

Journeys Home:

Early insights into the dynamics of homelessness



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



MELBOURNE INSTITUTE
of Applied Economic and Social Research

Motivation

- White Paper → National Homelessness Research Agenda
 - “to improve the evidence base for preventing and responding to homelessness”
- Census counts = limited
- Longitudinal data
 - Critical for understanding pathways
 - Previous studies = small / group-specific samples

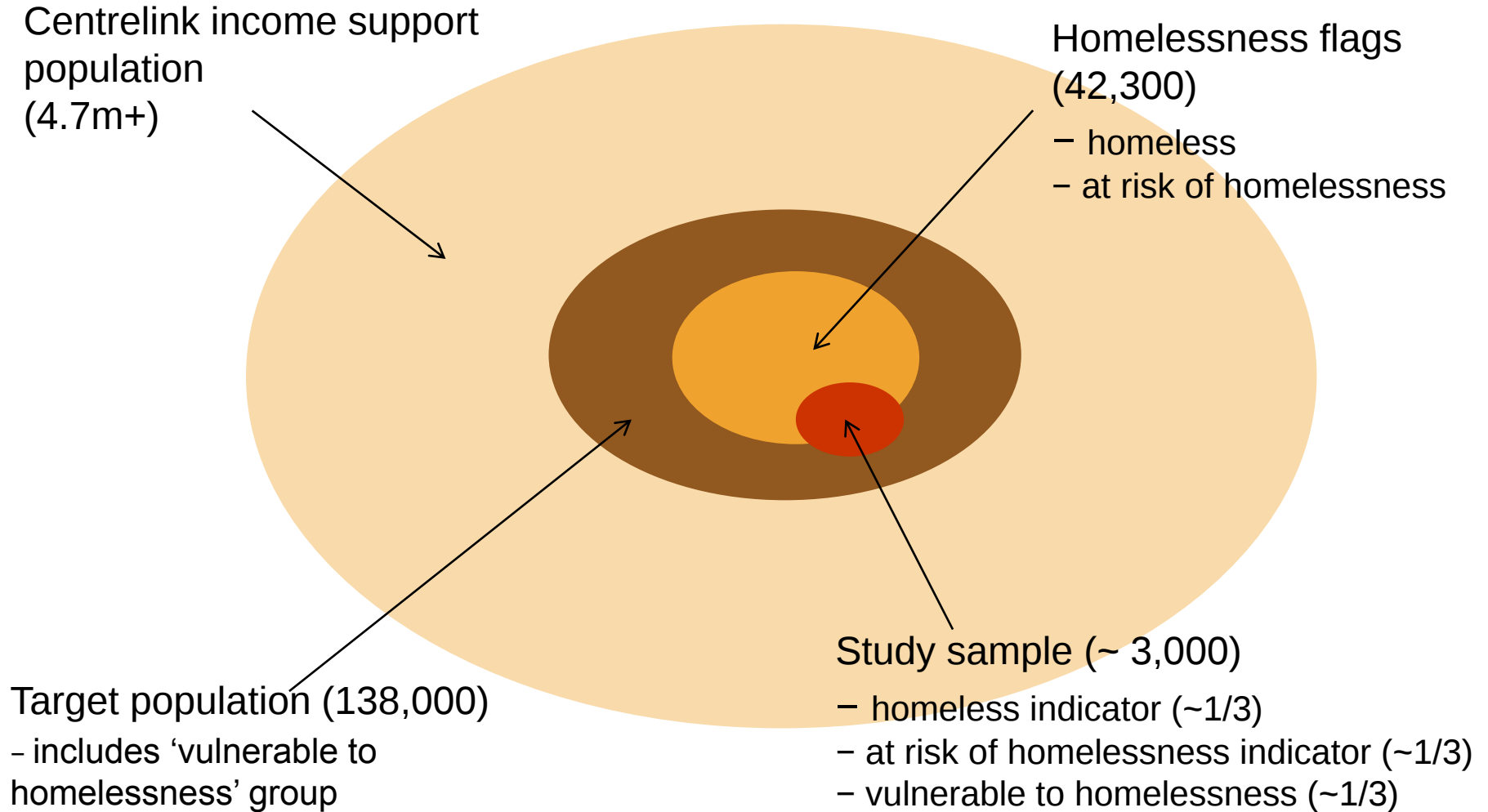
(Selected) Research Questions

- How persistent / episodic is homelessness?
- What factors are associated with instability/stability in housing?
- What characteristics distinguish at-risk families that become homeless from those that do not?
- What are the protective factors for staying out of homelessness?
- What are the triggers that lead to homelessness?
- What are the factors that are important in the road out of homelessness?

Key Design Features

- 4-wave panel; 6-month intervals
 - plus small scale pilot
- Sample
 - Stratified by region and clustered: 36 locations
 - 3 sub-samples
 - Size: ~3000 cases issued to field
- Only follow persons that respond at w1
- F2F (CAPI) interviews wherever possible
 - Telephone is an option
- \$40 incentive
- Average interview length = 1 hr (in w1), 35 mins (w2+)

Population and sample



W1 & W2 Response Outcomes

	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	N	% of total in-scope	N	% of total in-scope
Out-of-scope	273		22	
Non-contact	500	18.4	68	4.1
Other non-response*	537	19.5	63	3.8
Interviews	1682	61.9	1529	92.1
TOTAL sample issued	2992	100.0	1682	100.0

* Refusal, incapable or contact made but no interview resulted.

Profile of Respondents (1)

	JH Wave 1	JH Wave 2	Australian population
Male	54.7	53.3	49.4
Female	45.3	46.7	50.6
15-17 years	9.5	6.2	4.8
18-20 years	16.5	19.0	5.1
21-24 years	12.6	13.1	7.3
25-34 years	21.7	21.4	17.7
35-44 years	20.0	19.7	17.3
45-54 years	14.0	15.0	16.7
55-64 years	4.8	4.7	14.1
65+ years	0.9	1.0	16.9
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	19.7	19.0	2.5
Australian born	87.5	87.6	73.2
Born overseas (English-speaking)	5.8	6.0	26.8
Born overseas (non-English-speaking)	6.7	6.3	
Married/defacto	17.3	22.0	63.7
Have dependent children	19.8	23.0	33.9
N	1,681	1,529	

Profile of Respondents (2)

	JH Wave 1	JH Wave 2	Australian population
<i>Highest education qualification</i>			
Tertiary qualification	27.9	27.5	50.2
Completed Yr 12 or equivalent	11.3	11.6	20.6
Completed Year 10 or 11 or equivalent	39.5	40.0	21.4
Completed Year 9 or below	20.1	19.7	7.7
Undetermined	1.1	1.2	
<i>Labour force status</i>			
Employed	20.1	24.3	62.6
Unemployed	29.9	25.4	3.4
Not in labour force	50.1	50.3	34.0
N	1,681	1,529	

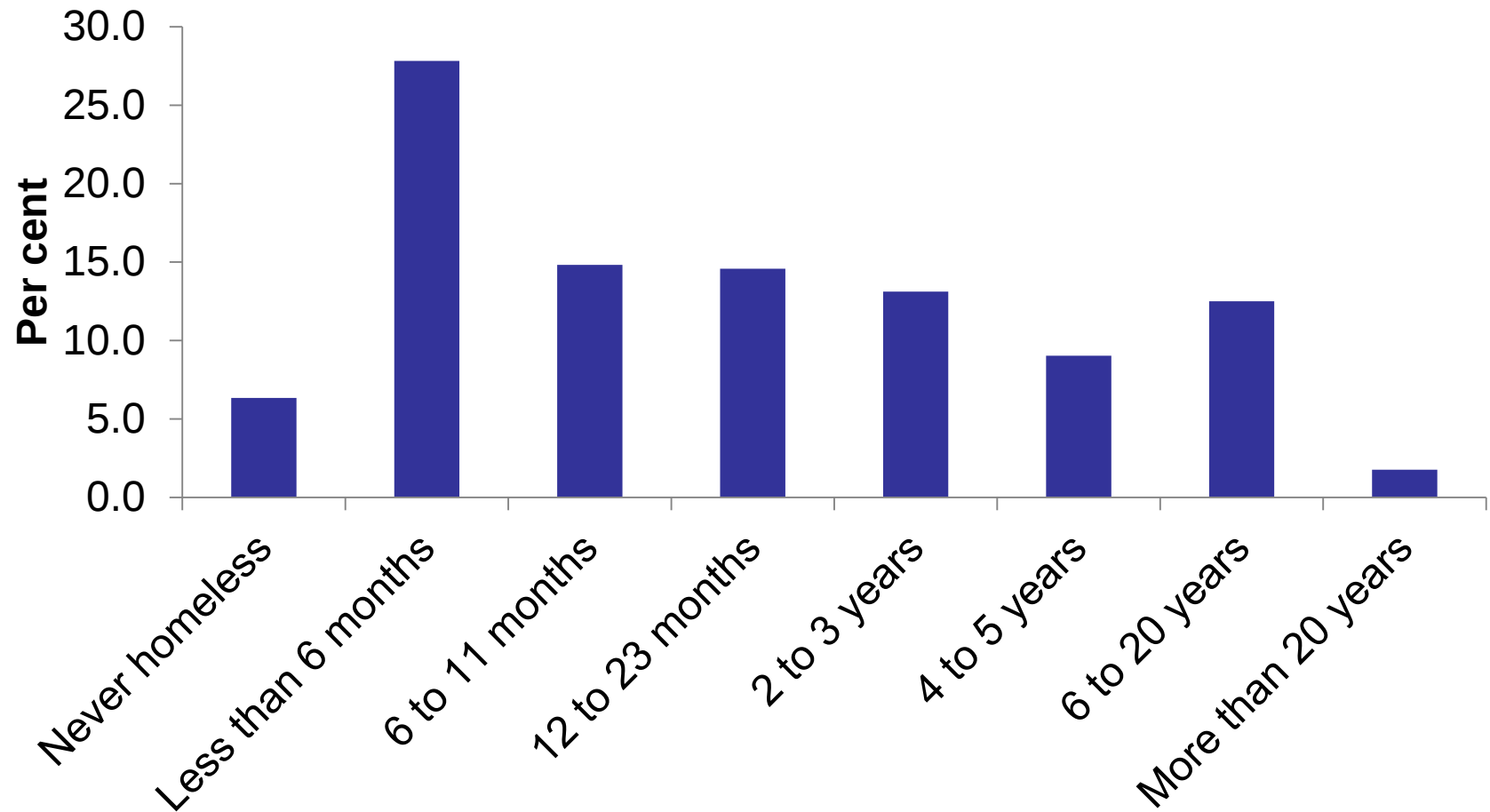
Profile of Respondents (3)

	JH Wave 1	JH Wave 2	Australian population ¹
<i>Diagnosed mental health condition</i>			
Bipolar effective disorder	11.0	12.2	2.9
Schizophrenia	8.9	9.8	n.a.
Depression	53.5	57.5	11.6 ²
Post-traumatic stress disorder ³	19.7	22.1	12.2
Anxiety disorder ³	41.3	45.5	26.3
N	1,681	1,529	

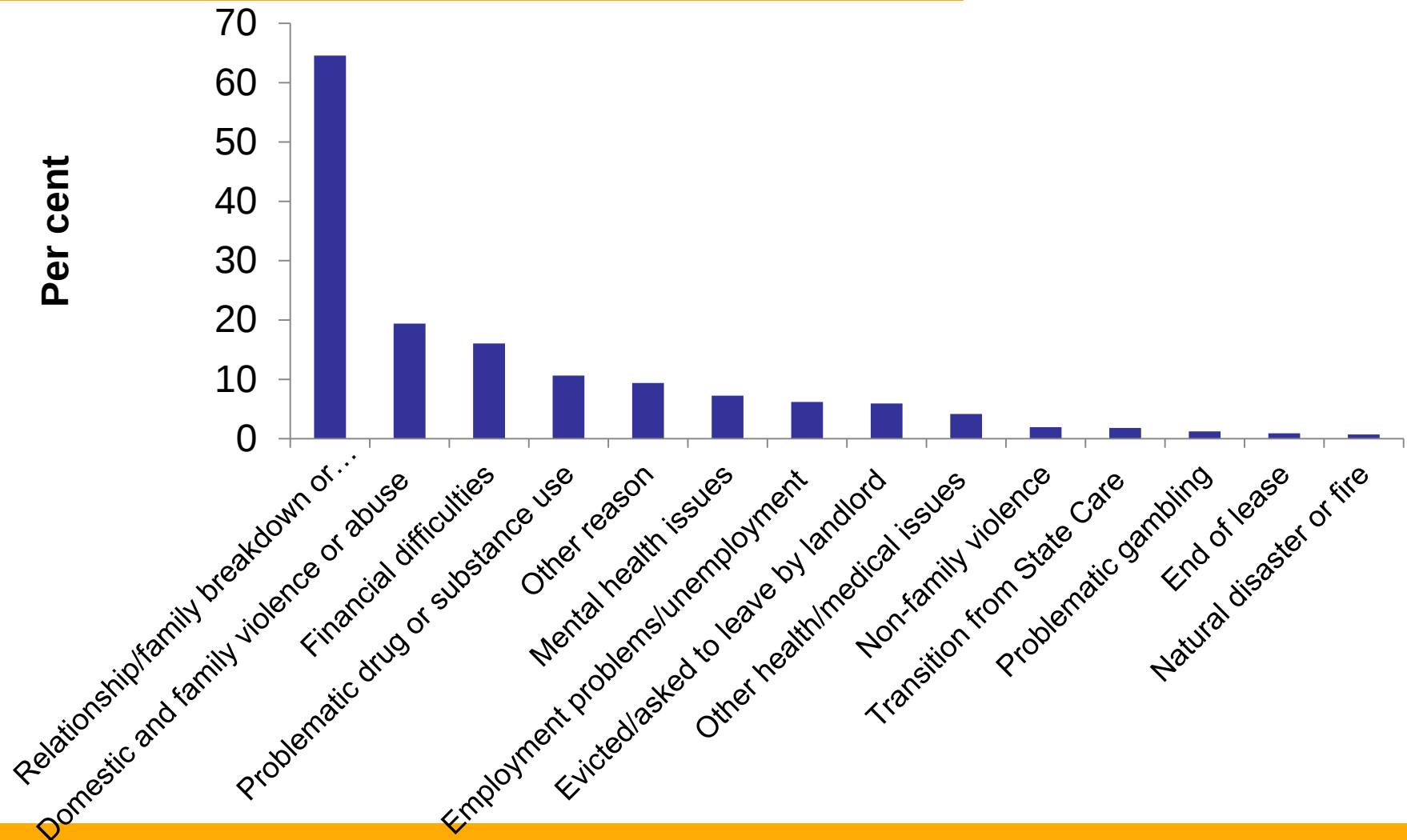
Housing transitions, %

	Wave 2				
Wave 1	Homeless	Marginal housing	Stable housing	Total (%)	Total (n)
Homeless	53.7	17.6	28.2	100.0	341
Marginal housing	8.0	50.5	40.3	100.0	402
Stable housing	8.8	11.6	78.4	100.0	777
Total (%)	18.8	23.1	56.9	100.0	
Total (n)	287	353	870		1,529

Lifetime experience of homelessness



Main reason first became homeless



Psychological distress

	<i>Homeless transitions</i>				
	Homeless W1 and W2	Homeless W2	Homeless W1	Not homeless	Total
No PD (0-7)	45.4	41.0	54.5	55.2	52.8
Mild to moderate PD (8-12)	26.2	20.0	19.9	23.5	23.2
Serious PD (13-24)	25.1	37.0	23.1	20.2	22.4
Average score	8.4	10.3	7.6	7.5	7.8
Total (N)	183	100	156	1,064	1,529

Conclusions

- Profile of JH respondents very different to that of general population
- Respondents housing situation appears to vary considerably over time:
 - Between 18 to 24% homeless at either interview;
 - 40% experienced homelessness over survey period;
 - Over 90% experienced homelessness in lifetime.

Conclusions (tentative)

- Family breakdown/conflict leading trigger of homelessness
- Highest levels of psychological distress experienced by those entering homelessness – higher even than remaining homeless
 - Adaptation?
- Support services need to be sensitive to this

Further information

- http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/journeys_home/