



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

Australia's welfare

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DISADVANTAGE AND DIVERSITY

The dynamics of homelessness

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Who counts as homeless?

Two major definitions used in Australia

- **Census:**

Cultural definition based on community standard

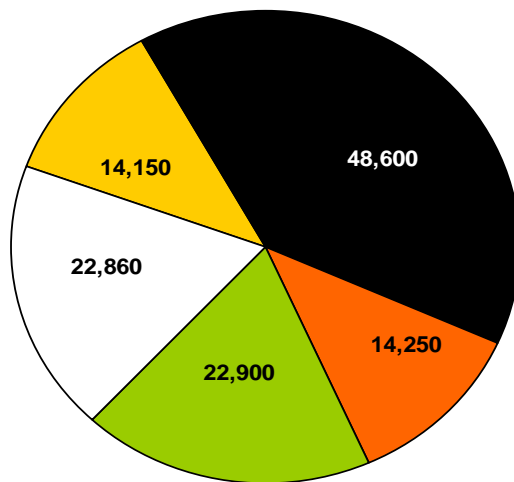
- **SAAP:**

Service delivery definition establishes eligibility for assistance

How many homeless?

2001 Census night: Counting the homeless (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2003)

Total homeless population: 122,800



■ Primary: sleeping rough/improvised

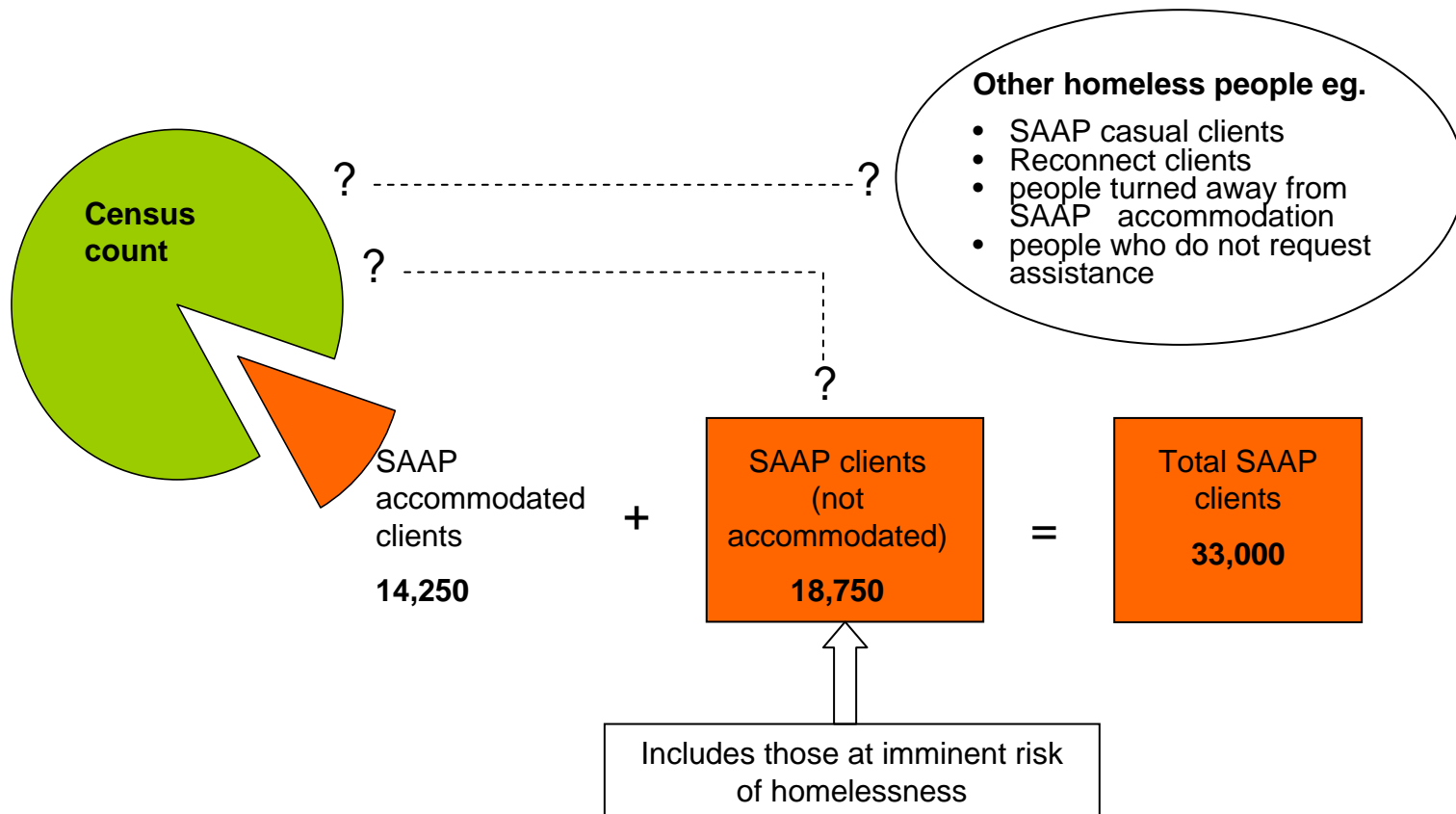
■ Secondary: friends/relatives

■ Secondary: SAAP accommodation

■ Tertiary: boarding houses

□ Tertiary: caravan parks

SAAP and homelessness



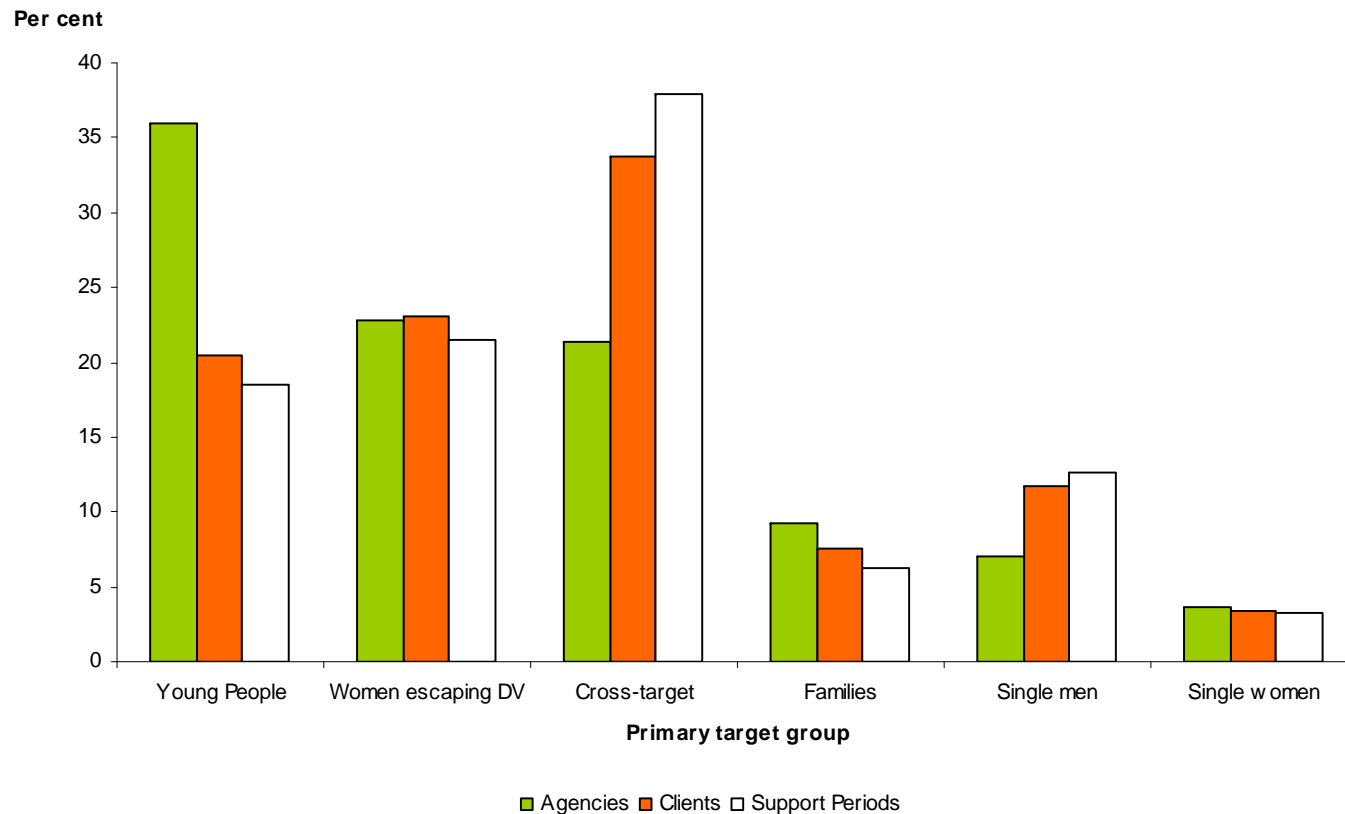
Who are the homeless?

	Census 2001	SAAP 2005-06
Males	58%	43%
Males < 25 years	42%	58%
Males 25+ years	58%	42%
Females	42%	57%
Females < 25 years	57%	56%
Females 25+ years	43%	44%

SAAP use 2005-06

- 106,500 clients
- 54,700 accompanying children
- 1 in every 126 of the Australian population
- Children aged 0-4 years and females aged 15-19 years have highest usage rate:
1 in every 57

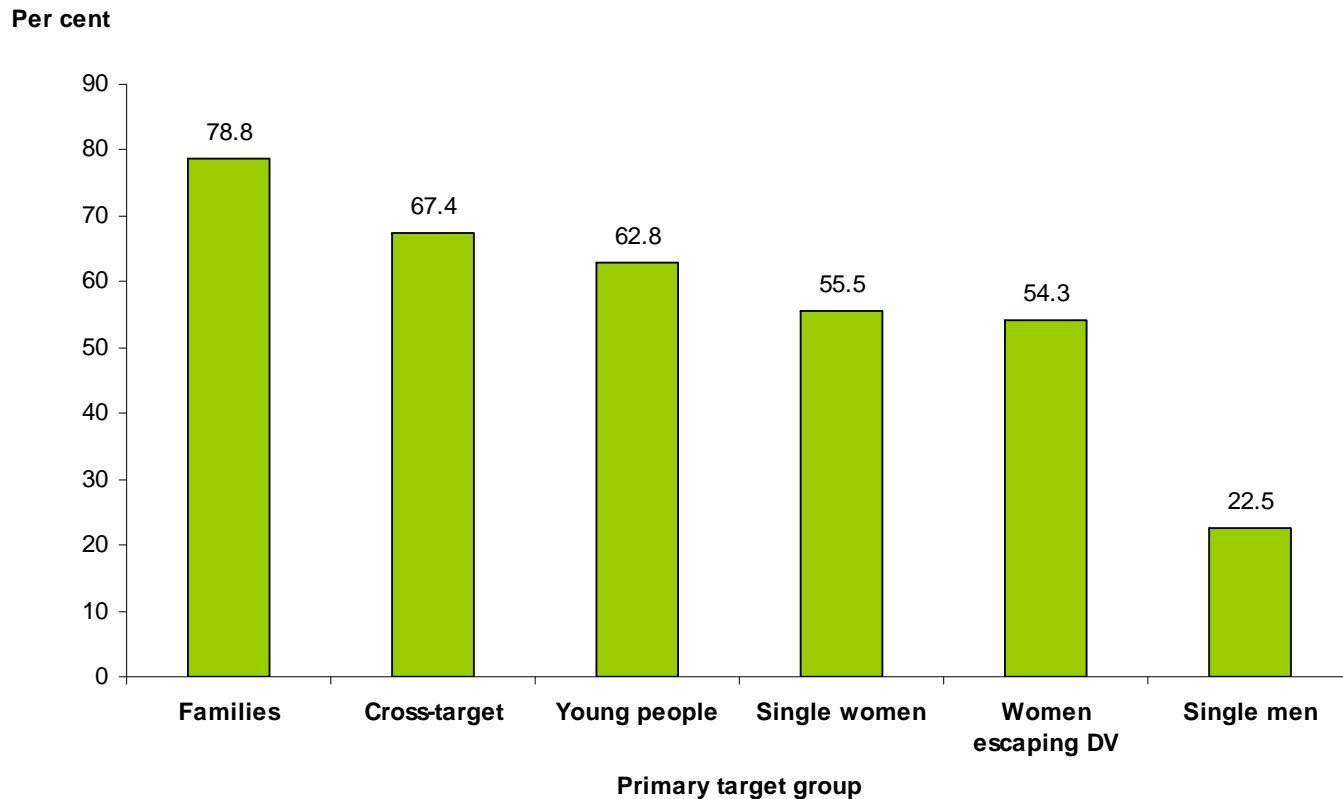
SAAP target groups



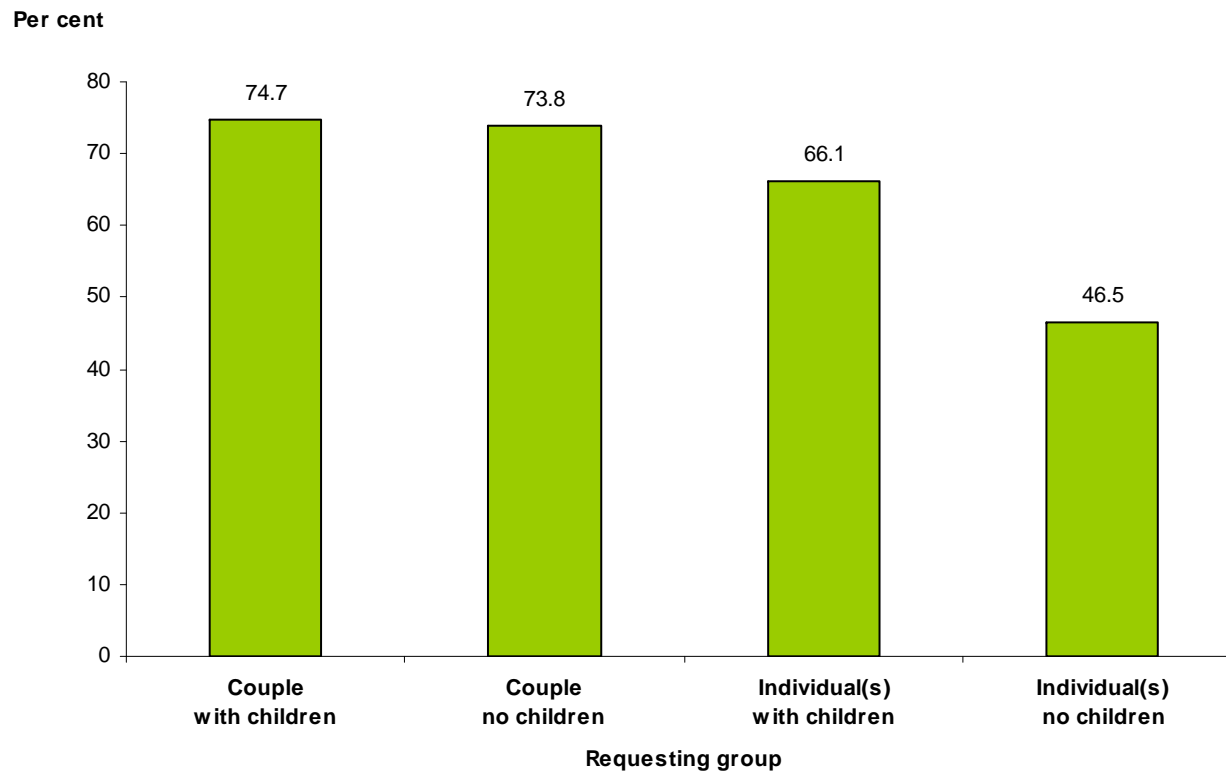
Demand for SAAP accommodation

- SAAP accommodates a large number of adults and children on a daily average basis: 12,359
- Not all requests for immediate SAAP accommodation can be met: 356

Turn aways from SAAP accommodation: primary target groups



Turn aways from SAAP accommodation: client groups



Tiers of homelessness?

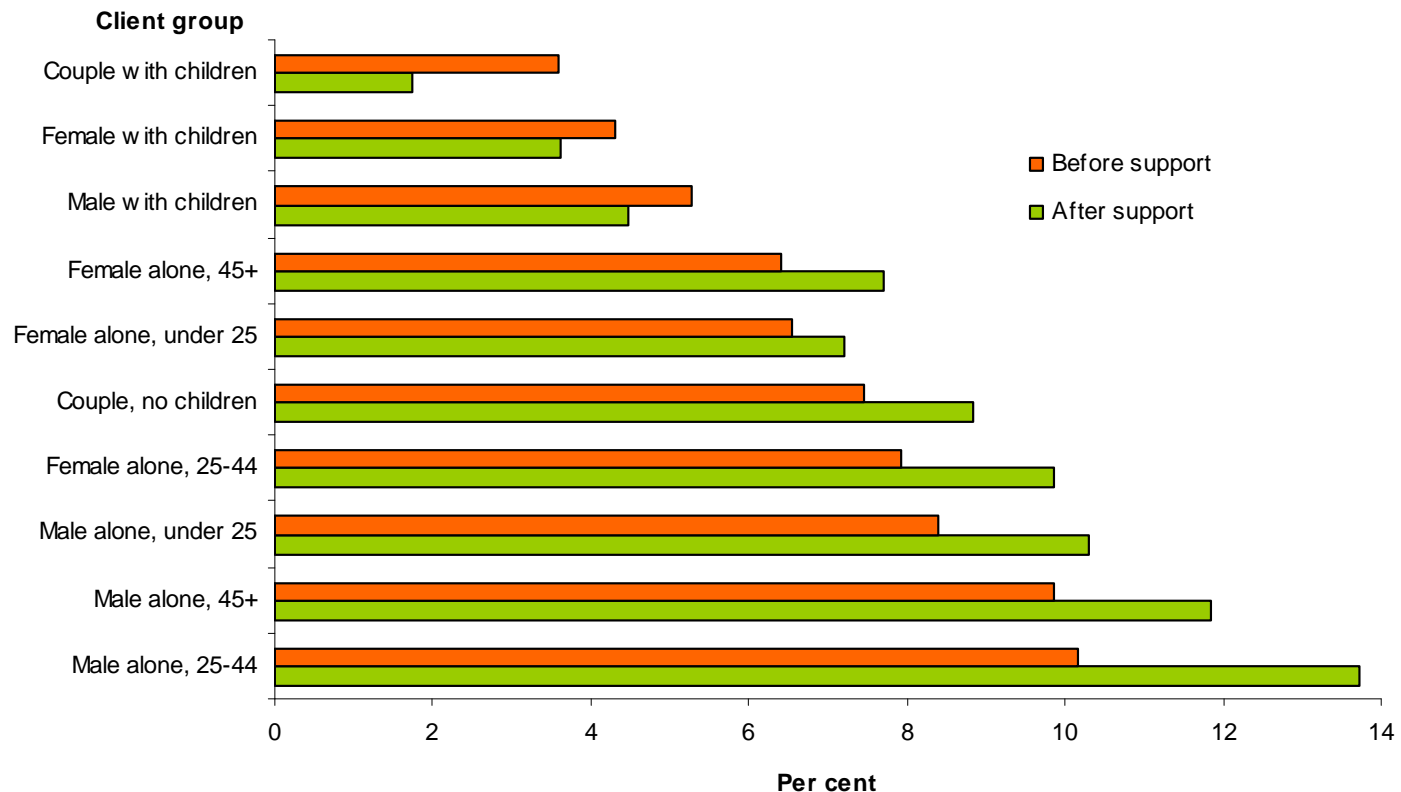
- Primary, secondary, tertiary and marginal tiers may be seen to represent degrees of housing disadvantage
- Homelessness is not always a one-off static experience
- Temporality is a key issue

Iterative homelessness?

- 'Dynamic' understanding of homelessness
- Cycling through precarious housing, eg. from friends, to boarding houses, to SAAP or the street, and back.
- Movement pattern may vary for different groups

An example of moving through the tiers:

Secondary and Tertiary homelessness: living in a boarding house before or after SAAP accommodation



Measuring diversity

- Cultural factors and complexity of client needs influence experiences of homelessness
- Indigenous people have different patterns of SAAP use
- People with mental health and problematic substance use may have more difficulty accessing SAAP

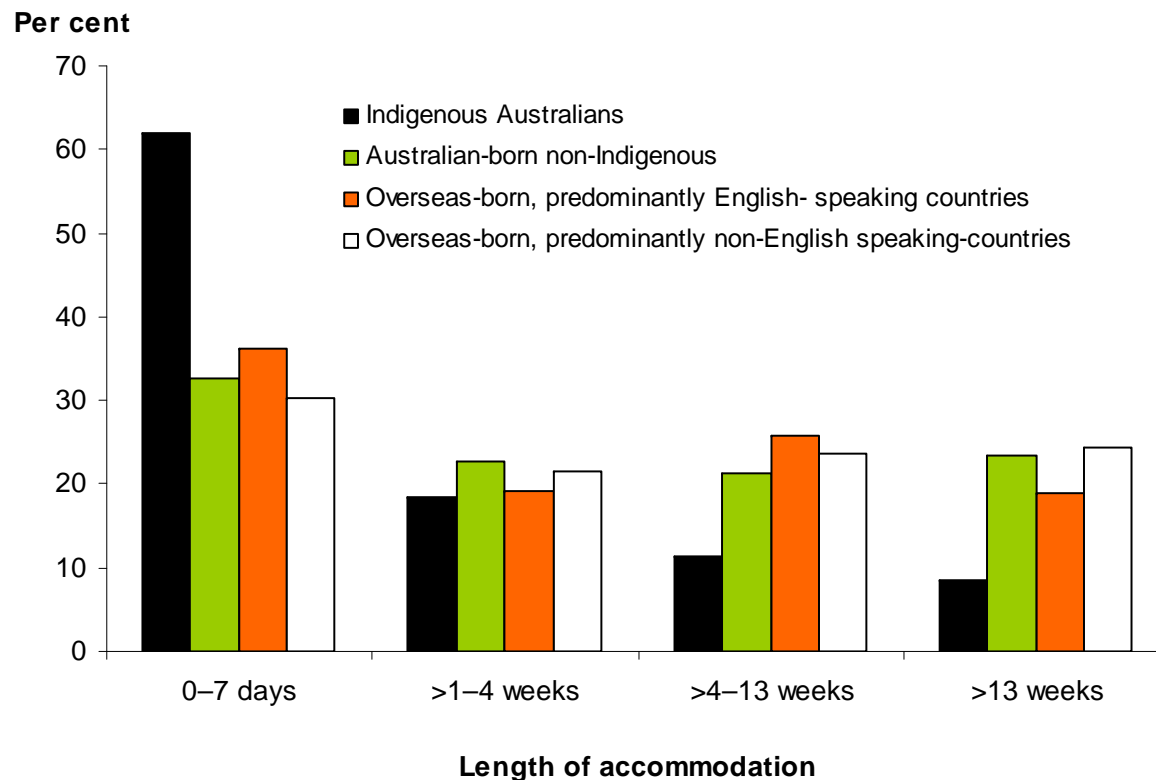
Indigenous homelessness

Higher rates of homelessness

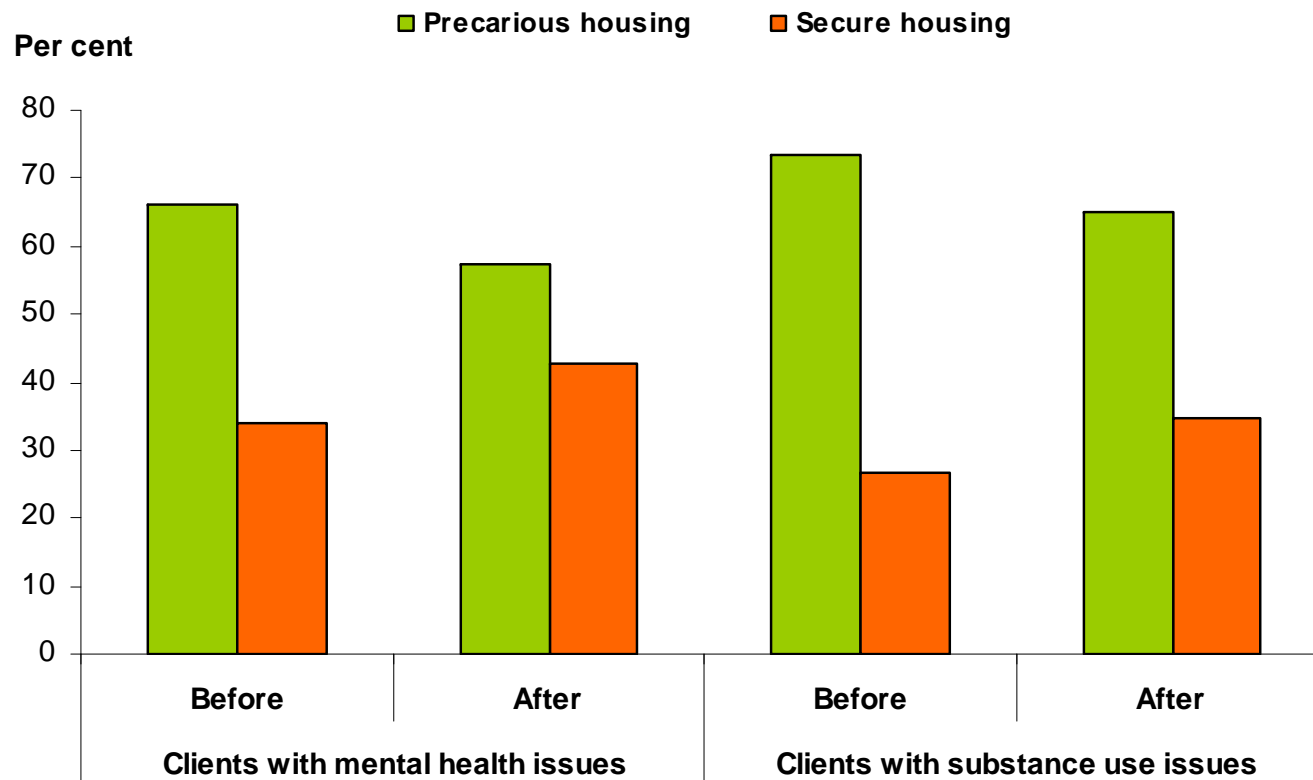
- Australian population: 2%
- Homeless population: 9%
- SAAP
 - Clients: 17%
 - Accompanying children: 27%
- Varies greatly by state and territory

Cultural diversity and SAAP accommodation

SAAP closed support periods with accommodation for women with children



SAAP clients: mental health, substance use and housing outcomes



How can we tell the whole story?

- Increasing emphasis on cross-program service responses
- Person-centred perspective to measure outcomes
- Progress towards the development of data linkage methods to measure within and across programs.
- New SAAP statistical linkage key consistent with other community services and health data collections

Summary

- People experiencing homelessness have a diverse range of circumstances and needs
- There are different ways of measuring homelessness
- SAAP data suggest a homeless population that is very dynamic
- There is a diverse range of service responses to homelessness

Thanks

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