



Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data

Web report | Last updated: 07 Mar 2024 | Topic: [Homelessness services](#)

About

Governments fund non-government agencies to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These agencies provide specialised services to target groups as well as general homelessness support services. This site presents monthly data on the number of clients receiving services.

Data in this report are updated quarterly.

Cat. no: HOU 321

Findings from this report:

- [Females are the main recipients of specialist homelessness services](#)
 - [Housing crisis and family and domestic violence are among the most common reasons for seeking assistance](#)
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Monthly data

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) receives and aggregates data from over 1,700 specialist homelessness services agencies across Australia on a monthly basis. This site presents monthly data on the number of clients supported throughout each month since July 2017, by state, age and sex. Additional breakdowns by specific target groups, the reasons clients sought assistance, homelessness status, clients receiving financial support for short-term accommodation and nights in short-term accommodation are also included. The data visualisation shows an interactive display with charts of monthly counts of clients by state and sex, separate charts for certain client groups, a population pyramid showing age and sex distributions for a selected time period and also counts of clients who sought services by their reason for seeking services. Data are available in the file available for download on this webpage.

Specialist Homelessness Services: Monthly data

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) agencies receive government funding to deliver SHS services to clients. A client is any person who receives a direct service from SHS agencies; they may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. A direct service aims to respond to the needs of the particular client. A client can be of any age, and children who present with a parent or guardian and receive a direct service are also considered to be SHS clients.

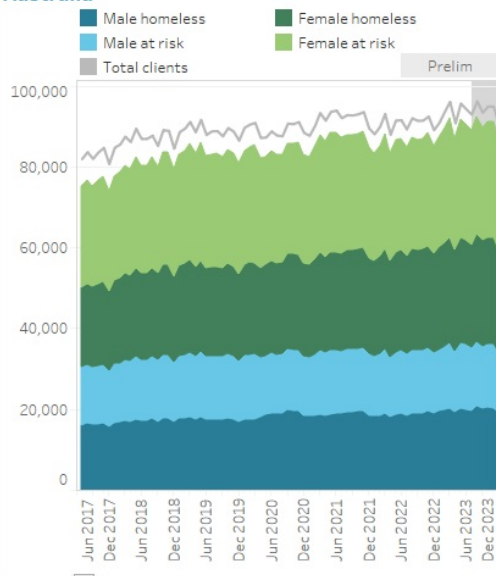
Note: SHS client counts change from one month to the next for many reasons. These changes are not necessarily due to changes in the demand for homelessness services. Monthly clients counts should not be summed to derive annual client counts because clients can access services in multiple months. Data from July 2023 onwards are preliminary.

Select a state/territory: **Australia** | NSW | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT

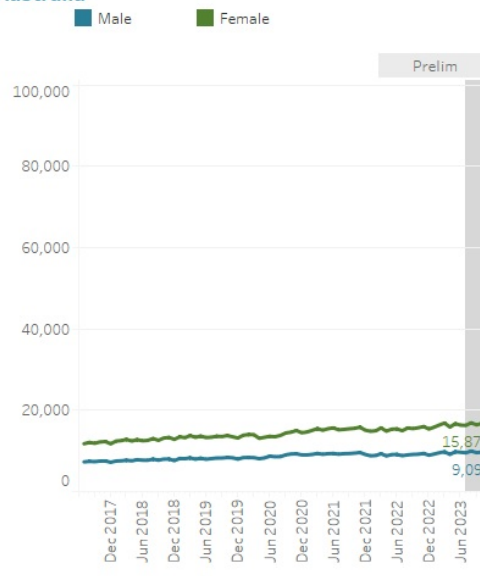
SHS clients by sex and client groups, July 2017 to December 2023

[data from July 2023 onwards are preliminary]

SHS clients by sex and homeless status, Australia



Indigenous SHS clients by sex, Australia



Note: Homeless status, *Homeless* or *At risk of homelessness* is the last known housing situation for a client in the month. Unknown homeless status is included in the Total clients line (grey line) above.

The number of clients who received support from Specialist Homelessness Services in Australia fluctuated between 81,980 clients in July 2017 to 90,601 in December 2023.

Of the 90,601 clients in December 2023; 55,123 were female; 35,478 were male; 24,971 were Indigenous.

SHS clients by client groups, July 2017 to December 2023

Australia



Note: The client groups are not mutually exclusive. A client can be in multiple client groups.

In December 2023, Specialist Homelessness Services in Australia assisted:

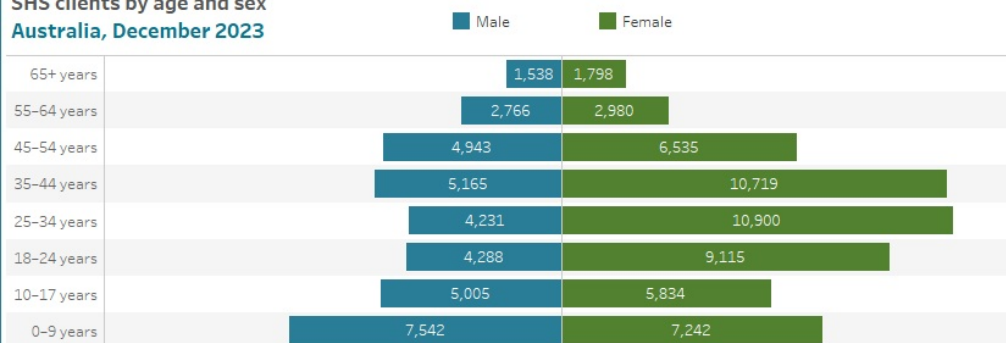
- 32,924 clients who had experienced family and domestic violence,
- 26,399 clients with a current mental health issue, and
- 6,857 clients with problematic drug or alcohol issues.

SHS clients by age, sex, reasons for seeking assistance and broad assistance provided, by month

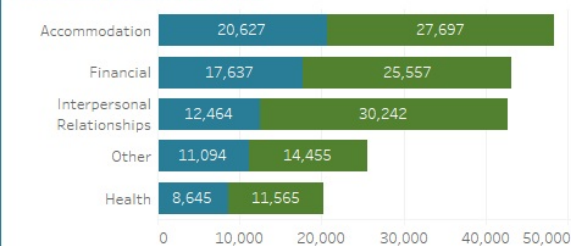
[data from July 2023 onwards are preliminary]

Select a month:
December 2023

SHS clients by age and sex Australia, December 2023



SHS clients by reasons for seeking assistance (main categories) Australia, December 2023



Note: Clients may have more than one reason for seeking assistance. Further information on sub-categories are available in the data tables.

Accommodation and financial assistance Australia, December 2023

262,407 nights
of short term/emergency
accommodation were provided to
13,728 SHS clients
in December 2023.

2,801 SHS clients
received financial assistance
for short term/emergency
accommodation.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

<<https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/specialist-homelessness-services-collection>>.

Source data: [Specialist homelessness services monthly data file \(615KB XLS\)](#).

Download

Please use the 'Download' button within the dashboard to generate image or PDF versions of the data.

Notes about interpreting the data

Sum of state and territory totals versus national total

Clients may access services in more than one state or territory. Therefore, the national total may be less than the sum of jurisdictions. State/territory level monthly client data are based on information from support periods active during the month within each respective state/territory.

Client count

The monthly count of clients should not be added together to determine an annual count as a client may receive assistance in more than one month. The Specialist homelessness services annual report series provides information about services provided to clients over an entire financial year (see [Further information](#)).

Age

A client's monthly age is calculated as at the start of their first support period in the month in that jurisdiction, or at the start of the month (if the support period began in a previous month).

Sex

Cases where sex has been recorded as 'other' have been combined with the category for 'female' for confidentiality/data quality reasons; sex=other is only applicable for support periods that started from 1 July 2019.

Family and domestic violence (FDV) clients - before July 2019

For each collection month, a client is counted if, in any support period active during the month:

- 'Domestic and family violence' was reported as a reason for seeking assistance (only reported at the beginning of the support period).
- They required family/ domestic violence services during that month.

Family and domestic violence (FDV) clients - from July 2019

For each collection month, a client is counted if, in any support period active during the month:

- 'Domestic and family violence' was reported as a reason for seeking assistance (only reported at the beginning of the support period).
- They were formally referred from a non-SHS family and domestic violence service provider (only reported at the beginning of the support period).
- They required family/ domestic violence services during that month.

Clients with mental health issues

For each collection month, a client is counted if they were 10 years or older and, in any support period, active during the month, the client:

- reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance at the beginning of the support period
- was formally referred to the specialist homelessness agency by a mental health service
- reported at the beginning of the support period that they had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months
- reported at the beginning of the support period that they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the last 12 months
- had psychiatric hospital or unit as their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency or when presenting to an agency
- reported psychiatric hospital or unit as their dwelling type during that month
- required psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services during that month.

Clients with problematic drug or alcohol issues

For each collection month, a client is counted if they were 10 years or older and, in any support period, active during the month, the client:

- reported 'problematic drug or substance use' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance at the beginning of the support period
- was formally referred to the specialist homelessness agency from a drug and alcohol service
- reported at the beginning of the support period that they had been in a rehabilitation facility in the last 12 months
- had rehabilitation facility as their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency or when presenting to an agency
- reported rehabilitation facility as their dwelling type during that month
- required drug or alcohol counselling services during that month.

Reason for seeking assistance

The count of reasons for seeking assistance should not be added together to determine a monthly total as a client may nominate multiple reasons for seeking assistance.

Clients with COVID-19 as a reason for seeking assistance

From 26 March 2020, 'COVID-19' became an 'other' reason for seeking assistance. It could mean that the client and/or the agency were affected directly or indirectly by the crisis. Caution should be applied when interpreting these data because it may not mean that the client was directly impacted by COVID-19.

Homeless status

All clients of specialist homelessness services are considered to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Homelessness and at-risk status is determined by a client's housing situation, which in turn is determined by the specific criteria described below using the following 3 aspects:

- dwelling type
- housing tenure
- their conditions of occupancy.

Clients are considered to be homeless if they are living in any of the following circumstances:

- No shelter or improvised dwelling - includes either:
 - where dwelling type has no dwelling/ street/ park/ in the open, motor vehicle, improvised building/ dwelling, caravan, cabin, boat or tent
 - tenure type is renting or living rent-free in a caravan park.
- Short-term temporary accommodation - dwelling type is either:
 - boarding/ rooming house, emergency accommodation, hotel/ motel/ bed and breakfast
 - tenure type is renting or living rent-free in boarding/ rooming house, renting or living rent-free in emergency accommodation, or renting or living rent-free in transitional housing.
- House, townhouse or flat (couch surfing or with no tenure) - dwelling type is house/ townhouse/ flat, and tenure type is no tenure or conditions of occupancy is couch surfing.

Clients are considered to be at risk if they are living in any of the following circumstances:

- Public or community housing (renter or rent free) - dwelling type is house/ townhouse/ flat and tenure type is renter or rent-free in public housing, or renter or rent-free in community housing.
- Private or other housing (renter, rent-free or owner) - dwelling type is house/ townhouse/ flat and tenure type is renter or rent free in private housing, life tenure scheme, owner-shared equity or rent/ buy scheme, owner-being purchased/ with mortgage, owner-fully owned, or other renter or rent free.
- Institutional settings - dwelling type is hospital, psychiatric hospital/ unit, disability support, rehabilitation, boarding school/ residential college, adult correctional facility, youth/ juvenile justice correctional centre, aged care facility or immigration detention centre.

Clients who did not provide sufficient information regarding the 3 aspects of their housing situation are classified as 'not stated'.

Homeless status ('Homeless' or 'At risk of homelessness') is based on the last known housing situation for a client in the month, derived either at the end of the month for clients still receiving a service or at the end of the last support period in the month.

Where a client has multiple support periods in a month with different homeless statuses, homeless status is derived as an ever-reported variable in a hierarchical ranking where "Homeless" ranks above "At risk" which in turn ranks above "Not stated".

Clients with unknown homeless status are excluded from the 'Homeless/ At risk of homelessness' counts.

Note: The derivation has changed over time and the newest derivation has been applied to all period in the data - from July 2017 to December 2023.

Clients receiving financial assistance for short-term/ emergency accommodation

Clients who received financial assistance for accommodation not owned by an SHS agency, such as hotels, motels and caravan parks. It excludes assistance given alongside accommodation owned or directly managed by an SHS agency (for example, refuge or crisis centres) and does not include assistance for rent or other housing costs.

SHS clients accommodated in short-term/ emergency accommodation

Clients who received accommodation owned or directly managed by an SHS agency, such as a refuge or crisis shelter. This includes emergency accommodation arranged and paid for by an SHS agency in places such as hotels, motels and caravan parks. However, this type of accommodation may not be accurately recorded by an SHS agency. Therefore, there may be an undercount of SHS clients accommodated in short-term/ emergency accommodation (as well as their associated nights in short-term/ emergency accommodation).

COVID-19 responses

New South Wales

The NSW Government initiated a number of strategies in response to COVID-19 including additional funding and supports for homelessness initiative, temporary accommodation for clients to support self-isolation, and rental subsidies to assist people in the private rental market. Most of these initiatives are outside the scope of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection and may impact SHS client numbers in NSW.

Victoria

Victoria's response to the COVID-19 pandemic focused on providing short-term or emergency accommodation to help people isolate and to ensure everyone was able to comply with stay-at-home directives. The provision of short-term or emergency accommodation peaked during the longer lockdowns in April to December 2020, and again from May to November 2021. Funded programs continued in 2021-22 and beyond to ensure safe housing exits for clients who received hotel accommodation during the early stages of the pandemic via the Homelessness to a Home (H2H) program. Further funding was also provided for support to families exiting from hotels via the Housing for Families (H4F) program.

Queensland

In Queensland, the Government delivered several responses to COVID-19 including:

- The Housing and Homelessness COVID-19 Immediate Response Fund (IRF) to enhance existing service offerings across the housing and homelessness continuum, including delivery of additional brokerage, emergency accommodation, and outreach services to ensure vulnerable Queenslanders had enhanced access to homelessness and housing responses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Emergency Housing Assistance Response, activated in a placed-based approach, supports vulnerable individuals and families who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and who required immediate short-term accommodation.
- Further assistance, for individuals and families in short-term accommodation to identify medium- and long-term housing solutions and support, including exits to private market housing, social housing or reconnection with families and friends.
- A rapid response domestic and family violence COVID-19 initiative that moves women and their children in inappropriate accommodation in Brisbane to safer short-term accommodation with coordinated specialist supports and services including safety planning.
- The department has helped obtain safe and secure accommodation for over 4,200 people during the Queensland COVID-19 lockdown events to reduce the chances of COVID-19 infection or spread. The department continues to work with customers to achieve safe and appropriate housing outcomes with support.
- Further supported people accommodated via a multi-agency response focusing on people's health and wellbeing needs while supporting transition to longer term housing models.

Western Australia

During the COVID-19 period, the Department of Communities, in line with Department of Finance (Western Australia) instructions, reduced non-essential contract compliance requirements for services to assist organisations responding to the changing COVID-19 environment. These reductions in reporting requirements are not considered likely to have impacted on Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. In WA, relief fund grants have been available through [Lottery West](#) and other one-off initiatives have taken place which fall outside the scope of SHSC but may influence the numbers reported. The WA Recovery Plan [In This Together](#) outlines other current and upcoming initiatives which may provide further contextual information.

South Australia

In July 2021, South Australia implemented a reform of the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) sector and established 5 Alliances to service the complex and evolving needs of clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness across South Australia. While there was little impact on the clients themselves, the data migration processes to align SHS agencies and client data records to the Alliance model have led to potential reporting errors in July to September 2021 - in particular, an underreporting of clients assisted by SHS and their service provision across cohorts.

In response to the COVID-19 lockdown in South Australia, the SA Housing Authority (the Authority) enacted a process for supporting people experiencing homelessness or domestic and family violence to stay in hotel/motel accommodation for the duration of the lockdown in order to comply with SA Health directions. Eligibility for hotel/ motel accommodation required an individual or family to have no safe alternative access to accommodation for the duration of the lockdown and included people sleeping rough and remote visitors.

Accommodation was provided for the duration of the lockdown at no cost to clients and outside the Authority's standard Emergency Assistance Program eligibility criteria. To facilitate exits for people accommodated during the lockdown, the Authority supported a coordinated approach with local homelessness service providers to identify a priority housing list of clients who required longer term housing and support, with extended hotel/ motel support provided to those clients who were on the priority housing list and awaiting a housing allocation. Prioritised housing includes short-term public housing, crisis and transitional accommodation and supportive housing.

Clients impacted by COVID-19 isolation requirements were supported through referral to SA Health for accommodation in SA Health managed medi-hotels, where necessary for health and safety. SA Health have now decommissioned medi-hotels in South Australia. Therefore, the Authority and SHS providers are working together to support homelessness clients impacted by COVID-19 through existing funded programs, including access to hotel or motel accommodation through the Emergency Accommodation Program, provided eligibility requirements are met.

Tasmania

In Tasmania, the Government introduced a Housing and Homelessness Support Package to assist people in housing stress and at risk of homelessness in response to COVID-19. This included uncapped brokerage funding to assist people to access emergency accommodation if required. Additionally, funding for Safe Spaces was introduced to deliver 24/7 models of care in 3 regions to assist people who are homeless to access day-and- night services. Complementing the Safe Spaces program has been the introduction of new clinical mental health services and telephone health screening for homeless Tasmanians during the COVID-19 emergency period. This has enhanced the availability of services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with the aim of improving long-term housing outcomes.

Australian Capital Territory

In response to COVID-19, the ACT has provided funding for:

- accommodation support for both emergency and long-term accommodation for clients dealing with physical distancing in shelters, self-isolation or quarantine
- support services to clients in short- to medium-term accommodation to promote stability
- an increase in demand for family and domestic violence and sexual assault services
- brokered accommodation in motels and hotels, via the central intake system, for clients who cannot be accommodated through SHS

- new accommodation programs including temporary shelters for rough sleepers, men and for women with children.

Additionally, the ACT's Housing First program (Axial Housing) has been expanded to provide assistance to more rough sleepers. The ACT has also expanded Winter Lodge from a 6-month to a 12-month operation and transformed Winter Lodge into a place for not only crisis but also transitional accommodation for men experiencing homelessness in the ACT.

Northern Territory

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northern Territory Government implemented a Return to Country program in collaboration with a range of non-government organisations to facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people returning to their home communities from urban regional centres. In addition, the Australian Government imposed biosecurity zones in 2020 and 2021 around remote communities in the NT. Visitors were required to quarantine for 14 days prior to entering these zones. Together, these policies restricted the movement of people between remote communities and the urban regional centres where SHS agencies are based. This would have resulted in a reduction in the number of prospective clients for SHS agencies.



Notes

Amendment

21 March 2024 - The code which generates the FDV number in the text under the client groups figures was incorrect. This has been corrected.

13 September 2023 - Data for the first 3 quarters of the financial year are preliminary, data for the last quarter are considered final. The words about preliminary data were mistakenly not removed from the June 2023 release.

Data quality statement

See the [data quality statement](#) for each reference year, available from METEOR - our metadata repository.





Data





Related material

Further information

For further information on how SHSC data are collected, see the [SHS collection manual \(PDF 2.7MB\)](#).

See the [data quality statement](#) for each reference year, available from METEOR - our metadata repository.

See [Homelessness services](#) for more on this topic.

Resources

Where to find help and support

If you need support, [Ask Izzy](#) is a free and anonymous service that can connect you with over 400,000 services for housing, family violence, meals, healthcare, counselling legal advice, addiction treatment and more.

Visit [Ask Izzy](#).

