
Press Release
For Immediate Release
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New Study Documents Brutal Impact of Homelessness on Women *“A Life-Threatening Condition”*

Toronto – A new study released today documents the brutal impact of homelessness on the lives of women in Toronto. Calling homelessness a “life-threatening” condition for women, the study reveals staggering rates of sexual assault among homeless women, and documents health impacts that significantly reduce life expectancy. The ***Women & Homelessness Research Bulletin***, released jointly by Street Health and Sistering, paints a detailed picture of women’s street homelessness today and its devastating impact.

“We were staggered to learn that homeless women are ten times more likely to be sexually assaulted than homeless men and are more likely to have a serious physical health condition,” stated Kate Mason, study coordinator at Street Health. “One in five women had been sexually assaulted in the past year and almost all - 84% - had at least one serious physical health condition.”

“Absolute poverty exists on the streets of our city with brutal consequences for women,” said Angela Robertson, study advisor, and Executive Director of Sistering, “Homeless women cannot meet their basic survival needs – they don’t know where their next meal is coming from, they don’t have safe shelter or private space to address personal hygiene needs. The provincial government is developing a strategy to reduce poverty, that strategy should include steps to bring an end to women’s street homelessness. It’s unsafe and unjust to condemn a woman to live on the street.”

The study is a partnership between Street Health, an organization providing nursing care and street outreach services to homeless people and Sistering, a multi-service agency for homeless and low-income women in Toronto. It surveyed 97 homeless women in Toronto about their health status and access to health care. Findings include information on the causes of homelessness, the difficult daily lives of homeless women, their physical and mental health status, as well as the barriers homeless women face when attempting to access health care. The bulletin sets out a series of solutions aimed at service providers and all levels of government to improve the health of homeless women and end homelessness.

This evening homeless, marginalized and low-income women are invited to Back Talk: Women Speak about Reducing Poverty in their Lives, a forum intended to give them a chance to have input into the government’s poverty reduction strategy. Back Talk takes place 3:30-6:30 pm at Sistering, 962 Bloor Street West, Toronto.

The ***Women & Homelessness Research Bulletin*** is available online at www.streethhealth.ca and www.sistering.org.

For information or to arrange interviews with study researchers or women with lived experience of homelessness, please contact:

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