



# ELEVATING THE NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS SERVICES WORKFORCE

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(National Alliance to End  
Homelessness)

# METHODOLOGY

- Created an online survey
- Open between July 17 – September 15
- Promoted through the Alliance's newsletter, social media, and announcements at the July 2023 national conference. Staff and friends found additional ways to let people know about the survey. Thank you!
- Limitation—not a chosen sample



**FINDINGS: ALL HOMELESS SERVICES WORKERS**

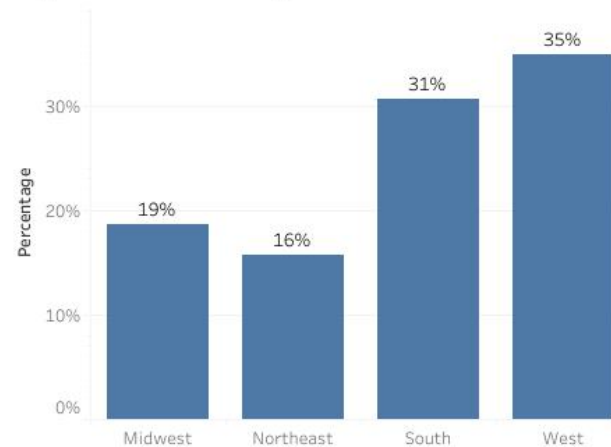
# RESPONDENTS: WHERE THEY WORK

- From all 50 states and the District of Columbia
- Western and southern states had the largest representation—however, these areas have the largest populations of people experiencing homelessness.
- Urban areas also significantly represented—matches population concentrations

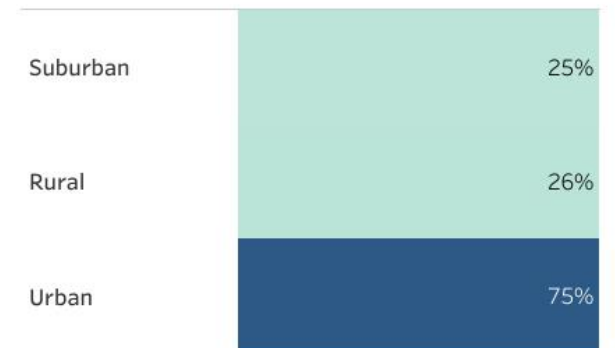
## Where Respondents Work



## Region of the Country



## Community Type



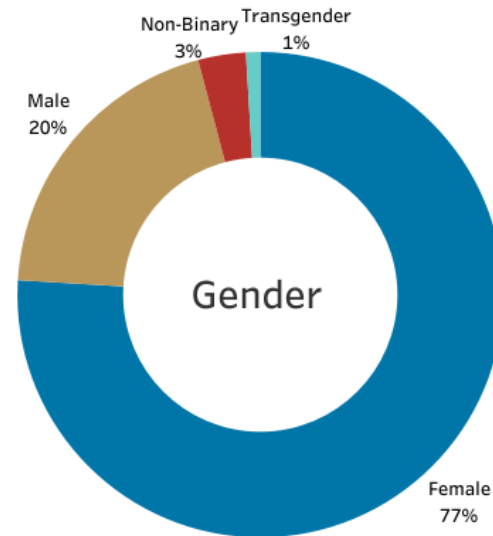
\* Numbers do not add up to 100%. Some workers are serving areas wit..



# RESPONDENTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

- Unclear the degree to which our sample matches the larger workforce--no available Census
- Largely Female—77%
- Racially Diverse—Over- or Under-Representation of Black Respondents
- Most have participated in higher education—92% had at least some college or an Associate's degree and 68% had at least a Bachelor's degree

## Survey Respondent Demographics



\* Some respondents identified with more than one gender category (e.g., "transgender" and "female"). Thus, the population shares add up to a little more than 100 percent.

## Race/Ethnicity

American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	2%
Asian or Asian American	2%
Black, African American, or African	18%
Hispanic/Latino	15%
Multi-Racial	5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
White	60%
Other	1%

\* This chart merges the responses related to race and ethnicity. Some Hispanics/Latinos also identified with a specific racial group such as "white". Thus, the population shares add up to more than 100 percent.

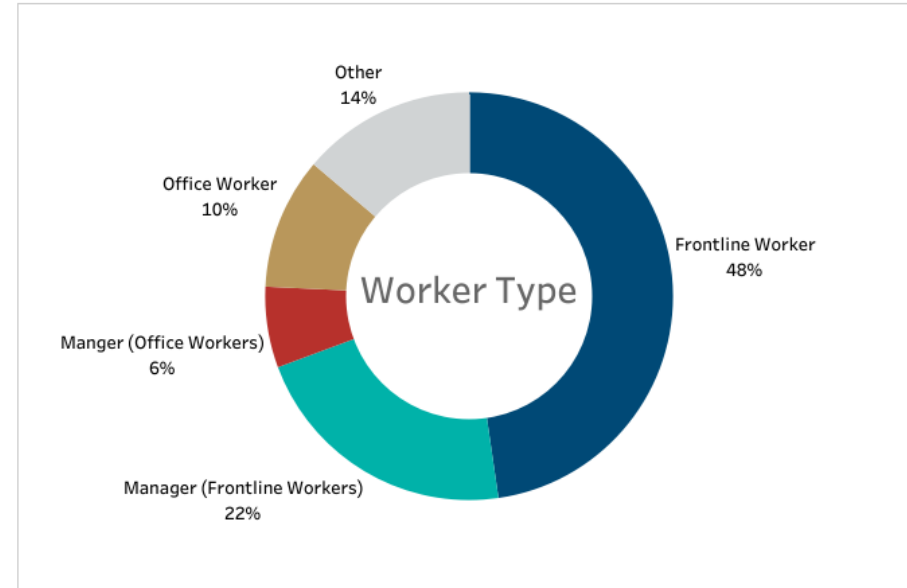
## Educational Attainment

A Grade Between 1 and 11	1%
High School Diploma or GED	8%
Some College or Associates Degree	24%
Bachelor's Degree	39%
Master's Degree	26%
Professional Degree	1%
Doctorate Degree	2%

# RESPONDENTS: JOB INFORMATION

- 70% identified as frontline workers or managers of frontline workers
- Others worked in other settings like working in a CoC agency or education setting
- Somewhat expected distribution of employer types
- Diversity in years of experience—except for a dip among those working 6-9 years
- Majority (55%) had salaries equal to or under \$50,000 per year—putting them at risk of being able to afford housing.

## Work-Related Characteristics



### Employer Type

Permanent Housing Program	27%
Emergency Shelter or Transitional Hous..	23%
Street Outreach Program	10%
Continuum of Care Lead Agency	9%
Service Provider Agency	7%
Coordinated Entry Access Point	5%
Drop-In Center	4%
Hotel/Motel/Non-Congregate Shelter Pr..	1%
Other	14%

### Length of Service

5 years or less	21%
6-9 years	11%
10-19 years	23%
20-29 years	21%
30 or more years	23%

### Salaries

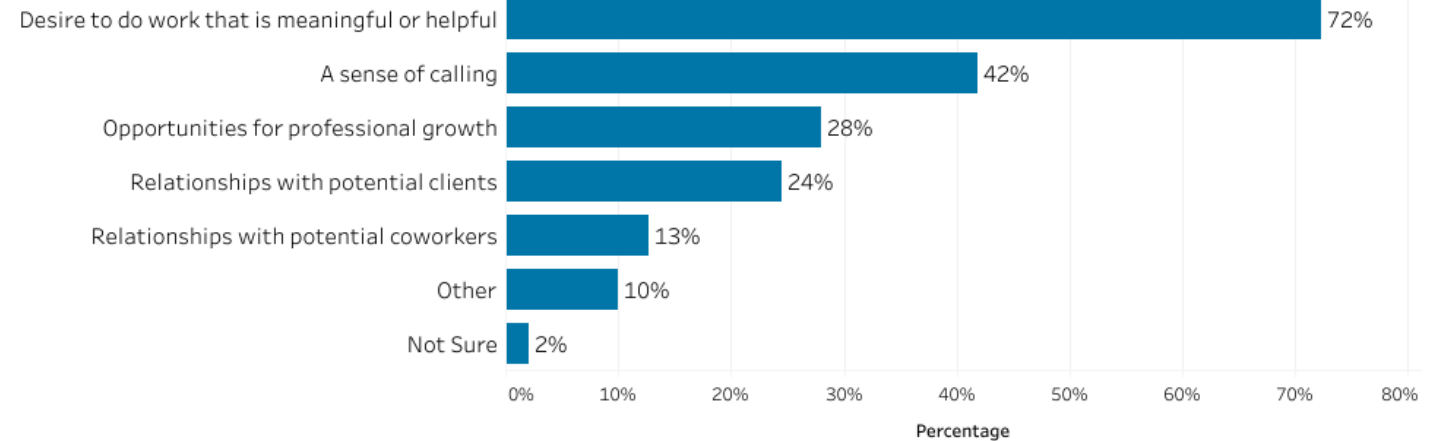
≤ \$30,000/yr	6%
≤ \$50,000/yr	55%
≤ \$75,000/yr	79%

# WHY DO PEOPLE WORK IN THIS FIELD?

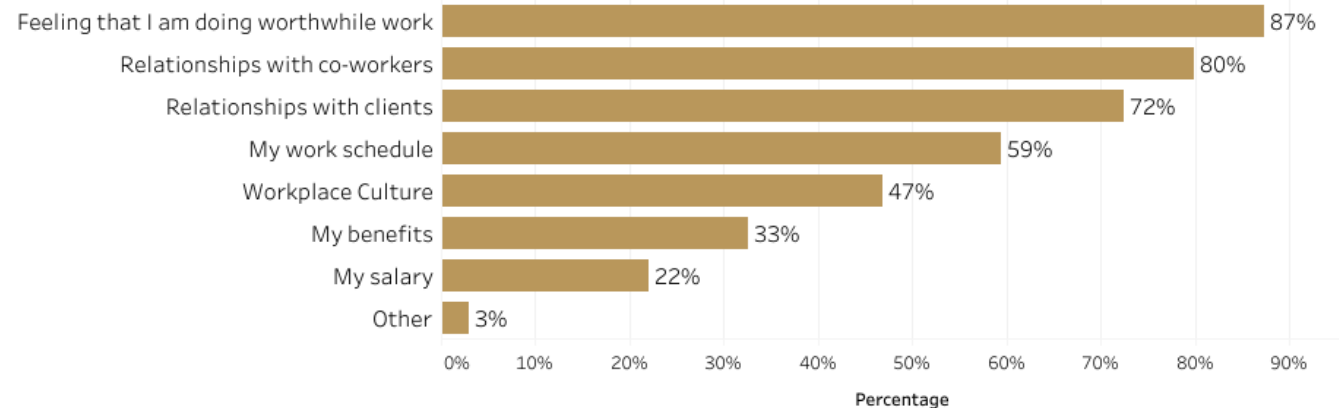
- Altruism—sense of calling, wanting meaningful work
  - “No one else was stepping up to do the necessary work.”
- Lived experience that drew them to helping others in similar circumstances—at least 182 people
- Connections to other professions—veterans, human trafficking, children and youth
- Practical reasons—job loss and needing a new income, work-life balance, desired career change from corporate America

## Reasons for Working in Homelessness

### *Why I Started Working in Homelessness*

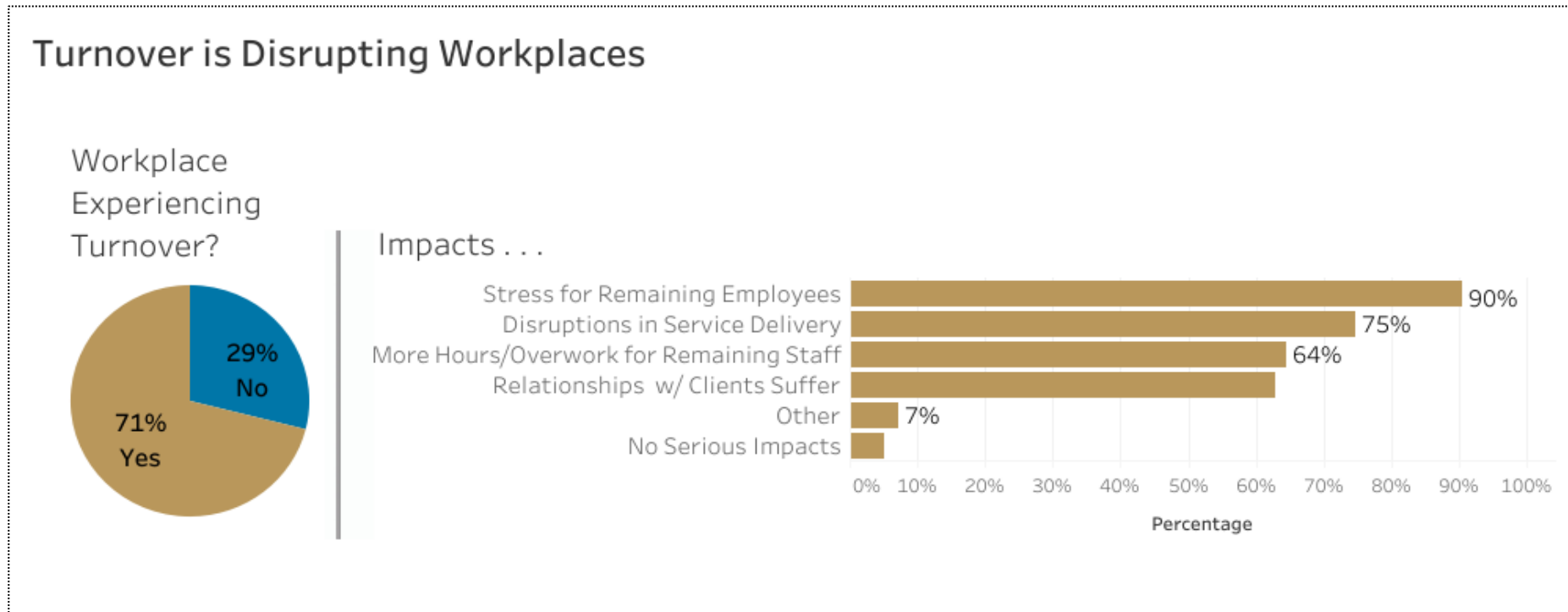


### *What I Now Like About My Job*



# CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENTS

- Understaffed—74% said their agencies didn't have enough people to serve everyone or meet goals
- High Turnover—71% said their organization/agency was experiencing this challenge





# STATED IMPACTS OF HIGH TURNOVER

## “Other” Responses:

- Signs of Despondency—“burnout”, “low morale”, “underappreciated”, and “hopelessness”
- Threats to Funding—preventing completion of service contracts or grant deliverables
- Sometimes Lower Quality Staffing
  - “We keep toxic staff due to staffing issues because it’s hard to fill positions.”
- Inefficient Use of Resources—specifically, money spent on constant new employee trainings
- Leadership Challenges--building staff cohesion
  - “Leadership can’t make strategic plans because they only think in crisis mode.”
- Losses of Institutional Knowledge

# SALARY-RELATED HARDSHIPS

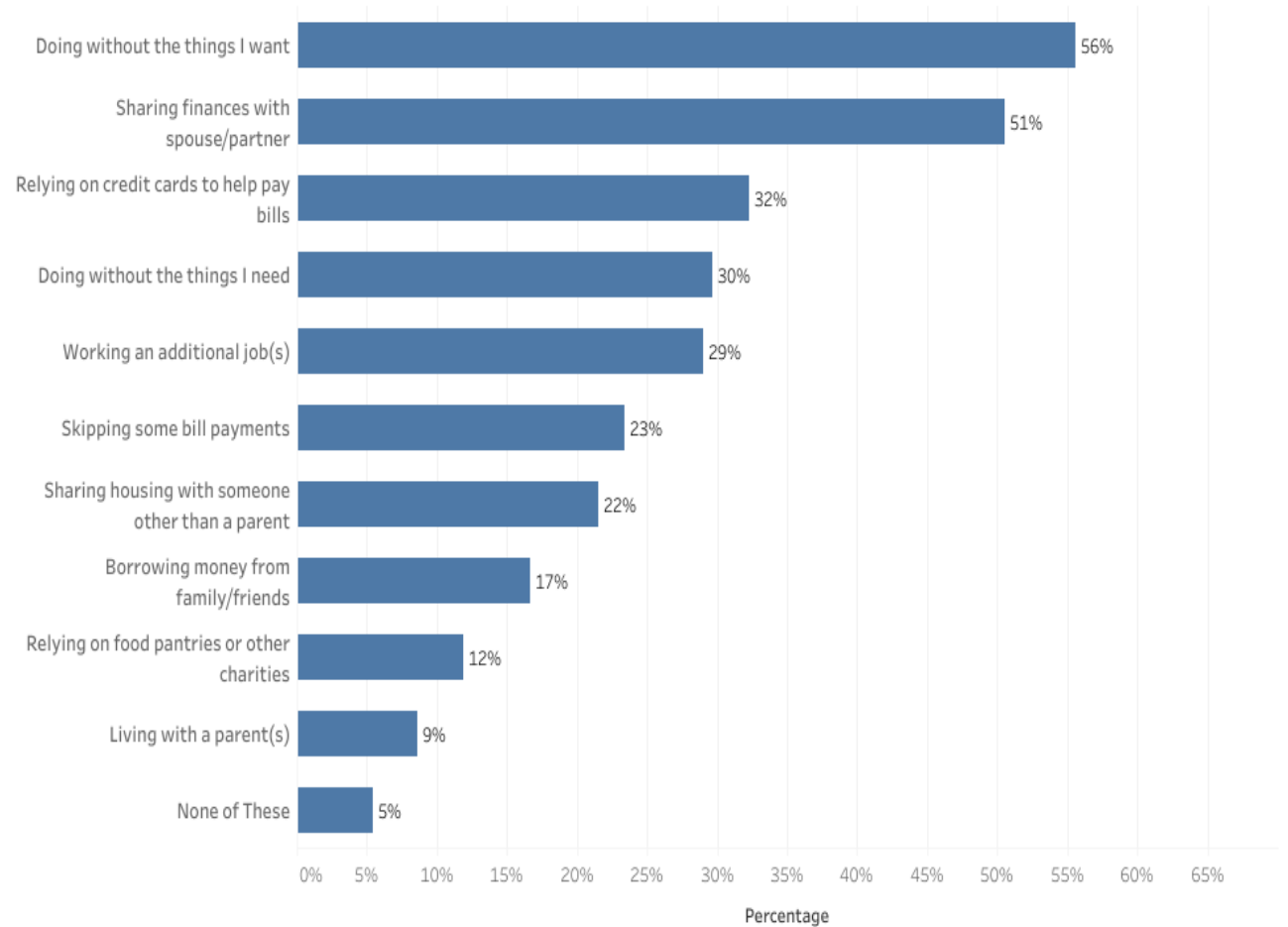
My salary is:

- Not enough for basic needs (34%)
- Just enough for basic needs (52%)
- Enough to live well (14%)

Making Ends Meet:

1. Relatively less harmful--sharing finances with a spouse/partner or parent.
2. Clearly struggling financially:
  - Relying on Credit Cards (32 percent)
  - Relying on Charities (12 percent)
  - Personal loans
  - Teenage children taking jobs
  - Donating plasma
  - Skipping meals
  - Filing for bankruptcy

## The Following Allow Me to Make Ends Meet . . .

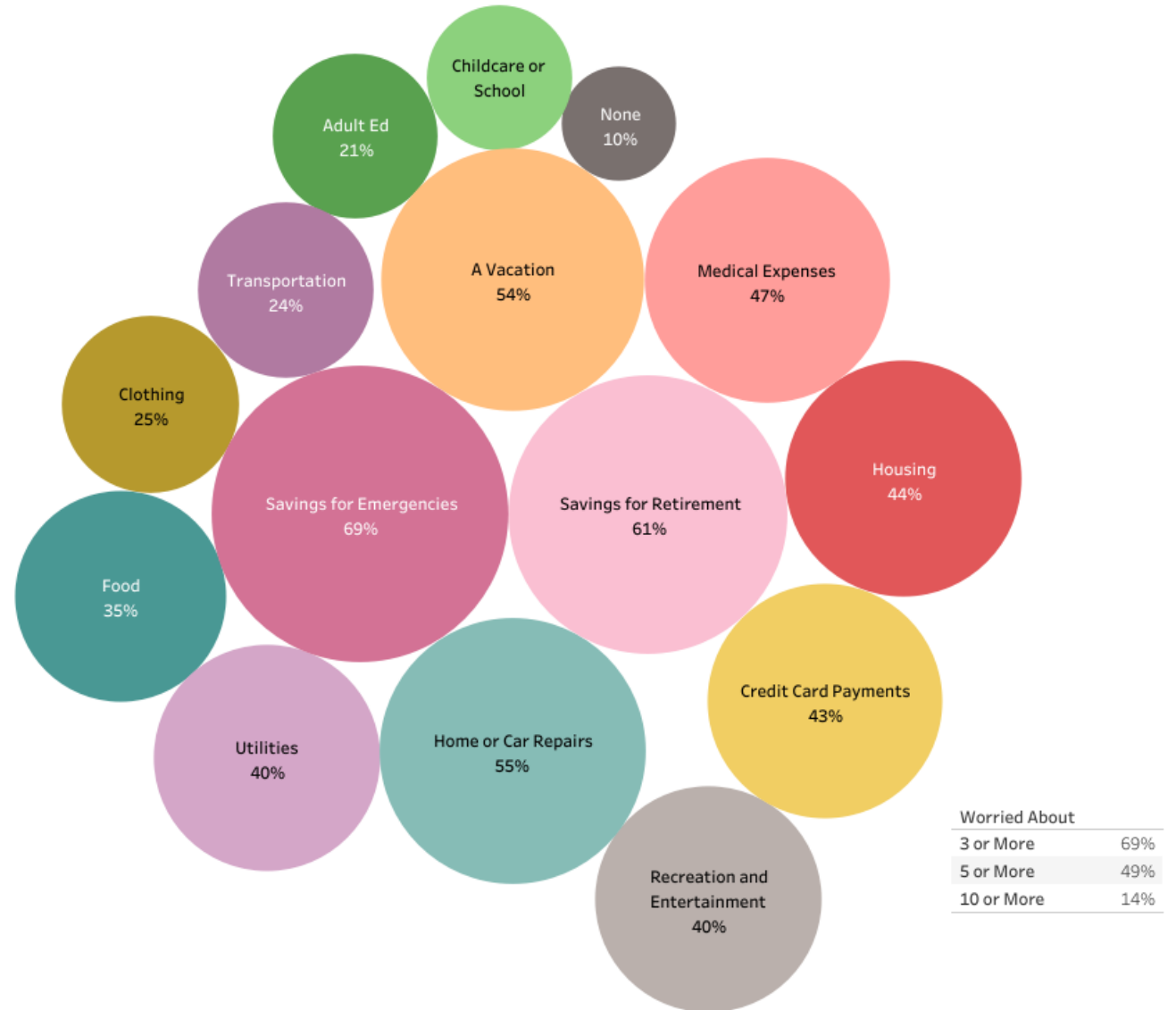


# WORRIED ABOUT PAYING

## Responses:

- Threats to financial security like savings for emergencies (69%)
- Threats to a balanced and happy life like savings for vacations (54%)
- Basic necessities like food (35%) and housing (40%)
- Many have multiple worries

Over the Last Year, I've Worried About Paying For . . .



# CHALLENGES

Notably:

- Bureaucracy
- Discrimination
- Worries About Coworkers
- Job Insecurity
- Lack of Community Support

## Workplace Challenges

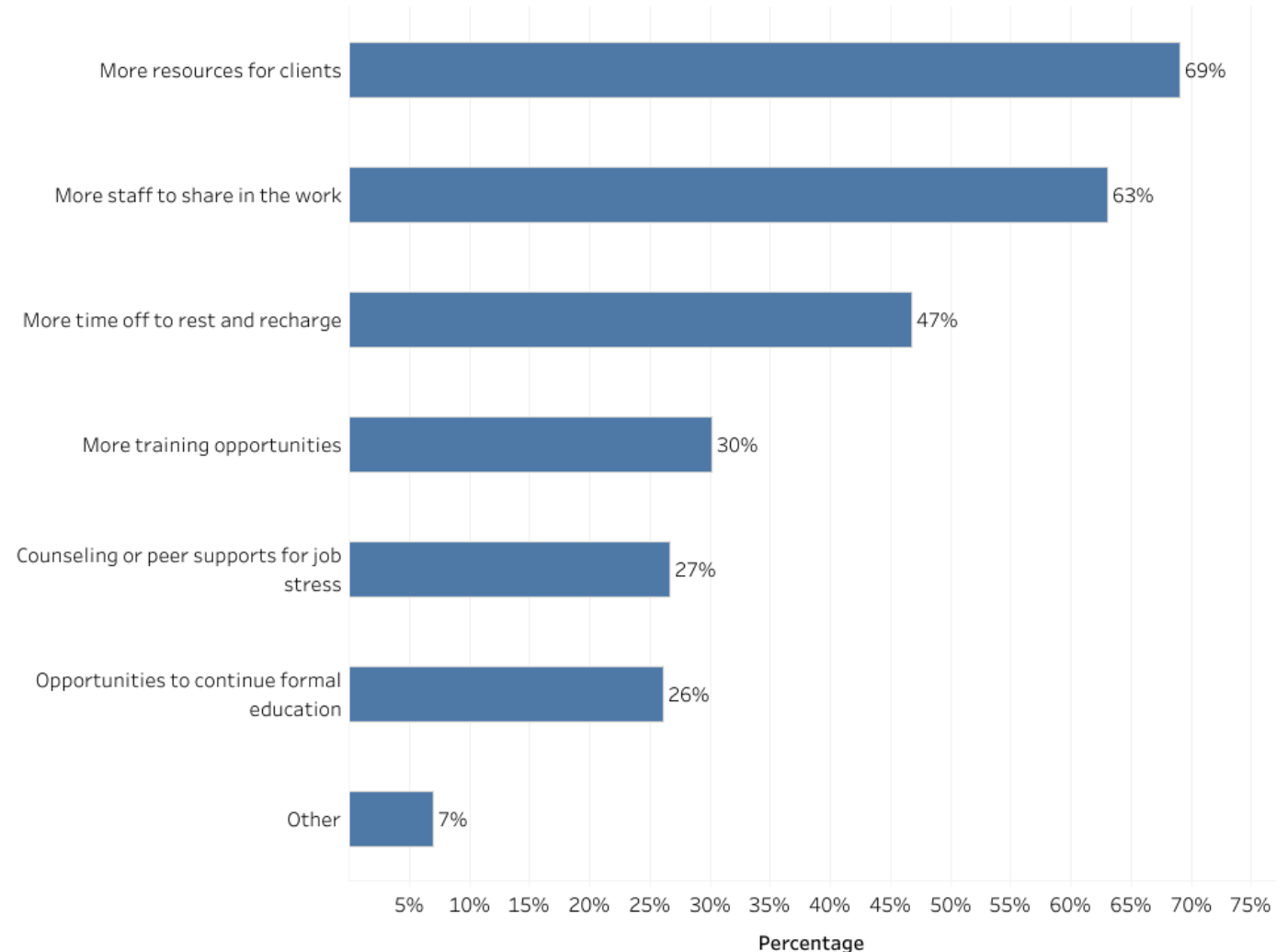
Frustration (Can't give more people housing and services)	69%
Stress/worry about the well-being of clients	60%
Being overworked	46%
Limited rewards or wins tied to work	37%
Overly burdensome paperwork requirements	36%
Limited opportunities to advance in my career	35%
Limited authority to make decisions	25%
Lack of respect for my opinions and contributions	21%
Fears for my safety	13%
None of these	9%
Other	6%
Discrimination or uncomfortable situations (Race/Ethnicity)	6%
Discrimination or uncomfortable situations (Gender)	5%
Discrimination or uncomfortable situations (LGBTQ identity)	3%

# NEEDS

Notably:

- Funding stability for organizations
- Student loan repayment assistance
- Executive and other types of mentorship
- Adequate physical workspaces
- Mental health leave
- Technology upgrades
- New types of staffing
- Career ladders
- Appreciation
- Home buying programs for employees

## Things I Still Need to Do My Job Well . . .

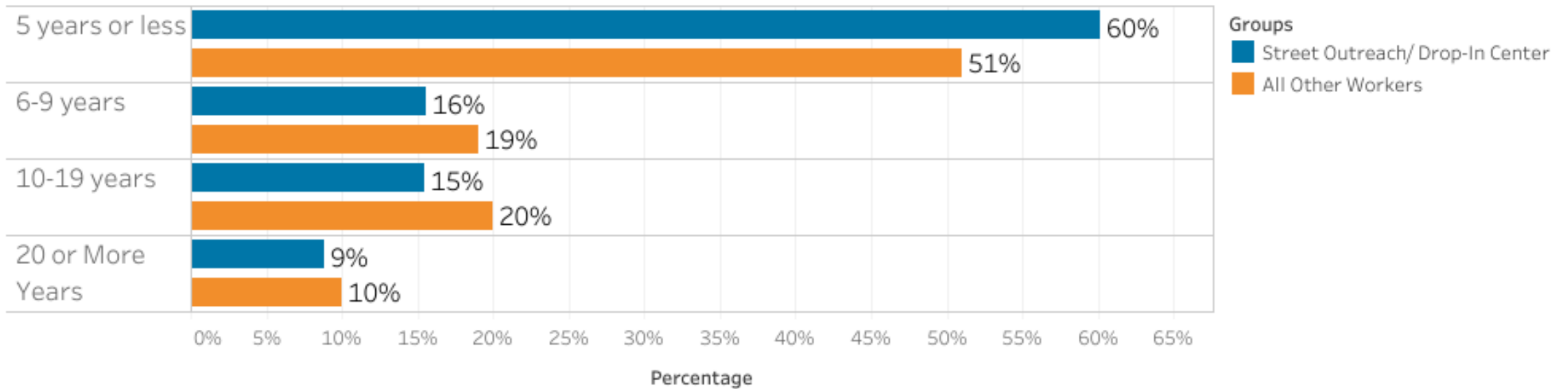


# **FINDINGS: STREET OUTREACH AND DROP-IN CENTER WORKERS**



## Years of Service

(60% of Street Outreach and Drop-In Center Workers Have 5 years of Experience or Less)



# 1) RELATIVELY NEW TO THE PROFESSION

Points to:

- Harder to Build Relationships and Trust
- Significant Training Demands
- Need for Greater Retention

## More Stressed About Ability to Serve Clients

Experiences	Street Outreach/Drop-In Center	All Other Workers
Frustration because I can't give more people housing and services	80%	67%
Need more resources for clients to do my job well	76%	68%
Stress/worry about the well-being of clients	69%	59%

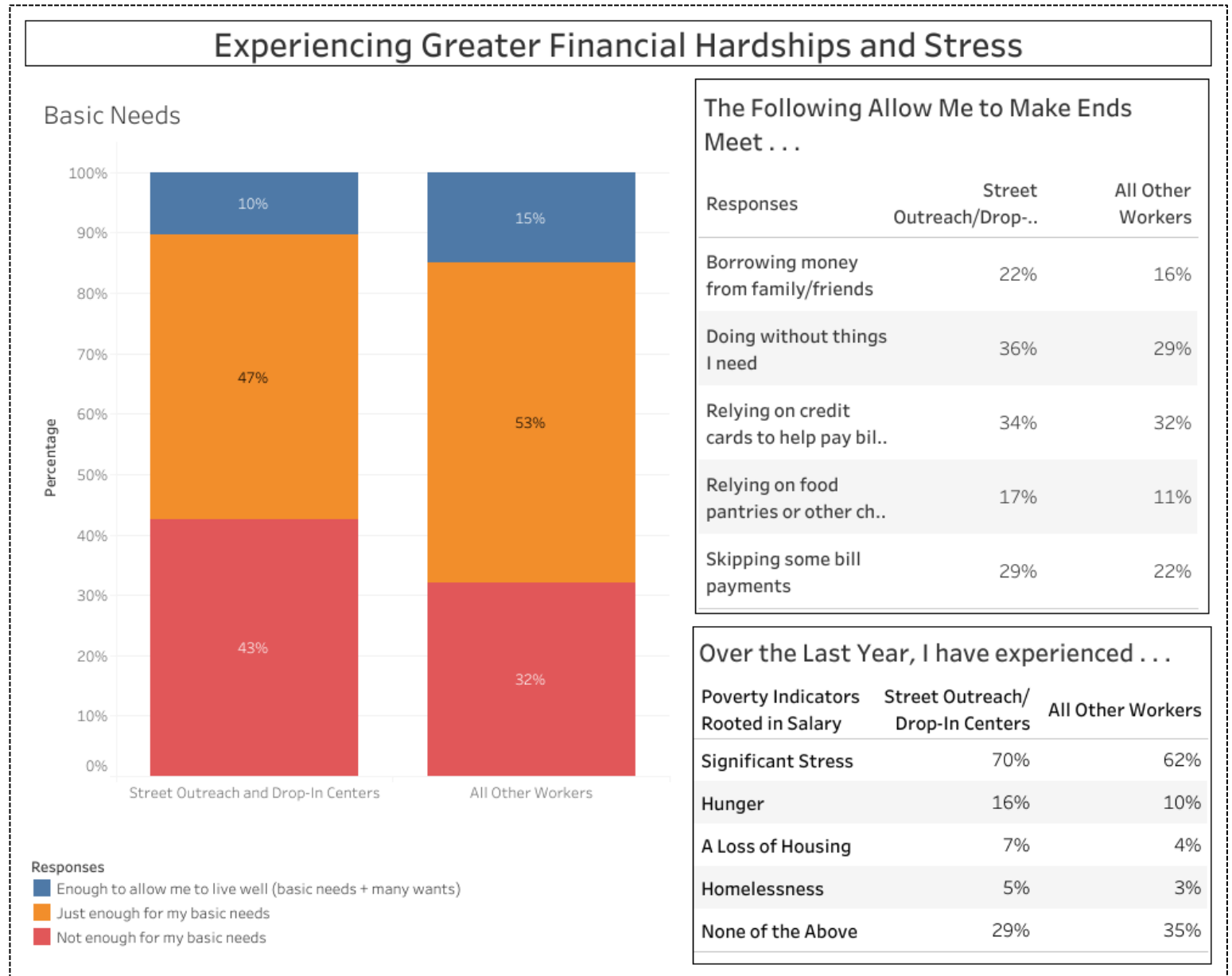
## 2) MORE LIKELY TO BE STRESSED ABOUT CLIENTS

### Points to:

- Clients with more complex challenges.
- Limited ability to help.
- Need for more resources
- Need for targeted supports.

### 3) MORE FINANCIAL DISTRESS

- 62% earn \$50,000 or less
- 53% of all other workers earn \$50,000 or less
- Points to: Need to investigate and reevaluate disparities



# FINAL THOUGHTS

# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- Much Work Ahead
- Steps forward—Initial asks of Congress.
- Work with national-level partners and the field to further develop solutions
- Learning from what other fields have asked of Congress and federal agencies.
- What solutions have communities developed (or considered) related to the homeless services workforce.
- Crafting model federal- and local-level policies.
- Ensuring solutions come from Multiple Directions—all levels of gov't plus the private sector.



# CONTACT INFORMATION

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