

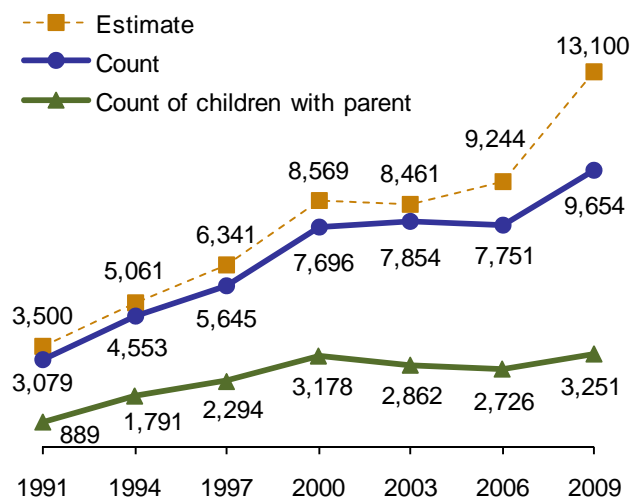
Homeless children in Minnesota and their families

Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a statewide survey of people without permanent shelter to better understand the causes, circumstances, and effects of homelessness.

On October 22, 2009 the study counted 9,654 homeless adults, youth, and children, and estimates the overall number of homeless people in Minnesota to be at least 13,100 on any given night. The number of homeless children with their parents, now about one-third of the homeless population, increased from 2,726 to 3,251 since the last study. Nearly half (47%) are age 5 and under; the average age is 6 and one-half.

The children were in transitional housing (59%), emergency shelters (19%), battered women's shelter (9%), or living outside the shelter system (13%).

HOMELESS PEOPLE IN MINNESOTA, October 22, 2009



Most homeless children (67%) are with a mother only; about a fifth (19%) are in two-parent families and 5 percent are with their father only. Another 9 percent are minors on their own without their parents, age 12-17.

The number of homeless families increased slightly from 1,413 in 2006 to 1,445 in 2009. More homeless women (55%) than men (7%) had children with them.

Racial disparities

Similar to the overall homeless population, persons who are African American and American Indian are significantly over-represented among homeless parents. Forty-eight percent of homeless parents are African American compared to just 5 percent of Minnesota parents, and about 11 percent of homeless parents are American Indian, compared to about 1 percent of Minnesota parents.

Employment

The tough job market has had an impact among the overall homeless population, and this is true of parents as well. Seventy-four percent of parents are not currently employed; up from 57 percent in 2000. Sixty-eight percent report employment is one of the main reasons they can not get housing.

Homeless background

Before becoming homeless, over half of the parents in the study lived in the Twin Cities 7-county metro area (Saint Paul 16%; Minneapolis 26%; other 11%) and 18 percent in greater Minnesota; the remaining 29 percent lived outside Minnesota.

The top reasons parents gave for becoming homeless were:

- Could not afford rent or house payments (46%)
- Lost job or had hours cut (37%)
- Evicted or lease not renewed (36%)
- Broke up with spouse or partner (30%)
- Abused by someone in the home (24%)

Among parents who had children with them, 34 percent reported that they had first experienced homelessness as a child (age 17 or younger) compared to 25 percent in 2006.

School

Among parents who had school-age children, 84 percent reported all of their children had attended school on the day of the study, down from 90 percent in 2006. Eleven percent reported their child had trouble going to school because of their housing situation, especially among parents who have spent significant amounts of time doubled up with other families. Other school-related problems reported by parents:

- 19% had a child who had repeated a grade (the same as 2006)
- 38% had a child with a learning difficulty or other school related problem (41% in 2006)

Children's health, nutrition and mental health

Among parents whose children were with them:

- 21% said that at least one of their children had an emotional or behavioral problem, about three times the rate for the overall population (22% in 2006).
- 12% could not get needed dental care for at least one child in the past year (14% in 2006).
- 13% had at least one child with a chronic or severe physical health problem (12% in 2006).
- 8% said their children skipped meals in the previous month because there was not enough money to buy food (9% in 2006).
- 8% had been unable to obtain needed health care for at least one child in the past year (8% in 2006).
- 3% had been unable to get needed mental health care for at least one child in the past year (4% in 2006).

Parents' health

Two-thirds (67%) of homeless parents reported at least one of three major health issues: mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or a chronic physical health condition; many report multiple issues.

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Unaccompanied minors, ages 12-17, are the most invisible of the homeless population because there are fewer services through which to contact them.

Many have come from difficult home situations:

- 38% physically abused (47% girls/26% boys)
- 20% sexually abused (32% girls/4% boys)
- 27% stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing (32% girls/22% boys)

Sixty-one percent have been in a social service or corrections placement, including:

- Foster home (34%)
- Mental health treatment center (20%)
- Group home (19%)
- Juvenile corrections for more than one week (36%)

They have the shortest episodes of homelessness, but are homeless more frequently. The main barriers to housing they report are:

- Age (64%)
- Lack of employment (62%)
- Lack of affordable housing (38%)
- No rental history (19%)

Barriers to housing

The reasons parents most frequently gave that prevent them from getting housing were:

- Lack of job (68%)
- Lack of affordable housing (45%)
- Credit problems (30%)
- Bad rental history (22%)

When asked about their prospects for obtaining housing, 65 percent of parents reported they were on a waiting list for a housing voucher, and 16 percent reported they could not get on a waiting list because it was closed.

This fact sheet is one of a series using information from the 2009 Minnesota homelessness study. To learn more, go to www.wilderresearch.org

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