

HIFIS Research Updates: Chronic Homelessness & Community-Level Analysis

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PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



2 HIFIS Research Updates

Outline

1. Community-Level Data

- a. Integrated data
- b. Demographics
- c. Trends
- d. Chronic and Episodic Homelessness

2. Revisiting Chronic Homelessness



Integrated data at the community level

- Integrated data requires that:
 - all shelters in a community collect data
 - all the community's data is put together in one place
 - the data is collected year after year
- Integrated data allows for:
 - a complete picture of the system and its users
 - analysis of chronic homelessness
 - measurement of trends over time
- HIFIS can facilitate this



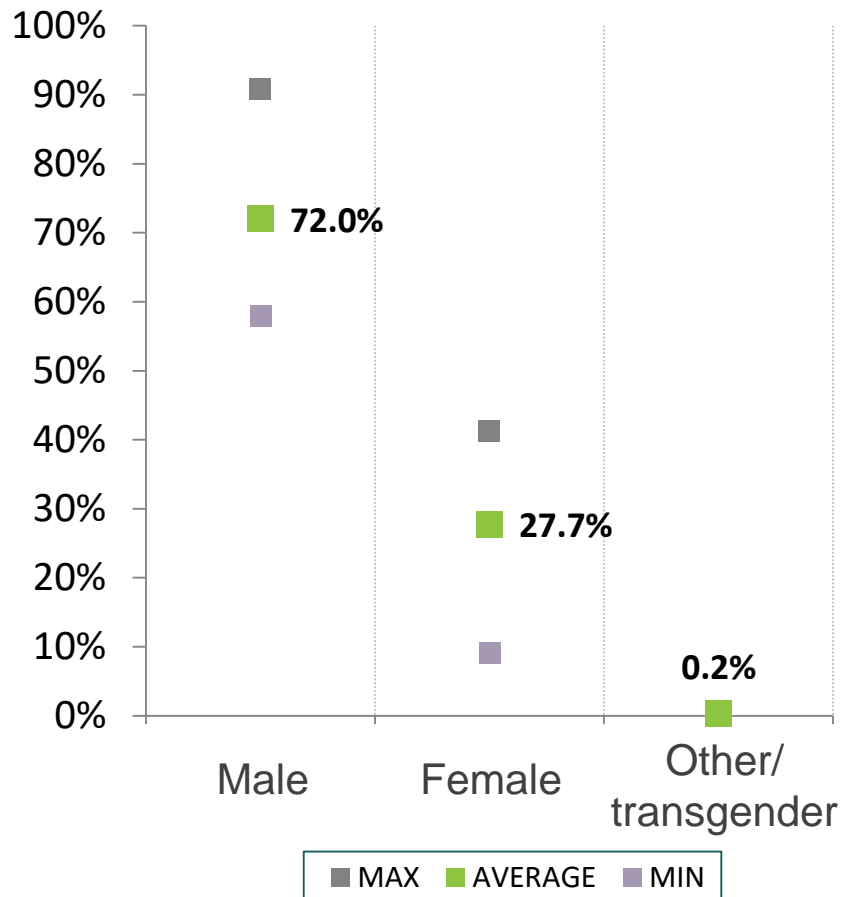
Community Progress Indicators

- A set of indicators that demonstrate community efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness.
- Many of the indicators are based on shelter data, which means HIFIS data in most cases.
- Planning and community consultation began in 2010-11 with six communities. First pilot reports were released in 2012.
- CPI has now expanded to 25 communities across Canada.



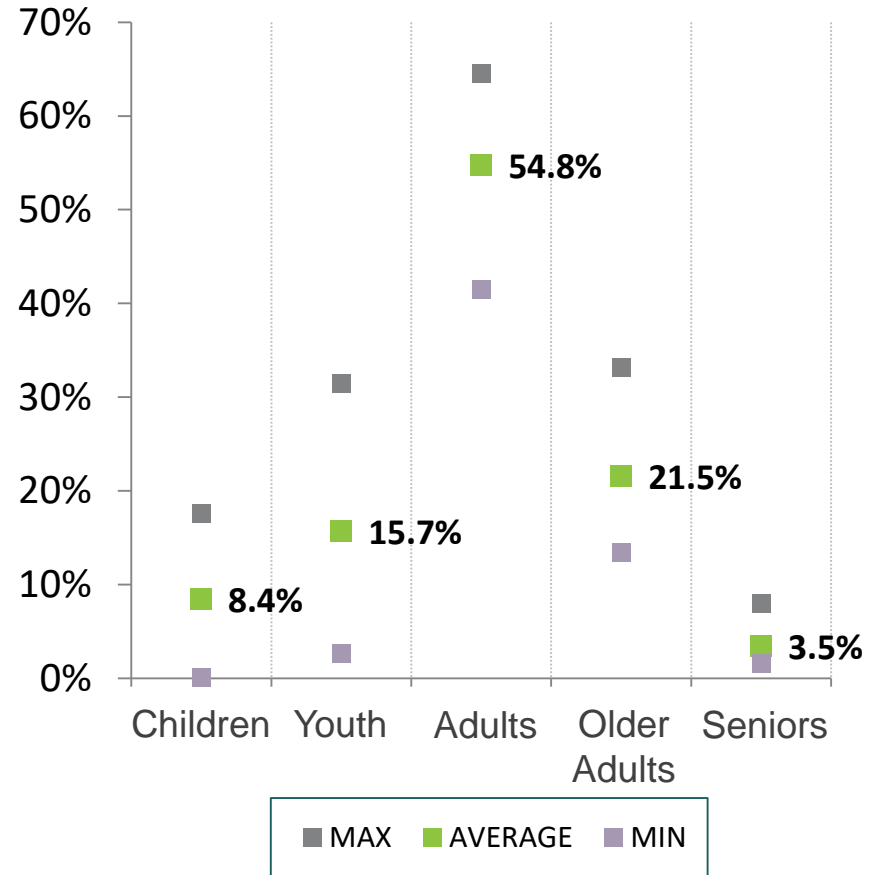
Gender

- Between 9% and 41% of shelter users are female
- VAW shelters are included in 2 communities. Usage patterns are similar.
- An average of 0.2% of shelter users listed a gender other than male or female*



Age

- Most shelter users are adults between 25 and 49 in all communities
- The percentage of shelter users over 65 varies from around 2% to 8%
- Approx. 3% to 30% are youth
- The percentage of children varied between 0.1% and 18%



Shelter Use by Indigenous Peoples

- The percentage of shelter users who are First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Aboriginal ancestry ranged from about 3% to 97% by community.
- On average, Indigenous shelter users are more likely to be female than non-Indigenous shelter users.
- There is a higher proportion of youth among Indigenous shelter users than among non-Indigenous shelter users.



Citizenship of Shelter Users

- Shelter users who are not Canadian citizens made up between 0 and 18.4% of shelter users in the communities studied.
- Citizens and non-Citizens had similar gender breakdowns.
- The percentage of children and families was higher among non-Citizens.



Veterans

- Between 0 and 8% of shelter users reported military service.
- Shelter users reporting military service were more likely to be male.
- Shelter users reporting military service were more likely to be over the age of 50 than other shelter users.

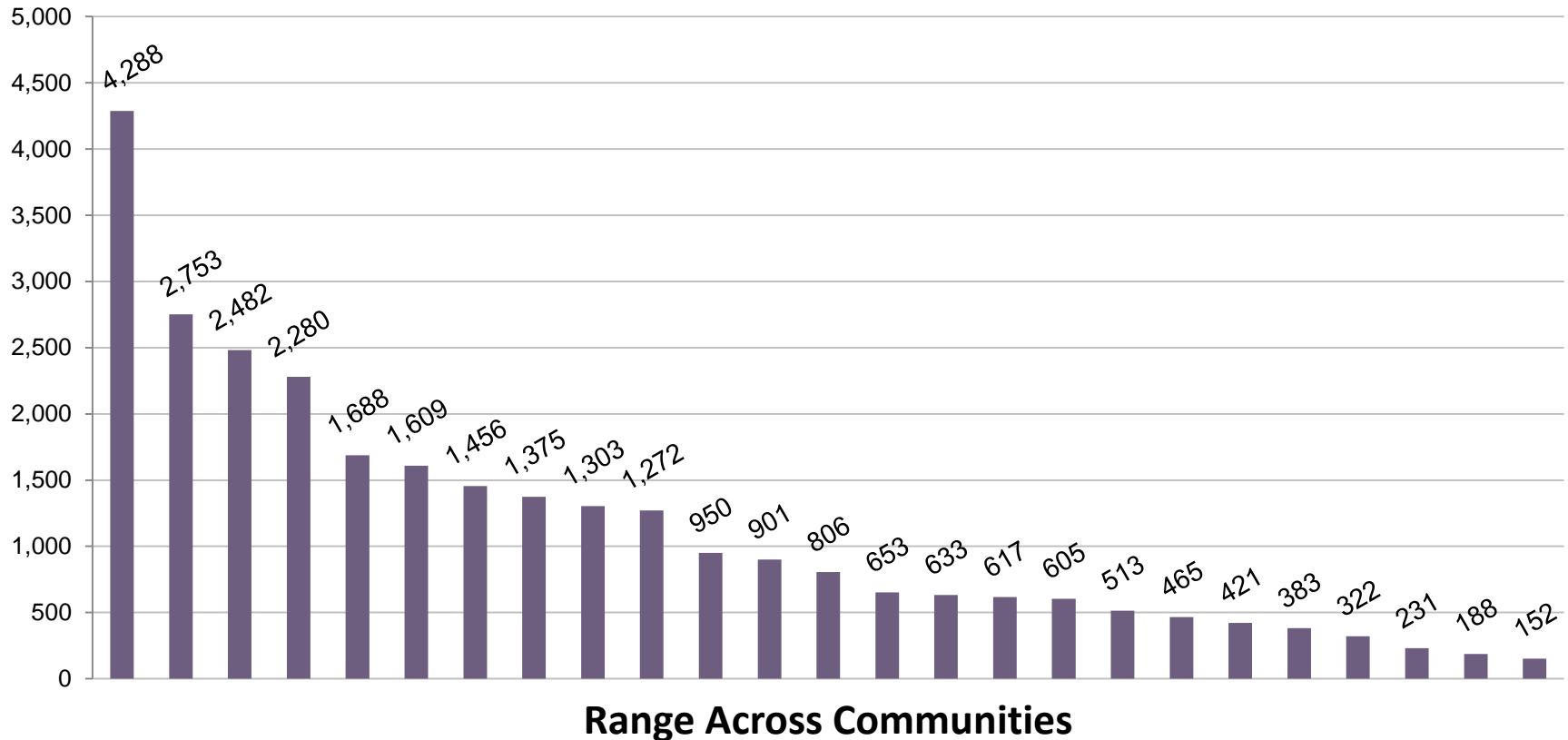


Trends – Total number of shelter users

- Eight communities showed no major change in the number of unique shelter users over the past 2 – 7 years.
- Nine communities showed a decrease. The reductions ranged from 11% to over 60%.
- Seven communities showed increases in the number of annual shelter users. The increased ranged from 9% to over 100%.



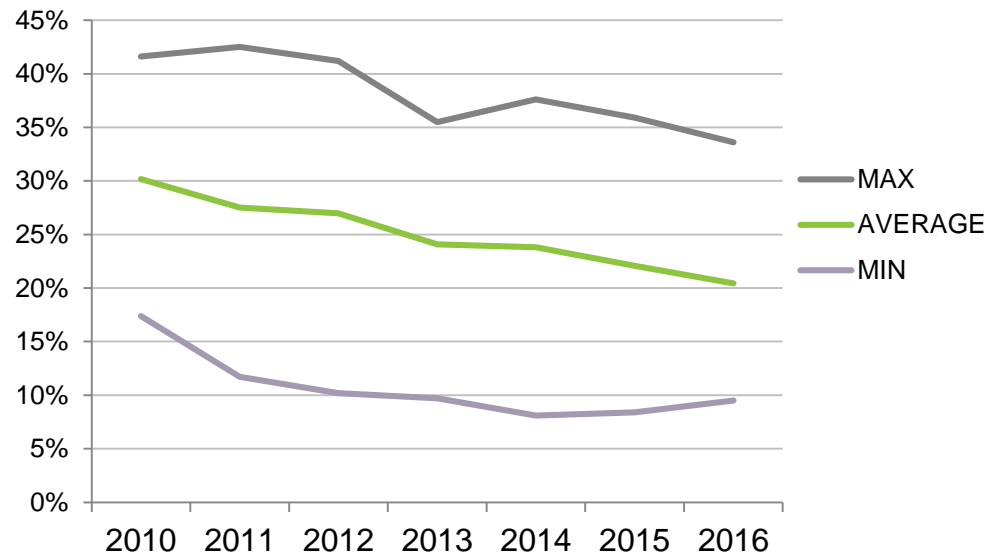
Unique Shelter Users (2016)



Family Homelessness

- In 2016, shelter users who were part of a family made up between around 10% and 30%.
- Data gaps exist where families are served by other systems.

% Shelter Users Accessing Shelter as Part of a Family

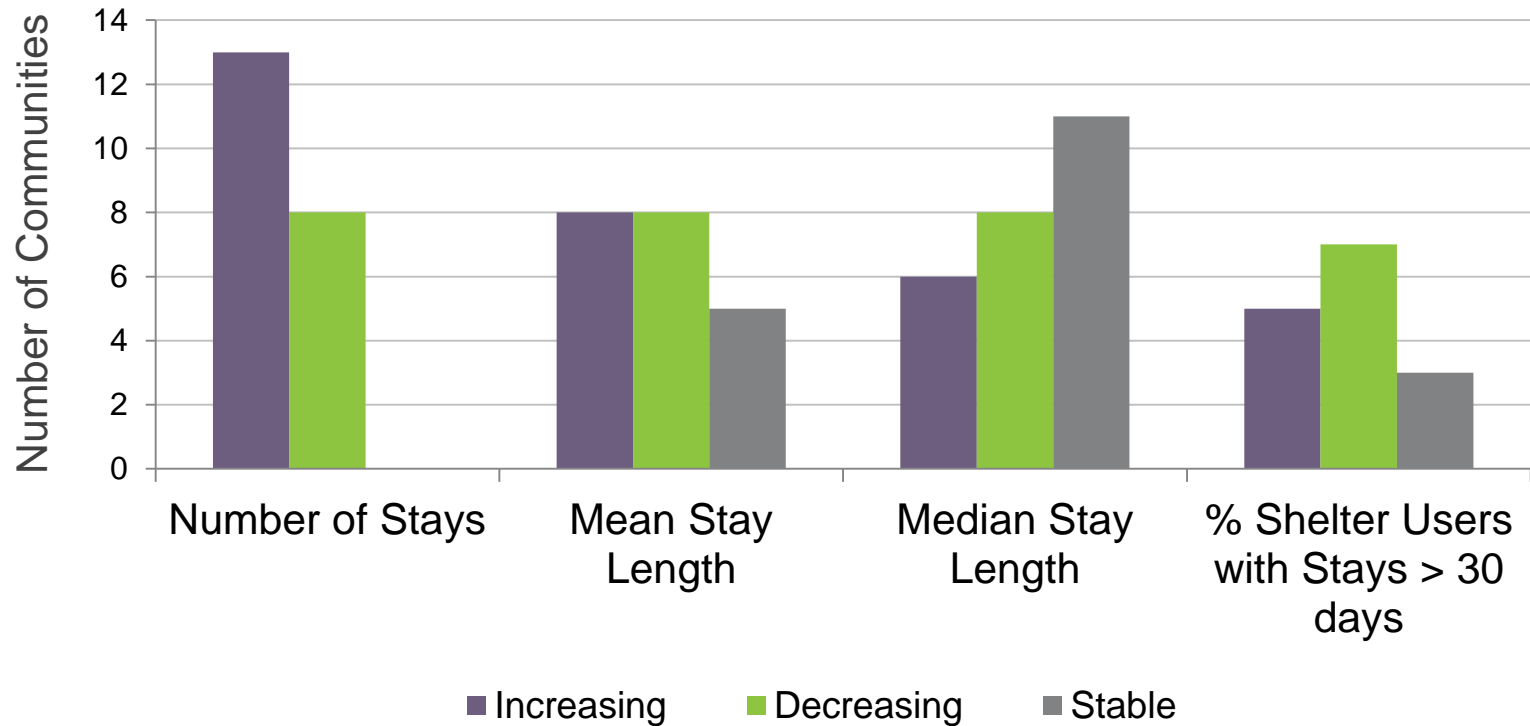


Bednights / Occupancy rate

- Occupancy rates increased for 10 communities over the last 3-7 years, with increases of 13% to more than 100%.
- Three communities showed decreases in occupancy rates over the last 5 years with decreases of 9% to around 30%.
- Occupancy rates were stable in five communities over the last 2-7 years.



Shelter Stay Trends

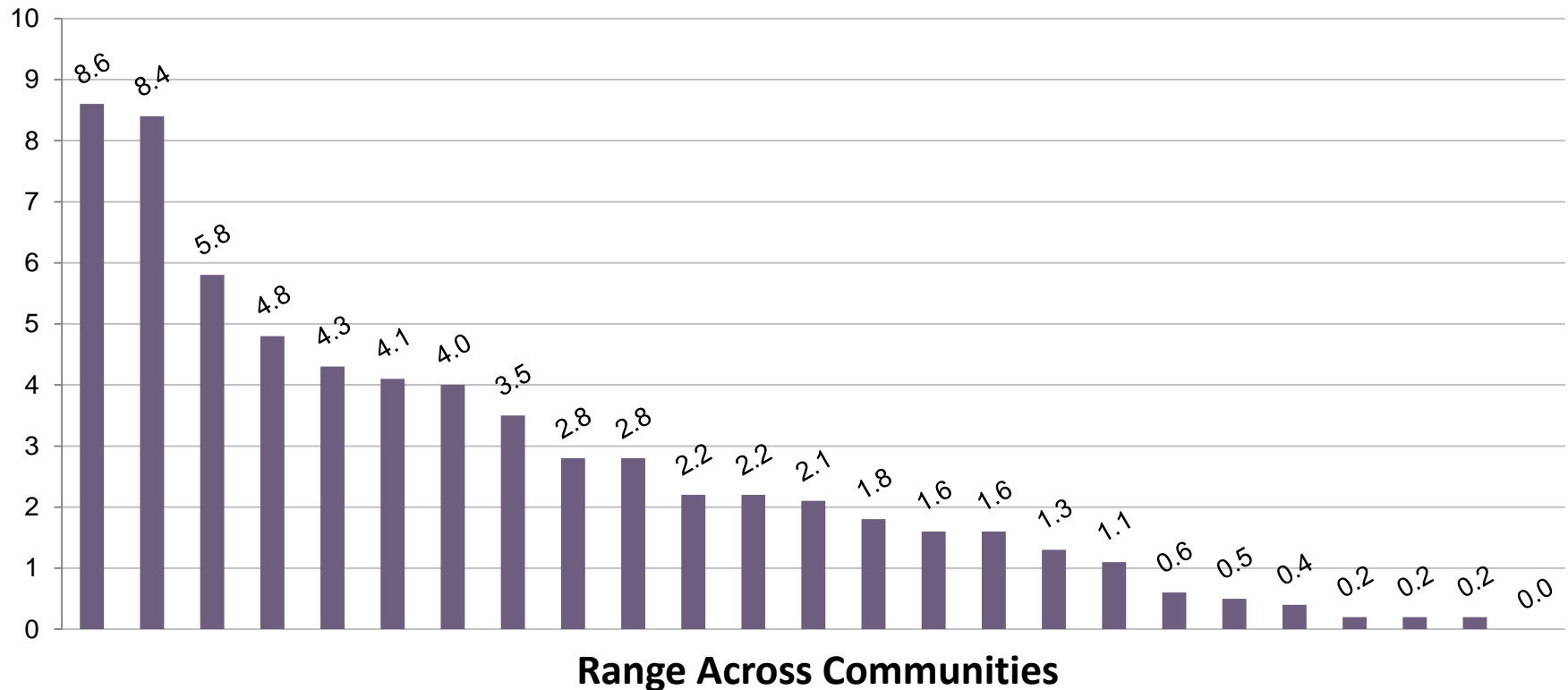


Chronic Homelessness

- A chronic shelter user has stayed at a shelter for 180 or more nights in the past year.
- Captures the small number of people who spend a lot of time in shelters.
- Ranges from 0 to 9% of shelter users, with more than half of communities reporting less than 3%.



% Chronic Shelter Users (2016)

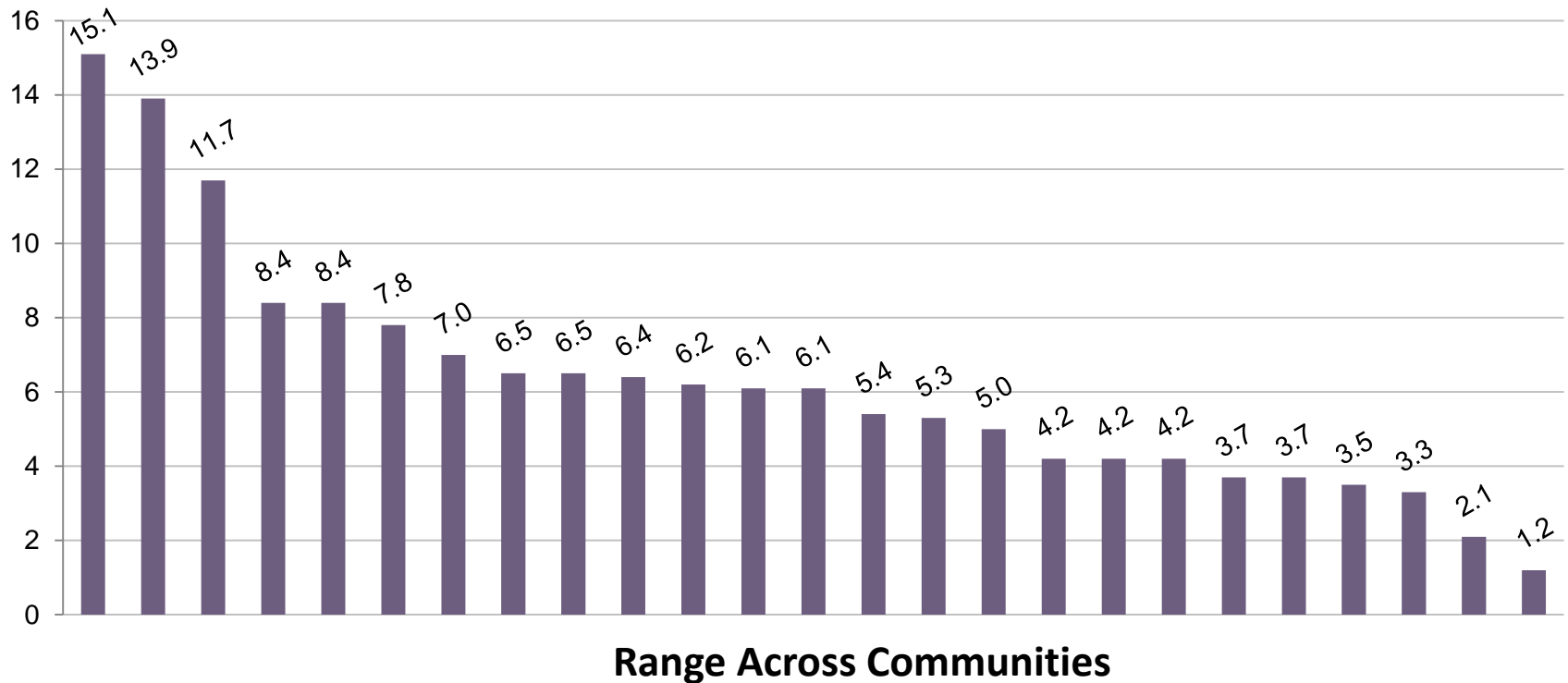


Episodic Homelessness

- An episodic shelter user has had three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year.
 - A homeless episode is considered to be a single stay or a cluster of shelter stays separated by less than 30 days.
 - A new homeless episode begins when a user returns to a shelter after 30 or more days have elapsed since their last shelter stay.
- Meant to capture those who are “in and out” of homelessness and those who are homeless for extended periods of time, but who do not use shelters that often.
- Most communities are in the 3% to 8% range.



% Episodic Shelter Users



Chronic and episodic definitions are based on analysis of shelter data

- Studies using “cluster analysis” techniques on shelter data (Kuhn and Culhane, Aubry et al.) have consistently shown **80% to 94% of shelter users are “temporary”**.
- About **3% to 11% are “episodic”** (multiple, short episodes of homelessness).
- About **2% to 10% are “chronic”** (long periods of homelessness).



Criticisms of the chronic and episodic indicators

- Too few individuals meet the thresholds:
 - Based on shelter data, fewer than 2% of shelter users were classified as chronic in most communities, and there are generally more episodic than chronic shelter users
 - In contrast, 57% of Point-in-Time survey respondents reported being chronically homeless while only 9% reported being episodically homeless
- Difficult to operationalize:
 - These definitions were not meant to be applied only to shelter data; however, that is how they are often interpreted, as it is difficult to quantify the duration of homelessness outside of shelters. Episodic is very difficult to calculate



Criticisms (cont'd)

Avoidance of shelters:

- Point-in-Time surveys suggest many homeless individuals are reluctant to use shelters. Individuals in the episodic category (based on shelter data) may have a series of short stays as opposed to one long stay.
- It can be assumed that their housing situation is precarious between shelter stays.

What is “episodic” homelessness?

- Although some people are “in and out” of homelessness, in many cases “episodic homelessness” may be an artifact of incomplete information about an individual’s history of homelessness due to using only shelter stays
- If homelessness is recurring “episodically” over a long period (years), the person is not stably housed and probably homeless most of the time. Why should they be classified separately from the “chronically” homeless?



A new way of looking at shelter data

- Existing analysis is only taking sheltered homelessness into consideration and it is not capturing the full extent of individual histories of homelessness
- New analysis uses a minimum of 5 years of complete shelter data from a community. Complete means all shelters reporting so there are no gaps in an individual's history of shelter stays
- Looks at the middle year of the study period, to ensure shelter stays in previous and subsequent years are taken into consideration



A new way of looking at shelter data

- Because there are so many temporary shelter users, they add up quickly over years and outnumber the chronically homeless, who are largely the same people each year
- Instead of looking at the entire period of time as a block, examine the annual flow in and out of shelters
- Instead of looking at discrete stays, measure homeless duration as the time from the first appearance at a shelter to the last appearance at a shelter. It is assumed that these individuals are not stably housed between shelter stays. *This takes into consideration homelessness experienced outside of the shelter system*

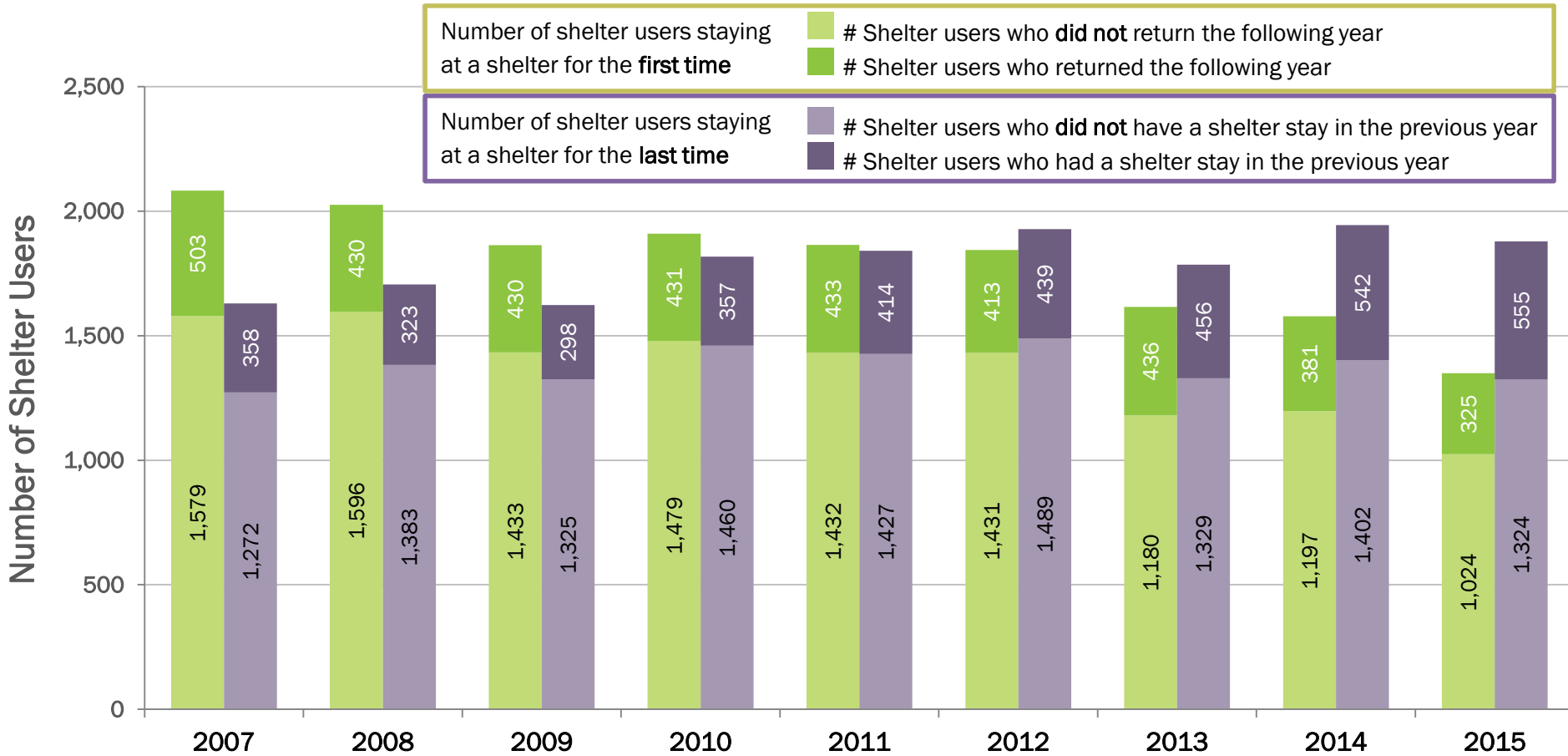


Starting Point: inflow/outflow

- Gives an idea of the number of shelter users who are new to the shelter system (inflow) and the number who do not return (outflow)
- Most communities showed a trend towards more outflow versus inflow of clients, which means a reduction in shelter users over time
- Also allows us to see the part of the shelter population that is “stable” from year to year



Inflow/outflow



Example Community 2010-2016

- Between 2010 and 2016, 13,947 unique individuals used a shelter in the community
- In 2013, 3,143 unique individuals used a shelter
 - Of these, 57.3% (1,800) were new users (i.e. had their first shelter stay in 2013)
 - 56.8% (1,785) had their last stay in 2013 (i.e. may have exited homelessness)
- 37% had their first *and* last stay in 2013, meaning they did not use a shelter in any other year. These could be considered temporarily homeless.



Example Community 2010-2016 (cont.)

- The other 63% (1,967) had a shelter stay before and/or after 2013
- Of these 1,967 people:
 - 32% (624) first used a shelter in 2013
 - 31% (609) used a shelter for the last time in 2013
- More than 1 in 3 individuals who first used a shelter in 2013 went on to use a shelter again in subsequent years



The “core” shelter population

- 734 individuals (23.4% of the total) were homeless in 2013 and also experienced homelessness before 2013 and after 2013
- This can be considered the “core” shelter population, or the portion of the homeless population that is static from year to year. These individuals were homeless in 2013, but their homelessness did not start or end in 2013



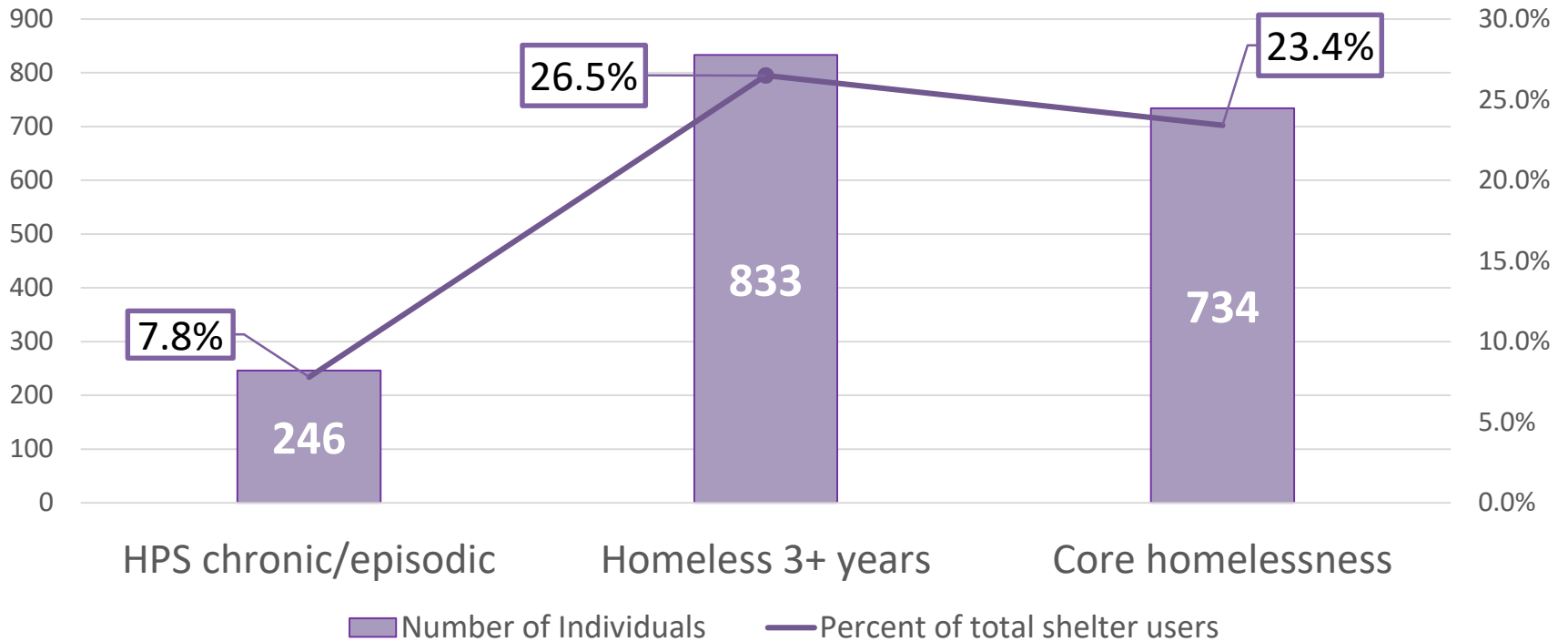
Yet another way to look at the data

833 individuals (26.5%) using shelters in 2013 experienced homelessness for a duration of three years or more

Number of years from first stay to last stay	Number of Individuals	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
6 to 7	132	4.2	4.2
5 to 6	143	4.5	8.7
4 to 5	197	6.3	15.0
3 to 4	361	11.5	26.5
2 to 3	346	11.0	37.5
1 to 2	352	11.2	48.7
0 to 1	1,612	51.3	100.0
Total	3,143	100.0	



Comparison of results



Core shelter pop is approximated by those using shelters for 3+ years

- It is difficult to model or calculate inflow/outflow and core shelter pop.
- Core cannot be calculated for current year.
- ...but it is easy to calculate the number of people using shelters for three or more years!



Limitations

- Some chronically homeless people never use shelters, they are still not counted.
- It is not possible to identify whether those newly entering shelter will become chronically homeless using the information available in shelter data. Perhaps other assessment tools could predict.



Conclusion

- The results can be replicated in other communities (tested 17).
- For 2016, the average percentage using shelters for 3+ years was 29% (range was 12% to 41%).
- This is a relatively simple way to measure the size of the chronically homeless population.



Integrated Community-level Data

- The first part of this presentation showed some trends in shelter use and demographic characteristics of shelter users by community. The second part showed a deeper analysis of shelter use patterns and chronic homelessness
- This type of analysis is only possible if **all** shelters in the community are collecting data, and more importantly, if all the data are put together in one place
- Many patterns and trends emerge after the data accumulates for several years



Thank you!

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