

# A deep dive into homelessness, substance abuse, and food insecurity across Maricopa County, AZ

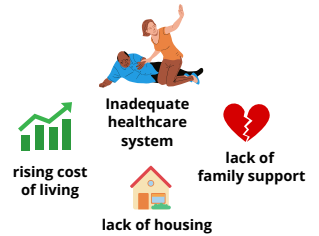


Between 2021-2022, *From the Ground Up* partnered with *Phoenix Rescue Mission* to conduct a regional gap analysis across 10 cities in Maricopa County. We posed the same questions to over 1,000 directly impacted people and diverse stakeholders that intersect with homelessness, food insecurity, and substance abuse in order to provide a 360-degree view of these related issues. Below is a summary of the key findings.

# 1

## Homelessness is a symptom of large-scale societal problems, and it is only exacerbated by social isolation.

When asked about the primary reasons for homelessness, respondents mentioned factors outside of their control: trauma, medical issues, inflation, and a lack of housing. The data shows that addressing homelessness requires interventions within these larger systemic and economic factors, as well as efforts to increase communal and social supports.



# 2

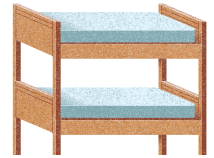
## Substance abuse and homelessness are linked. A lack of housing intensifies the challenges of recovery.

67.6% of people experiencing homelessness self-reported a substance use disorder. Directly-impacted people believe that housing and meeting basic needs would help with achieving sobriety. City officials, first responders, faith partners and service providers all mentioned a need to expand services instead of over-relying on police to deal with addiction.

# 3

## "Service-resistance" is a misnomer. People avoid shelters for reasons that can be addressed by cities and providers.

69.3% of people experiencing homelessness are not in shelters due to inaccessibility or negative experiences with such facilities. The data suggest that increasing the supply of lower-barrier, trauma-informed shelter programs across the region would decrease blockages and hesitancy among those seeking shelter services.



# 4

## There is a significant lack of community resources and poor public awareness of the resources that already exist.

Our research shows that resources are either too scarce or too hidden. The data highlight a need to both fund social services and present them to the public in a clear-cut way. Cities and service providers need to coordinate with each other in order to ensure that the public is receiving accurate and helpful information about aid programs.

# 5

## Food assistance programs are struggling to meet people where they're at, especially with transportation.

Current efforts to assist with food insecurity suggest blind spots in our perception of the lived experiences of those struggling to afford food. Food banks are often inaccessible due to their remote locations and/or limited hours, particularly for those without transportation (such as seniors or people with disabilities).

