

Housing assistance in Australia 2025

Web report | Last updated: **24 Jun 2025** | Topic: [Housing assistance](#)

About

In 2023–24, around 830,000 Australians lived in social housing in almost 452,000 dwellings. Most social housing dwellings were public housing stock (66%), followed by community housing (26%). Commonwealth Rent Assistance was provided to over 1.3 million income units (June 2024).

Cat. no: HOU 342

Key findings

- [The proportion of households living in social housing in Australia decreased from 4.7% in 2013 to 4.1% in 2024](#)
- [In 2023–24, there were around 830,000 occupants living in Australia's main social housing programs](#)
- [33,600 households were newly allocated social housing in 2023–24 compared with 32,400 new allocations in 2022–23](#)
- [At June 2024, over 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance \(CRA\)](#)

Summary

Housing assistance is an [Australia's welfare](#) topic

Australian and state and territory governments provide assistance to Australians experiencing difficulty finding or sustaining affordable and appropriate housing. Housing assistance refers to both access to social housing (such as public housing), and targeted financial assistance.

Defining social housing

Social housing provides eligible households with rent set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant's income). Social housing includes:

- public housing (rental housing managed by all state and territory housing authorities)
- community housing (housing managed by community-based organisations, available to low to moderate income or special needs households)
- state owned and managed Indigenous housing (housing provided and managed by state and territory governments available to households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin)
- Indigenous community housing (housing that First Nations communities own and/or manage).

In some states and territories, community housing may include affordable housing.

For more information, see [Housing assistance](#).

Social housing

At June 2024, there were around 452,000 social housing dwellings in Australia, up from 446,000 in 2023.

In 2024:

- most (322,000) social housing dwellings met the size requirements for the household composition.
- there were 60,900 (15%) dwellings that were considered to be underutilised and 22,600 (5.6%) dwellings that were considered to be overcrowded.

For more information, see [Social housing dwellings](#) and [Suitability of dwellings](#)

Social housing allocations

In 2024, there were around 426,000 households living in social housing, with around 830,000 occupants.

There has been a decline in the proportion of social housing households in Australia, falling from 4.7% of all households in 2013 to 4.1% in 2024.

In 2023–24:

- 33,600 households were newly allocated social housing (16,700 to public housing, 16,200 to community housing and 800 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing).
- 83% of new social housing allocations were households in greatest need, such as people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

For more information, see [Households and waitlists](#), and [Entries, exits and transfers](#).

Financial assistance

Governments provide financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs.

At June 2024, over 1.3 million income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), similar to June 2023.

In 2023–24, 60,400 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance and 32,000 households received Home Purchase Assistance.

For more information, see [Financial assistance](#).



Housing assistance in Australia

Australia	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
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Australians having difficulty meeting costs of housing can be supported by housing assistance programs, including social housing and financial assistance.

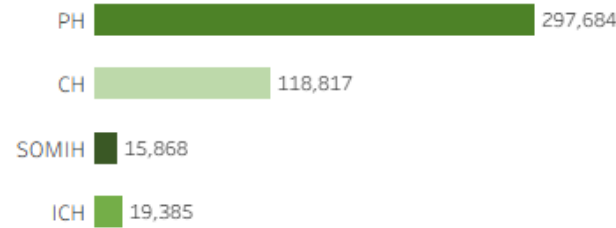
Social housing programs

Social housing provides eligible households with rents set below market rates (based on a percentage of a tenant’s income).

Forms of social housing include:

- public housing (PH)
- state owned & managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
- community housing (CH)
- Indigenous community housing (ICH).

Number of social housing dwellings 2024



Newly allocated households

In 2023–24, there were 33,624 households newly allocated social housing including, 16,660 households allocated public housing, 16,190 to community housing and 774 to state owned and managed Indigenous housing.

Supply of social housing

There has been a decline in the proportion of social housing households in Australia since 2014, from 4.6% of all households to 4.1% in 2024.

Proportion of social housing households (per cent)



Quick facts – Australia

In 2024 there were:

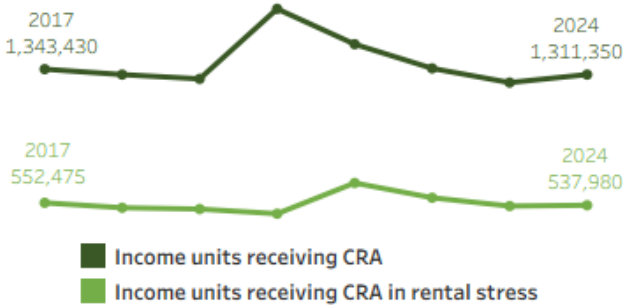
- 451,754 social housing dwellings
- housing 426,238 households
- with 830,321 occupants throughout 2023–24.

In 2024, most (321,919) social housing dwellings met the size requirements for the household composition. There were 60,847 dwellings that were considered to be underutilised and 22,551 dwellings that were considered to be overcrowded.

Financial assistance programs

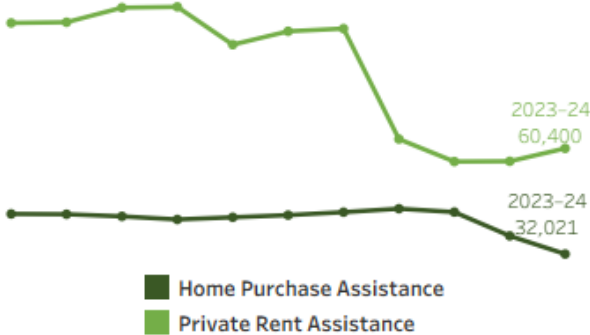
Governments provide various forms of financial support to assist people on lower incomes to meet housing costs.

At June 2024, 1,311,350 income units were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Australia, an increase from 2023. Of these income units, 537,980 were in rental stress, an increase from 2023.



Note: CRA data are from the last Friday in the financial year.

In 2023–24, 60,400 households in Australia received Private Rent Assistance and 32,021 households received Home Purchase Assistance.



Extended description for Figure SUMMARY.1

The interactive data visualisation displays a summary of key data about housing assistance in Australia at both national and state and territory levels. Data presented are available in the individual sections of this report and in the data download section. There were around 452,000 social housing dwellings in Australia at June 2024. Social housing households as a proportion of all households, remained stable nationally at 4.1% between June 2022 and June 2024 and has declined from 4.6% in June 2014. The number of households receiving Home Purchase Assistance decreased in 2023–24 compared with the previous year.

Housing assistance in Australia 2025 summary: Australia

Educational resource

In 2024, there were 451,754 social housing dwellings across Australia, housing 426,238 households with 830,321 occupants throughout 2023–24. This is the latest in a series of reports dating from 2008.

PDF 252kB

Housing assistance in Australia summary: NSW

Resource

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Housing assistance

On this page:

- [Housing affordability](#)
- [Drivers for people seeking housing assistance](#)
- [Scope of available housing assistance packages](#)

Housing affordability

Access to affordable housing is critical to wellbeing. Affordable housing refers to housing that meets the needs of households, priced so that alongside the costs of housing, people are able to meet their basic living costs, such as paying for food, heating, and medical care.

Finding and securing affordable housing in Australia has become difficult, particularly for many low-income households (ABS 2025). 2023 saw the longest continuous stretch of rising advertised rents. In 2024 the rental price growth eased, with higher vacancy rates across most capital cities. Rents increased by 5.5% over the 12 months to the March 2025 quarter (ABS 2025; Domain 2024; SQM Research 2025).

Low-income households are at an increased risk of financial stress due to the high cost of housing. Spending a large proportion of the household budget on housing leaves less to spend on essentials such as food, transport, utilities, health and childcare services. Saving for emergencies may also be reduced (Anacker 2019).

In 2019–20, approximately 619,000 (or 42%) low-income households in private dwellings were in rental stress, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Two-thirds (67%) of these households were in capital cities (ABS 2022a).

Housing assistance programs can provide households in need with affordable and appropriate housing, or with the means to afford appropriate housing in the private market. By receiving housing assistance, low-income households can achieve greater financial flexibility and housing stability. The support provided to these households can also lead to greater social and economic participation, and as a result, improve personal wellbeing and social cohesion (Bridge et al 2007; Carnemolla and Skinner 2021).

For more information on housing stress, see [Housing affordability](#) and [Home ownership and housing tenure](#).

Low income households

A low-income household is defined as a household with equivalised disposable income falling between the 3rd and 20th percentile of households. Equivalised disposable household income accounts for differences in household sizes and composition (ABS 2022b).

Drivers for people seeking housing assistance

Many circumstances or changes can contribute to the need for households to seek housing assistance. Understanding these drivers, and the influence of critical life events, and housing market factors on households can assist in defining housing stress, an early indicator of household need for housing support. Identifying housing stress can inform interventionist approaches to housing assistance provision and policy (Ghasri et al 2022).

Housing stress occurs when households pay a high proportion of their income on housing costs. Usually this definition applies to low-income households.

Critical life events can lead to major change in a person's life. These may include family formation or breakdown, providing care to a family member, loss of a family member, or change of employment. Multiple intersecting critical life events may also put significant financial pressure on a household's ability to manage their housing and living costs.

Housing market factors are the specific arrangement of conditions in the private housing market that impact housing options, and are influenced by:

- taxation
- regulation
- supply
- availability
- low vacancy rates
- rising private market rental costs
- cost of living pressures such as inflation, interest rates, and energy costs (Ghasri et al 2022; Stone et al 2016).

In response to housing insecurity and housing affordability challenges, households may need to use contingency resources (such as savings, assets, skills, or social networks) to ensure that they can sustain access to housing. However, low-income households often lack the contingency resources to respond to negative impacts arising from critical life events or housing market factors, leading them to seek housing assistance (Ghasri et al 2022).

Figure 1: Drivers of housing stress

Critical life events

- Family formation/breakdown
- Unemployment/underemployment and financial disruptions
- Mental/physical health issues
- Family and domestic violence

Housing market factors

- Security of tenure
- Affordability and competition
- Housing supply/availability
- Cost of living pressures
- Policies, programs, funding

Housing stress

Housing shocks

- Inability to afford rent/mortgage payments
- Eviction and foreclosure
- Overcrowding
- Housing precarity
- Forced mobility
- Homelessness

Household response

Household resources

- Income, savings, assets
- Social networks/support
- Insurance

Household resilience: households will utilise their household resources to overcome/mitigate housing shocks

Housing assistance

- Social housing
- Financial assistance

When household resources are insufficient, housing assistance can be provided to manage housing

• Homelessness services

Extended description for Figure 1: Drivers of housing stress

The diagram illustrates how critical life events and housing market factors interact to create or worsen housing stress. The housing shocks box outlines some of the potential flow on effects of this stress. The boxes at the bottom of the diagram present strategies for addressing housing shocks, including utilising household resources. If these resources are insufficient, people may need to seek housing assistance.

Scope of available housing assistance packages

The housing programs and assistance explored throughout this report include:

- social housing, owned and managed by government and non-government organisations, including:
 - public housing (PH)
 - state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
 - community housing (CH)
 - Indigenous community housing (ICH)
- financial assistance given to tenants to meet private rental costs, including:
 - Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)
 - Private Rent Assistance (PRA)
- financial assistance with home purchase, including:
 - Home Purchase Assistance (HPA)

This report does not cover the provision of services such as obtaining accommodation or sustaining tenancies provided by specialist homelessness services. For information relating to homelessness services see [Homelessness services](#).

Definitions of housing assistance programs

Social housing

Social housing is low cost or subsidised rental housing provided to eligible Australians by government or non-government (including not-for-profit) organisations and includes:

- Public housing: Rental housing managed by state and territory housing authorities. This includes dwellings that are owned by the housing authority or leased from the private sector or other housing program areas and used to provide public rental housing or leased to public housing tenants. Public housing can be accessed by non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people, and permanent residents.
- Community housing: Housing managed by community-based organisations, available to low to moderate income or special needs households. Community housing models vary across states and territories, and the housing stock may be owned by a variety of groups including government. Community housing can be accessed by non-Indigenous Australians, First Nations people, and permanent residents.
- State owned and managed Indigenous housing: Housing that state and territory governments provide and manage. It is available to households that have at least one member who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- Indigenous community housing: Any community housing that is owned or managed by an Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO). These organisations may either directly manage the dwellings they own or sublease tenancy management services to the relevant state/territory housing authority or another organisation. Services include managing tenancy arrangements, collecting rent, providing subsidised rent and performing housing maintenance. This type of housing is available to households with at least one First Nations member (NIAA 2024).

Financial assistance with rental costs

- Commonwealth Rent Assistance is a payment provided by the Australian government to eligible families and individuals who pay or are liable to pay private rent or community housing rent. Commonwealth Rent Assistance is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate (or ceiling) is reached. The minimum threshold and maximum rates vary according to the recipients' household or family situation, including the number of children (DSS 2024).
- Private Rent Assistance is financial assistance administered by each state and territory government. It is provided to low-income households experiencing difficulty with securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. Private Rent Assistance is usually provided as a one-off form of support – such as bond loans and rental grants – but may also include ongoing rental subsidies and payment of relocation expenses.

Financial assistance with home purchase

The Australian and state and territory governments provide assistance and programs to support people into home ownership.

For a summary of Australian Government programs see [Supporting people into home ownership](#) (The Treasury 2025). [Housing Australia](#) manages a number of these schemes, for example, First Home Guarantee, Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee and Family Home Guarantee (Housing Australia 2025).

Home Purchase Assistance is a form of government financial assistance administered by each state and territory. It is provided to eligible households to improve their access to, and maintain, home ownership. Home Purchase Assistance varies by state and territory, as some products are only offered within certain jurisdictions.

The Indigenous Home Ownership Program supports First Nations people into affordable, appropriate, and secure housing. The program aims to address barriers to home ownership by providing access to knowledge, skills and networks to support home buyers and owners (IBA 2024).

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funds Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, when deemed necessary and reasonable. SDA funding is used to stimulate investment in the building of new dwellings for NDIS participants (NDIS 2025).

Some of these schemes can be used in conjunction with one another and/or state and territory first homeowner grants and stamp duty concessions. There may also be state-specific programs in addition to those listed above.

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Housing policy framework

On this page:

- [A brief history of Government housing assistance](#)
- [Current policy landscape](#)
- [Government housing assistance expenditure](#)

A brief history of Government housing assistance

In 1943, the Commonwealth Housing Commission was appointed by the Commonwealth Government to evaluate the condition of Australia's housing stock. Due to the combined impact of the Great Depression and the use of labour and building materials in supporting the war effort, appropriate and secure housing was incredibly scarce during this time (Dufty-Jones 2018). In response to Australia's sizable housing shortage, the government began to provide people with adequate housing, to foster economic development and replace the tenement housing present at the time (Troy 2012; Macintyre 2015).

In 1944, the Commonwealth Housing Commission reported a shortage of some 300,000 dwellings and advised the Commonwealth to provide housing to overcome this housing deficit (Pawson et al. 2020). This advice would later result in the establishment of the first Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) in 1945.

The CSHA was an agreement between the Commonwealth and states/territories to provide funds for the construction of new dwellings. As a result, social housing provision from governments became a more prominent aspect of the housing landscape. The original 1945 CSHA has been updated numerous times, with the 2003 CSHA being the final revision, before it was officially replaced by the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) in 2009 (Parliament of Australia 2017). The NAHA was superseded by the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) in 2018 (DSS 2022a) and the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH) in 2024.

Historically, social housing was built to stimulate the economy, provide people with secure accommodation, and facilitate participation in the workforce (Pawson et al. 2020). As such, access to social housing was made available to predominantly working families on very low, low, and moderate incomes (Groenhart et al. 2014; Yates 2013). However, from 1956 to 1973, the Government's housing strategy shifted towards encouraging home ownership and supporting low-income households in the private rental market. In 1973, income eligibility limits were introduced to social housing households, signifying the beginning of the shift towards the current policy where social housing allocations are partly based on need (Yates 2013).

By the 1999 CSHA, a greater emphasis was placed on helping families and individuals that could not be housed in the private market. Accordingly, a key feature of the 1999 CSHA was providing housing assistance according to need, classified by income, rather than security of tenure (ANAO 2006).

With the introduction of the NAHA in 2009, provision of social housing focused on assisting households experiencing disadvantage, and more complex needs – or in other words, people who are in greatest need, especially people experiencing homelessness (Pawson et al. 2020).

Current policy landscape

National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH)

The [National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness](#) replaced the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) on 1 July 2024. It is a 5 year agreement between the Australian and state and territory governments under the *Federal Financial Relations Act 2009*. The Agreement supports the operation of Australia's social housing and homelessness services sectors and is underpinned by a new outcomes framework along with a commitment to improve data and reporting.

National Housing Supply and Affordability Council

The Council provides independent, evidence-based expert advice to Government on housing supply and affordability matters (NHSAC 2024). The Council builds the evidence base for national housing policy through its research, housing supply and demand forecasts, and by working to improve data availability and quality. The Council also engages with, and learns from, the diverse perspectives of stakeholders who are equally committed to achieving real reform in the housing system. The Council reports annually to the Minister for Housing on its research and the state of the housing system.

National Housing Accord

The [National Housing Accord](#) (2022) brings together all levels of government, investors and the residential development, building and construction sector to unlock quality, affordable housing supply over the medium term. The Accord recognises the need for more housing to be provided by the market, with government playing a pivotal role in the investment of building affordable housing that is close to services and other amenities.

Australian Government funding of \$350 million will help support the delivery of 10,000 affordable homes over five years from 2024. Additionally, state and territory governments have committed to deliver up to 10,000 new affordable homes nationally, supporting a total of up to 20,000 new affordable homes under the Accord (Treasury 2024).

There are a range of programs designed to help reach the Accord's targets:

- Housing Support Program
 - \$500 million initiative to help kick start housing supply, including connecting essential services and amenities to support new housing development or building planning capability.
 - In the 2024–25 Budget, an expansion of this program was announced, with a further \$1 billion being made available to states and territories to deliver new housing- including for connecting essential services. This brings the total funding for the Housing Support Program to \$1.5 billion.

- National Planning Reform Blueprint

Outlines planning, zoning, land release and other measures to improve housing supply and affordability.

- New Home Bonus

\$3 billion to help incentivise states and territories to build more than their share of the targets listed under the Accord.

- Social Housing Accelerator Payment

A \$2 billion payment to states and territories to permanently increase the social housing stock across Australia.

Housing Australia

[Housing Australia](#) (formerly the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation) has primary responsibility for delivering key programs which form the Government's housing agenda including increasing the supply of social and affordable housing and helping Australians realise homeownership sooner.

Housing Australia is responsible for delivering Australian Government commitments to fund 30,000 new social and affordable dwellings through the Housing Australia Future Fund (Department of Finance 2024), and an additional 10,000 affordable homes through the National Housing Accord (Treasury 2023).

Housing Australia Future Fund

The [Housing Australia Future Fund \(HAFF\)](#), a \$10 Billion investment fund, was established in November 2023.

The Australian Government established the HAFF to provide a sustainable funding source to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.

The income generated by the HAFF will provide a minimum annual disbursement of \$500 million per year, indexed from 2029–30, to support delivery of 20,000 new social and 10,000 new affordable homes over five years and to fund a range of acute housing needs. The disbursements will contribute \$324 million to a broader \$330 million package over five years to support a range of acute housing needs, including for: veterans, housing in remote First Nations communities, and accommodation for women and children impacted by family and domestic violence.

Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator

The [Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator](#) (AHBA) provides low-cost and longer-term loans to registered community housing providers, supporting more social and affordable housing. In the 2024–25 Budget, the Government is increasing the line of credit to Housing Australia by \$3 billion, and increasing Housing Australia's liability cap by \$2.5 billion to \$10 billion support ongoing delivery of the AHBA program.

In the 2025–26 Budget, the Government increased the cap on the Government's guarantee of Housing Australia's liabilities by \$16 billion to a total of \$26 billion – enabling Housing Australia to support the delivery of more social and affordable housing under the AHBA and the first two rounds of the HAFF and National Housing Accord.

National Housing Infrastructure Facility

The [National Housing Infrastructure Facility](#) (NHIF) was originally established as a \$1 billion facility that provides finance in the form of grants and concessional loans for eligible critical infrastructure projects that will unlock new housing supply, particularly social and affordable housing.

In 2022, the Government expanded the remit of the NHIF to allow for more flexible use of the available funds to also help directly unlock new social and affordable dwellings and attract more institutional capital to the sector.

In 2024, the NHIF received an additional \$1 billion in federal funding (\$700 million for grants and \$300 million for concessional loans) to support crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence, and for youth experiencing, or at particular risk of, homelessness. For the first 12 months, the full amount will be notionally allocated for projects in each state and territory. After this period, any remaining uncommitted funds will be pooled, supporting competitive applications regardless of location.

Capacity building for the social and affordable housing sector

The Government is providing \$2.1 million from 2024–25 to build the capacity of community housing providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations, assisting these organisations to engage with the Government's housing financing programs and improve their delivery of housing.

Government housing assistance expenditure

In 2023–24, Australian Government funding for the NHHA and related agreements was \$1.9 billion (of which \$1.7 billion was for the NHHA). An additional \$5.5 billion was spent on Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), an increase from 2022–23 (\$5.0 billion). In 2023–24, state and territory net recurrent expenditure on social housing was \$5.4 billion, an increase of \$0.4 billion from the previous financial year. State and territory government social housing capital (non-recurrent) expenditure was \$4.0 billion in 2023–24 (Productivity Commission 2025).

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Social housing dwellings

On this page:

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- [Social housing dwellings](#)
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- [Occupancy](#)
- [Tenantable status](#)
- [Dwelling attributes](#)
- [Dwellings managed by non-government providers](#)

The information presented in this section provides insights into social housing dwelling stock across Australia. This includes four main programs: public housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH), community housing and Indigenous community housing. The data are a snapshot on 30 June of the reference year.

Key findings

- At June 2024, there were around 452,000 social housing dwellings in Australia.
- There has been a gradual increase in community housing dwelling stock since 2006 while public housing stock has declined.
- In most states/territories, public housing was the most common type of social housing, followed by community housing.
- Three in four public housing dwellings are in *Major cities*, and around one-third of SOMIH and ICH dwellings are in *Very remote* areas.

What is a dwelling?

In this report, a dwelling is defined as a structure, or a discrete space within a structure, intended for a person or group of people to live.

Dwelling types include:

- a separate house
- a semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse, etc.
- a flat, unit, apartment, or cabin, etc.

A full list of dwelling types can be found in [METEOR](#).

For more information on how dwellings differ to households see [Households](#).

The concept of a dwelling may be different across the social housing collections; see the [Data quality statements](#) page for more information on definitions.

Social housing dwellings

At June 2024, there were around 452,000 social housing dwellings in Australia.

At June 2024, (Table DWELLINGS.1):

- 66% or 298,000 dwellings were public housing (PH)
- 26% or 119,000 dwellings were community housing (CH)
- 3.5% or 15,900 dwellings were state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)
- 4.3% or 19,400 dwellings were Indigenous community housing (ICH).

Changes to social housing dwellings over time

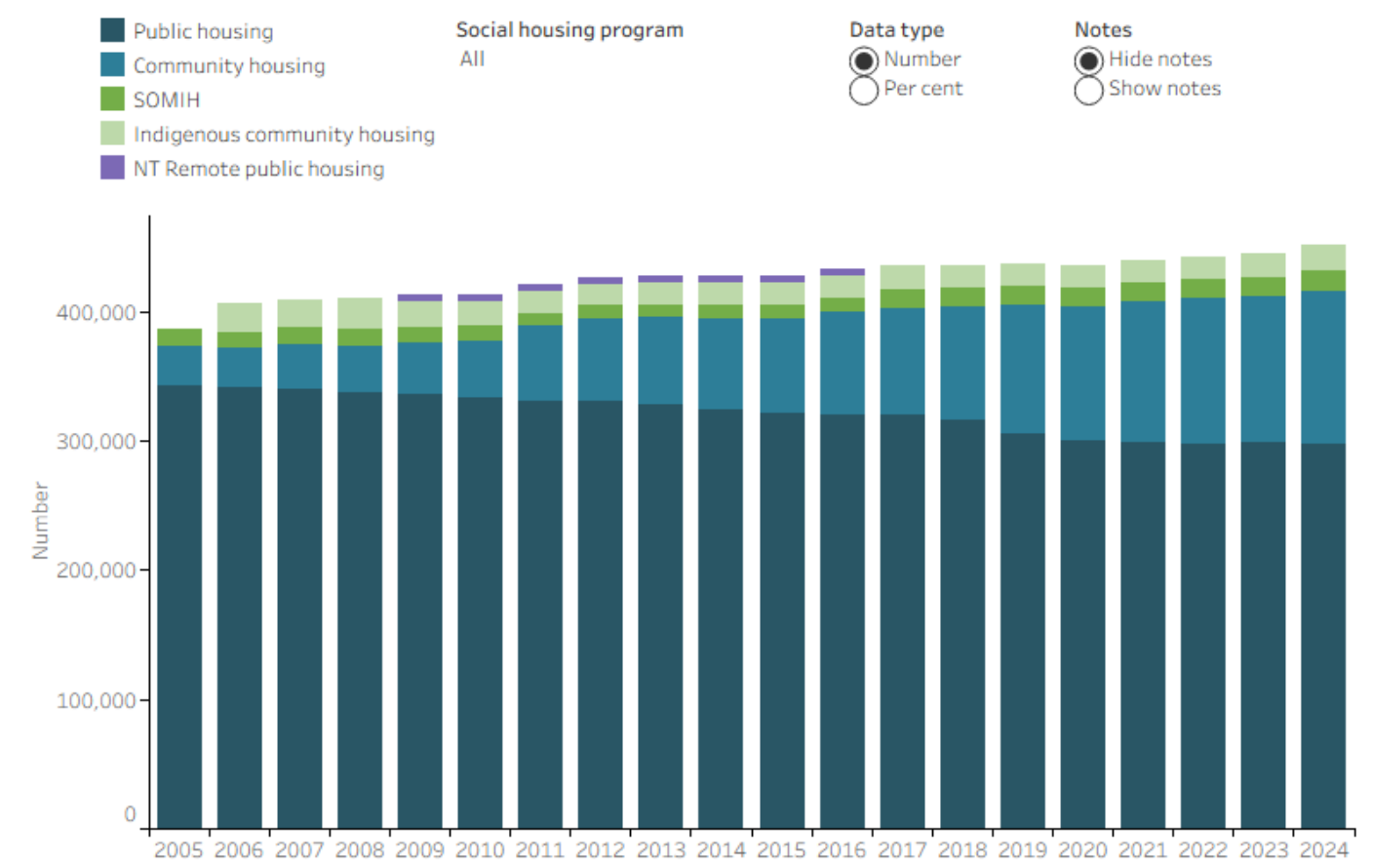
There has been a gradual increase in community housing dwelling stock since 2006 while public housing stock has declined.

From 2006 to 2024 (Figure DWELLINGS.1; Table DWELLINGS.1):

- The number of public housing dwellings decreased from 341,000 in 2006 to 298,000 in 2024.
- The number of community housing dwellings increased almost four-fold, from 30,100 in 2006 to 119,000 in 2024.
- There was a decrease in the number of Indigenous community housing dwellings from 22,200 in 2006 to 19,400 in 2024. However, the number of Indigenous community housing dwellings increased by 400 in the past year, from 19,000 in 2023.
- The number of SOMIH dwellings has fluctuated over the past 15 years due to stock transfers. The number of dwellings in 2024 (15,900) is higher than previous years.

There have been considerable changes to the composition of social housing stock among the four programs, see [Technical notes](#) for details. For example, the decline in public housing stock in some jurisdictions (such as in New South Wales) was largely due to transferring the management of social housing from government to community housing providers.

Figure DWELLINGS.1: Dwellings by social housing program, at June 2005 to 2024



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Northern Territory Government. Department of Housing, Annual Report. Darwin, NT. Supplementary table DWELLINGS.1.

Extended description for Figure DWELLINGS.1

Dwellings, by social housing program, at June 2005 to 2024. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that from 2006 to 2024, public housing has consistently been the most common type of social housing. Public housing as a share of social housing has decreased over time from 84% (341,000 dwellings) in 2006 to 66% (298,000 dwellings) in 2024. The number of community housing dwellings increased from 30,100 (or 7.4% of social housing dwellings) in 2006 to 119,000 (or 26%) in 2024, and the number of SOMIH dwellings increased from 12,900 (3.2%) in 2006 to 15,900 (3.5%) in 2024. The number of Indigenous community housing dwellings decreased from 22,200 (5.5%) in 2006 to 19,400 (4.3%) in 2024.

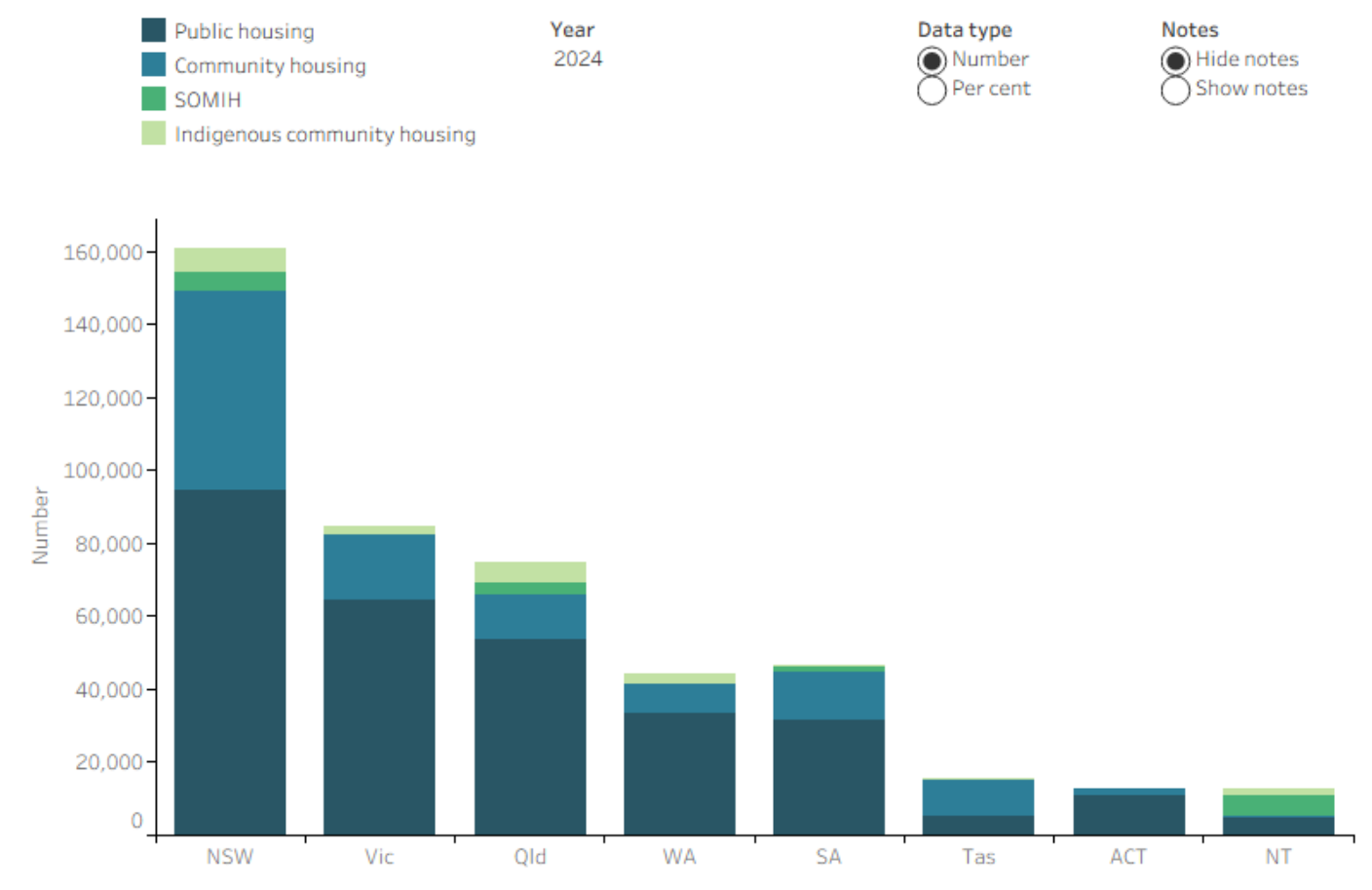
Variation between states and territories

In most states/territories, public housing is the most common type of social housing followed by community housing.

At June 2024, the profile of social housing varied across the states and territories (Figure DWELLINGS.2; Table DWELLINGS.2).

- New South Wales had the highest number of public and community housing dwellings (94,500 and 54,400 dwellings, respectively).
- For New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory, most dwellings were public housing (59–86%), followed by community housing (14–34%).
- Tasmania had more community housing dwellings (10,100 or 66%) than public housing dwellings (5,100 or 33%).
- The largest number of Northern Territory social housing dwellings were in the SOMIH program (44% or 5,700), followed by public housing (35% or 4,600 dwellings).
- The Northern Territory had the most SOMIH dwellings of any state or territory.
- For Indigenous community housing, New South Wales (6,500) had the largest number of dwellings, followed by Queensland (5,400 dwellings). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous community housing dwellings (15% or 1,900).

Figure DWELLINGS.2: Dwellings by social housing program by state or territory, at June 2014 to 2024



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Northern Territory Government. Department of Housing, Annual Report. Darwin, NT. Supplementary table DWELLINGS.2.

Extended description for Figure DWELLINGS.2

This vertical stacked bar graph illustrates the variation in the number and proportion of dwellings in each social housing program (public housing, SOMIH, community housing and Indigenous community housing) across states and territories. In 2024, the Australian Capital Territory (86%) had the highest proportion of public housing dwellings, while Tasmania (33%) had the lowest proportion. Tasmania had the highest proportion of community housing dwellings (66%), while the Northern Territory had the lowest (5.7%) in 2024. New South Wales had the highest number of Indigenous community housing dwellings increasing from 4,700 in 2014 to 6,500 dwellings in 2024.

Location of dwellings

Three in four public housing dwellings are in *Major cities*, and around one-third of SOMIH and ICH dwellings are in *Very remote* areas.

The location of social housing is an important component of the suitability of a dwelling for an occupant. Some of the factors that influence the suitability of housing location include access to amenities, employment opportunities, health services, and transportation services (AIHW 2024). For further information on the suitability of social housing in terms of location, see the [National Social Housing Survey 2023: Needs of tenants – location of their home](#).

The location of social housing largely reflects the geographic distribution of the population of Australia, with large concentrations of people living in urban centres of both the south-east and east coasts.

At June 2024 (Table DWELLINGS.3):

- Most public and community housing dwellings were in *Major cities* (76% and 66% of dwellings, respectively).
- For SOMIH, around a third of dwellings were in *Major cities* (31%) and about a third (30%) were in *Very remote* areas. The transfer of around 1,600 dwellings from public housing to SOMIH in NSW during 2023–24 increased the number of SOMIH dwellings in *Major cities* compared with previous years.
- Most Indigenous community housing dwellings were in *Very remote* areas (6,900 or 46%).

What is the Australian Statistical Geography Standard?

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is a classification of Australia into a social geography to reflect the location of people and communities to assist in the publication and analysis of social, economic, and demographic statistics. The ASGS categorises the regions of Australia into a hierarchy of statistical areas and consists of ABS structures and non-ABS structures (such as local government and postal areas). For further

information, see the [technical notes](#).

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) refers to the geographical area of sub-state regions in the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA4 broadly represents the labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory, with the boundaries reflecting the separation of sub-state regions by different labour markets. For the largest regional cities, including Wollongong and Townsville, SA4s broadly reflects the labour markets of the city. For outer regional and remote areas, SA4s broadly reflects the aggregation of smaller and localised labour markets that are geographically, socially, and economically similar (ABS 2021).

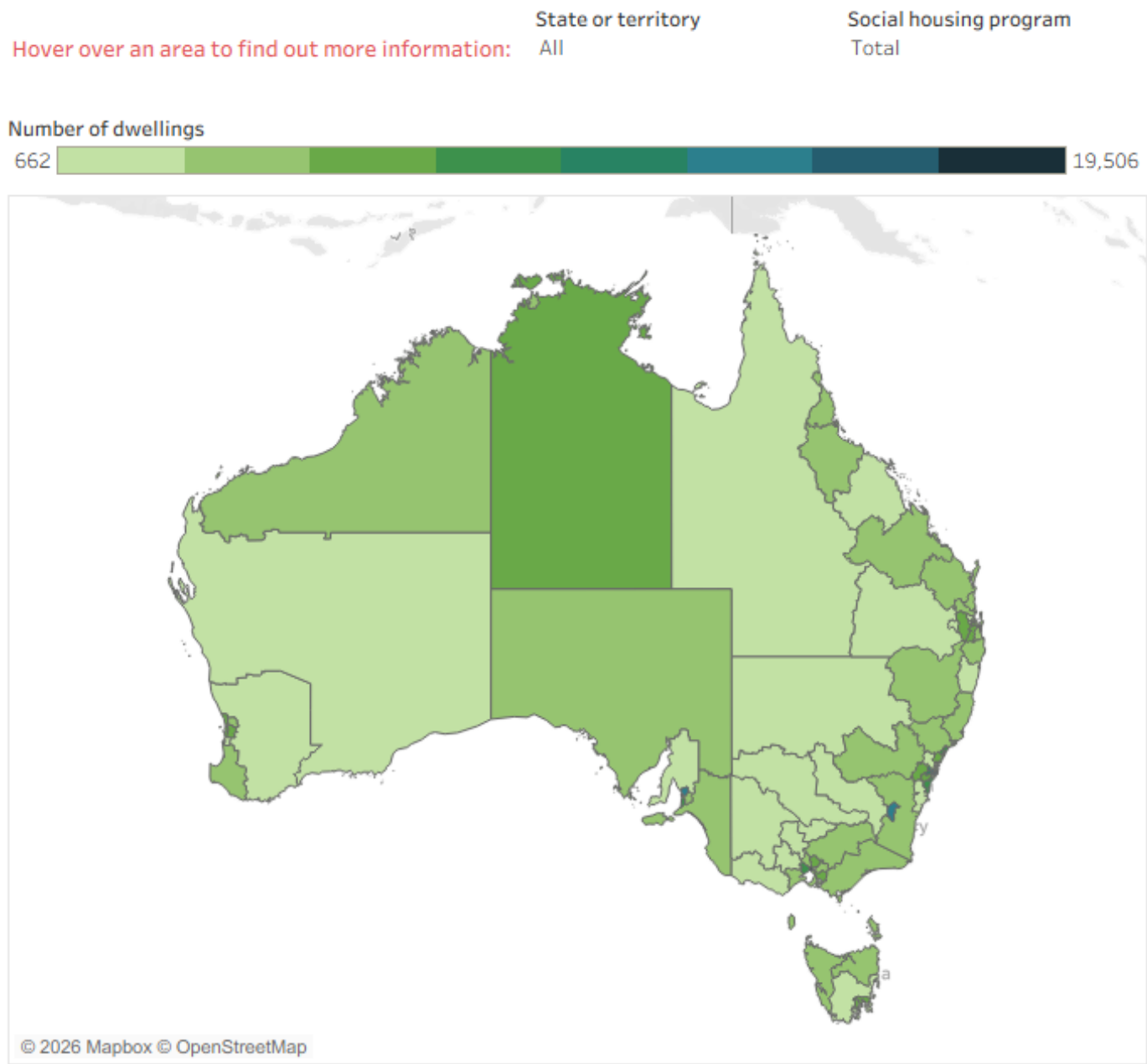
Across the states and territories, the number of dwellings managed by the different social housing programs varied by these sub-state regions.

In 2024, the regions with the highest number of social housing dwellings were (Figure DWELLINGS.3; Table DWELLINGS.4):

- Melbourne – Inner (19,500)
- Sydney – Parramatta (14,300)
- Sydney – City and Inner South (14,100)
- Sydney – Inner South West (13,600)
- Adelaide – North (13,200)
 - The highest number of public housing and community housing dwellings were in Melbourne – Inner (14,500 and 5,100 respectively)
 - The highest number of SOMIH dwellings were in Northern Territory – Outback (5,300)

Similarly, across Local Government Areas (LGA), Brisbane (19,300) had the highest total number of social housing dwellings, followed by the ACT (12,700), Sydney (11,200), Canterbury – Bankstown (10,500) and Blacktown (10,300) (Table DWELLINGS.5).

Figure DWELLINGS.3: Number of dwellings by social housing program Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4), at June 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.4.

Extended description for Figure DWELLINGS.3

The map shows the number of dwellings in SA4 areas of Australia in June 2024, aggregated by social housing program. Melbourne – Inner (19,500) had the highest number of social housing dwellings, of which most were public housing (14,500). Melbourne – Inner also had the highest number of community housing dwellings (5,100). The Northern Territory – Outback had the highest number of SOMIH dwellings (5,300).

Occupancy

Occupancy rates

Occupancy describes whether a dwelling is occupied under a formal tenancy agreement. For social housing, the rate of occupancy is calculated by analysing occupied dwellings in reference to total social housing dwellings for the reference year. The occupancy rate is influenced by tenancy turnover, changes to the number of available dwellings, as well as the need for redevelopment or replacement of dwellings whereby major maintenance work needs to be completed before dwellings can be allocated to a new household.

In Australia, social housing occupancy rates have remained high year to year. At June 2024, 97% of public housing dwellings were occupied and 95% for community housing. Occupancy rates of Indigenous community housing (94%) and SOMIH (93%) were also high (Table DWELLINGS.6). For all housing programs, occupancy rates were lower in *Very remote* areas compared to *Major cities* (Table DWELLINGS.7).

At June 2024 (Table DWELLINGS.6):

- For public housing, the highest occupancy rates were in Queensland (98%) and New South Wales (97%). The lowest occupancy rate was in the Australian Capital Territory (94%).
- The highest occupancy rate for SOMIH was in Queensland (98%) and the lowest was the Northern Territory (87%).
- For community housing, the highest occupancy rate was in the Northern Territory (98%), and the lowest was in the Australian Capital Territory (83%).
- For Indigenous Community Housing, Tasmania had the highest rate of occupancy (98%), with the lowest rate in Western Australia (87%).

Tenantable status

The tenantable status of a dwelling relates to whether a dwelling provides a certain level of basic amenity, and that maintenance is completed to the required minimum level (see also [NSHS 2023: tenant satisfaction with maintenance services](#)).

At June 2024, almost all public housing dwellings were tenantable (99% or 294,000); higher than the proportion of SOMIH (97% or 15,400) and community housing dwellings (93% or 111,000) (Table DWELLINGS.8).

Data were not available for Indigenous community housing dwellings.

Dwelling attributes

Dwelling type

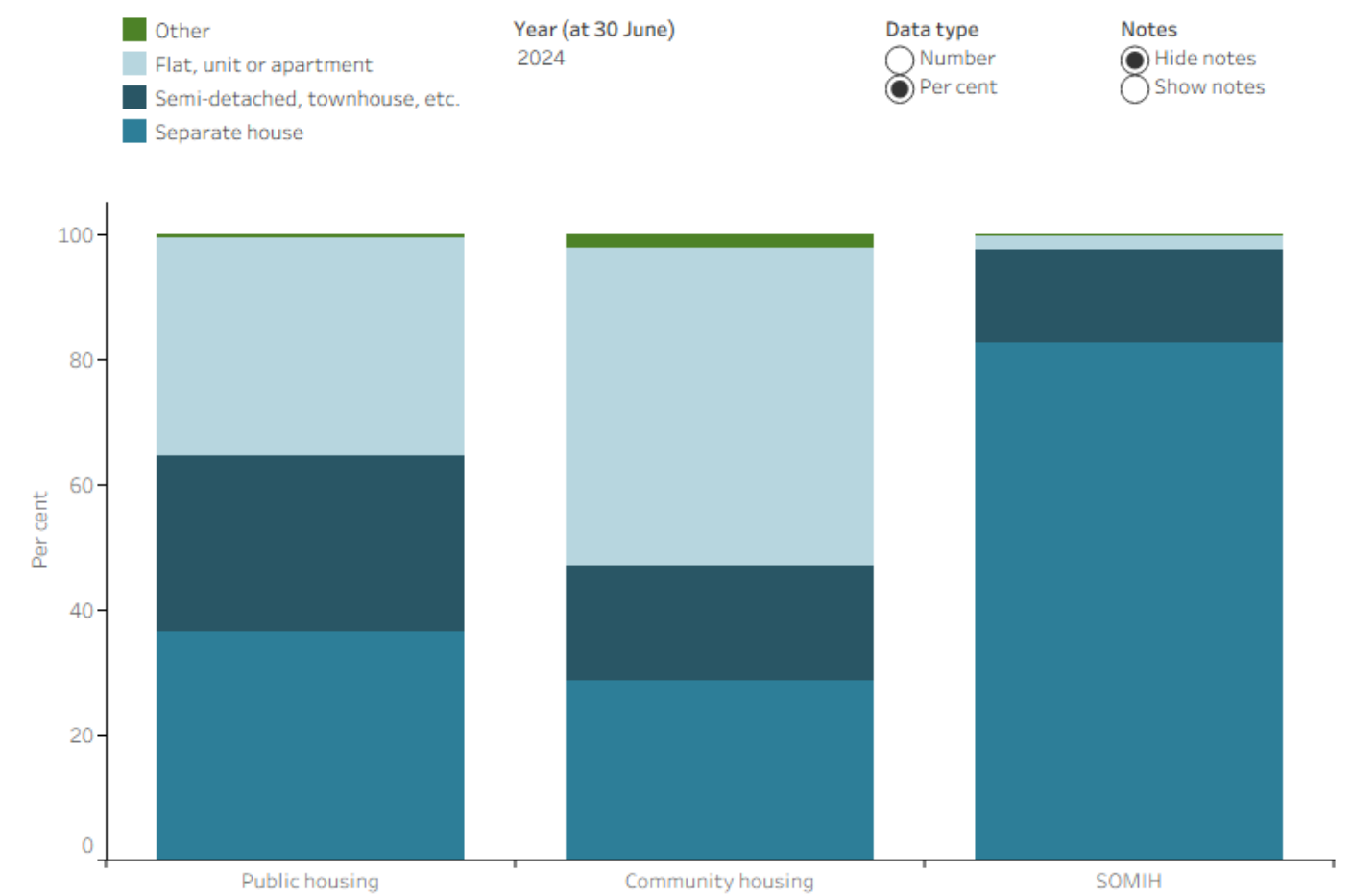
Within each social housing program, dwelling types have remained stable over time.

At June 2024, most public housing dwellings were a separate house (36%), flat, unit or apartment (35%) or semi-detached, townhouse, etc. (28%). Half of all community housing dwellings were a flat, unit or apartment (51%), followed by a separate house (29%). In comparison, the vast majority of SOMIH dwellings were a *separate house* (83%), followed by a relatively small proportion of semi-detached, townhouse etc (15%). This pattern of SOMIH dwelling types likely reflects the location of dwellings and the target group (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.9).

From June 2012 to 2024 (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.9):

- There was a decrease of around 21,000 separate houses in public housing.
- The number of flat, unit or apartment type dwellings in community housing more than doubled from 25,600 in 2012 to 56,800 in 2024.

Figure DWELLINGS.4: Dwellings by dwelling type and social housing program, at June 2012 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.9.

Extended description for Figure DWELLINGS.4

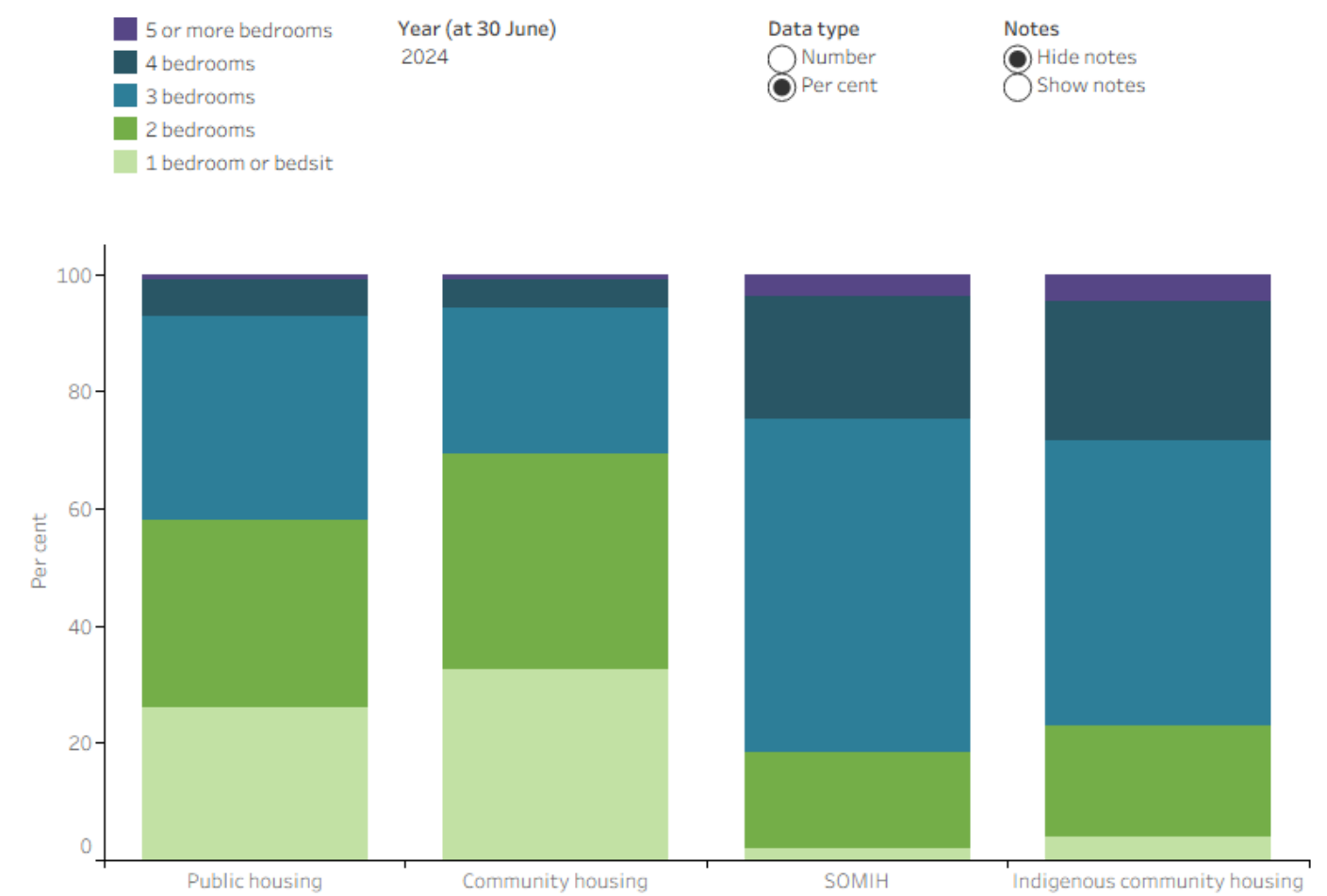
This stacked bar graph shows a comparison of the number and proportion of dwellings by dwelling type across social housing programs from 2012 to 2024. In 2024, the most common dwelling type in both public housing (36% or 108,000) and SOMIH (83% or 13,100) were separate houses. In community housing, flats, units, or apartments make up just over half of all dwellings (51% or 56,800).

Number of bedrooms

At June 2024 (Figure DWELLINGS.4; Table DWELLINGS.10):

- Public housing dwellings were most likely to have 3 bedrooms (35% or 103,700 dwellings), followed by 2 bedroom dwellings (32% or 95,000).
- The majority of SOMIH dwellings were 3 bedroom dwellings (57% or 9,000 dwellings), with very few 1 bedroom dwellings (1.9% or 305).
- Community housing dwellings were most commonly 2 bedroom (37% or 41,300) or 1 bedroom (33% or 36,600) dwellings.
- Around half of Indigenous community housing dwellings were 3 bedroom dwellings (49% or 7,200) and a further 24% (or 3,500) were 4 bedroom dwellings.

Figure DWELLINGS.5: Dwellings by number of bedrooms and social housing program, at June 2012 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables DWELLINGS.10.

Extended description for figure DWELLINGS.5

This stacked bar graph shows a comparison of dwellings by number of bedrooms across social housing programs from 2012 to 2024. In 2024, 3 bedroom dwellings were the most common number of bedrooms for public housing (35% or 104,000), SOMIH (57% or 9,000) and Indigenous community housing (49% or 7,200). However, the most common number of bedrooms in community housing dwellings were 1 bedroom (33% or 36,600) or 2 bedrooms (37% or 41,300).

Dwellings managed by non-government providers

Community housing and Indigenous community housing dwellings are managed by non-government organisations. As a result, information from some organisations is not available (See the [Data quality statements](#) for more information).

At June 2024 there were (Table DWELLINGS.11):

- Around 530 reporting community housing providers across Australia, an increase of 40 providers from the previous year. The majority (71% or 375) of these providers managed less than 50 dwellings.
- Over 200 reporting Indigenous community housing providers. Nearly half of these providers managed fewer than 20 dwellings (Table DWELLINGS.11).

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2021) *Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3*, ABS, Australian Government accessed on 25 March 2025.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024) *National Social Housing Survey 2023*, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed on 25 March 2025.

Households and waitlists

On this page:

- [Key findings](#)
- [Households](#)
- [Supply of social housing](#)
- [Key characteristics of households](#)
- [Length of household tenure](#)
- [Waiting lists](#)

Most of the data in this section are a snapshot of ongoing households at 30 June of the reference year.

Key findings

- The number of households in the four main social housing programs increased from 379,000 in 2008, to 426,000 in 2024.
- The growth in the number of social housing households has not kept up with the growth in the number of households in Australia.
- The majority of households in social housing have been in their tenancy for less than 10 years.
- The proportion of greatest need households on public housing and SOMIH waitlists has increased since 2014.

Households

Information on the characteristics of households (such as sex, income status and disability status) provides an insight into the demographic profile of social housing households.

Household definition

In this report, a household is defined as a person or a group of 2 or more (related or unrelated) people residing in a dwelling.

Household composition describes the group of people living in a household and is based on couple and parent-child relationships.

- A single-family household contains a main tenant only, or a main tenant residing with a partner and/or the main tenant's children.
- Group households consist of 2 or more tenants aged 16 or over who are not in a couple or parent-child relationship.
- Mixed households are households not described by the other two types – for example, multiple single-family households.

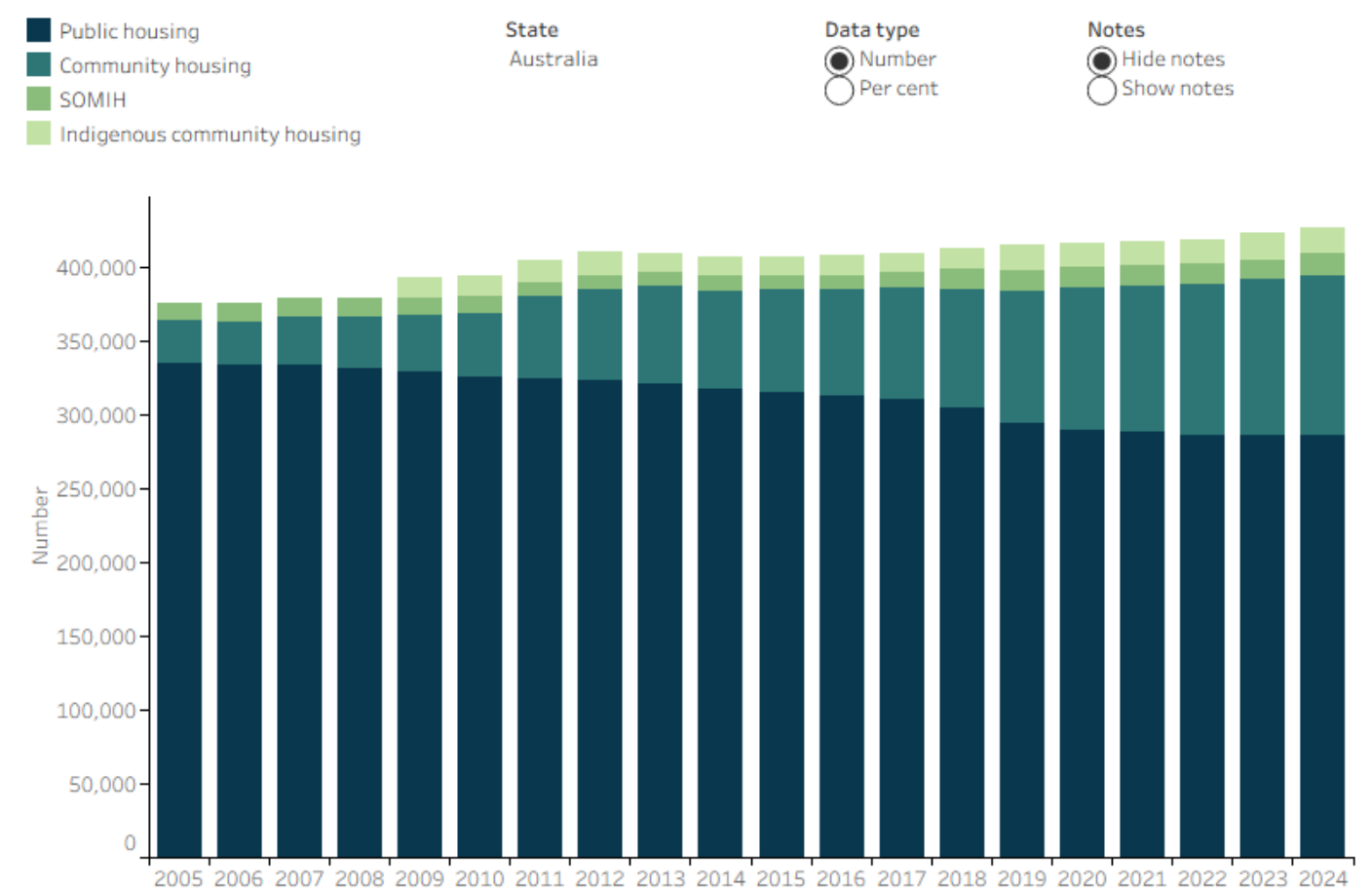
Information is presented about ongoing households, that is, those with a tenancy on 30 June in the reference year. Data were not available for all programs in some states and territories.

The number of households in the four main social housing programs increased from 379,000 in 2008 to 426,000 in 2024.

At June 2024, among social housing programs (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1; Table HOUSEHOLDS.1):

- 286,000 households (67%) were in public housing.
- 108,000 households (25%) were in community housing.
- 14,800 households (3.5%) were in SOMIH.
- 17,600 households (4.1%) were in Indigenous community housing.

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1: Households by social housing program, at June 2005 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.1.

Extended description for figure HOUSEHOLDS.1

This vertical stacked bar graph shows the highest proportion of households lived in public housing, ranging from 89% in 2005 to 67% in 2024. Community housing had the second highest proportion of households at 25% in 2024; increasing from 7.5% in 2005. In contrast, Indigenous community housing (4.1%) and SOMIH (3.5%) had the lowest proportion of households in 2024, with proportions for both programs remaining mostly unchanged over time.

Changes over time

The number of ongoing households in the four main social housing programs has fluctuated in recent years reflecting dwelling changes within each program (see [Social Housing Dwellings](#) section). Changes to the number of households in public housing and community housing programs account for the largest changes across time.

From 2008 to 2024, the number of public housing households decreased from 331,000 to 286,000. However, this decrease was offset by an increase in the number of community housing households which tripled from 35,000 to 108,000 (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1; Table HOUSEHOLDS.1).

The number of Indigenous community housing households increased from 14,200 in 2009 to 17,600 in 2024. Conversely, the number of SOMIH households has fluctuated over time, decreasing from 12,400 in 2008 to 9,600 households in 2017. In 2018 the inclusion of SOMIH household data for the Northern Territory for the first time contributed to an increase in reported SOMIH households to 13,800. There were around 14,800 SOMIH households in 2024.

The change in the proportion of households in each of the social housing programs varied across states and territories (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.1). Due to changes in systems and processes and stock movements between programs, data for individual states and territories and patterns of social housing may not be comparable across years. See the [Technical notes](#) and data quality statements for more information.

State and territory

States and territories employ different models of social housing. The number of households reflects the number of social housing dwelling types available to providers for allocation.

Of the social housing households at June 2024 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.1):

- Public housing households made up the majority in most states and territories, followed by community housing.
- In Tasmania, most social housing households were in community housing (66%), followed by public housing (33%).
- Households in the Northern Territory were split between SOMIH (42%) and public housing (37%), followed by Indigenous community housing (16%).

Supply of social housing

The growth in the number of social housing households has not kept up with the growth in the number of households in Australia.

The following compares the total number of households in social housing to the total number of households in Australia using:

- the number of social housing households (public housing, SOMIH, community housing and Indigenous community housing)
- the total number of households in Australia sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics household projections series (ABS 2010; ABS 2015; ABS 2019, ABS 2024).

The number of social housing households increased from 404,000 in 2011 to 426,000 in 2024 (Table SOCIAL SHARE.1). Over this same period, the number of total households in Australia also increased, from 8.4 million in 2011 to 10.5 million households in 2024 (ABS 2015; ABS 2019, ABS 2024).

The amount of social housing households as a proportion of Australian households has seen a steady decline, from 4.8% in 2011 to 4.1% in 2024 (Table SOCIAL SHARE.1).

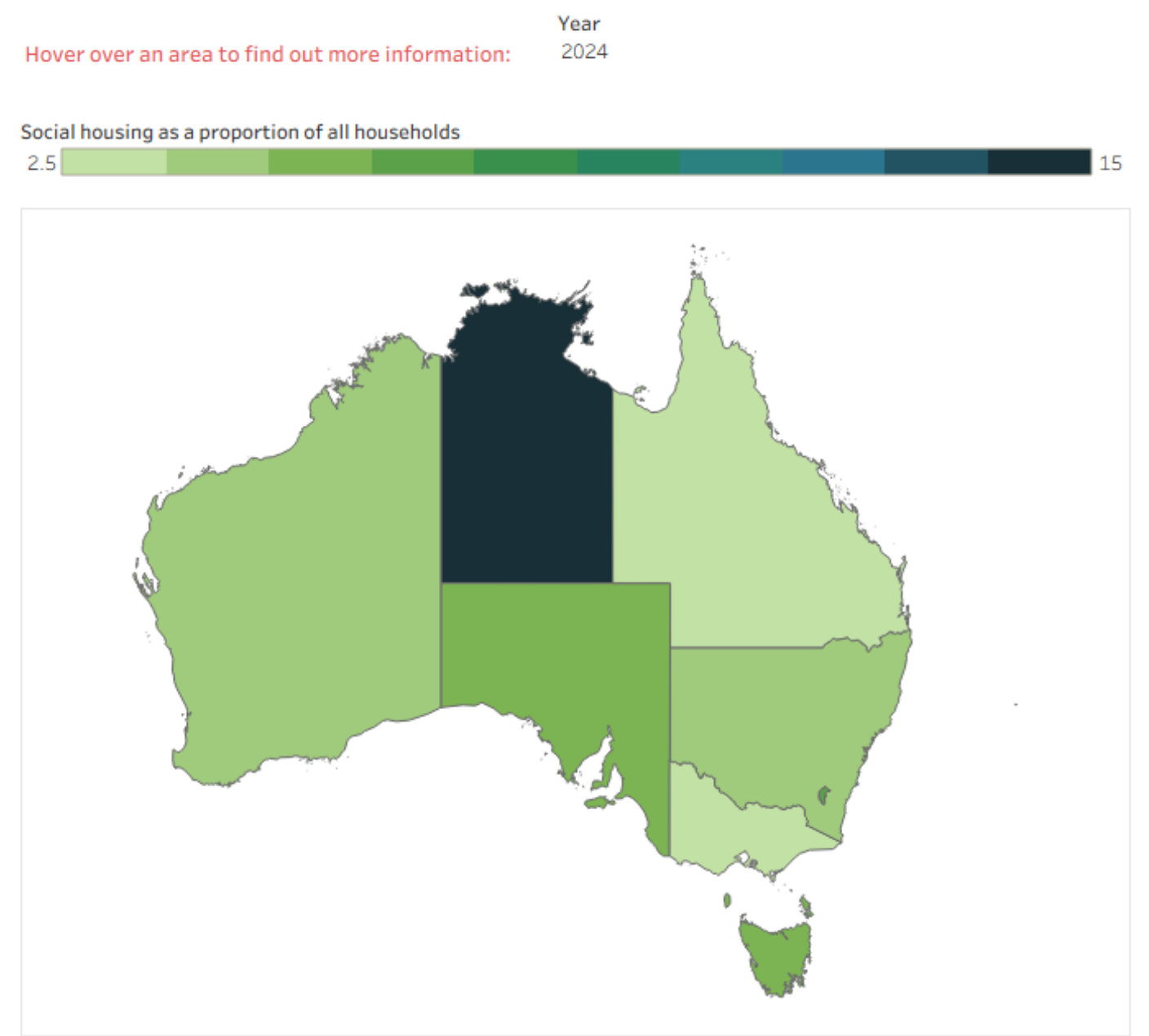
Over the decade to June 2024, the change in the share of social housing households varied between the states and territories (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.2; Table SOCIAL SHARE.1). In 2024, the proportion of social housing households was less than 5% for the four largest states:

- 4.5% in New South Wales (down from 5.0% in 2015)
- 3.0% in Victoria (down from 3.4% in 2015)
- 3.5% in Queensland (down from 3.7% in 2015)
- 3.8% in Western Australia (down from 4.3% in 2015).

The proportion of social housing households was around 6% in South Australia (5.8% down from 6.6% in 2015) and Tasmania (6.2% similar to the 6.3% in 2015), and 6.5% in the Australian Capital Territory (down from 7.4% in 2015).

Due to stock transfers, 2024 data for the Northern Territory are most comparable with 2018. The proportion of social housing households was 14.6% in 2018 and 14.4% in 2024.

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.2: Social housing households as a proportion of all Australian households, by states and territories, at June 2008 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables SOCIAL SHARE.1.

Extended description for figure HOUSEHOLDS.2

This interactive map shows the social housing households as a proportion of total households from June 2008 to 2024 in each state and territory. A colour gradient highlights the variation between states and territories, with Northern Territory having the highest proportion of social housing dwellings (14%) and Victoria with the lowest proportion of social housing dwellings (3.0%) at June 2024.

Key characteristics of households

Two thirds of all social housing main tenants were aged 50 years or over in 2024.

Key household characteristics were available for public housing, SOMIH and community housing. In these programs, at June 2024 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.4):

- Over 6 in 10 (63%) were female; 36% were male.
- Two thirds (66% or 269,000 households) of all main tenants were aged 50 years or over. Main tenants aged 75 and over were the largest age group (15% or 60,500 households), followed by main tenants aged 60–64 (11% or 45,900 households).
- Around 1 in 6 (16% or 66,800) households included a First Nations person.
- Around 2 in 5 (38% or 155,000) included a person with disability.
- Around 60% of public housing (58% or 166,000) and community housing (63% or 67,300) households consisted of a single adult.

Indigenous community housing data were not available.

Length of household tenure

The majority of households in social housing have been in their tenancy for less than 10 years

Tenure length presented here relates to the length of ongoing tenancies at June 2024 only, that is, excludes those who left the social housing system. Households may move between dwellings within a program, tenure length relates to the current tenancy and not the total length of a tenure of an individual or household in social housing.

Tenure length is not available for Indigenous community housing.

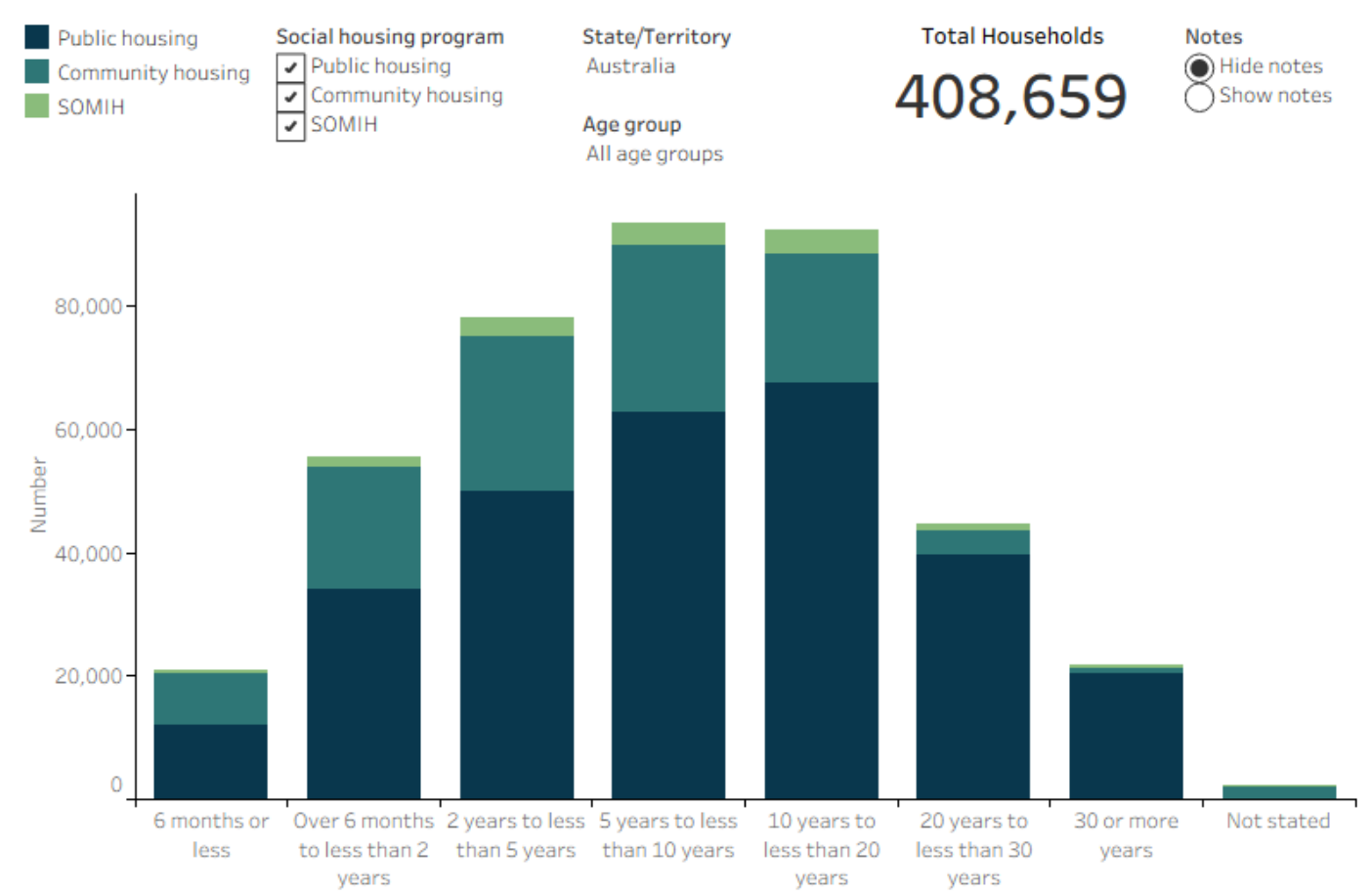
At June 2024, about 44% of public housing, 37% of SOMIH and 24% of community housing households had been in their current dwelling for more than a decade. In contrast, 4.2% of public housing, 4.4% of SOMIH and 7.7% of community housing households had been in the same tenancy for six months or less (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.3; Table HOUSEHOLDS.6). Tenancy length is affected by the number of available dwellings, a yearly increase in community housing dwellings will also increase the number of households with tenancy length under a year.

The number of households with a tenancy length of 20 years or more has increased over time for public housing (37,400 in 2011 to 59,800 in 2024), SOMIH (900 in 2014 to 1,600 in 2024), and community housing (410 in 2014 to 5,000 in 2024).

Age groups

The length of tenure varies by the age of the main tenant. The longer the tenure length, the higher the proportion of main tenants who were aged 65 or older. As expected, of the 20,200 public housing households that had been in the same dwelling for 30 years or more, more than three quarters (77%) were aged over 65 years (Table HOUSEHOLDS.5).

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.3: Households by tenure length and social housing program, at June 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.5.

Extended description for figure HOUSEHOLDS.3

This vertical stacked bar graph shows that across the social housing programs (public housing, community housing and SOMIH), the most common tenure length varied depending on the age of the main tenant, with younger tenants tending to have been in their tenancy for less time.

First Nations households

For First Nations households the length of tenure varied depending upon the housing program. Of First Nations households in social housing at June 2024 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.7):

- 19% of those in public housing, 37% of those in SOMIH and 13% of those in community housing had been in the same tenure for more than a decade.
- 29% of public housing, 16% of SOMIH and 36% of community housing households had been in the same tenure for less than two years.

Data for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Waiting lists

The proportion of greatest need households on public housing and SOMIH waiting lists has been increasing since 2014.

Waitlist definition

A waitlist is a register of people who have requested and are eligible for social housing.

In all states and territories, access to social housing is managed through the use of waitlists with priority given to those considered to be high priority applicants (see [Priority groups](#)). Fluctuations in the number of people on waitlists are not necessarily measures of changes in underlying demand for social housing. Factors that may influence the length of waitlists include changes to allocation policies, priorities, and eligibility criteria put in place by state/territory housing authorities, as well as their implementation (Dockery et al. 2008).

For further details, see the [Technical notes](#).

At June 2024, the number of households on a social housing waitlist (excluding transfers) were (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.26):

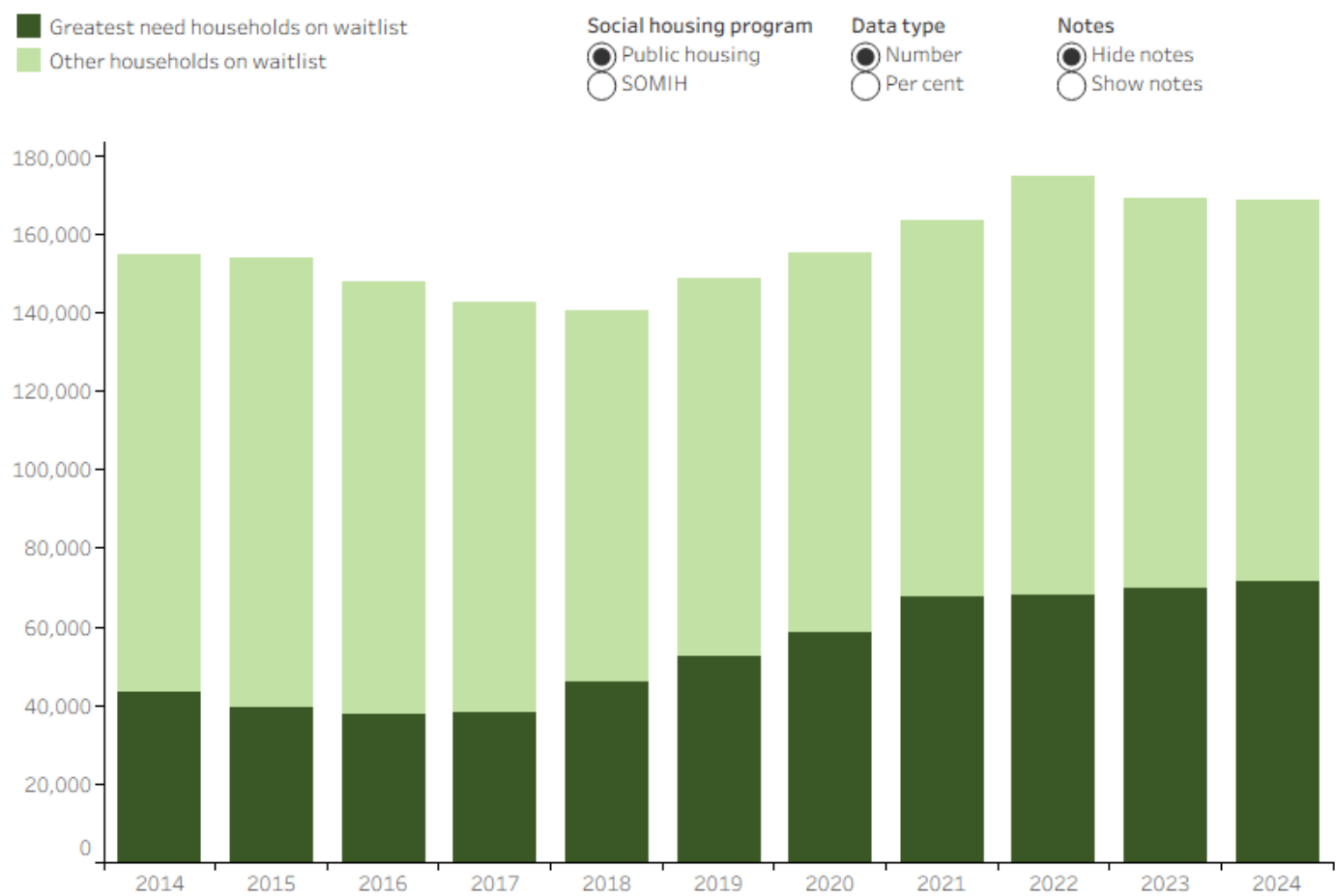
- 169,000 households waiting to be allocated public housing (up from 155,000 at June 2014)
- 15,100 households waiting to be allocated a SOMIH dwelling (up from 8,000 at June 2014).

Of those applicants on a waitlist at June 2024 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.26):

- There were 71,700 greatest need households on the waitlist for public housing (43% of all households on the waitlist); an increase from 43,200 at June 2014 (28% of all households).
- There were around 8,000 greatest need households waiting for SOMIH dwellings (53% of all households), up from 3,800 at June 2014 (48% of all households).

Waitlist data for both community housing and Indigenous community housing were unavailable.

Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4: Households on the public housing and SOMIH waitlists, at June 2014 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.26.

Extended description for figure HOUSEHOLDS.4

This vertical stacked bar graph shows that the number of greatest need households on the waitlist has increased for public housing, with 71,700 (43%) in 2024, compared with 43,200 (28%) in 2014. For SOMIH, the number of greatest need households on the waitlist has increased, with 8,000 (53%) in 2024, compared with 3,800 (48%) in 2014.

State and territory

The notable differences in the proportion of new greatest need households on the waitlists among states and territories is a result of the varying criteria for priority needs across jurisdictions. For more information, see the [technical notes](#).

Of the applicants on the waitlist at June 2024 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.27):

- For public housing and SOMIH, the proportion of applicants that were greatest need has been gradually increasing within most states and territories since 2019.

For SOMIH, greatest need information was not available in Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2010) [Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031](#), ABS website, Australian Government.

ABS (2015) [Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2011 to 2036](#), *Cat. no. 3236.0.*, ABS website, Australian Government

ABS (2019) [Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2016 to 2041](#), *Cat. no. 3236.0.*, ABS website, Australian Government

ABS (2024) [Projected households, Australia, 2021 to 2046](#), [Data Explorer], accessed 05 February 2025

Dockery A, Ong R, Whelan S and Wood G (2008) [The relationship between public housing wait lists, public housing tenure and labour market outcomes](#), *AHURI Research Report No. 9.*, AHURI, Melbourne.

Occupants

On this page:

- [Key findings](#)
- [Occupants in social housing](#)
- [First Nations occupants in social housing](#)
- [Occupants' satisfaction with social housing](#)

Key findings

- Around 830,000 occupants were living in Australia's main social housing programs. The majority (65%) were in public housing.
- Most social housing occupants resided in Australia's 3 most populous states; around one-third lived in New South Wales, and almost one-fifth lived in Victoria and Queensland respectively.
- Over a third of occupants were aged 55 and over in public housing and community housing, but only around 1 in 7 occupants were in this age group in SOMIH.
- Around 130,000 First Nations people were living in public housing and SOMIH.

Occupants

Occupants are defined as people living in any housing provided by Australia's four main social housing programs: public housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH), community housing and Indigenous community housing, within the reference year to 30 June (see [data quality statements](#) for exceptions).

Occupants in social housing

Around 830,000 occupants were living in Australia's main social housing programs. The majority (65%) were in public housing.

Of the 830,000 social housing occupants in 2023–24 (Table OCCUPANTS.1):

- 65% (544,000 people) were in public housing
- 23% (195,000 people) were in community housing
- 6.2% (51,700 people) were in SOMIH
- 4.8% (40,200 people) were in Indigenous community housing.

State and territory

Most social housing occupants resided in Australia's 3 most populous states; around one-third lived in New South Wales, and almost one-fifth lived in Victoria and Queensland respectively.

The number of occupants in each social housing program generally reflected the housing options available within the respective states. In all states except for Tasmania and the Northern Territory, most occupants were in public housing, followed by community housing. In Tasmania, most occupants were in community housing, while in the Northern Territory, most were living in SOMIH (Table OCCUPANTS.1). Note that community housing and Indigenous community housing data were unavailable for the Northern Territory.

Age and sex of occupants

Over one third of occupants were aged 55 and over in public housing and community housing, around 1 in 7 occupants were in this age group in SOMIH.

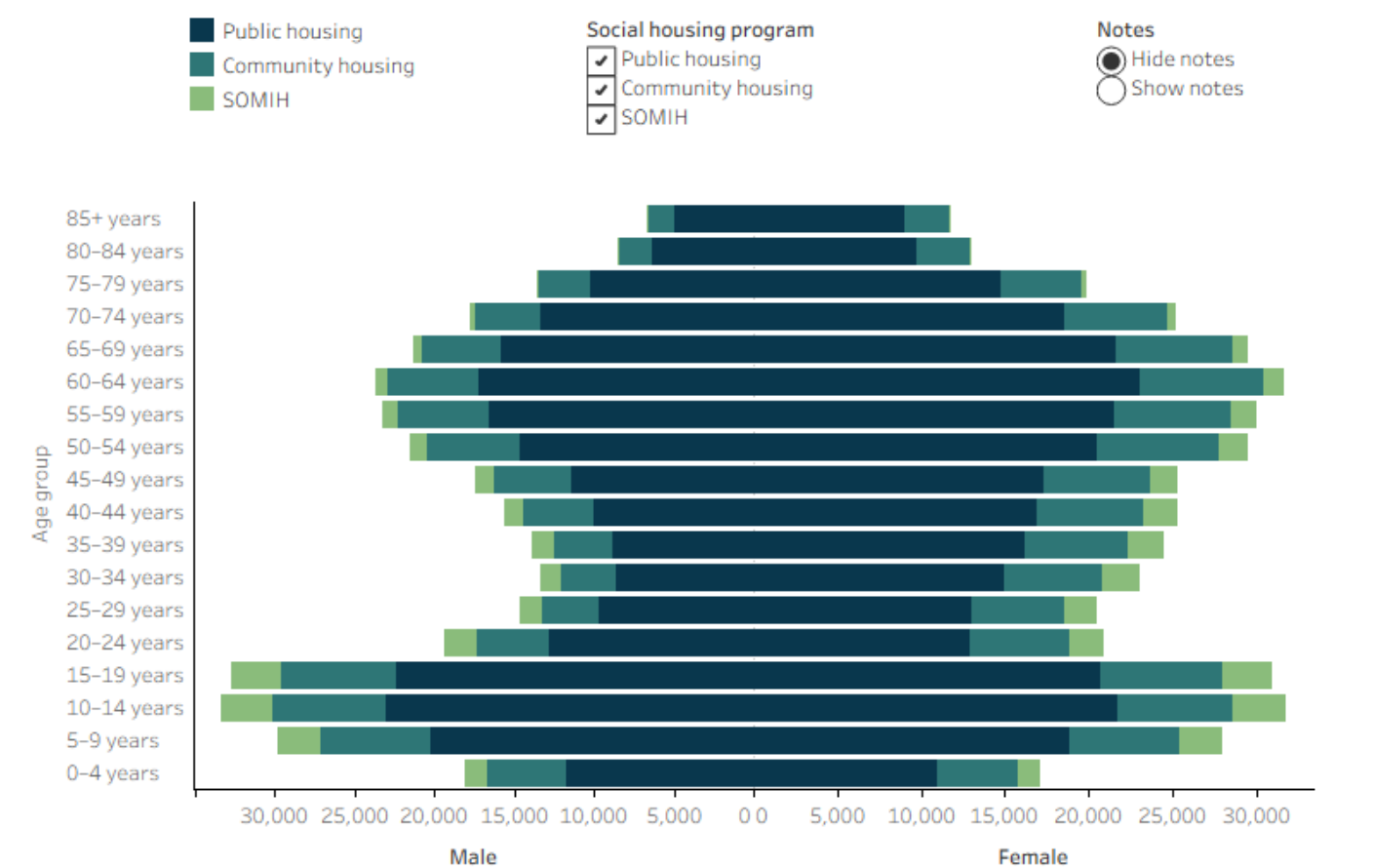
Females made up 55% of the occupants in social housing programs, including public housing (302,000 occupants), SOMIH (28,500) and community housing (108,000). Data were not available for Indigenous community housing.

Occupants in public housing and community housing had a similar age profile in 2023–24 (Figure OCCUPANTS.1; Table OCCUPANTS.2):

- Over one-third of occupants in public housing (38%) and community housing (34%) were aged 55 years and over.
- Around 1 in 3 occupants in both public housing (32%) and community housing (33%) were under the age of 25.

The age profile of SOMIH occupants was younger compared with public housing and community housing occupants. This may reflect the age structure of the First Nations population in general (AIHW 2024a). Almost half of the occupants (48%) were aged under 25 including about a third (28%) who were aged 0–14. In contrast, 15% were aged 55 or over (Figure OCCUPANTS.1; Table OCCUPANTS.2).

Figure OCCUPANTS.1: Household members by social housing program, age, and sex, 2023–24



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table OCCUPANTS.2.

Extended description for figure OCCUPANTS.1

The butterfly graph shows the age profile of male and female occupants in three social housing programs (public housing, community housing and SOMIH). In 2023–24, the highest number of female (23,000) occupants in public housing were aged 60–64 years, and the highest number of males (23,000) were aged 10–14 years. For SOMIH, the highest number of female (3,200) and male (3,300) household members were aged 10–14 years. For community housing, the highest number of females were aged 60–64 (7,400) and the highest number of males were aged 10–14 (7,100).

First Nations occupants in social housing

Around 130,000 First Nations people were living in public housing and SOMIH in 2023–24.

Of the 130,000 First Nations occupants in 2023–24 (Table OCCUPANTS.3):

- 84,300 lived in public housing
- 45,500 lived in SOMIH.

Changes over time

The total number of First Nations occupants across public housing and SOMIH has grown since 2017–18. The overall growth has mainly been driven by increases in the occupants of public housing, noting that the number of occupants with an unknown Indigenous status has declined over this time.

Occupants’ satisfaction with social housing

In the 2023 National Social Housing Survey, more than 2 in 3 (69%) occupants reported that they were satisfied with the overall services provided by their social housing organisation (AIHW 2024b), a decrease from 73% in 2021 (AIHW 2022). In 2023, around 80% of tenants reported economic, health and social benefits from living in social housing.

For both 2021 and 2023, structural problems were a highly significant factor in tenant satisfaction. The more structural problems a tenant had with their social housing dwelling, the less likely the tenant will be satisfied. Within each housing program, tenants living in a dwelling with one or more structural problems were less likely to be satisfied than those without.

More information about the analyses and occupants’ satisfaction with amenities, locations and services as well as the economic, health and social benefits of social housing, can be found in the [National Social Housing Survey 2023](#).

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Entries, exits and transfers

On this page:

- [Key findings](#)
- [Households entering social housing](#)
- [Priority groups](#)
- [New allocations for greatest need households](#)
- [New allocations for special needs households](#)
- [Time waited for social housing allocation](#)
- [Households exiting social housing](#)
- [Households transferring dwellings](#)

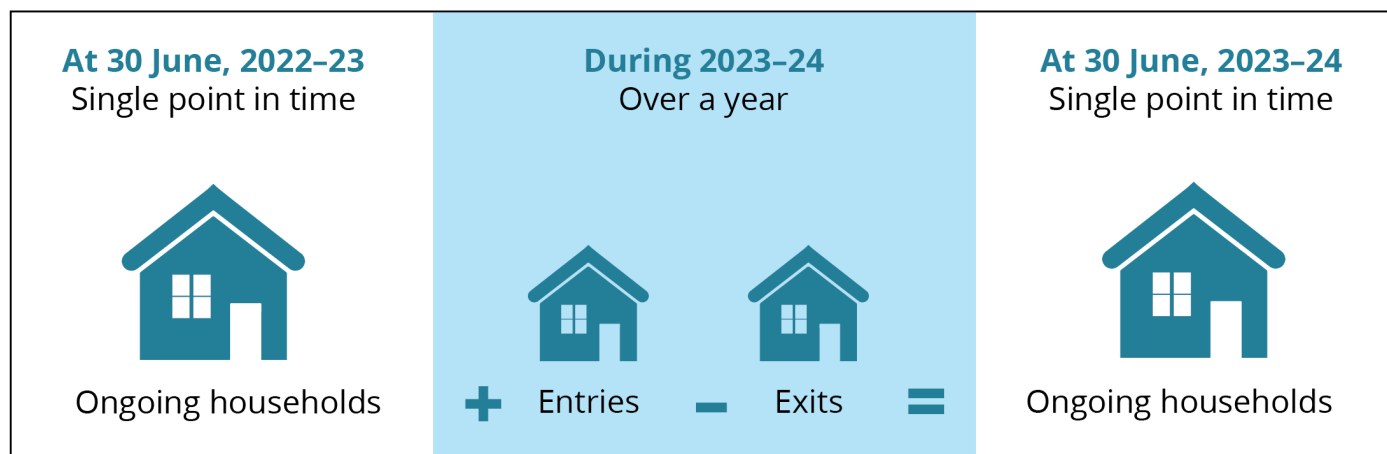
Key findings

- There were 33,600 households newly allocated social housing in 2023–24, more than the 32,400 new allocations in 2022–23.
- Around 13,800 new social housing allocations were to greatest need households who were experiencing homelessness.
- Almost two-thirds of newly allocated public housing households had special needs.
- Households in greatest need spent less time on waitlists than other households.
- Exits from public housing and SOMIH decreased compared to previous years.

During a financial year, people may be allocated social housing, exit a social housing program, or move from one social housing dwelling to another within the same program (Figure ENTRIES.1). This section presents key data on these entries, exits and transfers.

Data on entries, exits and transfers for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Figure ENTRIES.1: Entries, exits and ongoing households



Extended description for figure ENTRIES.1

The diagram shows the relationship between ongoing households at a single point in time (at 30 June 2022–23), households entering and exiting social housing over a year (during 2023–24) and ongoing households at a single point in time (at 30 June 2023–24).

Households entering social housing

There were 33,600 households newly allocated social housing in 2023–24.

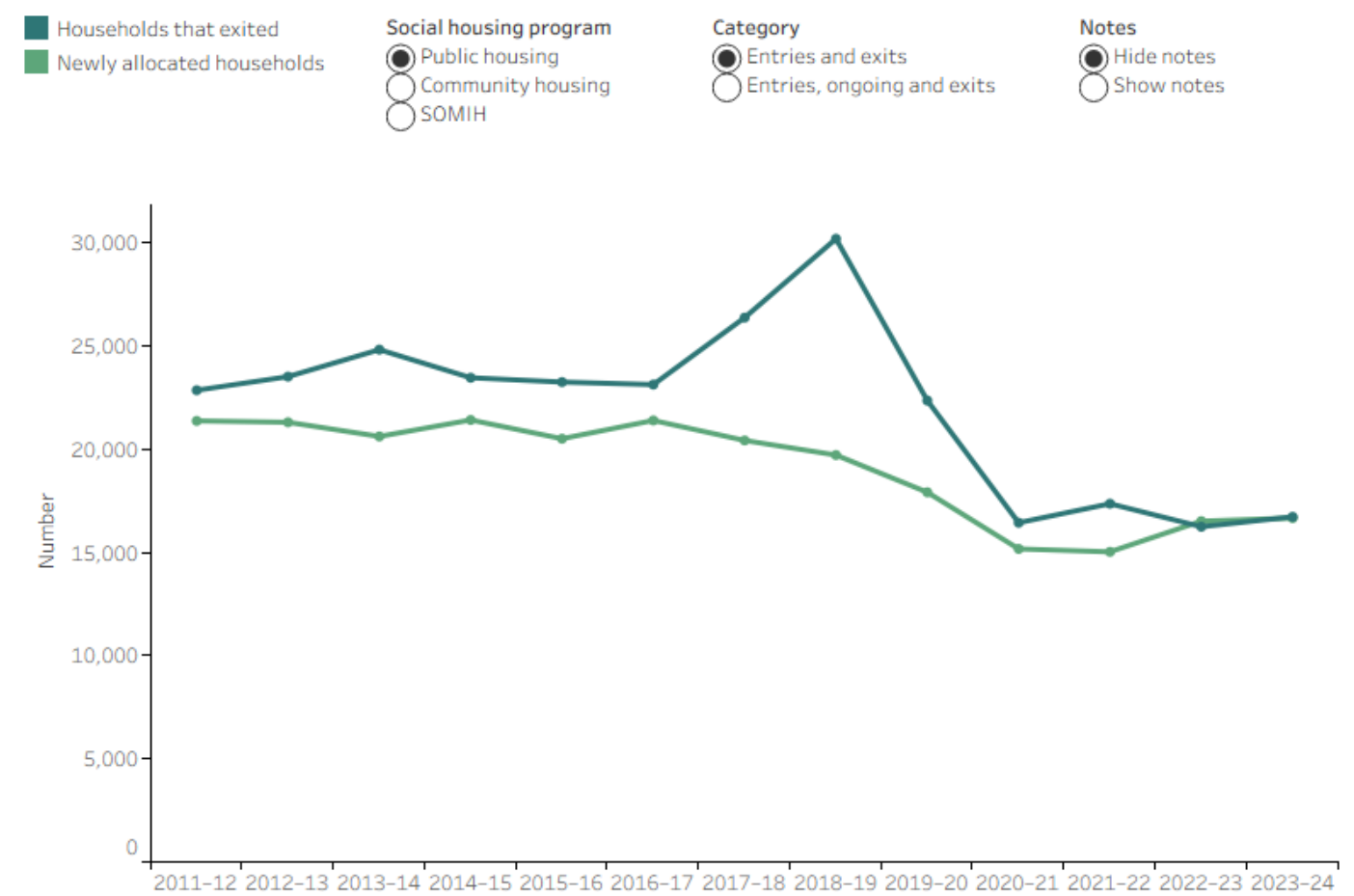
The total number of newly allocated households (also referred to as new entries) in 2023–24 increased to 33,600, compared with 32,400 in 2022–23, across public housing, community housing and SOMIH (Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

Of the 33,600 new allocations, half were allocated public housing (50% or 16,700 households), 48% were allocated community housing (16,200 households) and 2.3% to SOMIH (770 households), similar to the stock profiles of each housing program.

The number of new entries into public housing has been below 20,000 since 2018–19, mainly reflecting the declining dwelling stock in public housing, but may also reflect decreased flow of households. The number of new entries into community housing has fluctuated in recent years, in part due to dwelling transfers from public housing and SOMIH to community housing (Figure ENTRIES.2, Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

There were 770 new allocations for SOMIH in 2023–24, broadly consistent with data since 2021–22 (Figure ENTRIES.2; Table HOUSEHOLDS.10).

Figure ENTRIES.2: Ongoing households, newly allocated households and exited households, by social housing program, 2011–12 to 2023–24



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.23.

Extended description for figure ENTRIES.2

This line graph shows the changes in newly allocated households, ongoing households and households that exited a social housing program from 2011–12 to 2023–24 for public housing, SOMIH and community housing. Ongoing households in public housing decreased from 323,000 in 2011–12 to 286,000 in 2023–24 while SOMIH increased from 9,700 in 2011–12 to 14,800 in 2023–24. For public housing, newly allocated households declined from 21,400 in 2011–12 to 16,700 in 2023–24.

Characteristics of newly allocated households

Just over half of newly allocated public housing households were single adult (55%) households during 2023–24. Other key characteristics of newly allocated households in public housing for 2023–24 included (Table HOUSEHOLDS.12):

- The main tenant was female in over half (59%) of households.
- Over 1 in 4 (27%) households included a First Nations household member.
- For 1 in 3 (33%) households, the main tenant was aged 55 and over.
- Over a third (37%) of households had a member with disability.

For SOMIH, newly allocated households during 2023–24 were more likely to be group and mixed composition households (39%) followed by sole parent with dependent children households (33%). In contrast to public housing, with 55% being single adults, only 12% of newly allocated households in SOMIH were single adults (Table HOUSEHOLDS.12).

While proportions for each measured characteristic did have some degree of variation between states and territories, all followed similar trends for both public housing and SOMIH.

Data on the characteristics of newly allocated households for community housing and Indigenous community housing were not available.

Housing features of new allocations

Housing features of new allocations differed between public housing and SOMIH. The different profiles of new allocations by housing features partly reflect the differences in the types of dwelling stock available within each program (see Dwelling attributes).

In 2023–24, newly allocated households in public housing were more likely to be dwellings with fewer bedrooms (40% were 1 bedroom, 34% were 2 bedrooms, 22% were 3 bedrooms and 3.7% were 4 or more bedrooms) compared with SOMIH (2.5% were 1 bedroom, 19% were 2 bedrooms, 51% were 3 bedrooms and 22% were 4 or more bedrooms) (Table HOUSEHOLDS.14).

Priority groups

Allocation to social housing is determined by policies regarding eligibility, priority groups and entitlement (such as type and location of the property) (Powell et al. 2019). Although income remains the primary eligibility factor for social housing allocation, allocations are also based on an applicant's circumstances, that is, their need for social housing relative to others on the waitlist (Pawson et al. 2020).

While social housing allocations were historically targeted towards households with a lower income, over time, social housing policies have increasingly focused on supporting vulnerable and complex need applicants, such as applicants experiencing trauma, disadvantage and/or financial instability (Groenhart et al. 2014; Pawson et al, 2020).

As a result, social housing is allocated according to priority needs, with allocations made based on identifying those people with the greatest need (such as applicants experiencing homelessness) and those with special needs for housing assistance (such as applicants with disability).

Data on greatest need status for Indigenous community housing were not available.

Greatest need households

Public housing, SOMIH and community housing programs prioritise household allocations through priority waitlists, such as the greatest need waitlist. The criteria for priority needs varies between jurisdictions, so comparisons between states and territories must be exercised with caution.

Special needs households

Households seeking social housing often have members with special needs. Some households may have one or more members with multiple special needs. The definition of special needs differs across social housing programs and between jurisdictions.

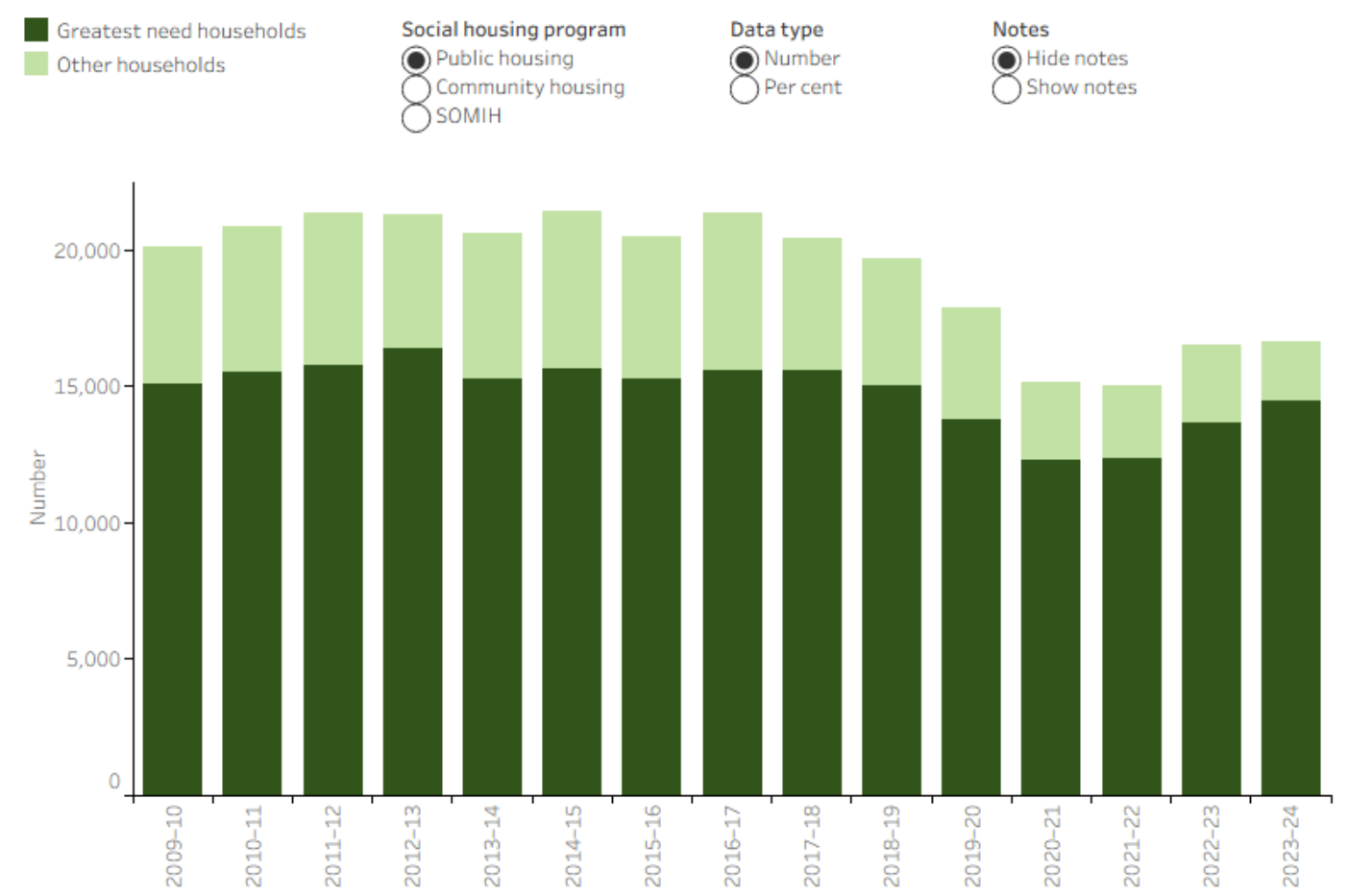
For more information about how households are prioritised, see the [technical notes](#).

New allocations for greatest need households

Around 13,800 new allocations for social housing were to greatest need households who were experiencing homelessness in 2023–24.

Greatest need households accounted for 87% (or 14,500 households) of all newly allocated public housing households in 2023–24. Over 4 in 5 (81% or 275) of newly allocated SOMIH households were households with greatest need status in 2023–24 (excludes Tasmania and the Northern Territory, as greatest need data were not available) (Figure ENTRIES.3; Table HOUSEHOLDS.15).

Figure ENTRIES.3: Newly allocated households by greatest need status and social housing program, 2009–10 to 2023–24



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.15.

Extended description for figure ENTRIES.3

This vertical stacked bar graph shows for public housing, community housing and SOMIH, there were more newly allocated greatest need households than other households, from 2009–10 to 2023–24. In 2023–24, most new social housing allocations were provided to households in greatest need, including 87% of public housing new allocations, 81% of SOMIH new allocations; and 80% of community housing new allocations.

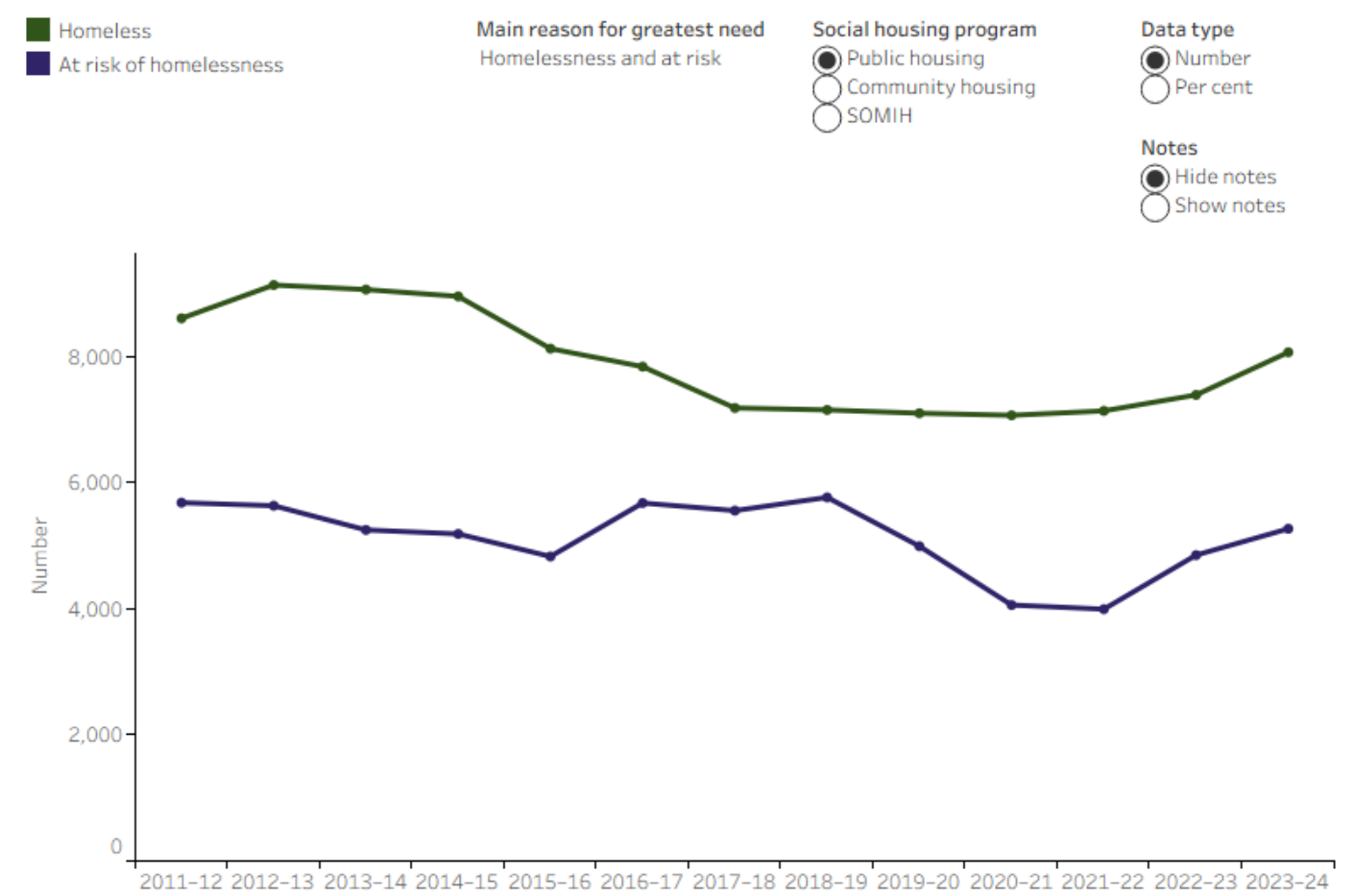
Main reason for greatest need

In 2023–24, of the 14,500 newly allocated public housing households in greatest need (Figure ENTRIES.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.16):

- 56% (8,100 households) were experiencing homelessness at the time of allocation; similar to data from 10 years ago in 2014–15 (57%).
- 36% (5,300 households) were at risk of homelessness, of those households:
 - Over 3,800 reported the main reason for their greatest need was because their life or safety was at risk in their accommodation.
 - More than 1,200 households reported a health condition aggravated by housing as their main reason for greatest need.

Data on the detailed main reason a household was in greatest need is not collected for community housing. Based on available data, in 2023–24, almost the same number of newly allocated greatest need community housing households were at risk of homelessness (5,600) and experiencing homelessness (5,500) (Figure ENTRIES.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.16).

Figure ENTRIES.4: Newly allocated households in greatest need by main reason for greatest need and social housing program, 2011–12 to 2023–24



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.16.

Extended description for figure ENTRIES.4

This line graph shows the main reason for greatest need of newly allocated households. In 2023–24 the main reason for greatest need for new allocations in public housing was homelessness (56%). For the greatest need new allocations in public housing that were at risk of homelessness in 2011–12, the most common main reason for greatest need was a health condition aggravated by housing (15%); in 2023–24, the most common reason was their life or safety was at risk in accommodation (26%).

New allocations for special needs households

Almost two-thirds of newly allocated public housing households had special needs.

Data on special needs were available for public housing, SOMIH and community housing. A household may be classified as special needs status for one or more reasons. In 2023–24, there were 10,600 newly allocated public housing households with special needs, representing 64% of all newly allocated households. Of these (Table HOUSEHOLDS.18):

- 6,200 households had at least one member with disability
- 4,500 households had at least one First Nations member
- 1,600 households had a main tenant aged under 25

- 810 households had a main tenant aged 75 or over

In 2023–24, of the 320 newly allocated SOMIH households with special needs:

- 200 households had a main tenant aged 50 and over
- 66 households had a main tenant aged under 25 years
- 100 households contained at least one member with disability

Greatest and special needs households

Greatest and special needs categories are not mutually exclusive, as one or more household members may be eligible within each priority group and between priority groups. Households with members in both greatest and special needs groups may be some of the most vulnerable households and may require high levels of care and support.

In 2023–24, of the newly allocated households in public housing (Figure HOUSEHOLDS.4; Table HOUSEHOLDS.17):

- Over half (56% or 9,400 households) were both greatest need and special needs households
- 1 in 5 (25% or 4,100 households) were greatest need only (no special needs)
- 3.4% (560) were neither greatest need nor special needs households.

In 2023–24, of the newly allocated households in SOMIH:

- around 1 in 6 (15% or 120 households) were both greatest need and special needs households
- almost 1 in 5 (20% or 155 households) were greatest need only (no special needs)

Note that greatest need information for SOMIH was unavailable for Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Time waited for social housing allocation

Households in greatest need spend less time on waitlists than other households.

The time waited by applicants is influenced by dwelling availability (including the size of dwelling needed) and priority group status (greatest need or special needs) (Powell et al. 2019). Since households with priority status (such as people experiencing homelessness or with disability) are placed ahead of households without priority status, the number of households with priority status may influence the amount of time waited for social housing allocation. The time waited for social housing programs can vary both between and within jurisdictions, with the time waited for social housing in high demand city areas often far greater than other areas (NSW Government 2018; Powell et al. 2019).

Data on time waited for housing allocation were unavailable for both community housing and Indigenous community housing. See [Technical notes](#) for more information on the method used to calculate time waited.

In 2023–24 (Table HOUSEHOLDS.21)

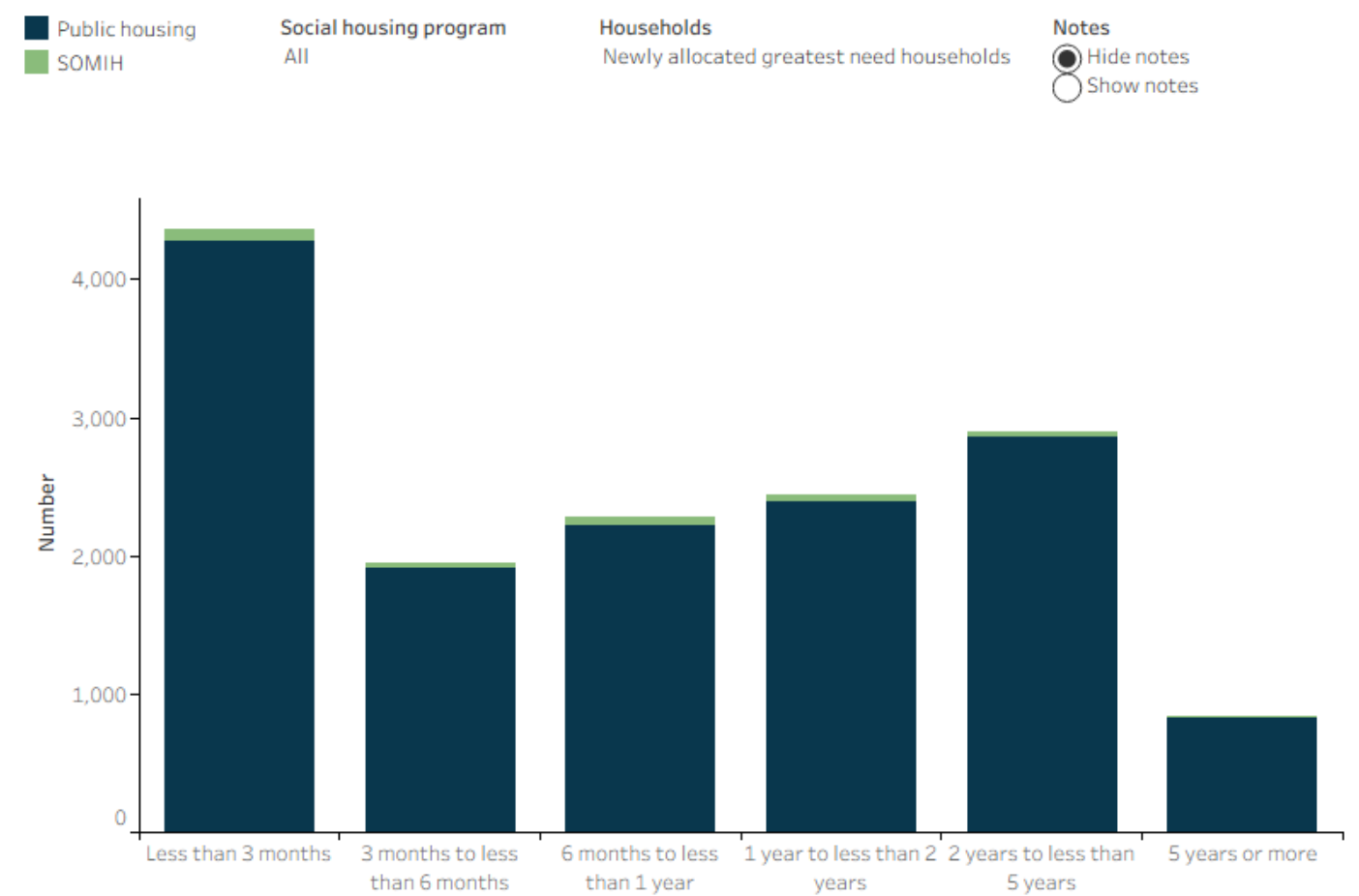
- Of all newly allocated public housing households:
 - 2 in 5 (41%) households were allocated housing within 1 year; 44% waited 1 to 5 years and 14% waited 5 years or more for housing allocation.
 - Almost one third of households without children were allocated housing in less than 6 months (30% for single adults and 24% for couples only households).
- Of all newly allocated SOMIH households:
 - Just under half (44%) of newly allocated households received housing in less than 1 year; 39% waited 1 to 5 years and 17% waited 5 or more years for housing allocation.
 - Two in 5 (39%) of group and mixed composition households were allocated housing in less than 6 months.

Greatest need and time waited for housing allocation

In 2023–24, among newly allocated households (Figure ENTRIES.5, Table HOUSEHOLDS.19):

- For public housing, greatest need households were more likely to be allocated housing within a year.
 - Over half of greatest need households (58%, or 8,400 households) received housing within one year, compared with 38% (830) of households without greatest need status.
 - The proportion of newly allocated greatest need households who waited less than 3 months (30%) for housing allocation was higher than households without greatest need status (18%).
- Households without greatest need status were more likely to spend 2 years or more on the waitlist before receiving a public housing allocation (46% or 990), compared with households with greatest need status (25% or 3,700).

Figure ENTRIES.5: Time waited by newly allocated households by greatest need status and public housing and SOMIH, 2023–24



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table HOUSEHOLDS.19.

Extended description for figure ENTRIES.4

The stacked bar graph shows the highest number of newly allocated greatest need households in both public housing (4,300) and SOMIH (84) waited less than 3 months for housing. For public housing (500) the highest number of newly allocated other households waited between 2 years and less than 5 years to be allocated housing.

Special needs and time waited

In 2023–24, the time special needs households waited for an allocation of public housing varied, around (Table HOUSEHOLDS.20):

- 1,500 (15%) households waited for less than 3 months
- 2,600 (25%) households waited between 3 months and less than 1 year
- 4,800 (46%) households waited between 1 year to less than 5 years
- 1,500 (or 15%) households waited for more than 5 years

Number of bedrooms and time waited

The time waited for social housing allocation varied depending upon the number of bedrooms required by a household and by program. For public housing, the amount of time waited was broadly similar regardless of the number of bedrooms. For SOMIH, 32% of households requiring 4 or more bedrooms waited less than 3 months (Table HOUSEHOLDS.22).

Households exiting social housing

Exits from public housing and SOMIH decreased compared to previous years.

Social housing 'Exits' refers to households that have exited a specific housing program during the reference year. Households that relocate within the same housing program are not considered 'exits' but are classified as 'transfers'. Note: this definition may vary across states and territories, see [Technical notes](#) for details.

Reasons influencing household exits from social housing can be both positive and negative (Wiesel et al. 2014). Some households exit because of changes to their housing or neighbourhood needs, such as those related to location, size, or neighbourhood safety (Johnson et al. 2019). Others exit social housing for financial or forced reasons, including employment opportunities, entry into home ownership, eviction, or ineligibility due to an increase in income (Baker et al. 2020, 2021). Some social housing providers offer fixed-term leases and an exit from social housing may reflect an end to this type of tenancy. While exiting households most commonly enter the private rental market, some also enter home ownership or other tenure types, such as employer provided housing (Baker et al. 2020, Bentley et al. 2018). This information is not captured in the datasets informing this report.

Across the states and territories, Victoria (3,500 entries and 2,700 exits), Queensland (3,200 entries and 2,600 exits), Western Australia (2,600 entries and 1,900 exits) and Australian Capital Territory (475 entered and 425 exited) had more new allocations to public housing than exits from public housing (Tables HOUSEHOLDS.10 and 25).

Transfers occur when occupants move to a dwelling in the same social housing program, see [Technical notes](#) for state/territory variations on this definition.

During 2023–24, 7,100 (2.3%) of public housing households and 510 (3.6%) of SOMIH households transferred – or were relocated – to a different dwelling within the same housing program (Table HOUSEHOLDS.25).

Year	Households that exited	Households that transferred
2013-14	24,800	8,400
2014-15	23,500	7,500
2015-16	23,300	7,400
2016-17	23,100	9,100
2017-18	26,300	9,500
2018-19	30,100	9,000
2019-20	22,300	7,900
2020-21	16,400	7,700
2021-22	17,300	7,000
2022-23	16,200	7,000
2023-24	16,700	7,100

Extended description for figure ENTRIES.4

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Suitability of dwellings

On this page:

- [Key findings](#)
- [Dwelling suitability](#)
- [Overcrowding](#)
- [Overcrowding in Indigenous households](#)
- [Underutilisation](#)

Key findings

At June 2024, of all social housing households with known dwelling size suitability:

- Most lived in dwellings with enough bedrooms to adequately accommodate the members of their household.
- The highest number of overcrowded public housing dwellings were in *Major cities* whilst the highest proportion of overcrowded dwellings were in *Very remote* areas.
- Most underutilised dwellings had a main tenant aged 55 years or older.

In Australia, the suitability of a household's dwelling size is commonly measured using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Broadly, the CNOS measures suitability based on whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household (see criteria below).

This section uses CNOS to provide information on how suitable social housing dwellings were for households living in social housing on 30 June of the reference year. It includes information about households living in the four main social housing programs in Australia.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS)

The CNOS measure assesses the suitability of a dwelling for a household according to the following criteria:

- no more than 2 people shall share a bedroom
- parents or couples may share a bedroom
- children under 5 years, either of the same sex or opposite sex, may share a bedroom
- children under 18 years of the same sex may share a bedroom
- a child aged 5–17 should not share a bedroom with a child under 5 of the opposite sex
- single adults 18 years and over, and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom

Based on the CNOS standard, housing utilisation will be described as the following:

- Suitable or adequate: when it meets the CNOS household bedroom requirements
- Underutilised: when it has 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the CNOS bedroom requirement for the household
- Overcrowded: when it requires at least 1 more bedroom

Source: Statistics Canada 2021

For more information on the CNOS, see [AIHW Metadata Online Registry \(METEOR\)](#).

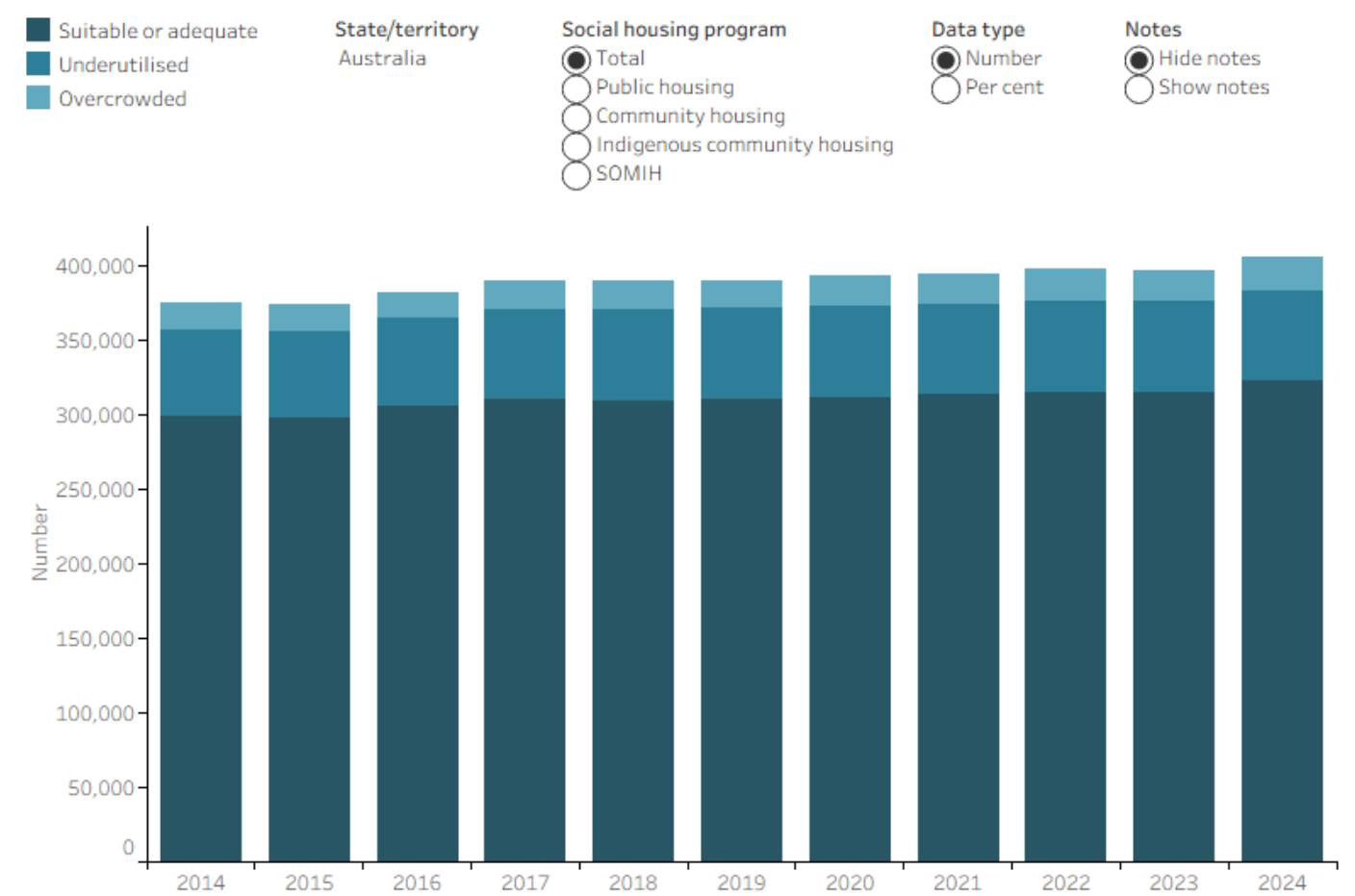
Although CNOS is useful for indicating overcrowding in dwellings, it does not necessarily reflect a household's experience of overcrowding. This is because CNOS does not consider cultural differences in living and sleeping arrangements (Dockery et al. 2022). As such, its classification of overcrowding may not necessarily match the experiences of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse households.

Dwelling suitability

Most social housing households lived in dwellings with enough bedrooms to adequately accommodate the members of their household.

Most households (79%) were living in suitable or adequate dwellings, a further 15% lived in underutilised dwellings (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Table SUITABILITY.1).

Figure SUITABILITY.1: Households by suitability of dwelling size and social housing program, at 30 June 2014 to 2024



Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary table SUITABILITY.1.

Extended description for figure SUITABILITY.1

Households, by suitability of dwelling size, and social housing program, at June 2014 to 2024. This vertical stacked bar graph shows that across the social housing programs (public housing, community housing, SOMIH and Indigenous Community Housing), there were more underutilised households than overcrowded households, from 2014 to 2024.

Overcrowding

For public housing, the highest number of overcrowded dwellings were in *Major cities* whilst the highest proportion of overcrowded dwellings were in *Very remote* areas.

A dwelling is considered overcrowded if it requires at least 1 additional bedroom, based on the size and composition of the household. In 2024, 5.6% (or 22,600) of social housing households were overcrowded. However, the level of overcrowding differed across the various social housing programs. Around 4.7% of households in public housing (13,200) and 3.7% of community housing households (3,800) were living in overcrowded dwellings, consistent with long term trends (Table SUITABILITY.1, Figure SUITABILITY.1). See the [Social housing dwellings](#) and the [technical notes](#) section for further information on the stock changes between the housing programs.

For SOMIH, around 1 in 4 (24% or 3,600) households were living in overcrowded dwellings (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Table SUITABILITY.1). This proportion has remained stable since 2018, after 5,000 remote public housing dwellings were added to the Northern Territory SOMIH data collection in 2017.

In Indigenous community housing, about 1 in 6 (16% or 1,900) households were in overcrowded dwellings.

Key characteristics of overcrowded households, at June 2024 (Table SUITABILITY.4):

- Over half of the overcrowded households in public housing (56% or 7,400) and SOMIH (57% or 2,000) had a main tenant aged 35 to 54 years.
- For public housing, overcrowded households were mostly households with a mixed composition (7,300 or 55%) or sole parents with dependent children (3,500 or 27%).
- Almost 4 in 5 (78%) overcrowded dwellings in SOMIH were mixed composition (2,800 households).

Demographic data on dwelling suitability were not available for community housing or Indigenous community housing.

Location of overcrowded households

Overcrowding in dwellings varied across the states and territories and remoteness areas.

At June 2024 (Figure SUITABILITY.1; Tables SUITABILITY.1 and 2):

- The Northern Territory had the highest proportion (9.2% or 405) of public housing households living in overcrowded dwellings however, Victoria had the highest number (3,700 or 6.1%).
- Northern Territory had the highest number (2,600) and proportion (51%) of SOMIH households living in overcrowded dwellings, noting that the Northern Territory also has the highest total number of SOMIH households.
- Tasmania had the highest proportion (4.4%) of community housing households living in overcrowded dwellings, New South Wales had the highest number (2,000 or 4.2%).
- The highest number of overcrowded public housing households (9,200 or 4.3%) were in *Major cities*, but the proportion was highest in *Very remote* areas (9.8% or 235).
- For SOMIH, *Very remote* areas had the highest number and highest proportion (2,000 or 47%) of households living in overcrowded dwellings.

Overcrowding data by remoteness were not available for community housing.

Overcrowding in First Nations households

In public housing, 9.9% of all First Nations households were living in overcrowded dwellings while only 4.7% of all households were living in overcrowded dwellings. Similarly in community housing, 9.5% of all First Nations households lived in overcrowded dwellings compared with 4.5% of all households (Table SUIABILITY.2).

Underutilisation

Most underutilised dwellings had a main tenant aged 55 years or older.

A dwelling is underutilised when it contains 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the household requirements. In 2024, around 15% (or 60,800) social housing households were underutilised (Figure SUIABILITY.1; Table SUIABILITY.1). Underutilisation differed across the programs.

About 47,100 (or 17%) public housing households and 11,300 (or 11%) community housing households were living in underutilised dwellings. SOMIH had the highest proportion of underutilised dwellings across the programs (25% or 2,400).

Underutilisation data were not available for the Northern Territory for SOMIH, community housing or Indigenous community housing.

Characteristics of underutilised households at June 2024 include (Table SUIABILITY.4):

- Around 29% (or 13,400) of public housing households in underutilised dwellings were receiving the age pension.
- Almost three-quarters of public housing households in underutilised dwellings had a main tenant aged 55 years or older.
- Within SOMIH, 58% (1,400 households) had a main tenant who was 55 years old or over.

Most underutilised dwellings in public housing (74%) and SOMIH (63%) were single adult households.

Location of underutilised households

The proportion of households in underutilised dwellings varied by state and territory and by remoteness area across the social housing programs. At June 2024 (Figure SUIABILITY.1; Tables SUIABILITY.1 and 3):

- South Australia had the highest proportion of social housing households living in underutilised dwellings (23% or 10,300 households), while New South Wales (21,600 or 15%) had the highest number of households.
- About 1 in 5 public housing households in *Inner regional* (18%) and *Outer regional* (20%) areas lived in underutilised dwellings, though the highest number was in *Major cities* (34,400 households or 16%).
- For SOMIH, *Major cities* had the highest number (1,200) and highest proportion (27%) of households living in underutilised dwellings.

References

Dockery M, Moskos M, Isherwood L and Harris M (2022) How many in a crowd? Assessing overcrowding measures in Australian housing, *Final report no. 382*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited.

Statistics Canada (2021) Housing suitability of private households, Statistics Canada website, accessed 24 March 2025.

Financial assistance

- **On this page:**

- [Key findings](#)

- [Commonwealth Rent Assistance](#)

- [Rental Stress and CRA](#)

- [Private Rent Assistance](#)

- [Home Purchase Assistance](#)

Key findings

At June 2024:

- around 1.3 million income units (individuals or group of related persons) were receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).
- More than 2 in 5 (42% or 538,000 income units) were in rental stress after receiving CRA.
- Around 60,400 households received Private Rent Assistance (PRA) and almost 3 in 5 (59%) PRA recipients were in *Major cities*.
- The number of households receiving Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) is declining.

This section provides information on the financial assistance related to rental costs and home purchases based on data as at the last Friday in June in the reference year (for CRA) and on 30 June of the reference year (for PRA and HPA). It provides insight into the scale and effectiveness of certain financial assistance programs. It includes financial assistance information on:

- The Commonwealth Rent Assistance program.
- The Private Rent Assistance programs.
- The Home Purchase Assistance programs.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

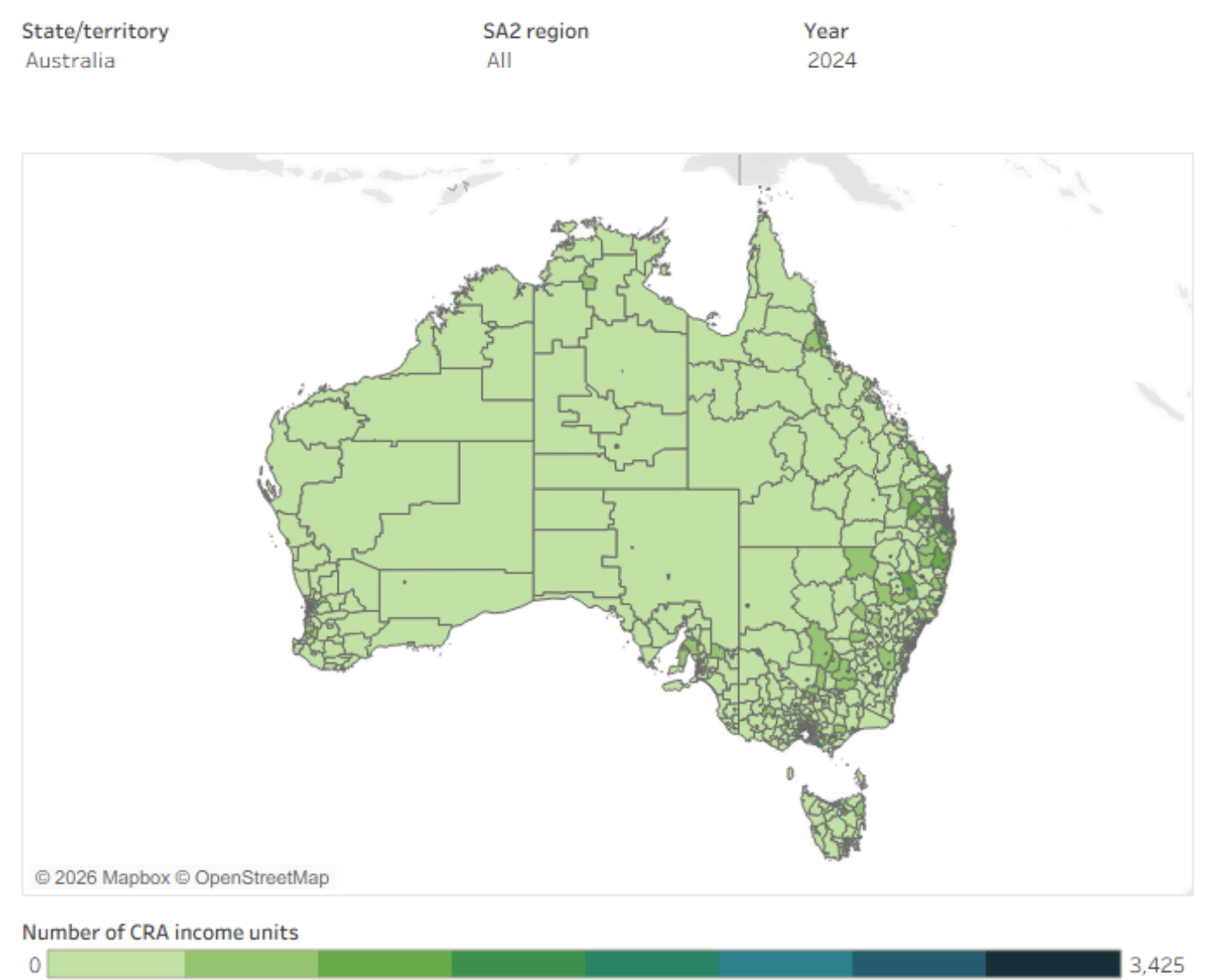
Data on the number of income units and rental stress levels are reported every quarter in the [Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Australia: quarterly data](#) report, including more recent data than the following section. Data by different geography levels is presented below.

CRA recipients by location

Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) is one of the geographical areas within the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA2s are medium sized areas, with populations between 3,000 and 25,000 people, they represent a community that interacts together socially and economically (ABS 2021).

At June 2024, the SA2s of *Fairfield* in NSW (3,400) and *Caboolture-South* in Queensland (3,400) had the highest number of income units receiving CRA.

Figure FINANCIAL.1: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance by SA2, at June 2019 to 2024



Note: For 2024, SA2 is derived from the postcode of households using the 2021 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). For previous years, the 2016 ASGS was used. Boundaries are revised over time due to factors such as population, further details can be found in [ABS Maps](#). Due to these changes caution should be used when comparing data across time. The time series graph will not show the full time series where the boundry has changed over time.

Source: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables CRA.2a and b.

Extended description for figure FINANCIAL.1

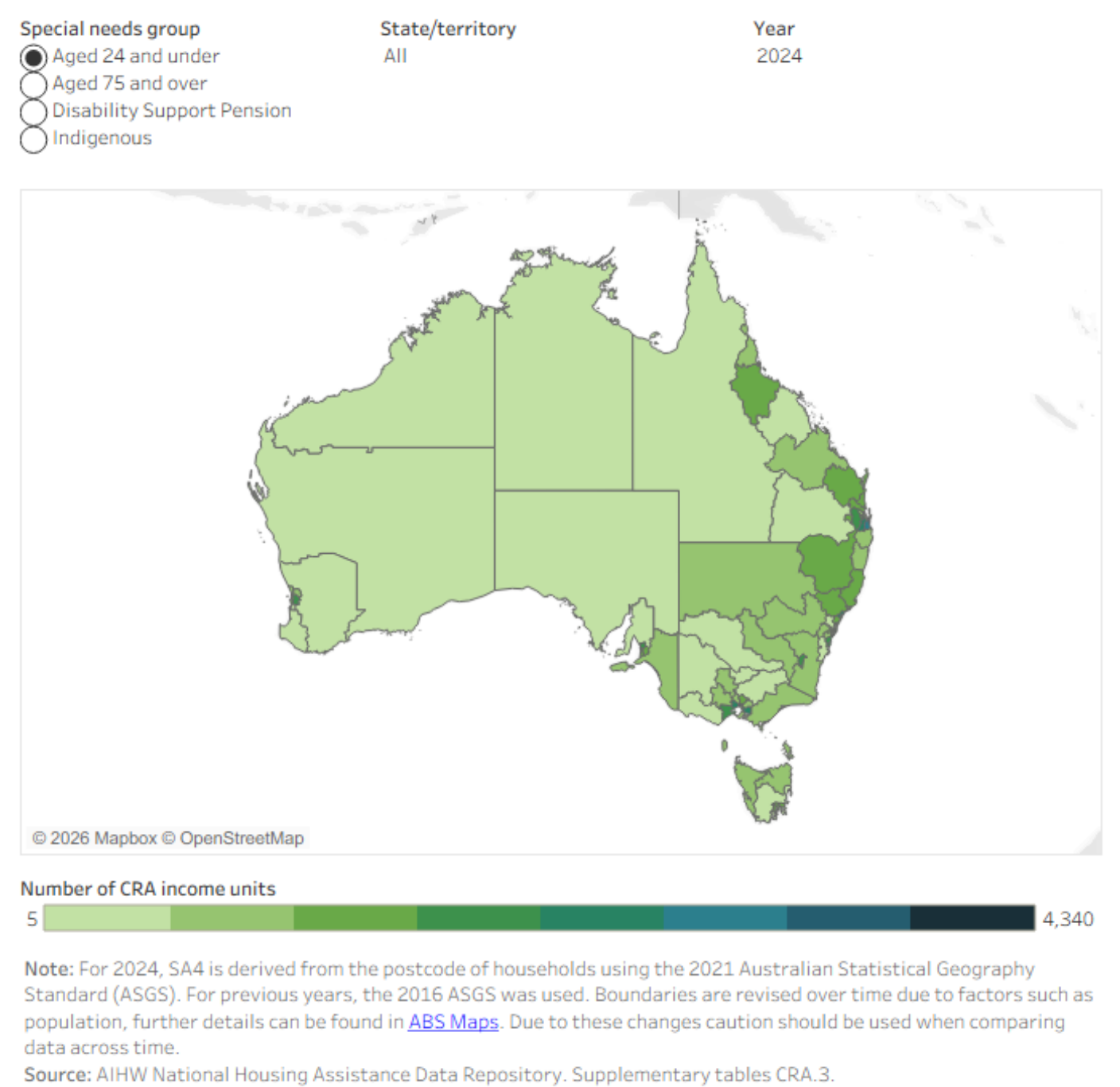
The map shows the number of CRA income units in SA2 areas of Australia at June 2019 to June 2024. Fairfield NSW (3,400) and Caboolture – South Qld (3,400) had the highest number of income units at June 2024.

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) is the largest sub-state geographical area in the ASGS. SA4s represent labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory. An SA4 generally has a population between 100,000 to 300,000 people in regional areas and 300,000 to 500,000 people in cities.

In 2024 (Table CRA.3):

- At the SA4 level, *Melbourne – Inner* (Victoria) had the highest number of income units receiving CRA that included a person aged 24 years and under (4,300). The *Gold Coast* (Queensland) had the highest number of income units receiving CRA that included a person aged 75 year and over (7,600) and *Melbourne – West* (Victoria) had the highest number of income units receiving a Disability support pension and CRA (7,700) (Figure FINANCIAL.2).

Figure FINANCIAL.2: Income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance by special needs group and SA4, at June 2019 to 2024



Extended description for figure FINANCIAL.2

The map shows the number of CRA income units by special needs groups in SA4 areas of Australia in June 2019 to June 2024. In June 2024, Melbourne – Inner (4,300) had the highest number of income units that included a person aged 24 and under, Gold Coast (7,600) had the highest number of income units that included a person aged 75 and over and New England and North West in NSW (4,300) had the highest number of Indigenous income units.

CRA as a proportion of rent paid

Rental prices and the proportion of rent covered by CRA can differ across states and territories, as well as from region to region. CRA often accounts for less of the proportion of rent in capital cities, as capital cities generally have a higher median fortnightly rent.

In 2024, the median fortnightly rent paid by income units in the capital cities was higher than those in the rest of the state or territory (Table CRA.5). However, the difference in median rent was larger in some states and territories than in others. In New South Wales the median fortnightly rents were around \$100 higher in Sydney compared with the rest of the state, and in Western Australia, rents were around \$80 higher in Perth compared with the rest of Western Australia. In Tasmania, the median rent in Hobart was almost the same as the rest of Tasmania at around \$500.

There were also differences in the proportion of rent paid for by CRA entitlements between regions. The proportion of rent accounted for by fortnightly CRA entitlements was higher among income units in the rest of the state regions than those in capital cities. In all states and territories, CRA entitlements covered 34–40% of the fortnightly rental costs in the rest of state regions, but around 31–38% for income units in capital cities.

Rental stress and CRA

More than 2 in 5 income units were in rental stress after receiving CRA.

In Australia, rental affordability is commonly measured by the amount of gross income a household spends on rent. A household is considered in rental stress when more than 30% of gross income is spent on rent. This report focusses on rental stress amongst CRA recipients, defined as a CRA income unit. For more information, see the [technical notes](#).

To provide insight into how much CRA reduced rental stress among income units receiving CRA, the proportion of income spent on rent before receiving (or excluding) CRA is compared with the proportion of income spent after receiving (or including) CRA.

In June 2024, around 538,000 (42%) income units were in rental stress including CRA. Around 398,000 additional income units would have been rental stress if they did not receive CRA (Table CRA.7).

More up to date information on rental stress for CRA income units, including rental stress for special needs groups and primary payment type, are available in the [Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Australia: quarterly data](#) report.

Private Rent Assistance

The number of households receiving Private Rent Assistance (PRA) has been relatively stable since 2020–21.

Private rent assistance (PRA) is a form of financial assistance provided by state and territory governments to low-income households experiencing difficulties with securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. PRA is typically provided once, as either a bond loan or a rental grant. However, state and territory governments may offer different types of support that others do not. For example, ongoing rental subsidies are only offered in New South Wales and relocation expenses are only offered in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. For more information, see the [Data quality statement](#) for PRA.

In 2023–24, about 60,400 households received PRA, similar to the values reported since 2020–21 but falling from 92,600 in 2019–20 (Figure FINANCIAL.3; Table PRA.1).

Government policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic likely had an impact on PRA. Many jurisdictions introduced initiatives including moratoriums on rental evictions and prevention of rent increases. Pandemic-related assistance may have been provided to households but is out of scope for the PRA collection.

PRA is demand driven, that is, decreases do not necessarily reflect a lack of household resources or changes to eligibility criteria. The overall rental market may have had an impact on the decline in PRA recipients. For example, reduced vacancy rates may result in reduced movement of tenants, potentially reducing the number of PRA applicants. Further, an increase in the total number of applicants for rental vacancies more broadly may reduce the likelihood of a PRA recipient to secure tenancy.

Key characteristics of households

Of the 60,400 households receiving PRA, most were aged 25–44 (55%), half had a gross weekly income above the national minimum wage (50%) and 19% were First Nations households (Table PRA.4).

The main source of income for most (69%) households receiving PRA was from some form of government payment. In particular, the government payments most households were receiving were:

- Jobseeker (17%)
- Other Government pension/allowances (18%)
- Disability Support Pension (16%)

Over a quarter (29%) of households received their main income sources from an employee income.

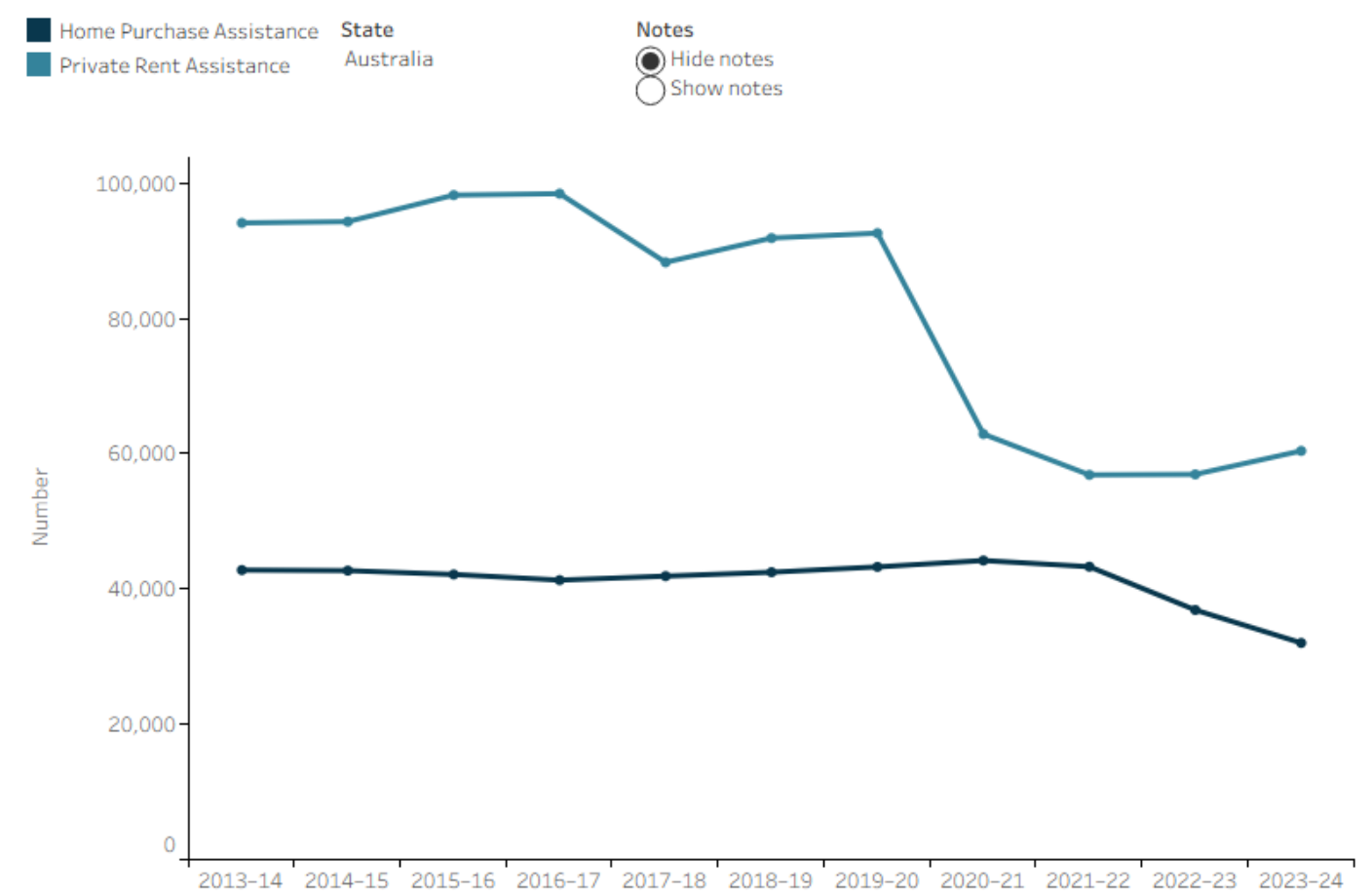
State and territory

Although all states and territories provide bond loans, the other types of PRA provided to households differed with each state and territory. In 2023–24 (Table PRA.2):

- Queensland provided the greatest number of bond loans (16,300) and households receiving PRA payments overall (21,300).
- South Australia provided the highest number of one-off rental grants (8,900).

New South Wales provided ongoing rental subsidies to around 7,400 households. No other state or territory provided these subsidies.

Figure FINANCIAL.3: Households receiving Private Rent Assistance and Home Purchase Assistance by states and territories, 2013–14 to 2023–24



Sources: AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Supplementary tables PRA.1 and HPA.1.

Extended description for figure FINANCIAL.3

This line graph shows the number of households receiving Private Rent Assistance and households receiving Home Purchase Assistance from 2013–14 to 2023–24 by states and territories. Nationally, there are fewer households receiving PRA in 2023–24 (60,400 households) compared with 2013–14 (94,100 households). The number of households receiving HPA was relatively stable nationally at over 40,000 until 2021–22, with decreases to 36,900 in 2022–23 and 32,000 in 2023–24.

Remoteness

In 2023–24, more PRA payments were made to households in *Major cities* (60%) than in *Inner regional* (25%) and *Outer regional* (14%) areas. By contrast, less than 2% of the PRA payments were made to households located in *Remote* (1.2%) or *Very remote* (0.5%) areas (Table PRA.3).

Home Purchase Assistance

The number of households receiving Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) is declining.

Home Purchase Assistance (HPA) is a form of financial assistance provided by state and territory governments to eligible households to improve their access or ability to maintain home ownership. HPA can include:

- direct lending
- concessional loans
- mortgage relief
- interest rate assistance
- deposit assistance
- other assistance grants

The type of home purchase assistance products available to households can differ across the years, and states and territories. Some products were only offered in certain states and territories or were no longer offered to new households. This section presents information on households who received HPA in 2023–24 and households who received HPA in the previous years who were still paying off their HPA-related loan in 2023–24.

Over 32,000 households in Australia received HPA or were paying off an HPA-related loan in 2023–24. Over half (57% or 18,000) of these households were in *Major cities* (HPA.3). The most common form of HPA was direct lending (28,200), which was provided in all the states and territories except Tasmania (Figure FINANCIAL.7; Table HPA.2).

Of the 32,000 households with a HPA related loan, most (88% or 28,200) commenced the loan prior to the start of 2023–24, with only 3,800 households receiving HPA commencing in 2023–24 (Table HPA.2).

Key characteristics of households

Of the 32,000 households receiving HPA in 2023–24 (Table HPA.4):

- A quarter (25% or 8,000) of households had a main applicant aged 35–44 years and 23% (7,300) were aged 45–54 years.
- Almost a third (31% or 10,000) of households earned a gross weekly income that was below the 2023 national minimum wage of \$882.80 (FWC 2023).

State and territory

In 2023–24, South Australia (18,000 households) and Western Australia (12,300 households) had the highest number of households receiving HPA. Together, the two states contributed 95% of households receiving HPA (Table HPA.1). Direct lending was the main type of HPA provided in these states. About 440 and 2,900 new households received HPA in 2023–24 in Western Australia and South Australia, respectively (Table HPA.2).

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2021) *Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3*, ABS, Australian Government accessed 25 March 2025.

FWC (Fair Work Commission) (2023) *National minimum wage orders* accessed 25 March 2025

Technical notes

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Key data quality information

The AIHW plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The AIHW works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and to compile, analyse and disseminate national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction.

The Housing Assistance in Australia report draws on key data from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository and Australian Government Housing Dataset.

Data compiled and used in the report are sourced from:

- **Public housing and State owned and managed Indigenous housing:** from state/territory housing authority administrative systems.
- **Community housing:** by state/territory housing authorities from community organisations and/or administrative records held by them. Data are incomplete for some states and territories due to non-reporting or under-reporting by organisations.
- **Indigenous community housing:** from state/territory housing authority administrative systems; dwelling audits conducted by states and territories; and, from Indigenous community housing organisations through data collection tools. Data are incomplete for some states and territories due to non-reporting or under-reporting by organisations.
- **Private Rent Assistance and Home Purchase Assistance:** are compiled from the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository. These data are sourced from state/territory housing authority administrative systems.
- **Commonwealth Rent Assistance:** data are derived from the Australian Government Housing Data Set. This is an administrative dataset provided to the AIHW by the Department of Social Services.

Data Quality Statements are developed for each data set and made available on the AIHW Metadata Online Registry ([METEOR](#)).

Further information regarding the data quality of each collection is available as follows:

- [Public Housing Data Collection, 2023–24](#)
- [State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing Data Collection, 2023–24](#)
- [Community Housing Data Collection, 2023–24](#)
- [Indigenous Community Housing Data Collection, 2023–24](#)
- [Private Rent Assistance Collection, 2023–24](#)
- [Home Purchase Assistance Collection, 2023–24](#)

Data quality

There are range of data quality issues such as the following. Caveats in the published data tables describe the salient issues important for interpretation of the data.

- The administrative data sets from which these collections are drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Some information may be self-identified and/or not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs (for example, Indigenous status and disability information).
- Not all states and territories or organisations capture and report all data items – data may not be collected and reported in a manner consistent with national data definitions. In addition, substitution may be required to calculate some outputs of the housing collections.
- Data for individual states and territories may not be comparable across reporting periods, nor with other social housing sectors due to changes in systems and processes which have led to differences in the accuracy, completeness and/or coverage of data over time.
- Historical data may have been updated and therefore differ from previous publications.

Comparing Census and administrative data about social housing

Estimates of social housing are also available from the ABS Census of Population and Housing and ABS surveys.

The 4 social housing data collections are administrative by-product data that provide annual point-in-time information on the number of households across Australia living in housing provided through each of the respective programs.

The Census, which is conducted by the ABS every 5 years, provides point-in-time data at the census date (with the 2021 Census pertaining to 10 August 2021). However, rather than provide information by social housing program, it distinguishes between the two types of social housing providers: state and territory governments, and the community sector.

The main discrepancies between the data sources are:

- Self-report errors in census data as the respondent may not correctly categorise landlord type, and as a result, incorrectly indicate a type of housing other than social housing.
- Incomplete census data potentially due to respondent fatigue or inability to answer the landlord type question.

- The categories reported in the census (and other ABS surveys) and outlined below, do not align well with the 4 social housing types:
 1. Real estate agent
 2. Government Housing Authority/Housing Department (Public Housing)
 3. Parent/other relative not in this dwelling
 4. Other person not in this dwelling
 5. Residential park (including caravan parks and marinas)
 6. Employer—Government (including Defence Housing Authority)
 7. Employer—Private
 8. Housing co-operative; Community or Church Group

Changes in housing stock

There have been considerable changes to the composition of social housing stock among the four programs, including the transfer of ownership and/or management of public housing dwelling stock to community housing organisations, involving:

- 4,100 dwellings from public housing and SOMIH to community housing in South Australia between 2018 and 2019.
- 14,000 dwellings from public housing and SOMIH to community housing in New South Wales between 2018 and 2019.
- Around 5,000 dwellings from Indigenous community housing to NT remote public housing between 2008 and 2010.
- Around 5,000 NT remote public housing dwellings to the SOMIH program in 2017.
- Over 2,000 Tasmanian public housing dwellings to community housing between 2021 and 2022.
- Around 1,600 public housing dwellings to SOMIH in New South Wales in 2023–24.

If making jurisdictional comparisons over time, please read the relevant data quality statements to ensure all these changes are considered in the analysis.

Waitlists

In all states and territories, access to social housing is managed with waitlists with priority given to those considered to be high priority applicants (see Priority Groups). All jurisdictions have an integrated waitlist across social housing programs. Waitlist data are provided separately for each social housing program applied for by a household. In some cases, this reflects the eligibility criteria for each different housing program. People/households may be on the waitlist for more than one program, therefore, households should not be summed across housing programs.

Fluctuations in the number of people on waitlists are not necessarily measures of changes in underlying demand for social housing. Factors that may influence the length of waitlists include changes to allocation policies, priorities, and eligibility criteria put in place by state/territory housing authorities, as well as their implementation (Dockery et al. 2008).

Applicants eligible for social housing may not apply due to the associated length of the waitlist and associated time to be allocated a dwelling, or the lack of available dwellings in their preferred location (Muir et al. 2020). In some states/territories, applicants may be on more than one waitlist, as lists are held by each program. As such, combined figures could be an overestimate of total households on social housing waitlists.

For further details, see the [Data quality statements](#).

Time waited for social housing allocation

The method used to calculate the amount of time waited for a housing allocation varies depending on household priority status. For households in greatest need, the time waited is calculated from the date applicants were determined to be of greatest need (priority group status) and the amount of time that passed before they were allocated housing. In other words, time waited is the amount of time between the greatest need determination and housing allocation.

However, for households *not* in greatest need, the time waited is calculated from the housing application date to housing allocation – this includes special needs only households. Hence, the time waited is measured here as the amount of time between the housing application and housing allocation.

Data on time waited for housing allocation were unavailable for both community housing and Indigenous community housing.

Households that exited or transferred

For most states/territories social housing 'exits' refers to households that have exited a specific housing program during the reference year. Households that relocate within the same housing program are not considered 'exits' but are instead known as 'transfers'.

Priority groups

Social housing is generally allocated according to priority needs, with allocations made based on identifying those people with the greatest need (such as applicants experiencing homelessness) and those with special needs for housing assistance (such as applicants with disability).

Disability status

There are differences between the states and territories in how disability status is classified. Disability may be based on self-reported disability or receipt of a disability support pension as a proxy for reported disability. These items may not be equivalent indicators of disability. Using self-reported disability status only may lead to under-reporting or misreporting of a household's disability status.

Greatest need households

Public housing, SOMIH and community housing programs prioritise household allocations through priority waitlists, such as the greatest need waitlist. The criteria for priority needs varies between jurisdictions, so any comparisons between states and territories must be exercised with caution.

Greatest need applies to households if, at the time of allocation, household members were subject to one or more of the following circumstances:

- they were experiencing homelessness

- they were at risk of homelessness, including:
 - Their life or safety was threatened within existing accommodation
 - a health condition was exacerbated by existing accommodation
 - their existing accommodation was inappropriate to their needs
 - they were experiencing very high rental costs.

For more information, see [METEOR](#).

Classifications for greatest need are not consistent across the states and territories, however, the states and territories map these data to an AIHW standard as defined in METEOR.

Special needs households

Households seeking social housing often have members with special needs. Some households may have one or more members with multiple special needs. The definition of special needs differs across the different social housing programs and between jurisdictions.

For public housing, special needs households include those with:

- a member with disability,
- a main tenant younger than 25 years or older than 75 years, or
- one or more members who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

As SOMIH is an Indigenous targeted program, Indigenous households in SOMIH are not considered special needs households. For SOMIH, special needs households are only those that have:

- a member with disability or
- a main tenant under 25 years or over 50 years.

Data presentation and derivations

Households at 30 June

For public housing, SOMIH and Indigenous community housing, households at 30 June are defined as those for which tenancies either have not ended or ended on 30 June of the reference period.

For community housing, for years prior to 2023–24, households at 30 June were those that had not ended by 30 June of the reference period. From 2023–24 onwards, the definition was updated to include households where the tenancy ended on 30 June.

Low income households

For years prior to 2011–12, low income households were defined as those with an income equivalent at or below 100% of the government income support benefits at the pensioner rate.

From 2011–12, the low income cut-off uses equivalised gross income to classify a household as low income. Equivalised gross income is used as it allows comparison of the relative economic wellbeing of households of different size and composition, with the equivalised gross income being an indicator of the economic resources available to a standardised household. (If a jurisdiction is unable to supply gross household income, then assessable household income will be used instead.) If a household has a negative disposable income, it will have an equivalised gross income of zero.

ABS provides tables of gross equivalised income by jurisdiction and capital city / balance of state calculated from the Survey of Income and Housing (SIH). Households that fall in the bottom two quintiles (that is, the bottom 40%) of equivalised gross income will be classified as low income households.

The SIH is conducted every 2 years which means that cut-offs are not updated each financial year.

Table TN.1: Data source for the equivalised gross income used to define low income households for public housing, SOMIH and community housing

Survey of income and housing	Low income cutoffs for housing data
<u>2019–20</u>	2022, 2023, 2024
<u>2017–18</u>	2019, 2020, 2021
<u>2015–16</u>	2018
<u>2013–14</u>	2015, 2016, 2017
<u>2011–12</u>	2013, 2014

Time waited for social housing allocation

The method used to calculate the amount of time waited for social housing allocation varies depending on household priority status. See the [waitlist](#) section for more information.

Suitability of dwelling

In Australia, the suitability of a household's dwelling size is commonly measured using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Broadly, the CNOS measures suitability based on whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household (see criteria below).

CNOS provides information on how suitable social housing dwellings were for households living in social housing on 30 June of the reference year.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS)

The CNOS measure assesses the suitability of a dwelling for a household according to the following criteria:

- no more than 2 people shall share a bedroom
- parents or couples may share a bedroom
- children under 5 years, either of the same sex or opposite sex, may share a bedroom
- children under 18 years of the same sex may share a bedroom
- a child aged 5–17 should not share a bedroom with a child under 5 of the opposite sex
- single adults 18 years and over, and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

Based on the CNOS standard, housing utilisation will be described as the following:

- Suitable or adequate: when it meets the CNOS household bedroom requirements
- Underutilised: when it has 2 or more bedrooms surplus to the CNOS bedroom requirement for the household
- Overcrowded: when it requires at least 1 more bedroom

Source: Statistics Canada 2021

For more information on the CNOS, see [AIHW Metadata Online Registry \(METEOR\)](#).

Although this measure is useful for indicating overcrowding in dwellings, it does not necessarily reflect a household's experience of overcrowding. This is because CNOS does not consider cultural differences in living and sleeping arrangements (Dockery et al. 2022). As such, its classification of overcrowding may not necessarily match the experiences of Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse households.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance is one of the main types of housing assistance provided to low-income households in Australia. Housing costs are often one of the largest expenses for low-income households. Governments offer various forms of financial support to help people afford housing costs, such as assisting with the cost of rent and accessing home loan finance.

Within this report, information on financial assistance related to rental costs and home purchases is based on data as at the last Friday in June in the reference year (for CRA) and on 30 June of the reference year (for PRA and HPA). It provides insight into the scale and effectiveness of certain financial assistance programs.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance

CRA is a non-taxable payment, which is generally paid fortnightly to eligible recipients as part of a recipient's primary payment rate. It is available to eligible recipients who rent in the private rental market or community housing. To be eligible, families or individuals must qualify for: an eligible social security payment; more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A; or an eligible veterans' income support payment; and pay or be liable to pay more than a specified rent threshold.

Qualification for CRA is assessed as part of the process for claiming a social security payment and it forms part of the rate of that payment. For information about CRA eligibility, see [Department of Social Services](#).

CRA is paid at 75 cents for every dollar above a minimum rental threshold until a maximum rate (or ceiling) is reached. The minimum threshold and maximum rates vary according to the household or family situation, including the number of children.

Certain social housing tenants are eligible for CRA, such as those living in community housing or Indigenous community housing and, in some states and territories, state owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH). CRA is not payable to public housing tenants as state and territory housing authorities already subsidise rent for these tenants.

People who rent housing from community housing providers may be eligible for CRA. Community housing providers typically charge rent as a proportion of assessable household income, plus 100 per cent of CRA, which is retained by the community housing provider. This can benefit community housing tenants by helping providers to maintain the quality and expand the supply of dwellings.

In September 2024, CRA maximum rates were increased by 10 per cent to help relieve rental cost pressures for recipient households. This followed a 15 per cent increase to CRA maximum rates in September 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic

The jobless rate in Australia increased as the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the Australian economy (Parliamentary Library 2020a). In the months leading to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was around 5.0% (from December 2019 to March 2020). By July 2020, it peaked at 7.5% – the highest in over 20 years (ABS 2025). The economic and social impact of COVID-19 affected many Australians. However, the rate of unemployment has declined sharply since then, falling below the pre-pandemic level to 4.7% in July 2021, and to 3.5% in February 2023, increasing to 4.0% in March 2025 (ABS 2025).

In response to COVID-19 and the associated increase in unemployment, the Australian Government made changes to social security payments from March 2020. Broadly, these changes meant that more people were eligible for and received social security payments throughout 2020 and 2021 (Parliamentary Library 2020b).

In 2020, the number of CRA income unit recipients and CRA expenditure peaked due to high unemployment and the temporary changes to social security that allowed more people to access income support during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Income units

An income unit comprises a single person (with or without dependent children) or a couple (with or without dependent children) receiving a social security or family assistance payment and expected to share financial resources. Single social security recipients living together in the same household are regarded as separate income units. One member of a couple is treated as the reference person for the recipient household, based on the type of payment they receive. The order of priority is Pensions; Allowances; Family Tax Benefit (FTB). Type of income unit information only available from 2016.

Confidentiality

To protect individuals' privacy, all cells including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest 5, values from 1 to 7 are rounded to 5. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.

Rental stress

Many renters, especially those with low to moderate incomes, struggle to pay for high rents without compromising or sacrificing on other basic living costs (ABS 2022). Rental stress is about whether rental housing is affordable for these households (AHURI 2019).

CRA and rental stress

In Australia, rental affordability is commonly measured by the level of rental stress faced by the household. This report focusses on rental stress amongst CRA recipients, defined as a CRA income unit spending more than 30% of gross income on rent.

For CRA income units, the proportion of income paid on rent is calculated as: (weekly rent–weekly CRA)/weekly gross income. Weekly gross income includes reported private income (for FTB-only income units estimated income is used) plus regular income support and family payments (excluding CRA) paid to the income unit. Income support paid includes the Coronavirus Supplement paid to the income unit. Family Tax Benefit paid to the income unit does not include the end of year supplement.

'In rental stress – excluding CRA' indicates the income units that would be in rental stress if they were not receiving CRA. This is theoretical as all income units included in the data are receiving CRA, but this calculation provides insight into how much CRA reduced rental stress among income units receiving CRA. The proportion of income paid on rent is calculated as: weekly rent/weekly gross income.

'In rental stress – including CRA' indicates the income units that are in rental stress while receiving CRA. The proportion of income paid on rent is calculated as: (weekly rent–weekly CRA)/weekly gross income.

Dwelling and household location

What is the Australian Statistical Geography Standard?

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) is a classification of Australia into a social geography to reflect the location of people and communities to assist in the publication and analysis of social, economic, and demographic statistics. The ASGS categorises the regions of Australia into a hierarchy of statistical areas and consists of ABS structures and non-ABS structures (such as local government and postal areas). The ABS structures are made up of six interconnected hierarchies of regions. It is an inclusive hierarchy of geographies, where each level is included (or excluded) directly into (or from) the next. For further information on the ASGS and the structures, see the latest release of the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard](#) (ABS 2021).

Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) is one of the geographical areas within the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA2s are medium sized areas, with populations between 3,000 and 25,000 people, they represent a community that interacts together socially and economically.

Statistical Area level 4 (SA4) refers to the geographical area of sub-state regions in the main structure of the Australia Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). SA4 broadly represents the labour markets or groups of labour markets within each state and territory, with the boundaries reflecting the separation of sub-state regions by different labour markets. For the largest regional cities, including Wollongong and Townsville, SA4s broadly reflects the labour markets of the city. For outer regional and remote areas, SA4s broadly reflects the aggregation of smaller and localised labour markets that are geographically, socially, and economically similar.

Local Government Areas (LGA) are Non ABS Structures generally representing administrative regions, they are not defined or maintained by the. All Non ABS Structures are approximated using ASGS regions. Mesh Blocks (the smallest geographic areas defined by the ABS, containing 30 to 60 dwellings) are allocated to Local Government Areas primarily based on where population is located.

Local Government Areas cover legally designated parts of a State or Territory for which incorporated local governing bodies have responsibility. There are 566 Local Government Areas covering the whole of Australia. ABS approximations of administrative boundaries do not match official legal boundaries and should only be used for statistical purposes.

Remoteness Areas (RA) are derived from the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+), produced by the Hugo Centre for Population and Migration Studies (University of Adelaide). Remoteness Areas divide Australia into five classes of remoteness based on a measure of relative access to services. The five remoteness classes are: *Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote and Very remote*.

Concordances for dwelling location

Dwellings were assigned to SA4s using a postcode to SA2 correspondence file.

Dwellings were assigned to LGAs using a postcode to SA2 correspondence file.

There may be some minor inaccuracies in results.

Dwelling Remoteness area is derived from the postcode of the household using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). Table TN.1 outlines the concordance files used for each year of housing data.

Remoteness boundaries are revised over time due to factors such as population and road network changes, further details can be found in [Change in the ASGS Remoteness Classification](#). Due to these changes caution should be used when comparing remoteness data across time. For example, in ASGS Edition 3 (2021), Mount Gambier in South Australia has been reclassified from *Inner regional* to *Outer regional*. This has contributed to a change in the number of dwellings in *Outer Regional* in South Australia from around 4,500 in 2022 to 5,500 in 2023.

Table TN2: Concordance files used to assign housing data to remoteness areas over time

ASGS edition	Postcode reference year	Applicable years for housing data
Edition 1 (2011)	2012	2014, 2015, 2016, 2017
Edition 2 (2016)	2017	2018
Edition 2 (2016)	2018	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022
Edition 3 (2021)	2022	2023, 2024

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2021) [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#), ABS website, accessed 25 March 2025.

ABS (2022) [13. Rental affordability, lower income renter households, national housing and homelessness agreement basis](#) [data set], abs.gov.au, accessed 25 March 2025.

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Dockery A, Ong R, Whelan S and Wood G (2008) [The relationship between public housing wait lists, public housing tenure and labour market outcomes](#), AHURI Research Report No. 9., AHURI, Melbourne.

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Parliamentary Library (2020a) [The impact of COVID-19 on JobSeeker Payment recipient numbers by electorate](#), accessed 25 March 2025.

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Statistics Canada (2021) [Housing suitability of private households](#), Statistics Canada website, accessed 25 March 2025.

Notes

Data quality statement

- [Public Housing Data Collection, 2023-24](#)
- [State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing Data Collection, 2023-24](#)
- [Community Housing Data Collection, 2023-24](#)
- [Indigenous Community Housing Data Collection, 2023-24](#)
- [Private Rent Assistance Collection, 2023-24](#)
- [Home Purchase Assistance Collection, 2023-24](#)

Amendments

15 August 2025 – On [Data presentation and derivations](#) in the Technical notes, text was updated to included detailed calculation of rental stress for CRA recipients.

Data

Newer release available: (23 Jun 2026)

Data tables: Financial assistance 2025

Data

XLSX 801kB

Data tables: Social housing dwellings 2025

Data

XLSX 260kB

Data tables: Social housing households 2025

Data

XLSX 461kB

Data tables: Social housing suitability 2025

Data

XLSX 227kB

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Web report | 24 Jun 2025
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Publication | 08 Nov 2013
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- Housing assistance in Australia 2011 |
Publication | 15 Jun 2011
- Housing assistance in Australia 2008 |
Publication | 22 Feb 2008

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