

Anecdotal Comments

In addition to the quantitative questions, clients were asked to provide anecdotal information on what the Drop-In can do to improve their safety and what they do to ensure, as much as possible, their own safety.

Providing ID cards was the preferred method for improving safety for 31% of the respondents when answering how the Drop-In can help improve their safety. Twenty-two percent believe there's nothing the Drop-In can do while 21% answered yes to more security staff, more police and the barring of individuals who break the rules at the Drop-In.

Responses to "What steps are you taking to improve your own safety?" identified practical ideas to enhance safety on the streets. Respondents gave seventeen different ideas on how they actively secure their safety on the street. The most effective and popular means suggested for staying safe while homeless are:

1. Always stay in a group and always watch out for yourself and your buddy.
2. Avoid bad areas.
3. Get off the streets and move out of a shelter.

The least used method for staying safe was to use an 'enforcer', i.e. "You hurt me I'll tell him and he'll take care of you." Six respondents stated they carry a weapon as a means of protection.

Conclusions

Life on the streets is harsh. Those who are homeless face greater risk of violence than individuals who are housed and are more likely to encounter multiple occurrences of violence. Staying safe requires continual awareness of both surroundings and people around you. While agencies endeavour to provide safe environments for those using their services, staying safe inside and outside is surviving the streets unscathed by violence is not a possibility, regardless of the efforts of police, agencies and of great

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Written by: John Rowland, Manager of Data Systems johnr@cdircs.com
Louise Gallagher, Manager, Resource Development & Public Relations louiseg@cdircs.com
Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre
423—4th St. S.E. Calgary, AB T2G 0C8
Tel: (403) 263-5707 Fax: (403) 234-067

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Mean Streets. Safe Streets.

**A survey of clients of the
Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre
and their perceptions and
experiences of crime.**



September 2007

Survey and Respondent Demographics

Surveys Completed:	284	Time on the street for respondents:	
% of client population (1100):	26%	less than 1 month	6%
Male Female ratio:	8:1	1 to 3 months	11%
Age Range:		3 to 6 months	10%
18-25	8%	6 to 12 months	15%
26-35	16%	12 to 36 months	26%
36-45	28%	36 to 60 months	15%
46-55	31%	5 to 10 years	11%
56+	17%	over 10 years	5%

Background

A homeless man is beaten in broad daylight in the park across the street from the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre. The brutal attack by three men is captured on video tape. The culprits are identified and arrests are made. The victim remains unidentified, his well-being unknown.

A homeless woman is shot while sleeping in a park two blocks from the Drop-In. CrimeStoppers airs a re-enactment on television. No arrests are made.

To understand the realities clients face when considering their safety and to better assist clients in their safety measures, including those steps the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre can take to assist in helping clients feel safe both on the street and in the Drop-In, a survey was provided to clients on Wednesday, August 22, 2007. The survey was provided to all those using the sleeping facilities on that night. Completion was voluntary with 284 completed surveys returned on the morning of Thursday, August 23.

The findings are a picture of survival, in spite of the odds of violence, on the street. Knifings. Assaults. Robberies. Clients fear for their lives and take measures, as much as possible, to offset the inevitable – at some point while being homeless, regardless of whether they are staying in a shelter or roughing it, regardless of if they're working or simply walking in a park, a homeless individual is likely to become a victim of a crime.

This is the terrifying world of homelessness. A world where violence lurks on every corner, and fear never falls asleep.

Question 3a: If yes, how often have you been victimized?

Once	Twice	3 to 5 times	More than 5
28.9%	23.4%	31.3%	15.9%

Question 3b. If yes, when was the last time you were the victim of a crime?

Less than a month	22.9%	Three to five years	8.0%
One to three months	17.4%	Five to ten years	6.5%
Three to six months	11.9%	More than ten years	7.0%
Six to twelve months	12.4%	No answer	4.5%
One to three years	9.0%		

Less than one year since last being a victim of a crime:	64.7%
More than a year:	30.3%

Question 3c: If yes, what happened specifically?

7.5% chose other, and their responses included vehicle break-in, home invasion, mistaken identification and injury while sleeping. Many respondents gave more than one response, and some chose not to disclose the nature of the crime.

Assaulted	Robbed	Targeted by drug dealer	Seeing assault	Raped	Extorted for money
49.8%	46.8%	13.9%	0.5%	2.5%	19.9%

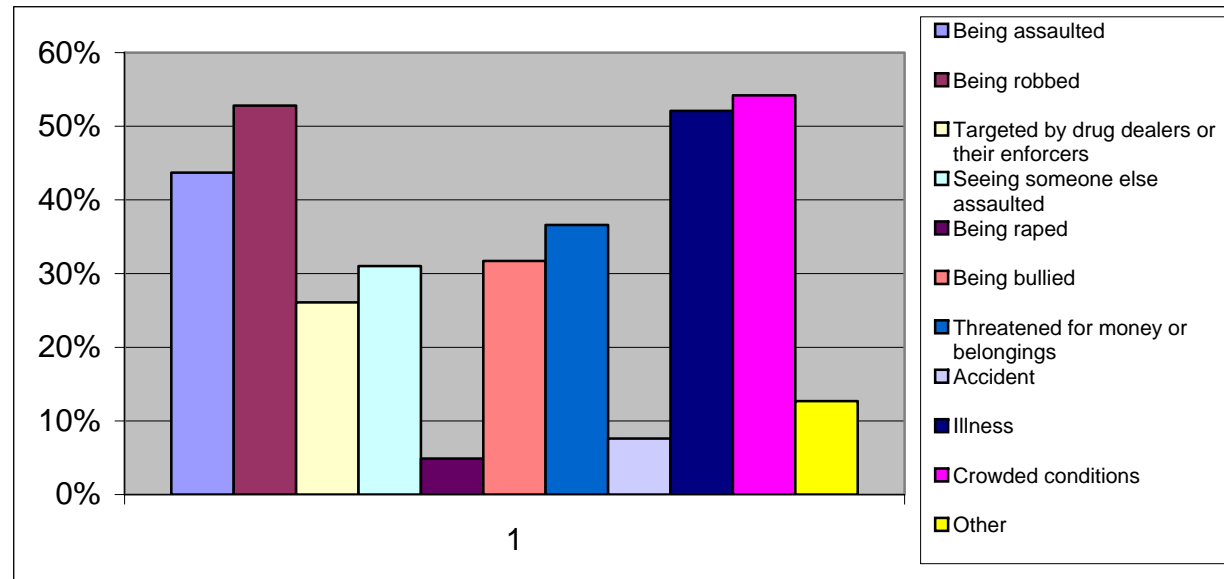
Question 3d: If yes, where were you?

Bike path	Out of downtown	Near Drop-In	Shelter	City Park	In downtown
14.4%	6.0%	26.9%	12.9%	13.4%	31.8%

Other areas included, 7.5% were victimized in C-trains and bike paths near the Drop-In. 2.5% were victimized at work, 3.0% while sleeping rough. Of the respondents who answered, 'other', 4.5% were victimized in their own homes and 2.5% in public buildings such as libraries, and commercial areas such as malls.

Many individuals chose to give more than one answer.

Concerned about safety while staying in the Drop-In



The data was distributed into categories as follows:

Concerned about being a victim of violence (assaulted, robbed, targeted by drug dealers, or raped)	33.8%
Concerned about intangible violence (Seeing someone else assaulted, bullied, or threatened)	28.9%
Concerned about the environment they live in (accident, illness, crowding)	40.1%
<i>Within these categories:</i>	
Concerned about two out of three categories	23.2%
Concerned about everything (many people circled every applicable item, for instance men would check every answer except rape)	9.2%

Question 3: Have you ever been assaulted, or been the victim of a crime?

Yes 72.8%
No 27.2%

Of the men, 46.2% were victims
Of the women, 45.2% were victims

Overview of Survey Results

Two hundred and one of the 284 respondents admitted to having been a victim of a crime. Fifty percent of those crimes were assaults. Forty-seven percent replied they had been robbed and 20% stated they had been extorted for money or belongings. Of the 201 who had been victimized, 71% experienced it more than once.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2005, police reported 7,761 Criminal Code offences for every 100,000 people, down from 8,166 the previous year. Twelve per cent of them were deemed violent crimes and 48 per cent were reported as property crimes. (<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/07/20/stats-crime.html>)

As reported in a backgrounder document compiled by The Wellesly Institute on May 3, 2007, (*Physical and sexual violence rates for homeless many times higher than housed*) homeless individuals are at risk of violence 35 times higher than the housed population. The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre's report, **Means Streets. Safe Streets.** A survey of the clients of the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre and their perceptions and experiences of crime corroborates the Wellesley Institute's summary statement: "The lives of the homeless are nasty, brutish and short."

Summary of Questionnaire

The survey was comprised of three questions pertaining to the gender, age and length of time living on the streets of each respondent. To encourage disclosure, no personal identification information was asked.

There were three main questions pertaining to safety:

1. When spending time on the street, day or night, (not in a shelter) are you concerned about your safety?
2. When spending time in the Calgary Drop-In Centre (day or night) do you have concerns about your safety?
3. Have you ever been assaulted, or been the victim of a crime?

Depending upon their answer, each respondent was then asked to answer additional questions that provided more detail about their perceptions and experiences with crime and safety.

In addition, clients were asked to provide their anecdotal comments on three additional questions:

1. Where do you feel safest?
2. How can the Drop-In Centre improve your safety?
3. What do you do to ensure your safety?

Questions and Answers

Question 1: When spending time on the streets, day or night, (not in a shelter) are you concerned for your safety?

Have concerns 75.0%
No concerns 25.0%

Of the men, 73.9% are concerned
Of the women, 19.4% are concerned

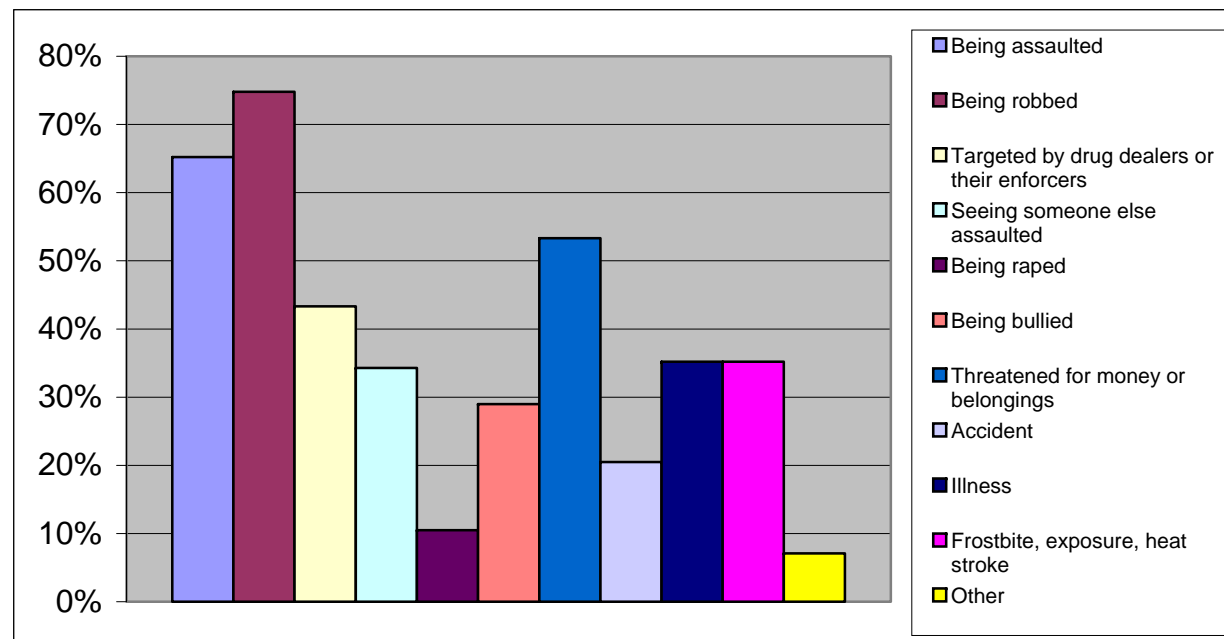
Question 1a: If yes, what are your concerns specifically?

Being assaulted	65.2%	Threatened for money or belongings	53.3%
Being robbed	74.8%	Accident	20.5%
Targeted by drug dealers or their enforcers	43.3%	Illness	35.2%
Seeing someone else assaulted	34.3%	Frostbite, exposure, heat stroke	35.2%
Being raped	10.5%	Other	7.1%
Being bullied	29.0%		

Of the 7.1% who chose other—5 stated they were afraid of the police. Other answers included, being turned away by a shelter, bugs, being found (spouse) and needing to leave, being killed, stabbed, targeted by natives, hopelessness, social economic discrimination, the unknown, and being poisoned or suffocated.

Note: Percentages are for those who answered yes. Most respondents chose more than one answer.

Safety concerns while on the street



The data was distributed into categories as follows:

Concerned about being a victim of violence (assaulted, robbed, targeted by drug dealers, or raped) 64.3%

Concerned about intangible violence (Seeing someone else assaulted, bullied, or threatened) 35.2%

Concerned about the environment they live in (accident, illness, crowding) 23.8%

Within these categories:

Concerned about two out of three categories 21.9%

Concerned about everything (many people circled every applicable item, for instance men would check every answer except rape) 13.8%

Question 2: When spending time in the Calgary Drop-In Centre, day or night, (not in a shelter) are you concerned about your safety?

Have concerns 50.5%
No concerns 49.5%

Of the men, 48.2% are concerned
Of the women, 67.7% are concerned

Question 2a: If yes, what are your concerns specifically?

Being assaulted	43.7%	Threatened for money or belongings	36.6%
Being robbed	52.8%	Accident	17.6%
Targeted by drug dealers or their enforcers	26.1%	Illness	52.1%
Seeing someone else assaulted	31%	Overcrowded conditions	54.2%
Being raped	4.9%	Other	12.7%
Being bullied	31.7%		

Of the 12.7% who chose other — 4 people stated they were concerned about the quality of food, lack of hygiene, false accusations, abuse by staff or clients, discrimination, lack of money & sleep, Columbine like shootings, threats from people form their reserve, and being stalked.

Note: Percentages are for those who answered yes, and most respondents chose more than one answer.