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MONTEREY AND SAN BENITO COUNTIES

LEAD ME HOME PLAN UPDATE: COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

Prepared for Coalition of Homeless Service Providers by Focus Strategies

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(916) 436-1836



FocusStrategies.net



340 S Lemon Ave, STE 1815, Walnut, CA 91789

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers (CHSP) conducted a community input survey to inform the update to the *Lead Me Home Plan to End Homelessness*, with a focus on seeking responses from people with lived experience of homelessness. The survey, developed and analyzed by consulting firm Focus Strategies, requested feedback on a number of system priorities including housing and services resources needed in the region; the types of services provided to people staying in encampments; the extent to which existing programs integrate best practice approaches (e.g., low barriers, person-centered, trauma-informed); and effective ways to evaluate homelessness response strategies. The survey, offered in English and Spanish as well as in both paper and online formats, was available for participants to fill out between March 5 and March 26, 2021. Outreach and shelter program staff shared the survey opportunity with participants and were available to support participants in completing the survey if needed. A total of 97 surveys were completed; all returned surveys were completed in English.¹

SURVEY OUTCOMES

A. Respondent Characteristics

The survey asked respondents to provide information about their age, race, ethnicity, gender, housing history, location, and which housing or services program types they have accessed in the region. Highlights include:

- 76.8% of respondents were ages 26 to 61, 20% were ages 62 or older, 2.1% were ages 18 to 25, and 1.1% declined to share
- 52.3% of respondents identified as White, 10.2% as Black or African American, 5.7% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5.7% as Multi-racial, 2.3% as Asian, and 1.1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 40.9% of respondents identified as Latinx or Hispanic
- 50.5% of respondents were currently experiencing homelessness and 34.4% were stably housed but experienced homelessness in the past

¹ While it is difficult to determine how representative of the populations experiencing unsheltered homelessness the 97 surveys are, the respondent characteristics described in the next section suggest information from a broad demographic was obtained. Receiving no Spanish language surveys was an unexpected finding; however, many surveys were completed with the support of an outreach worker, who may have chosen to access the English language version of the survey.



- The majority of respondents live or stay in Salinas Valley (56.4%) or the Peninsula (28.7%) in Monterey County
- Respondents have accessed a variety of housing and service program types with the most common being transitional housing (43.2%), shelter (39.2%), street outreach services (37.8%), and drop-in centers (32.4%)

B. Housing and Services Needed in the Region

Of the housing solutions presented in the survey, the following program types were most frequently identified by respondents as a priority for increasing availability in the region: affordable housing (56.8% of respondents); help to find housing (55.8%); and long-term housing with a rent subsidy and case management (52.6%). The services most frequently identified as a priority for the region to increase were access to food, showers, restrooms, and sinks (61.5% of respondents); mental health services (55.2%); and case management in shelters and other housing programs (49.0%).

C. Services for People Staying in Encampments

Survey respondents were asked to provide input on the services provided to people living in encampments. For almost all services listed - bathrooms and hygiene facilities, trash disposal, medical or mental health services, access to shelters and housing programs, and case management - over 75% of respondents indicated that more of the service is needed. The only service with mixed outcome was law enforcement involvement, where responses were almost evenly split between the response being fine as is, needing more, needing less, or being unsure.

D. Integration of Best Practice Approaches

The survey asked respondents about program types they have accessed in the community and the extent to which they agreed or disagreed the programs integrated specific approaches including: being low-barrier and integrating Housing First approaches; understanding the impacts of trauma; practicing inclusivity and cultural competency; and proactively supporting participants towards their identified goals. The majority of respondents affirmed the integration of these practices across program types, with the exception of low barrier entry in shelters (only 42.6% of respondents to this question agreed shelters were easy to access) and voluntary engagement in behavioral health services in permanent supportive housing (50% of respondents agreed services were voluntary).



E. Program Development and Evaluation Strategies

Survey respondents were asked for feedback on ways to engage people who are unsheltered in developing or improving homelessness response solutions, as well as criteria to use when evaluating program and system success. The most common suggestions for ways to involve people experiencing homelessness in solutions were to facilitate focus groups, host advisory groups, engage in direct outreach with the community of people who are unhoused, and ask people what they need (26.1%, 15.9%, 14.5%, and 11.6% of respondents, respectively).

Evaluating programs by the number of participants who gain stable housing was the most frequent criteria identified by respondents (39%), with a significant number of respondents also suggesting programs be evaluated based on participant feedback (23.7%).

F. Additional Suggestions to Reduce Homelessness

The survey provided respondents with an opportunity to offer additional suggestions for how the community can reduce homelessness. The following themes emerged through the strategies shared in the responses: increase housing programs and affordable housing availability; increase health and sanitation supplies for people who are unsheltered; expand and improve supportive services; improve staff training and service delivery approach; involve people with lived experience of homelessness in solutions; and increase opportunities for community involvement and partnership.



LEAD ME HOME PLAN UPDATE: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers (CHSP) conducted a community input survey to inform the update to the *Lead Me Home Plan to End Homelessness*, with a focus on seeking responses from people with lived experience of homelessness. The survey results are provided below. Section I presents data on the characteristics of the people who completed the survey. Section II summarizes the responses they provided.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Question	N	%
My age group is: (N=95)		
Under 18 years of age	0	0.0%
18 - 25 years	2	2.1%
26 - 61	73	76.8%
62 +	19	20.0%
Prefer not to answer	1	1.1%
My race is (select all that apply): (N=88)		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	5	5.7%
Asian	2	2.3%
Black or African American	9	10.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1.1%
White	46	52.3%
Prefer not to answer	20	22.7%
Multiple Races ²	5	5.7%
My ethnicity is: (N=88)		
Latinx or Hispanic	36	40.9%
Non-Latinx or Hispanic	42	47.7%
Prefer not to answer	10	11.4%
The gender I most identify with is: (N=94)		
Male	43	45.8%
Female	44	46.8%
Non-binary/non-conforming	4	4.3%
Transgender	0	0.0%
Not listed	1	1.1%
Prefer not to answer	2	2.1%

² "Multiple Races" included: two respondents chose both "American Indian or Alaskan Native" and "White"; one respondent each chose "American Indian or Alaskan Native" and "Black or African American", "Asian" and "White", and "Asian" and "Black or African American".



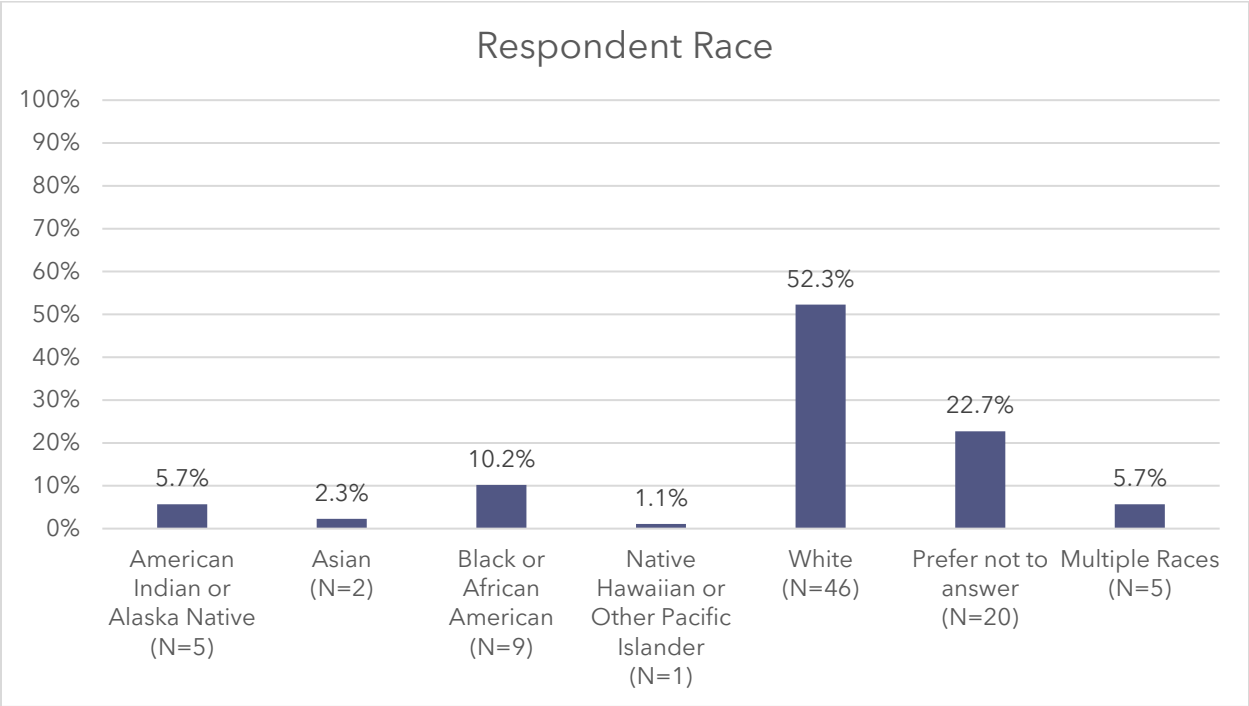
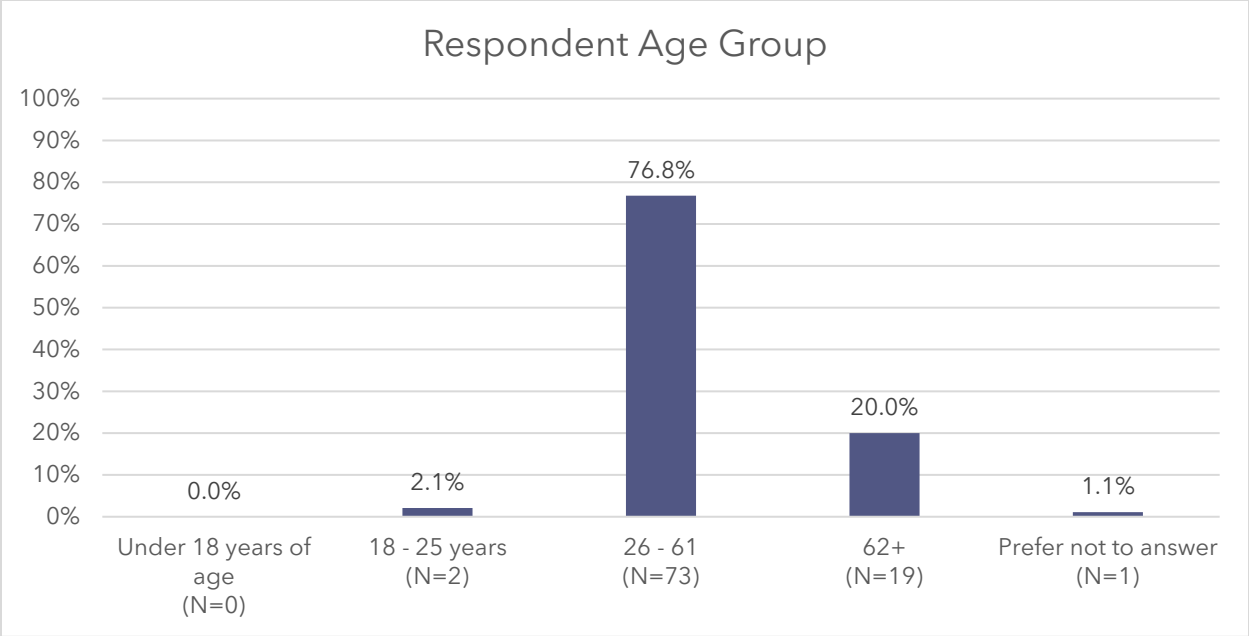
Question	N	%
My housing situation can be described as: (N=93)		
I am currently experiencing homelessness	47	50.5%
My housing is unstable, but I have never experienced homelessness	3	3.2%
My housing is stable now, but I have experienced homelessness before	32	34.4%
My housing is stable now, and I have never experienced homelessness	6	6.5%
Prefer not to answer	5	5.4%
I live or most often stay in: (N=94)³		
San Benito County	1	1.1%
Monterey County - South County	7	7.5%
Monterey County - Peninsula	27	28.7%
Monterey County - Salinas Valley	53	56.4%
Monterey County - Pajaro Valley	0	0.0%
Prefer not to answer	5	5.3%
Other ⁴	2	2.1%
I have accessed the following types of programs in San Benito or Monterey County: (N=74)⁵		
Homelessness/eviction prevention help	21	28.4%
Street outreach services	28	37.8%
Drop-in center	24	32.4%
Shelter	29	39.2%
Transitional Housing	32	43.2%
Rapid Re-housing (rent payment assistance)	12	16.2%
Housing voucher (such as Section 8)	15	20.3%
Permanent Supportive Housing	8	10.8%

³ 1 respondent selected both "Monterey County - South County" and "Monterey County - Peninsula"; this respondent is therefore represented in both of these categories.

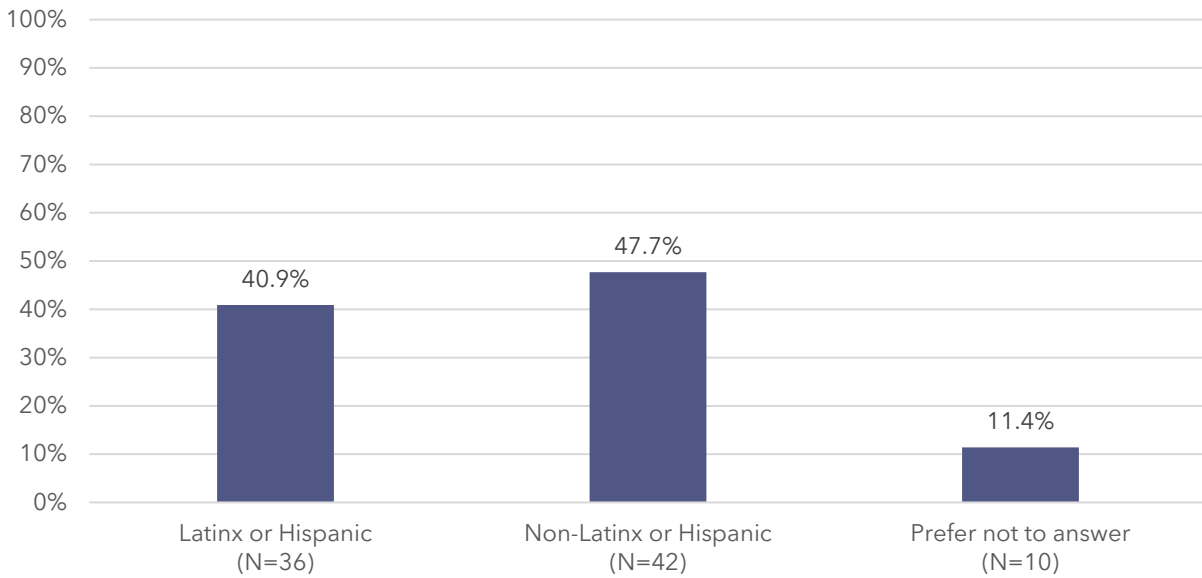
⁴ "Other" responses included: "Prunedale" and "Wherever you see me".

⁵ 41 respondents selected more than one answer choice; these respondents are represented in each of the categories they selected.

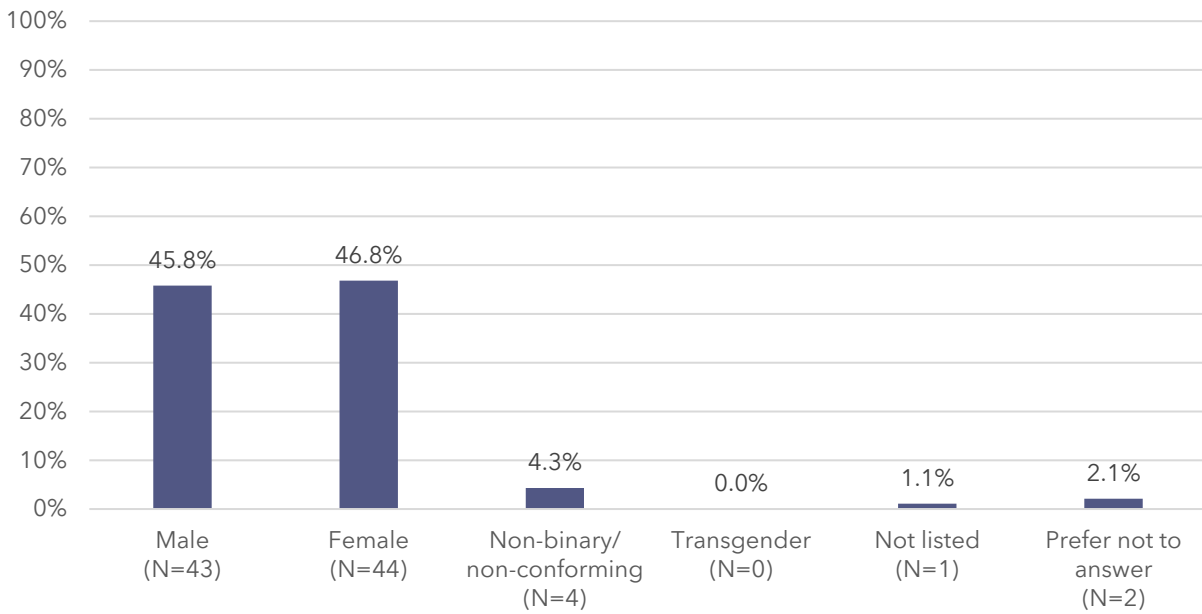


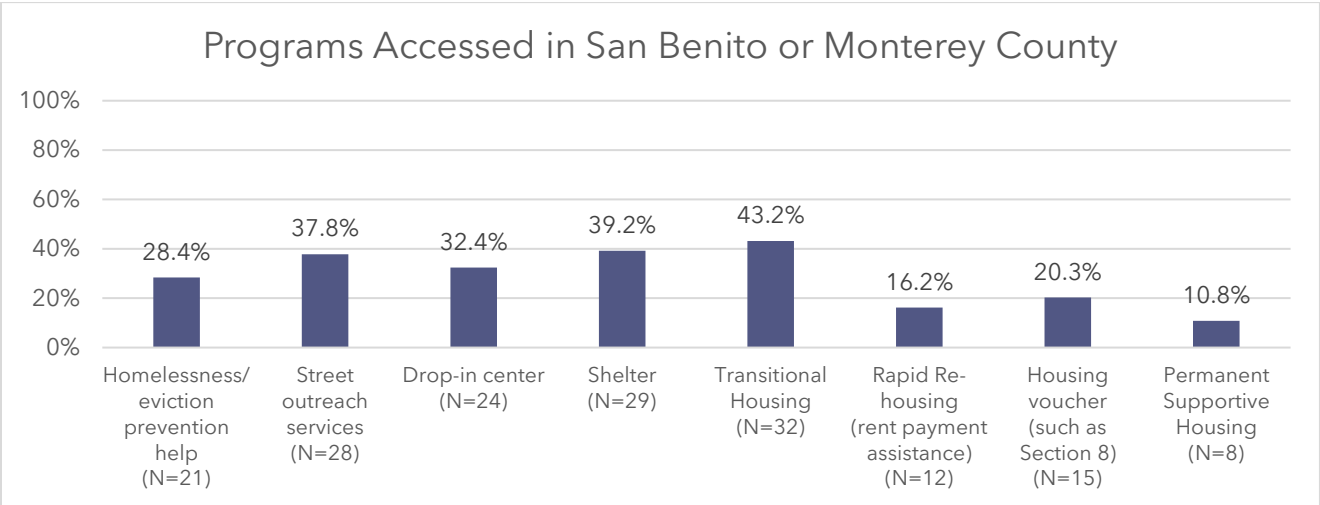
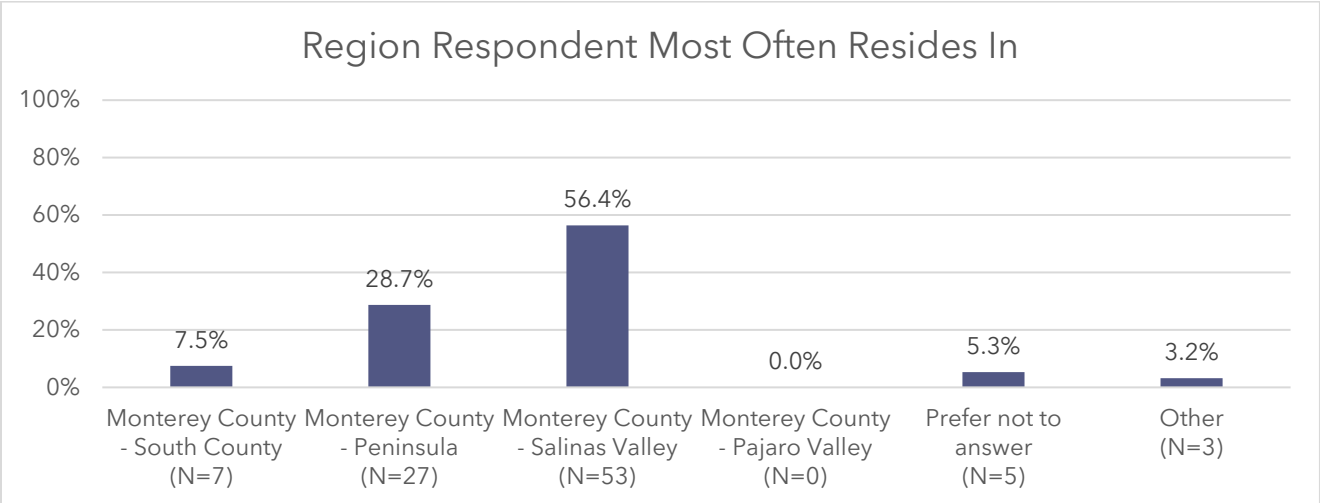
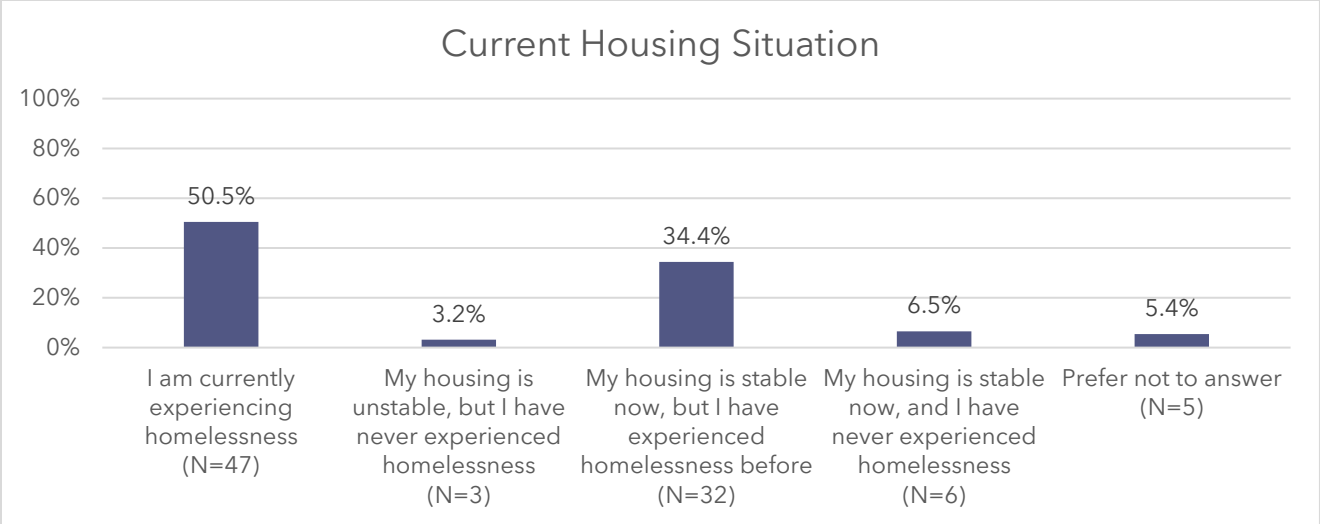


Respondent Ethnicity



Respondent Gender





II. RESPONDENT INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Housing and Services Needed in the Region

Question	N	%
Which housing programs should the region focus on increasing? (N=95)⁶		
Past due rent	14	14.7%
Emergency shelter (open year-round)	39	41.1%
Emergency shelter (open in the winter months)	8	8.4%
Help to find housing	53	55.8%
Rent payment subsidy to help me afford housing	33	34.7%
Affordable housing that I can pay for with my income	54	56.8%
Long-term housing with a rent subsidy and case management	50	52.6%
Other ⁷	2	2.1%
Which support services should the region focus on increasing? (N=96)⁸		
Street outreach services	42	43.8%
Case management in shelters and other housing programs	47	49.0%
Access to food, showers, restrooms, and sinks	59	61.5%
Mental health services	53	55.2%
Health services	32	33.3%
Substance use/recovery services	33	34.4%
Other ⁹	6	6.3%

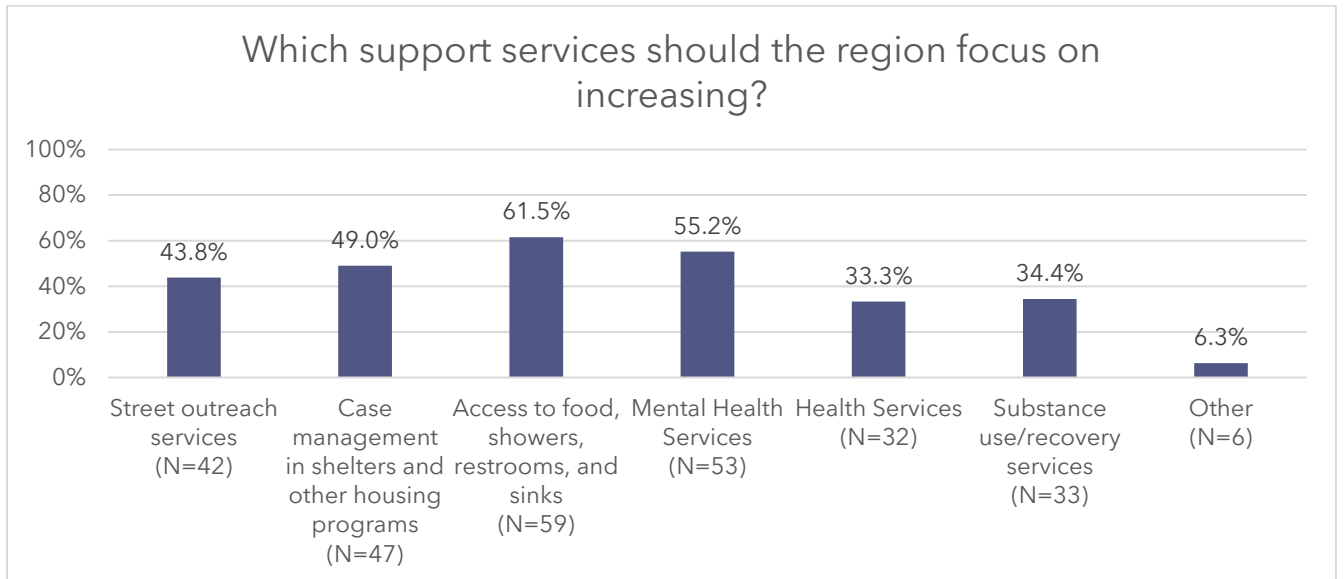
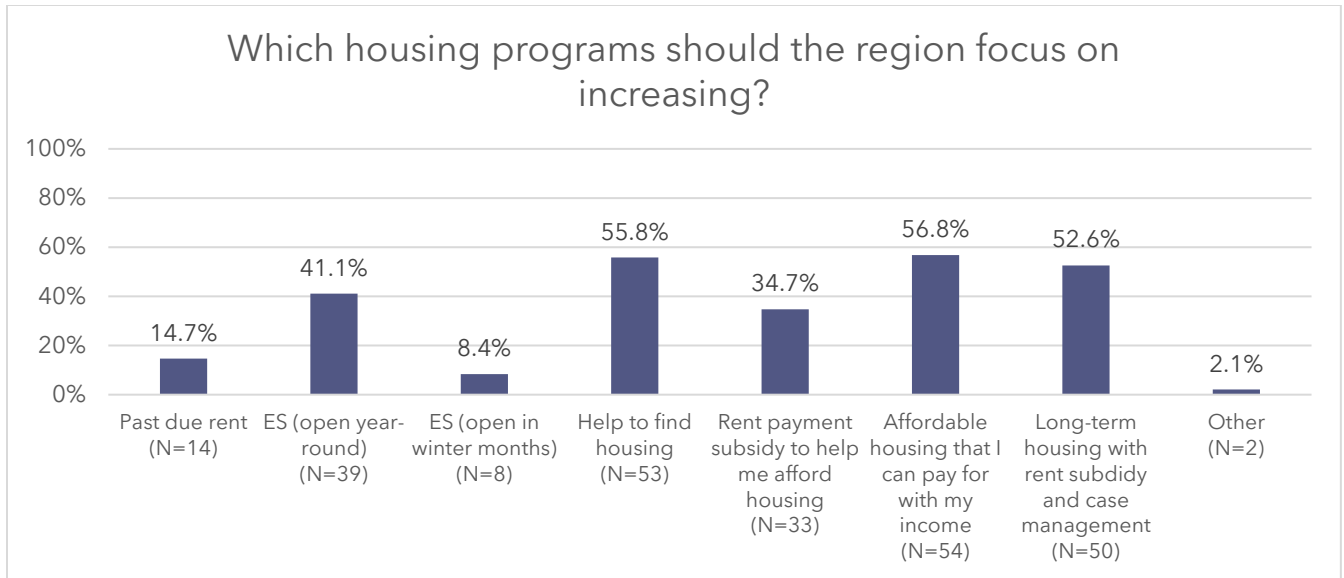
⁶ 84 respondents selected more than one answer choice; these respondents are represented in each of the categories they selected.

⁷ "Other" responses included: "Garbage cans", "Shorter-term alternatives; room rentals; tiny homes; refurbish motels; incentives to rent to us".

⁸ 85 respondents selected more than one answer choice; these respondents are represented in each of the categories they selected.

⁹ "Other" responses included: "Dual-Diagnosis Programs", "A more innovative approach with an emphasis on finding purpose, reconnecting goals and dreams, and providing structure and life-long community connection", "Low income individuals", "Fast housing not just for mental health but for addicts also", "Life/Living skills supportive services", "Talk to people without lying to them".





In the version of the survey available online, the answer choices listed in the rows of the next table were present. However, one additional answer choice was added: "Please select other to mention if the above strategies 'Need Less, Fine as is, Need More, Unsure'". On the paper version of the survey, respondents checked a box to indicate "Need Less", etc., on each of the strategies. As a result of this difference, the online surveys did not collect data regarding how the respondents rated the strategies. The column labeled "Selected Online" in the table below represents how many respondents selected the strategy as an answer choice but had



no corresponding ranking data. The N's below exclude the online responses which were not interpretable, and the percentages are of those N's.

B. Services for People Staying in Encampments

We're exploring ways to serve people who are staying in encampments (areas with multiple tents/outdoor structures). What do you think about the strategies below?						
Question	N	Need Less	Fine as is	Need More	Unsure	Selected Online
Bathrooms, showers, sinks at encampment sites	67	0.0%	4.5%	91.0%	4.5%	17
Trash disposal at encampment sites	68	0.0%	5.9%	92.7%	1.5%	13
Law enforcement involvement	62	29.0%	21.0%	27.4%	22.6%	6
Medical or mental health services	65	1.5%	6.2%	86.2%	6.2%	15
Access to shelters/housing programs	65	1.5%	4.6%	92.3%	1.5%	12
Case management services	67	3.0%	6.0%	77.6%	13.4%	9
Other ¹⁰	4	-	-	-	-	-

C. Integration of Best Practice Approaches

For the two tables below, respondents were asked to select the project type of the last program they are/were in, then indicate whether they agree or disagree with a number of statements about the project. **Only 35 respondents provided a program type**, while 62 did not (26 of the 62 are because the online survey did not include this part of the question). As the N's in the second table below show, approximately ten respondents ranked the statements about the project, but did not tell us what project type they were referring to (the N's are greater than the number of respondents indicating program type). Also, three

¹⁰ "Other" responses included: "Instead of encouraging homeless to continue living in tents you should proceed to get them recovery services first and then build more housing then homeless shelter. Movement is the key for bettering our community", "Law enforcement involvement with homeless outreach social worker present", "Better stewarding of encampment and shelter properties; Less eviction action by police; More robust mental health support & community approach follow-ups; Purpose finding with multiple member accountability instead of managing 'cases'", "Actually need more of all the services. I do believe that Law Enforcement aspect - need more but clients are reluctant to come where there is enforcement and will sacrifice their own needs for help due to their fear of police".



respondents selected more than one project type: Transitional & Permanent Housing, Shelter & Transitional Housing, and Transitional & Rapid Rehousing, so those respondents are included in the N's of both project types they selected.

If you have participated in shelter or housing programs in Monterey or San Benito Counties, rate your experience below. If you have been in multiple programs, answer these questions about the most recent program you are/were in. If you haven't accessed shelter or housing programs, you can skip this question.

Program	N	%
Shelter	13	34.2%
Transitional Housing	19	50.0%
Rapid Rehousing	2	5.3%
Permanent Supportive Housing	4	10.5%

Shelter (N=13):

Question	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The program is pretty easy to access - for example, not too many rules, it allows pets, and there is a place to keep my things	12	16.7%	41.7%	33.3%	8.3%
The staff are understanding of challenges or trauma I've been through and how it affects me	12	8.3%	16.7%	58.3%	16.7%
The staff respect me and try to build trust	12	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%	0.0%
The program doesn't make me participate in substance use or mental health resources to stay in the program	12	8.3%	33.3%	58.3%	0.0%
The program is inclusive and respects my culture	11	9.1%	18.2%	63.6%	9.1%
I am not harassed or discriminated against by staff	12	8.3%	25.0%	41.7%	25.0%
Staff asks me about my goals and the resources and supports I need to achieve them	12	8.3%	16.7%	58.3%	16.7%



Transitional Housing (N=19):

Question	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The program is pretty easy to access - for example, not too many rules, it allows pets, and there is a place to keep my things	19	5.3%	10.5%	57.9%	26.3%
The staff are understanding of challenges or trauma I've been through and how it affects me	18	5.6%	0.0%	50.0%	44.4%
The staff respect me and try to build trust	19	5.3%	0.0%	47.4%	47.4%
The program doesn't make me participate in substance use or mental health resources to stay in the program	16	18.8%	31.3%	31.3%	18.8%
The program is inclusive and respects my culture	18	0.0%	0.0%	55.6%	44.4%
I am not harassed or discriminated against by staff	17	0.0%	0.0%	41.2%	58.8%
Staff asks me about my goals and the resources and supports I need to achieve them	18	5.6%	0.0%	33.3%	61.1%

Rapid Rehousing (N=2):

Question	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The program is pretty easy to access - for example, not too many rules, it allows pets, and there is a place to keep my things	2	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
The staff are understanding of challenges or trauma I've been through and how it affects me	2	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
The staff respect me and try to build trust	2	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
The program doesn't make me participate in substance use or mental health resources to stay in the program	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
The program is inclusive and respects my culture	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%



I am not harassed or discriminated against by staff	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Staff asks me about my goals and the resources and supports I need to achieve them	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

Permanent Supportive Housing (N=4):

Question	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The program is pretty easy to access - for example, not too many rules, it allows pets, and there is a place to keep my things	4	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%
The staff are understanding of challenges or trauma I've been through and how it affects me	4	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%
The staff respect me and try to build trust	4	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
The program doesn't make me participate in substance use or mental health resources to stay in the program	4	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%
The program is inclusive and respects my culture	4	0	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
I am not harassed or discriminated against by staff	4	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%
Staff asks me about my goals and the resources and supports I need to achieve them	4	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%

D. Program Development and Evaluation Strategies

How can we better include people experiencing homelessness in solutions? What do you think about focus groups, advisory groups, or other ways people who are unhoused can share ideas? (N=69)

The responses to this question are summarized in the table below.

Ways People Who are Unhoused Can Share Ideas/Input	N	%
Focus groups	18	26.1%
Advisory groups	10	14.5%
Community outreach	11	15.9%



Suggestion boxes, bulletin boards, flyers	3	4.4%
Through conversation with or focus groups facilitated by people with personal experience of homelessness	4	5.8%
Through conversation with case managers or other staff members	5	7.3%
Ask the people experiencing homelessness what they need	8	11.6%

Five respondents indicated that additional strategies are not needed because either enough information is already available or people experiencing homelessness do not want to be included in the process. There were an additional eight responses not reflected in the table above in which respondents offered input that was not directly applicable to the question such as feedback on current services or information on general strategies the County or CoC should adopt (e.g., long wait times for housing, the role of law enforcement, etc.). These responses have been integrated into the last question on additional things respondents would like to share on how to improve programs or approaches to homelessness.

How should programs be evaluated? What are things that show a program is working? (N=59)

The responses to this question are summarized in the table below.

Evaluation Criteria	N	%
People gain stable housing	23	39.0%
Participant feedback such as how people feel about the program environment, if they would/do refer other people into the program, satisfaction with services	14	23.7%
Participants are successful in meeting their goals	12	20.3%
People who gain housing don't return to homelessness	5	8.5%
Number of people in the program	4	6.8%
Behavioral health services and health insurance linkages	3	5.1%
Alignment of program implementation with their stated purpose to serve people	2	3.4%
Data from case management & outreach	6	10.2%



Below is a sample of responses from this question.

- “Less homelessness, less tents”; “people getting housed”; “less people living on the streets”
- “Have participants share their experience”; “client satisfaction survey”
- “People being able to meet their goals whatever they may be”; “by progress that is being made by the staff and individual living there”; “the growth from people”
- “Are the newly housed through your program maintaining it”; “looking at the long term housing numbers”
- “The number of people that are in it”
- “Mental health screenings and drug/alcohol checks”; “number of unsheltered people who go from having no health insurance to having some form of health insurance”
- “...[Make] sure that [programs are] actually really here to help homeless not for themselves”
- “Outreach data”; “data/graphs (information)”

E. Additional Strategies to Reduce Homelessness

What else would you like to share about how the community can reduce homelessness or improve services? (N=50)

There were several ideas shared about how the community can reduce homelessness or improve services. These ideas are grouped by theme below.

Increase Housing Programs and Affordable Housing Availability

- Put us all in homes
- More housing programs
- Build a place just for homeless people and find the right people to fund the program
- Offer more housing, safe sleeping options
- Let us build our own places and give us materials so we don't have to steal the materials
- A place to stay
- I hope more people will try to share places with more than 1 bedroom
- No camps put these people in homes! No encampments, no tents, these people should have homes, that's the outreach, that's the help. Homeless shelter programs need to focus on the needs of the community instead of helping themselves. For



example, Chinatown Navigation Center and Rodrigo is a terrible, awful director. Fire him! He's not about the homeless community, he's about himself!

- Housing costs are too high!!!
- Usable vouchers for actual rent amounts. Build affordable housing for real working families
- More Homeless Shelter options that allow pets; More Residential Substance Abuse Treatment options that allow pets; Homeless Shelter that specializes in sheltering people who are homeless and have a psychiatric disability

Increase Health and Sanitation Supplies for People who are Unsheltered

- Give some heaters its cold out here
- More garbage cans...
- More trash pick ups...
- There's a need for showers, laundry, and porta-pottys
- I think that trash collection is a big deal at encampments - but it needs to be implemented by a group. When dumpsters were put in China Town (Salinas) for the homeless to use, local restaurants dumped their garbage there instead to avoid accountability - which made it looks like the people of China Town were not utilizing the resource.
- Safe and well lit places for people who are sleeping outdoors to urinate and poop at night.

Expand and Improve Supportive Services

- More Outreach programs
- More aggressive Outreach by agencies, organizations, churches, etc. in the area of self-sufficiency, education on mental health maintenance, and stricter law enforcement presence to alleviate loitering, crime
- Case management; mental health screenings and referrals; linkage to new services and providers - should be a condition for places to stay
- Timely, proactive, and accessible case management is crucial. Services that bridge every gap: mental health, transportation, housing, substance abuse treatment, showers, etc.
- Round up drug test rehab services
- More mental health and drug rehab services



- Somehow the mental health issues prevalent with so many of the homeless needs to be addressed more equitably. Especially the general non-involved folk have to be educated about how the mental health is a major factor and the issue needs to be destigmatized of the negativity to it. Wake up America!
- Programs should make clients involvement in services mandatory to staying in the program and if they do not want to participate then action should be taken to dismiss them. Rules should be more clear and strict with real consequences. That would encourage people who are serious about recovery.
- Help people find work
- Keep in contact with homeless, understand not always have a phone with battery power
- Constant follow up of information
- Prepare them for long term, not short term. We have many, many homeless people, plus the system does not help. Must separate by gender and their needs, also people like myself, my age.

Improve Staff Training and Service Delivery Approach

- Many staff seem to have problems or aren't trained all the way
- ...properly use funding instead of hiring people you don't need
- Being humane and non-critical about the people you are attempting to help
- More...friendly people
- Every program should be understanding that each homeless individual has a story of how they became homeless, or traumatic past that every individual may be every program should always remember that every homeless individual is human like everybody
- More fully recognize barriers we face and help directly. Staff you hire are not trained and you need more workers
- Stop treating people like animals when looking for resources, remember we're people first
- Better staff and caring. When I was living in my vehicle and called for these services, I didn't get help and the lady was so rude. The homeless need help and someone that's going to understand them and care for the situation they are going through
- Listen to them and support them on what they are going through in life



Involve People with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Solutions

- You have to have people willing to go into the sites without judgement. Preferably folks who have been there
- Make it easier for people who were homeless to give back and get involved to communicate what helped them

Increase Opportunities for Community Involvement and Partnership

- Public community needs to be involved more for disabled
- I believe the community is moving in the right direction. There have been a lot of change. I think we need more faith based organizations involved. People are willing to help but sometimes they need to be asked
- Focus groups for community members on how the homeless community is viewed, how it makes them feel and how to collaborate to change many aspects to unify everyone on helping the less fortunate
- A Community led and empowered, purpose oriented, Purpose Finding Initiative to preempt and dissipate homelessness so people are empowered to innovate, collaborate, build connections and stay connected, and not let go and give up
- Agencies and Partnership support to thrive for a better community and safety

In addition to the solutions above, multiple respondents shared about their personal experiences with homelessness and services. These responses are below.

- I have been needing help, for a while now. I go from a sofa from a friend to another friend's sofa! I sometimes rent hotel. I asked for help at Salvation Army and they say I have to be working (I needed help to pay for deposit). I also went to a shelter in Marina, and they requested my birth certificate; please tell me who is homeless is carrying a birth certificate? Few months later I was able to provide it. Never got help. Even enrolled in section 8; many years back but nothing
- Well, I had a worker a couple of years ago and would sure like another one if possible
- I'm a veteran and I was homeless due to PTSD issues I had that were never treated. Which I turned to drugs to cope with it and it made me homeless. Thank goodness for the HUD-VASH program I'm now housed (going on 4 years in the same apartment) and am 5 years sober. All thanks to case management through the VA and HUD and the VASH program. I think having people who go visit homeless camps and having



outreach play a big role in getting the word out that there are programs available for the homeless

- I lost my apartment because my disability benefits stopped, then took a year to receive unemployment benefits! I got cut in the middle of this pandemic. I did receive food stamps, my social worker knew about myself being homeless and just because I do not have children people do not try enough to help! I will be surprised if the government do not ask back for their funds. I have lost everything but I feel I still want to keep trying. I am afraid of ending like others. We do need help
- My son and I were essentially homeless for 20 months after I was injured at work and lost income. Despite the fact we were capable of paying a reasonable rent, we only lacked resources for a security deposit, there was no help available. I called every resource in the area, but it was a total waste of time. Most had no funding available.....
- Single mothers with only one child seems to be very difficult to find housing since it's just us two. I have been waiting for over 2 years for housing.

The following are additional comments to this question not captured in the themes above:

- Reducing homelessness is not the problem. The problem is people need to be shown how to live a healthy life
- I know the Legion has help in the past!
- I would like to know how grant money is spent
- We can't if there ain't one finger lifted
- It always comes down to money - more funding is needed

