



Specialist homelessness services 2015-16

Web report | Last updated: 15 Dec 2016 | Topic: [Homelessness services](#) | [Media release](#)

About

The specialist homelessness services 2015-16 web report is the fifth 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 2015-16.

Cat. no: WEB 162

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

Findings from this report:

- 275 requests for assistance were unable to be met each day
 - Almost 2 in 5 clients sought support for domestic and family violence
 - 1 in 4 clients were Indigenous, compared with just 1 in 33 of the population overall
-



Policy framework for reducing homelessness and service response

Governments across Australia fund a range of services to support people who are homeless or 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 domestic violence), as well as those that provide more generic services to those facing housing crises.

This report describes:

- the people who received assistance from specialist homelessness agencies in 2015–16, the assistance they received and their changes in housing and other circumstances
- trends in the characteristics of clients, the services they receive, and their outcomes
- the people who requested services in 2015–16 but were not provided with support at that time.

Data describing clients who have a disability and need support with core activities are presented from 2013–14 onwards.

The data in this publication are compiled from the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), which is conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

People who are homeless or facing 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.

Policy framework for reducing homelessness

Many Australians experience events in their life that may place them at risk of homelessness. It is estimated that half (50%) of lower income households experience affordability issues due to rental stress (paying more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs) [1], and around 1 in 6 women have experienced some form of domestic and family violence in their lifetime, putting them at risk of homelessness [2].

In the 2011 Census, 105,000 Australians were classified as homeless. This figure includes people in supported accommodation for the homeless, people in temporary accommodation, those 'sleeping rough' and people living in severely crowded dwellings (those that required 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the residents) [3].

Responses to homelessness are funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The NPAH contributes to the NAHA outcome that 'people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion' and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and state and territory governments in relation to reducing and preventing homelessness. In 2015–16, the Australian government committed funding of \$230 million over 2 years, under the NPAH, which was matched by states and territories to fund the delivery of specialist homelessness services.

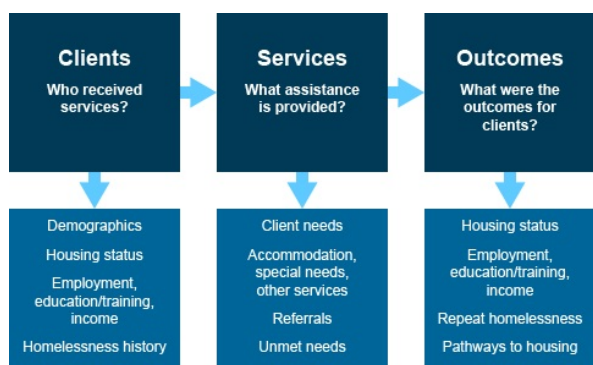
About the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

The SHSC began on 1 July 2011. The collection has been designed to collect data from homelessness agencies that are funded under the NAHA and the NPAH. State and territory departments identify agencies that are expected to participate in data collection. These agencies vary widely in terms of the services they provide and the service delivery frameworks they use. These 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 in the [Specialist Homelessness Services 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 circumstances—are collected at the end of every month in which the client receives services and again when contact with the client has ceased. Some data are self-reported, others require consent to publish. Information regarding these items is found in the [Technical information](#) section.

This information contributes to building a picture of clients, the specialist homelessness services that were provided to them and outcomes achieved for the client (Figure FRAMEWORK.1). 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 and supported accommodation do contribute to the profile of homelessness in Australia.

Figure framework 1: Conceptual framework of the SHSC client collection



The data collected by agencies are based on periods of support provided to clients. These support periods vary in terms of their duration, the number of contacts between Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) workers and clients, and the reasons support ends. Some support periods are relatively short (and are likely to have begun and ended in 2015–16) and others are much longer—many of these might have been ongoing from the previous year, and/or were still ongoing at the end of 2015–16.

Certain information collected about the client (selected letters of name, date of birth and sex) is used to construct a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) to bring together all data about each client who had multiple support periods (either with the same agency or with different agencies) during the reporting year. Note that while a client may have received SHS support in a previous year, use of homelessness services in prior year(s) is out of scope for SHS annual reporting purposes.

All data presented in this report and in the supplementary tables have been adjusted for agency non-response and data error in the Statistical Linkage Key (SLK). Detailed information about the weighting and estimation strategy for 2015–16 can be found in the [Technical information](#) section.

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, imputation methodology applied to these data, and information about the quality of the data obtained through the SHSC for 2015–16 is available in the [Technical information](#) section.

Delivery of homelessness services across Australia

Each state and territory manages their own system for the assessment, intake, referral and ongoing case management of specialist homelessness services clients. Box FRAMEWORK.1 summarises the delivery systems operating in Australia. Although presented as 3 distinct delivery models, these systems are representative of a range of approaches jurisdictions may employ to coordinate entry into specialist homelessness services. Changes implemented by jurisdictions 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 & intake:** managed by individual SHS providers, consistent with state or territory policies.
- **Referral:** refer to other SHS providers if clients' needs are not able to be met by initial SHS provider.
- May 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?

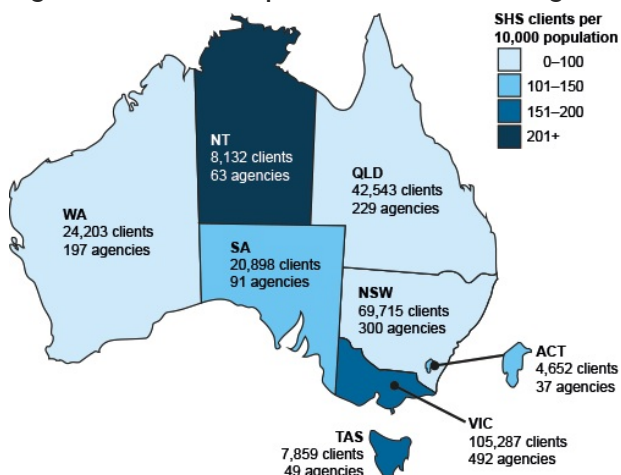
A specialist homelessness agency reporting to the SHSC is an organisation that receives government funding to deliver accommodation-related and personal services to people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. While it is recognised that other organisations not directly funded by the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

SHS agencies vary considerably in size and in the types of assistance they provide. Across Australia, agencies provide services aimed at prevention and early intervention, 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 intervention services, domestic and family 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/ 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, there were 1,458 agencies that delivered specialist homelessness services to an estimated 279,196 clients during 2015–16 (Figure FRAMEWORK.2).

Figure framework 2: Specialist homelessness agencies and clients, by jurisdiction, 2015–16



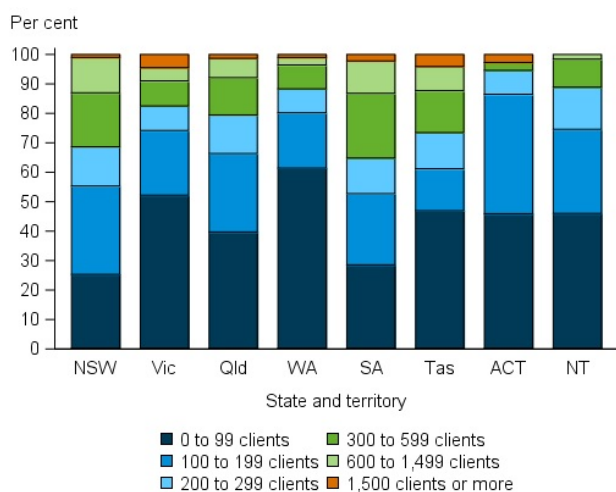
Notes

1. Client count has been adjusted for non-response. Clients may access services in more than one state or territory, therefore the 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, 2015–16.

Agencies range considerably in size, with some agencies assisting 100 clients per year and others upward 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 within each jurisdiction. Across all jurisdictions in 2015–16 the largest proportion of agencies assisted fewer than 100 clients, ranging from 61% in Western Australia to 29% in South Australia. Agencies assisting a large number of clients (more than 1,500 in 2015–16) exist in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory. Victoria has the most agencies of this size (22).

Figure framework 3: Specialist homelessness agencies, by client range and jurisdiction, 2015–16



Note: Client count has been adjusted for non-response.

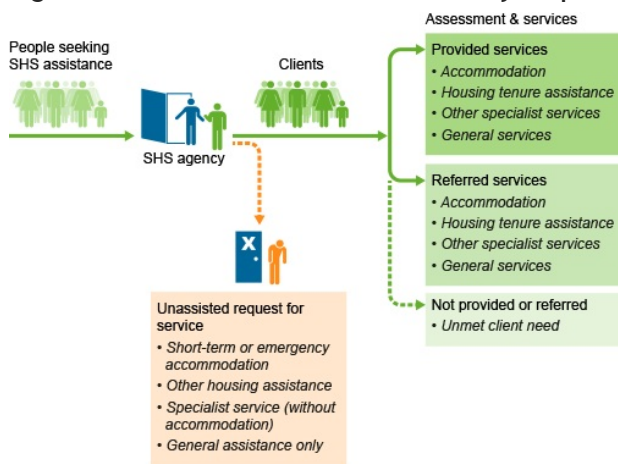
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015–16.

SHS agencies and their service delivery

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 neither receive nor be referred for a service and their need therefore goes unmet (see Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services section). These unmet needs are captured to assist in determining the ability of the sector to respond to client needs.

Sometimes SHS agencies cannot assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These instances are captured to assist in determining the ability of the sector to cope with demand. An 'unassisted request for service' is an instance where a person who approaches an agency is unable to be provided with any assistance (see [Technical information](#) section).

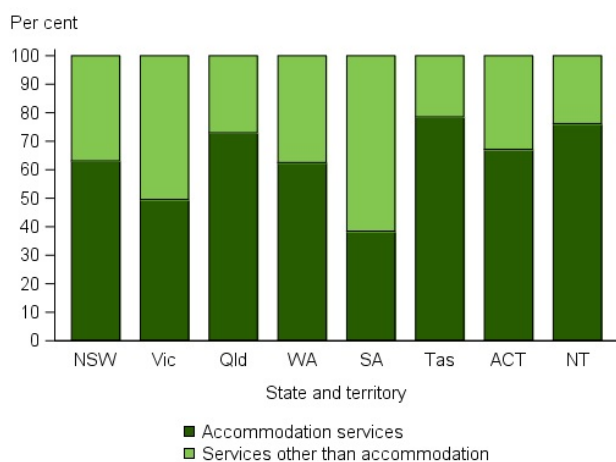
Figure framework 4: Access to and delivery of specialist homelessness services



Specialist homelessness services in all jurisdictions can be categorised as either accommodation services (either the direct provision of accommodation or assistance for the client to remain housed) or 'services other than accommodation'. The proportion of SHS clients receiving accommodation services varied across states and territories with 76% of clients in Tasmania and the Northern Territory receiving these services (FRAMEWORK.5). In contrast, 61% of clients in South Australia were provided services other than accommodation. This variation reflects differences in the demand for accommodation services, service delivery models, and housing options across jurisdictions.

While the extent to which these data reflect limitations in housing stock cannot be determined, it does serve to highlight governments' commitment to assist not only the homeless into secure housing but also those in unstable housing situations to remain housed. This integration and expansion of specialist homelessness services are reflected in the jurisdictional client profiles in figure framework 5.

Figure framework 5: Clients of specialist homelessness services, by service type, states and territories, 2015–16



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 2015–16.
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.
4. The proportion of clients who received accommodation services broadly reflects the demand for accommodation services in each jurisdiction and may be influenced by the delivery model employed in the state or territory and/or a limitation in accommodation stock of the jurisdiction.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services, 2015–16.

References

1. ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2013a. Housing and occupancy costs, 2011–12. ABS cat no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS.
2. ABS 2013b. Personal safety, Australia, 2012. ABS cat no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS.
3. ABS 2012. Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011. ABS cat no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.



Clients, services and outcomes

Specialist homelessness agencies provide a wide range of services to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ranging from general support and assistance to immediate crisis accommodation. This section outlines the characteristics of all clients assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 2015-16, describes their needs for assistance and the services they received. It also provides some key trends for the 5 years from 2011-12 (the start of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection-SHSC) to 2015-16.

Key findings in 2015-16

- Client numbers were up 9% from 2014-15 to 279,196, with support rising in parallel.
- Clients are getting older. One in 5 clients (over 54,000) were aged over 45 years; this is a 13% increase in clients in this age group compared with the previous year. By comparison, there was an 8% increase in clients aged under 45 years over the same period.
- While the median length of support has increased from 33 to 35 days compared with 2014-15, the proportion of clients receiving accommodation has decreased (31% compared with 33%) and so has the length of their accommodation (33 nights compared with 34).
- Agencies were best able to assist clients living in private or other housing to remain housed (79% of these clients remained housed, or nearly 57,000).
- The average amount of financial assistance provided totalled \$520 per client, up from \$468 in 2014-15 (not adjusted for inflation).

Clients: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Over 800,000

clients have been supported by homelessness agencies between 2011-12 and 2015-16.

The estimated number of clients assisted by agencies each year has increased from 236,000 in 2011-12 to 279,000 in 2015-16. This represents an average annual growth rate of 4.2%.

Because SHSC data provide a measure of the service response, increases in client numbers generally reflect the increased availability and accessibility of services, not necessarily a change in the underlying level of homelessness in Australia. The rate of specialist homelessness service use has increased since the start of the collection from 106 people per 10,000 in 2011-12 to 117 in 2015-16 ([Supplementary historical tables](#)). That is, from 1 in 95 people in the Australian population to 1 in 85.

The characteristics of clients, the main reason for seeking support, and the services provided to clients, have remained relatively stable over the 5 years. There have, however, been some notable changes:

- The median number of days a client was supported has increased from 29 days in 2011-12 to 35 days in 2015-16, an average increase each year of 4.8% (Table Client Trends.1).
- The proportion of clients who were identified as needing assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction increased from 28% in 2011-12 to 33% in 2015-16.
- The proportion of males who were homeless on presentation decreased from 56% of males in 2011-12 to 51% in 2015-16. The proportion of females who were homeless on presentation increased slightly from 36% of females in 2011-12 and 38% in 2015-16.
- Between 2011-12 and 2015-16 there has been a small but steady increase each year in the proportion of clients aged over 45 years from 17% (or 40,000) in 2011-12 to nearly 1 in 5 clients (19%, or over 54,000) in 2015-16.
- The 65 and over age group experienced the greatest rate increase. The proportion of clients aged 65 and over increased from 2% (or nearly 5,000) in 2011-12, to 3% (or nearly 7,500) in 2015-16. For Indigenous clients aged over 65, the average annual rate of growth is higher than the non-Indigenous rate (18% each year compared with 14%, respectively).
- The proportion of clients ending support in some form of private housing increased from 39% in 2011-12 to 43% in 2015-16.
- The proportion of clients ending support having achieved no case management goals has remained steady since 2012-13 at about 7%.

Table Client Trends.1: SHS clients: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients	236,429	244,176	254,001	255,657	279,196
Rate (per 10,000 population)	105.8	107.4	109.9	109.0	117.4
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	41	43	42	43	44
At risk of homelessness	59	57	58	57	56
Total days of support (millions)	18.1	20.6	20.1	19.7	22.2

Length of support (median number of days)	29	31	33	33	35
Proportion receiving accommodation	36	36	34	33	31
Total nights of accommodation (millions)	6.8	7.0	7.0	6.6	7.0
Median number of nights accommodated	35	34	35	34	33
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	22	22	24	26	23

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan (Supplementary table CLIENTS.26). Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Clients, services and outcomes 2015-16

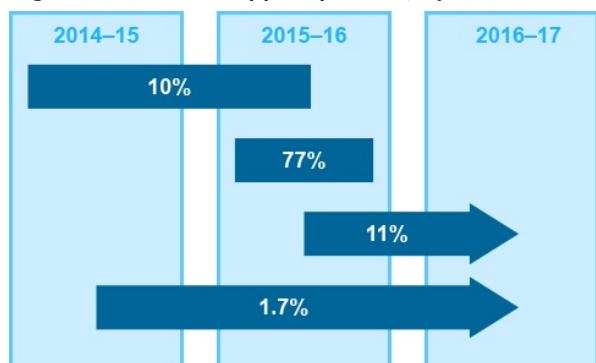
Support periods

Data collected by specialist homelessness agencies are based on support periods, or episodes of assistance provided to clients (see [Technical information](#) for further information). Clients may have had more than one support period in 2015-16, either with the same agency at different times, or with different agencies.

In 2015-16 more support was provided by homelessness agencies than in 2014-15, and this increase was consistent with agencies assisting more clients.

- In 2015-16, clients assisted by homelessness agencies were supported in 477,831 support periods, a 9% rise compared with 2014-15. The number of support periods has increased by an average of 5.3% each year since the collection began in 2011-12.
- The majority of clients in 2015-16 had only 1 support period (68%), while 18% had 2 support periods, 7% had 3 periods and 7% had 4 or more. The number of support periods per client is consistent with the previous year (1.7 support periods per client).
- The majority of support periods opened and closed in 2015-16 (77%, or nearly 370,000). An additional 11% of support periods opened during the year and remained open on 30 June 2016. Just 1.7% remained open throughout the 2015-16 reporting period (Figure CLIENTS.1).

Figure CLIENTS.1: Support periods, by indicative duration over the reporting period, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.19](#)

Number of days clients received support

3 in 10

clients (29%) received over 90 days support.

In 2015-16, clients were supported for an average of 79 days in total, either as consecutive days or over multiple periods of support. This is up from 76 days in 2014-15. The median number of support days has also increased over this time period (from 33 to 35 days).

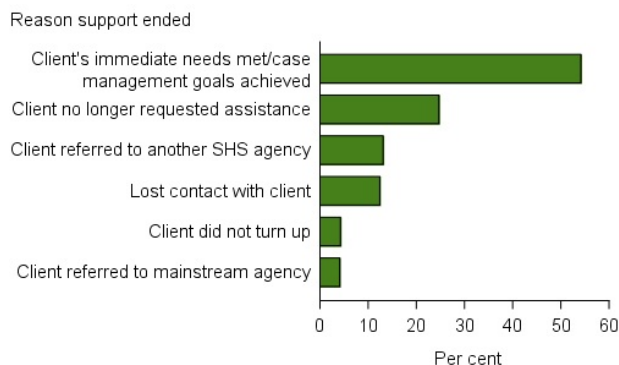
- Males (35 days) and females (34 days) received a similar length of support.
- The needs of some clients can be met relatively quickly, but for those with more complex issues significantly more support is needed. About one-third of clients (30%, or about 85,000) received between 6 and 45 days of support during the year; 25% received support for 5 or fewer days. Fourteen per cent received over 180 days of support during 2015-16; the same proportion received support for 91-180 days (14%).

Reasons that support periods ended

- Around half (54%) of support periods ended in 2015-16 because the client's immediate needs were met or case management goals were achieved.
- A quarter (25%) ended because the client no longer requested assistance.

- A further 13% closed because the client was referred to another specialist homelessness agency and another 12% closed because contact was lost with the client (Figure CLIENTS.2).

Figure CLIENTS.2: Clients by reason support period ended (top 6), 2015-16



Notes

1. Top 6 excludes 'Other' reason.
2. Includes clients with any closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.21](#).

Characteristics of clients

In 2015-16, specialist homelessness agencies provided assistance to an estimated 279,196 clients, equivalent to 1 in 85 people in the Australian population (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.2). This represents an increase since 2014-15, from 1 in 92.

Age and sex

6 in 10
clients were female (59%, or almost 166,000).

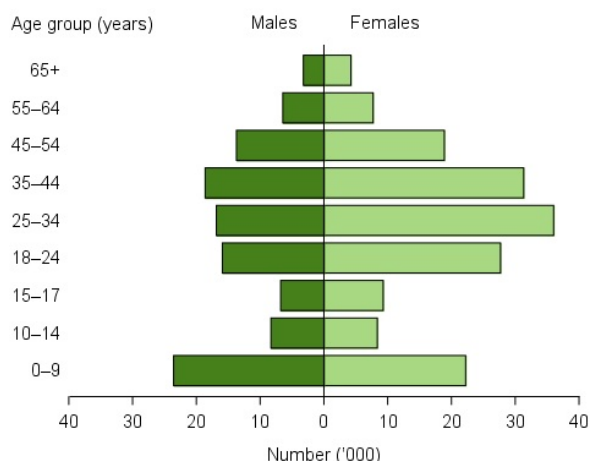
Nearly 3 in 10
clients were aged under 18 (28%, or nearly 79,000).

1 in 6
were children under the age of 10 (16%, or nearly 46,000 clients).

Clients aged 25-34
were the largest age group (19%).

- The majority (59%) of clients in 2015-16 were female, the same as in 2014-15.
- The rate of service use was higher for females; 1 in 72 females in the Australian population received specialist homelessness services, and 1 in 104 males.
- Females aged 18-24 years continue to have the highest rate of service use, at 1 in 40 females in that age group across the Australian population.
- For males the highest rate of service use was youth aged 15-17 (1 in 65 males in the Australian population aged 15-17).

Figure CLIENTS.3: Clients, by age and sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.1](#).

Indigenous status

1 in 4

clients were Indigenous.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented among specialist homelessness services clients, with nearly a quarter of clients (24%, or 61,700) who provided information on their Indigenous status identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. By comparison, 3% of the population identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders [1].

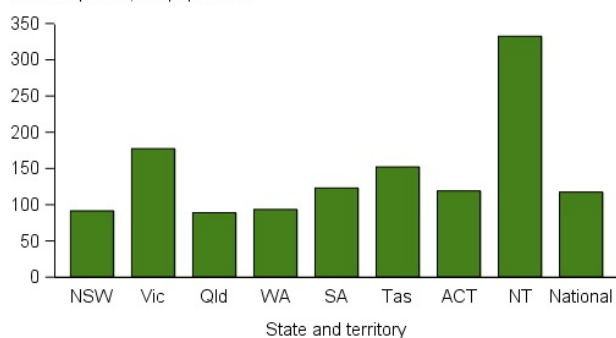
Further information about Indigenous clients can be found in the [Indigenous clients](#) section.

State and territory of clients

- The largest number of clients was in Victoria (105,287), followed by New South Wales (69,715) and Queensland (42,543) (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.2).
- Nationally, the number of SHS clients increased by 9%, or 23,539. This was due largely to a significant increase in client numbers in New South Wales (44%, or 21,453). Queensland (-4%), South Australia (-1%) and the Australian Capital Territory (-7%) all reported decreases in client numbers compared with 2014-15. The increase in client numbers in New South Wales is largely a result of the consolidation of new post-reform service models. 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 and with data for other states and territories.
- New, first time clients accounted for 53% of the national total with 47% of clients having sought assistance at some time in the previous 4 years. The proportion of new clients varied across jurisdictions with New South Wales reporting the highest proportion of new clients (60%) and South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory the lowest (both 43%).
- Nationally there have been large increases in the total numbers of both support days and accommodation nights compared with 2014-15. There were over 2.5 million more days of support and over 400,000 more nights of accommodation provided in 2015-16. New South Wales was responsible for the majority of these increases (2.2 million days of support and 307,000 nights of accommodation). 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 and with data for other states and territories.
- The highest rates of estimated service use occurred in the Northern Territory (where there were 332 clients per 10,000 people), followed by Victoria (177 clients per 10,000 people) and Tasmania (152 clients per 10,000 people) (Figure CLIENTS.4).
- New South Wales and Tasmania had on average the largest growth in rates of service use each year since 2011-12 (average growth of 6% each year).
- Females had higher rates of service use than males in all states and territories. The Northern Territory had the most pronounced difference between males and females, where 447 per 10,000 females received services compared with 230 per 10,000 males (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.2).

Figure CLIENTS.4: Client service use per 10,000 population, by state and territory, 2015-16

Number per 10,000 population



Note: Rates are crude rates as detailed in [Technical information](#).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.1](#).

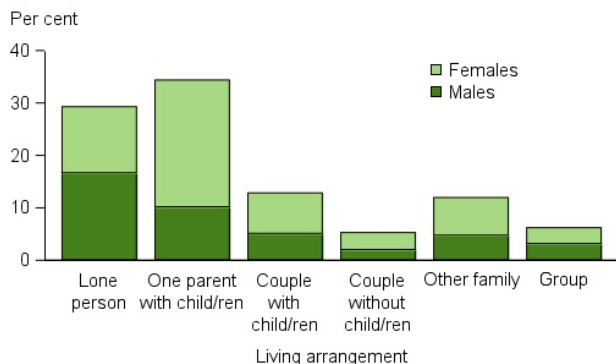
Country of birth

- Most clients of specialist homelessness agencies were born in Australia (86%, or nearly 206,000) (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.3). This proportion is higher than the general Australian population, of whom 72% are born in Australia [2].
- 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.4). Over half of the clients (52%) who were born overseas had arrived in Australia prior to 2007 (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.5).

Living arrangements

- The most common living arrangement reported by clients was 'One parent with 1 or more children' (34%, or nearly 88,000), followed by 'lone persons' (29%, or nearly 75,000) and couples with a child or children (13%, or nearly 33,000) (Figure CLIENTS.5).
- Female clients were more likely than male clients to be living as a single parent with a child or children (70% female), while males were more likely than females to be living alone (57% male) (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.6).

Figure CLIENTS.5: Clients, by living arrangement, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.6](#).

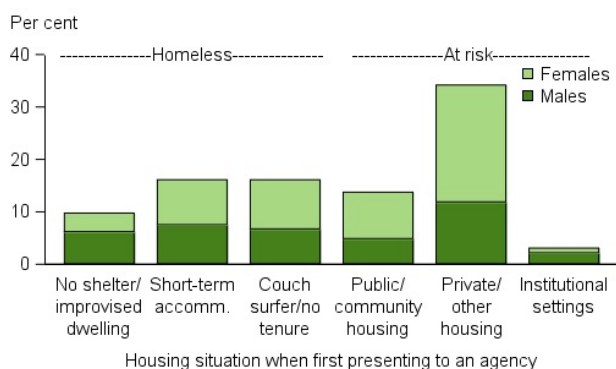
Housing situation

1 in 3

people (34%) who sought assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services were living in private or other housing (renter, rent free or owner) at the time.

- Among those whose housing status at the beginning of their first support period was known in 2015-16 (89% of clients), 44% (108,500 clients) were homeless and 56% (over 140,000 clients) were classified as at risk of homelessness (Figure CLIENTS.6).
- People living in private or other housing (renter, rent free, or owner) (34%) were the most common group presenting to agencies for assistance.
- For those clients who first presented to an agency reporting no shelter/improvised dwelling (24,000 clients), 45% were sleeping in no dwelling, either on the street, in a park or out in the open and just over 1 in 5 were sleeping in a car (22%).

Figure CLIENTS.6: Clients, by housing situation at the beginning of support, 2015-16



Notes

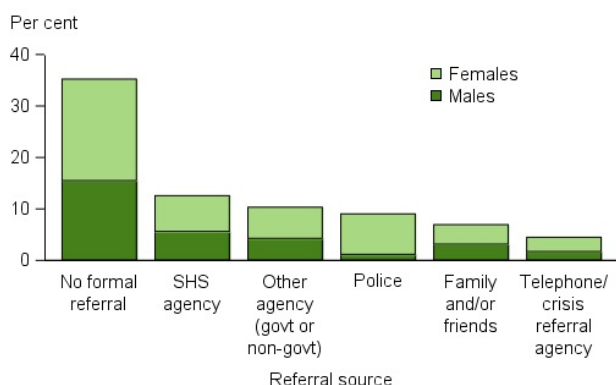
1. Per cent calculations based on Total clients, excluding 'Not stated'.
2. Housing situation 'Other' not shown.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.7](#).

Source of referral

- In 2015-16, nearly 180,000 clients, almost 2 in 3 (65%) were formally referred to a specialist homelessness agency.
- Figure CLIENTS.7 shows that the most common referral source was by either another specialist homelessness agency or outreach worker (13%), other agency (government or non-government) (10%), or by the police (9%).

Figure CLIENTS.7: Clients, by source of referral (top 6), 2015-16



Note: Top 6 excludes formal referral source 'Other'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.9](#).

Main source of income

- A high proportion of clients aged 15 and over were receiving some form of government payment as their main income source at the time they sought support. The most common government payments were Newstart Allowance (28%, or nearly 51,000), Parenting Payment (19%, or about 34,000) and Disability Support Pension (17%, or nearly 31,000).
- A total of 7% reported income from employment and 9% of clients reported having no income.

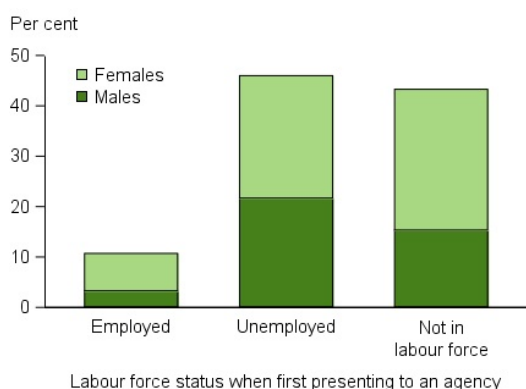
Education

- Over half of young people aged 5-24 (54%, or over 45,000) were enrolled in education.
- 16% of clients aged 5-14 (about 5,000) were not enrolled in education—1 in 7 (15%) children aged 6 were not in school.
- Among those clients aged over 25, 4% were enrolled in some form of education—mostly vocational education or training.
- 30% of clients aged 15-24 were not in some form of education or employment.

Labour force

- The proportion of clients not in the labour force at the beginning of support in 2015-16 was slightly lower than in 2014-15 (43% and 45%, respectively) (Figure CLIENTS.8).
- About 82,000 (46%) clients aged 15 or over were unemployed at the beginning of support.
- 11% of clients were employed; of these, around 3 in 5 were employed on a part-time basis (62%).
- The main differences between male and female clients were that female clients were more likely to report not being in the labour force (47% females and 38% males); however, females were also more likely to be employed than males (12% compared with 8%).

Figure CLIENTS.8: Clients aged 15 and over, by labour force status at the beginning of support, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.12](#).

Clients' needs for assistance and services provided

In the SHSC, information is captured about clients' needs for services from 2 perspectives:

[Technical information](#) and [glossary](#) provides 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 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. The [Unmet demand](#) section provides further information about clients' needs that went unmet.

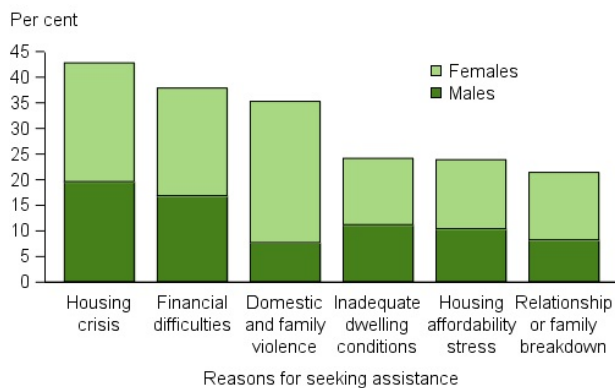
Reasons for seeking assistance

Accommodation issues

were identified by over half of clients (56%, or nearly 155,000) as a reason for seeking assistance.

- Over half of clients (56%) identified accommodation as a reason for seeking assistance, an increase of 2 percentage points from 2014-15.
- 'Housing crisis' was identified by 43% of clients as a reason for seeking assistance.
- 61% of clients identified housing affordability stress and/or financial difficulties as a reason for seeking assistance (Figure CLIENTS.9).
- Half (51%) of all SHS clients (about 140,000) identified interpersonal relationships as a reason for seeking support; within this group domestic and family violence and/or relationship/family breakdown were identified for 57% of clients.
- Health issues remain one of the common reasons clients seek assistance. Mental health, medical issues or problematic substance use were recorded as one of the reasons for seeking assistance for over 1 in 5 (22%) clients.
- Lack of family or community support was one of the reasons for seeking support for 17% of clients.

Figure CLIENTS.9: Clients, by all reasons for seeking assistance (top 6), 2015-16

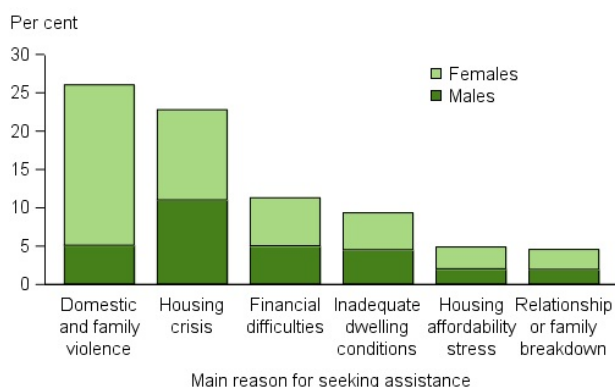


Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.13](#).

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

- Domestic and family violence was identified as the main reason for seeking assistance (Figure CLIENTS.10) for one-quarter of clients (26% or about 72,000). For more information see [Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence](#).
- Housing crisis was reported by 23% of clients as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Figure CLIENTS.10: Clients, by main reason for seeking assistance (top 6), 2015-16



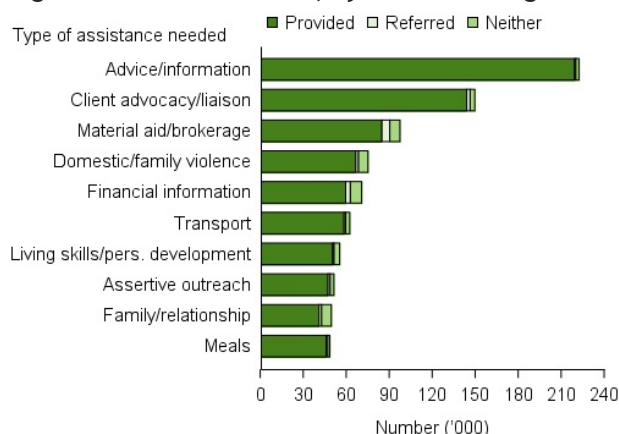
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.14](#).

General support and assistance

Some types of assistance provided by SHS agencies can be described as 'general support and assistance' (as opposed to more specialised services). These include advice and information, material aid, meals and living skills.

- Of all assistance needed by clients, advice and information continued to be the most common, identified as a need by 80% of clients (over 222,000) in 2015-16. The next most common was advocacy and liaison, needed by 54% clients (nearly 150,000), and 35% of clients (over 97,000) needed material aid/brokerage (Figure CLIENTS.11).
- Advice/information and advocacy/liaison services were provided directly by the agency for almost all clients who needed them. 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.
- In 2015-16 there were about 20,000 more requests for assistance with domestic and family violence, family/ relationship assistance and assistance for trauma. There were about 39,000 more requests for accommodation services compared with 2014-15.

Figure CLIENTS.11: Clients, by most needed general services and service provision status (top 10), 2015-16



Note: Top 10 excludes 'Other basic assistance'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.15](#).

Housing/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.

In 2015-16, 56% of SHS clients identified a need for accommodation services. Of these 157,000 clients:

- 87,000 (or 56%) were provided with accommodation by the agency.
- 25,000 (or 16%) were referred to another agency.
- 45,000 (or 29%) were neither provided with assistance or referred. These clients are further described in the [Unmet demand](#) section.

The proportion of SHS clients in 2015-16 who identified a need for accommodation assistance was the same as 2014-15 (56%).

However, the proportion of these clients who were subsequently provided with accommodation has decreased in 2015-16 (56% compared with 60% in 2014-15).

Nearly 7.0 million nights of accommodation were provided to clients in 2015-16, about 0.4 million (or 6%) more than 2014-15. Total nights of accommodation may represent more than one period of accommodation during 2015-16 (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.16) (see [Technical information](#) for details on how length of accommodation is calculated).

- The median length of accommodation received by clients was 33 nights.
- Most of the accommodation was provided in medium-term/ transitional housing (56%) followed by short-term and emergency accommodation (37%) and long-term housing (7%).

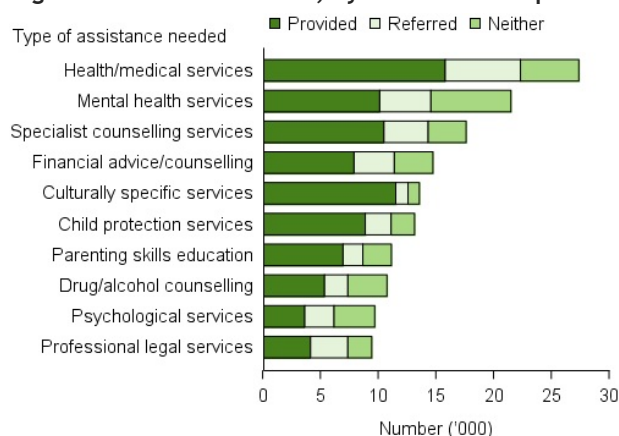
Assistance to sustain tenancy/prevent eviction was needed by 33% of clients at some stage during their support period in 2015-16. This group includes those who were still housed when they approached an SHS agency and were supported to remain in that housing. It also includes those who identified a need for accommodation, were assisted to secure new housing and then supported to sustain that housing.

- Most clients (81%, or 75,000) received assistance to sustain housing directly from the specialist homelessness agency.
- There has been, on average, a 5% increase in the proportion of clients needing assistance to sustain tenancy each year since 2011-12.

Specialised services

- Health/medical services were identified as a need by 1 in 10 clients (or about 27,000) and was one of the services most often referred (24%) (Figure CLIENTS.12).
- There has been little change in the most common specialised services needed and provided over the past 5 years. For example, health and medical services, mental health services and specialist counselling have been the most commonly needed services.

Figure CLIENTS.12: Clients, by most needed specialised services and service provision status (top 10), 2015-16



Note: Excludes 'Other specialised service'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.15](#).

Financial assistance

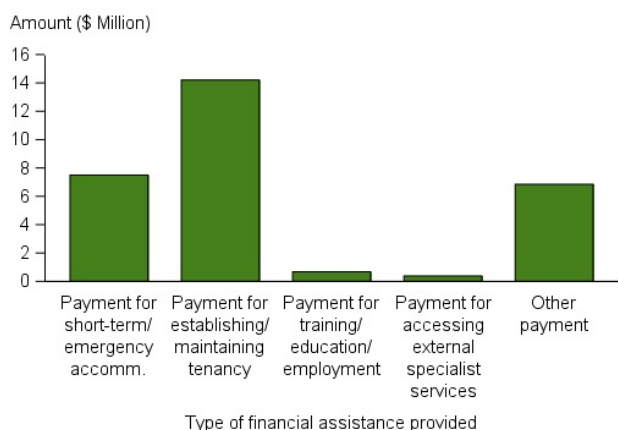
\$29.6 million

in financial assistance was provided to clients in 2015-16, an average of \$520 per client requesting financial assistance, and an increase from the previous year (\$468, unadjusted for inflation).

- A total of \$29.6 million in financial assistance was provided to clients in 2015-16 (Figure CLIENTS.13), an increase in nominal terms to the previous 3 financial years.

- Almost three quarters of the financial assistance was used to assist clients with housing:
 - Almost half (48%, or \$14.2 million) of the financial assistance was used to assist clients to establish or maintain a tenancy.
 - A quarter of this funding (25%, or \$7.5 million) was used to provide short-term or emergency accommodation.
 - These funding proportions are consistent with expenditure patterns in 2014-15.

Figure CLIENTS.13: Total amount of financial assistance provided to clients, by payment type, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.17](#).

Outcomes following support

This section looks at clients who ceased receiving support during the year—their support periods had closed and they did not have ongoing support at the end of the year. The outcomes presented here are changes in clients' situations with reference to the start and end of support. Many clients had long periods of support or multiple support periods during the year and they may have had a number of changes over the course of their support (for example, their housing situation may change a number of times during support). These changes within the year are not reflected in the data presented here.

Clients whose support period both opened and closed in 2015-16 accounted for 77% of all clients (Figure CLIENTS.1). A proportion of these clients may seek assistance again in 2016-17.

Housing outcomes

1 in 3

clients (32%, or nearly 57,000) were homeless when support ended, a decrease from 44% at the start of support.

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 information](#) for details on these categories and their derivation.

- The reduction in the proportion of clients homeless following support was due to large decreases in both the proportion of clients with either no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 11% 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 11%).
- There was also an increase in some forms of tenure over the course of support, including a large increase in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing (from 15% to 22%) (Figure CLIENTS.14).

These trends demonstrate that by the end of support, many clients have achieved or progressed towards more stable housing.

Figure CLIENTS.14: Clients, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period. Per cent calculations are based on total clients, excluding 'Not stated/other'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.17](#).

Other outcomes for clients

1 in 5

clients (20%) who needed employment assistance were employed at the end of support.

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 main source of income.

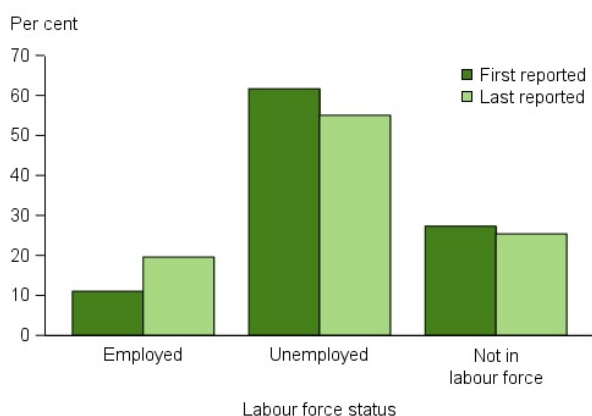
Education

- For clients whose support had ended, there was little change in the proportion of clients enrolled in education/training, from the beginning to the end of support (approximately 21% at the start and end).
- Among those who also had an identified need for support relating to education or training assistance, 42% were enrolled in education/training at the beginning of support, and this increased to 44% at the end of support.

Employment

- Figure CLIENTS.15 shows a decrease in the proportion of clients (who had an identified need for employment assistance) who were unemployed following support (55% at the end, down from 62% at the beginning of support).
- Among those clients who had an identified need for employment assistance, the proportion of clients who were employed at the end of their support increased from 11% to 20%.

Figure CLIENTS.15: Clients needing assistance relating to employment, by labour force status at beginning and at end of support, 2015-16



Note: Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

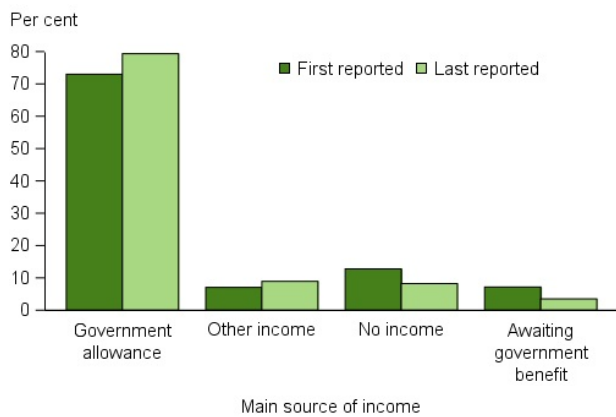
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.24](#).

Income

SHS agencies often provide services to clients aged 15 and over needing assistance to obtain/maintain a government payment or employment assistance.

- Of those who needed this type of assistance, the proportion of clients reporting a government payment or allowance as their main income increased from 73% at the start of support to 79% at the end.
- There was a reduction in those reporting that they received no income (from 13% to 8%) and the proportion awaiting government benefits halved (from 7% to 4%) (Figure CLIENTS.16).

Figure CLIENTS.16: Clients needing assistance to secure an income, by main source of income at beginning and end of support, 2015-16



Note: Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.25](#).

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 a case management plan; in other cases, a client may decline a case management plan. Case management approaches can differ across jurisdictions and over time as policy and practices change.

- For those clients with closed support, 61% (or 135,000 clients) had a case management plan—48% in their own right, and 13% were part of another client's case management plan, often as part of a family. The proportion of clients with a case management plan was similar in 2014-15 (60%).
- Among those who had a plan in their own right, 69% achieved some of their case management goals, 23% achieved all their goals and 7% did not achieve any (Supplementary Table CLIENTS.26). The proportion of clients achieving all their goals has decreased slightly when compared to the previous year (26%).
- Of the 39% 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 (70%), while a further 13% did not agree to having a case management plan.

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015a. Australian demographic statistics, Mar 2015. ABS cat no. 3101.0. Canberra: ABS.
2. ABS 2015b. Migration, Australia, 2013-14. ABS cat no. 3412.0. Canberra: ABS.

Clients in regional and remote areas

Key findings in 2015-16

- Client numbers increased in all regional areas in 2015-16 but by the greatest percentage increase in *Inner regional* areas.
- Indigenous client numbers in all regional areas increased at faster rates than non-Indigenous clients, with *Inner regional* areas (Indigenous 26% compared with non-Indigenous 14%) and *Major cities* (18% compared with 8%) experiencing the highest growth in Indigenous clients compared with 2014-15.
- The housing situation of clients when seeking assistance was very different across regional areas, with most clients (73%) in *Remote/Very remote* areas housed, but living in unstable situations (at risk of homelessness), compared with clients in all other regional areas (55-57% at risk).
- The rate of service use continued to be highest in *Remote/Very remote* areas, increasing to 1 in 38 people compared with 1 in 41 in 2014-15.
- *Remote/Very remote* areas had higher proportions of families presenting with children compared with *Major cities* while the proportion of lone persons was higher in *Major cities*.

Clients by geographic area: trends over time

1 in 38 people living in *Remote/Very remote* areas

were supported by homelessness agencies in 2015-16; the rate of service use in these areas is the fastest growing, at 6% on average each year between 2011-12 and 2015-16.

Since the beginning of the specialist homelessness services collection in 2011-12, there has been a steady increase in the number of clients across most geographic areas. The collection continues to reveal differences in client characteristics and service needs across these areas. Some key regional trends over the 5 years since the collection began have been:

- Taking into account population differences, *Remote/Very remote* areas consistently reported the highest rate of homelessness service use (Table Regional Trends.1). These areas also showed the largest growth in the rate of service use, increasing by an average of 6.0% each year since 2011-12.
- The proportion of Indigenous clients in both the *Outer regional* and *Remote/Very remote* areas has increased each year; in 2015-16, almost half (48%) and 9 in 10 (90%) clients identified as Indigenous in these areas, respectively.
- Domestic and family violence has remained the main reason clients sought assistance in all regional areas until 2015-16 when housing crisis was reported by slightly more clients in *Inner regional* areas (23%) than domestic and family violence (22%).

Table Regional Trends 1: Clients by geographic area: at a glance—2013-14 to 2015-16

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)					
2015-16		174,744 (63)	60,013 (21)	30,790 (11)	13,650 (5)
2014-15		162,286 (63)	52,061 (20)	28,257 (11)	13,053 (5)
2013-14		159,877 (63)	55,510 (22)	26,785 (11)	11,831 (5)
Rate (per 10,000 population)					
2015-16		103.6	139.5	147.6	259.9
2014-15		97.7	122.0	135.7	245.3
2013-14		98.0	131.7	139.6	222.4
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion (per cent) all clients)					
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
2013-14	Homeless	42	41	46	34

At risk of homelessness	58	59	54	66
Length of support (median number of days)				
2015-16	33	41	36	17
2014-15	32	39	36	17
2013-14	31	42	31	21
Average number of support periods per client				
2015-16	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5
2014-15	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5
2013-14	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4
Proportion receiving accommodation				
2015-16	29	27	39	62
2014-15	31	29	41	58
2013-14	32	29	44	63
Median number of nights accommodated				
2015-16	48	34	23	5
2014-15	48	35	21	5
2013-14	49	38	20	6
Proportion of a client group who had a case management plan (per cent)				
2015-16	59	61	75	60
2014-15	58	61	73	62
2013-14	55	62	65	66
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)				
2015-16	24	16	31	27
2014-15	27	18	30	29
2013-14	27	16	21	27

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.
3. Previous years' data can be found in the AIHW 2014-15 Specialist Homelessness Services annual report.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Clients in regional and remote areas

In 2015-16 regional areas displayed distinct characteristics:

- A large proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services lived in *Major cities* (63%). This is slightly lower than for the broader Australian population, 70% of whom live in *Major cities* (AIHW analysis of the ABS 2011 Census).
- The proportion of Indigenous clients increased as remoteness increased, similar to 2014-15; 15% lived in *Major cities*, 23% in *Inner regional*, 48% in *Outer regional* and 90% in *Remote/Very remote* areas.
- Some client groups were more likely to access specialist homelessness services in *Major cities*. For example, in 2015-16 67% of SHS clients with a current mental health issue and 86% of SHS clients born overseas accessed specialist homelessness services in *Major cities*.
- A higher proportion of clients of homelessness services in 2015-16 were located in *Remote/Very remote* areas (5%) compared with the general population (2%). Nine in 10 clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas were Indigenous (90%).
- The proportion of clients living in *Remote/Very remote* areas who were homeless upon presentation decreased from 29% in 2014-15 to 27% in 2015-16 and is very different to the homeless rate in other regional areas (Table Regional Trends.1).

- Accommodation length varied considerably across regional areas. In 2015-16, over half of the clients in *Major cities* received 48 or more nights accommodation while less than half of the clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas received 5 or fewer nights.
- The main reason clients sought assistance varied across regional areas; domestic and family violence and housing crisis were similarly reported as the main reason in *Major cities* (27%, 23%, respectively), *Inner regional* (22%, 23%), and *Outer regional* (both reasons 24%) areas while domestic and family violence was reported by 1 in 3 (32%) clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas and housing crisis just 14%.

Age and sex

About 1 in 4 clients

in *Remote/Very remote* areas (24%) were children under the age of 10; all other regional areas had lower rates, from 15% in *Inner regional*, 16% in *Major cities* and 20% in *Outer regional* areas.

Clients aged 25-34

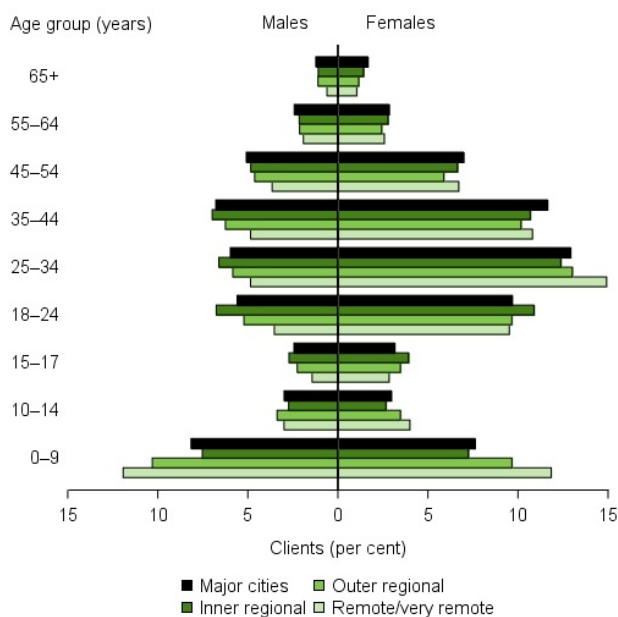
represented the largest proportion across *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas (both 19%).

Clients aged 0-9

represented the largest proportion in both *Outer regional* and *Remote/Very remote* areas (20%, 24%, respectively).

- Across all remoteness areas, there were more females than male clients (Figure REG.1). The proportion of females increased as remoteness increased. Females represented 59% of clients in *Major cities* compared with 64% of clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas.
- Together with the younger age of clients in more remote regions these data suggest that in *Remote/Very remote* areas there were higher proportions of families presenting with children compared with *Major cities* while the proportion of lone persons was higher in *Major cities*.

Figure REG.1: Clients, by remoteness area and by age and sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table REG.1](#).

Services needed and provided

61%

of clients accessing agencies located in *Remote/Very remote* areas required short-term or emergency accommodation.

87%

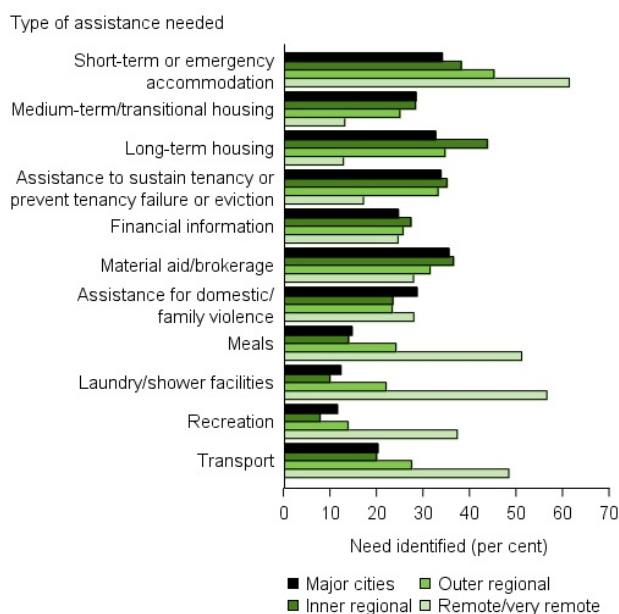
of requests for accommodation were met in *Remote/Very remote* areas; however, the likelihood of receiving accommodation reduced with urbanisation with clients in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas the least likely to receive accommodation (55% and 45% of need met, respectively).

Mental health services

were needed by a higher proportion of clients living in *Major cities* (9%) than those in any other region (between 3% and 7%).

- Clients accessing agencies located in *Remote/Very remote* areas were assessed with more needs compared with clients in other areas (Figure REG.2).
- Trends for clients accessing services in *Inner regional* areas were generally similar to those in *Major cities*. However, a higher proportion of clients accessing services in *Inner regional* areas needed long-term housing (44% compared with 33% in *Major cities*).
- One in 4 (25%) clients accessing services in *Remote/Very remote* areas needed 'other specialist services', including health/ medical (13%), specialist counselling (5%), and other specialised services (17%). Clients in *Inner regional* areas were the least likely to need these services (16%).

Figure REG.2: Most needed services by remoteness area, 2015-16



Notes

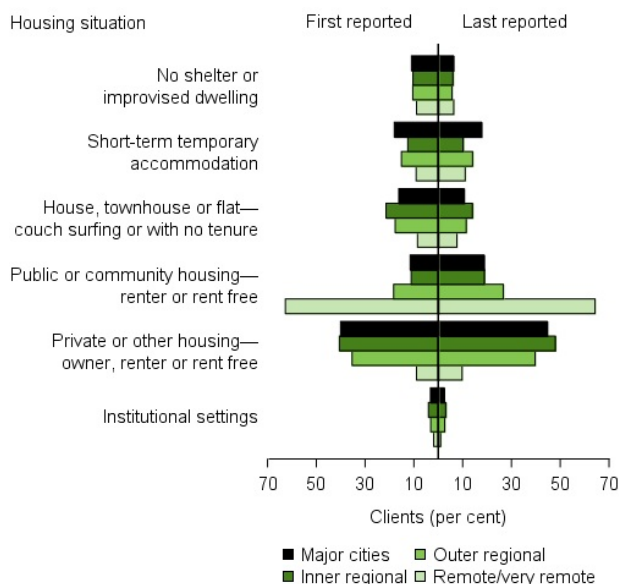
1. Most needed excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.
2. Proportions have been calculated using the client count for each remoteness area as the denominator.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table REG.3](#).

Housing outcomes

- Clients accessing services in *Major cities* were the least likely to report ending support in stable housing (66%), and most of these clients ended support in private or other housing as a renter, rent free or owner (45%) (Figure REG.3).
- *Inner regional* clients were the most likely to be housed in private or other housing at the end of their support period (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.
- Those clients accessing agencies in *Remote/Very remote areas* were more likely to report living in public or community housing (63%) at the beginning of their support period. While these clients were the most likely to be classified as 'housed' at the end of their support period (75%) this is to some extent a reflection of their housing situation prior to SHS assistance.

Figure REG.3: Clients, by remoteness area and housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table REG.4](#).

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Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services

Specialist homelessness agencies in Australia provide assistance to many people each day. In 2015-16, on average, each day an estimated 57,000 people were supported. However, there were also people who approached agencies who were unable to be offered any assistance. These people may have approached more than one agency or returned to the same agency another day. An instance where no assistance is received by a person who approaches a service is referred to as 'unassisted request for service'.

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 or the agency may not have the capacity to provide assistance at that time. The person may not be in the target group for the agency. These people may be referred to another agency for assistance, but the SHSC does not currently capture this activity. See [Technical information](#) and [glossary](#) for information on the way in which unassisted requests for services are measured in the SHSC.

There was an average of 275 instances of unassisted requests for services each day in 2015-16.

This section presents information on unmet demand from 2 perspectives:

- Unassisted requests for services—which relate to people who are not able to be offered any assistance by the SHS agency
- Unmet need—which captures those clients who had some, but not all, of their identified needs met.

The SHSC captures only limited information about unassisted requests for services, because it is not always appropriate for specialist homelessness agencies to collect the same level of detailed information as they would if the person became a client.

Unassisted requests for services: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Key finding in 2015-16

- There were about 20,000 (16%) fewer instances where requests for homelessness services were unable to be met compared with the previous year; an estimated 100,302 unassisted requests for services.

2011-12 to 2015-16

In 2015-16, there were an estimated 100,302 requests for assistance that were unable to be met. This represents a decrease of 16% from last year. Some key trends in unmet demand over the 5 years since the collection began have been:

- The number of unassisted requests has varied, increasing between 2011-12 and 2013-14 but decreasing over the past 2 years (Table UNASSISTED TRENDS.1). These decreases were primarily due to reductions in New South Wales and Queensland and are a reflection of the impact of new service delivery models in these states. For further details see the data quality information in the [Technical information](#) section.
- The rate of unassisted requests for males has fallen from 39% in 2011-12 to 36% in 2015-16.
- In contrast to the changes occurring in the number of unassisted requests for services, the number of clients and the number of support periods have been increasing over the same period. Unassisted requests have decreased on average, 7% each year while client numbers have increased 4% and support periods 5% over this time.

Table UNASSISTED TRENDS.1: Unassisted requests for service: at a glance—trends over time 2013-14 to 2015-16

	2013-14 Unassisted requests	2013-14 All assisted clients	2014-15 Unassisted requests	2014-15 All assisted clients	2015-16 Unassisted requests	2015-16 All assisted clients
Number	154,446	254,001	119,910	255,657	100,302	279,196
Sex (per cent)						
Female	61	59	65	59	64	59
Male	39	41	35	41	36	41
Living arrangement (per cent)						
Lone person	68	30	63	29	63	29
Sole parent	29	33	33	34	33	34
Couple with child/ren	—	13	—	13	—	13
Couple without children	2	5	2	6	2	5

Other family group	2	18	2	19	2	18
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– Rounded to zero

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Unassisted requests for service in 2015-16

Analysis of how often a person requested assistance and how many later became clients of specialist homelessness agencies can only be undertaken where the SLK was completed and valid (about half (49%) of all unassisted requests). In 2015-16, on average, each person who was not assisted approached an agency 1.5 times, slightly higher than 2014-15 (1.4 times). In 2015-16, 47% of persons with a valid SLK later went on to become a client and receive services during the year, the same proportion as 2014-15. The outcomes for the remaining 53% are not known—they may have received assistance from a non-SHS service, used their own support networks or continued to experience unstable housing.

Number of unassisted requests for services

275 requests per day

on average could not be met; about 177 daily unassisted requests (or 64% of all requests) were made by females, and 98 (36%) by males. This reflects the overall service user population, which is predominantly female.

1 in 4

unassisted requests were from females aged between 18 and 34 years. Overall, nearly 2 in 3 unassisted requests of all ages were women, and 1 in 3 were men.

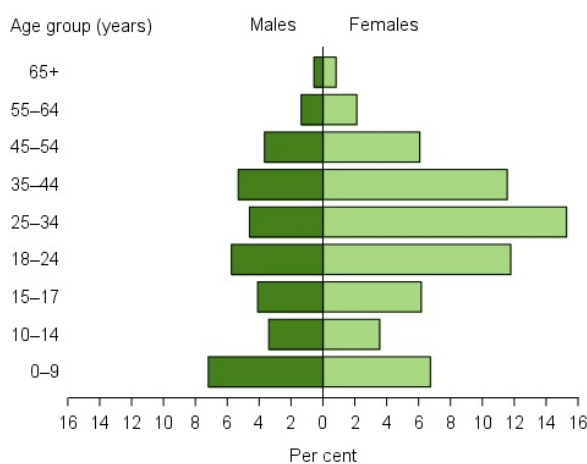
4 in 5

unassisted requests from single persons (aged 15 or over) with children were from females (80%) and most of these females were aged between 25 and 44 (59% of single females).

Compared with 2014-15, in 2015-16:

- The number of unassisted requests was lower for both sexes, but noticeably more so for females (about 9,000 fewer unassisted requests compared with about 4,500 fewer for males).
- The largest decrease for females was in the age group 18-24 presenting to an agency alone, not part of a family. For males it was 0-9 years presenting with a single parent.

Figure UNASSISTED.1: Proportion of unassisted requests, by sex and age group, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, National Supplementary Table UNMET.1.

What services were requested?

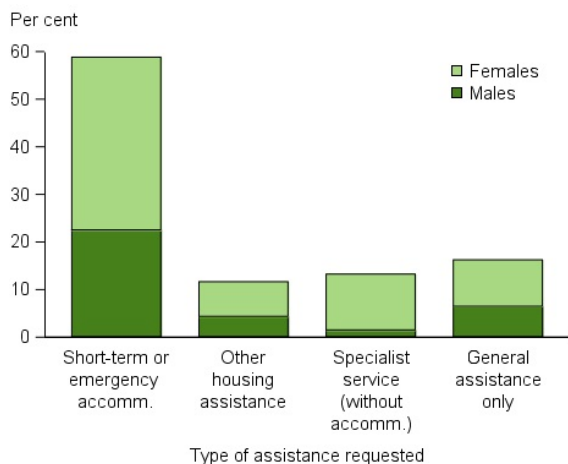
70%

of average daily unassisted requests included a need for some type of accommodation support.

- The majority of unassisted daily accommodation requests related to short-term or emergency accommodation (59%) (Figure UNASSISTED.2). Females were more likely than males to have requests for short-term or emergency accommodation unmet (62% and 38%, respectively), most likely a reflection of the higher proportion of females in this group.

- Unassisted requests for short-term or emergency accommodation were much lower than in 2014-15. There was on average, 33 fewer unmet requests daily for this type of assistance.

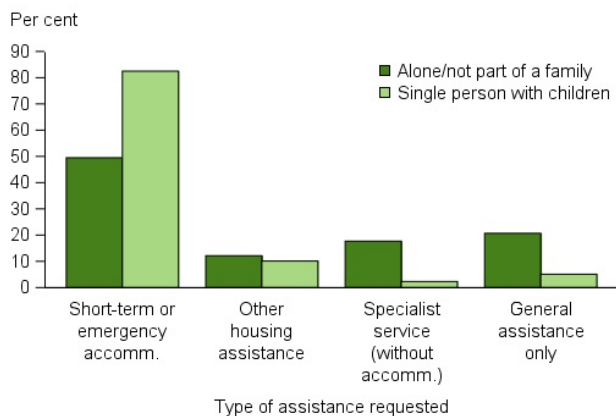
Figure UNASSISTED.2: Services requested as proportion of daily unassisted requests, by sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table UNMET.5](#).

- Ninety-three per cent of daily unassisted requests for services from single persons with their children were for accommodation needs, compared with 62% for single persons without children (Figure UNASSISTED.3).

Figure UNASSISTED.3: Proportion of unassisted requests for services by single person with or without children, by service type, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table UNMET.6](#).

- Most commonly, agencies reported that they could not meet requests for accommodation because there was no accommodation available at the time of the request (50% of unmet requests for accommodation) (Table UNMET.7). This figure is similar to 2014-15 (51%).
- On fewer than 1 in 10 occasions, a person did not accept the service offered (8%).

Clients' unmet need for services

Clients receiving support from specialist homelessness services are often identified as needing a wide range of services. Some needs arise more than once in a support period and this makes it difficult to assess (from the available data) the extent to which they have been met. In this section, each client need and the services to meet that need are only identified once in each support period.

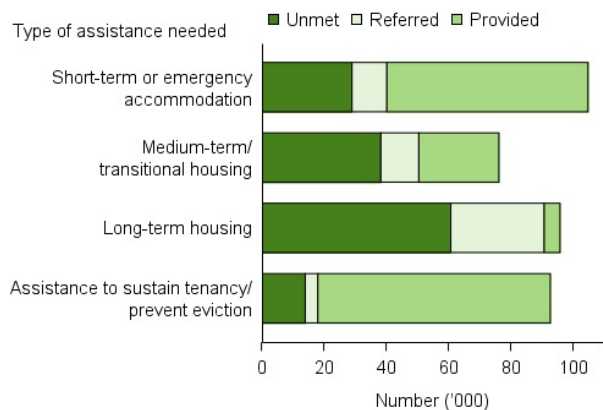
Key findings in 2015-16

- Long-term housing options were provided to just 5% (or 5,000) of the 96,000 (34%) clients needing this service.
- While there was a 9% increase in client numbers compared with the previous year, some services were needed by a greater proportion of the SHS population. Of the 10 most needed services, long-term housing and assistance for domestic and family violence grew by 14%.
- The ability of agencies to keep up with the demand for certain specialist services is decreasing. For example, 30% of mental health services were neither provided or referred in 2015-16, up from 25% in 2014-15. Clients needing mental health services grew by 12% (or over 2,700).

Unmet need for accommodation and housing assistance services

- Accommodation was the most common need identified. In 2015-16, 56% of all clients needed at least 1 type of accommodation service.
- 96,000 clients (or 34% of SHS clients) identified a need for long-term accommodation; only about 5,000 (or 5%) of those were provided with the service (Figure UNMET NEED.1).
- 105,000 clients (or 38% of SHS clients) needed short-term or emergency accommodation; about 2 in 3 (62%) of those requesting this service were provided with assistance.
- The numbers of clients requesting these 2 forms of accommodation were similarly large, however the considerable difference in the proportions of clients receiving these types of accommodation highlights the substantial unmet need for long-term housing for SHS clients.

Figure UNMET NEED.1: The number of clients with unmet needs for accommodation and housing assistance services, 2015-16



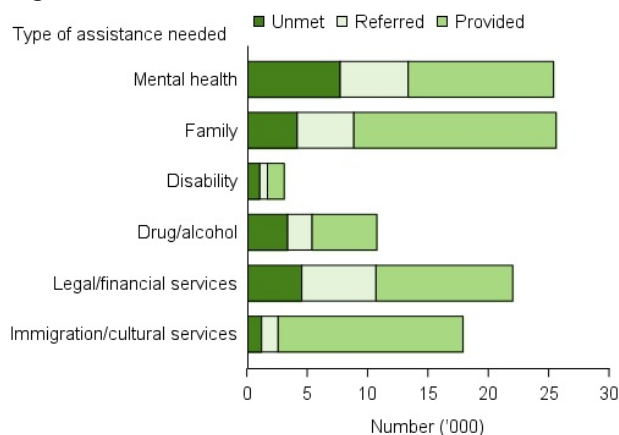
Note: Unmet includes 'Not provided nor referred'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.15](#).

Client unmet need for general and specialised services

- The level of need for broad groups of specialised services is shown in Figure UNMET NEED.2.
- Mental health services, including psychological, psychiatric and mental health services, were one of the most common specialised services identified as needed but these needs were most commonly unmet with around 3 in 10 (30%) clients neither provided nor referred these services.
- A third of the clients identifying with a need for either disability services (35%) or drug and alcohol services (31%) did not have their needs met.
- In contrast, immigration and cultural services, needed by 6% of the SHS population (about 18,000), were most often provided (86%).
- Some types of client needs were met for a significant proportion of clients. For example, of the almost 150,000 clients who needed assistance for advocacy/liaison, 96% were provided assistance, and of the clients requesting material brokerage (about 97,500), 87% were provided with assistance (Table CLIENTS.15).
- Other types of client needs were less commonly met. For example, among those clients who required gambling counselling (less than 1%, or about 1,000 clients), the level of unmet need was substantial—around 31% at the end of support. This may be related to the specialist skills required to provide gambling counselling and the limited availability of these skills within the SHS agencies and other services that clients may be referred to.

Figure UNMET NEED.2: The number of clients with unmet needs for specialised services (grouped), 2015-16



Note: Unmet includes 'Not provided nor referred'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table CLIENTS.15](#).

Client groups of interest

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of specialist homelessness services (see section on [Clients, services and outcomes](#) and [1]). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3% of the Australian population, yet they made up 24% of those accessing specialist homelessness services in 2015-16: an estimated 61,700 clients. Indigenous status was not reported for 10% of SHS clients in 2015-16.

Key findings in 2015-16

- Indigenous client numbers were up 16% from 2014-15 to an estimated 61,700, and grew at a faster rate than the general SHS population (9%). The majority of this growth came from increased client numbers in New South Wales (about 6,600) and Western Australia (over 1,000).
- Nationally, there were more returning Indigenous clients (53%) than new Indigenous clients in 2015-16; that is, over half the Indigenous clients in 2015-16 had received assistance at sometime in the previous 4 years. This is in contrast to non-Indigenous clients where the opposite was observed; 46% of non-Indigenous clients returned in 2015-16 having received homelessness services sometime in the previous 4 years. These trends were observed in the majority of states and territories.
- The frequency of Indigenous client engagement with homelessness agencies increased; average support increased to 1.7 support periods per client, up from 1.6 the previous year.
- The proportion of Indigenous clients receiving accommodation services decreased to 44%, down from 47% in 2014-15 and the median length of accommodation also decreased (19 nights, down from 20).
- In 2015-16 an estimated 2,900 (or 9%) more Indigenous clients ended support in public or community housing and fewer Indigenous clients were in short-term or emergency accommodation following assistance from SHS agencies.

Indigenous clients: trends 2011-12 to 2015-16

Over 157,000

Indigenous clients have been supported by homelessness agencies between 2011-12 and 2015-16.

The number of Indigenous clients has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12. The key trends identified over these 5 years have been:

- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients has increased from 587 clients per 10,000 Indigenous people in 2011-12 to 787 per 10,000 in 2015-16 (Table Indigenous Trends.1).
- The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates of service use continues to widen. In 2015-16 Indigenous people were 9.1 times more likely to use specialist homelessness services than non-Indigenous people, up from 7.8 times in 2011-12.
- After taking into account differences in population size, in 2015-16 Indigenous clients accessed services at the highest rate in *Major cities*.
- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients living in *Remote/Very remote* areas has increased by the greatest margin over time; from 499 Indigenous clients per 10,000 population in 2011-12 to 732 in 2015-16. This is in contrast to non-Indigenous clients in the same areas where the rate decreased from 53 clients per 10,000 to 36 clients over the same time period.
- The proportion of Indigenous clients ending support in some form of social or private housing has improved. In 2015-16 around 40% of Indigenous clients assisted ended support in public or community housing compared with 35% in 2012-13.

Table Indigenous Trends.1: Indigenous clients: at a glance—2013-14 to 2015-16

	2013-14 Indigenous	2013-14 Non- Indigenous	2014-15 Indigenous	2014-15 Non- Indigenous	2015-16 Indigenous	2015-16 Non- Indigenous
Number of clients	49,615	167,288	53,301	173,955	61,700	190,488
Proportion of all clients where Indigenous status reported	23	77	23	77	24	76
Rate (per 10,000 population)	654.1	77.6	693.2	79.8	787.0	86.5
Rate ratio	8.4		8.7		9.1	
Rate difference	576.5		613.4		700.5	
Remoteness rate (per 10,000 population)						
Major cities	659.8	71.7	710.9	75.1	823.9	80.6

Inner/Outer regional	672.8	100.0	683.9	98.6	789.2	110.5
Remote/Very remote	612.7	40.0	688.5	38.2	732.4	36.4
Rate ratio						
Major cities	9.2		9.5		10.2	
Inner/Outer regional	6.7		6.9		7.1	
Remote/Very remote	15.3		18.0		20.1	
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)						
Homeless	46	43	47	43	46	43
At risk of homelessness	54	57	53	57	54	57
Length of support (median number of days)	41	36	40	35	44	37
Average number of support periods per client	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Proportion receiving accommodation	48	34	47	32	44	30
Median number of nights accommodated	22	43	20	42	19	42
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	68	59	70	60	70	61
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	22	23	24	25	21	23

Notes

1. Rates were directly age-standardised as detailed in the [Technical information](#) section.
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 National supplementary table.
4. Previous years' data can be found in the AIHW 2014-15 Specialist Homelessness Services Annual report.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Indigenous clients 2015-16

Characteristics

1 in 4

Indigenous clients (23%) were children aged under 10.

1 in 2

Indigenous clients (54%) were aged under 25 compared with 41% of non-Indigenous clients.

2x

as many Indigenous female clients aged over 18 (42%, or 26,000) than male Indigenous clients (21%). By comparison, 46% of non-Indigenous clients were females over 18 and 29% were males.

1 in 4

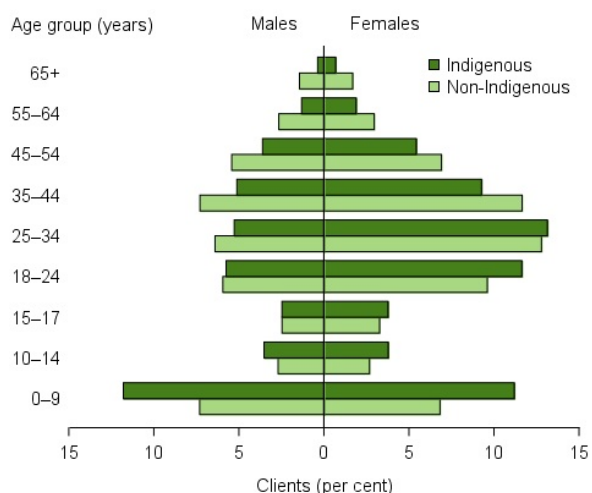
Indigenous clients sought homelessness services because of a housing crisis (25%) and about 1 in 5 (22%) for the reason of domestic and family violence.

1 in 3

Indigenous clients were living as a single parent with a child or children (36%) when they approached an agency for support.

The different age structures of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients is illustrated in Figure INDIGENOUS.1.

Figure INDIGENOUS.1: Clients by Indigenous status, by age and sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table INDIGENOUS.1](#).

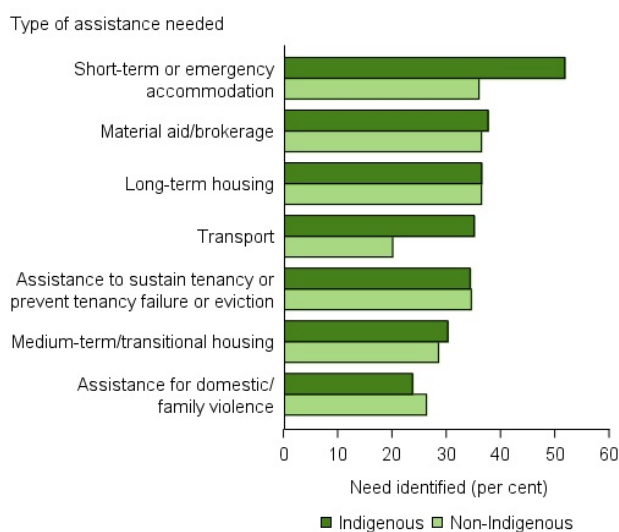
Services needed and provided

1 in 2

Indigenous clients (52%, or 32,000) needed short-term or emergency accommodation compared with 36% for non-Indigenous clients.

- For accommodation based assistance, apart from short-term or emergency accommodation, the need for other accommodation assistance was broadly similar between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients (Figure INDIGENOUS.2).
- For general services, needs were higher for Indigenous clients when compared with non-Indigenous clients. For example, general services comprising meals (29% compared with 15%), laundry/shower facilities (27% compared with 13%) and transport (35% compared with 20%) were all notably higher for Indigenous clients.

Figure INDIGENOUS.2: Clients, by Indigenous status and by most needed services, 2015-16



Note: Most needed excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information' and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.

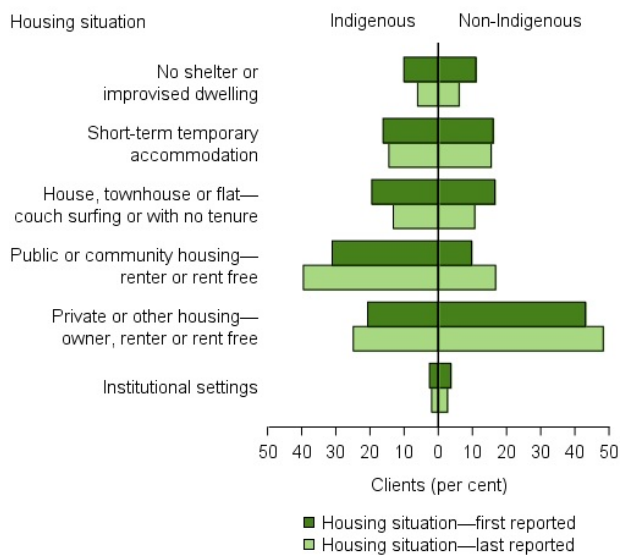
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2014-15, [National Supplementary Table INDIGENOUS.3](#).

Housing outcomes

For Indigenous clients who had ended support:

- The most common housing situation at the start of support was public or community housing (31%), compared with private or other housing for non-Indigenous clients (43%).
- The most common housing outcome following support was public or community housing (40%, or over 16,000) followed by private rental (25%, or over 10,000) (Figure INDIGENOUS.3). For non-Indigenous clients, the most common housing outcomes at the end of support were private rental (48%) followed by public or community housing (17%).
- There has been an improvement in housing outcomes for Indigenous clients when compared with the previous year. In 2015-16 around 2,900 (or 9%) more clients ended support in public or community housing and fewer clients were in short-term or emergency accommodation.

Figure INDIGENOUS.3: Clients, by Indigenous status and by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table INDIGENOUS.4](#).

Reference

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

Client groups of interest

Domestic and family violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia [1] and has consistently been one of the most common reasons clients have sought assistance from specialist homelessness agencies (see [Clients, services and outcomes](#)).

It is important to note that client numbers in the SHSC generally reflect the increased availability and accessibility of domestic and family violence services.

While SHS agencies mainly assist people who are victims of domestic and family violence, they may also assist perpetrators of violence who seek homelessness services. The SHSC is not able to separately identify these clients.

Key findings in 2015-16

- 106,000 people experiencing domestic and family violence sought assistance from homelessness agencies across Australia in 2015-16; 38% of all people requesting assistance from specialist homelessness agencies. This represents a rise in client numbers of 14% from 2014-15 and is higher than the growth rate of the general SHS population (9%).
- Nearly half (47%) of domestic and family violence clients were single parents with a child or children.
- One in 5 (22%, or over 23,000) were children aged 0-9 with over 36,000 under 18. The highest proportion of service users for adults was the 25-34 age group (20%); 93% of these were female clients.
- On average, each client experiencing domestic and family violence sought assistance from homelessness agencies on 2 occasions over the 12 month period (1.9 support periods per client), higher than the general SHS population (1.7). These periods of support tended to be shorter on average, than in 2014-15.
- Housing outcomes improved. The largest improvement in housing situation was for clients in public or community housing—up from 17% at the start of support to 24% at the end of support.

Clients experiencing domestic and family violence: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12, the number of clients who had experienced domestic and family violence has increased. Key trends identified over these 5 years have been:

- Nationally, the number of clients who had experienced domestic and family violence and sought assistance from specialist homelessness agencies has increased on average 7% each year since 2011-12 (Table DV Trends.1). The majority of these additional clients requesting assistance for domestic and family violence were single parent households (with a child or children).
- All jurisdictions had increases, with Tasmanian SHS agencies experiencing the highest average annual growth of domestic and family violence clients (15% each year) but Victoria contributing the most in terms of numbers of clients.
- The proportion of clients who were homeless upon presentation has increased, from 33% in 2011-12 to 38% in 2015-16.
- The proportion ending support with improved housing outcomes has increased, particularly for those in private rental or home owners (up around 5% to 47% in 2015-16).

Table DV Trends.1: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	79,611 (34)	77,870 (32)	84,774 (33)	92,349 (36)	105,619 (38)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	35.6	34.3	36.7	39.4	44.4
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	33	35	37	37	38
At risk of homelessness	67	65	63	63	62
Length of support (median number of days)	37	40	43	40	38
Average number of support periods per client	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9
Proportion receiving accommodation	43	45	44	41	39
Median number of nights accommodated	34	32	34	32	31
Proportion of a client group with a care management plan	63	62	63	64	64
Achievement of all case management goals (per cent)	18	16	17	22	21

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2015-16.

Clients experiencing domestic and family violence 2015-16

In 2015-16 specialist homelessness services agencies assisted 106,000 domestic and family violence clients. Compared with 2014-15:

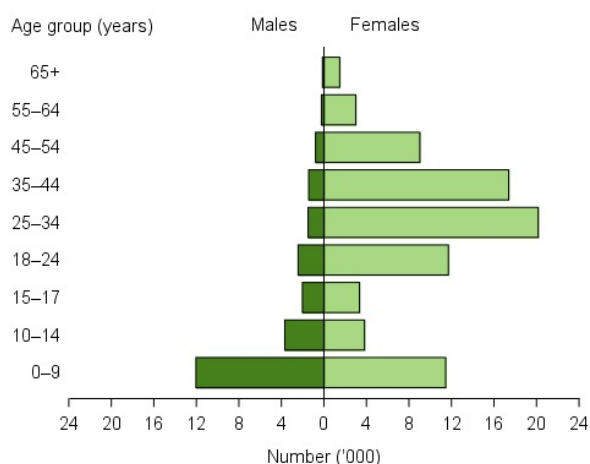
- There were about 13,300 (14%) more clients seeking assistance for domestic and family violence.
- This growth was largely due to increases in New South Wales (over 5,800 clients), Victoria (around 4,300 clients) and Western Australia (almost 1,300) over the past 12 months.
- Over three-quarters (77%) of domestic and family violence clients were female.
- Nearly half of all clients (47%) seeking assistance for domestic and family violence were living in single parent households (with a child or children), unchanged from the previous year.
- Sixty-two percent were at risk of homelessness when first presenting for support, similar to the previous year (63%).

Age and sex

The majority (92%) of clients of specialist homelessness services in 2015-16 who were experiencing domestic and family violence were females and children, unchanged from 2014-15 (Figure DV.1). In 2015-16:

- Females aged 15 and over accounted for 63% (or about 66,000) of this group.
- Children aged 14 and under accounted for an additional 29% (or about 31,000).
- Males aged 15 and older accounted for 8% (or about 8,500) of the client group.
- Among children aged 0-9 years, there were similar numbers of boys and girls, totalling about 23,500 children.

Figure DV.1: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence, by age and sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table DV.1](#).

Services needed and provided

44,500

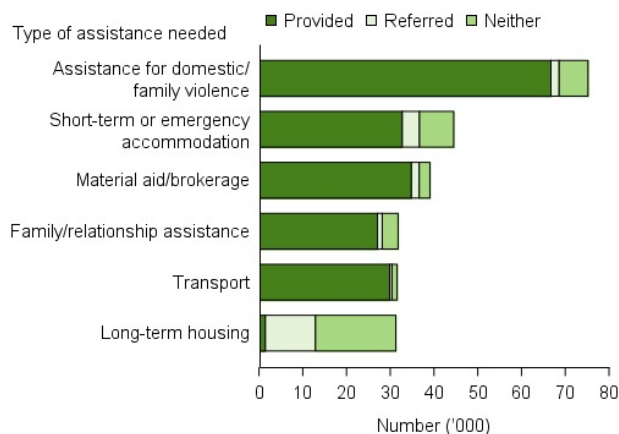
clients experiencing domestic and family violence needed short-term or emergency accommodation.

The majority of clients who had experienced domestic and family violence were assessed as needing specific assistance for these events, which may include discussion or group sessions, counselling and specialised domestic violence support services (71%, or about 75,000). Of the persons identified as needing assistance for domestic and family violence, 89% were provided assistance.

The next most common services requested by this client group were (Figure DV.2):

- short-term or emergency accommodation (42%, or over 44,000) and 74% of these clients received this service
- material aid/brokerage (37%) with 89% of those requesting this service receiving assistance
- family/relationship assistance (30%) with 85% of these clients receiving assistance
- transport (30%) and 95% received this service
- long-term housing (30%) with just 5% of those requesting this service receiving assistance.
- financial information (27%) and 85% of these clients receiving assistance.

Figure DV.2: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence, by most needed services and service provision status, 2014-15



Note: Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, National Supplementary Table DV.3.

Housing outcomes

Of clients who experienced domestic and family violence and had ended support during 2015-16, at the start of support:

- 61% were at risk of homelessness
- most (42%) were living in private rental accommodation (either as a renter or rent free). Housing outcomes at the end of support for those clients who had experienced domestic or family violence revealed that:
 - the proportion of clients that were homeless decreased from 39% at the beginning to 27% at the end of their support.
 - this decrease was particularly evident for those living in a house/townhouse or flat with no tenure or 'couch surfing' which decreased from 15% to 10% following support.
 - the largest improvement in housing situation at the end of support was for clients in public or community housing—up from 17% at the start of support to 24% at the end (Figure DV.3).

Figure DV.3: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence and who had closed support, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, National Supplementary Table DV.4.

Reference

1. Spinney A, 2012. Home and safe? Policy and practice innovations to prevent women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence from becoming homeless. Final report no. 196. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Client groups of interest

The 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) estimates that almost 1 in 5 Australians (18.3% of the total population) have disability. This estimate includes all those with any disability including mild and severe disabilities [1]. The SHSC identifies people with core activity limitations and their level of need for assistance in different life areas including those that may impact on housing and employment, and differentiates them from people without such limitations. The analysis of the availability and appropriateness of homelessness services for this group of clients allows for comparable information about people with disability across a range of government services.

Key findings in 2015-16

- There was a 12% increase in the number of clients; an estimated 10,000, people with disability sought assistance from homelessness agencies. This growth rate was higher than that of the general SHS population (9%), and New South Wales accounted for most of this increase (80%).
- The highest proportion of adult clients with disability were aged 45-54. This age group had similar proportions of male and female clients (48% male and 52% female), unlike the general SHS population (42% and 58%, respectively).
- Housing outcomes for clients with disability improved following support, with fewer people homeless (33%, down from 44% at the start of support).
- Most clients with disability ended support housed in private or other housing (34%). Public and community housing saw the greatest increase in client numbers to 28%, up from 19% at the start of support.

The reporting of disability in the SHSC

The SHSC disability questions are asked of all clients and are based on core activity limitations and whether the client has any need for assistance with these activities. In this report, people who identified that they have a limitation in core activities (self-care, mobility and/or communication) and who also reported that they always or sometimes needed assistance with one or more of these core activities are described as having disability. Details about measuring disability in the SHSC and the definition of a client with disability are provided in the [Technical information](#) section.

Clients with disability: 2013-14 to 2015-16

This is the third year for which information on clients based on core activity limitations together with their level of need for assistance has been collected. In 2015-16, of the 27,181 clients who had a core activity limitation, 9,812 clients (or 4% of all SHS clients) answered that they 'always/sometimes need help and/or supervision' with self-care, mobility or communication (Supplementary Table DIS.1). It is these 'clients with disability' who are described in this section.

Since reporting began on the disability indicator in the SHSC in 2013-14, the number of clients with disability has increased. The key trends identified over the 3 years have been:

- The number of clients with disability has increased by 41% across the 3 years (Table Disability Trends. 1).
- Clients with disability aged 45-54 are the fastest growing adult age group, up 39% over the 3 years to 2015-16.
- The average number of services needed by a client with disability has consistently been higher than the general SHS population (around 10 per client with disability compared with about 7 per SHS client).

Table Disability Trends. 1: Clients with disability: at a glance—2013-14 to 2015-16

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	6,979 (4)	8,789 (4)	9,812 (4)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	3.0	3.7	4.1
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)			
Homeless	42	43	44
At risk of homelessness	58	57	56
Length of support (median number of days)	68	59	64
Average number of support periods per client	2.3	2.2	2.3
Proportion receiving accommodation	42	40	39
Median number of nights accommodated	58	55	55
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	50	68	70

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Clients with disability 2015-16

Support received by clients with disability was longer than the general SHS population, reflecting the more complex needs these clients present with. In 2015-16 clients with disability:

- Were supported for 64 days (median), significantly longer than the general SHS population (median 35 days).
- Were more likely to receive accommodation (39%) than the general SHS population (31%), and for those who did, the length of supported accommodation was much longer (median 55 nights compared with 33 nights for the general SHS population).

Client demographics

Of the 9,812 clients reporting disability in 2015-16:

44%

of clients with disability were homeless, similar to the general SHS population.

34%

were living alone when they approached homelessness services, more than the general SHS population (29%).

22%

of clients with disability were Indigenous, compared with 24% of all SHS clients.

2 in 3

clients with disability (66%) accessed services in Major cities and 1 in 5 (20%) in Inner regional areas. This was about the same distribution as the general SHS population (63% and 21%, respectively).

22%

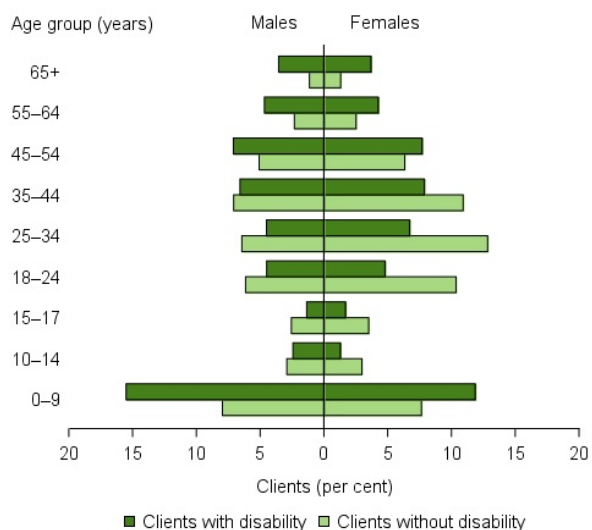
reported housing crisis as the most common main reason clients with disability sought homelessness services.

2x as many people aged over 55

with disability (16%) sought assistance from SHS agencies, compared with the general SHS population (8%). And, unlike the general SHS population, there were similar proportions of male and female clients with disability.

The age and sex distribution of clients with disability compared with clients without disability is shown in Figure DIS.1.

Figure DIS.1: Clients with disability, by age and sex, 2015-16



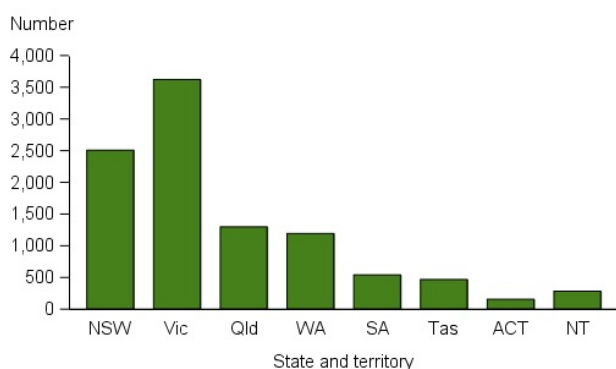
Note: For further information on the quality of Disability data, specifically for children aged 0-9, see the Data Quality Statement.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table DIS.3](#).

States and territories

- Over one-third of these clients with disability accessed services in Victoria (36%, or 3,600 clients). This was followed by New South Wales (25%) and Queensland (13%) (Figure DIS.2).
- Compared with 2014-15, New South Wales and Tasmania had the largest increase in clients with disability (49% and 39%, respectively). Note that this is in line with reported increases in overall client numbers in 2015-16 of 44% in New South Wales and 7% in Tasmania).
- The Northern Territory (11.6 per 10,000 people) and Tasmania (9.1) had the highest rates of clients with disability while Queensland (2.7) and South Australia (3.2) had the lowest rates.

Figure DIS.2: Clients with disability, by state and territory, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table DIS.4](#).

Main source of income

Of clients aged 15 and over with disability (nearly 6,800), 88% reported that their main source of income was a government payment, in particular:

- Disability Support Pension (47%) (compared with 17% of all SHS clients)
- New Start Allowance (19%) (compared with 28% of all SHS clients)
- Age Pension (7%) (compared with 3% of all SHS clients)
- Department of Veteran Affairs Disability Pension (3%) (compared with 1% of all SHS clients)
- Clients who require assistance for disability were less likely to report their main source of income as the parenting payment (5% compared with 19% of all SHS clients).

A larger proportion of male clients with disability (52%) reported that their main source of income was from the Disability Support Pension, compared with females (43%).

Employment status / educational status

Of clients aged 15 and over with disability (nearly 6,800):

- The majority were not in the workforce (59%). A further 37% were unemployed.
- Only 3% of these clients were employed. By comparison, 11% of the SHS client population were employed.
- Of those aged 5-14, 22% were not enrolled in education compared with 16% of the general SHS population. The proportion aged 15-24 who were not enrolled in education was similar to the general SHS client group (68% and 65%, respectively).

Source of referral

- Similar to other SHS clients, most of these clients seek support without a formal referral (32%). However, where a referral was made, it was most commonly made by a specialist homelessness agency/outreach worker (15%), followed by another (government/non-government) agency (12%), while a further 8% were referred by family and/or friends.
- Clients with disability were less likely to be referred to homelessness services by police (3%) than the general SHS population (9%).

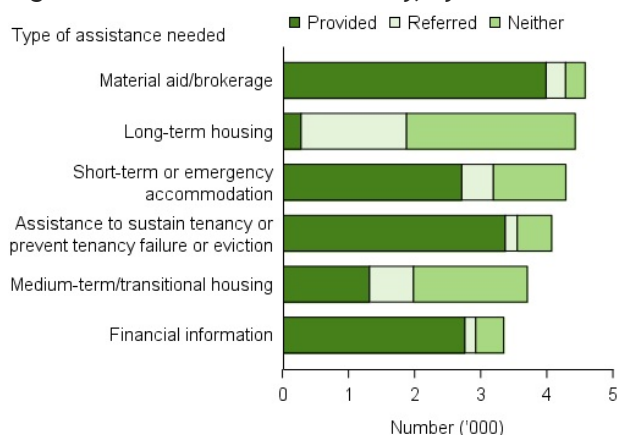
Reasons for seeking assistance

- The most common main reason this group of clients reported for seeking assistance was housing crisis (22%), similar to the SHS population (23%).
- 17% reported the main reason they had sought assistance was for domestic and family violence reasons, much lower than the general SHS population (26%).

Services needed and provided

- For clients with disability the most common need identified was for material aid/brokerage (over 4,500, or 47%), followed by long-term housing (45%), short-term or emergency accommodation (44%) and 'assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction' (42%) (Figure DIS.3).
- Most of these identified needs were provided: 87% (or nearly 4,000) of the need for material aid/brokerage; 63% of the need for short-term or emergency accommodation; and, 83% of the need for 'assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction'.
- Over 1 in 5 (22%, or over 2,000) clients were identified as in need of health/medical services and 19% were identified as in need of mental health services. Over half of these identified needs were provided-61% for health/medical services and 54% of mental health-related services.
- Just 4% (or about 400) of these clients needed support and assistance specifically for their physical disability and similarly, 4% needed services specifically for their intellectual disability. About half (49%) of the identified need for disability services was met.
- Clients with disability, were more likely to need family relationship assistance (24%, or over 2,300), assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems (22%) and assistance for trauma (16%) than the broader SHS population (18%, 13%, 11%, respectively).

Figure DIS.3: Clients with disability, by most needed services and service provision status, 2015-16



Note: Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table DIS.5](#).

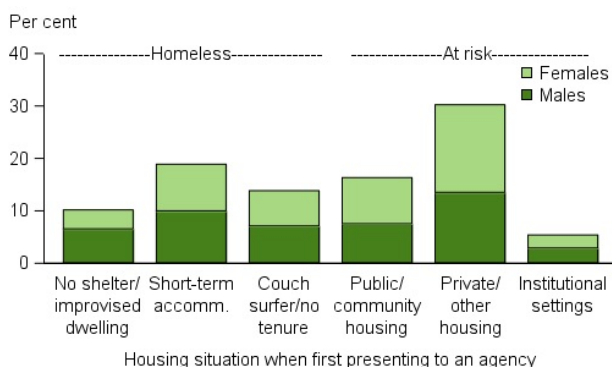
Previous experience of homelessness

- Two-fifths (40%) of clients with disability indicated they had experienced an episode of homelessness in the month before their support commenced. This is similar to the general SHS population (39%).

Housing situation at the start of support

- Over two-fifths (44%) of all clients with disability were homeless when their support commenced, the same proportion as the general SHS population (Figure DIS.4).
- Almost 1 in 3 (29%) clients with disability were living in private housing at the start of their support, followed by short-term accommodation (18%).

Figure DIS.4: Clients with disability, by housing situation at beginning of support, 2015-16



Note: Per cent calculations based on Total clients, excluding 'Not stated'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table DIS.6](#).

Housing and other outcomes

Of those clients with disability whose support had ended (about 7,000 clients):

- 44% were homeless at the start of support and this decreased to 33% by the end of support (Supplementary Table DIS.7).
- 34% (or about 2,100 clients) ended support in private housing and 28% (or about 1,700 clients) were housed in public or community housing.
- Data for this group indicate that clients' labour force status and educational enrolment status does not change following support from SHS.
 - For example, the proportions of these clients unemployed or not in the labour force remain unchanged at the end of support (36% unemployed, 60% not in the labour force).
- Of those who identified needing assistance to obtain a government payment or allowance, there was a decrease in the proportion with no income (12% to 7%) and a reduction in those awaiting government benefit (5% to 2%).

Reference

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016. Disability, ageing and carers, Australia. First Results, 2015. ABS cat no. 4430.0. Canberra: ABS.

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Client groups of interest

Young people are some of the most vulnerable people in our society and experience significant rates of homelessness [1]. Traumatic and abusive experiences in the home as a young person have been identified as one of the major pathways into longer term homelessness for adults [2].

43,165 young people

aged 15-24 approached specialist homelessness agencies alone; over half (52%) were homeless.

Key findings in 2015-16

- Over 43,000 young people aged 15 to 24 approached a specialist homelessness service alone in 2015-16; a small increase (3%) from the previous year, but smaller than the growth rate of the general SHS population (9%).
- A higher proportion were aged 15-17 than in 2014-15; around 9,700 (23%) compared with 8,900 (21%).
- 1 in 4 (24%) young people presenting alone sought assistance because of unstable housing (housing crisis).
- Housing outcomes improved: Fewer young clients were homeless following support (41%) with the largest decrease in 'couch surfers', falling from 30% to 21%. The largest improvement in housing situation was for young clients in private or other housing-up from 32% at the start of support to 42% at the end of support.

Young people presenting alone: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Over the 5 years since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12, the number of young people presenting alone to an agency has fluctuated. Key trends over these 5 years have been:

- The rate of service use by young people presenting alone to SHS agencies has decreased from 20 young people per 10,000 population in 2011-12 to 18 young people per 10,000 in 2015-16 (Table Young Trends.1).
- While the overall rate of young people presenting alone has been decreasing, the rate of Indigenous young people presenting alone has been increasing, from 1 in 5 (21%) in 2011-12 to 1 in 4 (25%) in 2015-16. While all regional areas have reported increasing rates of Indigenous young people presenting alone, the largest growth rates have been in *Major Cities* (9.1% on average each year) and *Inner Regional* areas (6.1% each year). By comparison, the only regional area to report an increase in the rate of non-Indigenous young people presenting alone was *Major Cities* (1.8%).
- Domestic and family violence (15% in 2015-16) or unstable housing (housing crisis 24% in 2015-16) remain the most common main reasons for young people presenting alone to seek assistance.
- Following initial increases, the median number of days of support and nights of accommodation for these clients have remained steady over the past 3 years.
- While the proportion of young people with a case management plan has increased, this group remains one of the least likely of all priority groups to achieve all their goals.

Table Young Trends.1: Young people (15-24 years) presenting alone: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	43,531 (18)	45,071 (18)	44,414 (17)	41,780 (16)	43,165 (15)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	19.5	19.8	19.2	17.8	18.2
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients) (per cent)					
Homeless	50	51	50	52	52
At risk of homelessness	50	49	50	48	48
Length of support (median number of days)	35	41	46	44	44
Average number of support periods per client	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
Proportion receiving accommodation	39	37	36	35	34
Median number of nights accommodated	35	36	41	41	41
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	54	54	57	58	60
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	16	16	17	20	18

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Young people presenting alone 2015-16

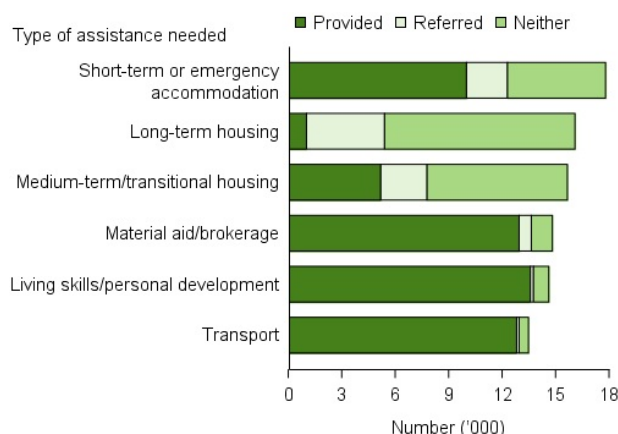
In 2015-16 43,165 young people (aged 15-24) were alone when they approached a specialist homelessness agency; 1 in 4 (25%) were Indigenous.

- Nationally, there was a 3% increase in young people presenting alone since 2014-15. This was primarily due to increases in client numbers in New South Wales (26%) and the Northern Territory (18%). All other jurisdictions reported a decrease in young people presenting alone to services.
- Forty-one per cent (or nearly 19,000) of these clients lived alone at the time of approaching a specialist homelessness agency and a further 15% were living as a single parent.
- The majority of young people presenting alone were female (62%) and 78% were aged between 18 and 24, similar to 2014-15.

Services needed and provided

- For young people presenting alone, the most common needs identified were accommodation related, including short-term or emergency accommodation (41% or around 17,800 clients), long-term accommodation (37%), and medium-term/transitional housing (36%) (Figure YOUNG.1).
- Just over half (56%) of young people presenting alone who needed short-term or emergency housing were provided with it. This proportion is lower than the general SHS client population (62%).
- Compared with the overall SHS population, young people presenting alone were much more likely to be identified as needing assistance with living skills/personal development (34% compared with 20%), education (20% compared with 8%), employment (14% compared with 5%) and training (12% compared with 4%).
- The need for these services was unmet in some cases (17% for those who identified needs for education, 22% for employment and 20% for training assistance).

Figure YOUNG.1: Young people presenting alone, by top 6 most needed services and service provision status, 2015-16



Note: Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liason on behalf of client'.

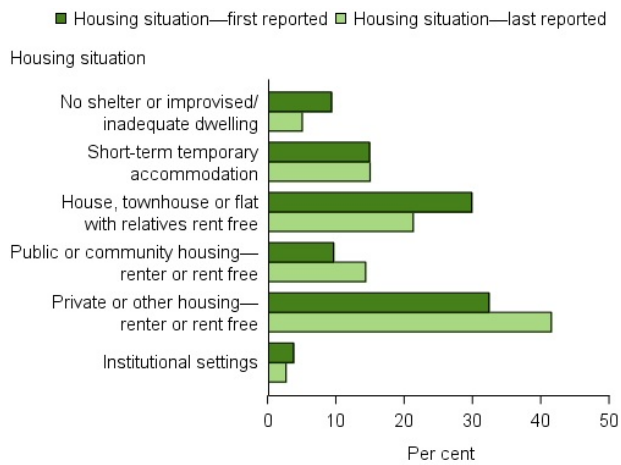
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table YOUNG.3](#).

Housing outcomes

For young people presenting alone whose support had ended:

- The rate of homelessness fell from 54% at the beginning of support to 41% at the end of support (Figure YOUNG.2).
- The most common housing outcome for young people presenting alone was private or other housing (as a renter, rent free or owner) (42%)—an increase from 32% at the beginning of support.
- At the beginning of support, 30% of young people who presented alone were 'couch surfing' or staying in housing with no tenure. This reduced to 21% by the end of support.

Figure YOUNG.2: Young people presenting alone, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table YOUNG.4](#).

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012. [Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011](#). ABS cat. No. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.
2. Chamberlain & Johnson 2011. Pathways into adult homelessness. *Journal of Sociology*, 1-18 DOI: 10.1177/1440783311422458.



Client groups of interest

During 2015-16 people aged 55 or older comprised 8% of all clients (21,610 people) of specialist homelessness services. Specialist homelessness service use by this group is increasing quickly with numbers up 44% since the collection began in 2011-12 and growing at over twice the rate (18%) of the general SHS population.

Key findings in 2015-16

- There were about 22,000 people aged over 55 seeking homelessness services in 2015-16; an increase of 15% from the previous year, and higher than the growth rate of the general SHS population (9%).
- Fewer older clients achieved all their case management plans, down 4 percentage points compared with the previous year to 27%.
- Housing outcomes improved: Fewer older clients were homeless following support (down from 34% to 25%) with the largest decrease in the number of 'rough sleepers', down 5 percentage points to 7% at the end of support. The largest improvement in housing situation was for clients in public and community housing-up from 21% at the start of support to 29% at the end of support.

Older clients: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12 the number of older clients seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has increased at a greater rate than other age groups. Key trends identified in this client population over the 5 years are:

- The rate of service use by older clients has increased from 7 older clients per 10,000 population to 9 per 10,000 (Table Older Trends.1).
- This group represents one of the fastest growing populations seeking assistance from specialist homelessness agencies. While the proportion of older clients is small (8% in 2015-16) this client group has experienced an average annual growth rate of 9.5% each year since 2011-12.
- Since 2011-12 the number of Indigenous older clients has grown at an average annual rate of 16.8% each year, with the number of Indigenous older clients reaching over 2,600 in 2015-16.
- The median number of days older clients need support has increased (from 17 days in 2011-12 to 25 days in 2015-16), suggesting these clients are presenting with potentially more complex issues, taking longer to resolve and are having greater difficulty in finding suitable housing.

Table Older Trends.1: Older clients (55 years and older): at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	15,052 (6)	17,193 (7)	18,182 (7)	18,741 (7)	21,610 (8)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	6.7	7.6	7.9	8.0	9.1
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	31	33	33	33	34
At risk of homelessness	69	67	67	67	66
Length of support (median number of days)	17	18	21	24	25
Average number of support periods per client	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	22	22	21	20	18
Median number of nights accommodated	30	34	33	31	31
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	47	42	45	49	50
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	30	30	30	31	27

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Characteristics of older clients 2015-16

55%

of older clients were female in 2015-16, similar to 2014-15.

2 in 3

older clients (66%) were aged 55-64 and the remaining one-third was 65 or over.

4%

of Indigenous clients were aged over 55 compared with 9% of non-Indigenous clients.

59%

were living alone.

21%

of older clients sought assistance primarily because of a housing crisis.

- In 2015-16, older clients were more likely than the general SHSC population to be male (45% compared with 41% of all clients). This group had a much larger proportion of lone persons compared with younger age groups.
- Older clients were less likely to be homeless on presentation than younger clients. For example, 34% of clients aged 55 and over were homeless on presentation compared with 44% of the general SHS population.
- For older clients there were 3 main reasons most commonly reported for seeking assistance: housing crisis (21%), domestic and family violence (18%) and financial difficulties (17%).

Services needed and provided

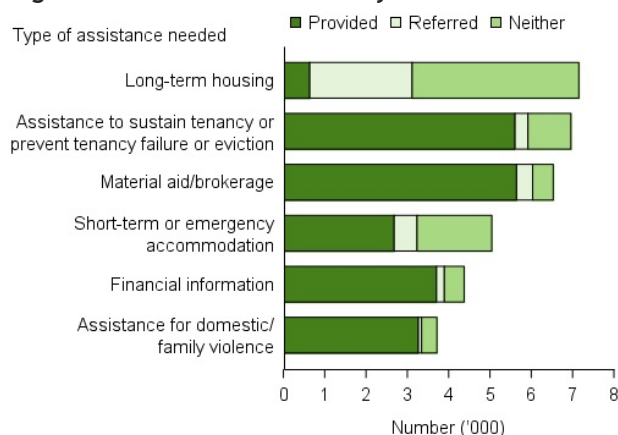
- Older clients were less likely to request accommodation services (45%) than the general SHS population (56%). However, of those who did request accommodation, most needed long-term housing (33%); they were more likely than the general SHS population to be provided with this form of accommodation (9% of those older people who requested it compared with 5% of the general SHS population).

Other services most commonly needed by older clients were for:

- assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction (32%, or nearly 7,000)
- material aid/brokerage (30%)
- short-term or emergency accommodation (23%) (Figure OLDER.1).

All these services were requested at lower rates than the general SHS population (assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction 33%, material aid/brokerage 35%, short-term or emergency accommodation 38%).

Figure OLDER.1: Older clients by most needed services and service provision status (top 6), 2015-16



Note: Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liason on behalf of client'.

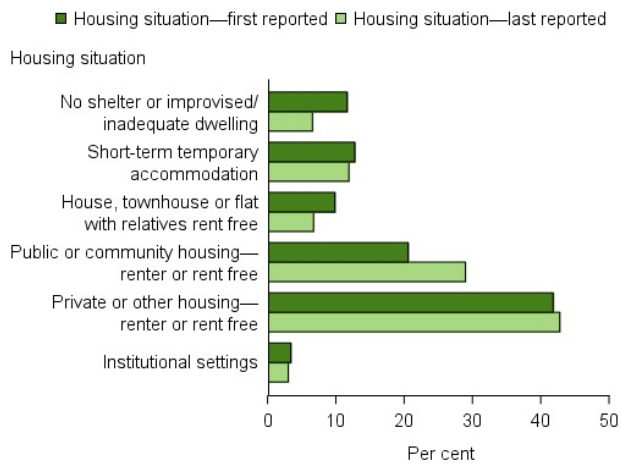
Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table OLDER.3](#).

Housing outcomes

While older clients most commonly ended their support in private or other housing (43%, or about 6,000), the proportion of older clients housed in public or community housing following support increased from 21% to 29% in 2015-16.

There was also a reduction in the proportion of older clients 'rough sleeping' (no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling), falling from just over 1 in 10 clients (12%, or 1,700) at the commencement of support to 7% at the end (Figure OLDER.2).

Figure OLDER.2: Older clients, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table OLDER.4](#).



Client groups of interest

In 2015-16, over 1 in 4 clients, or an estimated 72,000 people, who received assistance from a specialist homelessness agency were identified as having a current mental health issue, 9,300 (15%) more than in 2014-15.

Key findings in 2015-16

- The number of clients with a current mental health issue increased 15% from the previous year to over 72,000; this growth rate was higher than that of the general SHS population (9%).
- 1 in 4 (26%) needed assistance because of a 'housing crisis' and most were living alone (46%) when they sought assistance.
- 1 in 2 clients (50%) were homeless when they approached a SHS agency, most living either in short-term or emergency accommodation (18%) or 'couch surfing' (18%).
- Housing outcomes improved: Fewer clients were homeless following support (38%), with 'rough sleepers' dropping 6 percentage points to about 3,500 at the end of support. The largest improvement in housing situation was for clients in public and community housing—up from 12% at the start of support to 20% at the end of support.

Clients with a current mental health issue: 2011-12 to 2015-16

Increasing numbers of clients with mental health issues

have been supported by homelessness agencies between 2011-12 and 2015-16, growing at an average rate of 13% per year.

The number of clients presenting with a current mental health issue has been increasing since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12. Key trends identified over the 5 years to 2015-16 have been:

- Clients with a current mental health issue are the fastest growing client group within the SHS population, growing at an average rate of 13% per year since 2011-12. Factors, including increased identification, community awareness and reduced stigma have all potentially driven the increase in self-identification and reporting of mental illness among SHS clients.
- The rate of service use has increased from 20 people per 10,000 population to 30 people in 5 years (Table MH Trends. 1).
- These clients consistently need longer periods of support and tend to return more often for support within the 12 month reporting period than any of the other client priority groups.
- 'Housing crisis' and 'domestic and family violence' remain the most common main reasons these clients seek assistance from specialist homelessness agencies.

Table MH Trends.1: Clients with a current mental health issue: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	44,835 (19)	48,599 (20)	56,281 (22)	63,062 (25)	72,364 (26)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	20.1	21.4	24.3	26.9	30.4
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	49	51	50	50	50
At risk of homelessness	51	49	50	50	50
Length of support (median number of days)	67	73	67	62	64
Average number of support periods per client	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3
Proportion receiving accommodation	49	48	44	42	39
Median number of nights accommodated	49	48	48	44	44
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	71	69	69	70	70
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	14	15	18	19	17

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 national supplementary table.
3. Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Clients with a current mental health issue 2015-16

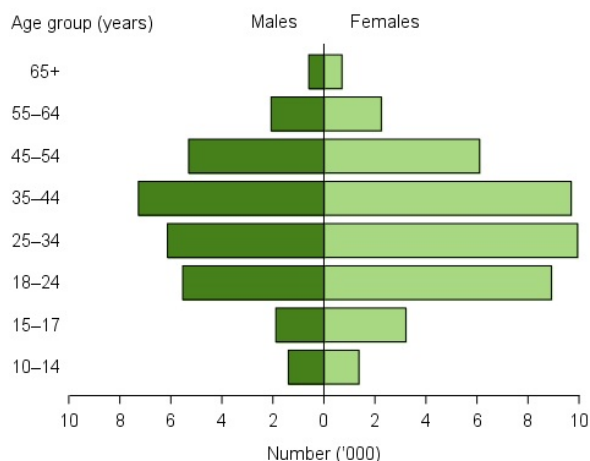
In 2015-16, 1 in 4 (26% or 72,364) clients accessing specialist homelessness services identified experiencing a current mental health issue:

- Half (50%) were homeless when they presented to an agency, higher than the general SHS population (44%) and most commonly lived alone (46% compared with 29%, respectively).
- These clients came back more often than any other priority group for support during the year (2.3 support periods per client) and received a median of 64 days of support each time. By comparison, the general SHS client population received 1.7 support periods and 35 days of support each time.

Age and sex

Similar to the general SHS population, the majority of clients with a current mental health issue were female (58%) in 2015-16. However, unlike the general SHS population nearly half of all clients with a current mental health issue were aged between 25 and 44 (46% compared with 37% in the general SHS population) (Figure MH.1).

Figure MH.1: Clients with a current mental health issue, by age and sex, 2015-16



Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table MH.1](#).

Services needed and provided

About 35,000

or just under half of the clients experiencing a current mental health issue (48%) needed short-term or emergency accommodation; 60% of these clients were provided assistance.

Of those clients experiencing a current mental health issue, about 1 in 3 (31%, or 22,000) identified a need for mental health-based services with:

- 26% identifying a need for mental health services; 47% of these requests were met.
- 11% identifying a need for psychological services; 36% of these requests were met.
- 7% identifying a need for psychiatric services; 40% of these requests were met.

Compared with the general SHS population, clients experiencing a current mental health issue were more likely to identify a need for:

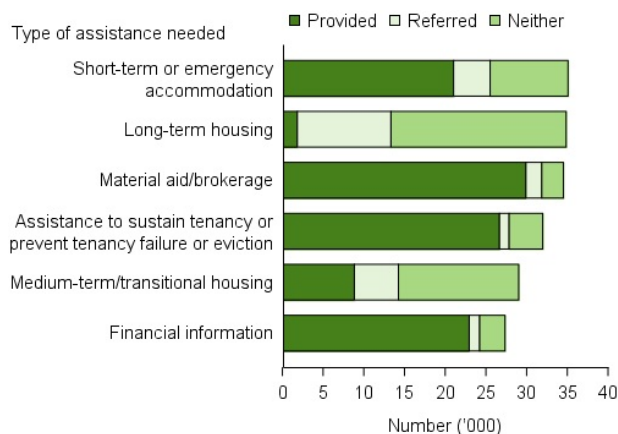
- drug and alcohol services (10% compared with 4% of the general SHS population).
- health/medical services (21% compared with 10%).
- Accommodation services (69% compared with 56%) and in particular long-term housing (48% compared with 34%) and medium-term/transitional housing (40% compared with 27%).

Clients experiencing a current mental health issue also identified needing:

- material aid/brokerage (48% or nearly 35,000 clients); with assistance able to be provided to 87% of these clients
- financial information (38% or over 27,000 clients); with assistance able to be provided to 84% of these clients
- transport (33%); with assistance able to be provided to 93% of these clients (Figure MH.2)
- assertive outreach (27%, or nearly 20,000), which mostly targets rough sleepers; this was higher for those clients with a current mental health issue than other priority groups.

All these services were needed at higher rates than the general SHS population (material aid/brokerage 35%, financial information 25%, transport 22%, assertive outreach 18%).

Figure MH.2: Clients with a current mental health issue, by top 6 most needed services and service provision status, 2015-16



Note: Excludes 'Other basic assistance', 'Advice/information', and 'Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client'.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, National Supplementary Table MH.3.

Housing outcomes

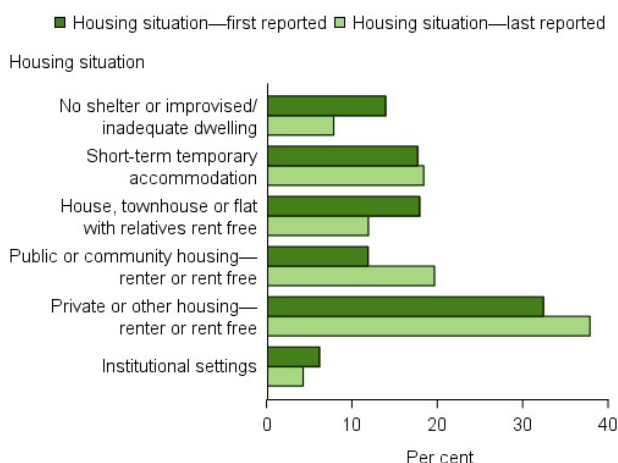
For clients experiencing a current mental health issue and whose support had ended:

- Half (50%, or nearly 24,000) were homeless at the beginning of support, with this reducing to 38% at end of support.
- improvement in housing outcomes was particularly evident for clients who first presented 'rough sleeping', that is, having no shelter or living in an improvised/inadequate dwelling. The rough sleeping rate dropped from 14% at the commencement of support to 8% at the end of their support (Supplementary Table MH.4).

Most of these clients were housed at the end of support with (Figure MH.3):

- 38% (or around 17,000 clients) in private rental (increasing from 32% at the commencement of support).
- 20% (or nearly 9,000 clients) in public/community housing (increasing from 12% at the commencement of support).

Figure MH.3: Clients with a current mental health issue, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, National Supplementary Table MH.4.

Client groups of interest

Those who are not in stable accommodation after leaving health or social care arrangements find themselves particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Clients are identified as leaving care if, in their first support period during 2015-16 (either the week before or at the beginning of the support period):

- their dwelling type was: hospital, psychiatric hospital or unit, disability support, rehabilitation, aged care facility; or
- their reason for seeking assistance was: transition from foster care/child safety residential, or transition from other care arrangements.

In 2015-16, almost 7,000 clients or 2% of specialist homelessness service clients were identified as leaving care.

Key findings in 2015-16

- Client numbers rose 13% from 2014-15 to around 7,000, due predominantly to increased numbers of clients in New South Wales. This growth rate was higher than that of the general SHS population (9%).
- Housing crisis was the most common main reason clients leaving care sought assistance from homelessness agencies (22%, a rise of 2 percentage points from 2014-15). In line with this, accommodation services were needed by 3 in 4 clients (76%).
- The proportion of clients provided with accommodation and the length of accommodation decreased in 2015-16; 48% received accommodation and half of these clients received 42 nights or fewer.
- At the end of support 1 in 4 (24%) clients were housed in private or other housing (renter, rent free or owner), 1 in 4 (24%) were living in institutional settings, and 1 in 4 (24%) (considered homeless) were living in short-term or emergency accommodation.

Clients leaving care: 2011-12 to 2015-16

The proportion of clients leaving care in the SHS population and subsequently seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has remained relatively stable over the 5 years of the SHS collection to 2015-16. Key trends identified in this client population over these 5 years are:

- Taking into account changes in population size, the rate of service use by clients leaving care has increased (Table LCare Trends.1).
- While males consistently made up the majority of clients leaving care, the age of these clients has increased over time; the age group with the highest proportion has increased from 25-34 in earlier years to 35-44 in the past 2 years.
- Engagement with homelessness services is increasing for this group. Both the length of support and number of support periods have increased over the 5 years from a median of 52 days and 1.7 support periods per client leaving care to 60 days and 1.9 support periods suggesting that these clients are presenting with complex needs.

Table LCARE Trends.1: Clients leaving care: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	4,654 (2)	5,542 (2)	5,573 (2)	6,084 (2)	6,869 (2)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.9
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	28	33	33	32	30
At risk of homelessness	72	67	67	68	70
Length of support (median number of days)	52	62	62	58	60
Average number of support periods per client	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.9
Proportion receiving accommodation	59	57	54	52	48
Median number of nights accommodated	38	45	48	44	42
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	67	69	71	71	70
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	16	15	16	19	17

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Characteristics of clients leaving care 2015-16

- Of clients leaving care in 2015-16, 1 in 5 were leaving a psychiatric hospital (21%), with the next most common rehabilitation (17%) or hospital (15%).
- The reason 42% (or 2,900) of these clients sought assistance was because they were transitioning from foster care/ child safety residential placements or other care arrangements.
- The majority of clients leaving care in 2015-16 were males (56%) and 22% of the male clients were aged 35-44 years. Female clients tended to be younger with nearly 1 in 4 aged 18-24 (24%).
- The majority (59%) were living alone when they sought assistance, the same as in 2014-15.

Services needed and provided

3 in 4

clients leaving care (76%) needed accommodation services, much higher than the general SHS population (56%).

54%

of all clients leaving care arrangements needed short-term or emergency accommodation, compared with 38% of the general population.

44%

of clients leaving care requested medium-term/transitional housing, higher than the general SHS population (27%) and these clients were more likely to be provided with accommodation (38% of those who requested it compared with 34%, respectively).

43%

requested long-term housing, but this was only able to be provided to 6% of the clients who needed it.

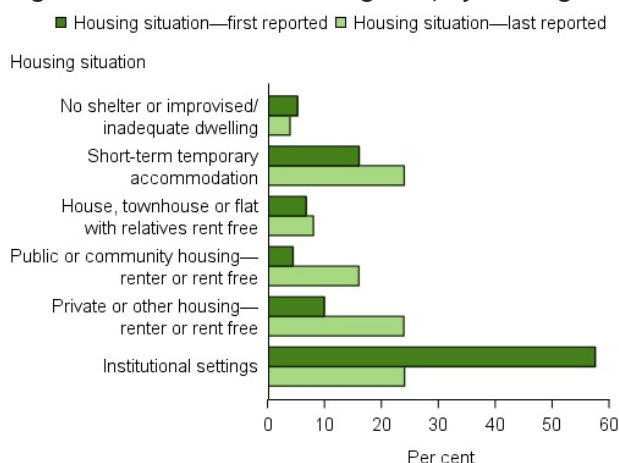
Other services most commonly needed by these clients were material aid/brokerage (39%), transport (39%) and living skills/personal development (37%). These services were needed by higher proportions of clients leaving care than clients in the general SHS population (35%, 22%, and 20%, respectively).

Housing outcomes

For those clients leaving care whose support had ended:

- Fifty-eight per cent (or nearly 2,700 clients) were living in institutional settings at the beginning of their support (Table LCARE.4). This proportion decreased to 24% at the end of support (Figure LCARE.1).
- Over a quarter (28%, or nearly 1,300 clients) were classified as homeless at the beginning of their support period, with the majority (57%) living in short-term emergency accommodation.
- At the end of support, the proportion of these clients classified as homeless had actually increased (from 28% to 36%; almost 1,500 clients homeless). This increase reflects clients leaving an institutional setting (considered at risk, rather than homeless) and subsequently becoming homeless. Most commonly, those homeless were living in short-term or emergency accommodation (24%) when support ended.
- Private or other housing was the most common housing situation at the end of support, increasing 14 percentage points to 24%.

Figure LCARE.1: Clients leaving care, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National Supplementary Table LCARE.4](#).

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Client groups of interest

This section highlights findings in relation to clients who have recently exited custodial settings, including correctional facilities, youth justice detention centres and immigration detention centres (see [Technical information](#) for client definition). People who exit custodial settings are recognised as being at increased risk of homelessness; they are also less likely to exit homelessness [1]. The ability to secure stable housing may reduce the likelihood of reoffending [2].

Key findings in 2015-16

- In 2015-16, 7,804 clients (3% of all clients of specialist homelessness clients) were identified as clients exiting from a custodial setting, an increase of 14% compared with 2014-15 and a higher rate of growth than the general SHS population. The majority of additional clients were from New South Wales (73%).
- The majority of clients were exiting adult correctional facilities (84%).
- The majority of clients who exited custodial settings in 2015-16 were male (77%) and aged between 25 and 44 (58%).
- Support was provided, on average, over shorter periods but more often than in 2014-15 (Table Exit Trends.1).
- 2 in 3 (66%) clients were living alone when they sought assistance from homelessness services, the highest rate of all SHS client groups.

Clients exiting custodial arrangements: 2011-12 to 2015-16

About 8 in 10

clients seeking assistance from homelessness agencies between 2011-12 and 2015-16 were male.

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011-12 the number of people exiting custodial arrangements and seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has been increasing. Key trends identified in this client population over these 5 years are:

- The number of clients who recently exited custodial arrangements is growing on average 11% each year and this annual growth rate is higher for females than males (15% compared with 10%).
- Both the proportion of clients receiving accommodation and the length of their accommodation (median) have declined (Table Exit Trends.1).
- Housing outcomes at the end of support for this client group have not improved over time; around 2 in 5 clients ended support in institutional settings and about 1 in 5 clients ended support housed in short-term emergency accommodation each year. The proportion of clients in these groups combined, has remained the same over time.
- The proportion of these clients achieving all case management goals was consistently lower than the general SHS population every year (see Tables Exit Trends.1 and Client Trends.1) and this group was one of the least likely to achieve all case management goals each year.

Table Exit Trends.1: Clients exiting custodial arrangements: at a glance—2011-12 to 2015-16

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	5,132 (2)	6,399 (3)	6,756 (3)	6,866 (3)	7,804 (3)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.3	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.3
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)					
Homeless	33	36	27	31	31
At risk of homelessness	67	64	73	69	69
Length of support (median number of days)	34	46	53	46	44
Average number of support periods per client	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9
Proportion receiving accommodation	45	41	40	41	38
Median number of nights accommodated	31	29	28	27	26
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	53	58	53	50	52
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	15	10	11	16	17

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2015-16.

Clients exiting custodial arrangements 2015-16

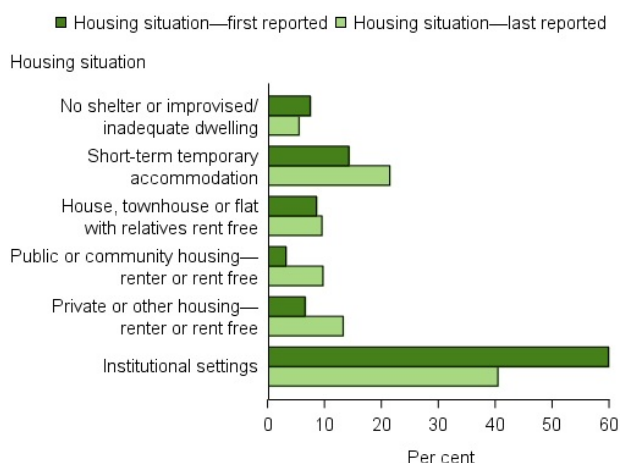
Services needed and provided

- Of those with an identified need for short-term or emergency housing (48%, or nearly 4,000), almost 2 in 3 (65%) were provided it.
- Of the nearly 3,000 clients exiting custodial arrangements needing assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction, 85% received this assistance.
- Clients leaving custodial settings were more likely to need assistance with drug/alcohol counselling (11%) than the general SHS population (4%).

Housing outcomes

- At the beginning of support, the majority of clients exiting custodial settings were living in institutions (60%), short-term or emergency accommodation (14%) or living in a house, townhouse or flat with no tenure, known as 'couch surfing' (9%).
- The proportion of clients exiting custodial arrangements who reported living in institutional settings decreased to 40% at the end of support.
- One in 5 clients (21%) were housed in short-term temporary accommodation at the end of support, up from 14% at the beginning of support.

Figure EXIT.1: Clients exiting custodial arrangements, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National supplementary table EXIT.4](#).

Reference

1. Johnson, G., Scutella, R., Tseng, Y., Wood, G. (2015) *Entries and exits from homelessness: a dynamic analysis of the relationship between structural conditions and individual characteristics*, AHURI Final Report No. 248, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne.
2. Australian Government 2008. *The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

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. They set up arrangements to provide support and assistance to 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 [1].

Key findings in 2015-16

- 9,000 children and young people on a care and protection order (CPO) sought assistance from homelessness agencies across Australia in 2015-16; 3% of all people requesting assistance from specialist homelessness agencies.
- Fifty-eight per cent of clients on a CPO were children aged 0-9. Males were more likely than females to be in this age range (62% compared with 55%).
- Domestic and family violence was identified as the main reason for seeking assistance for over one-quarter (28%) of clients on a CPO.
- The most common care type arrangement for clients on a CPO was 'parents'.
- While more likely to be homeless on presentation than the general SHS population, specialist homelessness service agencies were successful in improving housing outcomes for many of these clients. The largest improvement in housing situation was for CPO clients into public or community housing. Sixteen per cent were in public or community housing at the start of support and this increased to 31% by the end of support.

Improvements in the identification of SHS clients on a CPO have led to significantly better quality data in 2015-16, therefore improving reporting on these clients (see [Technical information](#)). For previous collection periods, those clients recorded as having a care type of either 'parents' or 'other living arrangements' were excluded from the CPO derivation. These care types are now included. Clients are now also identified as being on a CPO if they report being on a CPO in any support period during the collection period, rather than just the first. This means that analysis for these clients in 2015-16 is not directly comparable with previous years. Any comparisons with previously published data on clients on a CPO should therefore be made with caution.

Children on care and protection orders 2015-16

In 2015-16, almost 9,000 clients or 3% of specialist homelessness service clients were identified as a child on a care and protection order (aged 0-17 years) (National supplementary table CPO.1). Compared with the general SHS client population, clients on a CPO were:

- more likely to be homeless on presentation to an SHS agency (50% compared with 44%)
- more likely to receive accommodation (55% compared with 31%)
- less likely to have all case management goals achieved (18% compared with 23%).

Clients on a CPO also received more days of SHS support (86 days compared with 35 (median)) and more nights of accommodation (68 nights compared with 33 (median)) than the general SHS population (Table CPO.1).

Table CPO.1: Children (0-17 years) on care and protection orders: at a glance—2015-16

	2015-16
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	8,859 (3%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	3.7
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (proportion of all clients)	
Homeless	50
At risk of homelessness	50
Length of support (median number of days)	86
Average number of support periods per client	1.7
Proportion receiving accommodation	55
Median number of nights accommodated	68
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	86
Achievement of all cases management goals (per cent)	18

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
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 National supplementary table.
3. 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.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2015-16.

Characteristics of children on care and protection orders 2015-16

Of the 8,859 clients on a CPO in 2015-16:

1 in 2

were female (50%), similar to the rate of female 0-17 year olds in the general SHS population (51%).

Nearly 3 in 5

were aged 0-9 (58%). Males were more likely than females to be in this age range (62% compared with 55%).

Over half

were living with a sole parent when they sought assistance (52%). The next most common living arrangement on presentation to a SHS agency was 'other family group' (18%).

1 in 3

were Indigenous (34%), compared with 32% of general SHS clients aged 0-17.

2 in 3

accessed services in Major cities (66%) and just under 1 in 5 (18%) in Inner regional areas. This is similar to that of the general SHS population (63% and 21%, respectively).

Over half

of care type arrangements were with 'parent(s)' (56%).

Care arrangement type

- The most common type of care arrangement for clients on a CPO was parent(s) (56%).
- Sixty-six per cent of those living with their parent(s) on a CPO were aged 0-9. Unsurprisingly, 9 in 10 (88%) of those in 'independent living' were aged 15-17. Making up 21% of all clients on a CPO, 15-17 year olds were also over-represented in 'residential care' (72%) and 'other living arrangements' (54%).
- Female clients on a CPO were twice as likely as males to report their care arrangement as 'independent living' (67% compared with 33%). More males than females reported 'family group home' as their care arrangement (57% compared with 43%).
- The most common care type for Indigenous clients on a CPO was 'parent(s)' (49%), lower than for non-Indigenous clients (59%). Indigenous clients on a CPO were more likely than non-Indigenous clients to have care type arrangements of 'relative(s)/kin who are reimbursed' (13% compared with 8%) and 'family group home' (5% compared with 2%).

Reasons for seeking assistance

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

- Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason CPO clients sought assistance with over one-quarter (28%) of clients reporting this reason.
- Housing crisis was the next most common reason with 18% of clients.

Services needed and provided

Of the 8,859 clients on a CPO in 2015-16:

Nearly 7 in 10

clients on a care and protection order (68%) needed accommodation services, higher than the general SHS population (56%).

46%

of all clients on a CPO needed short-term or emergency accommodation, compared with 38% of the general SHS population.

36%

of clients on a CPO requested medium-term/transitional housing, higher than the general SHS population (27%) and these clients were almost twice as likely to be provided with this accommodation (61% of those who requested it compared with 34%, respectively).

Other general services most commonly needed by these clients were advocacy/liaison on behalf of client (62%), material aid/brokerage (44%), transport (39%) and assistance for domestic/family violence (36%). These services were needed by higher proportions of clients on a CPO than clients in the general SHS population (54%, 35%, 22% and 27%, respectively).

CPO clients were also more likely than the general SHS population to be identified as needing family/relationship assistance (34% compared with 18%), child protection services (26% compared with 5%), school liaison (18% compared with 5%) and health and medical services (18% compared with 10%).

Housing outcomes

For those clients on a care and protection order whose support had ended:

- Half (50%, or nearly 2,500 clients) were classified as homeless at the beginning of their support, with the majority (51%) living in short-term or emergency accommodation (Table CPO.4).
- Around 1 in 5 (19%) were ‘couch surfing’ at the beginning of their support (Figure CPO.1). This almost halved to 1 in 10 (10%) by the end of support.
- At the end of support, the proportion of these clients classified as homeless had decreased to 33%; almost 1,600 clients homeless.
- Private or other housing was the most common housing situation at the end of support, increasing 2 percentage points to 35%.
- The greatest change in housing situation was an almost two-fold increase in the proportion of CPO clients into public and community housing (31%, up from 16% at the beginning of support).

Figure CPO.1: Children on care and protection orders, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2015-16



Notes

1. The SHSC classifies clients living with no shelter or improvised/ inadequate dwelling, short-term temporary accommodation, or in a house, townhouse, or flat with relatives (rent free) as homeless. Clients living in public or community housing (renter or rent free), private or other housing (renter or rent free), or in institutional settings are classified as housed.
2. Proportions include only clients with closed support at the end of the reporting period.

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services 2015-16, [National supplementary table CPO.1](#).

Reference

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. [Child protection Australia 2014-15](#). Child welfare series no. 63. Cat. no. CWS 57. Canberra: AIHW.

Technical information

Key data quality information: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2015-16

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 2015-16 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement is available from [METeOR](#).

The collection of additional information has improved the quality of data for clients on care and protection orders. Before 2015-16 clients recorded as having a care arrangement of either 'parents' or 'other living arrangement' were excluded. From 2015-16 these care types are now included. In addition, care and protection information provided in all collection months in all support periods are now included reflecting the monthly data collected from specialist homelessness agencies. These changes constitute a break in statistical time series and hence previous data on clients on care and protection orders are not comparable.

The 9% increase nationally in client numbers in 2015-16, and the similar increase in support, was the largest since the collection began in 2011-12. These increases were largely a consequence of increases in New South Wales. 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 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 2015-16 SHSC data can be found in the Explanatory notes in the national and state and territory [Supplementary tables](#).

Imputation strategy for the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

Imputation was used in an effort to adjust 2015-16 reporting to correct for two types of error: agency non-response and data error in the statistical linkage key (SLK) which is used, among other things, to determine the number of clients serviced.

Agency non-response was adjusted for in two ways: by using an agency's own reported data to adjust for missing data (explicit imputation) and by weighting fully responding agencies to adjust for similar agencies with missing data (implicit imputation). Nineteen agencies underwent explicit imputation whilst implicit imputation was used for 58 agencies.

Invalid or missing SLK data were adjusted for by applying weights at the client level. These weights increased the counts of clients, taking into account the number of service period records with invalid or missing SLK data along with the observed distribution of the number of visits per client. There were about 16,500 support period records (approximately 3% of all records) with invalid or missing SLK 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. Clients who did not provide sufficient information to make this assessment are excluded.

These categories are designed to, as far as is possible, align with the 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.

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 transitional housing.
- House, townhouse or flat (couch surfing or with no tenure): tenure type is no tenure; or conditions of occupancy are living with relatives fee free, 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 public housing, renter or rent-free-community housing.
- Private or other housing (renter, rent-free or owner): dwelling type is house/townhouse/flat and tenure type is renter-private housing, life tenure scheme, owner—shared equity or rent/buy scheme, owner-being purchased/with mortgage, owner-fully owned, rent-free-private/other housing.
- Institutional settings: dwelling type is hospital, psychiatric hospital, disability support, rehabilitation, boarding school, adult correctional facility, youth/juvenile justice detention centre or immigration detention centre.

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 2015-16 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 2012c). The latest available version of the RA indicator (from the 2011 Census) has been developed by the ABS based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Indicator Australia (ARIA) used in the 2001 Census.

Using this classification, agencies participating in the SHSC were assigned to an RA based on their recorded Local Government Area (LGA) code.

Two concordances produced by the ABS have been used to match the LGA of agencies participating in the SHSC to RAs defined by the 2011 Census. Neither concordance is 1:1—where an agency's LGA represents a proportion of an RA, the agency is assigned to the RA with the largest representation in the LGA. Where an agency's LGA code was missing, an RA was assigned using a Postal Area Index, also developed by the ABS.

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 2015-16. 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 2015-16, regardless of the number of months over which this need was recorded, or the number of times during 2015-16 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 2015-16.

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, at any time in 2015-16, 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 10% of clients in 2015-16.

Clients born overseas

A client is identified as overseas-born, if at any time in 2015-16, 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 2015-16.

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 domestic and family violence

SHSC clients were counted as experiencing domestic and family violence if any support period during the reporting period:

- 'domestic and family violence' was reported as a reason they sought assistance, or
- during any support period they required domestic or family violence assistance.

The SHSC reports on clients who are victims of domestic and family violence. Current perpetrators of domestic and family 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.

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.

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.

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 51% of the unmet requests for service in 2015-16. 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.

Technical notes

Data presentation

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.

Data in tables that are adjusted for non-response (agency non-response and data error in the SLK) have had a weighting methodology applied which results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in these tables are rounded to the nearest whole number and client numbers in separate columns may not add to the figure for 'all clients' due to rounding.

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. please refer to the [AIHW Privacy policy](#) for further information.

Population estimates used for rates calculations

All rates in this report, including historical rates, have been calculated using population estimates based on the 2011 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 2015-16 data were calculated using the preliminary ERP at 30 June 2015.

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 removes 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:

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.

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5. ABS 2012d. [Information paper: a statistical definition of homelessness, 2012](#). ABS cat. No. 4922.0. Canberra: ABS. Viewed 17 August 2016.
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Fact sheets by state and territory





Notes

Data quality statement

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