

# Youth in Custody and Associated Risk Behaviours

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** We sought to identify associations between placement in custody and sexual and drug use risk behaviours reported by street-involved youth (aged 14-24) in Vancouver, British Columbia.

**Methods:** Data were obtained from Phase 5 of the Enhanced Surveillance of Canadian Street Youth Survey, which collected data from January to November 2006. Logistic regression analysis was performed using SPSS 14.0 for Windows.

**Results:** Of 193 youth interviewed, over half (n=112; 58.0%) reported ever being in custody. A lower prevalence was found for females (47.8%) in comparison to males (63.1%) [OR=0.53, 95% CI=0.29-0.98]. After adjustment for age, gender, and ethnicity, youth who had been in custody, compared to youth who had not, were significantly more likely to have: had a social worker [AOR=2.15, 95%CI=1.09-4.27]; been in a group home [AOR=2.42, 95%CI=1.25-4.68]; been kicked out of school [AOR=2.72, 95%CI=1.31-5.67]; lived on the streets all of the time [AOR=2.50, 95%CI=1.04-5.97]; used non-injection drugs more than daily [AOR=3.54, 95%CI=1.81-6.92]; used injection drugs [AOR=2.91, 95%CI=1.81-6.92]; traded sex [AOR=3.50, 95%CI=1.47-8.34]; been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant [AOR=3.38, 95%CI=1.70-6.69]; and had a mother who injected drugs [AOR=6.90, 95%CI=2.16-22.08].

**Discussion:** Youth who have been in custody are at high-risk for poor health outcomes, such as sexually-transmitted infections, HIV and hepatitis C infection, and other adverse events. Time spent in custody may provide an opportunity for interventions aimed at high-risk youth for prevention, harm reduction, and testing.

**Ways Forward:** We plan to perform qualitative work with at-risk youth to investigate the temporal and causal relationships between placement in custody and risk behaviours.