



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

December quarter 2011



Homelessness:

clearer picture,

better future



Australian Government

**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

*Authoritative information and statistics
to promote better health and wellbeing*

Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

December quarter 2011

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

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The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is a major national agency which provides reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. The Institute's mission is *authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing.*

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Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abbreviations.....	v
Summary	vii
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Things you should know about the data collection	1
1.2 Things you should know about this report.....	4
2 Data overview: highlights	7
2.1 Who was supported?	7
2.2 What services were provided?	10
2.3 How did clients' circumstances change with support?	11
3 Data spotlights	13
3.1 Young people presenting alone	13
3.2 Older people	16
3.3 Clients who received accommodation	20
3.4 Clients at risk of homelessness.....	23
4 Data overview: tables	28
Glossary.....	45
References	49
Appendix A.....	50
Non-response adjustment (weighting) methodology	50
Appendix B	54
Data quality statement (Specialist Homelessness Services Collection – December quarter 2011).....	54
List of tables	61
List of figures	63
List of boxes.....	64

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CMS	Client Management System
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
H2H	Homeless 2 Home (client and case management system)
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
No.	number
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SAAP NDC	SAAP National Data Collection
SHIP	Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (client and case management system)
SHOR	Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SLK	statistical linkage key
Tas	Tasmania
THM	Transitional Housing Management
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Symbols

..	not applicable
n.a.	not available

Summary

This report presents results of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) for the December quarter 2011. The SHSC describes the clients who receive assistance from specialist homelessness agencies and the services they receive.

Clients

In this quarter, an estimated 98,742 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies—59% were female and 41% male. Eighteen per cent of clients were aged under 10; and just under half of all clients (48%) were aged under 25.

When adjusted for the resident population (as at 30 June 2011) the national rate of people accessing homelessness services in the December quarter was 44 per 10,000 people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 21% of clients.

Most clients presented to specialist homelessness agencies alone (69%).

Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason for seeking assistance (25%). This was also the most common main reason reported by females (34% of female clients), but for male clients the most common main reasons were financial difficulties and housing crisis (both reported by 18% of male clients).

In 31% of support periods, clients had lived in short-term or emergency accommodation in the month before presenting for support, and 19% had 'slept rough'.

Accommodation and other support services

Accommodation was provided to clients in 35% of all support periods. Short-term or emergency accommodation was provided most often (in 60% of support periods where accommodation was provided). Where a need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified, it was met directly by the agency in 69% of support periods.

A total of 1,707,838 accommodation nights were provided in the reporting period to clients of specialist homelessness agencies. On average, 18,574 clients were accommodated on any given night, and the average length of accommodation provided by agencies was 66 nights.

Clients most often had needs for advice or information (in 68% of support periods). This service was provided directly by agencies in 98% of support periods where this was identified as a need.

Outcomes

There were slightly fewer clients living without shelter, or in inadequate dwellings, at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 14% at the beginning of these support periods).

There was a small decrease in the proportion of clients with no housing tenure at the end of support (21% of closed support periods, compared with 25% at the beginning of these support periods).

There was a slight decrease in clients who had no income after support (6% of closed support periods, compared with 7% at the beginning of these support periods).

1 Introduction

This report presents the results of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) for the collection months October to December 2011 (the December quarter 2011). The SHSC describes all clients who receive services from specialist homelessness agencies and the assistance they receive.

The SHSC, which began on 1 July 2011, is designed to support the information needs of relevant national agreements (the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness) (COAG 2009, 2012), to enable monitoring of assistance provided to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and to contribute to the evidence base that shapes policy and service development relating to homelessness.

1.1 Things you should know about the data collection

How the collection is conducted

SHSC data are collected by specialist homelessness agencies for all clients, and reported each month to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Data are collected about the characteristics and circumstances of a client when they first present at an agency, and further data—on the assistance the client receives and the client's circumstances at the end of the month—are collected at the end of every month in which the client receives services, and at the end of the support period.

Data are collected via a number of client management systems and submitted to the AIHW via the Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR) web portal. Over 80% of homelessness agencies that participate in the collection use the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP). This client management system (CMS) is provided by the AIHW on behalf of all states and territories except South Australia where all agencies use the Homelessness 2 Home (H2H) system. A number of agencies in other jurisdictions use different information systems to collect and report their data.

Information on the development of the SHSC, definitions and concepts, and collection materials and processes can be found on the AIHW website, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/shsc/>. Information on key definitions, concepts and classifications can be found in the Glossary to this report or in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2011).

Participation of agencies

Specialist homelessness agencies that are funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) are in scope for the collection. Those agencies that are expected to participate in the SHSC are identified by state and territory departments responsible for the delivery of services. Some agencies, such as some high-volume agencies that deliver basic services only, are not required to participate.

Ninety-two per cent of agencies (1,357 agencies) that were expected to participate returned support period data for at least one month in the December quarter 2011. This high level of participation is important to ensure that the data collected accurately reflect the support provided to clients.

Compared with the September quarter 2011, the number of agencies participating in the SHSC has increased (from 1,339). The overall rate of participation has remained similar (93% for the September quarter, 92% for the December quarter). The increase in the number of agencies covered by the data collection has occurred as jurisdictions identified more agencies that were expected to participate.

Some of these agencies were active in the September quarter and therefore should have been accounted for when weighting estimates of total clients. As a result the true number of clients in September quarter will have been underestimated. This effect will be eliminated when the annual client numbers for 2011–12 are estimated.

This difference in participating agencies affects the comparability of data for the two quarters. In particular, caution should be made in comparing overall numbers of clients between the two quarters (including estimated number of clients), because the increase in client number reported in the December quarter 2011 may not reflect an increase in the estimated number of clients from the September quarter 2011. See Appendix A for more details on estimating figures to adjust for non-response.

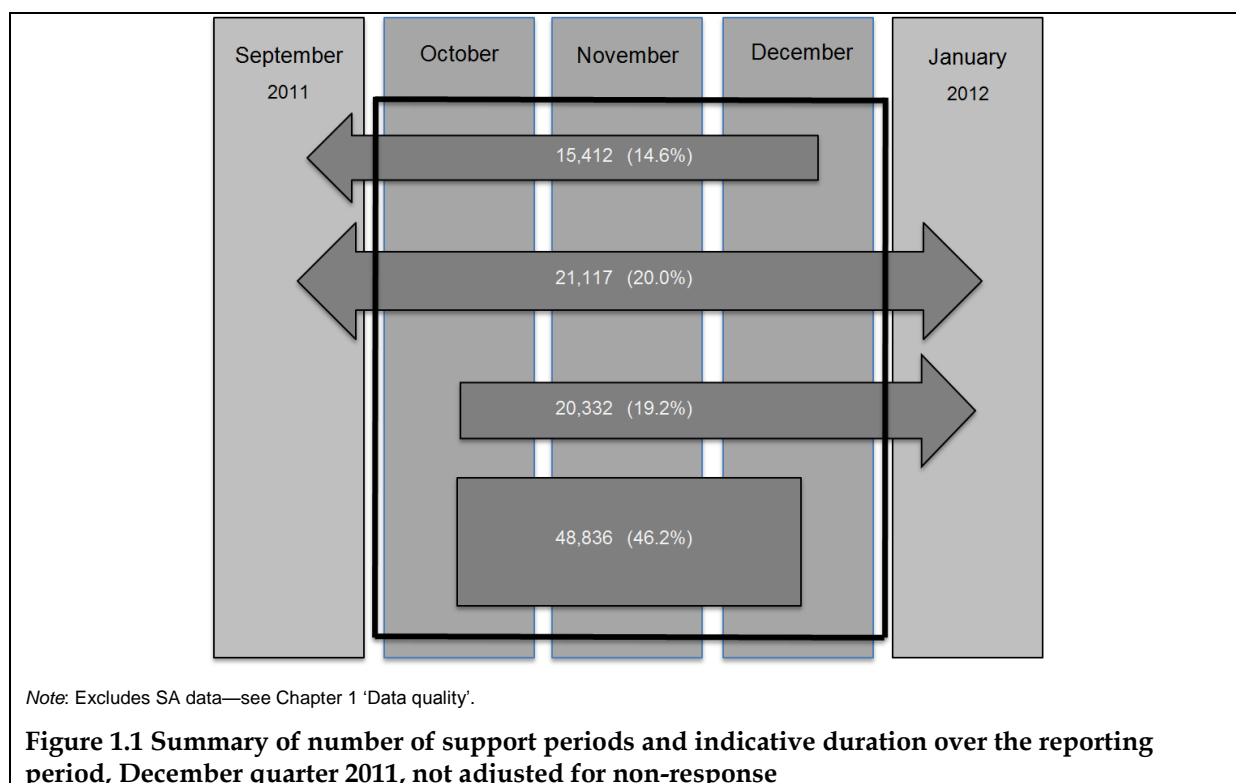
Reporting period

This report includes data on all clients who were assisted in the October, November and December collection months that were submitted and validated by 2 May 2012. This includes clients whose support period started before 1 October (the beginning of the quarter), and those who were still ongoing clients at 31 December; nearly half (46%) of all support periods began and ended in the December quarter (Figure 1.1).

Changes in the distribution of support periods over the reporting period (such as presented in Figure 1.1) – when compared to equivalent figures presented for the September quarter 2011 (AIHW 2012) – will have been affected by:

- the non-availability of SA data in the figure above (see explanation below), and
- a range of issues that affected the reporting of support periods in the September quarter 2011 which were related to the commencement of the collection at the beginning of that quarter (see AIHW 2012, Chapter 1 for an outline of these issues).

Additionally, changes in the number of clients and support periods reported in the December quarter 2011 (when compared to the September quarter 2011) will have been affected by the increased number of agencies in coverage for the December quarter 2011 (see 'Participation of agencies' above).



Data quality

Information on completeness, response rates and other aspects of data quality is provided in the data quality statement for the collection (Appendix B).

As a relatively new data collection, some level of missing data is expected, and is evident in the data received for the December quarter 2011. Data completeness is expected to improve as agencies become more familiar with the new collection and a longer time series of data becomes available.

A number of data items that had very high rates of missing or invalid data are not reported in this publication (for example, results from questions on mental health status). Where data items with high rates of missing data are reported, the rate of missing data is noted. Further analysis is continuing on how best to present data items that have not yet been published.

In addition, some South Australian data have not yet been included in the collection. The Homeless 2 Home (H2H) case management and data collection system used by all South Australian agencies was developed by South Australia to support the State's consolidated and integrated service response model. Due to timing differences between the systems-development life cycle of the H2H and SHIP systems, certain data items could not be implemented in H2H before collection for the SHSC commenced. Specifically, SA data on clients' needs, where associated services have not been provided, are not included, and SA data are excluded from analyses based on closed support periods because of differences in the way that the H2H system identifies open and closed support periods. South Australia has been working on a major release for H2H which will address this issue and the data will be included in future SHSC reports as it becomes available.

Comparisons with the SAAP National Data Collection

The SHSC replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection (SAAP NDC), which collected data from homelessness agencies from 1996 to June 2011.

The major differences between these collections (in scope, concepts and content) are outlined in the publication *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection: first results (September quarter 2011)* (see Appendix A, AIHW 2012). **As a result of these differences, caution should be exercised in directly comparing SHSC and SAAP NDC data.**

1.2 Things you should know about this report

Client, support period, and presenting unit data

Data presented in this report are mainly based on 'clients' or 'support periods', with some data based on 'client groups' (or 'presenting units' – which identify clients who present together to a specialist homelessness agency, including clients who present alone – and receive a service).

Client-level data

An individual client may have had more than one support period in the quarter – either from the same agency or from a different agency. Data from individual clients who received services from different agencies and/or at different times are matched based on a statistical linkage key (SLK). All analyses based on client data include only those clients for whom full and valid SLK data (i.e. date of birth, sex, and alpha code based on selected letters of name) are available.

Clients who have more than one support period may present with different characteristics in these different support periods. This has implications for the presentation and interpretation of client-level data. In particular:

- Demographic data are derived based on clients' characteristics as defined at the start of their first support period during the quarter.
- Data about client groups, reasons for seeking assistance (including main reason), main source of income, labour force status, dwelling type, tenure type, conditions of occupancy and client case management plans are also presented at the client level; however, all responses recorded for clients (where these are not the same across support periods) are reported.

This means that if a client has the same information recorded against a specific data item in different support periods, the client will be counted only once in the data table.

However, if a client has more than one support period and has different characteristics recorded in the support periods, the client will be counted more than once. For example, a client who presents more than once in the quarter, and identifies different main reasons for seeking assistance at the beginning of each support period, will appear against each of the relevant 'main reason' categories.

In these cases, the number of clients identified in tables can vary because a number of different characteristics can be reported for the same client. Also, the percentages will add up to more than 100%, because percentages are calculated using the total number of unique clients as the denominator. In these situations, percentages should be read as meaning that $x\%$ of clients had this characteristic at least once during the quarter.

Support period data

Data on client outcomes and some data on services and assistance are presented at the support period level:

- As a client may have more than one support period during the quarter, these data do not identify the number of *clients* with these characteristics.
- These data are generally based on closed support periods only, as they measure the outcome after receiving support.

Length of support period and accommodation data

Accommodation length for a client is obtained by totalling the individual accommodation period lengths that occurred in any support that was active during the December quarter 2011. Data on length of support period/accommodation includes support (or accommodation) provided in the September quarter where the support period (or accommodation) was ongoing from the previous quarter on 1 October 2011. Due to incomplete data for support periods that started before 1 July (see AIHW (2012) for more information), length of accommodation data does not take into account any accommodation provided before 1 July.

Reporting of percentages (and missing data)

All percentages reported in this publication are based on 'valid' responses to questions in the SHSC. That is, 'don't know', 'not applicable' and missing responses to a data item are not included in these calculations. Where the sum of these 'invalid' responses accounts for 15% or more of all responses for a data item this percentage is also reported. The total number of 'invalid' responses is provided as a footnote in the data overview tables in Chapter 4.

Adjusting for non-response (weighting)

Adjustments for non-response (or 'weighting') are commonly applied to data sets when there is a high rate of missing data.

A weighting method to adjust for missing support period information is being developed. This method relies on a longer time series of data and will produce more reliable estimates for the annual report. However, to give an estimate of the full size of the sector in the December quarter 2011, a simplified version of the method has been used for this report. Only the basic client and support period data for the overall population and for the spotlighted populations (chapters 2 and 3) have been adjusted for non-response, and some data on accommodation services provided (Chapter 2). All other figures given are raw (unweighted), unless otherwise noted. For further information on the weighting method used in this report, see Appendix A.

State and territory data (supplementary tables)

Where data quality and confidentiality provisions allow, state and territory tables equivalent to those in Chapter 3 will be made available on the AIHW's website <www.aihw.gov.au>.

Client spotlights

This report presents, firstly, an overview of the data collated from the December quarter 2011, based on all clients and their support periods (Chapter 2). The source data tables are provided in Chapter 4.

The report also spotlights findings in relation to four selected groups of special interest, namely:

- young people presenting alone
- older people
- people at risk of homelessness
- clients who received accommodation (Chapter 3).

These groups are of particular interest to policy-makers, homelessness agencies and the wider community. Although these client groups are treated as discrete population groups in these chapters, there is overlap between the groups, as outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Number of clients in special groups of interest, and overlap with other groups, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

	Young people presenting alone	Older people	People at risk of homelessness	Clients who received accommodation	None of these
Young people presenting alone	16,555	—	5,363	6,490	..
Older people		4,920	2,375	1,288	..
People at risk of homelessness			31,607	7,558	..
Clients who received accommodation				32,734	..
None of these					21,755

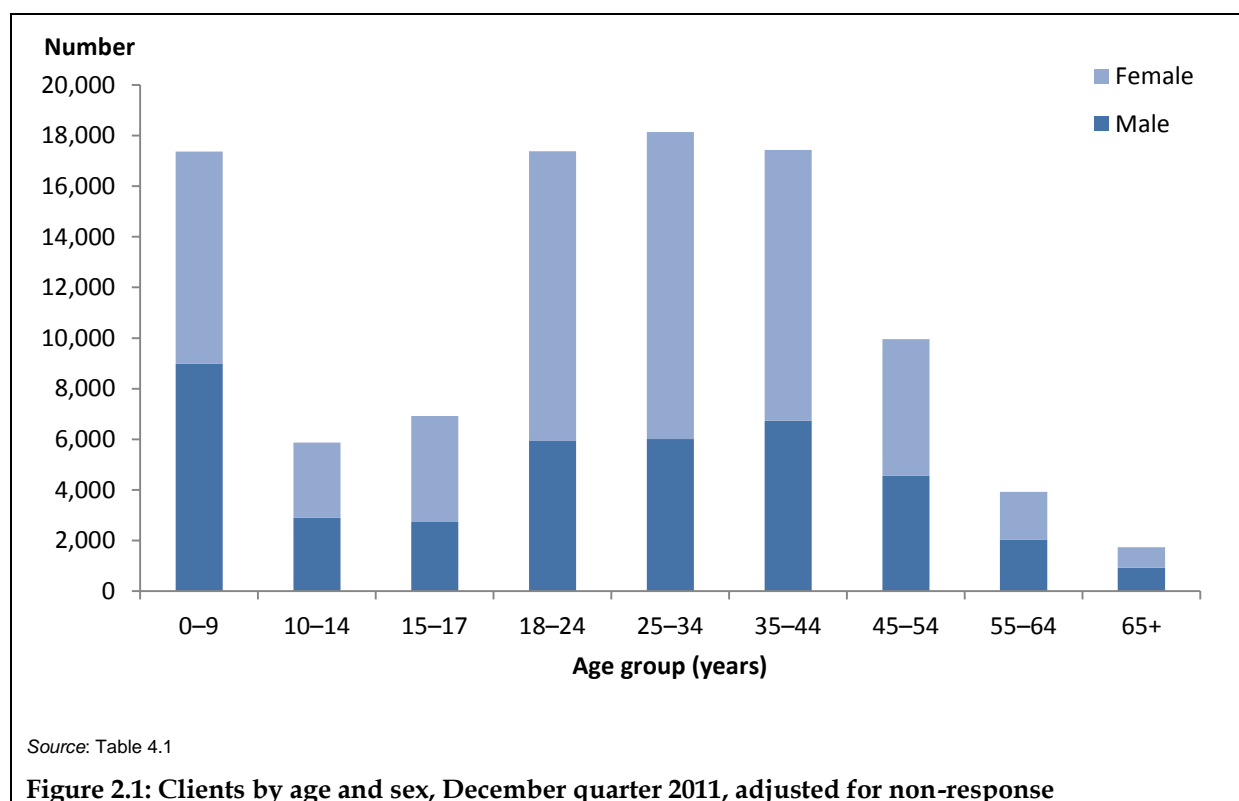
2 Data overview: highlights

In the December quarter 2011, an estimated 98,742 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 122,062 support periods (86,212 clients in 115,141 support periods using unweighted data – see Appendix A for more information about adjustments made for non-response). This is an apparent increase on the number of clients assisted compared with the September quarter 2011. However the increase is at least partially due to the increase in the number of agencies covered by the data collection in the December quarter 2011 compared to the September quarter 2011 (see ‘Chapter 1 – Participation of agencies’ for more details).

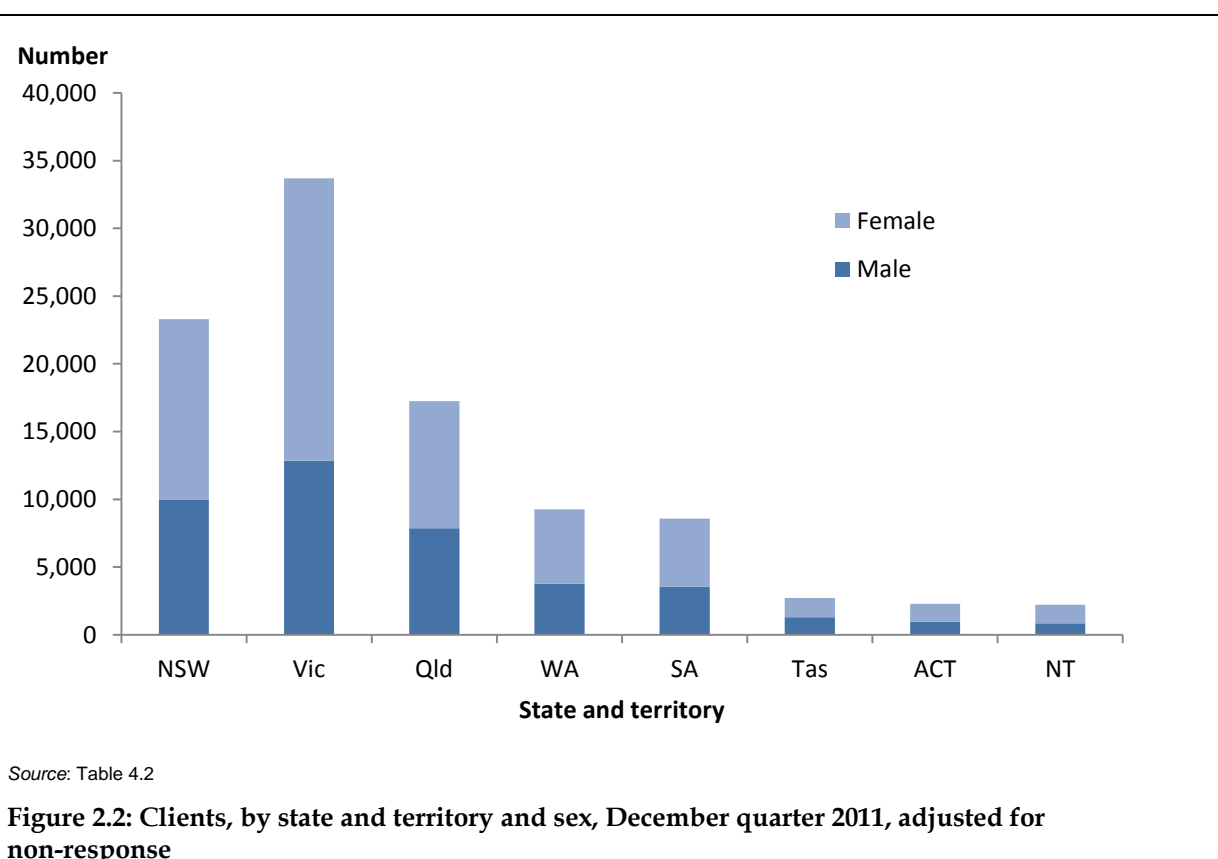
The following section summarises the findings in relation to all clients assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in the December quarter 2011 – including demographic characteristics, services needed and provided, and outcomes following support. Some information reported does not include South Australian data. Specifically, information on length of support, services and assistance, client outcomes and some accommodation information does not include SA data (primarily reported in Chapter 4).

2.1 Who was supported?

- 59% of clients were female and 41% were male.
- 18% of clients were aged under 10, and just under half (48%) of all clients were aged under 25 (Figure 2.1).



- Victoria recorded the highest number of clients (33,701 clients, 34% of all clients), followed by NSW (23,306 clients, 24% of all clients (Figure 2.2). The NT recorded the lowest number of clients (2,217 clients, 2%).
 - However, when adjusted for resident populations in each state and territory (as at 30 June 2011), the NT had the highest rate of people accessing specialist homelessness agencies in the quarter (96 per 10,000 people) and NSW had the lowest rate of people accessing specialist homelessness agencies (32 per 10,000 people).
 - The national rate of people accessing homelessness services in the December quarter was 44 per 10,000 people.



Indigenous status

- Around one-fifth (21%) of clients who provided information on their Indigenous status identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Table 4.3).

Country of birth

- Most clients were born in Australia (86%).
- For overseas-born clients, the most common countries of birth were: New Zealand (13% of those born overseas), Sudan (10%) and the United Kingdom (7%) (Table 4.4).
 - Of those clients who were born overseas, 17% arrived in Australia within the last two years (in 2010–2011), and 39% had lived in Australia for 10 years or more (Table 4.5).

Presenting units

- Most clients (69%) presented alone to specialist homelessness agencies in the December quarter 2011 (Table 4.6) 31% presented in groups.
- The average size of client groups was 3.7 people.
- When data are re-analysed based on 'presenting units' (which includes both 'client groups' and people presenting alone), the proportion of people/groups who attended alone increases to 88% (Table 4.7).

Main reason for seeking assistance

- Domestic and family violence was the most common main reason reported by clients for seeking assistance (25%), followed by financial difficulties (16%) and housing crisis (15%) (Table 4.8).
 - Domestic and family violence was also the most common reason for seeking assistance recorded for females (recorded for 34% of female clients, compared with 11% of male clients).
 - For males, the most common reasons for seeking assistance were financial difficulties and housing crisis (both recorded as the main reasons for 18% of males, and 15% and 14%, respectively, for female clients).
 - A main reason for seeking assistance was not provided for 19% of clients.
- When looking at *all* reasons given by clients (and not just the *main* reason) for seeking assistance, clients reported financial difficulties most often (38%), followed by domestic and family violence (31%), housing crisis (25%), and relationship/family breakdown (23%).

Main source of income

- Most clients who recorded information on their main source of income were receiving either Parenting Payment or Newstart Allowance (24% each) (Table 4.9). 21% were receiving a Centrelink disability support pension as their main source of income.
 - Main source of income was not reported for 31% of clients.

Labour force status

- Just over half (55%) of clients aged 15 and over whose labour force status was recorded were not in the labour force at the beginning of the support period (Table 4.10). Most other clients were unemployed (40%). Of those employed 11% per cent were in full- or part-time employment.
 - Information on labour force status was not reported for 24% of all clients aged 15 or over.

Housing situation before support

- Most clients reported living in a house, townhouse, or flat when presenting to the specialist homelessness service (74%).
 - 5% of clients had no dwelling at the time they presented to the specialist homelessness agency (Table 4.11).
- 26% of clients had no housing tenure (see Glossary) when presenting to the specialist homelessness agency, and 22% were renting in private housing (Table 4.12).
- 38% of clients who provided information about their conditions of occupancy had leased tenure and were nominated on the lease (Table 4.13).

- In 19% of support periods where clients provided information on whether they had been homeless in the last month, clients reported having slept rough in the month before presenting to the agency, and 31% reported having stayed in short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options (Table 4.14).
 - Nearly two-thirds of clients (62%) who had relevant information recorded had not been homeless in the month before presenting to the agency.
 - In 33% of support periods, no information was provided on previous homelessness status.

2.2 What services were provided?

The following information is for all clients of specialist homelessness agencies, and includes information on accommodation and other services provided to clients and some information about the length of support periods. Most of this information does not include SA data because of differences in the way that the H2H system used in South Australia currently collects data relevant to these analyses. However, analysis based on accommodation provided within the December quarter 2011 (that is, data drawn from Tables 4.19 and 4.20) does include SA data.

Accommodation

- The need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified for clients in 30% of all support periods, for medium-term/transitional housing in 23% of support periods and for long-term housing in 24% of support periods.
 - Where a need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified, it was met directly by the agency in 69% of support periods; in 53% for medium-term or transitional housing, and in 9% for long-term housing (Table 4.17).
 - For all clients who needed accommodation, clients with long-term housing needs were most likely to be referred to another service (45%).
 - In nearly half (48%) of support periods where long-term accommodation was needed, clients were neither provided this service, nor referred to another service.
- Accommodation was provided in 35% of all support periods. More information about clients who received accommodation is provided in Section 3.3 of this report.
 - Based on all support periods where accommodation was provided, 60% of clients were accommodated in short term or emergency accommodation, 34% in medium-term/transitional accommodation and 7% in long-term accommodation (Table 4.18).
- A total of 1,707,838 accommodation nights were provided in the December quarter 2011 to clients of specialist homelessness agencies (Table 4.19).
 - New South Wales recorded the highest number of accommodation nights provided for the December quarter 2011 (505,625 nights) followed by Victoria (470,300 nights).
- On average, 18,574 clients were accommodated on any given night and 36% of support periods per day (on average), included the provision of accommodation (Table 4.20).
- The average length of accommodation provided by specialist homelessness agencies was 66 nights.
 - ACT recorded the highest average length of accommodation (110 nights), followed by Victoria (77 nights) (Table 4.20).

- In 42% of closed support periods where accommodation was provided, the client was accommodated for between 1 and 7 days, and in a further 28% of these support periods clients were accommodated for more than 6 weeks (Table 4.18).
 - However, when looking at support periods that were ongoing at the end of the quarter where accommodation was provided (which represent 18% of all support periods in the December quarter 2011), 69% of clients had been provided with accommodation for longer than 6 weeks, and 8% were accommodated for between 1 and 7 days.

Other services

- Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction was identified in 20% of support periods and provided by the agency in 83% of these support periods (Table 4.17).
- Most clients were identified as having a need for advice or information (69% of support periods), and this service was provided directly by the agency in 98% of these support periods.
- In 41% of support periods, clients needed assistance with advocacy and liaison services and this was provided by the agency in 96% of these support periods.
- Clients needed material aid/brokerage in 30% of support periods and this was provided by the agency in 88% of support periods.
- In 20% of support periods, clients needed assistance for domestic and family violence and this was provided by the agency in 90% of these support periods.

Length of support period

- For clients whose support periods ended in the December quarter 2011 (excluding SA data), 44% of support periods were less than 2 days in length, and 22% were more than 6 weeks (Table 4.15).
- For clients with support periods that were ongoing at the end of the December quarter 2011, 72% of support periods had been open for more than 6 weeks.
- The average length of support periods that closed in the December quarter 2011 was 42 days (Table 4.16).
 - ACT recorded the highest average length of support (130 days), followed by NSW (59 days).

2.3 How did clients' circumstances change with support?

The following information is for all clients of specialist homelessness agencies whose support period ended in the December quarter 2011, and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support. This information does not include SA data.

Case management and support period outcomes

- In support periods where clients had a case management plan, 42% achieved all their case management goals. In a further 48% of these support periods, clients had completed at least some of their case management goals, and in 10% of these support periods, no case management goals were achieved (Table 4.21).

- 63% of clients had no case management plan. This was mostly because the service episode was too short (60%), or because they were part of another person's case management plan (17%).
- The most common reason support periods ended was because the client's immediate needs were met, or their case management goals achieved. This was the case in 50% of support periods that were up to 7 days in length, and 39% of support periods longer than 7 days (Table 4.22).

Changes in housing situation

- There were slightly fewer clients living without shelter, or in inadequate dwellings at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 14% at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.11).
- There was no change in the proportion of clients renting in private housing after receiving support from a specialist homelessness agency (24% of support periods before and after receiving support), but there were slightly more clients renting in public housing at the end of support (11% of closed support periods, compared with 10% at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.12).
- There was an increase in clients who were nominated on the lease of the accommodation they were living in after receiving support compared with when they first presented to the specialist homelessness agency (42% of support periods compared with 38% of support periods at the beginning of these support periods) (Table 4.13).
 - There were also fewer clients with no tenure at the end of support (21% of closed support periods, compared with 25% when presenting for support).

Changes in labour force status and main income source

- Overall, there were small changes in clients' labour force status after support—in 12% of closed support periods clients were employed after support, compared with 11% when presenting for support.
 - The increase in clients that were employed after support was greater for those clients who identified a need for assistance with employment (18% of closed support periods, compared with 13% when presenting for support).
- There was little change in clients' main source of income after support and only a slight decrease in clients with no income after support (6% of closed support periods, compared with 7% when presenting for support).

3 Data spotlights

This chapter shines a spotlight on findings in relation to four groups of special interest:

- young people presenting alone
- older people
- people at risk of homelessness
- clients who received accommodation.

Some information reported does not include South Australian data. Specifically, information on length of support, services and assistance, client outcomes, and some accommodation.

3.1 Young people presenting alone

A major focus of government strategies to prevent homelessness is aimed at preventing young people from entering into a lifetime of homelessness (Australian Government 2008).

In the December quarter 2011, an estimated 18,819 young clients who presented alone were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 23,985 support periods (16,555 clients in 22,019 support periods using unweighted data – see Appendix A for more information about adjustments made for non-response). All remaining data in this section are not adjusted for non-response.

Key facts

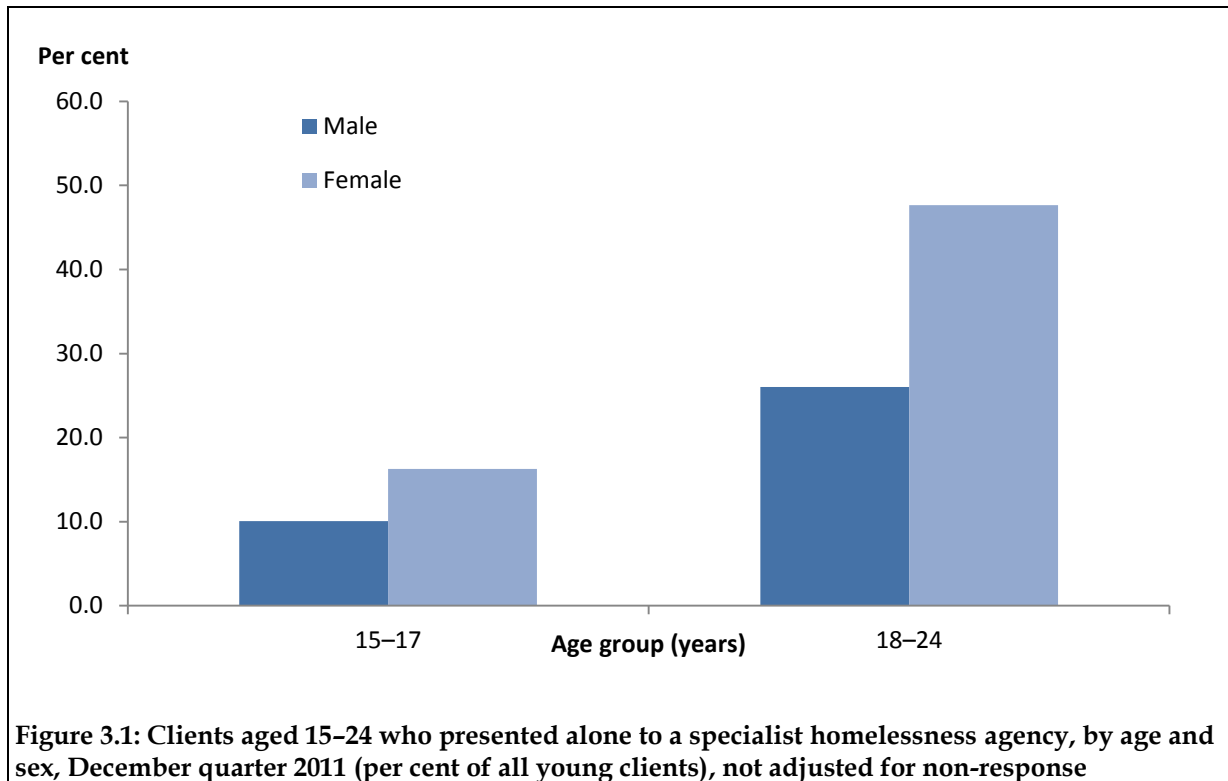
- 64% of young people presenting alone for assistance were female.
- 10% of all young people who presented alone for assistance were living in emergency accommodation, and 5% had no dwelling or were living in the street, park or in the open.
- 23% of young people were boarding, and 22% were couch surfing.
- Housing crisis was the most common main reason for young clients seeking assistance (18%), followed by relationship or family breakdown (17%) and domestic and family violence (15%).

Box 3.1 How we identified young people presenting alone

Young people are defined here as any client aged 15–24. Age is determined at the start date of the client's first support period in the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever is the latter. This analysis covers young people who received support at any stage in the December quarter 2011 and who presented to the specialist homelessness agency alone in any support period in the quarter. Young people who only presented during the quarter as part of a family, group or couple are not included in the analyses in this section unless otherwise noted.

Demographic profile

- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of young clients presenting alone to agencies were aged 18–24, and 26% were aged 15–17.
- Females represented 64% of young people, and were the majority in both the 15–17 and 18–24 age groups (Figure 3.1). Males comprised 36% of all young people attending homeless services alone.



- 20% of young clients presenting alone who provided information on their Indigenous status, identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- A significant proportion (39%) of young clients were receiving Youth Allowance as their main source of income, followed by parenting payment (19%) and Newstart Allowance (17%).
- The main income source was not known for 30% of young clients.
- Over half of young clients aged 15–17 were not in the labour force (54%), and 40% were unemployed.
- For young people aged 18–24, half were unemployed (50%) and a further 45% were not in the labour force.
- Of young people presenting alone to specialist homeless agencies who provided information on their education enrolment status, 29% were enrolled in formal study or training. Most of these clients were secondary school students (52%) and 28% were enrolled in vocational education/training.
 - Information on education was unknown for 37% of young clients.

Housing situation before support

- Over three-quarters (78%) of young clients who provided information on their housing type at the beginning of the support period were living in a house, townhouse or flat when they presented to the agency.
 - 10% were living in emergency accommodation, and 5% had no dwelling or were living in the street, park or in the open.
 - 26% of young clients had no information recorded on their type of dwelling.
- Just over half (55%) of young clients were in rented accommodation.
 - Private housing was the most common type of rental arrangement (reported by 18% of young clients), followed by short-term accommodation (9%).
 - Nearly one-third (30%) of young clients were living in rent-free arrangements. The most common type of rent-free arrangement was private housing (12% of all young clients).
- 29% of young clients reported having no housing tenure in the accommodation in which they were staying when they first presented to the specialist homelessness agency.
 - 34% of young clients did not provide information on their tenure type.
- One-quarter (25%) of young clients indicated that they had a lease for the accommodation where they were staying before the support period and were nominated on the lease, a further 23% were boarders and 22% were couch surfers.
 - 34% of young clients did not provide information on their conditions of occupancy.

Main reason for seeking assistance

- Housing crisis was the most common main reason for young clients seeking assistance (18%), followed by relationship or family breakdown (17%) and domestic and family violence (15%).

Services received

- For all young clients who were identified as needing accommodation, the need for short-term or emergency accommodation was identified most often (32% of support periods where accommodation needs were identified), followed by medium term or transitional housing (29%) and long term housing (26%).
- Short-term accommodation was most likely to be provided directly by the specialist homelessness agency (64%), followed by medium-term housing or transitional housing (45%).
- For those young clients who received accommodation, 39% were accommodated for more than 6 weeks, 28% for 1 day to 1 week, and 13% for 15 days to 4 weeks.
- Young clients needed advice and information more often than other services (73% of support periods) and in 98% of these support periods these services were provided directly by the agency.
 - Material aid and brokerage was needed in 29% of support periods, and in 87% of these support periods this assistance was provided by the agency.
 - Family and/or relationship assistance was needed by young clients in 20% of support periods, and in 85% of these support periods this assistance was provided by the agency.

- Young clients needed educational assistance in 13% of support periods and in 79% of these support periods this assistance was provided by the agency.

Outcomes

The following information is for all young people who presented alone to a specialist homelessness agency whose support period ended in the December quarter 2011, and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support. This analysis does not include data for SA.

- Most (58%) young people had no case management plan.
- Of those young clients who had a case management plan, 57% achieved half or more of their case management goals.
- Young people's living arrangements did not change greatly after support. There was a small decrease in young people living alone after support (41% of closed support periods, compared with 42% at beginning of the support period).
- There was a slight increase in young people enrolled in vocational education and training after support (27% of closed support periods, compared with 25% when presenting for support).
- There was a slight increase in the number of young people living independently under a care and protection order at the end of support (25% of closed support periods, compared with 23% when presenting for support).
- There was a slight increase in the number of young people employed at the end of the support period (13% of closed support periods, compared with 11% when presenting for support).
 - The increase in proportion of clients employed at the end of the support period was greater for those with an identified need for assistance with employment at presentation (18% of closed support periods after receiving assistance, compared with 11% at the beginning of the support period).
- There were fewer young people with no housing tenure at the end of support (23% of closed support periods, compared with 27% when presenting for support).
- There was very little change in clients' main source of income after support, though there was a slight decrease in young people with no income after support (10% of closed support periods, compared with 13% when presenting for support).

3.2 Older people

Based on previous Census numbers, the greatest percentage change in the homeless population between 2001 and 2006 was experienced by those in the 55–64 year age bracket, whose homeless rate jumped by 36% (Chamberlain & Mackenzie 2008). The second highest increase in homelessness was experienced by those in the over 65 age group (whose homeless rate increased by 23%). This results in the overall homeless rate for those over 55 increasing by 30% between 2001 and 2006 (Australian Government 2008).

In the December quarter 2011, an estimated 5,661 older clients were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 6,369 support periods (4,920 clients in 5,848 support periods using unweighted data – see Appendix A for more information about adjustments made for non-response). All remaining data in this section are not adjusted for non-response.

Key facts

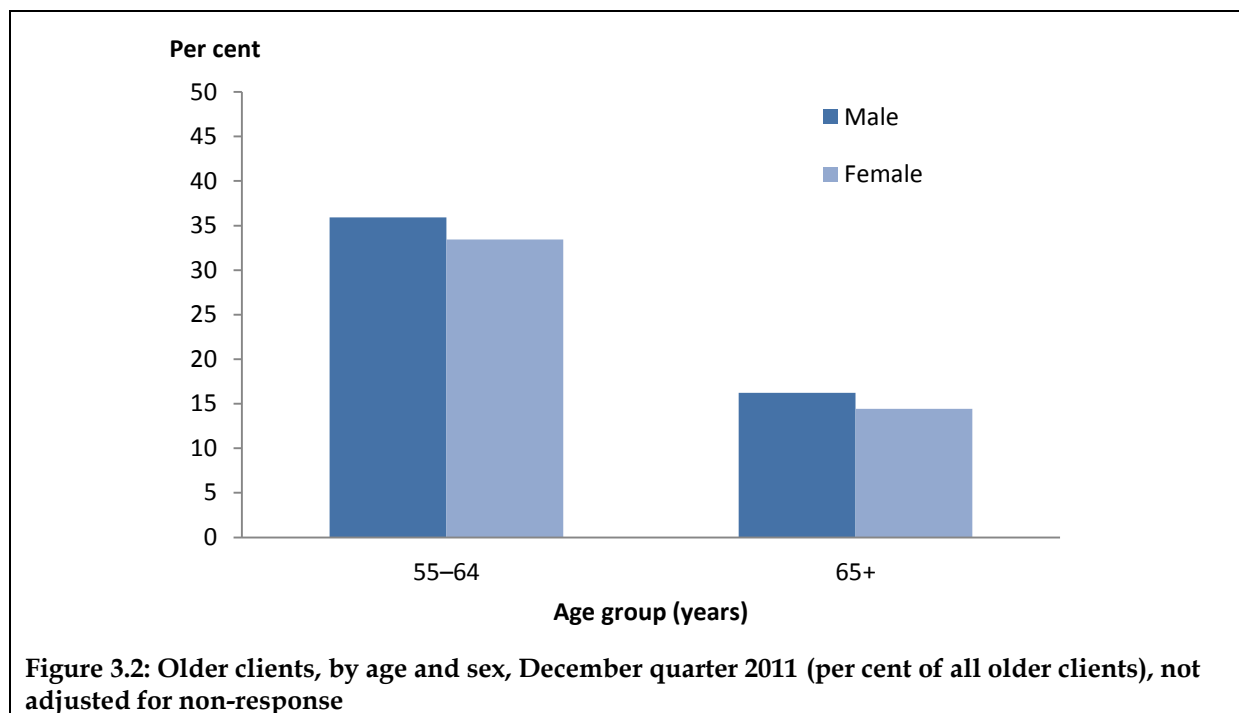
- Most clients (93%) aged 55 or over presented to the homelessness agency alone.
- 52% of older clients were men and 48% were women.
- Most older clients (90%) relied on government financial assistance and support as their main source of income; 42% relied on the Disability support pension.
- Financial difficulties were identified as the most common reason for older clients seeking assistance (23%).
- Around one-third (34%) of older clients reported an episode of homelessness in the month before receiving support from the homelessness agency.

Box 3.2 How we identified older people

Older people were defined here as any client aged 55 or older. Age is determined at the start date of the client's first support period in the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever is the latter.

Demographic profile

- Of all older Australians who received assistance from specialist homelessness agencies, 93% presented alone.
- Most older clients (69%) were aged 55–64, and the remaining 31% were aged 65 or over (Figure 3.2).
- Overall, slightly more older men received assistance than older women (52% were men compared to 48% women).
- The proportion of men and women across the 55–64 and 65+ age groups was very similar.
- Of those older clients who provided information about their income type, over two-thirds (68%) were receiving either a Disability support pension (42%) or the Aged pension (25%).
 - These figures exclude around 27% of all older clients who did not report their income source.
- Labour force participation was low amongst older clients – overall, 72% of older clients who provided information on their labour force status reported being not in the labour force, and a further 25% were unemployed.
 - 65% of all clients who provided information about their labour force status in the 55–64 age range reported being not in the labour force. This figure rose to 86% for those over 65.
 - These figures exclude 22% of all older persons whose labour force status was unknown.



Housing situation before support

- Of those older clients who provided information on their dwelling type, most were living in a house, townhouse, or flat when they presented to the specialist homelessness agency (69%); 8% had no dwelling or were living in the open.
 - These figures exclude 22% of client responses that were classified as unknown.
- Of those older clients, who provided information on their housing tenure type, over two-thirds (69%) were classified as being in rented accommodation, with most (45%) being in either private or public rental properties.
 - 22% of older clients reported having no tenure in the accommodation they were in when they presented to the specialist homelessness agency.
 - These figures exclude 27% of client responses that were classified as unknown.
- Around one-third (34%) of older clients reported an episode of homelessness in the month before receiving support from the specialist homelessness agency (that is, they slept rough, or lived in non-conventional accommodation, short-term or emergency accommodation).
 - These figures exclude 27% of older persons whose response to this question was unknown.

Main reason for seeking assistance

- Of older clients who provided information on their reason for seeking assistance, financial difficulty was identified as the most common reason for seeking assistance (23%), followed by domestic and family violence (14%).

Services received

- Overall, accommodation was identified as a need for older clients in 58% of support periods—23% identified a need for short term or emergency accommodation, 13% for medium term/transitional housing and 22% of long term housing.
 - Accommodation needs of older clients were met directly by the agency in 73% of support periods where a need was identified for short term or emergency accommodation, in 46% of support periods where there was a need for medium term/transitional housing and in 15% of support periods where there was a need for long term housing.
 - In 42% of support periods where long term housing was identified as a need, the client was referred to another service.
- Of those older clients who did receive accommodation, almost half were accommodated for more than 6 weeks (47%), with 27% accommodated for between 1 day to 1 week.
- Other than accommodation, the most common need identified for older clients was for advice and information (identified as a need in 64% of support periods), followed by other basic assistance (53%) and advocacy/liaison on behalf of the client (38%).
 - These needs were met directly by the agency in 98% of support periods for advice/information and for other basic assistance, and in 96% of support periods for advocacy/liaison on behalf of client.

Outcomes

The following information is for all older clients who presented alone to a specialist homelessness agency whose support period ended in the December quarter 2011, and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support. This information does not include SA data.

- 63% of older clients who provided relevant information had no case management plan.
 - Of those who had a case management plan, 66% achieved half or more of all case management goals.
- There was a slight increase in employment participation at the end of the older clients' support periods. The proportion of employed older people increased from 6% to 7% and the proportion unemployed dropped from 21% to 20%. Just under three-quarters considered themselves to be not in the labour force (73% at the end of their support period compared with 72% at the beginning of the support period).
- The proportion of older clients living in a house/townhouse/flat increased from 66% prior to receiving assistance, to 68% after support.
- There was also an increase in leased housing tenure from 57% before to 61% after assistance.
- Renting in public housing increased from 18% at the beginning of the support period to 21% at the end of the support period, while private rental rates remained the same (26% both before and after support).
- The proportion of older clients reporting no housing tenure dropped, from 22% at the beginning of the support period to 17% at the end of the support period.

3.3 Clients who received accommodation

The provision of accommodation is a major component of many specialist homelessness services, although not all agencies provide accommodation.

In the December quarter 2011, an estimated 37,119 clients who received accommodation were assisted by specialist homelessness agencies in 48,949 support periods (32,734 clients in 44,941 support periods using unweighted data – see Appendix A for more information about adjustments made for non-response). All remaining data in this section are not adjusted for non-response.

Clients who were provided with accommodation comprised 38% of all clients who received any type of assistance from a specialist homelessness agency.

Key facts

- The largest age group of clients who received accommodation was children aged 0–9 (23% of accommodated clients) and women aged 18–34 (women aged 18–24 and 25–34 both account for 11% of accommodated clients).
- Most accommodated clients presented alone (62%), but a further 34% were clients who were presenting in client groups that were comprised of a parent with a child (or children).
- The main reason for seeking assistance recorded for accommodated clients was domestic and family violence (26%), followed by housing crisis (18%) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (12%).
- Although all accommodated clients received at least some accommodation in the December quarter 2011, in 18% of support periods reported for these clients, accommodation was not provided. This indicates that many accommodated clients had more than one support period in the December quarter, and accommodation was not always provided.

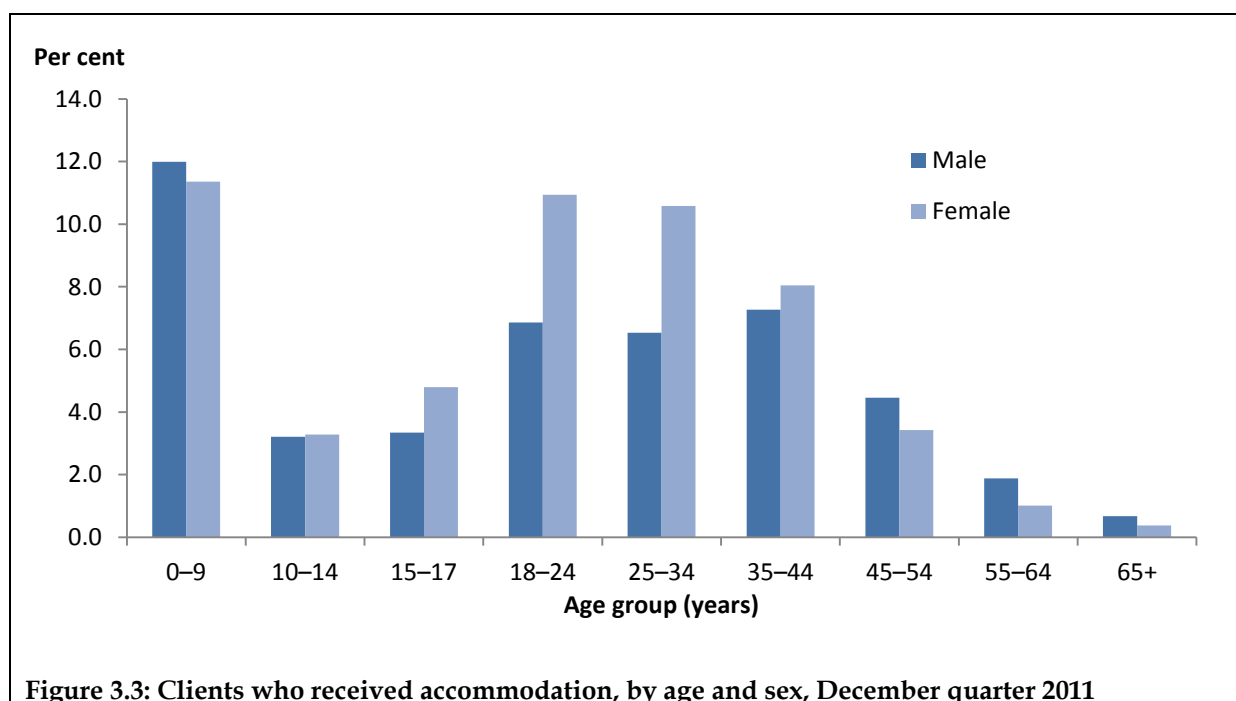
Box 3.3 How we identified clients who received accommodation

Clients who received accommodation were identified as any client provided with accommodation for at least one night in the reporting period as part of their support period, and where specific dates of accommodation were recorded and identified as either short term or emergency accommodation, medium term/transitional accommodation or long term accommodation.

Demographic profile

- The largest age group of clients who received accommodation was children aged 0–9 (23% of accommodated clients) and women aged 18–34 (11% of accommodated clients are women aged 18–24 and 11% are women aged 25–34) (Figure 3.3).
- Of those accommodated clients who provided information about their Indigenous status, one-fifth (22%) reported being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- The majority of accommodated clients presented alone (62%), with the next highest category being individual clients with children (34%).

- The most common main sources of income for accommodated clients aged 15 and over (who provided this information) were Newstart allowance (28%) and parenting payment (23%).
 - 10% of these clients reported having no income at the beginning of their support period.
 - 27% of accommodated clients' main income source was unknown.
- Most accommodated clients, aged 15 or over and who provided information on their labour force status, were either not in the labour force (56% of support periods) or unemployed (46% of support periods).
 - Of the 10% of accommodated clients who were employed, 64% of these clients were employed part-time.
 - For 18% of accommodated clients, their labour force status was unknown.



Housing situation before support

- Of those accommodated clients who provided information on their recent experiences of homelessness, 70% reported an episode of homelessness in the month before they began receiving support from the specialist homelessness agency.
 - For 37% of accommodated clients, information on whether or not they had a previous episode of homelessness was not provided.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of clients who received accommodation, and who provided information on their dwelling type, were living in a house/townhouse/flat at the beginning of their support period.
 - 9% had no dwelling or were living in the street/park/in the open.

- Housing type at the beginning of support was not known for 30% of accommodated clients.
- Just over half (54%) of accommodated clients who provided information about their tenure type when they presented to the homelessness agency were staying in rental accommodation at the beginning of the support period. Within this category, renting in emergency accommodation (where rent is charged) and renting in private housing were the most common types of rental arrangements (both 13%).
 - 29% of accommodated clients were living in rent-free arrangements when they presented to the specialist homelessness agency. The most common rent-free setting was private housing (7% of accommodated clients).
 - 33% of accommodated clients reported having no housing tenure in the circumstances they were living in at the beginning of the support period.
 - Tenure type was not reported for 34% of accommodated clients.
- Of clients who provided information on the details of their conditions of occupancy within a dwelling, one-quarter (25%) had some form of leased tenure and were nominated on the lease for the accommodation they were living in before presenting to the specialist homelessness agency. A further 21% were boarders and 20% were living with a relative fee free.
 - Conditions of occupancy arrangements were not reported for 16% of accommodated clients.

Main reason for seeking assistance

- For clients who received accommodation and who had information recorded about their main reason for seeking assistance, the most common reason reported was domestic and family violence (26%). This was followed by housing crisis (18%) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (12%).
 - 22% of accommodated clients' main reason for seeking assistance was not stated.

Services received

- Of all clients who received accommodation, short term or emergency accommodation was identified as a need in 56% of support periods, medium term/ transitional housing was identified as a need in 40% of support periods and long term housing was identified as a need in 28% of support periods (does not include SA data).
- The most commonly identified needs (other than for accommodation) were for advice and information (identified as a need in 72% of support period, for accommodated clients), other basic assistance (62%) and advocacy/liaison on behalf of the client (46%).
 - These needs were met directly by the agency in 99% of support periods for advice/information and other basic assistance, and in 97% of support periods for advocacy/liaison on behalf of client.
- 41% of clients who received accommodation were accommodated for more than 6 weeks, and 21% were accommodated for between 1 day and 1 week.
- Although all accommodated clients received at least *some* accommodation at some time in the December quarter 2011, in 18% of support periods reported for these clients, accommodation was not provided. This indicates that many accommodated clients had more than one support period in the December quarter, and accommodation was not always provided.

Outcomes

The following information is for all accommodated clients whose support period ended in the December quarter 2011, and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support. This information does not include SA data.

- 54% of clients who received accommodation had no case management plan.
 - Of all clients provided with accommodation who had a case management plan, 54% achieved half or more of all their goals.
- The largest difference in living arrangement was recorded for accommodated clients living in group households (10% at the beginning of the support period, which increased to 14% at the end of the support period).
- 50% of accommodated clients were living in a house, townhouse, flat before receiving support; this decreased to 49% after support.
 - There was a decrease of five percentage points in clients who had no dwelling or were living in the park/street/in the open (from 12% at the beginning of the support period to 7% after support).
- 41% of accommodated clients were paying rent at the beginning of their support period, which increased to 51% after support.
 - Accommodated clients living rent free decreased by two percentage points (from 23% at the beginning of the support period to 21% after support).
- Accommodated clients with no housing tenure decreased by eight percentage points (from 34% at the beginning of the support period to 26% after support).
 - The proportion of clients who had some form of leased tenure and were nominated on the lease, increased by seven percentage points after receiving support from a specialist homelessness agency (from 19% at the beginning of the support period to 26% after support).
 - The proportion of clients reported as 'couch surfers' decreased by five percentage points (from 13% at the beginning of the support period to 8% after support).

3.4 Clients at risk of homelessness

The White paper, *The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness* (Australian Government 2008) identifies 'turning off the tap' (services intervening early to prevent homelessness) as a key component of national homelessness response and investment to 2020. This strategy highlights that efforts should be directed at preventing homelessness by identifying people at risk and ensuring that they have access to the right support before reaching crisis point, and preventing the causes of homelessness.

Overall, 52% of clients who were assisted by specialist homelessness services in the December quarter 2011 and who provided sufficient information to assess their homelessness status, were identified as being homeless at the beginning of their support period, and 48% were determined to be 'at risk of homelessness'. Twenty-four per cent did not provide sufficient information to enable assessment.

This represented an estimated 36,637 clients who were 'at risk of homelessness', who were assisted in 37,460 support periods (31,607 clients in 34,391 support periods using unweighted data – see Appendix A for more information about adjustments made for non-response). All remaining data in this section are not adjusted for non-response.

Key facts

- Overall, 52% of clients who were assisted by specialist homelessness services in the December quarter 2011 were identified as being homeless at the beginning of their support period, and 48% were determined to be 'at risk of homelessness'.
- 34% of clients who were at risk of homelessness at the beginning of any support period in the December quarter 2011 had been homeless in the previous year.
- Across all types of services provided, long-term accommodation was the largest unmet need (17 percentage points based on the gap between the need identified and services provided) for this population. The lowest gap between accommodation need and provision was in short-term and emergency housing.

Box 3.4 How we identified clients who were at risk of homelessness

All clients accessing specialist homelessness services are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. 'Homeless' status was derived based on the client's housing circumstances at the beginning of the support period. All clients who were not deemed to be homeless were considered to be at risk of homelessness (excluding clients who did not provide sufficient information to make this assessment).

A client was considered 'homeless' if their housing situation was any of the following at presentation:

Dwelling type was: caravan, tent, cabin, boat, improvised building/dwelling, no dwelling/ street/ park/ in the open, motor vehicle, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation, or hotel/motel/bed and breakfast;

OR

Tenure type was: Renting or living rent-free in transitional housing, caravan park, boarding/rooming house, emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/ youth shelter;

OR

Condition of occupancy was: 'couch surfing'.

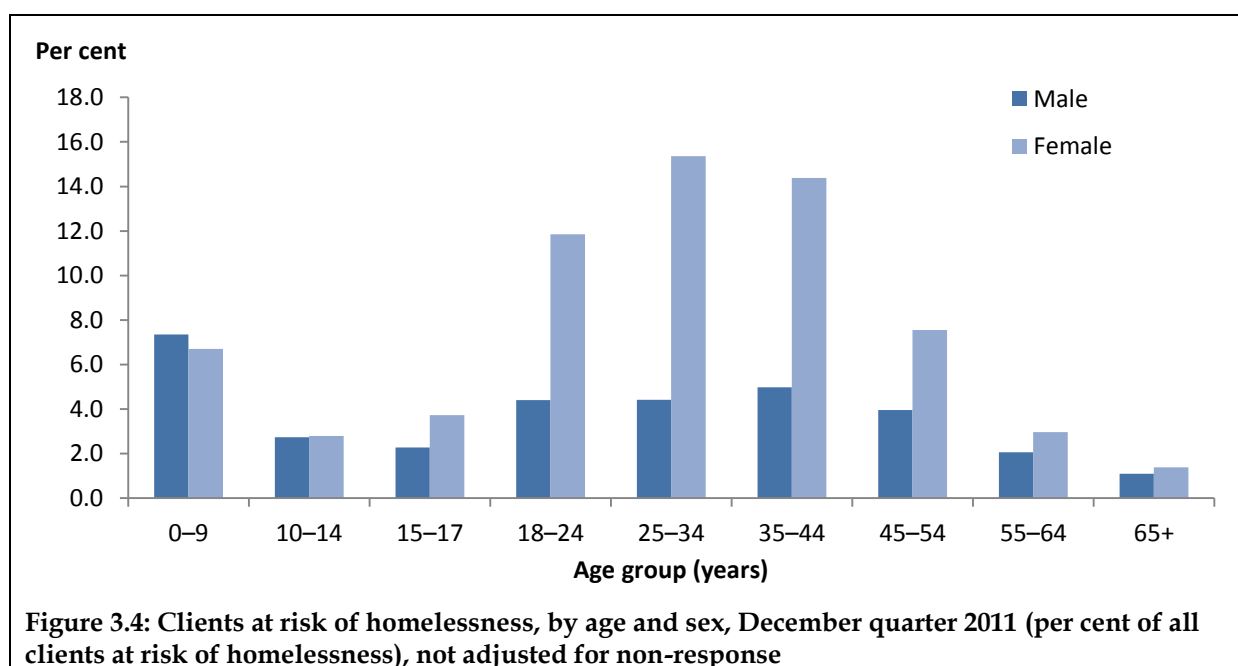
Clients who recorded none of the above characteristics at the beginning of any support period that was active in the December quarter were assumed to be 'at risk of homelessness'.

It is acknowledged that definitions of homelessness can vary and may be dependent on individual circumstances and perceptions, particularly for those who might be identified as experiencing 'tertiary homelessness' (e.g. those living in caravans, rooming houses, etc.). For this analysis, these clients were considered to be homeless because it was assumed that they considered their accommodation or living circumstances as inadequate (because they sought assistance from a homelessness agency), and because it is assumed that the service provider assessed and accepted this assessment by providing assistance.

Clients identified as being at risk of homelessness at the beginning of the support period may have become homeless during the support period, and may also have been homeless in the past.

Demographic profile

- Children aged 0–17 represented 25% of those at risk of homelessness; people aged 18–54 represented 67%; and older people aged 55 or over represented 8% (Figure 3.4).
- 63% of clients at risk of homelessness were female and 37% were male. Females represented a greater proportion of the ‘at risk of homelessness population’ across all age groups except the 0–9 age group.
- 21% of those who were at risk of homelessness, and who provided information on their Indigenous status, identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
 - For Indigenous clients aged 15–54 who were at risk of homelessness, 76% were female and 24% were male.
- 70% of clients or client groups (i.e. presenting units) were clients presenting alone for assistance; and 27% were a member of a client group described as a ‘person with children’.
- For clients aged 15 or over, who were at risk of homelessness, and who provided information on their main source of income, 82% indicated a government allowance or pension as their main source of income; 11% indicated employment, business or other as their main source of income; and 7% indicated they had no source of income.
- For clients aged 15 or over, who were at risk of homelessness, and who provided information on their labour force status, 14% were in full- or part-time employment, 33% were unemployed and 53% were not in the labour force.



Housing situation before support

- Most clients who were at risk of homelessness were living in a house, townhouse or flat at the beginning of their support period (98% of support periods).
- Most clients (71% of support periods) were renting in the accommodation they were in when they presented to the homelessness agency; 23% were living rent free in private,

public, community or other housing; and 5% were owner-occupiers owning or purchasing their homes.

- Of the clients who provided information on their conditions of occupancy for the accommodation in which they were staying before they presented to the homelessness agency, 56% were renting and were nominated on the lease; 10% were not nominated on a lease, 20% were living rent free with a relative, 8% were paying for board, and 7% were in other tenures.
 - Conditions of occupancy for the accommodation in which they were staying were not reported in 18% of support periods.
- 16% of clients who were at risk of homelessness had experienced an episode of homelessness in the previous month where they had slept rough (4%) or stayed in short-term or emergency accommodation (12%) due to a lack of options.
- 45% of clients who were at risk of homelessness had experienced an episode of homelessness in the previous year where they had slept rough (34%) or stayed in short-term or emergency accommodation (11%) due to a lack of options.

Main reason for seeking assistance

- For clients who were at risk of homelessness at the beginning of the support period, and who had information recorded about their main reason for seeking assistance, the most common reason reported was domestic and family violence (29%).
 - Other commonly reported reasons were financial difficulties (20%), housing crisis (10%), inadequate or inappropriate dwelling (7%), and family/relationship breakdown (5%).

Services received

- Of all the people at risk of homelessness, 7% were provided accommodation for a period of 1 day to 1 week, 6% were provided accommodation between 1 and 6 weeks, and 12% were provided accommodation for more than 12 weeks.
- Of accommodation-related needs identified for clients at risk of homelessness:
 - Assistance to sustain rental tenure was needed in 27% of support periods. Clients were provided this service directly by the agency in 85% of support periods where this need was identified.
 - Short-term or emergency housing was identified as a need in 19% of support periods for this client group. Clients were provided this accommodation by the agency in 73% of these support periods.
 - Long-term housing was also identified as a need in 19% of support periods for this client group. Clients were provided this accommodation by the agency in 11% of these support periods.
 - Medium-term or transitional housing was needed in 14% of support periods for people at risk of homelessness. Clients were provided this accommodation in 56% of support periods where this need was identified.
- Advice and information was the most commonly needed of all services and assistance for clients at risk of homelessness (69% of support periods). This was provided by the agency in 67% of these support periods.
 - Other basic assistance was needed in 47% of support periods. Clients were provided these services directly by the agency in 97% of these support periods.

- Assistance with domestic and family violence was needed in 25% of support periods. Clients were provided this assistance by the agency in 92% of these support periods.
- Family and relationship assistance was needed in 15% of support periods. Clients were provided this assistance by the agency in 89% of these support periods.
- A need for assistance with challenging social and behavioural problems was identified in 7% of support periods. Clients were provided with this assistance by the agency in 87% of these support periods.
- Unmet need for these services (as reflected by the gap between service need and provision) stayed at or below 2%.
- Across all types of services provided, long-term accommodation was the largest unmet need (17 percentage points, based on the gap between the need identified and services provided) for this population. The lowest gap between accommodation need and provision was in short term and emergency housing.

Outcomes

The following information is for all people at risk of homelessness whose support period ended in the December quarter 2011, and where valid data were available both at the beginning and end of support. This analysis does not include data for SA.

- 60% of clients at risk of homelessness had no case management plan.
 - Of all clients at risk of homelessness who had a case management plan, 43% achieved all their goals, and another 20% achieved half or more of their goals.
- On presentation, 82% of clients had a government pension or allowance as a source of income, 11% had employment income, and 6% had no income.
 - At the end of support, there was a one percentage point decrease in the number of people with no income (from 6% to 5%).
- The proportion of clients who were employed also increased one percentage point after receiving support from specialist homelessness agencies (from 16% at the beginning of the support period to 17% after support).
- 98% of at risk clients were living in a house, townhouse or flat before receiving support; this decreased by three percentage points by the end of the support period (to 95%).
 - The proportion of clients living in short-term emergency accommodation increased by three percentage points (from 0% to 3%).
- The proportion of clients who had some form of leased tenure and were nominated on the lease, increased one percentage point after receiving support from specialist homelessness agencies (from 59% at the beginning of the support period to 60% after support).

4 Data overview: tables

Table 4.1: Clients and support periods, by age group, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response

Age group (years)	Sex					
	Males		Females		All clients	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Clients						
0–9	8,976	22.0	8,397	14.5	17,373	17.6
10–14	2,891	7.1	2,981	5.1	5,872	5.9
15–17	2,732	6.7	4,189	7.2	6,921	7.0
18–24	5,937	14.6	11,442	19.7	17,378	17.6
25–34	6,003	14.7	12,145	21.0	18,148	18.4
35–44	6,730	16.5	10,697	18.5	17,426	17.6
45–54	4,558	11.2	5,404	9.3	9,962	10.1
55–64	2,030	5.0	1,893	3.3	3,923	4.0
65+	918	2.3	820	1.4	1,738	1.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>40,775</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>57,967</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>98,742</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Support periods						
0–9	10,011	19.8	9,374	13.1	19,385	15.9
10–14	3,259	6.5	3,381	4.7	6,640	5.4
15–17	3,410	6.8	5,257	7.3	8,668	7.1
18–24	7,565	15.0	14,437	20.2	22,002	18.0
25–34	7,999	15.8	15,659	21.9	23,658	19.4
35–44	8,881	17.6	13,667	19.1	22,548	18.5
45–54	5,844	11.6	6,610	9.2	12,455	10.2
55–64	2,451	4.9	2,221	3.1	4,671	3.8
65+	1,085	2.1	951	1.3	2,036	1.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>50,505</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>71,557</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>122,062</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Notes

1. Number excluded due to errors and omissions (weighted): 0 clients, 3,346 support periods.
2. Data in this table are adjusted for non-response, and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number, and male/female client numbers may not add to the figure for 'all clients' due to rounding errors.

Table 4.2: Clients and support periods, by state and territory, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Number									
Clients									
Males	9,979	12,839	7,854	3,778	3,528	1,280	972	844	40,775
Females	13,327	20,862	9,393	5,474	5,034	1,429	1,316	1,373	57,967
<i>Total</i>	<i>23,306</i>	<i>33,701</i>	<i>17,247</i>	<i>9,252</i>	<i>8,562</i>	<i>2,709</i>	<i>2,288</i>	<i>2,217</i>	<i>98,742</i>
Support periods									
Males	12,002	17,660	9,288	4,724	4,158	1,463	1,053	946	51,294
Females	16,024	28,813	11,107	6,967	6,128	1,686	1,475	1,654	73,854
<i>Total</i>	<i>28,026</i>	<i>46,473</i>	<i>20,395</i>	<i>11,691</i>	<i>10,286</i>	<i>3,149</i>	<i>2,528</i>	<i>2,600</i>	<i>125,148</i>
Per cent									
Clients									
Males	42.8	38.1	45.5	40.8	41.2	47.3	42.5	38.1	41.3
Females	57.2	61.9	54.5	59.2	58.8	52.7	57.5	61.9	58.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Support periods									
Males	42.8	38.0	45.5	40.4	40.4	46.5	41.7	36.4	41.0
Females	57.2	62.0	54.5	59.6	59.6	53.5	58.3	63.6	59.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Notes

1. Number excluded due to errors and omissions (weighted): 0 clients, 259 support periods.
2. State/territory client numbers do not sum to the national figure because clients may appear in more than one jurisdiction.
3. Data in this table are adjusted for non-response, and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. All figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 4.3: Clients by Indigenous status and age and sex, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Age group (years)	Sex				All clients ^(a)			
	Males (number)		Females (number)		Number		Per cent	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
0–9	2,075	4,707	1,945	4,422	4,020	9,129	5.4	12.2
10–14	545	1,619	624	1,566	1,169	3,185	1.6	4.3
15–17	421	1,652	671	2,490	1,092	4,142	1.5	5.6
18–24	789	3,806	2,126	6,650	2,915	10,456	3.9	14.0
25–34	787	3,808	2,038	7,008	2,825	10,816	3.8	14.5
35–44	799	4,396	1,511	6,421	2,310	10,817	3.1	14.5
45–54	487	3,008	700	3,267	1,187	6,275	1.6	8.4
55–64	158	1,426	216	1,152	374	2,578	0.5	3.5
65+	46	655	61	518	107	1,173	0.1	1.6
Total	6,107	25,077	9,892	33,494	15,999	58,571	21.5	78.5

(a) Includes clients where information on sex was missing.

Note: Indigenous status was not reported for 11,642 clients.

Table 4.4: Clients by country of birth (top three countries only) and year of arrival, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Country of birth	Number	Percentage of total	Percentage of overseas born	Year of arrival			
				2010–2011	2008–2009	2002–2007	Before 2002
Australia	66,081	85.5
<i>Top three countries of birth for overseas born clients:</i>							
New Zealand	1,517	1.8	12.5	2.1	1.3	2.7	6.4
Sudan	1,036	1.2	9.8	0.7	1.2	6.9	1.0
United Kingdom	802	0.9	6.5	0.3	0.3	0.6	5.3

Notes

1. Number of clients where country of birth not reported: 1,161.
2. Number of clients where year of arrival not reported: 4,882.
3. Number of overseas born clients where year of arrival not reported: 7,732.

Table 4.5: Clients born overseas by year of arrival, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Year of arrival	Number	Per cent
2010–2011	1,135	17.1
2008–2009	1,068	16.1
2002–2007	1,868	28.2
Before 2002	2,553	38.5
Total	6,624	100.00

Note: Number of overseas born clients where year of arrival was not reported: 12,614, not applicable (includes those born in Australia or where country of birth was not stated): 66,974.

Table 4.6: Clients by presenting unit type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Presenting unit type	Clients	
	Number	Per cent
Person alone	58,826	68.5
Couple, no children	1,895	2.2
Person with children	22,221	25.9
Couple with children	4,054	4.7
Other group	1,949	2.3
Other	354	0.4

Note: Percentages do not sum 100% because clients may have more than one presenting unit type.

Table 4.7: Client groups receiving assistance, by presenting unit type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Presenting unit type	Presenting units	
	Number	Per cent
Person alone	79,879	87.8
Couple, no children	1,063	1.2
Person with children	8,175	9.0
Couple with children	1,013	1.1
Other group	876	1.0
Other	236	0.3

Notes

1. Percentages do not sum 100% because clients may have more than one presenting unit type.
2. This table groups support periods for clients who present together (if applicable) and describes the relationship between these clients. Presenting units are counted based on the presenting unit Identifier for each support period. Individual presenting units have not been matched for each support period and may be counted more than once.

Table 4.8: Clients by reasons for seeking assistance, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Reason for seeking assistance	All reasons given by clients for seeking assistance ^(a)				Main reason given by clients for seeking assistance ^(b)			
	Male	Female	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)	Male	Female	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)
Financial								
Financial difficulties	12,230	15,237	27,467	37.6	5,418	6,399	11,817	16.2
Housing affordability stress	5,079	7,261	12,340	16.9	1,542	2,291	3,833	5.2
Employment difficulties	1,500	1,048	2,548	3.5	99	38	137	0.2
Unemployment	3,509	2,183	5,692	7.8	179	61	240	0.3
Problematic gambling	323	111	434	0.6	58	9	67	0.1
Accommodation								
Housing crisis	8,230	9,756	17,986	24.6	5,274	5,905	11,179	15.3
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	6,499	8,564	15,063	20.6	3,536	4,781	8,317	11.4
Previous accommodation ended	5,728	5,982	11,710	16.0	2,551	2,260	4,811	6.6
Interpersonal relationships								
Time out from family/other situation	3,423	5,308	8,731	11.9	782	1,031	1,813	2.5
Relationship/family breakdown	6,266	10,872	17,138	23.4	2,160	2,958	5,118	7.0
Sexual abuse	184	1,130	1,314	1.8	37	228	265	0.4
Domestic and family violence	4,446	18,060	22,506	30.8	3,154	14,826	17,980	24.6
Non-family violence	574	1,053	1,627	2.2	194	367	561	0.8
Health								
Mental health issues	4,424	4,754	9,178	12.6	1,045	710	1,755	2.4
Medical issues	2,832	3,303	6,135	8.4	447	351	798	1.1
Problematic drug or substance use	3,151	2,051	5,202	7.1	765	343	1,108	1.5
Problematic alcohol use	2,414	1,274	3,688	5.0	560	161	721	1.0

(continued)

Table 4.8 (continued): Clients by reasons for seeking assistance, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Reason for seeking assistance	All reasons given by clients for seeking assistance ^(a)				Main reason given by clients for seeking assistance ^(b)			
	Male	Female	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)	Male	Female	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)
Other reasons								
Transition from custodial arrangements	1,402	409	1,811	2.5	1,026	242	1,268	1.7
Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements	187	266	453	0.6	105	125	230	0.3
Transition from other care arrangements	427	399	826	1.1	202	180	382	0.5
Discrimination including racial and sexual discrimination	137	255	392	0.5	22	43	65	0.1
Itinerant	2,229	1,649	3,878	5.3	1,101	780	1,881	2.6
Unable to return home due to environmental reasons	722	1,123	1,845	2.5	200	238	438	0.6
Disengagement with school or other education and training	673	779	1,452	2.0	151	116	267	0.4
Lack of family and/or community support	4,303	6,422	10,725	14.7	622	719	1,341	1.8
Other	4,669	5,126	9,795	13.4	2,721	3,164	5,885	8.1
Total clients^(c)	29,570	43,547	73,117		29,542	43,512	73,054	

(a) Clients may have multiple reasons for seeking assistance recorded.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period and who identified different (main) reasons for seeking support on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Total clients are reported as total unique clients who provided information about their reason(s) for seeking assistance.

Note: Number of client support periods where a main reason for seeking assistance was not reported: missing females (all reasons): 9,226, missing males (all reasons): 7,511; missing females (main reason): 8,975, missing males (main reason): 7,307.

Table 4.9: Clients aged 15 or over by main source of income, at the beginning of the support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Main source of income	Number	Per cent
Government pension or allowance		
Newstart Allowance	12,066	24.0
Parenting Payment	12,196	24.3
Disability Support Pension (Centrelink)	10,657	21.2
Youth Allowance	5,424	10.8
Age Pension	992	2.0
Austudy/ABSTUDY	310	0.6
Disability Pension (DVA)	899	1.8
Service Pension (DVA)	25	0.0
War Widow(er's) Pension (inc. income support supplement) (DVA)	32	0.1
Sickness Allowance	145	0.3
Carer Allowance	202	0.4
Carer Payment	417	0.8
Other government pensions and allowances	715	1.4
Other source of income		
Employee income	3,600	7.2
Unincorporated business income	39	0.1
Other income	465	0.9
No income	4,468	8.9

Notes

1. Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where main source of income was reported: 20,184.
2. Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different main source of income on each occasion are recorded more than once.

Table 4.10: Clients aged 15 or over by labour force status, at beginning of the support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

	Age group (years)							All clients	
	15-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Number	Per cent
Employed									
Full time	80	463	424	526	326	80	7	1,906	3.8
Part time	370	937	741	860	433	117	17	3,475	6.9
Don't know	20	129	172	187	83	18	1	610	1.2
Unemployed	1,456	5,461	5,066	4,704	2,518	820	150	20,175	39.9
Not in labour force	2,208	5,586	6,954	6,455	3,855	1,757	986	27,801	55.0
Total clients (number)	3,869	11,711	12,456	11,872	6,811	2,690	1,145	50,554	..

Notes

1. Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where labour force status was reported: 15,563.
2. Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different labour force status on each occasion are recorded more than once.

Table 4.11: Clients and closed support periods, by dwelling type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Dwelling type	Closed support periods ^{(c)(d)}					
	All clients at beginning of support period ^{(a)(b)}		Beginning of support period		End of support period	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Without shelter						
No dwelling/street/park/in the open	3,604	5.4	2,497	6.4	1,735	4.4
Improvised building/dwelling	1,039	1.6	647	1.7	538	1.4
Motor vehicle	1,049	1.6	598	1.5	415	1.1
Inadequate dwelling						
Caravan	1,224	1.8	644	1.6	599	1.5
Tent	385	0.6	157	0.4	131	0.3
Cabin	296	0.4	137	0.3	143	0.4
Boat	14	0.0	14	0.0	10	0.0
Other	1,683	2.5	871	2.2	798	2.0
Temporary accommodation						
Boarding/rooming house	2,996	4.5	1,858	4.7	1,950	5.0
Emergency accommodation	5,740	8.6	2,905	7.4	4,038	10.3
Hotel/motel/bed and breakfast	2,199	3.3	1,196	3.1	1,061	2.7
Hospital (excluding psychiatric)	414	0.6	236	0.6	164	0.4
Psychiatric hospital/unit	399	0.6	207	0.5	126	0.3
Disability support	44	0.1	23	0.1	27	0.1
Rehabilitation	454	0.7	220	0.6	233	0.6
Boarding school/residential college	39	0.1	21	0.1	24	0.1
Aged care facility	27	0.0	16	0	20	0.1
Adult correctional facility	888	1.3	354	0.9	303	0.8
Youth/juvenile justice correctional centre	177	0.3	93	0.2	68	0.2
Immigration detention centre	4.0	0.0	3	0.0	2	0.0
Adequate dwelling						
House/townhouse/flat	49,407	74.0	26,506	67.6	26,818	68.4
Total	66,756		39,203		39,203	

(a) Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where dwelling type was reported at the beginning of the support period: 24,281.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different dwelling type at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.

(d) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

Table 4.12: Clients and closed support periods at the beginning and end of support period, by tenure type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Tenure type	All clients at beginning of support period ^{(a)(b)}		Closed support periods ^{(c)(d)}			
			Beginning of support period		End of support period	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Long term secure						
Renter—private housing	13,870	22.2	8,454	23.7	8,448	23.7
Renter—public housing	6,878	11.0	3,421	9.6	3,941	11.1
Renter—community housing	2,237	3.6	917	2.6	1,182	3.3
Life tenure scheme	21	0.0	2	0.0	3	0.0
Owner—shared equity or rent/buy scheme	82	0.1	41	0.1	42	0.1
Owner—being purchased/with mortgage	1,268	2.0	803	2.3	746	2.1
Owner — fully owned	314	0.5	200	0.6	189	0.5
Medium-term secure						
Renter—caravan park	866	1.4	445	1.2	418	1.2
Renter—boarding/rooming house	3,831	6.1	2,180	6.1	2,135	6.0
Other renter	1,804	2.9	909	2.5	886	2.5
Short-term secure						
Renter—transitional housing	2,763	4.4	673	1.9	920	2.6
Renter—emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter where rent is charged	4,304	6.9	2,011	5.6	2,932	8.2
Other tenure type not elsewhere specified	682	1.1	201	0.6	190	0.5
Not secure						
Rent free—private housing	4,416	7.1	2,068	5.8	1,774	5.0
Rent free—public housing	1,647	2.6	885	2.5	933	2.6
Rent free—community housing	487	0.8	290	0.8	357	1.0
Rent free—transitional housing	601	1.0	147	0.4	190	0.5
Rent free—caravan park	110	0.2	59	0.2	42	0.1
Rent free—boarding/rooming house	587	0.9	280	0.8	209	0.6
Rent free—emergency accommodation/night shelter/women's refuge/youth shelter where rent is not charged	2,046	3.3	977	2.7	1,034	2.9
Other rent free	3,881	6.2	1,900	5.3	1,671	4.7
No tenure	16,293	26.1	8,788	24.7	7,409	20.8
Total	62,527		35,651		35,651	

(a) Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where tenure type was reported at the beginning of the support period: 29,205.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different tenure type at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.

(d) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

Table 4.13: Clients and closed support periods, by conditions of occupancy, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Conditions of occupancy	Closed support periods ^{(c)(d)}					
	All clients at beginning of support period ^{(a)(b)}		Beginning of support period		End of support period	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Long-term secure						
Leased tenure—nominated on lease	20,653	38.4	10,874	38.1	12,046	42.2
Medium-term secure						
Lease in place—not nominated on lease	4,230	7.9	1,769	6.2	1,717	6.0
Not secure						
Couch surfer	6,518	12.1	3,053	10.7	2,293	8.0
Boarder	8,474	15.8	4,184	14.6	4,073	14.3
Living with relative free	9,089	16.9	4,210	14.7	4,059	14.2
Other	8,671	16.1	4,481	15.7	4,383	15.3
Total	53,801		28,571		28,571	

(a) Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where condition of occupancy was reported at the beginning of the support period: 33,573, not applicable: 6,849.

(b) Clients who had more than one support period during the reporting period and who identified a different condition of occupancy at the beginning of the support period on each occasion are recorded more than once.

(c) Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.

(d) Numbers are for closed support periods where a valid response was recorded both when presenting to an agency and at the end of support.

Table 4.14: Clients by previous experience of homelessness, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Previous experience of homelessness	In the last month before support		In the last year before support	
	Number	Per cent ^(a)	Number	Per cent ^(a)
Sleeping rough or in non-conventional accommodation	11,457	18.7	14,589	22.2
Short-term or emergency accommodation, due to a lack of other options	19,096	31.1	23,632	36.0
Not homeless	37,713	61.5	37,335	56.9

(a) Percentages do not add to 100% because clients may have reported both 'sleeping rough' and being in 'short-term or emergency accommodation' in the time period.

Note: Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where previous episode of homelessness was reported: 30,324 for previous month and 25,526 for previous year.

Table 4.15: Support periods, by length of support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Length of support period	Closed support periods	Ongoing support periods ^(a)
<2 days	28,125	376
2 day–1 week	8,639	808
>1 week–2 weeks	4,408	2,124
>2 weeks–4 weeks	5,247	4,655
>4 weeks–6 weeks	3,491	3,684
>6 weeks	14,338	29,802
Total	64,248	41,449

(a) Ongoing support period length is measured up to 31 December 2011.

Notes

1. Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Data on the length of support periods is based on support periods that were active in the December quarter 2011, but includes periods of support that were provided in previous quarters where the support period was ongoing on 1 October 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the December quarter).

Table 4.16: Closed support periods and average length of support period by jurisdiction, December quarter 2011 not adjusted for non-response

State/territory	Closed support periods	Average length (days)
NSW	13,185	59.3
Vic	29,042	31.0
Qld	11,600	41.1
WA	6,502	45.6
Tas	1,531	47.0
ACT	698	129.6
NT	1,690	32.3
Total	64,248	41.6

Notes

1. Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Data on the length of support periods is based on support periods that were active in the December quarter 2011, but includes periods of support that were provided in previous quarters where the support period was ongoing on 1 October 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the December quarter).

Table 4.17: Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Services and assistance types	Need identified	Need identified as % of support periods ^(a)	Service provision status				
			Provided only	Provided and referred	All provided as % of need identified	Referred only	Not provided or referred
Accommodation services							
Short term or emergency accommodation	31,653	30.0	19,899	2,014	69.2	4,239	5,501
Medium term/transitional housing	23,910	22.7	11,013	1,581	52.7	4,745	6,571
Long term housing	25,032	23.7	1,752	445	8.8	10,815	12,020
Assistance to sustain housing							
Assistance to sustain tenancy or prevent tenancy failure or eviction	21,346	20.2	15,936	1,793	83.1	1,227	2,390
Assistance to prevent foreclosures or for mortgage arrears	716	0.7	415	38	63.3	112	151
Advice, advocacy, referral							
Assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance	7,741	7.3	5,189	1,243	83.1	715	594
Legal information	10,952	10.4	6,628	1,753	76.5	1,594	977
Court support	5,753	5.5	3,671	736	76.6	683	663
Advice/information	72,271	68.5	64,664	5,791	97.5	722	1,094
Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client	42,905	40.7	36,225	4,949	96.0	682	1,049
Financial information	17,642	16.7	12,709	2,000	83.4	1,334	1,599
Assistance with immigration services	928	0.9	448	216	71.6	164	100
Child & parenting specific services							
School liaison	4,095	3.9	3,150	376	86.1	194	375
Child care	4,709	4.5	3,285	582	82.1	446	396
Structured play/skills development	4,282	4.1	3,592	198	88.5	254	238
Child contact and residence arrangements	1,740	1.6	1,091	194	73.9	184	271
Child protection services	2,944	2.8	1,274	652	65.4	691	327
Parenting skills education	3,558	3.4	1,667	561	62.6	673	657
Child specific specialist counselling services	2,183	2.1	688	344	47.3	673	478
Counselling and professional services (health, legal)							
Family/relationship assistance	16,154	15.3	12,547	1,388	86.3	770	1,449
Assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems	8,166	7.7	6,199	754	85.1	424	789
Psychological services	2,800	2.7	750	373	40.1	981	696
Psychiatric services	1,357	1.3	323	196	38.2	480	358
Mental health services	4,457	4.2	1,377	691	46.4	1,405	984
Pregnancy assistance	1,003	1.0	352	216	56.6	229	206
Family planning support	807	0.8	344	102	55.3	208	153
Physical disability services	358	0.3	77	72	41.6	112	97
Intellectual disability services	425	0.4	118	69	44.0	104	134
Health/medical services	8,434	8.0	2,779	1,781	54.1	2,686	1,188

(continued)

Table 4.17 (continued): Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Services and assistance types	Need identified	Need identified as % of support periods ^(a)	Service provision status				
			Provided only	Provided and referred	All provided as % of need identified	Referred only	Not provided or referred
Professional legal services	2184	2.1	443	908	61.9	516	317
Financial advice and counselling	4,073	3.9	1,633	669	56.5	991	780
Counselling for problem gambling	233	0.2	95	14	46.8	56	68
Drug/alcohol counselling	3,311	3.1	1,307	462	53.4	743	799
Specialist counselling services	4,665	4.4	1,830	701	54.3	1,292	842
Counselling and professional services (related to personal safety)							
Assistance for incest/sexual assault	1,304	1.2	752	220	74.5	132	200
Assistance for domestic/family violence	21,229	20.1	17,584	1,591	90.3	768	1,286
Assistance for trauma	4,927	4.7	3,406	513	79.5	393	615
Engagement with education/training/employment							
Employment assistance	4,507	4.3	2,526	488	66.9	563	930
Training assistance	3,744	3.5	2,228	405	70.3	528	583
Educational assistance	6,737	6.4	4,348	815	76.6	684	890
Homeless living support							
Material aid/brokerage	31,245	29.6	23,912	3,496	87.7	2,237	1,600
Living skills/personal development	17,201	16.3	14,705	968	91.1	525	1,003
Assertive outreach	12,663	12.0	10,679	687	89.8	629	668
Retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings	9,334	8.8	7,774	540	89.1	349	671
Meals	21,209	20.1	19,498	816	95.8	586	309
Laundry/shower facilities	16,792	15.9	16,182	234	97.8	212	164
Recreation	14,798	14.0	13,648	516	95.7	294	340
Transport	21,452	20.3	19,333	1,113	95.3	400	606
Other basic assistance	53,068	50.3	48,756	2,981	97.5	591	740
Specialist services for specific needs							
Interpreter services	1,307	1.2	831	251	82.8	188	37
Culturally specific services	3,677	3.5	2,196	760	80.4	491	230
Assistance to connect culturally	2,157	2.0	1,250	426	77.7	302	179
Other specialised service	6,907	6.5	3,861	1,396	76.1	1,238	412

(a) Total support with needs identified, provided or referred included: 105,500.

Notes

1. Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Agencies can provide multiple services to a client, so numbers will not sum to the total number of support periods.
3. Support periods where services and assistance was not reported: 197.

Table 4.18: Support periods by length of accommodation, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Length of accommodation	Closed support periods ^(a)	Ongoing support periods ^{(a)(b)}	All support periods		
			Support periods with short-term or emergency accommodation	Support periods with medium-term transitional accommodation	Support periods with long-term accommodation
No accommodation	46,286	22,080	90,175	101,100	112,181
1 day–1 week	7,622	1,524	9,582	533	466
>1 week–2 weeks	1,969	1,143	2,892	485	210
>2 weeks–4 weeks	1,975	1,730	3,283	790	272
>4 weeks–6 weeks	1,365	1,644	2,405	953	303
>6 weeks	5,031	13,328	6,804	11,280	1,709
Total	64,248	41,449	115,141	115,141	115,141

(a) Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.

(b) Ongoing accommodation length is measured up to 31 December 2011.

Notes

1. Data on the length of accommodation is based on support periods that were active in the December quarter 2011, but includes periods of accommodation that were provided in the previous quarter (September quarter 2011) where the accommodation was ongoing on 1 October 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the December quarter).
2. Clients can receive different types of accommodation in the one support period. Total support periods with accommodation provided: 40,256.

Table 4.19: Total number of nights of accommodation provided, by jurisdiction and accommodation type, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response

Accommodation type	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Short-term or emergency	161,729	86,798	196,811	44,939	31,905	22,069	29,869	17,763	591,883
Medium-term/transitional	310,665	353,718	111,722	68,680	39,792	24,706	37,760	20,513	967,556
Long-term	33,230	29,784	14,672	23,618	34,620	3,115	8,222	1,136	148,397
Total	505,625	470,300	323,206	137,236	106,317	49,889	75,852	39,413	1,707,838

Note: Data in this table are adjusted for non-response, and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 4.20: Support periods with accommodation by jurisdiction, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response

State	Support periods with accommodation	Average accommodation length (nights) ^(a)	Average support periods with accommodation per day	Average support periods per day
NSW	12,149	73.3	5,497	13,290
Vic	10,383	77.2	5,113	14,870
Qld	9,285	57.1	3,515	7,397
SA	3,173	50.6	1,161	6,740
WA	4,378	52.8	1,492	4,753
Tas	1,494	55.7	542	1,382
NT	1,723	39.9	429	820
ACT	1,260	110.1	824	1,682
Total	43,845	66.3	18,574	50,934

(a) Data on the length of accommodation is based on support periods that were active in the December quarter 2011, but includes periods of accommodation that were provided in the previous quarter (September quarter 2011) where the accommodation was ongoing on 1 October 2011 (i.e. at the beginning of the December quarter).

Notes: Data in this table are adjusted for non-response, and this methodology results in estimated figures that are not whole numbers. As a result, all figures in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 4.21: Closed support periods, by case management plan status, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Case management plan status	Number	Per cent
Case management plan in place	23,876	37.5
Extent to which case management goals achieved		
Not at all	2,413	10.1
Up to half	6,913	29.0
Half or more	4,596	19.2
All	9,954	41.7
No case management plan	39,808	62.5
Reason no case management plan		
Client did not agree to one	4,977	12.5
Service episode too short	24,009	60.3
Part of another person's case management plan	6,667	16.7
Other	4,155	10.4
Total support periods	63,684	100.0

Notes

1. Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where case management plan status was reported: 564.

Table 4.22: Closed support periods by reason support period ended and length of support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response

Reason support period ended	Length of support period			
	≤ 1 week		> 1 week	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Client referred to another specialist homelessness agency	2,467	6.4	1,665	6.6
Client referred to a mainstream agency	1,593	4.2	654	2.6
Client's immediate needs met/case management goals achieved	19,071	49.7	9,790	38.9
Maximum service period reached	533	1.4	896	3.6
Service withdrawn from client and no referral made	508	1.3	978	3.9
Client no longer requested assistance	8,790	22.9	6,059	24.0
Client did not turn up	1,123	2.9	1,046	4.2
Lost contact with client	1,793	4.7	2,402	9.5
Client institutionalised	44	0.1	85	0.3
Client incarcerated	39	0.1	107	0.4
Client died	16	0.0	42	0.2
Other	2,396	6.2	1,472	5.8
Total	38,373	100.0	25,196	100.0

Notes

1. Excludes SA data—see Chapter 1 for more information.
2. Number of clients who did not have a support period at any time during the reporting period where a reason for support period end was reported: 679.

Glossary

The following concepts and terms have been used in this report. More detailed descriptions of data concepts can be found in the SHSC's Collection Manual (AIHW 2011).

Age: Age is calculated as age of the client on the start date of their first support period of the reporting period or the first date of the reporting period, whichever of the two is the later date.

Care and protection order: Legal orders or arrangements which give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. The level of responsibility varies with the type of order or arrangement. These orders include guardianship and custody orders, third party parental responsibility orders, supervisory orders, interim and temporary orders, and other administrative arrangements.

Client: 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 a parent or guardian and receive a service are considered to be a client. This includes a service that they share with their parent or guardian such as meals or accommodation.

Children who present with a parent or guardian but do not directly receive a service are not considered to be clients. This includes situations where the parent or guardian receives assistance to prevent tenancy failure or eviction.

Closed support period: A support period that had finished on or before the end of the reporting period—31 December 2011.

Conditions of occupancy: A group of data items describing the security of a client's accommodation. Information provided is usually used in conjunction with other information such as 'tenure type' and 'dwelling type'.

Homelessness: A person is homeless if they are either:

- living in non-conventional accommodation or 'sleeping rough', or
- living in short-term or emergency accommodation due to lack of other options.

Material aid/brokerage: Money given to the client for bond/rent/transport etc. and other non-monetary assistance such as clothing, food, vouchers and bus/train tickets.

This assistance is not expected to be repaid.

No tenure: A type of tenure recorded for clients who are sleeping rough or do not have a legal right to occupy a dwelling and may be asked to leave at any time.

Includes couch surfing, living in an institutional setting, living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting, using cars or railway carriages, improvised dwellings or living in the long grass.

Non-conventional accommodation: Non-conventional accommodation is defined as:

- living on the streets
- sleeping in parks

- squatting
- staying in cars or railway carriages
- living in improvised dwellings
- living in long grass.

Ongoing support period: A support period is considered ongoing at the end of the reporting period if each of the following conditions is met:

- no support end-date is provided
- no after-support information is provided
- corresponding client data was received in the month following the end of the reporting period.

Presenting unit: A client or group of clients that present together to a specialist homelessness agency and receive assistance.

Primary homelessness: People without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, in parks, under bridges, in derelict buildings, improvised dwellings, etc.

Reporting period: For the purposes of this report the reporting period is 1 October 2011 to 31 December 2011. This means that data in this report relates to clients supported in this period, and where data were received and validated by the AIHW by 2 May 2012.

Short-term or emergency accommodation: Short-term or emergency accommodation includes:

- refuges
- crisis shelter
- couch surfing
- living temporarily with friends and relatives
- insecure accommodation on a short-term basis
- emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency (e.g. in hotels, motels etc.).

The following short-term accommodation options are not included:

- hotels, motels, caravan parks and other temporary accommodation used when a person is on holiday or travelling
- custodial and care arrangements, such as prisons and hospitals
- temporary accommodation utilised by a person while renovating their usual residence or building a new residence (e.g. weekenders, caravans).

Specialist homelessness agency: An organisation that receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services. Assistance is provided to clients aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Agencies may also receive funding from other sources.

Inclusion of agencies in the SHSC is determined by the state and territory departments responsible for administering the government response to homelessness. Not all funded agencies are required to participate in the data collection.

Specialist homelessness service(s): Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness.

The specialist homelessness services that are in scope for this collection and that may be provided during a support period are:

Housing/accommodation services:

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

General assistance and support:

- assertive outreach
- assistance to obtain/maintain government allowance
- employment assistance
- training assistance
- educational assistance
- financial information
- material aid/brokerage
- assistance for incest/sexual
- assistance for domestic/family violence
- family/relationship assistance
- assistance for trauma
- assistance with challenging social/behavioural problems
- living skills/personal development
- legal information
- court support
- advice/information
- retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings
- advocacy/liaison on behalf of client
- school liaison
- child care
- structured play/skills development
- child contact and residence arrangements
- meals
- laundry/shower facilities
- recreation
- transport
- other basic assistance.

Specialised services:

- child protection services

- parenting skills education
- child specific specialist counselling services
- psychological services
- psychiatric services
- mental health services
- pregnancy assistance
- family planning support
- physical disability services
- intellectual disability services
- health/medical services
- professional legal services
- financial advice and counselling
- counselling for problem gambling
- drug/alcohol counselling
- specialist counselling services
- interpreter services
- assistance with immigration services
- culturally specific services
- assistance to connect culturally
- other specialised services.

Support period: The period of time a client receives services from an agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service from an agency.

A support period 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.

Where a client has an appointment with the agency which is more than a calendar month in the future then it is not necessary to close the support period. This is because it is expected that there is an ongoing relationship with the client.

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

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Appendix A

Non-response adjustment (weighting) methodology

This section describes the methodology used to create the weighted estimates in chapters 2–4.

Only basic data items have been adjusted for non-response in the December quarter 2011, because the application of non-response adjustment to more complex data items requires a stratified approach which was not feasible for the December quarter 2011.

A more complete method for adjusting for missing support period information is being developed; the method described in this section is a simplified version of that method.

The weighting methodology

Non-response adjustment produces estimates of the figures that would result if data were available for all entities expected to respond. That is, estimates of the figures that would have been observed if the December quarter 2011 snapshot contained data on all support periods active in that quarter, for all agencies expected to participate in that quarter; and if all of those support period records contained information that could be used to form a valid Statistical Linkage Key (SLK). The SLK is used to create client-level data by enabling linkage of support periods that are likely to belong to the same individual client.

Non-response adjustment in the SHSC is performed for support periods and, separately, for clients, as follows:

1. support period records are weighted to account for agencies that did not participate
2. client records are weighted to account for:
 - a. support period-level weighting, i.e. non-participation of agencies
 - b. support period records with invalid Statistical Linkage Keys (SLKs)
 - c. mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity.

Support period weights

Support period weights adjust only for agency non-participation. The weight for a support period is:

$$w_i = \frac{N_A}{n_{A,r}}$$

where w_i is the support period weight for a valid support period, N_A is the total number of agencies expected to participate at some time during the quarter, and $n_{A,r}$ is the number of agencies that respond at some time during the quarter.

Client weights

Clients may have more than one support period in the quarter. Further, clients may be supported at an agency that participates in the collection in one support period, and in another support period the client may be supported at a non-participating agency—this is

referred to as mixed agency participation. As well, a client may provide information that can be used to form a valid SLK in some support periods but not others. This could happen, for example, where one support period was brief and another support period was longer and agency workers were able to obtain more data— this is referred to as mixed SLK validity.

The weighting process accounts for mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity. It begins by accounting for non-responding agencies and support periods with invalid SLKs in aggregate. An intermediate weight is calculated as:

$$w_j = \frac{N_A}{n_{A,r}} * \frac{N_S}{n_{S,v}}$$

where w_j is the intermediate weight for a valid support period, N_A is the total number of agencies expected to participate at some time during the quarter, $n_{A,r}$ is the number of agencies that respond at some time during the quarter, N_S is the number of support periods for which data was supplied, and $n_{S,v}$ is the number of support periods with a valid SLK.

Next, the process accounts for mixed agency participation and mixed SLK validity by taking into account the number of support periods recorded for each client. Clients with one support period are less likely to have at least one support period at a participating agency, therefore they require larger adjustments than clients with many support periods, because they are more likely to have at least one support period at a participating agency. The weight for a client is:

$$w_k = \frac{1}{1 - \prod_{j=1}^{n_k} (1 - w_{k,j}^{-1})}$$

where w_k is the client weight, $w_{k,j}$ is the j^{th} intermediate weight for client k , n_k is the number of observed support periods for client k , and $\prod_{j=1}^{n_k}$ is the product over all support periods for client k .

Considerations

Non-response adjustment makes the following core assumptions:

- Responses and non-responses are clearly defined, that is, agencies that should have participated in the collection can be divided into two distinct groups—those that participated and those that did not.
- Responses are representative of non-responses, that is, it is assumed that agencies that respond are similar to agencies that do not respond. Similarly support periods with valid SLKs are assumed to be similar to support periods without valid SLKs.

When these assumptions do not hold, estimates are biased (i.e. higher or lower, on average, than their true values). Varying agency participation (a violation of the assumption that responses and non-responses are clearly defined) and lack of appropriate stratification (a violation of the assumption that, within strata, responses are representative of non-responses) lead to bias.

Varying agency participation

Agencies were designated as ‘participating’ if they returned support period data at any time during the reporting period.

Not all SHSC participating agencies returned support period data in all three months of the December quarter. This is likely because:

- Some agencies were not ready to participate in the new collection earlier in the quarter.
- Some agencies did not provide later months' information in time to be included in this report.
- Some agencies had activity for some months but not others.

Ideally, non-response adjustment would take account of this varying participation over time; however, the quantity and quality of SHSC data processed to date does not lend itself to such a refinement.

Unless varying agency participation occurs only due to some agencies having activity for some months but not others, designating agencies as 'participating' if they participated at any time during the reporting period causes weighted estimates—both of numbers of support periods and of numbers of clients—to be, on average, underestimates. This occurs because agencies that participated in only one or two months in the quarter have missing support periods, and the weighting methodology does not adjust for these missing periods.

Stratification

Non-response adjustment is typically applied using a stratified approach: respondents are split into strata—often based on location, age group and sex—and weights are calculated within strata. This occurs because persons with the same location, age group and sex can be assumed to be more similar than persons generally.

For the December quarter 2011, a stratified approach could not be implemented because there was only one previous reporting period with which to compare the December quarter 2011 data. Non-response adjustment benefits from comparison of response over time to indicate the efficacy of a particular adjustment approach.

As a result, national-level weights are applied to state/territory estimates. This means, that all weighted estimates for jurisdictions with high agency participation, such as South Australia, are likely to be over estimates; and all weighted estimates for jurisdictions with low agency participation, such as the Northern Territory, are most likely under estimates.

Weights generated for all persons regardless of age or sex were used to create estimates of numbers of clients by age and sex. Because SLK validity varies between age and sex groups, this means that some weighted estimates are likely to be under estimates and others are likely to be over estimates. For example, the number of clients aged 0–14 is likely to be higher than Table 4.1 indicates, because SLK validity is low for persons aged 0–14.

The weighting methodology will be improved over the next year, as more SHSC data are collected. It is planned to implement a stratified approach; this will reduce (and in some cases eliminate) bias caused by varying rates of agency participation and SLK validity.

Comparability of weighted estimates over time

Non-response adjustment produces estimates of the figures that would result if data were available for all entities expected to respond. If the entities expected to respond in one time period are different from those in another time period, data for the two time periods are not directly comparable.

In the September quarter 2011, 1,443 agencies were expected to participate and 1,339 provided data. 80,450 clients were observed in the 1,339 agencies; as a result of non-response adjustment, it was estimated that 91,627 clients visited at least one of the 1,443 agencies.

In the December quarter 2011, 1,478 agencies were expected to participate and 1,357 provided data, including some new (large) agencies in Victoria that were not expected to participate in the September quarter. In the 1,357 agencies that provided data, 86,212 support periods were observed; as a result of non-response adjustment, it was estimated that 98,742 clients visited at least one of the 1,478 agencies.

Based on these data, it cannot be concluded that there were more clients of specialist homelessness agencies in the December quarter than in the September quarter – some agencies that participated in the December quarter and were not expected to participate in the September quarter may have, in the September quarter, assisted clients not among the 91,627 estimated to have visited an agency that was expected to participate in the September quarter. It can, however, be concluded that the number of clients visiting at least one agency expected to participate in the December quarter was higher than the number of clients visiting at least one agency expected to participate in the September quarter.

In the annual report, data for all quarters will be weighted on a common basis. However, due to the difference between the weighting methodology that will be used for the annual report and that used in the quarterly reports (as well as a range of other reasons, including more data being submitted and improved validation) annual data will not be directly comparable with quarterly data.

Appendix B

Data quality statement (Specialist Homelessness Services Collection—December quarter 2011)

Summary of key data quality issues

- The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection (SAAP NDC). There are significant differences between the two, creating comparability issues.
- Analysis of the December quarter 2011 SHSC data identified some data quality issues. In particular, the rate of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses was high for many data items in the December quarter, as it was in the September quarter. Data items with very high rates of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses are not reported on in this publication.
- Some new agencies (that did not participate in the September quarter) began submitting data in the December quarter 2011. This explains, to some extent, the lack of improvement in the rate of missing responses between the September and December quarters.
- All agencies that receive funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC, but only those expected to provide data are covered. Many high volume services and intake services are not covered.
- 92% of covered agencies returned support period data for the December quarter 2011, although some reported for only one or two months. This is a one percentage point decrease from the September quarter 2011. The increase in the agencies expected to submit data for the December quarter 2011 may account for the decrease in participation.
- Matching of data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times requires a valid statistical linkage key (SLK). 93% of support periods had a valid SLK in the December quarter 2011.

Description

The SHSC collects information on people who receive services from agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or the NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services. A limited amount of data is also collected about clients who seek, but do not receive, assistance from a specialist homelessness agency.

Data are collected monthly from agencies participating in the collection.

The SHSC replaced the SAAP NDC on July 1 2011. There are significant differences between the SAAP NDC and the SHSC.

Institutional environment

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent statutory authority established in 1987, governed by a management Board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health and Ageing portfolio.

The AIHW aims to provide authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing. The Institute collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The Institute also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

The *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*, in conjunction with compliance to the *Privacy Act 1988*, ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website <www.aihw.gov.au>.

The SHSC was developed by AIHW in conjunction with the states and territories and is being administered by the AIHW.

Timeliness

The SHSC began on 1 July 2011. Under the collection guidelines, specialist homelessness agencies provide their data to the AIHW each month, although delays in the provision of data from agencies do occur. Once validated, submitted data are regularly loaded to a Master Database. From this Master Database 'snapshots' are created at particular points in time for reporting purposes. Snapshots are taken following the end of each quarter, and another one for the whole collection year for annual reporting. From 2012–13, it is planned to publish quarterly results by the end of the following quarter, and annual results in October each year.

The December quarter 2011 snapshot contains data submitted to the AIHW for the October, November and December 2011 collection months, using responses received and validated as at 2 May 2012 when the snapshot was taken.

Accessibility

Published results from the December quarter 2011 are available in this report and elsewhere on the AIHW website.

Data not available online or in reports can be obtained from the Communications, Media and Marketing Unit on (02) 6244 1032 or via email to info@aihw.gov.au. Requests that take longer than half an hour to compile are charged for on a cost-recovery basis.

Interpretability

Information on the development of the SHSC, definitions and concepts, and collection materials and processes can be found on the AIHW website, <www.aihw.gov.au>. Information on definitions, concepts and classifications can also be found in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2011b).

Relevance

Scope and coverage

The SHSC is a key source of information for measuring the outcomes and outputs for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, who seek specialist homelessness services.

The SHSC collects, via specialist homelessness agencies, information on people who seek and receive services from those agencies. All agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC. However, only those identified by state and territory departments responsible for the provision of services are covered, because some 'high volume' services that provide short-term interventions (e.g. referral, meals) may not be expected to participate. In this quarter (December quarter 2011), 1,478 agencies were in coverage.

Not everyone in scope for SHSC is homeless, because specialist homelessness agencies provide services to people at risk of homelessness, as well as to people who are currently homeless.

Not all homeless people and people at risk of homelessness are in scope for the SHSC—only those who seek services from specialist homelessness agencies are in scope. In the client collection, data are collected by homelessness agency workers for each client support period. Some basic information is also collected on instances where people seek, but do not receive, assistance from a homelessness agency ('unassisted people').

Reference period

SHSC data are reported to the AIHW every month, and, once validated, these data are loaded to a Master Database. Snapshots of this database are created at particular points in time for reporting purposes. Snapshots are taken following the end of each quarter for quarterly reporting.

The 'December quarter 2011' data refers to data for October, November and December, 2011. It covers support periods active in at least one of those months: clients who had an active support period in at least one of those months, and unassisted people who sought services in one of those months. Information on unassisted people is not presented in this report due to issues with the quality of these data arising from inconsistent interpretation of the data concepts.

Geographic detail

Data are published at the national and state/territory level.

Statistical standards

A client is defined in the SHSC as a person who receives a specialist homelessness service – assistance provided to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. A client may be of any age – children are clients if they receive a service from a specialist homelessness service.

A support period is defined in the SHSC as a period of support provided by a specialist homelessness service agency to a client.

Standard Australian Classification of Countries 2008 (ABS 2008) codes were used as the code-frame for questions relating to country of birth.

Australian Classification for Source of Income 2010 (ABS 2010b) codes were used as the code-frame for questions relating to a client's source of income.

Accuracy

Potential sources of error

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.

Data validation

The AIHW receives data from specialist homelessness agencies every month. These data go through two processes of data validation, that is, error checking. Firstly, data validation is incorporated into the client management systems (CMSs) most agencies use to record their data. Secondly, data are submitted through the AIHW online reporting web-portal, Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR). SHOR completes a more thorough data validation and reports (to staff of the homelessness agency) any errors that need correcting before data can be submitted.

Agency participation

Ninety-two per cent of agencies returned support period data for at least one month in the December quarter 2011. This is one percentage point lower than in the September quarter 2011. The decrease may be due to an increase in the number of agencies covered for the December quarter 2011 – of relevant agencies that were expected to participate in the September quarter, 93% participated in the December quarter.

Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) validity

An individual client may seek or receive support on more than one occasion – either from the same agency or from a different agency. Data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times is matched based on a statistical linkage key (SLK) which allows client level data to be created. The SLK is constructed from information about the client's date of birth, sex and an alphacode based on selected letters of their name.

If a support period record does not have a valid SLK, it cannot be linked to a client, and thus it is not included in client-level tables (although it is included in support period-level tables). In the December quarter 2011, 93% of support periods had a valid SLK – the same as in the September quarter.

Incomplete responses

In many support periods, in the December quarter 2011, valid responses were not recorded for all questions – invalid responses were recorded, ‘don’t know’ was selected, or no response was recorded.

For example:

- ‘facilities/institutions the client has been in in the last 12 months’ and ‘time period the client received assistance for their mental health issue’ have the highest rates of invalid/‘don’t know’/missing response—53% and 52%, respectively
- ‘dwelling type at presentation’ and the outcome variable ‘dwelling type at the last service date in the reporting period’ have invalid/missing/don’t know response rates of 26% and 25%, respectively
- ‘main reason for seeking assistance’ has an invalid/missing/don’t know response rate of 17%.

The rate of invalid/‘don’t know’/missing responses in the December quarter 2011 was similar to that in the September quarter.

Analysis indicates that support periods in agencies in Victoria and the ACT (which have a central intake model), in agencies that provide referral services, and in agencies that did not participate in the collection in the September quarter, are more likely to have many missing responses. Many intake services in Victoria that did not participate in the September quarter, began submitting data in the December quarter 2011. This may explain why the rate of missing responses did not decrease in the December quarter.

Support periods with invalid/‘don’t know’/missing responses were retained in the collection and, due to the difficulty of doing so accurately, no attempt was made to deduce or impute the true value of invalid/‘don’t know’/missing responses.

Data items with very high rates of invalid/‘don’t know’/missing responses were not reported on in this publication.

Non-response bias

Less than 100% agency participation, less than 100% SLK validity and a high rate of incomplete responses do not necessarily mean that estimates are biased. If the non-respondents are not systematically different in terms of how they would have answered the questions, then there is no bias. Given the results of analyses of agency participation, SLK validity and incomplete responses performed to date, some non-response bias is expected.

Non-response adjustment

As some data are missing because of agency non-participation and SLK invalidity, non-response adjustment (or ‘weighting’) has been applied to create a selection of weighted estimates. Only a limited number of estimates were amenable to non-response adjustment in the December quarter 2011.

A more complete method for adjusting for missing information will be applied to annual data; the method used in the December quarter 2011 is a simplified version of that method.

Non-response adjustment in the SHSC is performed for support periods and, separately, for clients. The process used is described in Appendix A.

The process accounts only for agency non-participation and SLK invalidity—due to the difficulty of doing so accurately, no adjustments are made for incomplete responses.

In the December quarter 2011, non-response adjustment was performed at the national level only. This may lead to biased estimates, because analysis has shown that agency participation and SLK validity vary with characteristics such as state/territory, age group and sex, and the non-response adjustment process does not account for this.

The non-response adjustment process used in the December quarter 2011, which designates agencies 'participating' if they returned support period data at any time during the reporting period, causes weighted estimates to be, on average, underestimates.

Improvements to the weighting methodology will be implemented during 2011–12. In particular, the method used to weight the annual data will be much more extensive than the method used for the December quarter 2011 data. This will lead to comparability issues, as different weighting methodologies give different estimates for the same raw data.

Coherence

The SHSC replaces the SAAP NDC, which began in 1996. The SHSC differs from the SAAP NDC in many respects.

The major definitional differences between SAAP and SHSC relate to the capture of information about children and support. In the SAAP NDC, children who accompanied a parent or guardian were counted as accompanying children; in the SHSC, children are included as clients (in their own right) if they directly receive a service. In SAAP, support was considered to entail generally 1 hour or more of a worker's time; in SHSC no time-related condition exists. Further information on the comparability of SHSC and SAAP can be found in the report outlining findings from the September quarter 2011 (see Appendix A, AIHW 2012).

Comparison with other collections

The other major data sources on homelessness are:

- The ABS Census, which collects data from all persons in Australia on Census night, including data allowing respondents' homelessness status to be derived (see Chamberlain & Mackenzie 2008). The cultural definition of homelessness is used, which identifies three homelessness categories:
 - Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation.
 - Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another, including all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided by specialist homelessness services; people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own; and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis.
 - Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium- to long-term basis (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2008).

The cultural definition of homelessness does not define 'at risk of homelessness'.

Data are currently available for 2001 and 2006.

- The ABS General Social Survey's homelessness module (ABS 2010a), which collects data from usual residents of private dwellings, including data on whether respondents have ever been homeless. The survey defines homelessness as being without a permanent place to live for a selection of reasons. Data are currently available for 2010 only.

- The National Census of Homelessness School Students, which collects data on homeless school students via principals of all government and Catholic secondary schools (Mackenzie & Chamberlain 2008). Both the cultural definition of homelessness and a service delivery definition are used. Data are currently available for 2006 and selected prior years.
- Because these collections differ greatly from SHSC in scope, collection methodology, definitions and reference periods, comparisons between collections should be made with caution.

List of tables

Table 1.1:	Number of clients in special groups of interest, and overlap with other groups, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	6
Table 4.1:	Clients and support periods, by age group, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response	28
Table 4.2:	Clients and support periods, by state and territory, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response	29
Table 4.3:	Clients by Indigenous status and age and sex, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	30
Table 4.4:	Clients by country of birth (top three countries only) and year of arrival, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	31
Table 4.5:	Clients born overseas by year of arrival, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	31
Table 4.6:	Clients by presenting unit type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	31
Table 4.7:	Client groups receiving assistance, by presenting unit type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	32
Table 4.8:	Clients by reasons for seeking assistance, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	33
Table 4.9:	Clients aged 15 or over by main source of income, at the beginning of the support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	35
Table 4.10:	Clients aged 15 or over by labour force status, at beginning of the support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	35
Table 4.11:	Clients and closed support periods, by dwelling type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	36
Table 4.12:	Clients and closed support periods at the beginning and end of support period, by tenure type, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	37
Table 4.13:	Clients and closed support periods, by conditions of occupancy, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response.....	38
Table 4.14:	Clients by previous experience of homelessness, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	38
Table 4.15:	Support periods, by length of support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	39
Table 4.16:	Closed support periods and average length of support period by jurisdiction, December quarter 2011 not adjusted for non-response.....	39
Table 4.17:	Support periods, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response.....	40
Table 4.18:	Support periods by length of accommodation, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	42
Table 4.19:	Total number of nights of accommodation provided, by jurisdiction and accommodation type, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response.....	42

Table 4.20:	Support periods with accommodation by jurisdiction, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response	43
Table 4.21:	Closed support periods, by case management plan status, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response.....	43
Table 4.22:	Closed support periods by reason support period ended and length of support period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response	44

List of figures

Figure 1.1	Summary of number of support periods and indicative duration over the reporting period, December quarter 2011, not adjusted for non-response.....	3
Figure 2.1:	Clients by age and sex, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response	7
Figure 2.2:	Clients, by state and territory and sex, December quarter 2011, adjusted for non-response	8
Figure 3.2:	Older clients, by age and sex, December quarter 2011 (per cent of all older clients), not adjusted for non-response	18
Figure 3.3:	Clients who received accommodation, by age and sex, December quarter 2011	21
Figure 3.4:	Clients at risk of homelessness, by age and sex, December quarter 2011 (per cent of all clients at risk of homelessness), not adjusted for non-response.....	25

List of boxes

Box 3.1	How we identified young people presenting alone.....	13
Box 3.2	How we identified older people	17
Box 3.3	How we identified clients who received accommodation.....	20
Box 3.4	How we identified clients who were at risk of homelessness	24



Each year many Australians experience homelessness or find themselves in circumstances of risk of becoming homeless. This report presents the second quarterly results of the new Specialist Homelessness Services Collection. This collection replaces the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection which collected data on homelessness service provision by Australian governments since 1996.