

Homelessness and Older Adults in Minnesota

Minnesota Gerontological Society
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Agenda

Background on homelessness

Homelessness study overview

Older adult population overview

What is homelessness?

Federal definition of homelessness:

- Lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, **and**
- Has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised temporary living accommodation, **or**
- Has a nighttime residence in a place not meant for human habitation.

Key reasons people are homeless in MN

- The recession had a big impact
- There is not enough affordable housing
- Most homeless people have barriers to living independently
- Poverty is still concentrated among people of color and racial disparities exist

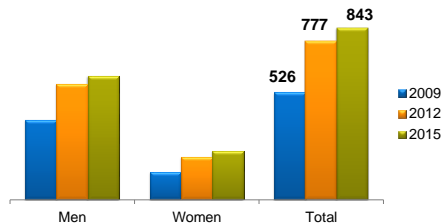
Why look at
homeless
older adults?

Good news and bad news...

- Relatively small numbers of older adults are experiencing homelessness in MN
- Older adults are **9%** of homeless population

But the number is increasing...

Up 48% from 2009 to 2012 and 8% from 2012 to 2015



Key characteristics of older adults who are homeless

- Age 55+
- Complex health care needs
- Mobility issues
- Economic instability
- Government safety nets make a difference

Affordable housing

Fair Market Rent vs. Income

	Fair Market Rent (one bedroom)	Monthly income needed to afford FMR	Monthly income provided by maximum SSI* benefit
Greater Minnesota	\$531	\$1,770	\$733
Twin Cities Metro	\$745	\$2,483	

*Supplemental Security Income

Poverty guidelines illustration

		Maximum annual SSI* benefit	Shortfall
Annual National Poverty Guideline	\$11,770	\$8,794	\$2,976
Annual Elder Index for Minnesota	\$22,980		\$14,186

*Supplemental Security Income

Sources: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>
www.basic.economicsecurity.org

A brief history of the homeless survey in MN

- Statewide study has been conducted every three years since 1991
- Trained volunteer interviewers

Last conducted on October 22, 2015:

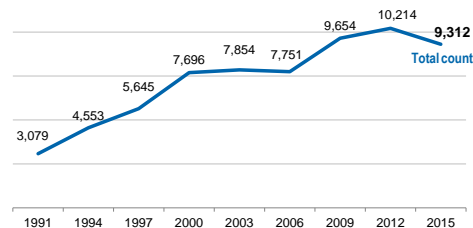
- 45 minute interviews in 300 shelters and programs; translated into Spanish and Somali
- Outreach locations in 50+ cities, towns, and outlying areas

Purpose of the statewide study

- Understand the prevalence, causes, circumstances, and effects of homelessness
- Promote efforts for permanent, affordable housing for all Minnesotans
- Inform federal, state, and local policies to prevent and end homelessness

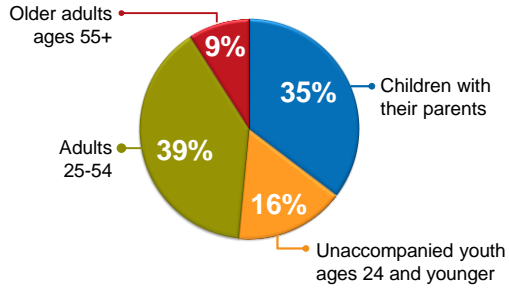
HOMELESSNESS IN MINNESOTA

Single-night count



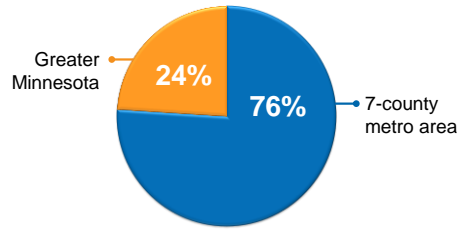
Source: Wilder Research

Age groups



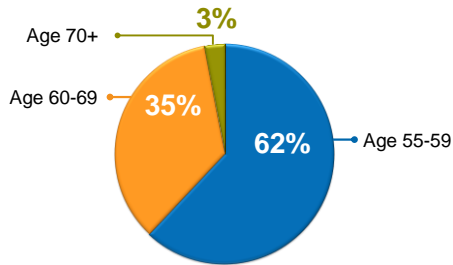
Source: 2015 Statewide Homeless Study

Location of homeless older adults



Source: 2015 Statewide Homeless Study

Age distribution



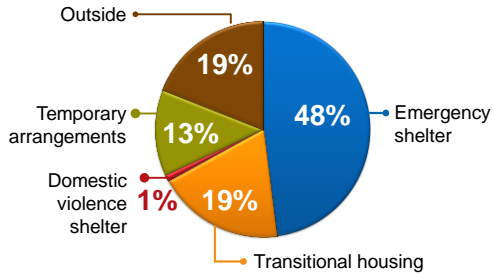
Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Demographics and background

- 77% male
- 45% persons of color
- 93% born in the United States
- 60% had lived in MN for 20+ years
- 33% of men had served in the U.S. military

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Housing on the night of the study



Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Experience with homelessness

- 61% homeless for at least a year
- 47% met the federal definition of chronic homelessness
- 50% did not become homeless until they were age 50+
- 34% homeless for the first time
- 41% had stayed outside in the past month (October)

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Main reasons for losing housing

- **39%** could not afford the rent
- **38%** lost their job or had their hours cut
- **28%** were evicted
- **18%** had a drinking or drug problem
- **17%** had problems getting along with other people they lived with
- **16%** had a break-up with a spouse or partner

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Main barriers to obtaining permanent housing

- **38%** lacked a job or income
- **23%** could not find affordable housing
- **15%** had a criminal background
- **13%** had credit problems

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study



Health and well-being

- **69%** reported having chronic health problems
- **17%** are not taking required medications
- **51%** need to see a professional about a physical health problem
- **53%** need to see a dentist

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study



Health and well-being

- **41%** reported serious or persistent mental health problems
- **32%** reported cognitive difficulties
- **30%** reported symptoms suggesting TBI
- **24%** reported alcohol or drug abuse disorder

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study



Health and well-being

- **88%** reported a serious or chronic disability that limits work or ADLs
 - **61%** reported physical, mental or other health conditions that limit their ability to work
 - **19%** reported physical, mental or other health conditions that make it hard to bathe, eat, get dressed, get in or out of bed, or get around

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Violence and abuse

- **19%** of older women and **10%** of older men reported being attacked or beaten while homeless
- **23%** stayed in an abusive relationship because they had no other housing options
- **27%** were physically abused as a child or youth
- **68%** had a difficult start in life

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Treatment and corrections

- **42%** have been in an in-patient alcohol or drug treatment facility
- **20%** have been in an in-patient mental health facility
- **50%** have been incarcerated at some point in their lives

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Education and employment

- **86%** had completed at least high school or a GED
- **13%** were employed
- **45%** unemployed for more than four years
- **35%** were looking for work
- Top 3 barriers to employment: poor physical health, age, and lack of transportation

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Income

- **36%** General Assistance
- **12%** Social Security
- **16%** Social Security Disability Insurance
- **16%** Supplemental Security Income

Average monthly income of \$400



Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

The most helpful services used

- **41%** food stamps
- **25%** hot meal program
- **21%** free/almost free clothing shelves
- **20%** transportation
- **16%** drop-in centers
- **15%** food shelves

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

Access to resources

- **23%** have a cell phone with a data plan
- **51%** have access to a computer
- **73%** have a valid ID
- **42%** said it had been more than a month since they had contact with family

Source: 2012 Statewide Homeless Study

A few takeaways

- Number of older adults in shelters and on the streets is growing
- Health care needs of older homeless adults require coordinated systems of care that can respond to complex health problems
- **Physical health problems** limit ability to work

A few takeaways

- Older adults rely on *income and food supports*
- They are often *disconnected from family*
- *Fixed incomes* may lead to even more increased economic vulnerability
- Supportive housing and other services can help people keep and maintain housing (examples include: Center City Housing's New San Marco in Duluth)

Discussion

- What are the challenges for ending homelessness for older adults?
- What are possible solutions for addressing homelessness for older adults?
- What should be the priorities to address these challenges?

What gives us hope

- Improvement among groups targeted for solutions
- Newly allocated money in Minnesota for housing
- Solutions address systems, not just individuals
- Unintended consequences – experiences of volunteer interviewers

Next steps

- Detailed data regarding the 2015 study coming soon with reports following throughout the year
- Next Wilder homelessness survey: October 2018
 - Volunteer opportunities through Wilder or through your Continuum of Care region
 - Spreading the word to the homeless community
 - Companion study on American Indian reservations

Wilder
Research

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Research

To learn more about homelessness
in Minnesota go to:
wilderresearch.org
mnhomeless.org



Questions or comments?

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