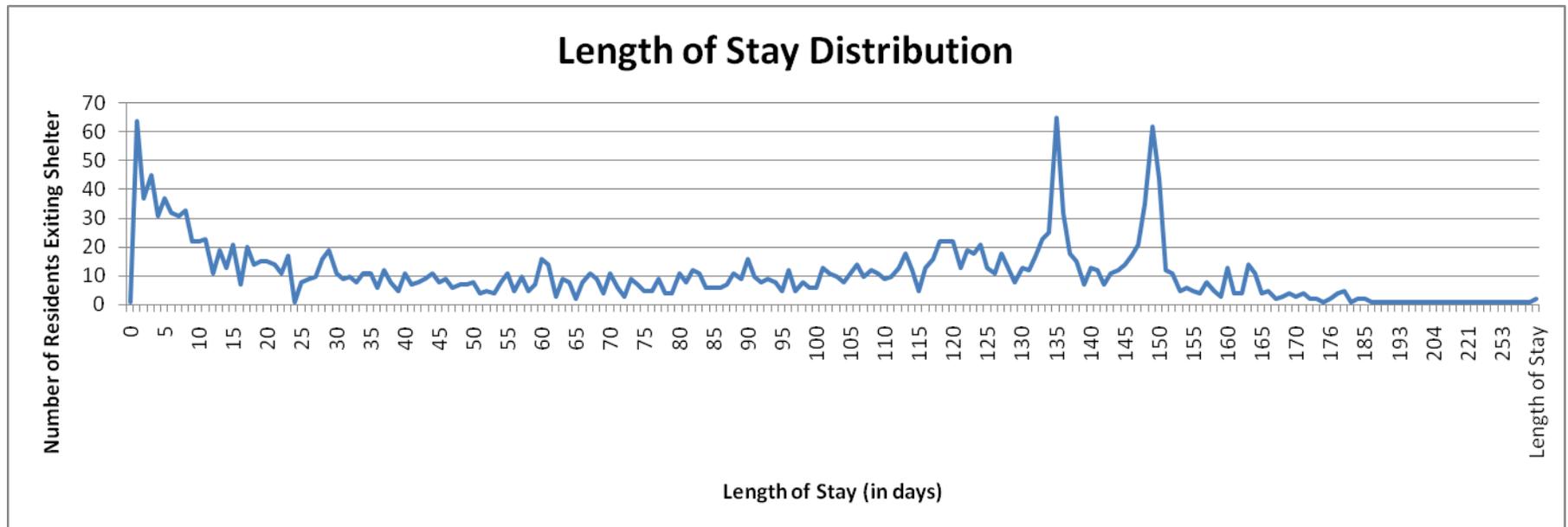


## Statistics for Advocacy: Permanent Housing Outcomes and Length of Stay in Emergency Shelter

The following is based on data collected from 38 New York City domestic violence shelters during calendar year 2008, as part of the New York City Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Providers' Statistics for Advocacy project. The information was collected using a monthly survey requesting information about the destination of shelter residents upon discharge.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this report is to examine the relationship between the length of stay in emergency domestic violence shelters and the housing destinations of shelter residents upon discharge.



\* Some extreme outliers for longer lengths of stay are not reflected in this graph; the longest length of stay reported in this period was 503 days.

The chart above shows the distribution of the length of stay in shelter. Excluding the extreme outliers from the survey responses (those staying over 200 days, as well as residents who left before 15 days), we found that the average length of stay of residents in the emergency shelters is 101 days. In addition, the median value for the data distribution is 113 days, which is more representative of the typical length of stay.

<sup>1</sup> The response rate was 87%

Residents are likely to exit shelter early in their stay (reflecting the ambivalence clients can feel upon entering shelter) or at the 135 – 150 day mark when the resident’s typically run out of time extensions. These spikes are indicative of larger issues raised concerning the feasibility of permanent housing placements for DV survivors before their shelter stays end.

## **ANALYZING THE “SPIKES”**

### **‘Spike’ 1: Less than 15 Days in Shelter**

Many of those who leave within 15 days of entering shelter do not inform shelter staff of their intended destinations; 47% of residents who stayed 15 days or less left for unknown destinations and 21% left to live with family or friends. According to an informal survey conducted by New Destiny in 2006, residents leave early because they have a hard time adjusting to shelter living. Common issues raised by survey participants were:

- Fear of unknown situations in shelter
- Pressure/guilt from not being able to provide children the same standard of living as before they left the abuser
- Overwhelmed by appointments
- Feelings of frustration that they have to give up everything when they’re not at fault for the abuse. The abuser is at fault, and therefore should be forced to leave the household, not the victim

### **‘Spikes’ 2 & 3: 135-150 Days in Shelter**

Twenty-one percent of residents who stay more than 15 days leave between days 135 and 150 (when the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> DPE extensions expire) and 57% leave because they have reached their Date Payment Ends (DPE), the maximum time permitted by New York State regulations. Of those residents leaving because of DPE, 79% were referred to the general homeless system and 17% reported doubling-up with family and friends.

Overall, the outcomes of the shelter stays of residents leaving during these ‘spikes’ are as follows:

- 47% are referred to the general homeless system
- 14% double up with family and friends
- 20% go to Tier II DV shelters
- 14% leave because they found permanent housing
- 5% go to other/unknown destinations

### **Eligibility for Housing Assistance and Other Factors**

Many of the residents who stayed longer than 135 days were often eligible for housing. For example, 39% were eligible for HRA Advantage, but many of the women were still searching for an apartment when they left shelter. After checking extensively through the survey results, there were no factors that could explain why these residents were unable to find housing before their stays ended (e.g. no significant reports of language barriers, need for very large apartments due to family size, etc.). The demographic profile of the client who stayed longer than 135 days did not differ greatly from the population at large, with respect to family size, education level, work experience and English language skills.

### **Longer Length of Stay, Better Outcomes**

	<b>Destination of those staying between 16 and 134 Days</b>	<b>Destination of those staying over 135 Days</b>	<b>Destination of those staying over 135 days EXCLUDING those who left because their time expired</b>
<b>Permanent Housing</b>	15%	22%	41%
<b>DV Tier II Shelter</b>	17%	23%	43%
<b>Doubled-Up</b>	19%	10%	6%
<b>General Homeless System</b>	25%	41%	5%
<b>Unknown/Other</b>	24%	4%	5%

Shelter residents who stay beyond the 135 day time limit tend to have better outcomes than those who leave before their 135<sup>th</sup> day. As noted above, there are no major differences in the subsets of the client population with regards to eligibility for housing assistance (except for immigrants who are ineligible for public benefits), education level, work experience or family size. The only salient difference between the cohorts was the length of stay and whether or not residents were allowed to stay beyond the maximum permissible time allotted for emergency shelter. The group allowed to stay, regardless of their DPE, had the best outcomes.