



# ELEVATING THE VOICES OF THE UNHOUSED

Research and Recommendations for  
A-Mark's Philanthropic Strategies  
to Help the Homeless in Los Angeles

**Jason Ballou, Fiona (Bofei) Yan**



## SPECIAL THANK YOU



A-Mark Foundation, Skid Row Brigade, Prof. Steinert-Threlkeld, Prof. Gilens, Denise Guttierrez, Lauren Nemeh, Tan Chau, Tyler Martin, Tyrone Carter and Percy Vazquez

# OUR CLIENT: A-MARK FOUNDATION



The A-Mark Foundation is a local private philanthropic foundation which provides funding to individuals and organizations engaged in humanitarian, educational, or charitable purposes



A-Mark Foundation has been around for about 25 years and is currently going through long term organizational planning and a more formalized structuring as its founding philanthropist and principal prepares for retirement

Published a report on **the costs of tiny home villages** built as a temporary housing solution in Los Angeles

Partnered with the LA Mayor's Office, the Skid Row Brigade, and the ILM Foundation to fund a pilot program to collect data on **the effectiveness of monitoring the approximately 50 portable toilets** installed on Skid Row in response to COVID

# AGENDA



# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION





**63,706**  
unhoused people



**13%** increase from 2019

**17,616**  
sheltered people



**3%** increase from 2019

**10,638**  
permanent supportive  
housing units

**11,200** interim housing  
units in operation

## BACKGROUND: SIZE OF HOMELESSNESS PROBLEM



**A HUGE GAP  
BETWEEN WHAT  
THE GOVERNMENT  
IS DOING AND  
WHAT PEOPLE  
NEED**

## **BACKGROUND: SIZE OF LOCAL EXPENDITURE ON HOMELESSNESS**



- LAHSA has an annual budget of **\$352 million** dollars
- City of Los Angeles budget contains nearly **\$1 billion** dollar for homelessness measure in 2021, accounting for **9%** of total budget



- New York City spent **2%** of the total budget on homelessness in 2021, with **38%** decrease in the number of unsheltered people



## **POLICY QUESTION**

By centering the voices of the unhoused themselves, what can our client, the A-Mark Foundation, do to implement policies that are more successful ?

# METHODOLOGY

01



Survey  
and  
Sample

03



Data  
analysis

05



Literature  
review



Focus  
Group  
Interviews



Stakeholder  
interviews

02

04



## SURVEY AND SAMPLE

### SURVEY BIG DAY

- **DATE** February 19th, 2022
- **LOCATION** 6th Street known as Skid Row neighborhood, DTLA
- **PARTICIPANTS** 100 currently unhoused people

### SURVEY TEAM

Surveyors: Jason Ballou, Fiona (Bofei) Yan, Denise Gutierrez, Tan Chau, Lauren Nemeh

Project coordinators: Manuel Compito, Lynne Price-Compito, Ron Crockett from Skid Row Brigade

# **SURVEY AND SAMPLE**

## **SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### **Opening Questions**

What you would do about homelessness, if you were Mayor of Los Angeles?  
What kinds of things would you do in the short run?  
Which folks out here need the most help?

### **Demographic Questions**

Age, Race Identity, Gender, Years of being homeless, Marital Status, Number of Children, Health & Disability

### **Additional Question**

Is there anything you'd like to add to what we've talked about today?





## FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

### WOMEN FOCUS GROUP

February 25, 2022

6 female participants

Around 1h10m

- **SENIOR MEN FOCUS GROUP**

March 6th,  
2022

5 male  
participants

Around  
1h40m



## DATA ANALYSIS

- Quantitative Analysis
  - R & Excel
- Qualitative Analysis
  - Otter

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Tracey DeFrancesco, Vice President of A-Mark

Lynne Price-Compito and Manuel Compito, Community Activists of Skid Row Brigade

Eric Schroer, Policy Analyst at LAHSA

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research report

Case studies

Scholarly articles

Newspaper articles

Committee reports

City and County policy literature

# RESULTS AND FINDINGS



## 100-RESPONDENT SHORT SURVEY: DEMOGRAPHICS

### OUR SURVEY

More than three quarters of respondents (86%) are chronically homeless people

People over 55 years old account for more than half of respondents (55%) and there are no people aged under 25

Black people (66%), male (76%) are over-represented in the survey respondents

People with physical disabilities account for more than half of respondents (56%)

**VS**

### 2020 HOMELESS COUNT

38% of people are chronically homeless people

People over 55 years old account for 24% of total population and people under 25 years old account for 19%

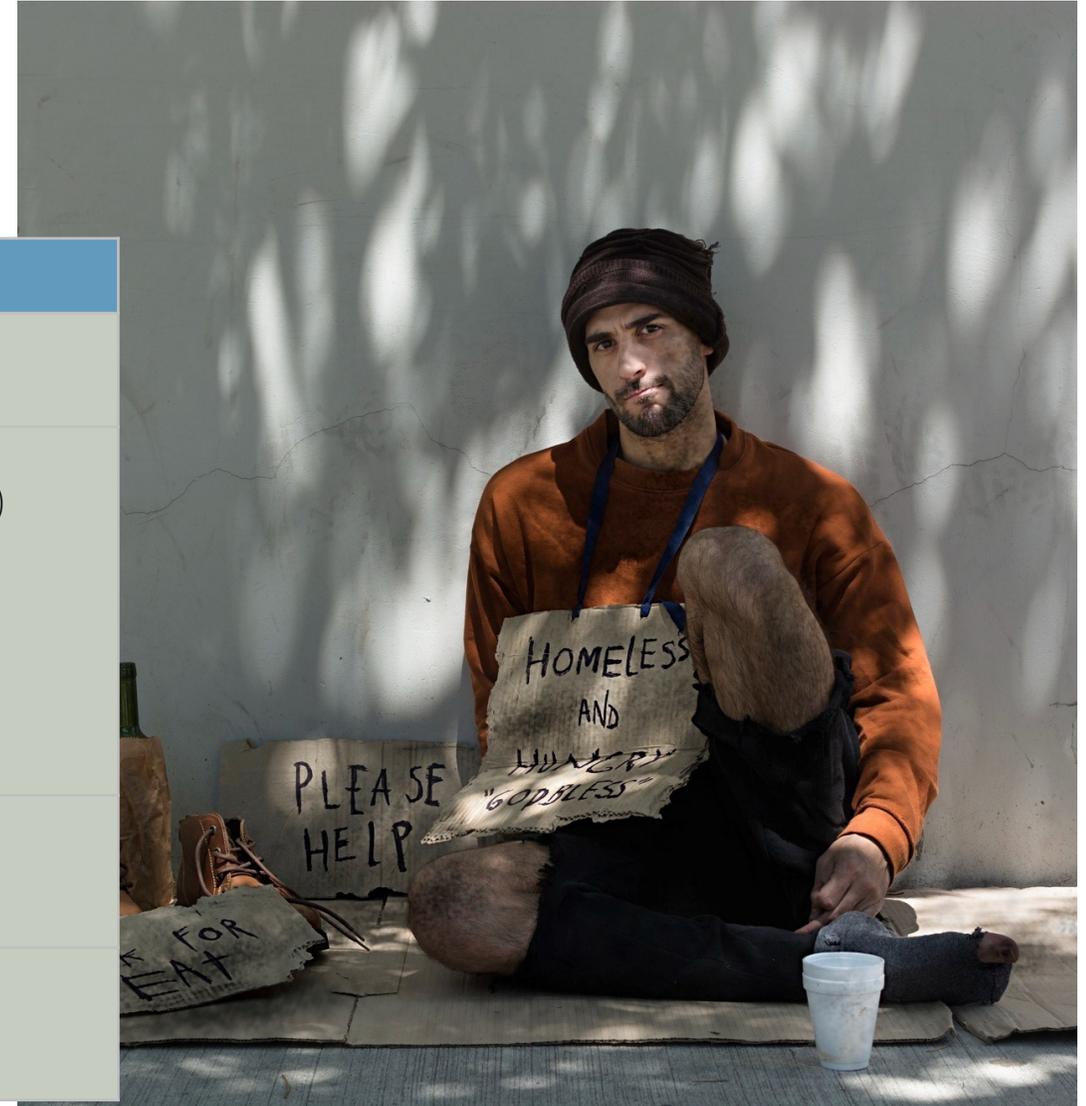
Black people account for 38%, male account for 67%

People with physical disabilities account for 19%

# 100-RESPONDENT SHORT SURVEY: RESPONSE OVERVIEW

## SURVEY RESPONSES CATEGORIES

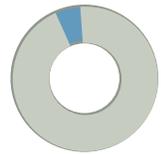
Category	Policies and Programs
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable interim and permanent housing</li> <li>• Shelter</li> </ul>
Community Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic living resources (food, clothing, etc)</li> <li>• Hygiene resources (toilets, laundry, sanitation, shower)</li> <li>• Education, employment and training opportunities</li> <li>• Street cleaning</li> <li>• Case management service and social service</li> <li>• Activities (entertaining, socializing and sports)</li> <li>• Public transportation</li> </ul>
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health service</li> <li>• Substance abuse service</li> <li>• Medical service</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Listening and caring</li> <li>• Effective system and funding</li> </ul>



## HOUSING:

### ➤ 88 respondents mentioned housing

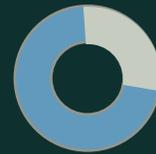
#### Affordable housing



**79 people (90%) stated that there is a scarcity of available affordable housing**

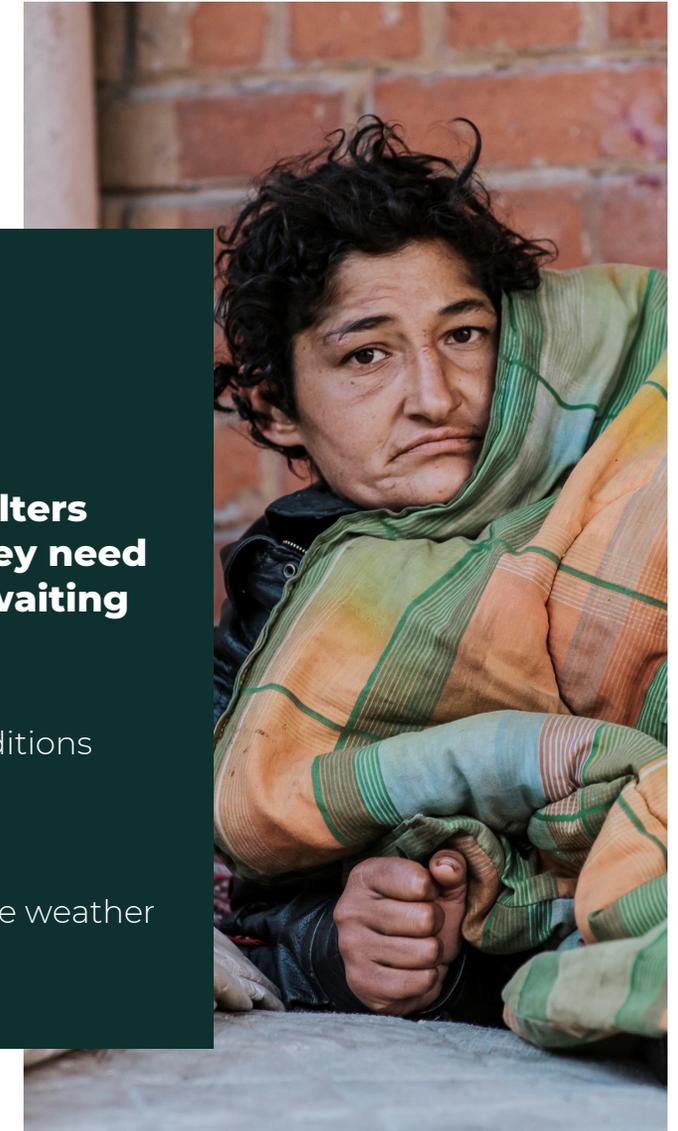
- More access to rental assistance programs
- More Single Room occupancy (SRO) housing
- Improving current housing living conditions

#### Shelter



**25 people (28%) noted shelters and 16 (18%) noted that they need more shelters for people waiting for housing**

- Improving the current shelter living conditions
- More nighttime shelters without curfew
- More shelter during the cold and extreme weather



## COMMUNITY RESOURCE:

### ➤ 85 respondents mentioned community resource

#### Living Resources (53%)

- Food (41%)
- Clothing (22%)
- Blankets or tents (8%)
- Benefits (6%)

#### Hygiene Resources (45%)

- Toilets (27%)
- Shower (22%)
- Laundry (20%)
- Sanitation (16%)

#### Job and Education Opportunities(45%)

- Job training programs, job opportunities (31%)
- Class for skills building, lifestyle class and education (15%)

#### Street Cleaning (21%)

- Cleaner neighborhood without trash, rats and bacteria

#### Case Management (16%)

- More case manager and social workers

#### Activities (15%)

- Entertaining, socializing and exercising activities



## HEALTHCARE:

### ➤ 45 respondents mentioned healthcare

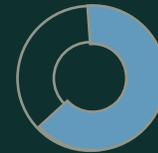
Substance Abuse  
Service



**(78%)**

- More treatment centers or programs
- Follow-up monitoring and drug & alcohol education

Mental Health  
Service



**(69%)**

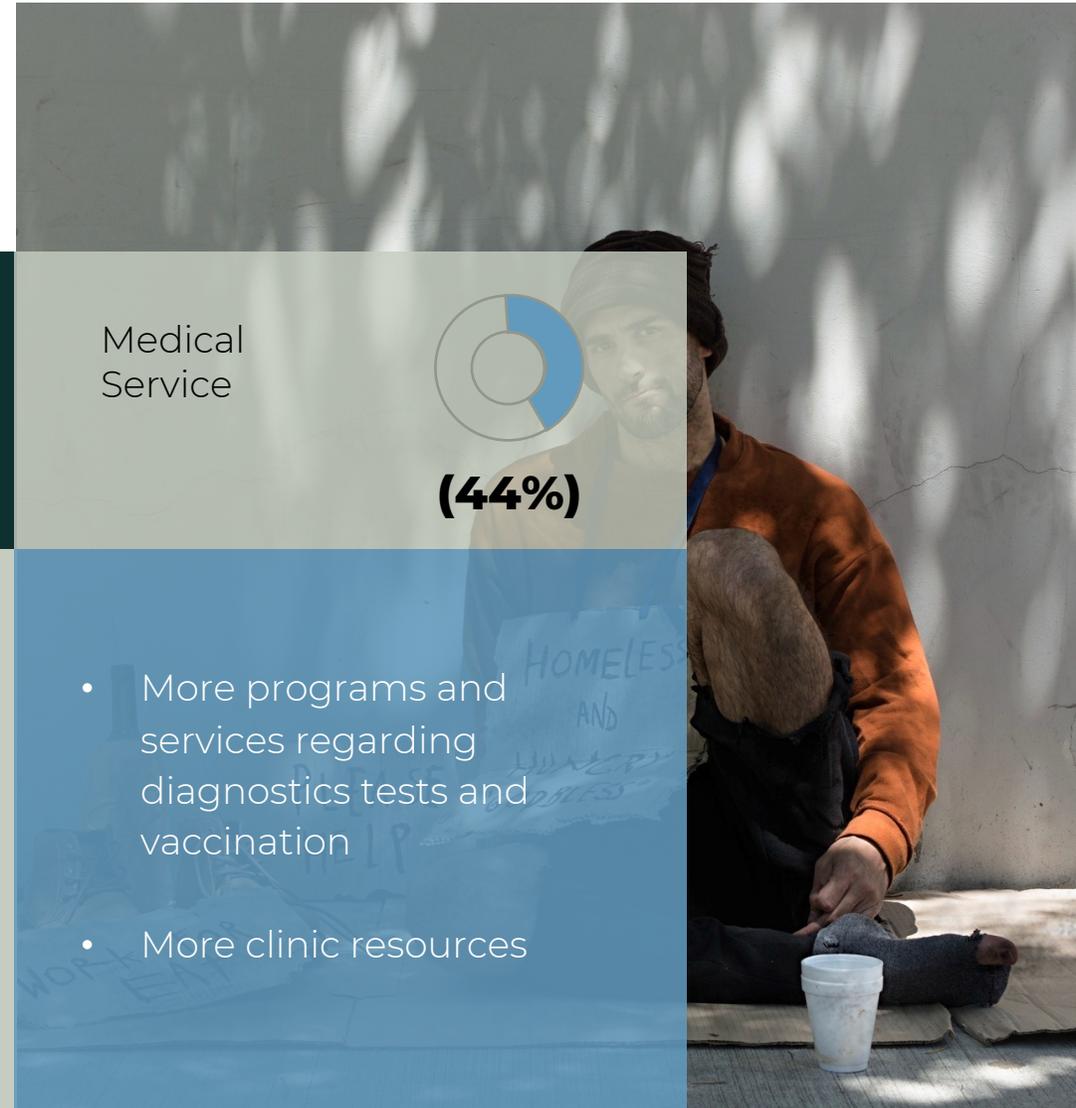
- Mental health counseling services, urgent care and other psychological help
- More case managers to support and assist

Medical  
Service



**(44%)**

- More programs and services regarding diagnostics tests and vaccination
- More clinic resources



## OTHERS

### **Safety**

Increasing police staffing to reduce violence and other danger in navigating shelters and life on the streets for unhoused people

### **Effective System and Funding**

Building a more effective system in the reform of budget and implementation of programs

### **Listening and Caring**

Lifting up the voices of people experiencing homelessness to create better policies and raise public awareness of helping them





**RANK OF PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO  
CHOSE THE CATEGORY**

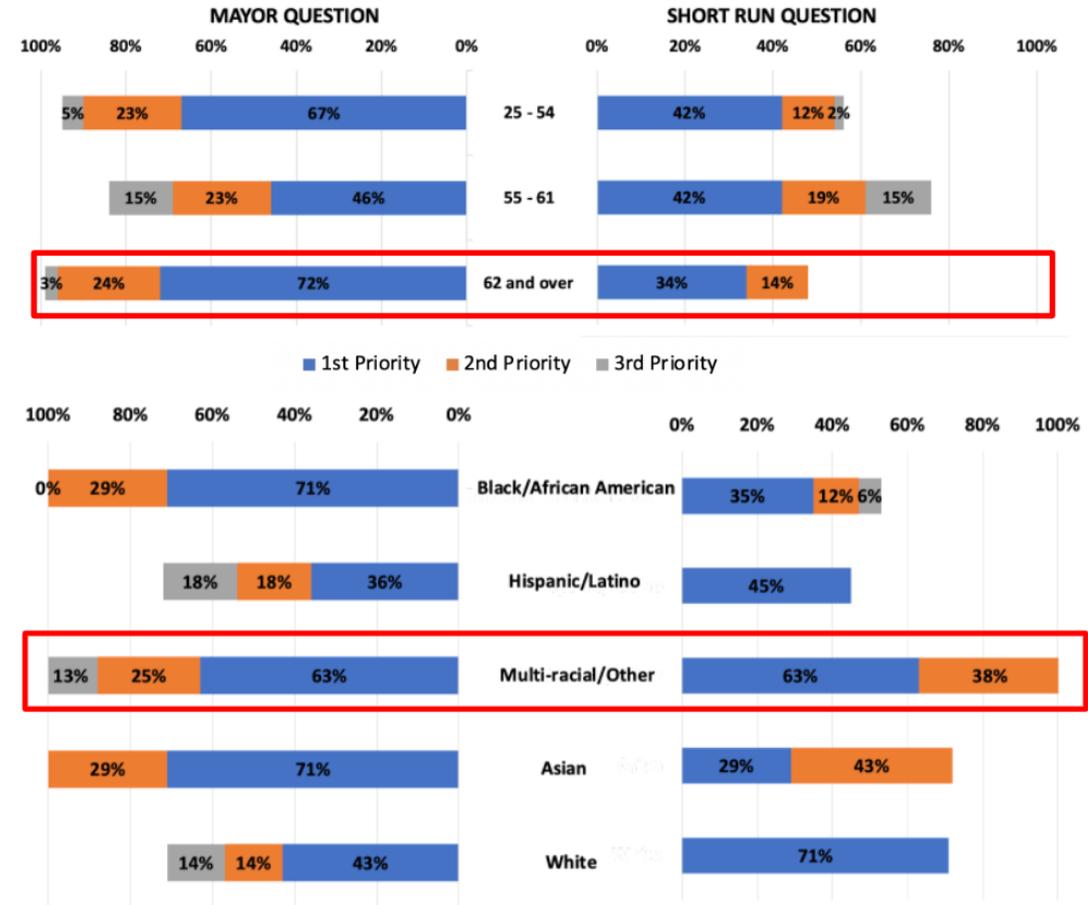
**MAYOR QUESTION**

- 1. Housing
- 2. Community Resources
- 3. Healthcare
- 4. Others

**SHORT RUN QUESTION**

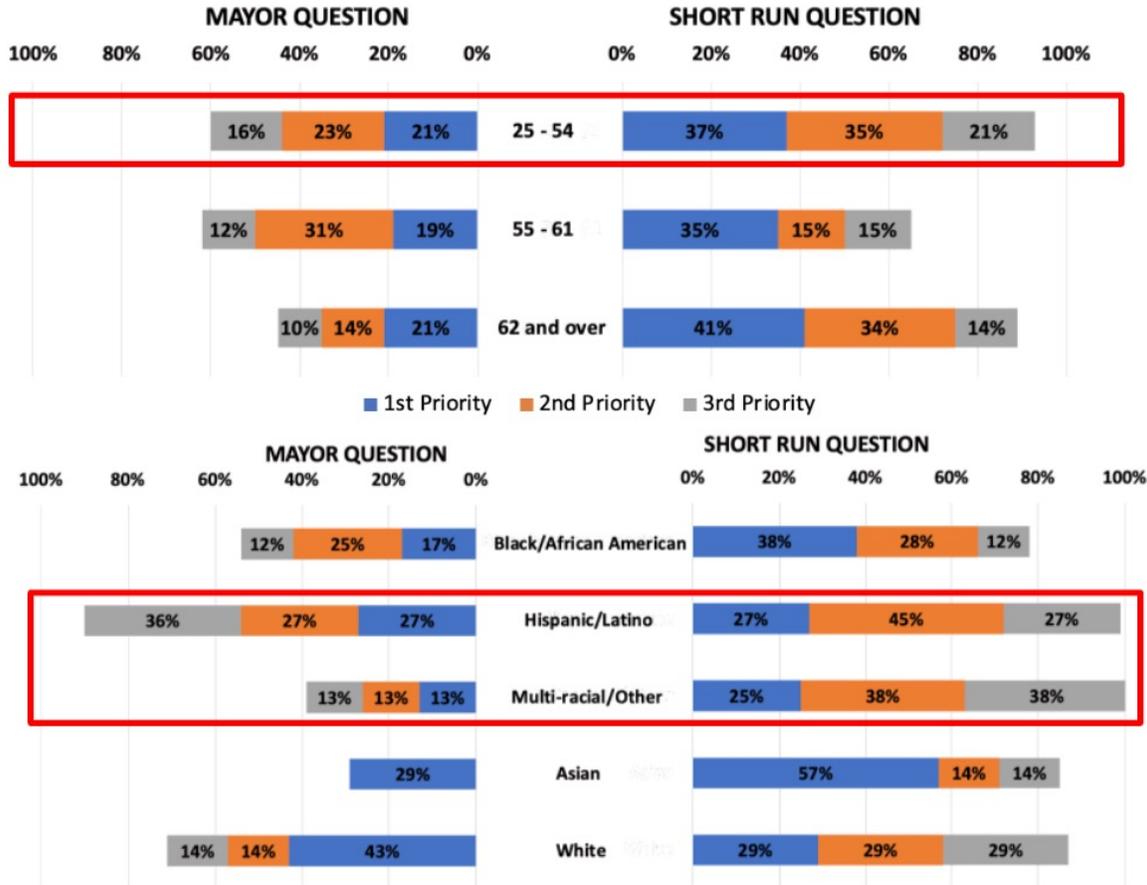
- 1. Community Resources
- 2. Housing
- 3. Others
- 4. Healthcare

**HOUSING: WHO CARES MOST?**

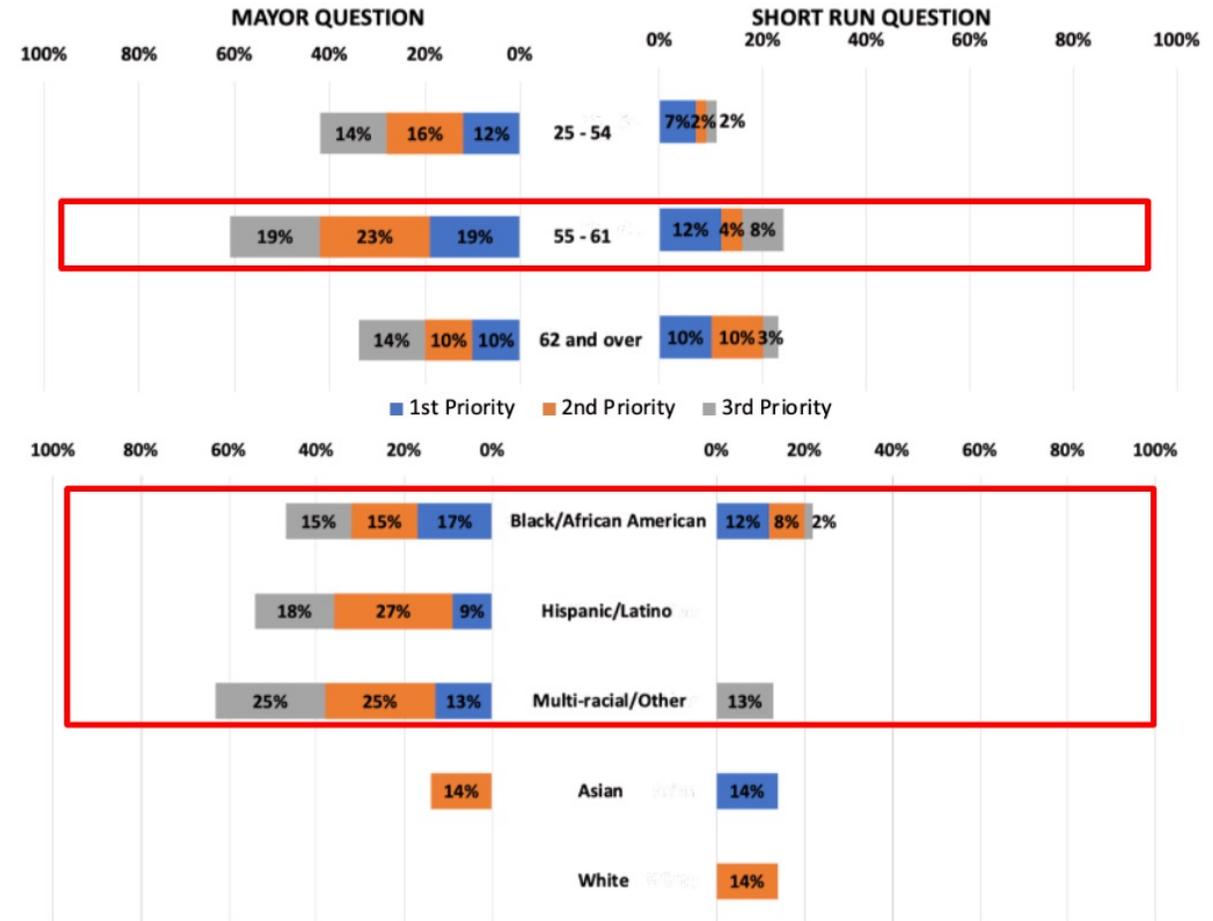


# WHO CARES MOST?

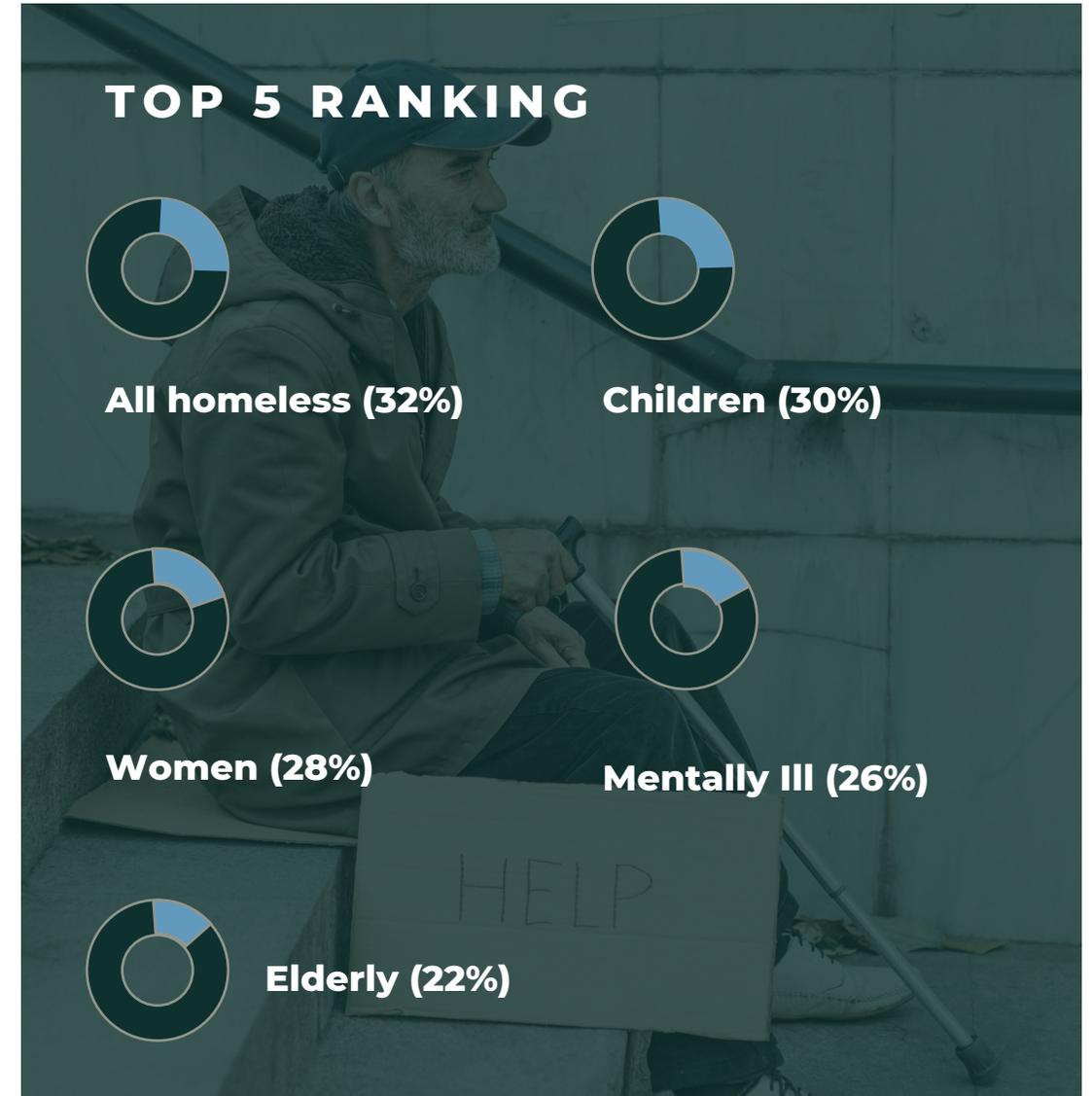
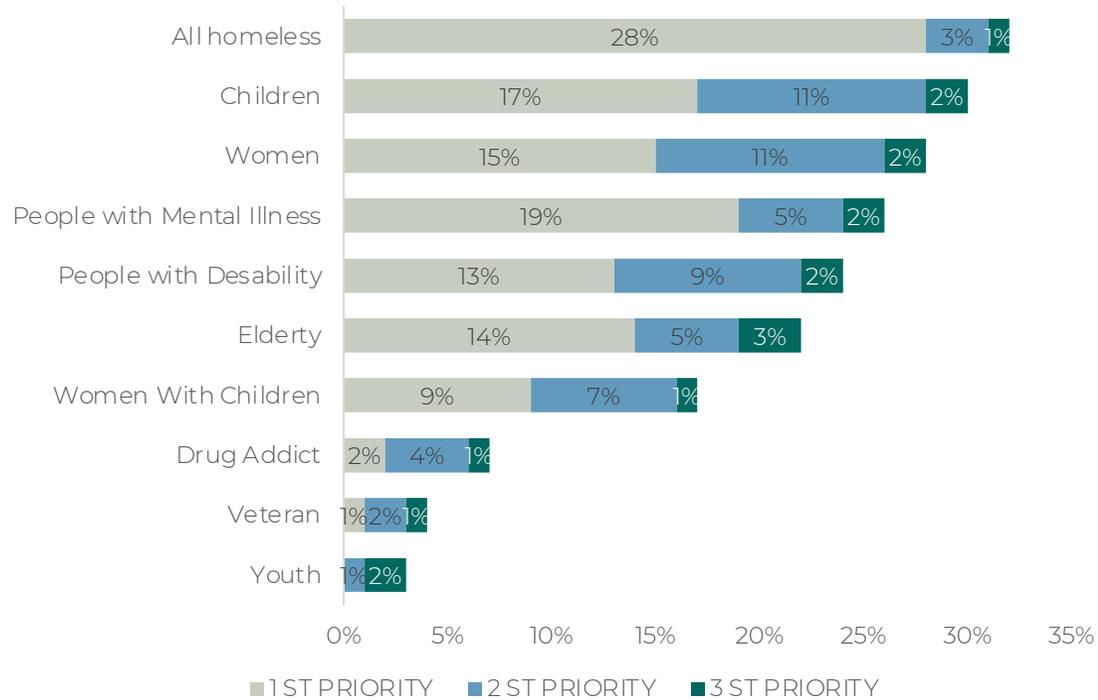
## COMMUNITY RESOURCES



## HEALTHCARE



# HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED THE MOST HELP



# FOCUS GROUP

## HOUSING

- Barrier to secure housing
- No pets” policy, no place for family household
- Lack of privacy and safety
- Scarcity of personal hygiene facilities
- Too strict curfews

## LISTENING AND CARING

- Paying attention to, making connections with, listening to their stories
- Listening and lifting up their voices

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Entry to the society...

- Skill training program
- Access to internet and technology resources
- Social activities to build connection
- Service for women having children

## HEALTHCARE

- Treatment
- Case management
- Discharge planning

## SAFETY

- Be wary on the street and even in temporary housing
- Insecurity comes not only from the other homeless people on the street, but even from the police surveillance
- Police brutality and racial discrimination
- Victims of violence:
  - Feel unsafe in their surroundings and even social workers
  - Complex PTSD - Untreated

## FOCUS GROUP

“

I had a mental problem, not a drug problem, but I couldn't get help. In my situation, I have to act crazy, for people (extreme crazy) in order to get help. Extreme case.

”

“

One of the biggest factors is where you take a shit, where you take a pee? Where do you change clothes, how can you have privacy if you don't have someplace to stash your belongings?

”

“

Walking around with pepper spray, that's my life. I have to make sure I get my guard up

”

“

More coping skills, more life skill programs can help people get back in (the society), start at a skill.”

”

“

At least give them (women having children) a chance. Some people don't give them a chance, they just say “Oh, you're homeless” and they automatically count that against them with DCFS.

”

“

So when you're doing whatever, make the person feel that you're doing it from your heart to help them, which is helping us in so many ways

”

# POLICY OPTIONS

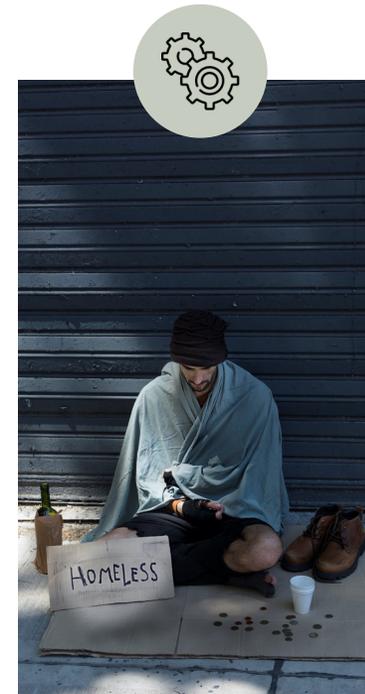


**HOUSING  
PROVISION**

# CAPACITY GRANTS



**PILOT  
PROJECTS**



# PURE RESEARCH





## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Preferences of those Unhoused

- Housing
- Safety
- Community Resources
- Healthcare
- Immediacy of Benefit

### A-Mark's Capacity

- Degree of Research Orientation
- Financial Feasibility
- Cost Efficiency



Where 4 equals Maximum, 3 equals High, 2 equals Moderate, 1 equals Low, and 0 equals None.

## POLICY OPTION 1: HOUSING PROVISION

- ANALYZED 2 CHEAPEST METHODS OF PROVIDING TEMPORARY, INDIVIDUALIZED HOUSING (by itself)
  - "Project Homekey" Style Motel Purchase + Conversion
  - "Tiny Homes" Project (lower cost/unit)
- While this Option scored **well** for Housing, Safety, and Immediacy
- Scored **poorly** for Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria for A-Mark of being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible (zero feasibility) at a minimum cost of \$5.7 million

## POLICY OPTION 2: CAPACITY GRANTS

- BASED ON THE CREATION OF THE “REFRESH SPOT” AS A MODEL
  - If A-Mark were to make a \$50,000 grant to a local grassroots organization, to formally incorporate, hire and train community members
  - Leverage that into a \$375,000 contract, which is approximately 1:8 leverage ratio
- While this Option scores poorly for providing Housing and Safety\*
- Scored highly for Immediacy, Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible

## POLICY OPTION 3: PILOT PROGRAMS

- 1 YEAR COST OF A WEEKLY SERVICES PROGRAM
  - Based upon our collected data, we would suggest services for vulnerable populations
  - Seniors, women, trauma, mindfulness, meditation, transition skills, exercise, etc
  - Provided in an indoor, physically safe space, moderated
  - Experimentally designed with controls, tracking, outcome evaluation
- Scores poorly for providing Housing and marginally better for Safety\*
- Scored highly for Immediacy, Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible

## POLICY OPTION 4: PURE RESEARCH

- 1 YEAR COST of RESEARCH OPERATIONS
  - Hiring a full time staffperson for leading research projects, making research grants
  - Could look into any of the several 'dark' areas of homelessness research that need enlightened
  - Cull and extrapolate data from agencies like DMH, housing and service providers like Step Up on Second, universities like Penn who's looking at the County's UBI experiment
- Option 4 scores poorly for providing Housing, Safety, and Immediacy
- Scores moderately for providing Community Resources and Healthcare
- Scored highly for being Research Oriented and Financially Feasible

## EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

CRITERIA	POLICY OPTIONS			
	Housing Provision	Capacity Grant	Pilot Programs	Pure Research Projects
Preference : Housing	4	0	0	1
Preference : Safety	3	2	3	1
Preference : Community Resources	1	4	4	3
Preference ; Healthcare	1	3	3	3
Immediacy Oriented	3	4	4	0
Research Oriented	1	4	4	4
Financial Feasibility	0	3	3	4
<b>Total score</b>	13/28	20/28	21/28	16/28
Cost Efficiency (cost / person)	\$42,344	\$16	\$39	\$73



## CONCLUSION

There is very little in the way of research done on the experiences, outcomes, or even detailed demographics of Los Angeles's homeless population.



- Based upon our surveying, there is a significant difference between some basic types of people experiencing homelessness and that containment strategies have tended to leave vulnerable people to suffer the violence of criminals and those who are mentally ill.
- Pilot Programs and Capacity Grants are the highest ranking Policy Options that allow for empirical research, at the lowest cost, while delivering the most immediate impact to those experiencing homelessness.
- This presents a striking opportunity for our Client, A-Mark, to bring research and enlightenment to a field where large expenditures are being made with little empirical evidence to support the nature of these expenditures.

**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!**