

2012 study

Homelessness and Near-Homelessness on Minnesota Indian Reservations

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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Demographics
Doubling up
Employment and education
Incarceration
Violence and abuse
Health and well-being
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About the study

This is the third study of homelessness on Minnesota's Indian reservations. Almost all interviews were conducted the week of October 22, 2012. Six of Minnesota's American Indian reservations participated in the study, all of which are Ojibwe — Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, Bois Forte, and Fond du Lac. This reservation study is conducted in conjunction with the statewide study of homelessness that Wilder Research has directed every three years since 1991.

The study was organized with the assistance of the Corporation for Supportive Housing's Minnesota Program through the American

Indian Supportive Housing Initiative. The Minnesota Department of Human Services has been instrumental in coordinating interviews for the tribes.

Special thanks go to the six Tribal Councils who approved their tribes' participation, as well as the tribal staff who organized outreach and recruited volunteer interviewers.

Finally, we thank the men, women, and children who shared their experiences with us. In total, there were 2,162 homeless individuals counted during the study, including 1,042 respondents, their significant others, and their children.

A P R I L 2 0 1 4

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Definition of homelessness

In this report, we define an individual as “homeless” if he or she is without housing of his or her own. For the reservation study, we use a broader definition of homelessness than what is defined by the federal government.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) deems a person homeless if he or she lives in any of the following places: shelters, transitional housing, informal housing arrangements, or places not intended for housing. Also included are people on the verge of eviction who have no other place to live. In total, 113 reservation respondents (11%) met these criteria for being “literally homeless”.

This study also includes the “near-homeless”—people who are doubled up with friends or family because they cannot afford a place of their own. Doubling up is a common response to homelessness in rural areas, including reservations. In total, 929 of those interviewed for the 2012 reservation study were doubled up with others because they were unable to secure housing of their own (89% of all respondents). Individuals often move between being doubled up and being literally homeless.

In some places, this report compares the results of the reservation study to our statewide study of homelessness. Note that the populations discussed in each report differ. Only individuals who fit the federal definition of homeless (“literally homeless”) are included in the statewide study. Comparisons to “greater Minnesota” refer to characteristics of homeless people in the 80 counties outside the seven-county metro area.

Key findings

In many respects, the challenges faced by homeless and near-homeless people on reservations mirror those of homeless people statewide. A few key themes emerge:

- **Temporarily doubling up with others is a prevalent and long-term strategy for homeless and near-homeless people on reservations.** Nine out of 10 respondents were doubled up at the time of the study, and two-thirds had been homeless for a year or more. In total, 166 people were doubled up in substandard housing, which is housing that lacks basic amenities such as plumbing, electricity, and/or heat.
- **Overcrowding has worsened over time.** Of all doubled-up respondents, 74 percent lived in overcrowded spaces, a substantial increase from 63 percent in 2006. The standard measure for overcrowding is number of people per room, and, for this group, the average number of people per room increased to 1.7, up from 1.5 in 2006. Conditions are worse for families, for whom the average number of people per room was 2.0. About one-third of homeless young adults and unaccompanied minors (age 16-21) who participated in this study said they first left home because the space was too small for everyone to live there.
- **Transportation is a significant barrier**, both to obtaining employment and to accessing vital services such as medical treatment. Only 15 percent of respondents reported receiving transportation assistance in the past month, compared with 30 percent of homeless respondents in greater Minnesota.
- **Improving high school graduation rates and increasing access to employment training may be a key solution for combatting homelessness.** Of all young adult respondents (age 19-21), only 21 percent were employed, compared to 31 percent of adult respondents (age 22+). Though 52 percent of young adults (age 19-21) who participated in the reservation homeless study lack a high school diploma or GED, only 11 percent were enrolled in a GED course at the time of the study.

Who are the homeless and near-homeless?

During the 2012 reservation homeless study, 1,042 homeless and near-homeless men, women, and unaccompanied minors were interviewed on the six participating reservations. The housing situation of the respondents falls into three categories:

- **Literally homeless:** 113 respondents, 11%
- **Doubled up in substandard housing:** 166 respondents, 16%
- **Doubled up in housing not identified as substandard:** 763 respondents, 73%

On the day they were surveyed, these respondents were staying with 1,120 others, including significant others, friends, and children. In total, 2,162 people were counted as part of the 2012 reservation homeless study.

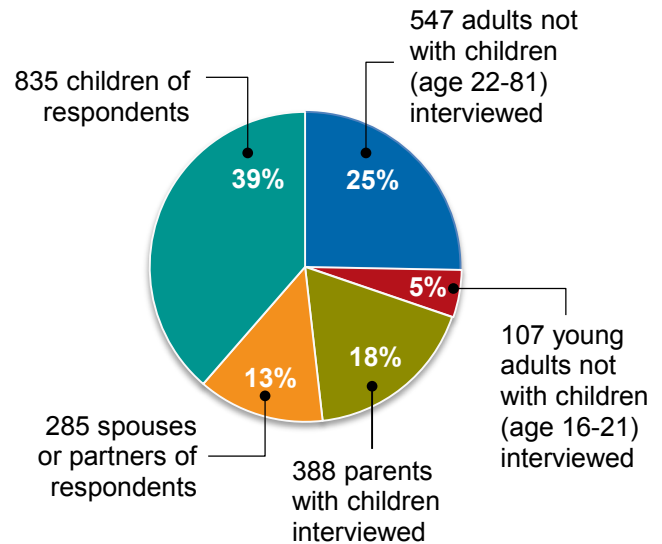
Homeless and near-homeless respondents without children

- 61% were male, 39% were female
- 22% were with a spouse or significant other
- 6 respondents (1%) were minor children age 17 or younger not accompanied by a parent
- 101 respondents (21%) were young adults age 18-21

Homeless and near-homeless respondents with children

- 26% were male, 74% were female
- 36% were with a spouse or significant other
- 44 respondents (8%) who had children with them were young adults age 18-21
- On average, parents had 2 children with them
- Half of all children with these parents were age 5 or younger

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP OF 2,162 HOMELESS AND NEAR-HOMELESS PEOPLE ON MINNESOTA INDIAN RESERVATIONS, FALL 2012



Demographics and tribal affiliation

The average respondent on these reservations:

- Was female
- Was 34 years old
- Had at least one child with them
- Had graduated high school or received a GED
- First experienced homelessness at age 21
- Is enrolled with the reservation where they were living

Of all respondents across the six reservations, 48 percent were male and 52 percent were female. The average age was 34 years, and nearly three-quarters (72%) of those interviewed were between the ages of 22 and 50. Seniors age 55 and older comprised 9 percent of the group.

Most respondents had never been married (76%), while 11 percent were divorced, 7 percent were married, 4 percent were separated, and 3 percent were widowed.

One-third (32%) of respondents had not completed high school or a GED, while 46 percent had received a high school diploma or GED, and 22 percent had some college or more.

Most respondents (96%) identified themselves as American Indian, 2 percent as white, and another 2 percent as multiracial or of another group. However, it should be noted that outreach to participants was guided by the tribes, and it is less likely that homeless non-Natives on the reservation would be recruited. Of all respondents, 94 percent said they were enrolled tribal members and an additional 6 percent were descendants but not enrolled. Overall, 81 percent of respondents were living on the reservation with which they were enrolled or descended.

Compared to the statewide homeless population, respondents who participated in the reservation study were significantly younger the first time they became homeless. The average age of respondents' first experience of homelessness was 21; in the statewide study, the average age was 27.

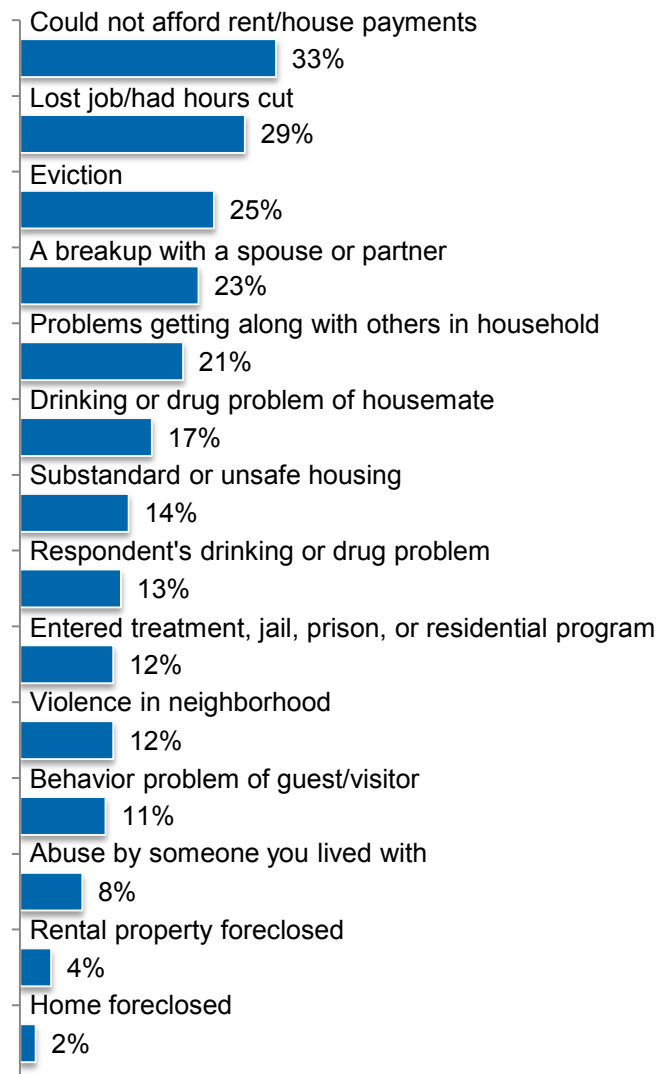
Four percent of respondents from the reservation study were veterans, and most had served either in the Army (56% of those who served) or Marines (27%). Of these, 20 percent had served during wartime, and 30 percent reported service-related health problems.

Most respondents had been living on a reservation before becoming homeless. Four out of five respondents (82%) reported that their last permanent residence was outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Of these, 71 percent said it had been on a reservation.

How did they become homeless?

The majority of respondents reported becoming homeless or near-homeless due to financial reasons, including not being able to afford housing costs and/or lacking adequate employment. Eviction, relationship problems, and drug and alcohol problems were also common reasons homeless people on the reservations left their last housing.

REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST PERMANENT HOUSING



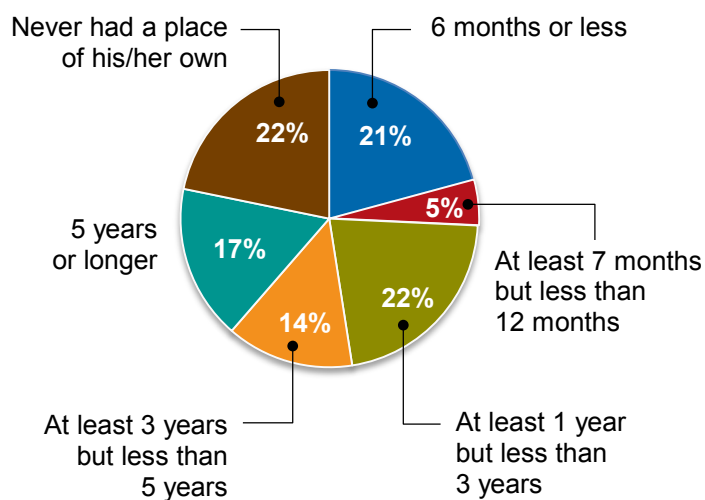
Doubling up, overcrowding, and substandard housing

Of the 1,042 respondents, 89 percent were near-homeless individuals and families, which means they were “doubled up” with others temporarily.

Those who are doubled up often face cramped, uncomfortable conditions, and some lack basic amenities. They also rely on multiple strategies to find shelter. During the month prior to the survey, one in five (22%) doubled-up respondents had spent at least one night in a location not intended for housing, and 4 percent had spent time in a shelter or in transitional housing.

Doubling up is often a long-term strategy for near-homeless people on Minnesota’s Indian reservations. Many respondents had been doubled up for years.

TIME SPENT NEARLY HOMELESS BY DOUBLED-UP RESPONDENTS



Doubled-up arrangements are often unstable. Around half (55%) of doubled-up respondents moved two or more times during the 60 days before the survey; 9 percent had moved 10 or more times. Two-thirds (67%) were confident they could stay where they were for another month without being asked to leave, while 18 percent were unsure and 15 percent could not.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding continues to be a serious problem on Minnesota’s Indian reservations. The Census Bureau considers a home overcrowded if the number of residents is greater than the number of rooms, and severely overcrowded if there are more than 1.5 residents per room.

- 74% of doubled-up respondents were living in overcrowded spaces, including
- 55% of doubled-up respondents who were living in *severely* overcrowded spaces

In 2012, the average number of people per room was 1.7, including one space that housed 24 residents. This is an increase from the 2006 and 2009 reports, where the average number of people per room was 1.5 and 1.6, respectively. For the 2012 report, families lived in even more crowded conditions, with an average of 2.0 people per room.

Substandard housing

Living in substandard conditions is a serious problem on reservations. Substandard housing is defined as housing that lacks the following: a flush toilet, electricity, and central heat, and either a kitchen sink or hot and cold running water. Of all doubled-up respondents, 19 percent were living in substandard housing.

Of all doubled-up respondents who participated:

- 17% lacked central heat
- 5% lacked a complete kitchen (refrigerator, oven, and sink)
- 4% lacked complete plumbing (hot and cold running water, a toilet, and a bathtub)
- 2% lacked electricity

The remainder of this report includes information provided by all of the homeless and near-homeless respondents who participated in the reservation study, not just those who were doubled up.

Employment and education

In total, 30 percent of respondents said that they were employed at the time of the study, similar to the 29 percent of homeless respondents employed in greater Minnesota. Income and employment problems were the most frequently cited reasons why respondents lost their last regular or permanent housing:

- 33% lost their last housing because they could not afford rent or house payments
- 29% said that job loss or a cut in hours was a factor in losing their housing

Lack of adequate income was also respondents' primary barrier to obtaining housing at the time of the survey. The three most frequently named barriers were:

- Lack of a job or sufficient income – 58%
- No housing they could afford – 38%
- Credit problems – 23%

Unemployment and barriers to employment

Unemployment for homeless people living on Minnesota's Indian reservations is both prevalent and long-lasting. At the time of the study, 70 percent of respondents were unemployed. Of these:

- 16% had been unemployed less than 6 months
- 26% had been unemployed 6 to 12 months
- 18% had been unemployed 13 months to 2 years
- 34% had been unemployed for over two years
- 6% had never held a job

Employment is often considered one of the key strategies for combatting homelessness; however, it is also useful to note that some individuals may *not* be seeking work for valid reasons, such as age or physical health. For this reason, the two groups are separated in this analysis: those looking for work, and those who are not (i.e., out of the labor market).

Most of the unemployed (69%) were currently looking for work. For this group, the most frequently cited barrier was lack of transportation (58%), followed by lack of employment opportunities (20%), and lack of resources needed to work or look for work (19%).

Strategies to prevent homelessness among people out of the labor market may differ from those to prevent homelessness in the working population. Thirty-one percent of unemployed respondents were not seeking work. For them, physical health was the most frequently cited barrier (48%), followed by lack of transportation (28%). It is possible that these individuals may be able to re-enter the labor market if they gained access to transportation.

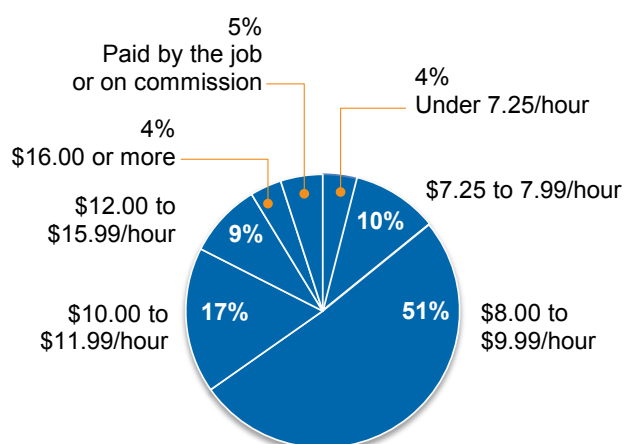
Employment and wages

In all, 30 percent of respondents were employed at the time of the study. This includes 15 percent who were employed full-time (35 hours or more each week).

- 14% of all employees earned less than \$8.00 per hour
- Half (51%) earned between \$8.00 and just under \$9.99 an hour

Overall, respondents worked an average of 32 hours each week. One-third of employed respondents (32%) said that their main job had lasted less than three months.

HOURLY WAGE FOR ALL EMPLOYED WORKERS



Educational attainment

Overall, educational attainment among homeless people on Minnesota's Indian reservations was lower than among the statewide homeless population:

- 32% did not have a high school diploma or GED (24% statewide)
- 46% had only a high school diploma or GED (43% statewide)
- 22% had at least some college education (33% statewide)

Compared to respondents statewide, homeless and near-homeless people on reservations were more likely to have a GED than a high school diploma.

Only 11 percent of unemployed respondents identified lack of education as a primary barrier to employment. However, there were lower levels of employment among those with lower levels of education, though those with a high school diploma/GED or at least some college were more often employed than their peers statewide.

- 21% with less than a high school diploma or GED were employed (19% statewide)
- 32% with only a high school diploma or GED were employed (24% statewide)
- 38% with at least some college education were employed (30% statewide)

Enrollment in adult education programs

Of all respondents, 13 percent were enrolled in adult education programs, similar to the enrollment rate of 14 percent among the homeless population statewide. Corresponding to their higher level of education overall, respondents from the statewide homeless study were slightly more likely to be enrolled in 2-year college programs. Of those enrolled in adult education, 31 percent statewide were enrolled in 2-year programs, compared with 18 percent of respondents who participated in the reservation study.

Meanwhile, the reservations had a larger share of homeless people in GED programs, comprising 56 percent of those in adult education programs compared with 30 percent of homeless people enrolled in education programs statewide.

Education among homeless children

One in five respondents (21%) had school-age children (age 6 or older) living with them at the time of the survey. High mobility and unstable housing situations often correlate with problems for children. For parents with school-age children:

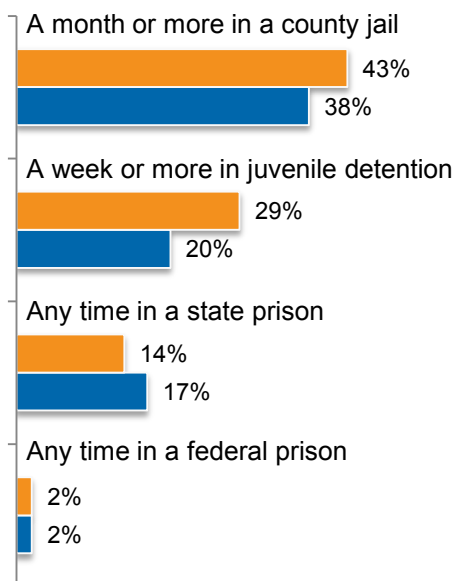
- 34% have had at least one child that needed additional support at school through summer school, tutoring, or other programs (47% statewide)
- 26% have had at least one child change schools due to the family's housing situation (42% statewide)
- 16% have had a child who had been suspended or dismissed from school (14% statewide)
- 15% have had a child that had been held back a year or more (11% statewide)

Incarceration and criminal background

A history of incarceration or criminal activity can hinder an individual's ability to secure both housing and employment. In this report, time in a correctional facility includes a week or more in juvenile detention, a month or more in a county jail or workhouse, or any time in state or federal prison.

Compared to homeless respondents statewide, homeless and near-homeless reservation respondents were slightly more likely to report time spent in a correctional facility. On reservations, 54 percent of respondents had a history of incarceration or criminal background as a barrier to employment, compared to 50 percent of respondents in the statewide sample.

ANY TIME SPENT IN A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY



- Homeless and near-homeless people on reservations
- Homeless people statewide

Barriers to housing and employment

Criminal history was one of the most common barriers to housing. About half of all respondents (56%) faced housing challenges due to their criminal history. Employment was also a challenge for this group: only 27 percent of those with a criminal history were employed, compared to 33 percent of those without.

Exited within the past year

Nearly one in five respondents (18%) with a history of incarceration exited in the year prior to the survey. They were more likely to report difficulty getting or keeping housing due to a criminal background (54%) compared to those who had left earlier (33%). However, unemployment rates between the two groups were identical: 73 percent of both groups were unemployed, similar to the 70 percent of all homeless and near-homeless people on reservations.

Compared to statewide respondents, reservation respondents are substantially different from those interviewed statewide. They were more likely to be homeless upon entry; however, at exit, they were less likely to be homeless and more frequently were supervised by a parole officer. Only about half as many received help finding a place to live upon exit. For respondents who left facilities in the last year:

- 77% were homeless upon entry (60% statewide)
- 68% were under the supervision of a probation or parole officer upon exit (56% statewide)
- 50% did not have a stable place to live when they left the facility (74% statewide)
- 15% received help finding a place to live upon exit (27% statewide)

Youth affected by parental incarceration

The 2012 homeless survey also asked homeless young adults and unaccompanied minors (age 16-21) about parental incarceration. Of the 151 youth and young adults interviewed on reservations:

- 59% had parents who had been incarcerated at some point (60% statewide)
- 9% had a parent who was currently incarcerated (13% statewide)

Violence and abuse

Violence and abuse often contribute to unstable housing situations, especially for women and children. This includes both recent violence and violence experienced as a child. In general, women were more likely to experience violence or abuse than men. Therefore, responses are reported by gender.

Reasons for leaving last regular housing

Of all respondents, 8 percent had trouble getting or keeping housing due to abuse by someone they lived with. Of all women, 12 percent had left their last permanent housing due to abuse. Meanwhile, 11 percent of males and 12 percent of females left their last housing due to neighborhood violence.

Violence while homeless or near-homeless

In the past year, 8 percent of respondents (both men and women) sought health care due to an injury from violence. In total, 4 percent of men and 12 percent of women reported being physically or sexually attacked or beaten while they have been homeless.

Several respondents reported entering into potentially dangerous relationships to secure housing or income. Six percent of men and 3 percent of women had been sexual to secure shelter, while 1 percent of men and 5 percent of women had been encouraged to dance, strip, or pose for nude photographs for money.

Domestic violence

Almost 3 in 10 women (28%) and about 1 in 10 men (11%) reported having ever stayed in an abusive situation because they did not have other housing options. In the past year, 6 percent of men and 18 percent of women said that they had been in an abusive relationship.

About 1 in 10 (11%) respondents said they had lived in a battered women's shelter at some point during their life; of these respondents, 23 percent had lived in a battered women's shelter as a child, and 83 percent had lived in one as an adult. Five percent of respondents who had lived in a battered women's shelter had spent time in one of these shelters during both youth and adulthood.

Childhood abuse

A number of respondents reported a history of abuse during childhood.

As a child or youth:

- 13% percent of males and 19% of females were physically mistreated
- 4% of males and 18% of females were sexually mistreated
- 16% of males and 18% of females were neglected, lacking food, shelter, medical care, and/or supervision for significant periods of time



Health and well-being

Homeless people face significant risks to health and well-being. Health has a significant effect on income and employment prospects, demonstrated by the fact that physical health was the second most commonly cited barrier to employment. Likewise, addiction among the homeless or near-homeless or others they live with can contribute to homelessness: 13 percent of respondents said they left their last permanent housing due to a drinking or drug problem they had, and 17 percent left due to drinking or drug problems of people in their household.

Health challenges

Two of the greatest health challenges experienced by homeless and near-homeless people on Minnesota's Indian reservations were the lasting effects of head trauma and the prevalence of tobacco use. Physical and mental disabilities are also prevalent.

Smoking

Smoking was the primary health concern—85 percent of respondents smoked cigarettes at the time of the study, and half of those smoked 10 or more cigarettes daily. This is substantially higher than the 69 percent of respondents from the statewide homeless study who reported cigarette use. It is also in stark contrast to the 20 percent of all adults in Minnesota who are current smokers, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. On average, those who smoked during the past 30 days began smoking at age 14.

In all, 86 percent of respondents reported using any tobacco product in the 30 days prior to their interview. This is substantially higher than in the statewide study, where 70 percent of homeless respondents reported tobacco use. It is important to note that the survey made no distinction made between commercial tobacco use and traditional use of tobacco (although respondents

were specifically asked about cigarette usage, which is commercial tobacco), so responses should be interpreted with caution.

Head trauma

Head trauma is a significant problem among homeless and near-homeless people on Minnesota's Indian reservations. Head injuries can contribute to physical, mental, and emotional problems that prevent individuals from working or completing daily tasks. Of all respondents, 44 percent had suffered head trauma that knocked them unconscious or caused them to “see stars,” and one-fifth of respondents (19%) reported lasting effects that interfere with their daily lives.

For those who have experienced head trauma, almost half (46%) began having problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people after their injury. For most of these respondents, their head injury occurred during youth or young adulthood: 64 percent were injured before age 22, including 41 percent who were injured before age 18.

Physical and mental disabilities

Some respondents had disabilities that impacted their ability to work and carry out daily activities.

- 23% had a physical, mental, or other health condition limiting the amount of work they can do
- 17% had a cognitive disability that interferes with their daily activities
- 9% had a physical or mental health condition that makes it difficult to carry out daily activities

Interaction with systems

Health care and insurance

Only 65 percent of respondents said that they had some kind of medical coverage during October 2012, compared to 79 percent of respondents statewide. This suggests a significant gap in health care access and availability on the reservations, which is consistent with respondents' lower public service utilization on average. Of those that have coverage, 56 percent have Medical Assistance, 14 percent have Medicare or Minnesota Care, 11 percent have Indian Health Services (IHS), and 10 percent have a combination of IHS and another plan. Only 4 percent have employer-sponsored insurance.

Though only 65 percent were covered by insurance, 71 percent said that they regularly sought care at an Indian Health Service clinic, and 11 percent regularly sought care at a clinic that requires insurance or fees. Fourteen percent had no source of regular medical care. Only 10 respondents (1%) said that their primary resource for health problems was the emergency room.

One in five respondents (19%) said that they faced barriers to getting the health care they needed. Of those:

- 48% cited transportation as the primary barrier
- 36% said that they lacked money or insurance to cover the expense

Again, transportation surfaces as a significant barrier for homeless and near-homeless people on Minnesota's Indian reservations.

Health care needs

The homeless often have significant unmet healthcare needs. On reservations, these needs are generally lower than the statewide sample, which can likely be attributed to the difference in survey populations and the greater access to free and low-cost medical care for people living on reservations.

Of all respondents:

- 34% needed care for tooth or gum problems
- 23% needed care for physical problems
- 16% needed care for emotional or mental health problems
- 8% needed care for alcohol or drug problems

Chronic diseases

Within the 12 months preceding the survey, respondents had commonly been told by their health care providers that they have high blood pressure (22% of all respondents), asthma (14%), and diabetes (14%). For those respondents who have high blood pressure or asthma, approximately one-quarter had not received treatment (23% of those for high blood pressure, 26% for asthma). Care was more common for diabetes, for which only 8 percent of respondents with this diagnosis had not received treatment.

Other medical conditions

Compared with the statewide homeless population, very few respondents in the reservation study reported rare conditions such as tuberculosis (1% diagnosed), lung or other chronic respiratory problems (5%), or frostbite or "trench foot" (1%). These percentages are lower than those in the statewide sample.

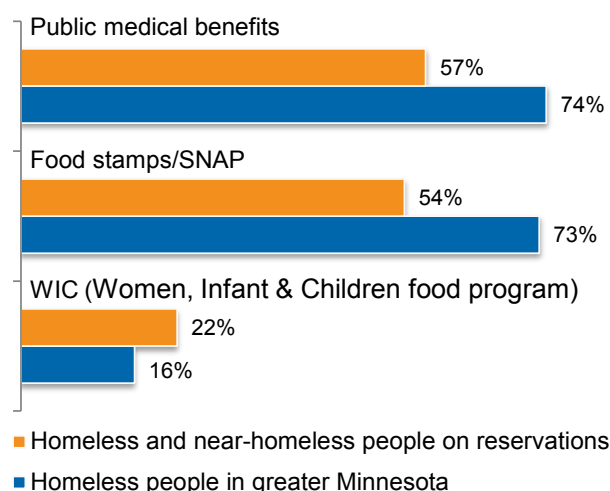
However, for conditions such as hepatitis (2% diagnosed), HIV/AIDS (1%), or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs, 1%), small numbers—yet significant percentages—were left untreated.

- 10 respondents lacked treatment for hepatitis
- 4 respondents lacked treatment for HIV/AIDS
- 3 respondents lacked treatment for other STIs

Access to services

Overall, homeless and near-homeless people on Minnesota's Indian reservations tend to utilize fewer public services than homeless people surveyed in the statewide study. Since rural areas generally have lower access to services than the metro area, this section compares service use by respondents on reservations to respondents in greater Minnesota to minimize differences in access.

MOST FREQUENTLY ACCESSED PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SOURCES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

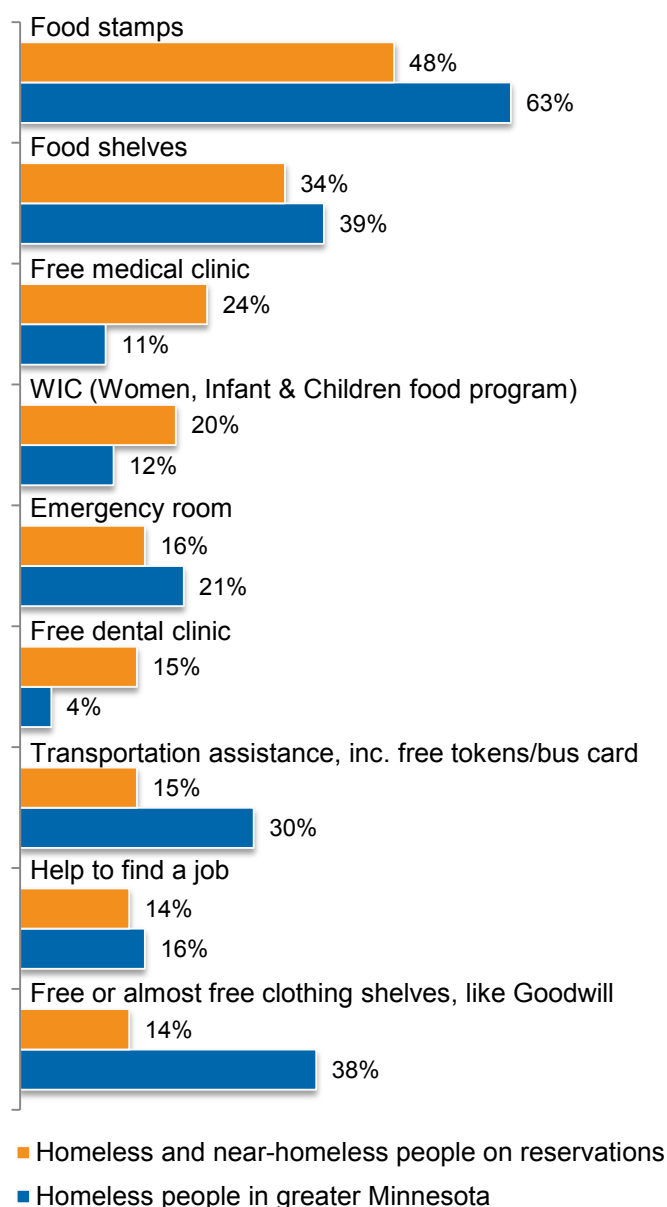


Twelve percent of respondents said they needed assistance applying or reapplying for benefits, much lower than the 21 percent of homeless respondents in greater Minnesota. Most of those needing help wanted to apply for public medical benefits (45%) and food stamps (42%). With the changes instated by the Affordable Care Act, assistance with accessing medical benefits may be an even greater need for homeless and near-homeless populations today. Alternatively, many American Indians on the reservation who are homeless or near-homeless may be eligible for and/or have access to medical care through Indian Health Service (IHS), so other medical benefits may not be as commonly needed among this population. By comparison, need for help with other forms of assistance was relatively lower. The only other substantial request was for help applying for Supplemental Security Income (15%).

Services

In most cases, participants in the reservation study accessed fewer services in the past month than respondents statewide; however, this may be due to differences in both need and access. In general, those interviewed for the statewide study demonstrate greater need, as all are literally homeless based on the federal definition. On reservations, 89 percent of respondents were classified as near-homeless.

SERVICES MOST OFTEN ACCESSED IN PAST MONTH BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Housing affordability and access

Respondents were asked to share information about their housing needs, income, and their ability to pay for rent. At the time of the study, 82 percent of respondents were looking for housing, and 40 percent of those who were not currently looking for housing had sought help in the past. At the time of the survey, 28 percent were having trouble obtaining or keeping housing because there was no housing they could afford. This is a substantial decrease from the 37 percent of reservation respondents who reported this barrier in 2009, and much closer to the 27 percent in greater Minnesota in 2012.

Access to housing support

In both the reservation and statewide studies, around two in five respondents were on the waiting list for housing support: 37 percent of reservation respondents and 39 percent of respondents in greater Minnesota.

Reservation respondents who were on the waiting list had been on the list much longer than most respondents in greater Minnesota. On average, reservation respondents had been on the waiting list 24 months, compared to 8 months for those in greater Minnesota. Nearly half of reservation homeless people had been on the list more than a year. For those on the waiting list:

- 20% had been on a waiting list for 7 to 12 months (21% in greater Minnesota)
- 47% had been on a waiting list for more than a year (16% in greater Minnesota)

Of those who were not on the waiting list, 14 percent were unable to sign up because the list was full/closed. By comparison, 17 percent of respondents in greater Minnesota who were not on a waiting list had been unable to get on because of a full/closed list.

In the two years preceding the survey, 50 respondents (5%) had received a housing voucher but could not find a place to accept it, which is similar to the 6 percent of respondents in greater Minnesota facing the same situation.

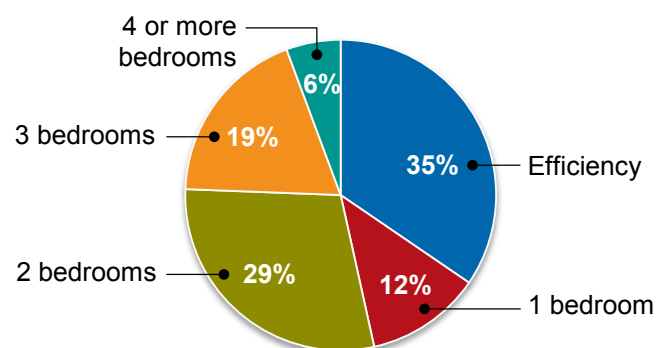
Housing affordability and needs

On average, respondents said they would be able to pay \$250 per month for rent and utilities. Note that this average is the median value, which means that half of all respondents said they could pay more, and half could pay less. This amount is well below the market rate for housing anywhere in Minnesota, even for a studio apartment. One-fifth of respondents (19%) said they could not afford to pay anything for rent or utilities at the time of the study.

According to HUD, households should spend no more than 30 percent of income on housing. For the month preceding the survey, respondents' median income from all sources was \$437, while 21 percent of respondents had no income whatsoever. Nevertheless, respondents said they would be able to pay \$250 a month on average for housing. Assuming no additional income in the household, this rate would be considered unaffordable by HUD standards, amounting to 57 percent of respondents' average monthly income. Following these guidelines, the average respondent should spend no more than \$146 a month in rent and utilities.

Over a third of respondents (35%) said their housing needs could be met by an efficiency (one-room) apartment alone. Meanwhile, one-quarter (25%) said they needed three or more bedrooms. Of all respondents, only 14 percent said they had ever had trouble finding or keeping housing due to the size of their family. Only 7 percent reported this as one of their primary barriers to securing housing at the time of the survey.

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS NEEDED



Young adults and unaccompanied minors

Young adults and minors are the least visible members of the homeless population. During the 2012 reservation homeless study, 6 unaccompanied minors (age 17 and under) and 145 young adults (age 18-21) were interviewed. Together, this group comprises 14 percent of the homeless and near-homeless people who were interviewed. Compared to older adults, homeless and near-homeless young people are less likely to utilize traditional homeless services and shelters and more likely to double up with friends or family. They are also invisible in other ways: for example, only 41 percent have a state-issued driver's license or photo ID, compared to 57 percent of adults (age 22+).

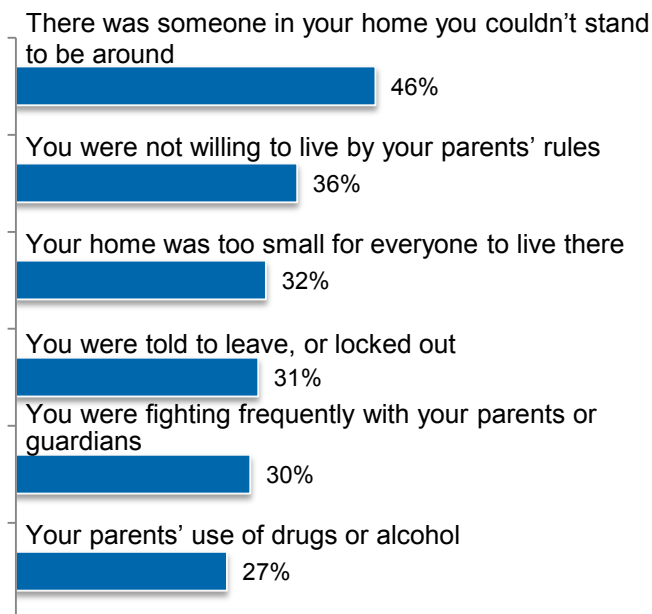
In addition to being hard to locate, homeless youth are often one of the most challenged and underserved groups of homeless people. As in past years, homeless youth more frequently reported traumatic events during childhood, and would therefore likely benefit from targeted mental health services.

Reasons for leaving home

During their interview, youth were asked about a series of factors that often contribute to homelessness, and whether each factor was a “main cause” or “part of the cause” for leaving home. Here, we describe the total percentage of youth that named each as either a “main cause” or “part of the cause.”

Most homeless and near-homeless youth on these reservations left home due to problems with others living there. They most often reported general problems such as fighting with their parents, while many fewer reported leaving for reasons such as their own delinquent activities (18%) and alcohol or drug use (16%). Seven respondents (5%) said that they had been abused by someone in the household. Over one-quarter (27%) said they left home because of their parents' use of alcohol or drugs, and 16 percent because of criminal activities by others in their household.

REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME, RESPONDENTS AGE 21 OR YOUNGER



Living situation

In total, 94 percent of homeless and near-homeless young adults and unaccompanied minors were doubled up, compared to 88 percent of adults (age 22+). About half (53%) of all young adults and unaccompanied minors have been without a regular or permanent place to live for a year or more, and they reported being highly mobile. During the previous year:

- 14% had lived in one place
- 22% had lived in two places
- 26% had lived in three places
- 37% had lived in four or more places

Homeless unaccompanied minors and young adults are less likely than homeless adults (age 22+) to have sought help to find housing. On Minnesota's Indian reservations, only 35 percent of young adults and unaccompanied minors who participated in this survey have looked for such help, compared with 42 percent of adults over the age of 22.

Education and employment

With respect to educational background, this is a high-needs group:

- 42% had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP, meaning they received special education services) while in school
- 52% of young adults (age 19-21) are without a high school diploma or GED

Compared to all adult respondents, homeless and near-homeless young adults are less likely to be employed, especially among those who have low educational attainment:

- Only 21% of young adults (age 19-21) are employed, compared to 31% of adults (age 22+) in the study
- Only 10% of young adults (age 19-21) without a high school diploma/GED are employed, compared to 24% of adults (age 22+) in the study without a diploma/GED

These findings are the reverse of the statewide trend, in which homeless young adults are more likely to be employed than homeless adults age 22 and older.

Barriers to employment

Similar to adults (age 22+) who participated in the reservation study, the most commonly reported barrier to employment among youth on reservations was transportation. However, young adults and unaccompanied minors more frequently reported that education was a significant barrier to employment compared to their older counterparts. Twenty percent of homeless and near-homeless young adults and unaccompanied minors said education was a barrier to employment, compared to only 9 percent of adults (age 22+) in the study.

Many of the young adults who participated in the reservation study are addressing this challenge by attempting to further their education. At the time of the study, 39 percent were enrolled in school or an educational

program. For those who were not currently enrolled in an education program:

- 43% had dropped out
- 43% were dealing with other issues or problems
- 23% were not interested in education

Access to services

Interactions with systems workers remain low. During the past year, most young adults and unaccompanied minors (70%) relied on friends for information on the services they needed. Relatively few received help from a professional to access services:

- 12% had been helped by a social worker
- 10% had been helped by a youth worker
- 5% had been helped by shelter staff

With respect to public assistance, 54 percent of homeless and near-homeless youth had received some type of public medical assistance in the past year, and 47 percent had received food stamps during the same period; both of these are lower than the usage rate for all reservation respondents. Though 29 percent of those surveyed were parents accompanied by children, only 3 percent had accessed child care assistance.

Challenges to health and well-being

Compared to all reservation respondents, unaccompanied youth and minors were less likely to use services such as free medical, dental, and mental health clinics. Homeless youth often face multiple complex challenges to their health and well-being. Many had difficult childhoods: 17 percent had been physically or sexually abused as a child, and 20 percent had been neglected by their parents. Out-of-home placements were also common among this group, wherein 56 percent had lived in a foster home, a treatment facility, or juvenile detention at some point. Of all youth and young adults, 30 percent had been diagnosed with a mental illness, and 16 percent reported considering suicide.

Methods

The reservation study was first conducted in the fall of 2006 by a collaborative of tribal representatives, Wilder Research, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing's Minnesota Program through the American Indian Supportive Housing Initiative. The Minnesota Department of Human Services has been instrumental in coordinating interviews for the tribes.

Each tribe organized its own plan for outreach and interviewing. Most outreach was conducted through advertisements in tribal newspapers, on tribal radio stations, and through fliers in other locations; some interviews were conducted in conjunction with existing events. Volunteers interviewed respondents at a number of different sites, primarily community centers and schools, as well as some known outdoor camps and shelters.

Interviews were conducted the week of October 22, 2012. Respondents were paid a small honorarium for sharing their time and experiences. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents could skip questions if they preferred not to answer. For this reason, some sensitive items—especially those related to health—are likely underreported.

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Project staff:

Greg Owen, co-study director
 Michelle Gerrard, co-study director
 Sarah Gehrig, author
 Nicole MartinRogers, author
 Ellen Shelton, author
 June Heineman, site coordinator
 Karen Ulstad, volunteer coordinator
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 Marilyn Conrad
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Wilder Research

Information. Insight. Impact.

451 Lexington Parkway North
 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
 651-280-2700
www.wilderresearch.org



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Learn more about the reservation study:

- Contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research by phone (651-280-2682 or toll free 1-800-328-2972) or by email (Nicole.MartinRogers@wilder.org).

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