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The First Year of Shelter Use
(and What it Can Tell Us)

Ron Kneebone

Presentation for the Data That Makes A Difference (DTMAD) Conference

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The Homelessness Environment

- The homelessness environment is more than shelters, supportive housing, and all the other services provided by community-based organizations
- The homelessness environment includes the housing market and the labour market because the outcomes they produce determine whether people have sufficient resources to remain housed
- It includes community supports in the form of charities and food banks that enable individuals and families to stretch limited incomes sufficiently to remain housed
- It includes government income supports and is sensitive to their design, their generosity, and the speed with which these supports are provided

The Homelessness Environment

- The homelessness environment is populated by more than people without a home
- It is also populated by individuals and families at heightened risk of homelessness
  - Kneebone and Wilkins (2023) have guessed in contains 115,000 individuals in Calgary
- When thought of in these ways, community-based organizations are best viewed as a rescue boat in a sea of housing insecurity made calm and shallow, or deep and frothy, by the decisions made by others
- Any evaluation of a homeless serving sector needs to be aware of and account for the homelessness environment in which it operates

Question: How Many are New to the Rescue Boat (and how long are they staying aboard)?

- The Data:
  - Daily data on overnight stays by single people in The DI, Mustard Seed, Salvation Army, and Alpha House (typically about 99% of all singles)
  - 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2025
  - Censoring on the left and the right
  - Left with 52,129 new entrants to the shelter system who in total stayed 1,674,586 nights during the 365 days following their first admission

Question: How Many are New in the Rescue Boat (and how long are they staying)?

- The Approach:
  - Assign new entrants to cohorts. Members of the 2009 cohort are those who entered shelter for the first time during calendar year 2009. Etcetera for 16 cohorts
  - Observe how the size of cohorts change between 2009 and 2024
  - Observe how nights spent in shelter over the 365 days following admission changes by cohort

Cohort	First Admissions	%Male	%Female	% Adults (25+ yrs)	% Youth (18-24 yrs)
2009	5,355	86.5%	13.5%	88.5%	11.5%
2010	2,104	83.4%	16.6%	81.1%	18.9%
2011	2,420	81.0%	19.0%	80.3%	19.7%
2012	3,269	78.2%	21.8%	82.0%	18.0%
2013	4,394	79.9%	20.1%	81.6%	18.4%
2014	3,679	79.4%	20.6%	83.3%	16.7%
2015	3,280	77.1%	22.9%	81.7%	18.3%
2016	3,076	78.1%	21.9%	83.5%	16.5%
2017	2,978	73.8%	26.2%	83.0%	17.0%
2018	3,036	71.8%	28.2%	84.1%	15.9%
2019	3,281	72.5%	27.5%	85.1%	14.9%
2020	1,955	71.1%	28.9%	86.3%	13.7%
2021	2,422	68.2%	31.8%	86.0%	14.0%
2022	3,257	68.5%	31.5%	86.2%	13.8%
2023	3,852	70.5%	29.5%	87.2%	12.8%
2024	3,771	71.8%	28.2%	88.7%	11.3%
2009-24	52,129	76.2%	23.8%	84.5%	15.5%

Demographic characteristics of first admissions

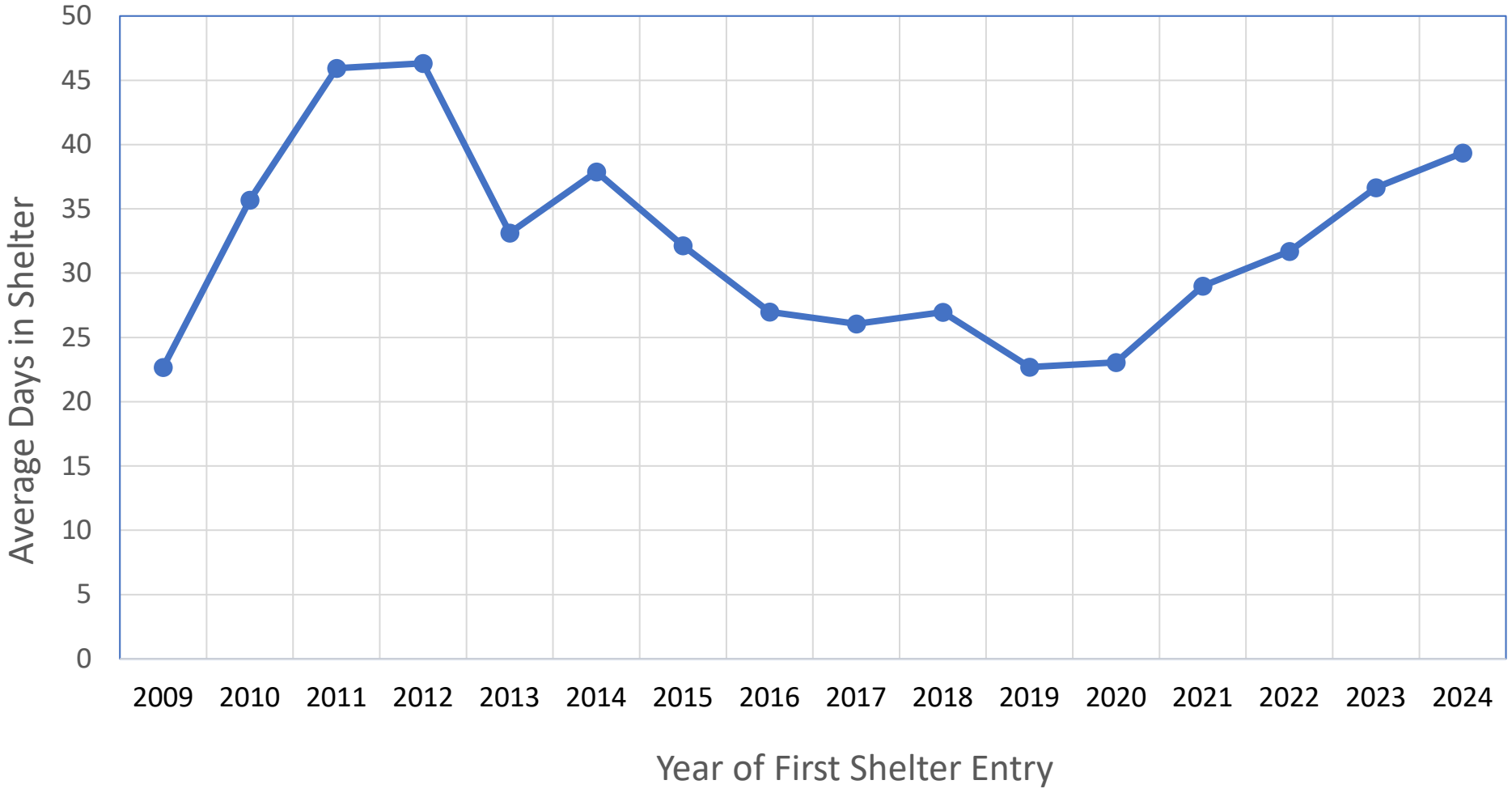
Cohort	First Admissions	Average Number of First Admissions per day	Average Daily First Admissions per million people aged 18+
2009	5,355	14.7	13.3
2010	2,104	5.8	5.1
2011	2,420	6.6	5.6
2012	3,269	9.0	7.6
2013	4,394	12.0	9.9
2014	3,679	10.1	8.1
2015	3,280	9.0	7.1
2016	3,076	8.4	6.6
2017	2,978	8.2	6.3
2018	3,036	8.3	6.4
2019	3,281	9.0	6.8
2020	1,955	5.4	4.0
2021	2,422	6.6	4.9
2022	3,257	8.9	6.4
2023	3,852	10.6	7.1
2024	3,771	10.3	6.4
2009-24	52,129	8.9	6.9

New admissions *per day, every day*

Cohort	First Admissions	Overnight Stays in 365 days following First Admission
2009	5,355	121,480
2010	2,104	75,093
2011	2,420	111,179
2012	3,269	151,421
2013	4,394	145,565
2014	3,679	139,376
2015	3,280	105,409
2016	3,076	83,002
2017	2,978	77,614
2018	3,036	81,899
2019	3,281	74,462
2020	1,955	45,074
2021	2,422	70,230
2022	3,257	103,233
2023	3,852	141,189
2024	3,771	148,360
2009-24	52,129	1,674,586

Volatility in nightly stays following first admission

Average Number of Days in Shelter During the 365 Days Following First Admission, All Ages, All Gender



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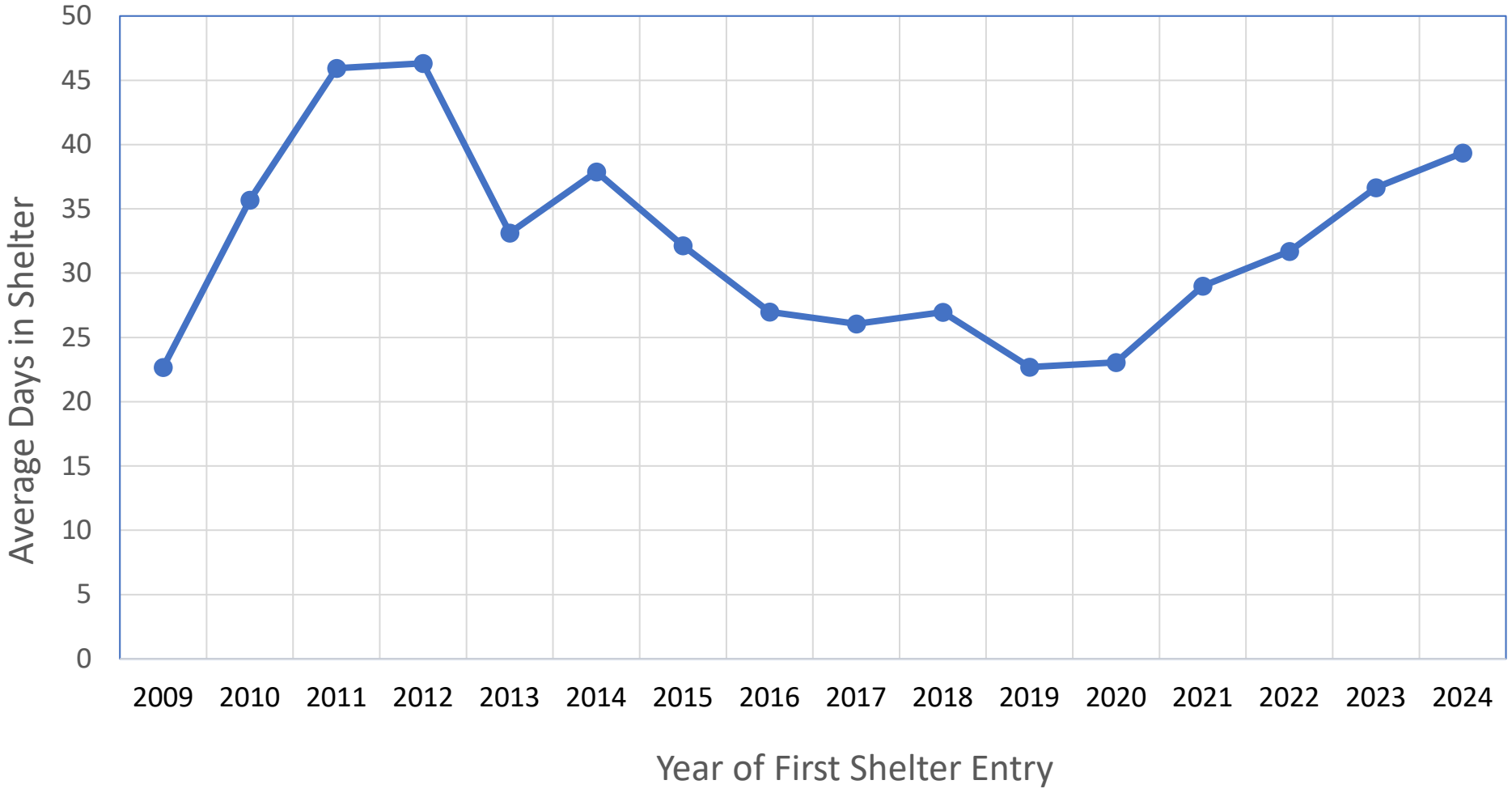
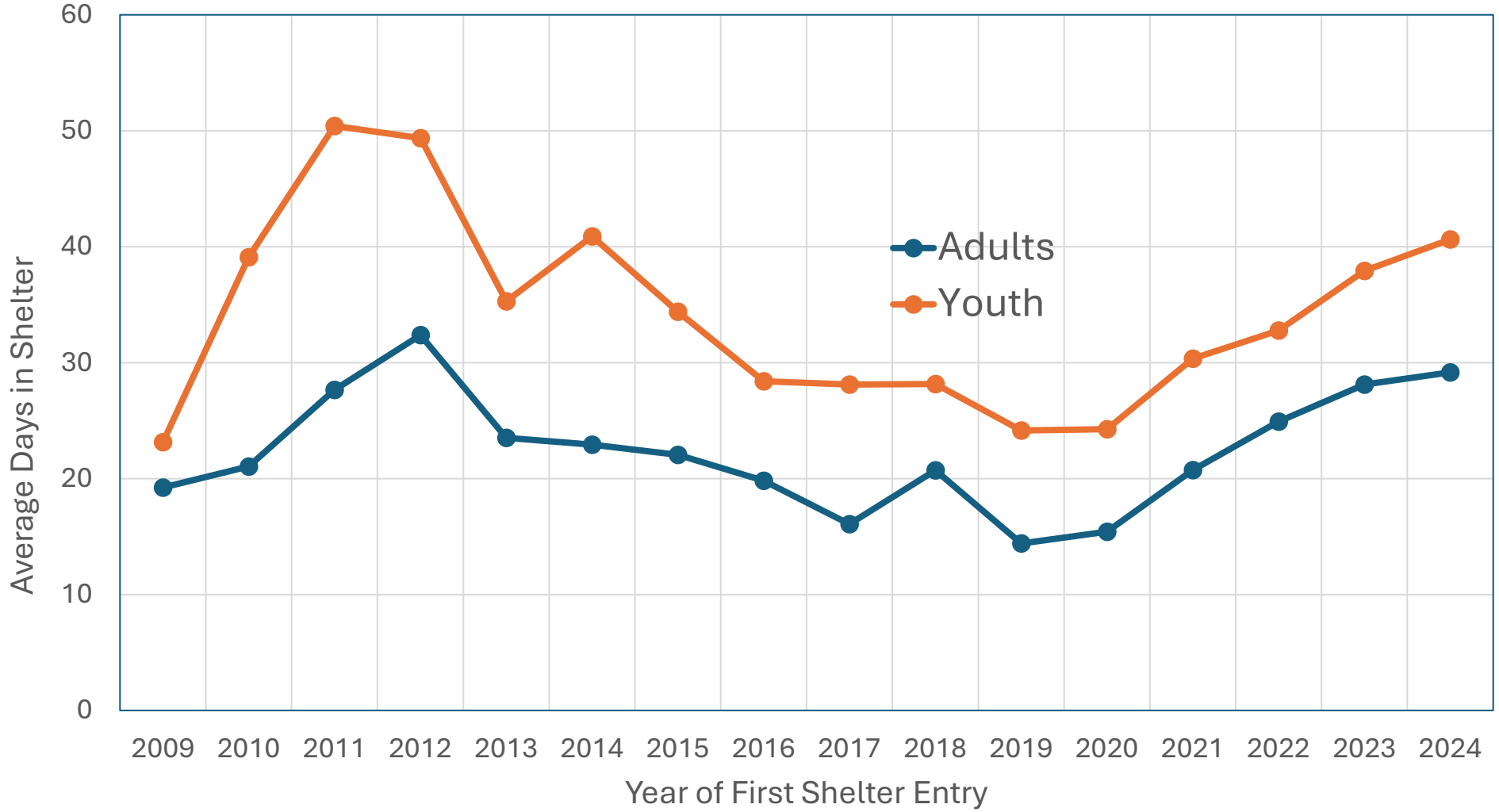
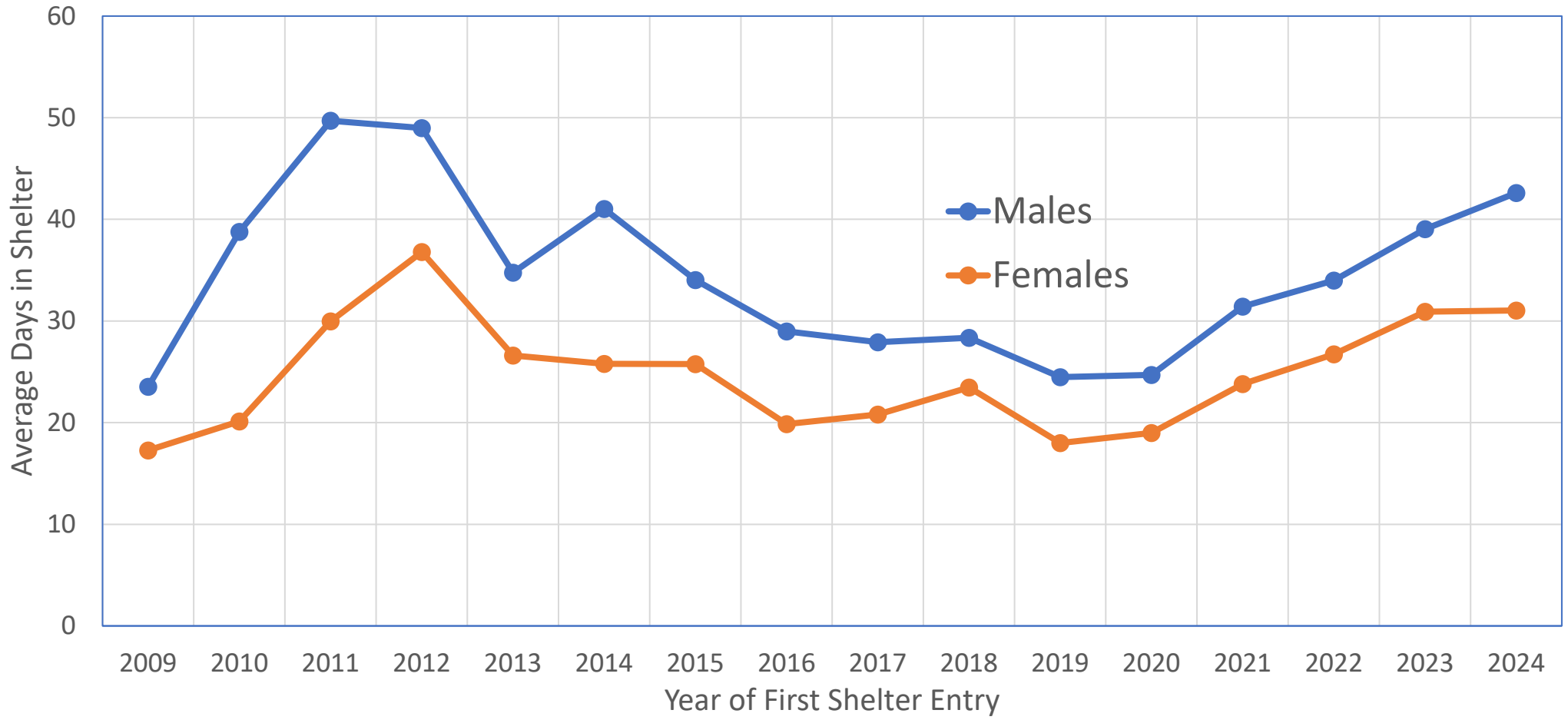


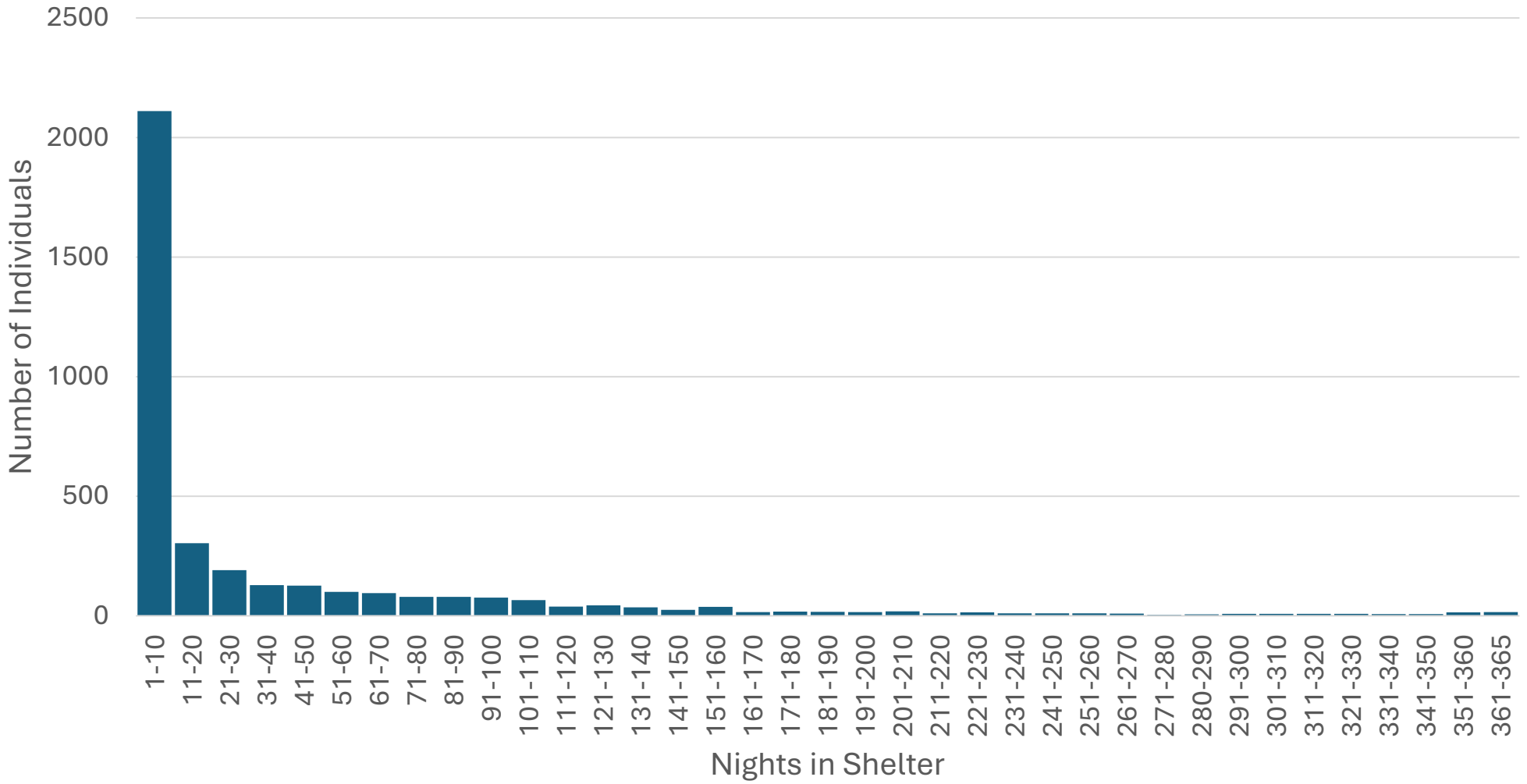
Average Number of Days in Shelter During the 365 Days Following First Admission, Adults versus Youth



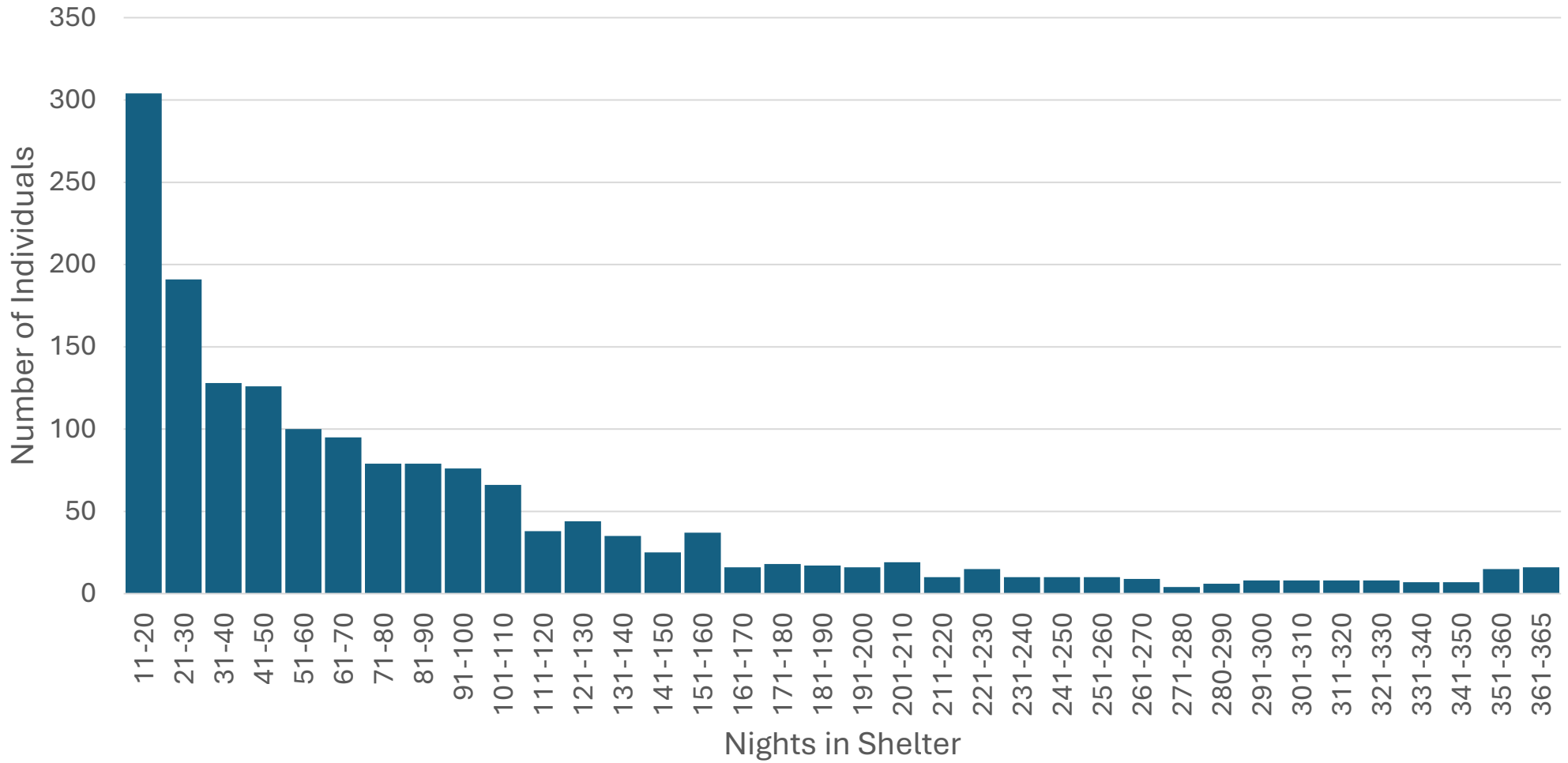
Average Number of Days in Shelter During the 365 Days Following First Entry, Male versus Female



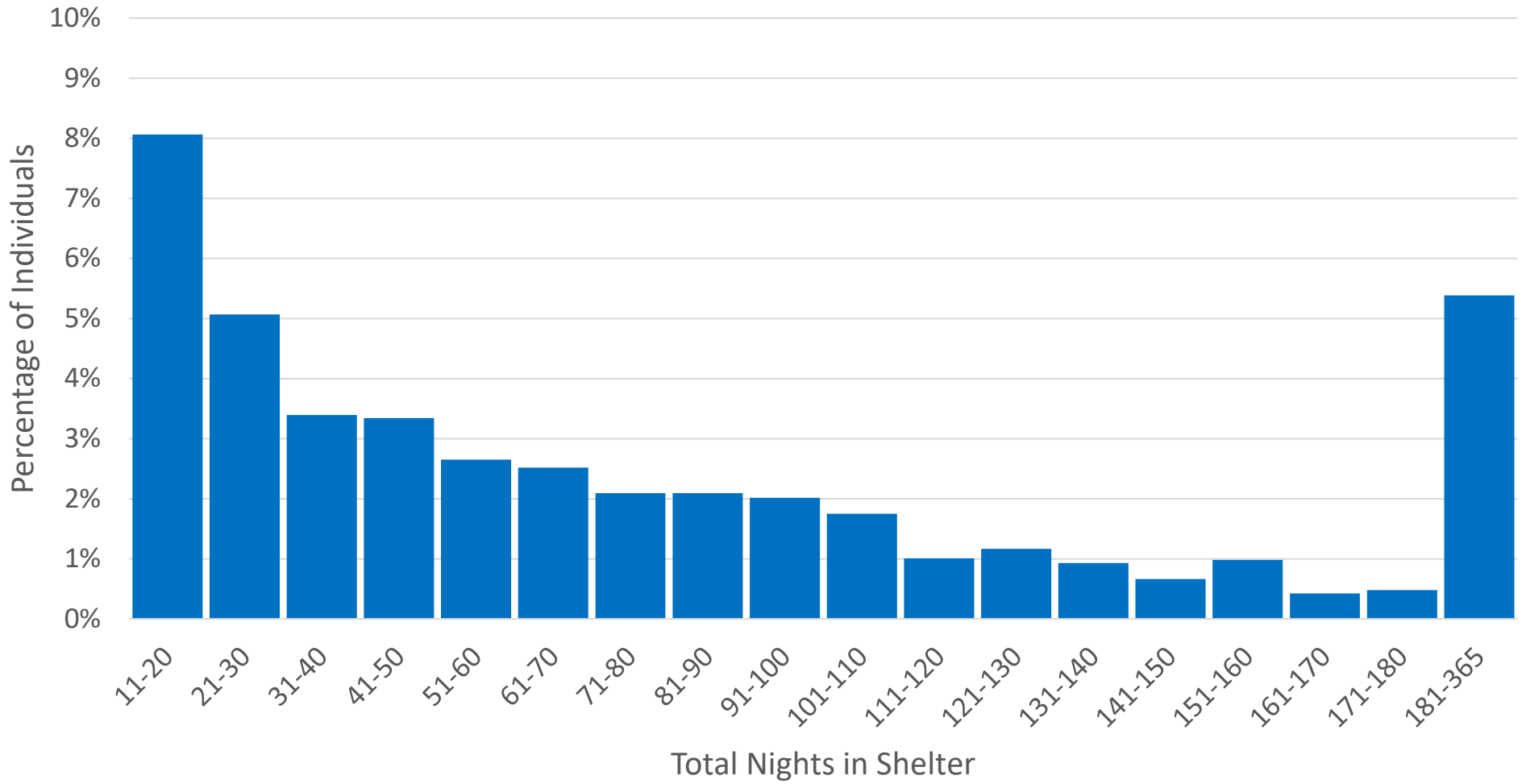
Number of Individuals by Nights in Shelter Following First Admission, 2024 Cohort (3,771 individuals)

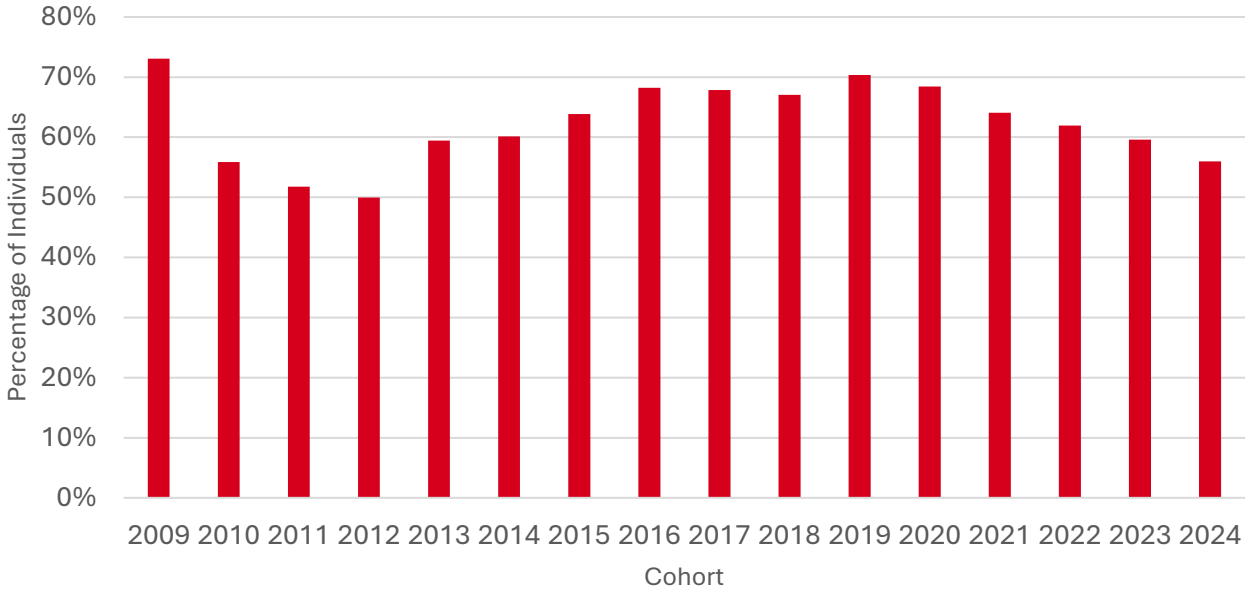


Number of Individuals by Nights in Shelter Following First Admission, 2024 Cohort, Omitting Those Staying 1-10 Nights



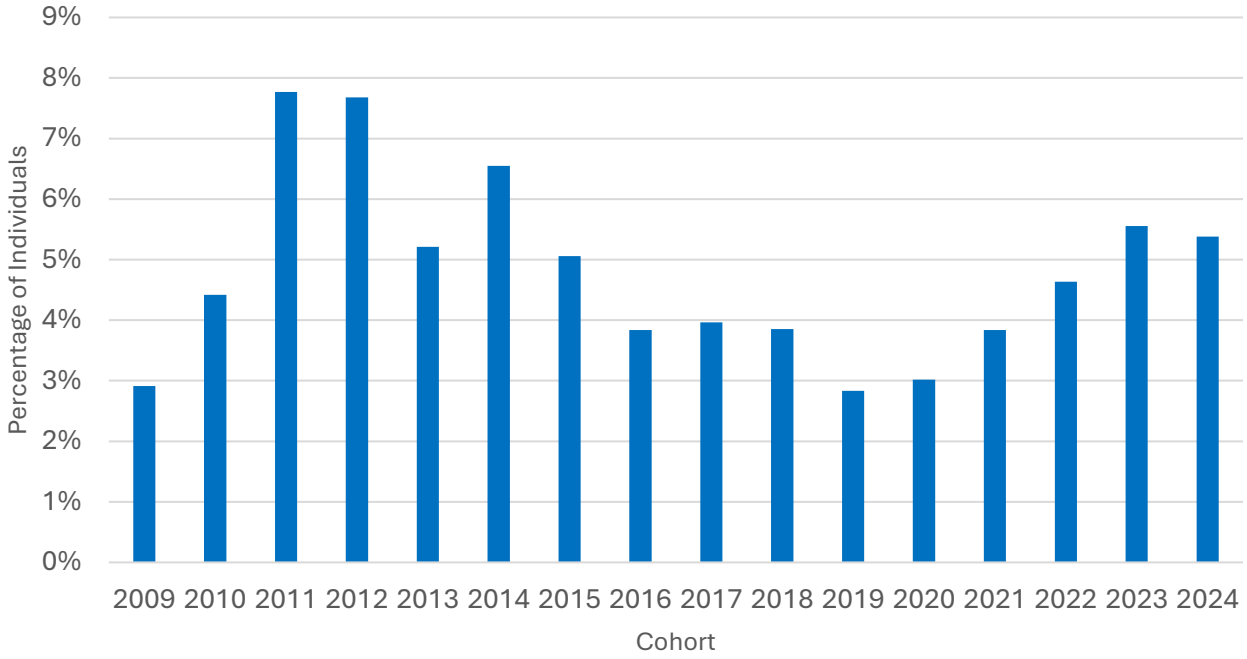
Percentage of Individuals by Nights in Shelter Following First Admission, 2024 Cohort, Omitting Those Staying 1-10 Nights

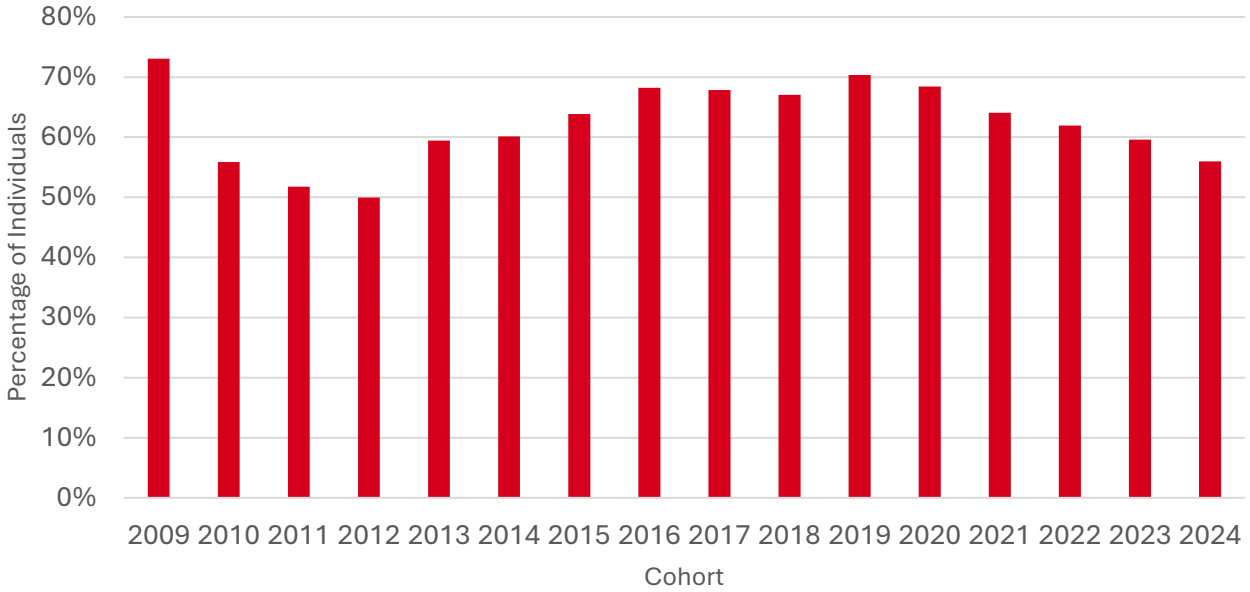




Percentage staying 1-10 nights in 365 days following first admission

Percentage staying 361-365 nights in 365 days following first admission





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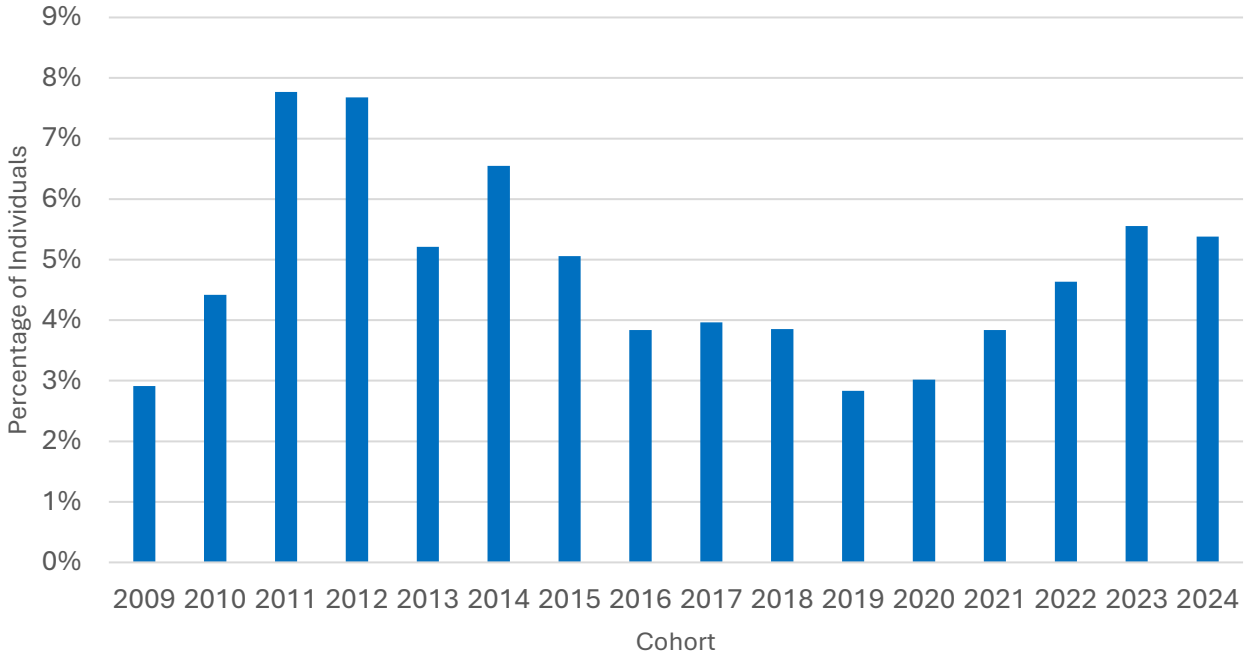

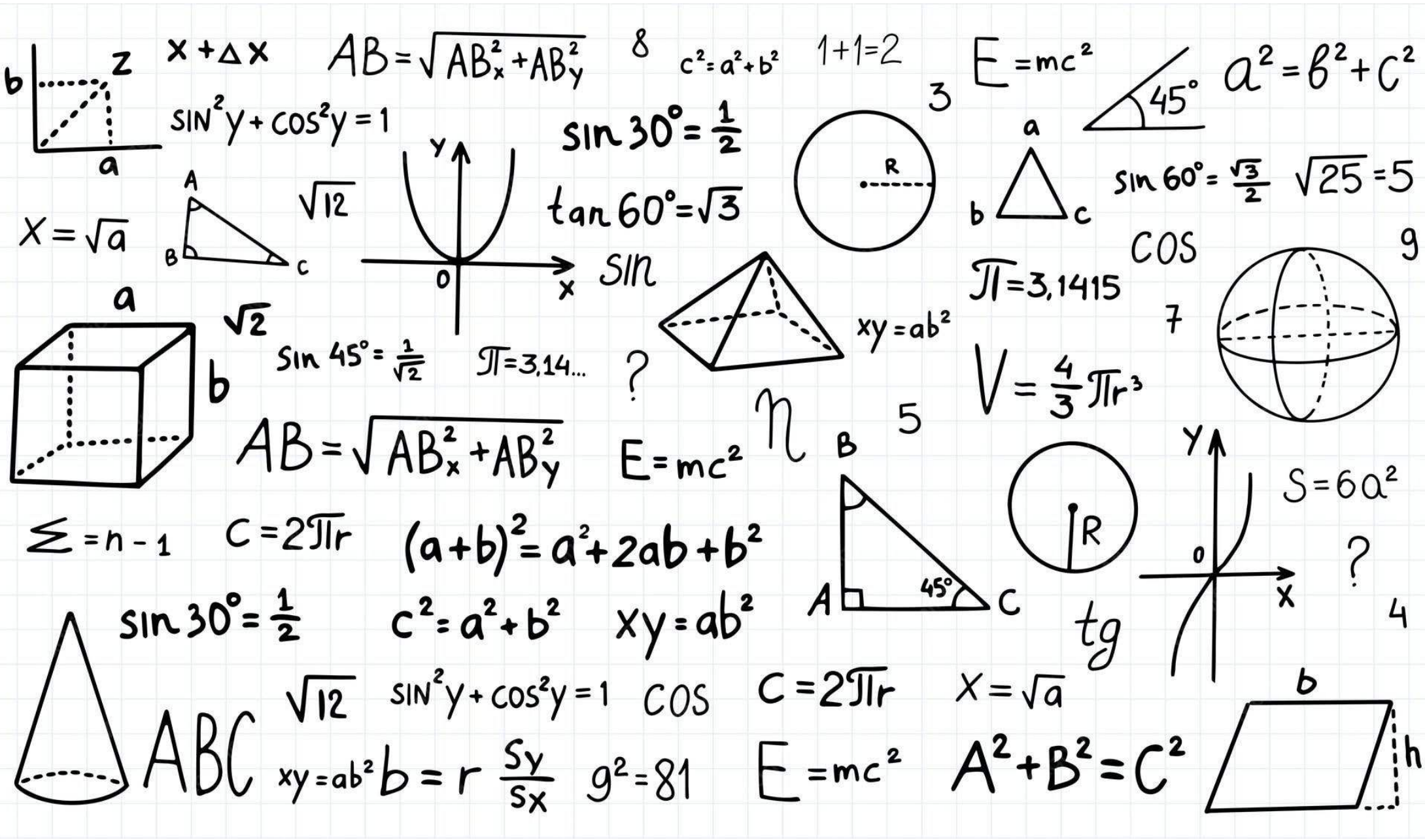
b
z
a
x + Δx
AB = √(AB_x² + AB_y²)
8
c² = a² + b²
1+1=2
E = mc²
3
45°
a² = b² + c²
sin² y + cos² y = 1
sin 30° = 1/2
R
a
b
c
sin 60° = √3/2
√25 = 5
A
B
C
√12
tan 60° = √3
y
0
x
sin
X = √a
cos
9
π = 3,1415
7
xy = ab²
a
b
√2
sin 45° = 1/√2
π = 3,14...
?
V = 4/3 πr³
AB = √(AB_x² + AB_y²)
E = mc²
η
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B
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0
x
S = 6a²
?
4
Σ = n - 1
C = 2πr
(a+b)² = a² + 2ab + b²
sin 30° = 1/2
c² = a² + b²
xy = ab²
tg
ABC
√12
sin² y + cos² y = 1
cos
C = 2πr
X = √a
xy = ab²
b = r Sy/Sx
g² = 81
E = mc²
A² + B² = C²
b
h

Effects of $100 Increase in Monthly Rent with No Change in Income Support, 2024 Cohort

	All	Men	Women	Youth (18-24)	Adults (25+)
On First Admissions					
% change	10.0%	12.0%	4.2%	12.0%	9.5%
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission					
% change	8.7%	8.5%	7.0%	8.8%	8.9%
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission Lasting 1-20 Nights					
% change	-2.4%				
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission Lasting More than 180 Nights					
% change	13.1%				

Effects of $500 Increase in Income Support with No Change in Rent, 2024 Cohort

	All	Men	Women	Youth (18-24)	Adults (25+)
On First Admissions					
% change	-6.8%	-8.0%	-7.1%	-5.7%	-8.1%
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission					
% change	-5.9%	-5.8%	-4.7%	-6.0%	-6.1%
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission Lasting 1-20 Nights					
% change	1.6%				
On Nightly Stays in 365 Days Following First Admission Lasting More than 180 Nights					
% change	-8.9%				

Questions for the Audience …

- Changes in the ratio of rent to income accounts for roughly 30% of the variation in the number of new admissions and number of nights in shelter

- It is likely there are other external influences

- Are there candidates for consideration of internal influences?

Final Comments

- Achieving functional zero is frequently identified as a goal of homeless serving sectors
- But that's wrong.
- Sensitivity of first admissions and lengths of stay following first admission to the rent to income ratio makes clear it must be a goal for the *community*
- Whether shelters are dynamic or static, and whether progress is made achieving functional zero, are largely policy choices made outside the homeless serving sector

Thanks for listening!

kneebone@ucalgary.ca

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