



How to Improve the Status of the Homelessness in China

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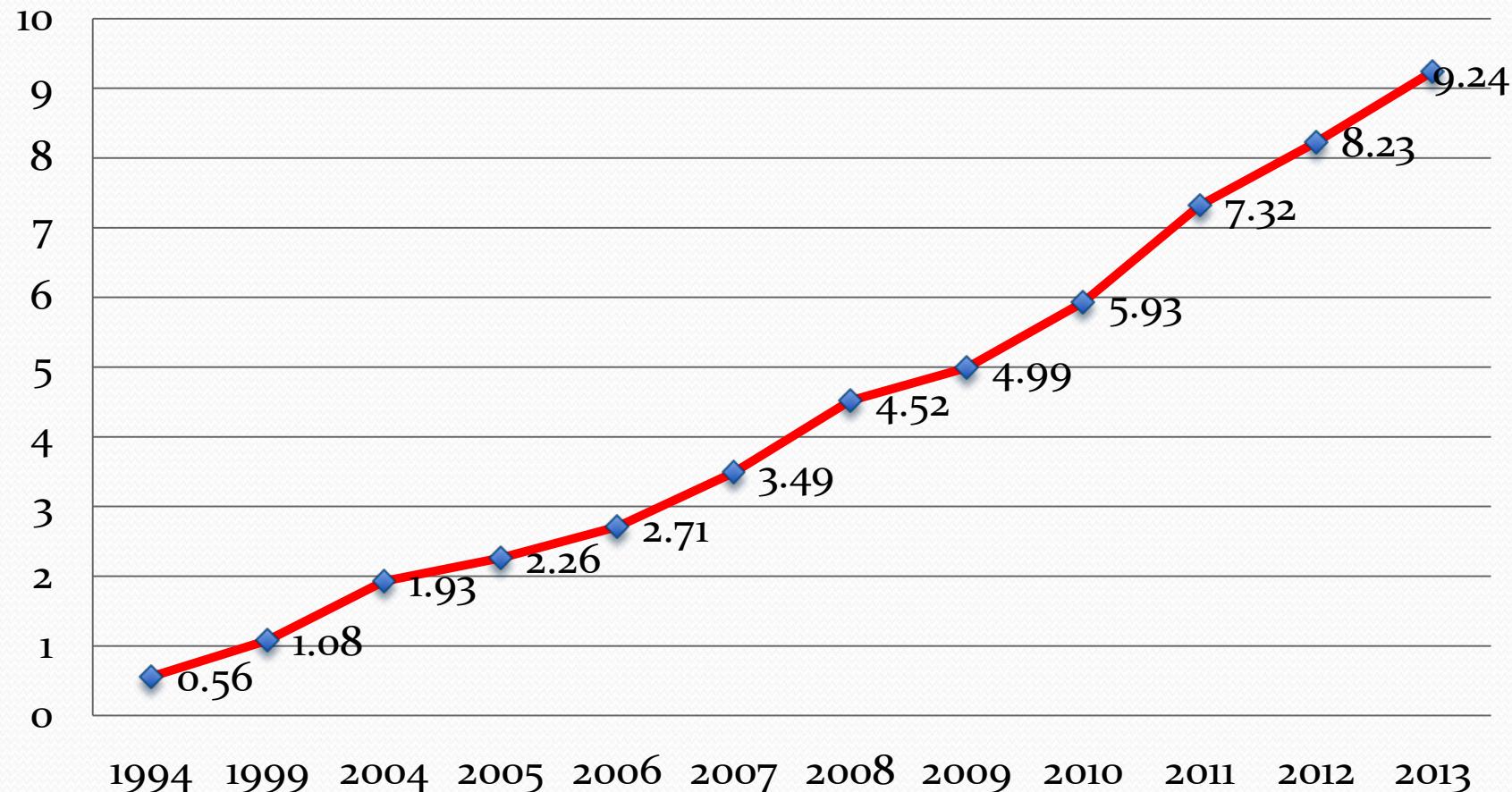
Content

- Definition of homelessness in mainland China and Hong Kong
- Measurement of homelessness in China
- Characteristics of homeless people and relevant services in mainland China & Hong Kong
- Characteristics of homeless people with schizophrenia in Chengdu, China



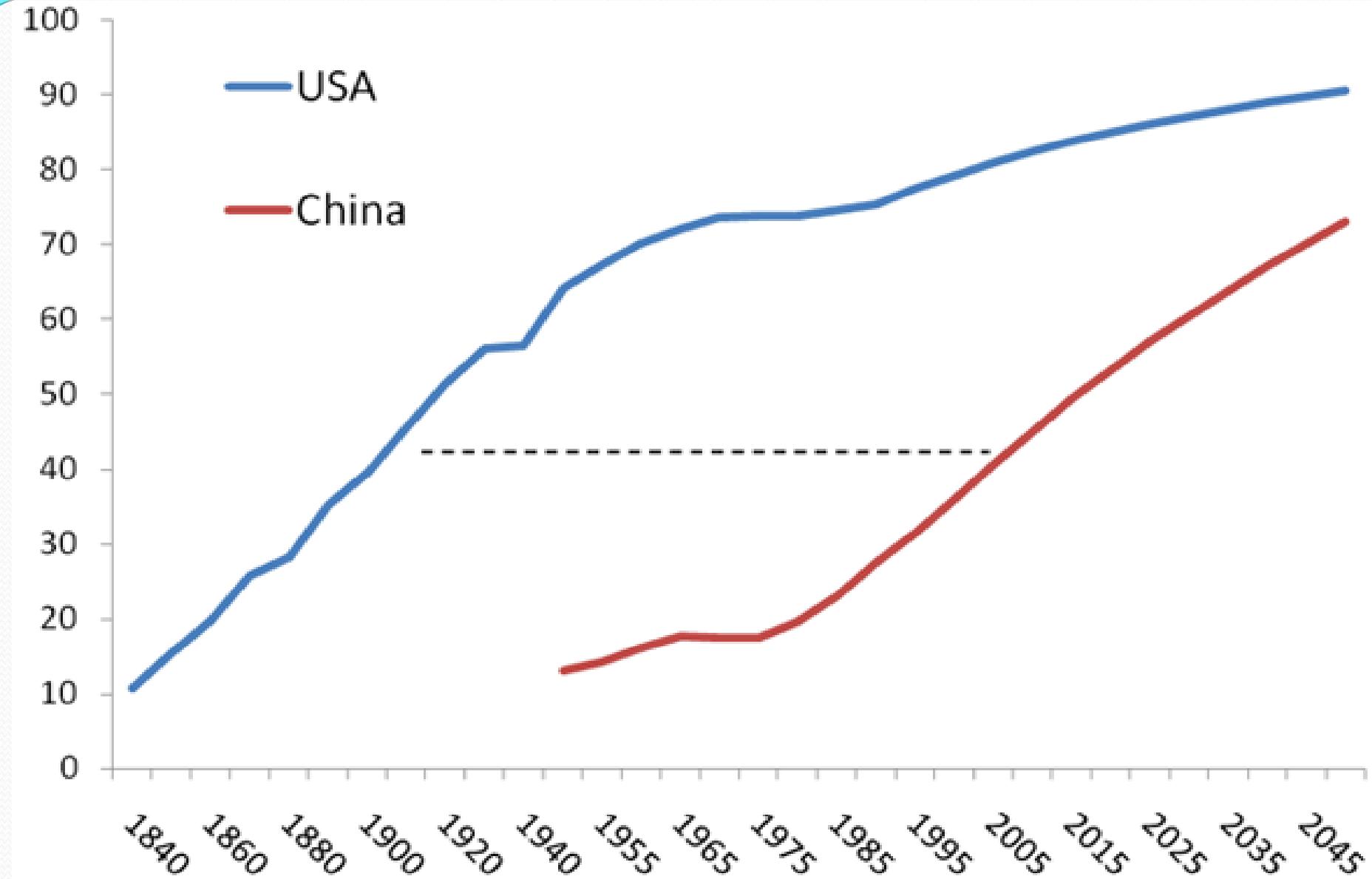
Rapid Economic Growth in China

GDP in China (Trillion; 1553% increase)





Urbanization Rate in USA & China





Background

- In mainland China, until the 1990s poverty was regarded as a rural phenomenon.
- Currently whilst for some the Chinese city has become a place of opportunity, wealth accumulation, and social mobility, for many other it has become a space of insecurity, unemployment, poverty, discrimination, and exclusion including homelessness (Yan, 2005)
- Prior to the 1990s, the homeless on Hong Kong were invisible to mainstream society and policy makers, and characterized as ageing, aberrant and morally deficient individuals
- Currently the homeless population has increasing included younger, better educated, and able-bodied men and women in Hong Kong



Background

- Whilst there has been some examination of the value of the concept for exploring and explaining homelessness in East Asia, the concept has had little influence on existing policy paradigms
- The exact number of homeless people in China is notoriously difficult to quantify given the varying definitions and methodologies applied, different terminology for the dispossessed, as well as the transient and hidden nature of the phenomenon



Definition of Homelessness

- ***Rooflessness***: without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
- ***Houselessness***: with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter
- ***Living in insecure housing***: threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence
- ***Living in inadequate housing***: in caravans, on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extensive overcrowding (Edgar, 2004)



Definition of Homelessness in China



- **Traditional forms of poverty:** *three nos* – no stable income, no capacity to work, and no family support
- **Visible forms of destitution:** street sleeping, tent-dwellers, or vagrants (mainland China and Hong Kong).
- **Vagrants and beggars** (official; mainland China): beggars, long-term street sleepers, rural-urban migrant workers without the required registration documents, the urban poor and laid-off workers, forced evictees, and children on the streets



Definition in Chengdu Studies

- Patients with mental disorders were classified as having experienced homelessness if they were reported as to have been homeless and they had, for at least one night, wandered and slept in public places
- **Measurement:** Based on the reports of subjects and/or informants (e.g., relatives, village doctors, etc.)



Reasons for Homelessness

- Structural and social change (e.g., privatization of public housing in 1998, Minimum Standard of Living Scheme-MLSS, rapid social and economic transformation, urbanization)
- The rise in insecure employment, underemployment, and unemployment
- Widening levels of inequality
- Neoliberalism





Homeless Children in China

- At least 1 million vagrant and begging minors in China (China Daily, 2009)
- The number of urban street children: about 150,000 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2009)
- An estimated 100,000 Chinese children are abandoned each year (Liu & zhi, 2009, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2006)



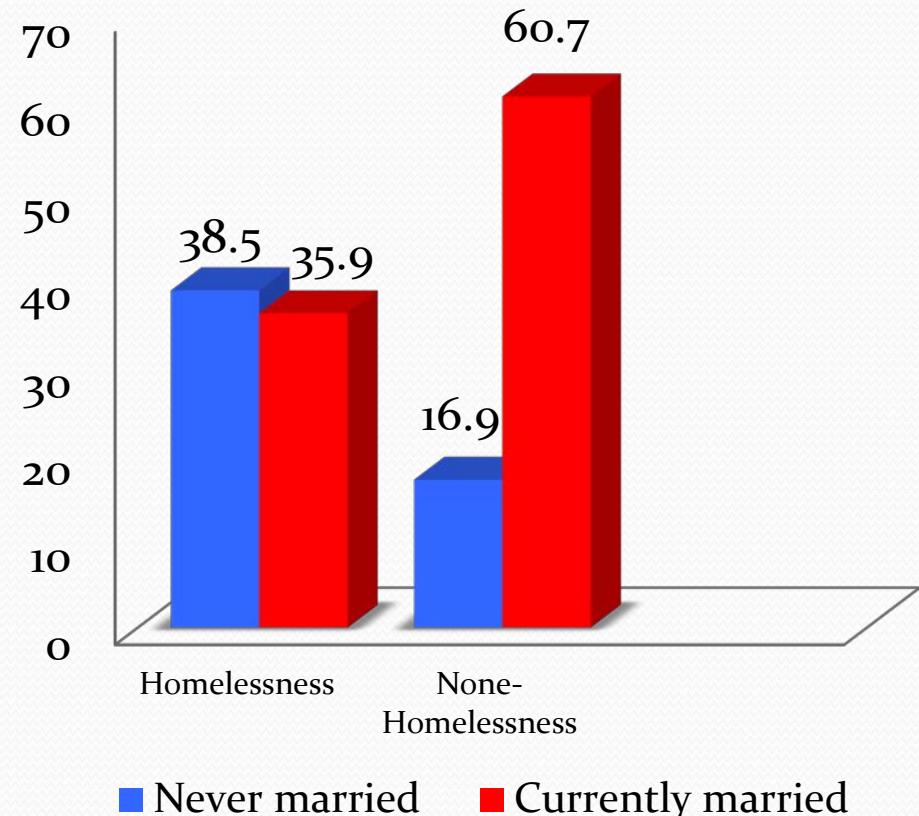
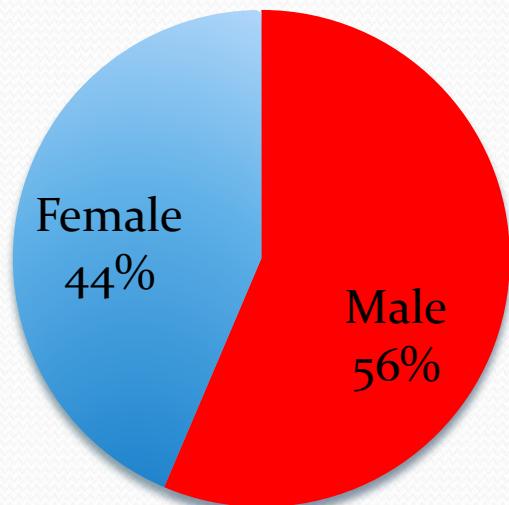


Homeless Persons with Schizophrenia in China

- Approximately 8 million Chinese citizens are affected by schizophrenia, of which 5 million in rural China
- The rate of homelessness (0.9 per 100 person-years) is very high in persons with schizophrenia in rural China (Ran et al., 2006)
- It is estimated that 390,000 persons with schizophrenia are homeless in rural China
- ***Risk factors:*** living in shabby or unstable house or shelter, positive family history of mental disorders, without income, unmarried, divorced, or separated (Ran et al., 2006)

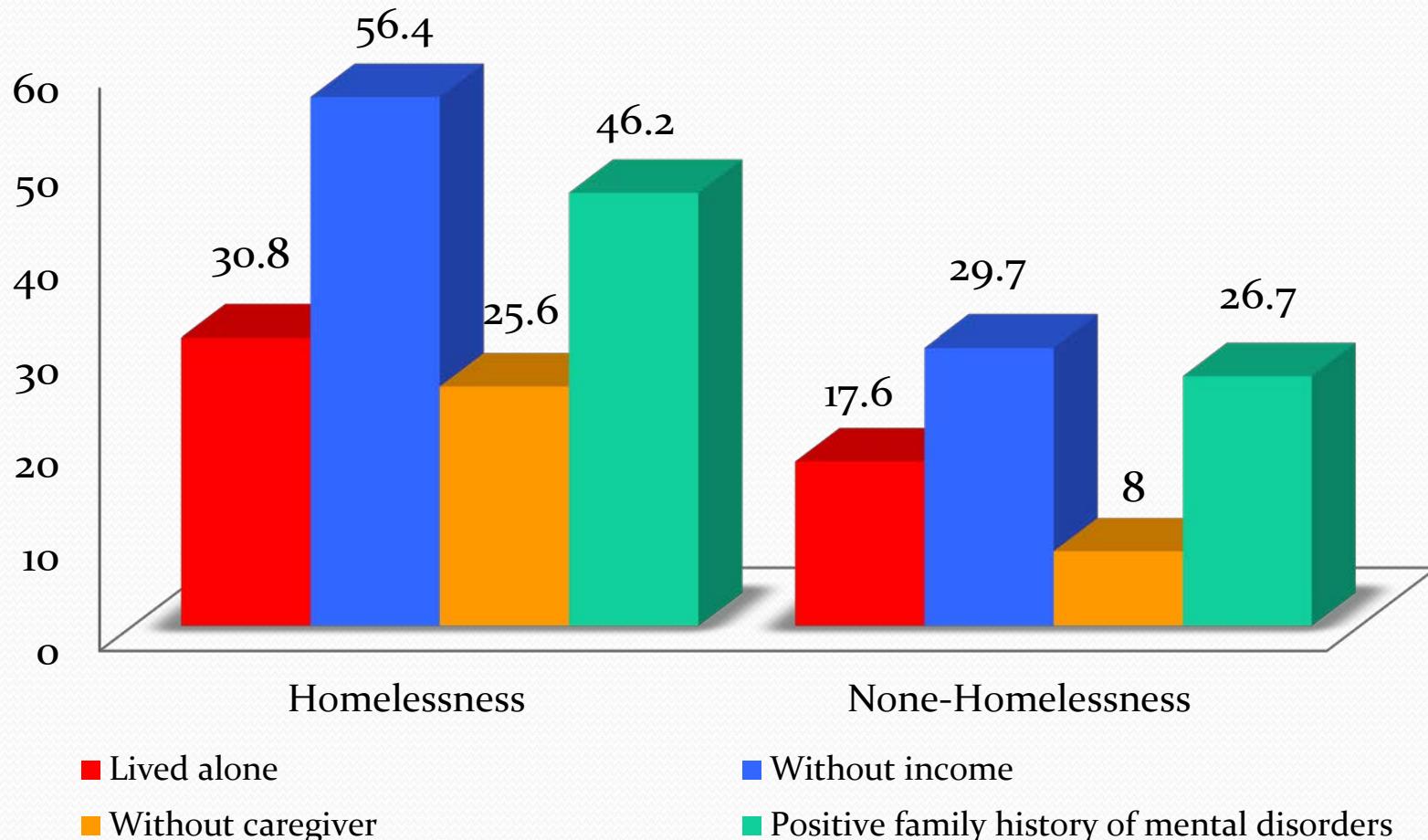
Characteristics of Homeless Persons with Schizophrenia in Rural China

10-year follow-up

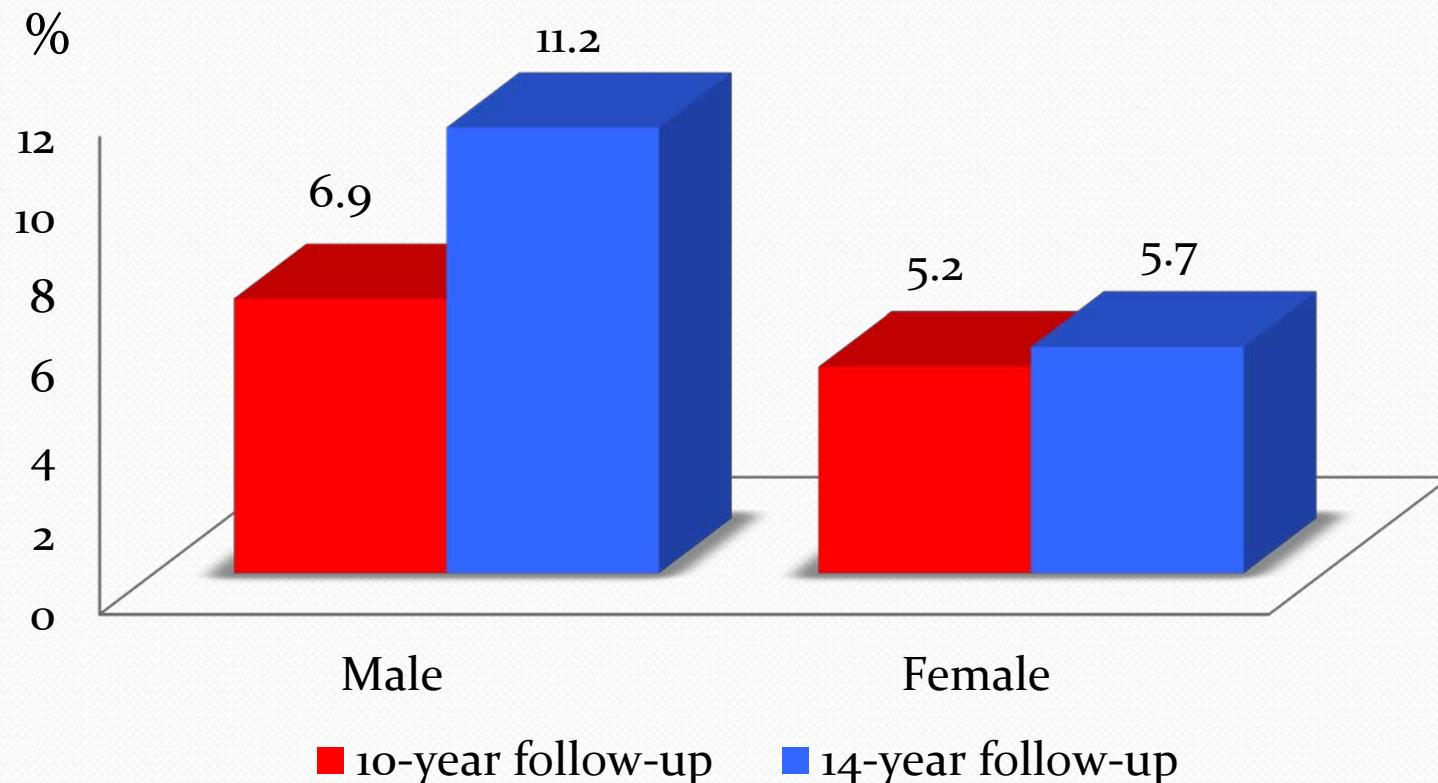


Characteristics of Homeless Persons with Schizophrenia in Rural China

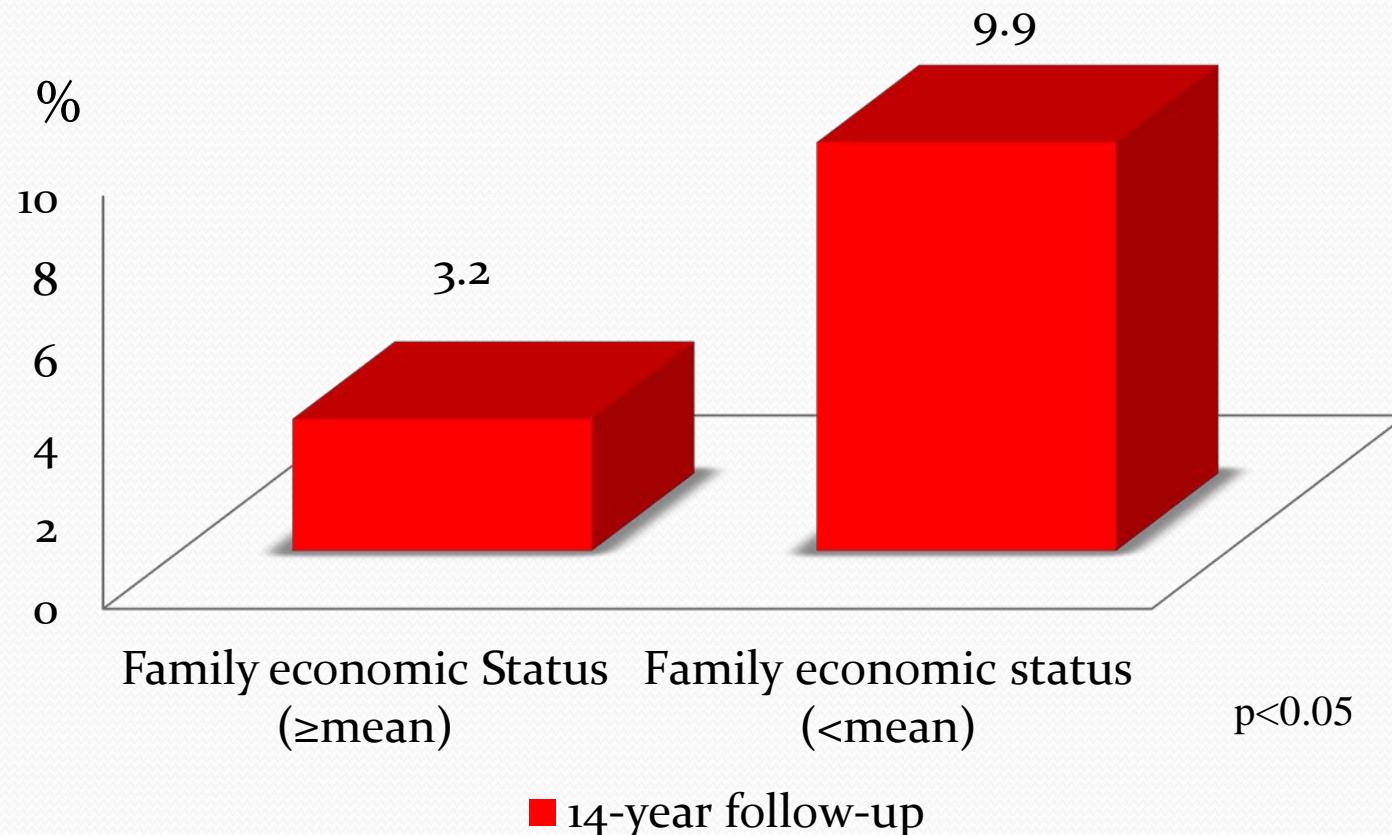
10-year follow-up



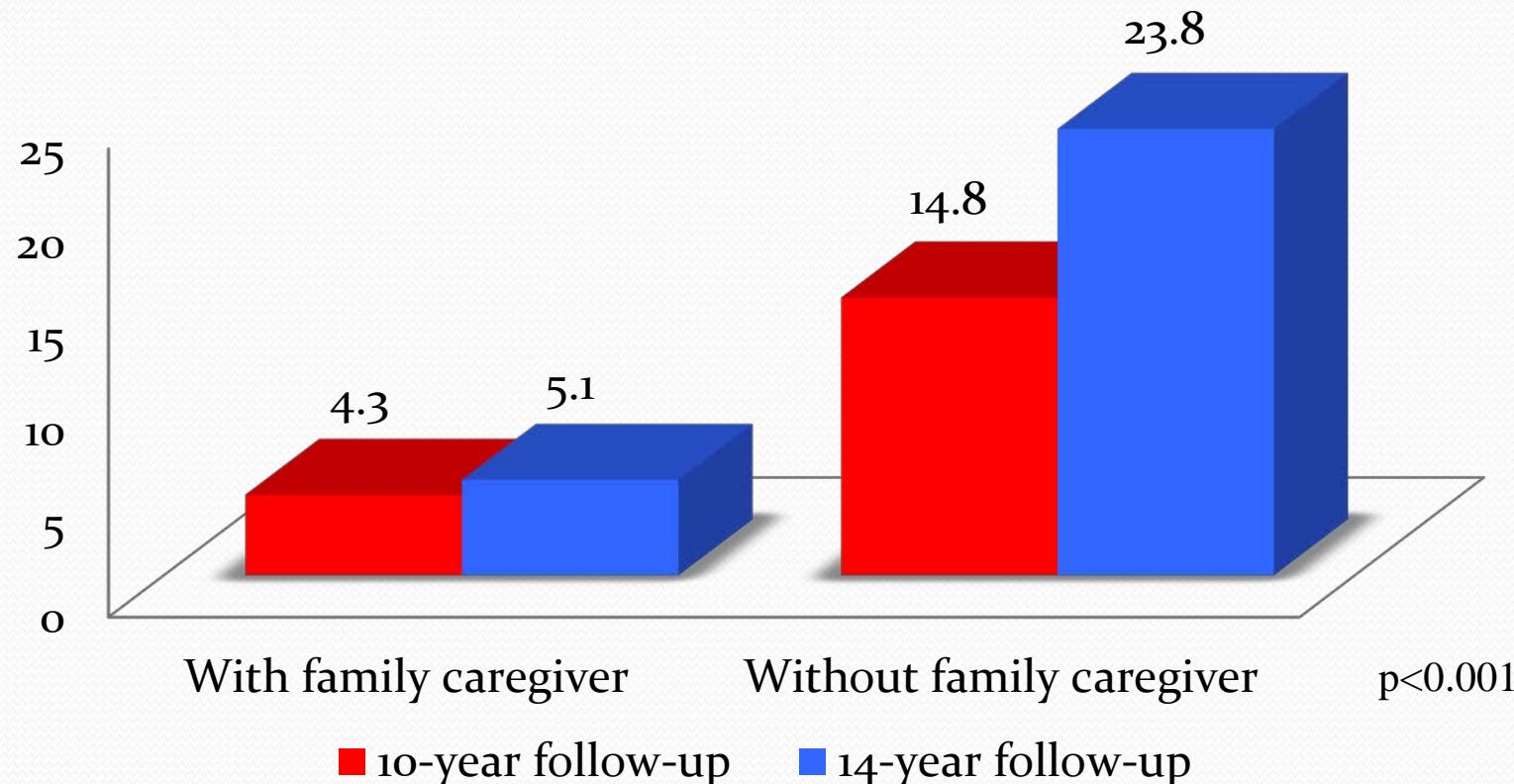
The rate of homelessness in persons with schizophrenia: 14-year follow-up



The rate of homelessness in persons with schizophrenia: 14-year follow-up



The rate of homelessness in persons with schizophrenia: 14-year follow-up





Regulation and Law in China

- Relief and Management for Vagrants and Beggars in Urban Area (城市生活无着的流浪乞讨人员救助管理办法) (State Council, 2003)
- Law on the Protection of Minors
- Law on the Prevention of Crimes by Minors



Services for Homelessness in Mainland China

- Social Security: Contributory Social Insurance Programmes (1986)
- Minimum Standard of Living Scheme (MLSS) (1999)
- Public Housing Fund (PHF) (for employees)
- Low-rent homes





Relief Management



- Regulation on aiding and managing vagrants and beggars in urban areas was adopted by the 12th Executive meeting of the State Council in June 2003
- The Measures for Internment and Deportation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars was replaced by the Measures for the Assistance and Administration of Persons Without Assured Living Sources in Cities (2003)
- Since 2003, responsibility has transferred from the Ministry of Public Security to Civil Affairs and is an indication of a change in approach to one of relief management for urban indigent vagrants and beggars



Relief Management

- Custody and repatriation centers which detained millions of people annually in the late 1990s have been converted into aid centers for homeless people
- The new centers offer shelter for a limited period and limited amounts of food
- Under the new regulation, vagrants can receive help from these aid stations if they are unable to feed themselves, have no relatives or friends with whom they can seek refuge, and if they receive no minimum living allowance



Special Protection Centers

- Shelter provision and rehabilitation services for the homeless have increased substantially in recent years
- Until 2001, street children were treated in the same way as adult vagrants, gathered and sent back by relief and administrative stations
- By 2003, the Chinese government had established more than 130 special protection centers to provide food, accommodation, education and the administration by the Ministry Civil Affairs



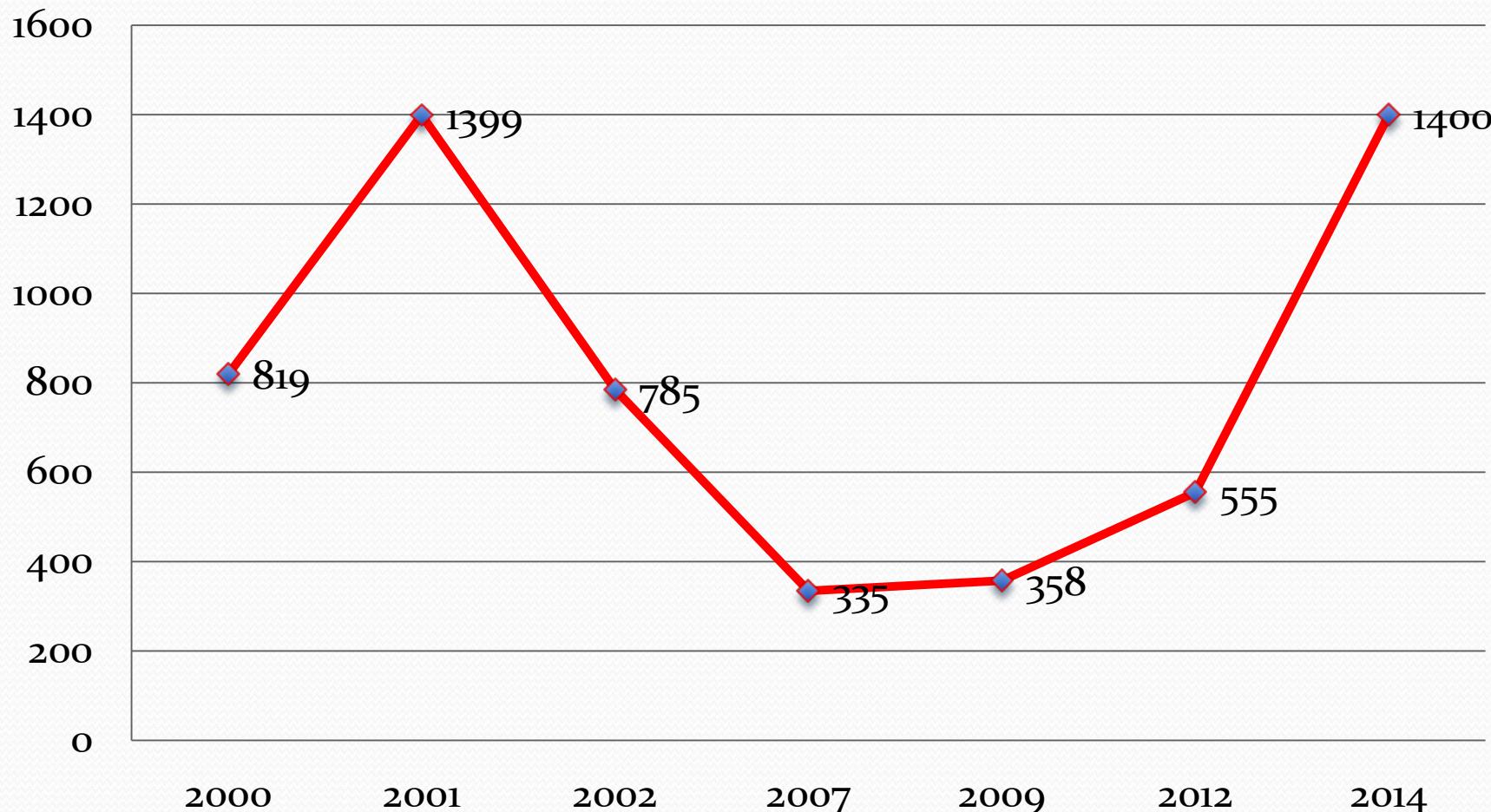
Homelessness in Hong Kong

- Prior to the 1990s, the homeless were invisible to mainstream society and policy makers, and were characterised as ageing, aberrant, and morally deficient individuals
- The bursting of the bubble economy and the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 was followed by the SARS epidemic in 2003, and contributed to massive unemployment, rising poverty, and an increase in those inadequately housed, visibly homeless, and destitute.
- The homeless population has increasingly included younger, better educated, and able-bodied men and women



Street Sleepers in Hong Kong

No. of Street Sleepers





Characteristics of Homelessness in HK



- 66% of street sleepers were between 20 and 49 years of age and were able bodied (Wong, 2001)
- 30% were on Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA)
- Of the non-CSSA receiving street-sleepers 10% worked full-time, 20% took add jobs, 10% lived on the streets, and the rest relied on loans or financial support from friends and relatives
- 28.5% of the street sleepers were drug misuses (Wong, 2001)



Homelessness in Hong Kong

- If we consider the quality or level of housing, the number of homeless people would be a high estimate
- Over 53,000 domestic household members were living in cubicles, bedspaces, or cocklofts.
- About 100,000 people live in cage homes
- In general, women's homelessness is invisible in Hong Kong as in other East Asian societies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a6NM0zQL44>

(Thousands living in tiny homes in Hong Kong, 2:20)



Services for Homelessness in Hong Kong

- In Hong Kong, shelter provision and rehabilitation services for the homeless have increased substantially in recent years
- Social Security in HK: Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA); Old Age Allowance; Disability Allowance; Mandatory Provident Fund
- HK: 7 street sleeper hostels, 5 hostels and temporary shelters (NGOs funded by the Social Welfare Department)
- Publicly provided flats play an extensive role in meeting the housing needs of the HK population



Prevention & Intervention

- In Hong Kong, in 2001, a three-year action plan to help street sleepers was implemented as a response to the rising number of people living on the street and concern that the homeless population was getting younger, fitter, and more short term
- NGOs, funded by the government, to provide hostel accommodation and integrated services (e.g., counselling, assistance with accommodation, advice on employment, arrangement of job placement, and assistance with applying to the emergency fund)



How to prevent the homelessness ?

- Further studies using the new definition of homelessness should be conducted
- Prevention of homelessness is not only relevant to accommodation
- Multi-disciplinary professionals (policy maker, public health professionals, mental health professionals, social workers, etc.) should work together on this

A large, ancient tree trunk with hanging vines, standing on the edge of a pond in a forest setting.

Thank You

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Questions