



**MIRIAM'S HOUSE**  
SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

SERVING THE HOMELESS IN  
CENTRAL VIRGINIA

Kristen Nolen, MSW

Director of Housing Services

MIRIAM'S HOUSE



SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

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*Est. 1994*

*Miriam's House exists to end homelessness by rebuilding lives and empowering our community's most vulnerable.*

# MIRIAM'S HOUSE ORIGINS

- Founded in 1991, opened our doors in 1994 with a mission to end homelessness and rebuild lives
- Co-founded by Rev. Bev Cosby of Church of the Covenant and Elizabeth M. Forsyth
- Opened a transitional housing program on Magnolia Street to provide 11 units of housing to homeless women and families





# Our Story

1992



Co-founders Rev. Bev Cosby and Elizabeth M. Forsyth joined together to envision a home for homeless women & children

1993



Broke ground on 409 Magnolia Street

1994



Miriam's House opened its doors and the work began

2004



Celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

2011



1000<sup>th</sup> homeless person served

2014



Our Community First program launched to serve more homeless families

2017



Our Magnolia Street Supportive Housing program opened to serve chronically homeless women

2018



Our HOME program was established to serve unsheltered people in our community

2019



Celebrating 25 years,  
2500 lives changed

# Causes of Homelessness

## **System deficiencies:**

Lack of affordable housing

Lack of access to health care and mental health services

Lack of living wages

## **Poverty coupled with:**

Domestic Violence

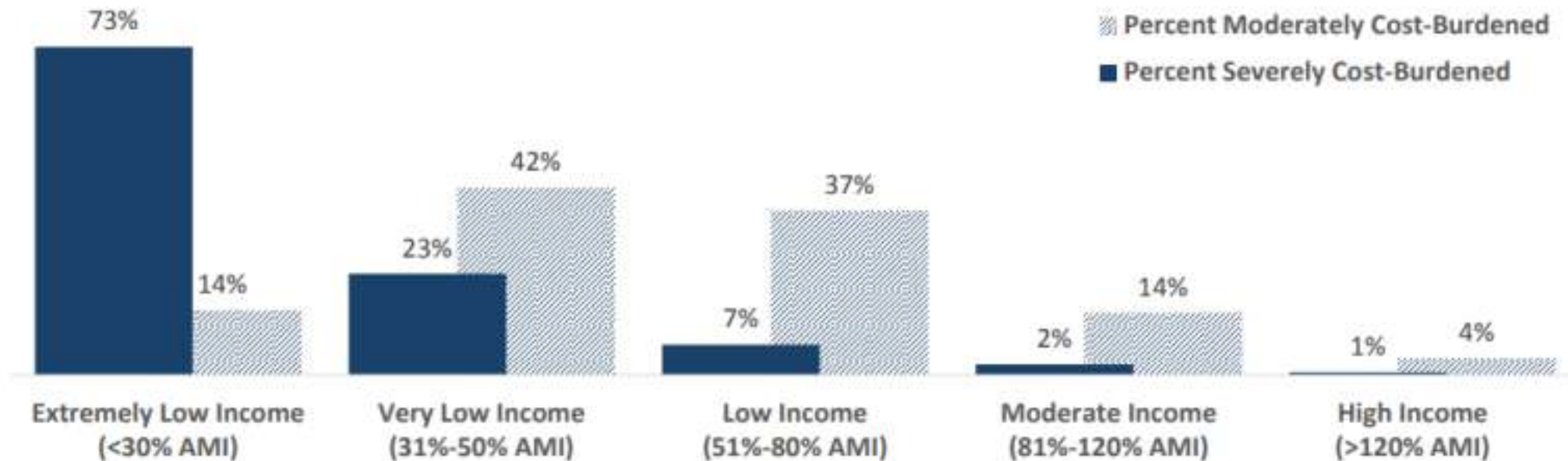
Substance use disorders

Mental health disorders

Other disabilities

Crisis (job loss, natural disasters, divorce, medical emergency)

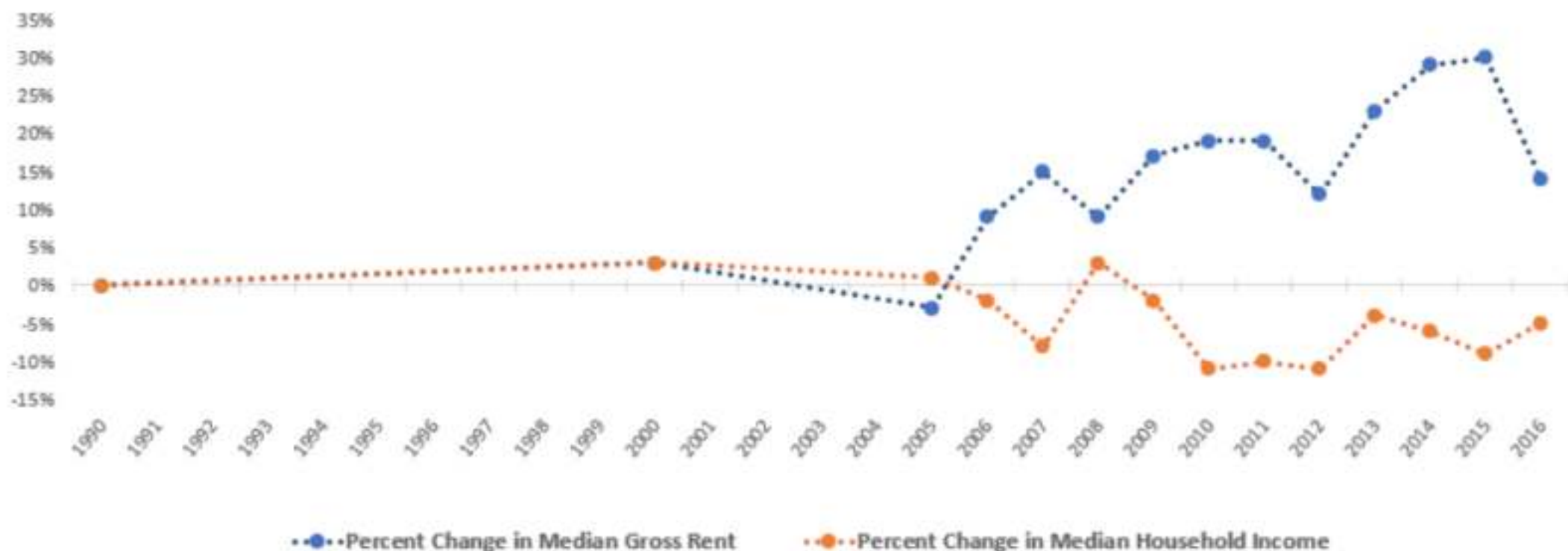
# Home Affordability by Income



**The lower a household's income, the less likely that an affordable home is in reach.**

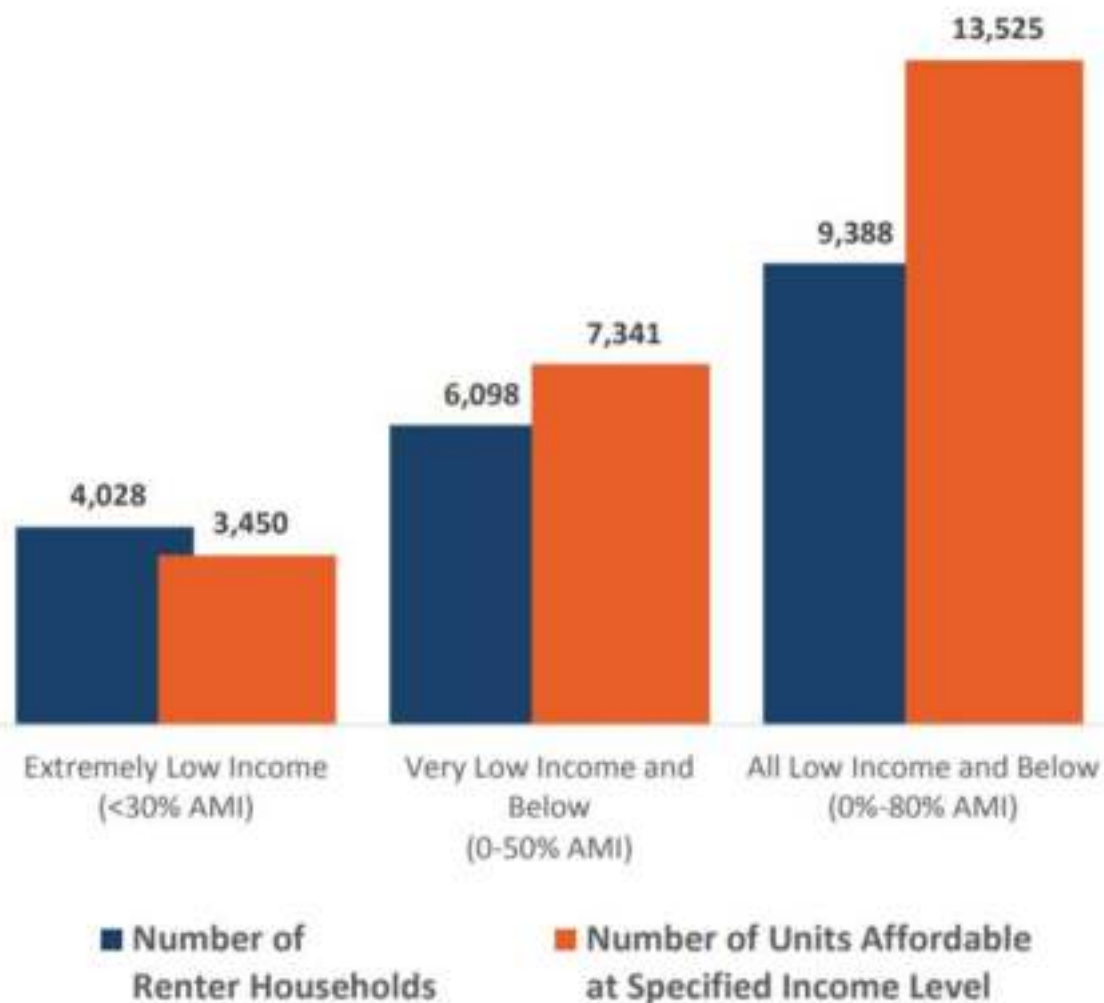
The majority (73%) of extremely low-income households in Lynchburg spent more than half their earnings on housing in 2016, and another 14% paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

# Rents are Rising, Relative to Wages in Lynchburg



**Rising rents have outpaced incomes in cities across the country, and Lynchburg is no exception.**

Since 1990, median rents in Lynchburg have risen 14 percent, while median income has declined—decreasing 5 percent from 1990 to 2016 (adjusted for inflation).



## High Demand, Short Supply

**Renters at the lowest end of the market face the biggest squeeze.**

There are 13,525 units affordable to all 9,388 low-income renter households in Lynchburg.

But renters at the lowest end of the market face a supply gap. For 4,028 extremely low-income renters (earning below 30 percent of the area median income), there are only 3,450 units they can afford.

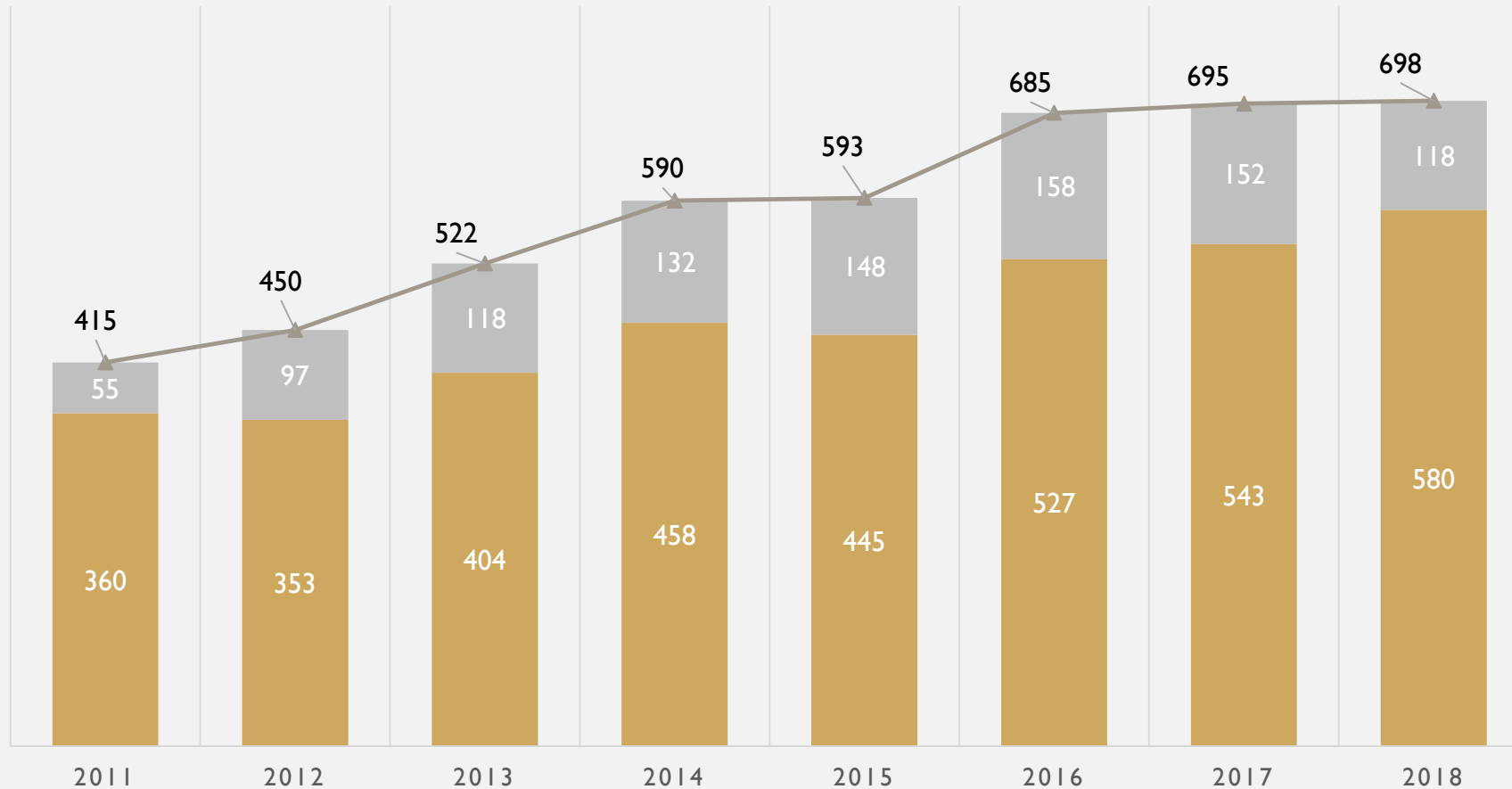
Source: 2016 ACS 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Data. A unit is considered "affordable" if it consumes no more than 30% of the household's income.



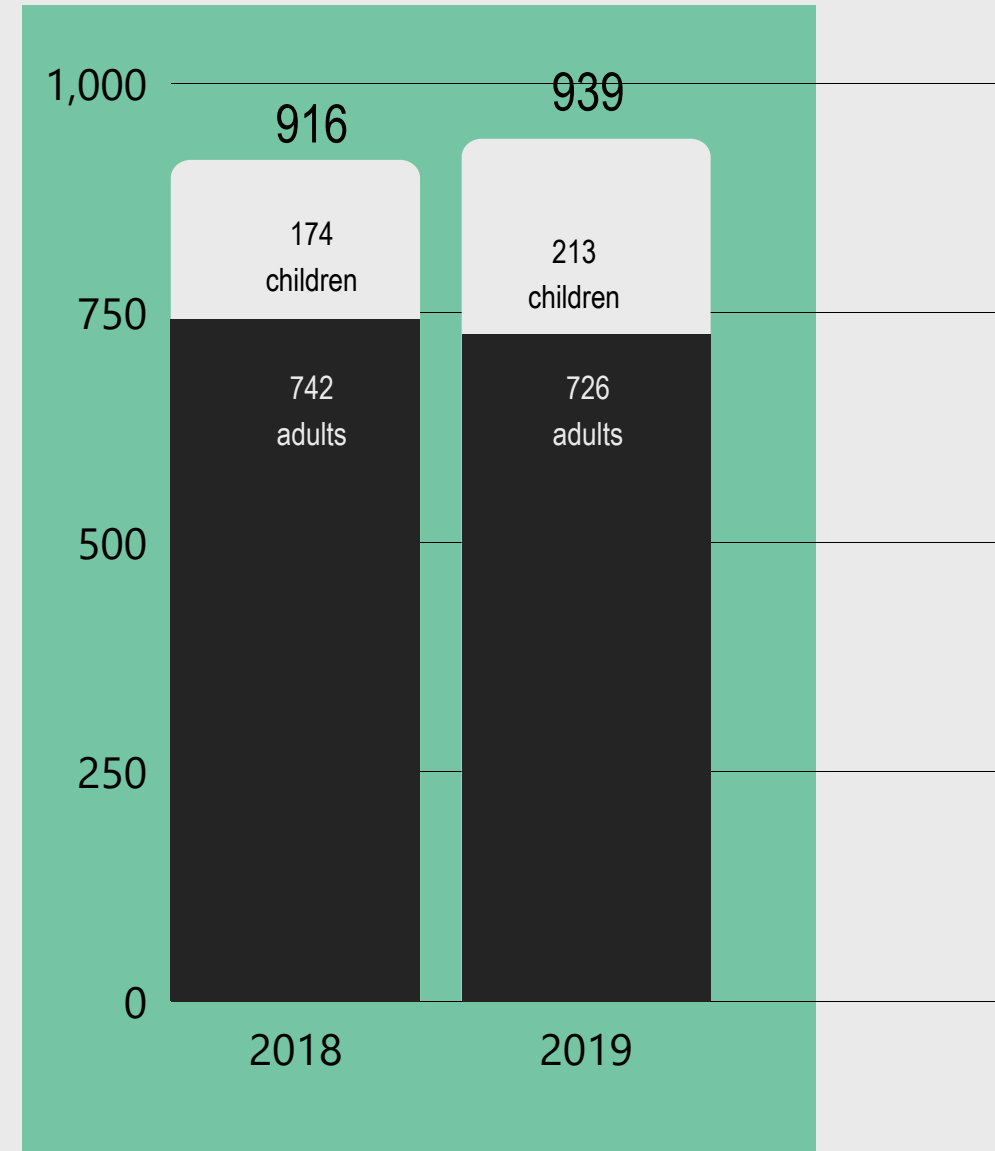
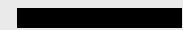
# Scope of Homelessness in Central VA

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN EMERGENCY SHELTER

■ Singles ■ Persons in Families ▲ Total



# Annual Central Virginia CoC Homeless Numbers Including Domestic Violence Shelters



Source: Homeless Management Information System for the  
US Department of Housing and Urban Development

# *MIRIAM'S HOUSE RESPONSE*

- **Became a Housing First organization**—removing barriers to program admission, housing focused approach, and prioritizing highest barrier households
- **Launched Community First**, our rapid re-housing program, in 2013 to provide homeless families with children the financial assistance and support to move out of shelter and into a home
- **Formed a coordinated entry process** for all homeless response in 2014
- In 2017, **shifted our transitional housing program to supportive housing** to serve the most vulnerable homeless women—those who have been homeless for more than a year
- In 2018, **started HOME**—a street outreach program—and began serving homeless youth with our Community First program
- Expanded our **partnership with PHAs and housing developers** to provide more vouchers and permanent housing solutions for those with the longest episodes of homelessness

# *Our Current Programs*

- **Community First**—providing housing and supportive services to families with children and unaccompanied youth
- **Magnolia Street Supportive Housing** for women who are chronically homeless (have had long lengths of homelessness coupled with a disability of long duration) to provide them with housing and supportive services
- **Central Virginia Supportive Housing** pairs long-term rental assistance through vouchers with wraparound and robust supportive services for chronically homeless individuals with the highest service needs
- **Housing First Lynchburg** is a partnership with Lynchburg Regional Housing Authority to provide supportive housing for chronically homeless households in the community
- **HOME (Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement)**—street outreach program to reach persons sleeping outdoors
- **Coordinated Homeless Intake and Access (CHIA)**—regional homeless hotline providing diversion, referral to resources and triage to shelter or street outreach for those experiencing a housing crisis
- **Homeless Response Coordination**—provides backbone support to all agencies providing homeless response within the Lynchburg area



## *Our Beliefs*

- Housing is a basic human right
- The solution to homelessness is housing
- Every homeless person can be successfully housed
- Services should be voluntary and designed to empower the client

# 4 *Principles Guide Our Work*

## HOUSING

- Housing is offered without preconditions

## EMPOWERMENT

- Clients are considered experts on their own lives and their choices are honored

## SUPPORT

- Individualized wrap-around services are tailored to each client's needs and strengths

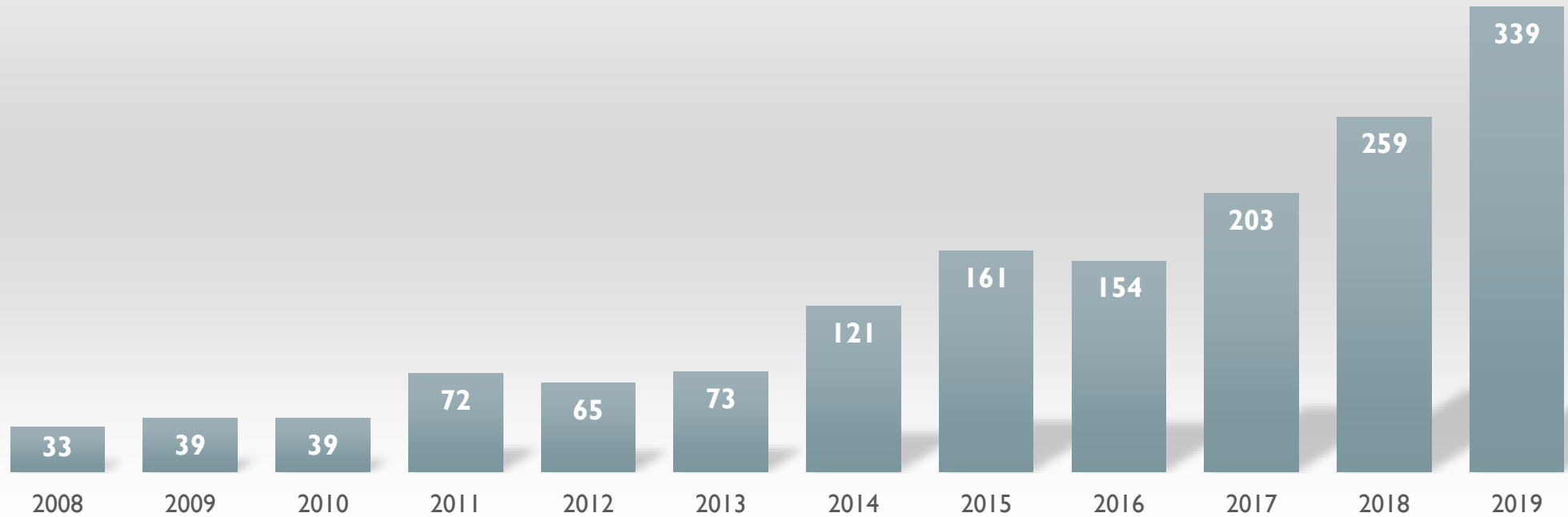
## COMMUNITY

- Connecting with neighbors and social supports promotes stability

# MIRIAM'S HOUSE SERVICE CAPACITY

Homeless Persons Served Increased by 930%

■ Persons Served



## PROGRAM OUTCOMES 2018-2022

- 33 days from enrollment to housed!
- 97% exited to permanent housing destination
- 86% exited with income
- 88% exited with health insurance



# COMMUNITY FIRST



- CLIENT STORY:
  - Kelly became homeless due to domestic violence
  - Sought shelter at a local emergency shelter
  - Referred to Community First for RRH
  - Rehoused within 3 weeks of shelter entry
  - Enrolled in a electrician training program
  - “Being in a homeless shelter is hard, it’s stressful, it’s loud. My son was starting to act out. Now my son is secure in where he is living and has stability.”

# SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR WOMEN

- Kathy
  - Years on the street and in domestic violence relationships
  - Victimization of crimes- “I don’t press charges when he hits me because I have nowhere else to go”
  - Untreated schizoaffective disorder
  - Criminal history related to homelessness-trespassing charges
  - Housing in her own apartment has provided safety from abuse, reduced interactions with the police and a place for her service providers to come work with her on her goals



# Milford's Journey to Housing

Everyone Deserves a Home

10+

YEARS

Experienced unsheltered homelessness.

4

YEARS  
AGO

Engaged with street outreach program, HOME, in 2018.

2

YEARS  
AGO

Moved into a Rush PSH unit in January 2020, with rental assistance provided by Lynchburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority and supportive services provided by Miriam's House.



Has successfully remained housed for over 2 years through weekly support from his supportive housing case manager and ongoing landlord engagement.



**2013 - 2018**

*Accessed shelter or slept outdoors.*



**NOVEMBER 9, 2018**

*Engaged with street outreach.*

US Department of Veteran Affairs



**JANUARY 2019**

*Assessed using VI-SPDAT.*



Central Virginia  
CONTINUUM OF CARE

*Success  
Story  
Butch*



**AUGUST 14, 2019**

*Engaged with Veteran Council for housing.*



**AUGUST 20, 2019**

*Enrolled in Rapid Re-Housing.*

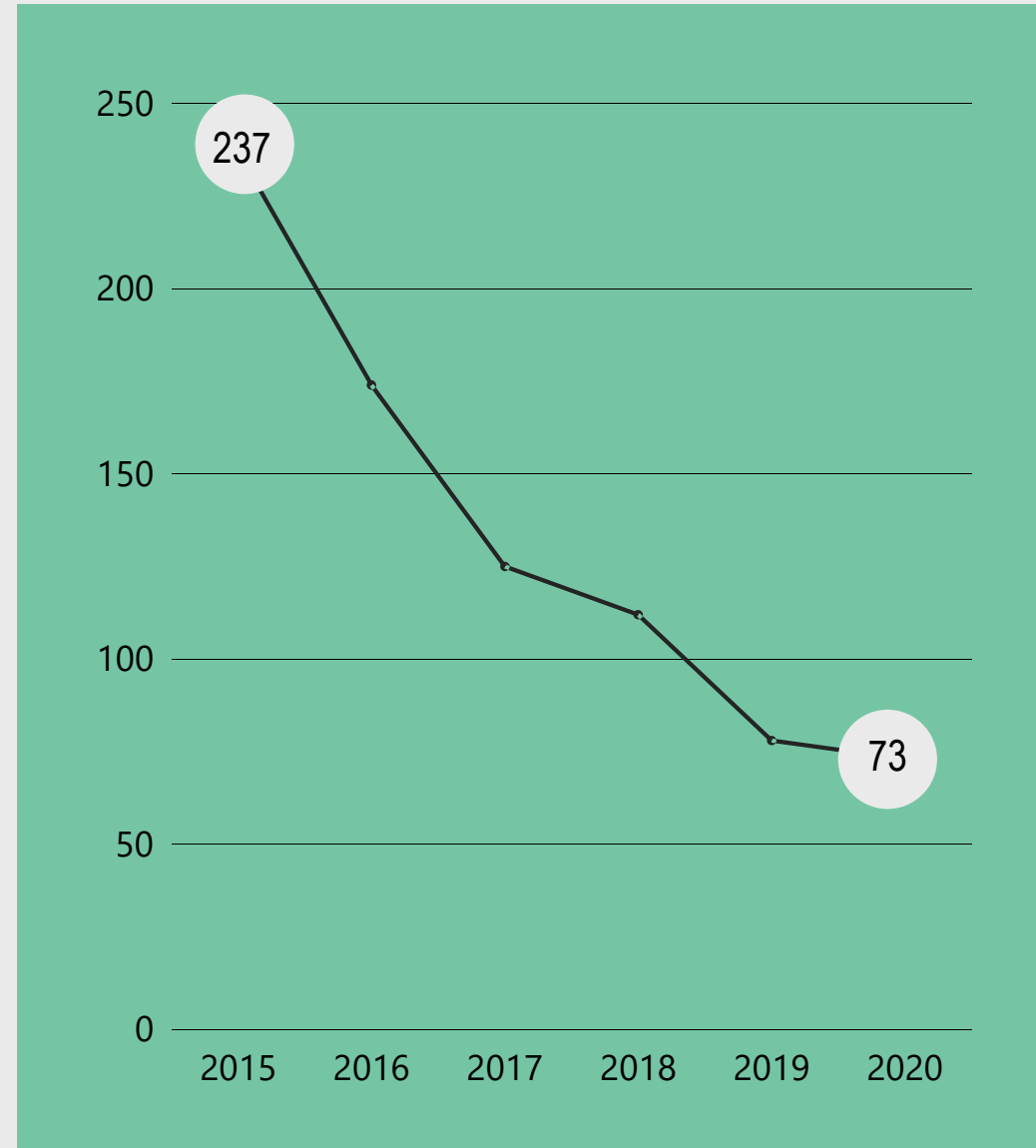
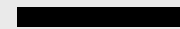


AUGUST 23, 2019 **HOUSED!!**

# Homelessness on a Single Night in Central Virginia

A count on a single night of the persons in the City of Lynchburg and the four surrounding counties experiencing homelessness.

**69%** decrease in overall homelessness since 2015.



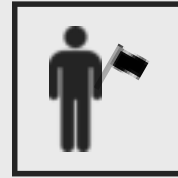
# Homelessness on a Single Night in Central Virginia

Priority Subpopulations



CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

36% decrease since 2015



VETERANS

89% decrease since 2015



PERSONS IN FAMILIES

71% decrease since 2015



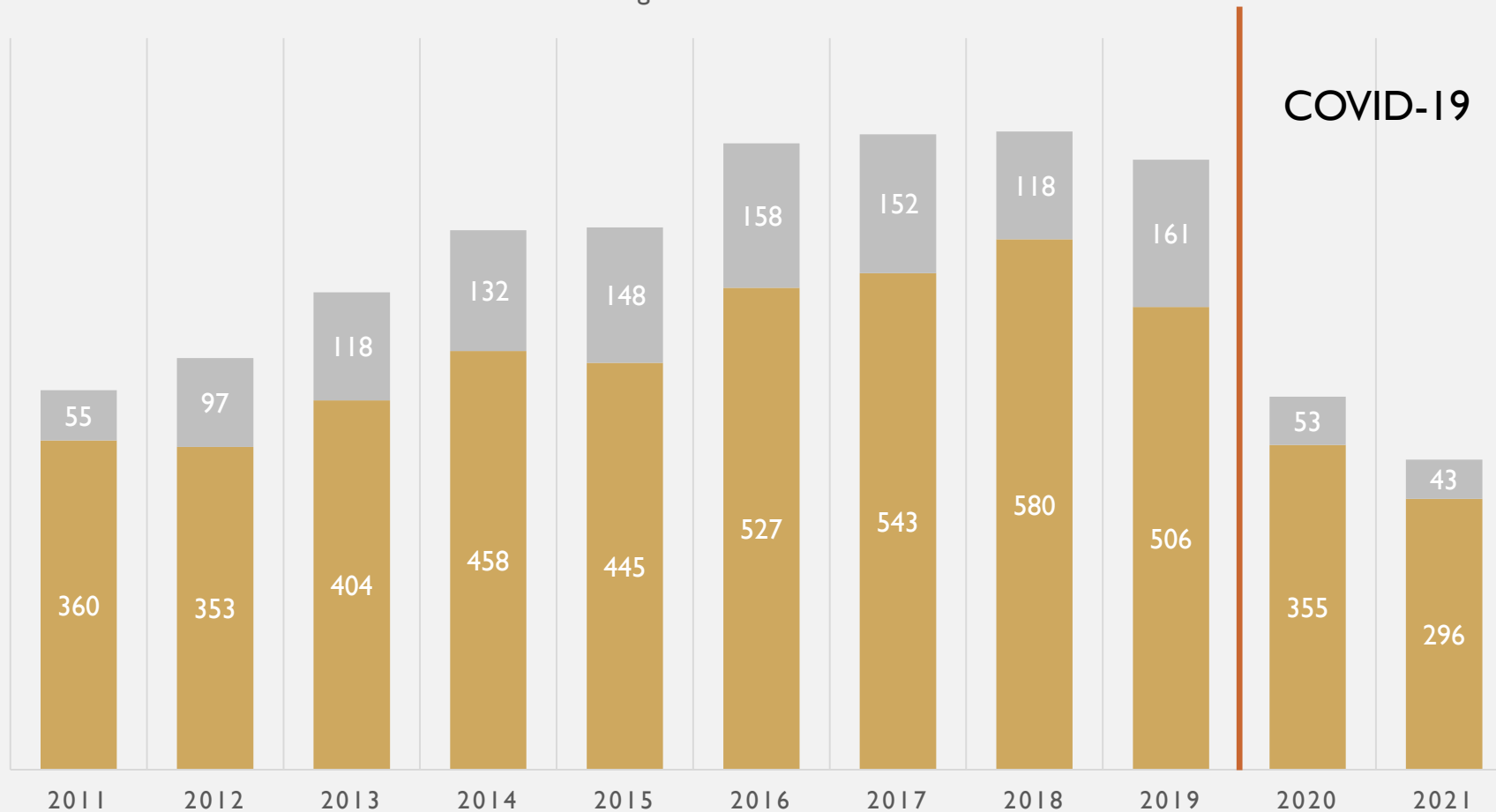
UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

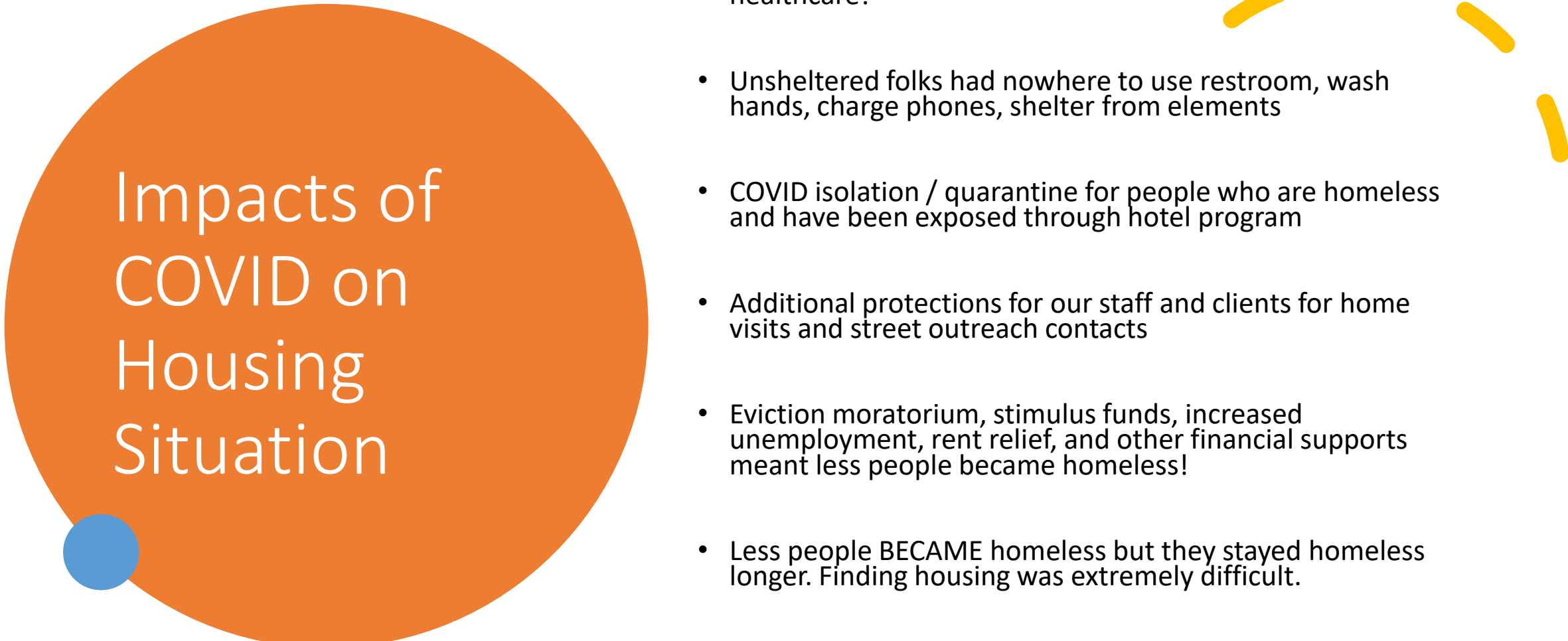
83% decrease since 2015

# *Impact of COVID on Homelessness in Central VA*

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN EMERGENCY SHELTER

■ Singles ■ Persons in Families





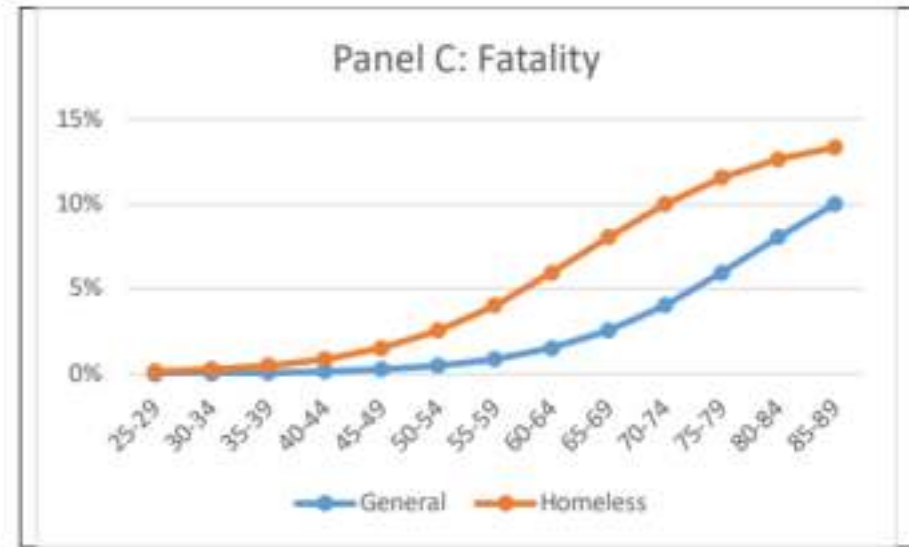
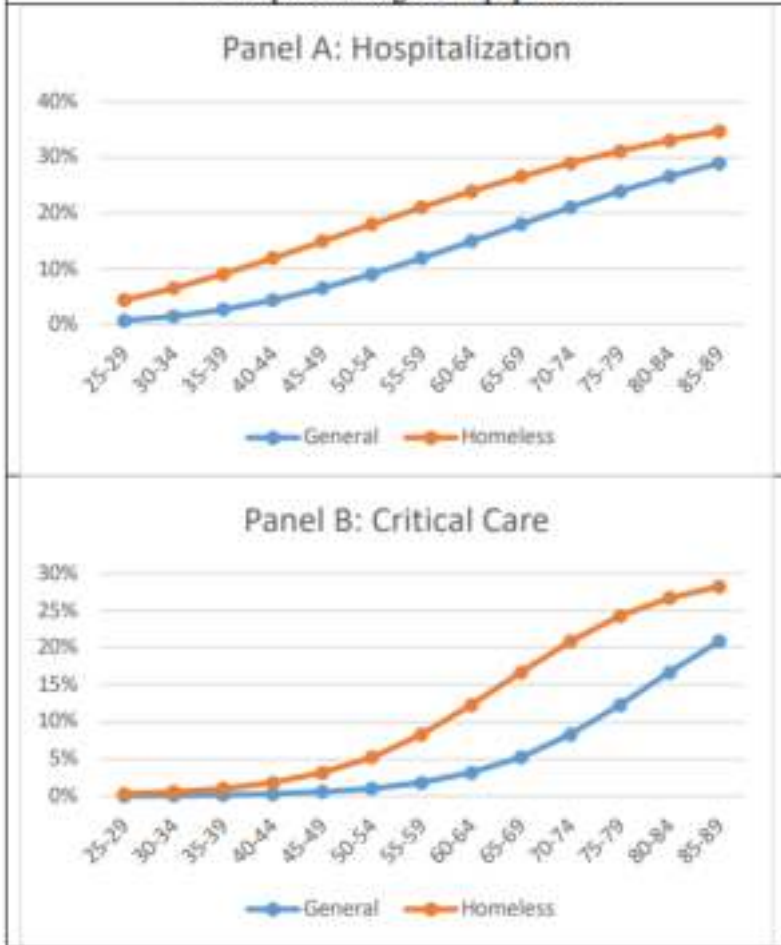
# Impacts of COVID on Housing Situation

- Important moment to raise awareness that housing = healthcare!
- Unsheltered folks had nowhere to use restroom, wash hands, charge phones, shelter from elements
- COVID isolation / quarantine for people who are homeless and have been exposed through hotel program
- Additional protections for our staff and clients for home visits and street outreach contacts
- Eviction moratorium, stimulus funds, increased unemployment, rent relief, and other financial supports meant less people became homeless!
- Less people BECAME homeless but they stayed homeless longer. Finding housing was extremely difficult.
- Hard realization – we rely on evictions to find places for homeless families to live. Revolving door for extremely low income households.



# COVID Risks for the Homeless Population

Figure 1: Age-specific risk for homelessness-adjusted scenarios in comparison to general population



# THE COMMUNITY'S IMPACT ON OUR WORK

- Churches and volunteers make our work possible in so many ways!
  - Donation drives of our most needed items (bus passes, household items, consumable goods, cleaning supplies)
  - Renting apartments to people needing to be re-housed
  - Helping with delivering furniture to families who are starting over
  - Projects around our Magnolia Street property, including updating tenant units, doing yardwork, organizing our supply shed
  - Dropping off meal boxes to families during holidays or times of need





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**QUESTIONS?**

Kristen Nolen, MSW

[kristen@miriamshouse.org](mailto:kristen@miriamshouse.org)