

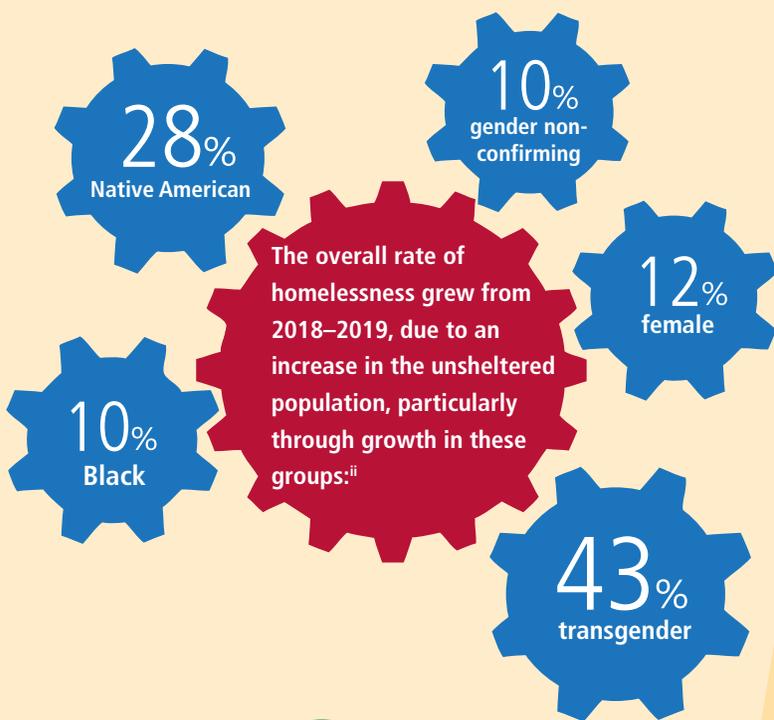
# COVID-19'S IMPACT ON HEALTH OF THE UNSHELTERED

## PROBLEM

### PRE-PANDEMIC

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness — such as those sleeping in parks and vehicles or on streets — were at higher risk of physical and mental health issues than their sheltered counterparts.<sup>i</sup>

 **1 in 3** individuals experiencing homelessness is unsheltered<sup>ii</sup>



### NOW

Those experiencing unsheltered homelessness are at high risk of COVID-19 morbidity and mortality because they are less connected to health care and other support systems and more likely to have other health conditions. And, the groups that have increased the unsheltered population also represent those most at risk of negative health consequences of COVID-19. Despite increased risks, the true impact of the pandemic on the unsheltered is unknown, due to extremely limited data.



## WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH CAN DO

### SHORT TERM



- ▶ **ENGAGE** with local housing groups to support rapid-rehousing efforts. Check out the [Homekey Program](#) supporting Californians experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.
- ▶ **ADVOCATE** for local, state and federal COVID tracking systems to incorporate housing status to determine the health impact of the pandemic on those experiencing homelessness.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** efforts to prioritize COVID-19 vaccination of vulnerable groups, especially those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

### LONG TERM



- ▶ **ENGAGE** with housing groups to support Housing First approaches such as [Permanent Supportive Housing](#), which increases access to health services and housing stability.
- ▶ **WORK** with community-based organizations serving groups that experienced recent growth — such as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ and women-serving organizations — to identify common barriers to housing.

<sup>i</sup> Montgomery, Ann E., Dorota Szymkowiak, Jessica Marcus, Paul Howard, and Dennis P. Culhane. 2016b. “Homelessness, Unsheltered Status, and Risk Factors for Mortality: Findings from the 100,000 Homes Campaign.” *Public Health Reports* 131 (6): 765–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033354916667501>

<sup>ii</sup> Henry, Meghan, Rian Watt, Anna Mahathay, Jillian Ouellette, and Aubrey Sitler. 2020. *The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness*. Washington, DC: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. Accessible here: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>