

American Indian homeless in Minnesota

Fact sheet: Minnesota statewide homelessness study, 2006

This report is based on the 2006 Statewide Study of Homelessness conducted by Wilder Research. It focuses on American Indians who were identified as homeless on October 26, 2006 and who were *not* living on reservations.

Results

On the night of October 26, 2006, trained volunteers interviewed 521 homeless adult American Indians in non-reservation locations across the state of Minnesota. Of this group, 44 percent were men and 56 percent were women.

American Indians were much less likely than other homeless adults to be staying in a formal shelter or housing program. Twenty-eight percent were staying in transitional housing programs, 23 percent were in temporary arrangements where they could stay for free, 19 percent were in emergency shelters, 17 percent were outdoors, or living in an abandoned building, vehicle or a squat, and the remainder were in some other type of short-term temporary arrangement.

Just over half of American Indians (54%) were interviewed in the seven-county metropolitan area, including 40 percent in Hennepin County. Twenty percent were in St. Louis County (including Duluth). By contrast, 72 percent of non-Indian homeless adults were in the metro area.

Education and employment

Twenty-nine percent of American Indian adults had not completed high school. This is similar to the percentage (26%) of adults in the general homeless population who had not completed high school. Twenty-three percent reported that they had received special education services while in school, the same percentage as for all homeless adults.

American Indians in the sample had significantly lower rates of employment (19%) than homeless adults in the general population (30%). Similarly, only 5 percent of the American Indians were employed full-time, compared to 13 percent in the general homeless population.

Income and income sources

Compared to the general population of homeless adults, American Indians had a much lower monthly income (\$364 compared to \$517), and while 21 percent of the general adult homeless population reported that their main source of income was from steady employment, only 8 percent of American Indians gave such a response. More than half of the American Indian respondents (54%), compared to 40 percent of other homeless adults in the survey, reported that they could pay less than \$200 per month for rent.

Health and disabilities

Forty-five percent of all homeless adult American Indians reported a chronic health condition, similar to the percentage of the general homeless adult population who reported such conditions (44%). However, American Indians were much more likely to report a history of symptoms suggesting traumatic brain injury (40%) compared to those in the general population (29%). Fifty-two percent of American Indians in the sample self-reported alcoholism or chemical dependence. This compares to 32 percent in the general homeless population reporting such conditions. Fifty-six percent of American Indians also report a serious or persistent mental health problem, compared to 51 percent of the adults in the general homeless population. Problems more common among American Indians include major depression and post traumatic stress disorder.

continued

Incarceration and post-release housing

Sixty percent of American Indians, compared to 46 percent of adults in the general homeless population, reported that they had ever been incarcerated. Of this group, 33 percent reported that they had been in a juvenile corrections facility, 46 percent reported that they had served in a county jail or workhouse, and 18 percent had served time in a state or federal prison.

Violence and abuse

Thirty-one percent of American Indian women, compared to 32 percent of non-Indian women, report that they are fleeing domestic violence. However, rates of physical and sexual abuse as well as child neglect are higher for the American Indian population. Forty-six percent of the American Indian adults report that they were physically abused as a child, compared to 37 percent of adults in the general homeless population. Thirty-three percent of American Indians, compared to 25 percent of adults in the general homeless population, report that they were sexually abused as children. Neglect was reported by 34 percent of American Indians, compared to 20 percent of adults in the general homeless population.

Service use

The use of Food Stamp benefits and transportation assistance was similar for the American Indian and the general homeless population. Fifty-five percent of American Indians, compared to 50 percent of other homeless adults, used Food Stamps during the month of October 2006, and 41 percent of American Indians, compared to 38 percent of other homeless adults, received transportation assistance during the same time period. However, American Indians were

twice as likely to use food shelves (48% vs. 29%) and somewhat more likely to use free medical clinics (28% vs. 22%) and free clothing shelves (48% vs. 42%). Eighteen percent of American Indians, compared to 14 percent of adults in the general homeless population, reported the loss of medical benefits during the previous 12 month period.

Consistent with their lower use of formal shelter programs, American Indians were more likely than others to report that the most helpful services included hot meal programs (34% vs. 23%), drop-in centers (25% vs. 14%), and outreach services (13% vs. 7%).

Summary

The results show that the general level of distress in the American Indian homeless population not residing on reservations is somewhat higher than for adults in the general homeless population, and that homeless American Indians are less likely to be receiving services from formal shelter and housing programs.

About the study

In the statewide study conducted every three years since 1991, trained volunteers conduct interviews with adults and unaccompanied youth who are in emergency shelters, battered women's shelters, or transitional housing programs, or who are staying in places not meant for habitation. More information about the study, including an overview of the overall findings, can be found on the Wilder Research website (www.wilderresearch.org).

In 2006, a separate companion study examined American Indian homelessness and near-homelessness on six northern reservations. Results of this study are planned to be released in the near future.

**Wilder
Research**

www.wilderresearch.org

1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-647-4600; FAX 651-647-4623



For more information

This summary presents highlights of the 2006 *Statewide Study of Homelessness*. For more information about this report, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research, 651-647-4600.

October 2007