



Disparities in Homelessness Amongst Youth who Identify as BIPOC

Homelessness Amongst BIPOC Youth

According to Wilder Research, an estimated 13,300 unaccompanied youth experience homelessness over the course of a year in Minnesota. Youth are disproportionately affected relative to their population, making up nearly half (46%) of the homeless. Nearly three quarters (73%) of youth experiencing homelessness identify as BIPOC, compared to just 26% of all Minnesota youth.ⁱ Annually, over 80% of youth at The Bridge identify as BIPOC. Systemic and institutional racism, as well as acute and long-term family conflict, leads to their sense of non-acceptance and lack of belonging.

Racial Disparities and Homelessness

Poverty, and particularly deep poverty, is a strong predictor of homelessness. Black and Latinx youth are overrepresented in poverty relative to their representation in the overall population. Racial disparities in incarceration rates continue. BIPOC youth are at greater risk of being targeted, profiled, and arrested for minor offenses, especially in high poverty areas. Nearly 1 in 5 youth experiencing homelessness is/has experienced mental health challenges, those who identify as BIPOC experience significant barriers in accessing care.ⁱⁱ Lack of health insurance and/or untreated mental illness increases the risk of experiencing homelessness or being precariously housed.



Experiences of BIPOC Youth Who Experience Homelessness

BIPOC youth have an 83% higher risk of experiencing homelessness when compared to their non-BIPOC counterparts, with QTBIPOC youth at even higher risk of homelessness. Nationally, the challenge of youth homelessness and housing instability is more pronounced among BIPOC youth ages 13 to 25. Annually 11% of American Indian and Alaskan Indian youth, 7% of Black youth, and 7% of Hispanic youth experience homelessness; compared to 4% of non-white Hispanic youth. Black and Hispanic youth spend longer periods of time homeless than their White, non-Hispanic counterparts, increasing their risk of re-entering homelessness after exiting. The intersection of different marginalized identities to intersectionality of identities compounds inequities among youth of color, with Black, LGBTQ+ identifying youth experiencing especially high rates of homelessness and adversity.ⁱⁱⁱ

Early Intervention is Key to Disrupting the Cycle of Homelessness

Family conflict is the most common cause of youth homelessness. Other contributing factors include economic circumstances like poverty and housing insecurity, racial disparities, and mental health and substance use disorders. Youth who have been involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. Early intervention is key to breaking the cycle of homelessness. When homeless adults were asked about their repeated homelessness starting at an early age, over a third (36%) first became homeless at or before the age of 18.^{iv} While immediate shelter and safety is vital, providing shelter alone is not enough. These youth need comprehensive assessment and intervention tailored to their developmental level that addresses underlying issues and effectively involves their family members and caregivers.

The Bridge for Youth

The Bridge for Youth (The Bridge) centers youth voice, justice, and equity in all we do, and empowers youth experiencing homelessness through safe shelter, basic needs, and healthy relationships. Our vision is a community where all youth feel safe, accepted, and supported. Since 1970, The Bridge has provided over 50,000 youth safety and stability through emergency shelter, as well as transitional housing for youth—including parenting youth and their young children; individual, family and group counseling; specialized case management for crime victims and youth who identify as LGBTQ+; phone/text crisis intervention; as well as street, site, and mobile outreach. The Bridge is at the forefront of addressing youth homelessness in Minnesota, positively impacting the lives of the most vulnerable youth in our community, through youth-centered programs that offer a pathway out of poverty and chronic homelessness.



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- i. Wilder Research. Homelessness in Minnesota 2018 Study. <https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/homelessness-minnesota-2018-study>
- ii. National Alliance to End Homelessness. *Homelessness and Racial Disparities*. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality>
- iii. Voices of Youth Count, an Initiative of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://voicesofyouthcount.org>
- iv. Berger Gonzalez, S., Morton, M., Patel, S., & Samuels, B. (2021). Centering racial equity in youth homelessness. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/RHY-Centering-Racial-Equity-Brief.pdf>