

Domino Project: Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment



Contents

Domino Project: Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment	1
Contents	2
Background	3
Project Summary.....	4
Access to Community programs	6
Trans Inclusion Matters.....	7
Data Highlights	8
Access to Information	10
The Black LGBTQ+ youth experience in Ontario.....	11
Black LGBTQ+ Youth in Care	11
The Future work - Priorities for change	12
Snapshot of Black LGBTQ+ Youth experiences	13
Summary of the findings on Black LGBTQ+ youth experiences.....	13
Acknowledgements	14

Background

The Black Queer Youth Collective (BQYC) is a grassroots group dedicated to serving Black Queer and Trans youth. The Black Queer Youth Collective utilizes the experiences and knowledge of core team members to identify unmet needs of Black Queer and Trans youth in the Toronto and beyond. In 2017, BQYC consulted with Black LGBTQ+ youth at 3 sites and received feedback from over 40 youth to create affirming supports that help to equip youth with the respective tools, confidence and leadership opportunities needed to achieve their goals and meet their needs. After months of consulting with Black LGBTQ+ youth in community spaces and online, the core team procured funding to launch an innovative program designed for and by community members. Thus in 2018, the Black Queer Youth Collective launched the Domino Project, a 24-month peer led piloted project to help Black Queer and Trans youth connect with each other to form and maintain healthy relationships.

In addition to direct service, youth expressed an interest in sharing their experiences so that programming is more targeted and meets their needs. As a result, the Black Queer Youth Collective decided to conduct a community needs assessment on Black LGBTQ+ youth in Ontario. The team examined existing community-based research on youth and found that population specific data on youth often does not include either race-based data or information on sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, in studies that do incorporate an intersectional analysis often findings suggest that information on Black LGBTQ+ youth are grouped with other racialized identities under the BIPOC umbrella with little to no analyses of the unique challenges and experiences Black folks may encounter due to anti-black racism. Thus, the purpose of Domino Project: Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment is to identify challenges and experiences specific to Black youth that may prevent them from accessing resources and supports.

The Domino Project: Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment is a community-based research study designed to center the experiences of Black Queer and Trans youth in Ontario. The study sought to engage 50-100 Black LGBTQ+ youth in the anonymous online survey to inform the development of this report. This community needs assessment falls under the commitment of the Domino project in partnership with Parkdale Queen West Community Health Center (PQWCHC). This assessment was partially funded by OTF's Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Children's Aid Foundation.

Project Summary

The Domino Project: Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment collected data for 3 weeks between August 21 and September 11, 2020. **94 Black LGBTQ+ youth** were engaged in an anonymous online survey to share information about their experiences accessing youth programs and services.

The online survey focused on 3 key areas related to youth programming,

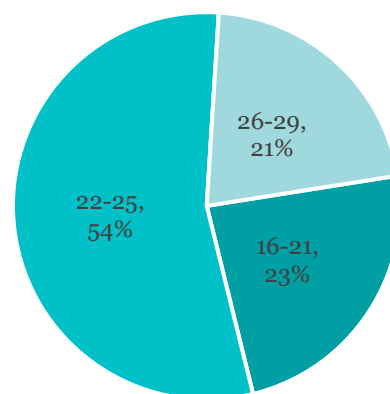
1. Access to programs
2. Access to information
3. Past and current experiences with programs

Key demographic information was collected on,

1. Race
2. Gender
3. Sexual Orientation
4. Age
5. Location
6. Income
7. Disability

This report highlights the findings and contains suggestions, recommendations, and feedback from youth on various topics as well as priorities for future programming.

Demographics by age
N=94



“Thanks for making this survey, I rarely get the chance to be heard, so this feels amazing.”

– Survey participant

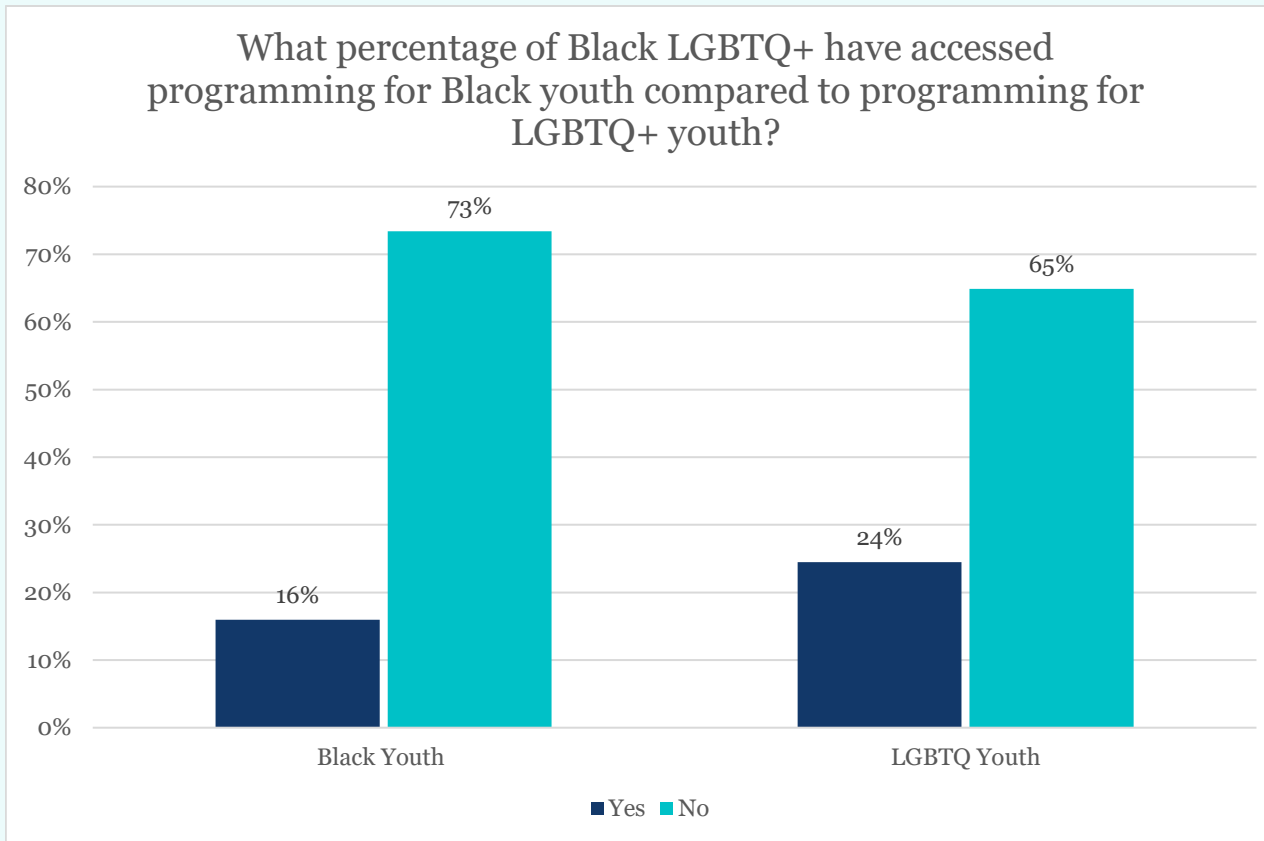
Black LGBTQ+ youth continue to be underserved both within the Black community and within the LGBTQ+ community.

According to our findings, only a quarter of participants have accessed a program either for Black youth or LGBTQ+ youth in the past year. 3 out of 4 Black LGBTQ+ youth have not accessed a youth program in the past year. This variable highlights the extent that Black LGBTQ+ youth continue to be underserved both within the Black community and within the LGBTQ+ community.

While there are numerous reasons why youth may not decide to attend a program. We acknowledge that social and systemic barriers are also contributing factors that prevent youth from accessing programs.

Additionally, roughly 28% of respondents resides in Toronto; however, of respondents who reside outside of Toronto, 50% shared that they have commuted to Toronto for programming. Youth who reside outside of the city core often have limited or no options for LGBTQ+ programming in their home community. The need for more social spaces for Black Queer and Trans youth continue to be a priority for youth who find it difficult to commute to the inner city for social supports.

Access to Community programs



The table illustrates the percentage of Black LGBTQ+ youth who have access a program either for Black youth or LGBTQ+ youth. In both cases, a larger percent of Black LGBTQ+ youth have not accessed programming for Black youth or LGBTQ youth.

Trans Inclusion Matters

Black Trans and nonbinary youth were noticeably underrepresented in the online study. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents identified with a gender identity other than cisgender. While there is a lot more visibility of Trans youth in Ontario, Black Trans youth continue to be underserved due to the lack of gender inclusion in most youth programs. To ensure diverse Black LGBTQ+ youth are served, gender inclusion should be prioritized in future programming.

Trans youth including those who identify as Nonbinary, Gender Non-conforming, gender fluid and agender should have access to safe spaces where they can receive help and support.

Black Trans youth need spaces to connect for social support and advice about transitioning.

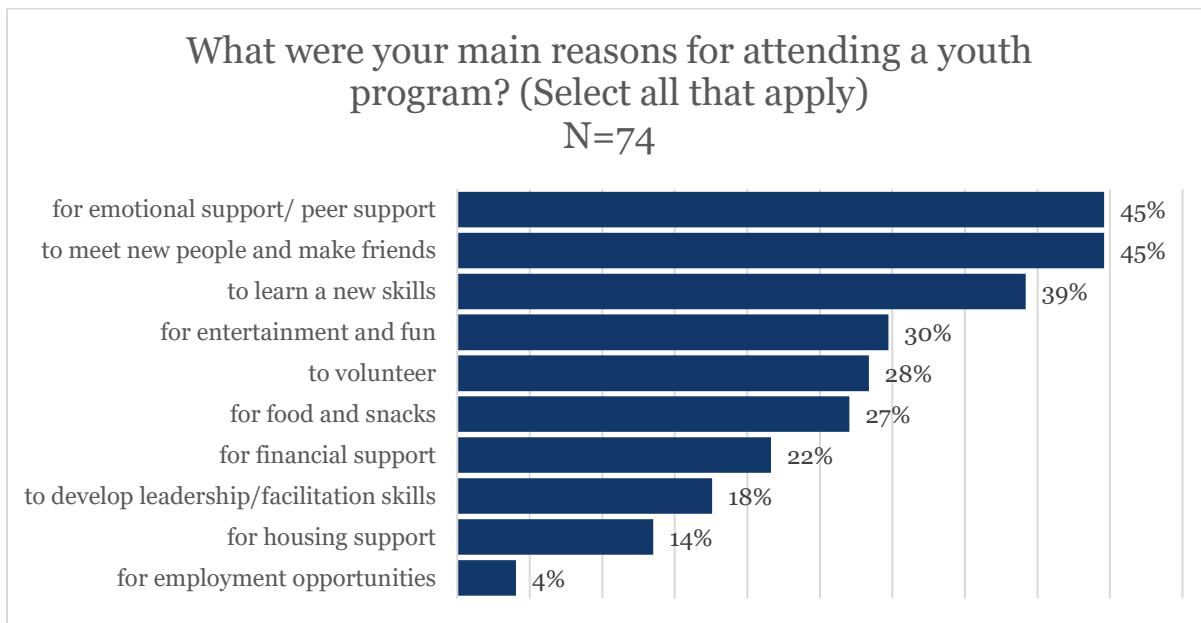
Data Highlights

The Domino Black LGBTQ+ Youth Needs Assessment engaged a diverse youth of various gender identities and sexual orientations.

Gender:	48% Cisgender male, 27% Cisgender female, 7% Nonbinary, 5% Trans women, 6% Trans men
Sexual Orientation:	Gay (47%), Queer (18%), Bisexual (15%), Pansexual (9%), Lesbian (8%)
Disability	17% reported a pre-existing health condition

Youth programs provide a range of opportunities for young people to develop skills, share interest, explore their creativity and connect each other in a social atmosphere. As a result, youth may decide to attend programs for a number of reasons. The most common reasons participants attended youth programs in our study was,

- For emotional/peer support
- To meet people and make friends
- Learn a new skill

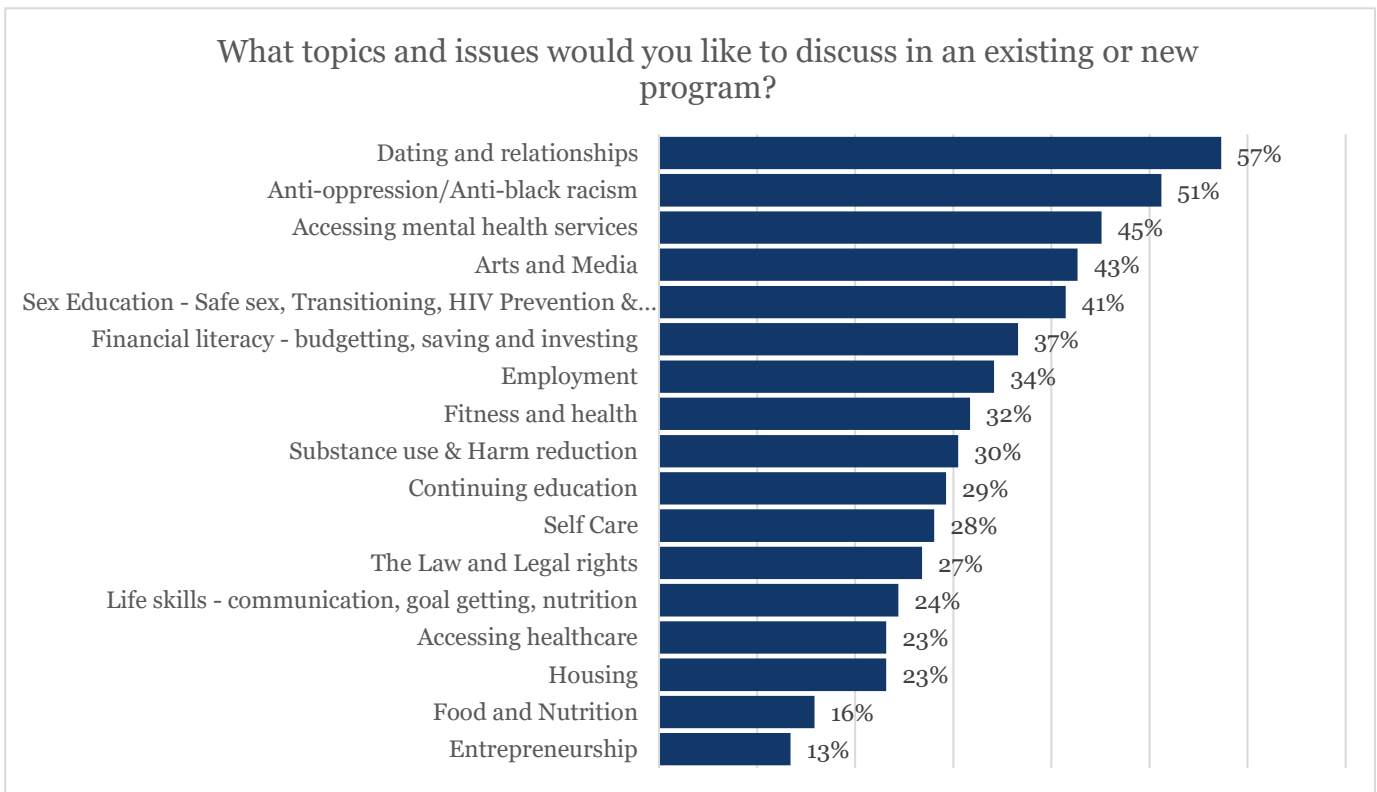


Other reasons youth decided to attend programming was for entertainment and fun, to volunteer and for food and snacks. Our findings suggest that Black youth are often looking for spaces to relax, bond with friends and meet new people. A large percentage of youth also expressed an interest in discussing anti-oppression/anti-black racism as well as Dating and Relationships.

Due to the coronavirus, youth programs have had to adapt to virtual model to help prevent the spread of the virus. While we didn't ask any questions about the impacts of COVID-19 on youth in this online survey, the Domino Project hosted a featured discussion on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Black LGBTQ+ youth in our Domino Table talk web series that took place in May 2020. A report of the impacts on COVID-19 can be downloaded from our websites resource page.

Additionally, we acknowledge that given the varying needs of youth, for direct and social supports, the pandemic has shift the landscape for youth programming and have created an unforeseen barrier for youth who have little connection to their family or friends outside of the youth spaces they access.

We also found that in addition to having social support, some youth are in crisis situations and access programs to meet more critical needs related to employment and housing.

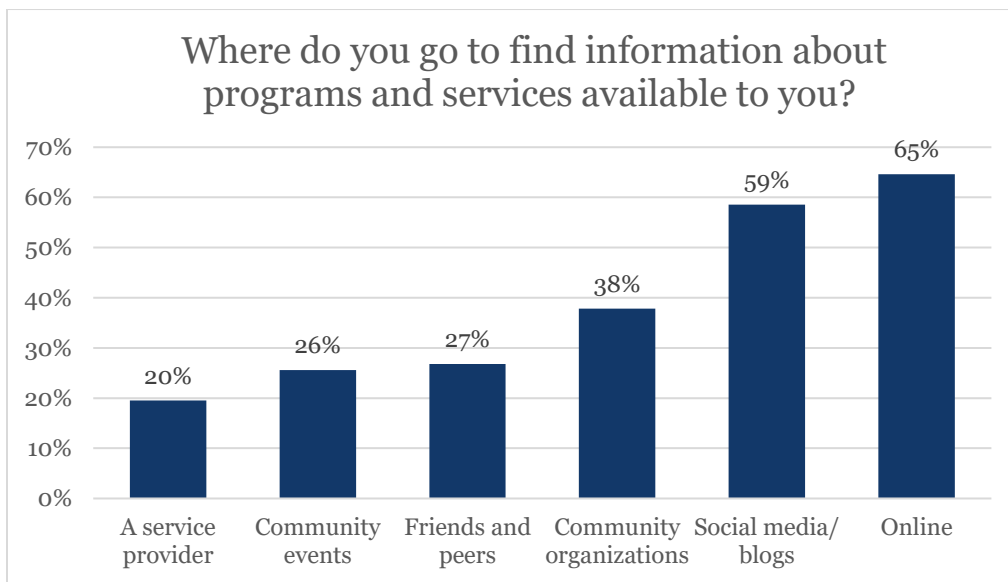


4 in 10 Black LGBTQ+ youth have experienced an adverse childhood experiences which has affected their Mental Health.

Access to Information

Access to information play a vital role in promotion and recruitment. Often youth may not attend a program, not because they do not need the service or want to but because they did not know about the program. Access to information is often a challenge for youth who are not already connected to a service provider or someone in the community. In fact, one third (38%) of youth shared that they go to a community organization to find out about programs and services and a quarter (27%) of youth shared that they usually go to family and friends to find out about programs and services.

In addition to providing general information about the program, the program time and location are other important factors to consider. Youth are more likely to attend programs that are conveniently located during times that does not conflict with any of their other personal activities.



While youth programs may differ based on the host organization. Generally, youth feel the information provided at programs they currently attend aligned with their needs.

GET CONNECTED

Social media and online engagements have become the top choice for Black Queer and Trans youth to find information about upcoming events, programs, and activities.

Most youth shared that they use Facebook to find information about programs and access supports.

Follow us on Instagram and Facebook @DominoProjectTO

The Black LGBTQ+ youth experience in Ontario

Social inequality, racism and poverty are key factors that has contributed to the global oppression of Black people. In our online study, youth described what the Black LGBTQ+ experience is in Ontario. The findings highlight systemic issues such as discrimination, unemployment/underemployment and financial barriers as the biggest challenges affecting Black LGBTQ+ youth in Ontario. Youth described difficulties not only finding a job but also finding a job that pays a livable wage. In addition, the rising cost of living, job instability has further disenfranchised Black LGBTQ+ youth. While many youth were already struggling to make ends meet prior to the pandemic, the coronavirus added an additional financial burden as many Black youth who were working a full time or part time jobs were unable to work and had to apply for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), a temporary financial support for individuals directly affected by COVID-19.

Our study found that one fifth of youth who participated in the survey are unemployed and a quarter earns less than 15K a year which indicates that a significant amount of Black LGBTQ+ youth were ineligible to receive the monthly CERB allowance. The government's response to provide financial support to Canadians who were unemployed during the ongoing health crisis also highlighted racial undertones and inequities in the response. Black LGBTQ+ youth including those who are low-income, unemployed, or living in poverty were among individuals most in need of financial assistance as community programs which provides food and transit fare came to a halt. Furthermore, over fifty percent (53%) of youth in the study shared that they are currently receiving social assistance to help cover their monthly living expenses. Notably, the amount provided by Ontario Works is a fraction of the projected two thousand a month that was noted as the minimum basic allowance needed to cover living expenses.

Black LGBTQ+ youth were particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of racial and sex-based discrimination. The need for more mental health services were echoed throughout the online survey with 45% of respondents sharing that they wanted access to Mental Health services. Culturally competent mental health services continue to be a priority for Black LGBTQ+ youth. When Black LGBTQ+ youth say Black Lives Matter it is not just a chant, it is an affirmation to resist oppression.

Black LGBTQ+ Youth in Care

Findings from the online survey suggest that one third of Black LGBTQ+ youth experienced adverse childhood experiences. As a result, one tenth (11%) of respondents shared past or current involvement with Child welfare. The experiences of Black LGBTQ+ youth in care suggest that Children's Services and Child welfare should work diligently to create safer spaces for Black LGBTQ+ youth. Of the participants who were involved in child welfare, three in ten described negative experiences related discrimination and lack of trans inclusion. While there is room for improvement to better support Black LGBTQ+ youth in care, the overall experiences across all Child protection services were described as okay.

The Future work - Priorities for change

1. *Increase access to programming for Black LGBTQ+ youth throughout Ontario.*

A quarter of respondents reside in Toronto; however, roughly 50% of respondents who reside outside of Toronto shared that they have commuted to Toronto for programming. Youth who reside in the outskirts of the city often have limited or no options for LGBTQ+ programming.

2. *Targeted programming for Black Trans people in Ontario*

Black Trans and nonbinary youth were noticeably underrepresented in the online study. While there is a lot more visibility of Trans youth in Ontario, Black Trans youth continue to be underserved due to the lack of gender inclusion in most youth programs.

3. *Targeted programming for Black Queer women and Lesbians*

Queer and Trans woman need dedicated spaces. Despite the shared connection to the Black LGBTQ+ youth community, Lesbians and Trans women were noticeable underrepresented. To ensure various Black LGBTQ+ youth are served targeted programming for Black Queer and Trans women should be prioritized in future programming.

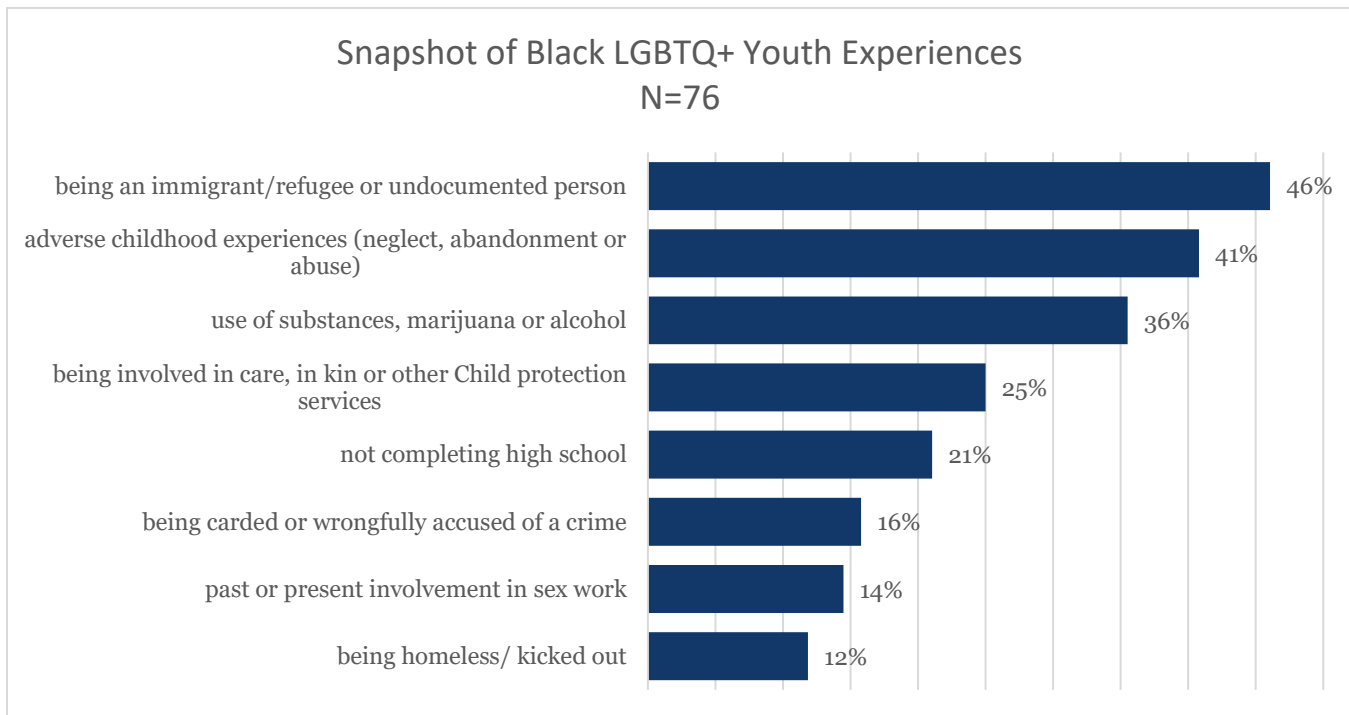
4. *Increase access to culturally appropriate Mental Health services*

Black LGBTQ+ youth are dealing with the psychological impact of witnessing anti-black violence be perpetuated against black bodies globally. Culturally competent mental health services continue to be a priority for Black LGBTQ+ youth.

5. *Invest in education, training, and employment initiatives to respond to unemployment among Black LGBTQ+ youth*

The findings highlight systemic issues such as discrimination and unemployment/underemployment as the biggest challenges Black youth are experiencing in Ontario. Youth described difficulties not only finding a job but also finding a job that pays a livable wage.

Snapshot of Black LGBTQ+ Youth experiences



The chart above illustrates the range of youth experiences during the data collection period ending September 11, 2020.

Source: Domino Project Black LGBTQ+ Needs Assessment 2020

Summary of the findings on Black LGBTQ+ youth experiences

Homeless/kicked out (1 in 10)
Had an adverse childhood experience (2 in 5)
Not completed high school (1 in 5)
Carded or wrongfully accused of a crime (1 in 5)
Involved in care (1 in 4)
Uses substances, marijuana, or alcohol (1 in 3)

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Tatiana Ferguson in consultation with members of the Black Queer Youth Collective. On behalf of the Black Queer Youth Collective, the Domino Project staff and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre. We would like to thank everyone who participated in the online survey and those who assisted with recruitment by sharing our promotional materials to engage Black LGBTQ+ youth in the online survey which has informed the development of this report.

We would also like to thank the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) for reviewing the online survey and OTF's Youth Opportunities Fund and Children's Aid Foundation for their financial contributions.

To download this report or to view other graphics on the findings, visit www.blackqueeryouthcollective.org

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