

Appendices

Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment; December 2021

Number	Title (hyperlinked)	Description
1	Best Practices	A community guide with recommendations on how to craft an effective homeless response system
2	Data Slides	Comprehensive set of data slides with population, socioeconomic, housing, and homelessness data
3	Final Presentation Summary	Includes the final slide set used to present project findings and proposed next steps to community partners
4	Gaps Model Methodology	A description of the process and inputs used to develop the gaps model
5	Focus Group Summary	A summary of focus group poll results



MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION

Mat-Su Homeless Response System Best Practices Guide

Created by Agnew::Beck Consulting for the Mat-Su Health Foundation as part of the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment; Updated February 2022

Introduction

This document is a guide for communities working to improve a homeless response system. It identifies key concepts, offers a proposed governance and operations structure, and contains recommendations for partners seeking to work together to successfully craft an effective homeless response system.






This summary synthesizes best practices and years of practical experience from [Agnew::Beck](#) (regional strategists and implementors), [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) (national best practice experts and organizers), [Corporation for Supportive Housing](#) (experts on evidence-based housing solutions), [FSG](#) (founders of collective impact model for social services), and [Pathways to Housing](#) (founders of Housing First and service provider).

Work from these communities informed this guide:

- Anchorage, AK
- Arlington County, VA
- Boise, ID
- Montgomery County, PA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Idaho Balance of State
- Alaska Balance of State
- Montana Balance of State

I. What are the key elements of an effective homeless response system?

Informed by the “Collective Impact” approach: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

Key Elements	Process to design an effective Homeless Response System <i>these steps can happen concurrently</i>
 Common Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a local public-private partnership dedicated to ending homelessness, including service providers, government, funders, housing developers, community leaders Create a vision for the partnership and a strategy for each population experiencing homelessness (adult-only households, families with children, veterans, chronic homelessness, youth)
 Shared Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on the outcomes to achieve the vision (examples: # of clients housed; time from assessment to housing; % of clients housed a year later; etc.) Establish a centralized database (Homeless Management Information System), sign data agreements with all relevant providers, ensure widespread usage and data input Publish a community dashboard so that leaders, public, and media can track the progress of the partnership
 Mutually Reinforcing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a flow for the system around a Housing First orientation Launch a triage team for preventing and diverting homelessness for those at risk of losing their housing Launch a coordinated entry system for accessing housing services for people experiencing literal homelessness
 Continuous Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a case conferencing meeting of case managers who can review the coordinated entry list and determine referrals and monitor case progress Host a regular, public-facing summit on homelessness to educate the community about the issue and about the partnership
 Backbone Support Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate a staff member (or a team) to work on the homeless response system full-time. Ideally, this person will not work for a service provider, but a neutral entity or a 501c3 established to house the partnership Assign an organization to be the lead agency of coordinated entry, managing the access point to all homeless services

2. How should the partnership be governed and managed?

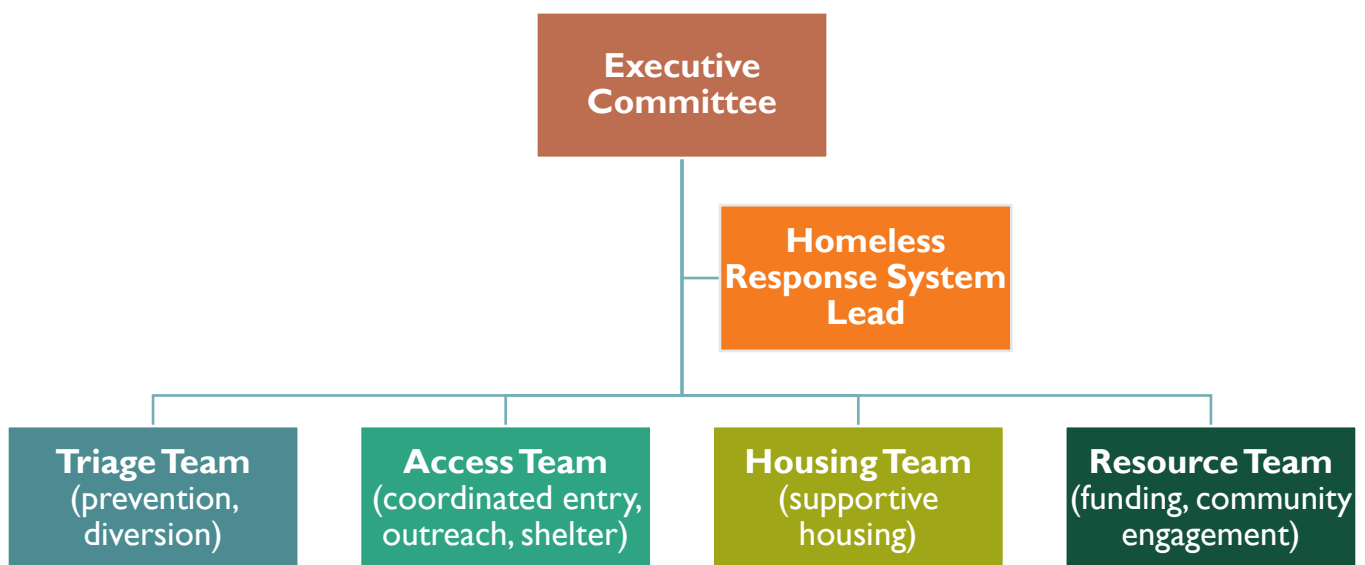
After designing an effective homeless response system, a structure is needed to govern the partnership. This section offers a possible governance and management structure. This structure should be modified to meet the scale and needs of the community.

Executive Committee – the governing body of the local homeless response system. The membership should include executive-level staff representing key social service partners, local governments, funders, housing developers and owners, and people with lived experience. The committee will be staffed by the Homeless Response System Lead.

- **Areas of Influence:** funding decisions, system evaluation and monitoring, coordination with other partnerships, educating community leaders, and designing system changes.

Homeless Response System Lead – an effective system needs to have a strong and skilled staffer dedicated to the partnership. Ideally, the staffing would expand to include a dedicated team of staff. The staff lead should be well-versed in evidence-based practices, be a strategic thinker, and comfortable working in large, intersectional partnerships. Ideally the lead is housed in a neutral organization.

- **Areas of Influence:** system and program coordination, staff to committees, represent the partnership in meetings, develop and manage strategy and tactics for system.



System Flow Teams (Triage, Access, Housing): teams of relevant service providers that will design, implement, monitor, and update the programs and tactics for each phase of the homeless response system.

- **Areas of influence:** Triage team (prevention and diversion), Access team (coordinated entry, outreach, shelter), Housing team (rapid resolution, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing)

Resource Team: the team responsible to identify funding streams, especially privately sourced funds, that address the needs of the homeless response system. This will include the need for a concentrated community engagement effort.

- **Areas of Influence:** fundraising, donor recognition, marketing, and public relations.

3. How should people flow through the system?

This section offers a summary of how to craft a system flow that works for the community, beginning with a review of the current state and then working toward a desired future state.

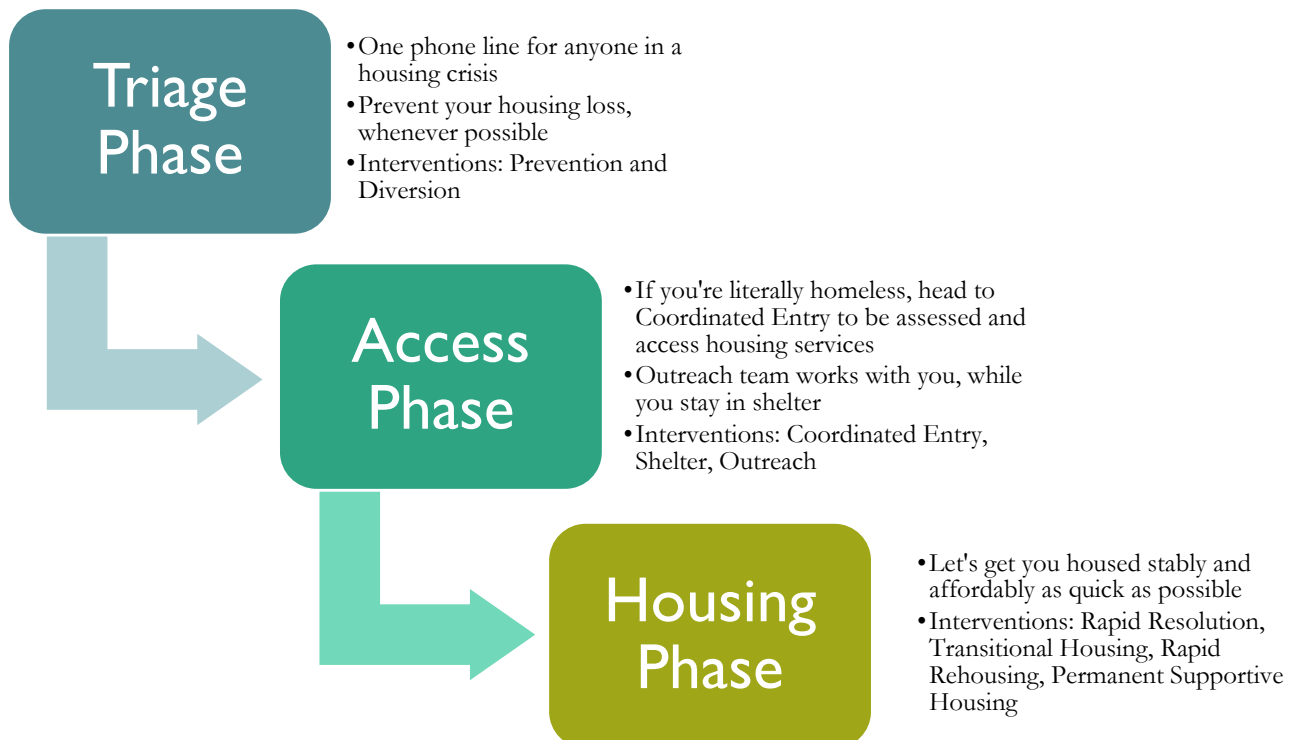
Current state: convene a series of work sessions with key providers, representing all available interventions in the homeless response system. Facilitate a mapping exercise that shows how critical populations (adult-only households, families with children, and transition-aged youth) flow through the current housing system.

Review the “current state” of how a household uses the system. Look for “leverage points,” the opportunity areas to streamline the response and make it simpler for a household to interact with the system and to rapidly get placed in housing.

Future state: Address the opportunity areas by designing a new flow through the homeless response system, one that prioritizes rapidly housing a household, lessening their trauma, reducing the paperwork needed, and ensuring that all on the street are eligible for housing services. This is the new system flow.

Recommended Categories of Program System Flow

As you design a new “future state” of your program system flow, it should conform to these broad categories of interventions, each with increasing level of services and support.



4. What evidence-based practices should inform our work?

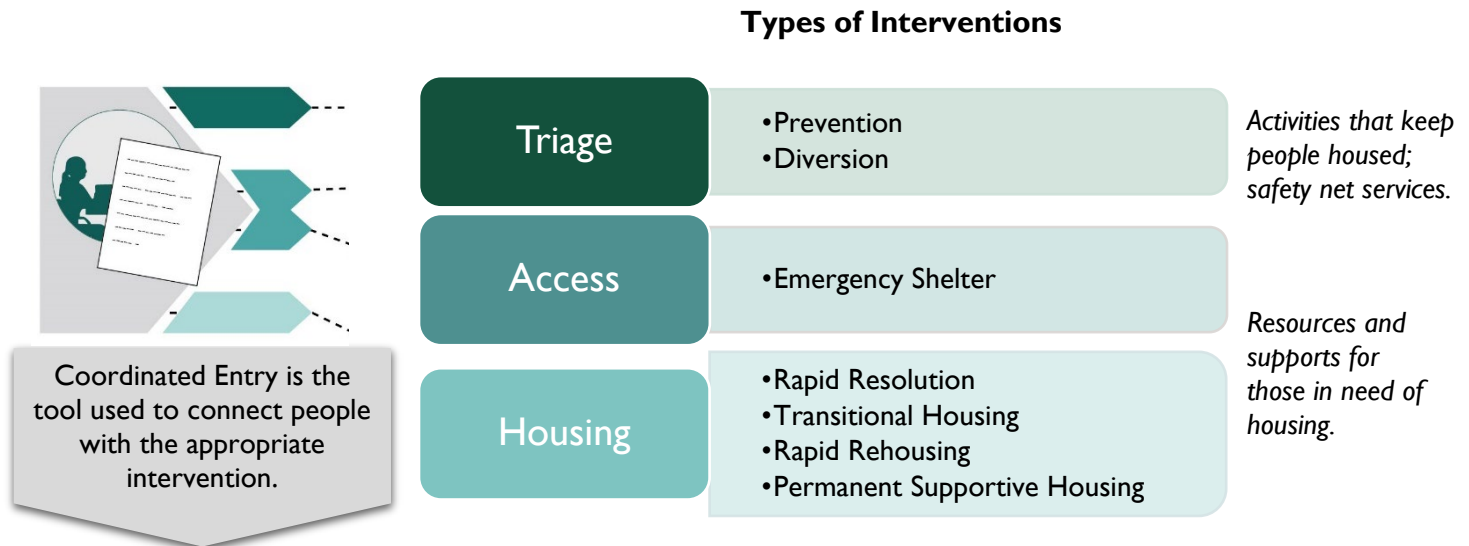
There are number of evidence-based practices that are central to an effective homeless response system. The most important practices are listed here.

These practices often act at two levels simultaneously. They are a **lens** (a service philosophy that informs all decision-making) and a **service model** (a programmatic strategy and structure to design a system around). Click on the name of each to read more.

- **[Equity](#)** – The work of homelessness must be centered on the principles of equity, recognizing the historical and current traumas that our country, community, and service network have created and nurtured for the most marginalized communities. Homelessness is a social ill that disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Recognizing this is crucial to implementing a response system that ends homelessness.
- **[Housing First](#)** – a philosophy and service model that centers all action around stably and affordably housing a client with as little barriers as possible. In addition to housing, the model is based on the pillars of choice, recovery, support, and community. Housing First has been widely acclaimed and supported by research as the most effective model to end homelessness.
- **[Trauma-Informed Care](#)** – a service approach that changes the modality from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you?” It recognizes the impactful role of trauma in our journey and avoids any re-traumatization during our service relationship. By recognizing trauma, providers are better able to walk alongside clients and co-create a service plan that is effective and long-lasting.
- **[Harm Reduction](#)** – Overcomes the shame of illicit substance misuse by recognizing that there is a multi-faceted and complex continuum of use and of non-use. Through a non-judgmental service relationship, works to minimize the harm of drug use. Affirms the worth and dignity of those who struggle with addiction and allows them to remain in control of their service journey.
- **[Systems Thinking](#)** – A homeless response system is inherently an ecosystem, where one incentive creates both positive and negative outcomes. It is dynamic, ever-changing. Designing and deploying effective solutions to homeless starts and ends with thinking about a community as a system.
- **[Collective Impact](#)** – We can only end homelessness by designing, implementing, and sustain robust public-private partnerships. Applying strategies inspired by the simple and effective Collective Impact model is the surest way to achieve that collaborative change.

5. What interventions should be available in the community?

This section summarizes the key intervention types that typically make up the continuum of housing and homelessness programs and services. Ideally a community's homeless response system includes all components, with individuals served by the intervention most appropriate to their needs.



How We Connect People with the Appropriate Intervention: **Coordinated Entry**

Coordinated entry is a systems approach that provides one centralized access point to all homeless interventions in the community. It makes sure people are connected with the right resources at the right time.

Why is coordinated entry important? Without coordinated entry, each agency and program must host their own access points to services. This can make it traumatic and confusing for households trying to navigate the system, and people may not connect with the program that best meets their needs. Coordinated Entry helps match people to programs in an efficient, transparent, and equitable way.

An effective coordinated entry system typically includes these six factors:

1. **Centralized Access** - The centralized access is often provided both remotely (phone and/or online) and through one or more physical locations. Ensuring equitable access to these locations is important.
2. **Housing Assessment** – Upon accessing the coordinated entry, the staff will assess the household to understand their needs and triage immediate housing solutions.
3. **Prioritized Queue** – After completing the housing assessment, the client will be entered into the prioritized queue. This will ensure that the most vulnerable are served by housing-based referrals. For those lower on the queue, they will be offered rapid resolution and diversion to ensure their homelessness does not linger.
4. **Housing Referrals** – All housing-based interventions should use the coordinated entry systems by accepting referrals only from the list created by the prioritized queue.
5. **Coordinated Data** – Centralized access creates an opportunity for collective data collection, providing critical information to inform the homeless response system on the effectiveness of its interventions. This is often accompanied by a community dashboard for the public to review progress.
6. **Dedicated Staff** – The coordinated entry should be supported by dedicated staff at a lead agency in the homeless response system.

Triage

Prevention

Homelessness prevention focuses on retaining housing for households at-risk of losing their housing. There are two broad program designs for prevention services:

- 1) **Universal/primary prevention** – this program model focuses on all households at-risk of losing their housing and focuses on a broad range of services, including education, rental assistance, light case management, food services, and more. Research is inconclusive on the effectiveness of this model. It is generally not advised for preventing homelessness, because the target population does not identify those most at-risk of entering the homeless services system. However, universal poverty reduction strategies and efforts to increase availability of affordable housing in a community can ultimately help reduce the number of households at risk of homelessness.
- 2) **Targeted prevention** – this program model focuses on those with an eviction notice (either formal or informal), knowing that this population is more likely to experience homelessness. It works with this population by providing three key services: mediation (mediating between the tenant and the landlord and/or between the tenant and the eviction court judge), rental assistance (assisting with rental arrears and/or utility arrears and/or another expense causing financial distress), and light case management (navigating to mainstream resources to prevent the next financial crisis). Services can be delivered remotely, home-based, or directly in eviction court. Ideally, prevention offers the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible to achieve a positive outcome for a household, which ensures program resources are used as efficiently as possible.

Diversion

Diversion is not considered a program. It is a problem-solving approach that should be taught to all service staff in a homeless response system. The approach seeks to understand from the client what led to their housing crisis and to explore what immediate solutions to the crisis may be possible. It recognizes that entering shelter and the homeless response system is a traumatic process and comes at a great cost to the community. It is preferred to divert from the system, if possible. This could include a negotiated return to their previous housing, a short-term housing accommodation, shared housing, return to family or friends, or a permanent housing solution. Diversion has been shown through research to be incredibly effective and lessens the strain of the homeless response system.

Includes: **Services**

Length of time: **days**

Permanent Temporary

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site** / **Scattered site**

Target population: All populations at-risk of homelessness are eligible for prevention services. The most effective populations to serve are those with an eviction notice (either formal or informal) and are either currently entering eviction court or are at imminent risk of entering eviction court.

Includes: **Services**

Length of time: **days**

Permanent Temporary

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site** / **Scattered site**

Target population: Those who have lost their housing and are actively requesting access to shelter or are about to sleep in a place not meant for human habitation.

Access

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter plays the critical role of managing the night-by-night crisis of households experiencing homelessness. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has identified the following features as essential for a shelter to be effective:

1. **Housing First approach** – an effective shelter embraces a Housing First approach of recognizing that housing ends homelessness and that shelter is not a home.
2. **Diversions** – a shelter’s first role for a household is to divert them from staying at the shelter, if there are other resources or options available to the family. This is done through a problem-solving approach.
3. **Immediate and Low-Barrier Access** – the shelter will offer 24/7 availability to clients and will have few eligibility criteria or burdensome processes to ensure that clients can easily access the shelter.
4. **Housing-Focused Services** – all services should be dedicated to ensuring that households do not stay long in shelter. All support staff should be trained as housing specialists. A dedicated fund for ‘rapid resolution’ should exist for clients.
5. **Data to Measure Performance** – data is crucial to understanding the evolving trends of the shelter population and the effectiveness of services.

Includes: **Transitional Shelter**

Length of time: **days (ideal), weeks**

Permanent **Temporary**

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site / Scattered site**

Target population: Effective for all populations. It is most effective to design specific spaces for specific populations, including families with children, unaccompanied youth, respite shelter for those with advanced health concerns, domestic violence survivors, those with a dual diagnosis, and adult-only populations.

Housing

Rapid Resolution

Rapid resolution focuses on housing people with few barriers to stable housing by prioritizing three components.

1. **Housing identification** – provide housing listings to client and assist in the housing search process. Assist in advocacy for the client to property managers, as needed.
2. **Move-in assistance** – rapid resolution funds the move-in and security deposit costs to aid in the stability of the client. This short-term intervention is not designed to provide on-going rental assistance.
3. **Resource navigation** – connect the client to mainstream resources that can aid in stabilizing the client long-term.

Includes: **Services**

Length of time: **days, weeks**

Permanent **Temporary**

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site / Scattered site**

Target population: Designed to serve either family or adult-only households that have demonstrated strengths and no need for long-term rental assistance or supportive services.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is designed to serve households for up to 24 months with temporary housing and wrap-around supportive services:

1. **Temporary housing** – transitional housing offers two models of housing: facility-based – one complex of housing units where services are delivered on-site for up to 24 months or transition-in-place – where housing units are scattered across the community and services are mobile for up to 24 months.

2. **Wrap-around services** – supportive services are designed to focus on special needs populations such as domestic violence, those in recovery from substance misuse, and unaccompanied youth. Accordingly, services should be designed for the target population served through the program, including intensive case management, housing navigation, recovery services, financial stability, and mentorship. Today, transitional housing is no longer recommended as an intervention for all populations not listed in the ‘target populations,’ because all other populations are more effectively and less expensively served by rapid rehousing.

Rapid Rehousing

Rapid rehousing focuses on housing and stabilizing households quickly through three core components:

1. **Housing identification** – assist families and adult-only households in finding stable and permanent housing with a 12-month lease in the household’s name. The program should assist with application fees, security deposit, and move-in costs.
2. **Rental assistance** – the program will fund the rent for a short-to-medium-term period, likely on average 6 months, while the household works on a case plan.
3. **Case management** – intensive case management services will meet with household weekly to work through a case plan that addresses the trauma the household has experienced, connect the family to resources and promote financial stability.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing ends homelessness by combining affordable housing with intensive supportive services. Both the housing and the services are considered timeless – they are available to the client until the client choose to vacate the apartment. Core components include:

1. **Housing** - the housing unit is matched with permanent rental subsidy – like a Housing Choice Voucher – where the household only pays 30% of their income to afford the apartment.
2. **Supportive services** – the services are considered the most intensive of any intervention in a homeless response system. They are often accompanied with a team-based approach that includes a case manager, a nurse practitioner, a psychologist, a recovery specialist, an employment specialist, and maybe more.

Includes: **Housing, Services**

Length of time: **up to 24 months**

Permanent Temporary

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site** or **Scattered site**

Target population: The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the National Alliance to End Homelessness recommend transitional housing only serve domestic violence survivors, households recovering from substance misuse or unaccompanied youth.

Includes: **Housing, Services**

Length of time: **3 - 12 months**

Permanent Temporary

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$

Location: Single site **Scattered site**

Target population: Rapid rehousing has been shown as effective, through research and case studies, for families experiencing homelessness. It is also effective for adult-only households that are considered to have low-to-medium vulnerabilities and do not require permanent rental subsidies.

Includes: **Housing, Services**

Length of time: **Timeless**

Permanent Temporary

Cost per intervention: \$\$\$\$

Location: **Single site** or **Scattered site**

Target population: Dedicated for the most vulnerable households in the homeless response system. These households are often experiencing chronic homelessness and are frequent users of emergency services like the hospital, paramedics, and corrections system.



Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

Data Deck

2021

Project Data Collection & Analysis



Research Questions

- **Evidence-Based Practices**

- What are the evidence-based practices to address homelessness?

- **Key Trends**

- What key trends exist for people experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?
- What key trends exist for the housing market in Mat-Su?

- **Upstream**

- Who is at risk of experiencing homelessness?

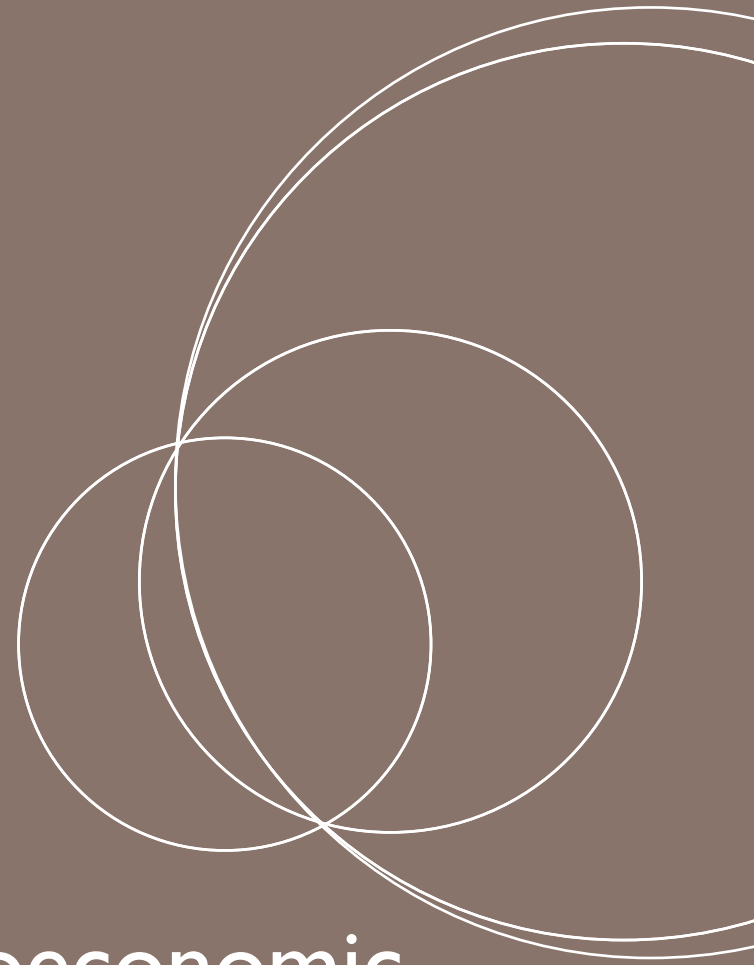
- **Gap Model**

- Do we have enough supply of appropriate housing and supports to meet demand from people experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?

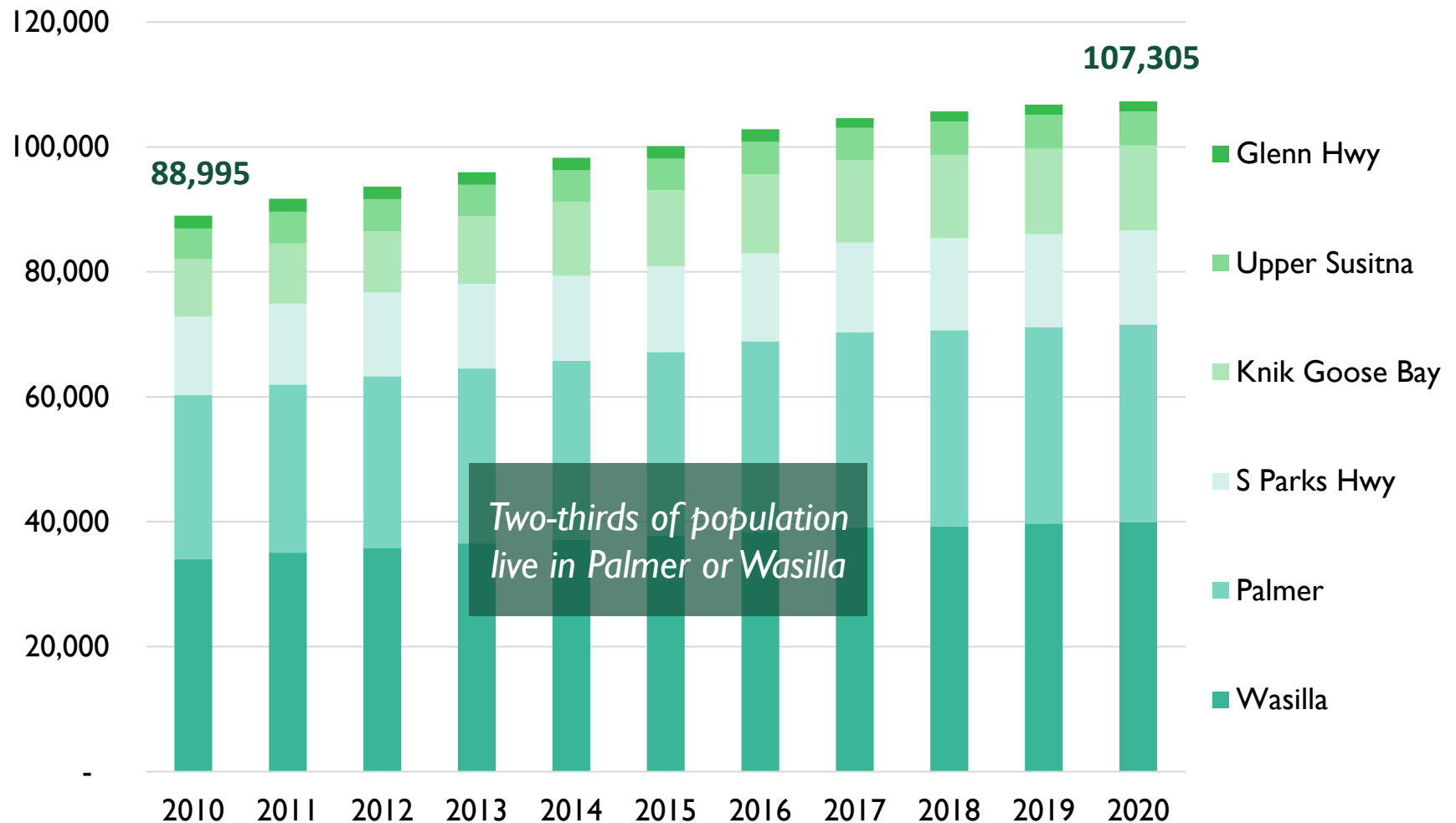
- **Communities Comparison**

- How does homelessness in Mat-Su compare to communities of similar size and characteristics?

Mat-Su Housing and Socioeconomic Landscape



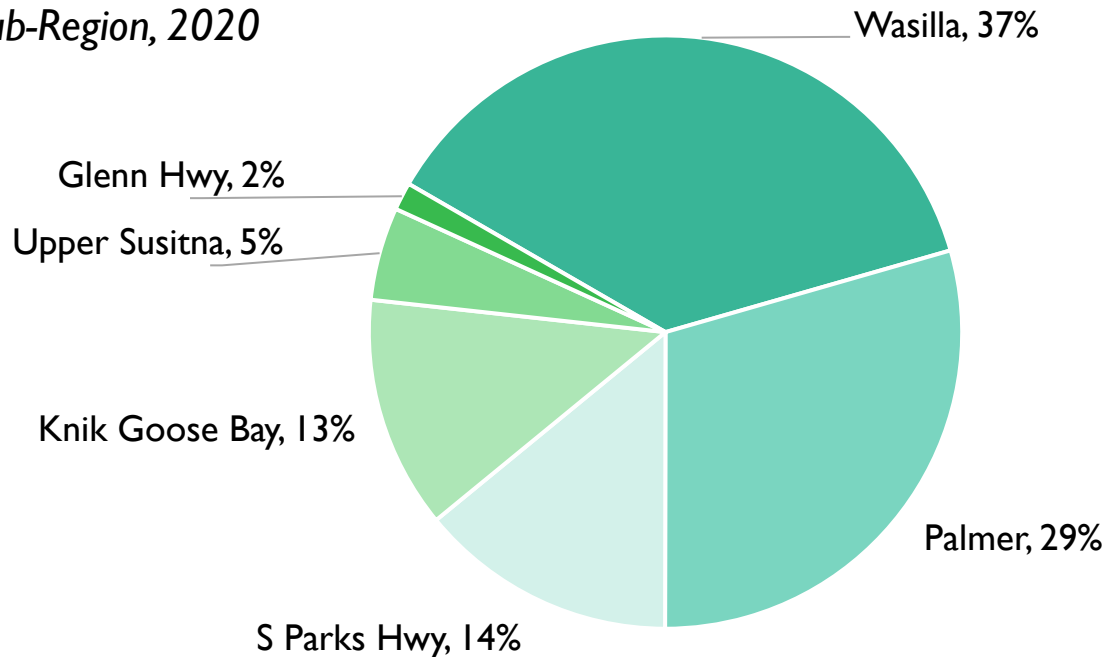
The Mat-Su Population is Growing



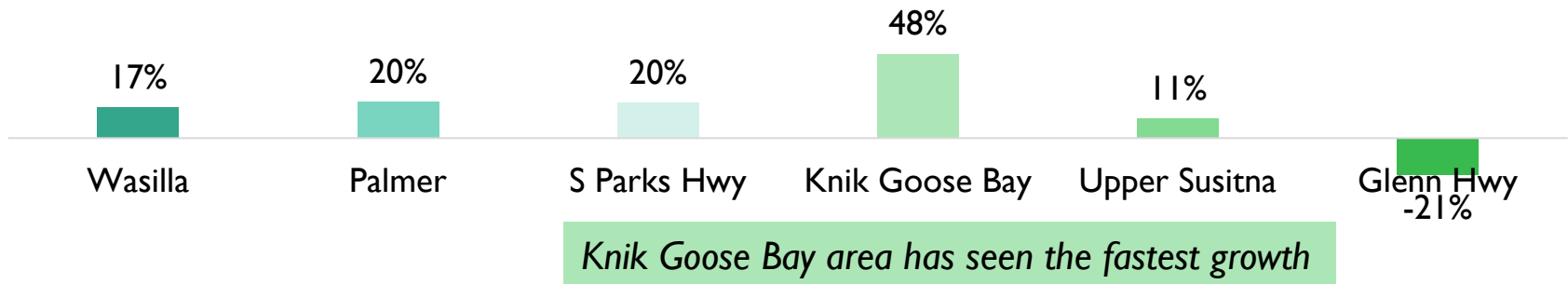
Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development

Two-Thirds of the Population live in Wasilla or Palmer

Population by Sub-Region, 2020



Growth Rates, 2010 - 2020



Source: U.S. Census

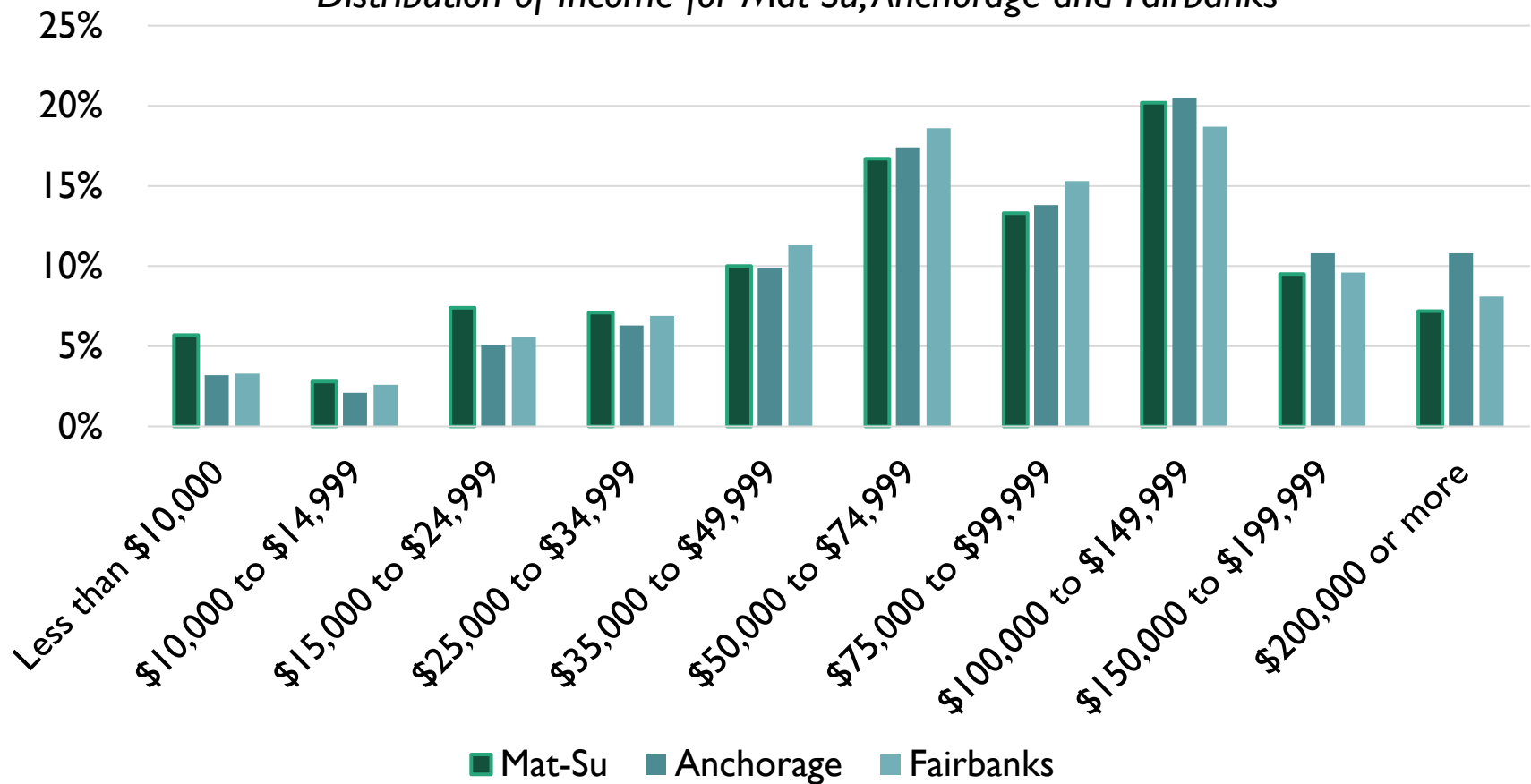
Mat-Su has slightly lower incomes compared with Anchorage and Fairbanks

Median: Mat-Su: \$75,493

Anchorage: \$84,928

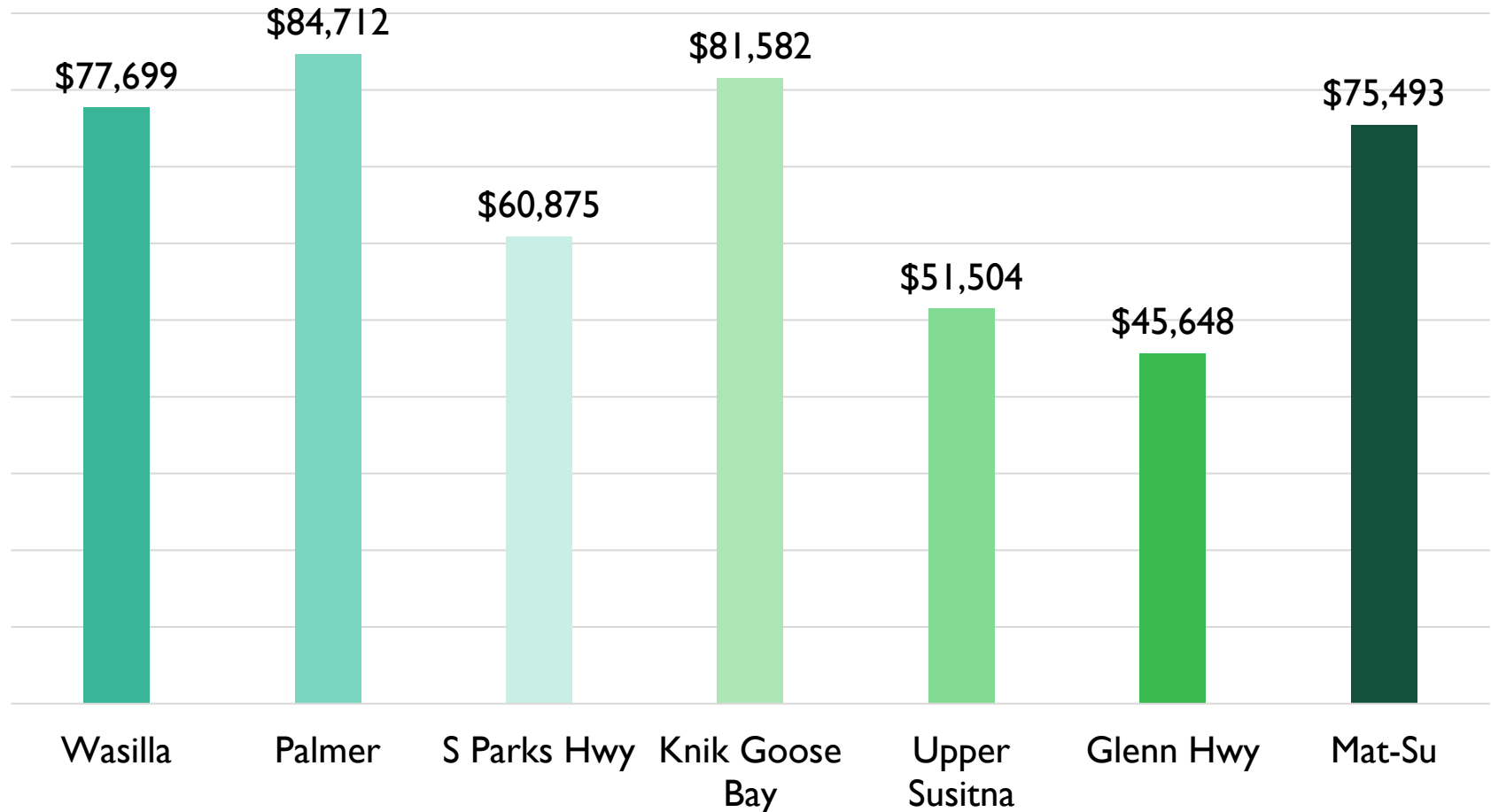
Fairbanks: \$76,992

Distribution of Income for Mat-Su, Anchorage and Fairbanks



Median Incomes Higher in Wasilla, Palmer and Knik Goose Bay Sub-Regions

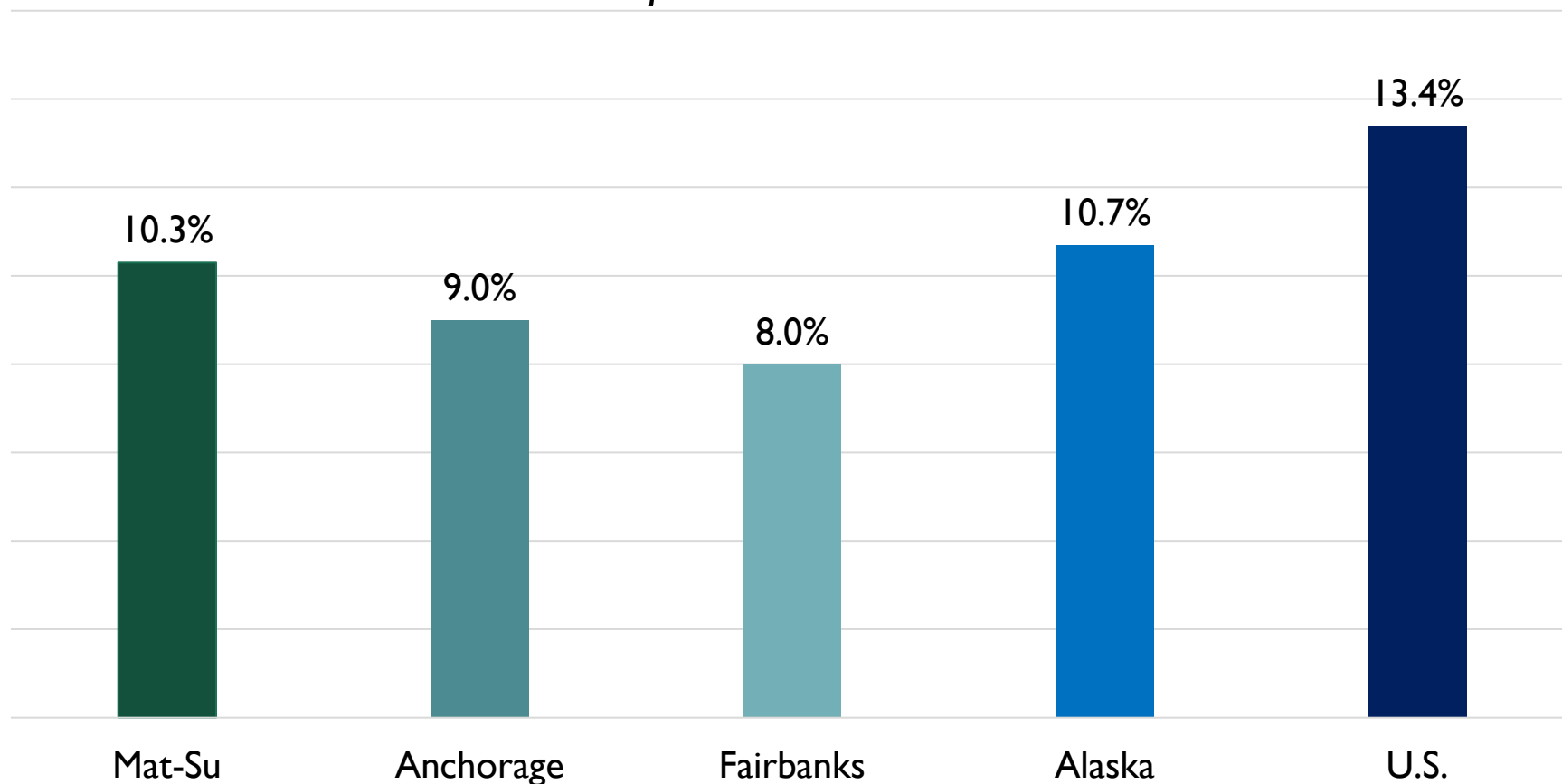
Median Income for Mat-Su and Sub-Regions



Source: U.S. Census

Slightly Higher Poverty Rates in Mat-Su compared to Anchorage, Fairbanks but lower than Alaska and U.S. Overall

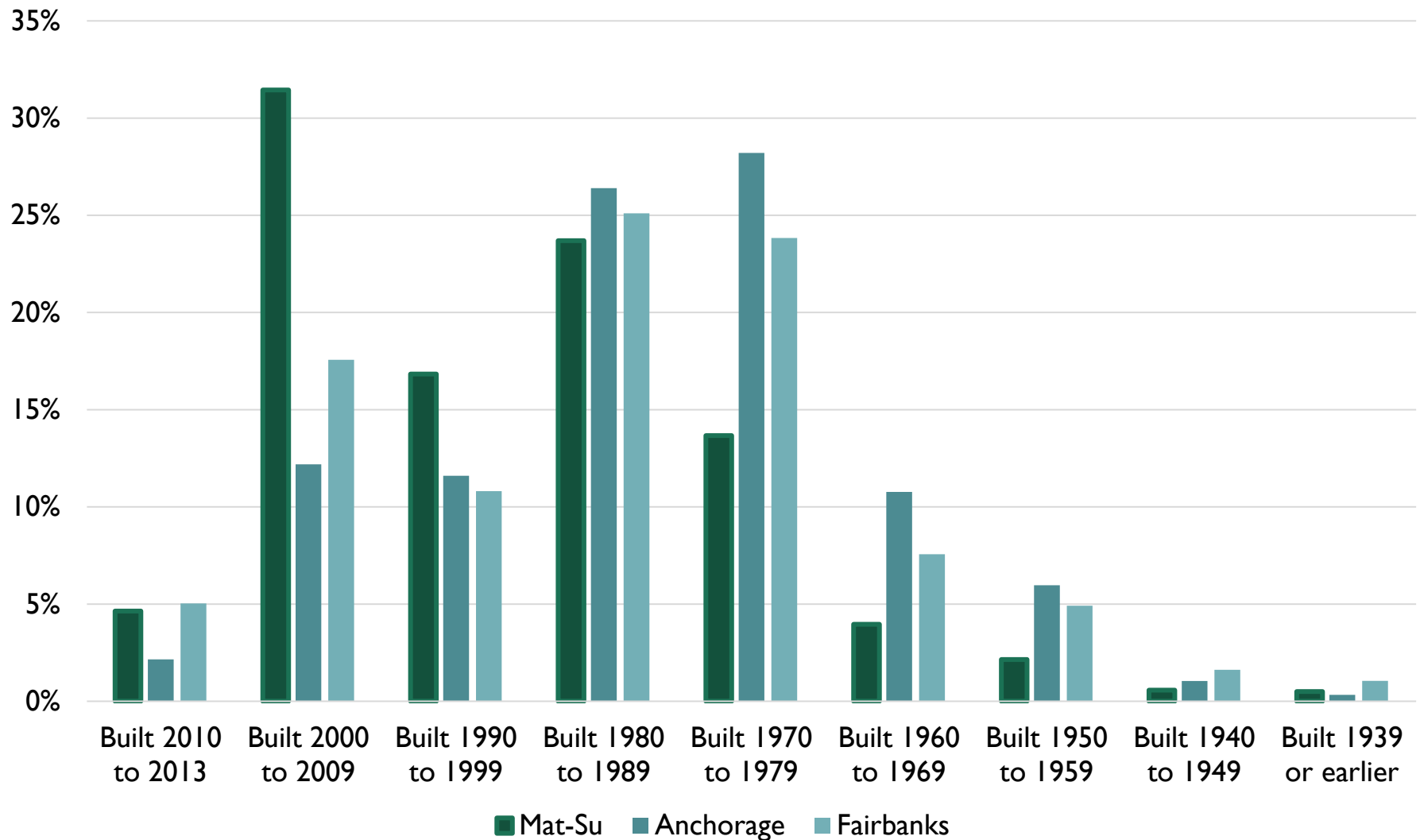
Percentage of population below the poverty line for Mat-Su and comparable communities



Overview of the Mat-Su Housing Market

- 🏠 Mat-Su has much newer housing stock than Anchorage or Fairbanks
- 🏠 Mat-Su has high rates of home ownership (77%)
- 🏠 Most housing units are single-family homes (84%)
- 🏠 Rent is lower in Mat-Su than statewide averages

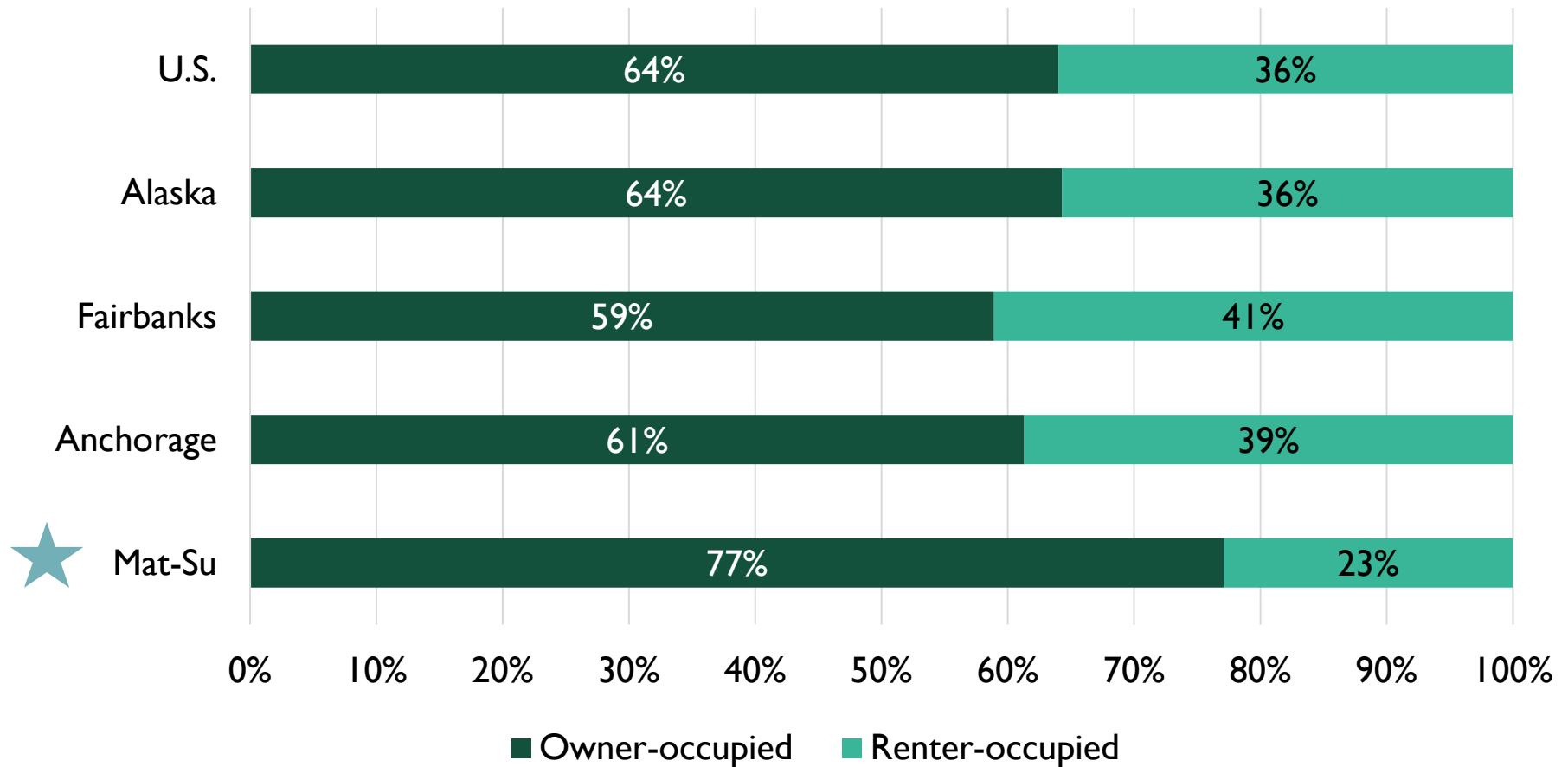
Mat-Su has Younger Housing Stock



Source: U.S. Census

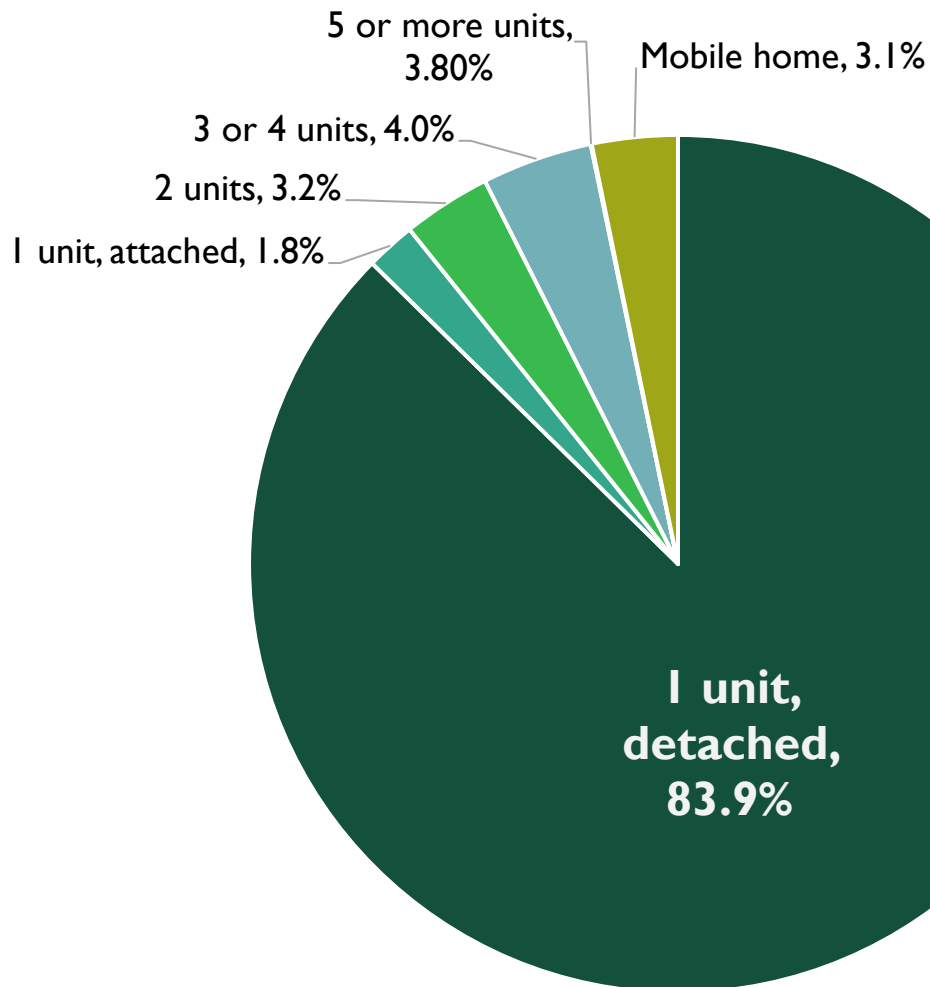
High Rates of Home Ownership in Mat-Su

Owner versus rental-occupied units for Mat-Su and comparable communities



Source: U.S. Census

Most Housing Units are Single-Family Homes

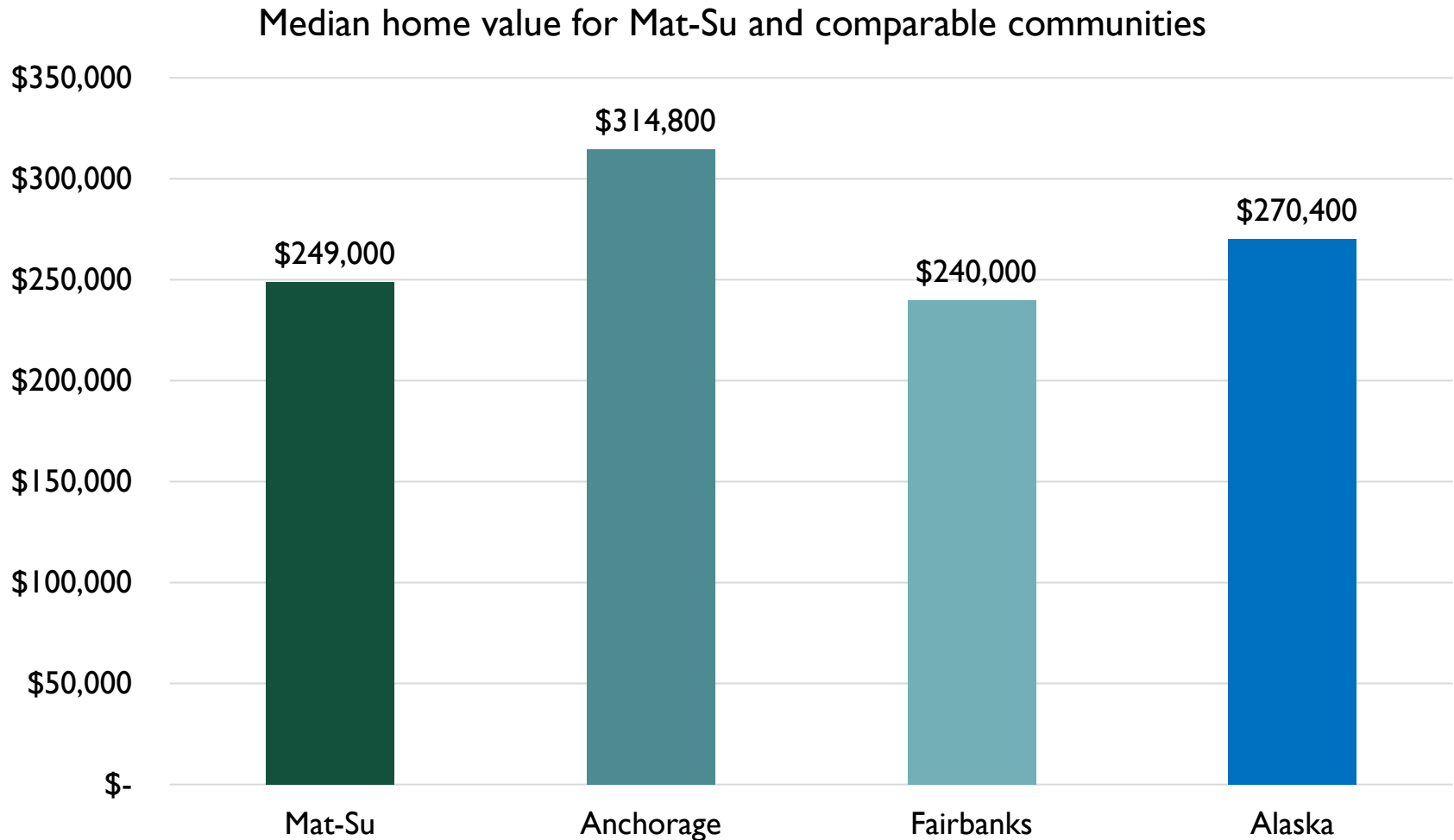


Mat-Su has more single-family homes than comparable areas:

Anchorage: 47.8%

Fairbanks: 61.5%

Median Home Values are Slightly Lower in Mat-Su

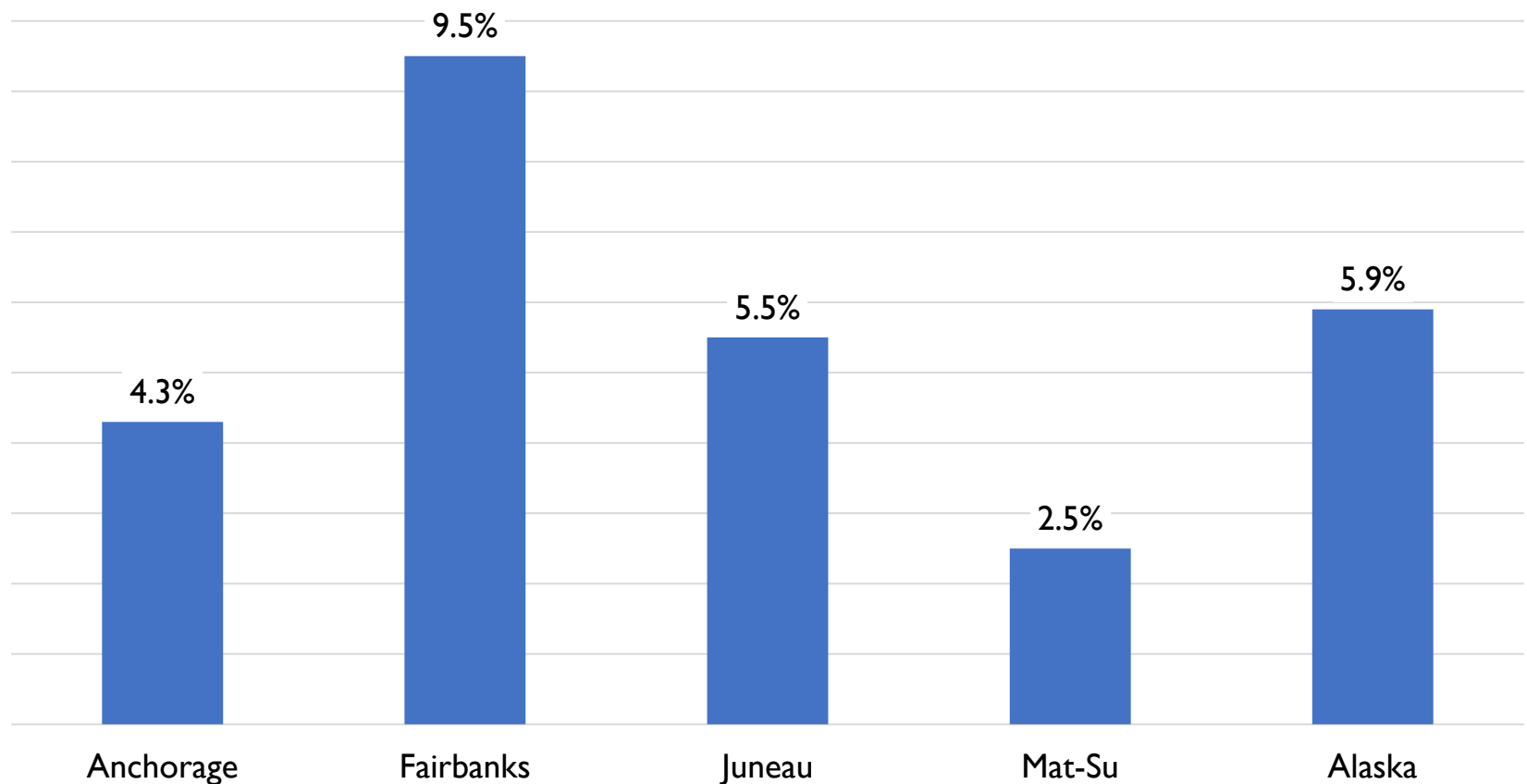


Source: U.S. Census

Vacancy Rates

The Mat-Su Borough has the lowest vacancy rate in the state

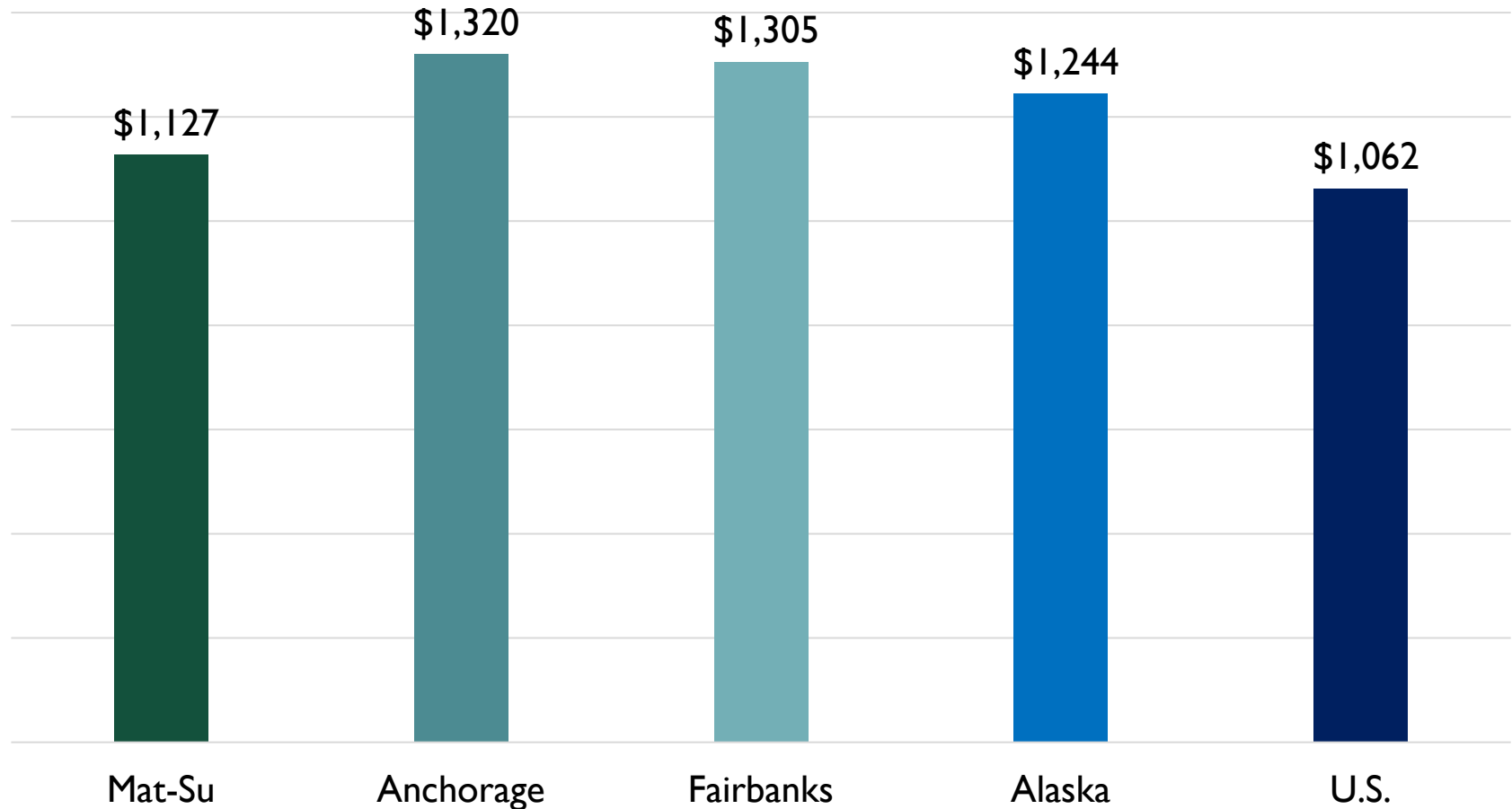
Vacancy rate



Source: Alaska Housing Finance Corp.

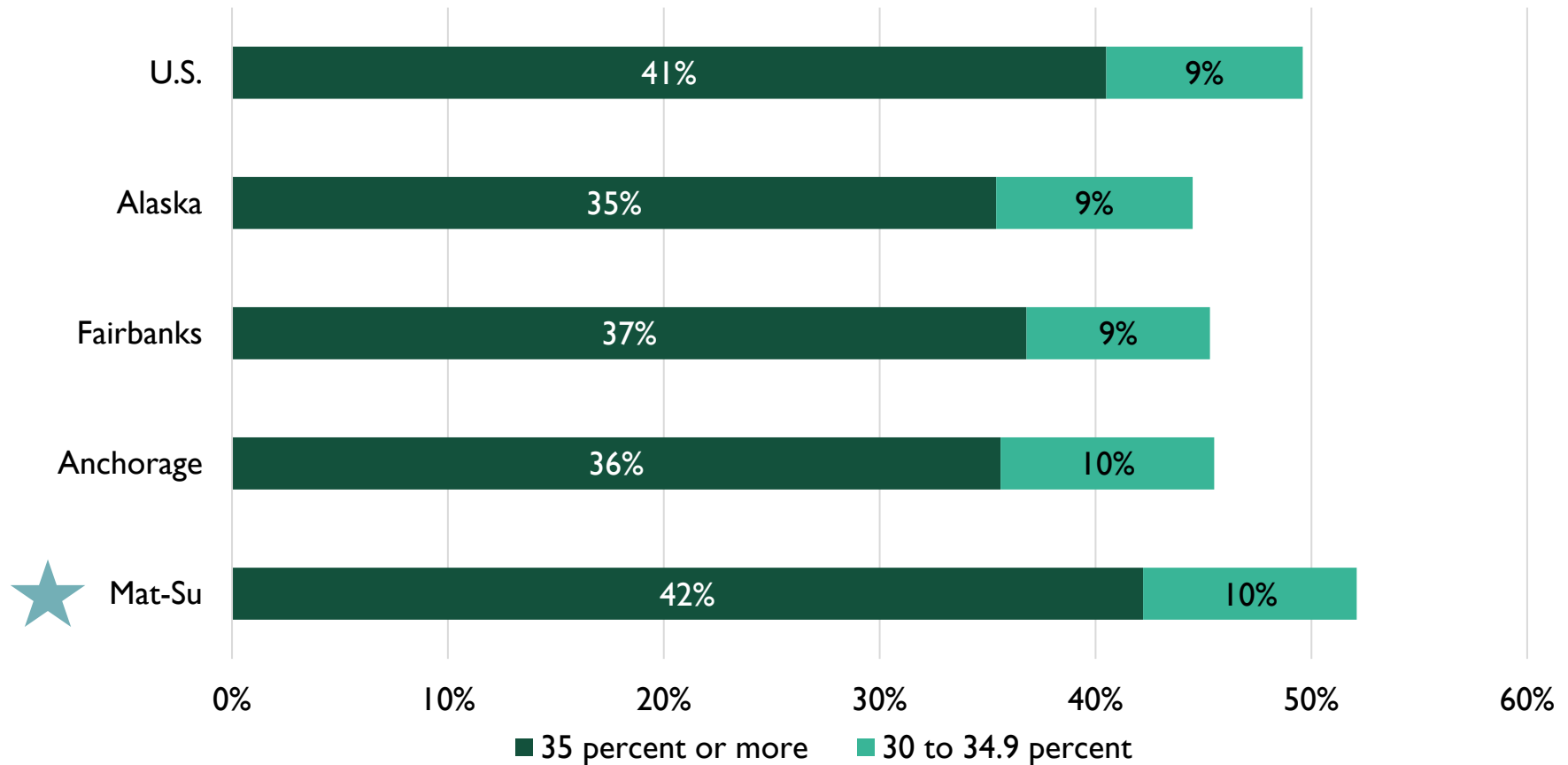
Rent in Mat-Su is Lower than the State Average

Median Rental Cost for Mat-Su and Comparable Communities



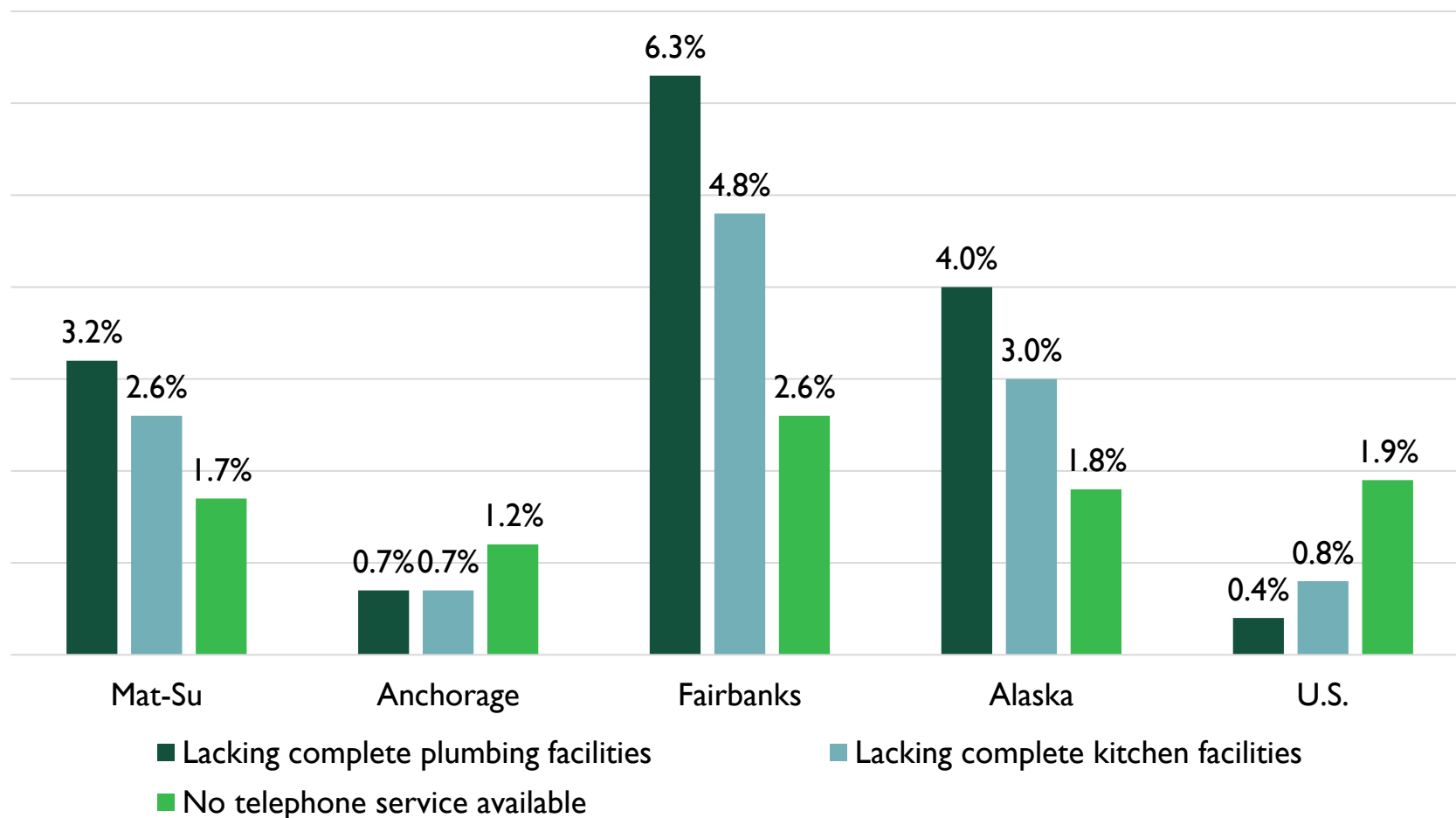
More than Half of all Renters are Cost-Burdened in Mat-Su

Percentage of gross rent of household income for Mat-Su and comparable communities



Some Mat-Su Homes Lack Plumbing, Kitchen Facilities

Select Housing Characteristics for Mat-Su and Comparable Regions



Some Disparities between Mat-Su Subregions in Housing Features such as Plumbing and Kitchens



Source: U.S. Census



What is Homelessness? What the State
of Homelessness in Mat-Su?

Response Continuum: Defining Key Elements

Homeless Response Continuum

Prevention

Diversion +
Resource
Navigation

Outreach

Emergency
Shelter +
Day
Services

Transitional
Housing
(TH)

Rapid
Rehousing
(RRH)

Permanent
Supportive
Housing
(PSH)

Infrastructure + Backbone

Understanding Homelessness through Quantitative Data

To understand people experiencing homelessness

- Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) using data from 2018-2020
- Housing Inventory Count (HIC) from 2019

To understand households at-risk of homelessness

- 211 data from 2018-2020
- Connect Mat-Su data
- Mat-Su Borough School District

HMIS Data Findings (FY18-FY20)

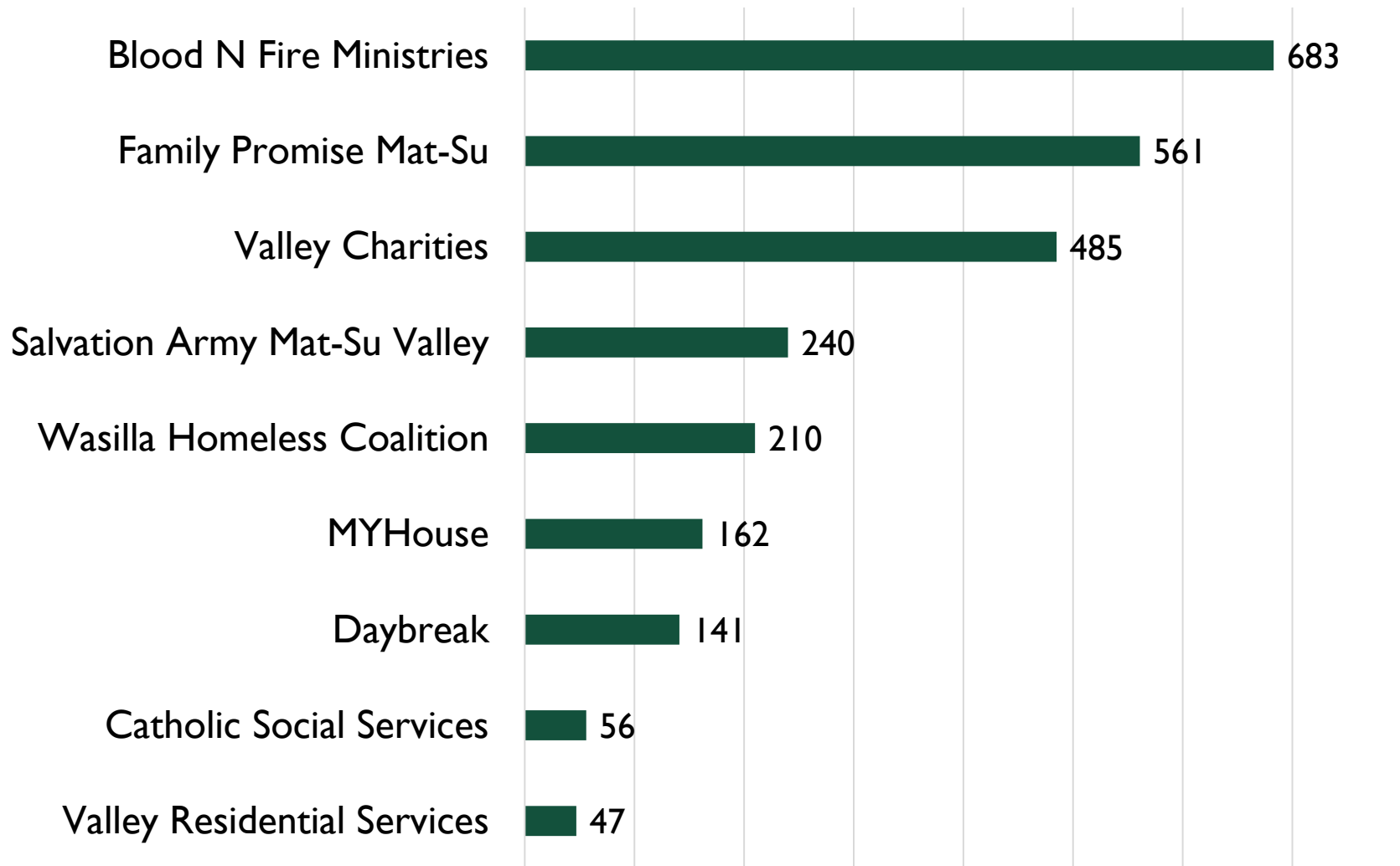
Region	Population (2020)	# of HMIS Encounters
Mat-Su	107,305	2,585
Anchorage	288,970	108,067

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020

Anchorage has 2.7 times the population of Mat-Su, but 42 times the number of Mat-Su HMIS entries.

This suggests HMIS data coverage is limited for Mat-Su.

Count of Encounters by Mat-Su Provider



Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020

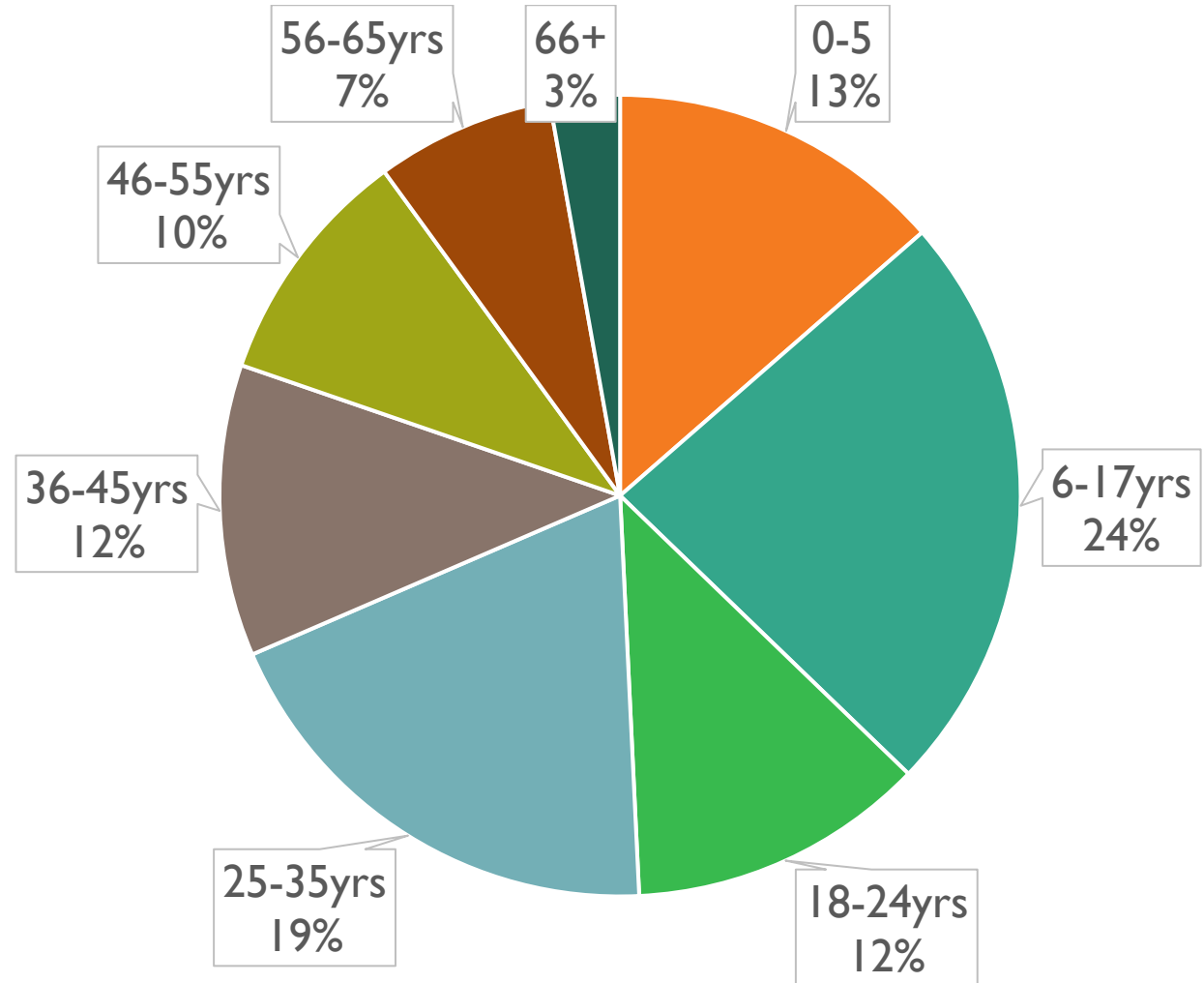
Heads of Household

Number of Heads of Households	1,052
Disabling Condition	44% have a disabling condition
Average Age	39 years
Domestic Violence	33% report fleeing domestic violence
Veterans	7%

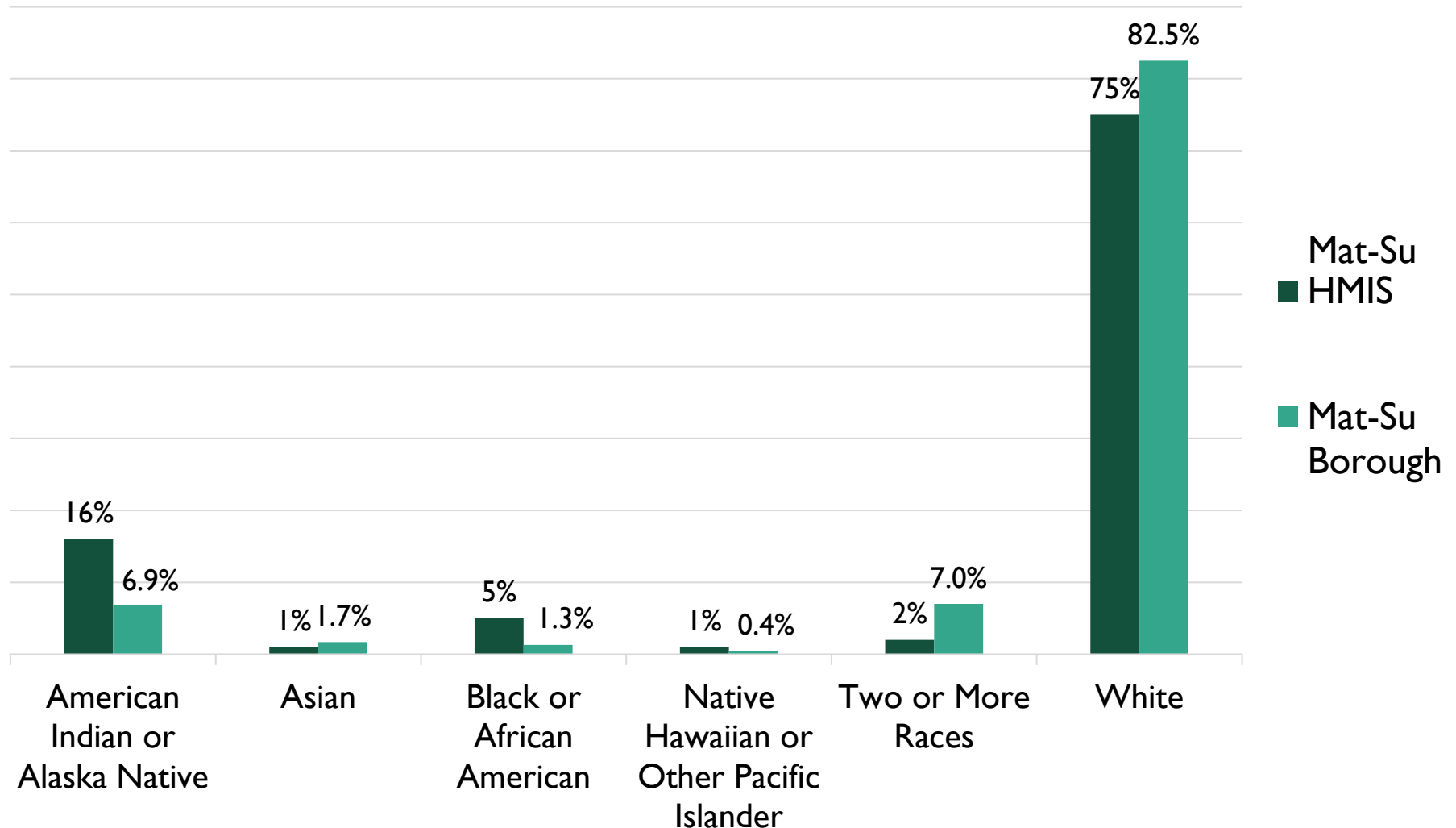
Overall, 13.8% of Mat-Su residents 18 and over are veterans

Ages of Head of Households

Avg Age of Head of Household	39
Avg Age of Children	8
Number of Children (under 18)	832

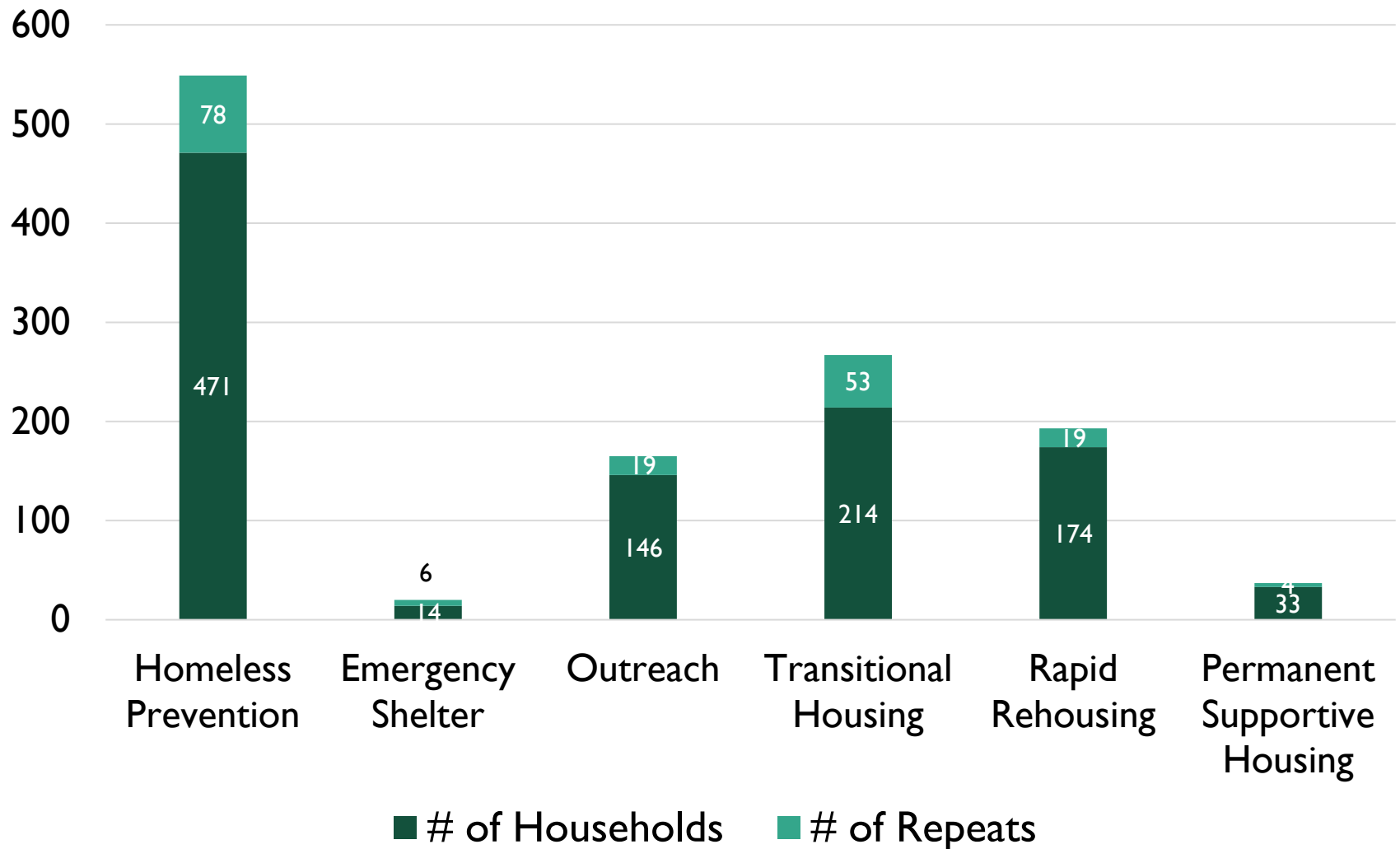


People Experiencing Homelessness by Race of Head of Household, compared to population



Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020 and U.S. Census

Number of Mat-Su Households Experiencing Homelessness by Project Type



Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020

What's the primary reason people are asking for assistance?

Homelessness Prevention	% of 546 Interventions
Low Wages	14%
Illness or Injury	13%
New Job/Paycheck Delay	11%
Hours of Work Cut	11%
Car Trouble or Accident	8%

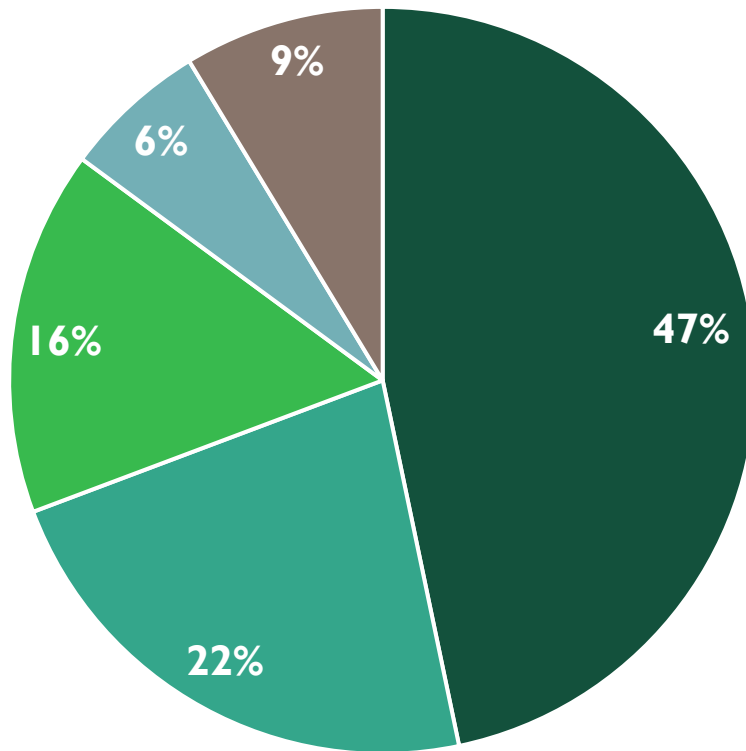
Discuss: Does this align with what you see? Does anything surprise you?

These individuals are currently in housing but at risk of losing it.

Literal Homelessness	% of 1,188 Interventions
Unemployed	15%
Low Wages	10%
Illness or Injury	10%
Hours of Work Cut	9%
Car Trouble or Accident	8%
New Job/Paycheck Delay	7%

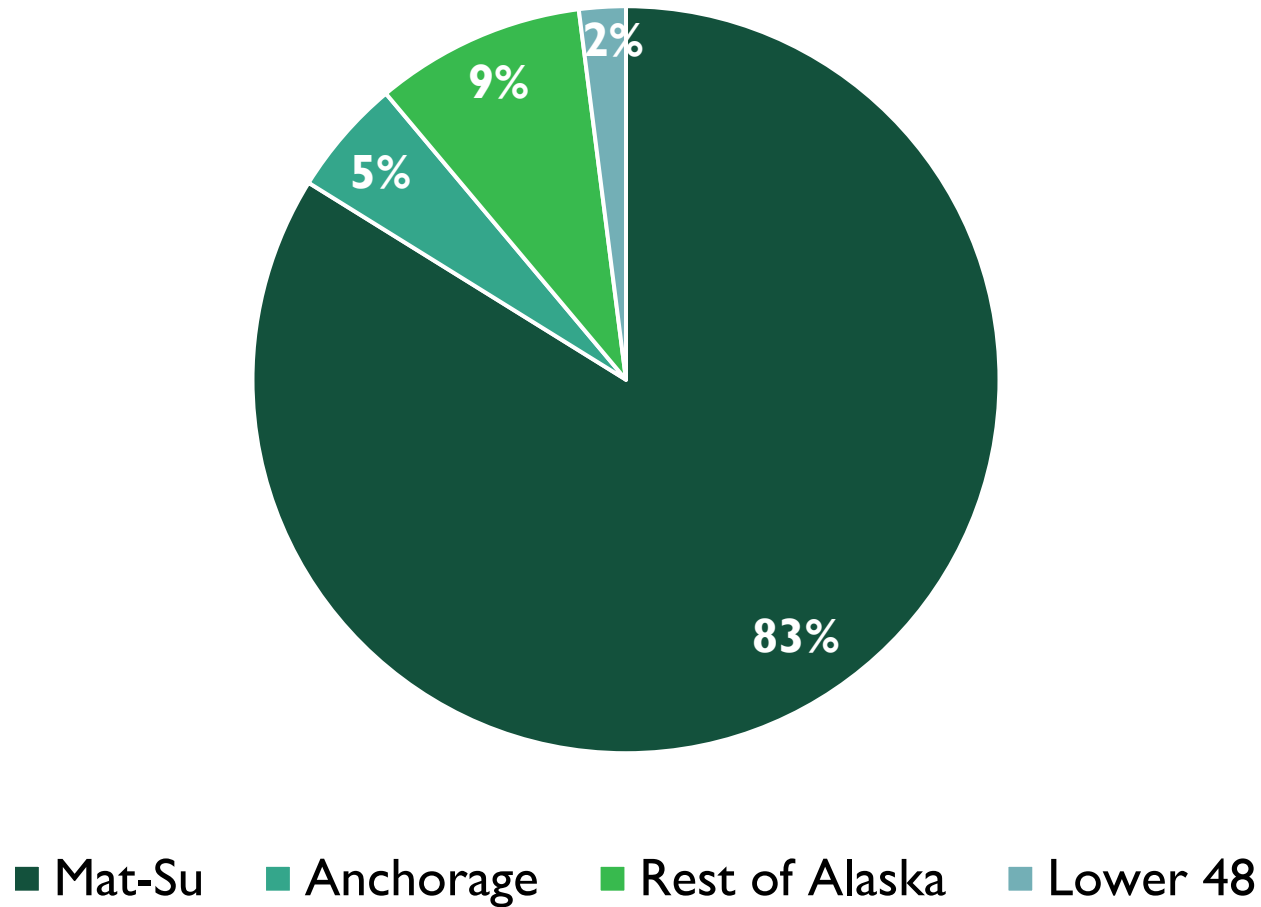
These are individuals on the streets, working with a homeless service provider

What are the key categories of reasons that people are experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?



■ Economic ■ Health ■ Housing ■ Legal ■ Other

Where are households coming from prior to working with a Mat-Su Provider? *(categorized by zip code)*



Overlap Between Mat-Su and Anchorage CoC

of Times a Household Worked with Both a Mat-Su AND Anchorage Service Provider: 137

of Households that Overlapped: 114 (11% of all Mat-Su households in HMIS)

% of Overlap that was Single Adults: 50%

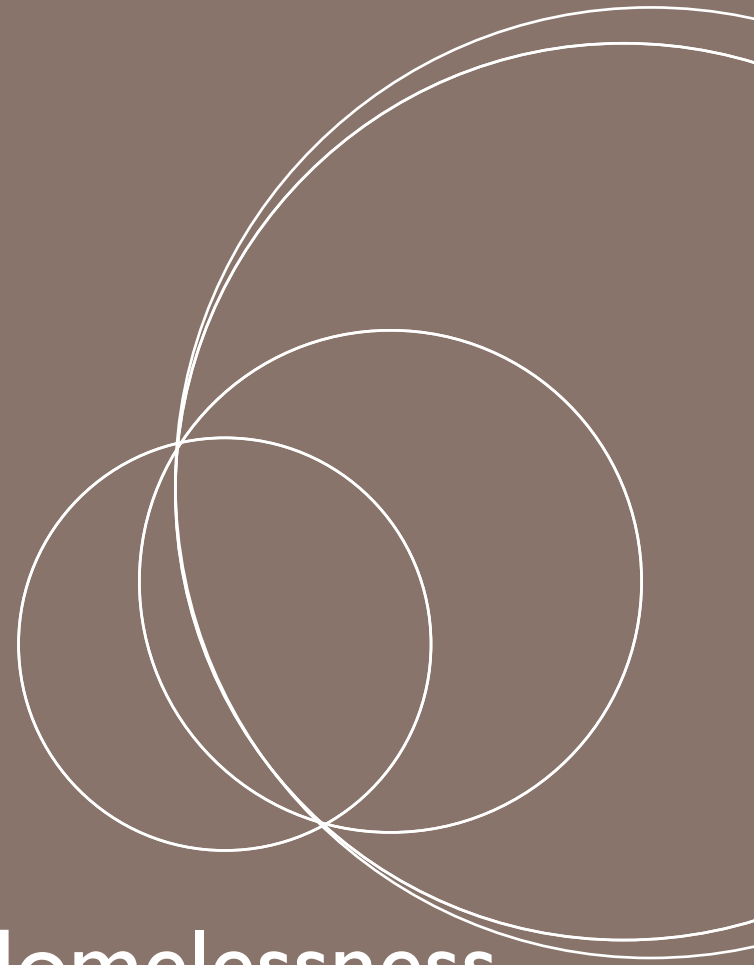
% of Overlap that was TAY: 17%

Which Project Type Did the Overlap Population Touch in the Mat-Su?	% of 137 Entries
Transitional Housing	45%
Homelessness Prevention	27%
Rapid ReHousing	15%
Outreach	10%

This is over a two-year period

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020

Discuss: As a part of your work, do you see people seeking assistance who move between Anchorage and Mat-Su?



At-Risk of Experiencing Homelessness

Different Views of the At-Risk Population



Poverty

of Households earning less than \$24,999 per year:

- **4,927**



Evictions

Average # of eviction filings per year:

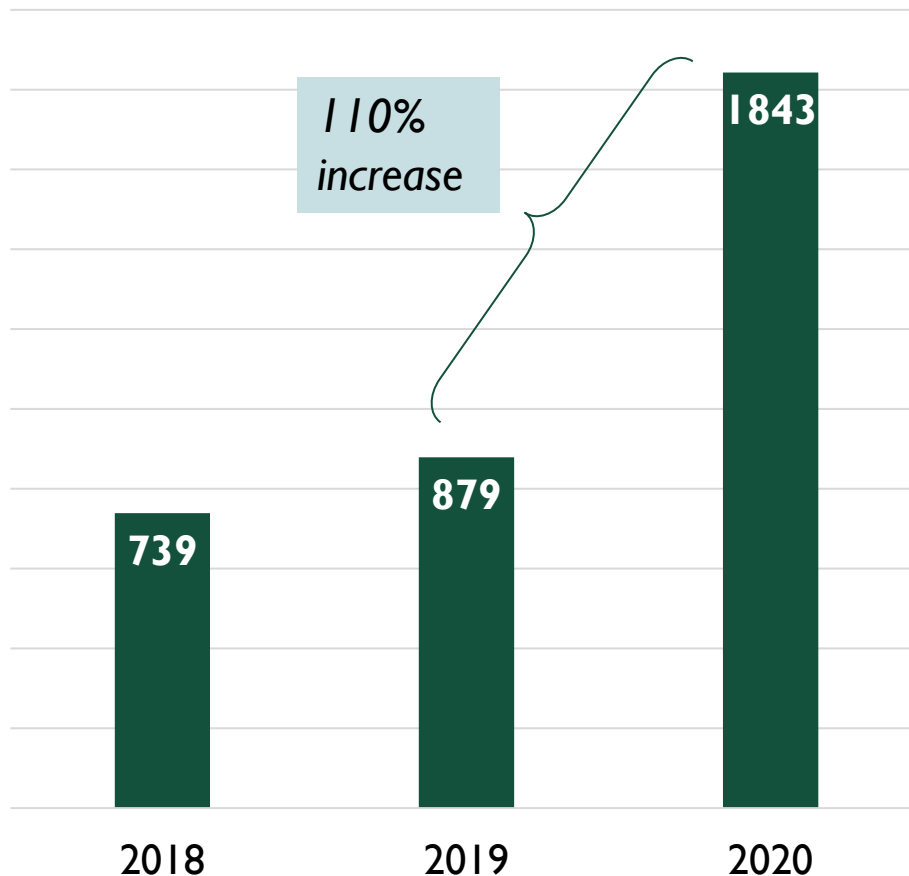
- **153**

of households “informally evicted” each year:

- **269**

Calls from Mat-Su to 211 (housing-related needs)

of 211 Housing-based Calls from the Mat-Su

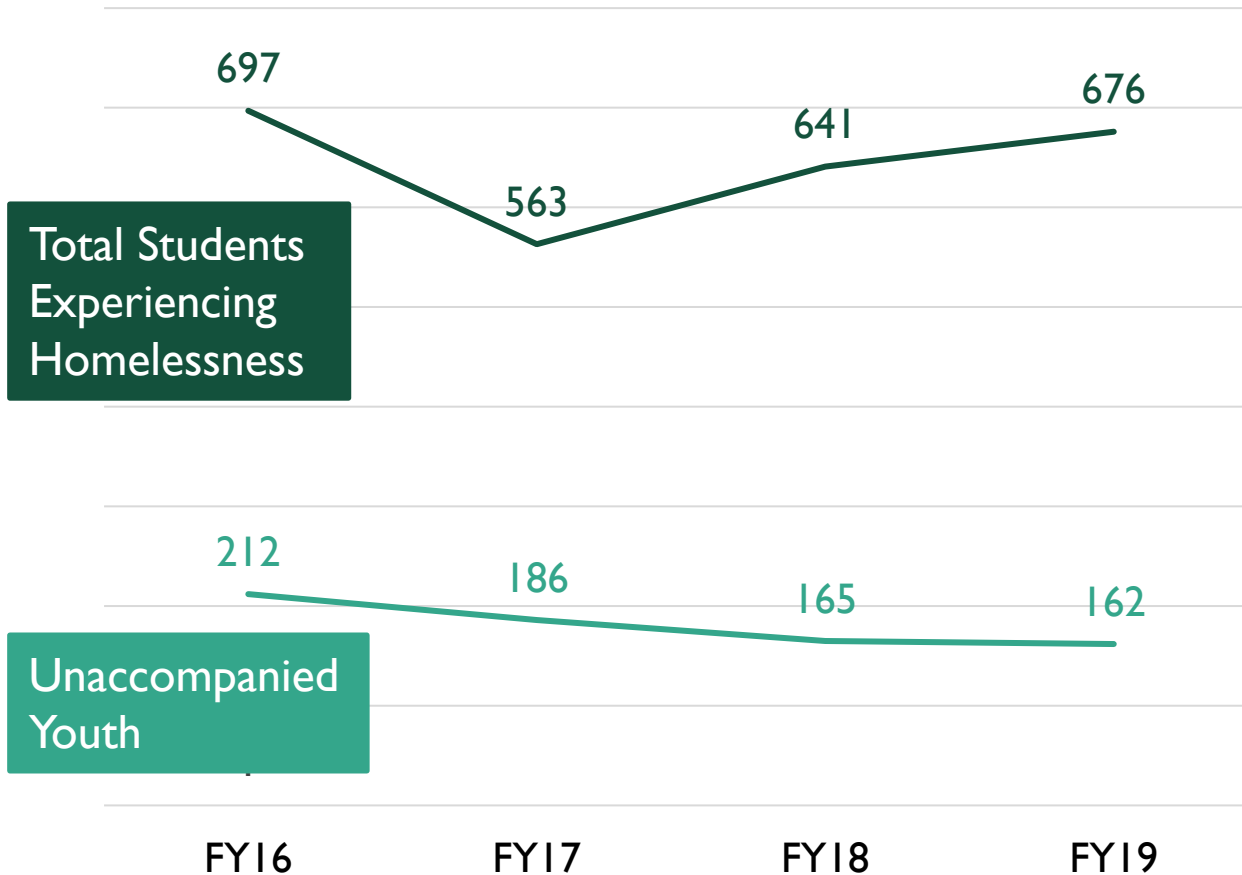


Top 3 Reasons for Call	% of Calls (2020)
Rental Assistance	42%
Utility Assistance	30%
Needs Low-Income Housing	7%

Top Zip Codes	# of Calls (2020)
99654 (Wasilla)	1,092
99645 (Palmer)	331
99623 (Wasilla)	205

Students Experiencing Homelessness

of Students Experiencing Homelessness



3.5% of the Mat-Su Borough School District students experienced homelessness*

3.8% of the Anchorage School District students experienced homelessness*

**FY19 numbers*

Services Offered to Students

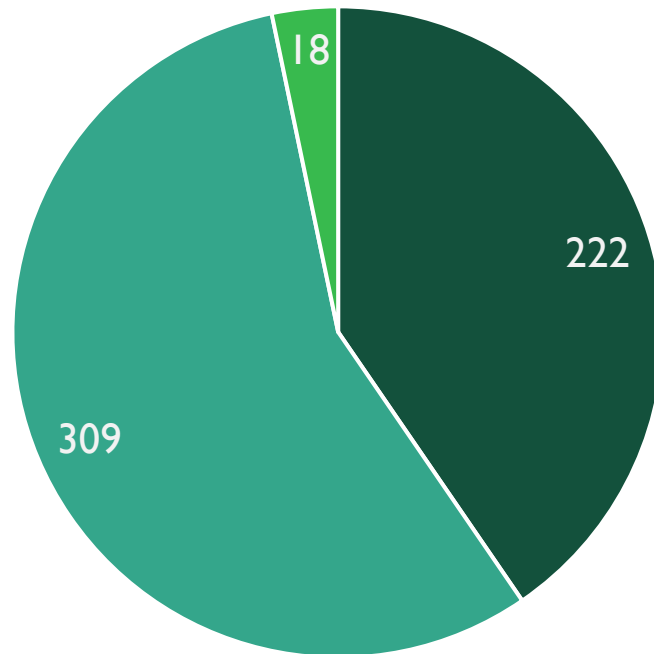
In FY19, the Mat-Su Borough School District provided 4,131 services to students in need, including:

- 704 (17%) clothing services
- 691 (16%) free breakfasts or lunches
- 557 (13%) transportation services
- 436 (10%) hygiene services
- 432 (10%) shoe cards



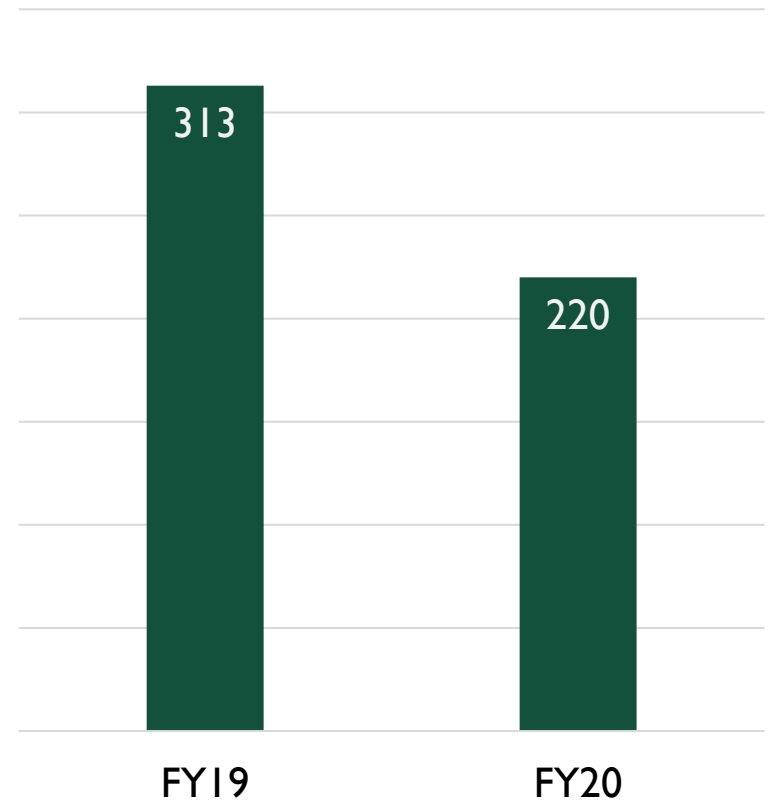
Homelessness Prevention

Populations Served (2019-2020)

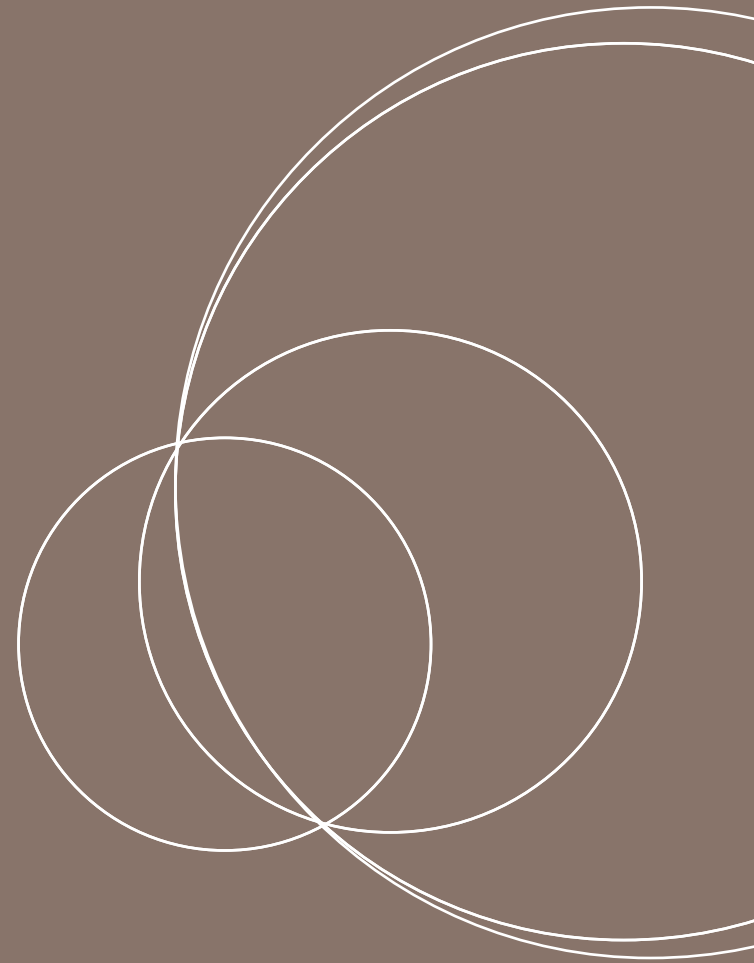


- Adult-Only
- Families with Children
- Youth/Transition-Aged Youth

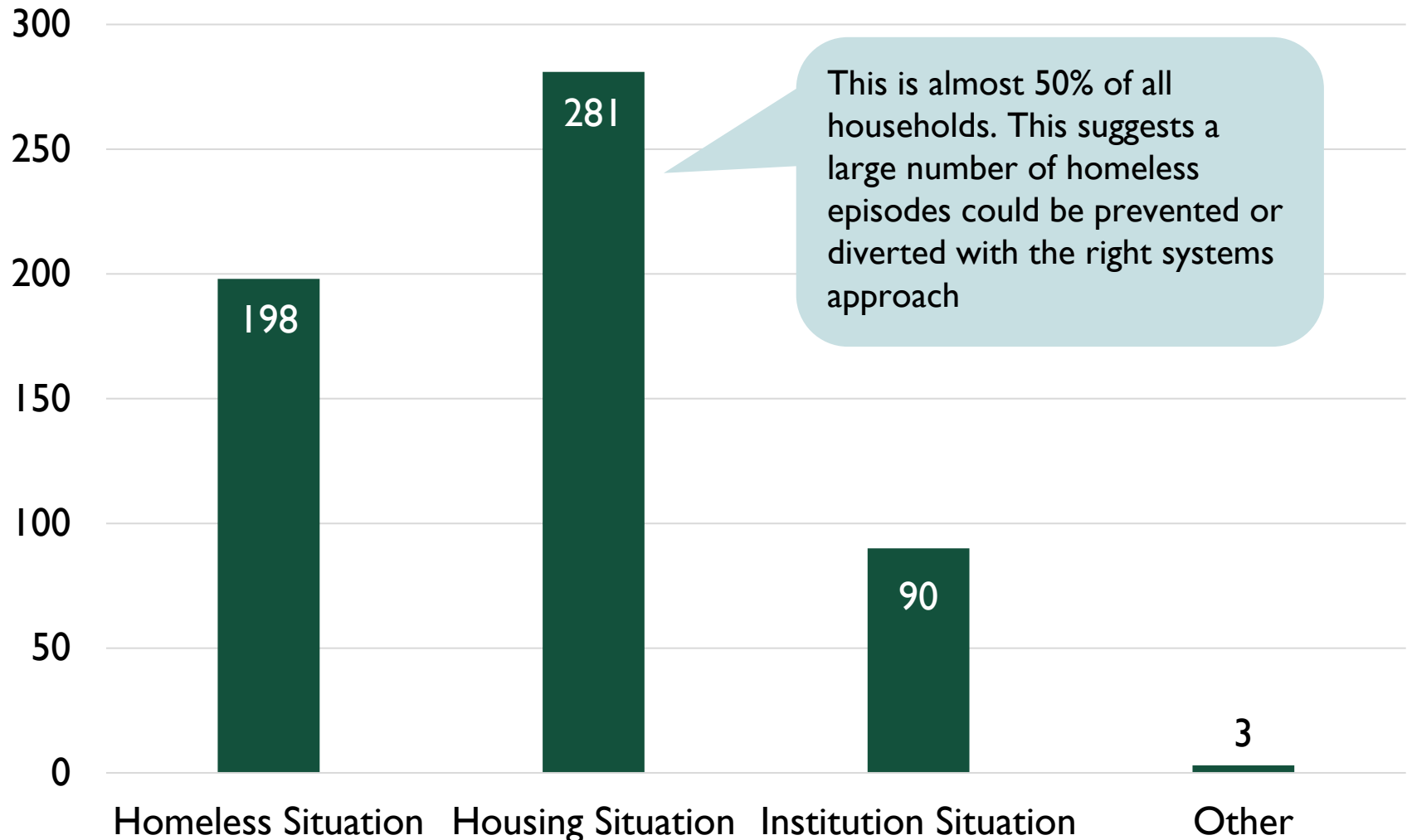
Households Served



Literal Homelessness

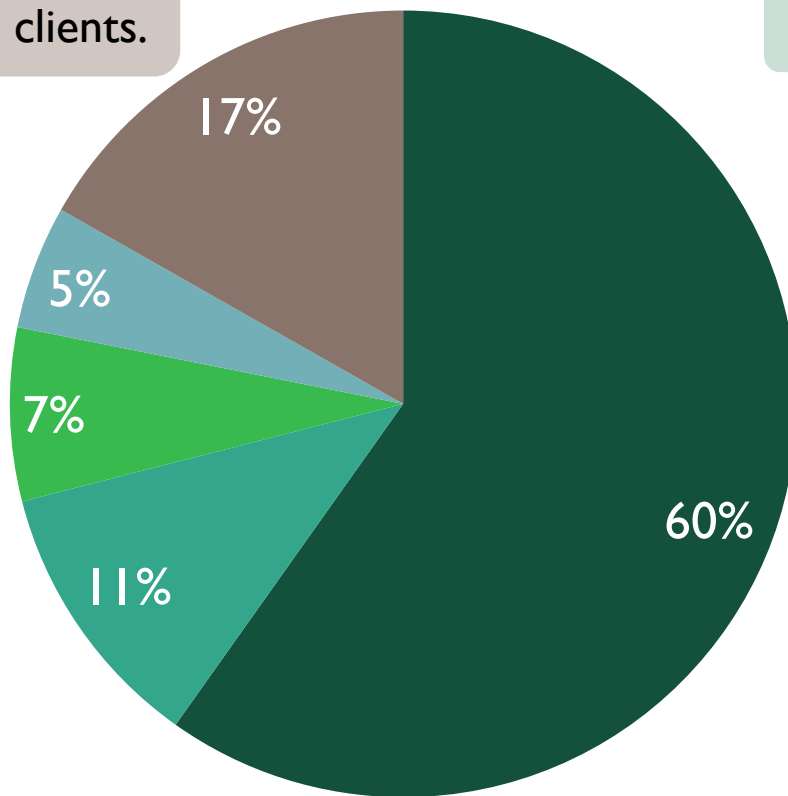


Residence Prior to Seeking Assistance (for people experiencing literal homelessness)



Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness Prior to Project Entry

Likely the most vulnerable clients.



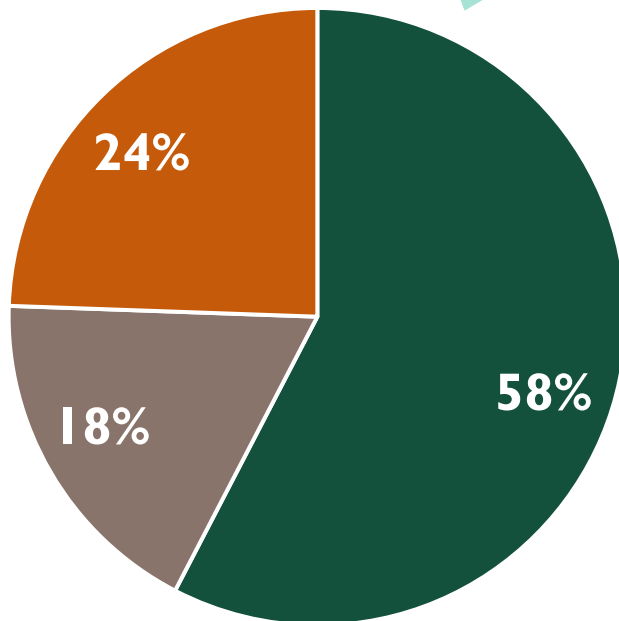
Target population for diversion

- 0 - 3 months
- 4 - 6 months
- 7 - 9 months
- 10 - 12 months
- Greater than a Year

Median Length of Time	2.5 months
Average Length of Time	9.5 months

Did our housing programs inspire a positive housing outcome for our clients?

National best practice would expect the positive outcomes to be above 80%



■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

Over 2 years, **446 households** entered a Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing or Transitional Housing program.

What was the reason for exiting the program?

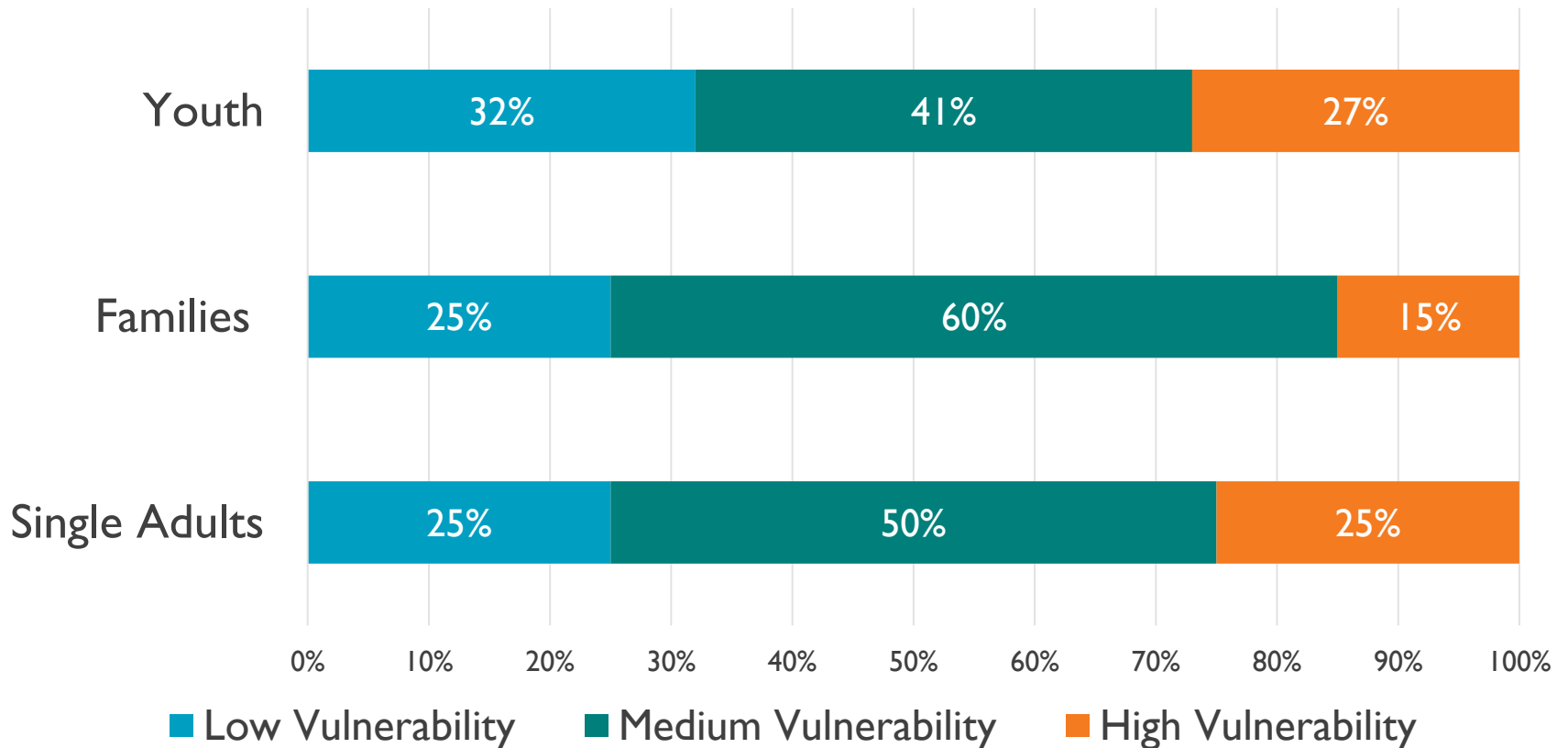
Positive outcome: Housed and completed program

Neutral outcome: Unknown exit reason, relocated outside of community, referred to another program, and other

Negative outcome: Non-compliance with program, broke program rules, criminal activity

Vulnerability by Population

NOTE: The numbers provided are from another analysis and will be updated for Mat-Su



Easier to Serve



More Complex Needs

Known Quantitative Data Challenges

- No coordinated entry into homeless services in Mat-Su
- Limited contact with unsheltered populations; limited emergency shelter and street outreach
- Not easy to quantify how many Mat-Su residents need services and are receiving homelessness services in Anchorage



Proposed Approach to Address Challenges:

- Synthesize multiple datasets to help address data gaps
- Look at overlap of Anchorage and Mat-Su data
- Check Mat-Su numbers against comparable communities



Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

What We Learned and What Comes Next

December 6 and 7, 2021



MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION

WELCOME

Project Purpose

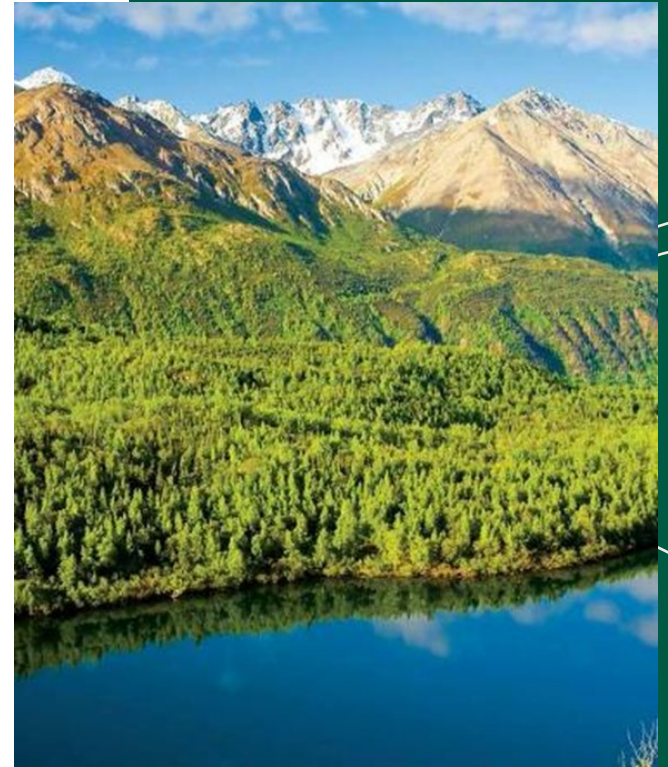
- **Better understand homelessness in Mat-Su** *through data collection and stakeholder input.*
- **Prepare a gaps model** *to answer the question: is the capacity to house people experiencing homelessness meeting the demand for homeless services in Mat-Su?*
- **Reach out to stakeholders** *to identify needs and areas for improvement.*
- **Compile findings and share recommendations** *to address homelessness in Mat-Su.*

Meeting Guidelines

- Introduce yourself by writing your name and affiliation in the chat.
- Stay muted when you are not talking.
- If you have joined by video, don't forget – everyone can see you.
- Use the chat to share comments, questions, and ideas. We will also invite discussion at the end of the presentation.

Land Acknowledgement

*We acknowledge that we are
on the traditional land of the
Dena'ina and **Ahtna** Peoples.*



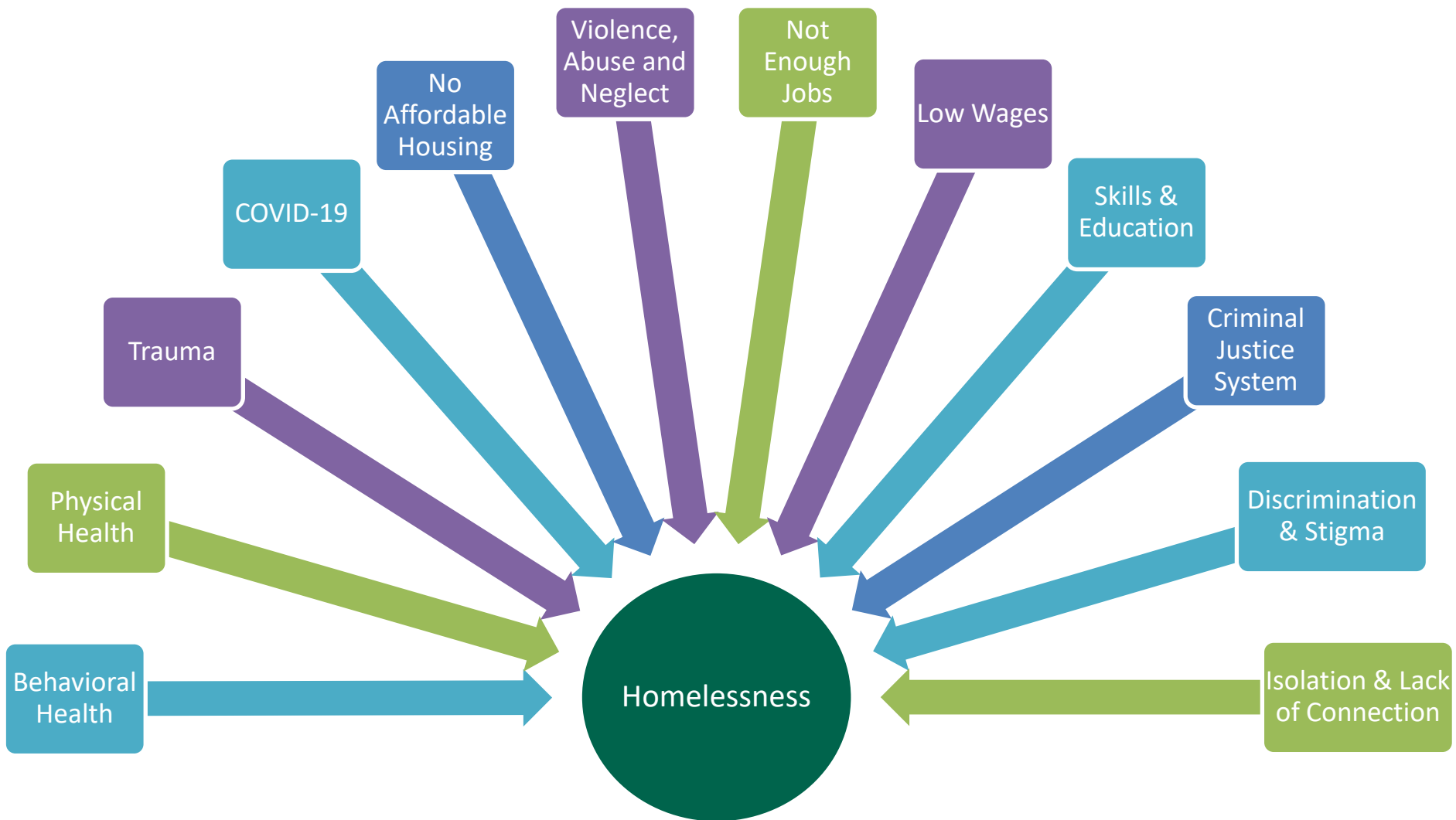
A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

<http://convention.myacpa.org/nashville2020/inclusion/land-acknowledgement/>

Agenda

15 minutes	Welcome and Key Findings
5 minutes	Outreach and Analysis
15 minutes	Summary of Themes
10 minutes	Recommendations
15 minutes	Q&A

What causes homelessness?



The Reason Why – Experiences of Homelessness in Mat-Su *(from interviews with adults with lived experience)*

“I finally got sober from a heroin addiction... My pregnancy was motivation to get sober. But once COVID-19 hit, I was struggling to pay rent. My case manager has been really helpful, I got his number from a friend.”

“I came out to Mat-Su to escape a bad domestic violence situation in Anchorage. Everything and everyone has been so helpful. Childcare has been an issue – I don’t have a job, and it’s hard to participate in job interviews if I have my kid with me.”

“I have a daughter living at my aunt’s house. I’m trying to win her back. It’s hard because I’ve been living in my car for the past four months. I don’t know what I’m going to do now that it’s getting colder.”

“I just found out I qualified for a voucher. I am excited and terrified to have my own place. I’m excited to get off the streets, to set my own schedule. Having control of my space will be a treasure. I’m terrified because I have alcohol and drug addition and go through periods of sobriety and relapse.”

“I moved here to be with my dad. Shortly before arriving I ruptured my Achilles; my leg was in a cast so I couldn’t work right away. The money I saved was dwindling. Then I was diagnosed with cancer – I had five surgeries in 2020. I had two part time jobs but was not making enough to get by. Then I got COVID-19 and was hospitalized... I’m not used to needing help, so it’s been hard.”



MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION

KEY FINDINGS

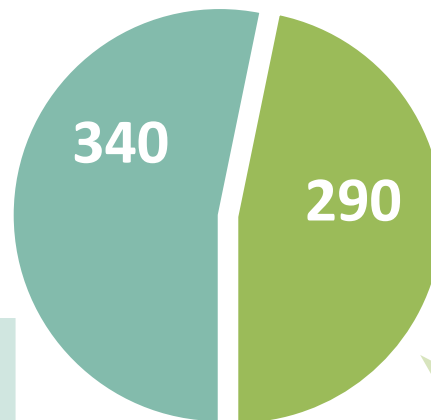
Key Findings: What We Learned

**Homelessness
exists in Mat-Su**



*Estimated number of households
experiencing homelessness in
Mat-Su each year*

*Estimated number of
households served by
Mat-Su organizations
each year*



*Estimated gap: the
number of households
not receiving services*

Mat-Su has a strong network of providers, but the community is not able to meet the full need

With some improvements, Mat-Su can create a system that can better meet community needs

Key Findings: What Comes Next



Improve the system: redesign the partnership, convene funders, and increase data integration

Fill the gaps: improve access, increase diversion and housing options, bring partners together around building more housing





MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION

OUTREACH AND ANALYSIS

Steering Committee (alphabetical order)

- Alissa Zank, *Alaska Veterans Health Administration*
- Ashley Peltier, *Connect Mat-Su*
- Barbara Mongar, *Mat-Su Re-Entry Coalition*
- Cameron Johnson, *AMG*
- DaJonee' Hale, *Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness*
- Dave Rose, *Mat-Su Coalition on Housing & Homelessness*
- Francis Seals, *youth representative*
- Ginger Bear, *Family Promise of Mat-Su*
- Jennifer Smerud, *Alaska Housing Finance Corporation*
- John Rozzi, *Valley Charities, Inc.*
- John Weaver, *Valley Residential Services*
- Kelsey Anderson, *Mat-Su Planning Department*
- Kevin Crozier, *Private Developer*
- Kristin Clark, *Choosing Our Roots*
- Lisa Wade, *Chickaloon Village Traditional Council*
- Michelle Overstreet, *My House*
- Polly Beth Odom, *Daybreak, Inc.*
- Stephen Adams, *Knik Tribal Council*
- Todd Smoldon, *Office of the Governor*
- Wendy Dodge, *Mat-Su School District: Families in Transition*

*Assessment process facilitated by
Agnew::Beck Consulting*

Who We Talked To

(Spring → Fall 2021)

Focus Groups

- 8 virtual conversations
- 56 total participants

Interviews

- 20 interviews
- 23 total participants

= 79 individuals

have participated in the process so far

*Adults with lived experience
Youth with lived experience
Providers
Tribal representatives
Crisis Intervention Team*

*R.O.C.K. Mat-Su
Transportation representatives
Mat-Su Re-Entry Coalition
Church representatives
Housing developers*

*Wasilla Homeless Committee
City of Wasilla
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center
United Way of Mat-Su
Mat-Su Office of Children's Services*



SUMMARY OF THEMES

WHAT ARE THE KEY THEMES THAT HAVE EMERGED FROM THE DATA, INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS AND STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT?

Strengths

- Providers work together to find solutions and are eager to improve, innovate
- Homelessness prevention programs
- Youth homelessness providers repeatedly highlighted for their good work
- Slowly increasing community awareness of homelessness as an issue in Mat-Su

“Our community does a great job at prevention. There are a lot of services set up to assist individuals who are at risk of losing their housing.”

“I love seeing our agencies work together. We all have a common goal.”

“We’re trying to own our issues and not send people to Anchorage. We used to have to do that more, but I think we’re getting closer to meeting the need.”

Misconceptions about Mat-Su Homelessness

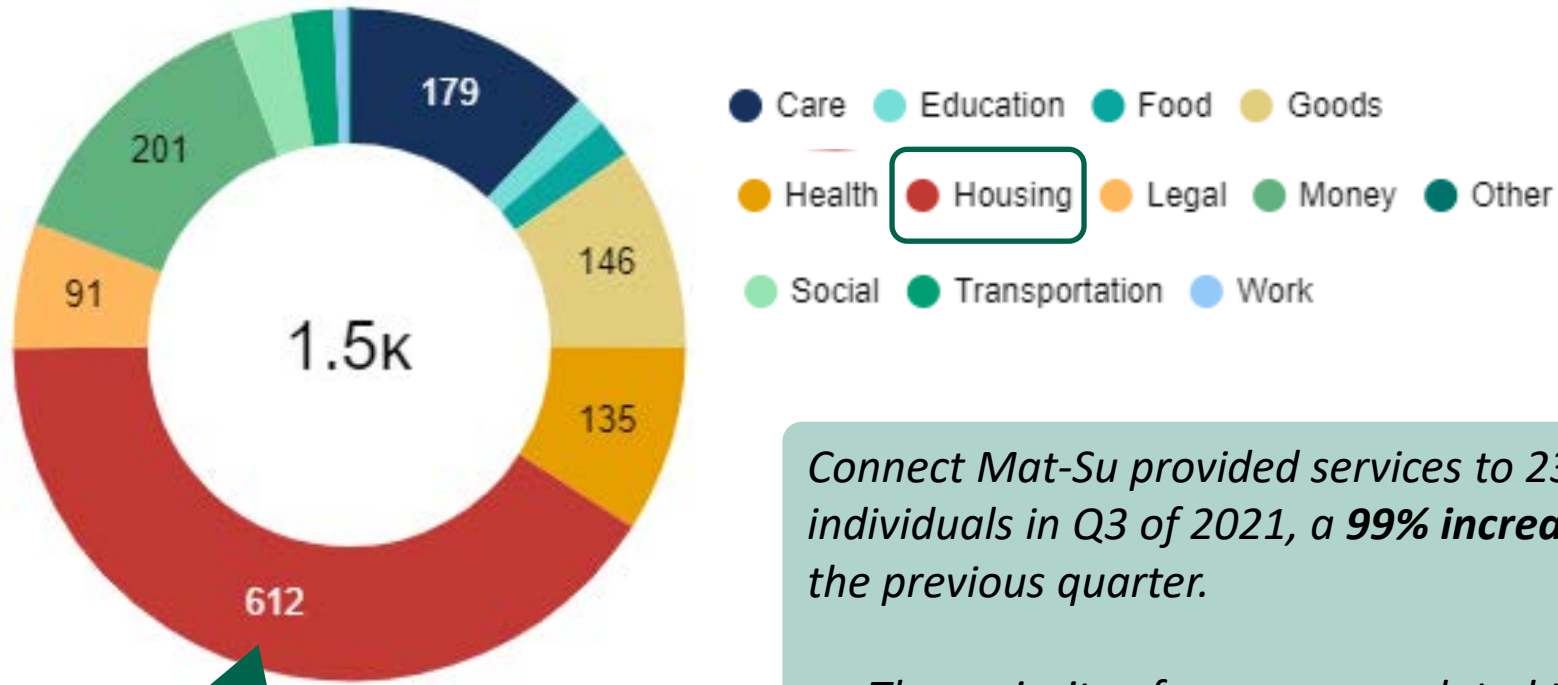
- ❖ Homelessness is a choice
- ❖ Homelessness doesn't exist in Mat-Su
- ❖ Only people sleeping outside are homeless, not those couch-surfing, living in vehicles, etc.
- ❖ Individuals experiencing homelessness cannot be helped

"No one wants to be homeless. ..My friend has been looking for a job for 6 months, but they won't accept him because of his history. How is he supposed to make a life for himself when everything and everyone is against him?"

"I was homeless for 5 years, but I have accomplished my goals. I bought a house last year. Just because someone is experiencing homelessness at a specific moment, doesn't mean they will be there forever."

"Rural homelessness looks much different from urban homelessness. In Anchorage it is more visible and easier to count."

Major Increase in Those Seeking Housing Assistance: Connect Mat-Su



Of 1,502 referrals made since Connect Mat-Su launched, the top issue/concern was housing, with 41% of all referrals

*Connect Mat-Su provided services to 231 individuals in Q3 of 2021, a **99% increase** from the previous quarter.*

- The majority of cases were related to housing*
- The majority of system gaps (e.g., staff were unable to meet the need with a referral) were also related to housing*

Source: Connect Mat-Su

Areas for Improvement

Lack of Low-Barrier, Short Term Housing for Households

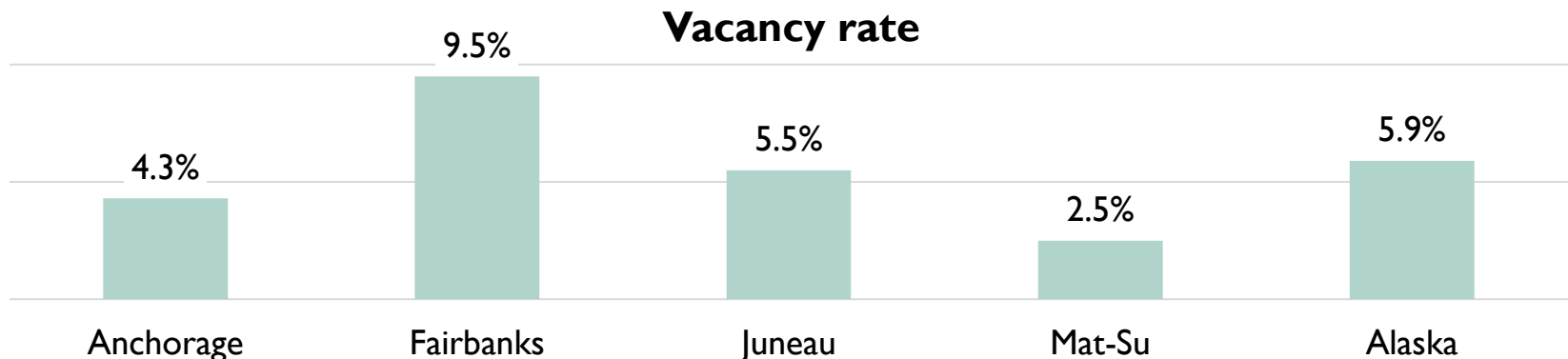
- There are very few Mat-Su locations where people can go on a short-term basis to connect with housing and services
 - People who are in crisis
 - Those waiting on an intake process
 - Anyone without a current place to sleep
- As a result, some people end up in Anchorage shelters

“The more difficult a population is to work with (chronic homelessness, dual diagnosis, etc.), the less likely that they are to get care or to last with programming long-term with existing capacity/models in the Mat-Su.”

Areas for Improvement

Limited Availability of Affordable Housing

- Over 50% of Mat-Su renters are cost-burdened by the amount paid to rent each month
- The Mat-Su vacancy rate is the lowest in the state
- Low-income housing and multifamily construction is typically only financially feasible to build with the assistance of tax credits, which are limited in Alaska



Source: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

Areas for Improvement

Some Populations Face Unique Challenges and are Disproportionately Represented in the Homelessness System

- Almost half (44%) of people experiencing homelessness report a **Disabling Condition**
- **LGBTQ+** individuals face added discrimination and challenges accessing resources
- **People of Color** experience disproportionately higher rates of homelessness in Mat-Su

“We have done a terrible job at responding to LGBTQ+ people. We do not have the resources to respond to this population... There is discrimination in housing in our community.”

Areas for Improvement

Lack of a Formal System of Care

- Collaboration is happening informally but not formally
- Many community partners (transportation, health care, etc.) are unfamiliar with the services offered by providers
- Need clearer entry points to services and housing

“Someone came into City Hall asking about housing...I called 7 different services. And was told they don’t qualify. There was no real solution for them.”

“Seems like we have so many people struggling but they don’t know about the resources. Rental relief took me 2-3 months, I didn’t know where to go or where to start.”

Areas for Improvement

Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Supports

- Treatment beds in Mat-Su have increased but there remains a need for improved coordination, case management and peer support
- Limited crisis care
- Lack of a coordinated, trauma-informed system of care for behavioral health

“The number of people addicted or on drugs in Mat-Su is insane, and treatment is so limited. I couldn’t find inpatient treatment and had to get sober on my own...”

We need to deal with underlying reasons of why people are homeless. You can put people in housing but if they can’t resolve their other issues, they won’t be able to sustain it.”

Gaps Model



Demand (+): What is the need?



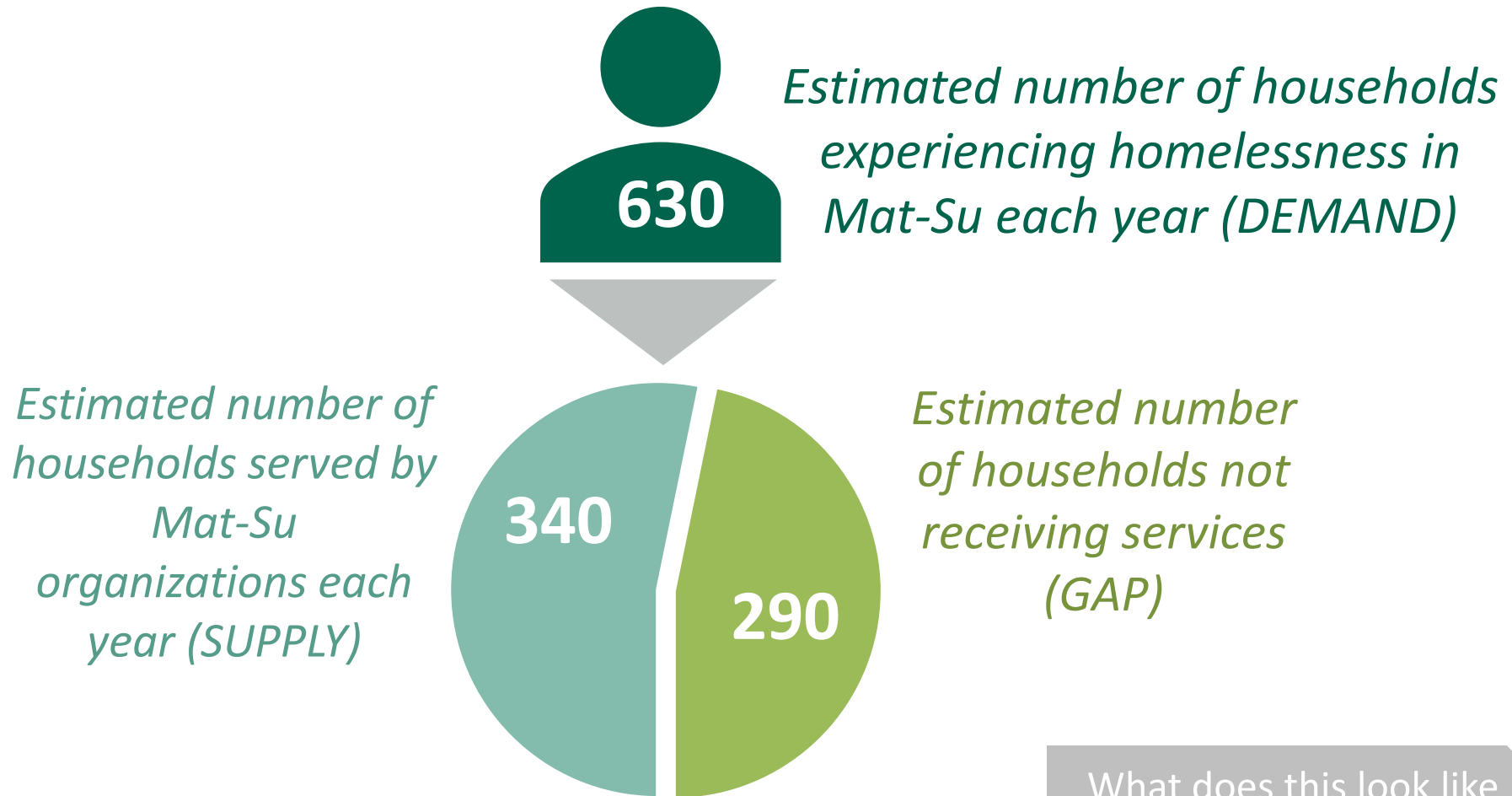
Supply (-): What do we have now?



= Gap: What additional supports do we need to meet demand?

Sources: Housing Inventory Count, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Census, eviction court filings, service providers

Annual Need in Mat-Su

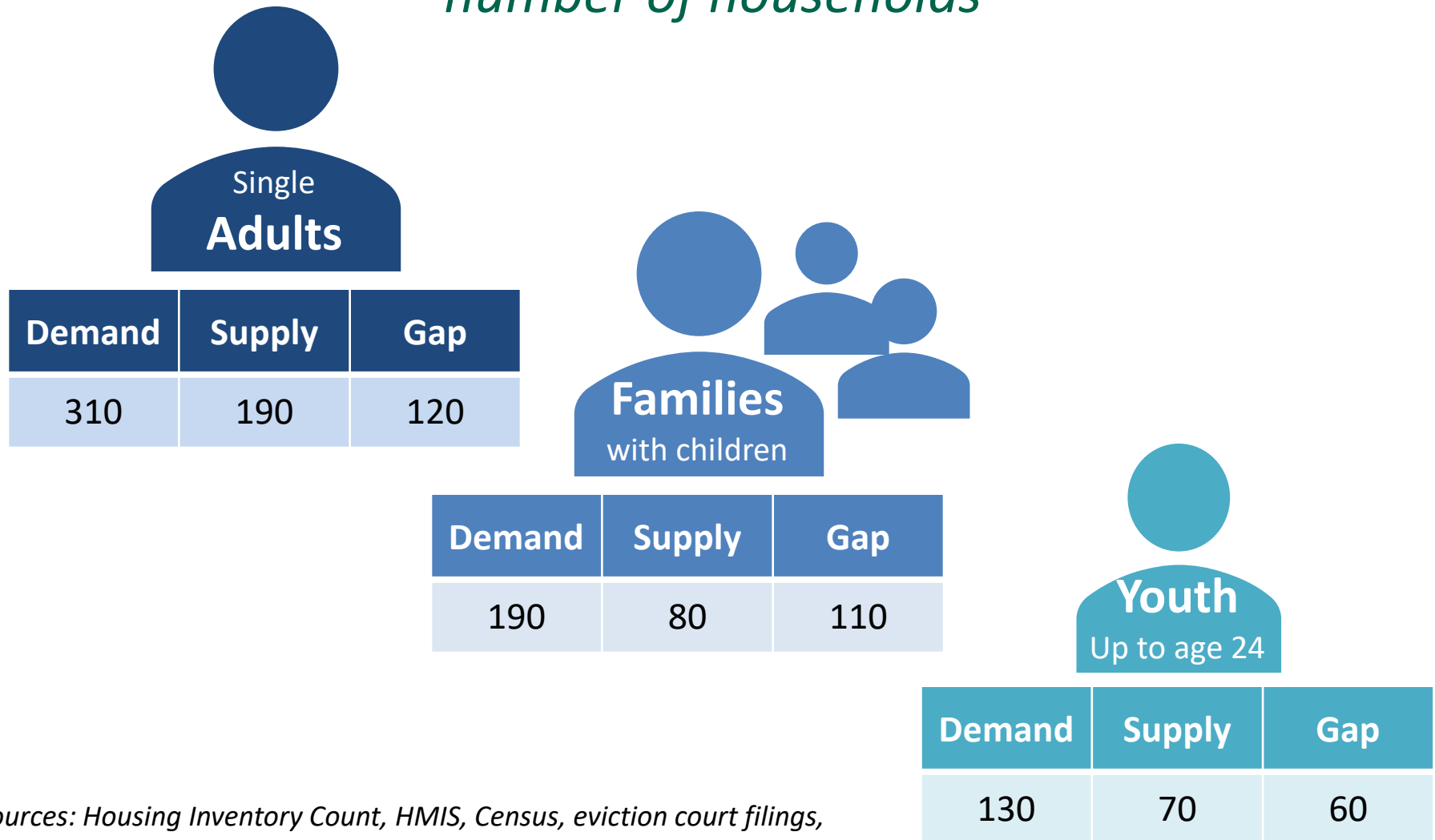


Sources: Housing Inventory Count, HMIS, Census, eviction court filings, and service providers

What does this look like by population type?

Annual Need in Mat-Su, by Population

number of households



Sources: Housing Inventory Count, HMIS, Census, eviction court filings, and service providers

Key Findings: Data Limitations

- **Homelessness data is very limited in Mat-Su.**
 - While these gap numbers are approximate, preliminary reactions from Mat-Su providers confirm these numbers appear consistent with what they see in the community.
- **Having quality data is essential to craft an effective community response to homelessness.**
 - As data collection and data sharing improves, the estimates in the model can be further refined.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations – Two Types

Improve the System

- How can we modify the processes in our community to better respond to homelessness?
- *3 recommendations*

Fill the Gaps

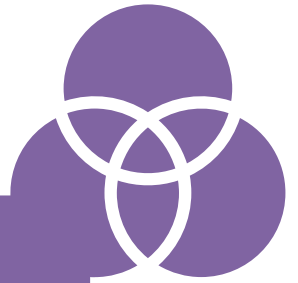
- What next steps are needed to help us address the gaps in the gaps analysis?
- *4 recommendations*

Improve the System: Recommendations



1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

2. Convene Private, Nonprofit, and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan



3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers



Fill the Gaps: Recommendations

1. Improve Access
for Those Seeking
Help

2. Expand
Diversion so Fewer
People Become
Homeless

3. Invest in
Supportive
Housing

4. Convene
Housing
Developers &
Property Owners



We want to hear from you! Use the polls to tell us...

Please indicate whether you agree that the recommendations are the right direction for Mat-Su

- Agree with all recommendations
- Agree with some recommendations
- Disagree with all recommendations
- I don't know

Would you like to be involved in implementation of the recommendations?

(e.g., participating in strategy meetings, collecting and sharing data, providing funding, etc.)

- Yes
- Maybe/I Don't Know
- No

Recommendations - Discuss

- Questions?
- Does this seem like the right approach for Mat-Su?
- What other ideas, thoughts, suggestions do you have?

Improve the System

1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

2. Convene Private, Nonprofit, and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan

3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers

Fill the Gaps

1. Improve Access for Those Seeking Help

2. Expand Diversion so Fewer People Become Homeless

3. Invest in Supportive Housing

4. Convene Housing Developers & Property Owners

Thank you!

- Closing Comments
- Additional questions, comments? Contact us:

Jim Beck, Senior Program Officer, Mat-Su Health Foundation	
907.748.4777	jbeck@healthymatsu.org
Molly Mylius, Project Manager, Agnew::Beck Consulting	
907.782.8787	mmylius@agnewbeck.com

Appendix 4: Gaps Model Methodology

Summary of methodology used in develop the gaps model for the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

Calculating the Overall Demand

1. To estimate initial demand, our team quantified the number of households that flowed into literal homelessness, as captured by the Homelessness Management Information System. The estimated number of households was based on an annual average of 2018-2020 data.
2. Since HMIS is only used by a small subset of homelessness response providers in Mat-Su, and not all households experiencing homelessness are served by the system, we used additional inputs to more fully capture demand. This included adding in the following:
 - a. Adding an estimate for the number of families that are either formally evicted (based on data from the Palmer Eviction Court filings), or informally evicted (using a multiplier that assumes only 24% of evictions make it to the legal process, a number supported in “Evicted” by Matthew Desmond).
 - b. Added an estimate for the number of households in Mat-Su that earn less than 30% of the area median income. (Minus the 'literal homelessness' and 'eviction' number with the assumption of 100% overlap of these populations).
3. Since the HMIS and other input data we relied on in steps 1 and 2 above represents pre-pandemic estimates, we added a 15% multiplier to account for an expected increase in the at-risk population due to economic impacts of COVID-19.
4. An additional 0.9% multiplier was added to account for annual population growth in Mat-Su. To derive the 0.9% multiplier, we used an average of population growth of over the past three years, according to the Census.
5. Steps 1-4 created a sum of all households at risk of experiencing homelessness. However, not all at-risk populations will ultimately experience homelessness, so our team took an estimate (11%) of the total at-risk population to estimate the number of households experiencing literal homelessness annually in Mat-Su. This number was derived based on national research that suggests that between 3% and 12% of populations at-risk of eviction will end up in a homeless response system. Through local conversations with providers, the 11% estimate was decided upon.

Calculating the Distribution of Demand by Population

1. Relying on data from HMIS over the last three years, our team estimated the allocation of inflow into three population groups: 1) adult-only households; 2) families with children under the age of 18; 3) unaccompanied youth and transition-aged youth from 0-24 years old. The total of these three populations equals 100% of the expected literal homelessness inflow.
2. As quality assurance, our team used HMIS data from the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and the Boise City/Ada County Continuum of Care to evaluate the population breakdown and ensure that the Mat-Su assumptions were roughly tracking with expectations.
3. Our team hosted a conversation with local providers on the demand by population and adjusted the proportions to match local assumptions.

Calculating the Distribution of Demand by Intervention Type

1. There is not one intervention that is suitable for every household experiencing literal homelessness. Therefore, our team required a way to distribute the demand for each intervention type. Interventions included: diversion, self-resolution (no intervention), rapid resolution, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. One way to consider the intervention breakdown is to consider the level of vulnerability of a given client, understanding that the more vulnerable a client, the more intensive the intervention demanded.

2. Our team leaned on best practices and the distribution from other communities, including Anchorage and Boise City/Ada County, to derive the estimated distribution of demand by intervention type.
3. Our team hosted a conversation with local providers on the demand by intervention type and adjusted the proportions to match local assumptions.

Calculating the Supply

1. To estimate supply, our team compiled program-level data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Housing Inventory Count (HIC), which communities report into annually. We also referenced the annual average households served through different programs as recorded in HMIS. Since the numbers between these two platforms were inconsistent and generally counted beds instead of households, we conducted follow up data requests with major homeless providers to refine the estimated inventory available in Mat-Su by intervention type.

Calculating the Gap

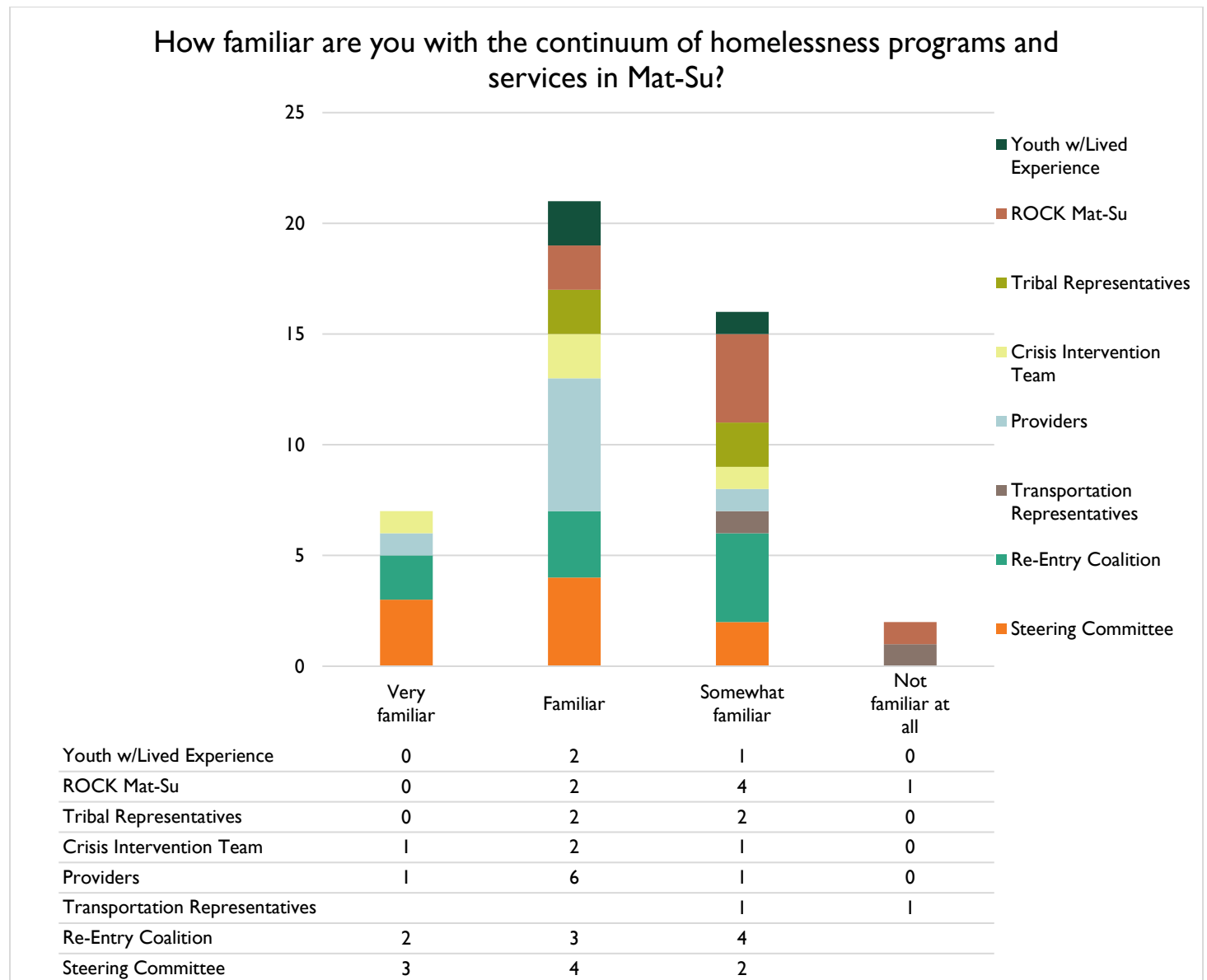
1. To calculate the gap between the demand for an intervention by population group and the supply of that intervention, the supply was subtracted from the demand figures. The gap represents the number of households underserved by population group and by intervention type in the Mat-Su in a given year.

Appendix 5: Focus Group Results

Summary of results to polls used in focus groups for the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

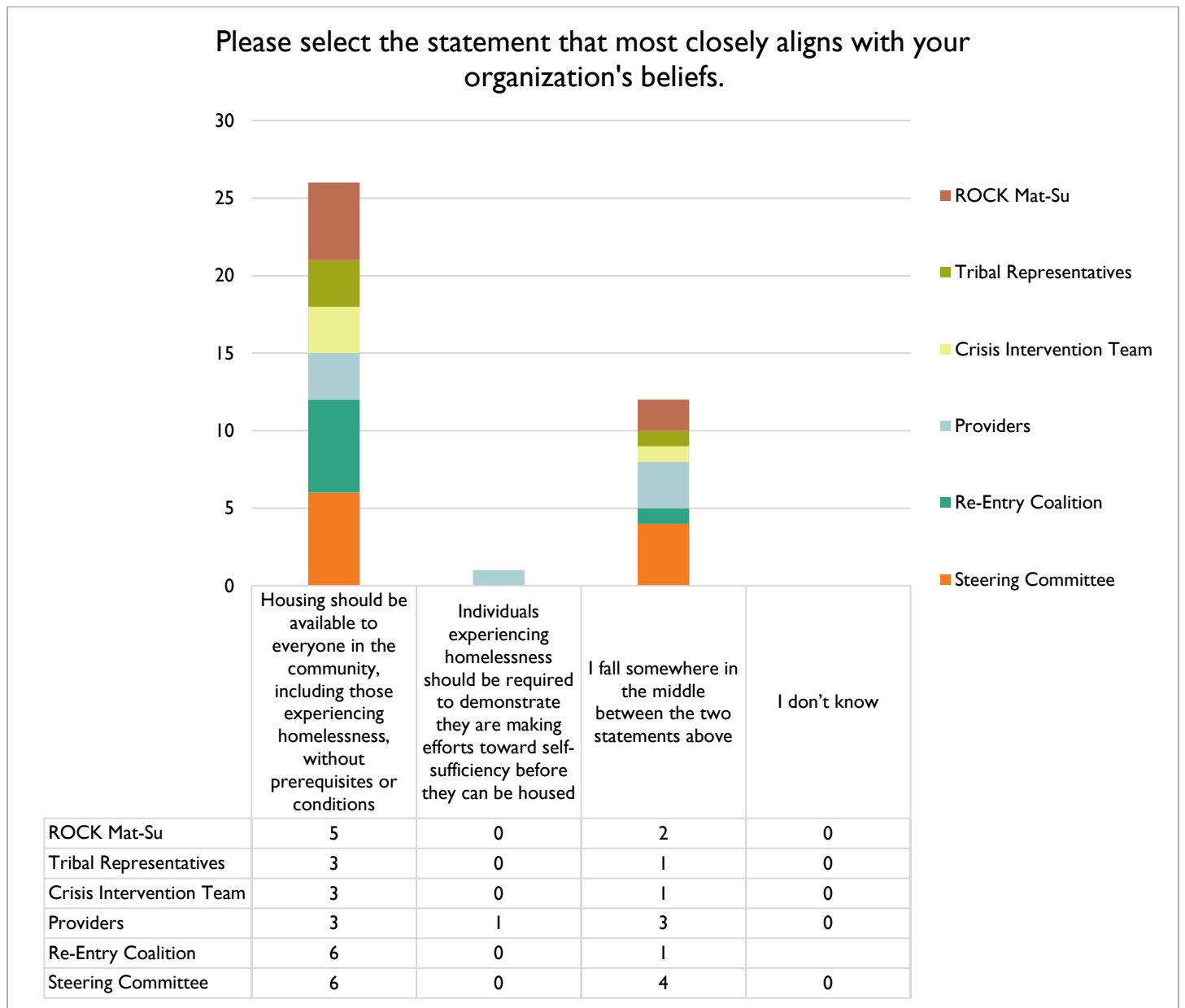
Response to the Question, “How familiar are you with the continuum of homelessness programs and services in Mat-Su?”

Total votes: 46



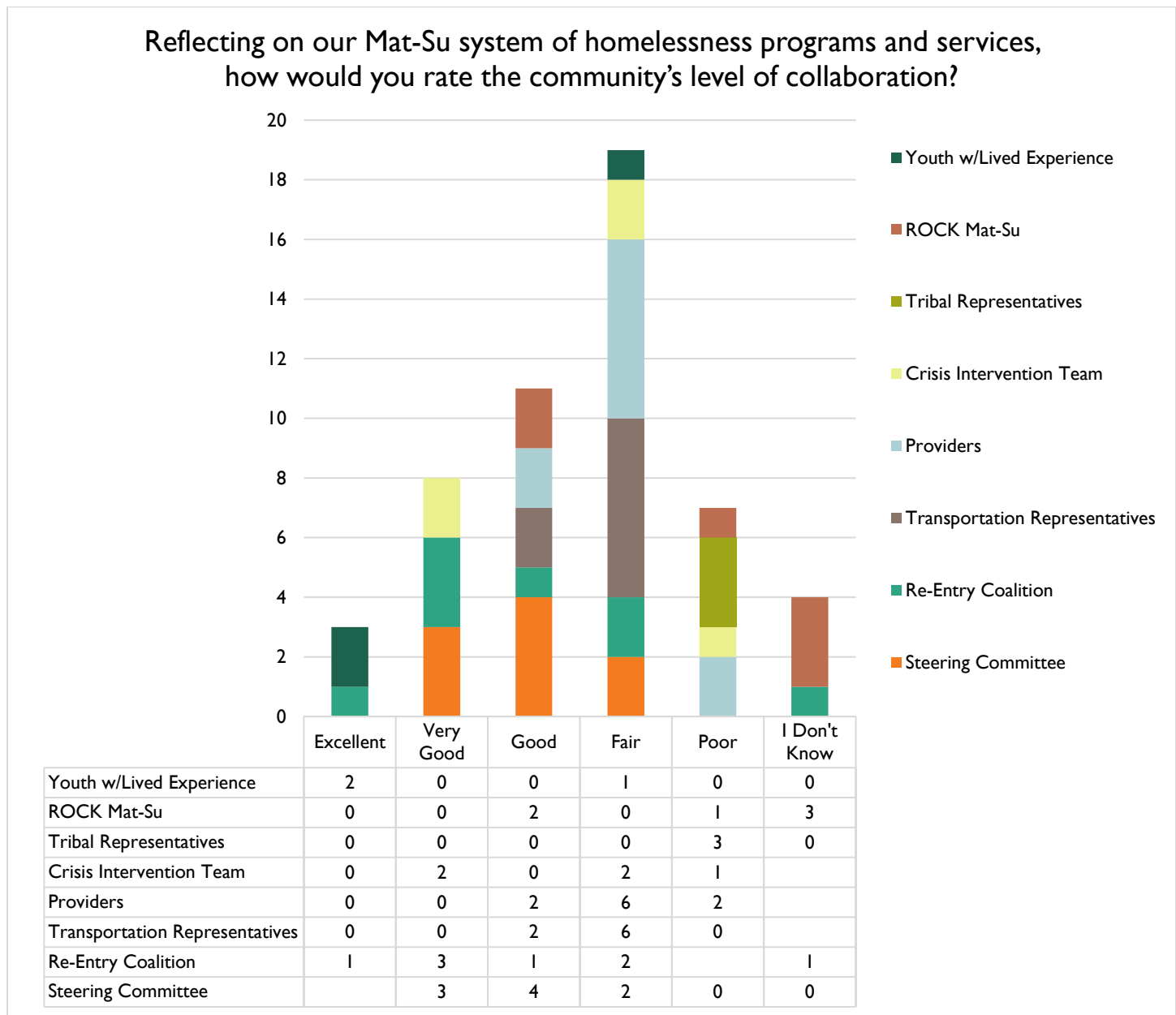
Response to the Question, “Please select the statement that most closely aligns with your organization's beliefs.”

Total votes: 39



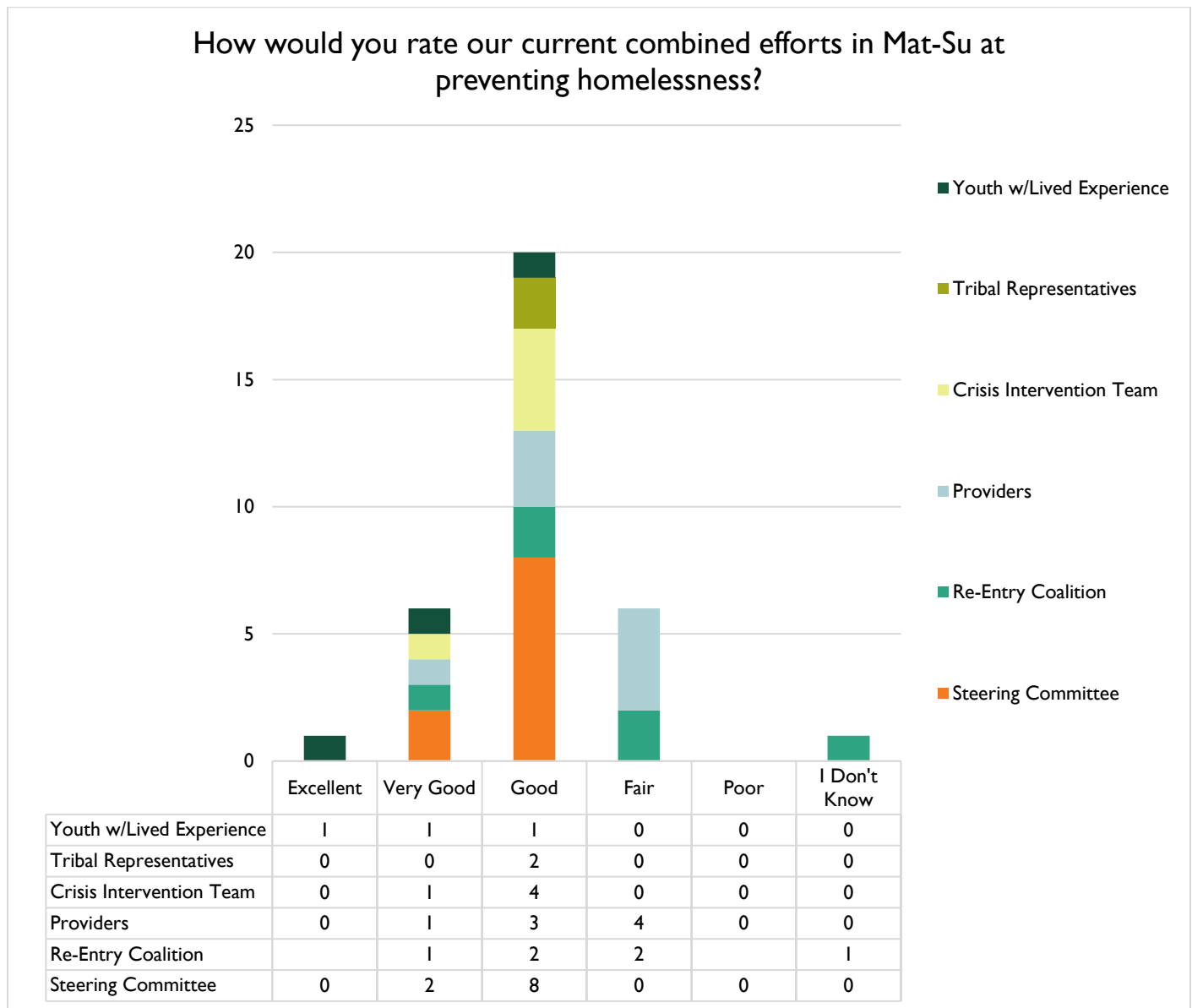
Response to the Question, “Reflecting on our Mat-Su system of homelessness programs and services, how would you rate the community’s level of collaboration?”

Total votes: 52



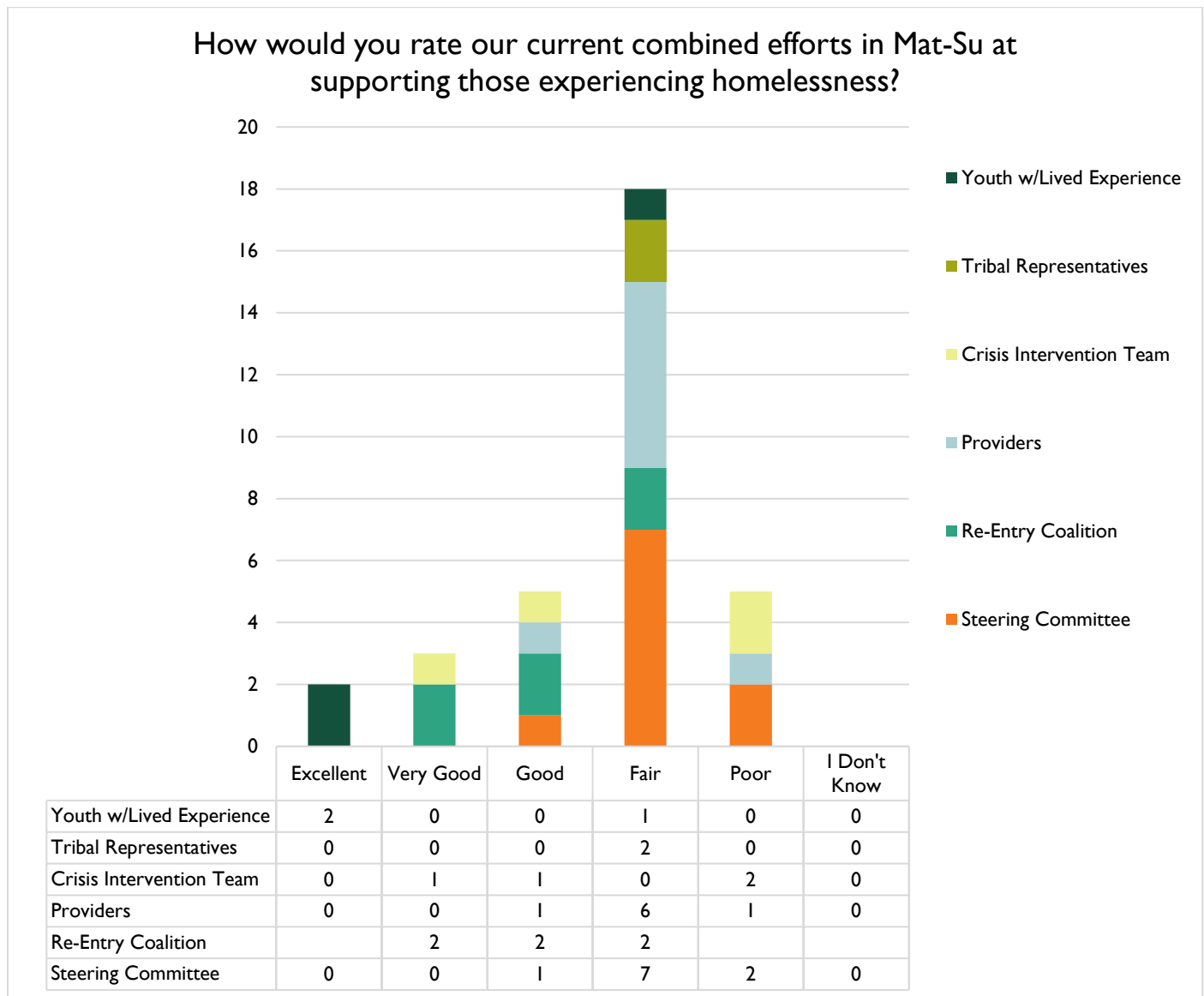
Response to the Question, “How would you rate our current combined efforts in Mat-Su at preventing homelessness?”

Total votes: 34



Response to the Question, “How would you rate our current combined efforts in Mat-Su at supporting those experiencing homelessness?”

Total votes: 33



Response to the Question, “Would you be interested in participating in an expanded coalition/advisory group that helps guide the Mat-Su community's response to homelessness?”

Total votes: 38

