



Specialist homelessness services 2014–15

Web report | Last updated: 11 Dec 2015 | Author: AIHW | [Media release](#) |

Citation

AIHW

AIHW 2015. Specialist homelessness services 2014–15. Cat. no. WEB 99. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 22 October 2019, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15>

Newer release available

The *Specialist homelessness services 2014–15* web report is the fourth annual report from the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection and the first presented as a web report. It describes the characteristics of clients of specialist homelessness services, the services requested, outcomes achieved, and unmet requests for services during 2014–15.

Cat. no: WEB 99

Findings from this report:

- 1 in 3 clients sought support due to domestic and family violence
- An estimated 256,000 people were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies
- 329 requests for assistance were unable to be met each day
- 1 in 10 young people who presented alone were sleeping rough

Last updated 27/03/2018 v4.0

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The policy framework for reducing homelessness

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

This report describes:

- the people who received assistance from specialist homelessness agencies in 2014–15, the assistance they received and their changes in housing and other circumstances
- trends in characteristics of clients, the services they receive and their outcomes
- the people who requested services in 2014–15 but were not provided with support during the year.

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

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

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

The policy framework for reducing homelessness

Many Australians experience events in their life that may place them at risk of homelessness. It is estimated that around 44% of low-income households experience affordability issues due to rental stress (paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent) [1], and around 1 in 6 women have experienced some form of domestic and family violence in their lifetime, putting them at risk of homelessness [2].

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

Responses to homelessness are funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The NPAH contributes to the NAHA outcome that 'people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion' and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and state and territory governments in relation to reducing and preventing homelessness. Funding associated with the NPAH was provided for the period 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2013, with an interim funding arrangement agreed between the Australian and state and territory governments for 2013–14 and 2014–15. In 2015–16, the Australian government has committed further funding of \$230 million over 2 years, under the NPAH, which is to be matched by states and territories.

The Australian Government has released a draft Discussion Paper on the Reform of the Federation to seek to review roles and responsibilities between the federal and state and territory governments. The Reform of the Federation Discussion Paper 2015 [4] includes an examination of the roles and responsibilities of governments in relation to housing and homelessness, and aims to seek views on shaping the future of housing and homelessness policy in Australia. The Reform of the Federation White Paper will be released in 2016.

About the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

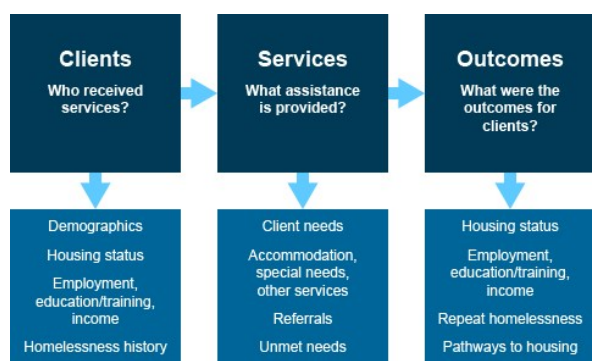
The SHSC began on 1 July 2011. The collection has been designed to collect data from homelessness agencies that are funded under the NAHA and the NPAH. State and territory departments identify agencies that are expected to participate in data collection. These agencies vary widely in terms of the services they provide and the service delivery frameworks they use. These frameworks may be determined by the state or territory funding department or developed as a response to local homelessness issues.

All SHSC agencies report standardised data about the clients they support each month to the AIHW. Data are collected about the characteristics and circumstances of clients when they first present at an agency. Further data—on assistance received and circumstances—are collected at the end of every month in which the client receives services and when contact with the client has ceased.

In 2014–15, there were around 1,500 agencies that provided data for the SHSC.

This information contributes to building a picture of clients, the specialist homelessness services that were provided to them and outcomes achieved for the client (Figure Framework.1). SHSC data provide a measure of the service response directed to those who are experiencing housing difficulty. The data do not provide a measure of the extent of homelessness in the community, although SHSC data on emergency and supported accommodation do contribute to the profile of homelessness in Australia.

Figure Framework.1: Conceptual framework of the SHSC client collection



The data collected by agencies are based on periods of support provided to clients. These support periods vary in terms of their duration, the number of contacts between Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) workers and clients, and the reasons support ends. Some support periods are relatively short (and are likely to have begun and ended in 2014–15) and others are much longer—many of these might have been ongoing from the previous year, or were still ongoing at the end of 2014–15.

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

Because some agencies may not submit client data for all months in the reporting period, and the SLK data may not be available for all clients and unassisted people, data are adjusted to account for this non-response.

All figures presented in this report and in the supplementary tables have been adjusted for agency non-response and data error in the statistical linkage key (SLK). Detailed information about the weighting and estimation strategy for 2014–15 can be found in the [Technical information](#) section.

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

Further information about the collection, imputation methodology applied to these data and information about the quality of the data obtained through the SHSC for 2014–15 is available in the [Technical information](#) section.

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2013a. Housing and occupancy costs, 2011–12. ABS cat no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS.
2. ABS 2013b. Personal safety, Australia, 2012. ABS cat no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS.
3. ABS 2012. Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011. ABS cat no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.
4. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) 2015. Reform of Federation: Discussion paper 2015. Canberra: DPMC.

Last updated 26/09/2017 v6.0

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Clients, services, and outcomes

Specialist homelessness agencies provide a wide range of services to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, ranging from general support and assistance to immediate crisis accommodation. This section outlines the characteristics of all clients assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 2014–15, describes their needs for assistance and the services they received. It also provides some key trends for the 4 years from 2011–12 (the start of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection —SHSC) to 2014–15.

Clients: trends over time

Between 2011–12 and 2014–15, specialist homelessness agencies provided support to over 650,000 clients. The estimated number of clients assisted by agencies each year has increased from 236,000 in 2011–12 to 256,000 in 2014–15. This represents an average annual growth rate of 2.6%.

Because SHSC data provide a measure of the service response, increases in client numbers generally reflect the increased availability and accessibility of services rather than change in the underlying level of homelessness in Australia. The rate of specialist homelessness service use has remained relatively steady since the start of the collection in 2011–12 (Table 1).

The characteristics of clients, the main reasons for seeking support, and the services provided to clients, have remained relatively stable over the 4 years. There have, however, been some notable changes:

- The proportion of clients who were identified as needing assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction increased from 28% in 2011–12 to 33% in 2014–15.
- The proportion of males who were homeless on presentation decreased from 56% of males in 2011–12 to 51% in 2014–15. The proportion of females who were homeless on presentation remained steady, at 36% of females in 2011–12 and 37% in 2014–15.
- From 2011–12 to 2014–15 there has been a small but steady increase each year in the proportion of clients aged over 45 years. In 2014–15 nearly 1 in 5 clients (19%, or nearly 48,000) were aged over 45 years. The largest average annual rate increase was reported in the 65+ age group (6.0% per year).
- The proportion of clients ending support in some form of private housing increased from 39% in 2011–12 to 43% in 2014–15.
- The proportion of clients ending support having achieved no case management goals has decreased.

Table 1: SHS clients: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients	236,429	244,176	254,001	255,657
Rate (per 10,000 population)	106	108	110	109
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	41%: 59%	*43%: 57%	*42%:58%	43%: 57%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	31%	32%	30%	29%
Sole parent	31%	31%	33%	34%
Couple with child/ren	13%	13%	13%	13%
Couple without child/ren	6%	6%	5%	5%
Other family	12%	11%	11%	12%
Other group	7%	7%	7%	7%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)				
Domestic and family violence	25%	23%	24%	25%
Housing crisis	13%	15%	16%	21%
Financial difficulties	15%	16%	15%	12%
Proportion receiving accommodation, total nights accommodation (median)	36% 6.8 million (35)	36% 7.0 million (34)	34% 7.0 million (35)	33% 6.6 million (34)
Reasons support period ended (Top 3)				
Immediate needs met/ goals achieved	*49%	53%	53%	54%
No longer requested assistance	*30%	28%	28%	25%
Lost contact	10%	10%	10%	11%
Most common housing situation after support				
Private housing	n.a.	39%	42%	43%
Social housing	n.a.	21%	21%	22%
Short-term accommodation	n.a.	*20%	17%	16%
Average (median) length of support (days)	79 (29)	84 (31)	81 (33)	76 (33)
Achievement of case management goals				
All goals met	22%	22%	*24%	26%
Some goals met	69%	71%	*70%	68%
No goals met	10%	7%	6%	6%

n.a. Not available

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all, some or no case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan (supplementary table CLIENTS.26). Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services annual reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

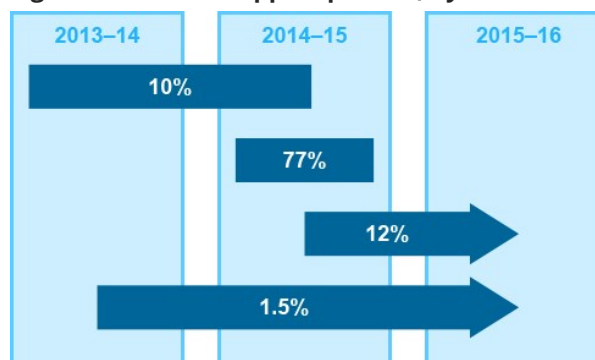
Support periods

Data collected by specialist homelessness agencies are based on support periods, or episodes of assistance provided to clients (see

[Technical information](#) for further details). Clients may have had more than one support period in 2014–15, either with the same agency at different times, or with different agencies.

- In 2014–15, clients assisted by homelessness agencies were supported in 437,004 support periods. The number of support periods has increased by an average of 4% each year since the collection began in 2011–12.
- The majority of clients in 2014–15 had only 1 support period (68%), while 18% had 2 support periods, 7% had 3 periods and 7% had 4 or more. The number of support periods per client is consistent with the previous year.
- The majority of support periods opened and closed in 2014–15 (77%, or nearly 336,000). An additional 12% of support periods opened during the year and remained open on 30 June 2015. Just 1.5% remained open throughout the entire year (Figure CLIENTS.1).

Figure CLIENTS.1: Support periods, by indicative duration over the reporting period, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.19 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

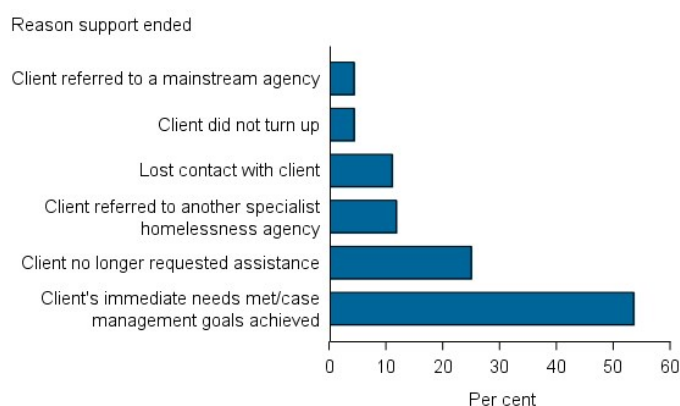
Number of days clients received support

- In 2014–15, clients were supported for an average of 76 days in total, either as consecutive days or over multiple periods of support. While this is a reduction in the average number of support days compared with 2013–14 (81 days), the median number of support days in 2014–15 was the same as last year (33 days).
- Males and females received a similar length of support on average (77 days for females and 75 days for males).
- About one third of clients (31%, or about 78,000) received between 6 and 45 days of support during the year; twenty-six per cent received support for 5 or less days. Fourteen per cent received over 180 days of support during 2014–15; a similar proportion received support for 91–180 days.

Reasons that support periods ended

- Around half (54%) of support periods ended in 2014–15 because the client's immediate needs were met or case management goals were achieved.
- A quarter (25%) ended because clients no longer requested assistance.
- A further 12% closed because the client was referred to another specialist homelessness agency and another 11% closed because contact was lost with the client (Figure CLIENTS.2).

Figure CLIENTS.2: Clients with any closed support period, by reason support period ended (Top 6), 2014–15



Note: Top 6 excludes 'Other' reason.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.21 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Characteristics of clients

In 2014–15, specialist homelessness agencies provided assistance to an estimated 255,657 clients, equivalent to 109 clients per 10,000 Australians (Table CLIENTS.2). This represents a small decrease since 2013–14, from 110 clients per 10,000.

Age and sex

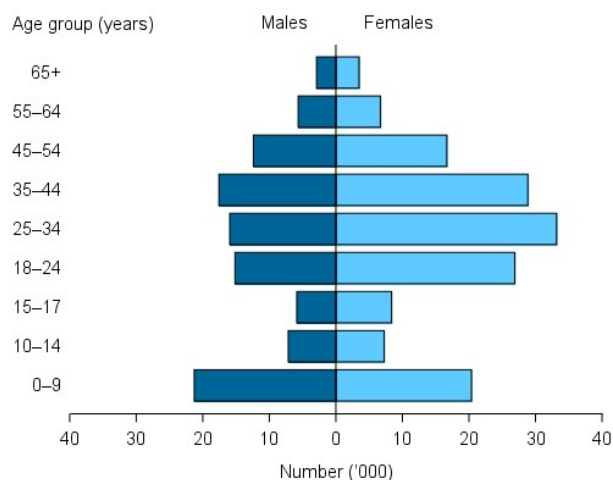
6 in 10

clients were female.

- The majority (59%) of clients in 2014–15 were female (almost 152,000 clients), and 41% were male. This was a rate of 129 per 10,000 females in the Australian population receiving specialist homelessness services, and 89 per 10,000 males.

- More than one-quarter of clients were aged under 18 (just over 70,000 clients) and 16% were aged under 10 (about 42,000 clients). Over half of all clients were aged 18–44 (54%) with the largest group being 25–34 years (19%) (Figure CLIENTS.3).
- Females aged 18–24 years continue to have the highest rate of service use, at 244 per 10,000 females.
- For males the highest rate of service use was children in the youngest age group (0–9 years, 137 per 10,000 males).

Figure CLIENTS.3: Clients, by age and sex, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Indigenous status

1 in 4

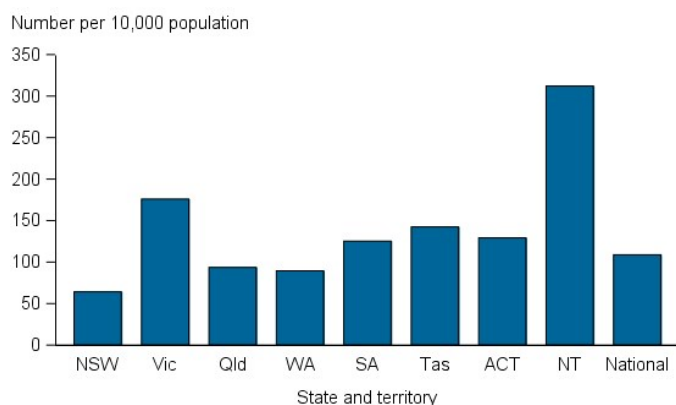
clients were Indigenous.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented among specialist homelessness services clients, with almost one-quarter of clients (23%, or just over 53,000) who provided information on the Indigenous status identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. By comparison, 3% of the population identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders [1].
- Further information about Indigenous clients can be found in [Indigenous clients](#).

State and territory of clients

- The largest number of clients was in Victoria (102,793), followed by New South Wales (48,262) and Queensland (44,213) (Table CLIENTS.2).
- Nationally the number of SHS clients was similar to last year. Increases in client numbers in Victoria (3%, or 2,901) and Western Australia (7%, or 1,584) were offset by reductions in client numbers in New South Wales (7%, or 3,524). These results have been affected by changes in NSW data in 2014–15 and, as outlined in the Data Quality Statement, caution should be used when making comparisons with past years' figures for NSW or with data for other states and territories.
- Nationally there have been large decreases in the total numbers of both support days and accommodation nights compared with 2013–14. There were nearly 1 million fewer days of support and over 400,000 fewer nights accommodation in 2014–15. Reporting of the number of days of support and accommodation nights have been largely affected by the major transition period for NSW Specialist Homelessness Services in 2014–15, as outlined in the Data Quality Statement. Caution should be used when making comparisons with past years' figures for NSW or with data for other states and territories.
- The highest rates of estimated service use occurred in the Northern Territory (where there were 312 clients per 10,000 people), Victoria (176 clients per 10,000 people) and Tasmania (142 clients per 10,000 people) (Figure CLIENTS.4).
- Females had higher rates of service use than males in all states and territories. The Northern Territory had the most pronounced difference between males and females, where 429 per 10,000 females received services compared with 208 per 10,000 males (Table CLIENTS.2).

Figure CLIENTS.4: Client service use per 10,000 population, by state and territory, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.2 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

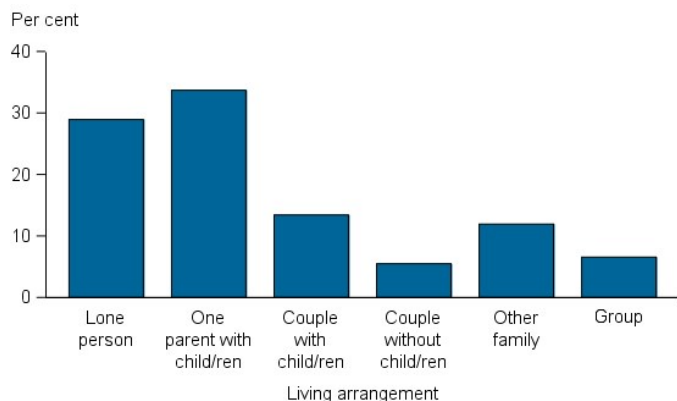
Country of birth

- Most clients of specialist homelessness agencies were born in Australia (85%, or just over 187,000) (Table CLIENTS.3). This proportion is higher than the broader Australian population, of whom 72% are born in Australia [2].
- Of those clients who reported their country of birth and were born overseas, the most common country of birth was New Zealand (13%) (Table CLIENTS.4). Nearly half of the clients (48%) who were born overseas had arrived in Australia before 2006 (Table CLIENTS.5).

Living arrangements

'One parent with 1 or more children' was the most common living arrangement (34%, or just over 79,000), followed by 'lone persons' (29%, or nearly 68,000) and couples with a child or children (13%, or nearly 32,000) (Figure CLIENTS.5).

Figure CLIENTS.5: Clients, by living arrangement, 2014–15

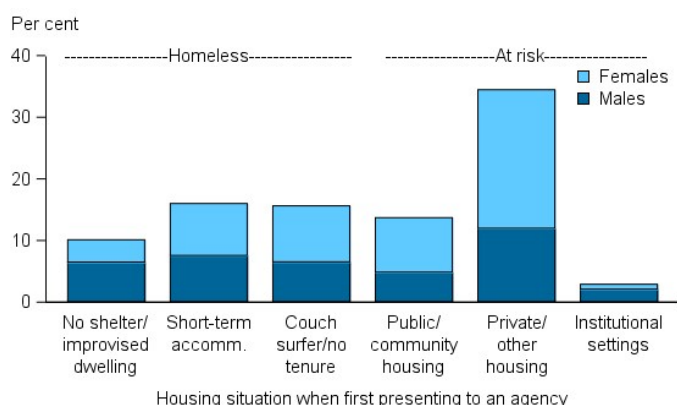


Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.6 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing situation

- Among those whose housing status at the beginning of their first support period was known in 2014–15 (89% of clients), 43% (98,500 clients) were homeless and 57% (130,000 clients) were classified as at risk of homelessness (Figure CLIENTS.6).
- For those clients who first presented to an agency reporting no shelter/improvised dwelling ('rough sleepers') (23,000 clients), 46% were sleeping in no dwelling, either on the street, park or out in the open and just over 1 in 5 were sleeping in a car (22%).

Figure CLIENTS.6: Clients, by housing situation at the beginning of support (Top 6), 2014–15



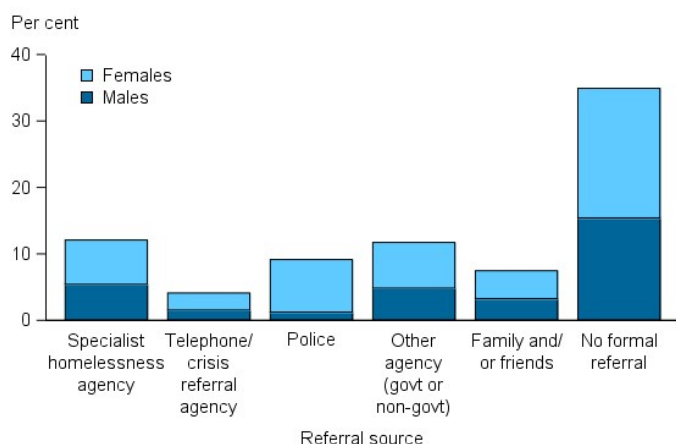
Note: Per cent calculations based on Total clients, excluding 'Not stated'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.7 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Source of referral

- In 2014–15, 65%, or nearly 163,000 clients, were formally referred to a specialist homelessness agency.
- Figure CLIENTS.7 shows that the most common referral source was by either another specialist homelessness agency or outreach worker, (12%) or other agency (12%), followed by the police (9%).

Figure CLIENTS.7: Clients, by source of referral (Top 6), 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.9 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Main source of income

- A high proportion of clients aged 15 and over was receiving some form of government payment at the time they sought support. The most common government payments were Newstart Allowance (27%, or nearly 46,000), Parenting Payment (19%, or about 32,000) and Disability Support Pension (17%, or about 29,000).
- A total of 7% reported income from employment and 9% of clients reported having no income.

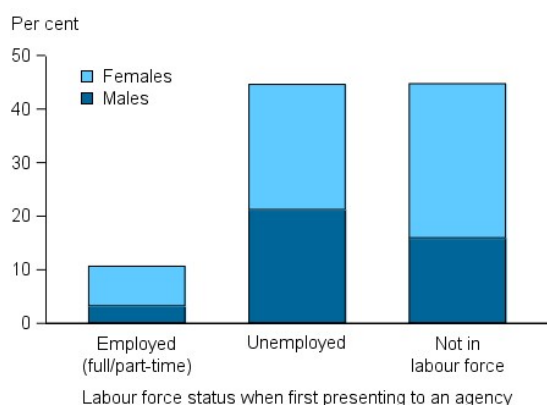
Education

- Sixteen per cent of clients aged 5–14 (about 4,500) were not enrolled in education—the largest proportion was aged 5 (38%).
- About half of young people aged 5–24 (53%, or nearly 41,000) were enrolled in education.
- Among those clients aged over 25, 4% were enrolled in some form of education—mostly vocational education or training.
- Twenty-nine per cent of clients aged 15–24 were not in some form of education or employment.

Labour force

- The proportion of clients not in the labour force at the beginning of support in 2014–15 was slightly lower than that of clients in 2013–14 (45% and 47%, respectively) (Figure CLIENTS.8).
- About 73,300 (45%) clients aged 15 or over were unemployed at the beginning of support.
- Eleven per cent of clients were employed; of these, 2 out of 3 were employed on a part-time basis.
- The main differences between male and female clients were that females were more likely to report not being in the labour force (48% females and 39% males); however, females were also more likely to be employed than males (12% compared with 8%).

Figure CLIENTS.8: Clients aged 15 and over, by labour force status at the beginning of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.12 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Clients' needs for assistance and services provided

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

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

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

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

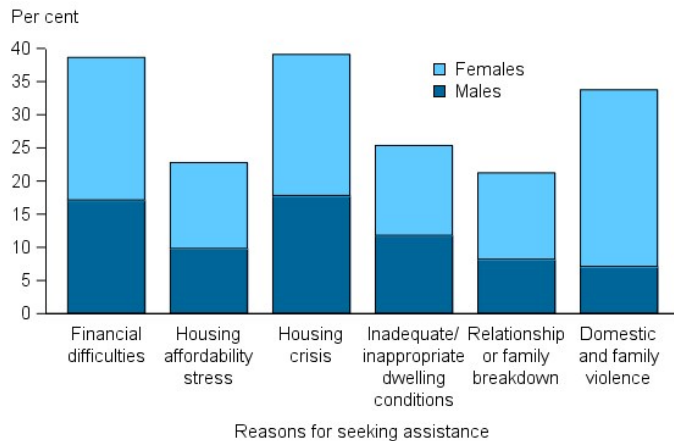
Reasons for seeking assistance

- Over half of clients (54%, or over 136,000) identified accommodation as a reason for seeking assistance, an increase of 5% from 2013–14.

- Housing crisis was identified by 39% of clients as a reason for seeking assistance (Figure CLIENTS.9).
- Just over 60% of clients identified housing affordability stress or financial difficulties as a reason for seeking assistance.
- Half of all SHS clients (about 126,000) identified interpersonal relationships as a reason for seeking support; within this group domestic and family violence and/or relationship/family breakdown were identified for 55% of clients.
- Health issues remain one of the common reasons clients seek assistance. Mental health, medical issues or problematic substance use were recorded as one of the reasons for seeking assistance for 21% of clients.
- Lack of family or community support was one of the reasons for seeking support for 17% of clients.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'reasons for seeking assistance' and 'main reason'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Figure CLIENTS.9: Clients, by all reasons for seeking assistance (Top 6), 2014–15



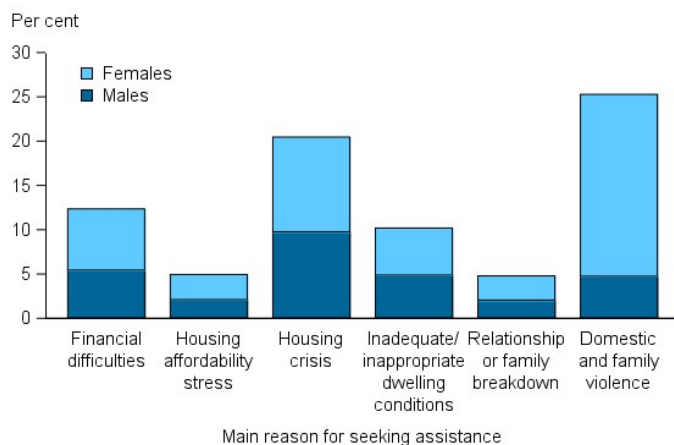
Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.13 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

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

- Domestic and family violence was identified as the main reason for seeking assistance (Figure CLIENTS.10) for one quarter of clients (about 64,000). For more information see [Clients experiencing domestic and family violence](#).
- Housing crisis was reported by 21% of clients as the main reason for seeking assistance.

To aid interpretation of data on main reason for seeking assistance see [Technical information](#) for details on changes in agency reporting in 2014–15.

Figure CLIENTS.10: Clients, by main reason for seeking assistance (Top 6), 2014–15



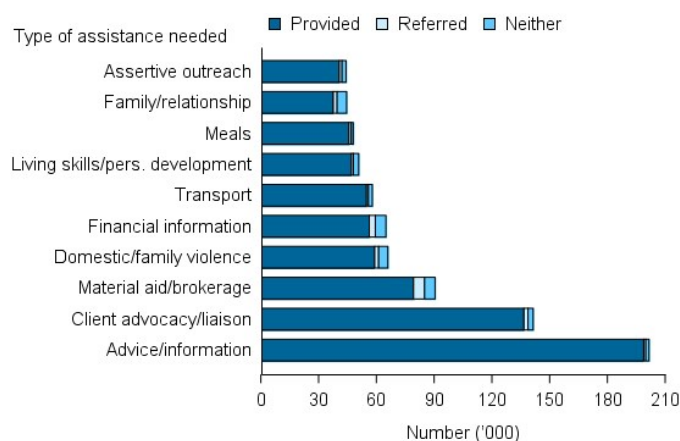
Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.14 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

General support and assistance

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

- Of all assistance needed by clients, advice and information continued to be the most common, identified as a need by 79% in 2014–15. The next most common was advocacy and liaison, needed by 55% clients, and 35% of clients needed material aid/brokerage (Figure CLIENTS.11).
- Advice/information and advocacy/liaison were provided directly by the agency for almost all clients who needed them. This differs from some specialised services (such as legal information and training or employment assistance) for which clients were more often referred to another agency.
- In 2014–15 there were about 17,000 fewer requests for assistance with meals, laundry/shower facilities, recreation and transport, and about 5,000 fewer requests for employment, training and educational assistance compared with 2013–14.

Figure CLIENTS.11: Clients, by most needed general services and service provision status (Top 10), 2014–15



Note: Top 10 excludes 'Other basis assistance'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.15 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing/accommodation services

Housing and accommodation services provided by agencies include:

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

In 2014–15 56% of SHS clients identified a need for accommodation. Of these 143,000 clients:

- 85,000 (or 60%) were provided with accommodation by the agency
- 21,000 (or 15%) were referred to another agency
- 37,000 (or 26%) were neither provided with assistance nor referred. These clients are described in [Unmet demand](#).

The proportion of SHS clients in 2014–15 who identified a need for accommodation assistance is similar to 2013–14 (56% and 55%, respectively).

However, the proportion of these clients who were subsequently provided with accommodation has decreased in 2014–15 (60% compared with 63% in 2013–14).

Over 6.5 million nights of accommodation were provided in 2014–15, about 0.4 million fewer (or 6% less) than last year. Total nights may represent more than one period of accommodation during 2014–15 (Table CLIENTS.16) (see [Technical information](#) for details on how length of accommodation is calculated).

- On average each client received 77 nights of accommodation (median accommodation length was 34 nights).
- Most of the accommodation nights were in medium-term housing (56%) followed by short-term (37%) and long-term housing (6%).

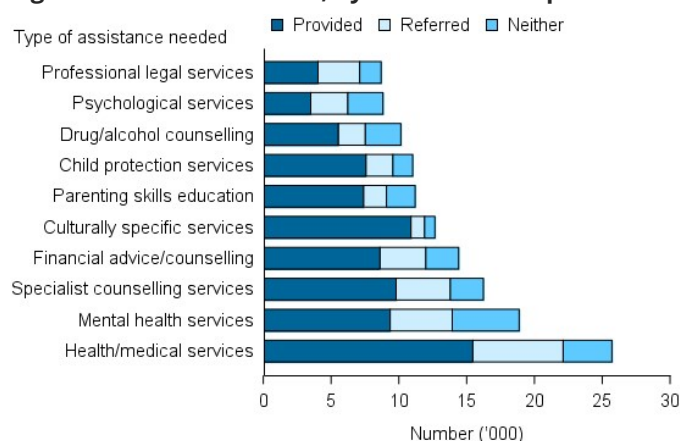
Assistance to sustain tenancy/prevent eviction was needed by 33% of clients at some stage during their support period in 2014–15. This group includes those who were still housed when they approached an SHS agency and were supported to remain in the same house. It also includes those who identified a need for accommodation, were assisted to secure new accommodation and then supported to sustain that housing.

- Most clients (83%, or 71,000) received assistance to sustain housing directly from the specialist homelessness agency.
- There has been, on average, a 6% increase in the proportion of clients needing assistance to sustain tenancy each year since 2011–12.

Specialised services

- Health/medical services were identified as a need by 1 in 10 clients (or 25,700 clients) and was one of the services most often referred (26%) (Figure CLIENTS.12).
- There has been little change in the most common specialised services needed and provided over the last 4 years.

Figure CLIENTS.12: Clients, by most needed specialised services and service provision status (Top 10), 2014–15



Note: Excludes 'Other specialised service'.

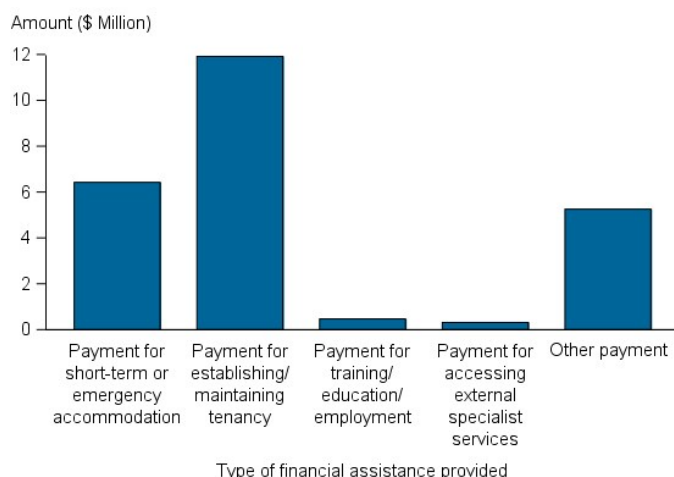
Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.15 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Financial assistance

- A total of \$24.4 million in financial assistance was provided to clients in 2014–15 (Figure CLIENTS.13), a similar amount in nominal terms to the previous 2 financial years.
- Three quarters of the financial assistance was used to assist clients with housing:
 - Around half (49%, or \$12.0 million) of the financial assistance was used to assist clients to establish or maintain a tenancy.
 - A quarter of this funding (26%, or \$6.5 million) was used to provide short term or emergency accommodation.
 - These funding proportions are consistent with expenditure patterns in 2013–14.
- The average total amount of assistance provided was \$468 per client who received financial assistance.

While payments for training/education/employment make up less than 2% of financial assistance, the amount provided for these purposes has decreased over the 4 years of the collection; in nominal terms, on average there has been a 3.8% decrease in assistance funding each year.

Figure CLIENTS.13: Total amount of financial assistance provided to clients, by payment type, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.17 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Outcomes following support

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

- Clients whose support period both opened and closed in 2014–15 accounted for 77% of all clients (Figure CLIENTS.1). A proportion of these clients may seek assistance again in 2015–16.

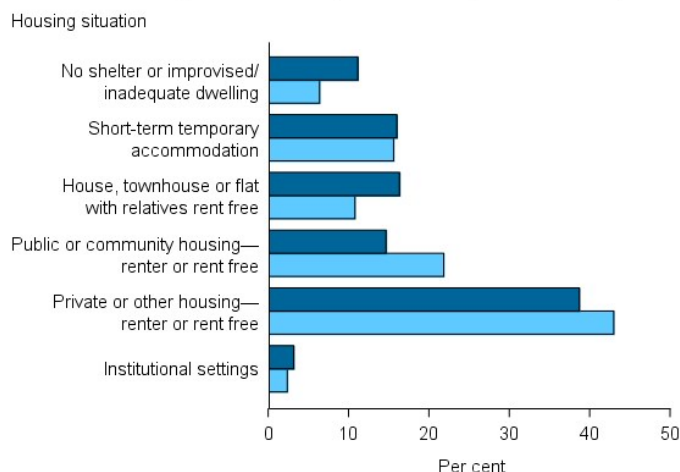
Housing outcomes

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

- In 2014–15, the proportion of clients who were considered homeless reduced from 43% at the start of support to 33% at the time of their last contact with the agency. This reduction was due to large decreases in both the proportion of clients with either no shelter or living in improvised dwellings (from 11% to 6%) and in the proportion of clients living in a house, townhouse or flat as a 'couch surfer' with no tenure (from 16% to 11%).
- By comparison, there was an increase in some forms of tenure over the course of support, including a large increase in the proportion of clients living in public or community housing (from 15% to 22%) (Figure CLIENTS.14).

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

Figure CLIENTS.14: Clients with closed support, by housing situation at beginning of support and at end of support, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.22 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Other outcomes for clients

Specialist homelessness agencies may support clients in a number of areas to reduce their vulnerability to homelessness. Outcomes include changes in educational enrolment status, labour force status and main source of income.

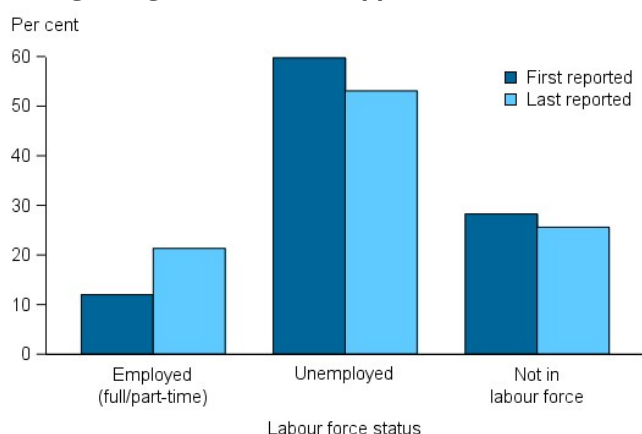
Education

- For clients with closed support, there was little change in the proportion of clients enrolled in education/training, from the beginning of support to the end of support (approximately 21%).
- Among those who also had an identified need for support relating to education or training assistance, 39% were enrolled in education/training at the beginning of support, and this increased to 43% at the end of support.

Employment

- Figure CLIENTS.15 shows a decrease in the proportion of clients (who had an identified need for employment assistance) who were unemployed following support (53% down from 60% at the beginning of support).
- Among those clients who had an identified need for employment assistance, the proportion of clients who were employed at the end of their support period increased from 12% to 21%.

Figure CLIENTS.15: Clients with closed support needing assistance relating to employment, by labour force status at beginning and at end of support, 2014–15



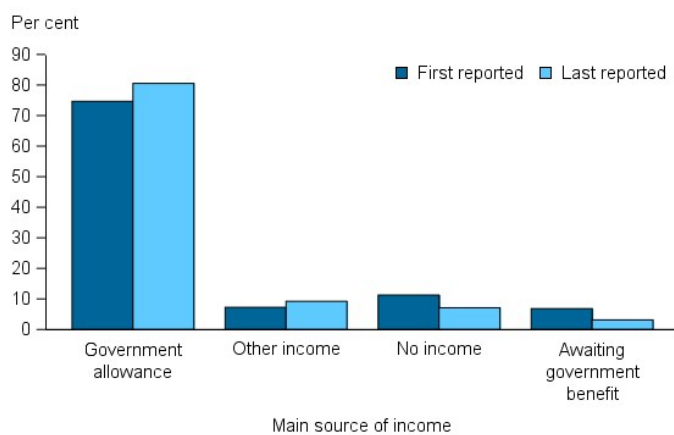
Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.24 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Income

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

- Of those who needed this type of assistance, the proportion of clients reporting having a main income source of a government payment or allowance increased from 75% at the start of support to 81% at the end of support.
- There was a reduction in those with no income (from 11% to 7%) and the proportion awaiting government benefits halved (from 7% to 3%) (Figure CLIENTS.16).

Figure CLIENTS.16: Clients with closed support needing assistance to secure an income, by main source of income at beginning and at end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.25 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Achievement of case management goals

Case management plans enable agency workers to assist a client to work towards agreed goals. In some cases, support periods are too short to allow for a case management plan; in other cases, a client may decline to have a case management plan. Case management approaches can differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and over time as policy and practices change.

- For those clients with closed support, 60% (or 122,300 clients) had a case management plan—47% in their own right, and 13% were part of another client's case management plan. The proportion of clients with a case management plan was less than in 2013–14 (63%).
- Among those who had a plan in their own right, 68% achieved some of their case management goals, 26% achieved all their goals and 6% did not achieve any (Table CLIENTS.26). The proportion of clients achieving all their goals was considerably better than in 2013–14 (19%).
- Of the 40% of clients with closed support who did not have a case management plan, the most common reason given for not having one was that the service episode was too short (71%), while 13% did not agree to having a case management plan.

References

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

Last updated 26/09/2017 v8.0

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Clients in regional and remote areas

Access to services can become increasingly difficult the further away a client is from a major city. This section examines differences in client characteristics and service needs according to location. Similar to previous reports, for the purposes of the analysis, clients have been classified by geographical area based on the location of the agency from which they first received assistance in 2014–15. Agencies have been classified by geographical area based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard [1] using the location details of each agency.

Clients by geographic area: trends over time

Since the beginning of the Specialist Homelessness Services collection in 2011–12 there has been a steady increase in the number of clients across most geographic areas. The collection continues to reveal differences in client characteristics and service needs across these areas. Some key regional changes over the 4 years since the collection began have been:

- Taking into account population differences, *Remote/Very remote* areas consistently reported the highest rate of homelessness service use. These areas also showed the largest growth in the rate of service use, increasing by an average of 6.1% each year.
- The proportion of Indigenous clients in both the *Outer regional* and *Remote/Very remote* areas increased each year; in 2014–15 5 in 10 and 9 in 10 clients identified as Indigenous in these areas respectively.
- Domestic and family violence was the main reason why people sought assistance in all regional areas and has remained so over the 4 years of the collection.

Table 1: Clients by geographic area: at a glance—trends over time

Year		<i>Major cities</i>	<i>Inner regional</i>	<i>Outer regional</i>	<i>Remote/ Very remote</i>
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)					
2014–15		162,286 (63%)	52,061 (20%)	28,257 (11%)	13,053 (5%)
2013–14		159,877 (63%)	55,510 (22%)	26,785 (11%)	11,831 (5%)
2012–13		151,255 (62%)	54,547 (22%)	26,693 (11%)	11,682 (5%)
2011–12		144,710 (61%)	53,694 (23%)	27,379 (12%)	10,647 (5%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)					
2014–15		98	122	136	245
2013–14		98	132	130	222
2012–13		95	131	130	222
2011–12		92	131	135	206
Indigenous status					
2014–15	Indigenous	14%	21%	48%	89%
	Non-Indigenous	86%	79%	52%	11%
2013–14	Indigenous	14%	21%	47%	87%
	Non-Indigenous	86%	79%	53%	13%
2012–13	Indigenous	14%	21%	45%	81%
	Non-Indigenous	86%	79%	55%	19%
2011–12	Indigenous	13%	20%	43%	80%
	Non-Indigenous	87%	80%	57%	20%
Living arrangement					
2014–15	Lone person	31%	27%	25%	16%
	Sole parent	33%	37%	35%	24%

Table 1: Clients by geographic area: at a glance—trends over time					
Year		Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote/ Very remote
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)					
2013–14	Couple with child/ren	13%	13%	17%	18%
	Couple without children	5%	6%	6%	6%
	Other family group	18%	17%	18%	36%
	Lone person	32%	28%	28%	15%
	Sole parent	33%	35%	35%	25%
	Couple with child/ren	12%	14%	14%	19%
	Couple without children	5%	6%	6%	7%
	Other family group	17%	18%	17%	34%
	Lone person	34%	29%	28%	19%
	Sole parent	30%	33%	33%	24%
2012–13	Couple with child/ren	12%	14%	15%	17%
	Couple without children	5%	6%	6%	7%
	Other family group	18%	18%	18%	33%
	Lone person	34%	27%	27%	18%
	Sole parent	30%	34%	33%	26%
	Couple with child/ren	12%	14%	15%	18%
	Couple without children	5%	6%	6%	7%
	Other family group	19%	19%	19%	31%
	Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
	Domestic and family violence	25%	23%	25%	34%
2014–15	Housing crisis	21%	21%	22%	11%
	Financial difficulties	12%	16%	8%	9%
	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	10%	10%	11%	10%
	Domestic and family violence	24%	23%	22%	*35%
	Housing crisis	17%	14%	15%	8%
	Financial difficulties	15%	17%	13%	*9%
	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	11%	12%	15%	*13%
	Domestic and family violence	22%	23%	21%	37%
	Housing crisis	16%	12%	16%	7%
	Financial difficulties	15%	21%	12%	11%
2012–13	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	10%	11%	15%	8%
	Domestic and family violence	25%	25%	20%	39%
	Housing crisis	14%	12%	12%	6%
	Financial difficulties	16%	14%	17%	11%
	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	8%	11%	13%	9%
	Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
	Homeless: At risk of homelessness	45%: 55%	42%: 58%	43%: 57%	29%: 71%

Table 1: Clients by geographic area: at a glance—trends over time

Year	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote/ Very remote
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)				

2013–14	Homeless: At risk of homelessness	*42%: 58%	*41%: 59%	*46%: 54%	34%: 66%
2012–13	Homeless: At risk of homelessness	*43%: 57%	*41%: 59%	*50%: 50%	*36%: 64%
2011–12	Homeless: At risk of homelessness	41%: 59%	40%: 60%	46%: 54%	35%:65%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))					
2014–15		31% (48)	29% (35)	41% (21)	58% (5)
2013–14		32% (49)	29% (38)	44% (20)	63% (6)
2012–13		35% (45)	30% (35)	45% (22)	65% (6)
2011–12		34% (48)	32% (34)	41% (21)	67% (7)
Number of support periods (average per client)					
2014–15		273,256 (1.7)	80,073 (1.5)	41,700 (1.5)	19,182 (1.5)
2013–14		263,720 (1.6)	82,889 (1.5)	38,884 (1.5)	16,770 (1.4)
2012–13		251,763 (1.7)	80,378 (1.5)	37,955 (1.4)	17,019 (1.5)
2011–12		216,744 (1.5)	74,961 (1.4)	38,009 (1.4)	13,980 (1.3)
Average (median) length of support (days)					
2014–15		79 (32)	72 (39)	72 (36)	64 (17)
2013–14		83 (31)	81 (42)	71 (31)	72 (21)
2012–13		89 (31)	79 (36)	75 (32)	74 (17)
2011–12		86 (30)	74 (33)	64 (22)	64 (15)
Proportion of a client group who had a case management plan					
2014–15		58%	61%	73%	62%
2013–14		*55%	*62%	*65%	*66%
2012–13		*53%	*57%	*64%	*59%
2011–12		55%	57%	61%	60%
Achievement of all case management goals					
2014–15		27%	18%	30%	29%
2013–14		*27%	*16%	*21%	*27%
2012–13		26%	15%	19%	21%
2011–12		24%	16%	22%	23%

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See Technical information for further details.

- In 2014–15 a large proportion of clients accessing specialist homelessness services lived in *Major cities* (63%). This is slightly lower than for the broader Australian population, 70% of whom live in *Major cities* (AIHW analysis of the ABS 2011 Census).
- Some client groups were more likely to access specialist homelessness services in *Major cities*. For example, in 2014–15 70% of SHS clients with a current mental health issue and 87% of SHS clients born overseas accessed specialist homelessness services in *Major cities*.
- A higher proportion of clients of homelessness services in 2014–15 were located in *Remote/Very remote* areas (5%) compared with the general population (2%). Almost 9 in 10 clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas were Indigenous (89%).

- The proportion of clients living in *Remote/Very remote* areas who were homeless upon presentation decreased from 34% in 2013–14 to 29% in 2014–15 (Table 1).
- Accommodation length varied considerably across regional areas. In 2014–15 over half of the clients in *Major cities* received 48 or more nights accommodation while less than half of the clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas received 5 or fewer nights.

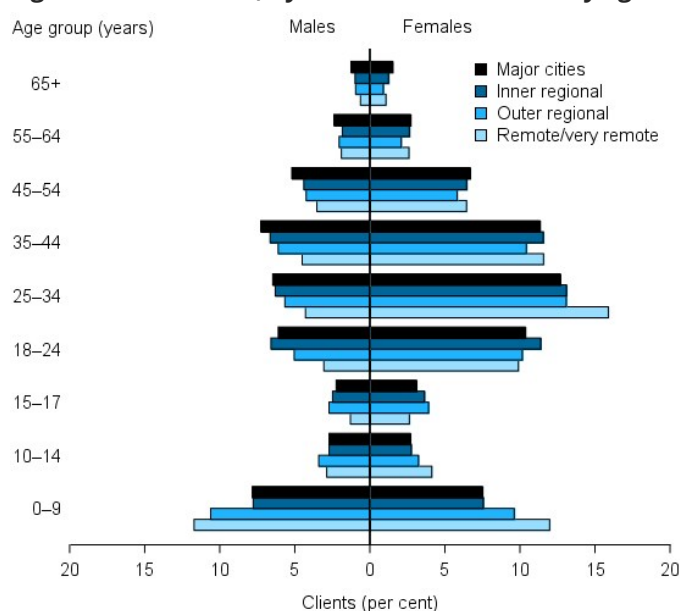
Age and sex

About 1 in 4 clients

in *Remote/Very remote* areas were children under the age of 10.

- In all remoteness areas, there were more females than male clients (Figure REG.1). The proportion of females increased as remoteness increased. Females represented 59% of clients in *Major cities* compared with 66% of clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas.
- Clients aged between 25 and 34 represented the largest proportion across *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas (18%, 20%, respectively) but clients aged between 0–9 represented the largest proportion in both *Outer regional* and *Remote/Very remote* areas (20%, 24%, respectively).
- The proportion of younger children (aged 0–9) generally increased with remoteness: from 15% of clients in *Major cities* to 24% of clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas.
- Together these data suggest that in *Remote/Very remote* areas there were higher proportions of families presenting with children compared with *Major cities* while the proportion of lone persons was higher in *Major cities*.

Figure REG.1: Clients, by remoteness area and by age and sex, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table REG.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

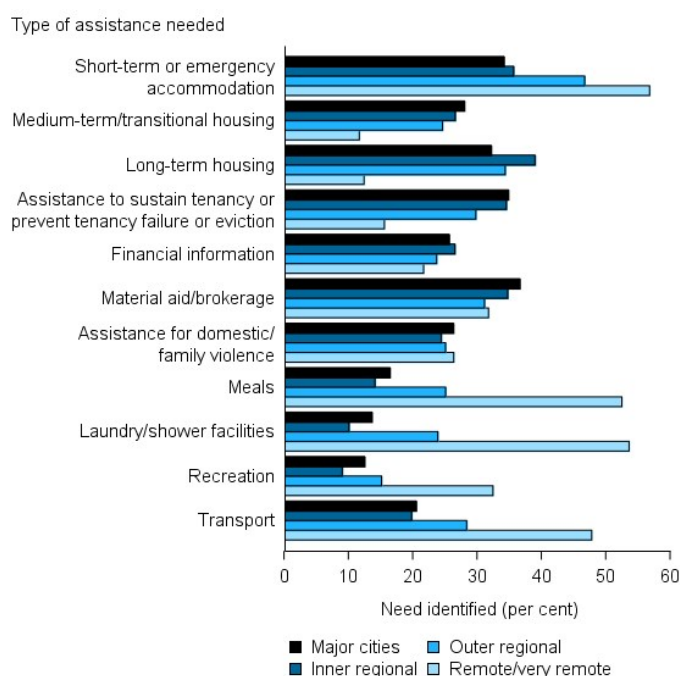
Services needed and provided

57%

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

- The likelihood of receiving accommodation decreased as remoteness decreased, with clients accessing agencies in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas the least likely to receive accommodation (59% and 51%, respectively) while those clients in *Remote/Very remote* areas with accommodation needs the most likely to have them met (87%).
- Clients accessing agencies located in *Remote/Very remote* areas were assessed with more needs compared with clients in other areas (Figure REG.2).
- Trends for clients accessing services in *Inner regional* areas were generally similar to those in *Major cities*. However, a higher proportion of clients accessing services in *Inner regional* areas were likely to need long-term housing (39% compared with 32% in *Major cities*).
- Clients accessing services in *Major cities* were more likely to be assessed as needing mental health services (8%) than those in any other region (between 2% and 7%).

Figure REG.2: Most needed services by remoteness area, 2014–15



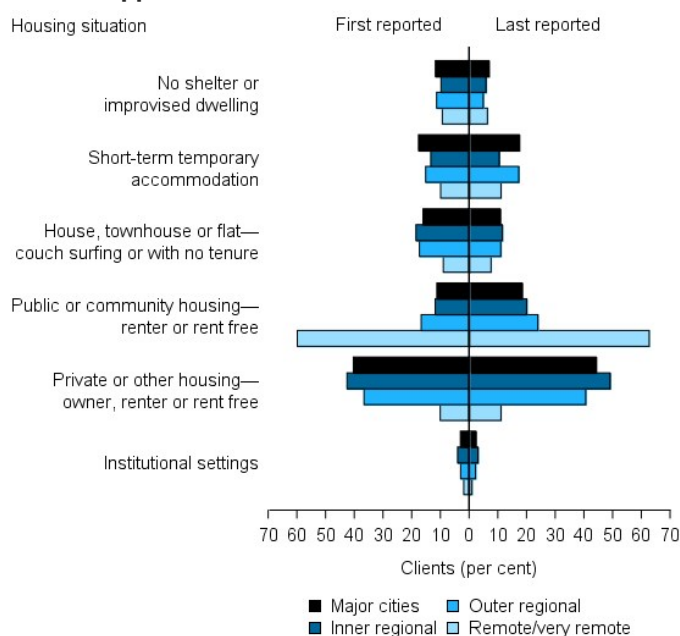
Note: Most needed excludes 'Other basic assistance'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table REG.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing outcomes

- Clients accessing services in *Major cities* were the least likely to report ending support in stable housing (65%), with most living in private or other housing as a renter or rent free (44%) (Figure REG.3).
- *Inner regional* clients were the most likely to be housed in private or other housing at the end of their support period (49%).
- Those clients accessing agencies in *Remote/Very remote areas* were more likely to report living in public or community housing (60%) at the beginning of their support period. These clients were also the most likely to be classified as housed at the end of their support period (75%).

Figure REG.3: Clients with closed support, by remoteness area and housing situation at beginning of support and at end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table REG.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Reference

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2013. Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 5—Remoteness structure, July 2011. ABS cat. no. 1270.0.55.005. Canberra: ABS.

Last updated 26/09/2017 v4.0

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Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services

Specialist homelessness agencies in Australia provide assistance to many people each day. In 2014–15, on average, each day 53,840 people were supported. However, there were also people who approached agencies who could not be offered any assistance. These people may have approached more than one agency or returned to the same agency another day. An instance where no assistance is given to a person who approaches a service is referred to as 'unassisted request for service'.

There may be a range of reasons why an agency cannot assist a person. For example, the person may be seeking a specialised service not offered by that particular agency or the agency may not have the capacity to provide assistance at that time. The person may not be in the target group for the agency. These people may be referred to another agency for assistance, but the SHSC does not currently capture this activity. See [Technical information](#) and [glossary](#) for information on the way in which unassisted requests for services are measured in the SHSC.

There was an average of 329 instances of unassisted requests for services each day in 2014–15.

This section presents information on unmet demand from 2 perspectives:

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

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

Unassisted requests for services: trends over time

In 2014–15, there were an estimated 119,910 requests for assistance that were not met. This represents a decrease of 22% from last year. Some key trends in unmet demand over the 4 years since the collection began have been:

- Numbers of unassisted requests remained stable from 2011–12 to 2013–14 but decreased in 2014–15. The decrease was due to reductions primarily in New South Wales and Queensland and is a reflection of the impact of new service delivery models in these states. For further details see the data quality information in the [Technical information](#) section.
- In contrast to the changes occurring in the number of unassisted requests for services, the number of support periods and the number of clients have been increasing over the same period.

Table 1: Unassisted requests for service: at a glance—trends over time

	2012–13 Unassisted requests	2012–13 All assisted clients	2013–14 Unassisted requests	2013–14 All assisted clients	2014–15 Unassisted requests	2014–15 All assisted clients
Number	152,103	244,176	*154,446	254,001	119,910	255,657
Sex	60% female 40% male	59% female 41% male	61% female 39% male	59% female 41% male	64% female 36% male	59% female 41% male
Living arrangement						
Lone person	70%	32%	68%	30%	63%	29%
Sole parent	27%	31%	29%	33%	33%	34%
Couple with child/ren	—	13%	—	13%	—	13%
Couple without children	1%	6%	2%	5%	2%	5%
Other family group	2%	19%	2%	18%	2%	19%

— Rounded to zero

* Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time.

Source: Specialist homelessness services annual reports 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Unassisted requests for service

Analysis of how often a person requested assistance and how many later became clients of specialist homelessness agencies can only

be undertaken where the SLK was completed (about half of all unassisted requests). In 2014–15, on average, each person who was not assisted approached an agency 1.4 times, similar to 2013–14. In 2014–15, 32% of those with a valid SLK later went on to become a client and receive services during the year compared with 29% in 2013–14. The outcomes for the remaining 68% are not known—they may have received assistance from a non-SHS service, used their own support networks or continued to experience unstable housing.

Number of unassisted requests for services

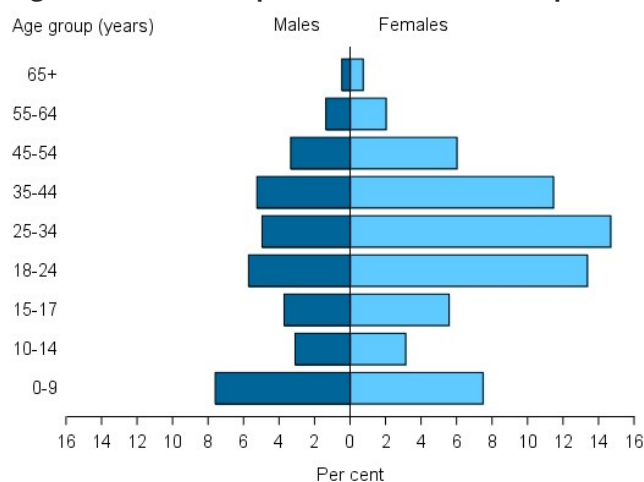
1 in 4

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

In 2014–15, there was an estimated 119,910 requests for service where an agency was not able to provide any assistance (Table UNMET.1). This equates to an average 329 requests per day that could not be met (Table UNMET.4). On average, about 212 daily unassisted requests (or 65% of all requests) were made by females, and 116 (35%) by males. This reflects the overall service user population, which is predominantly female.

- The daily average number of unassisted requests was much lower than in 2013–14 (a decrease of 22%) (Figure UNMET.1).
- Neither the proportions of requests that were from females and males nor their age group distributions have changed from the previous year.
- Four in 5 requests from single persons (aged 15 or over) with children were from females (81%) and most of these females were aged between 18 and 34 (62% of single females).

Figure UNMET.1: Proportion of unassisted requests, by sex and age group, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table UNMET.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

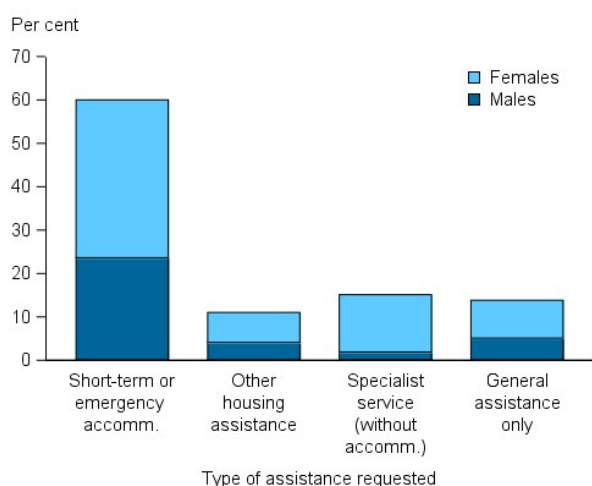
What services were requested?

Over 70%

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

- The majority of unassisted daily accommodation requests related to short-term or emergency accommodation (60%) (Figure UNMET.2). Females were more likely than males to have unmet requests for short-term or emergency accommodation (61% and 39%, respectively).

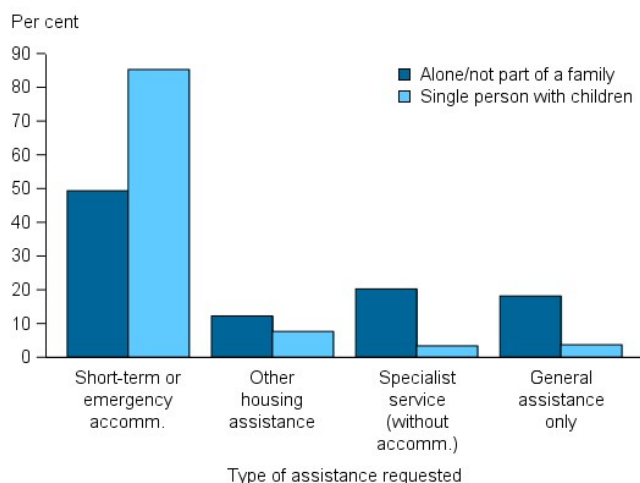
Figure UNMET.2: Services requested as proportion of daily unassisted requests, by sex, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table UNMET.5 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

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

Figure UNMET.3: Proportion of unassisted requests for services by single person and single people with children, by service type, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table UNMET.6 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

- Most commonly, agencies reported that they could not meet requests for accommodation because there was no accommodation available at the time of the request (51% of unmet requests for accommodation) (Table UNMET.7). This figure is down from 58% in 2013–14.

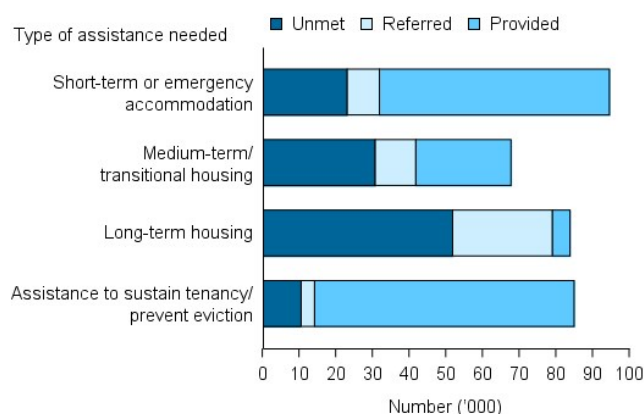
Unmet need for services

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

Unmet need for accommodation and housing assistance services

- The most common need identified was for accommodation. In 2014–15, 56% of all clients needed at least 1 type of accommodation service.
- 84,000 clients (or 33% of SHS clients) identified a need for long-term accommodation; only about 5,000 (or 6%) of those were provided with the service (Figure UNMET.4).
- 95,000 clients (or 37% of SHS clients) needed short-term or emergency accommodation; 66% of those requesting this service were provided with assistance.
- The numbers of clients requesting these 2 forms of accommodation were similarly large however the considerable difference in the proportions of clients receiving these types of accommodation highlights the substantial unmet need for long-term housing for SHS clients.

Figure UNMET.4: The number of clients with unmet needs for accommodation and housing assistance services, 2014–15



Note: Unmet includes 'Not provided nor referred'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.15 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Unmet need for general and specialised services

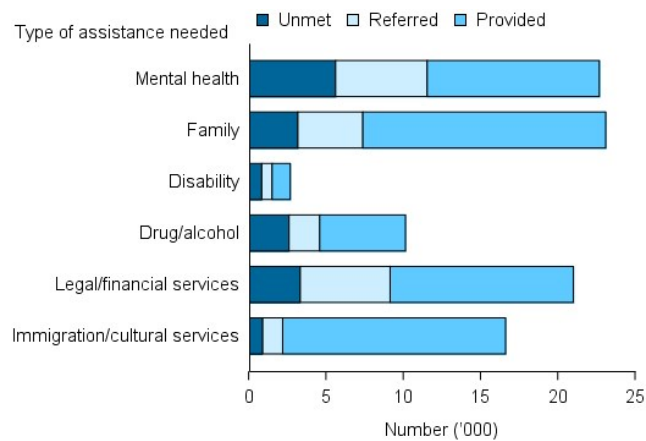
- Some types of client needs were met for a significant proportion of clients. For example, of the 141,000 clients who needed assistance for advocacy/liaison, 97% were provided assistance, and of the clients requesting material brokerage (90,000), 88% were provided with assistance (Table CLIENTS.15).
- Other types of client needs were less commonly met. For example, among those clients who required gambling counselling (less than 1% of clients), the level of unmet need was substantial—around 27% at the end of support. This may be related to the specialist skills required to provide gambling counselling and the limited availability of these skills within the SHS agencies and other services that clients may be referred to.

The level of need for broad groups of specialised services is shown in Figure UNMET.5.

- Mental health services were one of the most common specialised services identified as needed but these needs were most commonly unmet (neither provided nor referred).

- More than a quarter of the clients identifying with a need for either disability services or drug and alcohol services did not have their needs met.

Figure UNMET.5: The number of clients with unmet needs for specialised services (grouped), 2014–15



Note: Unmet includes 'Not provided nor referred'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table CLIENTS.15 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

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Client groups of interest

Indigenous clients

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of specialist homelessness services (see [Clients, services and outcomes](#)) [1]. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3% of the Australian population, yet they made up 23% of those accessing specialist homelessness services in 2014–15: 53,301 clients. Indigenous status was not reported for 11% of SHS clients in 2014–15.

Indigenous clients: trends over time

The number of Indigenous clients has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12. The key trends identified over these 4 years have been:

- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients has increased from 587 clients per 10,000 Indigenous people in 2011–12 to 693 per 10,000 in 2014–15.
- The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates of service use has been widening. Indigenous clients used specialist homelessness services at a rate of 8.7 times that of non-Indigenous clients in 2014–15, up from 7.8 times in 2011–12.
- After taking into account differences in population size, in 2014–15 Indigenous clients accessed services at the highest rate in *Major cities*. Previously highest rates were reported in *Inner and Outer regional* areas.
- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients living in *Remote/Very remote* areas has increased by the greatest margin over time; from 499 Indigenous clients per 10,000 population in 2011–12 to 689 in 2014–15. This is in contrast to non-Indigenous clients in the same areas where the rate decreased from 53 clients per 10,000 to 38 clients over the same time period.
- The proportion of Indigenous clients ending support in some form of public or private housing has improved. In 2014–15 around 40% of Indigenous clients assisted ended support in public or community housing compared with 35% in 2012–13.

Table 1: Indigenous clients: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12 Indigenous	2011–12 Non- Indigenous	2012–13 Indigenous	2012–13 Non- Indigenous
Number of clients (proportion of all clients where Indigenous status reported)	43,642 (22%)	157,227 (78%)	46,607 (22%)	160,740 (78%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	587	75	623	76
Rate ratio	7.8		8.2	
Remoteness rate (per 10,000 population)				
<i>Major cities</i>	594	68	626	69
<i>Inner/Outer regional</i>	628	101	660	100
<i>Remote/Very remote</i>	499	53	551	54
Rate ratio				
<i>Major cities</i>	8.8		9.1	
<i>Inner/Outer regional</i>	6.2		6.6	
<i>Remote/Very remote</i>	9.4		10.3	
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	46%: 54%	42%: 58%	47%:53%	44%: 56%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	23%	33%	24%	34%
Sole parent	33%	31%	33%	30%
Couple with child/ren	14%	13%	14%	13%
Couple without children	5%	5%	6%	5%
Other family	18%	11%	17%	10%
Other group	6%	8%	7%	8%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Domestic and family violence	24%	23%	22%	21%
Housing crisis	12%	14%	13%	15%
Financial difficulties	14%	16%	14%	17%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	13%	9%	15%	11%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	50% (21)	35% (43)	49% (21)	36% (40)
Number of support periods (average per client)	66,406 (1.5)	241,357 (1.5)	73,911 (1.6)	271,119 (1.7)
Average (median) length of support (days)	85 (34)	83 (32)	93 (40)	87 (34)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	65%	58%	*64%	*56%
Achievement of all case management goals	20%	20%	19%	21%

Table 1: Indigenous clients: at a glance—trends over time (continued)

	2013–14 Indigenous	2013–14 Non- Indigenous	2014–15 Indigenous	2014–15 Non- Indigenous
Number of clients (proportion of clients who reported Indigenous status)	49,615 (23%)	167,288 (77%)	53,301 (23%)	173,955 (77%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	654	78	693	80
Rate ratio	8.4		8.7	
Remoteness rate (per 10,000 population)				
<i>Major cities</i>	660	72	711	75
<i>Inner/Outer regional</i>	673	100	684	99
<i>Remote/Very remote</i>	613	40	689	38
Rate ratio				
<i>Major cities</i>	9.2		9.5	
<i>Inner/Outer regional</i>	6.7		6.9	
<i>Remote/Very remote</i>	15.3		18.0	
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	46%: 54%	43%: 57%	47%: 53%	43%: 57%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	23%	33%	22%	31%
Sole parent	35%	32%	35%	33%
Couple with child/ren	14%	13%	14%	13%
Couple without children	5%	5%	5%	5%
Other family	16%	9%	18%	10%
Other group	6%	7%	5%	7%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Domestic and family violence	22%	21%	24%	24%
Housing crisis	14%	17%	21%	21%
Financial difficulties	12%	16%	10%	14%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	15%	11%	13%	10%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	*48% (22)	*34% (43)	47% (20)	32% (42)
Number of support periods (average per client)	79,110 (1.6)	280,249 (1.7)	87,018 (1.6)	293,244 (1.7)
Average (median) length of support (days)	*89 (41)	*85 (36)	82 (40)	78 (35)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	*68%	*59%	70%	60%
Achievement of all case management goals	*22%	*23%	24%	25%

Notes

1. Rates were directly age-standardised as detailed in the [Technical information](#) section.
2. Rate ratio is the Indigenous rate divided by the non-Indigenous rate.
3. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
4. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'.

Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

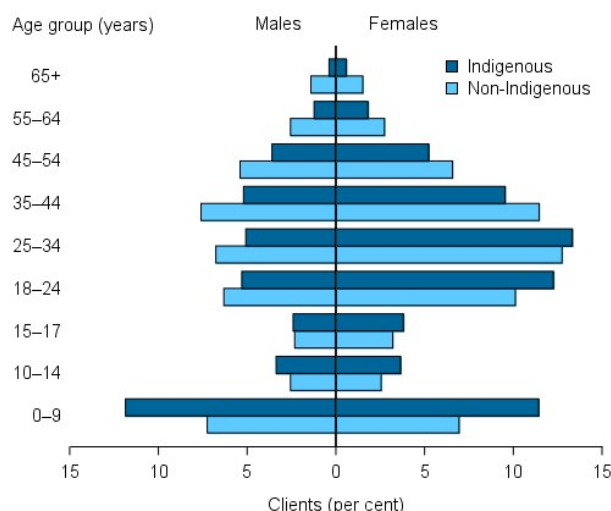
Age and sex

1 in 4

Indigenous clients were children aged less than 10.

- When compared with non-Indigenous clients, Indigenous clients were younger (23% were children aged 0–9) and more likely to be female (62%) (Figure INDIGENOUS.1).
- Over half of all Indigenous clients (54%) were aged under 25 compared with 40% of non-Indigenous clients.

Figure INDIGENOUS.1: Clients by Indigenous status, by age and sex, 2014–15

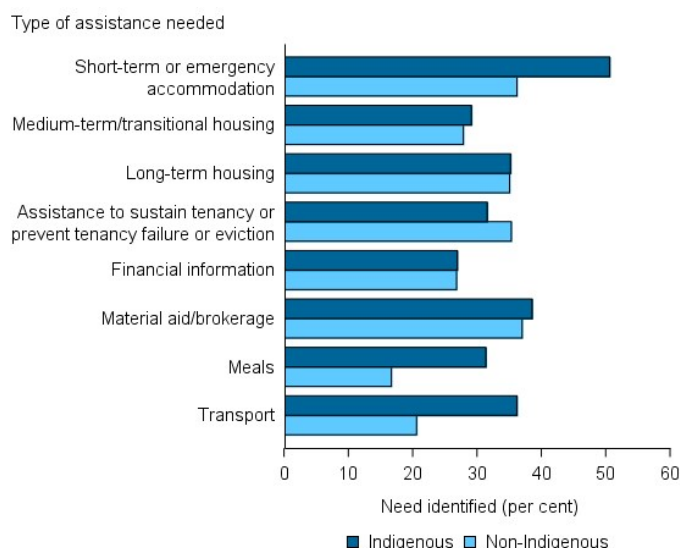


Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Services needed and provided

- Over half of the Indigenous clients seeking assistance needed short-term or emergency accommodation (51%, or about 27,000) compared with 36% for non-Indigenous clients.
- Apart from 'short-term or emergency accommodation', 'meals' and 'transport', the need for other accommodation based assistance was broadly similar between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients (Figure INDIGENOUS.2).

Figure INDIGENOUS.2: Clients, by Indigenous status and by most needed services, 2014–15



Note: Most needed excludes 'Other basic assistance'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

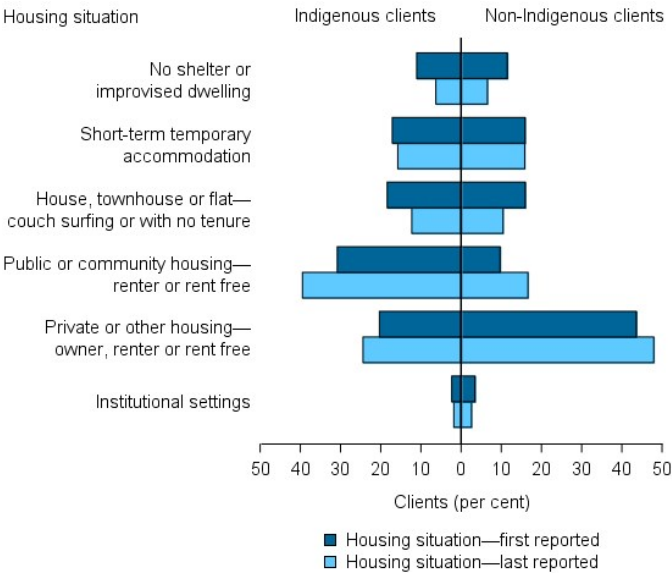
Housing outcomes

For clients with closed support periods:

- For Indigenous clients, the most common housing situation at the start of support was public or community housing (31%), compared with private or other housing for non-Indigenous clients (44%).
- For Indigenous clients, the most common housing outcome at the end of support was public or community housing (39%, or over 13,000) followed by private rental (24%, or over 8,000) (Figure INDIGENOUS.3). For non-Indigenous clients, the most common housing outcomes at the end of support were private rental (48%) followed by public or community housing (17%).

- Compared with the previous year, there has been an improvement in housing outcomes for Indigenous clients. In 2014–15 around 2,500 (or 9%) more clients ended support in public or community housing and fewer clients remained in short term or emergency accommodation.

Figure INDIGENOUS.3: Clients with closed support, by Indigenous status and by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Reference

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

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Client groups of interest

Indigenous clients

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented in both the national homeless population and as users of specialist homelessness services (see [Clients, services and outcomes](#)) [1]. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3% of the Australian population, yet they made up 23% of those accessing specialist homelessness services in 2014–15: 53,301 clients. Indigenous status was not reported for 11% of SHS clients in 2014–15.

Indigenous clients: trends over time

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- The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates of service use has been widening. Indigenous clients used specialist homelessness services at a rate of 8.7 times that of non-Indigenous clients in 2014–15, up from 7.8 times in 2011–12.
- After taking into account differences in population size, in 2014–15 Indigenous clients accessed services at the highest rate in *Major cities*. Previously highest rates were reported in *Inner and Outer regional* areas.
- The rate of service use by Indigenous clients living in *Remote/Very remote* areas has increased by the greatest margin over time; from 499 Indigenous clients per 10,000 population in 2011–12 to 689 in 2014–15. This is in contrast to non-Indigenous clients in the same areas where the rate decreased from 53 clients per 10,000 to 38 clients over the same time period.
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Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	46%: 54%	42%: 58%	47%:53%	44%: 56%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	23%	33%	24%	34%
Sole parent	33%	31%	33%	30%
Couple with child/ren	14%	13%	14%	13%
Couple without children	5%	5%	6%	5%
Other family	18%	11%	17%	10%
Other group	6%	8%	7%	8%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Domestic and family violence	24%	23%	22%	21%
Housing crisis	12%	14%	13%	15%
Financial difficulties	14%	16%	14%	17%
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Couple without children	5%	5%	5%	5%
Other family	16%	9%	18%	10%
Other group	6%	7%	5%	7%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Domestic and family violence	22%	21%	24%	24%
Housing crisis	14%	17%	21%	21%
Financial difficulties	12%	16%	10%	14%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	15%	11%	13%	10%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	*48% (22)	*34% (43)	47% (20)	32% (42)
Number of support periods (average per client)	79,110 (1.6)	280,249 (1.7)	87,018 (1.6)	293,244 (1.7)
Average (median) length of support (days)	*89 (41)	*85 (36)	82 (40)	78 (35)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	*68%	*59%	70%	60%
Achievement of all case management goals	*22%	*23%	24%	25%

Notes

1. Rates were directly age-standardised as detailed in the [Technical information](#) section.
2. Rate ratio is the Indigenous rate divided by the non-Indigenous rate.
3. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
4. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

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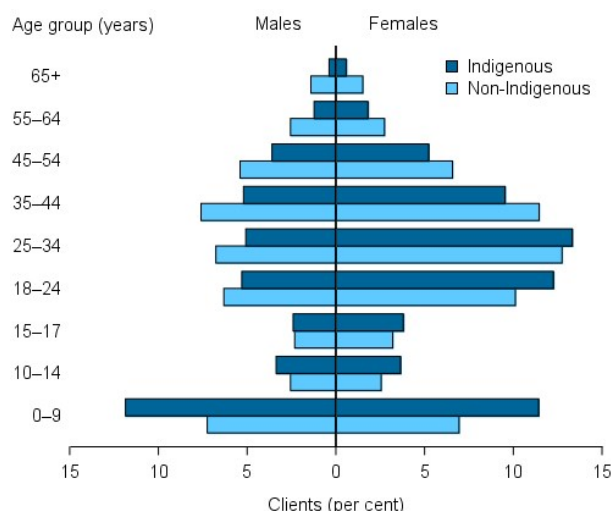
Age and sex

1 in 4

Indigenous clients were children aged less than 10.

- When compared with non-Indigenous clients, Indigenous clients were younger (23% were children aged 0–9) and more likely to be female (62%) (Figure INDIGENOUS.1).
- Over half of all Indigenous clients (54%) were aged under 25 compared with 40% of non-Indigenous clients.

Figure INDIGENOUS.1: Clients by Indigenous status, by age and sex, 2014–15

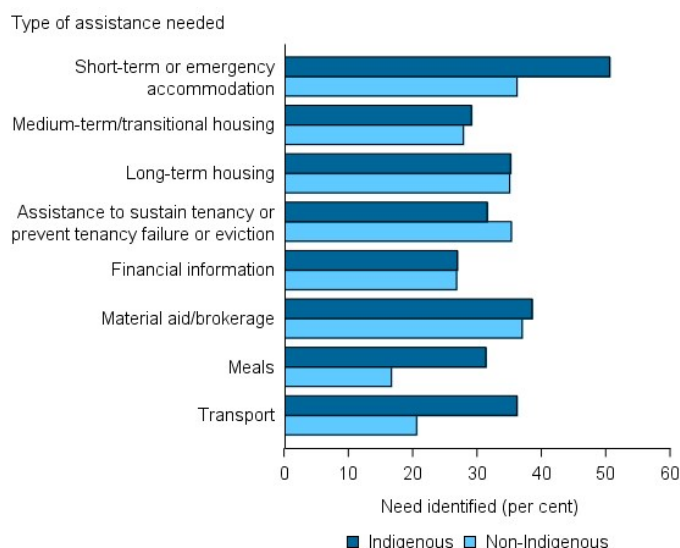


Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Services needed and provided

- Over half of the Indigenous clients seeking assistance needed short-term or emergency accommodation (51%, or about 27,000) compared with 36% for non-Indigenous clients.
- Apart from 'short-term or emergency accommodation', 'meals' and 'transport', the need for other accommodation based assistance was broadly similar between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients (Figure INDIGENOUS.2).

Figure INDIGENOUS.2: Clients, by Indigenous status and by most needed services, 2014–15



Note: Most needed excludes 'Other basic assistance'.

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

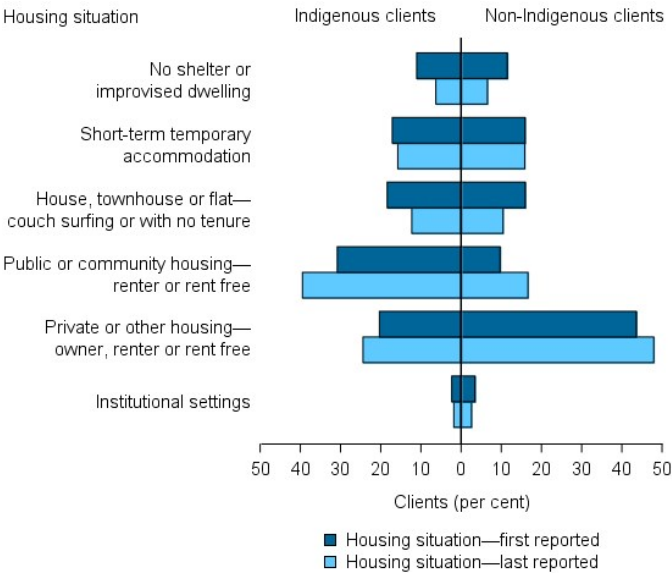
Housing outcomes

For clients with closed support periods:

- For Indigenous clients, the most common housing situation at the start of support was public or community housing (31%), compared with private or other housing for non-Indigenous clients (44%).
- For Indigenous clients, the most common housing outcome at the end of support was public or community housing (39%, or over 13,000) followed by private rental (24%, or over 8,000) (Figure INDIGENOUS.3). For non-Indigenous clients, the most common housing outcomes at the end of support were private rental (48%) followed by public or community housing (17%).

- Compared with the previous year, there has been an improvement in housing outcomes for Indigenous clients. In 2014–15 around 2,500 (or 9%) more clients ended support in public or community housing and fewer clients remained in short term or emergency accommodation.

Figure INDIGENOUS.3: Clients with closed support, by Indigenous status and by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table INDIGENOUS.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Reference

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

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Client groups of interest

Clients experiencing domestic and family violence

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

In 2014–15, 36% of all people requesting assistance from specialist homelessness agencies were escaping domestic or family violence (92,000 clients). This included 31,000 children aged under 18 and 56,000 adult females.

Clients experiencing domestic and family violence: trends over time

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12, the number of clients who had experienced domestic and family violence has increased. Key trends identified over these 4 years have been:

- Nationally the number of clients who had experienced domestic and family violence and sought assistance from specialist homelessness agencies has increased 16% since 2011–12. The majority of these additional clients requesting assistance for domestic and family violence were single parent households (with a child or children).
- This increase is due predominantly to increases in client numbers in Victoria where there has been, on average, a 15% increase each year. This increase in domestic and family violence clients is the result of more services being provided in Victoria.
- The proportion of clients who were homeless upon presentation has increased, from 33% in 2011–12 to 37% in 2014–15.
- The proportion ending support with improved housing outcomes has increased, particularly for those in private rental or owners.

Table 1: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	79,611 (34%)	77,870 (32%)	84,774 (33%)	92,349 (36%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	36	34	37	39
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	33%:67%	*35%: 65%	*37%: 63%	37%: 63%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	17%	19%	18%	17%
Sole parent	43%	43%	46%	47%
Couple with child/ren	16%	15%	14%	14%
Couple without children	6%	6%	5%	5%
Other family group	18%	18%	17%	17%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Domestic and family violence	72%	69%	70%	70%
Housing crisis	6%	6%	7%	9%
Relationship/family breakdown	5%	5%	5%	4%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	4%	5%	5%	4%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	43% (34)	*45% (32)	*44% (34)	41% (32)
Number of support periods (average per client)	126,270 (1.6)	137,896 (1.8)	150,205 (1.8)	168,274 (1.8)
Average (median) length of support (days)	93 (37)	98 (40)	*96 (43)	86 (40)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	63%	*62%	*63%	64%
Achievement of all case management goals	18%	16%	*17%	22%

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

- In 2014–15 there were over 7,500 more clients seeking assistance for domestic and family violence.
- This increase was largely due to more domestic and family violence clients in Victoria (nearly 5,700 clients) and Western Australia (about 1,200).
- Nearly half of all clients (47%) seeking assistance for domestic and family violence were living in single parent households (with a child or children).
- Sixty-three percent were at risk of homelessness when first presenting for support.

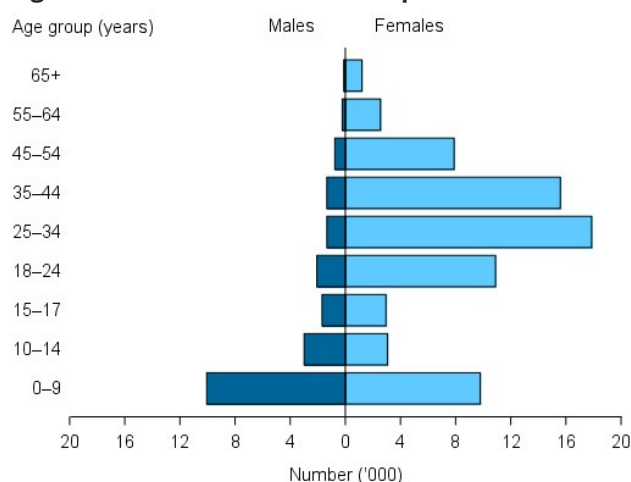
In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Age and sex

The majority of clients of specialist homelessness services who were escaping domestic and family violence were females and children (Figure DV.1). In particular:

- Females aged 15 and over accounted for 64% of this group.
- Children aged 14 and under accounted for an additional 28% (or about 26,000).
- Males aged 15 and older accounted for 8% of the client group.
- Among children aged 0–9 years, there were similar numbers of boys and girls, totalling about 20,000 children.

Figure DV.1: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence, by age and sex, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DV.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Services needed and provided

38,580

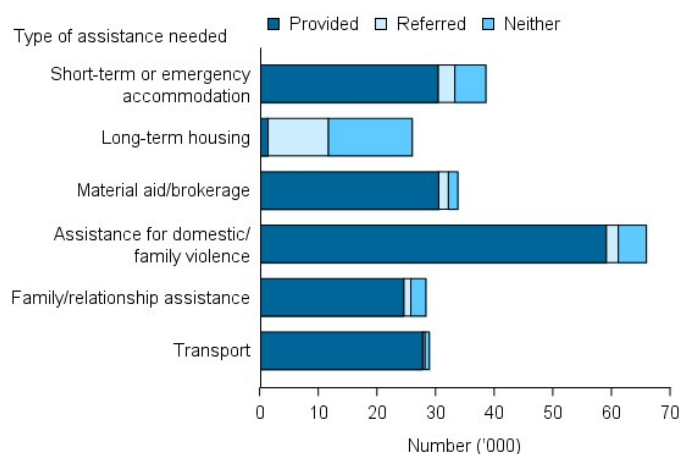
clients escaping domestic and family violence needed short term or emergency accommodation.

Clients who had experienced domestic and family violence were most commonly recorded as needing assistance for domestic/family violence (71%). The next most common services that were identified as a need for assistance were (Figure DV.2):

- short-term or emergency accommodation (42%)
- material aid/brokerage (37%)
- family/relationship assistance (31%)
- transport (31%)
- long term housing (28%).

Of the persons identified as needing assistance for domestic and family violence, 90% were provided assistance.

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



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DV.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing outcomes

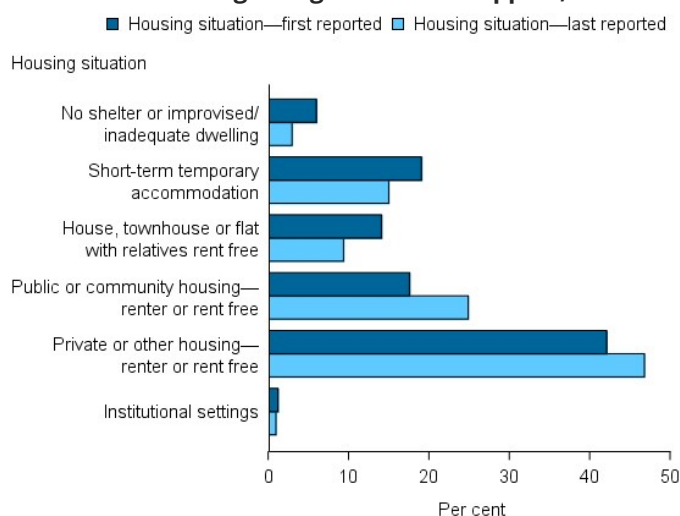
Of clients who experienced domestic and family violence with closed support periods, at the start of support:

- 61% were at risk of homelessness
- most (42%) were living in private rental accommodation (either as a renter or rent free).

The housing outcomes for those clients with closed support who had experienced domestic or family violence showed that (Figure DV.3):

- the proportion that were homeless decreased to 28% (from 39% at the beginning of their support)
- this decrease was particularly evident for those living in a house/townhouse or flat with no tenure (14% down to 9% after support)
- the largest improvement in housing situation at the end of support was for clients in public or community housing—up from 18% at the start of support to 25% at the end of support.

Figure DV.3: Clients who have experienced domestic and family violence and who had closed support, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DV.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Reference

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

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Client groups of interest

Clients with a disability

The 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) estimates that almost 1 in 5 Australians have a disability. This estimate includes all those with any disability including mild and severe disabilities [1]. The SHSC identifies people with core activity limitations and their level of need for assistance in different life areas including those that may impact on housing and employment, and differentiates them from people without activity limitations. The analysis of the availability and appropriateness of homelessness services for this group of clients allows for comparable information about people with disability across a range of government services.

The reporting of disability in the SHSC

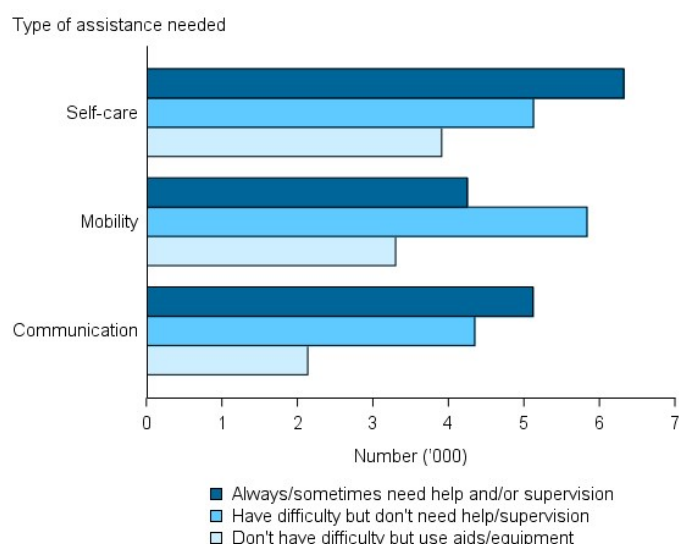
The SHSC disability questions are asked of all clients and are based on core activity limitations and whether the client has any need for assistance with these activities. In this report, people who identified that they had a limitation in core activities (self-care, mobility and/or communication) and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

In 2014–15 23,272 clients (or 11% of the SHS population) reported a limitation with a core activity. The distribution of these clients, by the extent of their need for assistance, is presented in Figure DIS.1. The categories of self-care, mobility and communication are not mutually exclusive as a client can have a need for assistance for more than one core activity.

Of the 23,272 clients reporting a limitation with self-care, mobility or communication:

- 38% always or sometimes needed assistance
- 40% have difficulty but don't need assistance
- 22% did not have difficulty but used aids/equipment.

Figure DIS.1: Clients reporting core activity limitations, by extent of need for assistance with core activities, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DIS.2 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Of the 3 categories of core activities:

- About 15,000 clients reported self-care limitations, of which 27% always/sometimes needed help and/or supervision
- About 13,000 reported mobility limitations, and 18% always/sometimes needed help and/or supervision
- Nearly 12,000 clients reported communication limitations, of which 22% always/sometimes needed help and/or supervision.

Clients with a disability who require assistance

This is the second year for which information on clients based on core activity limitations together with their level of need for assistance has been collected. In 2014–15, of the 23,272 clients who had a core activity limitation, 8,789 clients (or 4% of all SHS clients) answered that they 'always/sometimes need help and/or supervision' with self-care, mobility or communication (Table DIS.1). It is these clients who are described in this section.

Table DIS.1: Clients with a disability who require assistance: at a glance—trends over time

	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	*6,979 (4%)	8,789 (4%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	3.0	3.7
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)		
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	42%: 58%	43%: 57%
Living arrangement		
Lone person	37%	34%
Sole parent	26%	27%
Couple with child/ren	10%	10%
Couple without children	7%	6%
Other family group	20%	23%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)		
Housing crisis	18%	21%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	15%	12%
Domestic and family violence	14%	15%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	42% (58)	40% (55)
Average (median) length of support (days)	121 (68)	108 (59)
Number of support periods (average per client)	16,382 (2.3)	19,541 (2.2)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	50%	68%
Achievement of all case management goals	18%	19%

Notes

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

Source: Specialist homelessness services annual reports 2013–14 and 2014–15.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report ‘main reason’ and ‘reasons for seeking assistance’. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Support received by clients with a disability was longer than the general SHS population, suggesting that these clients are presenting with potentially more complex needs. In 2014–15 clients who always/sometimes need help and/or supervision with self-care, mobility or communication:

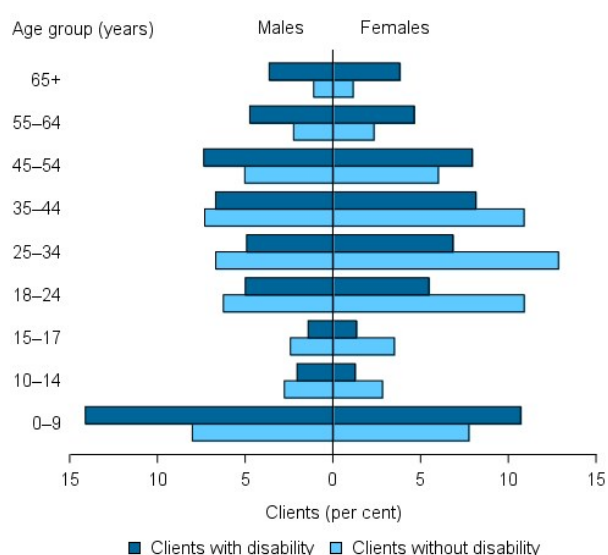
- Were supported on average for 108 days (median 59 days), significantly longer than the average support length of all clients (76 days (median 33 days)).
- Were more likely to receive accommodation (40%) than the general SHS population (33%), and for those who did, the length of supported accommodation was much longer (median 55 nights compared with 34 nights for the general SHS population).

Client demographics

Of the clients reporting that they always/sometimes need help and/or supervision with self-care, mobility or communication in 2014–15:

- One in 4 clients (25%) were young children aged between 0 and 9 (Figure DIS.2). Also, there was a higher proportion of people aged over 55 (18%) compared with the broader SHS population (7%).
- About 2 in 5 clients (43%, or nearly 3,600) were homeless at the beginning of their first support period, similar to the proportion of the broader SHS population (Table DIS.6).
- Twenty-two per cent of clients were Indigenous (compared with 23% of all clients).
- The majority of clients accessed services in Major cities (68%) followed by Inner regional areas (19%).
- A larger proportion were living alone (34%) compared with all SHS clients (29%) and living in other family groups (23%).

Figure DIS.2: Clients with a disability, by age and sex, 2014–15

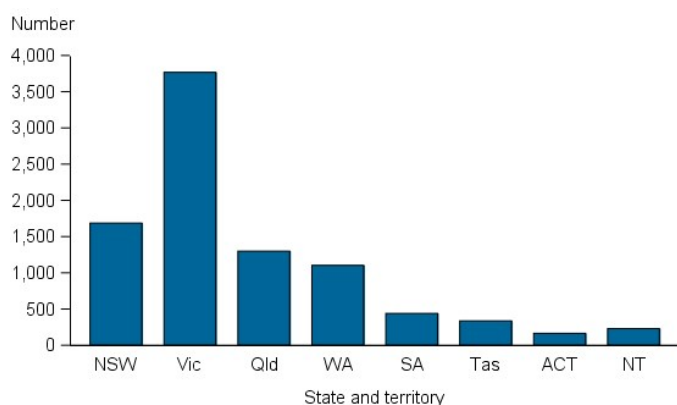


Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DIS.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

States and territories

- Almost half of these clients accessed services in Victoria (43%, or 3,767 clients). This was followed by New South Wales (19%) and Queensland (15%) (Figure DIS.3).
- Most states and territories had similar proportions of clients with disability—between 3% and 6%.

Figure DIS.3: Clients with a disability, by state and territory, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DIS.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Main source of income

Of clients (aged 15 and over) who required assistance for their disability (nearly 6,000), 90% reported that their main source of income was a government payment, in particular:

- Disability Support Pension (49%) (compared with 17% of all clients)
- New Start Allowance (16%) (compared with 27% of all clients)
- Age Pension (8%) (compared with 2% of all clients)
- Department of Veteran Affairs Disability Pension (3%) (compared with 1% of all SHS clients).

A larger proportion of male clients (52%) reported that their main source of income was from the Disability Support Pension, compared with females (46%). Clients who require assistance for a disability were less likely to report their main source of income as the parenting payment (6% compared with 19% of all SHS clients).

Employment status / educational status

- Of clients aged 15 and over who reported they needed help/and or supervision, the majority were not in the workforce (64%). A further 33% were unemployed.
- Only 3% of these clients were employed. By comparison, 11% of the SHS client population were employed.
- Of those aged 5–14, 23% were not enrolled in education compared with 16% of the broader SHS population. The proportion aged 15–24 who were not enrolled was similar to the general SHS client group (68% and 65%, respectively).

Source of referral

- Similar to other SHS clients, most of these clients seek support without a formal referral (32%). The most common formal referral was made by another (government/non-government) agency (15%), followed closely by a specialist homelessness agency/outreach worker (14%) and 8% were referred by family and/or friends.
- Clients who needed help/and or supervision were less likely to be referred to homelessness services by police (3%) than other homelessness clients (9%).

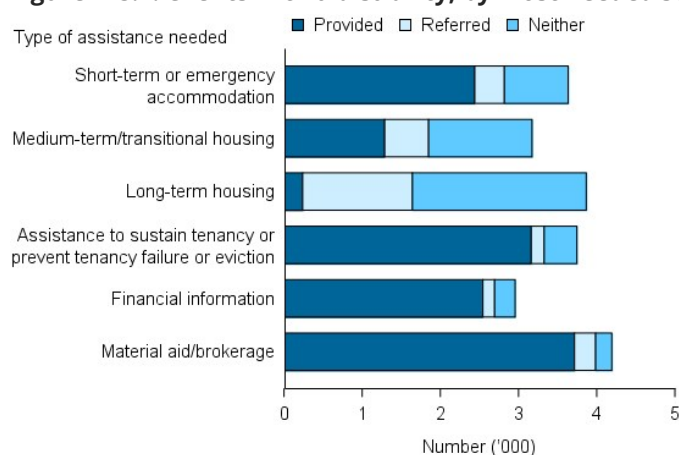
Reasons for seeking assistance

- The most common main reason this group of clients reported for seeking assistance was housing crisis (21%), the same proportion as the broader SHS population.
- Seven per cent reported the main reason they had sought assistance was for health related reasons.

Services needed and provided

- For clients who needed help/and or supervision the most common assistance identified as needed was for material aid/brokerage (48%), followed by 'assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction' (43%), short-term or emergency accommodation (41%) and long-term housing (44%) (Figure DIS.4).
- Most of these identified needs were provided: 89% of the need for material aid/brokerage; 84% of the need for 'assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction'; and 67% of the need for short-term or emergency accommodation.
- One in 5 (21%) clients was identified as in need of health/medical services and 17% were identified as in need of mental health services. Over half of these identified needs were provided—62% for health/medical services and 53% of mental health-related services.
- Just 4% of these clients were identified as in need of physical disability services and 4% in need of intellectual disability services. About one-half of the identified need for disability services were met (45%).
- Clients who needed help/and or supervision, were more likely to need family relationship assistance (22%), assistance with challenging social/ behavioural problems (21%) and assistance for trauma (13%) than the broader SHS population (17%, 13%, 9%, respectively).

Figure DIS.4: Clients with a disability, by most needed services and service provision status, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DIS.5 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

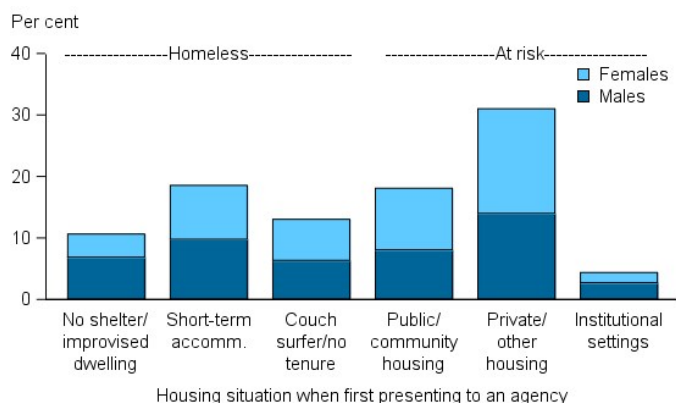
Previous experience of homelessness

- Forty-one per cent of clients who reported they needed help/and or supervision indicated they had experienced an episode of homelessness in the month before they commenced support. This is similar to the broader SHS population (39%).

Housing situation at the start of support

- Just over two-fifths (43%) of all clients with a disability were homeless when they started support (Figure DIS.5).
- Almost one third (31%) of clients with a disability were living in private housing at the start of their support, followed by short-term accommodation (19%).

Figure DIS.5: Clients with a disability, by housing situation at beginning of support, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table DIS.6 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing and other outcomes

Of those clients with a disability and who had closed support (about 6,200 clients):

- 41% were homeless at the start of support and this decreased to 32% by the end of support (Table DIS.7).

- 35% (or about 1,900 clients) ended support in private housing and 29% (or 1,600 clients) were housed in public or community housing.
 - Data for this group indicate that clients' labour force status and educational enrolment status is not changed after receiving support from SHS.
 - For instance, the proportions of these clients unemployed or not in the labour force remain unchanged at the end of support (31% unemployed, 66% not in the labour force).
 - Of those clients who needed help/and or supervision and were identified as needing assistance to obtain government allowance, there was a decrease in the proportion with no income (9% to 5%) and a reduction in those awaiting government benefit (6% to 2%).
-

Reference

1. ABS 2013. Disability, ageing and carers, Australia. Summary of findings 2012. ABS cat no. 4430.0. Canberra: ABS.
-

Last updated 26/09/2017 v2.0

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Client groups of interest

Young people presenting alone

Young people experience significant rates of homelessness [1] and this experience as a young person has been identified as one of the major pathways into longer term homelessness for adults [2].

In 2014–15

41,780 young people

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

Young people presenting alone: trends over time

Over the 4 years since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12 the number of young people presenting alone to an agency has fluctuated. Key trends over these 4 years have been:

- The rate of service use by young people presenting alone to SHS agencies has decreased from 20 young people per 10,000 population in 2011–12 to 18 young people per 10,000 in 2014–15.
- Domestic and family violence or housing crisis remain the most common main reasons why young people presenting alone are seeking assistance.
- The median length of support for these clients has increased.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Young people (15–24 years) presenting alone: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	43,531 (18%)	45,071 (18%)	44,414 (17%)	41,780 (16%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	20	20	19	18
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	50%: 50%	*51%: 49%	*50%: 50%	52%: 48%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	39%	38%	38%	39%
Sole parent	16%	16%	16%	15%
Couple with child/ren	7%	8%	8%	8%
Couple without children	6%	7%	7%	7%
Other family group	32%	31%	31%	30%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)				
Housing crisis	15%	16%	16%	21%
Domestic and family violence	16%	15%	15%	15%
Relationship/family breakdown	14%	13%	13%	12%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	39% (35)	37% (36)	*36% (41)	35% (41)
Number of support periods (average per client)	69,096 (1.6)	77,028 (1.7)	76,157 (1.7)	74,274 (1.8)
Average (median) length of support (days)	88 (35)	96 (41)	*98 (46)	92 (44)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	54%	*54%	57%	58%
Achievement of all case management goals	16%	16%	*17%	20%

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

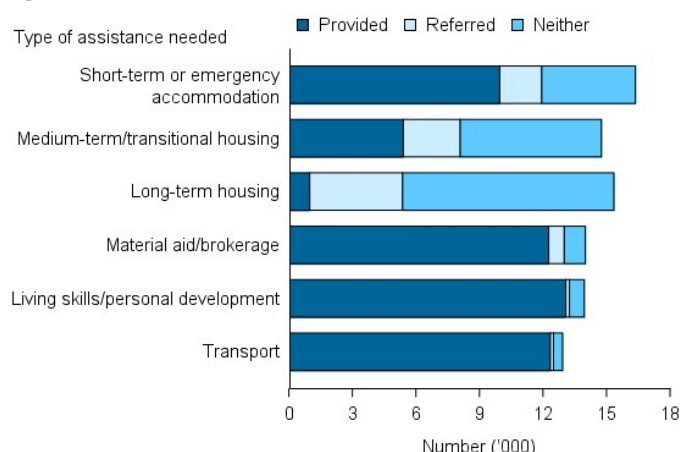
Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

- In 2014–15 16% of all clients (41,780 people) accessing specialist homelessness services were young people (aged 15–24) who presented alone. This represents a 6% reduction in client numbers compared with 2013–14 and a trend observed in all states and territories.
- For 39% of these clients they lived alone at the time of approaching a specialist homelessness agency and a further 15% lived as a couple, either with or without children.
- The majority of young people presenting alone were female (63%) and 79% were aged between 18 and 24.

Services needed and provided

- For young people presenting alone, the most common needs identified were accommodation related, including short-term or emergency accommodation (39% or over 16,000 clients), medium-term/transitional housing (35%) and long-term accommodation (37%) (Figure YOUNG.1).
- Sixty-one per cent of young people presenting alone with an identified need for short term or emergency housing were provided assistance. This proportion is lower than the general SHS client population (66%).
- Compared with the overall SHS population, young people presenting alone were more likely to be identified as needing assistance with living skills/personal development (33% compared with 20%), education (19% compared with 9%), employment (13% compared with 5%) and training (12% compared with 5%).
- The need for these services was unmet in some cases (20% for those who identified needs for education, 26% for employment and 27% for training assistance).

Figure YOUNG.1: Young people presenting alone, by top 6 most needed services and service provision status, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table YOUNG.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

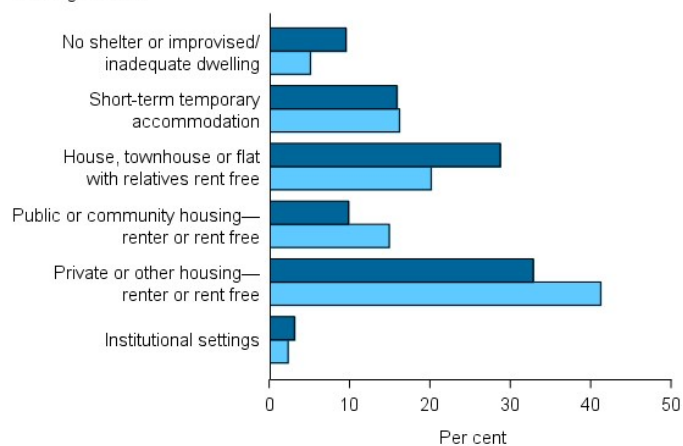
Housing outcomes

For young people presenting alone who had closed support periods:

- The rate of homelessness declined from 54% at the beginning of support to 41% at the end of support (Figure YOUNG.2).
- The most common housing outcome for young people presenting alone was in private or other housing (as a renter, rent free or owner) (41%)—an increase from 33% at the beginning of support.
- At the beginning of support, 29% of young people who presented alone were 'couch surfing' or staying in housing with no tenure. This reduced to 20% by the end of support.

Figure YOUNG.2: Young people presenting alone who had closed support, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2014–15

Housing situation



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table YOUNG.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

References

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

Last updated 19/02/2018 v5.0

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Client groups of interest

Older clients

People aged 55 or older comprised 7% of all clients (18,741 people) of specialist homelessness services in 2014–15. Specialist homelessness service use by this group is increasing with numbers up 25% since the collection began in 2011–12.

Older clients: trends over time

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12 the number of older clients seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has increased. Key trends identified in this client population over the 4 years are:

- The rate of service use by older clients has increased from 7 older clients per 10,000 population to 8 per 10,000.
- This group represents one of the growing populations seeking assistance from specialist homelessness agencies. While the proportion of older clients is small (7% in 2014–15) this client group has experienced an average annual growth rate of 8% each year.
- The median number of days older clients need support has increased, suggesting these clients are presenting with potentially more complex issues taking longer to resolve and are having greater difficulty in finding suitable housing.

Table 1: Older clients (55 years and older): at a glance-trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	15,052 (6%)	17,193 (7%)	18,182 (7%)	18,741 (7%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	6.7	7.6	7.9	8.0
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	31%: 69%	*33%: 67%	*33%: 67%	33%: 67%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	61%	61%	60%	59%
Sole parent	7%	7%	8%	8%
Couple with child/ren	4%	4%	4%	5%
Couple without children	12%	11%	11%	11%
Other family group	16%	16%	17%	18%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)				
Financial difficulties	22%	22%	21%	18%
Domestic and family violence	17%	15%	17%	18%
Housing crisis	11%	14%	15%	18%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	22% (30)	22% (34)	*21% (33)	20% (31)
Number of support periods (average per client)	20,222 (1.3)	25,875 (1.5)	26,731 (1.5)	27,811 (1.5)
Average (median) length of support (days)	64 (17)	71 (18)	*69 (21)	66 (24)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	47%	*42%	*45%	49%
Achievement of all case management goals	30%	30%	*30%	31%

Notes

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Characteristics of older clients

Similar numbers of male and female

older clients sought support from specialist homelessness agencies in 2014–15.

- In 2014–15 older clients were more likely than the broader SHS population to be male (46% compared with 41% of all clients). This group had a much larger proportion of lone persons compared with younger age groups.
- Of older clients, two-thirds were aged 55–64 (66%) and the remaining one-third was 65 or over.
- Only 4% of Indigenous clients were aged over 55 compared with 8% of non-Indigenous clients.
- Older clients were less likely to be homeless on presentation than younger clients. For example, 33% of clients aged 55 and over were homeless on presentation compared with 43% of the broader SHS population.
- For older clients there were 3 main reasons most commonly reported for seeking assistance: financial difficulties, domestic and family violence and housing crisis (all 18%).

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'.

Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See Technical information for further details.

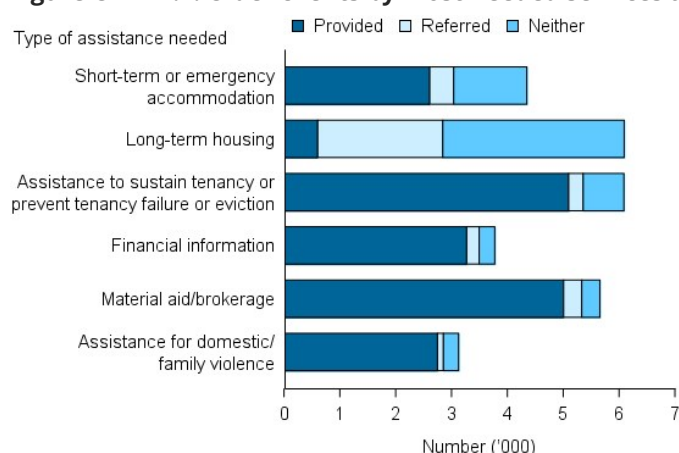
Services needed and provided

- Older clients were less likely to request accommodation services (45%) than the broader SHS population (56%). Of those who did request accommodation, most needed long term housing (33%); they were more likely to be provided with this form of accommodation (10% of those who requested it) compared with the general SHS population (6%).

Other services most commonly needed by older clients were for:

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

Figure OLDER.1: Older clients by most needed services and service provision status (top 6), 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table OLDER.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Housing outcomes

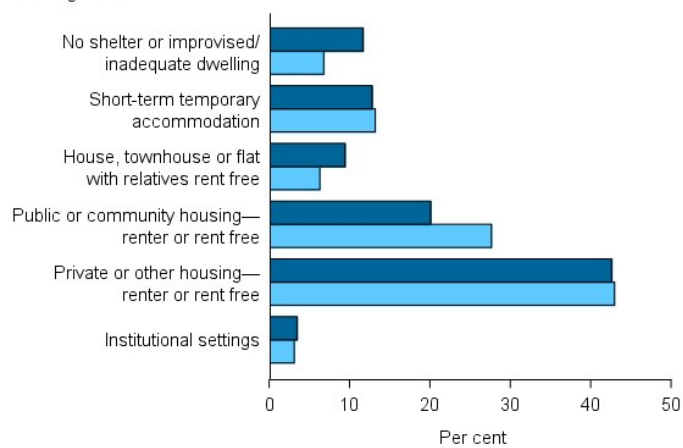
The most common housing outcomes for older clients with closed support periods were in:

- public or community housing (28%)—an increase from 20% at the beginning of support (Figure OLDER.2)
- no shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling (12% at beginning of support)—this reduced to 7% at the end of support.

Figure OLDER.2: Older clients with closed support, by housing situation at beginning of support and end of support, 2014–15

■ Housing situation—first reported ■ Housing situation—last reported

Housing situation



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table OLDER.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

Last updated 26/09/2017 v4.0

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Client groups of interest

Clients with a current mental health issue

In 2014–15, 1 in 4 clients, or 63,000 people, who received assistance from a specialist homelessness agency were identified as having a current mental health issue.

Clients with a current mental health issue: trends over time

The number of clients presenting with a current mental health issue has been increasing since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12. Key trends identified over the 4 years to 2014–15 have been:

- Clients with a current mental health issue are the fastest growing client group within the SHS population, growing at an average annual rate of 12% per year. This increase is likely to be due to a number of factors possibly including increased identification and reporting of mental illness among clients.
- These clients consistently need longer periods of support compared with the broader SHS population.
- Domestic and family violence and housing crisis remain the most common main reason these clients seek assistance from specialist homelessness agencies.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Table 1: Clients with a current mental health issue: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	44,835 (19%)	48,599 (20%)	*56,301 (22%)	63,062 (25%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	20	21	24	27
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	49%: 51%	*51%: 49%	*50%: 50%	50%: 50%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	47%	48%	48%	46%
Sole parent	21%	21%	22%	22%
Couple with child/ren	7%	7%	7%	8%
Couple without children	5%	5%	5%	6%
Other family group	19%	19%	18%	18%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Housing crisis	15%	16%	18%	24%
Domestic and family violence	17%	15%	*16%	16%
Financial difficulties	11%	12%	12%	11%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	10%	12%	12%	12%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	49% (49)	48% (48)	*44% (48)	42% (44)
Number of support periods (average per client)	98,273 (2.2)	115,949 (2.4)	128,820 (2.3)	144,799 (2.3)
Average (median) length of support (days)	121 (67)	128 (73)	*119 (67)	109 (62)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	71%	*69%	*69%	70%
Achievement of all case management goals	14%	15%	*18%	19%

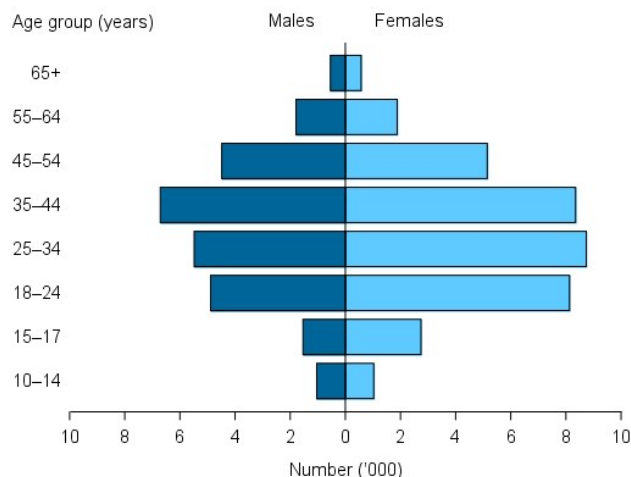
1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Age and sex

Similar to the broader SHS population, the majority of clients with a current mental health issue were female (58%). Nearly half of all clients with a current mental health issue (46%, or 29,300), were aged between 25 and 44 (Figure MH.1).

Figure MH.1: Clients with a current mental health issue, by age and sex, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table MH.1 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

About 30,000

clients with a current mental health issue needed short term or emergency accommodation; 65% were provided assistance.

Of those clients with a current mental health issue, almost 20,000 identified a need for mental health based services with:

- twenty-seven per cent identifying a need for mental health services
- twelve per cent identifying a need for psychological services
- seven per cent identifying a need for psychiatric services.

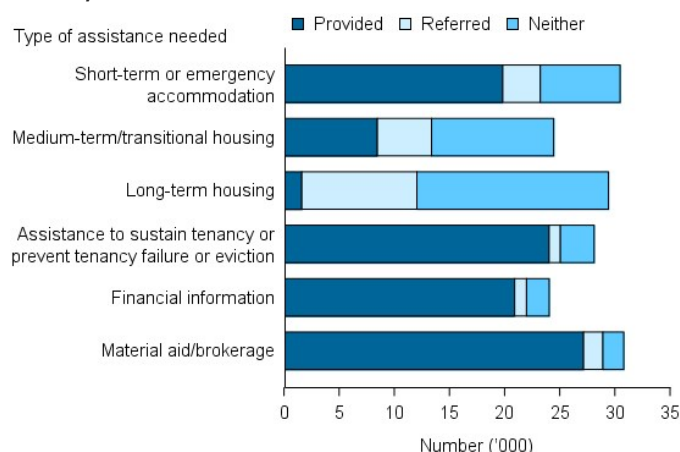
Compared with the general SHS population, clients with a current mental health issue were more likely to identify a need for:

- drug and alcohol services (11% compared with 4% of the general SHS population).
- health/medical services (23% compared with 10% of the broader SHS population)
- long-term housing (47% compared with 33% of the general SHS population).

High proportions of clients with a current mental health issue also identified as needing:

- material aid/brokerage (49% or over 30,000 clients); with assistance provided to 88% of these clients
- financial information (38% or over 24,000 clients); with assistance provided to 87% of these clients
- transport (34%); with assistance provided to 94% of these clients (Figure MH.2).

Figure MH.2: Clients with a current mental health issue, by top 6 most needed services and service provision status, 2014–15



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

Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table MH.3 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

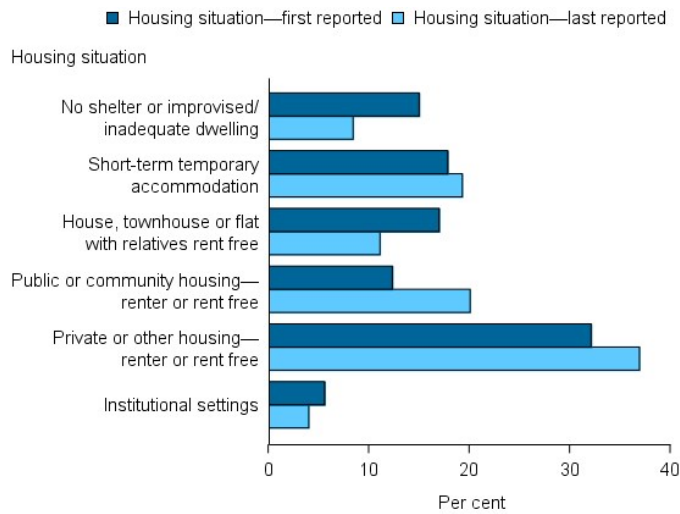
For clients with a current mental health issue and who had closed support:

- 50% (or about 21,000) were homeless at the beginning of support, and this decreased to 39% at end of support
- improvement in housing outcomes was particularly evident for clients who first presented with having no shelter or improvised/inadequate dwelling, with 15% of clients with this housing situation at the beginning of support compared with 8% at the end of their support (Table MH.4).

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

- thirty-seven per cent (or nearly 15,000 clients) in private rental (increased from 32%)
- twenty per cent (or about 8,000 clients) in public/community housing (an increase from 12%).

Figure MH.3: Clients with a current mental health issue and who had closed support, by housing situation at the beginning and end of support, 2014–15



Source: Specialist homelessness services 2014–15, [National supplementary table MH.4 \(702KB XLS\)](#).

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Client groups of interest

Clients leaving care

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

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

In 2014–15, over 6,000 clients or 2% of specialist homelessness service clients were identified as leaving care.

Clients leaving care: trends over time

The proportion of clients leaving care and seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has remained relatively stable over the 4 years of the SHS collection to 2014–15. Key trends identified in this client population over these 4 years are:

- Taking into account changes in population size, the rate of service use by clients leaving care has increased.
- While males consistently made up the majority of clients leaving care the age of these clients has increased; the age group with the highest proportion has moved from 25–34 to 35–44 years.

Table 1: Clients leaving care: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	4,654 (2%)	5,542 (2%)	5,573 (2%)	6,084 (2%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.6
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	28%: 72%	*33%: 67%	33%: 67%	32%: 68%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	58%	56%	57%	59%
Sole parent	10%	11%	11%	10%
Couple with child/ren	2%	3%	3%	3%
Couple without children	1%	2%	2%	2%
Other family	6%	6%	7%	8%
Other group	23%	21%	21%	19%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 4)				
Housing crisis	11%	12%	13%	20%
Transition from other care arrangements	15%	12%	13%	13%
Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements	n.a.	10%	9%	8%
Mental health issues	11%	9%	9%	9%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	59% (38)	57% (45)	*54% (48)	52% (44)
Number of support periods(average per client)	8,038 (1.7)	10,207 (1.8)	9,548 (1.7)	11,170 (1.8)
Average (median) length of support (days)	103 (52)	122 (62)	*120 (62)	109 (58)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	67%	*69%	*71%	71%
Achievement of all case management goals	16%	15%	*16%	19%

n.a. Not available.

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. See [Technical information](#) for further details.

Characteristics of clients leaving care

- Of clients leaving care, 1 in 5 was leaving a psychiatric hospital (22%), with the next most common being hospital (16%) or rehabilitation (15%). The definition of clients leaving care (for the purposes of the SHSC) also includes those seeking assistance for transitioning care (27% of clients).
- The majority of those clients leaving care in 2014–15 were males (56%) and 22% of the male clients were aged 35–44 years. Female clients tended to be younger with nearly 1 in 4 aged 18–24 (24%).

Services needed and provided

51%

of all clients leaving care arrangements needed short term or emergency accommodation.

- A higher proportion of clients leaving care requested medium term/transitional housing (40%) compared with the broader SHS population (27%) and these clients were more likely to be provided with accommodation (44% of those who requested it).
- Long-term housing was also commonly identified as a need for this client group (40%), but this was only able to be provided to 8% of those clients who needed it.
- Other services most commonly needed by these clients were material aid/brokerage (42%), transport (39%) and living skills/personal development (37%).

Housing outcomes

For those clients leaving care and with closed support periods:

- Fifty-three per cent (or over 2,200 clients) were living in institutional settings at the beginning of their support (Table LCARE.4). This proportion decreased to 23% at the end of support.
- Almost one-third (31%, or nearly 1,300 clients) were classified as homeless at the beginning of their support period, with the majority living in short-term temporary accommodation (57%).
- At the end of support the proportion of clients classified as homeless had increased (38%, or over 1,400 clients). This increase most likely reflects clients leaving institutional settings and becoming homeless.

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Client groups of interest

Clients exiting custodial arrangements

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

- In 2014–15, 6,866 clients (3% of all clients of specialist homelessness clients) were identified as clients exiting from a custodial setting.
- The majority of clients who exited custodial settings in 2014–15 were male (78%) and aged between 25 and 44 (60%).

Clients exiting custodial arrangements: trends over time

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12 the number of people exiting custodial arrangements and seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services has been increasing. Key trends identified in this client population over these 4 years are:

- Both the proportion of clients receiving accommodation and the length of their accommodation (median) have declined for clients recently exiting custodial arrangements.
- Housing outcomes at the end of support for this client group have not improved over time; while fewer clients ended support in institutional settings and more ended support housed in short term accommodation each year, the proportion of clients in these groups combined, has remained the same over time.
- The proportion of these clients achieving all case management goals was lower than the broader SHS population every year; this group was one of the lowest achieving groups in the SHS population on this measure.

Table 1: Clients exiting custodial arrangements: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	5,132 (2%)	6,399 (3%)	6,756 (3%)	6,866 (3%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	2.3	2.8	2.9	2.9
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	33%: 67%	*36%: 64%	*27%: 73%	31%: 69%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	61%	61%	68%	67%
Sole parent	5%	5%	5%	5%
Couple with child/ren	2%	2%	2%	2%
Couple without children	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other family	5%	5%	4%	4%
Other group	26%	25%	19%	20%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)				
Transition from custodial arrangements	56%	57%	59%	55%
Housing crisis	6%	7%	8%	15%
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	4%	5%	5%	5%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	45% (31)	41% (29)	*40% (28)	41% (27)
Number of support periods (average per client)	8,710 (1.7)	11,709 (1.8)	*11,841 (1.8)	12,506 (1.8)
Average (median) length of support (days)	80 (34)	96 (46)	*95 (53)	84 (46)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	53%	*58%	*53%	50%
Achievement of all case management goals	15%	10%	*11%	16%

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant national supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Services needed and provided

- Of those with an identified need for short-term or emergency housing (45%, or about 3,000), almost 3 in 4 (73%) were provided it. Similarly, 91% of the clients leaving care needing assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction received this assistance.
- Clients leaving custodial care were more likely to need assistance with drug/alcohol counselling (12%) than all homeless clients (4%).

Housing outcomes

- At the beginning of support, the majority of clients exiting custodial care were living in institutions (60%), short-term or emergency accommodation (12%) or house, townhouse or flat—‘couch surfer’ or with no tenure (8%).
- The proportion of clients exiting custodial arrangements who reported living in institutional settings decreased to 40% at the end of support.
- One in 5 clients (22%) was housed in short term temporary accommodation at the end of support, up from 12% at the beginning of support.

Reference

1. Australian Government 2008. The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

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Client groups of interest

Children on care and protection orders

Care and protection orders (CPOs) are legal orders or arrangements that place some responsibility for a child's welfare with child protection authorities. They set up arrangements to provide support and assistance to children and young people to protect them from abuse, neglect and other harm, or where their parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection [1].

Children on a care and protection order: trends over time

Since the beginning of the SHS collection in 2011–12 the number of children on a care and protection order seeking assistance has been decreasing. Key trends identified over this time have been:

- CPO clients make up a small proportion of the SHS client population, and this group has been decreasing on average by 10% each year.
- The proportion of CPO clients receiving accommodation has been steadily decreasing, but the length of accommodation for those receiving accommodation has been increasing.
- In general, the proportion of these CPO client groups with a case management plan has increased since 2011–12 however, the proportion achieving all case management goals has not increased in parallel and this group remains one of the lowest achieving groups in the SHS population by this measure.

Table 1: Children (0–17 years) on a care and protection order: at a glance—trends over time

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of clients (proportion of all clients)	2,681 (1%)	2,146 (1%)	2,205 (1%)	1,970 (1%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.8
Housing situation at the beginning of first support period (all clients)				
Homeless: At risk of homelessness	52%: 48%	*51%: 49%	52%: 48%	51%: 49%
Living arrangement				
Lone person	24%	26%	22%	20%
Sole parent	18%	20%	23%	24%
Couple with child/ren	9%	8%	9%	11%
Couple without children	3%	4%	3%	2%
Other family	30%	27%	28%	30%
Other group	16%	16%	16%	13%
Main reason for seeking assistance (Top 3)				
Domestic and family violence	15%	12%	11%	17%
Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements	10%	13%	13%	13%
Relationship/family breakdown	17%	13%	15%	11%
Proportion receiving accommodation (median (nights))	57% (40)	52% (40)	*51% (46)	45% (52)
Number of support periods (average per client)	4,052 (1.5)	3,283 (1.5)	3,162 (1.4)	2,831 (1.4)
Average (median) length of support (days)	105 (49)	114 (57)	*114 (63)	110 (64)
Proportion of a client group with a case management plan	71%	*70%	*79%	81%
Achievement of all case management goals	15%	13%	*18%	17%

1. Rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population (ERP) at 30 June of the reference year.
2. * Indicates where previously published data have been revised to ensure consistent reporting over time. 2011–12 data were revised in December 2013 but not previously reported in this format.
3. The denominator for the proportion achieving all case management goals is the number of client groups with a case management plan. Denominator values for proportions are provided in the relevant National supplementary table.

Source: Specialist homelessness services Annual Reports 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Characteristics of clients

- In 2014–15, there were an estimated 1,970 children on a CPO who received assistance from specialist homelessness agencies.
- CPO clients were more likely to be female (54%) and most female clients were aged 15–17 (45%).
- Almost half the male CPO clients (46%) were aged between 0 and 9 years.

Services needed and provided

Children on a Care and Protection Order

were more likely to end support housed in public or community housing (31%) than the general SHS client population (22%).

The most common service needs identified for children on a CPO were (Table CPO.3):

- transport (41%)
- living skills/personal development (38%)
- short-term or emergency accommodation (39%)
- medium-term/transitional housing (34%).

CPO clients were more likely than other clients to be identified as needing assistance with transport and living skills than other SHS clients. Also, CPO clients needing assistance for short-term or emergency accommodation (39%) were also more likely to receive assistance for it (77% of those who identified a need for this type of accommodation) than all SHS clients (66%).

Housing outcomes

The most common form of housing at the beginning of support for clients on a CPO (who had closed support) was private or other housing (renter, rent free or owner) (29%), followed by short-term or emergency accommodation or house, townhouse or flat (couch surfer or with no tenure) (both 22%) (Table CPO.4).

At the end of support, clients on a CPO were most likely to be living in:

- private or other housing (renter, rent free or owner) (32%)
- public or community housing (31%).

Reference

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2015. Child protection Australia 2013–14. Child welfare series no. 61. Cat. no. CWS 52. Canberra: AIHW.

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Technical information

Data quality statement: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2014–15

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, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

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

The 2014–15 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement is available from [METeOR](#).

In 2014–15 changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. In addition to improvements in the Client Management System (CMS) for these data items, wording providing specific examples of housing crisis was removed from the section relating to reason for seeking assistance in the CMS. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. These changes in agency reporting were evident in the data from all states and territories. Footnotes have been added to the Supplementary tables affected by these reporting changes. Further information on the data quality of 2014–15 SHSC data can be found in the Explanatory notes in the national and state and territory Supplementary tables.

Imputation strategy for the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

Imputation was used in an effort to adjust 2014–15 reporting to correct for two types of error: agency non-response and data error in the statistical linkage key (SLK) which is used, among other things, to determine the number of clients serviced.

Agency non-response was adjusted for in two ways: by using an agency's own reported data to adjust for missing data (explicit imputation) and by weighting fully responding agencies to adjust for similar agencies with missing data (implicit imputation). Twenty-two agencies underwent explicit imputation whilst implicit imputation was used for 31 agencies.

Invalid or missing SLK data were adjusted for by applying weights at the client level. These weights increased the counts of clients, taking into account the number of service period records with invalid or missing SLK data along with the observed distribution of the number of visits per client. There were about 22,800 support period records (approximately 5% of all records) with invalid or missing SLK data.

Data derivations

Homelessness status and other housing categories

All clients of specialist homelessness services are considered to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Homelessness and at-risk status is determined by the specific criteria described below. Clients who did not provide sufficient information to make this assessment are excluded.

These categories are designed to, as far as is possible, align with the ABS statistical definition of homelessness (ABS 2012a). However, there are some key areas where alignment may not occur. The ABS definition includes people living in severely crowded dwellings and as no specific question on crowding is included in the SHSC, this group cannot be separately identified.

Also, the ABS exclude certain groups of people from the homeless count where they appear to have accommodation alternatives or where there is a clear choice about the type of accommodation (for example, people who are travelling, people returning from overseas, certain owner builder or hobby farmers, and students living in halls of residence). However, if people in these circumstances become clients of specialist homelessness agencies, they are included here as either homeless or at risk of homelessness, depending on their housing situation as reported.

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

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

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

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

Support periods

The period of time a client receives services from a specialist homelessness agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service and ends when:

- the relationship between the client and the agency ends
- the client has reached their maximum amount of support the agency can offer
- a client has not received any services from the agency for a whole calendar month and there is no ongoing relationship.

The end of the support period is the day the client last received services from the agency.

Calculating total length of accommodation (and total length of support)

To calculate accommodation and support length, every night (for length of accommodation) or day (for length of support) the client received support or accommodation in 2014–15 is added together. This means that the total number of days/nights presented for clients does not necessarily represent a consecutive number of days/nights the client received support/accommodation. For example, a client who received accommodation for 7 nights may have had 2 separate periods of accommodation: 1 for 5 nights and another for 2 nights.

Agency remoteness area

Agencies have been classified according to their remoteness area (RA) as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure (ABS 2012c). The latest available version of the RA indicator (from the 2011 Census) has been developed by the ABS based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Indicator Australia (ARIA) used in the 2001 Census.

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

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

Identifying and meeting service needs

Identifying clients' needs for a service

The SHSC collects information on the needs of clients during their period of support from a specialist homelessness agency. Needs may be identified by the client and/or the service provider. Although this information is collected at the beginning of a support period, updated at the end of each month a client is supported and again at the end of each support period, each individual need is only recorded once in any collection month. For these analyses, a client need for a service is recorded if the client needed that service at any time in 2014–15. For example, a client is recorded as needing short-term accommodation if they were recorded as needing short-term accommodation in any collection month of 2014–15, regardless of the number of months over which this need was recorded, or the number of times during 2014–15 they presented with this need.

Meeting clients' service needs

There are several aspects to analysing the extent to which clients' needs for assistance are met. The first is to analyse the services provided to a client directly by the specialist homelessness agency. Where agencies are unable to provide services directly to clients or unable to fully meet the need they often refer the client to other organisations (either other specialist homelessness agencies or other organisations) that can provide those services. This information is also collected in the SHSC and is considered an important form of assistance that agencies provide, although it is not possible to know if these referrals resulted in the provision of services.

All information on services that are provided, whether referred or not, are recorded in the same way as service needs. That is, a service is recorded as provided if the client was provided that type of assistance at any time in 2014–15.

In some circumstances, an agency will not be able to either provide required services directly to clients, or refer them to another organisation—this is considered to be an unmet need. Further information about unmet needs can be found in the Unmet demand section of the report.

Indigenous clients

A client is considered as Indigenous if, at any time in 2014–15, they identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

In the SHSC, information on Indigenous status is only provided with explicit client consent to report this information. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander was not reported for 11% of clients in 2014–15.

Clients born overseas

A client is identified as overseas-born, if at any time in 2014–15, they identified that their country of birth was a country other than Australia.

In the SHSC, information on country of birth is only provided with explicit client consent to report this information. Country of birth information was not reported for 14% of clients in 2014–15.

Young people presenting alone

Young people are defined as clients aged 15–24 who presented alone in their first support period in the reporting period.

The age of the client is defined as the client's age on the start date of their first support period in the reporting period. For those who were ongoing clients at the beginning of the reporting period, the client's age on the first day of the reporting period is used.

Older people

Older people are defined as clients aged 55 or older.

The age of the client is defined as their age on the start date of their first support period in the reporting period. For those who were ongoing clients at the beginning of the reporting period, the client's age on the first day of the reporting period is used.

Clients who had experienced domestic and family violence

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

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

The SHSC reports on clients who are victims of domestic and family violence. Current perpetrators of domestic and family violence who may also be receiving assistance from a homelessness agency are not identified in the SHSC.

Clients with a current mental health issue

A client was identified as having a current mental health issue if they provided any of the following information:

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

This analysis does not include clients aged under 10.

Clients who were exiting custodial arrangements

Clients are counted as leaving a custodial setting if, in their first support period during the reporting period, either in the week before or at presentation:

- their dwelling type was: adult correctional facility, youth or juvenile justice detention centre or immigration detention centre or
- their reason for seeking assistance was: transition from custodial arrangements or
- their source of formal referral to the agency was: youth or juvenile justice detention centre, or adult correctional facility.

Some of these clients were still in custody at the time they began receiving support.

Children aged under 10 identified as exiting from adult correction facilities or youth/juvenile justice detention centres have been excluded because of concerns about the quality of the data, as children aged under 10 years cannot be charged with a criminal offence in any jurisdiction in Australia. Children aged under 10 transitioning from immigration detention centres have been retained in this group.

Clients on a care and protection order

Clients have been identified as being on a care and protection order if they were aged under 18 and, at any time in a support period that was active in 2014–15, the agency provided a valid response to the question 'If the client is under the age of 18 and has a care or protection order, what was their care arrangements?' (either in relation to the client's status a week before presenting or when presenting).

Clients who indicated their care arrangements were with their parents or in 'other living arrangements' have not been included in this analysis.

Unassisted requests for services

Unassisted requests for services provide a measure of the number of instances where a person received no immediate services from a specialist homelessness agency. It is not a measure of the number of people who did not receive services from an agency. Numbers exclude multiple requests from the same person (at any agency) on the same day, but may include requests from the same person (at any agency) on different days.

The data are presented as a daily average of requests for services because the information that is used to create the SLK was not

available for 50% of the unmet requests for service in 2014–15. Without a valid SLK, it is not possible to identify whether a person requested the same service more than once from the same agency or from different agencies on different days. Similarly, people who received services at a later date, thus becoming clients, cannot be identified where a valid SLK is not available.

Technical notes

Data presentation

Data presented in the report and in the supplementary tables are mainly based on 'clients', with some data based on 'support periods' or 'client groups' (or 'presenting units'—which identify clients who present together to a specialist homelessness agency, including clients who present alone—and receive a service). Information on clients who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or part of a group of special interest, is mostly client-level data and information on agencies, unmet demand and trends data is predominantly support period data.

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

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has strict confidentiality policies which have their basis in section 29 of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987 (AIHW Act) and the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act). Cells in supplementary tables may be suppressed for either confidentiality reasons or where estimates are based on small numbers, resulting in low reliability. Information that results in attribute disclosure will be suppressed unless agreement from the particular data provider to publish the data has been reached. Information on AIHW's Privacy policy is available on the [privacy page](#).

Population estimates used for rates calculations

All rates in this report, including historical rates, have been calculated using population estimates based on the 2011 Census. All Indigenous rates in this report are calculated using the Indigenous population estimates and projections, based on the 2011 Census.

Population rates

Crude rates are calculated using the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population (ERP) at the start of the range (for example, rates for 2011–12 were calculated using the ERP at 30 June 2011). Rates for 2014–15 data were calculated using the preliminary ERP at the 30 June 2014.

Age-standardised rates

Population rates were adjusted (standardised) for age to enhance the comparison between populations over time that have different age structures. Specifically, direct standardisation has been used where age-specific rates are applied to a standard population (the ERP as at the 30 June 2001, unless otherwise specified). This effectively removes the influence of age structure on the calculated rate and is referred to as the age-standardised rate. In this publication direct age-standardisation has been used to compare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2011).

Rate ratio

Rate ratios are mainly used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates and provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. A rate ratio is calculated by dividing the client rate for Indigenous Australian by the client rate for non-Indigenous Australians.

Average annual rates of change

The average annual rates of change or growth rates have been calculated as geometric rates:

$$\text{Average rate of change} = ((P_n/P_o)^{(1/n)} - 1) \times 100$$

where:

P_n = value in the later time period

P_o = value in the earlier time period

n = number of years between the 2 time periods.

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Glossary and abbreviations

Concept	Definition
Accommodation services	Accommodation services include short-term or emergency accommodation, medium-term/transitional housing, assistance to obtain long term housing, assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction and assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears.
At risk of homelessness	A person is described as at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation or they are experiencing one or more of a range of factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness. Risk factors include: • financial stress (including due to loss of income, low income, gambling, change of family circumstances) • housing affordability stress and housing crisis (pending evictions/foreclosures, rental and/or mortgage arrears) • inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, including accommodation that is unsafe, unsuitable or overcrowded • previous accommodation ended • relationship/family breakdown • child abuse, neglect or environments where children are at risk • sexual abuse • domestic/family violence • non-family violence • mental health issues and other health problems • problematic alcohol, drug or substance use • employment difficulties and unemployment • problematic gambling • transitions from custodial and care arrangements, including out-of-home care, • independent living arrangements for children aged under 18, health and mental health • facilities/programs, juvenile/youth justice and correctional facilities • discrimination, including racial discrimination (e.g. Aboriginal people in the urban rental market) • disengagement with school or other education and training • involvement in, or exposure to, criminal activities • antisocial behaviour • lack of family and/or community support • staying in a boarding house for 12 weeks or more without security of tenure. The measurement of this concept in the SHSC is defined in the Data derivation section.
Client	A Specialist homelessness agency client is a person who receives a specialist homelessness service. A client can be of any age. Children are also clients if they receive a service from a specialist homelessness agency. To be a client the person must: • directly receive a service and not just be a beneficiary of a service. Children who present with an adult and receive a service are considered to be a client. • children of a client or other household members who present but do not directly receive a service are not considered to be clients.
Client with a current mental health issue	SHS clients with a current mental health issue are identified as such if they have provided any of the following information: • they indicated that at the beginning of a support period they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the last 12 months • their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health service • they reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance • their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was as a psychiatric hospital or unit • they had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months • at some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services.

Concept	Definition
Client with a disability	SHS clients with a disability are identified as such if at any time they have provided the following information: • they 'always/sometimes need help or supervision' with self-care, mobility or communication for any support period during the reporting period. The definition used to identify clients with a disability (for the purposes of analyses for this report) is similar to that used for ABS Census questions that measure 'core activity need for assistance'. The Census questions are a simplified version of the comprehensive questions used in the ABS Survey of Disability and Carers (SDAC). The Census's simplified questions are conceptually comparable with 'severe or profound core activity limitation' in the SDAC. The ABS Census aims to identify people who need assistance in their day-to-day lives with any or all of the following core activities: self-care, mobility or communication (ABS 2012b). The SHSC takes a similar approach in gathering information from clients of specialist homelessness services about disability. To align with the ABS definition of 'core activity need for assistance', clients who did not report needing assistance (such as 'have difficulty but don't need help/supervision' or 'don't have difficulty, but use aids/equipment') with self-care, mobility or communication are not included as clients needing assistance with disability for SHS analyses.
Disability measurement in the SHSC	Measuring disability in the SHSC. A long-term health condition is one that has lasted, or is expected to last, 6 months or more. Examples of long-term health conditions that might restrict everyday activities include severe asthma, epilepsy, mental health conditions, hearing loss, arthritis, autism, kidney disease, chronic pain, speech impediment and stroke. Disability is a general term that covers: • impairments in body structures or functions (for example, loss or abnormality of a body part) • limitations in everyday activities (such as difficulty bathing or managing daily routines) • restrictions in participation in life situations (such as needing special arrangements to attend work). The SHSC collects information on whether and to what extent a long-term health condition or disability restricts clients' everyday activities across the following 3 life areas: • Self-care—the client needs help/supervision with self-care (e.g. showering or bathing, dressing or undressing, using the toilet or eating food) • Mobility—the client needs help/supervision with mobility (e.g. moving around the house, moving around outside the home, or getting into or out of a chair) • Communication—the client needs help/supervision with communication (e.g. understanding or being understood by other people, including people they know).

Concept	Definition
Homelessness	A person is defined as homeless if they are living in either: • non-conventional accommodation or 'sleeping rough', or • short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options. Non-conventional accommodation (primary homeless) is defined as: • living on the streets • sleeping in parks • squatting • staying in cars or railway carriages • living in improvised dwellings • living in the long grass. This definition aligns closely with the cultural definition of primary homelessness. Short-term or emergency accommodation (secondary homeless) includes: • refuges • crisis shelters • couch surfing • living temporarily with friends and relatives • insecure accommodation on a short-term basis • emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency (for example, in hotels, motels and so forth). This definition aligns closely with the cultural definition of secondary homelessness. Based on the ABS definition, the state of a person who does not have suitable accommodation alternatives and whose current living arrangement: • is in a dwelling that is inadequate (is unfit for human habitation or lacks basic facilities such as kitchen and bathroom facilities), or • has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or • does not allow them to have control, and access to space for social relations (including • personal—or household—living space, ability to maintain privacy and exclusive access to kitchen and bathroom facilities) (ABS 2012c). Note: 'Homelessness' can be defined in different ways for different purposes. The measurement of Homelessness in the SHSC is defined in the Data derivation section.
	Other support services Other support services refer to the assistance, other than accommodation services, provided to a client. Includes domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.
	Specialist homelessness agency A specialist homelessness agency is an organisation which receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services to a client. These can be either not-for-profit and for profit agencies.
	Specialist homelessness service(s) Specialist homelessness service(s) is assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. The specialist homelessness services in scope for this collection include accommodation provision, assistance to sustain housing, domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CPO	Care and Protection Order
DSS	Department of Social Services
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SLK	statistical linkage key

Symbols

-	nil or rounded to zero
..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data

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Last updated 26/09/2017 v7.0

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Notes

[Specialist Homelessness Services \(SHS\) collection data cubes](#)

Data quality statement

[Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2014-15.](#)

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Data

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