

Homeless youth in Minnesota

*2003 Statewide survey of
people without permanent shelter*

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 5

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Wilder Research
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-647-4600
www.wilder.org

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Project staff

Greg Owen, *Project Director*

Greg is a Consulting Scientist at Wilder Research and directed the Center's first study of Saint Paul's homeless population in 1984. He was responsible for overall project design and oversight.

June Heineman, *Research Associate*

June coordinated Wilder's work with the volunteer interviewers and the shelters that serve adults and children. June was responsible for the data preparation, data analysis, table preparation, and report writing.

Ellen Shelton, *Research Scientist and Policy Analyst*

Ellen contributed to the study design and analysis and was responsible for examining the policy implications of study findings.

Michelle Decker Gerrard, *Research Scientist*

Michelle coordinated the efforts of outreach workers and volunteers who interviewed youth and adults in non-shelter locations. Michelle was responsible for data analysis and report writing.

Mark Anton, *Research Analyst*

Mark conducted data analysis for the study, including table preparation, statistical summaries, and sample weighting.

Ginger Hope, *Communications Manager*

Ginger assisted in preparing and disseminating study materials, including reports and web site content.

Marilyn Conrad, *Administrative Services Manager*

Marilyn supervised report production and coordinated mailings, survey distribution, and honoraria to participants. She also developed the web-based data tables of survey results.

Karen Ulstad, *Survey Research Coordinator*

Karen assisted in the coordination of volunteer interviewers and shelter providers. Karen also was involved in collecting the shelter counts from the providers and preparing the surveys for data entry.

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Pat Leary from the Minnesota Department of Human Services helped identify sites throughout the state where homeless people could be found. He and his staff provided historical data from the Department's quarterly shelter counts.

Carolee Kelley, Pam Rienstatler, and Dave Schultz from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Sheila Brunelle from the Minnesota Department of Health consulted on health and service questions.

In addition to those named above, many others helped with the design of the survey including: Jim Anderson, Patty Beech, Angie Bernhard, Bill Donnay, Mary Ulland Evans, Dennis Forsberg, Jonathan Farmer, Lisa Graphenteen, Chip Hallbach, Mark Hendrickson, Ginger Hope, Leona Humphrey, Tim Jorissen, Rachael Kincaid, Kim Leiberman, Jane Lawrenz, Rhonda McCall, Gale McEvoy, Tina O'Malley, John Petroskas, Paula Phillips, Lisa Potswald, Mary Riley, Dale Rollie, Barb Sipson, Christy Snow, Trinetta Thunstrom, Laura Turner, Rich Wayman, and Patrick Wood.

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This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the study respondents who answered questions and described their personal experiences in shelters, transitional programs, drop-in centers, on the streets, and in other locations. Our report is dedicated to them.

Volunteers

Volunteer interviewers of homeless youth

Jose Acuna	Sky M. Jager	April Rasly
Marya Anderson	Mohamed Jams	Janelle N. Reich
Randy Brazil	Heidi M. Jaros	Suzanne E. Rice
Lisa Christensen	Crystal Johnson	Kris Robinson
Taraya Clark	Kami J. Kelm	Virginia Rodriguez-Doerr
Ryan Delaney	Rachel A. Kincaid	Suzanna J. Roettger
Megan Fatheree	Jen Kovash	Gary L. Russell
Rebecca Fedji	Phoebe J. Kroells	Linda M. Scheet
Israel Garcia	Becky J. Kroll	Dallas R. Scouton
Joan Gardner-Goodno	Elise Legard	Deanna L. Shellito
Lynn Gerlach Collard	Becky Lidji	Brenda K. Shores
Scott A. Harpin	Andy Littler	Dedra L. Smith
Patrick K. Harrington	Jose Luis	Shannon R. Smith
Kirsten L. Harris	Erich E. Lutz	Lydia M. Stanley
Corie M. Haverly	Bill Maddox	Jodi L. Stark
Elizabeth E. Hinz	Angela J. Mateski	Marney E. Thomas
Elisabeth Holser	Jacquelyn C. Meissner	Teneil Vaughn
Lynn R. Holzer	Erik Nelson	Rich Wayman
LeAnna L. Hudson	Stacy Pederson	Amber Whitner
Stacy M. Husebo	Susan M. Phillips	Steve Wilson
Brenda Inman	Susan T. Pohl	

Volunteers interviewers of homeless young adults

Erica Aguilar Moux	Carolyn Bollinger	Sarah Collins
Lisa Akinseye	Karin Bolwahn	Marilyn Cooper
Patricia Albritton	Cheryl Bourgeois	Phil Cooper
Wendy Aldrich Hayden	Patricia Boyer	Donna Cora
Patricia Alland	Brian Bozeman	Rosa Coutierrez
Lynn Allar	Karen Brady	Kenneth Covey
Tiffany Allbee	Dianne Brant	Elizabeth Cowan
Mark Ambroe	Katherine Brathen	Kenneth Cox
Gail L. Anderson	Antonina Bregel	Vivinnie Crowe
Jim Anderson	Jeffrey Brion	Barbara Dacy
Kathleen Anderson	Curtis Brown	Michael Dahl
Russ Anderson	Laurice Brown	Stacy Dalquist
Carmen Anderson	Mary Beth Brown	Sally Marie Dandurand
Mark Anton	Tonya Brownlow	Ade Daniel
Jeanine Antony	Sheila Brunelle	Anna Darby
Nina Arenson	Thomas Brunelle	Harriette Darrough
Brian Arett	Heidi Buchman	Melissa Davenport
Ruth Asder	David Burdick	Gina Davenport
Bess Askew	Darrell Burkland	Michael Davey
Sally Auger	Janelle Burton	Anne Davis (in memory)
Amy Axtmann	Margaret Bushinger	Crystal Deal
Rachel Babbitt	Roberta Butler	Patricia DeChaine
Connie Bach	Brett Byfield	Daniel Decker
Lori Baier	Moira Caidzanwa	Angela Delmedico
Kimberli K. Bailey	Katie Callen	Claudia Dengler
Cara Bailey	Julie Caraway	Catherine Denison
Suzanne Bair Braam	Martha Cardenas	Swati Deo
Judy Bakula	James Carlson	Marlene DeSerisy
Linda Barbe	Steven Carlson	Joy Dickinson
Richard Bartell	Thomas Carlson	Elaine Dix
Pamela Bartholemew	Kathy Carlson	Isabel Duchscheror
Roberta Basswood	Karen Carlson	Karen Dufty
L. Peter Bast	Teresa Carlyon	John Dunlap
Julia A. Bayard	Diana Carter	Marlys Dunlap
Jodi K. Beck	Dennise Catlin	Gloria Dupree
Julie Beckman	Mary Cecka	Jim Durdle
Maloyce Bell	Rick Chase	Jessica DuRose
Ellen Benavides	Xiaoying Chen	Ed Ede
Anita Bender	David Christensen	Louise Eidsmoe
John Benninghoff	Suzie Christensen	Renata Eigenheer
Marilyn Berg	Liz Christenson	Stephen Eisenreich
Barb Bernardy Rose	Cheryl Chute	Kelly Ekart
Courtney Bledsoe	Gina Ciganik	Andy Elofson
Pamela L. Boj-Rivas	Ellen Cleary	Jennifer Ernst

Troy Ertelt
Karla L. Essig
Joan Evans
Nancy Evans
Brenda Eylandt
E. Elaine Eyre
Desiree Fagel
Paula Faraci
Vicki Farden
Jill Fazio
Deann Fealy
Beth Feckter
Donna Felix
Wyatt Fernov
Antonette Flynn
Rosemary Foley
Jan Fondell
Cheryl Forfang
Alissa Fountain
Sharon Frahm
Sharon Frank
Sandy Frederickson
Sara Freid
Helene Freint
Barbara Frohnert
Jennifer Fuller
Andrea Gage
Steven Gallagher
Tessia A. Gardner
Clifford C. Gawne-Mark
Denise Geldernick
Chris Gerrard
Christina Giese
Zoie Glass
Lori Goetz
Megan Goggleye
Anna Goldammer
Tara Golden
Edith Gozali-Lee
Patricia M. Gradine
Jessica A. Grammond
Gary Green
Harry Greenberg
Maria A. Greene
Reginald Greenwell
Constance E. Greer

Shirley M. Gregory
Desera D. Grimley
Gary Groberg
Kristi Groberg
Shaunte R. Grobore
Jennifer Groebner
Sherry Gruenhagen
Eric I. Grumdahl
Pat Grundmeier
Jan L. Grunert
Rachel Grunklee
Patricia Gurel
Eloise D. Haglund
Robert W. Halbach
Judy Hall
Ken Hall
Shandon R. Halland
Lisa J. Hamilton
Jessica J. Hampton
Eric Hamrin
Harriette Harrington
Ronda J. Harrison
Mary A. Hartmann
John C. Hase
Beth Hastings
Christina R. Haycraft
Karen B. Hayes
Dana L. Hays
Darlene K. Heffron
Theodore H. Heimarck
John Heiner
Craig Helmstetter
Cindy Hendrickson
Maia T. Hendrickson
Tegan M. Henke
JoAnn I. Henry
Michael J. Hensley
Johnny Herda-Brown
Bonita K. Hertel
Debby J. Hetzel
Jennie L. Hevern
Geri L. Hickerson
Kristi L. Hill
Lamar T. Hill
Deirdre Hinz
Nancy Hirschenberger

Jeannette A. Ho
Jennifer L. Ho
Skyler Hoaas
Allison Hoberg
Norah V. Hoff
Michelle Hoffstater-Rosenberg
Lynn R. Holzer
Ginger Hope
Cheryl Hosley
Mary T. Howard.
Moisha Howze
Chelsea Hubbard
Billie Hughes
Staci Hull
Carrie I. Huntoon
Brenda Inman
Audrey Iverson
Spolinski Jacox
Sky M. Jager
Alesia M. Jamnick
Heidi M. Jaros
Barbara J. Jeanetta
Stephanie A. Jefferson
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Darlene M. Johnson
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Trisha C. Kauffman
Gina Kautz
Durbin M. Keeney
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Sue Marchel
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Nicole Martin
Timothy Marx
Signe A. Masterson
Francie Mathes

Rachel J. Mathison
Lyungai Mbilinyi
Loriann L. McCarty
Melissa McClain
Nova McGiffert
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Caitlin McMahan
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David Moore
Ana B. Moreno
Connie Mortensen Long
Ron Mortenson
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Donald L. Reeder
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Matthew A. Ryg
Bonnie Sahf
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Sherri L. Sandry
Anta Savela-Gornik
Wanda K. Sayers
Gregory C. Schach
Carl L. Scheider
Judith A. Scheider
Duke Schempp
Connie Schmoll
David Schultz
Amy Schwartzbauer
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Beverly A. Scovill
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Erin N. Seeman
Eugene Q. Senger
Ben Shardlow
Peggy A. Shattuck
Michele L. Sheets
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Kathy Sickels
Irene E. Silber
Audrey D. Simon
Todd A. Simon
Barbara Sipson
Daphne C. Skoglund
Karen L. Smith
Pastor Carol Smith
Jennifer J. Snider
Christy Snow
James J. Solem
Susan E. Sorenson
Mary M. Spagenski
Jo S. Spees
Megan I. Spires
Tamara J. Spry
Kelly A. Squire
Ellen St. John
Ann A. Stalboerger
Stephanie A. Starkson
Armella Stately
Kent T. Stendal
Katherine A. Stenzel
Marcy Steward

Kathlyn G. Stewart
Bob C. Stewart
Amanda Strauss
Sharon Streeter
Abby Struck
Val Strukel
Marlene Stumpf Johnson
Phil Sturlaugeon
Carrie C. Surber
Marilyn Swank
Andrea K. Swanson
Sara J. Swanson
Dan Swanson
Elizabeth Swee
Dale M. Swenson
Kent N. Swenson
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Kristen J. Tharaldson
Kari Thompson
Terri S. Thorson
Ginger Thrasher
Marva L. Thurston
Shawna L. Tobechukwa
Jennifer M. Tomes
Elizabeth Tovar
Roberto Trevino
Holly Triska
Ross Trotterchaude
Shar Trove
Nicole Trutwin
Mary B. Ulland-Evans
Kristen Ulstad
Katrina Valley

Margaret E. Van Buren
Thomas E. Van De Weghe
Renee Van Nett
Adam L. Venne
Jackie Vetvick
Elizabeth J. Viktora
Sister Karen Violette
Karen Vlam
Dolores D. Voorhees
Mary L. Vos
Lisa M. Wagner
Kimberly L. Washington
De Ann Waterman
Suzanne Watlov Phillips
Sheila Webb
Jessica L. Weber
Maureen Wells
John S. Welter
Isaac D. Wengerd
Derek D. Wenz
Deb Werner
Christina L. White
Jennifer L. White
Jane E. Wiedewitsch

Kate Wigren
Roberta J. Wilkinson
Michelle R. Willard
Sandra A. Williams
Diane W. Williams
Ora E. Williams
David L. Williams
Erik A. Williamsen
Trista N. Wilson
Donita Wilson
Ellie Windschitt
Robin Wisniewski
Bonnie I. T. Wittenberg
Patrick Wood
Patricia Wright
Janet P. Youel
Mary Beth Young
James J. Zanmiller
Carol A. Zapfel
Nicole M. Zimmerman
Sara M. Zoff
Hallie S. Zumwalde
Karyn K. Zwieg

Preface

“Daniel” is a 17-year-old American Indian youth who spent his early years in California, but moved to Minnesota when he was 12. Currently, he is couch-hopping – moving around from friend to friend to have a place to sleep. Daniel has been without a regular place to live for four months. It has been more than a year since he last had contact with his family. He says that he was physically mistreated and his parents neglected to provide for his basic needs at times. Daniel has lived in a lot of different places away from his family including a foster home, a group home, and a halfway house. He has lived in an emergency shelter and a battered women’s shelter with his family, and his parents are currently homeless. In fact, Daniel and his family have experienced homelessness several times. Within the past year, Daniel left a group home, but he did not have a place to live when he left it. Daniel has recently earned his GED, and has taken some classes to learn the construction trade. In the last month, Daniel has used drop-in centers and job training services. Daniel is currently working, but he does not have a steady job. Daniel does not think he will be with his family again. He does not think he can return home – not only because of substance abuse by his parents and criminal activity in the household, but also because of his own behavior.

This report on homelessness describes a population of youth and young adults who are troubled by conflict with parents, abusive relationships, and for some, a simple desire for freedom from authority. Behind the numbers, however, are the harsh life experiences of “Daniel” and more than 400 other young people. This report is dedicated to them.

In addition to the nearly 3,000 children who experienced homelessness in the company of their parents in Minnesota on a single night in October 2003 – and much less visible to most Minnesotans – were 500 to 600 homeless youth age 8 to 17 who were on their own.

Wilder Research estimates that between 12,000 and 22,000 Minnesota youth under 18 experienced at least one episode of homelessness on their own (not with their parents) during 2003. The full report *Homeless Youth in Minnesota 2003* describes in detail how we developed this estimate and why we think it is a conservative estimate.

Perhaps most distressing in this year’s report is the fact that many homeless youth and young adults have been in the child welfare system and are now experiencing homelessness. Seven out of 10 homeless youth previously lived in a foster home, group home, or other residential facility. One-quarter have lived in a foster home within the last two years. Nearly half have been abused – either physically or sexually. Four in 10 have serious mental health problems. Over one-third have been homeless before.

These youth have had a difficult start in life and have experienced serious upheaval before reaching adulthood. Many homeless youth need extra care because of abuse and

victimization, mental health problems, delinquent behavior, difficulty with school, and substance abuse. Previous studies have taught us that housing instability does the most harm to those with more than one of the above problems.¹ However, for many youth and young adults, housing alone will not solve their problems. Many need skills in independent living – such as how to keep a checking account, how to do laundry, and how to prepare low-cost meals. Others need the support of a caring adult – having someone they can call in a crisis.

National research by the Casey Family Foundation found that 42 percent of Casey’s foster care alumni (adults who had been in foster care as children) had been homeless at one time or another. Twenty-two percent were homeless for at least one night within the first year after they were officially discharged from foster care. The average age for first-time homelessness among these former foster children was 18.²

Although there are differences between homeless youth and homeless young adults – for one thing, youth under 18 have legal barriers to living independently – data from Wilder’s interviews support the observations of people who work with both homeless youth and homeless young adults that the two groups have many similar characteristics and needs. Throughout this year’s report you will find comparisons between these two age groups.

The purpose of this report is to bring about effective action on the problem of youth homelessness by spelling out some of the realities facing homeless youth and young adults. In large part, the volunteer interviewers who made this study possible represent the front line of services for these youth. Their efforts are often hampered by inadequate resources, too few housing options for minors, and limited public understanding about the origins and seriousness of youth homelessness in Minnesota. At a time of scarce resources to assist vulnerable populations, it is necessary to speak knowledgeably and frankly about what it will take to meet the needs of young people who are already homeless, as well as to prevent more youth from entering this situation in the future.

¹ Kids Mobility Project. (1998, March). *A report from the Kids Mobility Project*. Minneapolis: Author.

² Casey Research Services. (1993, March). *Assessing the effects of foster care: early results from the Casey national Alumni Study*. Seattle: Casey Family Services. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from: www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NationalAlumniStudy.htm.

Summary

How many youth are homeless?

This study is designed to describe characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth (age 8 to 17) and young adults (age 18 to 20) in Minnesota through personal interviews. **The study is not designed to provide a definitive count of homeless youth and young adults.** Several major complicating factors make it difficult to estimate the number of homeless young people.

First, under federal law, youth homelessness includes youth who are doubled-up on a temporary basis with friends. However, these youth are substantially under-represented in this study, which relies on shelters and agency staff to identify homeless youth. Second, the number of homeless young people found in this point-in-time study is partly dependent on shelter capacity at the time of the study. Between 2000 and 2003, the total number of beds available in youth shelters in Minnesota declined. At the same time, homeless youth are less likely than adults to stay in shelters, more often staying temporarily with friends or in places not intended for habitation. School counselors and social workers often know of homeless youth in their schools, but seldom know where they spend the night and how frequently they move around. Compared to homeless adults and families, homeless youth have fewer shelters available and fewer legal provisions for housing and other basic needs. Further complicating the picture is the fact that many agencies that serve homeless youth also serve a significant number of young adults age 18 to 20.

Despite these difficulties, it is important to arrive at the best possible estimate of the extent of homelessness among young people in Minnesota.

Youth homeless on any given night: 500 to 600 homeless youth age 8 to 17 were on their own, in addition to the nearly 3,000 children who experienced homelessness in the company of their parents in Minnesota on a single night in October 2003.

Youth homeless over the course of a year: Wilder Research estimates that between 12,600 and 22,500 Minnesota youth under 18 experienced at least one episode of homelessness on their own (not with their parents) during 2003.

Young adults homeless on any given night: between 500 and 1,200 young adults were homeless on a single night in October 2003.

Young adults homeless over the course of a year: Wilder Research estimates that 3,720 to 6,000 young adults age 18-20 experienced homelessness during 2003.

Age and gender

Homelessness is skewed toward the young. A striking 46 percent of all persons staying in homeless shelters or temporary housing on October 23, 2003, were under age 21. This includes 2,724 children under 18 who were with their parents, 141 youth under 18 who were on their own, and 325 young adults age 18-20.

Looking at youth on their own (not with parents), the average age is 16. The youngest in 2003 was 8 years old. More than 6 out of 10 (64%) of homeless youth are girls. For the young adults, 65 percent are female, while in the overall homeless adult population 48 percent are female.

Youth of color

About two-thirds of homeless youth on their own are Black, American Indian, Asian, or multiracial (65%). Among homeless young adults, 60 percent are people of color. The number of homeless young people of color is disproportionately high compared to their prevalence in the general population of Minnesota youth, of which only 15 percent are people of color.

Race	Homeless		All Minnesota youth age 8-17 (Census 2000)
	Youth under 18 (n=129)	Young adults (n=302)	
White	35%	40%	85%
Black	31%	35%	5%
American Indian	22%	10%	2%
Asian	1%	2%	4%
Multiracial or other	11%	12%	4%
Hispanic (any race)	9%	9%	3%

Education

A growing percentage of homeless youth are enrolled in school, rising from 52 percent in 1994, to 73 percent in 1997 and 2000, to 84 percent in 2003. One-third of homeless youth report receiving special education services (33%). Nine youth (7%) have graduated or received a GED.

Nearly two-thirds of homeless youth surveyed attended school the day of the survey (64% of those who had not yet graduated or received their GED). These rates are lower than the rates for children who are with their homeless parents (88% of parents surveyed said that all of their children attended school that day). The need to deal with other problems is the main reason youth report for not being in school.

Of those who had attended school during the previous school year (2002-2003):

- 47 percent had stayed in the same school all year
- 27 percent had attended two schools
- 17 percent had attended three schools
- 9 percent had attended 4 or more schools

One youth had attended 11 different schools during the last year.

Among homeless young adults in 2003, 25 percent were currently enrolled in an educational program, down from 37 percent in 2000. Of those who were enrolled, 59 percent attended on the day of the survey.

Employment and income

Sixteen percent of homeless youth received income from steady employment during the month prior to the survey. This is down from 25 percent in the 2000 survey. The other primary source of income was money received from parents, other relatives, or friends.

On the day of the survey, 19 percent of homeless youth were employed (compared to 27% in 2000). More than half of the youth who were employed (56%) were working 20 hours or more per week.

For homeless young adults, 39 percent had a job (the same percentage as in 2000). Of these, 78 percent were working 20 hours or more per week and 22 percent had a full-time job. Thirty-four percent had income from steady employment – up slightly from 26 percent in 2000.

History of abuse

Nearly one out of two homeless youth has been physically or sexually mistreated (46%); nearly 4 out of 10 have been physically abused (38%), and nearly 3 out of 10 have been sexually abused (28% overall; 31% of girls and 22% of boys).

History of placements

Seven out of 10 homeless youth have experienced an out-of-home placement (71%). Data from 2003 show a marked increase in the proportion of homeless youth who have been in foster care. The percentage remained relatively consistent between 1991 and 2000 (36%-41%), but increased to 53 percent in 2003. Twenty percent of youth have lived in a facility for persons with emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems.

Twenty-nine percent have lived in a group home. One-third of homeless youth have spent more than a week in a juvenile corrections facility (34%).

One-third of homeless youth have run away from placement at some time in their lives.

History of homelessness

In 2003, over one-third of homeless youth had been homeless before (38%). Twenty-three percent had slept outside at least one night in October 2003. Over one-third of homeless youth had a relative who also did not have housing (38%). One out of eight homeless youth had stayed in an abusive situation because they did not have other housing options.

Most homeless youth (92%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with parents (56%).

Mental health, substance use, and chemical dependency

Four out of 10 homeless youth report some type of significant mental health problem (42%). Twenty-three percent of homeless youth and 29 percent of homeless young adults report needing to see a health professional about a mental health problem. One-third of homeless youth have considered suicide (34%); 23 percent had attempted suicide.

Seventeen percent of homeless youth and 25 percent of young adults report needing to see a doctor about a physical health problem. Over one-third of homeless youth (36%) and 29 percent of young adults report at least one chronic health condition (asthma, other lung problems, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, diabetes, hepatitis, or HIV/AIDS).

Youth and young adults were asked about their substance use in the week prior to the survey. Over half (52%) smoked cigarettes, one-fifth (20%) used marijuana, 15 percent used alcohol, 3 percent used crack cocaine, and 3 percent used methamphetamines. For young adults (age 18-20), 68 percent smoked cigarettes, one-fifth (20%) used alcohol, one-fifth (19%) used marijuana, and 2 percent (each) used methamphetamines, crack cocaine, other cocaine, inhalants, and “other” illegal drugs. Older youth (age 15-17) report very similar rates of chemical use as compared to young adults (age 18-20). Unaccompanied youth under the age of 15 report significantly less.

Sixteen percent of the 15 to 17 year olds and 19 percent of the 18 to 20 years olds consider themselves an alcoholic or chemically dependent (none of the 8 to 14 year olds consider themselves so). Twenty-eight percent of youth and 31 percent of young adults used either alcohol or other drugs during the week prior to the survey.

Pregnancy and parenting

One in six homeless youth have a child of their own. This is up significantly from 2000 (16% in 2003, compared to 8% in 2000). Twenty-nine percent of young adults 18 to 20 have children. Most of these young parents had their children with them on the day of the survey.

Comparison to the general population of Minnesota youth

Overall, homeless youth report more difficult life experiences than youth who are housed. In addition, there is a higher proportion of African American and American Indian youth who are homeless compared to their representation in the general population.

Compared to youth in the general population, homeless youth are:

- Five times more likely to have been treated for alcohol or drug problems, although homeless youth are half as likely to report current use of alcohol
- More than three times more likely to have been hit by a date or intimate partner
- Three times more likely to have been physically abused
- Homeless boys are seven times more likely to have been sexually abused; homeless girls are three times more likely to have been sexually abused
- Three times more likely to use cigarettes or other tobacco
- For girls, about 20 times more likely to have been pregnant; for boys, 10 times more likely to have had a sexual relationship that resulted in a pregnancy

Reasons for not returning home

Homeless youth most often report these things prevent them from living with their parents:

- Conflict or fight with family (63%)
- Youth prefer to make their own decisions (51%)
- At least one adult in the home will not tolerate the youth's presence (39%)
- Alcohol or drug use by parent (24%)
- Danger of emotional abuse (22%)

- Adults in the household do not attend to the youth's basic needs (19%)
- Criminal or drug activity by someone else in the household (19%)
- Youth's substance use or delinquent activity (15%)
- Family does not have housing (15%)
- Not enough space for everyone in the household to live (15%)
- Danger of physical abuse (11%) or sexual abuse (5%)
- Parents will not accept youth's sexual orientation (7%).

On average, homeless youth originally left home around age 14. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (60%), kicked out or told to leave (43%), and wanted to be on their own (43%). Over half of homeless youth (55%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could do so. However, less than half (46%) believe they will live with their families again.

Some things look different in non-metro areas

About half of the youth under 18 and one-third of young adults age 18-20 were interviewed outside of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area. Most homeless youth in greater Minnesota are Caucasian (55%), American Indian (31%), or Hispanic (10%). Homeless youth in the Twin Cities area are mostly African American (56%), Caucasian (16%), American Indian (13%), Hispanic (11%), or multi-racial (10%).

Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota:

- To have been physically abused (43% vs. 34%)
- To be employed (24% vs. 14%)
- To feel that they now need to see a dentist about tooth or gum problems (47% vs. 31%)
- Metro boys are more likely to have been abused or neglected (58% vs. 37%), while greater Minnesota girls are more likely to have been abused or neglected (59% vs. 48%)

In contrast, greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely:

- To have been homeless less than one month (51% vs. 29%)
- To report that money from parents was their main source of income in October (30% vs. 8%)
- To report prior stays in foster homes, group homes, or other residential facilities (73% vs. 61%) as well as correctional facilities (47% vs. 22%)
- To feel that they now need to see a professional about a mental health problems (30% vs. 17%)
- To consider themselves chemically dependent (18% vs. 5%)
- To report that if they wanted to return home, their parent or guardian would allow them to do so (80% vs. 48%)

Services rated “most helpful” by homeless youth

Out of all services used by youth, those considered most helpful were food stamps (26%), transportation assistance (22%), other social services (19%), medical benefits (18%), and outreach services (18%).

Two thirds of homeless youth have a case manager (67%). Over 8 out of 10 homeless youth have regular contact with a trusted adult (81%).

About the research

On October 23, 2003, trained volunteers conducted interviews throughout Minnesota with 129 homeless youth (age 8 to 17) who were not with their parents and with 302 homeless young adults (age 18 to 20). These interviews were conducted in emergency shelters, battered women’s shelters, and transitional housing programs as well as drop-in centers, hot meal sites, and street locations. The study design and questions were based on similar surveys of homeless youth and adults conducted in Minnesota in 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000. The purpose of the study is to provide a current description of the characteristics and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults under 21 years of age.

School counselors and social workers often know of homeless youth in their schools, but seldom know where they spend the night and how frequently they move around. Homeless youth are less likely than adults to stay in shelters, more often staying temporarily with friends or in places not intended for habitation. Compared to homeless

adults and families, homeless youth have fewer shelters available and fewer legal provisions for housing and other basic needs.

For these reasons, it is more difficult when surveying homeless youth to be certain that changes from one study to the next reflect actual changes in the entire group rather than the sample of youth found on a given night in October. However, the comparisons we can make to the few national studies of homeless youth and young adults give us some measure of confidence that the information presented here is a valid representation of homelessness among youth in our state.

Introduction

This report is intended as a resource for planners, policy-makers, service providers, and others who are interested in addressing the problems associated with youth homelessness. The study is a companion piece to a comprehensive statewide report on homeless adults and their children, also available from Wilder Research.³ The information in this report comes from a survey of 129 youth age 8 to 17 and 302 young adults age 18, 19, and 20 who were homeless in Minnesota on October 23, 2003. Detailed data tables are presented for all questions asked of youth and young adult respondents in the survey.

The purpose of this report is to provide detailed descriptive information about the characteristics of youth and young adults who are homeless in our state, the problems they confront in finding and maintaining safe sleeping quarters, and the assistance that helps them survive each day. While these figures do not represent a full accounting of homeless youth and young adults in Minnesota, they do provide a detailed profile of current youth and young adult homelessness in our state.

Background

The study was commissioned by the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness in order to provide information for statewide planning efforts to reduce homelessness. State funding was provided by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Additional financial support came from the Family Housing Fund, the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. This private agency funding enabled researchers to conduct volunteer training, reimburse study respondents for their participation, and publish this report. Agency representatives from state and local government, Wilder Research, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, and other nonprofit groups met during the spring and summer of 2003 to finalize survey instruments and research methods. Statewide training was conducted in conjunction with the Minnesota Satellite Technology Center and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Survey dates were set by the planning group and temporary housing program sites were identified by staff of Wilder Research and the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

³ Wilder Research. (2001, August). *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*. Saint Paul, MN: Author. Includes information from three sources: a statewide population count of all persons residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing programs on October 23, 2003; a statewide survey of a sample of persons living in these facilities on October 23, 2003; and a survey of homeless adults found in non-shelter locations on October 23, 2003.

In 1991, a Roundtable for Youth without Permanent Shelter identified a need for information on homeless youth in Minnesota. Participants from the roundtable worked with Wilder Research to help conduct the first Minnesota survey of homeless youth in 1991. In 1994, many of the roundtable participants, representatives from several state agencies, and a few elected officials served on a Homeless Youth Advisory Committee and helped identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites for the second statewide survey of homeless youth.

In 1997, 2000, and 2003, an advisory committee of youth advocates, outreach workers, representatives from state agencies, and elected officials helped revise the survey instrument and identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites where homeless youth could be found throughout the state.

Methods

On October 23, 2003 volunteer interviewers, agency staff, and outreach workers went to over 200 providers to interview homeless persons throughout Minnesota. As part of this effort, youth were sought out by youth workers, agency staff, and other trained volunteers. Youth were interviewed in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, street locations, and drop-in centers in 14 cities. In all, interviews were conducted with 129 youth (46 males and 83 females) between the ages of 8 and 17 who were homeless on October 23, 2003. Interviews were also conducted with 302 homeless young adults (120 males and 182 females) age 18, 19, and 20 years who were homeless on October 23, 2003. Respondents received cash compensation (\$5) for the half-hour interview.

The survey sampled two-thirds of unaccompanied youth residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, youth shelters, and transitional housing facilities throughout Minnesota. However, it was not feasible to cover the entire state for homeless persons in non-shelter locations. Although some youth and young adults were found and interviewed in non-shelter locations, this study should not be considered a comprehensive enumeration of youth in these circumstances. Rather, the primary purpose of the study is to provide a detailed and reliable description of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness on a single night in Minnesota.

Supporting information for this study was obtained from shelter providers who completed a count of all men, women, and children as well as unaccompanied youth in residence on October 23, 2003. No comparable counts were available for unsheltered youth or young adults.

This study defines homelessness with the same criteria used by the United States Congress in allocating resources through the McKinney Act (P.L. 100-77, sec 103(2)(1), 101 stat. 485 [1987]).

The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” includes an individual who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless youth are defined as follows:

Youth who currently have no parental, substitute, foster or institutional home to which they can safely go. They are unaccompanied by an adult and have spent at least one night either in a formal emergency shelter, improvised shelter, doubled-up, or on the street.⁴

The main difference between definitions of youth and adult homelessness is that persons under 18 are considered homeless if they are doubled-up and living temporarily with others. Adults are not considered homeless under these circumstances. This study does not include special survey efforts to identify homeless youth in doubled-up situations, and thus cannot be considered representative of such youth.

Homeless young people found on October 23, 2003

The following table shows the total count of homeless children, unaccompanied youth, and young adults in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing facilities in Minnesota on the night of October 23, 2003.⁵ This is not the number that were interviewed, but the number that were counted by shelter providers.

⁴ Components of this definition are described in Kryder-Coe, J., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Homeless children and youth* (pp. 34-35). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

⁵ Persons interviewed in non-shelter locations are not included in this table.

Number of children, youth, and young adults (ages 0-20) in temporary housing programs on October 23, 2003

	Young adult: males age 18 – 20	Young adult: females age 18 – 20	Children with parent(s)	Unaccompanied youth: males < 18	Unaccompanied youth: females < 18	Total
Twin Cities metro area						
Emergency shelters	29	21	268	20	11	349
Battered women's shelters	-	13	216	-	8	237
Transitional housing	32	118	1,481	9	27	1667
Greater Minnesota						
Emergency shelters	17	16	103	20	22	178
Battered women's shelters		6	132	-	1	139
Transitional housing	32	51	524	10	13	630
Total	110	225	2,724	59	82	3,200

Source: Data provided to Wilder Research by shelter service providers across the state.

The counts of persons staying in shelters and other temporary housing show:

- The number of children and young people under age 21 in shelter or other temporary housing programs on October 23, 2003 was: **3,200**.
- In addition, there were **3,815** adults age 21 and over.
- The total sheltered population was **7,015** persons (46% were under age 21).

Interviews conducted on the streets or other non-shelter locations show:

- There were an additional **796** persons identified in non-shelter locations on October 23, 2003
- Of these 796 persons identified in non-shelter locations, 34 percent were under the age of 21 (270 persons under age 21 includes 138 children who were not interviewed, and 34 unaccompanied youth and 98 young adults who were interviewed)

In all, a total of **7,811** persons were identified as homeless in Minnesota on the night of October 23, 2003. Of these, 44 percent were under the age of 21.

This is 166 more persons than were identified in the October 2000 statewide survey, which is an increase of 2 percent. An unknown number of homeless persons are not represented in these counts, including persons in non-standard temporary arrangements as well as those in detoxification centers on that night. The number of available beds in temporary housing programs is approximately the same as in October 2000. The total number of beds available was 7,368,⁶ in October 2000 and 7,304⁷ in July 2003, indicating that utilization is near capacity.

The next table shows the number of young adults and youth who, according to providers, had children living with them in their temporary housing arrangement.

Youth and young adult families in shelter or temporary housing programs on October 23, 2003

	Number of homeless young families	Percent of homeless young families	Number of children with young parent(s)
Young adult men (age 18-20) with children	5	3.5%	7
Young adult women (age 18-20) with children	108	76.6%	156
Young adult couples (age 18-20) with children	2	1.4%	2
Unaccompanied male youth (under age 18) with children	0	-	0
Unaccompanied female youth (under age 18) with children	25	17.7%	30
Unaccompanied youth couples (under age 18) with children	1	.7%	2
Total families identified	141	100.0%	197

⁶ Minnesota Department of Human Services (formerly Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning). (2000, November). *Quarterly shelter survey-Revised*. Roseville, MN: Author. This includes beds in motels used by voucher clients.

⁷ The bed capacity was calculated from housing activity charts included in the regional Continuum of Care reports (July 2003), including all emergency, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs included in our study. It does not, however, include motels beds unless directly connected to a shelter provider.

Interviews conducted

Overall, interviews were conducted with 67 percent of unaccompanied homeless youth and with 61 percent of young adults staying in shelter or temporary programs on October 23, 2003. It appears that young adults interviewed in emergency shelters in greater Minnesota had the least representation in the number of interviews conducted (only 15% of these young adults were interviewed). The number of interviews conducted with youth and young adults in temporary housing programs is shown below.

Number of youth (17 and younger) interviewed in temporary housing programs

	Males interviewed	Females interviewed	Total interviewed	Total number of youth in temporary housing	Percent of total youth population interviewed
Twin Cities metro area					
Emergency shelters	13	10	23	31	74.2%
Battered women's shelters	-	-	-	8	-
Transitional housing	4	20	24	36	66.7%
Greater Minnesota					
Emergency shelters	14	16	30	42	71.4%
Battered women's shelters	-	-	-	1	-
Transitional housing	8	10	18	23	78.3%
Total	39	56	95	141	67.3%

Number of young adults (18 to 20) interviewed in temporary housing programs

	Males interviewed	Females interviewed	Total interviewed	Total number of young adults in temporary housing	Percent of total young adult population interviewed
Twin Cities metro area					
Emergency shelters	18	10	28	50	56.0%
Battered women's shelters	-	10	10	13	76.9%
Transitional housing	25	78	103	150	68.7%
Greater Minnesota					
Emergency shelters	-	5	5	33	15.2%
Battered women's shelters	-	4	4	6	66.7%
Transitional housing	23	31	54	83	65.1%
Total	66	138	204	335	60.9%

The next table shows the number of homeless young persons surveyed in *non-shelter locations* in the Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota on October 23, 2003. There is no way of accurately knowing what proportion of the street or unsheltered population we were able to interview. However, in 2000, the number of youth in non-shelter locations that we were able to find was substantially higher than in 2003. Nevertheless, we do not think the actual number of homeless youth has changed significantly. (See “Key Questions” in the next section for more information.) We know that the number of youth interviewed in non-shelter locations under-represents the overall population of unsheltered young persons. Because we do not know how well representative our sample of unsheltered youth are (how well their responses represent the entire population), data associated with these youth should be interpreted with caution.

Number of people under age 21 interviewed in non-shelter locations

	Males	Females	Children with young parent(s) in non-shelter locations	Total young persons interviewed in non-shelter locations
Youth (<18)				
Twin Cities metro area	2	14	1	16
Greater Minnesota	5	13	1	18
Total (youth)	7	27	2	34
Total in non-shelter locations	61	71	9	132
Young adult (18 - 20)				
Twin Cities metro area	34	24	4	58
Greater Minnesota	20	20	3	40
Total (adult)	54	44	7	98

Note. Children with parents were not interviewed. Figure shows number of children accompanying youth and young adults who were interviewed.

In all, 95 unaccompanied homeless youth were interviewed in shelters and 34 homeless youth were interviewed in non-shelter locations including drop-in centers, health clinics, schools, and on the streets. Interviews were completed with 63 homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and 66 youth in greater Minnesota. (Research sites are listed in the Appendix.)

Of the 302 young adults interviewed, 204 were interviewed in shelters and 98 were interviewed in non-shelter locations including drop-in centers and on the streets.

Interviews were completed with 199 homeless young adults in the Twin Cities area and 103 young adults in greater Minnesota.

Not a survey of all homeless youth and young adults

This sample of 129 unaccompanied homeless youth and 302 homeless young adults represents only a portion of all youth and young adults who were homeless in Minnesota on October 23, 2003. Fewer youth under 18 were interviewed in 2003 than in the 2000 study – especially fewer youth who were not in a shelter. However, shelter staff indicate that there have been losses in youth shelter capacity (at least two youth shelters were closed) and an increase in turn-aways when shelters were full. Because shelter services are less available for youth than for adults, they are more likely to be sleeping in temporary arrangements with friends and less likely to be found in a one night survey.

In our study, only limited attempts were made to identify and interview those who were not known to youth-serving agencies. It was not feasible to cover the state for homeless youth and young adults in non-shelter locations. In addition, only limited attempts were made to identify youth and young adults doubled-up with friends on that night. Consequently, this study describes primarily those homeless youth and young adults who are connected in some way to service providers and are not necessarily representative of all youth and young adults experiencing homelessness on the date of the survey.

Introduction to survey results

This report presents study results in six ways:

- Responses to key questions frequently posed by funders and policy-makers.
- Descriptive overview of the characteristics of youth and young adults who were homeless on October 23, 2003.
- Comparisons of key indicators from the 2003 statewide survey of unaccompanied youth to the Minnesota Student Survey general population and special populations including students in alternative schools, residential facilities, and correctional settings.
- Comparisons of key indicators from the 2003 statewide survey of unaccompanied youth and young adults (combined) with studies done nationally and in other states.
- Comparisons of key indicators from the 2003 statewide survey of unaccompanied youth with intake information for youth living in treatment foster care and residential treatment centers.
- Detailed data tables that allow readers to examine specific survey questions for youth and young adults broken down by location (Twin Cities metro area vs. greater Minnesota), gender, and shelter type.

Key questions

What do we know about the number of homeless youth in Minnesota?

This study is designed to describe the characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in Minnesota through a personal interview that collects information about past and current circumstances and needs. The study is not designed to provide a definitive count of unaccompanied homeless youth. Counting or estimating the number of homeless youth is complicated by several factors including the following:

- As defined in federal law in the McKinney Vento Act, youth homelessness includes youth who are doubled-up on a temporary basis with friends as well as those who are staying in shelters and places not intended for habitation. This study relies on shelters and agency staff to identify unaccompanied homeless youth and does not systematically gather information from youth who are doubled-up. Other research has shown that doubled-up homeless youth outnumber youth staying in shelters. Therefore, these youth are substantially under-represented in our study.
- The number of unaccompanied homeless youth found in our point-in-time study is partly dependent on shelter capacity for youth at the time of the study. Between 2000 and 2003 the total number of beds available in youth shelters in Minnesota declined considerably.

Given these facts the present study cannot be used for the purpose of developing a *definitive* count of unaccompanied homeless youth in Minnesota.

Estimates on any given night

Due to the difficulties mentioned above in counting the number of homeless youth, estimates must be used as the basis for understanding the extent of homelessness among youth in Minnesota. Our estimate is based on a statewide count of youth unaccompanied by their parents who were staying in shelters, transitional housing, or other temporary housing programs on October 23, 2003. To estimate the number of youth who are temporarily “doubled-up” on any given night, we multiply the number of sheltered youth by 2.7. This method is based on a 1989 U.S. General Accounting Office report which found that there were 2.7 times as many children and youth in doubled-up situations as in emergency shelters.⁸

⁸ 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.

For the 2003 study period, we estimate there are between 500 and 600 homeless youth on any given night in this state, a number very similar to the estimate derived from the 2000 study of homeless youth. This should be regarded as a conservative estimate, since the number could be substantially higher if large numbers of youth or young adults avoid services and seek shelter in places not intended for habitation.

Estimates of homelessness among unaccompanied youth on any given night

On any given night – one night snapshot	Number
Number of unaccompanied “sheltered” youth (under age 18) counted in shelter sites (October 23, 2003)	141
<i>Number of youth interviewed on the street or other non-sheltered locations (October 23, 2003)</i>	34
Estimated number of doubled-up youth – temporarily staying with friends or others. Doubled-up youth are included in the federal definition of homeless, while doubled-up adults are not. (conservative estimate based on G.A.O. study) = 141 X 2.7	381
Sheltered (counted) + doubled-up (conservative estimate) = 141 + 381	522
Total estimated number of unaccompanied youth under age 18 who are homeless on any given night	500-600

Estimates of unaccompanied youth homelessness over the course of a year

As in a one-night snap-shot, it is impossible to definitively count the number of unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness *over the course of a year*. However, it is possible to provide an estimate based on the prevalence of homelessness in the general youth population. As part of the National Health Interview Study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1992 and 1993, researchers interviewed a nationally representative household survey of 6,496 youth ages 12 to 17. Youth were asked if they spent at least one night in the past year in a variety of places unaccompanied by a parent or guardian including shelters as well as places not intended as housing such as outside, in a public place, with a stranger, in an abandoned building, or in a subway. In one study, Research Triangle Institute found that 2.8 percent of this national sample of currently housed youth (12-17) had spent at least one night in one of these settings. In a later study, by the same authors, this figure was revised to 5 percent of all 12 to 17 year olds.⁹

- Based on this research, it is estimated that between **12,635** and **22,563** Minnesota youth ages 12 to 17 have spent at least one night homeless in the past year.

⁹ Ringwalt, C., Greene, J.M., Robertson, M., McPheeters, M. (1998). The prevalence of homelessness among adolescents in the United States, *Am J Public Health*, 88; 1325-1329.

- This conservative figure was obtained from multiplying the 2.8 percent and 5 percent estimates by Minnesota’s total youth population of 451,251 (based on 2000 Census data).¹⁰

What do we know about the number of homeless young adults in Minnesota?

Estimates on any given night

For purposes of this study, “homeless young adults” refers to young people between the ages of 18 and 20 – a much smaller age span than the youth who were interviewed (ages 8 to 17). Young adults are found at adult shelters as well as youth shelters. In 2003, for the first time, temporary housing programs were asked to provide a count of young adults (ages 18-20) who were residing in these facilities on the survey night. There were 335 young adults staying in shelter and temporary programs and 98 young adults interviewed in non-shelter locations on October 23, 2003. The actual number of non-sheltered young adults on October 23, 2003 is not known.

Using conservative techniques, we estimate that between 500 and 1,200 young adults are homeless on any given night in Minnesota.

The lower end of the estimate is based on research conducted by the Urban Institute in other states which found that the “non-shelter-using” homeless population ranges between 20 and 40 percent of the shelter-using population, depending on the availability of shelter beds, the season, and weather conditions.¹¹ We know that applying Urban Institute’s most conservative estimate (20%) to the shelter-using population is too low of an estimate for the homeless young adult population in Minnesota, because we found more young adults in street and other non-shelter locations through our survey. Ninety-eight young adults were interviewed, exceeding the Urban Institute low (20% of sheltered) estimate of 67 unsheltered young adults. Therefore, using the what appears to be the more reasonable figure of 40 percent, there was a low estimate of 134 young adults unsheltered on the night of the survey.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. *Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data*; generated by Heather Johnson; using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder.census.gov> (8 December 2004).

¹¹ Burt, M., & Cohen, B. (1989). *America’s homeless: Numbers, characteristics, and the programs that serve them*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

The upper end estimate is based on the technique used for homeless youth based on the 1989 U.S. General Accounting Office report¹² which found that there were 2.7 times as many children and youth in doubled-up situations as in emergency shelters. Based on our count of 335 sheltered young adults, this would indicate an additional 905 young adults who were homeless, but not in a shelter. Therefore, we estimate between 470 and 1,240 young adults are homeless on any given night (see Figure below).

This should be regarded as a conservative estimate since the number could be substantially higher if large numbers of young adults seek shelter in places not intended for habitation.

Estimates of homelessness among young adults on any given night

On any given night – one night snap-shot	Number
Number of young adults (18-20) in shelter sites (October 23, 2003)	335
<i>Number of young adults interviewed in non-sheltered locations (October 23, 2003)</i>	98
Number of young adults not counted (conservative estimate based on Urban Institute study = 335 X .4; upper estimate based on G.A.O. study used for youth = 335 X 2.7)	134 – 905
Total estimated number of young adults ages 18 to 20 on any given night: low end of range = 335 + 134 = 469; high end of range = 335 + 905 = 1,240	500 – 1,200

Estimates over the course of the year

It is important to emphasize that our study is not designed to provide a definitive count of homelessness among young adults in Minnesota. Annual estimates for youth homelessness (see previous section) or for adult homelessness (published separately in *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*) are based on known patterns of homelessness, determined by studies of those populations. We know of no studies that have examined patterns of annual homelessness specifically for young adults. We know that patterns for youth are different from those of adults in general. We presume that patterns for young adults are intermediate between those for youth and adults. To estimate annual figures for homelessness among young adults, we therefore compute estimates separately based on the two patterns, and assume that the best estimate for young adults is in the middle ground between them.

¹² 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.

- **Estimate based on youth pattern:** Based on youth patterns, we estimate 2.8 to 5 percent of the total state population of young adults (218,285 in the 2000 Census), yielding a range from 6,000 to 11,000.¹³
- **Estimate based on adult pattern:** Based on adult patterns, we estimate the annual number of homeless young adults is about 3 times the number who are homeless on a given night (470 to 1,240), yielding a range from 1,410 to 3,720.¹⁴
- Taking the middle ground between these two patterns, we arrive at a conservative estimate of **3,720 to 6,000 young adults who are homeless over the course of a year.**

Estimated range in number of young adults, ages 18 to 20, who experience at least one night of homelessness over the course of the year in Minnesota

Estimate from adult model (range)		Estimate from youth model (range)	
1,407 to	3,713	6,112	to 10,914
Estimate from overlap (range)			

What do we know about changes over time in the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in Minnesota?

There is no way to know from our studies the actual number of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in Minnesota – and whether the numbers have changed over time. Our study is meant to describe, in depth, the characteristics and needs of the population through a 30 minute one-to-one interview. It is not meant to provide a street sweep or census count. In fact, the data from 1991 to 2003 give us **conflicting** messages about changes in the numbers of homeless youth and young adults in Minnesota:

- *If we only examine the numbers of unaccompanied youth counted on a single night in shelters and do not count those who were not sheltered. . .the number of unaccompanied youth increased from 1991 to 2000, but declined slightly from 2000 to 2003. However, this decline may be due to reduced shelter capacity to serve homeless youth. We know that the number of shelter beds available to youth on a self-referred basis has declined by about one-third in recent years. We know that oftentimes youth must receive a referral and have a case “open” with a county social*

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau. *Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data*; generated by Heather Johnson; using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder.census.gov> (8 December 2004).

¹⁴ Wilder Research (2003, September). *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*. St. Paul, MN: author.

service agency in order to access a bed. Therefore, there is no way to know whether or not the decline in the number of youth found in shelters or temporary housing programs in October 2003 shows an actual decline or merely reduced capacity of the system to serve youth.

- *If we only examine national studies to make estimates for the numbers of youth who are homeless. . .the number of unaccompanied youth increased since 1991.* This is because the total Census population of youth in Minnesota has increased. As described in the previous section, we use Census numbers to estimate the number of unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness over the course of the year. This is problematic, because if Census figures go up, then our estimates increase. There is no way of definitively knowing whether this trend is real or not. It is based on a study conducted with a representative sample of youth ages 12 to 17 in 1993. There may be changes in the behavior or needs of this age group since that time.
- *If we only examine information about young people who were found on the survey night. . . the number of unaccompanied youth (under 18) found through our one-night study (in shelters and on the streets) increased steadily from 1991 to 2000 and decreased slightly in 2003.* However, there were nearly 150 more young adults (ages 18-20) found in 2003 than in 2000. Overall, there were nearly four times as many youth and young adults found on a single night in 2003 compared with 1991 (see the Appendix for the number of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults found through Wilder studies from 1991 to 2003).

These numbers do not accurately reflect the number of youth doubled-up or staying in places not intended as housing. The number of completed interviews reflects efforts to recruit volunteers, as well as the involvement of youth-serving agencies in identifying homeless youth. We cannot determine if the number of homeless youth currently living in Minnesota is substantially larger or smaller than the number identified in previous surveys. However for the most part, the overall patterns of homelessness and characteristics of young people in these circumstances appear similar to previous years.

Have the background and life experiences of Minnesota's homeless youth population changed during the last dozen years?

Five studies have been conducted with Minnesota's homeless youth population during the last decade, in 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003. These studies provide a number of useful comparisons. However, the reader should keep in mind that youth transitional housing did not exist prior to 1995, which may account for some of the changes over time. In addition, compared to the 2000 study, fewer youth were interviewed on the street on the 2003 survey night. On the other hand, more young adults were interviewed in 2003 than in any previous year.

Most of the demographic characteristics of homeless youth have changed little over the last decade. The average age has remained about 16. There are somewhat more females than males.

Homeless youth are primarily Caucasian, African American, or American Indian, with a notable increase in the percentage of American Indians over the last decade.

- There is a disproportional representation of youth who are African American and American Indian in the homeless population.
- 2003 shows a marked decline in the percentage of homeless youth who are White or Caucasian.

Demographics of unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18, 1991-2003

	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003
Average age	16.0	16.0	15.6	15.7	15.6
Female	49%	61%	54%	53%	64%
Race					
White or Caucasian	57%	41%	41%	46%	35%
African American or Native African ^a	20%	32%	29%	25%	31%
American Indian	11%	10%	15%	20%	22%

Note. (a) In 1991, 1994, and 1997, the response category was African American. In 2000, response categories included both African American and Native African.

History of placements outside of the home

- Data from 2003 show a marked increase in the proportion of homeless youth who have been in foster care. The percentage remained relatively consistent between 1991 and 2000 (36%-41%), but increased to 53 percent in 2003.
- A consistent proportion of homeless youth report having been in alcohol or drug treatment facilities (10%-19%) and group homes (22%-33%) over the past 12 years.
- Over the past 12 years, about one-third of homeless youth report having lived in a correctional facility. This percentage increased slightly in 2000 to 46 percent, but decreased to 35 percent in 2003. As noted previously, a higher percentage of homeless youth were interviewed in street locations (not in shelters) in 2000 compared to 2003.

History of placements among homeless youth, 1991-2003

Have you ever lived in:	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003
Foster care	38%	36%	38%	41%	53%
Group home	22%	33%	29%	27%	29%
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	15%	10%	19%	13%	13%
Detention center or correctional facility	31%	34%	36%	46%	35%
Any institution	Not available	61%	70%	67%	71%

Life experiences

Over the past 12 years (five statewide studies):

- Over one-third to one-half of homeless youth report having been physically abused.
- 10 to 20 percent of homeless youth consider themselves chemically dependent.
- From 1991 to 1997 approximately one-third had a sexual relationship which resulted in a pregnancy; this decreased to one-fifth in 2000 and increased slightly to one quarter in 2003.
- The proportion of homeless youth who have children remained relatively constant between 1991 and 2003. Although there was a slight dip in 2000, research from the other years indicates that about one out every six homeless youth has children.

Life experiences of homeless youth, 1991-2003

	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003
Physically abused	47%	54%	42%	47%	38%
Consider self chemically dependent	10%	19%	15%	13%	12%
Told by a medical professional in the past 2 years that they have a significant mental health problem	Not available	Not available	23%	31%	29%
Have children	16%	18%	17%	8%	16%
Sexual relationship that resulted in pregnancy	32%	33%	31%	21%	26%

Income and employment

The percentage of youth reporting steady employment as their main source of income increased to one in four in 1997 and 2000, but decreased back to earlier levels with 17 percent reporting steady employment as their main source of income in 2003. In 2003, the percentage of youth who said that their parents, relatives, or other friends provide their main source of income increased to 36 percent – up from 25 to 30 percent of youth in previous years.

Main source of income for homeless youth, 1991-2003

	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003
Steady employment	16%	15%	26%	25%	17%
Temporary work	16%	4%	6%	7%	7%
Parents	24%	13%	16%	18%	19%
Other relatives or friends	14%	12%	14%	12%	17%

Are homeless youth different from youth who are housed?

Overall, homeless youth report more difficult life experiences than youth who are housed. Homeless youth report experiencing abuse, alcohol or drug treatment, and pregnancy more often than youth who are housed (see the section titled “Comparison of homeless youth to general youth population”). In addition, a higher proportion of African American and American Indian youth are homeless compared to the general population.

Information from the Minnesota Student Survey (2004) show that homeless youth, in comparison to youth in the general population, are:

- Five times more likely to have been treated for alcohol or drug problems. However, homeless youth are half as likely to report current use of alcohol.
- More than three times more likely to have been hit by a date or intimate partner.
- Three times more likely to have been physically abused.
- Homeless boys are seven times more likely to have been sexually abused; homeless girls are three times more likely to have been sexually abused.
- Three times more likely to use cigarettes or other tobacco.
- For girls, about 20 times more likely to have been pregnant; for boys, 10 times more likely to have had a sexual relationship that resulted in a pregnancy.

Do homeless youth in the Twin Cities area differ from those in greater Minnesota?

Most homeless youth in greater Minnesota are Caucasian (55%), American Indian (31%), or Hispanic (10%). Homeless youth in the Twin Cities area are mostly African American (56%), Caucasian (16%), American Indian (13%), Hispanic (11%), or multi-racial (10%).

Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota:

- To have been physically abused (43% vs. 34%).
- To be employed (24% vs. 14%).
- To have children (21% vs. 12%). Twin Cities boys are more likely to report having a sexual relationship that resulted in pregnancy (28% vs. 16%); girls in the Twin Cities and girls in greater Minnesota are equally likely to have been pregnant (29%).
- To feel that they now need to see a dentist about tooth or gum problems (47% vs. 31%).
- Metro boys are more likely to have been abused or neglected (58% vs. 37%), while greater Minnesota girls are more likely to have been abused or neglected (59% vs. 48%).

In contrast, greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely:

- To have been homeless less than one month (51% vs. 29%).

- To report that money from parents was their main source of income in October (30% vs. 8%).
- To have medical coverage (65% vs. 56%).
- To report prior stays in foster homes, group homes, or other residential facilities (73% vs. 61%) as well as correctional facilities (47% vs. 22%).
- To have been sexually abused (32% vs. 23%).
- To feel that they now need to see a professional about a mental health problem (30% vs. 17%).
- To report having been hit on the head so hard that they lost consciousness or saw stars (36% vs. 16%).
- To consider themselves chemically dependent (18% vs. 5%).
- To report that if they wanted to return home, their parent or guardian would allow them to do so (80% vs. 48%).
- To have regular contact with a trusted adult (86% vs. 77%).

Does Minnesota attract homeless youth and young adults?

Although some homeless people may be drawn here because of Minnesota's reputation as a safe environment with many social services, most of the homeless youth we interviewed are long-term residents of Minnesota.

- 80 percent of youth and 66 percent of young adults have lived in Minnesota for most of their lives.
- For 92 percent of youth and 80 percent of young adults, their last permanent housing was in Minnesota. Similar percentages of youth and young adults have lived in Minnesota for two or more years.

Over the last decade, a consistent majority of youth interviewed said they grew up in Minnesota (74% in 1991, 75% in 1994, 70% in 1997, 72% in 2000, and 80% in 2003).

What are the pathways toward youth homelessness?

As part of the *Our Children: Our Future* project in 2003, Wilder Research conducted a study examining the overall picture of children who are living away from home, regardless of the reason: children who are in the child welfare system because of abuse, neglect, or needs that their parents cannot meet, children who are in corrections settings because of delinquency, and those who are homeless. This study found that there are about 30,000 Minnesota children and youth who stay in some type of publicly supervised treatment program, foster care, correctional facility, or shelter each year. Sadly, many of the children who experience these varying types of placements have had similarly difficult lives. What follows is a summary of some of the information about pathways toward homelessness that were presented in the *Our Children: Our Future* report.¹⁵

Three primary groups of youth are found in the unaccompanied youth homeless population: 1) “throwaway youth,” adolescents whose parents demand that they leave the home; 2) “runaway youth,” adolescents who make a decision to leave home; and 3) “systems” homeless youth, adolescents who have been involved in government systems due to abuse, neglect, or homelessness with their families and whose transitions from previous placements did not result in stable living situations. In other words, homeless youth are not from a homogeneous population, and there is overlap among these groups. The causes of homelessness among youth fall into three interrelated categories: family problems (which include the behaviors of both parents and youth), economic problems, and residential instability.

Other researchers investigated the backgrounds of homeless youth and have found different pathways toward youth homelessness based on the “throwaway,” “runaway,” or “systems” categories. In a study of 356 homeless youth in the Seattle area, researchers found that:¹⁶

- Boys are more likely to be kicked out of the home, while girls are more likely to run away.
- 35 percent of runaways, 36 percent of throwaways, and 56 percent of systems homeless youth had been sexually abused.

¹⁵ Wilder Research. (2003). *Our children: our future, a research report on Minnesota children who do not live at home*. St. Paul, MN: author, 13-15.

¹⁶ MacLean, M., Embry, L., & Cauce, A. (1999). Homeless adolescents' paths to separation from family: Comparison of family characteristics, psychological adjustment, and victimization. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(2), 179-187.

- Runaways are more likely than other homeless youth to report that they could live with their mother or father.
- Getting kicked out of the family was not associated with a higher average level of “acting out” behavior, so it is possible that throwaway youth homelessness is more closely related to parental instability and intolerance than with the behavior of the adolescent.

Many homeless youth leave home after years of physical and sexual abuse, strained relationships, addiction of a family member, and parental neglect.¹⁷ These stressors are found in the vast majority of youth who participated in this study. Disruptive family conditions are the principal reason that young people leave home. Nearly two-thirds of the youth in our study cite “conflict with parents” as one of the reasons they originally left home and one of the primary reasons for not returning home.

Some youth become homeless when their families become homeless, but are later separated from the family by policies of shelters, transitional housing, or the child welfare system.¹⁸ Over one-third of the homeless youth (38%) and one-quarter of young adults (26%) in our study had a family member who was currently homeless. It is not known how many of these youth were separated because of these policies.

The following table describes some of the risk factors and predictors associated with homelessness among youth identified in other studies and confirmed by our own research. This table was compiled as part of the *Our Children: Our Future* project.¹⁹

¹⁷ Whitbeck, L. & Simmons, R. (1990). Life on the streets: The victimization of runaway and homeless adolescents. *Youth and Society*, 22, 108-125.

¹⁸ Shinn, M. & Weitzman, B.C. (1996). Homeless families are different. In Baumohl, J. (Ed.) *Homelessness in America*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 109-12.

¹⁹ Wilder Research (2003). *Our children: our future, a research report on Minnesota children who do not live at home*. St. Paul, MN: author, 13-15.

Risk factors and predictors of unaccompanied youth homelessness

Location of the risk factor	Risk factors and predictors (listed in no particular order)
Individual child	History of abuse and/or neglect Chemical dependency Sexual orientation different from parents Delinquency History of out-of-home placement
Family	Few family resources Parental substance abuse Poor parent/child relationship
Neighborhood/community	Children of color are disproportionately represented Substandard or temporary housing

Primary sources: Wilder Research statewide homeless studies and Wattenberg, 2002, April; MacLean et al., 1999; Wilder Research, 2001.²⁰

What is the link between foster care or other out-of-home placements and homelessness?

In 2002, there were 17,202 children and youth who spent at least one night in an out-of-home placement in Minnesota.²¹ Of this group, 11,137 were between the ages of 8 and 17. Youth in out-of-home care (primarily foster care) represent 1.5 percent of the general population of 8 to 17 year olds in Minnesota. The results of this study show that about half of the youth who are homeless and on their own in Minnesota have spent time in foster care. This is consistent with other studies, both in Minnesota and elsewhere.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services reports that in 2002, 572 discharges from out-of-home placement were due to “runaway from placement (placement no longer planned)” and 568 discharges were due to the fact that the youth reached the age of 18. Together these children represent nearly 1 out of every 10 discharges from care in 2002 (4.7% each). About one-third of the homeless youth interviewed for the 2003 homeless study reported that they had run from an out-of-home placement at some point in their lives.

²⁰ Wattenberg, E. (2002). *Responding to the needs of children unable to live at home*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota and Wilder Research statewide homeless studies..

²¹ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2004). *Minnesota’s Child Welfare Report for 2002*. St. Paul: Author.

A history of foster care is correlated with becoming homeless at an earlier age and remaining homeless for a longer period of time.²² Some youth living in residential or institutional placements become homeless upon discharge. Many researchers and advocates have voiced concern about youth “aging out” of the system.²³ One national study reported that more than one in five youth who arrived at emergency shelters came directly from foster care, and that more than one in four had been in foster care in the previous year.²⁴ National research by the Casey Family Foundation found that 42 percent of Casey’s foster care alumni (adults who had been in foster care as children) had been homeless at one time or another. Twenty-two percent were homeless for at least one night within a year after being officially discharged from foster care. The average age for first-time homelessness of foster care alumni was 18.²⁵

Two-thirds (71%) of the youth who participated in the Wilder Research Homeless Study reported having lived in foster care, chemical dependency treatment facilities, correctional facilities, halfway houses, residential treatment centers, orphanages, group homes, or Indian schools.

Some advocates feel that the over-representation of former foster care youth reveals a lack of transition services from childhood to adulthood for this population. Others feel that family issues that may have led to the out-of-home placement may also contribute to family homelessness. In addition, mental health and behavior problems may contribute to a youth’s inability to get or keep housing. The data show us that homeless youth and youth in out-of-home placement share many of the characteristics associated with a difficult start in life.

²² Roman, N.P. & Wolfe, P.B. (1995). *Web of failure: The relationship between foster care and homelessness*. Washington, D.C.: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

²³ Robertson, M. (1996). *Homeless youth on their own*. Berkley, CA: Alcohol Research Group.

²⁴ National Association of Social Workers. (1992). *Helping vulnerable youths: Runaway and homeless adolescents in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers.

²⁵ Casey Research Services. (1993, March). *Assessing the effects of foster care: early results from the Casey national Alumni Study*. Seattle: Casey Family Services. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from: www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NationalAlumniStudy.htm.

Are homeless youth and young adults who have recently been in out-of-home placement different from other homeless young people?

Researchers examined survey information provided by youth and young adults who had lived in a foster home, residence for people with physical disabilities, residential treatment facility, orphanage, or group home in the past **two years**. Their responses were compared to youth and young adults who had not lived in one of these placements in the past two years. The data provide some interesting differences, but should be interpreted with caution. We know that some of the youth who have not had a recent placement have been in out-of-home care earlier in their lives.

In all, 44 of 129 youth (34%) and 64 of 302 young adults (21%) have lived in a foster home, group home or residential treatment program in the past 2 years.

Demographic differences between youth and young adults who recently left placement versus others

Homeless young people who have recently left a placement are:

- More likely to be White (49% vs. 29% of youth; 49% vs. 38% of young adults).
- Less likely to be African American (21% vs. 35% of both youth and young adults)
- More likely to have grown up outside of Minneapolis/St. Paul – in Twin Cities suburbs and greater Minnesota (52% vs. 34% of youth; 56% vs. 31% of young adults) and to have had their last permanent housing in these locations (68% vs. 45% of youth; 59% vs. 36% of young adults).
- More likely to have lived in Minnesota more than 10 years (70% vs. 55% of youth; 73% vs. 54% of young adults).
- Less likely to have children (9% vs. 20% of youth; 16% vs. 32% of young adults), and less likely to have children with them on the day of the survey (7% vs. 13% of youth; 8% vs. 27% of young adults).

Differences in experiences with housing and homelessness between youth and young adults who recently left placement versus others

While many of the reasons for leaving home are similar, those who have recently left a placement are twice as likely to have left home originally because of physical abuse (15% vs. 9% of youth; 34% vs. 17% of young adults). In addition, young adults (18-20) are less likely to be currently staying in emergency shelter (8% of recent leavers vs. 16% of

other young adults) and more likely to be staying in temporary arrangements (36% of recent leavers vs. 24% of other young adults). Young people who have recently left placement have stayed in their current location for a shorter period of time (average of 29 days vs. 62 days for other youth; 74 days vs. 110 days for other young adults).

In addition, young people who have recently left placement are:

- More likely to be younger when they first left home (average age is 13.7 for recent leavers vs. 14.5 for other homeless youth; average age is 15.5 for recent leavers vs. 16.4 for all other young adults).
- More likely to have lived with foster parents in their last permanent housing (30% vs. 4% for youth; 10% vs. 1% for young adults).
- Less likely to have left their last housing because of eviction or foreclosure (7% vs. 19% for youth; 8% vs. 24% for young adults).
- More likely to have left their last permanent housing because of their own drinking or drug problem (21% vs. 10% for youth; 19% vs. 11% for young adults).
- More likely to have had difficulty getting or keeping housing because of their own or someone else's substance use (25% vs. 12% young adults)

Differences in experiences with out-of-home placements between youth and young adults who recently left placement versus others

It makes sense that youth who recently left placement are about twice as likely to have *ever* lived in an out-of-home placement as other youth (100% vs. 49%). They are similarly about twice as likely to have lived in foster homes (75% vs. 42%) and drug treatment programs (75% vs. 42%). However, young people who have recently left a placement are seven to nine times more likely to have lived in a residential treatment program for persons with emotional or behavioral issues (48% vs. 5% of youth; 58% vs. 8% of young adults).

In addition, young people who have recently left placement are:

- More likely to have run from a placement (63% vs. 19% for youth; 49% vs. 16% for young adults).
- Twice as likely to have lived in a correctional facility (57% vs. 24% for youth; 61% vs. 31% for young adults).

Differences in mental health and other needs between youth and young adults who recently left placement versus others

In terms of mental health status, there are few differences between youth who have recently left placement and other homeless youth. However, young adults (ages 18 to 20) who have left a placement within the past two years appear to have more substantial mental health issues.

- Young adults who have recently left placement are twice as likely to report mental health problems in the past year (19% vs. 15% for youth; 40% vs. 17% for young adults).
- Young adults who have recently left placement are nearly three times more likely to have been told by a doctor or nurse in the past two years that they have serious mental health problems (39% vs. 24% for youth; 73% vs. 25% for young adults).
- Young adults who have recently left placement are twice as likely to have a dual diagnosis – which means both mental health and chemical dependency problems (30% vs. 7% of young adults).

In terms of other factors, young people who have recently left placement are:

- More likely to have received special education services while in school (44% vs. 27% for youth; 53% vs. 33% for young adults).
- More likely to have ever been hit on the head so hard that they saw stars or were knocked unconscious (42% vs. 18% for youth; 57% vs. 35% for young adults).
- Two to four times more likely to consider themselves chemically dependent (24% vs. 6% for youth; 34% vs. 15% for young adults).
- More likely to have been physically or sexually abused as a child (50% vs. 44% for youth; 66% vs. 46% for young adults).
- For youth, more likely to have been encouraged to make money in the sex industry (19% vs. 8% for youth). This was equally likely for about one-quarter of the young adult sample.
- More likely to report their main source of income as money provided by parents, relatives, or friends (44% vs. 32% for youth; 20% vs. 9% for young adults).

General descriptive profile

In this section of the report, unaccompanied youth results are presented in the left column and young adult results are presented in the right column.

Demographics

Youth

Sixty-four percent of surveyed unaccompanied homeless youth are female and 36 percent are male. The youth range in age from 8 to 17. The average age is 15.6. Sixty-five percent of youth are persons of color.

Young adults

Sixty-five percent of homeless young adults are female and 35 percent are male. The young adults are 18, 19, or 20 years old. The average age is 19.1. Sixty-two percent of young adults are persons of color.

The table below shows the racial/ethnic background of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and greater Minnesota, compared to the 2000 U.S. Census racial/ethnic background of youth age 8 to 17. Homeless youth and homeless young adults are more likely than the youth population as a whole to be persons of color. Only 15 percent of the overall Minnesota youth population and 14 percent of the young adult population are persons of color, compared to 65 percent of homeless youth and 60 percent of homeless young adults.

Comparison of U.S. Census to homeless youth population

	White or Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Multiracial or other	Hispanic origin ^a
Minnesota youth age 8 to 17 (Census 2000 ^b)	85%	5%	2%	4%	4%	3%
2000 Twin Cities homeless youth sample (age 17 or under)	16%	56%	13%	2%	13%	10%
2000 greater Minnesota homeless youth sample (age 17 and under)	55%	5%	31%	-	9%	10%

Comparison of U.S. Census to homeless young adult population

	White or Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Multiracial or other	Hispanic origin ^a
Minnesota young adults age 18 to 20 (Census 2000 ^b)	86%	4%	2%	4%	4%	4%
2000 Twin Cities homeless young adults sample (age 18 to 20)	29%	48%	7%	4%	12%	12%
2000 greater Minnesota homeless young adult sample (age 18 to 20)	62%	9%	15%	-	14%	5%

Notes.

(a) Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

(b) U.S. Census Bureau. 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing [statistics from data file].

Retrieved December 8, 2004, from <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Youth

Sexual orientation

Eighty-four percent of homeless youth in our sample identify themselves as heterosexual. Six percent identify themselves as bisexual, 3 percent as gay or lesbian, and 7 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation.

Family of origin

Three-fifths (60%) of youth grew up with their biological parent(s), 13 percent with grandparents or other relatives, and 9 percent in a blended family. The remainder (18%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, or in multiple household arrangements.

Marital status

Only one of the unaccompanied youth (1%) is married. Ninety-nine percent have not been married.

Place of origin

Area where respondent grew up

Eight of 10 homeless youth (80%) have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 13 states and one continent. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (24%). Of the 25 homeless youth who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often Illinois or Wisconsin. Three homeless youth grew up in Africa.

Young adults

Eighty-seven percent of homeless young adults in our sample identify themselves as heterosexual. Six percent identify themselves as bisexual, 4 percent as gay or lesbian, and 3 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation.

Close to three-quarters of homeless young adults (72%) grew up with their biological parents(s), 8 percent with grandparents or other relatives, and 5 percent in a blended family. The remainder (15%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, or in multiple household arrangements.

Three young adults (2%) are married. Eleven are separated (4%), two are divorced (1%), and one is widowed (1%). Ninety-four percent have not been married.

Two-thirds (66%) of homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 26 states and several countries. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (21%). Of the 102 homeless young adults who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often Illinois, Wisconsin, or Texas. Eight homeless young adults grew up in Africa, two in Canada, two in Mexico, and one in the Middle East.

Youth

Length of time in Minnesota

Ten percent of homeless youth have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Three-fifths (60%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years. Homeless youth are more likely to be long-term residents than homeless adults (60% of youth vs. 52% of adults have resided in Minnesota for 11 or more years).

Nine of the 12 youth who are recent residents (have lived in Minnesota two years or less) have not lived in Minnesota previously. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were to be with friends or family (82%) or for better opportunities (46%). When the new residents arrived in Minnesota, eight youth stayed with friends or family, one youth stayed in a shelter, and one stayed in transitional housing. Data are missing for two youth.

Young adults

Twenty-one percent of homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Almost three-fifths of homeless young adults (58%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years.

Thirty-five of 59 homeless young adults who are recent residents (lived in Minnesota two years or less) have not lived in Minnesota previously. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were for better opportunities (74%) and to be with friends or family (52%). Over three-fifths of new residents (62%) lived with friends or family and about one-fifth (22%) stayed in shelters when they first arrived in Minnesota.

History of placements

Homeless youth have high rates of previous out-of-home placements with 71 percent experiencing some type of social service or correctional placement. Two-thirds (67%) of homeless youth have had some type of residential social service placement, and 35 percent have had a correctional placement. Foster care, correctional facilities, and group homes are the most common types of placements for youth in our sample. In the past year, 25 percent of youth left a correctional facility, 25 percent left an emergency shelter, 9 percent left a foster home, and 8 percent left a group home. The percentage of homeless youth who report having stable housing after leaving emergency shelter is 84 percent, leaving a correctional facility is 74 percent, leaving a foster home is 73 percent, and leaving a group home is 40 percent.

The following table shows the percentage of unaccompanied youth who have a history of residential program and shelter use.

Previous residential placement and shelter use (unaccompanied youth)			
Have you ever lived in:	Males	Females	Total
Foster home	63%	48%	53%
Group home	35%	26%	29%
Facility for persons with mental health problems	24%	17%	20%
Drug or alcohol treatment	13%	12%	13%
Halfway house	11%	7%	9%
Indian school	-	5%	3%
Orphanage	2%	1%	2%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	-	-	-
Any of the above	76%	61%	67%
Emergency shelter	85%	68%	74%
Battered women's shelter	7%	9%	8%
Transitional housing	30%	46%	41%
Permanent supportive housing	2%	4%	3%
Any of the above shelter use	94%	89%	91%

The following table shows the percentage of youth who have a history of correctional placements.

Previous placement in correctional facilities (unaccompanied youth)			
Have you ever been held in:	Males	Females	Total
Juvenile detention center or other juvenile facility or camp for more than a week	41%	30%	34%
County jail or workhouse for a month or more	7%	3%	4%
Any of the above correctional facilities	44%	30%	35%

Homeless young adults also have a high rate of out-of-home placements. Close to three-fifths (57%) of homeless young adults have had some type of residential placement and 37 percent have had a correctional placement. Correctional programs, foster care, and group homes are the most common types of placements for the homeless young adults in our sample. About three-fifths of young adults have lived in transitional housing (62%) or in an emergency shelter (56%). In the past year, 16 percent left a correctional facility, 21 percent left an emergency shelter, 6 percent left a battered women’s shelter, and 4 percent left a facility for persons with mental health problems. The percentage of homeless young adults who report having stable housing after leaving a half-way house is 80 percent, a battered women’s shelter is 77 percent, transitional housing is 70 percent, emergency shelter is 62 percent, and leaving a facility for persons with mental health problems is 62 percent.

The following table shows the percentage of young adults who have a history of out-of-home placement and shelter use.

Previous residential placement and shelter use (young adults age 18-20)			
Have you ever lived in:	Males	Females	Total
Foster home	40%	36%	37%
Group home	28%	21%	24%
Facility for persons with mental health problems	22%	16%	18%
Drug or alcohol treatment	16%	19%	18%
Halfway house	15%	9%	12%
Orphanage	4%	2%	3%
Indian school	3%	3%	3%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	-	1%	1%
Any of the above	62%	53%	57%
Transitional housing	50%	69%	62%
Emergency shelter	58%	55%	56%
Battered women’s shelter	6%	19%	14%
Permanent supportive housing	4%	10%	7%
Any of the above shelter use	85%	91%	88%

The following table shows the percentage of young adults with a history of correctional placements.

Previous placement in correctional facilities (young adults age 18-20)			
Have you ever been held in:	Males	Females	Total
Juvenile detention center or other juvenile facility or camp for more than a week	51%	22%	33%
County jail or workhouse for a month or more	24%	4%	12%
State or federal prison	3%	-	1%
Any of the above correctional facilities	58%	24%	37%

Youth

Forty-two percent of homeless male youth and 30 percent of homeless female youth report running away from foster care, a group home, treatment center, or other placement.

Young adults

Twenty-six percent of homeless male young adults and 22 percent of homeless female young adults report running away from foster care, a group home, treatment center, or other placement.

Education and job training

Youth

Education

Seven percent of homeless youth have completed high school or passed their GED. Eighty-three percent of homeless youth attended school in the previous school year. Of the students who attended school in the previous school year, 57 percent attended all of the school year, 31 percent attended most of the school year, and 12 percent attended only some of the school year.

The number of schools attended during the last school year ranged from one to 11. Half (47%) of homeless youth surveyed attended only one school during the previous school year, 27 percent attended two schools, 17 percent attended three schools, and 9 percent attended more than three schools.

Young adults

Half (51%) of homeless young adults have completed high school or passed their GED. Six percent have completed some post-high school education. Two-thirds (67%) of homeless young adults attended school in the previous school year. Of these students, 19 percent attended all of the school year, 34 percent attended most of the school year, and 47 percent attended some of the school year.

The number of schools attended during the last school year ranged from one to 12. Half of the (51%) homeless young adults attended only one school during the previous school year, 24 percent attended two schools, 8 percent attended three schools, and 18 percent attended more than three schools.

Youth

Over four-fifths (84%) of homeless youth are currently enrolled in school.

Of the students who had not yet graduated or received their GED, 65 percent attended school on the day of the survey.

Of the 19 homeless youth who said that they are not attending this school this year (2003-2004), almost half (47%) said that their main reason for not attending school is because they are dealing with other issues.

Special education

One-third of homeless youth (49% of males and 24% of females) received special education services while in school.

Independent living skills program

Fifty-nine percent of homeless youth (50% of males and 64% of females) attended a program that offers training in life skills or independent living skills.

Job training

Twenty-five homeless youth (20%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: certified nurses training, building trades training, and cooking. Sixty-four percent of the 25 youth completed their training. Ten homeless youth with job training became employed in jobs using that training.

Young adults

One-quarter (25%) of homeless young adults surveyed are currently enrolled in school. Of these students, about 59 percent attended school on the day of the survey.

Of the 66 homeless young adults currently not attending school, half (50%) said that their main reason for not attending school is because they are dealing with other issues.

Thirty-seven percent of homeless young adults (46% of males and 31% of females) received special education services while in school.

Sixty-six percent of homeless young adults (62% of males and 69% of females) attended a program that offers training in life skills or independent living skills.

Seventy-nine homeless young adults (34%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: certified nurses training, building trades training, mechanical trades training and cooking. Sixty-eight percent of the 79 young adults completed their training. Thirty-four homeless young adults became employed in jobs using that training.

Employment and income

Youth

Employment

One-fifth (19%) of homeless youth are employed. Three percent have full-time jobs and 16 percent have part-time jobs. Of those with jobs, 65 percent earn less than \$8.00 an hour. Thirty-eight percent have had their job for at least three months.

Of the homeless youth who are unemployed, 24 percent have been unemployed for less than six months, 12 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 9 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. Fifty-five percent of homeless youth have never been employed.

The main barriers to employment for those who are unemployed include: personal reasons including age (40%), lack of transportation (35%), and lack of education (33%).

Income

The main sources of income for homeless youth in our survey include: short-term or steady employment (24%), parents (19%), and friends or relatives (17%). Eight percent of youth (all females) are receiving MFIP. Three percent are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Twenty-one homeless youth (16%) do not have any income. The median total monthly income is \$182 for homeless male youth and \$266 for homeless females.

Young adults

Two-fifths (39%) of the homeless young adults surveyed are employed. Nine percent have full-time jobs and 30 percent have part-time jobs. Of those with jobs, 65 percent earn less than \$8.00 per hour. Forty-five percent have held their job for three months or more.

Of the homeless young adults who are unemployed, 42 percent have been unemployed for less than six months, 29 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 30 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. Six percent of homeless young adults have never been employed.

The main barriers to employment for those who are unemployed include: lack of transportation (40%), lack of housing (34%), and lack of education (29%).

The main sources of income for homeless young adults in our survey include: short-term or steady employment (40%), MFIP (22%), and General Assistance (8%). Three percent of young adults are receiving Supplemental Security Income. Thirty-six homeless young adults (14%) do not have any income. The median total monthly income for young adults is \$302 for young adult males and \$411 for young adult females.

History of housing and homelessness

Youth

Current sleeping arrangements

Homeless youth are found in a number of different temporary living situations. Close to half (48%) spent the previous night in an emergency shelter. Thirty-seven percent stayed in a transitional housing program, and 11 percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family. Two percent stayed outdoors, 2 percent spent the night in jail, and 1 percent stayed in a foster home.

Forty-seven percent of homeless youth report their current living arrangement have lasted one week or less. However, almost two-fifths (39%) of youth surveyed have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. Sixteen percent have been homeless for one year or more.

Ninety-two percent of homeless youth consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe.

Close to one-quarter (23%) of homeless youth surveyed had slept outdoors at least one night in October.

Thirteen percent of youth were unable to obtain shelter at some point within the last three months because no beds were available. Half (50%) of these youth found temporary shelter with a friend or family member. Other youth stayed in another shelter (25%), stayed outdoors (13%), stayed in a safe home (6%), or stayed in a car or abandoned building (6%).

Young adults

Over half (54%) of homeless young adults spent the previous night in a transitional housing program. Nineteen percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family, 16 percent stayed in an emergency shelter, and 5 percent stayed in a battered women's shelter. Four percent stayed outdoors, 2 percent spent the last night in some other type of temporary arrangement, and 1 percent stayed in a host home.

One-fifth (21%) of homeless young adults report their current living arrangement had lasted one week or less. Most have been without regular or permanent housing for much longer. Two-thirds of the young adults (66%) have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. Almost two-fifths (39%) have been homeless for one year or more.

Ninety-four percent of homeless young adults consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe.

Over one-quarter (29%) of homeless young adults surveyed had slept outdoors at least one night in October.

Eighteen percent of young adults were unable to obtain shelter at some point within the last three months because no beds were available. Over two-fifths (44%) of these young adults found temporary shelter with a friend or family member. The other young adults stayed outdoors (20%), stayed in a car or abandoned building (20%), stayed in another shelter (11%), found a safe home (2%), or stayed in a hospital (2%).

Youth

Over three-fifths (62%) of youth are homeless for the first time. Thirteen percent of youth have been homeless four or more times in the last three years.

The Minnesota definition of “long-term homeless” includes those who are homeless for one year or more or those who have been homeless four or more times in the last three years. Over one-quarter (26%) of homeless youth surveyed meet Minnesota’s “long term homeless” criteria.

Assessment of current housing needs

Over two-fifths of youth (43%) report that they cannot afford to pay any amount for rent. Over one-fifth (21%) could pay between \$1 and \$200 for rent and utilities. On average, male homeless youth can afford to pay \$136 per month and female homeless youth can afford to pay \$179, including rent and utilities. Most homeless youth (73%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, and 27 percent need two or more bedrooms.

Eleven percent of the youth were on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 2 months.

Housing history

Most of the homeless youth (92%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (56%). Only 4 percent of youth lived alone in their last housing.

Young adults

About two-thirds (68%) of young adults are homeless for the first time. Twelve percent of young adults have been homeless four or more times in the last three years.

The Minnesota definition of “long-term homeless” includes those who are homeless for one year or more or those who have been homeless four or more times in the last three years. Over two-fifths (44%) of homeless young adults surveyed meet Minnesota’s “long term homeless” criteria.

About one-quarter (24%) of homeless young adults surveyed report they could not afford to pay any amount for rent. Slightly over one-quarter (26%) of young adults report they could pay between \$1 and \$200 for rent and utilities. On average, homeless young men can afford \$215 per month and homeless young women can afford \$252, including rent and utilities. Most homeless young adults (74%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, and 26 percent need two or more bedrooms.

Thirty-nine percent of homeless young adults were on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 8.4 months.

Most of the homeless young adults (80%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (45%). Nine percent of young adults lived alone in their last housing.

Youth

The main reasons for leaving their last housing include problems getting along with the people they lived with (54%), relationship problems (41%), drinking or drug problems of someone else in the household (16%), eviction (15%), and abuse by someone they lived with (15%).

The most common reasons homeless youth cite for having difficulty in getting or keeping housing include their age (17%), no housing they can afford (13%), and no local rental history (6%).

Most homeless youth originally left home around age 14. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (60%), kicked out or told to leave (43%), and wanting to be on their own (43%). Over half of homeless youth (55%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could do so. However, less than half of the homeless youth respondents (46%) believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned reason for not returning home was conflicts and fight with parents (61%).

About two-fifths of homeless youth (38%) indicate they have relatives who are homeless.

Young adults

The main reasons for leaving their last housing include problems getting along with the people they lived with (43%), relationship problems (29%), abuse by someone they lived with (21%), eviction (21%), could not afford the rent (19%), and a drinking or drug problem of someone else in the household (16%).

The most common reasons for difficulty getting or keeping housing are a lack of housing they can afford (50%), lack of local rental history (33%), and their age (24%).

Most homeless young adults originally left home around age 16. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: wanting to be on their own (68%), conflict with family (62%), kicked out or told to leave (47%), and being emotionally abused (32%). Over half of homeless young adults surveyed (57%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could. However, only 16 percent of homeless young adults believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned reason for not returning home was their desire to be on their own (72%).

Over one-quarter (26%) of homeless young adults indicate they have relatives who are homeless.

Service use

Youth

Homeless youth used many different services in the month prior to the survey. Thirty-one percent used transportation services, 29 percent used drop-in centers, 26 percent used a medical benefit program, 26 percent used Food Stamps, 23 percent used outreach services, 22 percent used a job assistance program, 20 percent used clothing shelves, 16 percent went to the emergency room, and 14 percent used hot meal programs.

Out of all services used by youth, those considered most helpful were Food Stamps, transportation assistance, drop-in centers, outreach services, and medical benefits. During the previous year, 6 percent of youth report losing or becoming unable to afford services they were receiving such as Food Stamps and medical benefits.

Fourteen percent of homeless youth report needing help applying or reapplying for services. Two-thirds (67%) of homeless youth have at least one case manager, of these, 26 percent have two or more case managers.

Young adults

Of homeless young adults, 57 percent used transportation assistance, 39 percent used Food Stamps, 36 percent used a medical benefit program, 34 percent used drop-in centers, 33 percent used job assistance, 28 percent used outreach services, 28 percent used food shelves, 26 percent used hot meal programs, 25 percent used housing assistance, and 24 percent used clothing shelves.

Of all the services used by young adults, those considered most helpful were transportation assistance, Food Stamps, drop-in centers, outreach services, housing assistance, and medical benefits. During the previous year, 12 percent of young adults report losing or becoming unable to afford services they were receiving such as Food Stamps and medical benefits.

Eighteen percent of homeless young adults report needing help applying or reapplying for services. Over three-quarters (77%) of homeless young adults have at least one case manager, of these, 39 percent have two or more case managers.

Health care

Youth

Physical health

Seventeen percent of homeless youth report needing to see a doctor about a physical health problem. Over one-quarter (26%) encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barriers cited are lack of insurance and lack of money.

Nonetheless, 61 percent of homeless youth received some type of medical coverage in the previous month, including 38 percent who received Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 6 percent received the MinnesotaCare health plan.

Over one-third (36%) of homeless youth report at least one chronic health condition (asthma, other chronic lung or respiratory problems, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, diabetes, hepatitis, or HIV/AIDS). One-third (33%) of youth were worried about how they would be cared for if they were seriously ill or dying.

One in 10 (10%) homeless youth report having a physical, mental, or other health condition that limits the kind or amount of work they can do, and 1 percent have conditions that make it hard to bathe, eat, get dressed, get in or out of a chair or bed, or get around. Twenty-two percent report often feeling confused to the point that it interferes with daily activities.

Fourteen percent of homeless youth report having problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people following a serious blow to the head (indications of possible traumatic brain injury).

Young adults

One-quarter (25%) of homeless young adults report needing to see a doctor about a physical health problem. Over one-third (35%) encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barriers cited are lack of money and lack of insurance.

Nonetheless, 65 percent of homeless young adults received some type of medical coverage in the previous month, including 52 percent who received Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 8 percent received the MinnesotaCare health plan.

Over one-quarter (29%) of homeless young adults report at least one chronic health condition (asthma, other chronic lung or respiratory problems, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, diabetes, hepatitis, or HIV/AIDS). Two-fifths (40%) of young adults were worried about how they would be cared for if they were seriously ill or dying.

Eighteen percent of homeless young adults report having a physical, mental, or other health condition that limits the kind or amount of work they can do, and 6 percent have conditions that make it hard to bathe, eat, get dressed, get in or out of a chair or bed, or get around. Twenty-eight percent report often feeling confused to the point that it interferes with daily activities.

Eighteen percent of homeless young adults report having problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people following a serious blow to the head (indications of possible traumatic brain injury).

Youth

Eighteen percent of homeless youth are not taking their prescribed medication. About one-third of homeless youth (31%) received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (35% vs. 24%).

In the previous year, over one-quarter (27%) of homeless youth had problems with their teeth or gums. Two-fifths (39%) report needing to see a dentist about a tooth or gum problem.

Mental health

Almost one-quarter (23%) of homeless youth report needing to see a health professional about a current mental health problem.

Twenty-nine percent of the homeless youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Twelve percent have been told they have alcohol abuse disorder or drug abuse disorder. Four percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder).

Over one-quarter (28%) of homeless youth received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of homeless youth who have received outpatient mental health care, 94 percent received this care in the previous two years.

Over one-third of homeless youth (34%) have considered suicide and almost one-fourth (23%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, almost half (49%) report seeking help for depression.

Young adults

Fifteen percent of young adults surveyed are not taking their prescribed medication. Over one-third of homeless young adults surveyed (36%) received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (39% vs. 32%).

In the previous year, over one-third (35%) of homeless young adults had problems with teeth or gums. Half (50%) report currently needing to see a dentist about a tooth or gum problem.

Over one-quarter (29%) of homeless young adults report needing to see a health professional about a mental health problem. Thirty-five percent of homeless young adults in our sample have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Fifteen percent have been told they have an alcohol abuse disorder or a drug abuse disorder. Twelve percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder).

One-quarter (25%) of homeless young adults received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of homeless young adults who have received outpatient mental health care, 82 percent received this care in the previous two years.

Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults (45%) have considered suicide and almost one-fourth (24%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, almost half (48%) report seeking help for depression.

Youth

Sex-related health issues

Over one-fourth (26%) of homeless youth report they have had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (29% of females and 21% of males). Forty-one percent of homeless youth report that they use or need birth control. Thirteen percent of homeless youth who report a need for birth control indicate that they have **not** been able to get what they need.

Six percent of homeless youth report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months. Two percent of homeless youth report testing positive for HIV/AIDS.

Chemical dependency

Six percent of homeless youth report needing to see a health professional about a current alcohol or drug problem.

Substance abuse in the family of origin is given as one of the reasons youth leave home. One-fifth (20%) of homeless youth report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol.

Young adults

Forty-six percent of homeless young adults report having had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (59% of females and 27% of males). Thirty-six percent of homeless young adults report that they use or need birth control. Eleven percent of homeless young adults who report a need for birth control indicate that they have **not** been able to get what they need.

Eight percent of homeless young adults report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months. Less than 1 percent of homeless young adults report testing positive for HIV/AIDS.

Eight percent of homeless young adults report needing to see a health professional about a current alcohol or drug problem.

Substance abuse in the family of origin is given as one of the reasons young adults leave home. One-fifth (20%) of homeless young adults report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol.

Youth

Twelve percent of homeless youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. Twelve percent of homeless youth consider themselves chemically dependent. Females are slightly more likely than males to report chemical dependency (13% vs. 11%). Fifteen percent of homeless youth have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program, and 13 percent have had inpatient treatment. Six percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Ten percent of homeless youth have either been diagnosed as having a chemical dependency disorder or admitted to a detox center within the last two years.

Abuse and victimization

Nearly two-fifths (38%) of homeless youth surveyed have been physically abused, and more than one-quarter (28%) have been sexually abused. Forty-six percent of homeless youth have been either physically or sexually abused. Thirty percent of homeless youth report their parents neglected to provide food, shelter, or medical care, or consistently ignored their physical or emotional needs. Half (50%) of homeless youth have been neglected, physically abused, or sexually abused.

Young adults

Twelve percent of homeless young adults have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. Nineteen percent of homeless young adults consider themselves chemically dependent. Males are more likely than females to report chemical dependency (21% vs. 18%). Nineteen percent of homeless young adults have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program, and 18 percent have had inpatient treatment. Fourteen percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Eighteen percent of homeless young adults have either been diagnosed as having a chemical dependency disorder or admitted to a detox center within the last two years.

Nearly half (46%) of homeless young adults surveyed have been physically abused, and more than one-fourth (29%) have been sexually abused. Half (50%) of homeless young adults have been either physically or sexually abused. Thirty-two percent of homeless young adults report their parents neglected to provide food, shelter, or medical care, or consistently ignored their physical or emotional needs. Over half (56%) of homeless young adults have been neglected, physically abused, or sexually abused.

Youth

Close to one-fifth (19%) of females and 15 percent of males report they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. Thirteen percent of homeless youth stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options.

Nine percent of homeless youth have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless. In the past year, 11 percent of homeless youth sought health care because of an injury or illness resulting from violence, most often caused by someone they knew. Ten percent of homeless youth (4% of males and 13% of females) report they have been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food or other things.

Twelve percent of homeless youth report they have been told how to make money in the sex industry. They were approached most of the time (64%) by an adult.

Social contacts

The majority of youth (89%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the month prior to the survey. Eight percent had contact with family members within the prior year but not during the past month. Three percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Asked which people helped them find the services they needed, homeless youth most often mentioned friends (53%), shelter staff (43%), social workers (44%), youth workers (40%), relatives other than their parents (39%), and parents (38%).

Young adults

Over two-fifths (43%) of homeless young adult females and 15 percent of the males report they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. Over one-fourth (28%) of young adults say they stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options.

One-fifth (20%) of homeless young adults have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless. In the past year, 12 percent of homeless young adults sought health care because of an injury or illness resulting from violence, most often caused by someone they knew. Sixteen percent of homeless young adults (17% of males and 16% of females) report they have been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food or other things.

One-fourth (25%) of homeless young adults have been told how to make money in the sex industry. They were approached most of the time (81%) by an adult.

The majority of young adults (83%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the month prior to the survey. Thirteen percent had contact with family members within the prior year but not during the past month. Four percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Young adults report the people who have helped them find the services they needed are friends (71%), youth workers (52%), shelter staff (50%), social workers (48%), and outreach workers (38%).

Youth

Eighty-one percent of homeless youth surveyed report that there is an adult in their life who they trust and have regular contact with.

Children

Twenty-one homeless youth surveyed (16%) are parents (17 females and four males). Of this group, two-thirds (67%) are responsible for the care of their children (14 females). There were 14 children with their parents (homeless youth) on the night of the survey. All of the children were under age three, and four were infants under age one.

A few of the homeless youth interviewed face problems related to caring for their children. Four parents have open child protection cases. One parent has court-ordered child support, but she is not receiving it. None of the parents report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem or an emotional or behavioral problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. All youth parents were able to get needed physical health care, mental health care, and dental care for their child during the last 12 months. No youth parents report that a child had skipped a meal in the preceding month due to lack of money. Two homeless youth parents were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year.

Young adults

Eighty-one percent of homeless young adults surveyed report that there is an adult in their life who they trust and have regular contact with.

Eighty-seven homeless young adults surveyed (29%) are parents (73 females and 14 males). Of this group, 79 percent are responsible for the care of their children (66 females and 2 males). There were 90 children with their homeless young adult parents on the night of the survey. All of the parents in our survey had children age seven or younger, and 23 were infants under age one.

Some homeless young adult parents face problems related to caring for their children. Four parents have open child protection cases. Twenty-five of the parents have court-ordered child support, but only six of the parents are receiving it. Six of the 56 parents (11%) report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. Five parents (9%) report that their child has an emotional or behavioral problem that interferes with their daily activities. No parents report having school-age children. Five parents report being unable to obtain needed dental care, and two parents were unable to get needed physical health care in the past 12 months. In the month preceding the survey, two young adult parents report that their child skipped a meal due to lack of money. Two-fifths of parents (39%) were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year.

Comparison of homeless youth to the general youth population

In this section, we compare the homeless youth interviewed for this study (age 17 and under) to a sample of youth in the general population, as well as to three other populations: youth in alternative schools, youth in residential behavioral treatment facilities, and youth in juvenile correctional facilities.

The first comparison examines data from ninth-graders (ages 13 to 17) who participated in the 2004 Minnesota Student Survey.²⁶

As part of the Minnesota Student Survey, youth in alternative schools and learning centers (2004), residential behavioral treatment facilities (2001), and juvenile correctional facilities (2001) were also surveyed.²⁷ Youth between the ages of 11 and 21 are included in these tables.

The vast majority of the youth are 14 to 17 years old (87% of residential treatment youth, 85% of juvenile corrections youth, and 57% of alternative school or Area Learning Center youth).

²⁶ The Minnesota Student Survey is conducted ever three years in 6th, 9th, and 12th grades. Data available through Coordinated School Health at <http://www.mnschoolhealth.com/resources.html?ac=data>

²⁷ Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team. (2004). *2004 Minnesota Student Survey Statewide Tables*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Education.

Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning. (2001). *Minnesota Student Survey 2001 Tables for Residential Behavioral Treatment Facilities*. St. Paul, MN: Author. Retrieved December 6, 2004, from:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/healthcare/documents/pub/dhs_id_020538.pdf

Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning. (2001). *Minnesota Student Survey 2001 Tables for Juvenile Correctional Facilities and Detention Centers*. St. Paul, MN: Author. Retrieved December 6, 2004, from:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/healthcare/documents/pub/dhs_id_008347.pdf

Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team. (2005). *2004 Minnesota Student Survey Alternative Schools and Area Learning Centers Tables*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Education.

Comparing the Minnesota student population to the homeless youth survey sample

	Student survey, 9 th grade, general population, 2004 (N=49,210)		Student survey, alternative schools, 2004 (N=3,331)		Student survey, residential behavioral treatment population, 2001 (N=302)		Student survey, juvenile corrections population, 2001 (N=759)		Homeless youth survey, 2003 (N=129)	
	Male (N=23,999)	Female (N=25,211)	Male (N=1,763)	Female (N=1,568)	Male (N=139)	Female (N=163)	Male (N=618)	Female (N=141)	Male (N=46)	Female (N=83)
Race: White	77%		65%		56%		51%		35%	
Ran away from home in last year	11%	15%	20%	26%	38%	68%	42%	69%	-	-
Cigarette use ^a	14%	16%	65%	68%	39%	47%	47%	69%	46%	55%
Treated for drug or alcohol problem	5%	3%	24%	21%	30%	39%	46%	49%	24%	17%
Ever been hit by date ^b	5%	5%	9%	20%	6%	32%	13%	29%	15%	19%
Ever been pregnant (females)	-	1%	-	32%	-	29%	-	25%	-	29%
Ever gotten someone pregnant (males)	2%	-	12%	-	11%	-	23%	-	21%	-
Ever been physically abused ^c	9%	14%	14%	21%	33%	46%	21%	35%	33%	41%
Ever been sexually abused ^d	3%	9%	5%	20%	15%	47%	10%	39%	22%	31%
Ever attempted suicide	7%	16%	16%	34%	31%	53%	21%	42%	17%	25%
Recent use of alcohol ^e	27%	29%	62%	57%	20%	25%	28%	45%	16%	15%

- Notes:** a) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "during the last 30 days, on how many days did you smoke a cigarette?" (those reporting more than one day were counted for this item). The homeless youth survey states, "during the past week have you used cigarettes or other tobacco products?"
- b) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "victim of violence on a date." The homeless youth survey states, "during anytime in the past 12 months, have you been in a personal relationship with someone who hit you, slapped you or pushed you around or threatened to do so?"
- c) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "has any adult in your household ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were afraid of that person?" The homeless youth survey states, "physically mistreated as a child or youth?"
- d) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "has any older person outside the family touched you sexually against your wishes or forced you to touch them sexually?" The homeless youth survey states, "sexually mistreated as a child or youth?"
- e) The Minnesota Student Survey states, "On how many occasions have you had alcoholic beverages to drink during the last 30 days?" (those reporting more than one day were counted for this item). The homeless youth survey states, "during the past week, have you used alcohol (beer, wine, hard liquor)?"

Comparisons between homeless youth and the general population of similarly aged youth

By examining information provided by the general population of Minnesota youth (Minnesota Student Survey) compared with youth who were homeless on October 23, 2003, we find:

- Homeless youth are *more* likely than youth in the general Minnesota student population to have been physically or sexually abused, to smoke cigarettes, to have experienced violence in a recent relationship, to have been pregnant, and to have attempted suicide.
- Homeless youth are slightly *less* likely than youth in the general Minnesota student population to report recent use of alcohol, but they are more likely to have been treated for an alcohol or drug problem.

The incidence of substance abuse disorder (diagnosed within the last six months) in the general population of youth 9-17 years of age is 2 percent.²⁸ In the homeless youth sample, the rate of alcohol or drug abuse disorder (diagnosis within the last two years) is 13 percent. Even allowing for the different timeframes (two years versus six months), and the fact that the homeless youth sample includes a high proportion of 16 and 17 year olds, homeless youth interviewed are more likely to have substance abuse disorder than youth in the general population.

Comparisons between homeless youth and youth taking the Minnesota Student Survey in alternative schools, residential treatment facilities, and juvenile corrections facilities

Where comparison data are available, it is apparent that many of the experiences of homeless youth are very similar to those found in youth surveyed in juvenile corrections or residential behavioral treatment programs.

- Youth in alternative schools, residential behavioral treatment, juvenile corrections, and who are homeless report *similarly* high rates of having been abused and having been the victim of domestic violence.

²⁸ Shaffer, D. et. al. (1996). The NIMH Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children Version 2.3 (DISC-2.3): Description, acceptability, prevalence rates and performance in the MECA Study. Methods for the Epidemiology of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders Study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35 (7), 865-77.

- Compared to youth surveyed in juvenile corrections and residential behavioral treatment programs, homeless youth are *less* likely to have attempted suicide and less likely to have received chemical dependency treatment services.
- Homeless boys are *more* likely to have been sexually abused than boys in residential treatment, corrections, or alternative schools.

Prevalence of running away reported by Minnesota youth

- According to the Minnesota Student Survey, 11 percent of 9th grade boys and 15 percent of 9th grade girls have run away from home at some point during the 12 months prior to the 2004 survey.
- These rates jump to nearly a quarter of the population of students attending alternative schools and to over half of all students in residential treatment or juvenile justice facilities.
- Particularly for those living in residential treatment or corrections programs, girls are more likely than boys to report that they have run away within the past year.

It is not known how many of these youth end up participating in the homeless youth and young adult survey. We do know that seven out of 10 youth who participate in our study have lived in some type of out-of-home placement.

In 2003, there were 1,345 calls to the National Runaway Switchboard placed by children and youth from Minnesota. Seventy-six percent of calls made to the switchboard were made by girls, and 61 percent were made by youth on the street.²⁹

²⁹ Retrieved December 10, 2004, from: <http://www.nrscrisisline.org/2003stat.asp>

Comparisons to other studies of homeless youth and young adults

As part of the National Health Interview Study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1992 and 1993, researchers interviewed a nationally representative household sample of 6,496 youth ages 12 to 17. Youth were asked if they spent one or more nights in the past year in a variety of places. These included shelters as well as places not intended as housing such as bridges and cars. Based on these interviews, researchers estimated that 5 percent of the total population of 12 to 17 year olds are homeless each year (or 22,563 youth in Minnesota in a year).³⁰

There are very few comprehensive descriptive studies of the homeless youth population. Many use information collected from service providers that often report duplicated information (a youth may be counted more than once during a study period). This was true for the geographically closest statewide study – a study conducted in Iowa in 1999. Basic demographics were collected by surveying service providers who came in contact with homeless or near-homeless children and youth.³¹

However, there have been increased efforts in some communities to enumerate and describe homeless youth. In comparing the homeless youth interviewed for this survey with the results of other recent studies of youth homelessness, a number of common characteristics are evident. The comparisons are drawn from the following studies:

United States	1992	Interviews conducted by Research Triangle Institute in Fall 1992 with youth residing in 23 shelters nationally and with youth on the streets in 10 urban areas (two samples). ³²
Minnesota	2000	Interviews conducted by Wilder Research with youth and young adults in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota on the evening of October 26, 2000. ³³

³⁰ Ringwalt, C., Greene, J.M., Robertson, M., McPheeters, M. (1998). The prevalence of homelessness among adolescents in the United States. *Am J Public Health*, 88, 1325-1329.

³¹ University of Iowa. (2000). *Iowa's homeless population: 1999 estimates and profile*. Iowa City, IA: Author.

³² Greene, J. M., & Ringwalt, C. (1995). *Youth with runaway, throwaway and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors*. Silver Spring, MD: National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

Lower Midwest	2000	Interviews conducted between the spring of 2000 and the fall of 2001 as part of the Midwest Longitudinal Study of Homeless Adolescents. Interviews conducted in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas with 455 youth. ³⁴
Monterey CA	2002	Interviews conducted with 316 homeless youth between February and March 2002. Of these 316 youth, 27 percent were unaccompanied and living on their own. The rest were with families. ³⁵
Minnesota	2003	Interviews conducted with youth and young adults in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota during the evening of October 23, 2003 (this study).

Studies of youth homelessness include youth of varying age ranges. Many include youth who are between the ages of 12 and 21 (see the age ranges included in other studies, below). To better compare basic information collected about Minnesota’s homeless youth population to other studies done in other parts of the county, we have **combined youth and young adult data** in the following table.

Because these statistics combine youth and young adult data, percentages differ from those provided elsewhere in this report. In nearly all other tables, data for youth under the age of 18 are reported separately from data for young adults 18 to 20 years old.

The table below illustrates the demographic profiles and the life experiences of **youth and young adults** described in these varied samples.

³³ Wilder Research. (2001). *Homeless youth in Minnesota: statewide survey of people without permanent shelter*. St. Paul, MN: Author.

³⁴ Whitbeck, L., & Hoyt, D. (2002). *Midwest Longitudinal Study of Homeless Adolescents. Baseline summary for all participating agencies*. Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Retrieved May 11, 2004, from: www.endhomelessness.org/pub/MidwestStudy.pdf.

³⁵ Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services (2002). *Homeless Census and Homeless Youth/Foster Teen Study*. Monterey, CA: Author. Retrieved December 6, 2004, from: http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/dss/affiliates/cap/downloads/homeless_teens/07_main_study.pdf

Comparison of youth characteristics from six homeless youth and young adult studies

Sample population	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	Monterey CA, 2002, Street and sheltered N=316	Lower Midwest, 2002 Street & sheltered N=455	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=494	MN, 2003 Street & sheltered N=431
	Street youth from 10 urban areas	Sheltered youth from 23 shelters nationally	County-wide survey of youth with parents and on their own	Survey of youth ages 16-19	Statewide sheltered and street (not with parents)	Statewide sheltered and street (not with parents)
Gender						
Male	61%	39%	64%	44%	40%	39%
Female	39%	61%	36%	56%	60%	61%
Age						
Average age	17.9	16.1	18	18	17.4	17.9
Range of ages	12-21	12-21	14-21	16-19	10-20	8-20
Race						
African American	28%	41%	6%	22%	29%	34%
Caucasian	46%	32%	35%	59%	41%	39%
American Indian	-	-	-	3%	16%	13%
Latino/Hispanic	18%	20%	53%	4%	8%	10%
Asian	-	-	4%	1%	2%	2%
Other	9%	8%	-	11%	7%	9%
Placements						
Drug/alcohol treatment	24%	18%	Not asked	Not asked	16%	16%
Foster home	Not asked	Not asked	10%	Not asked	36%	42%
Abuse						
Physical	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	77%	45%	43%
Sexual	14%	8%	Not asked	22%	33% 40% girls, 21% boys	29% 37% girls, 16% boys

Comparison of youth characteristics from six homeless youth and young adult studies (continued)

Sample population	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	Monterey CA, 2002, Street and sheltered N=316	Lower Midwest, 2002 Street & sheltered N=455	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=494	MN, 2003 Street & sheltered N=431
	Street youth from 10 urban areas	Sheltered youth from 23 shelters nationally	County-wide survey of youth with parents and on their own	Survey of youth ages 16-19	Statewide sheltered and street (not with parents)	Statewide sheltered and street (not with parents)
Survival sex						
Engaged in sex for food, money, or shelter	21%	7%	Not asked	20%	17% 19% girls, 15% boys	14% 15% girls, 13% boys
Children						
Ever been pregnant (girls only)	50%	41%	50%	46%	45%	49%
Have children	Not asked	Not asked	19%	17%	30%	25%
Suicide						
Ever attempted suicide	32%	26%	Not asked	37%	28%	24%
Violence						
Been assaulted	29%	15%	Not asked	31% girls 36% boys (while homeless)	19% 20% girls 18% boys (while homeless)	17% 18% girls, 15% boys (while homeless)

The table shows that:

- Homeless youth are disproportionately youth of color.
- Homeless youth report high levels (8% to 33%) of past sexual abuse. Research Triangle Institute's national sample reported the lowest levels of sexual abuse. This may be due, in part, to differences in social climate with regard to reporting abuse.
- Nearly half of homeless girls report having been pregnant.
- One-fourth to one-third of homeless youth report having attempted suicide.
- Fifteen to 36 percent of homeless youth report having been assaulted since becoming homeless.
- Between 16 and 24 percent of homeless youth have been in drug or alcohol treatment facilities.

Comparisons to children and youth in residential treatment centers and treatment foster care

Youth who are homeless share common experiences with youth who are living in treatment programs. In many ways, the experiences of homeless youth parallel those of children who are served in residential treatment programs and treatment foster care. In fact, some of these facilities can also serve children who need short-term shelter. Backgrounds of abuse, alcoholism, and prior institutionalization are common. The table below provides selected comparisons between the 2003 homeless youth survey and information about children and youth served through the Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies.³⁶ Please note that the residential treatment center and treatment foster care samples include children of all ages (although three-quarters are ages 12 to 18 at intake), while the homeless youth population includes no one under the age of 8.

Demographics and life experiences

	Youth being discharged from residential facilities in 2002 (N=377)	Youth being discharged from treatment foster care in 2002 (N=104)	2003 homeless youth (Age 8-17) (N=129)
Average (mean) age	13.4 years	13.1 years	15.6 years
Gender			
Female	37%	51%	64%
Male	63%	49%	36%
Youth of Color	38%	69%	67%
Victimization^a			
Physical abuse	51%	46%	38%
Sexual abuse	46%	36%	28%
Abuse OR neglect ^b	68%	77%	52%

³⁶ Becker, L. and the MCCA Research and Evaluation Committee. (2003). *Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies 2003 Annual Outcomes Report*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies.

Demographics and life experiences (continued)

	Youth being discharged from residential facilities in 2002 (N=377)	Youth being discharged from treatment foster care in 2002 (N=104)	2003 homeless youth (Age 8-17) (N=129)
Prior Placement			
Foster care	37%	56%	53%
Group home	18%	13%	29%
Drug or alcohol treatment	6%	8%	13%
Residential treatment ^c	28%	27%	20%
Correctional facility	7%	12%	35%
Shelter/Shelter foster care	40%	60%	74% ^d

Notes: a) Data from residential treatment programs are based on abuse that was either suspected or documented. Homeless youth data are based on self-reported abuse.

b) Homeless youth were asked "did your parents ever neglect to provide you with food, shelter, or medical care, or consistently ignore your physical or emotional needs in other significant ways?" Residential treatment and treatment foster care programs reported on youth who were emotionally abused or physically neglected.

c) Refers to residential programs for emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems; does not include corrections programs.

d) Homeless youth were asked if they had ever lived in an emergency shelter.

The data suggest that many homeless youth have experienced circumstances similar to those of youth treated in residential programs. Homeless youth, however, appear less likely than those in treatment to have been physically or sexually abused. Homeless youth are more likely to be girls, to be persons of color, and are older on average than those in residential treatment facilities.

Institutionalized and homeless youth show similarities in their incidence of out-of-home placements. A substantial percentage of both groups have had prior placements in foster care, residential treatment facilities for mental health or behavioral problems, and correctional facilities. Homeless youth are more likely than youth in placement to have been in group homes, chemical dependency treatment facilities, and correctional facilities.

Data tables for all survey items

Tables in this section report frequency distributions for all questions included in the survey, with breakdowns by geographic area (Twin Cities metro area vs. greater Minnesota,³⁷ by gender, and by shelter type (youth shelter programs vs. friends/extended family or other arrangements).³⁸

Unlike in the *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*, these data are not weighted.³⁹ (In the companion report, survey data for adults in shelters and other temporary housing programs are weighted to better reflect the actual sheltered population of adults on the day the survey was conducted.)

Note that some tables are conditional and thus only include the responses of youth who answered “yes” to an earlier question. For example, Table 119 reports the number of youth who are currently employed. This question was asked of everyone. Table 120 reports information about the number of jobs held, but this question was only asked of those who were employed. Thus, the percentages reported in Table 123 total 100 percent of those who are employed, not 100 percent of the entire sample.

The tables are organized by question. Within each question, the data tables display the responses for the Twin Cities area for ages 10-17 and 18-20, then for greater Minnesota for ages 10-17 and 18-20. Note also that the “total” column appears in the middle of each table. To the left of the total column, breakdowns are presented by the shelter types of emergency/transitional housing versus friend/family/street/other shelter arrangements (further categorized by gender). To the right of the table totals, the statewide totals are provided for the same age group.

³⁷ Throughout this report, the “Twin Cities metro area” refers to the seven counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Carver, Scott, Dakota and Washington.

³⁸ Other housing arrangements include outside, abandoned buildings, temporary paid or exchange arrangements or voucher arrangements.

³⁹ A copy of *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota* can be obtained at: www.wilder.org/research

Appendix

Interview sites

Interview sites

Northeast Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Youth emergency shelters									
Carlton Youth Shelter	7	2	9	6	2	8	85.7	100.0	88.9
North Homes I.T.A.S.K.I.N.	6	2	8	4	1	5	66.7	50.0	62.5
Youth transitional housing									
North Homes I.T.A.S.K.I.N.	6	-	6	6	-	6	100.0	-	100.0
Totals	19	4	23	16	3	19	84.2	75.0	82.6
Total interviews – Northeast Minnesota Continuum of Care Region				16	3	19			

St. Louis County continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Youth emergency shelters									
Range Youth Services	3	4	7	3	4	7	100.0	100.0	100.0
L.S.S. Bethany Crisis Shelter	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	100.0	100.0
Transitional housing									
Range Transitional in Virginia	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Range Transitional in Hibbing	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
AEOA – Transitional	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Youth transitional housing									
Lifehouse – Proctor House	1	-	1	1	-	1	100.0	-	100.0
Harbor House for Youth	-	2	2	-	2	2	-	100.0	100.0
Total sheltered interviews	5	13	18	4	12	16	80.0	92.3	88.9
Non-sheltered – Duluth				2	1	3			
Total interviews – St. Louis County Continuum of Care Region				6	13	19			

Northwest Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Battered women's shelters									
Northwoods Coalition for Battered Women	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youth emergency shelters									
Evergreen House	1	5	6	-	4	4	-	80.0	66.7
Youth transitional housing									
Evergreen House Transitional Housing	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Totals sheltered interviews	1	7	8	-	5	5	-	71.4	62.5
Non-sheltered – Bemidji				-	5	5			
Total interviews – Northwest Minnesota Continuum of Care Region				-	10	10			

Central Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Transitional housing									
Volunteers of America	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
New Beginnings	-	2	2	-	2	2	-	100.0	100.0
Place of Hope Transitional	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Hope Housing									
Totals sheltered interviews	-	4	4	-	4	4	-	100.0	100.0
Non-sheltered – Brainerd				-	1	1			
Total interviews – Central Minnesota Continuum of Care Region					5	5			

West Central Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Transitional housing									
Bridges Moorhead	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Non-sheltered – Moorhead				2	5	7			
Total interviews – West Central Minnesota Continuum of Care Region				2	6	8			

Metro Area continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Battered women's shelters									
Alexandra House	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Women's Advocates	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youth emergency shelters									
Bridge for Runaway Youth	3	3	6	2	3	5	66.7	100.0	
Point Northwest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arlington House	7	-	7	4	-	4	57.1	-	57.1
Ain Dah Yung	5	4	9	4	3	7	80.0	75.0	77.8
LSS Rezek House	1	2	3	1	1	2	100.0	50.0	66.7
Hope Street Shelter	2	2	4	1	2	3	50.0	100.0	75.0
Transitional housing									
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council	-	3	3	-	1	1	-	33.3	33.3
Elim Transitional – Anoka	-	2	2	-	2	2	-	100.0	100.0
Incarnation House	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Youth transitional housing									
Beverly Benjamin Youth Lodge	-	2	2	-	2	2	-	100.0	100.0
Bridge – Transitional	2	2	4	2	1	3	100.0	50.0	75.0
Project Foundation	2	-	2	2	-	2	100.0	-	100.0
Freeport West –Project Solo	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Anpa Waste'	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	100.0	100.0
Safe Haven for Youth	1	-	1	1	-	1	100.0	-	100.0
LSS Life Haven	0	7	7	-	7	7	-	100.0	100.0
LSS Transitional Living Program	6	8	14	1	5	6	16.7	62.5	42.9
Total sheltered interviews				18	30	48			
Non-sheltered – Minneapolis				2	13	15			
Non-sheltered – St. Paul				-	1	1			
Total interviews – Metro Area Continuum of Care Region				20	44	64			

Southwest Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Youth transitional housing									
L. S. S. SEARCH Program	1	2	3	1	1	2	100.0	50.0	75.0
Non-sheltered – Willmar	1	1	2	1	1	2			
Total interviews – Southwest Minnesota Continuum of Care Region				2	2	4			

Southeast Minnesota continuum of care region

Agency	Census Counts			Interview Counts			Interview Percent of Census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Youth emergency shelter									
LSS Crossroads of Owatonna	2	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Von Wald Shelter-Sheriffs Youth Programs	1	1	2	1	1	2	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total interviews – Southeast Minnesota Continuum of Care Region				1	1	2			

Number of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults interviewed or counted in Minnesota on a single night in October 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003

1991	Interviewed In shelters	Interviewed in other locations	Total
Homeless youth (under age 18)	42	27	69
Homeless young adults (18-20)*	59	28	87
Total (based on interviews conducted)	101	55	156

1994	Interviewed In shelters	Interviewed in other locations	Total
Homeless youth (under age 18)	52	62	114
Homeless young adults (18-20)*	105	64	169
Total (based on interviews conducted)	157	126	283

1997	Counted or Interviewed In shelters	Interviewed in other locations	Total
Homeless youth (under age 18)	199 (count)	55	254
Homeless young adults (18-20)*	291 (interview)	95	386
Total (based on counts & interviews conducted)	490	150	640

2000	Counted or Interviewed In shelters	Interviewed in other locations	Total
Homeless youth (under age 18)	179 (count)	87	266
Homeless young adults (18-20)*	187 (interview)	102	289
Total (based on counts & interviews conducted)	366	189	555

2003	Counted in shelters	Interviewed in other locations	Total
Homeless youth (under age 18)	141	34	175
Homeless young adults (18-20)*	335	98	433
Total (based on counts & interviews conducted)	476	132	608

**Note. Prior to 2003, there was no way of distinguishing young adults ages 18 to 20 from other adults in the counts of numbers staying in shelters. Therefore for these items, we used the number of young adults interviewed on survey night. In each study, we interviewed approximately 45 to 55 percent of adults found in shelters on the survey night.*