

8 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Victoria, 95 per cent of people answered the census question: 'Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander origin?' and 0.6 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 underreporting in this category.

8.1 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	19 634	564	20 305	19 734	777	20 511
Rate	42	217	44	40	246	42

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

* Figures were adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in 107 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

The research found 777 homeless Indigenous people in Victoria on census night 2006 (Table 8.1). The rate was 246 per 10 000 of the population compared with a rate of 217 in 2001. The rate of homelessness for non-Indigenous people was 40 per 10 000 in 2006, compared with 42 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 increased in Victoria since 2001.

In Melbourne, there were 467 homeless Indigenous people (Table 8.2), including 315 in SAAP, 73 in boarding houses, 58 with other households and 21 in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (Appendix 2). Two-thirds (65 per cent) of the homeless Indigenous people were in the Inner City Ring and Outer City Ring (Appendix 2).

8.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE, 2006

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	N	%	N	%
Melbourne	14 101	71	467	60
Northern Victoria	2819	14	182	24
Western Victoria	1931	10	49	6
Eastern Victoria	883	5	79	10
	19 734	100	777	100

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

The other concentration of homeless Indigenous people was in Northern Victoria where there were 182 people. There were 94 in Mallee, 46 in Goulburn, 28 in Ovens-Murray and 14 in Loddon (Appendix 2). This included 59 homeless Indigenous people in Mildura, 21 in Shepparton and 11 in Bendigo.

There were 79 homeless Indigenous people in Eastern Victoria—45 in East Gippsland and 34 in Gippsland, including 16 in the La Trobe Valley.

There were 49 homeless Indigenous people in Western Victoria—21 in the Western District, 16 in Ballarat, eight in Geelong and four in the Wimmera.