



Housing assistance in Australia 2024

Web report | Last updated: 12 Jul 2024 | Topic: [Housing assistance](#)

About

In 2022-23, around 824,000 Australians lived in social housing in over 446,000 dwellings. The majority of social housing dwellings were public housing stock (67%), followed by Community Housing (26%). Commonwealth Rent Assistance was provided to over 1.3 million income units (June 2023).

Cat. no: HOU 337

Findings from this report:

- [The proportion of households living in social housing in Australia decreased from 4.7% in 2013 to 4.1% in 2023](#)
 - [In 2022-23, there were around 824,000 occupants living in Australia's main social housing programs](#)
 - [At June 2023, 5.3% \(or 21,000\) of social housing households were overcrowded](#)
 - [At June 2023, over 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance \(CRA\)](#)
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Summary

Housing assistance is an [Australia's welfare](#) topic

- Home ownership and housing tenure | 12 Jul 2024
- Homelessness and homelessness services | 27 Feb 2024
- Housing affordability | 12 Jul 2024

Australian and state and territory governments provide various types of assistance to people having difficulty with finding or sustaining affordable and appropriate housing in the private housing market. Housing assistance refers to both access to social housing (such as public housing), and targeted financial assistance to eligible Australians.

Social housing program types

Social housing provides eligible households with rents set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant's income). Forms of social housing include:

- public housing (rental housing managed by all state and territory housing authorities)
- community housing (housing managed by community-based organisations, available to low to moderate income or special needs households)
- state owned and managed Indigenous housing (housing provided and managed by state and territory governments available to households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin)
- Indigenous community housing (housing that Indigenous communities own and/or manage).

For more information, see [Housing assistance](#).

Social housing

At June 2023, there were around 446,000 social housing dwellings in Australia, up from 443,000 in 2022.

There has been a decline in the proportion of social housing households in Australia, falling from 4.7% of all households in 2013 to 4.1% in 2023.

In 2023:

- most (314,602) social housing dwellings met the size requirements for the household composition.
- there were 60,730 dwellings that were considered to be underutilised and 20,979 dwellings that were considered to be overcrowded.

For more information, see [Social housing dwellings](#) and [Suitability of dwellings](#).

Social housing allocations

In 2023, there were around 423,000 households living in social housing, with around 824,000 occupants throughout 2022-23.

In 2022-23:

- 32,400 households were newly allocated social housing (16,500 to public housing, 15,200 to community housing and 700 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing)
- 79% of new social housing allocations were to those in greatest need, such as people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

For more information, see [Households and waiting lists](#), [Occupants](#) and [Entries, exits and transfers](#).

Financial assistance

Governments provide financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs.

At June 2023, around 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), this is unchanged from June 2022.

In 2022-23, 56,900 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance and 36,900 households received Home Purchase Assistance.

For more information, see [Financial assistance](#).

Figure SUMMARY.1: Housing assistance in Australia, by state and territory, 2023

The interactive data visualisation displays a summary of key national as well as state and territory data about housing assistance in Australia. Data presented is available in the individual sections of this report and in the data download section. There were around 445,600 social housing dwellings in Australia at June 2023. Social housing households as a proportion of all households has remained stable nationally at

4.1% in June 2023 from 4.6% in June 2014. The number of households receiving Home Purchase Assistance decreased in 2022-23 compared with the previous year.

Housing assistance in Australia

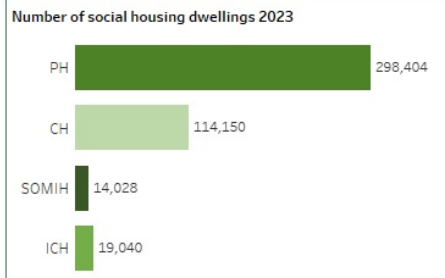
Australia NSW Vic Qld WA SA Tas ACT NT

Australians having difficulty meeting costs of housing can be supported by housing assistance programs, including social housing and financial assistance.

Social housing programs

Social housing provides eligible households with rents set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant's income). Forms of social housing include:

- public housing (PH)
- state owned & managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
- community housing (CH)
- Indigenous community housing (ICH).

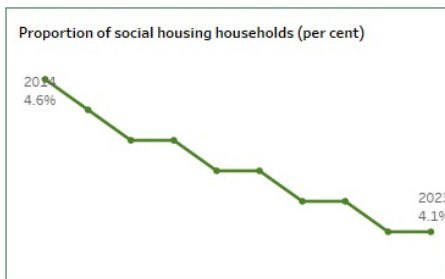


Newly allocated households

In 2022-23, there were 32,414 households newly allocated social housing including, 16,510 households allocated public housing, 15,202 to community housing and 702 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing.

Supply of social housing

There has been a decline in the proportion of social housing households in Australia since 2014, from 4.6% of all households to 4.1% in 2023.



Source: Housing assistance in Australia (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/haa>)
Published July 2024

Quick facts – Australia

In 2023 there were:

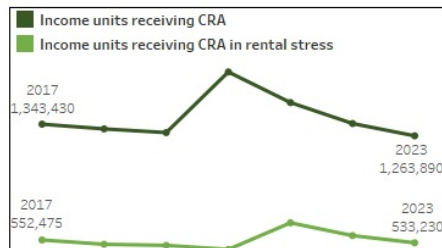
- 445,622 social housing dwellings
- housing 422,849 households
- with 823,700 occupants throughout 2022-23.

In 2023, most (314,602) social housing dwellings met the size requirements for the household composition. There were 60,730 dwellings that were considered to be underutilised and 20,979 dwellings that were considered to be overcrowded.

Financial assistance programs

Governments provide various forms of financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs.

At June 2023, 1,263,890 income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Australia, a decrease from 2022. Of these income units 533,230 were in rental stress, a decrease from 2022.



Note: CRA data are from the last Friday in the financial year.

In 2022-23, 56,928 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance and 36,889 households received Home Purchase Assistance.



Housing assistance

On this page:

- [Housing affordability](#)
- [Drivers for people seeking housing assistance](#)
- [Scope of available housing assistance packages](#)

The Australian, and state and territory governments provide a range of assistance to eligible Australians having difficulty with finding or sustaining affordable and appropriate housing in the private housing market. Housing assistance refers to both access to social housing (such as public housing), and targeted financial assistance.

Housing affordability

Access to affordable housing is critical to wellbeing. Affordable housing refers to housing that is appropriate for the needs of low to moderate income households, priced so that alongside the costs of housing, people are able to meet their basic living costs, such as paying for food, heating, and medical care.

In recent times, finding and securing affordable housing in Australia has been difficult for many low-income households (ABS 2024). 2023 saw the longest continuous stretch of rising advertised rents and the highest rents on record (ABS 2024, Domain 2023, SQM Research 2024).

High cost housing can make it difficult for low income households to meet basic living costs. A household's budget may be adversely affected, leaving less to spend on food, transport, utilities, health and childcare services. Saving for emergencies may also be reduced (Anacker, 2019).

In 2019-20, approximately 619,000 low-income households in private dwellings were in rental stress, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. More than two-thirds (67%) of these households were in capital cities (ABS 2022a).

Housing assistance can provide households in need with affordable and appropriate housing, or with the means to afford appropriate housing. By receiving housing assistance, low-income households can achieve greater financial flexibility and housing stability (Anglicare Australia 2019). The support provided to these households can also lead to greater social and economic participation, and as a result, improve social cohesion (Bridge et al 2007; Carnemolla and Skinner 2021).

For more information on housing stress, see [Housing affordability](#) and [Home ownership and housing tenure](#) (AIHW 2023a; 2023b).

Low income households

A low income household is defined as a household with equivalised disposable income falling between 3rd to 20th percentile of households. Equivalised disposable household income accounts for differences in household sizes and composition (ABS 2022b).

Drivers for people seeking housing assistance

A variety of drivers - circumstances or changes, can contribute to the probability of households seeking housing assistance. Understanding these drivers, and the influence of critical life events, and housing market factors on households can assist in defining housing stress, an early indicator of household need for housing support, and can form part of interventionist approaches to housing assistance provision and policy (Ghasri et al 2022).

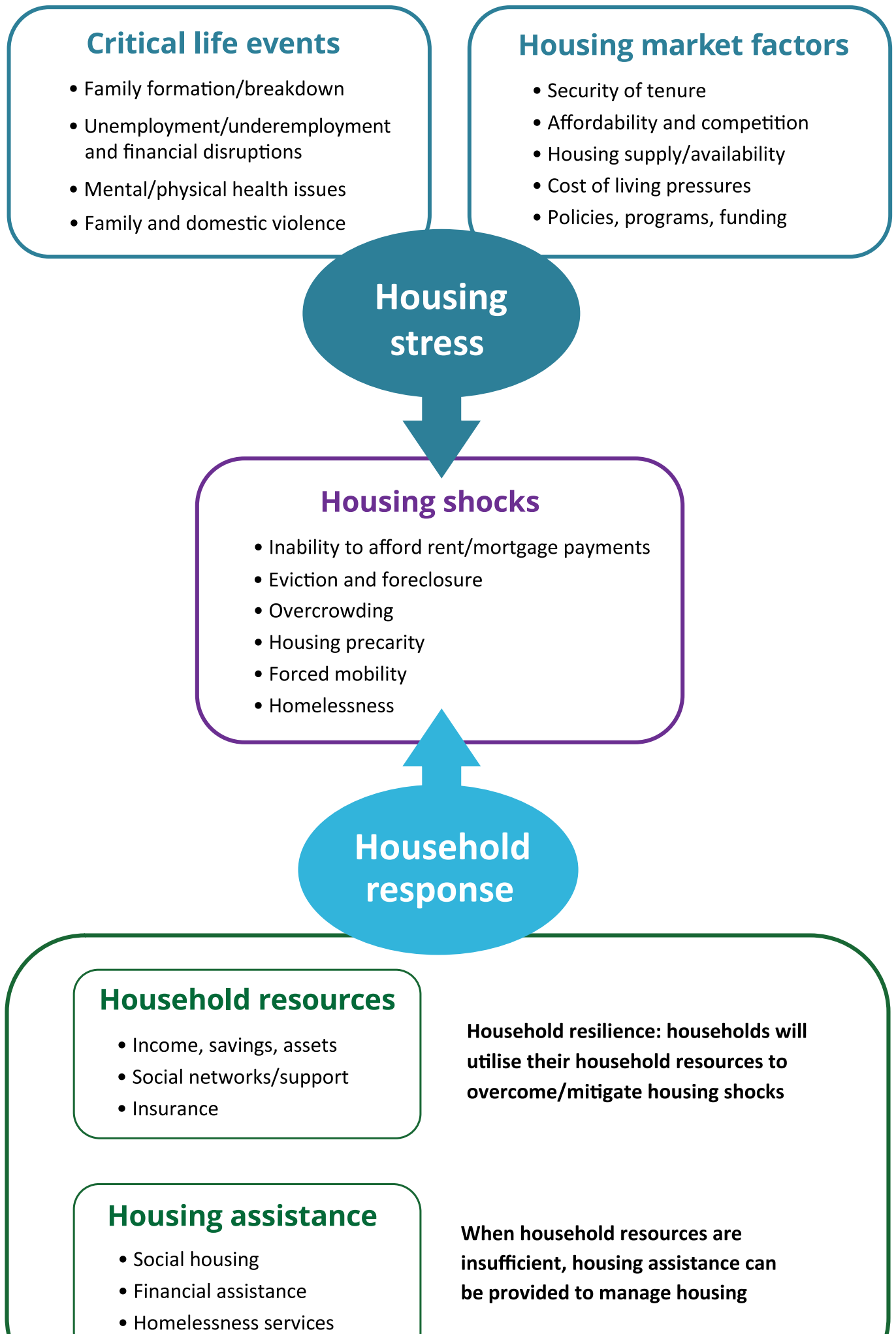
Housing stress is described by researchers, governments, and policy makers as households that are paying a high portion of their income on housing.

Critical life events are events that lead to major change in a person's life. These factors can involve family formation or breakdown, providing care to a family member, or loss of employment. Multiple intersecting critical life events may also put significant financial pressure on a household's ability to manage their housing and living costs.

Housing market factors are the specific arrangement of conditions in the private housing market that impact housing options and choices, and are influenced by taxation, regulation, supply, and availability. Additionally, other factors related to housing affordability include low vacancy rates, rising private market rental costs, and cost of living pressures such as inflation, interest rates, and energy costs may impact on housing stress (Ghasri et al 2022; Stone et al 2016).

In response to housing insecurity and housing affordability challenges, households may need to access contingency resources (such as savings, assets, skills, or social networks) to ensure that they can sustain access to housing. However, low income households often lack the additional resources to insure against or respond to any negative impacts arising from critical life events or housing market factors, leading them to seek housing assistance (Ghasri et al 2022).

Figure 1: Factors impacting housing stress



Scope of available housing assistance packages

The different housing programs and assistance explored throughout this report include:

- social housing, owned and managed by government and non-government organisations, including:
 - public housing (PH)
 - state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
 - community housing (CH)
 - Indigenous community housing (ICH)
- financial assistance given to tenants to meet private rental costs, including:
 - Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)
 - Private Rent Assistance (PRA)
- financial assistance with home purchase, including:
 - Home Purchase Assistance (HPA)

The report does not cover the provision of services such as obtaining accommodation or sustaining tenancies provided by Specialist Homelessness Services. For information relating to these specific homelessness services (see AIHW 2023c).

Definitions of housing assistance programs

Social housing

Social housing is low cost or subsidised rental housing provided to eligible Australians by government or non-government (including not-for-profit) organisations (AIHW 2022b).

- **Public housing:** Rental housing managed by all state and territory housing authorities. This includes dwellings that are owned by the housing authority or leased from the private sector or other housing program areas and used to provide public rental housing or leased to public housing tenants. Public housing can be accessed by non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and permanent residents on low incomes and/or with greatest and/or special needs.
- **Community housing:** Housing managed by community-based organisations, available to low to moderate income or special needs households. Community housing models vary across states and territories, and the housing stock may be owned by a variety of groups including government. Community housing can be accessed by non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians, and permanent residents.
- **State owned and managed Indigenous housing:** Housing that state and territory governments provide and manage. It is available to households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Eligibility criteria for these households include low income, special needs, or greatest need.
- **Indigenous community housing:** Any community housing that is owned or managed by an Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO). These organisations may either directly manage the dwellings they own or sublease tenancy management services to the relevant state/territory housing authority or another organisation. Services include managing tenancy arrangements, collecting rent, providing subsidised rent and performing housing maintenance. This type of housing is made available to households with at least one Indigenous member (NIAA 2024).

Financial assistance with rental costs

- **Commonwealth Rent Assistance:** This is a payment provided by the Australian government to eligible families and individuals who pay or are liable to pay private rent or community housing rent. Commonwealth Rent Assistance is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate (or ceiling) is reached. The minimum threshold and maximum rates vary according to the household or family situation, including the number of children (DSS 2023).
- **Private Rent Assistance:** This is financial assistance administered by each state and territory government. It provides a range of financial assistance to low-income households experiencing difficulty with securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. Private Rent Assistance is usually provided as a one-off form of support - such as bond loans and rental grants - but may also include ongoing rental subsidies and payment of relocation expenses.

Financial assistance with home purchase

- **Home Purchase Assistance:** This is a form of government financial assistance administered by each state and territory. It provides a range of financial assistance to eligible households to improve their access to, and maintain, home ownership. Home Purchase Assistance may vary by state and territory, as some products are only offered within certain states and territories.

Government assistance for home ownership

There are various forms of Australian and state-territory government assistance and programs to support people into home ownership. Australian Government initiatives are briefly described below; however, they are not the focus of this report.

Several schemes to support people in buying a home are managed by Housing Australia on behalf of the Australian Government (Housing Australia 2024).

- The First Home Guarantee (FHBG) Scheme is an initiative to support first home buyers get into home ownership sooner. Under the FHBG, part of the home loan is guaranteed by the Commonwealth, through Housing Australia. This enables participants to buy a home with as little as 5% deposit and without paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance.
- The Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee (RFHBG) is an initiative to support first home buyers get into home ownership sooner, in a regional area. Under the RFHBG, part of the home loan is guaranteed by the Commonwealth, through Housing Australia. This enables participants to buy a home with as little as 5% deposit and without paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance.
- The Family Home Guarantee (FHG) is an initiative to support single parents or legal guardians with at least one dependent to buy a home sooner. The parent/guardian may be a first homebuyer or have owned a home previously. Under the FHG, part of the home loan is guaranteed by the Commonwealth, through Housing Australia. This enables participants to buy a home with as little as 2% deposit and without paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance.
- The new Commonwealth [Help to Buy](#) program will assist low to middle income earners into home ownership using shared equity. Legislation to establish the program is before the Senate, as at July 2024. Once legislation has passed, it will be managed by Housing Australia.

The First Home Super Saver Scheme (FHSSS) was introduced by the Australian Government in the 2017-18 Budget. The FHSSS supports first homebuyers who meet the eligibility criteria to save money for a house deposit using their superannuation fund. Those who are eligible can voluntarily contribute up to \$15,000 in any one financial year, and \$50,000 in total under the scheme. They receive the tax benefit of saving through their superannuation contribution arrangements. In September 2024, amendments will be applied to the current scheme. These amendments will allow greater flexibility for first homebuyers (ATO 2024).

The Indigenous Home Ownership Program supports Indigenous Australians into affordable, appropriate, and secure housing. The program aims to address barriers to home ownership by providing access to knowledge, skills and networks to support home buyers and owners (IBA 2023).

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funds Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, when deemed necessary and reasonable. SDA funding is used to stimulate investment in the building of new dwellings for NDIS participants (NDIS 2022).

The First Home Owner Grant scheme, introduced nationally on 1 July 2000, is funded by the state and territory governments, and administered under their legislation. A one-off grant is payable to first homeowners who apply and satisfy eligibility criteria. Additional schemes may also be in place in states/territories, such as first home buyer exemptions from some transfer duties (Australian Government 2024).

Some of these national assistance schemes can be used in conjunction with one another and/or state and territory first homeowner grants and stamp duty concessions.

Housing policy framework

On this page:

- [A brief history of Government housing assistance](#)
- [Current policy landscape](#)
- [Government housing assistance expenditure](#)

A brief history of Government housing assistance

In 1943, the Commonwealth Housing Commission was appointed by the Commonwealth Government to evaluate the condition of Australia's housing stock. Due to the combined impact of the Great Depression and the use of labour and building materials in supporting the war effort, appropriate and secure housing was incredibly scarce during this time (Dufty-Jones 2018). In response to Australia's sizable housing shortage, the government began to provide people with adequate housing, to foster economic development and replace the tenement housing present at the time (Troy 2012; Macintyre 2015).

In 1944, the Commonwealth Housing Commission reported a shortage of some 300,000 dwellings and advised the Commonwealth to provide housing to overcome this housing deficit (Pawson et al. 2020). This advice would later result in the establishment of the first Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) in 1945.

The CSHA was an agreement between the Commonwealth and states/territories to provide funds for the construction of new dwellings. As a result, social housing provision from governments became a more prominent aspect of the housing landscape. The original 1945 CSHA has been updated numerous times, with the 2003 CSHA being the final revision, before it was officially replaced by the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) in 2009 (Parliament of Australia 2017). The NAHA was later superseded by the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement in 2018 (DSS 2022a).

Historically, social housing was built to stimulate the economy, provide people with secure accommodation, and facilitate participation in the workforce (Pawson et al. 2020). As such, access to social housing was made available to predominantly working families on very low, low, and moderate incomes (Groenhart et al. 2014; Yates 2013). However, from 1956 to 1973, the Government's housing strategy shifted towards encouraging home ownership and supporting low-income households in the private rental market. In 1973, income eligibility limits were introduced to social housing households, signifying the beginning of the shift towards the current policy where social housing are allocations partly based on need (Yates 2013).

By the 1999 CSHA, a greater emphasis was placed on helping families and individuals that could not be housed in the private market. Accordingly, a key feature of the 1999 CSHA was providing housing assistance according to need, classified by income, rather than security of tenure (DSS 2015).

With the introduction of the NAHA in 2009, provision of social housing focused on assisting households experiencing disadvantage, and more complex needs - or in other words, people who are in greatest need, especially people experiencing homelessness (Pawson et al. 2020).

Current policy landscape

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) contributes to improving access to affordable, safe, and sustainable housing across the housing spectrum, including to prevent and address homelessness, and to support social and economic participation. It is a mutual agreement between the Australian and state and territory governments (FFR 2018).

The NHHA came into effect on 1 July 2018, replacing previous funding agreements with states and territories including, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

The new National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (the Agreement) was signed in May 2024. The Agreement will support the operation of Australia's social housing and homelessness services sectors. The Agreement is underpinned by a new outcomes framework along with improvements to data and reporting.

The Australian Government will provide approximately \$1.7 billion in 2023-24 to state and territory governments for housing and homelessness services (COA 2023).

In addition to the NHHA, the Australian Government will provide \$187.5 million to state and territory governments through National Partnership payments for housing and essential services, and remote housing programs.

National Housing and Homelessness Plan

The Australian Government is developing a [National Housing and Homelessness Plan](#) to identify steps that can be taken to address housing issues in Australia. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan (the Plan) is being developed in collaboration with key stakeholders including state and territory governments. It will be informed by advice provided by the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council and the range of housing and homelessness issues heard through consultations and written submissions to the consultation process (DSS 2024).

National Housing Supply and Affordability Council

The Council provides independent, evidence-based expert advice to Government on housing supply and affordability matters (NHSAC 2024). The Council builds the evidence base for national housing policy through its research, housing supply and demand forecasts, and by working to improve data availability and quality. The Council also engages with, and learns from, the diverse perspectives of stakeholders who are equally committed to achieving real reform in the housing system. The Council reports annually to the Minister for Housing on its research and the state of the housing system.

National Housing Accord

The [National Housing Accord](#) (2022) brings together all levels of government, investors and the residential development, building and construction sector to unlock quality, affordable housing supply over the medium term. The Accord recognises the need for more housing to be provided by the market, with government playing a pivotal role in the investment of building affordable housing that is close to services and other amenities.

Australian Government funding of at least \$72 million per year by 2028-29, indexed from 2029-30, will help support the delivery of 10,000 affordable homes over five years from 2024. Additionally, state and territory governments have committed to deliver up to 10,000 new affordable homes, supporting a total of up to 20,000 new affordable homes under the Accord (Treasury 2024).

There are a range of programs designed to help reach the Accord's targets:

- Housing Support Program
 - \$500 million initiative to help kick start housing supply, including connecting essential services and amenities to support new housing development or building planning capability.
 - In the 2024-25 Budget, an expansion of this program was announced, with a further \$1 billion being made available to states and territories to deliver new housing- including for connecting essential services. This brings the total funding for the Housing Support Program to \$1.5 billion.
- National Planning Reform Blueprint
 - Outlines planning, zoning, land release and other measures to improve housing supply and affordability.
- New Home Bonus
 - \$3 billion to help incentivise states and territories to build more than their share of the targets listed under the Accord.

Housing Australia

[Housing Australia](#) (formerly the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation) has primary responsibility for delivering key programs which form the Government's housing agenda including increasing the supply of social and affordable housing and helping Australians realise homeownership sooner.

Housing Australia is responsible for delivering Australian Government commitments to fund 30,000 new social and affordable dwellings through the Housing Australia Future Fund (Department of Finance 2024), and an additional 10,000 affordable homes through the National Housing Accord (Treasury 2023).

Housing Australia Future Fund

The [Housing Australia Future Fund \(HAFF\)](#), a \$10 Billion investment fund, was established in November 2023.

The Australian Government established the HAFF to provide a sustainable funding source to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.

The income generated by the HAFF will provide a minimum annual disbursement of \$500 million per year, indexed from 2029-30, to support delivery of 20,000 new social and 10,000 new affordable homes over five years and to fund a range of acute housing needs.

Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator

The [Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator](#) (AHBA) provides low-cost and longer-term loans to registered community housing providers, supporting more social and affordable housing. In the 2024-25 Budget, the Government is increasing the line of credit to Housing Australia by \$3 billion, and increasing Housing Australia's liability cap by \$2.5 billion to \$10 billion support ongoing delivery of the AHBA program.

National Housing Infrastructure Facility

The [National Housing Infrastructure Facility](#) (NHIF) was originally established as a \$1 billion facility that provides finance for eligible infrastructure projects that will unlock new housing supply, particularly affordable housing.

The Government expanded the remit of the NHIF to allow for more flexible use of \$575 million of existing funds to help unlock new social and affordable dwellings and attract more institutional capital to the sector.

The NHIF is also receiving an additional \$1 billion in federal funding to support crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence, and for youth. This funding will have a higher allocation to up-front grants to support states and territories and community housing providers to deliver more housing for these cohorts.

Capacity building for the social and affordable housing sector

The Government is providing \$2.1 million from 2024-25 to build the capacity of community housing providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations, assisting these organisations to engage with the Government's housing financing programs and improve their delivery of housing.

Government housing assistance expenditure

In 2022-23, Australian Government funding for the NHHA and related agreements was \$3.8 billion (of which \$1.6 billion was for the NHHA). An additional \$4.7 billion was spent on Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). In 2020-21, this figure was \$5.4 billion due to pandemic-related measures. In 2022-23, state and territory social housing net recurrent expenditure was \$4.9 billion, an increase of \$0.1 billion from the previous financial year. State and territory government social housing capital (non-recurrent) expenditure was \$3.5 billion in 2022-23 (Productivity Commission 2024).

In the 2024-25 Budget, the Government increased the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by a further 10 per cent, at a cost of \$1.9 billion. Subject to the passage of legislation, the 10 per cent increase will be implemented on 20 September 2024, with regular indexation to occur on top of this on the same day.

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Social housing dwellings

On this page:

- [Social housing dwellings](#)
- [Location of dwellings](#)
- [Occupancy](#)
- [Tenantable status](#)
- [Dwelling attributes](#)
- [Dwellings managed by non-government providers](#)

The information presented in this section provides insights into social housing dwelling stock across Australia. This includes four main programs: public housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing or SOMIH, community housing and Indigenous community housing. The data are a snapshot on 30 June of the reference year.

Key findings

- At June 2023, there were around 446,000 social housing dwellings in Australia.
- There has been a gradual increase in community housing stock since 2006 while public housing stock has been declining.
- In most states/territories, public housing was the most common type of social housing, community housing is the second largest provider of social housing.
- Three in four public housing dwellings were in *Major cities*, although Indigenous-specific programs were mostly in *Very remote* areas.

What is a dwelling?

In this report, a dwelling is defined as a structure, or a discrete space within a structure, intended for a person or group of people to live.

Dwelling types include:

- a separate house
- a semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse, etc.
- a flat, unit, apartment, or cabin, etc.

A full list of dwelling types can be found in [METEOR](#).

For more information on how dwellings differ to households see [Households](#).

The concept of a dwelling may be different across the social housing collections; see the [Data quality statements](#) page for more information on definitions.

Social housing dwellings

At June 2023, there were around 446,000 social housing dwellings in Australia.

At June 2023, (Table DWELLINGS.1):

- 67% or 298,000 dwellings were public housing (PH)
- 26% or 114,000 dwellings were community housing (CH)
- 3.1% or 14,000 dwellings were state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
- 4.3% or 19,000 dwellings were Indigenous community housing (ICH).

Changes to social housing dwellings over time

There has been a gradual increase in community housing stock since 2006 while public housing stock has been declining.

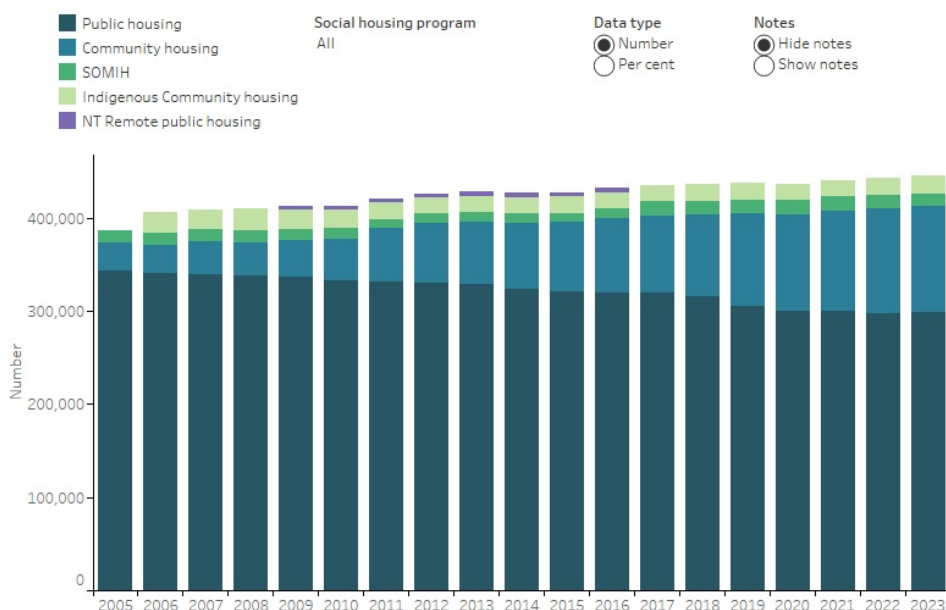
From 2006 to 2023 (Figure DWELLINGS.1; Table DWELLINGS.1):

- The number of public housing dwellings decreased from 341,000 in 2006 to 298,000 in 2023.
- The number of community housing dwellings increased almost four-fold, from 30,100 in 2006 to 114,000 in 2023.
- There was a decrease in the number of Indigenous community housing dwellings from 22,200 in 2006 to 19,000 in 2023. However, the number of Indigenous community housing dwellings increased by 1,000 in the past year, from 18,000 in 2022.
- The number of SOMIH dwellings fluctuated over the past 15 years due to stock transfers but has remained relatively stable since 2017.

There have been considerable changes to the composition of social housing stock among the four programs, see [Technical notes](#) for details.

Figure DWELLINGS.1: Dwellings by social housing program, at June 2005 to 2023

Dwellings, by social housing program, at June 2006 to 2023. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that from 2006 to 2023, public housing has consistently been the most common type of social housing. This majority has decreased over time from 84% (341,000 dwellings) in 2006 to 67% (298,000 dwellings) in 2023. The number of community housing dwellings increased from 30,100 (or 7.4%) in 2006 to 114,000 (or 26%) in 2023, and the number of SOMIH dwellings increased from 12,900 (3.2%) in 2006 to 14,000 (3.1%) in 2023. The number of Indigenous community housing dwellings decreased from 22,200 (5.5%) in 2006 to 19,000 (4.3%) in 2023. The number of Indigenous community housing dwellings decreased from 22,200 (5.5%) in 2006 to 19,000 (4.3%) in 2023.



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Northern Territory Government. Department of Housing, Annual Report. Darwin, NT. Supplementary table DWELLINGS.1.

Variation between states and territories

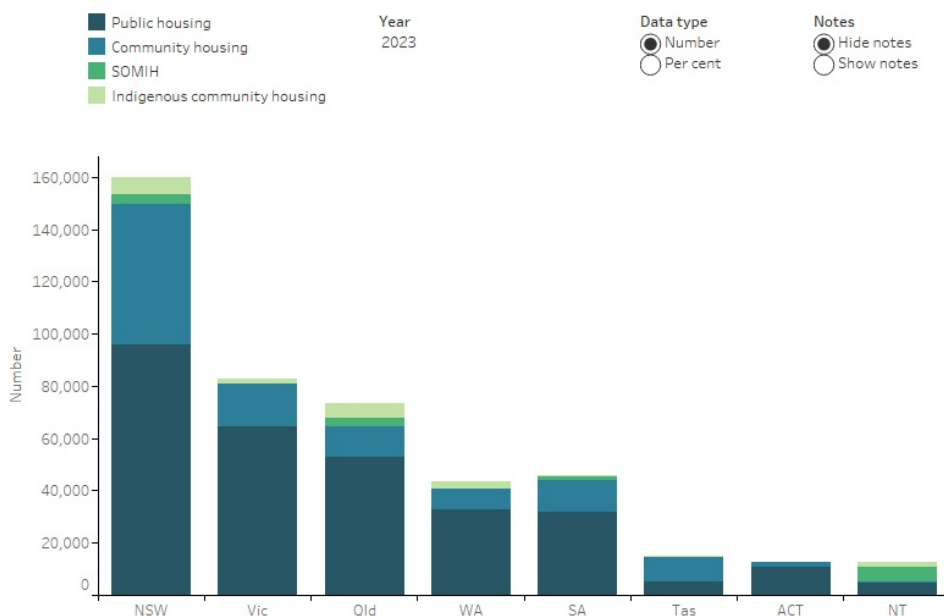
In most states/territories, public housing was the most common type of social housing, community housing is the second largest provider of social housing.

At June 2023, the profile of social housing varied across the states and territories (Figure DWELLINGS.2; Table DWELLINGS.2).

- New South Wales had the highest number of public and community housing dwellings (95,800 and 53,900 dwellings, respectively).
- For New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory, the majority of dwellings were public housing (60-87%), followed by community housing (14-34%).
- From 2015 to 2021, Tasmania had a near equal proportion of public housing (around 51%) and community housing (around 47%) dwellings. However, due to a public housing stock transfer in 2021-22, community housing dwellings (9,700) now outnumber public housing dwellings (5,000).
- The largest number of Northern Territory social housing dwellings were in the SOMIH program (44% or 5,600), followed by public housing (38% or 4,800 dwellings).
- The Northern Territory had the most SOMIH dwellings of any state or territory.
- For Indigenous community housing, New South Wales (6,500) had the largest number of dwellings, followed closely by Queensland (5,500 dwellings). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous community housing dwellings (15% or 1,800).

Figure DWELLINGS.2: Dwellings by social housing program by state or territory, at June 2014 to 2023

Dwellings, by social housing program, by state or territory, at June 2014 to 2023. This vertical stacked bar graph shows the variation in the number of dwellings in each social housing program (public housing, SOMIH, community housing and Indigenous community housing) across states and territories by number and per cent. In 2023, the Australian Capital Territory (87%) had the highest proportion of public housing dwellings, while Tasmania (34%) had the lowest proportion. Tasmania had the highest proportion of community housing dwellings (65%), while the Northern Territory had the lowest (4.5%) in 2023. New South Wales had the highest number of Indigenous community housing dwellings increasing from 4,700 in 2014 to 6,500 dwellings in 2023.



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Northern Territory Government. Department of Housing, Annual Report. Darwin, NT. Supplementary table DWELLINGS.2.

Location of dwellings

Three in four public housing dwellings were in *Major cities*, although Indigenous-specific programs were mostly in *Very remote* areas. The location of social housing is an important component of the suitability of a dwelling for an occupant. Location is associated with access to amenities, employment opportunities, health services, and transportation services (AIHW 2024). For further information on the suitability of social housing in terms of location, see the [National Social Housing Survey 2023: Needs of tenants - location of their home](#).

The location of social housing largely reflects the geographic distribution of the population of Australia, with large concentrations of people living in urban centres of both the south-east and east coasts.

At June 2023 (Table DWELLINGS.3):

- Most of the public and community housing dwellings were in Major cities (76% and 66% of dwellings, respectively).
- Most of the SOMIH and Indigenous community housing dwellings were in Very remote areas (33% and 47%, respectively).

What is the Australian Statistical Geography Standard?

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is a classification of Australia into a social geography to reflect the location of people and communities to assist in the publication and analysis of social, economic, and demographic statistics. The ASGS categorises the regions of Australia into a hierarchy of statistical areas and consists of ABS structures and non-ABS structures (such as local government and postal areas). For further information, see the [technical notes](#).

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) refers to the geographical area of sub-state regions in the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA4 broadly represents the labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory, with the boundaries reflecting the separation of sub-state regions by different labour markets. For the largest regional cities, including Wollongong and Townsville, SA4s broadly reflects the labour markets of the city. For outer regional and remote areas, SA4s broadly reflects the aggregation of smaller and localised labour markets that are geographically, socially, and economically similar (ABS 2021).

Across the states and territories, the number of dwellings managed by the different social housing programs varied by these sub-state regions.

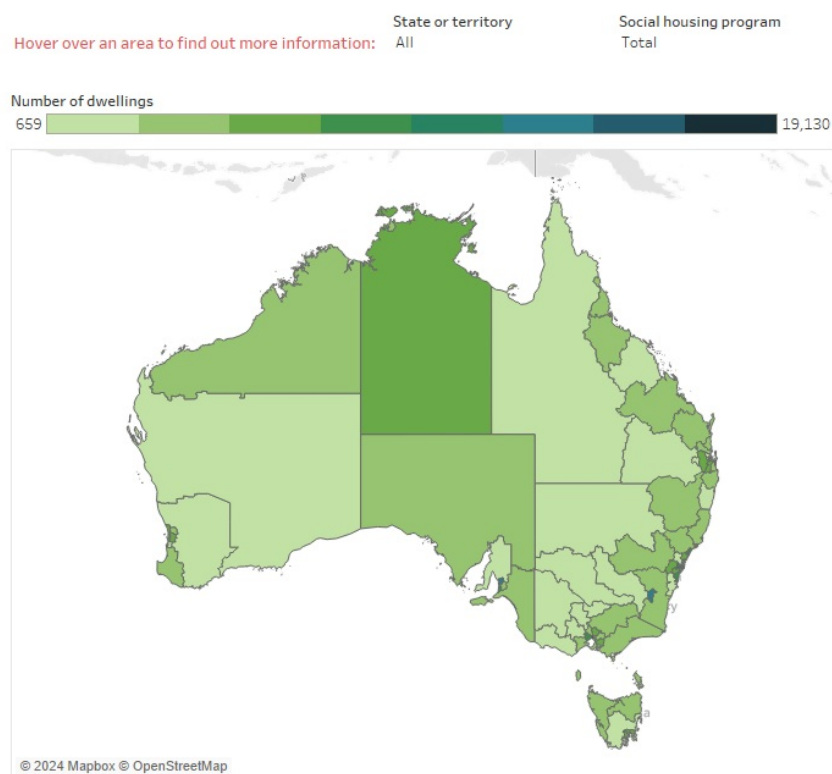
In 2023, the regions with the highest number of social housing dwellings were (Figure DWELLINGS.3; Table DWELLINGS.4):

1. Melbourne - Inner (19,100 dwellings)
 2. Sydney - Parramatta (14,000)
 3. Sydney - City and Inner South (14,000)
 4. Sydney - Inner South West (13,700)
 5. Adelaide - North (13,100)
- The highest number of public housing dwellings were in Melbourne - Inner (14,800 dwellings)
 - The highest numbers of community housing dwellings were in The NSW region of the Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle (4,700)
 - The highest number of SOMIH dwellings were in Northern Territory - Outback (5,200)

Similarly, across Local Government Areas (LGA), Brisbane (19,100) had the highest total number of social housing dwellings, followed by the ACT (12,500), Sydney (11,000), Canterbury-Bankstown (10,400) and Blacktown (10,200) (Table DWELLINGS.5).

Figure DWELLINGS.3: Number of dwellings by social housing program Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4), at June 2023

The map shows the number of dwellings in SA4 areas of Australia in June 2023, aggregated by social housing program. Melbourne-Inner (19,100) had the highest number of social housing dwellings, most of which were public housing (14,800). The Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle in New South Wales had the highest number of community housing dwellings (4,700). The Northern Territory - Outback had the highest number of SOMIH dwellings (5,200).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.4.

Occupancy

Occupancy rates

Occupancy describes whether a dwelling is occupied under a formal tenancy agreement. For social housing, the rate of occupancy is calculated by analysing occupied dwellings in reference to total social housing dwellings for the reference year. The occupancy rate is influenced by tenancy turnover, changes to the number of available dwellings, as well as the need for redevelopment or replacement of dwellings whereby major maintenance work needs to be completed before dwellings can be allocated to a new household.

In Australia, social housing occupancy rates have remained high year to year. At June 2023, 96% of dwellings were occupied in the public housing and community housing programs. Occupancy rates in Indigenous community housing (94%), and SOMIH (93%) were also high (Table DWELLINGS.6). The rates also remain consistent across remoteness areas (Table DWELLINGS.7).

At June 2023 (Table DWELLINGS.6):

- For public housing, the highest occupancy rates were in Queensland (98%) and Tasmania (97%). The lowest occupancy rate was in Victoria (94%).
- The highest occupancy rate for SOMIH was in Queensland (98%) compared with the Northern Territory (87%).
- For community housing, the highest occupancy rate was in New South Wales (98%), whereas the lowest was in the Australian Capital Territory (86%).
- For Indigenous Community Housing, Tasmania had the highest rate of occupancy (99%), with the lowest rate in Western Australia (87%).

Tenantable status

The tenantable status of a dwelling relates to whether a dwelling provides a certain level of basic amenity, and that maintenance is completed to the required minimum level (see also [NSHS 2023: tenant satisfaction with maintenance services](#)).

At June 2023, almost all public housing dwellings were tenantable (99% or 295,000); higher than the proportion of SOMIH (96% or 13,500) and community housing dwellings (94% or 107,000) (Table DWELLINGS.8).

Data were not available for Indigenous community housing dwellings.

Dwelling attributes

Dwelling type

Within each social housing program, dwelling types have remained stable over time.

At June 2023, most public housing dwellings were a *separate house* (37%), *flat, unit or apartment* (35%) or *semi-detached, townhouse, etc.* (27%).

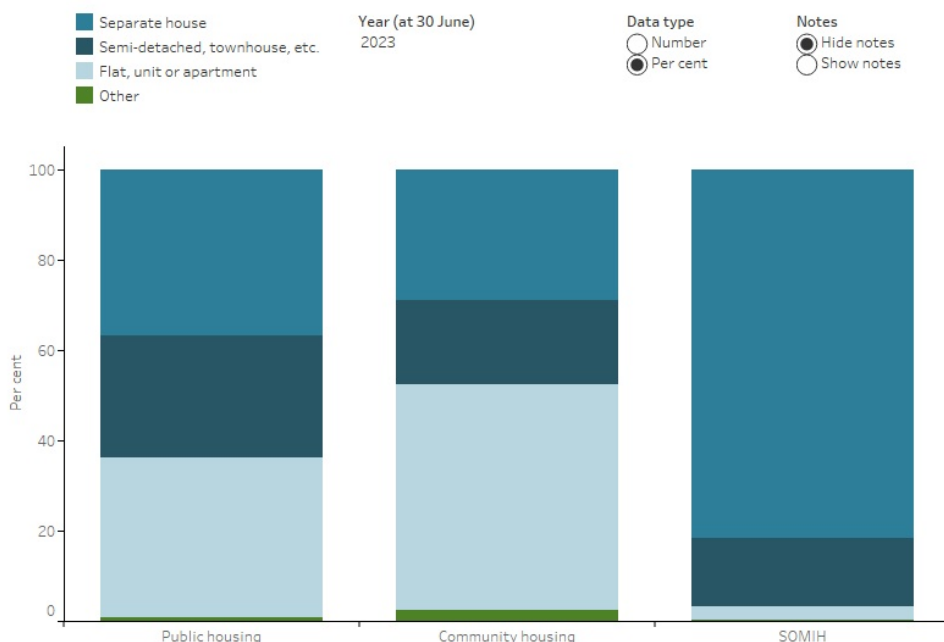
Half of all community housing dwellings were a *flat, unit or apartment* (50%), followed by a *separate house* (29%). In comparison, the vast majority of SOMIH dwellings were a *separate house* (82%), followed by a relatively small proportion of *semi-detached, townhouse etc.* (15%). This pattern of SOMIH dwelling types likely reflects the location of dwellings and the target group (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.9).

From June 2012 to 2023 (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.9):

- There was a decrease of around 19,400 *separate houses* in public housing.
- The number of *flat, unit or apartment* type dwellings in community housing more than doubled in the past decade; from 25,600 in 2012 to 53,800 in 2023.

Figure DWELLINGS.4: Dwellings by dwelling type and social housing program, at June 2012 to 2023

Dwelling type by social housing program, at June 2012 to 2023. This figure shows a comparison of the number of dwellings by dwelling type across social housing programs from 2012 to 2023. In 2023, the most common dwelling type in both public housing (37% or 110,000) and SOMIH (82% or 11,500) were separate houses, while for community housing the most common dwelling were flats, units, or apartments (50% or 55,800).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.9.

Number of bedrooms

At June 2023 (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.10):

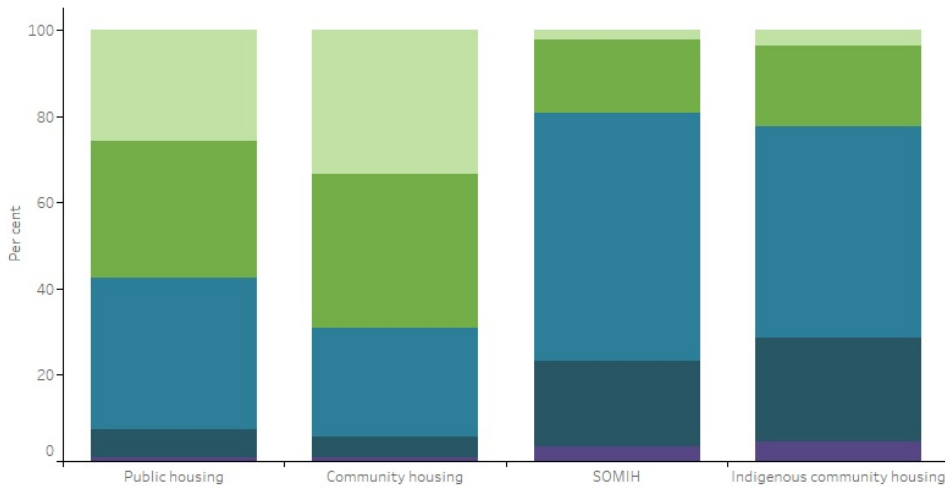
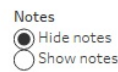
- Public housing dwellings were most likely to have *3 bedrooms* (35% or 105,000 dwellings), followed by *2 bedroom* dwellings (32% or 94,500).
- The majority of SOMIH dwellings were *3 bedroom* dwellings (58% or 8,100 dwellings), with very few *1 bedroom* dwellings (2.2% or 303).
- Community housing dwellings were most commonly *2 bedroom* (36% or 38,600) or *1 bedroom* (33% or 36,200) dwellings.
- Around half of Indigenous community housing dwellings were *3 bedroom* dwellings (49% or 7,100) and a further 24% (or 3,500) were *4 bedroom* dwellings.

Figure DWELLINGS.5: Dwellings by number of bedrooms and social housing program, at June 2012 to 2023

Number of bedrooms by social housing program, at June 2012 to 2023. This figure shows a comparison of dwellings by number of bedrooms across social housing programs. In 2023, 3 bedroom dwellings were the most common number of bedrooms for public housing (35% or 105,000), SOMIH (58% or 8,100) and Indigenous community housing (50% or 7,100). However, the most common number of bedrooms in community housing dwellings were 1 (34% or 36,200) or 2 bedrooms (36% or 38,600).



Year (at 30 June)
2023



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.10.

Dwellings managed by non-government providers

Community housing and Indigenous community housing dwellings are managed by non-government organisations. As a result, information from some organisations is not available (See the [Data quality statements](#) for more information).

At June 2023 there were (Table DWELLINGS.11):

- Around 490 reporting community housing providers across Australia, a decrease from 520 providers the previous year. The majority (70% or 343) of these providers managed less than 50 dwellings.
- Over 200 reporting Indigenous community housing providers. Nearly half of these providers managed fewer than 20 dwellings (Table DWELLINGS.11).

Glossary

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2021) '[Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#)', ABS, Australian Government accessed on 29 April 2023.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024) '[National Social Housing Survey 2023](#)', AIHW, Australian Government, accessed on 3 May 2024.



Households and waiting lists

On this page:

- [Households](#)
- [Supply of social housing](#)
- [Key characteristics of households](#)
- [Length of household tenure](#)
- [Waiting lists](#)

Most of the data in this section are a snapshot of ongoing households on 30 June of the reference year.

Key findings

- The number of households in the four main social housing programs increased from 379,000 in 2008, to 423,000 in 2023.
- The overall growth of social housing households has not kept up with the overall growth in the number of households in Australia.
- The majority of households in social housing have been in their tenancies for less than 10 years.
- The proportion of greatest need households on public housing and SOMIH waiting lists has been increasing since 2014.

Households

Information on the characteristics of households (such as sex, income status and disability status) provides an insight into the demographic profile of social housing households.

Household definitions

For the purposes of this analysis, a household is either an individual or a group of 2 or more related or unrelated people residing in the same dwelling. Information is presented about ongoing households, that is, those with a tenancy on 30 June in the reference year. Complete data were not available for all programs in some states and territories.

Household composition describes the group of people living in household in a dwelling and is based on couple and parent-child relationships. A single-family household contains a main tenant only, or a main tenant residing with a partner and/or the main tenant's children. Group households consist of 2 or more tenants aged 16 or over who are not in a couple or parent-child relationship. Mixed households are households not described by the other two types - for example, multiple single-family households.

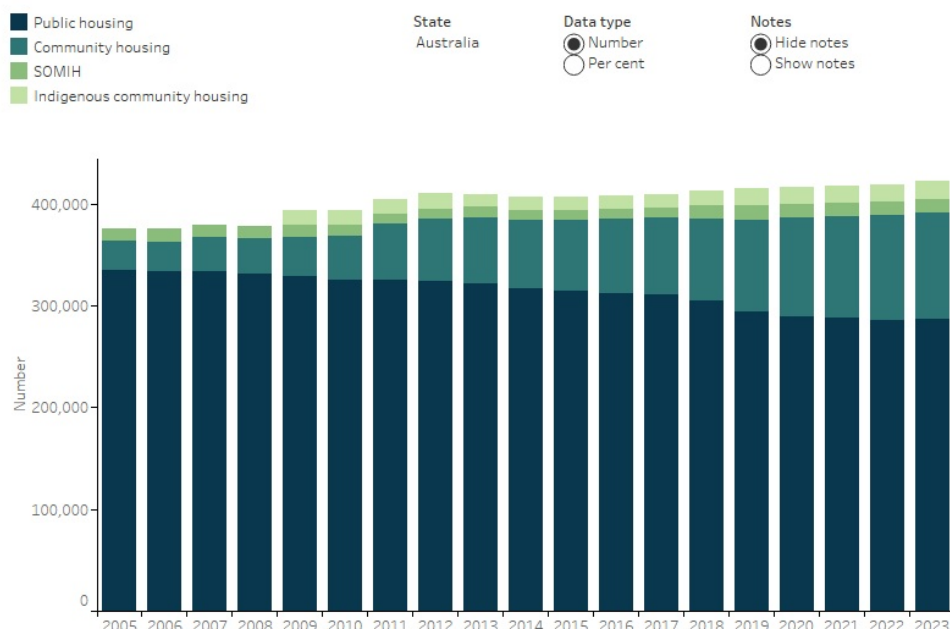
The number of households in the four main social housing programs increased from 379,000 in 2008, to 423,000 in 2023.

At June 2023, among social housing programs (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1; Table HOUSEHOLDS.1):

- 286,000 households (68%) were in public housing.
- 105,000 households (25%) were in community housing.
- 13,100 households (3.1%) were in SOMIH.
- 18,500 households (4.4%) were in Indigenous community housing.

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1: Households by social housing program, at June 2005 to 2023

Number of households, by social housing program, at June 2005 to June 2023. This vertical stacked bar graph shows the highest proportion of households living in public housing from 2005 (89%) to 2023 (68%). Community housing had the second highest proportion of households at 25% in 2023; increasing from 7.5% in 2005. In contrast, SOMIH (3.1%) and Indigenous community housing (4.4%) had the lowest proportion of households, with both proportions remaining mostly unchanged from 2005 and 2009, respectively.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.1.

Changes over time

The number of ongoing households in the four main social housing programs has fluctuated in recent years reflecting dwelling changes within each program (see [Social Housing Dwellings](#) section). Changes to the number of households in public housing and community housing programs account for the largest changes across time.

From 2008 to 2023, the number of public housing households decreased from 331,000 to 286,000. However, this decrease was offset by an increase in the number of community housing households which tripled from 35,000 to 105,000 (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1; Table HOUSEHOLDS.1).

The number of Indigenous community housing households increased from 14,200 in 2009 to 18,500 in 2023. Conversely, the number of SOMIH households has fluctuated over time, decreasing from 12,400 in 2008 to 9,600 households in 2017. SOMIH household data for the Northern Territory were reported for the first time in 2018 and in turn, the number of SOMIH households increased to 13,800 and has remained steady since, with around 13,100 SOMIH households reported in 2023.

The change in the proportion of households in each of the social housing programs varied across states and territories (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1). Due to changes in systems and processes and stock movements between programs, data for individual states and territories and patterns of social housing may not be comparable across years. See the [technical notes](#) and data quality statements for more information.

State and territory

Each state and territory employs a variety of different models of social housing provision, and the number of households largely reflects the number of social housing dwelling types available to providers for allocation.

Of the social housing households at June 2023 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.1):

- Public housing households made up the majority of social housing in most states and territories, followed by community housing.
- In Tasmania, social housing households were predominantly community housing (65%), followed by public housing (34%).
- Households in the Northern Territory were roughly evenly split between SOMIH (41%) and public housing (39%), followed by Indigenous community housing (16%).

Supply of social housing

The overall growth of social housing households has not kept up with the overall growth in the number of households in Australia. The following analysis compares the total number of households in social housing to the total number of households in Australia using:

- the number of social housing households (public housing, SOMIH, community housing and Indigenous community housing)
- the total number of households in Australia sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics household projections series (ABS 2010; ABS 2015; ABS 2019).

In the years from 2011 to 2023, the number of social housing households increased from 404,000 in 2011 to 423,000 in 2023 (Table SOCIAL SHARE.1). Over this same period, the number of total households in Australia also increased from 8.4 million in 2011 to 10.3 million households in 2023 (ABS 2015; ABS 2019).

The amount of social housing households as a proportion of Australian households has seen a steady decline, from 4.8% in 2011 to 4.1% in 2023 (Table SOCIAL SHARE.1).

From June 2014 to June 2023, the share of social housing households varied between states and territories (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.2; Table SOCIAL SHARE.1).

In 2023, the proportion of social housing households was less than 5% for the four largest states:

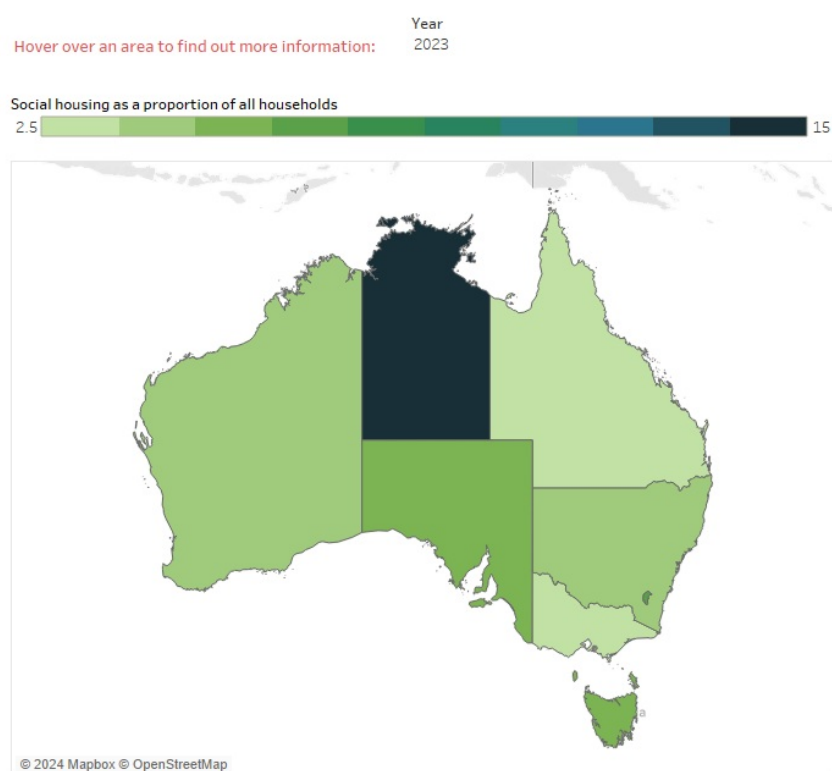
- 4.6% in New South Wales (down from 5.0% in 2014)
- 2.8% in Victoria (down from 3.5% in 2014)
- 3.6% in Queensland (down from 3.8% in 2014)
- 4.1% in Western Australia (down from 4.4% in 2014).

The proportion of social housing households was around 6% in South Australia (6.0%), and 6.5% in the Australian Capital Territory, although these were lower than the 2014 proportions for these jurisdictions (6.7% and 7.6% respectively).

Due to stock transfers, data for the Northern Territory are best comparable with 2018. The proportion of social housing households was 14.6% in 2018 and 14.4% in 2023.

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.2: Social housing households as a proportion of all Australian households, by states and territories, at June 2008 to 2023

The map shows the social housing households as a proportion of total households from June 2008 to 2023 in each state and territory.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables SOCIAL SHARE.1.

Key characteristics of households

Two thirds of all main tenants were aged 50 years or over.

Key household characteristics were available for public housing, SOMIH and community housing. In these programs, at June 2023 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.4):

- The vast majority of ongoing public housing (96%), SOMIH (98%), and community housing households (91%) were low-income households.
- Over 6 in 10 (62%) were female; 36% were male.
- Two thirds (66% or 266,000 households) of all main tenants were aged 50 years or over. Main tenants aged 75 and over were the largest age group (15% or 59,200 households), followed by main tenants aged 60-64 (11% or 45,400 households).
- Around 1 in 6 (16% or 64,400) households included an Indigenous Australian.
- More than one third (37% or 148,000) included a person with a disability.
- Around 60% of public housing (58% or 165,600) and community housing (61% or 64,400) households consisted of a single adult.

Note: Indigenous community housing data were not available

Length of household tenure

The majority of households in social housing have been in their tenancies for less than 10 years.

Tenure length presented here relates to the length of ongoing tenancies only, that is, excludes those who left the social housing system. Tenure length is not available for Indigenous community housing.

At June 2023, about 44% of public housing, 36% of SOMIH and 23% of community housing households had been in their current dwelling for more than a decade. Note: households may move between dwellings within a program, tenure length relates to the current tenancy, not the total length of a tenure of a household in a housing program. In contrast, 4.2% of public housing households, 4.2% of SOMIH and 7.9% of community housing households had been in the same tenure for six months or less (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.3; Table HOUSEHOLDS.6).

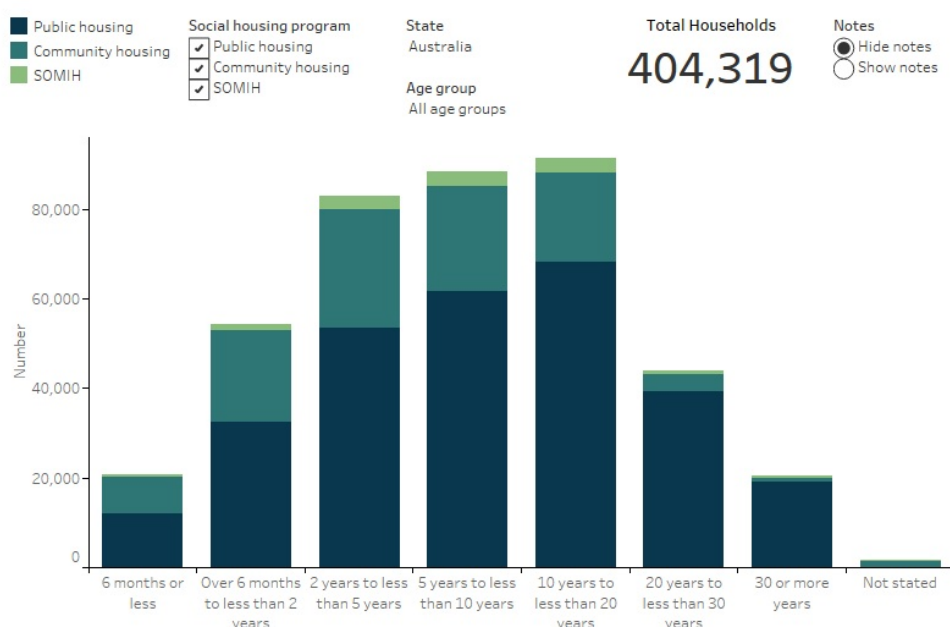
The tenancy length profile differs between the social housing programs. At June 2023, around 1 in 6 public housing (16%) tenancies were less than 2 years, compared to over 1 in 4 community housing (28%) tenancies.

Public housing had a higher proportion of households with longer tenures, with two thirds (66%) of households having been in the same dwelling for 5 years or more, compared with less than half (46%) of community housing tenancies (Table HOUSEHOLDS.6).

The number of households with a tenancy length of 20 years or more has increased over time for public housing (37,400 in 2011 to 58,400 in 2023), SOMIH (900 in 2014 to 1,400 in 2023), and community housing (410 in 2014 to 4,700 in 2023).

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.3: Households by tenure length and social housing program, at June 2023

Number of households, by tenure length, age group and social housing program, at June 2023. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that across the social housing programs (public housing, community housing and SOMIH), the most common tenure length for all age groups was 10 to (less than) 20 years (90,200). For community housing, the most common tenure length was 2 to less than 5 years for all age groups (28,300), whereas the most common for SOMIH was 5 to less than 10 years (3,200). The most common tenure length for public housing was 10 to less than 20 years (68,300).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.5.

Age groups

The length of tenure also differs considerably by the age of the main tenant in the household. At June 2023, for public housing, the number of shorter tenure lengths (less than 2 years) was relatively similar for all reported age groups (ranging from 8,000 to 8,700) apart from the 15-24 years group (3,200).

The longer the tenure length, the higher the proportion of main tenants who were aged 65 or older. As expected, of the 19,000 public housing households that had been in the same dwelling for 30 years or more, more than three quarters (77%) were aged over 65 years (Table HOUSEHOLDS.5).

Indigenous households

The length of tenure for Indigenous households varied depending upon the housing program. Of Indigenous households in social housing at June 2023 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.7):

- 19% of those in public housing, 36% of those in SOMIH and 13% of those in community housing had been in the same tenure for more than a decade.
- 28% of public housing, 15% of SOMIH and 38% of community housing had been in the same tenure for less than two years.

Data for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Waiting lists

The proportion of greatest need households on public housing and SOMIH waiting lists has been increasing since 2014.

In all states and territories, access to social housing is managed through the use of waiting lists with priority given to those considered to be high priority applicants (see [Priority Groups](#)). Fluctuations in the number of people on waiting lists are not necessarily measures of changes in underlying demand for social housing. Factors that may influence the length of waiting lists include changes to allocation policies, priorities, and eligibility criteria put in place by state/territory housing authorities, as well as their implementation (Dockery et al. 2008).

For further details, see the [Technical notes](#).

At June 2023, the number of households on a waiting list (excluding transfers) were (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.26):

- 169,000 households waiting to be allocated public housing (up from 155,000 at June 2014)
- 15,100 households on a waiting list for a SOMIH dwelling (up from 8,000 at June 2014).

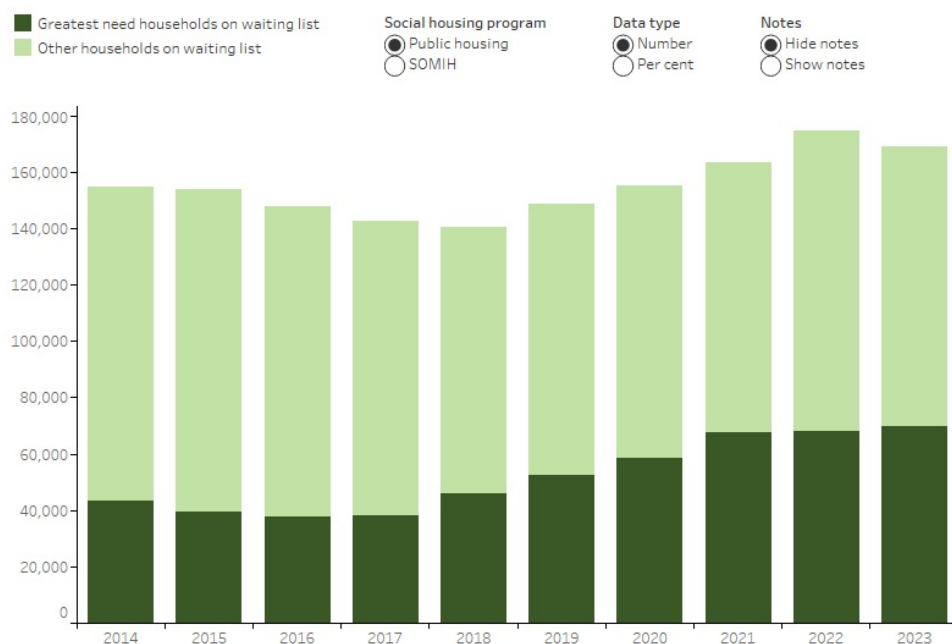
Of those applicants on a waiting list at June 2023 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.26):

- There were 69,700 greatest need households on the waiting list for public housing (41% of all households on the waiting list); an increase from 43,200 at June 2014 (28% of all households).
- There were over 7,900 greatest need households waiting for SOMIH dwellings (52% of all households), up from 3,800 at June 2014 (48% of all households).

Waiting list data for both community housing and Indigenous community housing were unavailable.

Table Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4: Households on the waiting list by public housing and SOMIH, at June 2014 to 2023

Number of households on a waiting list, by greatest need status, for public housing and SOMIH, 2014 to 2022. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that the number of greatest need households on waiting list has increased for public housing, with 70,000 (41%) in 2023, compared to 43,000 (28%) in 2014. For SOMIH, the number of greatest need households on the waiting list has increased, with 7,900 (52%) in 2023, compared with 3,800 (48%) in 2014.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.26.

State and territory

There were some notable differences in the proportion of new greatest need households on the waiting lists among the states and territories, which is a result of the varying criteria for priority needs across jurisdictions. For more information, see the [technical notes](#).

Of the applicants on the waiting list at June 2023 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.27):

- For public housing, the proportion of applicants that were greatest need has increased significantly in many states. In Victoria, 54% of applicants were greatest need in 2023, compared to 29% in 2014.
- In South Australia, the proportion of those in greatest need applying for SOMIH increased from 7.1% in 2014 to 31% in 2023.

For SOMIH, greatest needs information was not available in Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Glossary

References

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Occupants

On this page:

- [Occupants in social housing](#)
- [Indigenous occupants in social housing](#)
- [Occupants' satisfaction with social housing](#)

Key findings

In 2022-23:

- Around 824,000 occupants were living in Australia's main social housing programs. The majority (67%) were in public housing.
- Most social housing occupants resided in Australia's three most populous states; over one-third lived in New South Wales, and almost one fifth lived in Victoria and Queensland respectively.
- Over a third of occupants were aged 55 and over in public housing and community housing, but only around 1 in 7 occupants were in this age group in SOMIH.
- Around 126,000 Indigenous Australians were living in public housing and SOMIH.

Occupants

Defined as people living in any housing provided by Australia's four main social housing programs: public housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH), community housing and Indigenous community housing, within the reference year to 30 June (see [data quality statements](#) for exceptions).

Occupants in social housing

Around 824,000 occupants were living in Australia's main social housing programs. The majority (67%) were in public housing. Of the 824,000 social housing occupants in 2022-23 (Table OCCUPANTS.1):

- 67% (547,000 people) were in public housing
- 24% (194,000 people) were in community housing
- 5.7% (47,400 people) were in SOMIH (There may be some non-Indigenous occupants within the SOMIH program).
- 4.2% (around 34,700) were in Indigenous community housing.

State and territory

Most social housing occupants resided in Australia's three most populous states; over one-third lived in New South Wales, and almost one fifth lived in Victoria and Queensland respectively.

The number of occupants in each social housing program generally reflected the housing options available within the respective states. In all states except for Tasmania and the Northern Territory, most occupants were in public housing, followed by community housing. In Tasmania, most occupants were in community housing, while in the Northern Territory, most were living in SOMIH (Table OCCUPANTS.1). Note that community housing and Indigenous community housing data were unavailable for the Northern Territory.

Age and sex of occupants

Over a third of occupants were aged 55 and over in public housing and community housing, but only around 1 in 7 occupants were in this age group in SOMIH.

Females made up 55% of the occupants in social housing programs, including public housing (303,000 occupants), SOMIH (26,100) and community housing (107,000). Data were not available for Indigenous community housing.

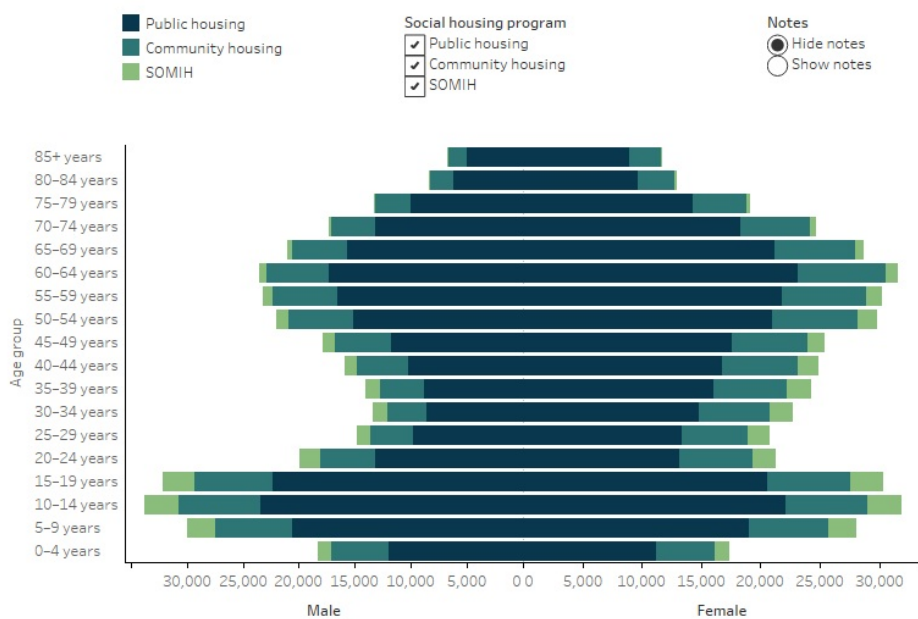
Occupants in public housing and community housing had a similar age profile. In 2022-23, the key similarities, and differences in the age profile of public housing and community housing occupants included (Figure OCCUPANTS.1; Table OCCUPANTS.2):

- For public housing, 37% of occupants were aged 55 years and over, compared with 33% of occupants in community housing.
- Around 1 in 3 occupants in both public housing (33%) and community housing (33%) were under the age of 25.

The age profile of SOMIH occupants was younger compared to public housing and community housing occupants. Almost half of the occupants (48%) were aged under 25 and about a third (28%) were aged 0-14. Note: this may reflect the relatively younger age structure of the First Nations population in general (AIHW 2023). In contrast, relatively few were aged 55 or over (15%) (Figure OCCUPANTS.1; Table OCCUPANTS.2).

Figure OCCUPANTS.1: Household members by social housing program, age, and sex, 2022-23

Household members, by social housing program, age, and sex, 2022-23. The butterfly graph shows the age profile of male and female household members in three social housing programs (public housing, community housing and SOMIH). In 2022-23, the highest number of females household members in public housing were aged 60-64 years (23,100) whereas the highest number of males were aged 10-14 years (23,400). For SOMIH, the highest number of female (2,900) and male (3,100) household members were aged 10-14 years. For community housing, the highest number of females were aged 60-64 (7,400) and the highest number of males were aged 10-14 (7,300).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table OCCUPANTS.2.

Indigenous occupants in social housing

Around 126,000 Indigenous Australians were living in public housing and SOMIH. Of the 126,000 Indigenous occupants in 2022-23 (Table OCCUPANTS.3):

- 83,600 lived in public housing, and
- 42,800 lived in SOMIH.

Changes over time

The total number of Indigenous occupants across public housing and SOMIH has grown since 2017-18, with increases in each successive year. The overall growth has mainly been driven by increases in the occupants of public housing, noting that the number of occupants with an unknown Indigenous status has declined over this time.

Occupants' satisfaction with social housing

In the 2023 National Social Housing Survey, more than 2 in 3 (69%) of occupants reported that they were satisfied with the overall services provided by their social housing organisation (AIHW 2024), a decrease from 73% in the 2021 survey (AIHW 2022). In 2023, around 80% of tenants reported economic, health and social benefits from living in social housing.

More information about the analyses and occupants' satisfaction with amenities, locations and services as well as the economic, health and social benefits of social housing, can be found in the [National Social Housing Survey 2023](#).

Glossary

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Entries, exits and transfers

On this page:

- [Households entering social housing](#)
- [Priority groups](#)
- [New allocations for greatest need households](#)
- [New allocations for special needs households](#)
- [Time waited for social housing allocation](#)
- [Households exiting social housing](#)
- [Households transferring dwellings](#)

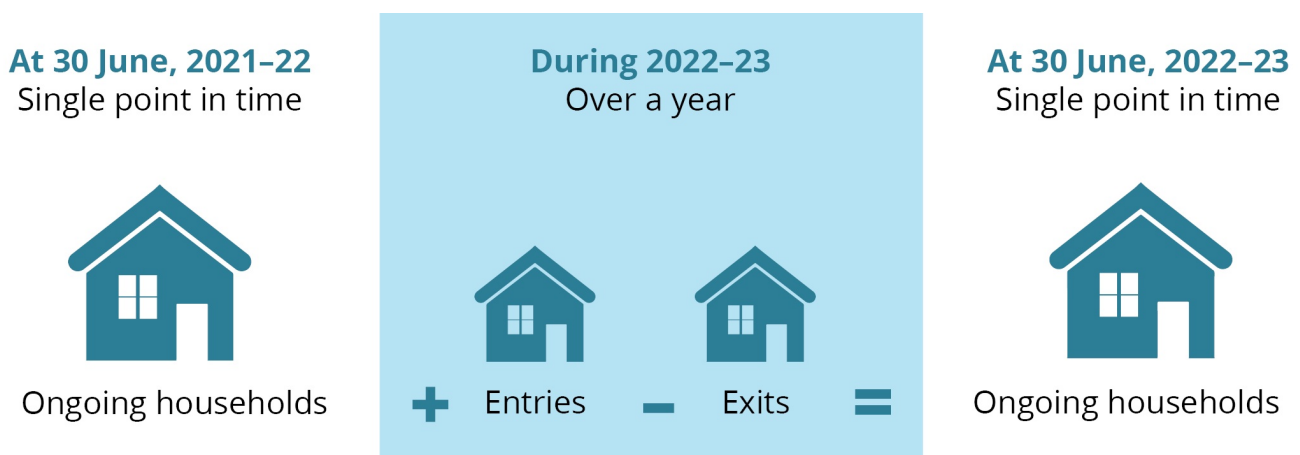
Key findings

- There were 32,400 households newly allocated social housing in 2022-23.
- Around 12,800 new social housing allocations were to greatest need households who were experiencing homelessness.
- Almost two thirds of newly allocated public housing households had special needs.
- Households in greatest need spent less time on waiting lists than other households.
- Exits from public housing and SOMIH decreased compared to previous years.

During a collection period, people may be allocated social housing, exit a social housing program, or move from one social housing dwelling to another within the same program (Figure ENTRIES.1). This section presents key data on these entries, exits and transfers.

Data on entries, exits and transfers for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Figure ENTRIES.1: Entries, exits and ongoing households



Households entering social housing

There were 32,400 households newly allocated social housing in 2022-23.

The total number of newly allocated households (also referred to as new entries) in 2022-23 increased to 32,400 compared with 31,700 in 2021-22 across public housing, community housing and SOMIH (Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

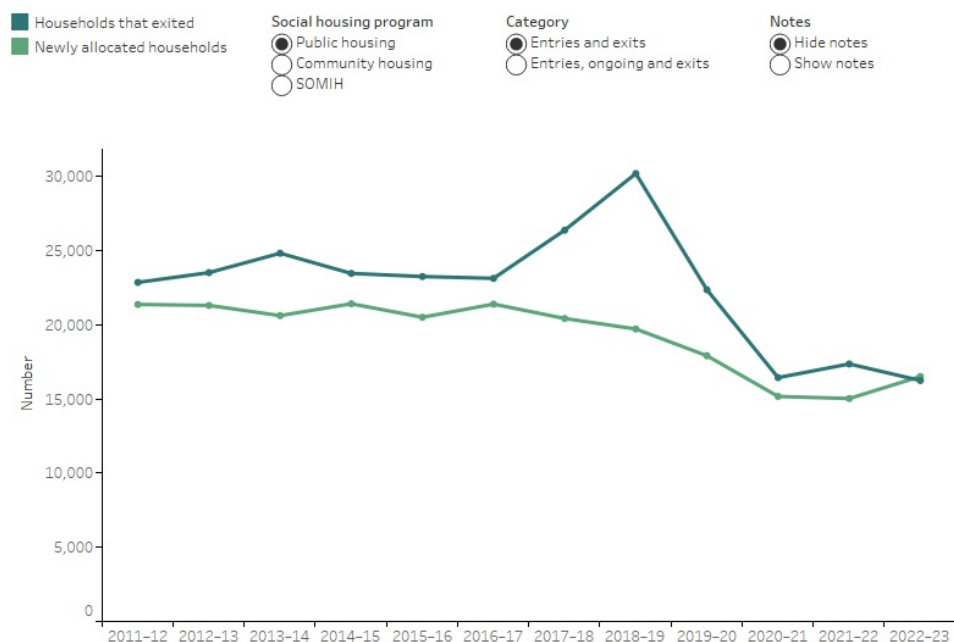
Of the 32,400 new allocations, approximately half were allocated public housing (51% or 16,500 households), 47% were allocated community housing (15,200 households) and 2.2% to SOMIH (700 households), similar to the stock profiles of each housing program.

In recent years, the number of new entries into public housing has been declining, reflecting the declining dwelling stock. For Queensland and South Australia, the number of new allocations in 2022-23 were fewer than all years since 2013-14 (Figure ENTRIES.2, Table HOUSEHOLDS.10). In contrast, the number of new entries into community housing has remained relatively stable in recent years, in part due to dwellings transfers from public housing and SOMIH to community housing (Figure ENTRIES.2, Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

For SOMIH, the number of newly allocated households has fluctuated over time, in 2022-23, 700 households were newly allocated (Figure ENTRIES.2; Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

Figure ENTRIES.2: Ongoing households, newly allocated households and exited households, by social housing program, 2011-12 to 2022-23

Ongoing, newly allocated and exited households, by public housing and SOMIH, in 2011-12 to 2022-23. This line graph shows the changes in newly allocated entries, ongoing and exits households from 2011-12 to 2022-23 for public housing and SOMIH. Ongoing households in public housing decreased from 323,400 in 2011-12 to 286,300 in 2022-23 while SOMIH increased from 9,700 in 2011-12 to 13,100 in 2022-23. For public housing, newly allocated households declined from 21,400 in 2011-12 to 16,500 in 2022-23.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.23.

Characteristics of newly allocated households

Newly allocated public housing households were mostly single adult (57%) households during 2022-23. Other key characteristics of newly allocated households in public housing for 2022-23 included (Table HOUSEHOLDS.12):

- The main tenant was female in over half (57%) of the households.
- Over 1 in 4 (27%) households included an Indigenous household member.
- For 1 in 3 (32%) households, the main tenant was aged 55 and over.
- Over a third (34%) of households had a member with disability.

For SOMIH, newly allocated households during 2022-23 were more likely to be *group and mixed composition* households (41%) followed by *sole parent with dependent children* households (32%). In contrast to public housing, with 57% being *single adults*, only 11% of newly allocated households in SOMIH were *single adults* (Table HOUSEHOLDS.12).

While proportions for each measured characteristic did have some degree of variation between states, all states followed the same general trends for both public housing and SOMIH.

Data on the characteristics of newly allocated households for community housing and Indigenous community housing were not available.

Housing features of new allocations

Housing features of new allocations differed between public housing and SOMIH. The different profiles of new allocations by housing features partly reflect the differences in the types of dwelling type stock available within the programs (see [Dwelling attributes](#)).

In 2022-23, newly allocated households in the public housing program were more likely to be dwellings with fewer bedrooms (40% were 1 bedroom, 33% were 2 bedrooms, 23% were 3 bedrooms and 4.3% were 4 or more bedrooms) compared to SOMIH (3.6% were 1 bedroom, 24% were 2 bedrooms, 50% were 3 bedrooms and 22% were 4 or more bedrooms) (Table HOUSEHOLDS.14).

Priority groups

Allocation to social housing is determined by policies regarding eligibility, priority groups and entitlement (such as type and location of the property) (Powell et al. 2019). Although income remains the primary eligibility factor for social housing allocation, allocations are also based on an applicant's circumstances, that is, their need for social housing relative to others on the waiting list (Pawson et al. 2020).

While social housing allocations were historically targeted towards households with a lower income, over time, social housing policies have increasingly focused on supporting vulnerable and complex need applicants, such as applicants experiencing trauma, disadvantage and/or financial instability (Groenhart et al. 2014; Pawson et al, 2020).

As a result, social housing is generally allocated according to priority needs, with allocations made based on identifying those people with the greatest need (such as applicants experiencing homelessness) and those with special needs for housing assistance (such as applicants with disability).

Data on greatest need status for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Greatest need households

Public housing, SOMIH and community housing programs prioritise household allocations through priority waiting lists, such as the greatest need waiting list. The criteria for priority needs varies between jurisdictions, so any comparisons between states and territories must be exercised with caution.

Special needs households

Households seeking social housing often have members with special needs. Some households may have one or more members with multiple special needs. The definition of special needs differs across the different social housing programs and between jurisdictions.

For more information about how households are prioritised, see the [technical notes](#).

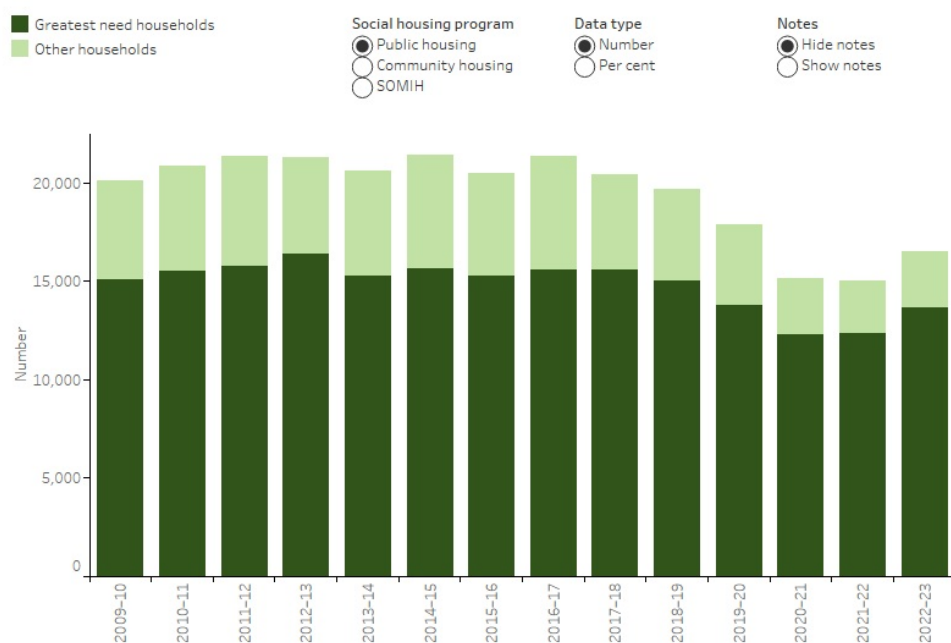
New allocations for greatest need households

Around 12,800 new social housing allocations were to greatest need households who were experiencing homelessness.

Greatest need households accounted for 83% (or 13,600 households) of all newly allocated public housing households in 2022-23 (Figure ENTRIES.3; Table HOUSEHOLDS.15).

Figure ENTRIES.3: Newly allocated households by greatest need status and social housing program, 2009-10 to 2022-23

Newly allocated households, by greatest need status and social housing program, 2009-10 to 2022-23. This vertical stacked bar graph shows, for public housing, community housing and SOMIH, there were more newly allocated greatest needs households than other households, from 2009-10 to 2022-23. In 2022-23, most new public housing allocations were provided to households in greatest need (83%). In 2009-10, 71% of newly allocated SOMIH dwellings were provided to households in greatest need; this increased to 81% in 2022-23. Housing allocations to greatest needs households in community housing was 77%.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.15.

Over 4 in 5 (81% or 230) of newly allocated SOMIH households were households with greatest need status in 2022-23 (excludes Tasmania and the Northern Territory, as greatest need data were not available) (Figure ENTRIES.3; Table HOUSEHOLDS.15). The variation over time in the proportion of newly allocated SOMIH households with greatest need status reflects changes in the total number of newly allocated households in SOMIH.

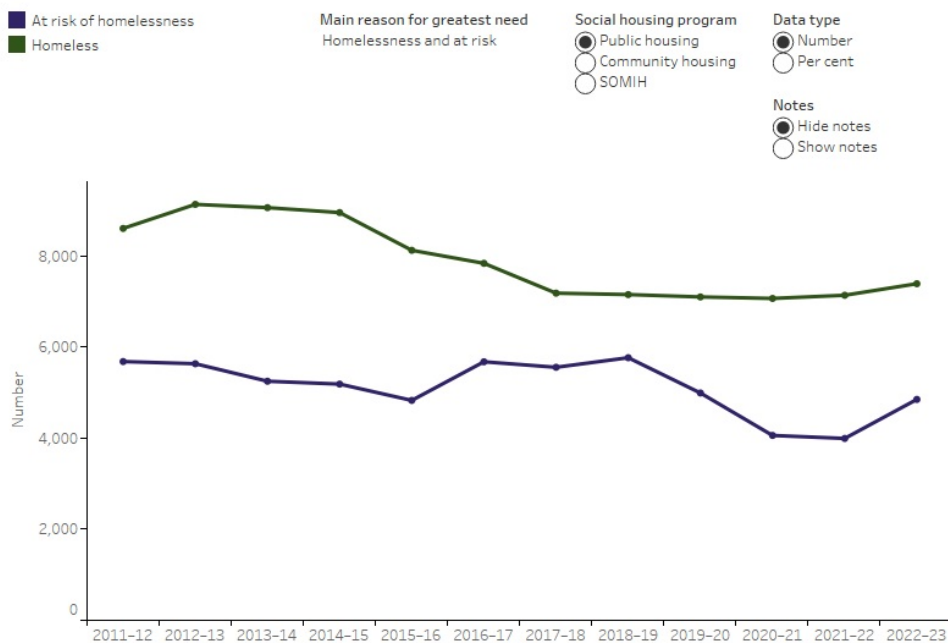
Main reason for greatest need

In 2022-23, of the 13,600 newly allocated public housing households in greatest need (Figure ENTRIES.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.16):

- 54% (7,400 households) were experiencing homelessness at the time of allocation; up from 47% in 2018-19.
- 36% (4,800 households) were at risk of homelessness, of those households:
 - Almost 3,100 reported the main reason for their greatest need was because their life or safety was at risk in their accommodation.
 - 1,500 households reported a health condition aggravated by housing as their main reason for greatest need.

Figure ENTRIES.4: Newly allocated households in greatest need by main reason for greatest need and social housing program, 2011-12 to 2022-23

Newly allocated households in greatest need, by main reason for greatest need and social housing program, 2011-12 to 2022-23. This line graph shows the main reason for greatest need of newly allocated households. In 2011-12, the main reason for greatest need in public housing was homelessness (55%); this decreased to 54% in 2022-23. Of those at risk of homelessness in public housing in 2011-12, the most common reason for greatest need was because their *health condition was aggravated by housing* (15%); in 2022-23, the most common reason was because their *life or safety was at risk in accommodation* (23%).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.16.

Data on the main reason a household was in greatest need is not collected for community housing. Based on available data, in 2022-23, more newly allocated greatest need community housing households were at *risk of homelessness* (49%) than *experiencing homelessness* (45%) (Figure ENTRIES.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.16).

New allocations for special needs households

Almost two thirds of newly allocated public housing households had special needs.

Data on special needs were available for public housing, SOMIH and community housing. A household may have more than one special needs reason. In 2022-23, there were 10,300 newly allocated public housing households with special needs, representing 62% of all newly allocated households. Of these (Table HOUSEHOLDS.18):

- 5,600 households had at least one member with disability
- 4,500 households had at least one Indigenous member
- 1,600 households had a main tenant aged under 25
- 800 households had a main tenant aged 75 or over.

In 2022-23, of the 300 newly allocated SOMIH households with special needs:

- 190 households had a main tenant aged 50 and over
- 60 households had a main tenant aged under 25 years
- 100 households contained at least one member with disability.

Greatest and special needs households

Greatest and special needs categories are not mutually exclusive, as one or more household members may be eligible within each priority group and between priority groups. Households with members in both greatest and special needs groups may be some of the most vulnerable households and may require high levels of care and support.

In 2022-23, of the newly allocated households in public housing (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.17):

- half (54% or 8,800 households) were both greatest need and special needs households
- 1 in 5 (22% or 3,600 households) were greatest need only (no special needs)
- 5.3% (900) were neither greatest need nor special needs households.

In 2022-23, of the newly allocated households in SOMIH:

- around 1 in 6 (15% or 105 households) were both greatest need and special needs households

- almost 1 in 5 (18% or 125 households) were greatest need only (no special needs)

Note that greatest need information for SOMIH was unavailable for Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Time waited for social housing allocation

Households in greatest need spent less time on waiting lists than other households.

The time waited by applicants is influenced by dwelling availability (including the size of dwelling needed) and priority group status (greatest need or special needs) (Powell et al. 2019). Since households with priority status (such as people experiencing homelessness or a disability) are placed ahead of households without priority status, the number of households with priority status may influence the amount of time waited for social housing allocation. Additionally, the time waited for social housing programs can vary both between and within jurisdictions, as the time waited for social housing in high demand city areas are often far greater than other areas (NSW Government 2018; Powell et al. 2019).

Data on time waited for housing allocation were unavailable for both community housing and Indigenous community housing. See the [technical notes](#) for more information on the method used to calculate time waited.

In 2022-23 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.21)

- Of all newly allocated public housing households:
 - 2 in 5 (40%) households were allocated housing within 1 year; 47% waited 1 to 5 years and 13% waited 5 years or more for housing allocation.
 - Almost one third of households without children were allocated housing in less than 6 months (31% for *single adults* and 28% for *couples* only households).
- Of all newly allocated SOMIH households:
 - Over half (54%) of newly allocated households received housing in less than 1 year; 34% waited 1 to 5 years and 12% waited 5 or more years for housing allocation.
 - *Group and mixed composition* households were allocated housing the fastest, with over half (58%) securing housing in less than 6 months.

Greatest need and time waited for housing allocation

In 2022-23, among newly allocated households (Figure ENTRIES.2, Table HOUSEHOLDS.19):

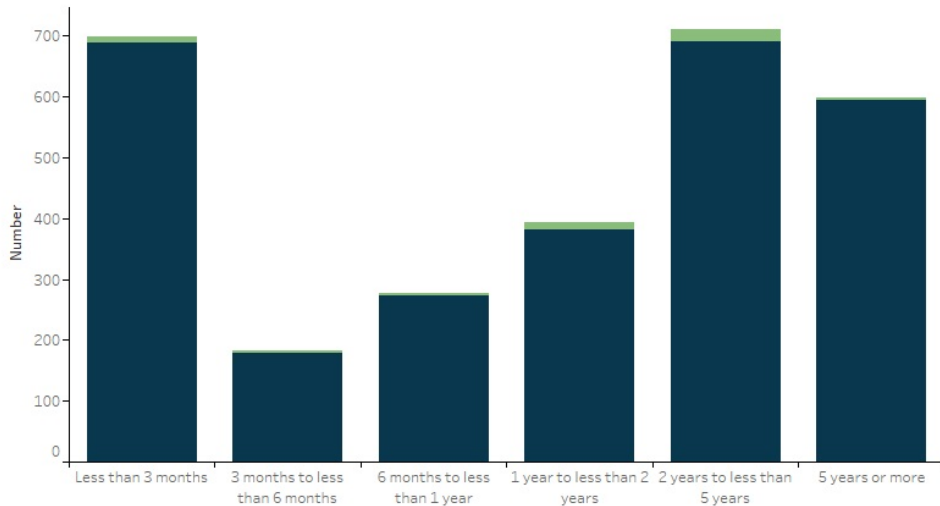
- For public housing, greatest need households were more likely to be allocated housing within a year.
 - Over half of greatest need households (57%, or 7,800 households) received housing within one year, compared to 40% (1,100) of households without greatest need status.
 - The proportion of newly allocated greatest need households receiving housing who waited less than 3 months (29%) for housing allocation was higher than households without greatest need status (24%).
- Households without greatest need status were more likely to spend 2 years or more on the waiting list before receiving a public housing allocation (45% or 1,300), compared to households with greatest need status (24% or 3,300).

For SOMIH, newly allocated households with greatest need status were generally allocated housing faster than households without. In 2022-23 (Figure ENTRIES.5; Table HOUSEHOLDS.19):

- Almost 2 in 3 (or 63%) of newly allocated SOMIH households in greatest need waited less than 1 year.
- Around one third (or 31%) of newly allocated SOMIH households without greatest need status waited less than 1 year.

Figure ENTRIES.5: Time waited by newly allocated households by greatest need status and public housing and SOMIH, 2022-23

Time waited of newly allocated households, by greatest need status for public housing and SOMIH, 2022-23. The stacked bar graph shows the highest number of newly allocated greatest need household in both public housing (4,000) and SOMIH (75) waited less than 3 months before being allocated housing. For public housing (690) the highest number of newly allocated other households waited between 2 years and less than 5 years to be allocated housing. Similarly, for SOMIH, almost 2 in 5 (39%) waited between 2 and less than 5 years to be allocated housing.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.19.

Special needs and time waited

Households seeking assistance from social housing providers often have members with special needs. Some households may have multiple special needs. The definition of special needs is different for different social housing programs. For more detailed information, see the [Technical notes](#).

In 2022-23, the time special needs households waited for an allocation of public housing varied, around (Table HOUSEHOLDS.20):

- 1,700 (17%) households waited for less than 3 months
- 2,300 (22%) households waited between 3 months and less than 1 year
- 4,900 (48%) households waited between 1 year to less than 5 years, and
- 1,300 (or 13%) households waited for more than 5 years.

Number of bedrooms and time waited

The time waited for social housing allocation varied depending upon the number of bedrooms required by a household and by program. For public housing, the amount of time waited was similar regardless of the number of bedrooms. For SOMIH, 44% of households requiring 4 or more bedrooms waited less than 3 months (Table HOUSEHOLDS.22).

Households exiting social housing

Exits from public housing and SOMIH decreased compared to previous years.

Social housing 'Exits' refers to households that have exited a specific housing program during the reference year. Households that relocate within the same housing program are not considered 'exits' but are instead known as 'transfers'. Note: this definition may vary across states and territories, see [Technical notes](#) for details.

Households may exit social housing for a variety of reasons. Some households exit because of changes to their housing or neighbourhood needs, such as those related to location, size, or neighbourhood safety (Johnson et al. 2019). Whereas others exit social housing for financial or forced reasons, including employment opportunities, entry into home ownership, eviction, or ineligibility due to an increase in income (Baker et al. 2020, 2021). In this way, reasons influencing households exits from social housing can be both positive and negative (Wiesel et al. 2014). While exiting households most commonly enter the private rental market, some also enter home ownership or other tenure types, such as employer provided housing (Baker et al. 2020, Bentley et al. 2018). This information is not captured in the datasets informing this report.

In 2022-23, exits from public housing decreased compared to previous years, with around 16,200 public housing households exiting. Both SOMIH and community housing saw increases in exits, with 1,200 SOMIH households and 12,900 community housing households having exited in 2022-23 (Table HOUSEHOLD.23).

Across the states and territories, Queensland (3,100 entries and 2,800 exits) and Western Australia (2,900 entries and 2,100 exits) were the only states to have had more new allocations to public housing than exits from public housing (Tables HOUSEHOLDS.10 and 25).

The number of households in Australia exiting SOMIH (1,200) in 2022-23 was higher than the number of newly allocated households (700).

Households transferring dwellings

Transfers occur when occupants move to a dwelling in the same social housing program, see [Technical notes](#) for state/territory variations on this definition.

Transfers may be initiated by either the tenant (including a mutual swapping of properties between eligible tenants) or housing provider in response to a change in circumstance or housing need. This may include household composition changes (such as overcrowding or underutilisation), a medical condition or because of stock renewal and re-development. Transfer eligibility and implementation varies by jurisdiction and housing program.

During 2022-23, 7,000 (2.3%) of public housing households and 360 (2.5%) of SOMIH households transferred - or were relocated - to a different dwelling within the same housing program (Table HOUSEHOLDS.25).

Figure TRANSFERS AND EXITS.1: Households by transfer and exit status, public housing and SOMIH, by states and territories, 2013-14 to 2022-23

Households by transfer and exit status, by public housing and SOMIH, 2011-12 to 2022-23. This vertical bar graph shows that nationally the number of public housing and SOMIH households that exited were higher than those that transferred, from 2011-12 to 2022-23. In 2011-12, 22,900 public housing households exited, and 8,200 households transferred; in 2022-23, households that exited decreased to 16,200 and households that transferred decreased to 7,000. In 2011-12, around 600 SOMIH households exited and 300 transferred; in 2022-23, households that exited increased to 1,200, while those that transferred remained around 300 (360 in 2022-23).



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.25.

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Suitability of dwellings

On this page:

- [Dwelling suitability](#)
- [Overcrowding](#)
- [Overcrowding in Indigenous households](#)
- [Underutilisation](#)

Key findings

At June 2023, of all social housing households with known dwelling size suitability:

- Most lived in dwellings with enough bedrooms to adequately accommodate the members of their household.
- The highest number of overcrowded public housing dwellings were in *Major cities* whilst the highest proportion of overcrowded dwellings were in *Very remote* areas.
- Over a quarter (26%) of SOMIH households were residing in dwellings considered to be underutilised, the highest proportion across the programs.

In Australia, the suitability of a household's dwelling size is commonly measured using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Broadly, the CNOS measures suitability based on whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household (see criteria below).

This section uses CNOS to provide information on how suitable social housing dwellings were for households living in social housing on 30 June of the reference year. It includes information about households living in across the four main social housing programs in Australia.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) measure assesses the suitability of a dwelling for a household according to the following criteria:

- no more than 2 people shall share a bedroom
- parents or couples may share a bedroom
- children under 5 years, either of the same sex or opposite sex, may share a bedroom
- children under 18 years of the same sex may share a bedroom
- a child aged 5-17 should not share a bedroom with a child under 5 of the opposite sex
- single adults 18 years and over, and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

Based on the CNOS standard, housing utilisation will be described as the following:

- Suitable or adequate: when it meets the CNOS household bedroom requirements
- Underutilised: when it has 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the CNOS bedroom requirement for the household
- Overcrowded: when it requires at least 1 more bedroom

Source: Statistics Canada 2021

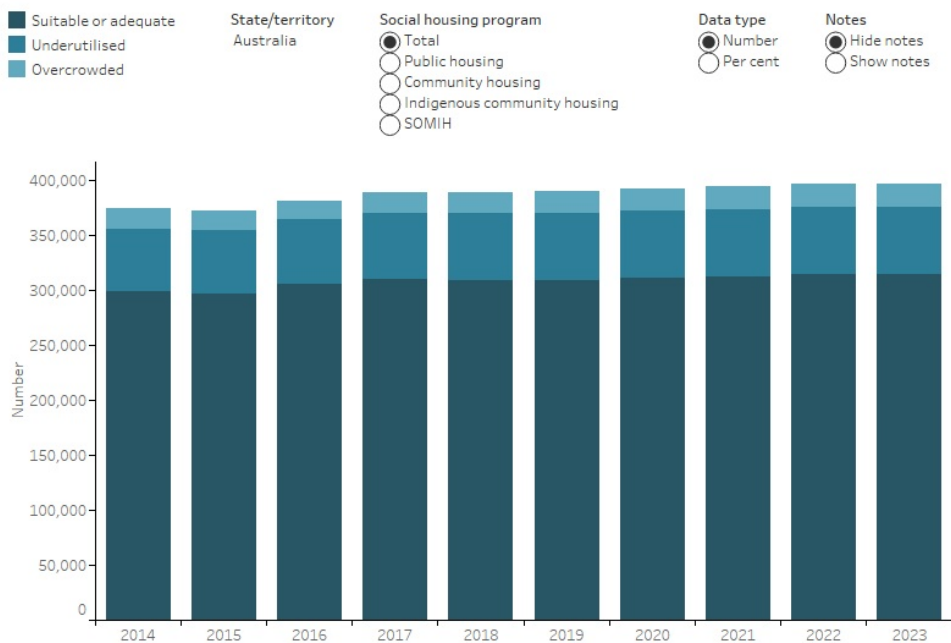
For more information on the CNOS, see [AIHW Metadata Online Registry \(METEOR\)](#). Although this measure is useful for indicating overcrowding in dwellings, it does not necessarily reflect a household's experience of overcrowding. This is because CNOS does not consider cultural differences in living and sleeping arrangements (Dockery et al. 2022). As such, its classification of overcrowding may not necessarily match the experiences of Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse households.

Dwelling suitability

Most social housing households lived in dwellings with enough bedrooms to adequately accommodate the members of their household. Most households (80%) were living in suitable or adequate dwellings, a further 15% lived in underutilised dwellings (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Table SUITABILITY.1).

Figure SUITABILITY.1: Households by suitability of dwelling size and social housing program, at 30 June 2014 to 2023

Households, by suitability of dwelling size, and social housing program, at June 2014 to 2023. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that across the social housing programs (public housing, community housing, SOMIH and Indigenous Community Housing), there were more underutilised households than overcrowded households, from 2014 to 2023. Across the social housing programs, the proportion of underutilised dwellings remained around 15% from 2014 to 2023. Likewise, the proportion of overcrowded dwellings has also remained stable, from 5.0% in 2014 to 5.3% in 2023.



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table SUIABILITY.1.

Overcrowding

For public housing, the highest number of overcrowded dwellings were in *Major cities* whilst the highest proportion of overcrowded dwellings were in *Very remote* areas.

A dwelling is considered overcrowded if it requires 1 or more bedrooms, taking into account the size and composition of the household. In 2023, 5.3% (or 21,000) of social housing households were overcrowded. However, the level of overcrowding differed across the various social housing programs. Around 4.1% of households in public housing (11,600) and 4.0% of community housing households (4,100) were living in overcrowded dwellings, consistent with long term trends (Table SUIABILITY.1, Figure SUIABILITY.1). See the [Social housing dwellings](#) section for further information on the stock changes between the housing programs.

For SOMIH, over 1 in 4 (27% or 3,400) households were living in overcrowded dwellings (Figure SUIABILITY.1; Table SUIABILITY.1). This proportion has remained stable since 2018, after 5,000 remote public housing dwellings were added to the Northern Territory SOMIH data collection in 2017.

In Indigenous community housing, about 1 in 6 (16% or 1,900) households were in overcrowded dwellings.

Key characteristics of overcrowded households, at June 2023 (Table Suitability.4):

- Over half of the overcrowded households in public housing (55% or 6,400) and SOMIH (56% or 1,900) had a main tenant aged 35 to 54 years.
- For public housing, overcrowded households were mostly households with a mixed composition (5,900 or 51%) or sole parents with dependent children (3,400 or 30%).
- Almost 80% of overcrowded dwellings in SOMIH were mixed composition (2,700 households).

Demographic data on dwelling suitability were not available for community housing.

Location of overcrowded households

Overcrowding in dwellings varied across the states and territories and remoteness areas.

At June 2023 (Figure SUIABILITY.1; Tables SUIABILITY.1 and 2):

- The Northern Territory had the highest proportion (9.0% or 415) of public housing households living in overcrowded dwellings, however New South Wales had the highest number (2,900 or 3.1%).
- Northern Territory had the highest number (2,600) and proportion (53%) of SOMIH households living in overcrowded dwellings. (Note: Northern Territory also has the highest total number of SOMIH households.)
- New South Wales had both the highest number (2,300) and highest proportion (4.7%) of community housing households living in overcrowded dwellings, followed by Tasmania at 4.2%.
- The highest number of overcrowded public housing households (8,200 or 3.9%) were in *Major cities* but the proportion was highest in *Very remote* areas (9.1% or 225).
- For SOMIH, *Very remote* areas had the highest number and highest proportion (2,000 or 48%) of households living in overcrowded dwellings.

Overcrowding data by remoteness were not available for community housing.

Overcrowding in Indigenous households

In public housing, 9.3% of all Indigenous households were living in overcrowded dwellings while only 4.1% of all households were living in overcrowded dwellings. Similarly in community housing, 7.8% of all Indigenous households lived in overcrowded dwellings compared with 4.0% of all households (Table SUITABILITY.2).

Underutilisation

Over a quarter (26%) of SOMIH households were residing in dwellings considered to be underutilised, the highest proportion across the programs.

A dwelling is underutilised when it contains 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the household requirements. In 2023, around 15% (or 60,700) social housing households were underutilised (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Table SUITABILITY.1). However, underutilisation differed across the programs.

About 47,900 (or 17%) public housing households and 10,800 (or 11%) community housing households were living in underutilised dwellings. SOMIH had the highest proportion of underutilised dwellings across the programs (26% or 2,100).

Underutilisation data were not available for the Northern Territory for SOMIH or community housing.

Key characteristics of underutilised households at June 2023 (Table SUITABILITY.4):

- Around 30% (or 13,900) of public housing households in underutilised dwellings were receiving the age pension (aged 65 years or over).
- Within SOMIH, 60% (1,200 households) had a main tenant who was 55 years old or over.
- Most underutilised dwellings in public housing (73%) and SOMIH (64%) contained a single adult.

Location of underutilised households

The proportion of households in underutilised dwellings varied by state and territory and remoteness area across the social housing programs. At June 2023 (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Tables SUITABILITY.1 and 3):

- South Australia had the highest proportion of social housing households living in underutilised dwellings (24% or 10,500 households), while New South Wales (21,400 or 14%) had the highest number of households.
- About 1 in 5 public housing households in *Inner regional* (19%) and *Outer regional* (20%) areas lived in underutilised dwellings, though the highest number was in *Major cities* (35,000 households or 16%).
- For SOMIH, *Major cities* had the highest number (940) of households living in underutilised dwellings (and highest proportion at 28%), followed by *Outer regional* areas (490 households or 24%).

Glossary

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Financial assistance

- On this page:
 - [Commonwealth Rent Assistance](#)
 - [Rental Stress and CRA](#)
 - [Private Rent Assistance](#)
 - [Home Purchase Assistance](#)

Key findings

- Australian Government Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) key findings include:
 - At June 2023, around 1.3 million income units (individuals or group of related persons) were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).
 - Almost 1 in 2 (43% or 533,000 income units) were in rental stress after receiving CRA.
- State/territory government provided programs in 2022-23:
 - Around 56,900 households received Private Rent Assistance (PRA) and over 3 in 5 (61%) PRA recipients were in *Major cities*.
 - Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) was received by 36,900 households.

This section provides information on the financial assistance related to rental costs and home purchases based on data as at the last Friday in June in the reference year (for CRA) and on 30 June of the reference year (for PRA and HPA). It provides insight into the scale and effectiveness of certain financial assistance programs. It includes financial assistance information on:

- The Commonwealth Rent Assistance program.
- The Private Rent Assistance programs.
- The Home Purchase Assistance programs.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

At June 2023, around 1.3 million income units (individuals or group of related persons) were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) helps people with lower incomes afford rental housing and is the most common form of housing assistance received by Australian households. CRA is available to individuals or families receiving a social security payment. CRA can be used to pay rent for a community housing dwelling or housing in the private rental market. The amount of rent assistance people can receive depends on an applicant's income, rent and household circumstances. For more information, see the [CRA eligibility conditions](#) and [rent assistance payments](#).

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

CRA is a non-taxable payment, which is generally paid fortnightly to eligible recipients as part of a recipient's primary payment rate. It is available to eligible recipients who rent in the private rental market or community housing. To be eligible, families or individuals must qualify for: an eligible social security payment; more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A; or an eligible veterans' income support payment; and pay or be liable to pay more than a specified rent threshold.

Qualification for CRA is assessed as part of the process for claiming a social security payment and it forms part of the rate of that payment. For information about CRA eligibility, see [Department of Social Services](#).

CRA is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate (or ceiling) is reached. The minimum threshold and maximum rates vary according to the household or family situation, including the number of children.

Certain social housing tenants are eligible for CRA, such as those living in community housing or Indigenous community housing and, in some states and territories, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). CRA is not generally payable to public housing tenants as state and territory housing authorities already subsidise rent for these tenants.

The data presented reflect the CRA data on the last Friday of the specified financial year (for example, 2023 data was on 30 June 2023).

Source: DSS 2023.

In 2023, almost 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) - a decrease from the all-time high of 1.7 million income units in 2020 (noting the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic section below). The number of income units receiving CRA in 2023 was similar to the numbers between 2013 and 2019, and in 2022.

In 2022-23, the Australian Government spent \$4.7 billion on Commonwealth Rent Assistance - a decrease from \$5.7 billion in 2020-21 (in 2022-23 terms) (Productivity Commission 2024). Most CRA income units were in New South Wales (413,000 income units) and Queensland (321,000 income units) (Table CRA.1).

Impact of COVID-19 on the receipt of government benefits

The COVID-19 pandemic, JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance

The jobless rate in Australia increased as the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the Australian economy (Parliamentary Library 2020a). In the months leading to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was around 5.0% (from December 2019 to March 2020). By July 2020, it peaked at 7.5% - the highest in over 20 years (ABS 2023). The economic and social impact of COVID-19 pandemic hit many Australians hard and fast. However, the rate of unemployment has declined sharply since then, falling below the pre-pandemic level to 4.7% in July 2021, and to 3.5% in February 2023 (ABS 2023).

In response to COVID-19 and the associated increase in unemployment, the Australian Government made changes to social security payments from March 2020. Broadly, these changes meant that more people were eligible for and received social security payments throughout 2020 and 2021 (Parliamentary Library 2020b).

Changes included introducing Jobseeker to replace Newstart Allowance, Sickness Allowance and Bereavement Allowance. The Coronavirus Supplement and Economic Support was also made available to recipients of the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance (JobSeeker, Student and Apprentice), Parenting Payment (Partnered and Single), Sickness Allowance, Austudy payment, ABSTUDY living allowance, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance, Farm Household Allowance, Special Benefit, and certain Department of Veterans Affairs student payments. Over time, the amount paid to recipients changed:

- from 27 April 2020 to 24 September 2020, recipients received \$550 per fortnight
- from 25 September 2020 to 31 December 2020, recipients received \$250 per fortnight
- from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021, recipients received \$150 per fortnight.

This supplement ended on 31 March 2021.

From 1 April 2021 onwards, JobSeeker Payment, Austudy and Youth Allowance increased by \$50 per fortnight (Treasury 2020).

From the end of April 2022 individuals who are currently in receipt of an Australian government allowance or pension (such as the age pension, disability support pension, parenting payment, carer payment, carer allowance, JobSeeker payment, youth allowance, Austudy and Abstudy living allowance) will receive a one-off payment of \$250 to ease cost of living pressures (Services Australia 2022).

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CRA over time

In 2020, the number of CRA income unit recipients and CRA expenditure peaked, largely because of the temporary changes to social security that allowed more people to access income support during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because more people were eligible for support payments and CRA, the number of income units and expenditure increased (Table CRA.1).

CRA recipients by selected characteristics

Of the 1.3 million income units receiving CRA in 2023, most were single without children (60%) or were aged 45 years or over (58%).

The primary payment types of income units receiving CRA in 2023 were (Table CRA.1):

- Age Pension (25%)
- JobSeeker (21%)
- Disability Support Pension (21%).

CRA recipients by location

Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) is one of the geographical areas within the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA2s are medium sized areas, with populations between 3,000 and 25,000 people, they represent a community that interacts together socially and economically (ABS 2021).

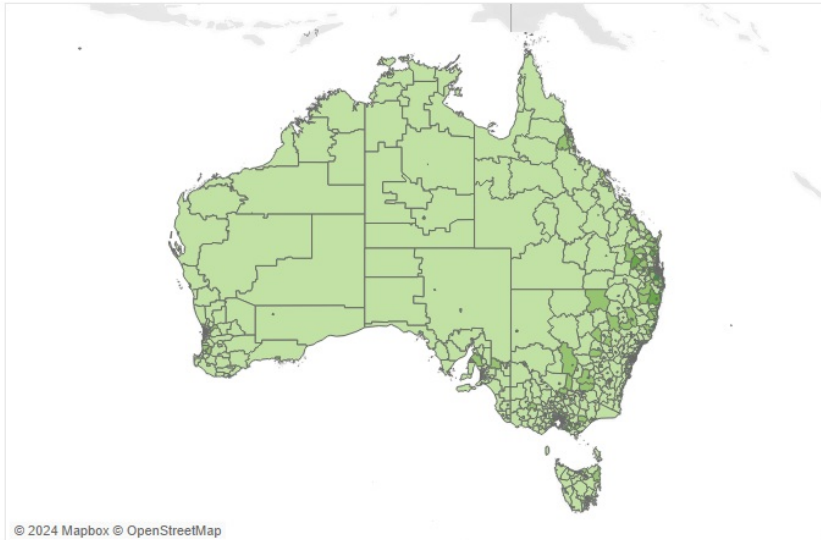
Figure FINANCIAL.1: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance by SA2, at June 2019 to 2023

The map shows the number of CRA income units in SA2 areas of Australia in June 2019 to June 2023. Fairfield NSW (3,400) had the highest number of income units in 2023 followed by Caboolture QLD (3,200).

State/territory
All

SA2 region
All

Year
2023



© 2024 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Number of CRA units
0 3,430

Note: For 2023, SA2 is derived from the postcode of households using the 2021 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). For previous years, the 2016 ASGS was used. Boundaries are revised over time due to factors such as population, further details can be found in [ABS Maps](#). Due to these changes caution should be used when comparing data across time. The time series graph will not show the full time series where the boundary has changed over time. Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables CRA.2a and b.

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) is the largest geographical area of sub-state regions in the ASGS. SA4s represent labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory. An SA4 generally has a population between 100,000 to 300,000 people in regional areas and 300,000 to 500,000 people in cities.

In 2023 (Table CRA.3):

- At the SA4 level, *Melbourne-Inner* had the highest number of income units aged 24 years and under (4,200). The *Gold Coast* had the highest number of income units who were aged 75 year and over (7,400) and *Melbourne - South East* had the highest number of income units receiving a Disability support pension (7,300) (Figure FINANCIAL.2).

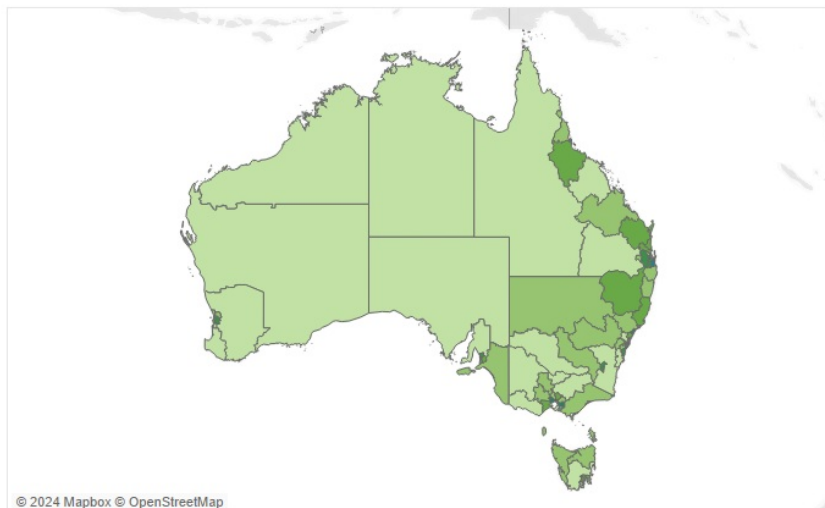
Figure FINANCIAL.2: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance by special needs group and SA4, at June 2019 to 2023

The map shows the number of CRA income units by special needs groups in SA4 areas of Australia in June 2019 to June 2023. In June 2023, Melbourne-Inner (4,200) had the highest number of income units aged 24 and under, Gold Coast (7,400) had the highest number of income units aged 75 and over and New England and North West in NSW (4,000) had the highest number of Indigenous income units.

Special needs group
 ● Aged 24 and under
 ○ Aged 75 and over
 ○ Disability support pension
 ○ Indigenous

State/territory
 All

Year of Pivot Field Names
 2023



Number of CRA income units
 5 4,230

Note: For 2023, SA4 is derived from the postcode of households using the 2021 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). For previous years, the 2016 ASGS was used. Boundaries are revised over time due to factors such as population, further details can be found in [ABS Maps](#). Due to these changes caution should be used when comparing data across time.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables CRA.3.

CRA as a proportion of rent paid

Rental prices and the proportion of rent covered by CRA can differ across states and territories, as well as from region to region. CRA often accounts for less of the proportion of rent in capital cities, as capital cities generally have a higher median fortnightly rent.

In 2023, the median fortnightly rent paid by income units in the capital cities was higher than those in the rest of the state or territory (Table CRA.5). However, the difference in median rent was larger in some states and territories than in others. In New South Wales the median fortnightly rents were around \$120 higher in Sydney, and around \$80 higher in the capital cities of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

There were also differences in the proportion of rent paid for by CRA entitlements between regions. The proportion of rent accounted for by fortnightly CRA entitlements was higher among income units in the rest of the state regions than those in capital cities. In all states and territories, CRA entitlements covered 31-36% the fortnightly rental costs in the rest of state regions, but around 27-34% for income units in capital cities. In Queensland, the difference in the proportion of rent covered by the entitlement between Brisbane (30%) and the rest of Queensland (31%) was small in contrast to other states and territories.

Rental stress and CRA

Almost 1 in 2 (43% or 533,000 income units) were still in rental stress after receiving CRA.

In Australia, rental affordability is commonly measured by the level of rental stress faced by the household. This report focusses on rental stress amongst CRA recipients, defined as a CRA income unit spending more than 30% of gross income on rent. For more information, see the [technical notes](#).

To provide insight into how much CRA reduced rental stress among income units receiving CRA, the proportion of income spent on rent before receiving (or excluding) CRA is compared with the proportion of income spent after receiving (or including) CRA.

In 2023, around 533,000 (43%) income units were in rental stress while receiving CRA. Around 345,000 additional income units would have been rental stress if they did not receive CRA in 2023 (Table CRA.7).

The proportion of income units receiving CRA in rental stress in 2023 has fallen compared with 2022, but is higher than 2013 to 2020.

Impact of COVID-19 on the rental stress changes over time

In 2020, the number and proportion of income units receiving CRA in rental stress reached an all-time low, despite the total number of income units receiving CRA reaching an all-time high. About 488,000 or 29% of income units receiving CRA were in rental stress in 2020. These lows were largely due the additional financial support and rent freezes introduced by governments to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in 2020 (detailed above) (Table CRA.7).

Special needs groups

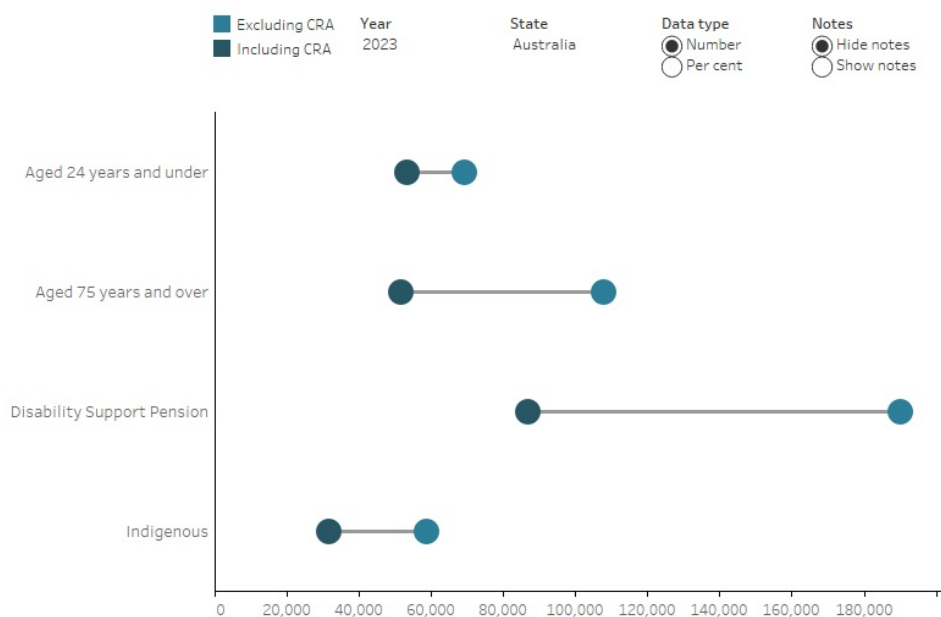
Of the 570,000 income units in the various special needs groups, around 37% (or 209,000) were in rental stress after receiving CRA in 2023.

However, the extent to which CRA reduced rental stress differed across the special needs groups. In 2023, income units with a household member aged 24 or under (65% in rental stress) most frequently remained in rental stress after receiving CRA. By contrast, the least common income units in rental stress after receiving CRA were those with at least one household member aged 75 years (29%) or with Disability Support Pension payments (33%). For Indigenous income units, around 2 in 5 (37%) were in rental stress with CRA (Figure FINANCIAL.3; Table CRA.7).

Figure FINANCIAL.3: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in rental stress by special needs group and states and territories, 2023

Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in rental stress, by special needs group and by states and territories, at June 2023. This dumbbell graph compares special needs groups income units in rental stress (i.e., paying more than 30% of their income on rent) with CRA and without CRA. Nationally, 71% of income units receiving Disability Support Pension excluding CRA were in rental stress compared with 84% of income units aged 24 years and under.

Of the special needs groups, income units aged 24 and under (65%), followed by Indigenous income units (37%) were most commonly in rental stress after receiving CRA. There was some variation between the states and territories.



Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services data (Australian Government Housing Dataset). Supplementary table CRA.7.

Among the special needs groups, the proportion of income units in rental stress with CRA also differed across the states and territories. In 2023 (Figure FINANCIAL.4; Table CRA.7):

- The Australian Capital Territory had the largest proportion of income units in rental stress who were aged 24 years and under (82%) and Indigenous (43%).
- South Australia and Tasmania had the lowest proportion of income units aged 75 years or over in rental stress (21% and 23% respectively).

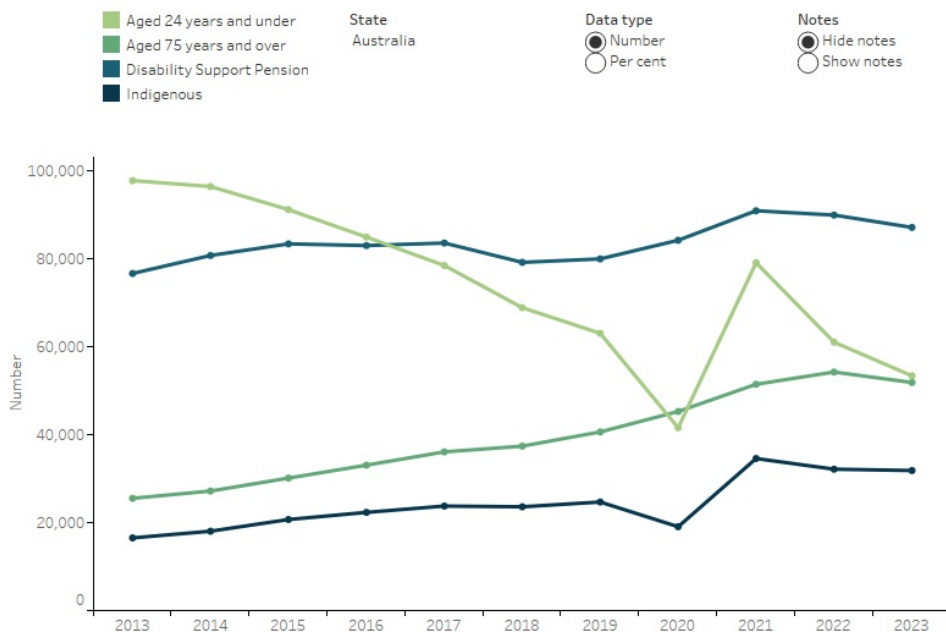
Special needs groups changes over time

The changes to the proportion of CRA income units who were in rental stress after receiving CRA differed by special needs groups and states and territories but has generally been stable over time (except for 2020). From June 2013 to June 2023 (Figure FINANCIAL.4; Table CRA.7):

- In 2023, 29% of income units aged 75 and over were in rental stress with CRA.
- While the number of income units in rental stress including CRA with a person aged 24 and under decreased from 97,600 to 53,300, the proportion in rental stress increased from 58% to 65%.

Figure FINANCIAL.4: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in rental stress by special needs group and states and territories, 2013 to 2023

Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), in rental stress, by special needs group, 2013 to 2023. This line graph shows that rental stress (i.e., paying more than 30% of income on rent) differs between the special needs groups. Income units aged 24 and under consistently (except in 2020) had the highest proportion between June 2013 and 2023, with around 57% to 65% of income units in rental stress after CRA. The next highest proportion of income units in rental stress after receiving CRA was Indigenous income units, with 37%; an increase from 30% in 2013. Likewise, the proportion of people aged 75 years and over in rental stress after receiving CRA has increased from 24% in 2013 to 29% in 2023. The proportion of income units receiving Disability Support Pension in rental stress after receiving CRA increased from 30% in 2013 to 33% in 2023.



Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services data (Australian Government Housing Dataset). Supplementary table CRA.7.

Primary payment type

Rental stress among income units receiving CRA varied depending upon the primary payment type. In 2023 (Figure FINANCIAL.5; Table CRA.8):

- Over 4 in 5 (84%) income units receiving Youth Allowance (Student and Apprentice) were in rental stress.
- Almost 2 in 3 (63%) income units receiving JobSeeker were in rental stress.
- Around 1 in 3 income units receiving an Age Pension (34%) or Disability Support Pension (33%) were in rental stress.

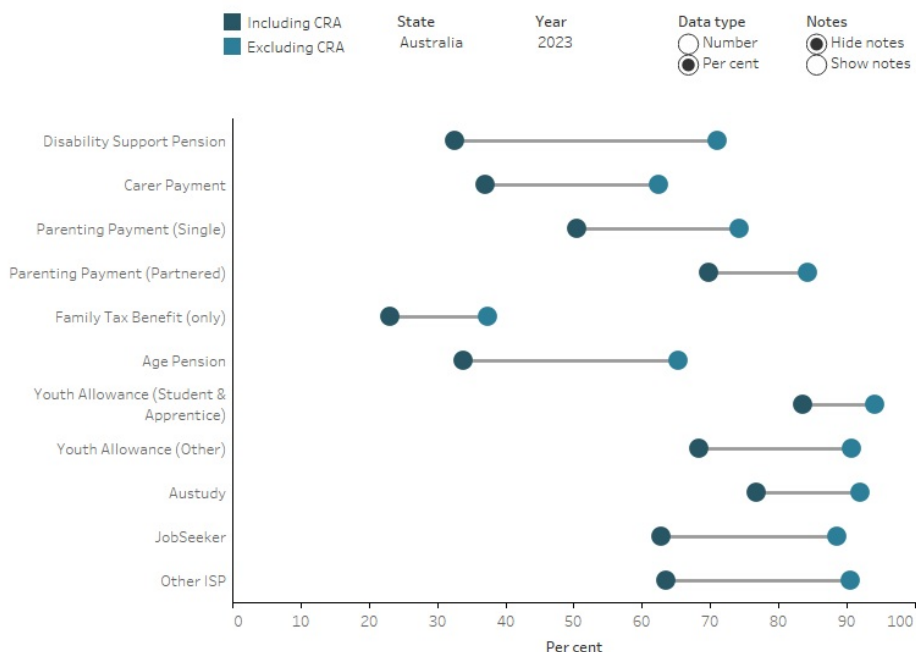
Primary payment type and state and territory

The proportion of income units receiving CRA who were in rental stress varied depending upon the state or territory and primary payment type. In 2023 (Figure FINANCIAL.5; Table CRA.7):

- The Australian Capital Territory (68%) and New South Wales (66%) had the highest proportion of income units receiving JobSeeker Payment in rental stress. Tasmania had the lowest but still over half of income units (52%) were in rental stress.
- The proportion of income units in rental stress receiving Youth Allowance (Student and Apprentice) ranged from 75% in the Northern Territory to 91% in the Australian Capital Territory.
- The Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion of income units in rental stress in 7 of the 11 primary payment types.

Figure FINANCIAL.5: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in rental stress by primary payment type and states and territories, 2013 to 2023

Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in rental stress, by primary payment type and states and territories, 2013 to 2023. The dumbbell graph compares the number and percent of income units receiving CRA in rental stress by primary payment types and states and territory. The graph shows that of the primary payment types in 2023, 84% of income units receiving Youth Allowance (Student & Apprentice), 77% of income units receiving Austudy and 70% of income units receiving Parenting Payment (Partnered) remained in rental stress after receiving CRA.



Source: AIHW analysis of Department of Social Services data (Australian Government Housing Dataset). Supplementary table CRA.7.

Private Rent Assistance

Around 56,900 households received Private Rent Assistance (PRA) and over 3 in 5 (61%) PRA recipients were located in *Major cities*. Private rent assistance (PRA) is a form of financial assistance provided by state and territory governments to low-income households experiencing difficulties with securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. PRA is typically provided once, as either a bond loan or a rental grant. However, state and territory governments may offer different types of support that others do not. For example, ongoing rental subsidies are only offered in New South Wales and relocation expenses are only offered in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. For more information, see the [Data quality statement](#) for PRA.

In 2022-23, about 56,900 households received PRA, falling from 92,600 in 2019-20 (Figure FINANCIAL.6; Table PRA.1).

Government policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic likely had an impact on PRA. Many jurisdictions introduced initiatives including moratoriums on rental evictions and prevention of rent increases. Pandemic-related assistance may have been provided to households but is out of scope for the PRA collection.

As PRA is demand driven, decreases do not necessarily reflect a lack of resources or changes to eligibility criteria. The overall rental market may have had an impact on the decline in PRA recipients. For example, reduced vacancy rates may result in reduced movement of tenants, potentially reducing the number of PRA applicants. Further, an increase in the total number of applicants for rental vacancies more broadly may reduce the likelihood of a PRA recipient to secure tenancy.

Key characteristics of households

Of the 56,900 unique households receiving PRA, most were aged between 25-44 (55%) and had a gross weekly income above the national minimum wage (52%), 19% were Indigenous (Table PRA.4).

The main source of income for most (71%) households receiving PRA was from some form of government payment. In particular, the government payments most households were receiving were:

- Newstart/Jobseeker (19%),
- Other Government pension/allowances (18%) and,
- Disability Support pension (17%).

About a quarter (27%) of households' main income sources were from an employee's income.

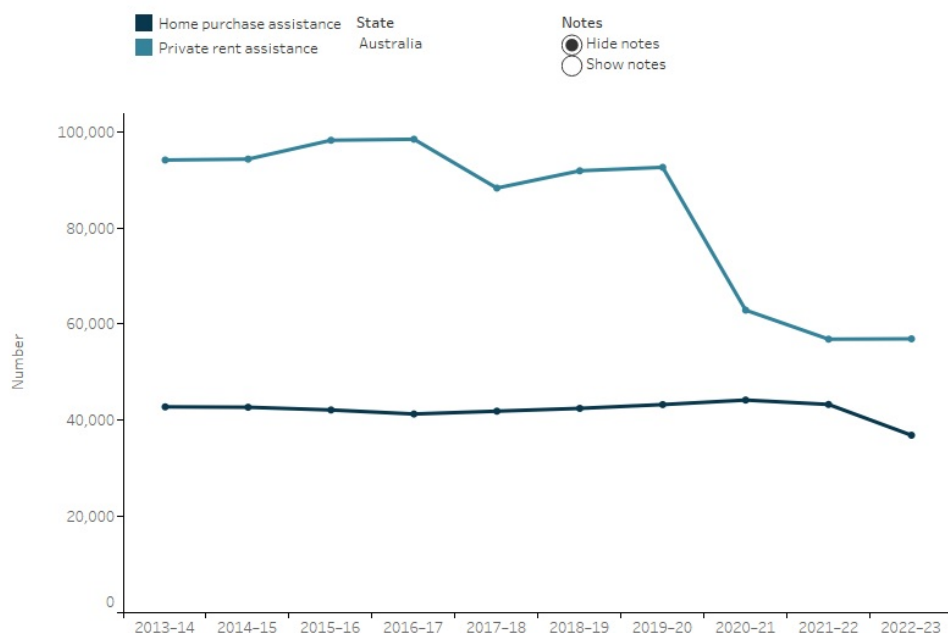
State and territory

Although all states and territories provide bond loans, the other types of PRA provided to households differed with each state and territory. In 2022-23 (Table PRA.2):

- Queensland (14,600) provided the greatest number of bond loans and households receiving PRA payments overall (19,400).
- South Australia provided the highest number of one-off rental grants (8,200).
- New South Wales provided ongoing rental subsidies to around 7,200 households (No other state or territory provided these subsidies).

Figure FINANCIAL.6: Households receiving Private Rent Assistance and Home Purchase Assistance by states and territories, 2013-14 to 2022-23

Households receiving Private Rent Assistance and Home Purchase Assistance, by states and territories, 2013-14 to 2022-23. This line graph shows the number of households receiving Private Rent Assistance and households receiving Home Purchase Assistance from 2013-14 to 2022-23 by states and territories. Nationally, the number of households receiving PRA has declined over time, with 62,900 households in 2022-23 compared with 94,100 households in 2013-14. Conversely, until 2022-23, the number of households receiving HPA has remained relatively stable nationally, with 43,300 households receiving HPA in 2021-22 compared with 42,800 in 2013-14. However, the number of households receiving HPA has declined in 2022-23 to 36,900.



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables PRA.1 and HPA.1.

Remoteness

In 2022-23, more PRA payments were made to households in *Major cities* (61%) than in *Inner regional* (24%) and *Outer regional* (13%) areas. By contrast, less than 2% of the PRA payments were made to households located in *Remote* (1.2%) or *Very remote* (0.5%) areas (Table PRA.3).

Home Purchase Assistance

Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) was received by 36,900 households.

Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) is a form of financial assistance provided by state and territory governments to eligible households to improve their access or ability to maintain home ownership. HPA can include:

- direct lending
- concessional loans
- mortgage relief
- interest rate assistance
- deposit assistance
- other assistance grants.

The type of home purchase assistance products available to households can differ across the years, and states and territories. Some products were only offered in certain states and territories or were no longer offered to new households. This section presents information on the new households who received HPA in 2022-23 and households who received HPA in the previous years who were still paying off their HPA-related loan in 2022-23.

Almost 36,900 households in Australia received HPA or were paying off an HPA-related loan in 2022-23. Over half (57% or 21,000) of the households were located in *Major cities* (HPA.3). The most common form of HPA was direct lending (32,800), which was provided in all the states and territories except Tasmania (Figure FINANCIAL.7; Table HPA.2).

Of the 36,900 households paying off a HPA related loan, most (91% or 33,700) commenced before 2022-23. By contrast, new households who received HPA in 2022-23 made up 9% (or 3,500) of total households (Table HPA.2).

Key characteristics of households

Of the 36,900 households receiving HPA in 2022-23 (Table HPA.4):

- Over a quarter (26% or 9,700) of the households had a main applicant aged 35-44 years and 23% (8,300) were aged 45-54 years.
- Over 1 in 5 (26% or 9,600) households earned a gross weekly income that was below the 2022 national minimum wage of \$812.60 (FWO 2022).

State and territory

In 2022-23, Western Australia (17,600 households) and South Australia (17,400) had the highest number of households receiving HPA. Together, the two states contributed 95% of the households receiving HPA (Table HPA.1). Direct lending was the main type of HPA provided in these states. About 1,000 and 2,200 new households received HPA in 2022-23 in Western Australia and South Australia, respectively (Table HPA.2).

Glossary

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Technical notes

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Technical notes

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.

The Housing Assistance in Australia report draws on key data from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository and Australian Government Housing Dataset.

Data compiled and used in the report are sourced from:

- **Public housing and State owned and managed Indigenous housing:** from state/territory housing authority administrative systems.
- **Community housing:** by state/territory housing authorities from community organisations and/or administrative records held by them. Data are incomplete for some states and territories due to non-reporting or under-reporting by organisations.
- **Indigenous community housing:** from state/territory housing authority administrative systems; dwelling audits conducted by states and territories; and, from Indigenous community housing organisations through data collection tools. Data are incomplete for some states and territories due to non-reporting or under-reporting by organisations.
- **Private Rent Assistance and Home Purchase Assistance:** are compiled from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. These data are sourced from state/territory housing authority administrative systems.
- **Commonwealth Rent Assistance:** data are derived from the Australian Government Housing Data Set. This is an administrative dataset provided to the AIHW by the Department of Social Services.

Data Quality Statements are developed for each data set and made available on the AIHW Metadata Online Registry ([METEOR](#)).

Further information regarding the data quality of each collection is available as follows:

- [Public Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
- [State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
- [Community Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
- [Indigenous Community Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
- [Private Rent Assistance Collection, 2022-23](#)
- [Home Purchase Assistance Collection, 2022-23](#)

Data quality

There are range of data quality issues such as the following. Caveats in the published data tables describe the salient issues important for interpretation of the data.

- The administrative data sets from which these collections are drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Some information may be self-identified and/or not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs (for example, Indigenous status and disability information).
- Not all states and territories or organisations capture and report all data items - data may not be collected and reported in a manner consistent with national data definitions. In addition, substitution may be required to calculate some outputs of the housing collections.
- Data for individual states and territories may not be comparable across reporting periods, nor with other social housing sectors due to changes in systems and processes which have led to differences in the accuracy, completeness and/or coverage of data over time.
- Historical data may have been updated and therefore differ from previous publications.

Comparing Census and administrative data about social housing

Estimates of social housing are also available from the ABS Census of Population and Housing and ABS surveys.

The 4 social housing data collections are administrative by-product data that provide annual point-in-time information on the number of households across Australia living in housing provided through each of the respective programs.

The Census, which is conducted by the ABS every 5 years, provides point-in-time data at the census date (with the 2021 Census pertaining to 10 August 2021). However, rather than provide information by social housing program, it distinguishes between the two types of social housing providers: state and territory governments, and the community sector.

The main discrepancies between the data sources are:

- Self-report errors in census data as the respondent may not correctly categorise landlord type, and as a result, incorrectly indicate a type of housing other than social housing.
- Incomplete census data potentially due to respondent fatigue or inability to answer the landlord type question.
- The categories reported in the census (and other ABS surveys) and outlined below, do not align well with the 4 social housing types:
 - Real estate agent
 - Government Housing Authority/Housing Department (Public Housing)
 - Parent/other relative not in this dwelling
 - Other person not in this dwelling
 - Residential park (including caravan parks and marinas)
 - Employer - Government (including Defence Housing Authority)
 - Employer - Private
 - Housing co-operative; Community or Church Group

Changes in housing stock

There have been considerable changes to the composition of social housing stock among the four programs, including the transfer of ownership and/or management of public housing dwelling stock to community housing organisations, involving:

- 4,100 dwellings from public housing and SOMIH to community housing in South Australia between 2018 and 2019.
- 11,200 dwellings from public housing and SOMIH to community housing in New South Wales between 2018 and 2019.
- Around 5,000 dwellings from Indigenous community housing to NT remote public housing between 2008 and 2010.
- Around 5,000 NT remote public housing dwellings to the SOMIH program in 2017.
- Over 2,000 Tasmanian public housing dwellings to community housing between 2021 and 2022.

If making jurisdictional comparisons over time, please read the relevant [data quality statements](#) to ensure all these changes are considered in the analysis.

Waiting lists

In all states and territories, access to social housing is managed through the use of waiting lists with priority given to those considered to be high priority applicants (see [Priority Groups](#)). All jurisdictions have an integrated waitlist across social housing programs. Waitlist data are provided separately for each social housing program applied for by a household. In some cases, this reflects the eligibility criteria for each different housing program. People/households may be on the waitlist for more than one program, therefore, households should not be summed across housing programs.

Fluctuations in the number of people on waiting lists are not necessarily measures of changes in underlying demand for social housing. Factors that may influence the length of waiting lists include changes to allocation policies, priorities, and eligibility criteria put in place by state/territory housing authorities, as well as their implementation (Dockery et al. 2008).

Applicants eligible for social housing may not apply due to the associated length of the waitlist and associated time to be allocated a dwelling, or the lack of available dwellings in their preferred location (Muir et al. 2020). In some states/territories, applicants may be on more than one waiting list, as lists are held by each program. As such, combined figures could be an overestimate of total households on social housing waitlists.

For further details, see the [Data quality statements](#).

Time waited for social housing allocation

The method used to calculate the amount of time waited for a housing allocation varies depending on household priority status. For households in greatest need, the time waited is calculated from the date applicants were determined to be of greatest need (priority group status) and the amount of time that passed before they were allocated housing. In other words, time waited is the amount of time between the greatest need determination and housing allocation.

However, for households not in greatest need, the time waited is calculated from the housing application date to housing allocation - this includes special needs only households. Hence, the time waited is measured here as the amount of time between the housing application and housing allocation.

Data on time waited for housing allocation were unavailable for both community housing and Indigenous community housing.

Households that exited or transferred

For most states/territories social housing 'exits' refers to households that have exited a specific housing program during the reference year. Households that relocate within the same housing program are not considered 'exits' but are instead known as 'transfers'.

However, for Queensland data, 'exits' refer to households that have exited from social housing to either private rental or private ownership etc. Households that transfer not only within a specific housing program but also from one social housing program to another are known as transfers.

Priority groups

Social housing is generally allocated according to priority needs, with allocations made based on identifying those people with the greatest need (such as applicants experiencing homelessness) and those with special needs for housing assistance (such as applicants with disability).

Disability status

There are differences between the states and territories in how disability status is classified. Disability may be based on self-reported disability or receipt of a disability support pension as a proxy for reported disability. These items may not be equivalent indicators of disability. Using self-reported disability status only may lead to under-reporting or misreporting of a household's disability status.

Greatest need households

Public housing, SOMIH and community housing programs prioritise household allocations through priority waiting lists, such as the greatest need waiting list. The criteria for priority needs varies between jurisdictions, so any comparisons between states and territories must be exercised with caution.

Greatest need applies to households if, at the time of allocation, household members were subject to one or more of the following circumstances:

- they were experiencing homelessness
- they were at risk of homelessness, including:
 - their life or safety was threatened within existing accommodation
 - a health condition was exacerbated by existing accommodation
 - their existing accommodation was inappropriate to their needs
 - they were experiencing very high rental costs.

For more information, see [METEOR](#).

Classifications for greatest need are not consistent across the states and territories, however, the states and territories map these data to an AIHW standard as defined in METEOR.

Special needs households

Households seeking social housing often have members with special needs. Some households may have one or more members with multiple special needs. The definition of special needs differs across the different social housing programs and between jurisdictions.

For public housing, special needs households include those with:

- a member with disability,
- a main tenant younger than 25 years or older than 75 years, or
- one or more members who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

As SOMIH is an Indigenous targeted program, Indigenous households in SOMIH are not considered special needs households. For SOMIH, special needs households are only those that have:

- a member with disability or
- a main tenant under 25 years or over 50 years.

Technical notes

Households at 30 June

For public housing, SOMIH and Indigenous community housing, households at 30 June are defined as those for which tenancies either have not ended or ended on 30 June of the reference period.

For community housing, households at 30 June were those that had not ended by 30 June of the reference period.

Low income households

For years prior to 2011-12, low income households were defined as those with an income equivalent at or below 100% of the government income support benefits at the pensioner rate.

From 2011-12, the low income cut-off uses equivalised gross income to classify a household as low income. Equivalised gross income is used as it allows comparison of the relative economic wellbeing of households of different size and composition, with the equivalised gross income being an indicator of the economic resources available to a standardised household. (If a jurisdiction is unable to supply gross household income then assessable household income will be used instead.) If a household has a negative disposable income it will have an equivalised gross income of zero.

ABS provides tables of gross equivalised income by jurisdiction and capital city / balance of state calculated from the Survey of Income and Housing (SIH). Households that fall in the bottom two quintiles (that is, the bottom 40%) of equivalised gross income will be classified as low income households.

The SIH is conducted every 2 years which means that cut-offs are not updated each financial year.

Table TN.1. Data source for the equivalised gross income used to define low income households for public housing, SOMIH and community housing

Survey of income and housing	Low income cutoffs for housing data
2019-20	2022, 2023
2017-18	2019, 2020, 2021
2015-16	2018
2013-14	2015, 2016, 2017
2011-12	2013, 2014

Time waited for social housing allocation

The method used to calculate the amount of time waited for social housing allocation varies depending on household priority status. See the [waiting list](#) section for more information.

Suitability of dwelling

In Australia, the suitability of a household's dwelling size is commonly measured using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Broadly, the CNOS measures suitability based on whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household (see criteria below).

CNOS provides information on how suitable social housing dwellings were for households living in social housing on 30 June of the reference year.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) measure assesses the suitability of a dwelling for a household according to the following criteria:

- no more than 2 people shall share a bedroom
- parents or couples may share a bedroom
- children under 5 years, either of the same sex or opposite sex, may share a bedroom
- children under 18 years of the same sex may share a bedroom
- a child aged 5-17 should not share a bedroom with a child under 5 of the opposite sex
- single adults 18 years and over, and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

Based on the CNOS standard, housing utilisation will be described as the following:

- Suitable or adequate: when it meets the CNOS household bedroom requirements

- Underutilised: when it has 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the CNOS bedroom requirement for the household
- Overcrowded: when it requires at least 1 more bedroom

Source: Statistics Canada 2021

For more information on the CNOS, see [AIHW Metadata Online Registry \(METEOR\)](#).

Although this measure is useful for indicating overcrowding in dwellings, it does not necessarily reflect a household's experience of overcrowding. This is because CNOS does not consider cultural differences in living and sleeping arrangements (Dockery et al. 2022). As such, its classification of overcrowding may not necessarily match the experiences of Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse households.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance is one of the main types of housing assistance provided to low-income households in Australia. Housing costs are often one of the largest expenses for low-income households. Governments offer various forms of financial support to help people afford housing costs, such as assisting with the cost of rent and accessing home loan finance.

Within this report, information on financial assistance related to rental costs and home purchases is based on data as at the last Friday in June in the reference year (for CRA) and on 30 June of the reference year (for PRA and HPA). It provides insight into the scale and effectiveness of certain financial assistance programs.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a non-taxable payment, which is generally paid fortnightly to eligible recipients as part of a recipient's primary payment rate. It is available to eligible recipients who rent in the private rental market or community housing. To be eligible, families or individuals must qualify for: an eligible social security payment; more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A; or an eligible veterans' income support payment; and pay or be liable to pay more than a specified rent threshold.

Qualification for CRA is assessed as part of the process for claiming a social security payment and it forms part of the rate of that payment. For information about CRA eligibility, see [Department of Social Services](#).

CRA is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate (or ceiling) is reached. The minimum threshold and maximum rates vary according to the household or family situation, including the number of children.

Certain social housing tenants are eligible for CRA, such as those living in community housing or Indigenous community housing and, in some states and territories, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). CRA is not generally payable to public housing tenants as state and territory housing authorities already subsidise rent for these tenants.

COVID-19, JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance

The jobless rate in Australia increased as the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the Australian economy (Parliamentary Library 2020a). In the months leading to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was around 5.0% (from December 2019 to March 2020). By July 2020, it peaked at 7.5% - the highest in over 20 years (ABS 2023). The economic and social impact of COVID-19 pandemic hit many Australians hard and fast. However, the rate of unemployment has declined sharply since then, falling below the pre-pandemic level to 4.7% in July 2021, and to 3.5% in February 2023 (ABS 2023).

In response to COVID-19 and the associated increase in unemployment, the Australian Government made changes to social security payments from March 2020. Broadly, these changes meant that more people were eligible for and received social security payments throughout 2020 and 2021 (Parliamentary Library 2020b).

Changes included introducing Jobseeker to replace Newstart Allowance, Sickness Allowance and Bereavement Allowance. The Coronavirus Supplement and Economic Support was also made available to recipients of the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance (JobSeeker, Student and Apprentice), Parenting Payment (Partnered and Single), Sickness Allowance, Austudy payment, ABSTUDY living allowance, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance, Farm Household Allowance, Special Benefit, and certain Department of Veterans Affairs student payments. Over time, the amount paid to recipients changed:

- from 27 April 2020 to 24 September 2020, recipients received \$550 per fortnight
- from 25 September 2020 to 31 December 2020, recipients received \$250 per fortnight
- from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021, recipients received \$150 per fortnight.

This supplement ended on 31 March 2021.

From 1 April 2021 onwards, JobSeeker Payment, Austudy and Youth Allowance increased by \$50 per fortnight (Treasury 2020).

From the end of April 2022 individuals who are currently in receipt of an Australian government allowance or pension (such as the age pension, disability support pension, parenting payment, carer payment, carer allowance, JobSeeker payment, youth allowance, Austudy and Abstudy living allowance) received a one-off payment of \$250 to ease cost of living pressures (Services Australia 2022).

Income units

An income unit comprises a single person (with or without dependent children) or a couple (with or without dependent children) receiving a social security or family assistance payment and expected to share financial resources. Single social security recipients living together in the same household are regarded as separate income units. One member of a couple is treated as the reference person for the recipient household, based on the type of payment they receive. The order of priority is: Pensions; Allowances; Family Tax Benefit (FTB). Type of income unit information only available from 2016.

Confidentiality

To protect individuals' privacy, all cells including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest 5, values from 1 to 7 are rounded to 5. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.

Rental stress

Many renters, especially those with low to moderate incomes, struggle to pay for high rents without compromising or sacrificing on other basic living costs (ABS 2022). Rental stress is about whether rental housing is affordable for these households (AHURI 2019).

Commonwealth Rent Assistance and rental stress

In Australia, rental affordability is commonly measured by the level of rental stress faced by the household. This report focusses on rental stress amongst CRA recipients, defined as a CRA income unit spending more than 30% of gross income on rent.

To provide insight into how much CRA reduced rental stress among income units receiving CRA, the proportion of income spent on rent before receiving (or excluding) CRA is compared with the proportion of income spent after receiving (or including) CRA.

Dwelling and household location

What is the Australian Statistical Geography Standard?

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is a classification of Australia into a social geography to reflect the location of people and communities to assist in the publication and analysis of social, economic, and demographic statistics. The ASGS categorises the regions of Australia into a hierarchy of statistical areas and consists of ABS structures and non-ABS structures (such as local government and postal areas). The ABS structures are made up of six interconnected hierarchies of regions. It is an inclusive hierarchy of geographies, where each level is included (or excluded) directly into (or from) the next. For further information on the ASGS and the structures, see the latest release of the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard](#) (ABS 2021).

Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) is one of the geographical areas within the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA2s are medium sized areas, with populations between 3,000 and 25,000 people, they represent a community that interacts together socially and economically.

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) refers to the geographical area of sub-state regions in the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA4 broadly represents the labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory, with the boundaries reflecting the separation of sub-state regions by different labour markets. For the largest regional cities, including Wollongong and Townsville, SA4s broadly reflects the labour markets of the city. For outer regional and remote areas, SA4s broadly reflects the aggregation of smaller and localised labour markets that are geographically, socially, and economically similar.

Local Government Areas (LGA) are Non ABS Structures generally representing administrative regions, they are not defined or maintained by the. All Non ABS Structures are approximated using ASGS regions. Mesh Blocks (the smallest geographic areas defined by the ABS, containing 30 to 60 dwellings) are allocated to Local Government Areas primarily based on where population is located.

Local Government Areas cover legally designated parts of a State or Territory for which incorporated local governing bodies have responsibility. There are 566 Local Government Areas covering the whole of Australia. ABS approximations of administrative boundaries do not match official legal boundaries and should only be used for statistical purposes.

Remoteness Areas (RA) are derived from the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+), produced by the Hugo Centre for Population and Migration Studies (University of Adelaide). Remoteness Areas divide Australia into five classes of remoteness on the basis of a measure of relative access to services. The five remoteness classes are: *Major cities*, *Inner regional*, *Outer regional*, *Remote* and *Very remote*.

Concordances for dwelling location

Dwellings were assigned to SA4s using a postcode to SA2 correspondence file.

Dwellings were assigned to LGAs using a postcode to SA2 correspondence file.

There may be some minor inaccuracies in results.

Dwelling Remoteness area is derived from the postcode of the household using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). Table TN.1 outlines the concordance files used for each year of housing data.

Remoteness boundaries are revised over time due to factors such as population and road network changes, further details can be found in [Change in the ASGS Remoteness Classification](#). Due to these changes caution should be used when comparing remoteness data across time. For example, in ASGS Edition 3 (2021), Mount Gambier in South Australia has been reclassified from *Inner regional* to *Outer regional*. This has contributed to a change in the number of dwellings in *Outer Regional* in South Australia from around 4,500 in 2022 to 5,500 in 2023.

Table TN2. Concordance files used to assign housing data to remoteness areas over time

ASGS edition	Postcode reference year	Applicable years for housing data
Edition 1 (2011)	2012	2014, 2015, 2016, 2017
Edition 2 (2016)	2017	2018
Edition 2 (2016)	2018	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022
Edition 3 (2021)	2022	2023

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2021) 'Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3', ABS, Australian Government accessed on 29 April 2023.

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Notes

Data quality statement

- [Public Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
 - [State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
 - [Community Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
 - [Indigenous Community Housing Data Collection, 2022-23](#)
 - [Private Rent Assistance Collection, 2022-23](#)
 - [Home Purchase Assistance Collection, 2022-23](#)
-



Data



Report editions

This release

Housing assistance in Australia 2024 | 12 Jul 2024

Previous releases

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- Housing assistance in Australia 2022 | **Web report** | 29 Jun 2022
- Housing assistance in Australia 2021 | **Web report** | 30 Jun 2021
- Housing assistance in Australia 2020 | **Web report** | 05 Aug 2020
- Housing assistance in Australia 2019 | **Web report** | 18 Jul 2019
- Housing assistance in Australia 2018 | **Web report** | 28 Jun 2018
- Housing assistance in Australia 2017 | **Web report** | 13 Jul 2017
- Housing assistance in Australia 2016 | **Web report** | 02 Jun 2016
- Housing assistance in Australia 2015 | **Web report** | 29 May 2015
- Housing assistance in Australia 2014 | **Publication** | 15 Oct 2014
- Housing assistance in Australia 2013 | **Publication** | 08 Nov 2013
- Housing assistance in Australia 2012 | **Publication** | 05 Dec 2012
- Housing assistance in Australia 2011 | **Publication** | 15 Jun 2011
- Housing assistance in Australia 2008 | **Publication** | 22 Feb 2008



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