



Survey Results from the *Pathways* Study

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SCHOOL OF
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Dedicated in Memory of Becky Lange



Surveys conducted in partnership with Street Roots

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Funded by Homeless Services Department, Multnomah County

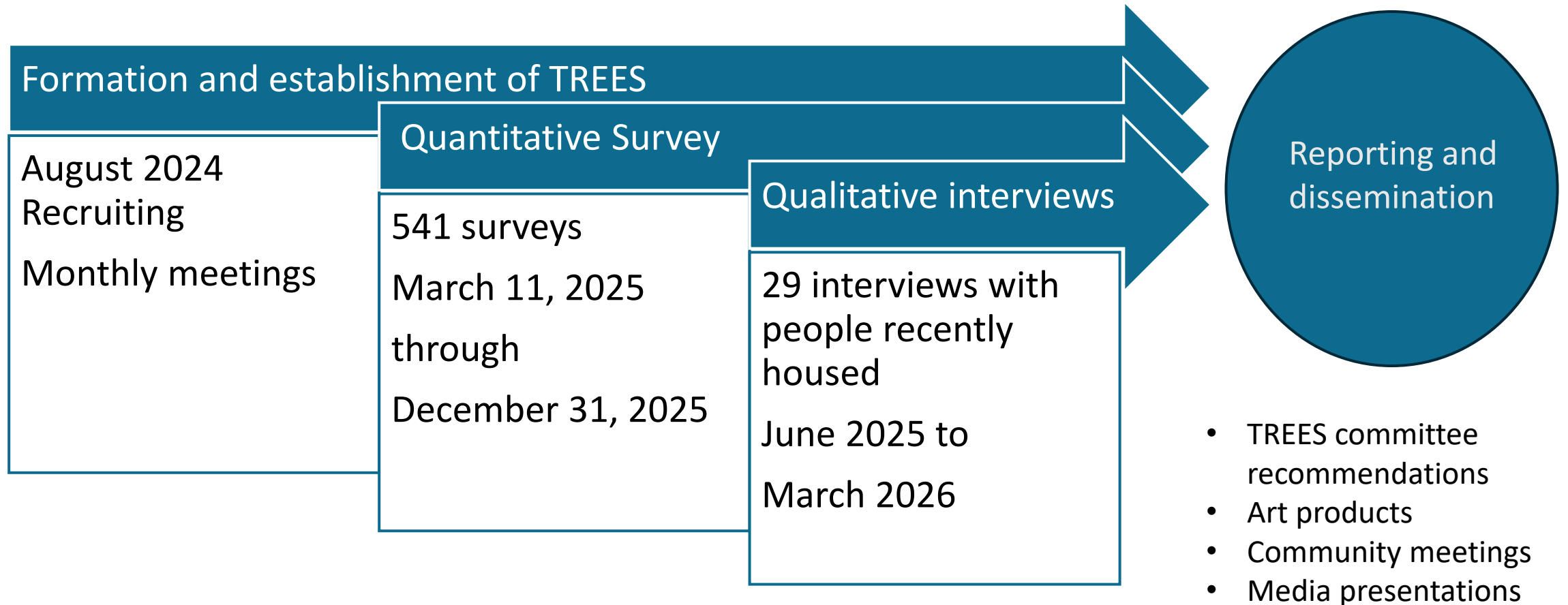
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School of Public Health**

*The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints, recommendations or policies of
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Research Questions

1. What goals do people have relating to housing and shelter?
2. What supports/impedes people in working towards those housing and shelter goals?
3. What supports people while they are living on the street?
4. How do socio-demographic factors influence or change people's needs, priorities, and goals (i.e., responses to previous questions)?
5. What do pathways through homelessness look like? (Report 2, Expected July 2026)

Study overview



TREES COMMITTEE



Data collection: Survey

- March through December, 2025
- 541 participants
 - 99 participants housed at the time of survey
 - 442 participants unhoused at the time of survey
- Electronic survey
 - In person – on phones, tablets
 - Online (housed participants) – link via email or flyers

Methods: Survey Instrument

- 57 question survey
- 5 sections
 - Current living situation
 - Demographics
 - Use/helpfulness of homeless services
 - Experience with involuntary displacements (sweeps)
 - Housing interests and preferences

Methods: Eligibility

- 18 + years of age
- Experienced homelessness in last 6-12 months
- Experienced homelessness in Multnomah county
- Speak and/or read English or Spanish
- Compensation
 - \$10 visa gift card
 - Snacks, hygiene supplies

Unsheltered/Sheltered Sample:

- Day centers, shelters, pod villages, public locations across Multnomah county
- On site, surveys were conducted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- TREES members or Street Roots Ambassadors
 - Who have lived experience of homelessness helped people complete surveys
 - Facilitated recruitment and supported people in taking the survey on provided tablets or individuals' cell phones

Geographic location, in-person survey events only	Number of sites	Number (%) of surveys completed in this area
N Portland	3	96 (20.8%)
NE Portland	8	126 (27.2%)
NW Portland	5	166 (35.9%)
SE Portland	4	47 (10.2%)
SW Portland	2	27 (5.8%)

Housed Sample:

- Recently moved into housing (in the last 12 months)
 - Emails sent to housing providers across Multnomah county
 - Fliers
 - TREES members visited 25 housing sites to promote the study
 - by meeting with residents and staff
 - helped people complete the survey
 - provided flyers that included QR code links
- An online version of the survey
- In-person surveys

Sample composition

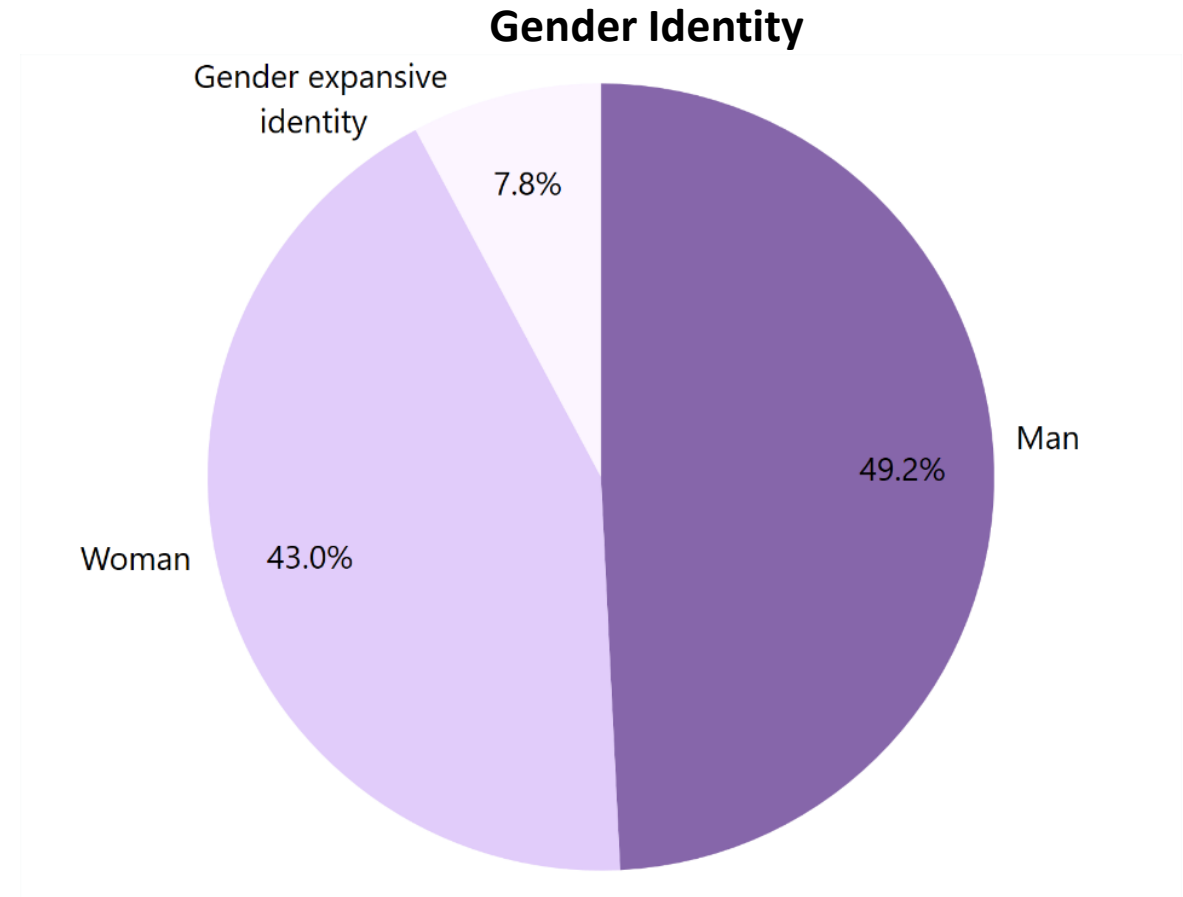
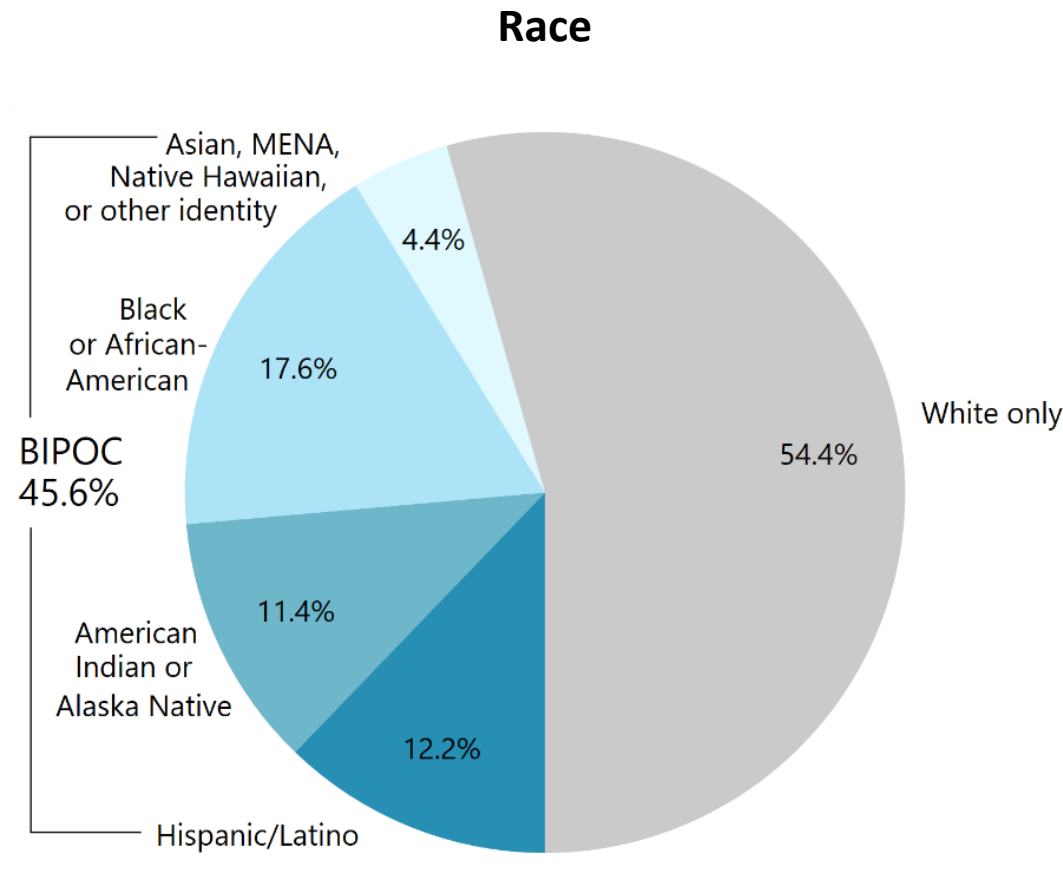


Figure 2.1 Sample characteristics by race and gender, categorized (N=541)

Figure note. Figure reflects exclusive categories as defined in Appendix B1. All 541 participants were presented with this question. Results shown are based on the n=500 who shared race information.

How similar is our sample to the general population experiencing homelessness?

Race

- More American Indian or Alaska Native
- Slightly less Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian
- Somewhat more White-Only

Age

- Somewhat Older

Gender

- More Gender Expansive, Slightly more female

Disability

- More people identifying as having a disability

Characteristic	Our Sample Compared	Pathways Sample (N=541)	HSD Multnomah BNL ¹ (N=29,234)
Race			
American Indian or Alaska Native	↑	14%	10%
Asian	=	2%	2%
Black or African American	↓	18%	22%
Hispanic or Latino/a/e	↓	14%	17%
Middle Eastern or North African	=	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	↓	3%	4%
White alone	↑	54%	49%
Age (years)			
18–24	↓	6%	10%
25–44	↓	46%	51%
45–54	↑	25%	19%
55+	↑	22%	20%
Gender			
Gender Expansive Identity	↑	12%	4%
Man	↓	49%	55%
Woman	↑	43%	42%
Disability (any) ²	↑	73%	61%

Note: For Race and Gender, participants were asked to “select all that apply,” so the sum of the percentages will exceed 100%.

¹ All Homeless BNL data is for all of calendar year 2025.

² For the Pathways sample, N=541 which includes missing or skipped responses. If restricted to those who provided information on disability (N=478), then 82% reported any disability.

Key Findings

1. Experiences of Homelessness

- Participants experience notable instability
 - Frequently changing sleeping location
- Average moves 5.6 times in last 6-12 months
 - Average is for people living unsheltered (7.6 moves)
 - But housed reported high number of moves (4.4 moves in 12 months)

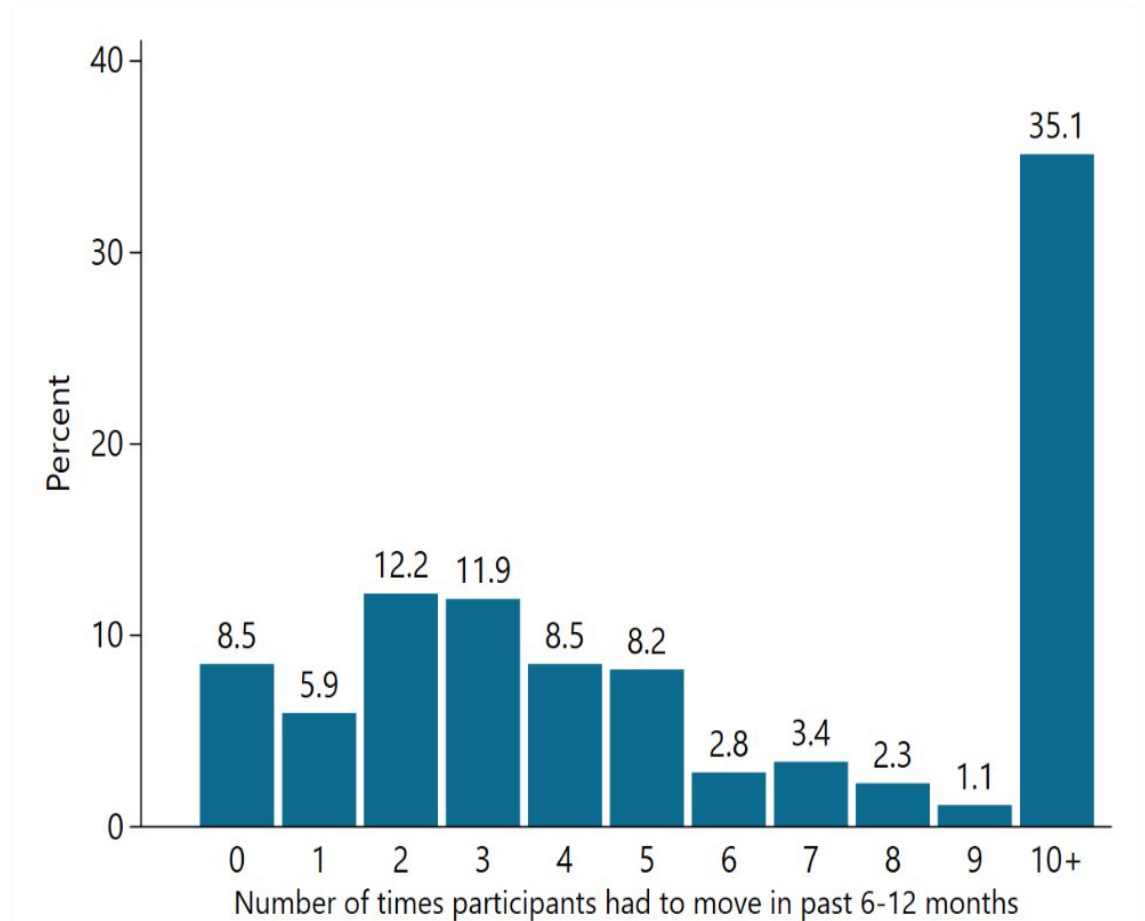
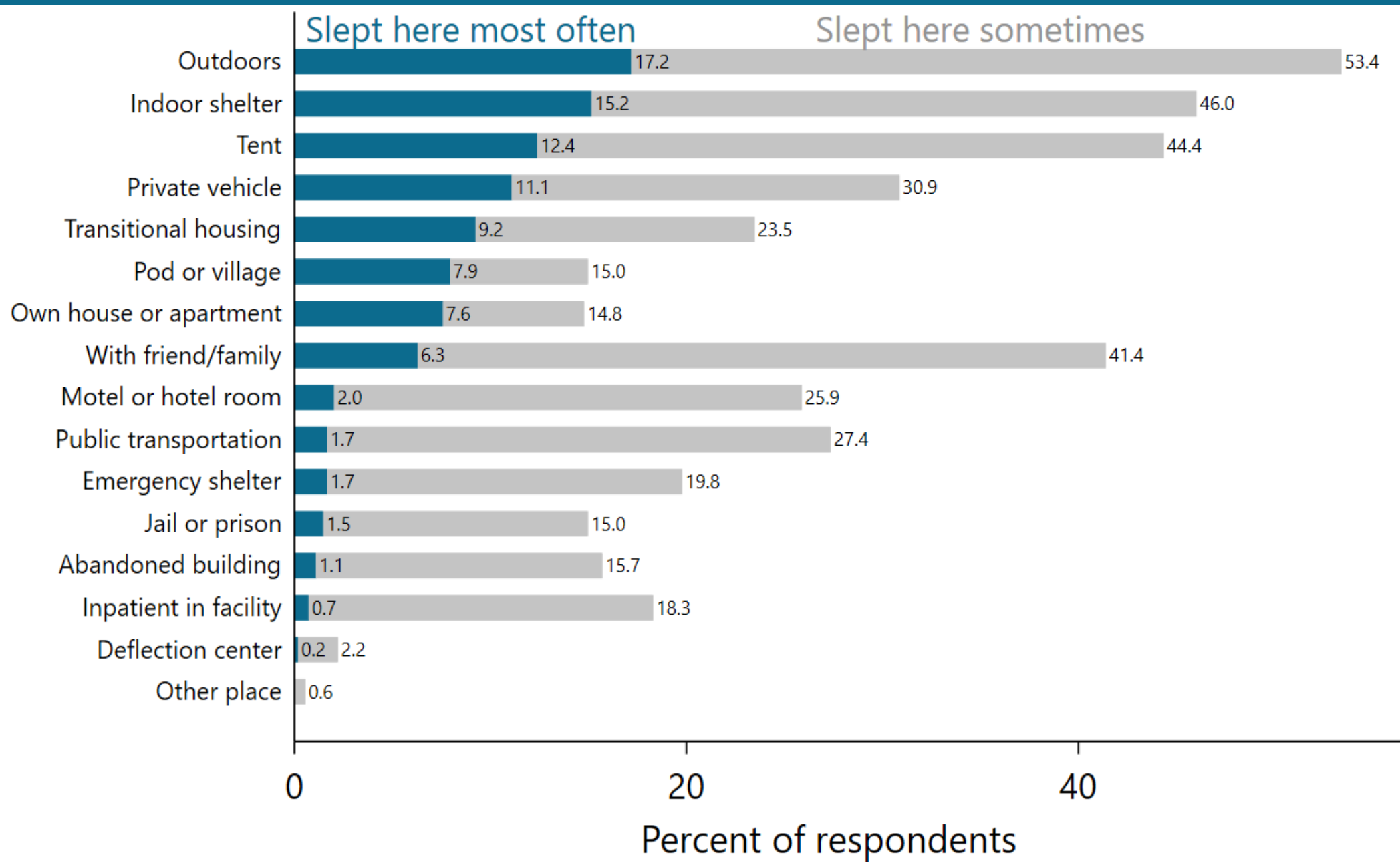


Figure .3 Number of times participants had to move in the past 6-12 months (N=541)

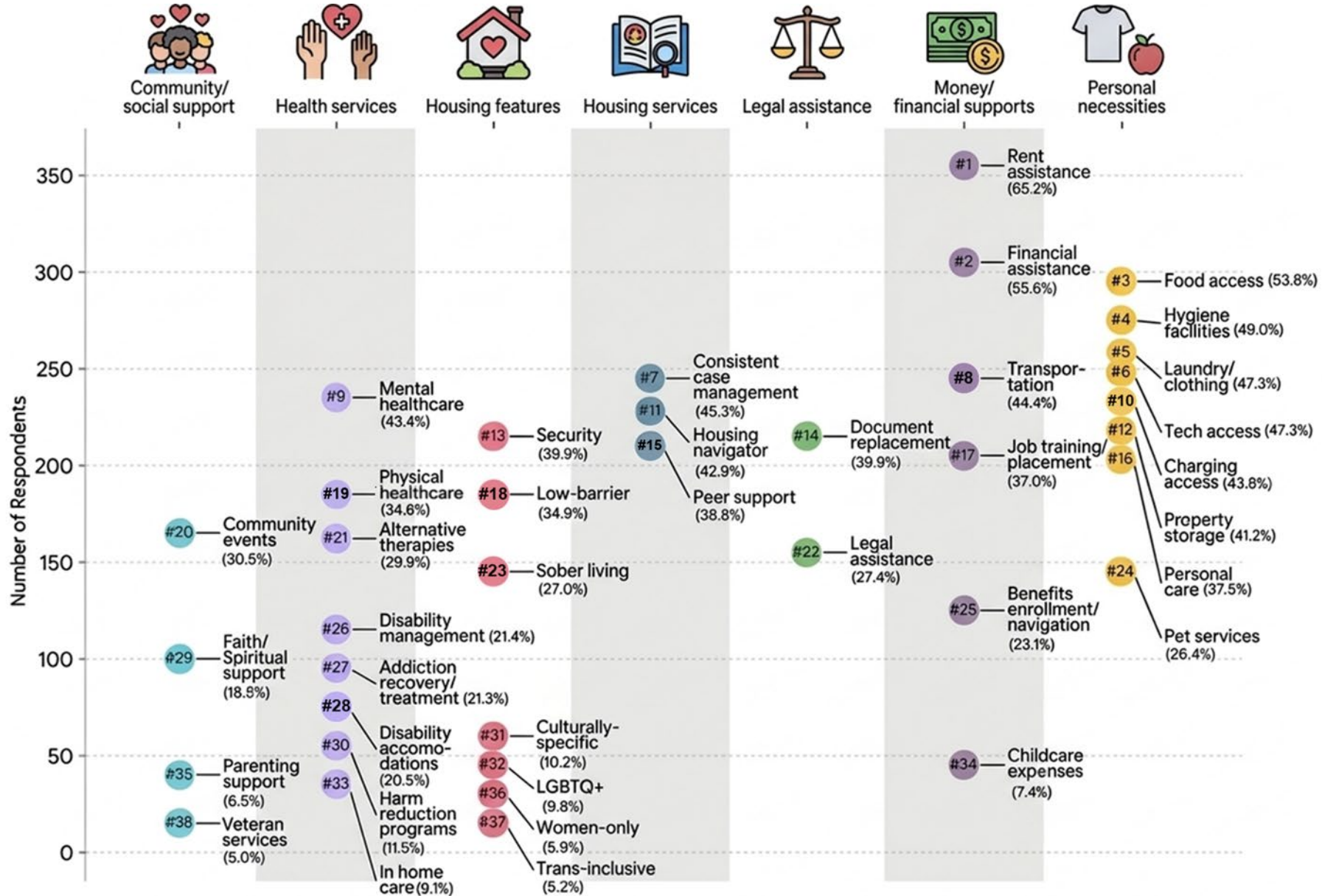
Figure 2.5 Places where participants slept most often and any time (N=541)



2. Participant Goals and Housing Preferences

- 98% of participants want permanent housing that they can afford
- Most want housing – any housing that meets needs for
 - Safety
 - Shelter
 - Hygiene
 - Sustenance
 - Family and friends

Rankings: Desired Housing Supports in Ideal Living Situation



Top Deal-breakers to Accepting Housing

1. No guests, roommates, or partners allowed 49.8%
2. Room checks, required to keep door open 48.6%
3. Curfew: unable to enter/leave building after a certain time 46.1%
4. Short-term or temporary stay (time limit on housing) 44.5%
5. Required to have a roommate 42.5%

In their own words: What does permanent and stable housing mean to you?

“Safe, warm, electricity, stable place to cook and clean myself and have my kitties”

“Not being cold”

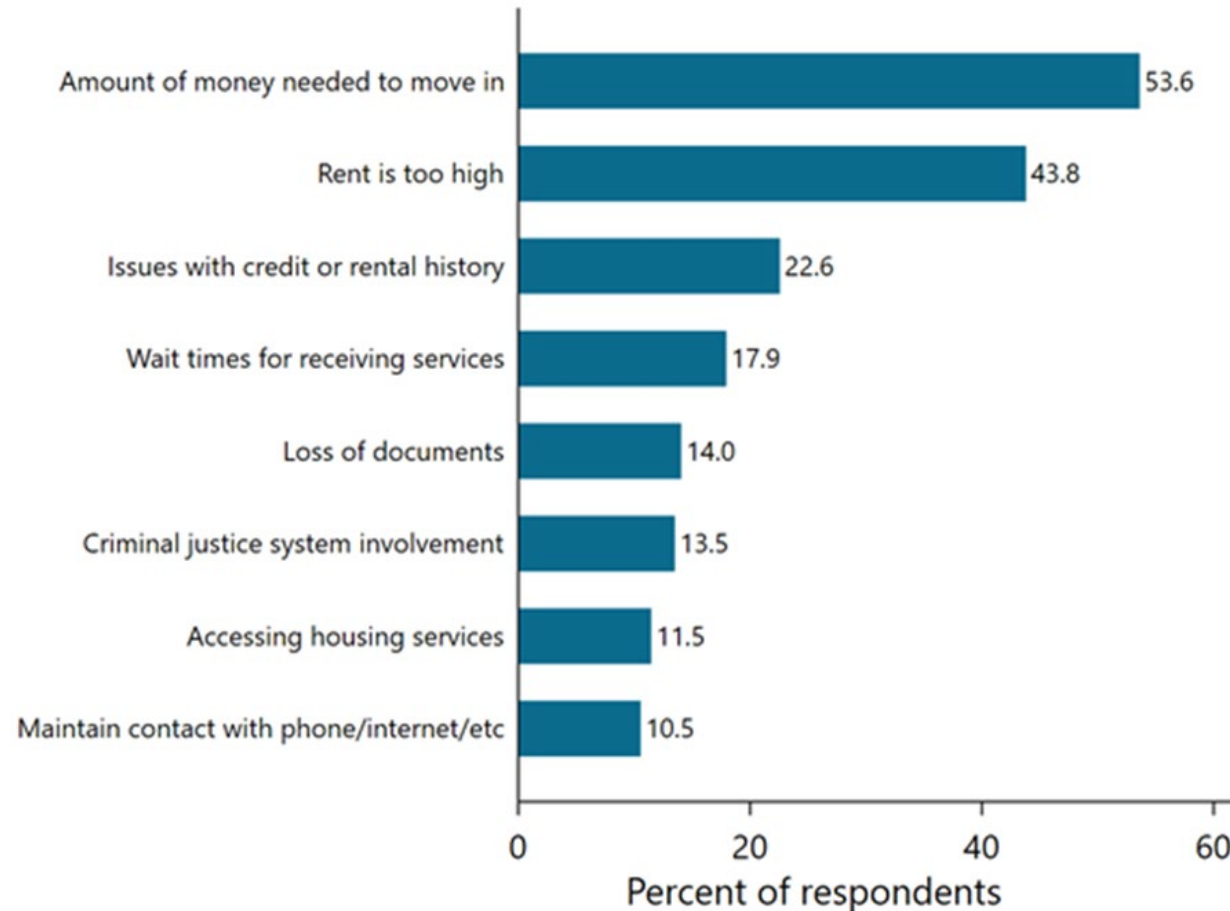
“Somewhere I can feel safe, be with my husband, not get told to leave or swept, and able to keep my things”

“Somewhere sustainable by a life that I am capable of maintaining and not just what someone else thinks that I should be able to maintain.”

“A place my kids can live with us in reunification”

“Like mom and dad had”

3. Barriers to Achieving Housing Goals



Participant responses to “What do you need to move into in housing?”

“I need to get into a home that is safe and open to my wife and daughter. We have to get a home as soon as possible to get our daughter back. All the waitlists simply don’t pan out or end up saying we don’t fit for the place for whatever reason.”

“My biggest barrier is financial. I am about to reapply for SSI [social security income] but with not having adequate time working for the last applicable quarters, even when I get approved it will be a very small amount monthly. Not enough to survive on. Of course it will be helpful but I still would not be able to afford housing after being approved.”

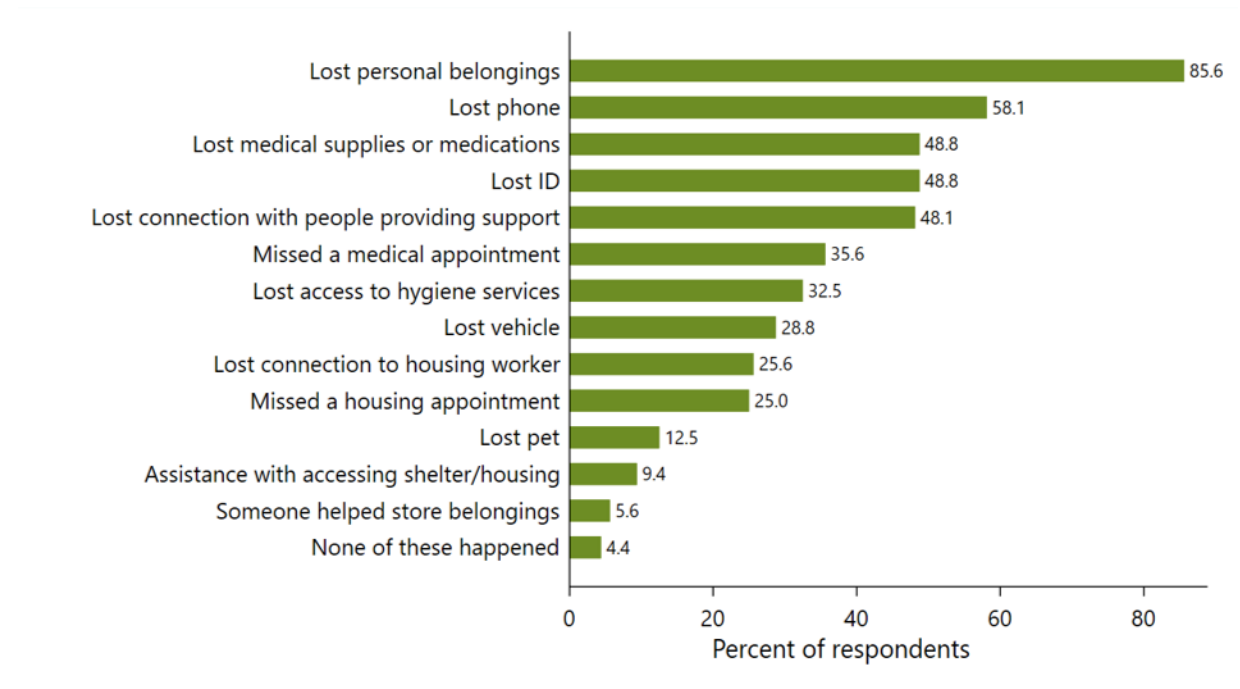
“A world that doesn’t hate and discard homeless people”

“I don’t want that anymore I want heaven”

3. Barriers to Achieving Housing Goals: Involuntary Displacement

- At least 40% of participants experienced at least one involuntary displacement
 - 48% were displaced more than 10 times
 - 86% lost personal items
 - 47% lost connection with people providing support (including housing workers and missing housing appointments)

Figure 4.4 Impact of involuntary displacement action (N=160)



3. Barriers to Achieving Housing Goals: Involuntary Displacement

- Involuntary displacements resulted in
 - Losing connections to housing services
 - Created new barriers to end homelessness
 - Significant negative physical and emotional consequences
 - Loss of medications, medical supplies
 - Missing medical appointments

3. In Their Own Words: Participant Accounts of Involuntary Displacement

“

Yes I've lost and started over like 30 times and cant take anymore losses.

This sweep thing is somebody showing up and throwing your stuff away if you don't move. It is terrifying to a person who has nowhere to go and no ability to rest or grow roots. I think it's the best way to put it, they make it entirely impossible to get anything done. If I want to go get an ID or if I wanna go get a job or I wanna go look at options for housing, I might come back and all my shit might be gone. So I have to take most of my stuff with me everywhere I go [it is] a huge burden.

Sweeps should be illegal. People should take care of fellow humans better than a stray dog.

”

4. What supports people while they are experiencing homelessness?: Services

Figure 5.2 Services used, helpful and not helpful (N=541)

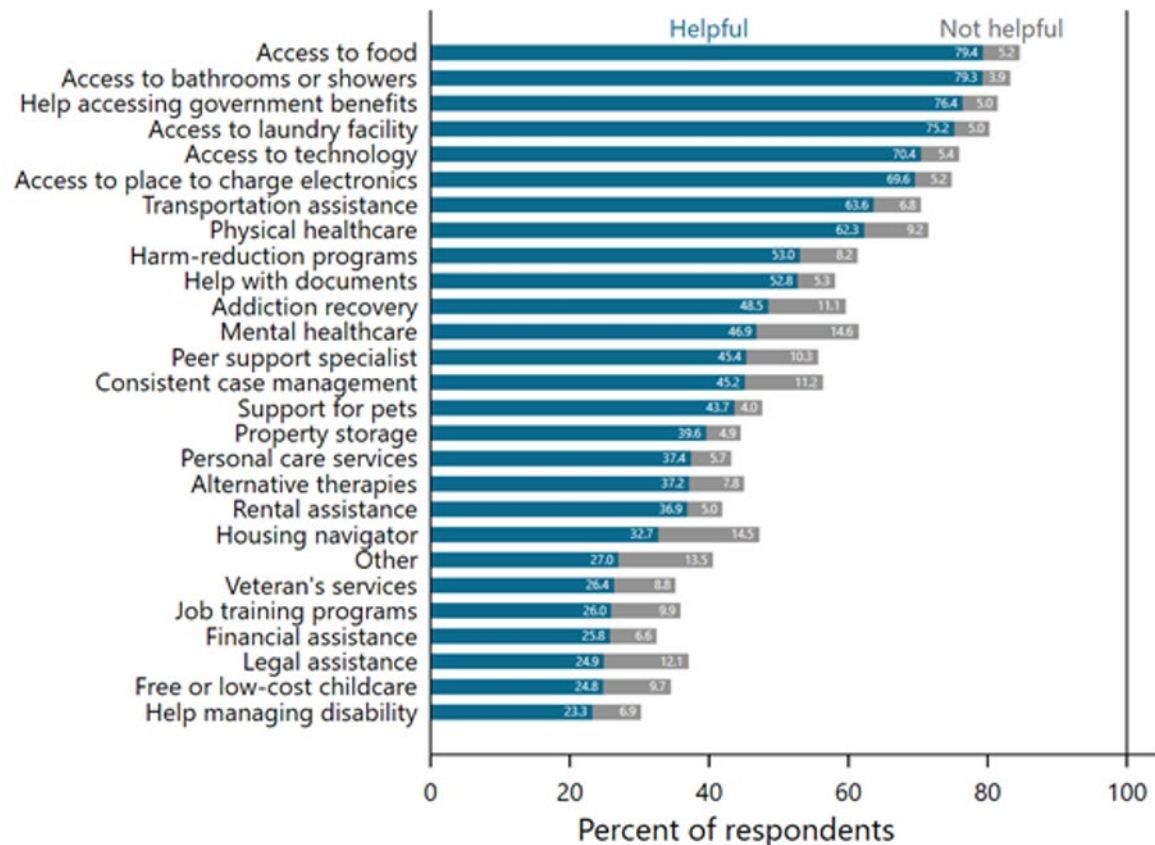
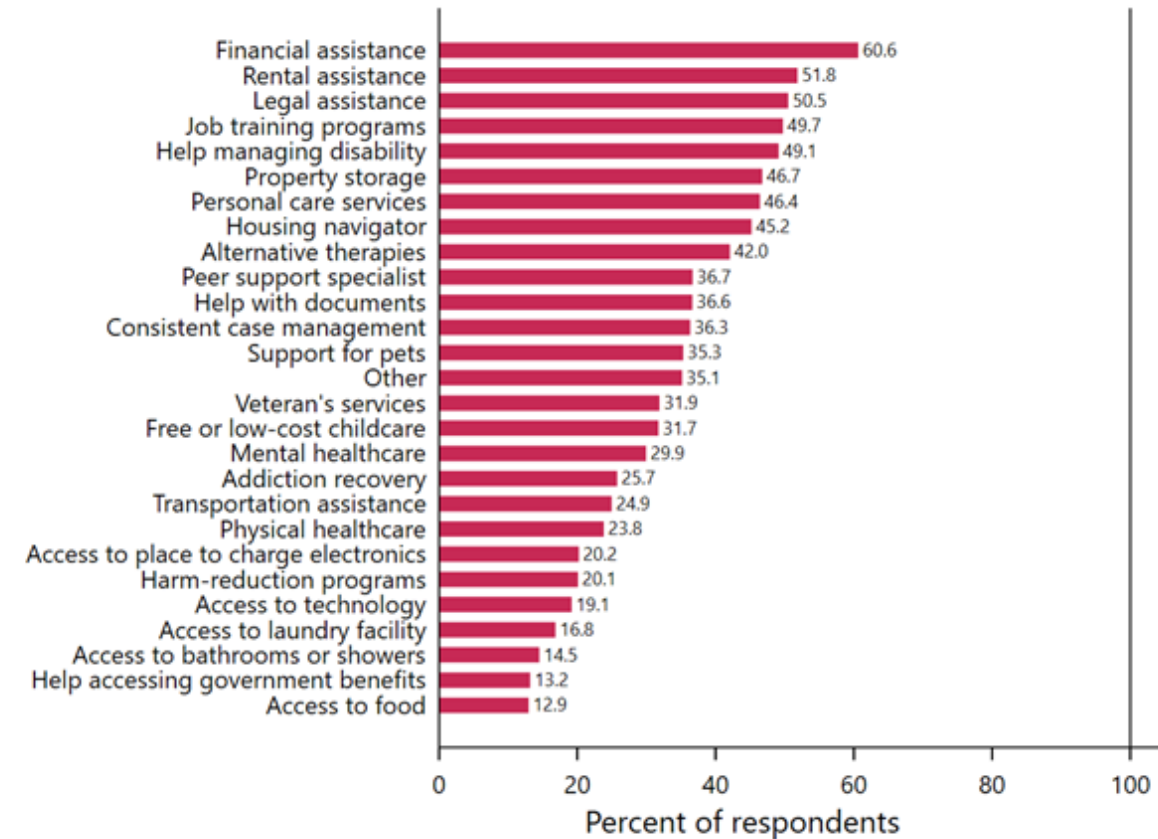
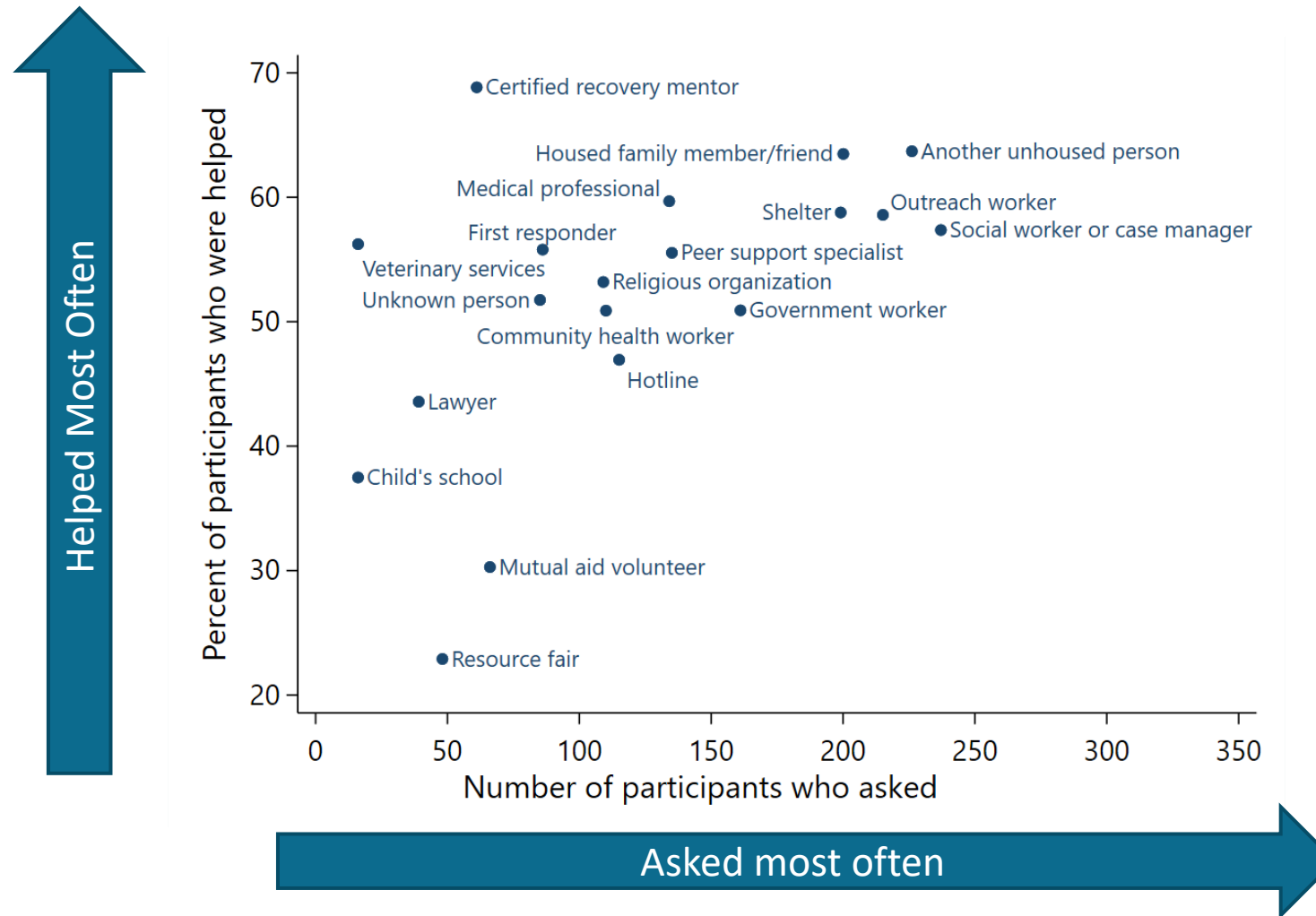


Figure 5.3 Unmet and desired service needs (N=541)



4. What supports people while they are experiencing homelessness?: People

Figure 5.6 Helpfulness (or follow-through when asked) of supporters (N=541)



4. What supports people while they are experiencing homelessness?: Case Managers

Case managers seen as some of the most – and least – helpful

- More insights from part 2 of the study – briefly:
 - Case managers who care, who are well-networked and trained
 - Many housed participants reported that good case managers were the thing that most helped them move into housing - they are prerequisite to getting into money/voucher programs

4. What supports people while they are experiencing homelessness?: Shelter

Mostly negative comments about shelter (58% of people):

"THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM AND IT'S DIFFICULT TO WEIGH OPTIONS VS RESOURCES VS WHAT WILL BE A COMFORTABLE OR SAFE SITUATION. THEN FOR SOME REASON MAYBE YOU CAN'T MAKE IT BACK AND HOPEFULLY THE PLACE DIDN'T STEAL OR THROW AWAY YOUR TRASH. EVEN IF IT BECOMES ROUTINE TO LOSE EVERYTHING SOMETIMES IT STILL HURTS"

"AT TIMES I HAVE FELT THAT I AM IN A FEMA CAMP RATHER THAN A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PLACE."

"GETTING ROBBED BY OTHER PEOPLE IN THE SHELTERS AND HAVING MY POSSESSIONS, INCLUDING SHOES, STOLEN"

4. What supports people while they are experiencing homelessness?: Shelter

But shelter was helpful for some people (34% of participants):

"THE SHELTER THAT I'M IN NOW I LIKE A LOT. I WORKED FOR HOMELESS SERVICES IN PORTLAND FOR 5 YEARS, WORKING IN MULTIPLE SHELTERS. THE [PROGRAM] IS FORMATTED IN A MUCH MORE HOLISTIC WAY. THE STAFF IS ALL CROSS-TRAINED, SO THEY ALL HAVE THE SAME INFORMATIVE INFORMATION TO GIVE WHEN ASKED A QUESTION. IT'S ACTUALLY BEEN A PLEASURE TO BE AT THIS SHELTER THEY ARE GENUINELY KIND."

"IT'S BEEN PRETTY SAFE. THEY HAVE SERVICES, TRYING TO HELP ME GET INTO HOUSING"

"I THINK THEY ARE BENEFICIAL IF THEY ARE RUN CORRECTLY."

"AS LONG AS YOU FOLLOWED THE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS IT IS VERY ACCESSIBLE"

5. Specific needs: Equity Analysis

- Gender
 - Women reported domestic or intimate partner violence as cause of homelessness at higher rate than men
 - Reported more safety-specific concerns
 - More likely to report being doubled-up

5. Specific needs

- People with disabilities
 - Report longer duration of homelessness
 - More barriers to housing
 - Higher service and more tailored needs
- People experiencing chronic homelessness report more barriers to housing
- Housed population
 - 80% of people housed in last 12 months reported feeling stable
 - Better access to mental and physical healthcare

Some Final Thoughts

- People experiencing homelessness know what they need to obtain and sustain permanent housing
- Near universal needs (rent assistance, financial assistance) can mask important differences among subpopulations
 - Importance of gender and culturally-specific services, services for people with disabilities, etc
- Involuntary displacement actively undermines progress by disconnecting people from services and resources meant to help them end and survive homelessness
- Stronger response requires maintaining what works (services that meet people's basic needs), improving what does not (involuntary displacement, fears for safety in shelter, access to financial resources), and prioritizing approaches that directly support permanent housing

Thank You!

Pathways Report 1: Survey Results



See more of our findings by scanning the QR code

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Sample Characteristics

Location last housed (N=400)

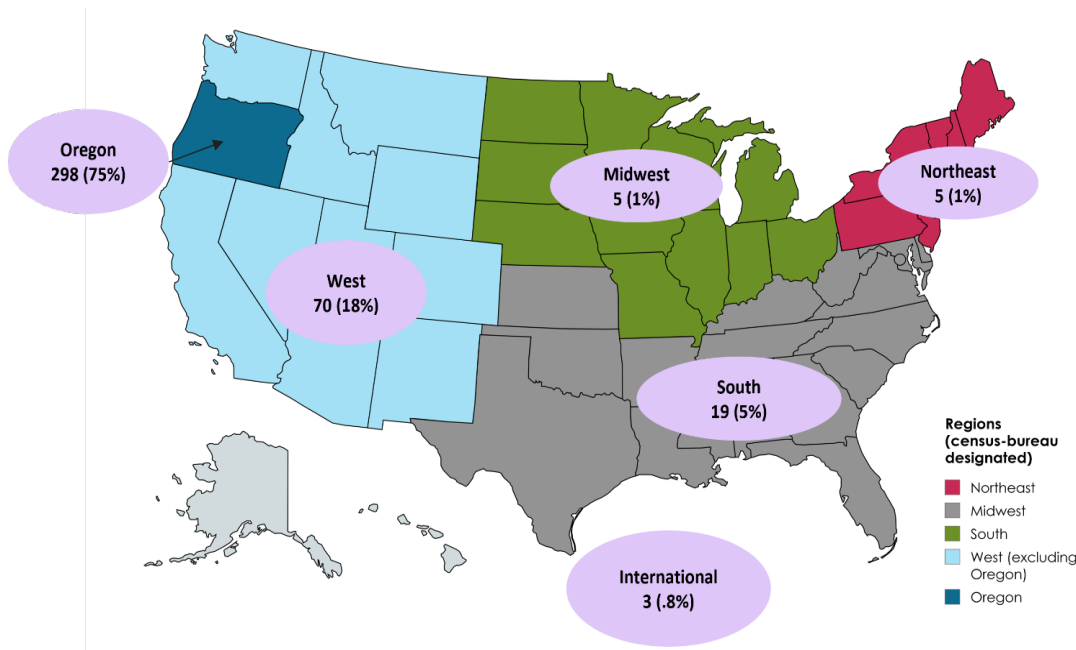


Figure 2.6 Reasons for loss of housing (N=440) by percent of respondents

