

# DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT

2021



## BACKGROUND

The River Valleys Continuum of Care conducts a demographic survey of its members and participants every 2-3 years to assess representation of people experiencing homelessness in CoC activities and decision-making. In each survey, anonymous responses are collected by paper or electronic methods over two months of CoC meetings and activities.

A summary of results is reported to the Full CoC (all participants) at a CoC meeting and posted publicly on the CoC's website. The survey results are also reviewed by the CoC Executive Committee as part of its regular evaluation of the CoC's work and its annual call for CoC membership and leadership positions.

## PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY

For the 2021 survey, the River Valleys Continuum of Care received 44 responses. The online survey was shared during CoC meetings, committees, and workgroups, and shared via email with the broader CoC listserv during May and June 2021. Based on respondents reported level of involvement in CoC and regular participation records showing 40-55 people actively involved in CoC meetings and groups, the CoC believes the 44 responses received generally represent the participants currently involved in River Valleys Continuum of Care.

## RESULTS

Overall results of the survey indicate that CoC participants and members bring a wide breadth of experiences, knowledge, and personal identities to River Valleys CoC. While many types of experiences are important and valuable to the CoC's work together, the demographic survey focused on experiences and identities commonly reported by people experiencing homelessness in the region.

The results will be summarized in four categories:

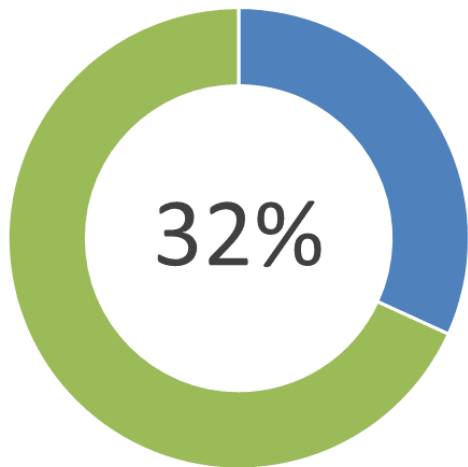
1. Representation of people with lived experience of homelessness within CoC
2. Representation of key subpopulations within CoC
3. Representation of other shared experiences within CoC
4. Representation comparisons across CoC participants and leadership

## REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS WITHIN COC

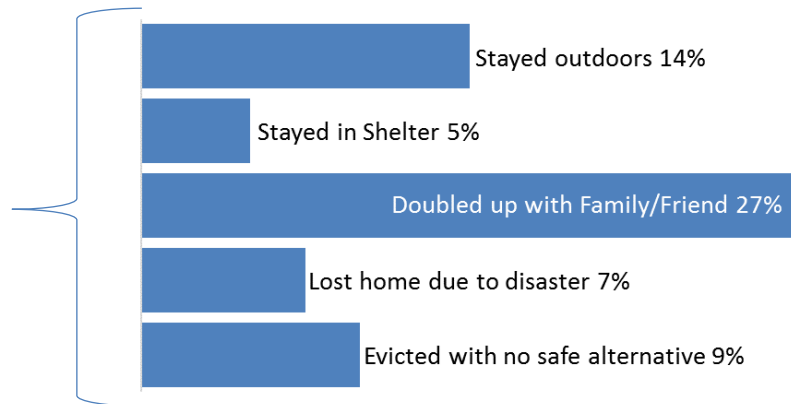
Respondents were asked two questions specifically about their own experiences of homelessness, if any. First, respondents answered the question, “Have you personally experienced any of the following housing situations or incidents?” The question did not name homelessness, but options described different situations that relate to experiencing homelessness. Respondents could choose as many as were true for them. As shown in the charts below, 32% of respondents (14 of 44) reported at least one experience of homelessness. Many reported staying temporarily with family or friends along with other situations. Half of respondents with lived experience (7 of 14) reported more than one type of experience of homelessness, and several respondents reported four different experiences.

Second, respondents were asked specifically about how recently they had experienced homelessness, if at all. The question asked, “Do you have current or previous lived experience of homelessness?” Respondents could select one option of the following: No experience, More than 3 years ago, Within the last 3 years, or I am experiencing the housing situation now. Responses indicated that one person (2%) was currently experiencing homelessness, 2 (5%) had experience in the past three years, and 11 (25%) had experienced homelessness more than three years ago.

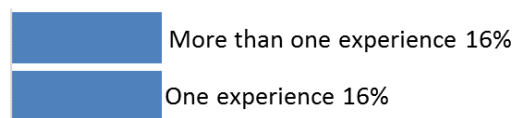
**Percentage of regular CoC Participants who Reported Lived Experience of Homelessness**



**Types of Lived Experience of Homelessness Reported**

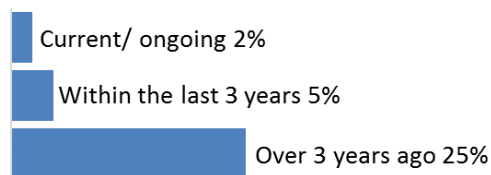


**Number of Types of Experiences Reported**



Range = 1 to 4 different experiences reported.

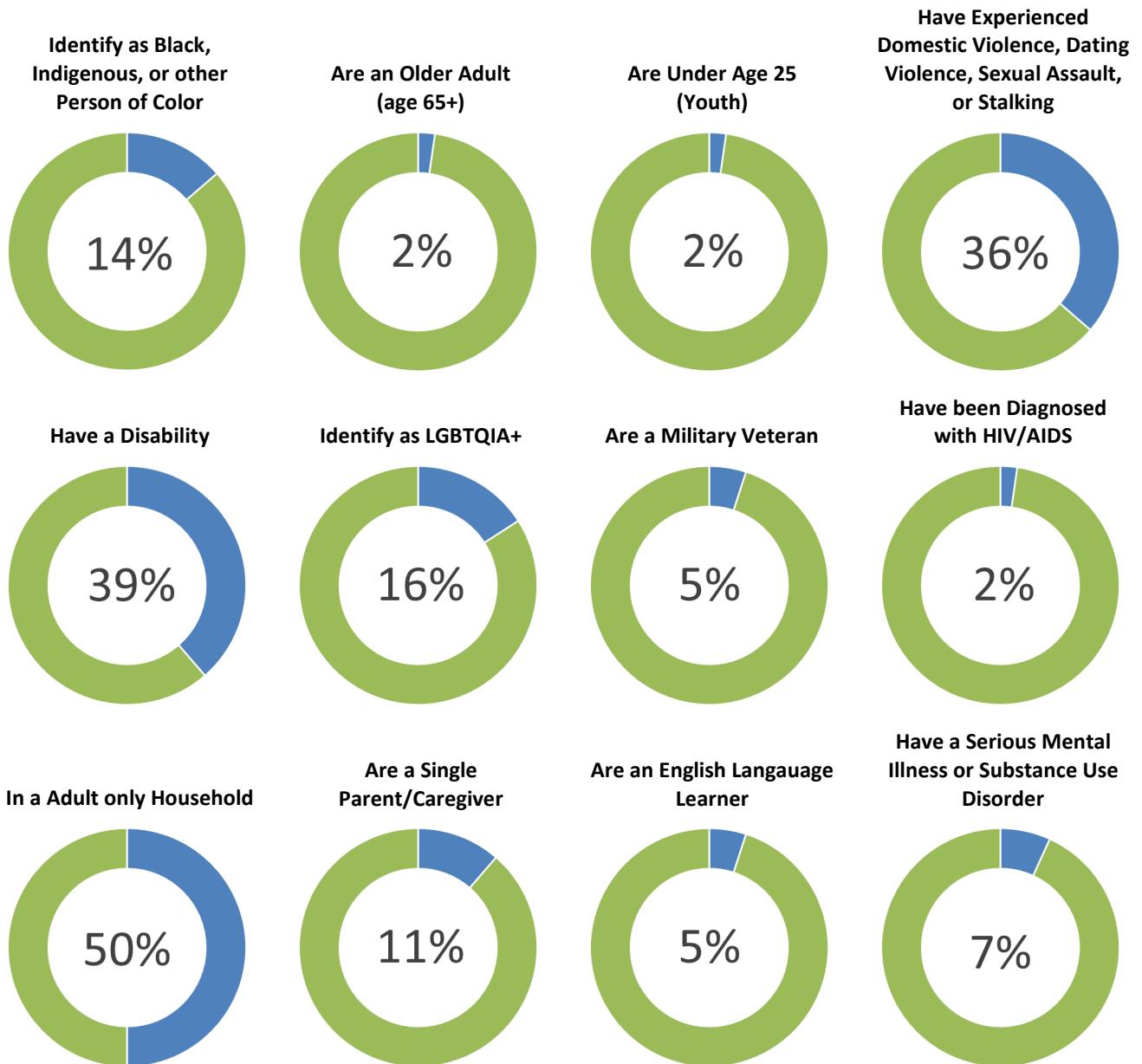
**When the Experience(s) of Homelessness Occurred**



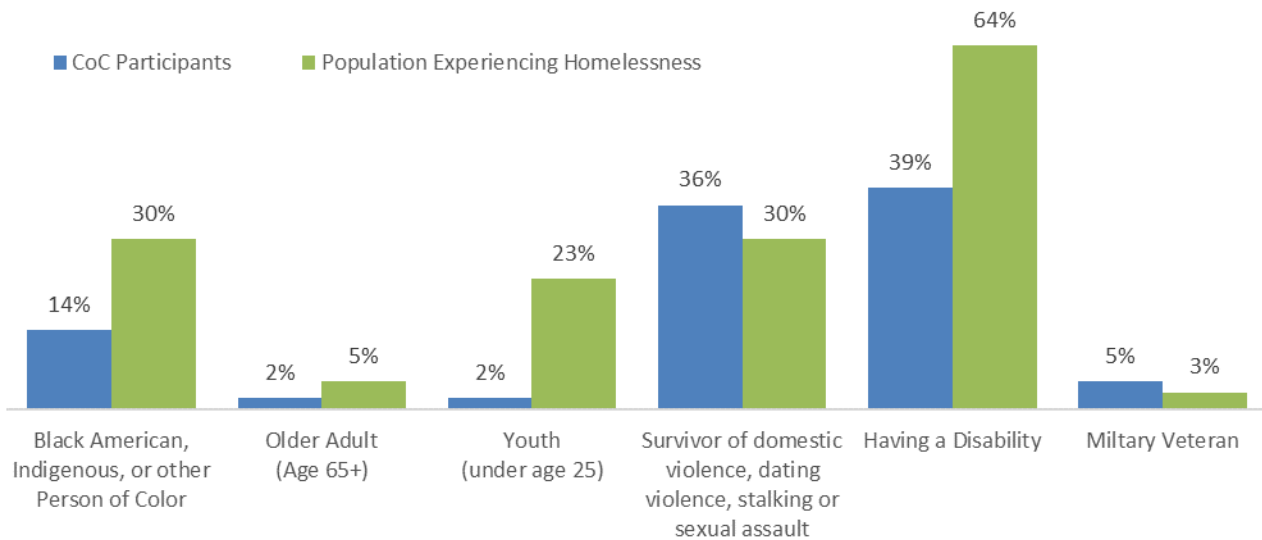
REPRESENTATION OF KEY GROUPS AND SUBPOPULATIONS WITHIN COC

Some groups and subpopulations experience homelessness at a higher rate than would be expected based on overall demographics in the CoC or the state. Other subpopulations have been identified as key demographics for funding or services based on unique needs or experiences. The CoC seeks to include representation from these groups to ensure that decisions are informed by and better able to address disparities in experience of homelessness.

In the survey, CoC members and participants responded to the question “Do any of the following identifiers describe you?” to describe their own representation of any key groups or subpopulations.

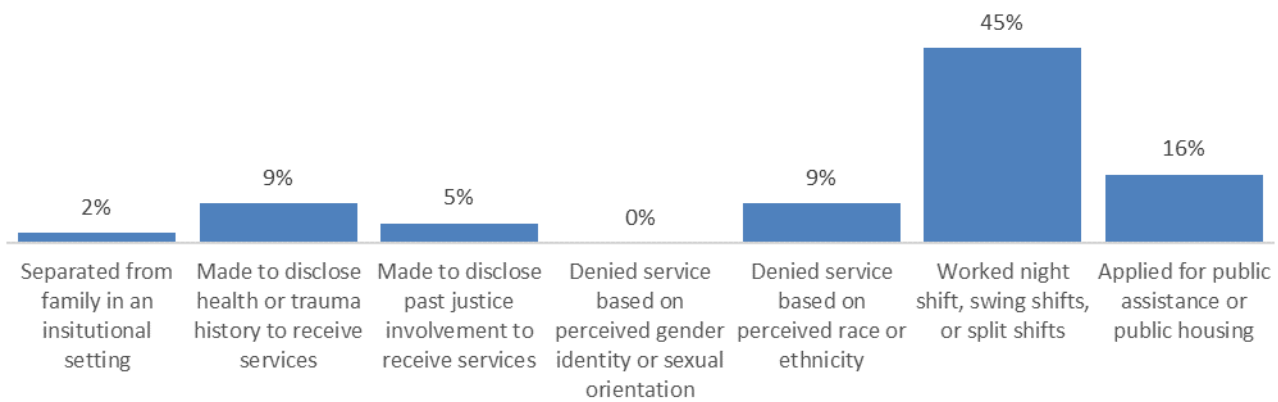


To understand the types and levels of representation on the previous page, the chart below compares the prevalence of selected subpopulations and groups to CoC participants. The proportions are similar in both groups for people who identify as older adults, military veterans, and survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault. However, substantially fewer CoC participants report having a disability compared to people experiencing homelessness (39% vs. 64%), and about half as many CoC participants identify as Black American, Indigenous, or other person of color as do people experiencing homelessness (14% vs. 30%).



**REPRESENTATION OF OTHER SHARED EXPERIENCES WITHIN COC**

Along with representation of key subpopulations, the CoC has found that other personal experiences in common with people experiencing homelessness bring important perspective to CoC work. Survey respondents were asked “Do you have personal experience with any of these other situations or incidents?” shown in the chart below. Nearly half of respondents had worked off-shift jobs, while about one in six (16%) had applied for public benefits or public housing. About 15% had been made to disclose difficult or very personal history to receive services, while 9% had experienced racial discrimination in seeking services.

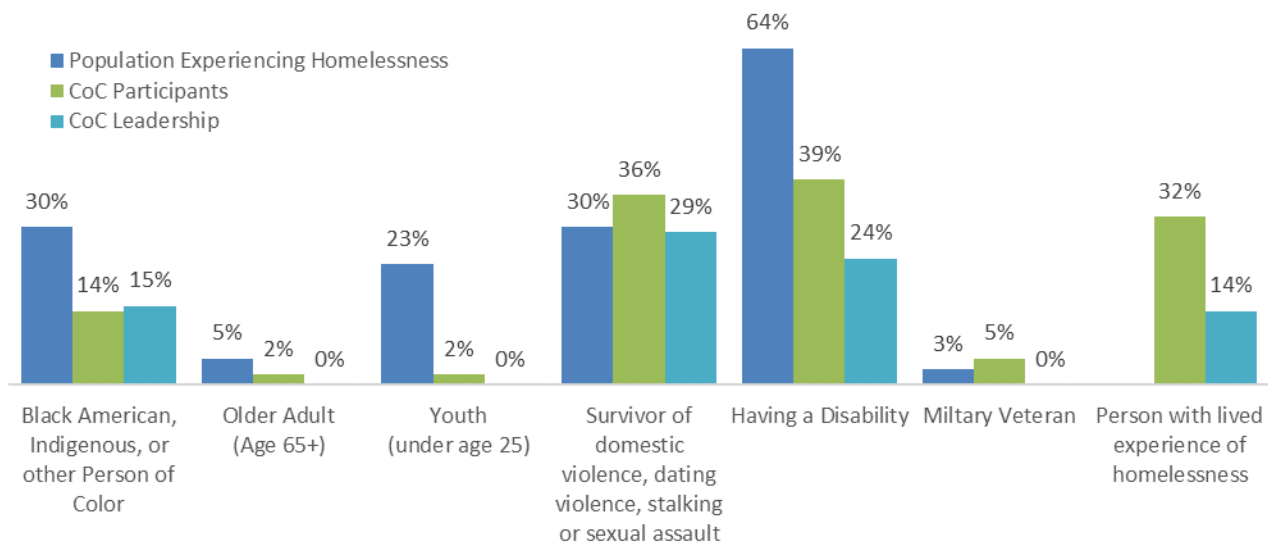


## REPRESENTATION COMPARISONS ACROSS LEVELS OF COC INVOLVEMENT

CoC participants may be involved in leadership roles to guide collaborative activities. Survey respondents identified if they were involved in CoC leadership as Committee members, Committee chairs, or other members of the Executive Committee. Based on responses, representation was compared between leadership and overall participants as well as to the population of people experiencing homelessness in the region.

Results indicated that representation varies between overall CoC participants and leadership. In some areas, representation is comparable between leadership and overall CoC participants: youth, older adults, military veterans, survivors of domestic violence, and people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or other Person of Color (BIPOC). In other areas, representation within leadership fell short of representation demonstrated in overall CoC participants: persons with a disability and persons with lived experience of homelessness.

Results also indicated that CoC participation and leadership does not fully represent the population of people experiencing homelessness in the region. Underrepresented groups of people experiencing homelessness within the CoC included people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or other Person of Color (BIPOC), youth, and those who have a disability.



## KEY LEARNINGS

Overall, River Valleys CoC participant representation of the population experiencing homelessness has improved in the past five years. This is commendable and important, and work remains to be done, particularly to increase leadership roles for people with lived experience of homelessness, and to increase representation and leadership roles of youth, persons who identify as Black, Indigenous, or other Person of Color, and persons who have a disability within overall CoC participants.