

Homelessness in Minnesota

The tough economic climate of the past few years has had a big impact. The significant increase in the number homeless came after a period of leveling off. Forty percent of homeless adults reported a job loss or reduced hours as a reason they lost their housing. Also the use of food stamps is the highest since the study began. Another notable finding is the increase in long-term homelessness.

The largest percent increase – 57 percent – was among young adults (age 18-21).

	2009 study	Percent increase
Unaccompanied minors (12-17)	227	10%
Young adults (18-21)	1,041	54%
Adults (22+)	5,111	24%
Children (<18) with parents	3,251	19%
Total	9,654	25%

**This includes 24 homeless people (of unknown age) in detox on the night of the survey.*

Along with the historic lows in employment, there were other signs of the economic downturn.

- 48% of all homeless adults have been jobless for more than a year (up from 38% in 2006, and the highest since the study began)
- 21% of unemployed homeless identify “lack of employment opportunities” as one of their main reasons for not working (up from 8% in 2006)
- Median monthly income of homeless adults (from all sources) was \$300 in 2009, down from \$400 in 2006.

Despite the dramatic decreases in employment, steady employment and day or temporary labor remain in the top five income sources for homeless adults. They provide the main income sources for 1 out of 5 homeless adults.

Top Income Sources for Homeless Adults (2009)

	Any Source	Main Source
General Assistance	29%	25%
MFIP or similar program	19%	15%
Steady employment	17%	14%
Relatives or friends (not parents)	12%	4%
Day or temporary labor	11%	5%
Sale or pawning of belongings	10%	2%
Asking for money on the streets	10%	4%
Supplemental Security Income	9%	8%
Emergency assistance	8%	1%
Social Security Disability Insurance	8%	7%

Downward trend of employment and income

Just 20 percent of homeless adults reported they were currently employed. Only 6 percent worked full-time (35+ hours per week), the lowest since the study began.

Youth on their own (ages 12-21) fared better than the adult homeless population but still experienced decreased in employment rates.

- 27% of youth were employed (31% in 2006)
- 6% of homeless youth averages at least 35 hours per week (10% in 2006)

Most Minnesota homeless are from Minnesota

More than three-fourths (77%) of the adults experience homelessness have lived in Minnesota for more than two years, the highest proportion since the start of the study. Of those who have come more recently, about one-third lived in Minnesota before.

Almost three-fourths (73%) of homeless adults report their last permanent and stable housing was in Minnesota –higher in greater Minnesota (79%) than in the Twin Cities metro (71%).

Eighty-one percent of adults who fit the Minnesota definition of long-term homelessness (homeless for at least a year or four times in the past three years) have lived in Minnesota for more than two years.

Most homeless youth grew up in Minnesota (70% of youth overall; 88% of youth minors and 68% of young adults). This remained consistent over the past three years.

What persists?

A number of persistent themes and issues continue to define homelessness in Minnesota, and represent some of the most difficult personal and systemic barriers to sustained stable housing.

Racial Disparities

Black and American Indian people remain significantly over-represented among the homeless. Together African American and African-born people make up about 4 percent of the adult Minnesota population, while they account for only 41 percent of Minnesota's homeless adult population.

Racial Distribution Among Minnesota's Homeless (2009) and Overall Population (Census, 2008)

Adults (18+)			Minors (12-17)	
Homeless	MN		Homeless	MN
11%	1%	American Indian	20%	1%
1%	3%	Asian American	2%	4%
41%	4%	Black	43%	6%
39%	88%	White	24%	81%
		(non-Hispanic)		
8%	2%	Other, including	11%	7%
		multi-racial		
7%	3%	Hispanic (any race)	11%	5%

Multiple health issues

Three-fourths (74%) of homeless adults report at least one of three major health issues: mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or a chronic physical health condition. Many report multiple issues.

Barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing

One half (51%) of homeless adults report that lack of a job or income (43%) or lack of affordable housing (24%) is currently preventing them from getting housing. One third (32%) of homeless adults report they left their last permanent housing because they were evicted, 8 percent because a place they were renting was foreclosed on, and 4 percent because a home they owned went into foreclosure.

Domestic Violence among women and children

Twenty-nine percent of adult homeless women are fleeing domestic violence and 58 percent of those women have children under 18 living with them. About 600 children under 18 were living with women fleeing abuse on the night of the study.

Intervention Points

Potential intervention points include prevention, rapid response to recent homelessness, and ending long-term homelessness. To address homelessness, at any of these points, it is critical to have a strong community safety net that includes: affordable housing, Earned Income Tax Credits, rent and utility subsidies, temporary cash assistance for needy individuals and families, job training, transportation, health care, child care, and case management for those with multiple needs. Support from neighbors and faith communities to meet basic needs is also important.

In addition, below are examples of strategies for specific intervention points:

Prevention of homelessness

- Discharge planning: for those leaving foster care, residential treatment, jail or prison, housing should be part of the discharge plan. In addition, comprehensive planning is needed for those leaving abusive homes.
- Mental/chemical health planning and treatment: For those dealing with mental health or chemical dependency issues, treatment needs to be more available, affordable, and culturally relevant. It should also include planning for potential crises.
- Emergency assistance: For those precariously housed, support such as emergency rent, utilities and landlord and/or bank mediation can avert homelessness.

Rapid response to recent homelessness

- There is need for adequate emergency shelter facilities throughout the state, especially in greater Minnesota.
- Immediate triage: There is a need to quickly identify needs, connect people with resources, and place them in permanent or transitional housing with supports.
- Assure the availability of affordable or subsidized housing.

Ending long-term homelessness

- Provide outreach for those not using shelters.
- Provide treatment for mental, chemical, and physical health problems.
- Make available a variety of subsidized and supported housing opportunities, including low-demand housing (supportive housing that does not require adherence to strict behavioral rules to enter).