



# 2018 Minnesota Reservation Homeless Study

## Key Findings

This summary provides results from the 2018 Reservation Homeless Study. Alongside the Statewide Minnesota Homeless Study, the Reservation Homeless Study is conducted every three years in partnership with six of Minnesota’s American Indian reservations: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, and White Earth Band of Ojibwe. Wilder Research worked with participating tribes to collect information in October 2018 through 1,226 interviews with people experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness. On the day they were surveyed, these respondents were accompanied by 1,089 others – including significant others, friends, and children. In total, 2,315 people were counted as part of the study.

### Definition of homelessness

This report includes *both* people living on the six participating Minnesota American Indian reservations who are experiencing **literal homelessness** and those experiencing **near-homelessness**.

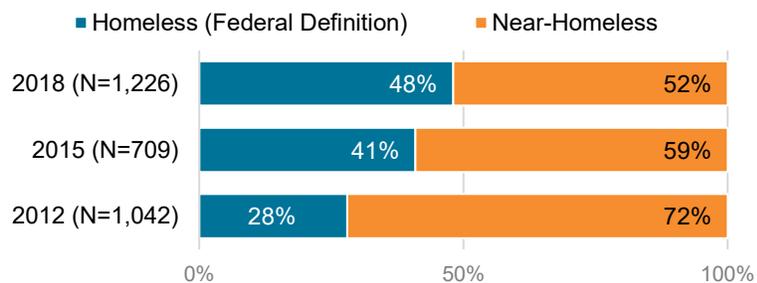
Briefly:

- **Homelessness** includes: staying in a shelter, transitional housing, or a place not intended for housing, or those who face eviction and have no other place to go, as well as some people who are temporarily staying with others (doubled up) if their situation is precarious.
- **Near-homelessness** includes: those who are temporarily staying with others (doubled up) in relatively more stable conditions.

### Overall findings

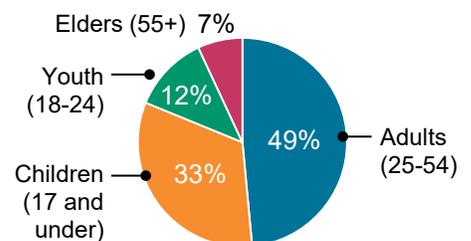
**The percentage of reservation respondents meeting the federal definition of homelessness (literal homelessness) continues to climb.** Compared to previous years, a greater proportion of respondents were experiencing literal homelessness. Some of this growth can be attributed to increased shelter and transitional housing infrastructure on reservations as well as significant outreach efforts.

### Percentage of respondents meeting federal definition of homelessness



**Children, youth, and elders make up half of the homeless and near-homeless population on reservations.** Many families experience homelessness or near-homelessness on reservations – including those with small children. More than 1 in 4 respondents were parents accompanied by their children, and over half (52%) of all children with these parents are age 6 or younger.

### Ages of people experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness in the reservation study



**Most respondents are experiencing chronic, long-term homelessness.** 77% of people interviewed on reservations met the Minnesota definition of long-term homelessness: those who have been without a permanent residence for at least one year, or four or more times during the last three years.

**2 of 3 respondents (64%) were living on a reservation before becoming homeless or near-homeless.** In addition, most study respondents were enrolled tribal members (86%) and were living with their affiliated tribe at the time of the interview (76%).

**Employment rates are lower for adults experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness on reservations.**

During the previous three studies, employment rates among reservation study respondents fell, while employment rates among adults experiencing homelessness in greater Minnesota increased, suggesting that those experiencing homelessness on reservations have not benefited as much from recent economic recovery. 24% of respondents from the reservation study were employed in 2018, and, of those, 81% were earning wages of less than \$15.00 an hour.

**Employment rate of reservation and greater Minnesota statewide homeless study respondents, 2009-2018**



► **Doubling up and near-homelessness on American Indian reservations**

**70% of respondents were doubled up** – that is, staying with a family member or someone they knew rather than living in a shelter or in places not intended for human habitation. Doubling up has historically been the most common form of homelessness on reservations. Anecdotally, we know this is due to a strong cultural tradition of not letting one’s relatives go without a place to stay when you have a home. However...

**Doubling up is not a common preference among the American Indians surveyed.** Nearly all respondents (99%) would live in their own housing – not doubled up with family or friends – if they could find or afford it.

**Many doubled-up respondents face considerable difficulty securing housing.** During the month before the survey, 34% of doubled-up respondents (both homeless and near-homeless) had spent at least one night in a location not intended for housing; 11% had done so for more than a week. Only 5% of doubled-up respondents reported spending time in a shelter or transitional housing program in the month before the survey.

**Doubled-up arrangements are often unstable.** 89% of doubled-up respondents lived in 2+ places during the previous year, and 49% had lived in 4+ places. Over half (57%) were confident they could stay where they were for another month without being asked to leave, while 17% were unsure and 26% felt they could not remain where they were currently staying for another month.

**Among those who were doubled up, overcrowding and substandard conditions are concerns.** 74% of doubled-up respondents live in overcrowded spaces (where the number of residents is greater than the number of rooms in a home); 51% of doubled-up respondents were living in severely overcrowded spaces (more than 1.5 residents per room). One in five (22%) of those doubled-up were living in substandard housing, defined as housing that lacks a flush toilet, electricity, central heat, a kitchen sink, or hot and cold running water.

## ► Health and well-being

**Chronic physical health conditions and mental health challenges are common among reservation respondents.** Nearly half of respondents reported a serious chronic physical health condition (47%) or mental health condition (44%).

**Co-occurrence of a variety of health issues is common among people experiencing homelessness and near-homelessness.** 67% of reservation respondents had at least one serious health condition (chronic physical health condition, serious mental illness, or substance abuse disorder); 38% of respondents reported two of the conditions; 11% reported all three.

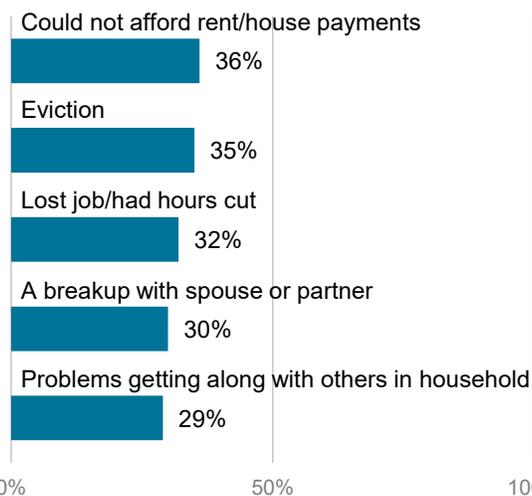
**Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are prevalent among reservation respondents.** 71% of reservation respondents had experienced at least one ACE; 42% had experienced three or more ACEs. The most commonly reported ACEs experienced as a child were living with someone who abused substances (56% of respondents) or witnessing abuse (52%).

**1 in 4 reservation respondents (28%) face physical, mental, or other health challenges that limit their ability to work or perform daily activities.** Given the proportion of reservation respondents experiencing severe challenges that influence their ability to secure employment or perform daily activities, long-term supportive housing or other housing with services may be the best options to support these individuals.

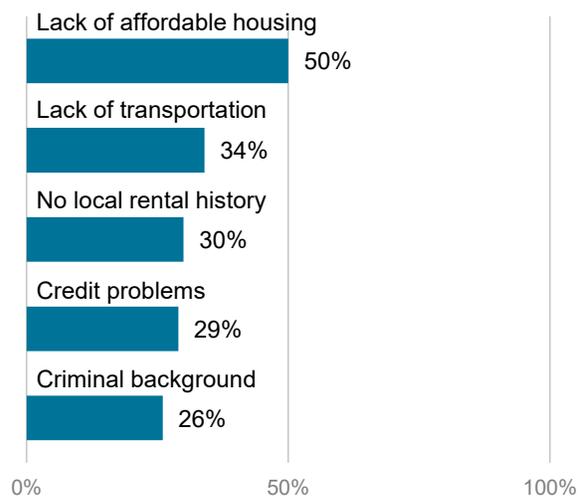
## ► Factors leading to homelessness and barriers to obtaining housing

**A lack of affordable housing is the most common barrier to obtaining housing on reservations.**

### Most common reasons for becoming homeless



### Most common barriers to obtaining housing



Note. Respondents could choose more than one response option.

**Median income of reservation respondents is too low to afford most housing options.** According to HUD, households should spend no more than 30% of income on housing. Respondents' median monthly income from all sources was \$300, and 27% of respondents had no income. Following these guidelines, the average respondent should spend no more than \$90 a month in rent and utilities – a markedly lower price than the 2018 fair market rent of \$576 for a one-bedroom apartment in greater Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

**Housing waiting lists are very long on reservations.** On average, respondents who said they were on a housing waiting list had been waiting 14 months, compared with 9 months for people experiencing homelessness in greater Minnesota.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2018). *FY 2018 Minnesota FMR summary*. FY 2018 Fair Market Rent Documentation System. [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2018\\_code/2018state\\_summary.odn](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2018_code/2018state_summary.odn)

## ► Access to services and public benefits

**Reservation respondents exiting jail or prison need more supports and services to find housing.** 74% of respondents who were recently incarcerated were homeless upon *entering* a correctional facility, 34% did not have a stable place to live when they *exited* a facility. These respondents reported many barriers to obtaining housing and employment. Providing housing support for adults exiting incarceration is one promising intervention point in stopping the intergenerational cycle of homelessness.

**Reservation respondents generally reported low utilization of public benefits and services,** with 37% receiving public assistance in the form of cash benefits in the month prior to the survey. These findings indicate that people experiencing homelessness on reservations may need more support to connect to public services and benefits for which they may be eligible.



## American Indians in the Statewide Minnesota Homeless Study

The reservation homeless survey is conducted every three years in conjunction with Wilder's statewide study of homelessness, which occurs on the third Thursday in October. In contrast to the reservation study, the statewide study does not include those who are doubled up longer term (it only includes those who are literally homeless according to the HUD definition).

In the statewide study (not the topic of this report), **18% of adults identified themselves as American Indian** alone or American Indian as part of a multiple-race heritage. 16% of people interviewed in the Twin Cities metro area and 23% of people experiencing homelessness who were interviewed in greater Minnesota identified as American Indian.

As on reservations, long-term homelessness was a challenge for American Indian respondents in the statewide survey: **74% of American Indians off reservations had been homeless for at least one year, or four or more times during the last three years**, compared to 63% of people experiencing homelessness who did not identify as American Indian.

Although the statewide study and reservation study target slightly different populations, the statewide data can be useful for making comparisons across racial and other demographic subgroups. Additional statewide survey data are available for reference on our website, [mnhomeless.org](http://mnhomeless.org).

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This summary presents highlights of the *HOMELESSNESS ON MINNESOTA AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS: FINDINGS FROM THE 2018 MINNESOTA RESERVATION STUDY*. For more information about this report, contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research, 651-280-2682.

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APRIL 2020