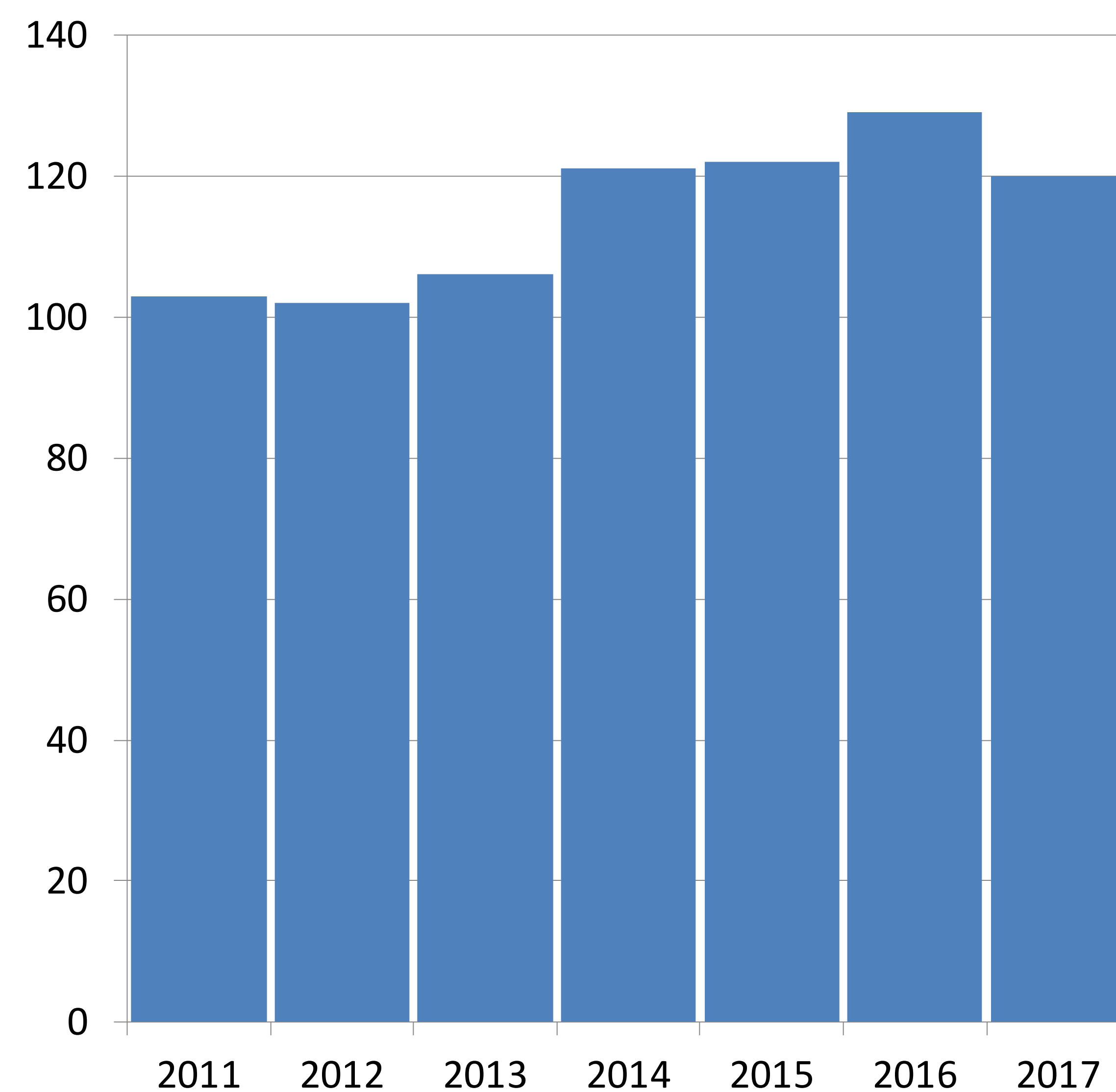


Introduction

Due to Canada's aging population¹, the landscape of homelessness is changing. More people over 50 are experiencing homelessness for the first time². People over the age of 50 stay longer in shelters than people under 50³.

Average Nights stayed in Emergency Shelter (people age 50+) in London, ON²



Why it Matters

- Longer shelter stays cause negative health and social experiences³.
- Shorter stays in emergency shelter has a positive social and financial impact on society⁴.
- Better knowledge of housing and support options may reduce length of shelter stays.

Participant Insight

- Location: Salvation Army Centre of Hope (COH) in London.
- Method: semi-structured interviews exploring participant experiences in emergency shelters and knowledge of long-term care.
- General lack of knowledge of long-term care.
- Confusion around "retirement home" and "long-term care".
- Desire for independence.
- Some personal experience of loved ones in long-term care.
- Positive and negative experiences within shelters.
- Experiences rooted in how they were treated by shelter staff and other residents.

The average number of nights stayed in emergency shelter goes up with age³...



There are other options.

Discussion

- Results cannot be generalized due to a short research period and small sample size (n=3).
- Initial look at gaps in knowledge of housing options and support
- Future studies should collect a wider range of data in order to better understand the knowledge and needs of population.

Next steps:

- Experiences of people who have transitioned from shelter to long-term care.
- Knowledge of shelter staff on long-term care.
- Knowledge of long-term care staff on homelessness.

Recommendations

- Additional resources and education sessions for emergency shelter staff and residents.
- Draw upon similarities and differences between emergency shelter and long-term care in education.

Ultimate goal:

- Allow people to be better informed when making housing choices and feel independent.

Works Cited

1. Statistics Canada. (2018). Seniors. Retrieved on 8 Jan 2019 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/seniors-aines/seniors-aines-eng.htm>
2. McDonald, L., Dergal, J., Cleghorn, L. (2007) Living on the margins: older homeless adults in Toronto. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 49(1-2), 19-46.
3. Homeless Prevention, Neighbourhood, Children, and Fire Services, City of London (2018). London's emergency shelters progress report: 2011-2017.
4. Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., Richter, T., Gulliver, T. (2013). The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.