

## Homeless youth who identify as GLBTQ

### Analysis from the 2006 Statewide Survey of Homelessness in Minnesota

Every three years since 1991, Wilder Research has conducted a statewide survey of homelessness in Minnesota to better understand the circumstances and effects of homelessness, and to promote efforts towards permanent and safe housing.

Young people on their own are some of the least visible and most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. In the 2006 study, 13 percent (71) of 566 respondents age 11-21 identified themselves as gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexual orientation (GLBTQ). This snapshot provides a picture of these youth, including their family situations, and other factors such as exposure to violence that may have contributed to their homelessness. It also compares their circumstances to other youth who are experiencing homelessness.

#### *Overview*

Homeless youth who identified themselves as GLBTQ ranged in age from as young as age 14 up to age 21. About seven in ten (69%) are female, compared to 58 percent of other homeless youth. Most (80%) are in the metro area, compared to just over half (57%) of other homeless youth.

Overall, 71 percent of homeless GLBTQ youth surveyed are youth of color, slightly higher than other youth surveyed. This includes:

- 43% African American
- 29% White non-Hispanic
- 16% Hispanic
- 4% American Indian
- 4% Asian
- 1% African born
- 3% other racial or ethnic backgrounds

Half of homeless GLBTQ youth mainly lived with their biological parents up to age 16, and another 18 percent lived with other family members. They were on average age 16 when they first left home to be on

their own. About half have been without a permanent place to live for a year or longer.

#### *GLBTQ compared to other homeless youth*

Many of the reasons GLBTQ youth report for being homeless are similar to the reasons other homeless youth give – frequently fighting with parents, someone in the home they couldn’t stand, told to leave or locked out, among others. However, when looking at the reasons given as a “main cause,” differences emerge.

“MAIN CAUSE” OF GLBTQ YOUTH’S HOMELESSNESS (TOP 9)

	GLBTQ (N=71)	OTHER YOUTH (N=495)
Someone in home they could not stand to be around	<b>42%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Fighting frequently with parents or guardians	42%	31%
Told to leave or locked out	35%	29%
Parents’ use of drugs or alcohol	<b>25%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Neglect/parents not meeting basic needs	<b>25%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Not willing to live by parents’ rules	23%	19%
Lack of tolerance of sexual orientation or gender identity	<b>23%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Parent or guardian had mental health problems	21%	8%
Did not feel safe because of violence in home	21%	13%

Note: Figures in **bold italics** are statistically significant (p<.05).

#### **Family**

About one-quarter (26%) of homeless GLBTQ youth have not had contact with their family in the previous month. This is considerably higher than other homeless youth (15%). GLBTQ youth were also less likely to have children (17% to 33%) or to have children with them (13% to 25%).

#### **Experience with homelessness**

Seventeen percent of GLBTQ youth didn’t have a place to stay on the night of the survey compared to 7 percent of other homeless youth. One- third (37%)

*continued*

reported that they stayed outside one or more nights in the three weeks before the survey.

### Education and school

About half of the homeless GLBTQ youth age 18-21 had at least a high school diploma or GED. Most (85%) age 20 and younger attended school during the last school year, but were much more likely than other youth (58% to 37%) to receive special education services.

### Health

Overall, homeless GLBTQ youth were more likely to report a health-related issue – mental illness, chemical dependency or a chronic health problem – than other homeless youth (87% to 65%). Almost two-thirds of homeless GLBTQ youth report some type of medical coverage.

Homeless GLBTQ youth were more likely to report at least one chronic physical health condition than other homeless youth (46% to 31%).

Homeless GLBTQ youth were also more likely to report a serious mental health problems (72% to 47%). Diagnosis included:

- Major depression (45%)
- Manic depression/bipolar disorder (45%)
- Anti-social personality, obsessive-compulsive personality, or any other severe personality disorder (30%)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (21%)

Homeless GLBTQ youth were much more likely to report that they needed to see a health professional about emotional or mental health problems (46% to 25%) and to have considered suicide (49% to 31%).

About two-thirds (65%) of homeless GLBTQ youth reported evidence of chemical dependency or substance abuse (compared to 51% other homeless youth) including:

- 25% who have ever received CD treatment
- 17% with an alcohol or chemical abuse disorder
- 11% who left their last housing because of a drinking or drug problem

They were also much more likely to say they used an illegal drug in the previous 30 days (44% compared to 29%).

### Abuse and exposure to violence

Most homeless GLBTQ youth (86%) report experiencing or being around violence or abuse, (compared to 67 percent of other homeless youth), including:

- 75% who were physically or sexually abused as a child
- 67% of female GLBTQ youth reporting they left their housing or came to MN because of abuse
- 39% who report being in an abusive personal relationship during the previous 12 months

They are also more likely to report being physically or sexually attacked or beaten while being homeless (28% to 16%).

### Assistance and services

Many GLBTQ homeless youth are getting help. Some of the services they reported using are listed below.

#### TOP SERVICES HOMELESS GLBTQ YOUTH REPORT USING

In the last 30 days	GLBTQ (N=71)	OTHER YOUTH (N=495)
Transportation assistance	<b>68%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Drop-in centers	<b>48%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Food Stamps	38%	39%
Outreach services	38%	27%
Help to find a job	34%	25%
Clothing shelves	35%	26%
Hot meal program	35%	18%
Food shelves	32%	29%

Note: Figures in **bold italics** are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

#### For more information

For more information about homelessness in Minnesota go to [www.wilderresearch.com/homeless](http://www.wilderresearch.com/homeless)

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