



# Homelessness in Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota

*Key findings from the 2015 survey of people experiencing homelessness*

**S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 6**

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# Background

## The Coalition

The Fargo-Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons (The Coalition) began in 1989 when a group of individuals, representing four emergency shelters and other homeless service providers, gathered to brainstorm ideas and support each other in matters affecting homeless men, women, and children in the Fargo-Moorhead community. From those initial gatherings, The Coalition has evolved into a coalition of more than 60 community partners. The membership represents both concerned citizens and a broad array of public and nonprofit agencies and organizations serving homeless and at-risk individuals and families in the Fargo-Moorhead area. The mission of The Coalition is to work in partnership to achieve permanent solutions to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness.

Every three years, Wilder Research conducts a statewide study to better understand the prevalence, causes, circumstances, and effects of homelessness. The study includes face-to-face interviews with people throughout Minnesota and Fargo, North Dakota who meet the federal definition of homelessness, as well as a count of people who were homeless on a single Thursday in late October. This summary provides counts and characteristics of the homeless population from the most recent study conducted in Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota (October 22, 2015).

Counts include all people staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs. The study also counted non-sheltered homeless people identified through outreach in locations such as encampments, hot meal programs, and other drop-in service sites.

# Counts on the night of the study

## Methods

The project coincided with Wilder Research's 2015 statewide survey of persons without permanent shelter. Agency and community volunteers were trained in social science research interview methods through a professionally produced DVD. The DVD also provided detailed instruction in how to conduct the approximately 45-minute face-to-face interview with individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

On Thursday, October 22, 2015, trained volunteer interviewers conducted 299 surveys with adults and 9 surveys with unaccompanied minors who were experiencing homelessness in the Fargo-Moorhead area. These surveys represent the 591 persons experiencing homelessness on that day. Surveys were conducted at 11 shelters and transitional housing programs, as well as at drop-in centers, feeding sites, and other locations frequented by persons experiencing homelessness in the Fargo-Moorhead area. The Fargo-Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons enlisted the help of homeless individuals to assist in locating homeless individuals not in shelters. A \$5.00 honorarium was given to each survey participant.

## 591 homeless adults, youth, and children were counted in the Fargo- Moorhead area, down 32 percent from 2012

Between 2012 and 2015, there was a 32% decrease in the area homeless population (down 40% in Fargo; down 14% in Moorhead).

Most of the decline in the 2015 study was in non-shelter locations. There was a 59 percent decrease in people found outside of the shelter system (down 61% in Fargo; down 53% in Moorhead). Variations in the number of people found outside the shelter system may be due to the ability of outreach staff to locate people experiencing homelessness. Those not using shelters are a much more hidden population.

The number of people in emergency shelters and transitional housing also showed a slight decrease (9%). However, there was a difference by city: Fargo was down 20 percent, while Moorhead was up by 17 percent.

On October 22, 2015, shelter providers counted 419 homeless people in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs (Figure 1). An additional 172 homeless people (including 21 children with their parents) were identified who were not staying in any formal shelter or housing program, for a total of 591 homeless people (376 in Fargo and 215 in Moorhead). There were 60 families counted in the 2015 study, including 51 in shelters and 9 in non-shelter locations. These families included 127 children under age 18.

## 1. Homeless counts in shelters and non-shelter locations by age group, 2015

	Fargo			Moorhead			Fargo/ Moorhead
	In shelters	Not in shelters	Total	In shelters	Not in shelters	Total	Total
Unaccompanied minors (age 17 and under)	3	8	11	1	2	3	14
Young adults (age 18-21)	11	8	19	25	5	30	49
Young adults (age 22-24)	13	7	20	5	0	5	25
Adults (age 25-54)	140	69	209	66	30	96	305
Older adults (age 55 and over)	38	16	54	11	6	17	71
Children (under age 18) with parents	52	11	63	54	10	64	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>591</b>

### Change over time varies by age group

After nearly a decade of increases, the number of persons experiencing homelessness has decreased in the Fargo-Moorhead area. This was especially true for adults age 22 and over (Figure 2).

## 2. Change in homeless counts by age group, 2009-2015

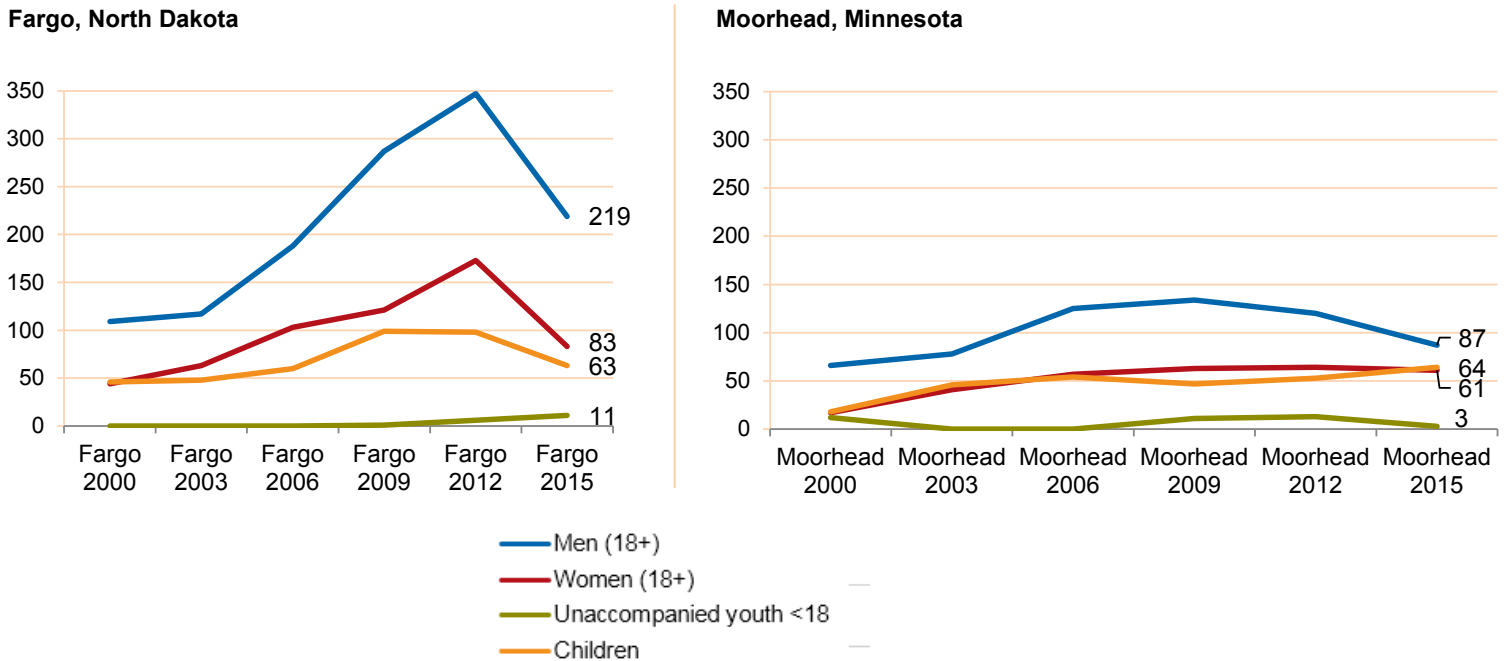
	2009	2012	2015	% change (2012-2015)
Children (under age 18) with parents	146	151	127	-16%
Unaccompanied minors (age 17 and under)	12	19	14	-26%
Young adults (age 18-21)	52	64	49	-23%
Adults (age 22-54)*	467	532	330	-38%
Older adults (age 55 and over)	86	108	71	-34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>-32%</b>

\*Young adults age 22-24 are included in the “adults” category so that we can compare to data collected in previous studies.

In Fargo between 2012 and 2015, the number of homeless men decreased from 347 to 219; the number of homeless women decreased from 173 to 83; and the number of homeless children decreased from 98 to 63 (Figure 3). Unaccompanied youth (under age 18) nearly doubled, but numbers are small (6 to 11).

Moorhead also saw a decrease between 2012 and 2015 (homeless men: 120 to 87; homeless women: 64 to 61; unaccompanied youth under age 18: 13 to 3). However, there was a slight increase in the number of homeless children in Moorhead (53 to 64).

### 3. Change in homeless counts by city, 2000-2015



#### These numbers are a minimum, based on actual counts

Because time-specific counts and surveys are not able to completely enumerate all people experiencing homelessness in any given geographical area, the numbers represented in this report should be considered a minimum. All such counts underrepresent the total homeless population, since many homeless people outside the shelter system are not found on the night of the study. This is especially true of youth on their own, who often couch hop or find other temporary places to stay, and homeless people in rural areas where there are fewer shelters. The count does not include estimates of the uncounted or unidentified homeless population.

## Who is homeless?

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. For the 2015 study, a homeless person was anyone who:

- Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- Has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised, publicly- or privately-operated temporary living accommodation, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and battered women’s shelters; or
- Has a nighttime residence in any place not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges or in cars.

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

The definition for homeless youth is expanded to include people through age 24 who are not with a parent or guardian and who are staying temporarily with other relatives or friends (“couch surfing”). However, those age 18 or older are legally adults and are also included in the overall adult findings. For this reason, “youth” and “adult” numbers should not be added together for totals.



# Key findings

Interviews were conducted with 299 adults in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and non-shelter locations such as encampments, hot meal programs, and other drop-in service sites. This includes 70 interviews with men and 44 interviews with women in Moorhead, and 135 interviews with men and 50 interviews with women in Fargo. A total of nine interviews were completed by unaccompanied minors (ages 17 and under), including seven in Fargo and two in Moorhead.

## The majority of homeless adults are men who have completed at least a high school degree

- In 2015, men made up the majority of homeless adults (68%) in the Fargo-Moorhead area (73% in Fargo and 59% in Moorhead).
- In the Fargo-Moorhead area, the average age of homeless men was 42 (43 in Fargo and 40 in Moorhead); for homeless women it was 34 (35 in Fargo and 34 in Moorhead).
- In the Fargo-Moorhead area, military veterans made up 17 percent of all homeless adults (21% in Fargo and 9% in Moorhead). In Fargo, 28 percent of homeless males were veterans, 13 percent of homeless males were veterans in Moorhead.
- The majority of homeless adults had completed at least high school or obtained a GED (86% in Fargo and 71% in Moorhead). Over one-third had attended at least some college (38% in Fargo and 33% in Moorhead). Over one-quarter of homeless persons had received special education services while in school (25% in Fargo and 31% in Moorhead).
- Just over one-third of homeless adults were considered long-term homeless by federal definition. People are considered to be chronic homeless if they have been homeless for a year or longer or if they have been homeless four times in the past three years; and they have a disabling condition. In Fargo, 36 percent met the definition (40% of men and 26% of women), and in Moorhead, 35 percent met the definition (48% of men and 17% of women).

## While the majority of homeless people in the area are white, people of color are overrepresented compared to their numbers in the overall population

- While less than 15 percent of Minnesota’s and 10 percent of North Dakota’s overall population is made up of persons of color, more than 40 percent of Fargo-Moorhead homeless adults are persons of color (43% in Fargo and 41% in Moorhead).
- People who are African American and American Indian are disproportionately affected by homelessness (Figure 4).
- For those experiencing homelessness, there is an even greater over representation of American Indian women (28% of Fargo homeless women and 34% of Moorhead homeless women) and American Indian people interviewed in non-sheltered locations (24% of non-sheltered homeless people in Fargo and 26% of non-sheltered homeless people in Moorhead).

### 4. Racial/ethnic background of homeless adults and all adults in state, 2015

	Minnesota adults: age 18 or older <sup>a</sup>	Homeless adults: Fargo	Homeless adults: Moorhead	Homeless adults: Fargo/Moorhead
White/Caucasian	85%	55%	57%	56%
Black/African American	5%	23%	15%	20%
American Indian	1%	15%	22%	17%
Other/Multi-racial	1%	6%	7%	6%
Hispanic (any race)	4%	2%	7%	4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4%	<1%	-	<1%

<sup>a</sup>Source: U.S. Census

## Homelessness is often preceded by childhood trauma and abuse

Nearly all homeless youth (95%) and three-quarters of homeless adults (74%) in Fargo-Moorhead had experienced some type of adverse childhood experience such as abuse, neglect, or out-of-home placement (Figure 5).

### 5. Adverse childhood experiences experienced by homeless adults and youth, 2015

Adverse childhood experiences	Adults (age 18 or older)	Youth (age 24 or younger) <sup>b</sup>
Physically abused as a child	42%	59%
Sexually abused as a child	20%	34%
Neglected as a child	25%	36%
Out-of-home placements as a child <sup>a</sup>	41%	67%
During childhood, had a parent serve time in prison	18%	57%
Witnessed abuse as a child	44%	64%
Lived with substance abuser as a child	50%	73%
Lived with parent/guardian with mental illness	37%	53%
At least one of the above	74%	95%

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

b In previous years, the “youth” analysis focused on minors age 17 or younger and young adults ages 18-21. This age grouping is included at points in this fact sheet in order to accurately compare data across years. To match recent policy changes, the 2015 study defines “youth” as age 24 or younger, so this column with this age grouping has been added. There is some overlap between the “adults” age grouping and the “youth” age grouping.

## Violence and exploitation are common, especially for homeless women

One common reason for women to seek temporary shelter is to flee an abusive partner. Nearly one-third of women interviewed (32%) indicated that one of the main reasons for leaving their last housing was to flee abuse (41% in Fargo; 22% in Moorhead). Other types of violence and exploitation are common (Figure 6).

### 6. Violence and sexual exploitation experienced by homeless adults and youth by gender, 2015

	Adults (age 18 or older)		Youth (age 24 or younger) <sup>a</sup>	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Left last housing because of abuse by someone they lived with	32%	8%	29%	21%
Stayed in an abusive situation due to no other housing options	63%	20%	43%	25%
Physically or sexually attacked while homeless	32%	19%	36%	10%
Been sexual with someone only for the purpose of getting shelter, clothing, or food	11%	12%	18%	3%
At least one of the above	79%	36%	68%	38%

<sup>a</sup> In previous years, the “youth” analysis focused on minors age 17 or younger and young adults ages 18-21. This age grouping is included at points in this fact sheet in order to accurately compare data across years. To match recent policy changes, the 2015 study defines “youth” as age 24 or younger, so this column with this age grouping has been added. There is some overlap between the “adults” age grouping and the “youth” age grouping.

## The vast majority of homeless adults and youth have serious health problems

Three out of four homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead have serious health conditions, including mental and physical health problems, substance abuse disorder, or evidence of a traumatic brain injury (Figure 7).

- Mental illness is a significant problem among those who are homeless in the Fargo-Moorhead area. Fifty-four percent of homeless adults in the Fargo-Moorhead area (49% in Fargo; 62% in Moorhead) were told by a doctor or nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental illness.
- Forty-one percent of adults have a chronic physical health problem (38% in Fargo; 45% in Moorhead).
- About one-third of homeless adults consider themselves chemically dependent (34% in Fargo; 31% in Moorhead). A slightly smaller group has received inpatient treatment (21% in Fargo; 18% in Moorhead) or outpatient treatment (20% in Fargo; 14% in Moorhead) within the past two years.

### 7. Long-term health issues experienced by homeless adults and youth, 2015

	Adults (age 18 or older)	Youth (age 24 or younger)
Serious mental illness <sup>a</sup>	54%	54%
Chronic physical health condition	41%	28%
Substance abuse disorder	27%	16%
Evidence of traumatic brain injury	31%	19%
At least one of the above	75%	71%

<sup>a</sup> The diagnosis of “anxiety or panic disorder” was added in 2015.

Many homeless adults in Fargo and Moorhead reported serious or chronic disabilities, in addition to the mental illnesses, substance abuse problems, and chronic health problems already mentioned.

- Forty-five percent of homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead reported physical, mental, or other health conditions that limit the kind or amount of work they can do (43% in Fargo; 49% in Moorhead) or that limit their daily activities (17% in Fargo; 16% in Moorhead), as well as conditions that interfere with memory or daily decision making (50% in Fargo; 63% in Moorhead).

## About one-third have symptoms or backgrounds that suggest a previous traumatic brain injury.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) also represents a considerable health concern among the homeless population. Evidence of TBI includes any respondent who reports being hit on the head so hard they were knocked unconscious or saw stars and who subsequently began to have problems with headaches, concentration or memory, understanding, excessive worry, sleeping, or getting along with people.

- In 2015, 31 percent of homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead reported evidence of TBI (similar to previous years). Twenty-eight percent of homeless adults in Fargo and 37 percent of homeless in Moorhead reported evidence of a TBI.

Brain injuries are often underdiagnosed among populations receiving assistance. Although the Brain Injury Foundation considers the experiences described above to be strong evidence of likely brain injury, in 2015, only 14 percent of homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead reported being told by a doctor or nurse in the previous two years that they had a concussion or TBI.

# Housing histories

Homelessness often starts in childhood and during the transition years to adulthood. Over one-quarter of homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead were first homeless when they were a child (Figure 8).

## 8. Age when first homeless by homeless adults and youth, 2015

Age at first homelessness	Adults (age 18 or older)	Youth (age 24 or younger)
0 - 12 years old	12%	35%
13 - 17 years old	15%	27%
18 - 24 years old	23%	33%

In their most recent experience with homelessness, the most common reason for homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead losing their last housing was due to housing affordability or lack of employment (Figure 9). However, issues related to alcohol or drug use, or problems with people in the household were also common.

## 9. Most common reasons why homeless adults left their last regular housing, 2015

Did you leave your last regular or permanent housing because...	Fargo	Moorhead	Fargo and Moorhead
You could not afford rent or house payments	36%	33%	35%
You were evicted or your lease was not renewed	35%	32%	34%
You lost your job or had your hours cut	35%	30%	33%
A drinking or drug problem you had	31%	22%	28%
Problems getting along with other people you lived with	30%	23%	27%
Drinking or drug problem of someone else	26%	13%	21%
A breakup with your spouse or partner	25%	21%	24%
Behavior problem of a guest or visitor	23%	14%	20%
Entered treatment, jail, or residential program	19%	15%	17%
Abuse by someone you lived with	16%	16%	16%

Note. Totals exceed 100% because respondents could identify multiple reasons.

Youth (age 24 and younger) are particularly vulnerable when they are on the streets. In the 30 days prior to the survey, nearly one-quarter of homeless youth in Fargo-Moorhead had to stay outside at some point; about half were doubled up or couch hopping (Figure 10).

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**10. Settings where homeless youth (age 24 and under) stayed during previous 30 nights, 2015**

	<b>Emergency shelter/ transitional housing</b>	<b>Doubled-up</b>	<b>Outside</b>	<b>Housed</b>	<b>Other</b>
Fargo	67%	56%	25%	14%	3%
Moorhead	67%	33%	19%	10%	5%
Fargo/Moorhead	67%	47%	23%	12%	4%

Note. Row totals are greater than 100% because many youth stayed in multiple settings during the month prior to the survey.

**The border between the two cities is fluid**

Of homeless persons interviewed in Fargo, 48 percent lived in North Dakota for two years or less. Of those recent residents, 46 percent came to North Dakota from Minnesota. Of homeless persons interviewed in Moorhead on the night of the survey, 55 percent lived in Minnesota for two years or less. Of those recent residents, 59 percent came to Minnesota from North Dakota.



# Employment and income

After a downturn in the economy, employment rates among homeless adults are back to levels similar to 2006. Thirty-nine percent of homeless adults in Fargo-Moorhead have jobs, and 18 percent are employed full time.

- Employment rates are fairly similar in the two cities. In Fargo, 40 percent of homeless adults reported having a job, and 18 percent reported working full time. In Moorhead, 36 percent of homeless adults reported having a job, with 19 percent working full time.
- For homeless adults in Fargo who were not working, the three most common barriers were physical health (41%), transportation (19%), and a lack of resources needed to look for work (18%). For those in Moorhead who were not working, the three most common barriers were transportation (37%), physical health (28%), and child care (23%).
- Average income increased considerably from 2012 to 2015; average income for homeless adults in October 2012 in the Fargo-Moorhead area was \$486 (\$499 in Fargo; \$446 in Moorhead). The average (mean) income in October 2015 was \$658 (\$662 in Fargo and \$651 in Moorhead), and the median monthly income was \$400 in Fargo and \$500 in Moorhead (up from a 2012 median income of \$300 in Fargo and \$203 in Moorhead).
- The average amount that homeless persons in Fargo said they could pay each month for their own place to live, including rent and utilities, was \$318, and in Moorhead the average amount was \$364. Nearly 30 percent said they could not pay anything for their own place to live (35% in Fargo and 16% in Moorhead).
- The main sources of income for homeless adults in Fargo was temporary work or day labor (31%), steady employment (24%), or SSI (12%). In Moorhead, it was steady employment (26%), General Assistance (19%), MFIP (13%), or temporary labor (10%) (Figure 11).
- Twenty-seven percent of homeless adults interviewed in Fargo and 12 percent in Moorhead reported having no income sources in October.

**11. Main sources of income for homeless adults earning income in October 2015 by city**

<b>“Main sources” of income</b>	<b>Fargo</b>	<b>Moorhead</b>	<b>Fargo and Moorhead</b>
General Assistance	2% 0% for men	19% 18% for men	8% 6% for men
Employment (steady or temporary)	56%	36%	48%
MFIP/TANF	1% 3% for women	13% 31% for women	5% 16% for women
Social Security, SSI or SSDI	26%	17%	22%
Friends and family	2%	7%	4%

Note. Percentages are based only on those who reported any income.

# Service usage

## Services most used are those required to meet basic needs

- Over half (57%) of homeless adults in Fargo and 78 percent of homeless adults in Moorhead reported having some type of medical coverage in October
- Over one-third (37%) of homeless adults interviewed in Fargo reported using the Sanford Medicaid Expansion Plan or MNSURE.org website to help them find their medical coverage. In Moorhead, nearly half (48%) reported the same.
- In Fargo, the five most frequently used services in the month of the study were: clothing shelves (41%), hot meals (39%), food stamps (29%), transportation assistance (29%), and the emergency room (28%) (Figure 12).
- In Moorhead, the five most frequently used services in October were: food stamps (62%), clothing shelves (43%), transportation assistance (34%), hot meals (27%), and help getting financial or public benefits (27%) (Figure 12).

## 12. Types of assistance received by homeless adults in October 2015 by city

Received assistance	Fargo	Moorhead	Fargo and Moorhead
<b>Food assistance</b>			
Food stamps	29%	62%	40%
Hot meal program	39%	27%	35%
Food shelf	18%	20%	19%
<b>Free/almost free clothing</b>	41%	43%	42%
<b>Transportation assistance</b>	29%	34%	31%
<b>Health-related service</b>			
Emergency room	28%	23%	26%
Free medical clinic	25%	15%	22%
Free mental health clinic	11%	14%	12%
Free dental clinic	6%	5%	5%
<b>Outreach-related</b>			
Drop-in center services	26%	14%	22%
Outreach services	13%	7%	11%
<b>Employment-related services</b>			
Help to find a job	12%	16%	13%
Job training	4%	8%	6%
<b>Other help connecting to resources</b>			
Attended a Project Homeless Connect event (past 12 months)	13%	14%	13%
Help getting financial or public benefits	7%	27%	14%

## Most helpful services

Food stamps, hot meal programs, free clothing, and transportation are not only the most-used services, but also the most important to homeless adults in the area (Figure 13).

### 13. Most helpful services received in the past month by homeless adults, by city

Service	Fargo	Moorhead	Fargo and Moorhead
Food stamps (SNAP)	24%	58%	36%
Hot meal program	33%	18%	28%
Free or almost free clothing	21%	18%	20%
Transportation assistance	20%	23%	21%
Free medical clinic	19%	9%	15%
Emergency room	13%	9%	12%
Food shelves	9%	10%	9%
WIC	3%	13%	7%
Help getting financial and other public benefits	1%	27%	6%

Note. These were rated “most helpful” by those receiving those services, only. Percentages are based on those receiving selecting that they had received at least one of 21 services listed in the survey.

## Loss of benefits

Thirteen percent of homeless adults in Fargo and 22 percent in Moorhead reported the loss of one or more public assistance benefits during the previous 12 months.

- Of those reporting a loss of benefits, the benefits most frequently mentioned in Fargo were food stamps (71%), public medical benefits (31%), and assistance to help pay for rent (21%). In Moorhead the most frequently mentioned were food stamps (75%), public medical benefits (19%), and SSI (12%).

# Children in homeless families

There were 60 families counted in the 2015 study; these families included 127 children under age 18. Children represent 21 percent of the homeless population in Fargo and Moorhead (17% in Fargo; 30% in Moorhead).

Study information about children is based on questions that were asked of parents. Unless otherwise specified, percentages are frequencies of parents who report certain characteristics of a child or children who are with them (not percentages of total children).

- Of the homeless women interviewed in Fargo, 41 percent had at least one child with them at the time of the survey. In Moorhead, one-half (50%) of the women interviewed had at least one child with them on the night of the survey.
- Parents in both Fargo and Moorhead report being unable to obtain needed child care (47% in Fargo; 33% in Moorhead). (Figure 14).
- A higher percentage of parents in Moorhead reported that their children attended school on the day of the study (45% in Fargo versus 84% in Moorhead). (Figure 14).
- Over half of parents with school aged children report that their children have been the victim of bullying (54% in Fargo; 53% in Moorhead). (Figure 14).
- A higher percentage of parents of school age children in Fargo report that their children have various school related problems than do the parents of Moorhead children. (Figure 14).

#### 14. Parents' report of needs of their homeless children, 2015

	Fargo	Moorhead	Fargo and Moorhead
<i>Number of parents (weighted) with children with them</i>	36	38	
Had children with emotional or behavioral problems	7 (19%)	4 (12%)	16%
Had children with chronic physical health problems	0	5 (14%)	7%
Unable to obtain needed child care	17 (47%)	13 (33%)	40%
Children had to skip meals in the past month because of lack of money	2 (4%)	4 (11%)	8%
<i>Number of parents with school age children with them</i>	19	15	
School age children attended school on the day of the survey	9 (45%)	13 (84%)	63%
School age children was a victim of bullying	10 (54%)	8 (53%)	54%
School age children had a learning or school problems that needed tutoring or special education	13 (65%)	5 (32%)	50%
School age children had difficulty with peer relationships	11 (56%)	2 (14%)	37%
School age children had demonstrated aggressive behavior	7 (34%)	2 (16%)	26%
School age children had to repeat a grade in school	5 (26%)	1 (8%)	18%

Note. The reported number of parents (in Figure 14) is slightly higher than the actual number of families interviewed. This is due to statistical weighting so that the responses of those interviewed reflect the entire population of the shelter in which they stayed (weighting is not done separately for families versus individuals). The actual number of parents interviewed in Fargo was 24 and in Moorhead was 25 for a total of 49 parents.

# Changes in homelessness from 2012 to 2015

Wilder Research compared survey information collected in 2012 and 2015 in order to identify trends and changes in the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in the Fargo-Moorhead area. The trend analysis is based on changes observed from 2012-2015 (see Figures 15-18 for a more complete listing of trends over time).

## Overall changes from 2012 to 2015

- Fargo showed a slight increase in percentage of homeless people employed in 2015 compared to homeless employed in 2012 (37% in 2012 vs 40% in 2015); Moorhead's percentage of homeless employed also increased (28% in 2012 vs 36% in 2015).
- Fargo's percentage of unemployed homeless adults who had been unemployed for 12 months or longer increased from 2012 to 2015 (42% in 2012 vs 52% in 2015). Moorhead's percentage showed a dramatic decline (58% in 2012 vs 31% in 2015).
- The average monthly income for women in both Fargo and Moorhead increased from 2012 (Fargo: \$426 in 2012 vs \$572 in 2015; Moorhead: \$451 in 2012 vs \$673 in 2015).
- The average monthly income for men in both Fargo and Moorhead increased from 2012 (Fargo: \$533 in 2012 vs \$691 in 2015; Moorhead: \$443 in 2012 vs \$635 in 2015).
- The percent of people who have been homeless longer than a year is up slightly in both cities from 2012 to 2015 (Fargo: 47% in 2012 vs 52% in 2015; Moorhead: 57% in 2012 vs 58% in 2015).
- While Fargo shows an increase in the percentage of women who are homeless because of abuse from 2012 to 2015 (22% in 2012 vs 41% in 2015); Moorhead shows a decline (35% in 2012 vs 22% in 2015).
- The percent of homeless adults who have been incarcerated within the last two years is up in both cities (Fargo: 24% in 2012 vs 44% in 2015; Moorhead: 35% in 2012 vs 39% in 2015).



- The percentage of homeless adults who reported serious or persistent mental health problems was up in both cities (Fargo: 44% in 2012 vs 49% in 2015; Moorhead: 50% in 2012 vs 62% in 2015). Some of this increase may be due to the addition of a new item (anxiety or panic disorder) in the 2015 survey.
- The percentage of homeless adults who had medical coverage in the past month was up in both cities (Fargo: 44% in 2012 vs 57% in 2015; Moorhead: 68% in 2012 vs 78% in 2015).
- The use of hot meal programs increased in Fargo from 2012 to 2015 (Fargo: 33% in 2012 vs 39% in 2015; while its use decreased in Moorhead: (41% in 2012 vs 27% in 2015).

# Conclusions

The results of the study are promising and show that efforts to find housing solutions for persons experiencing homelessness are beginning to pay off. In addition, people experiencing homelessness are employed at pre-recession levels (39% employed). A related piece of good news is that the average monthly income for homeless people in the area increased considerably from 2012 to 2015 (increasing from \$486 to \$658).

By continuing efforts to strengthen housing opportunities and services, the area can ensure that its supply of affordable housing is adequate to meet the multiple needs among the very poorest of the area's population.

The factors that characterize those who have been homeless for a year or more and those with multiple episodes of homelessness over multiple years (considered "long-term homeless") are complex. They include previous abuse, chronic health issues, criminal convictions, evictions, chronic substance use, violence, and broken relationships.

Research shows, however, that those with connections and support, previous success in keeping a job, fewer health problems, and less time in desperate poverty are the most likely to get back on their feet in short order.

There is no way to know what the area's homeless numbers would be in the absence of the programs and services currently available. Affordable housing with the addition of supports to help people keep and maintain their homes are key. These efforts appear to be making a difference to the area's most vulnerable population.

# Detailed survey results

This document provides a descriptive overview of the characteristics of those who were homeless in the Fargo-Moorhead area on Thursday, October 22, 2015. In addition, Wilder Research publishes detailed data tables that allow readers to examine specific survey questions broken down by locale (Fargo vs. Moorhead), gender, and shelter or non-shelter locations. The data tables are available online at [www.mnhomeless.org](http://www.mnhomeless.org).

Figures 15-18 on the next pages provide a snapshot of some key characteristics collected over the past six triennial studies (2000-2015) and presents these trends for Fargo (Figures 15-16) and Moorhead (Figures 17-18) separately.

Tables below provide comparisons on key measures over the six survey periods.

### 15. Comparison of selected characteristics of homeless adults in Fargo, from 2000 to 2015 homelessness surveys

	2000 (N=106)	2003 (N=179)	2006 (N=281)	2009 (N=408)	2012 (N=533)	2015 (N=289)
Men	64%	65%	64%	70%	68%	74%
Women	36%	35%	36%	30%	32%	26%
Average age in years (men)	42.7	42.1	44.2	46.0	44.5	43.2
Average age in years (women)	35.4	33.6	34.6	32.2	36.1	35.2
Persons of color	35%	28%	39%	38%	35%	43%
Never married	42%	51%	55%	55%	56%	60%
Women who have children with them	39%	16%	32%	36%	27%	27%
Men who have children with them	0%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Completed high school diploma or GED	77%	79%	80%	82%	81%	86%
Attended some college	28%	27%	30%	34%	33%	38%
Employed (full time or part time)	35%	41%	41%	32%	37%	40%
Employed full time	19%	18%	15%	13%	14%	18%
Unemployed for more than 12 months (of those who are unemployed)	51%	32%	29%	42%	42%	52%
No source of income	6%	16%	16%	20%	22%	27%
Average monthly income (males)	\$532	\$324	\$490	\$410	\$533	\$691
Average monthly income (females)	\$420	\$466	\$373	\$424	\$426	\$572
Main source of income is TANF (family welfare)	5%	5%	5%	5%	2%	1%
Main source of income is TANF (family welfare), (women only)	15%	11%	5%	11%	7%	5%
Main source of income is General Assistance	4%	8%	0%	7%	3%	2%
Main source of income is a steady job	27%	20%	26%	12%	24%	24%
Main source of income is day labor	28%	37%	27%	35%	24%	31%
Used food stamps in previous month	27%	24%	27%	37%	36%	29%
Had medical coverage in previous month	Not asked	39%	33%	38%	44%	57%
Received care in an emergency room in previous six months	33%	30%	34%	38%	41%	48%
Military veterans	25%	19%	25%	34%	22%	21%
Military veterans, (men only)	39%	29%	36%	47%	32%	28%
Lived in North Dakota for two years or less	40%	54%	38%	44%	50%	48%

Note. Percentages are weighted to reflect shelter population on the date of the survey.

**16. Comparison of selected characteristics of homeless adults in Fargo, from 2000 to 2015 homelessness surveys (continued)**

	<b>2000 (N=106)</b>	<b>2003 (N=179)</b>	<b>2006 (N=281)</b>	<b>2009 (N=408)</b>	<b>2012 (N=533)</b>	<b>2015 (N=289)</b>
Last lived in Minnesota (of those living in North Dakota two years or less)	42%	52%	39%	45%	38%	46%
Homeless for less than one month	13%	19%	12%	9%	7%	4%
Homeless for at least one year	34%	42%	45%	45%	47%	52%
Meets the federal definition of chronic homelessness	Not asked	34%	37%	46%	33%	36%
Left last housing to flee abuse (women only)	37%	21%	26%	38%	23%	41%
Could not pay anything for rent	21%	24%	22%	39%	32%	35%
Could pay something but less than \$200 a month for rent	35%	27%	27%	21%	16%	6%
Used free clothing shelves in previous month	43%	40%	53%	44%	49%	41%
Used hot meal programs in previous month	41%	42%	57%	49%	33%	39%
Used drop-in centers in previous month	22%	19%	25%	23%	25%	26%
Physically mistreated as a child	45%	30%	40%	34%	34%	42%
Sexually mistreated as a child	27%	20%	21%	20%	20%	18%
Ever in foster care	22%	23%	25%	29%	23%	26%
Chemically dependent (self-report)	46%	50%	43%	43%	43%	34%
Ever admitted to detox center	47%	49%	41%	39%	44%	38%
Ever lived in an alcohol or drug treatment facility	45%	52%	41%	38%	49%	48%
Lived in an alcohol or drug treatment facility in previous two years	28%	28%	19%	19%	27%	21%
Incarcerated within the last two years	20%	27%	34%	21%	24%	27%
Reported significant mental illness	38%	41%	44%	43%	44%	49%
Ever in hospital for persons with mental health problems	25%	20%	24%	22%	29%	34%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that limits the amount or kind work they can do	Not asked	38%	38%	38%	44%	43%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that limits their daily activities	Not asked	11%	14%	9%	10%	17%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that interferes with memory or daily decision making	Not asked	22%	30%	21%	31%	32%
Has a history that suggests likely brain injury	Not asked	23%	34%	32%	30%	28%
Diagnosed brain injury with last two years	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	10%	13%

Note. Percentages are weighted to reflect shelter population on the date of the survey.

**17. Comparison of selected characteristics of homeless adults in Moorhead, from 2000 to 2015 statewide surveys**

	<b>2000 (N=78)</b>	<b>2003 (N=118)</b>	<b>2006 (N=167)</b>	<b>2009 (N=196)</b>	<b>2012 (N=183)</b>	<b>2015 (N=148)</b>
Men	69%	67%	71%	67%	62%	59%
Women	31%	33%	29%	33%	38%	41%
Average age in years (men)	39.6	45.5	40.5	40.1	44.4	39.6
Average age in years (women)	29.2	36.4	37.7	38.2	39.0	34.3
Persons of color	44%	43%	40%	39%	50%	41%
Never married	46%	46%	55%	56%	53%	56%
Women who have children with them	25%	26%	29%	31%	33%	36%
Men who have children with them	4%	1%	3%	5%	5%	3%
Completed high school diploma or GED	67%	73%	67%	72%	78%	71%
Attended some college	21%	27%	16%	28%	36%	33%
Employed (full time or part time)	35%	29%	31%	29%	28%	36%
Employed full time	19%	12%	13%	5%	10%	19%
Unemployed for more than 12 months (of those who are unemployed)	24%	43%	34%	47%	58%	31%
No source of income	12%	12%	19%	17%	16%	12%
Average monthly income (males)	\$449	\$494	\$453	\$351	\$443	\$635
Average monthly income (females)	\$457	\$440	\$546	\$406	\$451	\$673
Main source of income is MFIP (family welfare)	1%	9%	7%	6%	5%	13%
Main source of income is MFIP (family welfare), (women only)	0%	26%	21%	18%	11%	31%
Main source of income is General Assistance	11%	12%	9%	17%	19%	19%
Main source of income is a steady job	26%	16%	13%	19%	17%	26%
Main source of income is day labor	31%	32%	26%	15%	16%	10%
Used food stamps in previous month	32%	39%	35%	44%	56%	62%
Had medical coverage in previous month	Not asked	51%	45%	71%	68%	78%
Received care in an emergency room in previous six months	30%	43%	26%	33%	36%	50%
Military veterans	24%	21%	19%	14%	12%	9%
Military veterans, (men only)	33%	32%	27%	19%	20%	13%
Lived in Minnesota for two years or less	37%	53%	41%	36%	47%	55%
Last lived in North Dakota (of those living in Minnesota two years or less)	39%	34%	53%	43%	46%	59%

Note. Percentages are weighted to reflect shelter population on the date of the survey.

**17. Comparison of selected characteristics of homeless adults in Moorhead, from 2000 to 2015 statewide surveys (continued)**

	<b>2000 (N=78)</b>	<b>2003 (N=118)</b>	<b>2006 (N=167)</b>	<b>2009 (N=196)</b>	<b>2012 (N=183)</b>	<b>2015 (N=148)</b>
Homeless for less than one month	16%	10%	10%	11%	7%	8%
Homeless for at least one year	31%	37%	40%	42%	57%	58%
Meets the federal definition of chronic homelessness	Not available	31%	32%	42%	37%	35%
Left last housing to flee abuse (women only)	21%	21%	24%	18%	35%	22%
Could not pay anything for rent	18%	29%	25%	35%	28%	16%
Could pay something but less than \$200 a month for rent	42%	15%	23%	22%	21%	23%
Used free clothing shelves in previous month	49%	39%	49%	37%	52%	43%
Used hot meal programs in previous month	68%	38%	52%	34%	41%	27%
Used drop-in centers in previous month	25%	26%	28%	10%	20%	14%
Physically mistreated as a child	36%	38%	36%	37%	39%	43%
Sexually mistreated as a child	15%	25%	15%	22%	28%	25%
Ever in foster care	32%	22%	25%	25%	27%	30%
Chemically dependent (self-report)	52%	41%	50%	49%	30%	31%
Ever admitted to detox center	47%	35%	46%	38%	35%	35%
Ever lived in an alcohol or drug treatment facility	60%	47%	54%	58%	33%	35%
Lived in an alcohol or drug treatment facility in previous two years	29%	25%	25%	54%	16%	18%
Incarcerated within the last two years	27%	26%	33%	29%	35%	22%
Reported significant mental illness	35%	54%	43%	47%	50%	62%
Ever in hospital for persons with mental health problems	20%	22%	23%	33%	25%	35%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that limits the amount or kind work they can do	Not asked	61%	40%	38%	54%	49%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that limits their daily activities	Not asked	19%	11%	9%	16%	16%
Has serious mental, physical, or other condition that interferes with memory or daily-decision making	Not asked	36%	24%	27%	41%	40%
Has a history that suggests likely brain injury	Not asked	32%	30%	37%	35%	37%
Diagnosed brain injury with last two years	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	13%	17%

Notes. Percentages are weighted to reflect shelter population on the date of the survey.  
2015 data tables are available at [www.mnhomeless.org](http://www.mnhomeless.org)