

# HOMELESSNESS IN MINNESOTA

A FACT SHEET PRODUCED FOR MINNESOTA MEETING • NOVEMBER 2007  
 ALL DATA FROM THE WILDER RESEARCH CENTER'S 2006 SURVEY OF HOMELESSNESS IN MINNESOTA.

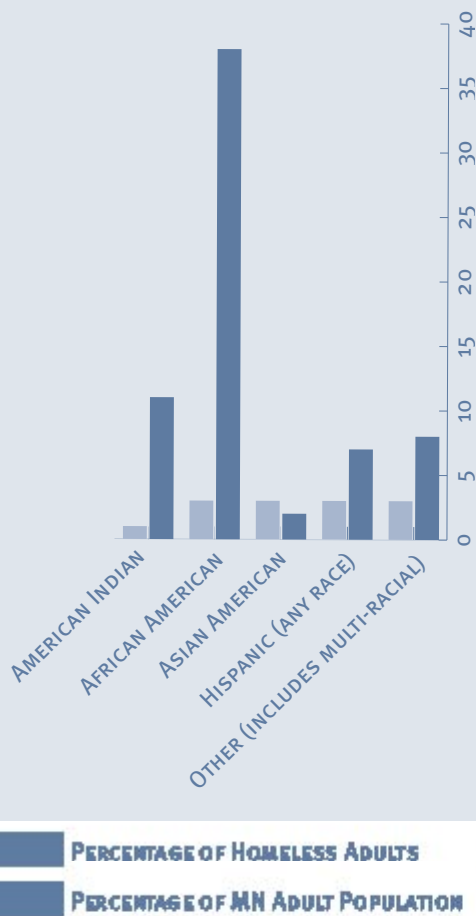
Every three years since 1991, Wilder Research has conducted a survey of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. On a single night in October 2006, more than 950 trained volunteers conducted face-to-face interviews with more than 3,700 people without permanent shelter.

The interviews took place in about 250 emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and battered women's shelters, along with food programs and drop-in centers, and under

bridges, in encampments, and in other locations in which people who don't use shelter programs spend time. Nearly 2,000 children were experiencing homelessness along with their parents and caregivers. 151 unaccompanied youth were among those interviewed.

The study provides a snapshot of homelessness in our state: who is without permanent shelter and why.

## RACE/ETHNICITY OF HOMELESS ADULTS



While whites comprise the majority of homeless Minnesotans, they are affected at a disproportionately lower rate than Minnesota's populations of color: whites comprise 41% of the state's homeless population, vs. 90% of the state's total population.

Note that these figures are not included in the chart above because it would mask the overrepresentation of people of color in Minnesota's homeless population.

## WHO IS HOMELESS?

Wilder Research Center estimates that between 9,200 - 9,300 people are homeless in Minnesota on any given night, including more than 3,000 children.

Note that the data on this fact sheet is based, not on the total estimated number of people experiencing homelessness, but on the adults and youth interviewed in October 2006 and information they provided about their children.

- 53% of those interviewed were male, 47% were female.
- Nearly 70% of the women had children age 17 or younger; 55% had at least one child with them.
- Nearly half of all homeless persons in the Twin Cities metro area are African American and nearly 1 in 5 homeless individuals in Greater Minnesota is American Indian.
- 1,381 families were represented (defined as one or more parents or caregivers with one or more children)
- The average age of homeless adults is 41 - men, 33 - women.
- About 5% of those interviewed were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

## RACE/ETHNICITY OF HOMELESS YOUTH

(UNACCOMPANIED, 11-17 YRS)

	% of homeless youth	% of all MN youth
American Indian	20%	2%
Asian American	2%	4%
Black	25%	5%
Hispanic (of any race)	12%	4%
Other, includes multi-racial	15%	4%
White	34%	82%

All data on this fact sheet is taken from the Wilder Research's 2006 Survey of Homelessness in Minnesota.

Please visit their website, [www.WilderResearch.org](http://www.WilderResearch.org), to view the full survey results and for more information about homelessness in Minnesota.

### DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

- 53% of adults reported that they had been homeless more than once in the past three years.
- At the time of the survey, 9% had been homeless for less than a month; 44% had been homeless between one month and one year, and 47% had been homeless for a year or longer.
- Nearly 1 in 4 adults reported experiencing homelessness during childhood.

### WHY PEOPLE LOST THEIR HOUSING

Major reasons people identified for having lost their housing:

- **unable to afford rent - 39%**
- lost job/had hours cut - 31%
- eviction - 32%
- spousal/partner breakup - 25%
- other relationship problem - 20%
- drinking or drug problem - 21%
- being abused - 17%
- entered jail or treatment - 16%
- drinking or drug problem of someone in home - 15%
- substandard or unsafe housing - 12%
- a behavior problem of a visitor or guest - 12%
- violence in the neighborhood - 11%

### EMPLOYMENT

- 1 in 3 homeless parents were working; overall, 28% of adults were employed.
- 12% of employed adults were working full-time.
- 12% had been laid off within the past six months; only 1 in 10 of these individuals received unemployment benefits.

Barriers to employment (in order of frequency of identification):

- lack of transportation - 34%
- lack of housing - 27%
- physical health problems - 26%
- mental health problems - 24%
- criminal history - 14%
- job experience or history - 13%
- limited/lack of education - 11%
- lack of child care - 10% overall, 21% of women

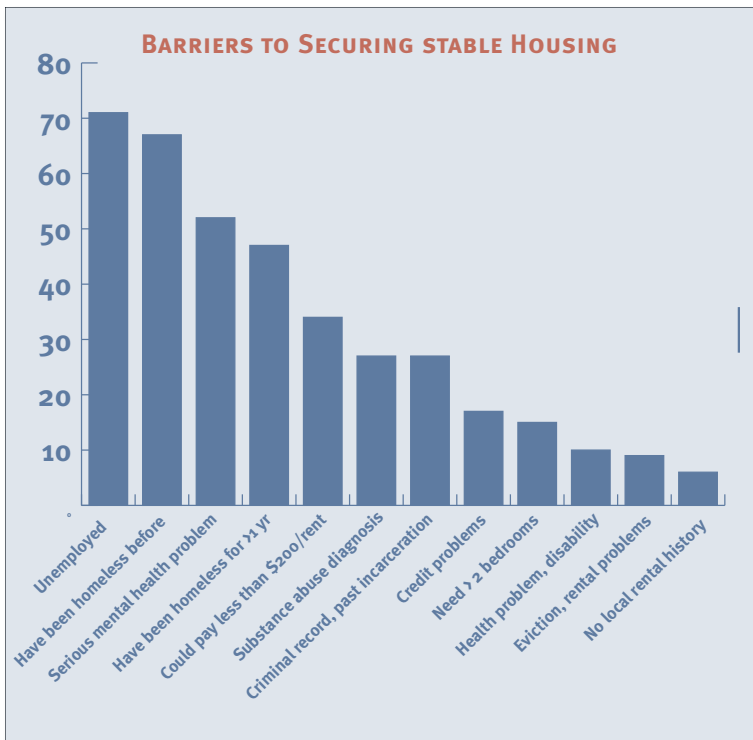
Additional barriers identified through other questions included: mental health problems; long-term unemployment of a year or more; physical or mental condition limiting employment options; chemical dependency; lack of a high school diploma; history of any incarceration.

### EDUCATION

- 89% of homeless, unaccompanied youth were enrolled in school (up from 52% in 1994)
- **90% of parents reported that all of their school age children attended school on the day of the survey.**
- Nearly 1 in 5 parents had a child who had repeated a grade.
- 26% of adults had no high school diploma; 47% had a high school education only; 27% had some post-secondary education.
- About 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 3 youth reported having received special education services while in school.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITIES

- **More than 50% of all children and adults reported a recent diagnosis or treatment for a serious mental illness.**
- 30% of adults had received a blow to the head hard enough to cause symptoms of traumatic brain injury. 56% of those individuals had experienced this prior to becoming homeless; more than one third experienced this injury after becoming homeless.



## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DISABILITIES

- 41% of adults had a physical or mental health problem that limits the work they could do; 15% had a condition that made daily living activities difficult.
- 43% of homeless adults said they needed to see a doctor for a physical health problem.
- **More than half of adults had dental problems needing attention.**
- 1 in 5 was not taking a prescribed medication – half for physical problems, 67% for mental health issues.
- 7 in 10 had some medical coverage or benefits (Medicare).

## CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

- 48% of men and 28% of women had been in an in-patient drug or alcohol treatment facility.
- 34% of adults considered themselves to be alcoholic or chemically dependent.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- 47% of adults had been incarcerated at some point during their lives.
- **65% of ex-offenders did not have stable housing secured when they were released.**
- 34% of unaccompanied youth had been in juvenile detention for a week or more.

## DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- **One-third of all women were homeless at least in part to escape an abusive partner.**
- At least 30% of adults reported that they had stayed in an abusive situation or relationship because they had nowhere else to live.
- 38% of adults and 53% of youth had been physically abused during childhood.
- 1 in 4 youth and adults had been sexually abused during childhood.
- 1 in 2 unaccompanied homeless youth have been physically or sexually abused.

## COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- 1 in 10 homeless adults cited violence in the neighborhood as a factor for leaving their previous housing.
- **Nearly 1 in 5 adults had been physically or sexually assaulted while homeless.**

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS (18-21 YRS)

- **70% of youth had experienced out-of-home placement: in a foster home, group home, treatment center, or correctional facility.**
- More than 2 in 5 had been in foster care.
- 1 in 8 young people had traded sex for shelter, food, clothing, or other essentials.
- 1 in 2 young people report some type of significant mental health problem; 1 in 5 has attempted suicide.
- **Girls experiencing homelessness are 17 times more likely to have been pregnant than girls in the general population.**
- More than 1 in 4 unaccompanied youth reported sleeping outside at least one night during the previous month.
- 60% of homeless youth were girls. (National studies show that girls are more likely to seek shelter and other services and thus be included in a one-night snapshot.)
- 8 out of 10 homeless young people (ages 20 and younger) report that they have regular contact with a trusted adult.
- **The youngest unaccompanied child interviewed was 11 years old.**

## CHILDREN

- 49% of children were age 5 or younger; one-third were 6-12 years old. (This includes children of unaccompanied homeless youth.)
- 75% of the children were with their mother or female caregiver.
- 22% of children were with both parents or two caregivers.
- Parents reported being unable to get needed care for dental (14%), physical (8%), or mental (4%) health needs for their children in the past year.
- Nearly 1 in 10 parents said their children had skipped meals in the previous month because there was not enough money to buy food.
- **44% of parents with children ages 17 or younger had a court order for child support. Of those parents, fewer than half (43%) actually received that support.**

This fact sheet was produced by The Minneapolis Foundation independently of Wilder Research. The fact sheet is designed to provide a snapshot of various causes and consequences of homelessness in Minnesota. Please refer to the Wilder Research's 2006 Survey of Homelessness in Minnesota for research or reproduction purposes.

## ENDING HOMELESSNESS

A PROGRAM OF THE MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION • NOVEMBER 2007

### A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

#### LEARN MORE & INFORM OTHERS

We can only end homelessness if we understand its causes, challenges, and consequences. Learn more about the issue, challenge misinformation when you hear it, and spread the word that *everyone* can help end homelessness in Minnesota.

- Businesses, community groups, book clubs, congregations: Request a speaker to lead a discussion on homelessness, or download a video and facilitator's guide. Contact Heading Home Minnesota to find out how your group can participate.
- Educators: Download classroom materials to educate yourself and your students about homelessness.
- Individuals: Participate in an immersion program, in which you experience a simulation of the daily challenges that confront people experiencing homelessness. Or volunteer at a shelter or with a homeless advocacy organization.

› [Link to educational resources at MinnesotaMeeting.com.](#)

#### ADVOCATE

You can advocate to help end homelessness by addressing any one of its contributing factors: job training, mental health care, veterans' benefits, family violence prevention, youth services, and more. You can also advocate directly for funding, services, and policies to help every Minnesotan find and keep a safe, affordable home. Here are a few current efforts:

- Promote public funding for a continuum of housing options, from emergency shelters to supportive housing to affordable rental and ownership properties.
- Eliminate policies that criminalize homelessness. Help ensure outreach workers rather than the police are the first responders for people who are homeless. It is more helpful to people in need and saves public dollars by stopping the revolving door of arrests and charge dismissals.

› [Link to current advocacy efforts and tips for impacting policy at MinnesotaMeeting.com.](#)

#### DONATE

In addition to time and effort, you can contribute financially to help end homelessness and aid those experiencing it.

- Donate to The Minneapolis Foundation's Fund to End Homelessness in Minnesota.
- Contribute to a homeless shelter, supportive housing facility, or housing advocacy organization.
- Support organizations providing services to those at risk of becoming homeless (the poor, at-risk youth, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, people with mental illness).
- Donate household goods (such as furniture or cookware), clothing, and/or personal care products to help people staying in emergency, transitional, or supportive housing. Find an organization in your area at [MinnesotaMeeting.com](#).

› [Contribute to the Fund to End Homelessness at MinnesotaMeeting.com.](#)

#### VOLUNTEER

Minnesota Meeting has teamed up with Hands On Twin Cities to connect you with opportunities to help people experiencing homelessness.

Hands On Twin Cities is the central source for volunteerism in the Twin Cities, connecting individuals and groups with meaningful opportunities to strengthen our community.



A few sample volunteer opportunities available right now:

- Lead children's activities at a shelter
- Prepare meals for shelter guests
- Organize a donation drive
- Bring your truck and help a family move into a new home
- Provide haircuts to shelter guests (experience required)

› [Find these and other Hands On Twin Cities volunteer opportunities through MinnesotaMeeting.com.](#)

VISIT [MINNESOTAMEETING.COM](#) FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVOCATE, EDUCATE, DONATE, & VOLUNTEER.