Exploring Attitudes Towards Homelessness

Kayleigh Darling, M.S.

California Lutheran University, Graduate School of Psychology

Introduction

**Increase in Homeless Population**
- Approx 600,000 homeless across U.S. on any given day (Harvard Health Publishing, 2014).
- Approx. 2 million Americans will be homeless at some point during the year (Harvard Health Publishing, 2014).
- A 12% increase in homelessness was seen from 2019-2020 in Los Angeles (LAHSA, 2020).

Ineffective Support Services
- Only about 500,000 people will use support services for homelessness in a given year (Hud Exchange, 2018).
- Resources are difficult to understand and access (Luhrmann et al., 2007)
- Many resources centers are dangerous (Luhrmann et al., 2007)
- Much legislation reflects the publics desire to avoid the homeless (exclusionary practices) (Clifford & Piston, 2017).

For the purpose of this study, housed will be defined as having habitation that provides: running water, working septic, working electricity, temperature control (heat), sanitary conditions , sound structure.
(Based on HUD minimal housing requirements; HUD, 2021)

The Increase in Homelessness in Los Angeles

■ Number of Unsheltered Individuals In Los Angeles (lahsa.org)
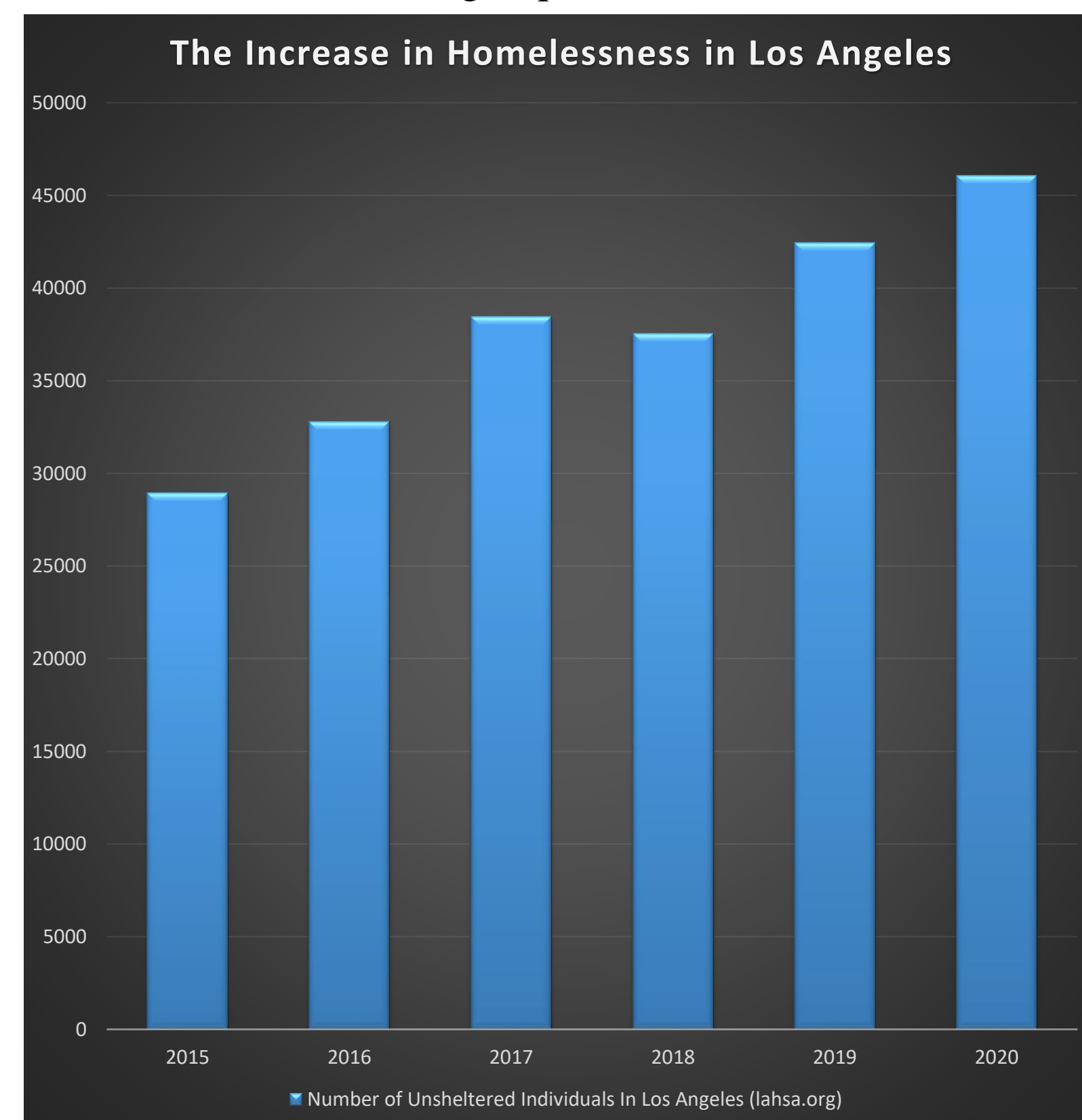
Objectives

The primary target of this study is to determine the relationship between domiciled populations' attitudes towards homelessness and helping behaviors and what influences them. This could aid to direct educational programs and campaigns to assist the homeless population by better understanding how to create an effective educational program or campaign to gain the interest of those who are in a position to help the homeless, increase empathy towards homeless individuals, and improve the services available to and provided to the homeless. As supported by Clifford & Piston's (2017) analysis, a change in attitude towards homelessness could also result in more effective policies to aid the homeless.

The objectives of this study are to:
1. Provide a deeper understanding of the domiciled population's attitudes towards homelessness and their willingness to help to allow for more targeted educational programs aimed at raising awareness of the issue of homelessness and improving willingness to help .
2. Identify beliefs that impact willingness and likeliness to help others.
3. Provide insight into how demographics affect attitudes towards homelessness and willingness to help to aid in the development of programs to increase empathy and willingness to help in various settings such as healthcare, social service programs and schooling.

Materials

The Attitudes Towards Homelessness Inventory (ATHI) (Kingtree & Daves, 1997)
created in the late 1990s and validated by Kingtree and Daves in 1997 in an effort to operationalize attitudes toward homelessness. The instrument is an 11-item inventory with 4 subscales:
•Personal Causation (PC –homelessness is due to personal deficiencies)
•Societal Causation (SC – homelessness is due to societal causes)
•Affiliation (AFFIL - willingness to affiliate with homeless people) Solutions (SOLN – there are viable solutions to homelessness)

Helping Orientations Inventory (HOI) (Maki et. al., 2017).
- This is a measure of helping behavior with three subscales: autonomy oriented, dependency oriented and opposition to helping.
- Each of the 3 subscales is scored separately to determine which type of helping orientation the individual exhibits.

Irrational Values Scale (IVS) (Terjesen et al., 2009)
- A nine-item scale designed to measure a respondent's endorsement of irrational beliefs using nine-point Likert scale.

The Social Economic Status Questionnaire
- Will be used to help identify each respondent's SES.
- The Social Economic Status Questionnaire allows standardized details about the participants' demographic details.

Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng et al., 2009)
- Four-point Likert scale from zero (never) to four (always) to assess the respondent's empathy.

Duke University Religiosity Scale
- five questions self-report measure that uses a six-point Likert scale to measure the religiosity of the respondent.

The Prosocial Behavioral Intentions Scale (Baumsteiger & Siegel, 2018)
- Created to measure the participants intention to engage in prosocial behaviors

Methods

Procedures and Design:
Quantitative correlational design using computerized (Qualtrics) survey
All measures used are psychometrically validated
All data collected will remain anonymous
Only fully completed surveys will be considered for data collection
Data analysis to be completed via SPSS
Data from measures will be categorized for simplified analysis

Sampling Procedures:
- The survey will be created using Qualtrics and be distributed via email and social media (Instagram and Facebook) for ease of sending and use.
- Additionally, participants will be recruited by snowball and convenience sampling.

Population:
- The population for this study will be housed individuals ages 18 years and older living in the United States of America.

Hypothesis 1: Rural individuals will be more willing to help homeless individuals and attribute homelessness to personal deficiencies. Urban individuals will be less likely to help homeless individuals and attribute homelessness to environmental factors.
- One-way ANOVA
- Dependent variable: attitudes towards homelessness & willingness to help
- Independent variables: housing location (rural or urban)

Hypothesis 2: Empathy and willingness to help will have a slight positive correlation; religiosity and willingness to help will have a weak positive correlation among suburban environments and a weak inverse correlation within rural environments.
- Two-way ANOVA
- Dependent variable: willingness to help
- Independent variables: empathy & religiosity
- Independent variables conditions: urban & rural

Hypothesis 3: High levels of irrational beliefs will result in decreased willingness to help and likeliness to help.
- Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation
- Non-experimental design exploring a correlation between:
  1. irrational beliefs and willingness to help
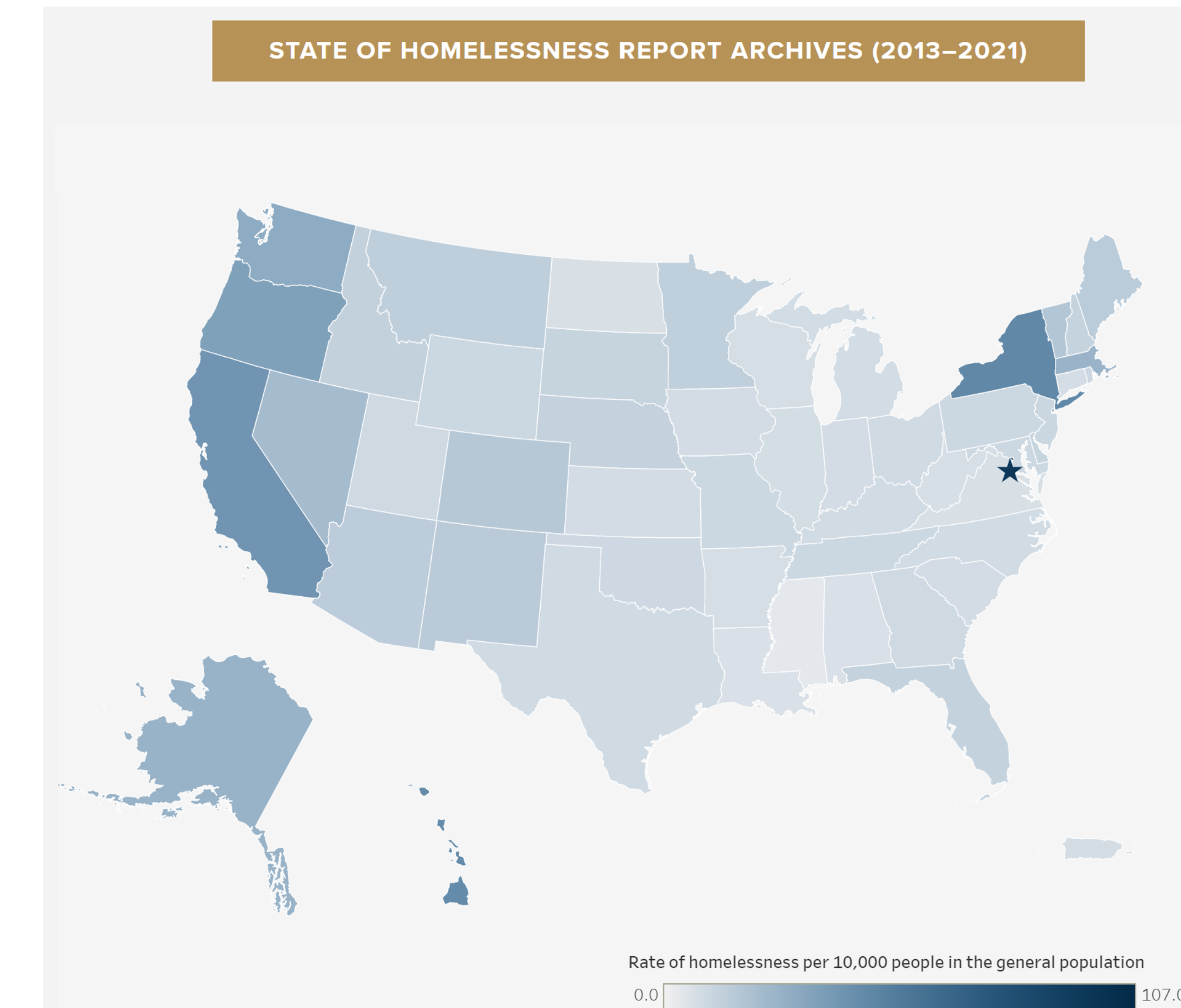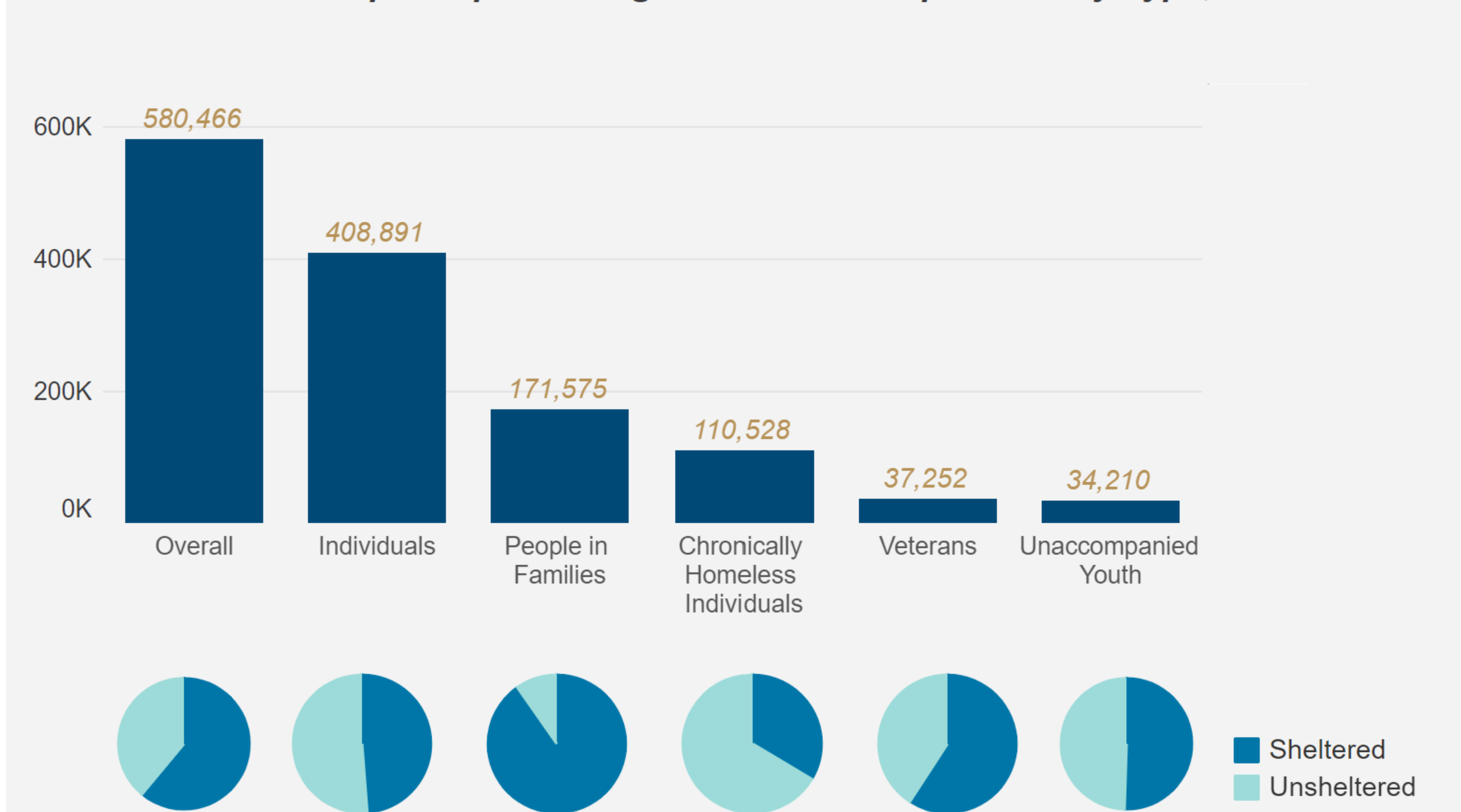 2. irrational beliefs and likeliness to help

Conclusions

Data collection will begin June 2023 pending IRB approval.
Data from this study will provide insight into beliefs and helping behaviors towards homeless individuals that could provide information to aid in improvement of programs and resources used to recruit aid, educate the community and provide resources directly to the individuals affected by homelessness.

References

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Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness per Year by Type, 2020

580,466 — Overall
408,891 — Individuals
171,575 — People in Families
110,528 — Chronically Homeless Individuals
37,252 — Veterans
34,210 — Unaccompanied Youth

■ Sheltered
■ Unsheltered

STATE OF HOMELESSNESS REPORT ARCHIVES (2013–2021)

Rate of homelessness per 10,000 people in the general population
0.0 ─ 107.0

https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/