



University of California
San Francisco

Homelessness in older adults: an emerging crisis

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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 homeless woman in HOPE HOME Study

The homeless population is aging

- In 1990, 11% of people experiencing homelessness in SF were 50 or older
- In 2003, 37% were
- Now about half are...

S.F.'S HOMELESS AGING ON THE STREET / Chronic health problems on the rise as median age nears 50

By Kevin Fagan | August 4, 2006



JGIM Journal of General Internal Medicine

[Explore this journal >](#)

BRIEF REPORT: The Aging of the Homeless Population: Fourteen-Year Trends in San Francisco

Judith A. Hahn PhD, Margot B. Kushel MD,
David R. Bangsberg MD, MPH, Elise Riley PhD, Andrew R. Moss

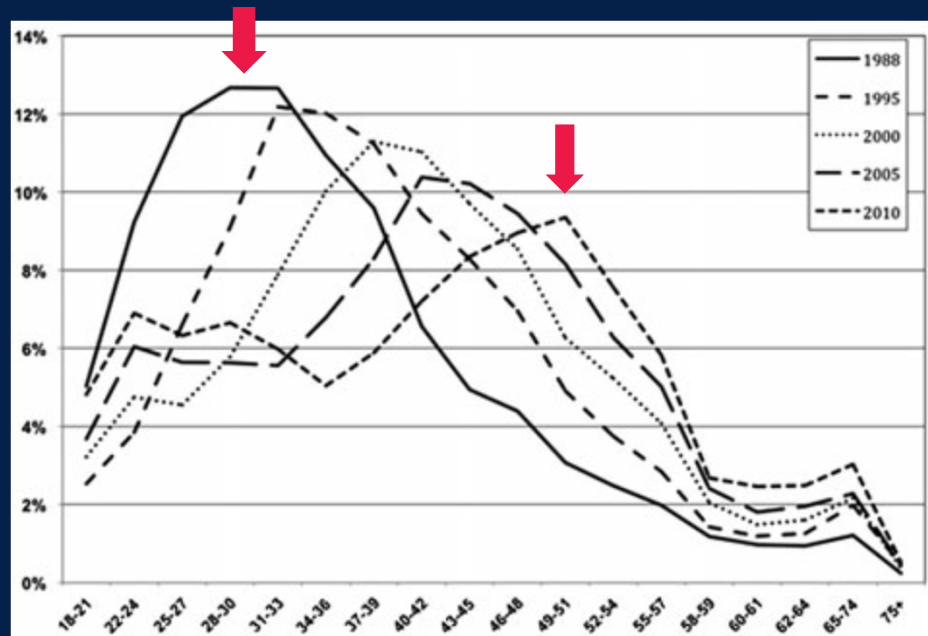
Hahn J et al. The Aging of the Homeless Population
JGIM 2006

Why 50?

- People living in poverty have premature aging
- Many will not live to traditional “old age”

Generational effect

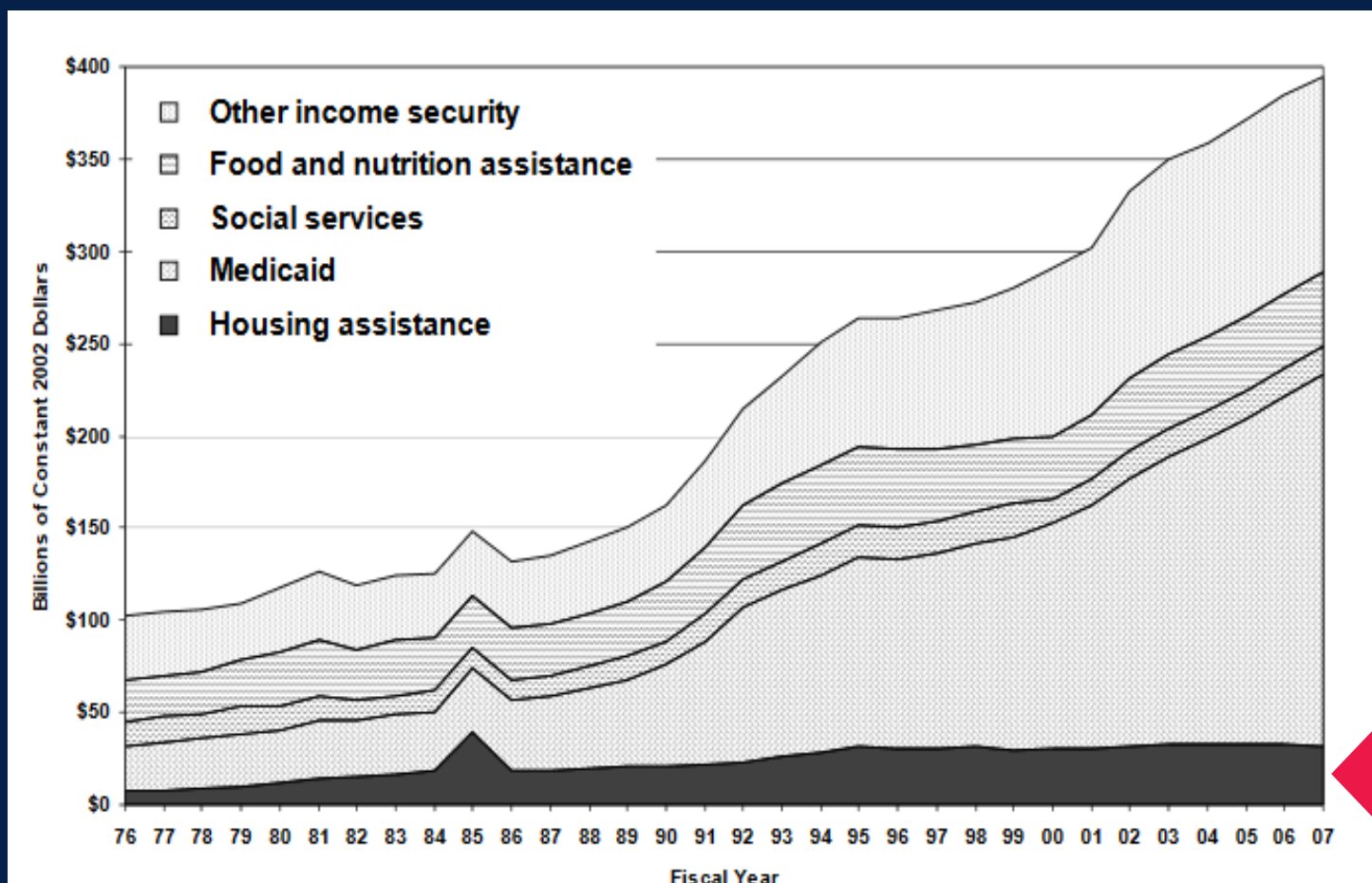
- Americans born in the second half of the baby boom (1954-1963) have had elevated risk
- 30-40% of homeless individuals* born 1954-1963
- About half are 50 and over



*doesn't include people living in homeless families or unaccompanied youth

Dennis P. Culhane, Stephen Metraux, Thomas Byrne, Magdi Steno, Jay Bainbridge, and National Center on Homelessness among Veterans. "The Age Structure of Contemporary Homelessness: Evidence and Implications for Public Policy" *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 13.1 (2013): 1-17.

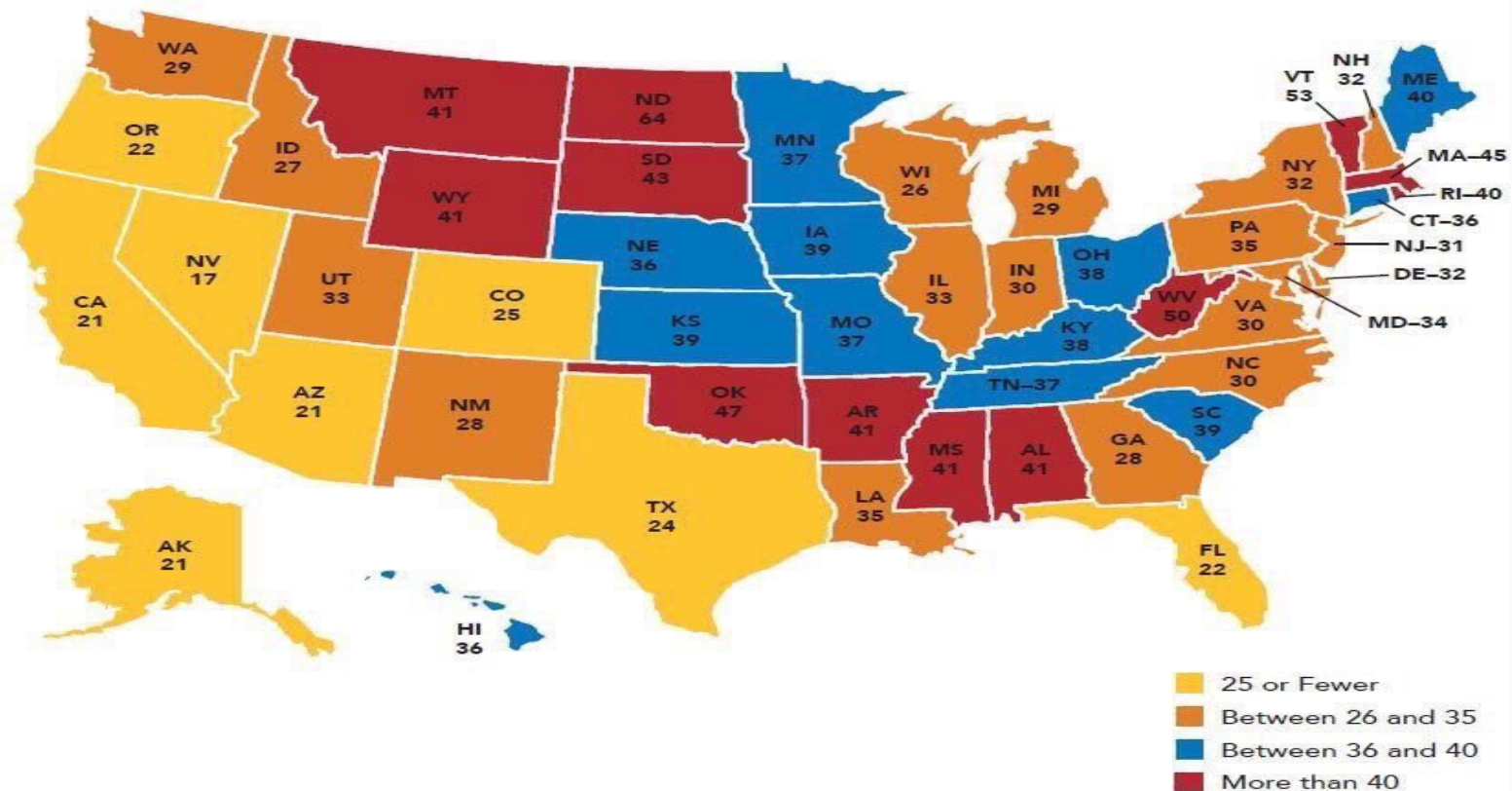
Housing assistance stagnant as compared to other federal outlays for low income individuals



Changing Priorities: The Federal Budget and Housing Assistance
1976-2007 NLIHC

California has 21 units available for every 100 extremely low income households

FIGURE 3: UNITS AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE PER 100 ELI RENTER HOUSEHOLDS BY STATE



Source: NLIHC Tabulations of 2014 ACS PUMS data

Will the trend continue?

- 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.

Racial discrimination and housing

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

The New York Times Magazine

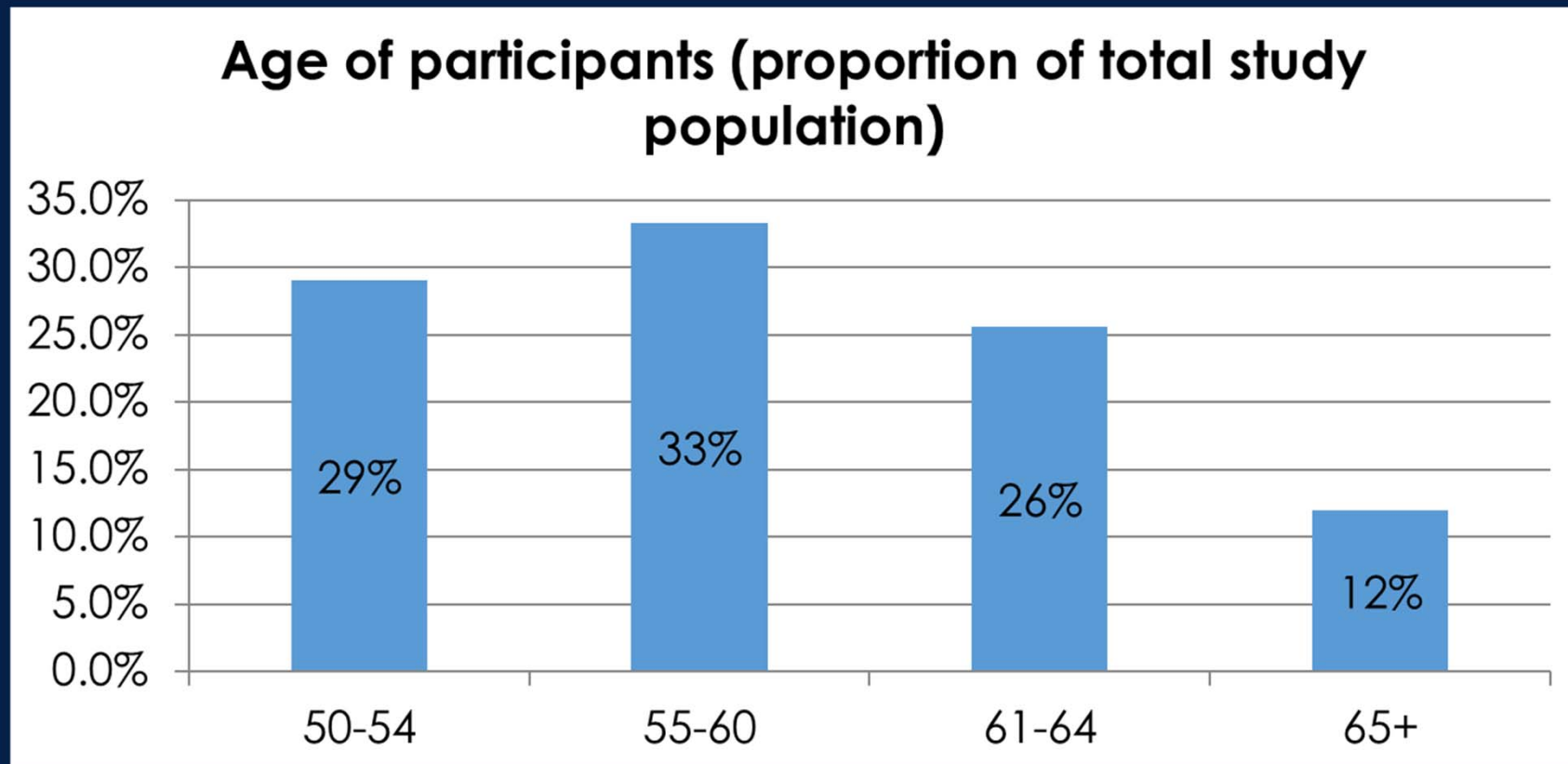
How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality

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

Data from HOPE HOME Study

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

Almost a third lost stable housing* in the past year

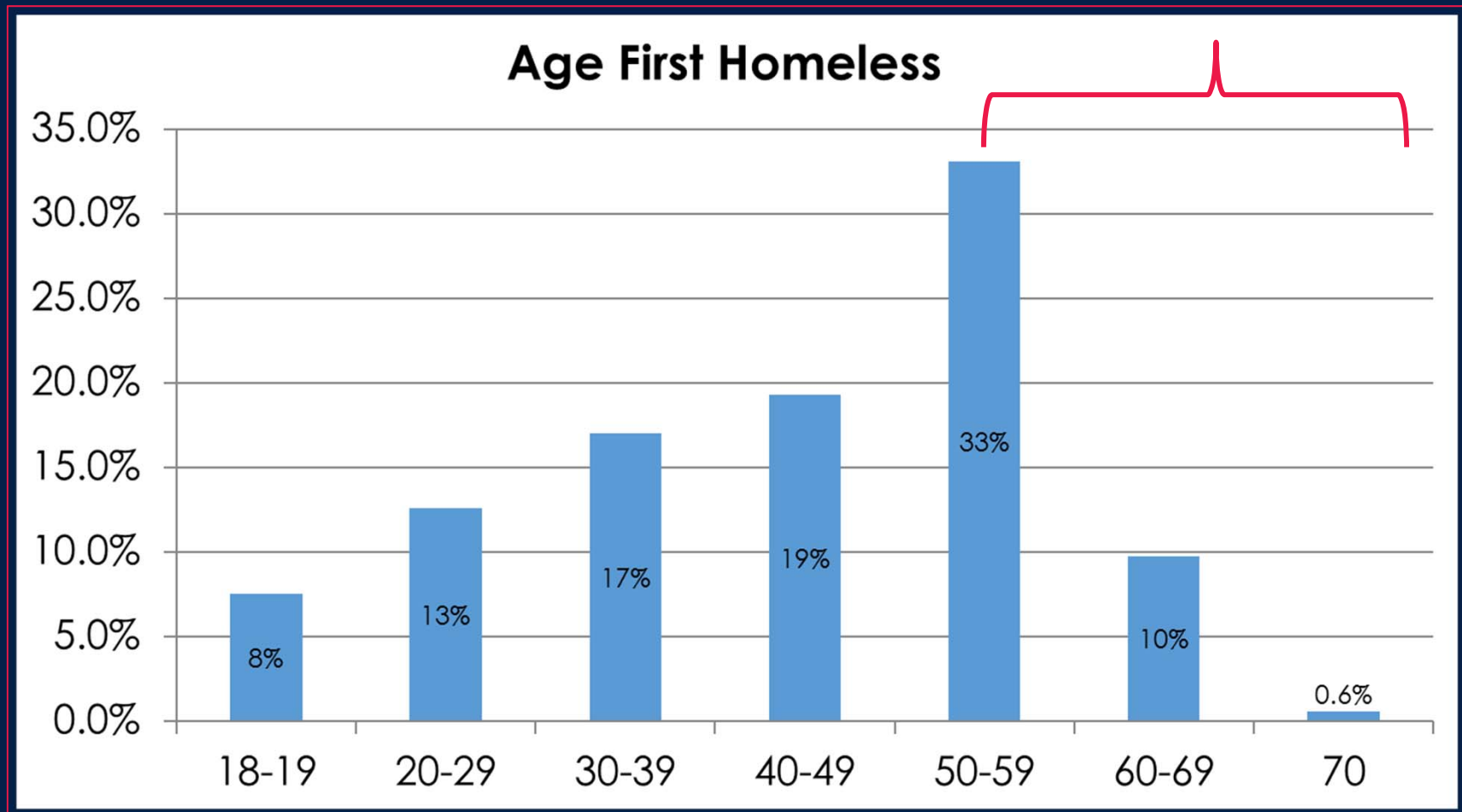
Years since last stable housing	Percent
<6 months	18
6 mo to <1 yr	15
1 yr to <5 yrs	39
5 yrs to <10 yrs	14
10+ years	15

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

Economic challenges and interpersonal conflict common reasons for housing loss

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/stealing	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

44% with first episode of homelessness after age 50



Early onset homelessness

- Multiple 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)

I only did like 5-6 months in YA [juvenile justice] when I was 13, but then after that I started getting violations over the years, that's where the four years [in juvenile justice system] came in at, going back and forth.... Yeah, when I got to be 17 then they took me off.... When I got 21, that's when I started using drugs.... At that time I was doing burglaries and all kind of petty thefts and ...I don't know, back then it was like every ninety days I end up back in San Quentin. It wasn't like, "Oh, I can't wait until I go get high," or nothing like that, but eventually I got high. Then that one time led to one another and a thousand other too many. So I was in that mentality, trapped in that mentality for over forty years.

(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

- Work histories: low wage, unskilled labor
- Crisis
 - Job loss
 - Marital breakdown
 - Illness (participant, spouse)
 - Death (spouse, parent)

“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.

Social Support

Partnership:

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

Other Sources:

- 67% say that they have “someone to confide in”
- 54% report attending house of worship or social club

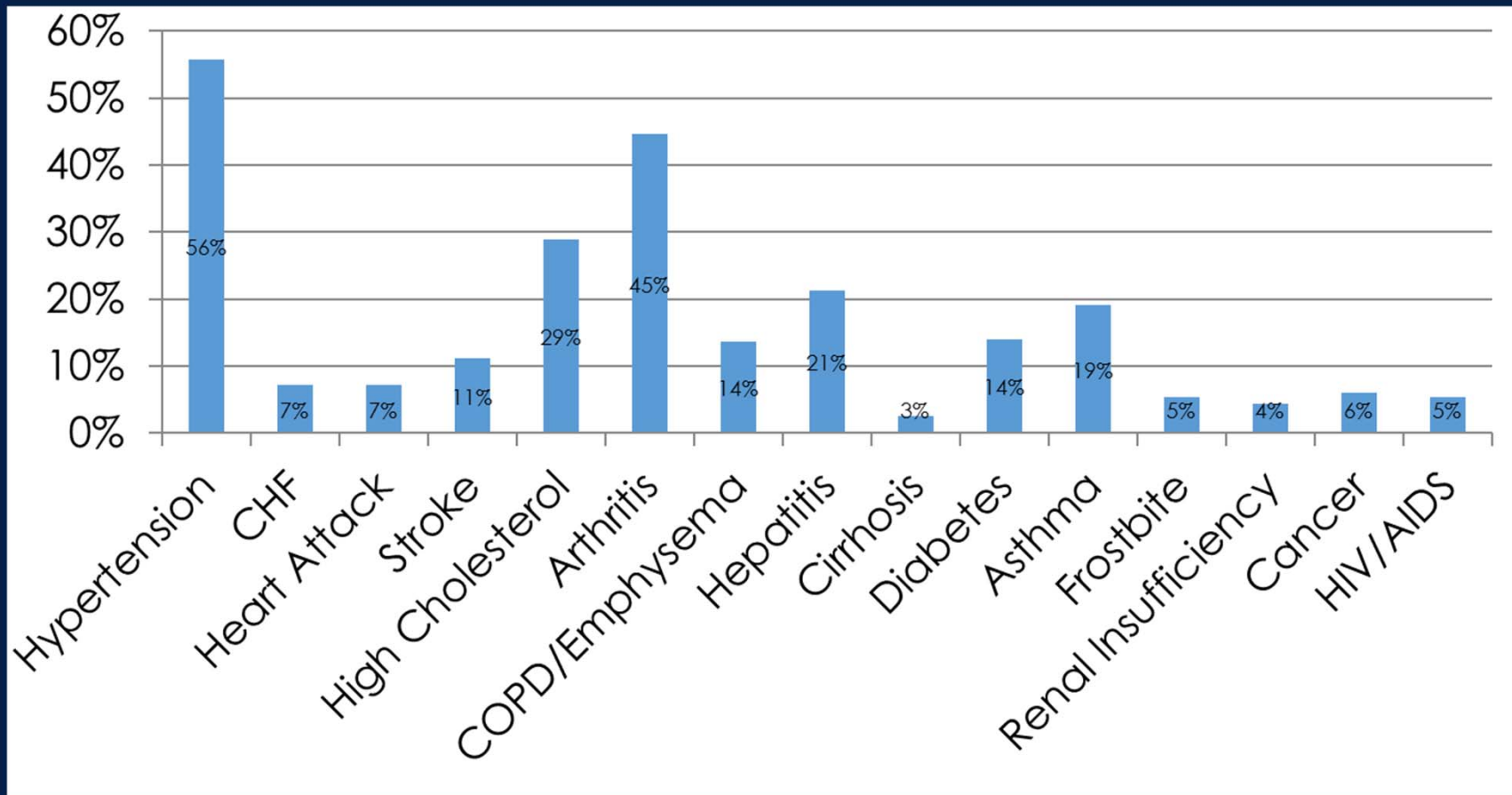
Yeah, because, all my friends, I'm going to say like 80% of them or 90% of them, they were all working people like **me...I was just too ashamed...** These were the people who cared....but I, I didn't look at it that way. I should have.

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

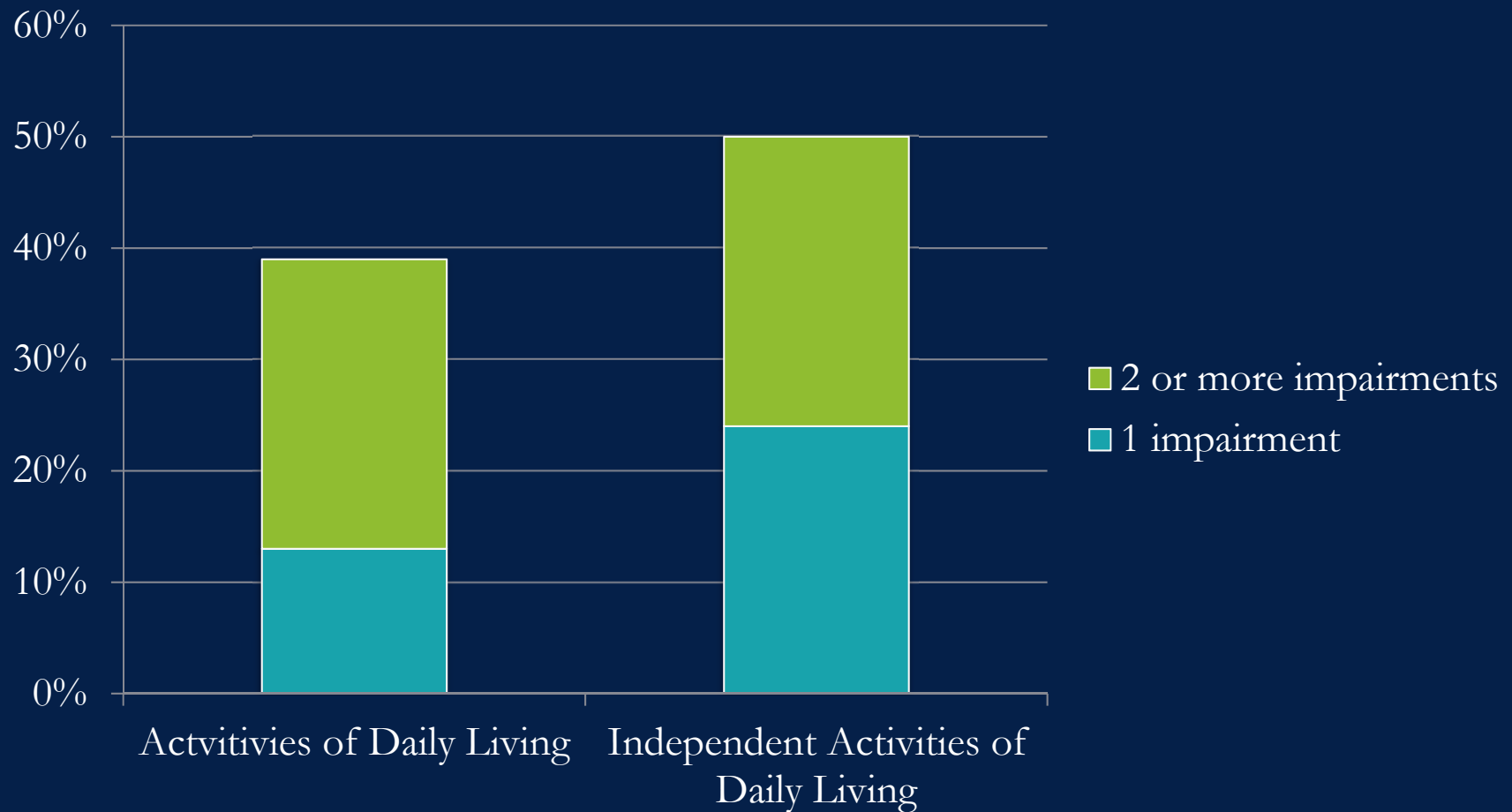
Poor health in every measure

56% report health as fair or poor

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

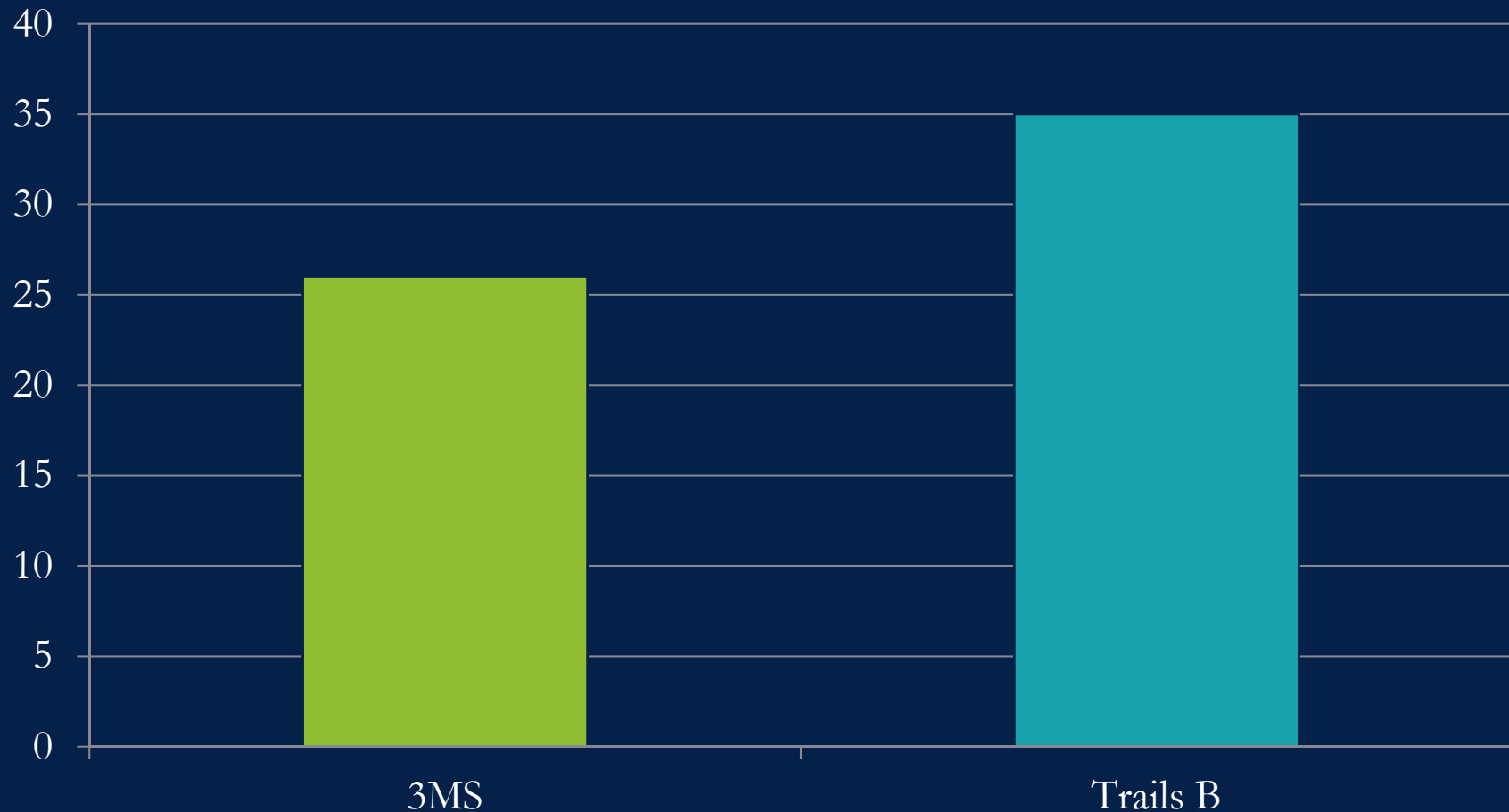


High Proportion with functional impairments



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

High prevalence of cognitive impairment
3MS measures global impairments;
Trails B measures executive function



Hurstak et al Drug and Alcohol 2017

50 is the new 75

Median age 57, but overall health worse
than those in 70s and 80s

Alcohol and Drug use problems common

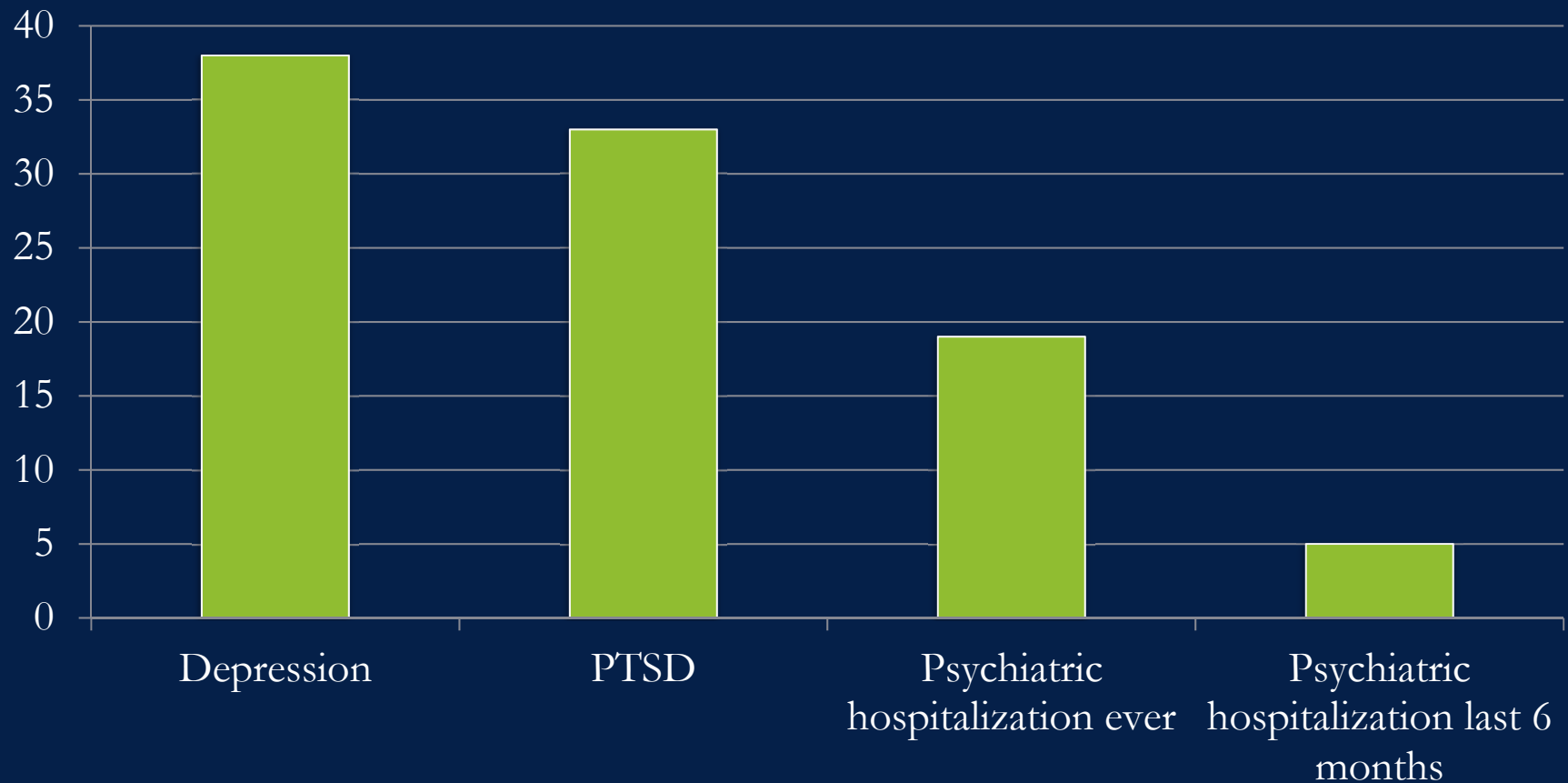
- 65% with moderate or greater severity of drug use symptoms
- 26% moderate or greater severity alcohol use symptoms

Spinelli et al. Factors associated with substance use in older homeless adults: Results from the HOPE HOME study. Substance Abuse 2017; 38(1): 88-94.

Prevalence of illicit drug and alcohol use problems

- lower than younger homeless adults
- higher than same age
- dramatically higher than those in 70s and 80s

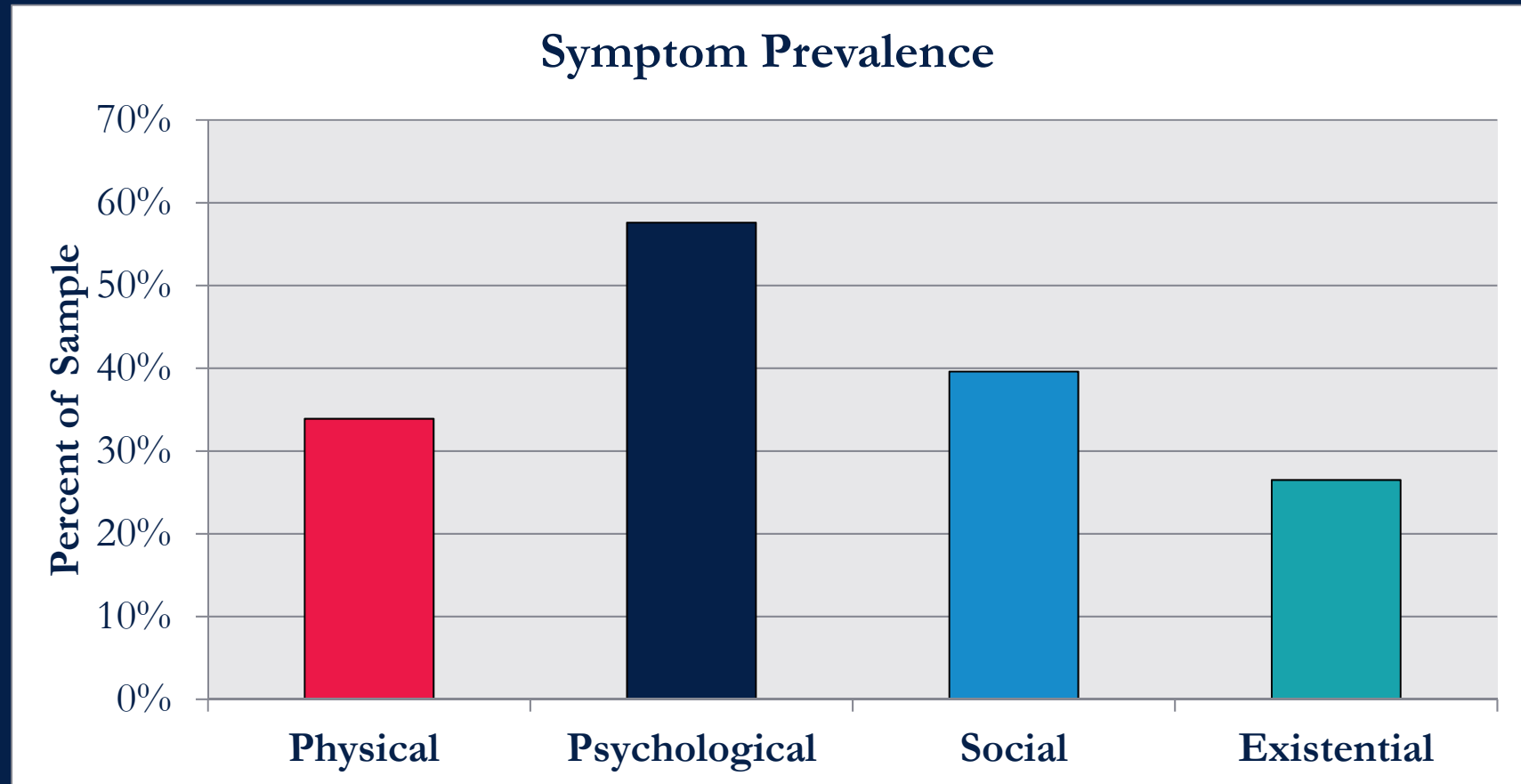
Mental Health Problems are common



Suffering comes in many forms



High prevalence of symptoms



Patanwala et al under review

Symptoms related to homelessness

“When I start thinking that I’m not gonna get off of this situation, my body starts to hurt, my stomach gets nauseated. It’s burning like it’s on fire.”

“My back pain actually is pretty real because I’m sleeping on cement but the thing that really gets me is the future. Sometimes there is a hopeless feeling that comes on.”

“Psychologically...I’m getting more used to the idea that my life is a complete waste. Nothing gets done. I don’t have family. I don’t have a career. I’m not a productive human being. It’s day after day of wasting my time.”

Loneliness and regret cause suffering

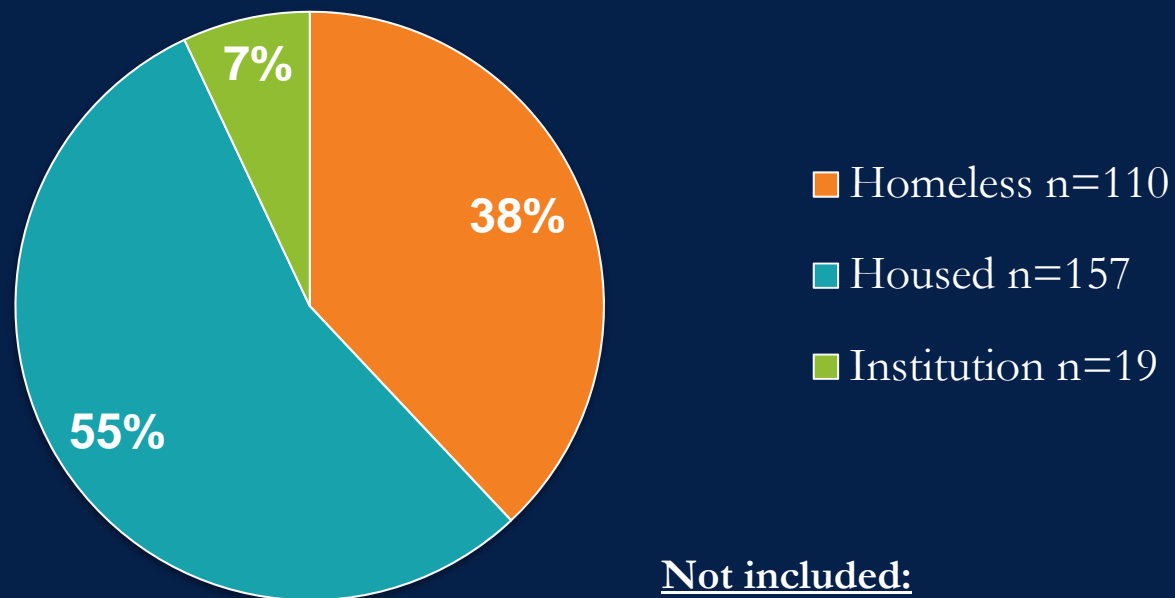
“...One of the things that gets me is when I say hello to somebody, and they don’t say hello back. That hurts. That’s one of the mix-ups of this culture that I am, that level of being untouchable...and that hurts. I mean psychologically is devastating...”

Food insecurity is common

Over half experience food insecurity:

- 31% low food security
- 24% very low food security

Housing Status at 24 months n=286

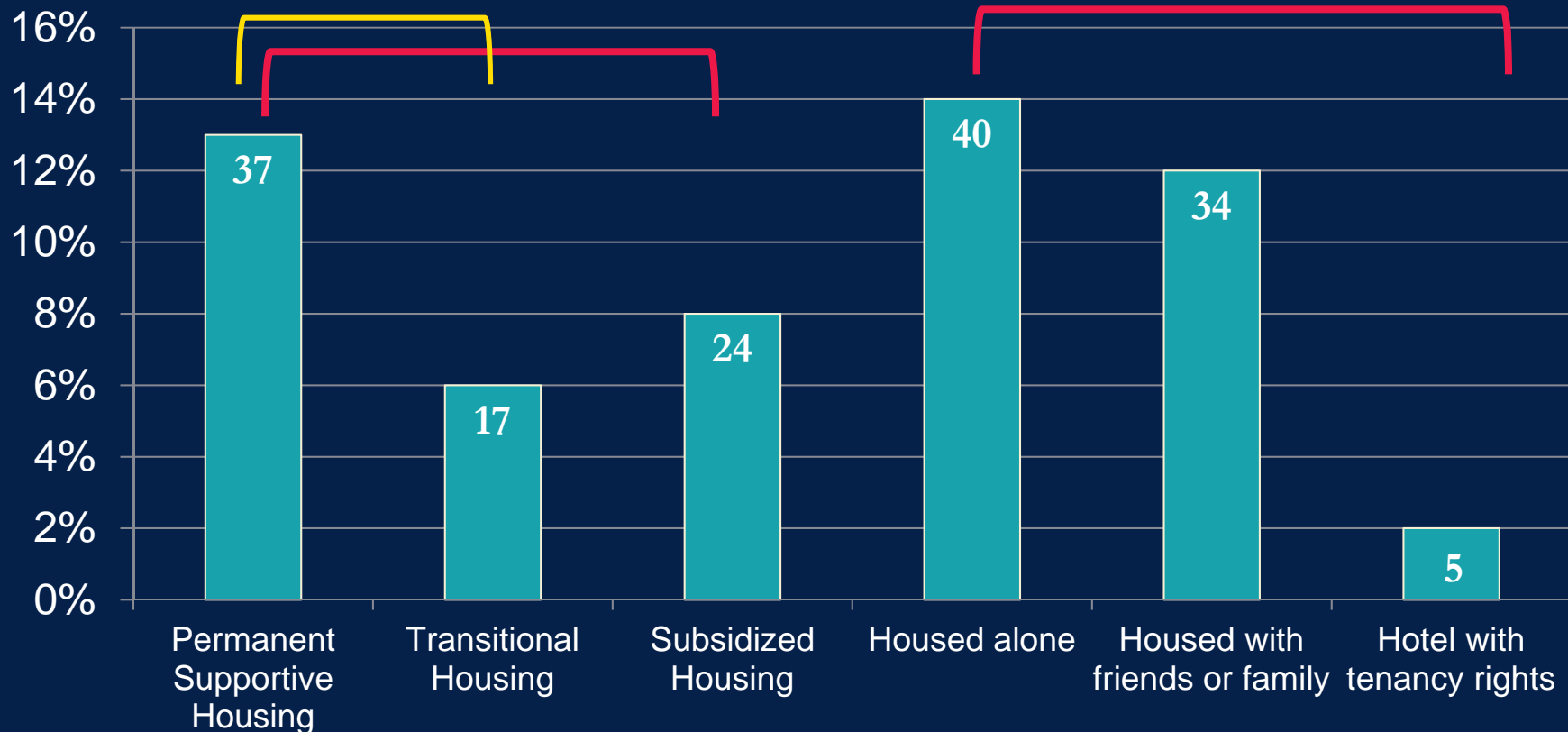


Not included:

Deceased n=17

Dropped out or unable to ascertain n=47

Where were individuals housed at 24 months? n=286



High mortality rate

of 350, 29 have died thus far

To care for aging population...

Problems

Low wage workers lack pensions/retirement funds

Severe lack of deeply affordable housing

Functional and cognitive impairment, and multi-morbidity

Disproportionately affects populations with less political power

Some solutions

- Support for low wage workers with early exit from workforce
- Increase supply of deeply affordable housing
 - 0-30% AMI at highest risk of homelessness
- Housing First Permanent Supportive Housing
 - Adapted for needs aging population
- Bolster families' ability to care for older adults
 - Recognize their strengths while assessing safety

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Community Advisory Board

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

- Robin M

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