

Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Findings from the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study

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Summary

Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a one-night statewide study to better understand the prevalence of homelessness in Minnesota, as well as the circumstances of those experiencing homelessness. The 2018 study took place on October 25, 2018. For more information about the study, and additional reports, please visit www.mnhomeless.org.

This report highlights findings from a subset of those interviewed during the Minnesota Homeless Study in 2018: U.S. military Veterans experiencing homelessness.

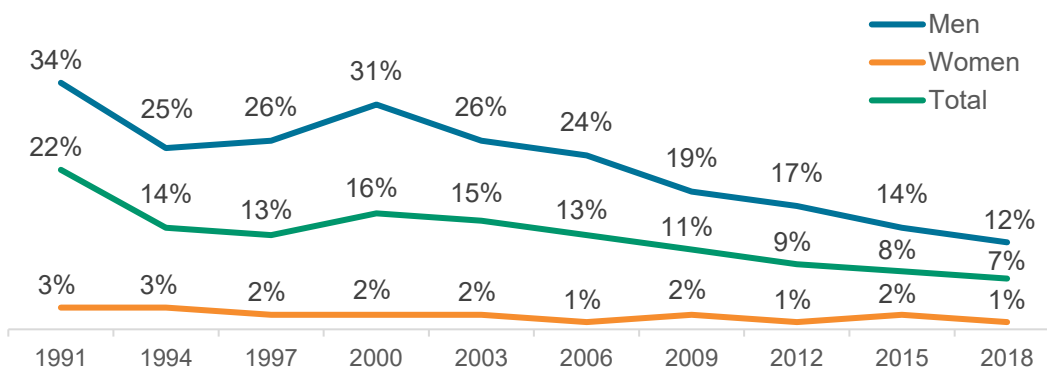
Key findings

Targeted efforts to reduce homelessness among military Veterans appear to be paying off.

Over the last decade, Minnesota has intensified and coordinated efforts to end homelessness among Veterans. For example, in 2014, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs launched the Homeless Veteran Registry, which “allows any veteran experiencing a housing crisis to connect, through one short application, with a team of organizations working together closely on a veteran-by-veteran basis to find solutions to each veteran’s housing issues.”¹

Since 2000, the percentage of people experiencing homelessness, who are also military Veterans, has decreased steadily (16% to 7%). This is particularly hopeful given that the overall homeless population has increased by 10% since the 2015 study.

Percentage of homeless people who are U.S. military Veterans, by year



Prepared by Wilder Research/mnhomeless.org

¹ Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018). *Heading Home Together: Minnesota's 2018-2020 action plan to prevent and end homelessness*. Retrieved from: https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/minnesota-action-plan-18-20_tcm1053-328234.pdf

Homeless Veterans are older and experience homelessness later in life. In 2018, the average age of Veterans experiencing homelessness increased slightly, from 51 years (in 2015) to 53 years (in 2018). Veterans are a full decade older than the overall population of adults experiencing homelessness (40 years). In addition, the average age at which Veterans first experienced homelessness is 37 years, nearly a decade more than the average age of first homelessness for adults overall (28 years).

Veterans of color are disproportionately affected by homelessness. The vast majority of Minnesota Veterans identify as white (94%); smaller proportions identify as African American (3%) or American Indian (1%).² However, within the specific population of Veterans experiencing homelessness, 26% identify as African American and 8% identify as American Indian, illustrating large racial disparities among Veterans experiencing homelessness. These disparities also exist within the homeless population as a whole. For example, while 5% of Minnesotans identify as African American, a much larger percentage of the homeless population identifies as African American (37%).

Reasons for Veteran homelessness, and continued barriers to stable housing, are similar to the overall homeless population. Veterans experiencing homelessness cite similar reasons for losing their last housing as the rest of the adult homeless population, with the primary reason being eviction (Veterans: 38%, all adults: 39%). Barriers to finding stable housing are also similar, with the primary reason being a lack of affordable housing (Veterans: 46%, all adults: 56%), followed by credit problems (Veterans: 41%, all adults: 43%) and no local rental history (Veterans: 32%, all adults: 30%).

The majority of Veterans experiencing homelessness have experienced trauma. More than two-thirds (69%) of Veterans interviewed for the Homeless Study had experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, such as abuse, neglect, or out-of-home placement; this percentage was higher among women (93%) than men (67%).

Serious and co-occurring health issues are common among Veterans experiencing homelessness. The vast majority (93%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported having at least one serious or chronic disability – meaning a mental health condition, substance abuse disorder, chronic medical condition, cognitive impairment, or other condition that limits work or activities of daily living. Over half (51%) of Veterans reported having a service-related health injury.

² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. (2017). *Minnesota State Summary*. Retrieved from: https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Minnesota.pdf

Employment rates among Veterans are similar to the overall homeless population. Nearly three in ten (29%) Veterans experiencing homelessness were employed; 17% overall were employed full time. These rates are similar to the overall population of adults experiencing homelessness (29% employed; 13% full time). Over one-third (34%) of unemployed homeless Veterans were looking for work. Among those who were unemployed, nearly three-quarters (73%) reported being unemployed for a year or more; over half (52%) had been unemployed for more than four years.

Overall, it is promising that there has been a steady decrease in the percentage of Veterans experiencing homelessness over the past two decades. However it is important to remember that Veterans experiencing homelessness have specific and unique needs that must be addressed, including that they are older than the homeless population as a whole and that they face a full range of serious, long-term health needs. Targeted outreach and policies remain essential in helping Veterans experiencing homelessness access and keep safe and affordable housing.

How do we define “Veteran”?

The Minnesota Homeless Study uses two definitions for Veterans – the Federal definition and the Minnesota definition. Different definitions may impact a person’s eligibility for services and benefits.

The majority of this report defines Veteran as someone who reported serving on **active duty for at least one day**. This aligns with the Federal definition and was chosen for consistency with past Homeless Study reports.

Introduction

The following report shows finding from the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study, specifically from military Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Data are based on the responses, gathered through in-depth, face-to-face interviews, of people who identified as Veterans and answered a specific set of questions for the Veteran population.

Information in this report is intended to be used by organizations and government agencies to help them identify and address systemic issues; guide services, programs, and policies to support Minnesota Veterans experiencing homelessness; and track progress in efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate homelessness in Minnesota.

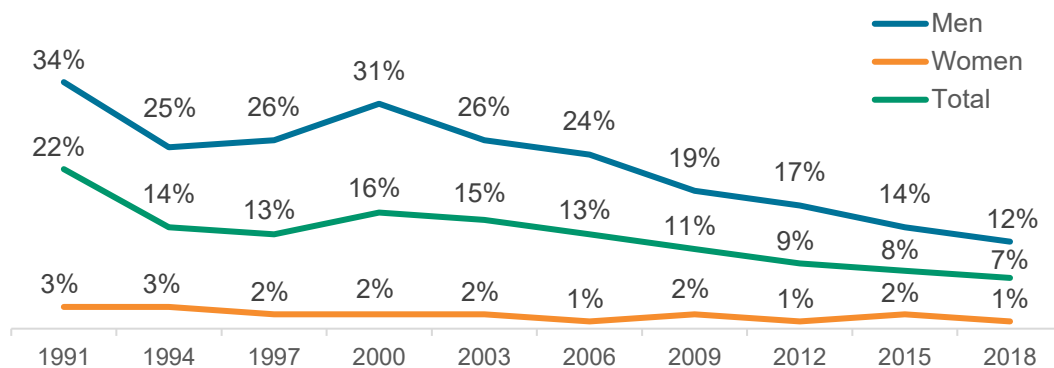
Additional data (from all questions asked during the interview) can be found in detailed data tables on www.mnhomeless.org. There are two sets of data tables available – one set using the Federal definition of Veteran and one set using the Minnesota definition (see Appendix A for Minnesota definition). For general information about the Minnesota Homeless Study and its methods, please see Appendix B.

Characteristics of Veterans experiencing homelessness

The 2018 Homeless Study shows a 7% decrease in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness, from 422 in 2015 to 393 in 2018.³ The majority (72%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness were interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area; 28% were interviewed in greater Minnesota.

Since 2000, the percentage of people experiencing homelessness, who are also military Veterans, has decreased steadily (Figure 1). The number of Veteran men experiencing homelessness decreased slightly, while homelessness among Veteran women remained consistently low. These results are based on a small number of women (n=26), so should be interpreted with caution.

1. Percentage of homeless people who are U.S. military Veterans, by year



Prepared by Wilder Research/mnhomeless.org

³ Interview data are **weighted** – or statistically adjusted – to reflect the actual number of sheltered homeless persons. Veterans data are weighted using the same procedure as the overall homeless adult population. All numbers (or “Ns”) in this report are the weighted interview totals.

Demographics and background

- Among the population of people interviewed for the Homeless Study, the majority of Veterans experiencing homelessness were men (93%). This mirrors the overall Veteran population in Minnesota, in which 93% are also men.⁴
- The average age of Veterans experiencing homelessness has increased slightly from the last study (2015: 51 years, 2018: 53 years), and is more than a decade older than the average age of the overall homeless adult population (40 years).
- Over half of Veterans experiencing homelessness identified as white (53%); one-quarter (26%) identified as black or African American and 8% identified as American Indian. Within the population Minnesota Veterans overall, a much smaller proportion identified as African American (2%) or American Indian (1%), illustrating huge racial disparities within the homeless population (Figure 2).

2. Race and ethnicity of Veterans experiencing homelessness, compared to all Minnesota Veterans

	Percentage of homeless Veterans in MN	Percentage of all Veterans in MN ^a
American Indian	8%	1%
Asian American	2%	1%
Black/African American	26%	2%
White/Caucasian	53%	95%
Multiracial or another group	9%	2%
Hispanic (any race)	4%	1%

Note. Respondents were asked to select one racial category, and were asked separately about Hispanic ethnicity. Those who report Hispanic ethnicity are not included in the other racial categories in this table. However, for the Minnesota Veteran population data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, those who report Hispanic ethnicity are included in other racial categories.

^a Source. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. (2014). *Veterans by State*. Retrieved from: <https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Report.asp>

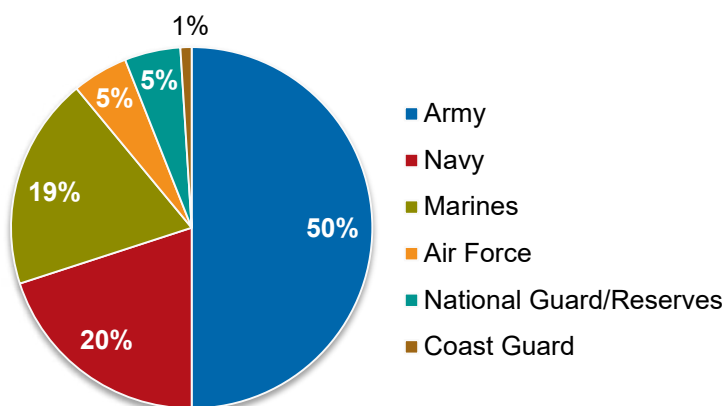
⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. (2017). *Minnesota State Summary*. Retrieved from: https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Minnesota.pdf

- The majority (95%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness were not married; of this group, 44% were divorced, 43% had never been married, 8% were separated, and 6% were widowed.
- Nearly all (96%) Veterans experiencing homelessness had graduated from high school or completed a GED, and 61% had some postsecondary education.
- More than three-quarters (78%) of those interviewed had lived in Minnesota for more than five years; over half (59%) had lived in Minnesota for 20 years or more.
- Over half (56%) of women reported that they had children under the age of 18, while 22% of men reported the same. Twenty-five percent of women and 2% of men were accompanied by their children on the night of the study.

Military service

Most Veterans experiencing homelessness (69%) had served in the military for more than two years; smaller proportions had served between six months and two years (21%) or under six months (11%). Half of those interviewed had served in the U.S. Army, followed by the Navy (20%) and Marines (19%; Figure 3). Nearly one-third (32%) of homeless Veterans reported having served in a combat zone.

3. Branch of U.S. military



The most common period in which Veterans had entered military service was from October 1980 through March 2003 (47%). None of the women interviewed had served before June 1975 (Figure 4).

4. Date Veterans entered U.S. military service

	Men (N=364)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=390)
Prior to August 1964	2%	-	2%
August 1964 to May 1975	18%	-	17%
June 1975 to September 1980	26%	12%	25%
October 1980 to March 2003	45%	65%	47%
April 2003 or later	9%	23%	10%

Note. The tables in this report reflect Ns based on **weighted** interview totals. Also, for each table that delineates between men and women, it is important to note that the number of homeless Veteran women is much smaller than the number of homeless Veteran men.

History of homelessness

Over one-quarter of those interviewed (26%) reported that their current episode of homelessness was their first; 60% had been homeless for more than one year (Figure 5).

5. Number of homeless episodes in lifetime and length of current episode

Number of homelessness episodes in lifetime	Men (N=360)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=386)
One	27%	21%	26%
Two or three	26%	25%	26%
Four or more	47%	53%	47%
Length of current homelessness episode	Men (N=365)	Women (N=24)	Total (N=389)
Less than 1 month	6%	11%	7%
More than 1 month but less than a year	33%	45%	34%
1 year to less than 5 years	41%	29%	41%
5 or more years	19%	17%	19%

- The average age at which Veterans first experienced homelessness was 37 years, nearly a decade more than the average age of first homelessness for adults overall (28 years).
- After losing their last housing, those interviewed for the Homeless Study most often reported that the first place they stayed was with family or friends (37%). Women (48%) were more likely to stay with family and friends after losing their housing than men (36%).

Long-term homelessness

In Minnesota, people are considered to be “long-term homeless” if they have been homeless for one year or longer, or if they have been homeless at least four times in the past three years. In the 2018 study, 64% of Veterans experiencing homelessness fit this definition. This is the same rate as in the overall homeless adult population (64%). Half of the Veterans experiencing homelessness (51%) met the federal definition of *chronic* homelessness, which, in addition to the long-term criteria described above, requires the presence of at least one serious or chronic disability.

Living situation

The majority of those interviewed (93%) had, at some point in their lives, stayed in an emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, or domestic violence shelter. However, shelter is not always available to all who need it.

- 29% of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported that they had been turned away from shelter in the previous three months due to a lack of available bed spaces. Among those who had (n=112), over three-quarters (76%) ended up staying outside or somewhere not meant for habitation.
- 41% of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported having stayed outdoors, in a car, vacant building, or someplace not intended for housing at least one night during the month of the study (October 2018). Among this group, the average number of nights spent outdoors was seven.
- Nearly one-quarter (22%) of those interviewed said they had doubled up in someone else's house, apartment, or room during October 2018; the average number of nights spent doubled up was two.

Immediate causes of homelessness

Respondents are asked about a series of factors that may have contributed to leaving their last regular housing. In 2018, the most common reason was eviction (38%), followed by an inability to afford rent or house payments (31%) and the loss of a job or reduction in work hours (30%; Figure 6).

6. Reasons Veterans left their last regular housing

Did you leave your last regular housing because...	Percentage responding “yes”		
	Men (N=367)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=393)
You were evicted or your lease was not renewed	39%	27%	38%
You could not afford the rent or house payments	31%	30%	31%
You lost your job or had your hours cut	31%	15%	30%
Breakup with your spouse or partner	26%	29%	27%
Problems getting along with other people you lived with	23%	18%	22%
You entered treatment, jail, or a residential program	21%	4%	19%
You were living in substandard or unsafe housing	17%	23%	17%
Abuse by someone you lived with	13%	18%	14%
Violence in the neighborhood	11%	12%	11%
Medical expenses or health care-related debt	10%	5%	10%

Barriers to regaining stable housing

Once someone has lost their regular housing, they can face multiple barriers to regaining stable housing.

- For Veterans experiencing homelessness, the most frequent reasons reported for having difficulty getting stable housing were: there is no housing they can afford (46%) and credit problems (41%; Figure 7).
- Men were more likely than women to identify a criminal background as a difficulty for getting or keeping housing, and women were more likely to report court eviction or bad rental history as a reason they are unable to get or keep housing. Again, it is important to interpret differences in gender with caution, as the number of Veteran women experiencing homelessness is quite small.

The majority (87%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported that *at least one* of these barriers prevented them from getting housing; over half (55%) reported experiencing multiple barriers.

7. Barriers to regaining stable housing

Have you ever had difficulty getting or keeping housing because...	Percentage responding “yes”		
	Men (N=367)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=393)
No affordable housing	46%	50%	46%
Credit problems	40%	46%	41%
No local rental history	32%	32%	32%
Criminal background	32%	23%	31%
Court eviction or bad rental history	29%	39%	29%
No transportation	22%	26%	22%
Alcohol or chemical use	19%	12%	18%
Mental health problems	13%	12%	13%
Physical health problems	8%	15%	9%
Age	5%	4%	5%
Race	5%	4%	5%
Family size	2%	10%	3%

The barriers listed above represent both sides of the affordability equation – the cost of housing and the ability to pay. Secondary barriers include considerations that landlords use to screen for the desirability of a new tenant, including poor credit and rental histories and/or criminal history.

To supplement what interview respondents reported as their housing barriers in Figure 8, Wilder looked at data throughout the entire interview to find other possible barriers to housing. These were selected based on a list of common barriers identified by homeless service providers:

- 74% have been homeless before
- 71% were unemployed
- 64% have a serious mental illness
- 60% have been homeless for at least a year
- 59% have spent time in a correctional facility

Finally, another major barrier to regaining stable housing was long waiting lists, illustrating the lack of affordable housing and needed rental assistance for low income people. Over four in ten (42%) Veterans experiencing homelessness were on a waiting list for housing vouchers (Section 8) or housing that offers some type of financial assistance, and 20% of those Veterans had been waiting for over a year. Of those who were not on a waiting list, 19% reported that they were unable to get on a waiting list because the list was closed. Twelve percent of Veterans experiencing homelessness said they had received a housing voucher that they lost or could not use.

Health and well-being

Traumatic experiences

A significant predictor of Veteran health is exposure to trauma, particularly in childhood. Trauma exposure can be predictive of mental health, physical health, and chemical health issues.

- More than two-thirds (69%) of homeless Veterans had experienced some type of adverse childhood experience, such as abuse, neglect, or out-of-home placement; this number was higher for Veteran women experiencing homelessness (93%; Figure 8).
- For women, the most common adverse childhood experience was witnessing abuse of another family member. Nearly all (93%) Veteran women experiencing homelessness reported witnessing abuse as a child, compared to 49% of men.

8. Selected adverse childhood experiences among Veterans experiencing homelessness

Selected adverse childhood experiences	Men (N=367)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=393)
Was physically mistreated or abused	45%	48%	45%
Was sexually mistreated or abused	17%	48%	19%
Was neglected	16%	20%	16%
Out-of-home placements as a child ^a	21%	22%	21%
Had a parent serve time in prison	7%	14%	8%
Witnessed abuse of another family member	49%	93%	52%
Lived with someone who abused substances (alcohol or drugs)	47%	57%	47%
Had a parent/guardian with mental health issues	37%	42%	37%
At least one of the above	67%	93%	69%
Three or more of the above	42%	54%	43%

Note. The Ns listed in this table are the **weighted** interview totals. It should be noted that the number of homeless Veteran women is much smaller than the number of homeless Veteran men.

^a Out-of-home placements include foster care, group home, and treatment facilities.

For those experiencing homelessness, trauma – particularly from physical and sexual violence – often continues into adulthood; this is especially true for women.

- Over half (51%) of Veteran women experiencing homelessness reported being in a personal relationship in the previous year with someone who hit them, slapped them, pushed them around, or threatened to do so; 13% of men reported the same.
- 45% of women and 24% of men have stayed in an abusive situation due to no other housing options.
- 39% of women and 18% of men reported being physically or sexually attacked while homeless.
- 37% of women and 11% of men said they had been sexual with someone only for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, or food.
- 35% of women and 7% of men had been approached to work in the sex industry.

Mental health

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported having a serious mental health condition, meaning they had been told by a doctor or nurse (within the last two years) that they had one of the conditions reported in the table below (Figure 9).

- The most common condition reported was anxiety or panic disorder (48%), followed by post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD (44%); rates for these conditions were higher among women.

9. Reported mental health conditions

	Men (N=367)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=393)
Anxiety or panic disorder	47%	64%	48%
Post-traumatic stress disorder	43%	62%	44%
Major depression	43%	47%	43%
Manic episodes or manic depression, bipolar disorder	20%	30%	21%
Antisocial personality, obsessive-compulsive personality, or another severe emotional disorder	15%	20%	15%
Schizophrenia	9%	10%	9%
Any mental health diagnosis above	64%	72%	64%

Note. The Ns listed in this table are the **weighted** interview totals. It should be noted that the number of homeless Veteran women is much smaller than the number of homeless Veteran men.

- Over half (55%) of those interviewed had received outpatient mental health services in their lifetime, and 35% felt they currently needed to see a doctor about a mental or emotional health problem.

Chemical dependency

- Three in ten Veterans experiencing homelessness had been told by a doctor or nurse in the last two years that they had a chemical dependency problem, and 27% had a dual diagnosis of chemical dependency and a mental health condition (Figure 10).

10. Reported chemical dependency

	Men (N=367)	Women (N=26)	Total (N=393)
Alcohol abuse disorder	22%	25%	22%
Drug abuse disorder	16%	23%	16%
Any chemical dependency diagnosis above	29%	35%	30%
Dual diagnosis (chemical dependency and mental illness)	26%	35%	27%

Note. The Ns listed in this table are the **weighted** interview totals. It should be noted that the number of homeless Veteran women is much smaller than the number of homeless Veteran men.

- Nearly four in ten (38%) respondents considered themselves to be alcoholic or chemically dependent.
- Over half (51%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported that they had been in an outpatient alcohol or drug treatment program at some time in their lives. Of that group, nearly four in ten (39%) received treatment in the previous two years.

Physical health

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported they had at least one chronic health condition (i.e., high blood pressure, asthma, other chronic lung or respiratory problems, chronic heart or circulatory problems, diabetes, cancer, severe chronic pain, and/or tuberculosis).
- Nearly half (45%) said they needed to see a dentist about tooth or gum problems; 44% said they needed to see a doctor for a physical health problem.

- Over half (51%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported having a service-related health injury; of that group, the majority reported a mental health problem (53%), followed by injuries to ears or hearing (24%), back (14%), and knees (11%). Veterans also described a variety of other service-related health issues that are not reported here (see the Veterans data tables at mnhomeless.org for more information).

A history of head injuries and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) is common within the homeless population. For the overall adult homeless population, over half (54%) said they have, at some point in their life, been hit in the head so hard that they saw stars or were knocked unconscious; this was even more common among Veterans experiencing homelessness (69%).

- 38% of Veterans experiencing homelessness had indications of a TBI, meaning they have had problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people.
- 10% of those who had served in the military, reported being diagnosed with a service-related head injury or traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Co-occurring health issues

Solving homelessness, within any population, is made more complex by the fact that the health issues described above are often co-occurring; 60% of Veterans experiencing homelessness have either a serious mental health condition, chronic health condition, or substance use disorder. Co-occurring health issues have significant implications on service needs for Veterans (and the homeless population overall), since treatment that addresses only one condition, but not the others, has a lower likelihood of success.

- Chronic health issues (73%) were most common among Veterans experiencing homelessness, followed by mental health conditions (69%); nearly a third (32%) of the population experienced both (Figure 11).
- Two in ten (22%) reported issues with all three aspects of their health – physical, mental, and chemical health conditions.

11. Incidence and co-occurrence of health conditions among Veterans experiencing homelessness

Percent reporting 1 of 3 conditions

Chronic health conditions ^a	Serious mental illness ^b	Substance abuse disorder ^c
73%	69%	27%

Percent reporting 2 of 3 conditions

Chronic health conditions + serious mental illness	Serious mental illness + substance abuse disorder	Substance abuse disorder + chronic health conditions
32%	5%	1%

Percent reporting all 3 conditions

Chronic health conditions + serious mental illness + substance abuse disorder
22%

^a During the last 12 months, did you have any of the following illnesses, conditions, or problems: asthma, tuberculosis or another chronic lung or respiratory problem, high blood pressure or other chronic heart / circulatory problems, diabetes, cancer, or severe chronic pain?

^b In the past 2 years, have you been told by a doctor or nurse that you have any of the following conditions: Schizophrenia or another paranoid or delusional disorder; bipolar disorder, manic episodes, or manic depression; major depression or clinical depression; obsessive-compulsive personality or any other severe social or personality disorder; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Anxiety disorder or panic disorder? In addition to the conditions listed above, this definition also includes outpatient treatment in the past two years.

^c In the past 2 years, have you been told by a doctor or nurse that you have any of the following conditions: alcohol abuse disorder, drug abuse disorder?

- The vast majority (93%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported having at least one serious or chronic disability, meaning a mental health condition, substance abuse disorder, chronic medical condition, cognitive impairment, or other condition that limits work or activities of daily living. Note: This is an expanded definition than the one detailed above, and specifically calls out the debilitating nature of the conditions, in that they prevent daily work or activities.

Services and benefits for Veterans

Veteran-specific services

- While not all Veterans are eligible, nearly half (47%) of those experiencing homelessness were using Veteran benefits on the day of the study. The benefits most frequently used were Veterans Administration medical services (37%), service-related compensation (19%), and Veterans Administration disability pay (16%). An additional 8% of Veterans who were not currently using Veteran benefits had used them in the previous 12 months.
- One-third (33%) of homeless Veterans reported that, during the past 12 months, they had contact with a County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer.
- As described in the introduction to this report, the Homeless Veteran Registry (launched in 2014) is an important, relatively recent service available to Veterans experiencing homelessness; 31% of those interviewed had joined this registry. Rates were slightly higher among those interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area (34%) than in greater Minnesota (24%). For more information about the registry, visit: <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/homelessnessandprevention/>

Medical care

- The majority (81%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported that they had a regular place to go for medical care. Of these, the most frequent place mentioned was the Veterans Administration (44%), followed by a clinic that requires insurance or fees (39%).
- Eighty-two percent of those interviewed had medical coverage of some kind in October; this is similar to the 2015 rate of coverage (86%).
- Over one-quarter (27%) of Veterans experiencing homelessness reported receiving care in an emergency room in October; 43% received care from an emergency room in the previous six months.

Community assistance

Respondents were asked about a series of services and benefits they might have received during the month of the study (October). Food-related assistance was among the most common, as well as the most helpful (Figure 12). Over two-thirds (68%) had received a free, hot meal and nearly half (48%) of those counted it among their top three most helpful services. Other food assistance, particularly food stamps, or SNAP, were rated as helpful (28%). Other commonly used services included medical or dental services (41%), transportation assistance (39%), and free, or nearly free, clothing (36%).

12. Types of services or assistance received in October 2018

	% who received the service during October	% who said the service was 1 of 3 that helped the most (of those who received it)
Food assistance		
Free hot meals	68%	48%
Food stamps or SNAP	43%	28%
Food shelves	28%	12%
Women, Infant & Children (WIC) food program	1%	1%
Health-related services		
Medical or dental services	41%	22%
Mental health services	26%	14%
Emergency room	27%	10%
Transportation assistance (including bus cards)	39%	19%
Free, or almost free, clothing	36%	12%
Homeless outreach-related		
Drop-in center services	34%	11%
Outreach services	25%	15%
Help getting an ID	12%	5%
Help finding a job	11%	7%
Free voice mail or cell phone	11%	2%
Help getting financial or other public benefits	19%	4%

Employment

- Nearly three in ten (29%) Veterans experiencing homelessness were employed; 17% of all Veterans experiencing homelessness were employed full time. These rates are similar to the overall population of adults experiencing homelessness (29% employed; 13% full time).
- For those who were employed, 29% reported that their jobs paid less than \$12 per hour.
- Among the 71% of those who were unemployed, nearly three-quarters (73%) reported being unemployed for a year or more. Over half (52%) had been unemployed for more than four years (Figure 13).
- Over one-third (34%) of unemployed homeless Veterans were looking for work.

13. Length of unemployment among Veterans experiencing homelessness

How long has it been since you last held a job?	Men (N=239)	Women (N=19)	Total (N=258)
Less than 6 months	15%	19%	15%
6 to 12 months	11%	18%	12%
1 to 2 years	7%	-	6%
2 to 3 years	9%	15%	10%
3 to 4 years	6%	-	5%
More than 4 years	52%	49%	52%
Mean (in days)	2,441	2,765	2,464
Median (in days)	1,460	730	1,460

Note. Only those not currently employed were asked this question.

- The most frequently mentioned barriers to employment for unemployed Veterans were physical health problems (43%), mental health problems (35%), lack of transportation (14%), lack of housing (13%), and age (11%).

Income

- When asked about their main sources of income in October 2018, Veterans experiencing homelessness most often reported steady employment (26%), followed by Social Security Disability Insurance, or SSDI (25%), General Assistance (13%), and Social Security (11%; Figure 14).

14. Main sources of income during October 2018

Main sources of income	Men (N=360)	Women (N=24)	Total (N=384)
Steady employment	27%	16%	26%
SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)	26%	17%	25%
General Assistance	14%	11%	13%
Social Security	11%	12%	11%
Asking for money on the streets	3%	11%	3%
Family or significant other	2%	4%	2%
MFIP or a family welfare program in another state	-	8%	1%
No income sources indicated	6%	4%	6%

- The majority of Veterans experiencing homelessness (90%) had at least some income during the month of the study (Figure 15).
- The median income of Veterans experiencing homelessness was \$800 per month. This is higher than the median income of all homeless adults (\$550/month).

15. Total income, from all sources, during October 2018

Total income in October	Men (N=342)	Women (N=22)	Total (N=365)
No income	10%	9%	10%
\$1 to \$100	3%	11%	3%
\$101 to \$300	15%	22%	15%
\$301 to \$500	5%	8%	6%
\$501 to \$800	16%	14%	17%
Over \$800	50%	35%	50%
Mean	\$1,025	\$960	\$1,021
Median	\$830	\$428	\$800

Conclusions

Results of the 2018 study show a drop in the total number and percentage of Veterans among Minnesota's homeless population. The estimated number of Veterans interviewed in the study decreased by approximately 7% from 2015 to 2018; this decrease is noteworthy because there was an overall increase in the statewide homeless population (10% increase from 2015 to 2018).

However, the fact that over 6 in 10 Veterans interviewed in 2018 can be defined as long-term homeless and that three-quarters (73%) of homeless Veterans have chronic health issues suggest that those Veterans who remain in the homeless population have additional barriers to overcome in order to achieve stable housing.

It is also clear that the remaining population of homeless Veterans will need support services and resources to be successful when appropriate housing becomes available.

Appendix A: Minnesota definition of Veteran

The Minnesota definition of “Veteran” is more specific than the federal one, and states that a Veteran is “a citizen of the United States or a resident alien who has been separated under honorable conditions from any branch of the armed forces of the United States after having served on active duty for 181 consecutive days or by reason of disability incurred while serving on active duty, or who has met the minimum active duty requirement as defined by Code of Federal Regulations, title 38, section 3.12a, or who has active military service certified under section 401, Public Law 95-202. The active military service must be certified by the United States secretary of defense as active military service and a discharge under honorable conditions must be issued by the secretary” (MN Statute 197.447).

Among adults interviewed in the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study, the majority of those who served in the U.S. military met the Minnesota definition of Veteran (79%). Veterans who meet the Minnesota definition are a subset of the larger group of Veterans who meet the federal definition. The figures below show the comparison between those who met the Minnesota definition of Veteran and those who only met the federal definition (i.e., they served on active duty for at least one day). Because the number of all other active duty Veterans is so small, interpret differences with caution.

On average, Veterans experiencing homelessness under the Minnesota definition were older (55 years) than other active duty Veterans (48 years). They were also more likely to have attended at least some college (63% vs. 49%) and to be on the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry (35% vs. 18%). They were less likely to have been incarcerated (55% vs. 75%), previously homeless (72% vs. 82%), or homeless a year or more (58% vs. 62%).

A1. Demographics of homeless Veterans

	Minnesota definition of Veterans N=312	All other active duty Veterans N=81
Men	93%	95%
Average (mean) age	55	48
Located in Twin Cities metro area	73%	71%
At least a high school diploma or GED	96%	96%
Attended at least some college	63%	49%
Racial or ethnic minority	42%	47%
Ever incarcerated	55%	75%
Ever homeless before	72%	82%
Currently homeless a year or longer	58%	62%
On the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry	35%	18%
Employed	29%	27%

Note. Because the number of all other active duty Veterans is so small, differences should be interpreted with caution.

On average, those who met the Minnesota definition of Veteran reported fewer traumatic childhood experiences than other active duty Veterans (Figure A2).

A2. Selected adverse childhood experiences among Veterans experiencing homelessness

Adverse childhood experiences	Minnesota definition of Veterans N=312	All other active duty Veterans N=81
Witnessed abuse of another family member	48%	68%
Lived with someone who abused substances (alcohol or drugs)	44%	59%
Was physically mistreated or abused	43%	52%
Had a parent/guardian with mental health issues	33%	50%
Out-of-home placements as a child ^a	20%	26%
Was sexually mistreated or abused	18%	24%
Was neglected	16%	20%
Had a parent serve time in prison	5%	18%
At least one of the above	68%	74%

Note. Because the number of all other active duty Veterans is so small, differences should be interpreted with caution.

^a Out-of-home placements include foster care, group home, and treatment facilities.

Physical and mental health

Respondents who met the Minnesota definition of Veteran were more likely to have service-related health problems, alcohol abuse disorder, and dual diagnosis (Figure A3).

A3. Health-related issues of homeless Veterans

Health-related issues	Minnesota definition of Veterans N=312	All other active duty Veterans N=81
Service-related health problem	53%	42%
Chronic health condition	73%	70%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	40%	60%
Major depression	41%	51%
Serious mental illness	61%	79%
Alcohol abuse disorder	24%	15%
Drug abuse disorder	16%	18%
Dual diagnosis (mental health and substance abuse disorder)	29%	19%

Note. Because the number of all other active duty Veterans is so small, differences should be interpreted with caution.

Barriers to housing

Veterans experiencing homelessness who met the Minnesota definition of Veteran were less likely to report their low income, their criminal history, lack of affordable housing, or the lack of a local rental history as a barrier to getting housing (Figure A4).

A4. Barriers to housing

Current housing barriers cited by Veterans	Minnesota definition of Veterans N=312	All other active duty Veterans N=81
Income below the poverty guideline (\leq \$1,000 per month)	56%	83%
Credit problems	41%	39%
Lack of affordable housing	43%	58%
Criminal history	28%	44%
Eviction, unlawful detainer, or bad rental history	30%	28%
No local rental history	30%	39%

Note. Because the number of all other active duty Veterans is so small, differences should be interpreted with caution.

Appendix B: Study methods

Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a one-day statewide study to better understand the prevalence of homelessness in Minnesota, as well as the circumstances of those experiencing homelessness. The 2018 study took place on October 25, 2018, and included two components that captured information on that date: 1) face-to-face interviews with people throughout the state who met the federal definition of homelessness (see below), and 2) a count of people experiencing homelessness. Because point-in-time counts and surveys can never completely include all people experiencing homelessness, especially those not using shelters, the numbers represented in the study should be considered a minimum count.

- **Face-to-face interviews:** On October 25, 2018, Wilder Research and its partners conducted 4,279 face-to-face interviews with adults and unaccompanied youth in emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, transitional housing, and in non-shelter locations such as encampments, hot-meal programs, and other drop-in service sites.
- **Count of people experiencing homelessness:** In addition to in-depth interviews, shelter staff provided counts of adults, youth, and children staying in all emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, transitional housing, a few Rapid Rehousing programs, and emergency service voucher sites on the day of the study. This complete enumeration within shelters allows Wilder Research staff to weight the interview results for those in shelters and generalize the findings to nearly the entire population of those experiencing homelessness in our state.

Weighting

Sample weightings are applied to all interviews conducted in shelter locations in order to describe the entire shelter population, including those who could not be interviewed, on the day of the study. Interviews with those **not** staying in shelters receive a weighting of 1.0 since there are no census counts to which these interviews can be weighted.

There is no comparable information about the total number of persons in non-shelter locations, other than the counts of those who participated in interviews and persons staying with them in non-shelter locations. All adults and unaccompanied youth found in non-shelter locations were asked to be interviewed (or one member of each couple).

Interviews with Veterans experiencing homelessness are weighted using the same procedure as the weighting of the overall study population; therefore the numbers (Ns) that appear in this report are the weighted interview totals. The total number of interviews (by definition of Veteran), compared to weighted totals are detailed below:

- **Federal definition of Veteran:** Data are based on interviews with 261 Veterans who were experiencing homelessness, including 240 men, 20 women, and one self-identified gender. In the data tables, survey results have been weighted to represent 393 Veterans: 367 men and 26 women.
- **Minnesota definition of Veteran:** Data are based on interviews with 207 Veterans who were experiencing homelessness, including 189 men, 17 women, and one self-identified gender. In the data tables, survey results have been weighted to represent 312 Veterans: 291 men and 21 women.

Definition of homelessness

The definition of homelessness used for the study is the same one specified by the U.S. Congress in its most recent reauthorization of the Hearth Act in May 2009. For the 2018 study, a homeless person is anyone who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, **and**:

1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
or
2. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised, publicly- or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations; congregate shelters; and transitional housing);
or
3. An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided (this includes those persons leaving detox on the date of the study who were homeless upon entry).

For this study, this definition is expanded to include persons who will imminently lose their housing, as evidenced by an eviction action that notifies them that they must leave within 14 days; or persons staying in hotels or motels (not paid for by public or charitable funds) who lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or persons in doubled-up situations where there is evidence that the owner or primary renter will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days.

A parent not meeting any of these criteria may be included if they have a child with them, have a significant history of residential instability, and have a barrier (or have a child with a barrier) that interferes with housing or employment.

Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

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