

Final Report

Admin Data and System Mapping Group

University of Mary Washington

SOCG 475: Public Sociology

Dr. Martin

December 15, 2023

Findings and Methods

Methodology

Throughout the course of the semester, the Admin Data group has been collaborating with the Fredericksburg Continuum of Care (CoC), an organization working to prevent and end homelessness, to provide a gaps analysis of their services. The group met with a representative of the CoC, Megan Samples, at the GWRC building downtown to determine what the group should focus their efforts on. After a productive meeting, Megan stated that the CoC wanted a specific focus on the coordinated entry process. In other words, the CoC wants to improve how people enter/leave the system to account for everybody. In order to achieve this goal, the Admin Data group agreed to look at both Homeless Helpline and HMIS data, which Megan sent over in October and November. The Homeless Helpline is a helpline that connects people in need of shelter or housing to services in the community. When they call this helpline, they are asked a number of questions that veer them towards a certain path (emergency shelter, domestic violence services, etc.) or service provider (MICAH, Loisann's Hope House, etc.) This helpline data provided information on caller statistics, where they were referred to, what happened after they were referred, and demographic information, such as race, ethnicity, gender, household income percentile, military veteran status, and the municipality that they live in.

The HMIS data, on the other hand, is much more in-depth. Every service provider that works with the CoC is required to fill out this information so it is the most helpful data that we have on-hand. This data is how the CoC keeps track of which people enter the system, and also needs track of repeated people in the system. On top of that, the data also keeps track of information like household ID, client ID, date of birth, relationship to head of household, gender,

military veteran status, provider, prior living situation, entry and exit dates, destination, reasons for entering or leaving the system, when their episode of homelessness started, total number of months spent on the street, number of times the client has been on the street, highest level of education, monthly income level, and zip code of their last residence. This data is split into three categories: Emergency Shelter, Housing, and Street Outreach. Each of these categories has data from 2019 to 2023. In other words, there were 15 HMIS spreadsheets given to us. For the sake of time, the group only looked at 2019 and 2023 for each category. This was to see if COVID had an impact on these services and if they were doing anything pre-pandemic that should be adopted again. Additionally, the group only analyzed information on date of birth, destination, and reasoning for entering or leaving the system since coordinated entry is the primary focus. All of this data was coded, using a coded sheet as reference, to convert into graphs (ex: Woman = 1, Man = 2, Nonbinary = 3, Transgender = 4, etc.)

Both the helpline and HMIS data were made into graphs to be easily represented and understood by the CoC. The end goal of this project is to provide an in-depth analysis on the CoC's coordinated entry system and how they could improve their data/services to better account for everybody who enters or leaves the system. Overall, the CoC is relying on the class to provide an accurate gaps analysis so that their services can continue to improve in the future. After analyzing part of the data, there are definite improvements that could be made. All of the spreadsheets, coded data, and charts are listed at the end (Appendix A).

Findings

Homeless Helpline

The Homeless Helpline data gives information on program outputs, program indicators (separated by emergency shelter and prevention), callers by county, household income, ethnicity,

gender, race, and military veteran status. For coordinated entry, both program outputs and program indicators are the most important parts of the data in this section. However, callers by county and the demographic information could be useful for showing how resources should be allocated. For example, if Fredericksburg is being served more than Spotsylvania and Stafford, then the CoC might need to come up with a different approach to account for people in those counties.

Program Outcomes / Program Indicators.

The data shows that 4,885 people were able to access the Homeless Helpline. These callers were either referred to prevention, an emergency shelter, domestic violence services, street outreach, another CoC, or mainstream resources. There are also categories for if they self-resolved their issues, declined all referrals, or had their general questions answered. The most common type of referral was emergency shelter (25.6%) and mainstream resources (83.2%). The least common type was referral to DV services (0.5%), referral to street outreach (1.9%), and declining of all referral types (1.9%) (Figure 1).

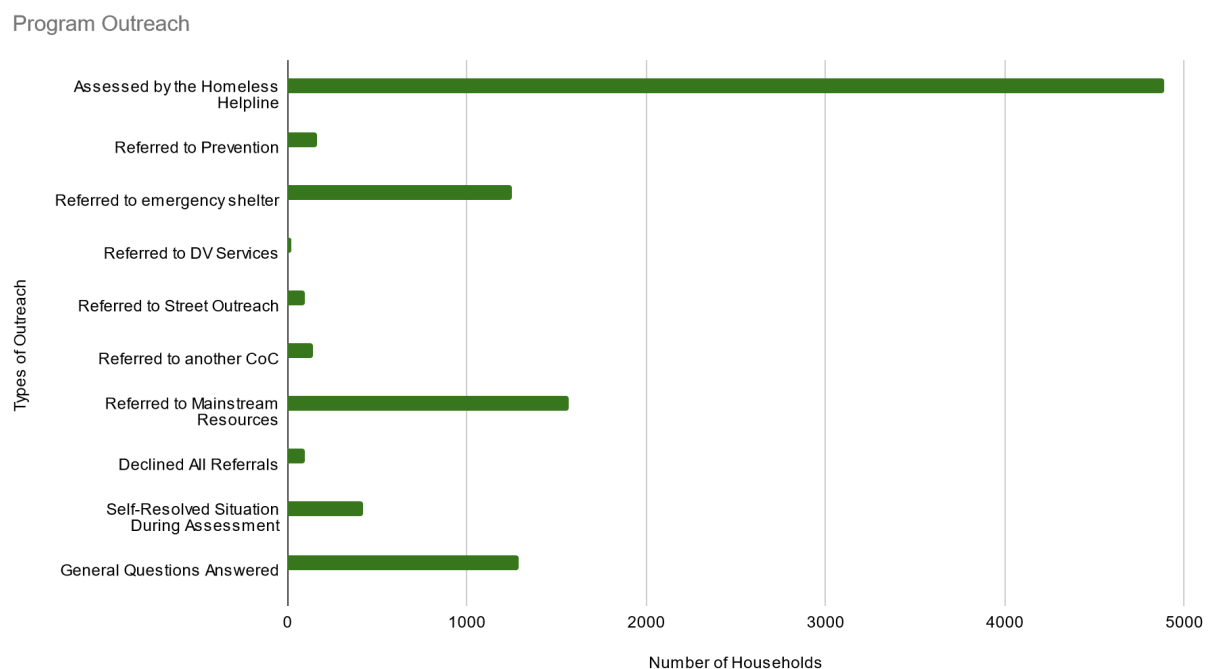


Figure 1. “Program Outcomes” graph from the Homeless Helpline data.

The helpline also has information on what happens to people who are referred to emergency shelter and prevention. With emergency shelter, a majority of people self-resolved or diverted their situation (33.8%). That is more than the people who were successfully put into shelters, which was only 21%. Additionally, only 3 people refused the service entirely. This data also shows that out of 1,250 referrals, around 248 people were still waiting for a response as of October 2023. In other words, those 248 people were still homeless (Figure 2).

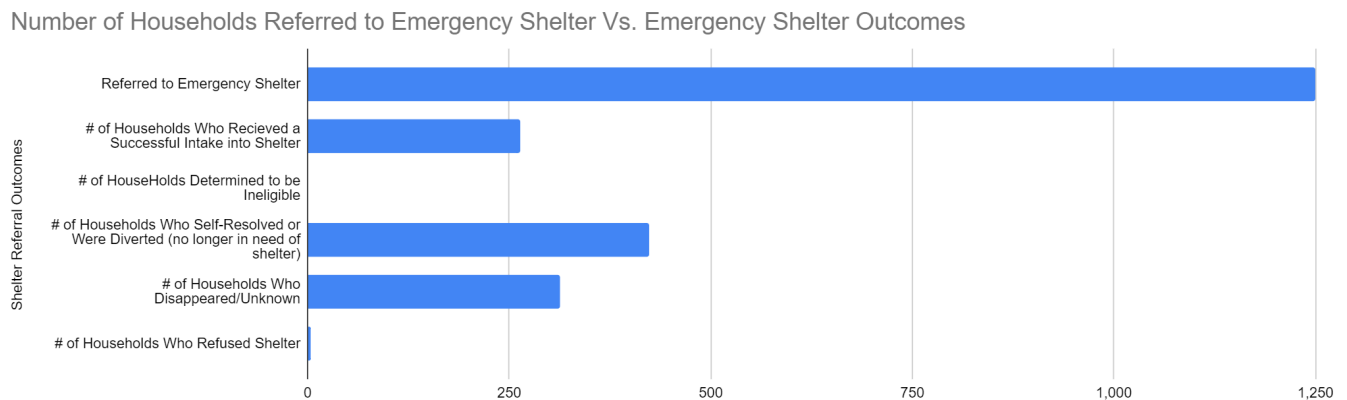


Figure 2. “Emergency Shelter Outcomes” graph from the Homeless Helpline data.

As for prevention outcomes, only 166 were referred to prevention services. Out of those 166 people, about 87 (52.4%) had a successful intake, 51 (30.7%) were ineligible, 38 (22.8%) disappeared, and 6 (3.6%) refused any sort of service (Figure 3). However, there is no clear idea of what qualifications somebody needs to be referred to a shelter/prevention service or how long that process normally takes. That is important to take note of when this final report is written for the CoC. The data that the CoC enters should be written for the general public to understand.

Number of Households Referred to Prevention vs. Prevention Referral Outcomes

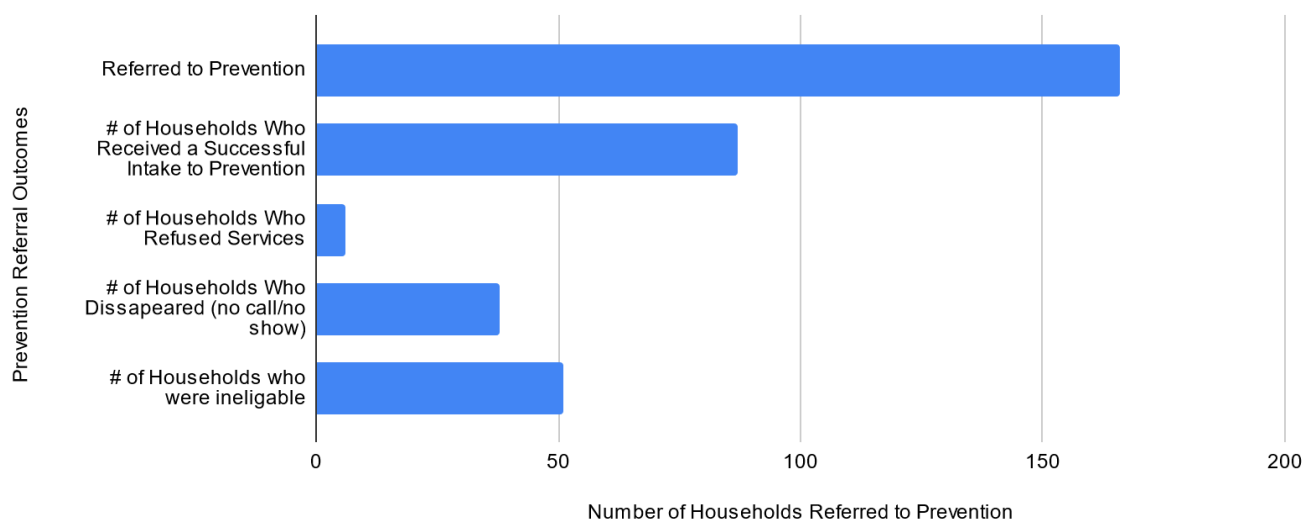


Figure 3. "Prevention Referral Outcomes" graph from the Homeless Helpline data.

Demographic Information.

Most of the people that call the Homeless Helpline tend to be black, non-Hispanic males that are in the 0-30% household income percentile. However, a majority of the data is not given for both callers by county and military veteran status. This is obviously a problem. This will be elaborated more in the "Memo for Students" section when talking about gaps.

HMIS - Emergency Shelter 2019

Date of Birth.

Looking at the year that each person was born, it was found that most people referred to emergency shelters in 2019 were in their mid-30s to mid-40s. People in their mid-60s to mid-50s are close behind, though. However, people born before 1960 (63 years or older) and people born after 2000 (23 years or younger) were not as common (Figure 4). This graph does not seem to provide much insight, unless it is compared with the other HMIS data.

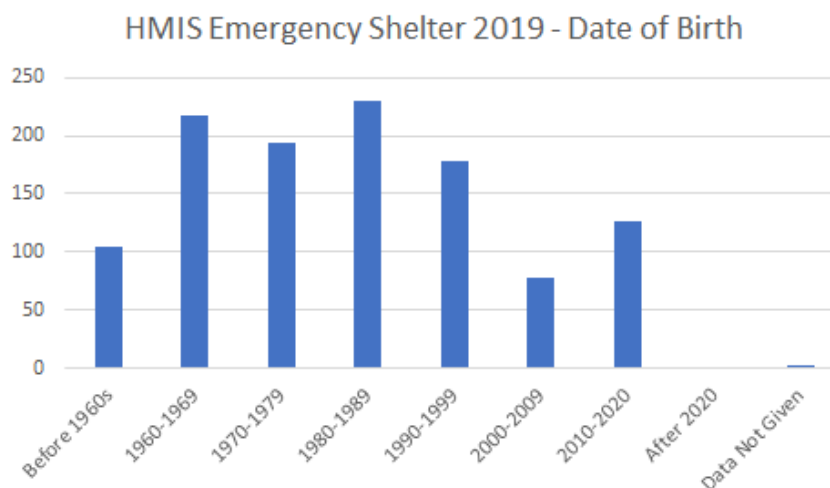


Figure 4. “Date of Birth” graph from HMIS Emergency Shelter 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

This category is integral to understanding where people are placed within the system and if those services are successfully preventing homelessness. Despite this being an important category, especially when trying to understand coordinated entry, it is not being prioritized. For instance, out of the 1,130 entries in this category, over 200 exit interviews were not completed (Figure 5). Asking Megan why this is not a requirement would be beneficial.

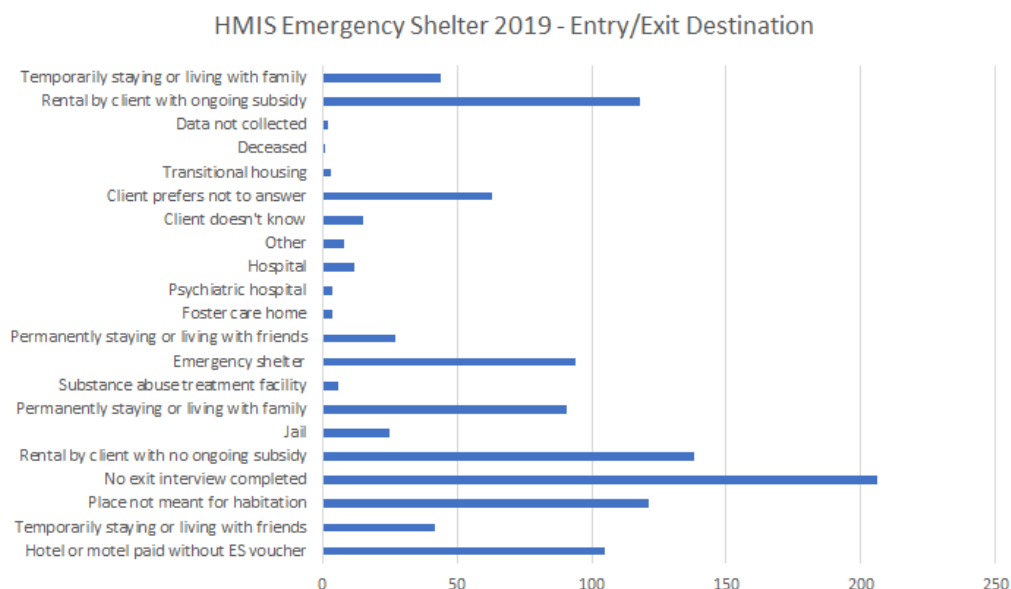


Figure 5. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from HMIS Emergency Shelter 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

This category is to keep track of where people are coming from and where they are going. This is also an important category since it keeps track of people who are repeatedly in the system or were temporarily homeless. There are a variety of outcomes in this category. In ES 2019, a majority of people “completed their program,” but it's uncertain what this means, especially since there is a category called “left for housing opportunity” (Figure 6).

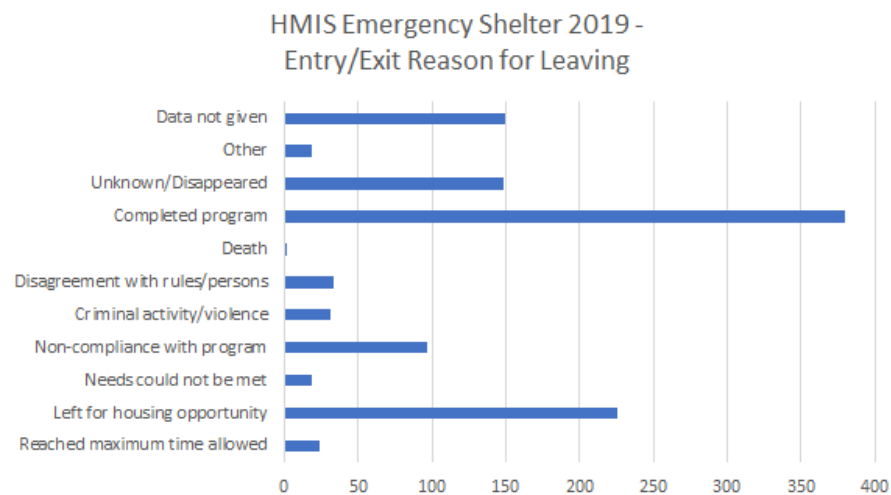


Figure 6. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph from HMIS Emergency Shelter 2019 data.

HMIS - Emergency Shelter 2023

Date of Birth.

Compared to the date of birth chart in ES 2019, the high number of people in their mid-30s to 40s being served is either a coincidence or other groups are being underrepresented. Due to the fact that there is not a big difference between the numbers, it is likely just a matter of circumstance. However, older people do tend to be more accounted for, especially in the point-in-time counts, due to them likely being in the system longer (Figure 7).

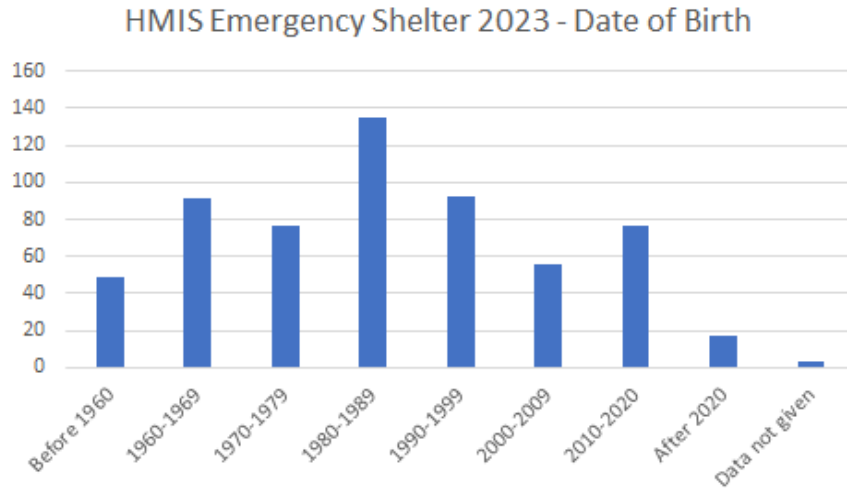


Figure 7. “Date of Birth” graph from HMIS Emergency Shelter 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

Similar to ES 2019, a majority of exit interviews were not completed, which suggests there has not been much of a change in the data collection process. In fact, the number of incomplete exit interviews has increased in the last 4 years. The next category, “place not meant for habitation,” is a little less than half of the “no exit interview completed” section (Figure 8).

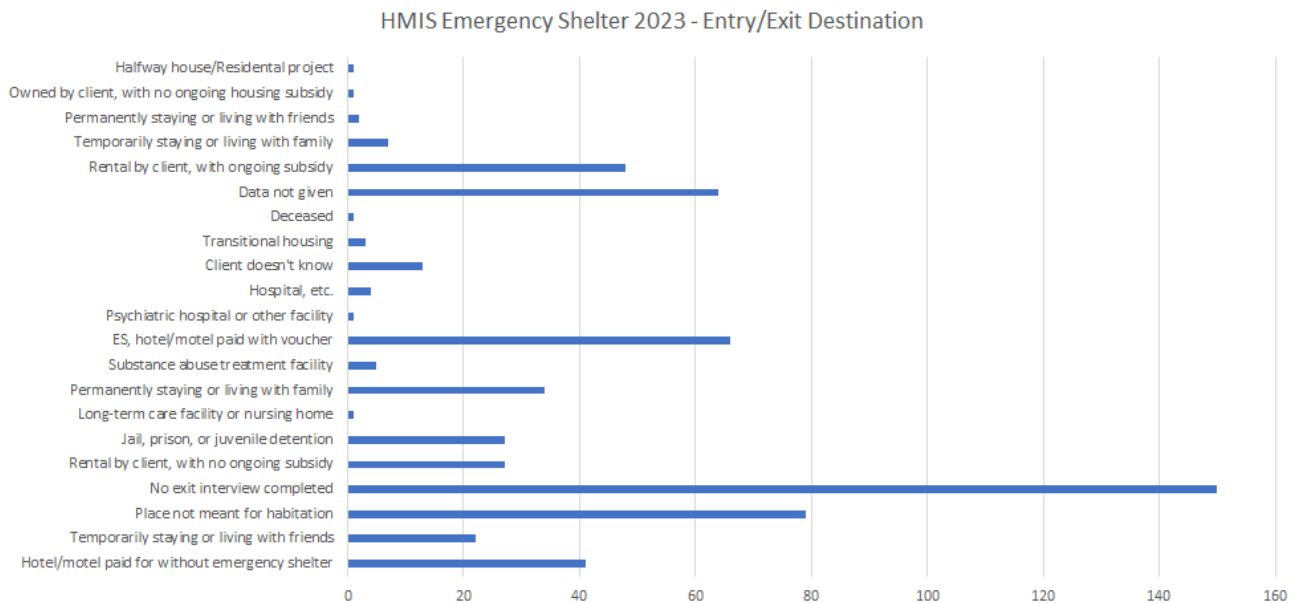


Figure 8. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from HMIS Emergency Shelter 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

A vast majority of the data in this section is not given. This column is nearly three times the length of the second highest column, “Completed Program.” Part of this may be because 2023 had officially not ended when this chart was created, but the category is also too large to be a coincidence (Figure 9).

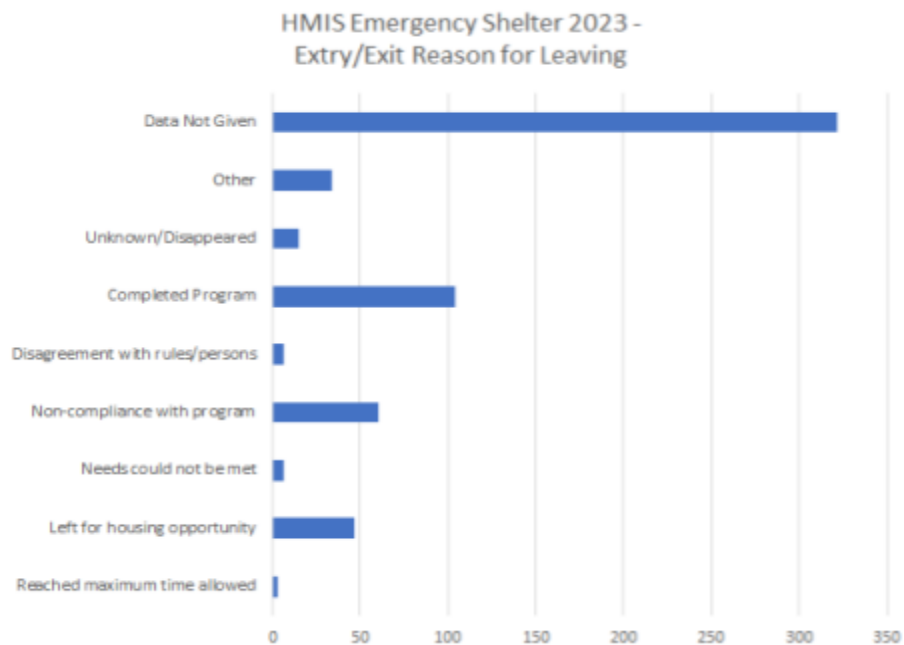


Figure 9. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph on HMIS Emergency Shelter 2023 data.

HMIS - Housing 2019

Date of Birth.

The data seems to be a lot more varied in Housing 2019 than it usually is in the other HMIS data sheets. Both older and younger people are being accounted for (Figure 10). It would be interesting to see if there is a particular reason for this, either by asking Megan or conducting further data analysis.

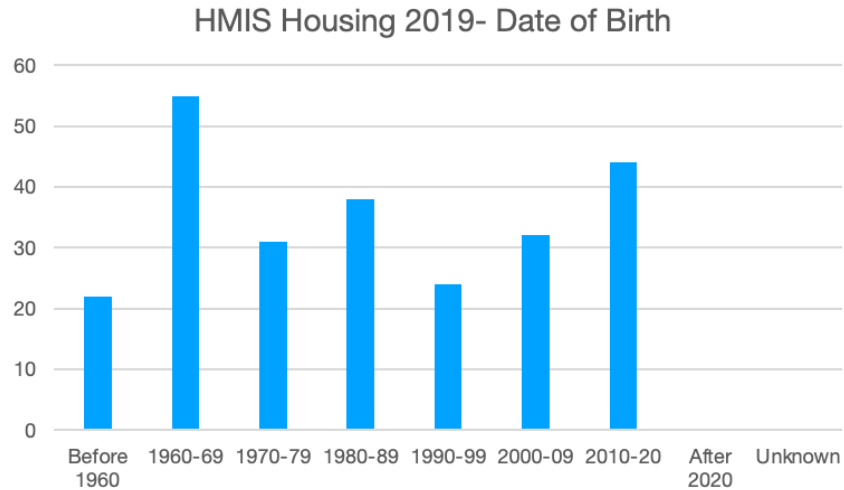


Figure 10. “Date of Birth” graph from the HMIS Housing 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

“Rental by client with no ongoing subsidy” seems to be the most popular category in this section (Figure 11). This means that the client is renting out the property with no governmental assistance to alleviate housing costs. This requires further evaluation to understand why this is relevant.

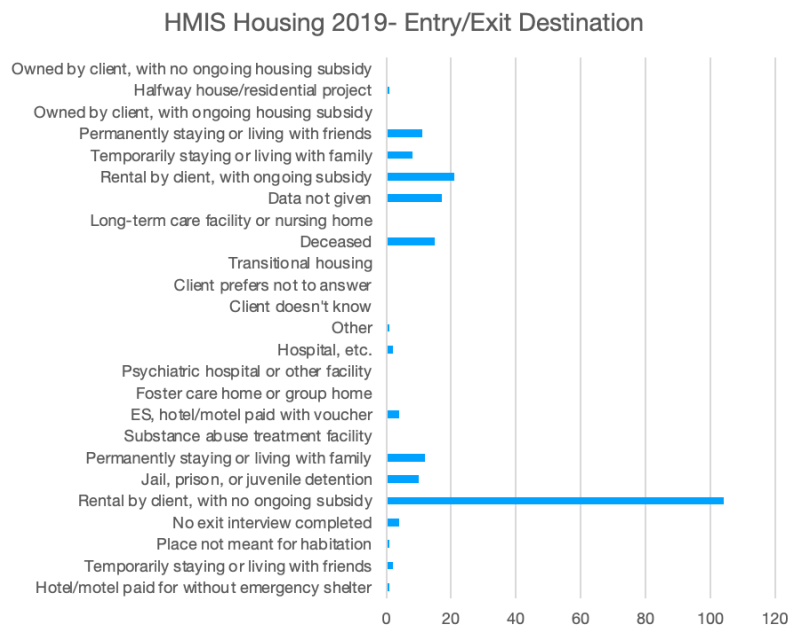


Figure 11. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from the HMIS Housing 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

Once again, the “Completed Program” category triumphs over the other categories. Surprisingly, though, “left for housing opportunity” has lower numbers this year (Figure 12). COVID did technically reach America late 2019, so that might have had an impact on people getting housing. The 2020 charts on housing should be run to see if there is any correlation.

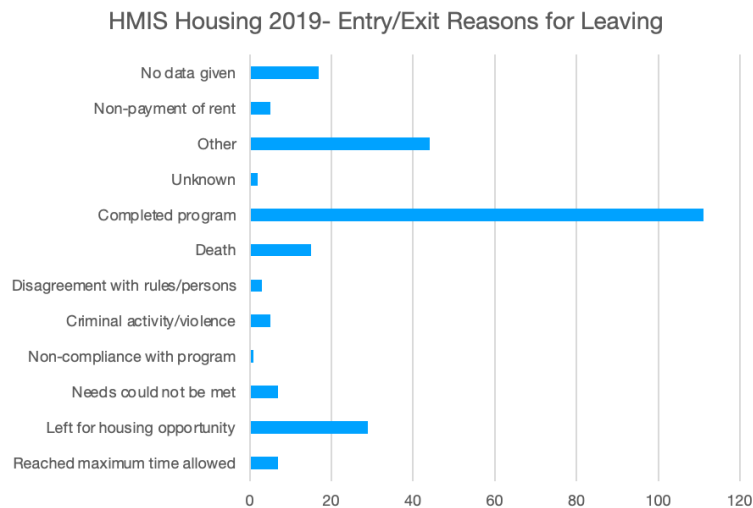


Figure 12. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph from the HMIS Housing 2019 data.

HMIS - Housing 2023

Date of Birth.

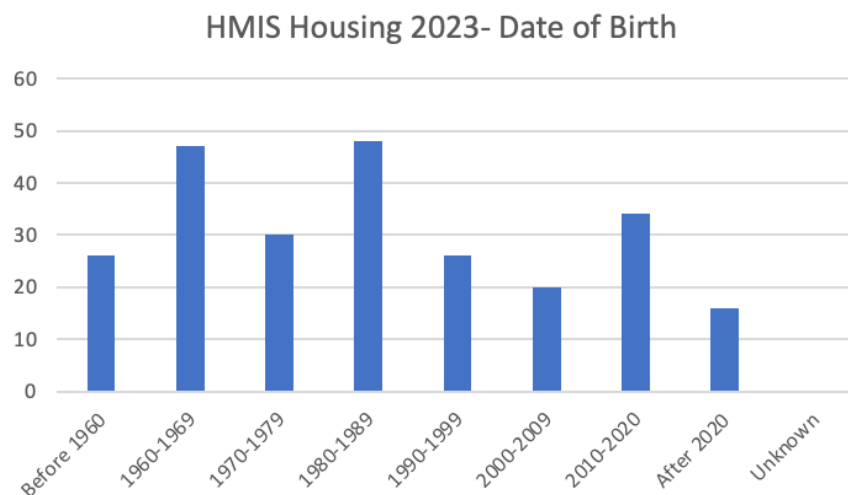


Figure 13. “Date of Birth” graph from the HMIS Housing 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

“Rental by client with ongoing subsidy” is the most popular category for this year, which differs from the top category in Housing 2019 which was “no subsidy” (Figure 14). There may need to be additional outside research done to see why this change occurred.

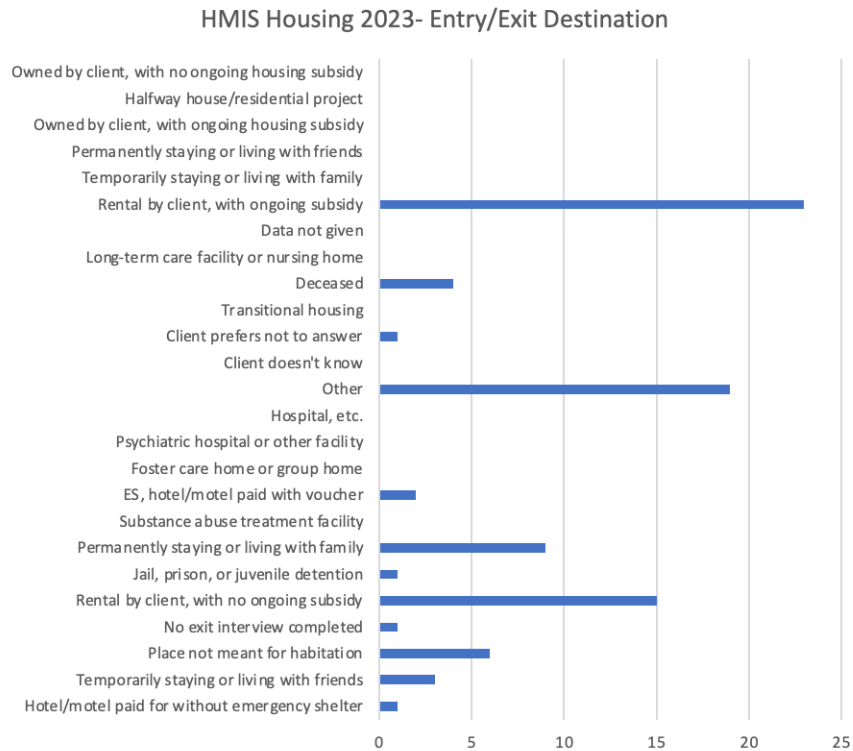


Figure 14. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from the HMIS Housing 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

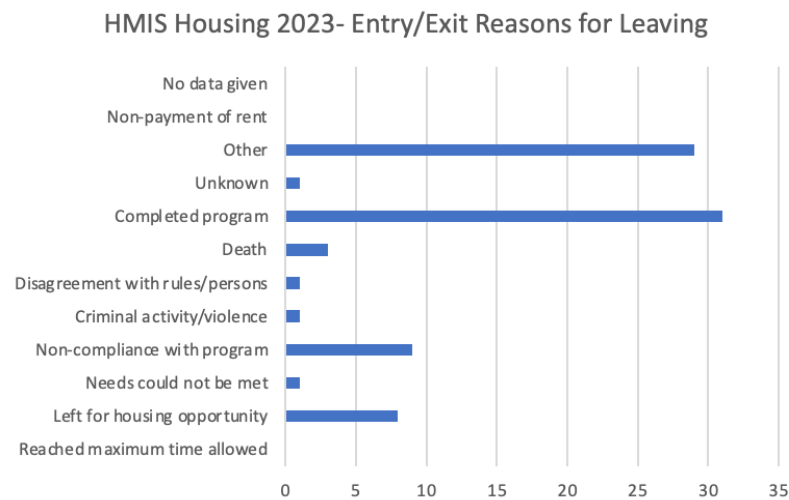


Figure 15. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph from the HMIS Housing 2023 data.

Highest Level of Education Achieved.

In an attempt to parse the other data in the spreadsheet, the group ran statistics on the highest level of education for Housing 2023. Due to time constraints, the group only had time to run one. The data showed that most people received their high school diploma (Figure 16). Surprising, almost all of the data is given for this section. If this category is being prioritized for some reason, there is no indication why.

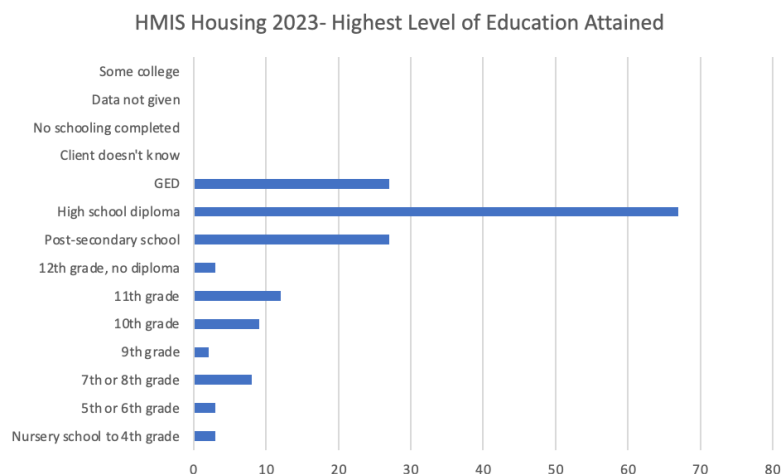


Figure 16. “Highest Level of Education Attained” graph from the HMIS Housing 2023 data.

HMIS - Street Outreach 2019

Date of Birth.

The data varies slightly for Street Outreach 2019. The most popular category is people in their mid-40s to mid-50s. This slight change does not imply much, unfortunately, unless further analysis is done. The lack of information on people who are 23 years old or younger is noteworthy, though (Figure 17).

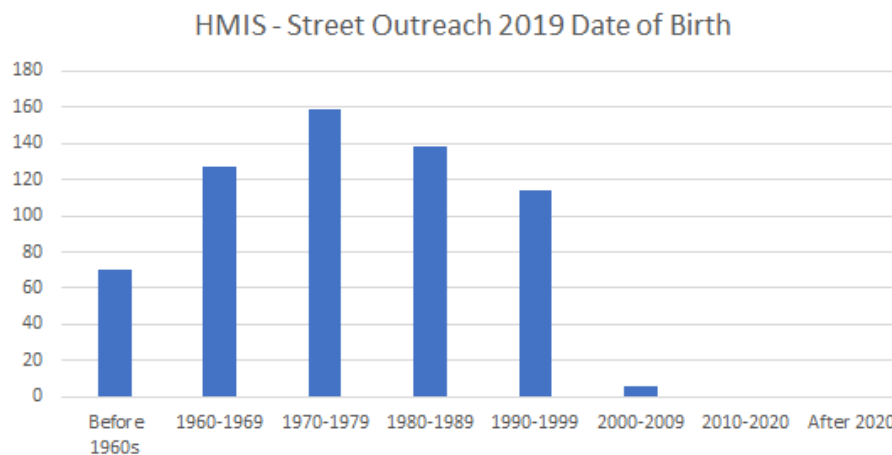


Figure 17. “Date of Birth” graph from the HMIS Street Outreach 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

While it is no surprise that “no exit interview completed” is the most popular, “emergency shelter” and “rental by client with no going subsidy” are the next most common categories (Figure 18). Emergency shelter options were more common in 2019 because Thurman Brisben was still a part of the CoC, so it makes sense why this number has gone down.

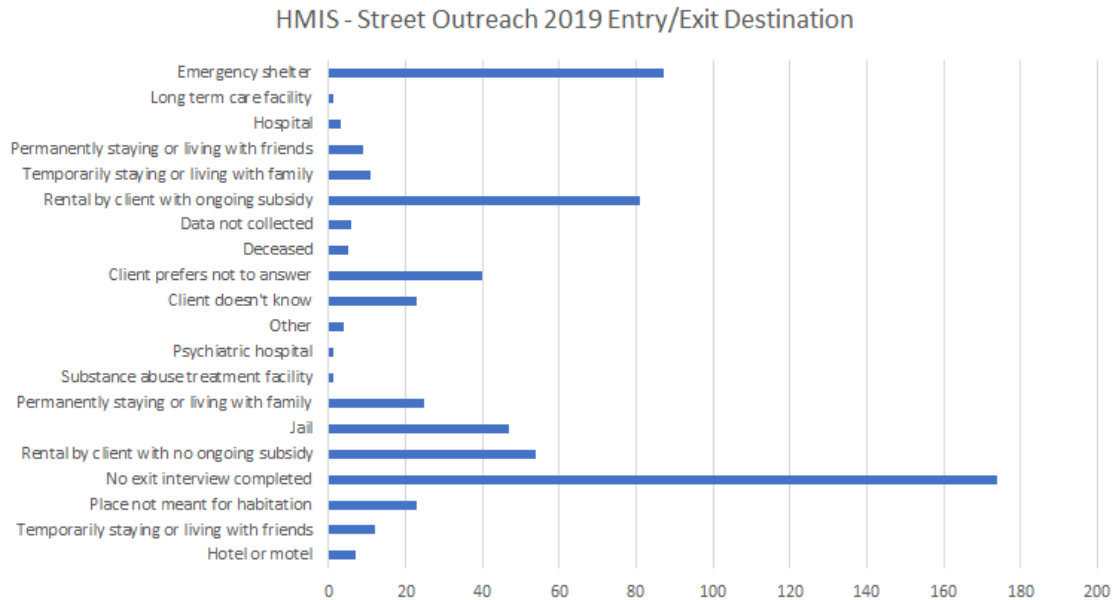


Figure 18. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from the HMIS Street Outreach 2019 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

As expected, “data not given” is the most popular category. “Other” is also a popular category, but would need more clarification on what that means (Figure 19). Presumably, “Other” means something different for Emergency Shelter, Housing, and Street Outreach.

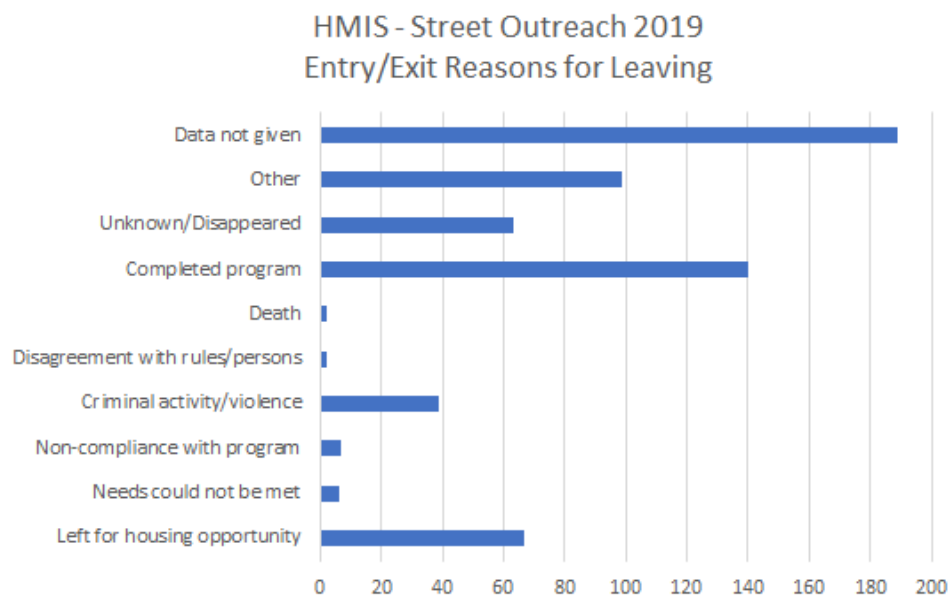


Figure 19. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph from HMIS Street Outreach 2019 data.

HMIS - Street Outreach 2023

Date of Birth.

Similar to the other HMIS Date of Birth charts, Street Outreach 2023 shows that mostly people in their mid-30s to mid-40s are using Fredericksburg’s homeless services. However, the number has significantly declined for people who are 23 years old or younger. This applies that there needs to be better street outreach to people in that age range.

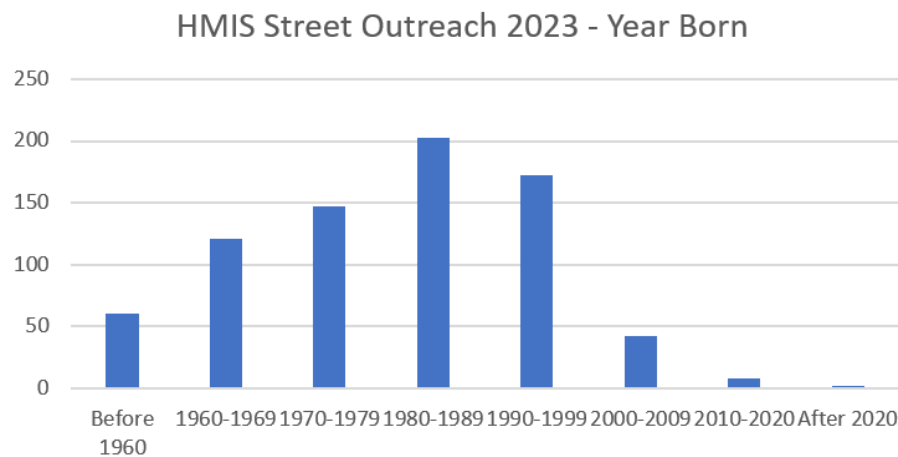


Figure 20. “Year Born” graph from the HMIS Street Outreach 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Destination.

Even though it is not shown in the graph, the most popular categories seem to be “no exit interview completed” and “data not given” (Figure 21). Both of these options are not particularly helpful, but do provide insight into what can be improved. The other categories are being overshadowed by these two categories and seem to skew the data.

HMIS Street Outreach 2023- Entry/Exit Destination

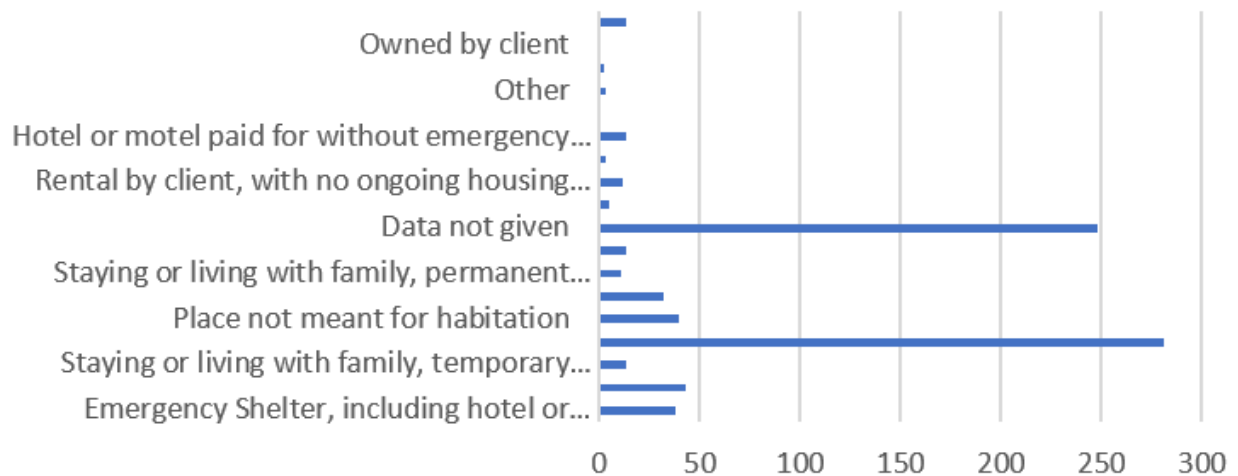


Figure 21. “Entry/Exit Destination” graph from the HMIS Street Outreach 2023 data.

Entry / Exit Reasons for Leaving.

This graph contains the largest amount of missing data yet. Out of about 800 entries, around 680 are missing data. This is more than a gap, it is actively preventing any sort of analysis to be done. If the group needs to demonstrate how big of an issue missing data is, this graph should be shown above all the other ones (Figure 22).

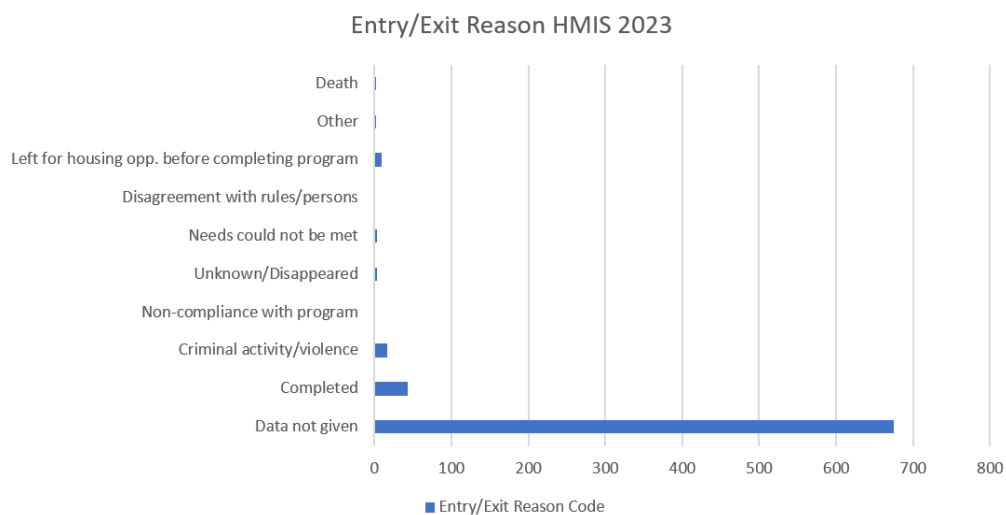


Figure 22. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” graph from the HMIS Street Outreach 2023 data.

Memo for Students Next Semester

What gaps, if any, has your team identified in the homeless services system of the Fredericksburg region?

As explored in the “Findings” section of this report, a lot of the Homeless Helpline and HMIS data is missing. This missing data means that we cannot find gaps in the data because there is not enough data to analyze. This is a huge problem and could greatly affect how the CoC and its partners write their annual reports and accounts for people in the system. If the CoC wants to improve their coordinated entry process, they should take note of this issue and act accordingly. The data should be a priority.

As previously noted, the category titled “Completed program” in the “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving” row of the HMIS data is unclear. Ideally, an emergency shelter is supposed to be a temporary place where somebody can get access to a bed, food, water, and other basic necessities until they receive permanent housing. However, there is another category called “Left for housing opportunity,” which confuses the data. In the future, it would be beneficial to ask Megan or anybody else working at/with the CoC what this category means. Presumably, “completed program” looks different for every service provider. Below is a crosstab that shows which service provider coincides with what entry/exit type (Figure 23). The data shows that Micah is only completing one category, which is likely because Micah is the only provider that has volunteers filling out these exit interviews. Suggestions should be made to have Micah more accurately complete the exit interviews. The goal is to reduce the “No data given” category as much as possible. It should be noted that the HMIS data was sent over in early November, so data not being given may be because the year has technically not ended and should be noted in the final report. Whatever the case, this means that the data is probably being entered before people

actually leave their programs or there is an oversight. Either way, it is ineffective and could lead to a portion of people not being represented. If this is the result of Thurman Brisben Center no longer being part of the CoC, there needs to be a better distinction of what data belongs to the CoC. Additionally, there should also be more clarification on what the “Other” category means.

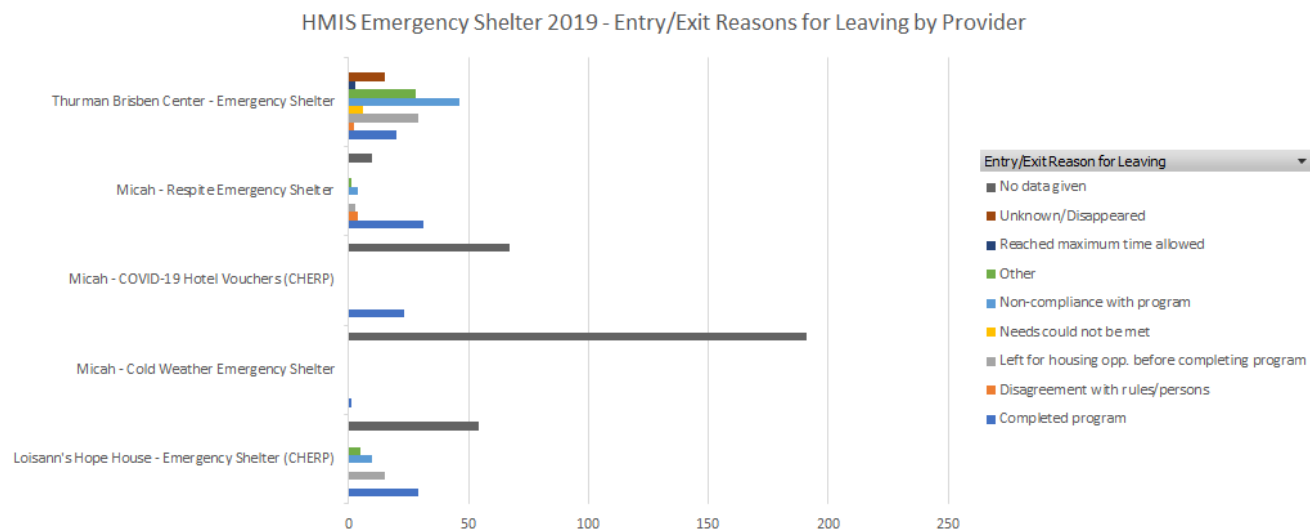


Figure 23. “Entry/Exit Reasons for Leaving by Provider” crosstab graph from the HMIS Emergency Shelter 2019 data.

The Homeless Helpline also fails to gather data on where callers are coming from and the military veteran status of callers. Around 64% of data is not given on the location of callers (Figure 24). Callers by municipality are important to know so resources can be better allocated to places with more callers. Also, military veteran status is unknown for 97% of callers (Figure 25). Military veteran status could also be important if those kinds of callers need special accommodations. If the answer to that question is “No,” then it should be listed as such.

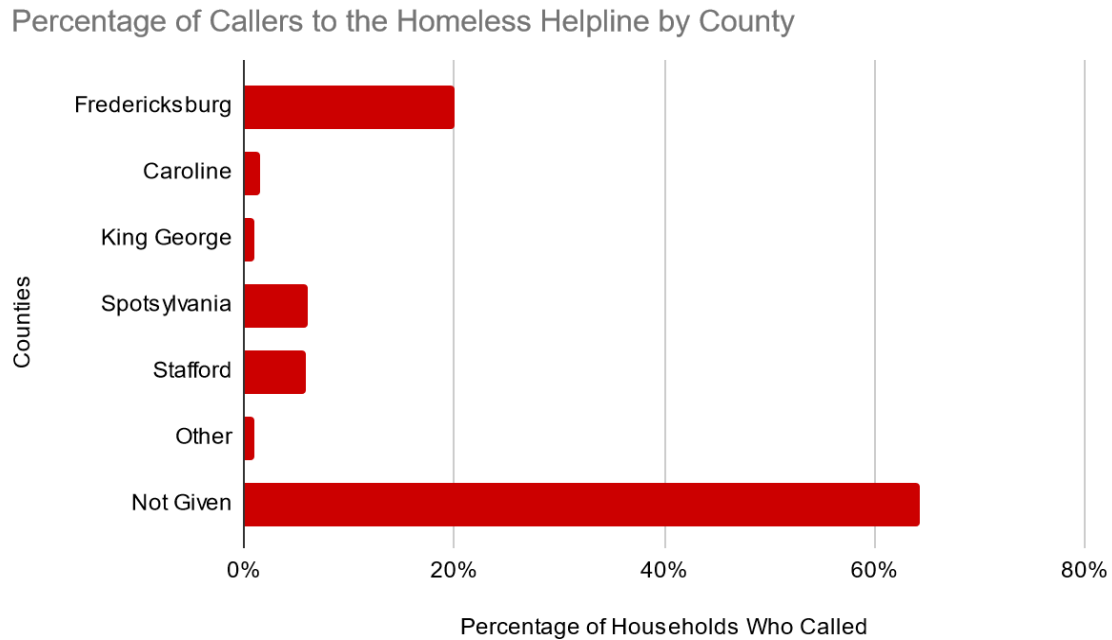


Figure 24. “Percentage of callers by county” graph from the Homeless Helpline data.

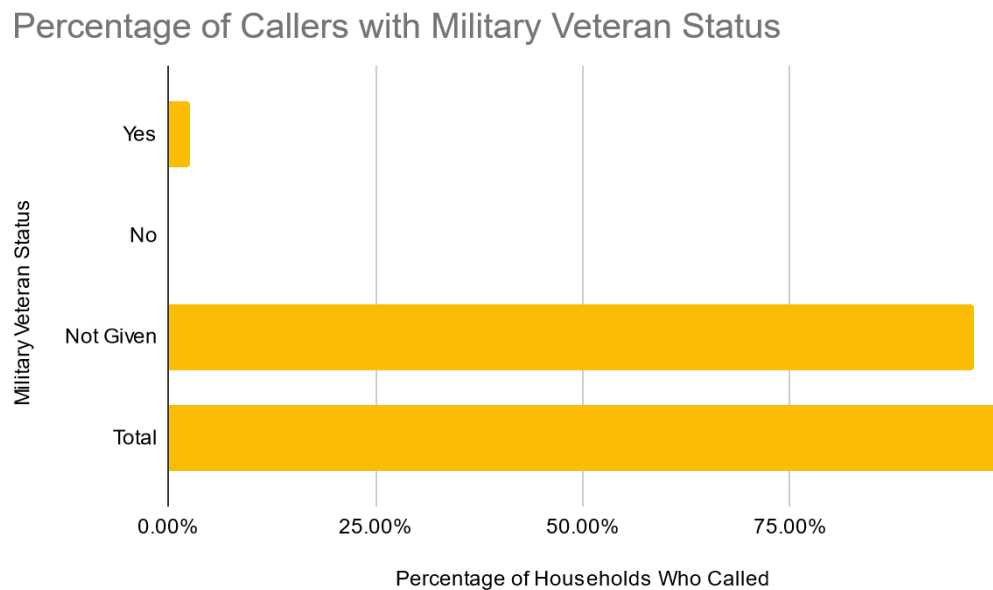


Figure 25. “Percentage of callers with military veteran status” graph from the Homeless Helpline data.

Additionally, looking at the outcome types for the Homeless Helpline is confusing. A majority of people were referred to mainstream resources (83%), but what those mainstream

resources are is unclear. The HMIS data is also inconsistent in places. For instance, when referring to transgender people sometimes they will refer to them as “Woman; transgender” or just “Transgender,” as seen below (Figures 26 and 27). This inconsistency prevents accurate data collection from occurring.

Woman (Girl, if child); Transgender
Woman (Girl, if child); Transgender

Figure 26. Screenshot of an entry from the “Gender” category of the HMIS Emergency Shelter 2023 data that says “Woman (Girl, if child); Transgender”.

Transgender

Figure 27. Screenshot of an entry from the “Gender” category of the HMIS Street Outreach 2019 data that says “Transgender”.

Should they gather more data? If so, how would you suggest they go about it? Are there gaps in what you have been able to gather so far?

The group does not see a need to gather more data since the HMIS data is full of relevant findings that could provide insight into coordinated entry. There are plenty of areas that could still be analyzed, such as prior living situation, providers, total months spent on the street, etc. that need to be coded and made into relevant charts. If there is time to do other things, looking at Empower House’s data would be beneficial since they have a different dataset than the HMIS data. System mapping is also a good alternative since it could be important to see what services are accessible to what communities. It could provide an accurate representation of how well these services are spread out and if everybody can realistically use them.

Realistically, though, with the ample amounts of spreadsheets received from the CoC, future students should not have to ask or search for more data. Since the group this semester had

limited time to completely organize only a small amount of data, there is much more that was provided but there was a limit to how much could be organized and prepared. With that, future students will have access to this and hopefully more time to look more into the data than past groups. So far, there are some gaps present within the data, as many graphs seem to have the majority of results within the topics “data not given,” or “client doesn’t know.” These topics taking over other topics within the graphs show that there are more questionable results than clear, specific results meaning that this data may need to be collected differently, which is the responsibility of the CoC, and can hopefully be seen by them and their officials.

Should they do more analysis of the data? If so, do you have recommendations of ways to look at the data, or things to look for in the data?

For times sake, the group only looked at 2019 and 2023 data for Emergency Shelter, Street Outreach, and Housing. Within that data, the group only looked at Date of Birth, Entry/Exit Destination, and Entry/Exit Reason for Leaving. The group also calculated which provider matched each entry/exit reason for leaving to achieve better results. However, there is a lot more that can be done with the data. For one, it would be interesting to look at the number of times the client has been on the street, total number of months they were living on the street, prior living situation, and providers. The main goal was to look at if the numbers changed pre-COVID and a few years post-COVID. If there is time, looking at 2020 in particular could gain some insight into how things changed/progressed.

Should they re-conceptualize the task, maybe try something entirely new?

It is difficult to say if this assignment needs to be reconceptualized since this group mainly focuses on analyzing the data and then interpreting it. It is hard to interpret something until you make the appropriate charts. Looking at the HMIS data is a great way to see

coordinated entry through several years and Megan has specifically requested that the Admin Data group look at it. Looking at different years besides 2019-2023 or creating a system map, if there is a time, are possibilities. For the next group of students taking on the remaining work for this project, it would be helpful to bring new concepts and ideas relating to coding data and organizing it. There are many ways to organize data whether it is within graphs or using other methods, but it would be interesting to see future student's different ideas on how to complete this portion of the project.

Is there a particular critical insight that you think the next team should bring to the task?

It is general knowledge that a lot of people who are homeless are temporarily homeless. This means a lot of people are only homeless for a few weeks/months. Therefore, the focus should be shifted to looking at people who are chronically homeless and what happened through the coordinated entry process that causes them to either be repeated in the system or stay in the system for many years. In other words, we want to see if people's journey through emergency shelter, housing, and/or street outreach has been successful. That may be calculating how often people are repeated into the system, their prior living situation, how long they were on the streets, etc.

Is there, in other words, a different way to look at the research question than what we have been given and have been wrestling with?

Megan has asked us to look at coordinated entry and provide a gaps analysis of that process. As previously mentioned, the HMIS data is packed with relevant data that we have only scratched the surface on. The HMIS data is the main focus since the data speaks for itself. It is hard to see what the group needs to look for until the data is analyzed and charts are made, which then leads to interpretation and findings. For example, the group did not know Micah was only

accounting for people who completed their program until the chart was made. The next step is to look at the other rows, such as prior living situation, months spent on the street, etc. to see if there are any relevant trends. Looking at how COVID affected coordinated entry or what counties are being underserved could also be interesting. However, the ultimate goal is to create a meaningful end product that the CoC can use to better account for everybody and potentially help people gain better access to homeless services. These services can always be improved and it is the Admin Data group's job to find ways to do that.

Appendix A

Relevant Links to the Data / Charts

Homeless Helpline ([Helpline Data](#), [Charts](#))

Code Sheet ([link](#))

Instruction for making charts ([link](#))

HMIS Emergency Shelter 2019 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Emergency Shelter 2020 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Emergency Shelter 2021 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Emergency Shelter 2022 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Emergency Shelter 2023 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Housing 2019 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Housing 2020 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Housing 2021([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Housing 2022 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Housing 2023 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Street Outreach 2019 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Street Outreach 2020 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Street Outreach 2021 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Street Outreach 2022 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))

HMIS Street Outreach 2023 ([Sheet](#), [Coded Sheet](#), [Charts](#))