



Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2018-19

Web report | Last updated: 18 Dec 2019 | Topic: [Homelessness services](#) | [Media release](#)

About

The specialist homelessness services 2018-19 web report is the eighth annual report from the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC). It describes the characteristics of clients of specialist homelessness services, the services requested, outcomes achieved, and unmet requests for services during 2018-19.

Cat. no: HOU 318

- [Fact sheets](#)
- [Infographics](#)
- [Data](#)

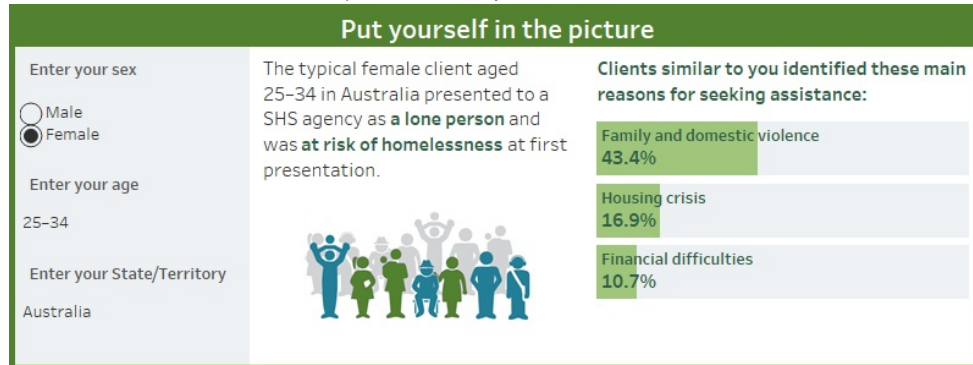
Findings from this report:

- 290,300 clients were assisted by SHS agencies in 2018-19; a total of 1.2 million clients since 2011-12
 - 3 in 5 clients were at risk of homelessness when first seeking SHS assistance
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Summary

Safe, secure housing is fundamental to people's health and wellbeing. Both people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness are supported by specialist homelessness services (SHS). In 2018-19, SHS agencies provided support to over 290,300 clients who each had a variety of different needs and reasons for seeking support. Use the following interactive to explore the typical client profile based on age, sex and state/territory where the client received support.

Interactive data visualisation: Put yourself in the picture



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Clients, services and outcomes

Specialist homelessness agencies provide a wide range of services to assist those who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness, ranging from general support and assistance to immediate crisis accommodation. Characteristics of all clients assisted by specialist homelessness services (SHS) in 2018-19 are described below, including their needs for assistance and the services they received.

Key findings

- More than 1.2 million clients have been assisted by SHS agencies since the collection began in 2011-12.
- More than half (57%) of all clients in 2018-19 had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- In 2018-19, around 290,300 clients sought assistance from SHS agencies, equating to 116.2 clients per 10,000 population.
- In 2018-19, almost 181,900 clients (63%) were formally referred to a specialist homelessness agency, most commonly from another specialist homelessness agency or outreach worker (14%), other agency (government or non-government) (11%) or by the police (6%).
- Upon first presentation, most clients seeking assistance were housed but at risk of homelessness (58% or 153,700); of these, most were living in private or other housing (61% or 93,800) or public or community housing at the time (23% or 35,700).
- 3 in 10 SHS clients (30%) received accommodation in 2018-19 and the median length of accommodation was 29 nights.
- 4 in 10 clients were homeless on presentation to a SHS agency. Of these, agencies assisted about 38% into housing, most into private or other housing (about 16,500) and a further 10,400 into public or community housing.
- SHS agencies assisted more than 8 in 10 clients who were in private or other housing (85% or 59,200 clients) and public or community housing (86% or 22,600 clients) at the beginning of support to maintain their tenancy at the end of support.
- The average amount of financial assistance provided totalled \$874 per client, up from \$794 in 2017-18 (not adjusted for inflation).

SHS clients at a glance

The estimated number of clients assisted by specialist homelessness agencies increased from 255,700 in 2014-15 to 290,300 in 2018-19; an average annual increase of 3.2%. The rate of SHS clients increased from 108.9 clients per 10,000 population in 2014-15 to 116.2 clients in 2018-19 (Table CLIENTS.1).

It is important to note, the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) data provide a measure of service response. Increases in client numbers reflect an increase in agency engagement of people which may be due to an increase in availability and accessibility of services or the utilisation of these services, not necessarily a change in the underlying level of homelessness in Australia.

Table CLIENTS.1: SHS clients: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	255,657	279,196	288,273	288,795	290,317
Rate (per 10,000 population)	108.9	117.2	119.2	117.4	116.2
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	43	44	44	43	42
At risk of homelessness	57	56	56	57	58
Total days of support (millions)	19.7	22.2	23.4	24.7	26.0
Length of support (median number of days)	33	35	37	39	44
Proportion receiving accommodation	33	31	30	29	30
Total nights of accommodation (millions)	6.6	7.0	6.9	6.9	7.0
Median number of nights accommodated	34	33	33	32	29
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	26	23	23	24	25

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Characteristics of clients

43% of SHS clients in 2018-19 were first time clients (since the collection began in 2011-12).

The characteristics of clients, the main reasons for seeking assistance, and the services that had been supplied to clients, have remained relatively stable over the 5 years to 2018-19 (Table CLIENTS.1). The top changes over time include:

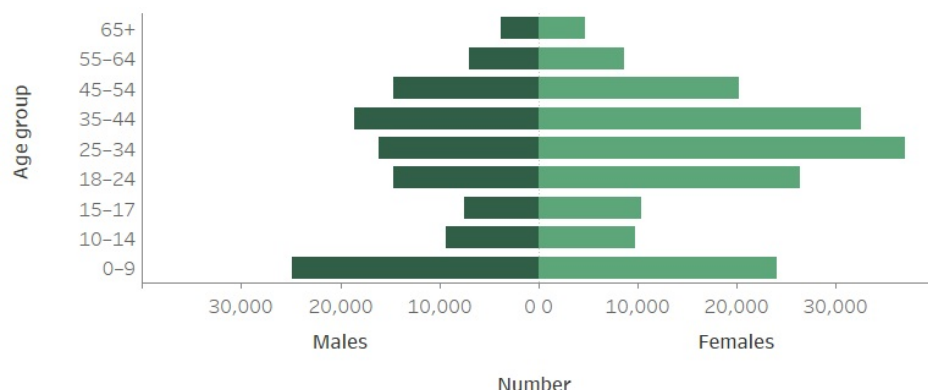
- Length of support has increased with the median number of days a client was supported increasing from 33 days in 2014-15 to 44 days in 2018-19.
- In 2018-19, the number of females presenting homeless (58,700) was higher than the number of males (53,300), up from 49,800 females and 48,700 males in 2014-15.
- The number of clients aged 65 and over are a growing group receiving SHS; up from 6,400 (3% of SHS clients) in 2014-15 to almost 8,500 (3%) in 2018-19.
- The housing outcomes for SHS clients presenting homeless have been changing; in 2014-15, similar numbers of these clients were housed in either public or community housing, or private or other housing at the end of support (9,800 and 13,000 respectively). In 2018-19, the number of clients in this group assisted into housing has grown to almost 28,000 with 6 in 10 (or more than 16,500) housed in private or other housing.

Age and sex

Figure CLIENTS.1 illustrates the age and sex distribution of SHS clients in 2018-19:

- The majority of clients were female (60% or more than 173,600 clients).
- The proportion of males (50% of males) who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support was higher than females (37%).
- 3 in 10 clients were aged under 18 (30% or almost 85,800).
- 1 in 6 were children under the age of 10 (17% or more than 48,900 clients).
- Among adult clients, the largest age group was those aged 25-34, accounting for almost 1 in 5 clients (18%), most of whom were female.
- The most common age group for males was those aged 0-9 years (21%) while for females, the most common age group was 25-34 (21%).
- The overall rate of service use was higher for females: 1 in 73 females in the Australian population received specialist homelessness services compared with 1 in 106 males.

Figure CLIENTS.1: Clients by age and sex, 2018-19

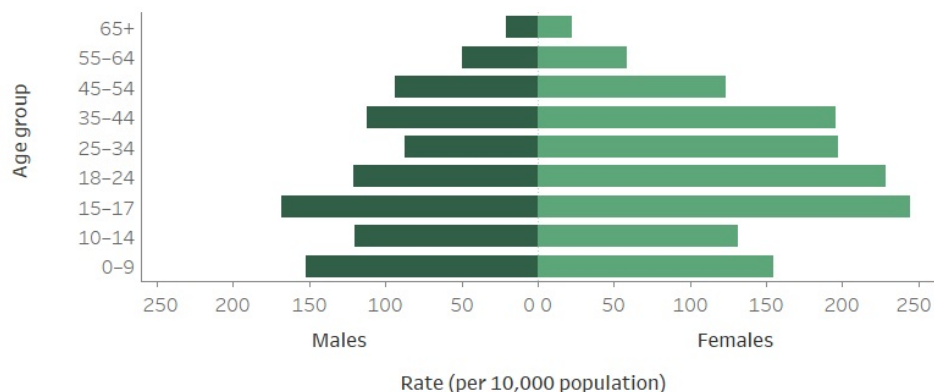


Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.1.

Figure CLIENTS.2 illustrates the rate of service use of SHS clients by age in 2018-19:

- The highest rate of clients were those aged 15-17 years: higher for females (244.4 per 10,000 population) than for males (167.8).
- The lowest rate of clients was for those aged 65 and over (22 per 10,000 population): again higher for females (22.5 per 10,000 population) than males (20.7).

Figure CLIENTS.2: Clients per 10,000 population, by age and sex, 2018-19



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.1.

Indigenous status

In 2018-19, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continued to be over-represented among SHS clients with more than one-quarter of clients (26% or almost 68,900) who provided information on their Indigenous status identifying as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Nationally, this equated to 832 Indigenous clients per 10,000 Indigenous population compared with a rate of 85 for non-Indigenous clients.

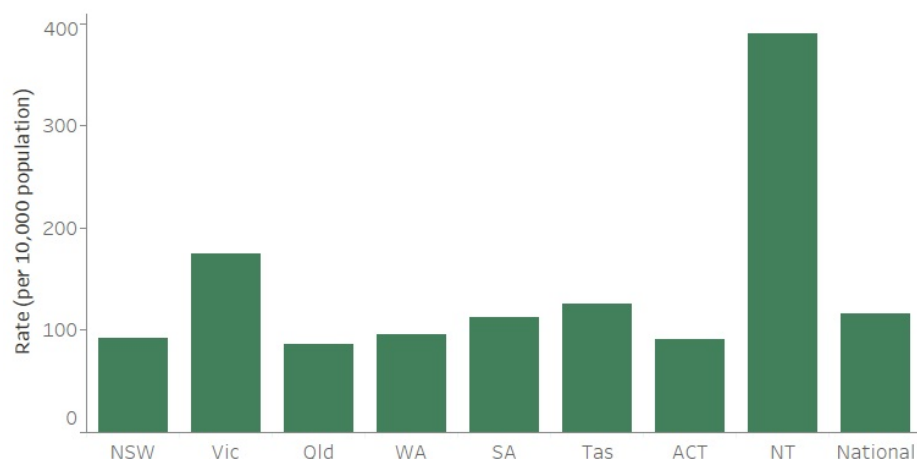
For further information about Indigenous clients please see [Indigenous clients](#).

State and territory of clients

The largest number of clients accessed services in Victoria (112,900), followed by New South Wales (73,500) and Queensland (43,100) (Supplementary table CLIENTS.1), noting that clients may have accessed services in more than one state or territory.

- The highest rate of SHS clients was in the Northern Territory where there were 390 clients per 10,000 population, followed by Victoria (175) and Tasmania (125) (Figure CLIENTS.3).
- Females had higher rates of service use than males across all states and territories; the Northern Territory had the most pronounced difference between males and females where 515 per 10,000 females received services compared with 274 per 10,000 males (Supplementary table CLIENTS.1).
- Overall, more than half of clients in 2018-19 had received services at some point since the collection began in 2011-12. The proportion of returning clients varied across jurisdictions with South Australia reporting the highest proportion (63%) and New South Wales the lowest (53%).
- Nationally, 26.0 million support days were provided in 2018-19; an increase of more than 1.3 million days since 2017-18. Support provided by services in Victoria were responsible for the major share of the increase in support days (an increase of almost half a million days), however Queensland reported the greatest change, up 10% since the previous reporting period.

Figure CLIENTS.3: Client per 10,000 population, by state and territory, 2018-19



Note: Rates are crude rates as detailed in Technical information.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.1.

Country of birth

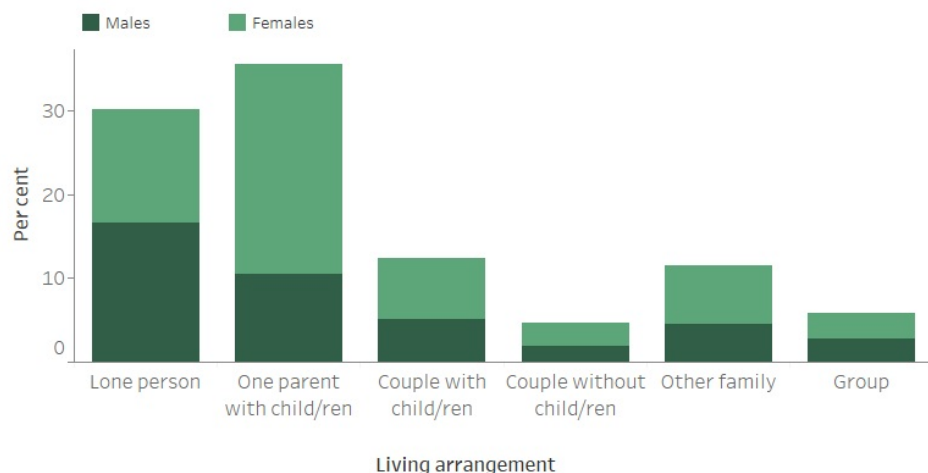
Most clients of specialist homelessness agencies in 2018-19 were born in Australia; almost 9 in 10 clients (86% or 215,000) (Supplementary table CLIENTS.2). This proportion is higher than the general Australian population, of whom 71% were born in Australia (ABS 2019). Of those clients who reported their country of birth and were born overseas, the most common country of birth was New Zealand (2%) (Supplementary table CLIENTS.3). Over half of the clients (55%) who were born overseas had arrived in Australia prior to 2009 (Supplementary table CLIENTS.4). Almost 9 in 10 (87% or over 32,100) clients who were born overseas lived in *Major cities* (Supplementary table CLIENTS.5).

Living arrangements

Living alone may be a sign of social advantage or disadvantage (De Vaus and Qu 2015). For some, it is associated with lower income, low participation in the labour force and lower levels of education. Living alone has also been shown to be a risk factor for social isolation (AIHW 2017). With limited economic resources and social networks, lone persons may be more vulnerable to homelessness. By way of comparison, according to the 2016 Census results, overall in Australia, 24% of households consist of a lone person, with most households having families or groups (76%) (ABS 2017).

The most common living arrangement reported by clients at the beginning of support in 2018-19 was lone parent with 1 or more children (36% or around 95,700), followed by lone persons (30% or around 81,300) and couples with 1 or more children (12% or around 33,400) (Figure CLIENTS.4). Female clients were more likely than male clients to be living as a single parent with 1 or more children (43% females compared with 25% males) while males were more likely than females to be living alone (40% males compared with 23% females).

Figure CLIENTS.4: Clients, by living arrangement, 2018-19



Notes:

1. This data item indicates the group of people with whom the client lives.
2. Per cent calculations based on total clients, excluding 'Not stated'.

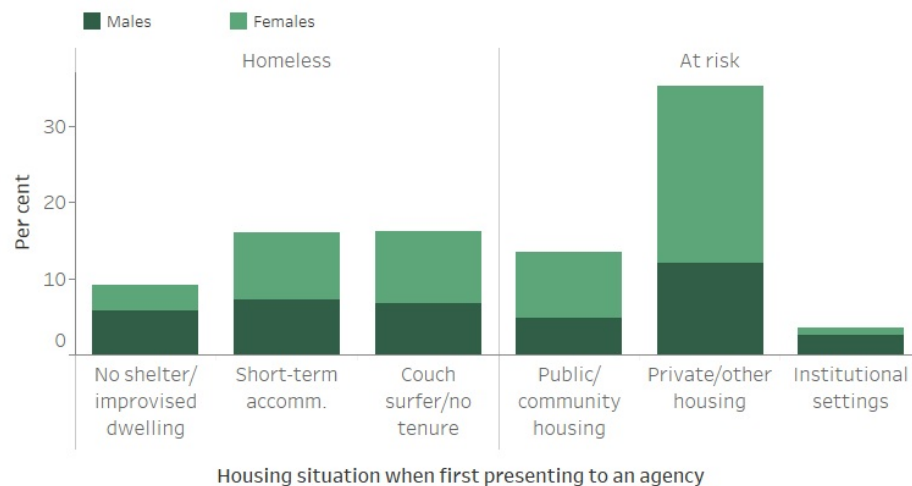
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.7.

Housing situation

Among those clients whose detailed housing status was known at the beginning of their first support period in 2018-19:

- Most (58% or more than 153,700 clients) were at risk of homelessness and 42% (more than 112,000 clients) were homeless (Figure CLIENTS.5).
- More than 1 in 3 clients (35% or more than 93,800) were living in private or other housing (renter, rent-free, or owner) when presenting to agencies for assistance.
- Of those clients with no shelter/improvised dwelling (more than 24,400 clients), 46% were sleeping in no dwelling, either on the street, in a park or out in the open and a further 22% (1 in 5) were sleeping in a car.

Figure CLIENTS.5: Clients by housing situation at the beginning of support, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Per cent calculations based on total clients, excluding 'Not stated'.
2. Housing situation 'Other' not shown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.8.

Main source of income

Income support was high among SHS clients with 78% of clients aged 15 and over receiving some form of government payment as their main source of income at the time they sought support in 2018-19 (Supplementary table CLIENTS.12). The most common government payments were Newstart Allowance (30% or about 57,000 clients), Parenting Payment (18% or 34,500) and Disability Support Pension (15% or 29,500). A total of 9% reported income from employment as their main source and 9% reported having no income.

Education

Of those whose educational status was known, over half of young people aged 5-24 (54% or over 48,100) were enrolled in some form of education in 2018-19 (Supplementary table CLIENTS.13). Almost 9 in 10 (88%) clients aged 5-14 were enrolled in school, 12% of clients aged 5-14 (about 4,500) were not enrolled in education. Almost 7 in 10 (69%) clients aged 15-24 were not in some form of education (around 36,200 clients).

Labour force

Almost 73,300 (38%) clients were not in the labour force in 2018-19 (Supplementary table CLIENTS.14). Over 92,900 (49%) clients aged 15 or over were unemployed at the beginning of support. Males (55%) were more likely to be unemployed than females (45%). More than 1 in 10 (13%) clients were employed and of these, around 3 in 5 (61%) were employed on a part-time basis.

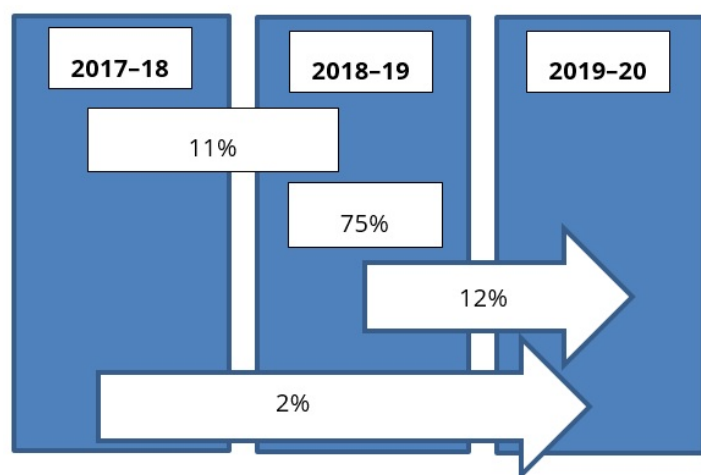
Clients service use in 2018-19

Support periods

Data collected by specialist homelessness agencies are based on support periods or episodes of assistance provided to clients (see [Technical notes](#) for further information). Clients may have had more than 1 support period in 2018-19, either with the same agency at different times or with different agencies.

- In 2018-19, clients assisted by homelessness agencies had almost 509,700 support periods. The number of support periods has increased by an average annual growth of 4.0% each year since 2011-12 (Supplementary table CLIENTS.1 and Historical table 1).
- Two-thirds of clients in 2018-19 had only 1 support period (66%) while 1 in 5 (19%) had 2 support periods, 7% had 3 periods and 8% had 4 or more. The average number of support periods per client was consistent with 2017-18 (1.8 support periods per client) (Supplementary table CLIENTS.21).
- The majority of support periods were opened and closed within 2018-19 (75% or around 383,100). An additional 12% of support periods opened during the year and remained open on 30 June 2019. Just 2% were ongoing throughout the 2018-19 reporting period (Figure CLIENTS.6).

Figure CLIENTS.6: Support periods, by indicative duration over the reporting period, 2018-19



Number of days clients received support

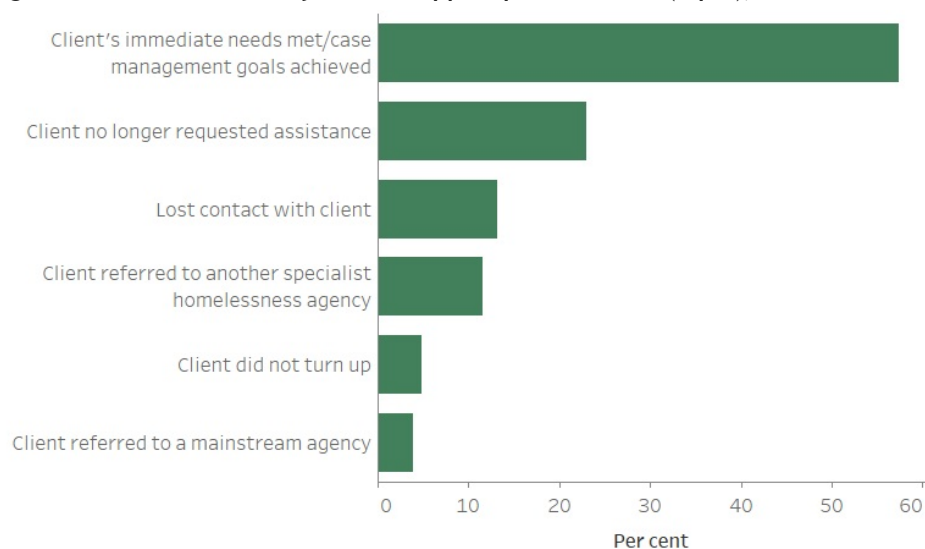
26.0 million support days were provided in 2018-19.

- In 2018-19, the median number of support days for all clients was 44 days, while clients were supported for an average of 89 support days in total, either as consecutive days or over multiple support periods (Supplementary table CLIENTS.23).
- Males (43 days) and females (45 days) received a similar median length of support.
- The needs of some clients can be met relatively quickly but clients with more complex needs received more support. Around 3 in 10 clients (29% or about 83,400) received between 6 and 45 days of support during 2018-19, while 22% received support for up to 5 days. Seventeen per cent received over 180 days of support; while 16% received support for 91-180 days.

Reasons that support ended

- More than half (57%) of support periods ended in 2018-19 because the client's immediate needs were met or case management goals were achieved.
- Almost one-quarter (23%) of support periods ended because the client no longer requested assistance; that is, a client may have decided that they no longer required assistance or they may have moved from the state/territory or region.
- A further 12% of support periods closed because the client was referred to another specialist homelessness agency and 13% closed because contact was lost with the client (Figure CLIENTS.7).

Figure CLIENTS.7: Clients by reason support period ended (top 6), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Top 6 excludes 'Other' reason and cases where reason 'Not stated'.
2. Includes clients with any closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.24.

Clients' needs for assistance and services provided

The SHSC includes information about clients' needs for services from two perspectives:

- The client's reasons for seeking assistance at the start of support—both the main reason for seeking support and all reasons for seeking support are collected.
- The agency worker's assessment of the client's needs—this information is captured when clients first present for assistance and each month while a client is still in contact with the agency.

[Technical notes](#) and [Glossary](#) provide more information about how clients' needs for assistance are captured in the SHSC.

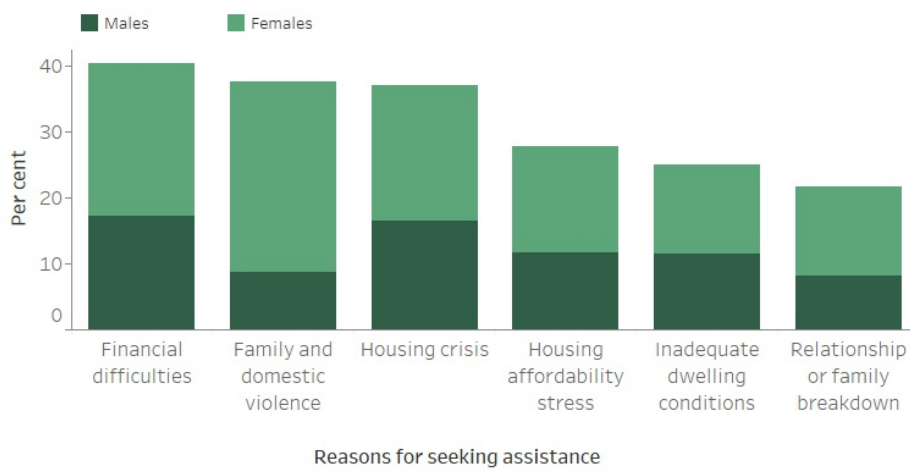
Services provided to clients range from the direct provision of accommodation, such as a bed in a shelter, to more specialised services such as counselling and legal support. These services are generally either provided to the client directly by the agency or the client is referred to another service. [Unmet need](#) provides further information about clients' needs that went unmet.

Reasons for seeking assistance

SHS clients can identify a number of reasons for seeking assistance, reflecting the range of situations that contribute to housing instability (Figure CLIENTS.8):

- Accommodation issues (including housing crisis, inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions and that previous accommodation had ended) were nominated as a reason for seeking help in over half of all clients; identified by 53% of clients (or around 153,400 clients), similar to previous years.
- More than one-third (37% of clients) were experiencing housing crisis.
- A higher proportion were experiencing financial difficulties, identified by 41% of clients, while over 1 in 4 clients were affected by housing affordability stress (28%).
- Interpersonal and relationship issues, including family and domestic violence, affected over half of all SHS clients; 52% of all clients (about 150,000) identified interpersonal relationships as a reason for seeking support. Within this group, 38% identified family and domestic violence.

Figure CLIENTS.8: Clients by all reasons for seeking assistance (top 6), 2018-19



Note: Top 6 excludes 'Other' reason and cases where reason 'Not stated'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.15.

While clients can identify a number of reasons for seeking assistance from SHS, agencies also record the main reason for seeking assistance:

- Family and domestic violence was the most common main reason identified for seeking assistance for almost 1 in 3 clients (28% or about 80,500) (Figure CLIENTS.9). For more information, see [Clients experiencing family and domestic violence](#).
- 1 in 5 (20%) identified housing crisis as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Figure CLIENTS.9: Clients by main reason for seeking assistance (top 6), 2018-19



Note: Top 6 excludes 'Other' reason and cases where reason 'Not stated'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.16.

For those clients presenting at risk of homelessness, the most common main reasons for seeking assistance were (Supplementary table CLIENTS.17):

- family and domestic violence (32%)
- housing crisis (17%)
- financial difficulties (15%).

For those clients presenting as homeless, the most common main reasons for seeking assistance were:

- housing crisis (26%)
- family and domestic violence (18%)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (17%).

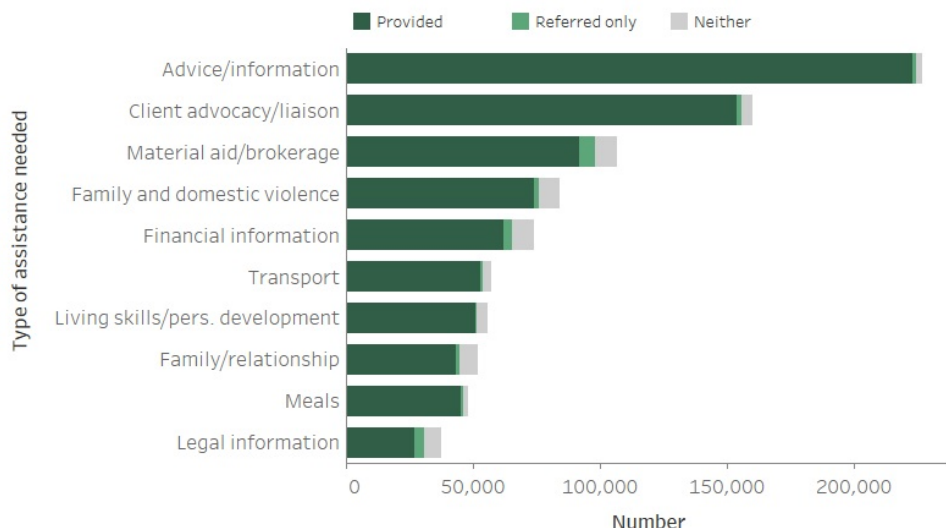
General support and assistance

Some types of assistance provided by SHS agencies can be described as 'general support and assistance', compared with more specialised services. These services include advice and information, material aid, meals and living skills. In 2018-19:

- Clients most commonly need advice and information, needed by 78% of clients (over 227,300). The next most common need was advocacy and liaison, needed by 55% of clients (almost 160,200) and material aid/brokerage which was needed by 37% of clients (more than 106,900) (Figure CLIENTS.10).
- Services almost always provided the required advice and information. This differs from some specialised services, such as legal information and training or employment assistance, for which clients were more often referred to another agency (see Supplementary table CLIENTS.18).

- Clients needing assistance for family and domestic violence services decreased. In 2018-19, there were about 7,500 less clients (or 8% decrease) requesting assistance for family and domestic violence compared with the previous year.

Figure CLIENTS.10: Clients by need for general services and service provision status (top 10), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Top 10 excludes 'Other basic assistance'.
2. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.
3. The general services group is a count of unique clients within all categories in the service and assistance group. A client may request multiple services and assistance types, therefore the sum of the categories is not equal to the group total.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.18.

Housing and accommodation services

Housing and accommodation services provided by agencies include:

- short-term or emergency accommodation
- medium-term/transitional housing
- long-term housing
- assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction
- assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears.

There were over 6,400 more clients (a 4% rise) requesting accommodation services compared with 2017-18.

In 2018-19, 58% of SHS clients identified a need for accommodation services. Of these nearly 169,200 clients:

- 86,100 (51%) were provided with accommodation by the agency
- 25,800 (15%) were referred to another agency for accommodation provision
- 57,200 (34%) were neither provided nor referred for assistance. These clients are further described in Unmet need.

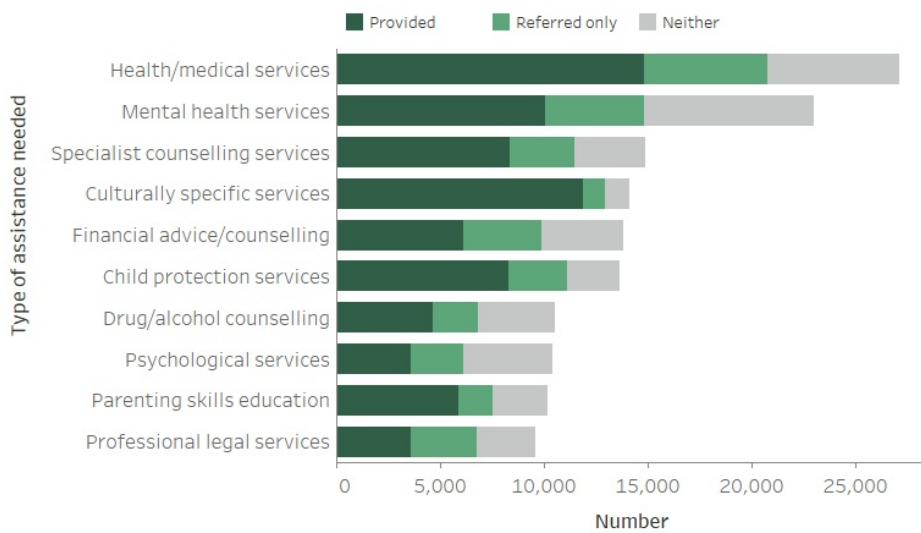
Assistance to sustain tenancy/prevent eviction was needed by 34% of clients at some stage during their support in 2018-19, a similar proportion to the previous year. This group includes those who were still housed when they approached a SHS agency and were supported to remain in that housing. It also includes those who identified a need for accommodation, were assisted to secure new housing and then supported to sustain that housing. Most clients (79,400 clients, or about 81% of those who needed it) received assistance to sustain tenancy directly from the specialist homelessness agency.

Specialised services

Specialised services refer to those services that require specific knowledge or skills and are usually undertaken by someone with qualifications to provide the particular service.

- Health/medical services were identified as needed by 1 in 10 clients (or just over 27,100) and were one of the services most often referred (22%) (Figure CLIENTS.11).
- There has been little change in the most common specialised services needed and provided over the past 5 years; for example, health/medical services, mental health services and specialist counselling remain the most commonly needed services.

Figure CLIENTS.11: Clients by need for specialised services and service provision status (top 10), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other specialised service'.
2. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.
3. The specialised services group is a count of unique clients within all categories in the service and assistance group. A client may request multiple services and assistance types, therefore the sum of the categories is not equal to the group total.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.18.

Financial assistance

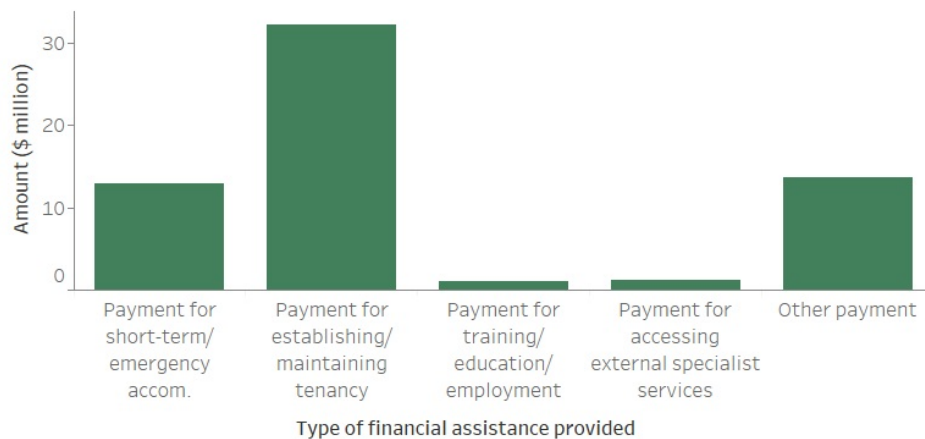
\$61.1 million in financial assistance was provided to clients in 2018-19.

Around \$61.1 million in financial assistance was provided to clients in 2018-19 (Figure CLIENTS.12), a 16% increase from the \$52.9 million provided in 2017-18 (not adjusted for inflation). This represents an average of \$874 provided per client requesting financial assistance, and an increase from \$794 in 2017-18 (not adjusted for inflation).

Around three-quarters of the financial assistance was used to assist clients with housing in 2018-19.

- Around \$32.2 million (53%) of the financial assistance was used to assist clients to establish or maintain their existing tenancy.
- One-fifth of the financial assistance (21% or \$12.9 million) was used to provide short-term or emergency accommodation.

Figure CLIENTS.12: Total amount of financial assistance provided to clients, by payment type, 2018-19



Note: Includes financial assistance, material aid, brokerage and vouchers provided to, or on behalf, of the client during the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.30.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first period of support during 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last period of support in 2018-19.

Clients whose support period(s) both opened and closed in 2018-19 accounted for 75% of all clients (Figure CLIENTS.6). A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may seek assistance again in future years.

Three aspects of a client's housing situation are considered in their housing circumstances: dwelling type, housing tenure and the conditions of occupancy. See [Technical notes](#) for details on how each of these categories are derived.

- The number of clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support reduced when support ended: 1 in 3 clients (32% or over 59,500) were known to be homeless when support ended, down from 43% at the start of support (Table CLIENTS.2).
- The reduction in the proportion of clients who were homeless following support was due to decreases in the proportion of clients rough sleeping or with no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 10% to 6%) and in the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure (from 17% to 12%).
- There was an increase in clients living in some form of tenure over the course of support, including an increase in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing from 15% (or 27,600 clients at the beginning of support) to 21% (or almost 39,000 clients at the end of support); and an increase in the proportion of clients living in private or other housing from 39% (or 73,900 clients at the beginning of support) to 44% (or 81,700 clients at the end of support).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of support, many clients have achieved or progressed towards a more positive housing solution. That is, clients ending support in public or community housing (renter or rent-free), private or other housing (renter or rent-free) or institutional settings had increased compared with the start of support.

Table CLIENTS.2: Clients (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	19,104	11,037	10.0	5.9
Short term temporary accommodation	30,444	26,551	16.0	14.3
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	32,282	21,922	16.9	11.8
Total homeless	81,830	59,510	42.9	32.1
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	27,596	38,977	14.5	21.0
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	73,896	81,657	38.7	44.0
Institutional settings	7,388	5,371	3.9	2.9
Total at risk	108,880	126,005	57.1	67.9
Total clients with known housing situation	190,710	185,515	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	33,638	38,833		
Total clients	224,348	224,348		

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table CLIENTS.25.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

In general terms, for those clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support, agencies were able to assist those clients into temporary accommodation and sometimes into public or community housing or private or other housing. SHS agencies were also often successful in preventing those known to be at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless during support (Supplementary table CLIENTS.25, [Interactive data visualisation](#)).

- Over 8 in 10 (85% or 59,200) clients who were living in private or other housing were assisted to maintain their housing, while a further 6% (4,000) were assisted into public or community housing.
- Almost 9 in 10 (86% or 22,600) clients who were living in public or community housing were assisted to maintain their existing tenancy. A further 6% (1,600) were assisted into private or other housing and 1% (170) were in an institutional setting.

For clients with closed support in 2018-19 who were homeless on presentation to SHS agencies (Supplementary table CLIENTS.25, [Interactive data visualisation](#)).

- About 4 in 10 (38%) were assisted by agencies into housing; most were assisted into private or other housing (about 16,500) and a further 10,400 into public or community housing.
- More than 4 in 10 (43%) of those who were in short-term or emergency accommodation were assisted into housing; most were assisted into private or other housing (about 6,600) and a further 4,900 were assisted into public or community housing.
- The reduction in clients who were homeless following support was mostly due to reductions in the proportion of clients rough sleeping or with no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 10% to 6%) and in the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure (from 17% to 12%).

Other outcomes for clients

Specialist homelessness agencies may support clients in a number of non-housing areas to reduce their vulnerability to homelessness. These include changes in educational enrolment status, labour force status and income.

Education

Education enrolment remained stable: 21% at the start of support and 22% at the end of support (Supplementary table CLIENTS.26). Of those who needed support for education or training assistance, 40% were enrolled at the start of support and 41% were enrolled at the end of support.

Employment

Employment increases following support. Of those with a need for employment assistance, 14% were employed at the start of support and 23% were employed at the end of the support (Supplementary table CLIENTS.27).

Income

Agencies assisted some clients receiving a government payment: 72% at the start of support and 78% at the end of support (Supplementary table CLIENTS.28). There was a reduction following support in those reporting no income from 13% to 8%), and the proportion waiting for government benefits halved from 7% to 3%.

Achievement of case management goals

Case management plans enable agency workers to assist a client to work towards agreed goals. In some cases, support periods are too short to allow for development of a case management plan; for example, when a client stays for a 24-hour period or less. In other cases, a client may decline a case management plan. Case management approaches can differ across SHS agencies and over time as state and territory policies and practices change.

- For those clients with closed support, 65% (or about 145,900 clients) had a case management plan—53% in their own right and 13% were part of another client's case management plan, often as part of a family (Supplementary table CLIENTS.29). The proportion of clients with a case management plan was similar in 2017-18 (63%).
- Among those who had a plan in their own right, 70% achieved some of their case management goals, 25% achieved all their goals and 6% did not achieve any goals. The proportion of clients achieving all their goals was similar when compared with the previous year (24%).
- Of the 35% of clients whose support had ended and who did not have a case management plan, the most common reason given for not having one was that the service episode was too short (71%) while a further 10% did not agree to have a case management plan.

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Policy framework for reducing homelessness and service response

Governments across Australia fund a range of services to provide support to people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. These services are delivered by non-government organisations including agencies specialising in delivering services to specific target groups (such as young people or people experiencing family and domestic violence), as well as those that provide more generic services to those facing housing instability.

This report describes:

- Information about people who have received assistance from specialist homelessness agencies in 2018-19, the type of assistance they received, and changes in their housing whilst receiving support.
- Client characteristics, the services they received, and their outcomes, including changes over time.
- Data on people who requested services in 2018-19, but were not provided with support at that time.

The data in this publication are produced from the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Data are provided to the AIHW by almost 1,600 homelessness agencies allowing this report to be compiled and published. The AIHW thanks the agencies and their clients for making this report possible.

People who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness may also access a range of mainstream services that are available to the broader community (such as income support payments or health services). These services are not described in this report.

In 2017-18, an Australian Defence Force (ADF) indicator was introduced into the SHSC to provide a better understanding of the extent to which veterans need and seek support from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) agencies. Results from the first 2 years of implementation are presented. Data for clients living with disability are presented from 2013-14 onwards.

The policy framework for reducing homelessness

Many Australians experience events in their lifetime that may place them at risk of, or result in, homelessness. Access to affordable housing is a key issue for all Australians, particularly those on low-incomes. A lack of affordable housing puts households at an increased risk of experiencing housing stress and can affect their health, education, employment and place them at risk of homelessness. It is estimated that around 1 million low-income households experience housing affordability issues due to rental stress—defined as paying more than 30% of their gross weekly income on housing costs (AIHW 2019, ABS 2019, SCGSP 2019).

On Census night in 2016, 116,427 Australians were homeless, up from 102,439 people in 2011. This equates to a 4.6% increase in the population adjusted rate of homeless persons over 5 years, from 47.6 per 10,000 population in 2011 to 49.8 in 2016. Census homeless estimates include people in supported accommodation for the homeless, people in short-term or emergency accommodation, those 'sleeping rough' and people living in severely crowded dwellings—defined as those that require 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the residents. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) acknowledges that the homeless circumstance may mean that some people are not captured at all in datasets, nor will all those experiencing homelessness be captured in datasets of those accessing particular homelessness services. In addition, certain groups of people (including Indigenous populations, rough sleepers and those in supported accommodation) are more likely to be undercounted on Census night. Hence, homelessness data collected in the Census is an estimation, and susceptible to under/overestimation and under enumeration (ABS 2018).

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)

In the 2017-18 Budget, the Federal Government announced the establishment of a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), which came into effect on 1 July 2018. This agreement reformed previous funding agreements with states and territories (the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)). The NHHA provides more than \$1.5 billion in Commonwealth funding to the states and territories a year, including dedicated funding of \$121 million for homelessness services in 2018-19, which states were required to match. Funding for homelessness services will be ongoing and indexed for the first time to provide certainty to front line services assisting Australians who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness (CFFR 2018). All SHS must contribute to the SHSC under this agreement.

The objective of the NHHA

The objective of the NHHA is to contribute to improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing across the housing spectrum from crisis housing to home ownership, including to prevent and address homelessness, and to support social and economic participation.

The key outcomes this agreement will contribute to include:

- a well-functioning social housing system that operates efficiently, sustainably and is effective in assisting low-income households and priority homeless cohorts to manage their needs
- affordable housing options for people on low-to-moderate incomes
- an effective homelessness system, which responds to and supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain housing, and addresses the incidence and prevalence of homelessness

- improved housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- a well-functioning housing market that responds to local conditions
- improved transparency and accountability in respect of housing and homelessness strategies, spending and outcomes.

Several national priority cohorts have been specifically identified in the agreement and are expected to be addressed in each state and territory’s homelessness strategy:

- women and children affected by family and domestic violence
- children and young people
- Indigenous Australians
- people experiencing repeat homelessness
- people exiting institutions and care into homelessness
- older people.

In addition, several homelessness priority policy reform areas have been identified:

- achieving better outcomes for people
- early intervention and prevention
- commitment to service program and design.

The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

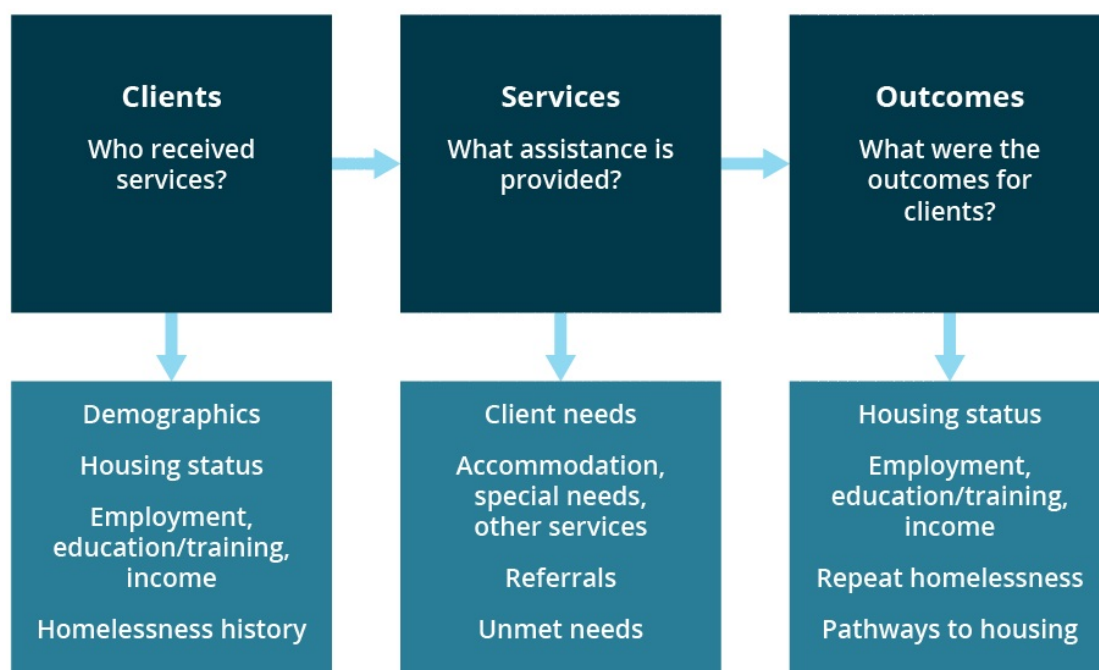
A total of 1.2 million clients have been supported by Specialist Homelessness Services since the collection began on 1 July 2011.

The SHSC collects data from homelessness agencies funded under the NHHA (and the previous NAHA and NPAH). State and territory departments identify agencies that are expected to participate in the data collection. These agencies vary widely in terms of the services they provide and the service delivery frameworks they use. The operational frameworks may be determined by the state or territory funding department or developed as a response to local homelessness issues (see [What are specialist homelessness agencies?](#) for more details).

All SHSC agencies report standardised data about the clients they support each month to the AIHW, as specified by the SHS National Minimum Dataset (NMDS). Data are collected about the characteristics and circumstances of clients when they first present at an agency. Further data on assistance received and client circumstances are collected at the end of every month in which the client receives services and again when contact with the client has ceased.

Data supplied in accordance with the SHS NMDS, known as the SHSC, builds a comprehensive picture of clients, the specialist homelessness services that were provided to them and the outcomes achieved for those clients (Figure FRAMEWORK.1). The SHSC data provide a measure of the service response directed to those who are experiencing housing difficulty. The data do not provide a measure of the extent of homelessness in the community, although SHSC data on emergency accommodation and supported accommodation do contribute to the profile on homelessness in Australia.

Figure FRAMEWORK.1: Conceptual framework of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection



The data collected by agencies are based on periods of support provided to clients. Support periods vary in terms of their duration, the number of contacts between SHS workers and clients during the period, and the reasons that support ends. Some support periods are relatively short—and are likely to have begun and ended in 2018-19—while others are much longer, many of which might have been ongoing from the previous year and/or were still ongoing at the end of 2018-19.

Certain information collected about the client (selected letters of name, date of birth and sex) is used to construct a statistical linkage key (SLK). This SLK brings together all data about each client who had multiple support periods (either within the same agency or across different agencies) during the reporting year.

Data tables from which these analyses are drawn are provided as supplementary tables to this report. All percentages given are based on valid responses reported for clients, and the extent of missing data is indicated in the supplementary tables.

Further information about the collection and information about the quality of the data obtained through the SHSC for 2018-19 is available in [Technical information](#).

Delivery of homelessness services across Australia

Each state and territory manages their own system for the assessment, intake, referral and ongoing case management of SHS clients. The key delivery systems operating in Australia are summarised in Box FRAMEWORK.1. Although presented as three distinct models, these systems are representative of a range of approaches that jurisdictions may take to coordinate entry to becoming a client of SHS. Changes implemented by state and territories in the delivery of services and their associated responses have the potential to impact SHSC annual data.

Box FRAMEWORK.1

Community sector funding and support

- **Assessment and intake:** managed by individual SHS providers, consistent with state or territory policies.
- **Referral:** refer to other SHS providers if clients' needs can't be met by initial SHS provider.
- Can be supported by a coordinating service.

Central information management

- **Assessment, intake and referral:** managed at any SHS provider, via state or territory central information management tool.
- Central information management system assists in the identification of appropriate services and indicates the availability/vacancy of services at all SHS providers.

Central intake

- **Assessment, intake and referral:** managed by one or more 'central intake' agency.
- Central intake agencies prioritise access to services and only refer clients as services and/or vacancies are available.
- Central information management tool may exist to share information between SHS providers.

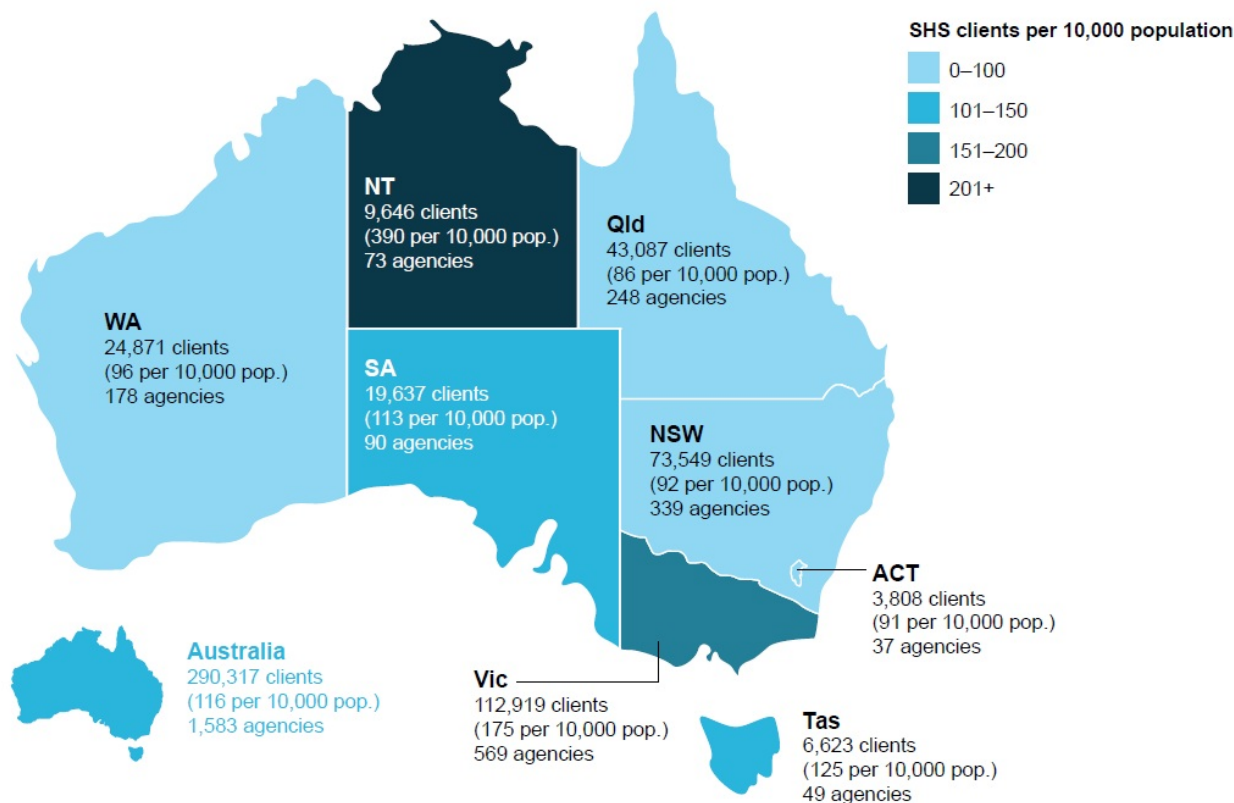
What are specialist homelessness agencies?

A specialist homelessness agency in scope for the SHSC is an organisation that receives government funding to deliver accommodation related and/or personal services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. While it is recognised that other organisations not directly funded by governments also provide a wide range of services to this sector, these organisations are not required to provide data to the SHSC.

SHS agencies vary in size and in the types of assistance they provide. Across Australia, agencies provide services aimed at prevention and early intervention, as well as crisis and post crisis assistance to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. For example, some agencies focus specifically on assisting people experiencing homelessness, while others deliver a broader range of services, including youth services, family and domestic violence services and housing support services to those at risk of becoming homeless. The service types an agency delivers range from basic, short-term interventions such as advice and information, meals and shower or laundry facilities through to more specialised, time intensive services such as financial advice and counselling and professional legal services (see [Glossary](#) for a complete list of service types).

Nationally 1,583 agencies delivered specialist homelessness services to more than 290,300 clients during 2018-19 (Figure FRAMEWORK.2).

Figure FRAMEWORK.2: Specialist homelessness agencies and clients by jurisdiction, 2018-19



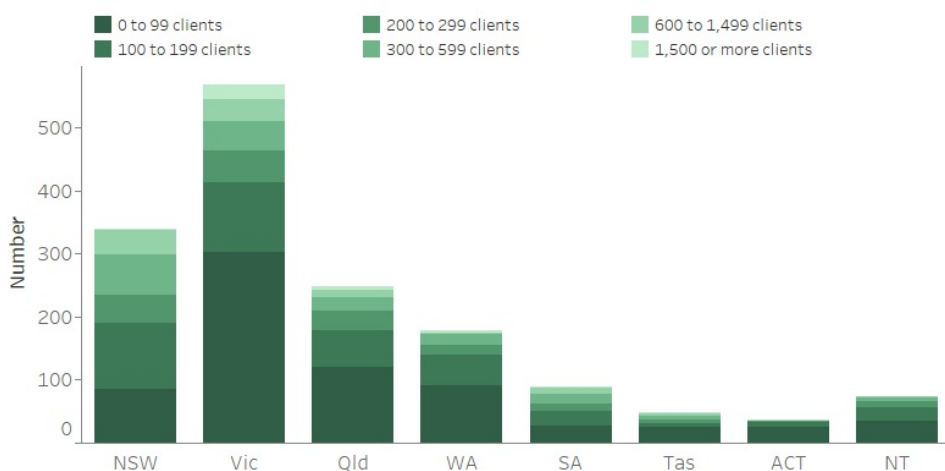
Notes

1. Clients may access services in more than one state or territory, therefore the Australia total will be less than the sum of jurisdictions.
2. The agency count includes only those agencies that provided support periods with valid SLKs.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

SHS agencies vary considerably in size, with some agencies assisting less than 100 clients per year and others assisting upwards of 1,500. Some agencies are represented by a larger ‘parent’ organisation while others are individual stand-alone agencies. The number of clients agencies assist (agency size) not only reflects the type and complexity of services provided, but also differing state and territory service delivery models. Agency size is also influenced by jurisdictional specific factors such as the size and geographical distribution of their population. Figure FRAMEWORK.3 illustrates the wide range in agency sizes in each state and territory. In 2018-19, most agencies assisted fewer than 100 clients, except for New South Wales. In New South Wales, a higher number of agencies assisted 100-199 clients than assisted fewer than 100 clients (104 compared with 86), while in South Australia 23 agencies assisted 100-199 clients. Agencies assisting a large number of clients (more than 1,500 in 2018-19) exist in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory. Victoria had the most agencies of this size (23 agencies).

Figure FRAMEWORK.3: Specialist homelessness agencies, by number of clients assisted and state and territory, 2019-18



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table FRAME.2.

How do people find SHS: a focus on the Ask Izzy website

There are several avenues through which people can find nearby homelessness services. One such mechanism is Ask Izzy, a ‘mobile-first’ designed website connecting people in need to housing, meals, support and counselling services in their local area. The website was launched early in 2016 and has received more than 1.5 million searches in the last financial year (Infoxchange 2019).

Some of the key trends in relation to category searches from the 2018-19 financial year include:

- Food, accounting for 32% of searches.
- Money help, 20%.
- Housing, 18%.
- Everyday things, 10%.
- Centrelink, 5%

The top demographics of those seeking housing support include:

- Mental or emotional difficulties, 24%.
- Families with children, 22%.
- Escaping family violence, 18%.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, 10%.
- Have pets, 8%.

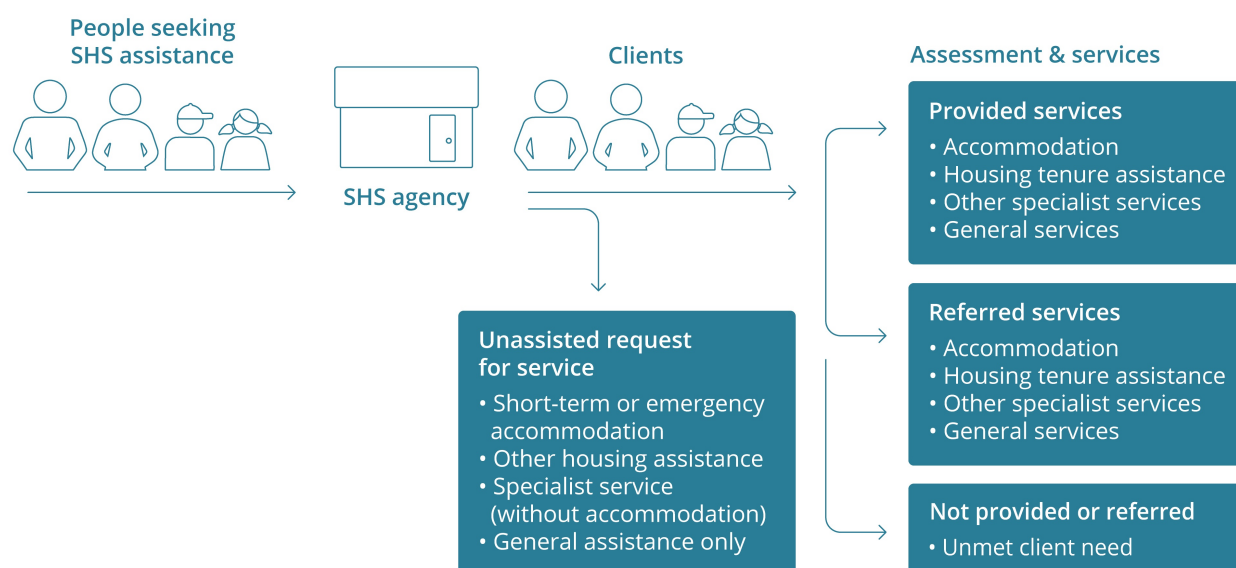
SHS agencies and their service delivery

Once a person has made contact, specialist homelessness services can either be provided to the client by the agency, or a client may be referred to another agency for a specific service (Figure FRAMEWORK.4). In some instances, a client may not receive nor be referred for a service and their need remains unmet.

These unmet needs are captured to assist in determining the ability of the sector to respond to client needs.

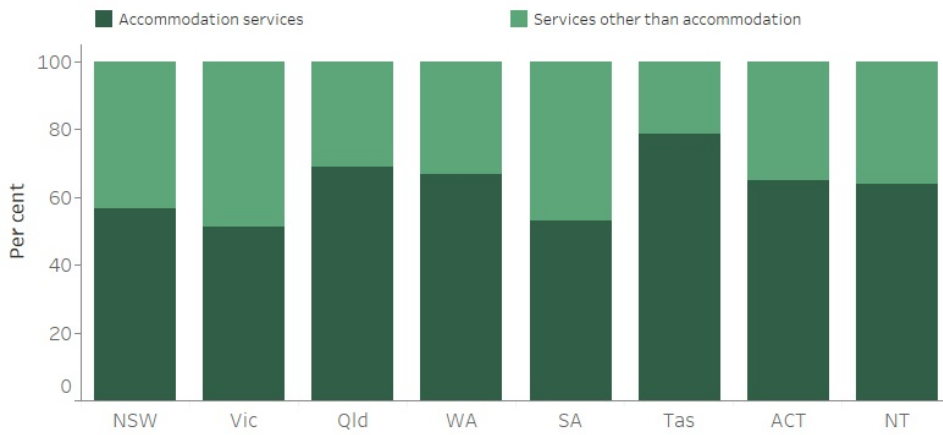
An ‘unassisted request for service’ is an instance where a person(s) who approaches an agency is unable to be provided with any assistance (see Technical information). Limited data are collected about these occasions.

Figure FRAMEWORK.4: Access to and delivery of Specialist Homelessness Services



Services provided by specialist homelessness agencies in all states and territories can be categorised as either ‘accommodation services’ (either the direct provision or referral of accommodation or assistance for the client to remain housed) or ‘services other than accommodation’ (Figure FRAMEWORK.5). The proportion of SHS clients receiving accommodation services varied across states and territories in 2018-19, with almost 8 in 10 clients in Tasmania (79%) and more than 6 in 10 clients in Queensland (69%), Western Australia (67%), the Australian Capital Territory (65%) and the Northern Territory (64%) receiving these services. In contrast, 49% of clients in Victoria, 47% of clients in South Australia and 43% of clients in New South Wales were provided services other than accommodation. This variation reflects differences in the demand for accommodation services, service delivery models and housing options across jurisdictions.

Figure FRAMEWORK.5: Clients of Specialist Homelessness Services by service type, state and territory, 2018-19



Notes

1. Clients provided or referred accommodation services (short-term or emergency accommodation, medium-term/ transitional housing, long-term housing, assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction and assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears) are included in the accommodation services category. These clients may have also been provided additional services other than accommodation.
2. The denominator for the proportions is the number of clients who were provided or referred any service during 2018-19.
3. Clients may access services in more than one state or territory. If they received accommodation services in any jurisdiction they will be counted as having received these services in all jurisdictions in which they received services.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table FRAME.3.

References

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SHS geography



SHS geography

The rate at which people access Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) can vary geographically partly due to service accessibility and region-specific factors such as housing availability and affordability. In Australia, market changes can influence the availability of housing options within an area (Wood et al. 2014). Over time, research has shown shifts towards higher concentrations of Australia's homelessness occurring in urban settings while more remote areas continue to be characterised by higher rates of homelessness (Parkinson et al. 2019). This section provides an overview of the geography of clients supported by SHS agencies across Australia based on the client's location prior to receiving SHS support.

Key findings

- In 2018-19, the median rate of people accessing SHS services across Statistical Area 4 regions was 100.1 clients per 10,000 population.
- The highest rate of clients were in Northern Territory - Outback (567.1 clients per 10,000 population or 5,600 clients).
- The rate of clients in Western Australia - Outback (North) had the largest increase from 343.2 per 10,000 population in 2017-18 to 468.0 in 2018-19.
- While females made up the majority of SHS clients across Australia (60% or 173,600 clients) in 2018-19, male clients made up just over half of clients in Australia's state capitals.

Identifying client location in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

This section examines people seeking SHS support based on where the person lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency, as reported at the first support period during 2018-19. Clients are assigned to only one region for the financial year but may move to other regions before subsequent support periods. This location may not be a permanent address, for example, people who were couch surfing the week prior to seeking services may nominate the location of their temporary accommodation. Client location is classified to Statistical Area 4 (SA4) based on the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) (ABS 2016). A total of 88 SA4s are reported in this section, which excludes non-geographic codes and Other Territories. Please note that other geographic analysis in the report is based on agency location. See [Technical information](#) for more details.

Geographic profile of SHS clients

In 2018-19, SHS agencies assisted over 290,300 clients across Australia, up from 288,800 in 2017-18. Taking population into consideration, the rate of people receiving SHS services varied by region in 2018-19 (Supplementary table CLIENTLOC.1):

- The median rate of clients receiving SHS support across SA4 regions was 100.1 per 10,000 population, up from 97.4 in 2017-18.
- The highest rate of SHS clients were in Northern Territory - Outback (567.1 per 10,000 population), higher than the Northern Territory and national rates (390.0 and 116.2 respectively):
 - The highest number of clients were in Melbourne - West (Victoria) (15,500 clients or 188.7 per 10,000 population).
 - Areas with the top 5 highest client rates had, on average, 376.6 SHS clients per 10,000 population (Table CLIENTLOC.1).
- Compared to 2017-18, 46 SA4 regions had an increase in SHS client rates while the remaining 42 SA4s had a decrease (Table CLIENTLOC.1):
 - The largest increase in the rate of SHS clients was in Western Australia - Outback (North) from 343.2 per 10,000 population in 2017-18 to 468.0 in 2018-19. Of these clients, where housing situation was known:
 - More than 4 in 5 (84% or 3,800 clients) were at risk of homelessness while just over 1 in 10 (15% or 700 clients) were homeless.
 - The largest decrease in the rate of SHS clients was in Geelong (Victoria) from; 179.5 per 10,000 population in 2017-18 decreasing to 151.3 in 2018-19.

Table CLIENTLOC.1: Client rate per 10,000 ERP, by highest and lowest 5 Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2018-19

State	SA4	Client: rate (per 10,000 population)	Client: number	Change in rate from 2017-18 to 2018-19 (per cent)
Highest rate (per 10,000 ERP)				
Northern Territory	Northern Territory –Outback	567.1	5,601	0.6
Western Australia	Western Australia – Outback (North)	468.0	4,571	36.4
Victoria	North West	305.6	4,649	-2.5

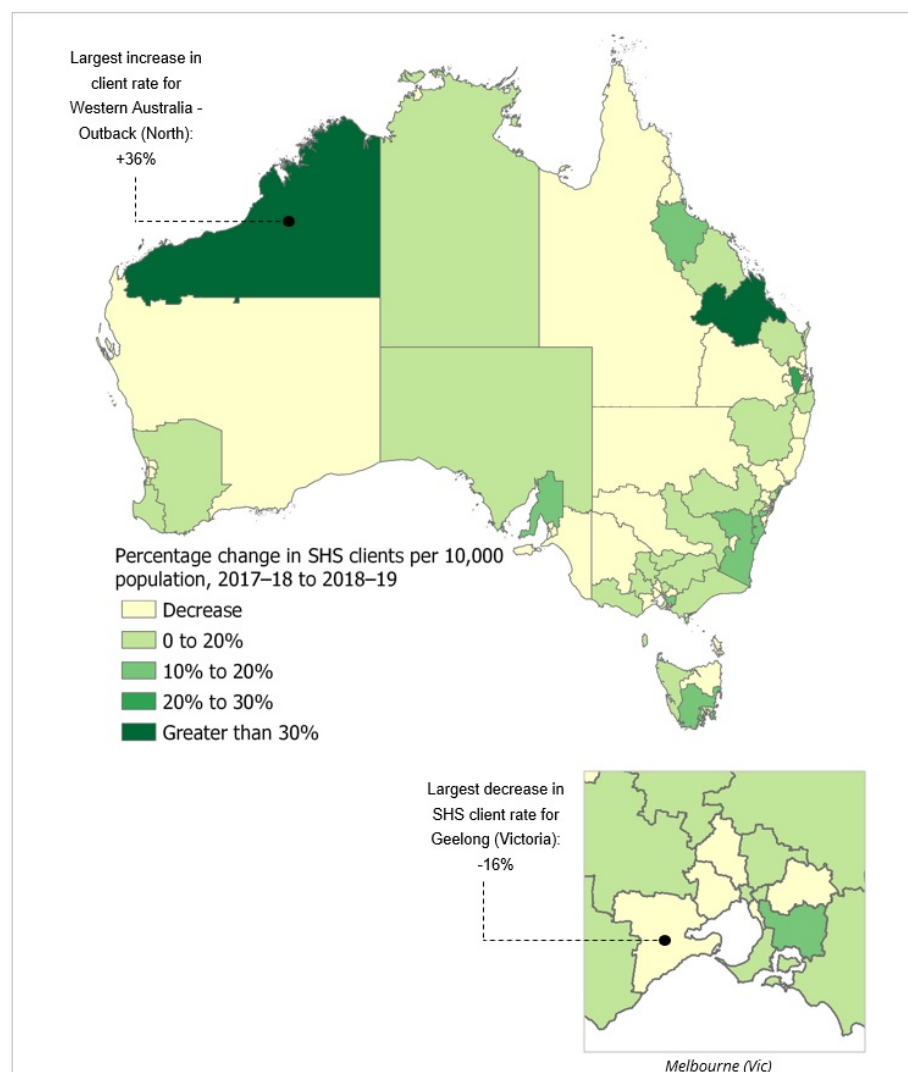
Victoria	Latrobe –Gippsland	280.8	7,947	6.0
South Australia	South Australia – Outback	261.4	2,216	5.0
Lowest (rate per 10,000 ERP)				
Queensland	Sunshine Coast	21.9	820	-10.7
New South Wales	Sydney–North Sydney and Hornsby	20.2	882	1.7
Queensland	Brisbane West	19.3	369	11.5
New South Wales	Sydney–Ryde	18.1	361	-15.4
New South Wales	Sydney–Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury	15.2	374	-10.5

Notes:

1. Client location based on location the week before first presentation, as reported at the first support period to an SHS agency in 2018-19.
2. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTLOC.1.

Figure CLIENTLOC.1: Change in SHS clients per 10,000 population (per cent), by Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2017-18 to 2018-19



Notes:

1. Clients are assigned to a region based on where they lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency in 2018-19. Clients are assigned to one region, based on the location details provided in the first support period in the reference year. Regions are defined by the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).
2. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population at 30 June of the reference year.
3. Mapped SA4s (88) exclude Other Territories and non-geographic SA4s coded as *No usual address*, *Migratory*, *Offshore* or *Shipping*.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017-18, Supplementary table CLIENTLOC.1: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTLOC.1.

Housing situation

Among clients whose housing status was known at the beginning of their first support period in 2018-19, around 112,000 clients presented homeless and 153,700 presented at risk of homelessness to SHS agencies across Australia (Supplementary table CLIENTS.1).

The proportion of homeless and at risk clients varied by geographic region:

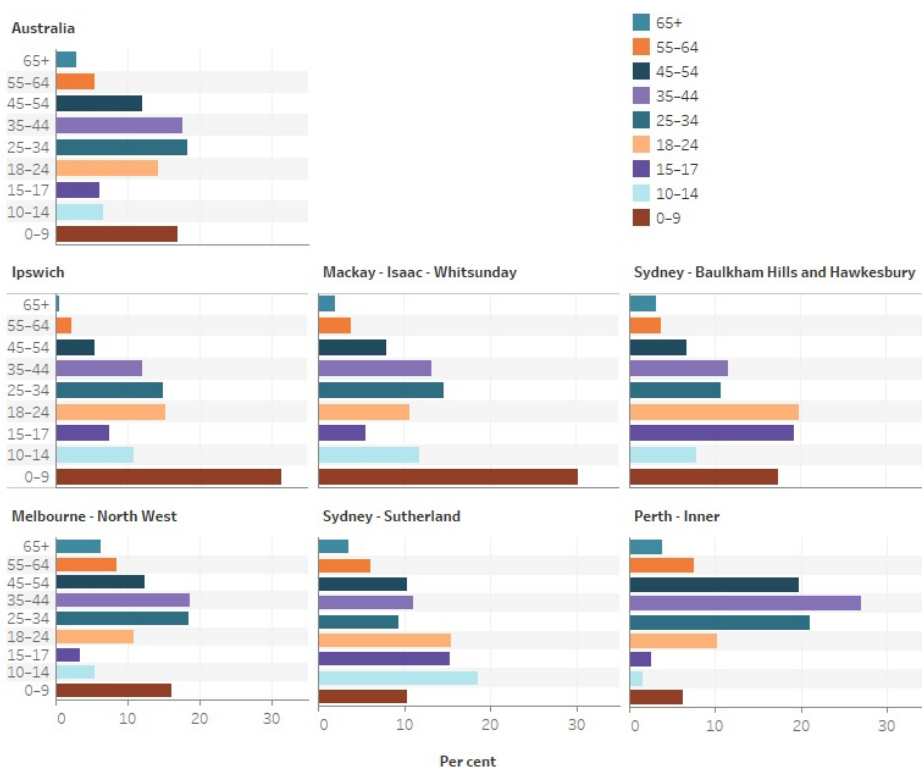
- Clients presenting at risk of homelessness to an SHS agency made up the majority (more than 50% of clients where housing situation known) of clients in 61 SA4 regions while clients presenting homeless made up the majority in the remaining 27 SA4s.
- The highest proportion of homeless clients were in Perth - Inner (73% or 1,200 clients) in Western Australia's capital region while the highest proportion of at risk clients were in Western Australia - Outback (North) (84% or 3,800 clients).

Client characteristics

The age of clients seeking SHS assistance varied by geography across Australia in 2018-19 (Figure CLIENTLOC.2):

- Almost 1 in 3 clients (32%) presenting to SHS services from Ipswich (Queensland) were aged 0-9 years, higher than the state (Qld, 22%) and national proportion (17%).
- Highest proportion of clients aged between 10-24 years were in Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury (47%) and Sydney - Sutherland (49%) (New South Wales) while the highest proportion of older clients aged 65 and over were in Melbourne - North West (Victoria) (6%).

Figure CLIENTLOC.2: Proportion of clients seeking services, by age group, by selected Statistical Area 4 (SA4) regions, 2018-19



Note: Clients are assigned to a region based on where they lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency in 2018-19. Clients are assigned to one region, based on the location details provided in the first support period in the reference year. Regions are defined by the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

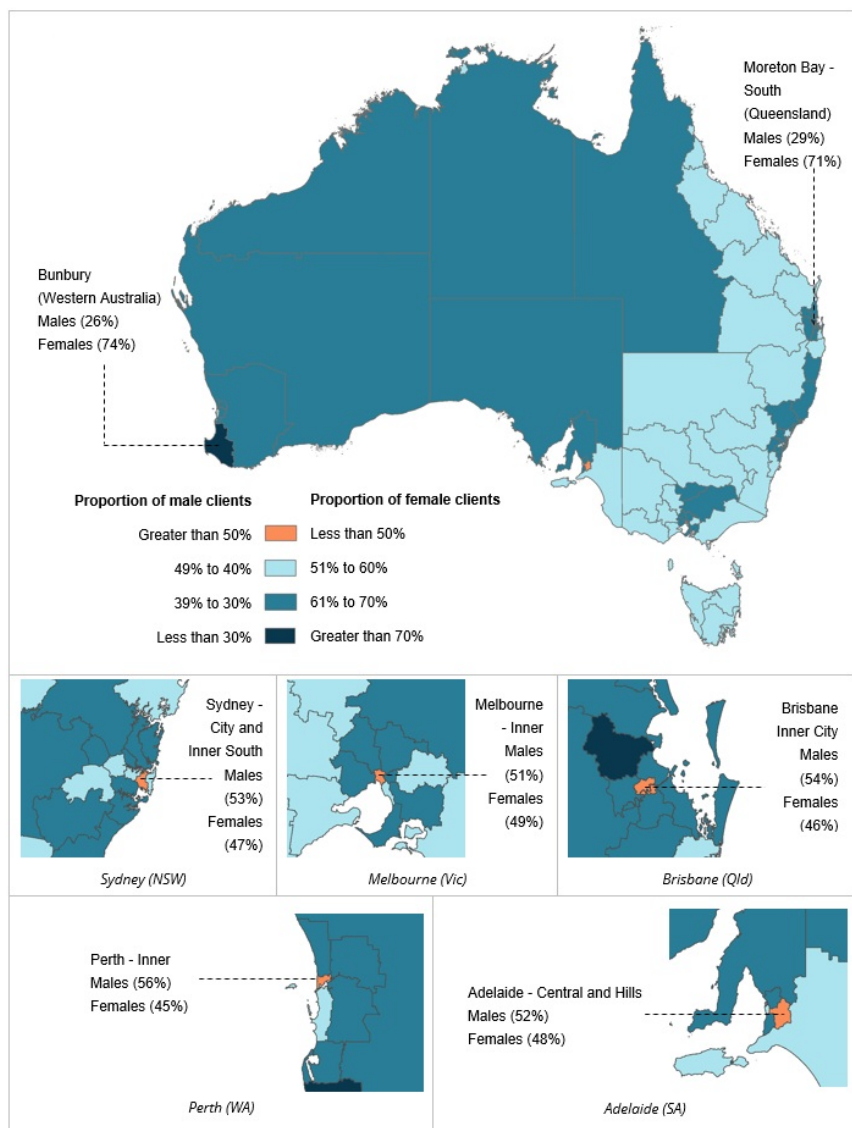
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.1 and CLIENTLOC.1.

Of the 290,300 clients presenting to SHS agencies across Australia, females made up the majority of clients in 2018-19 (60% or around 173,600 clients: Supplementary table CLIENTS.1). The location of male and female clients the week before presenting to a SHS agency varied (Figure CLIENTLOC.3):

- The highest proportion of female clients receiving services were in Bunbury (Western Australia) and Moreton Bay - South (Queensland); 74% and 71% respectively.

- Male clients made up the majority of clients in more urban areas of state capital cities with Perth - Inner region (56%) with the highest proportion of males.

Figure CLIENTLOC.3: Proportion of clients receiving SHS services, by sex, by Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Per cent calculations based on total clients excluding clients from ‘Other territories’ and those that have not provided address information. Proportions may not add to 100% due to rounding.
2. Clients are assigned to a region based on where they lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency in 2018-19. Clients are assigned to only one region, based on the location details provided in the first support period in the reference year. Regions are defined by the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).
3. Mapped SA4s (88) exclude Other Territories and non-geographic SA4s coded as *No usual address*, *Migratory*, *Offshore* or *Shipping*.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTLOC.1.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2016. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 1—Main Structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, July 2016. ABS cat. no. 1270.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.

Parkinson S, Batterham D, Reynolds M & Wood G 2019. The changing geography of homelessness: a spatial analysis from 2001 to 2016, AHURI Final Report 313. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Available from:

Wood G, Batterham D, Cigdem M & Mallett S 2014. The spatial dynamics of homelessness in Australia 2001-11, AHURI Final Report No.227. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Available from:

SHS geography

Access to services can become increasingly difficult the further away a client is from a major city (ABS 2018). For Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), state and territory systems for the assessment, intake, referral and ongoing case management of SHS clients vary, ranging from agency-based to centralised management models (PC 2019). This section provides an overview of the geography of SHS support services provided across Australia based on the location of the agency.

Key findings

- Agency client numbers increased across *Remote* or *Very remote* areas and *Inner* and *Outer regional* areas 2017-18 to 2018-19, while numbers in *Major cities* decreased over the same time period (over 2,800 clients).
- Agencies in *Inner regional* areas had the greatest increase in client numbers (over 1,900 clients).
- The housing situation of clients presenting to SHS agencies was different between remoteness areas, with most clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas (74%) at risk of homelessness, compared with just half for all other areas (56-58%).
- The rate of service was highest in *Remote* or *Very remote* areas, 1 in 33 people compared with over 1 in 100 in *Major cities* and 1 in 66 and 1 in 65 in *Inner* and *Outer regional* areas respectively in 2018-19.

Reporting service location in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

This section examines client service needs and characteristics based on the location of the SHS agency, where the service was received, that is, the profile of clients receiving support in specific areas. Clients can access services in more than one remoteness area, however, for the purpose of the analysis, clients are assigned to one Remoteness Area based on the SHS agency where they first sought support in 2018-19. The 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) (ABS 2018) is used to classify agencies by Remoteness Area based on the location details of each agency (see [Technical Information](#)).

In interpreting regional service trends throughout this section, 'urban areas' refer to *Major cities* and *Inner* and *Outer regional* areas and 'remote areas' refer to *Remote* and *Very remote areas*, unless otherwise stated.

Specialist homelessness services across urban and remote areas

In 2018-19, clients seeking assistance from SHS agencies in urban and remote areas displayed distinct characteristics:

- Of those clients with a current mental health issue (around 86,500 clients), almost 2 in 3 (65%) presented to agencies for assistance in *Major cities* (Supplementary table MH.10).
- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) SHS clients born overseas received services from agencies located in *Major cities* (Supplementary table CLIENTS.5).
- Over 9 in 10 clients (92%) seeking services in remote areas identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.5).
- The proportion of people who were homeless upon presentation was lower among the clients receiving support from services in remote areas (26%) compared with *Major cities* (43%) (Table REG.1).
- The median length of accommodation received by clients of services in *Major cities* was 40 nights, compared with 5 nights in remote areas (Table REG.1).
- The most common main reasons clients sought assistance across Remoteness Areas (Supplementary table REG.1) were:
 - *Major cities*: Family and domestic violence (29%), followed by housing crisis (21%).
 - *Inner* and *Outer regional* areas: Family and domestic violence (25% and 24% respectively) and housing crisis (19% and 21% respectively).
 - *Remote areas*: Family and domestic violence (34%) and housing crisis (10%). One in 10 clients (10%) also listed inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Trends over time

The SHS collection continues to reveal differences in client characteristics and service needs across Australia. Some key service trends between 2014-15 and 2018-19 (Table REG.1):

- Taking into account population differences, agencies in remote areas consistently reported the highest rate of SHS clients. The rate of SHS clients accessing services located in remote areas was 3.0 times higher than in *Major cities* in 2018-19, up from 2.6 times in 2014-15.
- Over this period, SHS support in remote areas provided accommodation to 3 in 5 clients each year (around 60%). This was higher than the proportion of clients provided with accommodation in urban areas (around 30%).
- Agencies in *Inner regional* areas had the largest average annual growth in client numbers and the rate of service use (7% and 6% respectively) since 2014-15.

Year		<i>Major cities</i>	<i>Inner regional</i>	<i>Outer regional</i>	<i>Remote/very remote</i>
Number of clients (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
2018-19	Number	176,507	67,607	31,676	14,527
	Per cent	61	23	11	5
2017-18	Number	179,323	65,671	30,352	13,449
	Per cent	62	23	11	5
2016-17	Number	178,197	65,330	31,131	13,614
	Per cent	62	23	11	5
2015-16	Number	174,744	60,013	30,790	13,650
	Per cent	63	21	11	5
2014-15	Number	162,286	52,061	28,257	13,053
	Per cent	63	20	11	5
Rate (per 10,000 population)					
2018-19		98.0	152.1	154.3	295.5
2017-18		101.5	149.6	148.2	273.0
2016-17		103.5	148.9	149.1	272.2
2015-16		103.4	138.6	147.8	268.4
2014-15		97.7	121.6	136.1	252.6
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
2018-19	Homeless	43	42	44	26
	At risk of homelessness	57	58	56	74
2017-18	Homeless	44	43	44	28
	At risk of homelessness	56	57	56	72
2016-17	Homeless	46	43	42	27
	At risk of homelessness	54	57	58	73
2015-16	Homeless	45	43	43	27
	At risk of homelessness	55	57	57	73
2014-15	Homeless	45	41	43	29
	At risk of homelessness	55	59	57	71
Length of support (median number of days)					
2018-19		40	58	40	19
2017-18		35	53	39	20
2016-17		34	46	37	20
2015-16		33	41	36	17
2014-15		32	39	36	17
Average number of support periods per client					

2018-19	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6
2017-18	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6
2016-17	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6
2015-16	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5
2014-15	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5
Proportion receiving accommodation				
2018-19	28	25	33	63
2017-18	27	25	36	62
2016-17	28	25	37	59
2015-16	29	27	39	62
2014-15	31	29	41	58
Median number of nights accommodated				
2018-19	40	33	24	5
2017-18	46	34	23	5
2016-17	48	31	24	5
2015-16	48	34	23	5
2014-15	48	35	21	5
Proportion of a client group who had a case management plan (per cent)				
2018-19	63	67	78	56
2017-18	60	66	77	65
2016-17	59	64	74	64
2015-16	59	61	75	60
2014-15	58	61	73	62
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)				
2018-19	25	17	36	25
2017-18	25	17	34	24
2016-17	25	16	27	23
2015-16	24	16	31	27
2014-15	27	18	30	29

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. Previous years' data can be found in the 2017-18 Specialist Homelessness Services Annual report.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the [Technical Notes](#).

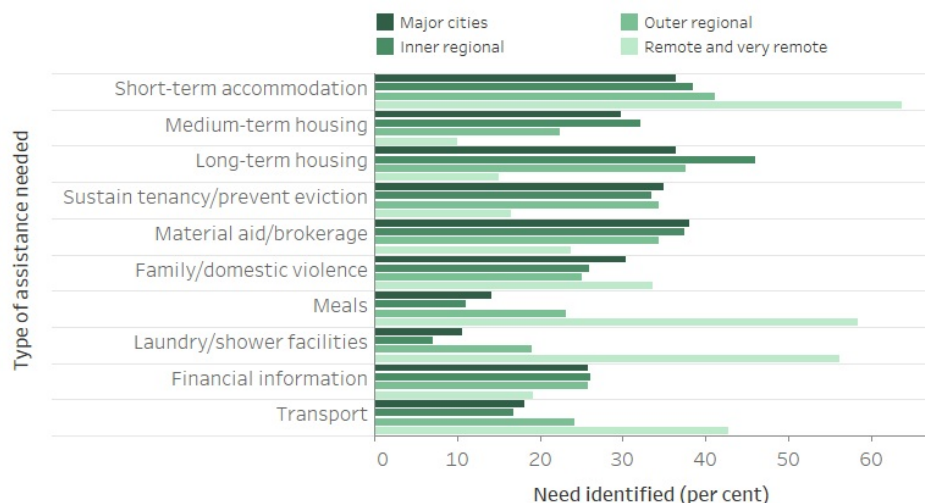
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Services needed and provided

In 2018-19 (Figure REG.1):

- The proportion of clients needing short-term or emergency accommodation was highest for services in more remote areas: *Major cities* 36%, *Inner regional* areas 39%, *Outer regional* areas 41%, and *Remote/Very remote* areas 64%.
- Just under half of clients of *Inner regional* services (46%) needed long-term housing compared with 37% in *Major cities*.
- Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) requests for accommodation were met by services in remote areas, while clients of services in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas were less likely to receive accommodation (51% and 41% of need met, respectively).
 - *Outer regional* areas had the highest proportion of clients referred to other agencies after identifying a need for accommodation services (18% or almost 3,500 clients).
- Clients in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas were more likely to receive short-term or emergency accommodation (92%) than those in *Major cities* (56%) and *Inner regional* (49%) areas.
- Need for mental health services was higher among clients of services in *Major cities* (10% or over 18,200 clients) and *Inner regional* areas (9% or over 5,900 clients) than those in *Outer regional* areas (6% or over 2,000 clients) and *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (4% or around 500 clients).

Figure REG.1: Clients by most needed services, by remoteness area, 2018-19



Notes

1. Most needed excludes 'General services', 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. Short-term accommodation includes temporary and emergency accommodation; medium-term housing includes transitional housing; and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. Proportions have been calculated using the client count for each remoteness area as the denominator.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table REG.4.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support during 2018-19. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future (Table REG.2).

- Clients accessing services in *Outer regional* areas were the least likely to end support in housing (66%), noting that this group also had the highest proportion presenting to SHS experiencing homelessness (45%).
- Clients of *Inner regional* services were the most likely to be housed in private or other housing following support (48%). They were also the most likely to improve their housing situation following SHS assistance with 70% housed at the end of support, up 14 percentage points from the beginning of support.
- Clients accessing agencies in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas were more likely to report living in public or community housing (66%) at the beginning of their support. The majority of clients (78%) were in housing at the end of support.

Table REG.2: Clients with closed support, by Remoteness Area, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
Major cities				

No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	11,677	6,717	10.3	6.1
Short term temporary accommodation	20,420	18,059	18.0	16.4
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	17,505	11,913	15.4	10.8
Total homeless	49,602	36,689	43.7	33.4
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	12,329	18,497	10.9	16.8
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	46,894	51,337	41.3	46.7
Institutional settings	4,643	3,420	4.1	3.1
Total at risk	63,866	73,254	56.3	66.6
Total clients with known housing situation	113,468	109,943	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	22,607	26,132		
Total clients	136,075	136,075		
<i>Inner regional</i>				
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	4,548	2,745	10.3	6.4
Short term temporary accommodation	5,687	4,393	12.8	10.2
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	9,173	5,948	20.7	13.8
Total homeless	19,408	13,086	43.9	30.3
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	4,920	8,321	11.1	19.3
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	18,150	20,579	41.0	47.6
Institutional settings	1,780	1,221	4.0	2.8
Total at risk	24,850	30,121	56.1	69.7
Total clients with known housing situation	44,258	43,207	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	7,343	8,394		
Total clients	51,601	51,601		
<i>Outer regional</i>				
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	2,431	1,342	10.6	6.0
Short term temporary accommodation	3,400	3,089	14.8	13.8
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	4,528	3,108	19.7	13.9
Total homeless	10,359	7,539	45.1	33.7
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	3,745	5,404	16.3	24.2
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	8,029	8,799	35.0	39.4
Institutional settings	817	611	3.6	2.7
Total at risk	12,591	14,814	54.9	66.3

Total clients with known housing situation	22,950	22,353	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	2,065	2,662		
Total clients	25,015	25,015		
<i>Remote and Very remote</i>				
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	448	233	4.5	2.3
Short term temporary accommodation	937	1,010	9.3	10.1
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	1,076	953	10.7	9.5
Total homeless	2,461	2,196	24.5	21.9
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	6,602	6,755	65.8	67.5
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	823	942	8.2	9.4
Institutional settings	148	119	1.5	1.2
Total at risk	7,573	7,816	75.5	78.1
Total clients with known housing situation	10,034	10,012	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	1,623	1,645		
Total clients	11,657	11,657		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown. Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table REG.5.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support, by the end of support ([Interactive Tableau visualisation](#)):

- Most clients in *Major cities* (39,100 clients or 65%) were in private housing.
- Most clients in *Inner regional areas* (15,000 clients or 64%) were in private housing.
- Most clients in *Outer regional areas* (6,800 clients or 56%) were in private housing, with an additional 30% (3,600 clients) in public or community housing.
- Most clients in *Remote or Very remote areas* (5,900 clients or 81%) were in public or community housing.

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support, at the end of support:

- In *Major cities*: 13,300 clients (30%) were in short term accommodation.
- In *Inner regional areas*: 4,600 clients (26%) were in private housing.
- In *Outer regional areas*: 2,600 clients (27%) were couch surfing.
- In *Remote and Very remote areas*: 700 clients (30%) remained couch surfing.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2018. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 5—Remoteness structure, July 2016. ABS cat. no. 1270.0.55.005. Canberra: ABS.

PC (Productivity Commission) 2019. [Report of Government Services 2019: Part G, Section 19: Homelessness Services](#). Viewed September 2019.

Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services

Specialist homelessness services (SHS) in Australia supported, on average, an estimated 65,800 people each day in 2018-19. However, there were also people who approached agencies who were unable to be offered any assistance. There may be a range of reasons an agency cannot assist a person. For example, the person may be seeking a specialised service not offered by that particular agency, the agency may not have the capacity to provide assistance at that time or the person may not be in the target group for the agency.

1. Unassisted requests for services

Identifying unassisted requests for services in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

Unassisted requests for services are instances where a person requests assistance from a SHS agency and receives no assistance at the time of request. The SHSC captures limited information about unassisted requests for services, as it is not always appropriate for an agency to collect the same detailed information as they would if the person became a client. See [Technical information](#) for more information on measuring unassisted requests in the SHSC.

Key findings

- In 2018-19, on average, there were 253 unassisted requests per day; a total of 92,300 unassisted requests for 2018-19, 6,200 more than in 2017-18 (86,100).
- More than 3 in 4 daily unassisted requests included a need for some type of accommodation support (76%).
- Most commonly, agencies were unable to offer requests for accommodation because there was no accommodation available at the time.
- The majority of unassisted requests were from females (66%).

Unassisted requests for services 2018-19

Across Australia, there were around 92,300 unassisted requests in 2018-19:

- On average, there were 253 unassisted requests per day
 - About 166 daily unassisted requests (66%) were made by females and 87 by males (34%). This reflects the overall SHS client population, which is predominantly female (Supplementary table UNMET.2).
- More than 1 in 4 (28%) unassisted requests were from females aged 25-44 (Supplementary table UNMET.2).
- More than 3 in 4 (78%) unassisted requests from single adults with children were from females, and most of these females were aged 25-44 (60% of adult single females with children) (Supplementary table UNMET.7).

Unassisted requests for services, trends over time

Some key trends in unassisted requests since 2014-15 include:

- The number of unassisted requests has varied over time (Table UNASSISTED.1). The increase in unassisted requests in 2018-19 was primarily due to increases in Western Australia and Victoria. For further details, see the [data quality information](#) and [Technical notes](#).
- The proportion of unassisted requests from persons living alone has decreased from 63% in 2014-15 to 56% in 2018-19 while the proportion of unassisted requests from single parents has increased from 33% in 2014-15 to 38% in 2018-19.
- Almost two-thirds (66%) of the unassisted requests were from females in 2018-19

Table UNASSISTED.1: Unassisted requests for service: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number	119,910	100,302	95,392	86,103	92,292
Sex (per cent)					
Female	65	64	66	66	65
Male	35	36	34	34	35
Living arrangement (per cent)					
Lone person	63	63	60	58	56
Sole parent	33	33	35	37	38
Couple with child(ren)	0	0	0	0	0

Couple without children	2	2	2	2	2
Other family group	2	2	3	3	4
Average number of times a person approached an agency	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7
Unassisted people who become clients (per cent)	45	47	46	47	45

Notes:

1. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
2. The SLK used to derive the average number of times a person approached an agency and the unassisted people who became clients is relatively low, and therefore both are likely to be an underestimate.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Analysis of how often a person requested assistance and how many later became SHS clients can only be examined and understood where the statistical linkage key (SLK) was complete and valid (just over half (53%) of all unassisted requests). In 2018-19, on average, each unassisted person approached an agency 1.7 times, a similar average to 2017-18 (1.5 times).

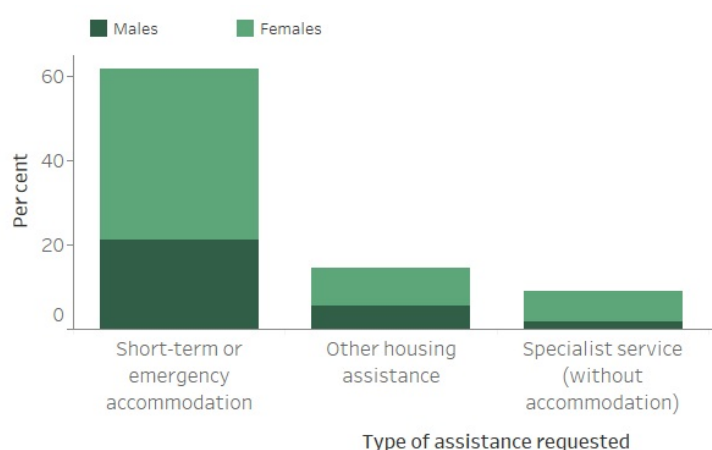
In 2018-19, 45% of people with a valid SLK later went on to become clients and received services during the year, similar to 2017-18 (47%). The service use experience for the remaining 55% were unknown; they may have received assistance from a non-SHS service, used their own support networks or continued to experience unstable housing or homelessness. Alternatively, these people may go on to become clients in future years.

Services requested

In 2018-19:

- On average, 76% of daily unassisted requests included a need for some type of accommodation support (Figure UNASSISTED.1):
 - Most unassisted daily requests related to short-term or emergency accommodation (62%). Females were more likely than males to have unmet requests for short-term or emergency accommodation (41% and 21% respectively).
 - Unassisted requests for short-term or emergency accommodation were higher than in 2017-18. There were, on average, 9 more unassisted requests per day for this type of assistance.

Figure UNASSISTED.1: Daily average unassisted requests, by type of service requested and sex, 2018-19



Note: Per cent calculations based on total daily average unassisted requests, excluding where sex unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table UNMET.4.

More than 9 in 10 (95%) daily unassisted requests for services from single parents with children were for accommodation needs (short-term accommodation and other housing assistance), compared with 69% for lone persons (Figure UNASSISTED.2).

Figure UNASSISTED.2: Proportion of unassisted requests for services by single person with or without children, by service type, 2018-19



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table UNMET.5.

Most commonly, agencies reported that they could not meet requests for any accommodation because there was no accommodation available at the time of the request (Supplementary table UNMET.6). On fewer than 1 in 10 occasions (8%), a person did not accept the service offered.

2. Clients' unmet need for services

Clients receiving support from SHS agencies often need a wide range of services. Some needs arise more than once in a support period and this makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the need has been met from the available data.

Reporting unmet need for services in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

Unmet need is recorded when an SHS client has some, but not all, their identified needs for services met. Agencies can also refer clients to another service for assistance.

Key findings

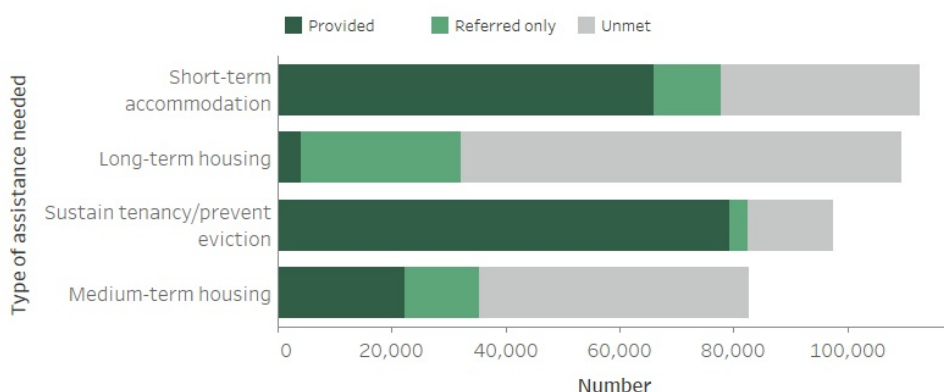
- Almost 169,200 SHS clients (58%) identified a need for accommodation services in 2018-19 and this service was able to be provided to more than half of these clients (86,100 clients or 51%).
- The ability of agencies to provide certain specialist services was similar to the previous year. For example, in 2018-19, 1 in 3 (34%) mental health service requests were neither provided nor referred, similar to that for 2017-18 (32%).

Unmet need for accommodation and housing assistance services

Accommodation was the most common need identified by SHS clients in 2018-19; over half (58%) of all clients needed at least one type of accommodation service (Figure UNMET NEED.1):

- Nearly 2 in 5 clients (39% or 112,700 clients) needed short-term or emergency accommodation; 6 in 10 (59%) of those requesting this service were provided with assistance, while 1 in 10 (10%) were referred.
- Almost 2 in 5 clients (38% or 109,600 clients) identified a need for long-term housing; about 4% (4,000 clients) of these clients were provided with this service, and an additional 26% were referred.
- The number of clients requesting either short-term or emergency accommodation or long-term housing were similarly large; however, the difference in the proportion of clients receiving these types of accommodation highlights the substantial unmet need for long-term housing encountered by SHS clients (71% or 77,500 clients with unmet need for long-term housing).

Figure UNMET NEED.1: Clients with unmet needs for accommodation and housing assistance services, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. Short-term accommodation includes temporary and emergency accommodation; medium-term housing includes transitional housing; and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Unmet' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.18.

Unmet need for general and specialised services

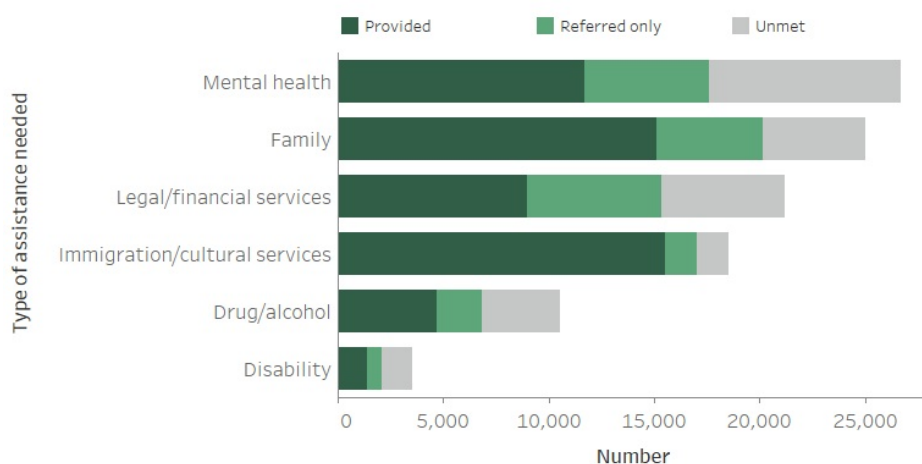
An agency was able to meet the general needs of many clients. For example, of the over 227,300 clients who needed advice/information, 98% were provided assistance, and of the almost 160,200 clients requesting advocacy/liaison, 96% were provided with assistance (Supplementary table CLIENTS.18).

Other types of client needs were less commonly met. For example, among those SHS clients who required professional legal services (3% or almost 9,600 clients), the level of unmet need was substantial, around 29% at the end of support. This may be because of the specialist skills required to provide legal services and the limited availability of these skills within the SHS agencies and other referral services offered to clients.

The level of unmet need for broad groups of specialised services can be determined (Figure UNMET NEED.2):

- Mental health services, including psychological, psychiatric and mental health services, were one of the most common specialised services needed by clients; however, these needs were frequently unmet with 1 in 3 clients (34%) neither provided nor referred these services.
- Around 4 in 10 clients identifying a need for disability services (41%) or drug and alcohol services (35%) did not have their needs met.
- Immigration and cultural services, needed by 6% of SHS clients (about 18,500 people), were provided for most requiring them (84%).

Figure UNMET NEED.2: Clients with unmet needs for specialised services (grouped), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. 'Unmet' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table CLIENTS.18.



Client groups of interest



Client groups of interest

In Australia, 1 in 6 women (17% or 1.6 million) and 1 in 16 men (6% or 548,000) have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner since the age of 15 (ABS 2017). Approximately 2.5 million Australian adults (13%) experienced abuse during their childhood; the majority knew the perpetrator and experienced multiple incidents of abuse (ABS 2017). Family and domestic violence affects people of all ages and from all backgrounds, but it predominantly affects women and children (AIHW 2019).

Family and domestic violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia (FaHCSIA 2008). Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) agencies provide the principal crisis response for these people (Flanagan et al. 2019), with clients who have experienced family and domestic violence making up 40% of SHS clients (see [Clients, services and outcomes](#)). Women and children affected by family and domestic violence are a national priority cohort in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, which came into effect on 1 July 2018 (CFFR 2019) (see [Policy section](#) for more information). Effective services are required that recognise the impact of trauma and violence and the need for support in a safe and respectful environment (Flinders 2008). To achieve long term housing stability, SHS responses often need to encompass a broad range of interventions and integrate services and supports (Flanagan et al. 2019).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, 116,400 SHS clients had experienced family and domestic violence, equating to 40% of all clients.
- Females made up the majority (90%) of adult (aged 18 years and over) SHS clients having experienced family and domestic violence.
- Half (50%) of all younger SHS clients (aged under 18) had experienced family and domestic violence.
- More SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence were at risk of homelessness (63%) upon presentation to an SHS agency, than were homeless (37%).
- On average, each client who experienced family and domestic violence received assistance twice from homelessness agencies over the 12 month period (2 support periods per client), and a median of 54 days of support.
- The largest change to housing situation at the end of service provision was for clients in public or community housing—increasing from 16% of clients at the start of support to 22% at the end of support.

Data quality statement note:

From 2017-18 to 2018-19, there was a three per cent decrease in the total number of Victorian homelessness clients and a 10 per cent decrease in family violence clients following years of steady increases in these numbers. The decrease was primarily due to a practice correction in how some family violence agencies were recording clients. In addition, during 2018-19, a phased process to shift family violence intake to non-SHS services began, which may result in an overall decrease in the number of SHS family violence clients over the coming years. Caution should be used when comparing Victorian client numbers over recent years. For more information, see [2018-19 SHS Data Quality Statement](#).

Reporting clients experiencing family and domestic violence in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

In the SHSC, a client is reported as experiencing family and domestic violence if in any support period during the reporting period the client sought assistance as a result of physical or emotional abuse inflicted on the client by a family member or if as part of any support period a person required family or domestic violence assistance.

The SHSC reports on clients experiencing family and domestic violence of any age. It also reports on both victims and perpetrators who may be assisted by SHS agencies. Currently, the SHSC cannot separately identify these groups, but changes to family and domestic violence service provision are in place for the 2019-20 reporting period. For more information, see [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table FDV.1):

- SHS agencies assisted around 116,400 clients (of any age) who experienced family and domestic violence. This equates to 40% of the 290,300 SHS clients in 2018-19.
- There were around 4,700 fewer SHS clients seeking assistance for family and domestic violence compared with 2017-18. This is in contrast to steady increases in numbers over recent reporting periods (on average 6% each year since 2014-15). See [data quality statement](#) for further information.
- The rate of SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence was 46.6 per 10,000 population, decreasing from 49.2 in 2017-18.

Table FDV.1: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
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Number of clients	92,349	105,619	114,757	121,116	116,419
Proportion of all clients	36	38	40	42	40
Rate (per 10,000 population)	39.3	44.3	47.4	49.2	46.6
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	37	38	39	39	37
At risk of homelessness	63	62	61	61	63
Length of support (median number of days)	40	38	39	43	54
Average number of support periods per client	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0
Proportion receiving accommodation	41	39	37	35	36
Median number of nights accommodated	32	31	31	31	30
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	64	64	64	65	69
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	22	21	20	20	19

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have experienced family and domestic violence. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
5. From 2017-18 to 2018-19, there was a three per cent decrease in the total number of Victorian homelessness clients and a 10 percent decrease in family violence clients following years of steady increases in these numbers. The decrease was primarily due to a practice correction in how some family violence agencies were recording clients. In addition, during 2018-19, a phased process to shift family violence intake to non-SHS services began, which may result in an overall decrease in the number of SHS family violence clients over the coming years. Caution should be used when comparing Victorian client numbers over recent years.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of all clients who experienced family and domestic violence:

- Clients had a younger age profile than all SHS clients, with over 1 in 3 (37%) aged less than 18 years; 1 in 3 (32%) aged 18 to 34, and a further 1 in 3 (31%) aged 35 and over (Supplementary table FDV.1).
- Half (50%) of all SHS clients aged less than 18 had experienced family and domestic violence (Supplementary tables FDV.1 and CLIENTS.1).
- 9 in 10 (90%) adult SHS clients (aged 18 years and over) who experienced family and domestic violence were female.
- There was very little difference in the number and proportion of males (18,000 or 50%) and females (18,300 or 50%) aged under 15 experiencing family and domestic violence, but from age 15, the majority of clients experiencing family and domestic violence were female (89%, 11% male).

Children experiencing family and domestic violence may seek SHS support with their family, or independently if fleeing the home. For children in particular, SHS support is critical to reduce the likelihood of a long term experience/risk of homelessness (Kaleveld et al 2018).

Indigenous clients

In 2018-19, of all clients who experienced family and domestic violence, around 68,900 clients) (Supplementary table FDV.8):

- 2 in 5 (40% or more than 27,200 clients) had experienced family and domestic violence.
- 3 in 10 (29%) Indigenous clients experiencing family and domestic violence were less than 10 years of age.

State and territory and remoteness

- Victoria recorded the highest number of SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence (50,800), representing almost half (44%) of this client group in Australia (Supplementary table FDV.2).
- New South Wales had the second highest number of clients who experienced family and domestic violence at 27,900 (24% of clients or 35 per 10,000 population). NSW was 1 of 3 states reporting an increase in numbers of clients experiencing family and domestic violence; an increase of 1,200 clients since 2017-18.
- While recording one of the lowest counts (4,700 clients or 4%) of family and domestic violence clients in Australia, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of clients, at 188 clients per 10,000 population.
- Almost 2 in 3 (63%, or 73,400 clients) SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence accessed services in *Major cities*, with a further 22% in *Inner regional* and 10% in *Outer regional* areas (Supplementary table FDV.10).

Living arrangements

In 2018-19, of the 103,300 children and adult clients who experienced family and domestic violence and stated their living arrangement at the beginning of SHS support (Supplementary table FDV.9)

- nearly half (49% or 50,700 clients) were living as single parents with one or more children
- 1 in 5 (19% or 19,500 clients) were living alone
- almost 12,600 people (12%) were living with other family, which can mean a person with or without children living (as a couch surfing arrangement) with others.

This was similar to 2017-18, albeit with fewer clients not stating their living arrangement at the beginning of support (down from 22,900 to 13,100 clients in 2018-19).

New or returning clients

Clients who have been victims of family and domestic violence may cycle in and out of homelessness due to lack of financial security and stable housing options and may return to the perpetrator on numerous occasions (DFHCSIA 2008). In 2018-19 (Supplementary table FDV.7):

- Of the 116,400 SHS clients (of all ages) who experienced family and domestic violence, 45% were new to the SHS and 55% were returning clients, that is, had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- Of the new clients, 45% (23,400 clients) were aged under 18, 50% were aged 18-55, and 5% were aged 55 and over.
- By contrast, of the returning clients, fewer (19,300 clients or 30%) were under 18.

Selected vulnerabilities

People who experience family and domestic violence may experience other vulnerabilities such as a current mental health issue and/or problematic drug and/or alcohol use. In 2018-19, of the 89,100 clients aged 10 and over who experienced family and domestic violence (Table FDV.2):

- almost 6 in 10 (58% or 52,000 clients) did not report experiencing an additional vulnerability
- 3 in 10 clients (30% or 26,300 clients) also reported a current mental health issue
- around 1 in 10 clients (9% or 8,400 clients) reported 3 key vulnerabilities (family and domestic violence, current mental health issues and problematic drug and/or alcohol use).

Four in 10 clients (42% or 37,100 clients) who experienced family and domestic violence reported experiencing at least 1 additional vulnerability (either a current mental health issue and/or problematic drug and/or alcohol use).

- The experience of family and domestic violence was more likely to be reported with a current mental health issue (34,600 clients) than problematic drug and/or alcohol use (10,800 clients).

Table FDV.2: Clients (aged 10 and over) who have experienced family and domestic violence, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	8,351	9.4
Yes	Yes	No	26,279	29.5
Yes	No	Yes	2,455	2.8
Yes	No	No	52,041	58.4
			89,126	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

In 2018-19 (Table FDV.1):

- Clients who experienced family and domestic violence had a median of 54 days and 30 nights of support and an average of 2.0 support periods per client.
- Many (69%) SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence had a case management plan, up from 65% in 2017-18. Around 1 in 5 (19%) of those with a plan achieved all the set goals.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, of those SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence:

- 7 in 10 clients (69%) identified family and domestic violence as the main reason for accessing SHS services, while a further 9% identified housing crisis (Supplementary table FDV.5).
- For those clients presenting at risk of homelessness, the most common main reasons for seeking assistance were (Supplementary table FDV.6):
 - family and domestic violence (75%)
 - housing crisis (6%)
 - financial difficulties (4%).
- For those clients presenting as homeless, the most common main reasons for seeking assistance were:
 - family and domestic violence (53%)
 - housing crisis (16%)
 - inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (9%).

Services needed and provided

In 2018-19, 84,000 (72%) SHS clients who experienced family and domestic violence needed specific assistance for this reason, including therapeutic discussion or group sessions, counselling and specialised support services. Of those identified as needing assistance for family and domestic violence, 89% were provided assistance (Figure FDV.1).

The next most common services requested by this client group were:

- short-term or emergency accommodation (43% or over 49,700), with 70% of those needing this service, receiving this service
- material aid/brokerage (41% or over 47,500), with 88% of those needing this service receiving this service
- long-term housing (33% or over 37,800), with 3% of those needing this service receiving this service and a further 30% referred.

Figure FDV.1: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by need for services and assistance and service provision status (top 6), 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. 'Short-term accommodation' includes temporary and emergency accommodation.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table FDV.3.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

At the end of the reporting period in 2018-19 (Table FDV.3):

- Just over 6 in 10 clients experiencing family and domestic violence presented to agencies known to be housed (61% or 40,100 clients), and by the end of support this had risen to over 7 in 10 (72% or 46,900). Much of the increase can be attributed to more clients living in public or community housing, up from 16% to 22% by the end of support.
- The most common housing situation for clients experiencing family and domestic violence at both the start and end of SHS support was private or other housing; 28,800 clients (44%) at the start, and 31,700 (48%) at the end of SHS support.
- At the end of support, almost 3 in 10 clients experiencing family and domestic violence were known to be experiencing homelessness (28% or 18,600 clients). Compared with the start of support, there were 7,500 fewer clients experiencing homelessness; down from 26,100 clients (39%).
- Clients experiencing family and domestic violence known to be homeless were more likely to present to agencies while living in short term temporary accommodation (20% or 13,200 clients). This was the most common housing situation for those experiencing homelessness, and remained so at the end of support (16% or 10,200 clients living in short term temporary accommodation).

These findings demonstrate that by the end of support, there was a reduction in homeless housing circumstances and an increase in other, potentially more positive, housing solutions. That is, more clients ended support in public or community housing (renter or rent-free) or private or other housing (renter or rent-free) compared with the start of support.

Table FDV.3: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	3,569	1,984	5.4	3.0
Short term temporary accommodation	13,217	10,154	20.0	15.5
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	9,276	6,447	14.0	9.8
Total homeless	26,062	18,585	39.4	28.4
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	10,356	14,501	15.6	22.1
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	28,765	31,720	43.5	48.4
Institutional settings	998	682	1.5	1.0
Total at risk	40,119	46,903	60.6	71.6
Total clients with known housing situation	66,181	65,488	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	21,402	22,095		
Total clients	87,583	87,583		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table FDV.4.

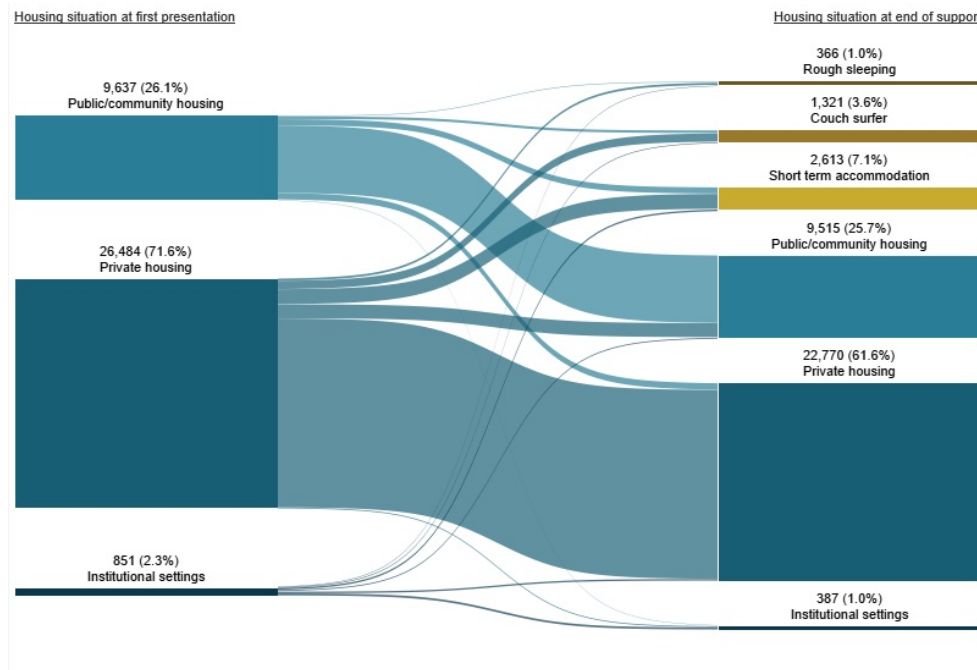
Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 37,000 clients), by the end of support (Figure FDV.2):

- Most (22,800 clients or 62%) were in private housing.
- Around 9,500 clients (26%) were in public housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (around 4,300 clients or 12% of those who started support at risk).

Figure FDV.2: Housing situation for clients with closed support who began support at risk of homelessness, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

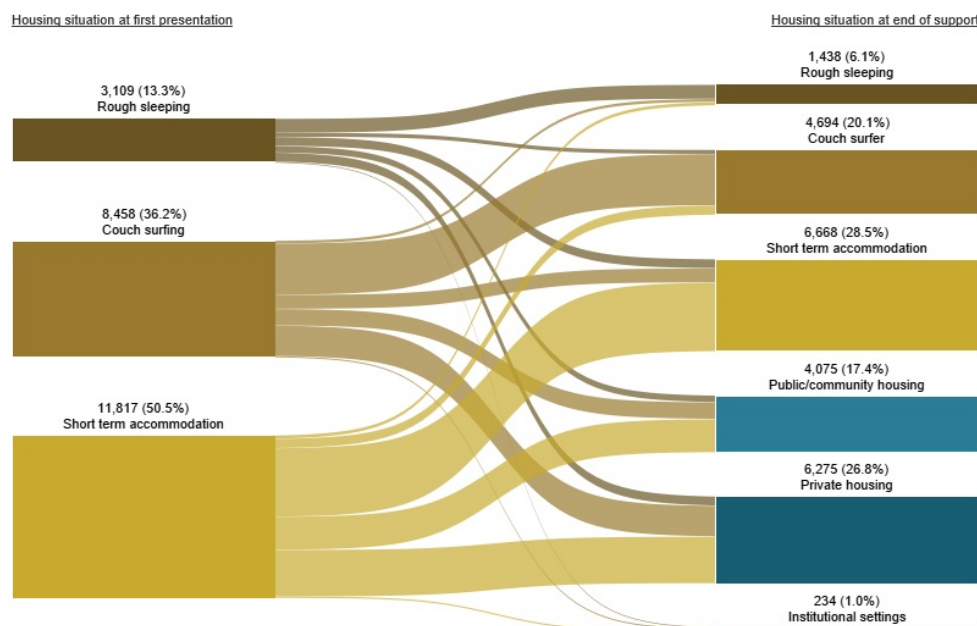
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 23,400 clients), agencies were able to assist (Figure FDV.3):

- 6,700 clients (29%) into short term accommodation
- 6,300 (27%) into private housing.

A further 4,700 clients (20%) were couch surfing at the end of support.

Figure FDV.3: Housing situation for clients with closed support who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

Clients accessing SHS agencies who have experienced family and domestic violence have some notable differences from other client groups. Compared with other client groups, more clients who experienced family and domestic violence were in private housing at the start and end of SHS support. Perhaps driven by their greater likelihood of presenting while housed, their service use patterns were considerably less than other client groups and they were less likely to need accommodation overall. Short-term accommodation was their greatest housing need which is in contrast to other groups which often needed long-term housing the most. This client group were more likely to be new, rather than returning clients, and more likely to experience only one selected vulnerability (family and domestic violence).

It is important to note that this analysis is based on the 116,400 clients of SHS agencies in 2018-19. While there are various support services available, many people do not seek advice or support after incidents of family or domestic violence. Other research suggests that for those who experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current cohabiting partner, 1 in 2 women never sought advice or support (AIHW 2019).

People fleeing violence often require safe, affordable, independent housing in which to live in the long term and yet, some are unable to secure it (Flanagan 2019). In the absence of an appropriate housing solution, some people may consider returning to a violent relationship (Flanagan 2019). While the availability of long-term housing is a key challenge for SHS clients overall, it is particularly so for this large client group.

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Client groups of interest

Family conflict and mental illness have been identified as youth homelessness risk factors, as has leaving the parental home prior to establishing stable employment (Carlisle et al. 2018, Steen & MacKenzie 2017). Young people can face discrimination in the private rental market due to lack of rental references and fewer financial resources (Homelessness Australia 2016).

Youth homelessness can lead to disruption of education and poorer education outcomes, which in turn leads to further economic disadvantage, perpetuating the cycle of homelessness in adulthood. For example, living in overcrowded housing can adversely affect the number of school years completed as students do not have enough space to do homework, get enough sleep or establish a routine (Fildes et al. 2018). There is concern that young people who do not seek support face substantial challenges in maintaining or engaging with education and employment, which is why it is important to provide greater avenues for preventing and responding to youth homelessness (Stone 2017).

According to Census estimates, around 27,700 young people aged 12-24 were experiencing homelessness on Census night in 2016, making up 24% of the total homeless population (ABS 2016). However, youth homelessness is likely to be underestimated in the Census (ABS 2016). For example, a usual address may be reported for couch surfers because the young person is staying in a household on Census night. It can be difficult to identify people experiencing this form of homelessness because of the transient nature of couch surfing and often young couch surfers do not classify themselves as homeless (Terui & Hsieh 2016). For more information, see [Couch surfers](#). Children and young people are a national priority cohort listed in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, which came into effect on 1 July 2018 (CFFR 2018) (see [Policy section for more information](#)).

Key findings:

- In 2018-19, almost 43,000 young people aged 15-24 presented alone to SHS agencies.
- Young people presenting alone made up 15% of all SHS clients but accounted for 73% of all SHS clients aged 15-24.
- Half (51%) of all young people presenting alone were known to be homeless at presentation to agencies.
- One-quarter (27%) of young people presenting alone were aged 15-17.
- 1 in 6 (16%) young people presenting alone were enrolled in secondary school at the beginning of support, 3% were enrolled in university and 1 in 10 (10%) were enrolled in vocational education or other training.
- Most (56%) young people presenting alone in 2018-19 had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- Young people presenting alone were more likely to be living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure (30%, compared with 17% of the overall SHS population).
- The proportion of young people who were known to be homeless decreased from 53% to 40% following SHS support, with the proportion of clients living in private or other housing increasing from 33% to 42%.

Client characteristics

Young people presenting alone are defined as any client aged 15-24 who presented to a SHS agency alone in their first support period in the financial year.

In 2018-19 (Table YOUNG.1):

- SHS agencies assisted around 43,000 young people aged 15-24 who presented alone, representing a decrease of 200 clients from 2017-18.
- Young people presenting alone made up 15% of all SHS clients but accounted for 73% of all SHS clients aged 15-24.
- The rate of young people presenting alone was 17.2 per 10,000 population, decreasing from 17.6 in 2017-18.

Table YOUNG.1: Young people (15-24 years) presenting alone: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	43,134	44,621	44,197	43,180	42,960
Proportion of all clients	17	16	15	15	15
Rate (per 10,000 population)	18.4	18.7	18.3	17.6	17.2
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	52	52	52	52	51
At risk of homelessness	48	48	48	48	49

Length of support (median number of days)	44	44	47	49	54
Average number of support periods per client	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.8
Proportion receiving accommodation	35	34	31	31	31
Median number of nights accommodated	41	41	44	45	45
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	58	60	60	63	64
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	20	18	18	19	20

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all young people presenting alone. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
5. In 2017-18, age and age-related variables were derived using a more robust calculation method. Data for previous years have been updated with the improved calculation method for age. As such, data prior to 2017-18 contained in the SHS Annual Report may not match that contained in the SHS Annual Report Historical Tables.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of young people presenting alone (Supplementary table YOUNG.1):

- 3 in 5 were female (62% or over 26,800 clients).
- 1 in 4 were aged 15-17 (27% or more than 11,400 clients).

Indigenous status

- Over one-quarter of young people presenting alone were Indigenous (28% or almost 11,400 clients).
- Young people presenting alone were more likely to identify as Indigenous than the overall SHS population (28%, compared with 26%).

State and territory and remoteness

- The largest number of young people presenting alone accessed services in New South Wales (almost 14,300 clients or 33%), followed by Victoria (nearly 13,800 clients or 32%).
- The highest rate of young people presenting alone was in the Northern Territory (55 clients per 10,000 population), followed by Tasmania (28).
- The majority of young people presenting alone accessed services in *Major cities* (59% or more than 25,400 clients), followed by *Inner regional* areas (26% or over 11,000 clients).

Living arrangements

- Among young people presenting alone, the most commonly reported living arrangement at the beginning of support was lone persons (42% or over 16,600 clients), followed by other family (17% or 6,700 clients).
- Female clients were more likely than males to report their living arrangement as one parent with child/ren (21% or over 5,100 clients, compared with 6% or almost 1,000 males) while male clients were more likely to report their living arrangement as a lone person (51% or over 7,800 clients, compared with 36% or 8,800 females).

Education

Of those whose education status was known, around 3 in 10 young people presenting alone were enrolled in education (29% or nearly 11,300 clients).

- 1 in 6 young people presenting alone were secondary school students (16% or around 6,400 clients).

- 1 in 10 young people presenting alone were enrolled in vocational education and training or other education or training (10% or almost 3,800 clients).

Selected vulnerabilities

Young people presenting alone may face additional vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to homelessness, in particular family and domestic violence, mental health issues and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

Of the 43,000 young people presenting alone in 2018-19, 3 in 5 (62%) reported experiencing one or more of these vulnerabilities (Table YOUNG.2):

- More than 2 in 5 reported a current mental health issue (44% or over 18,900 clients).
- 1 in 3 reported family and domestic violence (35% or almost 15,000 clients).
- 13% (around 5,500 clients) reported experiencing both a current mental health issue and family and domestic violence only.
- 14% (nearly 6,100 clients) reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- 6% (almost 2,500 clients) reported experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.
- Almost 2 in 5 (38% or 16,300 clients) reported experiencing none of these vulnerabilities.

Table YOUNG.2: Young people presenting alone, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	2,468	5.7
Yes	Yes	No	5,532	12.9
Yes	No	Yes	402	0.9
No	Yes	Yes	2,380	5.5
Yes	No	No	6,555	15.3
No	Yes	No	8,531	19.9
No	No	Yes	836	1.9
No	No	No	16,256	37.8
			42,960	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

- Young people presenting alone who received assistance from SHS agencies in 2018-19 had an average of 1.8 support periods per client and a median of 54 days of support, increasing from 49 days in 2017-18.
- 31% of young people who presented alone were provided with accommodation, with a median of 45 nights of accommodation provided throughout 2018-19.

New or returning clients

Most young people presenting alone in 2018-19 (56% or 24,100 clients) were returning clients, having previously been assisted by an SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12. Returning clients were more likely to be 18-24 (80%, compared with 65% of new clients).

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the main reasons for seeking assistance among young people presenting alone were:

- housing crisis (19% or over 8,100 clients)
- family and domestic violence (16% or almost 6,800 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (12% or nearly 5,000 clients)
- relationship/family breakdown (12% or around 5,000 clients).

Young people who were known to be homeless at first presentation were more likely to identify housing crisis (25%, compared with 14% of clients at risk) or inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (16%, compared with 8% at risk) as their main reason for seeking assistance.

Family and domestic violence was the most commonly reported main reason for seeking assistance among young people presenting alone who were known to be at risk of homelessness. Compared with those who were homeless, young people at risk were twice as likely to report family and domestic violence as the main reason for seeking assistance (19%, compared with 10% homeless clients).

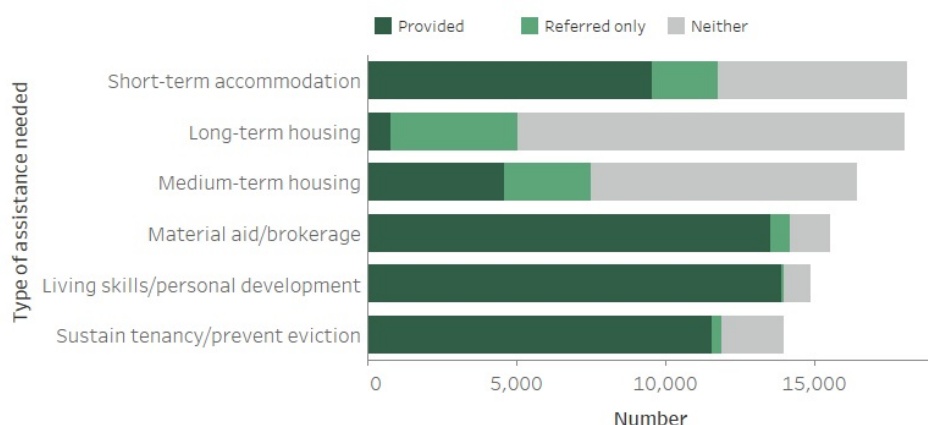
Services needed and provided

Similar to the overall SHS population, the majority of young people presenting alone needed general services that were provided by SHS agencies including advice/information, advocacy/liaison on behalf of client and other basic assistance.

Apart from those services, the most common services requested by young people presenting alone were (Figure YOUNG.1):

- short-term or emergency accommodation (42% or over 18,100 clients), with 53% of those needing this service also receiving this service
- long-term housing (42% or almost 18,100 clients), with 4% receiving this service and 24% receiving a referral
- medium-term/transitional housing (38% or around 16,500 clients), with 28% receiving this service.

Figure YOUNG.1: Young people presenting alone, by most needed services and service provision status (top 6) , 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. 'Short-term accommodation' includes temporary and emergency accommodation and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table YOUNG.3.

Young people presenting alone were also more likely than the overall SHS population to request services including:

- living skills/personal development (35%, compared with 19%), with 93% receiving this service
- educational assistance (20%, compared with 8%), with 75% receiving this service
- employment assistance (17%, compared with 6%), with 72% receiving this service
- training assistance (14%, compared with 4%), with 69% receiving this service.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

At the end of the reporting period in 2018-19 (Table YOUNG.3):

- The proportion of young people presenting alone who were known to be homeless decreased from 53% at the beginning of support to 40% at the end of support; over 4,000 fewer clients were homeless at the end of support.
- The shift in the proportion of couch surfers accounted for much of the decrease in the proportion of clients who were homeless; the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure dropped from 30% to 21% at the end of support, while the proportion sleeping rough dropped from 8% to 5%.
- The largest change for those known to be at risk of homelessness was in the proportion of clients living in private or other housing, which increased from 33% to 42% at the end of support (to almost 11,200 clients).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of support, many clients have achieved or progressed towards a more positive housing solution. That is, the number and/or proportion of clients ending support in public or community housing (renter or rent-free), private or other housing (renter or rent-free) or institutional settings had increased compared with the start of support.

Table YOUNG.3: Young people presenting alone (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	2,300	1,245	8.3	4.7
Short term temporary accommodation	4,140	3,692	15.0	14.0
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	8,185	5,602	29.6	21.2
Total homeless	14,625	10,539	52.9	39.9
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	2,849	3,870	10.3	14.6
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	9,094	11,184	32.9	42.3
Institutional settings	1,104	832	4.0	3.1
Total at risk	13,047	15,886	47.1	60.1
Total clients with known housing situation	27,672	26,425	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	4,059	5,306		
Total clients	31,731	31,731		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19. Supplementary table YOUNG.4.

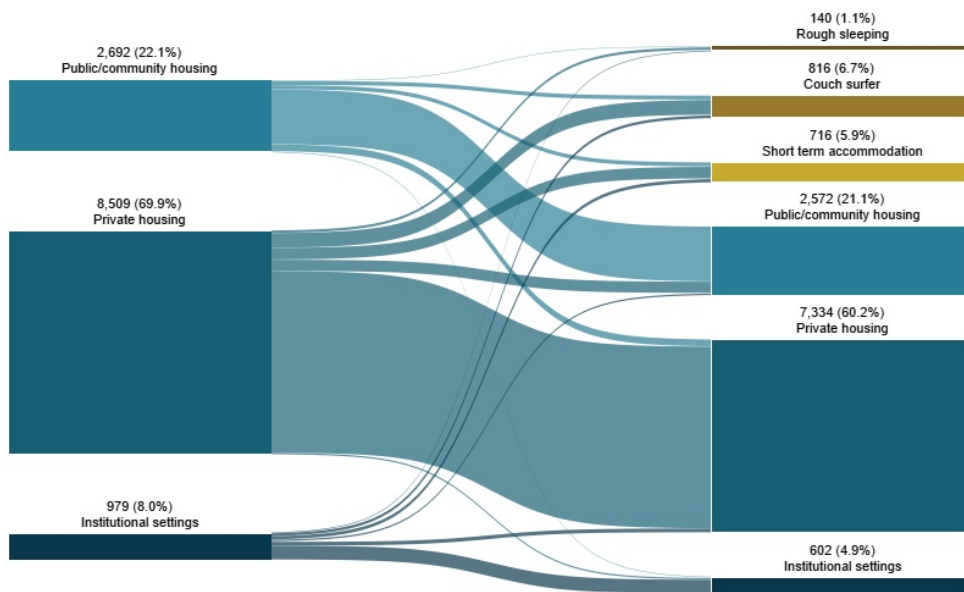
Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 12,200 clients), by the end of support (Figure YOUNG.2):

- Most clients (7,300 or 60%) were in private or other housing
- Around 2,600 clients (21%) were in public or community housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (around 1,700 clients or 14% of those who started support at risk).

Figure YOUNG.2: Housing situation for clients with closed support who began support at risk of homelessness, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

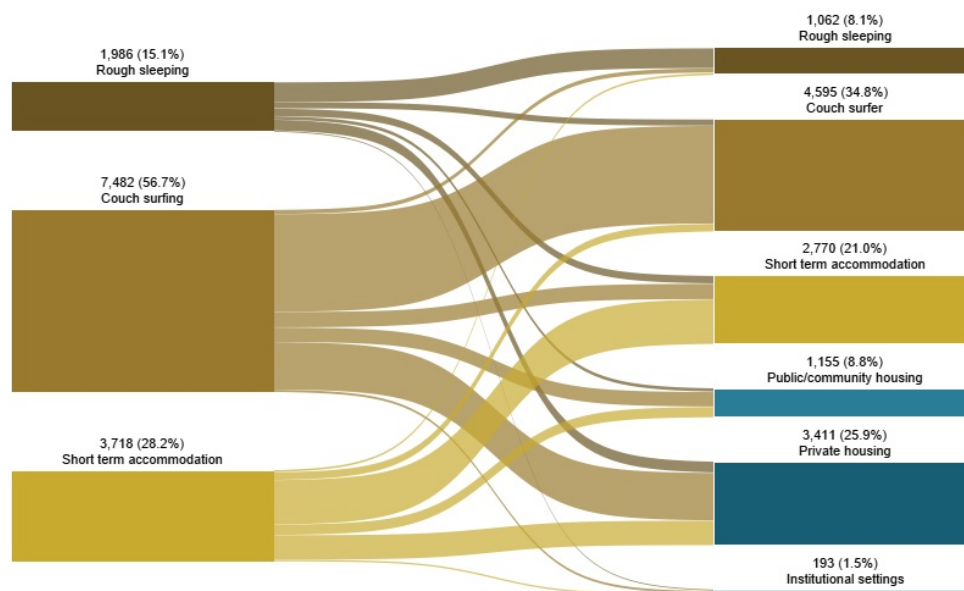
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (almost 13,200 clients), agencies were able to assist (Figure YOUNG.3):

- 3,400 clients (26%) into private or other housing
- 2,800 (21%) into short term accommodation.

More than 1 in 3 (35% or almost 4,600 clients) were couch surfing at the end of support.

Figure YOUNG.3: Housing situation for clients with closed support who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

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Client groups of interest

Care and protection orders (CPOs) are legal orders or arrangements that place some responsibility for a child's welfare with child protection authorities. In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for child protection and these departments assist vulnerable children and young people to protect them from abuse, neglect or other harm or where their parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection (AIHW 2019a).

While not specifically about those on care and protection orders, children and young people, as well as those exiting institutions and care into homelessness are national priority cohorts for homelessness identified in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement which came into effect on 1 July 2018 (CFFR 2018) (see [Policy section](#) for more information).

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, the rate of children on care and protection orders increased from 8.7 per 1,000 children to 10.1 per 1,000 children (AIHW 2019a). Of the 56,400 children on care and protection orders at 30 June 2018, most were living in out-of-home care, either with relative/kinship carers (38%) or in foster care (31%). While many children are moved into out-of-home care, others remain living at home with family support provided by community-based agencies.

Pathways into homelessness for children on care and protection orders is complex. For example, children and young people who are exposed to persistent violence, abuse and neglect in their family homes but are not removed by child protection authorities may become homeless, as they are no longer prepared to live in these households (Noble-Carr & Trew 2018). Children with unsatisfactory foster care arrangements can either voluntarily move out of their foster home into homelessness or can be placed in residential care settings by child protection authorities.

Family and domestic violence is one of the main reasons that families at risk of homelessness seek assistance from SHS agencies. It is also one of the leading reasons for statutory intervention, indicating that child protection and SHS agencies often work with the same families and children (MICAH Projects 2016). Linked data has been used to describe the characteristics of children and young people who received both child protection (an investigated notification, care and protection order or out-of-home care) and specialist homelessness services (AIHW 2016). Compared with an equivalent cohort who only accessed specialist homelessness services, children who accessed both child protection and specialist homelessness services were more likely to have experienced family and domestic violence (54%, compared with 44%). For more information about children on care and protection orders, see [Child protection Australia 2017-18](#).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, almost 9,200 children and young people on a CPO received assistance from a specialist homelessness services (SHS) agency, and just over half (51%) were female.
- Around 6 in 10 (59%) of these clients on a CPO were aged 0-9 and males were more likely to be in this age group (62% of male clients, compared with 55% of females).
- Almost half (47%) had experienced family and domestic violence and 39% had reported a current mental health issue.
- More than half (54%) of clients on a CPO had received assistance from a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- The most common care type arrangements for clients on a CPO were 'parents' (63%) and 'relative(s)/kin who are reimbursed' (13%).
- The proportion of children on a CPO who were homeless decreased from 49% to 34% following SHS support, with clients living in public or community housing increasing from 16% at the beginning of support to 27% at the end of support.
- Less than 1 in 5 (16%) of those with a case management plan achieved all the set goals, lower than young people (aged 15-24) who presented to SHS agencies alone (20%) and the overall SHS population (25%).

Reporting children on care and protection orders in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

A client is reported as being under a care and protection order (CPO) if they are aged under 18 and have provided any of the following information in any support period during the reporting period.

They reported that they were under a CPO and had the following care arrangements:

- residential care
- family group home
- relatives/kin/friends who are reimbursed
- foster care
- other home-based care (reimbursed)
- relatives/kin/friends who are not reimbursed
- independent living
- other living arrangements
- parents, or

They have reported ‘transition from foster care/child safety residential placements’ as a reason for seeking assistance or the main reason for seeking assistance. For more information, see [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table CPO.1):

- SHS agencies assisted almost 9,200 children on a CPO, representing an increase of 500 clients from 2017-18.
- Children on a CPO made up 3% of the overall SHS population and 11% of all SHS clients aged 0-18.
- The rate of children on a CPO receiving assistance from SHS agencies was 3.7 per 10,000 population, increasing from 3.5 in 2017-18.

Table CPO.1: Children on care and protection orders: at a glance—2015-16 to 2018-19

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	9,305	9,100	8,669	9,172
Proportion of all clients	3	3	3	3
Rate (per 10,000 population)	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.7
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)				
Homeless	50	51	51	50
At risk of homelessness	50	49	49	50
Length of support (median number of days)	86	98	97	95
Average number of support periods per client	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
Proportion receiving accommodation	55	53	51	49
Median number of nights accommodated	68	69	66	62
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	86	84	85	85
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	18	15	17	16

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients on a care and protection order. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Due to changes in the reporting of children on a care and protection order in 2015-16, as detailed in the online technical information, data are not comparable with previous years.
5. Data for 2015-16 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2015-16 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
6. In 2017-18, age and age-related variables were derived using a more robust calculation method. Data for previous years have been updated with the improved calculation method for age. As such, data prior to 2017-18 contained in the SHS Annual Report may not match that contained in the SHS Annual Report Historical Tables.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of clients on a CPO (Supplementary table CPO.1):

- Half were female (51% or over 4,700 clients).
- The majority were aged 0-9 (59% or more than 5,400 clients), followed by those aged 15-17 (21% or almost 2,000 clients).
- Male clients on a CPO were more likely to be in the 0-9 age group (62%, compared with 55% females) while female clients were more likely to be in the 15-17 age group (25%, compared with 18% males).

Indigenous status

One in 3 children on a CPO identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (36% or almost 3,200 clients), higher than the overall SHS population (25%).

State and territory and remoteness

- The largest number of clients on a CPO accessed services in Victoria (41% or almost 3,800 clients), followed by New South Wales (30% or nearly 2,800 clients).
- The highest rate of clients on a CPO was in the Northern Territory (17 clients per 10,000 population), followed by Victoria (6 clients per 10,000).
- The majority of children on a CPO accessed services in *Major cities* (61% or over 5,600 clients), followed by *Inner regional* areas (21% or around 1,900 clients).

Living arrangements

- The most commonly reported living arrangement among children on a CPO was a single parent with one or more children (55% or nearly 4,900 clients), followed by other family (17% or almost 1,500 clients).
- A higher proportion of male clients on a CPO reported their living arrangement as single parent with one or more children (57%, compared with 52% females).

Care arrangement type

- The most common care arrangement among clients on a CPO was parents (63% or 5,800 clients), followed by relative(s)/kin who are reimbursed (13% or almost 1,200 clients).
- Most clients aged 0-9 had parents as their care arrangement (74% or almost 4,000 clients), followed by relative(s)/kin who are reimbursed (13% or 700 clients).
- Among clients aged 15-17, similar proportions had parents (29% or almost 600 clients), independent living (24% or almost 500 clients) and other living arrangements (23% or nearly 500 clients) as care arrangements.
- Clients who received SHS assistance in *Remote/Very remote* areas were more likely to have family group home as their care arrangement (16%, compared with *Major cities* 3%, *Inner regional* 3% and *Outer regional* 9% areas).

Selected vulnerabilities

Children on a CPO may face additional vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to becoming homeless, in particular family and domestic violence, a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

In 2018-19, of the 3,800 clients on a CPO who were aged 10 and over, 2 in 3 (66%) reported experiencing one or more of these vulnerabilities (Table CPO.2):

- Almost half (47% or 1,800 clients) had experienced family and domestic violence.
- One-quarter (24% or 900 clients) reported only experiencing family and domestic violence while an additional 16% (600 clients) reported both a current mental health issue and family and domestic violence.
- Nearly 2 in 5 (39% or almost 1,500 clients) reported a current mental health issue.
- Around 1 in 10 (12% or almost 500 clients) reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- 6% (more than 200 clients) reported experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.

Table CPO.2: Children with a care and protection order, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	240	6.3
Yes	Yes	No	594	15.6
Yes	No	Yes	66	1.7
No	Yes	Yes	110	2.9
Yes	No	No	901	23.7
No	Yes	No	537	14.1
No	No	Yes	58	1.5
No	No	No	1,296	34.1
			42,960	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

- Children on a CPO who received assistance from SHS agencies in 2018-19 had a median of 95 days of support and an average of 1.8 support periods per client.
- 1 in 2 (49%) clients on a CPO were provided with accommodation with a median of 62 nights of accommodation.

New or returning clients

More than half of the children on a CPO (54% or over 4,900 clients) were returning clients, having received assistance from a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12. Returning clients were more likely than new clients to be aged 10-17 (44%, compared with 39%), while new clients were more likely to be aged 0-9 years (61% compared with 56% of returning clients).

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the main reasons for seeking assistance among children on a CPO were:

- family and domestic violence (36% or almost 3,300 clients)
- housing crisis (21% or more than 1,900 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (8% or over 700 clients).

Clients on a CPO who were known to be homeless at first presentation were more likely to identify housing crisis as their main reason for seeking assistance (28%, compared with 17% at risk). For those known to be at risk of homelessness, family and domestic violence was the most commonly reported main reason for seeking assistance among children on a CPO (42%, compared with 27% homeless).

Services needed and provided

Similar to the overall SHS population, most children on a CPO needed general services that were provided by SHS agencies including advice/information, advocacy/liaison on behalf of client and other basic assistance.

Apart from these, the most common services needed by children on a CPO were:

- short-term or emergency accommodation (46% or over 4,200 clients), with 76% of those needing this service also receiving this service
- assistance for family/domestic violence (41% or more than 3,700 clients), with 92% receiving this service
- medium-term/transitional housing (36% or almost 3,300 clients), with 50% receiving this service
- long-term housing (36% or nearly 3,300 clients), with 3% receiving this service.

Children on a CPO were also more likely than the overall SHS population to need services including:

- family/relationship assistance (34%, compared with 18%), with 85% receiving this service
- living skills/personal development (30%, compared with 19%), with 91% receiving this service
- child protection services (25%, compared with 5%), with 71% receiving this service
- assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems (24%, compared with 1%), with 86% receiving this service
- assistance for trauma (23%, compared with 4%), with 82% receiving this service

The majority (85%) of children on a CPO had a case management plan. However, only 16% of those with a case management plan achieved all the set goals. The proportion of children on a CPO who achieved all case management goals was lower than that in the overall SHS population (25%).

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

At the end of the reporting period in 2018-19:

- The proportion of children on a CPO who were known to be homeless decreased from 49% at the beginning of support to 35% at the end of support; 800 fewer clients were homeless following support (Table CPO.3).
- The shift in the proportion of couch surfers accounted for much of the decrease in the proportion of clients who were homeless; the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure dropped from 18% to 11% following support, while the proportion staying in short-term temporary accommodation decreased from 27% to 21%.
- The largest change at the end of support was in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing, which increased from 16% to 27% at the end of support (or over 500 clients).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of support, many clients have achieved or progressed towards a more positive housing solution. That is, clients ending support in public or community housing (renter or rent-free), private or other housing (renter or rent-free) or institutional settings had increased compared with the start of support.

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	258	112	5.0	2.2
Short term temporary accommodation	1,384	1,072	26.7	21.0
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	912	569	17.6	11.2
Total homeless	2,554	1,753	49.2	34.4
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	849	1,378	16.4	27.0
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	1,702	1,905	32.8	37.3
Institutional settings	81	65	1.6	1.3
Total at risk	2,632	3,348	50.8	65.6
Total clients with known housing situation	5,186	5,101	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	943	1,028		
Total clients	6,129	6,129		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table CPO.4.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (more than 2,400 clients), by the end of support ([Interactive Tableau visualisation](#)):

- Almost half (around 1,200 clients or 49%) were in private housing
- Around 800 clients (33%) were in public housing.

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 2,300 clients):

- 700 clients (31%) ended support in short term accommodation
- 600 (26%) ended support in private housing.

More than 400 clients (19%) were couch surfing at the end of support.

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Client groups of interest

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to experience insecure housing, live in overcrowded dwellings and experience homelessness, including intergenerational homelessness. They continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of specialist homelessness services (see [Clients, services and outcomes](#) and ABS 2012). Indigenous Australians are a national priority homelessness cohort in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, which came into effect 1 July 2018 (CFFR 2018) (see [Policy section](#) for more information).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.2% of the Australian population (ABS 2019), yet they made up 26% of the clients (an estimated 68,900 clients) assisted by specialist homelessness services (SHS) in 2018-19. It is important to note that Indigenous status was not reported for 9% of SHS clients in 2018-19 (similar to 2017-18; 10%).

Key findings

- Indigenous SHS client numbers increased by an average of 7% each year since 2011-12 to around 68,900 in 2018-19, increasing more than the rate of the general SHS population (3% increase on average per year).
- The length of support for Indigenous clients continues to increase, with the median number of days up from 46 in 2016-17 to 49 days in 2018-19; longer than that for non-Indigenous clients (47 days in 2018-19).
- The proportion of Indigenous clients receiving accommodation services remained steady at 41% in 2018-19; and the median length of accommodation decreased (18 nights in 2018-19, down from 20 nights in 2017-18); shorter than non-Indigenous clients (38 nights).
- Around 3,300 more Indigenous clients ended support in public or community housing and 1,200 fewer Indigenous clients were in short-term or emergency accommodation following assistance from SHS agencies in 2018-19.

Client characteristics

Over 241,700 Indigenous clients have been supported by homelessness agencies since the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) began in 2011-12. The number of Indigenous clients has been steadily increasing over this time. The key trends identified from 2016-17 to 2018-19 have been:

- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients has increased from 806.4 clients per 10,000 Indigenous people in 2016-17 to 832.0 in 2018-19 (Table INDIGENOUS.1).
- The gap between the rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous SHS clients has increased. In 2018-19, Indigenous people were 9.8 times as likely to use specialist homelessness services as non-Indigenous people, up from 9.2 times in 2016-17.
- After taking into account differences in population size, in 2018-19 Indigenous clients accessed services at the highest rate in *Inner/outer regional* areas, consistent with 2017-18.
- The rate of service use among Indigenous clients living in *Remote/very remote* areas has increased; from 721 Indigenous clients per 10,000 population in 2016-17 to 795 in 2018-19. The rate of use for non-Indigenous clients in the same area has decreased, from 41 clients per 10,000 in 2016-17 to 37 in 2018-19.
- The length of support for Indigenous clients continues to increase, with the median number of days up from 46 in 2016-17 to 49 days in 2018-19, and is longer than that for non-Indigenous clients (47 days in 2018-19).

Table INDIGENOUS.1: Indigenous clients: at a glance—2016-17 to 2018-19

	2016-17 Indigenous	2016-17 Non-Indigenous	2017-18 Indigenous	2017-18 Non-Indigenous	2018-19 Indigenous	2018-19 Non-Indigenous
Number of clients	64,644	196,689	65,184	194,072	68,853	195,993
Proportion of all clients where Indigenous status reported	25	75	25	75	26	74
Rate (per 10,000 population)	806.4	88.1	802.7	85.7	832.0	84.6
Rate ratio	9.2		9.4		9.8	

Rate difference (per 10,000 population)	718.3		717.0		747.4	
Remoteness rate (per 10,000 population)						
<i>Major cities</i>	832.4	80.7	814.7	78.1	830.1	76.9
<i>Inner/outer regional</i>	852.3	115.3	845.3	115.3	862.2	118.7
<i>Remote/very remote</i>	720.9	40.7	711.9	38.2	794.6	37.4
						Rate ratio
<i>Major cities</i>	10.3		10.4		10.8	
<i>Inner/outer regional</i>	7.4		7.3		7.3	
<i>Remote/very remote</i>	17.7		18.7		21.2	
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)						
Homeless	47	43	47	43	46	42
At risk of homelessness	53	57	53	57	54	58
Length of support (median number of days)	46	39	48	44	49	47
Average number of support periods per client	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8
Proportion receiving accommodation	42	29	41	28	41	28
Median number of nights accommodated	20	41	20	41	18	38
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	71	61	73	63	72	64
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	20	22	23	22	24	22

Notes

1. Rates were directly age-standardised as detailed in the Technical information section. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. Rate ratio is the Indigenous rate divided by the Non-Indigenous rate and is used to compare the 2 service use rates. Rate difference reveals the gap between the 2 rates.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Previous years' data can be found in the 2017-18 Specialist Homelessness Services Annual report.
5. Data for 2016-17 has been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2016-17 is comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.1):

- More than half (53% or 36,400) of Indigenous SHS clients were under the age of 25, compared with 41% (79,600) of non-Indigenous clients.
- The largest age group for Indigenous males was 0-9 years (28% or 7,600), for Indigenous females it was 25-34 (21% or 8,900).
- The proportion of clients over the age of 55 was lower in Indigenous clients (5% or 3,300) compared with non-Indigenous clients (9% or 18,500).

States and territory and remoteness

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.2 and 5):

- Victoria had the highest rate of Indigenous clients (1,717.0 per 10,000 population) and Tasmania the lowest (336.4 per 10,000 population). However, Victoria also had the highest rate of non-Indigenous clients (147.9 per 10,000 population), followed by Tasmania (124.3 per 10,000 population).
- The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous clients (85%) and Victoria the lowest (10%).
- The proportion of Indigenous clients seeking services in *Major cities* (36% or 24,800) was lower than non-Indigenous clients (67% or 131,900).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous clients sought services in *Remote* (12% or 8,300) and *Very remote* areas (7% or 4,500), compared with non-Indigenous clients (1% and <1%, respectively).

Selected vulnerabilities

Over half (55% or 29,800) of Indigenous SHS clients aged 10 years and over reported 1 or more vulnerabilities (i.e. family and domestic violence, mental health issues, or problematic drug and/or alcohol use).

In 2018-19 (Table INDIGENOUS.2):

- 1 in 20 (5% or 2,500 clients) Indigenous SHS clients were experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.
- Almost 1 in 5 (16% or around 8,600) Indigenous clients were experiencing 2 vulnerabilities.
- More than 1 in 3 (35% or around 18,600) Indigenous clients were experiencing 1 vulnerability.
- Less than half (45% or around 24,100) Indigenous clients did not experience any of the selected vulnerabilities.

Table INDIGENOUS.2: Indigenous clients, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	2,490	4.6
Yes	Yes	No	4,874	9.1
Yes	No	Yes	1,338	2.5
No	Yes	Yes	2,431	4.5
Yes	No	No	10,59	19.7
No	Yes	No	6,287	11.7
No	No	Yes	1,738	3.2
No	No	No	24,072	44.7
			53,829	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

Since 2016-17, the number of Indigenous clients seeking assistance from SHS agencies has increased. Key trends identified in this client population are (Table INDIGENOUS.1):

- The median number of days Indigenous clients receive support has increased from 46 days in 2016-17 to 49 days in 2018-19.
- The median number of nights accommodated has decreased, down from 20 nights in 2016-17 to 18 nights in 2018-19.

New or returning clients

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.6):

- There were more returning Indigenous clients (that is, those who had received SHS services at some point since the collection began in 2011-12) than there were new Indigenous clients (63% compared with 37%).

Main reasons for seeking assistance

The three main reasons why Indigenous clients sought assistance from SHS agencies in 2018-19 were (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.7):

- family and domestic violence (24% or 16,500 clients)
- housing crisis (19% or 12,800 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (13% or almost 8,700 clients)

Services needed and provided

The need for accommodation assistance was broadly similar between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, with the exception of short-term or emergency accommodation.

- Half of Indigenous clients (50% or 34,400) needed short-term or emergency accommodation, higher than the proportion of non-Indigenous clients (37% or 72,600). Two-thirds of those Indigenous clients with the need for short-term or emergency accommodation received this support (67%); a higher proportion than non-Indigenous clients (56%).

Other services commonly needed by Indigenous clients during 2018-19 were:

- advice/information (78%) with 98% provided this assistance
- advocacy/liaison (58%) with 97% provided this assistance
- material aid/brokerage (39%) with 88% provided this assistance

Assistance for family and domestic violence was another frequently requested service (27%), with 90% of clients with this need having such assistance provided.

For some general services, needs were higher for Indigenous clients when compared with non-Indigenous clients, including meals (30% compared with 14%), laundry/shower facilities (25% compared with 10%) and transport (31% compared with 18%).

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the changes in a client's housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

At the end of the reporting period in 2018-19:

- The number of Indigenous clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support reduced when support ended: 1 in 3 clients (35% or almost 15,800) were known to be homeless when support ended, down from 46% (or more than 21,500) at the start of support (Table INDIGENOUS.3).
- The reduction in the proportion of clients who were known to be homeless following support was due to decreases in the proportion of clients rough sleeping or with no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 9% to 6%) and in the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure (from 20% to 14%).
- Clients living in public or community housing increased following support; there was an increase in clients living in some form of tenure over the course of support, including an increase in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing from 30% to 38% (or an increase of almost 3,300 clients).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of support, many clients have achieved or progressed towards a more positive housing solution. That is, the proportion of clients ending support known to be housed but at risk of homelessness had increased compared with the start of support, and the proportion who were homeless had decreased.

Table INDIGENOUS.3: Clients with closed support, by Indigenous status, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	4,337	2,527	9.3	5.6
Short term temporary accommodation	7,993	6,786	17.1	15.0
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	9,194	6,479	19.7	14.3
Total homeless	21,524	15,792	46.1	34.9

Public or community housing - renter or rent free	14,002	17,282	30.0	38.2
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	9,723	11,150	20.8	24.6
Institutional settings	1,437	1,068	3.1	2.4
Total at risk	25,162	29,500	53.9	65.1
Total clients with known housing situation	46,686	45,292	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	5,376	6,770		
Total clients	52,062	52,062		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.4.

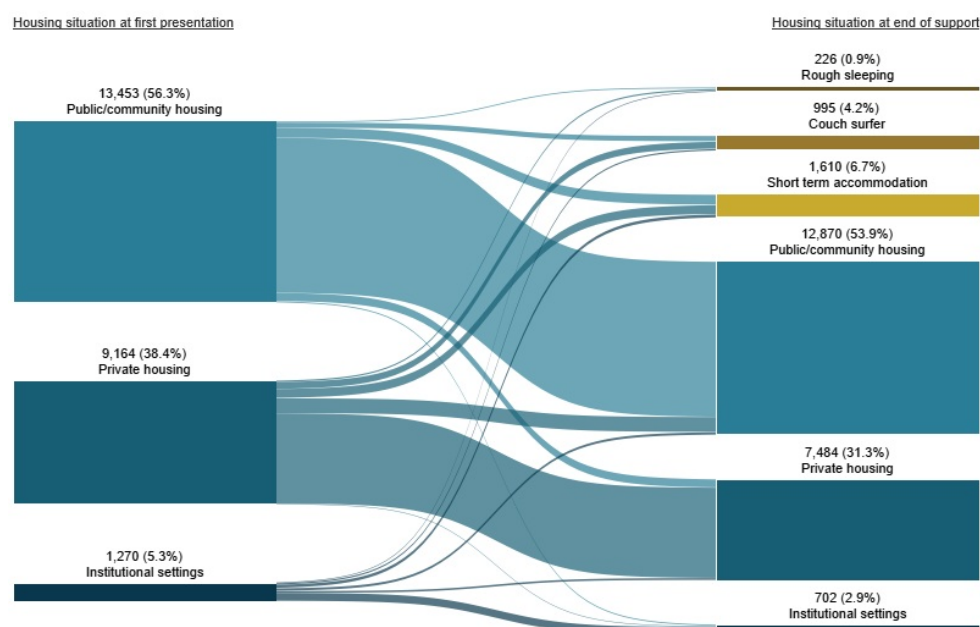
Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 23,900 clients), by the end of support (Figure INDIGENOUS.1):

- More than half (54% or almost 12,900 clients) were in public or community housing
- Almost one-third (31% or 7,500 clients) were in private housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (2,800 clients or 12% of those who started support at risk of homelessness).

Figure INDIGENOUS.1: Housing situation for clients with closed support who began support at risk of homelessness, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

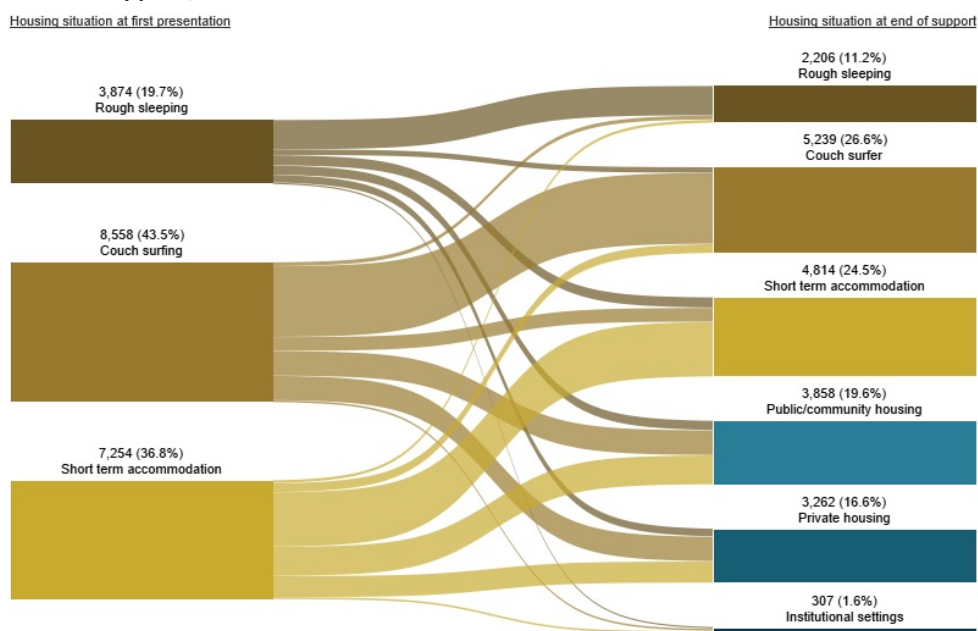
For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (almost 19,700 clients), agencies were able to assist (Figure INDIGENOUS.2):

- 4,800 clients (25%) into short term accommodation

- 3,900 (20%) into private or community housing.

A further 5,200 clients (27%) were couch surfing at the end of support.

Figure INDIGENOUS.2: Housing situation for clients with closed support who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support, 2018-19



Notes

1. Excludes clients with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning that their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2012. Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011. ABS Cat. no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2019. Australian demographic statistics, Mar 2019. ABS Cat. no. 3101.0. Canberra: ABS.

CFRR (Council on Federal Financial Relations) 2018. National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Viewed 23 January 2019.

Client groups of interest

Upon release from prison, discharges can face stigma associated with a history of imprisonment and face discrimination from landlords and potential employers (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). People applying for parole may experience difficulties securing accommodation, leading to refusal of parole or breach of parole conditions and subsequent return to prison. Parole officers must approve accommodation conditions for the duration of parole and if the assigned accommodation (including temporary or supported accommodation) becomes unavailable, it puts these people in breach of their parole conditions (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013).

People exiting custody can be supported to find stable housing by provision of adequate exit planning prior to release and integrated case management post-release (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). People discharged from prison need housing and employment for successful re-entry into the community and to reduce the likelihood of returning to prison. Discharges without housing often cycle from prison into homelessness and back into prison, with prison discharges who experience homelessness almost twice as likely to return to prison within 9 months of release (Baldry et al. 2006).

Young people leaving juvenile detention centres also face a high risk of becoming homeless, especially those who spend 12 months or more in juvenile detention (Bevitt et al. 2015). Homelessness or housing instability are often cited as drivers of increasing juvenile detention populations, with young people remanded in custody 'for their own good' due to a lack of appropriate options for accommodation (Cunneen et al. 2016; Richards 2011). Among young people who were released from juvenile detention, 1 in 8 (12%) received homelessness support within 2 years of leaving, while 1 in 12 (8%) received homeless support within 12 months (AIHW 2012). People with a history of juvenile justice supervision are also more vulnerable to homelessness in later years. People who have previously been in juvenile detention were almost twice as likely to have slept rough or in squats (Bevitt et al. 2015).

At 30 June 2018, there were almost 43,000 adult prisoners in custody, representing a 4% increase since 30 June 2017 and a 40% increase over the past 5 years (ABS 2018). Finding suitable, stable accommodation is a major concern for people who are discharged from prison, particularly for those without family support. More than half (54%) of prison discharges expect to be homeless upon release; many (44%) plan to sleep in short-term or emergency accommodation upon release (AIHW 2019).

People exiting institutions and care into homelessness are a national priority homelessness cohort identified in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement which came into effect on 1 July 2018 (CFFR 2018) (see [Policy section](#) for more information).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, almost 9,600 SHS clients were identified as exiting from a custodial facility.
- More than 3 in 4 (77%) clients exiting custody were male.
- Almost half (48%) had reported a current mental health issue and 1 in 3 (35%) had reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- 7 in 10 (69%) clients exiting custody were returning SHS clients; most females were returning clients (76%).
- One-quarter (24%) of those with a case management plan achieved all the set goals, similar to the proportion in the overall SHS population (25%).
- Transition from custodial arrangements' was the most commonly reported main reason for seeking assistance (66%), followed by 'housing crisis' (8%).

Reporting clients exiting custodial arrangements in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

A client is identified as transitioning from a custodial setting if they are 10 years or older and provided any of the following information in their first support period (week before or at the beginning of support period):

Their dwelling type was:

- adult correctional facility
- youth or juvenile justice detention centre
- immigration detention centre, or

One of their reasons for seeking assistance was:

- transition from a custodial arrangement, or

Their formal referral source was:

- youth or juvenile justice correction centre
- adult correctional facility.

Note, in the SHS collection it is not possible to distinguish between clients who have sought assistance without leaving an institutional setting (that is, they may have engaged with in-reach programs pending release from an institution) and those who may have left an institutional setting but returned prior to the end of support.

For more information see [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table EXIT.1):

- SHS agencies assisted almost 9,600 clients who were exiting custodial arrangements, an increase of more than 1,200 clients from 2017-18.
- Clients exiting custodial arrangements accounted for 3% of all SHS clients.
- The rate of clients exiting custodial arrangements was 3.8 per 10,000 population, increasing from 3.4 in 2017-18.

Table EXIT.1: Clients exiting custodial arrangements: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	6,866	7,804	8,118	8,338	9,577
Proportion of all clients	3	3	3	3	3
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.8
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	31	31	32	34	30
At risk of homelessness	69	69	68	66	70
Length of support (median number of days)	45	44	45	49	44
Average number of support periods per client	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9
Proportion receiving accommodation	41	38	35	37	36
Median number of nights accommodated	27	26	28	22	18
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	50	52	53	53	47
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	16	17	18	22	24

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have exited custodial arrangements. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
5. In 2017-18, age and age-related variables were derived using a more robust calculation method. Data for previous years have been updated with the improved calculation method for age. As such, data prior to 2017-18 contained in the SHS Annual Report may not match that contained in the SHS Annual Report Historical Tables.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

- Most clients who were exiting custodial arrangements were male (77% or around 7,400 clients).
- The largest age groups among clients exiting custodial arrangements were those aged 35-44 (31% or nearly 3,000 clients) and those aged 25-34 (31% or over 2,900 clients).
- Male clients were more likely to be in the 35-44 age group (32% of males, compared with 29% of females) while female clients were more likely to be in the 25-34 age group (33% of females, compared with 30% of males).

Indigenous status

One in 4 clients whose Indigenous status was known exiting custodial arrangements identified as Indigenous (26% or almost 2,400 clients). Female clients who were exiting custodial arrangements were more likely than male clients to identify as Indigenous (34% of females, compared with 24% of males).

State and territory and remoteness

- More than half of clients exiting custodial arrangements accessed services in Victoria (51% or nearly 4,900 clients) and a further 1 in 4 accessed services in New South Wales (24% or around 2,300 clients).
- The highest rate of clients exiting custodial arrangements was in the Northern Territory (10 clients per 10,000 population), followed by Victoria (8 clients per 10,000).
- The majority of clients exiting custodial arrangements accessed services in *Major cities* (62% or nearly 6,000 clients), followed by *Inner regional areas* (24% or over 2,300 clients).

Living arrangements

- Among clients exiting custodial arrangements, the most commonly reported living arrangement at the beginning of support was lone persons (74% or almost 7,000 clients), followed by groups (15% or almost 1,400 clients).
- Male clients were more likely to be living alone (77% of males, compared with 64% of females) while females clients were more likely to be living as a single parent with one or more children (11%, compared with 2% males).

Selected vulnerabilities

SHS clients can face additional vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to experiencing homelessness, in particular family and domestic violence, mental health issues and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

In 2018-19, of the almost 9,600 clients exiting custody, 3 in 5 (62%) reported experiencing one or more of these vulnerabilities (Table EXIT.2):

- Almost half (48% or nearly 4,600 clients) reported a current mental health issue, as a single vulnerability or in combination with other vulnerabilities.
- Nearly 2 in 5 (38% or 3,600 clients) reported none of these 3 vulnerabilities.
- Over 1 in 3 (35% or over 3,300 clients) reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use, as a single vulnerability or in combination with other vulnerabilities.
- While 1 in 5 clients (21%) reported only having a current mental health issue, an additional 17% (or 1,700 clients) reported both a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- More than 1 in 7 (15% or around 1,400 clients) reported experiencing family and domestic violence as a single vulnerability or in combination with other vulnerabilities.
- 7% (or around 600 clients) reported experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.

Table EXIT.2: Clients exiting custodial arrangements, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	621	6.3
Yes	Yes	No	305	3.2
Yes	No	Yes	147	1.5
No	Yes	Yes	1,667	17.4
Yes	No	No	337	3.5
No	Yes	No	1,964	20.5
No	No	Yes	895	9.3
No	No	No	3,641	38.0
			9,577	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

- In 2018-19, clients exiting custody had an average of 1.9 support periods per client and a median of 44 days of support, decreasing from 49 days in 2017-18 but consistent with the median length of support from 2014-15 to 2016-17.
- Over 1 in 3 (36%) clients exiting custody were provided with accommodation with a median of 18 nights of accommodation; fewer nights of accommodation compared with the overall SHS population (29 nights).

New or returning clients

- 7 in 10 clients who were exiting custodial arrangements (69% or over 6,600 clients) were returning clients, having previously accessed specialist homelessness services at some point since the SHS collection began in 2011-12.
- While less than one-quarter (23%) of all clients exiting custody were female, they were more likely to be returning clients (76%, compared with 67% males).

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the main reasons for seeking assistance among clients exiting custodial arrangements were:

- transition from custodial arrangements (66% or more than 6,300 clients)
- housing crisis (8% or almost 800 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (5% or around 500 clients).

Clients exiting custodial arrangements who were at risk of homeless at first presentation were more likely to identify their main reason for seeking assistance as transition from custodial arrangements (76% of those at risk, compared with 44% experiencing homelessness).

Compared with those who were at risk, clients exiting custodial arrangements who were homeless were more likely to report housing crisis (16%, compared with 5% at risk) or inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (12%, compared with 2% at risk) as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Services needed and provided

Similar to the overall SHS population, clients exiting custodial arrangements needed general services that were provided by SHS agencies including advice/information, advocacy/liaison on behalf of client and other basic assistance.

Apart from general services, the most common services requested by clients exiting custody were:

- short-term or emergency accommodation (53% or nearly 5,100 clients), with 57% receiving this service
- long-term housing (49% or 4,700 clients), with 3% receiving this service
- assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction (43% or around 4,100 clients), with 88% receiving this service
- medium-term/transitional housing (39% or 3,700 clients), with 18% receiving this service.

Clients exiting custody were also more likely than the overall SHS population to request services including:

- assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems (18%, compared with 13%), with 85% receiving this service
- retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings (13%, compared with 10%), with 87% receiving this service
- drug/alcohol counselling (11%, compared with 4%), with 41% receiving this service
- employment assistance (10%, compared with 6%), with 62% receiving this service.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

In 2018-19, for clients exiting custodial arrangements (Table EXIT.3):

- The largest change was in the proportion of clients who were living in institutional settings, which dropped from 64% to 44% at the end of support (a decrease of 1,700 clients).
- Aside from institutional settings, more clients were known to be housed at the end of support; the proportion of clients living in private or other housing increased from 5% to 12% (over 400 clients increase), while the proportion living in public or community housing increased from 3% to 9% (400 clients).
- Most clients leaving institutional settings who ended support known to be homeless were staying in short-term temporary accommodation at the end of support; the proportion of clients in short-term temporary accommodation increased from 13% to 18% (around 300 clients).

These trends demonstrate that known housing outcomes at the end of support can be challenging for clients transitioning from institutional settings. While some clients progressed towards more positive housing solutions, many remained in institutional settings, returned to institutional settings or were in temporary accommodation at the end of support. Some clients might only require short-term accommodation immediately after leaving, others might need support to access or maintain housing in the long-term.

Table EXIT.3: Clients exiting custodial arrangements (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	538	408	7.4	6.2
Short term temporary accommodation	905	1,212	12.5	18.4
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	608	649	8.4	9.8
Total homeless	2,051	2,269	28.4	34.4
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	213	618	2.9	9.4
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	340	788	4.7	11.9
Institutional settings	4,620	2,924	64.0	44.3
Total at risk	5,173	4,330	71.6	65.6
Total clients with known housing situation	7,224	6,599	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	262	887		
Total clients	7,486	7,486		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table EXIT.4.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2012. Children and young people at risk of social exclusion: links between homelessness, child protection and juvenile justice. Cat. no. CSI 13. Canberra: AIHW.

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Client groups of interest

People leaving care arrangements, including people transitioning from health care settings (hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation and aged care facilities) and young people transitioning from out-of-home care (foster care and residential care facilities), can find themselves particularly vulnerable to homelessness. This can be due to inadequate transition planning, undertaking discharge assessments in time- or resource-pressured environments and limited options for exit into suitable and secure housing (Brackertz et al. 2018).

People exiting institutions and care into homelessness are a national priority homelessness cohort identified in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement which came into effect on 1 July 2018 (See [Policy section](#) for more information).

Nationally, over 3,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 17 exit out-of-home care each year (AIHW 2019), corresponding with the end of formal support in the child protection system. The transition from adolescence to young adulthood is a time of significant change as young people prepare themselves for independent living and starting a new life on their own. Young people leaving out-of-home care often face barriers to accessing the same housing, educational and employment opportunities that are readily available to their non-care peers who tend to stay in their parental home (3 in 5 young people aged 18-29 were living at home in 2017) (Wilkins et al. 2019). Findings from a survey on young people transitioning from out-of-home care showed that 35% were homeless in the first year of leaving care (McDowall 2009).

People transitioning from health care settings are also at risk of being discharged into homelessness. In a study of people who have experienced homelessness, 17% had been admitted to hospital for a mental health diagnosis in the previous 2 years (Wood et al. 2016). Discharge from psychiatric hospital in particular has been identified as a key pathway into homelessness among people with mental health issues (Nielsen et al. 2018).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, over 6,800 clients leaving care received assistance from a specialist homelessness services (SHS) agency.
- More than half (54%) of clients leaving care were male.
- The largest age groups were clients aged 35-44 (19%) and 25-34 (19%). In addition, more than 1 in 5 clients leaving care were under 18 (21%).
- 2 in 3 (67%) had reported mental health issues and 44% had reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- Almost 2 in 3 (64%) clients leaving care had received assistance from a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- One in 5 (20%) of those with a case management plan achieved all the set goals, lower than that in the overall SHS population (25%).
- The proportion of clients living in institutional settings decreased from 62% to 26% at the end of SHS support.
- There was an increase in the proportion of clients who were homeless at the end of support (from 24% to 35%).

Reporting clients leaving care in the SHS collection

A client is reported as leaving care if in their first support period during 2018-19 (either the week before or at the beginning of the support period):

Their dwelling type was:

- hospital (excluding psychiatric)
- psychiatric hospital or unit
- disability support
- rehabilitation
- aged care facility, or

Their reason for seeking assistance was:

- transition from foster care/child safety residential placements
- transition from other care arrangements

Note that these categories are part of the broad housing situation 'Institutional settings', which also comprises categories relating to Custodial arrangements - see the associated section for information specifically relating to [Clients exiting custodial arrangements](#).

For more information see [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table LCARE.1):

- SHS agencies assisted over 6,800 clients leaving care.
- Clients transitioning from care accounted for 2% of all SHS clients.
- The rate of clients leaving care was 2.7 per 10,000 population, decreasing from 2.8 in 2017-18.

Table LCARE.1: Clients leaving care: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	6,084	6,869	7,104	6,917	6,834
Proportion of all clients	2	2	2	2	2
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.7
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	32	30	26	26	26
At risk of homelessness	68	70	74	74	74
Length of support (median number of days)	58	60	62	63	67
Average number of support periods per client	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0
Proportion receiving accommodation	52	48	46	45	45
Median number of nights accommodated	44	42	49	48	48
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	71	70	69	71	72
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	19	17	18	21	20

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have left care. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of clients leaving care (Supplementary table LCARE.1):

- The majority were male (54% or around 3,700 clients).
- The largest age groups were those aged 35-44 (19% or over 1,300 clients) and those aged 25-34 (19% or almost 1,300 clients).

- More than 1 in 5 clients were under 18 (21% or more than 1,400 clients); 11% (or almost 800 clients) were aged 15-17 and 10% were under 15 (or almost 700 clients).

Indigenous status

One in 4 clients leaving care identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (25% or almost 1,600 clients; Supplementary table LCARE.8).

State and territory and remoteness

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table LCARE.2):

- The largest number of clients leaving care accessed services in Victoria (34% or over 2,300 clients), followed by New South Wales (28% or around 1,900 clients).
- The highest rate of clients leaving care was in the Northern Territory (11 clients per 10,000 population), followed by Tasmania (5 per 10,000).
- The majority of clients leaving care accessed services in *Major cities* (65% or over 4,400 clients), followed by *Inner regional* areas (22% or around 1,500 clients).

Living arrangements

In 2018-19, among clients leaving care (Supplementary table LCARE.9):

- The most commonly reported living arrangement was lone persons (60% or 4,000 clients), followed by groups (18% or almost 1,200 clients).
- Male clients were more likely to be living alone (65%, compared with 53% females) or with a group (20%, compared with 16% females) while female clients were more likely to be living as a single parent with one or more children (16%, compared with 7% males).

Dwelling type at beginning of support

In 2018-19, among clients leaving care (Supplementary table LCARE.11):

- The most commonly reported dwelling type at the beginning of support was independent housing (house/townhouse/flat) (28% or almost 1,900 clients).
- 1 in 5 clients reported their dwelling type as 'rehabilitation' (18% or over 1,200 clients).
- An additional 1 in 5 clients were transitioning from care in a psychiatric hospital or unit (18% or around 1,200 clients).

Selected vulnerabilities

SHS clients can face additional vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to becoming homeless, in particular family and domestic violence, a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

In 2018-19, of the 6,400 clients leaving care who were aged 10 and over, 4 in 5 (83%) reported experiencing one or more of these vulnerabilities (Table LCARE.2):

- 2 in 3 clients leaving care (67% or 4,300 clients) reported a current mental health issue.
- 44% (or over 2,800 clients) reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- Almost 1 in 4 clients leaving care (23% or almost 1,500 clients) reported both mental health issues and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- One-quarter (25% or around 1,600 clients) reported experiencing family and domestic violence.
- 10% (or more than 600 clients) reported experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.

Table LCARE.2: Clients leaving care, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	630	9.8
Yes	Yes	No	547	8.5
Yes	No	Yes	132	2.1
No	Yes	Yes	1,488	23.2
Yes	No	No	302	4.7
No	Yes	No	1,652	25.8
No	No	Yes	577	9.0
No	No	No	1,078	16.8
			6,406	100.0

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

- In 2018-19, clients leaving care had an average of 2.0 support periods per client and a median of 67 days of support, increasing from 63 days in 2017-18.
- Almost half (45%) of all clients leaving care were provided with accommodation, with a median of 48 nights of accommodation.

New or returning clients

- Many clients leaving care (64% or more than 4,300 clients) were returning clients, having previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12 (Supplementary table LCARE.7).
- 2 in 3 clients leaving care (69% or more than 800 clients) who were aged 18-24 were returning clients. This age group includes young people who may have aged out of foster care or other out-of-home care arrangements.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the main reasons for seeking assistance among clients leaving care were (Supplementary table LCARE.5):

- housing crisis (18% or over 1,200 clients)
- transition from other care arrangements (12% or more than 800 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (9% or almost 600 clients)
- mental health issues (8% or nearly 600 clients)
- transition from foster care and child safety residential placements (8% or more than 500 clients).

Housing crisis was the most commonly reported main reason for seeking assistance for clients leaving care who were homeless (19% or over 300 clients) and those who were at risk of homelessness (18% or nearly 900 clients).

Clients leaving care who were homeless at first presentation were more likely to report transition from other care arrangements (16%, compared with 10% at risk) or transition from foster care and child safety residential placements (13%, compared with 6% at risk) as their main reason for seeking assistance (Supplementary table LCARE.6).

Compared with those who were homeless, clients leaving care who were at risk of homelessness were more likely to report mental health issues (10%, compared with 5% homeless) or family and domestic violence (8%, compared with 6%) as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Services needed and provided

Similar to the overall SHS population, clients leaving care needed general services that were provided by SHS agencies including advice/information, advocacy/liaison on behalf of client and other basic assistance.

Apart from general services, the most common services needed by clients transitioning from care were:

- short-term or emergency accommodation (51% or around 3,500 clients), with 62% receiving this service
- long-term housing (47% or over 3,200 clients), with 6% receiving this service
- medium-term/transitional housing (44% or over 3,000 clients), with 33% receiving this service.

Clients leaving care were more likely than the overall SHS population to need services including:

- living skills/personal development (36%, compared with 19%), with 91% receiving this service
- transport (35%, compared with 20%), with 94% receiving this service
- assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems (27%, compared with 13%), with 87% receiving this service
- health/medical services (20%, compared with 9%), with 62% receiving this service
- mental health services (19%, compared with 8%), with 54% receiving this service.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

In 2018-19, for clients leaving care (Table LCARE.3).

- The proportion of clients leaving care who were known to be homeless increased from 24% at the beginning of support to 35% at the end of support; 300 more clients were known to be homeless when support ended.

- The largest change was in the proportion of clients who were living in institutional settings, which dropped from 62% to 26% at the end of support (a decrease of 1,800 clients).
- Aside from institutional settings, more clients were known to be housed at the end of support; the proportion of clients living in private or other housing increased from 9% to 23% (over 500 clients), while the proportion living in public or community housing increased from 5% to 17% (nearly 500 clients). However, these increases did not account for all those leaving institutional settings, with over 600 clients in short term temporary accommodation or in a housing situation without tenure.

These trends demonstrate that housing outcomes following support can be challenging for clients transitioning from institutional settings. While some of these clients progressed towards more positive housing solutions, many remain in institutional settings or return to institutional settings by the end of support. Some clients might only require short-term accommodation immediately after leaving, others might need support to access or maintain housing in the long-term.

Table LCARE.3: Clients leaving care (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	266	223	5.7	5.3
Short term temporary accommodation	556	860	12.0	20.5
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	310	370	6.7	8.8
Total homeless	1,132	1,453	24.4	34.7
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	213	700	4.6	16.7
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	431	963	9.3	23.0
Institutional settings	2,864	1,071	61.7	25.6
Total at risk	3,508	2,734	75.6	65.3
Total clients with known housing situation	4,640	4,187	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	244	697		
Total clients	4,884	4,884		

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19. Supplementary table LCARE.4.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 3,100 clients), by the end of support ([Interactive Tableau visualisation](#)):

- Almost one-third (around 1,000 clients or 32%) remained in an Institutional setting
- Around 700 clients (24%) were in private housing
- Less than 1 in 5 (511 clients or 17%) were in public or community housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (around 800 clients or 27% of those who started support at risk).

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 1,000 clients), agencies were able to assist:

- 300 clients (32%) into short term accommodation
- 200 (21%) into private housing.

A further 200 clients (17%) were in public or community housing at the end of support.

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Client groups of interest

Home ownership rates for older Australians have decreased from 84% in 1995-96 to 81% in 2017-18 (ABS 2019). This largely reflects a drop in rates of home ownership of older people without a mortgage, decreasing from 77% in 1995-96 to 58% in 2017-18. An increase in home ownership with a mortgage offset much of this change, more than tripling from 7% in 1995-96 to 23% in 2017-18 (ABS 2019).

Older Australians are a national priority homelessness cohort in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (CFFR 2018) (see [Policy section](#) for more information) recognising the severe impact homelessness may have on older Australians. The number and proportion of Australians who are aged 55 and over have been increasing over recent decades, and are expected to continue to grow (AIHW 2018). During 2018-19, people aged 55 and over comprised 8% (24,200 clients) of all Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients. Specialist homelessness service use by this group is increasing with the number of clients up 36% since 2014-15.

The experiences of [older people](#) accessing SHS for assistance have been further investigated in a recent AIHW report. For the purposes of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), older people are defined as clients aged 55 years and over. For further information, see [Technical notes](#).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, there were about 24,200 people aged 55 years or older receiving homelessness services.
- The majority of older clients presented to SHS as lone persons (61%), and the proportion was higher for males (69%) than for females (53%).
- 2 in 3 older clients presented housed but at risk of homelessness (67%).
- More than half (53%) of older clients were returning clients, that is they had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- Housing outcomes improved; fewer older clients were known to be homeless at the end of support (down from 34% at the start of support to 25%).
- The proportion of 'rough sleepers' decreased from 11% at the beginning of support to 7% at the end of support in 2018-19.
- Most older clients known to be at risk of homelessness at the start of support were assisted to maintain a housing tenancy (94%).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table OLDER.1):

- SHS agencies assisted almost 24,200 clients aged 55 and over. Since 2014-15, the number of clients aged 55 and over has risen 36% from 17,800 clients.
- Older clients represented 8% of all SHS clients, which has been relatively stable since 2014-15.

Table OLDER.1: Older clients (55 years and older): at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	17,788	20,579	22,443	24,094	24,169
Proportion of all clients	7	7	8	8	8
Rate (per 10,000 population)	7.6	8.6	9.3	9.8	9.7
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	33	34	35	33	33
At risk of homelessness	67	66	65	67	67
Length of support (median number of days)	24	25	27	28	31

Average number of support periods per client	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
Proportion receiving accommodation	19	18	17	16	17
Median number of nights accommodated	31	31	30	29	22
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	48	50	51	52	53
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	31	27	26	27	27

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all older clients. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

Of the almost 24,200 older clients who received SHS support during 2018-19:

- Almost 2 in 3 (65%) were aged 55-64; the remaining one-third were 65 or over.
- More than half (55%) were female.

Indigenous status

The proportion of clients 55 and over was lower for Indigenous clients (5% or 3,300) compared with non-Indigenous clients (9% or 18,500).

States and territories and remoteness area

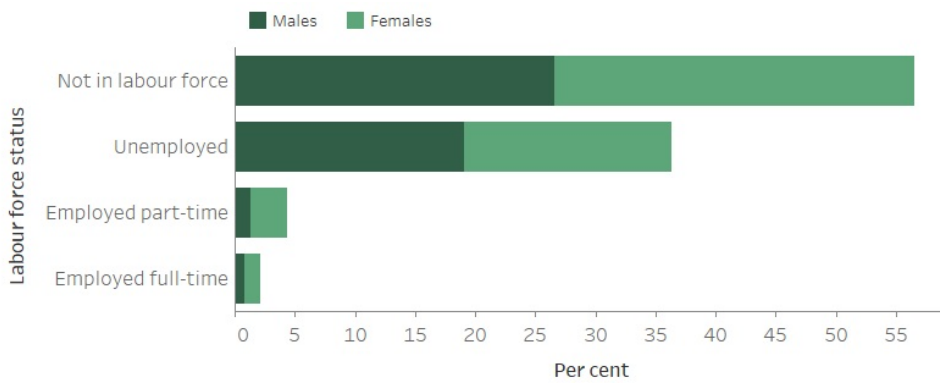
In 2018-19:

- Victoria recorded the highest number of older SHS clients (more than 11,300), representing almost half (47%) of this client group in Australia (Supplementary table OLDER.2), followed by New South Wales with 5,400 clients (22%).
- While recording one of the lowest counts (over 700 or 3% of national total) of older clients in Australia, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of clients, at 30 per 10,000 estimated resident population.
- 3 in 5 older clients (61%) sought assistance in *Major cities*, 34% in *Inner and Outer Regional* areas, and 5% in *Remote and Very Remote* areas.

Labour force

- In 2018-19, the majority of older clients were not in the labour force (57%), over a third were unemployed (36%) and less than 1 in 10 (7%) were employed.
- Of those who were in the labour force, females were more likely to be employed full-time (3%) and part-time (6%) than males (2% and 3%, respectively) (Figure OLDER.1).

Figure OLDER.1: Older clients, by labour force status and sex, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Per cent calculations based on total clients less 'Not stated'.
2. The labour force status at the beginning of support for clients 55 years and over.
3. Labour force status 'Employed don't know' not shown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table OLDER.11.

Living arrangements

In 2018-19, of the almost 21,900 clients who stated their living arrangement upon presentation to a SHS agency (Supplementary table OLDER.9):

- 6 in 10 (61% or 13,200 clients) were living alone, higher for males than females (69% compared with 53%)
- more than 1 in 10 (13% or 2,800 clients) were living as a lone parent or couple with children
- almost 2,600 people (12%) were living with other family which can include a person with or without children living (as a couch surfing arrangement) with others.

Selected vulnerabilities

The majority of older clients (54% or 13,000) reported no vulnerabilities (defined as a current mental health issue, experiencing family and domestic violence, or problematic drug and/or alcohol use) (Table OLDER.2).

- 1 in 5 older clients (20% or almost 4,800 clients) reported a current mental health issue only
- 1 in 7 older clients (15% or 3,500 clients) reported family and domestic violence only.

Table OLDER.2: Older clients, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	207	0.9
Yes	Yes	No	1,421	5.9
Yes	No	Yes	100	0.4
No	Yes	Yes	722	3.0
Yes	No	No	3,493	14.5
No	Yes	No	4,774	19.8
No	No	Yes	458	1.9
No	No	No	12,994	53.8
			24,169	100.0

Notes:

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 55 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

Since 2014-15, the number of older clients seeking assistance from SHS agencies increased at a greater rate than other age groups. Key trends identified in this client population over the 5 years to 2018-19 are (Table OLDER.1):

- The rate of older clients increased from 8 per 10,000 in 2014-15 to 10 in 2018-19.
- The median number of days older clients received support increased from 24 days in 2014-15 to 31 days in 2018-19.
- The proportion receiving any accommodation fell from 19% in 2014-15 to 17% in 2018-19. In addition, the median number of nights accommodated decreased, down from 31 nights in 2014-15 to 22 nights in 2018-19.

New or returning clients

More than half (53% or 12,700) were returning clients, having previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12. Returning clients were more likely to be aged 55-64 (69% compared with 60% of new clients).

Main reasons for seeking assistance

The 3 main reasons why older clients sought assistance from SHS agencies in 2018-19 were (Supplementary table OLDER.5):

- housing crisis (21% or 4,900 clients)
- financial difficulties (18% or 4,300)
- family and domestic violence (17% or 4,000).

The main reason for older clients seeking assistance was different for those experiencing homelessness compared with those presenting to services at risk of homelessness (Supplementary table OLDER.6).

- For those experiencing homelessness the main reasons for seeking assistance were:
 - housing crisis (28% or 2,000 clients)
 - inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (22% or 1,600)
 - financial difficulties (10% or 700).
- For those at risk of homelessness:
 - financial difficulties (20% or 3,000 clients)
 - housing crisis (19% or 2,800)
 - family and domestic violence (18% or 2,700).

Services needed and provided

In 2018-19, half (50% or 12,000) of older SHS clients needed accommodation, of those 34% were provided assistance. Demand was highest for long-term accommodation (39% or 9,300 needed long-term accommodation) compared with medium-term (21% or 5,000) and short-term or emergency accommodation (26% or 6,300). Of the older clients that needed long-term housing, less than 1 in 10 (7%) were provided assistance (Figure OLDER.2).

Other services most commonly needed by older clients during 2018-19 were:

- assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction (34%), with 81% provided this assistance
- material aid/brokerage (33%), with 87% provided this assistance
- financial information (21% or 5,100), with 85% provided with assistance.

Table OLDER.2: Older clients, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. Short-term accommodation includes temporary and emergency accommodation and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table OLDER.3.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

At the end of the reporting period in 2018-19 (Table OLDER.3).

- The number of clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support reduced when support ended: 1 in 4 (25% or almost 4,100) were known to be homeless when support ended, down from 34% at the start of support.
- The reduction in the proportion of clients who were known to be homeless following support was due to decreases in the proportion of clients rough sleeping or with no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 11% to 7%) and in the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer', with no tenure (from 11% to 8%).

Clients living in public or community housing increased following support; there was an increase in clients living in some form of tenure over the course of support, including an increase in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing from 21% to 28% (or more than 4,600 clients).

Table OLDER.3: Older clients (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	1,882	1,082	11.4	6.6
Short term temporary accommodation	1,826	1,679	11.0	10.2
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	1,837	1,294	11.1	7.9
Total homeless	5,545	4,055	33.5	24.7
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	3,407	4,649	20.6	28.3
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	6,984	7,151	42.2	43.6
Institutional settings	596	545	3.6	3.3
Total at risk	10,987	12,345	66.5	75.3
Total clients with known housing situation	16,532	16,400	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	2,928	3,060		
Total clients	19,460	19,460		

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table OLDER.4.

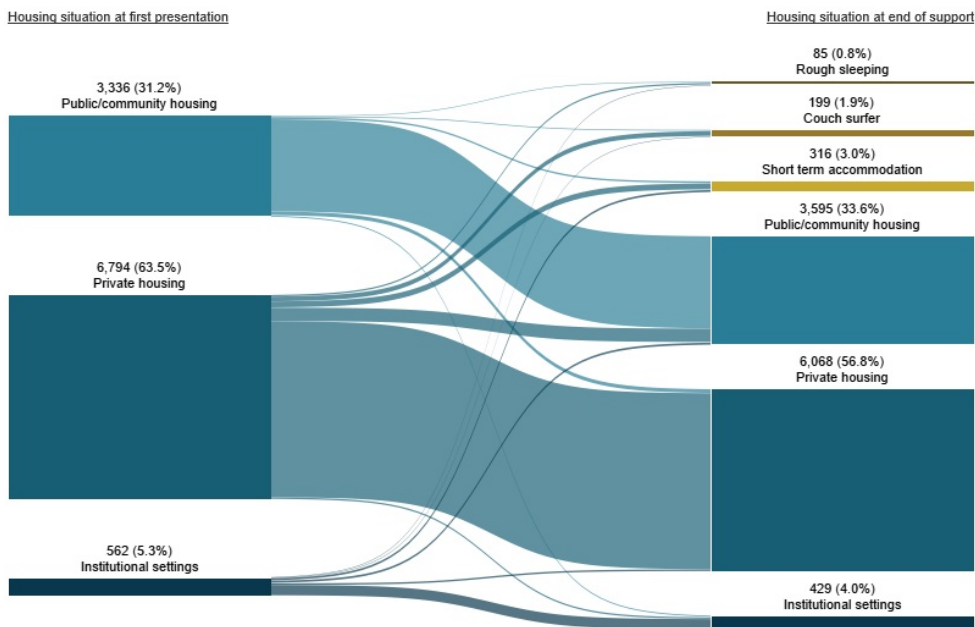
Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 10,700 clients), by the end of support (Figure OLDER.3):

- Most clients (6,100 clients or 57%) were in private or other housing
- Around 3,600 clients (34%) were in public or community housing.

Around 600 clients were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (6% of those who started support at risk).

Figure OLDER.3: Housing situation for clients with closed support who began support at risk of homelessness, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes client with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

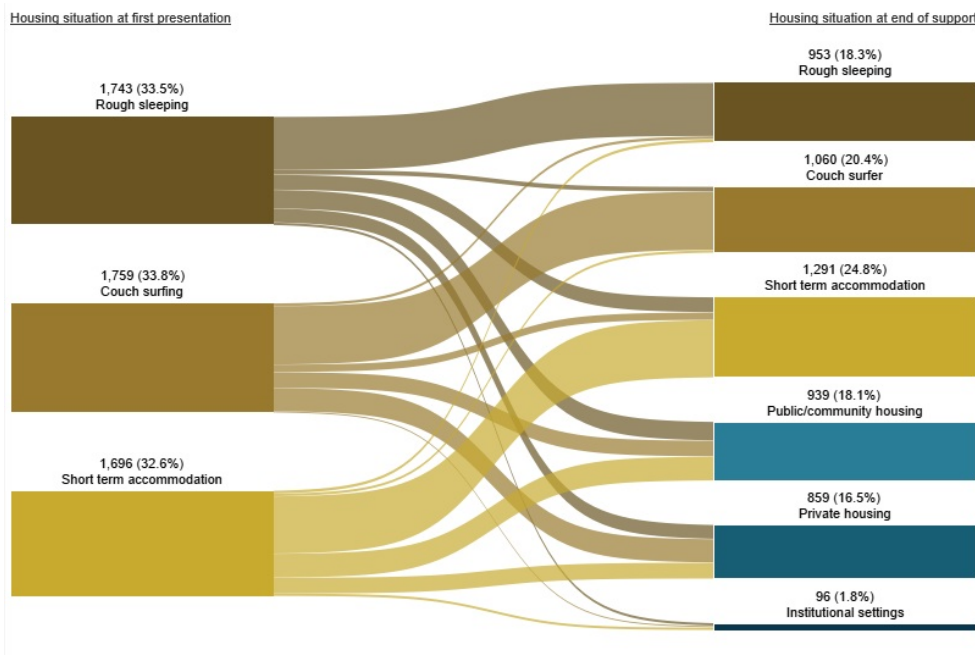
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 5,200 clients) (Figure OLDER.4):

- 1,300 clients (25%) were in short term accommodation at the end of support
- 900 (18%) were in private or other housing at the end of support.

One in five clients (almost 1,100 or 20%) were couch surfing at the end of support.

Figure OLDER.4: Housing situation for clients with closed support who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes client with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

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Client groups of interest

People with disability are a diverse group, with varied levels and types of support needs. Their pathways into and out of homelessness are just as varied, and how people with a disability experience homelessness may differ to other populations (Beer et al. 2012). People with disability may have a greater exposure to risk factors associated with homelessness than the general population (Beer et al. 2012). Low income, lack of social support, limited engagement with the labour market, compounded by the need for specialised assistance and services, can leave some people with disability increasingly vulnerable to the risk of homelessness and the negative impact of homelessness.

Timely access to safe, suitable and long-term housing can be critical to the wellbeing of people with disability. Affordable and secure housing can provide people with disability independence and the ability to participate in social, economic, sporting and cultural life. Housing that meets accessibility standards, is in close proximity to transport and to quality and affordable support services is also vital for those with disability (COAG 2011). The consequences of inadequate support may be severe for both those with physical and/or intellectual disabilities (Beer et al. 2012).

In 2018, an estimated 1 in 5 Australians (4.4 million people, or 18% of the total population) had disability (ABS 2019), ranging from mild to severe disabilities. Similar to 2006 and 2011, the 2016 Census identified around 5,700 people experiencing homelessness with disability in Australia (defined as people with a need for assistance with core activities) (ABS 2018). People with disability represented 5% of those experiencing homelessness on Census night in 2016.

Key findings

- In 2018-19, 7,200 (2%) SHS clients reported a severe or profound core activity limitation (throughout this section termed those with severe or profound disability).
- Over half (54%) of clients with severe or profound disability were housed but at risk of homelessness when they sought SHS assistance; the other 46% were experiencing homelessness.
- Almost 2 in 3 clients with disability in 2018-19 (62%) had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at any time since the collection began in 2011-12, the remaining 38% were deemed to be new clients.
- Most clients with severe or profound disability (with closed support) ended SHS support housed (68% or 2,900 clients); with many in private or other housing (1,600 or 37%).

Reporting clients with disability in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

Disability is a challenging concept to measure and there are numerous ways to identify it in any population. The SHSC disability questions are based on identifying whether the client has any difficulty and/or need for assistance with 3 core activities (self care, mobility and communication). These questions are asked of all SHS clients.

Data for clients with disability who required assistance may not be comparable across age groups due to differences in the interpretation of the SHSC disability questions. This issue mainly relates to young children, and therefore any comparisons between age groups should be made with caution.

Further details about measuring disability in the SHSC and the definition of a client with severe or profound core activity limitation are provided in the [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table DIS.1):

- 7,200 SHS clients reported that they always or sometimes needed assistance with core activities (self care, communication and/or mobility). This group of people can be described as having severe or profound core activity limitation(s), or as living with disability.
- SHS clients with severe or profound disability represented 2% of all SHS clients in 2018-19, down from 3% in 2017-18.

Table DIS.1: Clients with disability: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	8,789	9,812	10,988	7,902	7,198
Proportion of all clients	3	4	4	3	2
Rate (per 10,000 population)	3.7	4.1	4.5	3.2	2.9
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	43	44	44	46	46

At risk of homelessness	57	56	56	54	54
Length of support (median number of days)	59	64	65	76	80
Average number of support periods per client	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.4
Proportion receiving accommodation	40	39	39	38	36
Median number of nights accommodated	55	55	50	58	50
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	68	70	70	74	74
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	19	18	18	22	24

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients with disability. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of the 7,200 clients with severe or profound disability (Supplementary table DIS.1):

- Clients were generally younger than the total SHS population, that is,
 - 41% (2,900 clients) were under 25 years; most of these younger people were less than 10 years (almost 1,800 clients)
 - 42% (3,000) were aged 25 to 54
 - 18% (1,300) were aged 55 or over.
- There were similar proportions of male (51% or 3,700 clients) and female (49% or 3,500) SHS clients with severe or profound disability.
- There was a higher proportion of male SHS clients under 10 years living with disability (27% of males with disability) compared with females (22% of females with disability). For those aged 18 and over, there was a greater proportion of female than male SHS clients with disability.

Indigenous clients

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table DIS.8):

- Of the 6,800 SHS clients with severe or profound disability who provided information about their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, almost 1 in 4 were Indigenous (24% or 1,600 clients), similar to the SHS population (26%).
- There were equal numbers of Indigenous male and female clients with disability (800 each), but differences based on age. Of male Indigenous clients with disability, a higher proportion were aged under 10 years (37%) compared with female Indigenous clients with disability (29%).
- Indigenous clients with disability had a younger age profile than non-Indigenous clients with disability. Forty per cent of Indigenous clients with disability were aged under 18 compared with 29% of non-Indigenous clients.

States and territory and remoteness

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table DIS.2):

- Four in 10 (40% or almost 2,900 clients) SHS clients with severe or profound disability accessed SHS services in Victoria, 24% (more than 1,700 clients) in New South Wales and 14% (1,000 clients) in South Australia.
- The Northern Territory had the highest rate of SHS clients with severe or profound disability (7 clients per 10,000 population), followed by Victoria (4 clients), while Queensland had the lowest rate (2 per 10,000 population). These rates were all lower than in 2017-18, with the exception of South Australia which increased from 5 clients per 10,000 people to 6 in 2018-19.
- Seven in 10 (70%) clients with severe or profound disability accessed services in *Major cities* and 18% in *Inner regional* areas, different from the general SHS population (61% and 23% respectively) (Supplementary tables DIS.10 and REG.1).

In 2018-19, of the clients with severe or profound disability, the most common living arrangement reported at the beginning of SHS support was living alone (37% or almost 2,700 clients) (Supplementary table DIS.9). The next most common living arrangement was one parent with child/ren (28% or 2,000) and then other family (13% or over 900 clients). These proportions have been similar over time.

Living arrangements

In 2018-19, of the clients with severe or profound disability, the most common living arrangement reported at the beginning of SHS support was living alone (37% or almost 2,700 clients) (Supplementary table DIS.9). The next most common living arrangement was one parent with child/ren (28% or 2,000) and then other family (13% or over 900 clients). These proportions have been similar over time.

Selected vulnerabilities

Living with disability may not be the only challenge faced by this group of SHS clients. In 2018-19, 3 in 4 clients (74% or 4,000 clients) with severe or profound disability (aged 10 and over) reported experiencing one or more selected vulnerabilities: a current mental health issue, problematic drug and/or alcohol use or family and domestic violence (Table DIS.2). One in 4 clients (26% or 1,400) with disability did not report any of the selected vulnerabilities.

In 2018-19:

- 1 in 3 (32% or 1,700) clients with disability reported experiencing a current mental health issue *only*
- 14% (more than 700) experienced a current mental health issue and family and domestic violence
- a further 6% (more than 300 clients) of clients experienced all 3 vulnerabilities.

Table DIS.2: Clients with disability, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	342	6.3
Yes	Yes	No	742	13.7
Yes	No	Yes	28	0.5
No	Yes	Yes	585	10.8
Yes	No	No	454	8.4
No	Yes	No	1,709	31.5
No	No	Yes	157	2.9
No	No	No	1,413	26.0
			5,430	100.0

Notes:

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

In 2018-19, clients with profound or severe disability:

- received a median of 80 days of support, almost double the general SHS population (median 44 days) (Table DIS.1 and Table CLIENT.1). This may reflect the more complex needs of these clients
- were more likely to receive accommodation (36%) than the general SHS population (30%), and for those who did, the length of supported accommodation was much longer (median 50 nights compared with 29 nights for the general SHS population)
- were less likely to receive accommodation over time; in 2018-19, 36% received accommodation, down from 40% in 2014-15. This is still higher than the total SHS population (30%).

New or returning clients

The episodic or cyclic nature of homelessness can be explored by analysing whether clients with severe or profound disability were new to SHS agencies, or returning clients. In 2018-19, 62% (4,500 clients) of clients with severe or profound disability had also received SHS assistance at some time since the collection began in 2011-12 (Supplementary table DIS.7). The other 38% (2,700 clients) were new clients, that is, they only accessed services in 2018-19. One-third (34% or more than 900 clients) of new clients with disability were young, aged under 10.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, for SHS clients with severe or profound disability (Supplementary tables DIS.5 and DIS.6):

- The most common main reason for seeking SHS assistance was housing crisis (27% or 1,900 clients), which is consistent with 2017-18. This was most common for both clients experiencing homelessness (32% or almost 1,000 clients) and at risk of homelessness (23% or almost 900 clients).

- Family and domestic violence was the second most common main reason (18% or 1,300 clients), more so for clients at risk of homelessness (19% or 700 clients) than clients experiencing homelessness (13% or 400 clients).
- Inadequate or inappropriate dwellings conditions was the next most common main reason (13% or 900 clients), with 16% of homeless (500 clients) and 11% of at risk clients reporting this as a main reason (400 clients).

Services needed and provided

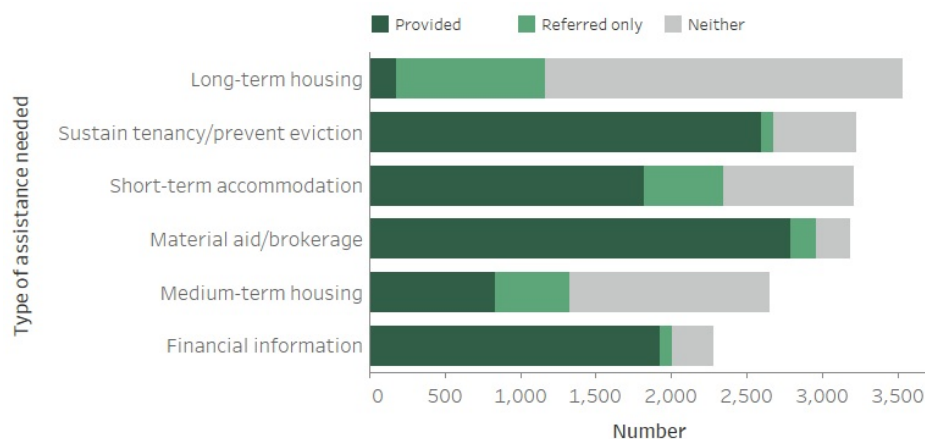
Four of the top 6 reasons clients with profound or severe disability sought SHS assistance were housing-related and the other 2 were financial reasons (Figure DIS.1). Of clients with disability in 2018-19:

- Almost half needed long-term housing (49% or more than 3,500 clients), which is accommodation for 3 months or more. One in 20 clients (5% or less than 200 clients) with severe or profound disability received the long-term housing they needed. An additional 28% (almost 1,000 clients) received a referral.
- 45% (over 3,200 clients) needed assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction and this service was provided to most (81% or around 2,600) of clients with that need.
- 45% (3,200 clients) needed short-term or emergency accommodation, and it was provided to more than half (57% or 1,800 clients) with that need.
- 37% (almost 2,700 clients) needed medium-term/transitional housing and it was provided to one-third (32% or more than 800 clients) with that need.

Of the financial reasons for seeking SHS assistance:

- Material aid/brokerage was needed by 44% of clients (3,200 clients), and provided to 88% of those with that need.
- Financial information was needed by 32% of clients (2,300 clients) and provided to 85% of clients with that need.

Figure DIS.1: Clients with disability, by most needed services and service provision status (top 6), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liason on behalf of client'.
2. 'Short-term accommodation' includes temporary and emergency accommodation and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table DIS.3.

In terms of other services that were needed by clients with severe or profound disability:

- 1 in 5 clients (20% or 1,400) needed health/medical services and around 3 in 4 (77%) with these identified needs either received the services or were referred elsewhere for services.
- Clients with severe or profound disability were more likely to need transport (28% or over 2,000 clients), assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems (19%) and assistance for trauma (16%) than the general SHS population (20%, 13% and 13% respectively).

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here highlight the changes in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first period of support during 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last period of support in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

In 2018-19, key features of the housing situation for clients with disability include (Table DIS.3):

- At the start of SHS support, more clients with disability were known to be at risk of homelessness (more than 2,400 or 55%) than experiencing homelessness (2,000 or 45%). Following SHS support, there were fewer clients with disability experiencing homelessness (1,400 clients or 32%).
- The decrease in the proportion of clients known to be experiencing homelessness was largely due to the drop in those living in a house, townhouse or flat as a couch surfer (with no tenure); down from 15% at the start of support to 9% at the end.
- For clients with disability, the greatest change in housing situation from the start to the end of support was for those living in public or community housing; increasing from just over 600 to 1,000 clients (from 14% to 24%).

SHS agencies were able to assist many clients secure or maintain housing, reducing the experience and risk of homelessness among clients with disability.

Table DIS.3: Clients with disability (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	517	297	11.7	6.9
Short term temporary accommodation	786	690	17.8	16.0
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	671	402	15.2	9.3
Total homeless	1,974	1,389	44.7	32.2
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	634	1,034	14.3	24.0
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	1,502	1,607	34.0	37.3
Institutional settings	310	281	7.0	6.5
Total at risk	2,446	2,922	55.3	67.8
Total clients with known housing situation	4,420	4,311	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	503	612		
Total clients	4,923	4,923		

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table DIS.4.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with severe or profound disability with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (more than 2,300 clients), by the end of support ([Interactive Tableau visualisation](#)):

- Half (around 1,200 clients or 51%) were in private housing
- Around 700 clients (29%) were in public or community housing.

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (almost 1,800 clients), agencies were able to assist:

- almost 500 clients (26%) into short term accommodation
- 400 (21%) into private housing.

For more information on people with disability, see [People with disability in Australia](#), AIHW.

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Client groups of interest

According to the most recent national Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, in 2007, 1 in 5 (20%) Australians (aged 16-85) had a current mental health issue, while 45% of Australians reported having had a mental disorder at some point in their life (ABS 2008). The intertwined nature of mental health issues and homelessness is well established (Kalevald et al. 2018). People with mental health issues are a group who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Research has shown that experiences of homelessness can trigger, exacerbate and magnify mental health issues (see for example, Kalevald et al. 2018, Brackertz et al 2018, CHP 2018 and Johnson & Chamberlain 2011). People living with a mental illness can be isolated, have disrupted family and social networks and sometimes suffer poor physical health, all of which impact their capacity to find and maintain adequate housing. Further, symptoms such as hallucinations, compulsive behaviours and anxiety can make it difficult to seek and maintain employment (Robinson 2003).

People experiencing homelessness with mental health issues need the support of various services including housing, but navigating through these services can be particularly challenging. Several studies suggest that when people with mental health issues are supported by homelessness agencies, they are more likely to remain housed rather than become homeless (MHCA 2009, Du et al. 2013, Wood et al. 2016, ABS 2014).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, there were 86,500 SHS clients reporting a current mental health issue, a 7% increase from the previous year.
- Not only were clients with a current mental health issue one of the largest SHS client groups (30% of all SHS clients), they were also one of the fastest growing client groups (increasing by 38% in the 5 years to 2018-19).
- Over half of all SHS clients with a current mental health issue were known to be housed, but at risk of homelessness (52%) when they sought SHS support, and most were returning clients (66%), have previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- It was more common for clients with a current mental health issue to present to SHS agencies living alone (46%) than in family units or groups.
- At the end of SHS support, fewer clients with a current mental health issue were homeless (36%, down from 48%); with 3,200 fewer clients sleeping rough (decreasing from 7,500 to almost 4,300 clients).

Reporting clients with a mental health issue in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients are identified as having a current mental health issue if they are aged 10 years or older and have provided any of the following information:

- They indicated that at the beginning of support they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the last 12 months.
- Their formal referral source to the SHS was a mental health service.
- They reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance.
- Their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was a psychiatric hospital or unit.
- They had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months.
- At some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services.

Client characteristics

Of the 290,300 SHS clients accessing services in 2018-19, 86,500 (30%) clients reported a current mental health issue. The number and proportion of clients presenting with a current mental health issue has been increasing since the beginning of the SHSC in 2011-12. Various factors, including increased identification, community awareness and reduced stigma, may have had an impact on the increase in self-identification and reporting of mental illness among SHS clients. In 2018-19 (Table MH.1):

- Clients with a current mental health issue were one of the fastest growing client groups within the SHSC, growing by 38% since 2014-15. Between 2017-18 and 2018-19 the increase was 7%, a larger increase than in the previous period.
- The rate of clients with a current mental health issue has increased from 27 clients per 10,000 population in 2014-15 to 35 in 2018-19.

Table MH.1: Clients with a current mental health issue: at a glance—2014-15 to 2018-19

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
15	16	17	18	19

Number of clients	62,904	72,120	77,286	81,004	86,499
Proportion of all clients	25	26	27	28	30
Rate (per 10,000 population)	26.8	30.3	31.9	32.9	34.6
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	50	50	50	48	48
At risk of homelessness	50	50	50	52	52
Length of support (median number of days)	62	64	68	72	75
Average number of support periods per client	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4
Proportion receiving accommodation	42	39	37	37	36
Median number of nights accommodated	44	44	45	43	39
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	70	70	71	72	72
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	19	17	18	19	19

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have a current mental health issue. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.
5. In 2017-18, age and age-related variables were derived using a more robust calculation method. Data for previous years have been updated with the improved calculation method for age. As such, data prior to 2017-18 contained in the SHS Annual Report may not match that contained in the SHS Annual Report Historical Tables.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of those clients presenting with a current mental health issue (Supplementary table MH.1):

- There were more female (more than 52,300 clients or 60%) than male SHS clients (almost 34,200 or 40%), similar to the proportions in 2017-18.
- Males had an older age profile than females, with 28% (9,400 clients) of males aged over 45, compared with 22% (11,500 clients) of females.
- Over half (53%) were aged 10-34 years, higher than all SHS clients (45%). A further 23% were aged 35-44 (compared with 18% of all SHS clients) and 24% were over 45 (compared with 20% of all SHS clients).

Indigenous clients

In 2018-19, around 83,200 SHS clients with a current mental health issue reported their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (Supplementary table MH.8). Key findings for this group include:

- Around 1 in 5 (19%) of all clients with a current mental health issue were Indigenous.
- Around one-quarter (23% or 16,100 clients) of all 68,900 Indigenous SHS clients had a current mental health issue.
- Almost 2 in 3 (64%) Indigenous clients with a current mental health issue were female, and 36% were male.
- Around 4 in 10 (38%) Indigenous SHS clients with a current mental health issue were aged 10-24 years, a further 45% were aged 25-44 and 18% were aged over 45.

States and territory and remoteness

There were differences across the states and territories in the rates of clients presenting to SHS agencies with a current mental health issue. In 2018-19:

- SHS agencies based in Victoria reported the greatest number of clients (almost 34,500 clients) and the second highest rate of clients with a current mental health issue (53 clients per 10,000 population). Tasmania had the highest rate, with 60 clients per 10,000 population (Supplementary table MH.2).
- Around half (48%) of Tasmania's SHS clients reported a current mental health issue, along with 40% of clients in the Australian Capital Territory and 34% in New South Wales. By contrast, 11% of the SHS clients in the Northern Territory reported a current mental health issue (Supplementary tables MH.2 and CLIENTS.1).
- Almost 2 in 3 clients (65%) with a current mental health issue accessed SHS in *Major cities*. A further 26% accessed services in *Inner regional* areas and 8% in *Outer regional* areas (Supplementary table MH.10).

Selected vulnerabilities

In 2018-19, of the 86,500 SHS clients who had a current mental health issue, over half (54% or 46,600 clients) were experiencing additional selected vulnerabilities (Table MH.2):

- 3 in 10 clients (30% or 26,300 clients) also experienced family and domestic violence.
- 14% (12,000 clients) of clients also reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- A further 1 in 10 (10% or almost 8,400 clients) experienced all 3 selected vulnerabilities: family and domestic violence, problematic drug and/or alcohol use and a current mental health issue.

These figures provide an insight into the multiple disadvantages clients experiencing mental health issues face and highlight the value of an integrated service response to homelessness for these clients (Flatau et al. 2013).

Table MH.2: Clients with a current mental health issue, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	8,351	9.7
Yes	Yes	No	26,279	30.4
No	Yes	Yes	11,951	13.8
No	Yes	No	39,918	46.1
			86,499	100.0

Notes:

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Living arrangements

At the beginning of support, clients with a current mental health issue (aged over 10) were more likely to be living alone (38,700 clients or 46%) or as a lone parent with child(ren) (20,700 clients or 25%) rather than in a group (6,600 clients or 8%) or as a couple with child(ren) (6,300 or 7%) (Supplementary table MH.9).

Service use patterns

Service use patterns for clients with a current mental health issue have changed between 2014-15 and 2018-19 (Table MH.1).

- There were increases in the median number of days of support, from 62 days in 2014-15 to 75 days in 2018-19.
- The proportion of clients receiving accommodation decreased (from 42% to 36%), along with the median number of nights accommodated (from 44 to 39 nights per client).

New or returning clients

In 2018-19 of those clients presenting with a current mental health issue (Supplementary table MH.7):

- Most (66% or more than 57,400 clients) were returning clients, that is, they had previously received assistance from a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- One-third (34% or almost 29,100 clients) of those with a current mental health issue were new to SHS agencies, having not previously received services.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the most common main reasons for seeking SHS assistance for clients with a current mental health issue were (Supplementary tables MH.5 and MH.6):

- housing crisis (22% or more than 18,700 clients)
- family and domestic violence (20% or 16,800 clients)
- inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (12% or almost 10,300 clients).

There were differences in the main reasons for those clients with a current mental health issue presenting at risk of, or experiencing homelessness:

- For clients at risk of homelessness, family and domestic violence (24%) was the most common main reason, followed by housing crisis (18%).
- For clients experiencing homelessness, housing crisis (26%) was the most common main reason, followed by inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (18%).

Services needed and provided

Figure MH.1 illustrates the top 6 most needed services for clients with a current mental health issue in 2018-19. Four of these were related to accommodation:

- long-term housing was the most needed service (more than 44,500 clients or 52%) yet least provided (4% of these clients were provided this assistance). A further 11,900 clients (27%) in need of long-term housing were referred to another agency. Almost 30,900 clients in need were neither provided nor referred.
- short-term or emergency accommodation was needed by 41,600 clients (48%), with 6 in 10 (58%) of these clients receiving this assistance.
- assistance to sustain tenancy/prevent eviction was needed by almost 37,400 clients with a current mental health issue, and a comparatively high proportion were provided with this service (82%).
- medium-term/transitional housing was needed by 35,700 clients (41%) and 24% of these clients were provided this assistance. Similar to long-term housing, this type of accommodation was commonly referred (18% or almost 6,500 clients).

The other 2 most needed services by clients with a current mental health issue were related to financial security:

- material aid/brokerage was needed by 41,400 clients (48%) and provided to almost 35,900 clients (87%).
- financial information was needed by 32,000 clients (37%) and provided to 26,800 clients (84%).

Over 1 in 4 (27% or 23,600) clients with a current mental health issue identified a need for mental health-based services. Specifically:

- 24% (more than 20,600 clients) identified a need for mental health services with 44% of these requests met.
- 11% (almost 9,100 clients) identified a need for psychological services with 34% of these requests met.
- 6% (more than 5,500 clients) identified a need for psychiatric services with 35% of these requests met.

Figure MH.1: Clients with a current mental health issue, by most needed services and service provision status (top 6), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. 'Short-term accommodation' includes temporary and emergency accommodation and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table MH.3.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here describe the change in client's housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first support period in 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last support period in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

In 2018-19, for clients with a current mental health issue (Table MH.3):

- The proportion of clients known to be experiencing homelessness decreased from just under half (48%) at the start of support to 36% at the end of support; this equates to almost 7,200 fewer clients experiencing homelessness.
- While there was little change in the proportion of clients in short term temporary accommodation (around 16% at both the start and end), considerably fewer clients were 'rough sleeping' (from 13% to 8%) and 'couch surfing' (from 18% to 13%) following SHS support.
- One of the largest changes was the increase in the number of clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free); increasing by almost 3,900 clients from the start to the end of SHS support (from 6,300 to 10,100 clients).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of SHS support, fewer clients with a current mental health issue were known to be experiencing homelessness, and most (64%) were living in housing, be it public or community, private or other housing or an institutional setting.

Table MH.3: Clients with a current mental health issue (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	7,503	4,260	13.3	7.8
Short term temporary accommodation	9,207	8,675	16.3	16.0
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	10,273	6,874	18.2	12.6
Total homeless	26,983	19,809	47.7	36.4
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	6,259	10,138	11.1	18.6
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	19,503	21,740	34.5	40.0
Institutional settings	3,845	2,695	6.8	5.0
Total at risk	29,607	34,573	52.3	63.6
Total clients with known housing situation	56,590	54,382	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	4,558	6,766		
Total clients	61,148	61,148		

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table MH.4.

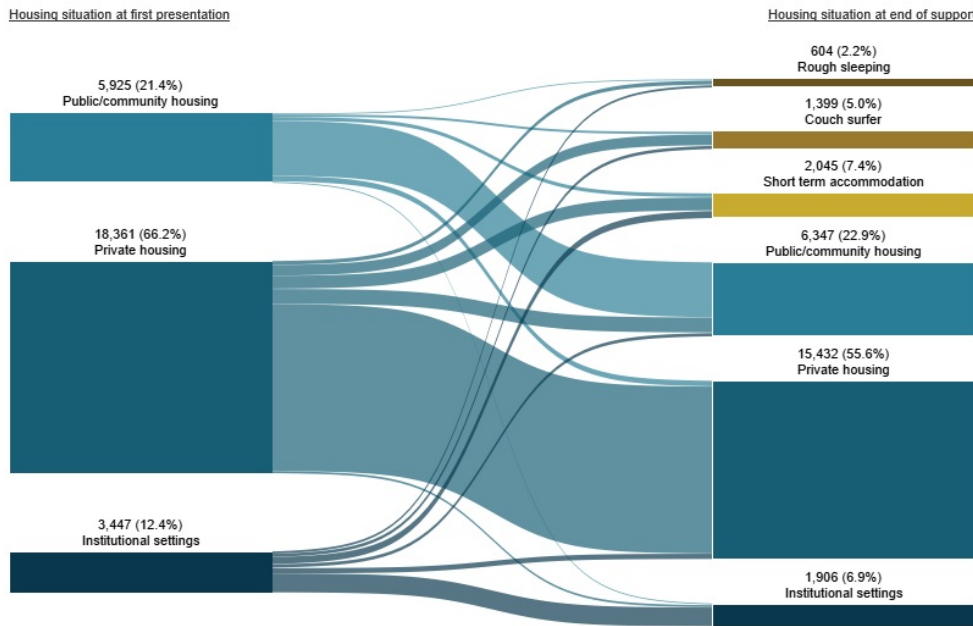
Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 27,700 clients), by the end of support (Figure MH.2):

- Most (15,400 clients or 56%) were in private housing
- Around 6,300 clients (23%) were in public or community housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (around 4,000 clients or 15% of those who started support at risk).

Figure MH.2: Housing situation for clients with closed support who began support at risk of homelessness, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes client with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

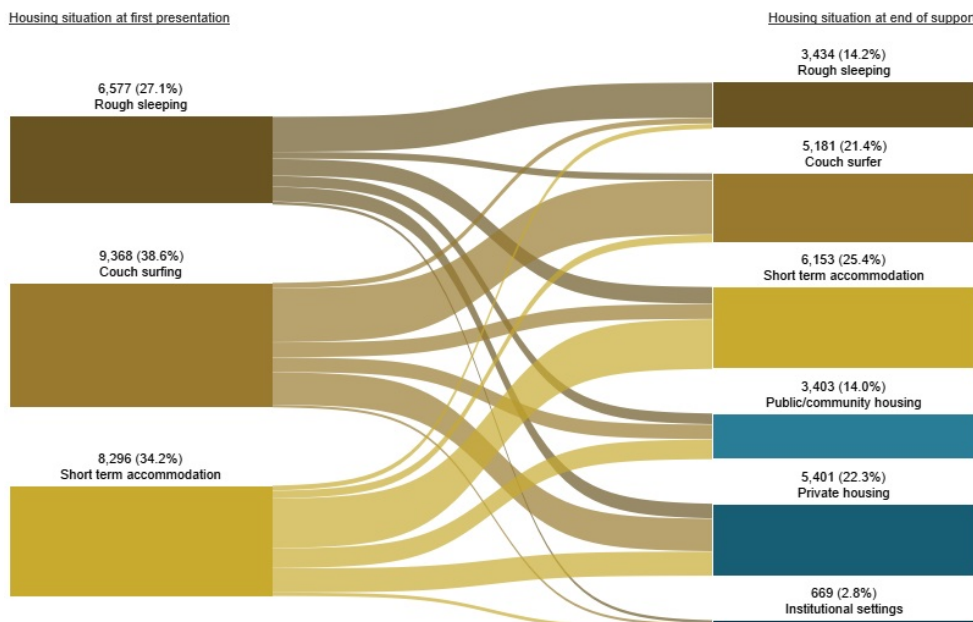
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 24,200 clients) (Figure MH.3):

- 6,200 clients (25%) were in short term accommodation
- 5,400 (22%) were in private housing.

A further 5,200 clients (21%) were couch surfing at the end of support.

Figure MH.3: Housing situation for clients with closed support who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support, 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes client with unknown housing situation.
2. Includes only those clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year (meaning their support period(s) had closed and they were not in ongoing support at the end of the year).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19.

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Client groups of interest

There is a strong association between problematic alcohol or other drug use and experiences of homelessness (AIHW 2019). Problematic drug and/or alcohol use can be a pathway into homelessness or develop while experiencing homelessness (Robinson 2014; Johnson & Chamberlain 2008). It can lock people into homelessness and compound the effects of limited service engagement and increased social isolation. The Journeys Home project identified that people were more likely to have risky levels of alcohol and drug use, the longer they were homeless (Scutella et al. 2014).

Problematic drug and/or alcohol users are at great risk of serious and preventable health issues and death, particularly those who are homeless (AIHW 2019). They are also likely to have the most persistent and challenging problems (Johnson & Chamberlain 2008; Scutella et al. 2014).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, 1 in 10 SHS clients (10%, or almost 28,000 people aged 10 and over) were identified as having problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- Most clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were known to be homeless upon presentation (55%) compared with 42% of all SHS clients.
- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use received more frequent support (2.9 support periods per client) over a longer period (median support length 87 days) than other client groups.
- Almost 3 in 4 (74%) clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use had received assistance from a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12, with the other 26% deemed to be new clients.
- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use remain one of the least likely of all SHS client groups to meet all case management goals (15%).
- At the end of support in 2018-19, almost half (46%) of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were known to be experiencing homelessness, which was higher than for all other client groups.

Reporting clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

SHS clients aged 10 and over are reported in the SHSC with problematic drug and/or alcohol use if, at the beginning of or during support, the client provided any of the following information:

- recorded their dwelling type as rehabilitation facility
- required drug or alcohol counselling
- were formally referred to the SHS service from an alcohol and drug treatment service
- had been in a rehabilitation facility or institution during the past 12 months
- reported problematic drug, substance or alcohol use as a reason for seeking assistance or the main reason for seeking assistance.

The identification of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use may be current or recent; referring to issues at presentation, just prior to receiving support or at least once in the 12 months prior to support.

For more information see [Technical notes](#).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19 (Table SUB.1):

- SHS agencies assisted almost 28,000 clients (aged 10 and over) with problematic drug and/or alcohol use an increase from around 24,300 in 2014-15.
- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use represented 10% of all SHS clients, with little change in the proportion of clients since 2014-15.

Table SUB.1: Clients with a problematic drug and/or alcohol use: at a glance—
2014-15 to 2018-19

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	24,251	26,562	27,229	27,158	27,974
Proportion of all clients	9	10	9	9	10

Rate (per 10,000 population)	10.3	11.2	11.3	11.0	11.2
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)					
Homeless	59	58	57	56	55
At risk of homelessness	41	42	43	44	45
Length of support (median number of days)					
	74	77	83	86	87
Average number of support periods per client					
	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9
Proportion receiving accommodation					
	53	51	49	50	50
Median number of nights accommodated					
	39	37	40	40	35
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan					
	74	74	75	75	73
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)					
	16	13	13	14	15

Notes:

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year. Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have problematic drug and/or alcohol use. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
4. Data for 2014-15 to 2016-17 have been adjusted for non-response. Due to improvements in the rates of agency participation and SLK validity, data from 2017-18 are not weighted. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series and weighted data from 2014-15 to 2016-17 are comparable with unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards. For further information, please refer to the Technical Notes.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use (Supplementary table SUB.1):

- More than half (54% or more than 15,000 clients) were male which differed to the overall SHS client profile which was mostly female (60%).
- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use had a younger age profile than other SHS client groups with around 8 in 10 (79%) clients aged under 44 years; 27% were aged 10-24 years, 25% aged 25-34 and 26% aged 35-44. This is even notwithstanding clients under the age of 10 not included.
- Male clients had an older age profile than females, with 53% of males aged 35 and over compared with 42% of females.

Indigenous status

- In 2018-19, around 8,000 clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use identified as Indigenous (Supplementary table SUB.8). This equates to 3 in 10 clients (29%) with problematic drug and/or alcohol use whose Indigenous status was known.
- Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use represent 12% of all Indigenous SHS clients (Supplementary table INDIGENOUS.1).

Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use had a younger age profile than non-Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use. That is:

- 30% of Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were aged 10-24 compared with 26% of non-Indigenous clients, and
- 19% of Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were aged 45 and over compared with 22% of non-Indigenous SHS clients.

States and territory and remoteness

In 2018-19:

- The highest number of SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were reported accessing services in Victoria (more than 9,600 clients or 34% of national total) and New South Wales (8,300 or 30%) (Supplementary table SUB.2).
- There were higher rates of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use in the Northern Territory (39 per 10,000 population) and Tasmania (17 per 10,000 population). Queensland had the lowest rate, at 8 clients per 10,000 population.
- Services in the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania had the highest proportion of SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use (13% each). Victoria (9%) had the lowest proportion of all their SHS clients reporting problematic drug and/or alcohol use (Supplementary table SUB.2 and CLIENTS.1).
- SHS agencies in the Northern Territory (61% females, 39% males) and Western Australia (59% females, 41% males) had higher proportions of female clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use, while Tasmania had mostly males (61% males, 39% females).
- SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use primarily accessed services in *Major cities* (64%) and *Inner regional areas* (22%) (Supplementary table SUB.10).

Living arrangements

The types of living arrangements reported by SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use at the beginning of support were quite different from the overall SHS population and other client groups. In 2018-19 (Supplementary tables SUB.9 and CLIENTS.7):

- Almost 6 in 10 (59% or more than 15,900) clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were living alone at the beginning of SHS support. This is a higher proportion than for all SHS clients (30%) and other client groups, such as clients with a current mental health issue (46%) and clients with disability (37%).
- Comparatively fewer clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were living as one parent with child(ren) (13% or 3,500 compared with 36% of total SHS clients), or in a group (10% or 2,700 clients compared with 6% of total SHS clients).

Selected vulnerabilities

Most clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use face additional challenges which may make them more vulnerable to homelessness. The selected additional vulnerabilities presented here include family and domestic violence and/or a current mental health issue.

In 2018-19 (Table SUB.2):

- More than 2 in 5 (43% or almost 12,000) clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use also reported a current mental health issue.
- Almost 8,400 (30%) clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use also reported a current mental health issue and family and domestic violence.
- Less than 1 in 10 (9% or 2,500) clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use also reported family and domestic violence.
- Less than 1 in 5 (19% or 5,200) clients only reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

Table SUB.2: Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol issues, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and/or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	8,351	29.9
Yes	No	Yes	2,455	8.8
No	Yes	Yes	11,951	42.7
No	No	Yes	5,217	18.6
			27,974	100.0

Notes:

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 10 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Service use patterns

Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use (see Tables SUB.1, DIS.1 and MH.1) received:

- a higher median number of days of support (87 days), compared with clients with disability (80 days) and clients with a current mental health issue (75 days)

- a higher average number of support periods per client (2.9), compared with clients with disability and clients with a current mental health issue (2.4 support periods each)
- a lower median number of nights of accommodation (35) compared with clients with disability and current mental health issues (39 nights each).

New or returning clients

In 2018-19 (Supplementary table SUB 7):

- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were more likely to have received SHS services in the past (74% or more than 20,800 clients) than be new clients (26% or more than 7,100). That is, more clients had previously been assisted by an SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12.
- Compared with 2017-18, there was an increase in the number of returning clients (an increase of 1,100 clients, or 2 percentage points).
- Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were also more likely to be returning (74%), compared with other client groups, for example 66% of clients with a mental health issue and 62% of those with profound or severe disability. This may reflect the cyclic nature of homelessness for people with problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

In 2018-19, the main reasons clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use presented to SHS agencies were:

- housing crisis (21%, compared with 20% of the overall SHS population)
- family and domestic violence (13%, compared with 28%)
- inadequate/inappropriate dwelling conditions (13%, compared with 10%) (Supplementary tables SUB.5 and CLIENTS.16).

Few clients (6%) with problematic drug and/or alcohol use reported their substance use as the main reason for seeking SHS assistance.

Services needed and provided

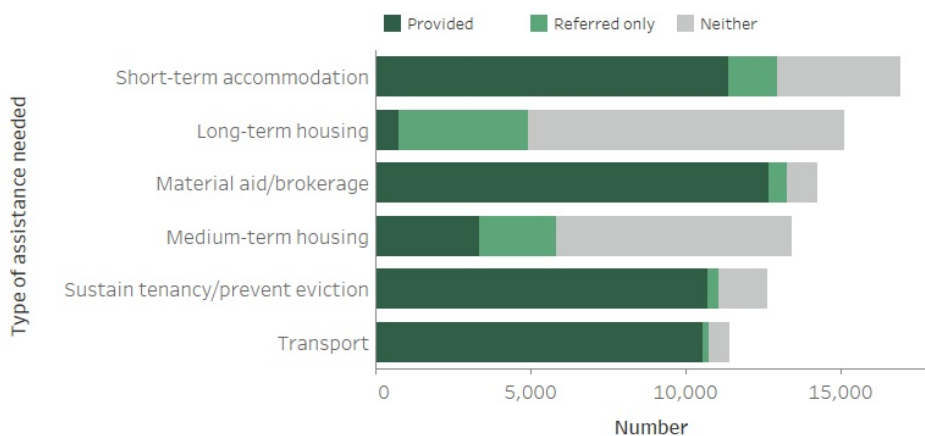
In 2018-19, the top 6 needs reported by SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use mainly related to housing and tenure (Figure SUB.1). Key features include:

- Short-term or emergency accommodation was the most needed service or assistance type (61% or more than 16,900 clients) and it was provided to 67% of these clients. A higher proportion of clients in this group needed this type of short-term housing compared with other groups, such as those with mental health issues (48%) and those with disability (45%).
- Long-term housing (54% or around 15,100 clients) was also commonly needed, but was one of the services that was least able to be provided (5% of these clients).
- Material aid/brokerage was needed by around half of clients (51% or almost 14,300 clients), with assistance provided to the majority (89%) of these clients.
- Unlike other client groups, transport (41%) was one of the top 6 needs, and it was provided to 93% of these clients.

In 2018-19, more than one-third (35% or almost 9,800 clients) of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use identified a need for drug or alcohol based services (Figure SUB.1):

- almost half (45% or 4,400 clients) had their request met
- 2,000 clients (20%) were referred to another agency
- 3,400 clients (35%) had unmet needs for drug or alcohol based services (neither provided nor referred).

Figure SUB.1: Clients with problematic drug or alcohol issues, by most needed services and service provision status (top 6), 2018-19



Notes:

1. Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. 'Short-term accommodation' includes temporary and emergency accommodation and sustain tenancy/prevent eviction includes assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction.
3. 'Neither' indicates a service was neither provided nor referred.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table SUB.3.

The proportion of SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use with a case management plan has remained comparatively high over time (73% in 2018-19); however, those achieving all case management goals has remained low (15% in 2018-19). This group remains one of the least likely of all SHS client groups to meet all goals.

Outcomes at the end of support

Outcomes presented here highlight the changes in clients' housing situation between the start and end of support. Data is limited to clients who ceased receiving support during the financial year—meaning that their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the 2018-19 reporting period.

Many clients had long periods of support or even multiple support periods during 2018-19. They may have had a number of changes in their housing situation over the course of their support. These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here, rather the client situation at the start of their first period of support during 2018-19 is compared with the end of their last period of support in 2018-19. A proportion of these clients may have sought assistance prior to 2018-19, and may again in the future.

In 2018-19 (Table SUB.3):

- Over half of clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use began support known to be experiencing homelessness (56% or 9,800 clients); decreasing by 2,300 to 7,600 clients (46%) by the end of support. Compared with all other client groups, these clients were most likely to start and end support known to be experiencing homelessness.
- Much of the decrease in numbers of clients known to be experiencing homelessness can be attributed to the drop in clients sleeping rough (no shelter or improvised/inadequate dwellings); from 3,300 clients at the start to 1,800 at the end of support.
- One of the greatest changes in housing situation from the start to the end of SHS support was for those living in public or community housing; a 9 percentage point increase from around 12% to 20%.

While overall housing outcome figures generally reflect trends towards more favourable housing, experiences of homelessness, particularly rough sleeping, appear to be more common for clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use both at the start and end of SHS support.

Table SUB.3: Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol issues (closed support), by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2018-19

Housing situation	Beginning of support (number)	End of support (number)	Beginning of support (per cent)	End of support (per cent)
No shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling	3,315	1,848	18.8	11.2
Short term temporary accommodation	3,323	3,484	18.9	21.1
House, townhouse or flat - couch surfer or with no tenure	3,189	2,228	18.1	13.5
Total homeless	9,827	7,560	55.8	45.9
Public or community housing - renter or rent free	2,025	3,307	11.5	20.1
Private or other housing - renter, rent free or owner	3,054	3,720	17.4	22.6
Institutional settings	2,693	1,886	15.3	11.4
Total at risk	7,772	8,913	44.2	54.1
Total clients with known housing situation	17,599	16,473	100.0	100.0
Not stated/other	1,518	2,644		
Total clients	19,117	19,117		

Notes:

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated/other).
2. It is important to note that individual clients beginning support in one housing type need not necessarily be the same individuals ending support in that housing type.
3. Not stated/other includes those clients whose housing situation at either the beginning or end of support was unknown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. Supplementary table SUB.4.

Housing outcomes for homeless versus at risk clients

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (almost 7,100 clients), by the end of support ([Interactive Tableau visualisation](#)):

- Almost 1 in 3 (2,200 clients or 31%) were in private housing.
- Around 1,900 clients (27%) were in public or community housing.

A smaller number were experiencing homelessness at the end of support (around 1,600 clients or 23% of those who started support at risk).

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 8,500 clients), agencies were able to assist:

- 2,400 clients (28%) into short term accommodation
- 1,400 (16%) into private housing.

A further 1,600 clients (19%) were couch surfing at the end of support and 1,500 clients (17%) were rough sleeping at the end of support.

The characteristics of people with problematic drug and/or alcohol use as well as their service use patterns and housing outcomes were different from the other client groups presented in this report. Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were more likely to be male, present to agencies alone and be homeless at first presentation compared with overall SHS clients. They were also more likely to be returning clients and use support services to a greater extent.

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Client groups of interest

The long-term welfare of Australian Defence Force (ADF) members is of importance as the nature of military service may mean serving and ex-serving personnel are exposed to a greater number of risk factors that may influence their likelihood of experiencing homelessness, including:

- Complex personal needs - mental health issues and other complex vulnerabilities can be reflective of the unique demands of service (McFarlane et al. 2011).
- Financial stress - employment can become an issue for ADF members when transitioning from service to civilian life (Searle et al. 2019).

At 30 June 2018, there were more than 58,000 permanent current ADF members (Defence 2018). In addition, as at 30 June 2018, there were estimated to be around 641,300 living veterans, this figure includes all living persons who have ever served in the ADF either full-time or as reservists (DVA 2018).

Serving ADF personnel have access to housing and rental assistance through Defence Housing Australia. However, once personnel discharge from the ADF they are no longer able to access this housing support. Current or former ADF members can access a range of housing and homelessness services through government and non-government organisations (Defence 2017). To provide a better understanding of the extent to which current or former ADF members may need support from specialist homelessness services (SHS), the Australian Defence Force (ADF) indicator was introduced into the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) in July 2017.

It is important to note that variability in the implementation of this item means that coverage is incomplete and limited analyses are possible for 2018-19. As is common with new data items, there was a high number of 'don't know' (9%, down from 14% in 2017-18) or 'not applicable' (30%, up from 29% in 2017-18) responses to the ADF question in 2018-19. A 'don't know' response is selected if the information is not known or the client refuses to provide the information while a 'not applicable' response is selected if the client is under the age of 18. Expectations are that data quality will improve over time. Further details about the ADF indicator in the SHSC are provided in the [Technical information](#) section.

The [Use of specialist homelessness services by ex-serving ADF members 2011-12 to 2016-17](#) report used linked data to identify contemporary ex-serving ADF members (those who discharged after 1 January 2001) who had used services between 2011-12 and 2016-17. The report provides a longer term view of client, prior to the implementation of the ADF indicator in the SHSC.

Reporting ADF clients in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

The SHS ADF indicator is applied when a client self-identifies as a current or former ADF member. The ADF indicator is not applicable to clients who may have served in non-Australian defence forces, reservists who have never served as a permanent ADF member or clients under the age of 18. Note that differences between the results of this and other publicly reported estimates may be due to differences in how an ADF member is defined. Further details about the ADF indicator in the SHSC are provided in [Technical information](#).

Key findings

- In 2018-19, specialist homelessness services agencies assisted around 1,400 clients who identified as current or former members of the Australian Defence Force, up from almost 1,300 clients in 2017-18.
- Two-thirds were male (67% or more than 900 clients).
- Overall, more than a quarter of clients were aged 45-54 (27% or almost 400 clients).
- More than half (52% or around 700 clients) were known to be homeless when they sought assistance and 60% (more than 800 clients) were living alone.
- 65%, or more than 900 clients, had received SHS support before, with a high proportion of males aged 45-54 returning in 2018-19 (32% or almost 200 clients).

Client characteristics

In 2018-19, clients who self-identified as current or former members of the ADF (Table ADF.1):

- received a median of 58 days and 23 nights of support.
- had an average of 2.8 support periods per client.
- almost 2 in 3 (65%) had a case management plan and 1 in 5 (19%) had all case management goals achieved.

More than half (52%) of clients who were ADF members were experiencing homelessness at the time of seeking SHS support, which was higher than the general SHS population (42%).

	2017-18	2018-19
Number of clients	1,295	1,406
Housing situation at the beginning of the first support period (proportion (per cent) of all clients)		
Homeless	49	52
At risk of homelessness	51	48
Length of support (median number of days)	53	58
Average number of support periods per client	3.1	2.8
Proportion receiving accommodation	36	40
Median number of nights accommodated	31	23
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	65	65
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	20	19

Notes

1. The denominator for the proportion receiving accommodation is all SHS clients who have identified as current or former members of the Australian Defence Force. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.
2. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant supplementary table.

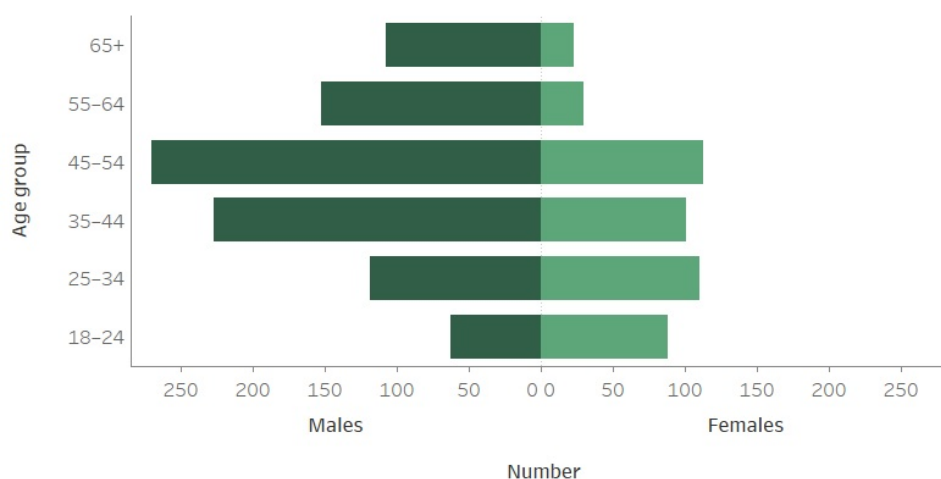
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017-18 to 2018-19.

Age and sex

In 2018-19, of clients who identified as current or former members of the ADF (Supplementary table ADF.1):

- Two-thirds (67% or more than 900 clients) were male (compared with 40% in the general SHS population) and more than a quarter (27% or almost 400 clients) were aged 45-54 (Figure ADF.1).
- More than twice the proportion of young females (aged 18-34) sought SHS support when compared with young males aged 18-34 (43% or 200 clients compared with 19% or 180 clients).
- There were more females aged 18-24 years than males, however there were more males than females in every other age category.

Figure ADF.1: Clients who are current or former members of the Australian Defence Force, by age and sex, 2018-19



Notes

1. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) indicator was introduced into the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) in July 2017.
2. The ADF indicator is not applicable to clients who may have served in non-Australian defence forces or reservists who have never served as a permanent ADF member.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19, Supplementary table ADF.1.

States and territories

In 2018-19, the highest number of clients accessed services in Victoria (44% or more than 600 clients) (Table ADF.2).

Table ADF.2: Clients who identified as current or former members of the Australian Defence Force, by states and territories, 2018-19

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	National
Number	312	624	257	94	67	54	17	52	1,406
Housing situation at the beginning of support									
Homeless	183	258	156	49	38	29	3	25	691
At risk of homelessness	107	312	92	41	20	24	12	25	619

Notes

1. Housing situation at the start of support excludes not stated/other.
2. Clients may access services in more than one state or territory. Therefore the total will be less than the sum of jurisdictions.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Living arrangements

In 2018-19, of clients who identified as current or former members of the ADF (Supplementary table ADF.4):

- On presentation to services for assistance more than half of clients (52%) were currently experiencing homelessness (compared with 42% of the general SHS population). Of those presenting homeless:
 - 40% (almost 300 clients) were rough sleeping (compared with 22% of the general SHS population)
 - 36% (around 250 clients) were in short-term or emergency accommodation (compared with 38% of the general SHS population).
- Just under half (48%) presented to services at risk of homelessness (compared with 58% of the general SHS population). Of those:
 - 61% were in private or other housing (compared with 61% of the general SHS population)
 - 19% were in public or community housing (compared with 23% of the general SHS population).

New and returning clients

In 2018-19, clients were either presenting to SHS agencies for the first time as new clients or had previously been assisted by a SHS agency at some point since the collection began in 2011-12 (Supplementary table ADF.7). More than a third of clients in 2018-19 were new (35% or almost 500 clients; compared with 45% of the general SHS population). One in 4 (25%) new clients were aged 45-54 years and an additional 1 in 5 (21%) were aged 35-44 years. Of those clients returning to SHS agencies for assistance (65% or around 900 clients), males were more likely to be aged 45-54 (32% or almost 200 clients), while females were more likely to be aged 25-34 (25% or almost 100 clients).

Selected vulnerabilities

SHS clients can face additional vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to experiencing homelessness, in particular family and domestic violence, a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

In 2018-19, of the more than 1,400 clients who self-identified as members of the ADF, almost 2 in 3 (66%) reported experiencing one or more of these vulnerabilities:

- 3 in 10 reported experiencing a current mental health issue only (30% or more than 400 clients).
- More than 1 in 10 (12%) reported both a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- 4% reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use only.
- 1 in 5 (20%) reported problematic drug and/or alcohol use, as a single vulnerability or in combination with other vulnerabilities.
- More than 1 in 5 (22%) reported experiencing family and domestic violence.
- 4% reported experiencing all 3 vulnerabilities.

Table ADF.3: Clients who are current or former members of the Australian Defence Force, by selected vulnerability characteristics, 2018-19

Family and domestic violence	Mental health issue	Problematic drug and or alcohol use	Clients	Per cent
Yes	Yes	Yes	51	3.6
Yes	Yes	No	141	10.0
Yes	No	Yes	8	0.6
No	Yes	Yes	163	11.6
Yes	No	No	103	7.3
No	Yes	No	416	29.6
No	No	Yes	53	3.8
No	No	No	471	33.5

Notes

1. Clients are assigned to one category only based on their vulnerability profile.
2. Clients are aged 18 and over.
3. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2018-19.

Main reasons for seeking assistance

SHS agencies provide a range of support services. For clients who self-identified as current or former members of the ADF receiving SHS support in 2018-19 (Supplementary table ADF.5 and ADF.6):

- The main reason for seeking assistance was housing crisis (26% or more than 350 clients), followed by financial difficulties (15% or around 200 clients).
- Both homeless and at risk clients most commonly identified housing crisis as their main reason for seeking assistance (29% or 200 clients and 23% or around 150 clients respectively).
- Clients at risk of homelessness were more likely to report financial difficulties as a main reason for seeking assistance (21% or more than 100 clients) than clients presenting as homeless (9% or less than 100 clients).

Services needed and provided

In 2018-19, the provision of support services to clients varied based on their identified need on presentation (Supplementary table ADF.3):

- Advice/information was most likely to be needed by clients (87% or more than 1,200 clients) and was provided to 99% (or around 1,200 clients).
- More than 2 in 3 (69%) clients needed accommodation and it was provided to more than half of those who needed it (59%). Three in 10 clients were unable to be provided or referred accommodation when a need was identified (30% or almost 300 clients).

Compared with the general SHS population, clients who self-identified as members of the ADF were more likely to need:

- financial information (34% compared with 26% in the general SHS population)
- health/medical services (17% compared with 9%)
- mental health services (14% compared with 8%).

Housing outcomes

For clients with a known housing status who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support (450 clients), by the end of support (Interactive Tableau visualisation):

- Half (around 250 clients or 55%) were in private housing
- Around 100 clients (18%) were in public or community housing.

For clients who were known to be homeless at the start of support (just over 400 clients), agencies were able to assist:

- More than 100 clients (28%) into short term accommodation
- 100 (22%) into private housing.

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Technical information

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Technical information

Key data quality information: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2018-19

The AIHW plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The AIHW works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and to compile, analyse and disseminate national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction.

Data Quality Statements are developed for each data set and made available on the AIHW Metadata Online Registry (METeOR). The 2018-19 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection [Data Quality Statement](#) is available from METeOR.

Breaks in time series

Clients subject to care and protection orders: Improvements made in 2015-16 to the method used to identify clients subject to care and protection orders mean that data from 2011-12 to 2014-15 are not comparable with data from 2015-16 onwards.

Source of income—DVA pension or payment: In 2017-18, the response options for source of income were updated and the three response options relating to payments or pensions from the Department of Veterans Affairs (disability pension—DVA, service pension—DVA and war widow(ers) pension—DVA) were replaced with a single response option of 'DVA pension or payment'. As the single 'DVA pension or payment' response option can include more payment types than the three options previously available, data on the 3 DVA pension or payments from 2011-12 to 2016-17 are not comparable with data on 'DVA pension or payment' from 2017-18 onwards.

Data issues that require caution when making comparisons

Disability: Data for clients with disability who require assistance may not be comparable across age groups due to differences in the interpretation of the disability questions; this issue relates mainly to young children.

Presenting unit type: Data for presenting unit type may not be comparable across age groups due to differences in interpretation of presenting units and how they are recorded. This issue mainly concerns young children and presenting unit type 'lone person'.

Housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability: Improvements made during 2014-15 resulted in changes to the way agencies were required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. In addition, wording providing a specific example of housing crisis was removed from the section relating to reason for seeking assistance. Caution should be used when making comparisons over time as the reporting of these items may be inconsistent between agencies. These changes in agency reporting were evident in the data from all states and territories.

Children presenting alone: South Australia has a comparatively high number of children reported as presenting alone. This may be due to a difference in how presenting units are recorded in South Australia's client management system. Caution should be used when comparing data for children presenting alone in South Australia with other states and territories.

Case management: Some aspects of case management are recorded differently in South Australia's client management system. Caution should be used when comparing data on case management for South Australia with other states and territories.

Services and Assistance—Assertive outreach: In 2017-18, there was a clarification made to the response option used to record clients who needed, or were provided, or referred assertive outreach services. The option was changed to specify that this service was directly targeted at rough sleepers. Due to this change, caution should be taken when comparing the number of clients receiving assertive outreach services before and after 2017-18.

Improvements to data items

Mandatory data items: Changes made in 2014-15 resulted in a substantial improvement in data quality for mandatory data items and in particular resulted in a decline in the number of non-response or missing values for these data items. Care should be used when comparing results from 2011-12 to 2013-14 with results from 2014-15 onwards.

Housing situation: Following improvement in the derivation for housing situation used in the SHSC in 2016-17, clients with a tenure status of 'life tenure scheme' are now counted under the housing situation category 'private or other housing (renter, rent-free or owner)' if their dwelling status was 'housing/townhouse/flat'. This change has very little impact on housing situation percentages and hence does not constitute a break in time series.

Age: In 2017-18, age and age-related variables were derived using a more robust calculation method. Caution should be used when comparing results with publications from December 2018 onwards that include 2017-18 data with previously issued publications.

New South Wales homelessness services underwent a period of major transition in 2014-15 that affected continuity of reporting for some service providers. These issues did not affect New South Wales data for 2017-18, 2016-17 or 2015-16. As outlined in the [Data Quality Statement](#) caution should be used when making comparisons of 2014-15 data with other years' figures for New South Wales or with data for other states and territories. Other jurisdictional-specific information can be found in the Data Quality Statement.

Further information on the data quality of 2018-19 SHSC data can be found in the Explanatory notes in the [Supplementary tables](#).

Imputation and weighting

Data from 2011-12 to 2016-17 are weighted to account for variable rates of agency response and SLK validity. However, due to improvements in agency response and SLK validity rates, data for 2017-18 onwards are not weighted. Unweighted data for 2017-18 onwards are directly comparable with weighted data for 2011-12 to 2016-17. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series.

The annual SHS report and accompanying products presenting financial year data for 2011-12 to 2016-17 are weighted. However, other AIHW publications that analyse the pathways of individual clients over time periods more than a single financial year and publications using SHS data linked with data from other collections, do not use weighted data.

Data derivations

Homelessness status and other housing categories

All clients of specialist homelessness services are considered to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Homelessness and at-risk status is determined by the specific criteria described below using three aspects of a client's housing situation: dwelling type, housing tenure and their conditions of occupancy.

Clients are considered to be homeless if they are living in any of the following circumstances:

- No shelter or improvised dwelling: includes where dwelling type is no dwelling/street/park/in the open, motor vehicle, improvised building/dwelling, caravan, cabin, boat or tent; or tenure type is renting or living rent-free in a caravan park.
- Short-term temporary accommodation: dwelling type is boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation, hotel/motel/bed and breakfast; or tenure type is renting or living rent-free in boarding/rooming house, renting or living rent-free in emergency accommodation, or renting or living rent-free in transitional housing.
- House, townhouse or flat (couch surfing or with no tenure): dwelling type is House/townhouse/flat, and tenure type is no tenure or conditions of occupancy is couch surfing.

Clients are considered to be at risk if they are living in any of the following circumstances:

- Public or community housing (renter or rent free): dwelling type is house/townhouse/flat and tenure type is renter or rent-free in public housing, or renter or rent-free in community housing.
- Private or other housing (renter, rent-free or owner): dwelling type is house/townhouse/flat and tenure type is renter or rent free in private housing, life tenure scheme, owner—shared equity or rent/buy scheme, owner—being purchased/with mortgage, owner—fully owned, or other renter or rent free.
- Institutional settings: dwelling type is hospital, psychiatric hospital/unit, disability support, rehabilitation, boarding school/residential college, adult correctional facility, youth/juvenile justice correctional centre, aged care facility or immigration detention centre.

Clients who did not provide any information regarding the three aspects of their housing situation are classified as 'not stated'.

In some cases, information about a client's dwelling type, tenure and conditions of occupancy may be partially complete and therefore there is not enough information to assign a client to any of the specific housing situation criteria above. Where analysis and report content relates to these more detailed housing situation categories, those clients with incomplete information are grouped with other clients with missing data as 'other/not stated'.

However, there may be enough information to determine whether the client is broadly homeless or at risk, in which case the client will be assigned to either 'other - homeless' or 'other - at risk' for some analysis.

More specifically, those allocated to 'other - homeless' includes clients who stated that they have 'no tenure' or that they are a 'couch surfer'. Clients in the 'other - at-risk' category are clients that have stated a response to at least one of the three aspects of their housing situation but there is not enough information to classify them as homeless.

Please see the footnotes for each table or figure to confirm the inclusion or exclusion of 'other' and 'not stated' categories.

The homeless and at-risk categories are designed to, as far as is possible, align with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical definition of homelessness (ABS 2012a). However, there are some key areas where alignment may not occur. The ABS definition includes people living in severely crowded dwellings and as no specific question on crowding is included in the SHSC, this group cannot be separately identified.

Also, the ABS exclude certain groups of people from the homeless count where they appear to have accommodation alternatives or where there is a clear choice about the type of accommodation (for example, people who are travelling, people returning from overseas, certain owner builder or hobby farmers, and students living in halls of residence). However, if people in these circumstances become clients of specialist homelessness agencies, they are included here as either homeless or at risk of homelessness, depending on their housing situation as reported.

Support periods

The period of time a client receives services from a specialist homelessness agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service and ends when:

- the relationship between the client and the agency ends
- the client has reached their maximum amount of support the agency can offer
- a client has not received any services from the agency for a whole calendar month and there is no ongoing relationship.

The end of the support period is the day the client last received services from the agency.

Calculating total length of accommodation (and total length of support)

To calculate accommodation and support length, every night (for length of accommodation) or day (for length of support) the client received support or accommodation in 2018-19 is added together. This means that the total number of days/nights presented for clients does not necessarily represent a consecutive number of days/nights the client received support/accommodation. For example, a client who received accommodation for 7 nights may have had 2 separate periods of accommodation: 1 for 5 nights and another for 2 nights.

Agency remoteness area

Agencies have been classified according to their remoteness area (RA) as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure (ABS 2016). The latest available version of the RA indicator (from the 2016 Census) has been developed by the ABS. The Remoteness Areas divide Australia into five classes of remoteness on the basis of relative access to services. Access to services is measured using the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), developed by the Hugo Centre for Migration and Population Research at the University of Adelaide. ARIA+ is derived by measuring the road distance from a point to the nearest Urban Centres and Localities in five separate population ranges.

Using this classification, agencies participating in the SHSC were assigned to an RA based on their recorded state, suburb, postcode and/or Local Government Area (LGA) values. Where available, a combination of these fields was used to assign RA for a given agency to improve accuracy.

Client geography

Clients have been assigned to a region based on where they lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency. Regions are defined by the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), developed by the ABS (ABS 2016a).

Clients are assigned to only one region, based on the location details (locality, postcode and state/territory) provided in the first support period active in the reference year. The first support period is defined as the earliest starting support period active in the financial year.

Where there are multiple support periods that meet this criteria (i.e. share the same start date), a support period is randomly selected as the first support period.

In 2018-19, approximately 10% of clients could not be assigned to a statistical area 2 (SA2) region due to missing or incomplete address information.

Identifying and meeting service needs

Identifying clients' needs for a service

The SHSC collects information on the needs of clients during their period of support from a specialist homelessness agency. Needs may be identified by the client and/or the service provider. Although this information is collected at the beginning of a support period, updated at the end of each month a client is supported and again at the end of each support period, each individual need is only recorded once in any collection month. For these analyses, a client need for a service is recorded if the client needed that service at any time in 2018-19. For example, a client is recorded as needing short-term accommodation if they were recorded as needing short-term accommodation in any collection month of 2018-19, regardless of the number of months over which this need was recorded, or the number of times during 2018-19 they presented with this need.

Meeting clients' service needs

There are several aspects to analysing the extent to which clients' needs for assistance are met. The first is to analyse the services provided to a client directly by the specialist homelessness agency. Where agencies are unable to provide services directly to clients or unable to fully meet the need they often refer the client to other organisations (either other specialist homelessness agencies or other organisations) that can provide those services. This information is also collected in the SHSC and is considered an important form of assistance that agencies provide, although it is not possible to know if these referrals resulted in the provision of services.

All information on services that are provided, whether referred or not, are recorded in the same way as service needs. That is, a service is recorded as provided if the client was provided that type of assistance at any time in 2018-19.

In some circumstances, an agency will not be able to either provide required services directly to clients, or refer them to another organisation—this is considered to be an unmet need. Further information about unmet needs can be found in the [Unmet demand](#) section of the report.

Indigenous clients

A client is considered as Indigenous if, in any support period in 2018-19, they identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

In the SHSC, information on Indigenous status is only provided with explicit client consent to report this information. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander was not reported for 9% of clients in 2018-19.

Clients born overseas

A client is identified as overseas-born, if in the majority of support periods in 2018-19, they identified that their country of birth was a country other than Australia.

In the SHSC, information on country of birth is only provided with explicit client consent to report this information. Country of birth information was not reported for 14% of clients in 2018-19.

Young people presenting alone

Young people are defined as clients aged 15-24 who presented alone in their first support period in the reporting period.

The age of the client is defined as the client's age on the start date of their first support period in the reporting period. For those who were ongoing clients at the beginning of the reporting period, the client's age on the first day of the reporting period is used.

Older people

Older people are defined as clients aged 55 or older.

The age of the client is defined as their age on the start date of their first support period in the reporting period. For those who were ongoing clients at the beginning of the reporting period, the client's age on the first day of the reporting period is used.

Clients who experienced family and domestic violence

SHSC clients were counted as experiencing family and domestic violence if any support period during the reporting period:

- 'family and domestic violence' was reported as a reason they sought assistance, or
- during any support period they required family or domestic violence assistance.

The SHSC reports on clients who are victims of family and domestic violence. Currently perpetrators family and domestic violence who may also be receiving assistance from a homelessness agency are not able to be identified within the SHSC.

Clients with a current mental health issue

A client was identified as having a current mental health issue if they provided any of the following information:

- They indicated that at the beginning of a support period they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the past 12 months.
- Their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health service.
- They reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance.
- Their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was a psychiatric hospital or unit.
- They had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months.
- At some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services.

This analysis does not include clients aged under 10.

In the SHSC, information on a mental health issue is only provided with explicit client consent to report this information.

Clients on care and protection orders

A client is identified as being under a care or protection order if they are aged under 18 and have provided any of the following information in any support period (any month within the support period) during the reporting period (either the week before, at the beginning of the support period or during support):

- They reported that they were under a care and protection order (and the care arrangement was known).
- They have reported 'Transition from foster care/child safety residential placements' as a reason for seeking assistance, or main reason for seeking assistance.

In the SHSC, if a client is under the age of 18 and has a care and protection order, consent is required to determine their care arrangements.

Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use

A client is identified as having problematic drug and/or alcohol use if they were aged 10 years or older and have provided any of the following information either at the beginning of support or in any support period during the reporting period (either the week before or at beginning of the support period):

- Their dwelling type was recorded as rehabilitation.
- Their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a drug and alcohol service.
- During their support they required drug/alcohol counselling.

- They have been in a rehabilitation facility/institution in the last 12 months.
- They have reported 'problematic drug or substance abuse' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance or main reason for seeking assistance.

Clients leaving care

Clients are counted as transitioning from care arrangements if, in their first support period during the reporting period, either in the week before or at presentation:

- The dwelling type was: hospital (excluding psychiatric), psychiatric hospital or unit, disability support, rehabilitation or aged care facility, or
- Their reason for seeking assistance was transition from foster care/child safety residential placements or transition from other care arrangements.

Clients who were exiting custodial arrangements

Clients are counted as leaving a custodial setting if, in their first support period during the reporting period, either in the week before or at presentation:

- their dwelling type was: adult correctional facility, youth or juvenile justice detention centre or immigration detention centre or
- their reason for seeking assistance was: transition from custodial arrangements or
- their source of formal referral to the agency was: youth or juvenile justice detention centre, or adult correctional facility.

Some of these clients were still in custody at the time they began receiving support.

Children aged under 10 identified as exiting from adult correction facilities or youth/juvenile justice detention centres have been excluded because of concerns about the quality of the data, as children aged under 10 years cannot be charged with a criminal offence in any jurisdiction in Australia. Children aged under 10 transitioning from immigration detention centres have been retained in this group.

New and returning clients

Clients are identified in the SHSC as new clients if, in their first support period during the reporting period, they:

- had not previously been assisted by a specialist homelessness agency, at any time since the collection began in 2011-12.

Clients are identified as returning if, in their first support period during the reporting period, they:

- had previously been assisted by a specialist homelessness agency at any time since the collection began in 2011-12.

This measure provides contextual information about service use patterns.

Unassisted requests for services

Unassisted requests for services provide a measure of the number of instances where a person received no immediate services from a specialist homelessness agency. It is not a measure of the number of people who did not receive services from an agency. Numbers exclude multiple requests from the same person (at any agency) on the same day, but may include requests from the same person (at any agency) on different days.

The data are presented as a daily average of requests for services because the information that is used to create the SLK was not available for 47% of the unmet requests for service in 2018-19. Without a valid SLK, it is not possible to identify whether a person requested the same service more than once from the same agency or from different agencies on different days. Similarly, people who received services at a later date, thus becoming clients, cannot be identified where a valid SLK is not available.

Over recent years, a number of jurisdictions have made changes to services delivery models and in particular toward central intake service delivery models. In practice, these systems often require agency workers to provide assistance of some kind to all presenting individuals. Therefore, caution should be used when comparing data over time and between states and territories, particularly data relating to unassisted requests.

Technical information

Data presented in the report and in the supplementary tables are mainly based on ‘clients’, with some data based on ‘support periods’ or ‘client groups’ (or ‘presenting units’—which identify clients who present together to a specialist homelessness agency, including clients who present alone—and receive a service). Information on clients who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or part of a group of special interest, is mostly client-level data and information on agencies, unmet demand and trends data is predominantly support period data.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has strict confidentiality policies which have their basis in section 29 of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987 (AIHW Act)* and the *Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act)*. Cells in supplementary tables may be suppressed for either confidentiality reasons or where estimates are based on small numbers, resulting in low reliability. Information that results in attribute disclosure, (that is, if as well as being able to identify the entity, other details are revealed), will be suppressed unless agreement from the particular data provider to publish the data has been reached. Information on AIHW’s Privacy policy is available on the [privacy page](#).

Population estimates used for rates calculations

All rates in this report, including historical rates, have been calculated using population estimates based on the 2016 Census. All Indigenous rates in this report are calculated using the Indigenous population estimates and projections, based on the 2011 Census.

Population rates

Crude rates are calculated using the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population (ERP) at the start of the range (for example, rates for 2011-12 were calculated using the ERP at 30 June 2011). Rates for 2018-19 data were calculated using the preliminary ERP at 30 June 2018.

Minor adjustments in rates may occur between publications reflecting revision of the estimated resident population by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Age-standardised rates

Population rates were adjusted (standardised) for age to enhance the comparison between populations over time that have different age structures. Specifically, direct standardisation has been used where age-specific rates are applied to a standard population (the ERP as at 30 June 2001, unless otherwise specified). This effectively accounts for the influence of age structure on the calculated rate and is referred to as the age-standardised rate. In this publication direct age-standardisation has been used to compare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2011).

Rate ratio

Rate ratios are mainly used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates and provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. A rate ratio is calculated by dividing the client rate for Indigenous Australian by the client rate for non-Indigenous Australians.

Average annual rates of change

The average annual rates of change or growth rates have been calculated as geometric rates:

$$\text{Average rate of change} = ((P_n/P_o)^{(1/n)} - 1) \times 100$$

where:

P_n = value in the later time period

P_o = value in the earlier time period

n = number of years between the 2 time periods.



Technical information

Concept	Definition
Accommodation services	<p>Accommodation services include short-term or emergency accommodation, medium-term/transitional housing, assistance to obtain long term housing, assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction and assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears.</p>
At risk of homelessness	<p>A person is described as at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation or they are experiencing one or more of a range of factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness.</p> <p>Risk factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• financial stress (including due to loss of income, low income, gambling, change of family circumstances)• housing affordability stress and housing crisis (pending evictions/foreclosures, rental and/or mortgage arrears)• inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, including accommodation that is unsafe, unsuitable or overcrowded• previous accommodation ended• relationship/family breakdown• child abuse, neglect or environments where children are at risk• sexual abuse• domestic/family violence• non-family violence• mental health issues and other health problems• problematic alcohol, drug or substance use• employment difficulties and unemployment• problematic gambling• transitions from custodial and care arrangements, including out-of-home care,• independent living arrangements for children aged under 18, health and mental health facilities/programs, juvenile/youth justice and correctional facilities• discrimination, including racial discrimination (e.g. Aboriginal people in the urban rental market)• disengagement with school or other education and training• involvement in, or exposure to, criminal activities• antisocial behaviour• lack of family and/or community support• staying in a boarding house for 12 weeks or more without security of tenure.• The measurement of this concept in the SHSC is defined in the Data derivation section.
Client	<p>A Specialist homelessness agency client is a person who receives a specialist homelessness service. A client can be of any age. Children are also clients if they receive a service from a specialist homelessness agency. To be a client the person must directly receive a service and not just be a beneficiary of a service. Children who present with an adult and receive a service are considered to be a client. Children of a client or other household members who present but do not directly receive a service are not considered to be clients.</p>

SHS clients are identified as being on a care and protection order if they are aged under 18 and provided any of the following information in any support period (any month within the support period) during the reporting period (either the week before, at the beginning of the support period or during support).

They reported that they are on a care and protection order and that they had the following care arrangements:

Client on a care and protection order

- residential care
- family group home
- relatives/kin/friends who are reimbursed
- foster care
- other home-based care (reimbursed)
- relatives/kin/friends who are not reimbursed
- independent living
- other living arrangements
- parents; or
- They have reported 'Transition from foster care/child safety residential placements' as a reason for seeking assistance, or main reason for seeking assistance.

SHS clients with a current mental health issue are identified as such if they have provided any of the following information:

Client with a current mental health issue

- they indicated that at the beginning of a support period they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the last 12 months
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health service
- they reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance
- their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was as a psychiatric hospital or unit
- they had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months
- at some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services.

SHS clients with a current problematic drug and/or alcohol use are identified as such if they are 10 years or older and have provided any of the following information:

Client with problematic drug and/or alcohol use

- their dwelling type was recorded as rehabilitation.
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a drug and alcohol service.
- during their support they required drug/alcohol counselling.
- they have been in a rehabilitation facility/institution in the last 12 months.
- they have reported 'problematic drug or substance abuse' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance or main reason for seeking assistance.

SHS clients with severe or profound disability are identified as such if at any time they have provided the following information:

- they 'always/sometimes need help or supervision' with self-care, mobility or communication for any support period during the reporting period.

Client with disability

The definition used to identify clients with disability (for the purposes of analyses for this report) is similar to that used for ABS Census questions that measure 'core activity need for assistance'. The Census questions are a simplified version of the comprehensive questions used in the ABS Survey of Disability and Carers (SDAC). The Census's simplified questions are conceptually comparable with 'severe or profound core activity limitation' in the SDAC.

The ABS Census aims to identify people who need assistance in their day-to-day lives with any or all of the following core activities: self-care, mobility or communication (ABS 2012b). The SHSC takes a similar approach in gathering information from clients of specialist homelessness services about disability.

To align with the ABS definition of 'core activity need for assistance', clients who did not report needing assistance (such as 'have difficulty but don't need help/supervision' or 'don't have difficulty, but use aids/equipment') with self-care, mobility or communication are not included as clients with severe or profound disability for SHS analyses.

Measuring disability in the SHSC

A long-term health condition is one that has lasted, or is expected to last, 6 months or more.

Examples of long-term health conditions that might restrict everyday activities include severe asthma, epilepsy, mental health conditions, hearing loss, arthritis, autism, kidney disease, chronic pain, speech impediment and stroke.

Disability is a general term that covers:

- impairments in body structures or functions (for example, loss or abnormality of a body part)
- limitations in everyday activities (such as difficulty bathing or managing daily routines)
- restrictions in participation in life situations (such as needing special arrangements to attend work).

Disability measurement in the SHSC

The SHSC collects information on whether, and to what extent, a long-term health condition or disability restricts clients' everyday activities across the following 3 life areas:

- Self-care—the client needs help/supervision with self-care (e.g. showering or bathing, dressing or undressing, using the toilet or eating food)
- Mobility—the client needs help/supervision with mobility (e.g. moving around the house, moving around outside the home, or getting into or out of a chair)
- Communication—the client needs help/supervision with communication (e.g. understanding or being understood by other people, including people they know).

General services include:

- family/relationship assistance
- assistance for incest/sexual assault
- legal information
- material aid/brokerage
- financial information
- educational assistance
- training assistance
- employment assistance
- assistance to obtain/maintain government allowances
- assertive outreach for rough sleepers
- child care
- assistance for trauma
- assistance for challenging social/behavioural problems
- living skills/personal development
- court support
- advice/information
- retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings
- advocacy/liaison on behalf of client
- school liaison
- structured play/skills development
- child contact and residence arrangements
- meals
- laundry/shower facilities
- recreation
- transport and
- other basic assistance.

General services

For the purpose of the SHSC a person is defined as homeless if they are living in either:

- non-conventional accommodation or ‘sleeping rough’, or
- short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options.

Non-conventional accommodation (primary homeless) is defined as:

- living on the streets
- sleeping in parks
- squatting
- staying in cars or railway carriages
- living in improvised dwellings
- living in the long grass.

Homelessness

This definition aligns closely with the cultural definition of primary homelessness.

Short-term or emergency accommodation (secondary homeless) includes:

- refuges
- crisis shelters
- couch surfing or no tenure
- living temporarily with friends and relatives
- insecure accommodation on a short-term basis
- emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency (for example, in hotels, motels and so forth).

This definition aligns closely with the cultural definition of secondary homelessness.

The measurement of Homelessness in the SHSC is defined in the Data derivation section.

The ABS definition of homelessness for estimates derived from the Census of Population and Housing can be found in ABS catalogue 2049.0 (ABS 2012a).

Other support services	Other support services refer to the assistance, other than accommodation services, provided to a client. They include domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.
Specialist homelessness agency	A specialist homelessness agency is an organisation which receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services to a client. These can be either not-for-profit or for profit agencies.
Specialist homelessness service(s)	Specialist homelessness service(s) is assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. The specialist homelessness services in scope for this collection include accommodation provision, assistance to sustain housing, domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.
Stable housing	Stable housing , for the purpose of the SHSC, refers to clients ending support in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter, rent free or owner), or Institutional settings.

Technical information

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CPO	Care and Protection Order
DSS	Department of Social Services
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NHHA	National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SLK	statistical linkage key

Symbols

—	nil or rounded to zero
. .	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data



Technical information

1. ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2012a. Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011. ABS cat. no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.
 2. ABS 2012b. [Census data quality statement: core activity need for assistance](#). Canberra: ABS. Viewed 17 August 2016, .
 3. ABS 2016. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 5 - Remoteness Structure July 2016. ABS cat. no. 1270.0.55.005. Canberra: ABS.
 4. ABS 2016a. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 1 - Main structure and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas July 2016. ABS cat. no. 1270.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.
 5. AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2011. [Principles on the use of direct age-standardisation in administrative data collections: for measuring the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians](#). Data linkage series. Cat. no. CSI 12. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 17 August 2016
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Interactive data visualisation

Australia's Specialist Homelessness Services Dashboard Contents

Click on topic of interest to explore further

Specialist Homelessness Services: 2018–19

**Client
Characteristics**

SHS client
characteristics
2018–19

**Client
Geography**

SHS client
geography, SA4
2018–19

**Client
Outcomes**

SHS client
housing outcomes
2018–19

Specialist Homelessness Services Historical Trends: 2012–13 to 2018–19

**Historical
Trends**

SHS client
group trends
2012–13 to 2018–19

**Indigenous
Trends**

Aboriginal and
Torres Strait
Islander clients
2012–13 to 2018–19

Supplementary information

**Explanatory
Notes**

Data technical notes



Fact sheets by state and territory





On any given day infographics

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Notes

Amendments

6 Oct 2020 - Data in table ADF.1 in the client group snapshot “Clients who are current or former members of the ADF” has been revised.

20 May 2020 - Minor updates to the [Victorian fact sheet](#) - Client groups of interest section and a hyperlink was added to the *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2018-19*.



Data





Report editions

Newer releases

- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022-23 |
Web report | 12 Dec 2023
- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021-22 |
Web report | 08 Dec 2022
- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020-21 |
Web report | 07 Oct 2022
- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2019-20 |
Web report | 11 Dec 2020

This release

Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2018-19 | 18 Dec 2019

Previous releases

- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18 |
Web report | 13 Feb 2019
- Specialist homelessness services annual report 2016-17 |
Web report | 12 Feb 2018
- Specialist homelessness services 2015-16 |
Web report | 15 Dec 2016
- Specialist homelessness services 2014-15 |
Web report | 11 Dec 2015
- Specialist homelessness services 2013-14 |
Publication | 15 Dec 2014
- Specialist homelessness services 2012-13 |
Publication | 17 Dec 2013
- Specialist Homelessness Services 2011-12 |
Publication | 18 Dec 2012





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