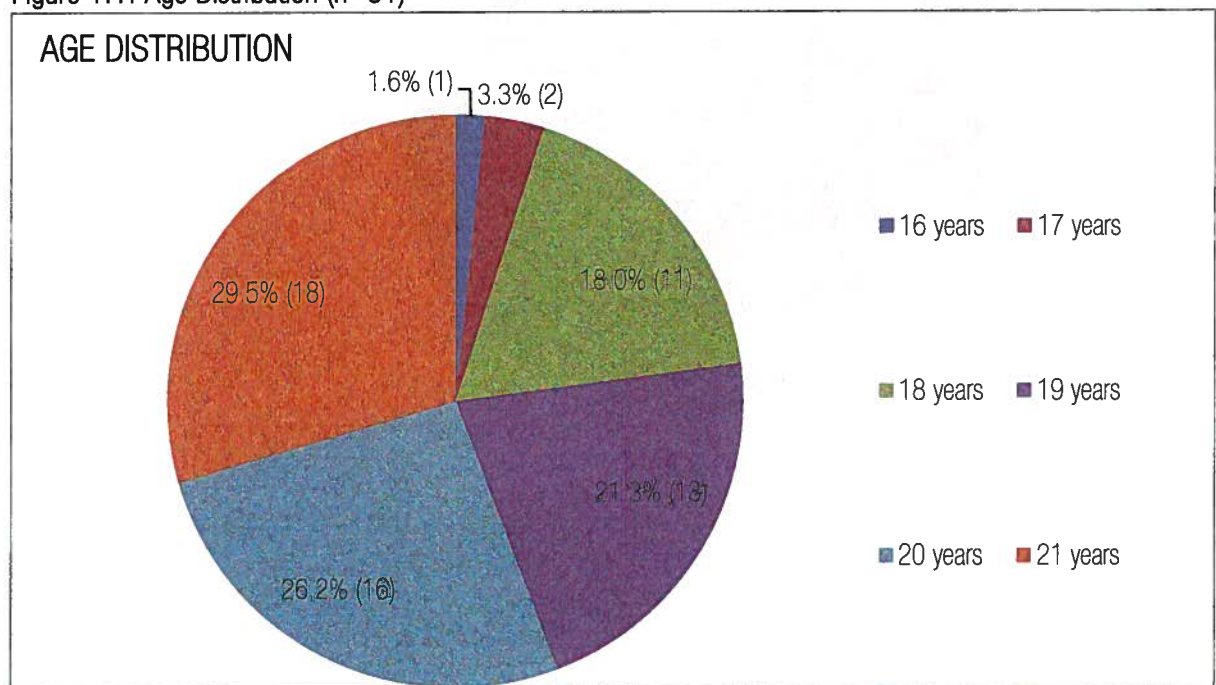
CHAPTER 1:

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

On average, respondents were 19.56 years old. Age ranged from 16 years to 21 years and the exact breakdown can be found in Figure 1.1 below. Although 14 and 15 year olds were also eligible for the study, none were interviewed. Most (77.0%; n=47) respondents were between 19-21 years.

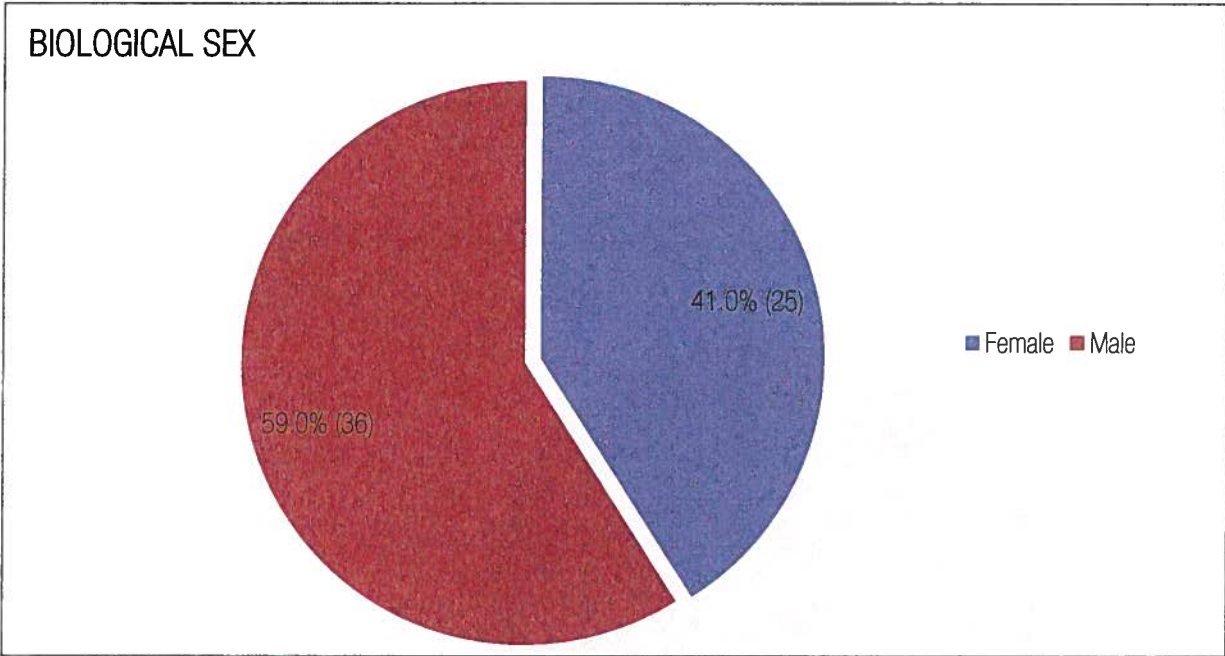
Figure 1.1: Age Distribution (n=61)



Biological Sex & Gender Identity

More than half of survey respondents in Austin reported their biological sex was male (59.0%; n=36) while 41.0% (n=25) of respondents reported their biological sex was female (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Biological Sex (n=61)

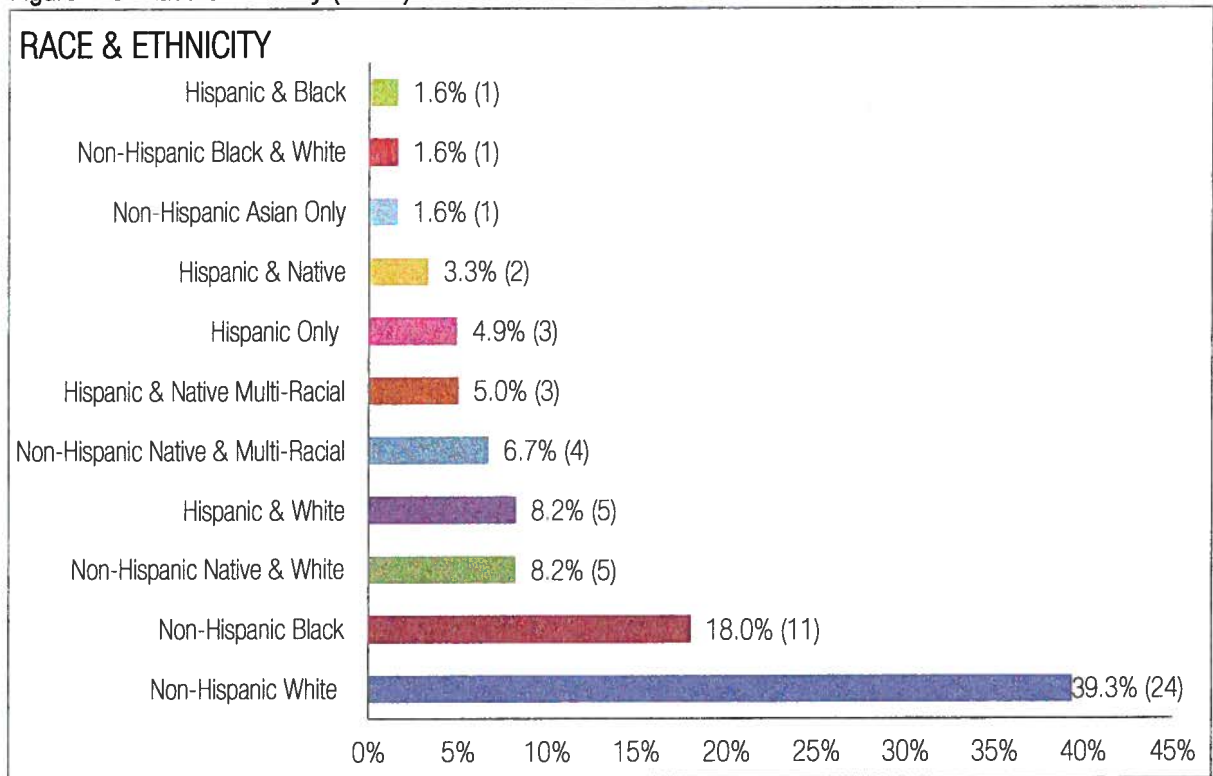


When asked about gender identity, most (90.2%; n=55) respondents reported that they are not transgender. Four respondents (6.6%) reported that they were "transgender and identify as a boy or man." Three of these respondents reported a biological sex of female and one reported a biological sex of male. One respondent (1.6%) reported that he is "transgender and identify as a girl or woman" and reported a biological sex of male. One respondent (1.6%) reported that she is "transgender, but identify in some other way". This person reported that her biological sex was female.

Race & Ethnicity

Almost one-quarter (23.0%; n=14) of the respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. Forty percent of the sample identified as non-Hispanic white (39.3%; n=24) and 18.0% (n=11) identified as non-Hispanic black. Five respondents (8.2%) identified as non-Hispanic native & white and another five respondents (8.2%) identified as Hispanic and white. Four respondents (6.7%) identified as non-Hispanic native and multi-racial. Five percent (n=3) of the sample identified as Hispanic & native multi-racial and another five percent (4.9%; n=3) identified as Hispanic only. Two respondents (3.3%) identified as Hispanic and native. All reported race and ethnicities are found in Figure 1.3 below.

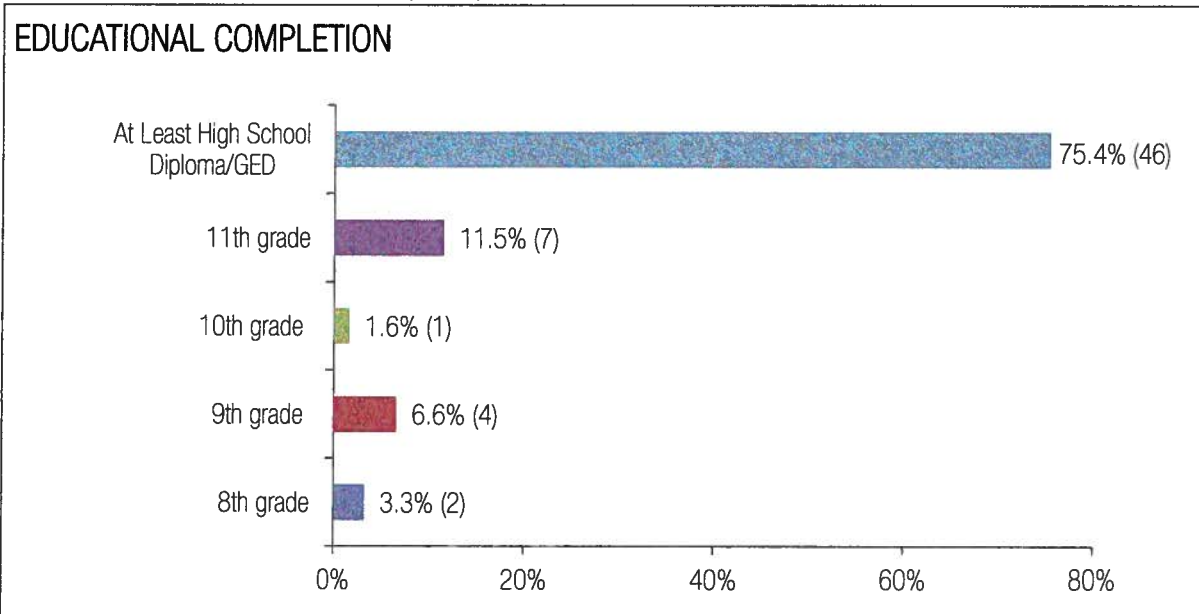
Figure 1.3: Race & Ethnicity (n=60)



Education

Three-fourths (75.4%; n=46) of the respondents in Austin have a high school diploma or GED (Figure 1.4). Of all the respondents in Austin, seven (11.5%) reported that 11th grade was the last grade they completed. Only one respondent said 10th grade was the last grade they completed. Seven percent (6.6%; n=4) said that 9th grade and 3.3% (n=2) said that it was 8th grade was the last grade they completed.

Figure 1.4: Educational Completion (n=61)



Respondents were also asked whether they were ever told by a teacher, counselor, doctor, or some other professional that they had a learning disability. Over half (57.4%; n=35) of the respondents were told that they had a learning disability at some point in their lives.

We also asked whether or not respondents were currently enrolled in various types of educational programs, including high school, college, a workforce program, an alternative school program (like night school), or a GED program. Most of the respondents in Austin (82.0%; n=50) were not currently enrolled in any of the educational programs we asked about. Almost one-tenth (9.8%; n=6) were enrolled in college. Four people (6.6%) were enrolled in high school and one respondent (1.6%) was enrolled in a GED program.

During the focus groups, respondents who weren't enrolled in school right now were asked about services or supports that they would need to get back to school. Most of those participants said they need help with filling out financial aid paperwork.

Focus group respondents were also asked about where they see themselves in 5 years, and many mentioned continuing their education or working professional careers that can be achieved through furthering education.

"School."—Female respondent

"Getting my doctor's degree in psychology."—Female respondent

"Probably most likely at least starting or almost through college and in an apartment, you know, probably not too far from here but something reasonable for me. You know not something that you know is way out there, not something that's you know not very far up, just getting somewhere just moving forward."—Male respondent

"I just hope I have my education by then... It would be easier for me to get a job and support everything."—Male respondent

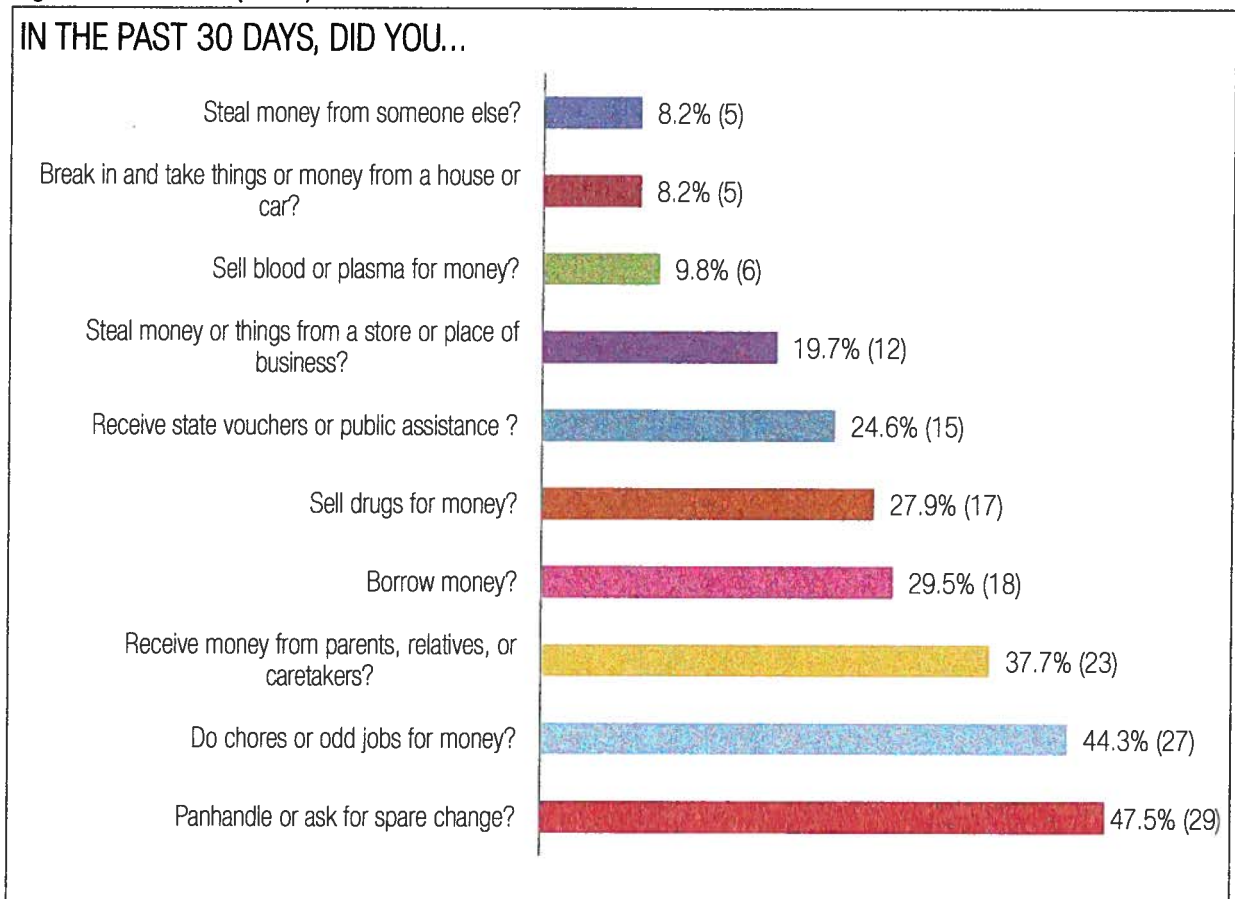
"I see myself working at the medical center downtown Houston living in a loft and having a 300 all black Chrysler and um going to school."—Female respondent

Employment & Income

Two respondents (3.3%) had a full time job at the time of their interview and twelve respondents (19.7%) had a part time job at the time of their interview. Five people (8.3%) had ever enlisted in the military. During the interview, respondents were asked about the last time they applied for a job. Approximately one-third of respondents (36.1%; n=22) reported that they had applied for a job within the past week. About one-quarter (23.0%; n=14) applied for a job more than a week ago but within the last month and 27.9% (n=17) applied for a job more than one month ago but within the last year. Six respondents (9.8%) reported that the last time they applied for a job was more than a year ago, and two people never applied for a job.

We also asked about ways respondents have gotten money in the past month (all responses shown in Figure 1.5 below). The most highly endorsed item was panhandle or ask for spare change (47.5%; n=29), followed closely by doing chores or odd jobs for money (44.3%; n=27), receiving money from parents, relatives, or caretakers (37.7%; n=23), borrowing money (29.5%; n=18) and selling drugs for money (27.9%; n=17). All of the items are shown below in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: Income (n=61)



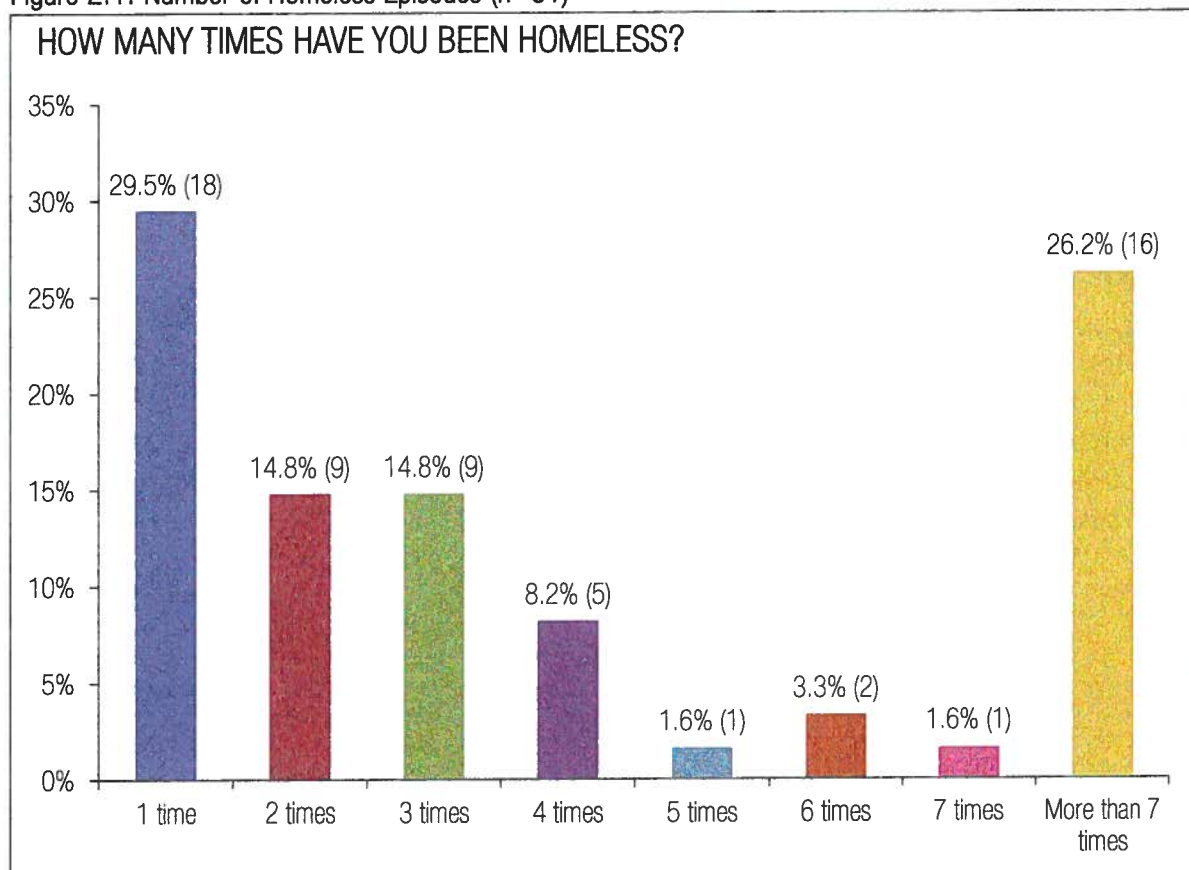
CHAPTER 2: HOMELESS HISTORY

Chapter two presents survey results pertaining to homeless experiences and attitudes towards homelessness. Percentages and numbers are presented in text, and occasionally percentages will be the same and numbers will be different across variables due to item missing data.

Homeless Episodes

We asked respondents how many times they had been homeless throughout their entire lives, with possible responses ranging from one time to more than seven times (Figure 2.1). Less than one-third (29.5%; n=18) of respondents had been homeless only one time. Exactly 14.8% (n=9) had been homeless two times and another 14.8% (n=9) had been homeless three times. More than one-quarter (26.2%; n=16) of respondents in Austin had been homeless more than seven times.

Figure 2.1: Number of Homeless Episodes (n=61)



During the focus groups, participants were asked whether they had gone back and forth from between being homeless and having a place to live. In Austin, some said yes and explained:

"I grew up in foster care and I've run away and then I get put back in foster care and I run away and then meet a dude and staying there and then run away from him, it's just constantly back and forth."—Focus group participant

"It becomes difficult at times because even though like when you run away it's because you don't want to be at the place that you're at and the reality is always going to be hard living out there on your own. So, if you like try to like deal with it or just do what you do, when I was homeless like I was at people's house or I would just like, I used to do things that girl people do my age and I would always fake my age just to pretend I was something older so I was able to more things."—Female respondent

"2 years back and forth. Like I said, when I was in my first shelter it was just absolutely horrible, so I ran away a lot. It's like, it's right by Austin. I ran away from (something-burg?) like 30 miles, that's a walk. This was 2 years ago. I did that several times, I just hated that place. So I'd be gone for a couple months, I'd just be staying with friends and if I couldn't say with them I'd stay with somewhere in the woods or something, cause I'd always have a place to go just to stay. Because if I went there it was just horrible, nothing would be accomplished, nothing, I just, I hated it. Absolutely hated it, being stuck in this little room, confined, you had this TV and this like 6 guys, little bitty room and you're stuck, and it's just hot as hell. And if you're lucky and you're older, you got to the big guy room, little bit longer, little bit more air conditioning going. It's like, yeah. It was just miserable, and being like, having everything and just straight to that just sucks. So of course, I go back to my friends and everything because they'll take care of me. So a lot happened and back and forth, back and forth, and eventually I just kind of calmed down, chilled out, like CPS, I'm gonna try to work it and get to a better place."—Male respondent

Time Spent Homeless

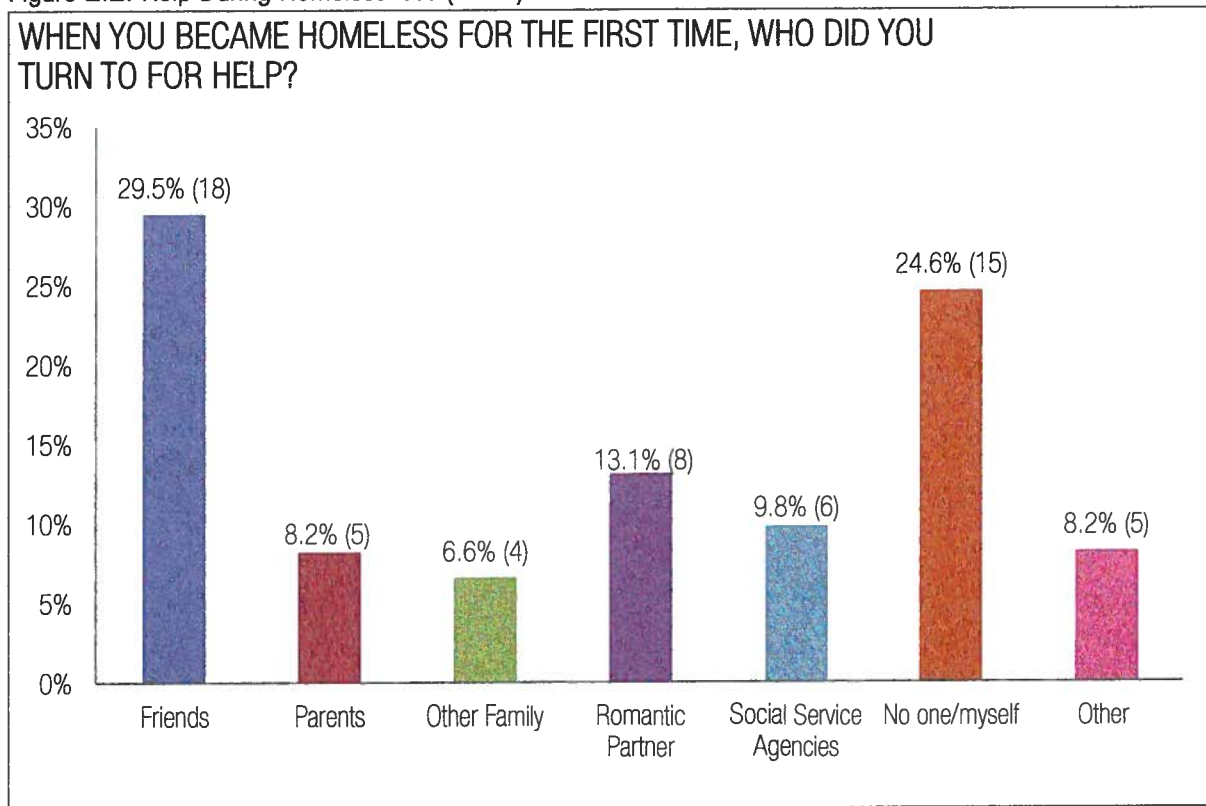
Young people who were interviewed in Austin spent between two days and thirteen years of their lives homeless. On average, respondents had been homeless for 23.8 months of their lives. Additionally, we asked how old respondents were the first time they became homeless, which ranged from age 8 years to age 21 years. On average, though, they first became homeless at age 16 years. If a young person was homeless more than once ($n=43$), he or she was also asked how long they he or she was homeless for the first time. On average, respondents who experienced more than one episode of homelessness were homeless for 5.9 months the first time.

Living Situation Prior to First Homeless Episode

The majority (60.7%; n=37) of young people surveyed in Austin were living with their parent or parents right before they became homeless for the first time. One-tenth (8.2%; n=5) were living with other family members, like grandparents, aunts, or siblings, before they became homeless for the first time. Four respondents were living in foster care (6.6%), one respondent was living with adoptive parents (1.6%) and one respondent was living in a group home (1.6%). Five respondents (8.2%) were living with friends and three respondents (4.9%) report living on their own before becoming homeless the first time. Five respondents reported some other living situation (8.2%).

When these young people became homeless for the first time, one-third (29.5%; n=18) turned to friends for help (Figure 2.2). Exactly 8.2% (n=5) turned to parents for help and 6.6% (n=4) turned to other family members for help. Eight people turned to a romantic partner or ex-romantic partner for help (13.1%). One-tenth of the young people surveyed in Austin (9.8%; n=6) turned to social services agencies or social service employees for help. A quarter of individuals (24.6%; n=15) in Austin reported that they turned to "no one" for help when they became homeless. Five respondents turned to someone else for help.

Figure 2.2: Help During Homelessness (n=61)



Kicked Out

Just over two-thirds (67.2%; n=41) of survey respondents in Austin had been kicked out of their homes by a parent or other adult in charge. Approximately 20% (19.7%; n=12) of respondents had been kicked out once, 13.1% (n=5) had been kicked out twice, 8.2% (n=5) had been kicked out three times, and 26.2% (n=16) had been kicked out four or more times.

Respondents were also asked whether they could go home to live now, if they wanted to. Most of the respondents reported that they could not go home (72.9%; n=43). Only 27.1% (n=16) had the option of going home, if they wanted to. If respondents said that they couldn't go home, we asked for a reason they couldn't return home. Twenty people said that their parents wouldn't allow it or general family conflict wouldn't allow it. Four people said that their family was also homeless or their homes were extremely overcrowded. Three people couldn't go home because their parents died or their parents were in jail and another two people said they had no family in the area. Three people cited their drug use as a reason they couldn't go home and one person said they lacked a job or money. Nine people reported they couldn't go home due to some other reason not mentioned.

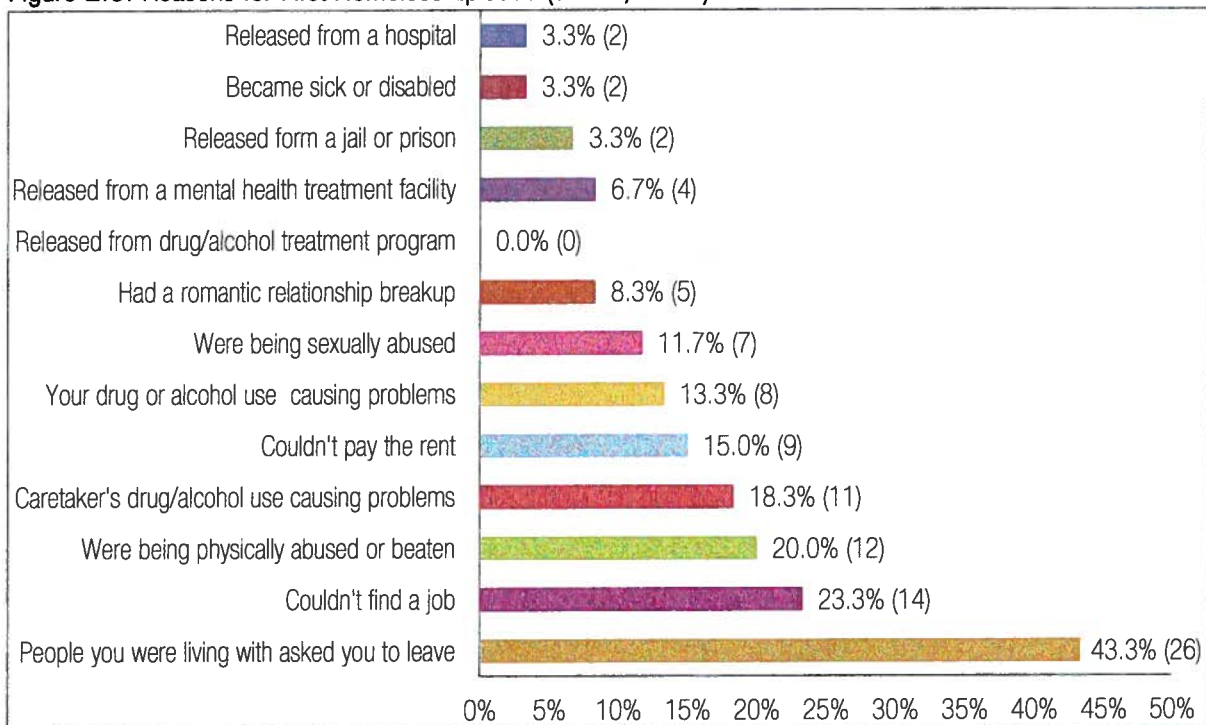
Reasons for Homelessness

The survey listed a few reasons that young people may have become homeless, and respondents were asked whether or not each one was a reason for becoming homeless the first time. These results are shown in Figure 2.3 below. The most highly endorsed reason was that "the people you were living with asked you to leave" (43.3%; n=26), followed by "you couldn't find a job" (23.3%; n=14), "you were being physically abused or beaten" (20.0%; n=12), and "caretaker's drug or alcohol use was causing problems" (18.3%; n=11). Respondents were also given the option to disclose another reason for becoming homeless. Most of these other reasons included family discord. Some respondents gave more specific reasons, like they immigrated to the U.S. on their own.

Focus group participants were also asked about why they became homeless the most recent time. Many reported family discord and family discord stemming from substance use as reasons they ran away or were asked to leave their homes.

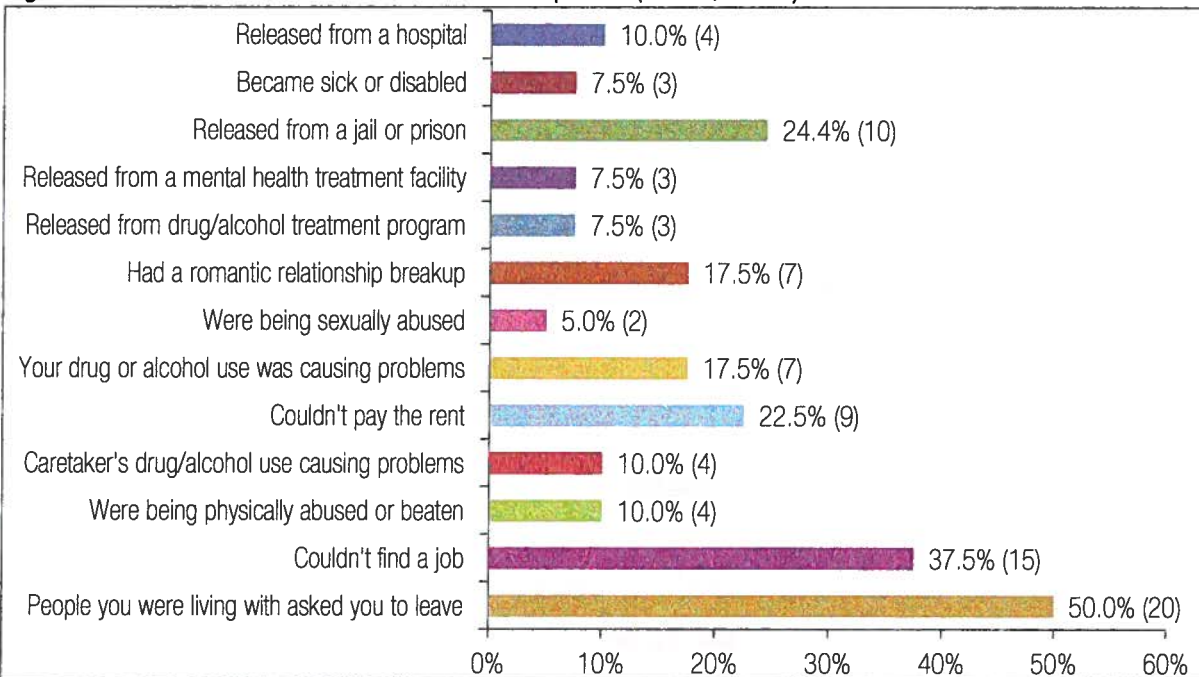
"I was staying with my parents cause I had gotten off drugs and then I got back on, they wouldn't keep me in the house anymore. So basically just like, they just won't even talk to me if I'm doing drugs or anything." ---
Female respondent

Figure 2.3: Reasons for First Homeless Episode (% Yes; n=60)



If a young person had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness, they were also asked about reasons which led them to become homeless the most recent time (Figure 2.4). The most endorsed reason was the same as reason for the first homeless episode—"the people you were living with asked you to leave" (50.0%; n=20). The second most endorsed reason was "you couldn't find a job" (37.5%; n=15). In general, reasons for the most recent homeless episode tended to relate to more adult issues, like being released from jail or prison (24.4%; n=10), inability to pay the rent (22.5%; n=9), going through a romantic relationship breakup (17.5%; n=7), and the respondent's own drug or alcohol use was causing problems (17.5%; n=7). Fewer people listed physical or sexual abuse as a reason for their most recent homeless episode than they did for their first homeless episode.

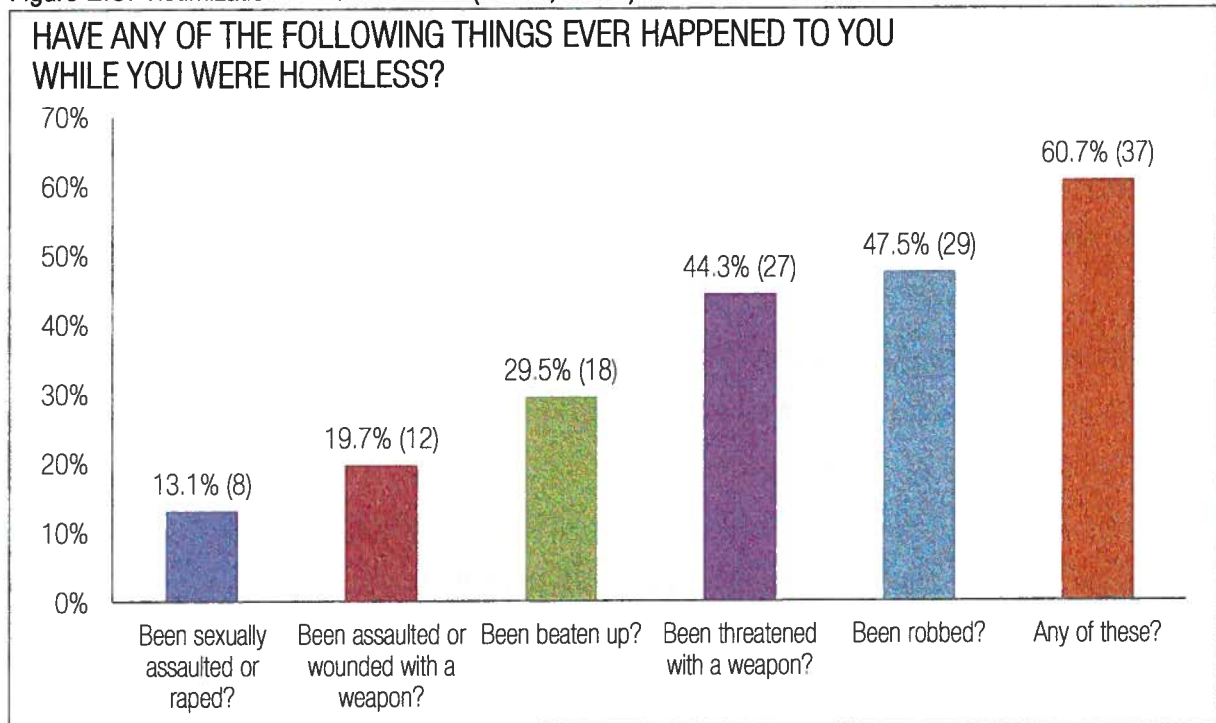
Figure 2.4: Reasons for Most Recent Homeless Episode (% Yes; n=40)



Homeless Victimization

Respondents were asked whether they had ever experienced various types of victimization while they were homeless (Figure 2.5). Experiences with victimization were quite common among homeless young adults in Austin. Almost half (47.5%; n=29) of the young people had been robbed while they were experiencing homelessness. Almost as many (44.3%; n=27) had been threatened with a weapon while homeless and 29.5% (n=18) had been beaten up while homeless. Almost one-fifth (19.7%; n=12) had been assaulted or wounded with a weapon and 13.1% (n=8) had been sexually assaulted or raped. Almost two-thirds (60.7%; n=37) of surveyed young people had experienced at least one of these types of victimization while they were homeless.

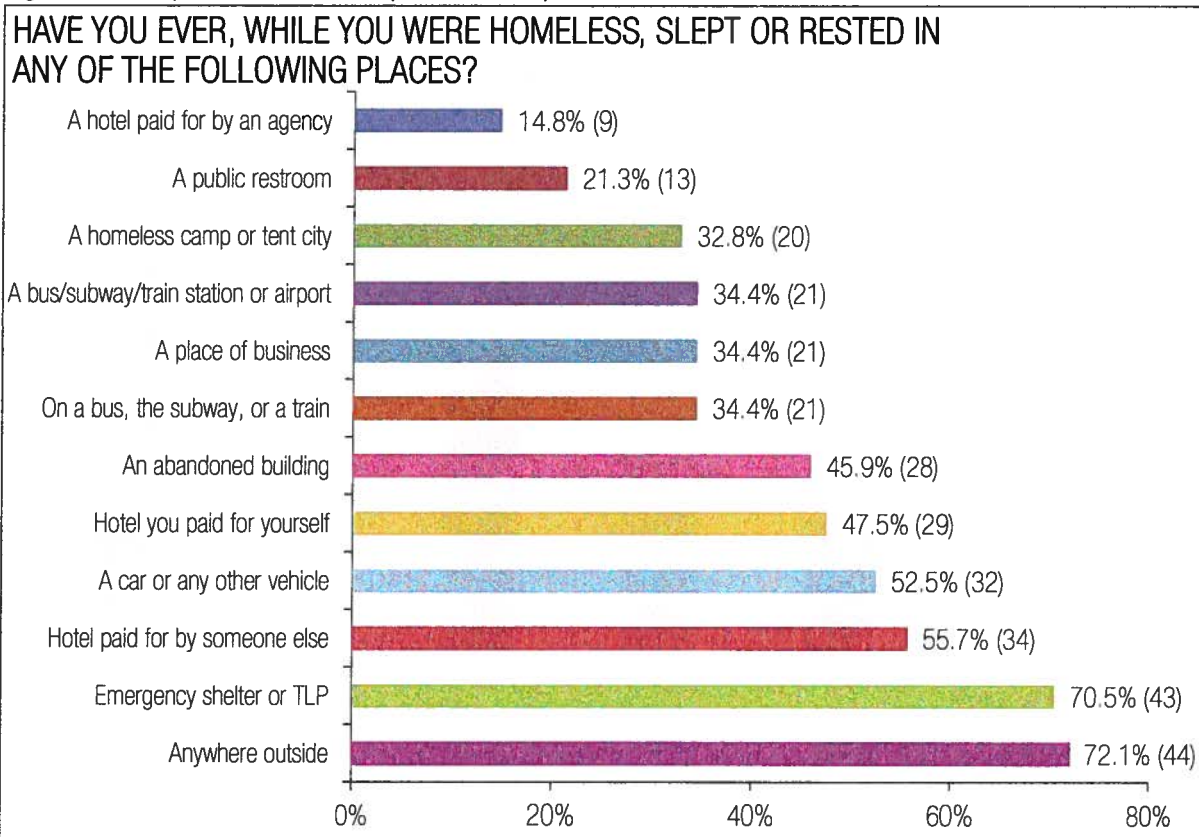
Figure 2.5: Victimization While Homeless (% Yes; n=61)



Locations Used to Sleep or Rest

We also asked respondents whether they had ever, while they were homeless, slept or rested in various places (Figure 2.6). Three-quarters of respondents (72.1%; n=44) had slept or rested anywhere outside and 70.5% (n=43) had slept in an emergency shelter or transitional living program. Just over half (55.7%; n=34) had slept or rested in a hotel or motel paid for by someone else and 52.5% (n=32) slept in a car. A little less than half (47.5%; n=29) had slept or rested in a hotel or motel paid for by themselves and 45.9% (n=28) had slept in an abandoned building.

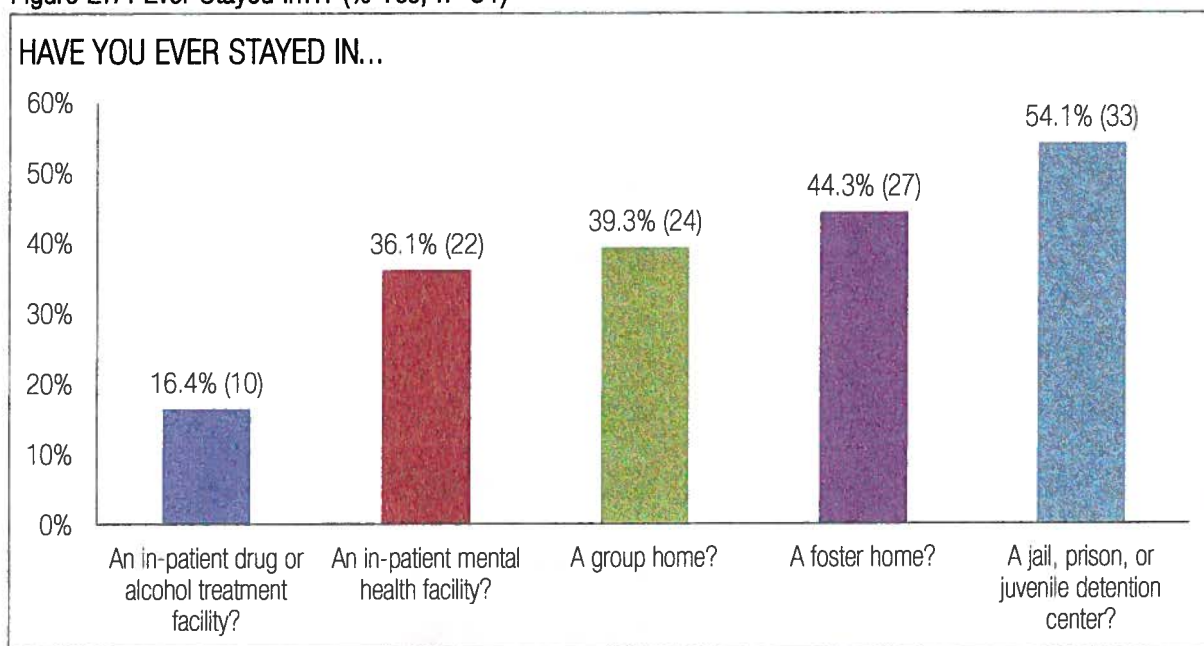
Figure 2.6: Slept While Homeless (% Yes; n=61)



Young people were also asked about where they slept the night before their survey interview. Almost a quarter of respondents in Austin had slept at an emergency shelter or transitional living program the night before their interview (23.0%; n=14), at a friend's house (21.3%; n=13), or somewhere outside (26.2%; n=16). Very few (4.9%; n=3) slept in an abandoned building or a vehicle on the night before their interview. Fourteen respondents also said that they had stayed "someplace else" and noted a homeless camp, hotel room, tent, alley way, parking garage, and box as sleeping places. Respondents were also asked how long they had been staying where they slept last night—on average, they had been staying there for 40 days.

We asked whether respondents had ever, throughout their entire lives, stayed in a foster home, a group home, a jail, prison, or juvenile detention center, an in-patient mental health facility, or an in-patient drug or alcohol treatment facility (Figure 2.7). Approximately forty percent of respondents in Austin have histories of staying in a foster home (44.3%; n=27) or a group home (39.3%; n=24). Many young people also reported staying in a jail, prison, or juvenile detention center (54.1%; n=33) and a little more than one-third (36.1%; n=22) stayed in an in-patient mental health facility. Slightly fewer (16.4%; n=10) had stayed in an in-patient drug or alcohol treatment facility.

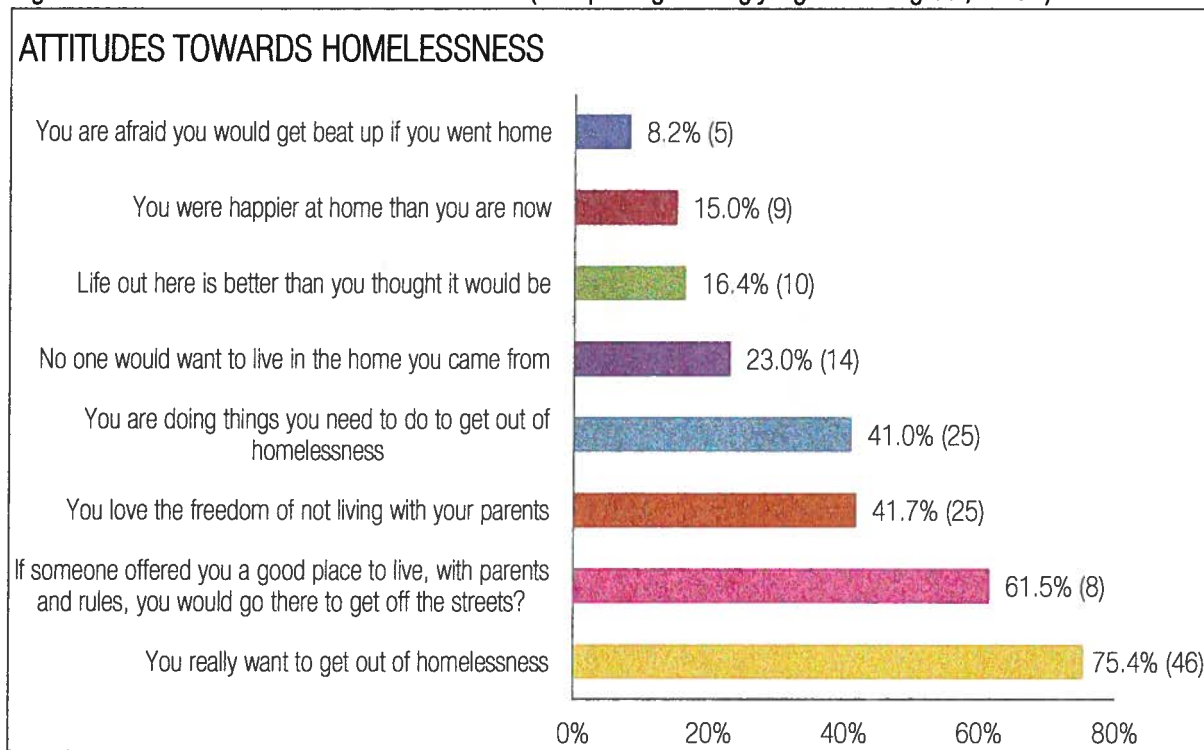
Figure 2.7: Ever Stayed In... (% Yes; n=61)



Attitudes toward Homelessness

Young people in Austin were read a series of statements regarding homelessness and living situations and chose between four response options—"strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", or "strongly disagree". Responses are shown in Figure 2.8 below. About three-quarters (75.4%; n=46) surveyed in Austin either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "you really want to get out of homelessness". Over half of respondents (61.5%; n=46) agreed that "If someone offered you a good place to live, with parents and rules, you would go there to get off the streets." Additional responses are shown below in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8: Attitudes toward Homelessness... (% reporting 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree'; n=61)



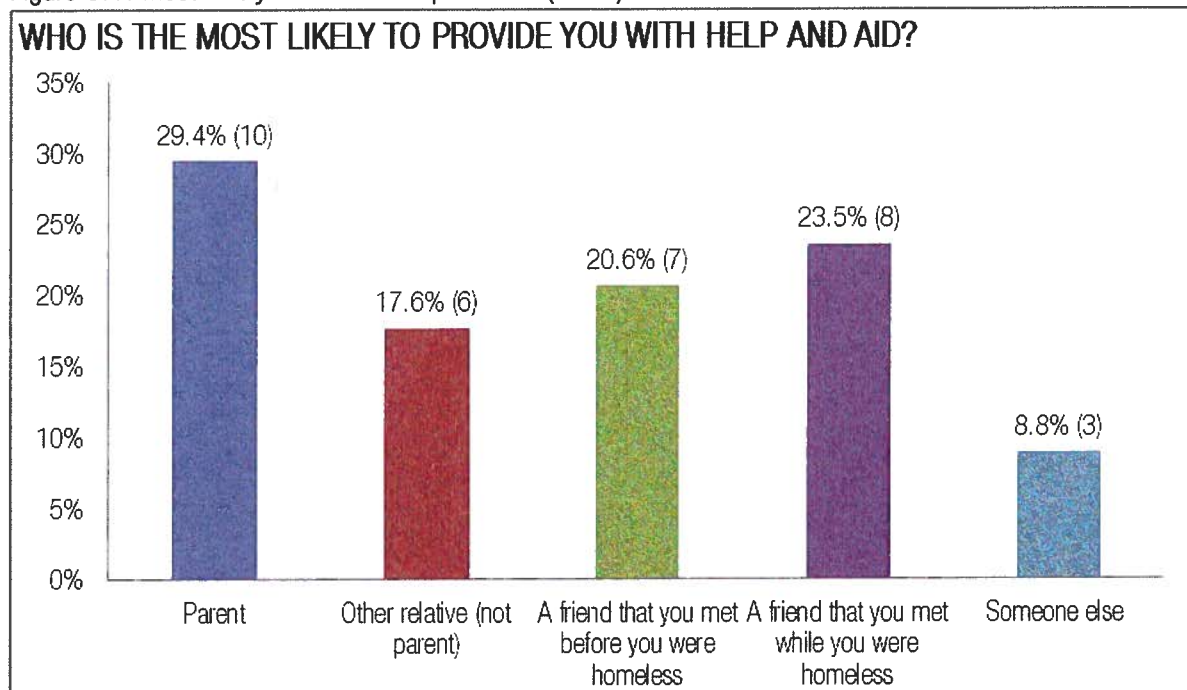
CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL SUPPORT & RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter three presents survey results pertaining to social support, friendships, romantic relationships, and childhood abuse.

Friends & Social Support

We asked respondents whether or not they had people in their life that they could count on to give them help and aid. People who may lend them money, give them food, or give them a place to stay without asking for anything in return. More than half (55.7%; $n=34$) of respondents in Austin reported that there were people in their life they could count on to provide help and aid. If a respondent said they had someone to give help and aid ($n=34$), we then asked who was the most likely to provide the respondent with help and aid (Figure 3.1). One-third (29.4%; $n=10$) respondents said that a parent was the person most likely to provide them with help and aid. Almost 20% (17.6%; $n=6$) of respondents said that they'd most likely receive help and aid from another relative, other than a parent. One-fifth (23.5%; $n=8$) would most likely receive help from a friend they met while they were experiencing homelessness and (20.6%; $n=7$) would most likely receive help from a friend they met before experiencing homelessness. Three respondents (8.8%) listed someone else, which included their wife, a family friend, and a "drug friend".

Figure 3.1: Most Likely to Provide Help and Aid ($n=34$)



Focus group respondents also talked about friends and family who support them, either financially or emotionally. Many talked about friends who provided emotional support.

"My friend. I met her in high school and she just, she was always there so she was definitely, I'm there for her so we just built a bond."—Female respondent

"My best friend, he's always there when I needed something he will come and help me and he'll like, he'll appreciate me and stuff like that and he'll tell me all the good things that I need to hear."—Female respondent

"My friend (name) who's (inaudible) sleep on south Austin. I met him in summer school when I was like 15. We've just been really good friends ever since then. He just helps me out however he can."—Focus group participant

Others, though, say they rely on no one but themselves.

"I kind of convinced myself when I was younger that I'm pretty much destined to be alone. Most of my real, my support and my everything it goes through me, I grew up in a Christian family but I'm not Christian I was raised by a Christian family. ... I don't have any of that, I haven't stayed in the same town for more than 3-5 months at a time, this is the longest I have ever been in a city and just stayed there, like going to different schools all the time doing this, I never build relationships, I'm terrible at it. So most of my support and stuff it comes through me and it comes through my ambition just to want to be somebody, like I really don't care what it is just as long as I'm successful enough to where my mom looks at me and is just semi, doesn't even have to be ultra-proud of me, just proud enough to where she is just like 'you did good.'"—Male respondent

The survey also included information about close friends. Specifically, we asked how many close friends each respondent had before he or she became homeless and how many of those people he or she still considered to be a close friend now, since becoming homeless. On average, respondents lost 4.56 friends since becoming homeless.

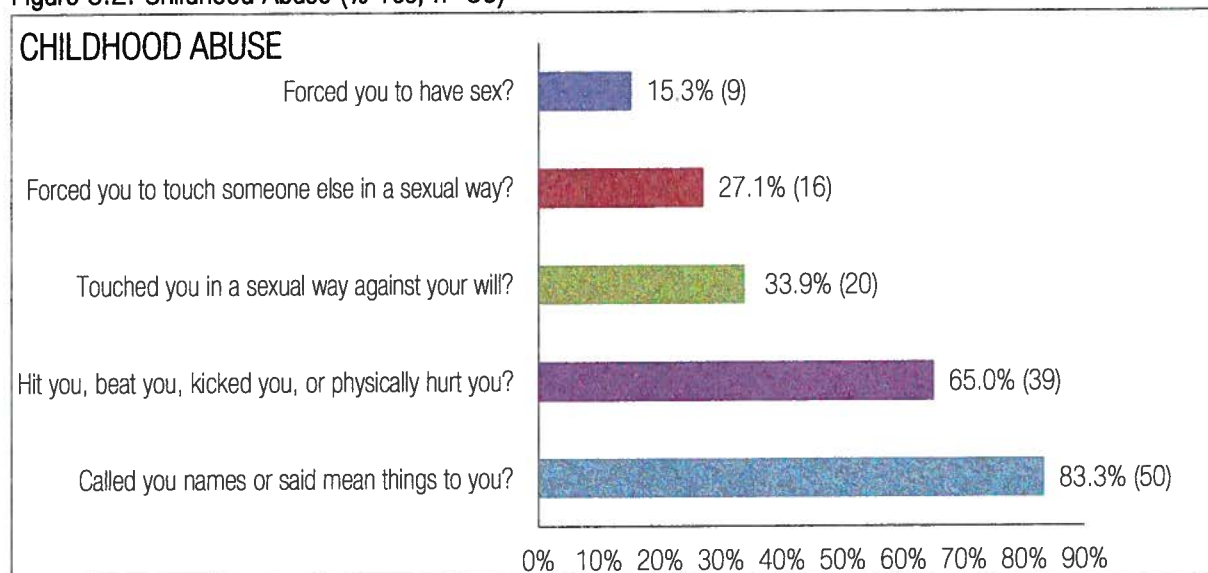
Romantic Relationships

We asked respondents whether or not they were currently in a romantic relationship with another person. Half (49.2%; n=30) were in a relationship at the time of their interview.

Childhood Abuse

We asked respondents about whether or not they had experienced various forms of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse by an adult before they were 18 years old (Figure 3.2). More than three-quarters (83.3%; n=50) of respondents reported that an adult called them names or said mean things to them before they were 18 years old. Almost two-thirds (65.0%; n=39) experienced physical abuse by an adult (e.g., being hit, beat, kicked, or physically hurt) during their childhood. Exactly 33.9% (n=20) of respondents in Austin were touched in a sexual way by an adult, 27.1% (n=16) were forced by an adult to touch someone else in a sexual way, and 15.3% (n=9) were forced by an adult to have sex.

Figure 3.2: Childhood Abuse (% Yes; n=59)



CHAPTER 4:

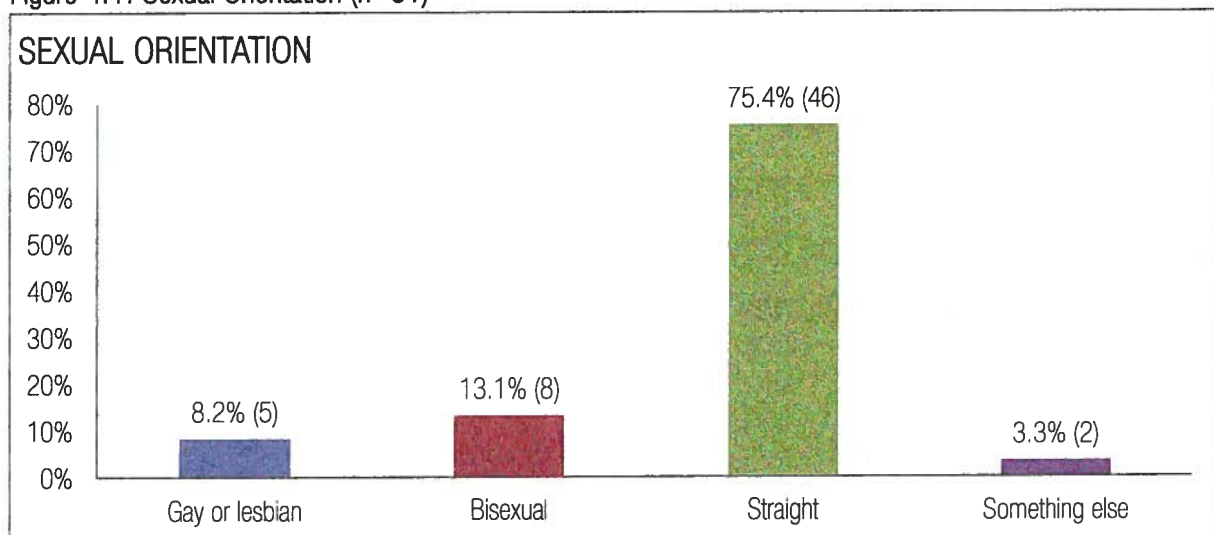
SEX, SEXUAL HEALTH, & PREGNANCY

Chapter four presents information regarding sex, sexual health, and pregnancy. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, most of the results presented in this chapter were asked in a self-administered section of the questionnaire—meaning that the interviewers did not read these questions aloud or see the computer screen while these questions were presented. The respondent read the questions silently to themselves, or they could press a “play” button on the computer to have the questions read aloud via headphones. The self-administered section has more item missing data than the interviewer administered section, but it is also expected to have higher validity.

Sexual Orientation

Thirteen percent (13.1%; $n=8$) of respondents in Austin think of themselves as bisexual while 8.2% ($n=5$) identify as gay or lesbian (Figure 4.1). Three-fourths (75.4%; $n=46$) of respondents in Austin reported thinking of themselves as straight. Two respondents (3.3%) think of themselves as “something else” and reported “transgender” ($n=1$) and “I identify with my desires not with a formula” ($n=1$).

Figure 4.1: Sexual Orientation ($n=61$)



Sex Partners

Respondents in Austin reported a median of 6 sex partners in their whole lives, although this number ranged from 0 to 300. In the past year, respondents in Austin reported having sex with a median of 2 sex partners, and this number ranged from 0 to 268.

We also asked whether **any** of the respondent's lifetime sex partners were a steady boyfriend or girlfriend—86.7% (n=52) said "yes". Follow up questions provided information about how many of their lifetime sex partners were a steady boyfriend or girlfriend, and how many of their lifetime sex partners were a stranger or someone they didn't know very well (Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below). Around one-fourth (23.3%; n=14) of the sampled young people in Austin reported that all of their sex partners were a steady boyfriend or girlfriend. Exactly 13.3% (n=8) of young people said that none of their sex partners were a steady boyfriend or girlfriend. Almost half (47.2%; n=28) of respondents reported that none of their sex partners were a stranger or someone they didn't know very well. One-fifth (28.8%; n=17) reported that between 26% and 50% of the people they have had sex with were a stranger. None of the respondents in Austin had sex with only strangers.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of sex partners who were a steady boyfriend/girlfriend (n=60)

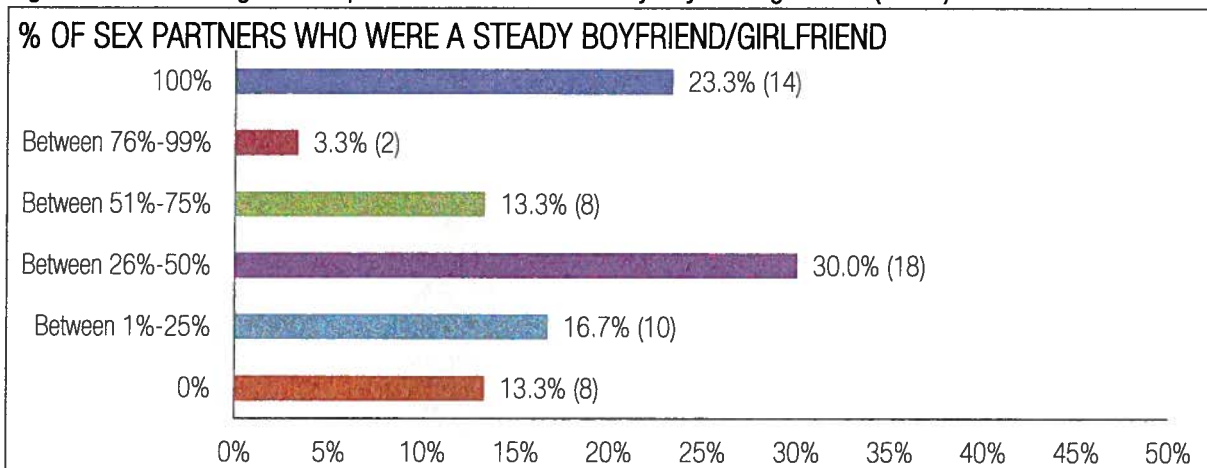
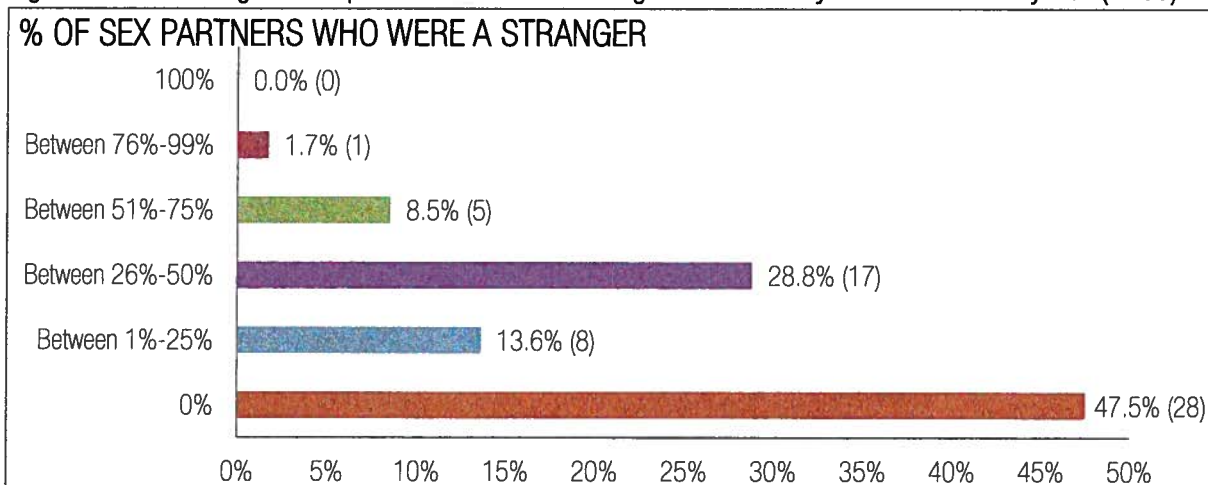


Figure 4.3: Percentage of sex partners who were a stranger or someone you didn't know very well (n=59)

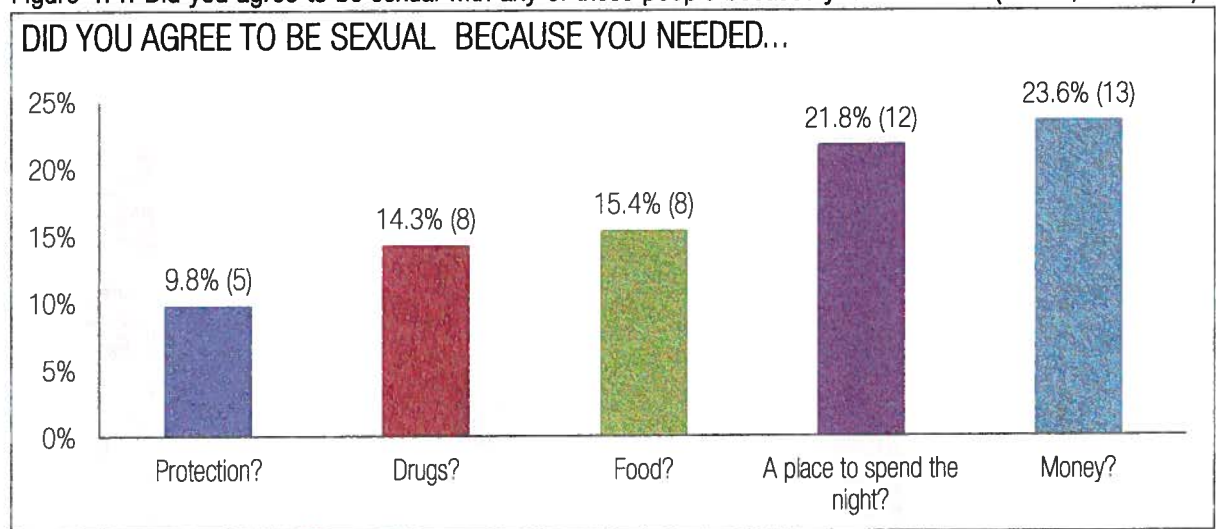


Trading Sex

Respondents were asked whether they had ever agreed to be sexual with anyone because they needed a place to spend the night, food, drugs, protection, or money. These results are shown in Figure 4.4 below. Approximately one-fourth (23.6%; n=13) agreed to be sexual with at least one person because they needed money, and slightly less (21.8%; n=12) because they needed a place to spend the night. Fifteen percent (15.4%; n=8) agreed to be sexual with someone because they needed food, 14.3% (n=8) agreed to be sexual with someone because they needed drugs, and 9.8% (n=5) agreed to be sexual with someone because they needed protection.

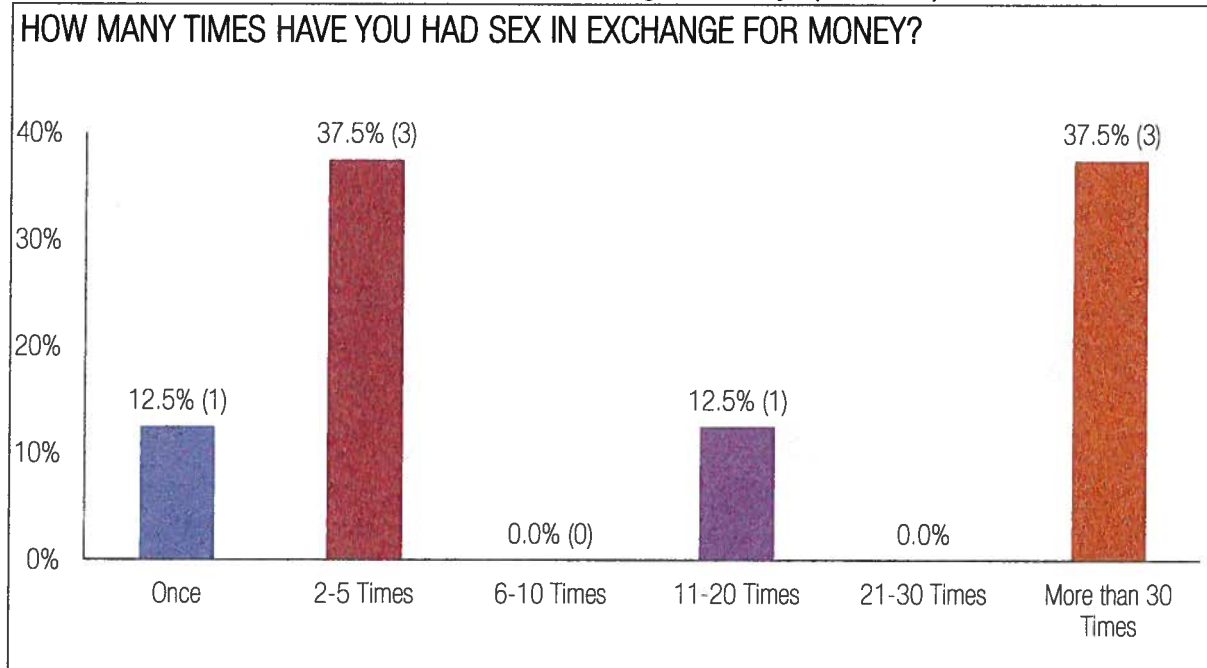
Nine percent (8.6%; n=5) of the respondents reported that they had been asked by a romantic partner to have sex with someone else in exchange for money.

Figure 4.4: Did you agree to be sexual with any of these people because you needed... (% Yes; n=51-55)



The 13 people who agreed to be sexual with someone because they needed money were asked some additional questions. Eleven people answered the question on if they first exchanged sex for money after they became homeless. Of these eleven, 8 responded that they first agreed to exchange sex after they became homeless. Figure 4.5 shows responses to the question "How many times have you had sex in exchange for money?" One respondent had sex in exchange for money once. Three respondents reported that they had sex in exchange for money between 2 and 5 times, one respondents reported between 11 and 20 times. Three respondents in Austin had sex in exchange for money more than 30 times. Of the 12 respondents who answered the question, "have you been physically assaulted while exchanging sex for money", three said yes. Of the 11 respondents who answered the question, "the last time that you exchanged sex for money, did you get to keep all of the money", eight said yes.

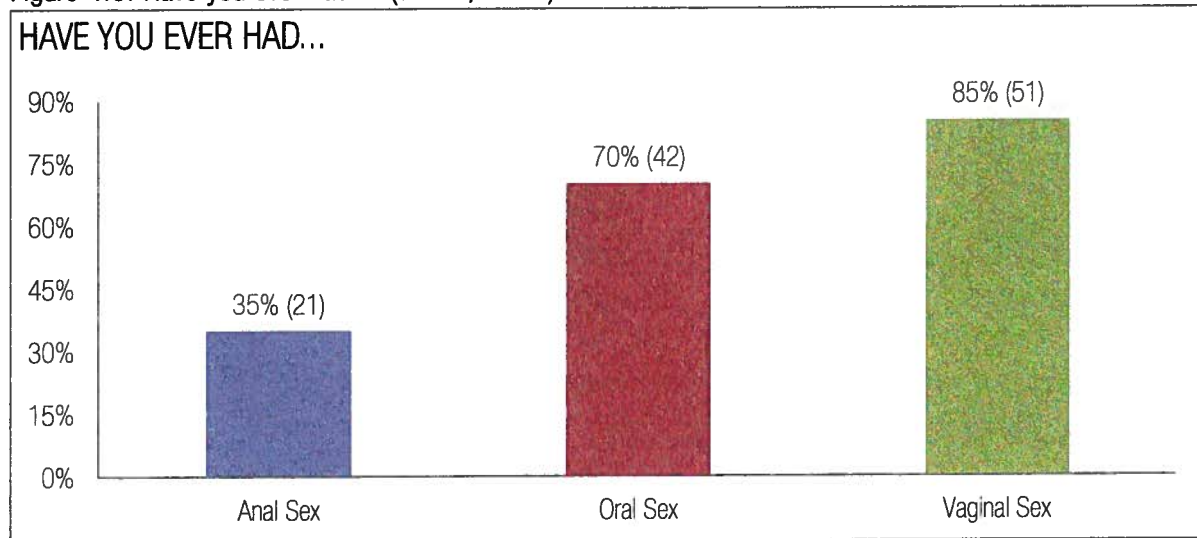
Figure 4.5: How many times have you had sex in exchange for money? (Total N=8)



Sexual Behavior & Condom Use

Most respondents in Austin were sexually active. Eighty-five percent (n=51) of respondents ever had vaginal sex, 70.0% ever had oral sex (n=42), and a third (35.0%; n=21) ever had anal sex (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Have you ever had... (% Yes; n=60)



If respondents said "yes" to ever having a particular type of sex, they were then asked how often in the past year they used a condom when they had these three specific types of sex. Response options ranged from "all of the time" to "none of the time" and results are shown in Figures 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9. Just over one-third (37.3%; n=19) reported that they used a condom "all of the time" when having vaginal sex during the past year. More than one-tenth (14.6%; n=6) used of a condom or dental dam "all of the time" when having oral sex in the past year and 50.0% (n=10) who answered the question to condom use when having anal sex used a condom "all of the time" in the past year.

Less than one-fifth (17.6%; n=9) never used a condom when having vaginal sex during the past year. Over half (56.1%; n=23) never used a condom when having oral sex during the past year and a third (35.0%; n=7) never used a condom when having anal sex during the past year.

Figure 4.7: In the past year, how often did you use a condom when you had vaginal sex? (n=51)

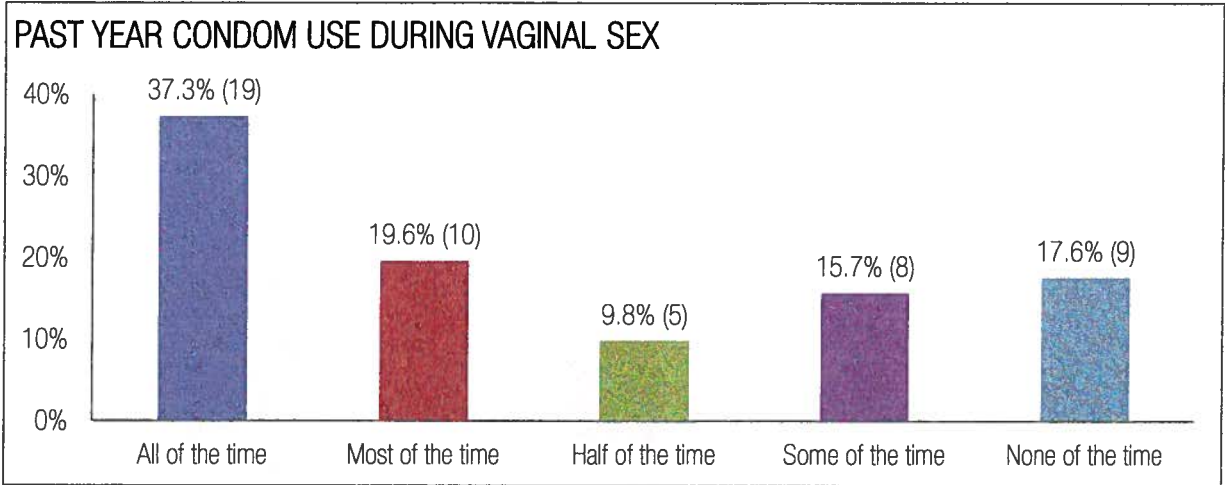


Figure 4.8: In the past year, how often did you use a condom when you had oral sex? (n=41)

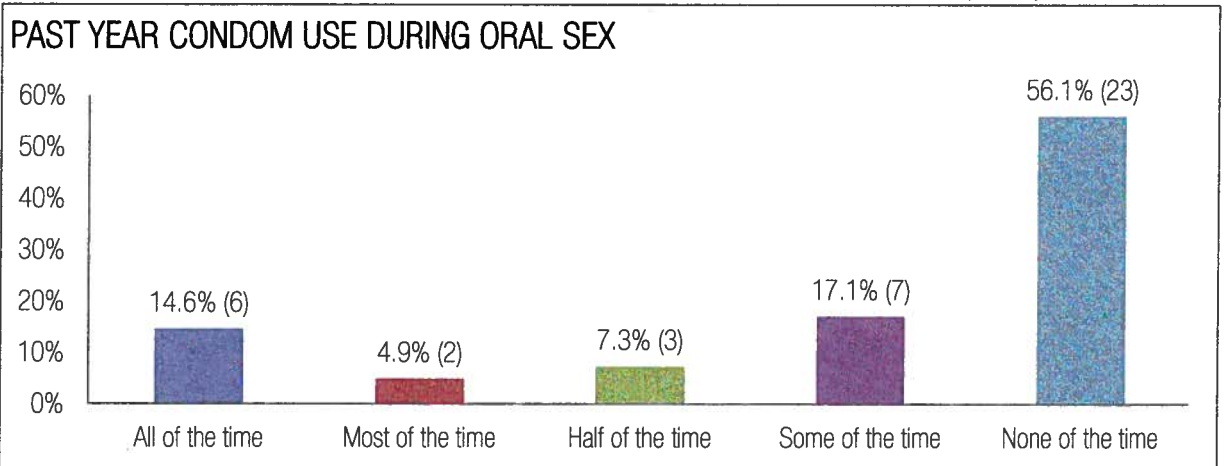
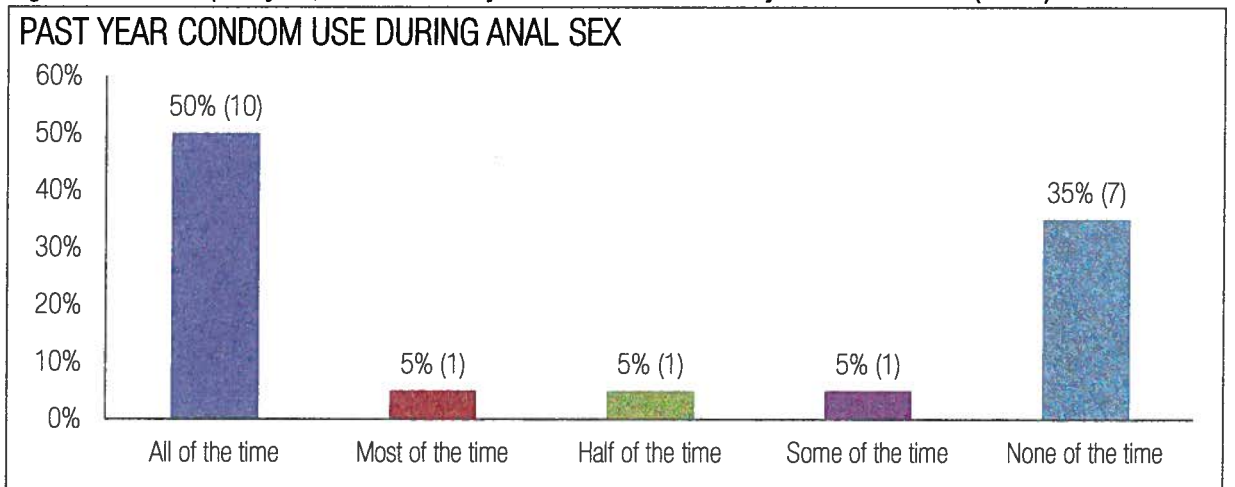


Figure 4.9: In the past year, how often did you use a condom when you had anal sex? (n=20)



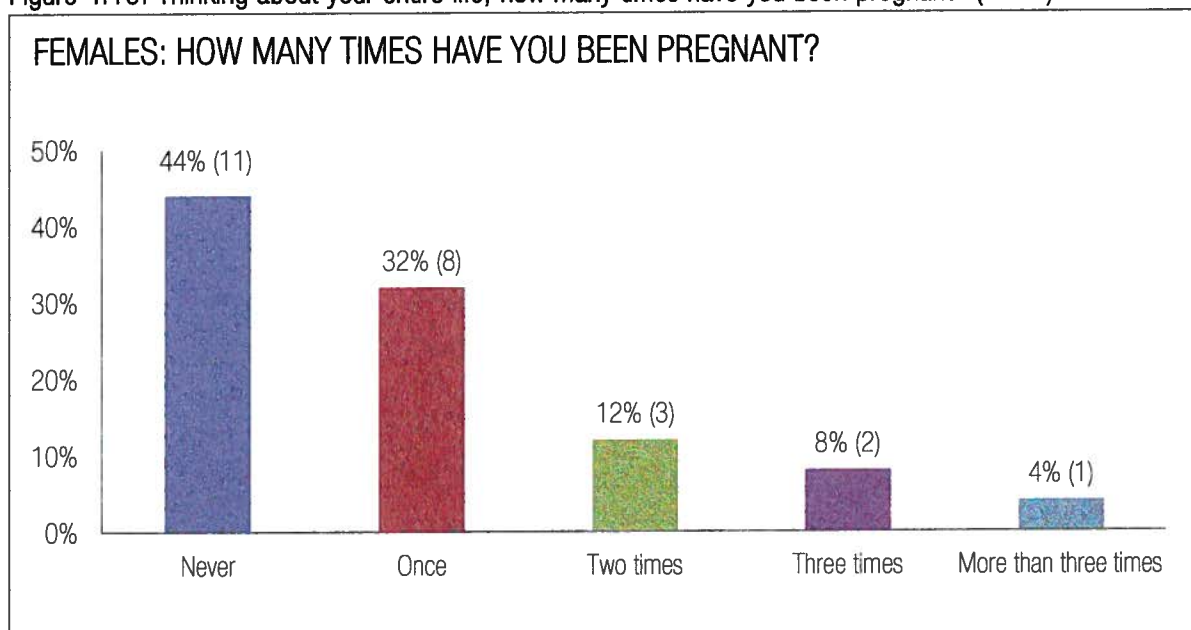
Sexually Transmitted Infections & HIV or AIDS

Three-fourths (73.3%; n=44) of respondents in Austin had been tested, at some point in their lives, for a sexually transmitted infection or HIV/AIDS. Less than 10 percent (6.7%; n=4) reported ever having a sexually transmitted infection and a few respondents (3.3%; n=2) were unsure whether they had ever had a sexually transmitted infection. None of the respondents reported that they had been told by a doctor or medical professional that they had HIV or AIDS. Nine respondents (15.0%) were worried that they may have a sexually transmitted infection.

Pregnancy

Male (n=36) and female (n=25) respondents were asked different questions regarding pregnancy. Half (56.0%; n=14) of the sampled females had ever been pregnant and a third of the males (31.4%; n=11) reported that someone had ever been pregnant with their child (although another 11.4% of males (n=4) were unsure whether someone had been pregnant with their child). In Austin, two women (8.0%) were pregnant at the time of their interview. We also asked females how many times they had ever been pregnant—32.0% (n=8) had been pregnant once, 12.0% (n=3) had been pregnant twice, and another 12.0% (n=3) had been pregnant three or more times (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Thinking about your entire life, how many times have you been pregnant? (n=25)



Less than half (42.9%; n=6) of the 14 females who had been pregnant had given birth (3 gave birth once, 2 gave birth twice, and 1 person gave birth three times). Only one of the women who had given birth still had custody of the children they have given birth to. Eight men reported that they have biological children. A total of thirteen males and females reported loss of custody of their biological children—two said their children were given up for adoption at birth, one said their child was given up for adoption later in life, eight had their child taken from their care against their wishes and five said their child was in the custody of another family member.

Abortion

Male (n=35) and female (n=32) respondents were asked different questions regarding abortion. Females were asked whether they had ever had an abortion—one of the women said that she had an abortion one time in her life. Males who reported that someone has ever been pregnant (total n=11) with their child were then asked whether any those pregnancies resulted in abortion—two men said yes. Of the two men who reported that someone had been pregnant with their child and that pregnancy ended in abortion, both reported only one pregnancy ending this way.

CHAPTER 5:

MENTAL HEALTH

Chapter five presents information regarding mental health and emotions. Note that this chapter does **not** present any diagnostic information—mental health was evaluated using screeners, including the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression (CESD) scale, an anger screener, a manic symptoms screener, and a post-traumatic stress symptoms screener.

Self-Esteem

Respondents were read ten statements regarding self-esteem and asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. These questions are known as the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. For example, “you feel that you are a person of worth, at least on an equal level with others,” “you are able to do things as well as most other people,” and “you feel that you do not have much to be proud of.” Negatively worded items were reversed coded. Based on the Rosenberg scoring criteria, 21.8% of respondents in Austin would be categorized as having low self-esteem, while 83.6% have normal self-esteem (total n=55).

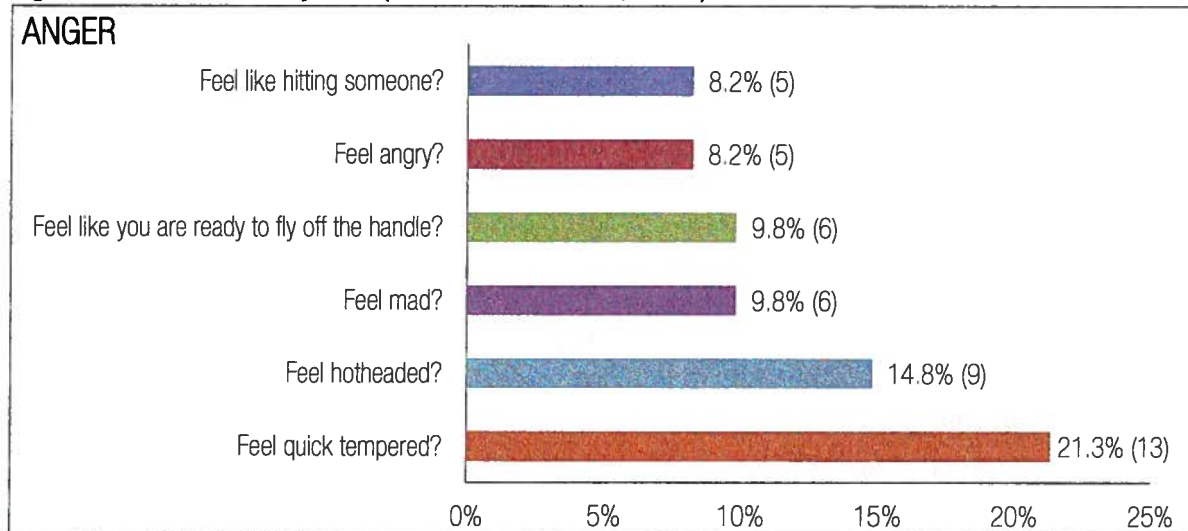
Depressive Symptoms

The Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression (CESD) scale was administered to all respondents in Austin. This scale is made up of 20 statements about how the respondent may have felt during the past week. For each statement, respondents were asked how often they felt this way during the past seven days, with response options of “0 days”, “1-2 days”, “3-4 days”, or “5-7 days”. Items included “you felt bothered by things that don't usually bother you” and “you felt you were just as good as other people”. Positively worded items were reverse coded and the generally agreed upon “cutoff score” which indicates the need for additional depression assessment is 16 (Radloff, 1977). On average, respondents had a CESD score of 22.11. Sixty-six (65.6%) of respondents in Austin were above the cutoff score of 16, indicating that more than two-thirds of respondents should receive clinical assessments because they may be struggling with depression (total n=61).

Anger

Respondents were asked six questions to evaluate anger, like "how often do you feel angry?" and response options included "most of the time," "some of the time," and "none of the time." Figure 5.1 below shows the percentage of respondents who said "most of the time" to each question. About one-fifth of respondents in Austin reported feeling quick tempered "most of the time".

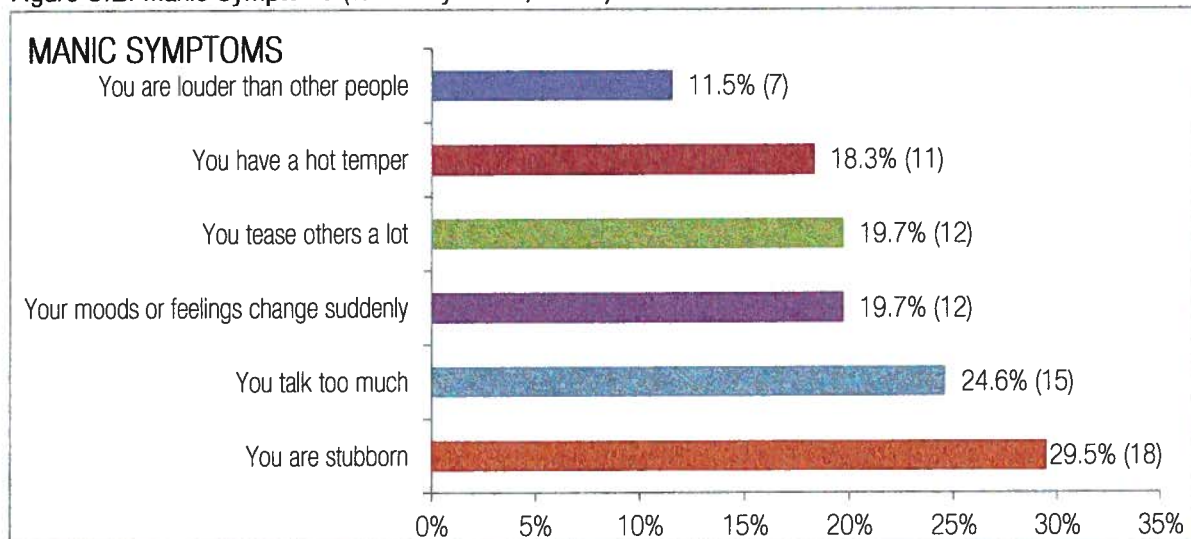
Figure 5.1: How often do you... (% "Most of the time"; n=61)



Manic Symptoms

An additional six items in the questionnaire related to mania. Respondents were read six statements and asked whether the statement was "never true," "sometimes true," or "always true" for you. Figure 5.2 depicts the percentage of respondents who reported "always true" for each item. Overall, it appears that about one-fifth of respondents in Austin may have problems with manic symptoms.

Figure 5.2: Manic Symptoms (% "Always true"; n=61)



Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms Screener

Sixty respondents in Austin were asked about any extremely frightening, traumatic, or horrible experiences that may trigger post-traumatic stress symptoms and asked about their reactions to these events. More than three-quarters (80.0%; n=48) of respondents reported having an extremely frightening traumatic or horrible experience at some point in their lives.

Young people who did report experiencing an extremely frightening traumatic or horrible experience were then asked about certain symptoms of post-traumatic stress. More than three-quarters (77.1%; n=37) of these people relived that experience through recurrent dreams, preoccupation, or flashbacks. Twenty eight (75.7%) of the 37 people who reported reliving the experience through recurrent dreams, preoccupation, or flashbacks experienced these symptoms for more than one month. Almost two-thirds (60.4%; n=29) had been less interested in important things, not "with it", or unable to experience or express emotions and twenty-two (75.9%) of those people experienced these problems for more than one month. Three-fourths (77.8%; n=36) had problems sleeping, concentrating, or having a short temper and twenty-eight of those people (77.5%) experienced those symptoms for at least one month. More than three-quarters (79.2%; n=38) avoided any place or anything that reminded them of the original horrible event and almost all of those people (89.5%; n=34) did this for more than a month.

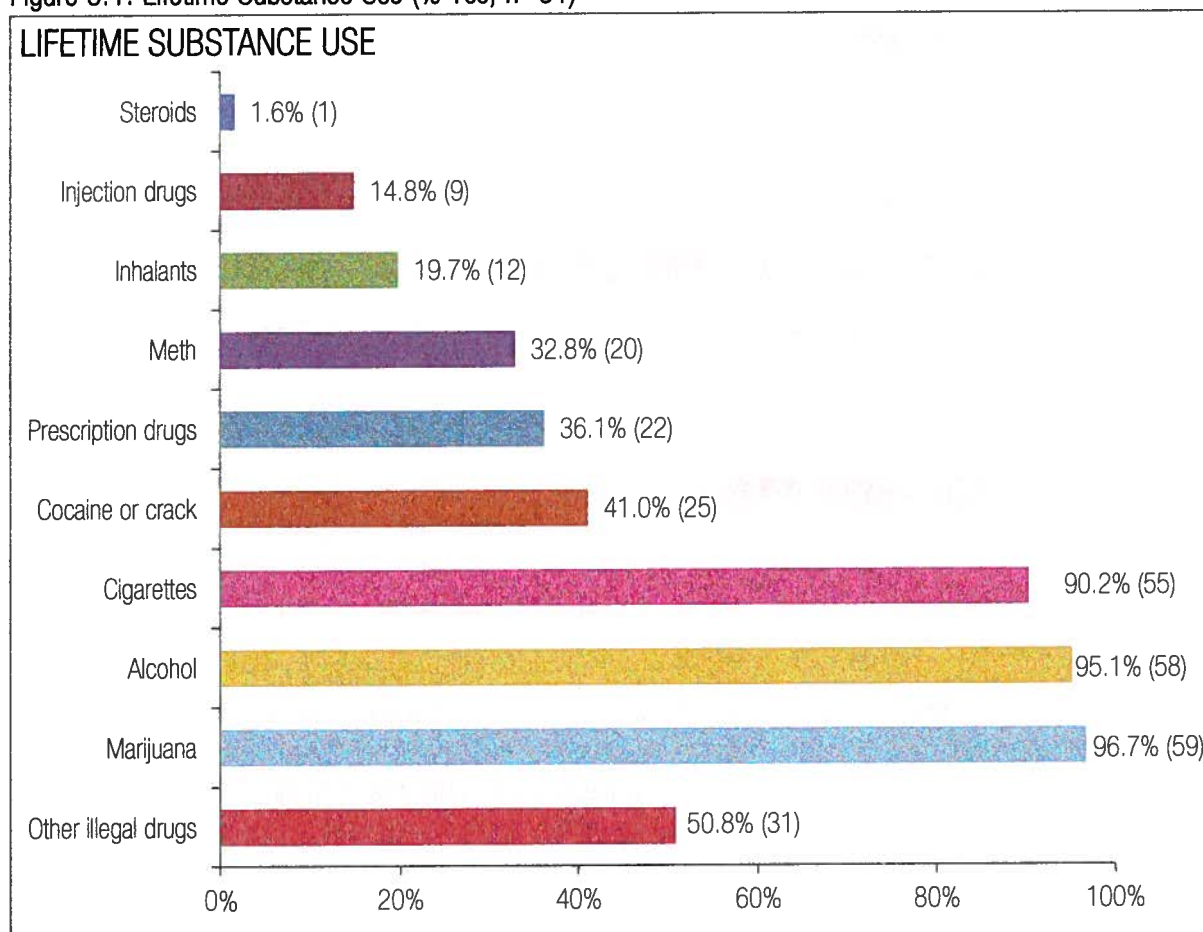
CHAPTER 6: SUBSTANCE USE

Chapter six presents information pertaining to substance use. Specifically, we asked about lifetime, past year, and past month use of ten different types of substance and about experiencing drug overdose.

Lifetime Substance Use

Lifetime substance use rates are presented in Figure 6.1 below. Ninety-five percent (95.1%; n=58) of the respondents reported lifetime alcohol use and approximately the same percentage (96.7%; n=59) reported lifetime marijuana use and lifetime cigarette use (90.2%; n=55). More than half (50.8%; n=31) reported using other illegal drugs, such as LSD, PCP, ecstasy, mushrooms, or heroin. One-third (32.8%; n=20) reported using meth in their lifetimes, 41.0% (n=25) reported using cocaine or crack, and 36.1% (n=22) reported using prescription drugs in their lifetimes. It should be noted that when the survey item specified taking prescription drugs that were not prescribed to the respondent for the experience or feelings it brings. About one in five (19.7%; n=12) reported using inhalants, 14.8% (n=9) reported using injection drugs, and one respondent reported using steroids.

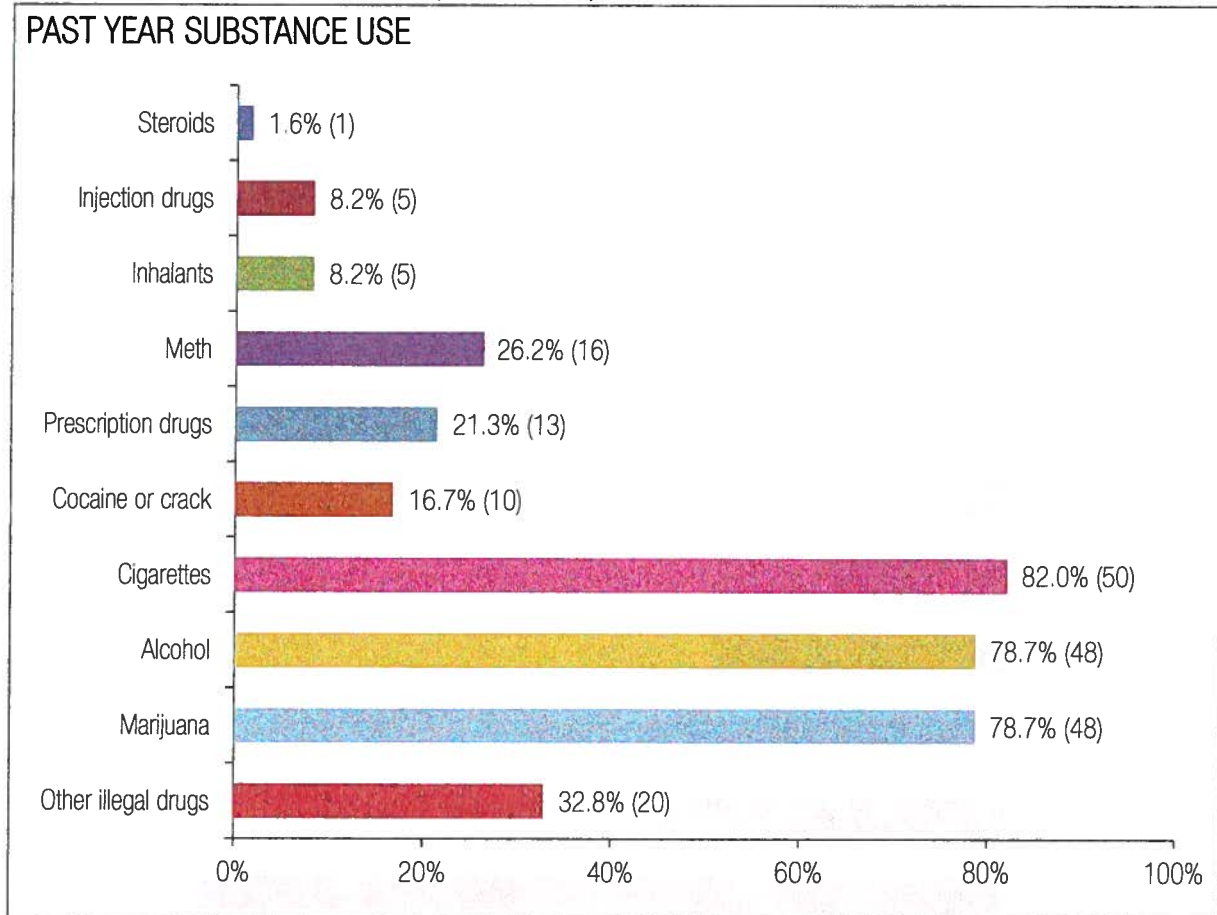
Figure 6.1: Lifetime Substance Use (% Yes; n=61)



Past Year Substance Use

The rates of past year substance use are presented in Figure 6.2 below.. Cigarettes (82.0%; n=50), alcohol (78.7%; n=48), marijuana (78.7%; n=48), were the most highly endorsed during the past year, followed by other illegal drugs (32.8%; n=20) methamphetamines (26.2%; n=16), prescription drugs (21.3%; n=13), and cocaine or crack (16.7%; n=10). Five respondents reported (8.2%) using inhalants and injection drugs in the past year. One respondent reported using steroids in the past year. During the past 12 months, 46.7% (n=28) reported binge drinking (four or more drinks within a two hour period for females and five or more drinks within a two hour period for males).

Figure 6.2: Past Year Substance Use (% Yes; n=61)

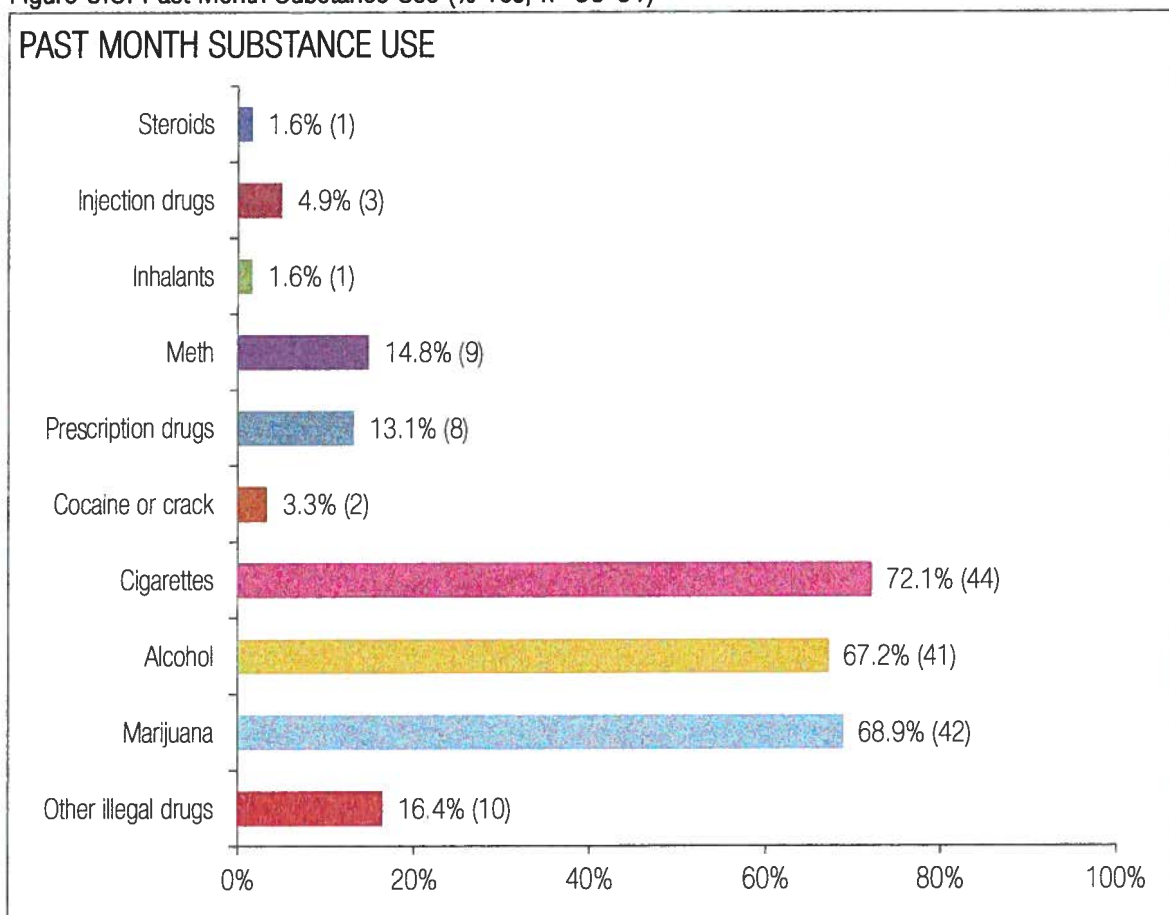


We asked for a bit more information regarding injection drug use. In Austin, the nine people who reported using any injection drugs during their life were asked whether or not they knew how to clean or bleach their own needles—44.4% (n=4) did. Five people used injection drugs during the past year. In the past year, three people never used a needle exchange, one person used a needle exchange two or three times a month and one person used a needle exchange once a week.

Past Month Substance Use

Figure 6.3 shows that during the past month, almost three-quarters of respondents in Austin reported using cigarettes (72.1%; n=44), marijuana (68.9%; n=42), and alcohol (67.2%; n=41). When asked how often, 39.3% (n=24) of respondents in Austin reported using cigarettes every day in the past month and 18.0% of respondents (n=11) smoked marijuana every day during the past month. Exactly 8.2% (n=5) of the sample drank alcohol nearly every day during the past month and 27.9% (n=17) of respondents reported drinking alcohol two or three times a week or once a week in the past month. During the past month, 16.4% (n=10) of respondents in Austin used other illegal drugs, 14.8% (n=9) used meth, 13.1% (n=8) used prescription drugs, and 3.3% (n=2) used cocaine or crack (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Past Month Substance Use (% Yes; n=60-61)



Drug Overdose

We asked respondents whether they had ever overdosed on drugs—20.0% (n=12) had overdosed. Three of those respondents (25%) received medical intervention, such as NARCAN, for an overdose.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Let } \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix} \\
 & \text{Then } \mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1+1 & 2+2 & 3+3 \\ 2+2 & 3+3 & 4+4 \\ 3+3 & 4+4 & 5+5 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 & 6 \\ 4 & 6 & 8 \\ 6 & 8 & 10 \end{bmatrix} \\
 & \text{Also, } \mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1-1 & 2-2 & 3-3 \\ 2-2 & 3-3 & 4-4 \\ 3-3 & 4-4 & 5-5 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \\
 & \text{Hence, } \mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 & 6 \\ 4 & 6 & 8 \\ 6 & 8 & 10 \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } \mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}
 \end{aligned}$$

Let $\mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$ and $\mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$

$$\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 & 6 \\ 4 & 6 & 8 \\ 6 & 8 & 10 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

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$$\text{Let } \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 & 6 \\ 4 & 6 & 8 \\ 6 & 8 & 10 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 14 & 32 & 20 \\ 32 & 35 & 28 \\ 20 & 28 & 22 \end{bmatrix}$$

Let $\mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$ and $\mathbf{B} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$

CHAPTER 7: LIFE ON THE STREET

Chapter seven presents information pertaining to respondents' daily lives, police interaction, and street life.

Police & Arrest

The majority of respondents in Austin (95.1% n=58) have had an interaction with the police. When asked whether their interactions with the police were helpful or hurtful to them, six people talked about positive, helpful interactions with the police and six people talked about negative, hurtful interactions with the police. The remainder of the experiences discussed during the interview couldn't be judged as either helpful or hurtful (n=46). Respondents who reported negative interactions with the police mostly talked about being treated disrespectfully by law enforcement and being hassled for being in public, especially in the downtown area. For example:

"... We slept I don't know where it was but it was under some kind of construction building by this I guess it used to be a river walk kinda thing. And we were underneath there and it was I dunno but scared the shit out of me 'cause the police and all, he came and like 'wake up y'all'. It scared me to death 'cause he said y'all gotta get out of here. He banned us. If we set foot on that sidewalk, he said we can get a fine or we can go to jail for it. So we have to walk around that place when we go. I don't know what the name of it is but—." —Focus group participant

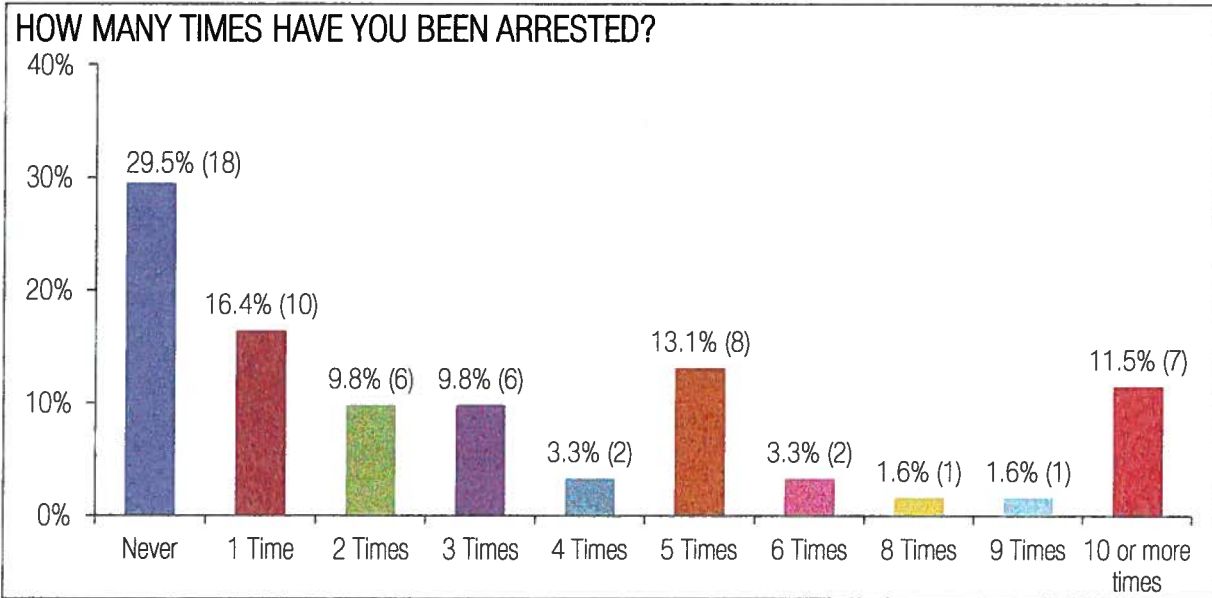
"I mean sleeping behind a dumpster they still get mad at you. And like, there's no other place you can really sleep. I mean we don't have a tent." —Focus group participant

"Yeah I have a huge scar on the side of my hip from the cops. I didn't feel safe then." —Focus group participant

"And don't panhandle downtown. They don't give a fuck wherever else you panhandle downtown, don't panhandle downtown. They will take you to jail automatically. They don't care." —Focus group participant [RESPONSE] "Yeah, cuz that's like their moneymaker. That's where all the tourists go. They don't want the tourists to see that." —Focus group participant

Almost three-fourths (70.5%; n=43) of the young people we interviewed had been arrested at some point in their lives. Just over fifteen percent (16.4%; n=10) had been arrested once and 9.8% (n=6) had been arrested twice. Another 32.7% (n=20) had been arrested between three and nine times, while 11.5% (n=7) had been arrested ten or more times. Respondents were arrested for various offenses, including being a runaway, assault/battery/fights, trespassing, jaywalking, burglary/theft, panhandling, and drug/alcohol related offenses.

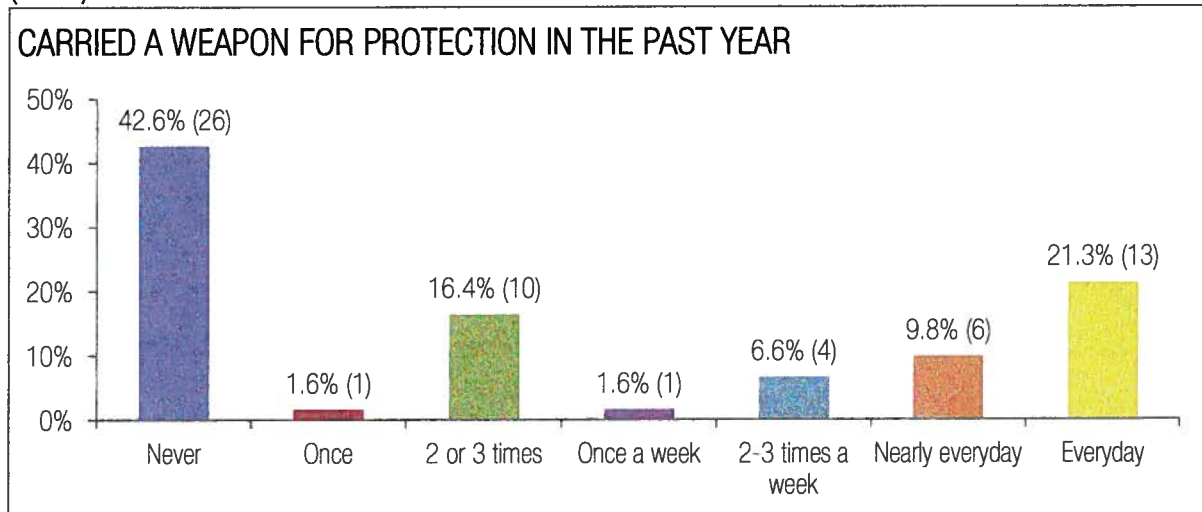
Figure 7.1: How many times have you been arrested? (n=61)



Weapons

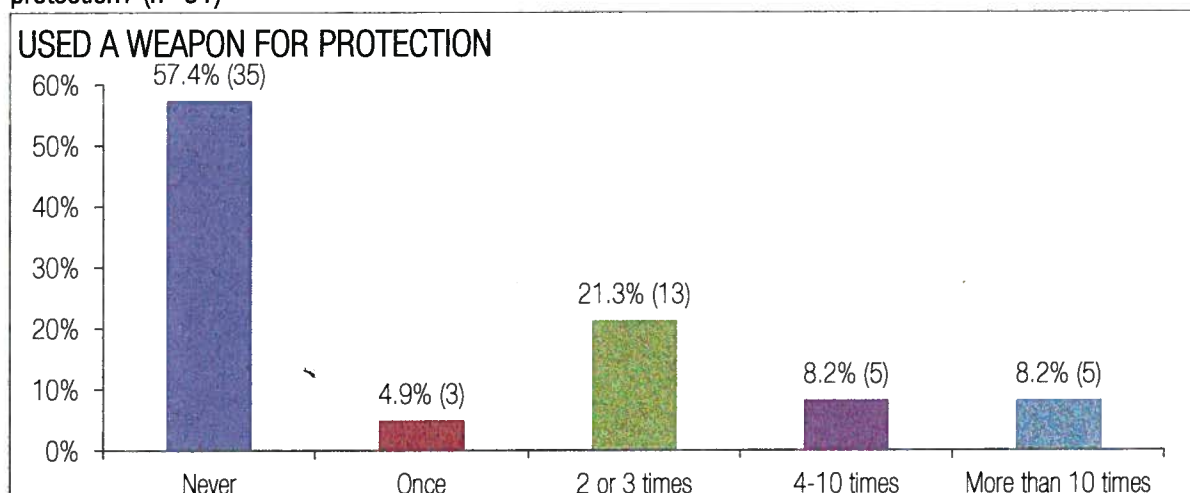
Over half (67.2%; n=41) of sampled young people in Austin had **carried** a weapon, such as a gun or knife, for protection at some point in their lives. We asked how often in the past year respondents carried a weapon for protection (Figure 7.2)—42.6% (n=26) had not carried a weapon for protection during the past year, while 9.8% (n=6) carried a weapon nearly every day and 21.3% (n=13) carried a weapon every day during the past year.

Figure 7.2: How often in the past year have you carried a weapon, such as a gun or knife, for protection? (n=61)



In total, almost half (42.6%; n=26) of respondents had **used** a weapon for protection (Figure 7.3) in their lifetimes. Three (4.9%) used a weapon once, thirteen (21.3%) used a weapon two or three times, five (8.2%) used a weapon between four and ten times, and five respondents (8.2%) used a weapon for protection more than ten times throughout their lives.

Figure 7.3: In your whole life, how often have you had to use a weapon, such as a gun or knife, for protection? (n=61)



Gang Activity

One quarter (24.6%; n=15) of respondents in Austin had ever participated in gang activity. Four (6.7%) were currently members of a gang.



Daily Life

In Austin, fourteen respondents (23.0%) had a driver's license and an additional seventeen (36.2%) had a government issued ID. In all, half of respondents had some form of government issued identification. A quarter (21.3%; n=13) had a library card. Approximately one-fifth (19.7%; n= 12) have never driven a car, 27.9% (n=17) drove a car more than a year ago, and another 29.5% (n=18) drove a car more than a month ago but within the last year. Only seven (11.5%) respondents in Austin drove a car within the past month. The majority of respondents (75.4%; n=46) hadn't been to a movie within the past month. A sizeable proportion (29.5%; n=18) used services from the library within the last week and an additional 8.2% (n=5) used services from the library more than a week ago but within the last month. A third (36.1%; n=22) of respondents in Austin applied for a job within the past week and an additional 23.0% (n=14) applied for a job more than a week ago but within the past month.

During the focus groups, participants were asked what their daily life is like.

"For me it's just workin, tryna get some money really. I'm just tryna make money so I can get out of the state that I'm in."—Focus group participant

"Um, working. I have to go up to Del Valley to make payments, so. I go up there on the bus. Court, things like that. My day-to-day revolved around working and legal things."—Focus group participant

"Sittin on the bus a lot."—Focus group participant

"I'm constantly going around places applying for jobs, going to my church, Goodwill, I'm all over the place, I don't really have time to slow down. Therapy, physical therapy, community care."—Male respondent

"School. By being a senior, I'm extremely busy being the last six weeks getting ready for graduation, prom, and it's like now I have a job so it's even more busy now, so..."—Female respondent

CHAPTER 8: SERVICE NEEDS

Current Service Needs

The survey listed twenty one things that respondents may or may not need "right now." The results are listed in Figures 8.1 and 8.2. Most people said they needed help with obtaining clothing (75.4%; n=46), a safe place to stay during the day (72.1%; n=44), laundry facilities (70.5%; n=43), and transportation (70.5%; n=43). Eight people endorsed the "anything else" category and they described things like pregnancy testing, hygiene supplies, specialized food (i.e. fruit and vegan choices), and assistance with obtaining glasses, assistance getting ID, and a place to use the computer regularly.

Figure 8.1: Right now, do you need... (% Yes; n=61)

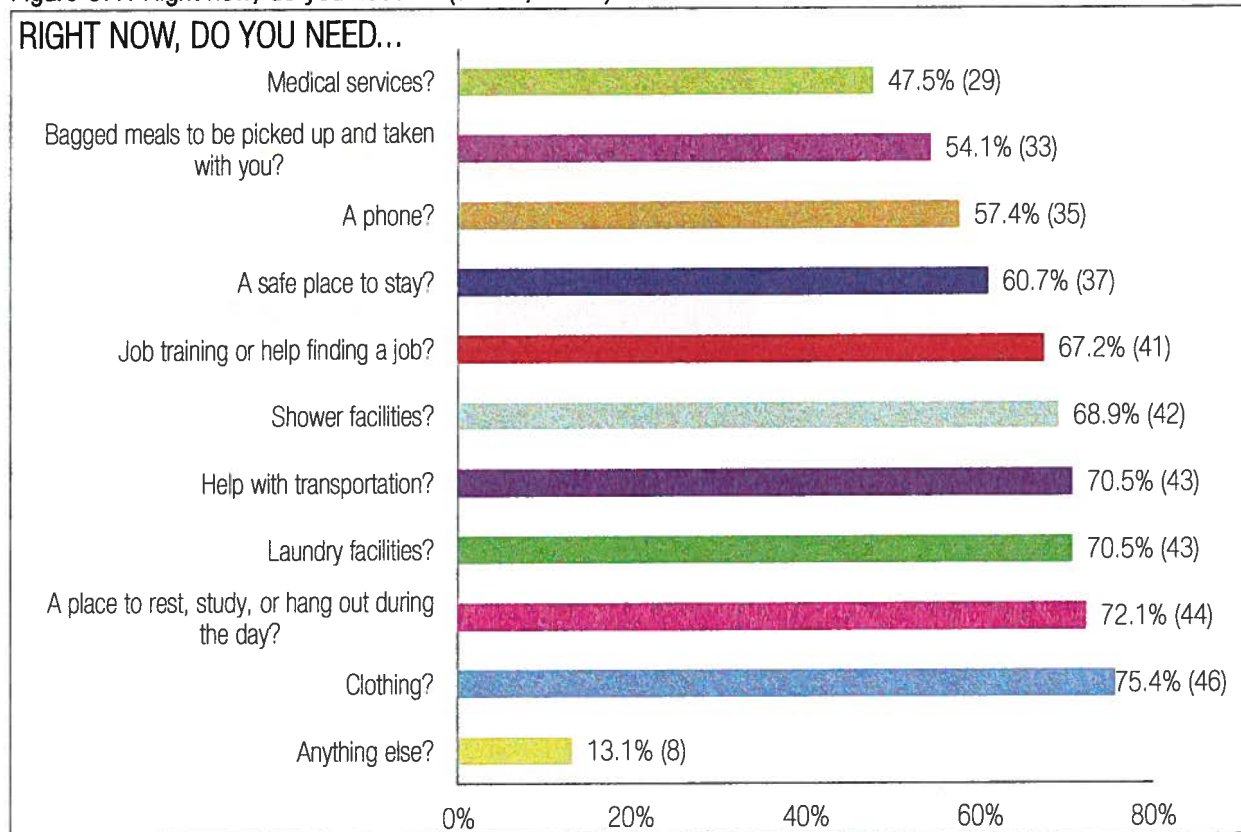
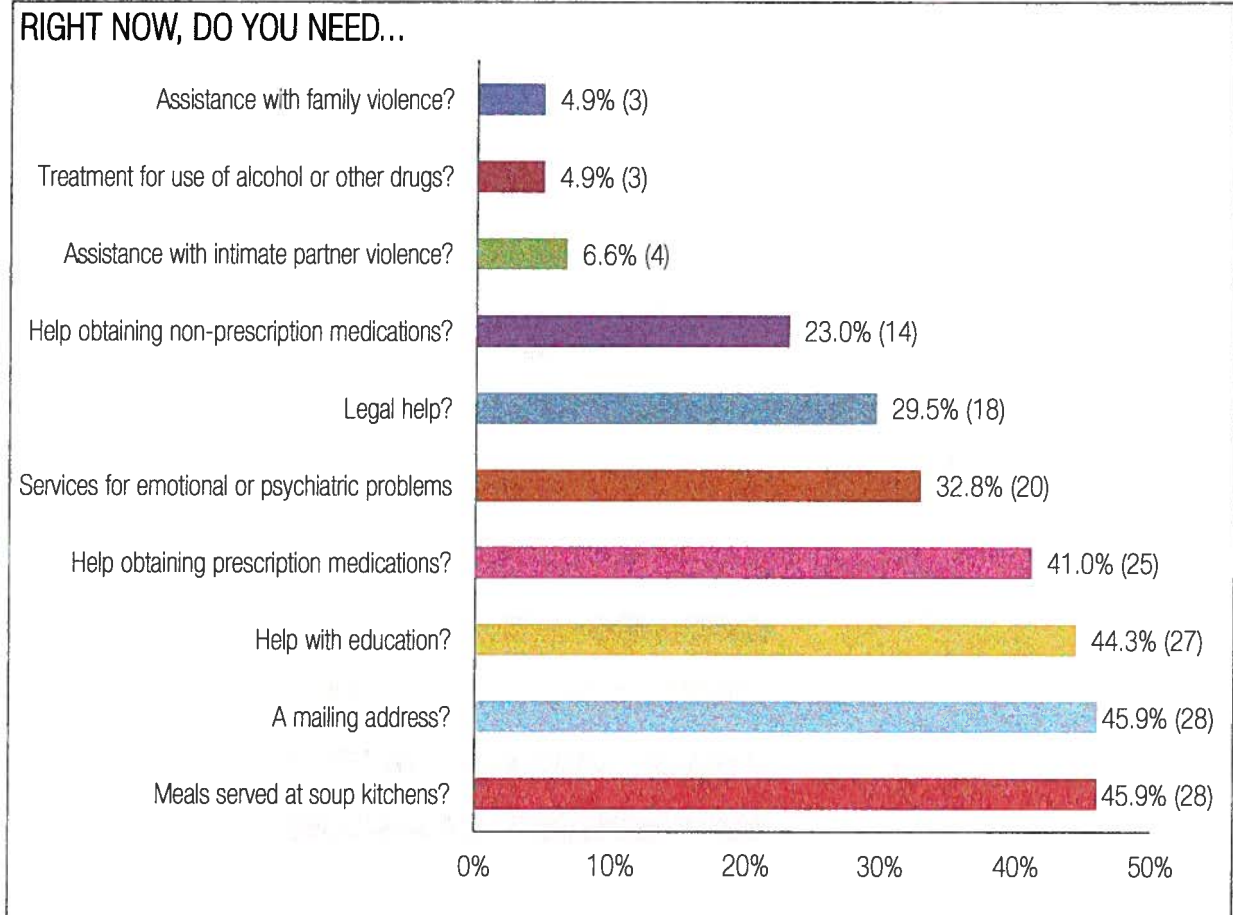


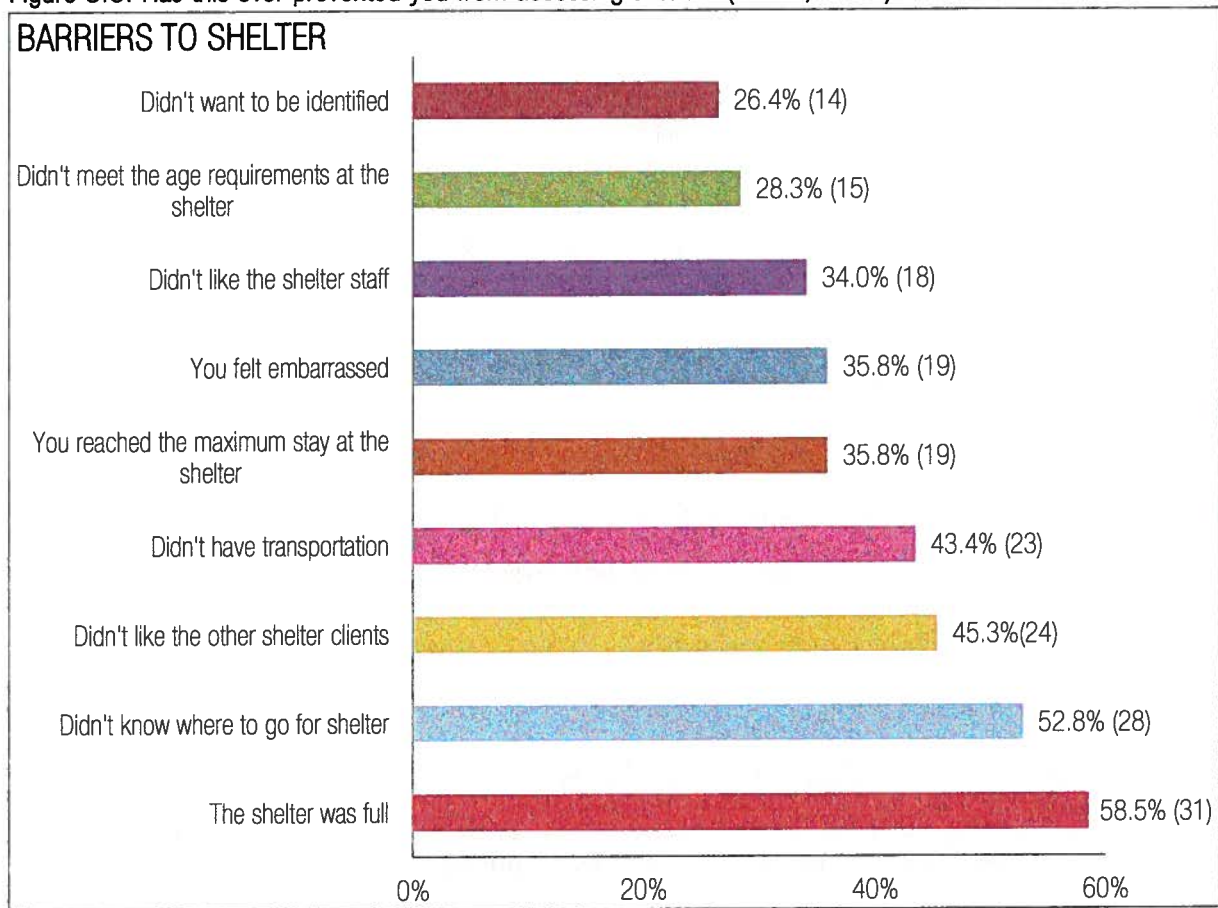
Figure 8.2: Right now, do you need...(% Yes; n=61)



Barriers to Shelter

We asked respondents in Austin about a variety of things that may have ever prevented them from accessing shelter. Most respondents reported that they were unable to access shelter because the shelter was full (58.5%; n=31) and lack of awareness regarding where to go for shelter (52.8%; n=41). Forty-five percent didn't like the other shelter clients (45.3%; n=24) or didn't have transportation to a shelter (43.4%; n=23). About one-third said they had reached the maximum stay at a shelter (35.8%; n=19), they felt embarrassed (35.8%; n=19), or they didn't like the shelter staff (34.0%; n=18). Fourteen respondents endorsed the "anything else" category. They reported a variety of issues: such as medical requirements, addiction to drugs/alcohol, being on the sex offender registry, having been sexually assaulted in a shelter, and being a "separatist" (i.e. doesn't think blacks should be in the same shelter as whites), not being able to sleep in same place as partner, and having a dog as reasons they did not access shelter.

Figure 8.3: Has this ever prevented you from accessing shelter? (% Yes; n=53)



Service Deficits and Challenges

Respondents were asked to name the most important service or support that they are **lacking** right now in their communities. Of fifty-five respondents, sixteen reported shelter/housing as the most important service that they do not have access to in their community right now. Twenty three respondents mentioned that they had other needs that topped their list, including recreation centers, showers and laundry facilities, emotional support, and money. Fewer named things like education (n=1), transportation (n=2), medical care (n=3), and job support (n=4) as the most important services or supports that they are missing. Six respondents said they had all their needs met and didn't require any additional services.

Focus group participants in Austin mentioned the need for more shelters and housing and transportation assistance. For example, one female focus group participant mentioned, "and then trying to at least get a bus pass and trying to find a way for someone to live, like get an apartment and a cheap apartment or a cheap house or something. Just somewhere where we can lay our head at, where we don't have to be around all the bad. We want to be somewhere where it's all good."

Respondents in Austin were asked to talk about the biggest challenges to accessing services in the Austin area. Respondents said age requirements, not knowing exactly where to go (and being scared to ask for help), not having an ID, lack of bus fare or having a tough time navigating bus routes, accessing medication, and finding services that they can go to with their dogs. Some respondents said they had no challenges to accessing services in Austin.

Focus group participants were asked about challenges they face when accessing services. Focus group participants spoke mainly of challenges related to transportation when accessing services. They also mentioned difficulties in finding shelters that had bed openings.

"Sometimes it's transportation. Just, really just getting there."—Focus group participant

"The length of time that it takes to access that services."—Focus group participant

"Like you gotta wait in line, then it takes like thirty minutes to interview with the person. Then you gotta go. Then you've wasted your day at like one place. It's why it's... Especially if you gotta go panhandle afterwards, cuz there's only certain hours that's good for panhandling really."—Focus group participant

"Like most services give us bus passes, not like a physical ride. A ride would be awesome."—Focus group participant

"The openings, that was just really hard like trying to get into just being, a spot being available..."—Female respondent

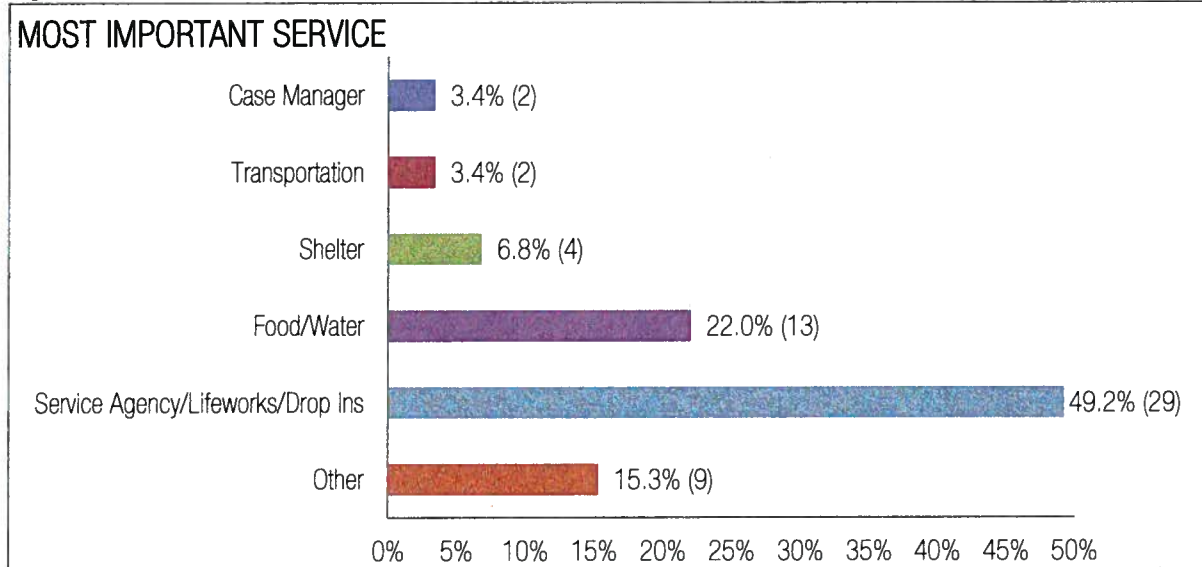
Focus group participants also offered their input as to what service agencies could do to be more effective in providing services.

"Better training for their staff, like to... I mean, I don't know about you guys, but I know sometimes when I go into a service place to get services that I feel that they're. Like I feel that they feel like if they help me, then it's coming out of their paycheck that they're helping me when it's not like that. It's coming out of the fund that's supposed to help us. Not feel like, just some places I've been to are like, well, if they help us and help them, then that's cutting them off. Just some places I've been to is like that."—Focus group participant

Most Important Service

Surveyed young people were also asked to name the most important service or support in your community that they use right now (Figure 8.4). Half (49.2%; n=29) reported that the most important service that they use was service agencies (e.g., Lifeworks and Drop-Ins). Thirteen people (22.0%) reported that access to food and water were most important. Nine respondents endorsed other services and named the library, education services, and emotional support as the most important in their community.

Figure 8.4: What is the most important service or support in your community that you use right now? (n=59)



Focus group participants talked about services that they receive the most often—most said food, shelter, and health services. Many received these services from Life Works, the Salvation Army, Goodwill, the Arch, and Shoreline. Focus group participants also talked about the benefits to being sheltered right now.

"Life Works is a very like good program like when it comes to like if you're determined to do things that you have to do to get ready for independence, and I know that if you work the program the right way that you'll be able to get the support and all the things that you need before you leave if you don't play around and keep your mind set. Because I know like in two months just being at the shelter I've got a lot of things done and now I'm here I'm like almost to the point that I have everything I need for whenever I turn 18 and I leave care, and it happened in such little time so I know that if I can do in this little time then I'm sure everybody works the program here right like they're supposed to it's possible. They do everything and it's very supportive, there's no dislikes about it."—Female respondent

"I get counseling, I guess I just get help when it need it. Like, if I'm ever in like a bad situation I know that I can come to anyone, anybody here and they'll find me the right help that I need."—Female respondent

During the focus groups, participants were also asked about characteristics of staff are the most helpful. Many respondents talked about the need for staffers to be patient, kind, respectful, and understanding.

"Lots of patience. . . Being there like when we have a problem they can tell, they can tell that you're, say like you had a bad day they would tell the difference between a good day and a bad day for you."—Female respondent

"Just like genuinely wanting to help."—Focus group participant

"Tell me out front if you're going to help me or not, don't let me sit here and waste my time telling you. You ain't gonna do shit."—Focus group participant

"I feel that's one for me is persistence, because if they're persistent no matter how much you push them away, they keep coming towards you just like. . . one of the things that my pastor said was you know, if someone pushes you away turn the other cheek and just love them more, you know, because like they all said it's a really good thing. But for me persistence because that shows that they actually care they, no matter how much they push you away they want to keep coming toward you with everything they got."—Male respondent

Focus group respondents also mentioned having encounters with agency staffers that were disrespectful to them or where they felt like the staff members didn't care about them, which were very frustrating and were characteristics they try to avoid now. On the other hand, some respondents talked about liking case managers who really showed that they cared about the youth's lives and wanted to help.

During the focus groups, participants were also asked whether they have had any experiences with services that made them not want to go back. One male focus group participant had a particularly negative incident involving abuse at a residential treatment center:

"No you're not getting treatment. You're getting slammed around like a sack of potatoes, and if you don't comply, I mean, after a while of being picked on by like 30 year old men that have been doing this job forever, they're like, 30, 35, 40 years old and they've had the same job for like 15 years and like all they're used to is taking these kids that, they're supposedly supposed to be giving you a treatment and stuff. But their version of treatment is like, oh you wanna talk crazy, alright, let me just tackle you real quick because I'm a formal football player and I know how to do this the right way where it hurts. I will take all bad out of you. They reach through your soul and pull it out of you, honestly. Depending on how bad a kid you are."—Male respondent

Other focus group participants recounted experiences with service agencies that discouraged them from going back. Focus group participants were also asked about the support services that they choose not to access.

"[Agency Name] . . . I went in there for they call Safe Sleep. It's for women only, like they do it every night. And like, you go and like sleep on this cot in their hallway and shit. That's scary. Fuck that. I'd rather sleep outside cuz there's at least a way to get away from that. There's like, they're crazy in there. They come in high and drunk and it doesn't matter."—Female respondent

"People will be taking your stuff while you sleep. If you don't sleep with your stuff, you gonna get robbed and it's too much."—Female respondent

"There's a lot of programs that they have for like CPS and stuff but they really don't, certain ones really just don't know how to treat you. Or they have like no like type of like . . . respect."—Female respondent

"I've never heard anything good about the Arch, and I never been there and I don't plan on going."—Focus group participant

Easier Lives

As a final general question regarding services, we asked respondents what would make their lives easier on any given day. The vast majority said that service agencies could help them to find a job or gain job training, get an education, help with transportation, and help obtaining housing. Many respondents also said that service agencies should be open longer, or expand their hours, to make their lives easier. Focus group participants were also asked what would make their lives easier on any given day, and many said having a stable place to live and having a job. Others were more specific. Some responses are listed below.

"I would, what would make my life easier is having a place, being already like having my own place where I know I can do my own things and get my stuff done with school and everything, I don't know, that would make my life easier."—Female respondent

"Proper paperwork production I think is what it's called. I can't remember the exact name of it, but the paperwork line and like getting stuff done, being in CPS, is honestly terrible."—Male respondent

"Money."—Female respondent

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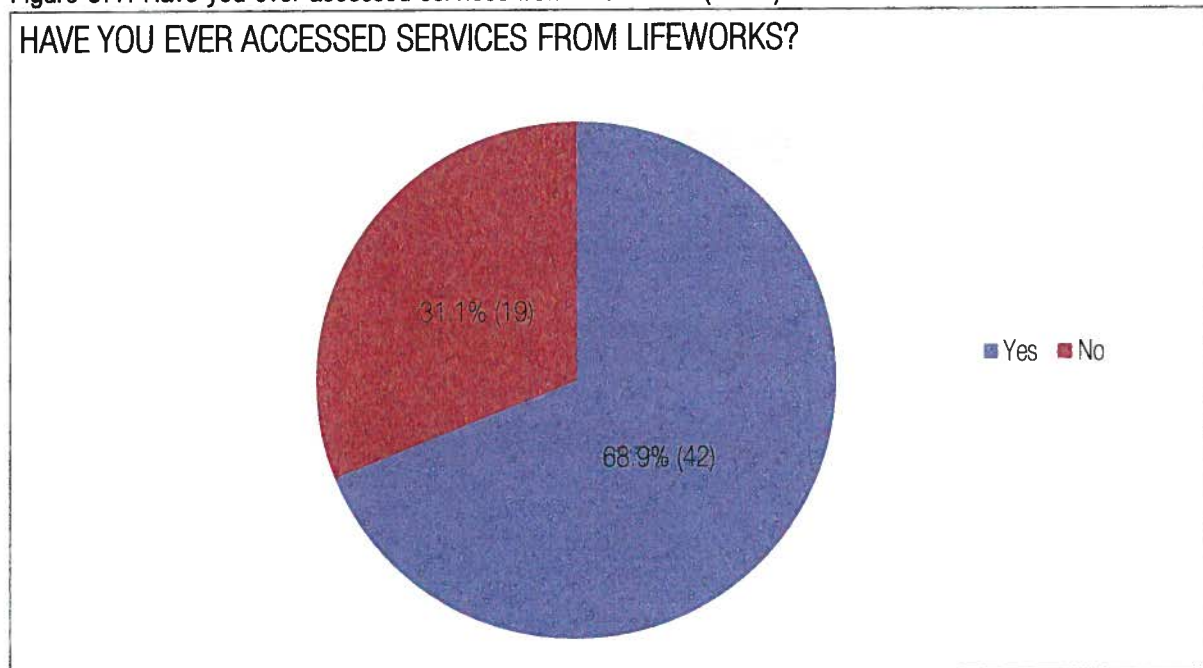
CHAPTER 9: AUSTIN AREA SERVICES

We asked respondents whether they had ever accessed services from various organizations in Austin. We also asked more specific questions about Lifeworks.

Lifeworks

Most respondents in Austin (68.9%; n=42), said that they had accessed services from Lifeworks at some point in their lives (Figure 9.1).

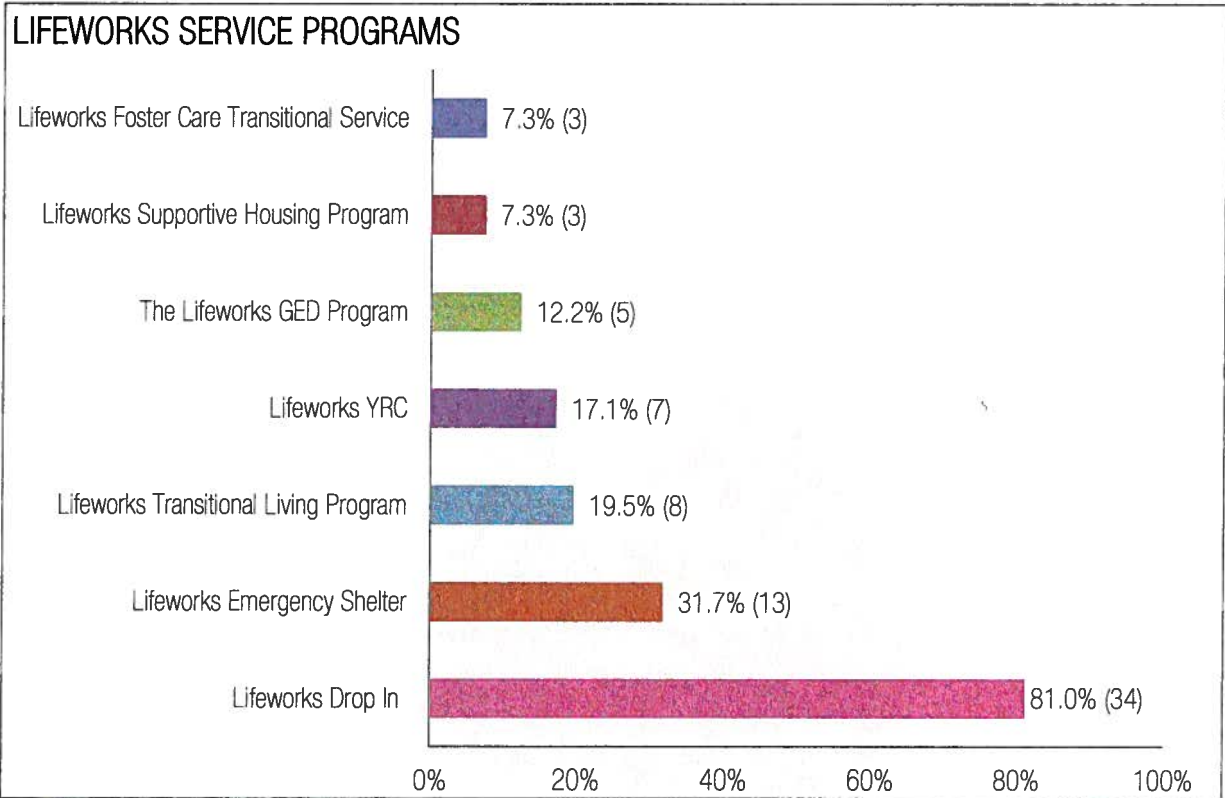
Figure 9.1: Have you ever accessed services from Lifeworks? (n=61)



The 19 respondents who had never accessed Lifeworks were asked for the main reason they didn't access services from Lifeworks. Most of these respondents (62.5%; n=10) said they weren't aware of Lifeworks' services, one respondent (6.3%) didn't need the services that Lifeworks provides, and five respondents (26.0%) said "something else" which included reasons like never heard about Lifeworks, just arrived to Austin or didn't know their way around Austin yet, and one person called lifeworks but was told he or she didn't qualify.

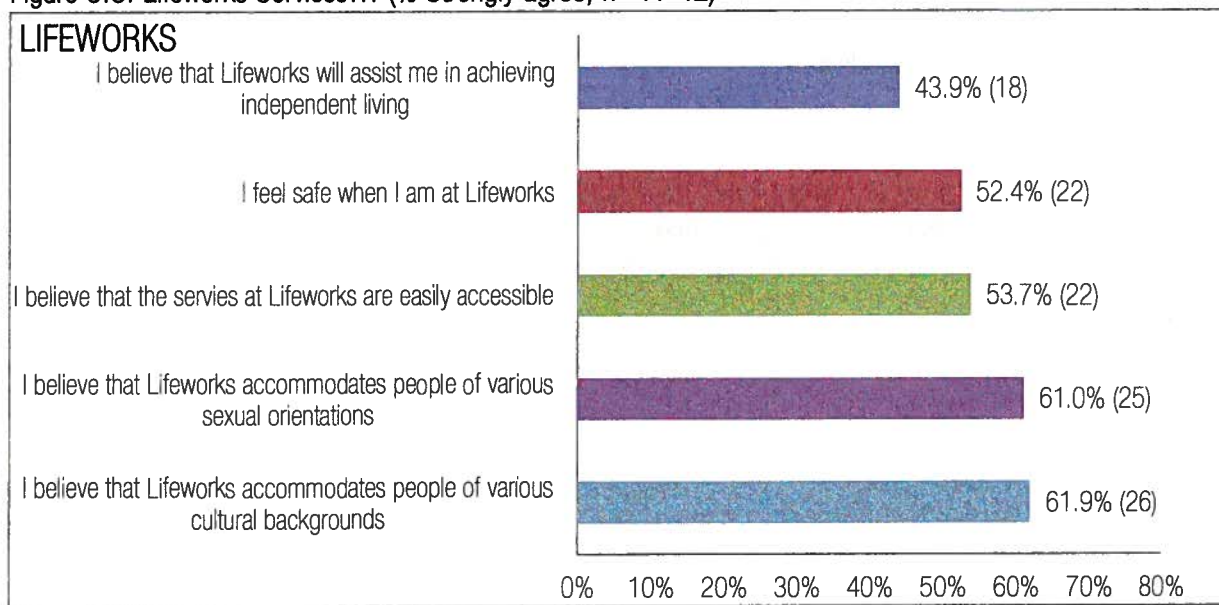
The 42 respondents who had accessed services from Lifeworks were asked some additional questions about their experiences with the agency. Respondents were asked which services they used from Lifeworks (shown in Figure 9.2). The vast majority (81.0%; n=34) used the Lifeworks Drop-In center. Fewer (31.7%; n=13) used the Lifeworks emergency shelter.

Figure 9.2: Use of Lifeworks Service Programs (% Yes; n=41-42)



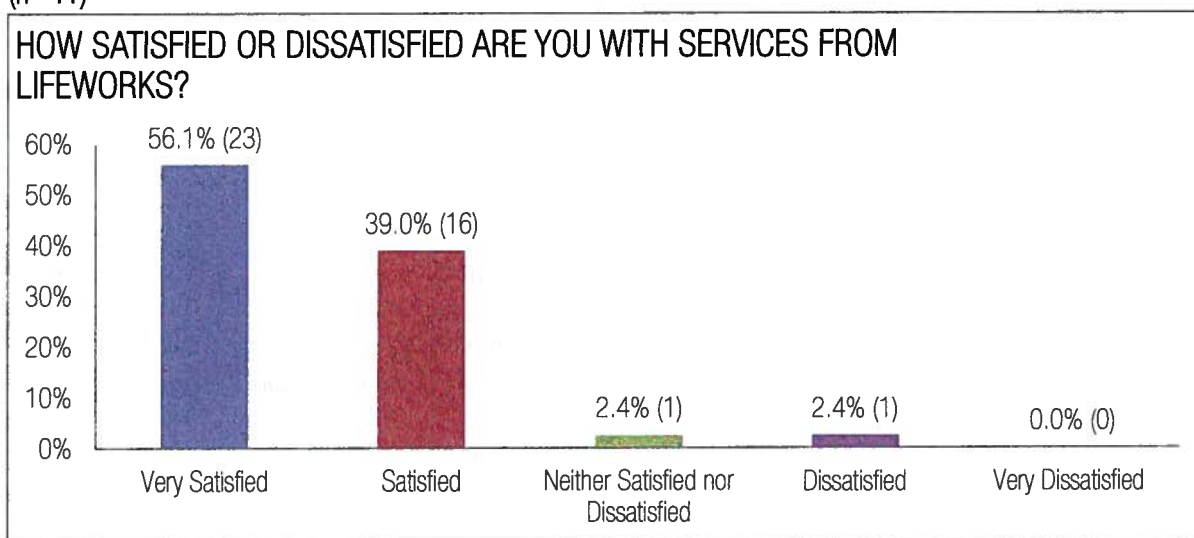
The respondents who had accessed services from Lifeworks were also asked about the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the following five statements. Figure 9.3 below shows the percentage who "strongly agreed" with each statement. Most "strongly agreed" that Lifeworks accommodates people of various cultural backgrounds (61.9%; n=26) and sexual orientations (61.0%; n=25).

Figure 9.3: Lifeworks Services... (% Strongly agree; n=41-42)



We also asked respondents how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the services that they had received from Lifeworks (Figure 9.4). Most respondents were very satisfied (56.1%; n=23) or satisfied (39.0%; n=16) with the services they received from Lifeworks.

Figure 9.4: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services you have received from Lifeworks? (n=41)



Respondents were also asked what services at Lifeworks they used the most often and why. Many respondents reported that they used services provided by the drop in, like food, clothing, computer/internet access, bus passes, and a place to relax or hang out to get away from the elements. Others said education services, mental health counseling, case managers, and transitional living programs. They were also asked what Lifeworks could do to make services more useful and accessible. Many respondents said Lifeworks could expand their hours and be open more often. Other suggestions included opening more Lifeworks locations in different neighborhoods, increasing publicity of their services and service hours, and making the age limit higher. Quite a few respondents said that Lifeworks was already very accessible and helpful to them.

Services in Austin

Respondents were asked about where else, aside from Lifeworks, they receive services in Austin, TX. Many said mostly Lifeworks or only Lifeworks. Some said Angel House, Caritas, the Austin Recreation Center, Salvation Army, the Arch, various churches, Women's and Children's Shelter, and public assistance (food stamps, supplemental security income).

Message To Funders

During the focus groups, participants were asked what they would say if they got to talk to the people who give money to street outreach programs.

"I would tell them I appreciate everything that y'all are doing. I really do. 'Cause I mean not too many people would reach out a helping hand to help someone else as much as y'all actually do, so thank you. ... That's what I would say. I mean, I have nothin' negative to say 'cause the places that I've been to actually have helped me out."—Female respondent

"I think I would say if you have all this money, why spend it on one organization when you can spend it on more organizations that can help a lot of other homeless people or people that are in CPS because there's a lot of kids that, I was in CPS and there was things that I didn't get that I needed, and it's like now I'm in a homeless shelter and it's like I'm still not getting the things that I needed and you're supposed to be there helping me provide for me and helping me get out there in the world and it's like... how can you help me be on my own when you're not helping me? So..."—Female respondent

"Well I mean, I don't, honestly I don't really ask for really anything, they don't really out anything towards me like, if I had to give up activity each night for the next few months (F: yeah) just to get some shoes I would do that, because they obviously have enough to spend it on activity but they don't have enough to spend on kids who need stuff, that's ridiculous."—Female respondent

"Uhm, to people who donate, it's a good cause. Cause a lot of people say they wanna do this this and this, but they don't do it. Their employees are just horrible people looking for jobs and they don't know what they're doing half the time. Like Angel Heart got shut down, and they were being funded, but it was just a horrible placement. Horrible. So make sure that you're actually trying to help, like lifeworks, they're actually trying to help make a difference with us. So make sure it's going to a good cause I guess."—Male respondent