

**Homelessness
and
Housing Instability
in Missoula
Needs Assessment 2010**

Maxine Jacobson, PhD

December 27, 2010

Praxis – Building Knowledge for Action

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	v
Introduction.....	v
Survey Methods.....	v
Survey Respondents.....	v
Limitations of the Data	vi
Key Findings.....	vi
Key Themes and Summary of Needs	viii
Section 1: A Context for Understanding the Report.....	1
Thinking Broadly about Homelessness	1
What is Homelessness?	1
Homelessness by the Numbers.....	2
Survey Purpose	3
Overview of the Report	3
Suggestions for Reading the Report.....	4
Section 2: Survey Design, Methods, and Respondents	5
Survey Design.....	5
Administration Methods	6
Survey Analysis Methods	7
Survey Sites, Sampling, and Respondents	8
Identifying Comparison Groups and Significant Demographic Differences	11
Limitations of the Data	13
Section 3: Past and Current Housing Circumstances	14
Section Overview	14
Current Location and Number of Places Lived in the Last 30-Days.....	14
Housing Status.....	16
Main Contributors to Homelessness.....	18
Living in Missoula	19
Section Highlights	21
Section 4: Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities.....	23
Section Overview	23
Housing and Other Service Use	23
Opportunities For and Barriers to Services	25
Finding Services.....	27
Additional Services Needed.....	28
Section Highlights	28
Section 5: Permanent Housing and Employment Needs	30
Section Overview	30
Permanent Housing Needs.....	30
Employment Needs.....	33
Additional Suggestions to Better Plan Services.....	35

Section Highlights	36
Section 6: Discussion of Key Findings and Summary of Needs	37
Section Overview	37
Missoula’s “Homegrown” Homeless	37
Build It and They Will Come?	37
Using Missoula’s Services	38
Identifying Service Opportunities and Challenges	38
Permanent, Affordable Housing.....	39
Work—Challenging another Assumption.....	39
The Importance of Comparison Group Findings.....	40
A Look Toward Prevention	40
Concluding Remarks.....	40
Appendix A: Section 3: Past and Current Housing Circumstances	41
Appendix B: Section 4: Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities	44
Appendix C: Section 5: Permanent Housing and Employment Needs.....	47
Appendix D: Sections 2–5: T-Test Analyses	51

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible because of the generosity of homeless and precariously housed people who shared their stories, and the community volunteers and Missoula agency staff who made the time to listen. Thank you for participating and for helping Missoula reach its goal to plan better solutions to the problem of homelessness.

Many other people contributed time, expertise, and their best thinking to the project. Foremost is Rachel Goen, MSW, of 5th House Consulting, who did an outstanding job recruiting volunteer survey interviewers, training them and organizing their efforts, reviewing survey drafts, and doing some data entry and analysis of open-ended survey questions.

Tim Conley, PhD, of the School of Social Work–The University of Montana, provided the computers and software for data analysis and the services of two of his graduate students (Erica Noble and Molly Devlin) to help with data entry. Tim was an amazing sounding board and is an expert statistician with an unending passion for research.

Other people helped in different ways. Paul Miller, PhD, a retired U of M sociology professor, gave his expert opinion on survey development, as did Thale Dillon, MA, of the Bureau of Business and Economic Development. Their ideas improved the survey and made it a better data-gathering tool.

The shepherds of the project were an incredible team of people representing City and County government, nonprofit organizations, and local business. Cindy Wulfekuhle, Office of Planning and Grants, went beyond the call of duty, fielding phone calls on the weekend, responding quickly to questions and requests, and always remembering to voice her appreciation.

Last but not least, thanks to Mayor John Engen for his foresight in deciding to gather more information before beginning a conversation on how to address homelessness in Missoula. It takes wisdom and fortitude to hold firm when everyone wants quick answers. This report will be the first step in an informed solution-building process.

Maxine Jacobson, PhD

Praxis – Building Knowledge for Action

December 2010

Executive Summary

Introduction

In October 2010, the Office of Planning and Grants, on behalf of the City and County of Missoula, local businesses, and several nonprofit organizations, released a request for proposals to conduct a survey of sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families. The purpose of the survey was twofold: (1) to understand the needs of homeless and precariously housed people—those living outside, episodically homeless, or living in emergency shelters or temporary housing; and (2) to gather information to inform a planning process to better meet the needs of people who are precariously housed or homeless.

Survey Methods

Volunteer survey interviewers attended a 3-hour training session. After the survey was pilot-tested and revised, it was administered by community volunteers and staff from key Missoula agencies in mid-November 2010. Survey locations included areas where homeless people live outside; Missoula's downtown core, trail system, and the Poverello; and Missoula 3:16, Missoula Public Library, Missoula Food Bank, Western Montana Mental Health Center shelters, YWCA Gateway Center, and Partnership Health Center. The survey contained 35 open- and closed-ended questions. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used to arrive at the findings. A convenience sampling approach was used to select people who were currently homeless or who had experienced episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years.

Survey Respondents

Altogether, 240 people participated in the survey. Almost 65% were males and approximately 35% were females. Ages ranged from 17 to 86, with an average age of 41.4. Seventy-five percent of respondents were white, and the sample also included very small numbers of Latino, black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native people. American Indians made up 22.5% of the sample.

Almost 67% of the respondents were living alone or as part of a couple without children, while almost 23% were living in one- or two-parent families. Concerning education levels, 22% had completed less than a high school degree or GED. Approximately 32% had completed high school or a GED, while almost 46% had completed some college or bachelor's or graduate degrees.

Almost 21% of survey completers had served in the U.S. military or National Guard. Thirty-five percent had lived in Missoula for 11 months or less, while 65% had lived in Missoula for a year or more. Of these, almost 42% had lived in Missoula at least 6 years. Monthly income ranged from \$0 to \$2,500. Average monthly income was \$480.58.

Limitations of the Data

When interpreting the findings contained in the report, keep in mind that they reflect the information gathered from those interviewed and not from Missoula's entire homeless and precariously housed population. As such, generalizing the findings to these broader groups living in Missoula is not advisable. Nonetheless, the work represents a landmark best effort to gather meaningful information on this population for Missoula. It can serve as a valuable guide when considering the policy and practice implications of proposed interventions.

Key Findings

Past and Current Housing Circumstances Highlights

The most striking findings to emerge from information collected about past and current housing circumstances were the following:

- The number of people living outdoors (mid-November) accounts for 85, or 34.5% of survey respondents.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) experienced extremely disrupted lives, marked by uncertainty about where to live day-to-day based on the number of places they lived during the 30-day period prior to the survey.
- Those most likely to live outside were males with longer histories of homelessness whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula.
- The most common places respondents stayed during the 30-day period prior to the survey were at the Poverello, outside, and with friends and/or family.
- Eighty-five percent of the total sample were considered homeless at the time of the survey.
- Fifty percent of the sample had experienced one or two episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 29% had been homeless continuously.
- Almost half of the respondents were living in Missoula's permanent housing when they experienced their first episode of homelessness. These were more likely to be women and families with children.
- The longer respondents were homeless, the more likely they were to report illness/medical problems as a reason for their homelessness.
- People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were more likely to report low wages as a reason for homelessness.
- Women and families were more likely to report domestic abuse and family conflicts as reasons for homelessness.
- People living elsewhere at the time they became homeless moved to Missoula primarily because of family and friends and not because of the services offered.
- People stayed in Missoula mostly because of the City's attributes (cohesiveness, community support, activities) and its helpful, friendly people and far less so because of the services offered.

Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities

The most striking findings to emerge from information collected about housing and other service use and needs were the following:

- Most respondents had used at least one of Missoula’s services in the past 12 months.
- Of all the services available in Missoula, food/meals were most frequently used.
- Of respondents who had lived in Missoula more than a year, women, and families with children, were more likely to use Missoula’s mainstream services (Missoula Housing Authority, Human Resource Council, WIC, and Missoula Food Bank).
- Respondents whose last permanent housing was in Missoula used the most services overall.
- Respondents whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula used more emergency-shelter services.
- Two-thirds of respondents reported that some services are easier to use than others.
- Informal program operations and respectful, compassionate treatment by service organization staff create more opportunities for services use.
- Ease of service access, location of service, and transportation to and from services create opportunities for service use.
- Top barriers to service use include not qualifying, an income that is too high, and lack of identification papers.
- Top reasons some respondents chose not to apply for services were “someone needs it more than I do,” embarrassment about using services, and too-lengthy application processes.
- Respondents most likely to find out about services through word of mouth were those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness and those whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula.
- Families and women were more likely to find out about services by accessing them.
- Housing assistance was by far the most frequently mentioned service needed.

Permanent Housing and Employment Needs

- Of the 205 respondents living in temporary housing and outside, almost 89% were interested in finding permanent housing.
- The top three needs identified for finding permanent housing were (1) affordable housing, (2) employment, and (3) bus passes.
- Monthly income for 78% of respondents fell below the median monthly rent (\$700.00) for a two-bedroom apartment in Missoula.
- Ongoing rental assistance, first and last month’s rent and deposit, and a job, or at least a better-paying one, were the top three needs identified that would help respondents afford permanent housing.

- Families with children were more likely to report minor vehicle repairs, paying rent on a weekly basis, first and last month's rental assistance, and employment assistance as needs that would help them afford permanent housing.
- Forty-two percent of respondents who reported monthly income sources were employed either part- or full-time, sold crafts, worked day labor, or recycled to earn money.
- Those who had lived in Missoula more than a year were more likely to report a part- or full-time job as a source of income.
- Almost 50% of respondents reported needing help to find a job.
- The top three employment assistance needs were (1) education/job training, (2) transportation, and (3) knowing what jobs were available.
- Identification papers were needed most by people who had been homeless longer and who had lived in Missoula for more than a year.
- Key suggestions to better plan services consisted of (1) creating more emergency-shelter resources for families with children, (2) expanding shelter services, and (3) developing quicker and easier access to affordable housing and increasing options for affordable housing.

Key Themes and Summary of Needs

Missoula's "Homegrown" Homeless

This key finding challenges an assumption that homeless people in Missoula come from somewhere else. Almost half of the sample included people who were living in Missoula when they were last permanently housed. These people were living in Missoula when they left permanent housing for a number of possible reasons including low wages, eviction, domestic abuse, and, first and foremost, because they simply could not afford rent or were unable to make their mortgage payment. Many are women and families with children.

Build It and They Will Come?

One of the most profound survey findings challenges the idea that building more services in Missoula will bring more homeless people to the City to use them—a fear of many who worry about the City's economy, especially during a time of recession and dwindling federal funding for social programs. It appears that, for at least those included in the survey, people come to Missoula and stay here primarily because of what has already been built—a supportive, cohesive, welcoming community of friendly, good people. They also come because of family and friends who already live here.

Using Missoula's Services

Almost everyone who participated in the survey used at least one of Missoula's housing assistance, shelter, food/meals, and health care services in the past year. Respondents were pleased with the emergency food and soup kitchen programs offered in Missoula. These were used more than any other service, and are also the easiest services to access in Missoula. Another striking finding was that in terms of service use,

survey respondents whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were likelier to use more services than those whose last permanent housing was in another state or elsewhere in Montana.

Identifying Service Opportunities and Challenges

Two-thirds of the respondents reported that some Missoula services were easier to access than others. They provided insight into service challenges such as lengthy applications and eligibility requirements that do not reflect the rising cost of living. However, treating people with dignity and respect emerged as the most important means of creating opportunities for access to services.

Permanent, Affordable Housing

More than three-quarters of the respondents who were not currently housed wanted permanent housing. The most pressing issue identified to meet this need was gaining access to affordable housing, which was linked to viable, sustainable employment. The median monthly income for respondents was \$450.00. However, a median-priced apartment in Missoula costs \$700 a month.

Work—Challenging another Assumption

The second most commonly mentioned need after affordable housing was employment. It was repeated as one of the top things people needed to afford permanent housing. Of the 71% of respondents who reported a monthly income source, 42% worked at something to achieve these ends (part- or full-time job, craft sales, day labor, recycling).

The Importance of Comparison-Group Findings

The findings indicate that the comparison groups identified for the analysis experience homelessness and housing instability differently. Needs for services and the intensity of service use are also different. Findings such as these push against stereotypes or grand overarching claims about which services are important for all “homeless people.” They help to create a better understanding of how assistance programs can tailor services to address distinctly different needs. Planning efforts need to take this important issue into account as well.

A Look Toward Prevention

A number of findings point to the higher cost of prolonged homelessness on the physical and emotional aspects of human life and the economic toll it takes on communities. Knowing how these costs tally out would be important planning information. For example, how much does it cost to provide a family with an intensive array of community services once they experience homelessness, compared to before?

1 A Context for Understanding the Report

Thinking Broadly about Homelessness

Homelessness first emerged as a national issue in the United States in the 1870s when a dramatic increase in the homeless population made the problem difficult to ignore.¹ Before this time there were reoccurring surges in what were referred to as “the wandering poor.” Homelessness was attributed to urbanization and industrial development. While the advancement of a nation has the ring of something good, it does not necessarily mean the advancement of all the nation’s people. Many were tossed aside by the social and economic wake that occurs with regularity in a capitalist society. Throughout the last 140 years, policies have been developed to address homelessness based on current definitions of the homeless themselves. Historically, homeless people have been stereotyped as vagrants, tramps, hobos, sturdy beggars, and, more recently, as “serial inebriates.”² However, none of these labels accurately depicts the larger picture of homelessness. Labels can do grave injustice to decision-making processes based solely on views that fail to capture the problem in its entirety.

Getting an accurate read on the number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States is difficult. Differing ways of defining homelessness, coupled with varying methods for measuring it, compromise our ability to collect precise numbers. In addition, counts of homeless people have been limited to those living on the streets or in emergency shelters. Those closest to the issue, programs offering services to the homeless, recognize the hidden underbelly of homelessness, those difficult to count, the “invisible homeless,” or people living short term with family members or friends, residing in motels or in campers. They come in contact with individuals and families precariously housed, whose daily existence is marked by uncertainty about whether today or tomorrow will precipitate just one more emergency likely to remove the roof over their heads.

What is Homelessness?

There are many definitions of homelessness. In general, definitions of social problems are shaped by societal perceptions and political trends that often polarize problems into opposing camps: dysfunctional individuals versus dysfunctional societal social, political, and economic structures.³ Accordingly, definitions of homelessness have changed throughout history. Definitions are important to understand because they influence and shape policy decisions. Some have argued that homeless people choose to be homeless and that services for the homeless create a culture of dependency, thereby perpetuating homelessness.⁴ The attitude voiced is that if more services are created to address homelessness, more

¹ Kusmer, K. (2002). *Down and out, on the road: The homeless in American history*. New York: Oxford University Press.

² see Jessica Mayrer’s November 25, 2010 article, *Out in the cold: Officials seek answers with homeless needs assessment*. Missoula, MT: Missoula Independent.

³ Cronley, C. (2010). Unraveling the social construction of homelessness. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 20, 319–333.

⁴ Baum, A., & Barnes, D. (1993). *A nation in denial: The truth about homelessness*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

people will gravitate toward them.⁵ Those in the opposing camp view homelessness as an extreme form of poverty in which the fastest growing group is families with dependent children.⁶

According to the federal definition of homeless, “a person is considered homeless who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence; and . . . has a primary night time residency that is:

- A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations . . .
- B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or
- C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”⁷

Homelessness by the Numbers

Throughout U.S. history, policy decisions and service development have relied primarily on estimates of homelessness. Current estimates based on information from the National Alliance to End Homelessness indicate the following:⁸

- Over the course of a year, between 2.5 million and 3.5 million people will live either on the streets or in an emergency shelter.
- Roughly 600,000 families and 1.35 million children experience homelessness in the United States each year.
- Approximately 23% of homeless people are veterans.

As a requirement for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, cities across the United States conduct point-in-time surveys at the end of January biannually to count the number of individuals and families who are unsheltered or who are living in transitional housing facilities or emergency shelters. Survey results are used to (1) determine the size and scope of the homeless problem at the local level, (2) plan services and programs appropriate to address local needs, and (3) measure progress in addressing homelessness.⁹

In Missoula, the *Homeless Survey Summary* compiled by the Continuum of Care group for 2009 and 2010 indicates that 524 and 631 surveys were completed, respectively. These numbers indicate a 21% increase in the number of people counted from 2009 to 2010. Surveys completed with families in 2009 and 2010

⁵ In short, this belief system supports the idea that “if you build it, they will come.”

⁶ Email correspondence with Annette Tezli, PhD candidate, University of Calgary, regarding *Keeping the Family Intact*, paper presentation at Sociology Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2010.

⁷ This definition comes from the Stewart B. McKinney Act, 42 U.S.C. § et seq. (1994).

⁸ For more information see the National Alliance to End Homelessness website at www.endhomelessness.org.

⁹ See www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homess/library for additional information on the rationale for and administration of point-in-time surveys.

were 130 and 179, respectively, indicating a 37% increase in the number of families counted over a 1-year period.

Survey Purpose

In October 2010, the Office of Planning and Grants, on behalf of the City and County of Missoula, local businesses, and a number of nonprofit organizations, released a request for proposals to conduct a survey of sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families. The purpose of the survey was to

- Understand the needs of people who are living or have recently lived in temporary housing, in emergency shelters, or outside.
- Gather information related to past and current housing circumstances, housing and other service needs and challenges, and income sources and employment needs of people precariously housed and homeless.
- Explore differences between identified groups of homeless and precariously housed people based on past and current housing circumstances and housing, employment, and other service needs.
- Gather information to inform a community planning process through which recommendations will be developed to help better meet the needs of homeless and precariously housed people living in Missoula.

Overview of the Report

Homelessness and Housing Instability in Missoula: Needs Assessment 2010 presents findings from a survey administered in November 2010. The report is organized into six sections:

Section 1: *Introduction: A Context for Understanding the Report* provides readers with some background information on homelessness including estimates of scope, local homelessness counts, and definitions of homelessness. This section also outlines the survey's purpose and provides information to help readers better understand the report.

Section 2: *Survey Design, Methods, and Respondents* discusses survey design rationale. It also describes the survey sample, as a whole, based on general demographic information. Seven distinct comparison groups are identified such as women versus men and one-time homeless versus multiple-times homeless.

Section 3: *Past and Current Housing Circumstances* reports on where survey respondents were living at the time of the survey and where they had lived during the month prior to participating in the survey. Family information and frequency of times in and out of permanent housing over the last 3 years are also reported. This section looks at how long survey respondents have been homeless, where they lived when last permanently housed, and the main reasons for their current housing circumstances.

Section 4: *Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities* presents frequency and intensity of respondents' service use. It provides additional information about what makes some services easier to use, why some people choose not to use them, and how people learn about and find services.

Section 5: *Permanent Housing and Employment Needs* outlines what assistance is needed in order to find and afford permanent housing. Respondents' income sources and employment needs are identified as well as what respondents thought they could afford for rent on a monthly basis.

Section 6: *Discussion of Key Findings and Summary of Needs* highlights and discusses key findings that emerged from the survey data. These are organized and summarized according to themes that look at the findings from a wide angle lens and their implications for practice and policy.

Suggestions for Reading the Report

The report contains a wealth of information extracted from a survey that elicited rich details about the lives, current circumstances, and housing, employment, and service needs of precariously housed and homeless people living in Missoula. Each of the findings' sections (3–5) is supported by an appendix that includes more in-depth information for readers who have an affinity for “digging deeper into the data.” Those with limited time may simply read the executive summary or end-of-section highlights.

In some cases the tables in the findings' sections represent an analysis of “word” data and, therefore, counts and percentages of themes are reported instead of the usual “number” data most of us are used to seeing. Sometimes percentages exceed 100% because respondents could “choose all that apply.”

2 Survey Design, Methods, and Respondents

Survey Design

A draft survey was developed by members of a committee who represented businesses, nonprofit organizations, and City and County government. Survey items were developed and/or drawn from surveys developed elsewhere to address a similar purpose. The draft survey was piloted and revised based on feedback from survey experts and a small group of people experiencing homelessness.

Survey design was also informed by current research in the study of homelessness. Different patterns of homelessness have been identified based on duration and frequency. The idea that there are different patterns of homelessness challenges the myth that all homeless people fit a common stereotype: a middle-aged to older man who is frequently unemployed; often mentally ill, handicapped, or an abuser of substances; and who exhibits little or no attachment to common values of social solidarity such as family, workplace, or membership in unions or organizations.¹⁰ This typology of homelessness differentiates the following groups:¹¹

1. **Transitional:** This group's members experience only one or two episodes of homelessness, are likely to be younger, and are least likely among the homeless population to have mental health, substance abuse, or major medical problems. They are often recent members of the precariously housed population who lost housing as a result of unemployment, marital discord, or some other catastrophic event.
2. **Episodic:** This group comprises individuals who frequently move in and out of homelessness. According to the literature, this group is likely to be young and to experience chronic unemployment, medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems. Time outside of shelters may be spent in hospitals, detoxification centers, jails, or on the streets.
3. **Chronic:** This group best fits the stereotype of what used to be called "the skid-row homeless." Shelter use is generally more long term than strictly for emergency purposes. These individuals are most likely older and have been unemployed longer and can suffer from disabilities and substance abuse problems.

Research on large urban samples of homeless people has indicated that the transitional homeless account for approximately 80% of sheltered adults, while the episodic and chronic homeless account for 9% and

¹⁰ See Bahr, H., & Caplow, T. (1973). *Old men drunk and sober*. New York: New York University Press. Rossi, P. H. (1989). *Down and out in America: The origins of homelessness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹¹ Information in this section has been summarized from: Kuhn, R., & Culhane, D. (1998). Applying cluster analysis to test a typology of homelessness by pattern of shelter utilization. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(2), 207–232.

11%, respectively.¹² Less research has been conducted specifically on homeless families, although some speculate that families fit a different pattern than those cited above.

Survey questions were divided into three broad areas: (1) past and current housing circumstances; (2) housing and other services used, needs, and challenges; and (3) income sources and employment needs. General demographic information was also gathered. The survey was organized around 35 broad question areas, both open- and closed-ended, containing almost 350 distinct survey items.

Administration Methods

Recruiting and Training of Volunteers

Because of the quick 10-week turnaround from survey development through reporting, volunteers were recruited to administer the survey. In total, 63 volunteers attended a 3-hour training session. Volunteers were staff members from community agencies that provide services to homeless people, and community residents, mostly retired seniors and university students. The volunteer-training curriculum consisted of background information on homelessness and presentations by a Western Montana Mental Health Center outreach worker, Adam Tucker, and a Missoula police officer, Bob Franke. Volunteers also learned about the survey and tips for conducting interviews.

Survey Administration

Of those volunteers who attended training, 45 administered surveys on November 16th in the downtown core, at the Poverello and Missoula 3:16, the Missoula Public Library, the YWCA Gateway Center, Missoula Food Bank, Partnership for Health, and at identified areas where homeless people live outside. Volunteers canvassed the areas in teams of two or three. Permission was not received to interview clients at the Salvation Army.¹³ Surveys were also administered by service agency staff from November 15th through November 19th at Missoula Housing Authority, Western Montana Mental Health Center shelters, Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD), and the YWCA shelters.

Potential survey respondents were informed of the survey's purpose and its voluntary and confidential nature. They were also told that they could skip any survey question or stop the survey at any time. Individuals completing the survey were offered a \$5.00 gift card for their participation.

Conversational Interview Philosophy

Interviewing people about sensitive, personal issues concerning their living circumstances is best done by eliciting their stories rather than through a lockstep method that walks quickly from one survey item to the

¹² Culhane, D. & Metraux, S. (2008). Rearranging the deck chairs or reallocating the lifeboats? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 74(1), 111–121.

¹³ Permission was not granted from the Salvation Army's regional headquarters to allow interviews at this location.

next. Volunteers were instructed to take their time when interviewing respondents and to listen, to probe for further explanation, and to remain nonjudgmental regardless of the topic.¹⁴

Survey Screens

Four survey screens were used to filter potential survey interviewees into or out of the sample:

1. Have you already been interviewed by someone wearing a name tag like this?
2. Are you living in temporary housing, an emergency shelter, or living outside right now?
3. Within the past 3 years, have you gone through periods where you did not have a permanent place to stay?
4. Would you be willing to answer some questions so we can better plan services and programs in Missoula?

The screens helped us include people in the sample who might currently be housed but who had experienced episodes of homelessness during the last 3 years.

Cutting Down on Survey Duplication

Three methods were used to help eliminate survey duplications: (1) informing prospective survey respondents of the importance of being interviewed only once to ensure reliable results; (2) creating a survey identification number that required respondents to provide the year, month, and day of their birth; and (3) administering the survey in the downtown area and camping areas on only 1 day. Use of the 8-digit identification number helped eliminate 6 survey duplications.

Survey Analysis Methods

Survey items were analyzed using a computerized statistical analysis program to aid in organizing and analyzing closed-ended survey responses.¹⁵ Frequencies and percentages were determined for these survey items. Chi-square and t-tests were performed to compare relevant survey items with each other and to assess whether the results occurred purely by chance or whether some association between the items influenced the results. These were used to find significant differences between the 7 identified comparison groups.

Responses to open-ended survey items were typed into the database, and Weft QDA,¹⁶ an open-source content analysis program, was used to compile survey respondents' comments and to arrive at major

¹⁴ The philosophy for the interview process was informed by research conducted at Sisters of the Road in Portland, Oregon, an outreach program for homeless people. See website at www.sistersoftheroad.org.

¹⁵ Closed-ended survey items required mostly yes-or-no responses, although some were multiple-choice questions.

¹⁶ Weft QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis) is simply a tool for organizing "word" data. The themes are developed by the user, not the program. Information on Weft can be accessed at www.rubyforge.org.

themes and subthemes.¹⁷ Themes and subthemes were then quantified by adding up the total number of responses in each category. Analyses of open-ended survey items were conducted by two separate reviewers to improve accuracy and inter-rater reliability in developing themes and counting them.

Survey Sites, Sampling, and Respondents

In total, 194 respondents were interviewed during the 1-day survey administration. Fifty-three additional surveys were conducted by nonprofit agency workers during the week of November 15th through November 19th at Missoula Housing Authority, WORD, Western Montana Mental Health Center shelters, and the YWCA shelters. A convenience sampling method was used to identify potential survey respondents. In this type of sampling approach, the people who are selected are those who are easiest to find and available for interviewing. This is an appropriate sampling approach given the need for preliminary information about the needs of homeless and precariously housed individuals and families in Missoula and given the difficulties inherent in developing a representative sample. However, not all homeless and precariously housed people had an equal chance of being included in the sample. As a result, caution should be exercised when considering generalizing the results to all homeless or precariously housed people living in Missoula.

After the elimination of 1 survey that did not fit the screening criteria, and 6 duplicate surveys, 240 surveys were used to generate the findings contained in the report. Table 1 presents where surveys were conducted in terms of counts and percentages of surveys completed at each site.

Table 1: Survey Administration Sites (N = 240)¹⁸

Survey Site	Number	Percent
Poverello	101	42.1
WORD	39	16.3
Downtown	30	12.5
Missoula 3:16	27	11.3
Outside locations (bridges, trails, camping)	9	3.8
Missoula Public Library	8	3.3
Gateway Center (YWCA)	7	2.9
WMMHC Shelters	7	2.9
Partnership Health Center	4	1.7
YWCA Women's Shelter	4	1.7
Missoula Housing Authority	3	1.3
Missoula Food Bank	1	.4
Total	240	100.0

¹⁷ Content analysis is a process used to identify and code word-type data as opposed to numeric data.

¹⁸ The large N refers to number of respondents. Note that the N varies in the report tables dependent upon how many people responded to a question or set of questions, and if the item was applicable to all respondents.

Demographic information describing survey respondents is summarized in Table 2. Almost 65% were males and about 35% were females. Their ages ranged from 17 to 86; the average age was 41.4 and the median age was 43.¹⁹ In terms of ethnicity, most of the respondents were not Hispanic. Seventy-five percent were white. There were very small numbers of Latino, black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native respondents. American Indians made up 22.5% of the sample. Based on current census data, the percentage of American Indians residing in Montana (6.4%), and those living in Missoula County (2.8%), American Indians were overrepresented in the survey.²⁰ Their high percentage indicates the higher proportion of American Indians living in poverty compared with non-American-Indian populations.

Table 2: Survey Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (N = 240)

Demographic Item	Number	Percent
Gender (N = 240)		
Male	155	64.6
Female	85	35.4
Age (N = 240)		
17–25	34	14.2
26–35	47	19.6
36–45	60	25.0
46–55	65	27.1
56–65	30	12.5
66+	4	1.7
Ethnicity (N = 237)		
Hispanic	6	2.5
Non-Hispanic	231	97.5
Race (N = 236)		
Latino	3	1.3
Black or African American	9	3.8
White	180	76.3
American Indian	54	22.5
Asian	1	.4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	.4
Alaskan Native	1	.4
Other	11	4.5
Current family situation (N = 236)		
Living alone	158	67.0
Living in a couple without children	27	11.4
One-parent family with children	27	11.4
Two-parent family with children	24	10.2

¹⁹ Means or averages are calculated by adding up, as in the case of age, all ages and dividing by the number of participants. The median, on the other hand, is a calculation that identifies the point at which 50% of respondents fall below and 50% are above. The median is not inclined to be pulled by extreme or outlying numbers.

²⁰ See www.quickfacts.census.gov.

Table 2 (Continued)

Demographic Item	Number	Percent
Education (N = 239)		
8 th grade or less	13	5.4
9 th –12 th grade (no diploma)	40	16.7
High school graduate or GED	77	32.2
Some college	87	36.4
Bachelor's degree	16	6.7
Graduate degree	6	2.5
U.S. Military or National Guard (N = 238)		
No	188	79.0
Yes	50	21.0
How long lived in Missoula? (N = 240)		
11 months or less	84	35.0
1–2 years	31	12.9
3–5 years	25	10.4
6–10 years	31	12.9
11–20 years	38	15.8
21 years or more	31	13.0
Total monthly income (N = 228)		
None	78	34.2
1–200	24	10.5
201–500	18	7.9
501–800	55	24.1
800–1000	25	11.0
1001–2000	26	11.4
2001–2500	2	.9

Almost 78% of respondents were living alone or as part of a couple without children, while almost 22% were living in one- or two-parent families, mostly with one or two children. Eight of the 51 families with children reported parenting a special-needs child with a health-related illness such as asthma, seizure disorder, or epilepsy.

Concerning education levels, 22% had completed less than a high school degree or GED. Approximately 32% had completed high school or a GED, while almost 46% had completed some college or bachelor's or graduate degrees. These percentages reflect the growing numbers of educated people living in poverty.

Almost 21% of survey completers had served in the U.S. military or National Guard, a percentage that closely approximates the national percentage of homeless veterans. As illustrated in Table 2, 35% had lived in Missoula 11 months or less, while 65% had lived in Missoula for a year or more. Of these, almost 42% had lived in Missoula for at least 6 years. Monthly incomes ranged from \$0 to \$2,500. Of respondents who answered this survey item, 34.2% reported having no monthly income. The average monthly income was \$480.58, and the median monthly income was \$450.00.

Identifying Comparison Groups and Significant Demographic Differences

Along with exploring overall findings for the entire survey sample, comparison groups were identified to determine whether specific groups of survey respondents differed significantly when compared with each other on a variety of survey items, including service needs.²¹ Groups were chosen based on practice wisdom, current research literature, the purposes of the survey, and whether it was feasible, based on group size, to conduct statistical tests of significance.

The 7 comparison groups and the rationale for including them in the survey analyses are reported below; demographic characteristics that differentiate them from each other, if any, are also noted:

1. One- and two-parent families versus people living alone or in a couple without children:

Homelessness among families has increased in the last few decades and has surged with housing foreclosures and the economic recession in recent years. The services used by families with children, and their housing, medical, and employment needs, vary in intensity compared with those used and needed by single people or couples who do not have children.²²

Fifty-one respondents (21.6%) lived in one- or two-parent families, while 185 (78.4%) lived alone or as part of a couple with no children. As a group, one- and two-parent families were more likely represented by females and American Indians, to be younger, and to have higher monthly incomes, and were less likely to have served in the military than people living alone or as part of a couple without children.

2. People who had lived in Missoula for less than a year versus people who had lived in Missoula for more than a year: One of the key survey questions was developed to identify the number of homeless people who might be “traveling through” Missoula versus more long-term Missoula residents to assess differences in both service use and service needs.

Eighty-four people (35.0%) had lived in Missoula for less than a year, while 156 (65%) people had lived in Missoula for more than a year. There were no significant differences noted between groups with regard to demographic characteristics.

3. One-time homeless versus people who had been homeless multiple times: The research literature points to distinct service use by homeless people depending on whether they have been without permanent housing in the short term, episodically, or continuously over the long term.²³

Ninety-one people (38.2%) reported being homeless once, while 147 (61.8%) reported multiple episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years. People who had been homeless once were more likely to have higher monthly incomes.

4. People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula versus people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere: Looking more closely at people whose last permanent

²¹ Chi-square and t-tests were used to measure differences between groups. Chi-square results are reported throughout the findings' chapters. All T-test analyses for the survey findings are located in Appendix D.

²² Hagen, J. (1987). Gender and homelessness. *Social Work*, 32(4), 312–316.

²³ Kuhn, R. & Culhane, D. (1998). Applying cluster analysis to test a typology of homelessness by pattern of shelter utilization. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(2), 207–232.

housing was in Missoula provides deeper insights into Missoula’s “homegrown” homeless population compared with people who became homeless elsewhere.

One-hundred and seventeen people (52.5%) reported that their last permanent housing was in Missoula, while 106 (47.5%) reported that their last permanent housing was elsewhere. People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were more likely to be living in one- or two-parent families, to be younger, and to have higher monthly incomes than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.

5. **Females versus males:** The research literature points to the divergent service needs and safety concerns of females compared with males who are homeless. In addition, a large number of homeless families are single-parent, female-headed households, and one of the foremost reasons for homelessness reported by women relates to eviction and domestic abuse.²⁴

Eighty-five females (35.4% of the sample) participated in the survey, as did 155 males (64.6%). Compared with males, females were more likely to be younger and to be living in one- or two-parent families.

6. **People who had served in the U.S. military or the National Guard versus people who had not served:** Generally, it is believed that people who have served in the military are overrepresented among the homeless population. Estimates indicate that although 8% of the general population can claim veteran status, roughly 20% of homeless people are veterans.²⁵

Fifty people (21%) in the survey sample had served in the U.S. military or the National Guard, and 188 (79%) had not. People who had served in the U.S. military were more likely to have higher monthly incomes and to be older than people who had not served.

7. **People who were homeless for less than a year versus people who were homeless for more than a year:** The research literature, especially recent articles on preventing homelessness, indicates the need for early intervention to prevent people who are homeless from feeling “as though they have fallen into an abyss, or landed at a way station to nowhere.”²⁶ Addressing homelessness early, or preventing it from occurring, not only saves money in the long run but also eliminates extended periods of homelessness that have proved to be “hazardous to people’s health and wellbeing.”²⁷

Seventy people (35.4%) in the sample had been homeless for less than a year, while 128 (64.6%) had been homeless for more than a year. As a group, people who were homeless for less than a year were more likely to have higher monthly incomes and to experience far fewer episodes of homelessness than those who were homeless for more than a year.

²⁴ See Hagen, J.

²⁵ See the National Coalition for Homeless Vets website at www.nchv.gov for additional information about homeless veterans.

²⁶ Culhane, D., Metraux, S., & Byrne, T. (2010). *A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: A paradigm shift?* Washington, DC: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. pp. 25–26.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

Limitations of the Data

When interpreting the findings contained in the report, keep in mind that they reflect the information gathered from the people interviewed and not from Missoula's entire homeless and precariously housed population. As such, generalizing the findings to these broader groups living in Missoula is not advisable. In addition, participation in the survey was voluntary. Therefore, the results might reflect characteristics of people inclined to voluntarily respond to the survey as compared to people who chose not to participate, although their numbers were few. Nonetheless, the work represents a landmark best effort to gather meaningful information on this population for Missoula. It can serve as a valuable guide when considering the policy and practice implications of proposed interventions.

3 Past and Current Housing Circumstances

Section Overview

This section presents survey findings about the following:

- housing histories and current housing circumstances
- length of time lived in Missoula
- current family situation
- frequency of homelessness episodes
- location of last permanent housing
- why people from elsewhere decided to move to Missoula
- main reasons for homelessness

Current Location and Number of Places Lived in the Last 30-Days

Current Location

Table 3 identifies where respondents were living at the time the survey was administered. Almost 24% were living at the Poverello, and 18% were living outside, for example, near the Reserve Street Bridge, Jacob's Island, and along the Clark Fork River. When combining outside locations (i.e., camping/tent, car/other vehicle, downtown, under bridge), 35% of respondents lived outdoors at least some, if not all, of the time in the 30 days prior to the survey.

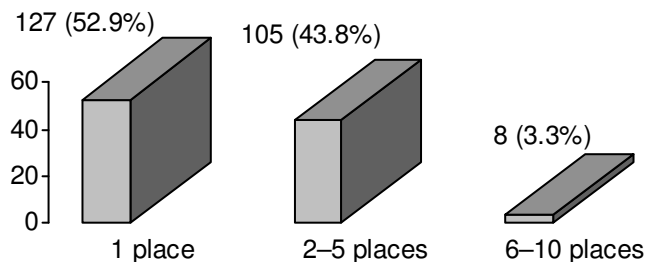
Table 3: Where Respondents Were Living When Interviewed (N = 240)

Current Location	Number	Percent
Poverello	57	23.8
Camping/tent	44	18.3
Own apartment or house	35	14.6
With friends or family	27	11.3
Car or other vehicle	27	11.3
Motel/or hotel	12	5.0
Downtown outside	11	4.6
YWCA shelter	9	3.8
Miscellaneous	5	2.1
Section 8	4	1.7
Gateway Center (YWCA)	4	1.7
Motel voucher	3	1.2
Under bridge	1	.3
Transitional housing	1	.3
Total	240	100.0

Living Situation in the Previous 30 Days

Many survey respondents stayed in multiple locations in the month before the survey. As noted in Chart 1, almost 53% stayed in one location, while almost 44% stayed anywhere from 2 to 5 different locations in that 30-day period. Three percent stayed in from 6 to 10 different places. This finding provides a window into the severity of the living-situation disruptions and uncertainty experienced by almost 50% of those interviewed.

Chart 1: Number of Places Respondents Lived in the Last 30 Days (N = 240)



Survey respondents were asked to recount all the places they had lived in the previous month. Table 4 illustrates the 6 most common places reported and the number of people who stayed in each location.²⁸ Everyone completed this item. Because some people stayed in multiple locations, the count exceeds the total number of respondents. The most frequent places respondents lived were at the Poverello and outside. Staying with family and friends was the third most commonly reported location.

Table 4: Where Respondents Lived in the Last 30 Days (N = 240)

Location	Number of Respondents
1. Poverello	79
2. Outside/tents	61
3. Friends/family	55
4. Car/other vehicle	46
5. Downtown outside	40
6. Own house or apartment	35

²⁸ For a complete list of places participants lived in the last 30 days, see Appendix A for corresponding table.

Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to Live Outside?²⁹

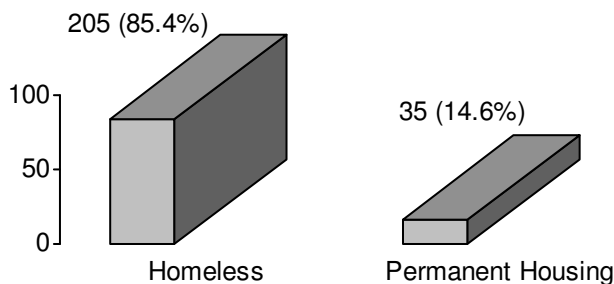
- 31.4% of those who were living alone or living in a couple vs. 5.9% of one- and two-parent families (.05)
- 30.6% of those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness vs. 16.5% of those who had experienced one episode of homelessness (.01)
- 32.1% of those whose last permanent housing was some place other than Missoula vs. 16.5% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula (.01)
- 38.3% of those who were homeless more than a year vs. 14.3% of those who were homeless less than a year (.00)

Housing Status

Permanently Housed and Homeless

As noted in Chart 2, 205 (85.4%) of the total survey sample were homeless, while 35 (14.6%) were permanently housed. Recall that individuals and families who were currently housed could be included in the survey if they had experienced at least one episode of homelessness in the last 3 years.

Chart 2: Current Housing Status (N = 240)



Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to Live in Permanent Housing?

- 43.1% of families with children vs. 8.6% of those living alone or as a couple (.00)
- 21.8% of those who had lived in Missoula for more than a year vs. 4.8% of those who had lived in Missoula for less than a year (.00)
- 22.0% of those who had been homeless one time in the previous 3 years vs. 11.6% of those who had been homeless multiple times in the previous 3 years (.03)
- 23.5% of women vs. 11.7% of men (.02)

²⁹ Information in the “Which Groups” sections is derived from chi-square and t-tests. Significance levels are reported. A significant finding does not occur by chance alone. Levels of significance are as follows: <.01 = highly significant; .01 to .05 = moderately significant; .06 to .10 = somewhat significant. Anything greater than .10 is not considered significant.

Length of Time Homeless

Of those who were currently homeless and who responded to the question (82.5%), Table 5 illustrates how many were homeless for specific time intervals. As noted, 35.4% had been homeless for 11 months or less, while 64.6% had been homeless for a year or more. Almost 15% of respondents had been homeless for 6 years or more. Fifty percent of respondents had been without permanent housing anywhere from 1 to 5 years.

Table 5: Length of Time Homeless (N = 198)

Time Intervals	Number	Percent
0–11 months	70	35.4
1–2 years	42	21.2
3–5 years	57	28.8
6–10 years	16	8.1
11–30 years	13	6.6
Total	198	100.0
Not applicable or no response ^a	42	17.5

^aThis category reflects 35 people in the sample who were permanently housed and 7 who did not respond to the item.

In and Out of Homelessness

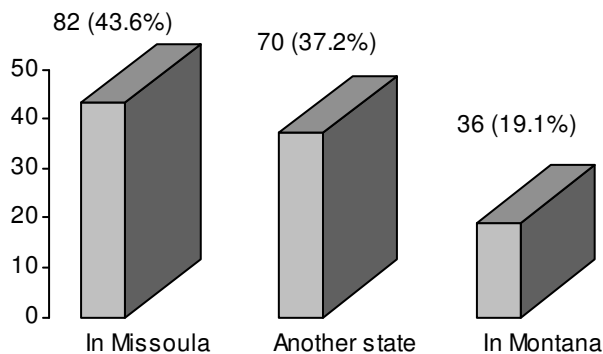
All respondents were asked how many times they had experienced periods of homelessness in the previous 3 years. As illustrated in Table 6, 50% had experienced 1 or 2 episodes of homelessness. Almost 17% had experienced 3 or 4 episodes of homelessness, while 33.2% had been homeless at least 5 times or continuously. Sixty-nine people, or 29% of this latter group, were homeless throughout the past 3 years.

Table 6: How Many Times Homeless in the Past 3 Years? (N = 238)

Number of Times	Number	Percent
1–2 times	119	50.0
3–4 times	40	16.8
5 times–continuous	79	33.2
Total	238	100.0

Last Permanent Housing

Survey respondents who were homeless at the time of the survey (205, or 85.4% of the sample) were also asked where they last lived in permanent housing. As illustrated in Chart 3, of the 188 people who responded to this question, 43.6% lived in Missoula. Thirty-seven percent lived in another state, mostly in the Northwest or Midwest. The remainder, 19.1%, lived in other locations throughout Montana but primarily in cities in the western and central regions of the state.

Chart 3: Where Was Your Last Permanent Housing? (N = 188)**Which Comparison Groups' Last Permanent Housing Was More Likely to be in Missoula?**

- 78.0% of families with children vs. 44.7% of those living alone or as a couple (.00)
- 83.3% of those who had lived in Missoula for more than a year vs. 30.5% of those who had lived in Missoula for less than a year (.00)

Main Contributors to Homelessness

The main reasons respondents had experienced homelessness were drawn from a list of 28 possible yes-or-no options; respondents were also allowed to add reasons that might not have appeared among those supplied. The responses per theme were counted, and then within thematic categories, specific topics were ranked based on frequency of affirmative responses, as noted in Table 7.

Almost all respondents (98.7%) responded to this survey item. Table 7 illustrates the main themes that emerged from the analysis in order of their frequency. Housing and economic reasons were by far the most frequently occurring theme. Half the reasons reported were related to housing and economics: first and foremost among these were job loss, inability to pay rent, and low wages. The most frequently reported health reasons included illness and medical problems, disability, and abuse of alcohol or other drugs. Miscellaneous reasons included moving in and out of town and being unhappy in a previous housing situation. The most common reasons related to family and friends consisted of arguments and conflicts, divorce or separation, and domestic (partner) violence.

Table 7: Main Reasons Homeless (N = 237)

Main Reasons	Number of Times Theme Noted	Percent
1. Housing/economic	407	48.1
2. Health	183	21.6
3. Miscellaneous	145	17.1
4. Family/friends	112	13.2
Total	847	100.0

What Are the Significant Reasons for Homelessness More Likely Reported for Comparison Groups?

- 26.6% of those who lived in Missoula for more than a year vs. 12.0% of those who lived in Missoula less than a year reported low wages (.01)
- 27.0% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula vs. 16.2% of those whose last housing was elsewhere reported low wages (.05)
- 46.3% of those who had been homeless multiple times in a 3-year period vs. 27.3% of those who had been homeless one time reported inability to pay rent or a mortgage (.00)
- 23.5% of women vs. 2.0% of men reported domestic (partner) violence (.00)
- 24.7% of women vs. 13.9% of men reported arguments or conflicts with friends or family members (.04)
- 33.6% of those who had been homeless for more than a year vs. 16.2% of those who had been homeless for less than a year reported illness/medical problems (.01)

Living in Missoula

Why Move To Missoula?

Survey respondents whose last permanent housing was elsewhere were asked why they decided to move to Missoula. As noted in Table 8, for the 119 people who responded to this open-ended question, the most frequently occurring theme addressed family and friends as the prime motivator. The second most frequently occurring theme concerned escaping adverse circumstances elsewhere, including abuse and jail. The third theme addressed employment opportunities, and the fourth, the services offered. By far the biggest draws precipitating a move to Missoula were family and friends.

Table 8: Why Move to Missoula? (N = 119)

Reasons	Number of Times Theme Noted	Percent
1. Family and friends	48	34.3
2. Adverse circumstances elsewhere	24	17.1
3. Work	17	12.1
4. Services offered	16	11.4
5. Liked Missoula	14	10.0
6. Needed a change	11	7.9
7. Hometown	10	7.2
Total	140	100

A compilation of respondents' quotes in response to this question add more depth to the information presented in Table 8:

I know some people here and I know the city well. I have lived here off and on since I was 16 years old . . . It's a long story. My husband and I broke up. Then the power got shut off . . . I heard about the doctors and services offered here in Missoula to low income families . . . I was fleeing a domestic violence situation.

Why Stay in Missoula?

As noted in the previous section, 35% of respondents had lived in Missoula 11 months or less, while 65% had lived in Missoula a year or more. Almost 42% had lived in Missoula 6 years or more. To assess why people stayed in Missoula, interviewees were asked whether Missoula had proved to be a good place to live. The majority of respondents (192 or 80.3%) reported in the affirmative, as noted in Table 9. Ten percent of respondents reported both the benefits of living in Missoula and some of the challenges.

Table 9: Is Missoula a Good Place to Live? (N = 239)

Response Option	Number	Percent
Yes	192	80.3
No	23	9.7
Yes and No	24	10.0
Total	239	100.0
No response	1	.4

A follow-up, open-ended question asked respondents to elaborate on their response. Table 10 indicates the major themes identified in respondents' answers and provides the strength of themes as illustrated by frequency counts. Of the total sample, 203 (84.5%) responded to this question.³⁰ The grand total for each major theme is represented in the total counts for each category.³¹ The top themes on the plus side in order of importance were (1) Missoula's attributes including "the nice community feel," community cohesiveness and support, activities offered, and navigability; (2) the kind, good, helpful, and friendly people who live in Missoula; (3) the quality of social services offered, especially food services; and (4) the fact that Missoula was home for a number of people or they had family and friends who lived here.

When combined, the first two themes state powerfully the reasons why people move to Missoula or why they stay: primarily the community itself and the people who live here. One respondent replied, "It's the

³⁰ The expanded version of List 2 is included in Appendix A.

³¹ Respondents could identify more than one reason why they thought Missoula had proved to be a good place to live. Therefore, the total counts following each major theme indicate not the number of respondents but rather the number of times each theme was mentioned.

people I've met here in the last 9 years—They are some of the best people I've ever met. There's a good support system here.”

Although respondents were not asked to comment on Missoula's challenges, they identified expensive housing, a lack of jobs, and low wages among these. In the words of one participant, “I've never had to work so hard for a place to live.” Note that only 10% of the comments related to Missoula's social services. Of the comments, one respondent's remarks clearly identified the conundrum for homeless people living in rural states who must leave their home communities to address their shelter, food, and medical needs: “Missoula has more resources to offer people like me compared to Hamilton and I have always liked Missoula.”

Table 10: Why Missoula Is a Good Place to Live, and Its Challenges (N = 203)

Major Themes	Number of Comments	Percent
1. Missoula's attributes	124	37.6
2. The people	81	24.5
3. Missoula's challenges	75	22.7
4. Social services	33	10.0
5. Originally from Missoula or have family here	17	5.2
Total	330	100.0

Section Highlights

The most striking findings to emerge from information collected about past and current housing circumstances were the following:

- The number of people living outdoors (mid-November) was 85, or 34.5% of survey respondents.
- Almost half the respondents (48%) experienced extremely disrupted lives marked by uncertainty about where to live day-to-day based on the number of places they lived in the 30-day period prior to the survey.
- Those most likely to live outside were males with longer histories of homelessness whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula.
- The most common places respondents stayed during the 30-day period prior to the survey were at the Poverello, outside, and with friends and/or family.
- Eighty-five percent of the total sample were considered homeless at the time of the survey.
- Fifty percent of the sample had experienced one or two episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 29% had been homeless continually.
- Almost half the respondents were living in Missoula's permanent housing when they experienced their first episode of homelessness (Missoula's homeless). These were more likely to be women and families with children.

- The longer respondents were homeless, the more likely they were to report illness/medical problems as a reason for homelessness.
- People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were more likely to report low wages as a reason for homelessness.
- Women and families were more likely to report domestic abuse and family conflicts as reasons for homelessness.
- People living elsewhere at the time they became homeless moved to Missoula primarily because of family and friends and not because of the services offered.
- People stayed in Missoula more because of the City's attributes (cohesiveness, community support, activities) and its helpful, friendly people and far less so because of the services offered.

4

Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities

Section Overview

This section explores:

- housing and other service use
- service needs
- types of services used
- intensity of service use
- barriers to and opportunities for services
- most common ways respondents find out about shelter, housing assistance, food, and health care

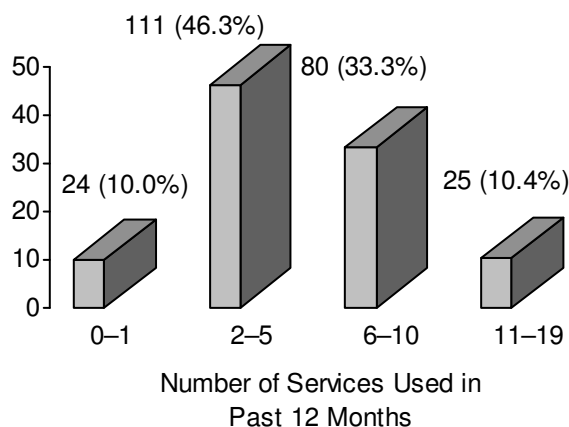
Housing and Other Service Use

Intensity of Service Use

Respondents were asked whether they had used Missoula services in the past 12 months. All but one responded to this question. Six people, or 2.5% of the entire sample, said they had not used services, while 233 (97.1%) reported that they had used Missoula social services in the past year.

Based on the responses to the service-use questions, the number of services used per respondent was counted to provide an idea of overall service-use intensity. As illustrated in Chart 4, approximately 46% of respondents used anywhere from 2 to 5 different Missoula social services over the course of a year. A smaller percentage (10.4%) used from 11 to 19 different Missoula social services in a year. Ten percent of survey respondents used either 0 or 1 service in a year.

Chart 4: Service-Use Intensity (N = 240)



Services Used in the Past 12 Months

In addition, respondents were asked 43 yes-or-no questions about which specific Missoula shelter, housing assistance, food/meals, and health care services they had used in the past year. Ninety-seven percent of the total sample responded to these items. Table 11 indicates the frequency of service use within each broad category. Appendix B contains a complete list of the services used within each category. Based on overall counts, broad categories were ranked according to frequency of service use.

Food and meal services ranked the highest in terms of overall use. Food stamps, Poverello, Missoula Food Bank, and Missoula 3:16 were used most often, at 42.5%. Health care services ranked second, at almost 24% of overall service use. The four most frequently mentioned were Partnership Health Center, local hospitals, Poverello, and prescription medication care. Housing assistance services ranked third in terms of overall usage. The most frequently mentioned were Missoula Housing Authority, WORD, Human Resource Council, and the Salvation Army. Shelter assistance ranked fourth. Of these, the most commonly used were the Poverello, Salvation Army vouchers, YWCA Gateway Center, and YWCA motel vouchers.

Table 11: Which Missoula Services Have You Used in the Past 12 Months? (N = 233)

Service Category	Count of Services Used	Percent
1. Food and meal services	563	42.5
2. Health care services	316	23.9
3. Housing assistance	224	16.9
4. Shelter services	221	16.2
Total	1324	100.0

Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to Use Which Services?

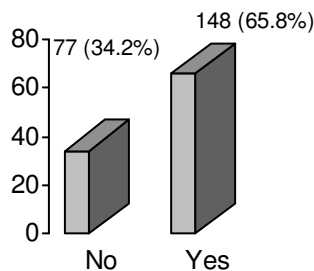
- 46.0% of families with children vs. 14.0% of those living alone or as a couple used Missoula Housing Authority (.00)
- 71.3% of those who had lived in Missoula for less than a year vs. 41.8% of those who had lived in Missoula more than a year used the Poverello shelter (.00)
- 55.6% of those who had live in Missoula more than a year vs. 25.0% of those who had lived in Missoula less than a year used Missoula Food Bank (.00)
- 33.7% of women vs. 6.7% of men used WORD (.00)
- 61.2% of those whose last permanent housing was some place other than Missoula vs. 37.2% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula used the Poverello shelter (.00)
- 28.4% of those who had experienced one episode of homelessness vs. 16.1% of those who had experienced multiple homeless episodes used YWCA motel vouchers.

Opportunities For and Barriers to Services

Ease of Service Use

Opportunities for and barriers to using services for homeless people are important to assess. Interactions with service providers have been found to initiate or impede access to services.^{32,33} One way to think about opportunities for services is that they create and improve ways for homeless and precariously housed people to get their needs met in important ways. Approximately 94% of respondents answered an item asking them whether some services were easier to use than others. As illustrated in Chart 5, of those, almost 66% indicated that this was indeed the case.

Chart 5: Are Some Services Easier to Use than Others? (N = 225)



All of those who reported that some services were easier to use than others responded to an open-ended question asking them to explain their responses. Table 12 identifies the major themes that emerged, in order of frequency. Respondents' top reason had to do with formality versus informality of services: those with more informal rules of operation, structure, and procedures won out. Subthemes included easy-to-use services that “you don't have to jump fences to use,” convenient hours of operation, and “less paperwork is best.” Treatment by staff included respect, dignity, and compassion, and a receptive, open attitude. Ease of access and convenience were related to issues of location and transportation. Finally, respondents reported that services were easier to use if staff were experienced and knowledgeable.

Table 12: Reasons Some Services Are Easier to Use (N = 148)

Major Themes	Count of Reasons	Percent
1. Informal program operations and procedures	41	26.6
2. Treatment by staff	37	24.0
3. Ease of access and convenience	36	23.4
4. Miscellaneous	26	16.9
5. Staff competency	14	9.1
Total	154	100.0

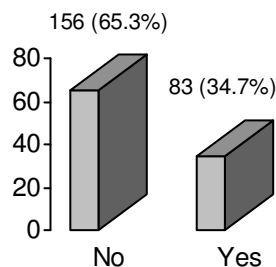
³² Jacobson, M., & Rugeley, C. (2007). *Food insecurity in Missoula County: Barriers, opportunities and solutions*. Missoula, MT: Praxis – Building Knowledge for Action.

³³ Hoffman, L., & Coffey, B. (2008). Dignity and indignation: How people experiencing homelessness view services and providers. *The Social Science Journal* 45, 207–222.

Service Challenges

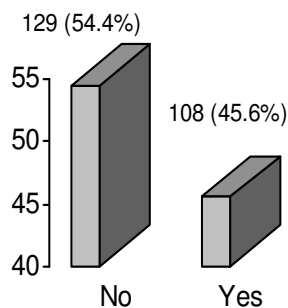
Survey respondents were asked whether they had been turned down for any Missoula services in the past 2 years (see Chart 6). All but one responded. Almost 35% reported being turned down for services. In order of importance, the three most common reasons mentioned were (1) not qualifying, (2) having an income that was too high, and (3) lack of identification.

Chart 6: Ever Turned Down for Services? (N = 239)



Of those respondents who answered a survey question about whether they had ever chosen not to use services in Missoula in the past 2 years even if they might have qualified for them, almost 46% reported that they had chosen not to apply (see Chart 7). The three most common reasons for not applying, in order of importance, were (1) “someone needs it more than I do,” (2) embarrassment about applying for services, and (3) an application process that was too long.

Chart 7: Ever Chosen Not to Use Services (N = 237)



Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to be Affected by Service Challenges?

- 83.3% of one- or two-parent families vs. 61.3% of those living alone or living as a couple (.00)
- 39.7% of those who had lived in Missoula more than a year vs. 25.3% of those who had lived in Missoula less than a year (.03)
- 45.2% of women vs. 29.2% of men (.02)
- 44.0% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula vs. 27.4% of those whose last permanent housing was elsewhere (.01)
- 40.4% of those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness vs. 26.4% of those who had experienced one episode (.04)
- 50.3% of those who had experienced homeless for more than a year vs. 36.6% of those who had experienced homelessness for less than a year (.04)

Finding Services

Of the 240 respondents, almost 96% answered a survey question asking how they usually find out about shelter, housing assistance, food, or health care services. They responded yes or no to a list of 20 items that included numerous service programs, friends, family, a newspaper, and other sources of information. Table 13 summarizes the top 10 sources of information accessed by service users, ranked in order of frequency. For example, 58.7% of respondents reported finding out about services by word of mouth, while 30% found out about services from the Poverello.

Table 13: Finding Out about Services—Top Ten Ways (N = 230)

Key Themes	Number of Yes Responses	Percent
1. Word of mouth	135	58.7
2. Poverello	69	30.0
3. Friends	68	29.6
4. WORD	39	17.0
5. Salvation Army	36	15.7
6. Family members	31	13.5
7. Missoula 3:16	31	13.5
8. Missoula Food Bank	25	10.9
9. Newspaper	25	10.9
10. Missoula Housing Authority	22	9.6

Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to Find Out about Services through Word of Mouth?

- 65.0% of those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness vs. 48.2% of those who had experience one episode (.01)
- 66.7% of those whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula vs. 50.0% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula (.01)

Additional Services Needed

Respondents were asked another open-ended question about whether they needed services other than those they were currently using. Of the total, 59.1% answered the question. The most frequently occurring theme was housing assistance. Respondents wanted help, in general, to secure housing through deposit assistance that would pay first and last month's rent, as well as affordable housing. Of the health and mental health care services, dental and eye care were most frequently requested. Miscellaneous services needed included education and training, legal services, and job assistance. Transportation services primarily included bus passes and better access to transportation.

Table 14: Other Services Needed (N = 142)

Major Theme	Frequency of Occurrence	Percent
1. Housing assistance	55	39.6
2. Health and mental health assistance	43	31.0
3. Miscellaneous services	30	21.5
4. Transportation services	11	7.9
Total	139	100.0

A composite of respondents' comments tell a richer story about other services they needed:

I need housing. I am tired of being on a waiting list . . . I need anything that will help me get housing . . . I need something that doesn't take forever . . . I would like to get assistance with dental care and glasses for my daughter . . . It would be nice to have health care and I need to stop worrying about the bill . . . I only use the bus and evenings are out.

Section Highlights

The most striking findings to emerge from information collected about housing and other service use and needs were the following:

- Most respondents have used at least one of Missoula's services in the past 12 months.

- Of all the services available in Missoula, food/meals were most frequently used.
- Of respondents who lived in Missoula more than a year, women, and families with children, were more likely to use Missoula’s mainstream services (Missoula Housing Authority, Human Resource Council, WIC, and Missoula Food Bank).
- Respondents whose last permanent housing was in Missoula used the most services overall.
- Respondents whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula used more emergency shelter services.
- Two-thirds of respondents reported that some services are easier to use than others.
- Informal program operations and respectful, compassionate treatment by service organization staff create more opportunities for services use.
- Ease of service access, location of service, and transportation to and from services create opportunities for service use.
- Top barriers to service use include not qualifying, an income that is too high, and lack of identification.
- Top reasons some respondents chose not to apply for services were “someone needs it more than I do,” embarrassment about using services, and application processes that are too long.
- Respondents most likely to find out about services through word of mouth were those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness and those whose last permanent housing was somewhere other than Missoula.
- Families and women were more likely to find out about services by accessing them.
- Housing assistance was by far the most frequently mentioned service needed.

5 Permanent Housing and Employment Needs

Section Overview

This section presents findings related to:

- survey respondents' housing and employment needs
- sources of and amounts of monthly income
- needs related to finding and keeping employment
- respondents' suggestions for how to address needs

Permanent Housing Needs

Finding Permanent Housing

Only respondents who were not already in permanent housing were asked whether they were interested in short-term shelter and/or permanent housing in Missoula. Both items could be checked either yes or no, so the total number of yes endorsements exceeds the number of respondents. Permanent housing was identified by almost 89% of respondents. Recall that almost 15% of the total sample was housed when the survey was administered.

Table 15: Interested in What Type of Housing (N = 205)

Type of Housing	Number of Respondents	Percent
Short-term housing	60	29.2
Permanent housing	182	88.8

Survey respondents interested in permanent housing were asked a set of 31 yes-or-no survey items listing factors that could help them find permanent housing. Table 16 presents the top 10 factors identified and the number of and percentage of respondents who endorsed each item. Affordable housing was identified by 128, or 70.3%, of respondents who completed this question. Employment received the second highest ranking, with 62.1% identifying jobs as a precursor to finding permanent housing.

Table 16: Finding Permanent Housing—Top Ten Needs (N = 182)

Needs	Number of Respondents	Percent
1. Affordable housing	128	70.3
2. Job	113	62.1
3. Bus passes	73	40.1
4. Outreach worker/advocate	69	37.9
5. Less discrimination (i.e., pets, children, credit, race, and criminal history, etc.)	68	37.3
6. Regular income	67	36.8
7. Damage deposit	62	34.0
8. Transportation to see apartments/housing	50	27.4
9. Information about housing supports/services	39	21.4
10. Shower/laundry facilities	37	20.3

Which Comparison Groups Were More Likely to Need Help Finding Permanent Housing?

- 48.6% of families with children vs. 13.5% of those living alone or living in a couple reported less discrimination based on credit history would help them find permanent housing (.00)
- 88.6% of families with children vs. 63.8% of those living alone or living in a couple reported that affordable housing would help them find permanent housing (.00)
- 37.2% of those who had never served in the military or National Guard vs. 19.0% of those who had reported that a damage deposit would help them find permanent housing (.03)
- 23.0% of those who had been homeless for less than a year vs. 9.6% of those who had been homeless for more than a year reported the need for mental health supports and an outreach worker/advocate to help them find permanent housing (.01)

Affording Permanent Housing

Of those respondents interested in finding permanent housing, almost all answered a question asking them what they could afford to pay for rent each month. Responses ranged from \$0 to \$700, and 40.2% reported that they were unable to pay rent. Table 17 illustrates what respondents reported they could afford, presented in intervals. Note that according to the 2010 Missoula Housing Report, the median price of a two-bedroom apartment is \$700 per month.³⁴

³⁴ See the 2010 Missoula Housing Report produced by the Missoula Organization of Realtors, p. 12, at www.missoularealestate.com.

Table 17: Monthly Affordable Rent Payment (N = 179)

Rent Could Afford Each Month	Number	Percent
No ability to pay rent	72	40.2
\$1–\$100	9	5.0
\$101–\$300	31	17.3
\$301–\$500	49	27.4
\$501–\$700	18	10.1
Total	179	100.0

Survey respondents who indicated interest in permanent housing were asked 17 yes-or-no items to determine their needs related to affording permanent housing. Table 18 illustrates the top ten responses to these items and the number and percentage of respondents who identified each. Ongoing rental assistance ranked first, with a 56.6% response rate. First and last month's rent ranked second, with almost 55% endorsing this need. Finding a job and/or a better-paying job ranked third in importance, with almost half of respondents answering this item.

Table 18: Affording Permanent Housing—Top Ten Needs (N = 182)

Needs	Number of Respondents	Percent
1. On-going rental assistance	103	56.6
2. First and last month's rent and deposit	100	54.9
3. A job or better paying job	89	48.9
4. Bus voucher	67	36.8
5. Employment assistance	59	32.4
6. Clothes	51	28.0
7. Food	49	26.9
8. Gas money	47	25.8
9. Medical care	43	23.6
10. Paying rent on a weekly basis	42	23.0

Which Comparison Groups Were More Likely to Need Help Affording Permanent Housing?

- 45.7% of families with children vs. 10.3% of those living alone or living in a couple reported that minor repairs to vehicles would help them afford permanent housing (.00)
- 51.4% of families with children vs. 32.9% of those living alone or living in a couple reported that a better paying job would help them find permanent housing (.04)
- 46.2% of women vs. 30.3% of men reported that a better paying job would help them find permanent housing (.03)

Income Sources

Four respondents did not answer a series of 17 yes-or-no questions asking about their sources of income. Of those who replied, 68 or 29% reported having no source of income. As illustrated in Table 19, of the 168 respondents who reported having at least some income, almost 40% received some form of social security benefit. Forty-two percent earned income through part- or full-time employment, selling crafts, working day-labor jobs, or recycling; 17.9% held a part-time job, and 10.1% held a full-time job.

Table 19: Top Ten Sources of Income (N = 168)

Income Sources	Number of Respondents	Percent
1. Social Security Disability (SSDI)	37	22.0
2. Job (part-time)	31	17.9
3. Supplemental Social Security	31	17.9
4. Family and/or friends	24	14.3
5. Job (full-time)	17	10.1
6. Panhandling	15	8.9
7. Odd jobs, crafts, day labor	14	8.3
8. Unemployment benefits	11	6.5
9. Recycling	10	6.0
10. Veterans pension/disability	9	5.4

Which Comparison Groups Were More Likely to Differ Significantly Based on Income Sources?

- 23.5% of women vs. 7.3% of men reported SSI as an income source (.00)
- 24.0% of families with children vs. 6.6% of those living alone or living as a couple reported family and friends as an income source (.00)

Employment Needs

Finding a Job

In order to assess employment needs, respondents were asked whether they needed help finding a job. Almost everyone answered this question. Nearly 50% reported the need for some help, while 7.1% reported already being employed. As noted in Table 20, 13% were unable to work and 3.8% were not currently interested in employment.

Table 20: Do You Need Help Finding a Job? (N = 239)

Responses	Number	Percent
No	64	26.8
Yes	118	49.4
Already have a job	17	7.1
Do not want a job right now	9	3.8
Unable to work	31	13.0
Total	239	100.0

Employment Assistance Needs

Of the 115 respondents (47.9%) who reported needing assistance to find work, almost all completed a series of 21 yes-or-no questions related to employment needs. Table 21 presents respondents' top ten employment needs. The category of education and job training figured foremost and was endorsed by 58.3% of respondents, while transportation and knowing what jobs were available ranked second and third, respectively.

Table 21: What Do You Need to Find and Keep a Job? (N = 116)

Needs	Number of Respondents	Percent
1. Education or job training	67	58.3
2. Transportation	53	46.1
3. Knowing jobs available	52	38.3
4. Clothing	44	38.3
5. Resume	40	34.8
6. Driver's license	37	32.2
7. Phone/voice mail	34	29.6
8. Tools for the trade	29	25.2
9. Better physical health	24	20.9
10. Place to store personal belongings	23	20.0

Which Comparison Groups Were Significantly More Likely to Differ Based on Employment Needs?

- 40.3% of those who had lived in Missoula for more than a year vs. 20.8% of those who had lived in Missoula for less than a year reported needing help getting the proper identification to find and keep a job (.03)
- 44.6% of those whose last permanent housing was in Missoula vs. 26.4% of those whose last permanent housing was elsewhere reported needing help with a resume (.05)
- 26.4% of those who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness vs. 9.5% of those who had experienced one episode of homelessness reported needing a place to store personal belongings in order to find and keep a job (.03)

Additional Suggestions to Better Plan Services

The final survey question was open-ended and asked respondents to add anything else they thought would be helpful to know and relevant to a planning process. Sixty-two percent of all respondents contributed additional information. The key themes noted in Table 22 illustrate the main topic area most relevant to respondents. (The complete list can be found in Appendix C.)

Suggestions for addressing temporary housing needs were related primarily to creating shelter resources for families. Expanding shelter services, building a larger shelter, including “warm places to go in the winter,” and providing shelter for people who drink were also recommended. Suggestions for addressing permanent housing needs included providing easier and quicker access to permanent housing and increasing options for affordable housing.

Table 22: Is There Anything Else? (N = 149)

Key Themes	Frequency of Occurrence	Percent
1. Suggestions for addressing temporary housing needs	36	22.9
2. Suggestions for addressing permanent housing needs	26	16.6
3. Miscellaneous comments	24	15.3
4. Address employment needs	23	14.6
5. Services in Missoula (improve or increase)	17	10.8
6. Ideas for new programs and/or services	10	6.4
7. Complaints about existing services	10	6.4
8. No need to change or increase services	9	5.7
9. Remedy discrimination issues	2	1.3
Total	157	100.0

Direct quotes from respondents below provide more detailed suggestions for the City and County to better plan services:

We need a place for families to stay not just for single men. People with kids have no place to go. The number of homeless families and the number of shelters or services available just don't add up . . . Build onto the Pov. It's a good place but it needs more dining space. Places like the Pov are needed in every city. It takes the pressure off the judicial system . . . We need an agricultural project like a homeless garden to help feed the homeless and give us jobs. That way we can work for the services. This would help to sustain the community and we can feel better about ourselves by contributing . . . We need a drop-in center like they used to have before someone that came messed it up. This place could have nice clothes and showers available, a phone, a class, and a computer with internet access . . . It would be nice if more services published what they provide. We need a homeless information center downtown like the tourist information center . . . How about a park downtown with an awning to stay under if it's raining? That would sure make it easier to get around when you're disabled.

Section Highlights

- Of the 205 respondents living in temporary housing and outside, almost 89% were interested in finding permanent housing.
- The top three needs identified for finding permanent housing were (1) affordable housing, (2) employment, and (3) bus passes.
- Seventy-eight percent of respondents had a monthly income below the median rental price (\$700.00/month) for a two-bedroom apartment in Missoula.
- Ongoing rental assistance, first and last month's rent and deposit, and a job, or at least a better-paying one, were the top three needs respondents identified that would help them afford permanent housing.
- Families with children were more likely to report minor vehicle repairs, paying rent on a weekly basis, first and last month's rental assistance, and employment assistance as needs that would help them afford permanent housing.
- Forty-two percent of respondents who reported monthly income sources were employed either part- or full-time, sold crafts, worked day labor, or recycled to earn money.
- Those who had lived in Missoula for more than a year were more likely to report a part- or full-time job as a source of income.
- Almost 50% of respondents reported needing help to find a job.
- The top three employment assistance needs were (1) education/job training, (2) transportation, and (3) knowing what jobs were available.
- Identification papers were needed most by people who had been homeless longer and who had lived in Missoula for more than a year.
- Key suggestions to better plan services consisted of (1) creating more emergency shelter resources for families with children, (2) expanding shelter services, and (3) developing quicker and easier access to affordable housing and increasing options for affordable housing.

6

Discussion of Key Findings and Summary of Needs

Section Overview

This section summarizes and discusses key findings outlined in the report. Given the amount of information to digest, this section identifies some common threads among the findings and attempts to tie these together. A summary of housing, other service, and employment needs are presented and further addressed in this section. This report stands as one piece of the information-gathering process that will inform a much broader community conversation about how to use these findings to better plan services for homeless and people experiencing housing instability in Missoula, Montana.

Missoula's "Homegrown" Homeless

Use of the term Missoula's "homegrown" homeless is not intended to demean Missoula or the homeless people who live here but rather to point out that homelessness has developed everywhere in the United States, within both rural and urban communities. Homelessness in Missoula emerged from many of the same conditions that have yielded increasing numbers of homeless and precariously housed people elsewhere. This fact helps challenge a few common myths about homelessness—that most of the homeless people in Missoula come from someplace else, and that these same people "use up" local services and contribute little to the local economy, except perhaps as a drain.

The findings provide important information about people whose last permanent housing was in Missoula. They became homeless because of low wages, eviction, domestic abuse, and, first and foremost, because they simply could not afford rent or were unable to make their mortgage payment. Many are women and families with children.

Build It and They Will Come?

Based on the survey findings, it is very likely that we have already built what it is that attracts people to Missoula. One of the most profound survey findings challenges the idea that building more services in Missoula will bring more homeless people to the City to use them—a fear of many who worry about the City's economy, especially during a time of recession and dwindling federal funding for social programs. The findings suggest otherwise. It appears that, for at least those included in the survey, people come to Missoula and stay here primarily because of what has already been built—a supportive, cohesive, welcoming community of friendly, good people. They also come because of family and friends who live here. Although services are mentioned, on the whole, these are an afterthought. The first thing on people's minds is not what they can get from Missoula in terms of service provision but rather the general feel of the place and the people who live here.

Using Missoula's Services

Almost everyone who participated in the survey used at least one of Missoula's housing assistance, shelter, food/meals, and health care services in the past year. Respondents were pleased with the emergency food and soup kitchen programs offered in Missoula. These services were used more than any others, and are also the easiest to access. No one has to show proof of need to qualify or present identification. People are accepted, and treated with respect. As one survey participant remarked, "they don't take your dignity away." These services, many of them locally developed and funded, operate from the understanding that if people are asking for help, especially in a culture that prides itself on "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps," then they really need that help.

Another striking finding was that in terms of service use, respondents whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were likelier to use more services than those whose last permanent housing was in another state or elsewhere in Montana. Again, this finding challenges the idea that building more services will attract more people from outside the City. Instead, the most intense service-use patterns were noted for those people who became homeless while living in Missoula. Furthermore, respondents who had lived in Missoula for more than a year, including women and families with children, were more likely to use more mainstream Missoula services for people with limited access to resources (Missoula Food Bank, Missoula Housing Authority, and Human Resource Council). On the other hand, people with more frequent and lengthier patterns of homelessness were more likely to use more emergency shelter services.

Identifying Service Opportunities and Challenges

Two-thirds of the respondents agreed that some Missoula services were easier to access than others. In previous local research on service opportunities and challenges, suggestions for increasing access to services were related to reducing paperwork, simplifying application processes, and changing eligibility requirements to reflect the rising cost of living.^{35,36} These items were also noted by respondents in this study as primary ways to increase service accessibility, along with convenient locations and transportation to and from services. But perhaps foremost in creating access to services is treating people with respect.³⁷ A compilation of service users' comments from a recent Missoula Food Bank program evaluation reflects most accurately the prevailing attitude about using services on the part of those who need them:

I am most grateful for the extension of kindness, nutritional assistance, courtesy, and gracious and gentle understanding of circumstances and change that can come to individuals and people . . . I am not embarrassed to come here . . . I can ask any question over and over and don't get treated like I'm stupid . . . To be treated like a human being with kindness . . . You save people's souls and dignity.

³⁵ Jacobson, M., & Rugeley, C. (2007). *Food insecurity in Missoula County: Barriers, opportunities, and solutions*. Missoula, MT: Praxis – Building Knowledge for Action.

³⁶ Jacobson, M., Pruitt-Chapin, K., & Rugeley, C. (2009). Toward reconstructing poverty knowledge: Addressing food insecurity through grassroots research design and implementation. *Journal of Poverty Research*, 13(1), 1–19.

³⁷ Jacobson, M. (2010). *Missoula Food Bank Program Evaluation Report*. Missoula, MT: Praxis – Building Knowledge for Action.

Another research study on service use among homeless people pointed to treating people with respect as potentially one of the key “inroads toward solving homelessness.”³⁸ We often think of meeting needs in terms of providing tangibles, such as new programs or services. But it is equally important to reflect on matters of humanity and relationship.

Permanent, Affordable Housing

Almost 90% of survey respondents who were not currently housed wanted permanent housing. The most pressing issue identified to meet this need was gaining access to affordable housing. Many respondents’ replies to questions concerning permanent housing were linked to yet another pressing need—viable, sustainable employment. These issues can not, nor should they, be looked at separately. Respondents’ median monthly income was \$450.00, meaning that 50% earned less than this amount and 50% earned more. Given the escalating housing costs of the past decade and the fact that a median-priced apartment costs \$700 a month in Missoula, respondents are hard-pressed to put a roof over their heads. In addition, federal housing policy in recent years has focused more on using limited and steadily decreasing pools of housing assistance funds for programs that address the needs of the long-term homeless and those needing “wrap-around” supportive housing services.³⁹ Less attention has been paid to the “new” homeless, families with children. Furthermore, this focus unintentionally implies “that ‘regular’ affordable housing is not what the majority of people experiencing homelessness are lacking . . .”⁴⁰ The survey findings indicate otherwise.

Work—Challenging another Assumption

Employment was another cross-cutting theme: this issue was mentioned in a variety of ways in response to multiple survey items. In researcher language, this attests to the strength and veracity of this issue. The second most commonly mentioned need following affordable housing was employment. It was repeated as one of the top things people needed to afford permanent housing. Furthermore, of the 71% of respondents who reported a monthly income source, 42% worked at something to achieve these ends (part- or full-time job, craft sales, day labor, recycling). This challenges a common stereotype of homeless people as incapable of or unwilling to work. In the words of one participant, when asked if there was anything else that would help the City and County better plan services:

Work, work, work! Create new jobs, spot jobs . . . anything that would provide me with an ability to make money myself. It would help my sense of self-esteem and my worth in the community. It is humiliating to get handouts. Offer day labor . . . groups should hang by Missoula 3:16 and offer day jobs.

³⁸ Hoffman, L., & Coffey, B. (2008). Dignity and indignation: How people experiencing homelessness view services and providers. *The Social Science Journal*, 45, 207–222.

³⁹ Western Regional Advocacy Project. *Without housing: Decades of federal housing cutbacks, massive homelessness, and policy failures*. San Francisco: CA, WRAP.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 18.

The Importance of Comparison Group Findings

The findings indicate that the comparison groups identified for the analysis experience homelessness and housing instability differently. Needs for services and the intensity of service use are also different across groups. Findings such as these push against stereotypes or grand overarching claims about which services are important for all “homeless people.” They help to create a better understanding of how assistance programs can tailor services to address distinctly different needs. Planning efforts need to take this important issue into account as well.

A Look Toward Prevention

A number of findings point to the higher cost of prolonged homelessness to human physical and emotional well-being and the economic toll it takes on communities. Several study findings illustrate this well. As some have suggested, “homelessness assistance should not be merely three mats and a cot, nor a promise of services only should a person remain homeless.”⁴¹ Knowing how these costs tally out would be important planning information. For example, how much does it cost to provide a family with an intensive array of community services once they experience homelessness, as opposed to before? What would services that focus on preventing people from losing their housing consist of? How would this approach differ in terms of overall costs measured not only in terms of dollars and cents but also in terms of human capacity retained?

Concluding Remarks

Analyzing several thousand pages of notes, data files, spreadsheets, charts, and tables based on the information gathered from 240 people, then compiling and condensing it, is a formidable task. Much good information is yet to come as this report makes its way to a community conversation, and as other people have a hand in interpreting the results. The attempt here was to surface the key issues, represent the voices of those who participated, and provide some useful information to help address homelessness and housing instability in Missoula.

⁴¹ Culhane, D., Metraux, S., & Byrne, T. (2010). *A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: A paradigm shift?* Washington, DC: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. pp. 25–26.

Appendix A: Section 3: Past and Current Housing Circumstances

Table numbers in Appendix A correspond with the table numbers in Section 3 of the report. The tables listed provide more detailed information from the analyses of all open-ended survey questions and some closed-ended questions that required respondents to review a lengthy list of yes-or-no items.

Table 4: Where Respondents Lived in the Last 30 Days (N = 240)

Poverello	79
Camping/tents	61
Friends/family	55
Car/other vehicles	46
Downtown outside	40
Own house or apartment	39
Single room occupancy motel	23
Motel with friend or family	20
Motel voucher	17
Gateway Center (YWCA)	15
Under a bridge	13
Jail/prison	8
Abandoned building	6
Hospital	5
Treatment program	3

Table 7: Main Reasons Homeless (N = 237)

1. Housing/economic reasons

Job loss	103
Unable to pay rent or mortgage	92
Low wages	51
Waiting list too long for housing	47
Eviction	31
Jail discharge without a job or housing	18
Unsafe housing	18
Prefer not to work	11
Landlord raised rent	10
Do not qualify for TANF	9
Loss of public housing unit or Section 8 housing	9
Loss of government/TANF benefits	6
Fire	2
Total	407

2. Health reasons

Illness or medical problem not related to substance abuse	62
Disable	46
Alcohol/drug abuse	38

Table 7: Main Reasons Homeless (N = 237)

Social/emotional challenges	30
Released from hospital	7
Total	183
3. Other reasons	
Move to/from out of town	64
Unhappy in previous housing situation	34
In transition	23
Released from jail, prison or juvenile detention	21
Can't live by myself	2
Aging out of the foster care system	1
Total	145
4. Family/friend reasons	
Argument/conflict with family/friends	42
Divorce or separation	40
Domestic (partner) violence	23
Family (other than partner) violence	7
Total	112

Table 8: Why Move to Missoula? (N = 119)

Family and friends	48
Adverse circumstances (abuse, jail etc.)	24
Work	17
Services offered	16
Liked Missoula	14
Needed a change	11
Hometown	10
Traveling through	5
Moved with a relative	4
Opportunities available	3
Education	3
Good for the children	1

Table 10: Why Missoula Is a Good Place to Live, and Its Challenges (N = 203)

1. Missoula's attributes	
Nice city/community	22
Miscellaneous positives	14
Better than other places	10
Activities	8
Community cohesiveness/support	8
Safe place	8
Jobs and opportunities	8
Aesthetics	7
Easy to navigate	6
Great bus system	6
Quality of life	5

Table 10: Why Missoula Is a Good Place to Live, and Its Challenges (N = 203)	
Nice establishments	4
Good weather	4
College town	4
Tolerant of homeless	3
Family life	3
Good public library	2
Affordable/cheap housing	2
Total	124
2. The people	
General comments about “the people”	32
Nice/friendly people	24
Good/kind people	13
Helpful people	12
Total	81
3. Missoula’s challenges	
Expensive housing	21
No jobs and low wages	20
Service problems	14
Inadequate services	7
Crime and violence	4
Drug and alcohol abuse	2
Difficulties with services	2
Insurance problems	2
Housing service problems	2
Prejudice	1
Total	75
4. Social services	
Good or better services in Missoula	14
Great food services	7
Good medical/mental health care	5
Specific agencies that are helpful	5
Helpful to people with low or no income	2
Total	33
5. Originally from Missoula or have family here	
Family lives in the area	9
Hometown	8
Total	17

Appendix B: Section 4: Housing and Other Service Use and Needs: Barriers and Opportunities

Table numbers in Appendix B correspond with the table numbers in Section 4 of the report. The tables listed provide more detailed information from the analyses of all open-ended survey questions and some closed-ended questions that required respondents to review a lengthy list of yes-or-no items.

Table 11: Which Missoula Services Have You Used in the Past 12 Months? (N = 233)

1. Food and Meals	
Food stamps (SNAP)	149
Poverello	119
Missoula Food Bank	105
Missoula 3:16	75
Salvation Army	41
WIC	25
Churches	17
Free and Reduced School Lunch	16
Salcido Center	16
Total	563
2. Health Care	
Partnership Health Center	98
Local hospital	60
Poverello	37
Prescription medication care	30
Other dental care	15
Private physician	14
Veterans Administration	14
Western MT Mental Health	14
Missoula Indian Center	12
Vision care	10
Winds of Change	8
Turning Point	4
Total	316
3. Housing Assistance	
Missoula Housing Authority	49
WORD	38
Human Resource Council	30
Salvation Army	29
Poverello	25
Missoula 3:16	19
YWCA	18
Veterans Administration	8
Western MT Mental Health	6

Table 11: Which Missoula Services Have You Used in the Past 12 Months? (N = 233)

homeWORD	2
Total	224
4. Shelter	
Poverello	121
Salvation Army (vouchers)	30
YWCA Gateway Center	17
Motel voucher – YWCA	15
YWCA Women’s Shelter	13
Motel voucher – Poverello	6
Motel voucher – Salvation Army	6
Motel voucher – Missoula 3:16	5
Western MT Mental Health – Dakota House	4
Church provided shelter	3
Western MT Mental Health – Stephens House	1
Western MT Mental Health – Share House Detox	0
Total	221

Table 12: Reasons Some Services Are Easier to Use than Others (N = 148)

1. Less Formal Program Operations and Procedures	
Quick, easy to use services	20
Convenient hours of operation	6
Little paperwork	4
No long waiting lists	4
Address essentials	2
Subsidized or free services	2
Make few demands	2
Rules are posted	1
Total	41
5. Treatment by the staff	
treated with respect, dignity and compassion	21
open, fair, friendly, receptive attitude	16
Total	37
6. Ease of access and convenience	
Agency accessibility and availability in general	17
Service location	11
Transportation to service	6
Easy to find out information about services	2
Total	36
7. Miscellaneous (T = 26)	
8. Staff competency	
Helpful case management	8
Experienced, knowledgeable staff	6
Total	14

Table 14: Other Services Needed (N = 142)	
6. Housing Assistance	
Help obtaining housing general	24
deposit, first/last months rent	6
bad credit and non discrimination	2
Help securing permanent housing	12
Affordable/low income housing access	6
Temporary housing assistance	5
Total	55
7. Health and Mental Health Assistance	
Dental and eye care	13
Access to medical care in general	12
Help accessing federal insurance programs	4
Medications	4
Mental health services	3
Care for chronic pain	2
Follow-up medical care	2
Alternative medical care	1
Medical records retrieval	1
Health and mental health miscellaneous	1
Total	43
8. Miscellaneous Services Needed	
Education and training	7
Legal services	4
More food access	4
Job assistance	3
Picture ID service	3
More advertising re: service availability	3
Advocacy services	2
More programs for men	2
Veterans Assistance	2
Total	30
9. Transportation Services	
Bus passes	3
Better transportation in general	2
Car insurance	2
Gas vouchers	2
Personal vehicle	2
Total	11

Appendix C: Section 5: Permanent Housing and Employment Needs

Table numbers in Appendix C correspond with the table numbers in Section 5 of the report. The tables listed provide more detailed information from the analyses of all open-ended survey questions and some closed-ended questions that required respondents to review a lengthy list of yes-or-no items.

Table 16: Finding Permanent Housing – Top Ten Needs (N = 189)

1.	Affordable housing	128
2.	Job	113
3.	Less discrimination (i.e., pet, children, credit history, etc.)	68
4.	Bus passes	73
5.	Outreach worker/advocate	69
6.	Regular income	67
7.	Damage deposit	62
8.	Transportation to see apartments/housing	50
9.	Information about housing supports/services	39
10.	Shower/laundry facilities	37

Table 18: Affording Permanent Housing – Top Ten Needs (N = 182)

1.	On-going rental assistance	103
2.	First and last months' rent and deposit	100
3.	A job or better paying job	89
4.	Bus voucher	67
5.	Employment assistance	59
6.	Clothes	51
7.	Food	49
8.	Gas money for vehicle	47
9.	Medical care	43
10.	Paying rent on a weekly basis	42

Table 19: Sources of Income (N = 168)

1.	Social Security Disability (SSDI)	37
2.	Job (part-time)	31
3.	Supplemental Social Security SSI	31
4.	Family and/or friends	24
5.	Job (full-time)	17
6.	Panhandling	15
7.	Odd jobs, crafts, day labor	14
8.	Unemployment benefits	11
9.	Recycling	10
10.	Veteran Pension/Veteran Disability	9

Table 19: Sources of Income (N = 168)

11. Child support	8
12. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	7
13. Alimony	4
14. Pension from former job	4
15. Private disability, private retirement	4
16. Inheritance	3
17. Workers' Compensation	2

Table 21: What Kind of Help Do you Need to Find and Keep a Job? (N = 116)

1. Education or job training	67
2. Transportation	53
3. Knowing what jobs are available	52
4. Clothing	44
5. Resume	40
6. Driver's license	37
7. Phone/voice mail	34
8. Tools for the trade	29
9. Better physical healthcare	24
10. Place to store personal belongings	23
11. Shower facility	11
12. Dental care	18
13. Helping getting proper ID	18
14. Child care	17
15. Help getting motivated	17
16. Better mental healthcare	16
17. Alarm clock	14
18. Addictions resources/treatment	9
19. Conflict/anger management skills	8
20. Legal aid	7
21. Work permit	2

Table 22: Is There Anything Else? (N = 149)**2. Suggestions for Addressing Temporary Housing Needs**

Different types of shelters needed	
Shelter resources for families	12
Build a bigger shelter	9
Temporary adverse weather shelter	6
Shelter for people who drink	3
Gender specific shelter	2
Build more shelters	2
More temporary housing access	2
Total	36

3. Suggestions for Addressing Permanent Housing Needs

Different types of permanent housing needed	
Affordable permanent housing	15

Table 22: Is There Anything Else? (N = 149)	
Non-discriminatory housing	1
Housing for smokers	1
Housing for people with pets	1
Assistance with securing housing	
Faster entry into housing	3
Assistance attaining housing	2
Rental assistance	2
Easier access to housing	1
Total	26
4. Address Employment Needs	
Increase job opportunities	12
More job services	8
Job creation	3
Total	23
5. Services in Missoula That Could be Improved and/or Increased	
Improve transportation and subsidized transportation	8
More caseworkers/advocates	2
Help with vision/dental	1
Better mental health care	1
Increase availability of food	1
More support for agencies	1
More options for Vets	1
Legal assistance	1
More help for people with disabilities	1
Total	17
6. Ideas for New Program and/or Services	
Drop-in Center	3
City designated camping	1
Detoxification facility	1
Homeless garden	1
Incentive program to help people become self-reliant	1
Information services	1
More public toilets	1
Personal skill building	1
Total	10
7. Complaints about Existing Services	
General complaints	10
Total	10
8. No Need to Change or Increase Services	
Services are good!	5
Missoula is great!	4
Total	9

Table 22: Is There Anything Else? (N = 149)

9. Remedy Discrimination Issues	
Address non-qualification for services	1
Address how to help people with criminal records	1
Total	2

Appendix D: Sections 2–5: T-Test Analyses

Appendix D contains the t-test analyses for the survey findings outlined according to the report sections. T-tests compare group differences based on the mean as noted in Table 23. Levels of significance are as follows: <.01 = highly significant; .01 to .05 = moderately significant; .06 to .10 = somewhat significant. Anything greater than .10 is not considered significant.

Table 23: T-Test Analyses for Independent Sample

Comparison Groups	Mean Differences Between Groups	Significance Level
Section 2		
Women were <u>more likely</u> to be younger than men.	37.44 vs. 43.49	.00
One- and two-parent families were <u>more likely</u> to be younger than people living alone or in a couple without children.	32.27 vs. 44.12	.00
People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were <u>more likely</u> to be younger than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.	39.09 vs. 43.42	.01
People who served in the U.S. military or National Guard were <u>more likely</u> older than people who had not served.	49.64 vs. 39.04	.00
Section 3		
One- and two-parent families were <u>less likely</u> to experience multiple episodes of homelessness than people who are living alone or in a couple without children.	2.30 vs. 4.43	.00
People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were <u>less likely</u> to experience multiple episodes of homelessness than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.	2.99 vs. 4.70	.00
Section 4		
One- and two-parent families who are homeless or precariously housed were <u>more likely</u> to use more services than people who were living alone or in a couple without children.	7.76 vs. 4.93	.00
People who had lived in Missoula less than a year were <u>less likely</u> to use food/meal services than people who had lived in Missoula more than a year.	2.01 vs. 2.53	.01
People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were <u>more likely</u> to use more services than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.	6.06 vs. 4.93	.00
People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were <u>more likely</u> to use more health care services than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.	1.52 vs. 1.10	.03
Section 5		
Women were <u>more likely</u> to afford more for monthly rent than men.	281.44 vs. 202.62	.02
One- and two-parent families were <u>more likely</u> to have higher monthly income than people who are living alone or in a couple without children.	625.65 vs. 442.07	.02
People who had been homeless one time in the last three years were <u>more likely</u> to report higher incomes than people who had been homeless multiple times in the last three years.	592.34 vs. 416.29	.01
People whose last permanent housing was in Missoula were <u>more likely</u> to have higher monthly income than people whose last permanent housing was elsewhere.	590.66 vs. 371.60	.00

Table 23: T-Test Analyses for Independent Sample

People who served in the U.S. military or National Guard were <u>more likely</u> to have higher monthly income than people who have not served.	616.73 vs. 449.26	.04
People who had been homeless less than a year were <u>more likely</u> to afford more monthly rent than people who had been homeless more than a year.	320.31 vs. 172.89	.00