



VANDERBILT
PEABODY COLLEGE

Design and Implementation of the Family Options Study

Michelle Wood
Abt Associates

NAWRS Conference
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
July 31, 2017



**HUD's 2015
Annual Homeless Assessment Report
estimates that nearly 155,000 families
with children experience homelessness
each year in the US**



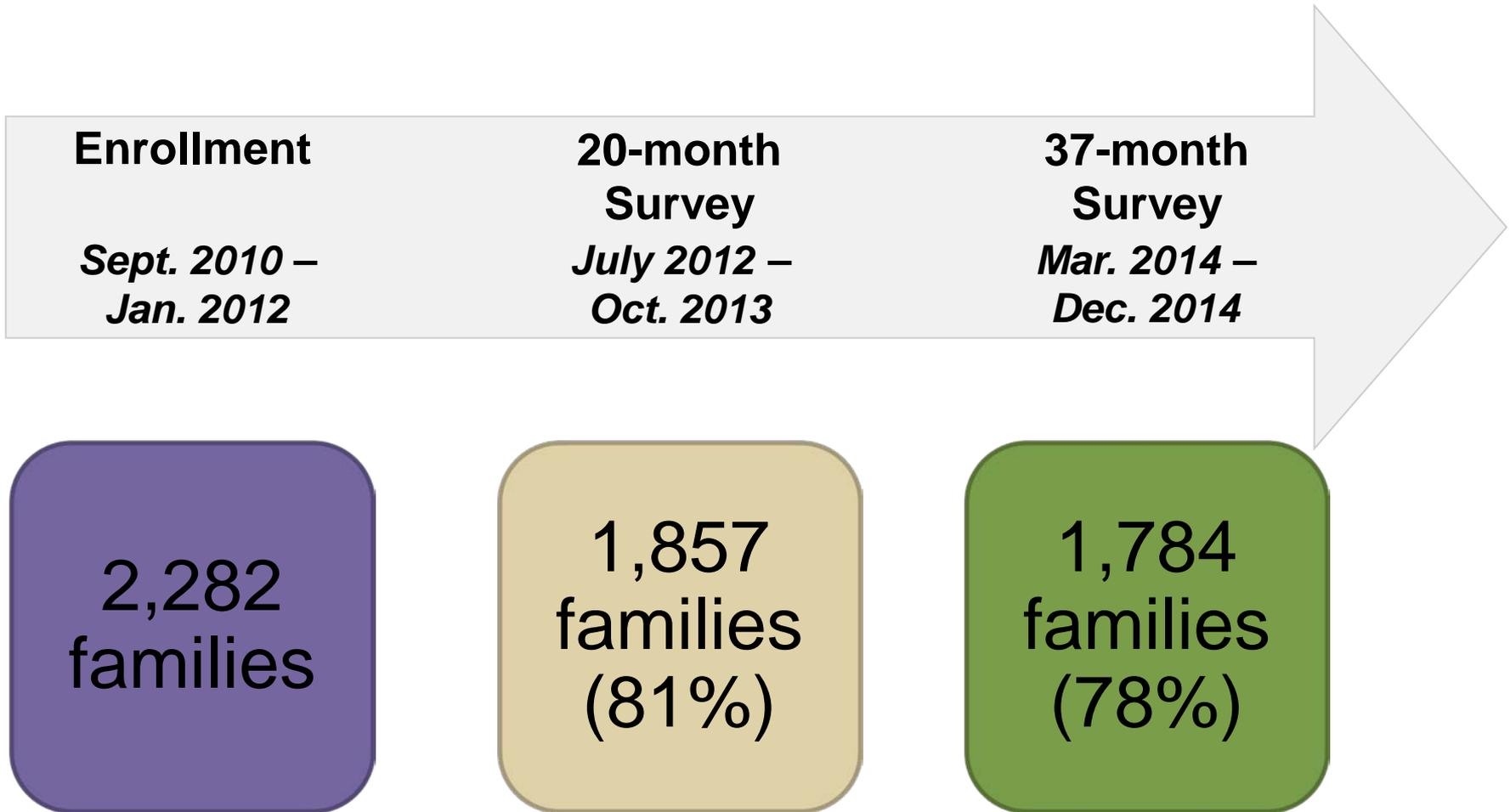
Study Goal and Scope

Examines the effects of alternative housing and services interventions for homeless families

Uses experimental design:
2,282 families with 5,397 children were randomly assigned to 3 distinct interventions and “usual care” group



Study timeline and sample





Outline of Presentation

- Characteristics of homeless families in the Family Options Study
- Design and implementation of the study
- Programs used by families



Parents in Family Options Sample

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Median age of family head | 29 years |
| Female adult respondent | 92% |
| Two-parent families | 23% |



Children in Family Options Sample

| Number of children | |
|---|------------|
| One child | 44% |
| Two children | 30% |
| Three or more children | 26% |
| At least one child under 3 | |
| | 50% |
| Mother is pregnant | 10% |
| At least one child separated from family | 24% |



History of Homelessness and Instability

Homeless History

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Prior episode of homelessness | 63% |
| Total homelessness in life | Median: 6 months |

Doubled-Up History

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Doubled up as adult because couldn't pay rent | 85% |
| Time doubled up last five years | Median: one year |

Exposure to Violence

| | |
|--|-----|
| Domestic violence by romantic partner | 49% |
| Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder | 22% |

Childhood Instability

| | |
|--|-----|
| Homeless as child | 16% |
| Foster care, group home, or institution as child | 27% |



Interventions Studied

Long-term rent Subsidy

usually a housing voucher,
no supportive services
(SUB)

Community-based Rapid Rehousing short-term rent subsidy (CBRR)

Project-based Transitional Housing temporary housing with supportive services (PBTH)

Usual Care emergency shelter and housing and services families access on their own (UC)

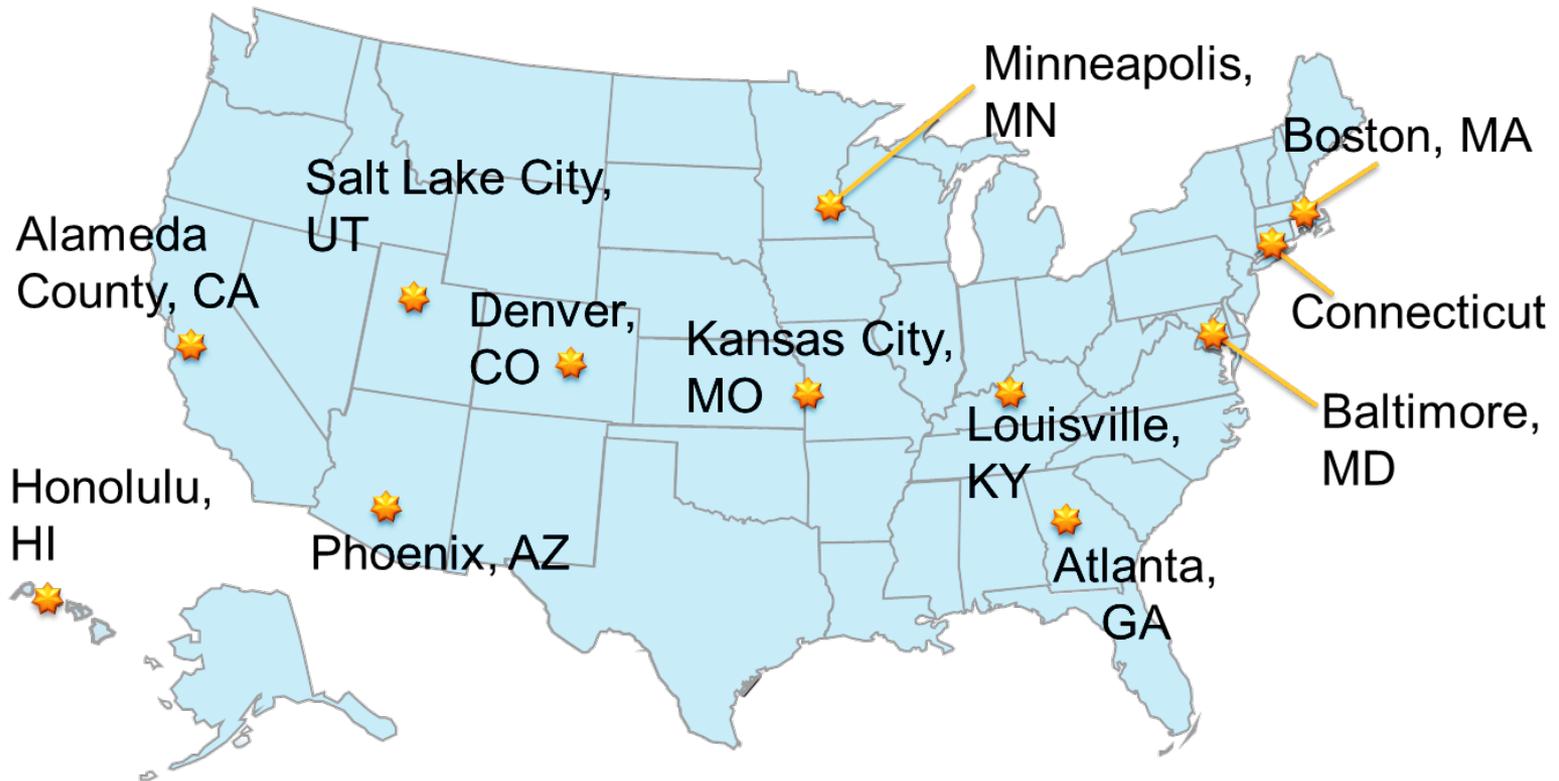


12 Communities Participated

2,282
families

5,397
children

148
programs





Intake and Random Assignment

Families in shelter for at least 7 days consent to participate in the study

Eligibility screening for available program slots

Random Assignment

Permanent Housing Subsidy (SUB)

Community-based Rapid Re-housing (CBRR)

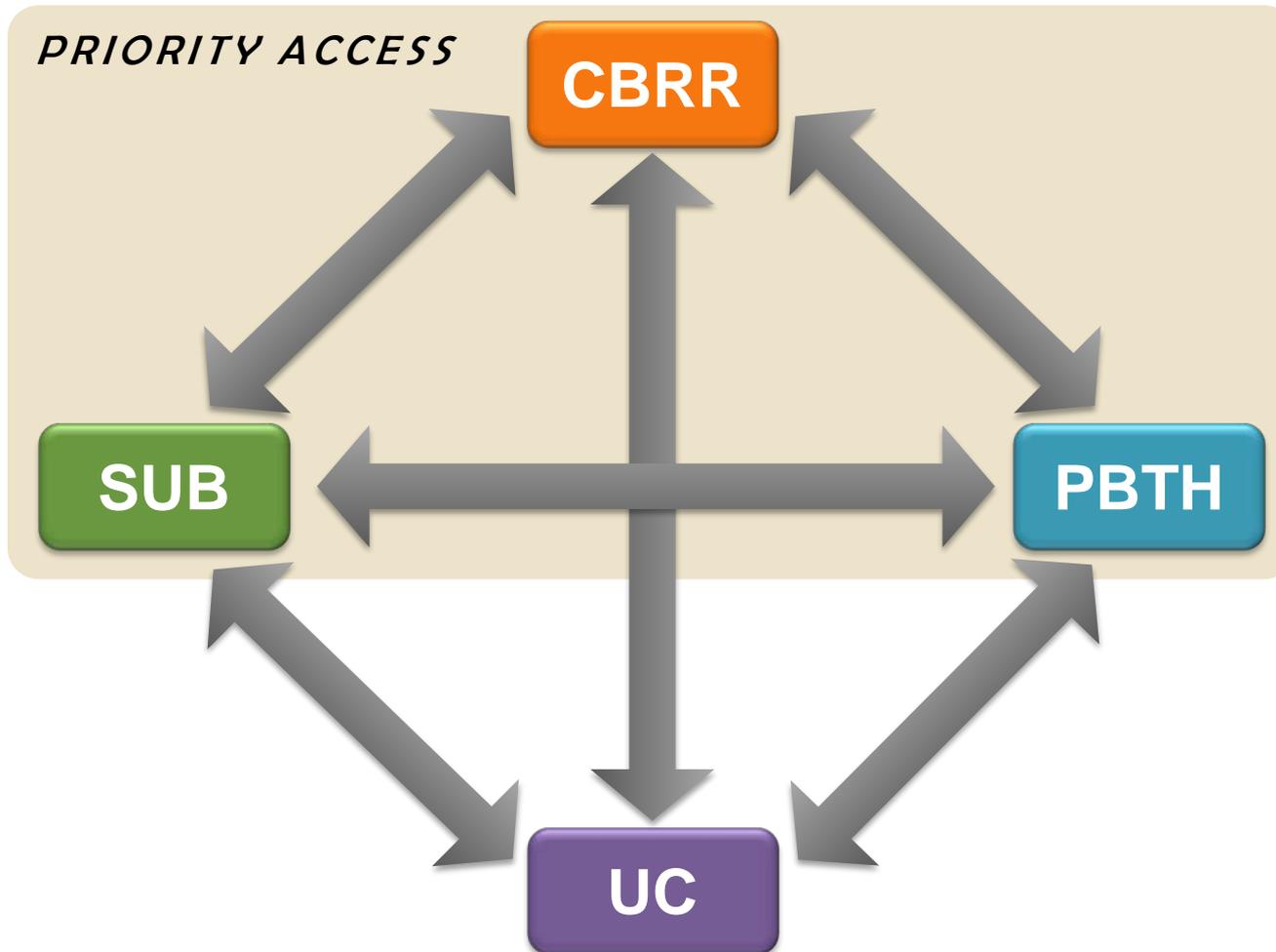
Project-based Transitional Housing (PBTH)

Usual Care (UC)

PRIORITY ACCESS

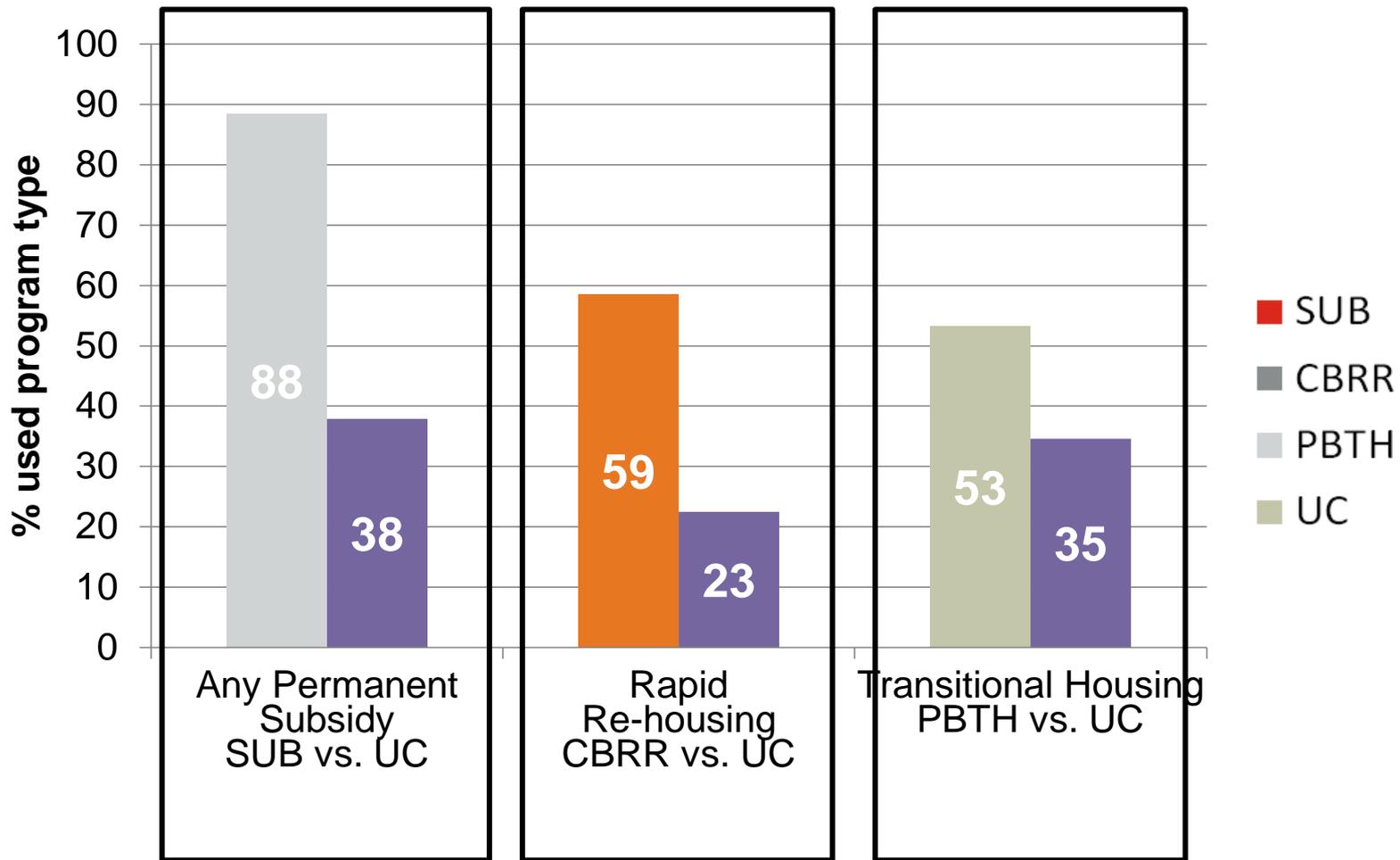


Impact comparisons





Take-up of Offered Program Type





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Family Options Study: Three-Year Impacts on Family Well-Being and Intervention Costs

Stephen Bell

Abt Associates

NAWRS Conference

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

July 31, 2017



Outline of Presentation

- Impacts in five domains
 - Housing stability
 - Family preservation
 - Adult well-being
 - Child well-being
 - Self-sufficiency
- Costs of interventions
- Key take-away points



Impacts of Assignment to the Intervention

- “Intent to Treat” impact estimates reveal the average impact of *offering* a family priority access to a particular type of program relative to usual care
- All families are included, whether or not the families used the assistance (or used other types of assistance instead)



Outcomes in five domains

1

Housing stability

2

Family preservation

3

Adult well-being

4

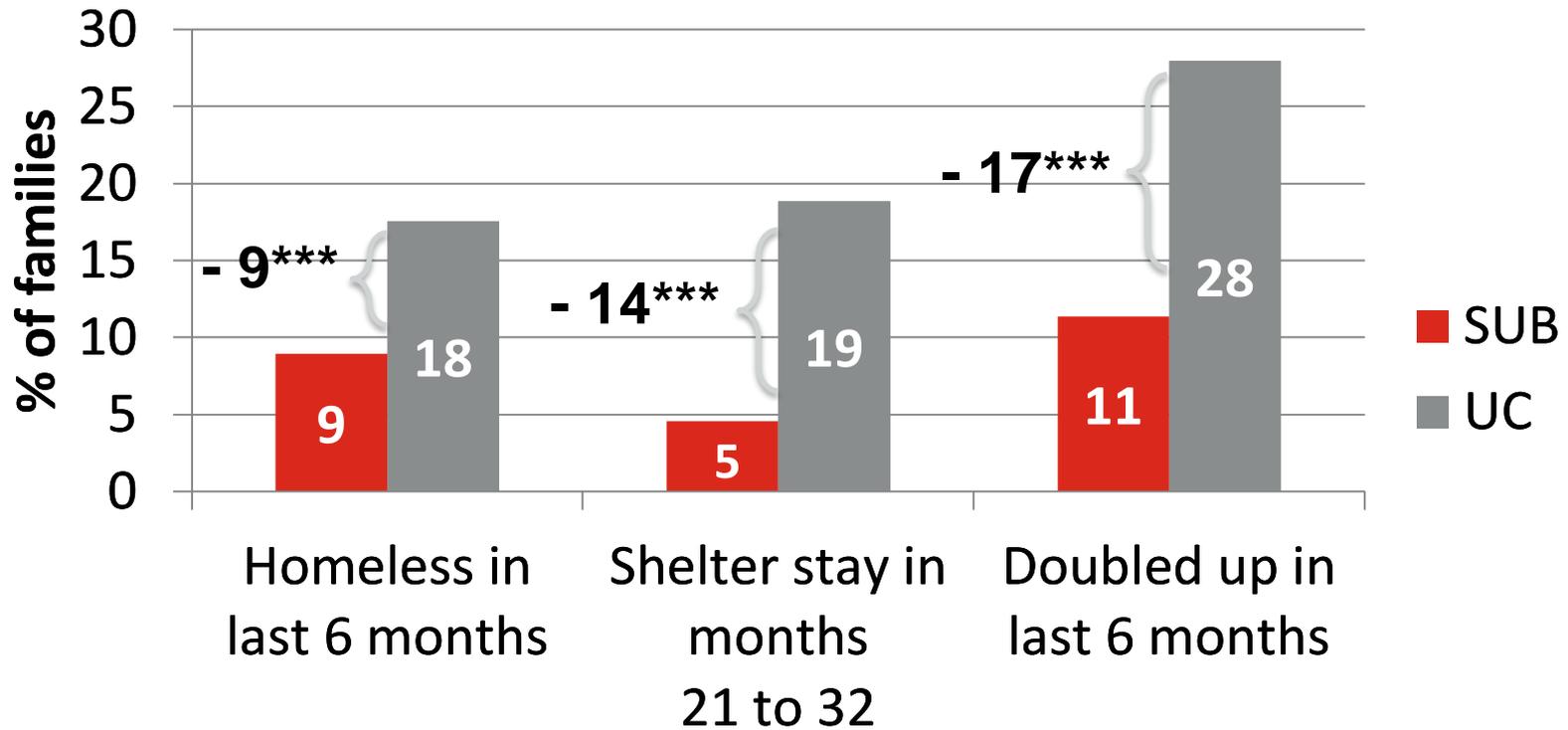
Child well-being

5

Self-sufficiency



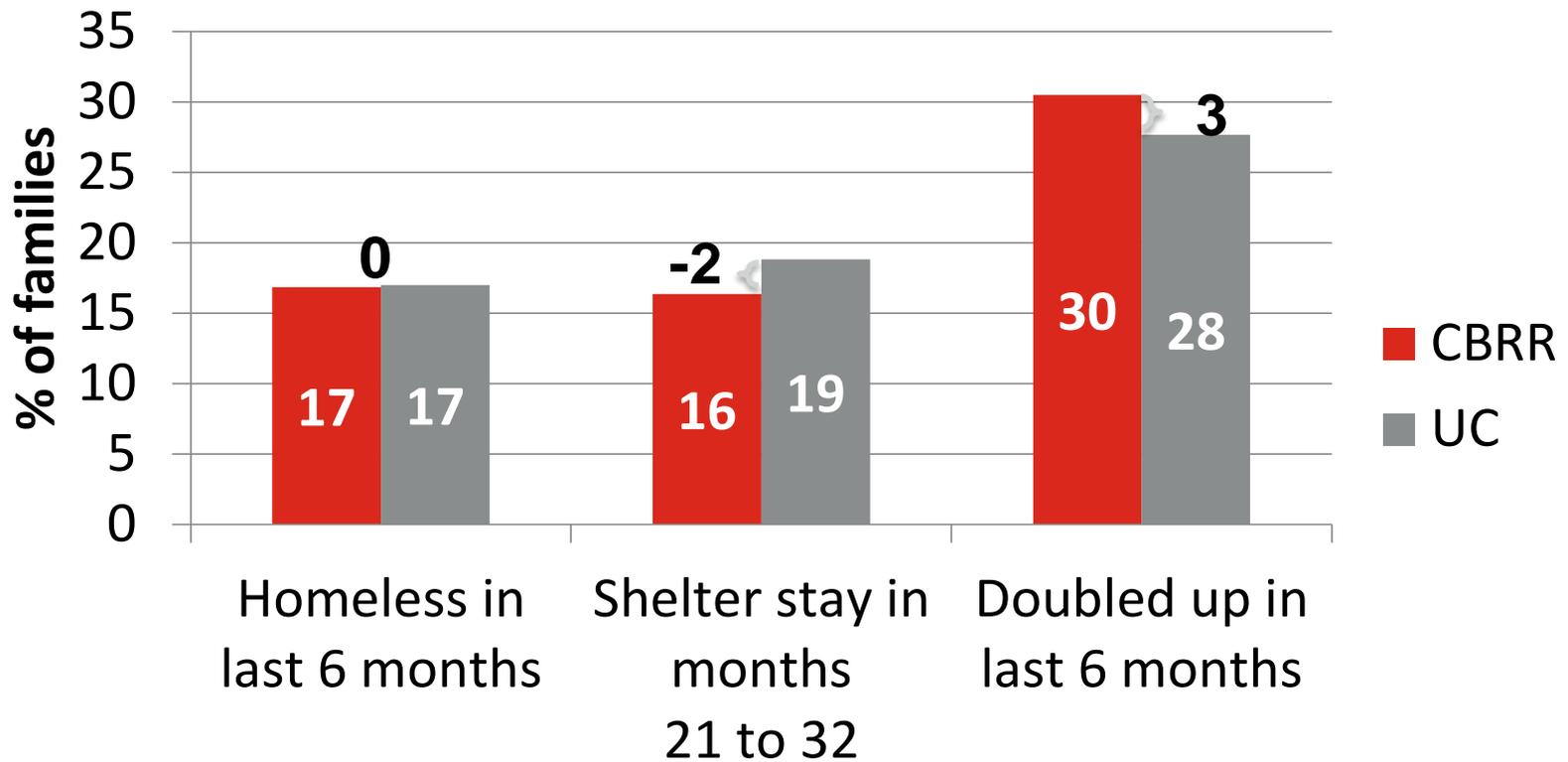
Housing stability impacts at 37 months: SUB versus UC



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



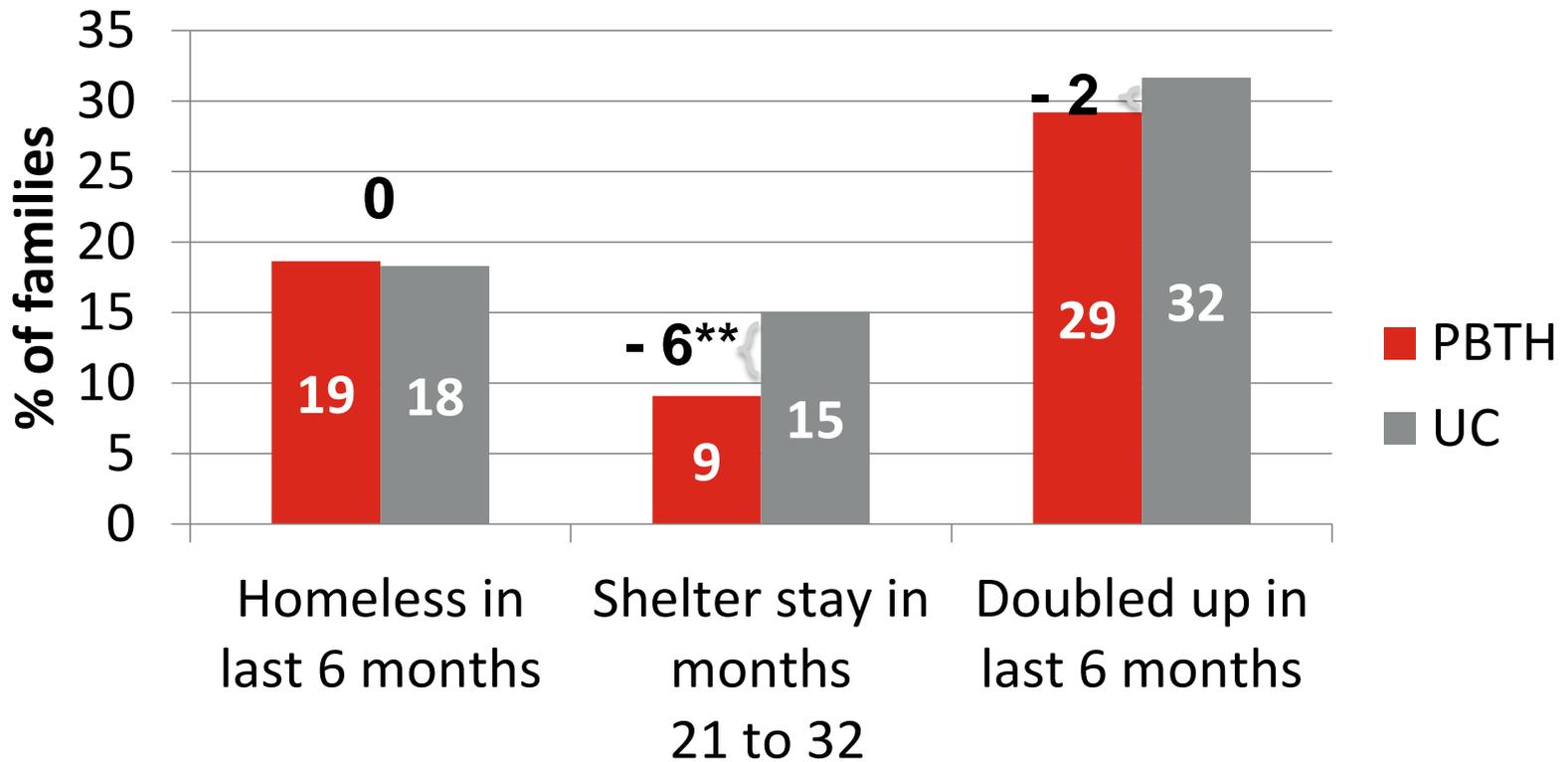
Housing stability impacts at 37 months: CBRR versus UC



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



Housing stability impacts at 37 months: PBTH versus UC



*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01



Family preservation impacts

- New or ongoing separations in past 6 months in UC families:
 - 17% from child
 - 38% from partner with family in shelter (reduced sample)
- At 20 months, SUB reduced child separations by two fifths
- At 37 months SUB *increased* partner separations by two fifths
- CBRR and PBTH: no impacts on family preservation



Adult well-being impacts

- One in nine UC adults reported alcohol dependence or drug abuse. One in ten reported intimate partner violence in the past 6 months. A third reported fair or poor health.
- SUB reduced intimate partner violence by a third and reduced psychological distress at both time points
- At 20 months, SUB additionally reduced substance dependence by almost a third
- CBRR and PBTH had no impacts on these measures
- No intervention affected physical health



Child well-being impacts

- UC children attended 2.1 schools in three years, were absent 1.1 days per month, and had elevated behavior problems
- SUB reduced school mobility (full period), absences (20 months) and behavior problems (37 months)
- CBRR reduced school absences at (20 months) and behavior problems (37 months)
- PBTH had no impacts on these outcomes
- No intervention affected child health



Self-sufficiency impacts

- 37% of UC families worked for pay in the week before the follow-up survey, almost half were food insecure, and median income was \$12,099 (all improvements from 20 months)
- SUB reduced work effort by 6 percentage points at 20 months and between the survey waves
- SUB increased food security by 10 percentage points (both times)
- CBRR increased food security and incomes (20 months)
- PBTH has no effect



Summary of 20- & 37-Month Impact Results

| Outcomes | SUB vs. UC | | CBRR vs. UC | | PBTH vs. UC | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| | 20 mos. | 37 mos. | 20 mos. | 37 mos. | 20 mos. | 37 mos. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Housing stability | + | + | + | | | | | | | + | + | | | + | | |
| Family preservation | + | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adult well-being | | + | + | + | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Child well-being | + | + | | | + | | | | | | | | + | | | |
| Self-sufficiency | - | + | | | + | + | | | | | | | | | | |

- + : beneficial effect
- : detrimental effect
- : ambiguous effect



Costs

- Total costs of all programs used by UC families averaged \$41,000 over 37 months
- SUB was 9% more expensive
- PBTH was 4% more expensive
- CBRR was 9% *less* expensive



Key Take-away Points

- Priority access to long-term rent subsidy (SUB) radiated benefits at both time points.
- Priority access to a short-term rent subsidy (CBRR) led to similar results to usual care at a lower cost.
- The service-intensive approach (PBTH) improved housing stability while families were in PBTH but did not affect other domains.



Thank you
Michelle Wood and Stephen Bell

Additional information:
For more info, HUDUser: Family Options
(U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

Michelle_Wood@abtassoc.com
Stephen_Bell@abtassoc.com



Families Experiencing Homelessness: Connection to Benefit Programs, Child and Partner Separations

Lauren Dunton
Abt Associates

NAWRS Conference
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
July 31, 2017





Homeless Families Research Briefs

- HHS's Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) contracted with Abt to conduct additional analysis of the Family Options Study data
- Family Options Study followed 2,282 homeless families with children who entered shelter between 2010-2012 in 12 sites across the country
- Collected data at enrollment, 20 months, and 37 months later
- Not nationally representative, but has broad geographic coverage and similar to national homeless population



Brief topics

Briefs Using 20 Month Follow-up Data

- **Are Homeless Families Connected to the Social Safety Net?**
- Adolescent Well-Being after Experiencing Family Homelessness
- Young Children Experiencing Family Homelessness
- **Child and Partner Transitions Among Families Experiencing Homelessness**
- **Patterns of Benefit Receipt Among Families Who Experience Homelessness**

Briefs Using 37 Month Follow-up Data

- Child Separation Among Families Experiencing Homelessness
- Characteristics of Families Experiencing Chronic Homelessness
- Earnings and Self-Sufficiency of Families Experiencing Homelessness
- Behavioral Health Improvements Among Adults in Families Experiencing Homelessness



Are families participating in public benefit programs?

This brief examines whether homeless families are receiving benefits from program public programs, both while in shelter and 20 months after their shelter stay

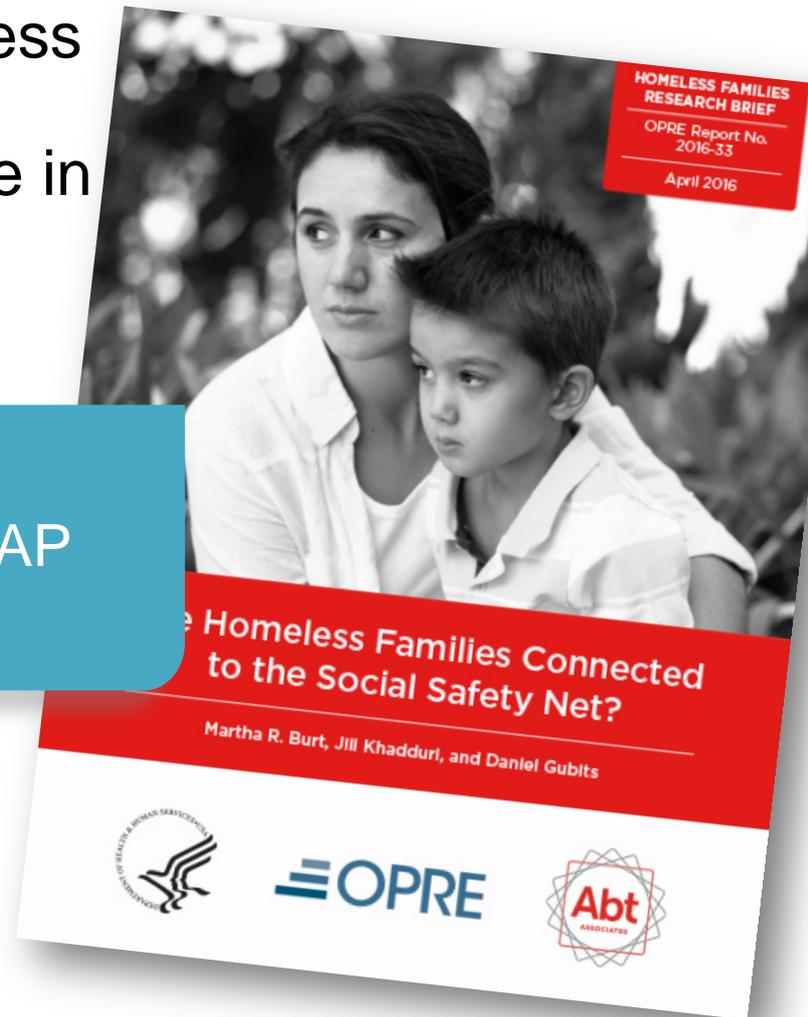
TANF cash assistance

Publicly funded health insurance

SNAP

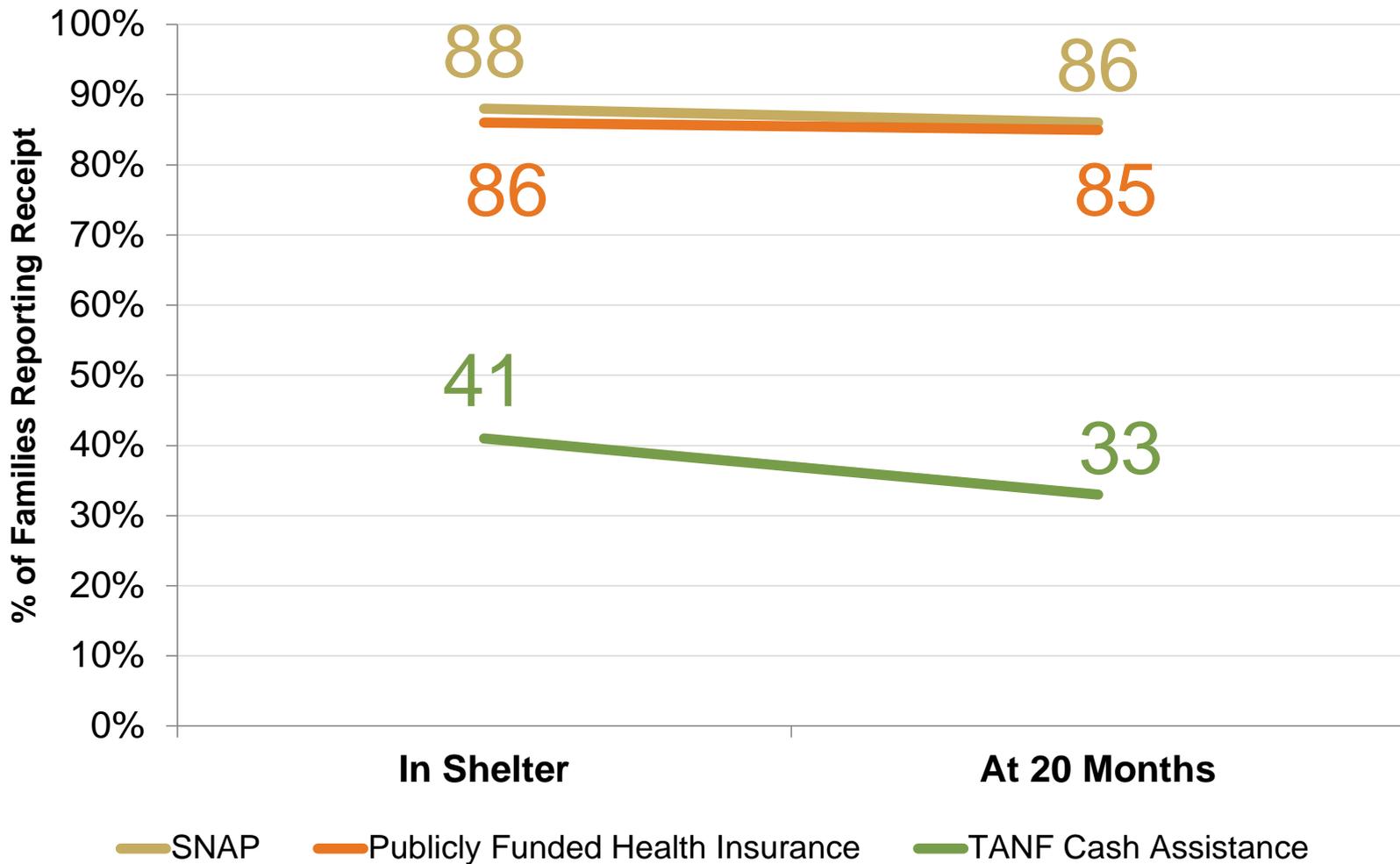
SSI and SSDI

Early education and child care





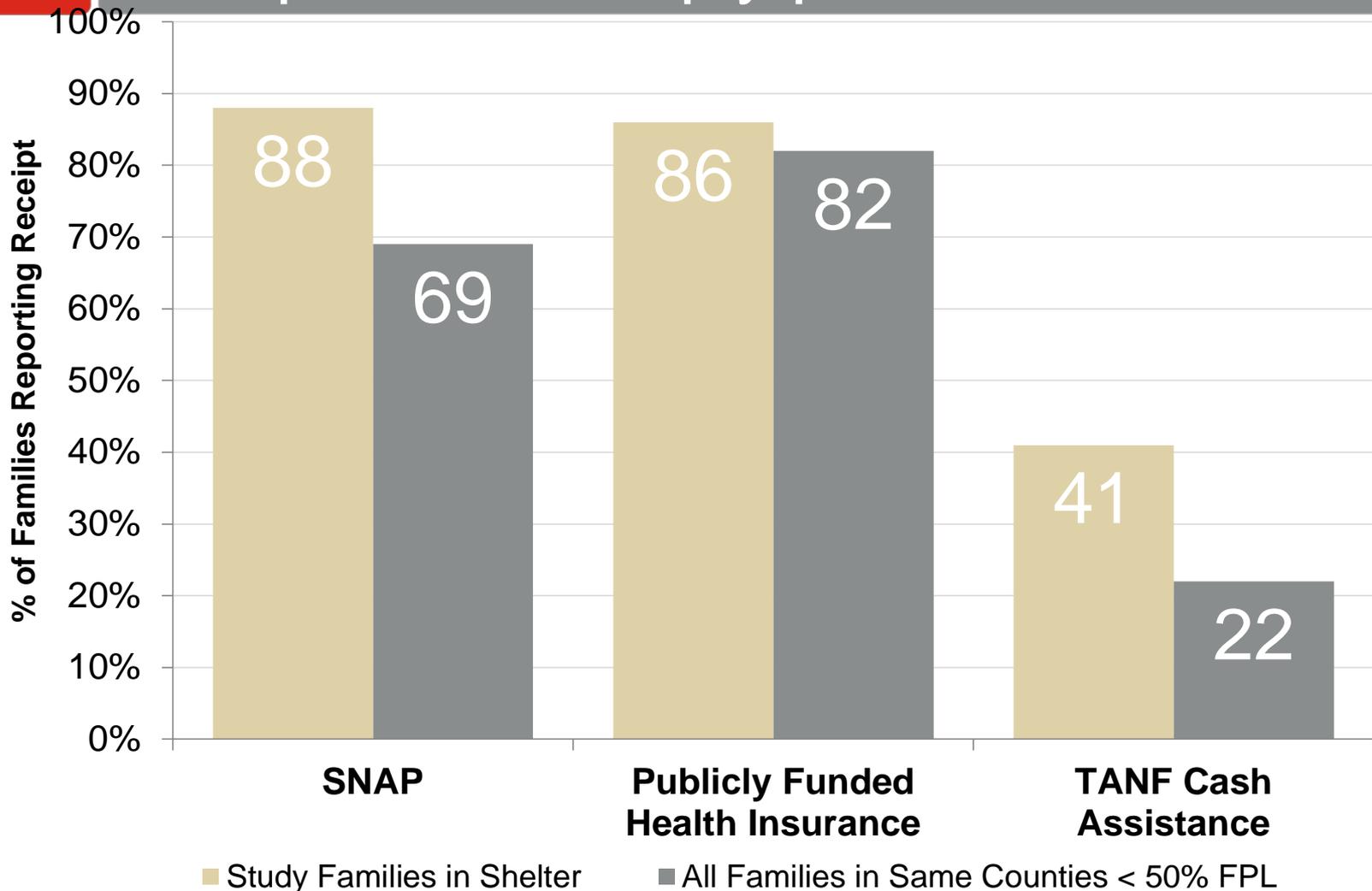
Study families' receipt of benefits while in shelter and 20 months later



Source: Family Options Study baseline and follow-up survey data



Study families' receipt of benefits compared to deeply poor families

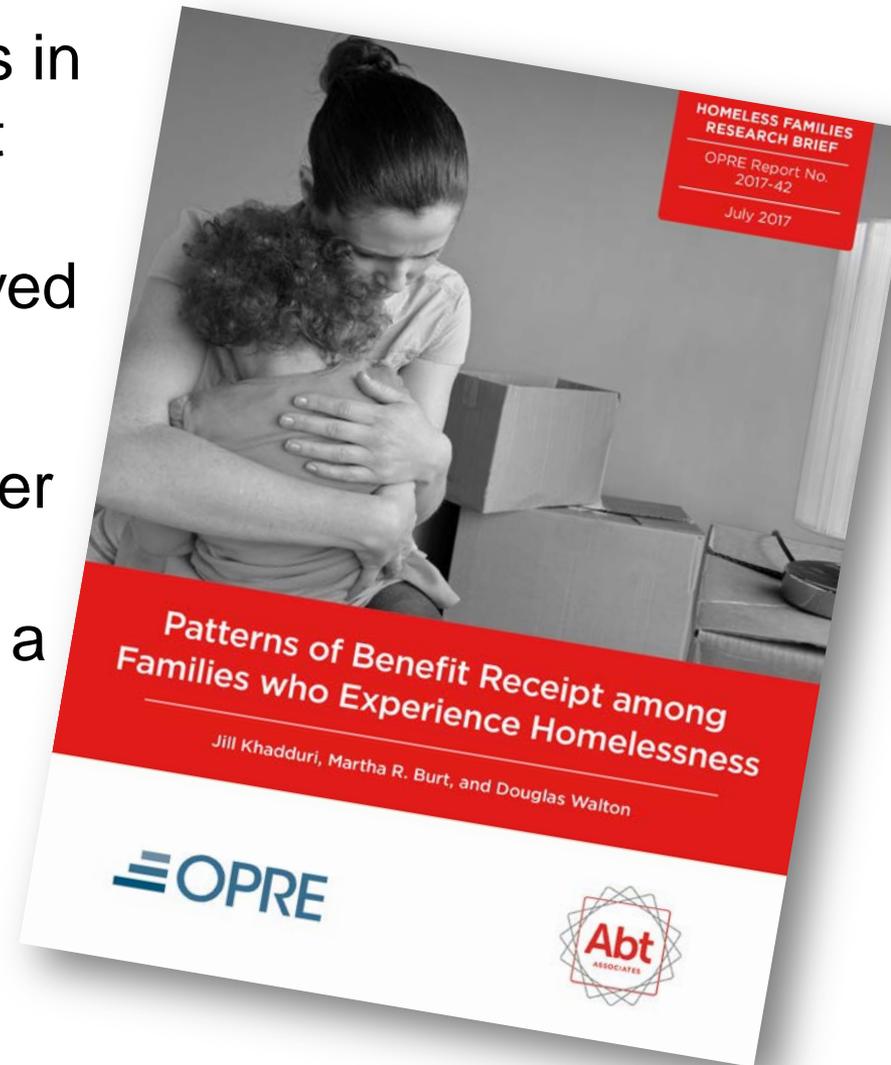


Sources: Family Options Study baseline data and ACS data



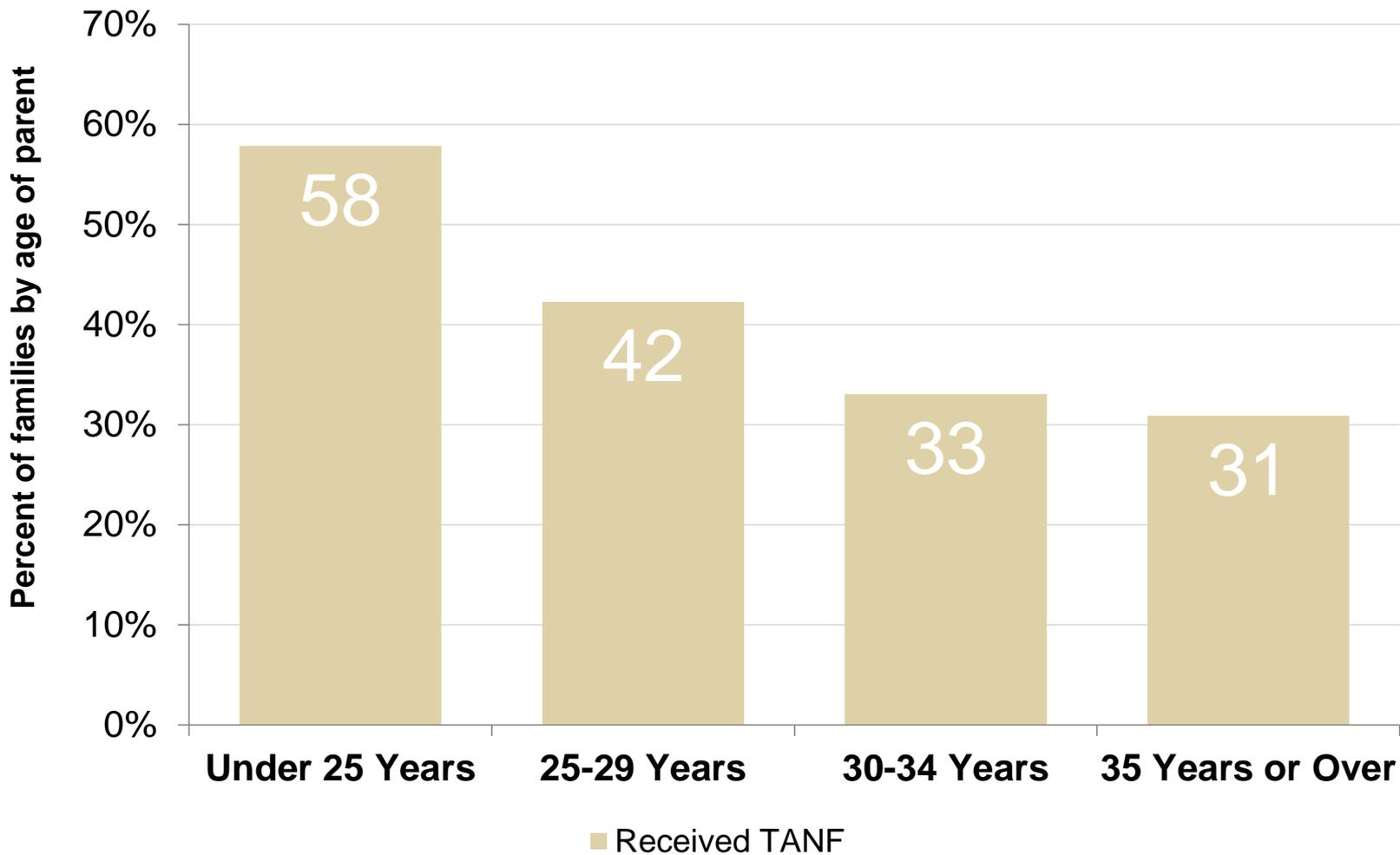
Patterns of Benefit Receipt Among Families Who Experience Homelessness

- This brief examines differences in family characteristics of benefit receipt after controlling for the community in which family stayed in ES
- The brief also considers whether there is a connection between benefit receipt 20 months after a shelter stay and recent experiences with unstable housing





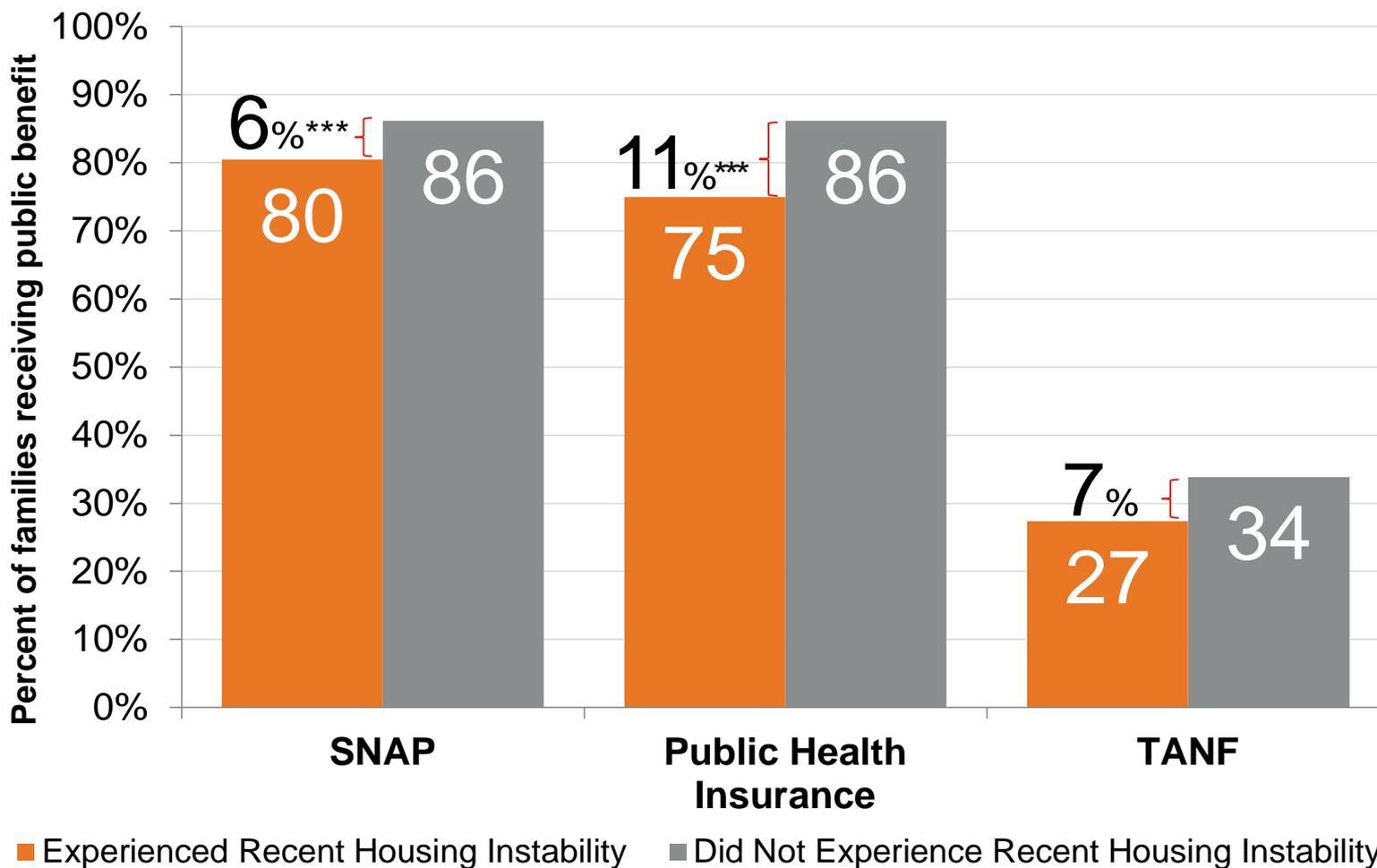
Receipt of TANF cash assistance while in shelter by age of parent



Source: Family Options Study baseline survey data



Benefit receipt and housing instability 20 months after shelter stay



Source: Family Options Study 20 month follow up survey data.

Note: ***/**/* denotes statistical significance at .01/.05/.10 level.



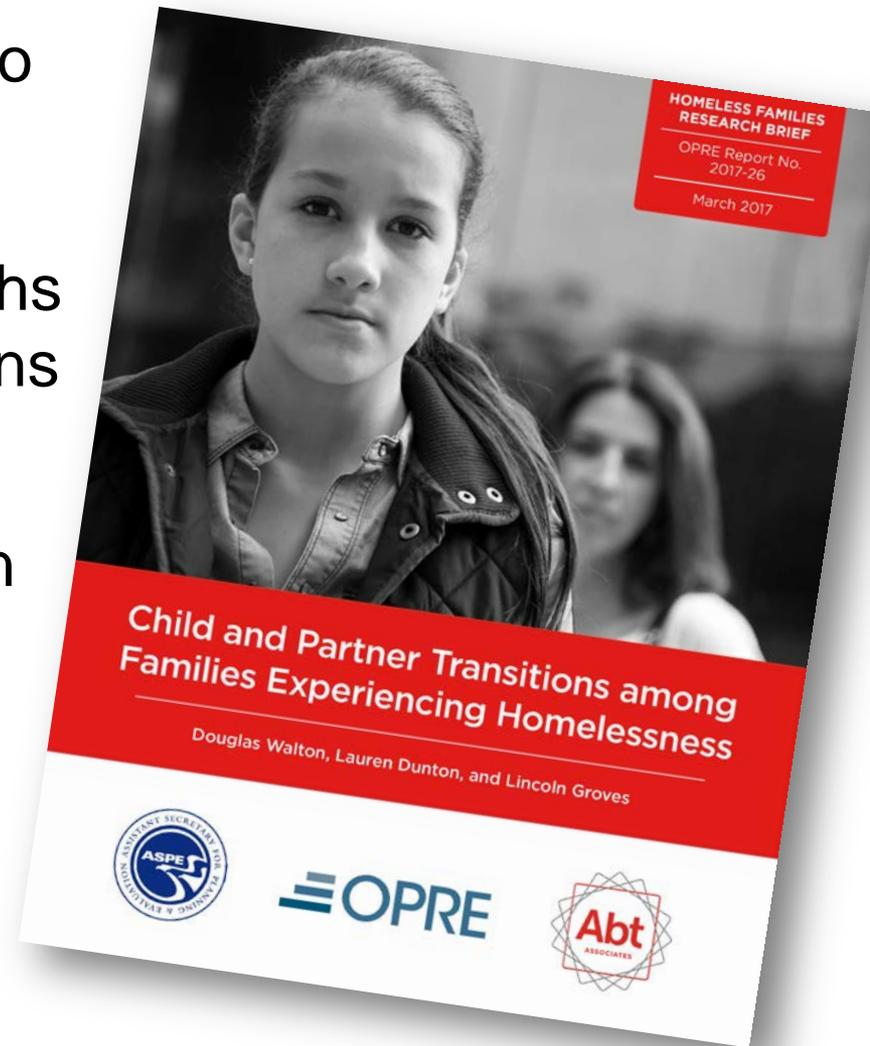
Main findings – benefit receipt

- Lacking support of benefit programs does not set families who use emergency shelter apart from other deeply poor families that remain housed
- Continued housing instability after a shelter stay may make families susceptible to either losing or having difficulty accessing public benefits



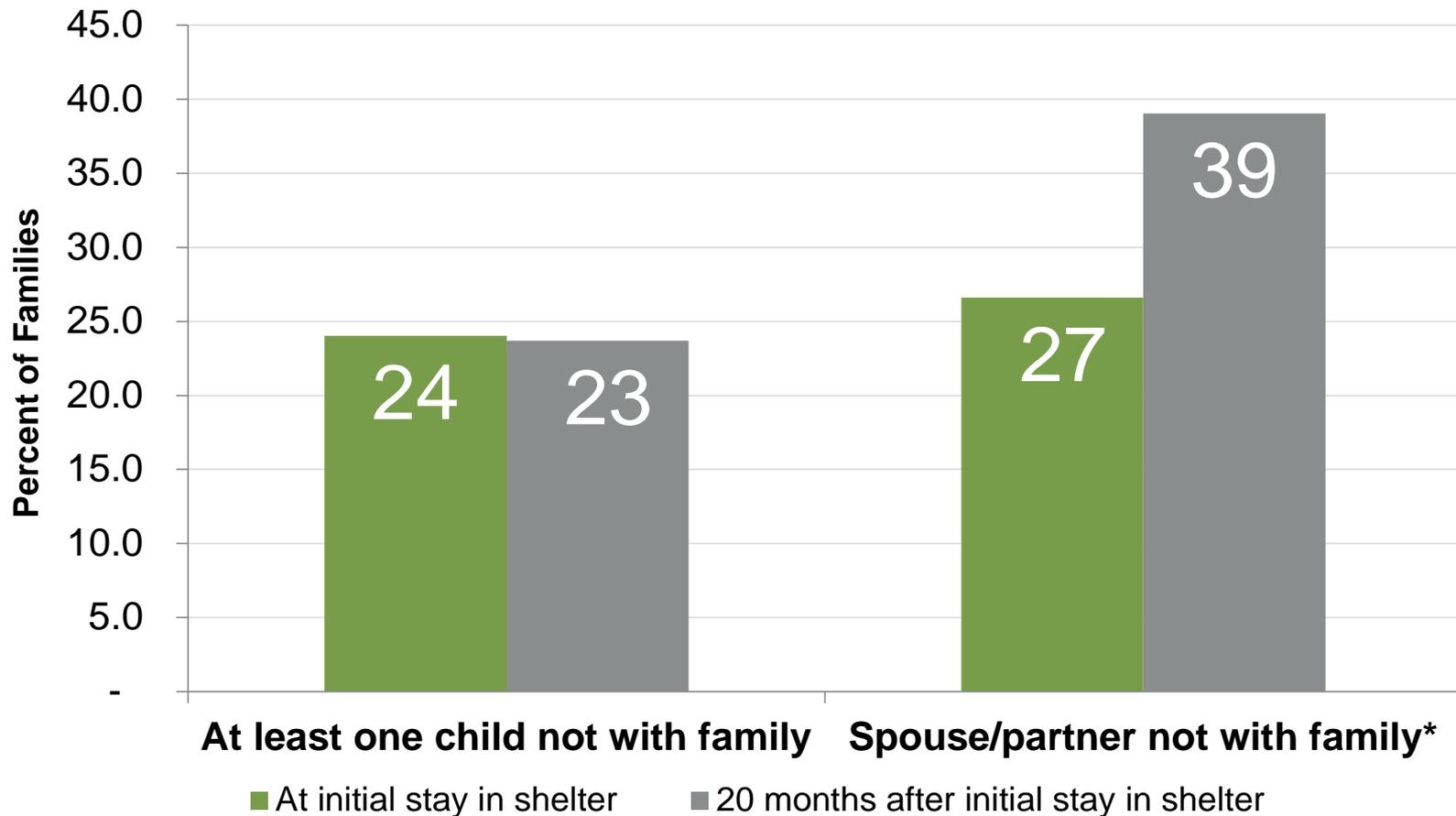
Child and Partner Transitions Among Homeless Families

- This brief examines the extent to which parents were separated from their children or adult partners in shelter and 20 months later, and considers reunifications that occur within 20 months
- About 30% of families staying in emergency shelter reported separation from at least one family member





Separations of children and partners during a family's stay in ES shelter and 20 months later



*Among the 37 percent of families reporting a spouse/partner The spouse/partner difference is statistically significant at .01 level

Source: Family Options Study baseline and follow-up survey data

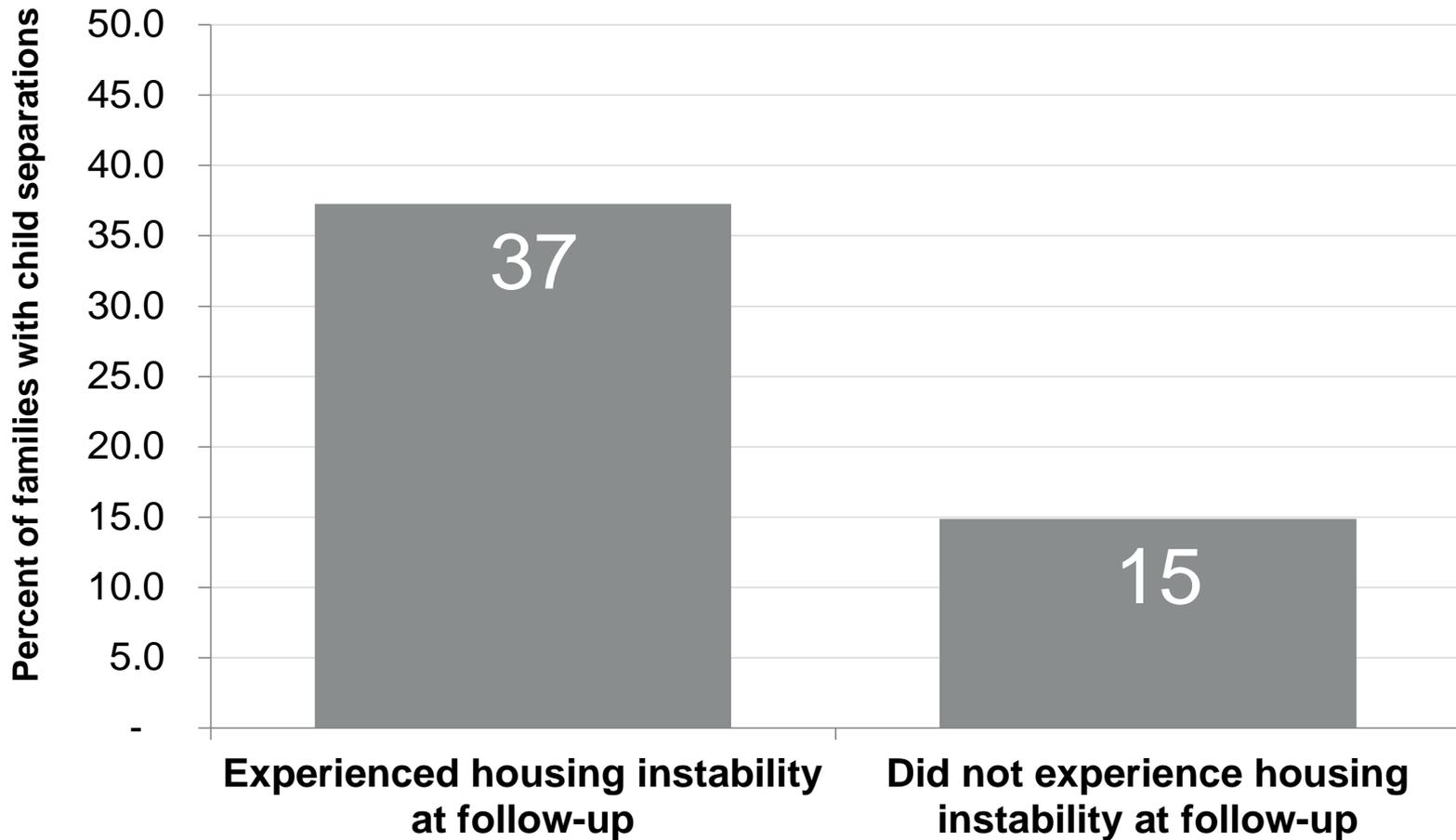


Homeless families continue to experience family transitions

- The stable overall rate of child separation masks the churning occurring within families.
 - Eight percent of families reported at least one child who was not with the family while in shelter had returned to the family
 - Ten percent of families reported a child who was with the family in shelter was no longer with the family 20 months later
- Adult partners also separated and re-joined families during this period.
- Placements involving the child welfare system were rare at the time families were staying in emergency shelter but increased over time



Housing instability is related to family separation 20 months later



Note: "Housing Instability" is defined as at least one night homeless or doubled up in the past 6 months, or in emergency shelter in the past 12 months. Difference is statistically significant at .05 level.

Source: Family Options Study follow-up survey data



Main findings – family transitions

- Families experience significant instability in their composition during and 20 months after a stay in emergency shelter
- Housing instability and family separations appear to be related
 - Families who reported subsequent housing instability were more likely to report separation from their children 20 months later
 - A relationship may exist between housing instability and family transitions across time, especially child separations



Published briefs

Available on OPRE's website:

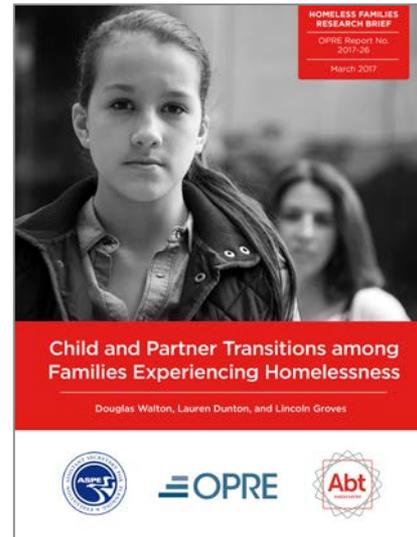
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/homeless-families-research-briefs>



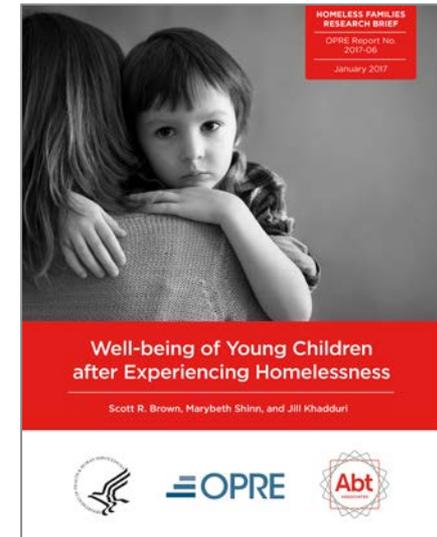
Are Homeless Families Connected to the Social Safety Net?



Adolescent Well-Being After Experiencing Homelessness



Child and Partner Transitions Among Families Experiencing Homelessness



Well-being of Young Children After Experiencing Homelessness



Questions?