



# Homelessness in Minnesota

*Findings from the 2012 statewide homeless study*

**S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 3**

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# Acknowledgments

This report, and other companion reports and fact sheets that describe the results of Wilder Research's eighth triennial study of homelessness in Minnesota, would not be possible without many helping hands. This study is, by its very nature, an exercise in cross-sector collaboration and there are many people to thank.

First, thanks to our funders, who always seem to find the resources necessary to bring this study to life. This year, much of the heavy lifting was done by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Housing, who together with the Minnesota Departments of Education, Veterans Affairs, Corrections, and Public Safety, provided half of the resources necessary to complete the study. Private funders also played a critical role by providing the other half of the funding needed. This includes F.R. Bigelow Foundation, Blandin Foundation, Bush Foundation, Family Housing Fund, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, Greater Twin Cities United Way, The McKnight Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, and the Wilder Foundation.

As often is the case, there is a key leader whose persistence and passion make the funding come together. Special thanks are due to Jane Lawrenz at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, who goes to bat in each study cycle to be sure the statewide homeless study and the companion study of reservation homelessness get the attention needed and the funding required, making both studies possible.

Thanks also to Boston Scientific, who provided their facilities and technical assistance to produce our training video, and to Cummins Power Generation, Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, and Wells Fargo for their special efforts recruiting staff to serve as volunteer interviewers.

Volunteer interviewers and service providers are not only the backbone of this study; they also raise awareness about homelessness through the many friends, co-workers, and family members each one touches. This year, community volunteers, agency and program staff, and virtually the entire Wilder Research work force went to 390 locations across the state to conduct interviews. The study would not be possible without them. They endure our training videos and instructional materials, and still find the courage to return for the next study cycle. They are special people.

Finally, all social science research depends on the willingness and participation of the individuals who make up the population of interest; in this case, adults and youth throughout Minnesota who have no permanent place to live. Despite the depth of the survey and the personal nature of many questions, participation rates are extremely high (90%). Respondents answer more than 300 survey questions in face-to-face interviews and receive in exchange only a \$5 honorarium. Their generosity in sharing the details of their lives gives voice and substance to the reality of homelessness in our state and helps planners, funders, and advocates in their efforts to find solutions. This report tells their stories.

# Introduction

*Homelessness is not only painful and stigmatizing for those who live it; it is also seemingly intractable for those trying to fix it. Results of Wilder Research's eighth triennial statewide study show that the number of homeless people in Minnesota continues to grow. Despite vigorous and targeted efforts to reduce homelessness, and despite many individual success stories, new people come into the shelter system every day.*

There is no way to know what Minnesota's homeless numbers would be in the absence of the programs and services currently available. We do know that prior to the recession that began in 2007, we were beginning to see measurable declines in the numbers of children and families experiencing homelessness. But this latest recession appears to have a long tail, and those who are living at the margins are always among the last to recover. In the year 2000, when the U.S. economy was at a high point, nearly a quarter of all adults who were homeless in our state had full-time jobs. The 2012 survey shows us that only 8 percent of those who are homeless today have full-time jobs.

One piece of good news is that the rate of growth in the homeless population has slowed. The 10,214 homeless adults, youth, and children counted on October 25, 2012, was up just 6 percent from 2009, significantly less than the 25 percent jump we observed from 2006 to 2009.

But we still have two fundamental issues that must be addressed if we are to see these numbers go down in future years. The first relates to the availability and affordability of housing itself, and the second relates to what an individual or family needs in order to be able to pay for and maintain stable residency in housing. Neither side of the equation is simple.

With regard to housing, the 2012 study shows us that 41 percent of homeless adults are currently on a waiting list for subsidized housing with an average wait time of nearly a year. On top of this, an additional 15 percent report they are unable to get on a waiting list because those lists are closed. The private housing market is not particularly well-suited to serve those with the least income. Consequently, most of the work of creating affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing with services, has fallen to the nonprofit and government sectors. For those who will need ongoing supportive services to stay in housing, we have seen success in the creation of new supportive housing opportunities as part of the statewide plans for ending homelessness – Heading Home Minnesota – but the new supportive housing falls far short of keeping up with the need that is created daily.



On the income creation and stable residency side, the picture is perhaps even more complicated. Over the course of eight homeless studies beginning in 1991, we have seen measurable increases in the level of distress in the population. In one of our analyses, we try to calculate the number of individuals who would be "good to go" into living independently if only reasonably priced housing opportunities were available. This means having some recent employment experience (or stable income stream) and the ability to live independently without ongoing supports. In 1999, Wilder Research responded to a request from the Minnesota Legislature for information about this issue and calculated that between 18 and 24 percent of those who were currently homeless would have the ability, without other ancillary services, to rent and maintain stable housing. When we recalculated this figure for 2012, we found only 10 to 12 percent of the homeless population could meet the same criteria. One of the complicating factors in the equation is the fact that, while we have gotten better at smoothing pathways to housing for those with fewer obstacles, we still struggle to find feasible exits for those who have been in jail or prison, those with significant mental health issues, and those whose starts in life included so much adversity that they have never developed the skills and support networks needed to gain a foothold on a path to stability.

We must also consider the fact that the numbers in this report represent only those who are currently homeless. To fully address this problem, we also have to consider the range of ways in which an individual or family may become homeless in the first place and what it might take to interrupt such an occurrence before it happens. Preventing homelessness takes a broad array of supports that include support from family and community and services provided by the public and private sector. These collectively make up our social safety net, but most are better designed to lift the fallen than to shore up the ground under those who may be about to fall. With rare exception, the public safety net has been strained in recent years and funding support, adjusted for inflation, has actually been reduced at the same time that economic stumbling blocks have multiplied.

When all of this is taken into account, and we factor in the widening income gap and the growing number of people who live in poverty, it is no surprise that we see growing numbers of homeless Minnesotans. Nonetheless, we can address homelessness in a more effective and comprehensive way than we do now, and we can create affordable and stable housing, even for those who seem most difficult to house. To do so, however, we must agree on the dimensions of the problem, use strategies that are known to work, broaden public awareness of the problem, expand the safety net to better catch those at risk of losing housing, and back it up with resources that match the need.

# About the study

## Background

Every three years since 1991, Wilder Research has conducted a statewide study of people who are homeless or living in temporary housing programs. In October 2012, nearly 1,300 volunteer interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with more than 4,500 people experiencing homelessness throughout the state. Study participation was voluntary, and participants received \$5.00 for completing the interview. Ninety percent of those who were asked agreed to participate.

## *Data sources*

The statewide homeless study is based on two sources of data: face-to-face interviews with adults and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, and a shelter census completed by the shelter providers.

## **Interviews**

The information in this report describing the characteristics of homeless people is based on 4,563 face-to-face interviews with homeless adults and youth, each one typically lasting 35 to 45 minutes. The interviews were done by 1,299 volunteers and program staff in 390 locations, including shelters and transitional housing programs as well as meal sites, service centers, encampments, and other places not intended for housing. In shelter and transitional housing programs, one adult per family was asked to complete the interview. Interviews were conducted in October 2012 with respondents known to be homeless on the night of October 25, including 1,502 men and 1,428 women in shelters, as well as another 1,535 interviews with adults in non-shelter locations. According to the interviews, adult respondents had 2,347 children and 704 partners with them. We also conducted interviews with 98 unaccompanied minors age 17 and under, both in and out of shelter settings. These minors had a total of 6 children and 12 partners with them.

Based on prior information from shelter providers, the survey was translated into the languages most often needed. Seven interviews were completed in Somali and 28 were completed in Spanish.

## **Shelter census count**

Detailed information about the total number of men, women, and children in residence on the night of the study was gathered from all providers of service in emergency shelters, time-limited transitional housing programs, domestic violence shelters, and emergency service voucher sites. This complete enumeration within shelters on the day of the study provides the basis for all shelter counts reported here. It also allows us to weight the survey results for those in shelters and generalize the findings to nearly the entire population of those experiencing homelessness in our state.

The shelter census counts are used to produce a detailed count for each Continuum of Care region (geographic areas used for housing planning and service coordination) in Minnesota and are posted on the Wilder Research website at <http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Areas/Homelessness/Pages/default.aspx> (see also, Figure 32-33). There is no comparable information about the total number of persons in non-shelter locations, other than the counts of those who participated in interviews and persons staying with them in non-shelter locations. All adults and unaccompanied youth found in non-shelter locations were asked to participate in the study (or one member of each couple).

## ***Who is included in the study***

### **Definition of homelessness**

The definition of homelessness used for the study is the same one specified by the U.S. Congress in its most recent reauthorization of the Hearth Act in May 2009. For the 2012 study, a homeless person is anyone who:

1. lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; **and**
2. has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised, publicly- or privately-operated temporary living accommodation, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and battered women's shelters; **or**
3. has a nighttime residence in any place not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges or in cars.

A parent not meeting any of these criteria may be included if they have a child with them, and have a significant history of residential instability, and have a barrier (or have a child with a barrier) that interferes with housing or employment.

For youth through age 21, the definition of homelessness is expanded to include people who are not with a parent or guardian and who are staying temporarily with other relatives

or friends (“couch hopping”). Federal and state legislation governing services for runaway and homeless youth explicitly include youth up through the age of 21. We therefore include young people age 18 through 21 in our discussion of unaccompanied homeless youth. However, those age 18 or older are legally adults and are also included in the overall adult findings. For this reason, “youth” and “adult” numbers should not be added together for totals.

A companion study was done in partnership with six Minnesota American Indian reservations. Results of this study are reported separately and are not included in this report.

### **Where interviews were done**

Interviews were conducted in shelters and temporary housing programs and also in non-shelter locations.

We distinguish three types of *shelter programs* that serve homeless people:

- **Emergency shelters** – A safe place to sleep, generally open only evenings and overnight. May provide meals, housing information, and other services.
- **Battered women’s shelters** – Safe refuge and advocacy for women and their children when fleeing an abusive situation.
- **Transitional housing** – Time-limited, subsidized housing that involves working with a professional to set and address goals to become self-sufficient.

For homeless people interviewed who were *not in shelters* on the date of the study, information from the survey gives some insight into the settings in which they had spent the most time in October. For analysis and reporting, we have identified two groups:

- **Informal arrangements** – People in this group were more likely to be in a house, apartment, or room in which they were allowed to stay on a temporary basis; or a motel room that they paid for (not provided by a voucher program). They were less likely to be outdoors.
- **Unsheltered** – People in this group were more likely to be in cars, transportation depots, 24-hour businesses, buildings that are abandoned or unfit for habitation (lacking plumbing, electricity, or heat), or outdoor locations. They were less likely to be in informal arrangements staying with others on a temporary basis.

Unless otherwise stated, percentages reported are based on all homeless adults who are represented in the survey.

## Using this report

### INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

This is a point-in-time study. If the study were extended over the course of a year, many more short-term episodes of homelessness would occur, but relatively few additional long-term episodes would be added to those already documented here. Therefore, when interpreting these findings, it is important to bear in mind that they better represent the experiences of those who are homeless for lengthy periods of time (or repeatedly) than for those whose experiences of homelessness are short.

The total number of responses to a given question is not always the total number of people in the survey. Not all questions were asked of every respondent (for example, questions about children were not asked of those who have no children). Not all respondents answered every question.

This report provides overall findings from the 2012 study and selected comparisons, where appropriate, to findings from previous studies. Because of changes in programs and services, and variations in outreach efforts in different regions of Minnesota, caution should be exercised in making direct comparisons to results from previous years, except comparisons presented in this report.

In this report, we present most homelessness information in terms of overall statewide frequencies or averages. However, in some instances where statewide reporting masks important variations, we have also provided information based on certain populations or types of settings.

There is a wealth of information in this report, but it is still possible that a specific fact a reader may be looking for is not here. In that case, it is likely to be found on our website: [www.wilderresearch.org](http://www.wilderresearch.org) where detailed responses to each survey question are available in tabular form, partitioned by geography, shelter type, and gender of respondent. Detailed data about homeless youth can be found at [www.wilderresearch.org](http://www.wilderresearch.org)

### *Understanding data weighting*

It is not possible to interview every person staying in shelters on the date of the study, although in 2012, nearly two-thirds (62%) of sheltered adults were interviewed. Survey results for sheltered adults have been statistically adjusted to reflect the actual adult populations residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs (2,326 men and 2,412 women) on the day of the study.

We do not weight the data collected from persons interviewed in non-shelter locations, because we do not know the actual number of people who were on the streets or not staying in shelters on the day of the study.

We do not weight the data in the youth section. This is because most homeless youth do not use shelter and we do not want to overrepresent the backgrounds and experiences of the small proportion of those using shelter during the one-night snapshot. However, when adult characteristics are reported, those 18 and older are included with the rest of the adult population. In those sections of the report, their responses are weighted in the same way as those of the rest of the adult population.

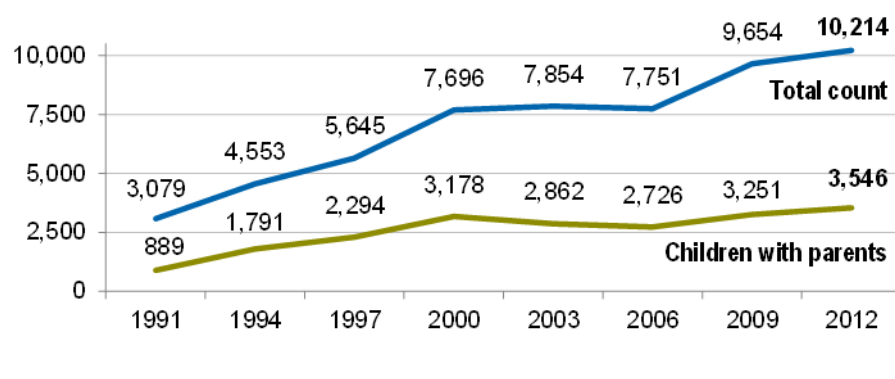
# Counts and estimates

*The number of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota is at an all-time high. However, the rate of growth has slowed since the 2009 study. Most of the increase in the 2012 study was in emergency and battered women’s shelters. The number of people in transitional housing and those found in unsheltered locations were about the same as in 2009.*

## Numbers counted on the night of the study

On October 25, 2012, shelter providers counted 7,961 homeless people in emergency shelters, battered women’s shelters, and transitional housing programs, as well as 32 homeless persons in detox facilities. An additional 2,221 homeless people were identified who were not staying in any formal shelter or housing program, for a total of 10,214 homeless persons (Figure 1). There were 1,747 families enumerated in the 2012 study, including 1,526 in shelters and 221 in non-shelter locations. These families included 3,546 children under age 18.

### 1. One-night study counts of the Minnesota homeless population, 1991-2012



A companion survey was done at the same time on 6 of the 11 American Indian reservations in the state. Data from the reservation study are reported separately and are not included in the totals shown in this report.

## 2. Shelter counts and people enumerated in non-shelter locations

	Emergency and battered women's shelters	Transitional housing programs	Not in shelters	Total
Adult men 55 and older	316	106	144	566
Adult women 55 and older	92	65	54	211
Adult men 22 through 54	1,064	600	742	2,406
Adult women 22 through 54	908	960	434	2,302
Young adult males 18-21	108	132	211	451
Young adult females 18-21	123	264	167	554
Unaccompanied male minors under 18	30	5	31	66
Unaccompanied female minors under 18	27	16	37	80
Children with their parents	1,211	1,934	401	3,546
Homeless persons in detox	-	-	-	32
<b>TOTAL</b> (source of number)	<b>3,879</b> (count)	<b>4,082</b> (count)	<b>2,221</b> (interviews)	<b>10,214</b> (sum)

**Source:** Counts from shelter providers, interview data from Wilder Research survey.

**Note:** Figures do not include homeless people on American Indian reservations, reported separately.

**Numbers by region:** For the distribution of homeless persons by region of the state, [see the maps at the back of the report](#). For more detail on numbers of homeless persons by age and family status, region, and type of shelter, see the report "Statewide and region counts of homeless people" posted on the Wilder Research website (<http://www.wilderresearch.org>).



## Single night estimate

The count from October 25, 2012, underrepresents the total homeless population, since many homeless people outside the shelter system are not found on the night of the study. This is especially true of youth on their own, who often couch-hop or find other temporary places to stay, and homeless people in greater Minnesota where there are fewer shelters.

**About 14,000 people are homeless on any given night in Minnesota.**

Research done elsewhere provides a basis for estimating the total number of Minnesotans who are likely to have been homeless and not staying in formal shelters on the date of the study. (See page 58-59 for more information about estimation methods.)

In total, we estimate that there were approximately 14,000 homeless Minnesotans on any given night in 2012, not including people on American Indian reservations (Figure 3).

### 3. Estimated number of persons homeless on any given night in Minnesota, 2012

	Count of number in shelters	Count of number not in shelters	Estimate of additional unsheltered persons	Estimated total
Adults 22 and older	4,111	1,374	561	6,046
Young adults 18-21	627	378	864 <sup>(a)</sup>	1,869
Unaccompanied minors under 18	78	68	2,065 <sup>(a)</sup>	2,211
Children with their parents	3,145	401	385	3,931
<b>TOTAL</b> (source of number)	<b>7,993<sup>(b)</sup></b> (count)	<b>2,221</b> (interviews)	<b>3,875</b> (estimate)	<b>14,057<sup>(b)</sup></b> (sum)

(a) The estimation method for youth has been updated from that used in previous years. As a result, the estimate cannot be directly compared to those from 2009 or earlier.

(b) Includes 32 homeless people in detox facilities on the night of the study.

## Estimate of annual numbers

Many of the people found in the one-night study experience homelessness for only a short time. Our October 25th study therefore cannot count people who were homeless for a single week in early October, for example, or for six months from February through July. By counting the number of people in our study who were homeless for shorter periods of time, and computing how many more such people would become newly homeless during comparable periods of time throughout the full year, we can estimate the number of people homeless over the course of the full year.

**Nearly 40,000  
Minnesotans experience  
homelessness in a year.**

Using these methods, we estimate that nearly 40,000 Minnesotans experience homelessness at least once over the course of a full year. This includes:

- 16,900 adults age 22 or older
- 3,900 young adults ages 18-21 on their own
- 5,100 minor youth (ages 17 or younger) on their own
- 13,900 children with their homeless parents

This estimate does not include homeless persons living on American Indian reservations in the state. It also does not include school-age children with parents who stay in temporary, doubled-up arrangements that are defined as “homeless” under the McKinney-Vento Act as it applies to educational services.

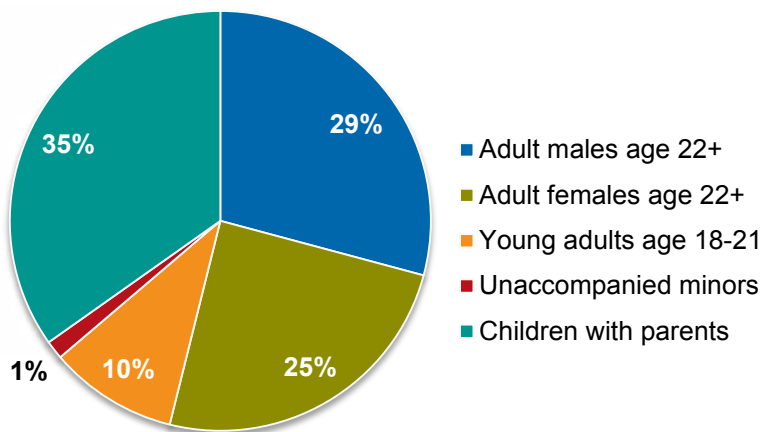
# Incidence of homelessness by age and race

*Youth and people of color are disproportionately overrepresented in the homeless population. Older adults are underrepresented, but are one of the fastest growing homeless groups.*

Just over half of the people experiencing homelessness on October 25 were adults age 22 or more. Unaccompanied youth were 11 percent of the total – although the study is least likely to have enumerated all of this group. Just over one-third of the total were children (ages 17 or younger) with their parents, of whom half were age 5 or younger (Figure 4.)

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#### 4. Age distribution of persons experiencing homeless on a single night in 2012



Racial disparities are persistent in the Minnesota homeless population (Figure 5). The disparities are most prevalent among African American and American Indian populations. These disparities have been relatively consistent since the statewide study began. The only significant change occurred between the years 2000 and 2003 when the overall percentage of African American, American Indian, and Hispanic persons dropped from 65 percent of the homeless population to 57 percent of the homeless population. The combined percentage total for these three groups today is 55 percent, only a slight decline from what was observed approximately one decade ago and well within the survey's margin of error.

## 5. Race and ethnicity of homeless adults and youth compared to overall Minnesota population

	Percent of HOMELESS adults	Percent of all Minnesota adults	Percent of unaccompanied HOMELESS youth age 21 and under	Percent of all Minnesota youth 10-24
American Indian	10%	1%	13%	2%
Asian American	1%	4%	2%	6%
Black/African American	38%	5%	40%	7%
White/Caucasian	42%	86%	33%	76%
Other/Mixed race	8%	3%	12%	6%
Hispanic (any race)	7%	4%	10%	7%

**Sources:** Wilder Research 2012 survey of homelessness and U.S. 2010 Census

**Note:** Column totals may be more than 100% because Hispanic ethnicity is asked independent of race.

A similar comparison of homeless rates by age groups shows that youth – especially those age 18 through 21 – are the age group most at risk of homelessness. Older adults, age 55 and over, are the age group least at risk, but between 2009 and 2012, the rate of homelessness in this age group rose considerably faster than their proportion in the overall Minnesota population (Figure 6).

## 6. Age groupings of homeless Minnesotans compared to all Minnesotans

	Percent of MN homeless population	Percent of MN total population	Number of homeless per 10,000 people in MN
Children with parents and unaccompanied minors (17 and under)	36%	24%	29
Young adults (18-21)	10%	6%	33
Adults (22-54)	46%	45%	20
Older adults (55 and over)	8%	26%	6

**Source for MN total population:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey

Other demographic information is reported separately in the sections for adults, children with parents, and unaccompanied youth.

# Homeless adults

*One of the most pressing and consistent themes throughout the 21 years of homelessness research statewide is the overrepresentation of persons of color.*

These racial disparities occur among persons of all age groups and genders; in the Twin Cities, this is especially true of people who are African American, and in greater Minnesota, especially with people who are American Indian. These disparities are an essential element to keep in mind when interpreting results in this section.

By digging deep into the characteristics and backgrounds of Minnesota's homeless population, we can better understand how to address the systemic issues that may lead to homelessness and design services that meet current needs. This section describes these characteristics as reported by study participants.

## Demographic characteristics

Homeless adults in Minnesota include slightly more men than women, but the gender distribution varies by type of shelter.

Overall, 53 percent are men and 47 percent are women.

- Men are more likely to stay outside or on the streets (74% male) and reside in emergency shelter (64% male)
- Women are more likely to live in transitional housing programs (61% female)

The average age of adults (18 and older) experiencing homelessness is 38 years old. The average age varies both by shelter type and gender.

- Adults in emergency shelters are oldest (average age of 41)
- Women in battered women's shelters are youngest (average age of 33)
- On average, men (average age of 41) are older than women (average age of 34)

Almost two-thirds (63%) of homeless adults in Minnesota have never been married. However, most have had recent contact with family members. Nearly three-quarters (72%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the past month. Only 14 percent report it has been a year or more since their last contact with family.

Just over half of adults were alone on the night before the survey (Figure 7). This includes three-quarters of men, but only one-third of women. Women were much more likely to have been with children.

**Nearly half of homeless adults have children. One in three have at least one child with them.**

## 7. Who adults stayed with on the night prior to the 2012 survey

	Percent of homeless adults (18+)	Percent of homeless men (18+)	Percent of homeless women (18+)
Alone	55%	76%	33%
With children age 17 or younger	32%	9%	57%
With a partner	11%	9%	14%
With another relative or friend	14%	14%	14%

Many people experiencing homelessness have children who do not live with them. Almost half of homeless adults are parents of at least one child age 17 or younger (48%), but just one-third had any children with them when they were interviewed. Women are much more likely than men to be parents, and to have children with them.

- 67% of homeless women are parents of minor children, compared to 31% of homeless men
- 54% of homeless women have at least one child with them, compared to 8% of homeless men

Information about these children is presented in a separate section (see page 42).

## Connections to Minnesota

Most of Minnesota's homeless adults have a connection to Minnesota. Half lived in Minnesota most or all of the time growing up (until age 16). More than 8 in 10 have lived in Minnesota for at least two years, or lived in Minnesota before. Three-quarters had their last regular or permanent housing in the state.

**74% of homeless adults had their last housing in Minnesota.**

- 52% of homeless adults lived in Minnesota most of the time they were growing up
- 83% of homeless adults have lived in Minnesota at least two years, or lived here at some point previously

## Educational attainment

More than three-quarters of homeless adults have a high school diploma or GED (Figure 8). Considering just those age 25 or older, 8 in 10 have completed high school, compared to 9 in 10 for all Minnesota adults. More than one-quarter received special education services while in school.

**77 percent of homeless adults have at least a high school education.**

### 8. Educational attainment of homeless adults and all Minnesota adults (age 25+)

	Percent of all homeless adults (18+)	Percent of homeless adults age 25+	Percent of all Minnesota adults age 25+
Did not complete high school or GED	23%	19%	8%
High school diploma or GED but no more	43%	44%	27%
At least some college	34%	37%	65%

**Sources:** Homeless adults: Wilder Research survey. All Minnesota adults: Minnesota Compass.

Among all homeless adults age 18 or older:

- 77% have a high school diploma or GED
- 34% have attended at least some college, and 10% have at least a two-year degree
- 28% received special education services while in school
- 14% are currently enrolled in an adult education or training program, most commonly 2-year college or technical programs (31% of those enrolled) or GED courses (30%)

### Current homelessness situations

For more than one-quarter of homeless adults (29%), the current episode of homelessness is their first. Half of homeless adults had been homeless more than a year (Figure 9).

**22% of homeless adults had been turned away from shelter in the past three months due to lack of bed spaces.**

### 9. Number of homeless episodes and length of current episode

Number of homelessness episodes	Percent	Length of current homelessness episode	Percent
One	29%	1 month or less	6%
Two	16%	More than a month but less than a year	43%
Three or more	55%	1 year or more	50%

Shelter is not always available to all who need it. Similar to previous studies, about one in five (22%) homeless adults reported they had been turned away from shelter in the previous three months due to a lack of available bed spaces. Of these, only one-quarter (28%) were able to secure an alternative shelter bed for that night. The remainder ended up outdoors, in cars or other places not meant for habitation, or doubled-up.

Only 39 percent had been in the same place for the past 60 days. One-fifth (19%) had moved once during that time, one-third (33%) had moved from two to nine times, and nearly 1 in 10 (9%) reported they had moved 10 or more times in the past 60 days.

In the 30 days prior to the survey, homeless adults who were interviewed averaged 20 nights in shelter or transitional housing programs, 4 nights outside or in other places not intended for housing (e.g., vehicle or vacant building), 4 nights doubled-up in someone else’s house, apartment, or room, and 1 night in regular housing. People interviewed in outreach settings (i.e., those not staying in shelter) reported staying in the most varied settings over the course of the month. Those interviewed in transitional housing programs were most likely to report spending all of the past month in a sheltered setting (Figure 10).

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**10. Percentage of homeless adults within each shelter type who spent all of the previous 30 days in a similar setting**

<b>Setting in which respondent was interviewed</b>	<b>Percent who had spent all of the past 30 days in a similar setting</b>
Emergency shelter	51% spent all of the past 30 days in shelter or transitional housing
Battered women’s shelter	45% spent all of the past 30 days in shelter or transitional housing
Transitional housing	83% spent all of the past 30 days in shelter or transitional housing
Outreach (not staying in shelter)	21% spent all of the past 30 days outdoors/unsheltered 18% spent all of the past 30 days doubled-up



## *Long-term homelessness*

In Minnesota, people are considered to be long-term homeless if they have been homeless for a year or longer or if they have been homeless four times in the past three years. In the 2012 study, 56 percent of homeless adults fit this definition. One-half (50%) have been without a regular or permanent place to stay for one year or longer, and 23 percent have been homeless four or more times in the past three years.

On the night of the study in 2012, 2,600 adults and unaccompanied minors, along with 914 children with parents, were among the long-term homeless.

The rate of long-term homelessness among adults appears to be slightly down from 2009, when the proportion was 59 percent. However, since there are more homeless people in 2012, the actual number of long-term homeless is almost exactly the same as in 2009.

- From 2009 to 2012, long-term homelessness increased faster in greater Minnesota (28%) than in the Twin Cities metro region (1%)
- Children with their parents represent the fastest-growing segment of the long-term homeless population today (26% increase from 2009 to 2012)
- It is estimated that approximately 5,200 households, or roughly 7,000 persons, experience long-term homelessness in Minnesota over the course of the year

Compared to those who have been homeless for shorter periods of time, those experiencing long-term homelessness are more likely to have multiple health problems and a history of prior incarceration.

- 60% of long-term homeless adults have a serious mental illness, compared to 49% of other homeless adults
- 54% have a chronic health condition, compared to 48% of other homeless adults
- 26% have a substance abuse disorder diagnosis, compared to 17% of other homeless adults
- 48% have a condition that limits the kind or amount of work they are able to do, compared to 37% of other homeless adults

**Long-term homelessness has increased in greater Minnesota, but remained stable in the Twin Cities area since 2009.**

**56% of homeless adults are long-term homeless by Minnesota's definition.**

## ***Violence during homelessness***

In addition to its role as a cause of homelessness, violence is also a common experience for those who lack housing. One in five (19%) homeless adults reports being physically or sexually assaulted while homeless, and 11 percent have had to seek health care because of an injury or illness resulting from violence in the past year.

- Women are more likely to have been attacked (26% of women vs. 12% of men)
- The longer an individual's experience with homelessness, the more likely he or she is to be attacked. 10 percent of adults who have been homeless less than one month have experienced an attack, compared to 15 percent of adults homeless 1 to 12 months, and 23 percent of those homeless a year or longer.

One-third (34%) of homeless adults, including almost one-half (48%) of homeless women (22% of men), report that they have stayed in an abusive relationship because they had nowhere else to live, and 16 percent report leaving their last stable housing because of abuse by someone they lived with (27% of women and 6% of men).

## **Background and prior experiences of homeless adults**

*For many, homelessness is merely the latest of a chain of adverse experiences that often begin in childhood. These can include violence, abuse, out-of-home placements, and incarceration.*

### ***Childhood abuse***

A history of abuse during childhood is common among homeless adults. Over one-third were physically abused as children and one-quarter were sexually abused as children. One-fifth were neglected as children. By comparison, estimates of the lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual abuse in the U.S. range between 16 and 18 percent.<sup>1</sup>

- 37% of homeless adults were physically abused as children
- 26% were sexually abused as children
- 21% were neglected as children (were not provided with food, shelter, or medical care, or were left unsupervised for long periods of time when they were too young to be on their own)

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<sup>1</sup> Habetha, S., Bleich, S., Weidenhammer, J., & Fegerg, J.M. (2012). A prevalence-based approach to societal costs occurring in consequence of child abuse and neglect. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 6(35), 1753-2000.

- Homeless women report higher rates of childhood physical abuse (44% for women vs. 30% for men), sexual abuse (39% for women vs. 13% for men), and neglect (25% for women vs. 16% for men)
- These rates have been remarkably similar over the entire past decade of homeless studies

### ***Childhood homelessness***

Unstable housing often begins in childhood. Twenty-five percent of homeless adults report that their first experience of homelessness, either with their parents or on their own, was as a child (age 17 or younger). Another 7 percent became homeless for the first time at age 18.

**One-quarter of homeless adults first experienced homelessness as a child.**

Women were more likely than men to have been homeless as a child.

- 30% of homeless women had their first experience of homelessness as a child, vs. 21% of homeless men

### ***Out-of-home experiences***

Over half of homeless adults have had the experience of living in some kind of social service or treatment facility.

Similar to prior surveys, three in 10 homeless adults lived in at least one social service or treatment facility as a child, most often foster homes and group homes (Figure 11). In addition, one-fifth (20%) have been held for at least a week in a juvenile correctional facility.

**30 percent of homeless adults lived in out-of-home placements during childhood.**

## **11. Homeless adults' experiences in out-of-home placements**

	<b>Ever lived in this kind of facility</b>	<b>Lived in as a child</b>	<b>Lived in as an adult</b>	<b>Lived in within the past 2 years</b>
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	35%	6%	32%	16%
Halfway house (any kind)	23%	2%	22%	9%
Foster home	21%	20%	2%	1%
Group home	20%	14%	7%	3%
Any social service or treatment facility*	56%	30%	43%	25%

**Note:** "Any facility" includes those shown in the table plus residences for people with physical disabilities and facilities for persons with emotional, behavioral or mental health problems.

## Out-of-home placements and incarceration during adulthood

Experiences with residential placements and incarceration during adulthood are also a significant and persistent theme. Four out of 10 homeless adults have lived in at least one social service or treatment facility as adults (age 18 or older), most often drug or alcohol treatment facilities and half-way houses. Persons who have a prior history of incarceration have a more difficult time accessing housing, especially in the private market.

**47 percent of homeless adults have spent time in a correctional facility.**

- Homeless men are more likely than women to have lived as adults in a drug or alcohol treatment facility (41% of men vs. 22% of women) or a halfway house (31% vs. 13%)
- Almost one-half (47%) of homeless adults have spent time in some type of correctional facility, including juvenile detention centers, county jails or workhouses, or state or federal prisons. This rate has been flat since 2006.
- 61% of homeless men compared to 31% of homeless women have been incarcerated
- Homeless adults who are not staying in shelter have the highest rates of incarceration (70% for men and 40% for women)
- 18% of homeless adults have been incarcerated within the past two years

## *Experience with community and domestic violence*

Similar to previous studies, almost one-third (30%) of homeless women are homeless as a direct result of domestic abuse. This proportion is higher in greater Minnesota (35%) than the Twin Cities area (28%). Women fleeing abuse are in all shelter types:

- 37% are in transitional housing (25% of all women in transitional housing)
- 33% are in battered women's shelters (100% of women in battered women's shelters)
- 16% are in emergency shelters (17% of all women in emergency shelter)
- 15% are living in non-shelter locations (23% of all women not in shelters)

About one in ten homeless adults reported that violence in the neighborhood was a factor in leaving their previous housing. As an earlier section showed, violence is not only a cause of homelessness but also one of its common results.

- Women do not report much more impact than men from neighborhood violence: 9% of men left their last housing due to violence in the neighborhood, vs. 13% of women (11% overall)

## Factors associated with homelessness

In addition to the adverse experiences described above – childhood abuse and neglect, out-of-home placements including incarceration, community and domestic violence, or traumas incurred during military service – other common factors that contribute to homelessness for some people include economic instability, relationship breakdowns, and problems with mental health or substance abuse.

### *Immediate causes of homelessness*

Study participants most often lost their last housing as the result of a job loss, loss of work hours, or an inability to afford rent or mortgage (Figure 12). The housing section of this report on the next page describes this issue in greater detail. Other common reasons adults report for the loss of housing include:

- Eviction, which could be for financial or other reasons (29%)
- Personal conflicts, including breakup with a spouse or partner (23%) and problems getting along with others (23%)
- Drinking or drug problems (17%)

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## 12. Most common reasons why adults left their last regular housing

### **Did you leave your last regular or permanent housing because...**

You could not afford rent or house payments	38%
You lost your job or had your hours cut	32%
You were evicted or your lease was not renewed	29%
A breakup with your spouse or partner	23%
Problems getting along with other people you lived with	23%
A drinking or drug problem you had	17%

**Note:** Totals exceed 100% because respondents could identify multiple reasons.

The percentages of homeless adults who reported inability to afford rent or mortgage and the loss of a job were down from 2009 rates, from 43 percent to 38 percent (rent) and from 40 percent to 32 percent (job). Other reasons for losing housing were similar to the rates reported in 2009.

Homeless adults very rarely report mental health problems as an immediate reason for becoming homeless. Because health issues – mental, chemical, and physical – are often made worse by homelessness, and often need to be addressed as part of the solution to restoring stable housing, these issues are addressed in a later section of this report.

### ***Housing affordability***

*The affordability of housing is the most significant reason people have lost their housing and the primary barrier to their regaining it.*

Housing affordability is the balance between the cost of housing and the income available to pay for it. Survey results show that people experiencing homelessness face serious challenges on both sides of this equation.

**Nearly half of homeless adults lost their housing because they could not afford the rent or mortgage and/or they lost a job or work hours.**

Not being able to afford rent or house payments is the most common reason people left their last regular or permanent housing (38%). The loss of a job or work hours is the second most common reason (32%). Together, these two reasons account for nearly half (46%) of all homeless adults.

The affordability of housing is also the most frequently mentioned barrier preventing currently homeless adults from getting re-housed.

Half (51%) of homeless adults report that the lack of a job or income is one of the three main barriers to their housing currently. The second most common (30%) is that there is no housing available that they can afford. Credit problems are the third most common current barrier (21%), and the cost of application fees is also among the most commonly mentioned (10%). These rates are similar to those reported in the 2009 survey.

### WHAT'S AN AFFORDABLE RENT?

A rule of thumb for housing affordability, particularly for lower-income households, is that housing should cost no more than 30% of monthly income. Housing that costs 50% or more of monthly income is considered a severe housing cost burden.

At the time of the study, “fair market rent” (an amount, determined annually by the federal government, that makes 40 to 50 percent of local apartments available to a renter) was \$745 per month for a one-bedroom apartment in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and averaged \$531 per month in the other 80 counties of greater Minnesota.

On the income side, 42 percent of homeless adults report that the amount they would be able to pay for rent is less than \$200 per month. While two-thirds (67%) report they would only need a one-bedroom apartment or smaller, this is still well below the fair market rent anywhere in the state. Rent is considered affordable if it is no more than 30 percent of income, but the median monthly income among homeless adults is \$400. Thirteen percent of homeless adults report having no income during the preceding month, and a full quarter (25%) had incomes of \$100 or less.

**Affordability Gap for Twin Cities area  
fair market rent for  
one-bedroom apartment  
vs.  
median monthly income, homeless adult  
\$745 (rent) vs. \$381 (income)**

Employment alone does not solve the affordability dilemma. Even among the 8 percent who are employed full time, most (57%) earn less than \$10 per hour, and the median monthly income is only \$1,100, which is below the poverty line for a family of two.

Figure 13 compares median incomes to fair market rent in the Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota.

### 13. Fair market rents versus income, in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and greater Minnesota

	Fair market rent (FMR) for a 1-bedroom apartment	Monthly income at which FMR would be affordable	Median monthly income, homeless adults
Twin Cities metro	\$745	\$2,483	\$381
Greater Minnesota	\$531	\$1,770	\$403

**Sources:** HUD, Fair Market Rent Documentation System ([http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2012\\_code/select\\_Geography.odn](http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2012_code/select_Geography.odn)); Greater Minnesota weighted average fair market rent computed based on renter-occupied units per county, from 2011 ACS 5-year estimates, Table ID DP04.

Foreclosure accounted for 9 percent of homelessness reported in the 2012 survey (6% were in a rental that was foreclosed and 4% owned their home, with 1% citing both). This is essentially the same as the 10 percent found in the 2009 survey. The people who were foreclosed on had been homeless about the same length of time as those who had not been foreclosed on, suggesting that foreclosure has been a relatively constant contributor to the problem, not one with stronger effects in the more recent past.

#### *Barriers to regaining stable housing*

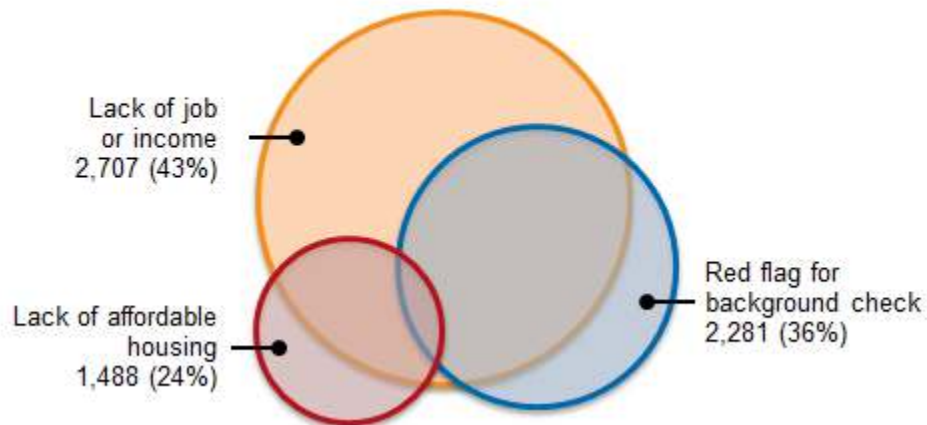
Once someone has lost their regular housing, they often face a different set of barriers in their efforts to regain stable housing. Affordability continues to be the single greatest problem. This includes both sides of the affordability equation – the cost of housing and the ability to pay. Secondary barriers tend to cluster around considerations that landlords use to screen for the desirability of a new tenant, including poor credit and rental histories and/or criminal history. Figure 14 shows the relative frequency with which homeless adults report each of these as issues that are currently preventing their getting housing. These frequencies are the same as in the 2009 survey.



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## 14. Overlapping barriers to housing

Total homeless adults represented by survey: 6,273 (100%)  
Proportion with none of these three barriers: 2,522 (40%)



To supplement what survey respondents themselves see as their housing barriers, we looked at information elsewhere in the survey for other possible barriers to housing. These were selected based on a list of common barriers identified by homeless service providers. The following appear to be among the most prevalent issues that are likely to require assistance in order to help those now homeless re-enter the mainstream.

- 76% are currently unemployed
- 68% have been homeless before
- 55% have a serious mental illness
- 50% have a criminal history
- 50% have been homeless for at least a year
- 36% could afford to pay less than \$200 monthly for rent

Virtually all study participants (97%) report at least one of the housing barriers described above.

### Waiting for subsidized housing

In the 2012 homeless survey, 41 percent of adults reported being on a waiting list, with an average wait of 11 months, and an additional 15 percent had been unable to get on a waiting list. The fact that this proportion is on a waiting list is an indication of successful connection to services, either on their own initiative or through the help of support systems.

### Housing assistance

The results of multiple studies point to increased help with housing affordability as one of the most effective ways of preventing homelessness. The primary mainstream program available to address housing costs is the Section 8 tenant-based housing subsidy. This enables the recipient to rent a participating housing unit at the fair market rent while paying no more than 30 to 40 percent of their income. This federally funded program is only available for a fraction of those who need it. As a result, waiting lists are typically long as well as frozen (unable to accept any new people on the list).

The most recent report on federal rental assistance in Minnesota<sup>2</sup> shows that in 2011, 258,209 low-income renter households paid an unaffordable amount for their housing (over 30% of income), including 133,422 who paid over half their income. During the same year, 91,988 Minnesota households received some kind of federal rental assistance, including 30,458 Section 8 vouchers. Only 36 percent of low-income renters with unaffordable housing were receiving assistance.

By contrast, federal spending on housing assistance for the middle and high income, through the mortgage interest deduction, is almost uncapped and goes to all households who qualify and apply for it. (The limit is \$1 million in mortgage debt on up to two houses.) In 2009, 82 percent of the mortgage interest deduction, or \$39 billion, went to households in the top quintile by income,<sup>3</sup> compared to approximately \$41 billion for all forms of rental assistance to lower-income households.<sup>4</sup>

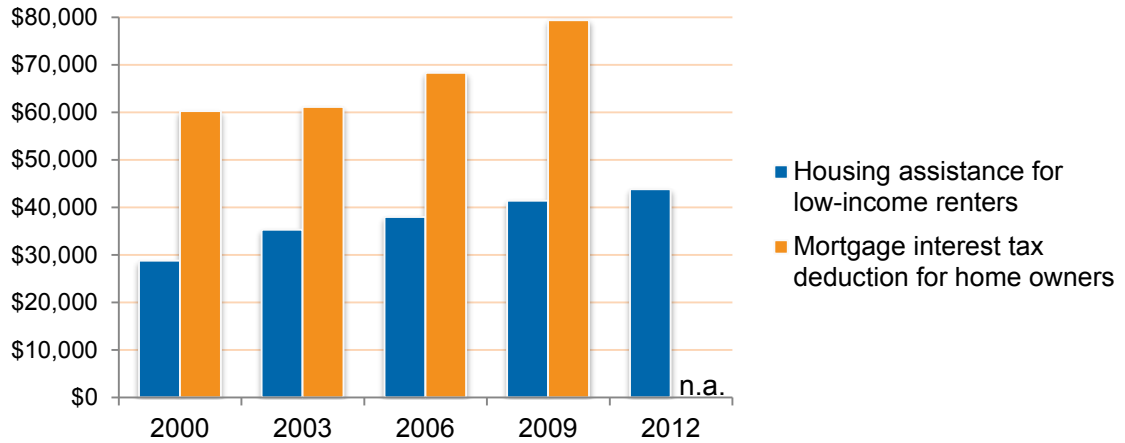
<sup>2</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2012, Dec.19). *Minnesota: Federal rental assistance facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbpp.org/files/4-13-11hous-MN.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Downs, A. (2011). *What's wrong with American housing?* Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Retrieved from [www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/1228\\_housing\\_downs.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/1228_housing_downs.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Office of Management and Budget. (2010.) *Analytical Perspectives: Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2011*, Table 8.7. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>

The chart below compares national tax expenditures for the mortgage interest deduction and the total expenditures for all HUD housing assistance programs for the years of the Minnesota homelessness studies since 2000 (Figure 15).

### 15. Total annual federal expenditures on two types of housing assistance



**Note:** Dollars in millions.

**Sources:** Rental Assistance: Office of Management and Budget (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>); Table 8.7; Mortgage interest deduction: Pew Charitable Trust's Subsidyscope Project analysis of Internal Revenue Service data ([http://subsidyscope.org/tax\\_expenditures/db/group/73/?estimate=2](http://subsidyscope.org/tax_expenditures/db/group/73/?estimate=2))

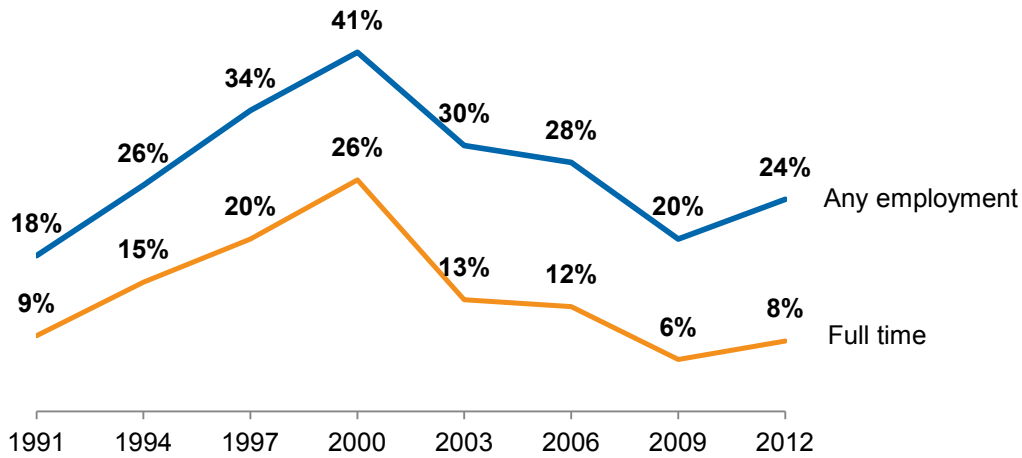
### *Employment and income of homeless adults*

*After a decade of declining employment rates among the homeless, the percent of homeless adults who are employed has increased slightly since 2009, but a large proportion still faces significant barriers to employment.*

The lack of employment and income are not only key reasons why people become homeless, but also primary barriers to becoming stably re-housed. Almost one-quarter (24%) of homeless adults are employed, and eight percent are working full time (35 hours per week or more). The percent of homeless adults who are employed has increased slightly since 2009, but has not yet reached the pre-recession levels of 2006 or the peak employment period of 2000, when 26 percent of study participants had full-time jobs. Figure 16 shows the employment trend since 1991.

**46% of homeless adults have been unemployed for a year or more.**

## 16. Employment trend among homeless adults, 1991-2012



Employed homeless adults average 27 hours of work per week, and more than one-half (56%) have been employed at their main job for at least three months.

Of the 76 percent of homeless adults who are unemployed, 27 percent lost their job in the previous six months and more than one-half (54%) are currently looking for work. The median length of time since unemployed homeless adults last worked is nearly two years (23 months); this is an increase from 16 months in 2009.

**Median length of time unemployed rose from 16 months in 2009 to 23 months in 2012.**

Employment varies by shelter type, gender, and geography.

- Employment is higher among homeless adults in transitional housing (33% employed, 10% full time)
- It is lower among women in battered women’s shelters (17%, 8% full time) and adults not using the formal shelter system (18%, 6% full time)
- Employment is higher in greater Minnesota (28%, 10% full time) than in the Twin Cities metro area (22%, 7% full time)
- Women are more likely than men to be employed (28% vs. 21%)
- Parents who have children with them are also more likely to be employed (33% vs. 20%)

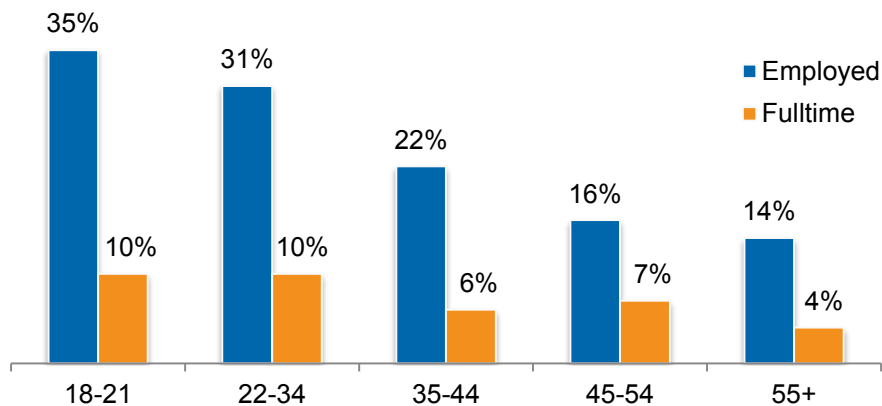
Almost one in five homeless adults (18%) are unemployed *and* do not have a high school education. Higher levels of education correspond to higher levels of employment.

- Homeless adults without a high school education are less likely to be employed (18% vs. 26%)
- Homeless adults with at least some college education are more likely to be employed (30% vs. 22%)

Employment is lower in older age groups (Figure 17). Younger adults age 18-21 are more likely to be employed (35% employed, 10% full time) and older adults age 55 and over are less likely (14% employed, 4% full time) to be employed.

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### 17. Employment by age category



### Conditions affecting employment

The health and social barriers commonly related to homelessness also significantly contribute to unemployment, including long-term unemployment of a year or longer.

- 14% of homeless adults with *substance abuse disorder* were employed (compared to 27% of others)
- 16% of homeless adults with evidence of *traumatic brain injury* were employed (compared to 28% of others)
- 18% of homeless adults with a *significant mental illness* were employed (compared to 32% of all others)

- 18% of homeless adults with a *criminal background or history of incarceration* were employed (compared to 29% of others)
- 21% of homeless adults with a *chronic health condition* were employed (compared to 28% of others)

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## 18. Employment rates by health or other conditions

	Percent of homeless adults with condition who are employed	Percent of homeless adults without condition who are employed
Substance abuse disorder	14%	27%
Traumatic brain injury	16%	28%
Significant mental illness	18%	32%
Criminal background or history	18%	29%
Chronic health condition	21%	28%

Eighty-six percent of homeless adults have at least one of the five health and social barriers listed above. Their employment outlook is less promising than for those with no barriers. Over one-third (37%) of those with no barriers are employed (13% full time), compared to 22% of those who have at least one of the barriers (7% full time).

Employment barriers related to child care, substance abuse, and criminal history vary by gender.

- Currently unemployed homeless women were more likely than men to report barriers related to child care (19% vs. 1%). These percentages are about the same as in 2009.
- Currently homeless men are more likely than women to experience job barriers related to substance abuse (33% vs. 20%) and a criminal background or previous incarceration (27% vs. 13%).

### Income and wages

Most (87%) homeless adults reported income during October 2012, and the median income for the month was \$400 (up significantly from \$300 in 2009, and the same as reported in 2006 [\$400]).

- Income was higher among the employed (\$800 vs. \$203 for the unemployed), women (\$500 vs. \$203 for men), and homeless adults in greater Minnesota (\$403 vs. \$381 in the Twin Cities metro area).

Figure 19 shows the top five sources of income reported by homeless adults in October 2012. Four out of five (81%) homeless adults reported income from at least one of these as their main source of income during the month. Seventy percent of employed homeless adults reported hourly wages of \$8.00 or more, and one-third (34%) reported hourly wages of \$10.00 or more.

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### 19. Top five sources of income, October 2012

	A source of income*	Main source of income*
General assistance	28% 36% for men	24% 32% for men
Employment (steady or temporary)	26%	23%
Social Security, SSI, or SSDI	19%	19%
MFIP	19% 35% for women	15% 27% for women
Family and friends	15%	6%

**\*Note:** In the column showing “A source,” percentages are based on all adults, including those with no income. In the column showing “main source,” percentages are based only on those who reported any income.

## Military service

*Nearly half of homeless veterans have a service-related health problem.*

About one in ten (9%) homeless adults have served in the military, a proportion that is the same as in the overall adult Minnesota population and a result that is similar to previous surveys.<sup>5</sup>

**One-tenth of all homeless adults, and one-quarter of those age 55 or older, are military veterans.**

- The proportion of homeless men who are military veterans (17%) is much higher than the proportion of women (1%)
- Homeless adults age 55 or older are more likely to have served in the military than those 54 or younger (24% vs. 7%)

Among those who served in the military, two-thirds (67%) served for more than two years, and 70 percent received an honorable discharge. One-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans served in a combat zone; of these, the highest proportions spent time in Vietnam (39%) and the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (30%). One-half (50%) of homeless veterans served in the Army, 16 percent served in the Navy, 16 percent served in the Marines, 9 percent served in the National Guard, and 6 percent served in the Air Force.

Nearly half of homeless veterans report having service-related health problems (47%). Of these, mental health problems are the most common for both men and women.

Fewer than half report that they are now receiving any veterans' benefits. The benefits being received by the most veterans are Veterans Administration Medical services and service-connected compensation.

- 18% of homeless veterans report a service-related mental health problem (44% of those with any service-related health problem)
- 34% of Iraq/Afghanistan combat veterans have evidence of TBI (traumatic brain injury)
- 34% are receiving Veterans Administration Medical Care services (VAMC)
- 19% are receiving service-connected compensation
- 56% are not receiving any veterans' benefits

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. *2011 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates* [statistics from data file]. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>



- 34% have had contact with a County or Tribal Veterans Services Officer during the past 12 months

## Health of homeless adults

*Mental, physical, and chemical health issues continue to be significant concerns among the homeless population, and these conditions often occur together. Physical and mental health conditions have increased significantly over the last decade, while chemical health issues have remained relatively flat. Most homeless adults have some kind of health coverage, but many need to see health professionals for current ailments.*

More than one-half (55%) of homeless adults report a **significant mental illness**. This includes being told by a doctor or nurse that they have at least one diagnosis including major depression (38%), bipolar disorder (21%), a personality disorder such as antisocial or obsessive-compulsive disorders (16%), or schizophrenia (6%) or other paranoid or delusional disorders (7%).

**More than half of homeless adults have a significant mental illness.**

One-half (51%) of homeless adults reported a **chronic health condition**. The most common of these are high blood pressure (29%) or other heart or circulatory problems (10%), asthma (20%) and other respiratory problems (11%), and diabetes (9%).

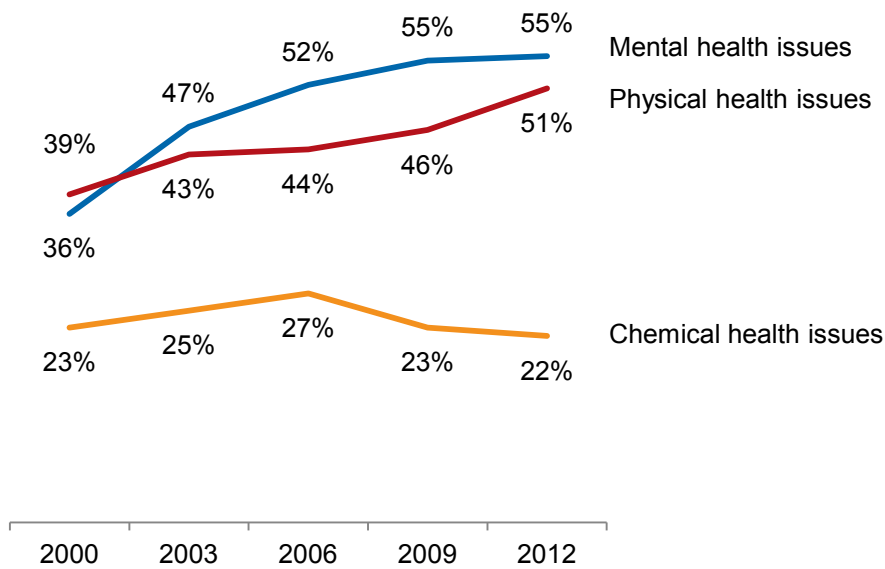
- Chronic health conditions are less prevalent among younger age groups (37% for ages 18-21 and 43% for ages 22-34), and more prevalent among older age groups (62% for ages 45-54 and 69% for ages 55+)

Almost one-quarter (22%) of homeless adults have been diagnosed with a **substance abuse disorder**, including either alcohol abuse disorder (17%) or drug abuse disorder (14%).

- Substance abuse disorder rates are lower among adults who had children with them (9%), women in battered women's shelters (11%), and African American adults (14%)

The rates of chronic health conditions and mental illness have increased since 2000. By contrast, the rate of substance abuse disorder has dropped since 2006 (Figure 20). Notably, 2012 is the first year since the statewide study began in 1991 that the rate of mental illness did not increase.

## 20. Physical, mental, and chemical health issues, 2000-2012



**Traumatic brain injury (TBI)** also represents a considerable health concern among the homeless population. Since 2006, the homeless survey has tracked evidence of TBI, and in 2012, nearly one-third (31%) of homeless adults reported evidence of TBI (similar to previous years). Evidence of TBI includes any respondent who reports being hit on the head so hard they were knocked unconscious or saw stars *and* who subsequently began to have problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people.

**Nearly one-third of homeless adults have histories that suggest likely traumatic brain injury.**

Brain injuries are often under-diagnosed among populations receiving assistance. Although the Brain Injury Foundation considers the experiences described above to be strong evidence of likely brain injury, only 11 percent of homeless adults report being told by a doctor or nurse in the previous two years that they have had a concussion or TBI.

One-third (34%) of homeless adults report a cognitive impairment (confusion, memory issues, or indecisiveness to the point that it interferes with daily activities), and 44 percent report a physical, mental, or other condition that limits either the work they can do or their daily activities.

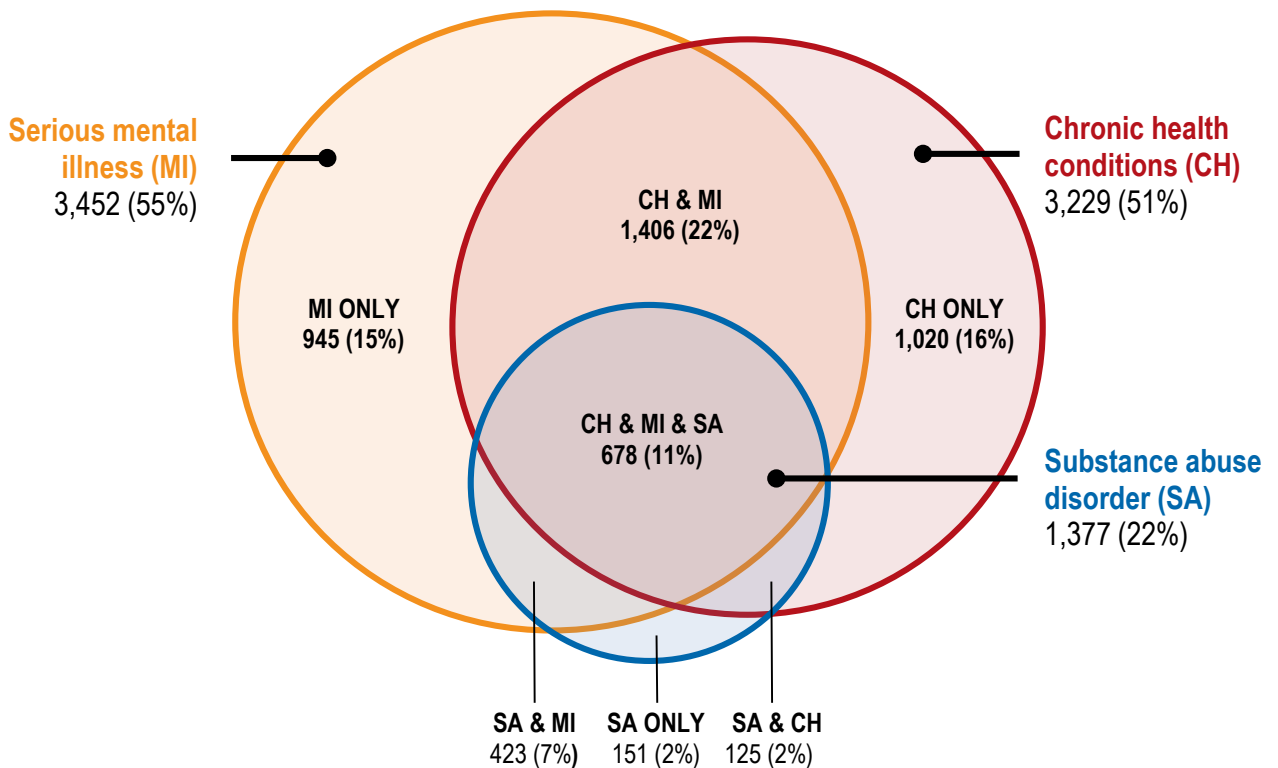
## Health conditions often occur together

Health issues in the homeless adult population are characterized by high levels of co-occurrence (Figure 21). Forty-two percent of homeless adults have more than one of the three most common conditions (significant mental illness, chronic health condition, or substance abuse disorder). One in ten (11%) reports all three. Substance abuse disorder is particularly likely to co-occur with other conditions; only 2 percent of homeless adults report substance abuse disorder without one of the other two conditions.

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### 21. Incidence and co-occurrence of health conditions among homeless adults

**Total homeless adults surveyed:** 6,273 (100%)  
Proportion with none of these three disabilities: 1,525 (24%)  
Proportion with multiple: 2,632 (42%)



These issues compound further when adding other common conditions. **Only 18 percent of homeless adults do not have any of the conditions above, or evidence of a traumatic brain injury, cognitive impairment, or a condition that limits their work or daily activities.** Almost two-thirds (63%) of homeless adults have more than one of these chronic conditions. This fact has significant implications for service needs, since treatment that addresses only one condition but not others that are also present has a lower likelihood of success.

## Treatment and health care

Two-fifths of homeless adults say that they need to see a health professional for physical health problems (38%) or for emotional health problems (40%), and one-half (51%) need to see a dentist for dental, tooth, or gum issues. Ten percent report needing services related to alcohol or substance abuse issues. These rates are similar to those reported in 2009.

**8 in 10 homeless adults have some type of health insurance or coverage, but most need to see health professionals for various ailments.**

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of homeless adults have received recent care for their conditions, but a sizeable fraction have not. Three-quarters (76%) of homeless adults who report a significant mental illness also report receiving inpatient or outpatient mental health care in the previous two years. More than two-thirds (69%) of homeless adults who report at least one chronic health condition also report receiving care for their condition(s). Two-thirds (66%) of homeless adults who report a substance abuse disorder also report receiving inpatient or outpatient treatment in the previous two years.

Most (79%) homeless adults report having some type of medical coverage during the month of the survey. This is up slightly from 2009, when 76 percent reported having medical coverage, and up significantly from the 69 percent who had coverage in 2006. Seventy-two percent of homeless adults report they have a regular place where they go to receive medical care. Of this group, 73 percent report that this place is a clinic that requires insurance or fees. For 11 percent, it is a free clinic, and for 6 percent, it is an emergency room. Among veterans, 34 percent report that they are now receiving Veterans Administration Medical Care (VAMC).

Free clinics play an important role for many homeless adults. During October, 21 percent had received services from a free medical clinic, 10 percent had received services from a free mental health clinic, and 9 percent had received services from a free dental clinic. Among those who had used a free medical clinic, nearly half (46%) rated it one of the three most helpful services they had received during the month.

## Service use

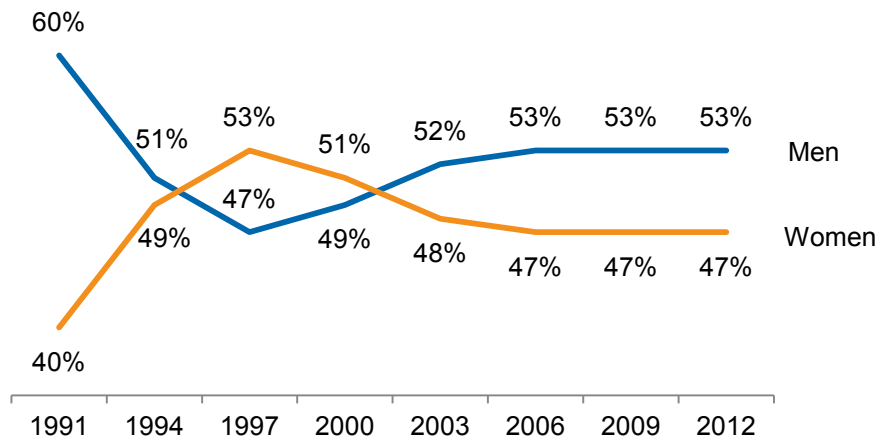
*Not surprisingly, meeting basic needs for food, clothing, transportation, and health care dominate service use among homeless adults. A mix of services is important. There is great variation in the usage rates for services depending on gender, age, type of shelter, and geography. Food assistance is used by four out of five homeless adults, and heads the list of services that they find most helpful.*

Four out of five (80%) homeless adults received at least one type of **food assistance** service during the month of the survey, including Food Stamps (67%), meals from a hot-meal program (31%), food from a food shelf (31%), or WIC benefits (11%).

**80% of homeless adults received food assistance services during October.**

- Food assistance is higher among women (85% vs. 76%) primarily because of higher usage of Food Stamps (77% vs. 58%) and Women, Infants, and Children food program (WIC, 21% vs. 2%). However, men were almost twice as likely (39% vs. 21%) to use hot meal programs.
- Food Stamps are the most used service among homeless adults (Figure 22).

### 22. Food Stamp use by homeless adults in the month of the survey, 1991-2012



More than two-fifths (44%) of homeless adults received **transportation assistance** (including bus cards) during the month of the survey.

- Rates were higher in the Twin Cities (51%) compared to greater Minnesota (30%)
- Women were also more likely than men (50% vs. 38%) to receive transportation assistance, particularly women in battered women's shelters (62%)

- Young adults age 18-21 (56%) were also considerably more likely than older adults age 55+ (34%) to receive transportation assistance

Two in five (40%) homeless adults received *free or almost free clothing* during the month of the survey.

Two in five (40%) homeless adults received at least one *health-related service* during the month of the survey, including using the emergency room (26%), a free medical clinic (21%), free mental health services (10%), or free dental services (9%).

- Receiving health-related services was more common in the Twin Cities metro (45%) than in greater Minnesota (31%).
- Emergency room usage was higher among women in battered women's shelters (36%) compared to adults living in other settings.

Almost one-third (31%) of homeless adults used either *drop-in center services* (24%) or *outreach services* (15%) during the month of the survey.

- Rates were higher among those not staying in shelters (43%) and those in emergency shelter (36%).
- Men were more likely (37% vs. 24%) to use these services primarily because they were twice as likely to use drop-in centers (31% vs. 16%).

More than one-fifth (22%) of homeless adults received *employment-related* services, including help to find a job (20%) and job training (9%) during the month of the survey (Figure 23).

- Homeless adults who have children with them were more likely than other homeless adults to receive employment-related services (30% vs. 19%).
- Older age groups were less likely than younger age groups to receive employment-related services. More than one-third (36%) of those age 18-21 received employment services, one-quarter (26%) of those age 22-34 received services, one-fifth (19%) of those 35-44 received services, 16 percent of those 45-54, and 11 percent of those 55 or older received services.

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### 23. Types of assistance received by homeless adults in October 2012

<b>Food assistance</b>	80%
Food stamps	67%
Hot meal program	31%
Food shelf	31%
WIC	11%
<b>Transportation assistance</b>	44%
<b>Free/almost free clothing</b>	40%
<b>Health-related service</b>	40%
Emergency room	26%
Free medical clinic	21%
Free mental health clinic	10%
Free dental clinic	9%
<b>Outreach-related</b>	31%
Drop-in center services	24%
Outreach services	15%
<b>Employment-related services</b>	22%
Help to find a job	20%
Job training	10%

## Most helpful services

Four of the top eight most helpful services (among those who received them) were food-related services (Figure 24).

**Food Stamps are not only the most-used service, but also the most important one to homeless adults.**

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### 24. Most helpful services received in the past month by homeless adults who received the service

Service	Percent of those who received the service
Food Stamps (SNAP)	73%
WIC	63%
State or Federal Veterans benefits	60%
Transportation assistance	56%
Hot meal program	46%
Free medical clinic	46%
Drop-in centers	45%
Food shelves	42%

*Note:* Top eight services (based on % of those receiving the service) out of 18 services asked about.

### Turn-away, waiting list, and loss of benefits

More than one-fifth (22%) of homeless adults were unable to obtain shelter because of lack of bed spaces in the three months before the survey, including more than two-fifths (42%) of women in battered women's shelters.

As stated in the previous section, a significant proportion of people who are eligible for housing assistance are unable to access it (see page 24). During the 12 months preceding the study, one-fifth (19%) of homeless adults reported that they had lost at least one service or benefit that they had previously received. One-quarter (25%) of homeless adults reported that they needed assistance in applying or reapplying for services or benefits.



# Children and youth

*Children and youth make up almost one-half of the total homeless population.*

*Unaccompanied youth (those on their own, up to and including age 21) have unique characteristics and needs that are different from those of the homeless adult population.*

*Homeless families also have distinctly different experiences and barriers and require assistance that takes their children's needs into account.*

This section provides a concise analysis of young people in the homeless population. This group as a whole makes up almost one-half (46%) of the homeless population counted on the night of the survey and includes minors and young adults on their own (11% of those counted) and children with their homeless parents (35% of those counted).

As part of the statewide homelessness study, we define three segments of homeless persons age 21 and younger.

- **Minors** age 17 and under who are homeless and on their own
- **Young adults** age 18 through 21 who are homeless and on their own
- **Children** age 17 and under who are homeless with their parents

Unaccompanied minors and young adults are discussed together below in the section on unaccompanied homeless youth. Children with their parents are discussed in the following section.

## Homeless children with their parents

*Children who are homeless with their parents make up about one-third of all the homeless people in Minnesota. Half of these children are under age 6. Homeless children are typically with their mother only, but the percentage of two-parent homeless families grew by 22 percent from 2009 to 2012. Compared to children in traditional shelters (emergency shelters and transitional housing), children with parents staying in informal – and frequently changing – arrangements are more likely to have difficulty with peer relationships and school.*

The study documented 3,546 children who were homeless with their parents on October 25, 2012, a 9 percent increase from 2009. This increase was almost entirely in the number of children in shelter programs, particularly emergency shelters and battered women’s shelters. The number in transitional housing and the number staying outside the shelter system were essentially unchanged from 2009.

We estimate there are a total of 3,931 minor children homeless with their parents on any given night. This number excludes a far larger number of children who are with parents who are doubled-up with friends or families and eligible for school services to homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Besides the children who are homeless with their parents, at least another 2,000 are affected by a parent’s homelessness but are not with that parent.

### ***Demographics***

One-half (51%) of homeless children with their parents are age 5 or younger. More than one-third (36%) are between 6 and 12 years old, and 13 percent are between 13 and 17 years old.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of children are in the care of their mother or a single female caregiver. Four percent are in the care of a father or male caregiver. One-quarter (24%) are in the care of two parents or caregivers.

Average ages and family composition are very similar to proportions in 2009.

**Homeless children with parents make up one-third of the homeless population on any given night in MN.**

**51% of homeless children with their parents are age 5 or younger.**

## ***Children's health, nutrition, and mental health***

Study information about children is based on questions that were asked of parents. Unless otherwise specified, percentages are frequencies of parents who report certain characteristics of a child or children who are with them (not percentages of children).

Among parents whose children were with them:

- 26% said that at least one of their children had an emotional or behavioral problem (up from 21% in 2009). The closest general population comparison for this figure is 7% (among children age 4–17).<sup>6</sup>
- 10% could not get needed dental care for at least one child in the past year
- 15% had at least one child with a chronic or severe physical health problem
- 11% said their children skipped meals in the previous month because there was not enough money to buy food
- 6% had been unable to obtain needed health care for a least one child in the past year
- 5% had been unable to get needed mental health care for at least one child in the past year

With the exception of emotional/behavioral problems, these proportions are similar to those found in 2009 overall.

## ***Education***

Homeless children experience several different kinds of issues with school because of their homelessness or housing instability.

Among homeless parents of ***preschool-age children*** (age 5 or younger), 42 percent report having a child who is enrolled in a Head Start program or an early childhood program. However, 15 percent of those (or 6 percent of all parents of preschoolers) report that their children have difficulty attending because of their housing situation.

Among homeless parents who have ***school-age children*** living with them, most (87%) report that all of their children attended school on the day of the survey. However, 13 percent report that a child has trouble going to school because of their housing situation, and 42 percent report a child had to change schools due to their housing situation.

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<sup>6</sup> Pastor, P. N., Reuben, C. A., & Duran, C. R. (2012). *Identifying emotional and behavioral problems in children aged 4-17 years: United States, 2001-2007* (No. 48). National health statistics reports. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

- Parents in transitional housing are most likely to report that all their children attended school on the day of the survey (90%)
- Parents in battered women’s shelters are least likely to report all their children attended school on the day of the survey (82%), and more likely to report that their children have trouble attending school due to their housing situation (20%) or have had to change schools due to their housing situation (55%)
- Parents interviewed in outreach settings who have spent a majority of the previous month doubled-up are most likely to report their children have trouble going to school because of their housing situation (33%)
- Other groups of parents more likely to report all of their children attended on the day of the survey are those who are employed parents (94% vs. 84%) and those in the Twin Cities metro (89% vs. 84%)

One in ten (11%) homeless parents with school-age children living with them has a child who has repeated a grade (down from 19% in 2009). Almost one-half (47%) have at least one school-age child with learning problems that resulted in the need for additional services, and about one in five report a child with a drop in grades (19%), excessive absences (17%) or tardies (14%), or dismissals or suspension (14%).

- Parents who are not staying in shelter are most likely to report a child who has experienced a drop in grades (27%), excessive tardies (24%), or skipping school entirely (9%)

School-age homeless children also have difficult social experiences. Almost one-quarter (23%) of homeless parents with school-age children had a child who was having difficulty relating to peers, and one-third (32%) reported that their child had been the victim of bullying. One-fifth (20%) reported a child who was displaying bullying, aggression, or antisocial behavior.

**One-third of homeless parents report they have a school-age child who has been the victim of bullying.**

Parents living outside of the shelter system report elevated incidences of children who are victims of bullying (44%).

## YOUTH OUTSIDE OF THE SHELTER SYSTEM

Finding youth outside of the shelter system is extremely difficult, and the numbers reported here are an undercount. Youth who are homeless and on their own tend to be some of the most difficult to find of those experiencing homelessness. Homeless youth are less likely than adults to stay in shelters, more often staying temporarily with friends or in places not intended for habitation. Thus, they are less likely to be found in a one-night survey. Compared to homeless adults and families, homeless youth have fewer shelters available and fewer legal provisions for housing and other basic needs. Although it is difficult to find persons staying outside the shelter system, nearly 4 in 10 youth on their own in the 2012 study were found outside of the shelter system – a higher percentage than any other age group.

## Unaccompanied homeless youth

*Homeless youth on their own often come from troubled backgrounds and face significant challenges. These include physical and mental health issues and histories of abuse and other trauma. A majority have a parent who has been incarcerated. Over one-quarter are parents themselves, and one-fifth have children with them.*

Because youth may be eligible for and participate in various programs and services through age 21, the following section combines both unaccompanied minors and young adults for an analysis of all homeless youth. Where differences between these populations are found, we describe them in the findings. However, where there were similarities in the responses of youth minors and young adults, we combine the responses of all “youth” we interviewed (both youth minors and young adults).

### *Numbers*

On October 25, 2012, the study **counted 1,151** youth on their own (down slightly from 1,268 counted in 2009); 146 were age 17 and younger, 1,005 were 18 through 21. This comes after a steep rise in youth homelessness between 2006 and 2009 (up 46%). Compared to their representation in the total Minnesota population, youth ages 21 and younger are the age group most likely to be homeless.

On any given night, an **estimated 4,080** Minnesota youth experience homelessness. This includes an estimated 2,211 minor youth ages 17 and under and 1,869 young adults age 18 through 21. These estimates are much higher than in previous years, because of updated ways of estimating youth staying outside of the shelter system. Nevertheless, these numbers are still conservative estimates; the actual number of unaccompanied youth is likely considerably higher.

## Demographics

The average age for youth minors on their own was 16 (19 for young adults). Fifty-five percent of homeless youth are female; this is down from 61 percent in 2009. National studies show that girls are more likely to seek shelter and other services and thus be included in a one-night snapshot.

The number of homeless youth of color is disproportionately high compared to their prevalence in the general population of Minnesota youth (Figure 25). Seven in 10 homeless youth (70%) were African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, or of mixed race, compared to just 24 percent of all Minnesota youth.<sup>7</sup> In the Twin Cities metro area, 82 percent were youth of color; in greater Minnesota, youth of color comprised 48 percent of the youth homeless population found on the day of the study. These are similar percentages to 2009.

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### 25. Racial or ethnic background of unaccompanied homeless youth (age 21 and younger) for Twin Cities metropolitan area and greater Minnesota

	Statewide	Twin Cities Metro	Greater Minnesota
African American	37%	54%	16%
African Native	3%	4%	<1%
American Indian	13%	5%	23%
Asian	2%	1%	2%
White	33%	18%	52%
Other/More than one	12%	17%	6%
Hispanic – may be of any race	10%	10%	9%

For homeless youth on their own:

- The vast majority of homeless youth grew up in Minnesota (76%). Compared to 2009, this proportion has increased (up from 69%).
- Most homeless youth grew up living with biological parents (65%). Others lived with grandparents or other family members (11%), in a blended family (9%), in a foster family (6%), or in an adoptive family (5%).
- Ten percent of homeless youth had lived in an adoptive home at some point in their lives (6% of youth minors and 11% of young adults)
- Four in 10 youth (42%) identified by the study as homeless were found outside of the Twin Cities in greater Minnesota (49% of youth minors and 41% of young adults)

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates [statistics from data file]. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

- Fifteen percent of youth identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or were unsure about their sexual orientation. Thirteen youth (2%) identified themselves as transgender.

### *Education and employment*

A growing proportion of homeless minors age 17 and younger are enrolled and attending school.

- Nearly all youth minors are enrolled in school (95%)
- The percentage of youth minors who attended school on the day of the survey increased over the past 12 years, from 48% in 2000 to 69% in 2012
- Fifty-eight percent of 19-21 year olds had completed high school or received their GED

Thirty-one percent of youth were employed at the time of the survey. Eight percent were employed full time (35 or more hours per week).

### *Living arrangements*

On the night of the study, youth were most likely to be found outside the shelter system. When asked where they had stayed in the 30 days prior to the study, 6 in 10 had stayed outside, and half had doubled-up or couch-hopped. Only one-third had stayed in shelter (Figures 26-27).

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#### **26. Where unaccompanied youth were staying on the night of the 2012 survey**

	<b>Emergency shelter</b>	<b>Transitional housing</b>	<b>Battered women's shelter</b>	<b>Outreach (not in shelter)</b>
Minors	39%	14%	0%	47%
Young adults	20%	39%	3%	38%
All youth	23%	36%	2%	39%

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#### **27. Where unaccompanied youth stayed in the 30 days prior to the 2012 survey**

	<b>Emergency shelter/ transitional housing</b>	<b>Doubled-up</b>	<b>Outside</b>	<b>Housed</b>
Minors	52%	62%	23%	31%
Young adults	64%	52%	35%	9%
All youth	62%	53%	33%	12%

**Note:** Row totals are greater than 100% because many youth stayed in multiple settings during the month prior to the survey.

## ***Youth affected by parental incarceration***

For the first time, the 2012 study asked unaccompanied youth if they had a parent who had ever been incarcerated. A surprising 60 percent of youth have a parent who has been incarcerated at some point, and 13 percent have a parent who is currently incarcerated.<sup>8</sup>

**60 percent of youth have a parent who has been incarcerated.**

## ***Out-of-home placements***

Almost three-fifths (58%) of homeless youth have experienced at least one of the following social service placements:

- 35% of youth have lived in a ***foster home***
- 23% of youth have lived in a ***facility for persons with emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems*** (up from 18% in 2009)
- 22% of youth have lived in a ***group home***

Youth in greater Minnesota are more likely to have a history of placements than youth in the Twin Cities area (65% versus 54%). The statewide total of 58 percent who have experienced one of these placements is down from 64 percent in 2009 and 70 percent in 2006.

- In the 12 months prior to the survey, 16 percent of youth left some type of social service placement, including almost one-third (30%) of this group who had recently left foster care or a group residential facility
- Thirty-seven percent had been held more than a week in a correctional facility (24% of minors and 40% of young adults)
- Sixty-five percent had either a social service or corrections placement (59% of minors and 66% of young adults)

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<sup>8</sup> In the separate report on homeless youth (fall 2013), these facts will be further explored to understand the impact of parental incarceration on youth homelessness.



## *History of childhood trauma*

Most homeless youth have histories of abuse and neglect (Figure 28). While female youth have higher rates of each of the kinds of maltreatment, they are especially more likely to have been victims of sexual abuse (38% vs. 14% for male youth).

**More than half (55%) of all homeless youth have been abused or neglected.**

### **28. Childhood histories of trauma among unaccompanied youth**

	<b>All youth</b>	<b>Female youth</b>	<b>Male youth</b>
Physically abused as a child	44%	46%	41%
Sexually abused as a child	27%	38%	14%
Neglected as a child	31%	33%	28%
At least one of the above	55%	59%	51%

## *Health issues*

As among adults, high proportions of homeless youth have physical, mental, and chemical health problems. Slightly over half (52%) have a serious mental illness, with depression being the most common at 29 percent. Slightly over one-third (36%) have a chronic physical health condition, most often high blood pressure (10%) or chronic lung or respiratory problems (7%). Sixteen percent have been told by a medical professional within the past two years that they have a drug abuse disorder (14%) or an alcohol abuse disorder (10%). Nearly one-quarter (23%) have suffered a head injury that was followed by the onset of symptoms indicative of a traumatic brain injury.

**52% of homeless youth report some type of significant mental health problem, and 36% have chronic physical health issues.**

- Compared to male youth, female youth are more likely to have a chronic physical health condition
- Male youth are more likely to have a mental illness, traumatic brain injury, or a substance abuse disorder

### **29. Health issues among unaccompanied youth**

	<b>All youth</b>	<b>Female youth</b>	<b>Male youth</b>
Chronic physical health condition	36%	41%	31%
Significant mental illness	52%	45%	58%
Substance abuse disorder	16%	13%	19%
Evidence of traumatic brain injury	23%	19%	27%
At least one of the above	69%	73%	63%

## *Violence and exploitation*

Thirty percent of homeless youth have stayed in an abusive situation because they did not have other housing options, and about one-sixth (17%) have traded sex for shelter, food, clothing, or other essentials (Figure 30). These rates are generally higher among female youth.

**21% of homeless youth have been attacked or beaten while homeless.**

### **30. Violence and sexual exploitation among unaccompanied youth**

	<b>All youth</b>	<b>Female youth</b>	<b>Male youth</b>
Female youth homeless due to domestic violence	16%	28%	-
Stayed in an abusive situation due to no other housing options	30%	35%	24%
Physically or sexually attacked while homeless	21%	26%	17%
Has been sexual with someone only for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, or food	17%	15%	18%
At least one of the above	46%	51%	39%

## *Experiences with and reasons for homelessness*

On average, homeless youth first left home at age 16 and more than one-half (57%) have been homeless for less than one year. Nearly three-quarters of youth (73%) have been homeless before their current experience with homelessness (similar to 2009).

**Eight out of 10 homeless youth (84%) report that they have regular contact with a trusted adult**

Eleven percent of youth interviewed had been homeless less than a month, and 43 percent had been homeless a year or more. Over one-half (53%) fit the definition of long-term homeless as defined by the State of Minnesota (homeless a year or more in the present episode, or homeless four or more times in the past three years).

Conditions for homeless youth are difficult and sometimes dangerous. One-third (33%) slept outside at least one night out of the previous 30 nights. More than one-half (53%) were “doubled-up” at least one night of the previous 30. One-quarter (25%) of homeless youth had been turned away from shelter in the past three months because there were not available bed spaces. One-fifth (21%) of homeless youth had been attacked or beaten while they were homeless.

Figure 31 shows the most common reasons that homeless youth cite for leaving home.

### 31. Youth’s views of what led to their homelessness, top 10 factors

	A main cause	Part of the cause or a main cause
Told to leave or locked out	30%	59%
Fighting frequently with parents or guardians	29%	61%
Someone in home they couldn’t stand to be around	23%	56%
Not willing to live by parents’ rules	12%	48%
Neglect or parents not attending to basic needs	12%	33%
Parents’ use of drugs or alcohol	12%	30%
Didn’t feel safe because of violence in the house	11%	25%
Family lost their housing	11%	23%
Home was too small for everyone to live there	10%	26%
Delinquent activities by the youth	9%	32%

**Note:** Only the top 10 of 17 total factors reported; based on the percent reporting each factor as “a main cause”

Relatively few homeless youth (6%) reported that they were homeless due to a lack of tolerance of their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, of the 15 percent of youth who identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender, over one-quarter (29%) cite this as a contributing factor to their homelessness, including 15 percent who identify it as the main cause.

### *Service use*

Among homeless youth who received services, the following services helped them most:

- Food Stamps (48%)
- Transportation assistance (37%)
- Drop-in centers (21%)
- Food shelves (15%)
- Free clothing shelf (14%)
- Help to find a job (12%)
- Outreach services (11%)
- WIC (11%)

## *Youth with children*

Overall, 29 percent of homeless youth are parents.

- 39% of female youth have any children, but only 16% of male youth
- 9% of minors have any children, and 32% of young adults

**29% of homeless youth are parents, and one out of five has at least one child with them.**

Twenty-one percent have their children with them (35% of female youth and 4% of male youth). Most have only one child (77%), and three-quarters of these children are age two or younger.

# Conclusion

What does this latest study of homelessness tell us? First, it tells us that the problem of homelessness is still with us, despite substantial efforts to fix it. In all likelihood, the numbers we found would be significantly higher were it not for the wide range of supportive services available in Minnesota.

Nonetheless, on one October night in 2012, we found a total of 10,214 homeless people in Minnesota, not including those living on reservation lands. Children who were with their parents make up about one-third of this figure. The total represents a six percent increase over the number found in 2009, and a larger number of homeless people than identified in any previous triennial survey conducted by Wilder Research since this effort began in 1991.

As in all parts of the country, homelessness is more often a problem for people of color than for whites. In fact, the racial differences are more pronounced in Minnesota than just about any other part of the United States. For example, in the Twin Cities metro area, African-Americans make up nearly half of the homeless population while representing only about nine out of 100 in the overall metro area population. Similarly, in greater Minnesota, American Indians account for nearly one in five people experiencing homelessness while numbering only about two in 100 in the general population of greater Minnesota.

Housing for low income people is not available in abundance, and it is least available to low income people with barriers and problems. The vacancy rate for what would be considered affordable units for very low income people is virtually zero. For those fortunate enough to receive some type of public benefit, the gap between what one is able to pay and what housing actually costs is still significant.

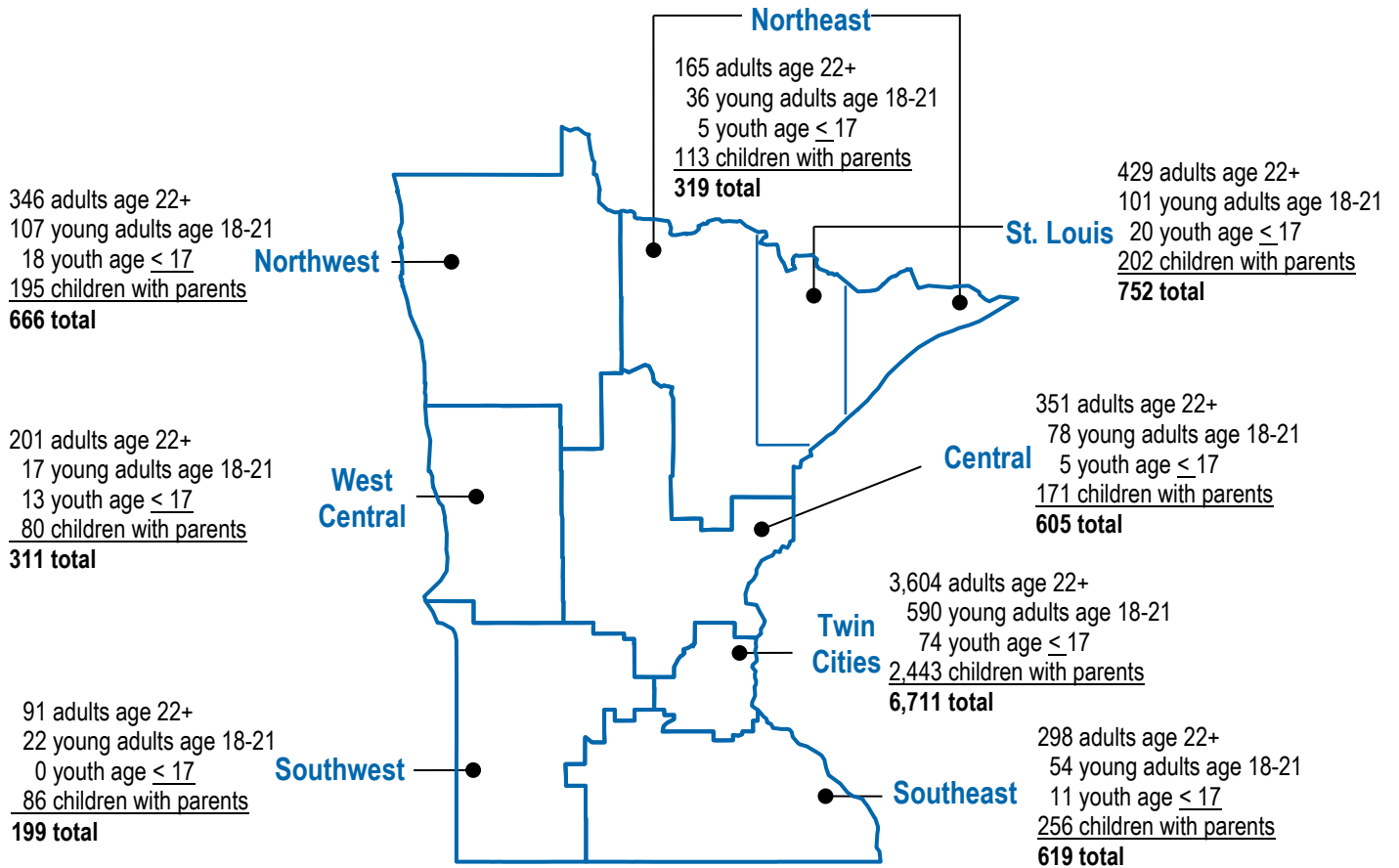
What distinguishes those who have been homeless a short time? Who are those most likely to get back on their feet in short order? It is those with connections and support, previous success in keeping a job, fewer health problems, and less time in desperate poverty.

And what characterizes those who have been homeless for a year or more and those with multiple episodes of homelessness over multiple years (the official federal definition of chronic homelessness)? Previous abuse, chronic health issues, criminal convictions, evictions, chronic substance use, violence, and broken relationships.

The information required to describe this problem is straightforward and clear. And the urgency for addressing homelessness can be demonstrated by one simple fact. When we started the study, there was little evidence that a significant number of adults we had interviewed had been homeless as children. Today, however, nearly 25 percent of adults

report that their first experience of homelessness was as a child. Left unabated, we will fully institutionalize shelter systems as the primary housing strategy for the poorest among us. And unfortunately, the numbers are still not going in the right direction. Today, compared to nearly 25 years ago when the study began, the rich have more, the poor have less. And the very poorest, those whose lives have begun with the roughest of starts, those unable to hold a job, those gripped by chronic illness or substance abuse, and those whose connections are weakened or broken, are growing in numbers. The information in this report is intended to describe the needs and barriers faced by homeless adults, youth, and children in ways that can lead to more effective and long-term solutions in Minnesota.

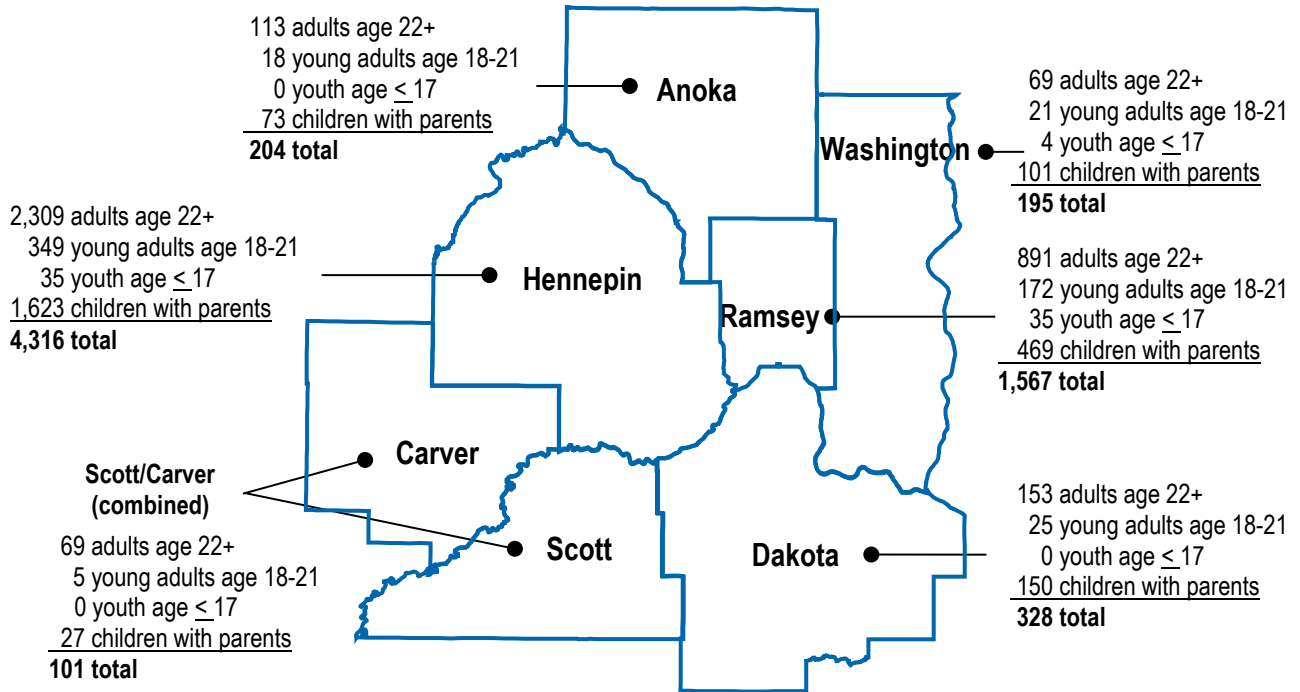
**32. Number of people counted in Minnesota’s homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, and in non-shelter locations by region on October 25, 2012**



**Source:** Wilder Research; data from shelter providers and homeless persons interviewed in non-shelter locations.

**Note:** “Youth” refers to those age 17 and younger who are on their own (not with their families).

**33. Number of people in Twin Cities area homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, and in non-shelter locations by county on October 25, 2012**



**Source:** Wilder Research; data from shelter providers and homeless persons interviewed in non-shelter locations.

**Note:** "Youth" refers to those age 17 and younger who are on their own (not with their families).



## How Wilder Research calculated the estimates

### *One-night estimates*

**Unaccompanied minors (age 17 or younger).** The estimate is based on two national studies. The first was conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office<sup>9</sup> and found that for every child and youth in shelter, there were 2.7 who were doubled-up. This study has been the basis for one-night estimates for the Wilder study for many years, but there is increasing evidence that this method significantly undercounts unsheltered minors. For this reason, we also use the findings of a 1998 national study by the Research Triangle Institute<sup>10</sup> that found that 2.6 percent of all minor youth ages 12 through 17 had been homeless for at least one night over the course of a year and had not used shelter programs. We believe this method is a more reliable estimate for current conditions. However, to be as conservative as possible in our estimates, we have averaged the results from the two methods to prepare our estimates for 2012.

**Young adults (age 18-21).** We have not found any studies that allow us to directly estimate the number of unsheltered young adults. We believe that the pattern of homelessness for this age group is closer to patterns for unaccompanied minors (ages 17 and younger) than to those for the overall adult population. As a conservative estimate, we computed the estimate using the Research Triangle study method described above in the section for minors and also computed an estimate using the method described below for adults. The estimate we report here is the average of the two.

**Adults (age 22 and older) and children who are with their parents.** Our estimate for adults and children is based on a November 2012 report issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)<sup>11</sup>, which compiled one-night point-in-time counts of homeless individuals in January 2012 from Continuum of Care regions nationwide. These found that for every 100 single adults in shelters, there were 60 more not in shelters, and for every 100 persons in families in shelters, there were 25 more not in shelters. We believe that this method computes a conservative estimate.

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office. (1989). Children and youths: About 68,000 homeless and 186,000 in shared housing at any given time. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>10</sup> Ringwalt, C.L. (1998). The prevalence of homelessness among adolescents in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 88(9), 1325-1329.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2012). *2012 Continuum of Care homeless assistance programs: Homeless populations and subpopulations*. Retrieved from [http://www.hudhre.info/CoC\\_Reports/2012\\_national\\_pops\\_sub\\_FULL.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/CoC_Reports/2012_national_pops_sub_FULL.pdf)

## *Annual estimates*

Annual estimates for all age groups follow a method developed by the Urban Institute in their 2001 report on their national homeless study.<sup>12</sup> The method starts with two facts that are known from the survey itself: how many people were in shelters on the night of the survey plus how many were enumerated in non-survey locations; and how long they had been homeless on that night.

We assume that the people interviewed on the night of the survey are representative of others who might have been interviewed had we chosen a different night of the year. Since the Urban Institute study found considerably more homeless persons in a February count than in the fall (October and November), our choice of an October date for the Minnesota survey makes this a conservative assumption.

On the night of the survey, we found 121 people who had become homeless within the most recent week. Over the course of a year, there are 51 additional weeks. Our 121 people thus represent (121 times 51) or 5,171 people homeless over the course of a year. Similarly, we found 290 people who had been homeless more than a week but not more than a month. To represent the additional 11 months in the year, we add (290 times 11) or 3,190 people to the annual total. We add more based on similar computations for those homeless for one to three months (for which there are three additional periods in the year) and those homeless four to six months (for which there is one additional period in the year). For those homeless between six months and a year, we make the conservative assumption that all had been homeless for the full year, and add no additional numbers to the annual estimate. Similarly, those homeless for a year or longer, and those who did not answer the question about length of homelessness, are included in the annual estimate but with no additions to represent the balance of the year.

As a final step, the estimated total was reduced to account for people who experience more than one episode of homelessness in a year. Based on the Urban Institute's study, this is assumed to be 10 percent of adults. The Urban Institute interviewed extremely few minors, so we do not consider it a reliable guide to the incidence of repeat episodes for minors. As a conservative estimate, we assume 18 percent had repeat episodes, and reduce the numbers for minors accordingly. We also assume that young adults in the 18 to 21 age bracket experience more repeat episodes than adults but fewer than minors, and use a 14 percent reduction factor for them.

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<sup>12</sup> Burt, M., Aron, L.Y., Lee, E., & Valente, J. (2001). *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing?* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

# Learn more at our website:

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<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Areas/Homelessness/Pages/Statewide-Homeless-Study-Most-Recent-Results.aspx>

Detailed data tables from the 2012 and 2009 studies at

<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Areas/Homelessness/Pages/Statewide-Homeless-Study-Detailed-Data.aspx>

All homeless publications from Wilder Research at

<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Pages/results-Homelessness-Housing.aspx>

Study findings about homeless youth at

<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Areas/Homelessness/Pages/Homeless-Youth-In-Minnesota.aspx>

Homeless service use (HMIS reports) at

<http://www.wilder.org/redirects/HomelessServiceUseinMinnesota.html>