

Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Homelessness and Health Study (PATHS): Using Mobile Phone Technology to Survey People Experiencing Homelessness

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Addressing data gaps in homelessness research and evaluation

- May 2018: NAEH, Homelessness Policy Research Institute, Urban Institute held “Session on Trajectories of People who are Unsheltered”
- November 2019: HPRI Data Gaps group formed to foster conversations about filling data gaps
- June 2022: HPRI issues RFP for “Moving Toward an Anti-racist System for Ending & Preventing Homelessness in Los Angeles”

Overview of PATHS

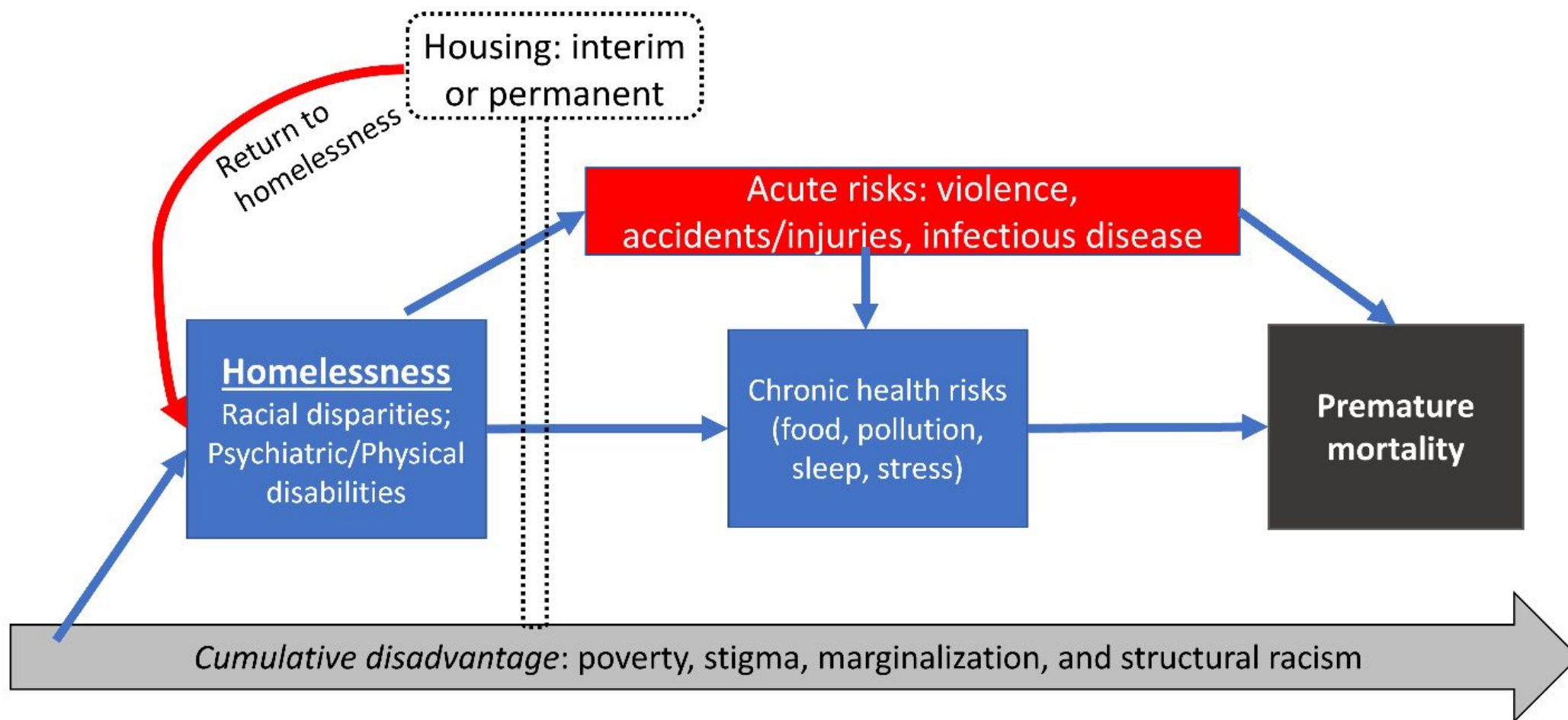
- Monthly survey of unhoused Angelenos (since 2022)
- Collected 19,672 monthly surveys from 2,091 resp
- Can be used for
 - Cross-sectional estimation
 - Rapid assessment
 - Longitudinal analysis
 - Evaluations



Randall Kuhn et al. (2025). Periodic Assessment of Trajectories of Housing, Homelessness, and Health Study (PATHS): Protocol for a Prospective Cohort Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. *JMIR*. <https://www.researchprotocols.org/2025/1/e74266>

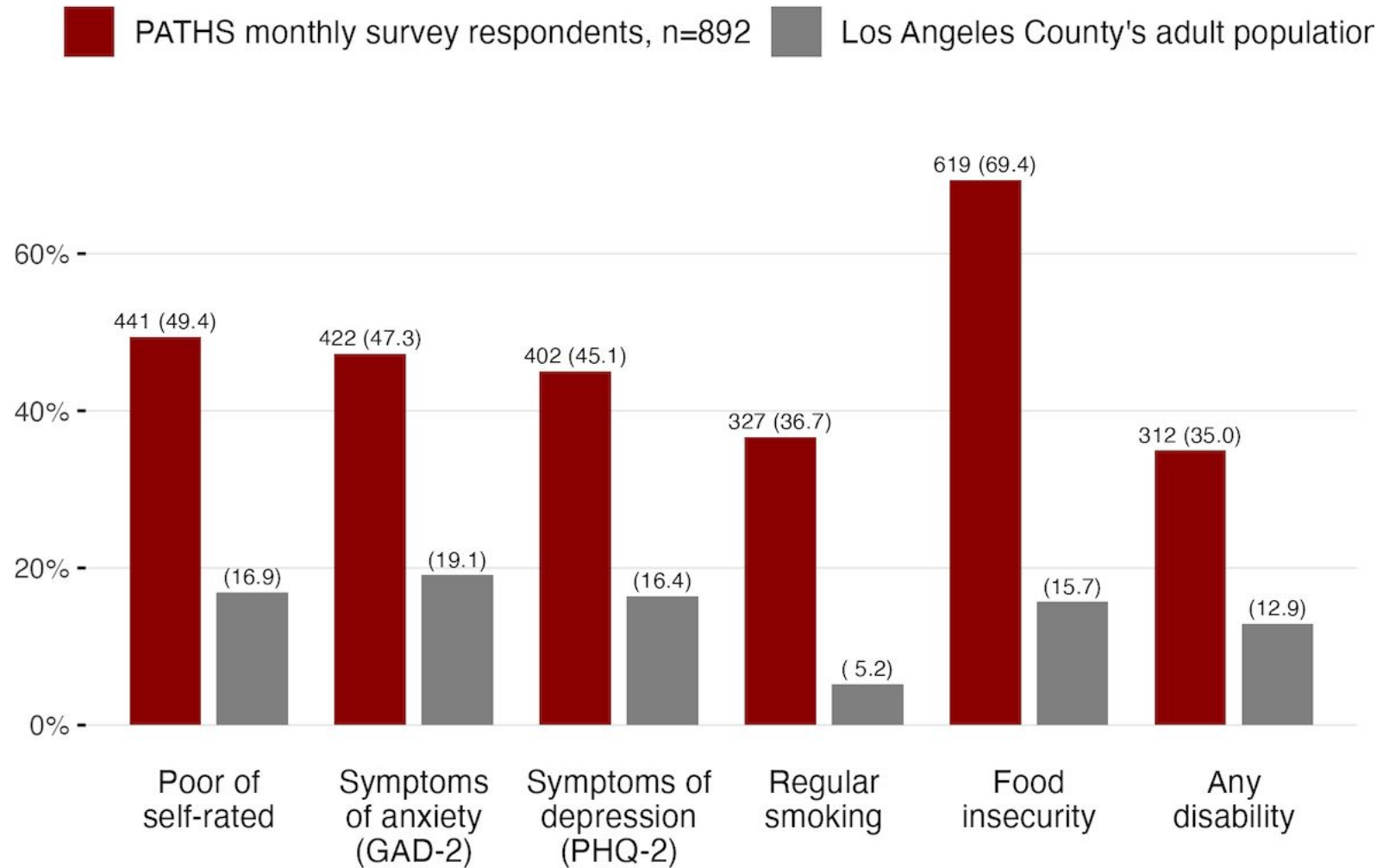


A person-centered perspective on the unsheltered life course



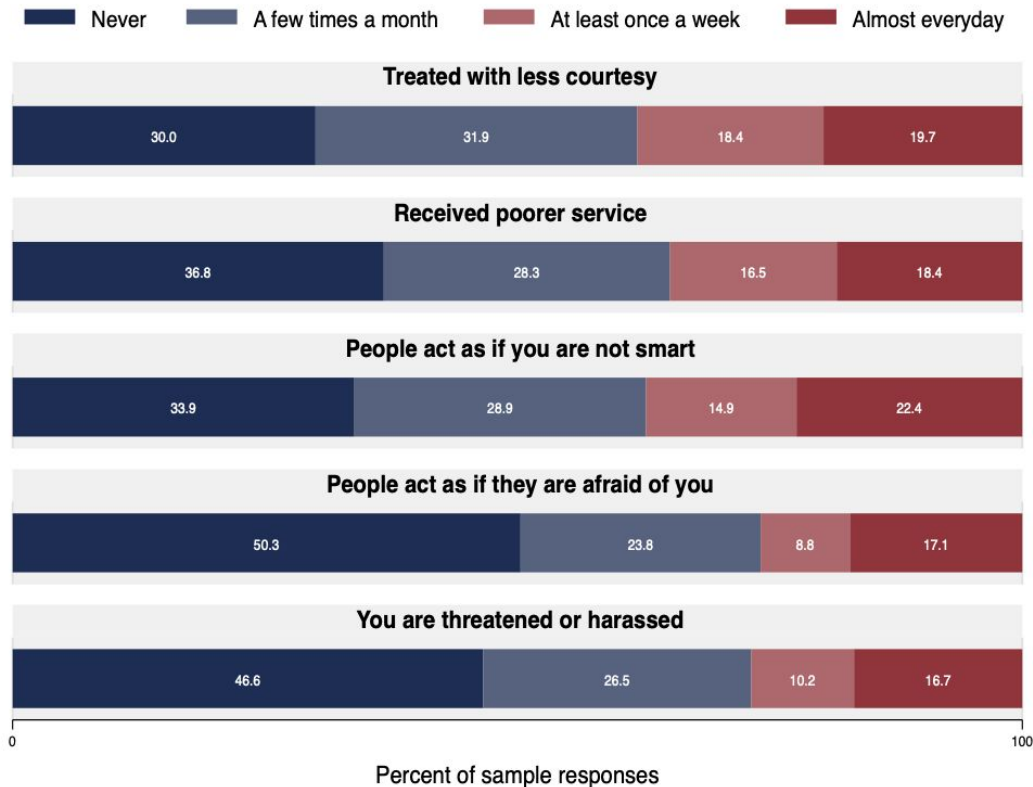
HPRI Data Gaps Group. A vision for an integrated homeless services data ecosystem for Los Angeles. Working paper.

PATHS tracks a shocking burden of health risks in the unhoused vs. general population

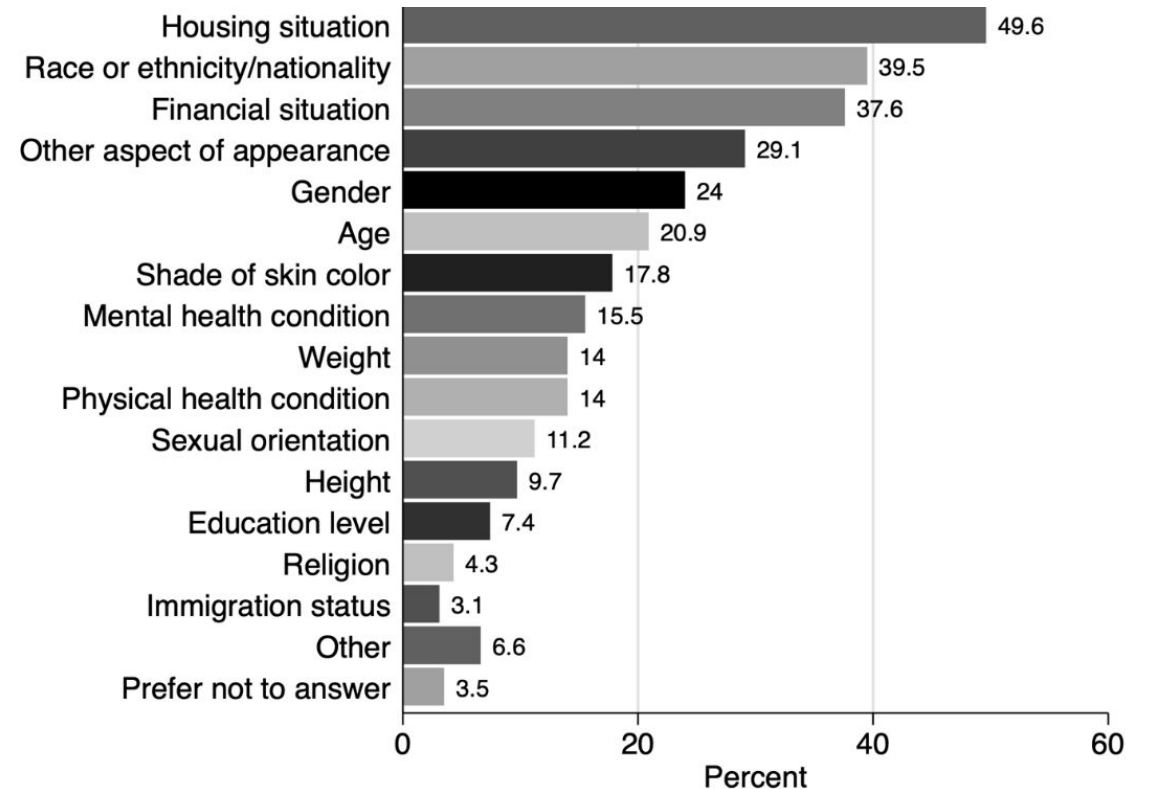


Validated scales of adverse exposures like discrimination

Frequency of Discriminatory Experiences (N=332)

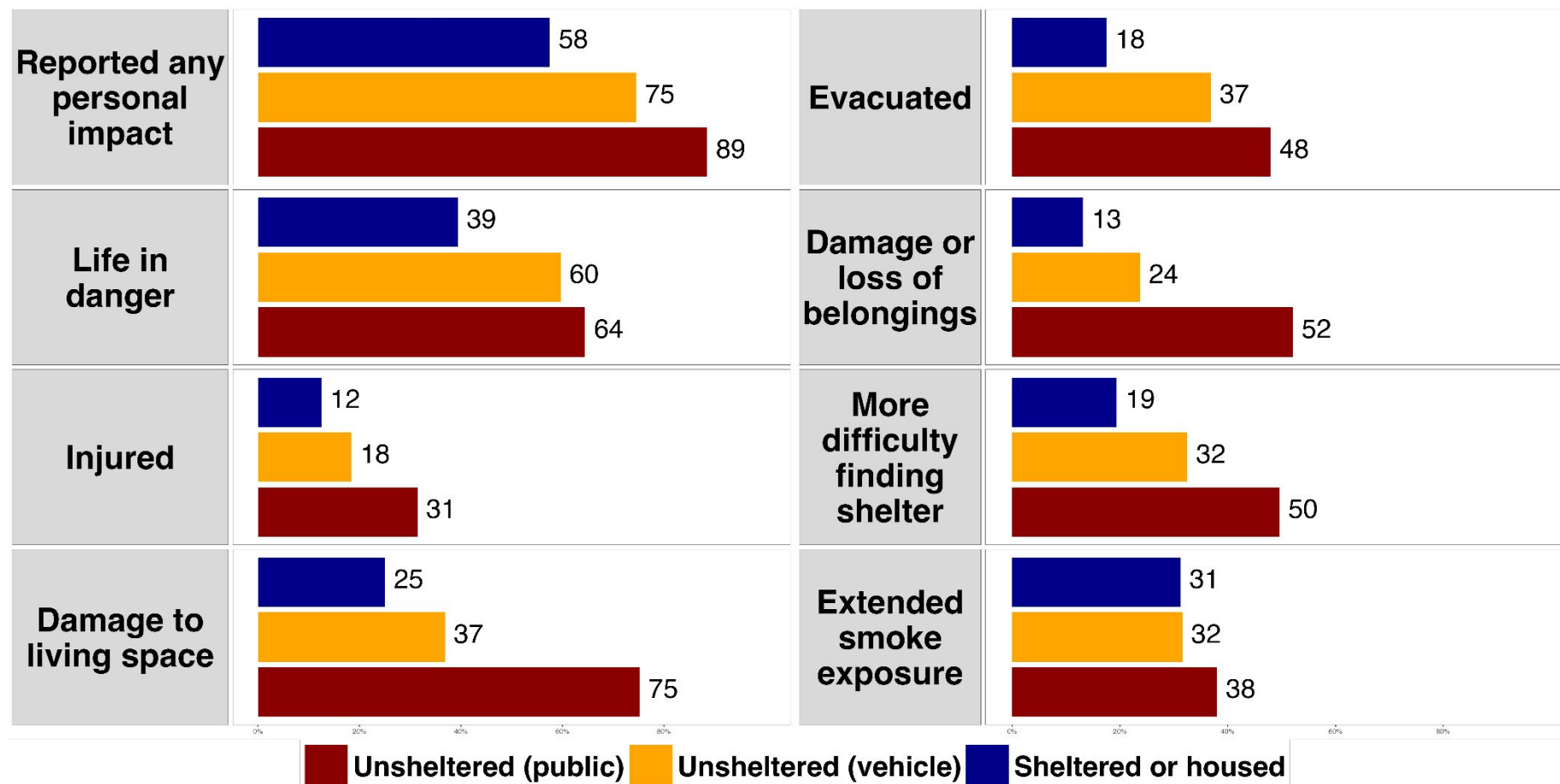


Reasons for Discriminatory Experiences (N=258)



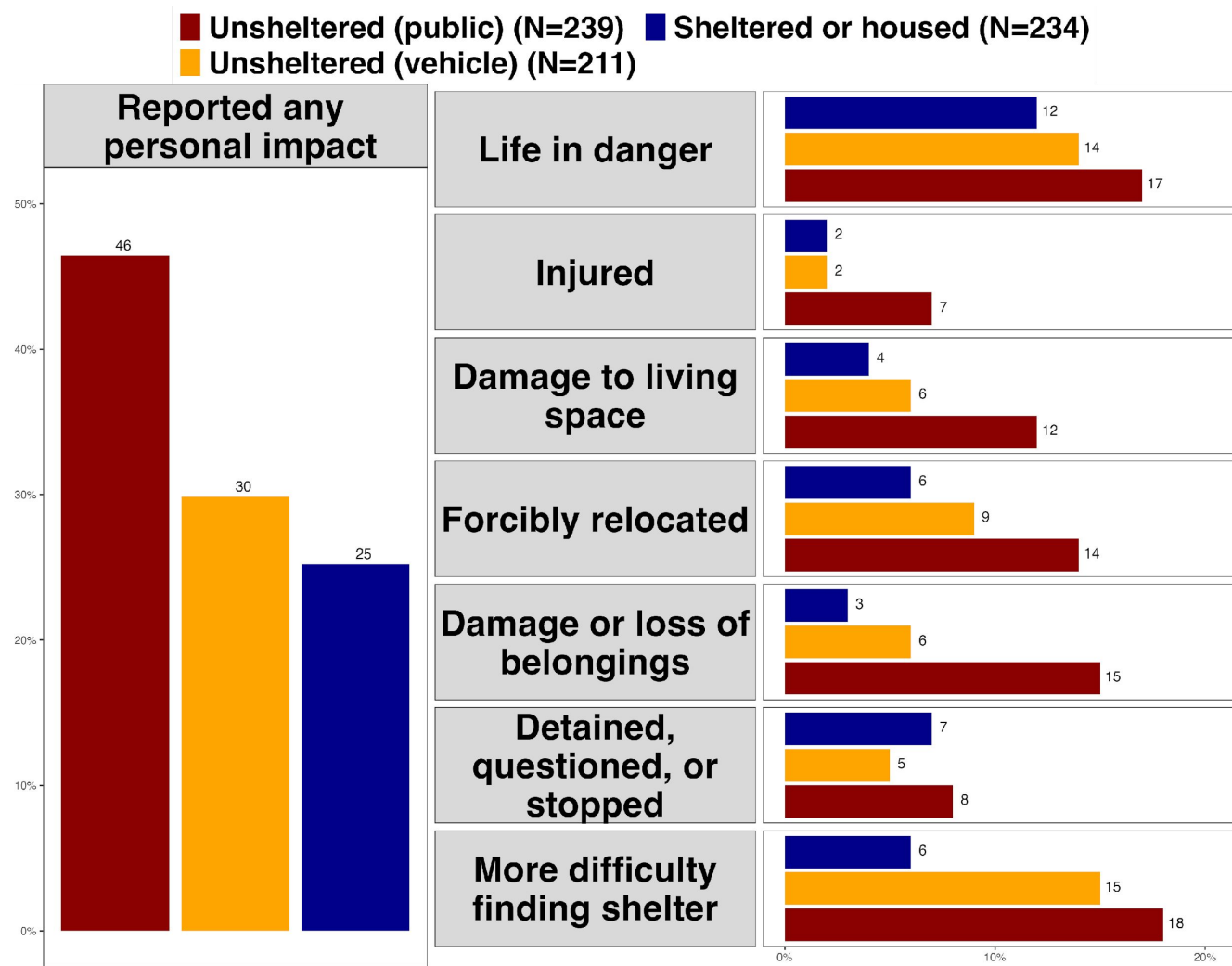
Howard Padwa, Jessie Chien, et al. Past-Month Discrimination, Physical Violence, and Sexual Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2024.06.016>

Assessment of events like the January 2025 wildfires



https://hpri.usc.edu/homeless_research/periodic-assessment-of-trajectories-of-housing-homelessness-and-health-study-paths-the-impact-of-january-2025-wildfires-on-los-angeles-unhoused-community/

Impact of the June 2025 ICE raids and protests



https://hpri.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ICE-Brief_final.pdf

Extreme Heat and Health Among Unhoused Angelenos

Figure 1. Frequency of uncomfortable heat in the past month

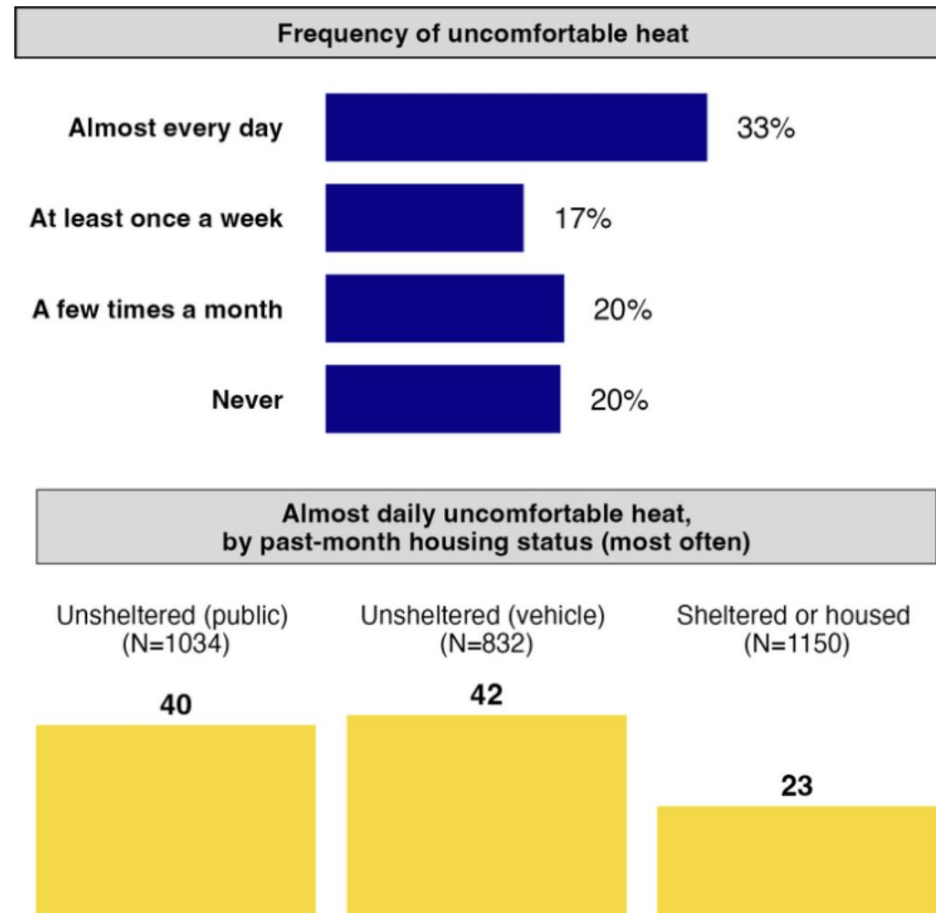
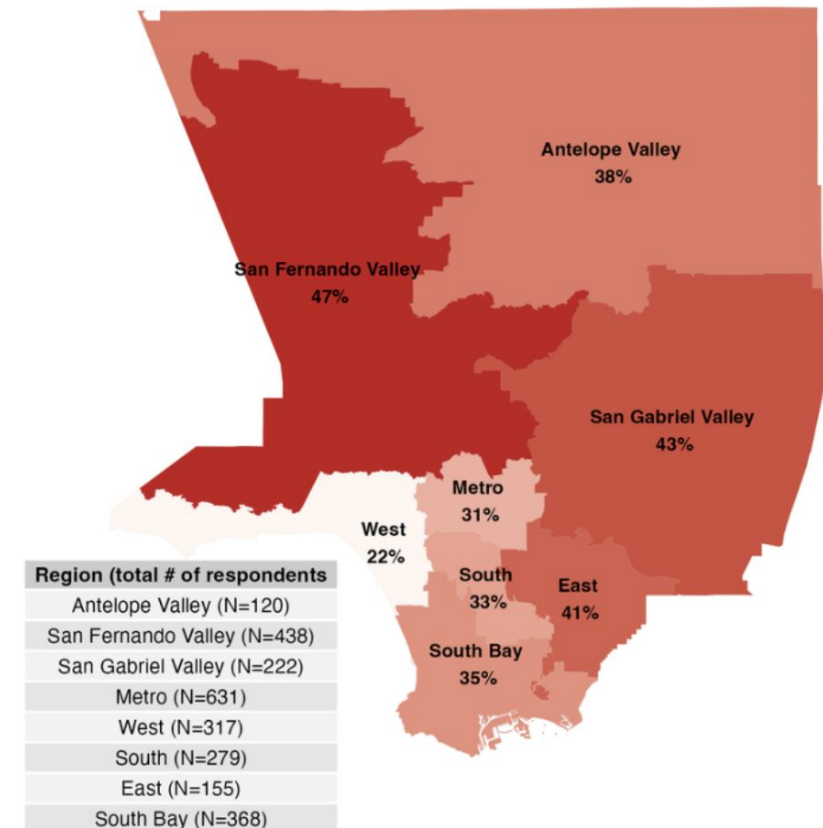
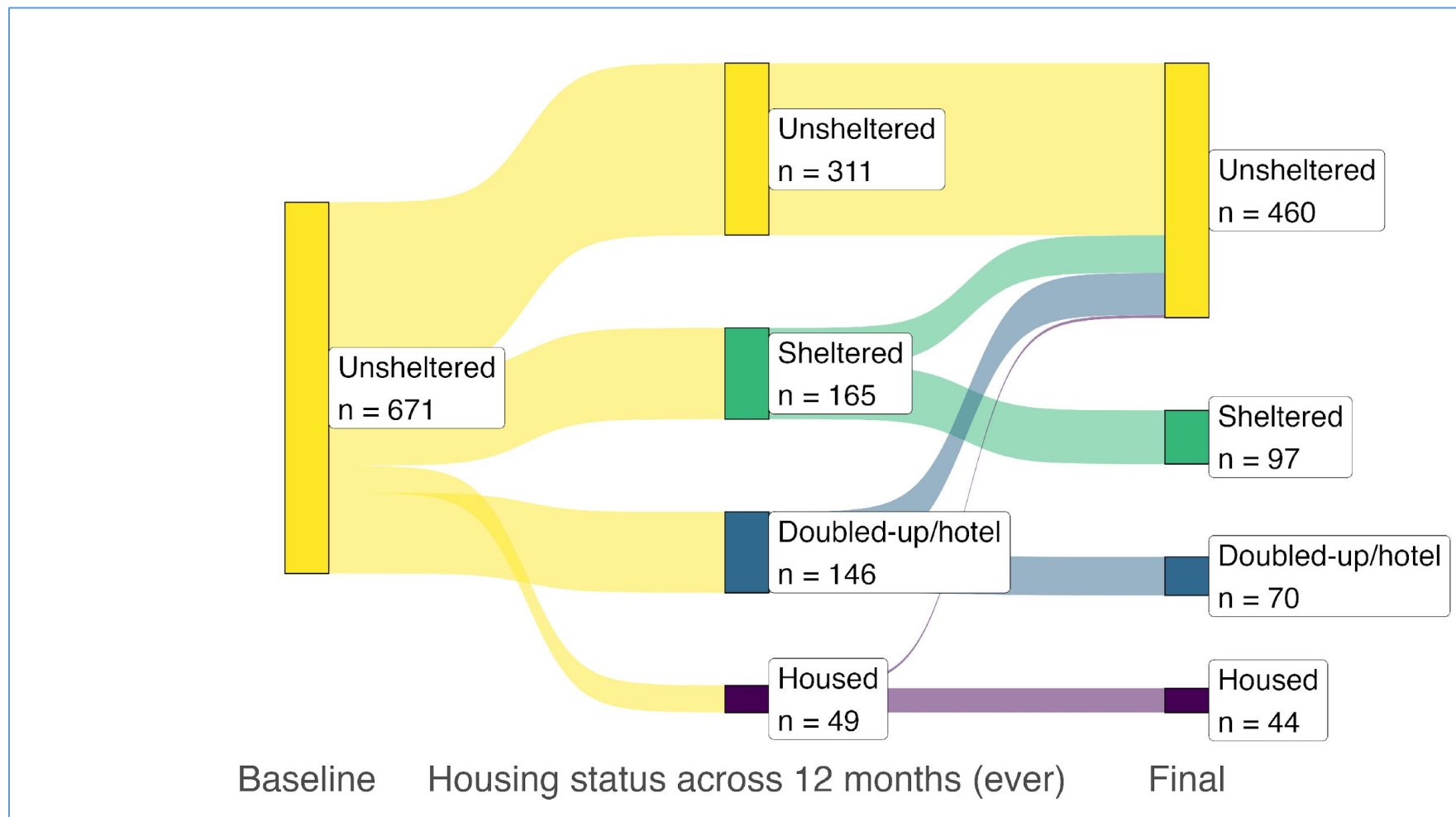


Figure 2. Frequency of almost daily uncomfortable heat by Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas (July-October 2025)



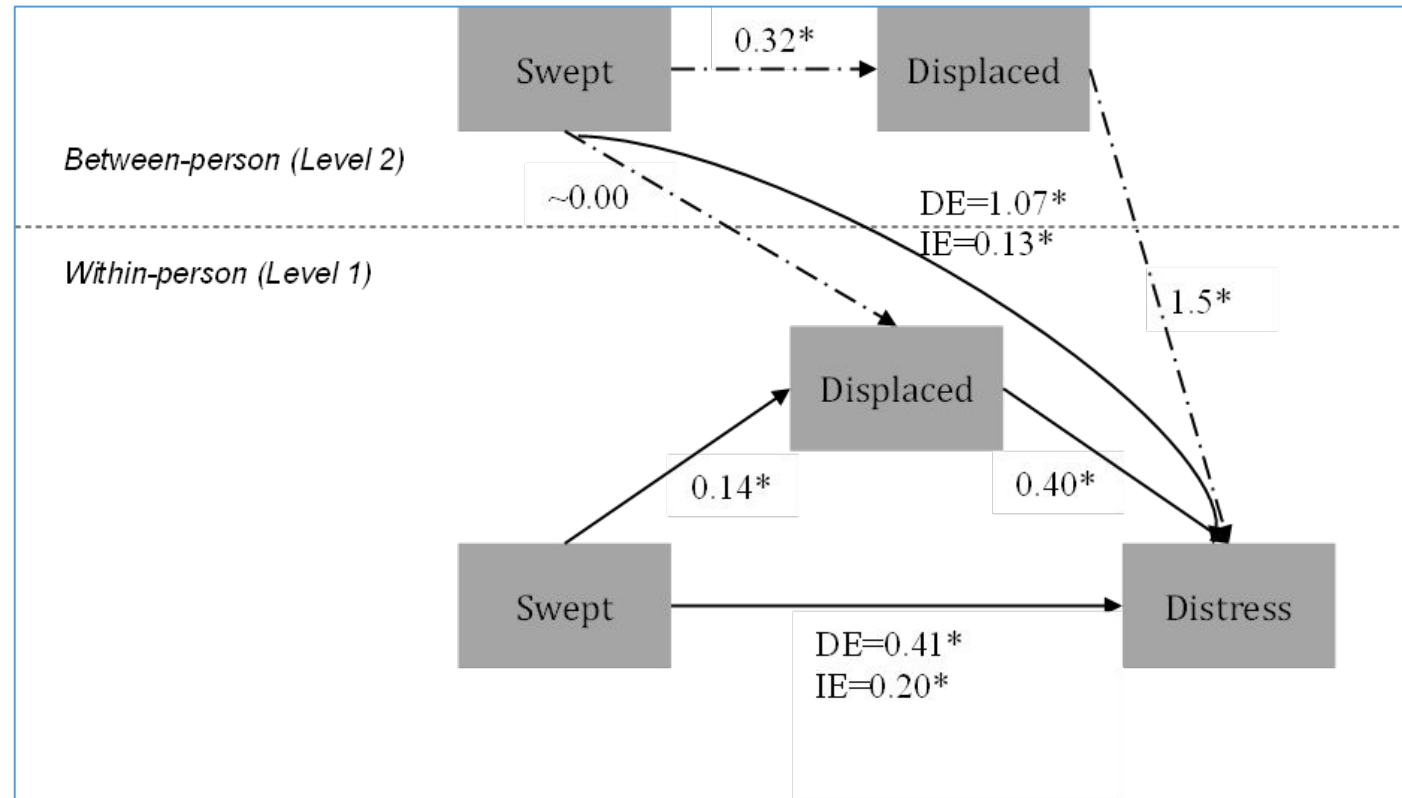
<https://www.paths.la/impact-of-extreme-heat>

Monthly data on all sleeping locations allows us to summarize trajectories over time



Complex longitudinal modeling

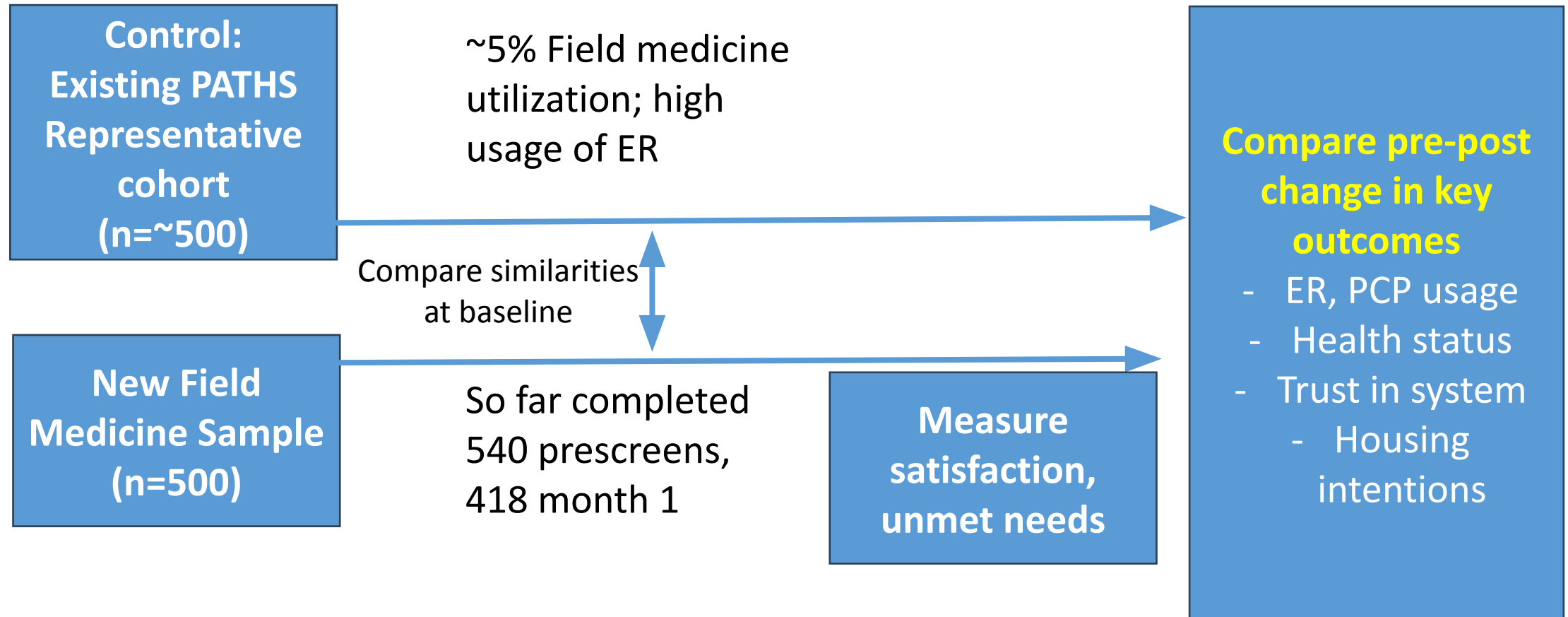
Pathways between recurrent and monthly experiences of sweeps and psychological distress via physical displacement



*Significant association at the $p < 0.05$ level
DE=Direct effect; IE=Indirect effect

Jessie Chien, Benjamin F. Henwood, Randall Kuhn. Policing homelessness: Longitudinal associations between experiences of anti-homeless policing and psychosocial health among the unhoused community in Los Angeles

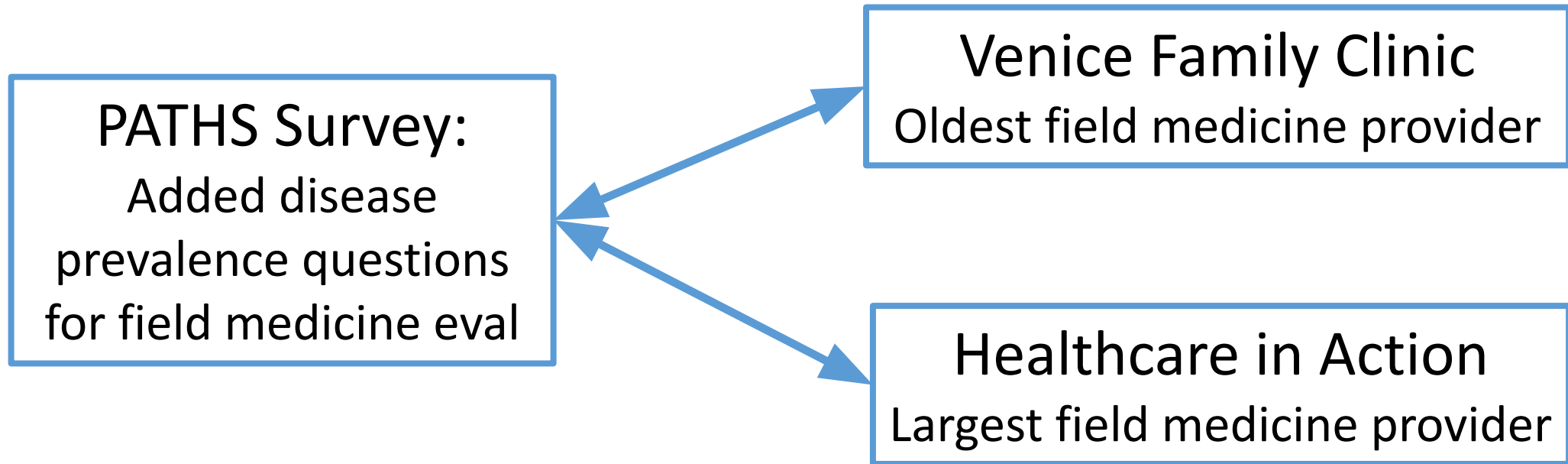
Field medicine evaluation study: Mixed methods study and partnership with LA Care and multiple providers



HUD NOFO Crisis – December 2025

- Sweeping changes in HUD CoC work: reemphasis from PSH to policing and involuntary treatment
- Justified based on a single 2019 report by California Policy Lab using VI-SPDAT data
 - 78% mental health, 75% substance use condition
 - Obviously biased sample, non-specific outcomes
- But little representative data on specific health conditions affecting unsheltered populations
- Could we quickly produce some new estimates?

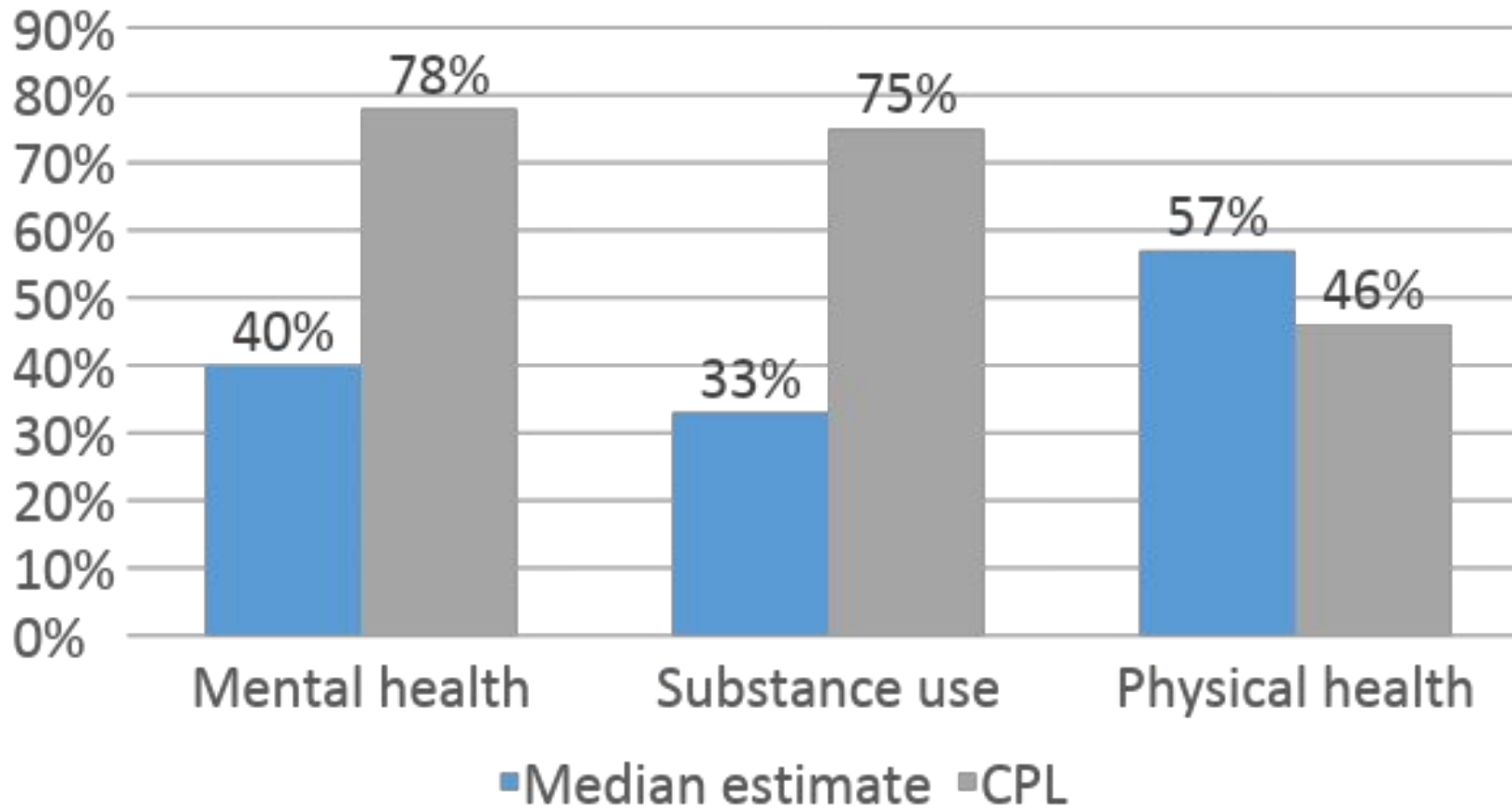
One mission, three data sources



Surveys represent whole county with limited selection bias, but self-reported data may be biased

Electronic health records (EHR): use clinical diagnosis, but may overrepresent sick patients and coverage limited geographics

Big picture: Much lower prevalence of mental health, substance use; higher physical



Paper is now
published!!



Conclusion

- . PATHS can be used for descriptive analysis, causal analysis, complex modeling, evaluation
- . More powerful inside broader data ecosystem
- . Next steps:
 - . Assessment of housing initiatives, olympics
 - . Integrating lived expertise, mutual aid partners

Thanks to our Funders

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- California Health Care Foundation

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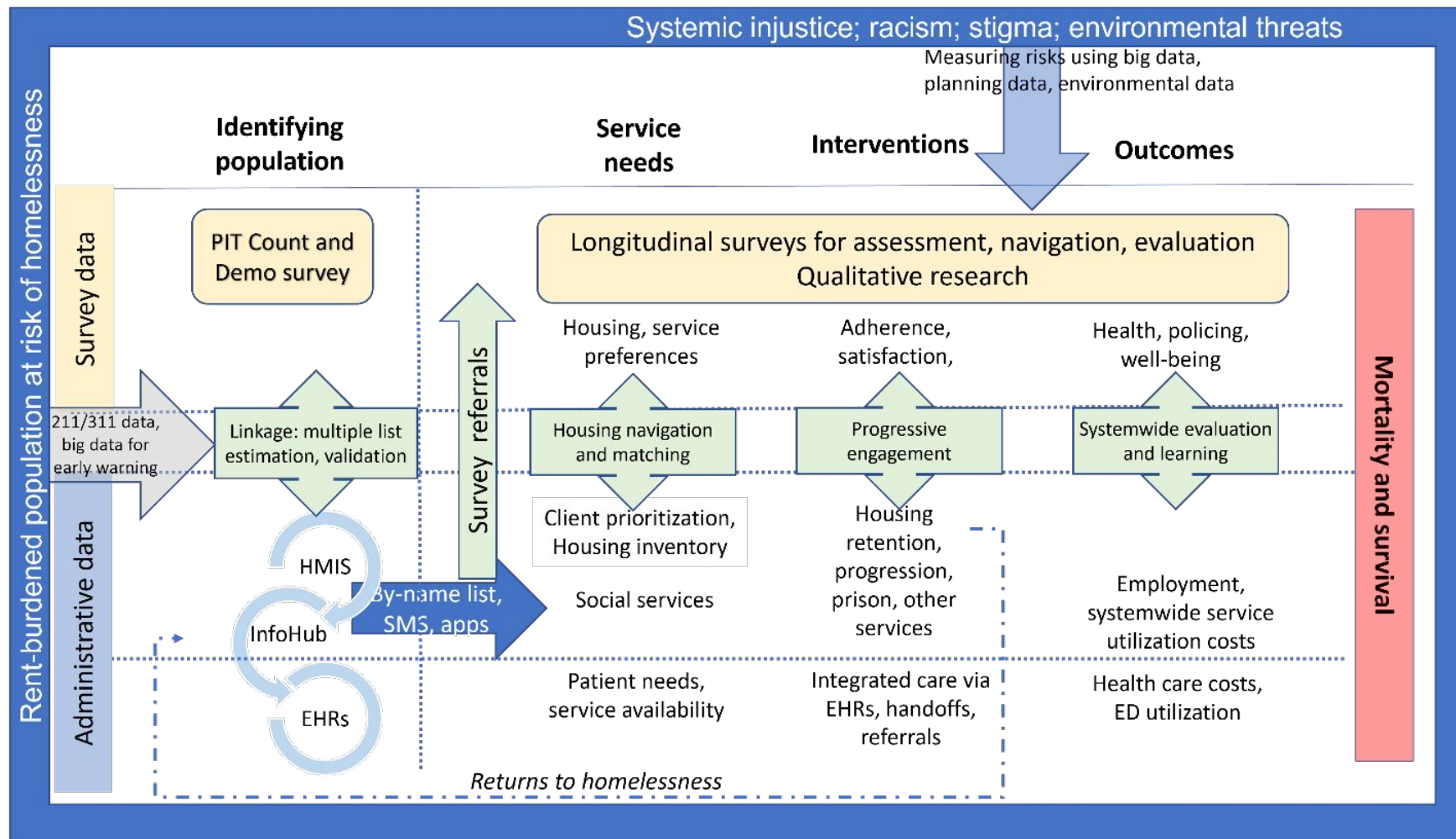


Fielding
School of Public Health



Extra slides

Structure of an integrated homelessness data ecosystem



- ## Advantages
- Validation
 - Integration
 - Triangulation



HPRI Data Gaps Group. A vision for an integrated homeless services data ecosystem for Los Angeles. Working paper.

Detailed reports: Mental health conditions

	PATHS	VFC	HIA	CPL
Any condition	61%	40%	40%	75%
Anxiety	40%	11%	17%	
Major depression	33%	13%	20%	
PTSD	28%	5%	6%	
Bipolar disorder	16%	6%	10%	
Schizophrenia/psychosis	7%	12%	9%	

Detailed reports: Substance use

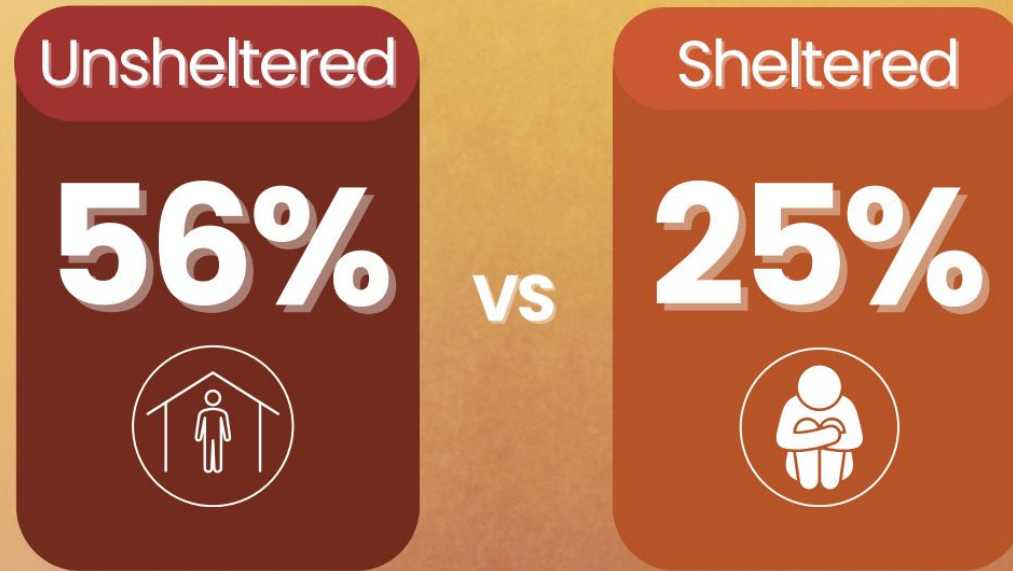
	PATHS	VFC	HIA	CPL
Any condition	33%	31%	43%	78%
Stimulant use disorder	19%	13%	27%	
Cannabis use disorder	13%	3%	3%	
Alcohol use disorder	11%	9%	7%	
Opioid use disorder	9%	10%	11%	

EXTREME HEAT IMPACTS FOR
UNHOUSED ANGELENOS

1 in 3
experienced
extreme heat
almost **daily**

50% experienced
it **weekly**

Unsheltered people face the
highest exposure

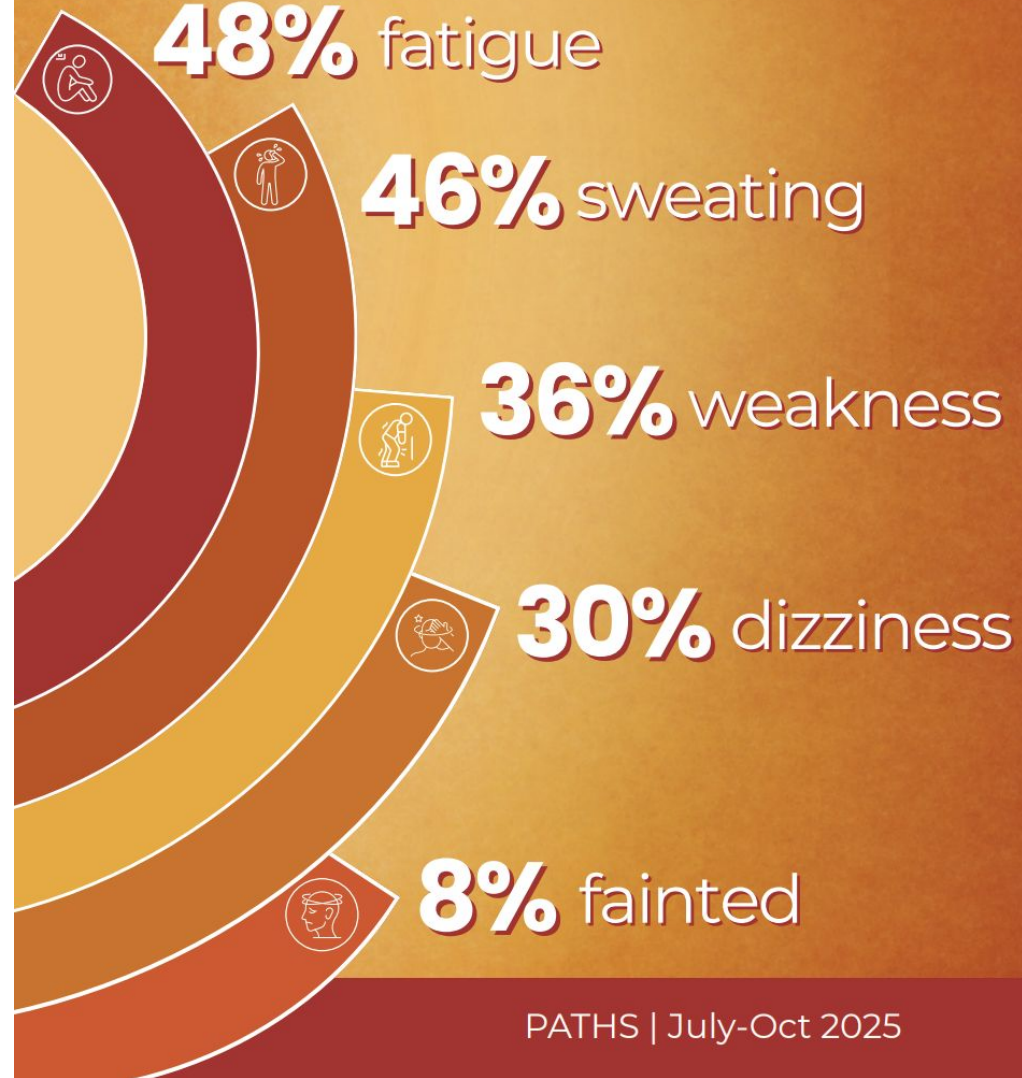


Without **stable shelter**,
heat exposure is often **constant &**
unavoidable.

HEALTH BURDEN IS REAL

68% experienced **heat**
related symptoms

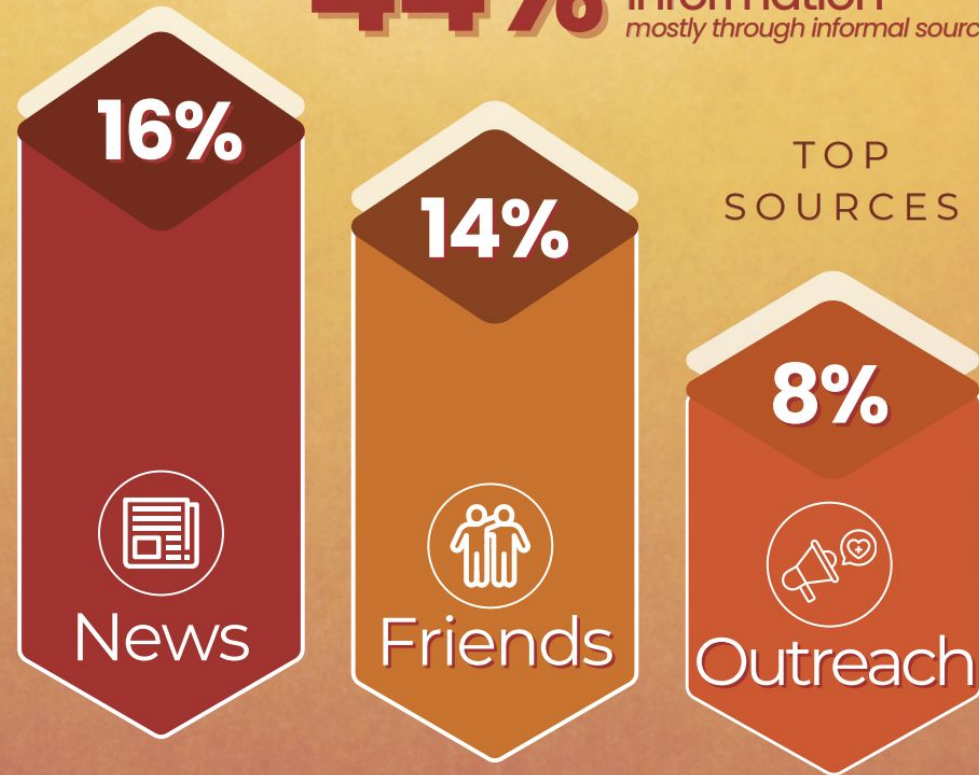
Extreme heat is not just uncomfortable, it creates real health risks



GAPS IN INFORMATION

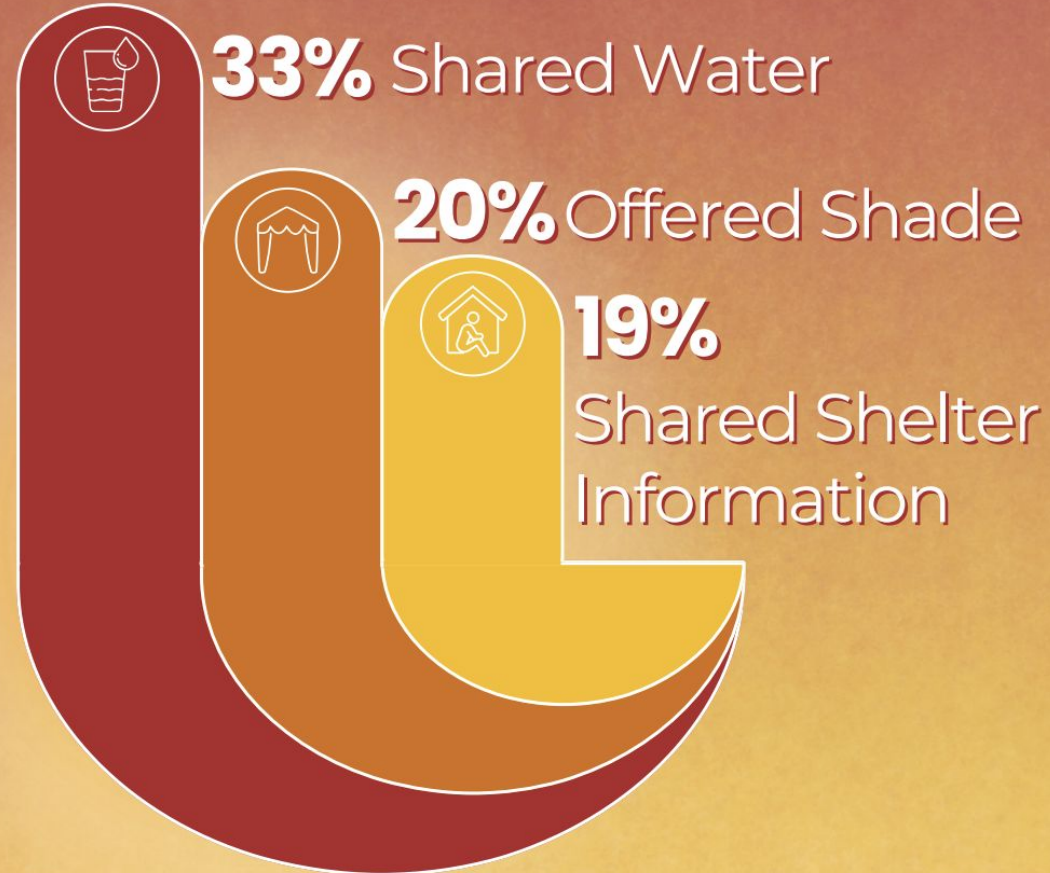
56% did **NOT** receive
heat information

44% did receive heat
information
mostly through informal sources



*Information systems often miss people living outside, where
access to phones, internet, and formal alerts is limited*

52% helped others



When formal systems fall short, communities step in, peer support is critical to staying safe during extreme heat.

WHAT CAN HELP

Strategies that help **close gaps** in
access, information, & protection



More cooling sites

Easy-to-reach places to cool down, with low barriers



Clear alerts

Simple info on where to go and when it's open



Mobile outreach

Meeting people where they are with support & supplies



Access to shade,
water, & restrooms

Safe, reliable basics available throughout the day

Current systems often don't reach unhoused communities