

Third Of Homeless Young New Yorkers Gay

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A new study says there are at least 3,800 people under the age of 25 living on the streets of New York and that almost 30 percent are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

The study, by the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, has been turned over to City Council, which paid for it.

Nearly half of all homeless young people were Black, about 25 percent were Latino the study said. Those numbers would be proportionate to Black and Latino populations in New York.

But the high number of gays on the streets is about three times the estimated percentage of New York's LGBT community.

The survey found that while many homeless youth went to city shelters 42 percent slept on the streets, subways or in empty buildings.

Some, the study said, turned to prostitution trying to find a "trick" to spend the night with.

The study was based on surveys of 1,000 young people taken last summer.

The results confirm a warning issued last January by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless which said gay, lesbian and transgender youth make up at least 20 percent - possibly as much as 40 percent - of the total number of homeless and runaway youth across the country.

The two national advocacy groups accused the federal government of neglecting what they described as an epidemic.

The NGLTF/Coalition for the Homeless report cited incidents nationwide of anti-gay harassment at homeless shelters and recommended that some shelter space be set aside solely for gay youth.

They also said any organization seeking public funding to serve homeless youth should be required to prove its staff would treat gay and lesbian young people competently and fairly.

The January report said that roughly one-fourth of gay and lesbian teens are kicked out of their homes after their parents learn of their sexual orientation. The report also said many gay youths experienced physical violence during the process of coming out.

Once homeless, the report says, these young people are more vulnerable than their peers to problems of mental health, substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases.