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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA

STUDY OF INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA
ÉTUDE SUR L'ITINÉRANCE DES AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

Social Policy has conducted a research project with the collaboration of the Homelessness Policy Directorate to study Indigenous homelessness trends. Homelessness and shelter use have previously been shown to be disproportionately faced by Indigenous peoples, and this project marks the first time this issue has been investigated to this depth using this internal administrative emergency shelter dataset.

Results show that Indigenous peoples are consistently overrepresented in homeless shelters in all 46 communities examined, reflecting a variety of cities across Canada. The degree of overrepresentation is particularly high for Indigenous women, seniors, and Inuit. Indigenous shelter users experience more shelter stays each year, and are less likely to exit a shelter because of finding residence.

The deck for the project has been shared with Homelessness Policy Directorate and presented at the Portfolio Research Coordination Committee on Income Security and Social Development meeting (Annex A).

BACKGROUND

The Social Research Division of the Strategic and Service Policy Branch completed a project titled *Indigenous Homelessness* in 2019 in collaboration with Homelessness Policy Directorate of the Income Security and Social Development Branch.

This project comes on the tails of the release of the National Housing Strategy, and helps to underscore the importance of the recent investments made into Indigenous housing, which also embody the values laid out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The study used an internal administrative data on shelters and shelter users collected using the department's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), paired with Aboriginal Peoples Highlight Tables from the 2016 Census.

The dataset reflects approximately 133,000 unique clients of emergency shelters for men, women, and youth in 2016 across a variety of communities in Canada, including an estimated 41,000 Indigenous clients.

Statistical analysis (regression and survival analysis) was carried out on this dataset to examine differences in the experiences of homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, and to provide a more detailed profile of the nature of shelter experiences of the Indigenous. This included specifically looking at subgroups of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status Indigenous shelter users.

CURRENT STATUS

Key findings indicate that Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented in emergency shelters relative to the overall population in all 46 communities examined, which include cities in each of the provinces and territories across Canada. Indigenous women, seniors, and the Inuit are especially overrepresented in shelters relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Indigenous shelter users experience more shelter stays per year, and higher rates of episodic homelessness (defined as having three or more shelter stays in the year).

Shelter stays for Indigenous shelter users are shorter on average, but this is not necessarily a positive outcome, as survival analysis indicates that their stays are less likely to end because of finding residence relative to non-Indigenous shelter users, even when controlling for other confounding factors.

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NEXT STEPS

A report is being written to expand on the results shown in the deck. Homelessness Policy Directorate would like to share the presentation with provinces and territories as a showcase of research using HIFIS data.

The approach used in this project will be revisited as new indicators and new HIFIS data is received under the Reaching Home program.



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Attachment : 1

Canada

 Employed at
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Indigenous Homelessness

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March 14, 2019

000004

Objectives

- Compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness in Canada by sociodemographic groups to describe a portrait of homelessness in shelters
- Examine the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in shelters relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts, and compare Indigenous representation in shelters between communities across Canada
- Identify differences in homelessness across Indigenous groups, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit



Methodology

Data Sources:

- National Homelessness Database (NHDB) - 2016
 - Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
 - Similar data from Province of Alberta, BC Housing, and City of Toronto
 - Contains data on demographic characteristics and shelter stay information for shelter users
 - Census - 2016
 - Aboriginal Peoples Highlight Tables
- Contains population counts by community for Indigenous status, age group, and gender

Units of Analysis:

- From the pool of shelter stays that at any point take place in 2016:
 - Unique clients – one observation per client/shelter is used for shelter demographics, number of annual stays, and chronic and episodic homelessness
 - Multiple stays – all shelter stays for all clients are used for average stay length and survival analysis



Methodology (cont'd)

Indigenous status:

- Data includes observations from First Nations (both living on- and off-reserve), Métis, Inuit, and those who are non-status or have other Indigenous ancestry

Target population:

- An estimated total of 132,999 unique clients are identified through emergency shelters for men, women, and youth in 50 communities across Canada in 2016, including an estimated 41,103 Indigenous clients; this analysis does not examine those experiencing unsheltered or hidden homelessness
- From these unique clients, over 360,000 spells that at any point take place in 2016 are estimated over the year
- For regional statistics, 3 communities were dropped where more than 40% of observations were missing the shelter users' Indigenous status, as well as the category of non-designated communities
 - Bathurst, Brandon, and Toronto
- Chronic and episodic homelessness figures are generally calculated by HPPD using only completely enumerated regions, but will be calculated using all regions for this analysis to avoid bias due to regional heterogeneity in the Indigenous population



Methodology (cont'd)

- Descriptive tabulations by subpopulation
- Linear regressions to measure differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous after controlling for other demographic characteristics

$$y_i = \beta_0 Indig_i + X_i\beta + u_i$$

- y_i represents the homelessness characteristics of interest for client i
 - E.g. Stay length, number of annual stays, etc.
- $Indig_i$ represents the Indigenous status for client i
- X_i represents other demographic characteristics used as controls (reported in regression results Appendix)
- u_i represents the error term

β_0 from estimating the above equation will give the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelter users after accounting for other characteristics

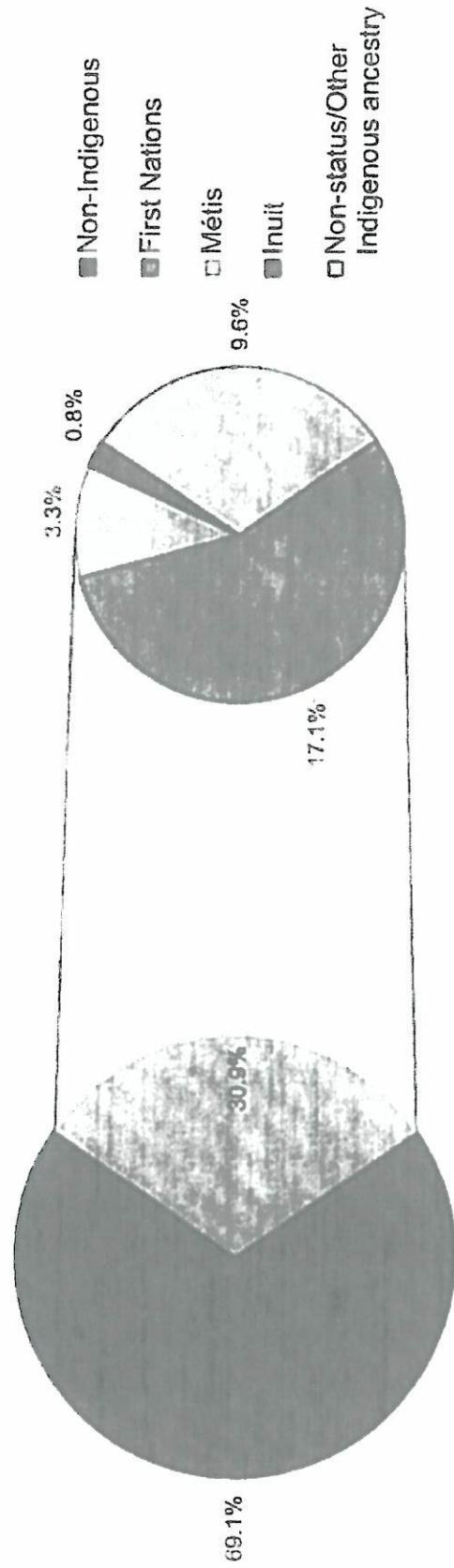


Methodology (cont'd)

- Survival analysis to examine likelihood of exiting shelters for different reasons after controlling for other characteristics
 - Competing risks survival model, Fine and Gray (1999)
 - Hazard function for exit type j : $\lambda_j(t, X) = \lambda_{j0}(t) \exp(\beta_0 Indig_i + X_i \beta)$
 - Subhazard ratio: $SHR_{Indig} = \frac{\lambda_j(t, Indig=1)}{\lambda_j(t, Indig=0)}$
 - Gives the likelihood of a specific type of exit for an Indigenous shelter user, relative to a non-Indigenous user with other characteristics held constant
 - X_i represents other demographic characteristics used as controls (reported in survival analysis results Appendix)
 - Right-censored spells and those with missing reasons for exit are accounted for
 - Standard errors are clustered at the client level to account for multiple spells
- Survey weights are calculated taking into account the stratified cluster survey design (clustered by shelters and stratified by their type of clientele) and the number of different shelters used by clients, and weights are applied to all analysis



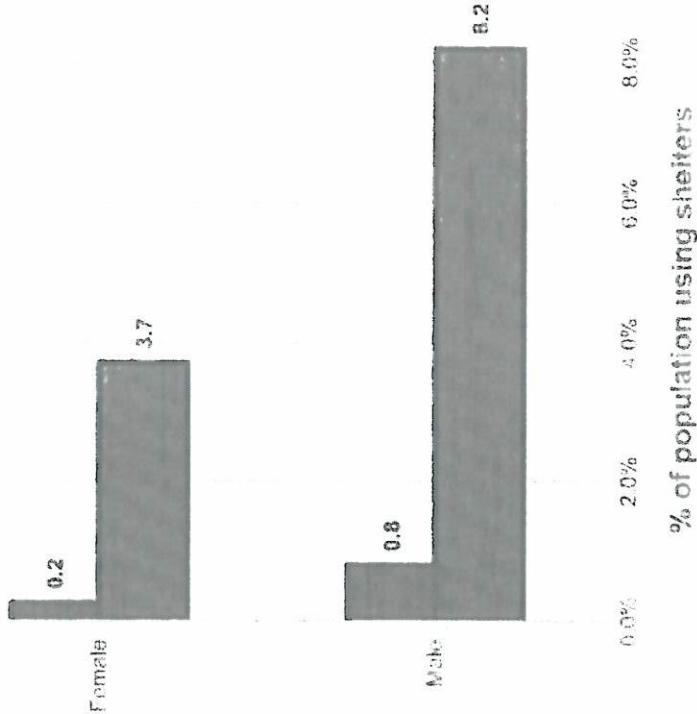
Indigenous people are overrepresented in Canadian shelters



- Indigenous people make up an estimated 30.9% of shelter users for 2016, despite only representing 4.9% of the total population in the same year
- Indigenous people in Canada are over 11 times more likely to use a shelter than non-Indigenous counterparts (Source: Census 2016, NHDB 2016)
- Although Inuit make up the smallest amount of Indigenous shelter users, they have the highest level of overrepresentation relative to non-Indigenous people (Source: Census 2016, NHDB 2016)



Indigenous women are disproportionately more likely to use shelters than non-Indigenous women

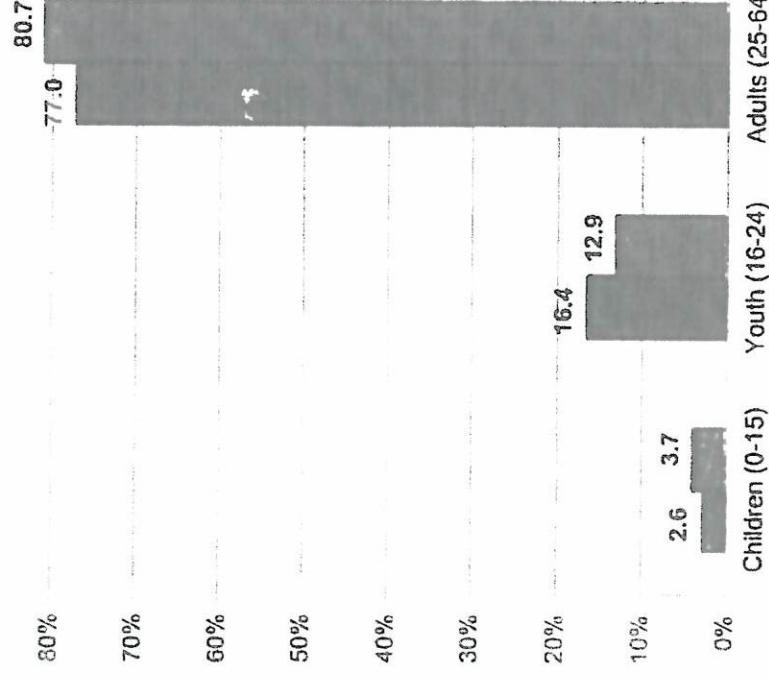


- Males from both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations are more likely to use shelters
- However, Indigenous males are over 10 times more likely to use a shelter than non-Indigenous males, but for Indigenous females, the likelihood is over 15 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Source: Census 2016, NHDB 2016)

■ Non-Indigenous ■ Indigenous

Indigenous seniors represent the highest likelihood of shelter use among age groups

- The age breakdown of Indigenous shelter users is similar to that of non-Indigenous shelter users



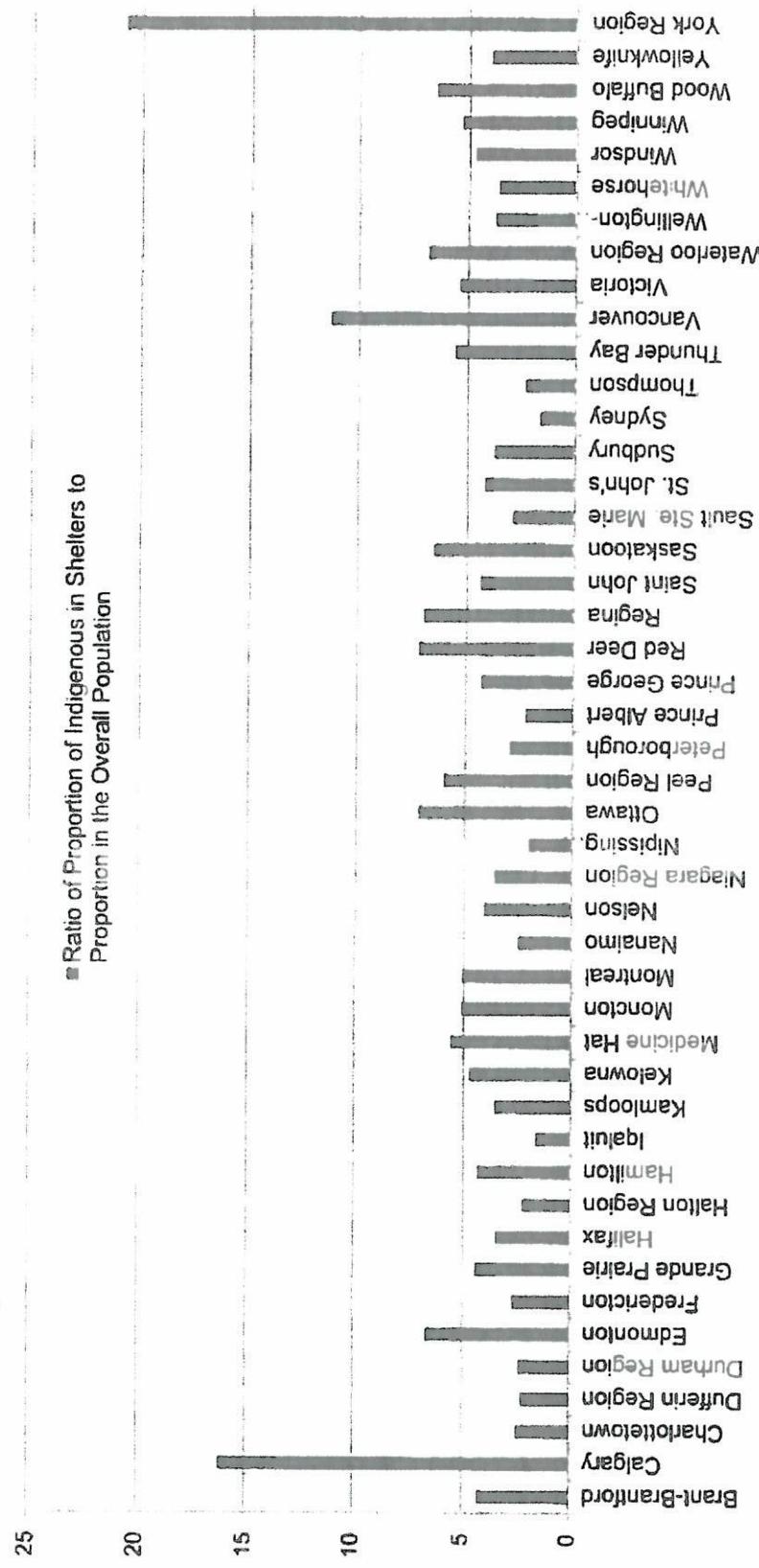
Indigenous people of all age groups are more likely to use shelters than non-Indigenous people, with seniors being the most overrepresented group relative to the overall population (Indigenous seniors are over 16 times more likely to use a shelter than non-Indigenous seniors) (Source: Census 2016, NHDB 2016)

Distribution by age group

■ Non-Indigenous ■ Indigenous



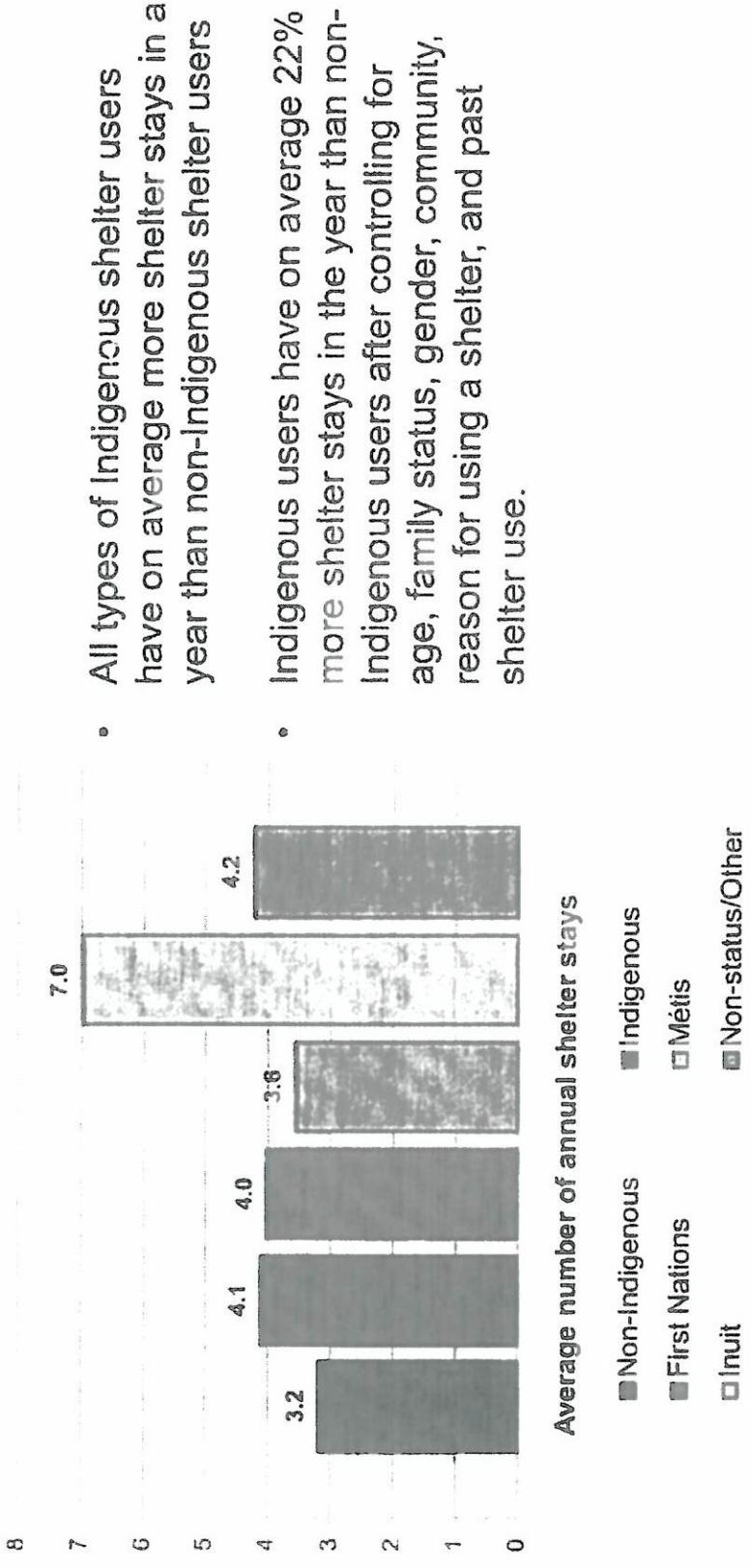
All communities examined have Indigenous people overrepresented in homeless shelters



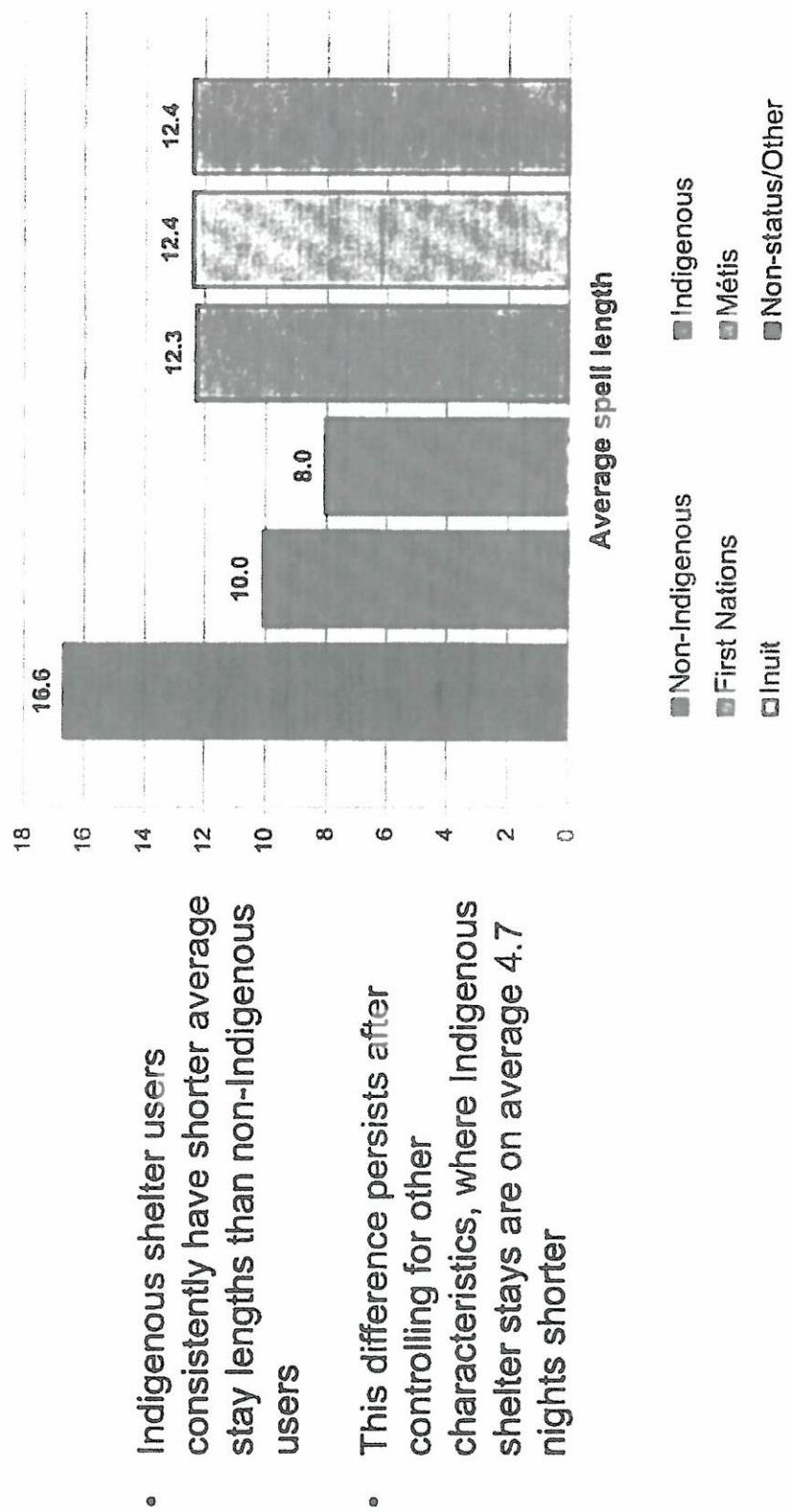
Indigenous people are overrepresented in all communities in the analysis and were not underrepresented in any community, ranging from shelter users being 1.5 times more likely to be Indigenous than those in the overall population, to over 20 times more likely, depending on the community (Source: Census 2016, NHDB 2016)



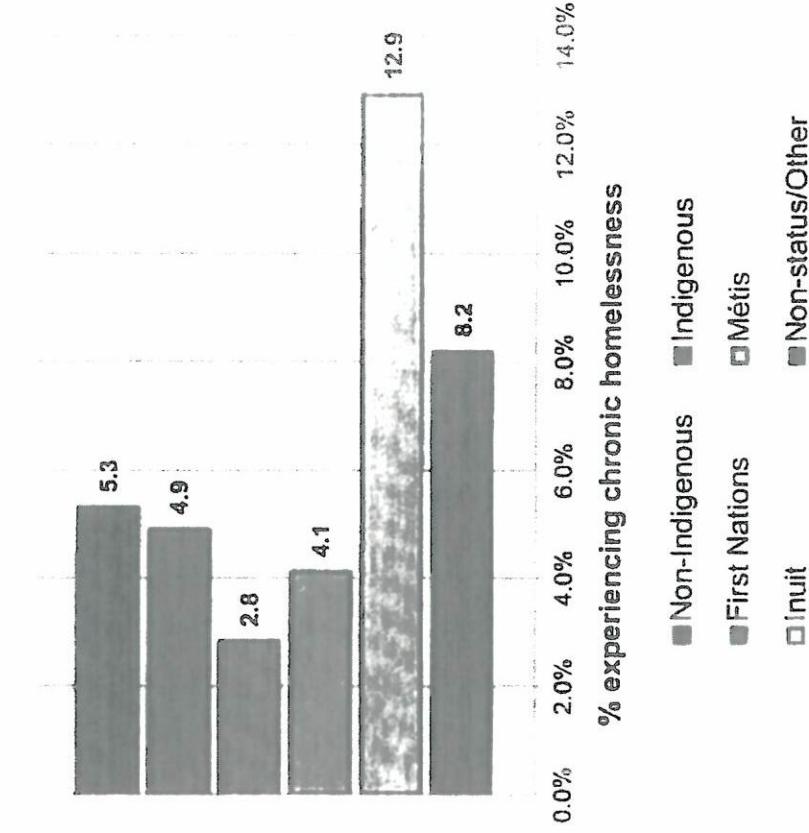
Indigenous shelter users have more shelter stays in the year than non-Indigenous users, with Inuit users having the most



Non-Indigenous shelter users typically have longer shelter stays than Indigenous users



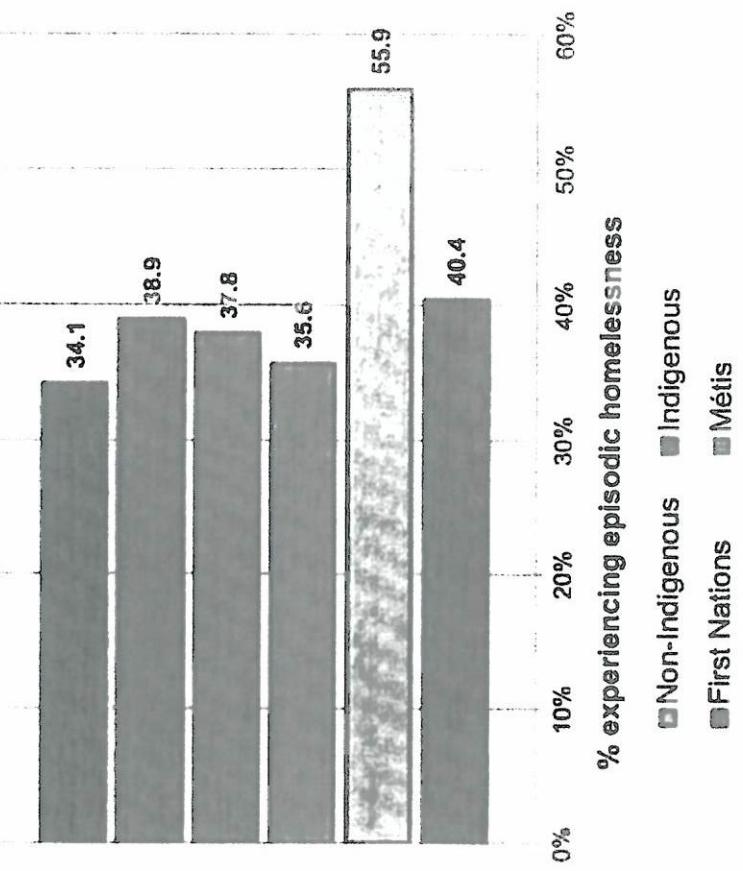
Rates of chronic homelessness vary across Indigenous groups



- Chronic homelessness is defined as when a client stays in shelters 180+ nights in the year*
- On average Indigenous shelter users experience chronic homelessness slightly less often than non-Indigenous users
- Inuit and non-status shelter users face the highest rates of chronic homelessness, but this does not persist after controlling for other characteristics

* Calculated using all regions, including incompletely-enumerated regions

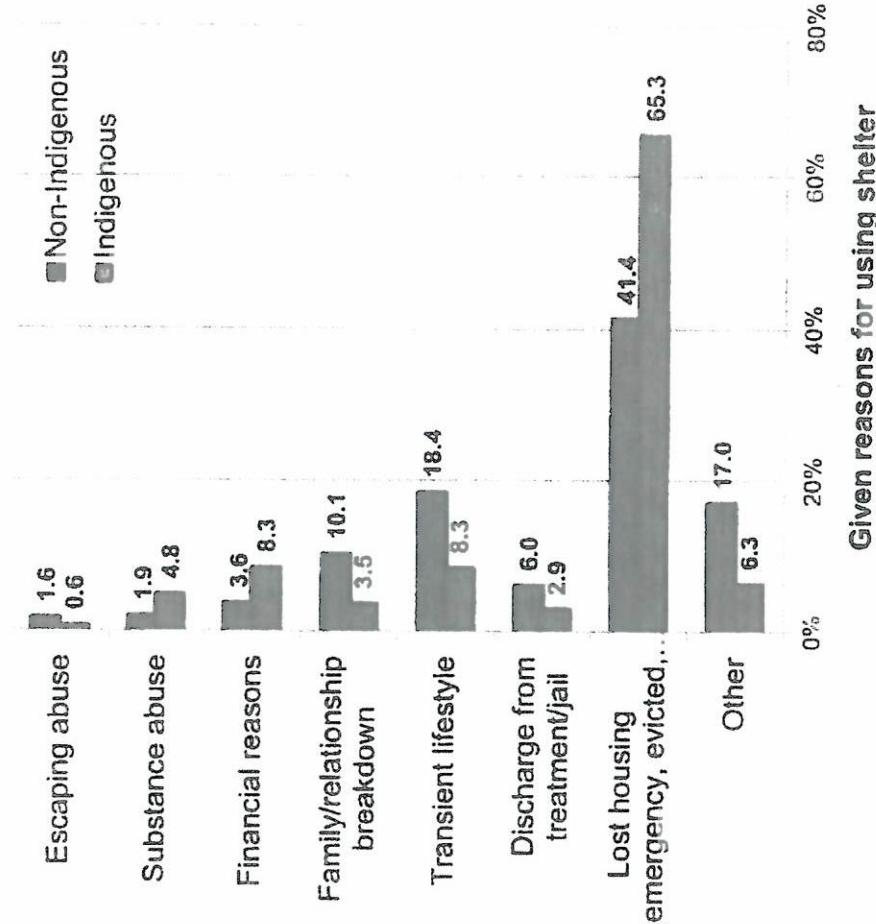
Indigenous groups experience higher rates of episodic homelessness, with Inuit clients most affected



- Episodic homelessness is defined as when a client experiences 3+ episodes of homelessness during the year*
- All Indigenous groups face higher rates of episodic homelessness than non-Indigenous users
- Inuit shelter users are most likely to experience episodic shelter use, and this effect persists after controlling for other characteristics

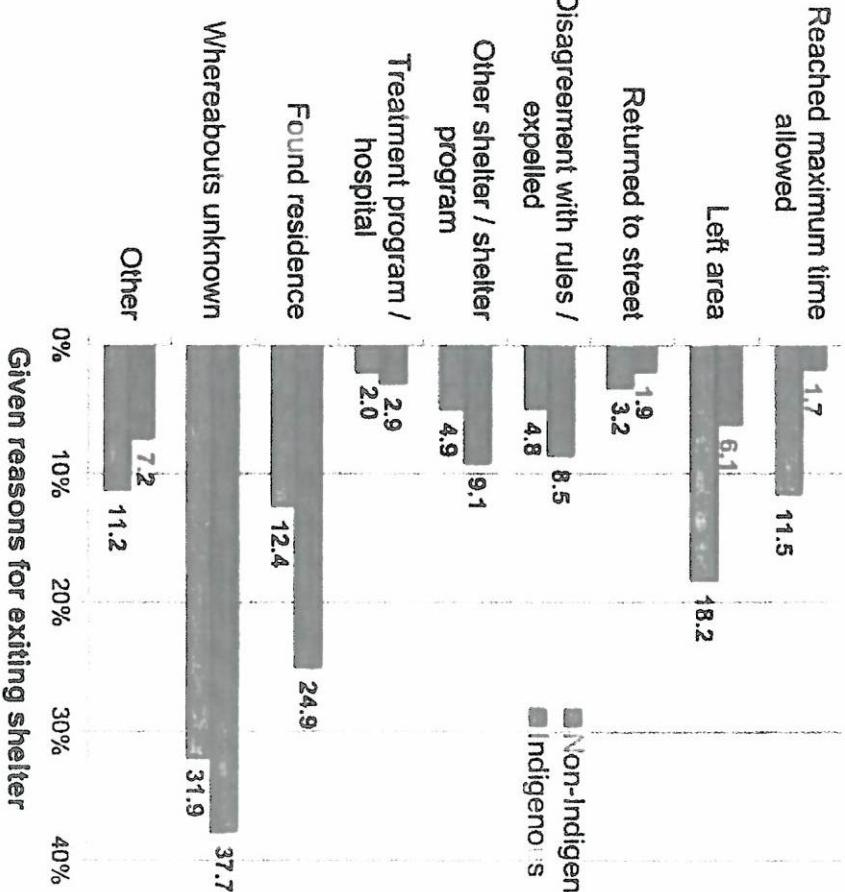
* Calculated using all regions, including incompletely-enumerated regions

Indigenous shelter users are more likely to have lost housing or faced financial hardships



- Of the Indigenous shelter users with reasons listed for their shelter stay, almost two thirds cite losing housing because of an emergency, eviction, or other reason
- Indigenous shelter users are more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous users to stay in a shelter because of substance abuse issues, or because of financial reasons

Much lower proportions of Indigenous shelter users exit shelters because of finding residence



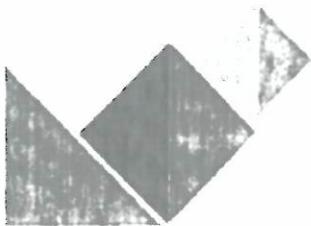
- For shelter users with reasons listed for shelter exit, the largest single reason for both groups is unknown whereabouts
- Non-Indigenous shelter users are over twice as likely to list finding residence (independently, through subsidized housing, returning to a previous address, etc.) as the reason for leaving a shelter

Results of Survival analysis

- After controlling for age, gender, family status, community, reason for using a shelter, and past shelter use, relative likelihoods of a stay ending for different competing reasons are estimated
- Reasons for exit include exit because of finding residence, or exit for other reasons (e.g. returning to the street, moving to another shelter, reaching the maximum allowed time, etc.)
- Indigenous shelter users are 18.0% less likely than non-Indigenous to exit a shelter because of finding residence
- Indigenous shelter users are 18.3% more likely than non-Indigenous to exit a shelter for a reason other than finding residence

Conclusions

- Key findings relating to Indigenous Peoples:
 - Overrepresentation in shelters, especially among women, seniors, and Inuit; women also make up a larger portion of Indigenous shelter users than of non-Indigenous shelter users
 - More shelter stays per year, and higher rates of episodic homelessness
 - Shorter shelter stays, but survival analysis indicates lower likelihoods of exiting to housing
- Results may indicate that Indigenous Peoples experience barriers in finding stable housing



Regressions results

Dependent variable	Indigenous (all groups)	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-status/other
Number of stays in the year	0.7080072***	0.8633326***	0.3882997***	0.7944353*	0.372632***
Shelter stay length in nights	-4.666524***	-4.690886***	-2.586749***	-4.575278	-5.373742***
Likelihood of chronic homelessness	-0.0175927***	-0.0231499***	-0.0134939***	-0.0295978*	-0.0011139
Likelihood of episodic homelessness	0.0336453***	0.0391876***	0.0242683*	0.0509111*	0.0186866

Survival analysis results

Exit reason	Indigenous (all groups)	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-status/other
Found residence	0.8196***	0.8100485***	0.9008196	0.5063446**	0.8611733
Other reason	1.182672***	1.18525***	1.055767	1.558175***	1.156075***

Results are relative to non-Indigenous shelter users
 Controls include gender, family status, age group, community, reason for using shelter, and indicator for
 shelter use in the past three months
 Estimates marked with *** , ** , * are statistically significant at the 0.001, 0.01, and 0.05 levels, respectively