

# Out of the woods? Lessons from the United States on tackling rural homelessness

## With:

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# Out of the woods?

Lessons from the United States on tackling  
rural homelessness in the UK



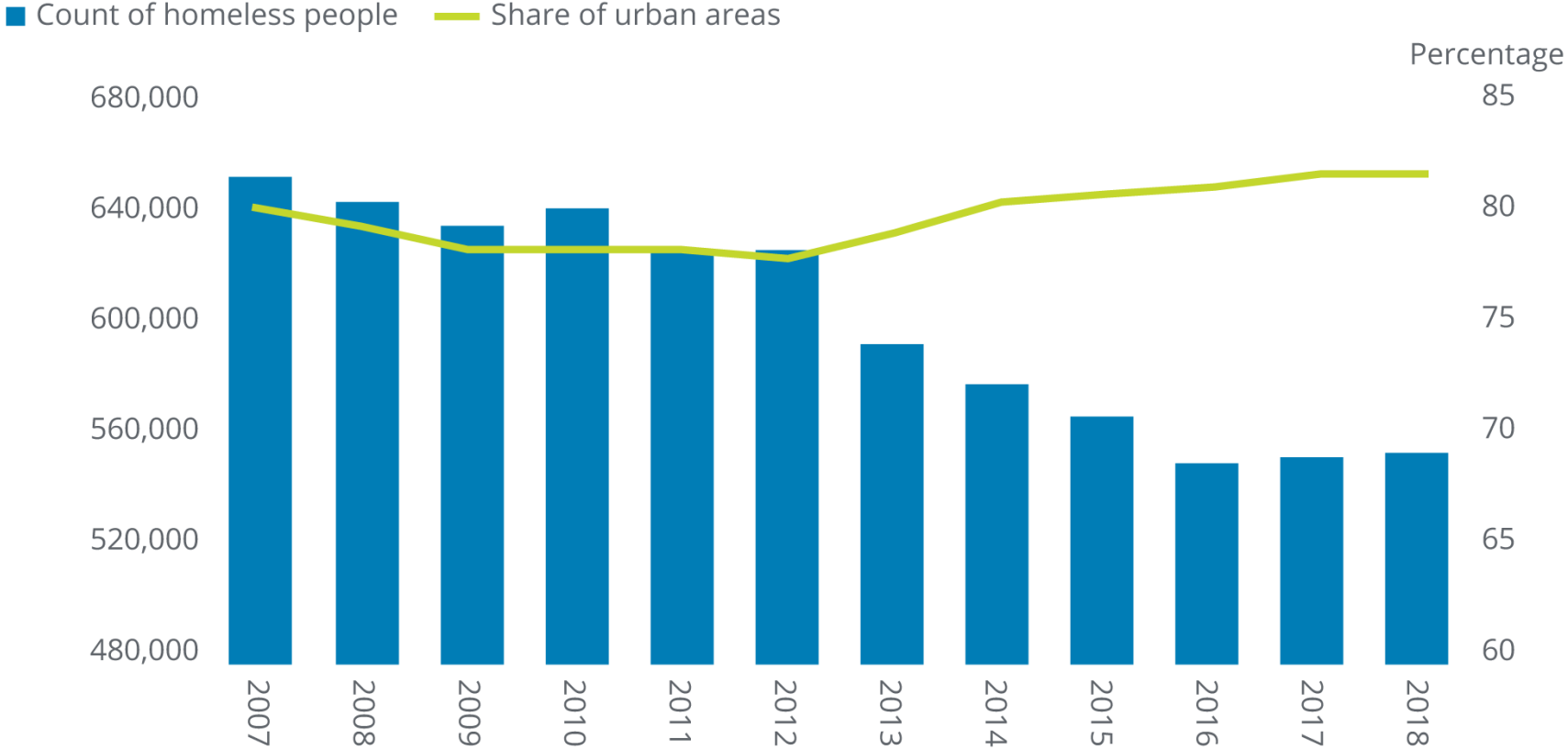
# Rural homelessness in England

- ▶ Rough sleeping up 65% since 2010
- ▶ Rising before the pandemic, while overall levels had started to fall
- ▶ Lack of targeted support, and limited local provision
- ▶ Lack of prevention drives in-movement to cities, with local connection policies in response
- ▶ Long standing cultural barriers, invisible and marginalised communities.

IPPR (2018):

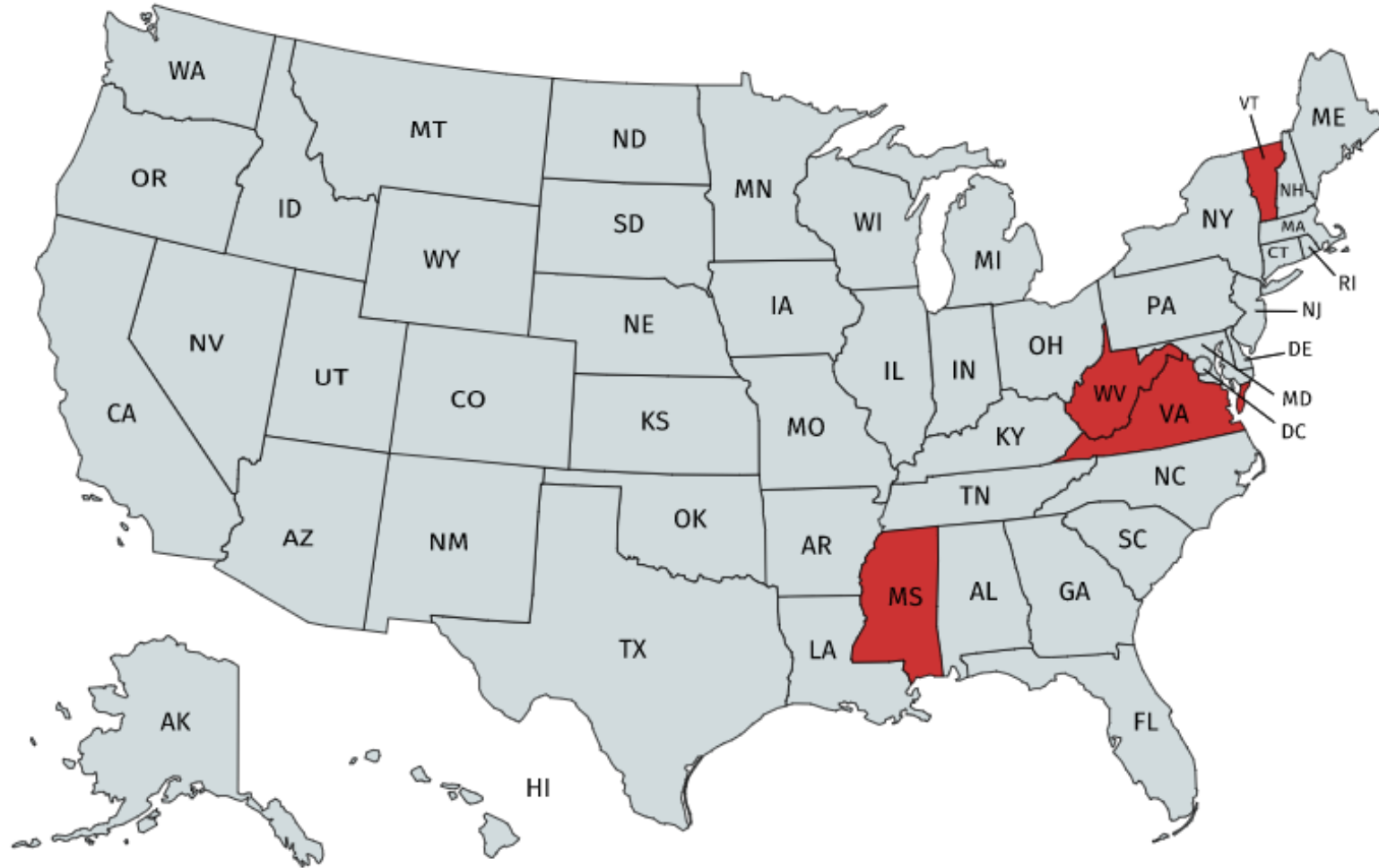
*'Scenes of rolling hills, countryside pursuits and nostalgic ideas about village life can present rural living as offering opportunities for people to escape the pressures associated with England's urban centres, to access a better quality of life. But these idyllic images mask significant experiences of inequality and deprivation to which rural communities are vulnerable.'*

# Looking to the US



Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development; Deloitte Services LP economic analysis.

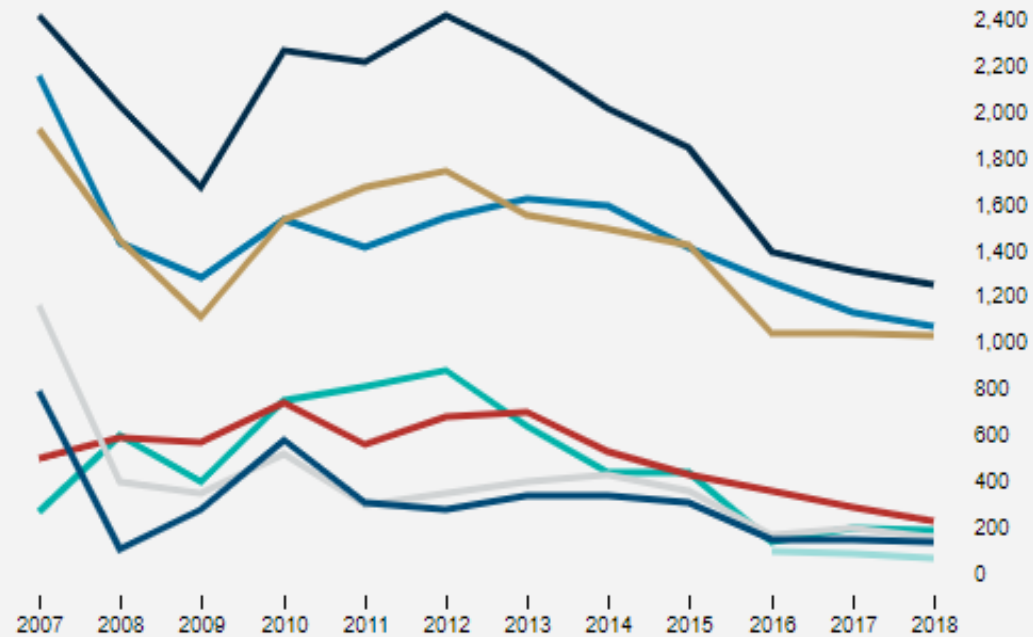
# In focus: four states



# Country roads, take me home - West Virginia

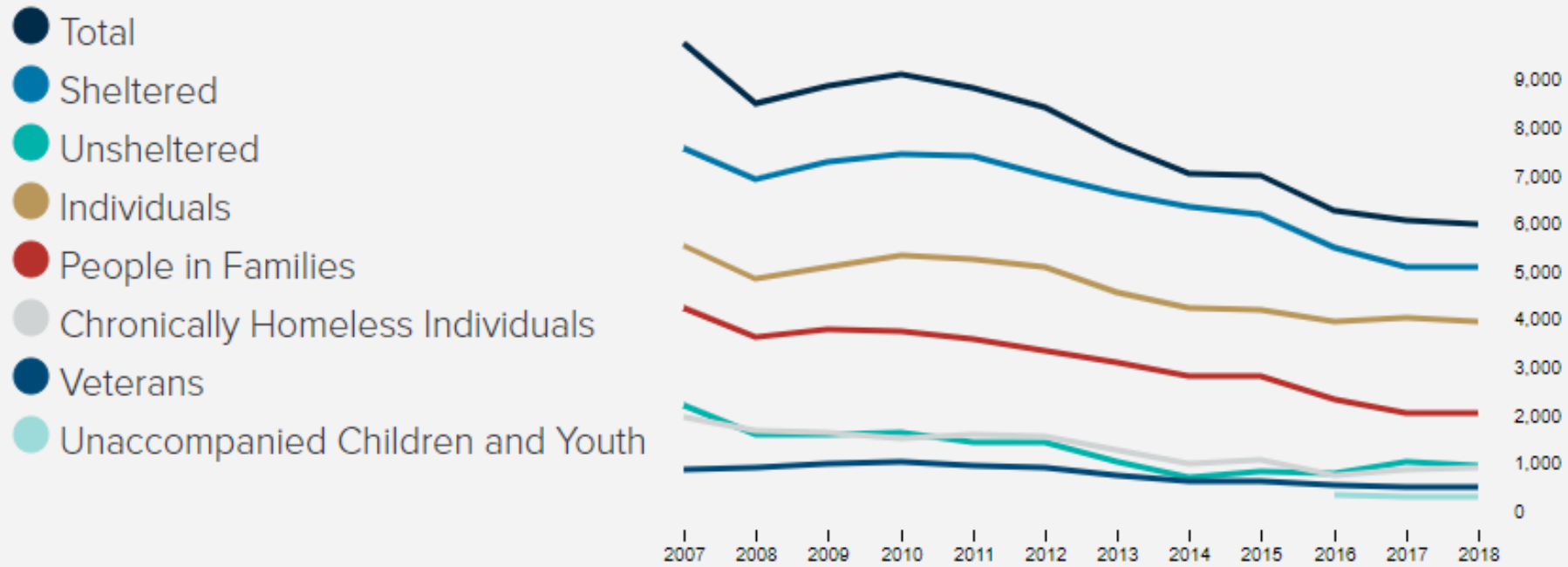
Number of People Experiencing Homelessness, by Type, 2007-2018

- Total
- Sheltered
- Unsheltered
- Individuals
- People in Families
- Chronically Homeless Individuals
- Veterans
- Unaccompanied Children and Youth



# Virginia

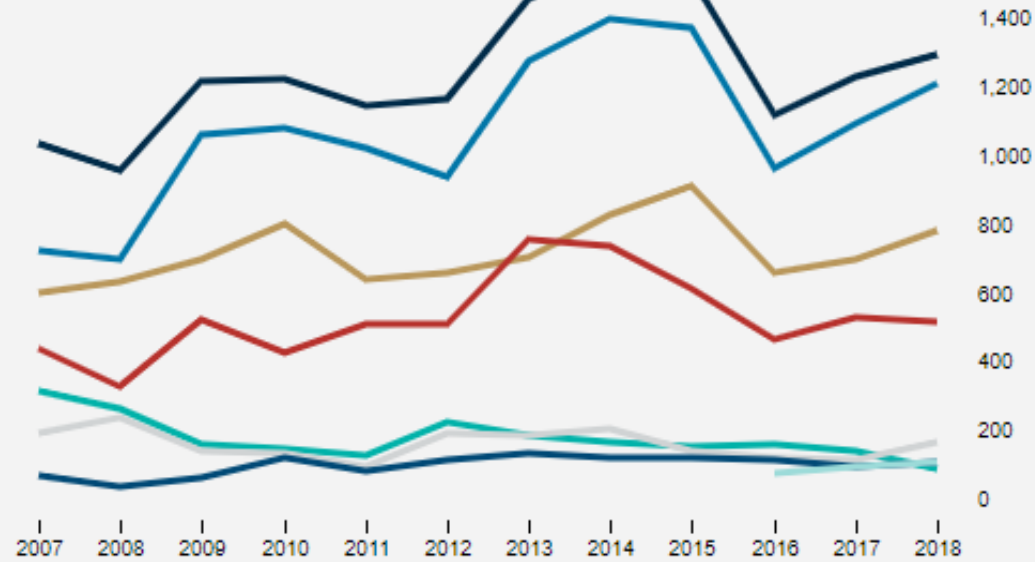
Number of People Experiencing Homelessness, by Type, 2007-2018



# Vermont

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness, by Type, 2007-2018

- Total
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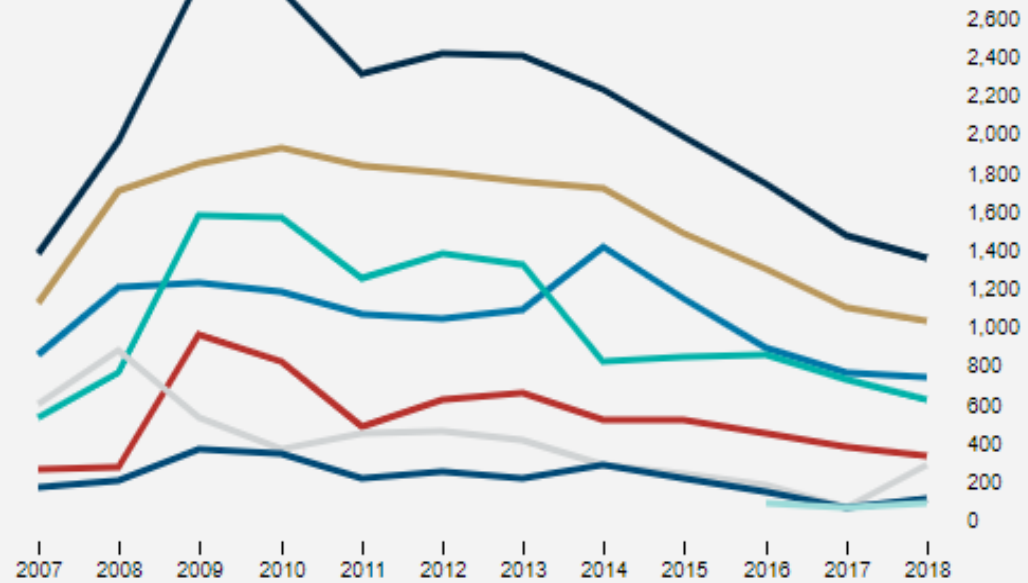




# Mississippi

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness, by Type, 2007-2018

- Total
- Sheltered
- Unsheltered
- Individuals
- People in Families
- Chronically Homeless Individuals
- Veterans
- Unaccompanied Children and Youth



# Key questions

How has awareness of the issue of rural and small town homelessness been developed?

How have relevant decision makers come to regard homelessness a policy priority?

What interventions have been developed, and how have they been adapted to effectively serve rural communities?

# Political leadership - national

- ▶ In rural areas which lack political will the importance of assertive leadership from central government:
  - Long standing leadership through CoCs
  - United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
  - *Opening Doors (2010)* led by President Obama
  - Funding for evidence based programmes and data collection: PSH, RRH, HMIS etc.
- National lobbying is key - Capitol Hill Day



# Political leadership

## - state level

### Virginia:

- Governor's Coordinating Council on Homelessness founded by Republican Governor in 2010 to mirror *Opening Doors*. Clear targets to reduce homelessness by sub pops.
- Innovative approach to sustain reductions across administrations – launched veterans campaign.

### Vermont

- Strategy followed similar approach, but pitched it to 'Vermonters' values:

*'A long-standing belief in "solving problems locally" combined with a commitment to flexibility at the state level to foster and support this Vermont value has led to the rise of innovative homelessness programs around the state'*



# System leadership

- Continuums of Care with ring-fenced funds provide a model to integrate state, non profit, and community efforts
- Particularly important in hostile rural states when state-level action is not forthcoming
- Effective practices incentivised such as data systems and co-ordinated entry. Ensures a single point of contact and fosters multi-agency approaches; and success across political administrations.

***‘The beauty of the continuum of care system is we are connected to other providers to provide the most holistic support’ - Dawn Butterfield, Vermont***

***‘We’ve passed up the slow arc of change at state level, to the extent that the state now comes to us to solve problems...we’re riding the cultural edge of what’s acceptable here’ - Zachary Brown, West Virginia***



## Local influencing and community organising

- Build unlikely alliances - Supreme Court Justices and Police Chiefs in Mississippi
- Winning over faith communities: GUEST Housing in Virginia and Pastors in Mississippi
- Homelessness 101 education sessions
- Authenticity of the messenger is key

**Tupelo Chief of Police: 'instead of getting aggressive with enforcement now we bring in MUTEH'**

# Adapting services to rural realities

- ▶ Outreach in West Virginia and Mississippi: collaborating with businesses and community figures
- ▶ Housing First in Vermont: pitched as a health service, greater investment in landlord liaison, flexibility over scatter site, and reliance on tech

***Beau Stiles, WV outreach: 'the first thing I do going into a new community or new town, and I repeat it periodically, is I hit every gas station, I hit the liquor store, I hit the library, I go to all these places someone might frequent, and I ask for their help...I ask them to be my eyes and ears, if you encounter someone please give me a call, and that's been a huge change in how we're doing what we do here compared to other areas.'***



# What does this mean for the UK?

‘Everyone in’ has shown how political will can end rough sleeping. But the sustainability of these measures are in doubt - particularly in rural communities. Communities have to be bought into change - but they need central government leadership. Immediate priorities for govt:

- ✓ Develop new cross-government strategy to tackle homelessness that is truly national in scope and ‘rural proofed’
- ✓ Implement new statutory bodies in all local authorities with responsibility for keeping ‘everybody in’, including rural areas, with non-profit as a designated lead or co-lead agency
- ✓ Guarantee ring-fenced long-term funding for local authorities to provide homelessness services, to the tune of £1bn per year not excluding areas with low counts - dedicated funding to these communities for outreach as first step and incentivise best practice

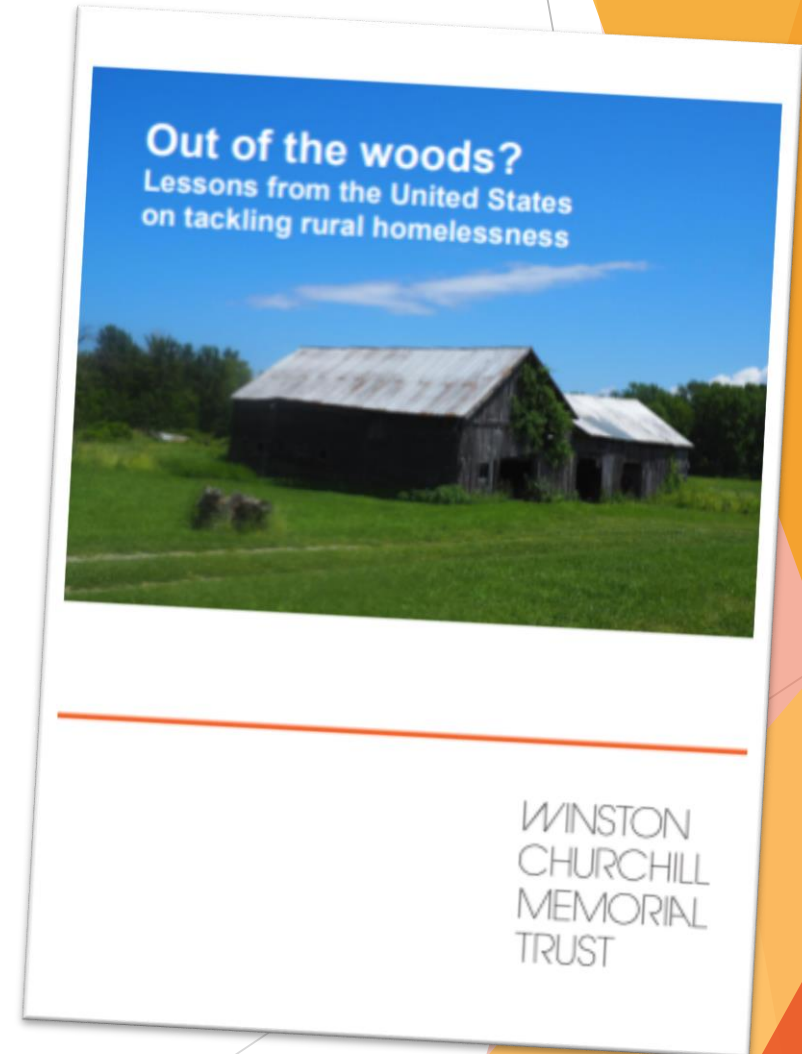


# Recommendations for LAs and charities

- ✓ Form national and local coalitions to co-ordinate influencing activity to Parliamentarians from all regions of UK on an annual basis, with shared asks, supplemented with leveraging voices from local communities including voices of lived experience.
- ✓ Identify 'influencing champion' in each service where similar role is not already established, responsible for building relationships with local decision makers, building shared narrative based on local identities, and capitalising on influencing opportunities as they emerge.
- ✓ Invest in outreach services as a first step and be willing to flex existing models. Co-design service with local communities, and partner with similar profile local authority with existing outreach function to co-design then upskill.

# Thank you for listening!

- ▶ Report available on Winston Churchill Memorial Trust website:  
<https://www.wcmt.org.uk/fellows/reports/tackling-homelessness-rural-communities>
- ▶ Share on social media with hashtag #outofthewoods
- ▶ Contact me on: roryweal@trusselltrust.org





# MISSISSIPPI BALANCE OF STATE CONTINUUM OF CARE

Hannah Maharrey MPA., Director



# CONTINUUMS OF CARE

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. CoCs submitted applications for federal homeless assistance funds to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in all 50 states, plus DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam. CoCs represent communities of all kinds, including major cities, suburbs and rural areas. By requiring communities to submit a single application, HUD hoped to encourage a more structural and strategic approach to both housing and providing services to homeless people. A CoC would provide this more strategic system by providing homeless people with housing and services appropriate to their range of needs.

## **The Four Parts of a Continuum**

Outreach, intake, and assessment

Emergency shelter

Transitional housing with supportive services

Permanent and permanent supportive housing

## **Other tasks:**

Coordinated Entry System and Data Tracking

Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Counts

Regulatory Oversight

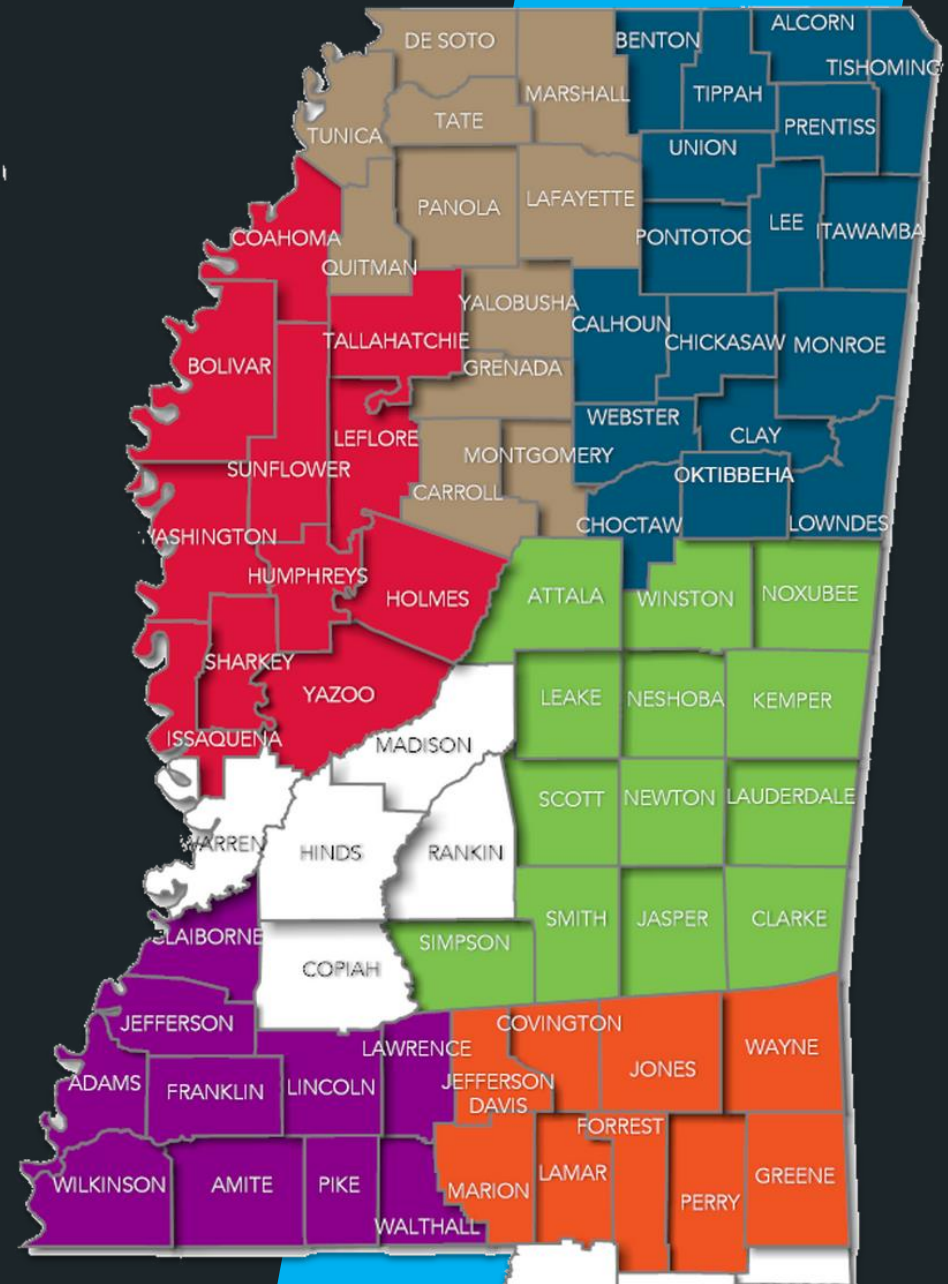
Financial Oversight



# REGIONAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

## FIVE REGIONAL COALITION:

- Northeast
- Delta
- East Central
- Pine Belt
- Southwest



# Creating a Partnership Network

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Connecting agencies and organizations that have reduced financial and staffing resources to address homelessness and case management needs

How to do more with less!



# Identify Your Potential Community Partnerships:

## Municipalities and City Governments

- Mayor's Office
- City Council
- Park and Rec Departments
- Police Department
- Fire Department and First Responders
- Municipal Courts
- Transportation
- City Planning/Code Enforcement

## Civic Clubs

- Service Organizations (Rotary Club, Lions Club)
- Veterans Associations
- Alumni Associations
- Gardening and Interest-Based Clubs

## Housing and Professional Groups

- City-based and Regional Housing Authorities
- Landlord Associations
- Business Associations
- Media Outlets

## Faith-Based Organizations

- Churches
- Faith-Based Sober Living and Treatment Centers
- Ministerial Associations
- Outreach Ministries

# Identify your sectors:

## Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment

- Regional Community Health Centers
- State Mental Hospital System
- Community Based Addiction Education
- Behavioral Health Centers
- Peer-Based Support Groups

## Medical/Healthcare System

- Free Health Clinics
- Sliding-Scale clinics
- State Mental Hospital System
- Community Based Addiction Education

## Community Resources/Partners

- Community Programs Specific to Homeless
- Emergency Shelter
- Meal Services and Food Pantries
- Public Libraries
- Public School District McKinney Vento Liaison
- Main Street Associations
- Neighborhood Associations
- Employment/Staffing Agencies
- Local WinJob Centers
- GED/Diploma Programs
- Life Skills Programs
- Community Colleges/Trade Programs
- Social Security Offices
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- SNAP/Food Stamps



# Faith-Based Organizations

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- Be Intentional/Specific Need
- Align your needs with church or organization's current mission programs
- Create Competition: Don't hesitate to compare faith organization with other faith-based organizations in community
- Involve Faith-based Organizations in Outreach and other Community Programs
- Be aware of difficulties

# Integrating Clients Into Community

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- Involving local neighborhood associations and churches in the move-in and case management process.
- Could these organizations “Adopt” a client to build more stability in their new neighborhood?

## Know your regional culture:

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- How to get the Good Ole Boy system to actually work within homelessness outreach and housing
- Involving community “influencers”
- The fickle nature of charitable giving
- Landlord relationships in a rural area are inherently different than within urban housing systems

# Community Relationships

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- Community Partnerships require constant effort
- Developing a Shared Language
- Partnerships need to be formed before resources are requested
- Frontline staff can't be the sole person within your organization fostering community relationships

MS BALANCE OF STATE COC

# 2020 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

Analysis of Results



# Total Persons Counted

JANUARY 2020

447

DECREASED FROM  
PREVIOUS YEAR

PREVIOUS YEARS

JANUARY  
2019: 480

JANUARY  
2018: 560

JANUARY  
2017: 697

JANUARY  
2016: 785

# Categories of Homelessnes

227

SHELTERED PERSONS

220

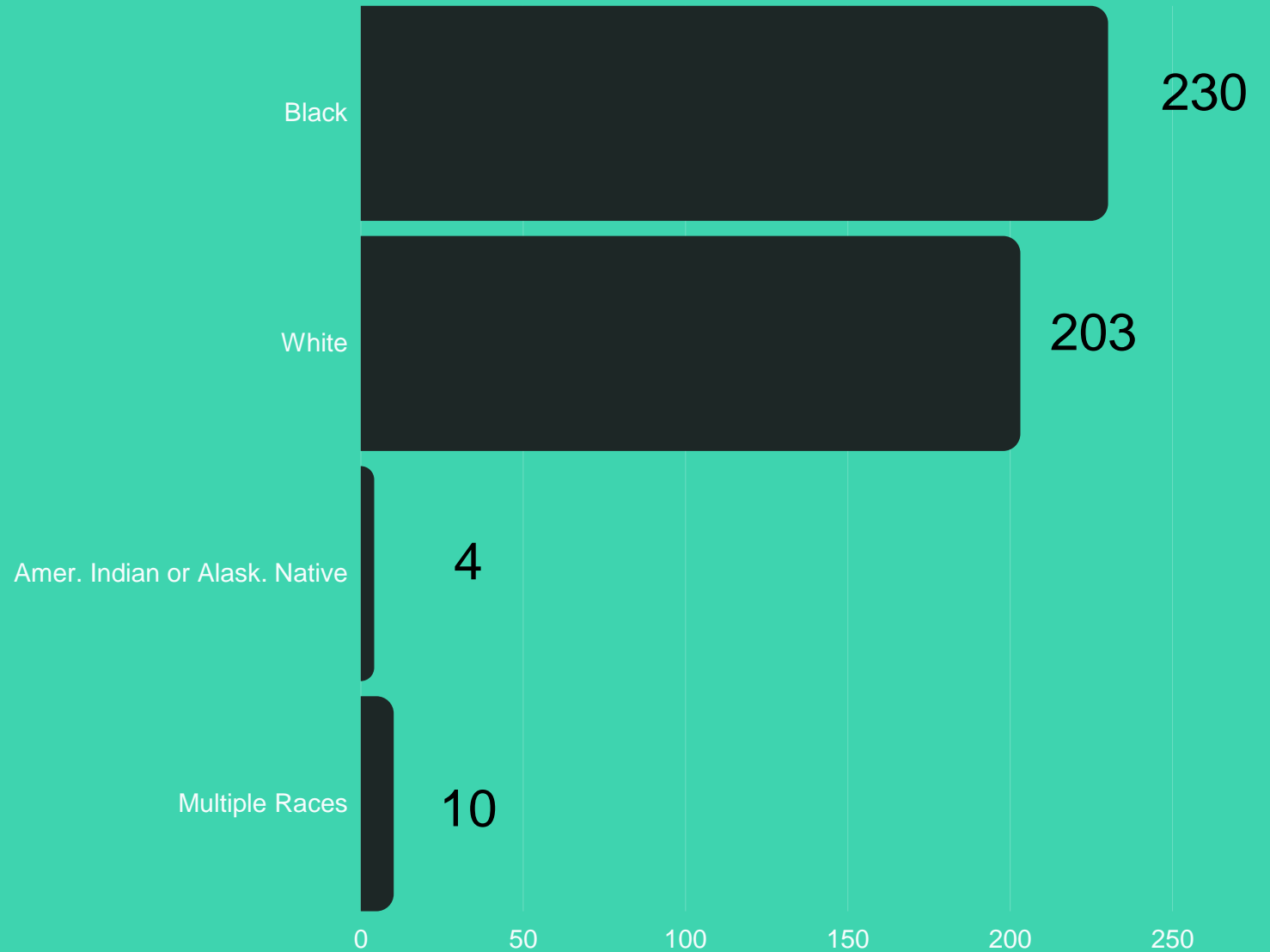
UNSHELTERED PERSONS

447

TOTAL PERSONS

# Homeless Breakdown

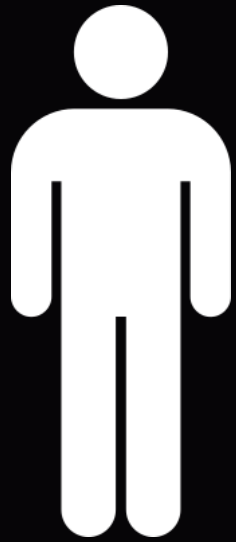
BY RACE





# Total Homeless Persons

BY GENDER



268

MALES



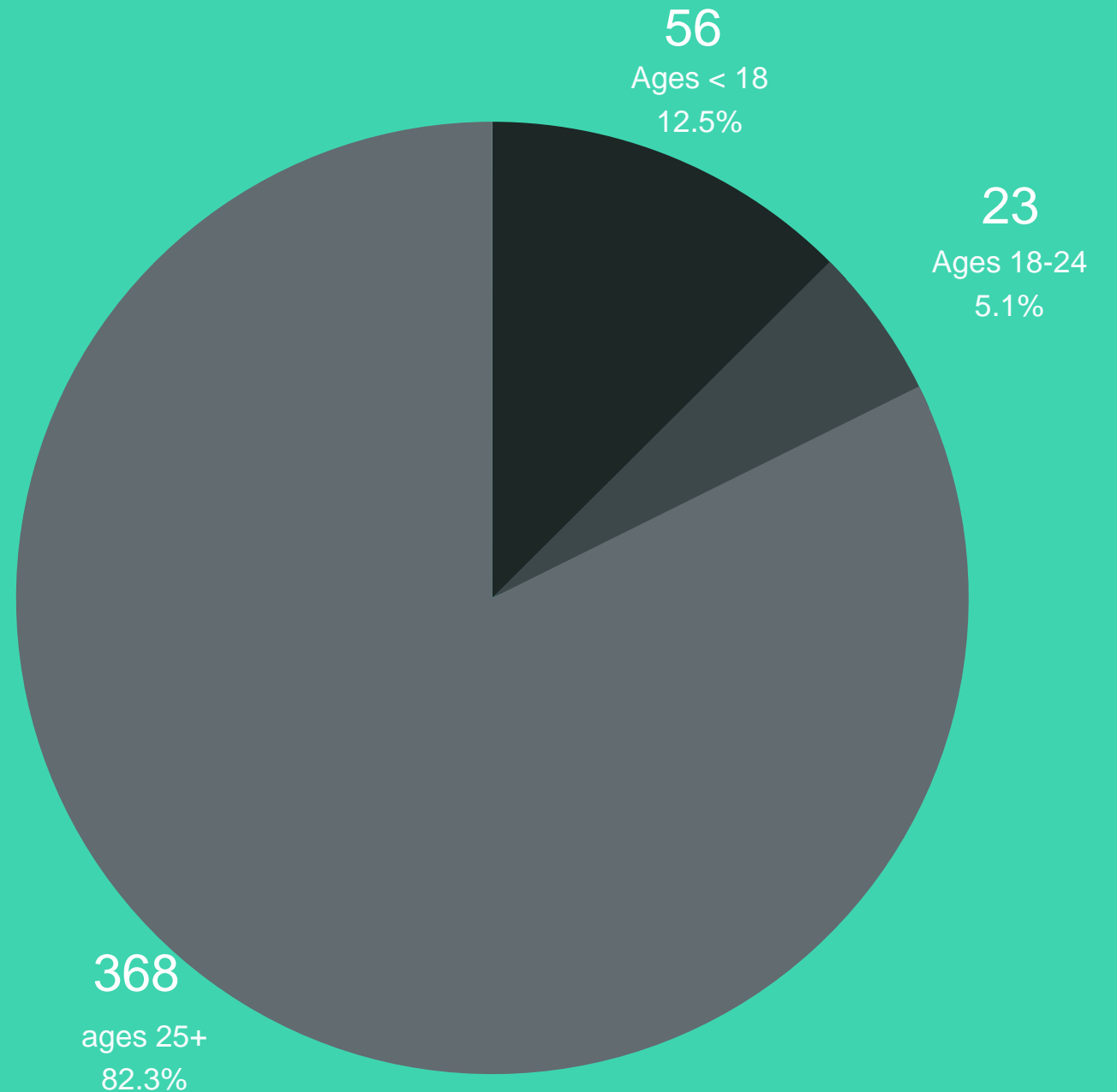
179

FEMALES

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# Total Homeless Persons

BY AGE



# Concentration Map

BY COUNTIES

## REGIONAL COALITION TOTALS

NORTH CENTRAL 31

DELTA 37

NORTHEAST 75

EAST CENTRAL 81

SOUTHWEST 35


PINE BELT 188

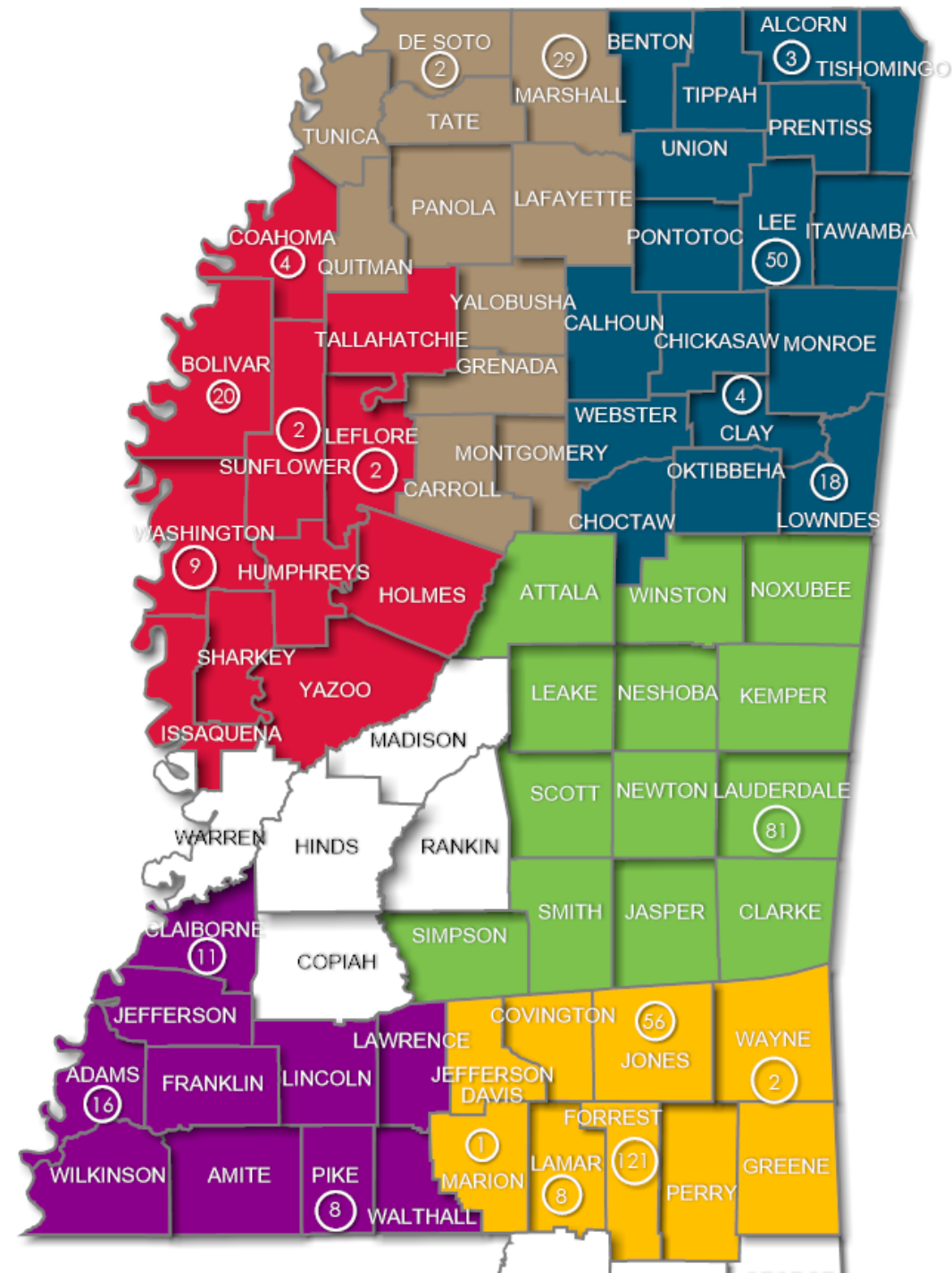
UNSHELTERED PERSONS 227

SHELTERED PERSONS 220

TOTAL PERSONS COUNTED 447

### KEY

 = Number of persons counted (sheltered + unsheltered)



# Living Situations for Homeless Persons

EMERGENCY  
SHELTER

202

45%

TRANSITIONAL  
HOUSING

18

4%

UNSHELTERED

227

50%

MS BOS COC  
AND COVID-19

## COC ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19

### AWARENESS

- COC-Wide Meeting about COVID-19

### SHELTERS

- Meeting with MS Dept of Health

### OUTREACH

- Access to Testing
- Targeted Outreach
- CoC Wide meeting with Outreach teams

### HOUSING

- COC-Wide Meeting with Housing teams

### STATE PARTNERSHIP

- Non-Congregate Shelter Task Force
- MS ESF6 Mass Care Coordination Team

### CARES: ESG-CV

- RAMP
  - MS BOS COC Coverage Area
  - COC-Wide Webinar
  - Monthly COC Meetings

# Contact Us



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COC