



# Sustaining Social Housing

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REPORT LAUNCH & DISCUSSION  
August 3, 2021 - 3pm AEST

Unison Housing  
Research Lab



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Profiles and patterns

Sarah Taylor  
and Guy Johnson  
**Research Report No 7**  
May 2021

Unison Housing  
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# Why are we interested in tenancy sustainment in social housing?

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- For community housing providers like Unison, **high tenancy turnover has significant cost implications**, as well as important place management implications.
- For individuals, **stable (good quality, affordable) housing is associated with better non-housing outcomes**. Longer tenancies enable people to build connections.
- A high proportion of Unison tenants have **experienced homelessness**.
- Researchers have long been aware that as much as finding housing has been a problem for the homeless, **maintaining it is an equally significant issue for some**.
- Public housing and community housing have different histories. **It is difficult to estimate tenancy durations for CHPs based on existing research**.





# Unison tenancy administration data

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⇒ Dataset #1, N=1,506

- Ongoing tenancies only, all start years.

⇒ Dataset #2, N=1,936

- Ongoing and exited tenancies that started in or after 2014.
- We use Dataset 2, unless specified otherwise.

⇒ Selected tenant demographic characteristics:

- Single (82%)
- Male (56%)
- Age at tenancy start: under 25 (20%), 25-44 (48%), 45 plus (32%)
- Income: Disability Support Pension (30%), Newstart Allowance (28%), Wages (23%)



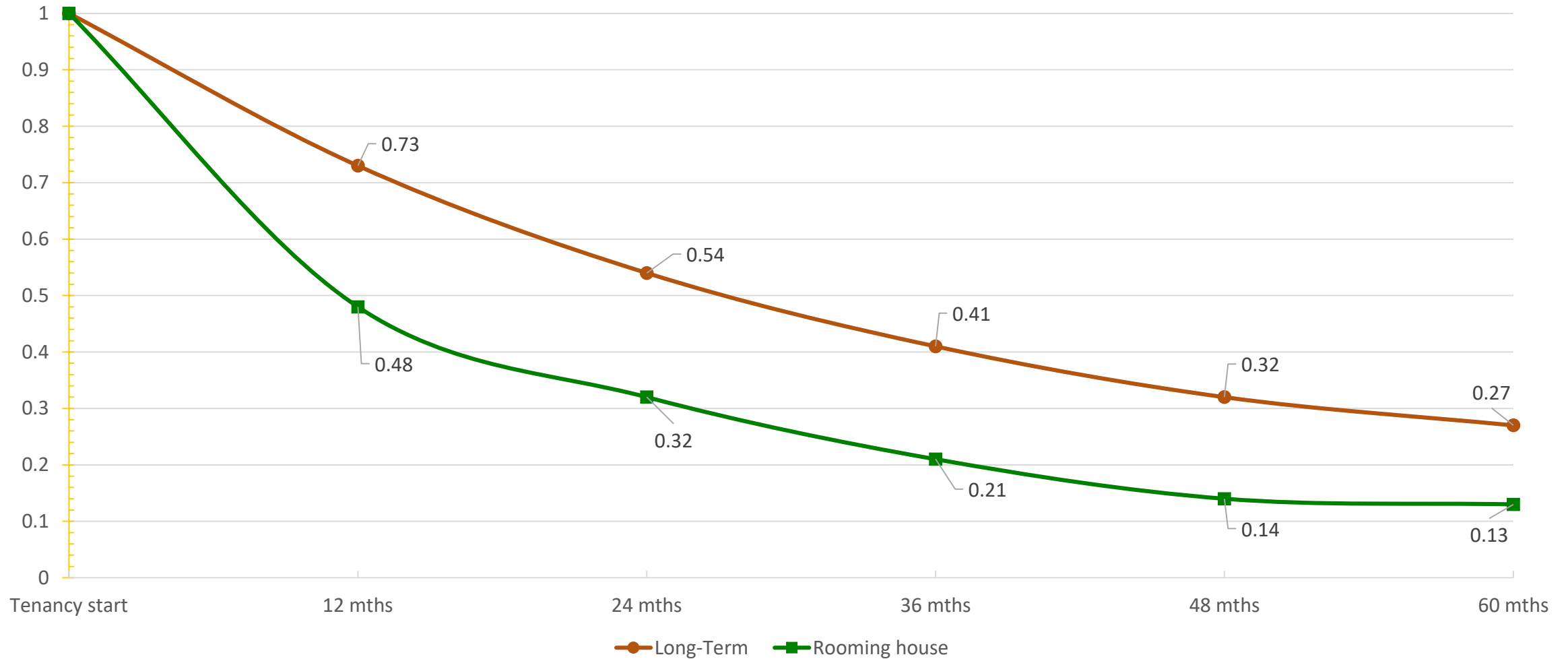


# Survival analysis

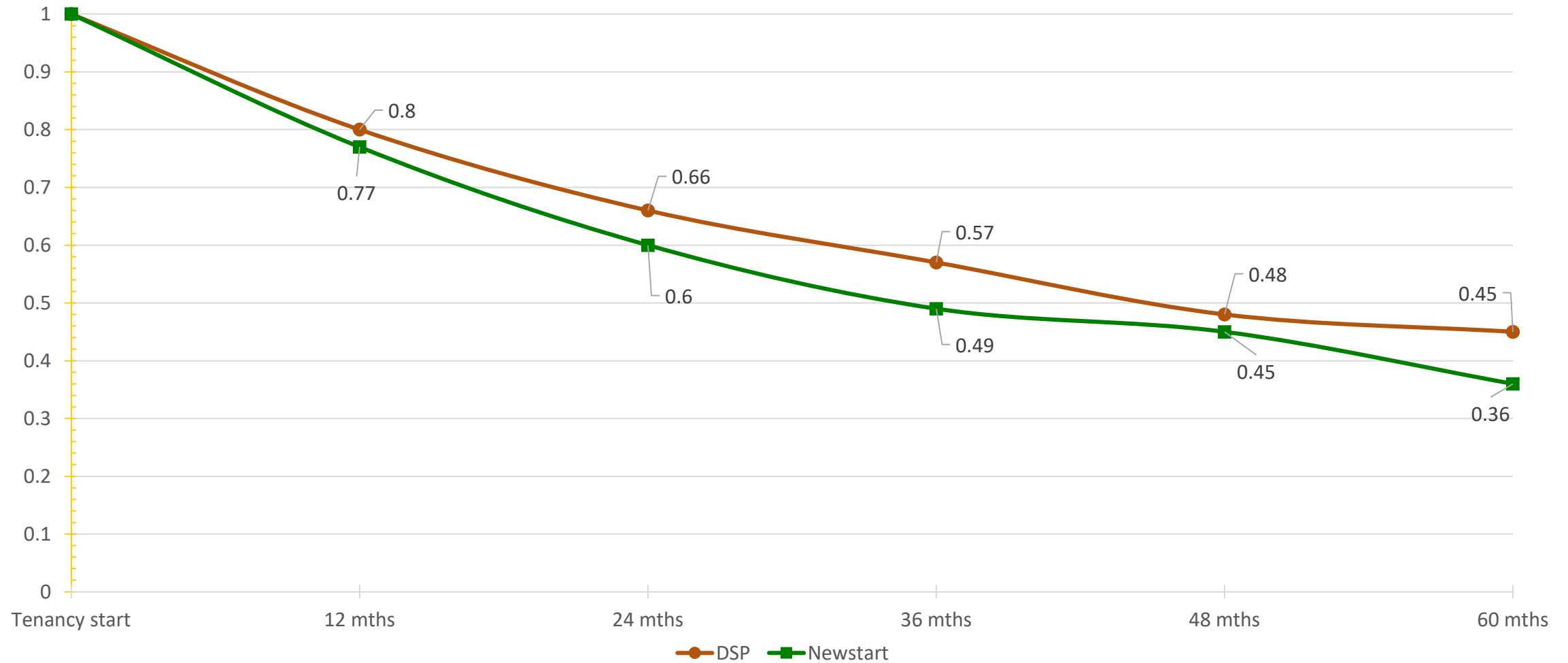
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- It is useful to move beyond a binary definition of early tenancy loss.
- Census style data (point in time survey of current tenants) can be misleading.
- It is preferable to consider both ongoing and exited tenancies, as well as different tenancy start times.
- This approach is facilitated with survival analysis:
  - Also known as ‘time to event’ analysis.
  - Wide range of real-world applications. Highly suited to tenancy data.
  - The ‘event’ in this context is tenancy exit. Sustaining = not exiting tenancy.
  - Kaplan-Meier charts show the cumulative probability of sustaining a tenancy to a given time, based on successive calculations of both exited and ongoing tenancies.
  - Likelihood of sustaining always starts at 1, approaches 0 over time.

# Likelihood of sustaining tenancy, by tenancy type

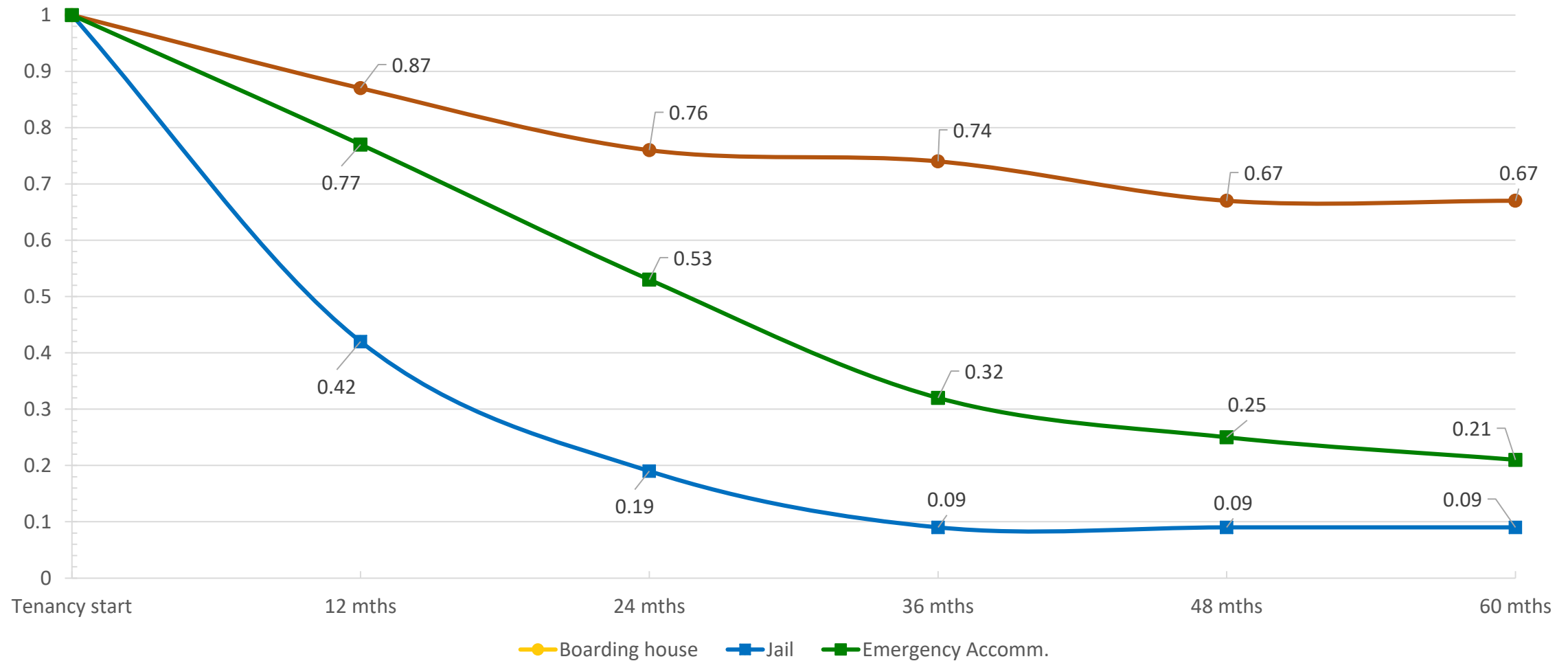


# Likelihood of sustaining Long-Term tenancy, by income type



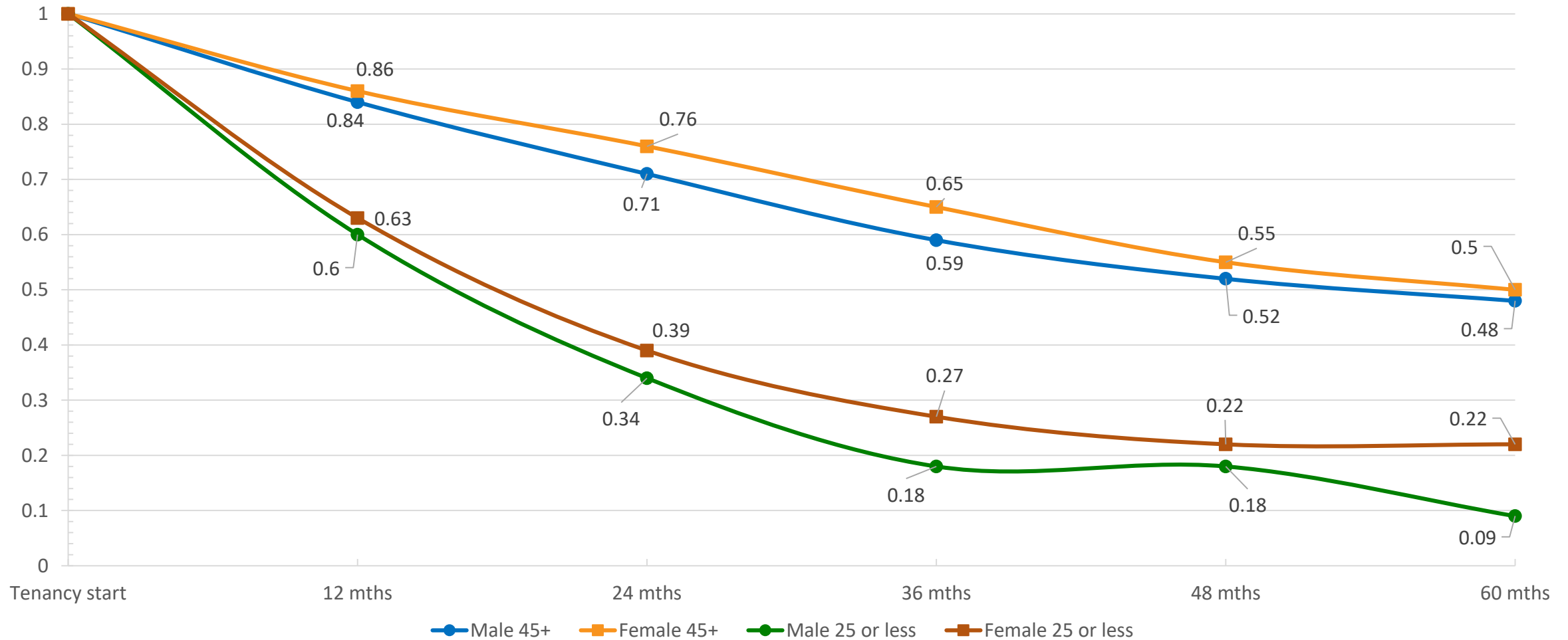


# Likelihood of sustaining Long-Term tenancy, by prior housing





# Likelihood of sustaining Long-Term tenancy, by gender and two age cohorts

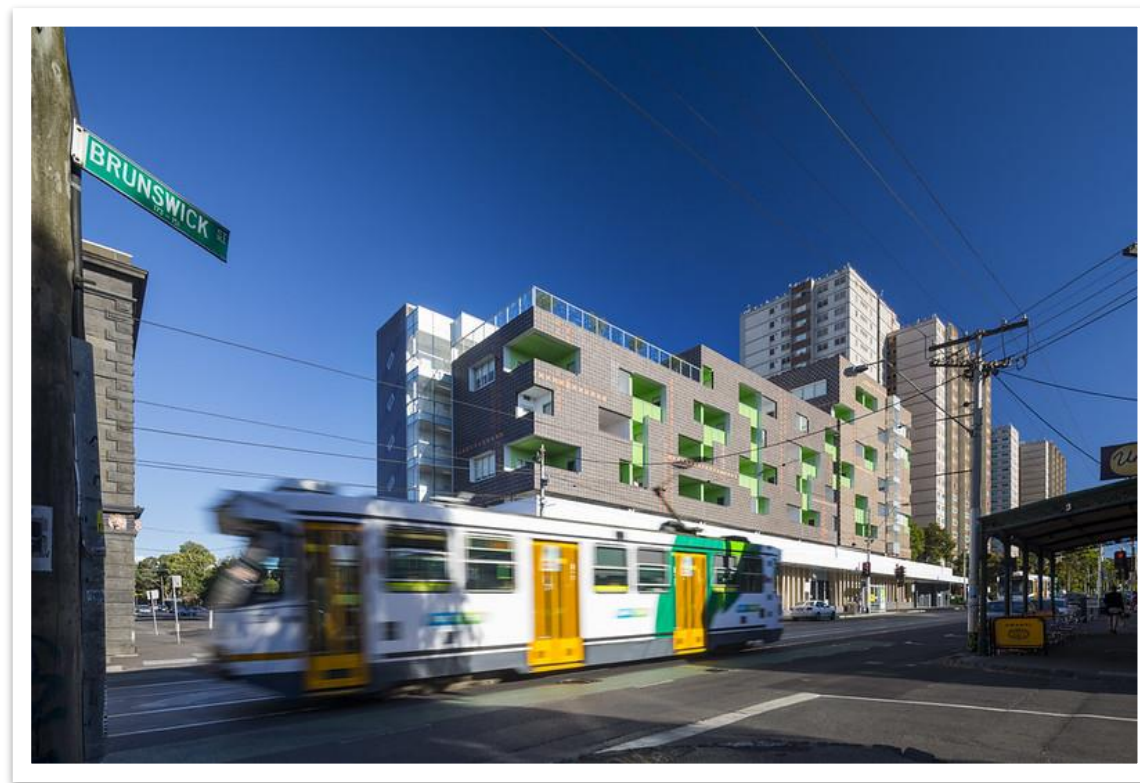


# Likelihood of sustaining Long-Term tenancy, two examples postcodes





*Unison-managed property, MacIntyre Drive, Altona.*



*Unison-managed property, Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.*



# Key findings (1/2)



## Housing type matters

Rooming house tenancies have much lower probabilities of sustaining than Long-Term tenancies.



## Prior housing matters

Former boarding house residents do well, as do former private rental residents. The probability of sustaining Long-Term housing is lower for households who were homeless immediately prior to moving into Long-Term housing, and lowest for those who were in prison.



## Tenant age at tenancy commencement matters (a lot)

The probability of tenants aged over 45 sustaining to two years is nearly double that of tenants aged under 25. But an association between age and tenancy duration is not unique to Unison, or even to social housing.

# Key findings (2/2)

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## Gender does not matter to tenancy sustainment

Men and women have near identical cumulative probabilities of sustaining Long-Term housing. However, there are some differences between younger men and women.



## Income type is important

Households in receipt of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) stay longer in tenancies than those on Newstart Allowance and equivalents. This is a small but persistent difference cutting across large cohorts of Unison tenants.



## Location matters

The cumulative probability of sustaining Long-Term housing is higher in some geographic areas (e.g. Heidelberg and Fitzroy) than others (e.g. Footscray and Geelong West).



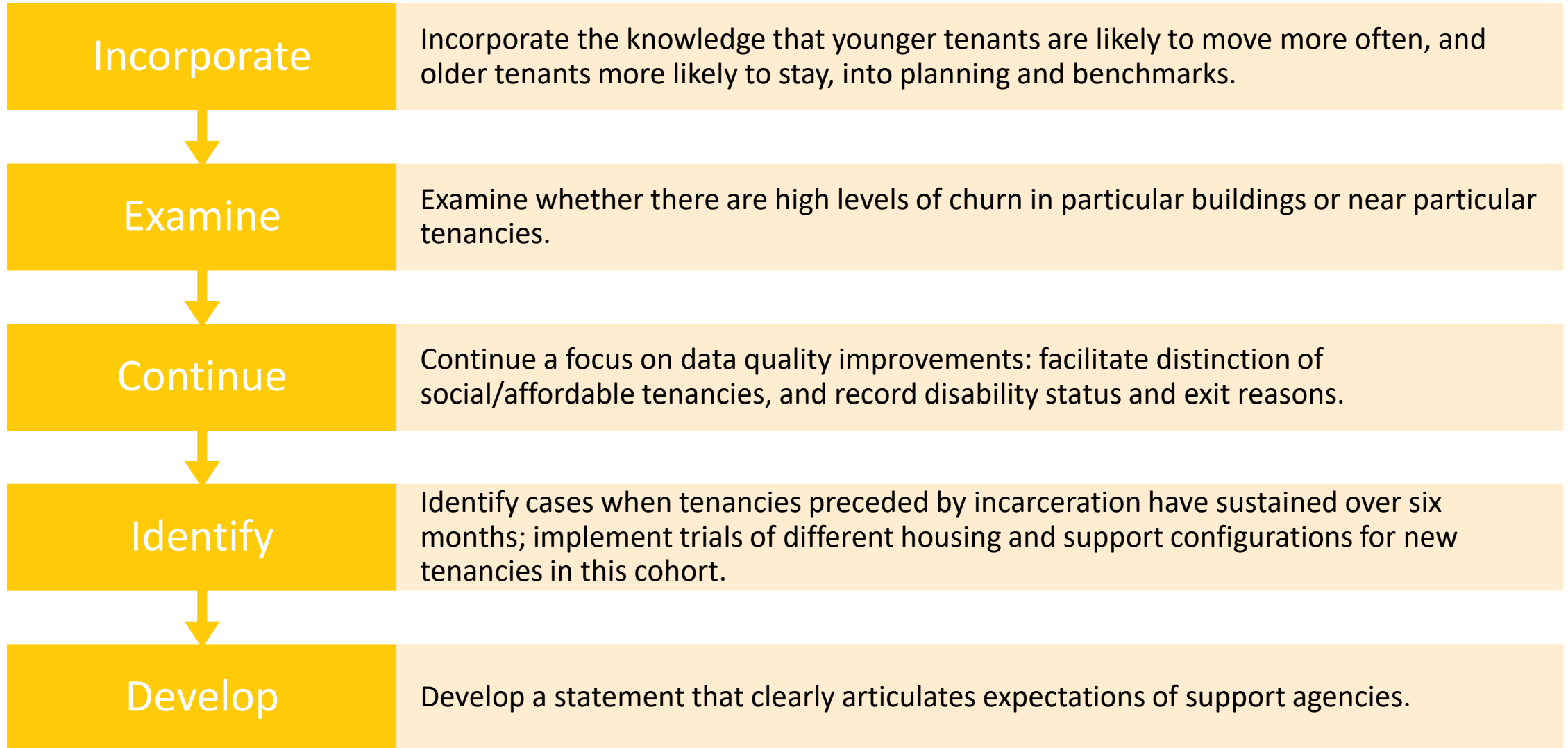
# Implications

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- **Households with some characteristics and certain experiences are more likely to sustain their tenancy.**
- The findings presented in this report provide Unison with a solid empirical foundation to guide future decision making and enhance housing and non-housing outcomes for its tenants.



# Our recommendations to Unison



# Thank you!

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Download the full report at  
[unison.org.au/research](https://unison.org.au/research)

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# Panel members

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