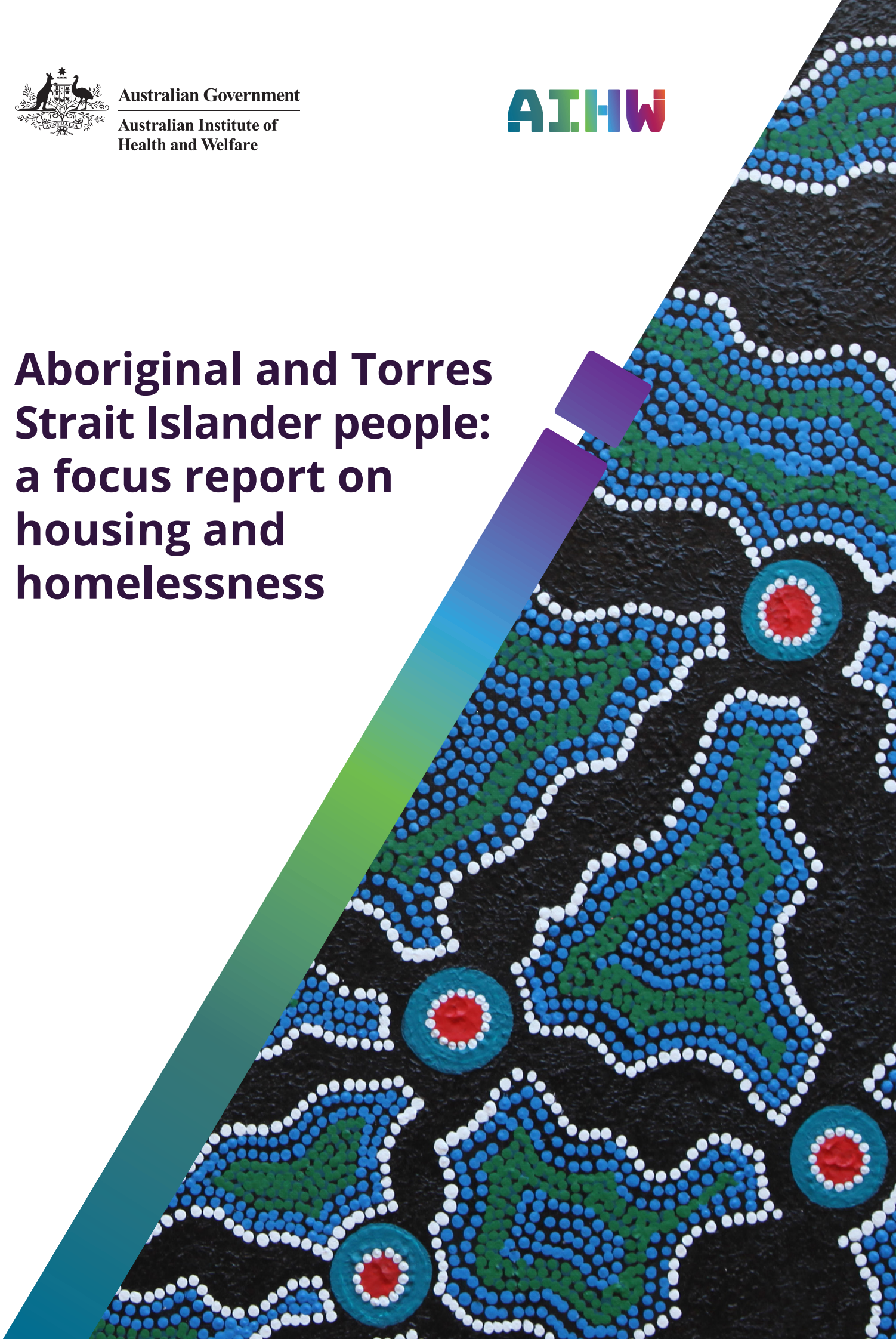




Australian Government
Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness



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ISBN 978-1-76054-504-8 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-76054-505-5 (Print)

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness. Cat. no. HOU 301. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair

Mrs Louise Markus

Chief Executive Officer

Mr Barry Sandison

Any enquiries relating to copyright or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6244 1000

Email: info@aihw.gov.au

Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Cover art by Rebecca Cavanagh Ferdinandes.

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

Please check the online version at www.aihw.gov.au for any amendment.

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Summary

Stable and secure housing is fundamentally important to health and well-being. Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced much higher rates of homelessness and have been overrepresented among clients seeking homelessness and social housing services than non-Indigenous Australians. These higher rates of unstable housing relate to complex and interrelated factors including the lasting impacts of colonisation on Indigenous Australians, exposure to family violence, substance disorders, unemployment, low education levels and poor health—which are both contributors to, and outcomes of, insecure housing circumstances (Flatau et al. 2005; Keys Young 1998; Silburn et al. 2018).

Even though there is still much progress to be made, the findings in this report covering the last 15 years demonstrate the housing situation of Indigenous Australians has improved—with rises in home ownership and housing provided through the private rental market, and falling levels of homelessness.

More Indigenous households own their home or rent privately

Across the 4 most recent Censuses, there has been a steady rise in Indigenous home ownership, with 38% of Indigenous households (or around 100,000) owning a home (with or without a mortgage) in 2016, compared with 32% in 2001. The opposite trend was observed for other Australian households (69% home ownership in 2001, 66% in 2016).

For both Indigenous and other Australians, there was a steady fall in the proportion of households in social housing between 2001 and 2016, offset by a rise in the proportion of private renters. Indigenous households were consistently more likely than other households to be renting in private housing (32% compared with 25% in 2016) over the period. The largest difference between Indigenous and other households remains the proportion of households renting in social housing (21% compared with 4% in 2016), however, this gap has been narrowing over time.

Fewer households in mortgage stress, more in rental stress

Increasing home ownership levels are a positive sign, particularly when considered in combination with data about households in mortgage stress. The proportion of Indigenous households with a mortgage considered to be in mortgage stress has dropped from a peak of 30% in 2011 to 21% in 2016. In 2016, 68,000 Indigenous home owners had a mortgage (26% of Indigenous households).

In contrast, of those Indigenous households renting, the proportion considered to be in rental stress increased from 22% in 2001 to 39% in 2016. In private rental housing, rental stress for Indigenous households increased similarly in both urban and rural areas over this period (from 34% to 43% in urban areas and 29% to 38% in rural areas in 2016).

Indigenous households in public housing

While the proportion of the Indigenous household population living in social housing has decreased, the number of households has increased. There are three main types of social housing available to eligible Australians. In 2016–17, of the 66,700 Indigenous households in social housing:

1. Half (50%, or 33,300) were in public housing, with this number rising by one-third (8,200 households) since 2008–09.
2. The number of Indigenous households in community housing more than doubled from 2,700 households in 2008–09 to 5,800 in 2016–17.
3. In contrast, the numbers of households in Indigenous-specific housing programs remained relatively stable over the period (around 10,000 for state owned and managed housing (SOMIH) and 18,000 for Indigenous community housing).

Fall in wait times for social housing

Waiting times for Indigenous Australians are generally shorter compared with other applicants. For both public housing and SOMIH housing programs there were improvements from 2013–14 to 2016–17. A larger proportion of clients waited less than 3 months (35% in 2013–14 and 42% in 2016–17 for public housing and 38% and 48% for SOMIH), and a smaller proportion waited more than 2 years to be housed. However, up to 1 in 6 (17%) Indigenous households waited more than 2 years for public housing.

Conditions in social housing have also improved over the 6 years to 2018. Data show a fall in overcrowding among Indigenous households, and a rise in the proportion of Indigenous tenants who rated their dwellings at an 'acceptable' standard.

1 in 28 Indigenous people are homeless

One in 28 Indigenous people (23,000) were homeless on Census night in 2016—representing more than 1 in 5 (22%) homeless Australians. More than half of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness lived in *Very remote* areas.

The rate of Indigenous homelessness decreased from 571 per 10,000 population in 2006 to 361 in 2016. The decline in Indigenous homelessness since 2006 is due predominantly to the decrease in Indigenous people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings (75% in 2006 to 70% in 2016). However, the 2016 Indigenous homelessness rate is 10 times that of non-Indigenous Australians. The differences in the rates of homelessness for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians were higher in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas than in *Major cities*.

The main type of homelessness experienced by Indigenous Australians was living in 'severely crowded' dwellings; that is, dwellings that need 4 or more *extra* bedrooms. Of those homeless on Census night 2016, Indigenous Australians (70%) were much more likely than non-Indigenous Australians (42%) to be living in severely crowded dwellings, yet the gap has narrowed over the past decade. Indigenous Australians were 68 times more likely to live in severely crowded dwellings in 2006; decreasing to 16 times more likely in 2016.

1 in 4 specialist homelessness services clients are Indigenous

Indigenous clients made up a quarter (25%) of all clients assisted by specialist homelessness services (SHS) in 2017–18; a rate 9 times that of non-Indigenous clients (803 per 10,000 population compared with 86). Most Indigenous people using these services were at risk of homelessness (53%), with the remainder homeless (47%), when they sought assistance.

Since 2011–12, SHS have assisted more Indigenous clients (43,600 in 2011–12; 65,200 in 2017–18). Of the Indigenous SHS clients in 2017–18:

- 1 in 8 (13% or 8,500) were aged under 5, reflecting that families often seek assistance
- 4 in 10 had experienced domestic and family violence (domestic and family violence was a reason they sought help and/or they required domestic or family violence assistance).

Homelessness services help clients keep tenancies and find homes

In 2017–18, more than half of Indigenous SHS clients (53% or 32,400 people) sought help when they were in unstable housing situations (at risk of homelessness)—more than 1 in 2 (16,400 clients) were living in social housing (either renting or rent free) when they sought assistance, while another third (12,100 clients) were in private or other housing (renting, rent free or owning). Most clients at risk of homelessness (89%) maintained their tenancies with SHS support.

Of the 20,700 Indigenous clients who were homeless when they sought help from SHS and had ended support in 2017–18, 38% (or 7,200 clients) were assisted into stable housing; an increase from 29% in 2012–13. In 2017–18 most Indigenous homeless clients who were assisted into housing ended support in social housing (around 3,800) with a further 3,100 clients in private rentals.

1 Introduction

Having access to stable housing helps a person to improve their education and maintain employment and proper health and nutrition (Bridge et al. 2007).

The quality, quantity and affordability of housing is a fundamental contributor to disadvantage and a potential pathway into homelessness. It has been recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) people have had significantly less access to affordable or secure housing or accommodation than other Australians (Keys Young 1998), and that historical events have impacted housing situations and experiences of homelessness within the current Indigenous population (AIHW 2018c).

Australia's homeless population are among the most vulnerable groups in the community. Homelessness can profoundly affect a person's mental and physical health, their education and employment opportunities, and their ability to participate fully in society.

Indigenous people make up 3.3% of the Australian population, yet they made up 22% of all people who were homeless on Census night in 2016 (of those for whom Indigenous status was stated) (ABS 2018c).

Indigenous people are increasingly turning to specialist homelessness services (SHS) for help either to assist with maintaining their tenancies (clients at risk of homelessness) or to help them when they are homeless. Twenty-five percent of the clients accessing SHS in 2017–18 were Indigenous, with most of these clients seeking help while in housing (53% at risk of homelessness) (AIHW 2018d).

This report examines changes in the housing status of Indigenous Australians across the housing continuum, from those housed through to the homeless, expanding upon previous reports by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (AIHW 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). Using a range of contemporary data, changing patterns in the housing profiles of Indigenous Australians are examined. The report also focuses on financial stress and overcrowding across the housing continuum and services and assistance provided to relieve these housing stresses.

Background

Historical experiences of Indigenous people in Australia and the lasting impacts of colonisation have had a significant impact on Indigenous housing conditions and homelessness. This has included displacement of Indigenous people from their traditional lands, separation of children from their families, and policies and services that conflict with Indigenous values and culture. The impact of these experiences transcends generations and includes poverty, low self-esteem, poor physical, mental health and social and emotional well-being, welfare dependency, poor living skills, high levels of domestic violence and substance abuse, and low levels of educational attainment (Keys Young 1998). In addition, communities and kinship networks which previously provided protection from harm have also been weakened. Overcrowded housing conditions and early-childhood poor health have been found to impact school attendance and educational outcomes of Indigenous children (Silburn et al. 2018).

Indigenous-specific cultural norms, such as high levels of mobility, cultural obligations to accommodate kin and other visitors and connection to country are critically important. However, influences such as severe overcrowding, complaints from neighbours, larger maintenance bills, pressure on dwellings and amenities, and paying rent consistently may act as barriers to accessing housing and managing tenancies (Flatau et al. 2005).

These interrelated factors put Indigenous Australians at greater risk of homelessness and may lead to frequent changes of housing or tenancies.

Literature suggests that many Indigenous Australians suffer 'spiritual homelessness' which is defined as a state of disconnection from one's homeland, separation from family or kinship networks or not being familiar with one's heritage (Spinney et al. 2016). This form of homelessness persists through multiple generations and has contributed to Indigenous people feeling more vulnerable, distrustful and resistant to engaging with mainstream services (government-provided services not specifically tailored to Indigenous people) and the effectiveness of maintaining tenancies (Flatau et al. 2005). Spiritual homelessness has not been covered in this report.

The Stolen Generations

The Stolen Generations are acknowledged to be a particularly disadvantaged group of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (AIHW 2018c). Between 1910 and 1970, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families (collectively termed the Stolen Generations) as a result of government policies at the time. The removal of children and subsequent disconnection from Indigenous culture and land have been shown to have had a widespread negative impact, not only on those removed but also on their descendants (AIHW 2018c).

The recent report by the AIHW showed that home ownership was low in the Stolen Generations proxy population, with just 1 in 4 (25%) in home ownership, notably lower than Indigenous Australians who were not removed (Reference group 40%; Table 1.1) (AIHW 2018c). They were also less likely to be employed, and more likely to have experienced homelessness. However, the disparity in the rate of home ownership did not appear to flow on to the descendants' populations.

Table 1.1: Stolen Generations report key findings

	Stolen Generations proxy population	
	Proxy population	Reference group ^(a)
Home owners	25%	40%
Not employed (among workers aged up to 64)	62%	47%
Had been a victim of actual or threatened physical violence (in last 12 months)	26%	17%
Had poor or fair self-assessed health	52%	38%
Has used substances (in last 12 months)	32%	21%
Had ever experienced homelessness	42%	25%
	Stolen Generations descendants	
	Descendants	Reference group ^(b)
Home owners	34%	28%
Not employed (among workers aged up to 64)	43%	48%
Had been a victim of actual or threatened physical violence (in last 12 months)	29%	16%
Had poor or fair self-assessed health	29%	23%
Has used substances (in last 12 months)	31%	27%
Had ever experienced homelessness	39%	21%

(a) Reference group for the Stolen Generations proxy population includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey respondents who were born before 1972 but who self-reported not having been removed from their family.

(b) Reference group for the descendants includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey respondents aged 18 and over who did not experience any type of removal (that is, who reported neither having been removed from their own families nor having any relatives removed).

Note: The proxy population includes survey respondents who were born before 1972 and who self-reported having been removed from their family. Data from the 2014–15 NATSISS, indicate that the Stolen Generations proxy population was estimated to be around 20,900; in 2014–15 this group was aged 42 and over and represents around 13% of the total population born before 1972. In 2014–15, the estimated number of descendants, aged 18 and over, of all people removed was around 162,100 (approximately 47% of the Indigenous population aged 18 and over).

Source: AIHW 2018c.

Housing conditions

According to Census data, Indigenous households (80%) are more likely than non-Indigenous households (71%) to be family households (one or multiple families living together) and much less likely to be lone-person households (15% compared with 25%, respectively) (ABS 2017a). Indigenous households (3.2 people per household) are also larger on average than other households (2.6 people).

Indigenous household size is driven by a strong connection to family and a culture of sharing accommodation. Household size can also fluctuate due to temporary and semi-permanent visitors who may have been evicted from elsewhere, have recently moved and don't yet have stable accommodation, are seeking refuge from family problems, are accessing health or other services in the area or are fulfilling cultural obligations (such as funerals or other events) (Memmott et al. 2012).

According to the widely used density model of overcrowding; that is, the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS), dwellings requiring at least one additional bedroom are considered to be overcrowded (see Box 1.1). In general, this model is a useful tool for assessing overcrowding. However, some studies have questioned whether CNOS is the appropriate method for measuring overcrowding within the Indigenous context due to the Indigenous-specific cultural and behavioural factors mentioned earlier (Memmott et al. 2003; Memmott et al. 2011; Pholeros 2010). Nevertheless, overcrowding, which causes stress to household members and pressure on dwelling facilities and resources, is a significant issue among Indigenous Australians. Of more concern is the high prevalence of Indigenous Australians living in 'severely' crowded dwellings (that is, dwellings which needed four or more extra bedrooms). The 2016 Census showed that 16,400 Indigenous people (70% of all Indigenous people experiencing homelessness) were living in severely crowded dwellings; a rate of 253 people per 10,000 Indigenous people, compared with 16 per 10,000 for non-Indigenous people.

The detrimental impacts of overcrowding are exacerbated when the dwelling is unsuitable (overcrowded and/or poor dwelling condition and/or unsafe and/or poorly located) (Mallett et al. 2011) and/or of poor quality. Findings from the 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) indicate that 18% (around 52,000) Indigenous households lived in houses which were not of an acceptable standard (defined as having less than four working facilities for washing people, washing clothes/bedding, storing/preparing food and sewerage and more than two major structural problems, such as electrical/plumbing problems, major cracks in walls/floors or major roof defects) (ABS 2016a).

Box 1.1: What is overcrowding?

Overcrowding: A situation in a dwelling when one or more additional bedrooms is required to meet the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS): A measure of the appropriateness of housing that is sensitive to both household size and composition. The CNOS specifies that:

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

'Severely' crowded dwellings: Dwellings needing 4 or more extra bedrooms under the CNOS.

What is homelessness?

While there is no international agreed definition of homelessness, the Australian definition of homelessness is broader than most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Australia includes overcrowding in estimates of homelessness (OECD 2017). Data presented in this report uses the definitions developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the AIHW (Box 1.2), depending on the data being presented.

Box 1.2: Definitions of homelessness

ABS Census: A person is homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection: 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 of homelessness* 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.

It is important to note that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of 'homelessness' can differ to those of non-Indigenous Australians and statistical definitions used by the various data sets.

Keys Young (1998) defined five distinct categories of Indigenous homelessness:

1. A lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing; essentially having nowhere to go (also known as 'public place dwellers').
2. Relocation and transient homelessness, resulting in temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyle, but also necessary to a large proportion of the Indigenous population having to travel to obtain services.
3. Spiritual forms of homelessness, relating to separation from traditional land and/or family.
4. Overcrowding when it causes considerable stress to families and communities.
5. Individuals escaping an unsafe or unstable home for their own safety or survival, usually affecting Indigenous women and young people.

The ABS consulted with Indigenous people and service providers about Indigenous concepts of 'home' and 'homelessness' to determine whether their perceptions aligned with the statistical definition of homelessness that the ABS use (ABS 2013; ABS 2014). While some perspectives did align with the ABS statistical definition, the stakeholders engaged during the process noted several areas where their perspectives did not match in regards to:

- connection to country, with Indigenous Australians being less likely to perceive themselves as homeless if they are living on country, irrespective of dwelling adequacy
- family and kinship responsibilities play a large part in Indigenous culture. Disconnection from family can be seen as a form of homelessness for Indigenous Australians. Alternatively, in some cases a person who has no suitable accommodation alternatives may not consider themselves to be homeless if they are staying temporarily with family due to cultural norms and responsibilities. This also ties in with crowding, as these expectations to provide shelter for family can place pressure on the household overall
- mobility and usual address, with Indigenous Australians often being highly mobile and connected to multiple communities that leads to them having multiple usual residences where they feel at home.

Pathways into homelessness

For Indigenous people a range of factors contribute to them being at greater potential risk of homelessness than non-Indigenous people (Keys Young 1998):

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suffer greater levels of social and economic disadvantage, particularly on the range of factors known to be associated with homelessness (such as poverty, unemployment, education levels, and poor health).
- Overall, Indigenous Australians have significantly less access to affordable, or secure housing, or accommodation than other Australians.
- The legacy of social and historical policies has affected some Indigenous people's ability to survive and cope in the contemporary world and also put pressure on Indigenous family and kinship networks, which have traditionally provided support to family members in need.

Twenty years on from the Keys Young report, Indigenous Australians are still considered to be a vulnerable group.

- Around 1 in 3 (31%) Indigenous Australians lived in income poverty in 2016 (income poverty rates are derived using the conventional relative poverty line of 50% of the median national equivalised

household income) (Markham & Biddle 2018). Indigenous poverty rates in Australia have declined over recent times (34% in 2006 compared with 31% in 2016). However, more than half (53%) of the Indigenous population in *Very remote* Australia were considered to be in income poverty in 2016.

- Indigenous employment rates among people aged 15–64 are well below the non-Indigenous population; 47% were employed compared with 72% of non-Indigenous people in 2016 (PM&C 2018a).
- Education also contributes significantly to reducing disadvantage (PM&C 2018a). In 2016, under half (47%) of Indigenous people aged 20–24 had completed Year 12 (or equivalent) (ABS 2017a). This is an improvement of 15 percentage points from 2006 (32%). However, the Year 12 completion rate for non-Indigenous people remains much higher at 79% in 2016.
- Indigenous health has improved. There was a 5% reduction in the rate of total burden of disease (an overall measure of health) in the Indigenous population between 2003 and 2011 (AIHW 2016). However, in 2011 the burden for Indigenous Australians was 2.3 times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians. The disease groups causing the most burden among Indigenous Australians were mental and substance use disorders, injuries, cardiovascular diseases, cancer and respiratory diseases.
- Housing instability is recognised as a potential pathway into homelessness. Historically, Indigenous Australians, particularly those in mainstream social housing programs (as opposed to Indigenous-specific housing programs), were more likely to face tenancy instability due to discrimination, cultural and historical issues, spiritual and psychological homelessness, lack of home management and urban living skills, and disadvantage and risk factors (Flatau et al. 2005). Indigenous households are increasingly turning to the private rental market—the proportion of Indigenous households renting privately has risen from 27% in 2001 to 32% in 2016—however, issues around poverty, unemployment, discrimination and a lack of appropriate housing stock also negatively impact Indigenous experiences in this rental market.
- Where a person lives can also affect their access to and experiences with housing services. In 2016, the majority (79%) of Indigenous people lived in urban areas (areas with a population of more than 1,000 people), an increase from 73% in 2011, and over a third lived in capital cities (35%) (ABS 2016a). Research suggests that the public housing and community housing services offered in these areas do not always align with Indigenous cultural beliefs, practices and needs (Memmott et al. 2016). This can lead to conflict with housing providers over roles and responsibilities, visitor numbers and anti-social behaviour, rent payments and ultimately can lead to their eviction.

Policy and frameworks

A number of policies and programs have been implemented to improve the housing situation of Indigenous Australians (Figure 1.1). The most recent is the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), introduced in July 2018 (SCFFR 2018). The NHHA will provide \$4.6 billion in Commonwealth funding to the states and territories over three years, including \$375 million for homelessness services, which states will be required to match. Under the agreement, states and territories must develop housing and homelessness policies and strategies that specifically address priority homelessness cohorts, one of which is Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government has also committed to provide increased funding to the Northern Territory of \$550.0 million from 2018–19 to 2022–23 for remote Indigenous housing (COA 2018).

Figure 1.1: Housing policies relevant to Indigenous Australians, 1945–2018

1945	1975	1979	1985	1992	1994	2008	2009	2016	2018
The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA)	Indigenous Home Ownership Program (IHOP)	Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP)	The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)	The Community Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP)	The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)	National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)	The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)	National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH)	National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)
→ Replaced by the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) in 2009		→ Replaced by the NPARIH and NPRH in 2008	→ Replaced by the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) in 2009 and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) in 2009	→ Replaced by the NPARIH and NPRH in 2008	National Data Collection (NDC) (established as National program in 1994) → Replaced by the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) in 2011	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) → Replaced by the NPRH in 2016	→ Replaced by the NHHA in 2018		
						National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH)	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)		
						→ Replaced by the NPRH in 2016	→ Replaced by the NHHA in 2018		
						National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) (Closing the Gap Strategy)	National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH)		
							→ Replaced by the NHHA in 2018		
							National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment (SPP)		
							→ Replaced by the NHHA in 2018		

Data sources

It is important to understand the scope, coverage and limitations related to the data sources used throughout this report (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Data sources used in the report

Chapter 1 Introduction	Chapter 2 Indigenous housing profile	Chapter 3 Housing stress and financial assistance	Chapter 4 Indigenous households in social housing	Chapter 5 Homelessness among Indigenous Australians	Chapter 6 Indigenous Australians seeking homelessness services
ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016	ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2001–2016	ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2001–2016	AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository	ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006–2016	AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), 2011–12 to 2017–18
AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), 2017–18	SCRGSP. Report on government services	SCRGSP. Report on government services	SCRGSP. Report on government services		
ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), 2014–15		AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository	AIHW National Social Housing Survey (NSHS), 2012–2018		
		Indigenous Business Australia (IBA). Annual Reports			
		DSS National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)			

Key:

	Census data
	Administrative data
	Survey data—cross sectional
	Both survey data—cross sectional/Administration

SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
DSS	Department of Social Services

1

Introduction

The most significant issue influencing any Indigenous analysis is the degree to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are correctly identified. This can be due to non-response (no information received about the Indigenous status of a person) or individuals choosing not to answer the Indigenous status question due to the sensitive nature of the information. In this report we have not imputed for unknown Indigenous status; the count of records with an unknown Indigenous status will be provided for reference.

There is also ongoing debate around the application of the ABS statistical definition of homelessness to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Cultural differences and the interpretation of 'usual address' can lead to both an underestimation and an overestimation of the Indigenous homeless population (ABS 2018c). No adjustments have been made and caution should be used when comparing homelessness estimates between different data collections.

For social housing data, there are inconsistencies in reporting across states and territories and over time as a result of jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions, issues with completeness and changes in methodology. This is a particular issue within the community housing (mainstream and Indigenous) data collections (that is, components of the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository). Where relevant, all footnotes and caveats have been provided and all analysis has been conducted within this context.

2 Indigenous housing profile

Key findings

- *The housing profile of Indigenous households has changed:* in 2016 there were more Indigenous households in home ownership and in private rental properties, and less in social housing than estimated in previous Censuses:
 - 38% of Indigenous households were home owners in 2016, up 6 percentage points from 2001
 - 32% of Indigenous households were private renters, up 5 percentage points from 2001
 - 21% of Indigenous households were renters in social housing (including public, community and Indigenous-specific housing) down 10 percentage points from 2001.
- *The change in housing profile was observed in all areas across Australia:* the increase in the proportion of Indigenous households in private rental dwellings was seen across all 37 Indigenous regions (IREGs) between 2011 and 2016; home ownership increases were observed in 30 IREGs and social housing rental dwellings decreased in 34 IREGs.
- *Overcrowding among Indigenous households has declined:* from 16% of households in 2001 to 10% in 2016:
 - the largest decreases in overcrowding occurred in the Northern Territory (from 41% to 32%) and Western Australia (from 19% to 11%).

2

Indigenous housing profile

Policy response to housing affordability and overcrowding

Since the 1970s, efforts have been made by successive Australian governments to improve housing affordability and increase rates of Indigenous home ownership (ANAO 2010). A number of arrangements focused on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. One of these was the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) and its replacement the National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH). Under the NPARIH and the NPRH, \$5.4 billion of funding was committed jointly by the Australian Government and state and territory governments over 10 years (to 2018) to address significant overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions, and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities (PM&C 2018b). The NPRH expired on 30 June 2018. The 2018–19 Federal Budget committed \$550 million over 5 years to support remote housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the Northern Territory. Additional state/territory commitments have been announced, however vary among the individual jurisdictions.

A new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) commenced 1 July 2018. The objective of the NHHA is to contribute to improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing across the spectrum, including outcomes for Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (SCFFR 2018).

In December 2018, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) drafted refreshed Closing the Gap targets for further consultation, aiming to increase the proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing, with finalisation of new targets expected by mid-2019 (COAG 2018).

Housing tenure

Housing tenure describes whether a dwelling is owned, rented, or occupied under some other arrangement.

In the 2016 Census, there were an estimated 263,000 Indigenous households (Table 2.1). An Indigenous household is one in which at least one usual resident is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (ABS 2017a). The effect of changing patterns of Indigenous identification can account for part of the growth in the Indigenous population. It has been estimated that over the period 2011 to 2016 there was a net population increase from identification change (13.7% of the in-scope Indigenous population in 2011) (Biddle & Markham 2018). Census data in this report have not been adjusted for identification change, however, regional and remoteness trends are included (refer to Appendix B for further details).

2

Indigenous housing profile

The profile of Indigenous housing tenure has changed across the last four Census cycles. The long-term trend shows a steady increase in Indigenous home ownership, from 32% of Indigenous households owning a home in 2001, to 38% in 2016 (Table 2.1). In contrast, home ownership declined for other households over this same period (from 69% in 2001 to 66% in 2016).

While Indigenous households remain nearly twice as likely to be renting as non-Indigenous households there have been changes among the rental types, most notably for Indigenous Australians. Between 2001 and 2016 there has been opposing trends within the rental sector, with the proportion of Indigenous private rental households increasing and that of social housing rental households decreasing (Table 2.1). The largest difference in rental types between Indigenous and other households remains the proportion of renters in social housing (21% compared with 4% for other households).

Table 2.1: Tenure type, by Indigenous status of household, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Tenure type	Indigenous households (%)				Other households (%)			
	2001	2006	2011	2016	2001	2006	2011	2016
Home owners								
Owned outright	12.6	11.0	11.2	12.2	41.5	34.6	32.6	31.6
Owned with mortgage	19.4	23.2	24.8	25.9	27.8	34.4	35.2	34.7
<i>Total home owners</i>	32.0	34.2	35.9	38.1	69.3	68.9	67.8	66.3
Renters								
Social housing	31.3	29.0	26.3	21.5	4.8	4.4	4.1	3.7
Private renters	27.4	27.0	29.1	32.4	19.8	20.8	22.6	24.6
Other renters	4.9	4.3	4.0	3.4	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.8
<i>Total renters</i>	63.5	60.2	59.4	57.3	27.3	27.4	28.8	30.0
Other tenure type	1.3	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.9	1.0
Tenure type not stated	3.2	4.9	4.0	3.9	2.1	2.8	2.5	2.7
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (number)	144,493	166,659	209,049	263,036	6,600,302	6,977,437	7,551,273	8,023,042

Notes

1. Indigenous household counts should be used with caution as changes in Indigenous identification can account for part of the growth between Census years (along with births and deaths, migration, enumeration methods and response). Refer to Appendix B for further information.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S2.1 for further explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2014b; AIHW analysis of ABS 2011 and 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

In 2016, the proportion of Indigenous household home owners (with and without a mortgage), and of renters (social and private) were similar across *Major cities*, *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas (Table 2.2). About 39%–42% of households were home owners and 54%–56% were renting, most commonly in private rentals (32%–36%). In contrast, in *Remote* (66%) and *Very remote* (84%) areas, higher proportions of Indigenous households were renting, and most commonly in social housing. However, it should be noted that there are different opportunities for home ownership, particularly in remote areas (Box 2.1).

Table 2.2: Tenure type of Indigenous household, by remoteness, 2016

Tenure type	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote	Remote and very remote
Home owners						
Owned outright	11.7	13.5	13.8	11.1	5.5	7.9
Owned with mortgage	28.7	28.7	25.3	16.6	4.4	9.7
<i>Total home owners</i>	<i>40.4</i>	<i>42.2</i>	<i>39.2</i>	<i>27.7</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>17.6</i>
Renters						
Social housing	17.3	15.5	19.0	37.4	69.1	55.4
Private renters	36.2	35.4	32.5	18.3	5.8	11.2
Other renters	1.9	2.6	4.3	10.5	8.7	9.5
<i>Total renters</i>	<i>55.4</i>	<i>53.5</i>	<i>55.8</i>	<i>66.3</i>	<i>83.6</i>	<i>76.1</i>
Other tenure type	0.7	0.6	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.3
Tenure type not stated	3.5	3.7	4.4	4.9	5.0	5.0
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (number)	113,964	68,358	50,842	12,905	16,970	29,871

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S2.2 for further explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

Geographical trends in Indigenous tenure

Complex intrinsic and extrinsic factors can influence the spatial distribution of home ownership among Indigenous households. Such factors can be characteristic of the household makeup or its location and can include:

- socio-economic status
- access to financial assistance
- familiarity with the home buying process (AIHW 2015a)
- cultural values and Indigenous identification of 'home' (Birdsall-Jones & Christensen 2007)
- Indigenous households living on community-titled land (Box 2.1).

The spatial distribution of Indigenous households who were home owners, private renters or social housing renters in 2016 can be mapped according to Indigenous regions (IREGs) (figures 2.1a–c).

The IREG statistical geography was developed with Indigenous-specific design considerations, enhancing the interpretability of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see Appendix D for further details on geographic areas and analysis).

Using Census data, in 2016 across all 37 IREGs the median number of Indigenous home owner households was 1,397 (ranging from 20 to around 14,000 households) (Supplementary table S2.3). For private renter households the median number was 990 (ranging from 10 to 14,600) (Supplementary table S2.5) and for social housing renter households the median number was 1,076 (300 to 6,900) (Supplementary table S2.4).

The percentage of Indigenous households in home ownership was highest in Tasmania (53% of Indigenous households), followed by NSW Central and North Coast, South-Eastern NSW, Perth and South-Western WA (all 46%) (Figure 2.1a).

For Indigenous households in private rental dwellings, the Queensland IREGs, Brisbane (45%), Toowoomba–Roma (42%), Rockhampton (41%), Cairns–Atherton (40%) and Townsville–Mackay (40%) recorded the highest percentages in 2016. The lowest were recorded in Jabiru–Tiwi (NT) (1.3%), Nhulunbuy (NT) (1.1%) and Apatula (NT) (0.8%) (Figure 2.1b).

The Northern Territory IREGs, Jabiru–Tiwi (86%) and Nhulunbuy (86%) recorded the highest percentages of social housing renter households followed by West Kimberley (WA) (82%) and Apatula (NT) (79%). The lowest were recorded in Brisbane (QLD) (12%), Melbourne (VIC) (13%), Tasmania (14%) and NSW Central and North Coast (15%) (Figure 2.1c).

Changes in the percentages of the various housing tenure types between 2011 and 2016 can also be mapped according to Indigenous regions (IREGs) (figures 2.1a–c; darker areas in IREGs represent regions with the largest change).

Of the 37 mapped IREGs, percentage point increases for Indigenous home-owner households were observed in 30 regions across Australia (Figure 2.1a, Table 2.3):

- South-Western WA had the largest increase in Indigenous home owners (from 40% of Indigenous households in 2011 to 46% in 2016).
- West Kimberley (WA) had the largest decrease in Indigenous home-owner households (from 12% to 8%).

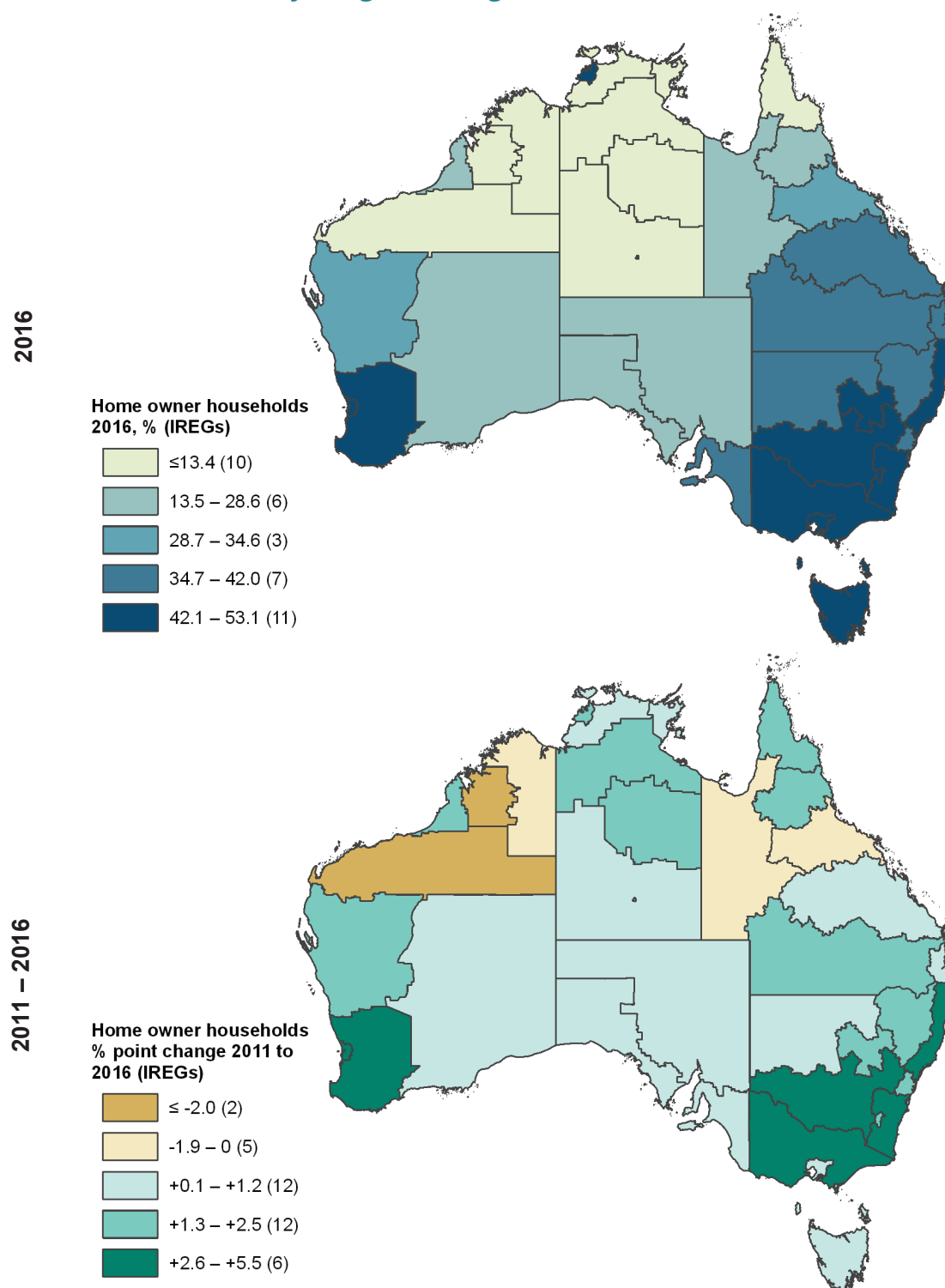
For Indigenous households in private rental dwellings, percentage point increases were observed across all 37 IREGs (Figure 2.1b):

- South Hedland (WA) reported the largest increase in Indigenous private rental households with a 10.3 percentage point increase to 18% in 2016.

In contrast, the percentage of Indigenous households in social housing rental dwellings declined in the majority of regions (34 IREGs) (Figure 2.1c):

- Perth (WA) reported the largest decrease in Indigenous social housing households (8.0 percentage point decrease to 19%).
- West Kimberley (WA) had increases in Indigenous social housing renters (3.8 percentage point increase to 82%).

Figure 2.1a: Indigenous home owner households 2016 (%) and change in household tenure (2011 to 2016), by Indigenous Region (IREG)

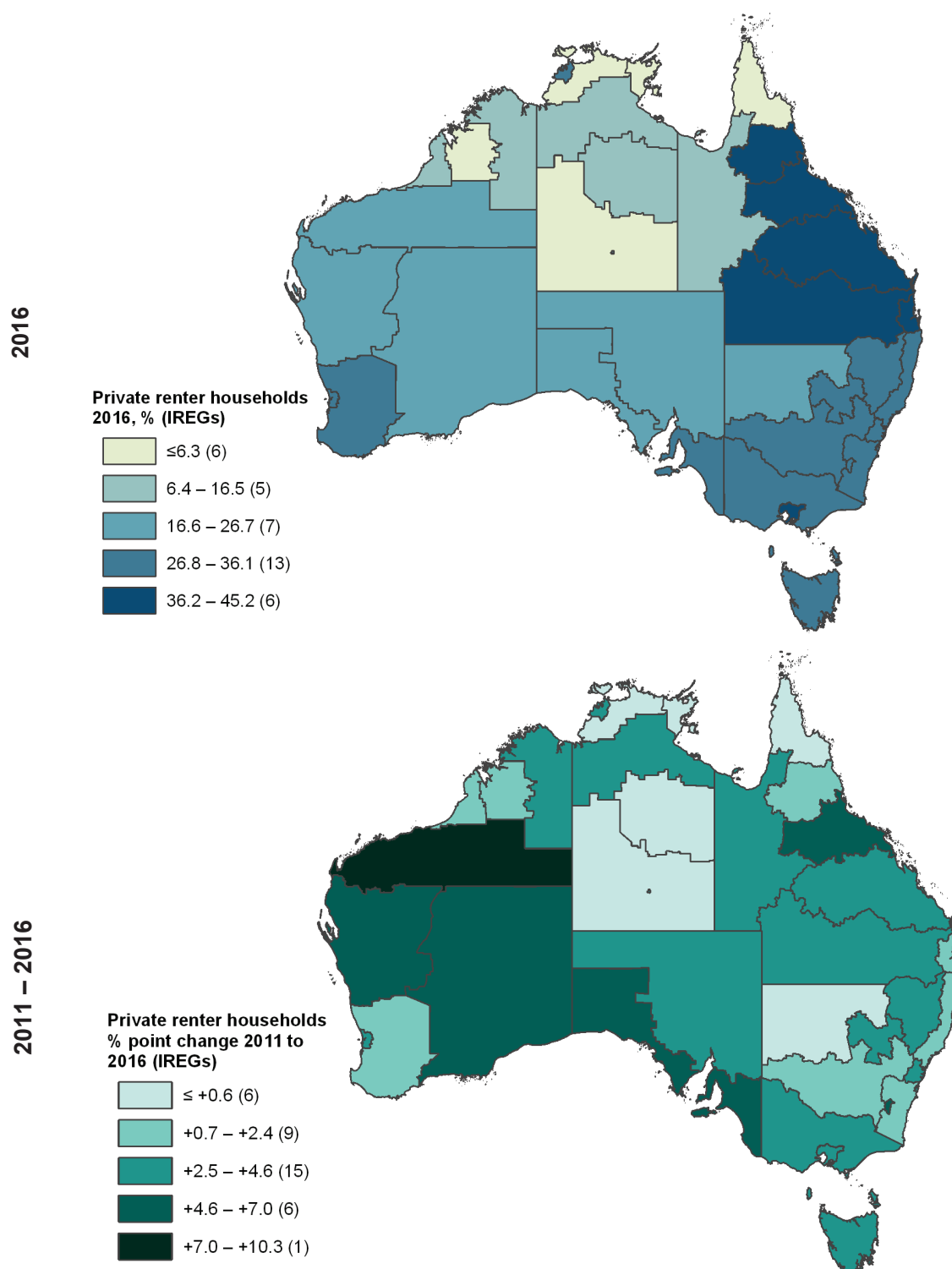


Notes

1. Mapped IREGs (37) exclude Other Territories and non-geographical IREGs coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping.
2. Choropleth map classes not comparable between tenure types. To highlight spatial variation, Jenks natural break classification has been applied to account for non-uniform data distribution giving unequal classes with varying frequencies of observations per class.
3. Refer to Appendix D for explanatory notes on identification of Indigenous households, tenure type and defining geographical boundaries.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2011 and 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); Supplementary tables S2.3, S2.4, S2.5.

Figure 2.1b: Indigenous private renter households 2016 (%) and change in household tenure (2011 to 2016), by Indigenous Region (IREG)

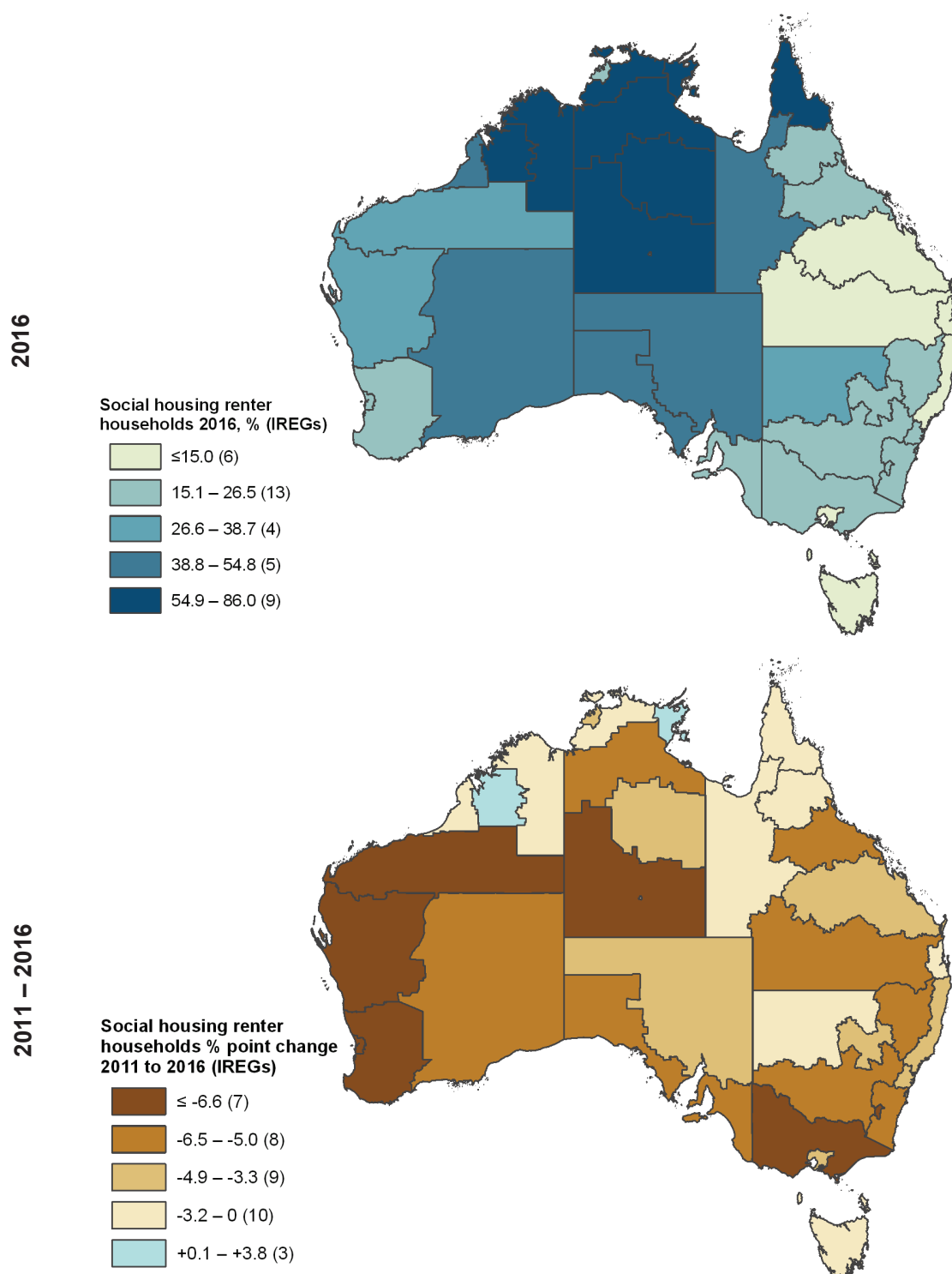


Notes

1. Mapped IREGs (37) exclude Other Territories and non-geographical IREGs coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping.
2. Choropleth map classes not comparable between tenure types. To highlight spatial variation, Jenks natural break classification has been applied to account for non-uniform data distribution giving unequal classes with varying frequencies of observations per class.
3. Refer to Appendix D for explanatory notes on identification of Indigenous households, tenure type and defining geographical boundaries.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2011 and 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); Supplementary tables S2.3, S2.4, S2.5.

Figure 2.1c: Indigenous social housing renter households 2016 (%) and change in household tenure (2011 to 2016), by Indigenous Region (IREG)



Notes

1. Mapped IREGs (37) exclude Other Territories and non-geographical IREGs coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping.
2. Choropleth map classes not comparable between tenure types. To highlight spatial variation, Jenks natural break classification has been applied to account for non-uniform data distribution giving unequal classes with varying frequencies of observations per class.
3. Refer to Appendix D for explanatory notes on identification of Indigenous households, tenure type and defining geographical boundaries.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2011 and 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); Supplementary tables S2.3, S2.4, S2.5.

Table 2.3: Tenure type and change in tenure type (%), by Indigenous Regions (IREG) showing the largest change in tenure type, 2011 to 2016

State	IREG	Per cent 2011	Per cent 2016	Change (Percentage point) (2011 to 2016)
Increase (per cent)				
Home owner households				
Western Australia	South-Western WA	40.2	45.7	5.5
Western Australia	Perth	41.3	45.9	4.7
New South Wales	South-Eastern NSW	42.1	46.1	4.0
Private renter households				
Western Australia	South Hedland	8.0	18.3	10.3
Queensland	Townsville-Mackay	33.0	40.0	7.0
South Australia	Port Lincoln - Ceduna	15.9	22.4	6.4
Social housing renter households				
Western Australia	West Kimberley	78.2	81.9	3.7
Queensland	Torres Strait	77.7	78.7	1.0
Northern Territory	Nhulunbuy	85.0	85.7	0.7
Decrease (per cent)^(a)				
Home owner households				
Western Australia	West Kimberley	12.2	8.3	-3.8
Western Australia	South Hedland	13.8	10.3	-3.5
Queensland	Torres Strait	9.3	7.4	-1.9
Social housing renter households				
Western Australia	Perth	26.9	18.9	-8.0
Northern Territory	Apatula	87.2	79.4	-7.8
Western Australia	South Hedland	46.4	38.7	-7.7

(a) None of the 37 IREGs had a decrease in the rate of private renter households between 2011 and 2016.

Notes

1. A household with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person(s) is any household that had at least one person of any age as a resident at the time of the Census who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
2. 'Home owner households' includes Indigenous households that owned their home outright or with a mortgage. 'Private renter households' includes Indigenous households renting either through a real estate agent or through a mortgage not in the same household. 'Social housing renter households' includes Indigenous households renting either through a state or territory housing authority or through a housing co-operative, community or church group.
3. Percentages for 2011 and 2016 include households in occupied private dwellings with at least one person identifying as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander as enumerated in the Census. Excludes 'Visitor only' and 'Other non-classifiable' household types.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2011 and 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); Supplementary tables S2.3, S2.4, S2.5.

Multiple and complex factors can influence the spatial distribution of home ownership among Indigenous households, affecting the tenure types available. Indigenous households living on community-titled land face additional barriers in obtaining individual land ownership (Box 2.1).

Varying state and territory Indigenous land reform initiatives aim to address this limitation by increasing the potential for home ownership on community-titled land (Crabtree et al. 2015; Memmott et al. 2009; SCRGSP 2016).

Box 2.1: What is communal title land?

Communal title lands are perceived to occur in remote Indigenous settlements, where lands are jointly held in some form of a trust to the broader 'community'. While less common, there are also communal title lands within the boundaries of a number of regional towns and metropolitan cities throughout Australia, which in some cases consist of conglomerates of freehold title blocks that are held collectively through a community housing organisation. Indigenous community title land can be defined as 'land held under a form of community title by an Indigenous group, trust, Co-op or company'. However, analysis of the tenures at such sites presents a complex range, which can include:

1. 'Indigenous community title' land as defined above.
2. 'Crown land—public use' as Crown land tenure specifically dedicated for public use or community purposes.
3. 'Community-controlled freehold' as freehold land held by a not-for-profit organisation, either Indigenous or non-Indigenous.
4. 'Private freehold' owned either by an individual or company for profit (Memmott et al. 2009).

Overcrowding in Indigenous households

Overcrowding can put stress on the infrastructure of the dwelling, such as food preparation areas, bathrooms, laundry facilities and sewerage systems. It can also adversely affect the physical and mental health of residents (AIHW 2014b; Booth & Carroll 2005; SCRGSP 2016).

Overcrowding, as measured according to CNOS (dwellings requiring 1 or more bedrooms; Box 1.1) has been on the decline among Indigenous household dwellings considered to be overcrowded; 16% of Indigenous households in 2001, decreasing to 10% in 2016 (Table 2.4). Decreases were seen in all remoteness areas between 2001 and 2016. While the more remote areas continue to have the highest proportion of households in overcrowded dwellings, dwellings in these areas have had the largest decreases in overcrowding (down 13.5 percentage points in *Very remote* and 7.0 in *Remote* areas between 2001 and 2016).

Table 2.4: Overcrowding in Indigenous households, by remoteness area, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Remoteness area	% of Indigenous households				Percentage point change between 2001 and 2016
	2001	2006	2011	2016	
Major cities	11.0	9.4	9.7	8.1	-2.9
Inner regional	10.9	10.0	9.5	7.4	-3.5
Outer regional	14.7	13.4	12.2	9.4	-5.3
Remote	21.5	22.3	20.1	14.5	-7.0
Very remote	45.8	40.5	38.9	32.3	-13.5
Remote and very remote	35.5	32.3	30.9	24.6	-10.9
Total (%)	15.7	13.6	12.9	10.0	-5.7
Total Indigenous households (number)	144,493	166,659	209,049	263,036	..

.. not applicable

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S2.6 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2014b; AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

Overcrowding among Indigenous households was lowest for home owners, and highest for those living in social housing, with one in five (20%) Indigenous households in social housing living in overcrowded conditions in 2016 (Figure 2.2; Supplementary table S2.7).

Figure 2.2: Overcrowding^(a) in Indigenous households (% of households), by tenure type and remoteness, 2016

Remoteness area	Home owners	Renters		10%	20%	30%	40%	50%
		Private renters	Social housing					
	●	○	*					
Major cities	5.4	9.4	12.3	● ○ *				
Inner regional	5.4	8.2	11.5	● ○ *				
Outer regional	6.3	9.9	16.1	● ○ *				
Remote	6.7	10.3	25.7	● ○		*		
Very remote	10.6	13.2	40.9	● ○				*
Total	5.7	9.2	19.9	● ○ *				

(a) Dwelling required 1 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate usual residents, based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Notes

1. Denominator includes only those households for which the level of crowding could be determined.
2. Remoteness areas are based on the ABS 2011 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).
3. Data for this figure are shown in Supplementary table S2.7.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

Overcrowding by state and territory

In 2016, New South Wales (7,800 households) had the highest number of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions followed by Queensland (7,600) (Table 2.5). The highest proportion of Indigenous households considered to be overcrowded was in the Northern Territory (32%) followed by Western Australia (11%). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous people living in overcrowded dwellings (51%), followed by Western Australia at 20% and Queensland at 18%.

Table 2.5: Overcrowding, Indigenous and other households and Indigenous people, by state and territory, 2016

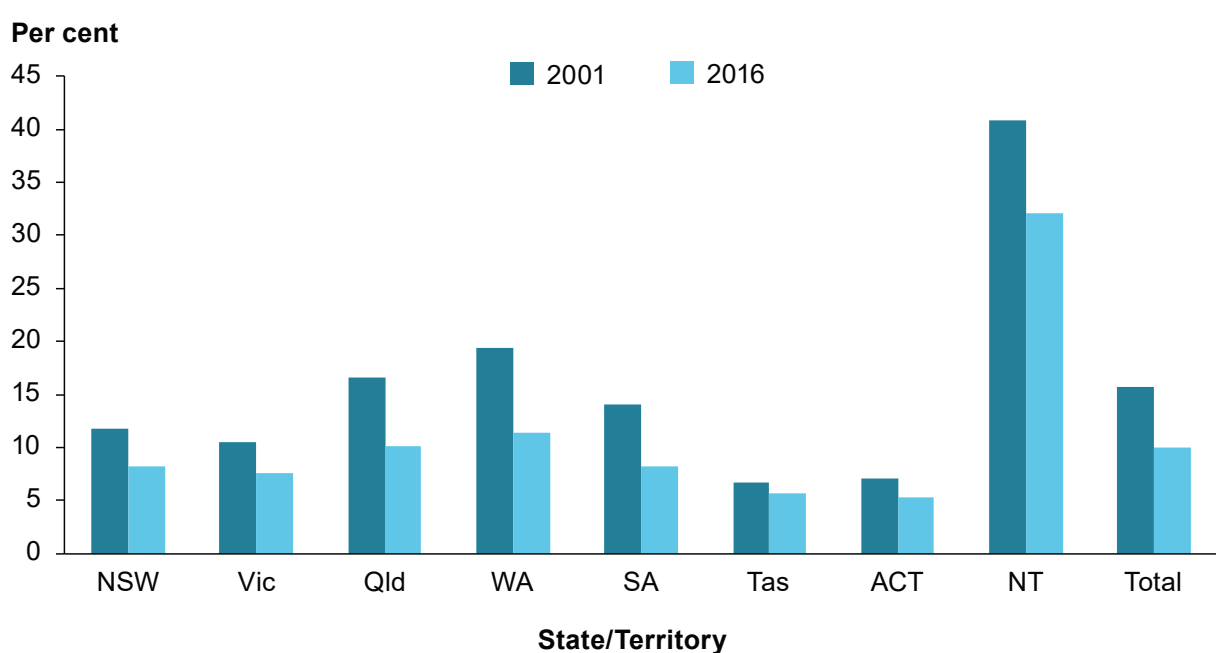
State/territory	Indigenous households		Other households		Indigenous people	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
New South Wales	7,823	8.2	123,233	4.9	26,401	12.2
Victoria	1,805	7.6	74,916	3.6	5,123	10.7
Queensland	7,593	10.2	41,095	2.6	33,097	17.7
Western Australia	3,013	11.4	17,584	2.1	15,137	19.9
South Australia	1,221	8.2	15,359	2.5	5,023	14.7
Tasmania	663	5.7	3,955	2.1	2,108	8.9
Australian Capital Territory	174	5.3	3,538	2.5	479	7.4
Northern Territory	4,087	32.0	2,595	5.0	29,629	50.9
Australia	26,377	10.0	282,335	3.5	117,090	18.0

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S2.8 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); ABS 2017a.

Between Census years 2001 and 2016 there was a decline in the proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions in all states and territories. The largest decrease occurred in the Northern Territory, down from 41% in 2001 to 32% in 2016 (Figure 2.3). However, the rate of overcrowding remains the highest in the Northern Territory by a large margin.

Figure 2.3: Overcrowding in Indigenous households, by state and territory, 2001 and 2016



Note: Data for this figure are shown in Supplementary table S2.9.
Sources: AIHW 2014; AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder); ABS 2018e.

Overcrowding and social housing

Indigenous Australians living in social housing face higher levels of overcrowding than other tenure types (Figure 2.2). Annual data available from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository have been used to explore overcrowding within individual social housing programs and show how this has changed over time.

Overcrowding has declined in public, community and SOMIH housing programs since 2013–14 (Table 2.6). (Data are unavailable for Indigenous community housing, which is predominately located in more remote areas). The largest decrease in the proportion of Indigenous households in overcrowded conditions has been in community housing, from 10% (393 households) in 2013–14 to 7% (372) in 2016–17. While the proportion of overcrowding in public housing steadily decreased from 10% (or 2,800 households) in 2013–14 to 8% (2,500) in 2016–17.

Table 2.6: Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions, by social housing program, 2013–14 to 2016–17

Year	Number of overcrowded households			Proportion of households in overcrowded conditions (%)		
	Public housing	SOMIH ^(a)	Community housing ^(b)	Public housing	SOMIH ^(a)	Community housing ^(b)
2013–14	2,820	981	393	9.8	10.2	10.1
2014–15	2,854	921	240	9.6	9.7	7.0
2015–16	2,531	842	393	8.8	9.0	7.9
2016–17	2,506	831	372	8.3	8.9	6.6

(a) Data relating to NT remote dwellings have not been included as limited unit record data are available due to data quality issues.

(b) Data are based on all jurisdictions except NT where data were unavailable. Qld provided partial unit record tenant data for the first time in 2015–16.

Note: Data for utilisation in Indigenous community housing are unavailable. Refer to Supplementary table S2.10 for further explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW analysis of SCRGSP 2018: table 18A.29; AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

3 Housing stress and financial assistance

Key findings

- *Indigenous household mortgage stress is showing signs of lessening:* of those Indigenous households with a mortgage, the proportion in mortgage stress dropped from a peak of 30% in 2011 to 21% in 2016.
- *Indigenous household rental stress is increasing:* of those Indigenous households renting, the proportion in rental stress (private, social housing, and other rentals) has almost doubled, from 22% of Indigenous households in 2001 to 39% in 2016.
- *The increase in rental stress occurred in both urban and rural areas:* between 2001 and 2016 rental stress increased by 17 percentage points in urban areas (to 41%) and 11 percentage points in rural areas (to 23%).
- *Rental stress is increasing for Indigenous households living in private rental dwellings:* 42% of Indigenous households were in rental stress in 2016, an 8 percentage point increase from 2011 (34%).
- *The number of Indigenous CRA income units has almost doubled in 8 years:* the number of Indigenous income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) increased 91% between June 2009 (37,200) and June 2017 (71,100).
- *Private rental assistance is being provided to growing numbers of Indigenous households:* private rental assistance (PRA) was provided to 14,000 households in 2016–17, a 33% increase since 2013–14.

Housing affordability and financial stress

Census data can be used to provide a measure of the proportion of a household's income that is spent on mortgage or rent repayments. This measure is imperfect due to the limited income data collected by the Census, however does provide an indication of housing affordability (ABS 2018a). Trends in the level of financial stress (defined as households spending more than 30 per cent of the household's gross income on repayments) of Indigenous household across Census years has been reported as proportions. Numbers are not a reliable measure as intercensal increases in counts of Indigenous people are influenced by a number of factors, including births and deaths, migration, a person's propensity to identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, and Census enumeration and response rates (Biddle & Markham 2018). Part of the Indigenous population growth is from the effect of changing patterns of identification (Biddle & Markham 2018). Over the period 2011 to 2016 a net population increase from identification change was revealed using the Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset (ACLD). The vast majority of those who changed how they indicated their Indigenous status lived in urban areas in 2011, with a net increase of 20.3% from 2011 in *Major cities*. While Census data in this report have not been adjusted to account for identification change, the report includes trends across Indigenous regions and by remoteness.

Mortgage stress

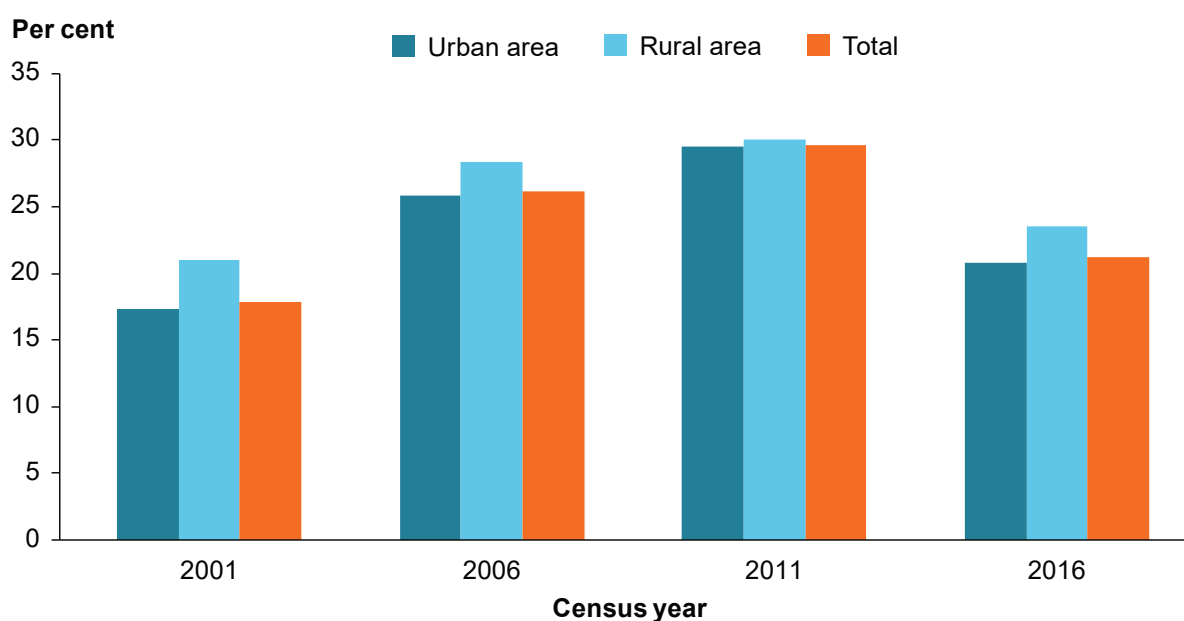
In 2016, 12% of Indigenous households (around 32,000 households) owned a home outright with a further 26% (68,000 households) purchasing a house with a mortgage (Table 2.1).

Twenty-six per cent of Indigenous households owned a home with a mortgage in 2016, an increase from 19% of Indigenous households in 2001. Over the same period, the proportion of Indigenous home owners in mortgage stress, defined as spending more than 30 per cent of the household's gross income on mortgage repayments, fell from a peak of 30% of those with a mortgage in 2011 to 21% in 2016 (Supplementary table S3.1).

Within urban areas (areas with a population of more than 1,000 people), 26% of all Indigenous households (almost 57,000 households) lived in mortgaged dwellings in 2016. Of these, 1 in 5 (21%) were in mortgage stress (Figure 3.1). The proportion of Indigenous households in mortgage stress has increased from 18% in 2001 to a peak of 30% in the 2011 Census, before dropping to 21% in 2016.

Mortgage stress has also been increasing for Indigenous households in rural areas (that is, areas not considered to be urban if they are a bounded locality of between 200 and 1,000 people or in a rural area). Of the 10,000 Indigenous households living in mortgaged dwellings in rural areas in 2016, 1 in 4 (24%) were in mortgage stress (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Indigenous households in mortgage stress (%), by section of state, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.1 for explanatory notes.

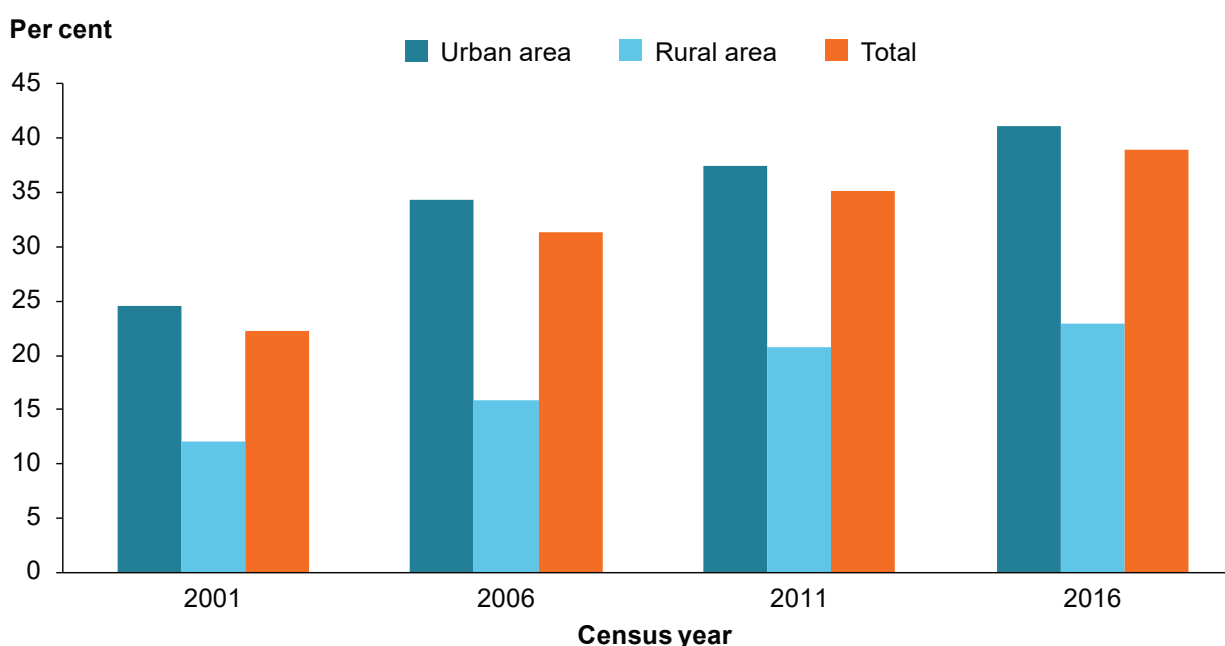
Source: AIHW customised data report of ABS Census data 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Rental stress

In 2016, 57% of Indigenous households (around 151,000 households) were renters (including social housing, private housing and other renters), a decrease from 64% in 2001 (Supplementary table S2.1).

Rental stress is commonly defined as spending more than 30% of gross household income on rent. Of those households renting, the proportion of Indigenous households experiencing rental stress has risen substantially from 22% in 2001 to 39% in 2016 (Figure 3.2). The increase in the proportion of households in rental stress occurred in both urban and rural areas.

Figure 3.2: Indigenous households in rental stress (%), by section of state, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.2 for explanatory notes.

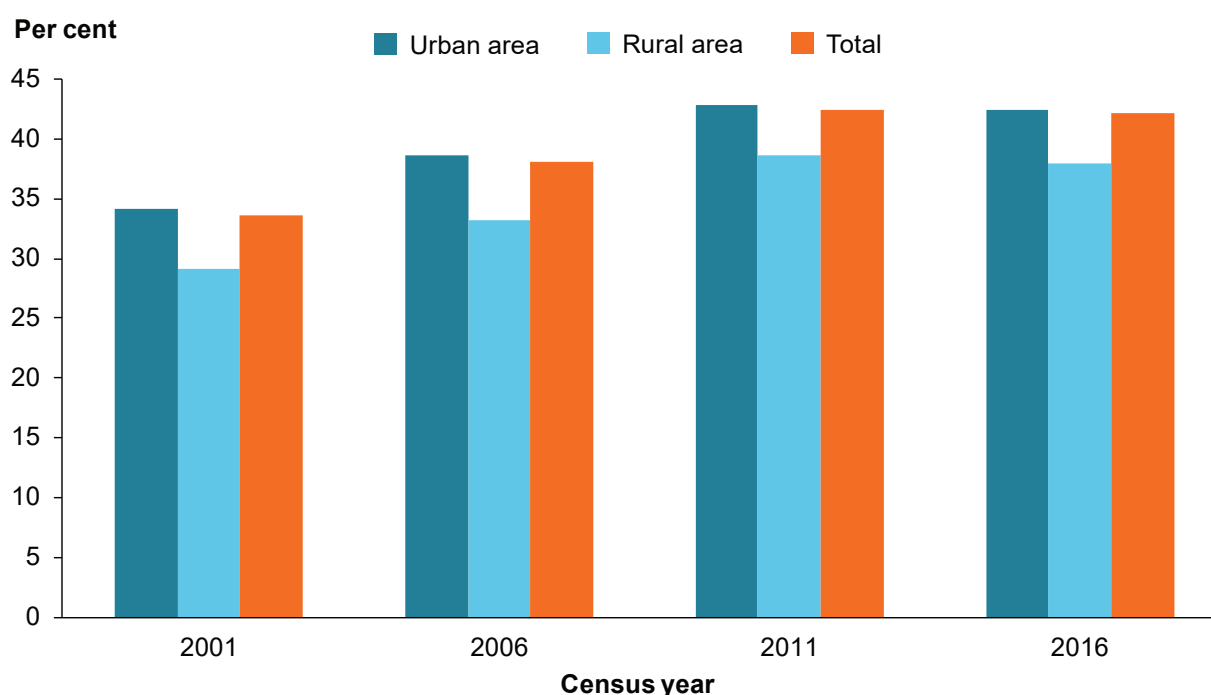
Source: AIHW customised data report of ABS Census data 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016.

In 2016, the proportion of Indigenous households in rental stress (private housing, social housing and other renters) was highest in New South Wales (44%), followed by Victoria (41%), while the Northern Territory had the lowest proportion (16%). Rental stress has been rising in all states and territories with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory every Census year between 2001 and 2016 (Supplementary table S3.2).

Rental stress for Indigenous private renters has increased from 34% in 2001 to 42% in 2016 with rental stress remaining stable between 2011 and 2016 (Figure 3.3). Private rental households in urban and rural areas showed similar trends over time.

The highest proportion of Indigenous private rental households in rental stress was in New South Wales; 44% in 2016, an increase of 8 percentage points since 2001 (Supplementary table S3.3). The lowest proportion was in the Australian Capital Territory, 24%.

Figure 3.3: Indigenous private renter households in rental stress (%), by section of state, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.3 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW customised data report of ABS Census data 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Financial assistance

Australian governments provide financial assistance to improve access to housing in the public and private sectors. There are several programs targeted to assist with home purchase (especially for first and low-income homebuyers) or with rental payments. As with social housing, there are financial assistance programs for all people, as well as Indigenous-specific programs.

The financial assistance programs, for which information is available for Indigenous Australians, include the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), private rent assistance (PRA) and home purchase assistance (HPA). The Indigenous-specific program is the Indigenous Home Ownership Program.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is an Australian Government payment, received by people on low or moderate incomes who are renting in the private housing market, to assist with the cost of housing. CRA is the most common form of housing assistance received by Indigenous Australian households.

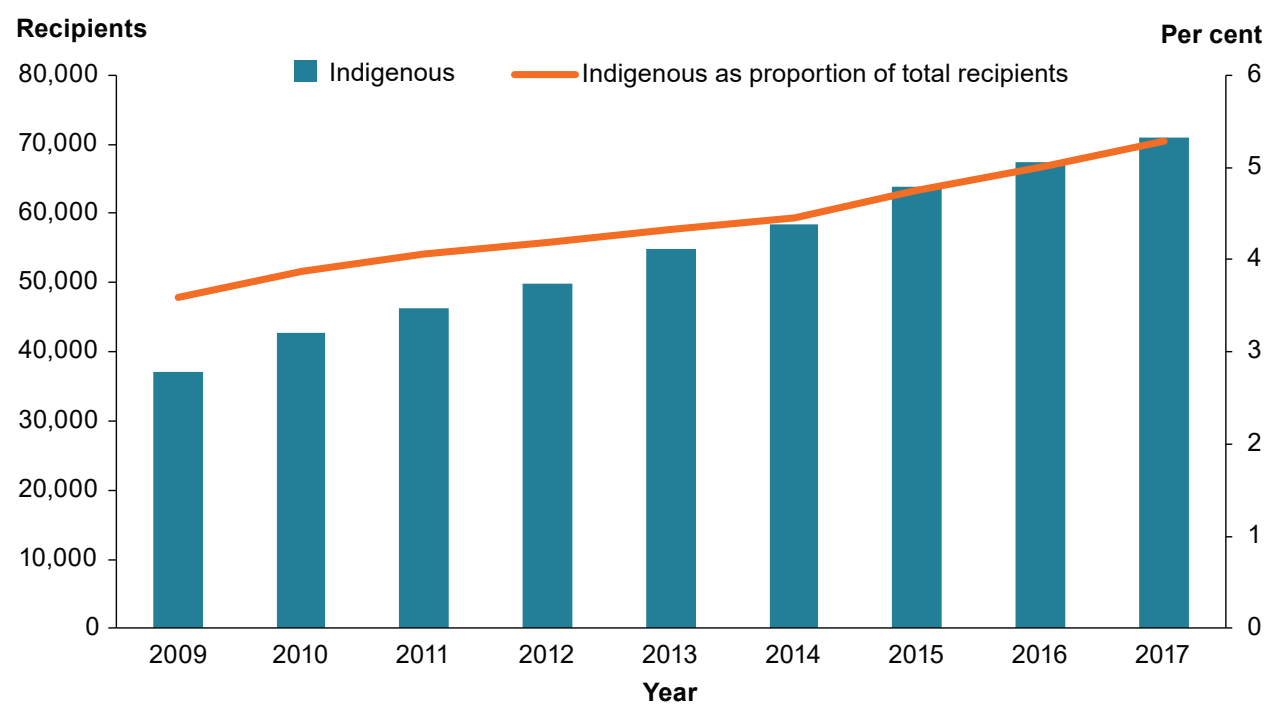
Some social housing tenants are eligible for CRA, such as those living in community housing or Indigenous community housing and, in some jurisdictions, state-owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). CRA is not generally payable to public rental housing tenants, as state and territory housing authorities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



Recipients of CRA are classified as 'income units', rather than households. Generally, there are more income units than households.

The number of Indigenous CRA income units increased 1.9 fold, from 37,200 income units in June 2009 to 71,100 in June 2017, with the proportion of CRA income units identifying as Indigenous increasing from 3.6% in 2009 to 5.3% in June 2017 (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Indigenous Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients (income units), 2009 to 2017



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.4 for explanatory notes.
Source: Productivity Commission 2018.

CRA by state and territory

The number of Indigenous CRA income units increased in all states and territories since 2013. While New South Wales continues to have the largest number of income units, Queensland had the largest increase over this period, from 17,600 income units in 2013 to 23,200 in June 2017 (Figure 3.5; Supplementary table S3.5).

Figure 3.5: Indigenous Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients (income units), by state and territory, 2013, 2015 and 2017



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.5 for explanatory notes.

Source: Productivity Commission 2018.

Private rent assistance

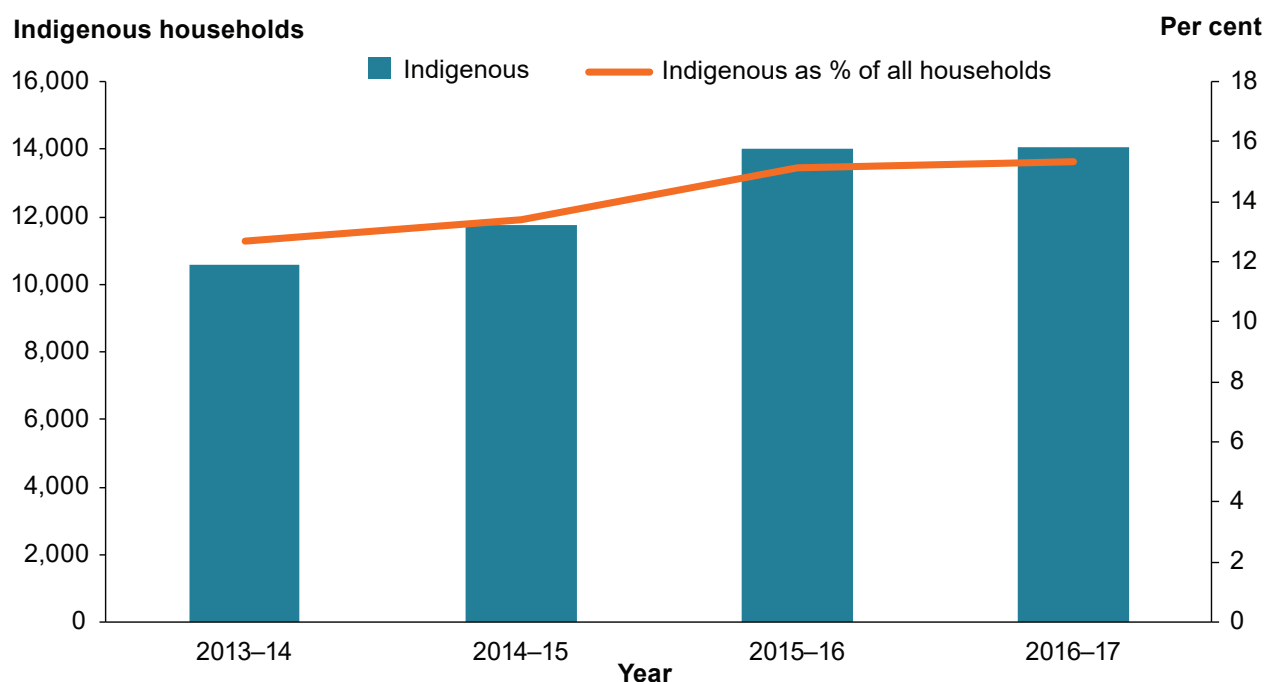
Private rent assistance (PRA) is financial assistance provided directly by all state and territory governments to low-income households experiencing difficulty either securing or maintaining private rental accommodation.

Typically, private rent assistance is provided as a one-off form of support and includes bond loans, rental grants, rental subsidies and relief, and payment of relocation expenses. In 2016–17, these forms of private rental assistance were provided to nearly 98,500 households, noting that households may receive more than one type of private rent assistance.

In 2013–14, 13% of all PRA recipients were Indigenous households; this has risen to 15% in 2016–17 (Figure 3.6). The number of Indigenous households receiving PRA has increased 1.3 fold, from 10,600 households in 2013–14 to 14,000 in 2016–17.



Figure 3.6: Indigenous households receiving private rent assistance, 2013–14 to 2016–17



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S3.6 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme ('NRAS' or 'the Scheme') is an Australian Government affordable housing initiative, delivered in partnership with state and territory governments. The Scheme, which began in 2008, seeks to address the shortage of affordable rental housing by offering annual financial incentives to housing providers for up to ten years, to build and rent dwellings for eligible NRAS tenants at 80 per cent or less of the market value rent.

NRAS issues financial incentives to organisations that provide people on low to moderate incomes with an opportunity to rent homes at a rate that is at least 20 per cent below market value rent. NRAS homes are not social housing—they are affordable private rental homes.

Under the NRAS, the Australian Government in conjunction with the states and territories are providing financial incentives to:

- increase the supply of affordable rental housing
- reduce the rental costs for low to moderate income households
- encourage the large-scale investment and innovative delivery of affordable rental housing.

Investment in the Scheme since its inception in 2008–09 has seen a relatively steady growth in the number of Indigenous tenants receiving NRAS. In 2016–17, there were 3,200 Indigenous tenants representing around 5% of all NRAS recipients (Supplementary table S3.7).

Home Purchase Assistance (HPA)

Home purchase assistance (HPA) is administered by each jurisdiction and provides a range of financial assistance to eligible households to improve their access to, and maintain, home ownership. HPA may vary from state to state, and some products are not offered by all jurisdictions.

HPA can include: direct lending, concessional loans, mortgage relief, interest rate assistance, deposit assistance and other assistance grants.

Traditionally HPA has been provided to a small number of Indigenous recipients. There has been little change in the number or rate of Indigenous people and households receiving HPA from 2013–14 to 2016–17. Funding targeted to specifically assist Indigenous homeownership is also available; see the Indigenous Home Ownership Program below.

Indigenous Home Ownership Program

Many Indigenous Australians face a range of barriers to owning a home, including lower incomes, lack of a deposit and/or credit history. These factors all affect the credit assessment criteria of mainstream lenders. Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) facilitates increasing the levels of home ownership through housing loans to Indigenous Australians who have difficulty qualifying for housing finance (IBA 2017). IBA assists Indigenous Australians into home ownership by providing home loans at concessional interest rates that have low deposit requirements and flexible repayment terms.

Since 1975, IBA has assisted almost 18,000 Indigenous people into home ownership. At 30 June 2017, the total number of loans in the portfolio was 4,570, with 544 new loans provided in 2016–17 (Supplementary table S3.9). The average purchase price in 2016–17 for homes funded through the program was \$350,400 (IBA 2017).

The overwhelming majority of IBA's home loan customers (92%) have been first homebuyers. With the substantial growth in Indigenous home ownership (with a mortgage) over the 15 years to 2016 (40,100 loans; Table 2.1), the contribution of Indigenous targeted home ownership schemes appears to be having a positive effect.



4 Indigenous households in social housing

Key findings

- *Growing numbers of Indigenous households in both public and community housing programs:* since 2008–09, the number of Indigenous households has increased to 33,300 and 5,800 households, respectively in 2016–17.
- *Public housing is the largest provider of social housing to Indigenous households:* at 30 June 2017, 33,300 Indigenous households were in public housing; that is, 1 in 9 public housing households.
- *The vast majority of Indigenous households living in public housing, community housing and SOMIH were located in Major cities, Inner regional and Outer regional areas:* that is, 86% of public housing households, 97% of those in community housing and 86% of SOMIH households in 2016–17.
- *New housing allocations are increasingly provided to Indigenous households:* Indigenous households accounted for 24% of all new public housing allocations in 2016–17, an increase from 16% in 2008–09; increases were also seen in community housing allocations (9% in 2008–09 compared with 16% in 2016–17).
- *Wait times for housing allocations have been declining:* the proportion of Indigenous households waiting more than 2 years for public housing has declined from 22% in 2013–14 to 17% in 2016–17; for SOMIH, similar reductions have been seen from 17% to 11%.
- *Social housing dwelling standards are improving:* since 2012, there has been an increase in the proportion of Indigenous tenants who rated their social housing dwellings as being of an 'acceptable' standard (from 62% up to 70% in 2018 for all housing programs).

Social housing and Indigenous households

Social housing is rental housing provided by the state and territory governments and community sectors. The purpose of social housing is to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market. Social housing includes public housing, community housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) and Indigenous community housing.

Low income is a strong contributor to disadvantage for Indigenous households (AHMAC 2015); in 2016 one-third of Indigenous people lived in income poverty (incomes of less than 50% of median equivalised disposable household income) (Markham & Biddle 2018). Affordability, along with discrimination, impedes access to both home ownership and private rental market properties, which in turn increases reliance on social housing (Milligan et al. 2011). Other factors such as managing a life crisis (for example, an illness or escaping domestic violence) and the need for safe and stable (long-term) housing also result in a high demand for social housing (Birdsall-Jones & Corunna 2008).

Being a divorced individual and single. I feel more secure within myself and within my community having a safe, stable environment for my daughter and myself. This takes a load of worry off my shoulders. I am aware if my circumstance change, my housing provider will be there to assist me through any transition period and this gives my peace of mind.

Indigenous tenant, Community Housing, National Social Housing Survey 2018

Annual data available through the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository provide information on the various social housing programs throughout Australia. Public housing is the largest provider of social housing to Indigenous households (Table 4.1).

At 30 June 2017:

- 33,300 Indigenous households were in public housing; this equates to 1 in 9 public housing households and 12% of all Indigenous households
- 17,900 Indigenous community housing program dwellings were recorded, or 7% of all Indigenous households, noting that for these data, dwellings can be used as a proxy for households
- 9,600 Indigenous households were in SOMIH; this equates to 4% of all Indigenous households
- 5,800 community housing program households were Indigenous, equating to 1 in 13 community housing households and 2% of all Indigenous households. Note: household information drawn from the Community Housing data collection does not include data for the Northern Territory. This means that counts of Indigenous households are underestimates for this collection.

Table 4.1: Indigenous households in major social housing programs, 30 June 2017

At 30 June 2017	Public Housing	Indigenous community housing ^(a)	SOMIH	Community housing
How many social housing households are Indigenous?	33,300 1 in 9	17,900 All	9,600 All	5,800 1 in 13
How many Indigenous households are living in social housing?	12%	7%	4%	2%

(a) Dwelling data is used as a proxy for households in the Indigenous Community Housing program.

Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository; Supplementary table S4.1.

Social housing dwellings over time

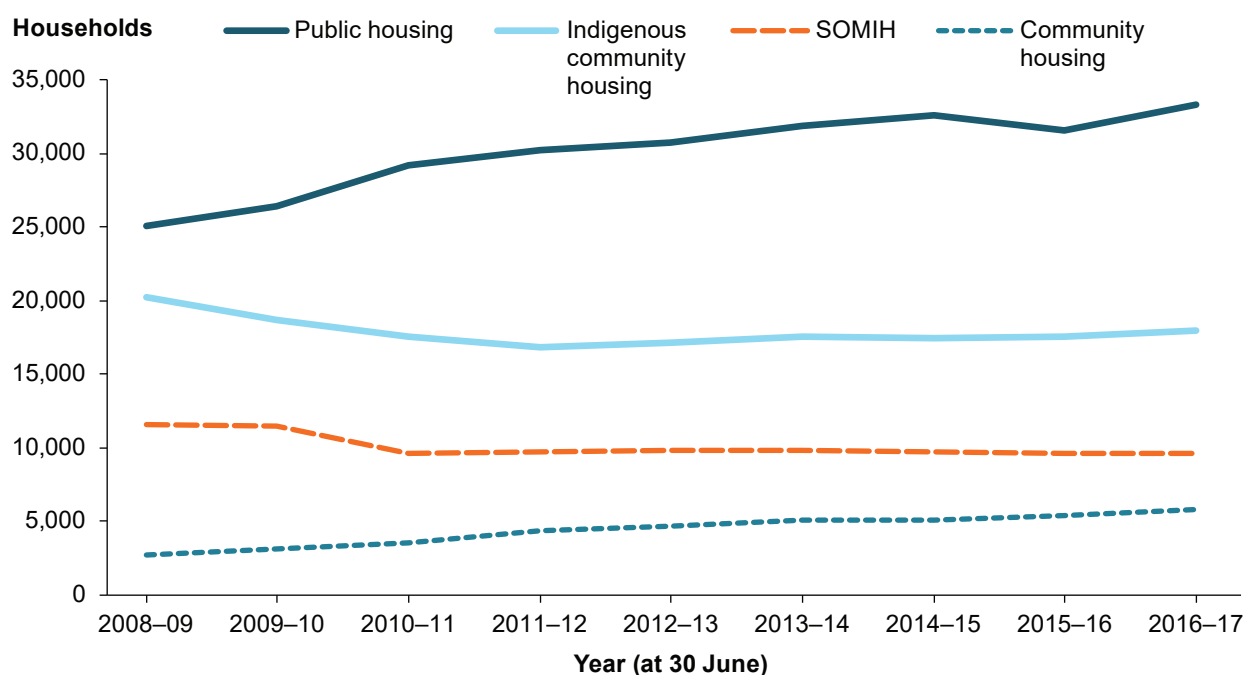
Since 2007–08, the total number of dwellings provided through social housing programs has increased however, the growth has not kept up with the growth in the total number of Australian households. The number of social housing dwellings per 100 Australian households has declined from 5.1% of households in 2007–08 to 4.6% in 2016–17 (AIHW 2018b). As Indigenous households are overrepresented in social housing, the impact of decreasing social housing as a share of all national dwellings (social share), has the potential to have a greater impact on Indigenous Australians.

Since 2006–07, there has been a policy shift towards expansion of the community housing sector: community housing dwelling numbers increased by 136% (or 47,700 dwellings) over the decade to 2016–17. During this time public housing stock has declined by 6% (19,900 dwellings) and the number

of Indigenous community housing dwellings has declined by 19% (4,100 dwellings) (AIHW 2018b). The decrease in public housing dwellings is partly attributable to the transfers of dwellings to community housing providers, as well as the disposal of some stock.

The number of Indigenous households within both public housing and community housing programs has increased since 2008–09 (Figure 4.1). In contrast, the number of Indigenous community housing and SOMIH households have remained relatively stable.

Figure 4.1: Indigenous households in social housing programs, 2008–09 to 2016–17



Note: Dwelling data is used as a proxy for households in Indigenous community housing. Refer to Supplementary table S4.2 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2014a; AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Social housing households by state and territory

Social housing assistance provided to Indigenous households vary among states and territories due to differences in housing environments and policies. At 30 June 2017, the proportion of all Indigenous households living in social housing ranged from 7% in Tasmania to 37% in Western Australia (Table 4.2). The Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous households in public housing (28%). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous households in Indigenous community housing at 17%.

Table 4.2: Indigenous households, by social housing program and state and territory (%), at 30 June 2017

Social housing program	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Indigenous households in mainstream social housing									
Public housing	11.8	10.1	9.1	24.5	14.5	3.8	28.4	17.5	12.4
Community housing	3.1	1.9	1.5	2.7	2.2	1.2	0.4	n.a.	2.2
Indigenous households in targeted Indigenous social housing									
SOMIH	4.6	..	4.3	..	10.9	1.9	..	n.a.	3.6
Indigenous community housing	5.2	7.1	6.9	9.7	6.2	0.6	..	17.3	6.7
Total households in social housing (%)	24.7	19.0	21.7	36.8	33.9	7.5	28.8	34.8	24.9
Total Indigenous households (number)	96,907	24,238	76,302	27,320	14,976	11,748	3,319	12,993	267,802

.. not applicable

n.a. not available

Notes

1. Indigenous households in social housing programs as a percentage of all Indigenous households (at 30 June 2017) in each state or territory.

2. Refer to Supplementary table S4.3 for explanatory notes.

Sources: SCRGSP 2018; AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

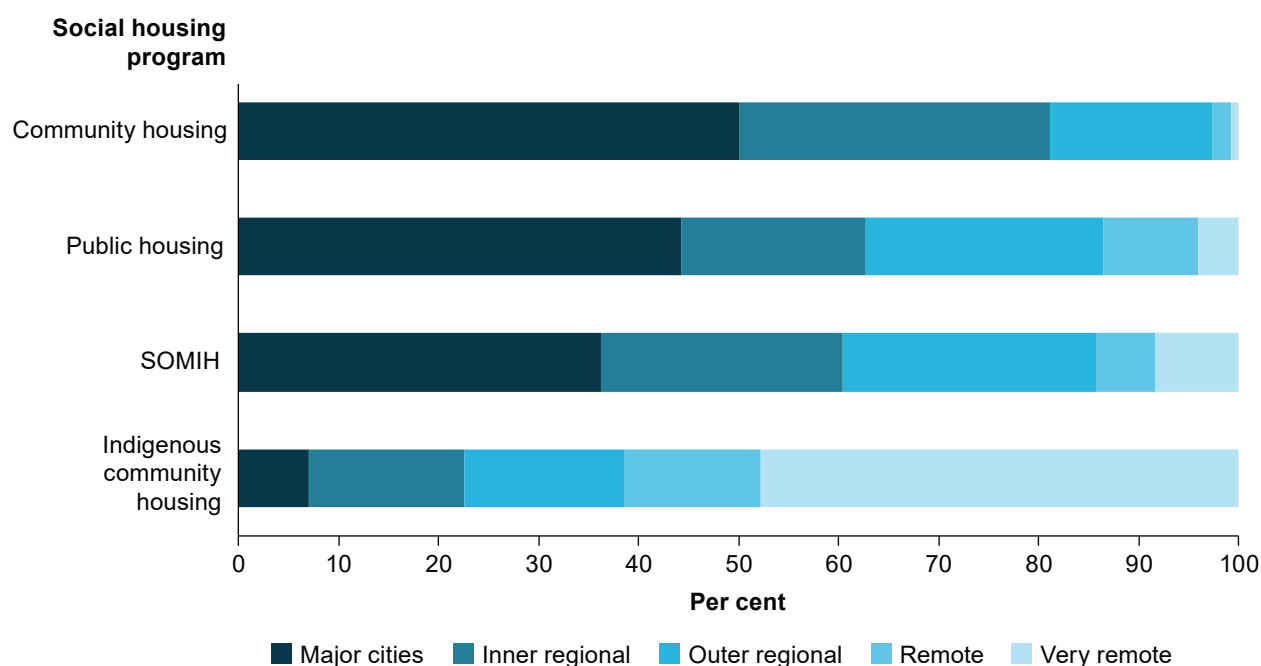
Social housing by remoteness

According to the 2016 Census, 8 in 10 (81%) Indigenous people lived in *Major cities, Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas (ABS 2018g). Indigenous households in social housing in 2016–17 show a similar pattern, with the majority of Indigenous households in public and community housing programs as well as the SOMIH program located in *Major cities, Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas (86%, 97% and 86%, respectively) (Figure 4.2). (Note SOMIH data for the Northern Territory are unavailable; including the data would reduce the Indigenous household proportions in urban areas).

In contrast, a different geographic distribution is seen in the Indigenous community housing (ICH) program. The majority (61%) of Indigenous ICH households were in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas in 2016–17.



Figure 4.2: Proportion of Indigenous households by remoteness, by social housing program, 2016–17



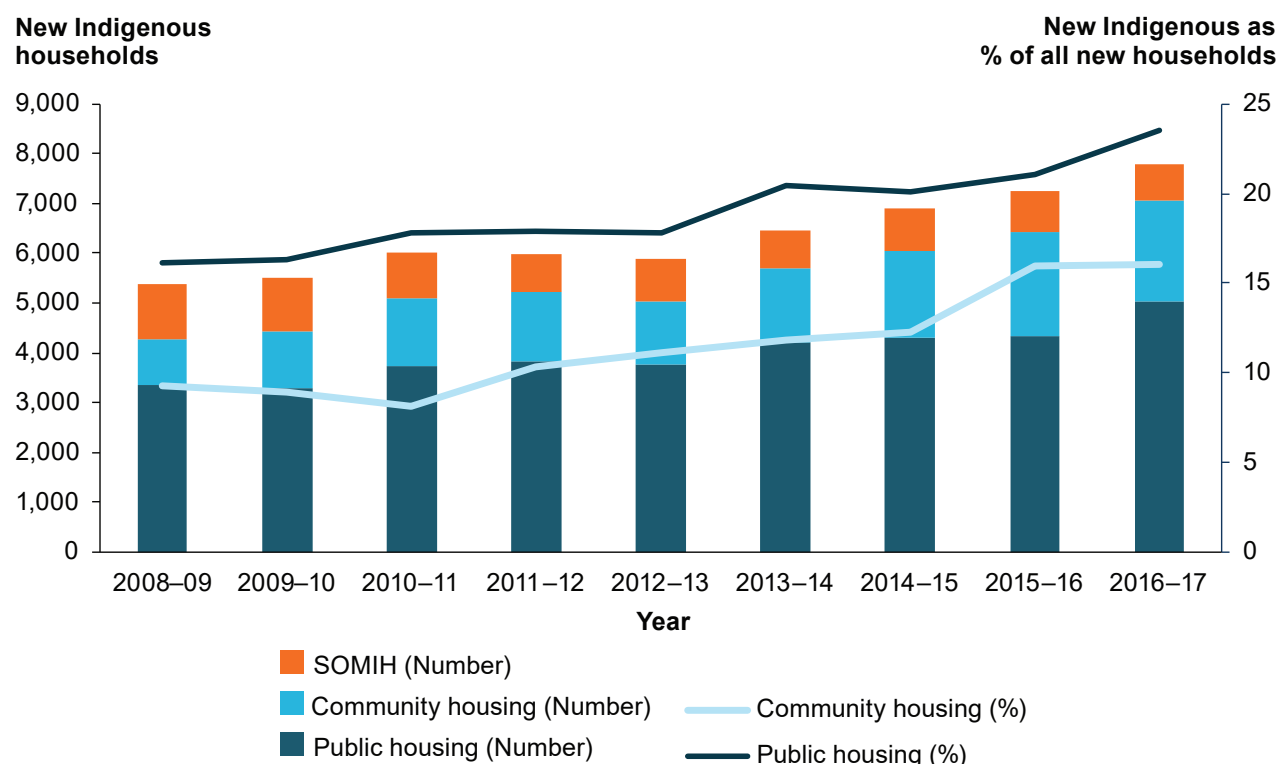
Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository; Supplementary table S4.4.

There are signs of changes in the distribution pattern of Indigenous households across remoteness areas within public housing, which houses half (50%) of Indigenous households in social housing. From 2012–13 to 2016–17 the proportion of Indigenous households in public housing in *Major cities* has increased (up 2 percentage points or 2,200 households) and the proportion of Indigenous households in remote areas has decreased (down 2 percentage points or 44 households) (Supplementary table S4.4). These movements of Indigenous households living in social housing away from remote areas follow a general shift in the Indigenous population to, for example, *Major cities* over the last decade; in particular there has been an increase in Indigenous people living in *Major cities* from 32% in 2006 to 37% in 2016 (ABS 2018f).

New housing allocations and tenure length

Since 2008–09, there has been an increase in the proportion of newly allocated dwellings provided to Indigenous households (Figure 4.3). New public housing allocations to Indigenous households (as a proportion of all new allocations) increased from 16% (3,300 households) in 2008–09 to 24% (5,000) in 2016–17. New allocations in community housing have increased from 9% (900 households) in 2008–09 to 16% (2,000) in 2016–17.

Figure 4.3: New housing assistance allocated to Indigenous households, by social housing program, 2008-09 to 2016-17

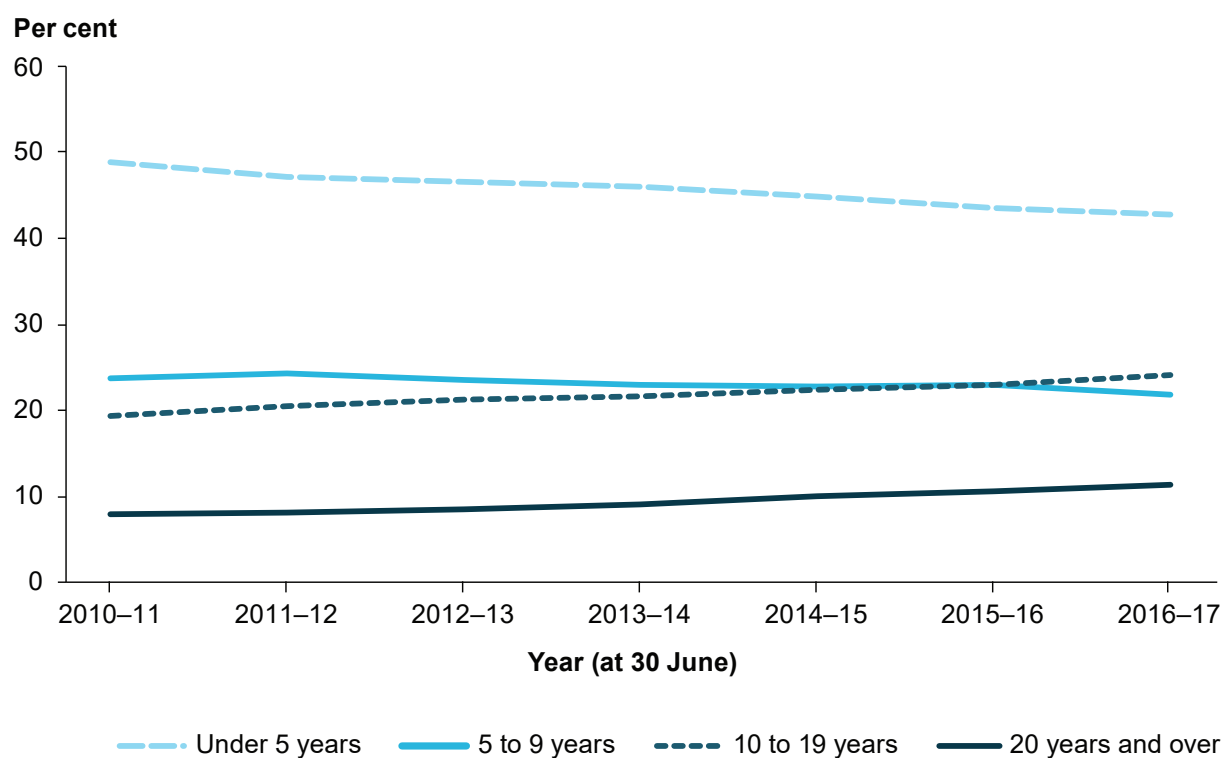


Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.5 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Within the SOMIH program, by definition, all new allocations are to Indigenous households. The number of new allocations has fluctuated between 1,100 in 2008-09 and 720 in 2016-17, with the general trend falling (dropping 35%, or 388 over this time) (Supplementary table S4.5).

Since 2010-11, the total number of SOMIH households has remained relatively stable at around 9,600 households since 2010-11 (Figure 4.1). Between 2010-11 and 2016-17 the number of new SOMIH households has decreased by 229 or 24% (Supplementary table S4.5). One factor influencing this trend is the rate of exits from the program. Over this time period there has been a decline in shorter tenure lengths, under 5 years (49% down to 43% of tenures) and a rise in longer tenures (10 years and over), up from 27% to 35% (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Tenure length of ongoing households in SOMIH, 2010–11 to 2016–17

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.6 for explanatory notes.

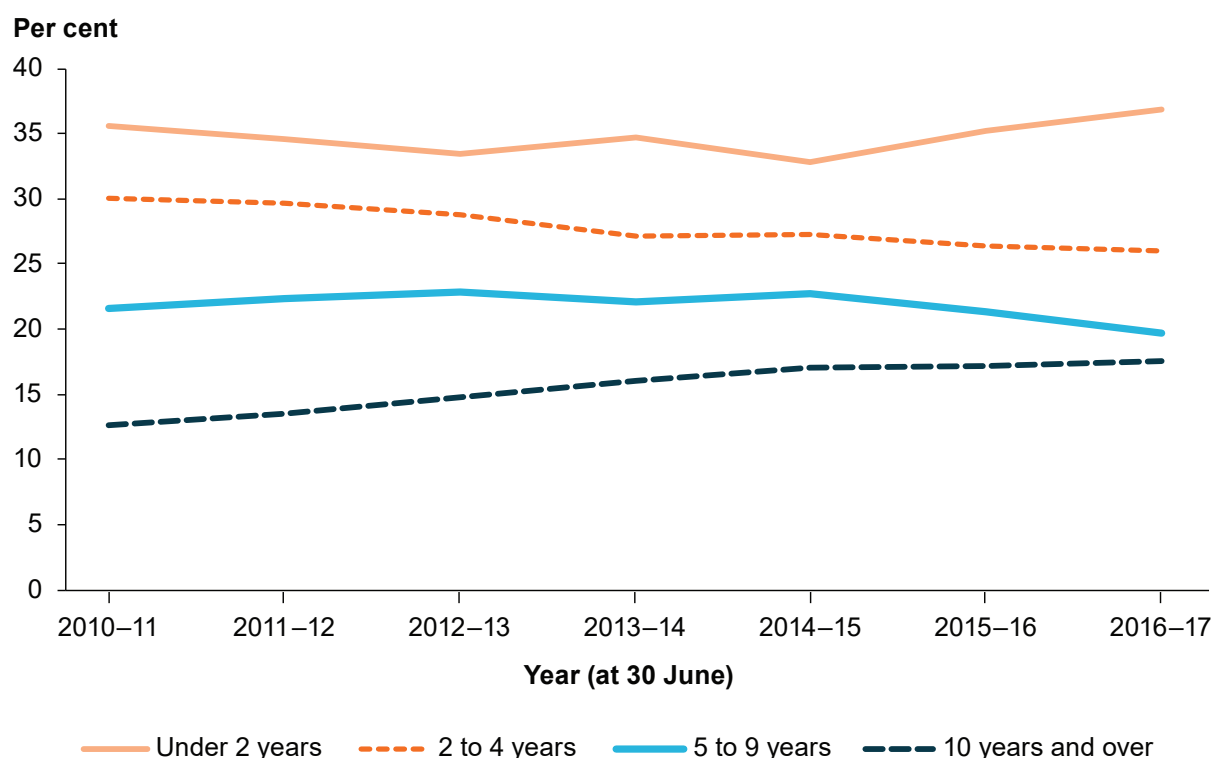
Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Tenure length can be influenced by a number of factors. Research has shown that Indigenous Australians may face multiple barriers to sustaining mainstream public and community housing tenancies over time, including discrimination, cultural factors and unsuitable housing (Flatau et al. 2005).

Across the social housing programs, tenure length varies considerably for Indigenous tenants. SOMIH tenants tend to have longer tenure lengths than tenants in other social housing programs. In 2016–17, 35% of SOMIH tenants had lived in their dwellings for more than 10 years, compared with 18% for public housing and 5% for community housing (Supplementary table S4.6).

The majority of Indigenous public housing tenants had tenure lengths of under 5 years, however, the long-term trend shows an increasing proportion of Indigenous tenants with longer tenure (10 years or longer) (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Tenure length of ongoing Indigenous households in public housing, 2010–11 to 2016–17

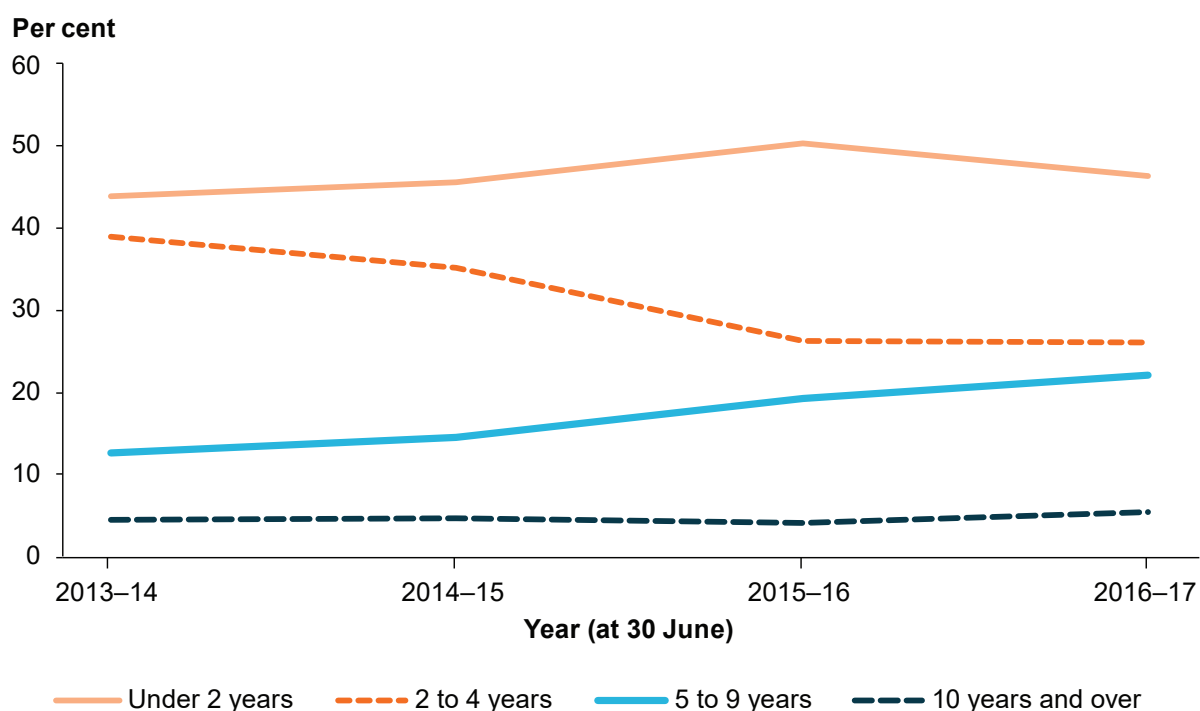


Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.6 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Indigenous tenants living in community housing dwellings tend to have the shortest tenure lengths (compared with Indigenous tenants in other social housing programs). In 2016–17, 73% of households (or 4,200) had lived in a community housing dwelling for under 5 years (Figure 4.6), compared with 43% in SOMIH and 63% in public housing (Supplementary table S4.6). The shorter tenure lengths in community housing is not unexpected given the growth in this program in recent years, meaning that there is a greater proportion of housing stock that has only been available for tenancy for shorter time periods.

Figure 4.6: Tenure length of ongoing Indigenous households in community housing, 2013–14 to 2016–17



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.6 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Waiting times

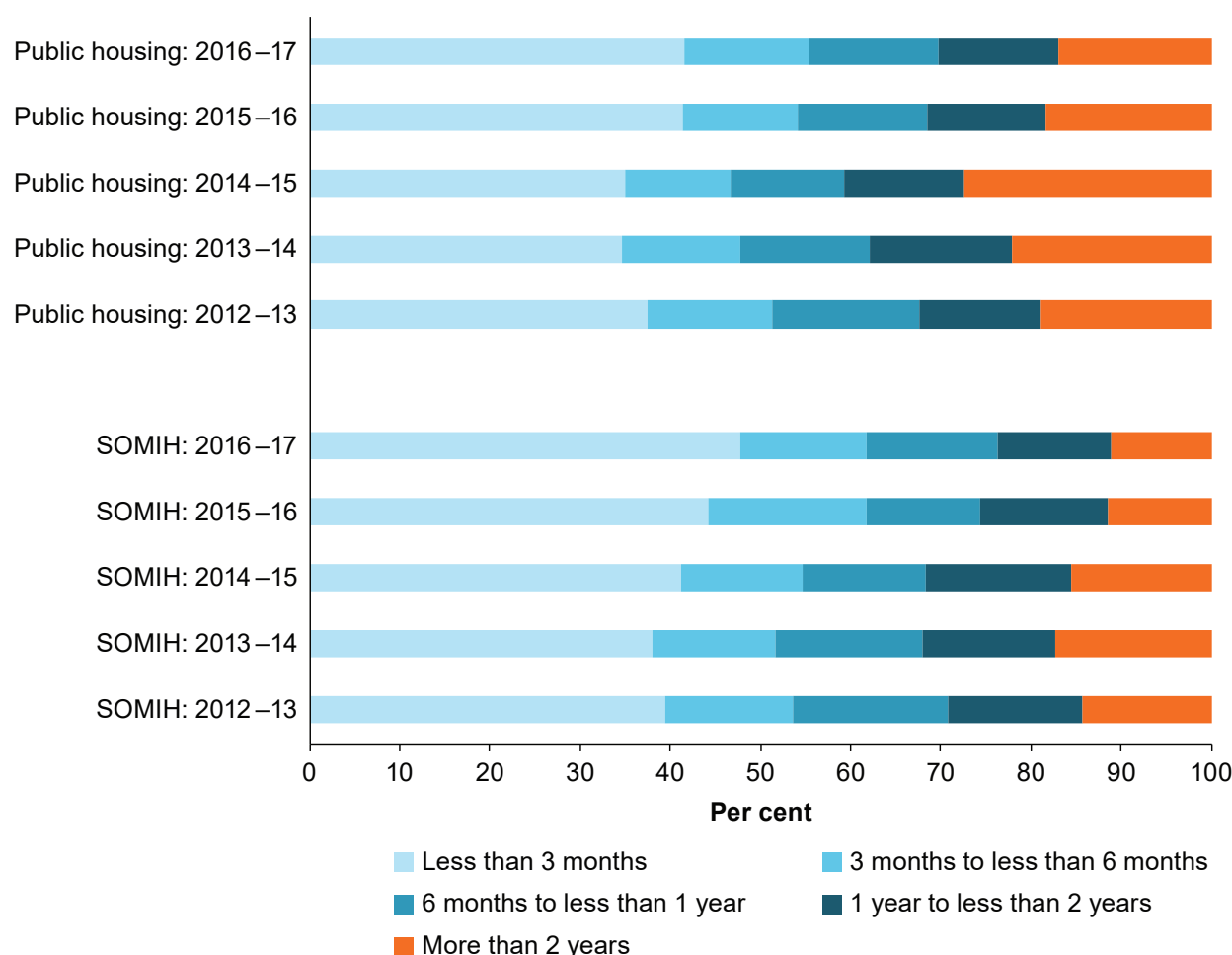
The demand for social housing outweighs supply in all states and territories; therefore, access is managed through waiting lists (a general list as well as a priority waiting list for greatest need or special needs households). Eligibility for the general waiting list mostly depends on household composition, income and the value of the assets held. Applicants are eligible for the priority waiting list based on additional criteria relating to personal safety, extreme hardship and homelessness (PC 2017).

The length of time applicants remain on the waiting list is dependent on a number of factors including the amount, location and composition of social housing properties (PC 2017). Matching the applicants to the dwelling is important for tenant satisfaction, stability and overall improved health and social outcomes.

In 2016–17, 42% of Indigenous households waited less than 3 months for a public housing allocation compared with 39% for non-Indigenous households.

Since 2012–13, there have been reductions in wait times for Indigenous households on both the public housing and SOMIH programs. For public housing the proportion of new Indigenous allocations waiting less than 3 months increased from 35% in 2013–14 to 42% in 2016–17 (Figure 4.7). For SOMIH, the proportion increased from 38% to 48% over the same time period. Indigenous households waiting more than 2 years for a public housing allocation has also declined.

Figure 4.7: Wait times for new Indigenous allocations, by social housing program, 2012–13 to 2016–17



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.7 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository.

Social housing dwelling standards and tenant satisfaction

In response to the poorer standard of Indigenous housing in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians (Keys Young 1998), a number of performance measures are published annually in the Report on Government Services (RoGS). These indicators relate to improving housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians, specifically focusing on social housing quality and tenant satisfaction. These performance measures have been addressed within the housing strategies of each state and territory.

The National Social Housing Survey (NSHS) collects information biennially (every second year) from tenants receiving assistance from three social housing programs—public housing, community housing, and SOMIH. The NSHS provides tenant information about the standard as well as their satisfaction with their social housing dwelling.

'Dwelling condition or standard' is assessed by the number of working facilities, as well as by the number of major structural problems present, as assessed by the tenant (AIHW 2017a) (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1: Dwelling condition

A dwelling is considered to be of an 'acceptable standard' if it has 4 or more working facilities, and if it has no more than 2 major structural problems.

In order to assess dwelling condition, tenants were asked to indicate what facilities their dwelling had and whether they were in working order.

The facilities listed included:

- stove/oven/other cooking facilities
- toilet
- washing machine
- fridge
- bath or shower
- kitchen sink
- laundry tub.

Major structural problems listed on the survey included:

- rising damp
- sinking/moving foundations
- walls/windows out of plumb
- major electrical problems
- major roof defect
- major cracks to walls/floors
- sagging floors
- wood rot/termite damage
- major plumbing problems
- other structural problems.

Source: AIHW 2017a.

Standard of dwelling

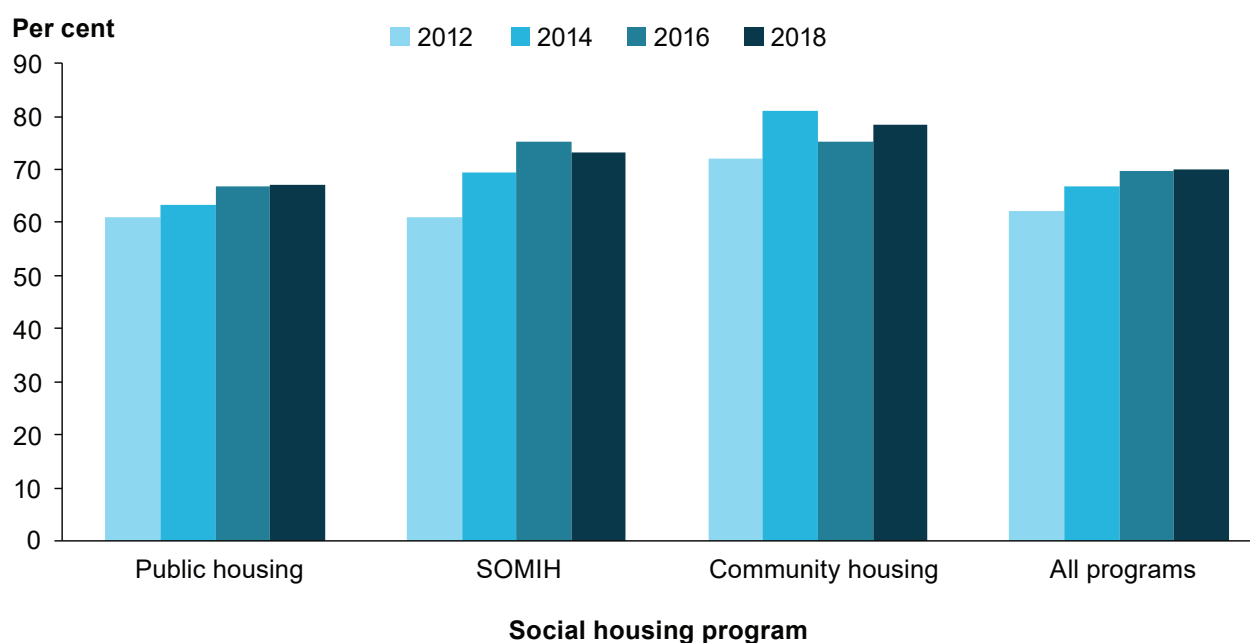
The 2018 NSHS collated data on responses from 9,890 tenants (public housing, SOMIH and community housing). Indigenous community housing (ICH) tenant responses have not been included, refer to Appendix B for further details. Descriptive results show that Indigenous tenants living in the social housing programs (public and community housing) were less likely to rate their dwellings as being of an 'acceptable' standard, compared with non-Indigenous tenants (67% compared with 82% in public housing and 79% compared with 88% in community housing) (AIHW 2019).

Regression analysis of NSHS data showed that dwelling condition was the most important factor in tenants' satisfaction (AIHW 2019). Tenants in all 3 programs were considerably less likely to be satisfied if they lived in a dwelling with structural problems, after accounting for other housing, geographic and demographic factors. However, findings from this analysis also show that once factors such as the location and condition of Indigenous household dwellings, housing program and time in social housing (among other factors) are accounted for, there is no significant relationship between Indigenous status and satisfaction.

Since 2012, there has been an 8 percentage point increase in the proportion of Indigenous tenants who rated their social housing dwelling as being of an 'acceptable' standard (62% in 2012, 70% in 2018 for all programs) (Figure 4.8).

The proportion of public housing dwellings assessed by Indigenous status as being of an acceptable standard has continually improved between 2012 and 2018. The proportions of SOMIH and community housing dwellings assessed as being of an acceptable standard have shown some fluctuations across years but generally improved between 2012 and 2018.

Figure 4.8: Proportion of dwellings assessed as being of an acceptable standard, by social housing program, Indigenous tenants, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.8 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2012 National Social Housing Survey; AIHW 2015b; AIHW 2017a; AIHW 2019.

Tenant satisfaction

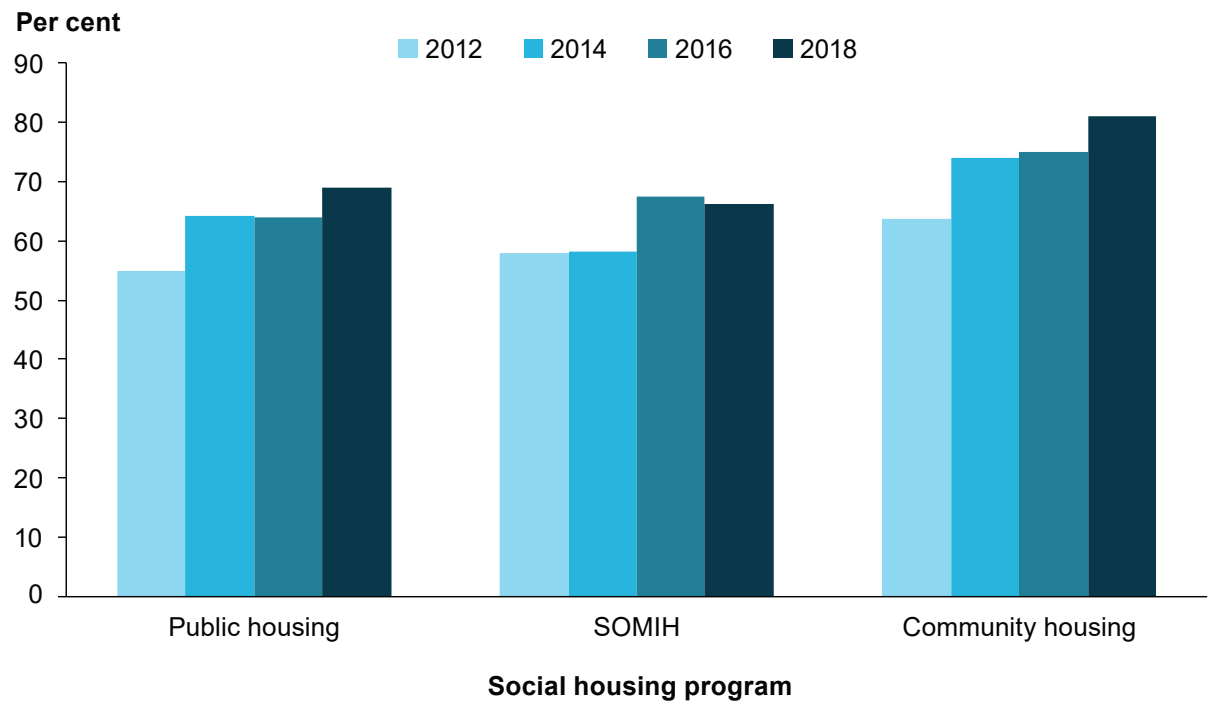
In 2018, Indigenous tenants in public housing (69% satisfied) were less satisfied with the services received from their housing providers than non-Indigenous tenants (75%). Indigenous tenants (81%) in community housing dwellings were more satisfied with their provider than public housing tenants (69%). Community housing Indigenous tenant satisfaction (81%) was higher than non-Indigenous tenant satisfaction (80%) (Supplementary table S4.9).

I have been very satisfied with all services provided as I receive a follow up after services to see if I was happy, phone calls to housing has been helpful and useful as well. Maintenance work has been done very well and on time and punctual as well as a good job.

Tenant, State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing, NSHS 2018

The level of satisfaction among Indigenous tenants has improved between 2012 and 2018 across both public housing and community housing programs (Figure 4.9). In contrast, tenant satisfaction in the SOMIH program has remained relatively stable since 2016.

Figure 4.9: Proportion of Indigenous tenants satisfied with their housing organisation, by housing program type, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.9 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2013; AIHW 2015b; AIHW 2017a; AIHW 2019.

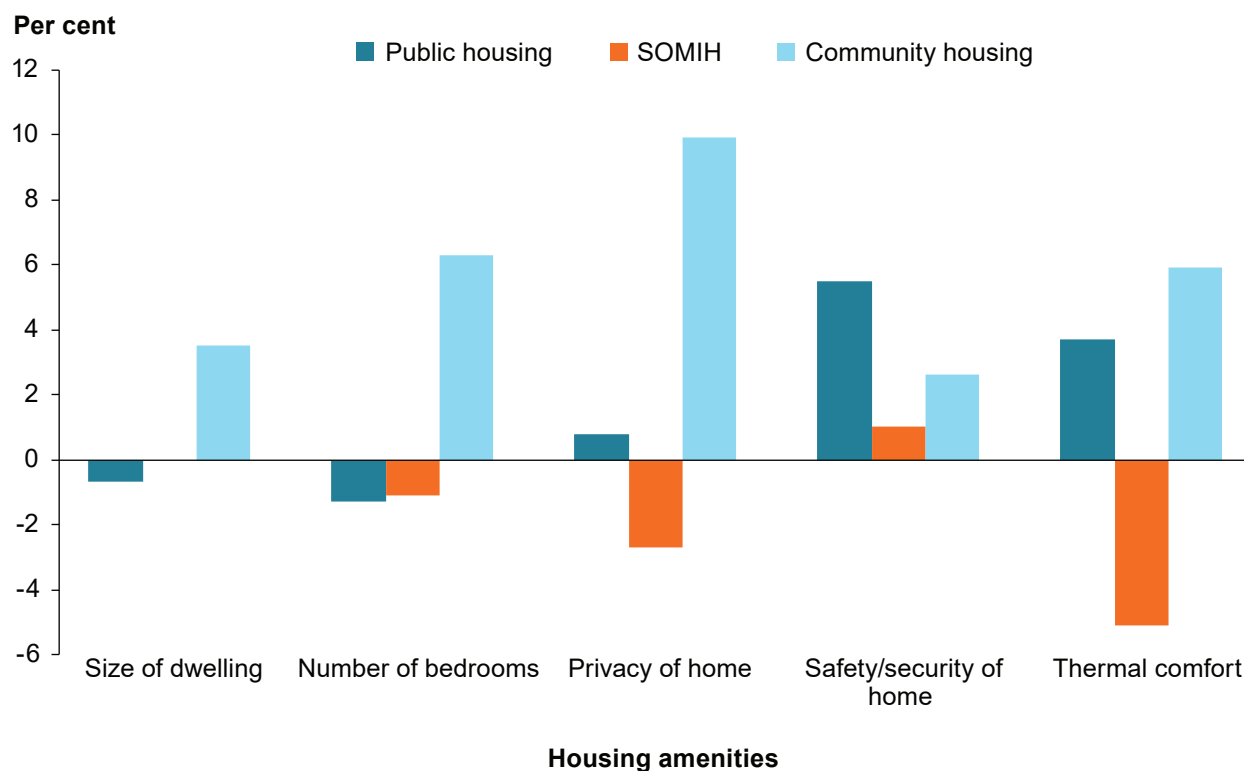
Satisfaction with amenities

The amenities more commonly rated by Indigenous social housing tenants as important compared with other tenants were *number of bedrooms* and *size of the dwelling* (AIHW 2019).

Looking at five select amenities rated as important to Indigenous households between 2016 and 2018 (Figure 4.10; Supplementary table S4.10):

- the amenity rated lowest in terms of meeting households needs was thermal comfort (ranging from 56%–66% across the three programs); tenant satisfaction with this amenity increased for both mainstream public and community housing but declined for SOMIH tenants (Figure 4.10)
- satisfaction declined among public housing tenants in the amenities, size of dwelling (from 78% to 77%) and number of bedrooms (from 80% to 78%), however satisfaction increased for safety/security of home (from 71% to 77%) and thermal comfort (from 52% to 56%)
- satisfaction declined among SOMIH tenants in the amenities, number of bedrooms (from 84% to 83%), privacy of home (from 88% to 85%) and thermal comfort (from 67% to 62%)
- community housing tenants were more satisfied with all the five select amenities rated as important in 2018 compared with 2016.

Figure 4.10: Change in the proportion of Indigenous tenants rating their amenities as meeting the needs of the household, by housing program type, between 2016 and 2018



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S4.10 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2017a; AIHW 2019.

5 Homelessness among Indigenous Australians

Key findings

- More than 23,000 (1 in 28) Indigenous people were homeless on Census night 2016.
- While the rate of homelessness has been falling over time, it is 10 times higher for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians.
- The decline in the Indigenous homelessness rate since 2006 is due predominantly to the decrease in people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings, from 429 per 10,000 population in 2006 to 253 in 2016.

Of the Indigenous people who were homeless on Census night 2016:

- the majority (56% or 13,000) lived in *Very remote* areas of Australia
- 70% were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings and 3 in 4 (76%) of these people were in *Very remote* areas
- 25% (5,900) were children aged under 12
- 52% (12,100) lived in the Northern Territory (only 9% of all Indigenous people live in the Northern Territory).

On Census night 2016, an estimated 23,400 Indigenous Australians were homeless, or 22% of the estimated homeless population (where Indigenous status known) (Table 5.1). The rate of Indigenous homelessness has been steadily decreasing over the last decade, from 571 per 10,000 Indigenous population on Census night in 2006 to 361 in 2016. Indigenous Australians were almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than non-Indigenous people in 2016, however, the difference has been decreasing (down from 18 times in 2006).

The estimate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons who were homeless on Census night is likely to be an underestimate, reflecting both a relatively large under-enumeration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in the Census compared to the total population, and because of cultural differences in the concepts of home and homelessness (ABS 2017a).

Table 5.1: People experiencing homelessness on Census night, by Indigenous status, 2006, 2011 and 2016

	2006			2011			2016		
	Number	Rate	Per cent	Number	Rate	Per cent	Number	Rate	Per cent
Indigenous	25,950	570.6	31.2	26,718	487.4	28.2	23,437	361.0	22.5
Non-Indigenous	57,324	31.4	68.8	68,070	34.2	71.8	80,769	37.8	77.5
Not stated	6,454	57.0	..	7,651	72.3	..	12,217	86.6	..
Total	89,728	45.2	100.0	102,439	47.6	100.0	116,423	49.8	100.0

.. not applicable

Notes

1. All rates are crude rates, per 10,000 population of the usual resident population as enumerated in the Census.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S5.1 for explanatory notes.

Source: ABS 2018c.

Types of homelessness

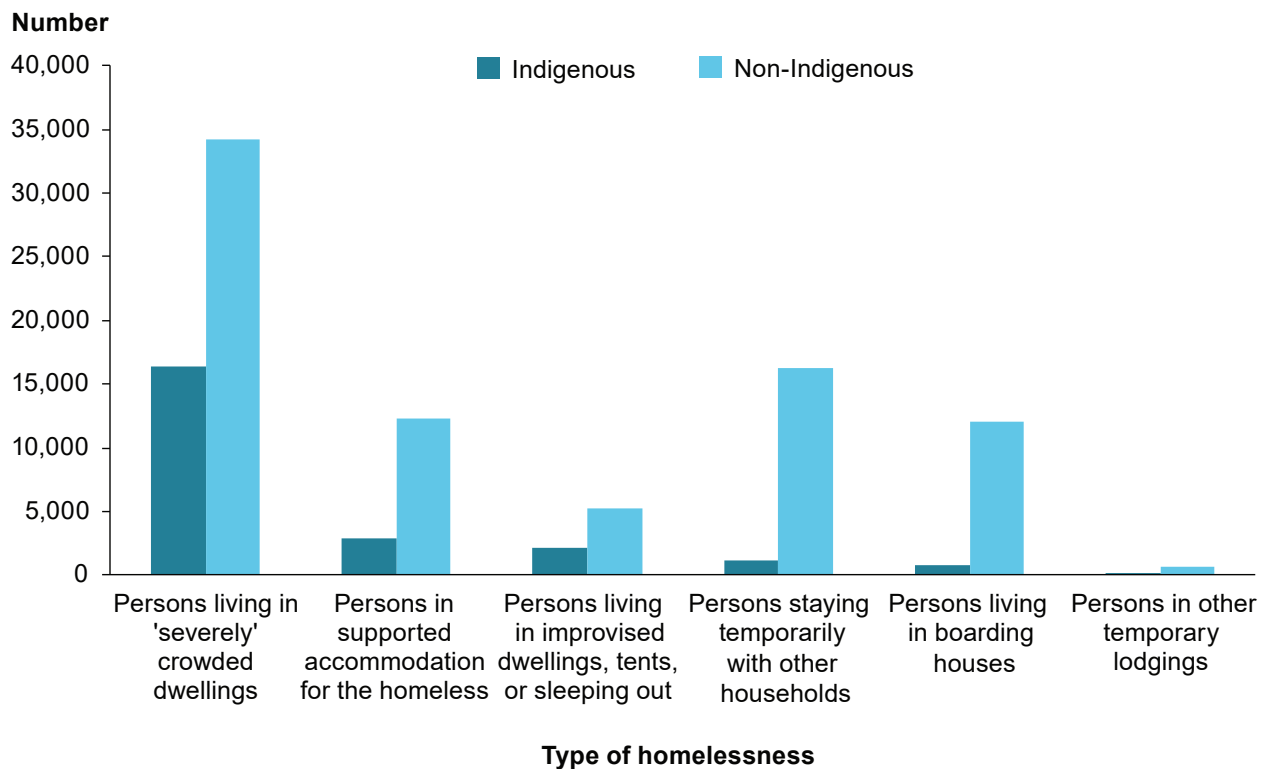
The Census distinguishes between 6 broad groups of homelessness according to the living situation of the person on the night (see Appendix C for details).

Of the 23,400 Indigenous people homeless on Census night 2016 (Figure 5.1):

- 70% (or 16,400) were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings (i.e. dwellings which needed four or more extra bedrooms)
- 12% were living in supported accommodation for the homeless
- 9% were living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (rough sleepers)
- 5% were staying temporarily with other households (couch surfers)
- the remainder were living in boarding houses (3%) or staying in other temporary lodgings (less than 1%).

Indigenous people were over-represented in the homeless groups 'persons living in severely crowded dwellings' and 'persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out'. Crowding is driven, at least in part, by the composition of Indigenous households, with extended family and multiple families often living together (either temporarily or permanently) within the same dwelling (ABS 2014). Cultural factors such as connection to country are also important to consider; Indigenous Australians may not consider themselves as homeless if they are living on country, irrespective of dwelling adequacy.



Figure 5.1: Type of homelessness, by Indigenous status, 2016

Note: Data for this figure are shown in Supplementary table S5.3.

Sources: ABS 2018c; AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

Taking into account differences in the Indigenous population size, on Census night in 2016, 253 Indigenous people per 10,000 population were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings—this is 16 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous people (Table 5.2). (Note: rates are crude rates. No adjustment has been made for the effect of differences in population age structures in these figures).

In addition, on Census night in 2016, compared with non-Indigenous people, Indigenous Australians were:

- 14 times as likely to be living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- 8 times as likely to be in supported accommodation for the homeless.

The rate of Indigenous people who were homeless has improved considerably; 571 people per 10,000 population in 2006, decreasing to 361 in 2016 (Table 5.2). The decline is particularly evident for persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

Table 5.2: Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (per 10,000 population), by homelessness type, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Type of homelessness	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Rate ratio		
	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings ^(a)	428.5	365.9	252.6	6.3	10.4	16.1	68.0	35.2	15.7
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	59.2	59.9	44.8	6.4	7.2	5.8	9.3	8.3	7.7
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out	46.0	30.6	33.4	2.6	2.4	2.4	17.7	12.8	13.9
Persons staying temporarily with other households	19.1	18.4	17.3	9.0	8.0	7.6	2.1	2.3	2.3
Persons living in boarding houses	17.2	12.4	12.1	6.8	6.9	5.6	2.5	1.8	2.2
Persons in other temporary lodgings	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.7	2.3	2.3
All persons experiencing homelessness	570.6	487.4	361.0	31.4	35.2	37.8	18.2	13.8	9.6

(a) Includes usual residents in dwellings needing 4 or more extra bedrooms under the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS).

Notes

1. Refer to Supplementary table S5.2 and Technical notes for explanatory details.
2. Rates are crude rates; no adjustment has been made for the effect of differences in population age structures.

Sources: ABS 2018c; AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

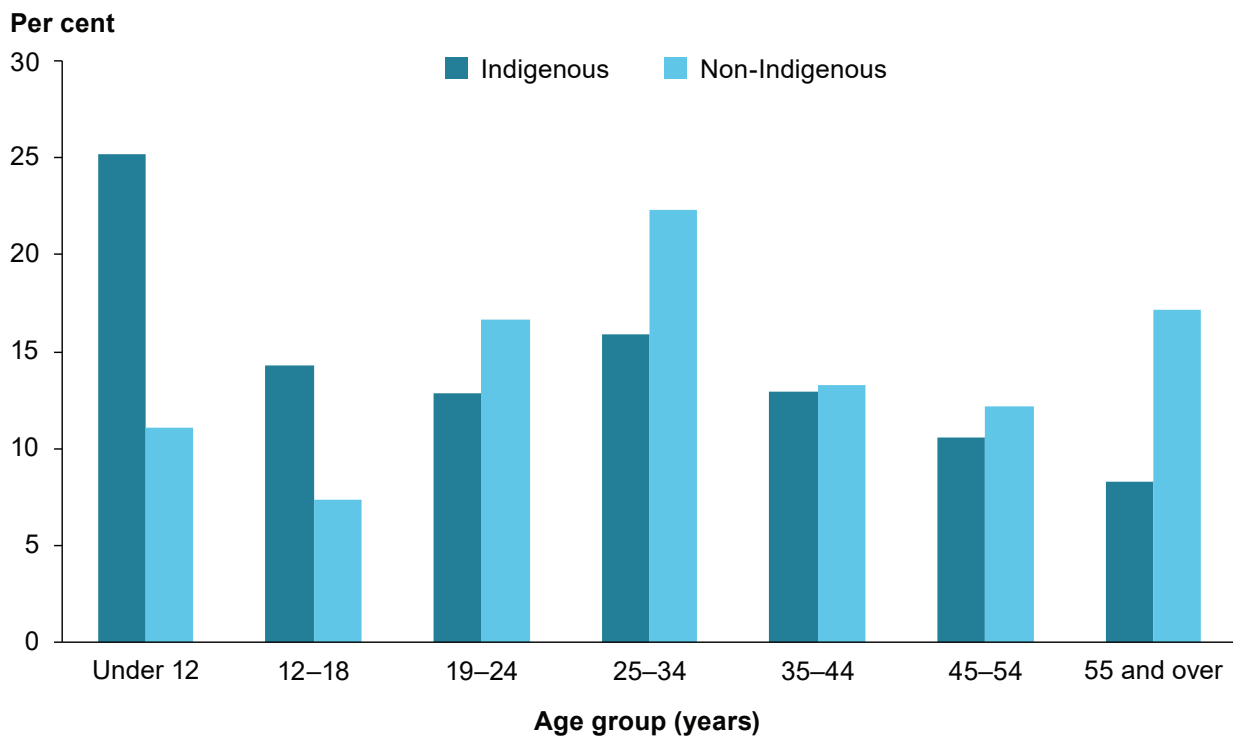
Characteristics of the homeless

Age and sex

Indigenous children made up a large proportion of the Indigenous population who were homeless on Census night 2016, with 4 in 10 (39%, or 9,200) aged 18 or under and most of these under the age of 12 (5,900, or 25%) considered to be homeless (Figure 5.2, Supplementary table S5.4).

Between 2011 and 2016, the rate of homelessness for Indigenous Australians fell across all age groups (Supplementary table S5.4).

Similar numbers of Indigenous males and females were homeless in 2016. By contrast, males (59%) comprised a higher proportion of the non-Indigenous homeless population than females (41%) (Supplementary table S5.4). Indigenous males and females were 8 and 12 times, respectively, more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be homeless.

Figure 5.2: Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, by age, 2016

Note: Data for this figure are shown in Table S5.4.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

State and territory

The majority of Indigenous people homeless on Census night in 2016 were located in the Northern Territory (52%, or 12,100) (Table 5.3). Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory make up only 9% of the total Indigenous population (ABS 2018f). The proportion of Indigenous people who were homeless in the Northern Territory has declined since 2006 (54%). Although nationally the total number of Indigenous people who were homeless has fallen between 2006 and 2016, increases were observed in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory over the period.

Table 5.3: Number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, by state and territory, 2006, 2011 and 2016

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Indigenous									
2006	1,881	639	4,780	3,309	1,260	94	73	13,917	25,950
2011	2,205	828	4,819	3,379	1,091	167	261	13,978	26,718
2016	2,278	783	4,450	2,618	936	130	95	12,131	23,437
Non-Indigenous									
2006	18,567	14,488	12,804	4,572	3,938	983	811	1,159	57,324
2011	23,012	18,843	12,961	5,454	4,222	1,269	1,267	1,043	68,070
2016	31,327	20,310	14,846	5,794	4,643	1,363	1,197	1,239	80,769

Notes

1. In 2012, the ABS released a new definition of homelessness for use in its statistical collections; this definition was used in the 2011 Census. The ABS retrospectively applied the new statistical definition and estimation methodology to both 2001 and 2006 Census data. However, comparable data for the homeless population by Indigenous status are only available for 2006.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S5.7 for additional explanatory notes.

Source: ABS 2018c.

Taking the Indigenous population size into account, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of Indigenous people homeless on Census night in 2016 (Figure 5.3). Over 1 in 5 (22%) Indigenous people (or 2,083 per 10,000 population) were homeless in the Northern Territory. Western Australia reported the next highest rate at 345 per 10,000 population. Between 2006 and 2016 the rate of homelessness among Indigenous people declined in all states and territories.

The rate ratio between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians declined across all states and territories between 2011 and 2016 (Supplementary table S5.8). In New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory the decline in the rate ratio was driven by both a drop in the rate of homelessness among Indigenous people as well as a rise in the rate of homelessness among non-Indigenous people.



Figure 5.3: Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (per 10,000 population), by state and territory, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Note: Data for this figure are shown in Table S5.8.

Source: ABS 2018c.

Remoteness areas

The rate of Indigenous homelessness declined across all remoteness areas between 2006 and 2016 (Table 5.4). Higher rates with increasing remoteness continue to be the dominant trend. Compared with non-Indigenous people, in 2016 the homelessness rate for Indigenous people was:

- 13 times higher in *Remote* areas and 15 times higher in *Very remote* areas
- 4 times higher in *Major cities*.

Table 5.4: Rate of homelessness among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (per 10,000 population), by remoteness, 2006, 2011 and 2016

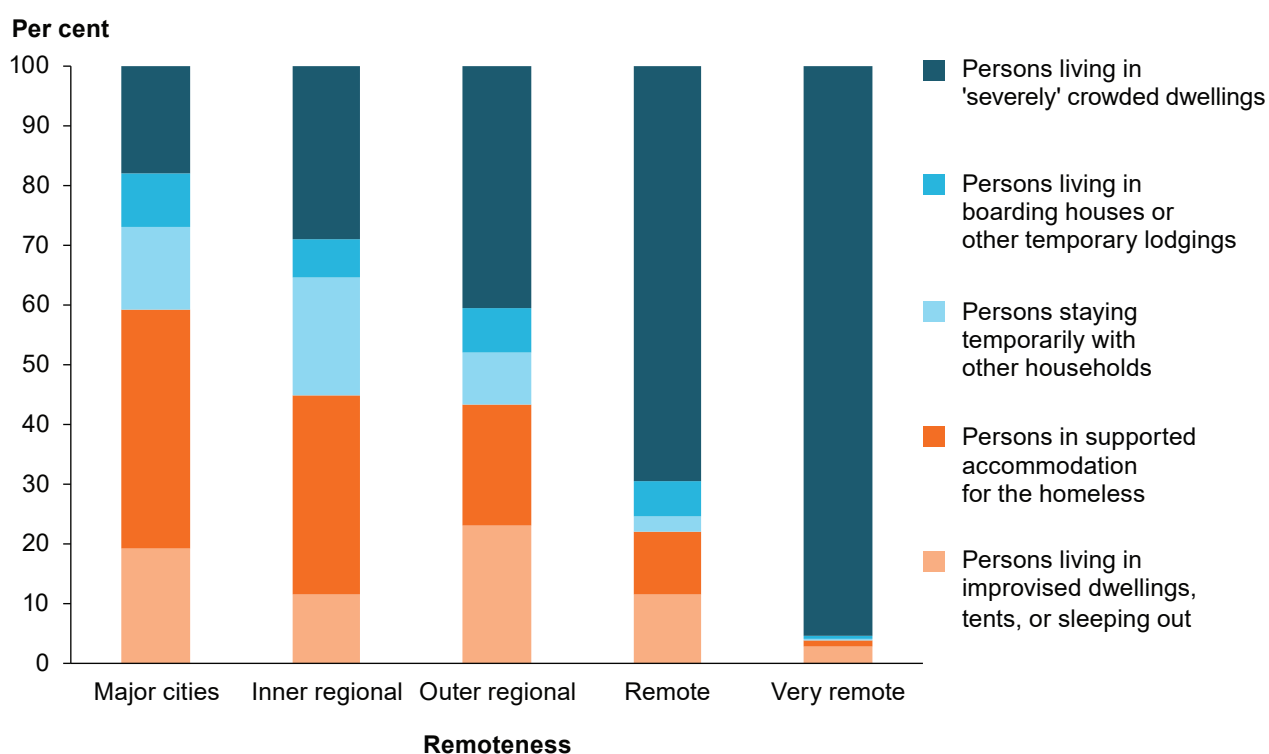
Remoteness area	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous		
	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016
Major cities	188.7	172.0	141.9	31.3	36.6	40.2
Inner regional	141.0	132.8	100.5	25.8	28.1	27.3
Outer regional	274.5	248.0	221.8	37.7	33.3	35.3
Remote	951.0	694.7	633.4	54.0	54.0	47.9
Very remote	2,220.3	2,079.7	1,639.5	111.8	88.9	110.2
Total	570.6	487.4	361.0	31.4	34.2	37.8

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S5.9 for explanatory notes.

Sources: AIHW 2014c; AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

There was considerable variation in the distribution of types of homelessness across remoteness areas (Figure 5.4). In 2016, in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas, the Indigenous homeless population was most commonly living in supported accommodation for the homeless (40% or 1,400 of people in *Major cities* and 33% or 700 in *Inner regional*). In *Remote* and *Very remote* areas, the majority were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings: this was particularly evident in *Very remote* areas where 95% of the Indigenous homeless population were living in these conditions, similar to the previous Census (98% in 2011 Census).

Figure 5.4: Indigenous Australians experiencing homelessness, by remoteness and type of homelessness, 2016



Note: Data for this figure are shown in Supplementary table S5.11.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS 2016 Census (using TableBuilder).

Indigenous people in marginal housing

'Marginal housing' provides an indication of the people who are living in conditions that put them 'at risk' of homelessness (ABS 2012b) (See Appendix C for description of marginal housing). Indigenous people made up 12% (11,643) of the Australian population living in marginal housing on Census night in 2016. Of these:

- 92% were living in 'other crowded' dwellings
- 3% were living in 'other improvised' dwellings
- 5% were marginally housed in caravan parks.

The rate of Indigenous people living in marginal housing has declined across all marginal housing types, down from 258 per 10,000 population in 2006 to 212 in 2016 (Supplementary table S5.12).

6 Indigenous Australians seeking homelessness services

Key findings

- *1 in 4 (or 65,200) specialist homelessness services (SHS) clients were Indigenous in 2017–18, a rise from 1 in 5 (or 43,600) in 2011–12: the largest increases in numbers of Indigenous people seeking assistance over this period have been single parent families (1.7 fold, to 23,200) and lone persons (1.4 fold, to 35,100).*
- *In 2017–18 most Indigenous people who sought SHS assistance were at risk of homelessness (53%), while 47% were homeless: these proportions have remained relatively stable since 2011–12.*
- *Indigenous people more likely to seek specialist homelessness services (SHS) than non-Indigenous people: Indigenous people were 9.4 times more likely to seek assistance from SHS than non-Indigenous people in 2017–18; an increase from 7.8 times in 2011–12.*
- *Housing crisis and domestic and family violence were the most common main reasons for those experiencing homelessness to seek assistance in 2017–18: housing crisis was the main reason over 1 in 4 (27%) Indigenous clients were seeking assistance in 2017–18; 1 in 5 (19%) reported domestic and family violence as the main reason.*
- *For Indigenous people at risk of homelessness, domestic and family violence was the main reason for seeking assistance in 2017–18, followed by housing crisis: 28% of at risk Indigenous clients reported domestic and family violence; 16% reported housing crisis as the main reason.*
- *More of the homeless were assisted into housing 2017–18 than in 2012–13: 38% of Indigenous clients who were homeless at presentation in 2017–18 were housed at the end of support, up from 29% in 2012–13.*
- *A greater proportion of the homeless were assisted into public and community housing than private housing in 2017–18, but this trend is changing: In 2017–18, 53% of clients presenting homeless who were assisted into housing were housed in public and community housing, down from 58% in 2011–12.*

Specialist homelessness services

Governments across Australia fund a range of services to support people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless. These specialist homelessness services (SHS) provide a range of assistance aimed at prevention and early intervention, as well as crisis and post crisis assistance. Some agencies assist people experiencing homelessness, while others deliver a broader range of services, including youth intervention services, domestic and family violence services and housing support services to those at risk of becoming homeless.

Data in this section are sourced from the AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), which commenced on 1 July 2011. The collection relates to clients assisted by government-funded specialist homelessness services. The data collected by these agencies are based on support periods. A 'support period' is an episode of assistance provided to a client; clients may have more than 1 support period in any 1 reporting period (for example, financial year). Clients with 'closed support' refers to clients who had a support period end during the collection period and who were not in on-going support at the end of the collection period.

Number of Indigenous people who sought help

One-quarter (25%) of all SHS clients in 2017–18 were Indigenous, an increase from 1 in 5 (20%) in 2011–12. A greater proportion of Indigenous people seeking assistance were at risk of homelessness (53%) compared with those who were homeless (47%) in 2017–18; these proportions have remained relatively stable since 2011–12.

Specialist homelessness services (SHS) assisted 65,200 Indigenous people in 2017–18, an increase from 46,600 in 2012–13 (Supplementary table S6.1), a growth of 6.9% on average per year. Indigenous clients who presented as 'homeless' as well as those presenting 'at risk of homelessness' both contributed to this rise. Between 2012–13 and 2017–18, the average annual growth in Indigenous clients who presented as 'homeless' (11.9%) rose at a similar rate as those who presented 'at risk of homelessness' (12.3%). During the same period, the numbers of clients have increased almost 2-fold, from 16,200 presenting homeless in 2012–13 to 28,500 in 2017–18 and 18,100 at risk clients to 32,400 (See Box 1.2 for definitions of homeless and at risk of homelessness used in the SHSC).

Taking the Indigenous population size and age structure into account, the rate of service use has increased from 587 per 10,000 population in 2011–12 to 803 in 2017–18 (Figure 6.1). In 2017–18, Indigenous people were 9.4 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to use homelessness services, an increase from 7.8 in 2011–12.



Figure 6.1: Specialist homelessness services clients, by Indigenous status, 2011–12 to 2017–18**Notes**

1. Rates are directly aged-standardised to the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June 2001.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.1 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

SHS client characteristics

In 2017–18, 25,100 males and 40,100 females assisted by SHS identified as Indigenous. The rate of service use for Indigenous males (602 per 10,000 population) was lower than for Indigenous females, (1,003). Compared with non-Indigenous clients the rate for Indigenous males was 8.7 times higher than the rate of non-Indigenous males and for Indigenous females, 9.8 times higher than the rate of non-Indigenous females (Table 6.1; Supplementary table S6.2). The rates of service use have been increasing over time for Indigenous clients of both sexes (AIHW 2018d).

Table 6.1: Specialist homelessness services clients, by Indigenous status and sex, 2017–18

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Clients	25,070 (38%)	40,114 (62%)	78,583 (40%)	115,489 (60%)
Rate (per 10,000 population)	601.8	1,003.0	69.2	102.3
Rate ratio	8.7	9.8	..	..
Median age	19	25	29	31

.. not applicable

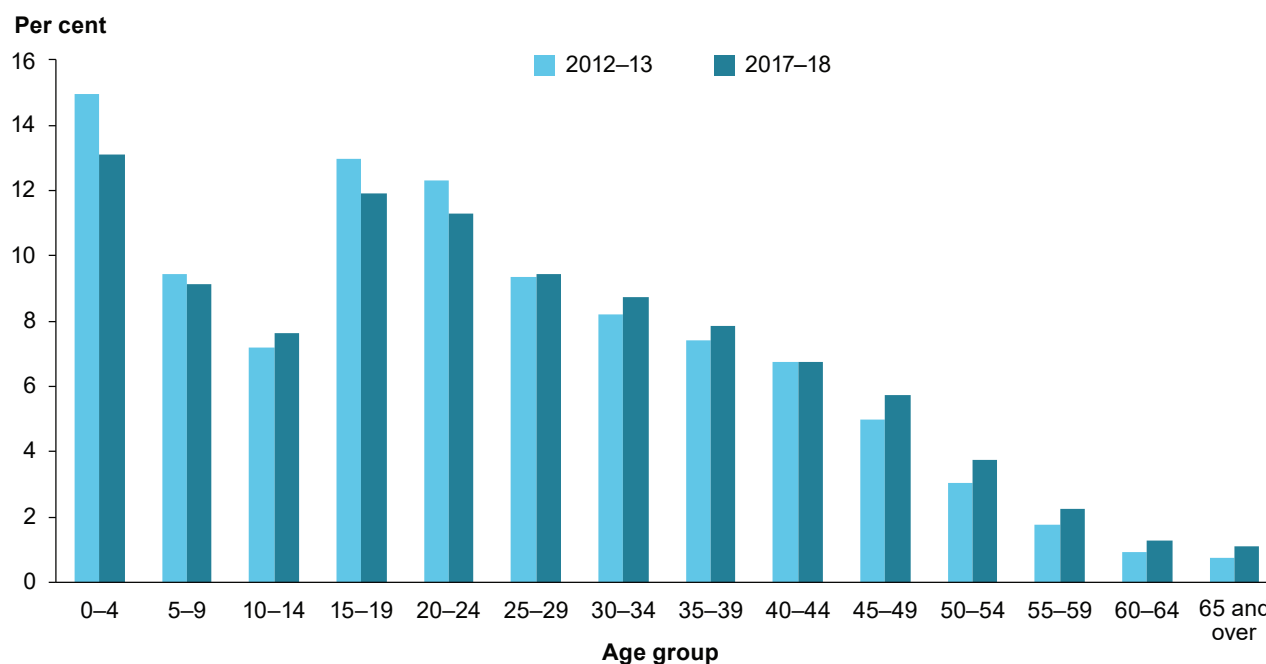
Notes

1. Rates are directly aged-standardised to the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June 2001.
2. The rate ratio is used to provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. A rate ratio is calculated by dividing the client rate for Indigenous Australians by the client rate for non-Indigenous Australians.

Sources: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) 2017–18; Supplementary table S6.2.

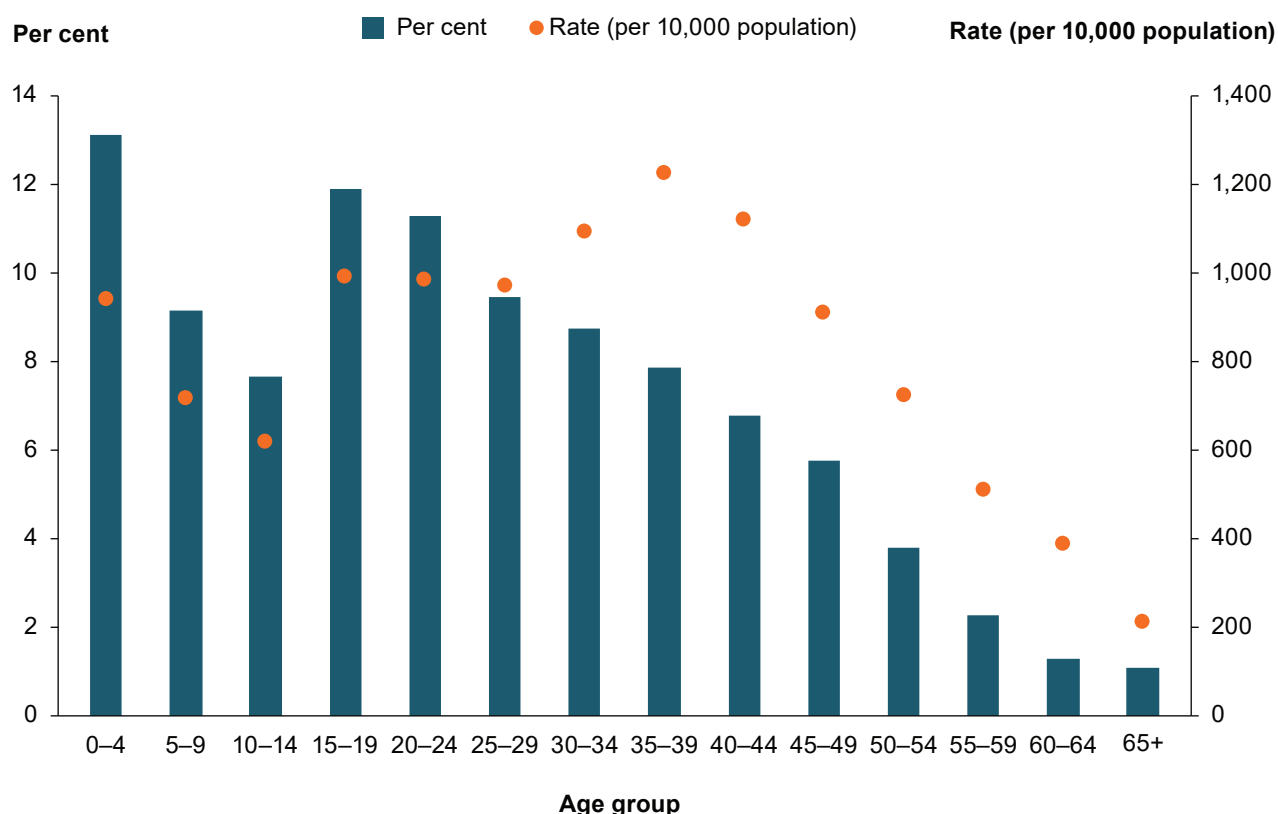
In 2017–18, children under the age of 5 (8,500 or 13%) represented the largest age group of Indigenous SHS clients (Figure 6.2). The high proportion of children has been a consistent trend over time, and reflects the high proportion of Indigenous family groups presenting to services for assistance (see section clients by presenting unit type). More older Indigenous people were seeking assistance in 2017–18 (14% aged 45 and over, or 9,200) compared with 2012–13 (11%, or 5,300) (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by age group, 2012–13 and 2017–18



Sources: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) 2017–18; Supplementary table S6.2.

In 2017–18, the highest rate of service use was for Indigenous clients aged 35–39 (Figure 6.3; Supplementary table S6.2). In each of the three oldest age groups Indigenous clients were more likely to access services than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Supplementary table S6.2). The highest rate ratio was for the 65 years and over age group; Indigenous people were 12.3 times more likely to access services than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous females accessed SHS at a higher rate than Indigenous males in all age groups except the youngest (0–4 years) (Supplementary table S6.3).

Figure 6.3: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by age group, 2017–18**Notes**

1. Rates are directly aged-standardised to the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June 2001.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.2 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Priority groups

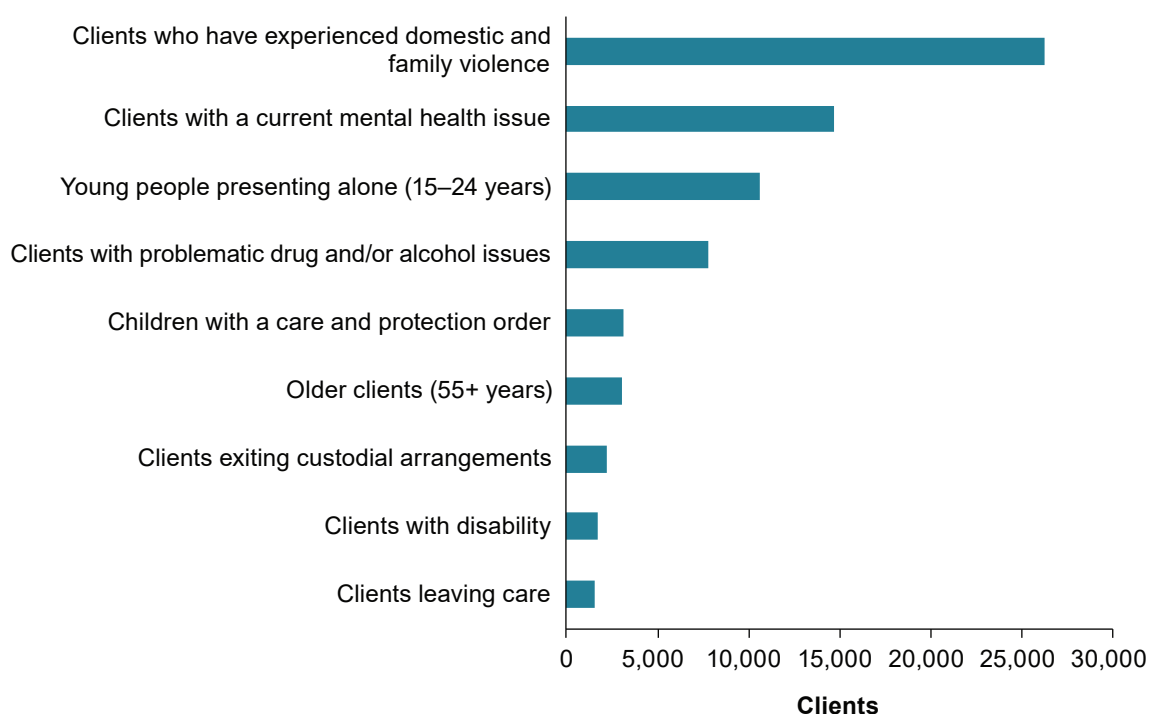
Despite improvements in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians in recent years, this group continues to be one of the most vulnerable groups in Australia (AHRC 2017).

As mentioned previously, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), and predecessor agreements (Figure 1.1), classify Indigenous Australians as a priority homelessness cohort; these agreements provide a framework for all levels of government to work together to improve housing and homelessness outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous Australians are more likely to experience exposure to family/community violence and contact with the criminal justice system than other Australians (AHMAC 2017). Chronic conditions such as mental health and substance use disorders also continue to have a significant negative impact on Indigenous people. For Indigenous clients of specialist homelessness services, many may be facing such challenges when they seek assistance. As additional priority groups under the NHHA, these cohorts can be reported from the SHSC using information provided by the client, such as referral source, dwelling type, services needed and reason for seeking assistance.

During 2017–18, 40% (or 26,300) of Indigenous clients seeking SHS assistance had experienced domestic and family violence (Figure 6.4), an increase from 35% (15,400) in 2011–12 (Figure 6.5). The next largest group in 2017–18 was those presenting with a current mental health issue (23% or 14,700); an increase from 14% (6,200) in 2011–12. The proportion of Indigenous clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol issues (12% in 2017–18) and those who recently exited custodial settings (3.4%) have remained stable over the past 6 years (Supplementary table S6.4) (see Appendix C for definitions of each of the client groups).

Figure 6.4: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by client groups, 2017–18

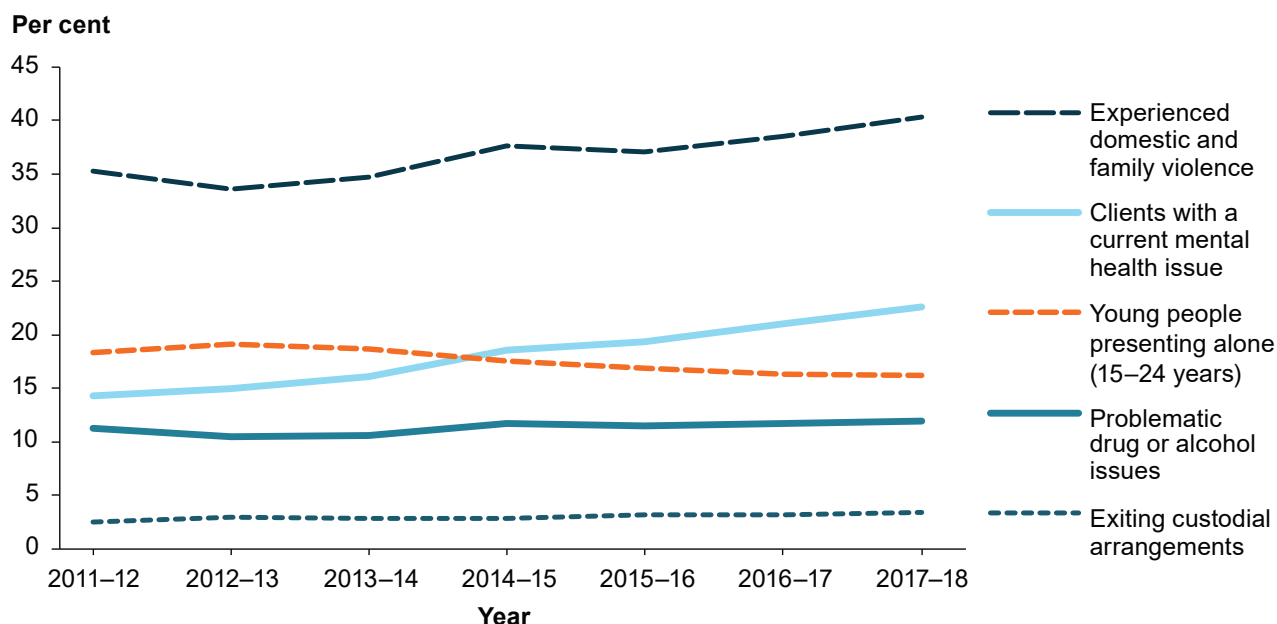


Notes

1. Refer to Supplementary table S6.4 and Appendix C for explanatory notes.
2. These client groups are not mutually exclusive, meaning clients may be included in more than one group.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Figure 6.5: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by selected client groups, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Notes

1. These client groups are not mutually exclusive, meaning clients may be included in more than one group, and therefore will not add to 100%.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.5 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Indigenous SHS clients by state and territory

New South Wales (19,900) had the largest number of Indigenous SHS clients in 2017–18, followed by Queensland (13,900) (Table 6.2). Taking into consideration the size of Indigenous populations in each state/territory, Victoria had the highest rate of Indigenous SHS clients (1,693 per 10,000 Indigenous population), followed by South Australia (1,044). Indigenous people were 10–12 times more likely to access SHS than non-Indigenous clients, the exceptions being Western Australia, which had a higher rate ratio (17), and Tasmania which had a lower ratio (2.7). The Northern Territory (83%) had the highest proportion of Indigenous SHS clients, compared with the national level (25%) (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Specialist homelessness services clients, by Indigenous status, state and territory, 2017–18

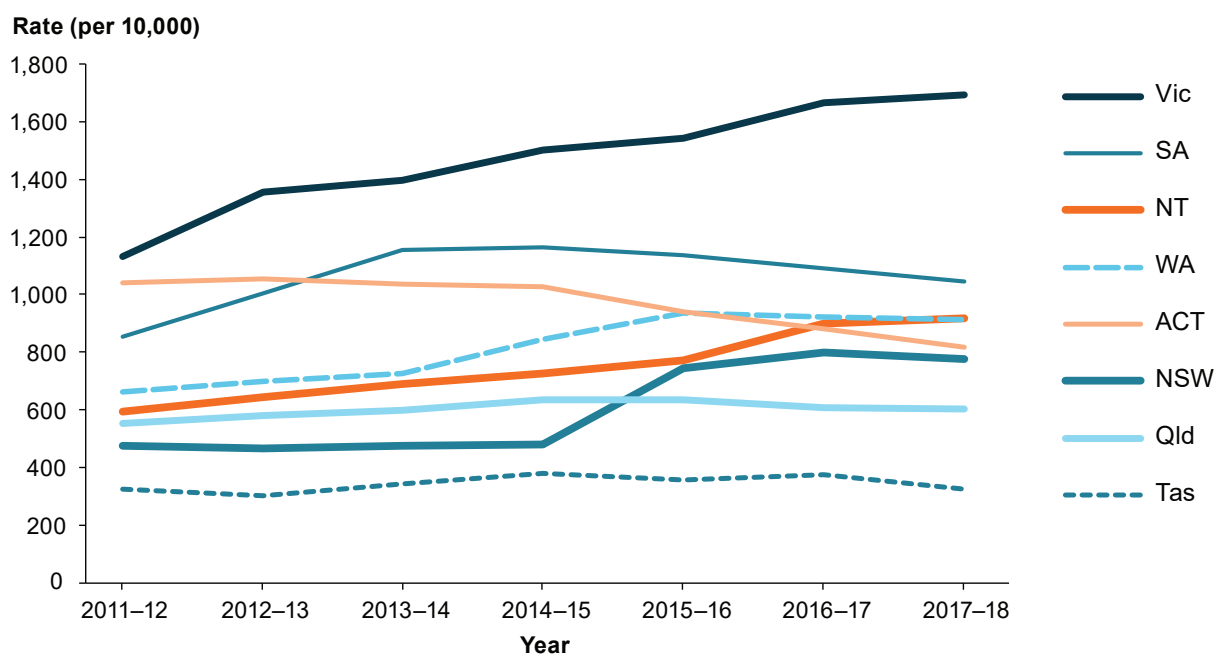
State/territory	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Rate ratio	Indigenous clients (% of all clients)	Indigenous population (% of total population)
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate			
New South Wales	19,914	774.6	48,885	68.5	11.3	28.9	3.0
Victoria	9,428	1,692.8	86,981	143.5	11.8	9.8	0.9
Queensland	13,887	603.1	24,716	55.6	10.8	36.0	4.4
Western Australia	9,580	913.5	13,244	54.9	16.6	42.0	3.9
South Australia	4,741	1,043.5	12,900	85.4	12.2	26.9	2.5
Tasmania	925	326.6	5,232	122.1	2.7	15.0	5.3
Australian Capital Territory	671	817.7	3,164	78.7	10.4	17.5	1.8
Northern Territory	7,485	918.7	1,516	90.5	10.2	83.2	30.8
Australia	65,184	802.7	194,072	85.7	9.4	25.1	3.1

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.6 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Victoria had the highest rate of Indigenous SHS clients across all years of the collection (2011–12 to 2017–18); this rate of service use has steadily increased since 2011–12 (Figure 6.6). The rate of service use has also been increasing in New South Wales, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, over the same time period. Rates for Queensland and Tasmania have remained stable, and there has been an overall decline in the Australian Capital Territory.

Figure 6.6: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients (rate per 10,000 Indigenous population), by state and territory, 2011–12 to 2017–18



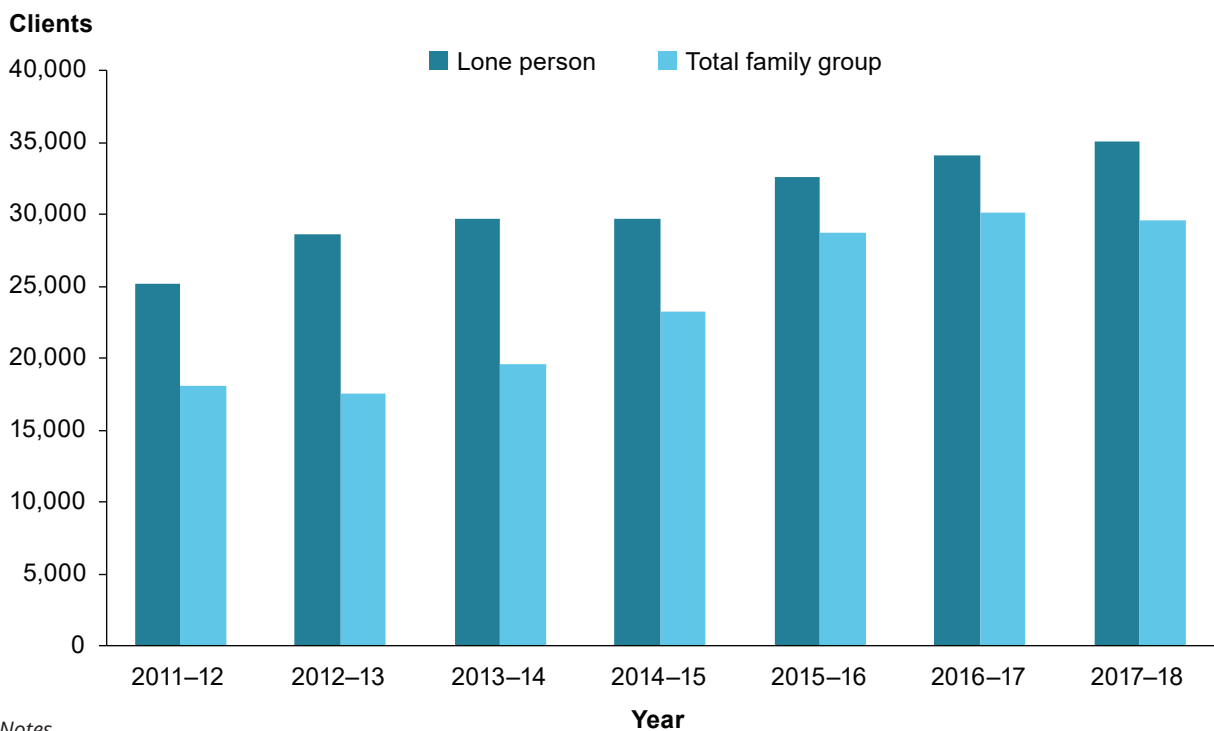
Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.7 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

SHS clients by presenting unit type

The profile of Indigenous clients presenting to SHS has changed from the start of the collection to 2017–18. The proportion of clients presenting as lone persons declined from 58% in 2011–12 to 54% in 2017–18 (Figure 6.7; Supplementary table S6.9). In contrast, the proportion presenting in family groups increased from 41% to 45%; this increase was due predominantly to an increase in single parent families. The proportion of single parent families presenting to SHS increased from 32% or 13,900 in 2011–12 to 36% or 23,200 in 2017–18 (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by select presenting unit types at the beginning of support, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Notes

1. Refer to Supplementary table S6.9 for explanatory notes.
2. Total family group includes one parent families with child/ren, couple with or without child/ren, and other family groups.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

The majority of the states and territories reflect the national trend in the profile of clients presenting to services, that is, a reduction on the share of lone persons and an increase in single parent families between 2011–12 and 2017–18 (Supplementary table S6.10). However, increases in the proportion of Indigenous SHS clients presenting as lone persons occurred in Queensland and Tasmania between 2011–12 and 2017–18 (compared with a fall at the national level).

6

There have also been some compositional differences within presenting unit type across states and territories. In 2017–18, 75% (or 3,500) of clients presented alone in South Australia, much higher than the national level at 54%. Conversely, 18% (or 830) of clients presented as one parent with child/ren, much lower than the national level (36%) in 2017–18. Among all states and territories, the Northern Territory had the lowest proportion of Indigenous lone persons (44% or 3,300 clients), and the highest proportion of one parent with child/ren (42% or 3,200) and couples presenting with child/ren (8% or 580).

Why people are seeking help

When a person presents to a SHS agency they are asked to provide the reasons for seeking assistance. The person is also asked to select the main reason for seeking assistance. This information enables the agency to better understand clients and why they are in need of assistance and tailor the services agencies provide in response to their needs (AIHW 2017b). This information is also important for the assessment of service delivery models and homelessness policy development.

Domestic and family violence (25%) was the most common main reason Indigenous people (both homeless and at risk) sought assistance from the SHS in 2017–18, followed by housing crisis (21%). The top main reasons were the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, with only minimal differences in rank order. Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions ranked higher for Indigenous clients. The elevated ranking may reflect a higher proportion of Indigenous clients living in remote areas, where maintenance work is more difficult to perform (Memmott et al. 2016) (Supplementary table S6.8).

The top five main reasons for seeking assistance have remained relatively stable since 2012–13. Domestic and family violence has remained the most common main reason for seeking assistance in most years, only dropping to second in 2015–16 and 2016–17 (Table 6.3). Housing crisis was a common reason for Indigenous people seeking assistance increasing each year between 2012–13 and 2015–16 but dropping in 2017–18. Housing affordability stress also increased in the earlier years but has stabilised since 2015–16.

Table 6.3: Specialist homelessness services Indigenous clients, main reason for seeking assistance (top 5), 2012–13 to 2017–18

Number	Per cent	2012–13		2017–18	Number	Per cent
8,301	22.1	Domestic and family violence	1	Domestic and family violence	15,935	24.6
5,424	14.5	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	2	Housing crisis	13,558	20.9
5,100	13.6	Financial difficulties	3	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	8,154	12.6
4,717	12.6	Housing crisis	4	Financial difficulties	6,249	9.6
1,786	4.8	Relationship/family breakdown	5	Housing affordability stress	3,354	5.2
25,329	67.5	Sub total		Sub total	47,250	72.9
37,520	..	Total clients		Total clients	64,840	..

Notes

1. Percentages have been calculated using total number of clients as the denominator (less not stated).
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.11 for additional explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Main reason for seeking assistance by homelessness status

Reasons homeless clients are seeking help

The main reason Indigenous people experiencing homelessness sought assistance from SHS in 2017–18 was for housing crisis (27% or 7,600 clients), this was followed by domestic and family violence (19% or 5,300 clients) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (18% or 5,100 clients) (Supplementary table S6.12).

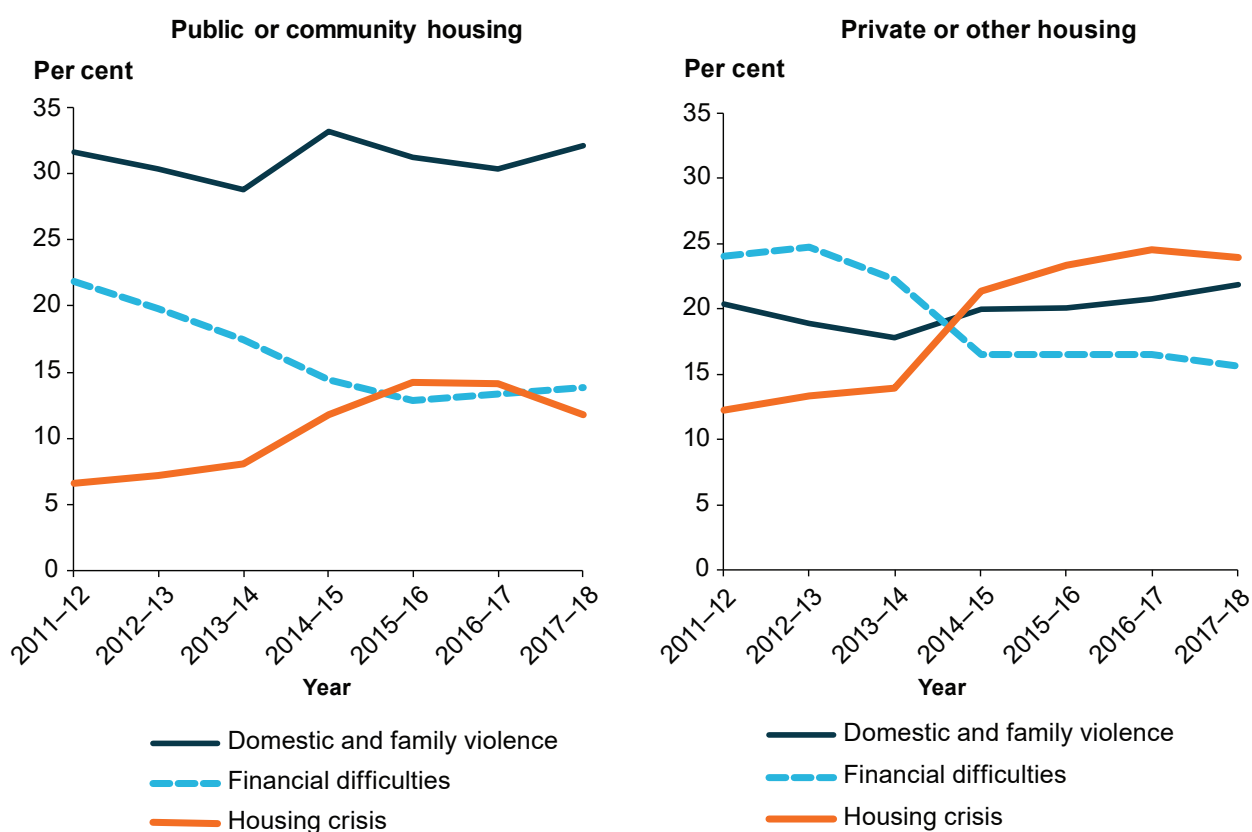
Reasons people at risk of homelessness are seeking help

For Indigenous people at risk of homelessness, the main reason for seeking assistance in 2017–18 was for domestic and family violence (28% or 9,100 clients), followed by housing crisis (16% or 5,300 clients) and financial difficulties (14% or 4,400 clients) (Supplementary table S6.12).

There has been a growing number of Indigenous people at risk of homelessness, both in public or community housing and in private housing, seeking assistance from SHS agencies over time. The number of Indigenous clients seeking support while living in public or community housing has grown by from 7,200 clients in 2011–12 to 16,400 in 2017–18 (Supplementary table S6.15). Similarly, over the same period, the number of clients seeking support while living in private housing has also increased (5,400 to 12,100, respectively). These two groups present to SHS for different main reasons, inferring that they face differing housing challenges. In 2017–18, nearly one-third (32% or 5,300 clients) of Indigenous clients in social housing (public or community) reported domestic and family violence as the main reason for seeking assistance (Figure 6.8). A further 14% (2,300 clients) reported financial difficulties, however, this proportion has been decreasing since 2011–12.

In 2017–18, the most common reason Indigenous clients in private housing sought assistance was housing crisis (24%, or 2,900 clients). Indigenous clients in private housing (22% or 2,600 clients) were less likely than those in social housing to report domestic and family violence as the main reason for seeking assistance.

Figure 6.8: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by select main reasons for seeking assistance, by select at risk housing situations, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.13 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Services needed and provided

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. The services and assistance needed by the client, as assessed by the agency worker, and the services provided by the agency, are recorded both at the start and during the period of support. Some clients may be referred to another service provider if the services cannot be provided by the agency; these services are recorded as 'referral arranged', however, in these cases it is not known whether the client kept the appointment, or whether the appointment led to the client receiving a service.

While the proportion of Indigenous SHS clients needing accommodation has remained stable between 2011–12 and 2017–18 at around two-thirds, the number of clients needing accommodation services (short, medium or long-term) has increased. In 2017–18, 45,000 clients needed accommodation services, an increase from 30,000 in 2011–12 (Supplementary table S6.13). Against a background of increasing client numbers needing accommodation there has been a decline in the provision of these services from 68% of those who needed this service in 2011–12 to 60% in 2017–18.

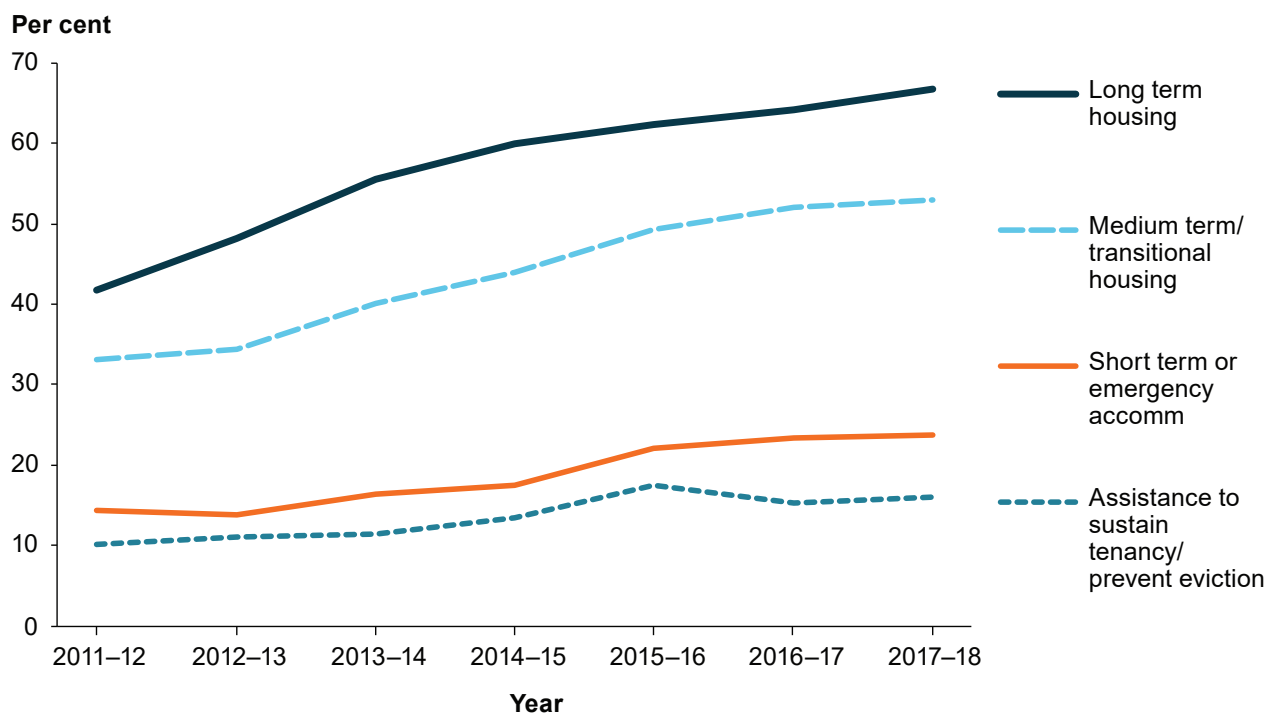
Accommodation referrals have also declined, with referrals for long-term housing decreasing by the largest percentage points, from 51% in 2011–12 to 29% in 2017–18 (noting that clients may be referred in a subsequent year). Consequently, the proportion of clients not receiving either accommodation or a referral has increased from 15% in 2011–12 to 26% in 2017–18.

The largest service gap has been for long-term housing. In 2017–18, 67% of Indigenous clients who needed long-term accommodation either did not receive it or were not provided with a referral, an increase of 25 percentage points from 2011–12 (Figure 6.9). This pattern of declining rates of both accommodation provision and referrals most likely reflects a shortage of available suitable housing, particularly long term housing.

There has been an increase in clients needing assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction. Around 1 in 3 (35% or 22,700) clients needed tenancy assistance in 2017–18, an increase from nearly 1 in 4 (24%) in 2011–12. The provision of this service over the seven years has remained relatively stable peaking at 84% in 2012–13, decreasing to 80% in 2017–18. The proportion of Indigenous clients who needed tenancy assistance, but who did not receive this assistance (and were not referred), increased from 10% to 16% over the time period.



Figure 6.9: Proportion of Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients with unmet accommodation needs, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Notes

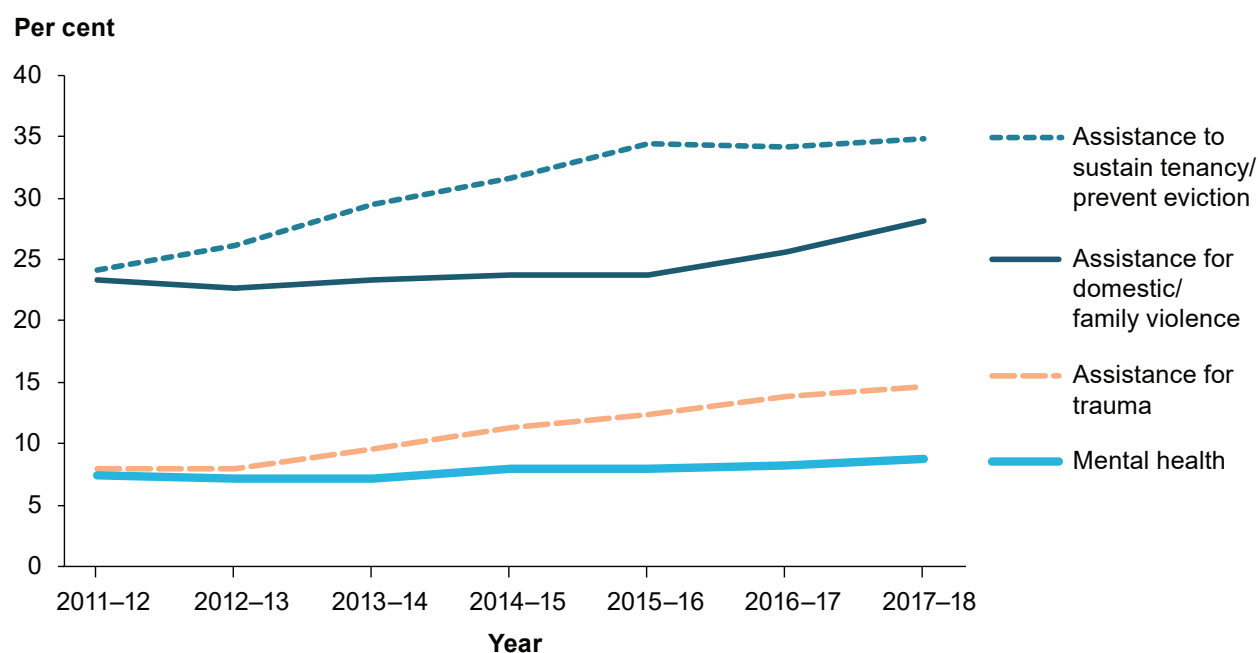
1. Clients who were not provided or referred select housing services and assistance (as % of clients who needed these services).
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.14 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Between 2011–12 and 2017–18 Indigenous people have been increasingly seeking services for (Figure 6.10; Supplementary table S6.14):

- domestic and family violence; up 5 percentage points to 28%, or 18,300 clients in 2017–18
- trauma, up 7 percentage points to 15%, or to 9,500 (assistance for trauma includes children who have been affected by domestic/family violence)
- mental health; up 2 percentage points to 9% or to 5,700.

Figure 6.10: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, select services and assistance needed (as % of Indigenous clients), 2011–12 to 2017–18



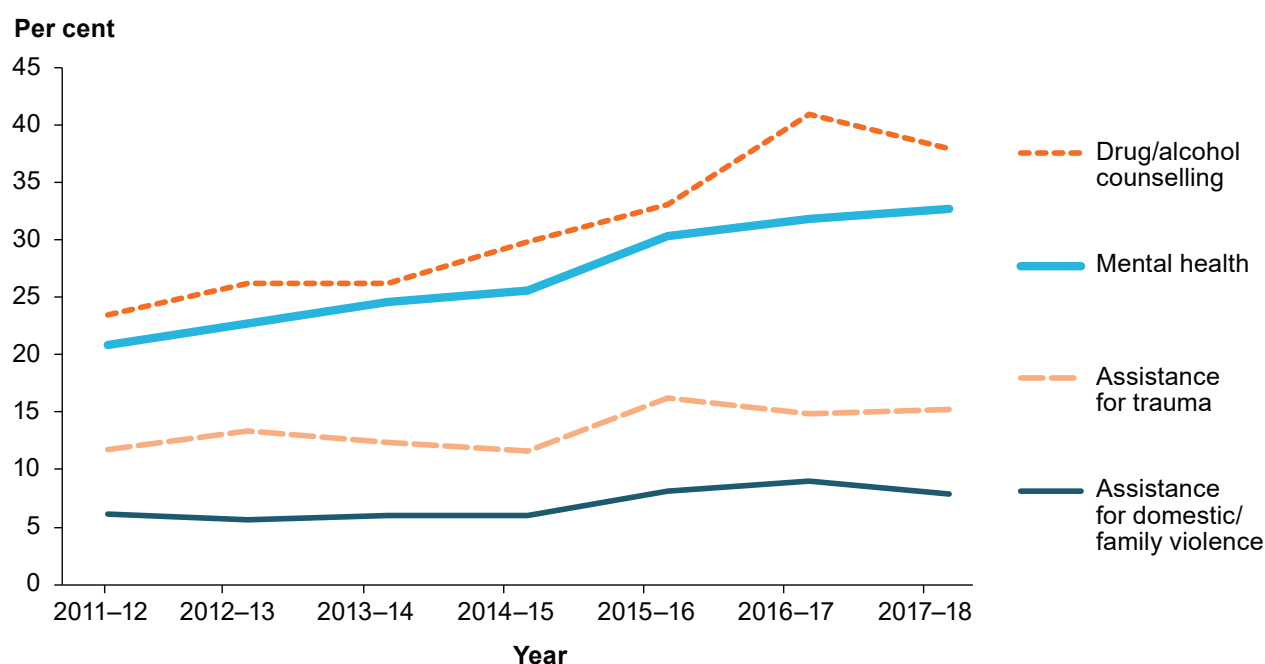
Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.14 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

The provision of services for domestic and family violence (90%) and for trauma (80%) has remained stable across the seven years of available data (Supplementary table S6.14).

There has been an increasing trend in the non-provision or referral of some services between 2011–12 and 2017–18. Assistance for drug/alcohol counselling had the largest service gap, increasing from 24% in 2011–12 to 38% in 2017–18 (Figure 6.11). Agencies were unable to meet the mental health service needs of 33% of Indigenous clients in 2017–18 (compared with 21% in 2011–12) and unmet need for trauma services increased from 12% to 15% over the same time period.

Figure 6.11: Proportion of Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients with unmet need for drug/alcohol, mental health and domestic and family violence, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Notes

1. Clients who were not provided or referred select services and assistance (as % of clients who needed these services).
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.14 for explanatory notes.

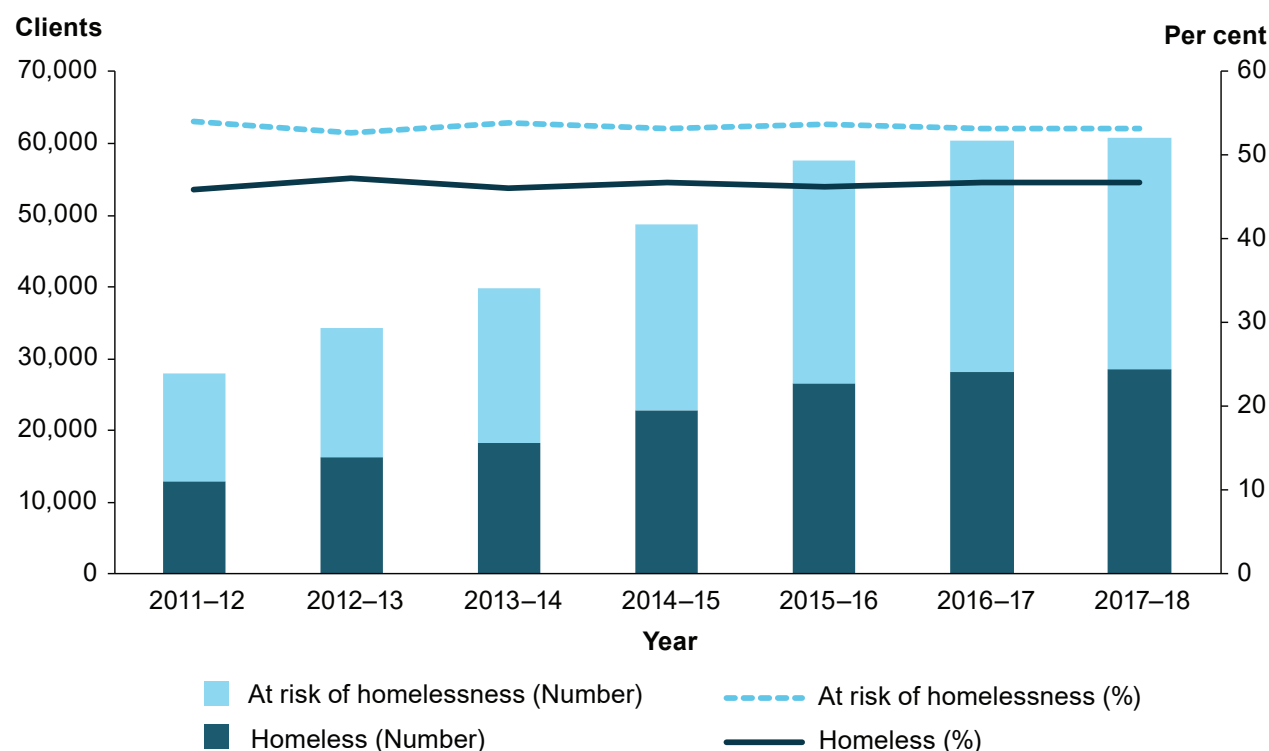
Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Housing status of Indigenous SHS clients

Homelessness status when seeking SHS assistance

Over half (53%) of Indigenous people seeking assistance from SHS were not 'homeless' but were considered to be 'at risk of homelessness' in 2017–18 (Figure 6.12). (See Box 1.2 for the definitions of homeless and at risk of homelessness used by the SHSC). The proportions of Indigenous people who presented to SHS agencies homeless and at risk have remained stable since 2011–12, however, the numbers of clients have increased more than 2 fold, from 12,900 clients presenting homeless in 2011–12 to 28,500 in 2017–18 and 15,200 at risk to 32,400.

Figure 6.12: Specialist homelessness services Indigenous clients, homelessness status when seeking assistance, 2011–12 to 2017–18



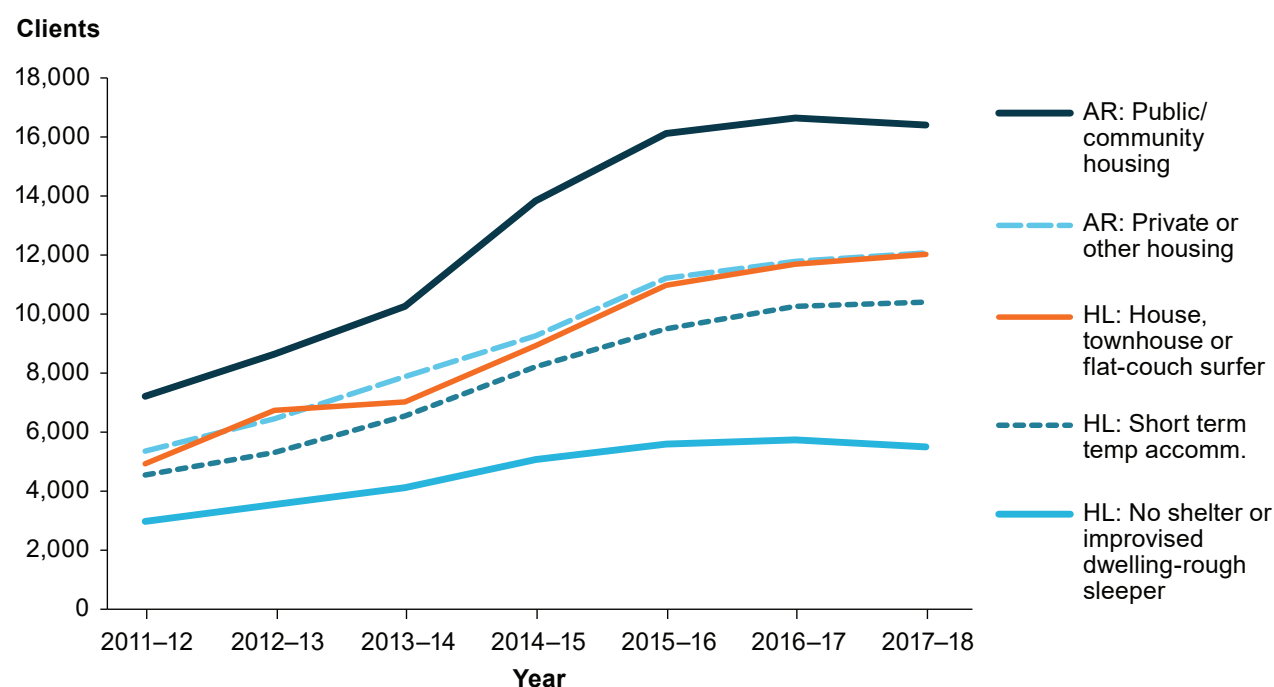
Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.15 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

While the number of clients at risk of homelessness has grown over time, the housing profile of clients has remained the same. The largest proportion of Indigenous people who presented to SHS in 2017–18 (27%, or 16,400 clients) were at risk and living in social housing (public or community housing—either renting or rent free) (Figure 6.13). The proportion of clients in this group has remained stable over the past 6 years. A further 20% (12,100) of Indigenous people were at risk and living in private or other housing (renting, rent free or owning) at presentation in 2017–18; this proportion has also remained stable since 2011–12.

By contrast, the profile of Indigenous people presenting homeless to SHS agencies has changed over time. A higher proportion are presenting as couch surfers (living without tenure in a house, townhouse or flat) and a lower proportion as rough sleepers (living without shelter or in an inadequate dwelling). Around 1 in 5 (20% or 12,000 clients) Indigenous clients were couch surfers in 2017–18, an increase from 18% (or around 7,000) in 2011–12. Rough sleepers constituted 9% (or 5,500) of clients presenting homeless in 2017–18, down from 11% in 2011–12.

Figure 6.13: Specialist homelessness services Indigenous clients, by housing situation when seeking assistance, 2011–12 to 2017–18



HL = Homeless

AR = At risk

Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.15 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Geographical trends in changes in SHS clients' homelessness status

This section examines Indigenous Australians seeking assistance from SHS based on where the person lived in the week before presenting to an agency, as reported at the first support period within the reference year. This location may not be a permanent address; for example, people who were couch surfing the week prior to seeking services may nominate the location of their temporary accommodation. Client location has been classified by statistical area 4 (there are 88 SA4 areas in total excluding Other Territories and non-geographical areas), based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ABS 2016c) (see Appendix C).

Of the 65,200 Indigenous clients presenting to SHS agencies nationally in 2017–18, 55,600 clients had a known homelessness status on presentation and valid location in the week prior to seeking support (Supplementary table S6.16).

In 2017–18, across all SA4s the median number of Indigenous people presenting at risk of homelessness to SHS agencies was 212 clients, ranging from less than 100 to around 2,900 among all SA4s. For those presenting homeless the median was similar (217 clients), but the range was smaller (less than 100 to 1,600 clients).

Examining regional changes in the proportion of Indigenous SHS clients presenting homeless or at risk of homelessness over the four years to 2017–18 can provide insights into local service need profiles.

From 2014–15 to 2017–18, the majority of SA4 areas (42 of 76) reported a decrease in the proportion of Indigenous clients presenting as homeless (Supplementary table S6.15), meaning that these areas experienced increases in the proportion of clients presenting at risk. The size of these changes over time in these SA4 regions shows some variability:

- Decreases in the proportion of clients presenting homeless were larger in SA4s in south-east Australia and in capital cities:
 - Sydney-Outer South West (New South Wales) recorded the largest decrease with the proportion of homeless clients decreasing annually by 17% on average (51% or 114 clients to 30% or 205 clients); this is lower than the national rate (47%) (Figure 6.14).
 - Of the areas that reported increases in the proportion of Indigenous clients presenting homeless, South Australia-Outback (from 33% or 355 clients to 49% or 551 clients) and Coffs Harbour-Grafton (from 39% or 105 clients to 57% or 434 clients) (New South Wales) had the highest annual increases of 14% (Table 6.4).
- While decreases in the relative proportion of Indigenous at risk clients were recorded across Australia notable reductions were observed in Hobart (Tasmania), Coffs Harbour-Grafton (New South Wales) and Brisbane-South (Queensland) (Table 6.4; Figure 6.15).

Changes in the proportion of Indigenous people presenting homeless relative to those presenting at risk support regional variation in service use not visible with reporting at the national level. Geographical differences in service use may be driven, for example, by variable labour and housing markets, demographics and other regionally specific features influencing an individual's housing situation and how that situation changes over time (Wood et al. 2014). Similar complexities arise when exploring spatial and temporal changes in Indigenous homeless status on presentation to Specialist Homelessness Services as Indigenous culture and society can influence how, when and where homelessness is identified (Birdsall-Jones & Shaw 2008). Changes in Indigenous clients presenting at risk of homelessness relative to those presenting homeless should be interpreted with caution considering client counts, changes in population over time and the influence of how homelessness is captured in administrative records.



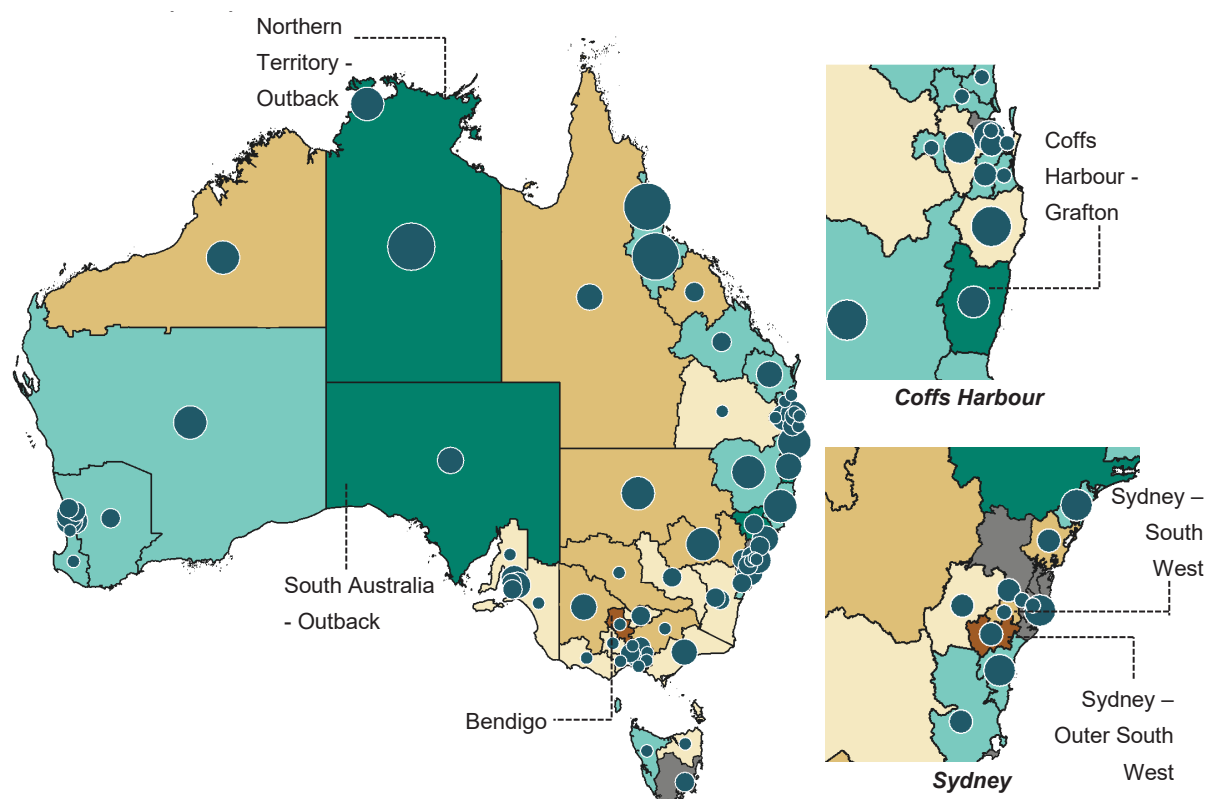
Table 6.4: Indigenous clients, by homelessness status on presentation, top and bottom 3 Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2014–15 to 2017–18

State	SA4	2014–15		2015–16		2016–17		2017–18		Average annual change (%) 2014–15 to 2017–18
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Areas with average annual increases										
Homeless										
South Australia	South Australia—Outback	355	33.2	379	32.3	535	47.2	551	48.7	13.7
New South Wales	Coffs Harbour—Grafton	105	39.0	400	52.9	508	57.5	434	57.2	13.6
Northern Territory	Northern Territory—Outback	712	24.1	938	27.8	1,169	29.0	1,428	33.2	11.3
At risk of homelessness										
New South Wales	Sydney—Outer South West	108	48.7	355	61.3	355	63.5	484	70.3	13.0
New South Wales	Sydney—South West	42	37.2	99	42.7	134	47.4	129	53.3	12.8
South Australia	Adelaide—South	112	40.0	159	40.2	207	48.1	227	54.3	10.7
Areas with average annual decreases										
Homeless										
New South Wales	Sydney—Outer South West	114	51.4	224	38.7	204	36.5	205	29.8	-16.6
Victoria	Bendigo	121	46.7	129	40.1	159	38.5	167	30.9	-12.9
New South Wales	Sydney—South West	71	62.8	133	57.3	149	52.7	113	46.7	-9.4
At risk of homelessness										
Queensland	Brisbane—South	113	46.3	87	37.3	98	31.2	98	31.3	-12.2
New South Wales	Coffs Harbour—Grafton	164	61.0	356	47.1	375	42.5	325	42.8	-11.1
Tasmania	Hobart	191	53.4	170	46.6	164	39.6	131	39.7	-9.4

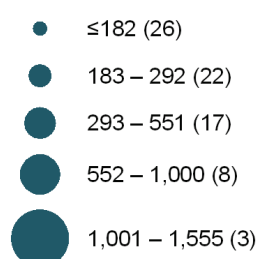
Notes

1. The change has been calculated as the average annual percentage change in the proportion of the homeless/at risk status.
 2. A client is considered Indigenous if, at any time between 2014–15 and 2017–18, they identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
 3. Per cent calculations based on total Indigenous clients excluding those whose homeless/at risk status on presentation was 'Not stated/other' and who did not have a valid location.
 4. Clients assigned an SA4 based on location the week before presenting to the SHS agency where they first sought assistance in the reporting period.
 5. SA4s (12) where the total count of Indigenous clients within a reporting period was less than 100 have been excluded from analysis.
- Sources: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014–15 to 2017–18; Supplementary table S6.16.

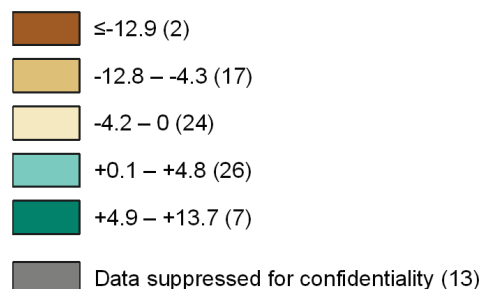
Figure 6.14: Indigenous clients homeless on presentation in 2017–18 (number) and average annual percentage change in proportion of Indigenous clients homeless on presentation (%), Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2014–15 to 2017–18



Number of homeless Indigenous clients 2017–18 (SA4s)



Avg annual change 2014–15 to 2017–18, % (SA4s)

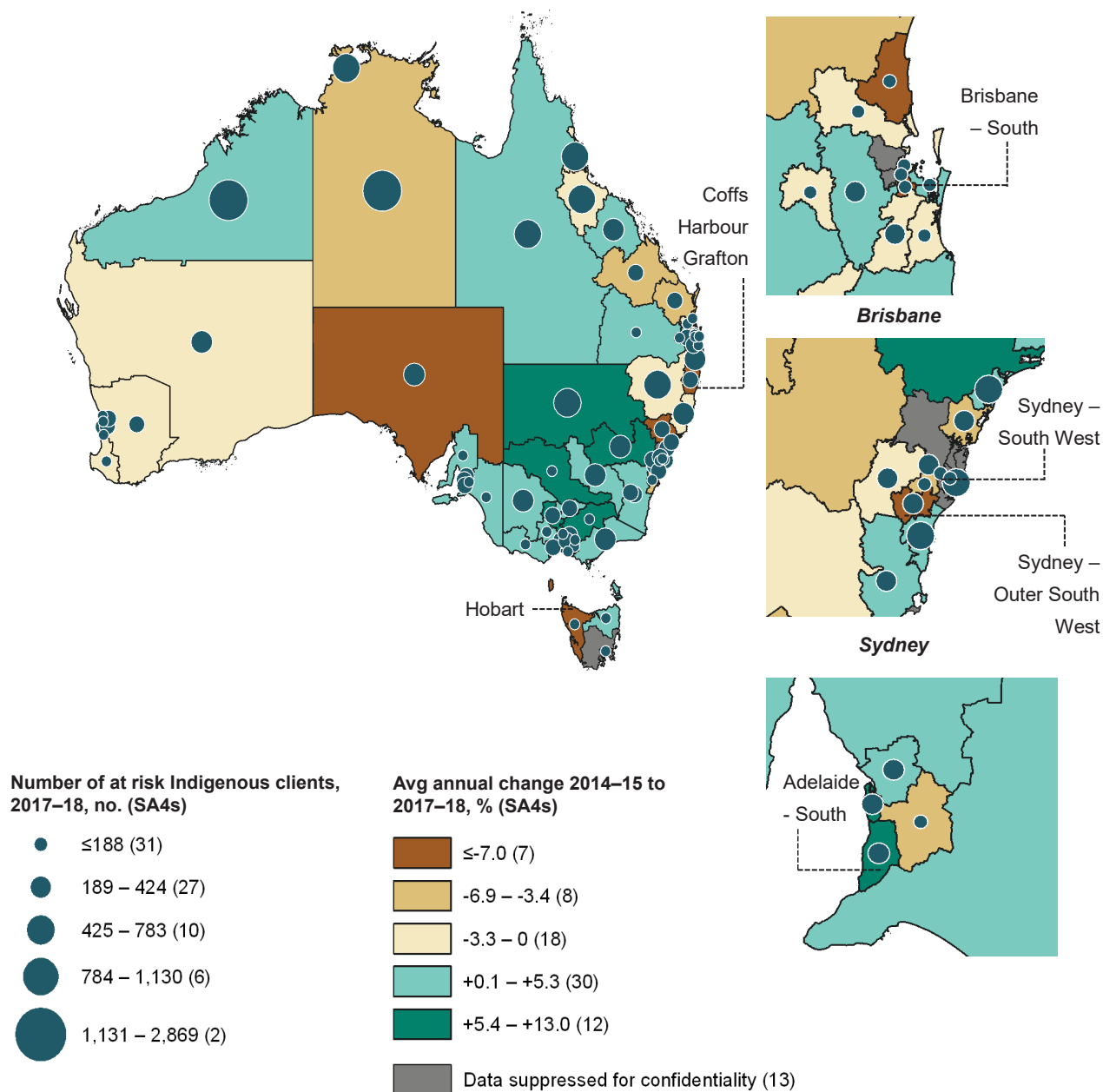


Notes

1. A client is considered Indigenous if, at any time between 2014–15 and 2017–18, they identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
2. Per cent calculations based on total Indigenous clients excluding those whose homeless/at risk status on presentation was 'Not stated/other' and who do not have a valid location. Top and bottom three average annual percentage change value SA4s as labelled.
3. Clients assigned an SA4 based on location the week before presenting to the SHS agency where they first sought assistance in the reporting period.
4. Mapped SA4s (88) exclude Other Territories and non-geographic SA4s coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping.
5. SA4s where the total count of Indigenous clients within a reporting period was less than 100 suppressed for confidentiality and integrity of proportion calculations (12).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014–15 to 2017–18.

Figure 6.15: Indigenous clients presenting at risk of homelessness in 2017–18 (number) and average annual percentage change in proportion of Indigenous clients presenting at risk of homelessness (%), Statistical Area 4 (SA4), 2014–15 to 2017–18



Notes

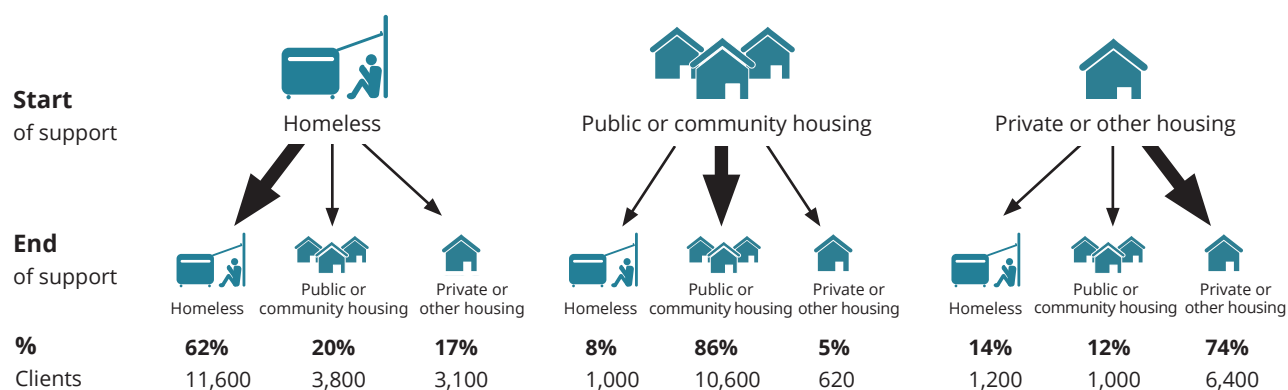
1. A client is considered Indigenous if, at any time between 2014–15 and 2017–18, they identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
2. Per cent at risk calculations based on total Indigenous clients excluding where homeless/at risk status on presentation 'Not stated/other' and who do not have a valid location. Top and bottom three average annual percentage change value SA4s as labelled.
3. Clients assigned an SA4 based on location the week before presenting to the SHS agency where they first sought support in the reporting period.
4. Mapped SA4s (88) exclude Other Territories and non-geographic SA4s coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping.
5. SA4s where the total count of Indigenous clients within a reporting period was less than 100 suppressed for confidentiality and integrity of proportion calculations (12).

Source: Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2014–15 to 2017–18.

Housing outcomes for Indigenous clients

For Indigenous clients ending SHS support in 2017–18, the majority of clients at risk of homelessness (89%) maintained housing in either public/community, private/other or institutional settings (Supplementary table S6.18). Of those Indigenous clients who were homeless at presentation and had ended support in 2017–18, 38% (or 7,200 clients) were assisted into stable housing.

Figure 6.16: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, housing outcomes, 2017–18



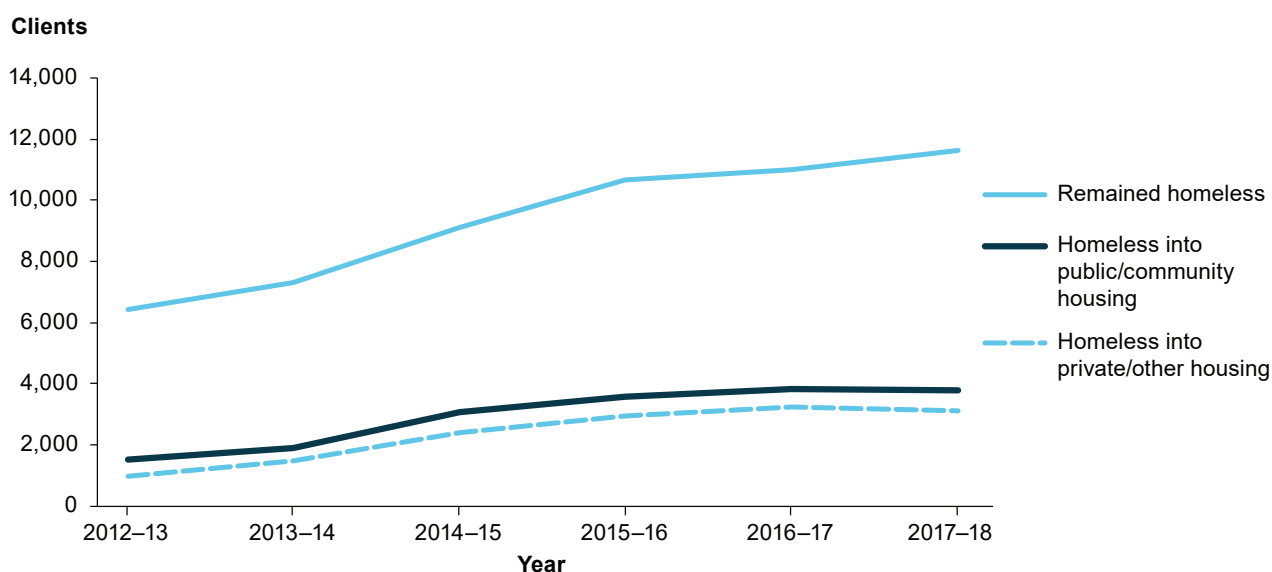
Notes

1. Percentages do not add to 100% as the small percentages of clients ending support in Institutional settings have not been shown.
2. Refer to Supplementary table S6.18 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

For those clients who were homeless when seeking assistance, 62% (or 11,600 clients) could not be helped into stable housing in 2017–18 (Figure 6.16). The proportion ending support homeless has declined from a high of 71% (6,400) in 2012–13 but has remained steady since 2014–15 (62%) (Figure 6.17). One in 5 (20%, or 3,800 clients) of Indigenous clients who were homeless were assisted into housing in social housing rentals in 2017–18. Both the number and proportion of Indigenous clients who started support homeless and moved into social (public or community) housing has increased, from 17% (1,500 clients) in 2012–13 to 20% (3,800) in 2017–18. The number of Indigenous homeless clients housed in private/other dwellings continues to be lower than in social housing. In 2017–18, 17% (3,100) were housed in private/other dwellings, rising from 11% (1,000) in 2012–13. This pattern is different for non-Indigenous clients, where more of the homeless are assisted into private/other dwellings (refer to the data visualisation for further details).

Figure 6.17: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, housing outcomes for homeless clients, 2012–13 to 2017–18



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.18 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

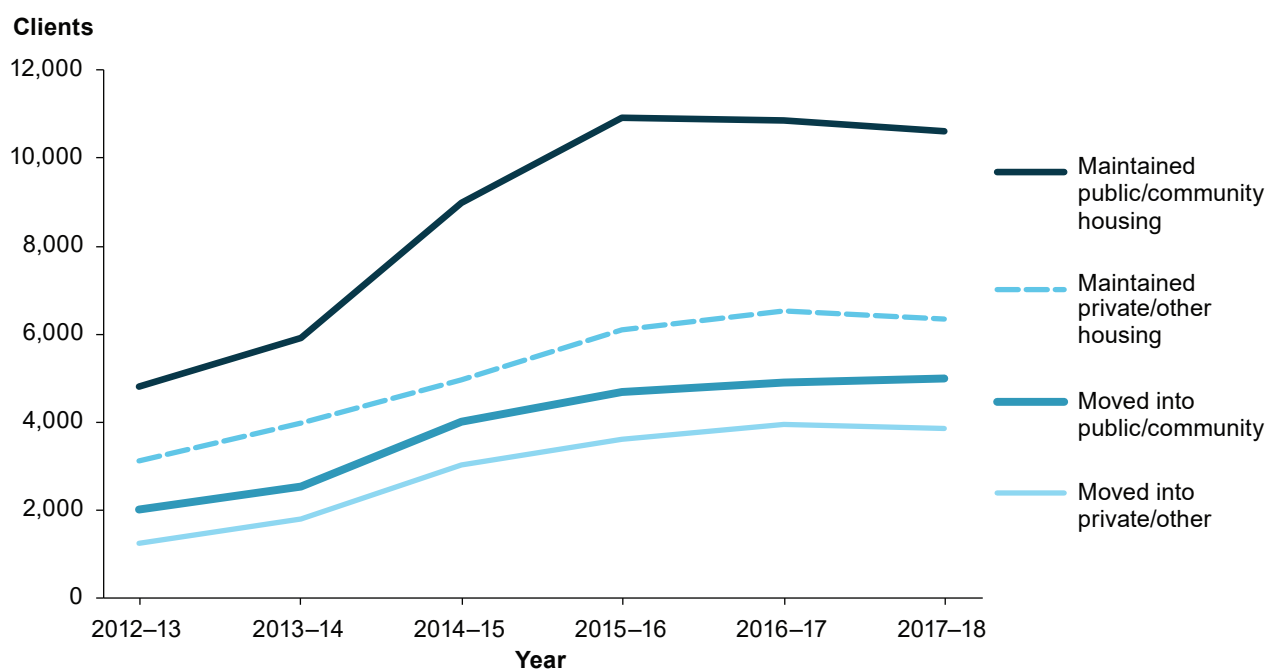
The vast majority of Indigenous clients at risk of homelessness and living in social (public/community) housing maintained this tenancy; 86% or 10,600 clients in 2017–18 (Figure 6.16). This may reflect the stability and affordability of this form of housing for vulnerable groups. In contrast, a lower proportion of Indigenous clients at risk of homelessness and living in private/other tenancies maintained their tenancy in 2017–18 (74% or 6,400 clients). These proportions have remained relatively stable over recent years (Supplementary table S6.18).

Those who did not maintain their social housing tenancies were more likely to become homeless than be housed in private/other housing (8% and 5%, respectively in 2017–18). This outcome is the same for those who did not maintain their private/other tenancies, 14% became homeless and 12% who were housed in social housing (Figure 6.16).

Clients who are without stable housing (homeless) or who cannot maintain social or private housing often have complex and multiple needs when they seek assistance from SHS agencies. Increasingly, state and territory governments are incorporating housing models that focus on the provision of stable housing as a first step in support, complemented by the provision of ongoing services aimed at managing these complex needs. In addition, for those who have been transitioned into secure housing, literature suggests that follow-up support is critical for this group as some clients who have been chronically homeless find the experience of having a home distressing and struggle to maintain this housing (Chamberlain & Johnson 2018).

Each year a greater number of both social and private rental houses are required to house Indigenous Australians experiencing homelessness (figures 6.17 and 6.18). The rising numbers of Indigenous Australians experiencing homelessness and living in unstable housing situations highlights the need to provide a supply of affordable and secure housing which is able to meet this growing demand.

Figure 6.18: Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients by select housing outcomes, 2012–13 to 2017–18



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.18 for explanatory notes.

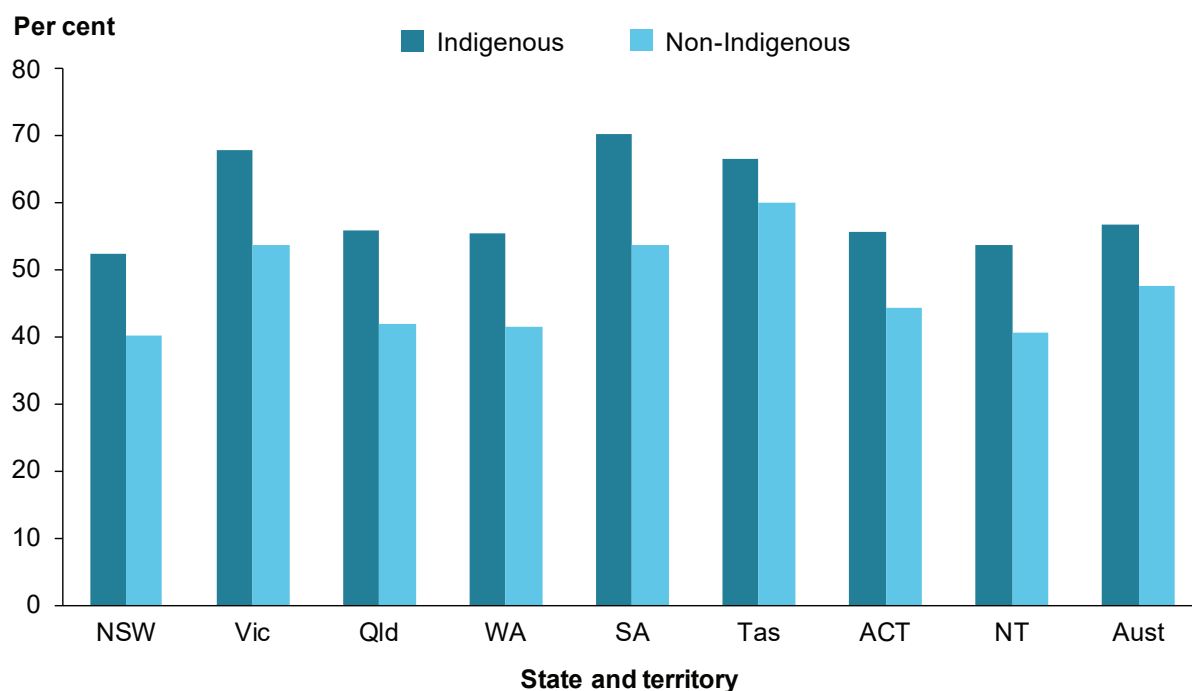
Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Indigenous clients returning for assistance in 2017–18

Indigenous Australians seek SHS assistance for a variety of reasons, some of which are complex and require long-term support. As such, not all client needs may be met in a single period of support or within a year. Clients who received assistance in 2017–18 and who had also received assistance in a previous year, are referred to as returning clients (support may have occurred at any time in the 6 years prior to 2017–18).

Since 2011–12, 213,300 Indigenous people have been assisted by SHS. Over half (57% or 37,000 clients) of clients who received assistance in 2017–18 had also received support at another time since 2011–12 (Figure 6.19). Across all states and territories, non-Indigenous clients were less likely to have returned for support since 2011–12 than Indigenous clients (48% or 92,400 clients).

Figure 6.19: Returning specialist homelessness services clients, by Indigenous status, state and territory, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.19 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

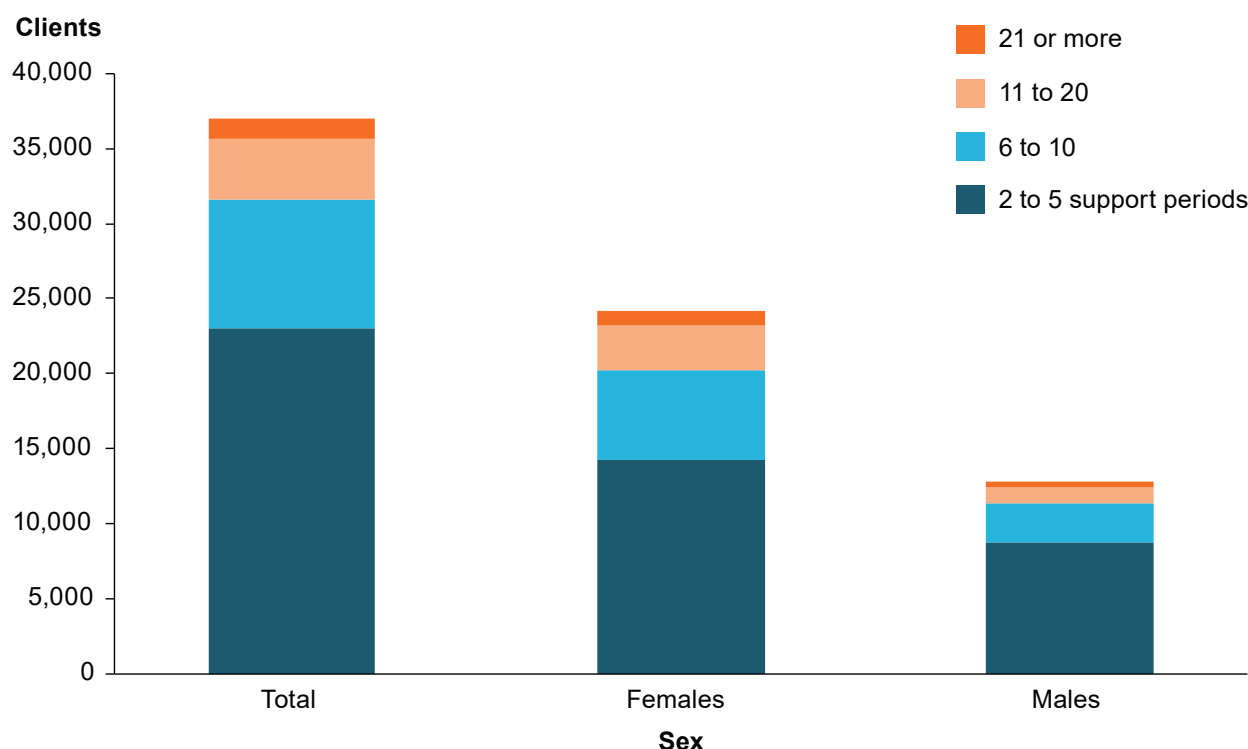
A higher proportion of female Indigenous clients (60%) have returned for SHS support compared with Indigenous male clients (51%) in 2017–18 (Supplementary table S6.18). Nationally, Indigenous women (60%) were also more likely to have returned for support than non-Indigenous women (48%). The higher proportion of female Indigenous clients returning for SHS assistance compared with male clients can be seen across all states and territories.

Patterns of service use

Between 2011–12 and 2017–18, the majority of Indigenous returning clients had received between 2 and 5 support periods (62% or 23,000 clients) (Figure 6.20 and Supplementary table S6.20). Less than 4% (1,400) engaged with services very frequently (more than 21 support periods over the 7 year period).

Within the returning client group there were differences in the way Indigenous males and females engaged with SHS. The majority of returning clients were female (65% or 24,200 clients). These female clients received more periods of support between 2011–12 and 2017–18 than males; 16% of females received more than 10 support periods compared with 11% of males. Conversely, 69% (or 8,800) of Indigenous male returning clients had fewer than 6 periods of support over the past 6 years (compared with 59% of returning female clients) (Figure 6.20).

Figure 6.20: Returning Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by number of support periods and sex, 2011–12 to 2017–18



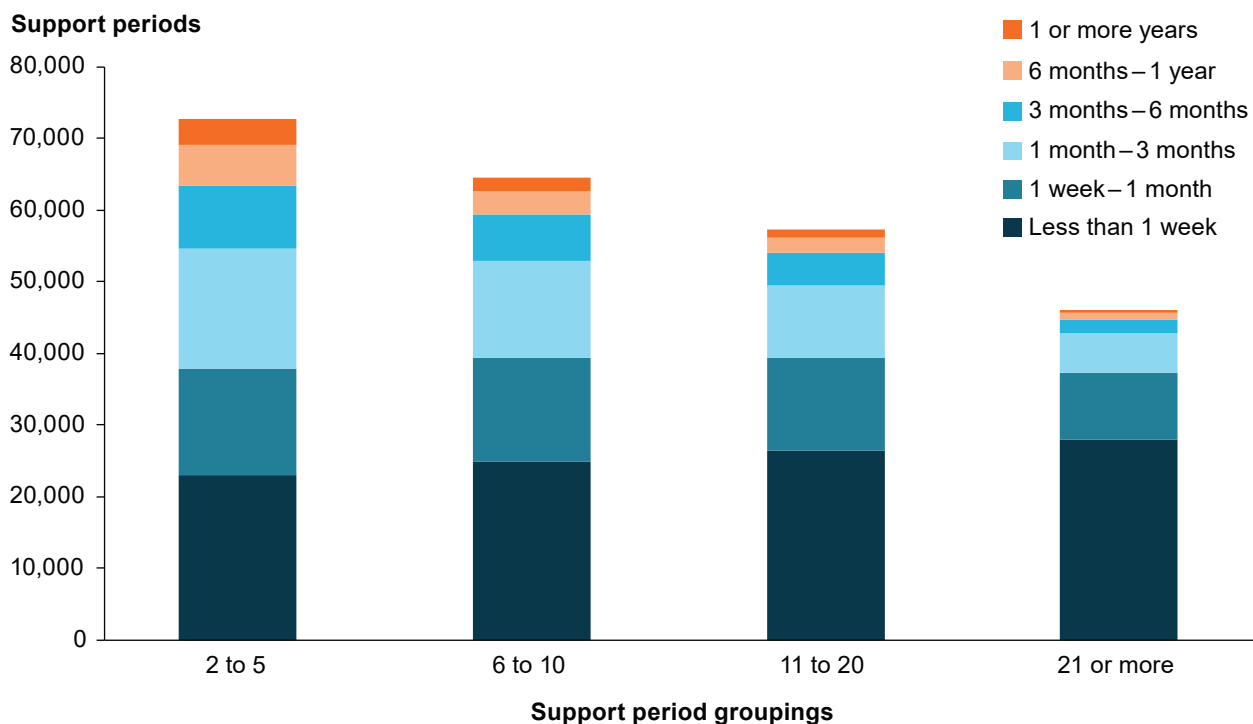
Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.20 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

On average, each Indigenous male returning client had 6 periods of support between 2011–12 and 2017–18 while females had 7 periods of support. Almost half of the support periods for Indigenous returning clients were very short, less than 1 week in length (43% or 102,400) (Figure 6.21). The majority (64%) of support periods were up to 1 month in length. The general pattern of service use of this returning client group reveals that clients with fewer support periods tended to engage with the SHS for longer periods of time.

The pattern of support length is similar between males and females and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients, except that the proportion with very short support periods was higher for non-Indigenous clients at 48% (298,500).

Figure 6.21: Returning Indigenous specialist homelessness services clients, by number of support periods and length of support, 2011–12 to 2017–18



Note: Refer to Supplementary table S6.20 for explanatory notes.

Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

Appendix A: Data quality statements

A.1 Census of Population and Housing

- 2016 Census: Census of Population and Housing: Understanding the Census and Census Data, Australia, 2016. ABS cat. no. 2900.0. Canberra: ABS.
- Historical data quality information can be found on the Census homepage <<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/historicalquality?opendocument&navpos=470>>.

A.2 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

The SHSC data should be interpreted in conjunction with the data quality statements for each reporting year.

- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2011–12; Quality Statement available in Appendix B of the 2011–12 national data report <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129542549>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2012–13; Quality Statement available in Appendix A of the 2012–13 national data report <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129545629>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2013–14; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/593778>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2014–15; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/626455>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2015–16; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/659136>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2016–17; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/683255>>.
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2017–18; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/702922>>.

A.3 Housing assistance data collections

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010. Public rental housing 2008–09. Cat. no. HOU 218. Canberra: AIHW. <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/housing-assistance/reports>>.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011. Public rental housing 2009–10. Cat. no. HOU 234. Canberra: AIHW. <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/housing-assistance/reports>>.
- Public Rental Housing data collection, 2010–11; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/495761>>.
- Public Rental Housing data collection, 2011–12; Quality Statement is available from <<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/524623>>.

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Appendix B: Data scope and quality

ABS Census of Population and Housing		
First year: 1911	Last year: 2016 (9 August)	Frequency: Every 5 years
Scope: Snapshot of the Australian population		
Purpose/description: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing collects information such as age, sex and other characteristics from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population every 5 years. Specifically, the Census provides important data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population counts and housing tenure (including social housing) over time. Census data can also be used to estimate Indigenous people classified as homeless (using the ABS definition of homelessness) on Census night. These data can be further broken down in order to provide insights into those sleeping rough, those staying in supported accommodation and overcrowding.		
Data quality/limitations: Some undercount and overcount will occur during every Census; the Census Post Enumeration Survey (PES), which is run by the ABS shortly after the Census, is used to calculate the Census net undercount. This is the difference between the PES estimate of how many people should have been counted in the Census and the actual Census count (including imputed persons) (ABS 2018b). For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, the net undercount rate in 2016 was 17.5% (equivalent to 137,750 persons), in 2011, the rate was 17.2%. In addition, the methodology used by the ABS to derive homeless estimates has limitations when applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Cultural differences around the concepts of 'home' and 'house' may result in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population being both under-enumerated and over-represented in the homeless population. For example the 'no usual address' category will be under-reported for those staying temporarily with extended family or other households. Whereas those sleeping on the land or in an improvised dwelling in order to be connected to country and/or connected to family or community may not consider themselves to be homeless (ABS 2018c). In the Census the variable about Indigenous status is collected through self-identification. The method of enumeration can influence the count of people who identify themselves as Indigenous. As such, caution should be used when analysing Indigenous counts over time. In 2011 the non-response rate for the Indigenous status variable was 5% (of the usual resident Census count), this increased marginally to 6% in 2016. In 2016, the proportion of homeless persons who did not report their Indigenous status is even higher, at 10% (compared with 7% in 2011). This may have been due to the increase in the number of Indigenous people who completed the Census online (45% in 2016 compared with 25% in 2011) as opposed to using the paper form. In addition, changes in Indigenous identification can account for part of the growth in Indigenous people between Census years (along with births and deaths, migration, enumeration methods and response) (Markham & Biddle 2017). The number of people who chose to identify as being a person of Indigenous origin in 2016, but who did not choose to do so in 2011, was greater than the number of people who changed their identification in the opposite direction over the period (the		

net increase was estimated to be 13.7% of the 2011 in-scope Indigenous population) (Markham & Biddle 2018). If these newly identified Indigenous people had a higher socioeconomic status than those who remained Indigenous or changed to Non-Indigenous this may bias any measured change in outcomes across Census years.

Tenure of occupied private dwellings is collected in the Census as whether the dwelling is owned, being purchased, rented, or occupied under another arrangement. The non-response rate for this variable was 7.7% in 2016 (6.1% in 2011) (ABS 2017a).

Comparability: Census data on the number of households living in social housing yield substantially lower numbers than data derived from the social housing administrative data collections described below. These differences could be due to a number of factors, including Census under-count of people, missing information about Indigenous status, and only dwellings that were occupied on Census night being captured in the Census (AIHW 2014a). This difference has remained consistent over time (around 11%), therefore trends are considered to be comparable.

Identifying homelessness

The ABS presents estimates of the prevalence of homelessness on Census night, derived from the Census of Population and Housing using the ABS definition of homelessness. Prevalence is an estimate of how many people experienced homelessness at a particular point-in-time.

While homelessness itself is not a characteristic that is directly collected in the Census of Population and Housing, estimates of the homeless population may be derived from the Census using analytical techniques based on both the characteristics observed in the Census and assumptions about the way people may respond to Census questions.

The ABS also presents estimates for selected groups of people who may be marginally housed and whose living arrangements are close to the statistical boundary of homelessness and who may be at risk of homelessness (ABS 2018b).

The ABS distinguishes between 6 broad groups of homeless people according to the living situation of the person at the time:

- people living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out
- people in supported accommodation for the homeless
- people staying temporarily with other households
- people living in boarding houses
- people in other temporary lodgings
- people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

The AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) (see details below) uses the same homeless definition as the Census with the exception of people living in severely crowded dwellings. No specific question on crowding is included in the SHSC, therefore this group cannot be separately identified. The Census homeless counts include people living in 'severely' crowded dwellings (that is, a dwelling that needs 4 or more extra bedrooms); this is derived using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) (see Box 1.1). For Indigenous people this category of homelessness is the largest (70% in 2016).

In 2012, the ABS released a new definition of homelessness for use in its statistical collections; this definition was used in the 2011 Census. The ABS retrospectively applied the new statistical definition and estimation methodology to both 2001 and 2006 Census data. However, comparable data for the homeless population by Indigenous status are only available for 2006 (AIHW 2014c).

Not all aspects of the homelessness definition can be captured using Census data as complete data on living and/or accommodation circumstances are not available from the Census. There are particular challenges around ensuring that people staying in supported accommodation are correctly classified. Information provided by government bodies, individual Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) providers and umbrella homelessness services organisations is used to make an assessment about the adequacy of the dwelling, and whether the household has privacy and exclusive use of basic facilities.

Those in long-term supported accommodation (Transitional Housing Management (THM) Units) may not meet the ABS definition of homelessness because they have security of tenure in the dwelling. However, these people were included in the 'People in supported accommodation for the homeless' group in 2011 and 2016 because the information to classify them more completely in line with the ABS definition was not available (ABS 2018b).

AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

First year: 2011–12

Last year: 2017–18

Frequency: Annual

Scope: The collection captures information on people who seek and receive services from specialist homelessness agencies that receive funding to provide specialist homelessness services under:

- the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)
- the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) from 1 July 2018.

Purpose/description: The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) was established on 1 July 2011 and covers a wide range of people experiencing issues with homelessness and stable housing. Within the SHSC clients are classified as being 'homeless' or 'at risk of homelessness'; see Box 1.2 for details on the homeless derivation. The data are collected monthly from specialist homelessness agencies participating in the collection and reported on an annual financial year basis.

Data quality/limitations: As with all data collections, the SHSC estimates are subject to errors. These can arise from data coding and processing errors, inaccurate data, or missing data. Reported findings are based on data reported by agency workers.

Valid responses may not be recorded for all questions—in some cases responses such as 'don't know' were selected, or no response was recorded. No attempt has been made to deduce or impute the true value of these responses. However an imputation strategy has been used to account for agency non-response and invalid statistical linkage keys (SLKs) (resulting in weighted client and support period data).

Data about Indigenous Australians are affected by a number of issues, the most common being the under-identification of Indigenous people. This may happen when:

- people are not asked about their Indigenous status
- people are asked but in an inconsistent way
- information about a person's Indigenous status is recorded inaccurately.

Under-identification can vary across time and between jurisdictions. In the SHSC, information on Indigenous status is only provided with explicit consent to report this information. Indigenous status was not reported for 10% of clients in 2017–18.

Comparability: On 1 July 2011, the SHSC replaced the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection (NDC), which began in 1996. The collections vary in many respects and therefore comparisons cannot be made.

The methodology used to derive homeless estimates differs between the SHSC and the ABS Census; refer to Box 1.2 for details. In general the AIHW definition is narrower and does not specifically identify those people living in severely crowded dwellings as this information is not available.

ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

First year: 1994	Last year: September 2014 to June 2015	Frequency: Every 6 years
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Scope: The scope of the survey is all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were usual residents of private dwellings in Australia (based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households identified in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing).

Methodology: The final sample was weighted to population benchmarks to infer results for the total in-scope population (ABS 2016a).

Purpose/description: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) provides information on a range of demographic, social, environmental and economic indicators, including: personal and household characteristics; geography; language and cultural activities; social networks and support; health and disability; education; employment; stressors; income; housing; and crime, law, and justice.

Data quality/limitations: Estimates from the NATSISS are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. The measure of the sampling error for a given sample estimate is provided by the relative standard error (RSE). Estimates with RSEs of 25%–50% should be used with caution and those with RSEs greater than 50% are considered too unreliable for most purposes (ABS 2016a).

Undercoverage is one potential source of non-sampling error, the rate for the 2014–15 NATSISS was approximately 62% of the in-scope population at the national level. This rate varies across the states and territories (ABS 2016b). Potential sources of undercoverage include, frame exclusions, non-response, non-identification as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; and issues arising in the field.

Comparability: The NATSISS collects information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages, this includes people who identified themselves, or were identified by another household member, as being of Aboriginal origin, Torres Strait Islander origin, or both. An Indigenous household is defined as an occupied private dwelling with at least one resident (including children) who has been identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. The same definition is used in the ABS Census and the AIHW housing and homelessness data collections.

Estimates on past experiences of homelessness collected in the 2014–15 NATSISS are not comparable with prevalence estimates of homelessness derived from the Census of Population and Housing and the definition used in the SHSC.

The measures of household utilisation used in the NATSISS are based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for Housing Appropriateness, this is the same standard used by the ABS and the AIHW.

AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository: Public Housing (PH), State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH), Community Housing (CH), Indigenous Community Housing (ICH)

First year: 1995–96 (PH/SOMIH), 2005–06 (CH), 2006–07 (ICH)	Last year: 2017–18, 2016–17 (ICH)	Frequency: Annual
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Scope:

Public housing and SOMIH: Includes information about households residing in dwellings:

- owned by the housing authority
- leased from the private sector or other housing program areas and used for provision of PH and SOMIH programs.

Community housing (CH): Community housing is rental housing provided for low to moderate income or special needs households, managed by community-based organisations that have received capital or recurrent subsidy from government. Models vary across jurisdictions, and housing stock may be owned by a variety of groups including government.

Indigenous community housing (ICH): Dwellings managed by Indigenous community housing organisations who received funding in the current and/or previous financial years and/or dwellings targeted to Indigenous people.

Purpose/description: The National Housing Assistance Data Repository is a collective term used to describe the annual administrative data related to the mainstream housing assistance programs—public housing and community housing as well as the targeted Indigenous programs—state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) and Indigenous community housing.

Data quality/limitations: Not all housing organisations capture and report all data items—data may not be collected and reported in a manner consistent with national data definitions. For some organisations, some information may be self-identified and/or not collected for some programs (for example, Indigenous status).

Refer to Supplementary table A.1 for information about the proportion of households for which information about Indigenous status was unknown.

Program specific data quality:

Public housing and SOMIH: Data relating to NT remote dwellings have been reported for the first time in the 2016–17 SOMIH collection. Due to data quality issues, only limited aggregate information relating to stock numbers and overcrowding has been provided.

Community housing: The information was sourced by state/territory housing authorities from community housing organisations (CHOs) and/or from administrative records held by them. Data are incomplete for some jurisdictions due to non-reporting or under-reporting by CHOs. The response rate differs between jurisdictions (refer to the Data quality statements listed in Appendix A.3 for further details). Tenancy (rental) units in community housing are reported for community housing as these are equivalent to dwellings in other housing collections. Household information drawn from the Community Housing data collection does not include data for the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory submits aggregate data, which includes dwelling and organisational-level data, but not information on individual tenancies or persons. This means that counts of Indigenous households are underestimates for this collection.

Indigenous community housing: Indigenous community housing data include permanent dwellings managed by funded and unfunded providers. Data on the number of Indigenous community housing households were not available due to issues relating to data completeness and coverage.

AIHW National Social Housing Survey (NSHS)

First year: 1996

Last year: 2018

Frequency: Biennial

Scope: Tenants are randomly sampled from the three social housing programs—public housing, community housing, and state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). The Indigenous Community Housing (ICH) sector (Queensland only) was included for the first time in 2018. As there is only one year of data for this population, and inter-jurisdiction or time series analysis is not possible, these ICH tenant responses were excluded from the findings in this report.

Methodology: The data were collected via a combination of mail-out paper questionnaires, online self-completed questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. All remoteness areas were included in the sample.

The estimates presented have been derived by applying ‘weights’ to the raw data (survey responses) to ensure that the estimates presented represent the total population, to the extent possible.

Purpose/description: The NSHS provides information on characteristics of tenants, information about their housing histories, their satisfaction with their housing, and information about their household’s use of other health and community services. All states and territories participated in the survey if the relevant program operated in their jurisdiction.

Data quality/limitations: Some survey respondents did not answer all questions, either because they were unable or unwilling to provide a response. The survey responses for these people were retained in the sample, and the missing values are excluded from analysis.

The 2018 response rate for the combined mail-out/online approach was 35.5% (2 percentage points higher than in 2016). In 2018, 32% of all surveys were completed online—higher than the 2016 online proportion of 20%. For the two jurisdictions where SOMIH tenants completed the survey face-to-face (New South Wales and Queensland), 2,033 interviews were attempted and 1,065 completed, with an overall response rate of 52.4%.

For the 2018 NSHS, caution should be used when comparing trend data or data between jurisdictions due to differences in response rates and non-sampling error.

The 2018 NSHS sampling and stratification methods were similar to the 2016 survey: a sample was randomly selected from each strata.

As in 2016, the data collected for SOMIH were sourced using two methodologies (via mail-out in two jurisdictions and via face-to-face interview in two jurisdictions). Trend data from before 2016, and comparisons between jurisdictions, should therefore be interpreted with caution.

AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository: Home Purchase Assistance (HPA), Private Rent Assistance (PRA)

First year: 1997–98

Last year: 2017–18

Frequency: Annual

Scope:

Home purchase assistance: HPA is administered by each jurisdiction and provides a range of financial assistance to eligible households to improve their access to, and maintain, home ownership. HPA can include: direct lending, concessional loans, mortgage relief, interest rate assistance, deposit assistance or other assistance grants.

Private rent assistance: All states and territories provide private rental assistance through a number of programs. PRA programs include: bond loans, rental grants, subsidies and relief, and relocation expenses. The collection excludes non-financial assistance; for example, tenancy support services and tenancy guarantees.

Methodology: The data collected are an administrative by-product of the management of HPA and PRA programs delivered by states and territories. Extracts of these data sets are provided annually to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Purpose/description:

Home purchase assistance: States and territories provide financial assistance to households to improve their access to home ownership through a number of programs. Data include the number of households that received HPA during the financial year and repayable forms of HPA received in prior years. Data are also reported for the value of HPA received during the financial year.

Private rent assistance: PRA is financial assistance provided by state and territory governments to low-income households experiencing difficulty in securing or maintaining private rental accommodation.

Data quality/limitations:

The administrative data sets from which this collection is drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data and data coding or recording errors. Care should also be taken when comparing data across time due to changes in methodology or the underlying HPA and PRA programs and how they are classified.

Home purchase assistance: Information about the Indigenous status of the household is not collected for some programs within the HPA collection. Approximately 16% of all households recorded in the 2016–17 collection had an unknown Indigenous status. As a result, caution should be taken when interpreting data relating to Indigenous people.

Private rent assistance: Information about the Indigenous status of the household is not collected for some programs within the PRA collection. Approximately 6% of households recorded in the 2016–17 collection had an unknown Indigenous status. Caution is also advised when reviewing the Indigenous status of the household. Households receiving more than one type of assistance may report different Indigenous statuses.

Department of Social Services: Australian Government Housing Data Set		
First year: 1 January 1998	Last year: 2017	Frequency: Annual
Scope: Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) data are derived from the Australian Government Housing Data Set (AGHDS), which is drawn from administrative data used to monitor the rent assistance program. Includes information about the type of housing, amount of weekly income, payment type and other characteristics of income units.		
Methodology: The data comprise confidentialised point-in-time administrative data for income units in receipt of Centrelink payments.		
Purpose/description: The AGHDS provides point-in-time data about income units in receipt of Centrelink social security payments and families receiving Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A. The data set is provided to the AIHW by the Department of Social Services and used to derive national public housing performance indicators. The dataset combines information from numerous Centrelink files to create records at an income unit level, rather than a person or household level. An income unit consists of a person, the person's partner and any children for whom the couple may receive FTB Part A. Single social security recipients living together in the same household are regarded as separate income units. Indigenous income units contain one member who has self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.		
Data quality/limitations: CRA figures from 2014–15 are extracted from a new dataset built from the new Department of Human Services Enterprise Data Warehouse environment. While every effort has been made to replicate the old dataset, there are some small discrepancies due to differences between the old and new environments. Therefore, data may not be strictly comparable with earlier years.		

Appendix C: Technical notes

C.1 Census of Population and Housing

Homelessness rates

In this paper, all rates that are based on Census data are crude rates. That is, they indicate the number of homelessness people divided by the size of the relevant population (as enumerated in the Census). They are generally expressed as the number of homeless people per 10,000 persons of the usual resident population in the Census, excluding people, at sea, or in migratory and off shore regions.

Homeless operational groups

The ABS distinguishes between 6 broad groups or types of homelessness according to the living situation of the person on Census night. As these groups may overlap in a small number of circumstances, the ABS assigns people to only 1 category based on the following hierarchy:

- Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out
- Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless
- Persons staying temporarily with other households
- Persons living in boarding houses
- Persons in other temporary lodgings
- Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

People in marginal housing

The Census can also be used to provide estimates of the number of people in selected marginal housing circumstances (ABS 2018b). These people are not classified as homeless but are considered to be at risk of homelessness.

Three groups of marginally housed people can be identified:

- people living in 'other crowded' dwellings—that is, people in dwellings that needed three extra bedrooms to accommodate the usual residents adequately as defined by the CNOS (see Box 1.1)
- people in 'other improvised' dwellings—people living in an improvised dwelling, tent or sleeping out, excluding those who were considered to be homeless using the ABS methodology
- people who are marginally housed in caravan parks who do not appear to have suitable accommodation alternatives (based on their employment status and level of household income) (ABS 2018b).

Estimates of people living in other types of marginal housing—such as housing with major structural problems—cannot be obtained from the Census, and so are not included in these estimates.

Type of count and scope

Census counts can be compiled according to a person's 'place of enumeration' i.e. where they were on Census night or 'place of usual residence' i.e. where they usually live. For this report both counts have been used as each have different uses and advantages (ABS 2017a).

All homelessness estimates used in this report have been derived from the 'place of usual residence' datasets, consistent with the ABS approach.

The ABS uses reporting of 'no usual address' as the starting point to classify anyone who may be homeless, this is then refined to remove groups who are unlikely to be homeless, such as overseas students in group houses, 'grey nomads' or recently arrived migrants (ABS 2018b).

The 2016 homelessness estimates cover usual residents in Australia and Other Territories on Census night and do not include:

- overseas visitors
- people who were enumerated in offshore, shipping or migratory regions
- people on an overnight journey by train or bus.

In 2011 and previous Censuses, Norfolk Island was not included in the definition of geographic Australia. Christmas and Cocos Keeling Islands have been included since the 1996 Census (ABS 2012b).

The 'place of enumeration' counts have been used for all tenure and overcrowding reporting as this dataset provides an accurate description of dwelling characteristics.

In addition, for all analysis:

- only people/households in occupied private dwellings on Census night are included. Thus those who were in non-private dwellings—such as hotels, motels, prisons, boarding schools, and hospitals—were excluded
- visitors in households were excluded
- family, lone person and group households (and people in such households) were included. Households for which the household type could not be classified—namely 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households—were excluded since the Indigenous status of such households is not determined by the ABS
- totals include Other Territories. Other Territories include Norfolk Island, Jervis Bay Territory, the Territory of Christmas Island and the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Island, but does not include any other external territory.

Household composition

Within the Census data collection, a household is broadly defined as *'one or more persons, at least one of whom is at least 15 years of age, usually resident in the same private dwelling'*.

This means there is never more than one household per dwelling, therefore the terms 'dwelling' and 'household' are often used interchangeably. Households with only persons aged under 15 are coded to 'Other non-classifiable' (ABS 2017a).

Estimating number of households

To calculate the rate of all Indigenous (and other) households living in social housing, total counts of households in 2017 by Indigenous status are required. The 2016 Census count provides the best available and most recent source of information about the total number of Indigenous and other Australian households. In order to derive such estimates for 2017, the number of Indigenous and other households as enumerated in the 2016 Census were adjusted to take into account the estimated rate of growth in households between 2016 and 2017.

To estimate this rate of growth, ABS projections of household growth (ABS 2015), series II (the middle range of three different projection scenarios) were used. Percentage changes in the number of households between 2016 and 2017 were calculated for Australia (as a whole) as well as for each state and territory. These growth percentages were then applied to 2016 Census household counts (ABS 2018e) to derive an estimated count of all households in 2017.

An example of the process is set out below, using the number of Indigenous households across Australia:

- (a) The number of Indigenous households enumerated in the 2016 Census count was 263,037.
- (b) According to the ABS series II household projections, the number of households in Australia was expected to grow by 1.9% between 2016 and 2017.
- (c) Applying this adjustment factor to the number of Indigenous households in 2016 provides an estimated count of 267,929 Indigenous households in 2017 (suggesting an increase of 4,892 Indigenous households over the 1-year period).

This estimated count was then used as the denominator when calculating rates of usage of social housing by Indigenous households at the national level.

Note, separate sets of household projections are not available for Indigenous households and for other Australian households. It is assumed that these households have the same estimated rate of growth and, thus, the one rate is applied.

Other technical notes

Census data were randomly adjusted by the ABS to avoid the release of confidential information; as a result, components of tables may not sum exactly to the totals, and data in any one table may vary slightly from corresponding data presented in other tables and data presented elsewhere.

Further information

Further information about the Census can be found on the Census page of the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au/census>>.

Information about estimating homelessness from the Census can be found in a number of ABS publications (ABS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2018a).

C.2 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

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 because estimates from the 2016 Census are not yet available.

Indigenous client rates at the sub-state (SA4) level cannot be calculated as annual projected population estimates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians at these lower levels of geography are not available.

Age-standardised rates

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

Rate ratio

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

Imputation and weighting

Due to improvements in agency response and statistical linkage key (SLK) validity rates, data for 2017–18 were not weighted. As the aim of the imputation strategy was to account for low rates of agency response and SLK validity in previous years, unweighted data for 2017–18 onwards are directly comparable with weighted data for 2011–12 to 2016–17. The removal of weighting does not constitute a break in time series.

This report uses financial year data, and for 2011–12 to 2016–17, these data are weighted. However, other AIHW publications that analyse the pathways of individual clients over time, including publications using SHS data linked with data from other collections, do not use weighted data.

Comparisons between years of counts of clients and support periods should use weighted data for 2011–12 to 2016–17 and unweighted data from 2017–18 onwards. These counts can be obtained from the annual report and accompanying data products.

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.

Data derivations

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 2018d). The latest available version of the RA indicator (from the 2016 Census) has been developed by the ABS. The Remoteness Areas divide Australia into five classes of remoteness on the basis of relative access to services. Access to services is measured using the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), developed by the Hugo Centre for Migration and Population Research at the University of Adelaide. ARIA+ is derived by measuring the road distance from a point to the nearest Urban Centres and Localities in five separate population ranges.

Using this classification, agencies participating in the SHSC were assigned to an RA based on their recorded state, suburb, postcode and/or Local Government Area (LGA) values. Where available, a combination of these fields was used to assign RA for a given agency to improve accuracy.

Client geography

Clients have been assigned to a region based on where they lived in the week before presenting to a SHS agency. Regions are defined by the 2016 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), developed by the ABS (ABS 2016c).

Clients are assigned to only one region, based on the location details (locality, postcode and state/territory) provided in the first support period in the reference year. The first support period is defined as the support period with the earliest start date in the financial year.

Young people presenting alone

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

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

Older people

Older people are defined as clients aged 55 or older.

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

Clients who experienced domestic and family violence

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

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

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

Clients with a current mental health issue

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

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

This analysis does not include clients aged under 10.

Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use

A client is identified as having problematic drug and/or alcohol use if they were aged 10 or older and have provided any of the following information either at the beginning of support or in any support period during the reporting period (either the week before or at beginning of the support period):

- their dwelling type was recorded as rehabilitation
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a drug and alcohol service
- during their support they required drug/alcohol counselling
- they have been in a rehabilitation facility/institution in the last 12 months
- they have reported 'problematic drug or substance abuse' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance or main reason for seeking assistance.

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 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.

Indigenous clients

A client is considered Indigenous if, at any time in the reporting period, 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 status was not reported for 10% of clients in 2017–18.

Returning clients

Returning clients are defined as clients who have an open support period in the 2017–18 reference year and a support period in at least one other year (between 2011–12 and 2016–17). This excludes clients with only 1 support period. Support periods can cross reference years.

The reporting period is between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2018, however in cases where support started before 1 July 2011, the support period start date has been used. If the support period end dates are outside of the reporting period, total days are calculated using an end date of 30 June 2018. Clients can be included in multiple length of support groupings.

This measure provides contextual information about service use patterns.

Further information

Further information about the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection can be found on the AIHW website at <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/overview>>.

C.3 Housing assistance data collections

Social household rates

The rate of all Indigenous (and other) households living in social housing per 100 Indigenous households has been derived using projected households counts based on data from the ABS 2016 Census and ABS projections of growth in household numbers (ABS 2015) (See the Appendix C.1: Technical notes relating to the Census of Population and Housing for further details).

Reference periods

Social housing data are collected in relation to two reference periods:

- point in time, the status at 30 June of the reference year. Generally assistance is ongoing or current at the end of the financial year for these records. Where assistance ceased on 30 June, these records are also counted. For example households counts by social housing program are a stock measure and are recorded 'at 30 June' in the reference year
- financial year, data relate to the period 1 July to 30 June of the reference year. These records were current at any point during the financial year, and are not necessarily current as of 30 June. Counts of new households assisted in the reference year are a flow measure and are recorded as '2016–17', for example.

An additional reference period is also used when reporting variables such as tenure length. This variable has been derived using only households who are ongoing at the end of the reference year (at 30 June) (that is, households records which do not have an end date). In addition, tenure length has been calculated using the tenancy start date and an end date of the 30th June of the financial year.

Further information

Further information about the housing assistance data collections can be found on the AIHW website at <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-statistics/health-welfare-services/housing-assistance/overview>>.

C.4 Number of households receiving financial assistance

Commonwealth rent assistance

Recipients of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) are 'income units', rather than households. An income unit is defined as one person or a group of related persons within a household whose command over income is shared, or any person living in a non-private dwelling who is in receipt of personal income. A non-dependent child living at home, including one who is receiving an income support payment in their own right, is regarded as a separate income unit. Similarly, a group of non-related adults sharing accommodation are counted as separate income units. More than one person/group within a household can receive CRA.

Private rent assistance and Home purchase assistance

Statistical units used within these collections:

- Instance of assistance: The number of times a household receives a one-off assistance grant or receives assistance through an 'ongoing' assistance type, such as a loan. 'Ongoing' assistance is counted as one instance of assistance in the financial year for each program type where assistance is provided.
- Household: This is the unique count of households that received assistance for year ending 30 June. Households that received multiple instances of assistance are only counted once. Households are defined as a group of two or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling, and who make common provision for food or other essentials for living; or a single person living in a dwelling who makes provision for his or her own food and other essentials for living, without combining with any other person.

Within the report both instances and household counts have been discussed.

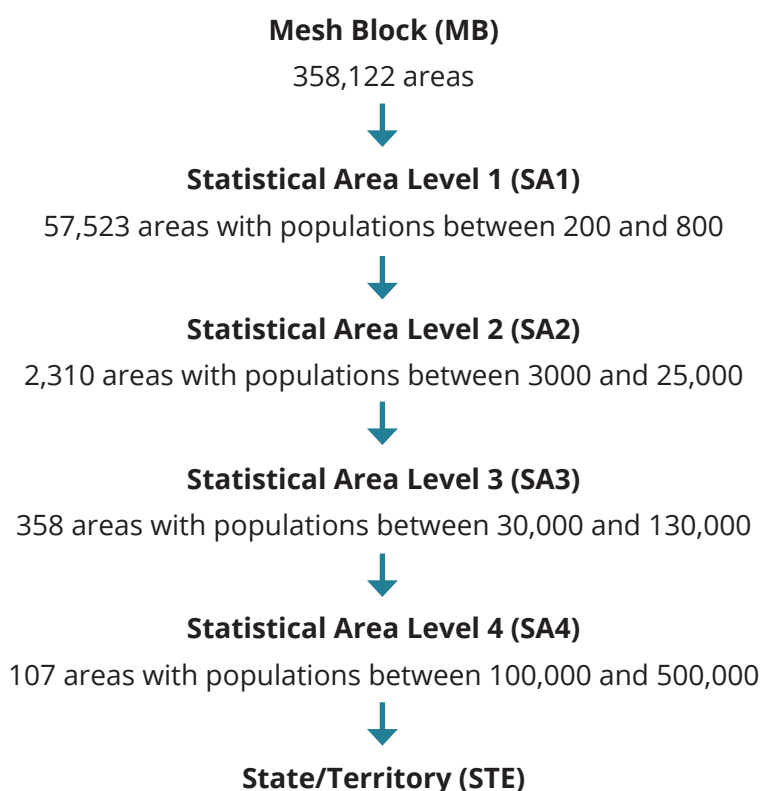
Appendix D: Geography methods

Geography analysis

A major challenge for any spatial analysis is the choice of geographic framework and the unit of analysis. Choices are constrained by pre-existing spatial boundaries, the lowest available level of geographic detail available in the data, and the availability of other required information at a similar scale (such as population data) (AIHW 2017c).

Within Australia, spatial data can be presented by geographic boundaries drawn for consistent reporting of statistics (ABS boundaries). The statistical area (SA) structure of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), developed by the ABS for the collection and dissemination of geographic statistics, was selected as the most relevant framework for components of this report (ABS 2016c) (Box D.1).

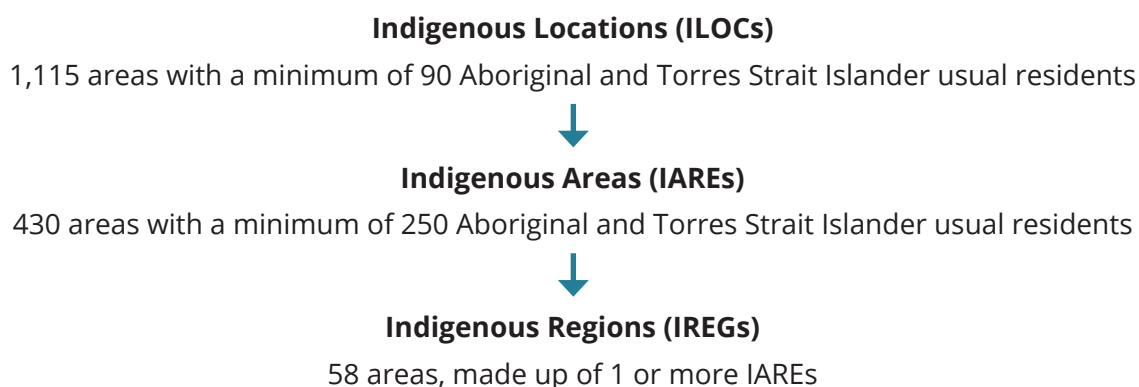
Box D.1: Hierarchical construction of SA levels from 2016 ASGS



The SA structure is hierarchical, where lower level units fit wholly into higher level units, and is based on the functional areas of major cities and towns and gazetted suburbs and localities.

In addition to the SA structure, the ABS has a three-level Indigenous structure, which aims to provide a geographical standard for the publication of statistics about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia (Box D.2).

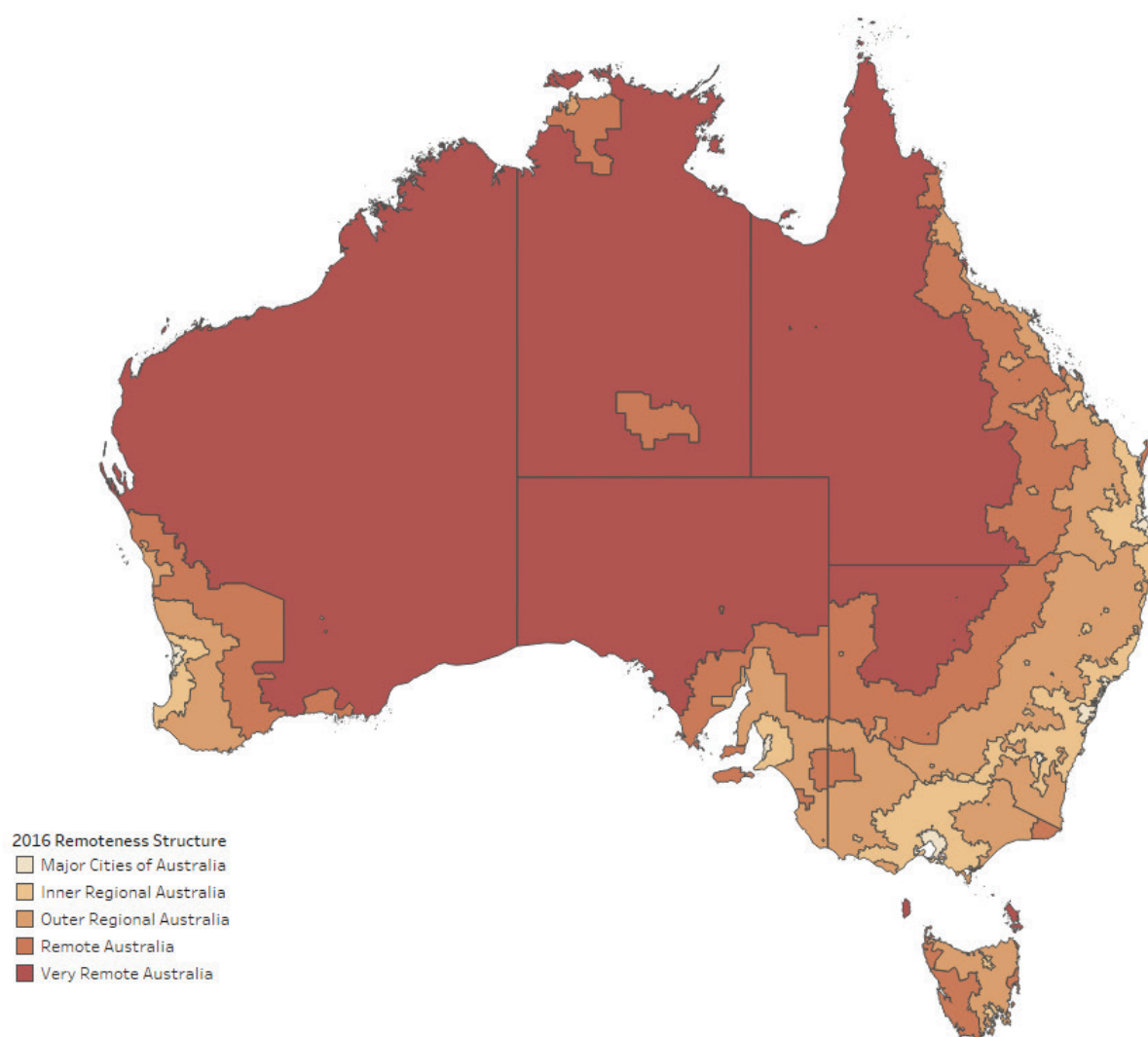
Box D.2: Hierarchical construction of Indigenous structure levels from the 2016 ASGS



The number of areas in both the SA and Indigenous structures include non-geographic SA1s coded as No usual address, Migratory, Offshore or Shipping. Report analyses exclude those areas and areas falling into Other territories. Following exclusions 37 IREG and 88 SA4s were mapped for inclusion in this report.

Remoteness areas reported in this report were based on the ASGS Remoteness Structure. Remoteness Areas divide Australia into 5 classes of remoteness based on a measure of relative access to services (Figure D.1). The latest version of the RA indicator (from the 2016 Census) was developed by the ABS based on the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+) (ABS 2018d).

Figure D.1: Boundaries of 2016 Remoteness Areas (RA)



Geographic levels for reporting

Several different geographic levels were selected for the analyses and reporting in this paper, as described below.

Percentage change in Indigenous household tenure, IREG

Geographical trends in the rate of Indigenous households by dwelling tenure were calculated at the IREG level (Figure D.2). This was calculated as a percentage of all Indigenous households within the respective IREG where an Indigenous household was defined as a household where at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person was a usual resident and was present on Census night.

Figure D.2: Boundaries of 2016 Indigenous regions (IREG)



Specialist Homelessness Services—client geography, SA4

Geographical trends in Indigenous use of specialist homelessness services was reported at statistical area level 4 (SA4) (Figure D.3). See Appendix C.2 for derivation of client location.

Figure D.3: Boundaries of 2016 statistical area level 4 (SA4)



Figure D.3 (continued): Boundaries of 2016 statistical area level 4 (SA4)



Concordance of Census data from 2011 IREG to 2016 IREG

Census estimates were concorded from 2011 IREG to 2016 IREG using the population-weighted correspondence files made available by the Australian Bureau of Statistics at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1270.0.55.002July%202016?OpenDocument>.

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Louise Tierney, Emily Norton, Christopher Humphrey and Cynthia Parayiwa from the Housing and Homelessness Reporting and Development Unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The authors would like to thank Matthew James, AIHW Deputy CEO and head of the Housing and Specialised Services Group and Fadwa Al-Yaman, head of the Indigenous and Maternal Health Group for their guidance and input in the preparation of this report.

We thank staff in the AIHW's Housing and Homelessness Collection Processing Unit, Katherine Green for her geospatial advice as well as staff from the Website and Publishing and Specialist Capabilities units; their contribution is greatly appreciated.

The AIHW would like to acknowledge the (former) Housing and Homelessness Data Network for funding this report and the (current) Housing and Homelessness Data Working Group (HHDWG) for peer review.

We are grateful to the Department of Social Services and the state and territory departments responsible for the delivery of specialist homelessness services for funding the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection and for working with the AIHW to conduct the collection.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of key state and territory government and non-government stakeholders who manage social housing assistance programs and work with the AIHW to collect and analyse national housing assistance data.

We are especially appreciative of all homelessness agencies, social housing providers and their clients for their participation in the data collection, making research of this nature possible.

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
CH	Community housing
CNOS	Canadian National Occupancy Standard
COA	Commonwealth of Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
FHOG	First Home Owner Grant
HPA	Home Purchase Assistance
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
ICHO	Indigenous community housing organisation
IREG	Indigenous Region
NAH SPP	National Affordable Housing Special Purpose Payment
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NHHA	National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
NSHS	National Social Housing Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PC	Productivity Commission
PH	Public rental housing
PRA	Private Rent Assistance
SA	Statistical Area
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SOMIH	State owned and managed Indigenous housing

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

Glossary

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander: A person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Age standardisation: A method of removing the influence of age when comparing populations with different age structures.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard: A measure of the appropriateness of housing that is sensitive to both household size and composition. The CNOS specifies that:

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

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.

Client with problematic drug and/or alcohol use: SHS clients with a current problematic drug and/or alcohol use are identified as such if they are 10 years or older and have provided any of the following information:

- their dwelling type was recorded as rehabilitation
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a drug and alcohol service
- during their support they required drug/alcohol counselling
- they have been in a rehabilitation facility/institution in the last 12 months
- they have reported 'problematic drug or substance abuse' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance or main reason for seeking assistance.

Community housing: Housing provided for low- to moderate-income or special needs households, which community-based organisations manage. Community housing models vary across jurisdictions and a variety of groups, including government, own the housing stock.

Community housing organisation: A not-for-profit organisation that provides safe, secure, affordable and appropriate rental housing.

Couch surfer: A term used to describe any person who typically moves from household to household intermittently, who is not regarded as being part of those households, and who does not have any form of leased tenure over any accommodation.

Greatest need: A descriptor applying to a low-income household if, at the time of allocation, household members were subject to one or more of the following circumstances:

- they were homeless
- their life or safety was at risk in their accommodation
- their health condition was aggravated by their housing
- their housing was inappropriate to their needs
- they had very high rental housing costs.

A low-income household for the greatest need definition is a household that satisfies an eligibility test to receive housing assistance.

Shared equity scheme: A shared equity schemes is a financial agreement entered into by two parties (such as a private investor, not-for profit organisation or government housing authority) in order to purchase property. This scheme assists lower income homebuyers as they need a lower initial deposit and have lower ongoing housing costs.

Social housing household: A group of 2 or more related or unrelated people who usually reside in the same dwelling, and who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. A household can also be a single person living in a dwelling who makes provision for his or her own food and other essentials for living, without combining with any other person.

Housing affordability: The cost of housing compared with the financial situation of households. This term is generally used to refer to housing across major cities, states or nationally, as opposed to individual households. Housing affordability is often measured using the proportion of households in a given area in housing stress.

Housing mobility: The movement of people due to a change in their place of usual residence. Housing mobility may occur due to changes in tenure arrangements, such as from rental to home-ownership, or moving from one geographic location to another for various housing, employment or lifestyle reasons.

Housing stress: A measure of housing affordability where the proportion of household income spent on basic housing costs (that is, rent or mortgage) is calculated. So owner-occupiers without a mortgage cannot experience housing stress according to this definition. It is defined as the situation of a household whose housing costs are more than 30% of the gross household income.

Income poverty: Income poverty rates are derived using the conventional relative poverty line of 50% of the median national equivalised household income. This means that the Indigenous poverty rate is a measure of the economic situation of Indigenous Australians relative to the entire population of the country.

Income unit: One person or a group of related persons within a household, whose command over income is shared, or any person living in a non-private dwelling who is in receipt of personal income.

Indigenous community housing: Housing that Indigenous communities own and/or manage for the provision of housing services to Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous community housing organisation: Any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation that is responsible for managing housing for Indigenous Australians. This includes community organisations such as resource agencies and land councils, which have a range of functions, provided that they manage housing for Indigenous Australians. It may also include tenancies managed by a state/territory housing authority.

Indigenous household: A household as defined above which contains one or more people who identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Indigenous status: People who identified themselves as being of Aboriginal origin, Torres Strait Islander origin, or both.

Major structural problems: Refers to the general condition of a dwelling and identifies specific structural problems such as rising damp, major cracks in walls/floors, sinking or moving foundations, sagging floors, walls or windows that are not plumb, wood rot or termite damage, major electrical problems, major plumbing problems and major roof defects.

Mortgage stress: Defined as households that paid more than 30% of household income on mortgage payments.

Newly allocated household: A newly allocated household is a household that is a new allocation for housing assistance in the financial year.

Overcrowding: A situation in a dwelling when one or more additional bedrooms are required to meet the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Priority allocation: A new tenancy that is provided to individuals classified as being in greatest need.

Public housing: Rental housing that state and territory governments provide and manage. Currently public housing operates in all jurisdictions. Included are households residing in public rental dwellings where the dwelling is either:

- owned by the housing authority
- leased from the private sector or other housing program areas and used to provide public rental housing
- leased to public housing tenants.

Rental stress: Defined as households that paid more than 30% of household income on rent payments.

Rural areas: The ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) includes a 'Section of State' (SOS) classification. SOS groups Urban Centres and Localities into broad classes based on population sizes within each state. Rural areas represents the remainder of the State/Territory which has not been classified under 'Urban area'.

Social housing: Rental housing that is funded or partly funded by government, and that is owned or managed by the government or a community organisation and let to eligible persons. This includes public rental housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing, mainstream and Indigenous community housing and housing provided under the Crisis Accommodation Program.

Special needs: A descriptor for those households that have a member with disability, a main tenant aged under 25 or 75 and over, or households defined as Indigenous households. Indigenous households in SOMIH are not considered special needs households, as SOMIH is an Indigenous-targeted program.

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.

Specialist homelessness services clients: 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.

State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH): Social housing administered by state and territory governments but is targeted specifically at low- to moderate-income households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Currently SOMIH operates in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

Tenancy (rental) unit: For the purposes of the public housing, SOMIH and community housing data collections, the unit of accommodation for which a rental agreement can be made. In the majority of cases, there will be only one tenancy (rental) unit within dwelling; in a small number of cases (for example, boarding houses, special group homes, semi-institutional dwellings), there may be more than one tenancy (rental) unit.

Urban areas: The ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) includes a 'Section of State' (SOS) classification. SOS groups Urban Centres and Localities into broad classes based on population sizes within each state. Urban areas represent a combination of all Urban Centres with a population of more than 1,000.

Rural areas: The ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) includes a 'Section of State' (SOS) classification. SOS groups Urban Centres and Localities into broad classes based on population sizes within each state. Rural areas represents the remainder of the State/Territory which has not been classified under 'Urban area'.

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Related publications

Three reports released by the AIHW in 2014 have previously covered the topic of Indigenous housing and homelessness.

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014. Housing assistance for Indigenous Australians. Cat no. IHW 131. Canberra: AIHW.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014. Housing circumstances of Indigenous households: tenure and overcrowding. Cat no. IHW 132. Canberra: AIHW.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014. Homelessness among Indigenous Australians. Cat no. IHW 133. Canberra: AIHW.

The following publications relating to Indigenous Australians might also be of interest:

- Report on Government Services (ROGS). Housing and Homelessness. Available from: <<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services>>. Canberra: Productivity Commission.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017–18. Cat. no. WEB 299. Canberra: AIHW.
- SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2016, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016. Canberra: Productivity Commission.
- SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2017, 2017 Indigenous Expenditure Report. Canberra: Productivity Commission.
- Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2018. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018. Cat. no. FDV 2. Canberra: AIHW. Housing Assistance in Australia 2018. Cat no. HOU 296. Canberra: AIHW.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes. Cat. no. IHW 195. Canberra: AIHW.



This report examines the profiles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in both the housing and homelessness sectors over time, using multiple data sources and visualisation tools.

Historically, Indigenous Australians have been over-represented among clients seeking homelessness and social housing services. This report shows that the housing situation of Indigenous Australians has improved—with rises in home ownership and housing provided through the private rental market, and falling levels of homelessness.

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