Methodology:
The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania requested de-identified data from Pennsylvania’s Continuums of Care (CoCs). Pennsylvania has 16 CoCs that cover an approved geographic area. A CoC coordinates a local response to homelessness and applies directly to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for federal CoC funding to support their local efforts to prevent and end homelessness through the provision of housing and services. Each CoC also conducts its own local efforts to collect data about homelessness in their communities.

Data for this report was provided by the following 10 CoCs: Allegheny County, Beaver County, Bucks County, Chester County, City of Philadelphia, Erie City and County, Harrisburg/Dauphin County, Montgomery County, Scranton/Lackawanna County, and York City and County.

CoCs provided data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS.) A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used by a CoC to collect client-level data about people and families experiencing homelessness, as well as data on the provision of housing and services for this population and the outcomes achieved. Each CoC is responsible for using an HMIS software solution that complies with federal standards set by HUD. The type of data entered into HMIS includes demographics, family composition, health and wellness, income, length of time homeless, participation in homeless assistance programs, and the outcomes achieved. Most HMIS data is based on self-report by people experiencing homelessness, though some is verified by third party sources.

The data collected and used in this report is for adults experiencing literal homelessness in 2018 as defined by HUD, including single adults as well as adult couples. HUD defines literal homelessness as individuals sleeping in emergency shelters or places not meant for human habitation, such as parks, cars, homeless encampments, train stations, etc. This data does not include people in families with children. Throughout the report, the term “adult” refers to adults experiencing homelessness without children.

The reported data represents an estimated 69% of adults experiencing literal homelessness in Pennsylvania in 2018. This estimate is derived from an analysis of 2018 Point-in-Time data at the state and CoC levels. Some CoCs reported missing or unavailable data among the population or for some the data points requested, which is common across communities working to collect information about people experiencing homelessness. Data was not de-duplicated across the CoCs. We estimate there may be some but fairly insignificant overlap.

Given that the data collected represents approximately 69% of the homeless population in PA, the final numbers included in the report are an estimate for the entire state.