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**Preface to "Why Do Teens Run Away?"**

Street Teens. 2012.

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From Opposing Viewpoints In Context.

The [National Runaway Switchboard](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&docType=Preface&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=OVIC&contentSet=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&searchId=R7&userGroupName=pioneer&inPS=true) (NRS) provides an electronic bulletin board teens can access to get advice about the problems that lead them to contemplate running away from home. In a recent posting, a young girl writes she has had to deal with the death of her boyfriend and the divorce of her parents in the past year, while also struggling with ADHD and depression. Another writer says she has been sexually and physically abused at home since she was four years old. When her mother failed to protect her, she turned to a life of alcohol, gangs, and drugs. A 15-year-old girl reports she fell in love with a 19-year-old man on Facebook, and wants to run away to be with him. These posts describe some of the many reasons youth become street teens.

Statistics kept by the NRS indicate a dramatic increase in the number of teens running away or being thrown out of their homes with a rise in the proportion of the latter. And kids are running away at an earlier age. The NRS estimates that each year between 1.6 and 2.8 million US youth will face a period of [homelessness](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&docType=Preface&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=OVIC&contentSet=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&searchId=R7&userGroupName=pioneer&inPS=true).

Typically, [family](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&docType=Preface&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=OVIC&contentSet=GALE%7CEJ3010773102&searchId=R7&userGroupName=pioneer&inPS=true) problems such as divorce, remarriage, and problems with siblings are the most common reasons teens run away. Teens who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender often encounter negative reactions from their parents that cause them either to be thrown out or leave their homes. Other reasons teens leave home for the street include neglect and physical or sexual abuse. Economic issues have emerged as a growing problem since 2008, with more and more youth citing the depressed economy as a reason for leaving home.

Covenant House, a privately funded child care agency providing services to homeless and runaway youth, reports the following statistics from the children taking refuge in its shelters:

*Nearly 50% reported intense conflict or physical harm by a family member*

*41% witnessed acts of violence in their homes*

*19% reported being beaten*

*19% reported sexual abuse*

*15% had someone close to them murdered*

Although teens encounter danger on the street, many are fleeing home situations that are perilous. Others have no choice, as they are abandoned or rejected by their family. The reasons youth become street teens are debated in the following chapter.

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