



Gaps in Service Provision in the Housing and Homelessness Sector

A Shelter SA Summary of the AIHW Report

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Report on [*People in Short-Term or Emergency Accommodation: A Profile of Specialist Homelessness Services Clients*](#) presents a comprehensive analysis of people experiencing homelessness in Australia living in short-term or emergency accommodation, over a 4-year period. On Census night in 2016, around 21,200 Australians were in short-term or emergency accommodation. Short-term or emergency accommodation can include:

- > Refuges;
- > Crisis shelters;
- > Living temporarily with friends or relatives; and
- > Emergency accommodation arranged by a specialist homelessness agency.

Analysis of the service use patterns of clients accessing short-term or emergency accommodation in 2011-12 revealed three predominant cohorts:

- > Persistent service users (clients in short-term or emergency accommodation accessed services every financial year from 2011-12 to 2014-15);
- > Service cyclers (clients in short-term or emergency accommodation accessed services in 2 or 3 years of the 4-year period); and
- > Transitory service users (clients in short-term or emergency accommodation accessed services in 2011-12 only).

From 2011-12 until 2015-16, 14% of people accessing short-term and emergency accommodation were persistent service users, 43% were service cyclers, and 43% were transitory service users.


Shelter SA chose to focus on the data most relevant to persistent service users, as we believe that a 'housing first' approach would help to break the cycle of homelessness and decrease the likelihood of people re-entering the homelessness system multiple times. Persistent service users are a direct product of a broken housing system, where people cannot afford to buy or rent privately, but waiting lists for social housing are far too long; homelessness is the only option for people who cannot find safe and stable housing. While emergency and short-term accommodation is essential in assisting people find temporary shelter, we strongly believe that an increase in public and community housing would help minimise the percentage of those experiencing repeat homelessness.

Unmet Needs for Long-Term Housing

Clients receiving support from Specialist Homelessness Services often require a wide range of services. Unmet needs are described as the services that a client identified as needing in a particular support period, but were either not provided or not referred to the service. According to the AIHW, the largest gap in accommodation service provision for persistent service users is meeting their long-term housing needs. It is not surprising that the need for any accommodation is high for persistent service users

(92%). However, despite this obvious level of need, and the importance of safe and secure housing for overall health and wellbeing, almost one-third of persistent service users who identified a need for long-term housing were not provided or referred for this housing solution during the years 2011-15.

Accommodation services not provided or referred to clients who identified a need, persistent service users, by sex (%)



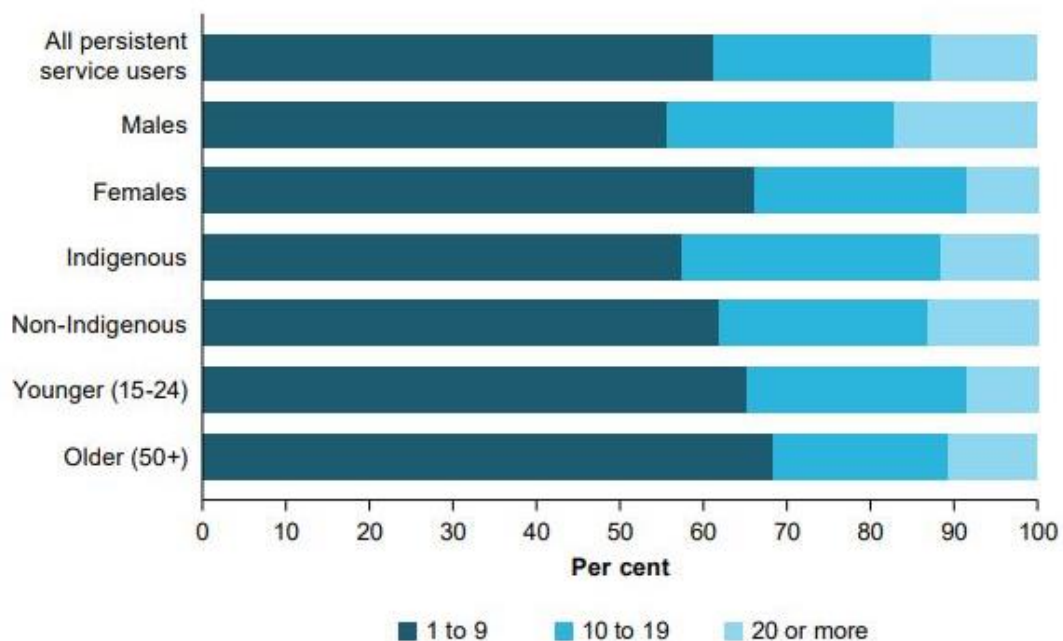
	All persistent service users	Male	Female
All accommodation types	4%	4%	3%
Short-term or emergency accommodation	8%	7%	10%
Medium-term or transitional housing	19%	24%	14%
Long-term housing	30%	36%	25%

Source: AIHW

Support Periods for Persistent Users

Across a four-year period until June 2015, there were 2,900 persistent service users and these clients received almost 32,000 support periods during this time.

Number of support periods, persistent service users (%)



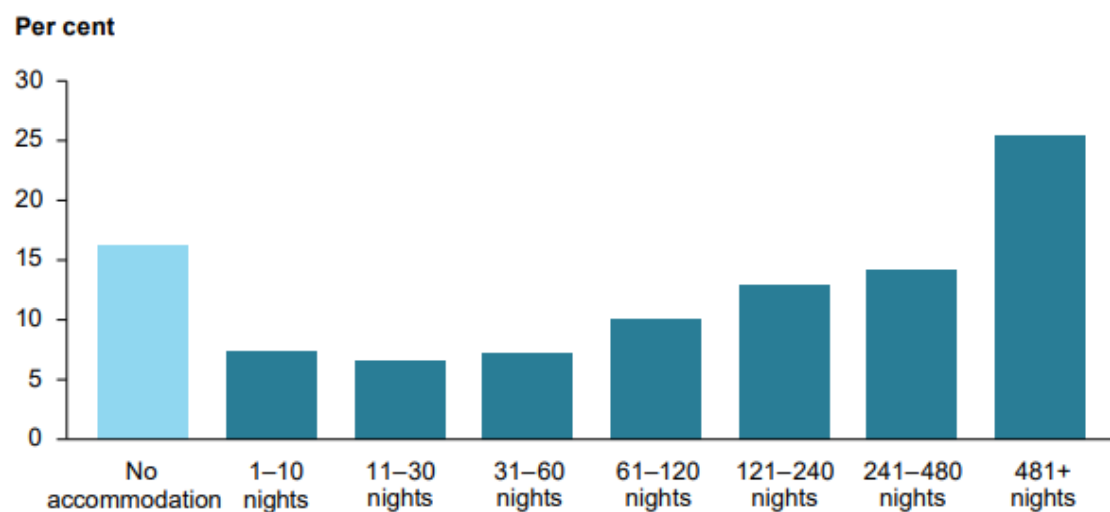
Source: AIHW

Data on the number of support periods for persistent service users shows:

- › Female persistent service users were more likely to have fewer support periods in total than males.
- › Older clients (aged 50 years and over) had fewer support periods across the four years, compared with younger clients (aged 15-24).
- › While non-Indigenous peoples were more likely to have received 1-9 support periods than Indigenous clients, Indigenous peoples were more likely to receive 10-19 support periods.

While 92% of persistent service users identified a need for accommodation services, almost 16% did not receive any nights of accommodation. 53% of persistent service users received 121 nights or more of accommodation (roughly 4 months or more) over the four-year period.

Nights of accommodation, persistent service users (%)

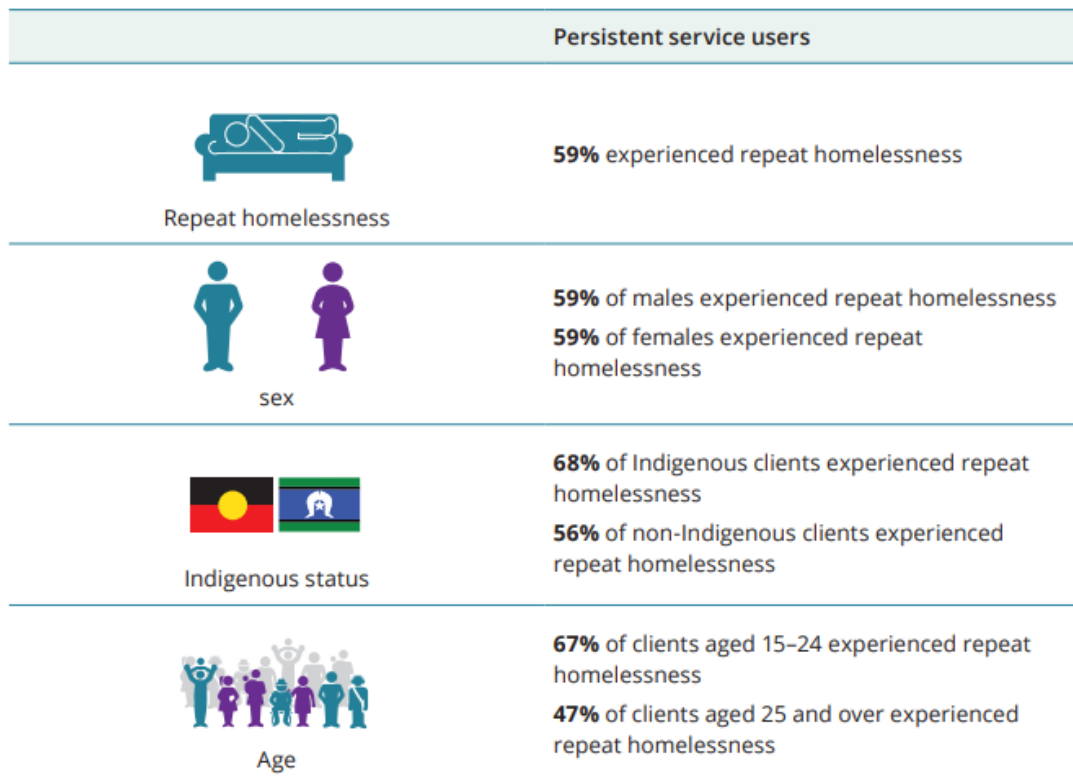


Source: AIHW

Housing Outcomes for Persistent Service Users

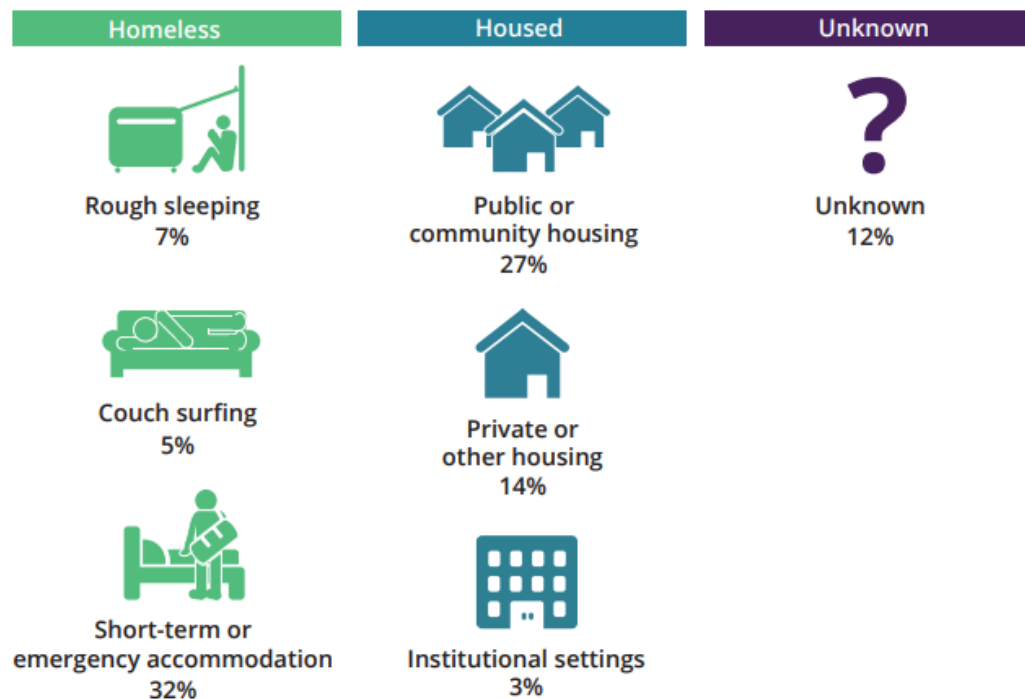
Housing outcomes for persistent service users are based on a study from 2011-12 until 2015. 29% of persistent service users were in ongoing support at the end of the study, much higher than other short-term or emergency accommodation cohorts. 59% of persistent service users experienced repeat episodes of homelessness between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

Repeat episodes of homelessness, persistent users (%)



Source: AIHW

Housing situation at the end of the support and client percentage (persistent users)



Source: AIHW

