



Australian Government

**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

*Better information and statistics
for better health and wellbeing*

Government-funded specialist homelessness services

**SAAP National Data Collection
annual report
2009–10**

Australia

June 2011

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Canberra

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**Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report.
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Summary

Each year too many Australians experience homelessness or find themselves in circumstances that put them at risk of becoming homeless. People of all ages, genders, cultural backgrounds and personal circumstances can find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness at some time in their life. In response, Australian governments deliver a range of services specifically designed to reduce the incidence or frequency of homelessness and the impact it has on people and families.

In 2009–10, 219,900 people (or 1 in every 100 Australians) used government-funded specialist homelessness services. Of these, 135,700 (62%) were clients and 84,100 (38%) were children accompanying clients (see Box 3.1).

In 2009–10, young people (particularly young women), children, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were significant users of specialist homelessness services:

- 1 in every 65 young Australians aged 15–19 years (23,200) and 1 in every 51 young women aged 15–19 years (14,300) became a client
- 1 in every 60 Australian children aged 0–17 years (84,100) and 1 in 38 young children aged 0–4 years (37,100) accompanied a client
- 18% of clients and 26% of children accompanying clients identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, far higher than the proportion of the general Australian population (2% and 5% respectively).

As the people using specialist homelessness services are diverse, the reasons they seek assistance and the support they require also vary. In 2009–10:

- single women, women with children and young people commonly sought assistance because of issues in their interpersonal relationships, such as domestic or family violence or the breakdown of a relationship with a family member, spouse or partner
- single men aged 25 years and over commonly sought assistance because of drug, alcohol or substance use or as a result of financial difficulties
- couples, both with and without children, and men with children commonly sought assistance because of accommodation related issues, such as being evicted.

The types of support needed by clients generally aligned with the reasons they sought assistance. In the majority of cases, these needs were met by the time the client finished support.

Clients were supported for an average of 64 days and, when accommodated, were accommodated for an average of 60 days. Family groups generally had longer periods of support and accommodation than people who presented on their own.

In recent years there have been some changes in the use of government-funded specialist homelessness services. From 2006–07 to 2009–10:

- there has been a small increase in the overall rate of Australians using specialist homelessness services – increasing from 1 in every 110 to 1 in 100

- the proportion of support periods that include a period of specialist homelessness accommodation has decreased – from 38% to 29% ¹
- the overall length of both support and accommodation has generally increased – support from an average of 50 days to 64; and accommodation from an average of 50 days to 60 days.

There has been little change in recent years in the overall demographic profile of clients and their accompanying children, their reasons for seeking assistance, or in their circumstances immediately following support.

¹ Accommodation data are reported differently in Victoria to other jurisdictions (see Box 1.1). If Victoria is excluded from the calculations, the proportion of support periods that included a period of specialist homelessness accommodation decreased from 49% in 2006–07 to 38% in 2009–10.

1 Introduction

This national report provides an overview of the use of government-funded specialist homelessness services in 2009–10. It is accompanied by an appendix – containing tables and further information on the data (AIHW 2011i) – and by individual state and territory supplementary reports (AIHW 2011a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h).

The 2009–10 data from government-funded specialist homelessness agencies was collected in the SAAP National Data Collection (SAAP NDC) (see Appendix 2 for details). A new collection reflecting the changed arrangements under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the national partnership agreements is planned to replace the SAAP NDC on 1 July 2011.

Readers should note that figures presented here and in the supplementary state and territory reports may not add or match exactly between tables and text due to rounding (see AIHW 2011i:Appendix 5).

1.1 The government response to homelessness

The government response to homelessness has been shaped by the White Paper on homelessness – *The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness* (Australian Government 2008). The response is administered under the NAHA and the national partnership agreements. These agreements cover people who are homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness.

The White Paper on homelessness

The White Paper on homelessness outlines the Australian Government's response to homelessness, with a focus on the reduction and prevention of homelessness. In order to achieve this, three broad strategies are highlighted. They are:

1. turning off the tap – prevention and early intervention to stop people becoming homeless by tackling the structural drivers of homelessness
2. improving and expanding services – improving and expanding service responses to homelessness to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation, and end homelessness
3. breaking the cycle – moving people through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

National Affordable Housing Agreement

The NAHA is designed to provide a framework for all levels of governments to work together to reduce homelessness and improve housing affordability. The objective of the NAHA is to ensure that 'all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation'. Funding for the NAHA commenced on 1 January 2009.

Box 1.1: Interpreting data in this report

Government-funded specialist homelessness services are only part of the picture

Currently there is no accurate measure of the proportion of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who make contact with a specialist homelessness agency. While the SAAP NDC provides reliable estimates of those using homelessness services, it should not be interpreted as representing the entire population of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (for example, see Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2008).

The SAAP NDC is designed to capture the government response to homelessness and therefore service providers who do not receive government funding are excluded. Further, the collection is focused on services provided by 'specialist homelessness agencies' – those that specifically target and provide services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – and more general service providers are not included.

The model of service delivery and client target groups vary by jurisdiction

The approaches to delivering homelessness services vary between jurisdictions. In particular, accommodation related data for Victoria, both in regard to the assessed need for accommodation and the provision of accommodation, is affected by the model of homelessness service delivery used in this state. Much of the specialist homelessness accommodation in Victoria is provided through the complementary Transitional Housing Management (THM) program, which collects data separately to the SAAP NDC. As such, accommodation related data in Victoria has not been recorded in the SAAP NDC in a basis consistent with other states and territories and is therefore not strictly comparable with that reported by other jurisdictions.

Accommodation data for South Australia is also affected by the model of homelessness service delivery used in this state. A large number of South Australian agencies do not provide accommodation, they provide support services only, with accommodation being provided through other sources.

The states and territories also vary in their client focus ('primary target group') for service delivery. For example: Western Australia has a high proportion of agencies primarily focused on delivering services to women escaping domestic violence; and the Australian Capital Territory has a high proportion of agencies primarily focused on delivering services to young people.

These variations need to be considered when analysing the national results and comparing the states and territories.

Policy and service delivery arrangements have changed over recent years

There have been changes in arrangements for determining homelessness policy and service delivery in recent years. For example, midway through the 2008–09 financial year, the SAAP agreement was discontinued and replaced by the NAHA. Then, in 2009–10, the national partnership funding commenced. Although data collection has continued under the new arrangements, it may have been affected by the changes. In particular, the inclusion of agencies in the collection is determined by the state and territory departments responsible for administering the government response to homelessness. The addition of agencies funded under the revised arrangements has not been uniform across jurisdictions nor across years.

National partnership agreements

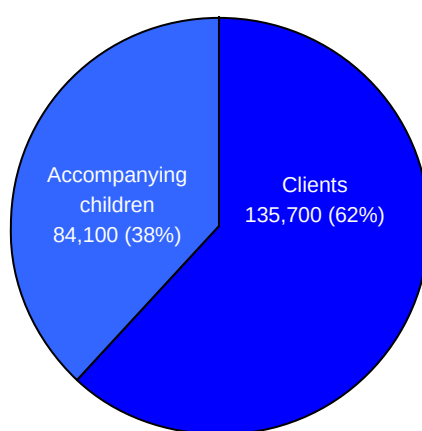
The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and the state and territory governments specifically in relation to reducing and preventing homelessness. It contributes to the NAHA outcome that 'people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion'. The NPAH was signed in December 2008 and funding commenced 1 July 2009.

The NPAH is complemented by other partnership agreements that are designed to respond to a range of housing needs including homelessness. These include the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

2 How many people were supported?

This chapter presents information on how many people were supported by government-funded specialist homelessness agencies in 2009–10 and their rate of service use.

During 2009–10, it is estimated that 1 in every 100 Australians received support from a government-funded specialist homelessness agency. More specifically, these agencies supported an estimated 219,900 people. Figure 2.1 shows that of these, 135,700 (62%) were clients and 84,100 (38%) were children accompanying clients (see Box 3.1 for an explanation of clients and accompanying children).



Sources: tables A3, A4 and A5.

Figure 2.1: Total people supported, clients and accompanying children, 2009–10 (per cent)

Box 2.1: Number of support periods and number of people

Data in the SAAP Client Collection are collected in relation to support periods. A support period is a discrete period of time over which a person receives ongoing support from a government-funded specialist homelessness agency. A person may have one or more periods of support within a year. To calculate the number of people associated with these periods of support, a statistical linkage key (SLK) is created for each person receiving support where consent was provided to record this information. In this way, people with multiple periods of support can be ascertained and estimates of the number of people can be made. See the appendixes to this report for more detail (AIHW 2011i).

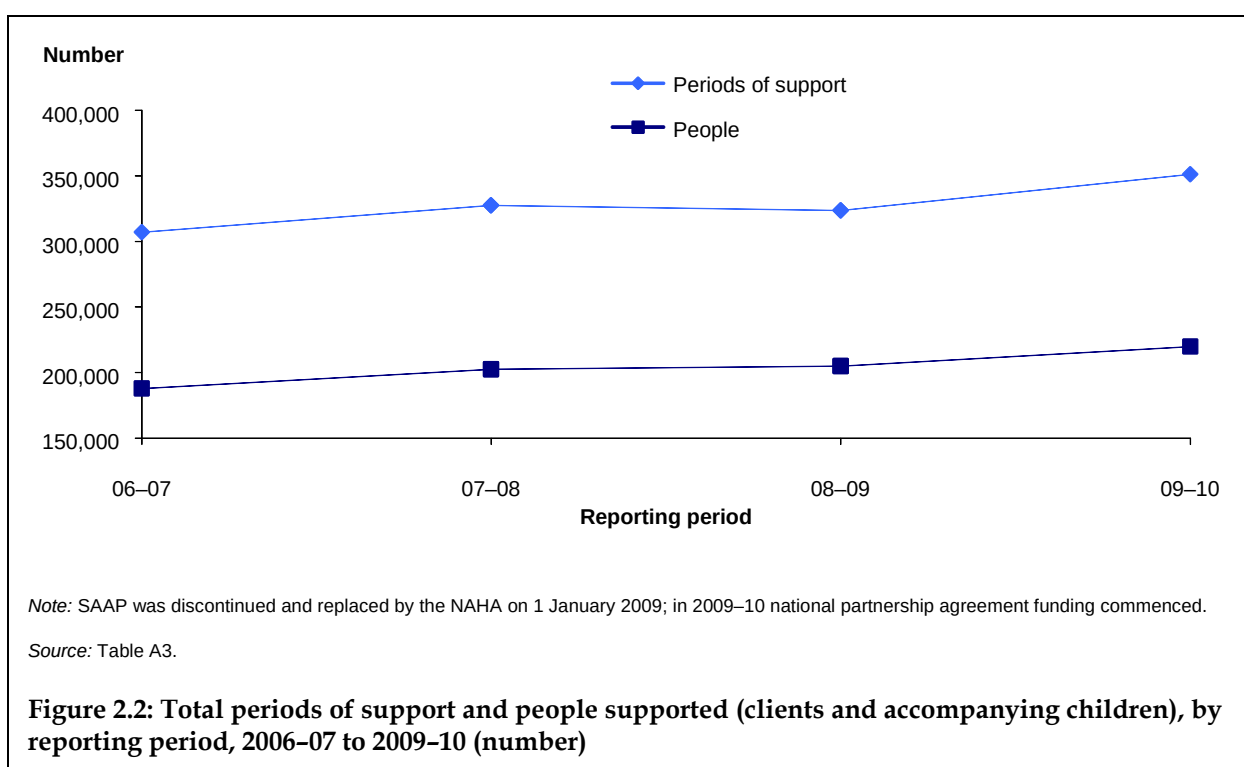
In the context of this report, people supported refer to clients and accompanying children (see Box 3.1).

Most clients and accompanying children presented only once for support during the year (73% of clients and 79% of accompanying children) (tables A4 and A5) (see Box 2.1). The average number of support periods was 1.6 overall, 1.7 for clients, and 1.4 for accompanying children.

The majority of services delivered were non-accommodation related support services. Only 29% of support periods included a period of specialist homelessness accommodation (Table A4).²

2.1 Changes over time

Figure 2.2 presents the number of periods of support and people supported since 2006–07 (clients plus accompanying children). Both have generally increased over recent years – periods of support from 307,000 in 2006–07 to 351,200 in 2009–10; and people supported from 187,900 to 219,900.

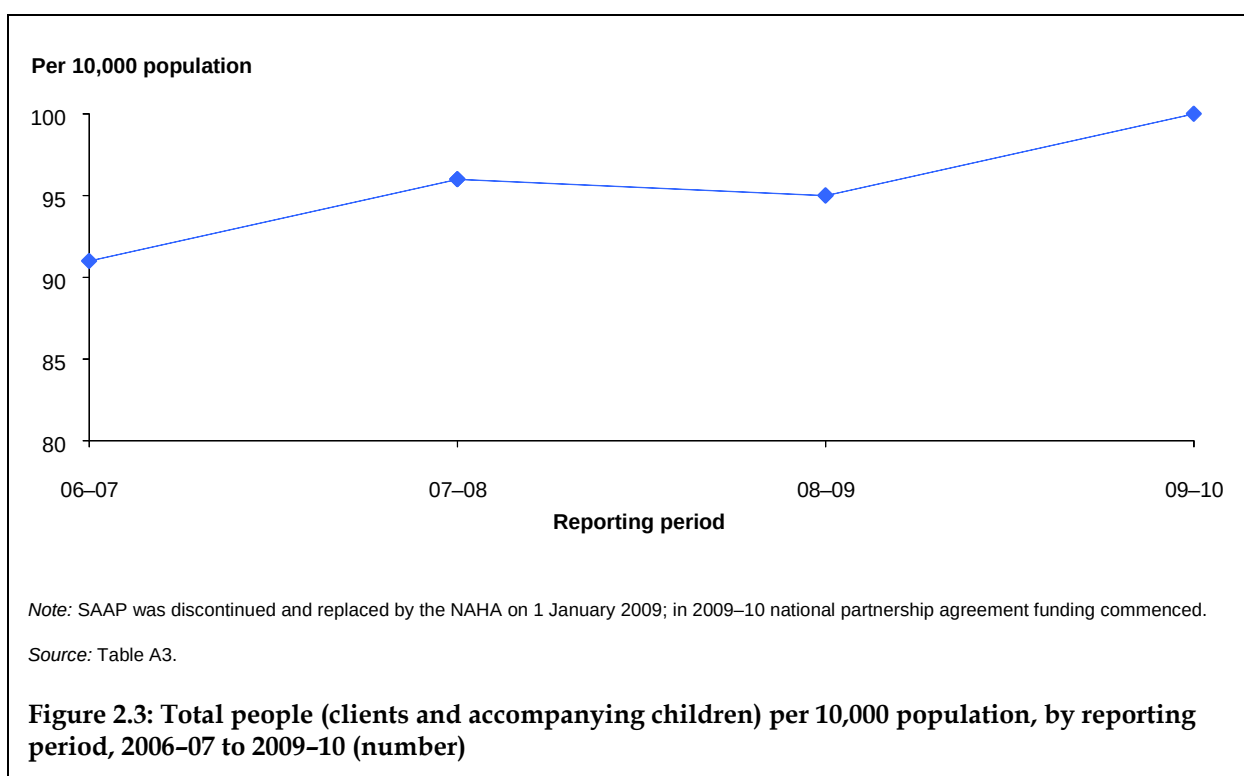


The rate of Australians using specialist homelessness services has also generally increased – from 91 per 10,000 Australians in 2006–07 (or 1 in 110 people) to 100 per 10,000 in 2009–10 (or 1 in 100 people) (Figure 2.3).

An increase or decrease in the periods of support, the number of people supported, or in the rate of use of services does not necessarily indicate an increase or decrease in the number of Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Consideration needs to be given to

² Accommodation data are reported differently in Victoria to other jurisdictions (see Box 1.1). If Victoria is excluded from the calculations, the proportion of support periods with accommodation was 38%.

factors such as the level of funding, the number of agencies operating and the scope of government programs, as these changes may instead reflect an expansion or reduction in the level of, and access to, services available.



3 Who was supported?

This chapter describes the users of specialist homelessness services, including their demographic characteristics and rate of service use.

The data show that:

- people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are from diverse sections of the community
- young women and children are significant users of specialist homelessness services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use services at much higher rates than non-Indigenous people.

Box 3.1: Clients and accompanying children

The SAAP NDC collects information on people who present to government-funded specialist homelessness agencies. This includes adults and children who present independently (clients) as well as children who present as part of a family group (accompanying children). See the appendixes to this report for more detail (AIHW 2011i).

Many children accompanying clients do not receive direct service provision (in around 49% of their periods of support). That is, the child may have indirectly benefited from the support provided to the family as a whole but no particular types of support were required, provided or referred on specifically for that child.

3.1 Age and sex

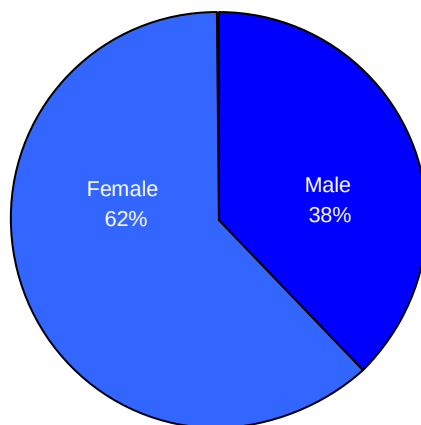
Clients

In 2009–10, there were more female (62%) than male clients (38%) of specialist homelessness agencies (Figure 3.1).

The average (mean) age of all clients was 32 years. Female clients were on average slightly younger than male clients – the average age of female clients was 31 years and the average age of male clients was 34 years (Table A6).

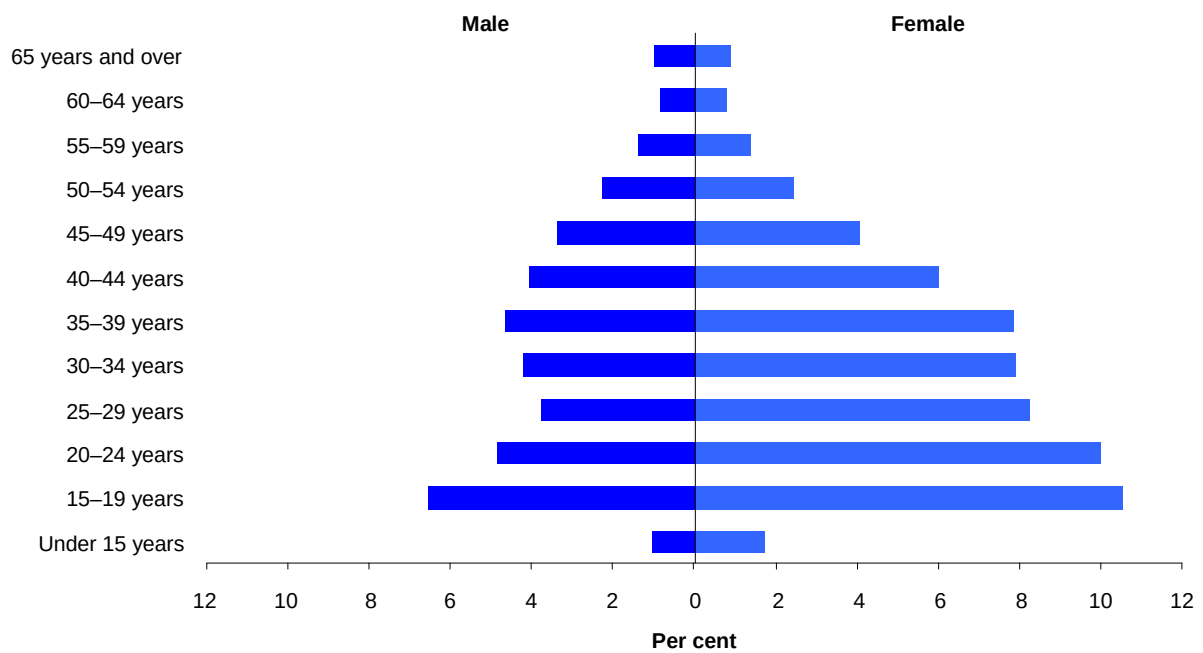
Young people, especially young females, were generally the most likely group to use specialist homelessness services (Table A7). The highest rate of use by any age group was by 15–19 year-olds, with 1 in every 65 Australians aged 15–19 years becoming a client (or 154 per 10,000 people). The highest rate of use by any one age and sex group was by female clients aged 15–19 years (1 in 51 or 197 per 10,000 people).

People aged 65 years and over were the least likely to use specialist homelessness services (1 in every 1,111 or 9 per 10,000 people).



Source: Table A6.

Figure 3.1: Clients, by sex, 2009-10 (per cent)

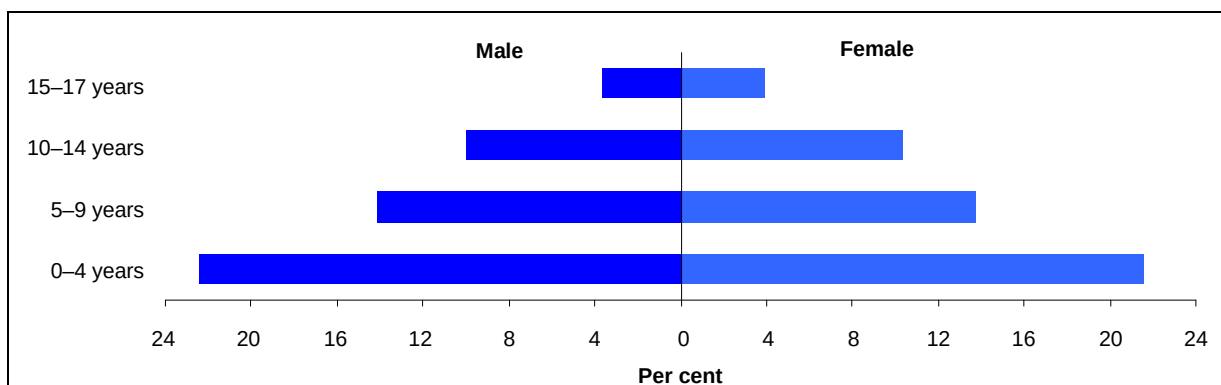


Source: Table A6.

Figure 3.2: Clients, by age and sex, 2009-10 (percentage of all clients)

Accompanying children

There was little difference reported in the sex of accompanying children (Figure 3.3). The average (mean) age of accompanying children was 6 years (Table A8).



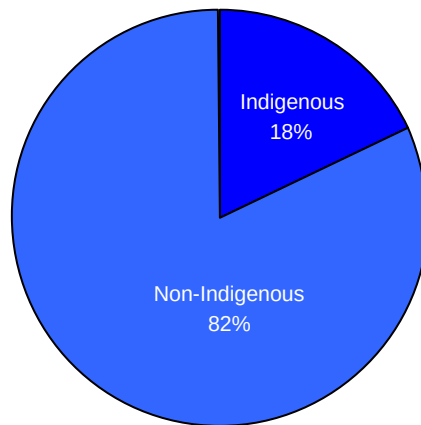
Source: Table A8.

Figure 3.3: Accompanying children, by age and sex, 2009–10 (percentage of all accompanying children)

One in every 60 children aged 0–17 years in the general Australian population accompanied a parent or guardian to a specialist homelessness agency (or 166 in every 10,000) (Table A9). Those aged 0–4 years had a particularly high rate, with 1 in every 38 children in this age bracket accompanying a client (or 260 per 10,000).

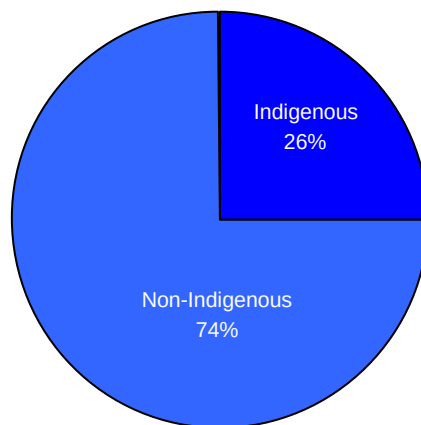
3.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The majority of clients and their accompanying children were non-Indigenous (82% of clients and 74% of accompanying children) (figures 3.4 and 3.5). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were, however, over-represented relative to their population size – 18% of clients aged 10 years and over were reported to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared with around 2% of the Australian population; and 26% of accompanying children were Indigenous compared with around 5% of the Australian population aged 17 years and under (ABS 2009).



Source: Table A10.

Figure 3.4: Clients, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2009–10 (per cent)



Source: Table A11.

Figure 3.5: Accompanying children, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2009–10 (per cent)

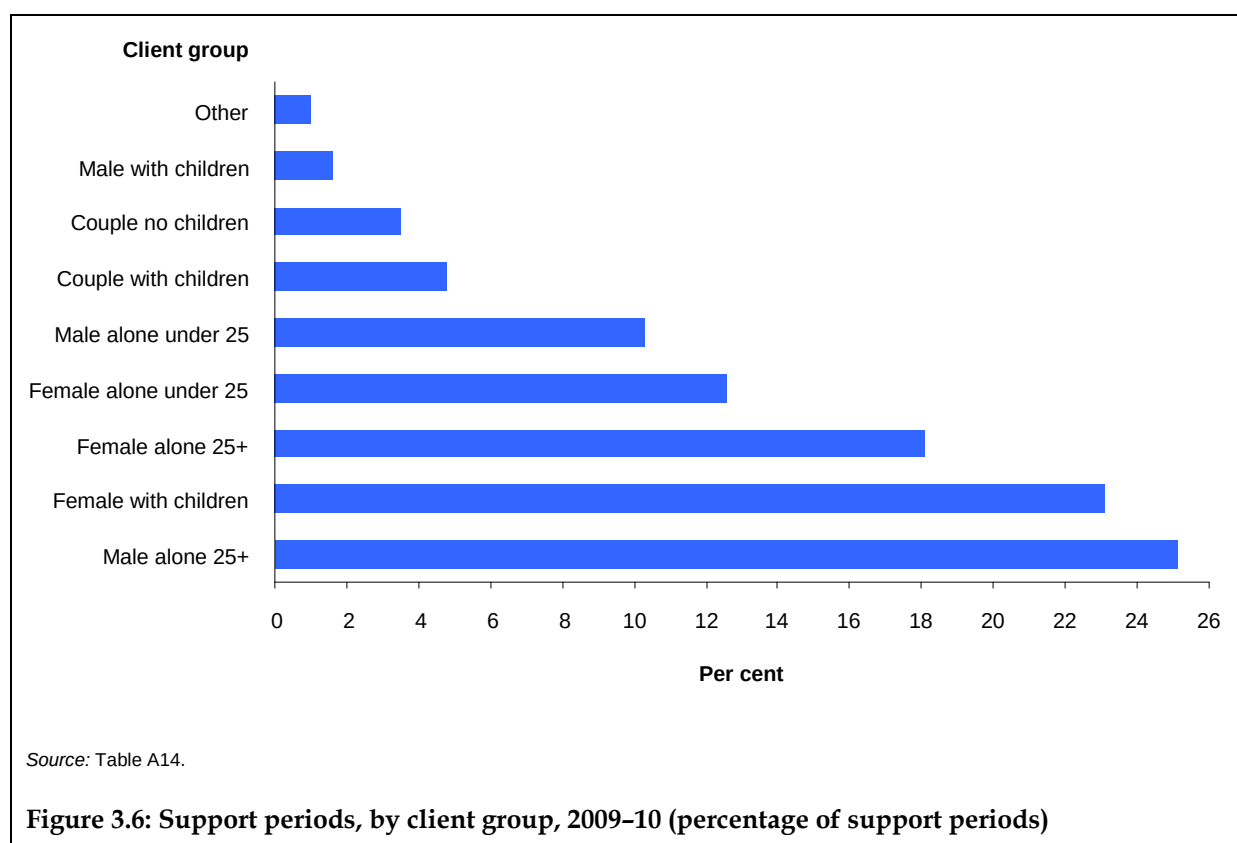
3.3 Country of birth

The vast majority of clients and accompanying children were born in Australia (84% of clients and 94% of accompanying children) (tables A12 and A13). This was higher than in the general Australian population, of which around 73% were Australian-born (ABS 2010b:45).

3.4 Client groups

This section contains information on the client groups to which a person who received assistance belongs (see Box 4.1). Client groups are classified according to the relationship the client has to the people with whom they are supported. Clients may have more than one support period during a reporting year (see Box 2.1). Because a client may present with different people in each support period, data in this section relate to support periods rather than to clients.

According to the number of support periods, males aged 25 years and over who presented alone or with an unrelated person and women with children were the largest groups of users of specialist homelessness agencies (Figure 3.6). Nationally, one-quarter (25%) of support periods were provided to unaccompanied males aged 25 years and over, and 23% were provided to female clients with children.



3.5 Changes over time

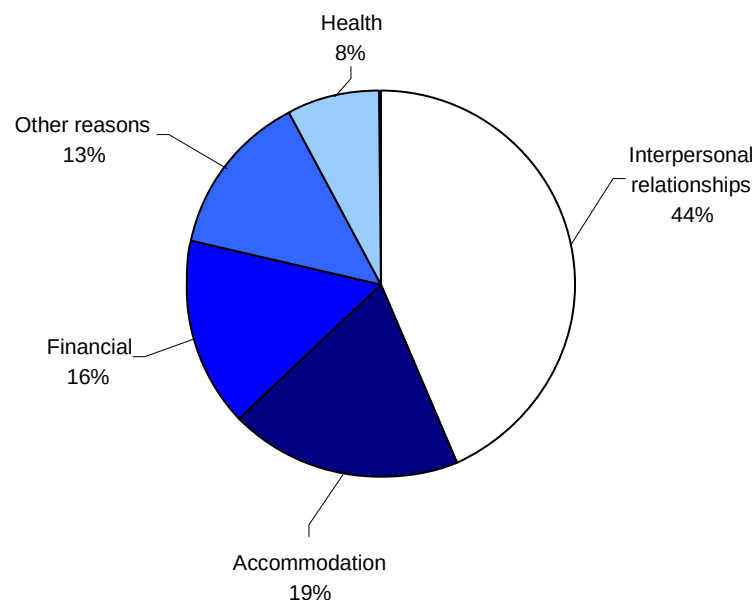
In recent years there has been little overall change in the demographic profile of the people supported by government-funded specialist homelessness agencies (tables A6–A14). Across the years:

- the majority of clients were female
- the median age of clients remained relatively steady. There was, however, a slight increase in the age of clients in 2009–10 – the median age of all clients increased from 30 years in 2008–09 to 31 years in 2009–10; from 32 years to 33 years for male clients; and from 29 years to 30 years for female clients
- the group most likely to become a client were young people aged 15–19 years, particularly young women in this age bracket. Accompanying children also had a high rate of use relative to their population size
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were over-represented relative to their population size.

4 Why do people seek support?

The most common broad main reasons why people sought support were:

- interpersonal relationships issues (44%) – such as domestic or family violence (22%) and the breakdown of a relationship with a family member, spouse or partner (10%) (Figure 4.1 and Table A15)
- accommodation related issues (19%) – such as being evicted or otherwise made to leave existing accommodation (7%) or having their usual accommodation become unavailable (7%)
- financial issues (16%) – such as having insufficient money to pay for accommodation, food, bills or other essentials (9%) or budgeting problems (5%).



Source: Table A15.

Figure 4.1: Broad main reason for seeking assistance, 2009-10 (percentage of support periods)

4.1 Client group

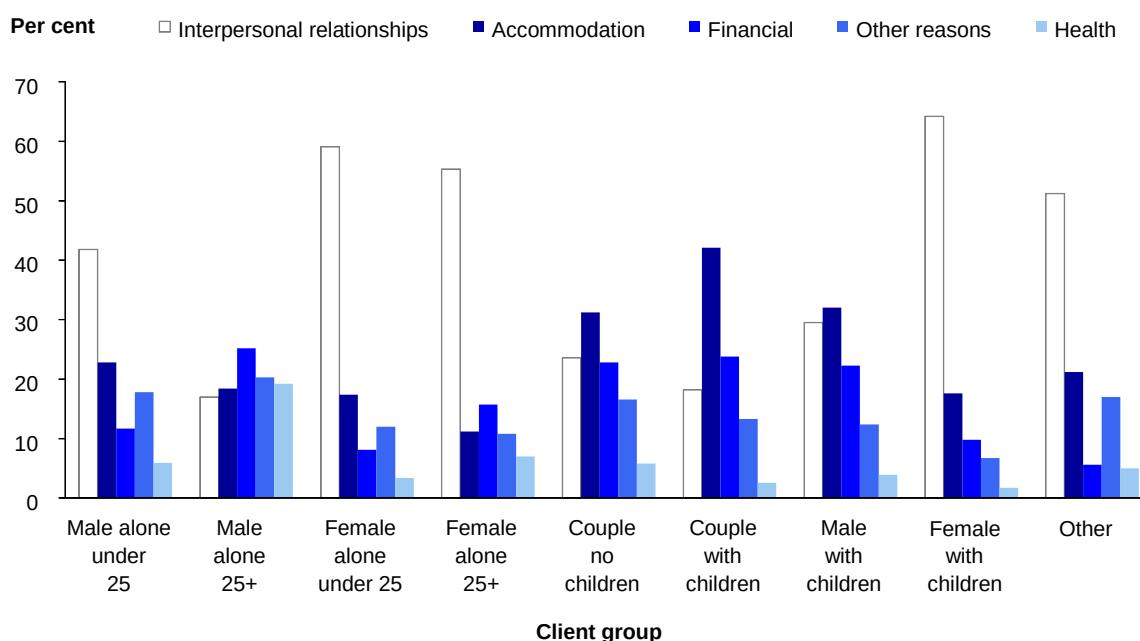
As presented in Chapter 3, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness come from diverse sections of the community. As such their reasons for seeking assistance can vary considerably. This section looks at these variations in terms of client group (see Box 4.1 and Table A16).

Box 4.1: Client group

Client groups are classified according to the relationship the client has to the people with whom they are supported and should not be confused with their family type (see AIHW 2005 and AIHW 2011i:Appendix 5). For example, if a married woman with children is escaping a violent situation and is supported by an agency without her partner, she would be classified as a female with children, not as a couple; and a 17 year-old male presenting with a group of friends would be classified as a person presenting 'alone or with an unrelated person(s)' (sometimes referred to as an unaccompanied client).

The 'other' client group is used to record all other groups of related individuals, such as siblings and multigenerational families, who are supported together.

Clients may have more than one period of support during a reporting year (see Box 2.1). Because the reasons they seek support may vary each time, analyses in this chapter relate to support periods rather than to clients.



Source: Table A16.

Figure 4.2: Broad main reason for seeking assistance, by client group, 2009-10 (percentage of support periods)

Single people without children

Unaccompanied young people aged under 25 years commonly sought assistance because of interpersonal relationship issues, particularly the breakdown of relationships with a family member or with a spouse or partner, followed by accommodation issues (Figure 4.2 and Table A16). Young females sought assistance because of interpersonal relationship issues in 59% of their support periods and because of accommodation issues in 17%. Young males sought assistance because of interpersonal relationship issues in 42% of their support periods and because of accommodation issues in 23%.

Single women aged 25 years and over most commonly sought assistance because of interpersonal relationship issues (55%), predominantly related to domestic or family violence (40%). This was followed by financial reasons (16%).

In contrast, single men aged 25 years and over most commonly reported financial (25%), health (19%) or accommodation (17%) related reasons. In particular, for these older males, drug, alcohol or substance use was reported in a far higher proportion of cases than for other client groups (11% compared with between 1% and 3% for the other client groups).

Single parents

Women with children most often cited interpersonal relationship issues as their main reason for seeking assistance (in 64% of their support periods) – in particular domestic or family violence (48%) – followed by accommodation issues (18%) (Figure 4.2 and Table A16).

Men with children commonly reported either accommodation issues (32%), such as being evicted or having their previous accommodation end, or interpersonal relationship issues (29%), such as relationship or family breakdown, as their main reasons for seeking assistance.

Couples

For couples, accommodation issues was the most frequent broad reason for seeking assistance followed by financial reasons (Figure 4.2 and Table A16). Accommodation issues were reported in 42% of support periods for couples with children and in 31% for couples without children, while financial reasons were reported in 24% and 23%, respectively.

4.2 Changes over time

There has been little change in recent years in the broad main reasons clients seek support (Table A15). The predominant reason across all years has been interpersonal relationship issues, followed by accommodation and financial issues. This is influenced by the large number of women who access specialist homelessness services (see Chapter 3).

5 For how long were people supported?

In this chapter, the lengths of support and accommodation for clients are examined. The data show that people in family groups generally have longer periods of support and accommodation than people who present on their own or with unrelated people.

Box 5.1: Lengths of support and accommodation

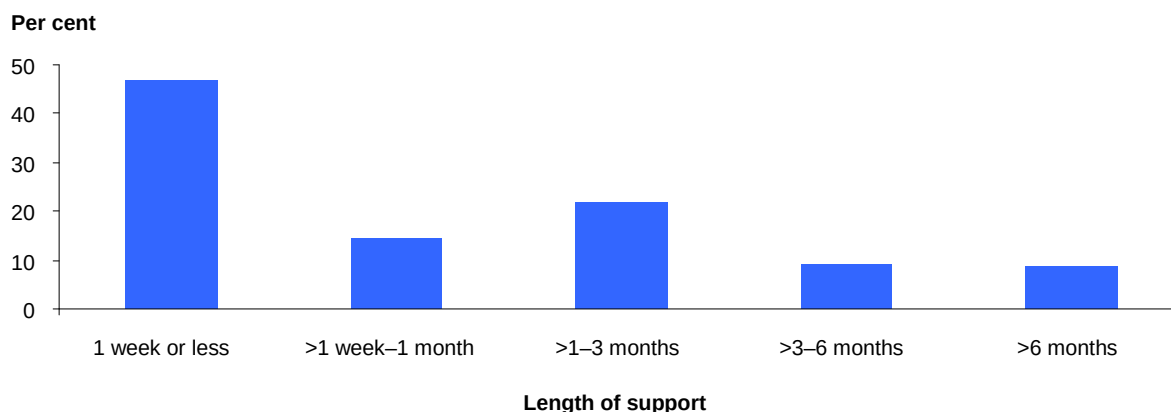
The analysis in this chapter is based on closed support periods only; that is, support periods that finished on or before the end of the reporting year. In 2009–10, there were an estimated 188,400 closed support periods; and 54,700 (or 29%) of these closed support periods included a period of specialist homelessness accommodation.

It is important to note that, when accommodated, a client may be accommodated for all or only some of the total time they were supported. Further, a client may have more than one period of accommodation within a period of support.

For definitions and counting rules, see Appendix 5 to this report.

5.1 Length of support

Close to half of all support periods were for periods of less than 1 week (47%) (Figure 5.1). On average, clients were supported for 64 days (Table A17). Because means are affected much more than medians by a small number of large values, the mean (average) number of days of support is considerably longer than the median of 11 days.

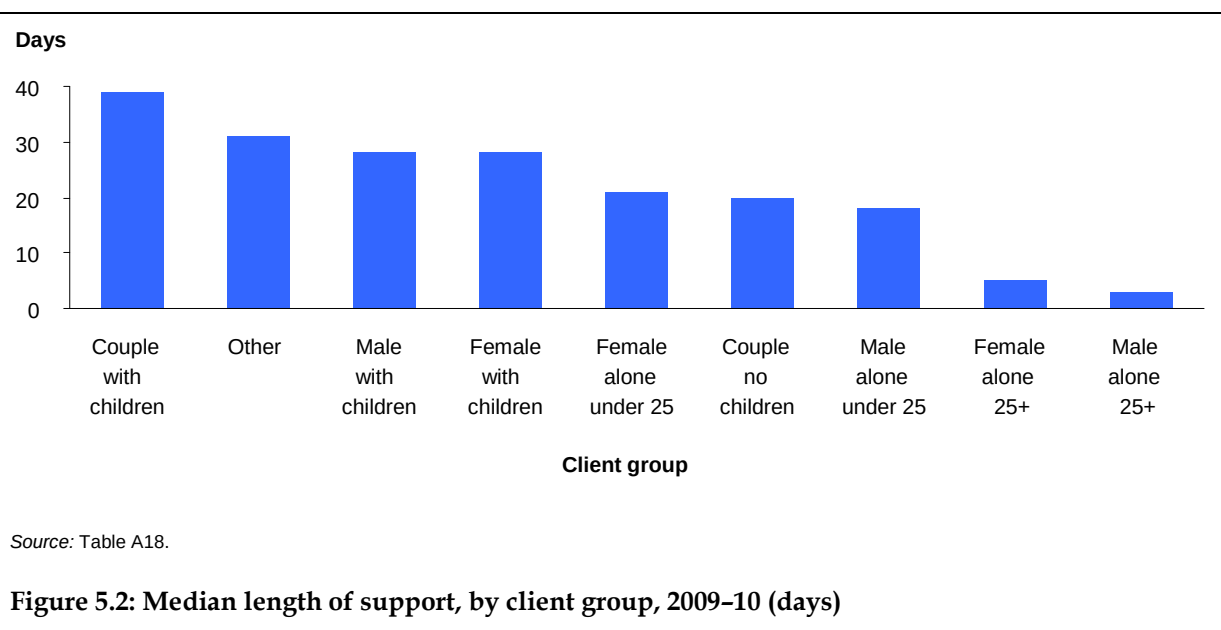


Source: Table A17.

Figure 5.1: Length of support, 2009–10 (percentage of closed support periods)

Client group

People in family groups tended to have longer periods of support than clients who presented alone or with unrelated people (Figure 5.2; see also Box 4.1). Single men and women aged 25 years and over, in particular, were generally supported for relatively short periods.



5.2 Length of accommodation³

Forty per cent of accommodation periods were for less than 1 week (Figure 5.3). The average (mean) length of accommodation nationally was 60 days; while the median length of accommodation was 14 days (Table A19).⁴

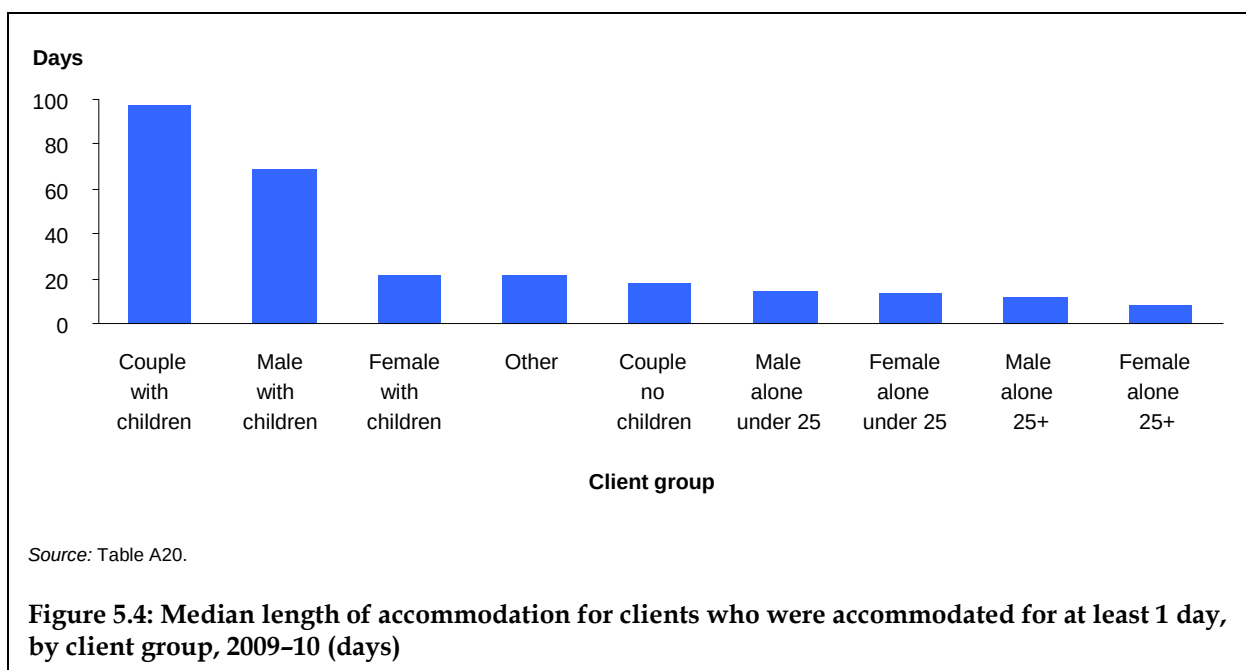
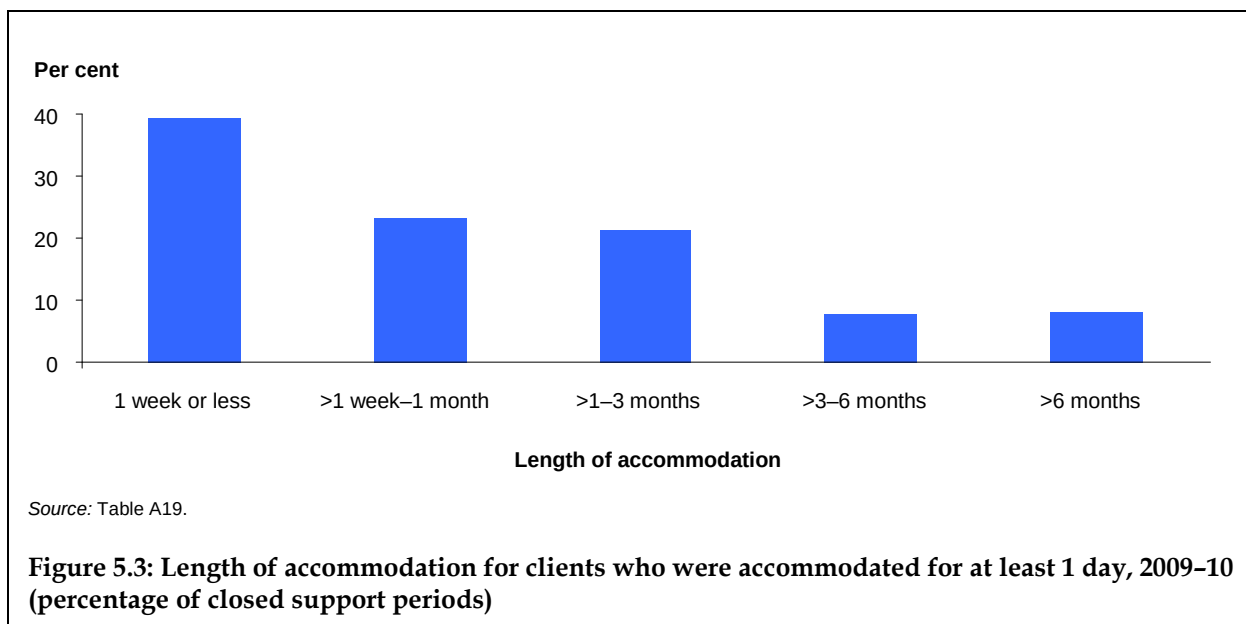
Client group

Family groups were generally accommodated for longer periods than clients who presented alone or with unrelated people (Figure 5.4; see also Box 4.1).

Of the family groups, men with children and couples with children generally had longer periods of accommodation than women with children.

³ For analysis purposes, accommodation starting and ending on the same day has been excluded from this section.

⁴ Accommodation data are reported differently in Victoria to other jurisdictions (see Box 1.1). If Victoria is excluded from the calculations, the national average (mean) length of accommodation was 57 days and the median length of accommodation was 13 days.



5.3 Changes over time

The overall lengths of both support and accommodation have generally increased in recent years (tables A17 and A19). These increases are likely to reflect shifts in policy that place more emphasis on meeting the wider needs of clients and their accompanying children, with a particular focus on case management and pre- and post-crisis support. These policies are aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by improving early intervention strategies for those at risk of homelessness to stop them from becoming homeless; by better managing the needs of clients while they are in the system; and by providing improved follow-up support to reduce the reoccurrence of homelessness. This has resulted in an expansion in the scope of programs to include more people at risk of homelessness as well as in an increase in the length of time that clients are supported.

The length of accommodation may also have been influenced by limitations on the availability of more secure and sustainable accommodation. For example, over recent years the demand for low cost accommodation, including social housing, has generally outstripped the supply (AIHW 2009). This is evidenced by the declining vacancy rates and long waiting lists in all aspects of social housing as well as in the private rental market. In this way, some clients may be unable to exit specialist homelessness accommodation because there is no appropriate alternative accommodation available to them.

6 What support was needed and were these needs met?

Agencies were able to meet the needs of clients and accompanying children in the majority of cases (see Box 6.1; tables A23 and A26). Basic support – such as meals and shower facilities – were the most likely type of support to be provided directly. Specialist services – such as physical or intellectual disability services – were the least likely type of support to be provided directly, and the most likely type to be referred on. Specialist services were also the group of services most likely to remain unmet at the completion of support.

Box 6.1: Meeting the needs of clients and accompanying children

In the SAAP NDC Client Collection, assessing the ability of agencies to meet the needs of their clients and accompanying children is measured by whether the agency worker indicated that a particular type of support was required and then whether that support was able to be provided or formally referred on. When support cannot be provided directly, an agency's ability to refer clients on to other appropriate service providers assumes added importance. For this reason, the need for a particular type of support is considered to be met if the support could be provided directly by the agency or referred on.

For some of the required support, however, it might not be possible either to provide the support directly or to refer the person on, which results in an unmet need.

The number of times a type of support was required, provided, referred or remained unmet is not collected: only that the support type was required, provided, referred or unmet sometime during the support period. For example, a client may have required a meal three times within a support period, but the SAAP NDC Client Collection only shows that a meal was required sometime during the client's support, not that it was required three times. Further, a type of support is only reported as unmet if it was needed and never provided or referred throughout the entire period of support. If, for example, a support type was needed three times but only able to be provided once, it is reported as provided.

Support needs are reported by the agency workers. These needs usually reflect the reasons why people sought support. However, this is not always the case. For example, a person may be at risk of losing their accommodation because of mental health issues. Support would be expected to involve assistance around their mental health issues but would also likely involve other more general tenancy related support.

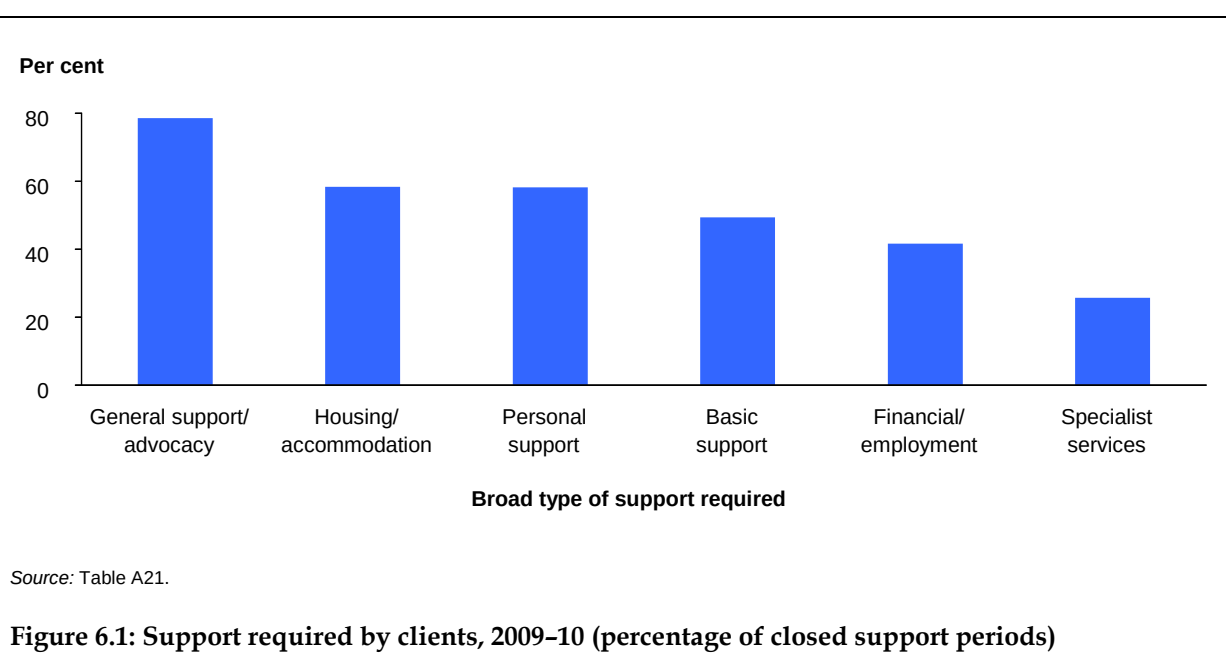
Whether or not the needs of a client or accompanying child have been met can only be fully measured after the support period has ended. It is therefore necessary to look at closed support periods, that is, support periods that finished on or before the end of the reporting year, when examining the provision of required support.

6.1 Clients

Support required

At the broad level, the most commonly required type of support was general support or advocacy (needed in 78% of closed support periods) (Figure 6.1 and Table A21). This category includes 'Advice or information' (needed in 71% of closed support periods), which is often used to record generic advice or information given to a client around their needs as identified by the agency worker.

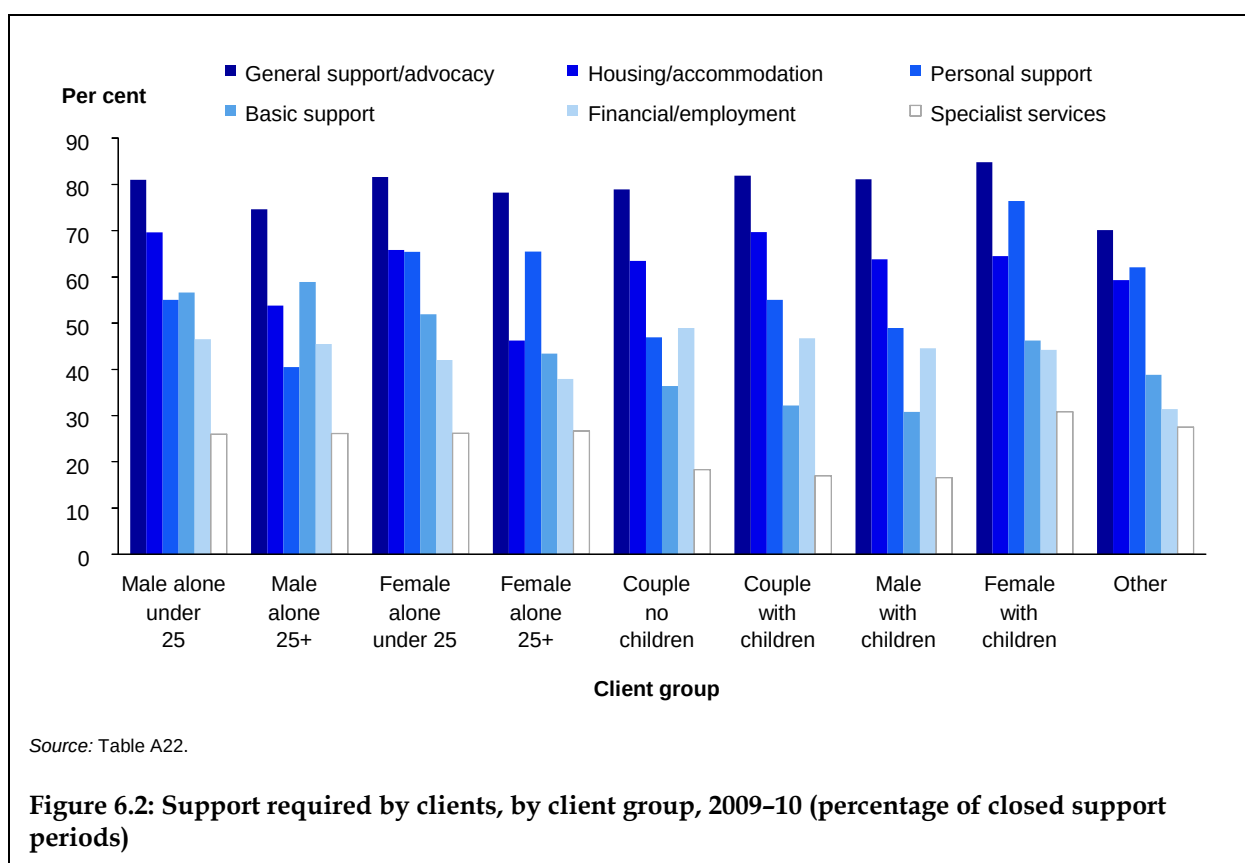
General support or advocacy was followed by housing or accommodation-related support (required in 58% of closed support periods)⁵, personal support (58%), basic support (49%), and financial or employment services (42%). Specialist services were required least (26%).



Client group

The people supported by specialist homelessness agencies come from diverse sections of the community and have a wide range of needs (see Chapter 3 and Box 4.1). As such, it is not surprising that their requirements in relation to support are also diverse. Illustrating this, the types of support people required varied according to their client group (Figure 6.2 and Table A22). These requirements generally aligned with the reasons why people sought assistance in the first place (see also Chapter 4 on why people seek support).

⁵ Accommodation data are reported differently in Victoria to other jurisdictions (see Box 1.1). If Victoria is excluded from the calculations, the percentage of closed support periods in which 'SAAP/CAP accommodation' was required was 47% nationally.



Single people without children

Unaccompanied young people aged under 25 years often sought assistance because of the breakdown of a family or other relationship. This group required family or relationship support more often than other client groups. Young females required incest or sexual assault support more often than any other group. Unaccompanied young people also required assistance to obtain or maintain a government allowance and assistance with employment and training more often than the other client groups.

Single men aged 25 years and over commonly sought assistance because of financial or health related issues. Reflecting this, they needed financial assistance or material aid in a high proportion of cases. This group also more often required support related to problematic drug, alcohol or substance use and health or medical services when compared with the other client groups. They generally had a lower requirement for personal support services, with the exception of assistance with problem gambling.

Interestingly, although seeking assistance primarily because of problematic drug, alcohol or substance use was not as commonly reported for unaccompanied young men, they required assistance with drug or alcohol support or intervention in roughly the same proportion of cases as their older counterparts. Young single men aged under 25 years also had a high requirement for specialist homelessness accommodation and assistance to obtain or maintain short- or medium-term accommodation when compared with other client groups.

Single women aged 25 years and over often sought support because of domestic or family violence. Linked with this, they had a high requirement for personal support services, particularly support related to domestic or family violence.

Single parents

Single women with children commonly sought assistance because of domestic or family violence. Not surprisingly then, they often required personal support services, particularly support related to domestic or family violence. They also had a higher requirement for specialist counselling services compared with the other client groups.

Single men with children commonly reported accommodation and interpersonal issues as their main reasons for seeking assistance. Reflecting this they had a relatively high requirement for housing and accommodation related services, particularly assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing. The most common type of personal support required by males with children was emotional support.

Couples

Couples often sought assistance because of financial and accommodation related issues. Reflecting this, they often required financial assistance or material aid; had a relatively high need for employment and training assistance; and had a high requirement for assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing when compared with the other client groups.

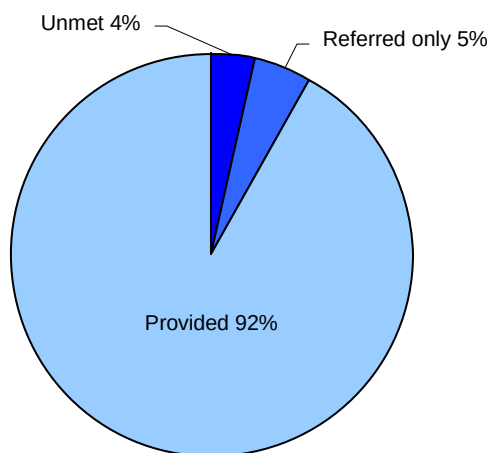
Support provision

An inability to provide a particular type of support can have a significant impact on the client requiring it. Specialist homelessness agencies, however, cannot provide the entire homelessness response directly. When support cannot be provided directly, an agency's ability to refer clients on to other appropriate service providers assumes added importance. For this reason, the need for a particular type of support is considered to be met if the support could be provided directly by the agency or referred on.

Overall, agencies were able to meet the needs of clients in the majority of cases (Figure 6.3). Agencies directly provided support or referred clients on to other organisations in 96% of cases (provided directly in 92% and referred on in 5%).

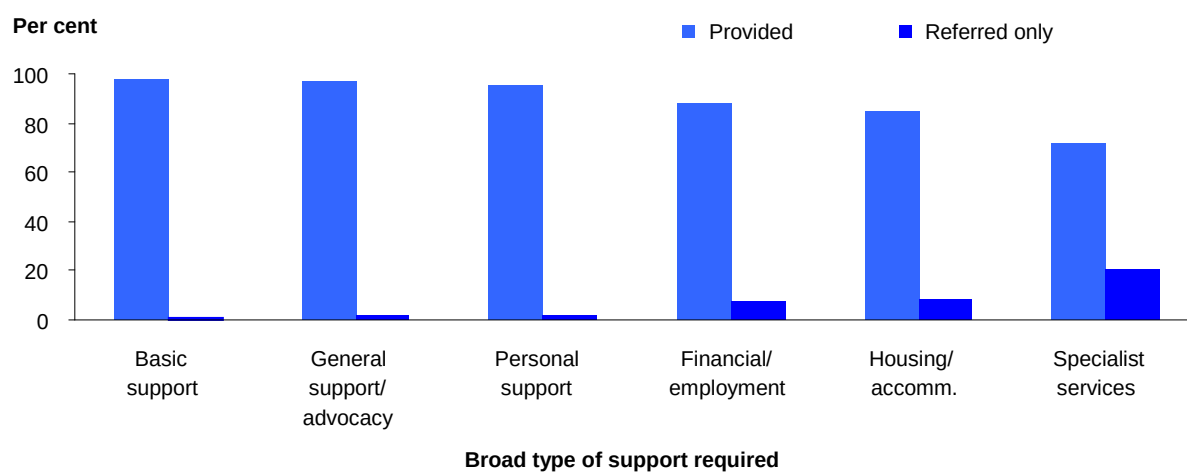
The broad type of support most likely to be met was basic support (99%) (derived from Table A23). Specialist services were the least likely to be met (92%).

It is important to note that, as the level of direct service provision fell, referrals generally increased so clients received far more referrals for specialist services than other types of support (21%, compared with 1% for basic support services) (Figure 6.4).



Source: Table A23.

Figure 6.3: Provision of support to clients, 2009-10 (percentage of distinct types of support required in closed support periods)

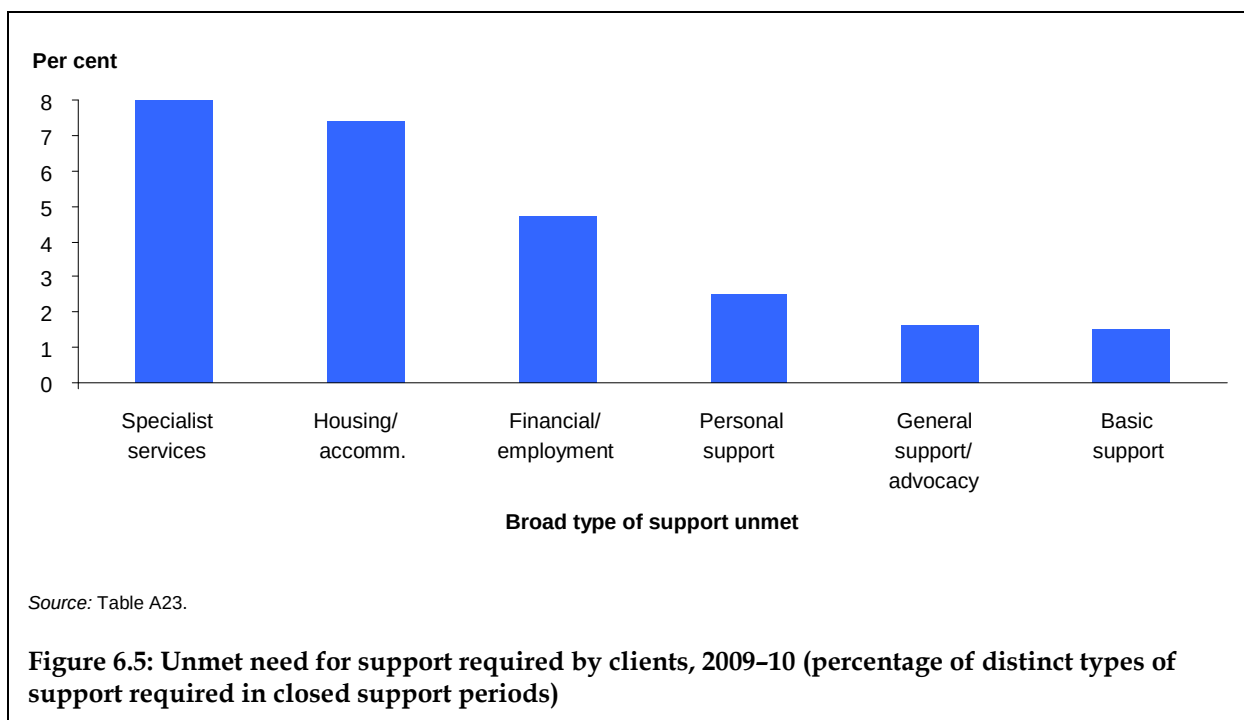


Source: Table A23.

Figure 6.4: Provision and referral of broad types of support required by clients, 2009-10 (percentage of distinct types of support required in closed support periods)

Unmet need

Overall, client need for specific types of support remained unmet in 4% of cases (Table A23). Specialist services were the most common broad type of support to remain unmet, followed by housing and accommodation services (in 8% and 7% of cases, respectively) (Figure 6.5).



6.2 Accompanying children

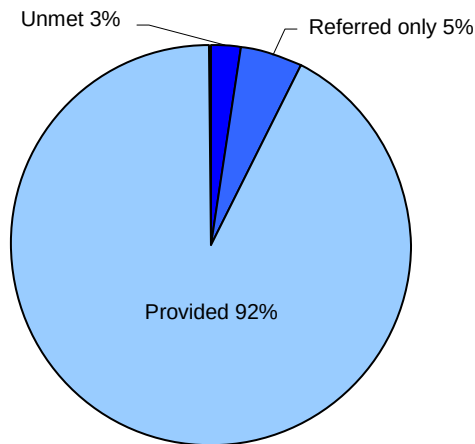
Support required

At the broad level, accompanying children most often required accommodation-related support ('SAAP/CAP accommodation') (in 60% of closed accompanying child support periods) (Table A25). Personal support (20%) and specialist services (21%) were required the least.

Support provision

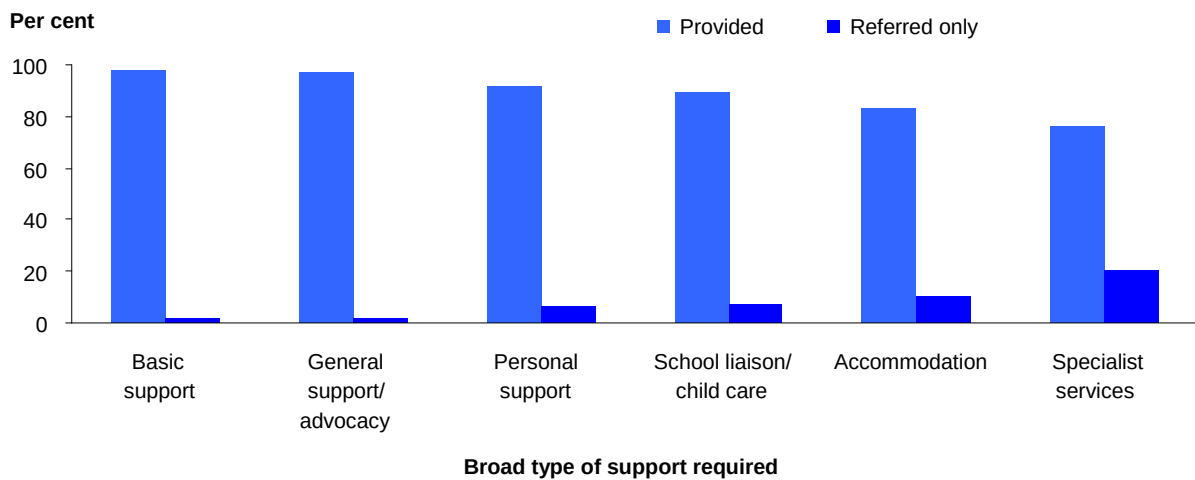
Overall, agencies were able to meet the needs of accompanying children in the majority of cases (Figure 6.6). Agencies directly provided the required support in 92% of cases and referred the child on for a further 5%, resulting in 97% of support requirements being met in some way by the completion of support.

Basic support was the broad type of support most often met (99%) (Table A26).



Source: Table A26.

Figure 6.6: Provision of support to accompanying children, 2009–10 (percentage of distinct types of support required in closed accompanying child support periods)

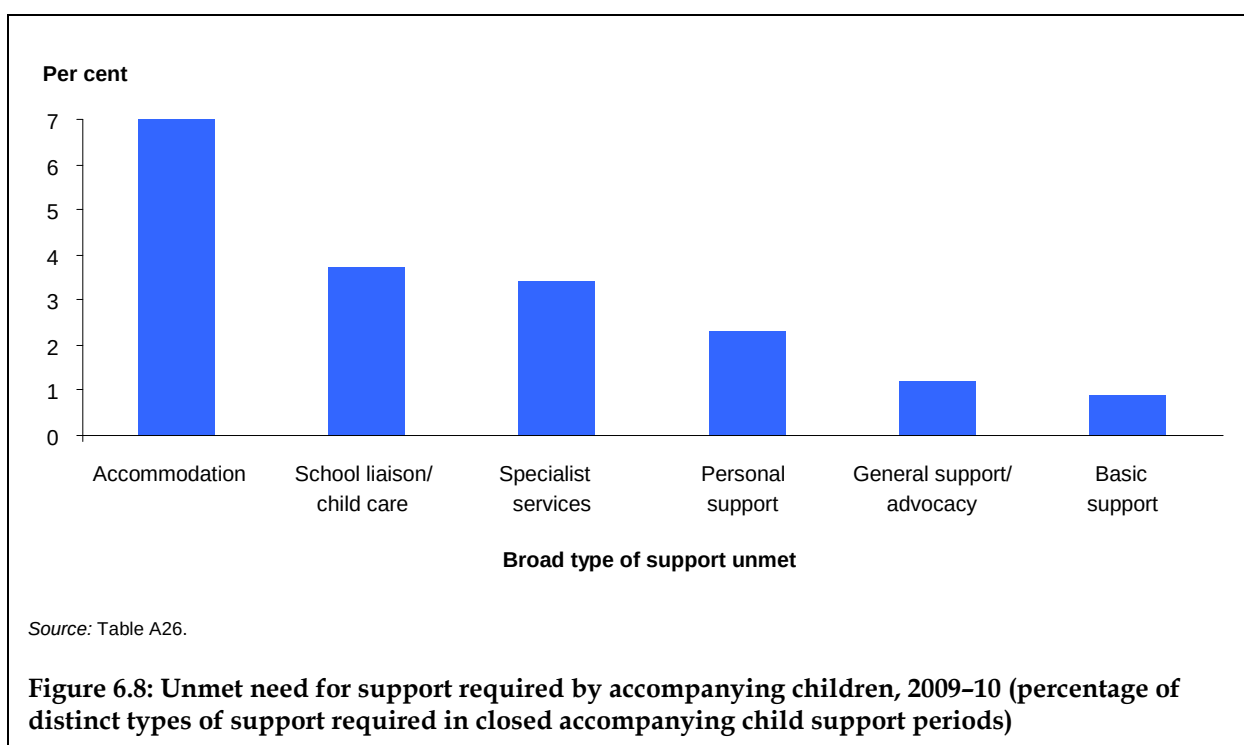


Source: Table A26.

Figure 6.7: Provision and referral of broad types of support required by accompanying children, 2009–10 (percentage of distinct types of support required in closed accompanying child support periods)

Unmet need

Overall, accompanying children's need for specific types of support remained unmet in 3% of cases (Table A26). The need for specialist homelessness accommodation remained unmet the most often (in 7% of cases) (Figure 6.8).



6.3 Changes over time

Over time, there has been a decrease in the reported need for government-funded specialist homelessness accommodation (from 45% of closed support periods in 2006–07 to 35% in 2009–10)⁶ (Table A21). This decrease can be partly explained by the increased emphasis in recent policies on pre-crisis intervention and post-crisis transitional support. These policies have led to an increase in the provision of support-only services to prevent people at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless in the first place and to assist those people who have previously been homeless from falling back into homelessness. In line with this there has been an increase in the need for assistance to obtain or maintain other accommodation, particularly short-term accommodation and independent housing – the need for assistance to obtain or maintain short-term accommodation increased from 14% in 2006–07 to 19% in 2009–10; and the need to obtain or maintain independent accommodation increased from 22% in 2006–07 to 25% in 2009–10.

Across years, the majority of requested services were able to be either provided directly or referred on by the time the client completed support (tables A23–A27). The proportion has remained relatively steady for all years since 2006–07.

⁶ Accommodation data are reported differently in Victoria to other jurisdictions (see Box 1.1). If Victoria is excluded from the calculations, the proportion of support periods in which specialist homelessness accommodation was required decreased from 58% in 2006–07 to 51% in 2007–08 and 2008–09 before decreasing to 47% in 2009–10.

7 What happened after support?

This chapter details changes in clients' circumstances immediately following the provision of support. Generally, the immediate circumstances of clients had improved by the completion of support. This was particularly the case for clients who specifically required assistance with income, employment and housing; and for those who were supported for longer periods.

Box 7.1: Measuring client outcomes

The data collected in the SAAP NDC Client Collection describe only immediate outcomes and therefore do not provide information on the longer term situation of the client. It is also important to note that the achievement of client goals does not depend on the intervention of agencies alone—a complex interplay of policies and programs relating to housing and community services, as well as individuals' personal circumstances, will influence outcomes for clients.

Outcome data relate to clients only. Data are not collected on the circumstances of accompanying children before or after support.

Because outcomes can only be measured once a client has left support, closed support periods—that is, support periods that finished on or before the end of the reporting year—are used as the basis for analysis.

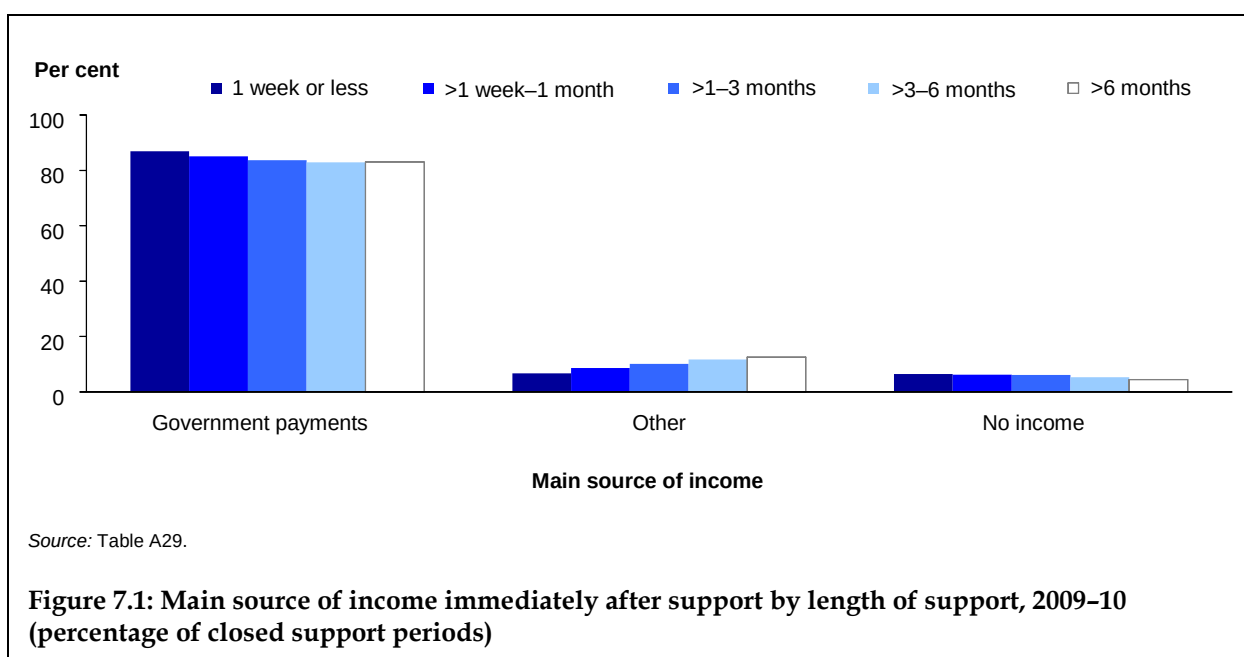
For some outcome data there are relatively high proportions where client circumstances following support were not known or missing.

7.1 Income

In the majority of cases, clients were recipients of a government payment both before and after support (in 83% of closed support periods immediately before support and 85% after) (Table A28).

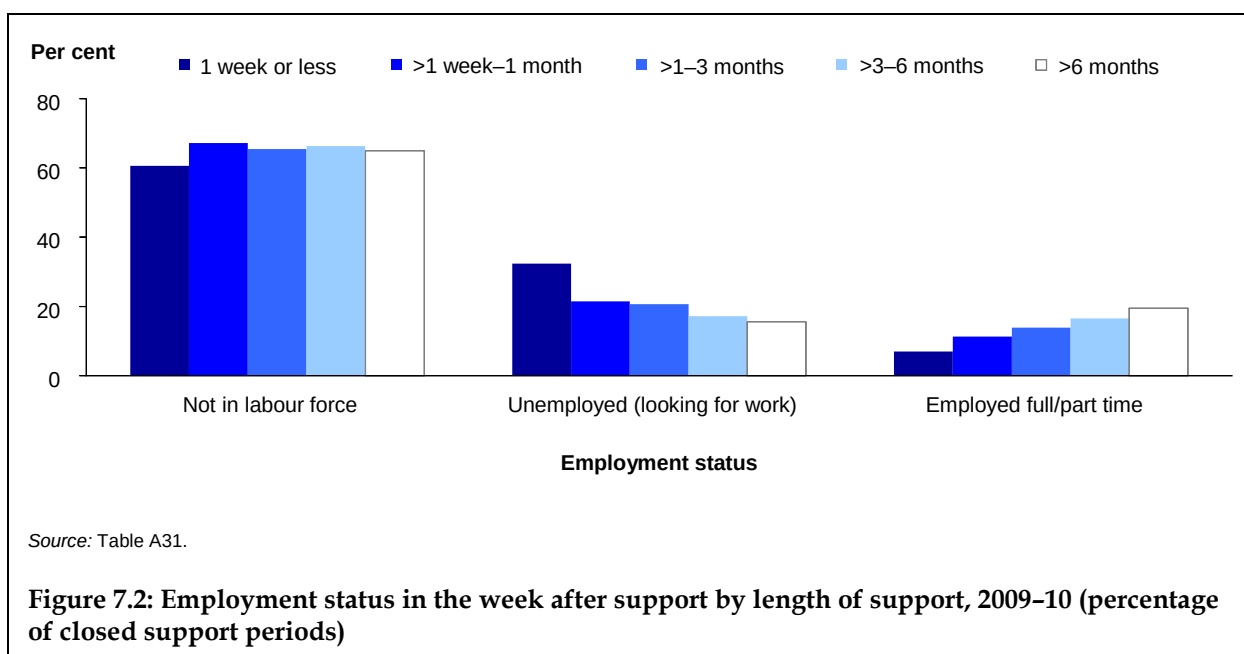
Although across all closed support periods clients' main source of income did not vary much from before to after support, when clients specifically required assistance to obtain or maintain a government pension or benefit, there was a marked improvement. After support, these clients were receiving a government payment in 84% of closed support periods compared with 74% before support. Consequently, the proportion of closed support periods in which these clients had no income dropped from 18% before support to 8% after support. The proportion with 'other' sources of income remained relatively unchanged, at 8% before support and 9% after.

In general, the longer a client was supported, the more likely they were to have a source of income after they exited support (Figure 7.1).



7.2 Employment

The majority of clients were not in paid employment (not in the labour force or unemployed and looking for work) on entry to and exit from support (in 91% of closed support periods before support and 89% after) (derived from Table A30).



When examined for all closed support periods, there were only small changes in the employment profile of clients from before support to after support. However, among those clients who specifically required assistance in the area of employment and training during their period of support, there was a marked increase in the proportion in paid work

following support. These clients were employed, either full time or part time, following 21% of closed support periods: nearly double the 11% before support.

In general, the longer a client was supported, the more likely they were to be employed, either full time or part time, after exiting support (Figure 7.2).

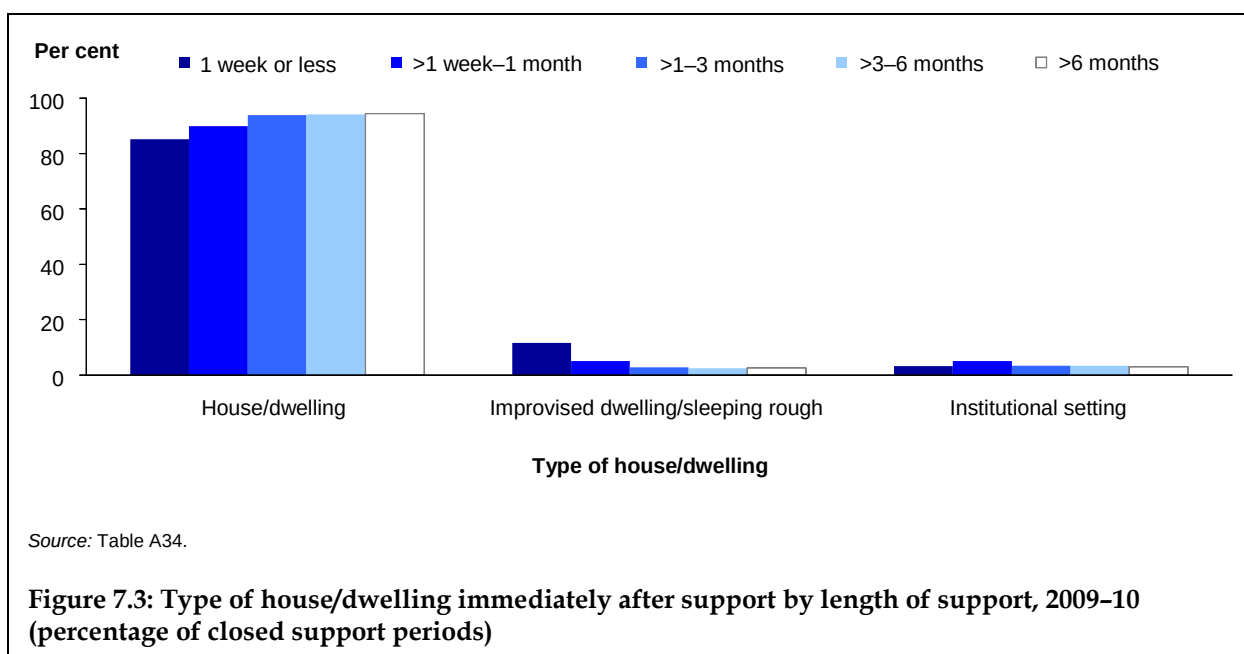
7.3 Housing

Quantifying a 'positive' housing outcome for such a diverse population is difficult, but it is generally accepted that, for most people, having security of dwelling tenure is positive.

Generally, positive housing outcomes were reported following support. In the majority of closed support periods, clients were living in a house or other dwelling and the majority had tenure both before and after support (tables A32 and A33). These proportions increased following support, particularly for those who specifically required assistance to obtain or maintain independent housing.

In 12% of closed support periods, clients were living in an improvised dwelling or sleeping rough before support. This decreased to 7% after support. When clients specifically required assistance with obtaining or maintaining independent housing, the proportion of closed support periods in which clients were living in an improvised dwelling or sleeping rough decreased from 8% of closed support periods before support to 2% after support.

In general, the longer a client was supported, the more likely they were to have a positive housing outcome after exiting support (Figure 7.3 and Table A35).



7.4 Living situation

By the time support had finished, the living arrangements for some clients had changed considerably. The most common situation both before and after support was living alone; however, the proportion had increased on exit (Table A36). There was also an increase after support in the proportion living alone with children. In contrast, there was a decrease in the proportion living with relatives or friends in the short term, and a decrease in the proportion living with a spouse or partner and children.

7.5 Education

In just over half of cases, clients aged 5–17 years were not students immediately before a period of support (in 51% of closed support periods) and there was little change following support (50%) (Table A37).

Most clients aged 18 years and over were not students immediately before or after a period of support (in 95% of closed support periods both before and after support). A small proportion were engaged in post-secondary education or employment training (in 4% before support and 5% after).

7.6 Changes over time

Over recent years, there has been little change in the immediate income, employment and housing outcomes of clients upon exiting support (tables A28, A30, A32, A33, A36, and A37). Across the years, the majority were in receipt of a government payment, were either not in the labour force or were unemployed, and were living in a house or flat with some form of tenure immediately following support.

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