

3 Client characteristics

A total of 24,590 clients received open employment support between 1 July 1996 and 30 June 1997, of whom around two-thirds (63%) were male and one-third (37%) female (Table 3.1). The age distribution was similar for males and females although a slightly higher proportion of female clients were aged 20–24 years.

The overall number of clients increased by 3,966 or 19% from 20,624 in 1995–96 to 24,590 in 1996–97. A very small part of this change (99 clients or less than 0.5 percentage points) was due to clients who were included in 1996–97 but were from agencies that had missing data in 1995–96 (see Section 2.1). The remainder of the increase (3,867 clients) was due to new clients of whom about one-sixth (17% or 665) were from new sites.

The sex distribution of clients remained constant over the two financial years; however, the age distribution varied somewhat, with a higher proportion of clients in the 15–19 year age group in 1996–97 (16%) compared with 1995–96 (10%; Figure 3.1).

Table 3.1: Number of clients by sex and age, 1995–96, 1996–97

Sex	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–44		45–59		60–64		Total ^(a)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1995–96														
Male	1,411	10.7	3,309	25.0	2,581	19.5	4,446	33.6	1,397	10.6	59	0.4	13,227	64.1
Female	715	9.7	2,173	29.4	1,420	19.2	2,325	31.4	738	10.0	14	0.2	7,397	35.9
Total	2,126	10.3	5,482	26.6	4,001	19.4	6,771	32.8	2,135	10.4	73	0.4	20,624	100.0
1996–97														
Male	2,474	15.9	3,637	23.3	2,774	17.8	4,991	32.0	1,639	10.5	67	0.4	15,602	63.4
Female	1,369	15.2	2,355	26.2	1,546	17.2	2,774	30.9	916	10.2	13	0.1	8,988	36.6
Total	3,843	15.6	5,992	24.4	4,320	17.6	7,765	31.6	2,555	10.4	80	0.3	24,590	100.0

(a) Includes 14 clients aged 65–69 and 22 clients for whom age was unknown in 1995–96, and 15 clients aged 65–69 and 20 clients for whom age was unknown in 1996–97.

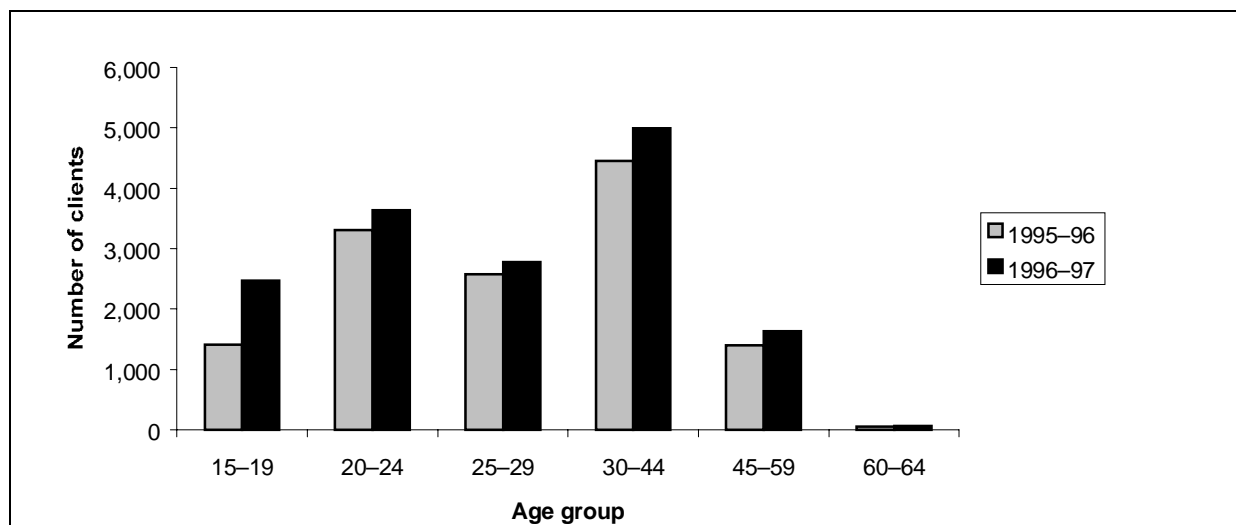
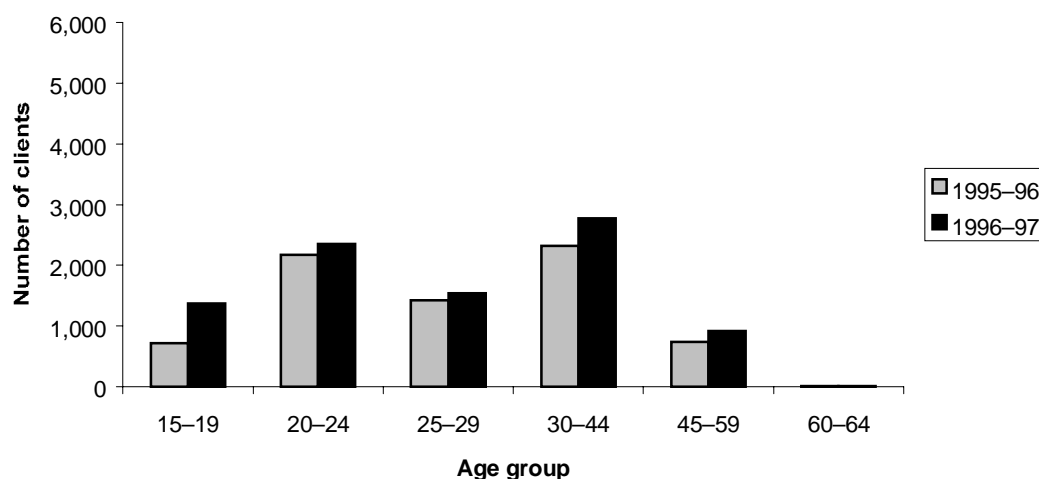


Figure 3.1a: Number of clients by age group for males, 1995-96, 1996-97



Source: Table 3.1.

Figure 3.1b: Number of clients by age group for females, 1995-96, 1996-97

During 1996-97, 2,875 clients were recorded by agencies as withdrawing from open employment support (Table 3.2). Half (51%) of these withdrawals were client-initiated and about one-third (35%) were agency-initiated. Nearly one in ten clients (9%) withdrew from support because they transferred to another agency and one in twenty (5%) because they became independent workers. During 1995-96, 2,445 clients withdrew from support. The reasons for ceasing support in 1995-96 were distributed in a similar fashion to those in 1996-97.

In 1996-97, a further 2,860 clients with support prior to 1 July 1996 (i.e. the beginning of the financial year) had not received support during the 1996-97 financial year but had no recorded reason for ceasing support. For 1995-96, there were 1,099 clients with support in the six months prior to 1 July 1995 who had received no support since that time but had no recorded reason for ceasing support. These figures suggest that, in some cases, clients have

ceased open employment support without this being recorded. The small number of clients who transferred from one agency to another should be recorded at the new agency, in which case they will appear as new clients for the new agency.

Table 3.2: Number of clients who ceased support by reason for ceasing support, 1995–96, 1996–97

Reason for ceasing support	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Independent	118	4.8	139	4.8
Transferred	241	9.9	259	9.0
Agency-initiated	870	35.6	1,005	35.0
Client-initiated	1,209	49.4	1,471	51.2
Not specified	7	0.3	1	0.0
Total	2,445	100.0	2,875	100.0

Of the clients receiving open employment support in the 12 months to 30 June 1997, 1.7% (415) were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (Table 3.3), compared with 1.9% (390) in the 12 months to 1995–96. These percentages were slightly less than the estimated proportion in the total Australian population at these times (2.0% as at 30 June 1996 and 30 June 1997)(ABS 1997a). The percentage of clients recorded as having unknown origin decreased between 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Table 3.3: Number of clients by origin, 1995–96, 1996–97

Origin	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Not Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, South Sea Islander	19,073	92.5	23,005	93.6
Aboriginal	363	1.8	391	1.6
Torres Strait Islander	27	0.1	24	0.1
South Sea Islander	44	0.2	42	0.2
Unknown	1,117	5.4	1,128	4.6
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

In 1996–97, 90% of clients were born in Australia, 3% born in another country classified as English-speaking, 5% from countries classified as non-English-speaking and 2% recorded as 'not known' (Table 3.4). These percentages are almost identical to those in 1995–96. The distribution of people according to country of birth differs somewhat from the estimated distribution in the Australian population in 1996. According to the 1996 Census of Population and Housing, 75% of the population were born in Australia, 9% in other English-speaking countries, 13% in non-English-speaking countries and 3% had unknown country of birth (ABS 1997b:38).

Table 3.4: Number of clients by country of birth, 1995–96, 1996–97

Country of birth	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Australia	18,466	89.5	22,044	89.6
Other English-speaking	606	2.9	750	3.1
Non-English-speaking	1,040	5.0	1,228	5.0
Not known	512	2.5	568	2.3
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

(a) The classification for country of birth is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. 'English-speaking' countries are defined as Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, USA, Canada and South Africa.

In both 1995–96 and 1996–97, the preferred language of the vast majority of clients were English (93% and 94% respectively), followed by sign language, Italian and Greek (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Number of clients by most common preferred languages, 1995–96, 1996–97

Language	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
English	19,169	92.9	22,988	93.5
An Australian Aboriginal language	63	0.3	52	0.2
Italian	121	0.6	121	0.5
Greek	104	0.5	112	0.5
Vietnamese	64	0.3	85	0.3
Arabic (including Lebanese)	60	0.3	69	0.3
Spanish	44	0.2	50	0.2
Cantonese	40	0.2	40	0.2
All other spoken languages	590	2.9	656	2.7
Sign language	245	1.2	306	1.2
Little/no effective communication	58	0.3	50	0.2
Not known	66	0.3	61	0.2
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

In 1995–96 and 1996–97, two-thirds (67%) of clients receiving open employment support lived with family members at the time they commenced support and nearly one-fifth (19%) lived alone (Table 3.6). The percentage distribution of clients across all other living arrangements was similar in 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Table 3.6: Number of clients by type of accommodation, 1995–96, 1996–97

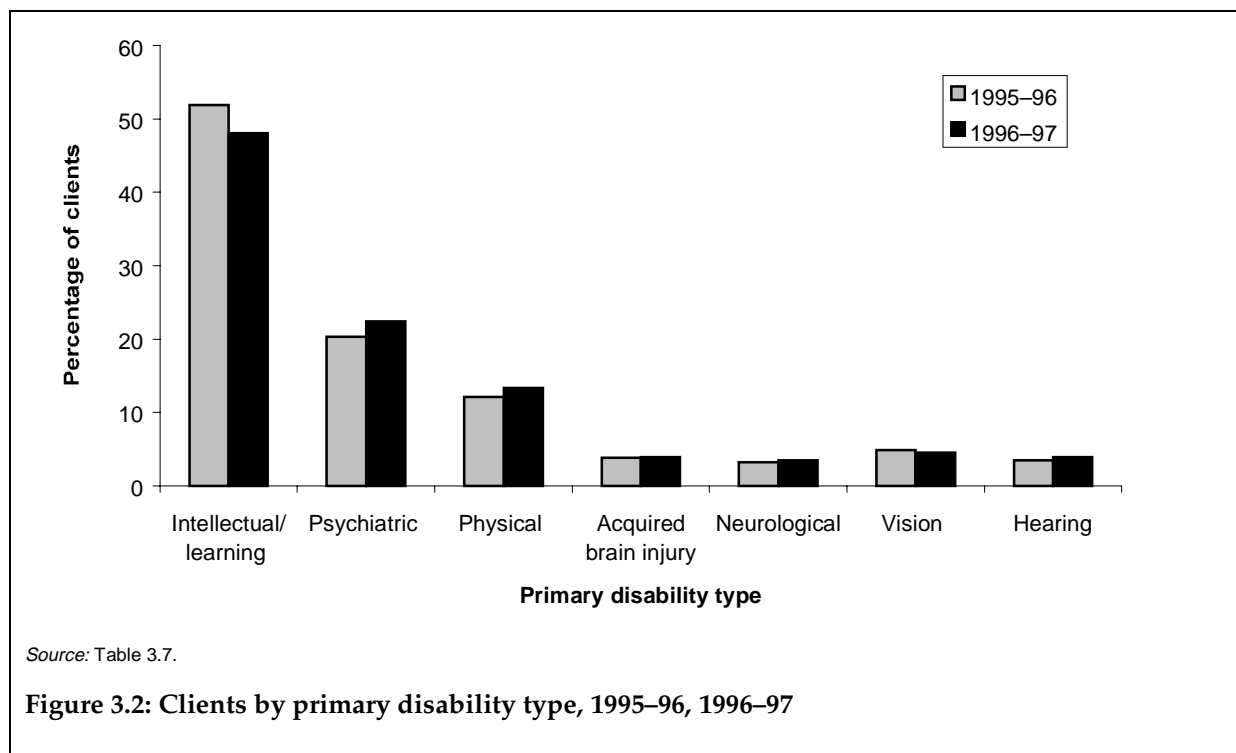
Accommodation type	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Lives with family members	13,715	66.5	16,459	66.9
Lives alone	3,918	19.0	4,613	18.8
Special purpose accommodation	1,012	4.9	1,083	4.4
Other community	784	3.8	907	3.7
Institutional accommodation	22	0.1	23	0.1
No usual residence	91	0.5	102	0.4
Not known	1,059	5.1	1,351	5.5
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

In 1996–97, almost half (48%) of people attending open employment services had intellectual/learning as their primary disability, followed by about a fifth (22%) who had a psychiatric disability and 13% who had a physical disability (Table 3.7, Figure 3.2). This percentage distribution differs from that in 1995–96, where a higher percentage of people had intellectual/learning as their primary disability type (52%) and correspondingly lower percentages of people had psychiatric (20%) or physical disabilities (12%) as their primary disability.

The percentage distribution of primary disability type was a little different for males and females. In both periods, a higher proportion of females had intellectual/learning as their primary disability compared to males and a lower percentage had psychiatric and acquired brain injury as their primary disability.

Table 3.7: Number of clients by primary disability type and sex, 1995–96, 1996–97

Primary disability type	1995–96						1996–97					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Intellectual/learning	6,737	50.9	3,959	53.5	10,696	51.9	7,406	47.5	4,432	49.3	11,838	48.1
Psychiatric	2,781	21.0	1,397	18.9	4,178	20.3	3,581	23.0	1,934	21.5	5,515	22.4
Physical	1,575	11.9	917	12.4	2,492	12.1	2,016	12.9	1,244	13.8	3,260	13.3
Acquired brain injury	601	4.5	178	2.4	779	3.8	737	4.7	227	2.5	964	3.9
Neurological	467	3.5	197	2.7	664	3.2	606	3.9	258	2.9	864	3.5
Vision	606	4.6	401	5.4	1,007	4.9	652	4.2	444	4.9	1,096	4.5
Hearing	407	3.1	324	4.4	731	3.5	531	3.4	420	4.7	951	3.9
Speech	40	0.3	20	0.3	60	0.3	51	0.3	21	0.2	72	0.3
Deaf and blind	13	0.1	4	0.1	17	0.1	22	0.1	8	0.1	30	0.1
Total^(a)	13,227	100.0	7,397	100.0	20,624	100.0	15,602	100.0	8,988	100.0	24,590	100.0
<i>Total %</i>		<i>64.1</i>		<i>35.9</i>		<i>100.0</i>		<i>63.4</i>		<i>36.6</i>		<i>100.0</i>



The primary disability type most likely to be episodic in nature was psychiatric and 80% of people with an episodic disability in 1996-97 had a psychiatric disability (Table 3.8). This percentage has increased from 77% in 1995-96, probably because overall a larger percentage of clients had a psychiatric disability. About one-fifth (19%) of clients had a primary disability that was episodic in nature, similar to the percentage in 1995-96 (18%).

Table 3.8: Number of clients by primary disability and episodic nature of disability, 1995-96, 1996-97

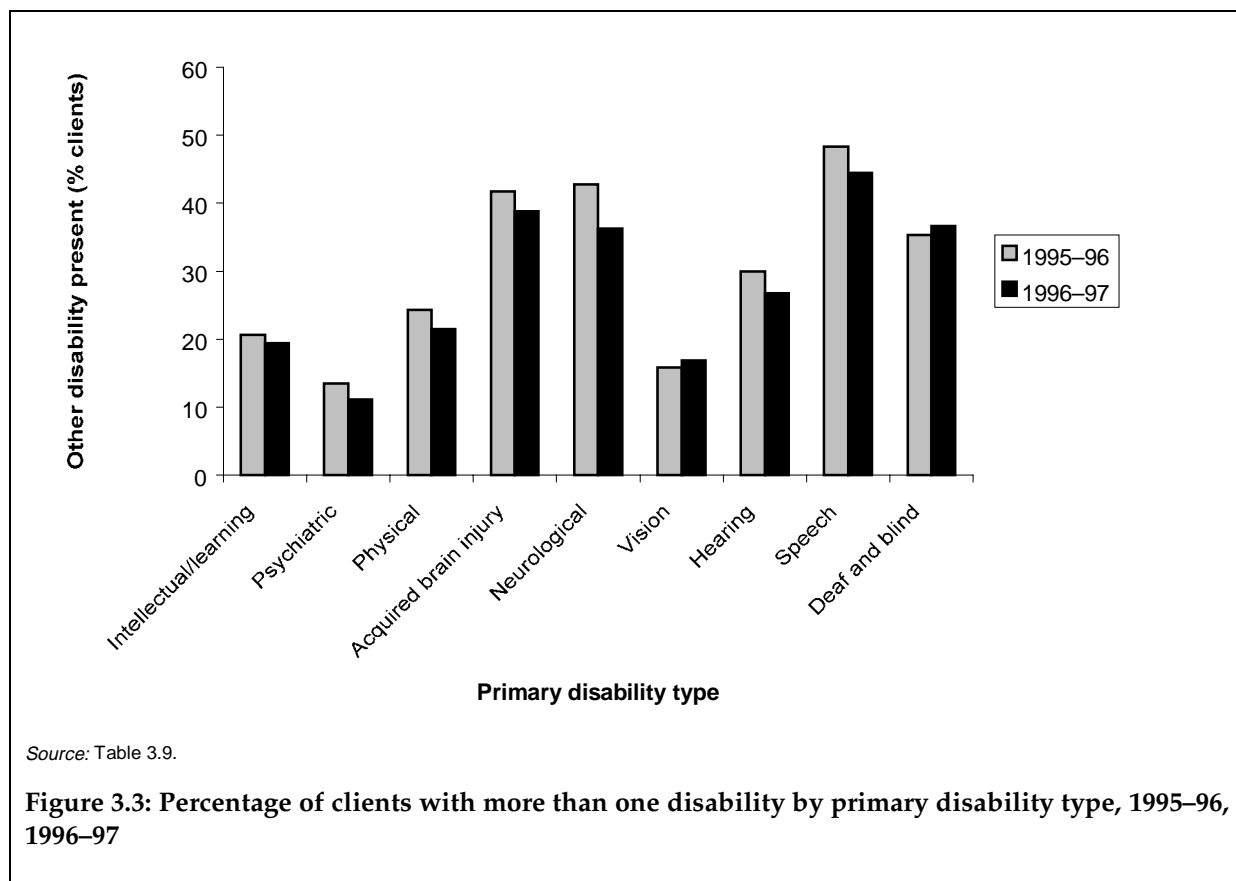
Primary disability type	1995-96						1996-97					
	Episodic		Not episodic		Total		Episodic		Not episodic		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Intellectual/learning	250	6.6	10,446	62.0	10,696	51.9	277	5.8	11,561	58.3	11,838	48.1
Psychiatric	2,928	77.4	1,250	7.4	4,178	20.3	3,805	80.0	1,710	8.6	5,515	22.4
Physical	218	5.8	2,274	13.5	2,492	12.1	263	5.5	2,997	15.1	3,260	13.3
Acquired brain injury	65	1.7	714	4.2	779	3.8	68	1.4	896	4.5	964	3.9
Neurological	283	7.5	381	2.3	664	3.2	295	6.2	569	2.9	864	3.5
Vision	14	0.4	993	5.9	1,007	4.9	15	0.3	1,081	5.4	1,096	4.5
Hearing	14	0.4	717	4.3	731	3.5	22	0.5	929	4.7	951	3.9
Speech	11	0.3	49	0.3	60	0.3	9	0.2	63	0.3	72	0.3
Deaf and blind	0	0.0	17	0.1	17	0.1	0	0.0	30	0.2	30	0.1
Total	3,783	100.0	16,841	100.0	20,624	100.0	4,754	100.0	19,836	100.0	24,590	100.0
<i>Total %</i>		<i>18.3</i>		<i>81.7</i>		<i>100.0</i>		<i>19.3</i>		<i>80.7</i>		<i>100.0</i>

Nearly a fifth (19%) of all clients in 1996–97 had at least one disability other than their primary disability (Table 3.9), a slight decrease from 1995–96 (21%). People whose primary disability was an acquired brain injury, neurological, speech, or deaf and blind disability were most likely to have another disability (Figure 3.3). People with the primary disability types psychiatric or vision were least likely to have another significant disability.

Table 3.9: Number of clients by primary disability type, by presence or absence of other disability and by sex, 1995–96, 1996–97

Primary disability type	Males		Females		Persons	
	Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence
1995–96						
Intellectual/learning	1,427	5,310	780	3,179	2,207	8,489
Psychiatric	392	2,389	171	1,226	563	3,615
Physical	376	1,199	230	687	606	1,886
Acquired brain injury	248	353	77	101	325	454
Neurological	205	262	79	118	284	380
Vision	107	499	52	349	159	848
Hearing	129	278	90	234	219	512
Speech	20	20	9	11	29	31
Deaf and blind	5	8	1	3	6	11
Total	2,909	10,318	1,489	5,908	4,398	16,226
<i>Total %</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>78.0</i>	<i>20.1</i>	<i>79.9</i>	<i>21.3</i>	<i>78.7</i>
1996–97						
Intellectual/learning	1,433	5,973	863	3,569	2,296	9,542
Psychiatric	408	3,173	207	1,727	615	4,900
Physical	441	1,575	260	984	701	2,559
Acquired brain injury	284	453	90	137	374	590
Neurological	214	392	99	159	313	551
Vision	116	536	69	375	185	911
Hearing	153	378	101	319	254	697
Speech	23	28	9	12	32	40
Deaf and blind	7	15	4	4	11	19
Total	3,079	12,523	1,702	7,286	4,781	19,809
<i>Total %</i>	<i>19.7</i>	<i>80.3</i>	<i>18.9</i>	<i>81.1</i>	<i>19.4</i>	<i>80.6</i>

Note: If other disability was not specified, it was assumed to be absent.



The frequency of assistance required by a client for activities of daily living (ADL) is categorised as 'none', 'occasional', 'frequent' or 'continual'. It refers to the frequency of assistance required in the areas of self-care, mobility and/or verbal communication.

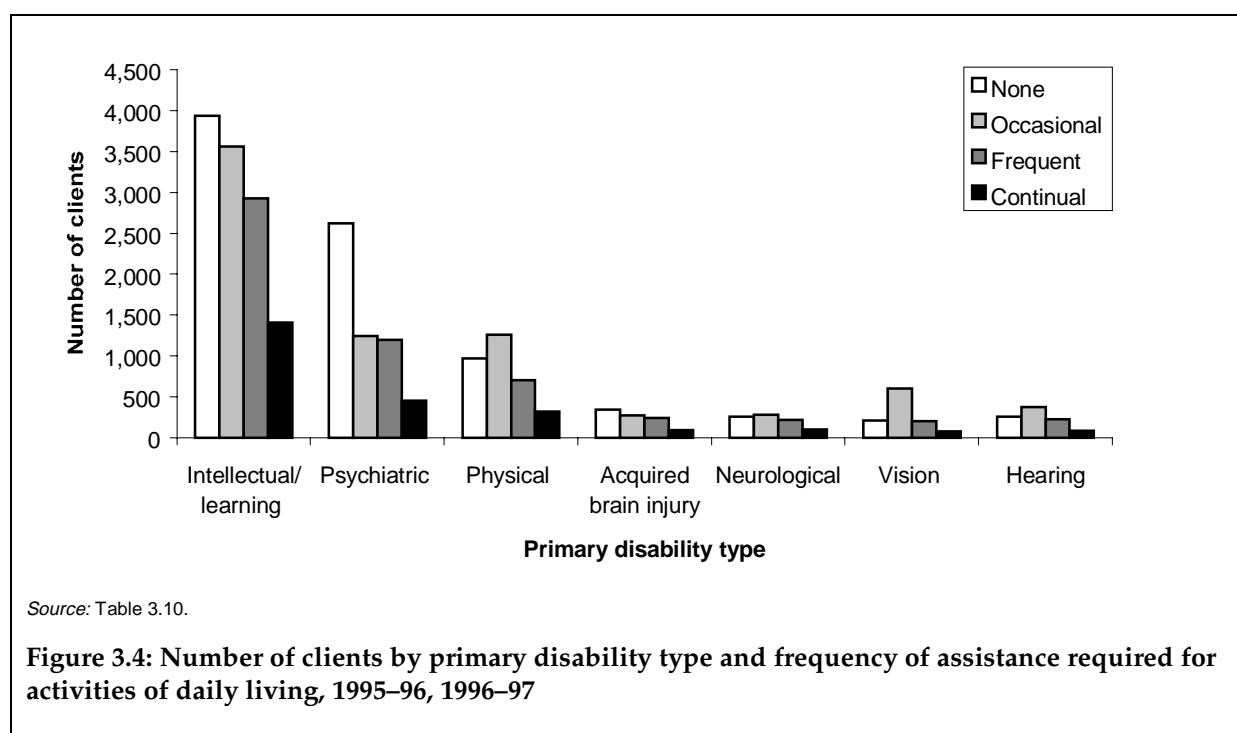
In 1996-97, two-thirds of clients required no or occasional ADL assistance (16,276 of 24,590 or 66%) and 10% required continual ADL assistance (2,556 of 24,590; Table 3.10). People with a psychiatric disability were most likely to have required no ADL assistance (2,622 of 5,515 or 48%) and people with a vision disability were most likely to have required occasional ADL assistance (605 of 1,096 or 55%; Figure 3.4).

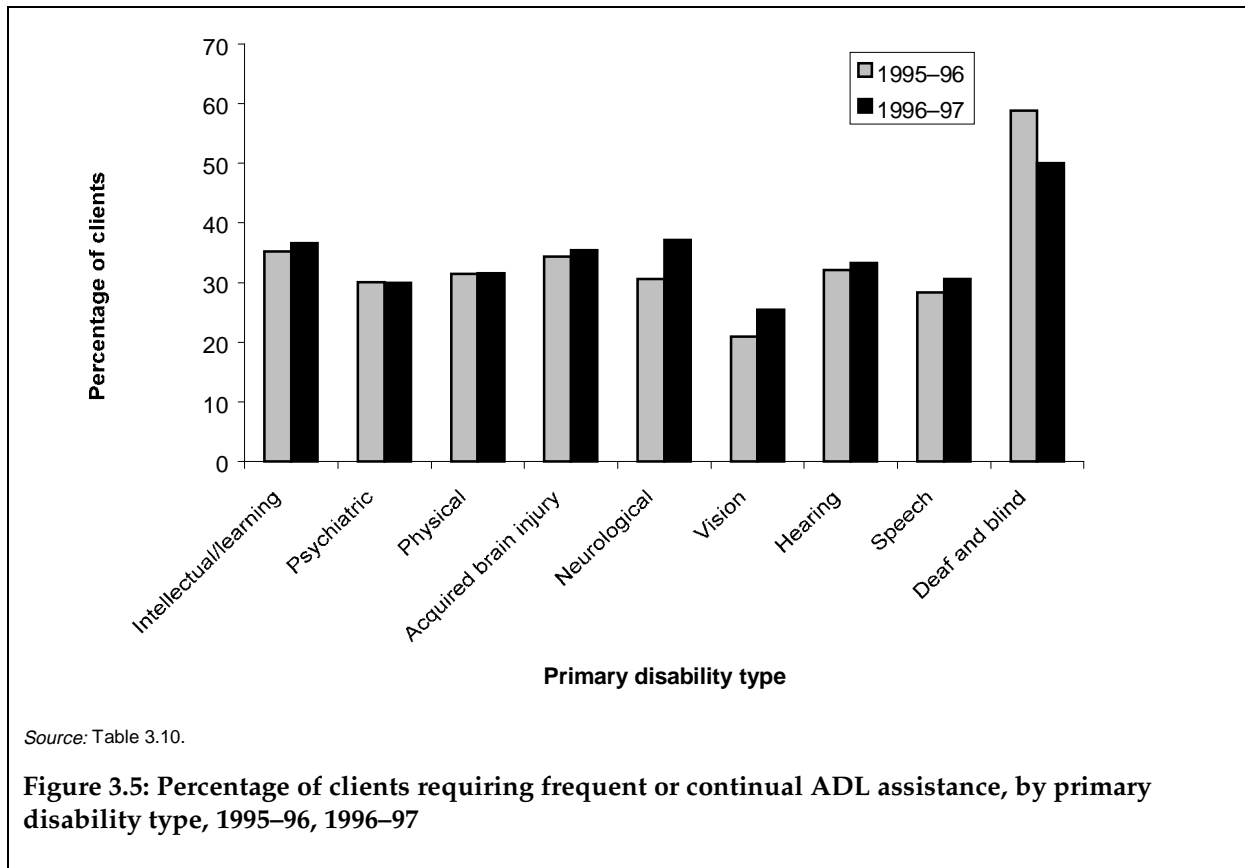
Compared with 1995-96, a slightly lower proportion of all clients in 1996-97 were recorded as requiring no ADL assistance (35% compared with 37%) and marginally higher percentages were recorded as requiring occasional or frequent assistance. The proportion of clients requiring frequent or continual assistance increased slightly from 33% in 1995-96 to 34% in 1996-97. This increase was experienced by clients in nearly all primary disability groups, with the exception of people with psychiatric, speech or deaf and blind as a primary disability type (Figure 3.5).

Table 3.10: Number of clients by primary disability type and frequency of ADL assistance required,^(a) 1995–96, 1996–97

Primary disability type	1995–96				1996–97			
	None	Occasional	Frequent	Continual	None	Occasional	Frequent	Continual
Intellectual/learning	3,887	3,045	2,482	1,282	3,936	3,563	2,928	1,411
Psychiatric	2,084	837	903	354	2,622	1,242	1,198	453
Physical	773	934	525	260	971	1,260	709	320
Acquired brain injury	289	222	188	80	348	274	246	96
Neurological	241	220	130	73	257	286	217	104
Vision	191	605	152	59	212	605	202	77
Hearing	220	276	159	76	258	377	231	85
Speech	14	29	15	2	20	30	20	2
Deaf and blind	3	4	5	5	9	6	7	8
Total	7,702	6,172	4,559	2,191	8,633	7,643	5,758	2,556
<i>Total %</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>29.9</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>35.1</i>	<i>31.1</i>	<i>23.4</i>	<i>10.4</i>

(a) Frequency of assistance required by the person in their overall situation, due to their condition, in one or more of the areas of self-care (bathing, dressing, eating and/or toileting), mobility (around the home or away from home) and verbal communication (called 'level of support required' in the NIMS data dictionary).





Historically, prior to the introduction of NIMS, a distinction was made between two main types of clients—Competitive Employment Training and Placement (CETP) and Individual Supported Job (ISJ) clients. This differentiation reflected the perceived level of client support need, with ISJ clients generally requiring a higher level of support than CETP clients. While these terms are no longer used by the Department, many agencies continue to define clients clearly along these lines. Hence, this item is a measure of the level of client need, as assessed by the agency.

According to this early model, CETP clients are generally placed in regular jobs with full award wages and conditions. They are often provided with general pre-employment training and usually have an initial period of intensive on-the-job training followed by a lower level of maintenance support. ISJ clients are generally those with higher support needs who may not be able to compete in open employment for full award or productivity-based wages without ongoing support. They tend to require training specific to a particular job and a longer period of ongoing support. Their wages are more likely to be based on the level of productivity.

About two-thirds of clients were recorded as Competitive Employment Training and Placement clients (66% in each year) and over a quarter of clients as Individual Supported Job clients (27% in 1995-96 and 26% in 1996-97; Table 3.11).

Table 3.11: Number of clients by client type, 1995–96, 1996–97

Client type	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
CETP	13,679	66.3	16,310	66.3
ISJ	5,566	27.0	6,451	26.2
Other ^(a)	1,378	6.7	1,803	7.4
Not specified	1	0.0	26	0.1
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

(a) Includes a small number of clients recorded as Supported Wage System clients (227 in 1995–96 and 239 in 1996–97).

The Disability Reform Package (DRP), introduced in 1991, was designed amongst other things to increase employment opportunities for people with a disability. Disability panels were set up nationally to assess and refer people with a disability to appropriate rehabilitation, training, education, labour market or job search services, and to coordinate delivery of services.

Under these arrangements, access to a Disability Reform Package program was achieved in one of two ways. A panel could invite a Department of Social Security income support recipient with a disability to meet the panel who would formulate a plan with the person and then refer them to a service. This was known as a *referral*. Alternatively, clients could be referred by a third party, or themselves, to a service. The service would then develop an activity plan and send it to the panel for approval. This was an *endorsement*.

Following changes in late 1997 and early 1998 to the way in which employment services are delivered, disability panels are no longer in operation. The following information is therefore presented from an historical point of view only.

In 1996–97, two-thirds (67%) of clients had been through the disability panel process, either as an endorsement (54%) or a referral (13%; Table 3.12). Nearly a third (32%) of all clients in 1996–97 were not assessed and thus neither referred nor endorsed, and less than 1% rejected. The percentage distribution was similar in 1995–96 although a slightly higher proportion of clients were endorsed by a disability reform panel (55% compared with 54%) and a slightly lower percentage referred (11% compared with 13%) in the earlier year.

Table 3.12: Number of clients by disability panel status, 1995–96, 1996–97

Disability panel status	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Endorsed	11,423	55.4	13,303	54.1
Referred	2,343	11.4	3,262	13.3
Rejected	97	0.5	69	0.3
Neither referred or endorsed	6,761	32.8	7,955	32.4
Total^(a)	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

(a) For 1996–97, total includes 1 client for whom disability panel status was not specified.

Sources of referral to NIMS sites were varied (Table 3.13). In 1996–97, the most common sources were self (20%), disability panel (10%), secondary school (9%), Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) programs (7%), the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (7%) and sheltered employment services (5%). These percentages were similar to those in 1995–96, with the largest changes being an increase in self-referrals and a decrease in referrals from sheltered employment services.

Table 3.13: Number of clients by referral source, 1995–96, 1996–97

Referral source	1995–96		1996–97	
	Number	%	Number	%
Self	3,844	18.6	4,848	19.7
Family member	996	4.8	1,092	4.4
DEETYA programs	1,633	7.8	1,791	7.3
Education system				
Secondary school system	1,831	8.9	2,204	9.0
TAFE college	649	3.1	792	3.2
University	6	0.0	6	0.0
Health and Family Services				
CETP or ISJ Service	573	2.8	808	3.3
Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service	1,526	7.4	1,698	6.9
Jobnet	121	0.6	141	0.6
Partnership with industry project	3	0.0	5	0.0
Post school options	660	3.2	669	2.7
Supported employment service	438	2.1	543	2.2
Special Employment Placement Officer	90	0.4	124	0.5
Sheltered employment service	1,344	6.5	1,268	5.2
Supported wage system placement	19	0.1	20	0.1
Employment skills development program	90	0.4	139	0.6
Other				
Another branch of same agency	519	2.5	593	2.4
Advocate/advocacy service	185	0.9	179	0.7
Community service network	1,187	5.8	1,286	5.2
Disability Panel (DRP) ^(a)	1,969	9.5	2,471	10.0
Employer	132	0.6	128	0.5
Hospital	69	0.3	111	0.5
Medical/health centre	493	2.4	816	3.3
Other Commonwealth Government	193	0.9	380	1.5
Other	1,567	7.6	1,744	7.1
Occupational therapist (not CRS)	41	0.2	50	0.2
Rehabilitation counsellor (not CRS)	209	1.0	333	1.4
State Government	237	1.1	351	1.4
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0

(a) For both years DRP numbers are smaller than those for the referrals recorded under disability panel status (Table 3.12). This may be explained by a lack of historical data kept by agencies, incorrect initial data entry or misunderstanding of the data dictionary.