

DID YOU KNOW?

HOW DO PEOPLE FALL INTO HOMELESSNESS?

Structural causes, systems failures and individual factors all contribute to experiencing homelessness.

The path to homelessness is different for everyone. Nobody's situation is determined by one single event. Instead, it's usually a combination of different factors over time. These factors fall into three distinct categories:

1. Structural Causes
2. Systems Failures
3. Individual Factors

STRUCTURAL CAUSES

Structural causes of homelessness are economic and societal issues which impact our ability to thrive or even to simply meet our basic needs.

Lack of access to affordable housing is the most obvious structural factor. However, lack of adequate income, lack of adequate access to health supports, and discrimination contribute to homelessness.

Structural causes include unemployment and poverty. These negative shifts in the economy create challenges for people to earn enough income to pay their bills. [The 2020 Nanaimo Homeless Count](#) reported the top reason that caused people to lose their housing was not enough income (34%).

SYSTEMS FAILURES

When systems of care and support fail or are inaccessible, people don't receive the support they need. Examples of systems failures include a lack of support for immigrants

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and refugees and unsupported transitions from child welfare. A new question in the 2020 Nanaimo Homeless Count identified foster care as a precipitating factor forcing youth into homelessness. For youth leaving foster care in Nanaimo, 39% were homeless within five years or less, according to the count.

Inadequate discharge planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections facilities and mental health and addictions facilities can also leave people with nowhere to go. [1]

INDIVIDUAL AND RELATIONAL FACTORS

Circumstances that affect people on a personal level or within their family and support system, fall into this category. House fire, job loss, personal health issues, disabilities, struggles with addictions and mental health are all examples of circumstances that may lead someone to homelessness.

Relationship and family incidents are also included in this category. These include domestic violence, family breakdown or death of a partner, parent, or someone who supports them. For young people, this often includes problems with their family accepting their gender identity or sexual orientation. [1]

PATH TO HOMELESSNESS

The path to homelessness is as complex and varied as the people themselves. Underlying economic, structural and social factors, in varying combinations, contribute to homelessness.

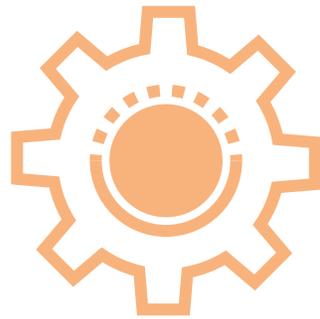
[VIEW ARTICLE ONLINE](#)

[1] <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/causes-homelessness>

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PATHS TO HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a complex issue. When a person becomes homeless, it's usually the impact of several different factors over time. The many reasons that contribute to homelessness fall into three categories:



STRUCTURAL CAUSES

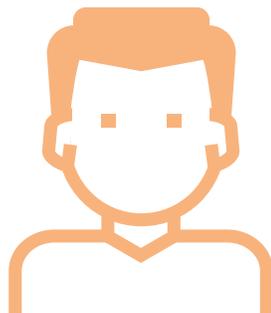
Broad economic and social issues

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of adequate income
- Lack of health supports
- Discrimination
- Shifts in the economy

SYSTEMS FAILURES

Inadequate systems of care/support

- Lack of support for immigrants and refugees
- Unsupported transitions from child welfare
- Inadequate discharge planning for people leaving hospitals, corrections and mental health and addictions facilities



INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Personal and family circumstances

- House fire
- Job loss
- Health issues
- Domestic violence
- Family breakdown

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HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE END UP HOMELESS?

Youth between the ages of 13-25 make up 20% of the homeless population in Canada^[1]. In Nanaimo, we're seeing increasing numbers of vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness. Of the people facing homelessness surveyed in the 2020 Nanaimo Point-In-Time Count, 10.7% of respondents were under the age of 25. An estimated 60 to 65 youth are living on the street. There are many reasons that lead young people into homelessness.

FAMILY CONFLICT

Family and relationship breakdowns are one of the main reasons young people become homeless. Many youths leave home after years of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, strained relationships, addiction issues in the family and parental neglect. Young people often become homeless because it's safer to leave home than to stay.

Conflict with parents or caregivers was a major cause of homelessness for 74% of youth, and was a contributing factor for 92% of youth, according to the 2014 Leaving Home report. ^[2]

RESIDENTIAL INSTABILITY

Aging out of the child welfare system is another cause of youth homelessness. When they reach the age of 19, youth are no longer supported. Without adequate planning, housing and income support, some youth living in residential or institutional placements become homeless when they're discharged.

The 2020 Nanaimo Point-in-Time Count confirmed that foster care is a precipitating factor leading youth into homelessness. In Nanaimo, of those who indicated they had been in foster care, 39% were homeless within five years or less of leaving.

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LIVING IN POVERTY

Many young people who become homeless come from families living in poverty. The families may indeed be supportive and caring, but may simply not have the means to take care of the young person and they may be forced to leave the home.

Some youth become homeless with their families, after the family suffers financial crises resulting from lack of affordable housing, limited employment opportunities or insufficient wages. These youth may be separated from their family by shelter, transitional housing or child welfare policies.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CHALLENGES

Youth may be pushed into homelessness because of their own undiagnosed or untreated mental health or addictions challenges or because of their parents' mental health and addictions challenges. This is concerning because the sufferings of being homeless only exacerbate these challenges.

LGBTQ2S+ YOUTH

LGBTQ2S+ youth experience higher levels of homelessness than their peers. It's estimated that between 25-40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S+ compared to 10% of non-homeless youth.

Many sexual and gender diverse youth grow up in homes with family members that are not accepting, supportive or affirming. Often, coming out to family leads to homelessness. Some youth may run away from home because of abuse or discrimination from their family members. Others may be thrown out of their family home.

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DISCRIMINATION

When young people experience discrimination of any kind, it impacts their options and access to employment, educational opportunities, and their ability to access the services they need. This contributes to an increased risk of falling into homelessness, particularly when combined with other challenges the young person may be experiencing in the home.

CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH

Youth homelessness is complex and is usually the result of a combination of factors. Experiencing homelessness at any age is extremely difficult. Homeless youth are especially vulnerable to physical and mental health issues, overdoses, abuse and exploitation without a stable support system.

[VIEW ARTICLE ONLINE](#)

^[1] <https://awayhome.ca/youth-homelessness/>

^[2] <https://ighhub.org/leavinghome>

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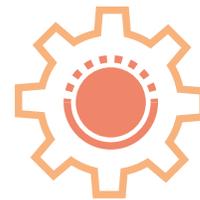
HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE END UP HOMELESS?

In Nanaimo, we're seeing increasing numbers of vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness. There are many reasons that lead young people into homelessness.



FAMILY CONFLICT

Including physical/sexual/emotional abuse, strained relationships and parental neglect.



FOSTER CARE

Some youth living in placements become homeless when they're discharged.



DISCRIMINATION

This negatively impacts options, employment, education and access to services.



LGBTQ2S+

Many families are not supportive. Often times, coming out to family leads to homelessness.



POVERTY

This negatively impacts options and access to employment, educational opportunities and ability to access needed services.



MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CHALLENGES

Undiagnosed or untreated mental health or addiction challenges may push youth into homelessness.

DID YOU KNOW?

RESOURCES - HOW DO PEOPLE FALL INTO HOMELESSNESS?

ARTICLES

[How Homeless People Become Homeless](#)

[Causes Of Homelessness](#)

[How Do People Become Homeless? *People who have experienced homelessness share their stories*](#)

[What Causes Homelessness? Homelessness as a Social Problem](#)

[Why do Young People Become Homeless?](#)

[Youth Homelessness in Canada](#)

REPORTS

[The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013](#)

[Risk Factors for Homelessness](#)

[2020 Nanaimo Point-in-Time Count](#)

VIDEOS

[Nanaimo Homeless Coalition - Paths to Homelessness](#)

[Nanaimo Homeless Coalition - How do young people become homeless?](#)

WEBSITES

[Nanaimo Homeless Coalition](#)

[Away Home Canada – A national coalition reimagining solutions to youth homelessness](#)

FACTSHEETS

[Fact Sheet: Affordable Housing](#)

[Fact Sheet: What's Driving Homelessness](#)

[Fact Sheet: Homelessness in Nanaimo](#)

[Housing & Homelessness Glossary](#)