

Homeless veterans in Minnesota 2009

*Statewide survey of veterans without
permanent shelter*

DECEMBER 2010

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This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of more than 4,570 study respondents (476 veterans) who answered questions and described their personal experiences in shelters, in transitional programs, in drop-in centers, on the streets, and in other locations. Our report is dedicated to them.

Preface

This year's report shows that veterans continue to represent a significant part of the homeless population in Minnesota. And while there has been a slight drop in the overall percentage of veterans in the study population, the overall number of homeless veterans in Minnesota has reached an all-time high. On October 22, 2009 the study found 605 men and 64 women who had previously served in a branch of the armed forces of the United States. In addition, 65 children were with veterans on the night they were surveyed.

The Federal Plan to End Homelessness (September 2010) says that there are a growing number of women veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who are now homeless. In addition, the number of homeless veterans with substance abuse problems and traumatic brain injury continues to grow. Our study corroborates these changes. The report also provides a great deal of information about the wide ranging needs and circumstances of homeless veterans in Minnesota. Unfortunately, the results of the report also suggest that the federal goal to end homelessness for veterans within the next five years will be difficult to achieve.

One element of the federal initiative, entitled Opening Doors, is intended to align the resources of the Veterans Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services to connect resources across programs that would otherwise operate separately and to concentrate resources in ways that will be helpful for veterans. In fact, this is considered a signature initiative for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. The plan also calls for new efforts to:

- provide affordable housing and expand housing opportunities through rent subsidies and increased construction or rehabilitation of housing
- provide permanent supportive housing and expand the supply of this housing for veterans
- increase opportunities for meaningful and sustainable employment and provide workforce training and guidance for job seekers
- reduce financial vulnerability of veterans, by making veterans more aware of the programs that are available to them and by improving access to those services
- transform crisis response systems and increase the focus on prevention and rapid re-housing

The information provided in this report makes it clear that these and other actions will be necessary if we are to make significant progress on the goal of ending homelessness for veterans.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a current snapshot of U.S. military veterans experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. The information is intended as a resource for planners, policy-makers, service providers, and others who are interested in addressing the problems associated with homelessness among veterans.

The information presented in this report comes from three main sources:

1. A statewide population count, or census, of all persons who were residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities on the night of Thursday, October 22, 2009.
2. A statewide survey of a sample of military veterans (N=329) who were living in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities on October 22, 2009.
3. A survey of 147 homeless veterans found in informal or non-shelter locations around the state on October 22, 2009.

The report also references U.S. Census information and other data about the general adult population.

Other reports and detailed data tables on homeless adults and their children, youth and young adults, and on Minnesota's Continuum of Care Regions are also available at: www.wilderresearch.org.

Background

Every three years since 1991, Wilder Research has conducted a statewide survey of people who are homeless or living in temporary housing programs. In October 2009, more than 1,000 volunteer interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with 4,570 people experiencing homelessness. Interviews took place throughout Minnesota in about 300 locations, including emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, battered women's shelters, and a variety of non-shelter locations.

Homeless people not currently in shelters were interviewed in more than 80 cities, towns, and surrounding areas, including at food programs and drop-in centers, as well as under bridges, in encampments, and in other places where those not using shelter programs spend time. With help from partners across the state to reach this population, the survey was able to exceed the 2006 number of interviews conducted among homeless people not in shelters.

Continuing a trend seen over several study periods, including the three years since the previous study, funders and service providers have focused on the development of housing and services targeted to the long-term homeless, much of which has been in the form of permanent supportive housing. Because this kind of housing is not time-limited, previously homeless people being served through permanent supportive housing are not considered homeless and are therefore not included in the statewide survey. From 2006 to 2009, while Minnesota's reported bed capacity in emergency shelters and domestic violence shelters decreased by 6 percent and the capacity in transitional housing increased by 2 percent, the capacity in permanent supportive programs increased 27 percent. The three years between 2006 and 2009 also included significant new resources for homelessness prevention, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (or federal Stimulus Package), although programs funded under this act were only just beginning to be implemented at the time of the study.

Methods

The information in the Homeless Veterans report is based on the characteristics of 605 homeless men and 64 homeless women who reported that they had served in the U.S. Military Services. It is a population subset of interviews conducted in October, 2009 with 1,417 men and 1,436 women age 18 or older in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs, as well as another 1,584 interviews with adults in non-shelter locations. According to the interviews, adult respondents had a total of 2,211 children with them, and 607 of them were also with a spouse or partner on the date of the study.

Weighting frequencies and percentages

The 2009 survey results have been statistically adjusted to reflect the actual adult populations residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs (2,154 men and 2,219 women) on the day of the survey.

We cannot weight the data collected from persons interviewed in non-shelter locations, because we do not know the actual numbers of people who were on the streets or in other non-shelter locations on the day of the survey, only those found by study team members and volunteers.

Additional notes

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

The 2009 study found a significantly larger number of homeless people than in the 2006 study. Most results are reported as percents of a specific homeless population (for example, homeless adults or parents). Because of the larger numbers, even when percentages have decreased between 2006 and 2009, the absolute numbers in question may still be larger.

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]).

In the definition used for this research, a homeless person is anyone who 1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and 2) has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised, publicly- or privately-operated temporary living accommodation, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and battered women's shelters; or 3) has a nighttime residence in any place not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges or in cars. This is based on the definition established by the U.S. Congress. A parent not meeting any of these criteria may be included if they have a child with them, and have a significant history of residential instability, and have a barrier (or have a child with a barrier) that interferes with housing or employment.

For the 2009 study in general, Wilder Research used the same definition of homelessness as in prior years, with one small exception based on recent change in national legislation. As in Wilder's previous surveys, people who were approached in non-shelter locations were screened out of the survey if they had not stayed in a shelter or been literally homeless (on the streets, in a car, in an abandoned building, or in some other place not meant for habitation) within the past seven days. In 2009, however, based on new language enacted by Congress in May 2009, families (individuals who had children with them) who were staying temporarily with family or friends were included in the study if they had a significant history of unstable housing and had a disability or other barrier that impeded their ability to obtain housing or employment. The addition of this new screening category added only 51 people who would otherwise not have been interviewed. This is 1 percent of the total number interviewed, and less than 3 percent of all the people interviewed in outreach settings. Given the small numbers included through this change in definition, it is clear that the new definition has not affected our ability to compare 2009 findings to those of previous years.

Shelter types

As in past years, we distinguish three types of shelter programs that serve homeless people:

- **Emergency shelters** – A safe place to sleep, generally open only evenings and overnight. May provide meals, housing information and other services.

- **Battered women's shelters** – Safe refuge and advocacy for women and their children when fleeing an abusive situation.
- **Transitional housing** – Time-limited, subsidized housing that involves working with a professional to set and address goals to become self-sufficient.

Most homeless people spend some time outside of shelter programs, and many never use them. A national survey in 1997¹ found that only one-third of homeless adults had slept every night of the previous week in any kind of shelter program, while two-thirds had spent at least one night in unsheltered locations or unofficial temporary housing.

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

Informal shelter – When they were not using formal emergency shelters, people in this group were less likely to be outdoors than in a house, apartment, or room in which they were allowed to stay on a temporary basis; a motel room that they paid for (not provided by a voucher program); or in a jail or detox facility from which they had no place to go when they were released.

Unsheltered – When they were not using formal emergency shelters, people in this group were less likely to be in informal arrangements than in cars or other vehicles, transportation depots, 24-hour businesses, buildings that are abandoned or unfit for habitation (lacking plumbing, electricity, or heat), or outdoor locations.

Unless otherwise stated, percentages given in this report are of all homeless adults who are represented in the survey.

Interpreting the findings

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

Other detailed reports from the 2009 study will be published and will be posted on our Web site: www.wilderresearch.org.

¹ Burt, M., Aron, L.Y., Lee, E., & Valente, J. (2001). *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or affordable housing?* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Summary

This study gives a snapshot of U.S. military veterans experiencing homelessness in Minnesota on a single day in October 2009. The findings reported here are based on interviews with 431 male veterans and 45 female veterans conducted on Thursday, October 22, 2009. Interviews, as part of the statewide survey of people without permanent shelter in Minnesota, were weighted to represent the known population count of adults residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities. The known number of veterans in Minnesota's temporary housing programs was 522 veterans (465 men and 57 women). An additional 147 veterans (140 men and 7 women) were interviewed in non-shelter locations. Interviews with people in non-sheltered locations were not weighted, because there is no way to determine the total population in such settings. In all, the 2009 study identified 669 homeless veterans, including 605 men and 64 women, residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs or in non-sheltered locations. These homeless veterans were accompanied by 65 children.

Comparisons to 2006 should be made with caution, because one major veterans program that participated in the 2006 study was unable to participate in 2009. Examination of weighted survey results suggests that the overall statewide results for 2009 are reliable and can support year-to-year comparisons with only a slightly expanded margin of sampling error. The number of veterans identified in 2009 is 7 percent higher than in 2006 (up by 45 people). However, the number and proportion of homeless women veterans has increased greatly, more than doubling from 29 in 2006 to 64 in 2009.

Key findings

Numbers of homeless

The overall study included interviews with 1,417 men and 1,436 women age 18 or older in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs, as well as another 1,584 interviews with adults in non-shelter locations. According to the interviews, adult respondents had a total of 2,211 children with them, and 607 of them were also with a spouse or partner on the date of the study.

Overall, 1 in 10 homeless adults (11%), and 1 in 5 homeless men (19%), served in the military at some time. One-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans had served in a combat zone. In 2008, military veterans made up 10 percent of all adults in Minnesota, (19% of adult men and 1% of adult women in Minnesota).²

² 2008 American Community Survey. Minnesota. Veteran Status. [Statistics from Data file] Retrieved June 21, 2010 from <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>

In comparison to the general adult population experiencing homelessness, the numbers of U.S. Military veterans experiencing homeless has increased, while the percent decreased from 22 percent in 1991 to 11 percent in 2009. Veterans, as a percentage of men experiencing homelessness, have also declined, (34% in 1991 to 19% in 2009). The next table shows the weighted number and percentage of homeless veterans described over the seven study periods.

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF HOMELESS PERSONS WHO ARE US MILITARY VETERANS

	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
October 1991	417	33.7%	21	2.7%	438	21.8%
October 1994	322	25.4%	32	2.6%	354	14.3%
October 1997	350	26.3%	24	1.6%	374	13.2%
October 2000	686	30.7%	50	2.4%	686	16.4%
October 2003	652	26.1%	50	2.2%	702	14.7%
October 2006	595	23.9%	29	1.3%	624	13.2%
October 2009	605	19.3%	64	2.3%	669	11.3%

Who is homeless?

- The vast majority of homeless veterans were males (90%). The average age of homeless male veterans was 47.9, and the average age of homeless female veterans was 38.2. Nearly half of homeless veterans reported that they were divorced or separated (41% and 7%, respectively). The percent of homeless veterans who had never married was lower than that of the general homeless population surveyed in 2009 (42% vs. 63%).
- Only 22 percent of veterans who were homeless on the night of the survey had lived in Minnesota for two years or less. Over three-quarters (71%) of the veterans surveyed had lived in Minnesota for more than five years, including 47 percent who had lived in Minnesota for more than 20 years.
- Homeless veterans were disproportionately people of color. Particularly over-represented were African Americans in the Twin Cities metro area (41%) and both African Americans (10%) and American Indians (20%) in greater Minnesota.³ While less than 11 percent of the state’s overall population is made up of persons of color, over two-fifths (46%) of Minnesota’s homeless veterans were persons of color.

³ Throughout this report, the “Twin Cities metro area” refers to the seven counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Carver, Scott, Dakota, and Washington.

- Veterans interviewed in informal and unsheltered locations were predominantly male (95%), and over half (57%) had been homeless for a year or longer. American Indians made up 22 percent of veterans interviewed in informal and unsheltered locations.
- Nearly half (45%) of veterans interviewed had served in the U.S. Army, 22 percent served in the U.S. Navy, 17 percent served in the U.S. Marines, 7 percent served in the U.S. Air Force, 7 percent served in the National Guard, 2 percent served in the Reserves, and less than 1 percent served in the Coast Guard.
- Sixty percent of homeless veterans had served for more than two years, 25 percent for 181 days to two years, 7 percent for 90 days to 180 days, and 7 percent for less than 90 days.
- Two percent of the homeless veterans began their military service prior to August 1964, 24 percent between August 1964 and May 1975, 25 percent between June 1975 and August 1980, 43 percent between September 1980 and March 2003, and 6 percent after April 2003.
- One-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans reported having served in a combat zone. Nine percent of homeless veterans reported they had served in a combat zone in Vietnam, 9 percent in the first Gulf War, 5 percent in the current Gulf War, Iraq or Afghanistan, 1 percent in Panama, 1 percent in Lebanon, and less than 1 percent each in Korea, Granada, Honduras, and Iran.

Children of homeless veterans

- Although 32 percent of homeless veterans reported having children under the age of 18, only 29 percent of parents had any children with them on the night of the survey. Those parents represented 9 percent of all homeless veterans surveyed.
- Of the homeless veterans who had children with them, 35 percent reported they had been unable to obtain needed child care in the previous 12 months, 18 percent had been unable to obtain needed dental care, and 7 percent had been unable to obtain needed health care for at least one of their children. Nine percent of the homeless parents reported that their children had to skip meals in the last month.
- Fifteen (25%) homeless veteran parents who had children with them reported having at least one child who had an emotional or behavioral problem that interfered with their daily activities. Three homeless parents (6%) reported having at least one child who had a physical health problem that interfered with their daily activities.

- Forty-two homeless veteran parents had a least one school-age child. Over two-fifths (44%) reported that at least one of their school-age children had some type of learning or school-related problem, and nearly one-fifth (22%) reported having a child who had repeated a grade in school. Thirty-four (81%) homeless parents reported that their children attended school on the day of the survey, and six parents (15%) reported that one or more children had problems going to school because of their housing situation.

Education, employment, and income

- The percentage of homeless veterans who had completed high school was much higher than that of the general homeless population surveyed in 2009 (95% for homeless veterans and 74% for the general homeless population). The percentage who had attended at least some college was also higher than for the general homeless population (51% vs. 29%).
- Eighteen percent of homeless veterans were employed, with 6 percent employed full-time. Of those employed, nearly two-thirds (65%) earned less than \$10 per hour. Three-fifths (61%) of those who were employed had been at their current job for three months or more.
- Those who were not working reported that their main barriers to employment were physical health (32%), economic opportunities (24%), transportation (21%), mental health problems (18%), criminal background (13%), age (12%), lack of housing (10%), and lack of job history (10%).
- Homeless veterans surveyed reported their main sources of income in the month of October came from the following sources: General Assistance (29%), steady employment (13%), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (8%), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (8%) and day labor (6%).
- When asked about their total income for the month of October, 9 percent reported some income, but less than \$100, 31 percent reported incomes of \$101-\$300; 11 percent reported incomes of \$301-\$500, 15 percent reported incomes of \$501-\$800, and 19 percent reported incomes over \$800. Ninety-nine (15%) homeless veterans reported having had no income in October. The average income was \$456 and the median income was \$213.

History of homelessness

- Three-quarters (74%) of homeless veterans had been homeless more than once. One-quarter (24%) reported they had been homeless two to three times in their lives, one-quarter (25%) had been homeless four to seven times, and one-quarter (25%) had

been homeless eight or more times. The average age at which they became homeless for the first time was at age 33.8, and the median age was 32.

- The proportion of homeless veterans that fit HUD’s definition of chronic homeless was 55 percent. Likewise, the proportion of homeless veterans that fit Minnesota’s definition of long-term homeless was 63 percent.
- One-fifth (20%) of homeless veterans reported having been unable to obtain shelter in the previous three months because of a lack of available beds. Of those, most ended up sleeping outdoors (37%), in cars or other enclosed places not meant for habitation (21%), in another shelter (18%), or with friends or family (14%). Others ended up with a voucher for a motel (5%), in a church (1%), in a public place open 24 hours (1%), in a hospital (1%), in a motel (no voucher) (1%), or in detox (1%).
- One-third (33%) of homeless veterans spent at least one night outdoors during the month of October. The average number of nights spent outdoors was 3.3. One-third (34%) of homeless veterans spent at least one night during October “doubled-up” with friends or family. The average number of nights spent “doubled-up” was 3.2.

Residential placements

- Two-thirds (67%) of homeless veterans had lived in at least one kind of institution or residential program in their lives, including a drug or alcohol treatment facility (55%), a halfway house (32%), a mental health treatment facility (22%), a group home (15%), or a foster home (13%).
- Three-fifths (59%) of homeless veterans had been in a correctional facility in their lives, including in a county jail or workhouse (55%), a state or federal prison (25%), or a juvenile detention center (14%).

Housing

- The most common reasons homeless veterans cited for having left their last regular housing were: loss of a job (53%), inability to afford the rent (48%), eviction (36%), a drinking or drug problem (29%), or a break-up with a spouse or partner (25%). The most commonly cited current barriers to regaining housing were: lack of a job or income (45%), credit problems (21%), a criminal background (20%), or no housing they could afford (19%).
- The average amount that homeless veterans reported they could pay for rent, including utilities, was \$240 a month. The median amount was \$170. More than one-third (35%) of homeless veterans could pay something but \$300 or less for rent.

Close to one-third (30%) reported they could not pay anything for rent. Nearly two-thirds (65%) only needed an efficiency or studio apartment.

Public assistance and service use

- Five percent of homeless veterans (3% of men and 25% of women) had received MFIP (welfare assistance) in the previous 12 months.
- One-fifth (19%) of homeless veterans reported the loss of one or more services or public assistance benefits during the previous 12 months. Those who had lost benefits most frequently reported the loss of food stamps (45%), medical benefits (45%), and unemployment benefits (20%). One-third (34%) of all homeless veterans said they needed help to apply or re-apply for services.
- Three-fourths (75%) of homeless veterans reported having some type of medical coverage in October, and nearly half (48%) reported the use of food stamps in October. Other frequently services used included hot meal programs (43%), free clothing shelves (42%), transportation assistance (40%), drop-in centers (32%), emergency room (24%), food shelves (24%), free medical clinic (23%), and state or federal veterans benefits (23%).
- Over two-fifths (42%) of homeless veterans reported having had contact with their County Veterans Service Officer during the previous 12 months.
- One-quarter (24%) of homeless veterans had attended a Veterans StandDown event in the previous 12 months.
- Over one-quarter (27%) of homeless veterans had attended a Project Homeless connect event in the previous 12 months.

Health and well-being

- Over two-fifths (44%) of homeless veterans reported a service-related health problem. Of those veterans, 39 percent reported a mental health problem. Four percent reported a service-related head injury or traumatic brain injury.
- Over two-fifths (43%) of homeless veterans had at least one chronic medical condition (asthma, other chronic lung or respiratory problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, tuberculosis, hepatitis, or HIV/AIDS). Of those, 73 percent received care for each such condition in the previous year.
- Fifty-six percent of homeless veterans said they currently needed to see a dentist, 47 percent needed to see a doctor for a physical health problem, 40 percent needed to see a

professional for a mental health problem, and 15 percent needed to see a professional for a chemical dependency problem. More than one-quarter (29%) reported problems getting needed medical care.

- Three-fourths (76%) of homeless veterans reported a regular place to go for medical care. Of those, two-fifths (41%) received medical care at a clinic that required fees or insurance, and 35 percent received care at a Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Mental and chemical health

- Mental illness was a significant problem among homeless veterans in Minnesota. Half (50%) had been told by a doctor or nurse within the previous two years that they had at least one of the following serious mental health disorders: schizophrenia, manic-depression, some type of delusional disorder, major depression, anti-social personality disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Adding those who had received inpatient or outpatient mental health treatment in the previous two years, 57 percent can be described as having a serious mental health problem.
- The specific mental health disorders reported by homeless veterans included major depression (40%), post-traumatic stress disorder (29%), manic-depression (24%), anti-social personality disorder or another serious emotional disorder (18%), some other type of delusional disorder (8%), and schizophrenia (6%).
- More than two-fifths (45%) of homeless veterans self-report that they are an alcoholic or chemically dependent. One-third (32%) reported being told by a doctor or nurse within the previous two years that they have a drug disorder or an alcohol disorder. Twenty-eight percent of homeless veterans received inpatient alcohol or drug treatment within the previous two years. One-fifth of homeless veterans (19%) having received outpatient alcohol or drug treatment in the previous two years.
- Nearly one-quarter (23%) of homeless veterans have a dual diagnosis of a mental illness and chemical dependency. This is based on the percent of persons who reported being told by a doctor or nurse within the previous two years that they have a major mental illness (schizophrenia, paranoia, manic-depression, major depression, anti-social personality or post-traumatic stress disorder) and alcohol or drug abuse disorder. By comparison, one-sixth (17%) of the statewide homeless population surveyed in 2009 a dual diagnosis.

Serious or chronic disability

- Over half (54%) of homeless veterans reported a physical, mental, or other health condition limited the amount or type of work they could do. Nearly one-sixth (15%) reported that a health condition limited their daily activities, and over one-third (36%) reported problems with memory, concentration, or decision-making.
- Pooling these disabilities with chronic medical conditions, mental illness, and substance abuse, 84 percent of homeless veterans had at least one serious or chronic disability.
- Over one-third (36%) had a history that suggests likely traumatic brain injury. This rate was higher for recent veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan (69%).

Abuse and victimization

- One-third (32%) percent of homeless veterans reported physical mistreatment as a child (30% of men and 54% of women), and 18 percent reported they were sexually mistreated as children (14% of men and 56% of women).
- One-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans had stayed in an abusive situation for lack of other housing options (22% of men and 70% of women), and one-quarter (26%) of homeless female veterans left their previous housing to flee domestic violence. Thirteen percent of homeless veterans (11% of men and 36% of women) had been in an abusive relationship in the previous 12 months.
- Twenty-six percent of homeless female veterans had been approached to work in the sex industry.
- One-fifth (21%) had been physically or sexually attacked at some time while they were homeless (19% of men, 46% of women), and one-tenth (11%) had sought health care for injuries due to violence in the previous year (10% of men and 21% of women).

Challenges to effective service strategies

In order to be effective, homelessness prevention and other service efforts to support homeless veterans must consider the following:

More homeless female veterans: A recent article, *Homeless on the Homefront*, (Andrea Mayfield, *Healthy Generations*, Summer 2010. University of Minnesota School of Public Health; 7-8), reported that 18 percent of post-9/11 veterans are women and their representation in the homeless population is increasing. In Minnesota's statewide survey,

the population of homeless women, although small, more than doubled since the last study in 2006 (from 29 to 64).

A higher unemployment rate for veterans: Mayfield (op. cit.) also reported that the unemployment rate for homeless veterans who had served in the military since September 11, 2001 was 10.2 percent, compared to a jobless rate of 8.1 percent for all veterans.

In Minnesota, lack of employment is a significant barrier to stable housing. The 2009 survey found 82 percent of homeless veterans were currently unemployed. Among those who were employed, about two-thirds earned less than \$10 an hour. The main barriers to employment cited by homeless veterans were physical health problems (32%), lack of job opportunities (24%), lack of transportation (21%), and mental health problems (18%).

Changes in the risk markers for homelessness post-9/11: Currently, most homeless veterans served in Vietnam. Mayfield (op. cit.) points out that Veterans returning from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are younger and their risk-markers for homelessness may be unique. Their combat exposures and related disabilities may also be different. In 2009, 21 percent of post-9/11 veterans had a service-connected disability, compared to 13 percent of all veterans.

The Minnesota survey shows that 84 percent of homeless veterans have at least one serious or chronic disability. In addition, 36 percent of all veterans and 69 percent of those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have a history indicative of traumatic brain injury. These results suggest an increasingly urgent need for careful assessment and triage following discharge and additional services to help veterans gain housing and employment in a difficult economic environment.

Introduction to survey results

This report presents study results in two ways:

1. A comparison of homeless male veterans to non-veteran homeless men.
2. Descriptive overview of homeless veterans surveyed on Thursday, October 22, 2009.

In addition, detailed data tables that allow readers to examine specific survey questions broken down by locale (Twin Cities metro area vs. greater Minnesota), gender, and shelter type are available on our Web site: www.wilderresearch.org.

Comparison of homeless male veterans to non-veteran homeless men

Despite the increase in women veterans, the overwhelming majority (90%) of homeless veterans are men. While veterans include 19 percent of homeless men, only 2 percent of homeless women had served in the military (1% in 2006). Unless otherwise stated, the descriptions given below apply only to the **male** veterans.

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED TO OTHER HOMELESS MEN

	Male veterans N=605	Other homeless men N=2,534
Average (mean) age	48	39
Age 34 or younger	8%	37%
Located in Twin Cities metro area	74%	69%
At least a HS diploma or GED	95%	72%
Some college	51%	22%
Racial or ethnic minority	49%	62%
Ever incarcerated	62%	64%
Ever homeless before	74%	74%
Homeless a year or longer now	59%	56%
Employed	18%	16%
Working full-time (35+ hr/wk)	6%	5%

Homeless veterans reported childhood experiences that were less traumatic, on average, than those of non-veterans. Compared to other homeless adults, fewer veterans had ever lived in an out-of-home placement or institution as a child. However, approximately equal proportions reported that they had been physically or sexually abused as children.

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED TO OTHER HOMELESS MEN – CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND PLACEMENTS

	Male veterans N=605	Other homeless men N=2,534
Spent a week (or more) in a juvenile detention center	14%	27%
Foster care (as child)	11%	18%
Group home (as child)	7%	13%
Drug treatment facility (as child)	4%	7%
Physically or sexually abused (as child)	33%	30%
First experienced homelessness before age 18	13%	22%
First experienced homelessness before age 26	32%	51%

Physical and mental health

Homeless male veterans are more likely than other homeless men to have considered suicide or attempted suicide. They are also more likely to have a mental illness and/or chemical dependency problem, or have a chronic health condition. Homeless veterans (especially combat veterans) are also much more likely to experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED TO OTHER HOMELESS MEN – HEALTH

	Male veterans N=605	Other homeless men N=2,534
Service-related health problem (% of combat vets)	44% (61%)	(n.a.)
Chronic health condition	58%	45%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (% of combat vets)	28% (42%)	15% (n.a.)
Major depression	38%	33%
Serious mental illness	55%	49%
Ever considered suicide	37%	33%
Ever attempted suicide	21%	18%
Alcohol abuse disorder	28%	23%
Drug abuse disorder	17%	16%
Dual diagnosis (mental health and substance abuse disorder)	22%	18%

Barriers to housing

Homeless male veterans report housing barriers similar to those reported by other homeless men. Veterans are somewhat more likely to cite credit problems, bad rental history (including eviction), or mental illness as current barriers to housing.

Other possible housing barriers include lack of a job, previous homelessness, mental illness, current homelessness that has lasted a year or longer, substance abuse, and a prior history of incarceration

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED TO OTHER HOMELESS MEN – BARRIERS TO HOUSING

	Male veterans N=605	Other homeless men N=2,534
Current housing barriers cited by veterans:		
Credit problems	20%	13%
Criminal history	31%	39%
Bad rental history	9%	4%
Mental health problems	4%	4%
Physical health problems	31%	19%

Barriers to employment

Compared to other homeless men, veterans are approximately equally likely to be employed, and about the same proportion are working full-time (35 hours or more a week). The barriers to employment identified by veterans are similar to those identified by other homeless men (physical health problems, lack of transportation, mental health problems, and lack of housing). Veterans more often than non-veterans mention age as a barrier to employment.

Fifty-five percent have been unemployed for a year or longer.

Some of these differences may be attributable to the fact that homeless male veterans, on average, are nine years older than other homeless men.

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED TO OTHER HOMELESS MEN – BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

	Male veterans N=551	Other homeless men N=2,534
<i>Employment barriers cited by unemployed veterans:</i>		
Transportation	18%	23%
Mental health problems	18%	15%
Lack of housing	9%	10%
Age	12%	4%
Criminal history	23%	33%
<i>Potential employment barriers based on survey:</i>		
Mental illness problems	46%	43%
Long-term unemployment	65%	63%
Alcohol or drug problem	63%	51%
Lack of education	5%	29%

General descriptive profile

Background characteristics

The known number of homeless veterans on October 22, 2009, was 522 (465 men and 57 women) in Minnesota's temporary housing programs. An additional 147 veterans (140 men and 7 women) were interviewed in non-shelter locations. Homeless veterans were accompanied by 65 children. The following results are based on weighted interviews as described on page 3 of this report.

Men made up 90 percent of the adult homeless veteran population. The average age for men was 47.9 years, and for women, 38.2 years.

Nearly half (46%) of homeless veterans in Minnesota were people of color. Survey results indicate that 52 percent of homeless veterans were Caucasian, 32 percent were African American, 9 percent were American Indian, 3 percent were of mixed racial background, 1 percent identified their race as Hispanic, and 2 percent did not specify any race. Four percent of homeless veterans said they were of Hispanic origin.

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of homeless veterans had lived in Minnesota for more than five years. By comparison, over 90 percent of the general population has lived in Minnesota for five years or more. Over half (54%) of homeless veterans grew up in another state or country, compared to one-quarter (26%) of the general Minnesota population.⁴

Over two-fifths (42%) of surveyed homeless veterans had never been married. Two-fifths (41%) were divorced, 7 percent were separated, 6 percent were currently married, and 5 percent were widowed.

Ninety-five percent of homeless veterans had graduated from high school or completed a GED, and one half (51%) had some type of post-secondary education. For comparison, approximately nine of ten (91%), of adults in the general population have completed high school.⁵

⁴ 2008 American Community Survey. Minnesota Selected Social Characteristics in United States. [Statistics from Data file] Retrieved September 20, 2010 from <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet>

⁵ 2008 American Community Survey. Minnesota Selected Social Characteristics in United States. [Statistics from Data file] Retrieved September 20, 2010 from <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet>

Veteran status

On Thursday, October 22, 2009, the study found that 489 homeless adults in the Twin Cities metro area and 180 homeless adults in greater Minnesota had served in the U.S. military. This represented approximately one-tenth (11%) of the total homeless population (19% of homeless men.)

More than two-fifths (45%) of the U.S. military veterans had served in the Army, 22 percent had served in the Navy, 17 percent in the Marines, 7 percent in the Air Force, 7 percent in the National Guard, 2 percent in the Reserves, and less than 1 percent in the Coast Guard. Over two-fifths (43%) of homeless military veterans began their service between August 1980 and March 2003. Two percent began their service before August 1964, one-quarter (24%) began their service between August 1964 and May 1975, one-quarter (25%) began their service between June 1975 and September 1980, 43 percent began their service between October 1980 and March 2003, and 6 percent began after March 2003. Sixty percent of the homeless veterans reported that the length of their military service was more than two years, and one-quarter (25%) served between a half year and two years.

One-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans reported serving in a combat zone. Nine percent of the homeless military veterans served in a combat zone in Vietnam, 9 percent in the first Gulf War, and 5 percent in the current Iraq War or Afghanistan. Other conflicts, mentioned by about 1 percent each, included Lebanon, Panama, Iran, Korea, Honduras, and Granada. Over two-thirds of homeless military veterans (69%) received an honorable discharge, and 14 percent received a General Discharge. Over two-fifths (44%) of homeless veterans reported service-related health problems, primarily mental health problems (39%) and hearing/ear problems (29%). Four percent reported that they have been diagnosed with a service-related head injury or traumatic brain injury.

During the previous 12 months, over two-fifths (42%) of homeless military veterans reported they had contact with a County Veterans Service Officer, over one-quarter attended a Project Homeless Connect event and one-quarter (24%) of homeless military veterans attended a Veterans StandDown event.

Over two-fifths (44%) of the military veterans had used veterans' benefits in the previous 12 months. Of those who had used veterans' benefits, the most frequent services used were Veterans Administration Medical services (32%) and service-related compensation (11%).

Public assistance and service use

The services most commonly used by homeless veterans in the month preceding the survey were food stamps (48%), hot meal programs (43%), free clothing shelves (42%), transportation assistance (40%), drop-in centers (32%), food shelves (24%), emergency room (24%), free medical clinic (23%), and state or federal veterans benefits (23%).

One-fifth (19%) of homeless veterans reported having lost public benefits during the 12 months preceding the study. Of those who lost benefits, the benefits most frequently lost were food stamps (45%), medical benefits (45%), and unemployment benefits (20%).

Five percent of homeless veterans (3% of men and 25% of women) received MFIP in the previous 12 months.

Three-fourths (75%) of homeless veterans had medical coverage of some kind in October. In October, one-quarter (24%) of homeless veterans received care in an emergency room. In the previous six months, more than two-fifths (44%) of homeless veterans reported receiving care in an emergency room.

One-third (34%) of homeless veterans reported needing help applying or reapplying for services, particularly for medical benefits (37% of those needing help with applications), food stamps (32%), SSI (21%), and housing assistance (18%).

Employment

Nearly one-fifth (18%) of homeless veterans were employed; 6 percent were employed full-time. Three-fifths (61%) of employed homeless veterans reported that their job had lasted at least three months. Two-thirds (65%) of homeless veterans reported that their jobs paid less than \$10 per hour.

One-fifth (20%) of unemployed homeless veterans reported they had been laid off, terminated, or had their job eliminated in the last six months. For over one-fifth (22%), it had been less than six months since they had last held a steady job. Twenty percent of veterans had last had a job between six months and one year prior, 22 percent had a job one to two years prior, 8 percent had last been employed two to three years prior, 4 percent had last been employed three to four years prior, and one-quarter (24%) reported that their last job had been more than four years prior.

Nearly three-fifths (57%) of unemployed homeless veterans were looking for work. The most frequently mentioned barriers to employment included: physical health (32%), job opportunities (24%), transportation (21%), mental health problems (18%), criminal background (13%), age (12%), lack of job history (10%), and lack of housing (10%).

Income

Homeless veterans surveyed reported their main source of income for the month of October had been from: General Assistance (29%), steady employment (13%), Social Security Income (SSI) (8%), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) (8%) and day labor (6%).

When asked about their total income for the month of October, 9 percent reported some income but less than \$100, 31 percent reported incomes of \$101-\$300, 11 percent reported incomes of \$301-\$500, 15 percent reported incomes of \$501-\$800, and 19 percent reported incomes over \$800. Fifteen percent of respondents reported no incomes in the month of October.

Homeless male veterans had lower median incomes than did homeless female veterans (\$203 vs. \$437). The median income for homeless male veterans in greater Minnesota was \$340 vs. \$376 for homeless female veterans. The median income for homeless male veterans in the Metro area was \$203 vs. \$560 for homeless female veterans.

Shelter use

For one-quarter (26%) of homeless veterans interviewed, this was their first experience of homelessness. One-quarter (24%) had been homeless two or three times in their lives, one-quarter (25%) had been homeless four to seven times, and one-quarter (25%) had been homeless eight or more times.

Six percent of homeless veterans reported they had been homeless for less than one month, over one-third (37%) had been homeless for more than one month but less than one year, 28 percent had been homeless for more than one years but less than three years, 12 percent had been homeless for more than three years but less than five years, and 17 percent had been homeless for more than five years. The average age at which veterans reported becoming homeless for the first time was 33.8 and the median age was 32.0.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of homeless veterans met the Minnesota definition of long-term homeless (they had been homeless for a year or longer, or four or more times in the previous four years). Over half (55%) of homeless veterans met the federal definition of chronic homelessness, which, in addition to the long-term criteria in the Minnesota definition, also requires the presence of at least one serious or chronic disability and a marital status of single.

Three-quarters (75%) of homeless veterans reported having lived in an emergency shelter (5% as a child and 62% in the previous two years). Four percent of homeless veterans

reported having lived in a battered women's shelter (1% as a child and 2% in the previous two years). Over half (52%) of homeless veterans reported having lived in a transitional housing program (2% as a child and 43% in the previous two years). Fourteen percent of homeless veterans reported having lived in permanent supportive housing (1% as a child and 10% in the previous two years.) Overall, 89 percent of all homeless veterans surveyed had lived in a temporary or supportive shelter facility (emergency shelter, battered women's shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing with supportive services), of whom 79 percent had done so in the previous two years.

Of the homeless services programs that homeless veterans last left, three-fourths (76%) last left an emergency shelter, 18 percent last left transitional housing, 5 percent last left permanent supportive housing, and less than 1 percent last left a battered women's shelter. Of those who last left an emergency shelter, 37 percent reported having a stable place to live. Of those who last left transitional housing, 36 percent reported having a stable place to live. Half of the veterans who last left permanent supportive housing had a stable place to live, and the one veteran who last left a battered women's shelter had a stable place to live. Thirty percent of homeless veterans reported receiving help from homeless service programs in finding a stable place, and 28 percent were offered follow-up or aftercare services.

Over one-third (36%) of the homeless veterans had been in their current temporary housing arrangements for less than one month. Over half (52%) had been in their current temporary arrangement for more than one month, but less than one year. One-tenth (12%) had been in their current temporary arrangement for more than one year.

One-fifth (20%) of homeless veterans had been unable to obtain shelter at least once in the previous three months. The last time that happened, they reported having slept outdoors (37%); in cars, abandoned buildings, or other enclosed spaces (21%); at another shelter (18%); with family or a friend (14%); in a motel or other shelter with a voucher (5%); in a church (1%); a public place open 24 hours; motel (no voucher) (1%); hospital (1%); or detox (1%).

One-third (33%) of homeless veterans reported having stayed outdoors at least one night during the month of October. Fourteen percent had spent one to four nights outdoors, and one-fifth (19%) had spent five or more nights outdoors. The average number of nights spent outdoors was 3.3.

Close to three-fourths (71%) of homeless veterans reported that, at some time in their life, they have had to double or triple up in someone else's house, apartment, or room due to economic reasons, or because there was not a safe or affordable place to rent or buy. Over half (54%) had doubled up in the previous 12 months. One-third (34%) of those

veterans reported that they have doubled up in the month of the survey (October). Thirteen percent had spent one to four nights doubled up, and one-fifth (21%) had spent five or more nights doubled up. The average number of nights spent doubled-up in October was 3.2.

Residential placements

With respect to prior residential placements, two-thirds (67%) of homeless veterans surveyed had lived in at least one type of residential facility or program. If correctional facilities are included, the percentage increases to 81 percent. Women were slightly more likely than men to have lived in some type of residential setting (69% vs. 67%).

Homeless veterans most often had lived in: correctional facilities (59%), drug or alcohol treatment facilities (55%), halfway houses (32%), mental health facilities (22%), group homes (15%), or foster care (13%). Homeless men and women differed in the type of placements. Men were more likely than women to have been in a correctional facility (62% vs. 30%) or in a drug or alcohol treatment facility (56% vs. 54%). Women were more likely than men to have been in foster care (21% vs. 12%), a mental health facility (31% vs. 21%), or in a group home (18% vs. 15%).

Small proportions of homeless veterans surveyed had lived in an adoptive home (5%) or a residence for persons with physical disabilities (5%).

HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF FACILITIES OR PROGRAMS?

	Percentage responding "yes"		
	Men	Women	Total
Foster care	11.9%	21.1%	12.8%
Drug or alcohol treatment	55.6%	53.6%	55.4%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	5.4%	3.5%	5.2%
Halfway house	32.2%	26.9%	31.7%
Mental health facility	21.3%	30.5%	22.2%
Group home	14.8%	18.2%	15.2%
Adoptive home	5.5%	4.2%	5.4%
Any of the above placements	66.9%	69.3%	67.2%
Juvenile detention or facility	14.1%	8.8%	13.6%
County jail or workhouse	58.7%	20.9%	55.1%
State or federal prison	27.3%	5.7%	25.2%
Any correction facility or detention center	62.4%	29.9%	59.3%
Any of the above, including correction facility or detention center	81.4%	75.1%	80.8%

Migration to Minnesota

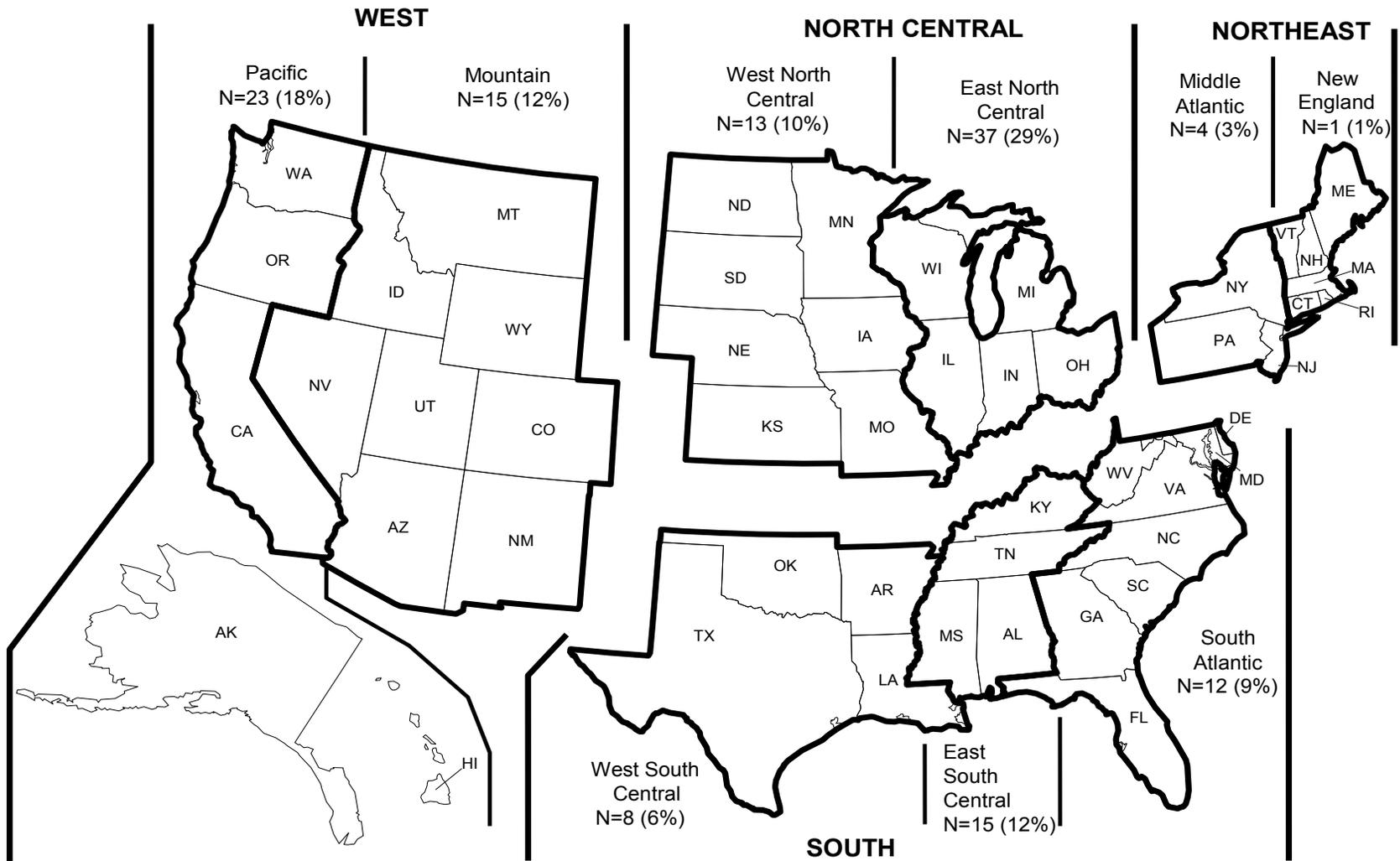
Homeless female veterans were more likely than homeless male veterans to have lived in Minnesota for less than one year (23% vs. 13%). Overall, 14 percent of homeless veterans had been in Minnesota for less than one year, 8 percent for one to two years, and 78 percent for longer than two years. Nearly two-fifths (37%) of recent residents (two years or less) had previously lived in Minnesota.

Of the 128 veterans who lived in Minnesota two years or less, the majority came from East North Central states (29%). Eighteen percent came from Pacific States, 12 percent came from Mountain states, 12 percent from East South Central States, 10 percent came from West North Central states, 9 percent from South Atlantic states, 6 percent from West South Central states, and 3 percent from Middle Atlantic States and 1 percent from New England states.

Recent residents (those who had lived here two years or less) in Greater Minnesota were more likely than those in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to have come from Pacific states (37% vs. 11%). In the Twin Cities metropolitan area, recent residents were more likely to have come from East North Central states (32% vs. 20%). (See maps on the next three pages.)

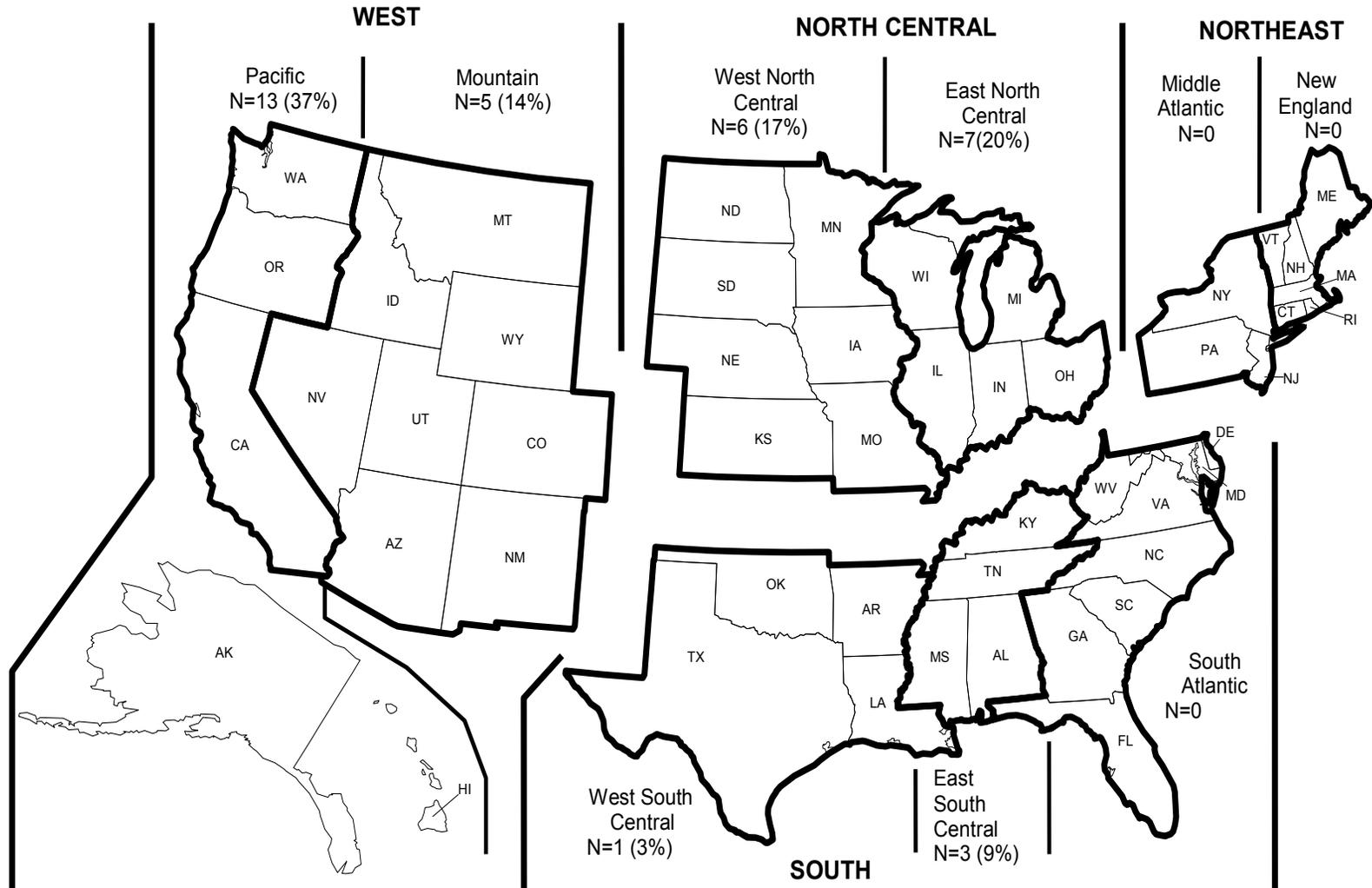
All homeless veterans living in Minnesota two years or less
 "Where did you live before coming to Minnesota?" N=128

US Census Bureau geographic regions



Greater Minnesota homeless veterans living in the state two years or less
 "Where did you live before coming to Minnesota?" N=35

US Census Bureau geographic regions

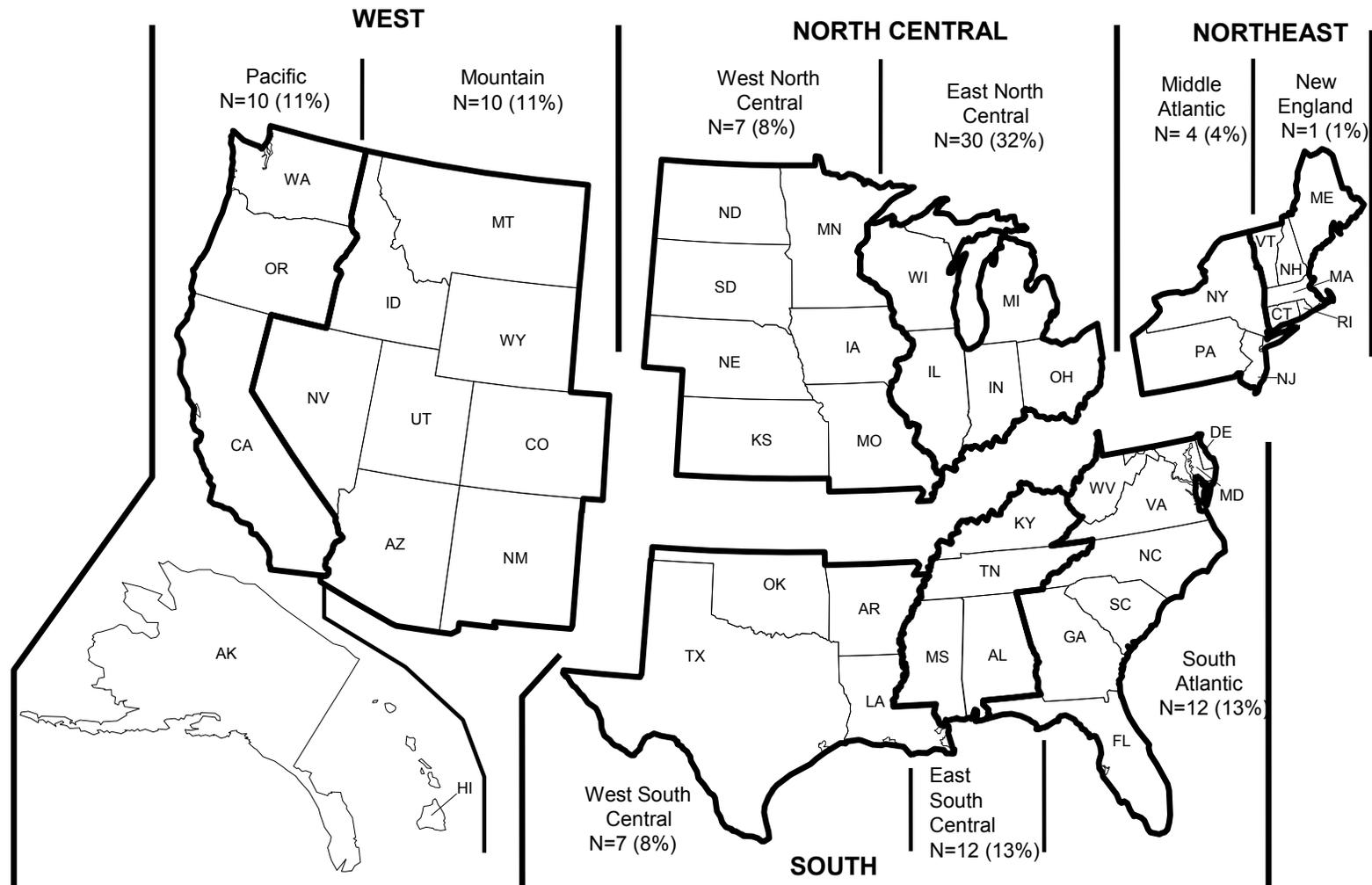


* Missing data: N=1 (2%)

* Countries outside the United States: N=0

Twin Cities area homeless veterans living in Minnesota two years or less
 "Where did you live before coming to Minnesota?" N=93

US Census Bureau geographic regions



Housing

Nearly three-fifths (57%) of homeless veterans reported being without permanent housing for more than a year. Over one-third (35%) of homeless veterans were on a waiting list for Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) or housing that offers some type of financial assistance, and 14 percent of those veterans had been waiting for over a year. Seventeen percent of homeless veterans were unable to get on a waiting list, because the list was closed. Four percent of homeless veterans said they had received a housing voucher that they lost or could not use.

Over four-fifths (83%) of homeless veterans only needed an efficiency or one-bedroom apartment. About one-third (30%) of homeless veterans were not able to pay any amount for rent. Thirteen percent indicated they could pay \$1-\$100 per month for rent, 12 percent could pay \$101-\$200, 11 percent could pay \$201-\$300, 11 percent could pay \$301-\$400, 12 percent could pay \$401-\$500, and 12 percent could pay over \$500 per month.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of homeless veterans indicated that their last regular or permanent housing was in Minnesota, 28 percent in another state.

The main reasons homeless veterans cited for leaving their last housing included: loss of a job or reduction in work hours (53%), inability to afford the rent (48%), eviction (36%), their own drinking or drug problem (29%) or break-up with spouse or partner (25%). One-quarter (26%) of women cited domestic violence as a reason. Men were more likely than women to cite the loss of a job (55% vs. 42%). Women were more likely to cite another household member's drinking or drug problem (20% vs. 11%).

Homeless veterans reported that the first place they stayed in when they lost their housing was: with family or friends (39%), in an emergency shelter (26%), outdoors (12%), or in a van, bus station, or another public place (8%). Other places mentioned were a treatment program (4%), jail (3%), hotel/motel (3%), transitional housing (2%), campground (1%), rental housing (1%), hospital (1%), and half way house (<1%). Homeless female veterans were more likely to stay with family or friends than homeless male veterans (48% vs. 38%).

The main reasons given by homeless veterans for being unable to obtain housing included: lack of job or income (45%), credit problems (21%), a criminal background (20%), no housing they could afford (19%), court eviction (9%), cost of application fees (8%), no local rental history (7%), and alcohol or chemical use (6%).

Children of homeless veterans

Although three-fifths (61%) of homeless female veterans and over one-quarter (28%) of homeless male veterans reported that they *had* children under the age of 18, the proportion caring for their children while homeless was substantially lower. Just under one-third (31%) of homeless female veterans and 6 percent of male veterans were accompanied by children on the night of the survey. The parents accompanied by their children represented 9 percent of all homeless veterans surveyed. The average number of children with those parents was 1.7, with an average age of 8.7 years.

Of homeless veterans who had children with them, 35 percent reported being unable to obtain needed child care in the previous 12 months, 18 percent were unable to obtain needed dental care for at least one of their children, and 7 percent reported being unable to obtain needed physical health care for at least one of their children. Nine percent of the homeless veterans who had children with them reported that their children had to skip meals in the previous month. One-quarter (25%) of homeless veterans who had children with them reported their children had emotional health problems, and 6 percent reported that their children had physical health problems, that interfere with their daily life.

Forty-two parents had school-age children with them. Of those parents, 44 percent reported they had a least one child with learning or school problems, 22 percent reported that at least one of their children repeated a grade in school, and 15 percent had children who had trouble going to school because of housing problems.

Chemical dependency

Close to half (45%) of homeless veterans (45% of male veterans and 46% of female veterans) reported that they consider themselves to be alcoholic or chemically dependent. Fifteen percent of homeless veterans reported the need to see a health professional about alcohol or drug problems. Two-fifths (41%) of homeless male veterans and one-quarter (26%) of homeless female veterans had been admitted to a detox center at least once. More than half of homeless male veterans (56%) and homeless female veterans (54%) reported that, at some time in their lives, they had lived in an alcohol or drug treatment facility. About one-third of homeless male veterans (31%) and homeless female veterans (35%) had been told by a doctor or nurse within the previous two years, that they had chemical dependency problems. Over one-quarter (27%), of homeless male veterans and nearly one-third (32%) of homeless female veterans had been in residential drug treatment programs in the previous two years. Nearly half (48%) of homeless male veterans and 45 percent of homeless female veterans had received outpatient drug or alcohol treatment some time in their lives. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of homeless male veterans and one-quarter (26%) of homeless female veterans received outpatient drug or alcohol treatment in the previous two years.

Physical health

Over two-fifths (43%) of homeless veterans had a chronic medical condition (high blood pressure, asthma, other chronic lung or respiratory problems, diabetes, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, and/or tuberculosis). Of those, nearly three-quarters (73%) reported receiving care for each reported problem in the previous 12 months.

Nearly three-fifths (56%) of homeless veterans said they needed to see a dentist about tooth or gum problems, and nearly half (47%) said they needed to see a doctor for a physical health problem. Nearly one-sixth (15%) of homeless veterans reported they were not taking prescribed medication. Over two-fifths (44%) of homeless veterans had used emergency room services during the previous six months.

Three-fourths (75%) of homeless veterans reported that they had medical coverage in October. Of those who reported having medical coverage, 29 percent had Medical Assistance, 25 percent had VAMC benefits, 19 percent had General Assistance Medical Care, 14 percent had MinnesotaCare, 8 percent had Medicare, 3 percent did not specify the type of medical coverage they had, 2 percent had employer sponsored insurance, and less than 1 percent had Indian Health Services medical coverage. Over one-quarter (29%) of homeless veterans reported they had problems getting needed medical care, primarily because of a lack of money or insurance.

Three-fourths (76%) of homeless veterans reported that they had a regular place to go for medical care. Two-fifths of homeless veterans reported that they received medical care at a clinic that requires insurance or fees, 35 percent received care at the VA Medical Center, 9 percent received care at a free clinic, 7 percent received care at an emergency room, 2 percent at a medical center (not specified if they require fees or insurance), 2 percent at a medical clinic (not specified if they require fees or insurance), 2 percent did not specify any type of medical facility, 1 percent at a hospital, 1 percent at an Indian Health Service, and less than 1 percent at the Center for American Indian Resources.

Mental health

In the Wilder study, mental illness was a significant problem for nearly three-fifths (57%) of the homeless veterans in the survey. Half (50%) of homeless veterans had been told by a doctor or nurse (within the previous two years) that they had schizophrenia, manic-depression, some other type of delusional disorder, major depression, anti-social personality disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder. In the previous two years, 38 percent of homeless veterans surveyed had received outpatient mental health services, and 22 percent had lived in a facility for persons with mental health problems. Two-fifths of homeless veterans (40%) said they needed to see a doctor about a mental or emotional health problem.

MENTAL HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS ADULTS

	Percentage with characteristics		
	Men (N=605)	Women (N=64)	Total (N=669)
Schizophrenia	6.5%	6.0%	6.4%
Paranoid or delusional disorder, other than schizophrenia	8.4%	7.8%	8.3%
Manic episodes or manic depression, also called bipolar disorder	23.1%	30.0%	23.8%
Major depression	38.5%	52.4%	39.8%
Anti-social personality, obsessive-compulsive personality, or another severe emotional disorder	17.4%	6.5%	16.9%
Post-traumatic stress disorder	27.7%	40.0%	28.9%
Any of the mental health diagnosis above	48.7%	61.0%	49.9%
Alcohol abuse disorder	27.6%	26.9%	27.5%
Drug abuse disorder	16.6%	25.1%	17.4%
Any of the chemical dependency diagnosis	31.1%	35.3%	31.5%
Dual diagnosis (chemical dependency and mental illness)	23.7%	33.8%	24.6%

Serious or chronic disability

As described previously, half (50%) of homeless veterans had serious mental health problems (indicated by recent diagnosis or treatment), 31 percent had a diagnosed alcohol or drug abuse disorder, and over two-fifths (43%) had a chronic physical health condition.

According to many homeless veterans interviewed, physical, mental, or other health conditions limited the amount or kind of work they could do (54%), limited their daily activities (15%), or interfered with memory or daily decision-making (36%).

Pooling all of the above, over four-fifths (84%) of homeless veterans reported having at least one serious or chronic disability (mental illness, substance abuse disorder, chronic medical condition, cognitive impairment, or other condition that limits work or activities of daily living).

Another concern is the fact that traumatic brain injury, which is reported by more than one in five veterans, is sometimes difficult to detect, and the symptoms may mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder. While survivors may appear normal, they often have diminished memory, act in irrational ways, display episodes of rage, have difficulty concentrating, and generally have diminished capacity to maintain family relationships. Any of these elements, left untreated, can increase the likelihood of homelessness for new veterans.

Over one-third (36%) of homeless veterans in the Wilder study had a history that suggests likely traumatic brain injury. That is, they received a serious head injury, followed by the development of problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people. These risk factors, more concentrated among veterans, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, are the *same* set of risk factors that increase the likelihood of homelessness among those in the general adult population.

Abuse and victimization

A history of childhood mistreatment was not uncommon for respondents in the survey. Nearly one-third (30%) of homeless male veterans and 54 percent of homeless female veterans indicated that they were physically mistreated as children, 14 percent of men and 56 percent of women reported sexual mistreatment as children, and 17 percent of men and 31 percent of women indicated that, as children, their parents neglected to provide food, shelter, or medical care, or left them unsupervised for long periods of time. Nearly, one-third (30%) of homeless male veterans and nearly two-thirds (65%) of homeless female veterans were either physically or sexually mistreated as children. If individuals reporting neglect as children were added, 38 percent of men and 73 percent of women reported mistreatment as children.

Fifteen percent of homeless veterans interviewed (14% of men and 29% of women) reported being sexual with someone only for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food, and other things. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of homeless male veterans and 70 percent of homeless female veterans reported staying in an abusive situation in the previous two years, because they did not have other housing options. One-tenth (11%) of homeless male veterans and over one-third (36%) of homeless female veterans reported being in a personal relationship in the previous year with someone who hit them, slapped them, pushed them around, or threatened to do so. One-quarter (26%) of the women veterans reported they were homeless, at least in part, because they were fleeing abuse.

The overall experience of homelessness can be a risky one, especially for women. One-quarter (26%) of homeless female veterans had been approached to work in the sex industry. Twenty-one percent (19% of men and 46% of women) of homeless veterans reported having been physically or sexually attacked or beaten since becoming homeless. Eleven percent of homeless veterans (10% of men and 21% of women) reported having sought health care because of an injury or illness caused by violence.

Homeless veterans data tables

Tables in the next section report frequency distributions for all questions included in the survey, with breakdowns by geographic area (Metropolitan area vs. greater Minnesota), by gender (male vs. female), and by type of shelter arrangement (emergency shelter, transitional housing programs, informal shelter, and unsheltered locations).⁶

The tables are organized by question. Within each question, the data tables display the responses for the metropolitan area, then the greater Minnesota area, and then the totals for the metropolitan area, greater Minnesota, and the combined total of both the metropolitan area and greater Minnesota.

Note that some tables are conditional. For example, Table 167 reports the number of respondents who have considered suicide. This question was asked of everyone. Table 168 reports information about suicide attempts, but this question was only asked of those who had considered suicide. Thus, the percentages reported in Table 168 total 100 percent of those who have considered suicide, not 100 percent of the entire sample.

Notes for interpreting the data tables

The tables contain weighted estimates. This means that the survey results have been statistically adjusted to reflect the actual populations residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs on the day of the survey. (We interviewed a sample, not every person in each shelter.)

For informal and unsheltered locations, the data are not weighted. We do not adjust the numbers to reflect the actual population, because we do not know the actual numbers of men, women, and children who were on the streets or in other non-shelter locations on the day of the survey.

You should use the percentages, not the frequencies, when interpreting these tables. Sample weighting, such as we have performed with these data, uses calculations that can result in "fractional" persons. When we use computer rounding to adjust for this, the numbers do not always add up exactly to the total for each category.

The total number of responses is different for each question, based on the number of valid responses to that question. Missing data (cases when a respondent did not answer a question) are not reported or included in the percentages.

⁶ Unsheltered arrangements include outside, abandoned buildings, vehicles, temporary paid, or exchange arrangements.

Weighting techniques

The 2009 survey data were weighted to reflect the actual number of homeless persons as indicated by specific site counts of people in shelters in Minnesota on Thursday, October 22, 2009. Only sites from which there were completed interviews were used in the weighting. The actual number of homeless persons in non-sheltered locations cannot be accurately estimated, so these cases were given a weight of 1.0.

The weightings were calculated by a sample-balancing program available in the Princeton Statistical Program (P-Stat). This technique uses an iterative approximation to the least square adjustment of W.E. Deming (Statistical Adjustment of Data, New York: Wiley, 1943). This weighting procedure uses marginals (totals of control variables) to compute individual case weights. In order to obtain the highest possible accuracy, 5 sets of marginals were used.

These were:

- Individual sites.
- Gender (male, female).
- Region (metropolitan area and greater Minnesota).
- Shelter type (emergency, transitional).
- Shelter type within region by gender (all combinations of items 2, 3, and 4 above).

Weightings were used to estimate the characteristics of homeless veterans in Minnesota temporary housing programs on the night of the survey, based on the sample of interviews with adults in such programs. Statistical weightings could not be computed if interviews were not completed in a specific weighting category (e.g., region, shelter type, and gender).

The 2009 data tables can be found on our website:

<http://www.wilder.org/homeless2009.0.html>