

# Adult Homelessness: Risk Period or Cohort Effect? Implications for Policy and Practice

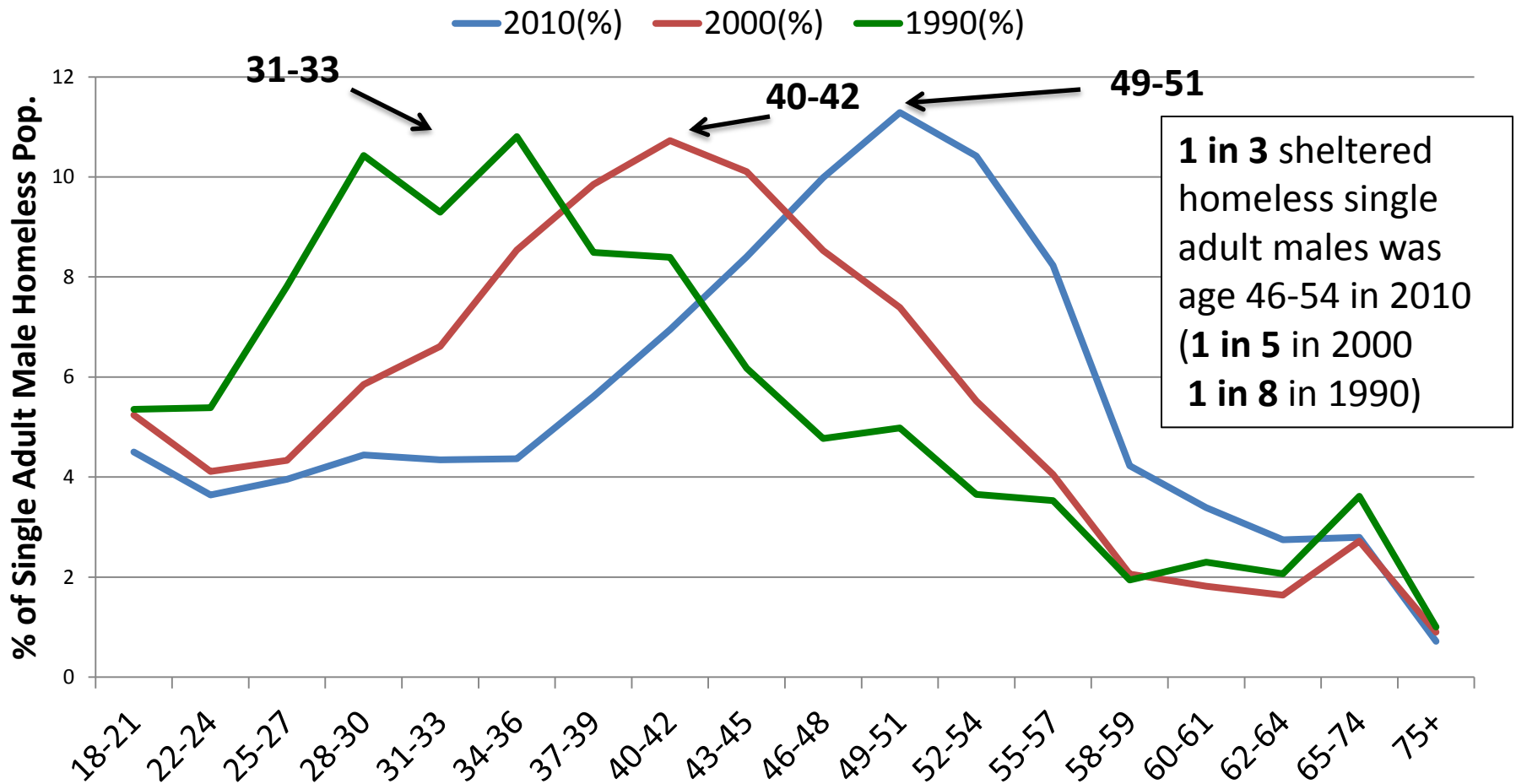
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# 1988 Ethnographic Field Study

- Soup kitchens and shelters
- Mostly young men in 20s and early 30s
- Turnover

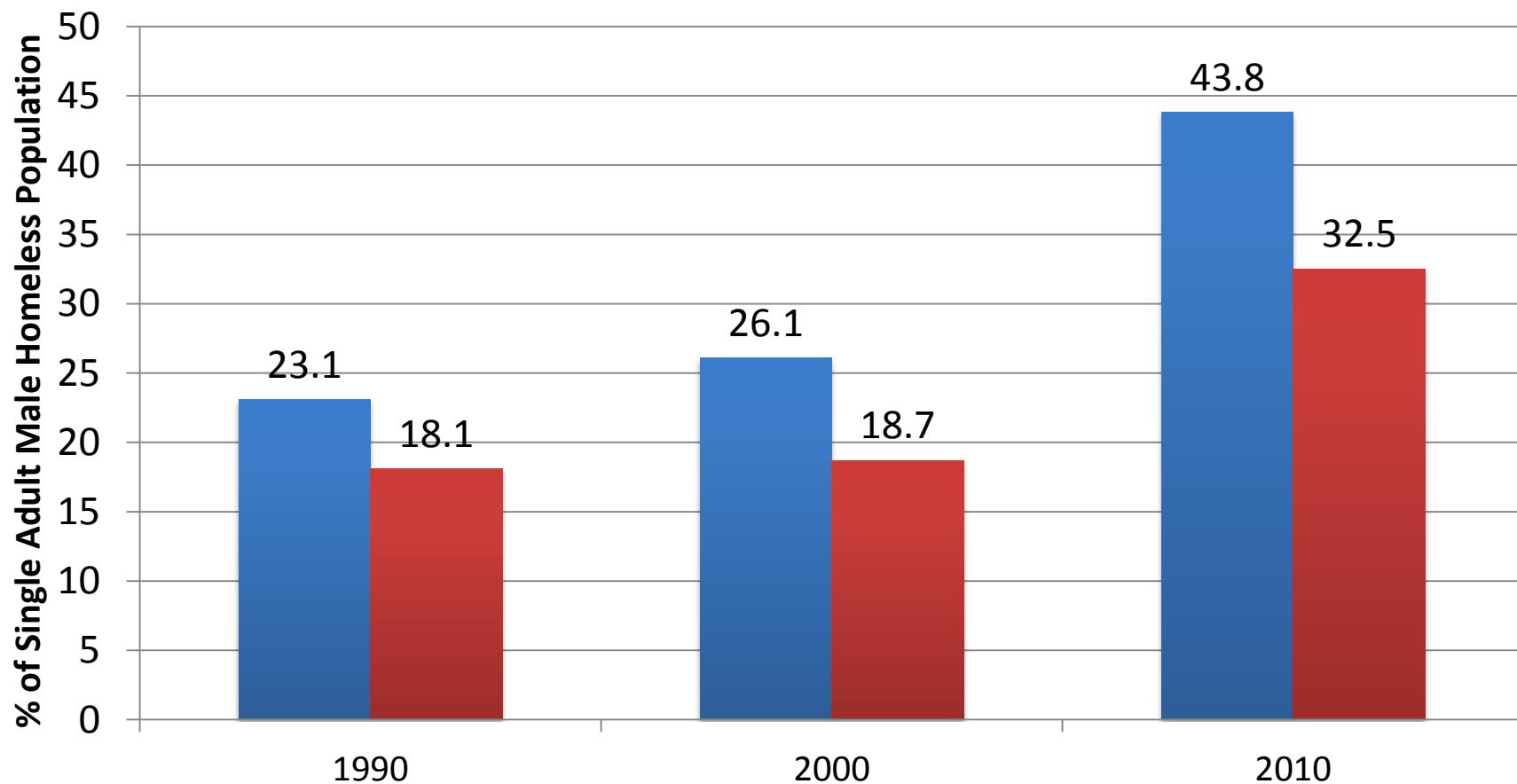
# A Birth Cohort Phenomenon: Persons Born 1955-1965

Age Distribution, Male Shelter Users, US Census



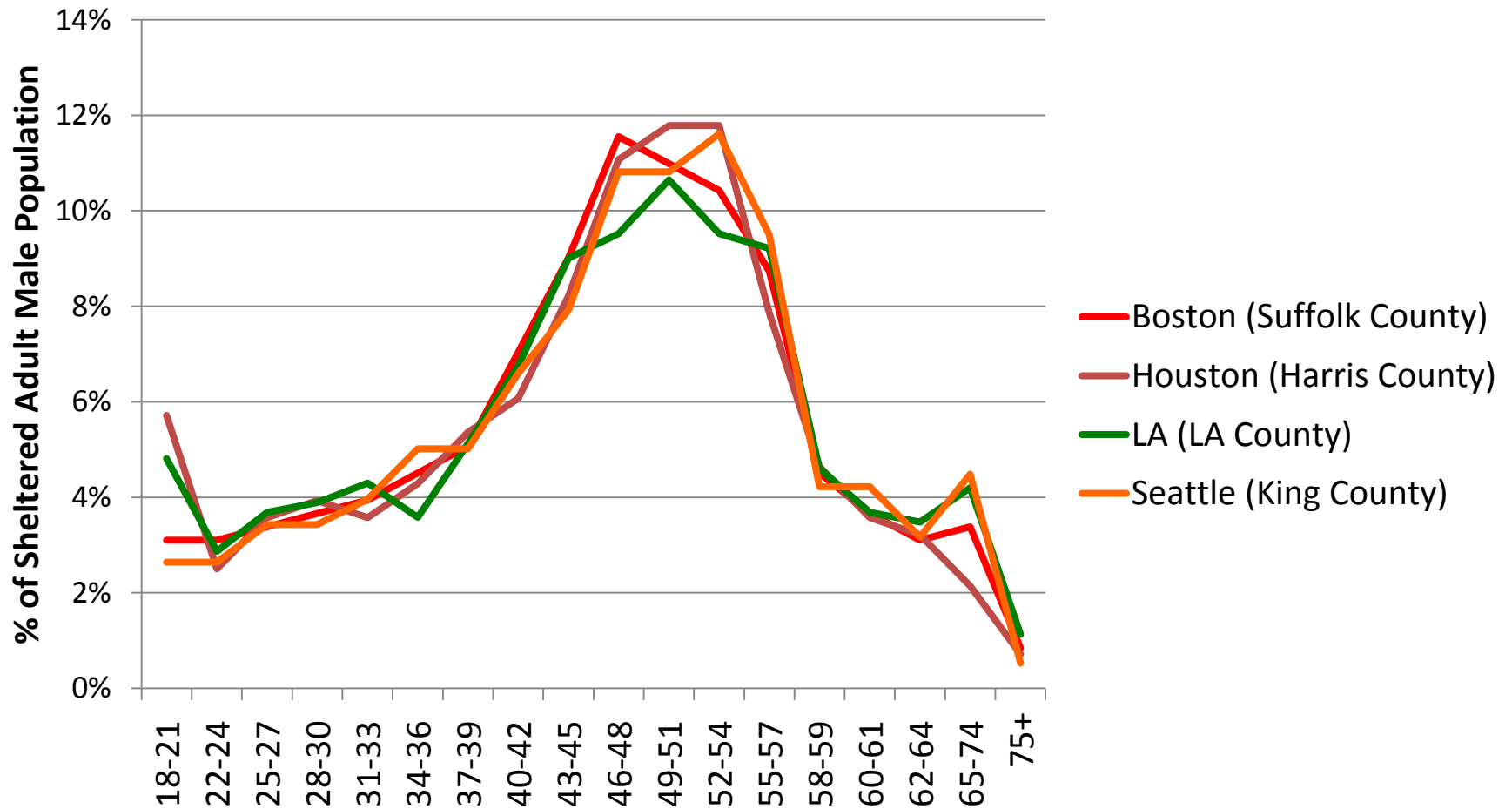
## **% Sheltered Single Adult Male Homeless Population Accounted For By Persons Ages 49+ and 55+, 1990-2010**

■ Age 49+ ■ Age 55+



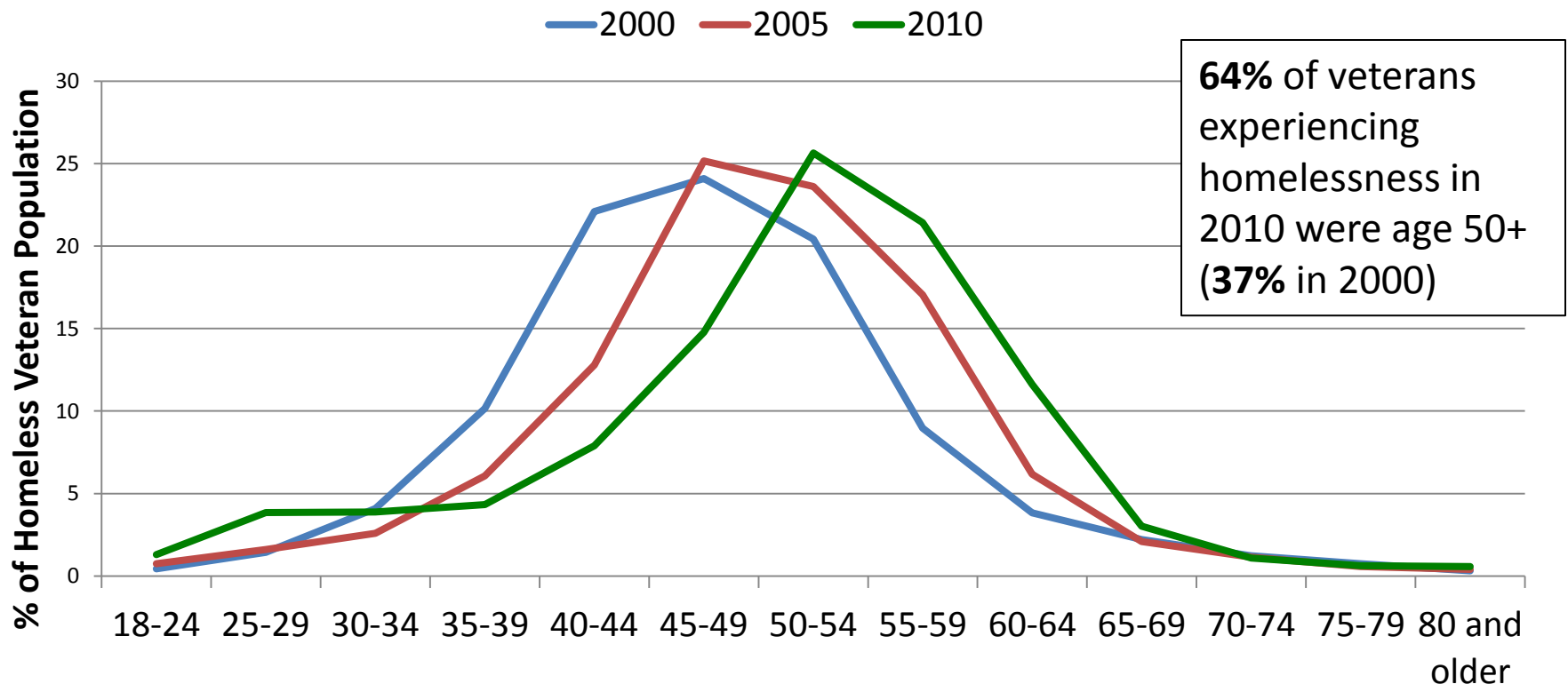
# Aging Trend Consistent Across Cities . . .

Age Distribution of Sheltered Adult Male Population, 2010

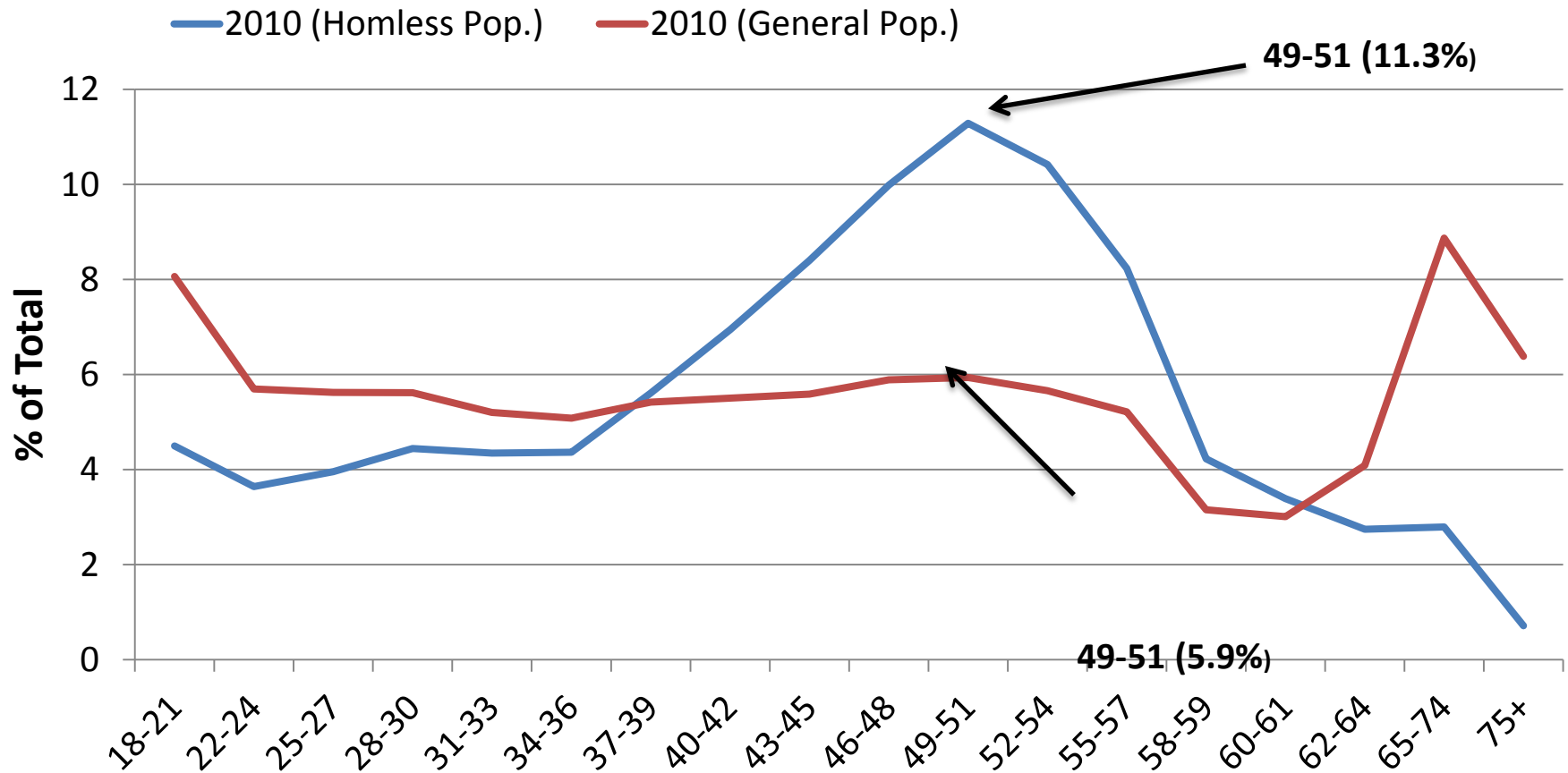


# . . . And sub-populations, such as Veterans

**Age Distribution of Homeless Veteran Population (based on users of  
VA specialized homeless programs) , 2000-2010**



# Aging Trend Is Quite Distinct from the Aging of General Population

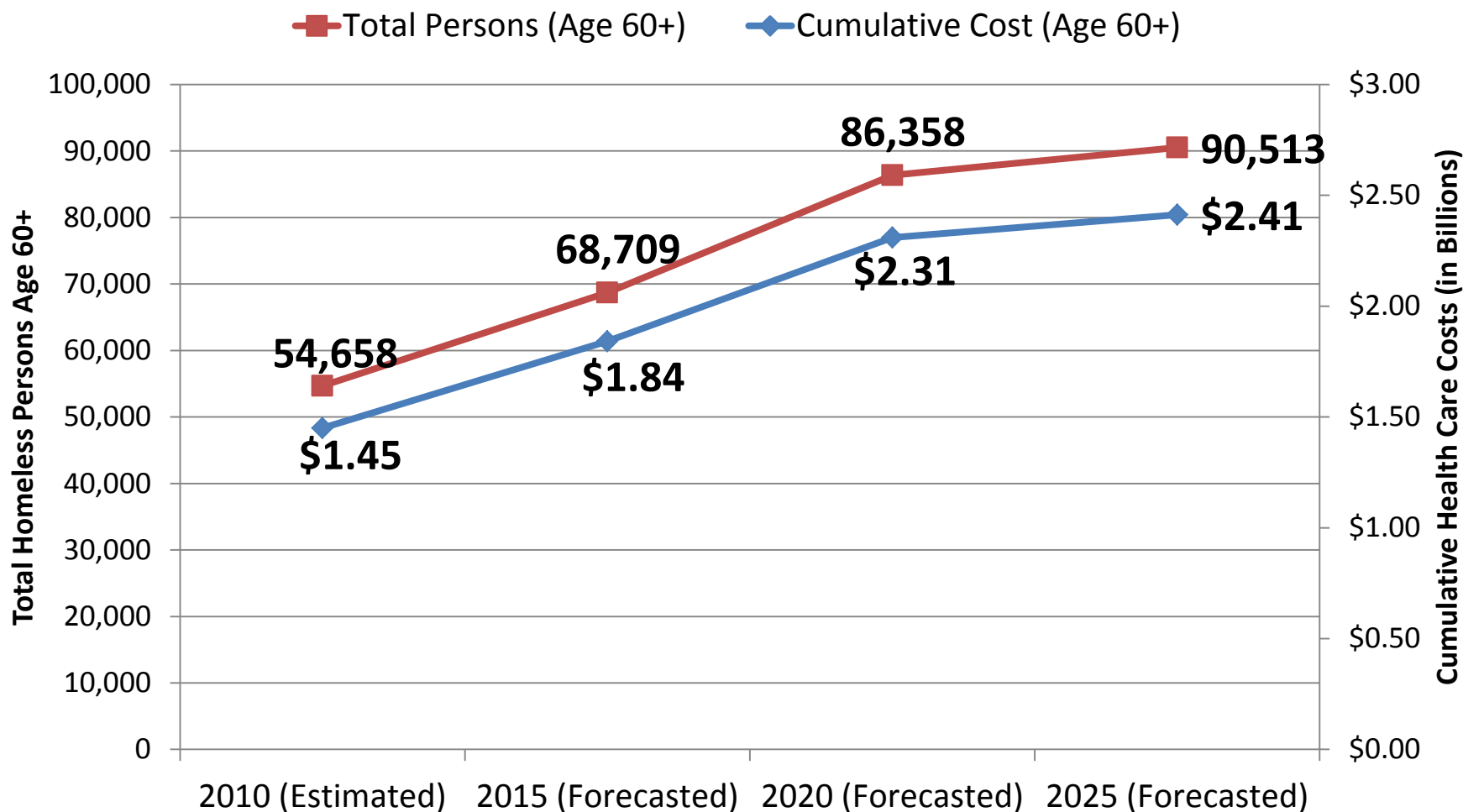


# Implications

- High mortality risk – life expectancy of 64
- Onset of chronic diseases, disability, medical frailty
- Homelessness programs not prepared or capable of managing
- Without housing, excess demand for acute hospitalization and long-term care
- Need for urgency and expanded housing capacity



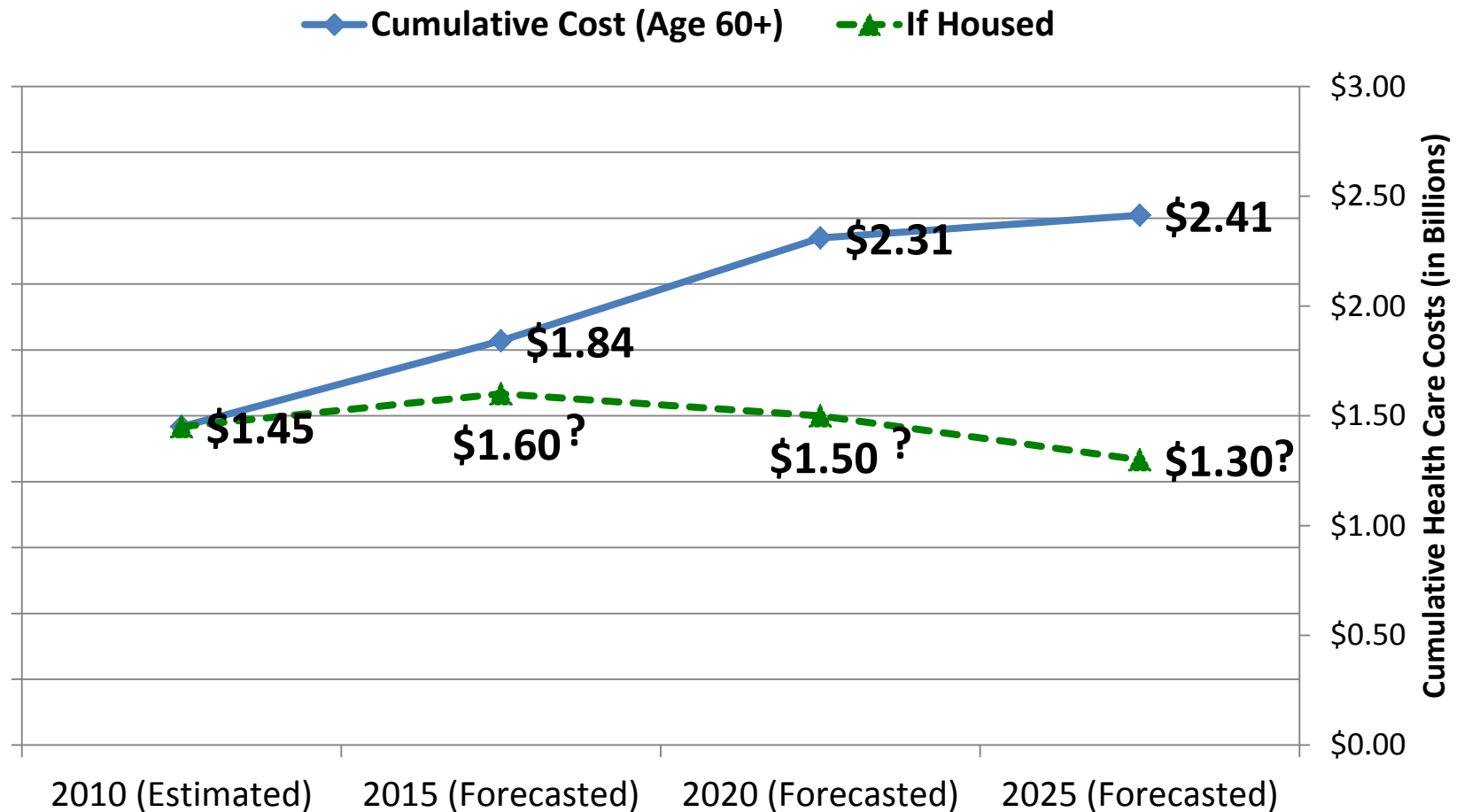
## Projected Health Care Costs



Source: Author Estimates Based Data from U.S. Census Bureau, AHAR Report and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Note: Cost estimates based on use of VA healthcare services and should be interpreted cautiously.

# Can permanent housing lead to cost savings for health care systems? How much?



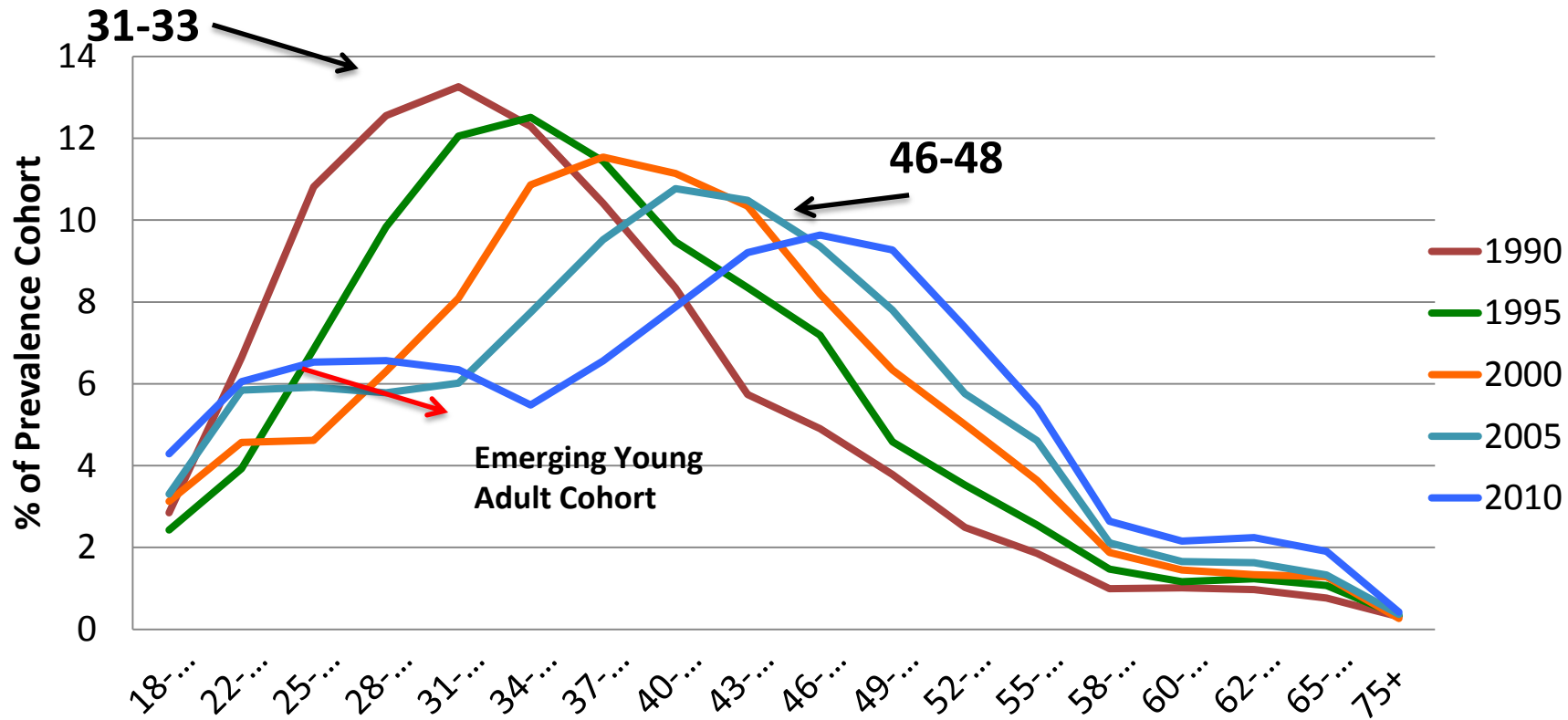
# Conclusions

- Cohort nature means this generation will fade away
- Parallel to the “skid row” generation in 1940-1960’s
- A future with substantially less homelessness, like the 1970s?

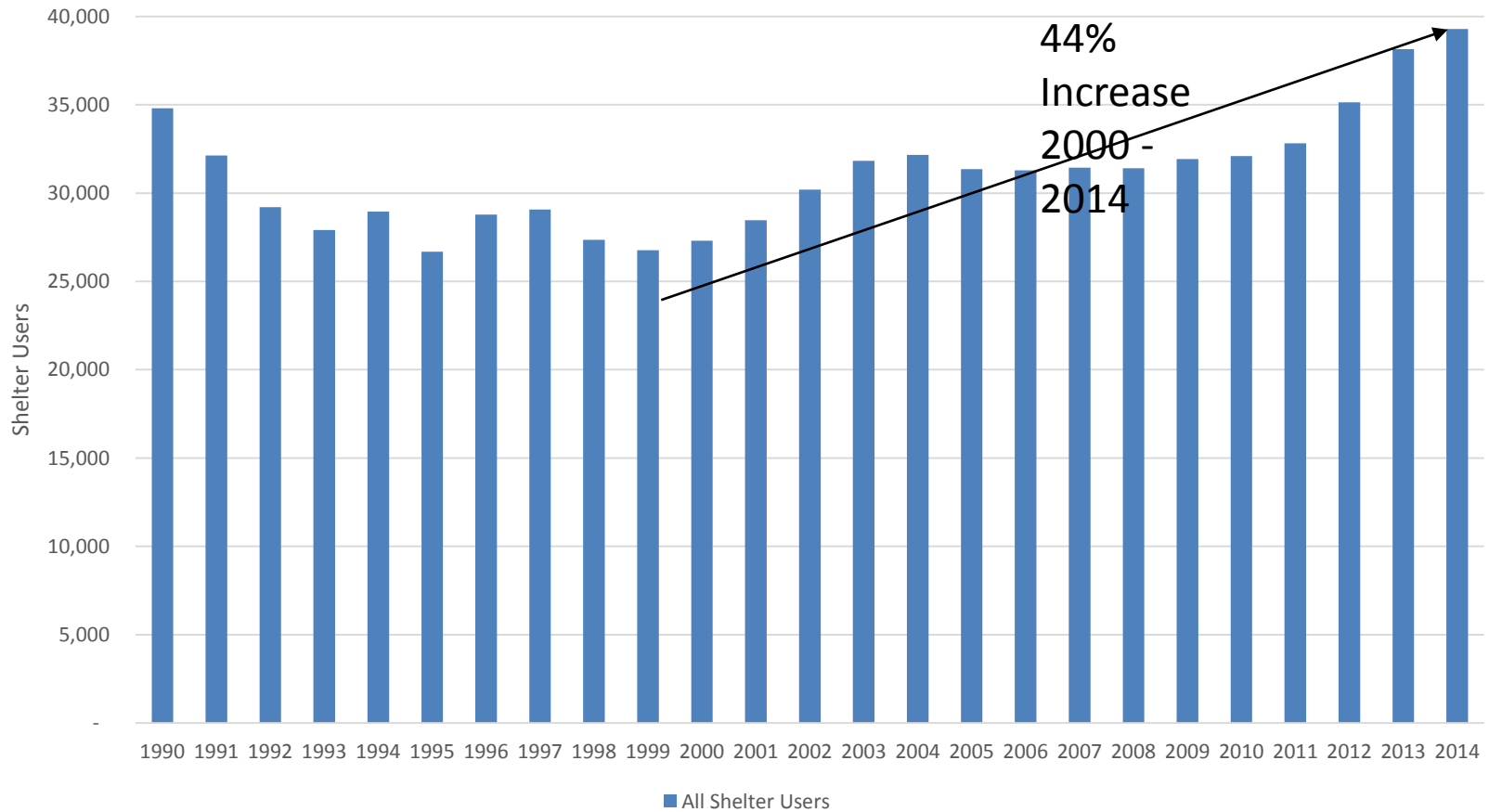
# Not so fast...

- Why them?
- Easterlin: Baby boom/bust cycle
- Latter half of cohort at risk of disadvantage in labor and housing markets
- Coming of age boomers crowd out social welfare system
- Economic shocks can exacerbate
- Underground labor market, i.e. “crack”

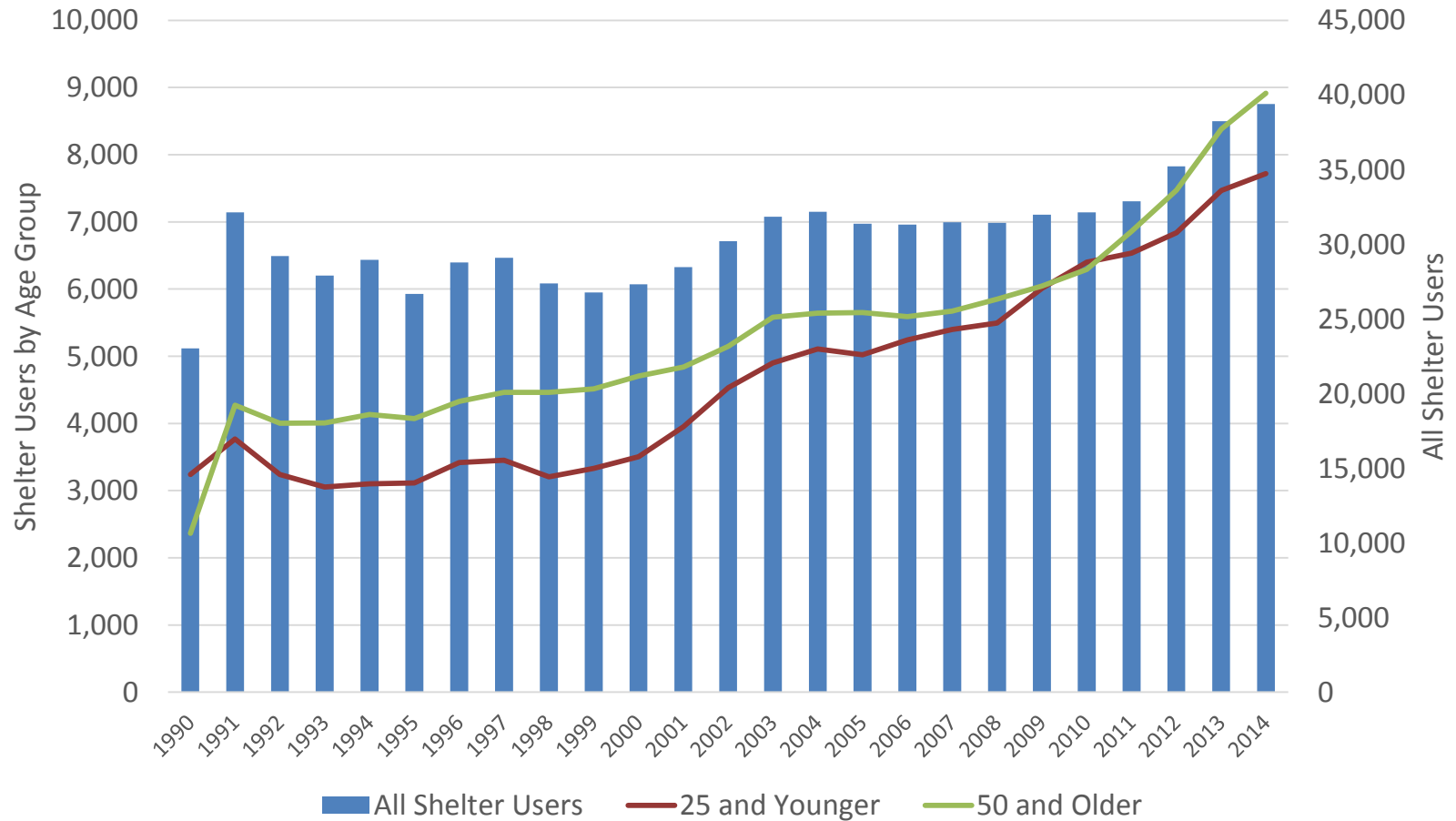
## Age Distribution of Prevalence Cohorts of Male Shelter Users in New York City, 1990-2010



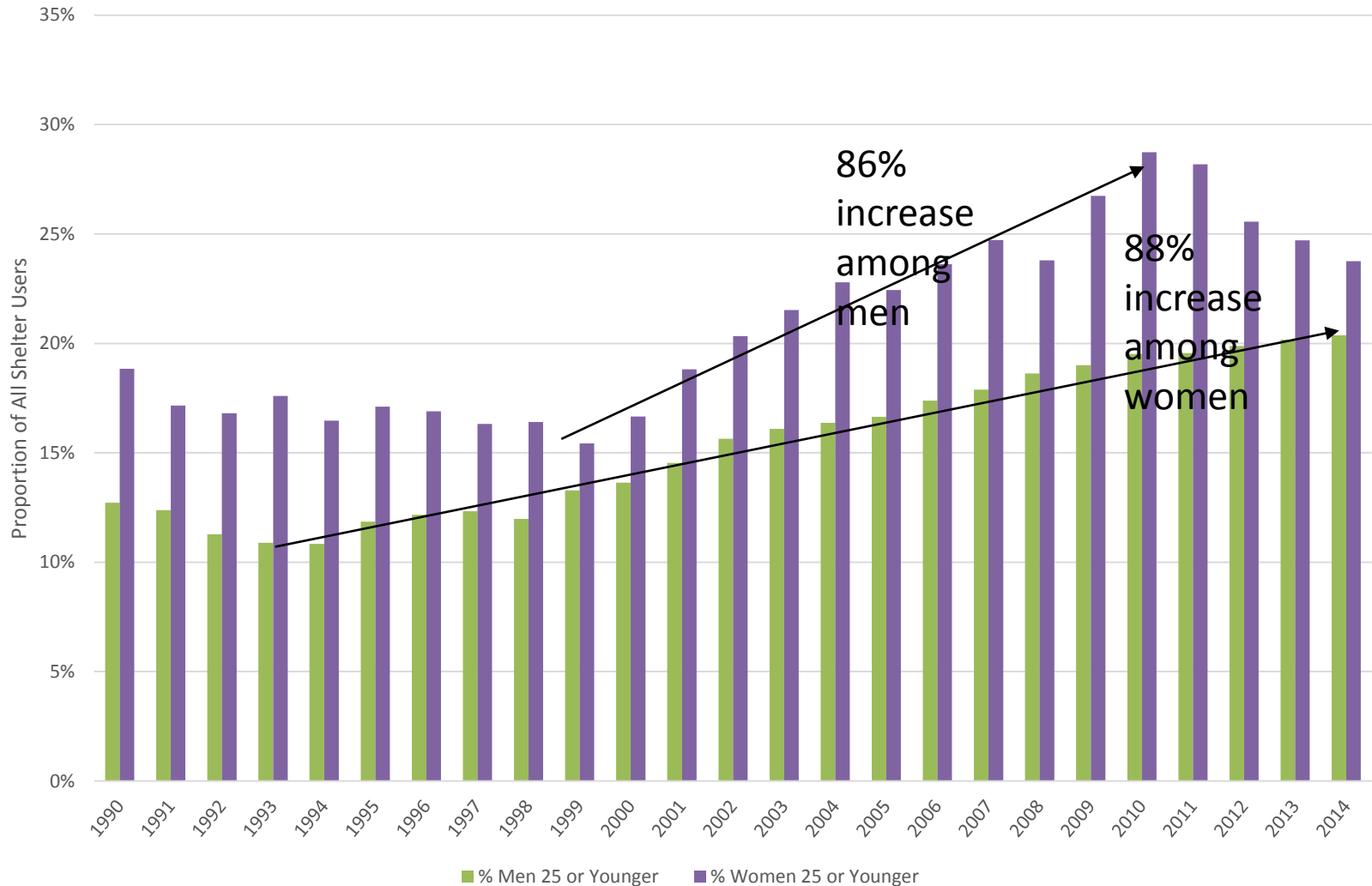
# Shelter Prevalence from 1990 - 2014



# Youngest and Oldest Account for 62% in Shelter Use Increase

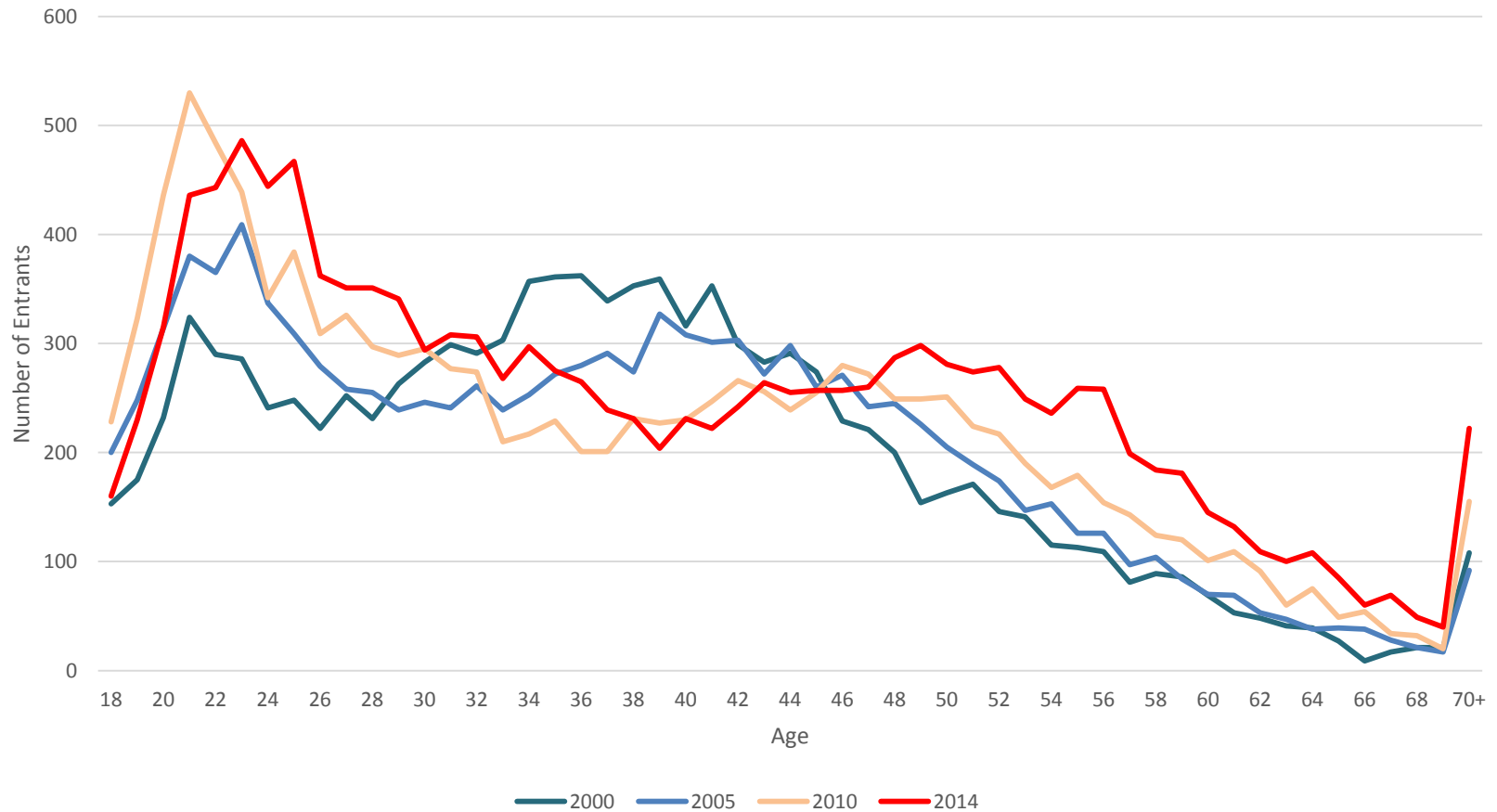


# Share of Shelter Users 25 and Younger

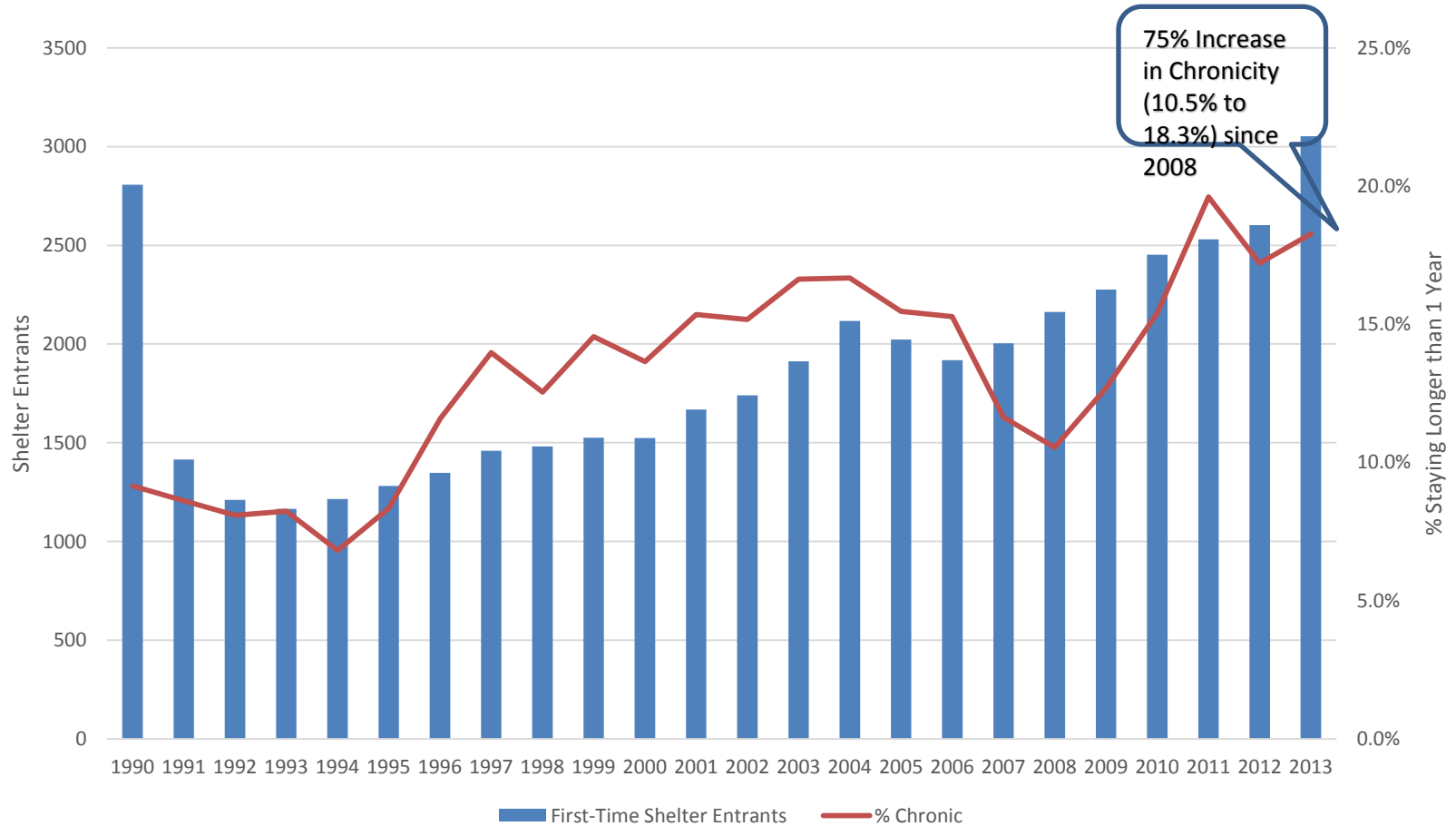




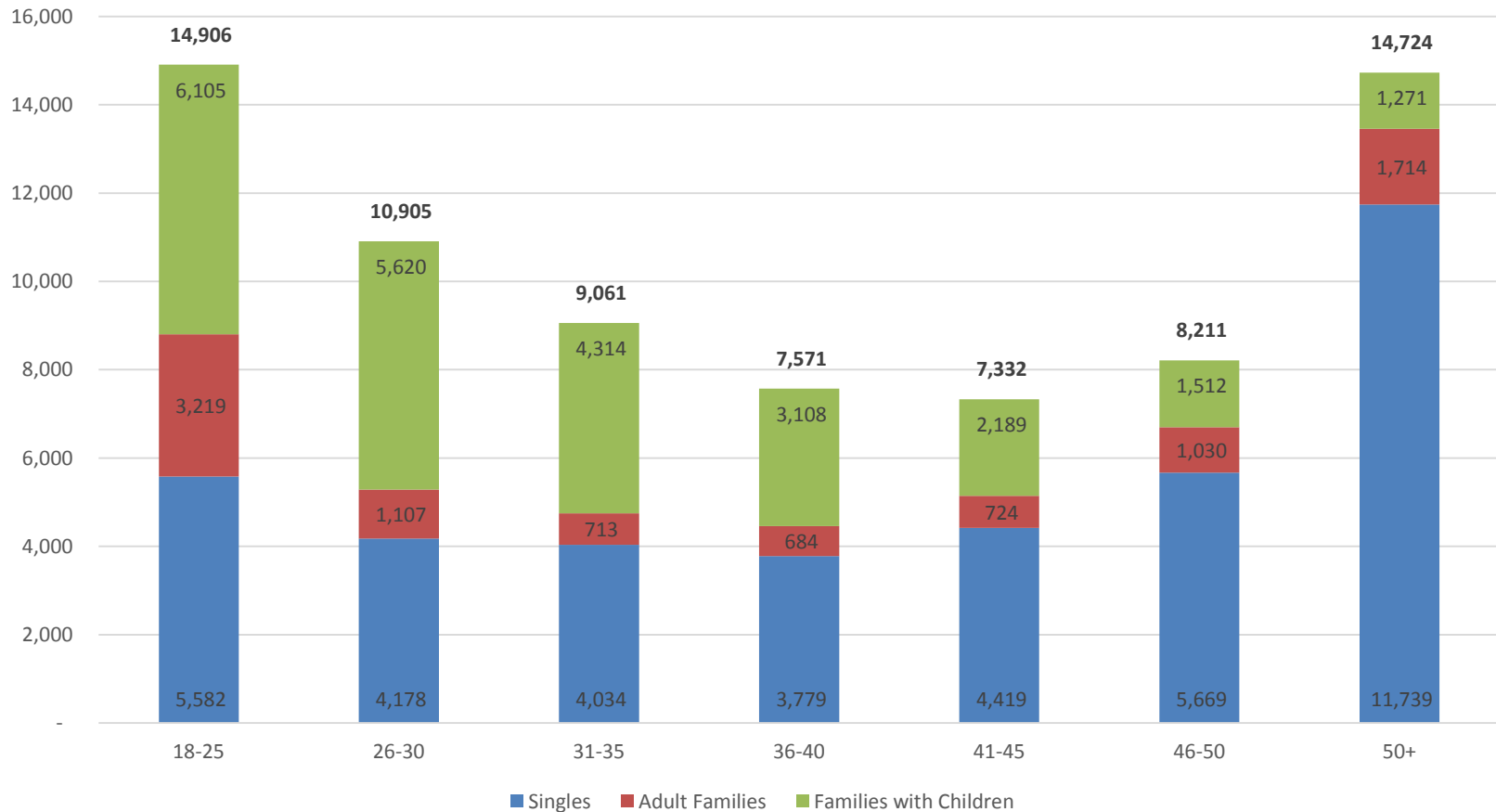
# Age Distribution of First-Time Entrants 2000-2014



# First-Time Entrants & Chronicity: 50 & Older



# Age Distribution of all Adults in Shelter: NYC 2014



# Conclusions

- Is rising youth homelessness really a Millennial cohort effect?
- GFC combined with larger birth cohort creating excess labor supply, greater social welfare demands
- Underground labor market? Idle hands...Opiate addiction epidemic

# Implications

- Can't repeat the emergency response of the 1980s and 1990s
- Proactive engagement
- Family conflict mediation
- Behavioral health supports
- Housing supports, including contingencies
- Educational/vocational training, job subsidies
- Long-term: Anticipatory planning....