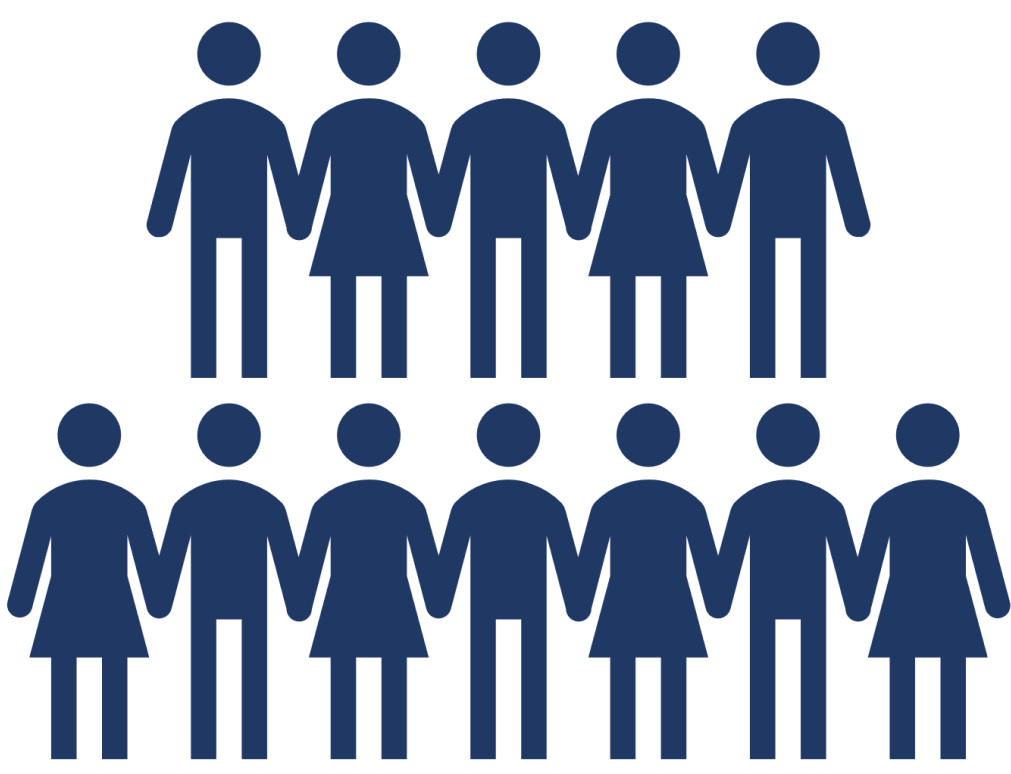


Cards for Connection:

Coping Skills Playing Cards for Homeless Veterans

Funding: VHA Innovators Network, Spark (2018)

Contact: Katherine.Juhasz@va.gov



40,000+

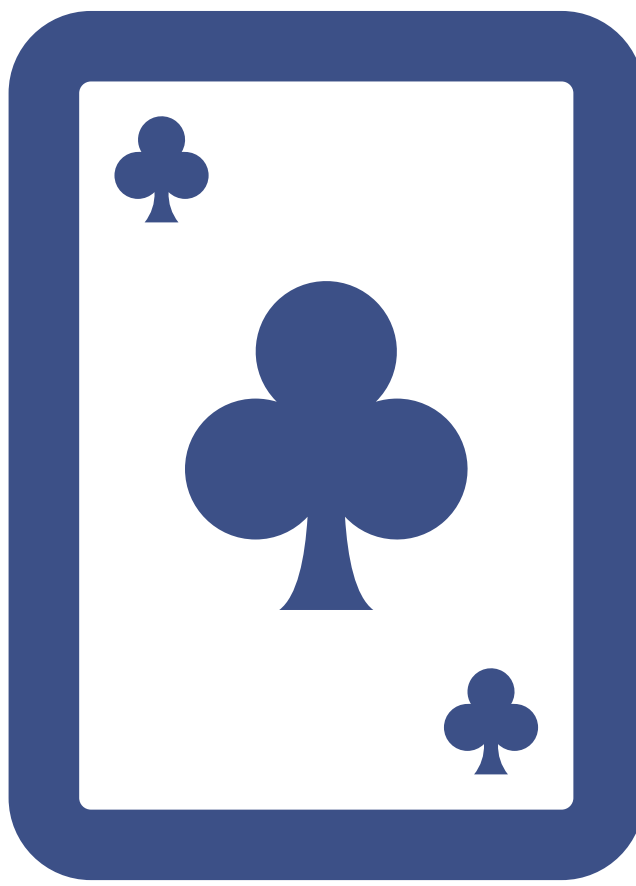
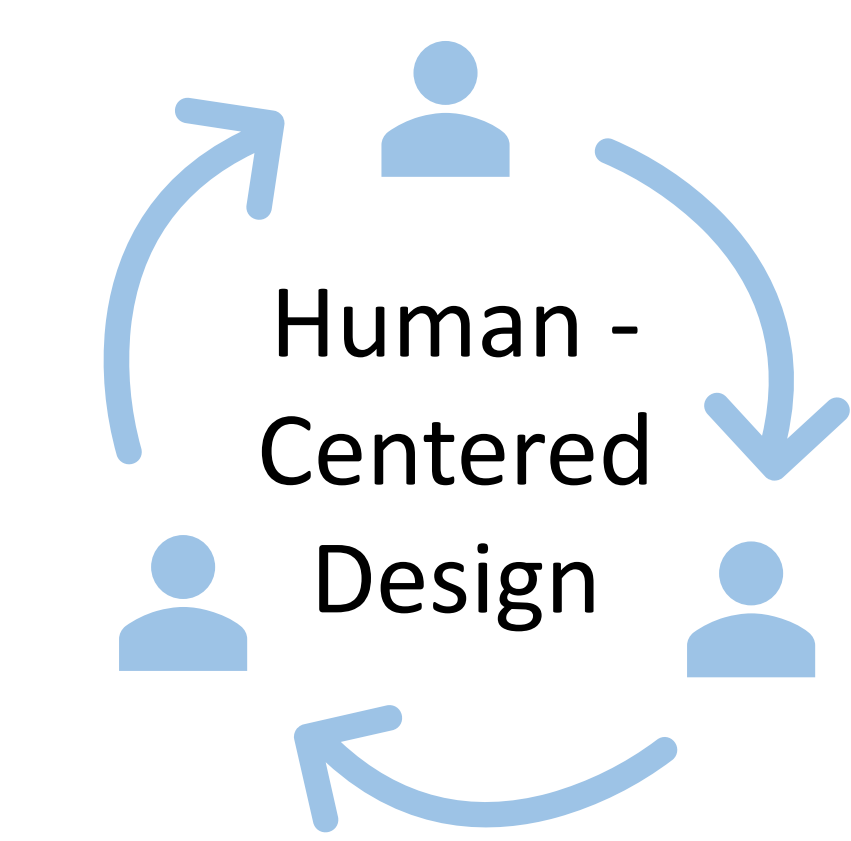
Veterans were without shelter on any given night in 2017

More than 50%

of the Veterans followed in a large-scale longitudinal study had a diagnosed mental disorder before they became homeless

Up to 92%

had a mental disorder diagnosis after experiencing homelessness



Cards for Connection

Each of the 52 playing cards has a unique design, and in using them for their primary function (as playing cards) Veterans will have repeated exposure to simple, easy to implement coping skills and critical VA resources

- Since playing cards are already distributed and used in VA and homeless outreach settings, this is an easy to access and maintain resource for homeless Veterans
- Cards for Connection offers a non-stigmatizing and low-cost solution that can be seamlessly integrated into current operations
- This fills a critical gap for homeless Veterans who have difficulty connecting to essential resources

- Icon: Person at a desk

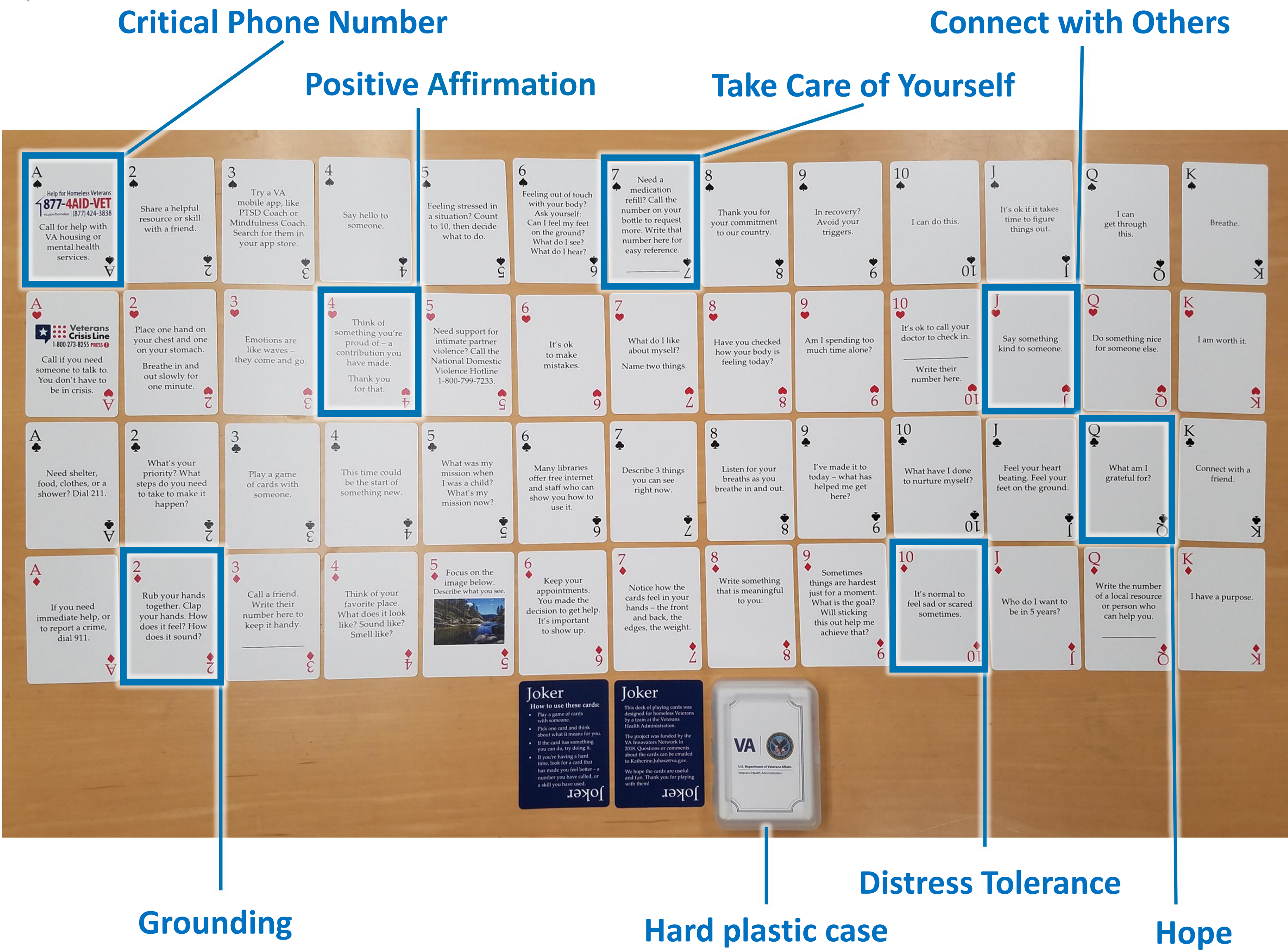
**Clinical:** Increased awareness of and engagement with VA clinical services among Veterans who are homeless, including increased access to mental health services and critical resources
- Icon: Gears

**Operational:** Cost-effective method for distributing evidence-based mental health strategies to Veterans who are homeless and living with untreated mental health problems
- Icon: Stacks of coins

**Financial:** Public education campaign using playing cards has the potential to reduce the need for, or increase the efficiency of, existing mental health outreach efforts
- Icon: Head with brain

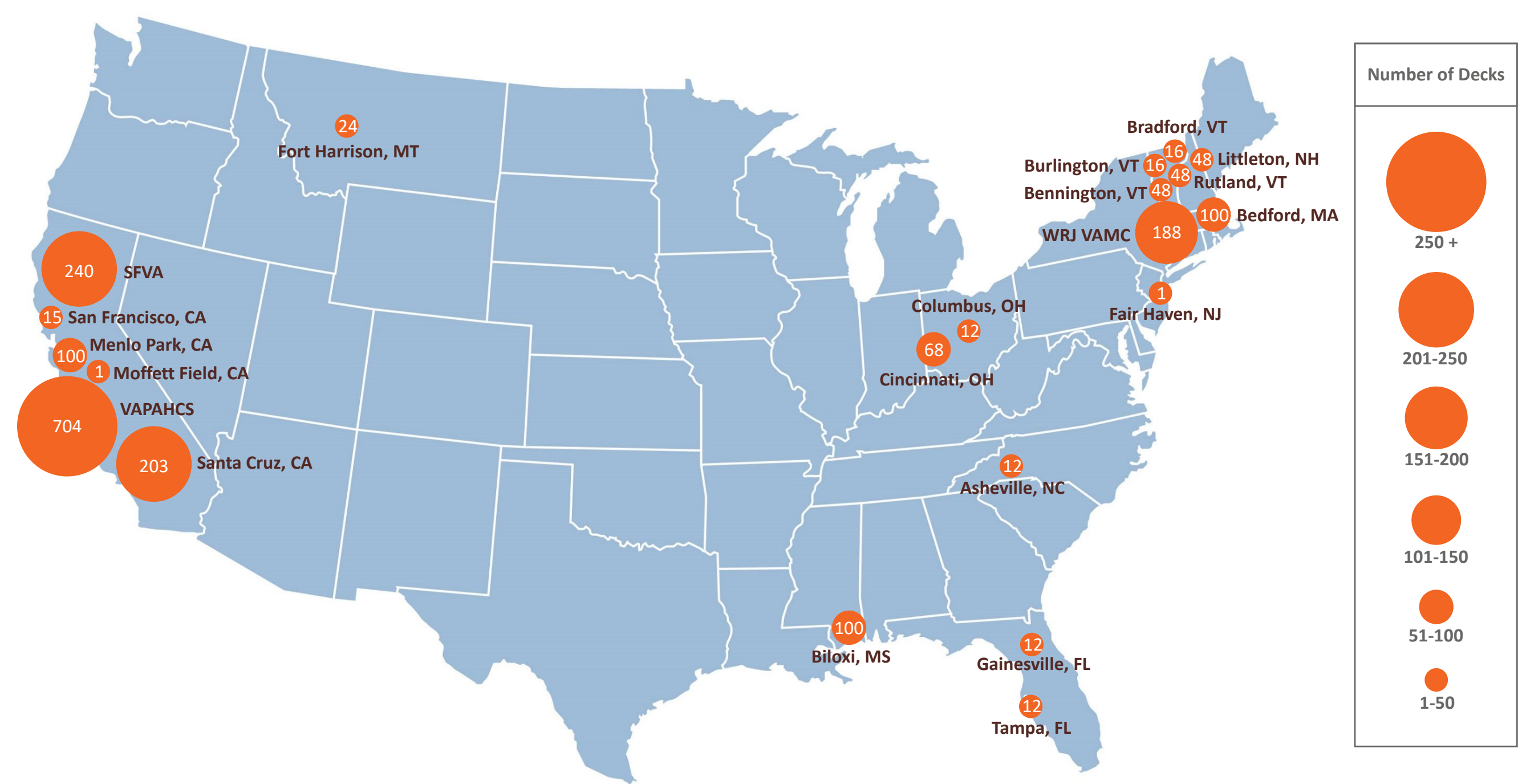
**Customer:** Puts VA resources into the hands of Veterans in need; makes it easier for Veterans to use effective mental health strategies and to connect to existing services, using an easily accessible and Veteran-focused product
- Icon: Group of people

**Societal:** Contributes to ongoing efforts to end homelessness among Veterans and to address the tremendous unmet needs of this population

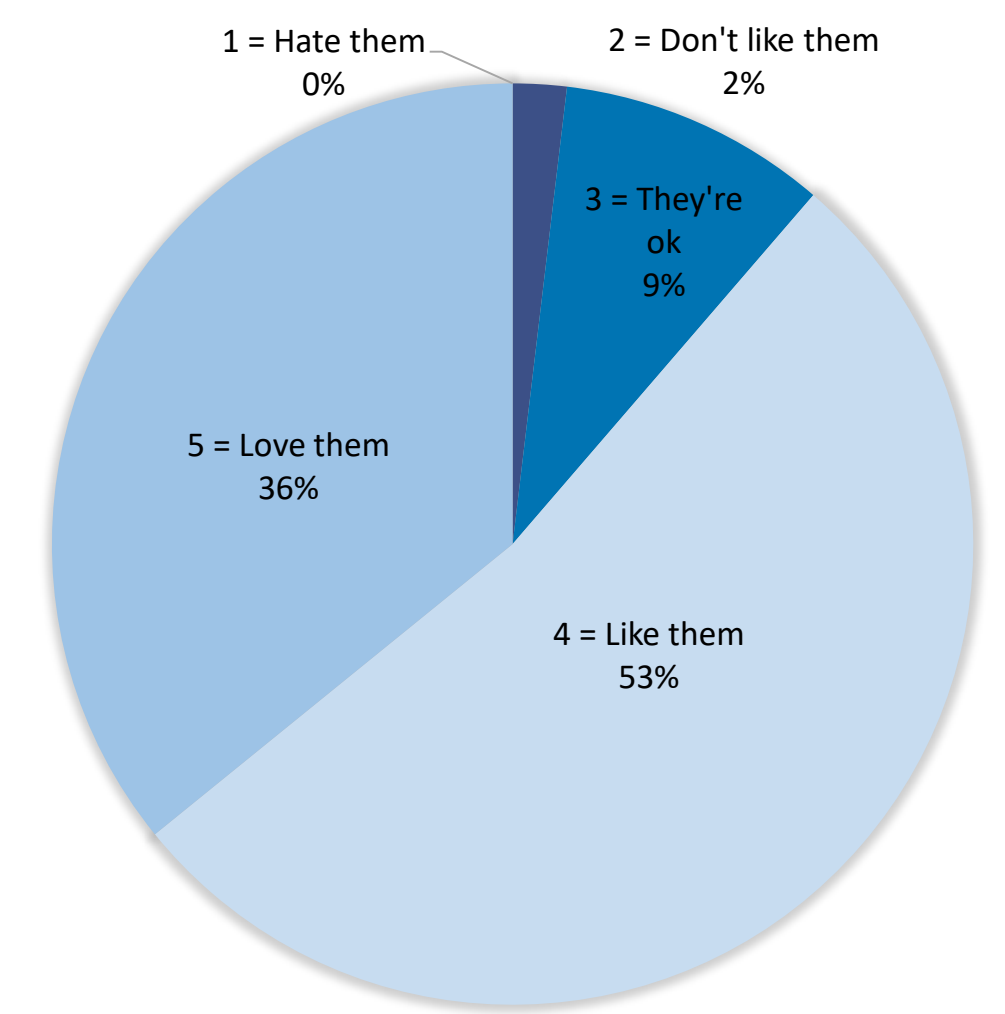


Cards for Connection Prototype Distribution (2018)

2,000 Decks distributed in 10 states

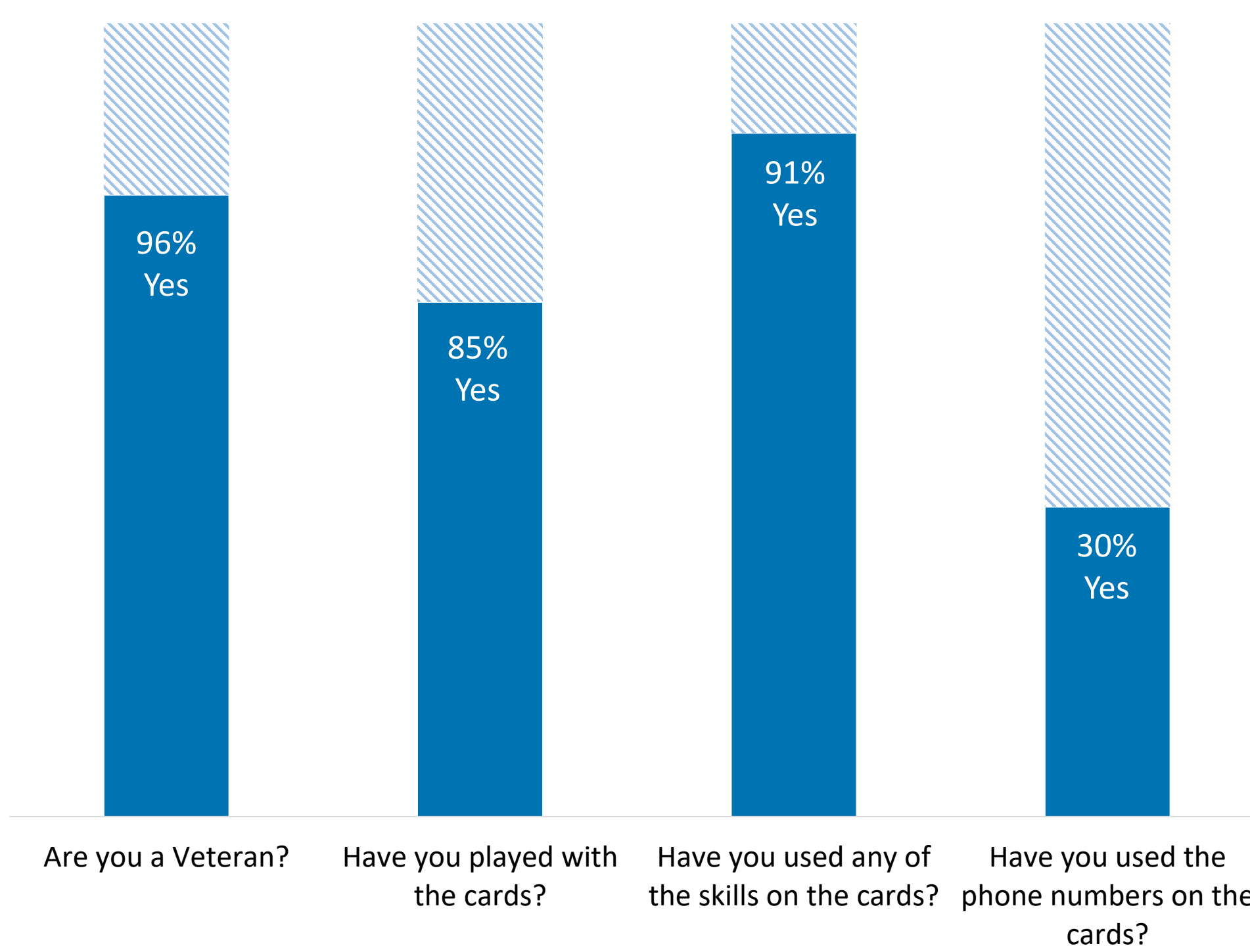


How would you rate the cards?  
N=53



Average score: 4.23

Veteran Postcard Return Feedback N=53



Living situations of card recipients:



VA Homeless Programs



Shelter



Street



Inpatient Psych

Theme: Playing cards are familiar and convenient for Veterans.

"They can also be very sentimental because it could take them back to times of service, times with friends/battle buddies, whatever."

Theme: The size of playing cards is important.

"Also, the size is great- very accessible, easy to carry, portable."

Theme: For Veterans dealing with addiction or in recovery from addiction, playing cards are familiar and convenient.

"I'm a Veteran too, I was homeless, and all we did was play cards, dominos, and drink. And I go to a memorial in the city and all they do is play cards, drink, and play dominos."

Theme: Playing cards are discreet and accessible.

"Then you put them back in your pocket – like a wallet. Camouflaged, doesn't draw attention to them, someone can easily step aside, sit down, pull it out real quick and take a look, then put it back. For Veterans in general, not just homelessness, it's great."

Theme: There's a unique social aspect to playing cards and an educational component to these cards.

"Yeah, it's social and it's an educational platform – it opens up a conversation. It can be a very helpful resource for family, in particular."