

# Aging Among Homeless Populations: causes, consequences, solutions

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“I’m old and I’m tired and I got my disability...I can’t, I can’t do it no more...”

–55 year old woman experiencing homeless in HOPE HOME Study

# Overview

- Why is the homeless population aging?
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- Housing outcomes
- Interventions/Solutions

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# The homeless population is aging

Proportion of single homeless adults  $\geq 50$  in San Francisco

- 1990      11%
- 2003      37%
- Today      approximately 50%
- Median age increased 0.66 years for every calendar year between 1990-2003

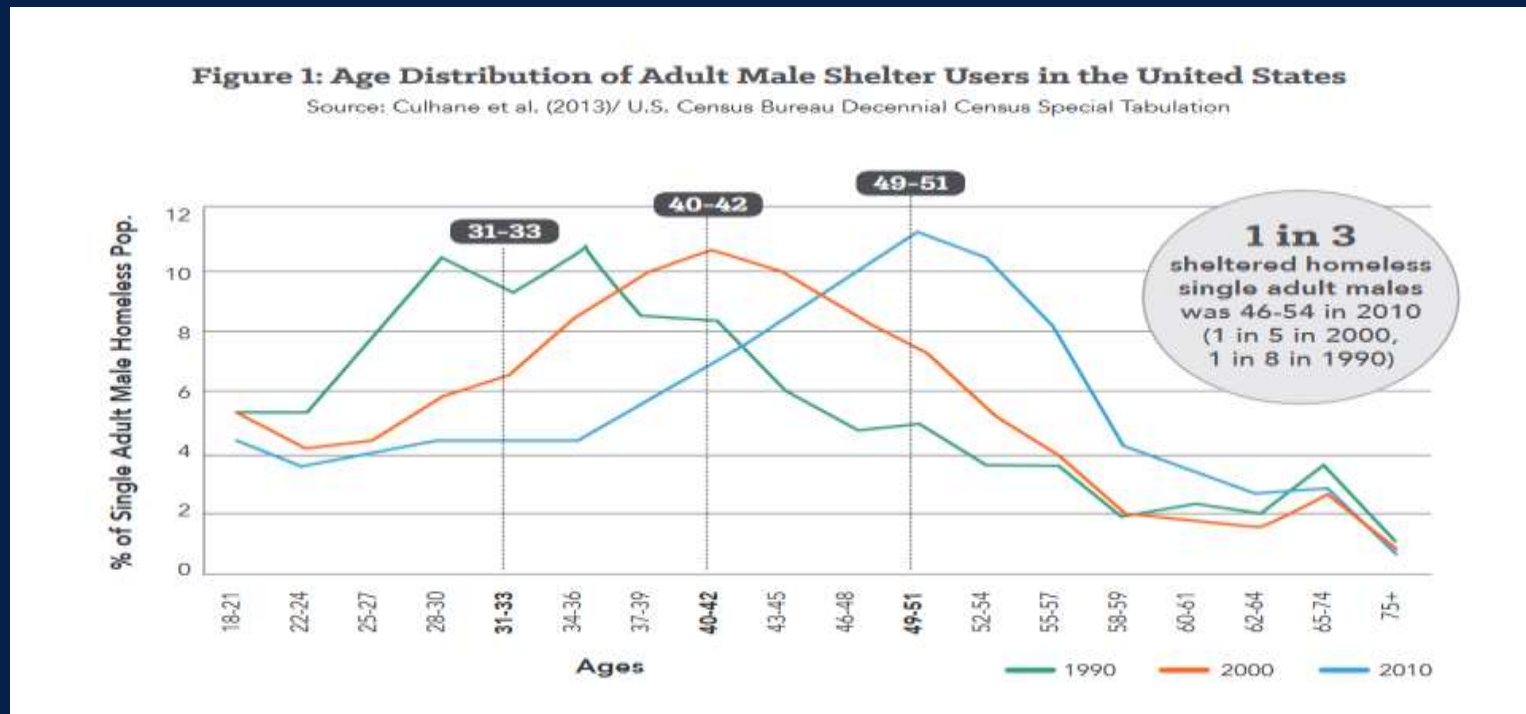


Hahn J et al. The Aging of the Homeless Population JGIM 2006



# Generational effect

- Americans born in the second half of the baby boom (1955-1965) have had elevated risk of homelessness throughout their lifetime



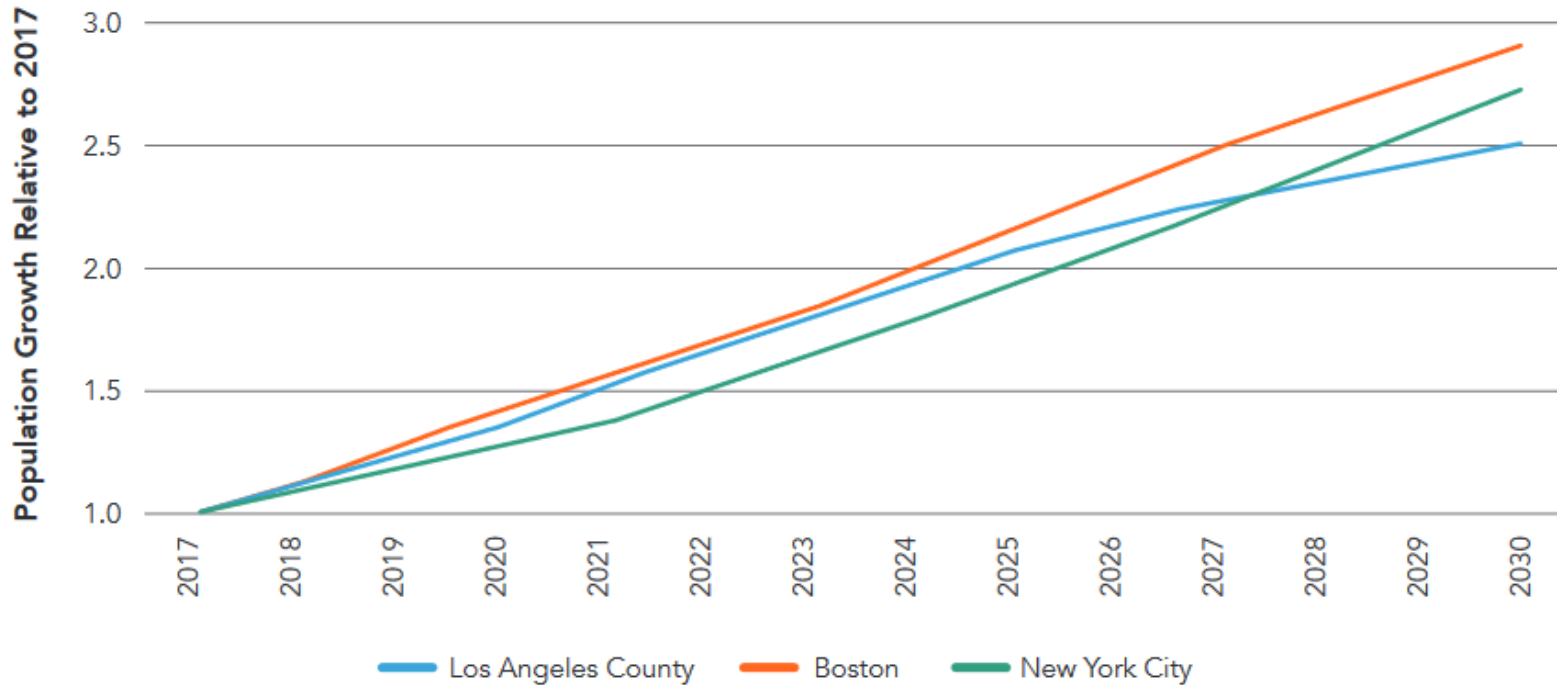
“The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness” Culhane, Treglia, Byrne, Metraux, Kuhn, Doran, Johns, Schretzman  
<https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness.pdf>

# Will the trend continue?

- Housing affordability crisis acute for those 50 and over
- Among renters age 50 and over, 30% spend more than half their income in rent “severe housing burden”
- Median age of homeless individuals expected to rise

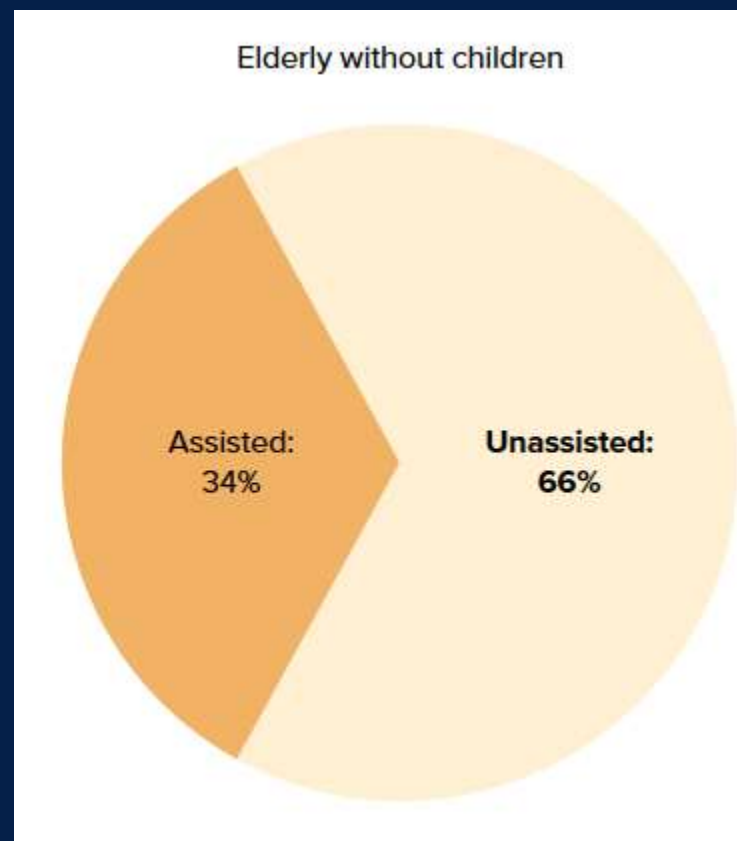
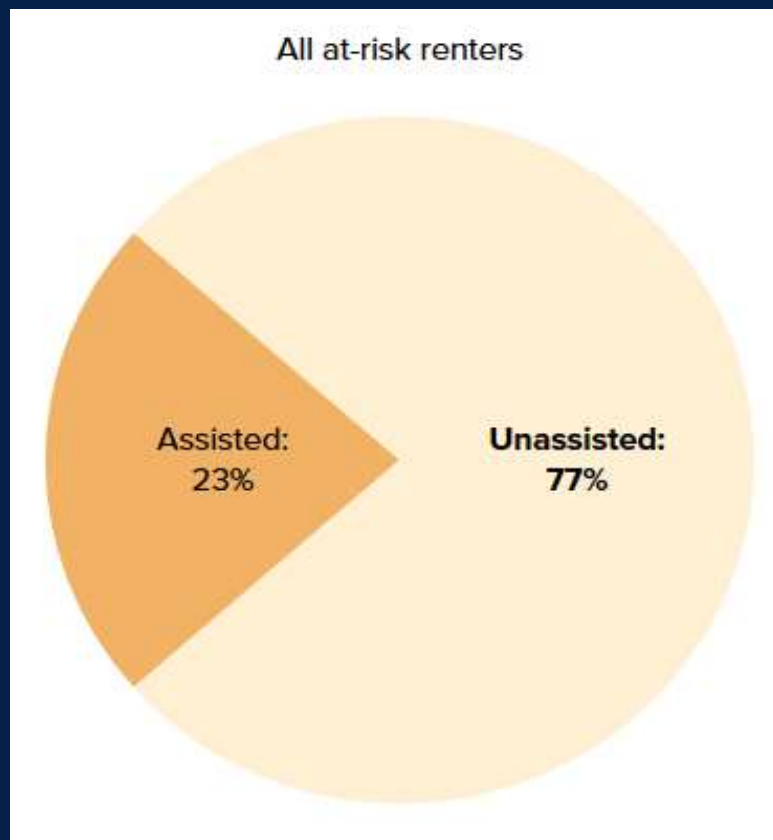
Baker K, Baldwin P, Donahue K, et al. Housing America's Older Adults – Meeting the Needs of an Aging Population. Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. 2014.

**Figure 2: Forecasted Relative Change in the 65 and Older Homeless Population Compared to 2017**



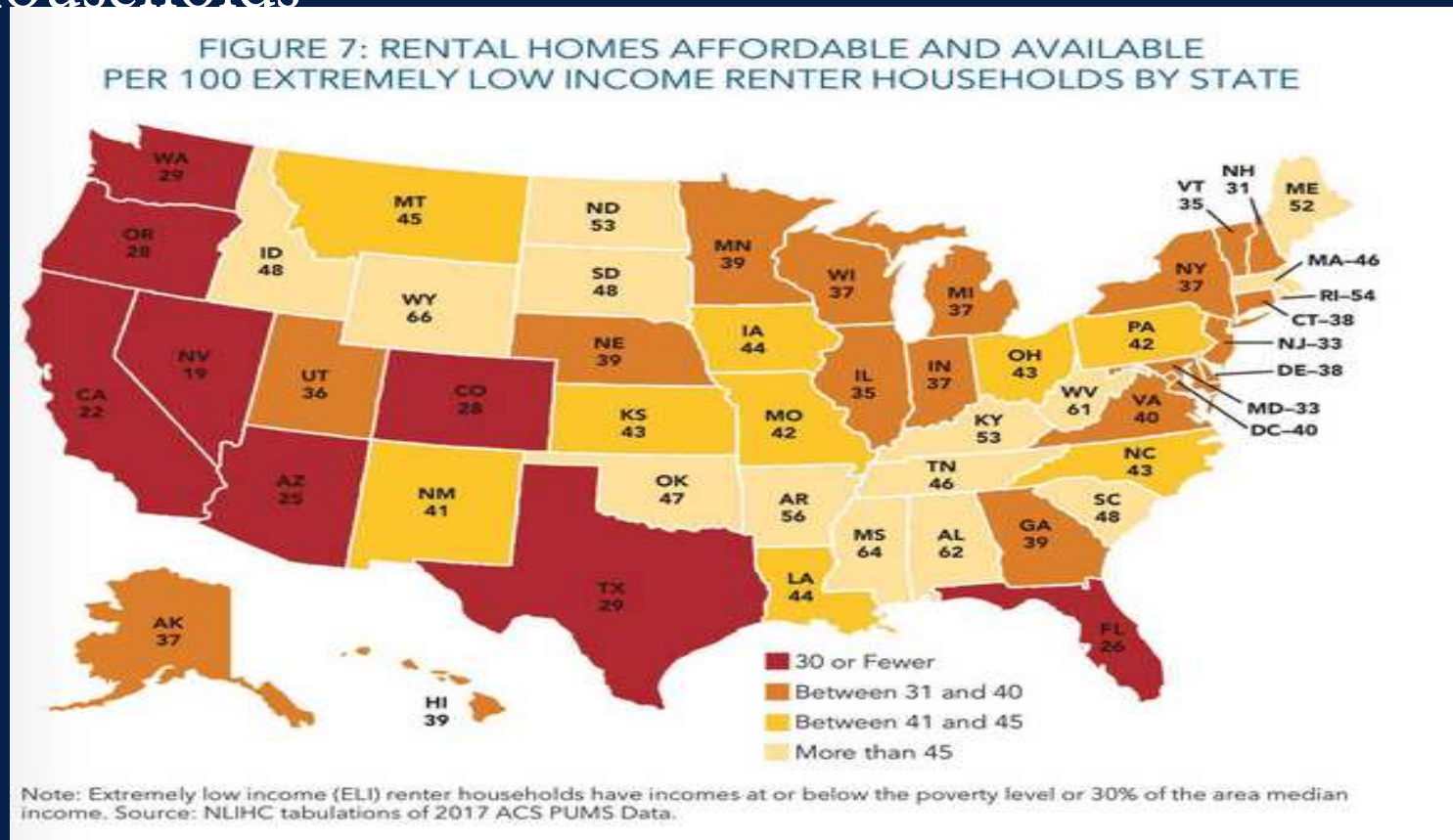
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Fewer than  $\frac{1}{4}$  low-income at risk households receive rental assistance;  $\frac{1}{3}$  of elderly (low income, at risk) households do



Sources: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) custom tabulations of the 2015 American Housing Survey; 2016 HUD administrative data; FY2016 McKinney-Vento Permanent Supportive Housing bed counts; 2015-2016 Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS grantee performance profiles; and the USDA FY2016 Multi-Family Fair Housing Occupancy Report.

Nationally, 35 units of housing affordable and available for every 100 extremely low income households

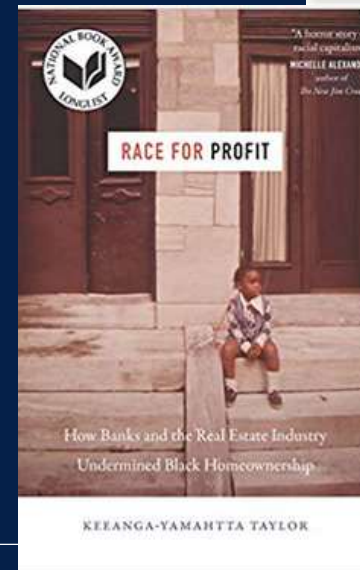
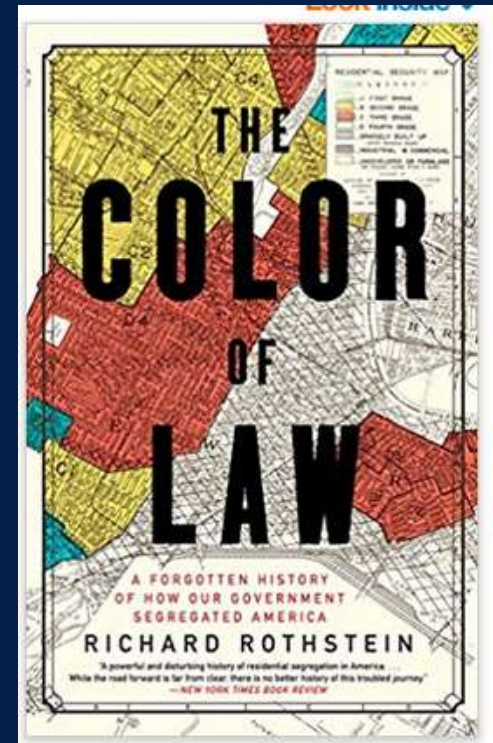


The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes NLIHC

March 2019 [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/gap-19\\_int/mobile/index.html](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/gap-19_int/mobile/index.html)

# Homelessness is a racial justice issue

- Housing primary means of wealth-building
- Discrimination in home ownership
  - Segregated neighborhoods
  - Redlining—restricted access to mortgages in segregated neighborhoods
  - Predatory lending
- Discrimination in rental market
- Criminal justice, employment and educational discrimination
- Black Americans at 3-4 fold increased risk of homelessness



## How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality

An enormous entitlement in the tax code props up home prices — and overwhelmingly benefits the wealthy and the upper middle class.

BY MATTHEW DESMOND MAY 9, 2017

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# HOPE HOME Study

- Health Outcomes of People Experiencing Homelessness in Older Middle agE
  - Funded by National Institute on Aging (NIA)
  - Longitudinal cohort study in Oakland, CA
  - 350 participants enrolled July 2013 to June 2014, following participants every six months
  - Additional 100 participants 2017-2018

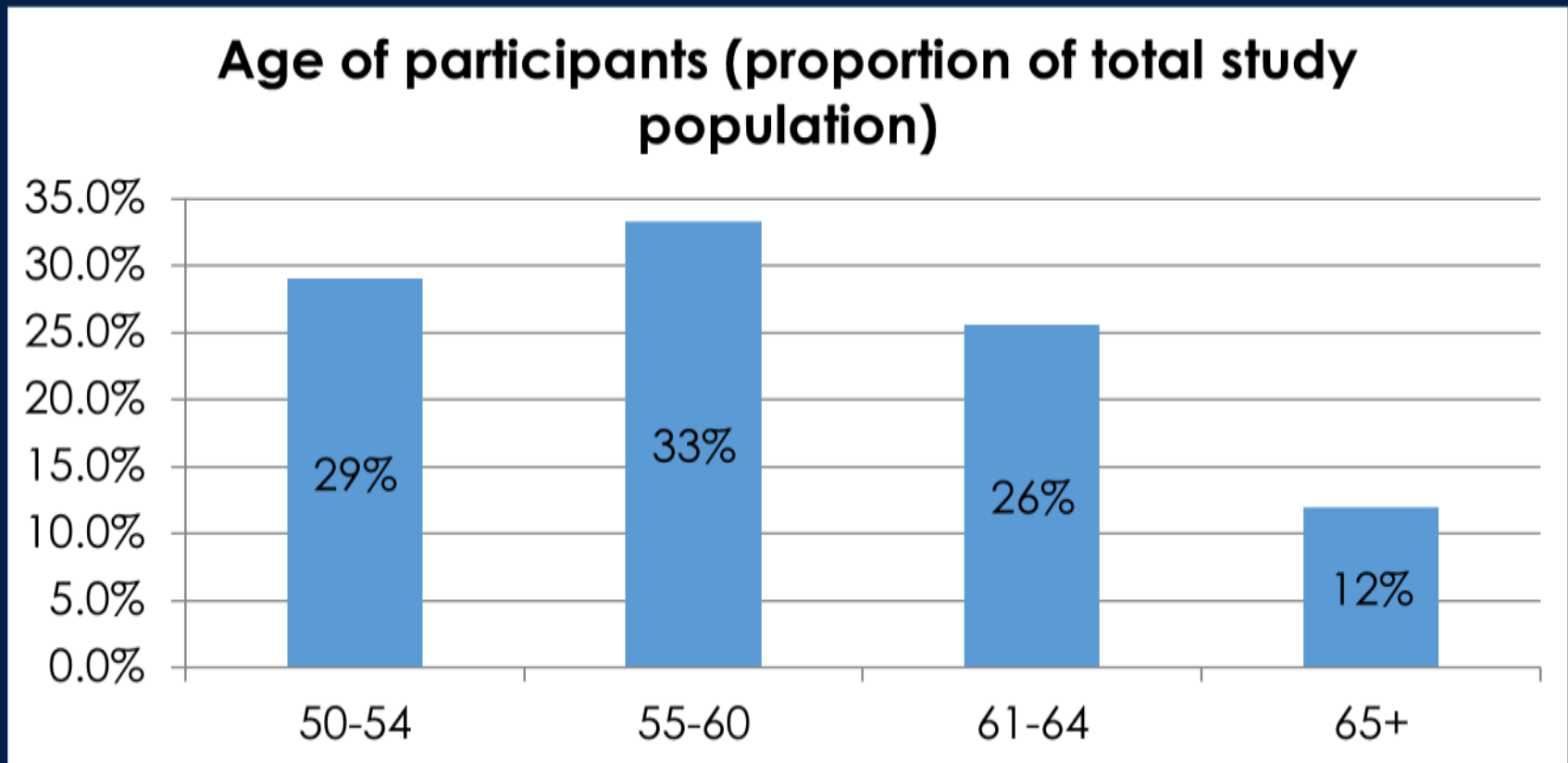
# HOPE HOME Study

- Aged 50 and older
- English speaking
- Homeless by HEARTH Act definition at time of enrollment
  - Living outdoors, places not meant for human habitation
  - Emergency shelters
  - Losing housing within 14 days (eviction notice)
  - Fleeing domestic violence with no place to go

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Two thirds are 60 and under, but 12% are older than 65 years at study entry: Median age 57



# Study population

- 77% men
- 80% African American
- 13% currently work for pay
- 28% currently looking for work
- 90% income less than \$1150/month

# Social Support: Not true that homelessness = disconnection from family/community

## Partnership:

- 5% currently married/partnered
- 41% never married
- 11% widowed; 43% divorced or separated

## But....

- 80% of our sample was able to give us a contact
- 60% of participants reported family member as contact
- 67% say that they have “someone to confide in”
- 54% report attending house of worship or social club

# Almost a third of the sample lost stable housing\* in the past year

Years since last stable housing	Percent
<6 months	18
6 mo to <1 yr	15
1 yr to <5 yrs	39
5 yrs to <10 yrs	14
10+ years	15

**\*Defined as non-institutional place that you lived for a year or more**

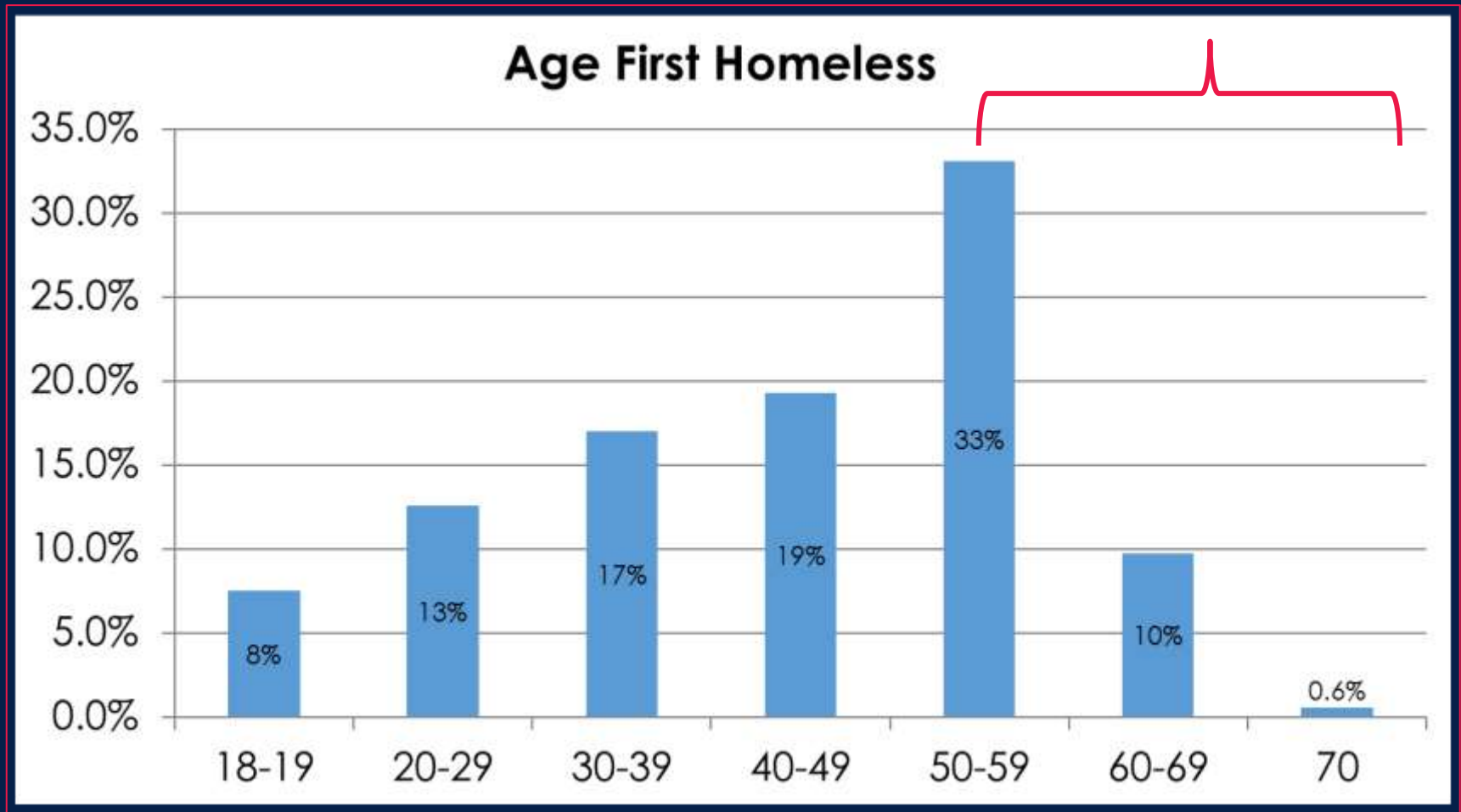
# Economic challenges and interpersonal conflict are most common reasons to have left last stable housing

Reason	% of Sample
Couldn't pay rent/mortgage	28
Rent increased	2
Lost job	7
Became sick/disabled	1
Other bills (not medical)	1
Someone else stopped paying rent/mortgage	15
Family abuse/violence	1
Kicked out (not related to money)	41
Didn't get along/asked to leave	11
Drinking/doing drugs	4
Evicted	7
Housemates' substance use/theft	1
Building condemned/destroyed/foreclosed	6
Other reasons	21
Moved to new city/more desirable place	6
Hospital/treatment program	1
Incarcerated	4
Conditions were poor	4

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44% with first episode of homelessness after age 50



# Those with early homelessness (<50)

- More adverse life experiences
- Low income attainment in early adulthood
- No spouse partner
- Mental health problems
- Traumatic brain injury
- Imprisonment
- Alcohol use problem

Brown RT, Goodman L, Guzman D, Tieu L, Ponath C, Kushel MB. Pathways to Homelessness among Older Homeless Adults: Results from the HOPE HOME Study. PLoS One. 2016 May 10;11(5)

(My father said): “Next time you, if you runaway, I’ll beat you with a car chain or I’m going to throw you out the window.”

Okay, so I, I was, I wouldn’t use the word ‘reasonable’ but I put things in perspective real quick and I would say, “Could I survive a car chain? Probably not.”

Then I looked out the window and said, and we lived on the 13th floor, I said, “I ain’t playing with this man.” He went to work, I had whatever I had on me, I was out the door.

# Late onset homelessness

- Low wage work throughout life
- Crisis
  - Job loss
  - Marital breakdown
  - Illness (participant, spouse)
  - Death (spouse, parent)

# Late onset homelessness

- Lack of advocacy
  - Evictions for reasons other than non-payment of rent
  - Not getting benefits
  - Multiple bureaucratic hurdles
- Low social support
  - Shame prevented them from accessing social support
- Less likely to have imprisonment/long incarceration, but housing hampered by one-time charges (i.e. one drug charge) or unexplained arrest

“It was a lot of different things but basically the new owners took over, we were being evicted.

My wife, she had just got out of the hospital, had the stroke and was blind....so, the daughter came up and said, ‘Don’t fight it, y’all can come stay with me for a couple months and save your money.’ So we said, ‘Okay’ ...[and didn’t fight the eviction].

After we moved out of the place, turned in the keys and everything we went over to her house and she said, ‘Y’all can’t stay here.’ And I said, ‘I got \$9 in my pocket,’ I said, ‘At least let your mother spend the night because we don’t have enough money to get a motel room.’ She said, ‘No.’ So that was the beginning.”

“...When they bought the company out they cut our hours back and they would bring in temp workers and they would give them all the hours and they weren't giving us our hours, which caused me to lose my place I was staying in because I couldn't afford to pay the rent, because, you know, from, you're going from almost 80-100 (hours) a week down to 20 hours a week, it's kind of hard to pay bills.”

While late onset homeless individuals tend to have fewer vulnerabilities, many had significant health challenges related to their homelessness.

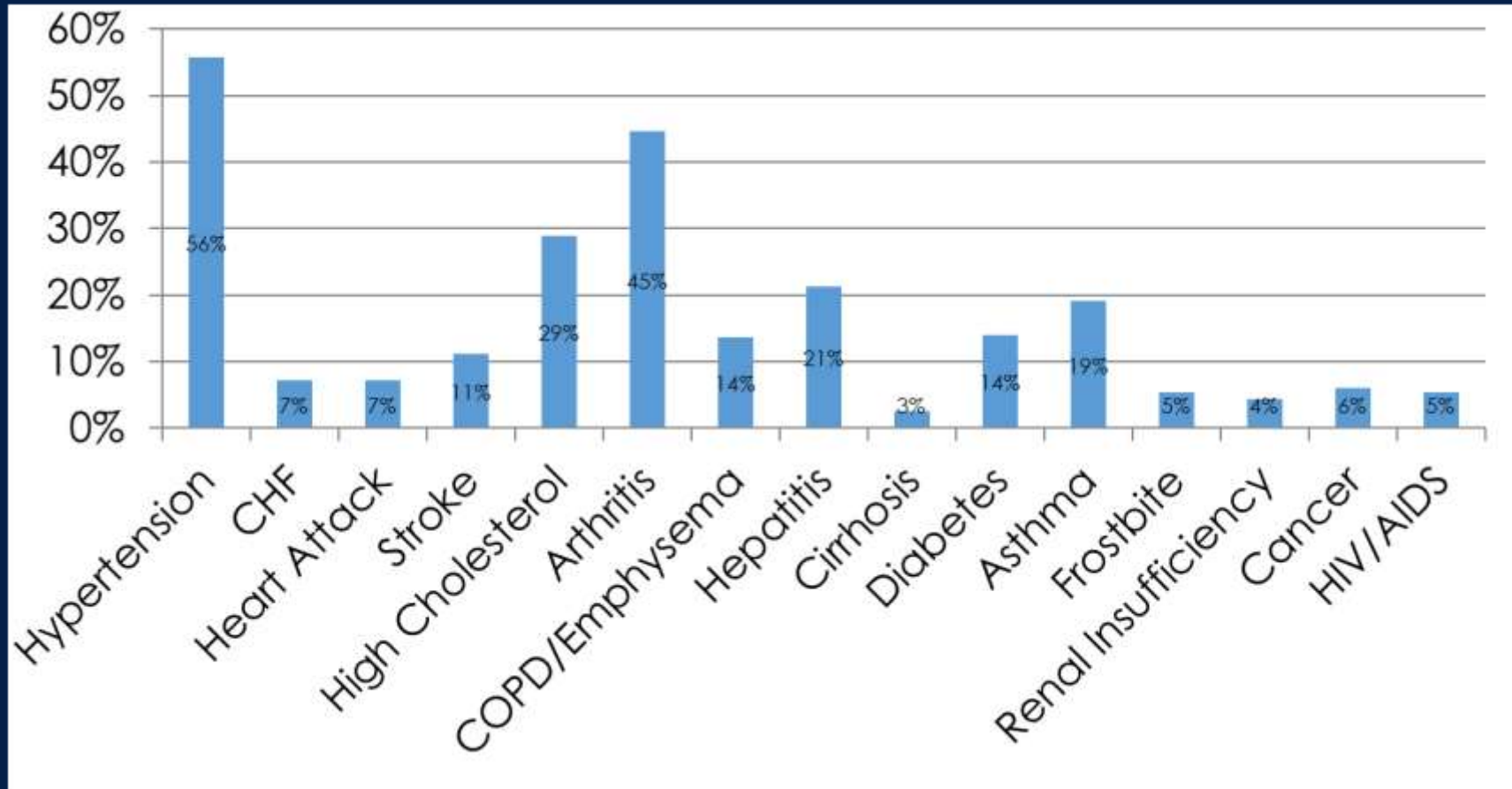
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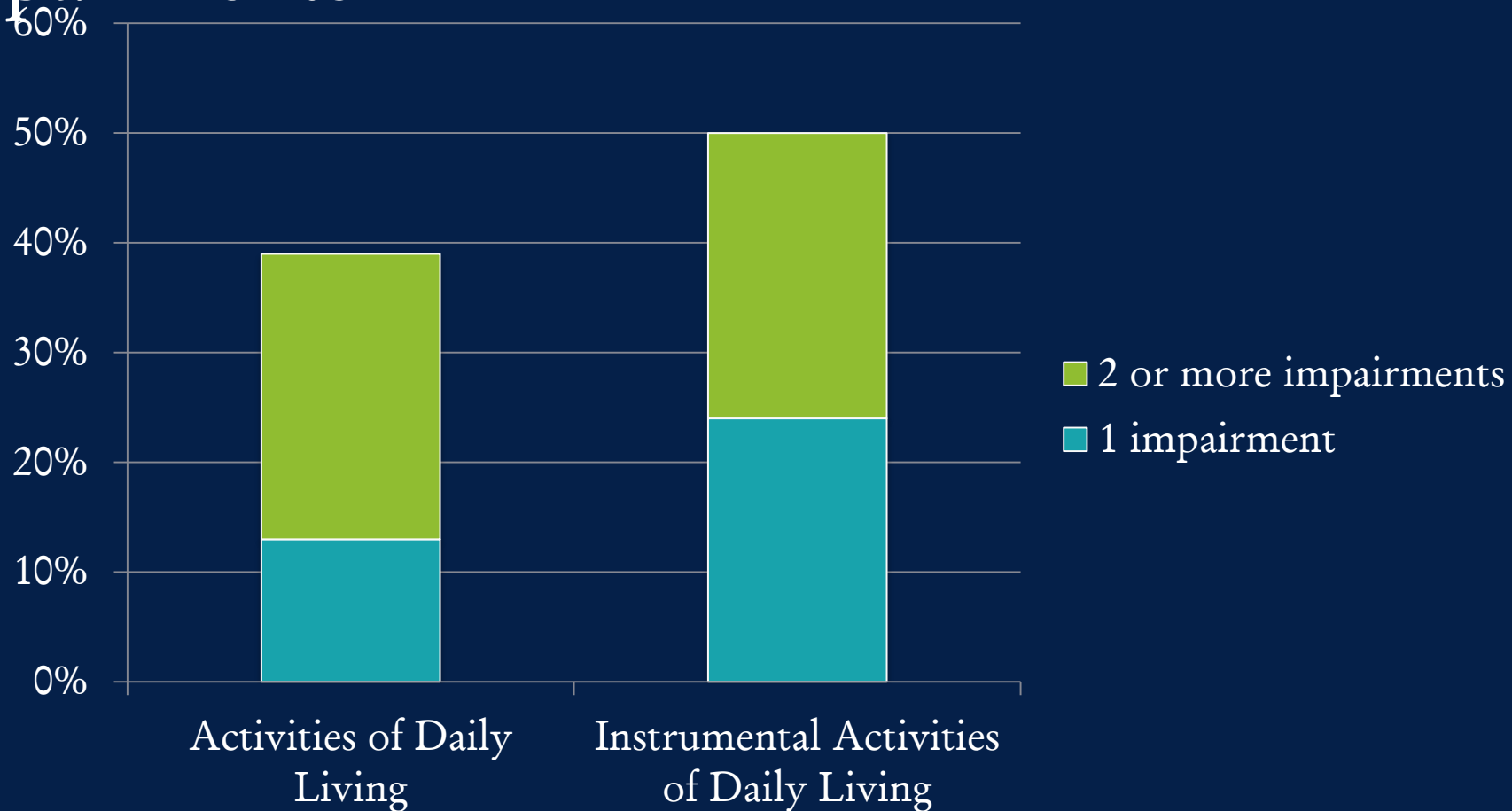
# Poor health in every measure

## 56% report health as fair or poor

# Self-reported chronic diseases are common but may be underreported

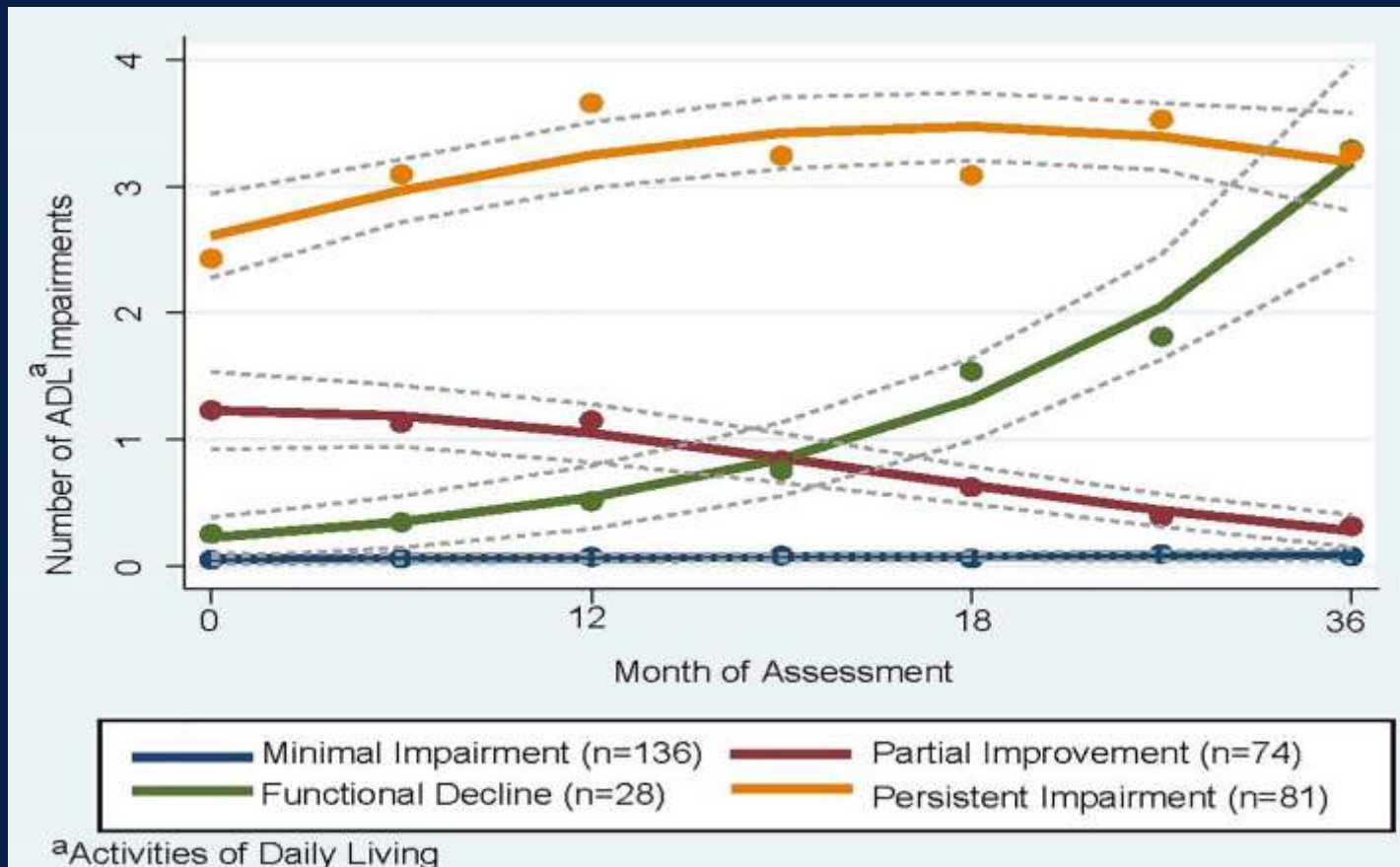


# High proportion with functional impairments



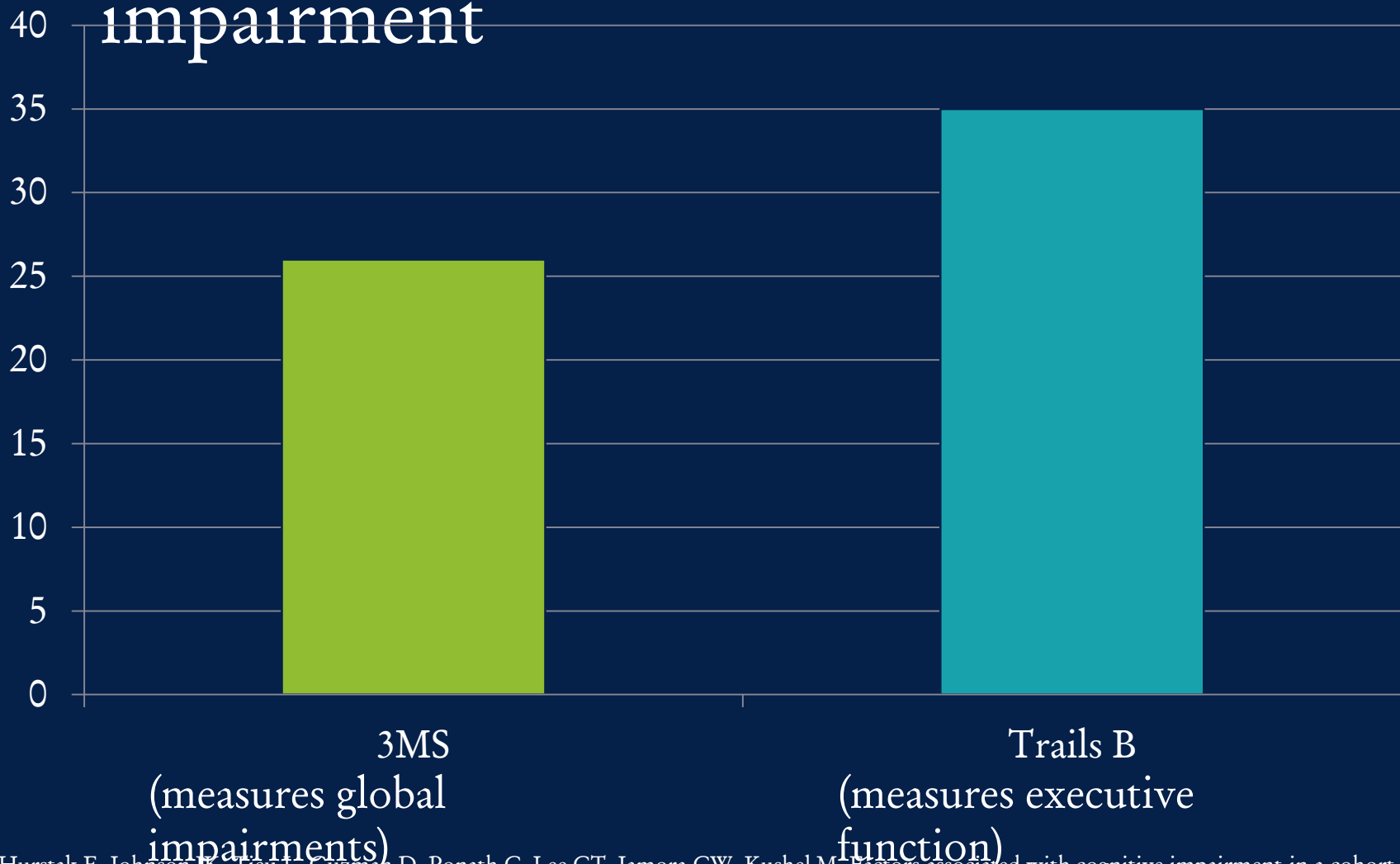
Brown RT, Hemati K, Riley ED, Lee CT, Ponath C, Tieu L, Guzman D, Kushel MB. Geriatric Conditions in a Population-Based Sample of Older Homeless Adults. *Gerontologist*. 2016 Feb 26. pii: gnw011. PubMed PMID: 26920935

# Trajectories of recovery similar to those of people in their 70s and 80s



Brown and Kushel PLOS ONE 2019

# High prevalence of cognitive impairment



Hurstak E, Johnson JK, Tieu L, Guzman D, Ponath C, Lee CT, Jamora CW, Kushel M. Factors associated with cognitive impairment in a cohort of older homeless adults: Results from the HOPE HOME study. Drug Alcohol Depend. 2017 Sep 1;178:562-570.

# High prevalence of all geriatric conditions

■ Mobility impairment	27%
■ One or more falls (6 months)	34%
■ Visual impairment	45%
■ Hearing impairment	36%
■ Urinary incontinence	48%

Brown RT, Hemati K, Riley ED, Lee CT, Ponath C, Tieu L, Guzman D, Kushel MB. Geriatric Conditions in a Population-Based Sample of Older Homeless Adults. *Gerontologist*. 2016 Feb 26. pii: gnw011. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 26920935.

# Overall poor functional status:

**“50 is the new 75”**

Median age of sample: 57

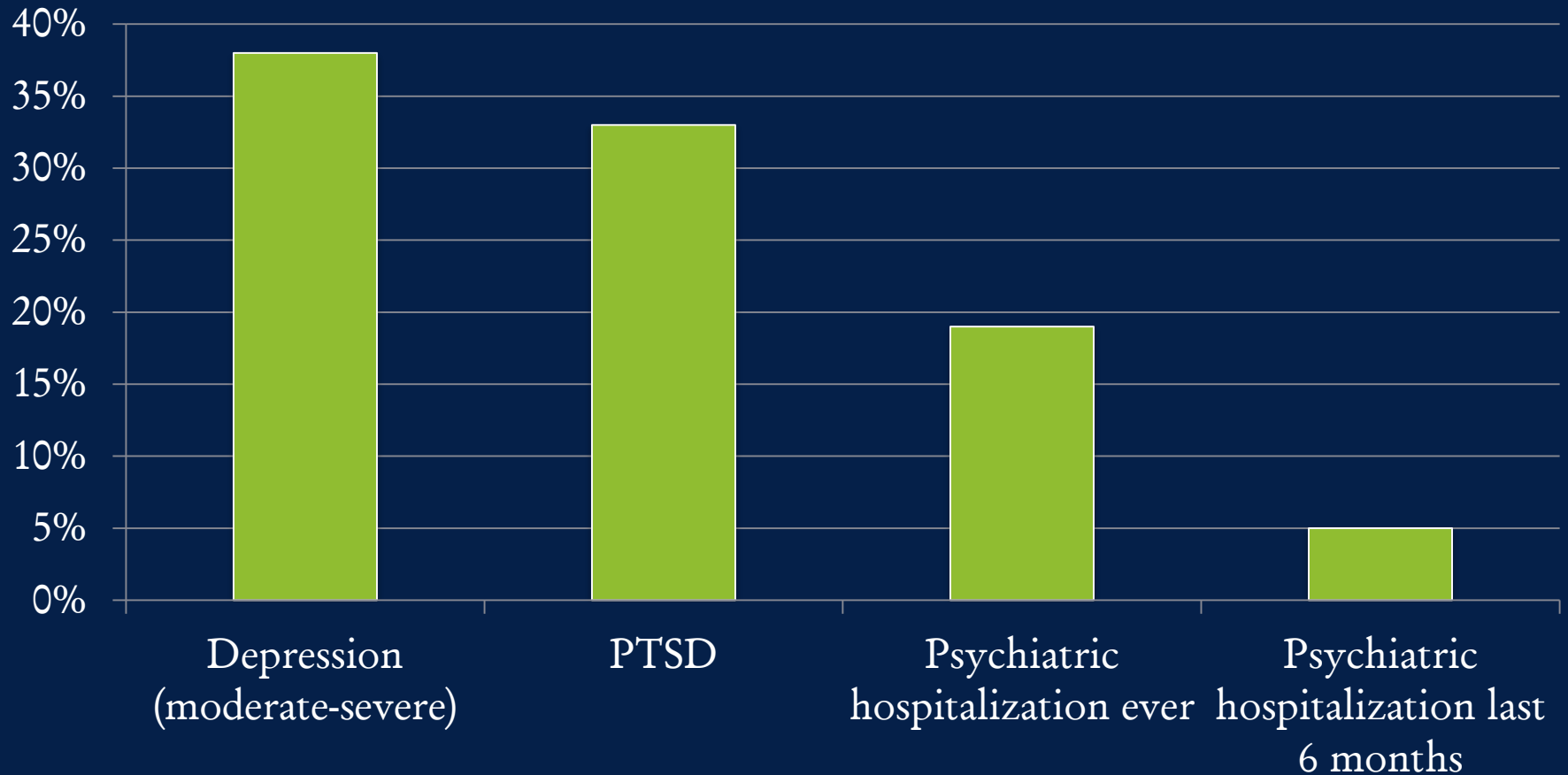
Prevalence of geriatric conditions worse than those in general population samples in their 70s and 80s

# Alcohol and drug use problems common

- 65% with moderate or greater severity of drug use symptoms
  - Cocaine (43%), cannabis (39%), and opioids (13%) moderate or severe use symptoms
- 26% moderate or greater severity alcohol use symptoms
  - 15% severe symptoms

Prevalence of illicit drug and alcohol use problems lower than samples of younger homeless adults, but higher than age-matched (and dramatically higher than those of general population ages 70s and 80s).

# Mental Health Problems are common



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# High rates of acute healthcare utilization

- **72%** had a non-ED source for care
- **53%** reported a PCP
- **Half** of all participants had visited an ED (confirmed) in the prior **six months**
- **<7%** of participants accounted for **half** of all ED visits
- **24%** of visits for worsening of chronic illness
- **10%** were hospitalized for physical condition in prior **six** months

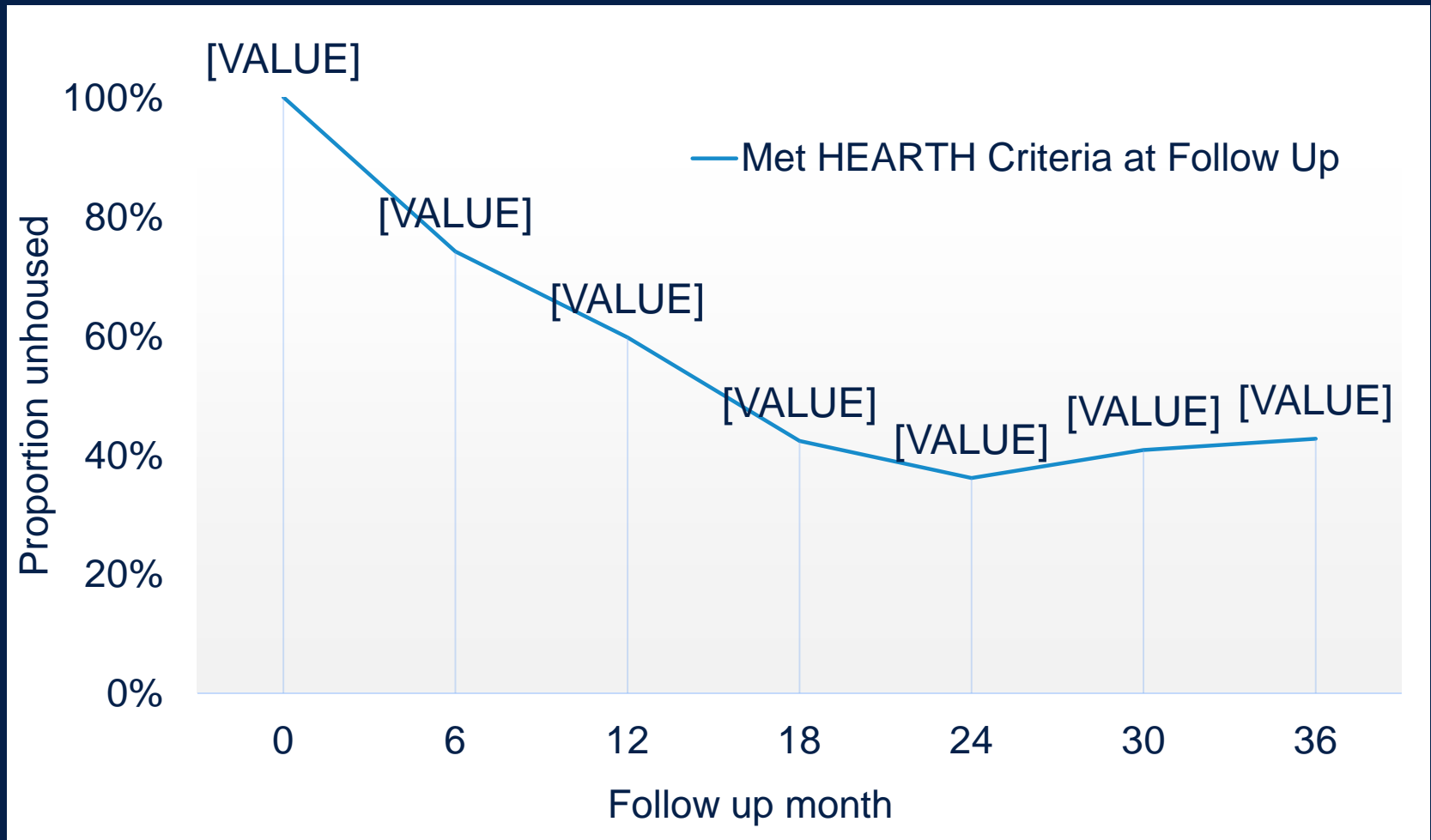
# High mortality rate and institutional care

- 49 confirmed deaths out of 350 participants in HOPE HOME since cohort began (July 2013-June 2014)
- (7 additional deaths among 100 recruited last year)
- Those first homeless >50 3x as likely to have died as those with earlier onset homelessness
- >40 confirmed nursing home stays

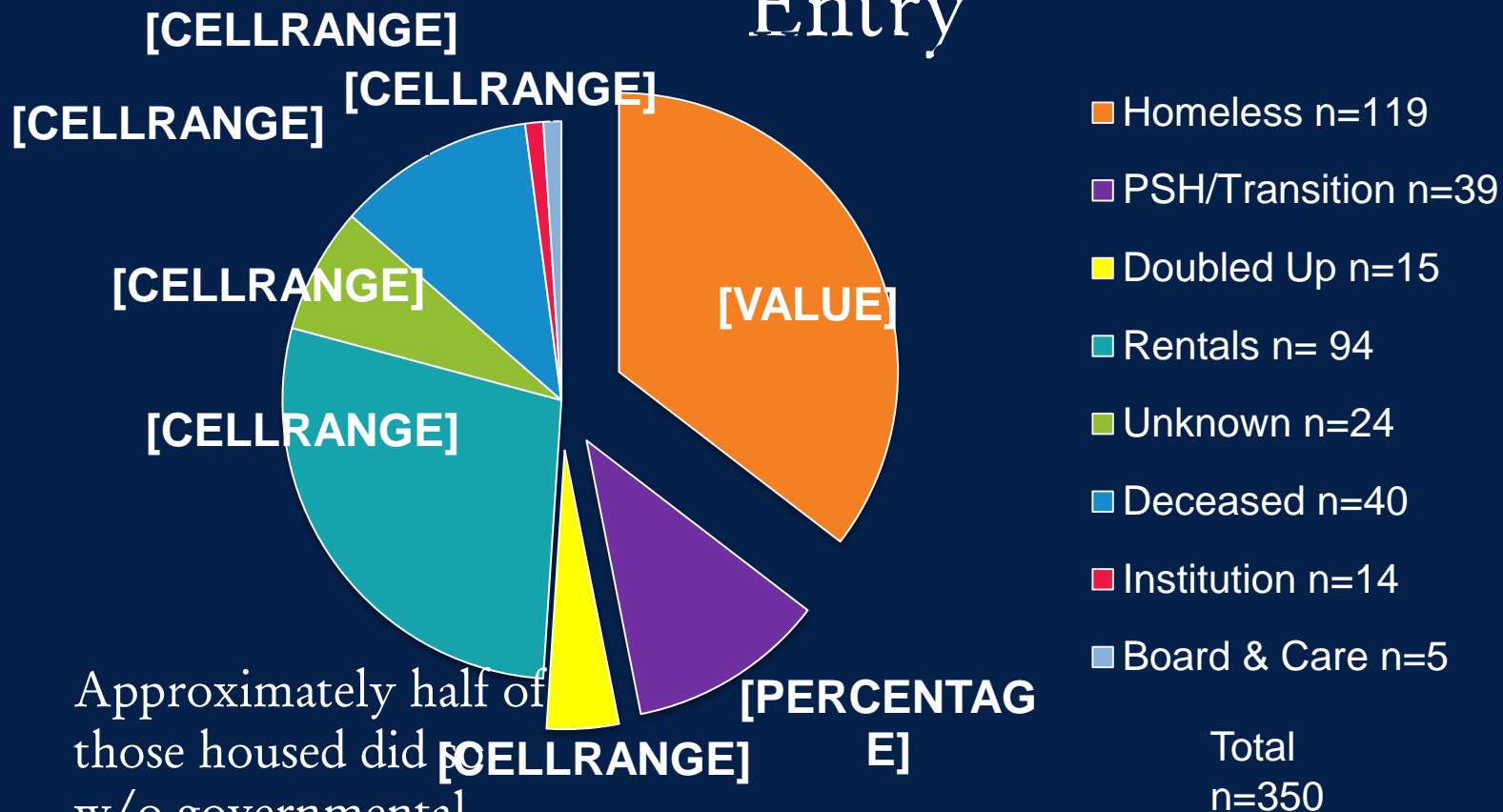
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# Majority obtain housing by 18 month follow-up



# Housing Status Five Years after Study Entry



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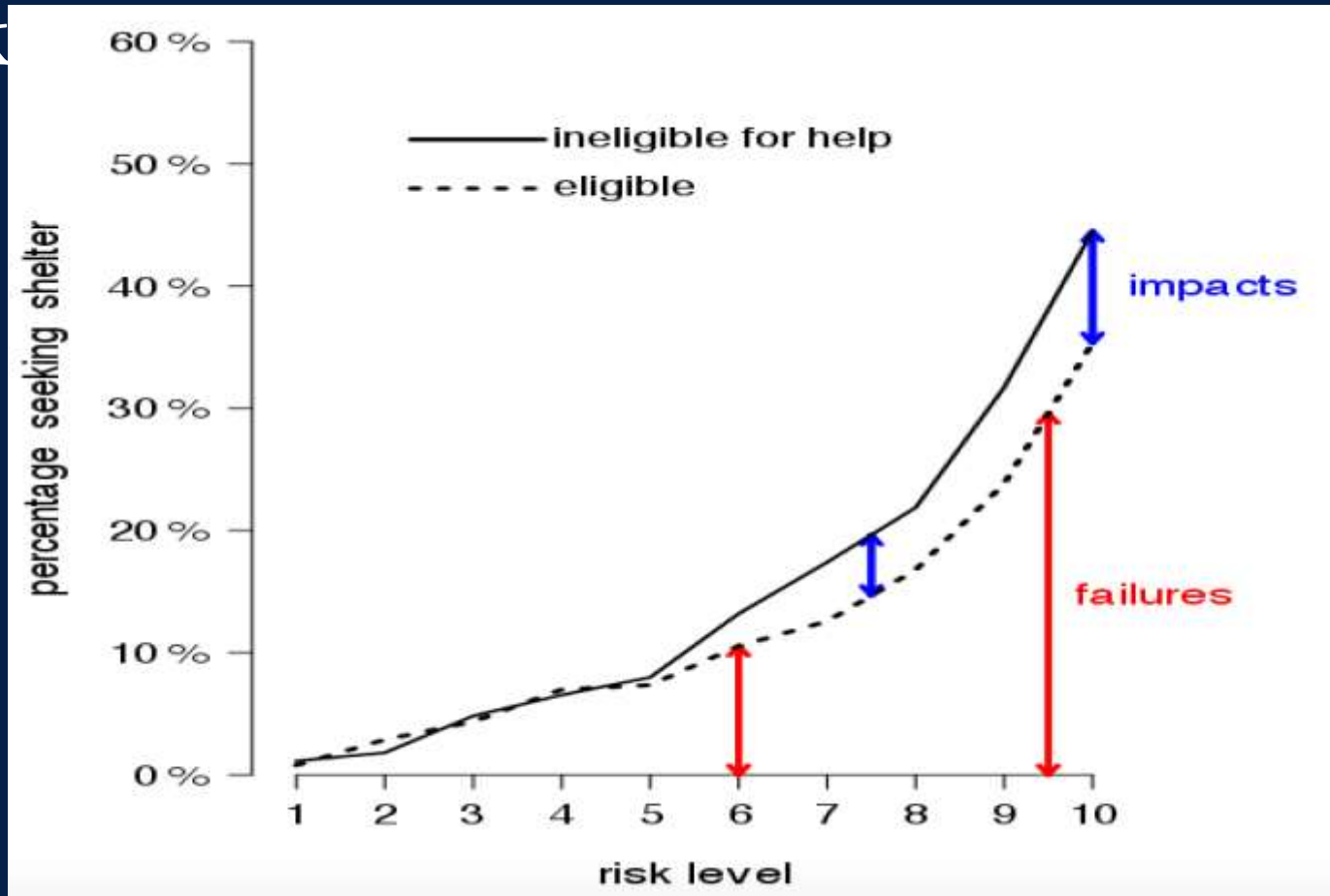
# Deeply Affordable Housing

- Expand and preserve affordable housing
- Affordable housing: target towards those who make <30% AMI
  - Cutbacks in HUD threaten development
  - Good sources of information for national legislative efforts:
    - National Low Income Housing Coalition
  - State:
  - November 2018 affordable housing bond
    - New budget items for affordable housing, homelessness services and prevention

# PREVENTION

- Not enough effort on preventing homelessness
- Prevention efforts need to be both EFFICIENT and EFFECTIVE
- Some increased action on eviction protection
- Individuals without a lease are at highest risk
  - HOME BASE in NY
- HOME SAFE
  - Targeting prevention funds for APS involved older adults in CA
- Most benefit is to target those at highest risk!

To be efficient—target those at highest risk



Shinn et al 2013

# Eviction Prevention

- Eviction prevention
  - Just cause evictions
    - SF, Oakland, and San Jose now have just cause evictions
    - Legal protection for tenants
    - AB 1482 combined state-wide just cause laws with limits on large rental increases

# Emergency Housing Assistance

- Families who called when housing assistance available 76% less likely to enter shelter at six months
  - Absolute decrease 1.6%
- One time payments up to \$1500
- Average cost per caller referred \$720; cost of homeless spell averted \$10,300
- Limiting to very low-income callers reduce cost per episode averted to \$6800

Science 

## The impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness

William N. Evans<sup>1,2,3</sup>, James X. Sullivan<sup>1,3,\*</sup>, Melanie Wallskog<sup>4</sup>

+ See all authors and affiliations

# Rapid Re-Housing

- Connects families and individuals to permanent housing via tailored package of assistance. Can serve as bridge to longer-term support (i.e. rental vouchers)
  - Time-limited rental assistance
  - Targeted supportive services
    - Housing identification
    - Rent and move-in assistance (typically 6 months or less)
    - Case management and services

# Permanent Supportive Housing

- Permanent supportive housing for those with chronic homelessness/disabling conditions
  - Subsidized housing
  - Linked supportive services that are voluntary
  - **Housing First** model – start with the housing
  - Shown to be highly effective at keeping people housed
  - Need to adapt for needs of older adults

# Challenges: Affordable Housing and Prevention

- Enormous shortage of deeply affordable housing
  - Difficult to build for those most at risk
- Need to stop in-flow into homelessness
  - Difficult to target resources

# Challenges: Aging population

- Loss of residential care facilities throughout CA
  - “Board and Care”
- PSH faced with providing services for aging population
  - Provision of personal care
    - Homebridge
    - ?PACE programs aligned with PSH
  - Advance Care Planning
  - Dementia Care

# Final thoughts

- Homelessness reaching crisis proportions
- Aging population increases urgency
- Suffering is immense
- Use of healthcare system can be chaotic
- While mental health and substance use disorders are common, underlying causes are structural
- Solutions will not be easy, but are doable
- Must match solution to the problem

# Thanks to....

- Claudia Ponath
- Pamela Olsen
- Angela Allen (in memory)
- John Weeks
- Jakki Carillo
- Tauni Marin
- Stephen King
- Kenneth Perez
- Marina Rosenberg
- David Guzman
- Lina Tieu

## Community Advisory Board

- Carol Johnson
- Carol Wilkins
- Elaine deColigny
- Brenda Goldstein
- David Modersbach
- Barb Wismer MD
- Maria H
- Kym C
- Robin M



- Rebecca Brown MD
- Maria Raven MD MPH
- Emily Hurstak MD MPH
- Christopher Lee MD MPH
- Matthew Spinelli MD
- Kelly Knight PhD
- Maya Vijayaraghavan MD MAS
- Chuan-Mei Lee MD
- Daniel (DJ) Freitas MD
- Kaveh Hemati MD
- Leah Goodman MD
- Sandeepa Sriram MD
- Maria Patanwala
- Adam Bazari
- John Landefeld MD
- Michelle Tong
- Isabel Arellano Cuervo
- Dereck Paul
- Eric Vittinghoff PhD
- Louise Walter MD
- Irene Yen PhD
- Elise Riley PhD
- Margaret Handley MPH PhD
- Julene Johnson PhD
- Chris Weyer Jamora PhD
- Community Partner: St Mary's Center
- Allen Temple
- East Bay Community Recovery Center

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