



**MAKING THE SHIFT**  
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB

# Youth Homelessness Prevention

Where We Are, What's Needed, and How to Move Forward

October 2, 2024



canadian  
observatory on  
homelessness



**A WAY HOME**  
VERS UN CHEZ-SOI



Association of  
Municipalities  
of Ontario

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MAKING THE SHIFT INC

**Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab** is a collaborative project, launched in 2017 and co-led by the **Canadian Observatory on Homelessness** and **A Way Home Canada**.



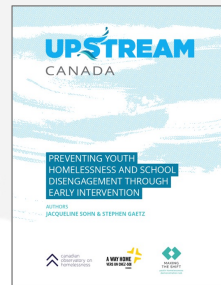
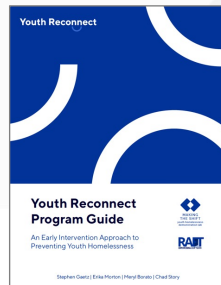
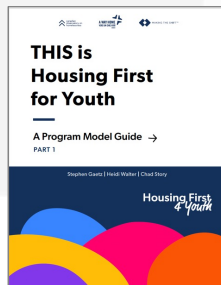
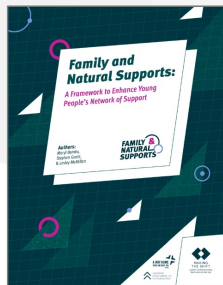
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The **Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)** is a research and policy partnership working to conduct and mobilize research designed to have an impact on solutions to homelessness.



**A WAY HOME**  
VERS UN CHEZ-SOI

**A Way Home Canada (AWHC)** is a national coalition reimagining solutions to youth homelessness through transformations in policy, practice and planning. AWHC also leads the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness.



**17** Sites in  
**12** Communities

# Why Should We Address Youth Homelessness?



## First experience of homelessness

**40%** of youth experiencing homelessness faced their first homelessness experience prior to turning **16**.



## Involvement with child protection services

**57.8%** of youth had contact with child protection services.



## Declining mental health

An alarming **85.4%** of respondents reported experiencing significant distress.



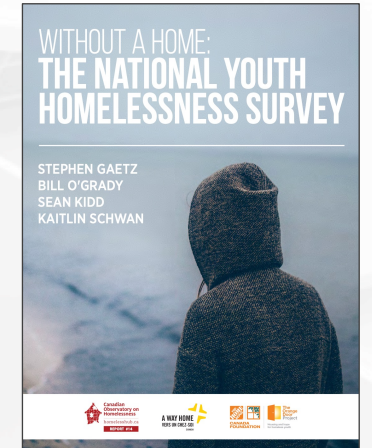
## Challenges in school

**50%** reported being tested for a learning disability while at school and **83%** reported experiencing bullying.



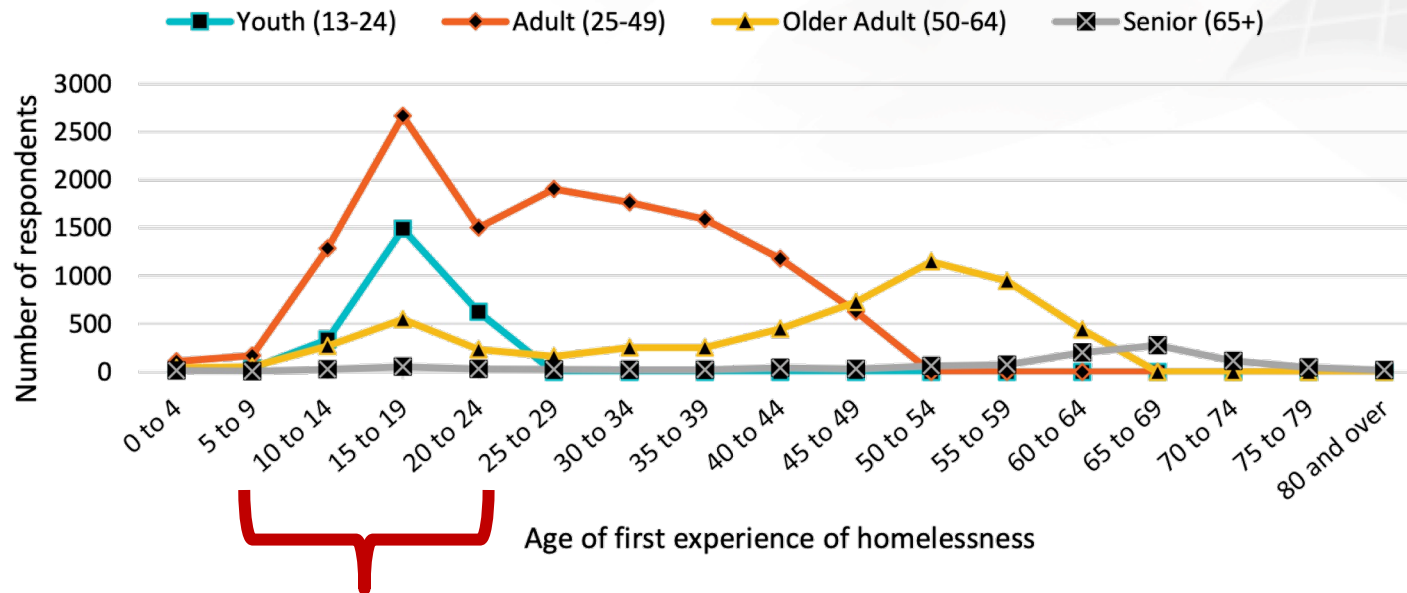
## Disproportionate impact on marginalized groups

Youth identified as gender non-binary (**49.2%**), 2SLGBTQ+ (**46.7%**), or Indigenous (**45%**) were significantly more likely to have left home before the age of **16**.



<https://homelesshub.ca/resource/without-a-home-national-youth-homelessness-survey/>

# Why Should We Address Youth Homelessness?



**44%** experienced homelessness for the first time before the age of 25.

## > Crisis starts

Youth experience homelessness for the first time (13-24)

2020 — 2022

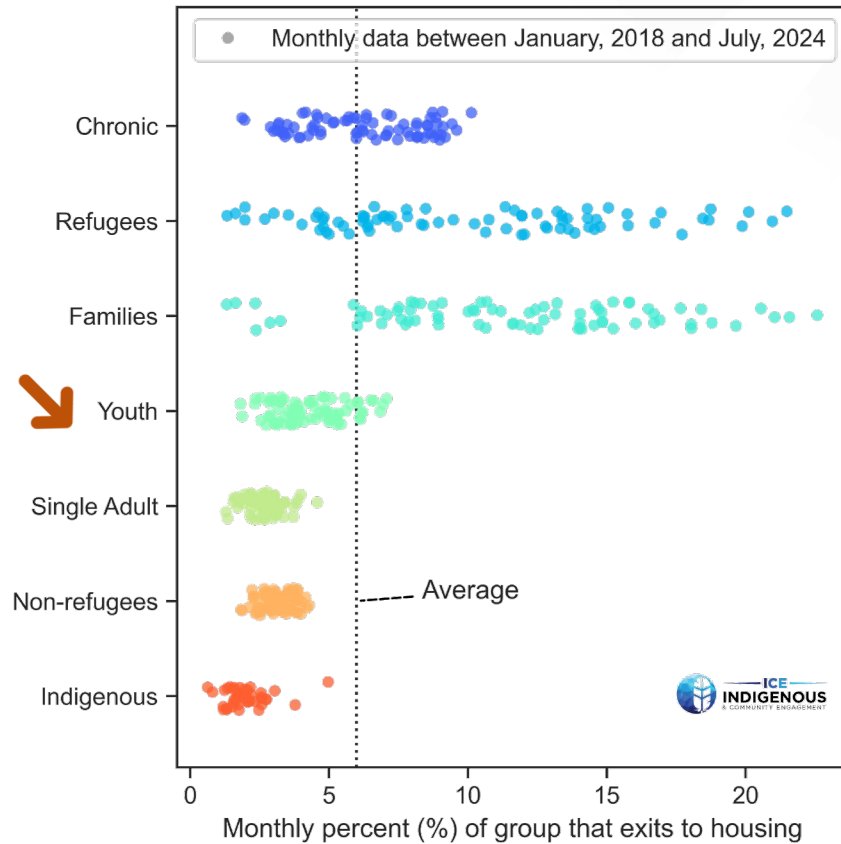


Infrastructure  
Canada

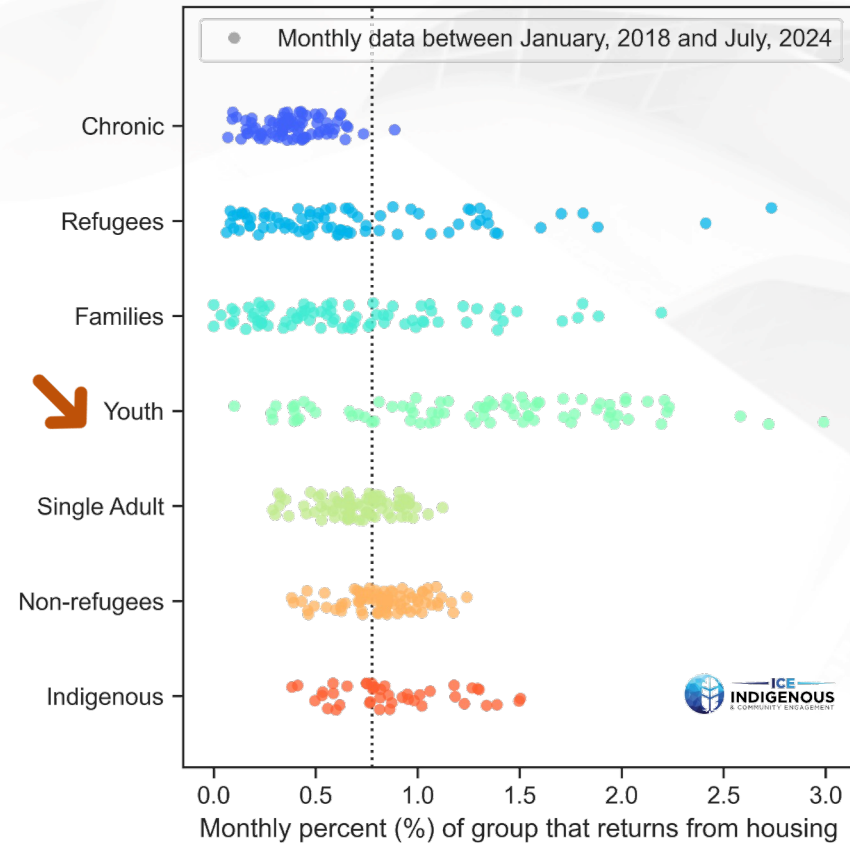
<https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/reports-rapports/pit-counts-dp-2018-highlights-eng.html>

# Why Should We Address Youth Homelessness?

## Leaving Toronto's Shelters to Housing



## Return to Toronto's Shelters from Housing



<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/shelter-system-flow-data/>

Analysis by  
**James McMahon**

# 2 Youth Homelessness Responses

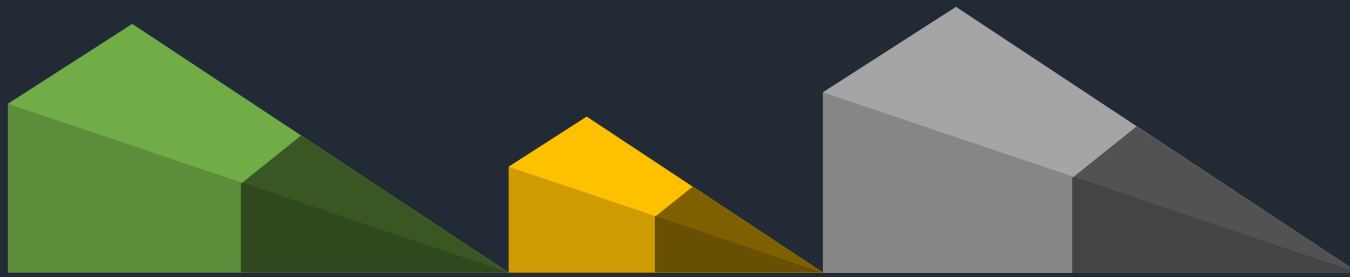


**Short-Term Focus:** Crisis responses typically focus on immediate relief, which may not address underlying issues.

**Reactive:** Crisis responses deal with issues after they arise, which may not be the best approach.

Emergency Responses are **failing us ...**

# 2 Youth Homelessness Responses



## Prevention

## Emergency Responses

## Housing & Supports

**Youth Homelessness Prevention** refers to the **policies, practices, and interventions** that **reduce the likelihood** of a young person entering homelessness. It also provides youth experiencing homelessness with the necessary supports to **stabilize their housing**, improve their **well-being**, connect with **community**, and avoid re-entry into homelessness.

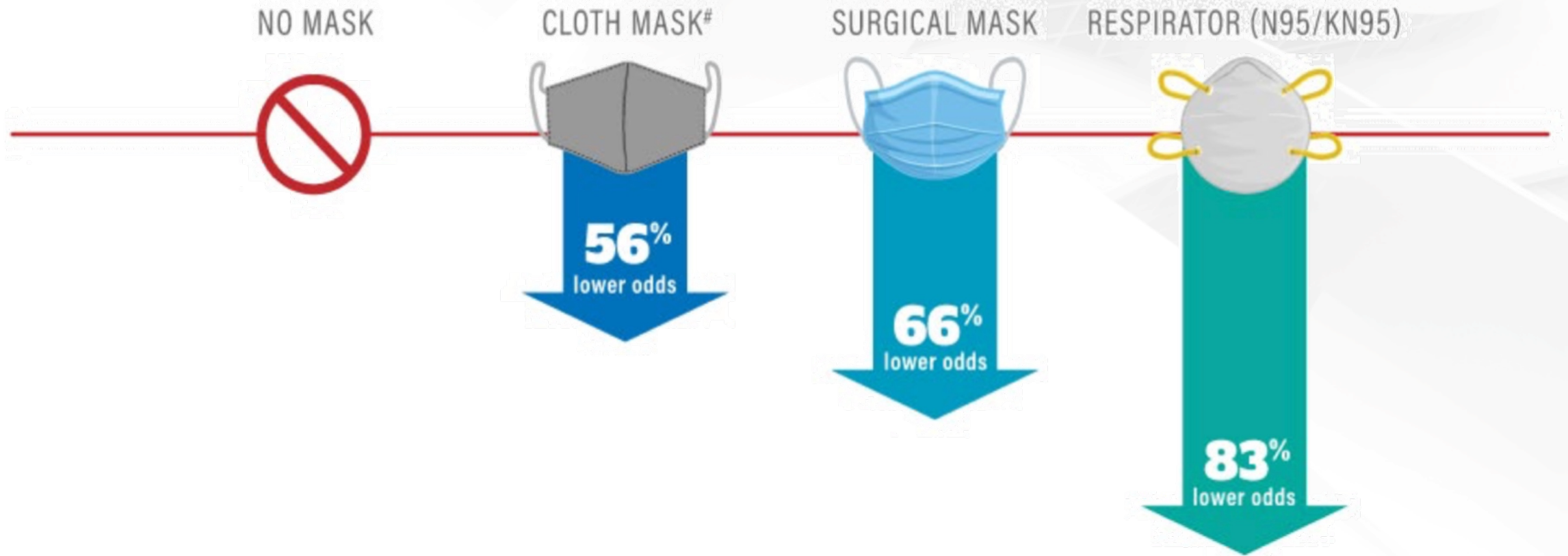
### **Long-Term Focus:**

Preventive measures work to provide long-term solutions and support to prevent future crises.

**Proactive:** Preventive measures can reduce the likelihood of crises occurring in the first place.

# WEARING A MASK LOWERED THE ODDS OF TESTING POSITIVE

Among 534 participants reporting mask type<sup>†</sup>



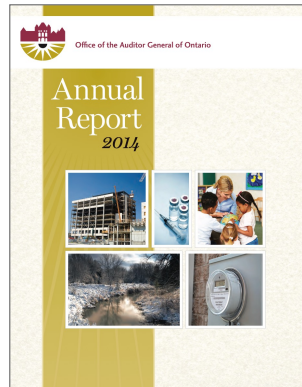
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7106e1.htm>



# Youth Homelessness Responses

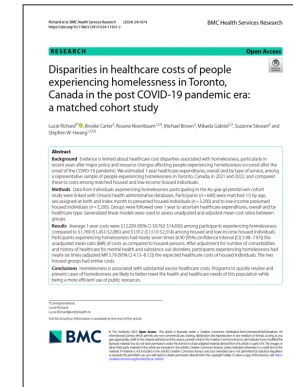
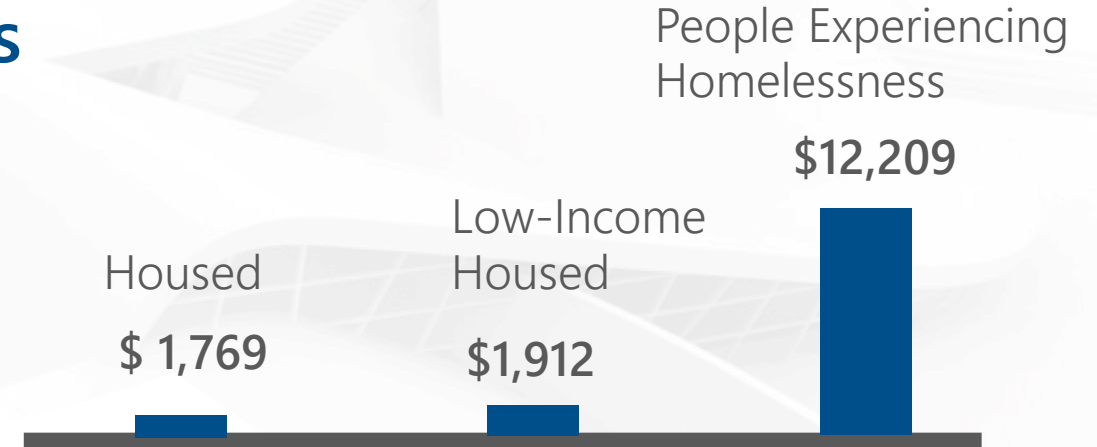


## WHAT IS THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS?



In **Ontario**, in 2011, the average **daily cost per youth** ranged from **\$331 to \$3,012** for agency-operated open facilities.

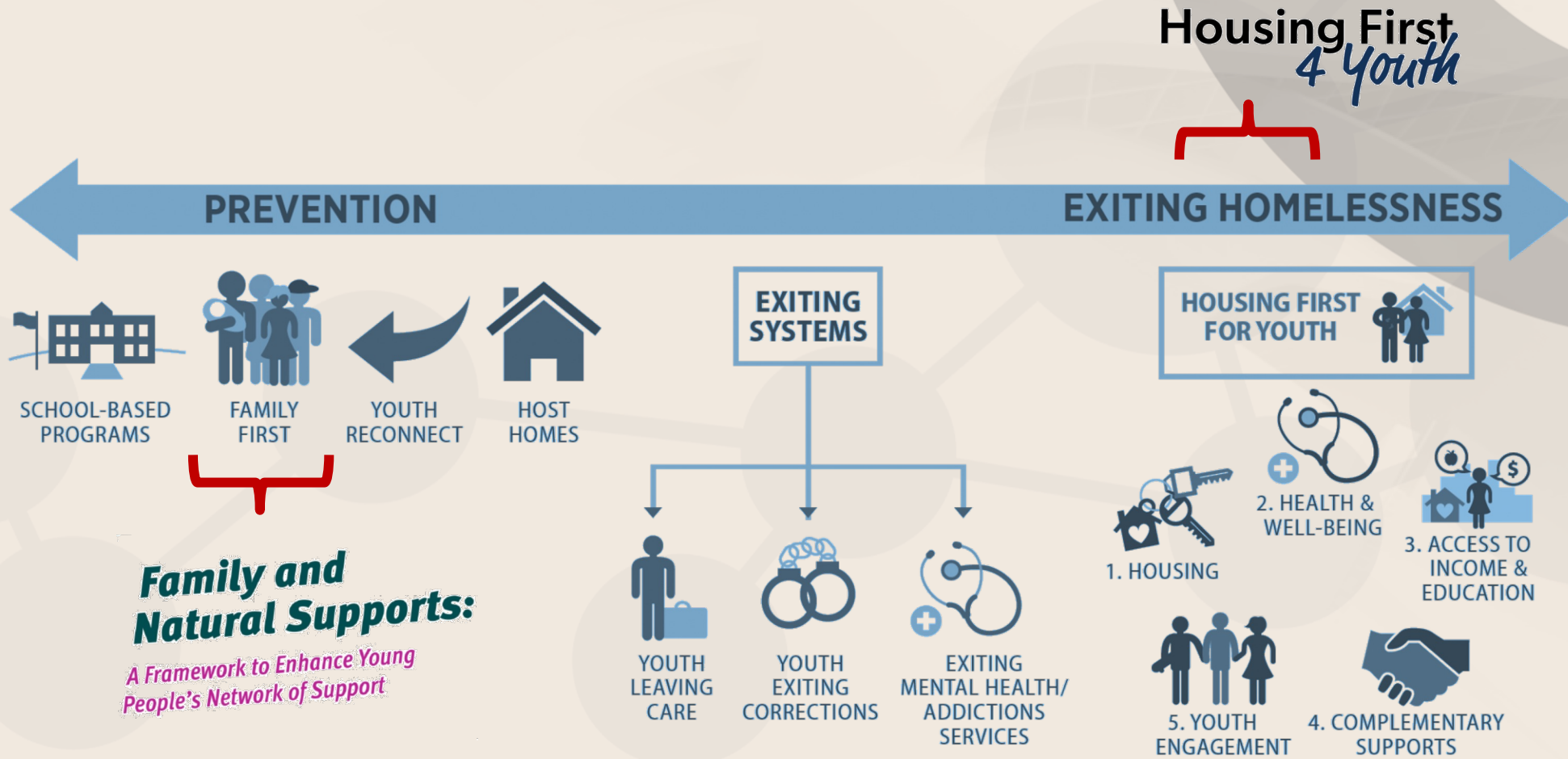
[https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en14/2014AR\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en14/2014AR_en_web.pdf)



In **Ontario**, in 2021, individuals experiencing **homelessness** have significantly higher **healthcare costs—nearly 7 times more**—compared to housed and low-income housed individuals.

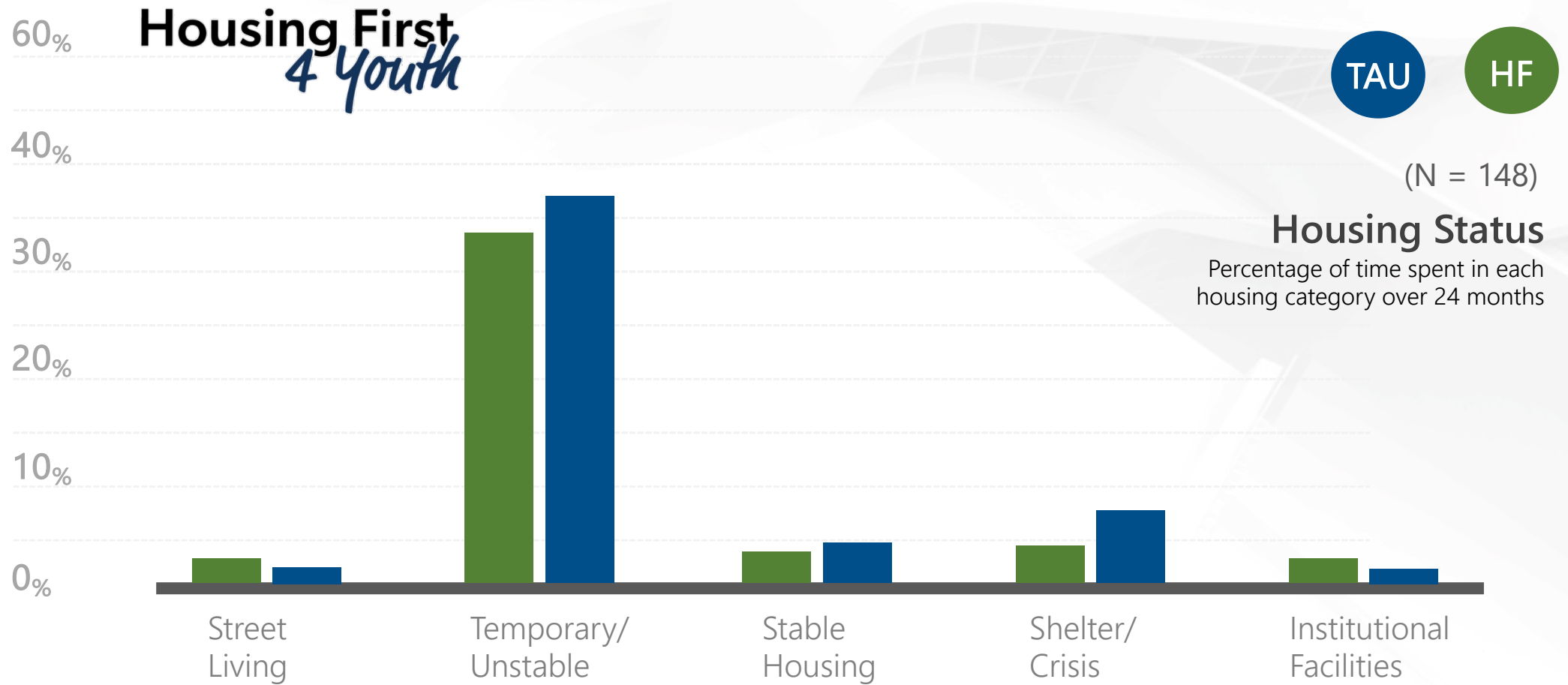
<https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-024-11501-2>

# Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention



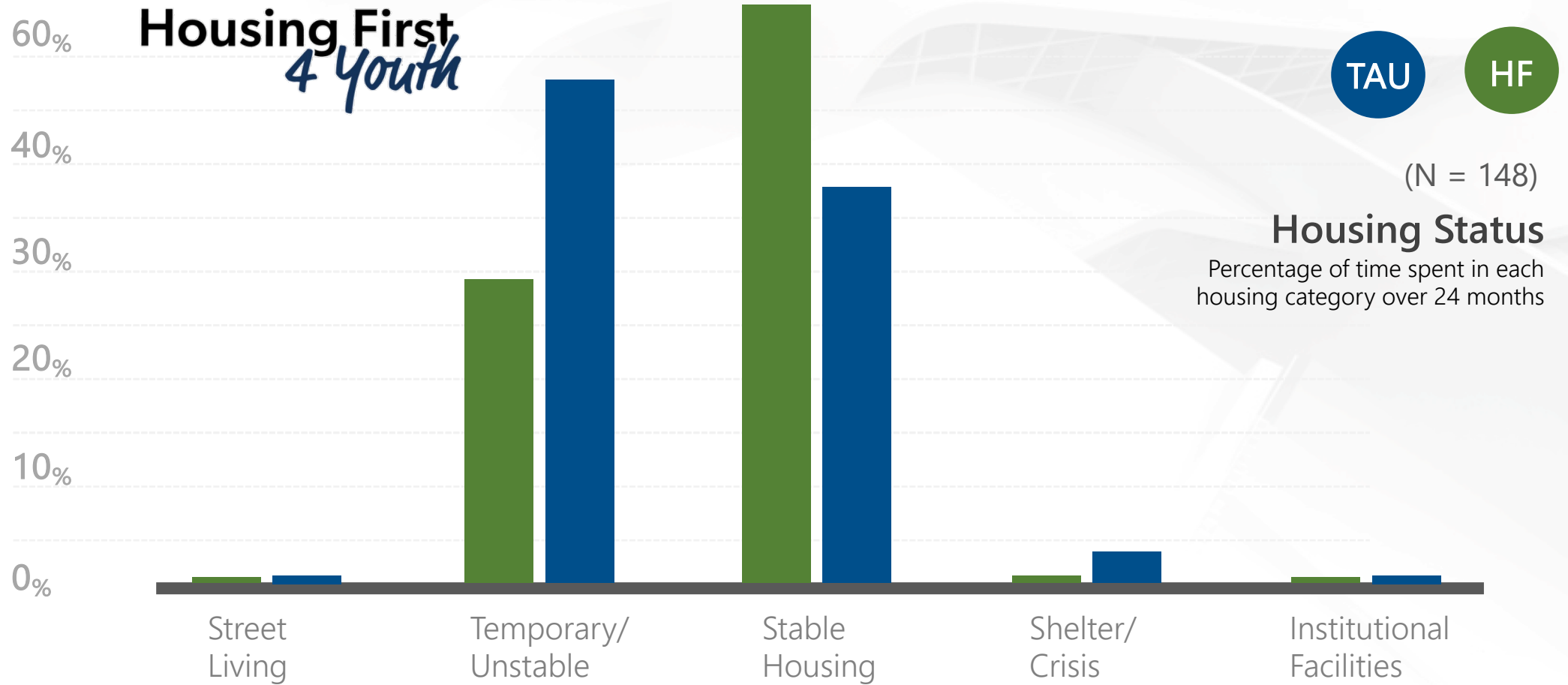
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## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

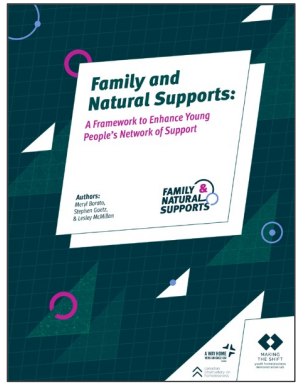


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## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention



# Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention



## Family and Natural Supports: A Framework to Enhance Young People's Network of Support



The **Family and Natural Supports (FNS)** model aims to help youth return home, **strengthen their safety net, reconnect with family,** and build new, **lasting relationships.**



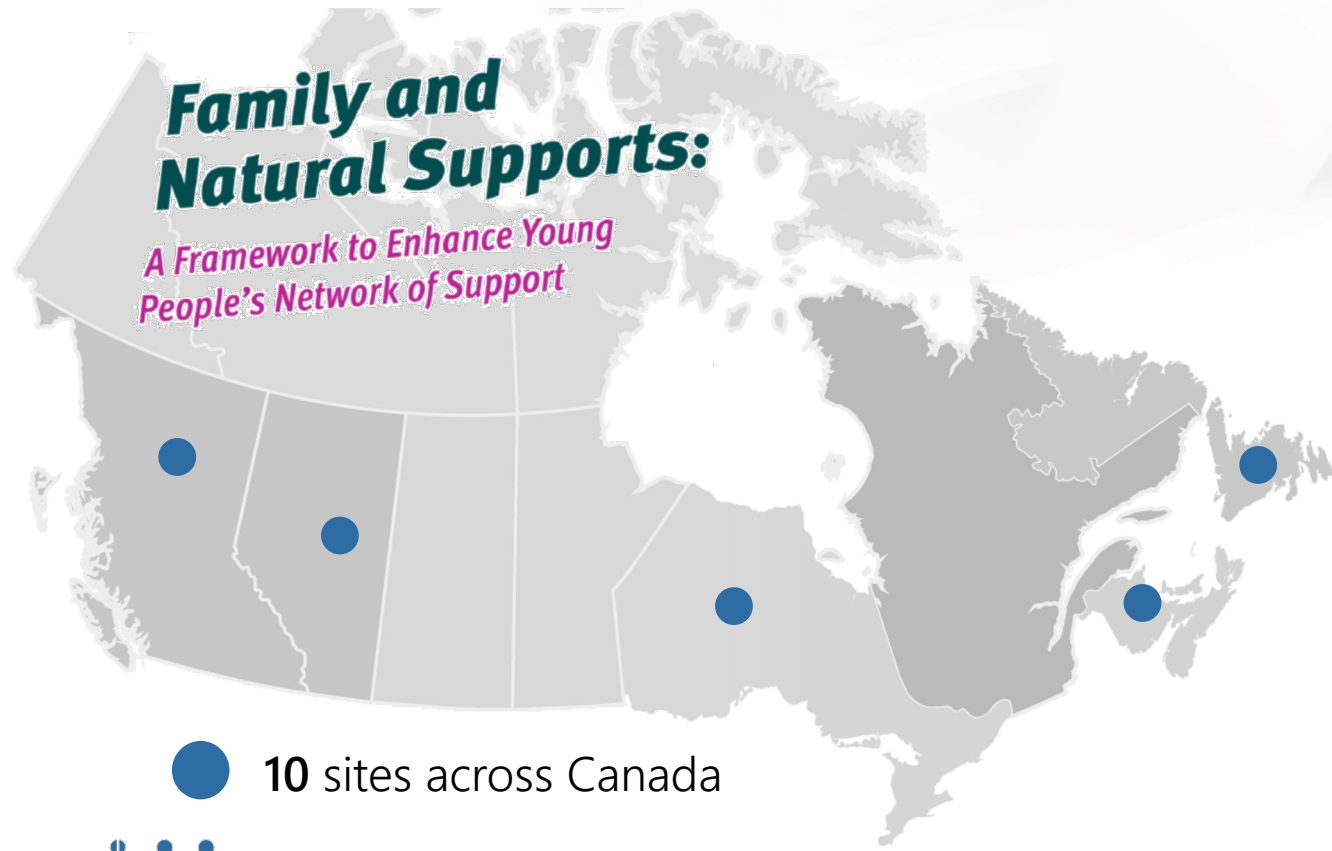
The FNS model **targets youth between the ages of 13 and 24** who are at risk of or have experienced homelessness. The programs involve dedicated **resources and staff** who support youth and **enhance their relationships** with **chosen family and supports.**



By helping youth **mediate conflicts, rebuild relationships,** and **nurture natural supports,** they can move forward, **stay in school** or access training, **address mental health** and addiction issues, and **transition into adulthood.**

# 3

## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention



● 10 sites across Canada



409 young people

391 family and natural supports



Improved bonds between family members (BL= 21.2 vs. F/U= 22.3)  
Number of **supportive adult connections increased** (from 6 to 8).



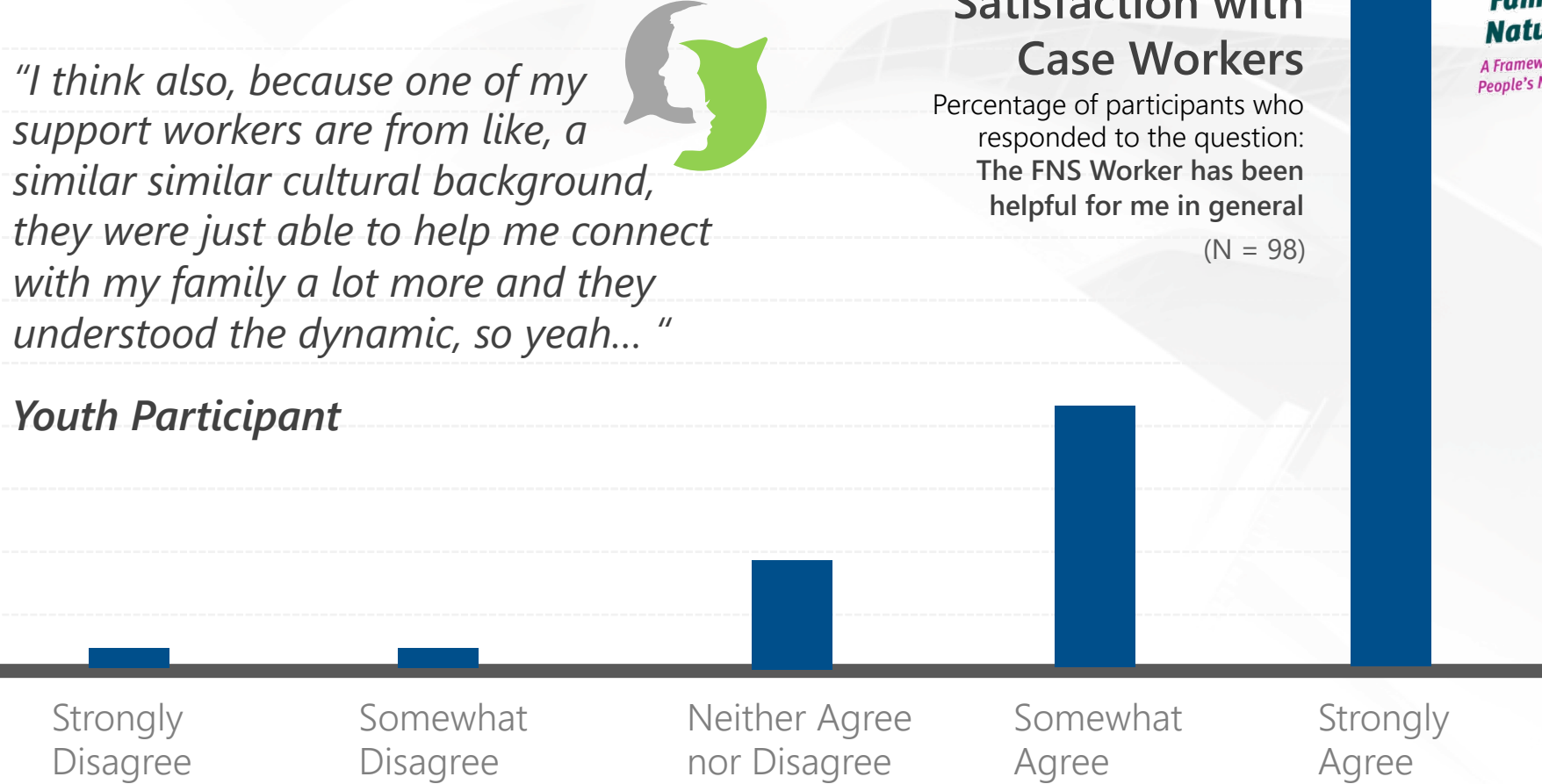
The percentage of participants who reported they are **satisfied or very satisfied with their mental health more than doubled** compared to baseline, 37.8% (n=37) vs 18.0% (n=21).



Compared to baseline (12%), **only about 4% remained at shelters and emergency housing** at follow-up.

# Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

60%  
40%  
30%  
20%  
10%  
0%



*"I think also, because one of my support workers are from like, a similar similar cultural background, they were just able to help me connect with my family a lot more and they understood the dynamic, so yeah... "*



**Youth Participant**

## Satisfaction with Case Workers

Percentage of participants who responded to the question: **The FNS Worker has been helpful for me in general**  
(N = 98)

**Family and Natural Supports:**  
*A Framework to Enhance Young People's Network of Support*

# Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

## Reducing Homelessness in Municipalities Across Ontario

**Leadership  
and Visioning**

**Tailored programming** for youth homelessness prevention in municipalities and the province.

**Dedicated  
Funding**

**Dedicated funding** to support the implementation of youth homelessness prevention programs.

**Building  
Capacity**

**Supporting community entities** by providing **guidance, expertise, training** and **technical assistance**.

**Inclusive  
Strategies**

**Investing in culturally appropriate interventions** by engaging relevant stakeholders (e.g., Indigenous groups)



# 3

## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

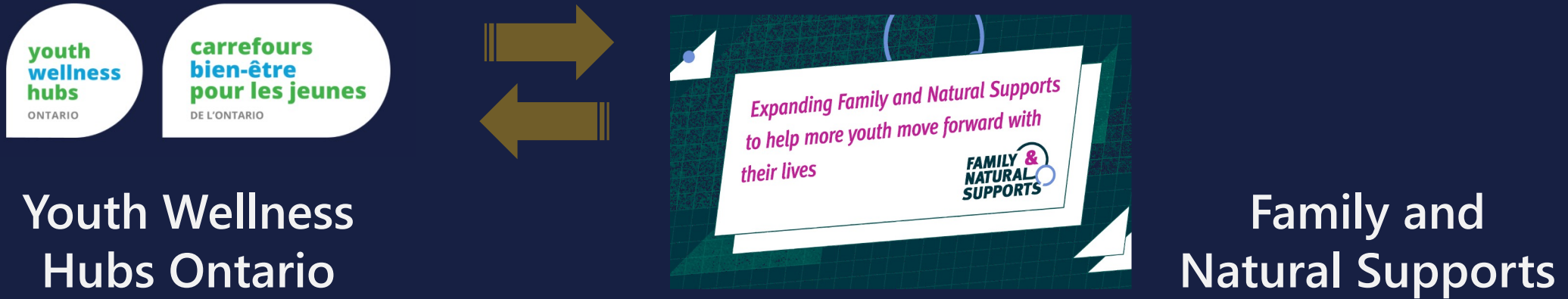
To reduce homelessness in municipalities across Ontario, **COH** and **AWHC** can:



1. Provide **training** and **technical assistance to local and municipal service providers** to implement new innovative approaches to homelessness prevention.
2. Mobilize resources to **support the implementation and evaluation of preventive interventions** in local communities.
3. Complement the work of **Youth Wellness Hubs in Ontario** through our **Family and Natural Supports model** that provides direct support to youth and their families to prevent youth homelessness.
4. Develop the knowledge about **how to prevent youth homelessness through proven research projects that impact youth directly on the ground.**

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## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention



The average cost of **FNS programming** is only **\$15,000 annually per youth**, enabling thousands of youth and their families to maintain meaningful relationships so that they can rely less on professional supports.

By working together, we can **assist municipalities** to deliver on their goals to **reduce homelessness** and growing demand for shelter space, while **reducing strain on ERs and hospitals**.

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## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

Estimated Average Cost Per Person in Ontario					
Sheltering Option for Homeless	Day	Week	Month	Year	5 years
Social housing (Household)	\$20	\$153	\$613	\$7,356	\$36,780
Shelter	\$70	\$525	\$2,100	\$25,200	\$126,000
Ontario provincial prisons	\$388	\$2,906	\$11,625	\$139,500	\$697,500
Ontario provincial prisons (youth)	\$553	\$4,150	\$16,600	\$199,200	\$996,000
Hospital	\$450	\$3,375	\$13,500	\$162,000	\$810,000
<b>Family and Natural Supports</b>	--	--	--	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$15,000 (* One Year Program)</b>



Investing in **Family and Natural Supports (FNS) Program** will save all levels of **government millions of dollars a year** in diversion from emergency rooms, temporary shelters, social services, and the justice system.



Investing in prevention will allow governments to reinvest these savings into **housing, health care and other priorities**, rather than relying on short-term measures that fail to prevent homelessness or ensure long-term stability.

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## Making the Shift to Youth Homelessness Prevention

We have seen **the success of youth homelessness prevention** firsthand. To date, **AWHC's** projects in **Ontario** have:



- Delivered youth **homelessness prevention programming** in **17 Ontario municipalities**, in every corner of the province.
- Enrolled **804** youth in programs and successfully supported **552 youth** to **complete the program**.
- Secured employment or self-employment for **366** youth and enhanced **essential skills** for **751** youth.
- Ensured that **566 youth** remained **stably housed**.
- Ensured **449 youth** remained in school and **supported 99** youth in re-enrolling or re-engaging in school.
- Improved **family connections** for **717 youth**, strengthened community relationship for **623** youth, and improved overall health and well-being for **670** youth.
- Supported **123 Indigenous youth** and **425 youth who identify as a woman** enrolled in programs.

Reducing and ultimately ending homelessness in municipalities across Ontario is not just a goal — it's within our reach.



**Any Questions or Comments?**

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