

**ENGAGE
TOGETHER®**

TENNESSEE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT 2026 REPORT

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Engage Together Project for Tennessee was accomplished in collaboration with many partners, including especially the TBI Human Trafficking Task Force leadership, Tennessee Counter Trafficking Alliance (TCTA), Belmont University's Data & AI Collaborative, Pomerol Partners and Qlik. Learn more about each of these partners and access all the supplemental reports and directories (updated since the original reports in 2023) by going to the Project website at engagetgether.com/tn.

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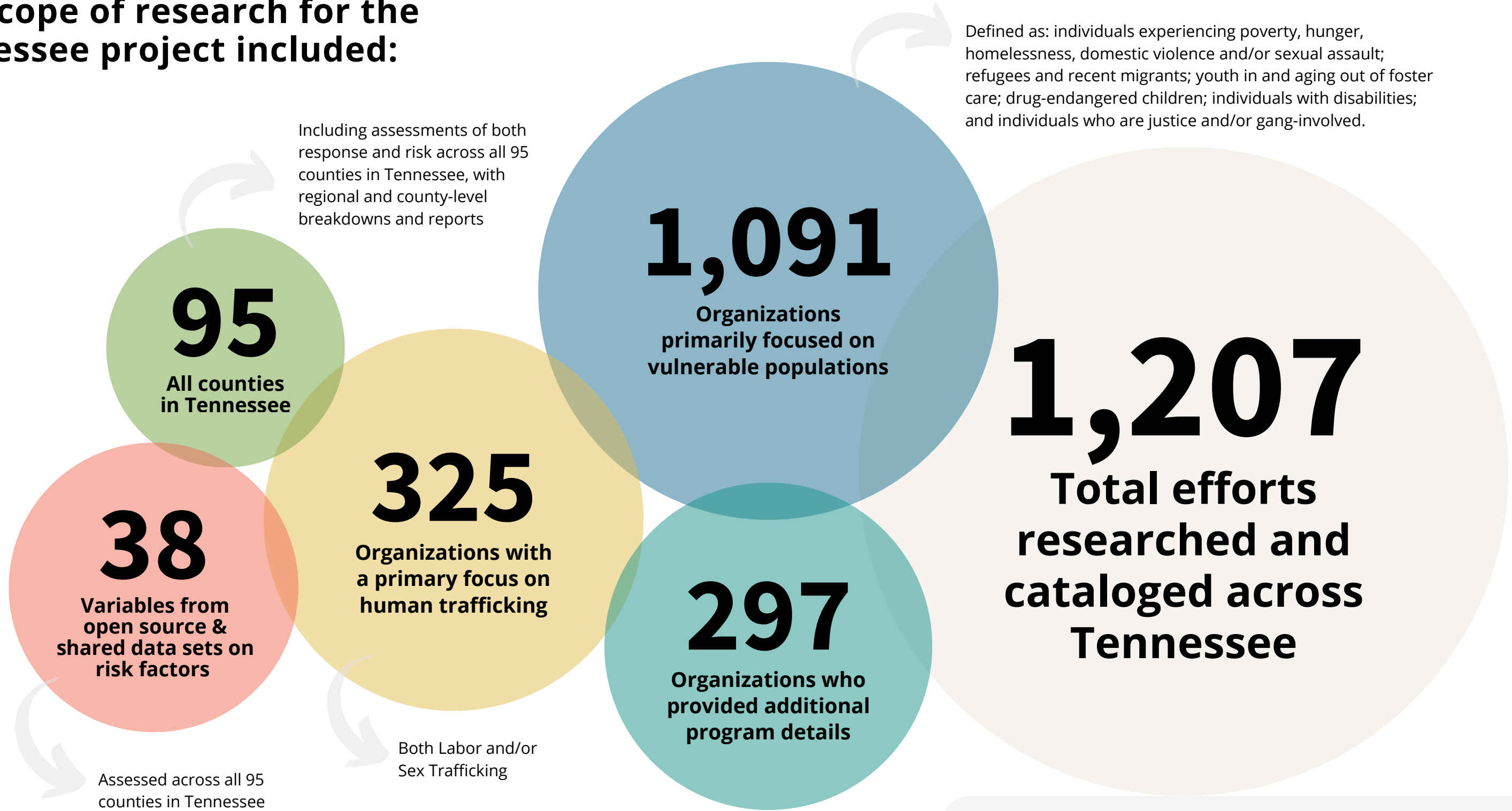


WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

An assessment of the current strengths, gaps, needs, vulnerabilities and opportunities for community-wide engagement to end and prevent human trafficking in Tennessee.

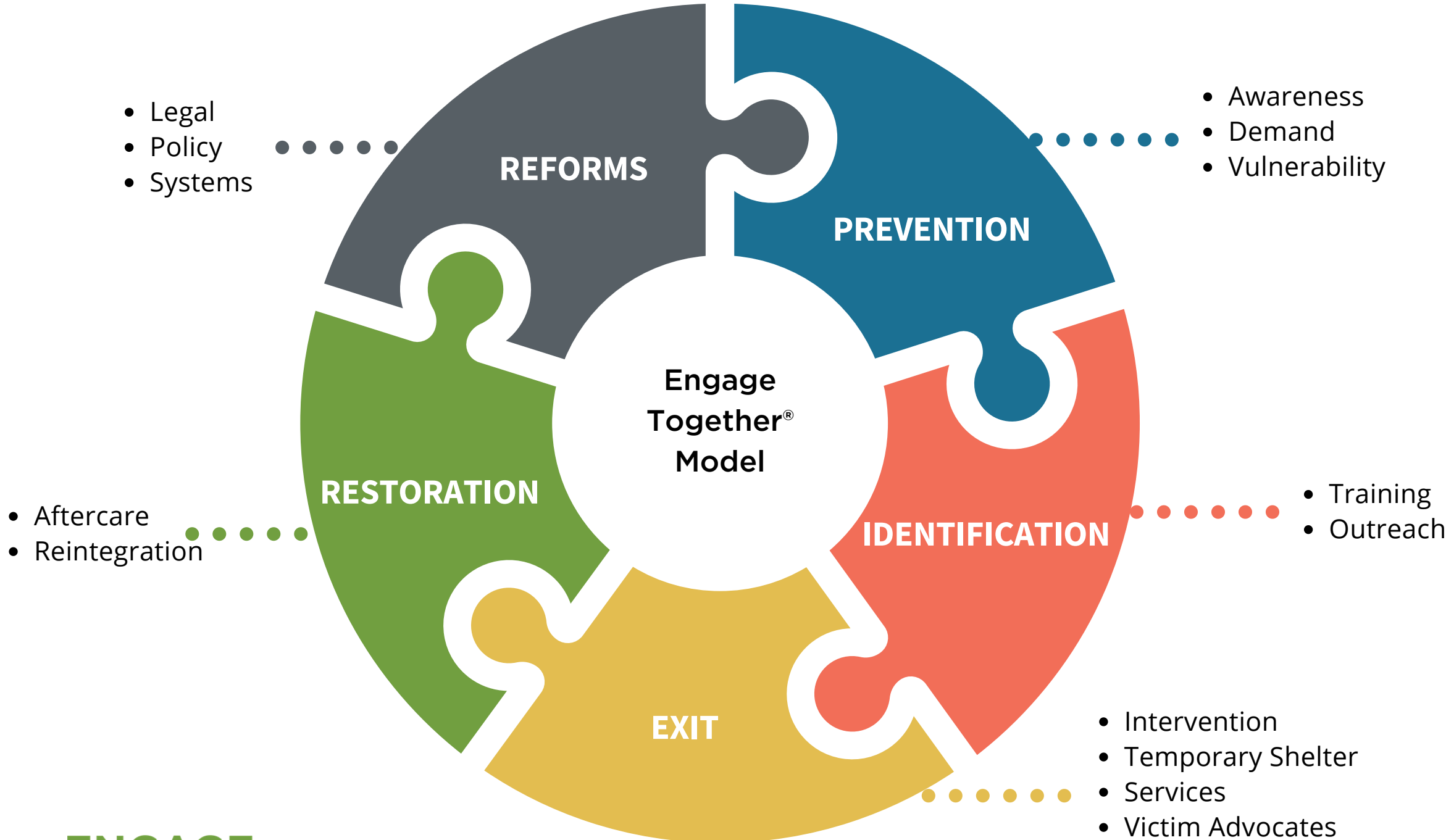
RESEARCH SCOPE

The scope of research for the Tennessee project included:



Download this report, supplemental reports, and access the Tennessee directory at engagetgether.com/tn.

RESEARCH SCOPE



ETP includes research and assessments of all efforts by every sector related to labor and sex trafficking, for adults and minors, citizens and foreign nationals.



Learn more about Engage Together's model [at this link.](#)

RESEARCH SCOPE

To assist in developing **community-based prevention and early intervention strategies**, we also include within the scope of research:

+ THOSE SERVING AT-RISK & VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, INCLUDING

Refugees and recent migrants

Justice- and gang-involved individuals

Individuals with disabilities

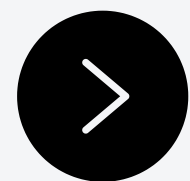
Those experiencing homelessness, poverty, or hunger

Drug-endangered children & youth in and aging out of foster care

Those who **have already suffered** other types of abuse or exploitation (DV/SA)

WHY?

Because traffickers exploit vulnerable people, luring victims with promises of work, shelter, food, and support. Addressing vulnerabilities in your community is critical to prevention.



+ EVERY EFFORT BY EVERY SECTOR

Churches & Houses of Worship
Civic/Service Clubs
Businesses
Foundations

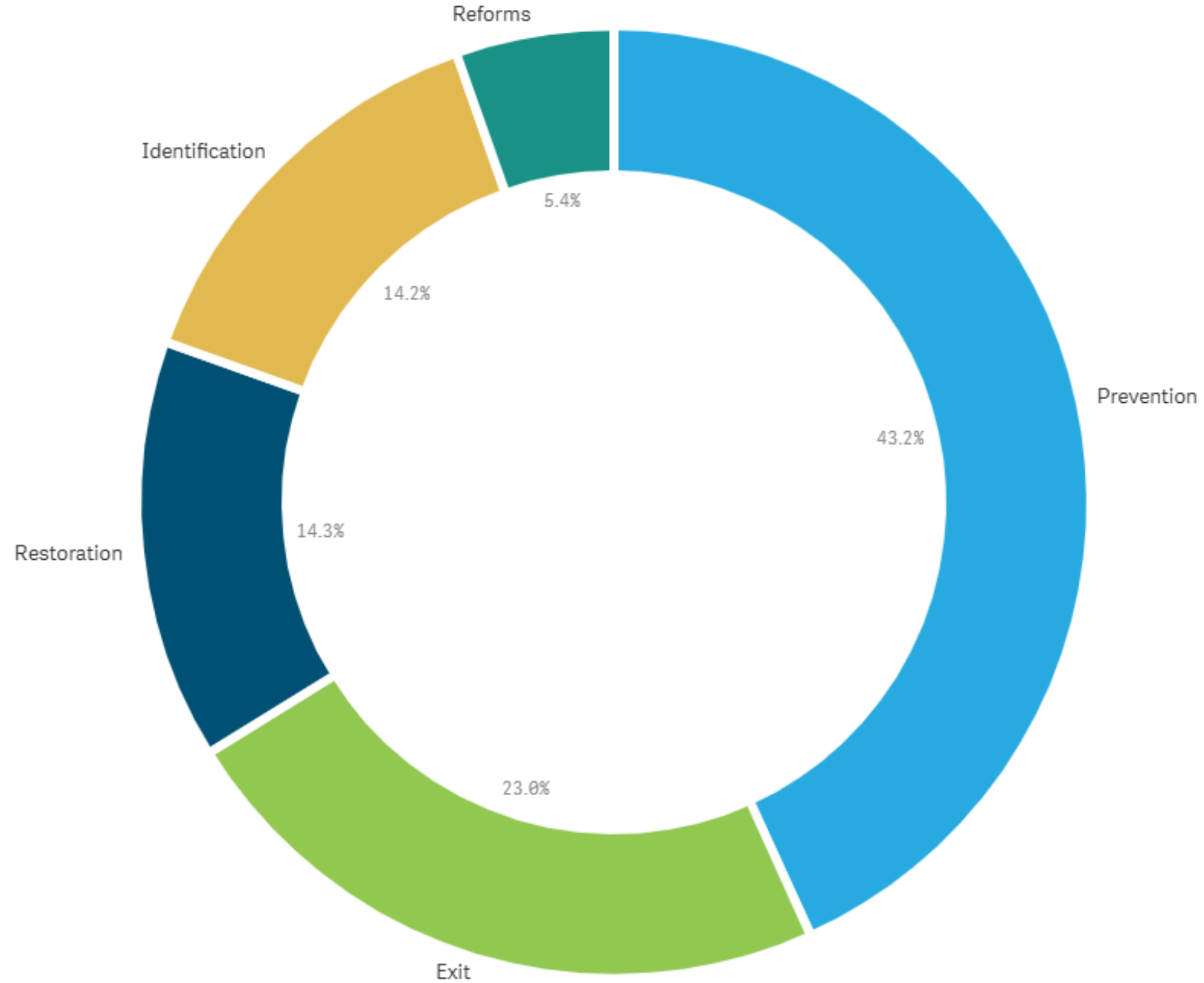
Government
Legal
Healthcare
Individual Practitioners

Nonprofits
Professional Associations
Education
Taskforces & Coalitions

CURRENT RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following is an assessment of Tennessee's current efforts to directly address labor and sex trafficking as of March 2026.

BY PROGRAM



BY PRIMARY SERVICE

Efforts to address human trafficking in Tennessee are currently highly concentrated in PREVENTION (43%), followed by Exit (23%). Programs that focus on RESTORATION (14.0%), IDENTIFICATION (14%) and REFORMS (5%) will need attention and strengthening.

BY HUMAN TRAFFICKING TYPE

Of the 325 organizations that work to directly address human trafficking in Tennessee:

99% are working to address **sex trafficking**

54% are working to address **labor trafficking**

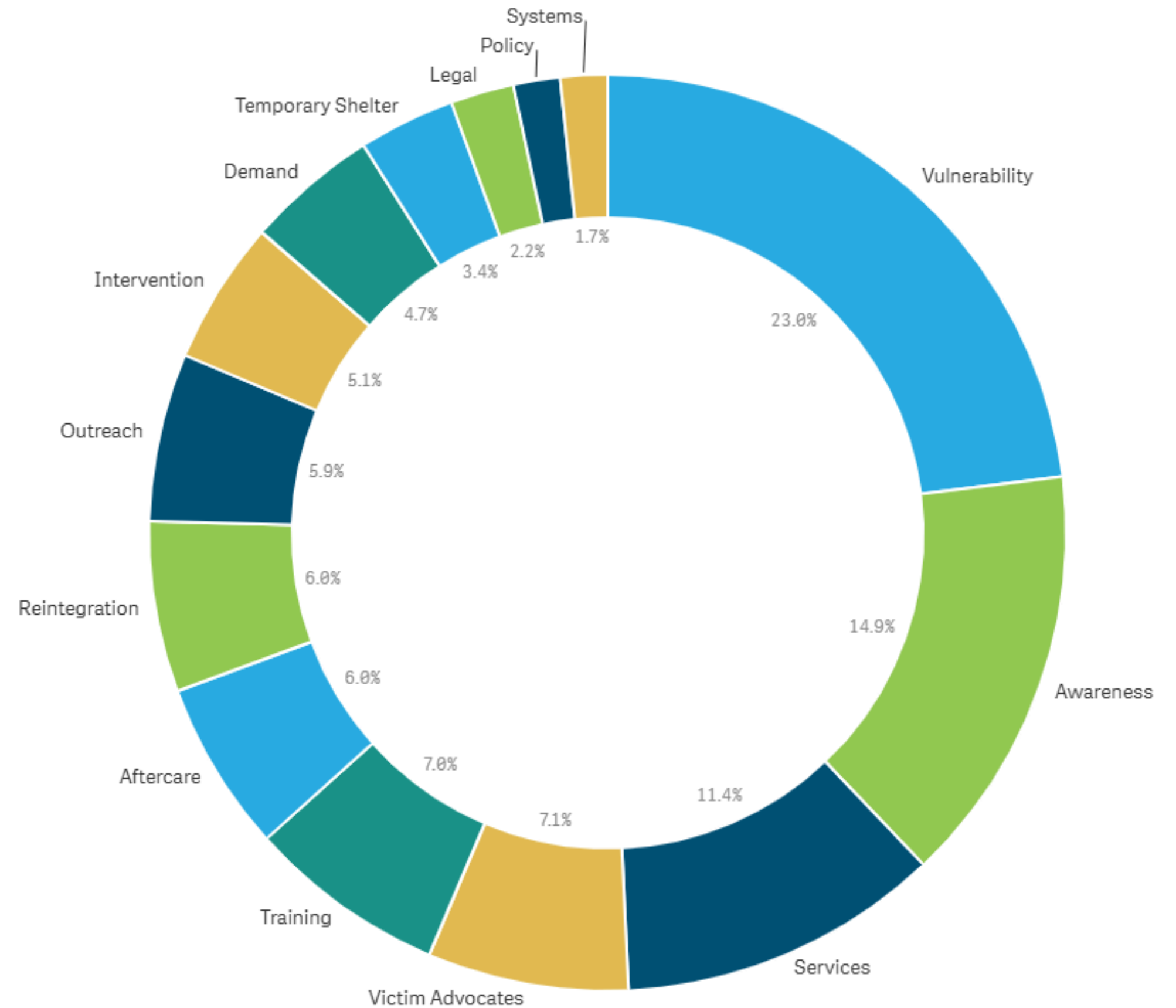
BY PROGRAM

BY SUB-CATEGORY

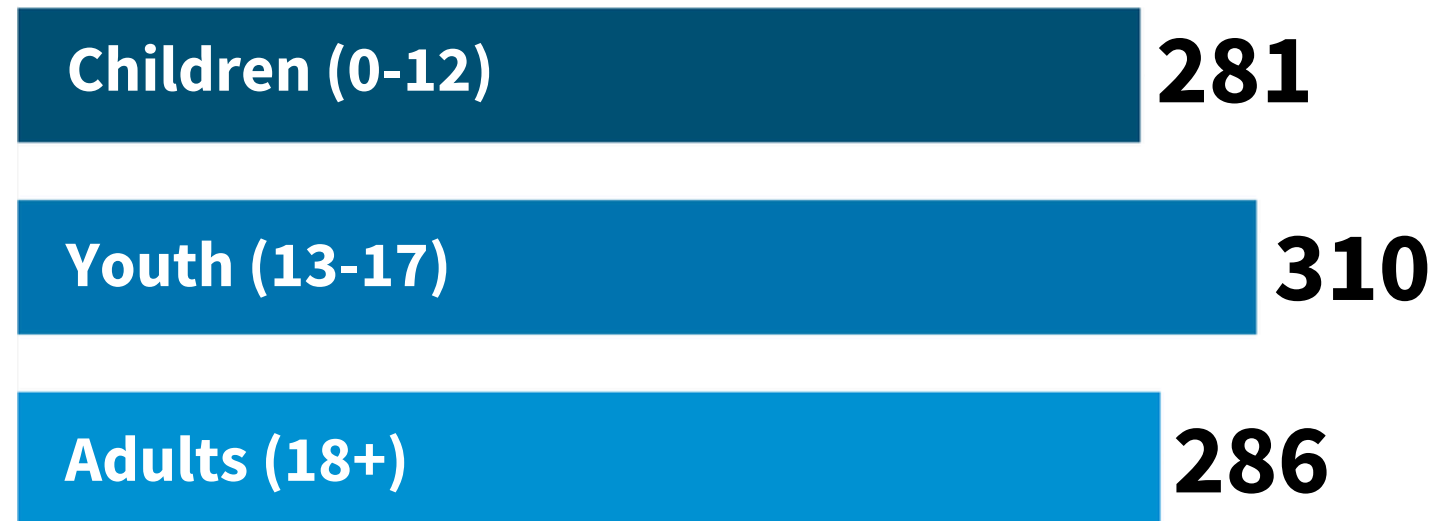
Nearly 50% of efforts to address human trafficking across Tennessee are currently concentrated in 3 of 14 sub-categories: addressing Vulnerability, raising Awareness, and providing immediately accessible Services upon exit.

Concerning Services, the majority of the 117 organizations working to provide this type of support for HT victims and survivors include nonprofits (55) and government agencies (15). Of note, these efforts are highly concentrated in Davidson, Shelby, and Knox counties; while the greatest risk for trafficking includes those 3 counties plus quite a few more. Hence, there is still a need to increase the reach and capacity for these types of programs and services for all those that need them.

Areas of effort that need special attention and strengthening include: increasing availability of Temporary Shelters, improving efforts to decrease Demand, strengthening Intervention strategies, expanding Reintegration supports, and expanding proactive Outreach to at-risk populations to help them stay safe or self-report.



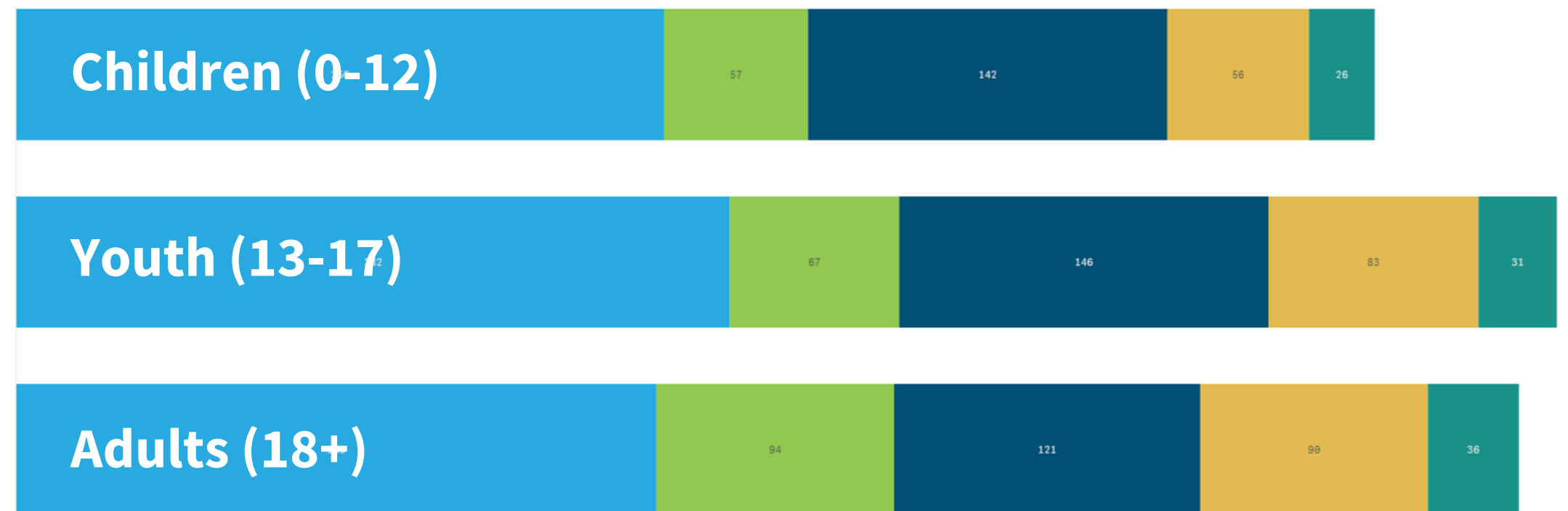
BY DEMOGRAPHIC



The majority of programs reported being able to serve all genders, and most, both citizens and non-citizens. The highest concentration of available programs and services across Tennessee, however, are for youth sex trafficking victims.

And the programs available to this particular demographic are highly concentrated in addressing vulnerabilities and providing immediately accessible services upon exit.

When comparing programmatic efforts across age groups, what is common to all is the need for increased Identification efforts, including Training for those in a position to recognize and respond to human trafficking, and also Outreach to at-risk populations to help them understand how to stay safe or seek help.



■ Prevention ■ Identification ■ Exit ■ Restoration ■ Reforms

BY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Nonprofit
46.0%

Nonprofit (150)

Nonprofit efforts are highly concentrated in addressing vulnerabilities, raising awareness, and providing victim advocacy and services for survivors upon exit. Government efforts are mostly focused on addressing vulnerability, interventions, and demand-reduction efforts. All other sectors are predominantly supporting vulnerabilities and raising awareness.

Church/House of Worship
14.2%

Church (46)

Healthcare
6.8%

Healthcare (22)

Legal
6.8%

Legal (22)

Business
4.9%

Business (16)

Civic/Service Club
2.8%

Civic Clubs (9)

Foundat-
ion
1.9%

Government
10.5%

Gov't (34)

Education
4.0%

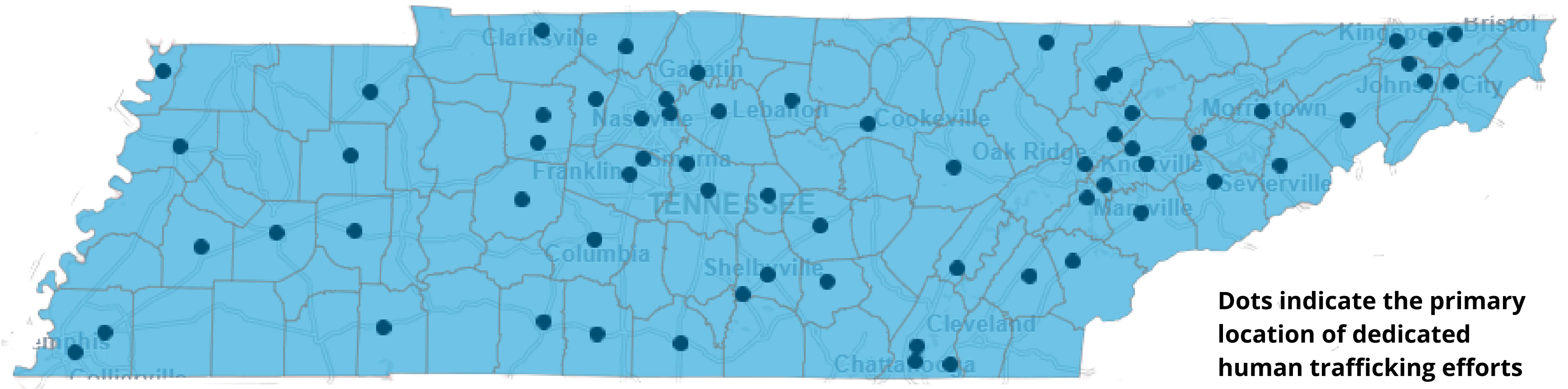
Education (13)

Professional Association
1.2%

Mobilizing multi-sector engagement to meet needs and fill gaps, especially aimed at program areas that need strengthening (such as Reintegration, Outreach, or Training) is both a pressing need and opportunity in Tennessee.

BY GEOGRAPHY

The 10 counties with the **most reported efforts** to end and prevent human trafficking include: Davidson, Knox, Shelby, Hamilton, Williamson, Rutherford, Dickson, Wilson, Montgomery, and Sumner.



Dots indicate the primary location of dedicated human trafficking efforts across the state

The 10 counties with the **least reported efforts** to end and prevent human trafficking include: Obion, Sequatchie, Tipton, Unicoi, Union, Weakley, White, Claiborne, Hancock, and Lauderdale.

RESPONSE SUMMARY

Key takeaways from Tennessee's current response to human trafficking are as follows:

AT-RISK YOUTH

Vulnerable youth appear to be at the highest risk of trafficking in Tennessee. While many programs exist to support youth, **early intervention** efforts will need to be strengthened.

SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY

Services are highly concentrated in higher-resourced communities, while many **counties with high risk have limited access** to needed supports. Increasing accessibility of services will need to be prioritized.

SEX V. LABOR

Across the state, **response to sex trafficking is far more robust than labor trafficking**. The strategies outlined in the corresponding Labor Trafficking Report will need to be adopted and implemented.

CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

There is strong cross-sector engagement to raise awareness and provide services in the state. Mobilizing additional sectors and expanding **partnerships to address critical service gaps** (such as temporary shelter, intervention, reintegration and outreach) is both a need and opportunity.

IDENTIFICATION EFFORTS

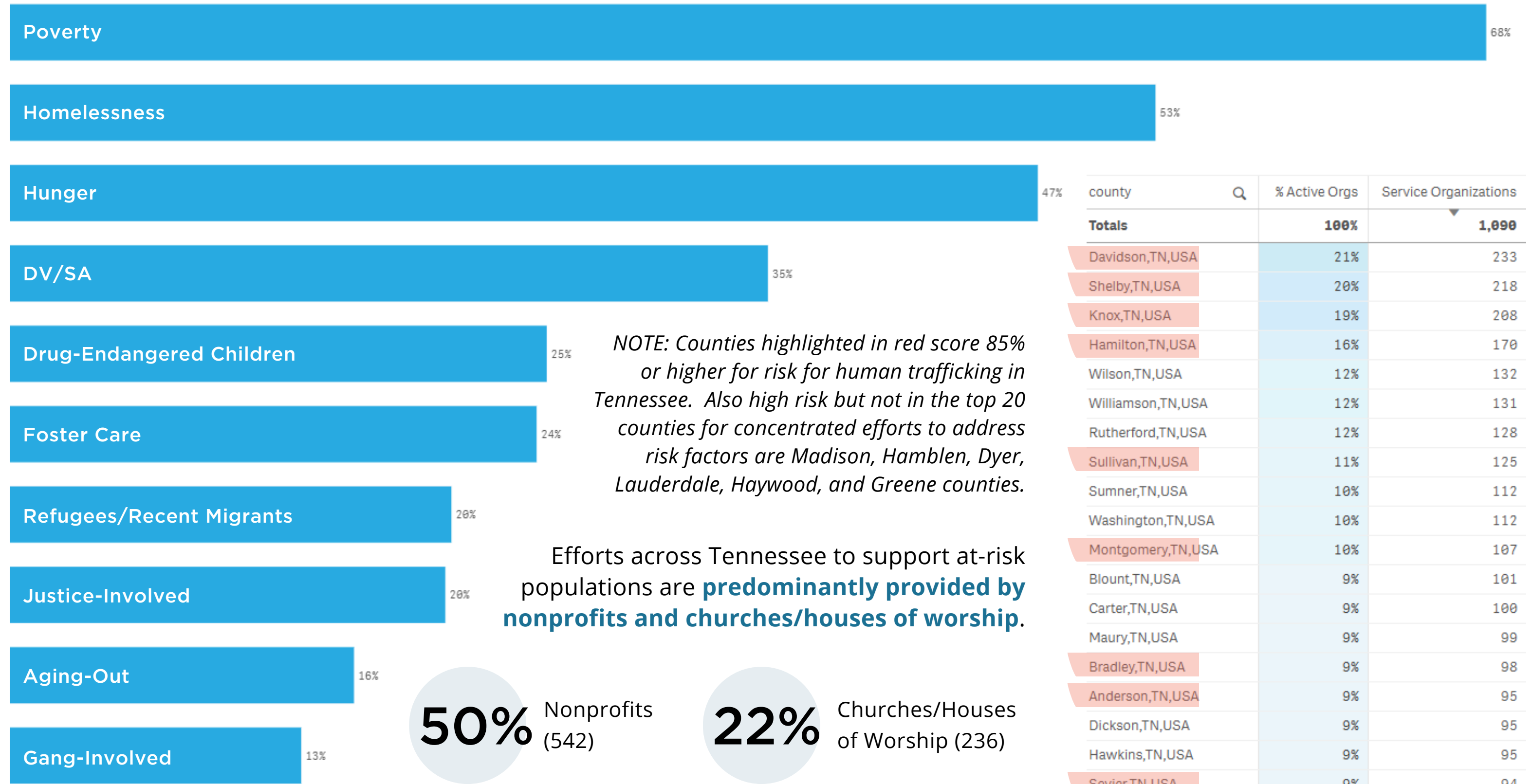
Proactive identification efforts is a consistent gap across all counties, demographics, and trafficking types. **Providing training** for frontline professionals and **expanding outreach** to at-risk populations will need to be a key priority across the entire state.

CURRENT RISK FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The following is an assessment of the current risk for human trafficking in Tennessee, based on the presence and prevalence of risk factors and vulnerable populations in each county.

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

Of the **1,090 organizations** supporting populations at high-risk of trafficking across the 95 counties of Tennessee, those efforts are concentrated as follows:



NOTE: Counties highlighted in red score 85% or higher for risk for human trafficking in Tennessee. Also high risk but not in the top 20 counties for concentrated efforts to address risk factors are Madison, Hamblen, Dyer, Lauderdale, Haywood, and Greene counties.

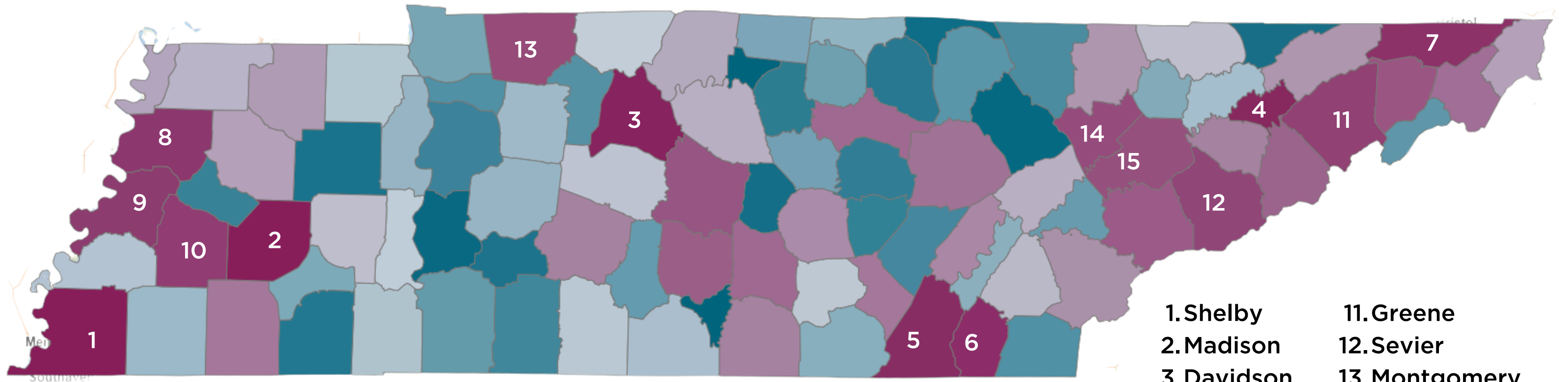
Efforts across Tennessee to support at-risk populations are **predominantly provided by nonprofits and churches/houses of worship.**

50% Nonprofits (542)

22% Churches/Houses of Worship (236)

county	Q	% Active Orgs	Service Organizations
Totals		100%	1,090
Davidson,TN,USA		21%	233
Shelby,TN,USA		20%	218
Knox,TN,USA		19%	208
Hamilton,TN,USA		16%	170
Wilson,TN,USA		12%	132
Williamson,TN,USA		12%	131
Rutherford,TN,USA		12%	128
Sullivan,TN,USA		11%	125
Sumner,TN,USA		10%	112
Washington,TN,USA		10%	112
Montgomery,TN,USA		10%	107
Blount,TN,USA		9%	101
Carter,TN,USA		9%	100
Maury,TN,USA		9%	99
Bradley,TN,USA		9%	98
Anderson,TN,USA		9%	95
Dickson,TN,USA		9%	95
Hawkins,TN,USA		9%	95
Sevier,TN,USA		9%	94
Cheatham,TN,USA		8%	91

AT-RISK COUNTIES



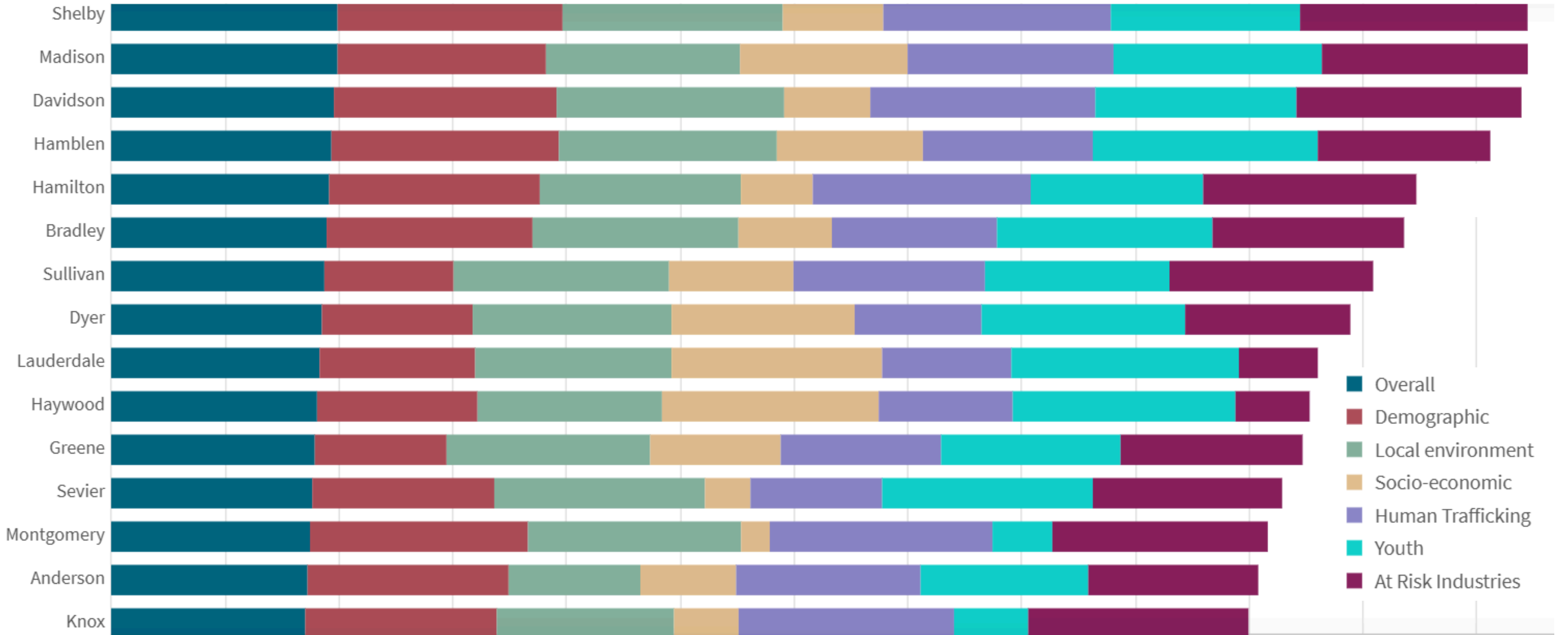
The **Vulnerable Population Index (VPI) Score** assesses risk for human trafficking by analyzing data that illuminates the presence and prevalence of known risk factors and/or populations vulnerable to human trafficking (sex and/or labor), within the context of six key vulnerabilities:

**Demographic | Local Environment | Socio-Economic
Youth | At-Risk Industries | Known Human Trafficking Activity**

In TN, 15 counties score above 85% for overall risk for human trafficking

- 1. Shelby
- 2. Madison
- 3. Davidson
- 4. Hamblen
- 5. Hamilton
- 6. Bradley
- 7. Sullivan
- 8. Dyer
- 9. Lauderdale
- 10. Haywood
- 11. Greene
- 12. Sevier
- 13. Montgomery
- 14. Anderson
- 15. Knox

VPI COUNTY COMPARISON (TOP 15)



RISK SUMMARY

Key takeaways from Tennessee's current risk for human trafficking are as follows:

RURAL COMMUNITIES

There are quite a few **rural and resource-limited counties** that show strong risk for human trafficking, with few identified cases, suggesting substantial likelihood of hidden exploitation.

ECONOMICS & GEOGRAPHY

Tennessee's economic and geographic landscape, e.g. **major transportation corridors, mobile workforces, and at-risk industries**, create risk that will require more coordinated outreach and intervention strategies to address.

SEX V. LABOR

While sex-trafficking indicators are more visible, **labor trafficking** risk—especially in agriculture, construction/day labor, and manufacturing—is significant and likely heavily **under-identified**.

COMPOUNDING VULNERABILITIES

Risk factors are consistently compounding in **a few key categories**—youth vulnerability, poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, and disability—intensified in communities with corresponding prevalence of drug offenses, domestic violence/sexual assault, and other sex offenses.

AT-RISK YOUTH

Across the state, trafficking **vulnerability of at-risk youth is a prevailing issue**, including especially chronically absent, homeless, or justice-involved youth; youth in and aging out of foster care; and child victims of crimes, including CSEM.

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

The organizations that provided additional program details also shared their top three tangible, funding, and service needs - along with thoughts regarding current challenges and successes in anti-trafficking efforts across Tennessee.

PRIORITIES

Based on all the research and data gathered and assessed throughout this Engage Together Project, here are our top five recommended priorities and next steps for Tennessee statewide.

1

EXPAND PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION, AND COORDINATED RESPONSE FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

Vulnerable youth remain at the highest risk of trafficking across Tennessee. Increase prevention, early identification, and intervention efforts—particularly for chronically absent, homeless, justice-involved youth, and those in or aging out of foster care. Strengthening coordinated supports across schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems will be critical to reducing vulnerability and preventing exploitation before it occurs. Additionally, children and youth should be equipped with age-appropriate education on grooming, exploitation, and human trafficking—including online tactics—to increase awareness and reduce risk. Strengthening coordinated, trauma-informed response systems will ensure youth are identified early and connected to appropriate services and supports.

2

INCREASE SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Services remain highly concentrated in higher-resourced communities, while many high-risk and rural counties have limited access to critical supports. Increase the availability and accessibility of temporary shelter, victim advocacy, and restoration services—through regional, mobile, and cross-county approaches—to ensure individuals in underserved areas can access timely and appropriate care. Particular attention should be given to populations with unique needs, including foreign-born noncitizens, limited English-speaking households, unaccompanied refugee children, and individuals with disabilities, ensuring outreach, services, and supports are culturally responsive, accessible, and effectively delivered.

3

IMPROVE IDENTIFICATION THROUGH TRAINING AND OUTREACH

Proactive identification remains a consistent gap across all regions, demographics, and trafficking types. Improve profession-specific training for frontline professionals and expand outreach to at-risk populations. Trainings should include clear, actionable protocols for responding to suspected trafficking, including reporting and referral pathways. Outreach should also address populations with unique needs—such as foreign-born noncitizens, limited English-speaking households, unaccompanied refugee children, and individuals with disabilities—ensuring materials and approaches are accessible and culturally responsive.

4

PRIORTIZE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS LABOR TRAFFICKING

Labor trafficking remains significantly under-identified despite clear risk across industries such as agriculture, construction day labor, and manufacturing. Increase targeted strategies—including industry engagement, workforce outreach, and specialized training—to strengthen statewide response. The accompanying Labor Trafficking Report should be used as a guide to begin addressing these existing challenges and to support a more coordinated and comprehensive approach.

5

CATALYZE MULTI-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Tennessee demonstrates strong cross-sector engagement, particularly in awareness and service delivery. Catalyze additional sector involvement—including business, healthcare, education, faith communities, foundations, and civic organizations—and strengthen partnerships to address gaps in temporary shelter, intervention, reintegration, and outreach. Multi-sector collaboration should also support the provision of basic needs—such as housing, food, healthcare, and transportation—as a critical prevention strategy to reduce vulnerability to exploitation.

SUPPLEMENTALS

This Report includes the overall assessment and recommendations based on the findings of Engage Together® Project for Tennessee . For additional reports and supplementals, including the Regional and County-Level Reports and Directories, go to engagetgether.com/tn.



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