Returns to the Emergency Shelter

How do psychosocial factors, demographics and policy affect returns to the homeless shelter?

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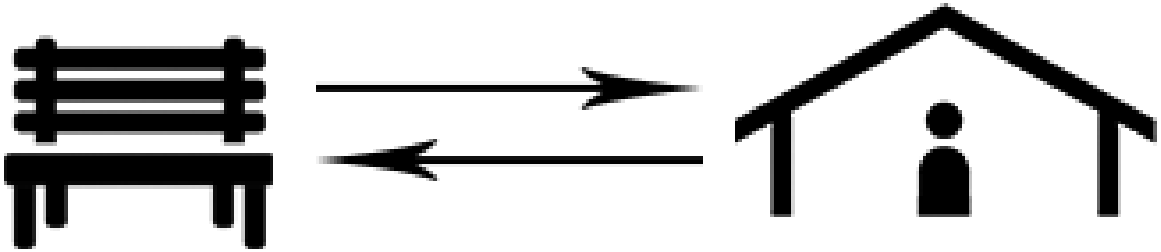
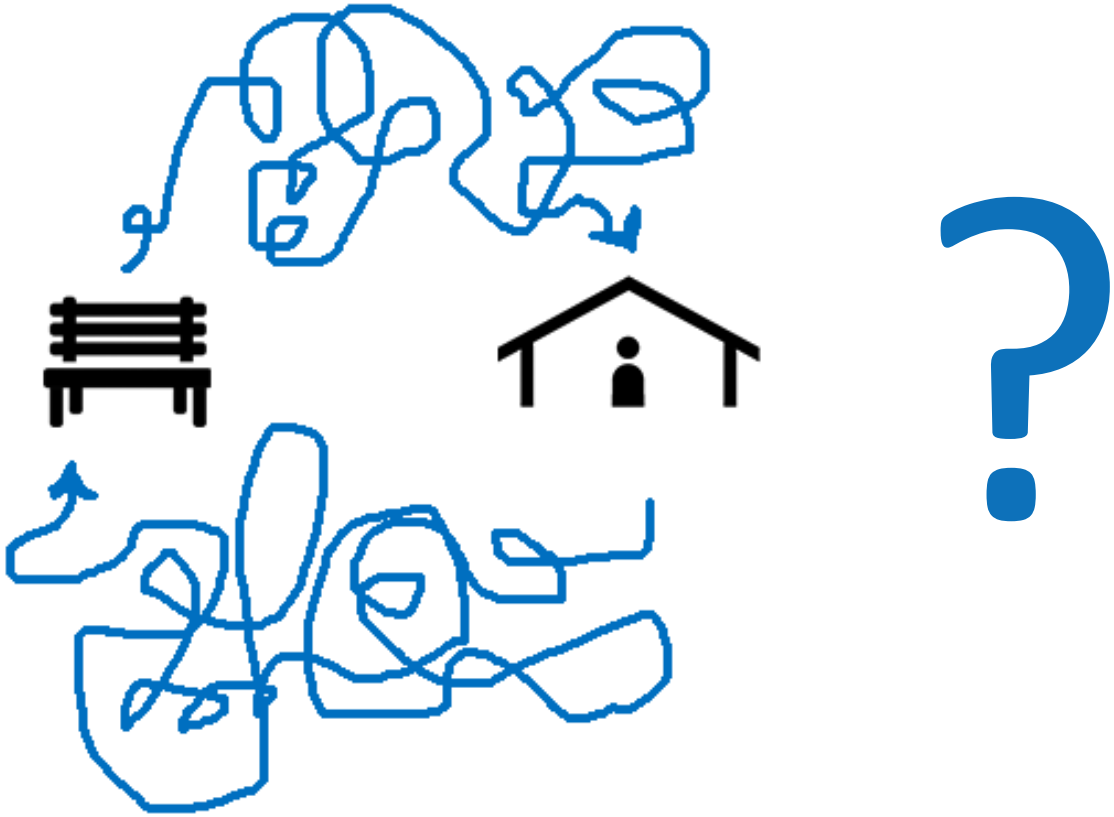
Repeated episodes of homelessness are common





Homelessness as a spectrum

- Re-entries to the shelter in the social/economic context in which we live are a given and natural part of the process.

- From a policy standpoint, it is a top priority to extend the period between bouts of homelessness and keep people acceptably housed for as long as possible.

- It is therefore important to identify the factors that may lead to rapid returns to homelessness in order to provide appropriate community support and design helpful policies.

Just a few things before I tell you about the results…

! exiting our shelter is not synonymous with exiting homelessness. Clients may move to other shelters in the city, become "hidden homeless", move away, become hospitalized, or return to the shelter after we've stopped observing them.

! *many clients who used the shelter services during the time of the study were not included in the analysis. These clients might not resemble those studied and the results found may not apply to them.*

Results $\not\equiv$ **Cause**

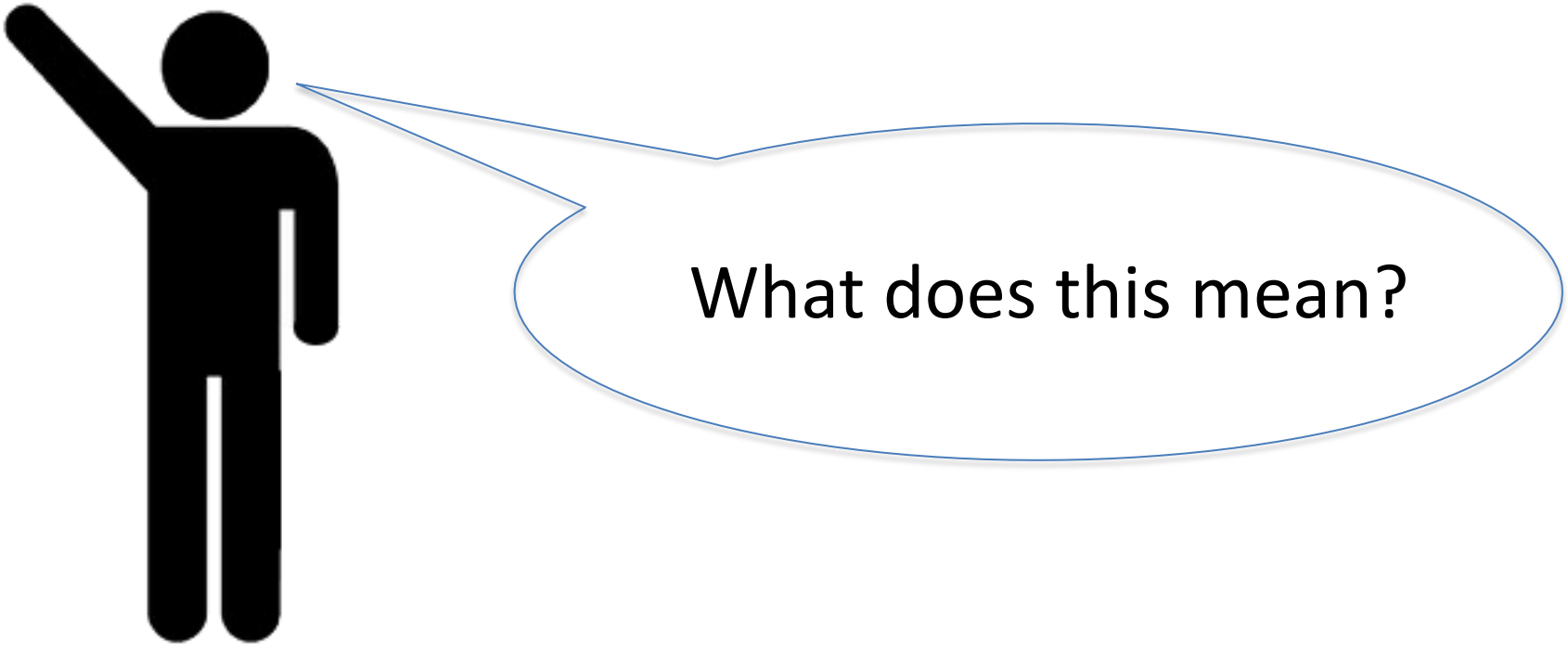
! *our results indicate significant associations between some demographic, contexutal and psychosocial factors and returns to the Old Brewery Mission. However, they do not indicate that these factors are the specific cause of return, though they may be contributing factors. Our study design does not allow us to draw causal conclusions.*

Results **Truth**

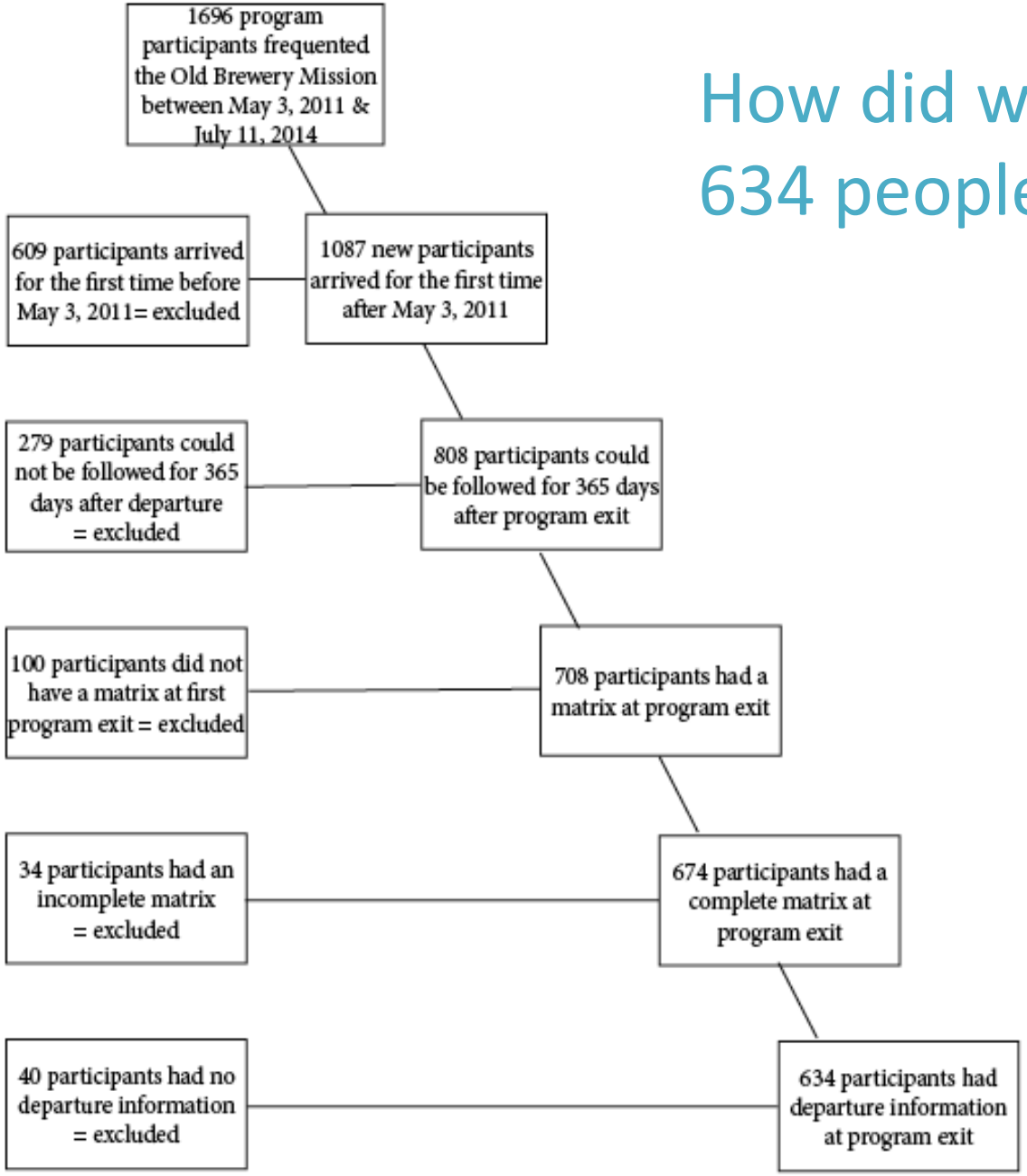
! did we measure what we thought we were measuring? As with any scientific analysis, there are always concerns with quality of data. For example, psychosocial characteristics are assessed during client-counselor interviews. The counselors can only assess what the clients tell them. At the time of data collection the client is dependent upon the Old Brewery Mission to provide him with his most basic human needs. As such, it is in his best interest to give a positive impression. This can result in under- or over-reporting.

Now for some details about the project…

"The study selected 634 *participants who were* new to the shelter *between May 2011 and July 2014 and who had a* complete client record *at the time of departure"*



How did we get 634 people?



How did we try to predict returns?

Community.involvement
Employment
Safety
Income
Support
Housing
Stay.length
Legal.issues
Substance.use
Departure.type
Mental.illness
Banned
Age
Life.skills
Education

The study was guided by the following 3 questions…

1

Are the people who returned to the OBM different from those who did not return?

To what extent can demographic and psychosocial factors allow us to predict returns to the shelter?

2

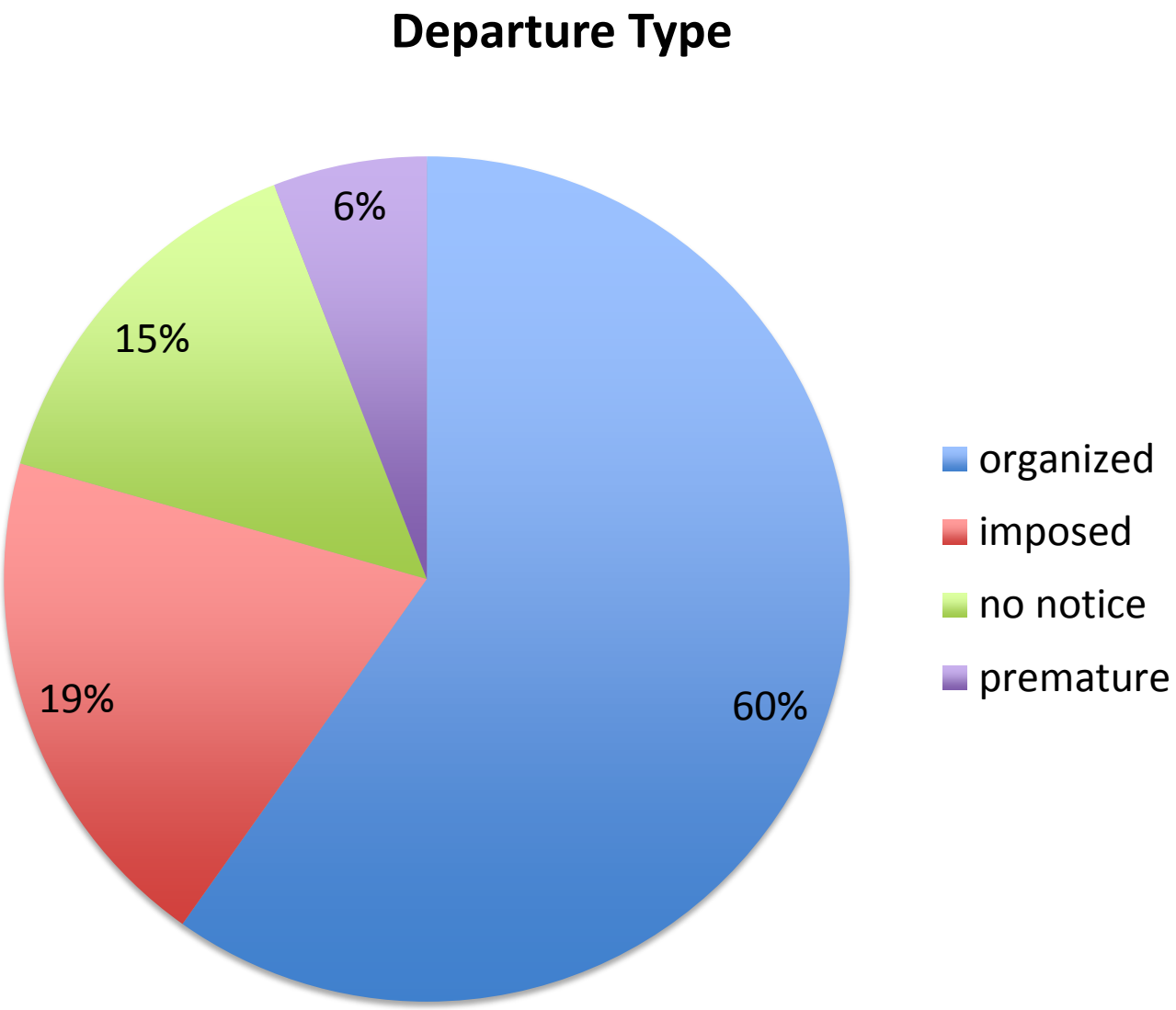
What demographic, psychosocial and contextual factors affect time to return to the shelter?

3

1

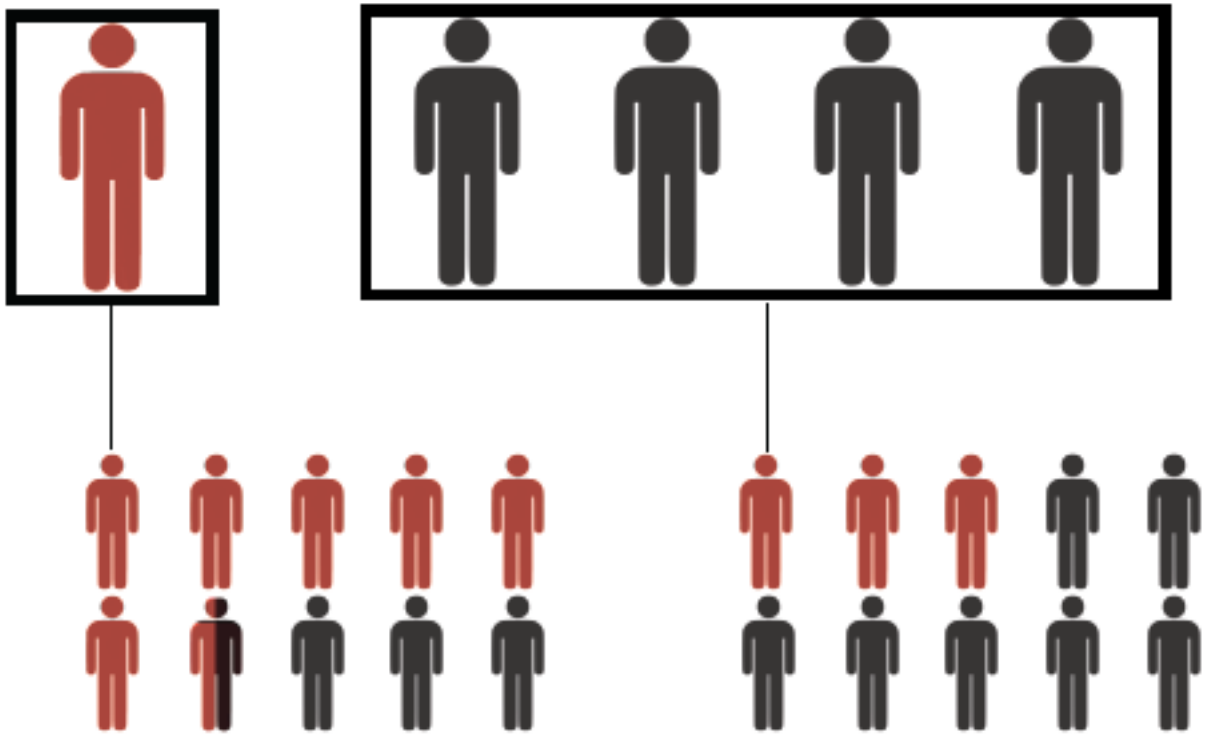
Comparing those who returned to the OBM and those who did not return

1


Departure Type
6%
15%
19%
60%
organized
imposed
no notice
premature

1 in 5

program clients have an imposed departure



65%

of imposed departures return within a year

<30%

of other departures return within a year

1

Compared to those who did not return, the group that returned to the shelter had a higher proportion of individuals with a vulnerable family and friends Self-Sufficiency Matrix score

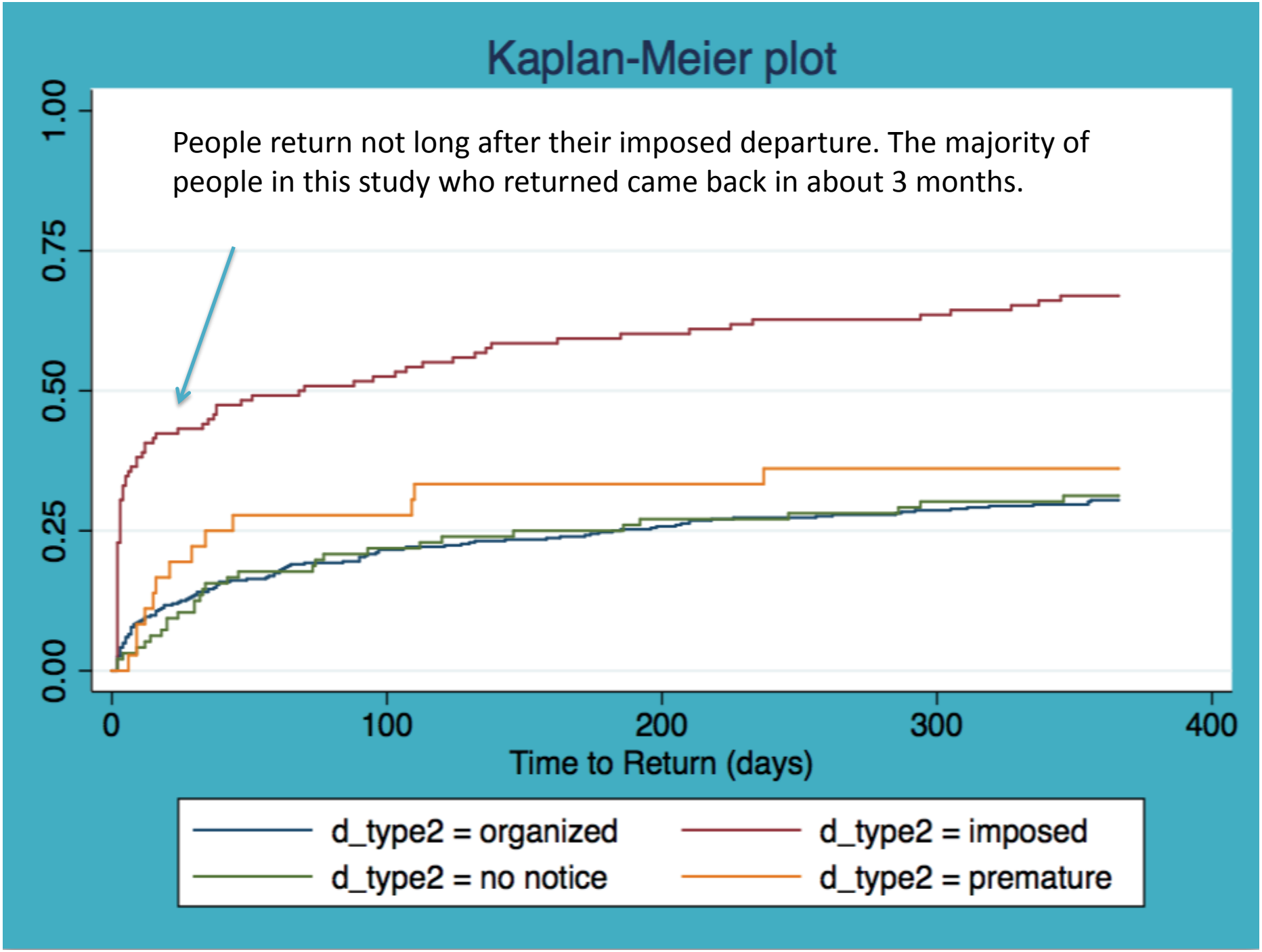
2

Now for some more in-depth analysis!

Family and friends SSM scores interact with departure to affect returns to the shelter!

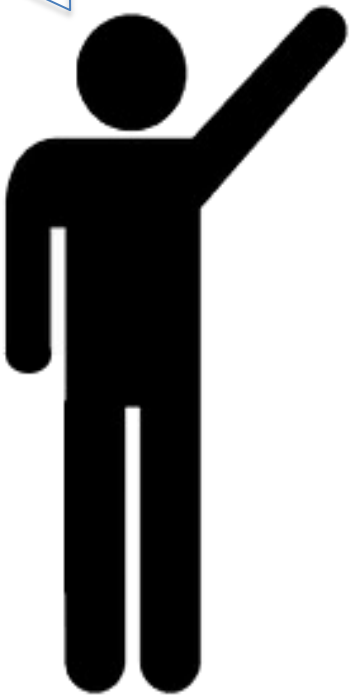
✓ = sufficient ✗ = insufficient					Predicted probability of return
support	✓	+	*organized departure*	→	25%
support	✗	+	*organized departure*	→	35%
support	✓	+	*imposed departure*	→	60%
support	✗	+	*imposed departure*	→	70%

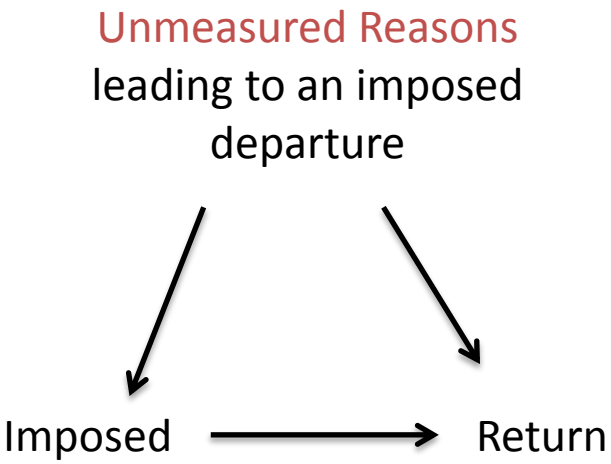
But what affects time to return?


Kaplan-Meier plot
People return not long after their imposed departure. The majority of people in this study who returned came back in about 3 months.
1.00
0.75
0.50
0.25
0.00
0
100
200
300
400
Time to Return (days)
d_type2 = organized
d_type2 = imposed
d_type2 = no notice
d_type2 = premature

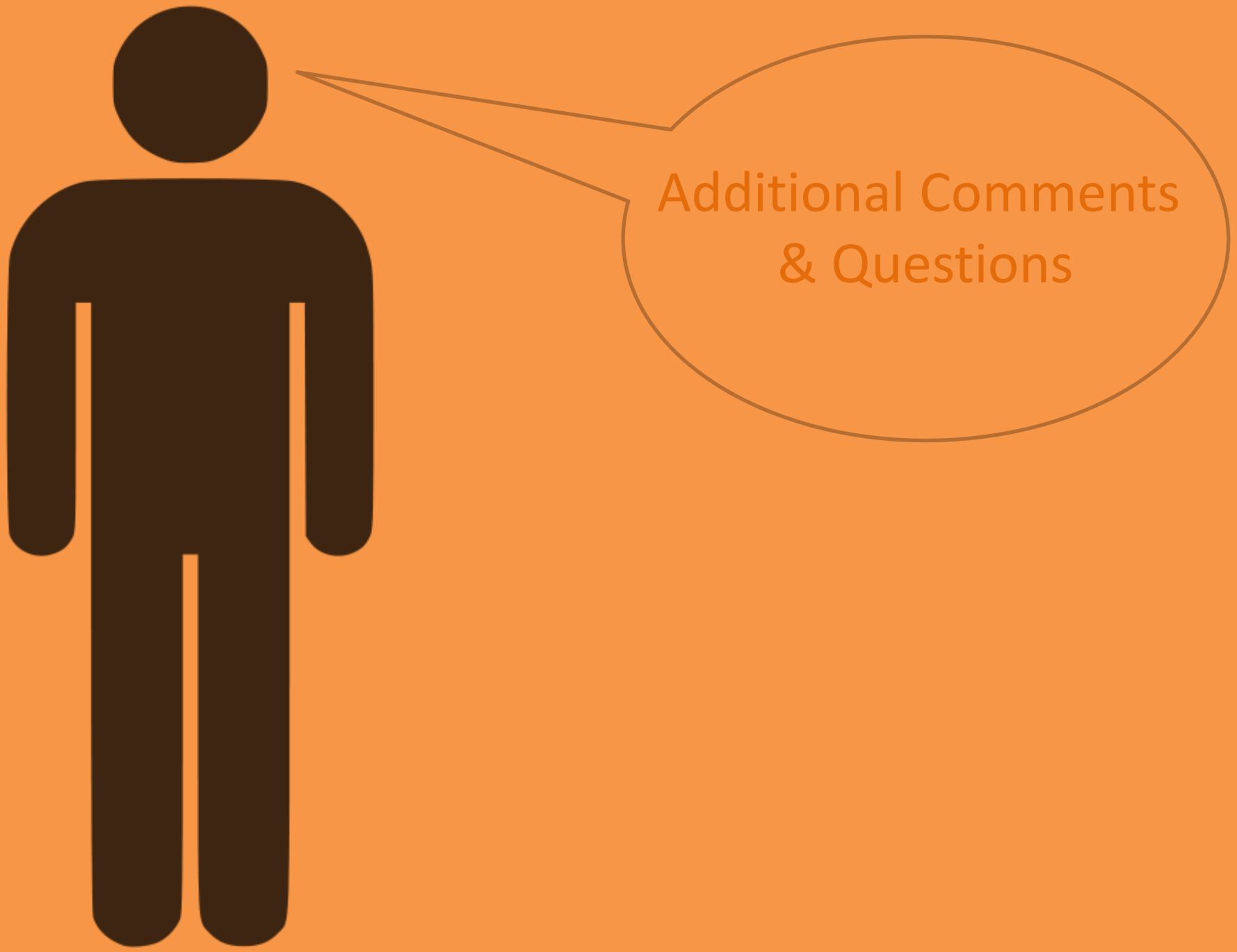
…but why?!

This is a good place to start
when expanding on these analyses!





hypothesis


Additional Comments
& Questions