

## **HOMELESSNESS IN THE GTA** ***PUBLIC PRIORITIES, PREFERENCES, & PERCEPTIONS***

- **Eight-in-Ten (81%) GTA Residents say Homelessness should be a Major (43%) or Moderate (38%) Local Government Priority**
  - **Close to Half (46%) Want More Homeless Shelters, and Two-Thirds (68%) would Allow One in their Neighbourhood**
  - **Moreover, 68% are Opposed to Forcibly Removing Homeless from Public, and Only 25% Feel this Presence Threatens their Safety**
- **Top Perceived Causes of Homelessness: Mental Illness (41%), Addiction (36%), and Job Market Difficulties (32%)**
- **In Past Year, 71% Donated Money to Homeless Charity (54%) or Panhandler (40%) or “Squeegee Kid” (13%)**
  - ***Megacity and Suburbs exhibit notable consensus of opinion on the issues, as well as similar perceptions and donation patterns.***

From March 8 to 13, 2005, Leger Marketing – the Canadian representative of the Gallup International Association – conducted telephone interviews among a randomly selected, representative sample of 500 residents of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The margin of error for the total sample is  $\pm 4.4\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The City of Toronto ( $n=250$ ) and Suburban ( $n=250$ ) sub-segments of the total GTA sample each have an associated margin of error of  $\pm 6.2\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The Suburban sub-segment is comprised of the Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current regional, gender, and age Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of the GTA.

Founded in 1986, Leger Marketing is the largest independent full-service research firm in Canada, with more than 500 employees spread over its offices in Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Quebec City, New York City, and Shanghai. Leger conducts quantitative and qualitative research on behalf of an extensive array of public and private sector clients on a local, national, and global scale. Leger is the Canadian representative of the Gallup International Association, and is the polling Agency of Record for Sun Media, Toronto Life Magazine, Marketing Magazine, and the Canadian Press news service.

**Eight-in-Ten say Homelessness should be a Major or Moderate Priority**

- **Four-in-ten (43%) GTA residents feel homelessness should be a major priority, and 38% feel it should be a moderate priority.**
- **Only 15% say it should be a minor priority, and just 3% do not think it should be a priority at all.**

<b>Homelessness on the Local Government Priority Agenda</b>			
1. First, I would like you to think about how important the issue of homelessness should be for your local government. Thinking about all of the different issues facing your local government, should the issue of homelessness be a major priority, moderate priority, minor priority, or not a priority at all for your local government? Base: All Respondents. N=500.			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>MAJOR+MODERATE</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>79%</b>
Major Priority	43%	44%	41%
Moderate Priority	38%	37%	38%
Minor Priority	15%	15%	16%
Not a Priority At All	3%	2%	4%
<b>MINOR+NOT</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Don't Know	1%	2%	1%

**Close to Half (46%) Want More Homeless Shelters in their City**

- Close to half (46%) of GTA residents feel that there are not enough homeless shelters in their city.
- About a third (34%) say there are about the right number of shelters available for homeless and street people.
- Only 3% say there are too many homeless shelters in their city.

<b>Homeless Shelters: Need &amp; Demand</b>			
<p>3. Now, thinking about the homeless shelters that are available to provide support to homeless people, such as food and a temporary place to stay... To the best of your knowledge, do you feel that your city has too many shelters, not enough shelters, or about the right number of shelters available for homeless and street people?  <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500.</b></p>			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>Too Many</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>About Right</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Not Enough</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>

**Two-Thirds (68%) would Allow Homeless Shelter in their Neighbourhood**

- If more homeless shelters were necessary in their city, 68% of GTA residents would support the establishment of a homeless shelter in their neighbourhood.
  - Support is moderate, as 39% are somewhat supportive.
  - But, only 14% express strong opposition.
- Notably, 15% of those who feel that there are not enough shelters in their city are opposed to a shelter in their area.
  - Four-in-ten (42%) of those who felt that the number of shelters in their city was about right are opposed to setting up a new shelter in their neighbourhood.

<b>Homeless Shelters: Proximity</b>			
4. And, if more homeless shelters needed to be setup in your city, would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose having a new homeless shelter setup in your neighbourhood? <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500.</b>			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Somewhat Support</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Somewhat Oppose</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Strongly Oppose</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>

**Two-Thirds (68%) Oppose Forcibly Removing Homeless from Public**

- **Almost Seven-in-Ten (68%) disagree with the following statement:**  
*“All homeless people should be forcibly removed from public places”.*
  - **Notably, four-in-ten (43%) strongly disagree.**
- **Only 28% agree – and just 13% strongly.**
- **Although opposition is similar in the two regions, Torontonians (47%) are more likely than suburbanites (40%) to be strongly opposed to forcibly removing the homeless from public places.**
  - **GTA residents who feel unsafe around homeless people (52%) are much more likely to support the forcible removal of the homeless from public places.**

<b>Attitudes toward Homeless People in Public Places</b>			
<b>“All homeless people should be forcibly removed from public places.”</b>			
<b>6.</b> Now, I am going to read to you a few statements about this issue. For each, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. How about...? <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500.</b>			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>AGREE</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Only 25% Feel their Safety Threatened by the Presence of the Homeless**

- Only 25% of GTA residents agree with the following statement:  
“I do not feel safe walking public when there are homeless people in the area.”
  - Just 8% strongly agree.
- Seven-in-ten (71%) disagree.
  - Four-in-ten (44%) strongly disagree.
- Suburban residents (29%) are more likely than Torontonians (20%) to feel threatened by homeless people.
  - Suburbanites (10%) are also more likely than Torontonians (5%) to express this sentiment strongly.

<b>Perceived Threat to Personal Safety</b>			
<b>“I do not feel safe walking in public when there are homeless people in the area.”</b>			
<b>6.</b> Now, I am going to read to you a few statements about this issue. For each, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. How about...? <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500.</b>			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>AGREE</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>

**Top Perceived Causes of Homelessness**

- When asked to state in their own words what – to the best of their knowledge – they think are the most common causes or reasons for homelessness, **Mental Illness (41%), Addiction (36%), and Job Market Difficulties (32%)** emerge as the top net mentions of GTA residents.

<b>Perceptions: Top Causes of Homelessness</b>			
2. And, thinking about people who are homeless... To the best of your knowledge, what do <u>you</u> think is the <u>most common cause or reason</u> for why they are homeless? Are there any other causes of homelessness? <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500. Mentions of 5% and above shown. Total Mentions displayed: Open-Ended Question to which Multiple Responses were allowed. Therefore, sum total of responses will be more than 100%.</b>			
	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>Mental Disability/Illness – NET</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Addiction (incl. Gambling 2%) – NET</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Job Market Difficulties - NET</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Mental Disability/Illness / Insanity – General Comment</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Unemployed / Layoff / Lost Job</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Drug Addiction / Drug Addicts</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Alcohol Addiction / Drunks</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>No Affordable Housing</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Mental Disability/Illness / Insanity – Cutbacks/Closings of Mental Hospitals/Beds</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Financial Problems – Bankruptcy</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Lazy</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Dropped out of Rat Race / Couldn't handle life/stress</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Low-paying job</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>No Family Support</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Lack of Education</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Minimum Wage is too low</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>

**Seven-in-Ten (71%) Donated Money to One of Three Homeless Causes**

- **Seven-in-Ten (71%) GTA residents say that they donated money to at least one of the three discussed homeless causes in the past 12 months.**
  - **Four-in-ten (43%) donated money to at least one of the two “street person” categories: panhandler or squeegee kid.**
- **Looking at the three categories tested, a slim majority (54%) say that they have donated money to a registered homeless charity in the past year, compared to 40% who have donated to a panhandler and just 13% who have given money to a “squeegee kid”.**
  - **Torontonians (49%) are noticeably more likely than GTA residents (31%) to have donated money to panhandlers in the past year. However, GTA residents were almost as likely as Torontonians to have donated to squeegee kids and homeless charities.**

<b>Donation Patterns</b>			
5. In the past 12 months, have you donated any money to the following types of people or organizations? How about ... ? <b>Base: All Respondents. N=500.</b>			
<b>% Who Have Donated To...</b>	<b>GTA</b>	<b>City of Toronto</b>	<b>Suburbs</b>
<b>“Street Person” – <u>NET</u> (Squeegee Kid or Panhandler)</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>At Least One of Three Below</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>A Squeegee Kid (or Adult) – that is, a person who asks for money in return for cleaning car windows at street intersections.</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>A Panhandler – that is, a person who asks for money in a public place without offering any goods or services in return.</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>A registered charitable or non-profit organization that helps homeless people.</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>52%</b>



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For more information,  
please see the June Issue of *Toronto Life* Magazine,  
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