

Homeless in Minnesota 2003



*Key facts from the survey of
Minnesotans without permanent housing*

This report was prepared by Wilder Research Center through a special grant from the Family Housing Fund, www.fhfund.org.

Funders of the 2003 Wilder homelessness survey

Minnesota Housing Finance Agency
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Minnesota Department of Veterans' Affairs

Family Housing Fund
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

Project staff

Greg Owen, study director
June Heineman
Karen Ulstad

Ellen Shelton
Michelle Decker Gerrard

Editor: Ginger Hope
Design: Marilyn Conrad
Photography: Steve Wewerka

Other principal staff contributors: Mark Anton, Ben Bushee, Marilyn Conrad, Phil Cooper, Thalia Cooper, Linda Houle, Nicole Martin, Ryan McArdle, Ron Mortenson, and Wayne Ramsden.

Every three years since 1991, Wilder Research Center has conducted a statewide survey of people who are homeless or living in temporary housing programs. In October 2003, more than 700 volunteer interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with about 3,100 people experiencing homelessness. This took place in nearly 250 places throughout Minnesota, including about 220 emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and battered women's shelters. In addition, homeless people not currently in shelters were interviewed in 40 cities and towns.

This summary represents an overview of initial findings from the full study, and closely follows the topics of our previous summary report, *Understanding Homelessness 2000*. Because of changes in shelter services and program definitions, the reader should use caution in making direct comparisons to results from previous years, except where those comparisons are presented in this 2003 report.

Find more detailed reports from the 2003 study as they are published by consulting the Wilder Research Center web site: www.wilder.org/research

Wilder Research Center
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, MN 55108
651-647-4600
February 2004 (revised July 2004)



AMHERST H.
WILDER
FOUNDATION

Inside

- 3 How many homeless Minnesotans?
- 6 Key trends
- 8 Who was homeless in Minnesota in 2003?
- 10 Children
- 12 Employment
- 14 Health concerns
- 16 Services
- 17 Shelter providers describe impact of budget cuts
- 18 Affordable housing
- 20 Barriers to stable housing
- 21 Guide to temporary housing programs
- 22 Violence and abuse
- 23 Youth on their own
- 26 Greater Minnesota

How many homeless Minnesotans?

On October 23, 2003, shelter providers counted 7,015 homeless people in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs. An additional 796 homeless people were identified who were not staying in any formal shelter or housing program, for a total of 7,811 who were counted that night.

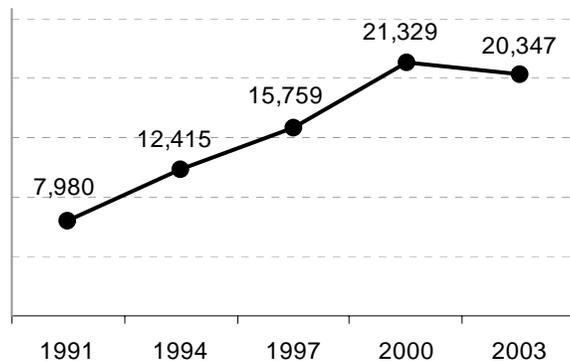
Combined, these figures include:

- 2,517 men
- 2,257 women
- 2,862 children with their parents
- 66 unaccompanied male youth under 18
- 109 unaccompanied female youth under 18

These numbers are an undercount of homeless people, because we do not know how many are living on the street or in other non-shelter arrangements. From other research done elsewhere, we estimate that about 600 more individuals were on the streets and 350 to 450 more youth were homeless on their own (not with their parents), and were not served by formal shelter programs. Adding 43 homeless persons who were in detox on the night of October 23, the estimate rises to 8,800 to 8,900 total homeless Minnesotans on any given night in 2003.

Adding those who are “precariously housed” (see definition below), the total estimates look like this:

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MINNESOTANS WHO ARE HOMELESS OR PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED



Source: Wilder Research Center

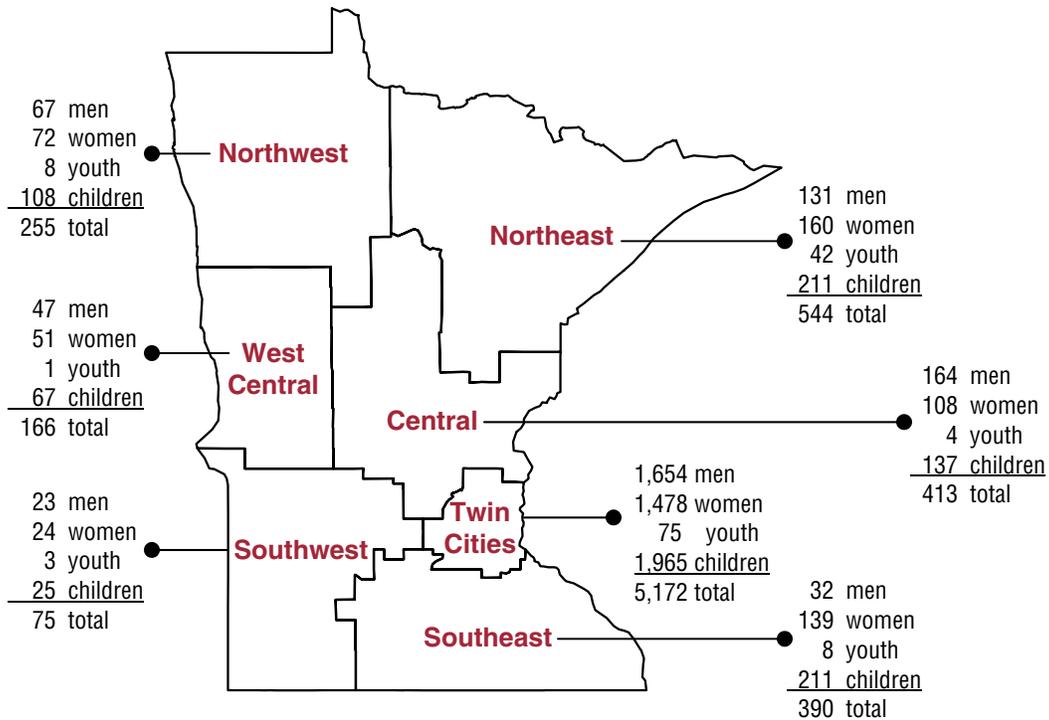
Precariously housed individuals are those whose housing situation is temporary or unstable. Examples include those living “doubled-up” with friends or relatives. These individuals are not included in the homeless numbers. We use conservative formulas to estimate how many are precariously housed, so the actual numbers are probably higher.

What do we mean by “homeless”?

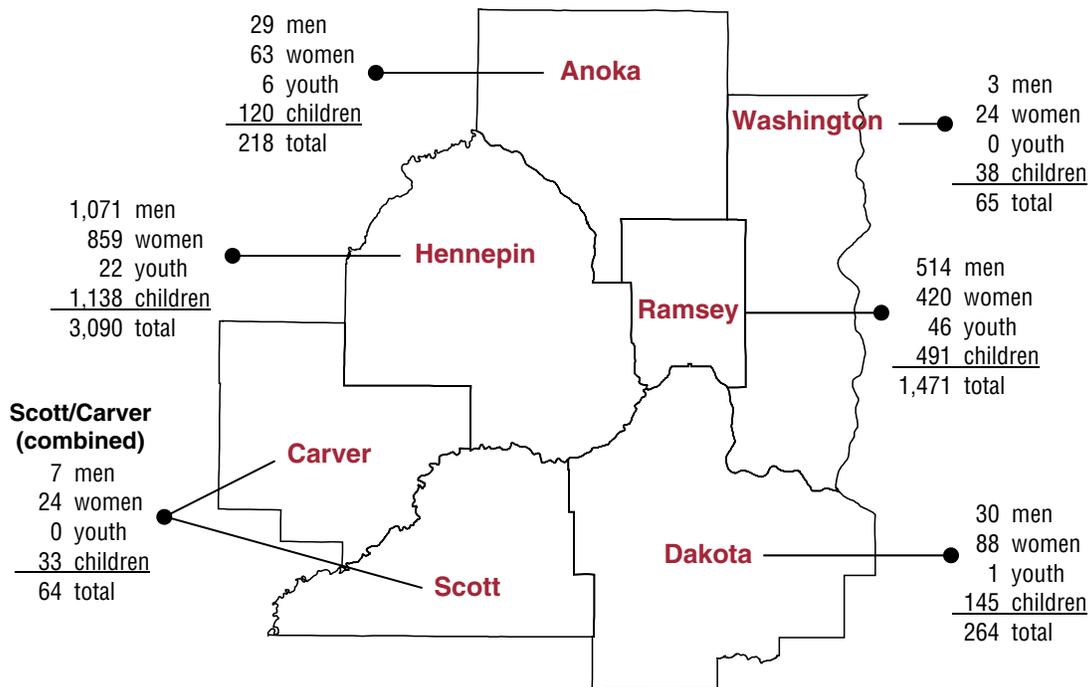
In the definition used for this research, a homeless person is anyone who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; or (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised, publicly or privately operated temporary living accommodation, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and battered women’s shelters; or (3) has a nighttime residence in any place not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges or in cars. This is based on the definition established by the U.S. Congress.

How many homeless Minnesotans?

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN MINNESOTA HOMELESS SHELTERS ON OCTOBER 23, 2003



NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN METRO AREA HOMELESS SHELTERS ON OCTOBER 23, 2003



Source: Wilder Research Center; data from shelter providers.

Note: "Youth" refers to those under age 18 who are on their own (not with their families).

Number of families

Minnesota's homeless population in 2003 included 1,341 families (defined as one or more adults with one or more children). Most children were with their mother or other female caretaker (82%), some were with both parents or two caretakers (12%), and a few were with their father or male caretaker (6%).

From 1991 to 2003, the number of homeless families more than tripled. This growth was consistent and significant throughout the decade of the 1990s (434 families in 1991, 807 in 1994, 1,103 in 1997, and 1,413 in 2000), before dropping slightly to 1,341 in 2003.

Number of children

The number of homeless children with their parents in 2003 continued to be high, but for the first time, it dropped slightly from the previous survey in 2000. On the night of the 2003 survey, Wilder identified 2,862 children in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets with their families, compared to 875 children when this research began in 1991 and 3,122 in 2000. The decrease was observed only in Hennepin County; elsewhere in the state, the numbers actually grew.

There does not appear to have been any significant change in the number of homeless youth on their own.



Halt in the rising numbers of homeless children

In 2003, for the first time since 1991, the number of children with their homeless parents did not rise. The actual numbers counted were down slightly compared to 2000, but this decrease seems to be mainly related to the change in status of one large facility whose residents no longer meet the federal definition of “homeless.” We suspect that more children are also being served through permanent supportive housing.

Some gains in racial disparities among adults

Black, American Indian, and Hispanic people continued to make up the majority (about 57%) of the adult homeless population, while they make up just 6 percent of the total adult population in Minnesota. However, the disparity was not as large in 2003 as it was in 2000, when 65 percent of the homeless were Black, American Indian, or Hispanic. Asian Americans were the only minority group that was less common among the homeless than in the population as a whole. Unlike adults, homeless youth continued to include increasing proportions of Black, American Indian, and Hispanic youth.





Employment lost ground

From 1991 to 2000, the percentage of employed homeless adults rose steadily and more than doubled, from 19 percent in 1991 to 41 percent in 2000. The proportion working full time rose over this same decade from 7.5 percent to 26 percent. However, a few years into the recession in the early 2000s, the employment rate for homeless adults in 2003 had fallen to 30 percent employed, with 13 percent working full time.

Mental illness continued to rise

Continuing a rising trend since the first study in 1991, once again a higher percentage of homeless adults reported a significant mental health problem. The percentage was 47 percent in 2003, compared to 25 percent in 1991 and 36 percent in 2000.

Persistent rates of chemical dependency

One in four homeless adults (25%) had a recent diagnosis with an alcohol or substance abuse disorder, including 30 percent of men. More than half of Minnesotans without permanent housing reported serious problems with alcohol or drugs. Over one in six had a dual diagnosis of both mental health and chemical abuse disorders.

Adults who were abused as children

The percentage of homeless adults who were physically mistreated as children continued to rise, from 28 percent in 1991 and 33 percent in 2000 to 38 percent in 2003. Likewise, the percentage of homeless adults reporting that they were sexually mistreated as children increased from 17 percent in 1991 and 24 percent in 2000 to 27 percent in 2003. For women, the increase was from 33 percent in 1991 to 42 percent in 2003.

School attendance

88 percent of parents reported that all of their school-age children attended school that day. Fewer were having trouble attending school because of their family's housing problems (8% in 2003, down from 15% in 2000). Among youth who were homeless on their own, 58 percent had attended school on the day of the survey, compared to less than half in 2000.

Who was homeless in Minnesota in 2003?

Age

The average age of people experiencing homelessness:

- . 41 years for men
- . 34 years for women
- . 15 to 16 years for youth on their own

Among children who are homeless with their parents:

- . 82% are age 12 or younger
- . 44% are age 5 or younger

Note: 2,862 children were counted on the night of the survey, but this age information is based only on the 1,783 children whose parents were interviewed.

Does homelessness become a repeating problem?

- . 59% of adults in the 2003 Minnesota survey were homeless for the first time
 - . 8% had 1 previous episode
 - . 11% had 2 or 3 previous episodes
 - . 9% had 7 or more previous episodes
 - . 44% had been homeless for a year or more at the time of the interview
-

Marital status

More than half of homeless adults had never been married (55%); 26 percent were divorced, 11 percent were separated, 7 percent were currently married, and 2 percent were widowed.

Education

One out of four homeless adults (24%) had no high school diploma. Just under half (46%) had a high school education but no more, and nearly one-third (30%) had at least some higher education. One-quarter (25%) reported that they had received special education services while in school.

Length of residence in Minnesota

Half of homeless adults (52%) have lived in Minnesota for more than 10 years, and nearly two-thirds (64%) have lived here more than five years. The percentage of homeless people who have lived in Minnesota for two years or less dropped in the mid-1990s, from 39 percent in 1991 and 1994 to 28 percent in 1997 and 2000 and 27 percent in 2003. Of those in Minnesota for two years or less, one-third had lived in Minnesota before.

Homeless individuals in 2003 were very similar to those in 2000 in their ages, marital status, education levels, and length of residence in Minnesota.

Race and ethnicity

Black, American Indian, and Hispanic people comprised a much larger proportion of the homeless population than the overall state population. However, the disparities for adults fell from 2000 to 2003, while continuing to rise for unaccompanied youth.

RACE AND ETHNICITY OF HOMELESS ADULTS AND YOUTH

Percent of homeless adults	Percent of all Minnesota adults		Percent of homeless youth (unaccompanied, age 8-17)	Percent of all Minnesota youth (age 10-17)
9%	1%	American Indian	22%	2%
1%	2%	Asian American	1%	4%
40%	3%	Black	31%	5%
43%	91%	White	35%	85%
6%	2%	Other, including mixed race	11%	4%
7%	2%	Hispanic (may be of any race)	10%	3%

Source: Wilder Research Center survey of homelessness and Census 2000

Income

Asked to name their main source of income, homeless adults report:

- . Steady employment (20%)
- . MFIP, Minnesota's welfare program (16% of adults, 31% of women)
- . General Assistance (16%)
- . Day labor (11%)

Total monthly incomes were lower than in 2000:

- . 23% have monthly incomes of \$100 or less
- . 20% - \$101 to \$300
- . 15% - \$301 to \$500
- . 24% - \$501 to \$800
- . 19% - over \$800

Many children experience homelessness

A total of 2,862 children were homeless with their parents in October 2003. While this was fewer than in 2000, it was still more than triple the number of children in 1991. Including unaccompanied youth, children were 39 percent of all homeless individuals in 2003. Besides the children who were homeless with their parents, nearly 2,600 were affected by a parent's homelessness but were not with that parent.

Ages of homeless children

- 44% of homeless children with their parents were age 5 or younger
- 38% were between 6 and 12
- 18% were 13 to 17 years old

Note: 2,862 children were counted on the night of the survey, but this age information is based only on the 1,783 children whose parents were interviewed.

Most homeless children were with only one parent

- Most children were with their mother or female caretaker only (82%)
- 69% of homeless women had children under age 18, and 53% had at least one child with them
- 36% of homeless men had minor children, and 6% had at least one child with them



Children's health, nutrition, and mental health

Among parents whose children were with them:

- 16% had at least one child with a chronic or severe physical health problem (average age: 7½)
- 6% had been unable to obtain needed health care for at least one child in the past year (average age: 9½)
- 3% had been unable to get needed mental health care for at least one child in the past year
- 16% could not get needed dental care
- 7% said their children skipped meals in the previous month because there wasn't enough money to buy food
- 23% said that at least one of their children had an emotional or behavioral problem, about four times the rate for the overall population

Education

Among parents who have school-age children:

- 88% reported that all their school-age children attended school on the day of the survey, the same as in 2000, which was the highest percentage since the start of the Minnesota homeless survey in 1991.
- 38% had at least one school-age child with learning difficulties or other school-related problems
- 25% had a child who had repeated a grade
- 8% said their children had trouble going to school because of their housing situation. This was a greater problem in emergency shelters (16%) and battered women's shelters (13%) than in transitional housing (3%). It was worst among those living outdoors (57%) and in other unofficial arrangements (35%). However, for all these types of arrangements, it was an improvement from previous years.



More homeless people were working than in 1991, but not as many as in 2000.

Who was working?

- 30% of homeless adults were working in 2003, compared to 41% in 2000
- 13% were working full time, down from 26% in 2000
- A lower percentage of women (27%) than men (33%) were working
- Homeless parents (28%) were slightly less likely to be employed than other homeless adults without children (31%), but about equally likely to be working full time (13% for each)
- Adults in transitional housing were more likely to be working (34%) than adults in other types of shelters
- Adults living in non-shelter locations were less likely to be working than those in shelters, but they were the only group whose employment rate remained stable since 2000 (in 2000, 22% and in 2003, 23%)

9 percent had been laid off within the previous six months. Of these, only 10 percent reported having received any unemployment benefits.

Wages

Of homeless adults working full time in 2003:

- 59% earned less than \$10 an hour
- 26% earned less than \$8 an hour

Although fewer homeless adults were working full time in 2003, more of those who were working full time were earning above \$8 or \$10 per hour than in 2000.

Education and training

24 percent of homeless adults had less than a high school education, and 30 percent had some post-secondary education. Consistently over the past decade, about half of homeless adults have attended training to learn a specific job.

Barriers to employment

Asked what they see as their greatest barriers to working, unemployed homeless adults named these most often:

- Lack of transportation (35%)
- Lack of housing (30%)
- Physical health problems (28%)
- Mental health problems (21%)
- Lack of child care (20% of unemployed women)

From answers to other survey questions, we also know that unemployed adults are affected by the following:

- Mental health problems (reported by 51% of unemployed adults, although fewer mentioned them as a main job barrier)
- Previous long-term unemployment (52%)
- Criminal background (43%)
- Chemical dependency problems (38%)
- Lack of a high school diploma (27%)



Top physical health problems in the past year

- Tooth or gum problems (45%)
- Mental health problems (34%)
- Injury-related problems (21%)
- Stomach or digestive problems (20%)
- High blood pressure (19%)
- Asthma (18%)

Each of these is up by three or more percentage points since the 2000 survey.

One in five homeless adults had dental problems for which they had not received care. This proportion was larger outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Homeless people report high needs for basic health care, dental care, prescription medicines, mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment.

Mental health

- Nearly half (47%) of homeless adults had a serious mental illness, compared to 20% in 1994, 32% in 1997, and 36% in 2000.
- Major depression was the most common diagnosis (31% of all homeless adults, compared to between 6% and 17% for other mental illnesses)
- All categories of major mental illness diagnoses had increased by one-quarter to one-half since the 2000 survey
- 39% said they needed to see a doctor for an emotional or mental health problem, up from 30% in 2000
- 18% had both a mental illness and a substance abuse disorder, up from around 14% in each of the previous three studies (1994 through 2000)

Substance abuse

- One of every four homeless men (25%) and 14% of homeless women had recently been told they had an alcohol abuse disorder (compared to an estimated 5% of Americans)
- 16% had been diagnosed with drug abuse disorder
- 25% of all homeless adults had a drug or alcohol abuse disorder (20% of men, 19% of women)
- 34% consider themselves alcoholic or chemically dependent (40% of men, 27% of women)
- 49% of men and 29% of women had lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility within the past two years



Other disabilities

- 41% of homeless adults reported that they had a physical, mental or other health condition that limited the kind or amount of work they could do
- 14% reported having a condition that makes it hard to engage in activities of daily living (such as bathing, eating, getting dressed, getting in or out of a bed or chair, or getting around by themselves)
- 30% reported that they often feel confused or have trouble remembering things, or have problems making decisions, to the point that it interferes with daily activities.
- 29% reported having received a blow to the head hard enough to knock them out or make them see stars, followed by problems with headache, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people (an indication of a possible traumatic brain injury)

Health care

- 41% of homeless adults said they needed to see a doctor for a physical health problem (up from 35% in 2000)
- 39% said they needed to see a health professional for a mental health problem (up from 30% in 2000)
- 59% had current dental problems needing attention (up from 54%)
- 44% had a chronic health condition such as arthritis, high blood pressure, or diabetes (about the same as in 2000)
- 37% had visited an emergency room in the past 6 months, an average of 2.5 times (the same rates of use as in 2000)
- 18% had medication prescribed in the past year that they were not taking – 47% of them for a physical problem, 56% for a mental health problem, and 5% for a substance abuse problem. The total proportion not taking needed medication was about the same as in 2000, but the kind of problem not being treated had shifted, to a lower rate for physical problems and a higher rate for mental health problems.
- 70% had medical coverage during October 2003. Most had it through a public program (such as Medical Assistance, General Assistance Medical Care, or MinnesotaCare), and 4% had employer-based coverage.
- 14% of homeless adults had lost public medical benefits during the previous year, and 22% had had their benefits reduced or their co-pays increased

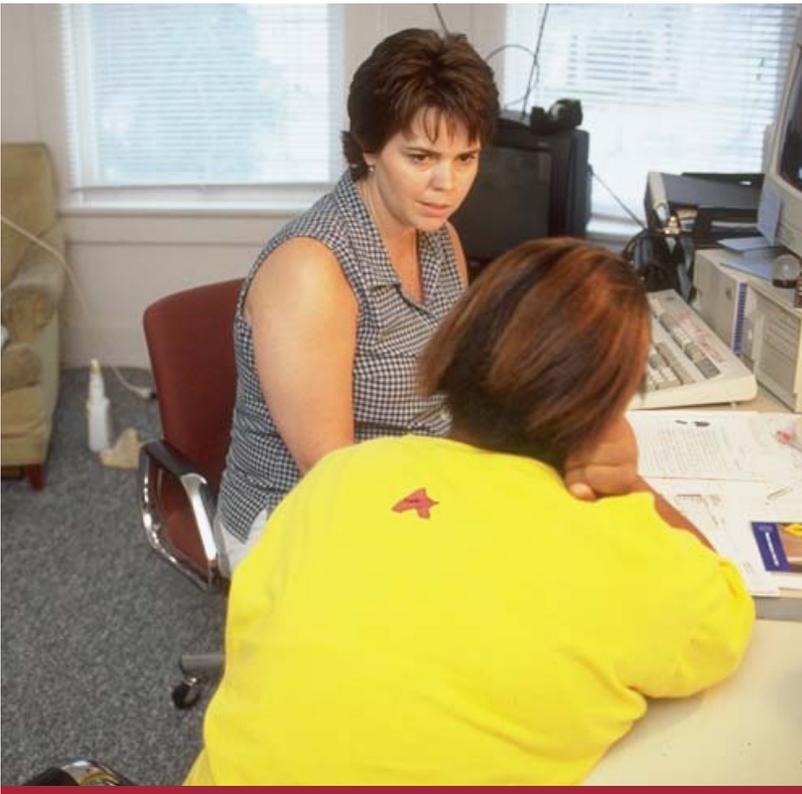
The services most commonly used in October by homeless adults were:

- Food Stamps (received by 46%)
- Free or almost free clothing shelves (40%)
- Transportation assistance (35%)
- Hot meal program (35%)
- Medical care through a regular medical benefit or insurance program (30%)
- Drop-in centers (30%)
- Food shelves (28%)
- Housing assistance programs (24%)

60 percent of homeless adults have at least one case manager, and 20 percent have more than one.

17 percent of homeless women had received child care assistance in the previous 12 months. Of these, 37 percent had lost assistance, and another 37 percent had their benefits reduced or co-pays increased.

4 percent of homeless adults had lost Food Stamp benefits within the past 12 months.



Shelter providers describe impact of budget cuts

In a separate survey in August-September 2003, homeless shelter providers throughout Minnesota told Wilder that they had concerns about their ability to maintain services. About three-quarters (73%) of providers had turned people away in the previous three months for lack of space, and of those providers, two-thirds reported that they were turning away more people than in previous months.

59 percent of providers, serving 66 percent of homeless people, reported that recent budget cuts at the federal, state, and local levels had affected their ability to provide services. Another 13 percent thought it likely that they might be affected in the near future. They reported that the main effects of cuts so far were:

- Reductions in the amount or quality of their own direct services to homeless clients (mentioned by 29% of all providers)
- Staff reductions and other administrative cuts (cited by 21% of all providers, especially larger ones in the Twin Cities area)
- Fewer services available from other agencies that their clients depended on, such as employment services, child care assistance, and emergency rental assistance (cited by 17%)
- More need for their services, or clients with needs that were harder to meet (cited by 11%, especially in greater Minnesota)



Shelters that had to turn people away mainly referred them to other shelters and to county offices. When people are unable to find a space at other shelters, providers believe they most commonly end up sleeping: doubled up temporarily with friends or family; outdoors; in a car; or at another shelter or church.

The October 2003 survey of homeless people found that one in five (21%) had been turned away from a shelter in the past three months because of a lack of space. Similar to shelter providers' estimates, most of them reported they had ended up sleeping:

- Outdoors (32%)
- With friends or family temporarily (23%)
- In another shelter (18%)

What's an affordable rent?

A rule of thumb for housing affordability, particularly for lower-income households, is that housing should cost no more than 30% of monthly income.

Based on average rents at the time of the survey:

More than 10% of homeless working adults earn less than \$6 per hour. At this rate, a full-time worker would spend more than half (55% or more) of his or her income for an efficiency apartment.

About one-third of homeless workers earn \$6 to \$7.99 per hour. At this rate, a full-time worker would spend 53% to 71% of his or her income for a one-bedroom apartment.

Slightly over one-quarter of homeless workers earn \$8.00 to \$9.99 per hour. At this rate, a full-time worker would spend 40% to 53% of his or her income for a one-bedroom apartment.

Homelessness involves many factors beyond the purely financial. However, the cost of housing plays an important role in homelessness.

Evidence of the role of affordability in homelessness

- It is the most common barrier to stable housing reported by homeless adults (and the second most common barrier to employment reported by unemployed homeless adults)
- 40% reported in 2003 that they were on a waiting list for Section 8 or other subsidized housing, and another 16% reported that they were unable to get on a list because it was closed
- For those on the waiting list, the median time they had been waiting so far was over 10 months, about twice as long as in 2000
- Just over one-quarter (27%) could pay \$450 or more per month

How many need just affordable housing?

To attempt to estimate the number of homeless adults whose main need is simply access to affordable housing, Wilder Research Center excluded those likely to need special services in order to maintain a stable housing situation, including:

- Current diagnosis with any serious mental illness
- Current diagnosis with alcohol or drug abuse disorder
- Diagnosis of AIDS or HIV
- Less than a high school education
- Unemployed for over a month
- Left last housing because of drinking or drug use

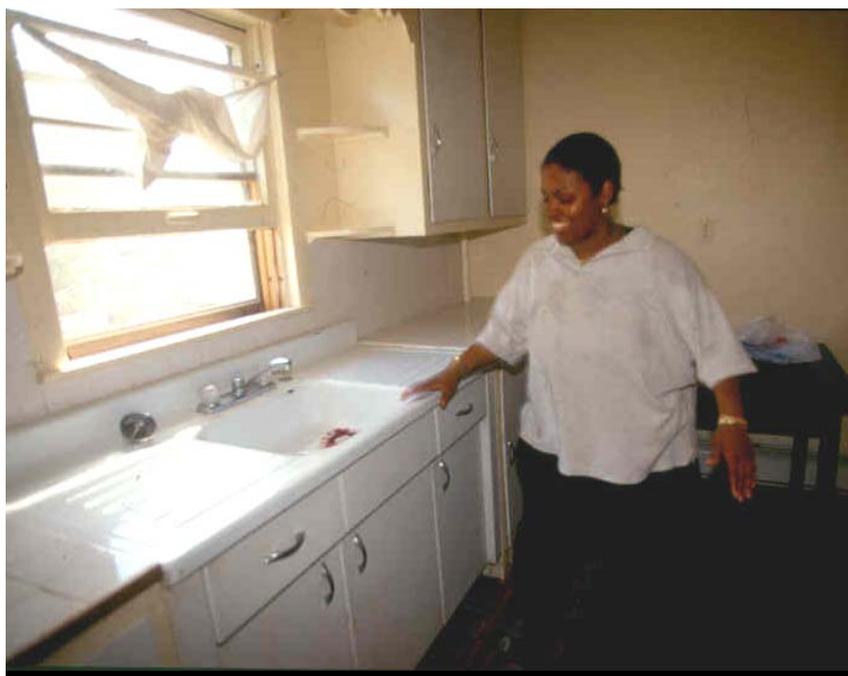
Also note that we considered only conditions likely to require ongoing services, not issues likely to make it hard to *qualify* for housing (such as eviction history, criminal background, credit problems, or lack of local rental history).

This analysis suggests that about 14 percent of homeless adults could potentially maintain stable housing if they just had an affordable place to live, with no additional services other than those generally available to the public. This number is down from the 21 percent reported in 2000.

Among different groups, different percentages of people could potentially maintain housing on their own if it were affordable for them:

- . 20% of those not abused, pregnant, or institutionalized before age 18
- . 16% of adults who have children with them
- . 10% of those in battered women's shelters
- . 16% of those in emergency shelters
- . 13% of those in transitional housing
- . 9% of those on the streets
- . 15% of those in non-formal shelter arrangements
- . 15% in the Twin Cities metro area
- . 12% in greater Minnesota
- . 24% of those homeless for less than one month
- . 11% of those homeless for a year or longer
- . 6% of those who have been homeless four times or more in the last three years

There may be even higher proportions of the homeless for whom access to affordable housing is the main stumbling block. A one-day snapshot like this survey has a greater chance of including those who have been homeless for a long time than those who are homeless at some point during the year but not on that day. Our analysis shows that people with shorter episodes of homelessness are more likely to need just housing, not special support services. Therefore, while affordable housing might be the primary barrier for 14 percent of adults who are homeless on any given day, it would likely solve the problem for a larger portion of those who are homeless at some point in any given year.



85% of homeless adults have at least two substantial barriers to overcome in order to maintain a stable housing situation.

Main reasons for leaving previous housing

- . Unable to afford rent (33%)
- . Lost job or had hours cut (31%)
- . Eviction (28%)
- . Breakup with spouse or partner (24%) or other relationship problem (20%)
- . Drinking or drug problem (20%)
- . Being abused (16%)
- . Substandard or unsafe housing (12%)
- . Violence in the neighborhood (11%)

Potential barriers to stable housing

96% of homeless adults have at least one of the following barriers, and 85% have more than one. The average number of barriers is over three per person. The most common barriers:

- . 70% are not currently employed
- . 47% have a mental health diagnosis
- . 43% have been homeless for more than one year
- . 41% have been homeless before
- . 30% could pay less than \$200 per month for rent
- . 25% have a substance abuse diagnosis
- . 22% have credit problems
- . 22% have a criminal background
- . 15% need more than two bedrooms
- . 11% have an eviction or other rental problems on their record
- . 10% have a serious health problem or physical disability
- . 9% have no local rental history

Prior history of institutional living

In 2003, two-thirds of homeless adults (69%) had prior experience living in institutional arrangements.

58 percent of those who had recently left correctional facilities, and 48 percent of those recently leaving other kinds of institutions, did not have a stable place to live when they left. This includes:

- . 66% of those who had recently left county jails or workhouses
- . 58% of those who had recently left foster homes
- . 57% of those who had recently left group homes
- . 58% of those who had recently left transitional housing
- . 45% of those who had recently left emergency shelter

Guide to temporary housing programs

	Emergency shelters	Battered women's shelters	Transitional housing
Access	Walk in or referred by a social service agency. If space is limited, may be selected by lottery.	Walk in or referred by an agency or advocate.	Walk in or referred by a social service agency or shelter program.
Services	Safe sleeping space. Most open only evenings and overnight. Some sites provide other services like hot meals, health care, employment and/or housing information, and connections to other services.	Safe refuge for women and their children when fleeing an abusive situation. Legal advocacy and moral support for women while they work on a longer-term solution to their situation.	Housing and support services. Usually involves working with a case manager or service coordinator to set and address goals for family and housing stability. Most are family-focused, but some serve other specific populations such as veterans, single adults, or persons with special needs.
Time limits	Up to 30 days.	Until safe housing can be arranged; usually up to 30 days.	Varies; ranges from 45 days to 24 months.

Changes in the mix of programs serving homeless people

The same program, serving the same kinds of people, may be classified differently in different years depending on changes in legal definitions and rules and how funds are made available. Because of this ambiguity, it is difficult to calculate exact changes in the capacity of temporary housing programs. However, it appears that transitional housing programs have gained more than 130 beds since the 2000 study, while emergency and battered women's shelters have lost about 150 beds.

The 2003 survey included some programs not previously included that serve adults who are mentally ill, chemically dependent, or both. Other programs were omitted, although they were previously included as transitional programs, because they are now classified as "permanent supportive housing" and therefore their residents no longer qualify as "homeless." These changes affect a small proportion of all those surveyed. They may, for example, explain a small amount of the increase in the proportion of homeless individuals who had a serious mental illness in 2003.

Both as a cause and an effect of homelessness, violence and abuse are common threads in the lives of homeless adults.

Domestic violence

The single most common reason for women seeking shelter was to flee an abusive partner. As in 2000, nearly one of every three homeless women (31% in 2003) was homeless at least in part because of domestic abuse. The proportion was higher in greater Minnesota (39% compared to 27% in the Twin Cities area).

In addition, 34 percent of homeless adults (and 46% of women) reported that they had stayed in an abusive relationship because they had nowhere else to live.

Women fleeing abuse were in all types of shelter programs:

- 40% were in battered women's shelters
- 46% were in transitional housing
- 8% were in emergency shelters
- 2% were living in non-sheltered locations
- 5% were living in other unofficial arrangements

History of childhood abuse

A history of abuse during childhood is unusually common among homeless adults. In 2003:

- More than 1 out of 3 (38%) had been physically abused as a child, up from 33% in 2000. As in previous surveys, the proportion was higher for women (45%) than for men (31%).
- 1 out of 4 (27%) had been sexually abused as a child, up from 24% in 2000. On this measure as well, the rates for women (42%) were higher than those for men (14%).
- Nearly 1 out of 4 (23%) had been neglected as a child (28% of women and 19% of men)

Community violence

In the 2003 survey, violence in the neighborhood was a factor for 11 percent of homeless adults leaving their previous housing.

Violence while homeless

The lack of stable housing puts people at higher risk for violence

- 15% of homeless adults had been physically or sexually assaulted while homeless
- 12% have had to seek health care because of an injury or illness resulting from violence in the past year

In 2003, between 10,000 and 12,000 Minnesota youth under 18 experienced homelessness on their own

An estimated 10,000 to 12,000 Minnesota youth under 18 are thought to have experienced at least one episode of homelessness on their own – that is, not with their family – during 2003. On any given night in 2003, between 500 and 600 youth in Minnesota were homeless. On October 23, 2003, 129 of these youth were interviewed in shelters, other temporary housing programs, and places not intended as housing. Fewer youth 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, they are more likely to be sleeping in temporary arrangements with friends and less likely to be found in a one-night survey.

Demographics

The average age of youth on their own was 16. The youngest in 2003 was 8 years old. More than 6 out of 10 (64%) of homeless youth were girls. About two-thirds were Black, American Indian, or of mixed race (65%), compared to just 11 percent of all Minnesota youth. One in six homeless youth had a child of their own (16% in 2003, compared to 8% in 2000).

Teen experiences with homelessness

- Over one-third had been homeless before (38%)
- 1 out of 4 slept outside at least one night in October 2003 (23%)
- Nearly 1 out of 6 had had no regular place to live for more than a year (16%)
- Over one-third had a relative who also did not have housing (38%)
- 1 out of 8 had stayed in an abusive situation because they did not have other housing options (13%)

Many homeless youth come from troubled backgrounds and lead troubled lives

- One-third have considered suicide (34%); of these, two-thirds (67%) have attempted suicide (23% overall)
- 4 out of 10 report some type of significant mental health problem (42%)
- Nearly 1 out of 2 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)

Not long ago, these youth might have been thought of as runaways, and the solution was for them to go home. It's rarely that simple.

Youth on their own

- 3 out of 10 had experienced parental neglect (30%)
- 1 out of 5 had been in alcohol or drug treatment (19%)
- 1 out of 8 youth had problems following a head injury (14%)
- 1 out of 10 had traded sex for shelter, food, clothing, etc. (10% overall; 13% of girls and 4% of boys)

History of placement

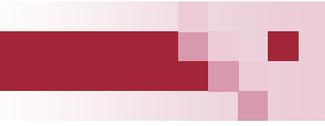
- 7 out of 10 homeless youth had experienced a placement in a foster home, group home, or corrections facility (71%)
- Over half had lived in a foster home (53%)
- 1 out of 5 had lived in a facility for persons with emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems (20%)
- 3 out of 10 had lived in a group home (29%)
- One-third had been held more than a week in a juvenile corrections facility (34%)
- One-third of homeless youth had run away from a placement (34%)



Reasons for not returning home

- 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%)

Conflict with parents was the most common reason that youth originally left home (63%). Half of the youth felt that there was a chance they would live with their family again (52%).



Compared to the general Minnesota youth population, homeless youth were:

- . Five times more likely to have been treated for drug or alcohol problems
- . 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
- . Nearly three times more likely to use cigarettes or other tobacco
- . About twice as likely to have attempted suicide
- . Among girls, 14 times more likely to have been pregnant

School enrollment and attendance

- . More than half (58%) had attended school the day of the survey (a school day)
- . 81% were enrolled in school
- . The need to deal with other problems was the main reason youth reported for not being in school
- . One-third of homeless youth reported receiving special education services in school (33%)

Services rated “most helpful” by homeless youth

According to youth who participated in the survey, the following services helped them most:

- . Food Stamps (26%)
- . Transportation assistance (22%)
- . Other social services (19%)
- . Medical care paid by Medical Assistance or insurance (18%)
- . Outreach services (18%)

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

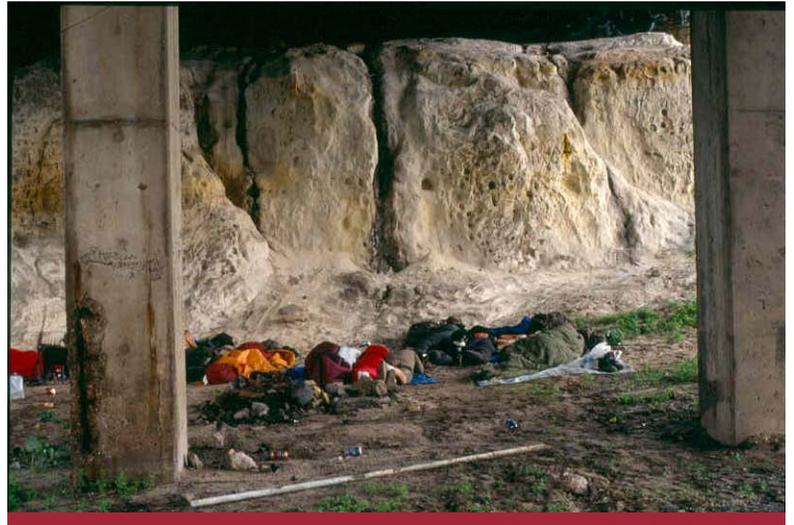
Things look different in greater Minnesota

Just over one quarter (28%) of homeless Minnesotans were living outside the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area in 2003. With people further apart from each other and fewer services available, patterns of homelessness are different in greater Minnesota. Homeless adults are similar across the state on many measures, including education levels, ages, how long they have lived in Minnesota, and their main sources of income. On other measures, however, the picture in greater Minnesota differs. For instance, in the 2003 survey:

- . 62% were White (compared to 36% in the metro region)
- . However, the percentage of homeless adults who were American Indian in greater Minnesota (14%) was twice as high as in the metro area (7%)
- . 67% had children with them (74% in the metro area)
- . 40% of children were in short-term, emergency arrangements (25% in the metro area)
- . 36% of men were veterans (23% in the metro area)
- . 27% were employed (31% in the metro area – but about the same proportion were working full time)
- . 53% were mentally ill (45% in the metro area)
- . 28% had a substance abuse diagnosis (24% in the metro area)

When they were turned away from a shelter for lack of space, homeless adults in the metro area were most likely to end up sleeping outdoors or in another shelter, while those in greater Minnesota mostly ended up doubled up temporarily with friends or family, or sleeping in a car or abandoned building.





Visit the Wilder Research Center web site (www.wilder.org/research) for more reports on homelessness and housing programs, including in-depth issue briefs that take a closer look at several topics covered briefly in this summary.

Current and planned issue briefs:

- . Homeless youth*
 - . Families*
 - . Veterans*
 - . Health and disabilities*
 - . Role of domestic abuse in homelessness*
-

