

# Emergency Department Boarding

## *An Ongoing Public Health Threat*

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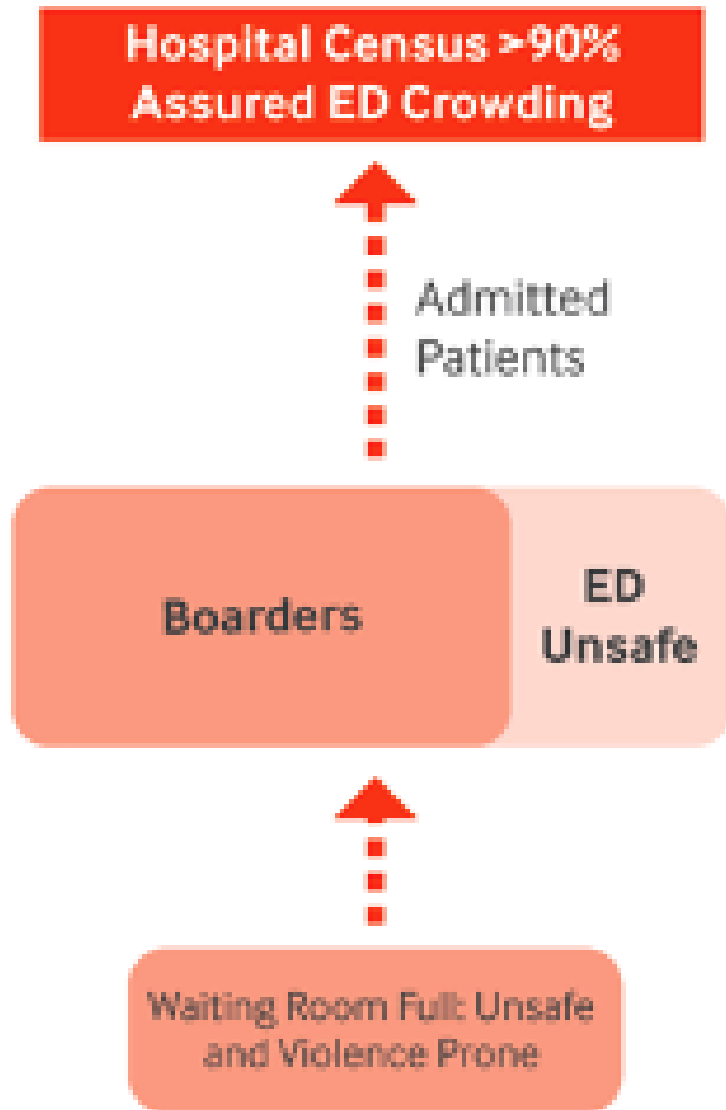
A patient is seen in an emergency department (ED), evaluated and treated by a clinician, and then recommended for admission to a hospital bed.

When patients wait in the ED for a hospital bed to open, they are ***boarding***.



The Joint Commission has identified boarding as a patient safety risk that should not exceed 4 hours. *Patients often board for days.*

Length of Stay: Total time a patient is in the ED, inclusive of time spent in the waiting room, time spent for medical evaluation and treatment, and, for those patients admitted to the hospital, time waiting for a bed.



**Crowding** occurs when patients' needs exceed available healthcare resources in the ED.

Decades of research demonstrate that ED boarding and crowding are dangerous. Devastating medical problems can be missed, and essential medications not given.

**1 in 4 Oregonians seek ED care annually**

**1.3 to 1.6 million ED visits in Oregon each year**

**~75,000 Oregonians checked in, but left without being seen in 2022**

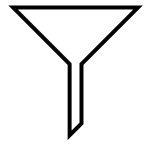
**47 of 58 sampled Oregon hospitals did not report boarding data to CMS**

**Average length of stay in Oregon EDs has ranged from 5 to 6 hours since 2018**

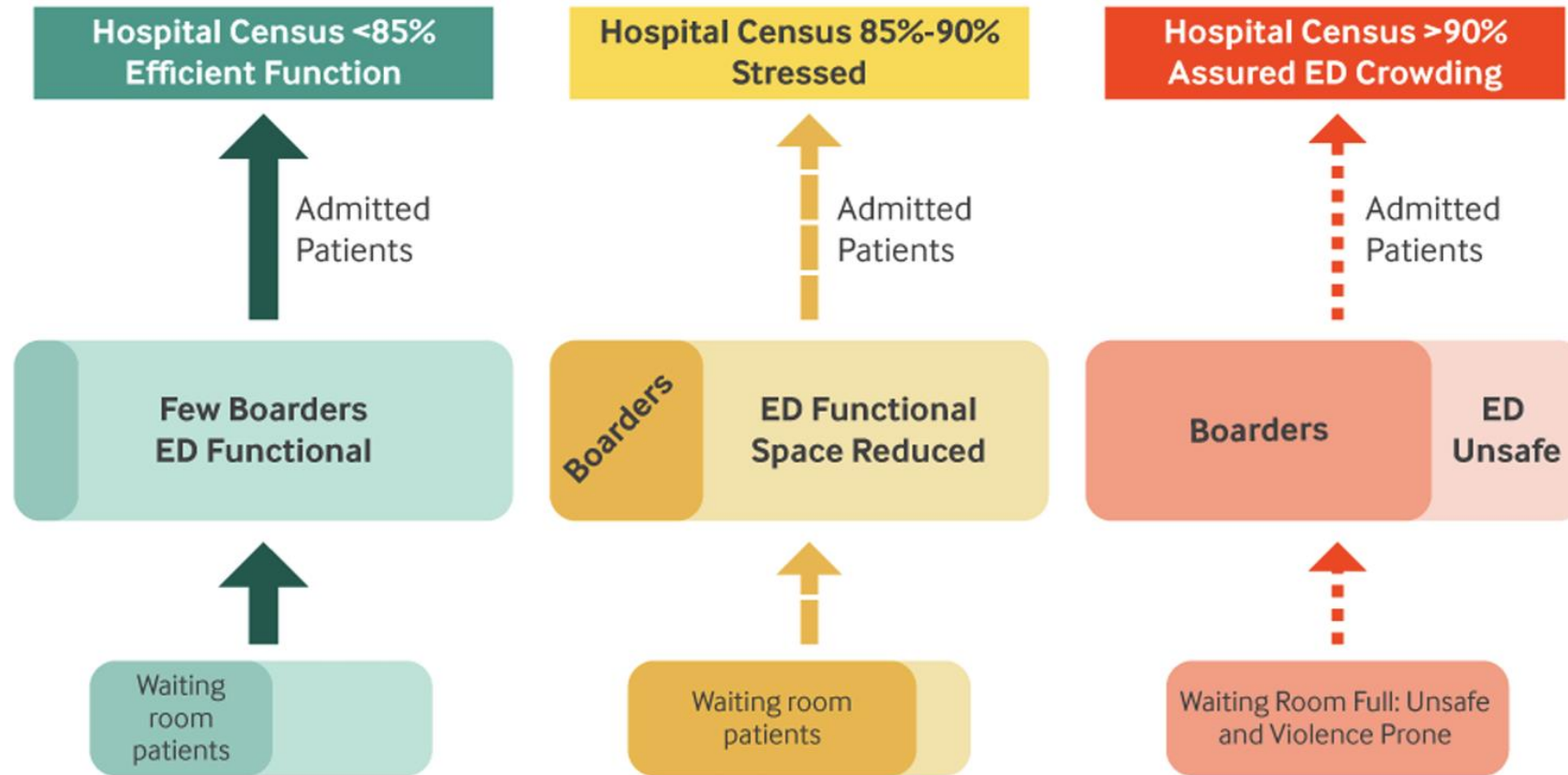
Nationwide Emergency Department Inventory, 2021

CMS Timely and Effective Care Data, 2022

Oregon Health Authority, 2024

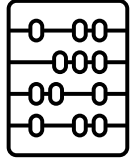


# ***ED crowding is a glaring reminder*** of our failure to meet our communities' healthcare needs.



Kelen et al, NEJM, 2021

Patient leave without being seen due to prolonged waits



***Averages don't tell the whole story.*** Harms occur at the extremes for the most vulnerable.

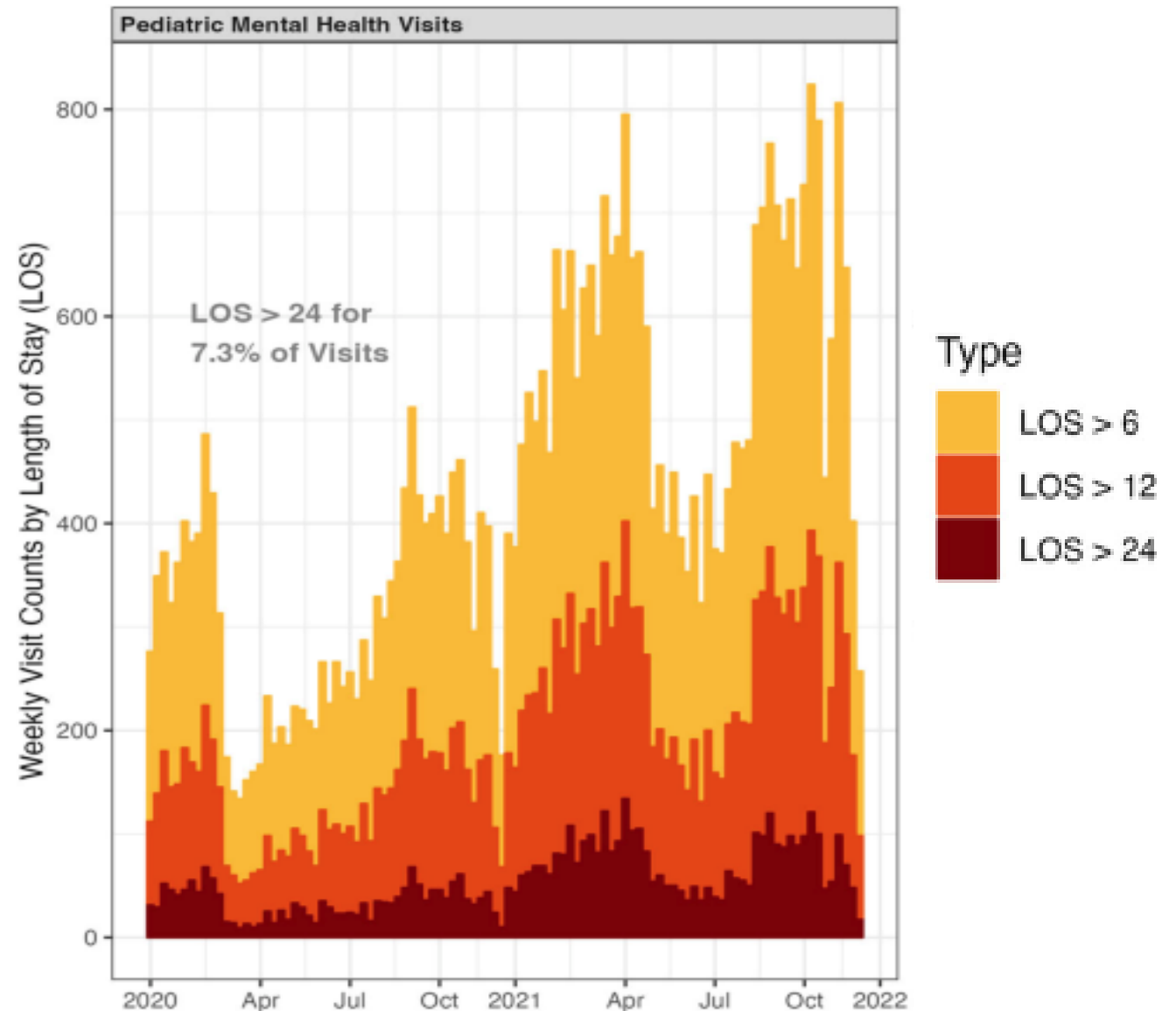
In Oregon, average length of stay has varied from 5.1 & 6.1 hours since 2018.

In the past year, 46,911 Oregonians were in an ED for at least 24 hours, while 7,837 were in an ED for at least 72 hours. Vulnerable patient populations are much more likely to board for days.

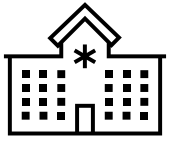
- Those experiencing homelessness: 2.3 times\* more likely
- Mental health patients: 4.4 times\* more likely
- 65 years and older: 2.8 times\* more likely

Children with mental health conditions are uniquely at-risk for prolonged ED visit length of stay and boarding.

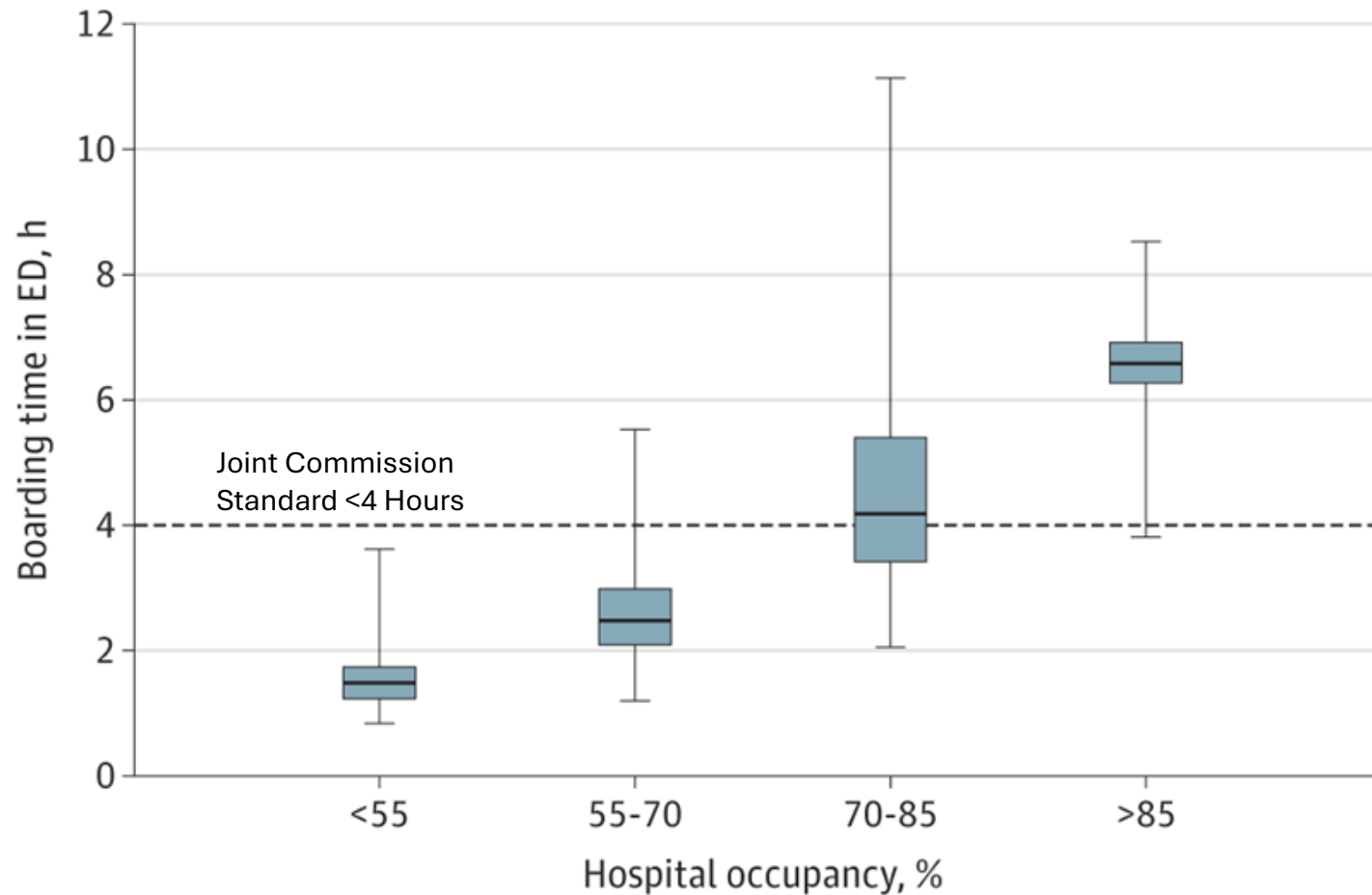
In a national sample of community EDs, we found that thousands of children had lengths of stay (LOS) exceed 24 hours.

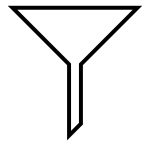




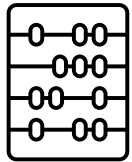


# Hospital and rehab bed *space constraints are the most important cause.*

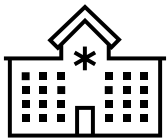




***ED crowding is a glaring reminder*** of our failure to meet our communities' healthcare needs.



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Hospital and rehab bed ***space constraints are the most important cause.***