

CHAPTER 11 VETERANS¹

Highlights: Homeless Male Veterans and Non-Veterans²

- Homeless male veterans are more likely than their non-veteran counterparts to be white (46 versus 34 percent) and age 45 or older (46 versus 20 percent).
- 32 percent of homeless male veterans report that their last homeless episode lasted 13 or more months, compared to 17 percent of male non-veterans. Only 34 percent of homeless male veterans say their last homeless episode lasted three months or less compared to 43 percent of their non-veteran counterparts.
- Homeless male veterans report a median income over the past 30 days of \$250. This is only slightly higher than the \$212 median income of homeless male non-veterans.
- 49 percent of homeless male veterans report having no medical insurance, compared to 68 percent of other homeless men. This large difference occurs because many homeless veterans receive VA medical care (32 percent).

Highlights: Currently and Formerly Homeless Male Veterans Compared

- Currently and formerly homeless male veterans are from similar racial/ethnic groups: the largest shares are white non-Hispanic and black non-Hispanic.
- 31 percent of currently homeless male veterans have experienced 4 or more periods of homelessness, compared to 16 percent of formerly homeless veterans. For 49 percent of formerly homeless veterans, their most recently completed episode of homelessness lasted less than four months, compared to 34 percent of currently homeless veterans.
- Formerly homeless male veterans' median income over the past 30 days is over twice that of currently homeless male veterans (\$511 versus \$250).

¹ Analyses in this chapter are based on *male* NSHAPC clients, since 98 percent of the veterans in NSHAPC are men.

² Unless noted specifically in the text, all comparisons are statistically significant at $p = .10$ or better, and all percentages presented by themselves have a 90 percent confidence interval no larger than ± 6 percentage points. A confidence interval of ± 6 percentage points means that if the reported percent is 60, 60 is the estimate of the value and the probability is 90 percent that the value falls between 56 and 64 percent. Confidence intervals greater than ± 6 percentage points will be noted in a footnote as: 90% C.I. = $\pm X$ percentage points.

- Currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless veterans to be without medical insurance (49 versus 34 percent).
- 25 percent of currently homeless veterans report three or more food problems, compared to 11 percent of formerly homeless veterans.

INTRODUCTION

That some veterans are homeless is particularly ironic in the eyes of many Americans. Might their military experiences have contributed to their vulnerability to homelessness? Combat experience has often been considered in this regard, because of the traumatic stress that it produces and the use of drugs and alcohol to counter this stress. Some studies by Rosenheck and colleagues (Rosenheck et al., 1996) have reviewed the experiences of homeless and non-homeless veterans and found few differences in their exposure to war-zone service or combat, or in the prevalence of war-related post-traumatic stress disorder. As with other Americans, poverty, ADM problems, and social isolation are documented as the primary risk factors for homelessness among veterans (Rosenheck et al., 1996). This study provides the opportunity to explore further the issue of military service and homelessness.

HOMELESS VETERANS

Twenty-three percent of all homeless clients are veterans. Ninety-four percent report service in the Armed Forces of the United States and 2 percent report service in the Reserves or National Guard (Appendix table 11.A2). In addition, 4 percent say that they were in the military at the time they were interviewed for this study.

Forty-seven percent of homeless veterans served in the Vietnam Era (August 1964 through May 1975), and 32 percent served from May 1975 to August 1980. The next most common periods of service are September 1980 to July 1990 (17 percent) and before the Vietnam War—February 1955 to July 1964 (15 percent). Sixty-seven percent of homeless veterans served three or more years in the military, 21 percent served two years, and 7 percent served one year. Thirty-three percent report being stationed in a war zone, of whom most report that they were exposed to combat (28 percent). Finally, 11 percent of homeless veterans report they did not receive an honorable discharge from military service.

The use of veteran-specific services by homeless veterans was a focus of this study. Fifty-seven percent have used a medical facility operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs for some type of long or short-term medical care. Also, 25 percent of homeless veterans have participated in programs specifically for homeless veterans, the most common of which are shelters for veterans (14 percent), domiciliary programs (11 percent), and compensated work therapy (8 percent).

HOMELESS MALE VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS

Among homeless men, 33 percent report being veterans, and a very high proportion (98 percent) of homeless veterans are men. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter looks at homeless *male* veterans and compares them to homeless *male* non-veterans. Focusing on homeless *male* clients rather than all homeless clients allows one to examine differences due to veteran status rather than confounding these with gender differences.

Demographic Characteristics

Several interesting differences emerge when examining the differences in demographic characteristics between homeless male veterans and non-veterans (table 11.1). Homeless veterans are more likely than their non-veteran counterparts to be white non-Hispanic (46 versus 34 percent) and less likely to be Hispanic or Native American (9 versus 26 percent). Homeless veterans are more likely to be older; 44 percent are between the ages of 45 and 64 compared to only 20 percent of homeless non-veterans (figure 11.1). Also, 85 percent of homeless veterans have completed high school or have received a GED, compared to 56 percent of homeless non-veterans.

The two groups also differ in their marital status. However, they are equally unlikely to be in family households (2 percent of homeless male veterans and 4 percent of homeless male non-veterans). Sixty-seven percent of homeless veterans and 41 percent of their non-veteran counterparts report that they are married or have been married in the past and the veteran group is more likely to be divorced (38 versus 19 percent). Among homeless veterans, the largest proportion reside in central cities (79 percent), with smaller proportions in suburban (16 percent) and rural areas (5 percent).

Homeless Experiences

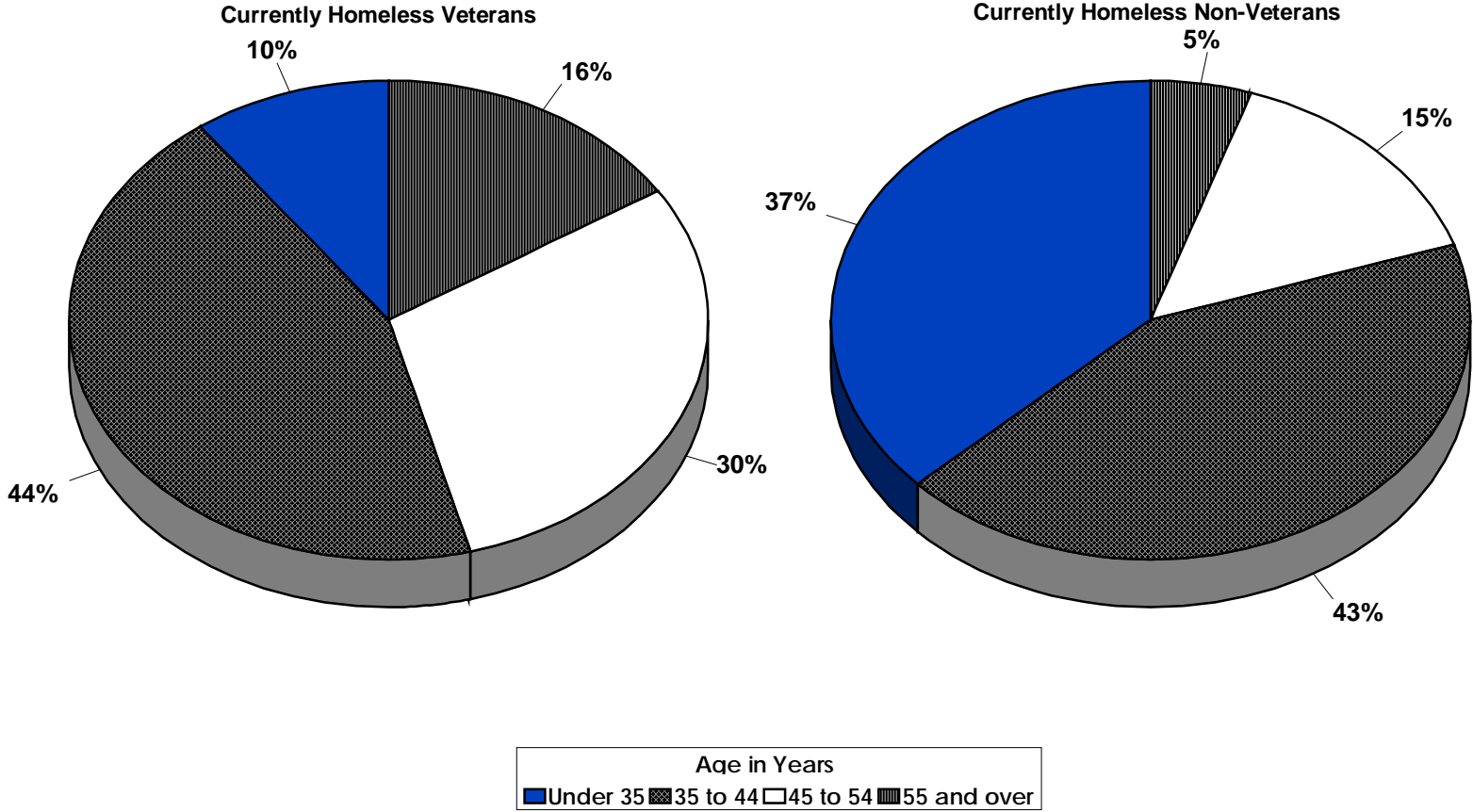
Currently homeless veterans and non-veterans do not differ in the number of times they report having been homeless. However, they do report having been homeless for different lengths of time (figure 11.2). Nearly half of each group say they are in their first homeless episode (table 11.2). Homeless non-veterans, however, are more likely to report that their current episode has lasted three months or less (28 versus 18 percent). The same pattern emerges when studying the length of previous episodes. Homeless veterans are more likely to report their most recent

Table 11.1
Basic Demographic Characteristics of Male NSHAPC Veterans and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Race/Ethnicity						
White non-Hispanic	46(%)	34(%)	54(%)	36(%)	73(%)	38(%)
Black non-Hispanic	45	40	43	49	23	48
Hispanic	5	13	2	7	3	11
Native American	4	13	1	2	0	1
Other	1	1	*	6	1	2
Age						
Under 18	0	*	0	0	Insufficient N	1
18 to 21 yrs.	*	6	0	3		5
22 to 24 yrs.	1	4	3	2		3
25 to 34 yrs.	9	27	3	18		10
35 to 44 yrs.	44	43	34	32		26
45 to 54 yrs.	30	15	34	29		19
55 to 64 yrs.	14	5	17	9		9
65 or more yrs.	2	*	10	8		27
Urban/Rural Status						
Central Cities	79	71	69	77	48	52
Suburban/Urban Fringe	16	17	22	13	29	20
Rural	5	12	9	11	22	28
Education/Highest Level of Completed Schooling						
Less than high school	15	44	18	52	34	57
High school graduate/G.E.D.	40	34	53	33	29	26
More than high school	45	22	29	15	36	17
Marital Status						
Never married	33	59	31	55	10	48
Married	7	7	8	7	20	25
Widowed	3	2	8	1	42	12
Divorced	38	19	44	18	6	7
Separated	19	13	9	19	22	8
Living Situation						
Client 17 to 24						
In families						
Men	*	1	0	*	0	*
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Single clients						
Men	1	10	3	4	0	9
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Client 25 or older						
In families						
Men	2	3	6	5	5	4
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Single clients						
Men	97	86	91	90	95	87
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding. Insufficient N signifies that sample size was too small for data to be reported.

Figure 11.1
Age of Homeless Male Clients, by Veteran Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

completed episode lasted over 13 months (32 versus 17 percent) while their non-veteran counterparts are more likely to report that it lasted three months or less (46 versus 34 percent).

Current and Lifetime Use of Homeless Assistance Programs

The living situation on the day they were interviewed for this study is very similar for veteran and non-veteran homeless clients (table 11.3). One difference does exist in their use of homeless assistance programs over the prior week. Forty-two percent of homeless non-veterans report using a soup kitchen over the past week compared to 34 percent of homeless veterans. When the day of the interview is included along with the last seven days, the percentage of veterans (44 percent) that report using a soup kitchen is still smaller than the percentage of non-veterans (53 percent).

During the course of their lifetime, a similar proportion of homeless veterans and non-veterans report using emergency shelters and soup kitchens. However, a larger percentage of homeless veterans (42 percent) have used food pantries in their lifetime than have homeless non-veterans (33 percent).

Income, Income Sources, and Employment

Very few differences exist in current income, income sources, and employment characteristics of veteran and non-veteran homeless clients (table 11.4). Veterans report a median income over the past 30 days of \$250, which is only slightly higher than the \$212 median income of homeless non-veterans. Looking at sources of income helps explain why these amounts are so similar. For example, similar proportions of homeless veterans and non-veterans report working for pay in the last thirty days (49 versus 51 percent). One expected difference, however, is receipt of veteran-related benefits: 6 percent of homeless veterans receive veterans disability payments and 2 percent receive a veteran's pension.

Health and Nutrition

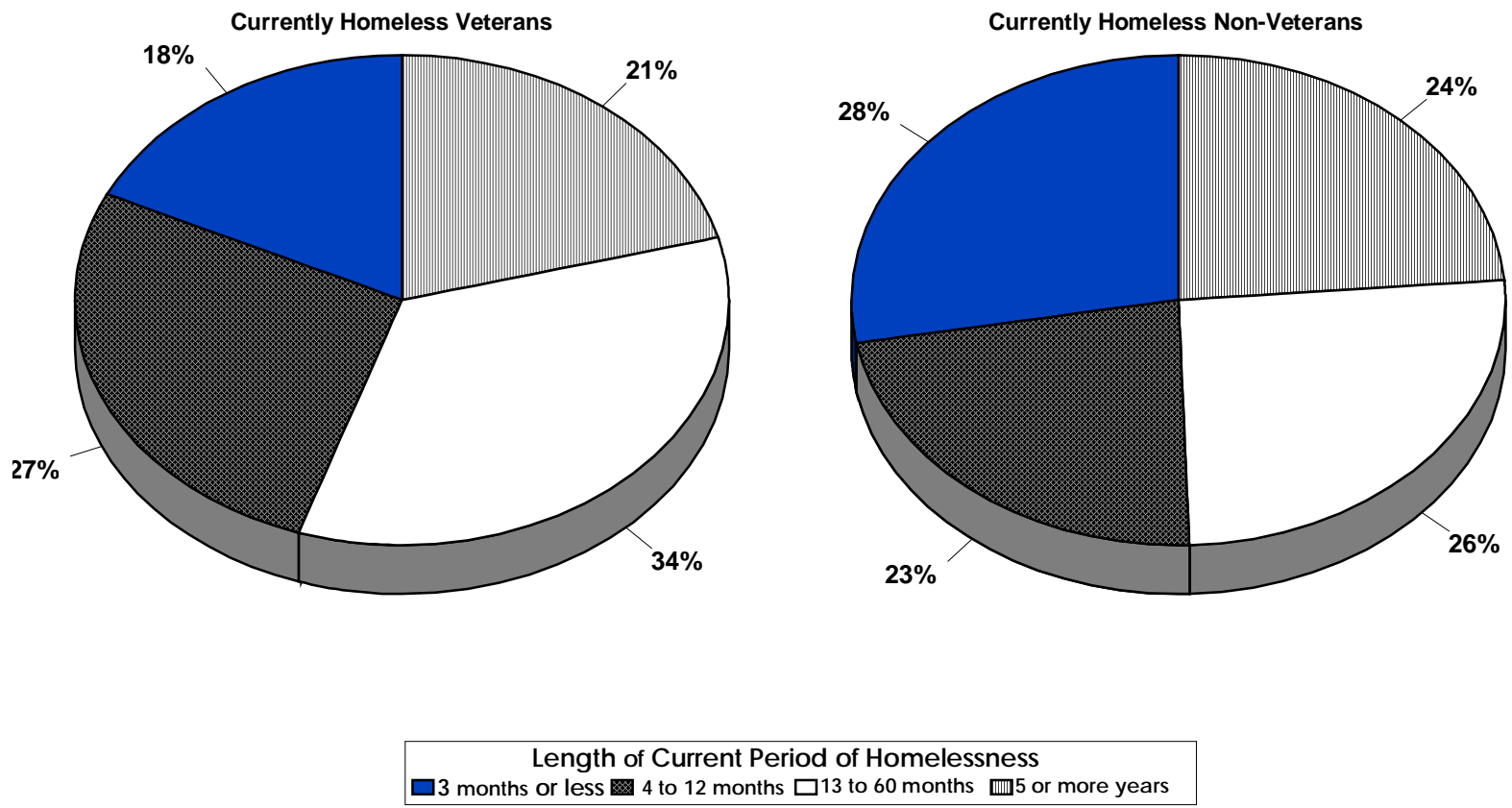
While physical health, medical needs, and health insurance coverage of homeless clients vary by veteran status, the general types of health-related conditions reported by both groups are quite similar (table 11.5 and figure 11.3). Twenty-five percent of veterans and 24 percent of non-veterans report having one or more acute infectious conditions. Likewise, 8 percent of both groups report one or more acute *non*-infectious conditions, and 52 percent of veterans and 44 percent of non-veterans report having one or more chronic health conditions. The most common medical conditions reported by homeless veterans are arthritis, rheumatism or other joint problems (32 versus 21 percent of homeless non-veterans) and high blood pressure (23 versus 12

Table 11.2
**Length and Number of Homeless Episodes of Male Veterans
and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Statu:**

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)
Number of Times Homeless or Without Regular Housing for 30 Days or More				
1	47(%)	47(%)	43(%)	34(%)
2	12	17	30	25
3	10	12	6	11
4-10	22	20	14	22
11 or more	9	4	2	5
<i>Among Currently Homeless Clients</i>				
Length of Current Period of Homelessness				
< 1 week	3	6	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
>= 1 week and < 1 month	5	8		
1-3 months	10	14		
4-6 months	10	10		
7-12 months	17	13		
13-24 months	20	17		
25-60 months	14	9		
5 or more years	21	24		
Spell History and Current Spell Length				
First time homeless				
6 months or less	13	17	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
more than 6 months	34	30		
Not first time homeless				
current spell 6 months or less	17	20		
current spell more than 6 months	36	32		
<i>Among Currently or Formerly Homeless Clients With at Least One Completed Homeless Episode</i>				
Length of Last Complete Period of Homelessness				
<1 month	12	14	16	7
1-3 months	22	32	33	37
4-6 months	14	15	19	10
7-12 months	20	23	8	23
13-60 months	21	13	16	19
5 or more years	11	4	9	4

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.

Figure 11.2
**Length of Homeless Male Clients Current Period of Homelessness,
 by Veteran Status**



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Table 11.3
**Current Housing & Use of Homelessness Assistance Programs by Male Veterans
and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status**

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Kind of Place Lives Now (Today)						
Emergency shelter	27(%)	30(%)	0(%)	0(%)	0	0(%)
Transitional shelter/housing	21	23	0	0	0	0
Welfare or voucher hotel	*	1	0	0	0	0
Car or other vehicle	2	5	0	0	0	0
Abandoned building	2	5	0	0	0	0
Transportation site (e.g., bus station)	5	1	0	0	0	0
Place of business (e.g., cinema)	*	*	0	0	0	0
Anywhere outside (e.g., street, park)	11	12	0	0	0	0
Hotel/motel/dormitory hotel (pay yourself)	6	2	15	9	28	3
House/apt./room (not transitional prog.)	10	13	85	91	72	97
House/apt./room (transitional prog.)	6	7	0	0	0	0
Other place	8	2	0	0	0	0
Type of Program Use Within Last Seven Days or on Day of Interview						
Street ^a	38	41	0	0	0	0
Shelter ^b	65	72	1	1	0	4
Soup kitchen ^c	44	53	38	59	45	60
Other ^d	28	25	71	61	62	45
Programs Used Within Last Week						
Emergency shelter	25	29	0	0	0	0
Transitional housing	23	24	0	0	0	0
Shelter ^e	2	5	0	0	0	0
Permanent housing	3	2	11	15	0	0
Shelter vouchers	2	1	0	0	0	0
Soup kitchen	34	42	31	46	17	26
Food pantry	5	4	6	7	9	4
Mobile food program	5	6	10	4	5	3
Outreach	5	7	1	6	1	*
Drop-in center	9	11	8	10	12	6
Programs Ever Used						
Emergency shelter	67	66	67	66	0	0
Transitional housing	42	38	27	22	0	0
Permanent housing	9	7	14	30	0	0
Shelter vouchers	18	14	15	13	0	0
Soup kitchen	73	70	85	79	42	43
Food pantry	42	33	44	55	72	29
Mobile food program	26	22	22	17	5	13
Outreach	16	19	9	14	32	10
Drop-in center	30	30	33	25	22	12

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% or other total due to rounding. ^aThis includes clients who reported staying in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation (e.g., abandoned buildings, vehicles) on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview. ^bThis includes clients who reported staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program or voucher program on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were selected for the study at one of these programs. ^cThis includes clients who reported using a soup kitchen during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at a soup kitchen. ^dThis includes clients who reported using an other program (food pantry, mobile food, outreach, drop-in center and/or permanent housing) during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at one of these programs. ^eThis includes clients who did not report staying in an emergency shelter, transitional shelter, permanent housing, or voucher program over the last seven days but said yes to question 6.6e that they received food over the last seven days in the shelter where they live.

Table 11.4
**Income Levels, Income Sources, and Employment of Male Veterans
and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status**

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Mean Income from All Sources (Last 30 Days)^a	\$396	\$334	\$544	\$453	\$868	\$476
Median Income from All Sources (Last 30 Days)^a	250	212	511	447	750	470
Income from All Sources Over Last 30 Days						
None	11(%)	16(%)	1(%)	4(%)	Insufficient N	4(%)
Less than \$100	20	19	6	7		12
\$100 to 299	22	20	17	20		14
\$300 to 499	15	16	24	32		20
\$500 to 699	11	13	28	16		16
\$700 to 799	3	5	6	9		12
\$800 to 999	4	5	9	7		7
\$1000 to 1,199	7	2	2	1		2
\$1200 or more	7	4	7	4		5
Did Any Paid Work At All in Last 30 Days	49	51	46	40	37	27
Sources of Earned Income in Last 30 Days						
Job lasting 3 or more months	17	11	20	12	32	12
Job expected to last 3 or more months	5	8	13	8	0	1
Temporary job, farm work	8	9	5	12	2	6
Temporary job, non-farm work	2	5	*	1	0	*
Day job or pick-up job	18	20	8	6	1	9
Peddling	5	2	1	3	0	*
Received Money/Benefits from Government Sources in Last 30 Days						
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)	*	4	0	1	0	2
General Assistance	8	10	18	18	2	12
Supplemental Security Income	10	11	11	37	14	21
SSDI	8	7	16	19	7	14
Social Security	5	2	11	7	39	23
Veteran's disability payments	6	0	14	0	23	0
Veteran's pension (not disability related)	2	0	1	0	16	0
Food Stamps	33	29	30	42	16	28
Received Means-Tested Government Benefits^b						
Any, including food stamps	41	37	45	74	23	48
Any other than food stamps	17	22	35	61	20	40
Other Sources of Income Over the Last 30 Days						
Parents	5	10	6	4	2	8
Friends	8	12	3	6	3	9
Asking for Money on the Street	9	10	2	6	1	*

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. ^aIf an income range was reported by client, mid-point of range was used in calculating mean. ^bAFDC, GA, SSI, Food Stamps, housing assistance. Insufficient N signifies that sample size was too small for data to be reported.

percent). Many of these health status differences may be the result of the age differences reported earlier in this chapter.

Forty-nine percent of homeless veterans say they have no medical insurance compared to 68 percent of non-veteran homeless men (figure 11.4). This large difference is due to many homeless veterans receiving VA medical care (32 percent compared to less than 1 percent of non-veterans).

It is also interesting to examine measures relating to food and hunger by veteran status (figure 11.5). A slightly higher percent of homeless veterans report having no food problems over the last 30 days (43 versus 36 percent), but similar proportions of both groups report having one to four problems acquiring sufficient food (57 versus 63 percent).

Special Needs

The incidence of alcohol, drug, or mental health (ADM) problems is very similar for veteran and non-veteran homeless clients (table 11.6 and figure 11.6). The overwhelming majority of both groups have experienced past-month ADM problems (76 and 68 percent, respectively), with alcohol difficulties being the most frequently reported (49 and 43 percent).

When the time frame is expanded to the past year, 58 percent of veterans and 53 percent of non-veterans report an alcohol-related problem. The corresponding lifetime rates are 77 and 70 percent, respectively. Overall, 93 percent of veterans and 88 percent of non-veterans report an ADM problem at some point in their lives.

Service Needs

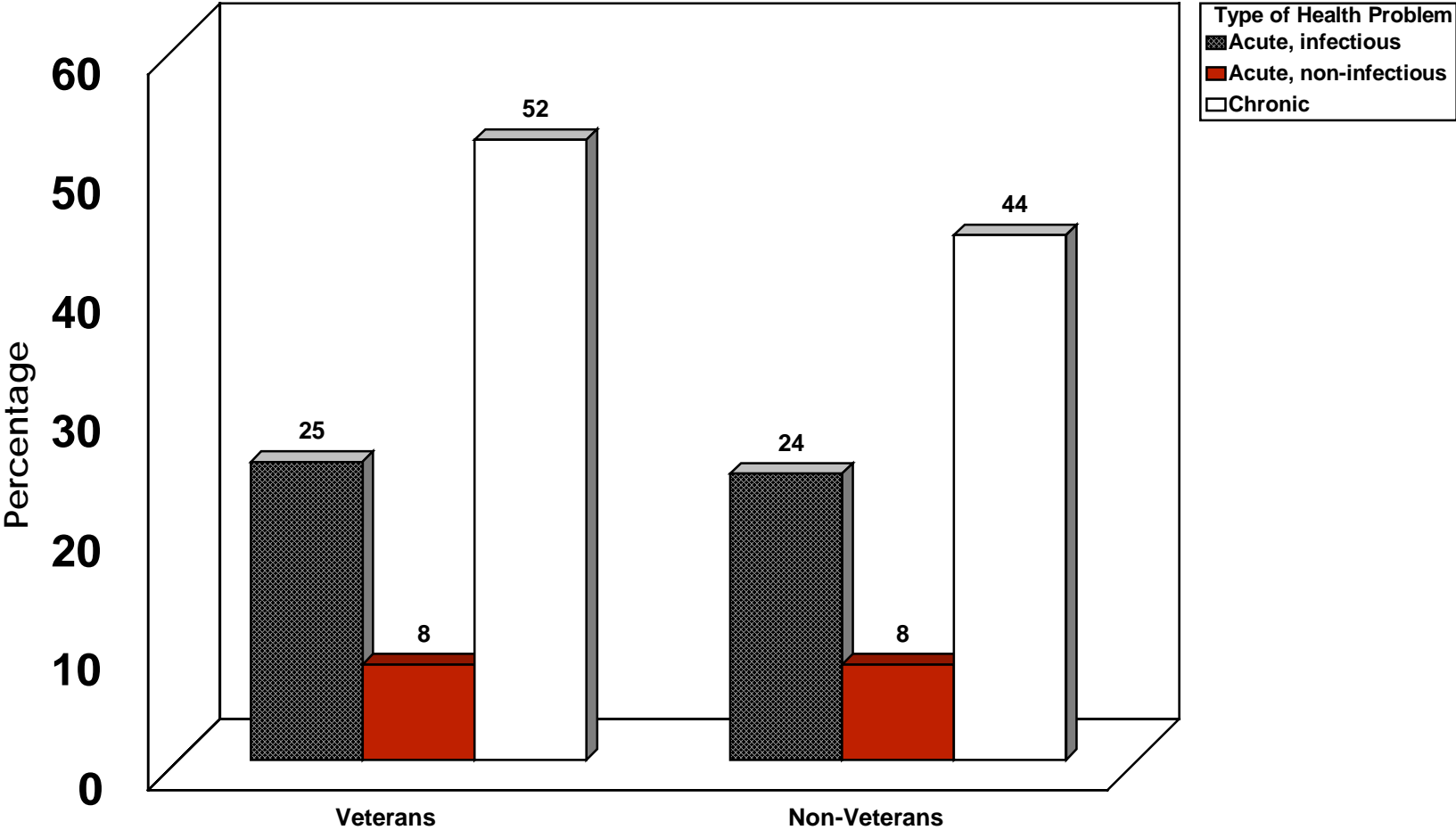
Currently homeless veterans and non-veterans report similar service needs and requirements for leaving homelessness (table 11.7). When asked “what are the three things you need the most now?” the top two choices for homeless veterans and non-veterans alike are finding a job (45 and 47 percent, respectively) and finding affordable housing (37 and 39 percent, respectively). In addition, insufficient income and a lack of a job or other employment are the overwhelming choices when homeless veterans and non-veterans are asked what has kept them from leaving homelessness.

Table 11.5
**Physical Health and Nutrition Status of Male Veterans
and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status**

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Type of Reported Medical Conditions^a						
Acute infectious conditions (1 or more)	25(%)	24(%)	15(%)	32(%)	45(%)	19(%)
Acute non-infectious conditions (1 or more)	8	8	7	6	12	1
Chronic conditions (1 or more)	52	44	56	65	78	53
Four Most Common Medical Conditions						
Arthritis, rheumatism, joint problems	32	21	34	36	54	32
Chest infection, cold, cough, bronchitis	23	18	15	20	55	17
Problem walking, lost limb, other handicap	16	13	20	30	38	29
High blood pressure	23	12	13	27	48	37
Needed but Not Able to See Doctor or Nurse in Last Year						
	18	25	13	23	15	14
Type of Current Medical Insurance						
Medicaid	17	25	32	52	18	54
VA Medical Care	32	0	30	0	26	0
Private insurance	4	4	8	4	3	4
No insurance	49	68	34	34	42	34
Other	9	6	11	14	34	22
Best Description of Food Situation						
Get enough of kinds of food wanted	40	36	38	36	57	48
Get enough but not always what wants	33	34	35	36	33	37
Sometimes not enough to eat	18	18	15	14	10	13
Often not enough to eat	9	12	11	15	0	2
Current Food Problem^b						
None	43	36	46	47	82	64
One	18	21	29	22	16	28
Two	14	18	14	17	2	3
Three	18	15	6	9	*	6
Four	7	9	5	5	0	*

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.^aConditions asked include: diabetes, anemia, high blood pressure, heart disease/stroke, liver problems, arthritis/rheumatism, chest infection/cold/bronchitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, skin diseases, lice/scabies, cancer, problems walking/other handicap, STDs (other than AIDS), HIV, AIDS, intravenous drugs, and other. ^bProblems include: 1) sometimes or often not having enough to eat, 2) eating once or less per day, 3) in the last 30 days client was hungry but did not eat because could not afford enough food, and 4) in the last 30 days client went at least one whole day without anything to eat. Insufficient N signifies that sample size was too small for data to be reported.

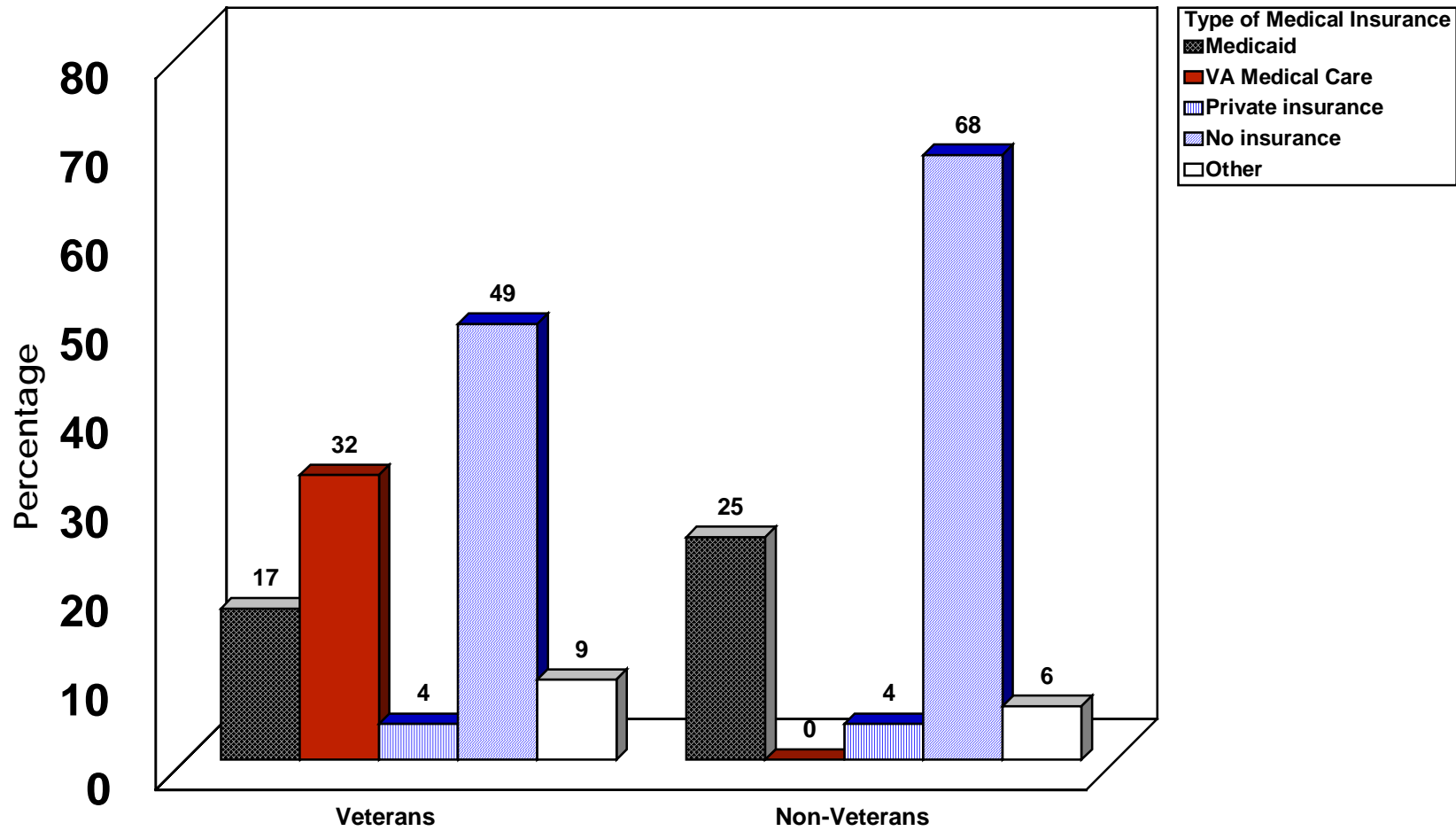
Figure 11.3
Health Problems Reported by Homeless Male Clients, by Veteran Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

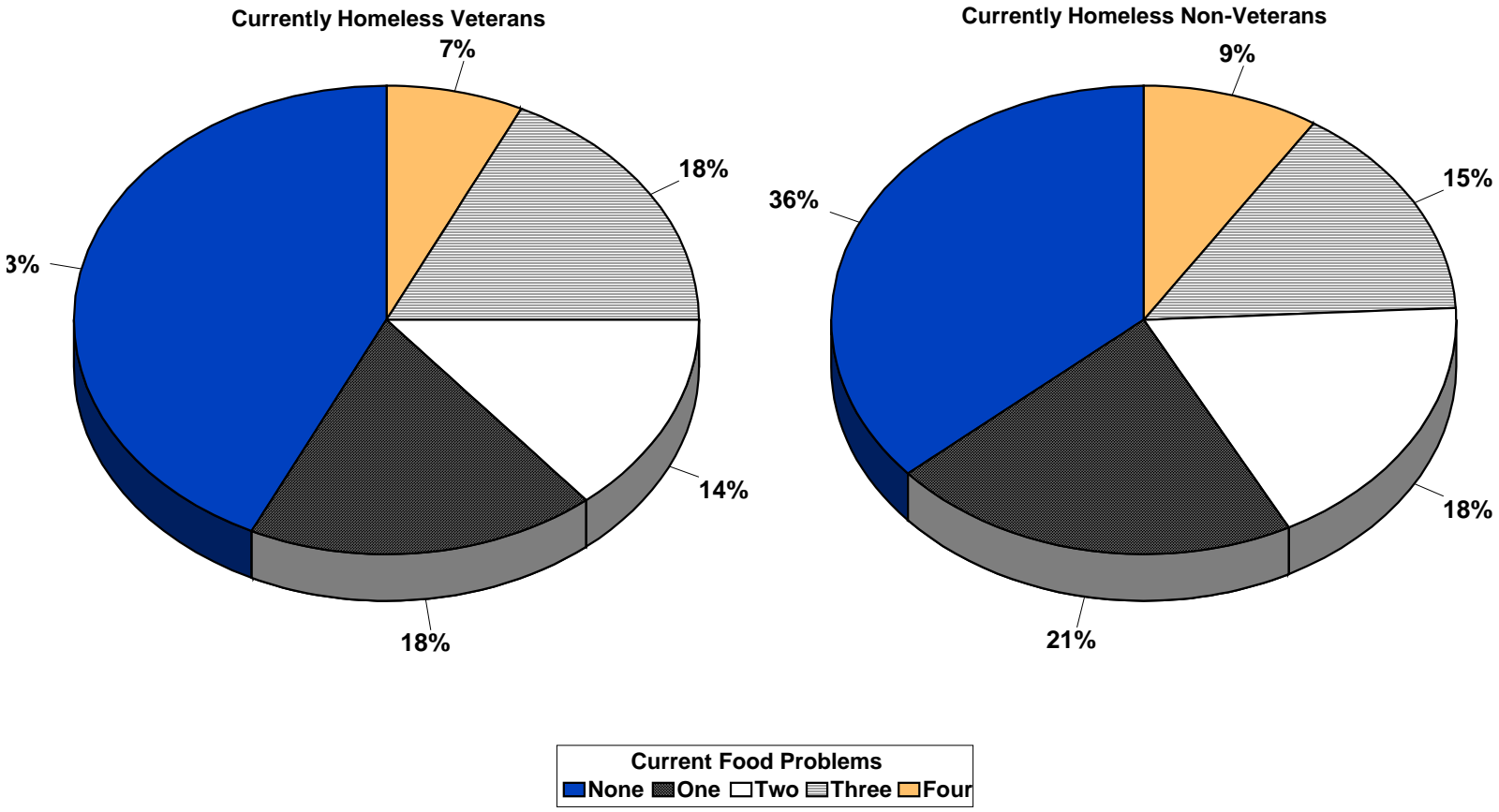
Figure 11.4

Type of Medical Insurance for Homeless Male Clients, by Veteran Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Figure 11.5
Food Problems of Homeless Male Clients, by Veteran Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% or other total due to rounding.

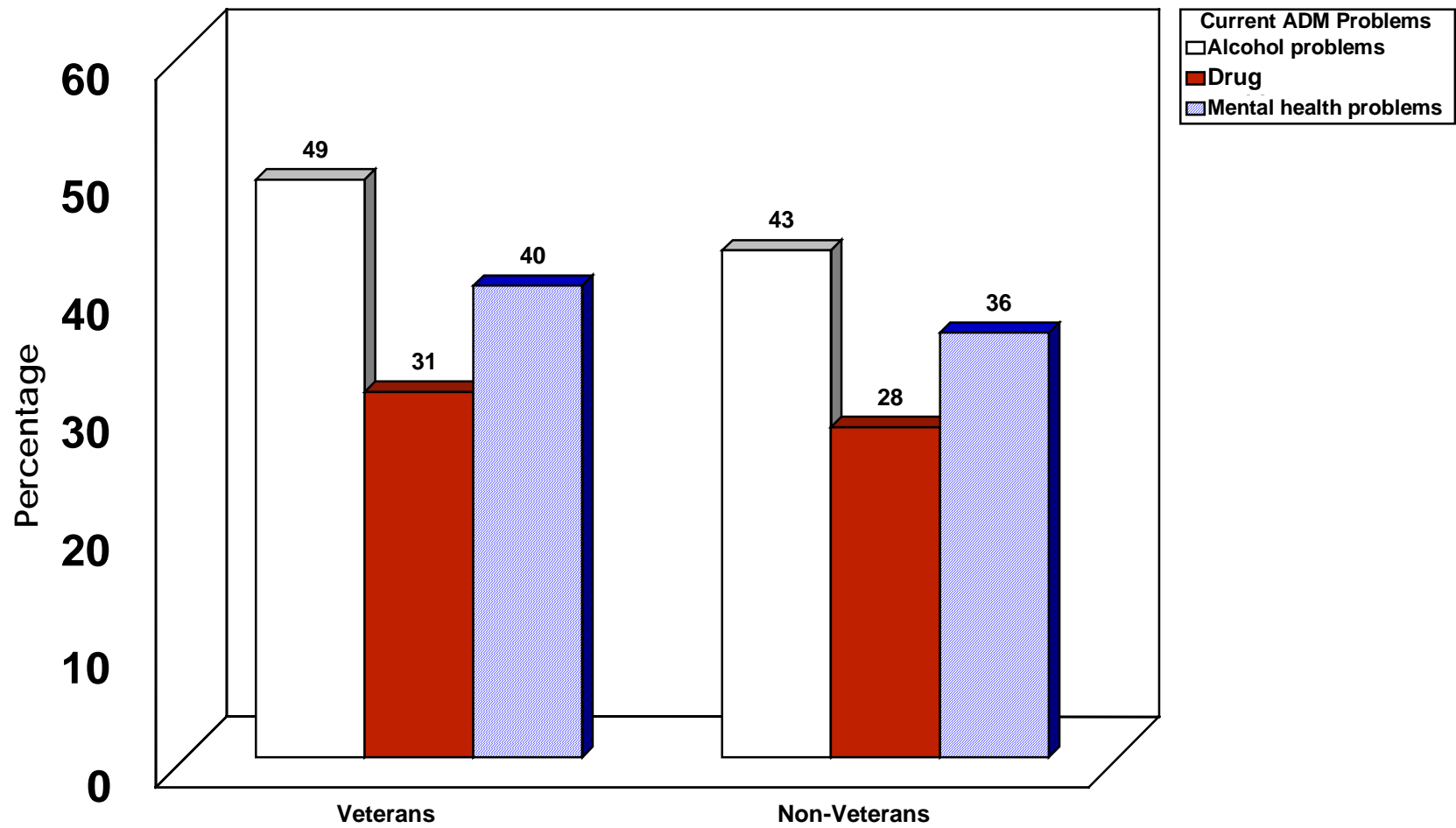
Table 11.6
**Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Problems Among Male Veterans
and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status**

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Problems in Past Month						
Alcohol Problems	49(%)	43(%)	33(%)	37(%)	43(%)	25(%)
Drug Problems	31	28	10	25	3	13
Mental Health Problems	40	36	28	32	16	18
Specific Combinations						
Alcohol problem only	17	18	Insufficient N	14	Insufficient N	20
Drug problem only	8	7		7		4
Mental health problem only	12	13		17		10
Alcohol and drug problems	11	7		11		3
Alcohol and mental health problems	17	9		8		2
Drug and mental health problems	6	5		2		6
Alcohol, drug, and mental health problems	5	9		5		*
No ADM problems	24	32		36		55
Problems in Past Year						
Alcohol Problems	58	53	36	43	43	28
Drug Problems	40	43	22	32	5	17
Mental Health Problems	46	43	29	39	17	20
Specific Combinations						
Alcohol problem only	15	15	Insufficient N	14	Insufficient N	19
Drug problem only	8	7		9		4
Mental health problem only	10	10		15		10
Alcohol and drug problems	14	13		10		5
Alcohol and mental health problems	18	9		10		1
Drug and mental health problems	7	8		5		5
Alcohol, drug, and mental health problems	11	16		9		3
No ADM problems	17	23		29		53
Problems in Lifetime						
Alcohol Problems	77	70	65	62	67	51
Drug Problems	60	68	50	53	17	35
Mental Health Problems	54	54	49	52	26	25
Specific Combinations						
Alcohol problem only	12	11	Insufficient N	9	Insufficient N	26
Drug problem only	7	6		6		6
Mental health problem only	2	4		15		9
Alcohol and drug problems	20	18		21		15
Alcohol and mental health problems	19	6		12		3
Drug and mental health problems	7	8		5		6
Alcohol, drug, and mental health problems	26	36		20		7
No ADM problems	7	12		12		27

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

* Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. Insufficient N signifies that sample size was too small for data to be reported.

Figure 11.6
Past-Month ADM Problems of Homeless Male Clients, by Veteran Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Table 11.7
Service Needs Reported by Male Veterans and Non-Veterans, by Homeless Status

	Currently Homeless		Formerly Homeless		Other Service Users	
	Veterans (N=632)	Non-Veterans (N=1353)	Veterans (N=129)	Non-Veterans (N=271)	Veterans (N=54)	Non-Veterans (N=168)
Top Responses Clients Provided to "What Are the (three) Things You Need the Most Now?"						
Obtaining food	15(%)	19(%)	25(%)	30(%)	30(%)	29(%)
Finding a job	45	47	31	30	19	27
Finding affordable housing	37	39	24	20	13	19
Assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing	32	27	14	16	15	6
Other ^a	21	22	40	22	28	38
Single Most Important Thing Keeping Client from Getting Out of Homelessness^b						
Insufficient income	26	28	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Lack of job/employment	25	27				
Other	14	14				
Addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs	13	10				
Lack of suitable housing	9	11				
Physical condition or disability	5	3				
Mental health condition	3	2				
Insufficient education/skills/training	2	3				
Family or domestic instability	2	1				
Insufficient services or service information	1	1				

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. ^aRefers to needs other than assistance getting food, assistance getting clothing, transportation assistance, help with legal issues, help with parenting, child care services and payment of costs. ^bQuestion only asked of clients who are currently homeless.

CURRENTLY AND FORMERLY HOMELESS MALE VETERANS COMPARED³

As in prior chapters, this section examines variations in veterans' characteristics across homeless status. However, the categories of other service users are not discussed due to potential biases.⁴

Demographic Characteristics

Currently and formerly homeless veterans have equivalent demographic characteristics (figure 11.7). Both groups have similar race/ethnicity distributions with the largest proportions being white non-Hispanic (46 and 54 percent of currently and formerly homeless veterans, respectively). In addition, their urban/rural distributions do not differ statistically, with the majority residing in central cities (79 and 69 percent, respectively). The only difference between the two groups with regard to marital status is that currently homeless veterans are more likely to be separated than formerly homeless veterans (19 versus 9 percent). They also report higher educational attainments than their formerly homeless counterparts (45 versus 29 percent have at least a high school diploma).

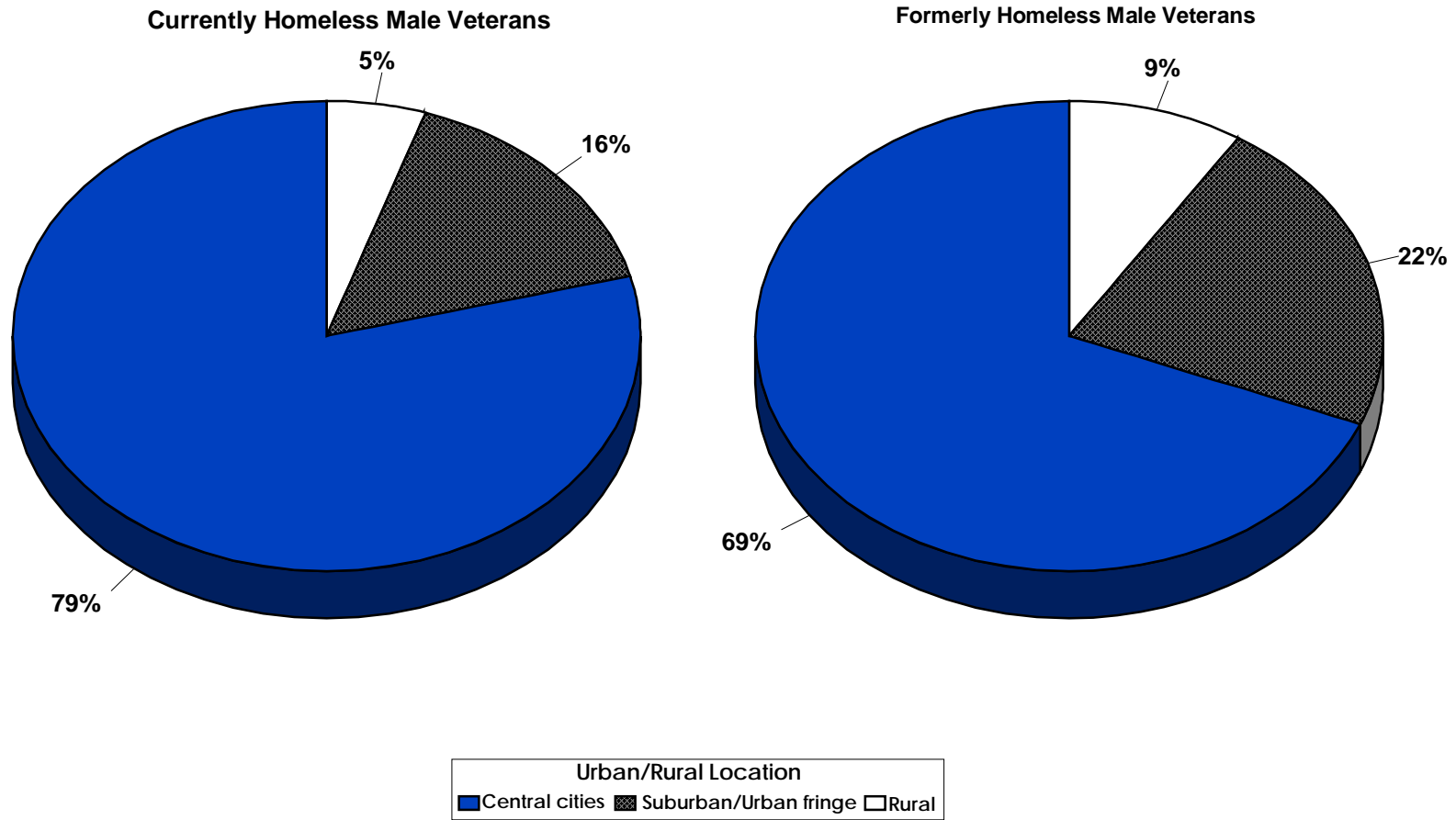
Homeless Experiences

There are some interesting differences in the homeless experiences of currently and formerly homeless veterans. Currently homeless veterans have more episodes and longer periods of homelessness. Thirty-one percent of currently homeless veterans have experienced four or more periods of homelessness compared to 16 percent of formerly homeless veterans. By contrast, formerly homeless veterans are more likely to have two or fewer episodes than currently homeless veterans (73 versus 59 percent). The length of the last period of homelessness also varies, with currently homeless veterans less likely to report shorter durations of homelessness. Almost half (49 percent) of formerly homeless veterans report that their most recent complete episode of homelessness lasted less than four months compared to only one-third (34 percent) of currently homeless veterans.

³ All C.I.'s for formerly homeless veterans in this section are less than ± 11 percentage points.

⁴ The unweighted sample of other service users who are veterans (N=54) comprise a very small share (only 9 percent) of the unweighted sample but a much larger share (38 percent) of the weighted sample (i.e., the sample weighted in such a way as to represent the national population of clients of NSHAPC programs). Consequently estimates based on this weighted sample may be biased and may produce misleading results. In addition, the subsample is too small to divide by age as has been done in other chapters. The tables report information about all other service users who are male veterans.

Figure 11.7
Urban/Rural Location of Male Veteran Clients, by Homeless Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Current and Lifetime Use of Homeless Assistance Programs

Since a person's current housing situation was a factor in determining homeless status, it is not surprising to find that currently homeless veterans are more likely to use shelter programs than formerly homeless veterans over the past week (table 11.3). About one-quarter of currently homeless veterans report using either an emergency shelter or transitional housing program in the seven days before being interviewed. By contrast, a larger proportion of formerly than currently homeless veterans have used a permanent housing program over the past seven days (11 versus 3 percent).

Over the course of their lifetime, a similar proportion of currently and formerly homeless veterans have used emergency shelters, permanent housing programs, voucher programs, food pantries, mobile food programs, outreach programs, and drop-in centers. However, because such programs first appeared in the late 1980s, currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless veterans to have used a transitional housing program in their lifetime (42 versus 27 percent). A larger proportion of formerly homeless veterans, however, have used a soup kitchen at some point in their lives (85 versus 73 percent).

Income, Income Sources, and Employment

Although similar proportions of currently and formerly homeless veterans undertook some form of paid work in the last 30 days, the income distribution of the two groups are quite different. While the majority of currently homeless veterans had incomes less than \$300 (53 percent), 76 percent of formerly homeless veterans had incomes greater than this amount. This discrepancy corresponds to a more than \$250 difference in the median incomes of the two groups (\$250 and \$511 for currently and formerly homeless veterans, respectively).

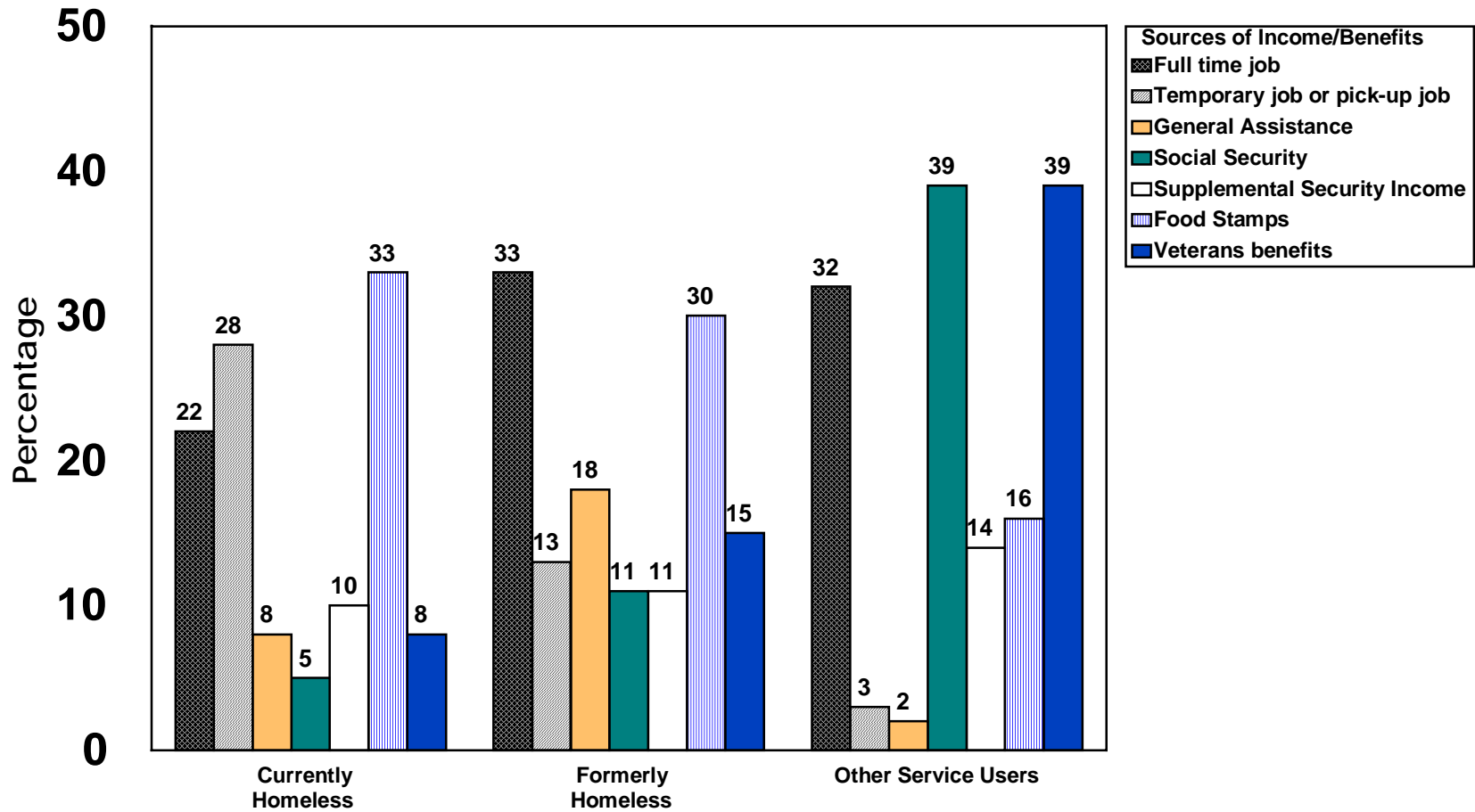
Some of the variations in incomes can be explained by contrasts in the type of employment held and government benefits received by the two groups (figure 11.8). In the past 30 days, twenty-two percent of currently homeless veterans have held a job lasting or expected to last three or more months, compared to 33 percent of formerly homeless veterans. In addition, currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless veterans to have earned income from peddling or a day job (23 versus 9 percent). Currently homeless veterans are also less likely to have received General Assistance (8 versus 18 percent) or Veteran's Disability payments (6 versus 14 percent).

Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition status also vary by the homeless status of male veteran clients. Although comparable proportions of both groups report one or more acute *non*-infectious conditions, currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless veterans to indicate having

Figure 11.8

Sources of Money/Benefits Received by Male Veteran Clients in Last 30 Days, by Homeless



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

one or more acute infectious problems. In addition, 23 percent of currently homeless veterans report having high blood pressure, compared to 13 percent of formerly homeless veterans. However, similar portions of both groups indicate having joint problems, chest infections, and problems walking.

Sources of medical insurance also vary by homeless status. While both groups are equally likely to have access to VA medical insurance, currently homeless veterans are much less likely to have Medicaid (17 versus 32 percent). Instead, currently homeless veterans are much more likely to have no health insurance at all (49 versus 34 percent).

Equal portions of both populations indicate they get enough of the kinds of food they want to eat (40 and 38 percent for currently and formerly homeless veterans, respectively). Equal proportions of each group also indicate at least one food problem in the last 30 days (57 and 54 percent— figure 11.9). However, currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless veterans to report three or more food problems (25 versus 11 percent).

Special Needs

A number of significant variations in ADM problems are evident by homelessness status (table 11.6 and figure 11.10). Currently homeless veterans are more likely than formerly homeless clients to have an alcohol problem in the past month (49 versus 33 percent). However, formerly homeless veterans are less likely than currently homeless veterans to have a past-month mental health problem (28 versus 40 percent).

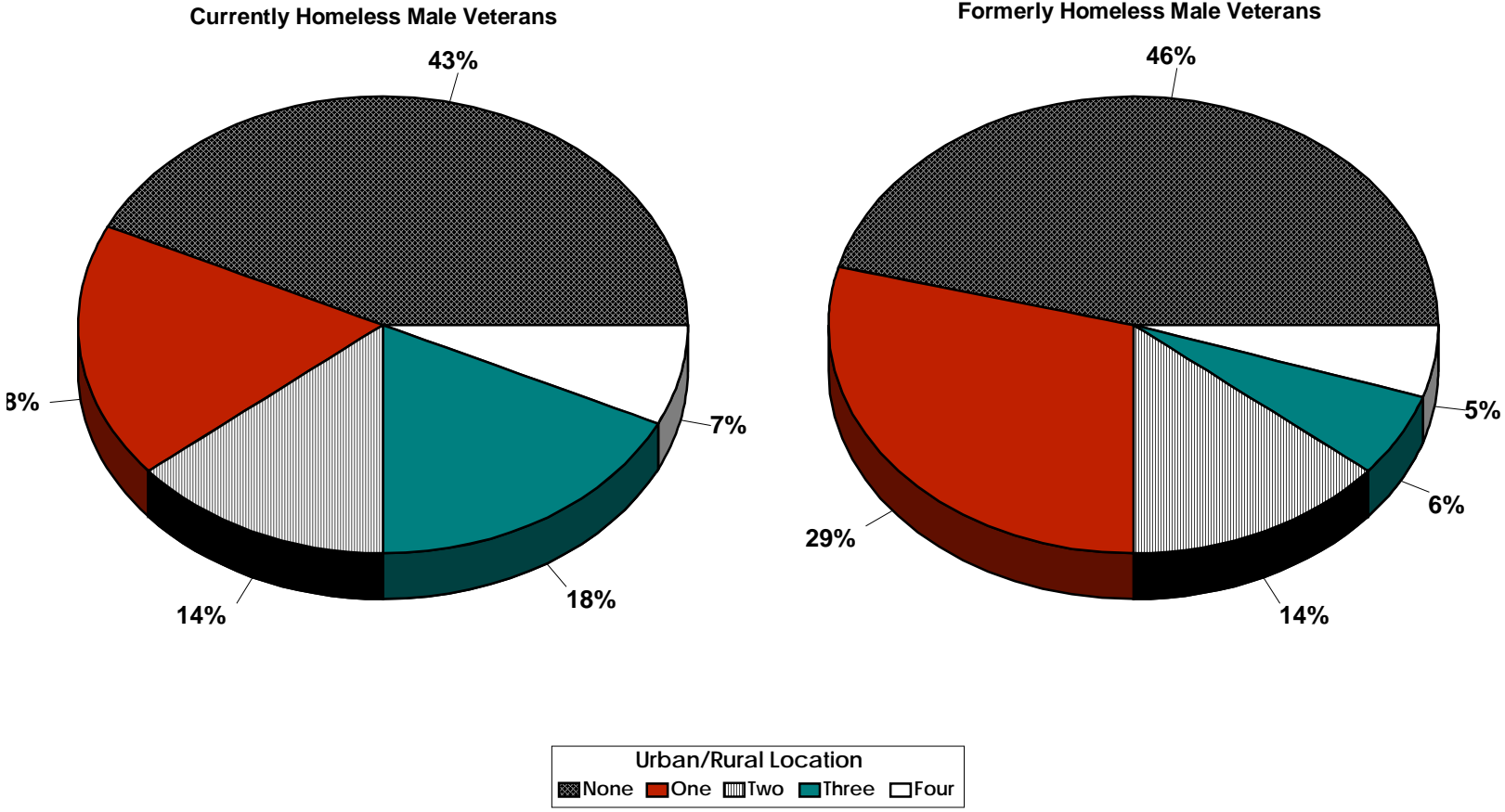
Service Needs

The service needs reported by currently and formerly homeless veterans vary considerably. When asked “What are the three things you need the most now,” currently homeless veterans gave finding a job as their top choice followed by finding affordable housing and securing permanent housing (45, 37, and 32 percent, respectively). Formerly homeless veterans report as their most important need some need “other” than the 28 specific ones asked about on the survey (40 percent). The next most important needs for formerly homeless male veterans are finding a job (31 percent) and obtaining food (25 percent).

APPENDIX 11

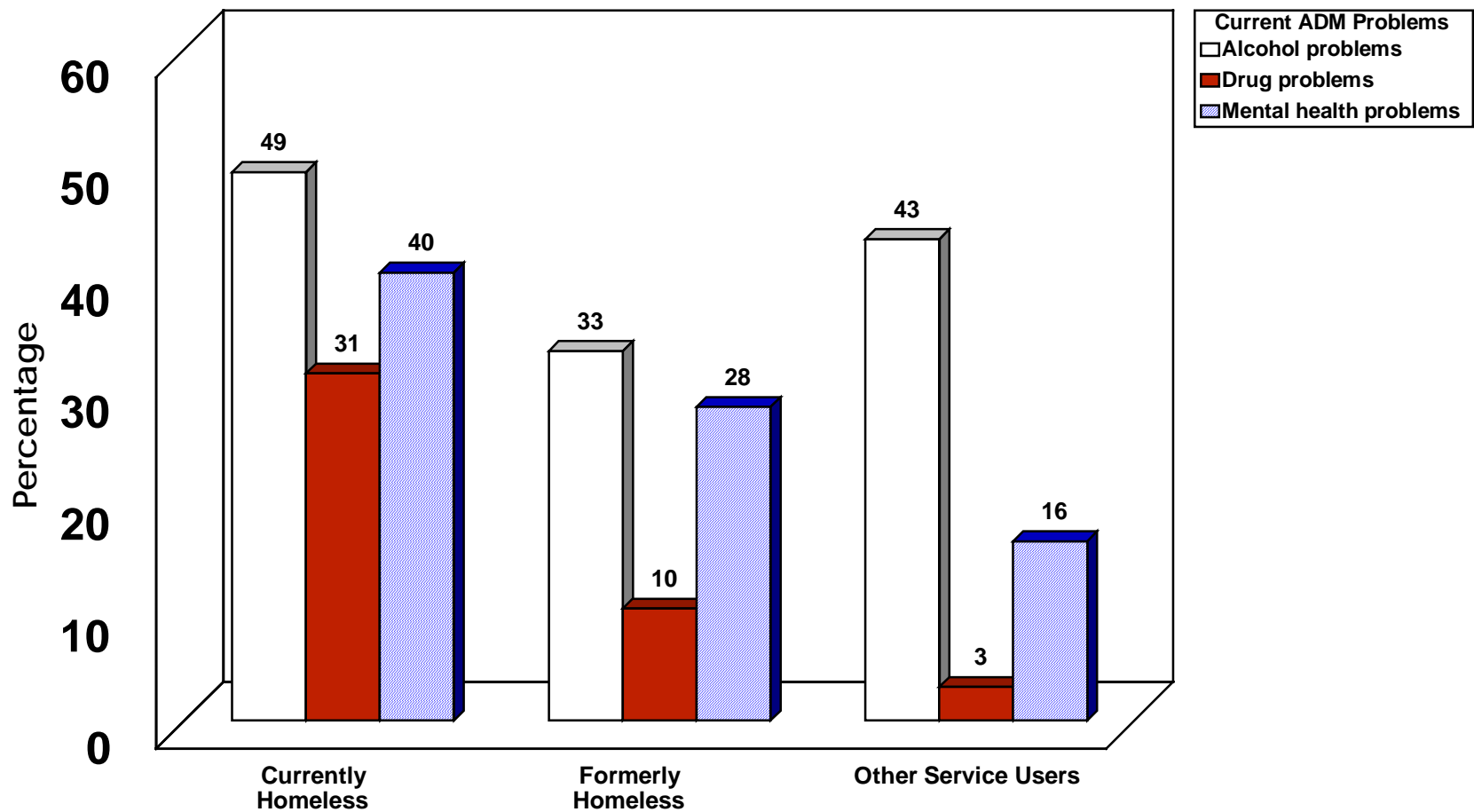
For readers interested in the military experiences of NSHAPC veterans, Appendix tables 11.A1 and 11.A2 provide information about type, timing, and length of service, combat experience, type of discharge, and use of programs designed specifically for veterans.

Figure 11.9
Food Problems of Male Veteran Clients, by Homeless Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Figure 11.10
Past-Month ADM Problems of Male Veteran Clients, by Homeless Status



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Appendix Table 11.A1
**Military and Veteran Specific Program Use Characteristics
of Homeless Clients, by Standard Grouping**

	Currently Homeless Veterans (N=676)	Living Situation		ADM, Past Month@		Race/Ethnicity			
		Homeless Veterans in Family Households (N=31)	All Other Homeless Veterans (N=645)	With ADM (N=460)	Without ADM (N=216)	White Non-Hispanic (N=311)	Black Non-Hispanic (N=290)	Hispanic (N=35)	Native American (N=30)
Types of Military Service									
Active duty military service in the armed forces of the United States, now	4(%)	Insufficient N	4(%)	4(%)	1(%)	3(%)	2(%)	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Active duty military service in the armed forces of the United States, in the past	94		94	93	98	96	95		
Service in Reserves or National Guard only	2		2	3	1	2	3		
When Served on Active-Duty in the U.S. Armed Forces (Including Reserves or National Guard)									
August 1990 or later	8	Insufficient N	7	9	5	8	6	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
September 1980 to July 1990	17		16	15	24	14	20		
May 1975 to August 1980	32		32	33	31	20	46		
Vietnam era (8/64-4/75)	47		48	51	34	54	34		
February 1955- July 1964	15		15	12	23	18	11		
Korean conflict (6/50-1/55)	4		4	2	8	3	4		
World War II (9/40-7/47)	1		2	*	5	1	1		
Any other time	1		1	1	*	1	1		
In Total, Number of Years of Active-Duty Military Service (Including Reserves or National Guard)									
One	7	Insufficient N	7	8	Insufficient N	5	11	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Two	21		22	23		24	17		
Three	25		26	26		25	27		
Four	19		19	19		23	13		
Five to ten	19		17	17		12	26		
Eleven or more	4		4	3		5	2		
Ever Stationed in War Zone	33	Insufficient N	33	31	38	32	35	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
During Military Service, Ever in or Exposed to Combat	28	Insufficient N	28	27	30	28	26	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
<i>(Items Below Are Limited to Clients In Active Duty in Past or Service In Reserves or National Guard)</i>									
Received an Honorable Discharge When Discharged from Military Service	89	Insufficient N	89	90	87	92	88	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Ever Used a Medical Facility Operated by the VA for Overnight Hospital Care, Outpatient Visits, or for Nursing Home, Convalescent Home, or Admissions for Long-Term Care	57	Insufficient N	57	59	50	58	57	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Participated in Programs Specifically for Homeless Veterans	25	Insufficient N	26	29	13	28	25	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Participated in the Following Programs									
Compensated work therapy program	8	Insufficient N	8	11	1	15	2	Insufficient N	Insufficient N
Dom Program (domiciliary care program)	11		12	14	4	15	9		
Homeless shelters for veterans not run by the VA	14		15	16	7	17	13		
Veterans Center drop-in program	4		4	4	3	4	3		
Stand down	4		4	5	3	4	4		
Other	3		3	4	1	2	4		

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% or other total due to rounding.
* Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. @ADM = Alcohol, drug, or mental health problem in the past month.

Military and Veteran Specific Program Use Characteristics, by Homelessness Status

	Homelessness Status			
	Currently Homeless Clients (N=676)	Formerly Homeless Clients (N=140)	Other Service Users Under Age 65 (N=46)	Other Service Users 65 and Older (N=12)
Types of Military Service				
Active duty military service in the armed forces of the United States, now	4(%)	0(%)	0(%)	0(%)
Active duty military service in the armed forces of the United States, in the past	94	98	92	100
Service in Reserves or National Guard only	2	2	9	0
When Served on Active-Duty in the U.S.				
Armed Forces (Including Reserves or National Guard)				
August 1990 or later	8	9	2	0
September 1980 to July 1990	17	15	30	0
May 1975 to August 1980	32	14	19	0
Vietnam era (8/64-4/75)	47	53	38	0
February 1955- July 1964	15	18	20	0
Korean conflict (6/50-1/55)	4	8	30	39
World War II (9/40-7/47)	1	6	0	65
Any other time	1	*	2	0
In Total, Number of Years of Active-Duty Military Service (Including Reserves or National Guard)				
One	7	4	3	3
Two	21	22	26	37
Three	25	26	27	8
Four	19	16	17	47
Five to ten	19	27	20	4
Eleven or more	4	1	3	0
Ever Stationed in War Zone	33	27	26	24
During Military Service, Ever in or Exposed to Combat	28	28	16	12
<i>(Items Below Are Limited to Clients In Active Duty in Past or Service In Reserves or National Guard)</i>				
Received an Honorable Discharge When Discharged from Military Service	89	93	98	0
Ever Used a Medical Facility Operated by the VA for Overnight Hospital Care, Outpatient Visits, or for Nursing Home, Convalescent Home, or Admissions for Long-Term Care	57	52	75	83
Participated in Programs Specifically for Homeless Veterans	25	11	14	0
Participated in the Following Programs				
Compensated work therapy program	8	2	0	0
Dom Program (domiciliary care program)	11	1	0	0
Homeless shelters for veterans not run by the VA	14	7	12	0
Veterans Center drop-in program	4	8	2	0
Stand down	4	1	0	0
Other	3	2	*	0

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% or other total due to rounding. *Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.