



2007 Homeless Youth Fact Sheet

Tucson and Pima County, Arizona

Prepared by the Homeless Youth Committee of the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless (TPCH). When using this information, please credit TPCH.

How many homeless youth are in the Tucson area?

Too many! Probably between 1,000 and 1,500 persons age 12 to 21 are without a permanent residence in the Tucson area. In Arizona about 1780 youth under 18 are homeless at any given time, while Arizona schools estimated that they had nearly 15,000 homeless students in the 2003-2004 academic year. An exact number of homeless youth is very difficult to determine, but research suggests that homeless youth comprise one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. homeless population.

Who are our homeless youth?

Quite often, they are good students with jobs! A 2005 TPCH study of youth between the ages of 12 and 24 learned the following: (More than 40 of the youth interviewed did not identify as being homeless and therefore could not be counted as homeless, but gave answers that met the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness.) You can read the study at www.tpch.org.

Average age:	17.5 years (Average age of first becoming homeless: 14)		
Why they are homeless:	60% abuse or neglect		
Ethnicity:	42% Hispanic	30% white	16% mixed race
	7% African-American	4 % Native American	1% Asian
Gender:	56% female	43% male	1% transgender
Currently enrolled in school:	50% (of which 82% reported receiving passing grades)		
Employment:	26% employed 40% actively seeking employment, (79% of those not actively seeking employment reported lacking proper documentation, clothing, and/or transportation for work.)		

Why is it hard to determine the number of homeless youth?

In three words: legislation, reporting, and perception.

Legislation: Many homeless youth are subject to arrest as runaways and truants. This is a strong incentive to remain unobserved or deny homelessness. Several different laws also define who is homeless and how those persons are reported.

Reporting: Government programs and individual agencies use differing entrance and exit ages as part of their definitions of homeless youth. For example, the Federal McKinney-Vento Act covers children in foster care and schools to age 21, while services from Arizona's foster care system end at age 18. In addition, homeless youths may need services well into their 20's, and seek those services from multiple programs. A total of all agencies' reported numbers could lead to duplication or underreporting.

Perception: Many youth do not identify themselves as homeless if they have a car, a tent, or a friend's couch to sleep on. Government rules state that a person who denies homelessness is not allowed to be counted as homeless.