

## DESCRIPTION

Homelessness exists when people lack safe, stable and appropriate places to live. Individuals experiencing homelessness often lack access to appropriate health care and experience higher rates of physical and mental illness and behavioral health issues compared to other populations.<sup>1</sup> Recent research finds homeless people are three to four times more likely to die prematurely than their housed counterparts, and experience an average life expectancy as low as 41 years.<sup>2</sup> A recent survey of homeless individuals in and around downtown Saint Paul revealed that most people reported mental or chemical health issues or physical injuries; half had been homeless for less than two years; about one in five had been restricted from shelter facilities, and nearly half receive some type of assistance from Ramsey County.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW WE ARE DOING

According to the most current Minnesota Homeless Study conducted by Wilder Research, the overall rate of homelessness among all age groups in Ramsey County increased during 2012-2015.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, 1,787 people experienced homelessness in Ramsey County. Children (17 and under) and their parents represented 30 percent of the homeless population in the county, an increase of 15 percent since 2012.<sup>4</sup> Ramsey County's homeless individuals account for nearly 19 percent of the total count for the state (9,312).<sup>4</sup> There has also been a steady increase in the number of older adults experiencing homelessness (up 14 percent since 2012).<sup>4</sup> Metro Transit reports that about 150 people are sleeping in transit vehicles on an average night.<sup>3</sup>

## BENCHMARK INDICATOR

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) metrics:<sup>5</sup>

- 1) Decrease the number of persons experiencing homelessness.
- 2) Decrease the average and median days a person is homeless.

## DISPARITIES

Children and older adults are currently vulnerable populations for homelessness. People of color in Minnesota disproportionately experience homelessness compared to their white counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

Homelessness is consistently linked with lack of adequate employment, having chronic health conditions, and having a history of violence or abuse.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these risk factors, Minnesotans also are more likely to experience homelessness when there are stagnant wages, rising rents, low vacancy rates and a lack of affordable housing.<sup>6</sup>

(continued on back)

## Information to note

- Homelessness in Ramsey County has increased since 2009. The county now has the highest rate in the 7-county metro area.
- Children and their parents represent 30% of the homeless population in the county, an increase of 15% since 2012.
- Since 2009, the number of homeless adults age 55+ living in shelters has doubled.



## Community voice

*"Unstable housing (stress from that)."*

- Black/African American Female, age 35-44

Respondents expressed the stress from lack of housing and homelessness. About 50% (98) of the housing mentions referenced homelessness and instability.

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association. Health and Homelessness. <http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/homelessness-health.pdf>. Accessed March 5, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> National Healthcare for the Homeless Council. (2010). Homelessness and Health: What's the Connection. from [https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/HIn\\_health\\_factsheet\\_Jan10.pdf](https://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/HIn_health_factsheet_Jan10.pdf). Accessed September 1, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsey County Managers Office All Staff Communication. A collaborative effort to tackle homelessness. February, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Wilder Research. Ramsey County: Characteristics and Trends of those Experiencing Homelessness in Minnesota. <http://mnhomeless.org/minnesota-homeless-study/reports-and-fact-sheets/2015/2015-homeless-ramsey-county-fact-sheet-2-17.pdf>. Accessed March 5, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. May 2015. System Performance Measures: An introductory guide to understanding system-level performance measurement. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-Introductory-Guide.pdf>. Accessed December 1, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Amherst Wilder Foundation. Start by Knowing Why: 5 Reasons People in Minnesota are Homeless, December, 2017. <http://www.wilder.org/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=198#Wp8BlujwBIU>. Accessed March 6, 2018.

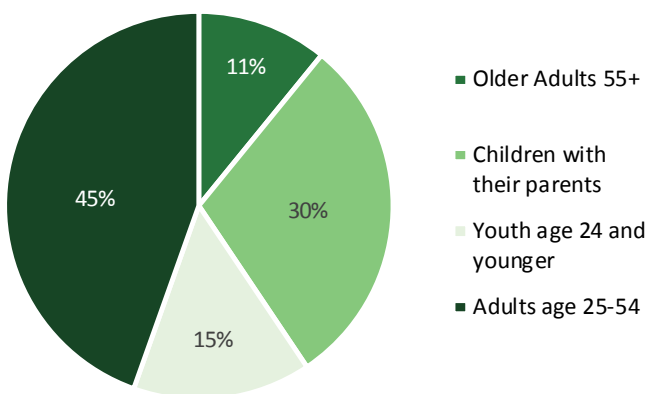
## WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Ramsey County’s contributions to end homelessness include involvement in the opening of Catholic Charities’ Higher Ground Saint Paul at Dorothy Day Place in 2017. Phase II of the project is under construction which will add more beds and provide on-site services through an Opportunity Center. Ramsey County was the first public sector partner to contribute financially to the Opportunity Center, agreeing to both a capital investment in the building and a long-term service delivery lease that will ensure that county staff are able to effectively deliver a variety of services as close as possible to the people who need them. Also in 2017, the county launched the *RUSH* initiative (Re-directing Users of Shelter to Housing) which works with the most frequent users of Higher Ground and the Union Gospel Mission to move them into permanent housing. The county along with community partners recently converted the former detox space in Government Center East to an emergency overnight shelter- *Winter Safe Space*. Additionally, an outreach team called “Outside In” is working to create a registry of all unsheltered individuals and connect them to services. Ramsey County directly funds family emergency shelters as well as the *Coordinated Entry System* which offers access to supportive housing for youth and single adults. Through local and national funding opportunities, the county continues to secure over \$8.5 million annually to fund housing projects.

Ramsey County Homelessness Numbers by Study Year, Age Group, and Percent Change Between 2012 - 2015				
	2009 Study	2012 Study	2015 Study	% Change (2012-2015)
Children (17 and under) with parents	490	469	541	+15%
Unaccompanied minors (under 17 and under)	43	35	52	+49%
Young adults (18-21)	199	172	208	+21%
Adults (22-54)	848	724	796	+10%
Older Adults (55 and over)	105	167	190	+14%
Total	1,685	1,567	1,787	+14%

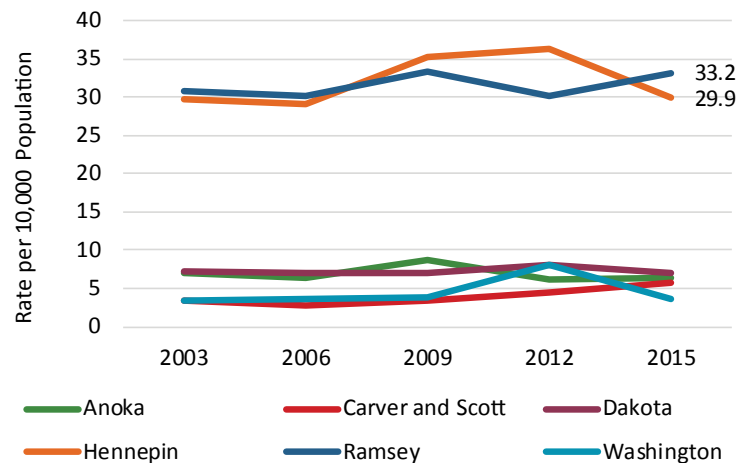
Source: Wilder Research.<sup>7</sup>

Homelessness by Age Group, Ramsey County 2015



Source: Wilder Research.<sup>7</sup>

Rate of Homelessness by Metro County



Source: Wilder Research and Minnesota Compass.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Wilder Research. Ramsey County: Characteristics and Trends of those Experiencing Homelessness in Minnesota. <http://mnhomeless.org/minnesota-homeless-study/reports-and-fact-sheets/2015/2015-homeless-ramsey-county-fact-sheet-2-17.pdf>. Accessed March 5, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Wilder Research and Minnesota Compass. <http://www.mncompass.org/housing/homeless-persons#7-190-g>. Accessed February 23, 2018.