

Impacts of early and late homelessness on adulthood consequences

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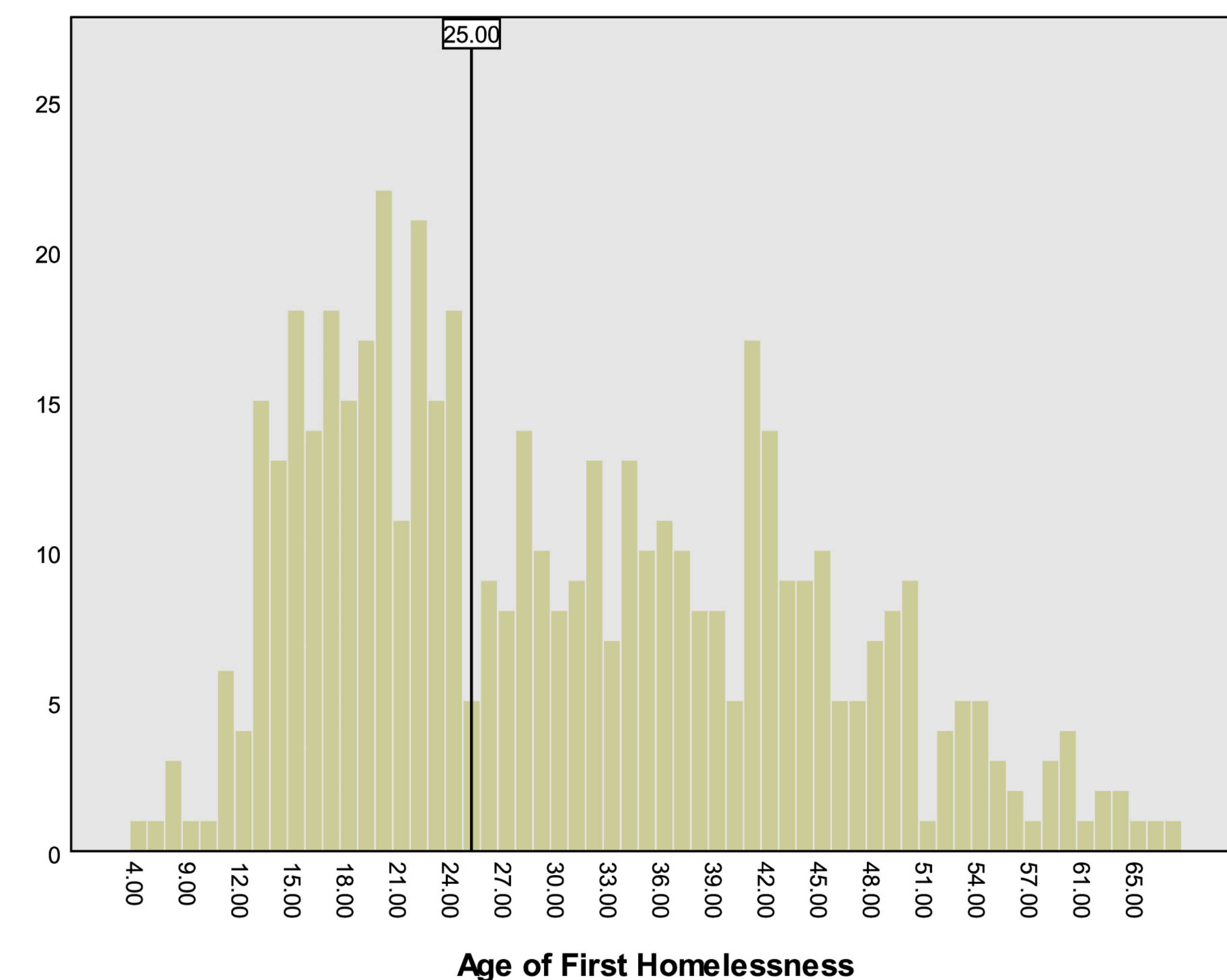
Introduction

- Youth make up one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the homeless population in Canada (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002).
- Each year, a minimum of 35,000 to 45,000 youth are estimated to be homeless (Gaetz et al., 2016).
- Little is known about the long-term consequences of homelessness in youth and how it is different from an onset in adulthood.
- Our approach was to compare the differential risks by homelessness onset among a sample of currently homeless Vancouver adults.

Methods

- The At Home/Chez Soi study assessed the longitudinal effects of a Housing First intervention among homeless adults with mental illness in 5 Canadian cities (Somers et al., 2013).
- Housing First provides immediate access to permanent housing with clinical or tenancy-related support.
- Cross-sectional data from the baseline interview at the Vancouver site was analyzed using bivariate statistics and multivariate logistic regression.
- Differences between youth- and adult-onset homelessness were compared across demographic variables, mental disorders, substance use, health service use, comorbid conditions, and childhood events.

Results



Of the total 491 participants, 214 (43.6%) identified as first becoming homeless in their youth and 277 (56.4%) in adulthood. Median age of first homelessness was 28 with a range between 4 to 74.

Significant differences between youth- and adult-onset populations with links to early life, mental health, and risk behaviour were found.

Each year, 35,000 homeless youth face daily detrimental effects that last throughout their life.



Discussion

DEMOGRAPHICS

	Total N=491	Youth-onset N=214 (43.6%)	Adult-onset N=277 (56.4%)
Age, mean (SD)	40.1 (10.8)	42.5 (10.6)	39.1 (10.8)
Male gender	351 (71.5)	147 (68.7)	204 (73.6)
Indigenous	77 (15.7)	33 (15.4)	44 (15.9)
Absolute homeless	384 (78.2)	165 (77.1)	219 (79.1)

Youth-onset homeless were more likely to be diagnosed with current alcohol abuse (18.2% v. 11.9%), epilepsy (18.5% v. 10.2%), and to report growing up with an incarcerated household member (25.8% vs. 15.9%).

Adult-onset homeless were more likely to have no high school diploma (61.7% v. 51.4%), needed help in school (51.5% v. 38.4%), been arrested in the past month (40.2% v. 29.7%), engage in injection drug use (20.7% v. 13.9%), shoplifting (15.7% v. 9.1%), and soliciting (8.8% v. 1.4%).

YOUTH-ONSET

Significant predictors	OR (95% CI)	P value
Current age	1.028 (1.006-1.052)	0.013

ADULT-ONSET

Significant predictors	OR (95% CI)	P value
Total duration of homelessness	1.006 (1.000-1.012)	0.045
Extra help in school	1.883 (1.153-3.074)	0.011
Solicited in past month	6.369 (1.362-29.793)	0.019

Conclusions

- Youth-onset homelessness is a risk factor for adulthood homelessness.
- Children who show poor academic performance may be potentially at-risk.
- More efforts are needed to understand the cyclic nature of homelessness; the effects of chronic illnesses; ways to increase school retention; and to remove barriers in the labour market.
- Findings underscore the need for integrated public services and early intervention for children with experiences of homelessness.

Future Work

- Longitudinal studies following youth to early adulthood are needed to establish temporal relations.
- Replication studies are needed in homeless populations in other geographic or sheltered areas.

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