

Homeless youth in Minnesota

*Statewide survey of people without
permanent shelter*

S E P T E M B E R 2 0 0 1

Homeless youth in Minnesota

Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter

September 2001

Wilder Research Center
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-647-4600
www.wilder.org/research

Contents

Preface to the 2001 report.....	1
Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	10
Background.....	10
Methods.....	11
Not a survey of all homeless youth.....	12
Estimating the number of homeless youth.....	12
Key questions.....	14
Does the study show an increasing number of homeless youth in Minnesota?.....	14
Are homeless youth different from youth who are housed?.....	15
Do homeless youth in the Twin Cities area differ from those in greater Minnesota? ..	16
Do homeless youth who are staying with friends or on the street differ from those staying in shelters and transitional housing programs? ..	16
Has Minnesota’s homeless youth population changed during the last decade? ..	17
Does Minnesota attract homeless youth?.....	19
What is the profile of youth who use government assistance programs?.....	19
Descriptive summary	22
Demographics	22
Place of origin.....	23
Prior use of residential services	25
Education and job training	27
Employment and income	28
History of housing and homelessness.....	29
Service use	31
Health care	32
Chemical dependency	34
Physical and sexual abuse.....	35
Social contacts	36
Children.....	37

Contents (continued)

Personal accounts.....	38
Comparison of homeless youth to the general youth population.....	41
Comparisons to other studies of homeless youth.....	44
Comparison of homeless youth to children and youth in residential treatment facilities.	47
Data tables for all survey items.....	49

Acknowledgments

The fourth statewide survey of persons without permanent shelter benefited from the help of many contributors. Funding was provided by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; the Minnesota Department of Human Services; the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning; the Minnesota Department of Economic Security; the Minnesota Department of Health; the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs; Minnesota Veterans Home Board; the Family Housing Fund; the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund; and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Michael Dahl of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless encouraged service providers and volunteers to participate. Sue Watlov Philips, acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, provided a review of relevant policy issues and concerns on both the state and national level.

Pat Leary and Vicki Farden from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning helped identify sites throughout the state where homeless people could be found. They and Becky Couvrette provided historical data from the Department's quarterly shelter counts.

Housing Finance Commissioner Kit Hadley, as well as staff member Denise Rogers, helped bring state and local agencies together to collaborate on the study.

Suzanne Guttsen, Carolee Kelley, and Dave Schultz from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Sheila Brunelle and Pam Rienstatler from the Minnesota Department of Health consulted on health and human service questions.

In addition to those named above, many others helped with the design of the survey and the identification of respondents, including: Alcenya Ajayi, Michelle Basham, Angie Bernhard, Cheryl Byers, Jan Delage, Mary Ulland Evans, Dennis Forsberg, Joan Gardner Goodno, Tom Gray, Cassandra Hancock, Marcy Harris, Ginger Hope, Leona Humphrey, Rachael Kincaid, Judson Kenyon, Jenny Larson, Pacyinz Lyfoung, Edward McBrayer, Rhonda McCall, Ron Mortenson, Lucille Paden, Susan Phillips, Luan Quaal, Katherine Rosebear, Tom Sawyer, Irene Silber, Karen Trondson, Rich Wayman, Mary Weeks, and Patrick Wood. Special thanks are due to those who provided help in conducting youth outreach efforts including many of those named above.

Members of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and individuals from many other agencies and voluntary associations served as site leaders, coordinators and interviewers for our survey effort. The statewide training leaders include: Shirley J. Anderson, Jill Bengston, Julie Caraway, Steve Gallagher, Ken Hall, Cassandra Hancock, Bonnie Hertel,

Marcy Jensen, Rachael Kincaid, Betty Jo Koltres, Diane Long, Laura Martell Kelly, Laura McLain, Ann McGill, Nell Murphy, and John Redding.

Many Wilder Research Center staff members contributed to the success of the project. Cheryl Bourgeois assisted in the coordination of agencies. Doug Frost, Nicole Leicht, and Sara Nichols coded and prepared the survey forms for data entry. Phil Cooper and Bryan Lloyd coordinated data entry and analysis. The data entry staff included Linda Houle, Jodi Schoon and Mary Lou Tillman. Marilyn Conrad and Louann Graham prepared this document. Heather Johnson provided helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this report. Many other WRC staff provided assistance and served as site leaders and interviewers.

The Minnesota Satellite Technology Center provided the facilities and staff for our statewide training efforts. Minnesota Technical Colleges provided training space and additional technical support throughout the state including sites in: Bemidji, Brainerd, Brooklyn Park, Duluth, East Grand Forks, Fergus Falls, Grand Rapids, Mankato, Marshall, Moorhead, Rochester, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Virginia, and Willmar.

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the nearly 500 youth and young adult study respondents who answered questions and described their personal experiences in shelters, transitional programs, drop-in centers, on the streets and in other locations. Our report is dedicated to them.

Volunteers

Jose Acuna
Angie Ahlbrecht
Mike Bryant
Cheryl Byers
Kelisa Callaway
Vanessa Cannon
Eric Chamberlin
Elizabeth Christenson
George Coleman
Diane Collier
Angie Dahlager
Skye Davis
Darren Dearing
Ewen Diering
Jen Fairbourne
Leo Flaschberger
Scott Foundry
Jessica Gove
Patrick Grundmeier
Cassie Hamilton
Kathy Hamilton
Garron Haubner
Kim Hauge
Geri Hickerson

Kirsten Huus
Maggie Johnson
Catherine Kelley
Rachel Kincaid
Lisa Krimri
Katie Kunz
Raymond LaCroix
Adeleine Larson
Tonya Lee
LeAnn Littlewolf
Lindsey Mader
Jennifer Martin
Shannon Mattson
Mary Jo Meuleners
Malinda Miller
Mary Mitchell
Sheila Moriarty
Ryan Murphy
Anna Myer
Kate Navaro
Alex Nelson
Claudia Nicolosi
Meghan Olson
Alison Otte

Kristina Peterson
Yolanda Pindegayosh
MaCherie M. Placide
Natalie Plumley
Jenny Pringle
Alajha Proffit
John Redding
Janelle Reich
Gary Russell
Dan Saad
Connita Sayles
Deanna Shellito
Jonna Shelomith
Grete Sievers
Brian Smith
V. J. Smith
Amy Snyder
Matt Tennant
Marney Thomas
Karen Trondson
Lam Truong
Rich Wayman
Sandra Weise

Preface to the 2001 report

Homeless youth age 17 and younger are perhaps the least visible portion of the homeless population. They are less likely than homeless adults to stay in shelters and more likely to stay with friends and in places not intended for habitation. School counselors and social workers often know of homeless youth in their schools, but seldom know where they spend each night and how frequently their arrangements change. Compared to services for homeless adults and families, there are fewer shelters for homeless youth and fewer legal provisions to provide services to them. Further complicating the picture of youth homelessness is the fact that many youth service providers report also serving a significant number of young adults between the ages of 18 and 20. Consequently, it is more difficult in our youth survey to be certain that study results reflect true changes in the population rather than variation in the numbers and characteristics of those youth who can be found on a certain night in October. Nonetheless, our comparisons to other studies, including those previously conducted in Minnesota, give us some measure of confidence that the information presented here is a valid representation of homelessness among youth in our state.

On October 26, 2000, volunteers interviewed 98 males and 111 females under the age of 18 who were living on their own. In addition, interviews were conducted with 99 males and 186 females aged 18 to 20. As in 1997, many of those under 18 were youth of color. Approximately two-thirds had experienced some type of out-of-home placement and, as in past studies, homeless youth were much more likely than youth in the general population to report that they had been abused or neglected. Homeless youth have more experience with illegal drugs and alcohol than their peers, are less likely to attend school, and are more likely to attempt suicide.

Although not identical, data from interviews with homeless young adults support the observations of service providers regarding the similarity of homeless youth and young adults. In order to make this year's study more useful, we have provided comparisons (unweighted) between these two age groups throughout the text and tables.

Perhaps most distressing this year is the fact that nearly one out of ten adults (persons 18 and older) living in shelters report that they were homeless as children. This means that we are seeing a second generation of homelessness. The information is consistent enough to convince researchers that homeless young adults are often continuing patterns that first emerged in childhood and continue into the early adult years.

Related research shows us that the future prospects of young people who begin life under these conditions are very risky. A recent report from the Kids Mobility Project¹ showed that frequent moves are associated with poor school performance and that students who attend less than 85 percent of their school days lose ground academically. Most importantly, residential instability most adversely affects those youth with multiple risk factors.

The purpose of this report is to provoke dialogue on the subject of youth homelessness and to help readers understand the connection between youth and young adult experiences. The volunteers who made this study possible represent the front lines in providing needed services. Nonetheless, their efforts are often hampered by the lack of adequate resources, too few housing options for minors, and a general lack of understanding by the public regarding the origins and significance of youth homelessness in Minnesota. It is clearly time to open a window to the lives of homeless youth, and we hope this study can help to do that.

¹ Kids Mobility Project. (1998, March). *A report from the Kids Mobility Project*. Minneapolis: Author.

Summary

On October 26, 2000, trained volunteers conducted interviews throughout Minnesota with 209 homeless youth (age 10 to 17) who were unaccompanied by adults. The study design, based on similar surveys of homeless youth conducted by Wilder Research Center in 1991, 1994, and 1997, involved working with a network of service providers, shelters, and agency staff to identify potential respondents. The purpose of the study is to provide a current description of the characteristics and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. It is a snapshot of youth homelessness during a single day in the last quarter of 2000.

Additional interviews were conducted with 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) 18, 19, and 20 years of age who were homeless on the same date (October 26, 2000). Information on both the 209 unaccompanied youth and 285 young adults are included in the data tables of this report.

Information on young adults in this report is also included in the companion report on homeless adults and their children. Unlike in the adult report, however, information on those age 18-20 in this report is not statistically weighted, so the numbers in the two reports do not match. This report uses the *actual* number of interviewed young adults. It should be noted that *weighted* numbers are used in the adult report to better reflect the entire sheltered adult population. The reader is cautioned not to add the figures on young adults in the two reports, since that would result in double-counting.

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]).

The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” includes an individual who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless youth are defined as follows:

Youth who currently have no parental, substitute, foster or institutional home to which they can safely go. They are unaccompanied by an adult and have spent at least one night either in a formal emergency shelter, improvised shelter, doubled-up, or on the street.²

Youth and young adults who meet the criteria were asked to participate in a 30-minute personal interview to answer questions about family background, housing history, physical and mental health, experiences while being homeless, school and employment status, service use, and related needs. A total of 98 males and 111 females age 17 and younger were interviewed in locations throughout Minnesota, including shelters, youth transitional housing programs, drop-in sites, health clinics, and schools, as well as in non-shelter locations. A total of 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) age 18 to 20 were interviewed in battered women's shelters, emergency shelters, transitional housing, and in non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota.

In addition, this report draws from other youth-related research to provide relevant and useful comparisons to the Minnesota homeless youth sample.

Key findings

Number of homeless youth

- On any given night in Minnesota, an estimated 660 unaccompanied youth (persons 17 or younger) are without permanent shelter.
- Over the course of one year, an estimated 10,000 Minnesota unaccompanied youth (persons 17 or younger) experience at least one episode of homelessness.

Who is homeless?

- Slightly over half (51%) of homeless youth and about two-fifths of homeless young adults (42%) grew up in a single-parent household.
- Homeless youth are much more likely than youth in the general population to be persons of color. For example, whereas only 8 percent of all youth in the Twin Cities metro area are African American, 44 percent of *homeless* youth in the Twin Cities area are African American. Likewise, whereas 2 percent of all youth in greater

² Components of this definition are described in Kryder-Coe, J., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Homeless children and youth* (pp. 34-35). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Minnesota are American Indian, 32 percent of *homeless* greater Minnesota youth are American Indian.

- On average, the 2000 study shows that homeless youth began living on their own around age 13. This is slightly younger than the age reported in previous studies. Young adults surveyed in 2000 began living on their own between age 15 and 16.
- Nearly one-third of homeless youth (29%) have been homeless for less than one month. In contrast, only 9 percent of homeless young adults have been homeless less than one month.
- Two-thirds of all homeless youth (67%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Close to half of homeless youth (46%) have spent at least one night in a detention center, and 41 percent have spent some time in foster care. One in ten homeless youth (13%) have lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility.
- Over half of youth who have experienced each of these placements report having been in the placement within the last two years.
- Over three-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (62%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. About two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (38%) have spent at least one night in a detention center, 34 percent have lived in a foster home, 30 percent in a group home, and 20 percent have lived in a residential program for people with behavioral or mental health problems. About one-fifth of homeless young adults (19%) have lived in a drug or alcohol treatment facility.
- Conflict with parents is the most common reason for youth to be homeless (39%). This is also true for 27 percent of the homeless young adults surveyed.
- The main reasons youth report for not returning home are: an adult in the household won't tolerate their being around (50%), alcohol or drug use by a parent or other household member (30%), adults don't attend to the youth's basic needs (30%), not enough space for everyone in the household to live (27%), and danger of physical or sexual abuse (25%).
- Forty-one percent of girls (age 10-17) report having been sexually mistreated as a child or youth, as do 40 percent of young women 18-20 years of age. Homeless boys (10-17) and young men (18-20) report somewhat lower rates of sexual abuse (14% and 28% respectively).

- Sixty-seven percent of the homeless youth report that they could return home if they wished to do so. This is the same proportion as in 1997, but higher than the 45 percent of youth in 1994 who felt they could return home if they wished to do so. In 2000, 57 percent of the homeless young adults report that they could return home.
- Youth who don't think they will ever live with their family again most often cite better communication as the issue that would have to change for them to live with their family again.
- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely to have been incarcerated than homeless youth in the Twin Cities area (56% vs. 31%). The same is true for homeless young adults (44% vs. 35%).
- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely than homeless youth in the Twin Cities area to have lived in a foster home (49% vs. 29%). Young adults in greater Minnesota are only slightly more likely to have lived in a foster home (35% vs. 32%).
- Homeless youth cite several reasons for having had difficulty getting or keeping housing. These include: their age, lack of housing they can afford, lack of local rental history, the cost of application fees, and a criminal background. Homeless young adults cite similar reasons, with the addition of credit problems.
- Youth and young adults mention the following people most often as having helped them find the services they need: a friend, a shelter staff person, a social worker, a youth worker, or an outreach worker.
- Homeless youth who stay with friends or on the street are more likely than those in shelters and transitional programs:
 - To be female (59% vs. 49%).
 - To have left home at a later age (average of 13.7 years vs. 12.9 years).
 - To be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (14% vs. 8%).
 - To feel unsafe in their current housing situation (17% vs. 3%).
 - To have homeless relatives (37% vs. 27%).
- Those who stay in shelters and transitional housing programs are more likely than those who stay with friends or on the street:
 - To be attending school this year (81% vs. 71%).
 - To have higher average monthly income (\$312 vs. \$260).

Pregnancy and parenting

- Girls who are homeless are about seven times more likely than girls (ages 13-18) in the general population to report that they have had at least one pregnancy (29% vs. 4%).
- Eight percent of homeless youth have at least one child (5% of the males and 10% of the females). Among the homeless young adults, 25 percent of males and 55 percent of females have at least one child.
- Of the homeless youth who have children, 60 percent (none of the males and 90% of the females) have their children with them in temporary housing. Of the homeless young adults, 71 percent (13% of the males and 83% of the females) have their children with them in temporary housing.

Education, employment, and income

- The percentage of homeless youth enrolled in secondary schools increased from 52 percent in 1994, to 73 percent in 1997 and 2000. Among homeless young adults in 2000, 37 percent are currently enrolled in an educational program.
- One-fourth of homeless youth (25%) receive income from steady employment. The other primary sources of income for homeless youth are support from parents or other relatives. Among the homeless young adults, 26 percent have income from steady employment.
- Twenty-seven percent of homeless youth have a job (5% have a full-time job). Thirty-nine percent of homeless young adults have a job (23% have a full-time job).
- Youth report that other than housing, their main needs are: a job, school, money or budgeting assistance, food/food stamps, clothing, and getting their family together. Young adults report their main needs other than housing are: a job, transportation, money or budgeting assistance, school or training, and clothing.

Public assistance and service use

- Five percent of homeless youth receive income from MFIP and 8 percent from General Assistance. Twenty-eight percent of homeless young adults receive income from MFIP and 6 percent from General Assistance.
- Sixteen percent of all homeless youth report that they need help applying for services. About one-fourth of homeless young adults (24%) report that they need help applying for services.

Health and well-being

- The percentage of youth who feel they need to see a medical professional about a physical health problem has decreased from 31 percent in 1994, to 19 percent in 1997, to 14 percent in 2000. Over one-fourth of homeless young adults (27%) report that they need to see a medical professional about a physical health problem.
- About one-third (31%) of the homeless youth have recently (in the past two years) been told by a doctor or nurse that they have a serious mental health problem. This is an increase from 23 percent in 1997. An equal number of homeless young adults (31%) have recently been told by a doctor or nurse that they have a serious mental health problem.
- One in five of the homeless youth (19%) have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. This is the same proportion as in 1997. Fewer than half of these youth (43%) consider themselves to be chemically dependent. Ten percent of homeless young adults have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. Most of these young adults (72%) consider themselves to be chemically dependent.
- Eleven percent of homeless youth have been told within the last two years that they have both a serious mental health problem and an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. This represents a slight increase over the 9 percent reported in 1997. Six percent of homeless young adults report having been told within the last two years that they have both a serious mental health problem and an alcohol or drug abuse disorder.
- In 2000, about half of all homeless youth (46%) report drug or alcohol problems within their immediate family, compared to over two-thirds of homeless youth (71%) in 1997. In 2000, 41 percent of homeless young adults report drug or alcohol problems within their immediate family.
- Compared to the general population of 12- to 16-year-olds, youth experiencing homelessness are over three times more likely to report that they have been sexually abused (28% vs. 9%) or physically abused (47% vs. 13%) in the past. For homeless young adults, 44 percent report that they have been physically abused, and 36 percent report that they have been sexually abused.

- Twin Cities area homeless youth are less likely to report having been in a violent relationship in the past 12 months than are homeless youth in greater Minnesota (20% vs. 28%). Just over one-third of homeless young adults in both the Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota (36% and 38% respectively) report having been in a violent relationship in the past 12 months.
- Greater Minnesota homeless youth are less likely than those in the Twin Cities area to report having left their last housing because of abuse (13% vs. 23%). The same is true among homeless young adults (16% vs. 20%).
- Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota to report having been physically assaulted since becoming homeless (19% vs. 15%). The same pattern is seen for homeless young adults (25% vs. 17%).

Introduction

This report is intended as a resource for planners, policy-makers, service providers and others who are interested in addressing the problems associated with youth homelessness. The study is a companion piece to a comprehensive statewide report on homeless adults and their children, also available from Wilder Research Center.³ The information in this report comes from a survey of 209 youth age 10 to 17 and 285 young adults age 18, 19, and 20 who were homeless in Minnesota on October 26, 2000. Detailed data tables are presented for all questions asked of youth respondents in the survey.

The purpose of this report is to provide detailed descriptive information about the characteristics of youth who are homeless in our state, the problems they confront in finding and maintaining safe sleeping quarters, and the services they use to survive each day. While these figures do not represent a complete count of homeless youth in Minnesota, they do provide a detailed profile of current youth homelessness in our state.

Background

The study was commissioned by the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness in order to provide information for statewide planning efforts to reduce homelessness. State funding was provided by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning; Minnesota Department of Economic Security; Minnesota Department of Health; Minnesota Department of Human Services; Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs; and Minnesota Veterans Home Board.

Additional financial support came from the Family Housing Fund; the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund; and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. This private agency funding enabled researchers to conduct volunteer training, reimburse study respondents for their participation, and publish this report. Agency representatives from state and local government, Wilder Research Center, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, and other nonprofit groups met during the spring and summer of 2000 to finalize survey instruments and research methods. Statewide training was conducted in conjunction with the Minnesota Satellite Technology Center and Minnesota Technical Colleges. Survey dates were set by the planning group and temporary housing program sites were

³ Wilder Research Center. (2001, August). *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*. Saint Paul, MN: Author. Includes information from four sources: a statewide population count of all persons residing in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters and transitional housing programs on October 26, 2000; a statewide survey of a sample of persons living in these facilities on October 26, 2000; a survey of homeless adults found in non-shelter locations on October 26, 2000; and a survey of persons using Community Assistance Programs and Community Action Council housing assistance services during October 2000.

identified by staff of Wilder Research Center and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning.

In 1991, a Roundtable for Youth Without Permanent Shelter identified a need for information on homeless youth in Minnesota. Participants from the roundtable worked with Wilder Research Center to help conduct the first Minnesota survey of homeless youth in 1991. In 1994, many of the roundtable participants, representatives from several state agencies, and a few elected officials served on a Homeless Youth Advisory Committee and helped identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites for the second statewide survey of homeless youth.

In 1997 and 2000, an advisory committee of youth advocates, outreach workers, representatives from state agencies, and elected officials helped revise the survey instrument and identify youth-serving agencies and non-shelter sites where homeless youth could be found throughout the state.

Methods

Agency staff, youth workers, and other trained volunteers conducted interviews with 209 youth (98 males and 111 females) between the ages of 10 and 17 who were homeless on October 26, 2000. Interviews were also conducted with 285 homeless young adults (99 males and 186 females) age 18, 19, and 20 years who were homeless on October 26, 2000. Information on the 209 unaccompanied youth and 285 young adults is included in the data tables beginning on page 49.

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]).

The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” includes an individual who (1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (2) has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless youth are defined as follows:

Youth who currently have no parental, substitute, foster or institutional home to which they can safely go. They are unaccompanied by an adult and have spent at least one night either in a formal emergency shelter, improvised shelter, doubled-up, or on the street.⁴

In all, 122 unaccompanied homeless youth were interviewed in shelters and 87 homeless youth were interviewed in non-shelter locations including drop-in centers, health clinics, schools, and on the streets. Interviews were completed with 93 homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and 116 youth in greater Minnesota. (Research sites are listed in the Appendix.)

Not a survey of all homeless youth

This purposive sample of 209 unaccompanied homeless youth represents only a portion of all youth who were homeless in Minnesota on October 26, 2000. In our study, only limited attempts were made to identify and interview those who were not known to youth-serving agencies. It was not feasible to cover the state for homeless youth in non-shelter locations. In addition, only limited attempts were made to identify youth doubled-up with friends on that night. Consequently, this study describes primarily those homeless youth who are connected in some way to service providers and are not necessarily representative of all youth experiencing homelessness on the date of the survey.

Estimating the number of homeless youth

To estimate the number of youth who are living “doubled-up” (temporarily staying with friends), we multiply the number of sheltered homeless youth by 2.7. This method is based on a 1989 U.S. General Accounting Office report⁵, which found that there were 2.7 times as many children and youth in doubled-up situations as in emergency shelters. Using this method, the following table shows estimates of the total number of sheltered and “doubled-up” youth for 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000. The count of sheltered youth is from a statewide population count, or census, of all unaccompanied youth residing in youth emergency shelters, youth transitional housing, or other temporary housing program in Minnesota on the night of October 26, 2000. This count was reported to Wilder Research Center by service providers in conjunction with the homeless survey.

⁴ Components of this definition are described in Kryder-Coe, J., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Homeless children and youth* (pp. 34-35). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office. (1989). *Children and youths: About 68,000 homeless and 186,000 in shared housing at any given time*. Washington, DC: Author.

Estimated number of youth without permanent shelter in Minnesota on a single night in October 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000

1991 ESTIMATE

Count or estimate		Number
Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	124
Estimate	“Doubled-up” youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	335
Total		459

1994 ESTIMATE

Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	132
Estimate	“Doubled-up” youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	356
Total		488

1997 ESTIMATE

Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	199
Estimate	“Doubled-up” youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	537
Total		736

2000 ESTIMATE

Count	Homeless youth connected to shelters or services	179
Estimate	“Doubled-up” youth (2.7 times the number of sheltered youth)	483
Total		662

The most recent estimate is that approximately 662 unaccompanied youth were homeless in Minnesota *on any given night* in 2000. This should be regarded as a conservative estimate, since the number could be substantially higher if large numbers of youth avoid services and seek shelter in places not intended for habitation.

It is also possible to estimate the total number of youth who experience at least one episode of homelessness *over the course of a year*. The following estimate is based on a national study of homeless youth conducted by the Research Triangle Institute in 1992.

Research Triangle Institute found that 2.8 percent of a national sample of currently housed youth (12-17) had spent at least one night in the last 12 months unaccompanied by a parent or guardian in one of the following places: outside, in a public place, in an adult or youth shelter, with a stranger, in an abandoned building, or in a subway. If we apply this finding to the Minnesota population age 12-17 (numbering 350,250 in 1990; figures from the 2000 Census are not available as of this writing) we estimate that approximately 9,807 youth have spent at least one night without regular or permanent shelter in the last 12 months.

Key questions

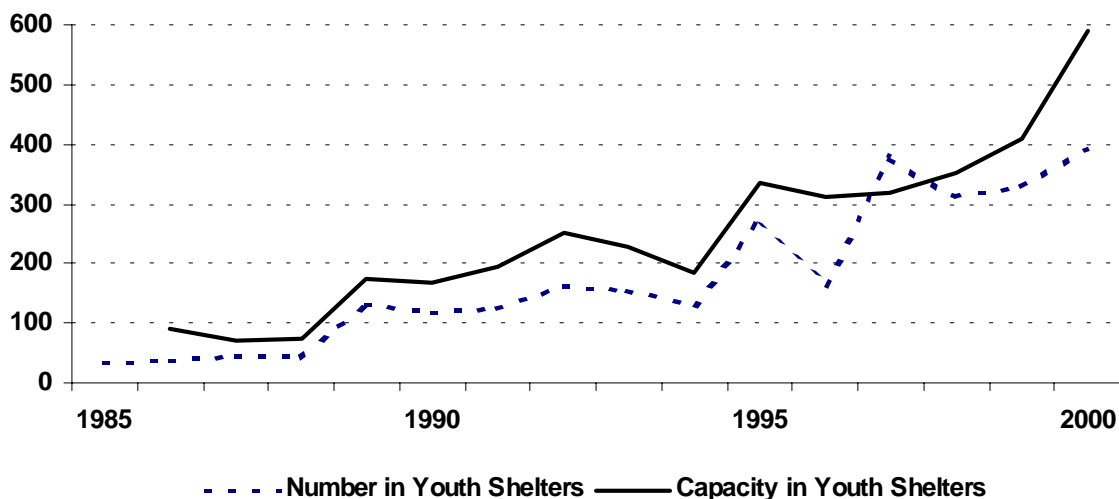
Does the study show an increasing number of homeless youth in Minnesota?

Since the first statewide survey of homelessness in 1991, the number of interviews with unaccompanied youth (under 18 years of age) has increased steadily. Eighty-one youth were interviewed in 1991, 114 in 1994, 165 in 1997, and 209 in 2000.

The increase in the number of interviews with homeless youth reflects increased efforts to recruit volunteers to interview youth, as well as the increased involvement of youth workers and youth-serving agencies in identifying homeless youth. We cannot accurately determine whether the number of homeless youth currently living in Minnesota is substantially larger than the number identified in previous surveys.

Nonetheless, an examination of quarterly counts of youth using temporary housing programs in Minnesota shows a considerable increase in utilization over the past 15 years. The Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (and previously, the Minnesota Department of Economic Security) conducts these quarterly shelter counts. The following graph shows the number of youth in shelters and transitional housing programs from 1985 to 2000.

Shelter capacity and total number of youth sheltered, 1985-2000



Source: *Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning.*

As the graph shows, the number of youth using temporary housing programs in Minnesota increased from 35 in 1985 to 393 in 2000 according to the shelter counts done by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning for the specified day in November of each year. The number nearly tripled in the six years from 1994 to 2000.

The trends for capacity and utilization are not identical. Nonetheless, increases in the number of youth using temporary housing programs generally parallel the increases in shelter capacity. This suggests that the availability of shelter beds is linked with shelter use. We do not know, however, the extent to which the increased need for services prompted the creation of new facilities (increased capacity) or the increased availability of shelter beds prompted more youth to use shelters. One time period in particular, 1988-89, appears to show rapid growth in both the number of homeless youth and the availability of services for youth. In 1989, three youth shelters provided data for the first time to the Minnesota Department of Economic Security (which at that time was conducting the quarterly shelter counts). These figures account for most of the increase in reported capacity during this time period.

Are homeless youth different from youth who are housed?

Overall, homeless youth report more *difficult life experiences* than youth who are housed. Homeless youth report experiencing abuse, alcohol or drug treatment, and pregnancy more often than youth who are housed (see the section titled “Comparison of homeless youth to general youth population”).

Information from the Minnesota Student Survey (1998) shows that homeless youth, in comparison to youth in the general population, are:

- Three to four times more likely to have been physically or sexually abused.
- Three times more likely to smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.
- Four times more likely to have been hit by a date or intimate partner.
- Five times more likely to have been treated for drug or alcohol problems.
- (For girls only) 13 times more likely to have been pregnant at least once.

Do homeless youth in the Twin Cities area differ from those in greater Minnesota?

Most homeless youth in greater Minnesota are Caucasian (60%) or American Indian (32%). Homeless youth in the Twin Cities area are mostly African American (44%), Caucasian (29%), Native African (8%), Hispanic (8%), or American Indian (5%).

Twin Cities area homeless youth are more likely than those in greater Minnesota:

- To report they can't return home because there isn't enough space for everyone in the household to live (29% vs. 12% in greater Minnesota), and because of the danger of physical abuse (27% vs. 19%).
- To have relatives who are homeless (38% vs. 26%).
- To have traded sex for shelter or other basic needs (23% vs. 9%).
- To have a higher monthly income (average \$325 vs. \$253).

In contrast, greater Minnesota homeless youth are more likely:

- To report living in a foster home in the past (50% vs. 30%).
- To have been incarcerated (57% vs. 32%).
- To report the place they stayed last night was reasonably safe (97% vs. 84%).
- To have been homeless for less than one month (47% vs. 10%).
- To believe that they will live with their families again (72% vs. 29%).

Do homeless youth who are staying with friends or on the street differ from those staying in shelters and transitional housing programs?

The survey included interviews with 87 homeless youth staying temporarily with friends or on the street and 122 staying in emergency and transitional housing programs.

Those staying with friends or on the street are more likely than those in shelters and transitional programs:

- To be female (59% vs. 49%).
- To have left home at a later age (average of 13.7 years vs. 12.9 years).

- To be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (14% vs. 8%).
- To feel unsafe in their current housing situation (17% vs. 3%).
- To have other homeless relatives (37% vs. 27%).

Those in shelters and transitional housing programs are more likely than those staying with friends or on the street:

- To be attending school this year (81% vs. 71%).
- To have higher monthly income (average of \$312 vs. \$260).

Has Minnesota’s homeless youth population changed during the last decade?

Four studies have been conducted with Minnesota's homeless youth population during the last decade, in 1991, 1994, 1997, and 2000. These studies provide a number of useful comparisons. However, the reader should keep in mind that youth transitional housing did not exist prior to 1995, which may account for some of the changes over time. The demographic characteristics of homeless youth have changed little over the last decade. The average age has remained about 16. The race/ethnicity of homeless youth is mostly Caucasian, African American, or American Indian, with a notable increase in the percentage of American Indians over the last decade. There are somewhat more females than males.

Demographics of homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Average age	16.0	16.0	15.6	15.7
Female	49%	61%	54%	53%
Race				
Caucasian	57%	41%	41%	46%
African American or Native African^a	20%	32%	29%	25%
American Indian	11%	10%	15%	20%

Note: (a) In 1991, 1994, and 1997, the response category was African American. In 2000, response categories included both African American and Native African.

In the past decade, a consistent proportion of homeless youth (over one-third) reported having been in foster care, and 10 to 20 percent reported having been in alcohol or drug treatment facilities. However, the percentage of youth who had been in a detention center has increased over the past decade.

History of institutionalization among homeless youth, 1991-2000

Have you ever lived in:	1991	1994	1997	2000
Foster care	38%	36%	38%	41%
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	15%	10%	19%	13%
Detention center or correctional facility	31%	34%	36%	46%

In the last decade, nearly half of homeless youth consistently reported having been physically abused, and 10 to 20 percent considered themselves chemically dependent. From 1991 to 1997 approximately one-third had had a sexual relationship which ended in pregnancy; this decreased to one-fifth in 2000. Another decrease was in the proportion of homeless youth who had children, which was approximately 17 percent from 1991 through 1997, compared to 8 percent in 2000.

Life experiences of homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Physically abused	47%	54%	42%	47%
Consider self chemically dependent	10%	19%	15%	13%
Have children	16%	18%	17%	8%
Sexual relationship that resulted in pregnancy	32%	33%	31%	21%

In the past decade, the percentage of youth reporting steady employment as their main source of income increased notably, and the percentage who said their parents provided their main source of income decreased somewhat.

Main source of income for homeless youth, 1991-2000

	1991	1994	1997	2000
Steady employment	16%	15%	26%	25%
Parents	24%	13%	16%	18%
Temporary work	16%	4%	6%	7%
Other relatives or friends	14%	12%	14%	12%

Does Minnesota attract homeless youth?

Although some homeless youth may be drawn here because of Minnesota’s reputation as a safe environment with many social services, most of the homeless youth we interviewed are long-term residents of Minnesota. Eighty-five percent have lived in Minnesota for more than two years. Over the last decade, a consistent three-fourths of the youth interviewed said they grew up in Minnesota (74% in 1991, 75% in 1994, 70% in 1997, and 72% in 2000). Twin Cities area youth are more likely to report that they grew up outside of Minnesota (38%) than are youth in greater Minnesota (20%).

What is the profile of youth who use government assistance programs?

Many studies indicate that homeless youth who use services may have different characteristics from those who do not. Many reasons have been suggested for why youth do not use services. Some homeless youth may not be aware of services, and some may refuse services for a variety of reasons, including fear. Greenblatt and Robertson (1993) state:

Runaways shun authority, fearing either being sent back to a detention center or to the family from which they separated. Social services for this population are scarce and often inadequate.⁶

⁶ Greenblatt, M., & Robertson, M. (1993). Life-styles, adaptive strategies, and sexual behaviors of homeless adolescents. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry, 44* (12), 1177-1183.

The Stanford Studies of Homeless Families, Children and Youth (1991)⁷ found that 52 percent of their sample “chose to remain on the streets and not use any social services.” They also found that youth who chose not to use services were much worse off than youth who used services. Increased understanding of the similarities and differences between homeless youth who use services and those who do not is important for planning services for this population.

The following table compares the characteristics of homeless youth in our study who are receiving government assistance⁸ with those who are not.

Comparing homeless youth who do and do not use government assistance

	Receiving services (N=70)	Not receiving services (N=130)
Place you stayed last night was safe	94%	89%
Less than one month without regular place to live	18%	34%
On Section 8 waiting list	16%	4%
Lived with parents in last regular housing	58%	73%
Previously homeless	46%	42%
Employed	36%	24%
Consider self chemically dependent	17%	11%
Physically abused as child or youth	48%	47%
Median income	\$273	\$150
Attacked or beaten since homeless	16%	17%
Ever been told how to engage in sexual activities for money	37%	34%
Consider self heterosexual	81%	85%
Sources of income:		
Parents	37%	40%
Sale of personal belongings	7%	21%
Asking for money on the streets	7%	24%
Prior placements:		
Foster care	49%	34%
Group home	32%	22%

⁷ Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children and Youth. (1991). *The stanford studies of homeless families, children and youth*. Stanford, CA: Author.

⁸ Governmental assistance is defined as any one of the following: MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), GA (General Assistance), SSI (Social Security Income), MA (Medical Assistance), or GAMC (General Assistance Medical Care).

The table shows that youth who are receiving government services are *more likely* than those who are not receiving government services to:

- Be on the waiting list for Section 8 housing.
- Not have lived with parents in their last housing.
- Be currently employed.
- Have more income.
- Have lived in foster care or a group home.
- Have stayed in a safe place the previous night.
- Have been homeless prior to their current episode of homelessness.

Youth who are receiving government services are *less likely* than those who are not receiving government services to have received income from the sale of personal belongings or asking for money on the streets.

Descriptive summary

In this section of the report, unaccompanied youth results are presented in the left column and young adult results are presented in the right column.

Demographics

Fifty-three percent of the unaccompanied homeless youth surveyed are female, and 47 percent are male. The youth range in age from 10 to 17. The average age is 15.7. Fifty-five percent of youth are persons of color.

Sixty-five percent of the homeless young adults are female and 35 percent are male. The young adults are 18, 19, or 20 years old. The average age is 18.8. Sixty-three percent of the young adults are persons of color.

The table below shows the racial/ethnic background of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Twin Cities area and greater Minnesota, compared to the 2000 U.S. Census racial/ethnic background of youth under age 18. Homeless youth and homeless young adults are more likely than the youth population as a whole to be persons of color. Only 11 percent of the overall Minnesota youth population are persons of color, compared to 54 percent of homeless youth and 63 percent of homeless young adults.

Comparison of U.S. Census to homeless youth and young adult population

	Caucasian	African American	American Indian	Asian	Mixed race or other	Hispanic origin ^a
Minnesota youth age 17 and under (Census 2000 ^b)	86%	5%	2%	4%	3%	5%
2000 Twin Cities homeless youth sample (age 17 or less)	29%	44%	5%	-	22%	8%
2000 greater Minnesota homeless youth sample (age 17 and under)	60%	1%	32%	1%	6%	5%

Notes: (a) Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

(b) *Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2001*

Sexual orientation

Eighty-five percent of the homeless youth identify themselves as heterosexual. Five percent identify themselves as bisexual, 5 percent as gay or lesbian, and 4 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation. Two persons identify as transgender.

Eighty-three percent of homeless young adults in our sample identify themselves as heterosexual. Nine percent identify themselves as bisexual, 6 percent as gay or lesbian, and 2 percent report being unsure of their sexual orientation. One person identifies as transgender.

Family of origin

About one-half (51%) of the youth grew up in a single parent family, and slightly over one-third (34%) grew up in a two-parent family. The remainder (16%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, blended families, with other relatives, or in multiple household arrangements.

Slightly over two-fifths of homeless young adults (42%) grew up in a single-parent family. About the same percent (42%) grew up in a two-parent family. The remainder (18%) grew up in adoptive families, foster families, blended families, with other relatives, or in multiple household arrangements.

Marital status

Only one of the unaccompanied youth (1%) is married.

Only one of the young adults (1%) is married. Two percent are separated and two percent are divorced.

Place of origin

Area where respondent grew up

Seven of 10 homeless youth (72%) have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 20 states and three continents. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (21%). Of the 58 homeless youth who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often identified as Illinois (21%), California (12%), or Wisconsin (10%). Four homeless youth report that they grew up in Africa, one in Mexico, and one in Europe.

Sixty-three percent of the homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota most of their lives. The remainder come from 25 states and three continents. Those who grew up in Minnesota are most often from Minneapolis (26%). Of the 104 homeless young adults who did not grow up in Minnesota, their home states are most often identified as Illinois (33%), Wisconsin (13%), or California (7%). Four homeless young adults report that they grew up in Africa, one in Canada, two in Central America, and one in South America.

Length of time in Minnesota

Fifteen percent of the homeless youth have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Over half (58%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years. Homeless youth are more likely to be long-term residents than homeless adults (58% of youth vs. 49% of adults have resided in Minnesota for 11 or more years).

Approximately three-fourths of the homeless youth (77%) who are recent residents (two years or less) have never previously lived in Minnesota. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were to be with friends or family (53%) or for better opportunities (19%). About two-thirds of new residents (68%) lived with friends or family and about one-fifth (19%) stayed in shelters when they first arrived in Minnesota.

Twenty-five percent of homeless young adults have lived in Minnesota for less than two years. Over half of all homeless young adults (51%) have lived in Minnesota for 11 or more years. Homeless young adults are more likely to be longer-term residents than homeless adults (55% of young adults vs. 49% of adults have resided in Minnesota for 11 or more years).

Approximately one-third of the homeless young adults (37%) who are recent residents (two years or less) have never previously lived in Minnesota. The two main reasons for coming to Minnesota were to be with friends or family (69%) or for better opportunities (46%). About two-thirds of new residents (67%) lived with friends or family and about one-fourth (23%) stayed in shelters when they first arrived in Minnesota.

Prior use of residential services

Placement history

The following table indicates the percentage of female and male unaccompanied youth who have some history of residential service.

Previous placement in residential service (unaccompanied youth)

Have you ever lived in:	Males	Females	Total
Foster care	45%	36%	40%
Drug or alcohol treatment	11%	14%	13%
Corrections facility	51%	40%	45%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	1%	1%	1%
Halfway house	9%	6%	8%
Residential treatment center	16%	27%	22%
Orphanage	1%	1%	1%
Group home	22%	30%	27%
Indian school	2%	6%	3%
Any of the above	68%	65%	67%

Homeless youth have a high rate of residential service use. About two-thirds of homeless youth (65% of the females and 68% of the males) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Foster care, correctional programs and group homes are the most common types of placements for youth in our sample. Twenty-six youth had left a detention center in the last year. Nineteen had left foster care, and 16 had left a group home in the last year. Among youth who had recently left a detention center or group home, 56 percent reported that they had a stable place to live when they left the facility. Two-thirds of youth who had left foster care had a stable place to live when they left foster care.

The following table indicates the percentage of female and male young adults who have had some type of residential service history.

Previous placement in residential service (young adults)			
	Males	Females	Total
Foster care	47%	27%	33%
Drug or alcohol treatment	25%	15%	18%
Corrections facility	58%	27%	38%
Residence for persons with physical disabilities	3%	-	1%
Halfway house	11%	6%	8%
Residential treatment center	26%	15%	19%
Orphanage	2%	3%	3%
Group home	42%	23%	30%
Indian school	5%	2%	3%
Any of the above	78%	54%	62%

Homeless young adults have a high rate of residential service history. About three-fourths of males (78%) and over half of females (54%) have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. Correctional programs, foster care, and group homes are the most common types of placements for the homeless young adults in our sample.

Twenty-six young adults had left a detention center in the last year. Fifteen left a group home, and eight left foster care. Most young adults who had left a group home or foster care had a stable place to live when they left the placement (92% and 86%, respectively). Forty-two percent of those who left a detention center had a stable place to live.

Education and job training

Education

Close to three-fourths of the homeless youth (73%) are enrolled in school. Of these students, about two-thirds (62%) attended school on the day of the survey and one-third (38%) did not. The three main reasons given by those who are enrolled but did not attend school that day are: 1) they were scheduled to start back to school soon, 2) there was no school that day, and 3) they had an appointment. Of those homeless youth currently not enrolled, most (24%) said that a lack of permanent housing was the main reason they were not enrolled.

Two-fifths of the young adults (42%) have completed high school or passed their GED. Five percent have completed some post-high school education. Slightly over one-third of the homeless young adults surveyed (37%) are currently enrolled in school. Of these students, about half (47%) attended school on the day of the survey. The two main reasons given by those who are enrolled but did not attend school that day are: 1) there was no school that day, and 2) they were scheduled to start back to school soon. Of those homeless young adults currently not enrolled, most (59%) have graduated from high school. Other reasons given for not attending school included: currently working (14%), no money to attend school (13%), no permanent address (12%), and no interest in attending school (11%).

Job training

Forty-five homeless youth (22%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: computer training, certified nurses training, and mechanical trade training. Seventy-eight percent of those with job training have completed their training. Over half (55%) of homeless youth with job training are employed in jobs using that training.

Ninety-six homeless young adults (34%) have received some type of job training. The main training experiences include: certified nurses training, building trade training, computer training, child development/child care training, and mechanical trade training. Two-thirds of those (67%) with job training have completed their training. Over half (57%) of homeless young adults with job training are employed in jobs using that training.

Employment and income

Employment

One-fourth of the homeless youth (27%) are currently employed. Five percent have full-time jobs and 22 percent have part-time jobs. Of those with jobs, 86% earn less than \$8.00 an hour. Fifty percent have held the job for three months or more. Twenty-three percent of homeless youth have never been employed. One-third of homeless youth (33%) have been unemployed for less than six months, 5 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 5 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. The main barriers to employment, according to respondents, include: age (18%), lack of transportation (13%), and lack of identification needed for employment.

Two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (39%) are currently employed. Twenty-three percent have full-time jobs and 14 percent have part-time jobs. Slightly over half of those employed (53%) earn less than \$8.00 per hour. Forty percent have held the job for three months or more. Seven percent of homeless young adults have never been employed. One-third of homeless young adults (36%) have been unemployed for less than six months, 8 percent have been unemployed between six months and one year, and 6 percent have been unemployed for more than one year. The main barriers to employment, according to respondents, are: lack of transportation (27%), lack of child care (18%), lack of education (12%), and lack of housing (12%).

Income

We asked homeless youth to name their single primary source of income in the previous month. The most common sources include: short-term or steady employment (24%), parents (13%), friends or relatives (9%), General Assistance (4%), sale of personal belongings (4%), asking for money on the streets (3%) and MFIP (3%). The median total monthly income is \$230 for homeless male youth and \$334 for homeless females. Ten percent report no current income, while 10 percent report income of more than \$500 per month.

The main sources of income for homeless young adult respondents include: short-term or steady employment (32%), MFIP (21%), parents (6%), friends or relatives (6%), and General Assistance (5%). The median total monthly income for young adults is \$444 for men and \$497 for women. Six percent of homeless young adults report no current income, while 31 percent report income of more than \$500 per month.

History of housing and homelessness

Current sleeping arrangements

Homeless youth are found in a number of different temporary living situations. Two-fifths spent the previous night in an emergency shelter (39%). Twenty-one percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family and 17 percent stayed in a transitional housing program. Sixteen percent stayed outdoors and 6 percent spent the last night in some other type of temporary arrangement.

Temporary housing arrangements for homeless youth appear to be less stable than for homeless adults. Forty-seven percent of homeless youth report that their current living arrangement has lasted one week or less. Although most youth have been in their current living situation for one week or less, most have been without regular or permanent housing for much longer. More than half of the youth surveyed (52%) have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. Twenty-one percent have been homeless for more than one year.

Ninety-one percent of homeless youth consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe. The most frequent concerns are theft of personal items (3%) and personal safety (2%).

Almost half of the homeless young adults spent the previous night in a transitional housing program (45%). Twenty percent stayed in a temporary arrangement with friends or extended family, 14 percent stayed in an emergency shelter, and 5 percent stayed in a battered women's shelter. Nine percent stayed outdoors and 7 percent spent the last night in some other type of temporary arrangement.

Twenty-eight percent of homeless young adults report that their current living arrangement has lasted only one week or less. Although most young adults have been in their current living situation for one week or less, most have been without regular or permanent housing for much longer. Close to two-thirds of the young adults (63%) have been without a regular or permanent place to live for more than three months. One-third (33%) have been homeless for more than one year.

Ninety-four percent of homeless young adults consider the place they stayed the previous night to be reasonably safe. The most frequent concerns are not knowing the other people staying there (2%), fear of violence (1%), and concern for personal safety (1%).

Assessment of current housing needs

Homeless youth have housing needs similar to those of homeless young adults. One-third of the youth (33%) report that they cannot afford to pay any amount for rent. Forty-four percent say they could pay \$200 or more per month for rent. On average, male homeless youth can afford to pay \$152 per month and female homeless youth can afford to pay \$205, including rent and utilities. Most homeless youth (74%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, yet close to one-fourth (26%) need two or more bedrooms. Eight percent of the youth are on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 4.1 months.

Housing history

Most of the homeless youth (71%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (56%). Only 4 percent of youth lived alone in their last housing. The main reasons they cite for leaving their last housing include relationship problems (51%), parents' drinking and drug use (21%), and fleeing abuse (17%).

Forty-two percent of the homeless youth in our sample have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. The most common reasons for difficulty getting or keeping housing include the youth's age (37%), no housing they can afford (33%), no local rental history (23%), and the cost of application fees (17%).

Sixteen percent of the young adults surveyed report that they could not afford to pay any amount for rent. Three-fourths of the homeless young adults report that they could pay \$200 or more per month for rent. On average, homeless young men can afford \$254 per month and homeless young women can afford \$321, including rent and utilities. Most homeless young adults (59%) need only a one-bedroom or a studio apartment, yet close to two-fifths (41%) need two or more bedrooms. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents are on a waiting list for Section 8 housing. Of those on a waiting list, the average wait has been 4.9 months.

The majority of homeless young adults (76%) lived in Minnesota in their last regular or permanent housing, primarily with a parent or parents (37%). The main reasons for leaving their last housing include relationship problems (44%), eviction (27%), and inability to afford the rent (21%).

Forty-seven percent of the homeless young adults have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness. The most common reasons for difficulty getting or keeping housing are a lack of housing they can afford (52%), their age (46%), lack of local rental history (42%), the cost of application fees (31%), and credit problems (27%).

Most homeless youth originally left home around age 13. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (33%), wanting to be on their own (13%), drug or alcohol use by parent (10%), and unspecified abuse (10%). Two-thirds of the homeless youth (65%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could do so. However, only about half of the homeless youth respondents (54%) believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned changes that would be needed in order to return home: improved relationships with parents (17%) and the ending of parental drug or alcohol use (9%). About one-third of homeless youth (31%) indicate that they have relatives who have been homeless.

Most homeless young adults originally left home around age 15. The main reasons cited for leaving home include: conflict with family (24%), wanting to be on their own (23%), kicked out (unspecified) (12%), and unspecified abuse (11%). Half of the homeless young adults surveyed (50%) indicate that if they wanted to return home, they could. Yet only about one-fourth of the homeless young adults (21%) believe they will live with their families again. The most frequently mentioned changes that would be needed in order to return home: improved relationships with parents (21%), parents would need a bigger house (11%), and the respondent would have to want to go back (10%). Over one-third of the homeless young adults (37%) say they have relatives who have been homeless.

Service use

Homeless youth used many different services in the month prior to the survey. Thirty-one percent used Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, 33 percent used drop-in centers, 33 percent used outreach services, 19 percent used transportation services, and 19 percent used hot meal programs. Out of all services used by youth, those considered most helpful are drop-in centers, outreach services, and Medical Assistance. Of the youth who used Food Stamps, the average amount received in October 2000 was \$91 for males and \$152 for females.

Of homeless young adults, 53 percent used Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, 37 percent used Food Stamps, 34 percent used drop-in centers, 33 percent used outreach services, 29 percent used clothing shelves, 28 percent used transportation services, and 25 percent used job assistance services. The services considered most helpful by these young adults are Medical Assistance, drop-in centers, Food Stamps, outreach services, and housing assistance. Of those who used Food Stamps, the average amount received in October 2000 was \$122 for males and \$204 for females.

Health care

Physical health

Fourteen percent of the homeless youth report that they need to see a doctor about a current health problem. About one-quarter of the respondents (22%) report that they have encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barrier cited is lack of insurance. Nonetheless, 31 percent of the homeless youth are receiving health benefits through Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 4 percent use the MinnesotaCare health plan. One-fourth of the homeless youth (23%) have had problems with their teeth or gums during the previous year. Twenty-two percent are not taking medication they should be taking. One-third of the youth (33%) have received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (40% vs. 27%).

Twenty-six percent of the homeless young adults report that they need to see a doctor about a current health problem. About one-third (30%) report that they have encountered barriers to getting needed health care. The main barriers cited are lack of money and lack of insurance. Nonetheless, 53 percent of the homeless young adults are receiving health benefits through Medical Assistance or General Assistance Medical Care, and 5 percent use the MinnesotaCare health plan. One-third of the homeless young adults (31%) have had problems with teeth or gums during the previous year. One-fourth (24%) of those surveyed are not taking medication they should be taking. Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults surveyed (44%) have received services in an emergency room during the previous six months. Females are more likely than males to have used emergency room services (50% vs. 35%).

Mental health

Thirty-one percent of the homeless youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Twenty-one percent are diagnosed with major depression, 14 percent with alcohol abuse disorder, and 16 percent with drug abuse disorder. Nine percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder). One-fifth (20%) have received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of those receiving outpatient mental health care, 85 percent received treatment in the previous two years. About two-fifths of the homeless youth (39%) have considered suicide, and one-fourth (26%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, 46 percent report seeking help for depression.

Sex-related health issues

About one-fourth (21%) of the homeless youth report they have had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (29% of the females and 11% of the males). Forty percent of homeless youth report that they use or need birth control. Only 5 percent of those who report a need for birth control indicate that they have not been able to get what they needed. The vast majority of youth (94%) state that they have learned about safer sex practices and 90 percent indicate that they use safer sex practices sometimes or almost always. Eight percent of respondents report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months.

Thirty-one percent of homeless young adults in our sample have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem. Twenty-one percent are diagnosed with major depression, 8 percent with alcohol abuse disorder, and 8 percent with drug abuse disorder. Six percent report a dual diagnosis (severe or persistent mental illness in addition to an alcohol or drug abuse disorder). One-fifth (22%) have received outpatient care because of mental health problems. Of the homeless young adults who have received outpatient mental health care, 67 percent received treatment in the previous two years. Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults (46%) have considered suicide and over one-fourth (29%) have attempted suicide. Of those who have considered suicide, 51 percent report seeking help for depression.

About two-thirds (63%) of young adults report having had sexual relationships that resulted in pregnancy (74% of the females and 42% of the males). Forty-two percent of homeless youth report that they use or need birth control. Only 4 percent of those who report a need for birth control indicate that they have not been able to get what they need. The vast majority of young adults in our sample (94%) state that they have learned about safer sex practices and 88 percent indicated that they use safer sex practices sometimes or almost always. Eleven percent of respondents report that they have had a sexually transmitted disease within the past 12 months.

Chemical dependency

Substance abuse in the family of origin is often mentioned by youth as a reason for leaving home. Over two-fifths of the homeless youth (46%) report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol. Familial substance abuse is more likely to be reported by youth in greater Minnesota than in the Twin Cities area (53% vs. 39%). Of those who report familial substance abuse, more than four-fifths (85%) indicate that at least one parent has a problem with drugs or alcohol.

Many of the youth used chemical substances during the previous week. More than half (61%) smoked cigarettes, more than one-fourth (30%) used marijuana, one-fourth (26%) used alcohol, and 11 percent used prescription-strength painkillers.

Although 19 percent of youth have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder, only 13 percent of homeless youth consider themselves chemically dependent. Males are slightly more likely than females to report chemical dependency (14% vs. 12%). Sixteen percent of the youth have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program and 13 percent have had inpatient treatment. Twelve percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Among homeless young adults, 40 percent report that someone in their immediate family has problems with drugs or alcohol. Familial substance abuse is more likely to be reported by young adults in greater Minnesota than in the Twin Cities area (45% vs. 37%). Of those who report familial substance abuse, more than four-fifths (83%) indicate that at least one parent has a problem with drugs or alcohol

Many of the young adults used substances during the previous week. Three-fourths (75%) smoked cigarettes, over one-fourth (29%) used alcohol, over one-fourth (28%) used marijuana, and 18 percent used prescription-strength painkillers.

Ten percent of homeless young adults have been told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have an alcohol or drug abuse disorder. However, 13 percent of all homeless young adults consider themselves chemically dependent. Males are more likely than females to report chemical dependency (21% vs. 8%). Thirteen percent of the young adults have been treated in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program and 19 percent have had inpatient treatment. Seventeen percent have been admitted to detox at least once.

Physical and sexual abuse

Nearly half of the homeless youth surveyed (47%) have been physically abused and more than one-fourth (28%) have been sexually abused. Fifty-three percent of females, compared to 40 percent of males, report physical abuse; and 41 percent of females, compared to 14 percent of males, report sexual abuse. Close to one-third of females (30%), compared to 16 percent of males, report that they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. One-fifth of the youth (20%) report that they have stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options. Sixteen percent of homeless youth have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless.

When asked if they had been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food or other things, seven percent of homeless youth said yes (about 2% of males and 12% of females). Similarly, about one-third of the homeless youth (34%) report that they have been told how to make money in the sex industry. Fifty-eight percent of homeless female youth in the Twin Cities area, compared to 38 percent in greater Minnesota, have been told that they could make money by dancing, stripping, working in saunas, phone sex, or by dating adults.

Over two-fifths of the homeless young adults (44%) have been physically abused, and more than one-third (36%) have been sexually abused. Males are more likely than females to have a history of physical abuse (50% vs. 41%), and females are more likely to have a history of sexual abuse (40% vs. 28%). Two-fifths of the homeless young adult females (41%), compared to 30 percent of the males, report that they have been assaulted or threatened with violence in a relationship during the past year. One-fifth of the young adults (20%) say they have stayed in an abusive situation because they had no other housing options. Twenty-two percent of homeless young adults have been physically attacked or beaten since being homeless.

When asked if they had been sexual with someone for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, food, or other things, 10 percent of homeless young adults said yes (about 7% of males and 11% of females). More than two-fifths (45%) report that they have been told how to make money in the sex industry. Fifty-nine percent of homeless female young adults in the Twin Cities area, compared to 42 percent in greater Minnesota, have been told that they could make money by dancing, stripping, working in saunas, phone sex, or by dating adults.

Social contacts

The majority of youth (80%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the previous month. Fifteen percent had contact with family members within the past year but not during the past month. Five percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Asked which people helped them find the services they needed, homeless youth most often mentioned friends (62%), shelter staff (46%), social workers (45%), youth workers (44%), and outreach workers (36%).

The majority of young adults (84%) have had contact with a family member or relative within the previous month. Twelve percent had contact with family members within the past year but not during the past month. Four percent have had no contact with any family members for over one year.

Young adults report that the people who have helped them find the services they needed are friends (71%), shelter staff (50%), outreach workers (47%), youth workers (43%), and social workers (40%).

Children

Sixteen of the homeless youth surveyed (8%) are parents (11 females and five males). Of this group, two-thirds are responsible for the care of their children (10 females and one male). Some youth are not involved in the day-to-day care of their children; the other parent is caring for their children. There were 11 children with their parents (homeless youth) on the night of the survey. All of the children were under age 3, and four were infants under age 1.

A number of homeless youth face problems related to caring for their children. Two parents are not receiving child support, although it is court-ordered. Two parents report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. All youth parents were able to get needed medical care for their child during the last 12 months. In the month preceding the survey, no youth parents report that a child had skipped a meal due to lack of money. Half of the youth parents (50%) were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year. Youth identify the main needs of their children as clothing (38%) and food (25%).

Forty-five percent of homeless young adults (128) are parents (103 females and 25 males). Of this group, 80 percent are responsible for the care of their children (92 females and 10 males). Some homeless young adults are not involved in the day-to-day care of their children. For these young adults, a family member, the other parent, a foster care provider, or grandparents are caring for their children. One young adult's child is in adoptive care. There were 117 children who accompanied 102 homeless young adult parents on the night of the survey. All of the parents in our survey had children under age 8, and 28 of their children were infants under age 1.

Some homeless youth parents face problems related to caring for their children. Thirty-six parents (28%) have court-ordered child support, but only 16 of them are receiving child support. Seven parents (9%) report that their child has a chronic or severe physical health problem that interferes with the child's daily activities. Seven parents (9%) report that their child has an emotional or behavioral problem that interferes with their daily activities. Of the three parents who have school-age children, no one reported any school-related problems. Eleven percent were unable to get needed medical care for their child during the last 12 months. In the month preceding the survey, six young adult parents (8%) report that a child had skipped a meal due to lack of money. Over one-third of the parents (38%) were unable to obtain regular child care during the past year. The main needs of children as identified by parents include clothing (31%) and food (29%).

Personal accounts

This report provides a statistical profile of unaccompanied youth who were homeless on October 26, 2000. It describes a population troubled by conflicts with parents, abusive relationships, and for some, a simple desire for freedom from authority. Behind the numbers, however, are the individual stories of each study respondent.

Each of these accounts is drawn from an actual survey interview. The names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents.

- Amanda is a 15-year-old Caucasian youth of Hispanic origin who grew up in northern Minnesota. She grew up in a two-parent blended family. Her parents asked her to leave home because of her drug use and the constant conflicts she had with her parents and step-brother. She does not believe that she could or would ever move back home. Amanda says she has never been institutionalized, but she does feel that she is chemically dependent and reports that her parents have drug and alcohol problems. She has been homeless for about three months. Although she has been approached to work in the sex industry (by an adult), she has not done so. Amanda is currently attending school and works part-time at a fast food restaurant. Her job is her main source of income, bringing in about \$400 in October. She has just moved into a youth transitional housing program and sees her main need right now as finishing high school. She reports that both a youth worker and a social worker have helped her in the last year to get services she needed.
- Jeremy is a 16-year-old African American youth who grew up in St. Paul. He has a long history of institutionalization. He has been in a foster home, a drug or alcohol treatment center, a detention center, a residential facility for people with behavioral problems, and a halfway house. Jeremy reports that he left home for the first time when he was 10. He does not know where his parents are currently living, so he does not think he will ever return home. Jeremy has been “couch-hopping” from friend to friend for about six months. He feels that his age and his lack of steady income are the biggest barriers to getting stable housing. At present, he is not enrolled in school but hopes to return when he gets stable housing. He sees his main needs as getting a steady job and returning to school.
- Derek is a 17-year-old American Indian youth who grew up on a reservation in northern Minnesota. Derek has lived in a foster home, a drug or alcohol treatment center, and a group home. He considers himself to be chemically dependent, and has been told that he has an alcohol abuse disorder. He reports being physically abused as a youth. He has one child, who is currently living with the mother. He reports that

he has been unable to find housing because of the high cost of housing and his age. Derek has a GED and is currently working full time doing assembly work in a factory. He could afford to pay about \$500 for his own place to live. He does not report any physical health problems. Once he is able to find housing, he hopes to be reunited with his girlfriend and his child.

- Tameka is a 15-year-old African American youth who grew up in Minneapolis. She grew up in a single-parent family and left home because of conflicts with her mother. She has been living with friends for the last two months and is still attending school. She has never held a job and is interested in some type of job training. She says she uses cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana, and feels that she may be chemically dependent, but has not requested or received help for this problem. She has no history of out-of-home placements. Tameka says that a youth outreach worker at the drop-in center has been helpful in getting her the services she needs. The youth worker has helped her set up counseling for her and her mother. She is hopeful that she can work out some of the problems with her mother and be able to return home sometime in the future. She feels her main needs are to complete high school and resolve the conflicts with her mother.
- Ashley is a 19-year-old Caucasian youth who grew up in Illinois. She has lived in Minnesota for less than two years and reports that she came to Minnesota to be with other family members. She and her two children are currently living in a transitional housing program. Ashley completed her GED and works full time as a nursing assistant, earning between \$8 and \$10 per hour. She reports being both physically and sexually abused as a child. She says she has been diagnosed as manic-depressive in the last two years but has never been institutionalized. Ashley has lived in an abusive relationship in the last 12 months because she did not have any other housing options available. She reports that the main reasons she has been unable to find her own housing are the lack of affordable housing and her lack of local rental history. She needs a three-bedroom apartment and could pay \$600 per month for rent and utilities. She sees her main needs right now to be a better-paying job and a means of transportation.
- David is an 18-year-old youth of mixed racial background who grew up in a single-parent family in Minneapolis. He has been in out-of-home placement settings since he was 11. He has lived in a foster care home, a correctional facility, a drug or alcohol treatment facility, and a group home. He reports being sexually mistreated as a child, and says the abuse stopped after being reported. He does not think he will ever live with his family again. David identifies himself as bisexual. For the last three months he has lived in a transitional housing program. David has completed his GED. He is not employed and sees his criminal record and lack of job skills as his

biggest barriers to employment. Currently he has no source of income. He reports that he has been sexual with someone in order to get shelter, clothing, food, or other things. He also reports that he has made money in the sex industry. David has been physically beaten since he has been without housing and has sought medical care as a result of his injuries. He does not consider himself to be chemically dependent, although he reports using marijuana and crack cocaine within the previous week. He reports that his main need right now is getting a job.

Comparison of homeless youth to the general youth population

In this section, we compare the homeless youth interviewed for this study (age 17 and under) to a sample of youth in the general population, as well as to three other populations: youth in alternative schools, youth in residential behavioral treatment facilities, and youth in juvenile correctional facilities.

The first comparison examines data from ninth-graders (ages 14 to 16) who participated in the 1998 Minnesota Student Survey.⁹

As part of the Minnesota Student Survey, youth in alternative schools and learning centers, residential behavioral treatment facilities, and juvenile correctional facilities were also surveyed.¹⁰ Youth between the ages of 12-17 are included in these tables.

⁹ More information regarding the Minnesota Student Survey data is available from Patricia Harrison at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 651-296-8574.

¹⁰ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, March). *Minnesota Student Survey 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998: Behavioral trends for Minnesota's youth*. St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, July). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Alternative schools and area learning centers*. St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, July). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Residential behavioral treatment facilities*. St. Paul, MN: Author.
Minnesota Department of Human Services. (1999, September). *1998 Minnesota Student Survey: Juvenile corrections facilities*. St. Paul, MN: Author.

Comparing the Minnesota student population to the homeless youth survey sample

	Student survey, general population, 1998 (N=49,048)		Student survey, alternative schools, 1998 (N=2,607)		Student survey, residential behavioral treatment population, 1998 (N=366)		Student survey, juvenile corrections population, 1998 (N=964)		Homeless youth survey, 2000 (N=209)	
	Male (N=24,253)	Female (N=24,795)	Male (N=1,240)	Female (N=1,367)	Male (N=199)	Female (N=167)	Male (N=764)	Female (N=200)	Male (N=98)	Female (N=111)
Live with single parents ^a	18%	17%	41%	39%	39%	29%	49%	39%	56%	46%
Ran away from home in last year	11%	13%	28%	34%	44%	70%	38%	67%	-	-
Cigarette use ^b	22%	19%	74%	73%	55%	58%	63%	77%	55%	68%
Treated for drug or alcohol problem	5%	3%	25%	23%	33%	35%	37%	42%	13%	27%
Ever been hit by date ^c	5%	6%	10%	24%	9%	31%	11%	30%	16%	30%
Ever been pregnant (females)	-	2%	-	34%	-	22%	-	27%	-	29%
Ever gotten someone pregnant (males)	3%	-	13%	-	14%	-	24%	-	11%	-
Ever been physically abused ^d	10%	15%	15%	28%	31%	44%	24%	37%	40%	53%
Ever been sexually abused ^e	4%	10%	5%	27%	12%	38%	10%	38%	14%	41%
Ever attempted suicide	8%	17%	18%	39%	30%	51%	20%	47%	14%	39%

- Notes:** a) For the Minnesota Student Survey, the question asked, “Which adults do you live with?” while the homeless youth survey stated, “What type of family did you grow up in?”
 b) The Minnesota Student Survey states, “at least weekly.” The homeless youth survey states, “during the past week.”
 c) The Minnesota Student Survey states, “victim of violence on a date.” The homeless youth survey states, “in a relationship with someone who hit you, slapped you or pushed you around or threatened to do so.”
 d) The Minnesota Student Survey states, “physically abused by adult in the household.” The homeless youth survey states, “physically mistreated as a child or youth.”
 e) The Minnesota Student Survey states, “sexually abused by non-family member.” The homeless youth survey states, “sexually mistreated as a child or youth.”

Homeless youth are more likely than youth in the general Minnesota student population to have lived in a single parent home, to have attempted suicide, to have been physically or sexually abused, to smoke cigarettes, to have experienced violence in a recent relationship, and to have been pregnant.

Compared to youth surveyed in juvenile corrections and residential behavioral treatment programs, homeless youth report the highest rates of having been physically abused and having lived with a single parent, and homeless girls are the most likely to report having been pregnant.

Youth in alternative schools, residential behavioral treatment, juvenile corrections, and homeless youth report similarly high rates of having been sexually abused and having been abused (or threatened) by a partner.

The incidence of substance abuse disorder (within the last six months) in the general population of youth 9-17 years of age is 2 percent¹¹. In the homeless youth sample, the rate of alcohol or drug abuse disorder (diagnosis within the last two years) is 19 percent. Even allowing for the different timeframes (two years versus six months), and the fact that the homeless youth sample includes a high proportion of 16 and 17 year olds, homeless youth interviewed are more likely to have substance abuse disorder than youth in the general population.

¹¹ Shaffer, D. et. al. (1996). The NIMH Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children Version 2.3 (DISC-2.3): Description, acceptability, prevalence rates and performance in the MECA Study. Methods for the Epidemiology of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders Study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35 (7), 865-77.

Comparisons to other studies of homeless youth

Comparing the homeless youth interviewed for this survey with the results of other recent studies of youth homelessness, a number of common characteristics are evident. The comparisons are drawn from the following studies:

United States	1995	Interviews conducted by Research Triangle Institute in fall 1992 with youth residing in 23 shelters nationally, and with youth on the streets in 10 urban areas (two samples). ¹²
Minnesota	1997	Interviews conducted by Wilder Research Center with youth in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota on the evening of October 23, 1997. ¹³
Iowa	1999	Spring 1999 survey of Iowa service providers who come in contact with homeless and near-homeless children and youth. Providers reported on a total of 487 youth. ¹⁴
Minnesota	2000	Interviews conducted with youth in shelters and non-shelter locations throughout Minnesota during the evening of October 26, 2000 (this study).

¹² Greene, J. M., & Ringwalt, C. (1995). *Youth with runaway, throwaway and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors*. Prepared for Silver Spring, MD: National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

¹³ Wilder Research Center. (1998). *Minnesota statewide survey of persons without permanent shelter, volume II: Unaccompanied youth*. St. Paul, MN: Author.

¹⁴ University of Iowa. (2000). *Iowa's homeless population: 1999 estimates and profile*. Iowa City, IA: Author.

The following table illustrates the demographic profiles and the life experiences of youth described in these varied samples.

Demographic comparison of five homeless youth surveys

	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	MN, 1997 Street & sheltered N=165	IA, 1999 Homeless & near-homeless N=487	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=209
Sample population	Street youth from 10 urban areas	Sheltered youth from 23 shelters nationally	Statewide sheltered and street youth	Survey of youth service providers	Statewide sheltered and street youth
Gender					
Male	61%	39%	45%	50%	47%
Female	39%	61%	54%	48%	53%
Age					
Average age	17.9	16.1	16	12	15.7
Range of ages	12-21	12-21	10-17	5-17	10-17
Race					
African American	28%	41%	29%	13%	21%
Caucasian	46%	32%	41%	77%	46%
American Indian	-	-	15%	0.2%	20%
Latino/Hispanic	18%	20%	-	3%	7%
Asian	-	-	2%	1%	1%
Other	9%	8%	13%	6%	8%
Family type					
Single parent	48%	52%	53%	NA	51%
Placements					
Drug/alcohol treatment	24%	18%	19%	NA	13%
Mental health hospital	-	-	22%	NA	23%
Abuse					
Physical	-	-	42%	NA	47%
Sexual	14%	8%	24% (37% girls, 8% boys)	NA	28% (41% girls, 14% boys)

Demographic comparison of five homeless youth surveys (continued)

	RTI, 1995 Street N=600	RTI, 1995 Sheltered N=640	MN, 1997 Street & sheltered N=165	IA, 1999 Homeless & near-homeless N=487	MN, 2000 Street & sheltered N=209
Survival sex					
Engaged in sex for food, money, or shelter	21%	7%	10% girls, 9% boys	NA	21% girls, 8% boys
Children					
Ever been pregnant (girls only)	50%	41%	42%	NA	29%
Have children	-	-	17%	NA	8%
Suicide					
Ever attempted suicide	32%	26%	25%	NA	27%
Violence					
Been assaulted	29%	15%	23% (since homeless)	NA	16% (since homeless)

The table shows that:

- Homeless youth are disproportionately youth of color.
- Between 13 and 24 percent of homeless youth have been in drug or alcohol treatment facilities, compared to 4 percent of the general youth population.
- One-fourth of homeless youth have been admitted to a mental health hospital.
- Homeless youth report high levels (8% to 28%) of past sexual abuse. Research Triangle Institute's national sample reported the lowest levels of sexual abuse. This may be due, in part, to differences in social climate with regard to reporting abuse.
- A high percentage of homeless girls report having been pregnant (29% to 50%).
- One-fourth to one-third of homeless youth report having attempted suicide.
- Fifteen to 29 percent of homeless youth report having been assaulted since becoming homeless.

Comparison of homeless youth to children and youth in residential treatment facilities

In many ways, the experiences of homeless youth parallel those of children who are served in residential treatment programs. In both cases, backgrounds of abuse, alcoholism, and prior institutionalization are common. The table below provides selected comparisons for samples derived from these two populations. Please note that the residential treatment sample includes children of all ages including a few less than 1, while the homeless youth population includes no one under the age of 10.

Demographics and life experiences

	Youth being discharged from residential treatment facilities in 1999 ^a (N=409)	2000 homeless youth (age 10-17) (N=209)
Average (mean) age	13.3 years	15.7 years
Gender		
Female	30.1%	53.1%
Male	69.9%	46.9%
Youth of Color	34.1%	55.2%
Victimization^b		
Physical abuse	54.4%	47.0%
Sexual abuse	47.0%	28.1%
Prior Placement		
Foster care	64.4%	41.0%
Drug or alcohol treatment	11.1%	13.2%
Residential treatment	46.4%	22.5%^c
Mental health hospital	60.7%	-
Correctional facility	20.5%	46.1%

Notes: a) Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies: Leaders in quality care for troubled youth. (2000, November). Student Data Reporting System. St. Paul, MN.

b) Data from residential treatment programs are based on abuse that was either suspected or documented. Homeless youth data are based on self-reported abuse.

c) Residential programs for emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems

The figures shown in the table suggest that many homeless youth have experienced circumstances similar to those of youth treated in residential programs. Homeless youth, however, appear less likely than those in treatment to have been physically or sexually abused. Homeless youth are more likely to be persons of color and are older on average than those in residential treatment facilities.

Institutionalized and homeless youth show similarities in their incidence of out-of-home placements. A substantial percentage of both groups have had prior placements in foster care, mental health hospitals/residential treatment facilities, and correctional facilities. Youth in residential treatment, however, are more likely than homeless youth to have had prior placements in foster care settings and mental health hospitals/ residential treatment facilities. Homeless youth are more likely than youth in placement to have been in correctional facilities.

Data tables for all survey items

Tables in this section report frequency distributions for all questions included in the survey, with breakdowns by geographic area (Twin Cities metro area vs. greater Minnesota¹⁵), by gender, and by shelter type (youth shelter programs vs. friends/extended family or other arrangements).¹⁶

Unlike in the *Homeless adults and children in Minnesota*, these data are not weighted. (In the companion report, survey data for adults in shelters and other temporary housing programs are weighted to better reflect the actual sheltered population of adults on the day the survey was conducted.)

Note that some tables are conditional and thus only include the responses of youth who answered “yes” to an earlier question. For example, Table 122 reports the number of youth who have considered suicide. This question was asked of everyone. Table 123 reports information about suicide attempts, but this question was only asked of those who had considered suicide. Thus, the percentages reported in Table 123 total 100 percent of those who have considered suicide, not 100 percent of the entire sample.

The tables are organized by question. Within each question, the data tables display the responses for the Twin Cities area for ages 10-17 and 18-20, then for greater Minnesota for ages 10-17 and 18-20. Note also that the “total” column appears in the middle of each table. To the left of the total column, breakdowns are presented by the shelter types of emergency/transitional housing versus friend/family/street/other shelter arrangements (further categorized by gender). To the right of the table totals, the statewide totals are provided for the same age group.

¹⁵ Throughout this report, the “Twin Cities metro area” refers to the seven counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Carver, Scott, Dakota and Washington.

¹⁶ Other housing arrangements include outside, abandoned buildings, temporary paid or exchange arrangements or voucher arrangements.