

INTRODUCTION

The housing circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people differ markedly from those of other Australians. Indigenous people are much less likely to own their homes and are more likely to receive some form of government housing assistance. The average size of Indigenous households is larger than the size of other Australian households. Some Indigenous people, particularly those in more remote areas, live in poorly maintained housing without essential infrastructure such as a supply of safe drinking water or effective sewerage systems. Indigenous people are also vulnerable to homelessness because of their relative social and economic disadvantage.

Housing has been identified as a major factor affecting the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Inadequate or poorly maintained housing and the absence of functioning infrastructure can pose serious health risks. Overcrowded dwellings and poor quality housing have been associated with poorer physical and mental health among residents.

Housing assistance programs are especially important for Indigenous people as they are generally aimed at people on low incomes or those with special needs (box 4.5). A large proportion of Indigenous households rent their accommodation through housing assistance programs such as public housing or Indigenous community housing. For those in the private rental market, rent assistance programs provide an important income supplement for lower income households. Housing assistance programs also play a role in relation to homelessness both by directly assisting homeless people and by helping those at risk of homelessness. For example, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was designed specifically to assist homeless people with accommodation and other services.

This chapter describes the characteristics of Indigenous households and their housing circumstances. It includes data on tenure type and housing assistance, location and housing costs. The chapter examines the relationship between housing and health, and provides data on those housing characteristics that may contribute to poor health outcomes—overcrowding and poor quality housing. The final part of the chapter focuses on those who are most disadvantaged in relation to housing, namely homeless people. Detailed information on the characteristics of homeless people is provided through data from the AIHW SAAP National Data Collection.

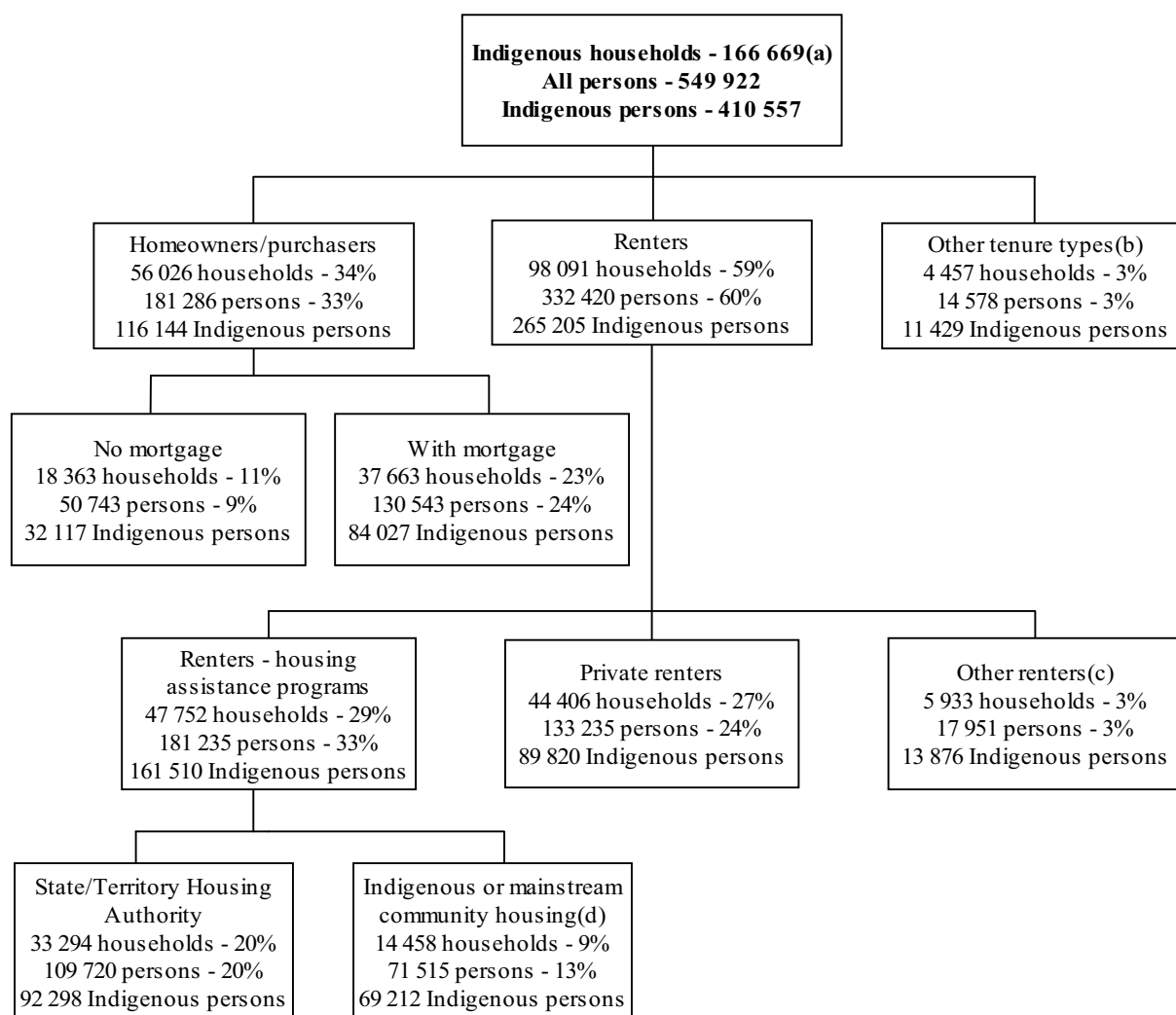
*Indigenous households*

For the purposes of analysis, Indigenous households have been defined as households containing at least one Indigenous person of any age, excluding visitors. This definition is also used in the National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary (AIHW 2006e).

HOUSING TENURE

Of the estimated 166,700 Indigenous households in the 2006 Census, 34% were home owners (with or without a mortgage), 59% were renting and 3% had other types of tenure (figure 4.1). Among the 98,100 Indigenous households in rental accommodation, 27% were renting privately, 20% were renting from state or territory housing authorities, 9% were renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations and the remaining 4% were other renters (i.e. with other or unspecified landlord types) (figure 4.1). In comparison, 69% of the estimated 7 million other Australian households were home owners (with or without a mortgage) 26% were renting and 2% had other tenure types. Of the 1.8 million other households that were renting, the majority were renting privately (1.4 million or 20% of other households), with just 4% renting from state or territory housing authorities and 1% from Indigenous or mainstream community organisations.

**4.1** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS IN INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS—2006



- (a) The 8,095 Indigenous households with tenure type not stated are not shown in this chart.
- (b) Includes households and persons in rent/buy schemes, living rent-free or under a life tenure scheme.
- (c) Includes 1,331 Indigenous households with landlord not stated.
- (d) Community housing managed by Indigenous community housing organisations or mainstream community housing providers.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

## HOUSING TENURE

*continued*

Home ownership provides a relatively secure form of housing tenure. There are much lower rates of home ownership among Indigenous households, partly reflecting the lower socioeconomic status of many Indigenous households and the fact that one-quarter of the Indigenous population live on Indigenous land in remote areas where individual home ownership is generally not possible. In 2006, 11% of Indigenous households were home owner households without a mortgage and 23% were home owner households with a mortgage (figure 4.1).

As most residents of Indigenous households are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, the proportion of Indigenous people in Indigenous households, by tenure type, is broadly similar to the distribution of Indigenous households by tenure type. However, there are some differences related to the size of households across the different tenure types (see table 4.8). There was a larger proportion of Indigenous people living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (17%) than the proportion of Indigenous households with this tenure type (9%). In contrast, a smaller proportion of Indigenous people were living in home owner households (28%) than the proportion of home owner households (34%) (table 4.2). This reflects the larger average household size for those living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (see table 4.8). Information about the housing circumstances of Indigenous people, in addition to Indigenous households, is shown in selected tables in this chapter.

*Changes over time in housing tenure*

Between 2001 and 2006 the proportion of Indigenous home owner households increased from 31% to 34%. The proportion of these households without a mortgage decreased from 13% in 2001 to 11% in 2006, while the proportion with a mortgage increased from 18% to 23% over the same period (table 4.2). The proportions of Indigenous households renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations and those renting from private or other providers, fell by around two percentage points between 2001 and 2006, while the proportion of Indigenous households renting from state housing authorities remained relatively unchanged over this period.

Consistent with increases in the proportion of households living in dwellings that were being purchased, the proportion of Indigenous people living in these dwellings increased from 16% in 2001 to 20% in 2006 (table 4.2). Over the same period, there was a decrease in the proportion of Indigenous people living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (from 21% in 2001 to 17% in 2006).

Changes over time in  
housing tenure *continued*

**4.2** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIGENOUS PERSONS, by  
tenure type—2001 and 2006

		HOUSEHOLDS		PERSONS (a)	
		2001	2006	2001	2006
Fully owned	%	12.6	11.0	9.1	7.8
Being purchased	%	18.4	22.6	16.2	20.4
Private and other renter(a)	%	32.2	30.2	26.3	25.3
Renter state or territory housing authority	%	20.4	20.0	22.5	22.5
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	%	10.9	8.7	20.8	16.8
Other tenure(b)	%	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.8
Not stated	%	3.2	4.9	2.9	4.4
<b>Total number(c)</b>	no.	<b>144 493</b>	<b>166 669</b>	<b>372 125</b>	<b>411 334</b>

(a) Includes households for which landlord type was not stated.

(b) Includes those living under life tenure schemes, those living rent free and participants in rent/buy schemes.

(c) Excludes visitors.

Source: ABS 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

Tenure by state and  
territory

The tenure type of Indigenous households varies by state and territory, partly reflecting differences in the types of housing that are available to Indigenous people. In 2006, the Northern Territory had the lowest proportion of Indigenous home owner households (18%) and the highest proportion of households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (41%). Tasmania, on the other hand, had a relatively high proportion of Indigenous home owner households (52%) and just 1% of Indigenous households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (table 4.3).

Rates of home ownership were highest in jurisdictions with mainly urban Indigenous populations—Tasmania (52%), the Australian Capital Territory (42%) and Victoria (39%). The proportions of Indigenous households renting from private and other landlords were highest in Queensland (37%), New South Wales (32%), and Victoria (31%). Relative to other jurisdictions, South Australia (29%), the Australian Capital Territory (27%) and Western Australia (26%) had high proportions of Indigenous households renting from state/territory housing authorities (table 4.3). State and territory housing authorities provide both public housing and state and territory owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). Information on SOMIH is covered in some detail in later sections of this chapter.

At the state/territory level, the distribution of Indigenous people, by tenure type, is broadly similar to the proportions of Indigenous households by tenure type. Variation is due to differences in the size of households by tenure type. For example, the proportion of Indigenous people living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing in the Northern Territory was significantly greater than the proportion of Indigenous households in these types of dwellings (63% compared with 41%) (table 4.3). This difference reflects the higher average number of people living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (five people per dwelling) compared with other types of housing (three people per dwelling). For more information on household size by tenure, see table 4.8.

### 4.3 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS, by tenure type and state/territory—2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia(a)
HOUSEHOLDS									
Home owner/purchaser %	35.6	39.3	31.5	29.4	33.4	51.9	41.5	17.9	33.6
Private and other renter(b) %	32.1	30.7	36.5	24.2	23.6	25.3	27.0	13.9	30.2
Renter state/territory housing authority %	21.0	19.5	16.3	25.8	28.8	16.6	26.5	14.3	20.0
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing %	4.9	2.4	8.6	10.9	6.3	1.0	2.0	41.2	8.7
Other tenure %	2.2	2.7	2.7	3.4	2.3	2.6	1.4	4.0	2.7
Not stated %	4.2	5.3	4.3	6.4	5.6	2.7	1.7	8.7	4.9
<b>Total number(c)</b> no.	<b>57 246</b>	<b>14 151</b>	<b>45 938</b>	<b>18 381</b>	<b>9 949</b>	<b>7 923</b>	<b>1 814</b>	<b>11 199</b>	<b>166 669</b>
PERSONS									
Home owner/purchaser %	33.1	37.8	26.4	23.6	29.6	52.1	40.1	10.1	28.3
Private and other renter(b) %	29.5	27.2	31.4	19.2	19.6	23.9	23.2	7.7	25.3
Renter state/territory housing authority %	24.1	24.2	20.5	29.7	32.1	18.1	30.6	10.7	22.5
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing %	7.3	3.2	14.6	18.5	11.5	1.0	2.9	62.6	16.8
Other tenure %	2.2	2.6	3.1	3.3	2.2	2.6	1.2	3.6	2.8
Not stated %	3.9	5.1	4.0	5.8	5.1	2.3	2.0	5.3	4.4
<b>Total number(c)</b> no.	<b>126 623</b>	<b>27 674</b>	<b>115 428</b>	<b>51 275</b>	<b>23 019</b>	<b>15 847</b>	<b>3 565</b>	<b>47 705</b>	<b>411 334</b>

(a) Includes 'Other territories'.

(c) Excludes visitors.

(b) Includes landlord type not stated.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

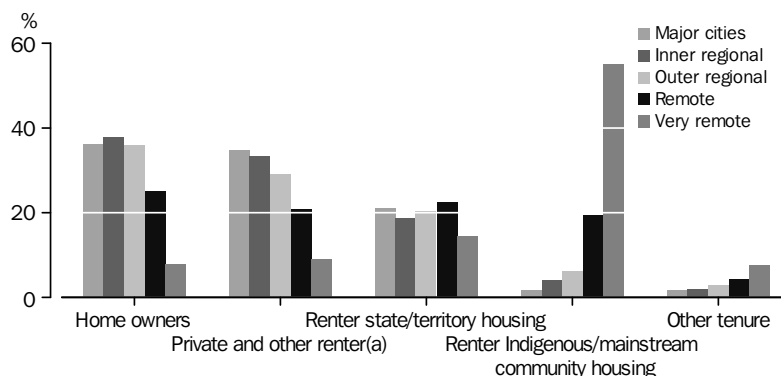
#### Tenure by Remoteness Areas

In 2006, there were around 24,300 Indigenous households (15%) in remote or very remote areas, 76,000 (46%) living in inner and outer regional areas and 66,300 (40%) living in major cities. Tenure type varied by remoteness, reflecting the different housing options available to Indigenous people in different locations, as well as the generally lower socioeconomic status of Indigenous households in more remote areas.

Home ownership rates (with or without a mortgage) were highest among Indigenous households in inner regional areas (38%) and lowest among those in very remote areas (8%). The proportion of Indigenous households living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing was highest in very remote areas (55%) (graph 4.4).

Tenure by Remoteness  
Areas continued

**4.4** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS, by tenure type and Remoteness Areas—2006



(a) Includes landlord type not stated.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

A large proportion of Indigenous households receive government housing assistance of some kind (see box 4.5). The following analysis is based on data from housing administrative data collections including the AIHW Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and National Reporting Framework for Indigenous housing data collections, and the Commonwealth Rent Assistance data collection.

Administrative data on the number of households in these programs differ from data on tenure type from the 2006 Census. This is due to a range of factors including the under-identification of Indigenous households in public and mainstream community housing data collections. The Census data and the housing administrative data collections are also based on different reference periods and use different collection methodologies. There may also be some undercounting of Indigenous households in the Census data as this definition is dependent on the identification of Indigenous people in the Census.

**4.5** MAJOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA COLLECTIONS

*Indigenous-specific programs:*

- State and territory owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) is managed by the state governments and allocated specifically to Indigenous Australians. Funding is through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA).
- Indigenous community housing (ICH) is managed by Indigenous community housing organisations, with funding provided by the states and territories and the Australian Government.

*Mainstream programs:*

- Public housing is administered by the states and territories and provides publicly owned dwellings that are funded through CSHA and used to provide appropriate, affordable and accessible shelter for low to moderate income earners who may have difficulty entering the housing market.

## HOUSING ASSISTANCE

*continued*

- Community housing is managed by non-profit community-based organisations such as local governments, churches and charity groups and is funded through the CSHA. It takes several forms: from emergency or crisis accommodation, to medium-term or transitional accommodation, to long-term housing.
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is an income supplement that may be payable to recipients of social security, family tax benefit and Australian Government Department of Veteran's Affairs payments in the private rental market. To be eligible for assistance the rent paid must be above a specified threshold level, which varies according to a client's family situation.
- Private Rental Assistance (PRA) is a suite of housing assistance programs, including rental assistance (subsidies), bond assistance and relocation expenses, provided by the states and territories through the CSHA and aimed at assisting low-income households experiencing difficulty in securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. For the year ending 30 June 2006, there were 7,989 new Indigenous households who received PRA.
- Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) or home ownership assistance is provided for people who wish to buy their own house but need help with financing. Assistance can be in the form of deposit assistance, mortgage relief and access to surplus housing stock. For the year ending 30 June 2006 there were 295 new Indigenous households who received HPA.

*Administrative data collections*

The AIHW collects the national administrative data on programs funded under the CSHA, that is public rental housing, mainstream community housing, private rent assistance and home purchase assistance. There is much variability in the quality of information about mainstream housing assistance for Indigenous Australians. Indigenous identification is not complete and the number of Indigenous households receiving assistance under these programs is therefore underestimated.

The AIHW also collects data on Indigenous community housing from the Australian Government and the states and territories in the National Reporting Framework (NRF) data collection. This administrative data collection was established in 2003–04.

Data on those in receipt of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) come from the FaHCSIA Housing Dataset. A copy of this dataset is provided to the AIHW each year.

At 30 June 2006, administrative data collections recorded around 55,000 Indigenous households receiving assistance through a range of housing programs—an estimated 22,200 in Indigenous community housing, 12,400 in SOMIH, 21,100 in public rental housing and 1,700 in mainstream community housing. There were another 30,200 Indigenous income units (single persons, couples or family units comprising parents with dependent children) in receipt of CRA (table 4.6). Across Australia, over 50 in every 100 Indigenous households were receiving housing assistance of some kind—18 per 100 were in receipt of CRA, 13 per 100 in both Indigenous community housing and public housing and 7 per 100 in SOMIH.

*Housing assistance by state/territory*

The rate of Indigenous households in the different housing assistance programs varied across states and territories. Compared with other states, the Northern Territory had much higher rates for Indigenous community housing (61 per 100). This was followed by Western Australia (18 per 100) and Queensland (12 per 100). For SOMIH, South Australia had the highest rate (18 per 100) followed by Western Australia (12 per 100). Western Australia had the highest rate of Indigenous households in public housing (24 per 100) followed by New South Wales and the Northern Territory (15 per 100). The rate of Indigenous households receiving CRA was highest in Queensland (23 per 100) followed by New South Wales (20 per 100).

**4.6** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS OR INCOME UNITS IN MAJOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, by state/territory—30 June 2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia
NUMBER									
Indigenous community housing(a)	4 989	442	5 671	3 213	991	56	23	6 807	22 192
SOMIH	4 041	1 248	2 822	2 138	1 791	346	..	..	12 386
Public housing	(b)8 700	1 233	3 122	4 399	1 210	639	191	1 647	21 141
Community housing	661	56	725	121	65	11	24	na	1 663
Commonwealth Rent Assistance(c)	11 692	1 945	10 377	2 612	1 368	1 007	124	1 031	30 168
RATE PER 100 HOUSEHOLDS									
Indigenous community housing(a)	8.7	3.1	12.3	17.5	10.0	0.7	1.3	60.8	13.3
SOMIH	7.1	8.8	6.1	11.6	18.0	4.4	..	..	7.4
Public housing	(b)15.2	8.7	6.8	23.9	12.2	8.1	10.5	14.7	12.7
Community housing	1.2	0.4	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.1	1.3	na	1.0
Commonwealth Rent Assistance(c)	20.4	13.7	22.6	14.2	13.8	12.7	6.8	9.2	18.1

.. not applicable  
na not available

(a) ICH data are number of dwellings at 30 June 2006 as data on the number of households are not available. The number of households would be similar to the number of dwellings.  
(b) Estimate based on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

(c) Commonwealth Rent Assistance data refer to income units receiving CRA at 3 March 2006. Income units are used to determine eligibility for CRA and comprise single persons, couples, or families with dependent children. In some cases there may be more than one income unit per household.  
Source: AIHW CSHA data collection and AIHW NRF data collection, CRA data collection

*Remoteness Areas*

The location of dwellings (with resident Indigenous households) provided under the three major housing assistance programs according to remoteness areas is shown in table 4.7. SOMIH is provided across all remoteness areas with 34% of SOMIH dwellings located in major cities, 48% in regional areas and 18% in remote or very remote areas. Public housing dwellings (with resident Indigenous households) were also spread across remoteness areas, with the highest proportion located in major cities (33%) followed by outer regional areas (30%). Over two-thirds of Indigenous community housing dwellings were located in remote or very remote areas (68%), with 32% located in non-remote areas (table 4.7).

At 30 June 2006, most Indigenous income units receiving CRA were located in major cities or inner regional areas (67%) with only 2% in very remote areas (Australian Government Housing Dataset June 2006).

## Remoteness Areas

*continued***4.7** DWELLINGS (WITH INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS) IN MAJOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, by Remoteness Areas—2006

	SOMIH.....		Public housing(a).....		Indigenous community housing(b).....	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Major cities	4 389	34.1	4 049	32.5	na	na
Inner regional	2 858	22.2	1 827	14.7	7 006	32.1
Outer regional	3 350	26.0	3 772	30.3	na	na
Remote	1 092	8.5	2 047	16.5	2 441	11.2
Very remote	1 198	9.3	746	6.0	12 407	56.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 893</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12 441</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>21 854</b>	<b>100.0</b>

na not available

(a) The public housing data do not include New South Wales because of the under reporting of Indigenous status. When NSW data are included the proportion of dwellings by location is similar.

(b) Includes permanent dwellings managed by Indigenous housing organisations. Data were categorised as non-remote, remote and very remote according to the location of the organisation managing the dwellings.

Source: AIHW CSHA data collections, ABS 2006 CHINS

## HOUSEHOLD TYPES AND SIZE

According to the 2006 Census, 76% of the 166,700 Indigenous households were one family households, and 14% were lone person households. The remaining 10% of Indigenous households was divided equally between multi-family households (5%) (that is, with two or more families in the household) and group households (5%) (that consist of unrelated adults).

Indigenous households are more likely to be larger than other Australian households, with an average household size of 3.4 people compared with 2.6 in other households (table 4.8 and Chapter 2). In 2006, 23% of Indigenous households had five or more residents, 18% had four, 20% had three, 26% had two and 14% had one person.

Average Indigenous household size varied by tenure type, with an average of 4.8 people per household in Indigenous or mainstream community housing compared with 3.1 for those renting from private and other landlords and 3.3 for home owner households (with or without a mortgage). Almost half (47%) of households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing had five or more residents compared with 18% of households renting from private and other landlords (table 4.8).

#### 4.8 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS, by tenure type and number of persons in household—2006

	Home owners	Private and other renter	Renter state/territory housing authority	Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	Other tenure types	Total
NUMBER						
One person	5 008	7 005	5 543	1 508	845	23 030
Two people	15 654	14 811	7 206	2 098	1 114	42 537
Three people	11 236	11 046	6 642	1 984	762	32 737
Four people	12 201	8 648	5 367	2 059	658	29 780
Five or more people	11 927	8 829	8 536	6 809	1 079	38 586
<b>Total</b>	<b>56 027</b>	<b>50 339</b>	<b>33 294</b>	<b>14 458</b>	<b>4 458</b>	<b>166 669</b>
<i>Average number per household</i>	3.3	3.1	3.4	4.8	3.3	3.4
PROPORTION (%)						
One person	8.9	13.9	16.6	10.4	19.0	13.8
Two people	27.9	29.4	21.6	14.5	25.0	25.5
Three people	20.1	21.9	19.9	13.7	17.1	19.6
Four people	21.8	17.2	16.1	14.2	14.8	17.9
Five or more people	21.3	17.5	25.6	47.1	24.2	23.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

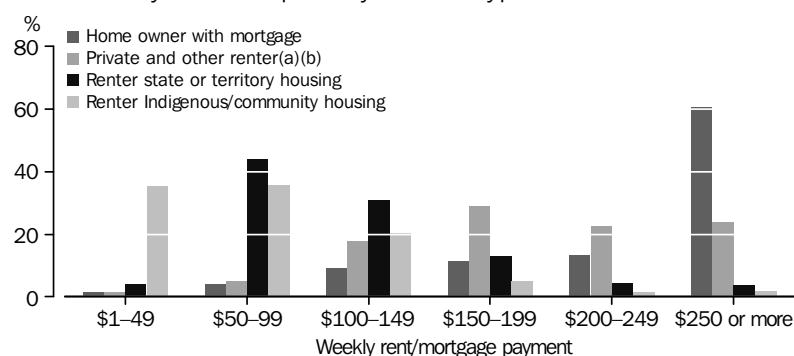
#### HOUSING COSTS

Indigenous Australians have access to a range of housing assistance programs, but housing costs remain high relative to incomes for many households. Weekly housing costs reflect the type of housing, and to some extent, the condition of the dwelling (discussed further in the section on Housing quality). Households renting from state or territory housing authorities and those renting from Indigenous or community housing providers pay rents that are subsidised or related to income, and therefore have lower effective housing costs than those renting in the private market.

Among Indigenous households in 2006, the median weekly mortgage payment for home owners with a mortgage was \$264. The median weekly rents for private/other renters were \$190, for renters of public housing (from state or territory housing authorities) were \$100 and for those renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations were \$60.

Data on the distribution of weekly housing costs for Indigenous households paying mortgages or rent are shown in graph 4.9. Of the 34,800 Indigenous households that reported their mortgage payments, 60% were paying \$250 or more per week in mortgage payments in 2006. Of the 48,600 Indigenous households renting from private/other landlords, 24% were paying \$250 or more per week in rent. More than two-thirds (71%) of Indigenous households renting from Indigenous or mainstream community organisations and 48% of those renting from state/territory housing authorities were paying less than \$100 per week in rent in 2006.

## HOUSING COSTS

*continued***4.9** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS PAYING RENT OR MORTGAGES,  
Weekly amount paid by tenure type—2006

(a) Without adjustment for Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

(b) Includes landlord type not stated.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

## HOUSING AND HEALTH

Housing is a key social determinant of health and is often considered to be a proxy indicator of socioeconomic status as well as of health and wellbeing (Shaw 2004). In Britain, housing tenure has been found to be related to health outcomes such as self-assessed health, hospital admissions and mortality; with home owners having better outcomes than renters.

Housing can impact on health in both direct and indirect ways (Shaw 2004).

Overcrowding, poor dwelling conditions and inadequate basic utilities such as facilities for washing clothes, sewerage systems or safe drinking water, can directly impact on both physical and mental health. Indirect effects include the area or neighbourhood in which housing is located, proximity to services and facilities, and the broader community functioning (Shaw 2004; Bailie 2007).

Health problems related to inadequate housing and infrastructure in remote areas of Australia include infectious diseases such as skin infections and infestations, respiratory infections, eye and ear infections, diarrhoeal diseases and rheumatic fever (Menzies School of Health Research 2000). These diseases have the greatest impact on Indigenous children and are directly related to factors such as inadequate water supplies, sanitation and overcrowding (Bailie 2007).

Information on the status of housing and infrastructure in discrete Indigenous communities (including access to essential services) is presented later in this chapter. Data are from the 2006 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS).

*Overcrowding*

Overcrowding can put stress on bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities as well as on sewerage systems such as septic tanks. It can lead to the spread of infectious diseases such as meningococcal, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, respiratory diseases and skin infections (Howden-Chapman & Wilson 2000). It has also been associated with poorer self-reported physical and mental health and higher rates of smoking and hazardous drinking (Waters 2001; Shaw 2004).

*Overcrowding continued***4.10** WAACHS—POOR QUALITY HOUSING

The 2001–02 Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) collected a range of data about the housing characteristics of families with Aboriginal children and examined their relationship to life stresses, family functioning and community characteristics (Silburn et al 2006). Using criteria based on number of bedrooms and number of people in the household, the WAACHS researchers classified 15% of dwellings with Aboriginal children as overcrowded. This result is similar to that for WA using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard and 2006 Census data (see table 4.12).

In the 2001–02 WAACHS, overcrowding was independently associated with poor housing quality, higher levels of life stresses, overuse of alcohol (causing problems in the household) and a higher number of neighbourhood problems. An earlier report from the survey, however, found that overcrowding had some positive effects. Children living in households with a high household occupancy level were half as likely to be at risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties as children living in homes with a low household occupancy level (Zubrick et al 2005).

Data on overcrowding at the national level come from ABS surveys and the Census. Various measures can be used to define and measure the extent of overcrowding. The Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness is an internationally accepted measure of housing utilisation. Households that require one additional bedroom to meet the standard are considered to experience 'a moderate degree of overcrowding', whereas households requiring two or more bedrooms are said to experience a 'high degree of overcrowding'. The Canadian model is sensitive to both household size and composition and uses the following criteria to assess bedroom requirements:

- there should be no more than two people per bedroom;
- a household of one unattached individual may reasonably occupy a bed-sit (i.e. have no bedroom);
- couples and parents should have a separate bedroom;
- children less than five years of age, of different sexes, may reasonably share a bedroom;
- children five years of age or over, of the opposite sex, should not share a bedroom;
- children less than 18 years of age and of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom; and
- single household members aged 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom.

In the 2006 Census, information on the number of bedrooms (in dwellings) was obtained for 151,900 Indigenous households (91% of all Indigenous households). Some 376,600 Indigenous people were living in these dwellings. The following overcrowding rates are based on these dwellings (and their Indigenous residents), i.e. those for whom housing utilisation could be determined.

Using the Canadian housing utilisation measure, there were around 20,700 overcrowded Indigenous households (14%) and 102,400 Indigenous people (27%) living in

*Overcrowding continued*

overcrowded conditions in 2006. There has been some improvement in rates of overcrowding, with the proportion of Indigenous households that were overcrowded decreasing from 16% in 2001 to 14% in 2006 (table 4.11).

Overcrowding rates varied according to tenure, with the highest rates of overcrowding found in Indigenous households renting Indigenous/mainstream community housing (40% of Indigenous households and 64% of Indigenous people). In contrast, home owners (with or without a mortgage) had the lowest rates of overcrowding (7% of Indigenous households and 11% of Indigenous people).

**4.11** OVERCROWDED INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS (a)(b), by tenure type—2001 and 2006

	<i>Households 2001</i>		<i>Households 2006</i>		<i>Persons 2006</i>	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Home owner/purchaser	3 310	7.7	3 687	6.9	12 528	11.4
Private and other renter	6 077	13.5	5 570	11.6	19 167	18.6
Renter state/territory housing authority	4 546	16.3	4 970	15.9	24 371	28.1
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	6 572	42.9	5 567	39.9	43 853	63.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 258</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>20 734</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>102 364</b>	<b>27.2</b>

(a) Excludes dwellings for which the number of bedrooms was not stated.

(b) Excludes visitors.

Source: 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

#### STATE OR TERRITORY

Overcrowding rates also varied by jurisdiction, reflecting the type of housing options available to Indigenous people in different parts of Australia. In 2006, Queensland had the largest number of overcrowded Indigenous households (6,200) followed by New South Wales (5,200). The highest rates of overcrowding among Indigenous households were in the Northern Territory (38%) followed by Western Australia (16%). Rates of overcrowding were especially high in the Indigenous/mainstream community housing sector in the Northern Territory, where 61% of households were overcrowded.

**4.12** OVERCROWDED INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS(a), by tenure type and state/territory—2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia
NUMBER OF CROWDED HOUSEHOLDS									
Home owner/purchaser	1 301	318	1 081	366	194	187	22	218	3 687
Private and other renter(b)	1 977	423	2 088	413	210	177	21	258	5 570
Renter state/territory housing authority	1 309	323	1 511	894	390	133	44	366	4 970
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	475	50	1 253	811	223	6	3	2 743	5 567
Other	135	40	246	109	31	22	3	163	752
<b>Total(c)</b>	<b>5 246</b>	<b>1 170</b>	<b>6 232</b>	<b>2 615</b>	<b>1 064</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>3 775</b>	<b>20 734</b>

## OVERCROWDED HOUSEHOLDS AS A PROPORTION OF ALL INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS

Home owner/purchaser	6.7	6.0	7.9	7.2	6.1	4.8	3.1	11.6	6.9
Private and other renter(b)	11.3	10.1	13.0	9.8	9.3	9.2	4.5	17.5	11.6
Renter state/territory housing authority	11.5	12.3	21.5	20.5	14.5	10.7	9.6	24.9	15.9
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	18.0	15.6	33.0	41.7	36.9	8.7	8.8	60.8	39.9
Other	11.2	11.4	13.5	19.4	14.6	11.4	13.0	39.9	18.1
<b>Total(c)</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>13.6</b>

(a) Excludes dwellings for which the number of bedrooms was not stated.

(c) Includes tenure type not stated.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

(b) Includes landlord type not stated.

*Housing quality*

The most recent national survey to include measures of housing quality was the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). According to the survey, around one-third (35%) of Indigenous households were living in dwellings that had structural problems (e.g. rising damp, major cracks in floors or walls, major electrical/plumbing problems and roof defects). Just over half (55%) of Indigenous households renting mainstream or community housing reported that their dwellings had structural problems, while the corresponding proportions for renters of state/territory housing, private and other renters, and home owners were 42%, 33% and 22% respectively (ABS & AIHW 2005). In 2006, the ABS Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) also collected information about the state of repair of houses in discrete Indigenous communities, and their connection to essential services. Selected data from the survey are presented in tables 4.13 and 4.14.

The WAACHS developed a measure of housing quality based on the healthy living practices outlined in the National Framework for Indigenous Housing. The survey classified 16% of dwellings with Aboriginal children as being of 'poor housing quality'. Dwellings with poor housing quality were more likely to be rented, and to be located in areas of extreme isolation and areas of relative socioeconomic disadvantage. Households living in poor quality dwellings had poorer economic wellbeing, lower levels of family functioning, experienced more life stresses and were more likely to overuse alcohol (Silburn et al 2006).

## DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The 2006 CHINS provides more detailed information on the housing quality of dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities (ABS 2007). Discrete Indigenous communities are those inhabited predominantly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with housing or infrastructure that is managed on a community basis. These communities

*Housing quality  
continued*

DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES *continued*

have an estimated population of 92,960 people and are primarily located in remote and very remote areas of Australia (ABS 2007d).

*Dwelling condition*

The CHINS data on dwelling condition were collected for permanent dwellings and categorised according to the cost of repairs required to the dwelling. No data were collected on the 1,596 temporary or improvised dwellings in these communities which are likely to have been in the poorest condition. Some 4,039 Indigenous people (4% of the usual resident population) were living in temporary or improvised dwellings in 2006.

In discrete Indigenous communities across Australia, there were around 6,674 dwellings (31%) that required major repair or replacement (table 4.13). Dwellings in remote and very remote areas tended to be in the poorest condition, with 9% requiring replacement compared with 4% of dwellings in non-remote areas.

**4.13** CONDITION OF PERMANENT DWELLINGS IN DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, by remoteness—2006

<i>Dwelling condition</i>	<i>Non-remote</i>	<i>Remote</i>	<i>Very remote</i>	<i>Total</i>
NUMBER				
Minor or no repair	5 015	1 560	8 605	15 180
Major repair	1 718	634	2 759	5 111
Replacement	273	247	1 043	1 563
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 006</b>	<b>2 441</b>	<b>12 407</b>	<b>21 854</b>
PERCENT				
Minor or no repair	71.6	63.9	69.4	69.5
Major repair	24.5	26.0	22.2	23.4
Replacement	3.9	10.1	8.4	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS 2006 CHINS

*Connection to services*

The 2006 CHINS collected data on main source of water, sewerage and electricity at the community level for all discrete Indigenous communities. While the data show services available to communities and the number of permanent dwellings located in these communities, some of these dwellings may not have had access to a service that was available at the community level. In addition there are improvised dwellings in these communities for which data were not collected.

The main source of drinking water for the majority of permanent dwellings (8,078 or 53%) was bore water. There were another 4,685 dwellings (30%) in communities connected to a town supply and 1,682 (11%) in communities where the main source of water was a river or reservoir. In addition there were 201 permanent dwellings in communities where the main source of water was a well or spring and 10 permanent dwellings in communities that had no organised water supply (table 4.14).

*Housing quality continued*      *Connection to services continued*

In relation to sewerage, 5,725 permanent dwellings (33%) were in communities with some type of septic system. The next most common type of sewerage system was a town system (5,229 or 30% of dwellings) followed by community water-borne systems (5,162 or 30% of dwellings). There were also 51 permanent dwellings in communities with no organised sewerage supply (table 4.14).

The main type of electricity supply for the majority of permanent dwellings (9,161 or 53%) was community generators. There were also 6,323 dwellings (37%) in communities connected to the state grid and 447 (3%) in communities with domestic generators as their main source of electricity. In addition, there were 85 permanent dwellings in communities with no organised electricity supply (table 4.14).

**4.14** TYPES OF CONNECTION TO WATER, SEWERAGE AND ELECTRICITY IN DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES—2006

	All communities	Number of permanent dwellings(a)	Proportion of dwellings
	no.	no.	%
<b>Main source of drinking water</b>			
Connected to town supply	209	4 685	27.3
Bore water	694	8 078	47.0
Rain water tank	41	525	3.1
River or reservoir	57	1 682	9.8
Well or spring	39	201	1.2
Carted water	27	105	0.6
Other organised supply	3	33	0.2
No organised supply	9	10	0.1
<b>Type of sewerage system(b)</b>			
Connected to town system	121	5 229	30.4
Community water-borne system	108	5 162	30.1
Septic tanks with common effluent disposal	101	2 194	12.8
Septic tank with leach drain	593	3 531	20.6
Pit toilets	202	587	3.4
Pan toilets	1	3	—
Other organised sewerage system	9	6	—
No organised sewerage system	25	51	0.3
<b>Main type of electricity supply</b>			
State grid transmitted supply	274	6 323	36.8
Community generators	377	9 161	53.3
Domestic generators	178	447	2.6
Solar	105	304	1.8
Solar hybrid	107	395	2.3
Other organised electricity supply	8	214	1.2
No organised electricity supply	32	85	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 187</b>	<b>17 177</b>	<b>..</b>

.. not applicable

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Data are collected at the community level and some permanent dwellings may not be connected to the type of service reported at the community level.

(b) More than one type of sewerage system could be specified.

Source: ABS 2006 CHINS

*Housing quality continued*      *Connection to services continued*

Between the 2001 and 2006 CHINS<sup>1</sup> there was a decrease in the number and proportion of permanent dwellings not connected to an organised sewerage system (table 4.15). Over this period, the number of dwellings in communities not connected to an organised sewerage system fell from 153 to 51. There was also a small decrease in the number of dwellings in communities not connected to an organised water supply (from 13 to 10) and a small increase in the number of permanent dwellings in communities not connected to an organised supply of electricity (from 80 to 85).

**4.15** PERMANENT DWELLINGS IN DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, not connected to an organised supply of water, sewerage and/or electricity—2001 and 2006

	2001		2006	
	<i>Number of dwellings in communities with no organised supply</i>	<i>Total number of permanent dwellings</i>	<i>Number of dwellings in communities with no organised supply</i>	<i>Total number of permanent dwellings</i>
Water	13	16 966	10	17 177
Sewerage	153	16 966	51	17 177
Electricity	80	16 966	85	17 177

Source: ABS 2001 and 2006 CHINS

## HOMELESSNESS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be homeless than other Australians as they generally do not have the same access to affordable and secure housing. The Indigenous population is more mobile than the remainder of the population. Indigenous people often need to leave their home to access services or to observe cultural obligations. These factors combined with the absence of adequate temporary accommodation, can contribute to homelessness in this population (Keys Young 1998). Measuring the extent of homelessness, however, can be difficult and depends on which definition is used. This section examines how homelessness is defined and measured and then provides a range of data on Indigenous homeless people in the major program response to homelessness, the SAAP.

*Defining and measuring homelessness*

Homeless people may be simply defined as those with no housing or residing in temporary or emergency accommodation. The concept of homelessness is, however, subjective and depends on prevailing community standards. The Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) definition, adopted by the ABS, defines people as homeless if their accommodation falls below the minimum community standard of a small rental flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and some security of tenure.

The definition of homelessness can also be related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, values and beliefs (Keys Young 1998; Memmott et al 2004). Keys Young developed a number of definitions of Indigenous homelessness which emphasised the multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of Indigenous homelessness and incorporated the concept of spiritual homelessness. Underlying these definitions was the understanding that 'home' can have different meanings for Indigenous Australians (AIHW

*Defining and measuring homelessness continued*

2003a). These differing concepts of homelessness are not, however, captured in current data sources.

ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Chamberlain and MacKenzie defined the following three levels of homelessness:

- Primary homelessness—includes all people with no conventional accommodation such as people living on the streets, in the parks, in derelict buildings and other improvised dwellings.
- Secondary homelessness—includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. This includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own, as well as people accommodated in SAAP establishments.
- Tertiary homelessness—includes people who live in boarding houses on a medium-to-long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. These people are regarded as homeless because their accommodation situation is below community standard.

To provide a count of the number of Indigenous homeless people, Chamberlain and MacKenzie used Census data supplemented with data from the SAAP National Data Collection. The Chamberlain and MacKenzie estimate also included an adjustment for undercounting. Using this approach, there were an estimated 7,526 homeless Indigenous people at the time of the 2001 Census (a rate of 176 per 10,000) compared with 91,699 homeless non-Indigenous people (or 50 per 10,000 population) (ABS & AIHW 2005).

A similar count using data from the 2006 Census and SAAP data is not yet available. The following table therefore provides an estimate of the number and rate of Indigenous homeless people using Census data only, and with no adjustment for undercounting. This is the simple definition of homelessness and provides an estimate that is considerably lower than that determined by Chamberlain and MacKenzie using 2001 Census data.

According to the 2006 Census, there were 4,116 Indigenous people who were homeless on Census night (table 4.16). This included 2,283 Indigenous people with no conventional accommodation (i.e. in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough), 662 in hostels, refuges or night shelters, and 1,171 residing temporarily with others. The Northern Territory recorded the largest number of Indigenous homeless people (1,143), followed by Queensland (1,019).

**4.16** NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIGENOUS PERSONS, by state/territory—2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia
	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.
No conventional accommodation	250	55	469	402	152	24	4	927	2 283
Hostel, refuge, night shelter	206	38	198	76	39	9	14	82	662
Friends/relatives	315	70	352	171	67	43	19	134	1 171
<b>Total number</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>1 019</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1 143</b>	<b>4 116</b>

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

*Homeless people in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)*

There are two major national programs that provide assistance to homeless people:

- the SAAP, which provides temporary accommodation and support services, such as domestic violence counselling, employment assistance and living skills development to homeless people, and aims to help them achieve self-reliance and independence. It is jointly funded and managed by the Australian and state/territory governments with services delivered largely by non-government agencies with some local government participation.
- the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) which is funded under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement and provides emergency accommodation for homeless people. Funds are used for the purchase, lease and maintenance of dwellings.

The SAAP was established to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, defined by the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act 1994* (Section 4) as someone who has 'inadequate access to safe and secure housing' (FaCS 1999:19). In the context of homelessness, the Act refers to housing situations that may damage health, threaten safety, marginalise a person from both personal amenities and the economic and social support a home normally offers; where the affordability, safety, security or adequacy of housing is threatened; or where there is no security of tenure. A person is also considered homeless under the Act if they are living in SAAP or other emergency accommodation.

Those using SAAP services represent a subset of homeless people, no matter which definition of homelessness is used, as not all people experiencing homelessness will use SAAP services. The existence of the SAAP National Data Collection, however, means that there is a wide range of information available on SAAP clients. In addition to counting all people assisted by SAAP, there are also some data collected on those who seek accommodation but whose requests for accommodation could not be met.

There were 16,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over who received SAAP support in 2005–06 (table 4.17), making up 17% of all SAAP clients. In every state and territory, Indigenous clients of SAAP services were substantially over-represented relative to the proportion of Indigenous people in those jurisdictions.

Homeless people in the  
Supported Accommodation  
Assistance Program (SAAP)  
*continued*

#### 4.17 INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS (a)—2005–06

	INDIGENOUS CLIENTS (b)		INDIGENOUS PERSONS	
	Number	% of all SAAP clients	Number	% of the total Australian population
New South Wales	4 100	17.6	89 400	1.6
Victoria	1 800	5.4	19 400	0.5
Queensland	3 400	21.7	84 400	2.7
Western Australia	3 100	40.1	45 100	2.8
South Australia	1 800	18.8	17 600	1.4
Tasmania	400	9.8	11 500	3.0
Australian Capital Territory	200	9.9	2 700	1.0
Northern Territory	1 800	62.2	39 600	25.5
<b>Australia</b>	<b>16 200</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>309 800</b>	<b>1.9</b>

(a) Clients and Indigenous population aged 15 years and over. Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

(b) Number excluded due to errors and omissions (weighted): 5,131 clients. Figures have been weighted to adjust for agency non-participation and client non-consent. The number of clients within a state or territory relates to clients who have received assistance from a SAAP agency in that state or territory. Since a client may have support periods in more than one state or territory, state and territory figures do not sum to the national figure.

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

#### CLIENT PROFILE

The demographic profile of Indigenous and non-Indigenous SAAP clients is shown in table 4.18. Consistent with differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous clients were more likely to be younger than non-Indigenous clients. For example, 68% of Indigenous clients were aged less than 35 years compared with 60% of non-Indigenous clients.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Indigenous SAAP clients were female compared with only 57% of non-Indigenous SAAP clients. Among Indigenous clients aged 25–29 years, over 80% were female. In two jurisdictions, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, there were far more Indigenous female clients than other Australian-born female clients—76% compared with 21% in the Northern Territory and 53% compared with 34% in Western Australia (AIHW 2007g:32). The high rate of Indigenous females in SAAP reflects the support which this program provides for those who have experienced domestic violence and those at risk of homelessness, both of which are areas of particular concern for Indigenous women (see tables 4.18 and 4.20, and Chapter 6).

Homeless people in the  
Supported Accommodation  
Assistance Program (SAAP)  
*continued*

CLIENT PROFILE *continued*

**4.18** SAAP CLIENTS, by Indigenous status, age and sex—2005–06

Age group (years)	INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS			NON-INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15–19	21.4	18.9	19.6	17.4	20.1	18.9
20–24	16.0	19.2	18.3	13.5	15.9	14.9
25–29	10.3	16.0	14.4	12.2	13.4	12.9
30–34	13.3	16.8	15.8	13.0	14.2	13.7
35–39	13.6	12.2	12.6	12.3	13.0	12.7
40–44	9.9	7.9	8.4	10.3	9.1	9.6
45–49	6.9	4.2	4.9	7.7	6.0	6.7
50–54	4.5	2.3	2.9	5.1	3.2	4.0
55–59	2.0	1.3	1.5	3.5	2.1	2.7
60–64	1.3	0.7	0.9	2.2	1.2	1.6
65 and over	0.9	0.5	0.6	2.8	1.9	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>72.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	no.	<b>4 400</b>	<b>11 800</b>	<b>16 200</b>	<b>34 200</b>	<b>45 900</b>
				<b>80 100</b>		

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

#### CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING SAAP CLIENTS

For the purposes of the National Data Collection, children who attend a SAAP service with their parent or guardian are not counted as clients in their own right, but are counted as accompanying children. In 2005–06, the first year in which the Indigenous status of accompanying children was collected, 27% of all accompanying children in SAAP were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (AIHW 2007g).

Reflecting the over-representation of Indigenous people among SAAP clients and the high proportion of clients who have experienced domestic violence, Indigenous children were far more likely than non-Indigenous children to have accompanied a parent or guardian to a SAAP agency (table 4.19). Indigenous children attended a SAAP agency at a rate of 537 per 10,000, compared with 69 per 10,000 for non-Indigenous children. In the 0–4 years age group, there were 906 Indigenous children in SAAP for every 10,000 Indigenous children in this age group. That is, 1 in every 11 Indigenous children aged 0–4 years attended a SAAP agency in 2005–06. The corresponding rates for non-Indigenous children were 113 per 10,000, or 1 in every 88 children.

Homeless people in the  
Supported Accommodation  
Assistance Program (SAAP)  
*continued*

CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING SAAP CLIENTS *continued*

**4.19** CHILDREN ACCOMPANYING SAAP CLIENTS, by Indigenous status and age—2005–06

Age group (years)	INDIGENOUS			NON-INDIGENOUS			TOTAL		
	no.	%	rate(a)	no.	%	rate(a)	no.	%	rate(a)
0–4	5 500	47.3	906	13 900	43.1	113	19 400	44.2	150
5–9	3 500	29.8	572	9 300	28.9	73	12 700	29.1	95
10–14	2 200	18.6	349	6 900	21.4	51	9 000	20.6	65
15–17	500	4.3	150	2 100	6.6	27	2 600	6.0	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>32 200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>43 800</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>90</b>

(a) Rate per 10,000 population. The rate is estimated by comparing the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous SAAP accompanying children with the estimated resident population in each of these groups and age groups.

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

#### REASONS FOR SEEKING SUPPORT

In 2005–06, the most common reason cited by Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients for seeking accommodation assistance was domestic violence (in 31% and 21% of support periods respectively) (table 4.20). A further one in five Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients sought accommodation assistance as a result of relationship or family breakdown, which also includes time out from family or other situations, and interpersonal conflict (in 21% and 20% of support periods, respectively).

Indigenous clients were less likely to cite accommodation difficulties as a reason for seeking assistance than non-Indigenous clients (in 10% and 17% of support periods, respectively), where accommodation difficulties include being evicted or asked to leave, or the ending of previous accommodation or emergency accommodation. However, Indigenous clients were twice as likely to cite overcrowding as a reason for seeking assistance, in 4% of support periods compared with 2% for non-Indigenous clients.

Indigenous clients were less likely to report financial difficulties (budgeting, rent too high, or other financial difficulty) as a reason for seeking assistance (in 8% of support periods, compared with 14% for non-Indigenous clients), while proportions for the other main reasons given for seeking assistance did not differ greatly from non-Indigenous clients. A slightly higher proportion of Indigenous clients, compared with non-Indigenous clients, were likely to be seeking assistance for being itinerant or a recent arrival to the area with no means of support.

Homeless people in the  
Supported Accommodation  
Assistance Program (SAAP)  
*continued*

REASONS FOR SEEKING SUPPORT *continued*

**4.20** SAAP SUPPORT PERIODS, main reason for seeking SAAP  
assistance by Indigenous status of clients—2005–06

Main reason for seeking assistance	INDIGENOUS	NON-INDIGENOUS	TOTAL	
	%	%	%	no.
Accommodation difficulties(a)	10.4	16.8	15.7	24 400
Relationship/family breakdown(b)	21.3	20.4	20.6	31 900
Sexual/physical/emotional abuse	2.9	2.3	2.4	3 700
Domestic violence	31.2	21.0	22.6	35 100
Financial difficulty(c)	7.9	14.2	13.1	20 300
Overcrowding	4.0	1.9	2.2	3 400
Gambling	0.1	0.4	0.3	500
Drug/alcohol/substance abuse	5.5	5.7	5.7	8 800
Recently left institution	1.3	1.4	1.4	2 100
Psychiatric illness	0.3	1.1	1.0	1 600
Recent arrival in area with no means of support	4.6	4.1	4.2	6 500
Itinerant	3.2	2.5	2.6	4 100
Mental health issues	0.8	1.9	1.7	2 700
Other health issues	1.3	1.1	1.1	1 700
Gay/lesbian/transgender issues	—	0.1	0.1	100
Other	5.0	5.1	5.1	7 900
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Total (no.)</b>	<b>25 400</b>	<b>129 600</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>155 000</b>

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Eviction/asked to leave; Previous accommodation ended; Emergency accommodation ended.

(b) Time out from family/ other situation; Interpersonal conflict.

(c) Budgeting; Rent too high; Other financial difficulty.

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

SAAP clients before and  
after support

SAAP aims to assist clients in re-establishing their capacity to live independently once they cease to receive assistance from the Program. To evaluate the Program's success in achieving this objective, information is collected about clients' tenure and income source both before and after their use of SAAP services. Closed support periods, that is, support periods that finished on or before 30 June 2006, are used as the basis for this analysis. The data presented in tables 4.21 and 4.22 relate only to support periods for which both before and after information on clients' tenure and income source were provided. Instances where only before or after information were provided, or neither, have been excluded so caution should be exercised in assessing the data.

Among Indigenous clients, the major type of tenure both before and after SAAP support was public housing, which increased from 23% before assistance to 25% after assistance (table 4.21). There was also a small increase in the proportion of clients in private rental accommodation, from 14% to 16%. For non-Indigenous clients, private rental was the major type of tenure both before support (28%) and after support (29%).

SAAP clients before and  
after support continued

**4.21** SAAP SUPPORT PERIODS, type of tenure before and after SAAP support by Indigenous status of clients—2005–06

Type of accommodation		INDIGENOUS		NON-INDIGENOUS	
		Before support	After support	Before support	After support
SAAP/CAP crisis short term accommodation	%	7.7	8.2	8.2	8.8
SAAP/CAP medium long term accommodation	%	2.1	3.7	2.7	5.2
Other SAAP/CAP funded accommodation	%	2.2	2.6	2.1	2.7
Institutional setting	%	2.3	2.1	3.3	2.7
Improvised dwelling/sleeping rough	%	7.0	4.1	8.7	4.9
Other (no tenure)	%	1.3	0.8	1.6	1.1
Purchasing/purchased own home	%	0.9	0.7	5.3	3.9
Private rental	%	14.3	15.5	28.0	29.0
Public housing rental	%	23.3	25.4	10.7	14.1
Community housing rental	%	14.8	15.3	2.4	3.8
Rent-free accommodation	%	7.7	6.8	8.9	6.6
Boarding	%	16.4	14.8	18.0	17.2
<b>Total</b>	%	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	%	<b>15.9</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>84.1</b>
	no.	<b>15 800</b>	<b>15 800</b>	<b>83 500</b>	<b>83 500</b>

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

There were only small changes in the proportions of Indigenous clients with the various sources of income before and after support. The proportion of Indigenous clients on a pension or benefit, for example, increased from 89% before support to 91% after support, and the proportion with no income decreased from 6% to 5% (table 4.22). Among non-Indigenous clients, the proportion on a government pension or benefit increased from 85% before support to 87% after support, and the proportion with no income decreased from 7% to 5%.

**4.22** SAAP SUPPORT PERIODS, primary income source immediately before and after SAAP support by Indigenous status—2005–06

Source of income		INDIGENOUS		NON-INDIGENOUS	
		Before support	After support	Before support	After support
No income	%	6.4	4.6	7.2	4.8
No income, awaiting pension/benefit	%	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.8
Government pension/benefit	%	89.3	90.5	84.6	86.5
Other	%	3.7	4.1	7.1	7.8
<b>Total</b>	%	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	%	<b>16.4</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>83.6</b>
	no.	<b>20 400</b>	<b>20 400</b>	<b>107 500</b>	<b>107 500</b>

Source: AIHW SAAP Client Collection

*Unmet need for SAAP*

The Demand for Accommodation Collection attempts to measure unmet need for SAAP accommodation in two separate weeks during the year. This collection counts those who were seeking accommodation but whose request for accommodation could not be met. The identification of Indigenous clients in this data collection is less complete than in the main SAAP data collection, with Indigenous status unknown for around 31% of people making valid unmet requests for accommodation (AIHW 2007e).

In addition to those clients who were provided with assistance, in December 2005 and May 2006 there were an average 78 Indigenous people per day with valid unmet requests for assistance. There were more Indigenous females (44) with unmet requests for assistance than Indigenous males (34) (table 4.23). While these data are an indicator of unmet need for accommodation assistance, it is difficult to extrapolate these figures to annual figures because of seasonal factors and because people can have several unmet requests for assistance in the same year.

**4.23** VALID UNMET REQUESTS FOR SAAP ACCOMMODATION (a)—  
7–13 December 2005 and 17–23 May 2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Australia
Males	4.6	1.7	11.9	9.9	3.1	0.3	0.6	2.3	34.4
Females	6.2	2.4	11.1	15.0	3.6	0.2	0.6	4.5	43.8
<b>Persons</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>78.1</b>

(a) Estimated average number per day of potential Indigenous clients with accompanying children.

Source: AIHW SAAP Demand for Accommodation Collection

## SUMMARY

The tenure type of Indigenous households differs from that of other Australian households. Indigenous households are much less likely to be home owner households (with or without a mortgage) and much more likely to receive some form of housing assistance, such as Indigenous/mainstream community housing or public housing. There was, however, an increase in the proportion of Indigenous households that were home owners, from 31% in 2001 to 34% in 2006.

The housing tenure of Indigenous households varies by remoteness reflecting the availability of different tenure options for Indigenous people according to location. Home ownership rates were highest in inner regional areas (38%) and lowest in very remote areas (8%), while the proportion of Indigenous households renting mainstream or community housing was highest in very remote areas (55%).

Some Indigenous households, especially those in remote areas, live in conditions that do not support good health. In 2006, 14% of Indigenous households were overcrowded, which puts stress on basic facilities and contributes to the spread of infectious diseases. The highest rate of overcrowding was among renters of Indigenous or mainstream community housing in the Northern Territory, where 61% of Indigenous households were overcrowded. Across Australia, however, overcrowding rates fell from 16% of Indigenous households in 2001 to 14% in 2006.

There are still some dwellings in Indigenous communities not connected to essential services. In 2006 there were 51 dwellings in communities not connected to an organised sewerage system, 85 not connected to an organised electricity supply and 10 not

SUMMARY *continued*

connected to an organised water supply. The number of dwellings in communities not connected to an organised sewerage system fell from 153 in 2001 to 51 in 2006.

The rate of Indigenous homelessness was three times the rate for other Australians. Indigenous clients made up 17% of all SAAP clients and nearly three-quarters of Indigenous clients using SAAP were women. The most common reasons for Indigenous clients seeking support through SAAP were domestic violence and family breakdown. Twenty-seven per cent of all children attending a SAAP service with their parent or guardian were Indigenous. Among Indigenous children aged less than four years, one in eleven attended a SAAP service in 2005–06.