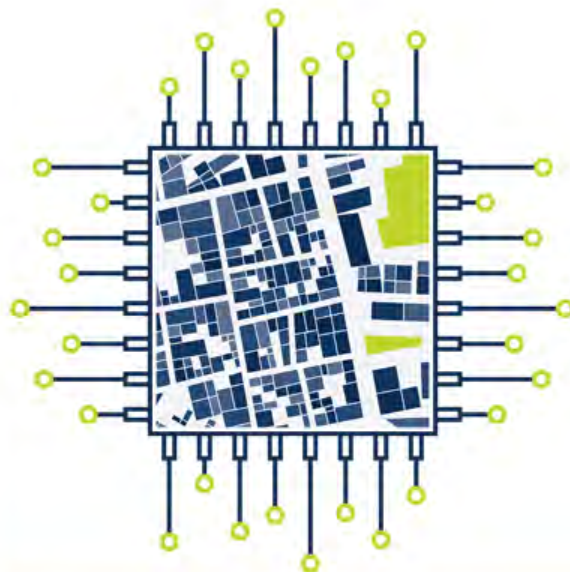


# The PIT Plus

Collecting Information that Answers Local Questions



Solving Problems &  
Impacting Communities  
With Data



# The District of Columbia CoC

- The District of Columbia CoC's coverage area includes everything within the boundaries of the nation's capital – just over 68 square miles with over 711,000 residents.
- On a given night (PIT) in the District, there are 3,875 unaccompanied individuals and 815 families experiencing homelessness; we serve roughly 9,600 individuals and 1,600 families annually.
- In addition to HUD, VA, and HHS dollars, homeless services programming is primarily funded by the District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DHS).
- The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP) is the HUD Collaborative Applicant, HMIS Lead, and Prime Contractor for programs funded by DHS.


**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 2019 SHELTER & HOUSING INVENTORY**

Category	Units for Individuals	Units for Families	<i>Beds in Family Units</i>
Winter Shelter	839	-	-
Emergency Shelter	2,384	667*	2266*
Transitional Housing	900	225	605
Rapid Rehousing	365	1,893	5,803
Permanent Supportive Housing	3,729	1,274	3,983
Other Permanent Housing	1,779	976	3,032

\*Reduced since PIT 2019.

# Emergency Shelter

- District legislation – Homeless Services Reform Act – created different types of Emergency Shelter for individuals and families:
  - Severe Weather (ind)
    - Seasonal – open throughout Hypothermia season, November through March
    - Hypothermia Alert – open when temp/wind chill is or is forecasted to be 32 deg. or below
  - Low Barrier (ind) – overnight accommodation, meals, case management optional; primarily health and safety oriented
  - Temporary (ind and fam)– 24 hour accommodation, higher level of service and requirements
  - Short Term Family Housing (fam)– community based, roughly 50 families per site, more private space and neighborhood amenities; goal for LOS is 90 days



## Eligibility for Shelter

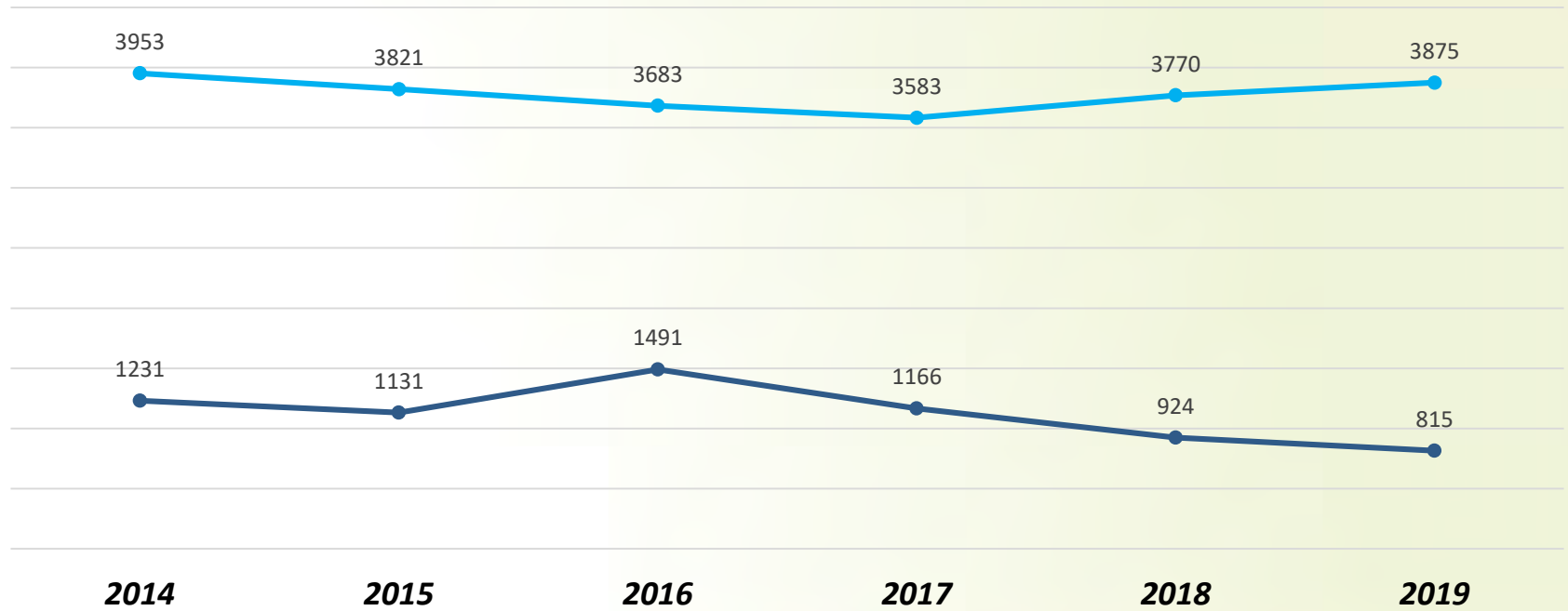
- An individual or family is eligible to receive services within the Continuum of Care if the household:
  - Is homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless;
  - Is a resident of the District; or
  - Has demonstrated (e.g., benefits transfer) the intent to remain in the District; and;
  - Meets any additional eligibility requirements that have been established by the provider from whom services are sought.
- No household may be deemed ineligible for services solely because they cannot establish proof of homelessness or residency at the time of the application for assistance.
- Low Barrier/Winter shelters are walk-in/“first come, first served;” staff does not ask individuals for identification or documentation upon entry; no service or residency requirements or entry restrictions



## Point in Time Results, 2014-2019

- Overall, the District saw a 5.5 percent **decrease** in persons experiencing homelessness between the 2018 and 2019 PIT counts
- The number of **families has decreased by 12 percent**, yet the count of **individuals increased by 3 percent**
- Continued trend of last few PIT cycles where the count of families decreased while singles increased, despite high number of housing placements being made on both sides of the system
- In 2018, the count of **individuals experiencing chronic homelessness was down by almost 13 percent**, but the CoC was seeing a number of people who we thought had self-resolved return after long periods – often years at a time
- Inflow and returns to the CoC after long periods are contributing to the increased overall number; TCP and DHS have undertaken steps to better understand the reason(s) for this to see where system improvement/change can have an impact

## PIT Count Totals For Single and Family Households, 2014 – 2019





# Inflow and Service Use Patterns

- Following the 2018 count, the CoC wanted to better understand how the count of unaccompanied individuals was going up despite connecting hundreds to housing resources each year.
- TCP looked at the HMIS service histories of the men and women served in ES at PIT to better understand:
  - How many people were experiencing homelessness in the District for the first time?
  - How many people have experienced multiple episodes?
  - Of those that are experiencing homelessness episodically, how many are returning after “self-resolving” vs. returning after being served RRH or PSH, etc.?
  - How much inflow from outside of the District are we seeing?





<i>Percent of Single Persons Counted in Shelter at PIT 2018, by Service Pattern</i>	<i>Single Women (n=650)</i>	<i>Single Men (n=1802)</i>
Category #1: Experienced homelessness, became housed but returned to CoC	5%	4%
Category #2: Multiple episodes (services rec'd a year or more apart)	34%	43%
Category #3: First/only episode, has lasted more than one year	28%	31%
Category #4: First/only episode, has lasted less than one year	33%	22%

## Takeaways from Inflow Analysis

- Past estimates developed for the CoC assumed that 30 percent of those using shelter would resolve their experience of homelessness on their own; this analysis suggested that the rate is much lower – **closer to 12 percent**.
- The small breaks in shelter usage suggests many people may have other places they are already accessing for periods of time
  - Diversion efforts likely need to be paired with more intensive supports to ensure arrangements are longer-lasting
  - Jobs are critical; too many jobs are temporary, seasonal, or part-time
- Small but significant numbers of people coming from throughout the U.S. having a impact on the District's system



## Questions Raised by Inflow Analysis

- What caused someone to seek emergency shelter?
- What could have altered that path?
- When we see short or long breaks in service patterns, where are people going and with whom are they staying?
- If someone has experienced homelessness more than once, were the causes of both/each experiences the same?
- When people arrive from outside of the District, what factors influenced their decision to seek services here?
- Do the answers to the above differ among demographic groups?



# The PIT Plus

- To better understand the answers to these questions, TCP and DHS developed a survey tool – the PIT Plus – which was conducted over a 10 day span in January 2019, overlapping with PIT.
- PIT+ asked 60+ questions across 10 domains, areas that might influence a person's reason for experiencing homelessness or factors that could help them exit to permanent housing.
- The PIT+ questionnaire included our general PIT survey questions so that that we could cross-reference the data among different demographic groups or cohorts of individuals.
- Unlike PIT, many PIT+ questions were designed to give respondents an opportunity to tell their story in a narrative format rather than to respond to a set of questions/answers. This allowed for more nuanced, complex situations to be understood as a part of the results without making assumptions about facts not stated.
- We limited surveys to unaccompanied individuals because the CoC has seen decreases in its count of families experiencing homelessness over the last few years; similar causation questions asked as a part of family shelter central intake.



## PIT Plus Domains

- Where are respondents currently/usually staying?
- For how long have respondents been experiencing homelessness?
- Have respondents lived or used services outside of DC?
- What are the respondents reasons for seeking (or not seeking) shelter in DC?
- What were the causes of respondents current and first experience of homelessness (if different), and what could have prevented the experience(s)?
- Who comprises respondents' social networks?
- With what health issues are respondents living?
- With what other systems are respondents engaging?
- PIT demographic questions.



## PIT Plus Methodology

- Our methodology was informed by conversations with staff from Catholic University and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago who have experience implementing qualitative studies which produce quantitative results.
- We reviewed other CoCs' (Santa Clara, CA; San Jose, CA) expanded PIT survey questions to help direct survey content; we also held early practice interviews to inform on survey format and content with an eye toward making it as "DC specific" as possible.
- Conducting surveys around the same time as PIT helped build on the community's energy and familiarity with that project.
- TCP provided \$25 gift cards as a "thank you" for participants.



## PIT Plus Methodology

- To be sure that there was adequate representation among those experiencing homelessness, whether or not they regularly use shelter, we primarily targeted meal programs, drop-in centers, and sites with day programming for surveys.
- However, outreach providers, shelters/transitional programs, and some housing providers did PIT+ surveys in addition to their regular PIT work.
- Respondents generally spoke with their case manager or someone with whom they had an established rapport. Other surveys were conducted by individuals with survey experience who helped out various sites.
- Surveyors met one on one with participants; surveys took between 15-30 minutes each, depending on how much a person was willing to share.



## PIT Plus Methodology

- While there were questions with set response options, e.g. binary or multiple choice, many questions were designed for respondents to pick multiple responses, describe “other” options in detail, or provide responses in a narrative format.
- Surveyors coded responses as surveys were conducted, recording details to inform data throughout.
- Format allowed surveyor to capture open all of the information a respondent was willing to share – and in the way he or she shared it, without making assumptions about facts not in their responses.
  - Individual statements like “I lost my job” or “I couldn’t afford my rent” or “I was evicted” would all have been coded differently than “I lost my job, so I couldn’t afford my rent and was evicted.”



# PIT Plus Tool

- **Who took the survey?**
- 1,065 unaccompanied individuals from drop-in centers, meal programs, libraries, street outreach, shelters, and transitional housing programs
- This represents 28% of the unaccompanied individual population counted during the PIT
  
- **Why can't we generalize the results?**
- Convenience Sample (non-random) - respondents were compensated with \$25 gift card
- Point in time does not account for seasonal changes in homelessness
- Sample is slightly younger and more Hispanic and more female than the PIT population
- Weighted to demographics of the PIT population to potentially counteract this skew

# PIT Plus Results – Topics

Location and Residency  
Accommodations and Shelter Usage  
Causes and Prevention  
Systems Involvement  
Social Supports  
Health

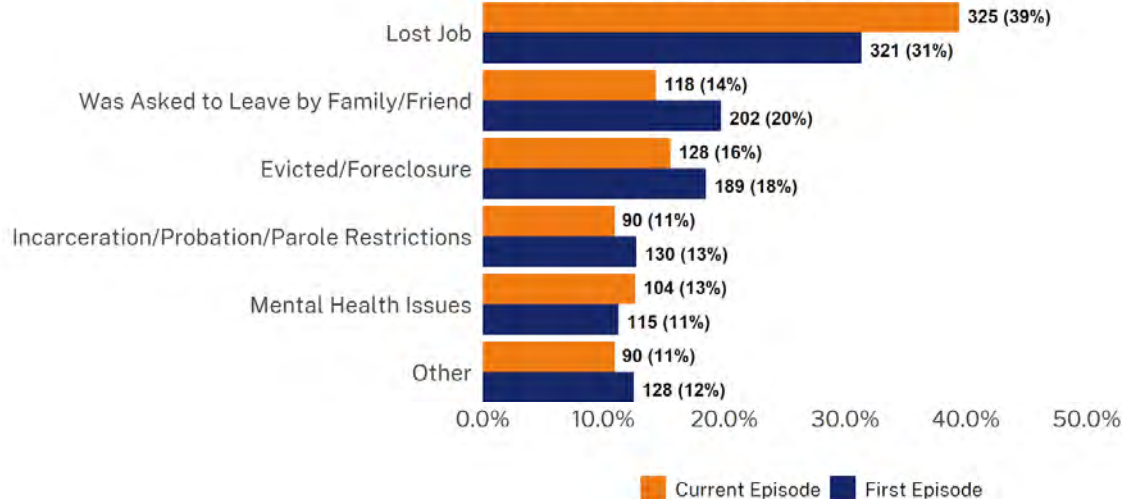
For full reports, visit [community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures](https://community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures)



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Causes of First and Current Homelessness

'What event(s) or condition(s) do you believe led to your [first/current] episode of homelessness'



First Episode: 1,720 responses from 1,024 respondents  
 Current Episode: 1,282 responses from 824 respondents

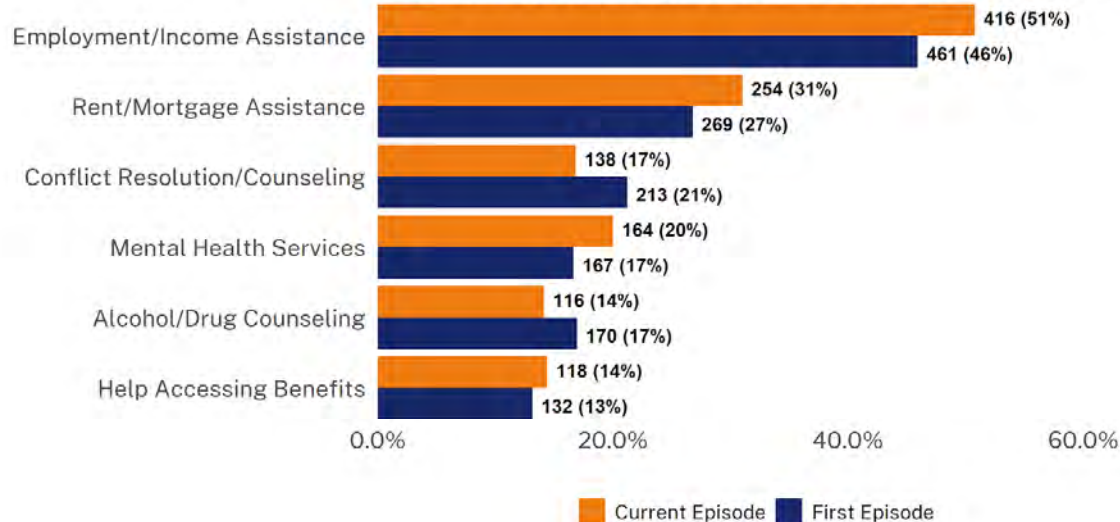
We asked what events or conditions led to your first and/or current episodes of homelessness, and **“I lost my job”** was the number one answer cited by respondents



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Preventing First and Current Homelessness

'What might have prevented your [first/current] episode of homelessness?'



First Episode: 1,954 responses from 1,004 respondents  
Current Episode: 1,632 responses from 819 respondents

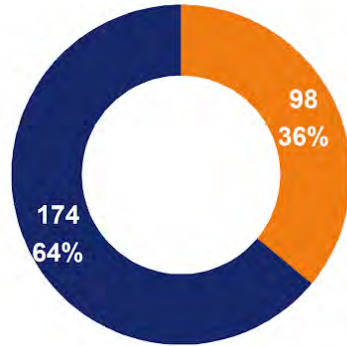
We also asked what might have prevented your homelessness, and employment beat rent/mortgage assistance by 20 percentage points



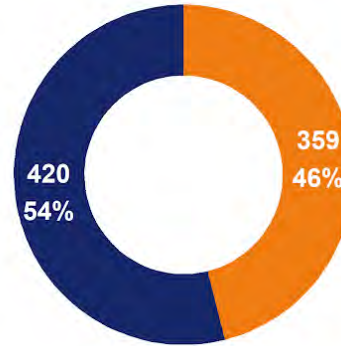
# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Employment/Income Assistance Would Prevent First Homeless Episode

Female



Male



- Employment/Income Assistance Would Prevent First Episode of Homelessness
- Did not Report Employment/Income Assistance Would Prevent First Episode of Homelessness

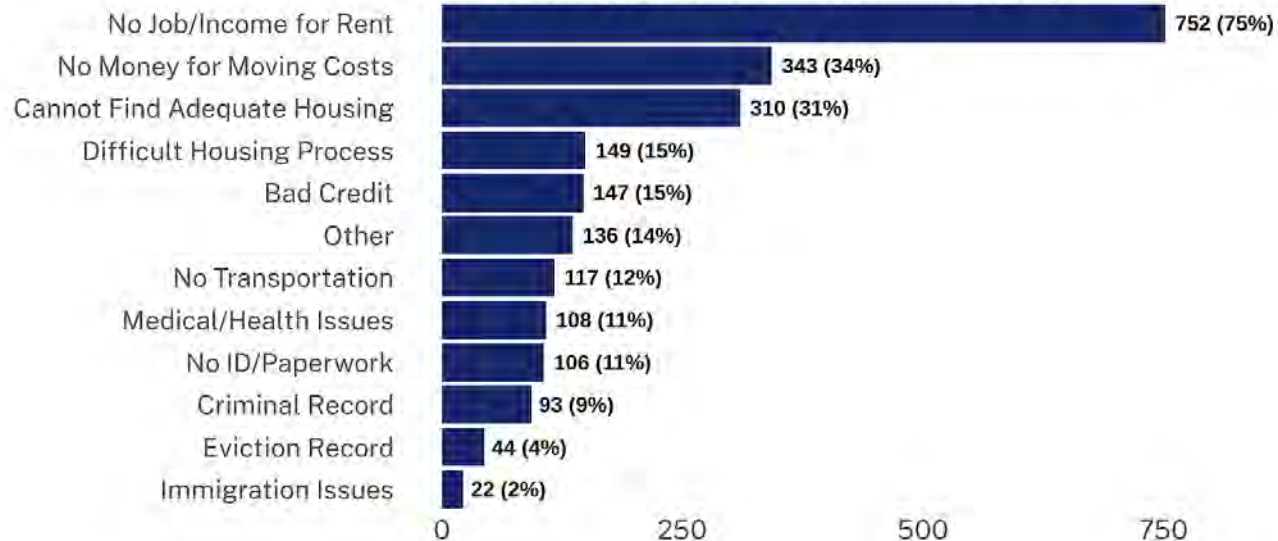
n = 1,051, p < 0.01



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Barriers to Permanent Housing

'What is preventing you from obtaining permanent housing?'



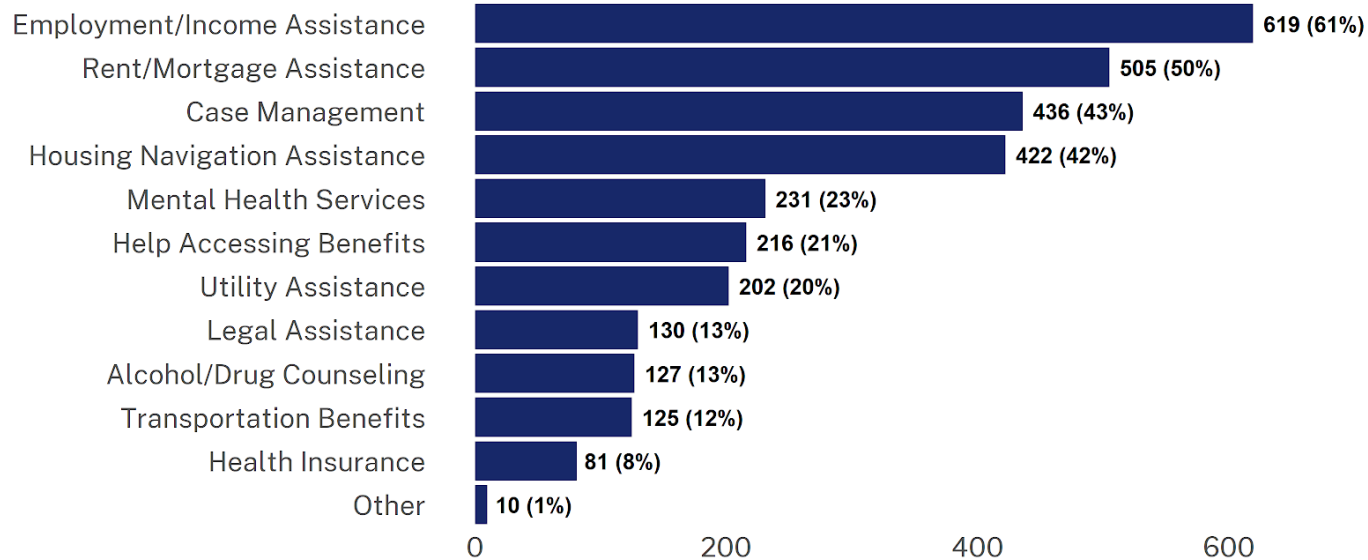
2,327 responses from 1,001 respondents



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Help Obtaining Permanent Housing

'In your opinion, what would help you obtain permanent housing?'



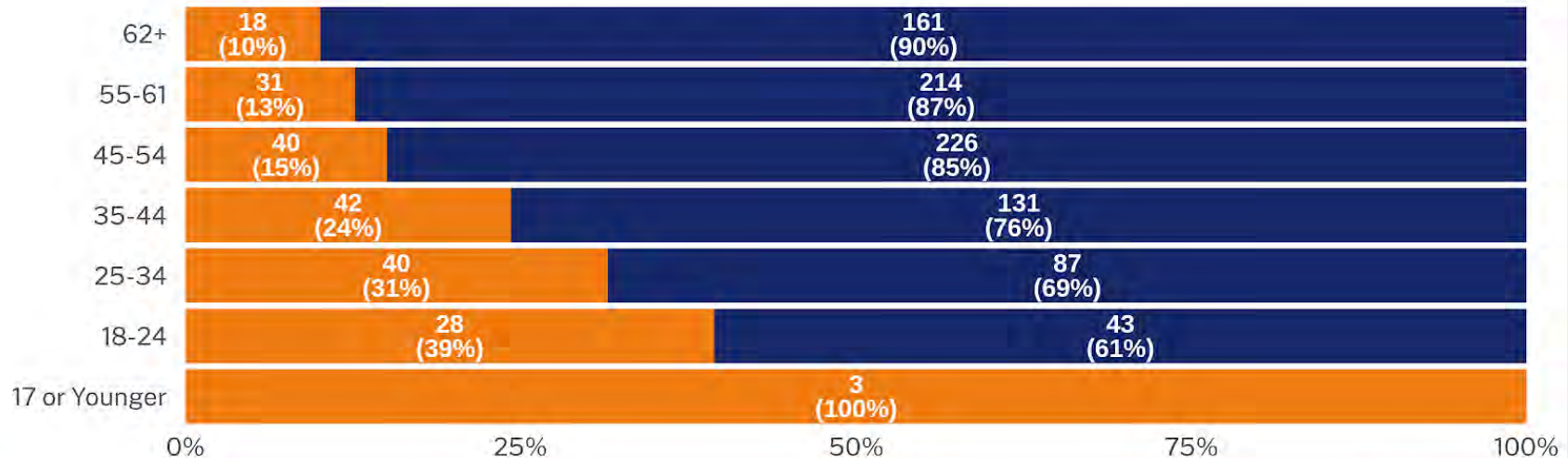
3,105 responses from 1,008 respondents



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Being Asked to Leave Housing Cited as Cause of First Homeless Episode

- Being Asked to Leave Housing Caused First Episode of Homelessness
- Did not Report Being Asked to Leave Housing Causing First Episode of Homelessness



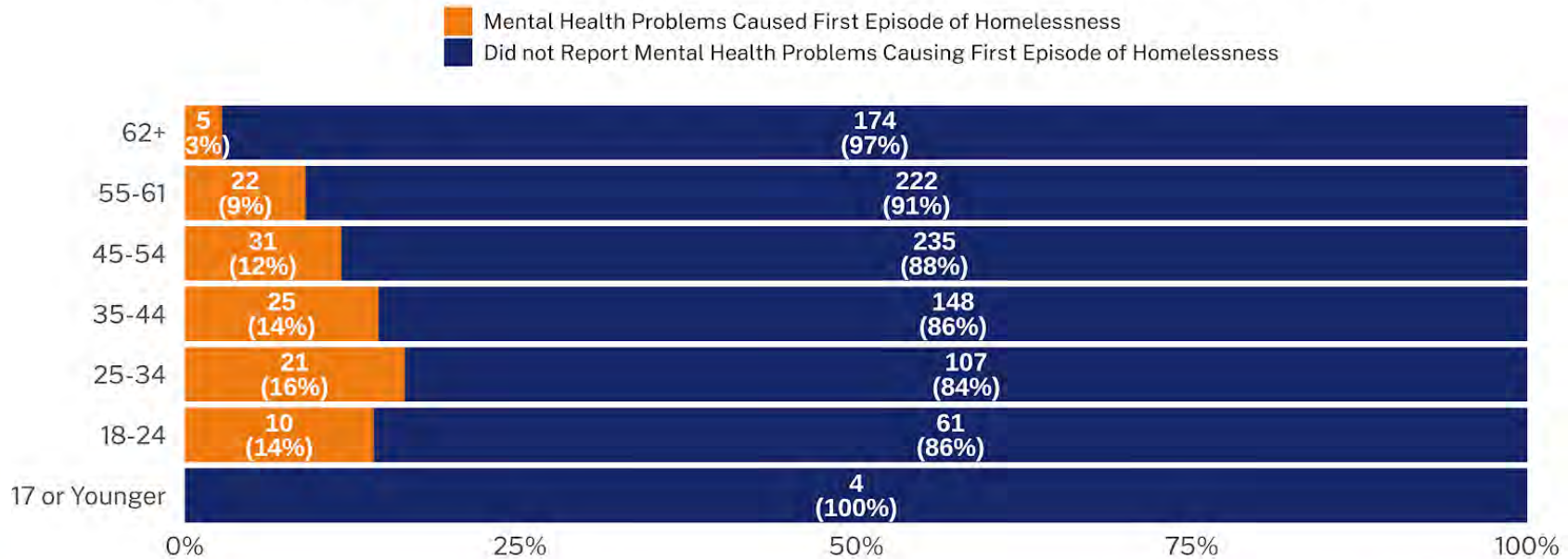
n = 1,064, p < 0.001





# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Mental Health Problems Cited as Cause of First Homeless Episode



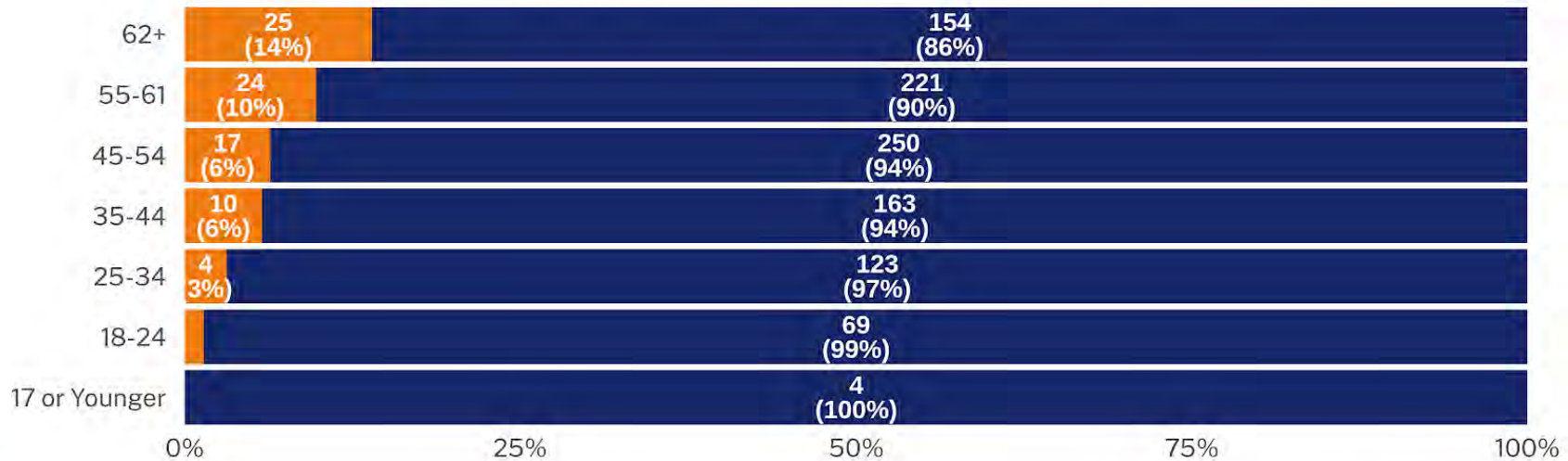
n = 1,064, p < 0.001



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

## Death of Head of Household Cited as Cause of First Homeless Episode

- Death of Head of Household Caused First Episode of Homelessness
- Did not Report Death of Head of Household Causing First Episode of Homelessness



n = 1,064, p < 0.001



# PIT Plus Results – Causes and Prevention

**Incarceration Cited as Cause of First Homeless Episode**

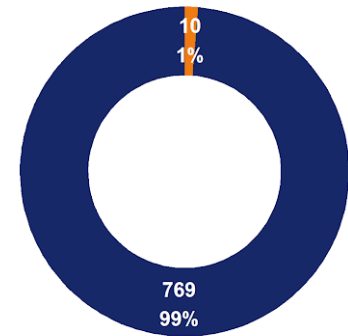
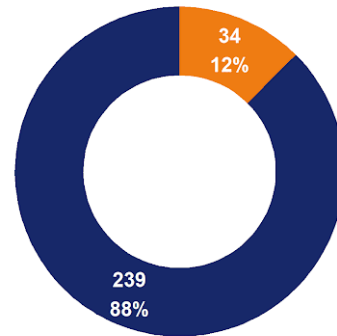
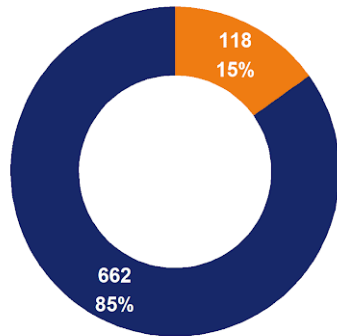
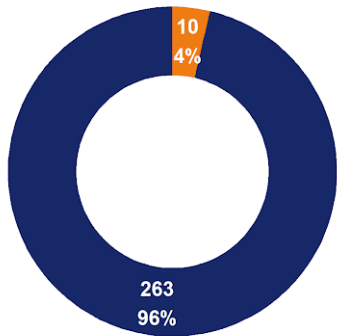
**Domestic Violence Cited as Cause of First Homeless Episode**

Female

Male

Female

Male



■ Incarceration Caused First Episode of Homelessness  
■ Did not Report Incarceration Causing First Episode of Homelessness

■ Domestic Violence Caused First Episode of Homelessness  
■ Did not Report DV Causing First Episode of Homelessness

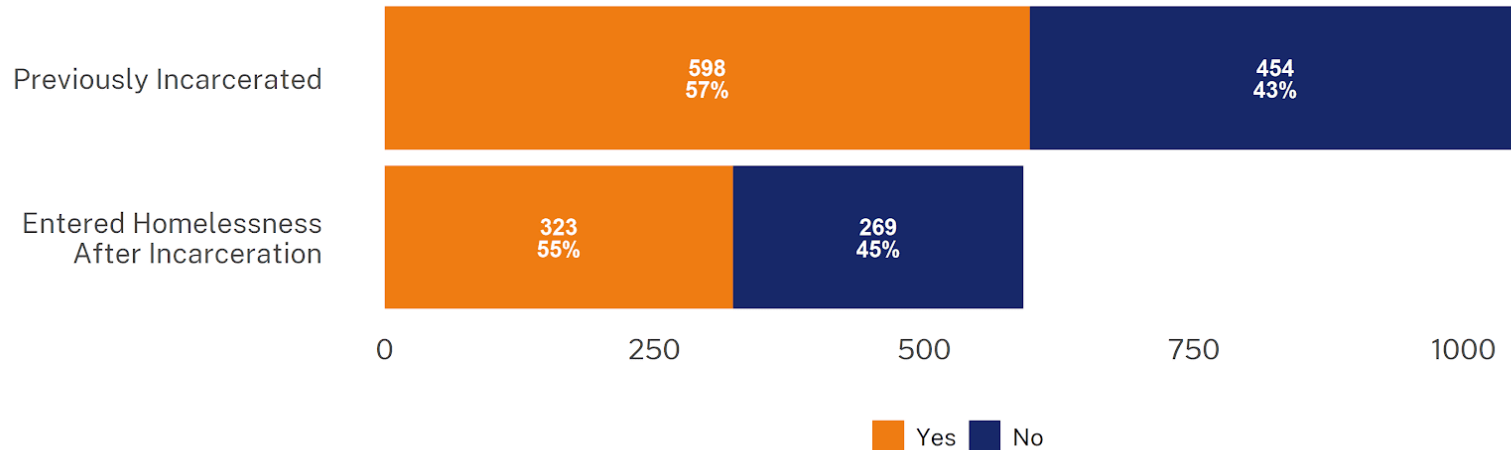
n = 1,053, p < 0.001

n = 1,052, p < 0.001



# PIT Plus Results – Systems Involvement

## Incarceration and Homelessness

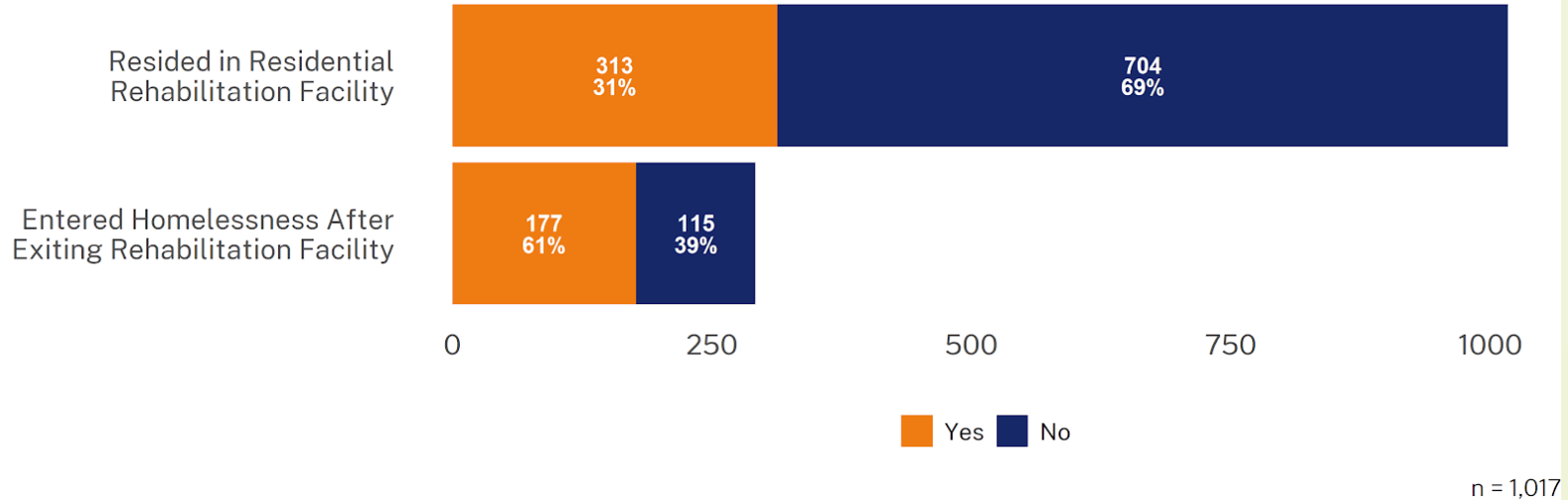


n = 1,052



# PIT Plus Results – Systems Involvement

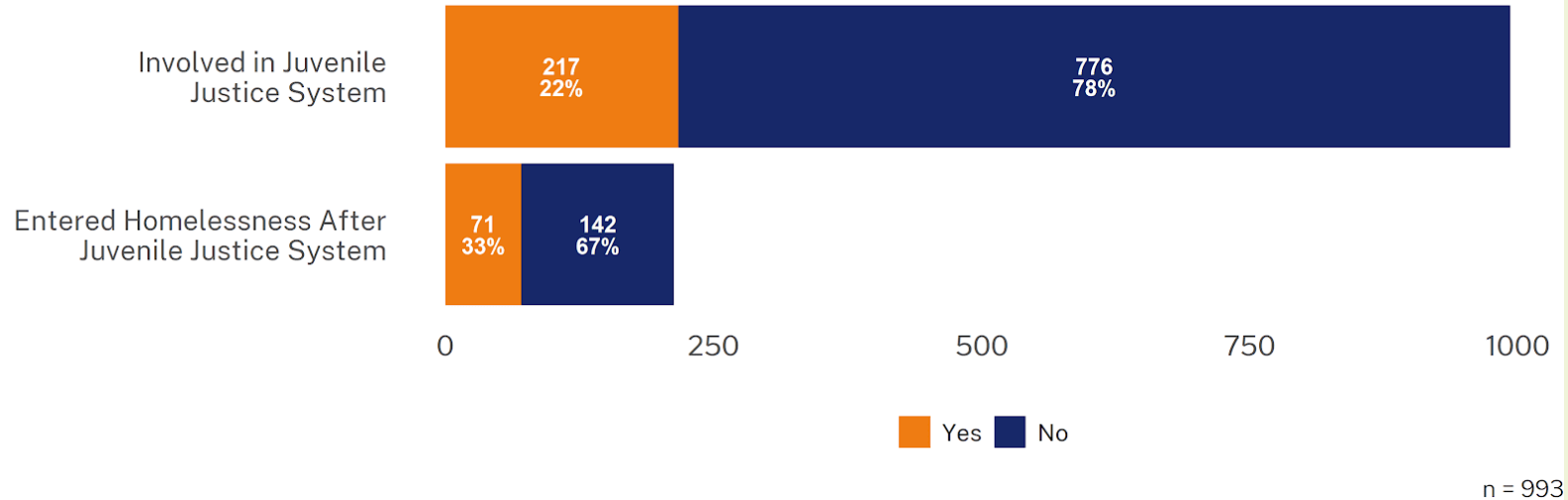
## Rehabilitation/Treatment Facility





# PIT Plus Results – Systems Involvement

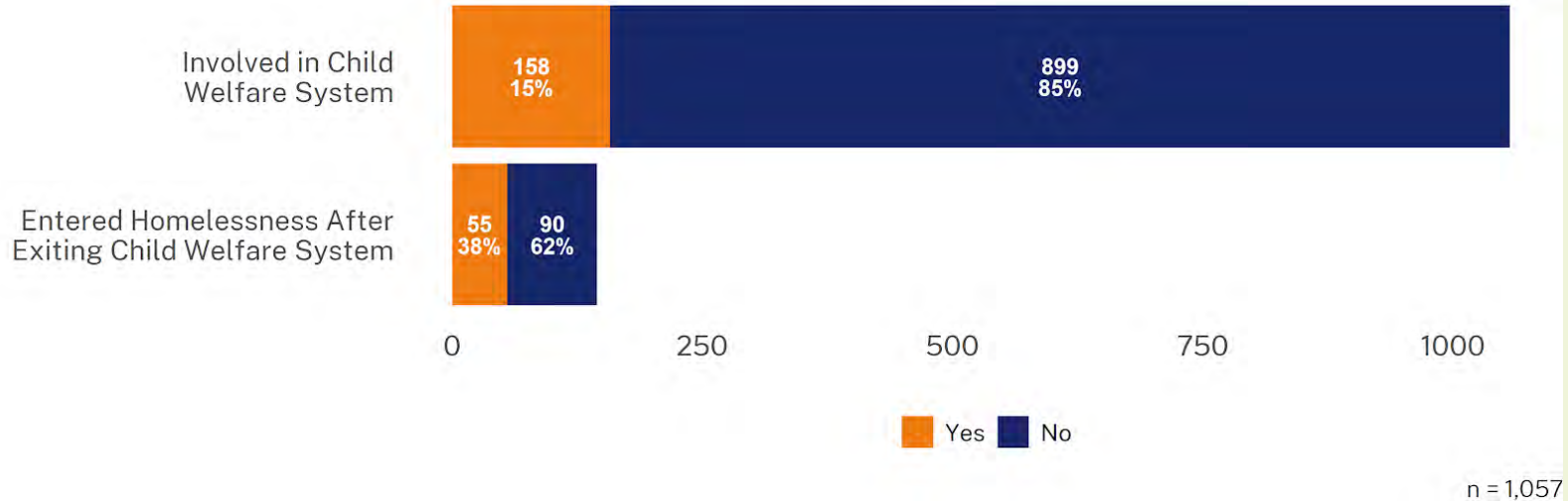
## Juvenile Justice System





# PIT Plus Results – Systems Involvement

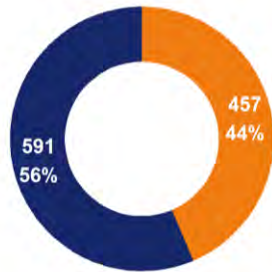
## Child Welfare System Involvement



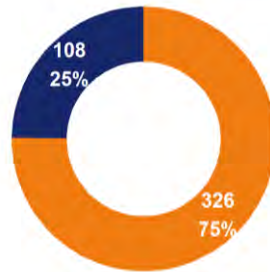


# PIT Plus Results – Social Supports

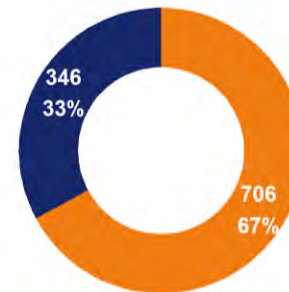
Has Adult  
Children



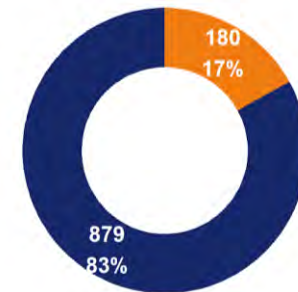
In Contact  
with Children



Has Someone Who Makes  
them Feel Safe/Comfortable



Has a Partner



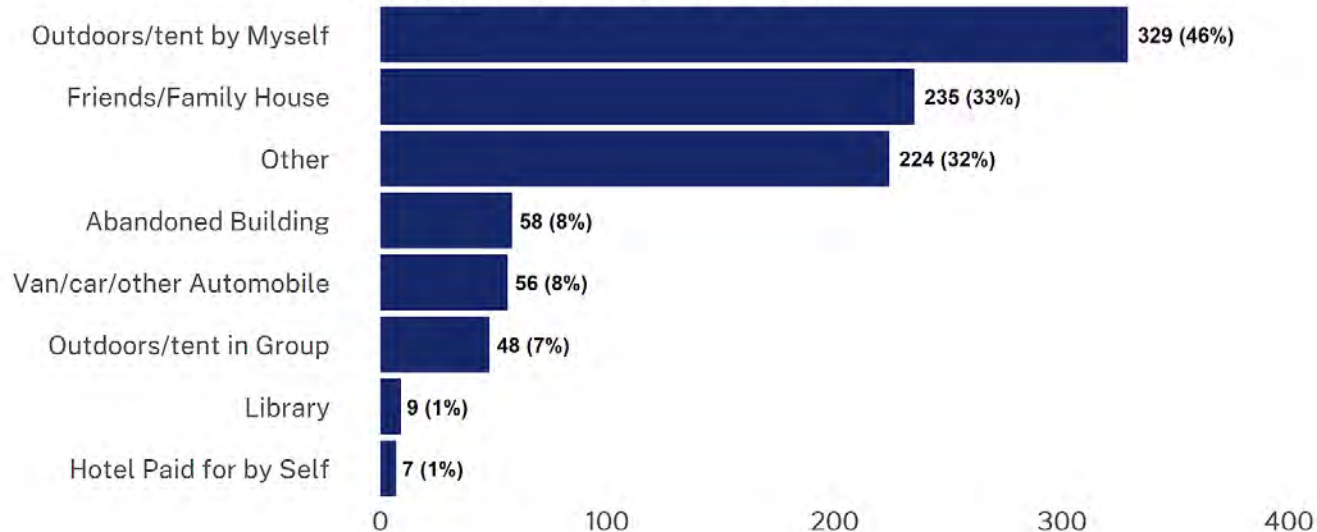




# PIT Plus Results – Social Supports

## Shelter Alternatives

'Where do you stay if shelter is not an option?'



963 responses from 709 respondents

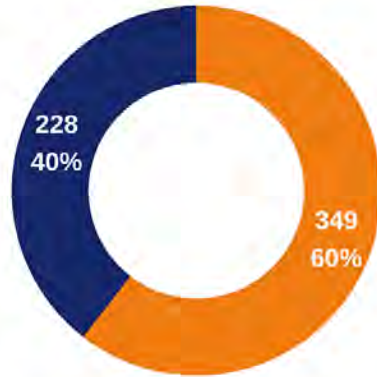
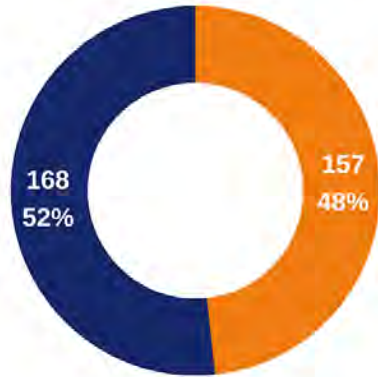


# PIT Plus Results – Social Supports

**Length of D.C. Residency**

Less than 10 years

10 years or more

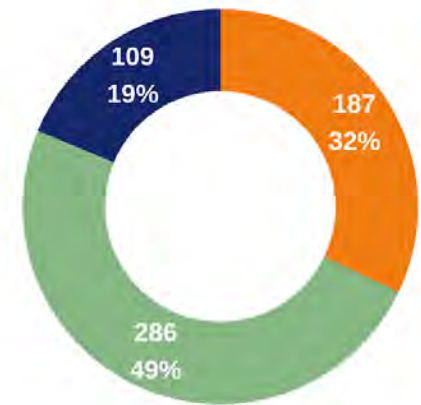
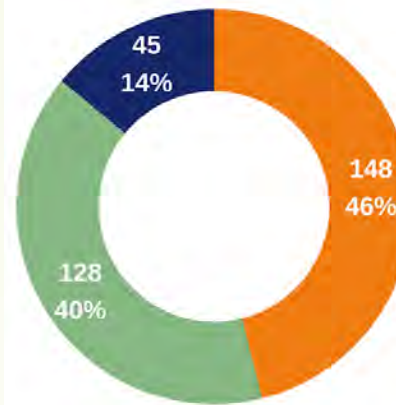


■ Has Someone in Network with Permanent Housing  
■ Does Not Have Anyone in Network with Permanent Housing

**Length of D.C. Residency**

Less than 10 years

10 years or more



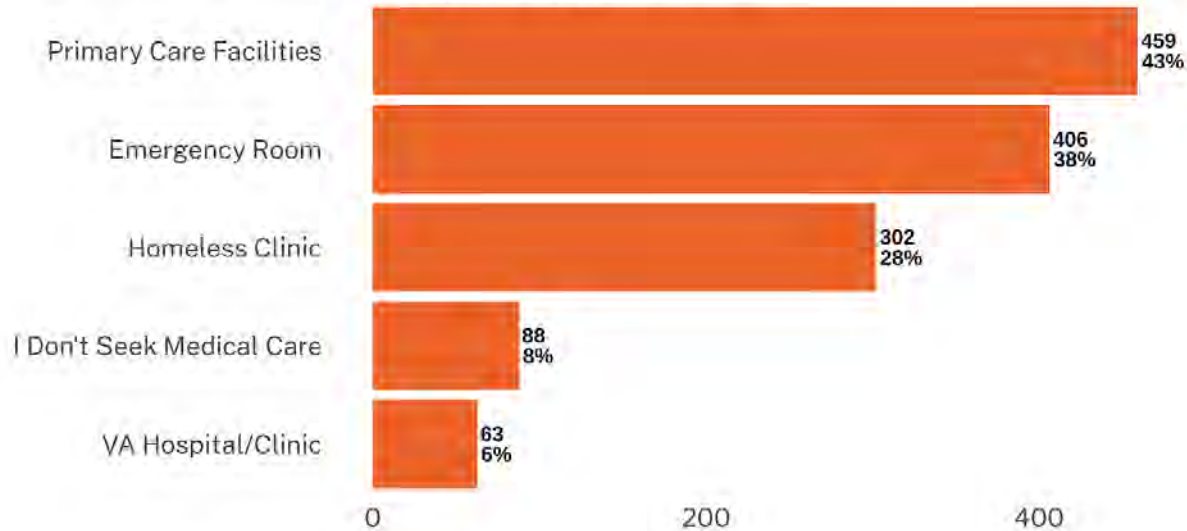
■ None ■ 1-3 friends ■ More than 4 friends



# PIT Plus Results – Health

## Medical Care Provider

"Where do you usually go for medical care?"

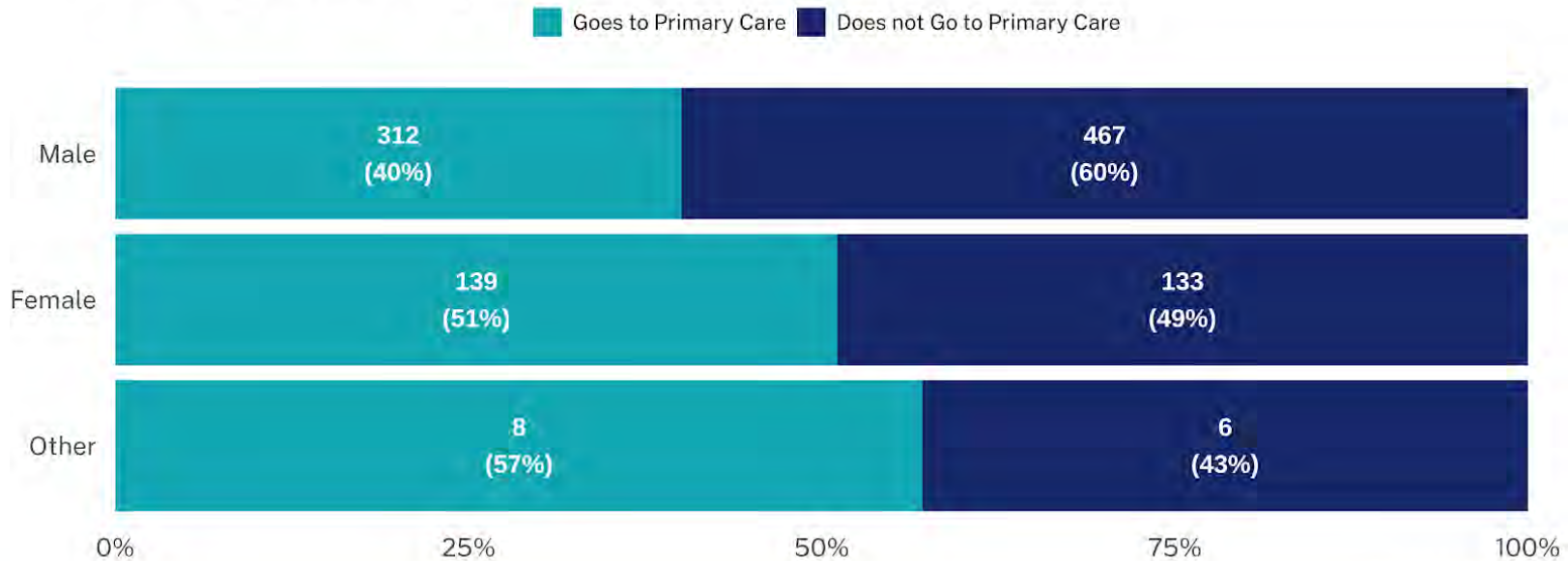


1,018 responses from 1,065 respondents



# PIT Plus Results – Health

## Primary Care Use by Gender

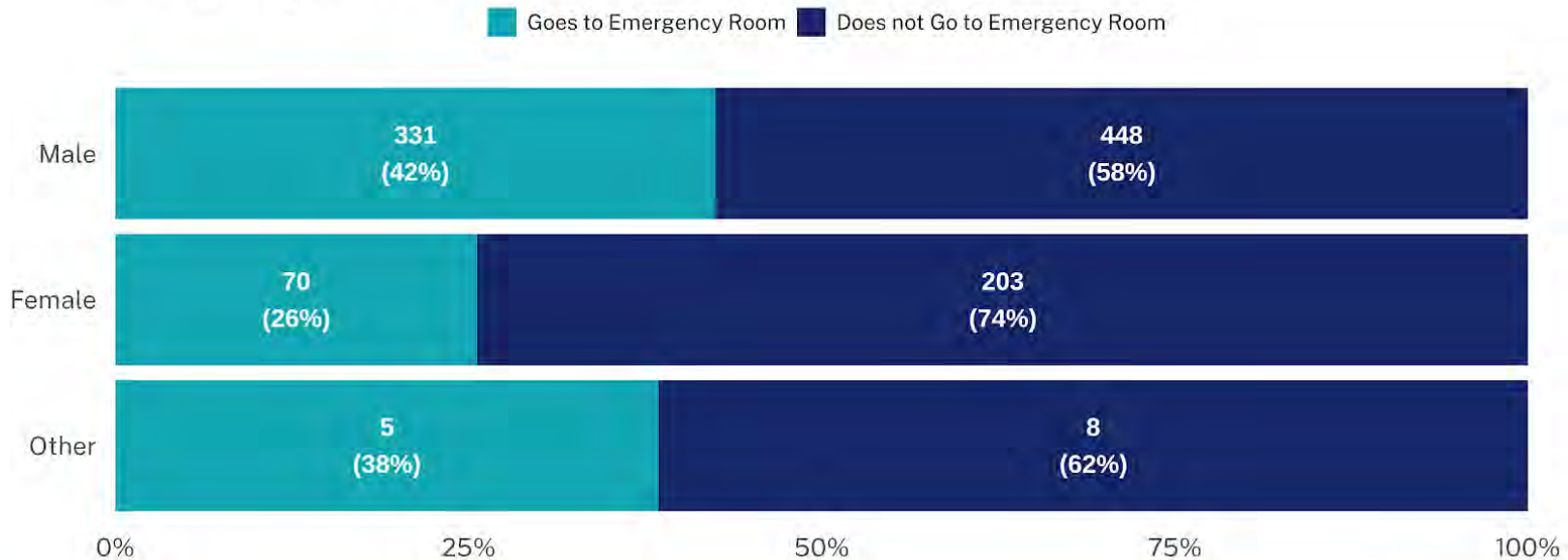


n = 1,051, p < 0.05



# PIT Plus Results – Health

## Emergency Room Use by Gender



n=1,051, p < 0.001



## Lessons Learned

- **People want a job.** Lack of employment and income were the largest drivers of homelessness cited by respondents. In fact, when asked what might have helped prevent homelessness, jobs beat rent/mortgage assistance by 20 percentage points.
- **People still have supportive networks that can be leveraged for diversion.** Most people have friends, someone who makes them feel comfortable/safe, and someone who will help them out. In fact, about one third of clients report staying in a house with friends and/or family when shelter is not an option.
- **What happens after incarceration or treatment?** A majority of respondents were previously incarcerated and most of them became homeless immediately after incarceration. Coordination with reentry programs is crucial to stemming inflow.
- **Perception is Reality.** Two questions revealed opportunities to change client perceptions about shelter safety/hygiene and benefits eligibility to increase their utilization of shelter (versus outdoors) and increase their application to benefits (particularly SNAP).
- **One third were living outside the District.** 33% of respondents were living in Maryland, Virginia, or other states prior to being homeless in the District, which has important implications for our regional system of care.



# Using PIT Plus Data for Strategic Planning and Program Development

- DC's ICH will be using this information to guide the development of Homeward DC 2.0, our strategic plan to address homelessness in the District.
- PIT Plus provided in-depth information on migration between regions in the metro DC-area, we are using these data to strengthen collaboration with surrounding CoCs.
- PIT Plus has fostered stronger coordination with DC Dept. of Employment Services (DOES) and a follow-up study coordinating HMIS data with wage and employment services data from DOES, opening the opportunity to explore targeted, employment programs coupled with homeless services delivery.
- We are increasing attention on diversion for individuals; PIT Plus made it clear that we need to be looking at areas to prop up supports in already existing social networks with the goal of stabilizing an individual before they enter homeless services.



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