

# 20,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN IN SIMCOE COUNTY

Highlight Report

May 2016



**SCATEH**

Simcoe County Alliance to  
End Homelessness



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# OVERVIEW

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## Set the Stage

- Background
- Methodology
- Lessons Learned

## Findings

- Data Limitations
- Data Summary

## Tying It All Together

- What We've Learned
- Next Steps



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Survey participants
- Survey volunteer teams
- Agencies:
  - Barrie Community Health Centre
  - CONTACT Community Services
  - County of Simcoe
  - David Busby Street Centre
  - Georgian Triangle Resource Centre
  - Housing Resource Centres
  - Salvation Army- Bayside Mission Barrie
  - Simcoe Community Services
  - Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness
  - Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
  - United Way Greater Simcoe County
  - YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka
- Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) and Community Solutions

# BACKGROUND

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20,000 Homes Campaign:  
Beginning the End of Homelessness in Canada

# ABOUT THE 20,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN

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- National campaign led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
- A national movement of communities, mobilizing together to house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable people by July 1, 2018
- Inspired by the successful 100,000 Homes Campaign in the USA
- Locally led by the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH) and supported by the County of Simcoe

# LOCAL 20,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN

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- Contributes to a systems-model for housing and supports partnership initiative for local agencies
- Supports recommendations from the *Simcoe County Housing Our Future: Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy*
  - Advocacy
  - Undertaking a local enumeration count
  - Housing delivery activities
- Raises public awareness and involvement

# METHODOLOGY

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How did we do what we did?



# PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

## (WHY DID WE PARTICIPATE?)

- To connect people experiencing homelessness in Simcoe County to the appropriate services that they require
- To track the progress of housing individuals at the local level for the national campaign goal
- To understand the big picture of need in our communities and the levels of vulnerability
- To raise awareness of issues of homelessness in our community
- To inform local policy and service delivery planning

# SIMCOE COUNTY REGISTRY WEEK

- Over 120 volunteers and professional staff across Simcoe County surveyed people experiencing homelessness on January 15 and 16, 2016,
- Data entry and central headquarters were located in Barrie
- Local headquarters and survey teams in 5 areas across Simcoe County and a toll-free number to connect with rural areas
- Surveys were conducted at YMCAs across the region, in shelters and drop-in centres, at food banks, and in ‘hot spots’ identified in each community
- Participants received a \$10 Tim Horton’s gift card to thank them for their time
- Information collected is personal and sensitive; specific data protocols were established for responsible data stewardship

# PROCESS

- Survey participants:
  - People experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness
  - Voluntary participation, following informed consent process
- Survey tool:
  - VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool)
  - Pre-screening/triage tool that identifies areas of vulnerability and recommends appropriate housing and supports
  - Self-reported, answers recorded by survey volunteer
- Acuity:
  - Describes the complexity of the situation or issues that an individual is facing, which are likely to have an effect on their housing stability

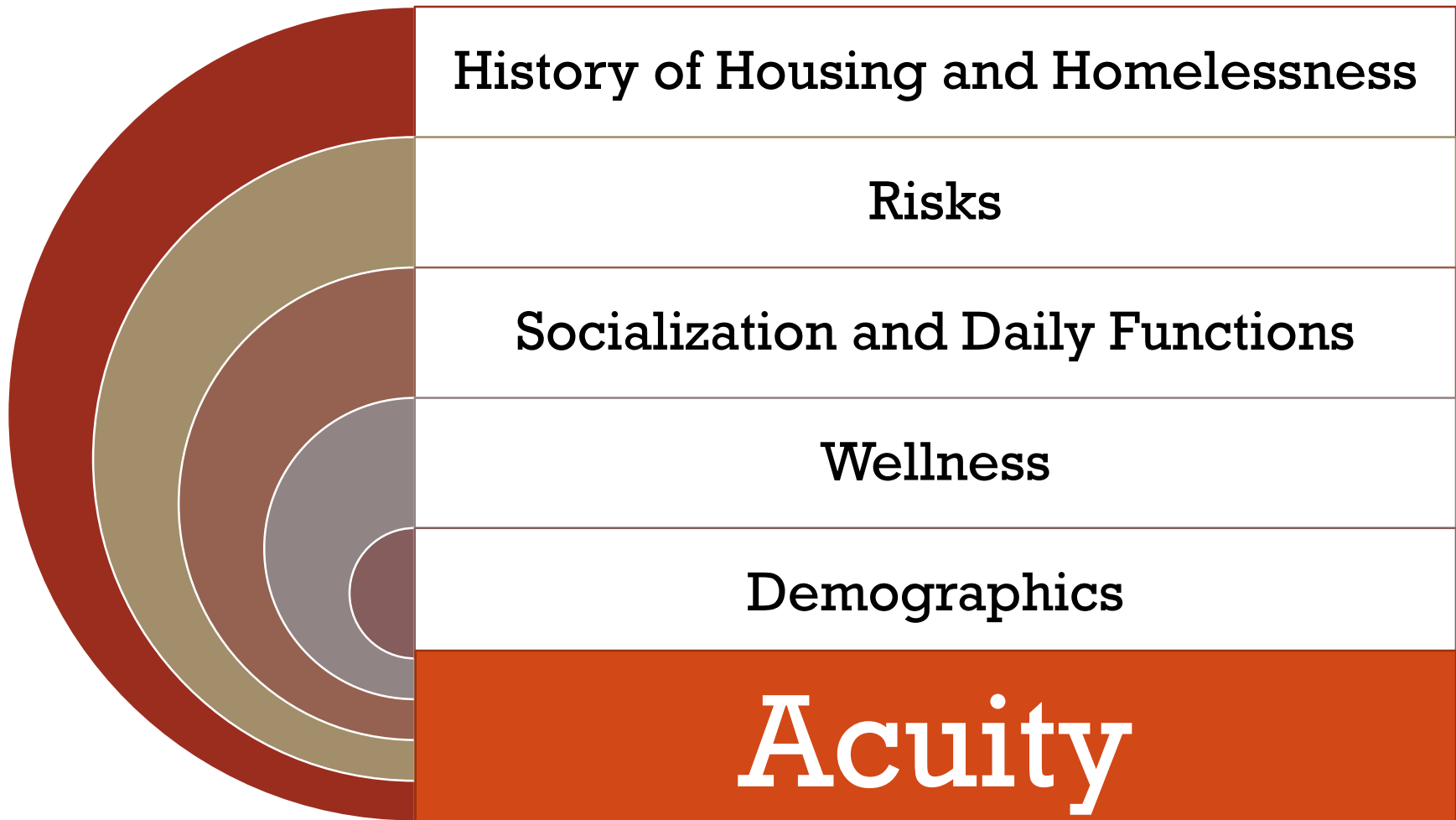
# ACUITY

- The term **acuity** is used to describe the complexity of the situation that an individual is facing, which is likely to have an effect on their housing stability:

“In the case of an evidence-informed common assessment tool like the SPDAT, acuity is expressed as a number, with a higher number representing more complex, co-occurring issues that are likely to impact overall housing stability.”<sup>1</sup>
- Acuity is an important indicator in recommending the type of housing intervention
- The VI-SPDAT provides an acuity score based on survey participants’ responses to certain questions, and provides a recommendation of housing intervention based on that acuity score

<sup>1</sup> OrgCode Consulting. 2014. *The Difference Between Having Higher Acuity and Being Chronic*. Accessed March 9, 2016. Available: <http://www.orgcode.com/2014/03/10/the-difference-between-having-higher-acuity-and-being-chronic/>

The VI-SPDAT determines **ACUITY** by identifying domains with higher complexity:





# VI-SPDAT RECOMMENDATIONS

Acuity Level	Recommendation
<b>High</b>	An assessment for <b>Housing First</b> / Permanent Supportive Housing
<b>Moderate</b>	An assessment for <b>Rapid Re-Housing</b>
<b>Low</b>	No housing intervention (though other types of referrals may be made)



# LESSONS LEARNED

**More time:**  
training and  
prep

**More time:**  
community  
engagement

**More time:**  
survey data  
collection

**More time:**  
volunteer  
recruitment

Pilot the VI-  
SPDAT locally

Local media  
outreach

Seasonal  
considerations

Coordinating  
between local  
HQ sites

Outreach to  
French  
communities

Outreach to  
aboriginal  
communities

Specialized  
sub-population  
VI-SPDATs

# OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

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Understanding homelessness in Simcoe County



# DATA LIMITATIONS

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- **Voluntary Survey:** the data is reflective of the population that was reached on January 15 & 16, not necessarily all the people experiencing homelessness
  - Rural/urban
  - Seasonality
- **Risk of interview bias:** potential that the interviewer unintentionally influenced the responses
  - Listing examples
  - Summarizing a response when transcribing it
  - Common in social research
- **Under-reporting:** of emergency service use questions
  - In some instances, check marks were recorded instead of # of uses



# TOTAL INTERACTIONS

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Total People Talked To	301
Total Surveys Submitted	292
Total Refusals/Consent withdrawn	7
Consent withdrawn	2

- The following findings are based on a sample size of 292 surveys

# DEMOGRAPHICS

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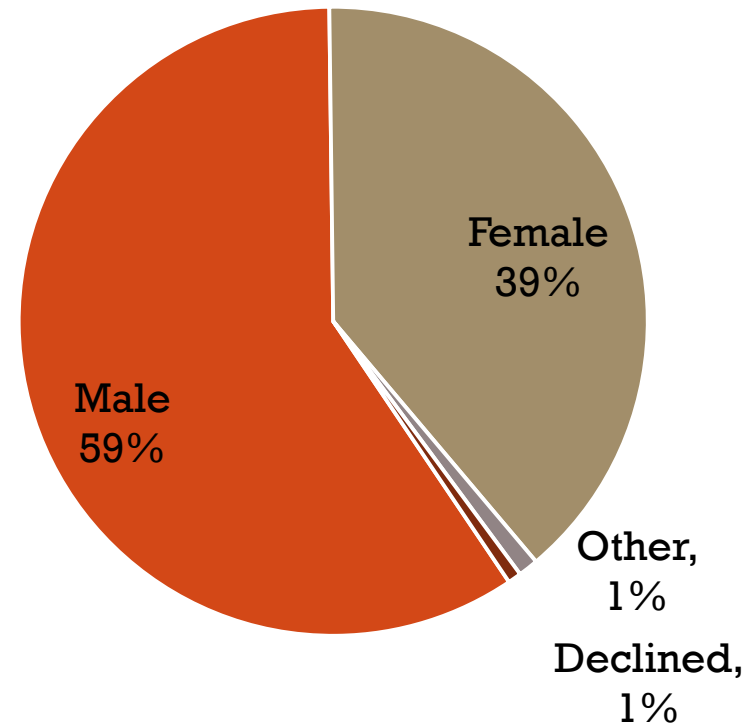
Understanding homelessness in Simcoe County



# GENDER

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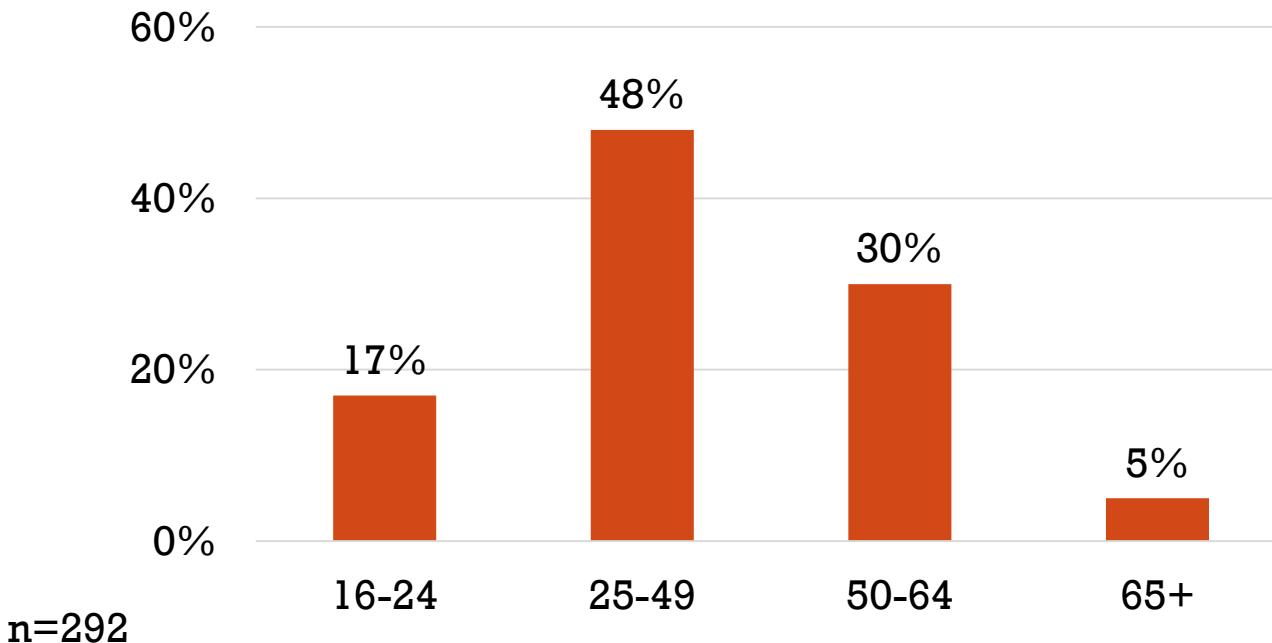
- The majority of the 292 survey participants were male (59%), and 39% were female. 1% of participants provided an *Other* response, and another 1% declined to answer the question



n=292

# AGE GROUPS

- Almost half of survey participants (48%) were between 25 and 49 years of age. 17% of the survey participants were youth between the ages of 16 to 24. Only 5% of survey participants were 65 years of age or older.



# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	# of survey participants	% of total survey participants (292)
<b>Mobility</b>		
Moved to Simcoe County within the last year	85	29%
<b>Aboriginal Identity</b>		
Self-identified as Aboriginal or having Aboriginal ancestry (including First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, with or without status)	65	22%
<b>Foster Care</b>	47	16%
<b>Jail/Prison in past 6 months</b>	38	13%
<b>Canadian Military or RCMP service</b>	17	5%
<b>Recent Immigrant or refugee</b>		
Moved to Canada within last five years	3	1%

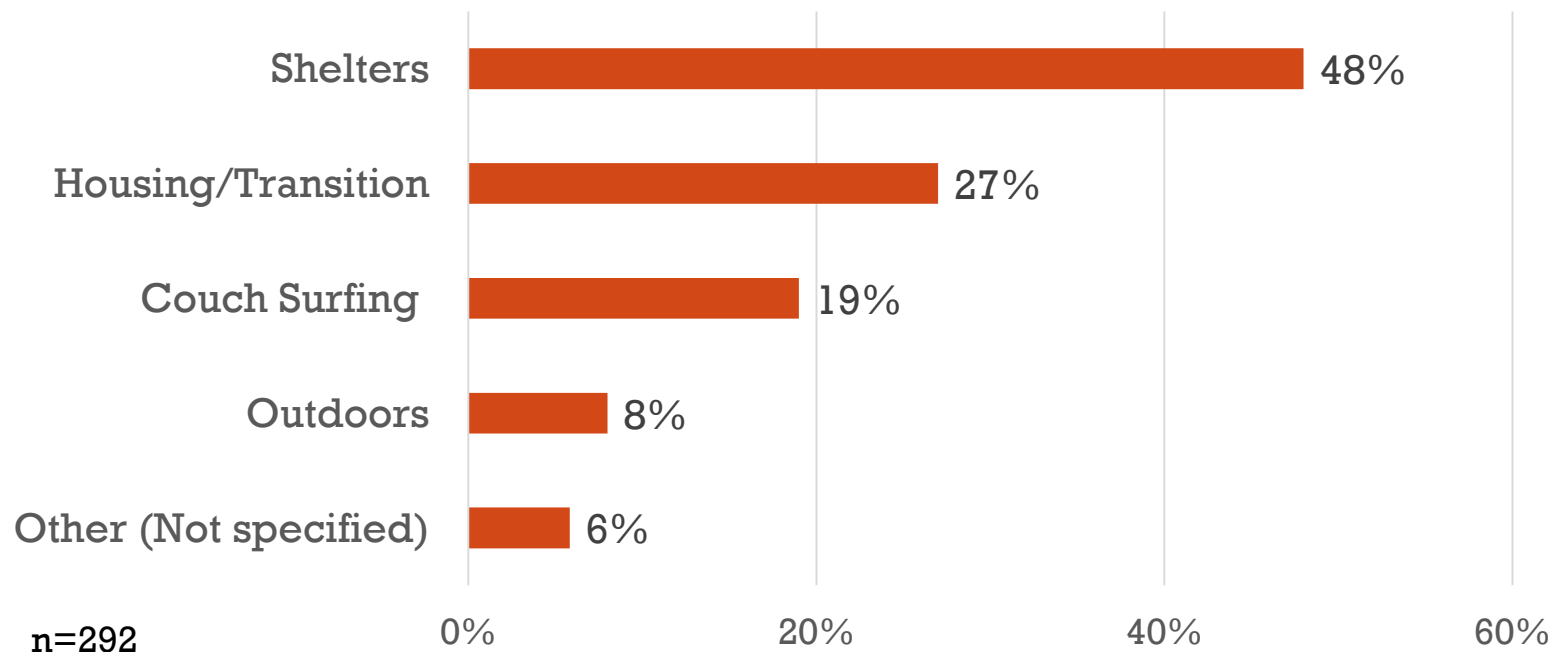
# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

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Understanding homelessness in Simcoe County

# HISTORY OF HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

- The majority of survey participants, close to half (48%), sleep most frequently in emergency shelters. Just over a quarter (27%) do have housing, such as a rented room, apartment, townhome, or house, or are living in a transition home, but many of these are precarious. Almost one in five (19%) are couch surfing, and 8% indicated they sleep most frequently outdoors

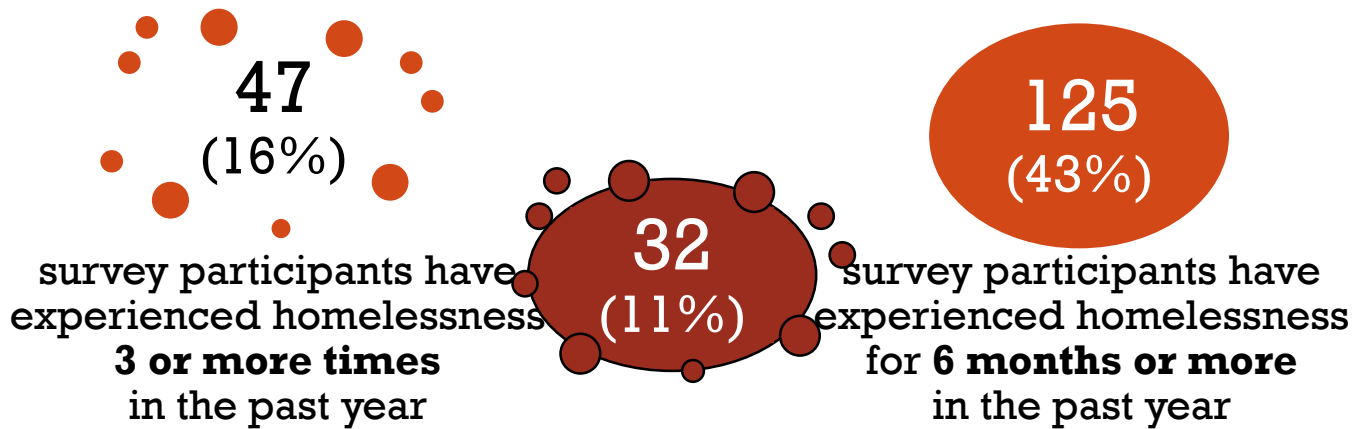




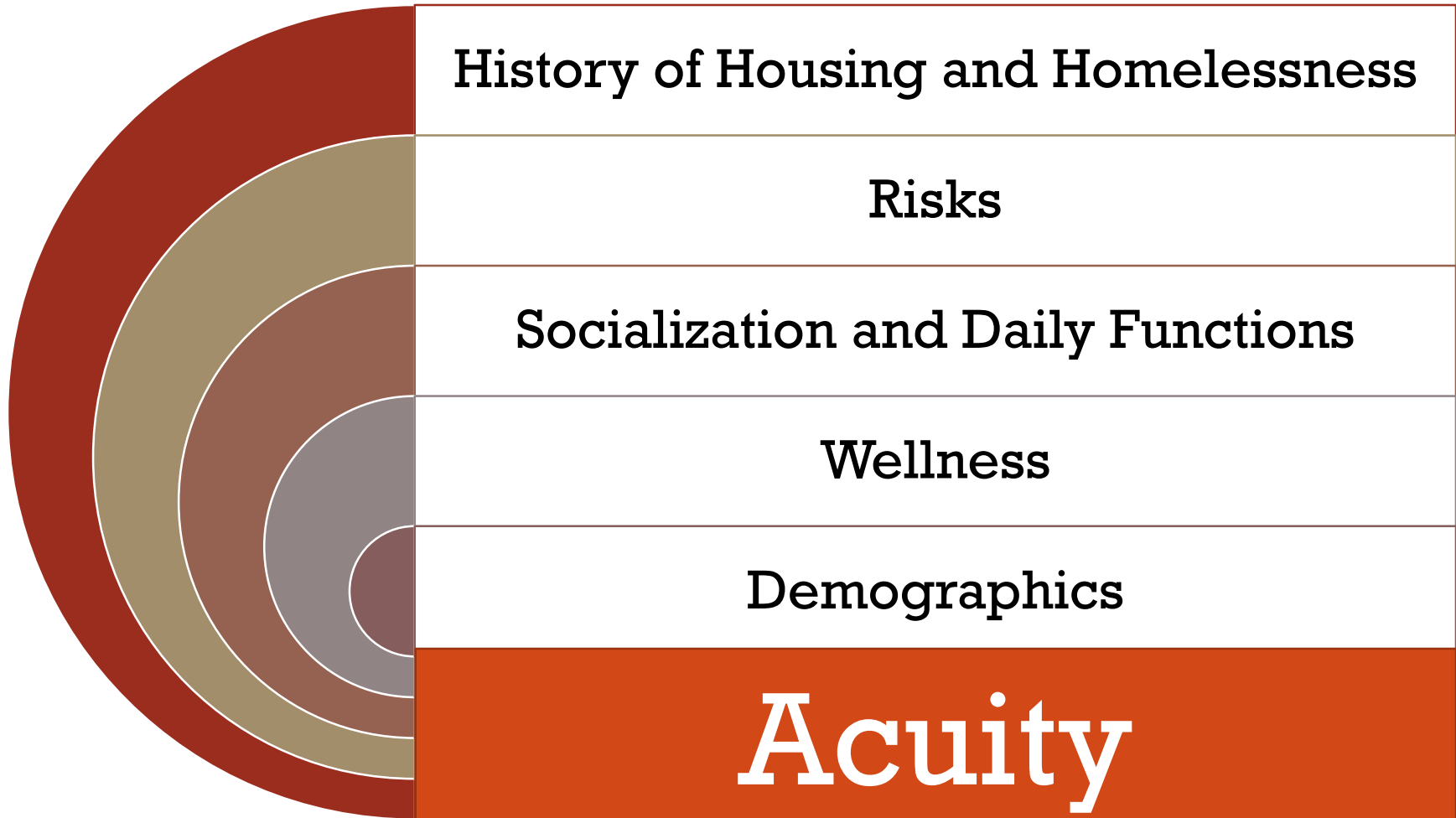
# EPISODIC & CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

**Episodic** homelessness refers to the **number of times** a person has experienced homelessness, and is defined as 3 or more times in the past year

**Chronic** homelessness refers to the **length of time** a person has been experiencing homelessness, and is defined by the VI-SPDAT as 6 months or more in the past year



The VI-SPDAT determines **ACUITY** by identifying domains with higher complexity:



# ACUITY OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

**35%**

High Acuity  
(Score 8+)

**Recommendation:**  
Assessment for  
PSH/Housing First

**45%**

Moderate Acuity  
(Score 4-7)

**Recommendation:**  
Assessment for  
Rapid Re-Housing

**20%**

Low Acuity  
(Score 0-3)

**Recommendation:**  
No housing  
intervention

**51 (18%)**  
Chronic  
Homelessness

# RISKS

- Survey participants are often at risk of experiencing physical harm, legal issues, or of being exploited in different ways because they are experiencing homelessness

35%

## **HARM**

have been attacked or beaten up since becoming homeless, or have threatened or tried to harm themselves or someone else in the last year

35%

## **EXPLOITATION**

being forced or tricked into doing things, or doing risky things, like exchanging sex for money, running drugs, having unprotected sex, sharing a needle

27%

## **LEGAL**

facing issues that may result in being locked up, having to pay fines, or that might make it more difficult to rent a place to live

# EMERGENCY SERVICE USE

- 42% of survey participants have used at least one or more of the following emergency services\* over the last six months

	# (%) of survey participants	Total # of service uses for all survey participants	Average # of service uses per survey participant
Received Health Care at an Emergency Department or Room	128 (51%)	478	1.7
Taken an ambulance to the hospital	79 (27%)	246	0.9
Been hospitalized as an inpatient	68 (23%)	129	0.5
Used a Crisis Service (i.e., sexual assault, mental health, distress centre, family/intimate violence, or suicide prevention hotline)	103 (35%)	589	1.4
Talked to Police (as a witness, victim, or alleged perpetrator of a crime, or because the police said to move along)	128 (44%)	665	2.4
Stayed one or more nights in a holding cell, jail or prison	63 (22%)	101	0.4

# SOCIALIZATION AND DAILY FUNCTIONING

50%

Money  
management issues

55%

Current  
homelessness is  
caused by breakdown  
in social relationships

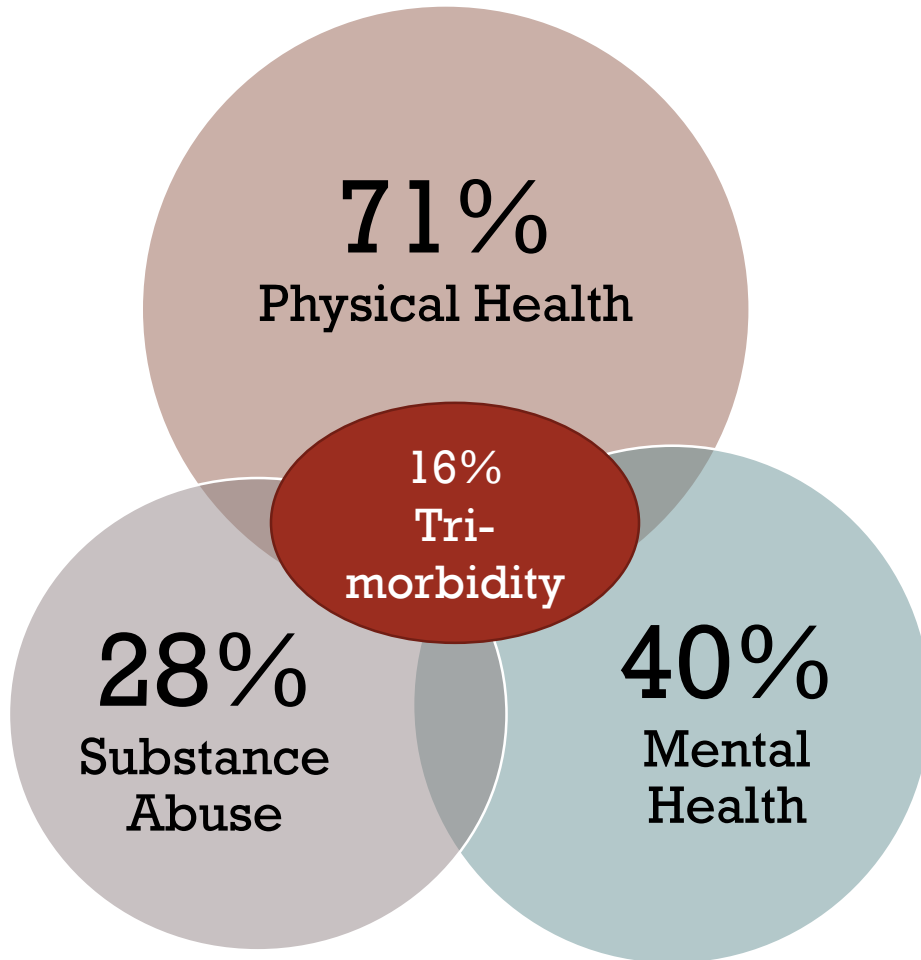
32%

No meaningful daily  
activity

8%

Struggle with self-  
care basic needs

# WELLNESS

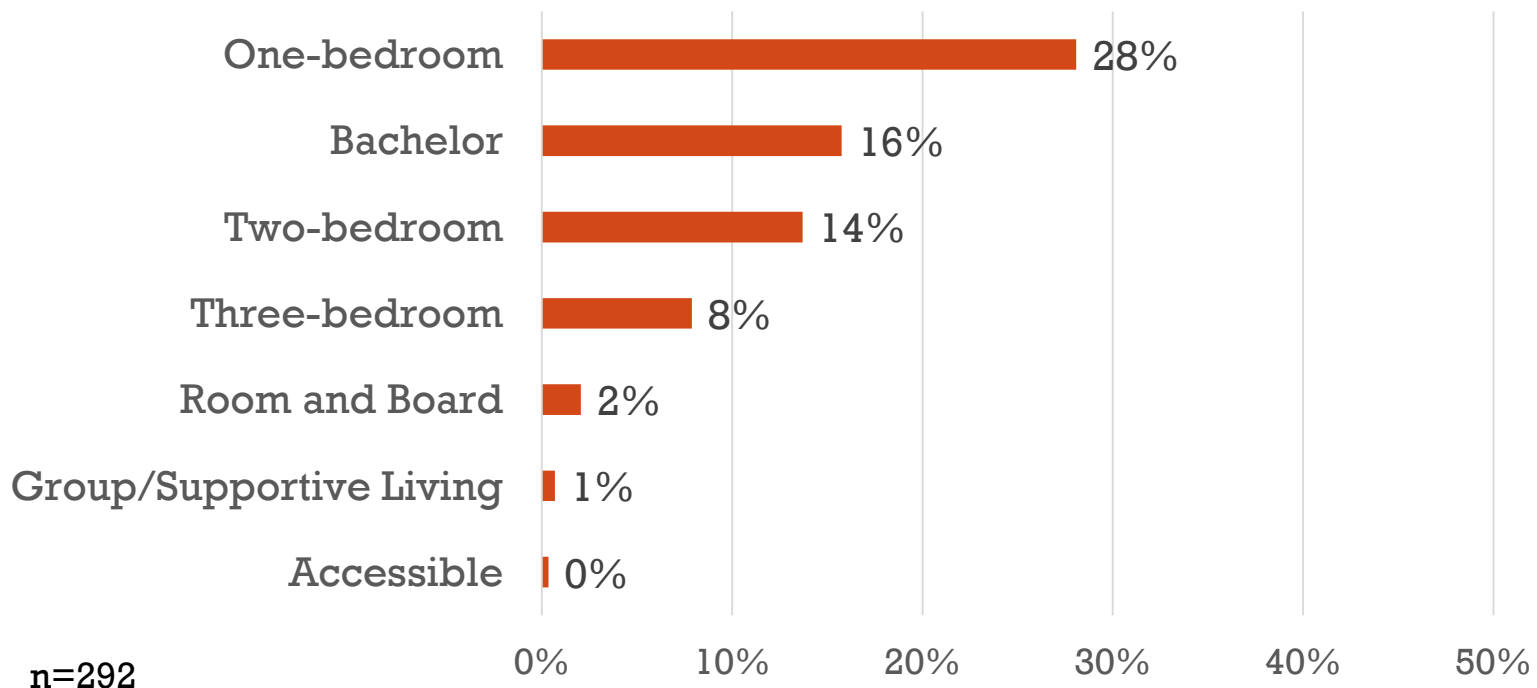


**46%**  
Homelessness is caused by an experience of abuse or trauma

**32%**  
Not taking / selling recommended medications

# HOUSING PREFERENCES

- The majority of survey participants (30%) indicated that they require a one-bedroom unit
- Almost all survey participants (98%) indicated that having a monthly rental benefit/allowance would help them to find and keep stable housing





# DEPTH OF NEED

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High  
Acuity

Chronic  
Homelessness

Youth  
(16-24)

Aboriginal  
Identity

# **HIGH-ACUITY** 100 PEOPLE (35%)

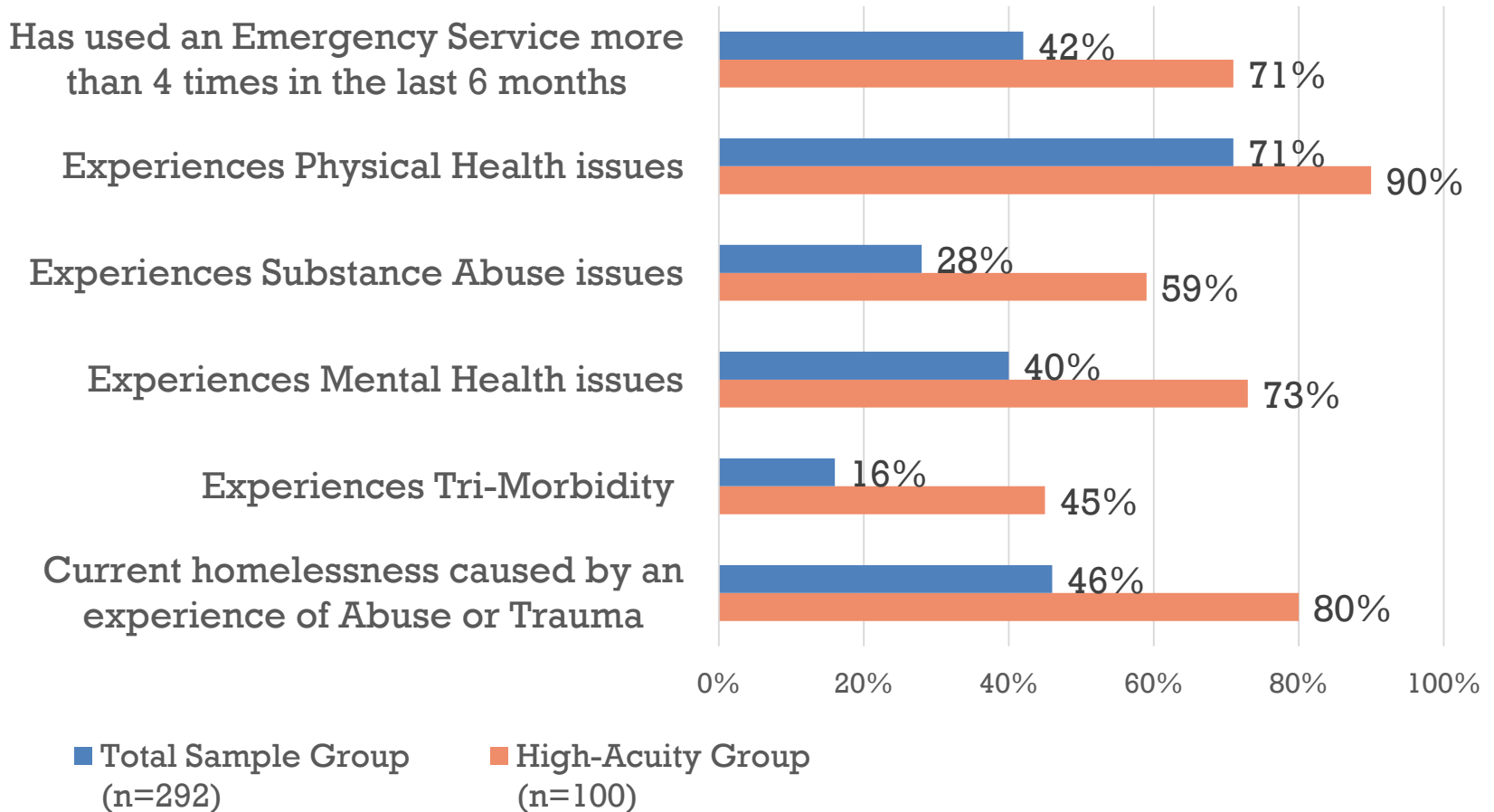
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When compared to the total sample group:

- ↑ Experiencing chronic homelessness (51%)
- ↑ Experiencing episodic homelessness (24%)
- Lower shelter utilization (40% compared to 48%)
- More likely to be sleeping outdoors (26% compared to 8%)

# HIGH-ACUITY

100 PEOPLE (35%)



# **CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS** 125 PEOPLE (43%)

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(Experiencing homelessness 6 months or more in the last year)

When compared to the total sample group:

- Demographic characteristics tend to be similar
- ↑ Higher-acuity range (41% compared to 34%)
- Higher shelter utilization and a greater number couch-surfing
- Slightly greater number of people:
  - Using emergency services
  - Experiencing tri-morbidity
  - Current homelessness caused by experience of abuse or trauma

# DEPTH OF NEED

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- **Youth Aged 16 – 24:** 51 people, 17% of the survey participants
  - 17 (35%) scored in the high-acuity range
  - 24 (49%) current homelessness is caused by an experience of abuse or trauma
  - 32 (65%) current homelessness caused by relationship that broke down, an unhealthy or abusive relationship, or family/friends caused eviction
- **Aboriginal Identity:** 65 people, 22% of the survey participants
  - 24 (37%) scored in the high-acuity range
  - 31 (48%) experienced chronic homelessness
  - 30 (46%) current homelessness is caused by an experience of abuse or trauma
  - 36 (55%) current homelessness caused by relationship that broke down, an unhealthy or abusive relationship, or family/friends caused eviction

# NEXT STEPS

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Working to end homelessness



# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Almost half of survey participants are facing **MODERATE** acuity

- Recommended housing intervention = Rapid Re-Housing

Over one-third of survey participants are facing **HIGH** acuity

- Recommended housing intervention = Housing First

Diverse Communities across Simcoe County

- Solutions need to be locally-informed

Methodologies developed during inaugural Registry Week

- Will be helpful for future similar initiatives

Service Providers and Volunteers

- Engaged and eager to provide support

# WHAT'S NEXT?

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- **Program Recommendations**
  - Support evidence-informed policy and service program design that is relevant for our communities
- **Communication**
  - Raise awareness about homelessness throughout Simcoe County
- **Service Delivery**
  - Housing Resource Centres are working with survey participants to understand their unique needs and recommend appropriate services
- **Building Local Capacity**
  - Building and further enhancing local capacity for service delivery providers, i.e. local training