

5 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

5.1 OVERVIEW

In the Northern Territory, 91 per cent of people answered the census question: 'Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander origin?' and 30 per cent identified as Indigenous. However, there was no information on the Indigenous status of the homeless young people staying temporarily with friends or relatives, who were not counted in the census. We use census data on homeless people staying with other households (the 'usual address' question) to estimate how many Indigenous young people were missed by the census.

There is a risk of underestimation, because many Indigenous people make sense of the 'usual address' question within a different cultural frame of reference. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they often move in with members of their extended family. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on census night, because 'home' is understood in a different way. This creates under-reporting in this category.

5.1 NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATES PER 10 000, 2001 AND 2006

	2001			2006		
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total*
Number	3559	1864	5423	3126	1652	4785
Rate	266	344	288	235	287	248

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in seven cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

The research found 1652 homeless Indigenous people in the Northern Territory on census night 2006 (Table 5.1). The rate was 287 per 10 000 of the population, compared with a rate of 344 in 2001. The rate of homelessness for non-Indigenous people was 235 per 10 000 in 2006, compared with 266 per 10 000 in 2001. Indigenous people were overrepresented in the

homeless population in all states and territories in 2006, but the rate of Indigenous homelessness has decreased in the Northern Territory since 2001.

5.2 DARWIN, ALICE SPRINGS AND NORTHERN TERRITORY BALANCE

In Darwin, the rate of Indigenous homelessness was 601 per 10 000 compared with 189 per 10 000 for non-Indigenous people. Similarly, in Alice Springs, the rate for Indigenous people was 315 per 10 000 compared with 154 per 10 000 for non-Indigenous people. However, in the Northern Territory Balance (excluding Alice Springs), the rate of homelessness for Indigenous people was 197 per 10 000, compared with 530 per 10 000 for non-Indigenous people. This result is counter to what might be expected. First, we examine Darwin and Alice Springs. Then we examine the Northern Territory Balance.

5.2 NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DARWIN, ALICE SPRINGS AND NORTHERN TERRITORY BALANCE

	Darwin		Alice Springs		NT Balance*		Total**	
	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.
Number of homeless	1791	684	292	154	1043	814	3126	1652
Rate per 10 000	189	601	154	315	530	197	235	287

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* Excluding Alice Springs.

** Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in seven cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

In Darwin and Alice Springs, about half of the homeless Indigenous people were camping out or sleeping rough (44 per cent in Darwin and 45 per cent in Alice Springs), compared with less than 15 per cent of the non-Indigenous people (11 per cent in Darwin and 14 per cent in Alice Springs). In urban areas, Indigenous people are much more likely to sleep rough than non-Indigenous people.

Non-Indigenous people are more likely to be staying with other households. In Darwin, 63 per cent of homeless non-Indigenous people were staying with friends or relatives, as were 59 per cent of non-Indigenous people in Alice Springs. There were few Indigenous people staying with other households: 15 per cent in Darwin and 14 per cent in Alice Springs.

In the Northern Territory Balance, Indigenous people were usually camping out or sleeping rough: 97 per cent in Daly, 100 per cent in Alligator,

63 per cent in East Arnhem, 76 per cent in the Lower Top End, and 90 per cent in the Central NT (excluding Alice Springs). The proportions were lower in Barkly (28 per cent) and Finnis (33 per cent), but these subdivisions had few homeless people.

The proportion of non-Indigenous people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough varied widely: 11 per cent in Daly, 51 per cent in Finnis, 75 per cent in Alligator, 35 per cent in East Arnhem, 20 per cent in the Lower Top End, five per cent in Barkly and 31 per cent in central NT (excluding Alice Springs).

In remote communities, non-Indigenous people were often staying with friends or relatives: 81 per cent in Daly, 47 per cent in Finnis, 72 per cent in the Lower Top End, 53 per cent in East Arnhem, 88 per cent in Barkly and 54 per cent in the Central NT.

In contrast, few Indigenous people in these communities reported staying temporarily with other households: none in Alligator; five per cent in East Arnhem; and three per cent in Daly, Central NT and Lower Top End. The proportion with other households was higher in Finnis (40 per cent) and Barkly (25 per cent), but these subdivisions had small numbers of homeless people.

It was pointed out earlier that Indigenous people have a broader understanding of family than Anglo-Australians, and it is common for Indigenous people to move between different dwellings in their extended kinship group. They often stay with members of their extended family in times of crisis—for example, when there is domestic violence or other family problems. The different cultural conception of ‘home’ means that recording ‘no usual address’ on census night is inappropriate. In remote communities, the rate of homelessness for Indigenous people is lower because of this under-reporting.

5.3 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting caravans or cabins, living at their usual address, and with no one in the dwelling having full-time employment. For some policy purposes, marginal caravan park dwellers might be thought of as part of the tertiary population. There were 273 people in this category in the Territory. Table 5.3 shows that 92 per cent were non-Indigenous: 96 per cent in Darwin, 79 per cent in Alice Springs, and 89 per cent in remote locations.

5.3 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

	Darwin (N=147)	Alice Springs (N=24)	NT Balance (N=83)	Total (N=254)*
	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	96	79	89	92
Indigenous	4	21	11	8
	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* No information on 19 people.

5.4 SUMMARY

Overall, there were 4785 homeless people in the Territory. There were 3126 non-Indigenous people and the rate of homelessness was 235 per 10 000. There were 1652 Indigenous people and the rate of homelessness was 287 per 10 000. In Darwin, the rate of homelessness for Indigenous people was three times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous people. In Alice Springs, the rate was twice as high. However, in Northern Territory Balance, the rate of homelessness for non-Indigenous people was more than double the rate for Indigenous people. This is because Indigenous people staying temporarily with other households were often not counted.