Use of homelessness services by contemporary ex-serving Australian Defence Force members 2011-17

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About

Between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017, 1,215 contemporary ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members used specialist homelessness services (SHS), representing 1.1% of the contemporary ex-serving ADF population (those who have at least 1 day of service on or after 1 January 2001 who discharged after that date). Ex-serving ADF members who were women, younger or had less ADF experience were more likely to be SHS clients.

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Findings from this report:

- Ex-serving ADF members' use of homelessness services was lower than the Australian population – 1.1% compared with 3.4%

- Ex-serving ADF members who were women, younger, or had less ADF experience were more likely to be SHS clients

- At the start of support, 46% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were homeless and 54% were at risk of homelessness

- Fewer ex-serving ADF SHS clients were homeless at the end of support compared with the start of support

Summary of findings

- Ex-serving ADF members' use of homelessness services was lower than the Australian population – 1.1% compared with 3.4%.
- Ex-serving ADF members who were women, younger, or had less ADF experience were more likely to be SHS clients.
- At the start of support, clients can be categorised either as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Of ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the start of support, 46% were homeless and 54% were at risk of becoming homeless.
- At the end of support, clients can be categorised either as homeless or in stable housing. Of ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the end of support, 41% were homeless and 59% were in stable housing.
- Of the 54% ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support, the majority (82%) were in stable housing at the end of support.
- At the start of support, half (49%) of ex-serving ADF SHS clients lived alone, 16% were single parents with children and 13% lived as a couple with children.
- Male ex-serving ADF SHS clients required and used more accommodation services compared with ex-serving women.
- During the reporting period, 38% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients received accommodation compared with 29% of Australian SHS clients.
- More than half (53%) of female ex-serving ADF SHS clients also needed domestic and family violence services. This reflects the association between the use of domestic and family violence services and the use of homelessness services found among female Australian SHS clients.
- Accommodation, financial and interpersonal reasons were the most common main reasons for seeking SHS assistance.
- Ex-serving ADF SHS clients with complex care needs (including a current mental health issue, problematic drug and/or alcohol use and disability) required and used more services than ex-serving clients without these needs. This was also the case among Australian SHS clients.

Introduction

Homelessness can profoundly affect a person's mental and physical health, their education and employment opportunities, and their ability to participate fully in social and community life. As such, homelessness is recognised as an important focus area for understanding the welfare of veterans, though until recently there has been limited evidence on homelessness among Australian veterans.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) commissioned the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to investigate the use of homelessness services by clients reported in the AIHW's Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) who have served for at least 1 day in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) since 2001, described here as the contemporary ex-serving ADF population.

The results presented in this report are based on data generated by linking information from the Department of Defence staff and payroll management system—the Personnel Management Key Solution (PMKeyS)—with the AIHW's SHSC. The cohort is defined by the matches between the 2 data sources, using a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) methodology (see Technical Notes for more information). This means that the scope of the homelessness examined in this report is defined by the SHSC, and the scope of ex-serving ADF is defined by the PMKeyS.

Defining homelessness

The SHSC contains information on individuals who use specialist homelessness services in Australia from a SHS agency (an agency providing SHS and receiving funding under the former National Affordable Housing Agreement or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness).

This means that the SHSC does not include information about all people in Australia who may need homelessness services, or all those who are homeless, only those who accessed SHS. This approach is different from other reported data on homelessness such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing, which measures homelessness based on an individual's living arrangement, irrespective of whether they have used homelessness services (ABS 2016). Additionally, the ABS Census measures homelessness based on the living arrangement of the individual only on Census night every 5 years, whereas the SHSC contains data for the length of time clients received specialist homelessness services. SHS agencies also provide services to people who are at risk of becoming homeless, so not all SHS clients are experiencing homelessness. As a result, estimates of homelessness from the Census or other sources differ from those from the SHSC.

Homelessness and risk of homelessness

SHS agencies provide a range of services to assist those who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. Clients are considered to be homeless if they are: living in non-conventional accommodation; sleeping rough; or living in short-term or emergency accommodation. Clients are considered to be at risk of homelessness if they are currently living in accommodation but are: at risk of losing their accommodation; or experiencing 1 or more factors that can contribute to homelessness. A small proportion of clients may also have their housing situation recorded as 'not stated' at the start of support if their housing situation is unknown.

Defining the ADF population

This report covers SHS use by 'contemporary ex-serving ADF members', which is defined as ADF members who had at least 1 day of service on or after 1 January 2001 (when the PMKeyS was introduced) and who discharged after this date. All data about ex-serving ADF members presented in this report refer to this cohort, including references to the broader contemporary ex-serving ADF population.

Comparison with ADF indicator

An ADF indicator was introduced into the SHSC in July 2017. The ADF indicator records whether the SHS client self-reports as a current or former ADF member, either on a full or part-time basis. This indicator was introduced to provide a better understanding of the extent to which veterans may need support from SHS.

The SHSC ADF indicator identified 1,295 current or former ADF members who had used SHS in 2017–18 (AIHW 2019). In comparison, between 2011–12 and 2016–17, analysis of linked data found 1,215 unique SHS clients who were ex-serving ADF members with service since 2001. Accounting for clients who used SHS in multiple years, the sum of total clients in each year across the 6-year period was 1,867 clients, or an average of 311 clients per year.

Important factors to consider (including more detail about the differences between the ADF indicator and the linked data used in this report) are provided in Box 1.

> ### Box 1: Factors to consider when reading this report
> **The scope of this report is restricted to data about use of homelessness services collected as part of the SHSC.** The SHSC contains information on people seeking services from agencies that receive funding to provide SHS under the (former) National Affordable Housing Agreement or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. This report does not include information on ex-serving ADF members who may have experienced homelessness but **did not seek support from a SHS agency.**

The scope of this report is restricted to ex-serving ADF SHS clients with at least 1 day of service since 1 January 2001, who discharged after 1 January 2001 and before 1 July 2017. As a result, this report cannot be used to estimate the use of homelessness services by ex-serving members who left the ADF before 1 January 2001.

The analysis in this report links the PMKeyS and SHSC data using a SLK. The SLK is a combination of letters and numbers taken from an individual's personal information, which is used to match individuals across data sets. While the SLK methodology is a robust approach to match individuals between data sources, it may miss some matches or make incorrect matches that may not have occurred if the full identifiable information was used.

The scope of this report is restricted to SHS use that occurred between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017. As the contemporary ex-serving ADF population consists of ex-serving ADF members who discharged on or after 1 January 2001, the maximum length of time between discharge and SHS use is 16 years (that is, a person who discharged in 2001 and used SHS for the first time in 2017). As such, the analysis population is limited to those who used SHS within 16 years of their discharge. Any demographic or service characteristics associated with SHS use more than 16 years after discharge will not be captured in this report. In addition, demographic or service characteristics associated with SHS use many years after discharge may be under-represented.

The scope of this report is restricted to SHS use that occurred after an ADF member was discharged. Data for SHS use that occurs prior to the financial year in which an ex-serving ADF member was discharged are not included in this report.

Data on homelessness support provided before 1 July 2011 are not available, which means the total days of support may be underestimated for clients already receiving accommodation or other homelessness support on 1 July 2011. Similarly, some clients may have continued to receive SHS support beyond 30 June 2017, but this information is not within the scope of this report. The data for 2016–17 was the most recent financial year of data available at the time of data linkage for this report.

In this report, counts of clients are reported for each individual financial year, and across the 6-year reporting period (2011-12 to 2016-17). For some analyses, the total number of clients for each individual financial year will sum to greater than the total number of unique clients in the 6-year period as clients may receive several services over multiple years and can be counted in the total for each financial year in which they received SHS support.

Ex-serving ADF SHS client counts are unweighted and under-estimate the number of clients. Unlike national SHS client data (such as that presented in the _Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18_), no imputation strategy has been applied to correct for missing or incomplete data.

Two different extracts of Australian SHS client data were sourced for the analysis for this report. The first is data from the _Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18_. These data have several key methodological differences compared with the ex-serving ADF SHS client data, such as the inclusion of clients under the age of 16; and the inclusion of clients in outcome data only if all of their support periods have closed by the end of the year. Because of this, data from this extract are included in the report to provide context to the ex-serving ADF results by showing patterns of SHS use in the Australian population, rather than for direct comparison.

The second is the unweighted proportion of Australians aged 17 and over who had used SHS from 2011–12 to 2016-17. These data are only used to compare the level of SHS use among ex-serving ADF members with the level among the general Australian population. These data are unweighted (no imputation strategy has been applied to correct for missing or incomplete data), so these counts under-estimate the number of SHS clients. These data also represent a unique count of clients across 6 financial years, so the counts will not be comparable to data published for individual financial years. These data were sourced from a customised data request and are not published elsewhere.

There are differences in the methodology of how the analysis for the current report identifies ADF members, compared with the ADF indicator:

- The ADF indicator includes veterans who discharged before 1 January 2001 and applies to currently serving or former ADF members.
- The ADF indicator is self-reported and will only capture ADF members who identify themselves as such to the SHS agency. This report identifies ex-serving ADF SHS clients by linking the SHSC data with the Department of Defence's PMKeyS data.
- The ADF indicator is only asked of clients aged 18 and over, whereas this report contains ex-serving ADF members aged 17.

It was not possible to analyse a number of other potentially important social, demographic and psychological factors that may contribute to homelessness, due to a number of factors including the specific administrative information available in the PMKeyS data.

The results may indicate some groups of ex-serving ADF SHS clients that may be at higher risk of homelessness by examining characteristics that may be associated with homelessness. However, it is not possible to attribute a causal relationship between these characteristics and homelessness.

Some of the results in this report are based on small numbers. Caution should be taken when interpreting these findings, as results based on small numbers can be sensitive to small changes in client numbers over time.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2016. Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2016. ABS cat. no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. <u>Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017–18.</u> Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients

Key findings

- Ex-serving ADF members were less likely to have used SHS in the 6-year period than the Australian population as a whole (1.1% compared with 3.4%).
- Ex-serving ADF members who are women, younger, or had less ADF experience were more likely to seek homelessness services than other ex-serving ADF members.
- At the start of support, 46% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients (whose housing situation was known) were homeless and 54% (whose housing situation was known) were at risk of homelessness.
- 84% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients presented to a SHS agency alone, but women were more likely than men to present with children (17% and 2%, respectively).

Number of ex-serving ADF SHS clients

Between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017, a total of 1,215 contemporary ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members (those with at least 1 day of service on or after 1 January 2001 who discharged after this date) used specialist homelessness services (SHS). Over the 6 years, the proportion of SHS clients among the contemporary ex-serving ADF population in each financial year remained relatively stable at around 37 per 10,000 (Table 1). However, as the contemporary ex-serving ADF population has increased over the reporting period, the number of SHS clients in each financial year has increased accordingly from 216 in 2011–12 to 399 in 2016–17.

Table 1: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients and contemporary ex-serving ADF population, by financial year

Financial year	Total ex-serving ADF SHS clients (number)	Total contemporary ex-serving ADF (number)	Rate (clients per 10,000 population)
2011–12	216	70,068	31
2012–13	275	75,257	37
2013–14	292	81,647	36
2014–15	331	87,601	38
2015–16	354	95,927	37
2016–17	399	108,825	37
2011–12 to 2016–17	1,215	108,825	112

Notes

1. The total clients using SHS between 2011–12 and 2016–17 is a count of the unique clients over the reporting period. Clients could use SHS in multiple years across the 6 years, so the sum of the number of clients per financial year is greater than the total of ex-serving ADF SHS clients.
2. A lower proportion of agencies returned data for 2011–12 so these numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

The majority (66%) of contemporary ex-serving ADF SHS clients used SHS in only 1 financial year, 22% used SHS in 2 years, 8% used SHS in 3 years and less than 1% used SHS in all 6 years.

Of the 417 clients who used SHS across multiple years, 72% used it in sequential years (for example 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14), and the remaining 28% had a gap in their service use of at least 1 year.

Level of SHS use

The proportion of the contemporary ex-serving ADF population who ever used SHS during the 6 years was 1.1% (Table 2). Although there were more ex-serving men (941) who used SHS during this period than ex-serving women (274), the proportion of ex-serving women who used SHS (1.7%) was 1.6 times as high as the proportion of ex-serving men (1.0%).

Among the general Australian population aged 17 and over, 3.4% used SHS during the 6 years. The proportion of Australian men who used SHS was 2.6%, compared with 4.2% of Australian women. The relative difference (ratio) between Australian men and Australian women was 1.6, similar to the ratio between ex-serving men and ex-serving women. This indicates that women are relatively more likely than men to be SHS clients, and the size of this effect is the same for ex-serving women as for women in the general Australian population.

Table 2: Level of SHS use among contemporary ex-serving ADF members and general Australian population, by sex, 2011–12 to 2016–17

Population group	SHS clients (number)	Population (number)	Proportion of population who were SHS clients (%)
Contemporary ex-serving ADF	1,215	108,825	1.1
Men	941	92,354	1.0
Women	274	16,471	1.7
Australia	664,026	19,389,067	3.4
Men	252,214	9,527,029	2.6
Women	411,812	9,862,038	4.2

Sources: ABS Estimated Resident Population aged 17 and over as at 30 June 2017; AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Across all age groups, the level of SHS use during 2011–12 to 2016–17 among ex-serving ADF members was lower, compared with use among the general Australian population (Figure 1). For ex-serving ADF members, the level of SHS use was highest among those aged 25–29 and 30–34 (both 1.6%). For the general Australian population, the highest level of use was among those aged 20–24 (5.6%).

Figure 1: Level of SHS use among contemporary ex-serving ADF members and general Australian population, by age, 2011-12 to 2016–17
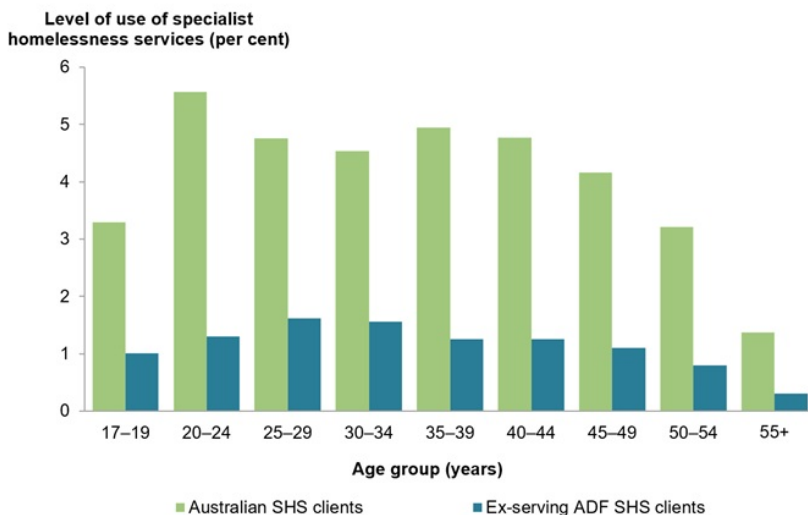
Note: Age is as at 30 June 2017.

Sources: ABS Estimated Resident Population aged 17 and over as at 30 June 2017; AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S1.

Comparing ex-serving ADF SHS clients with non-clients

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients are a sub-population of all contemporary ex-serving ADF members, and their demographic and service characteristics may reflect the broader contemporary population of ex-serving ADF members. Therefore, if differences are observed between ex-serving ADF SHS clients and non-clients for a particular characteristic, it suggests the characteristic may be associated with homelessness service use. Differences in demographic and service characteristics between the 2 groups across the 6-year period are described next.

Sex

Just over 3 in 4 (77%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients were men, and 23% were women (Table 3). However, among ex-serving ADF members who were not SHS clients, the proportion of men was higher (85% men, 15% women). The higher proportion of women in the sub-population of ex-serving ADF SHS clients suggests ex-serving women are more likely to use SHS services than ex-serving men (as is the case for the general Australian population of SHS clients) (AIHW 2019).

Service

Nearly 3 in 4 (71%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged from the Army (Table 3), 20% from the Navy and 9% from the Air Force. The proportion of ex-serving ADF members discharged from the Army was higher among SHS clients (71%) than non-clients (65%). There was a lower proportion of Air Force members among SHS clients (9%), compared with non-clients (16%). The proportion of Navy members among

SHS clients (20%) was similar to non-clients (19%). Further analysis of key findings by service is presented in the Client groups of interest section.

Reason for discharge

There are 2 broad types of reason for discharge from the ADF: voluntary or involuntary.

- Within the voluntary discharge type, there are the sub-categories of contract/administrative discharge (including retirement and contract completion) and voluntary-other (including voluntary discharges and redundancies).
- There are two categories of involuntary discharge: involuntary-medical (including discharge for being medically unfit) and involuntary-other (non-medical reasons).

Just under half (46%) of ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged voluntarily and 50% discharged involuntarily—14% for a medical reason and 36% for a non-medical reason (Table 3). A higher proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged involuntarily for a non medical reason (36%) compared with non-clients (27%) while there was little difference between the groups for discharge for medical reasons. Further analysis revealed no substantial differences in the number of accommodation nights or support days for clients with different reasons for discharge.

Table 3: Demographic and service profile (sex, service and discharge reason) of contemporary ex-serving ADF members

	Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (%)	Ex-serving non-clients (%)
Sex		
Women	23	15
Men	77	85
Service		
Army	71	65
Navy	20	19
Air Force	9	16
Discharge reason		
Contractual/Admin change	4	12
Voluntary	46	49
Involuntary (other)	36	27
Involuntary (medical)	14	12
Total number of clients	1,215	107,610

Note: Service is recorded as at discharge and is current as at 30 June 2017.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Age, experience and length of service

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients were younger, served for a shorter period and were less likely to have operational experience, compared with ex-serving ADF members who were not SHS clients (Table 4). Differences between ex-serving ADF SHS clients and non-clients included:

- Ex-serving ADF SHS clients were generally younger than non-clients—at the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017), 73% were aged 25–44, compared with 57% of non-clients. Also, 39% of non-clients were aged 45 and over, compared with 23% of ex-serving clients. The mean age of ex-serving ADF SHS clients was lower than the mean age of non-clients (38 and 43, respectively). See also young men with complex care needs.
- Ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged at a younger age—46% were aged 17–24, compared with 26% of non-clients. A lower proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were aged 35 and over at their discharge date (21%) compared with non-clients (42%).
- Ex-serving ADF SHS clients had a shorter length of service—63% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients had served for less than 5 years, compared with 34% of non-clients. One in 4 (26%) non-clients served for 20 years or more, compared with 6% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients. The mean length of service for ex-serving ADF SHS clients was also much shorter compared with non-clients (6 and 13 years, respectively). Further analysis of ex-serving ADF SHS clients with less than 5 years of service is presented in the Client groups of interest section.
- A lower proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients had operational experience—14% compared with 25% of non-clients.
- Ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged at a lower rank—95% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged at a rank other than officer, compared with 81% of non-clients.

While these characteristics have been reported individually, it is recognised that some may be related. For example, the young age of ex-serving ADF SHS clients at discharge may be related to the findings for rank, length of service and operational experience. For example, all of the ex-serving ADF SHS clients aged 17–24 as at the end of the reporting period had served for less than 5 years. This report does not analyse which characteristics are related or which are most strongly associated with SHS use. Investigation of risk factors associated with homelessness may be undertaken in future analysis.

Table 4: Demographic and service profile (age, experience and length of ADF service) of contemporary ex-serving ADF members

	Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (%)	Ex-serving non-clients (%)
Age at end of reporting period		
17-24	5	4
25-34	40	28
35-44	33	29
45 and over	23	39
Mean age	**38**	**43**
Rank		
Officer	5	19
Other rank	95	81
Length of ADF service (years)		
Less than 5	63	34
5-9	16	17
10-14	9	14
15-19	6	9
20 or more	6	26
Mean length of service	**6**	**13**
Operational experience		
Any operational experience	14	25
No experience	86	75
Total number of clients	**1,215**	**107,610**

Notes

1. Age at the end of the reporting period is calculated as at 30 June 2017. This differs to the calculation of age as at the start of support, where age is reported as at 31 December of the financial year in which the client first received SHS support (for reporting over the 6-year period), or as at 31 December for each financial year in analysis by financial year.
2. Rank is recorded at discharge and is current as at 30 June 2017. One record is excluded from the analysis by rank for non-clients due to missing details.
3. Operational experience is only counted for ex-serving ADF members hired on or after 1 January 1999, due to a change in the data collection approach on that date. The total used for percentages is 887 for ex-serving ADF SHS clients and 55,978 for ex-serving ADF non-clients. More information about the methodology for operational experience is in the Technical Notes.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Profile at the start of support

The characteristics or circumstances of clients at the start of receiving SHS support were examined. SHS clients may have more than 1 support period during a reporting year, and may present with different characteristics in these different supporting periods. Data reported as at the start of support in a year are taken from the earliest support period in that financial year, and from the first year of support when clients use services in multiple years.

Age at the start of support

At the start of support, 41% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were aged 25–34, and a further 29% were aged 35–44 (Figure 2). This reflects, in part, the contemporary nature of the analysis population, as ex-serving members with service since 2001 are likely to have a younger age profile than the broader population of ex-serving ADF members. The results for age at the start of support were similar for ex-serving men and women.

Among Australian SHS clients, 29% were aged 17 years and under at the start of support, which reflects the fact that clients of any age can receive homelessness services (AIHW 2019). Approximately 1 in 5 Australian SHS clients were in each of the following age groups: 25–34 (19%); 35–44 (18%); and 45 and over (20%).

Location of SHS agency

Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients accessed services from a SHS agency located in a major city, and 42% from an agency in a regional or remote location (Figure 2). The results were similar for Australian SHS clients—62% accessed services from a SHS agency located in a major city, and 38% accessed services in a regional or remote location (AIHW 2019).

Ex-serving men (59%) were more likely than ex-serving women (54%) to access services in a major city. Most ex-serving ADF SHS clients accessed services from a SHS agency located in Victoria (35%), Queensland (24%) or New South Wales (18%; Table 5). Among Australian SHS clients, services were accessed most commonly in Victoria (40%), New South Wales (25%) and Queensland (14%) (AIHW 2019).

Table 5: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (2011–12 to 2016–17) and Australian SHS clients (2017–18), by state and territory location of SHS agency

States and territories	Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (%)	Australian SHS clients (%)
NSW	18	25
Vic	35	40
Qld	24	14
WA	7	8
SA	6	7
Tas	4	2
ACT	4	1
NT	4	3
Total number of clients	**1,215**	**288,795**

Note: The sum of the proportions of SHS clients in each state and territory is greater than 100% as some clients sought services from multiple SHS agencies in different locations.

Sources: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS-SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17 (Ex-serving ADF SHS clients); AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017–18 (Australian SHS clients).

Housing situation

When a person presents to a SHS agency at the start of support, their housing situation is categorised as either being 'homeless' or 'at risk of homelessness'. Clients are categorised as homeless if they are: living in non-conventional accommodation; sleeping rough; or living in short-term or emergency accommodation. Clients are categorised as being at risk of homelessness if they are currently living in accommodation but are: at risk of losing their accommodation; or experiencing 1 or more factors that can contribute to homelessness. A small proportion of clients may also have their housing situation recorded as 'not stated' at the start of support if their housing situation is unknown.

Among the 1,082 ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the start of support, 46% (495) were homeless and 54% (587) were at risk of homelessness. The results for Australian SHS clients at the start of support were similar—43% were homeless at the start of support, and 57% were at risk of homelessness (AIHW 2019).

Ex-serving men were more likely to be homeless than ex-serving women at the start of support. Among the 855 ex-serving men who were SHS clients and whose housing situation was known, 50% were homeless, and 50% were at risk of homelessness. Among the 227 ex-serving women who were SHS clients and whose housing situation was known, 29% were homeless, and 71% were at risk of homelessness.

Living arrangement

Of the 1,082 ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose living situation was known at the start of support, 49% lived alone, 16% were single parents with children and 13% lived as a couple with children (Figure 2).

Some differences emerged in the living arrangements of ex-serving men (858 whose status was known) and women (224 whose status was known) seeking SHS:

- 56% of men lived alone, compared with 21% of women.
- 46% of women lived as a single parent with 1 or more children, compared with 8% of men.

These differences in living situations between men and women were also evident in the results for Australian SHS clients, although the size of the difference was smaller:

- 40% of men lived alone, compared with 23% of women.
- 41% of women lived as a single parent with children, compared with 25% of men.

Presenting unit type

Presenting unit type indicates if clients first presented to a SHS agency by themselves, or accompanied by their partner, children or a group of other family and friends (Figure 2). At the start of support, 84% of the 1,214 ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose presenting type was known presented alone.

Some differences emerged in how ex-serving men (940 clients whose status was known) and women (274) first presented to a SHS agency:

- A higher proportion of men (85%) presented to a SHS agency alone, compared with women (78%).
- Women were more likely to present with 1 or more children (17%) than men (2%).

Figure 2: Demographic profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients at the start of support, 2011-12 to 2016-17
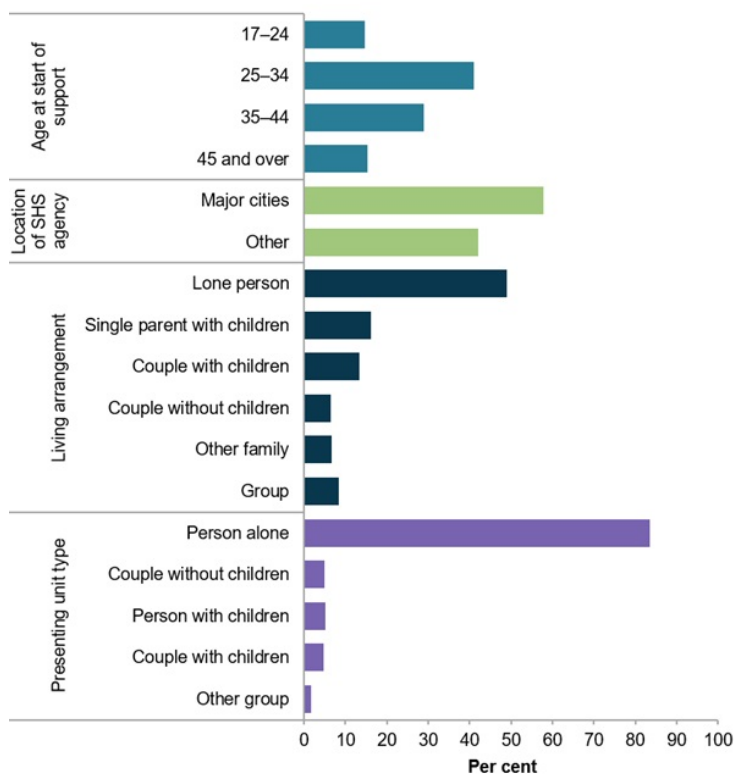
Notes

1. Age is calculated using information from the PMKeyS data. Age at the start of support is calculated as at 31 December of the financial year in which a client first received SHS support.
2. Location of SHS agency is assigned using the Australian Bureau of Statistics classification, Australian Statistical Geography Standard, 2011. Other refers to all areas that are not classified as Major cities (i.e. areas classified as inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote).
3. The percentages for living arrangement have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator (1,082), excluding those whose situation was not stated.
4. The percentages for presenting unit type have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator (1,214), excluding those whose presenting unit type was not stated.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S2.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18.* Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Profile of service use

Key findings

- Accommodation, financial and interpersonal reasons were the most common main reasons for seeking assistance.
- For ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were 'homeless' at the start of support their most common main reason for seeking assistance was accommodation reasons. For clients at risk of homelessness their most common main reasons for seeking assistance were financial and accommodation.
- For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the most common service needed and provided was general support and assistance, followed by accommodation services.
- Most clients had a support period end because their needs were assessed to have been met.
- Homelessness among ex-serving ADF SHS clients appeared to be lower after support, and income, education and employment levels remained stable.

Amount of services used

There are 3 main ways to examine the amount of specialist homelessness services (SHS) used by ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) SHS clients, using data available in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC):

- number of support days provided
- number of nights of accommodation provided
- amount of financial assistance received.

Support days provided

A client's period of support starts on the day the client first receives services and ends on the last day the client received services from the SHS agency. Support days include nights of accommodation as well as non-accommodation services. Some clients receive a combination of accommodation and non-accommodation services.

Across the 6-year reporting period, over half (56%) of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were provided with between 1 and 45 days of support (Table 6). This pattern of results was similar to the results for the general Australian population of SHS clients (53% were provided with between 1 and 45 days of support) (AIHW 2019).

The number of support days provided to ex-serving ADF SHS clients remained relatively stable over the reporting period.

Table 6: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (2011–12 to 2016–17) and Australian SHS clients (2017–18), by support days provided

Support days provided	Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (%)	Australian SHS clients 2017-18 (%)
Up to 5 days	28	24
6 to 45 days	29	29
46 to 90 days	13	16
91 to 180 days	13	15
Over 180 days	18	15
Total number of clients	**1,215**	**288,795**

Notes

1. For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the calculation of days of support includes all clients, regardless of whether all their support periods were closed. For the general population of Australian SHS clients, the calculation only includes clients who had all of their support periods closed at the end of 2017-18.
2. If the support period start or end dates are outside of the reporting period for a financial year, total days are calculated using a start date of 1 July and an end date of 30 June.
3. For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, days of support are calculated by summing all support days received between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017.
4. Percentages may sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

Sources: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17 (Ex-serving ADF SHS clients); AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017-18 (Australian SHS clients).

Nights of accommodation provided

Over the reporting period, nearly 2 in 5 (38%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients were provided with at least 1 night of accommodation, which was higher than the proportion among Australian SHS clients (29%) (Table 7). Almost 1 in 4 (23%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients were provided with between 1 and 45 nights of accommodation.

Table 7: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (2011–12 to 2016–17) and Australian SHS clients (2017–18), by nights of accommodation provided

Accommodation nights provided	Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (%)	Australian SHS clients 2017–18 (%)
Clients receiving any accommodation	38	29
Up to 5 nights	9	7
6 to 45 nights	14	10
46 to 90 nights	5	4
91 to 180 nights	5	4
Over 180 nights	6	5
No accommodation	62	71
Total number of clients	1,215	288,795

Notes

1. For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the calculation of nights of accommodation includes all clients, regardless of whether all their support periods were closed. For the general population of Australian SHS clients, the calculation only includes clients who had all their support periods closed at the end of 2017–18.
2. If the support period start or end dates are outside the reporting period for a financial year, nights of accommodation are calculated using a start date of 1 July and an end date of 30 June.
3. The length of accommodation for a client is calculated by adding each night of accommodation (short term/emergency, medium and long term accommodation) provided across all support periods between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017. The length of accommodation for a client only includes nights provided to the client, and does not include nights of accommodation in which the client was referred to another agency.

Sources: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17 (Ex-serving ADF SHS clients); AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017–18 (Australian SHS clients).

Over the 6-year reporting period, the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were provided with accommodation of any length remained relatively stable over time, and was similar to the proportion of Australian SHS clients provided with accommodation (AIHW 2019).

Amount of financial assistance provided

Over the reporting period, nearly 4 in 5 (79%) clients were provided with between $0 and $200 in financial assistance. Fewer than 1 in 10 clients (7%) were provided with between $201 and $400, and 8% with between $401 and $800. The amount of financial assistance provided to ex-serving ADF SHS clients remained relatively stable over the 6 years.

Reason for seeking assistance

Any reason for seeking assistance (at the start of support)

When SHS clients first seek assistance from a SHS agency, they are asked to identify all reasons for doing so. If a client selects more than 1 reason, they are asked to choose their main reason from among those they identified. This makes it possible to analyse 2 separate but related data items: **any reasons** given for seeking assistance and the **main reasons** for doing so. By comparing the data items, it is possible to gain some insight into which reasons are primary or central reasons for seeking assistance, and which are secondary reasons.

The most common reasons ex-serving ADF SHS clients identified for seeking assistance at the start of support related to accommodation (61%) and financial issues (57%) (Table 8). Nearly 2 in 5 (38%) sought assistance for interpersonal relationship reasons, 1 in 3 (28%) for a health reason, and a similar proportion for other reasons (30%).

Among Australian SHS clients, the most common reasons for seeking assistance were accommodation and interpersonal relationships (both 53%). Just under half (47%) sought assistance for financial reasons, 23% for a health reason and 32% sought assistance for other reasons.

Main reason for seeking assistance (at start of support)

The most frequently selected main reason for seeking assistance was accommodation (39%), followed by financial (25%), interpersonal (21%) and health (5%) (Table 8). The results were broadly similar for all Australian SHS clients—the most common main reason was also accommodation, and the proportion was similar (35%). However, a higher proportion of Australian SHS clients sought assistance for interpersonal reasons (36%) compared with ex-serving ADF SHS clients (21%), and a lower proportion for financial reasons (17% and 25%, respectively) (AIHW 2019).

Among ex-serving ADF SHS clients, some differences existed between the results for the main reason for seeking assistance, compared with any reason (Table 8):

- The proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients (21%) who selected interpersonal reasons as their main reason was similar to the proportion who selected financial reasons (25%), but a higher proportion of clients had selected financial reasons as any reason (57%), compared with interpersonal reasons (38%). This may suggest that although fewer people are seeking assistance for interpersonal reasons than financial, when they do, interpersonal is more likely to be the main reason.
- A lower proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients (5%) selected health as their main reason, compared with those who selected it as any reason (28%). This suggests that health reasons are more likely to contribute to the need for services than be the main reason. Most (92%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients who nominated health as their main reason for seeking assistance were clients with disability, a current mental health issue, or problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

Table 8: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by any reason for seeking assistance at start of support, and main reason for seeking assistance at start of support

Reason	Any reason (number)	Any reason (%)	Main reason (number)	Main reason (%)
Accommodation	718	61	460	39
Financial	676	57	291	25
Interpersonal relationships	449	38	251	21
Other	350	30	117	10
Health	336	28	53	5
Total number of clients	1,182		1,172	

Notes

1. The denominator used to calculate percentages for any reason for seeking assistance at the start of support is the total number of unique clients, excluding those whose reason for seeking assistance was not stated for every support period in the client's first financial year of support (1,182).
2. Percentages for any reason for seeking assistance at the start of support may sum to greater than 100 as clients could list multiple reasons for seeking assistance. Clients are only counted once per reason.
3. The denominator used to calculate percentages for main reason for seeking assistance is the total number of unique clients (1,172), excluding those whose reason for seeking assistance was not stated in the client's first financial year of support.
4. Where more than 1 reason for seeking assistance has been provided, the client chooses the main reason.
5. 'Other' includes transition from custodial arrangements, transition from foster care and child safety residential placements, transition from other care arrangements, discrimination including racial discrimination, itinerant, unable to return home due to environmental reasons, disengagement with school or other education and training, lack of family and/or community support.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

During the reporting period, the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who nominated:

- accommodation as their main reason for seeking assistance increased from 35% in 2011–12 to 43% in 2016–17
- financial reasons decreased from 29% to 19% (Figure 3).

The results for the general population of Australian SHS clients for the same period followed a similar pattern to the results for ex-serving ADF SHS clients (AIHW 2019). The proportion who nominated:

- accommodation as their main reason for seeking assistance increased from 28% in 2011–12 to 37% in 2016–17
- financial reasons decreased from 20% to 17%.

It should be noted that across all 6 years, the proportion of Australian SHS clients who nominated interpersonal reasons as their main reason for seeking assistance was between 31% and 35%. This was higher than the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients, which was between 16% and 22%.

Figure 3: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, main reason for seeking assistance, by financial year, 2011–12 to 2016–17
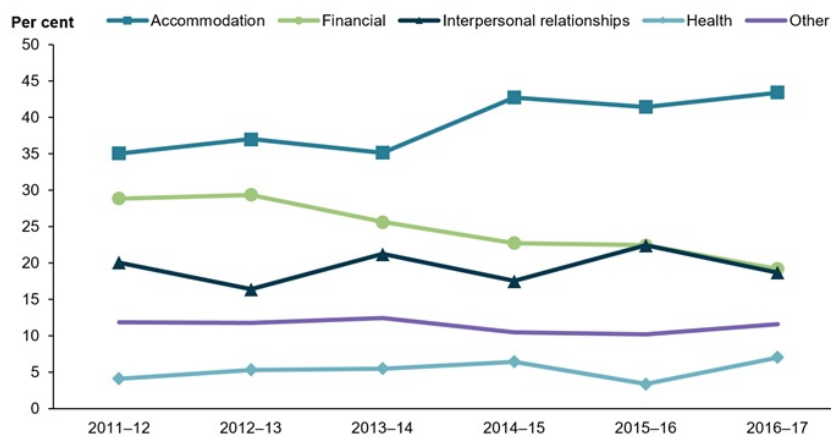
Per cent

Notes

1. Percentages are calculated using the total number clients per financial year as denominator, excluding those whose reason for seeking assistance was not stated in that year.
2. Where more than 1 reason for seeking assistance has been provided, the client chooses the main reason.
3. 'Other' includes transition from custodial arrangements, transition from foster care and child safety residential placements, transition from other care arrangements, discrimination including racial discrimination, itinerant, unable to return home due to environmental reasons, disengagement with school or other education and training, lack of family and/or community support.
4. A lower proportion of agencies returned data for 2011–12 so these numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S3.

The main reasons for seeking assistance differed for those who were homeless at the start of support and whose reason for seeking assistance was known (493 clients), compared with those at risk of homelessness and whose reason for seeking assistance was known (584 clients) (Table 9):

- Half (52%) of those who were homeless sought assistance for accommodation reasons, compared with 30% of those at risk
- 1 in 5 (19%) of those who were homeless sought assistance for financial reasons, compared with 31% of those at risk
- 1 in 6 (16%) of those who were homeless sought assistance for interpersonal reasons, compared with 22% of those at risk.

The general pattern of results was similar for Australian SHS clients (AIHW 2019). Among those who were homeless at the start of support, the most common main reason for seeking assistance was accommodation (51%), followed by interpersonal relationships (25%) and financial (12%). Among those who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support, the most common main reason was interpersonal relationships (35%), followed by accommodation (28%), and financial (22%).

Table 9: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, main reason for seeking support at start of support, by housing situation at start of support

Main reason	Homeless (number)	Homeless (%)	At risk (number)	At risk (%)
Accommodation	257	52	178	30
Financial	95	19	179	31
Interpersonal relationships	77	16	131	22
Other	40	8	70	12
Health	24	5	26	4
Total number of clients	439		584	

Notes

1. Percentages are calculated using the total of unique clients in each housing situation as denominator (439 for homeless, 584 for at risk), excluding those whose main reason for seeking assistance was not stated or whose housing situation was not stated.
2. Where more than 1 reason for seeking assistance has been provided, the client chooses the main reason.
3. 'Other' includes transition from custodial arrangements, transition from foster care and child safety residential placements, transition from other care arrangements, discrimination including racial discrimination, itinerant, unable to return home due to environmental reasons, disengagement with school or other education and training, lack of family and/or community support.
4. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Support needs identified, provided and referred

When a SHS client seeks assistance from a SHS agency, the agency assesses which services the client needs. An agency may then provide the client with this service, or may refer the client to another organisation. On some occasions, a client may need a service but may not be either provided with the service or referred to another organisation. Further information about services needed, provided and referred is located in the Technical Notes.

Among ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the type of service most commonly needed was general services (Figure 4). General services include a wide variety of services, such as advice and information, material aid, living skills and meals. A more detailed list of general services can be found in the glossary. Most (92%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients needed at least 1 of these services. Of the 1,123 clients who needed these services, 99% were provided with at least 1 service by their SHS agency, and 1% were referred to another organisation.

Accommodation services were needed by 2 in 3 (64%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients on at least 1 occasion, which could include short-term accommodation, medium-term accommodation or long-term housing. Of the 778 clients who needed any of these types of accommodation, 58% were provided with accommodation at least once, and 15% were referred to another organisation at least once.

The service needs and services provided to SHS clients in the general Australian population were similar to those for ex-serving ADF SHS clients. Among Australian SHS clients:

- 95% needed general services on at least 1 occasion, and 96% of the clients who needed these services were provided with at least 1 service in this category
- 56% needed any type of accommodation on at least 1 occasion, and 52% of the clients who needed accommodation were provided with it at least once (AIHW 2019).

The SHSC identifies 3 types of accommodation services: short-term accommodation; medium-term accommodation; and long-term housing. The proportions of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who needed, were provided with, or were referred to each service were as follows:

- Short-term accommodation was needed at least once by almost half (47%) of all ex-serving ADF SHS clients. The proportion of clients who needed long-term housing at least once was slightly lower (43%), and 1 in 3 (32%) needed medium-term accommodation at least once.
- Of the 575 clients who needed short-term accommodation, 2 in 3 (66%) were provided with this type of accommodation on at least 1 occasion, and 1 in 10 (11%) were referred to another organisation for this service on at least 1 occasion.
- Of the 384 clients who needed medium-term accommodation, 1 in 4 (26%) were provided with this service, and 22% were referred.
- Of the 517 clients who needed long-term housing, 5% were provided with this service, and 36% were referred.

Nearly 2 in 5 (38%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients needed assistance to sustain housing tenure or prevent tenancy failure or eviction at least once. Of the 463 clients who needed this service, 80% were provided with the service at least once, and 4% were referred to another organisation at least once.
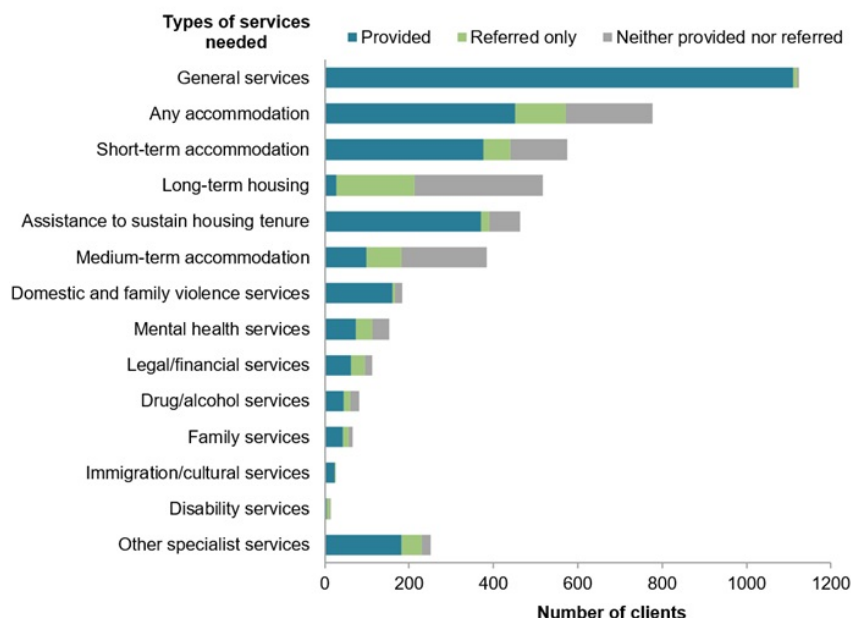
The services needed by ex-serving ADF SHS clients extended beyond services related to accommodation. The proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who needed other non-accommodation services (on at least 1 occasion) were as follows:

- 15% needed domestic and family violence services
- 13% needed mental health services
- 9% needed legal or financial services
- 7% needed drug and/or alcohol services
- 5% needed family services
- 21% needed other specialist services.

The ex-serving ADF SHS clients who needed domestic violence services were almost exclusively women. Of the 274 ex-serving women who were SHS clients, 53% needed domestic and family violence services, compared with 4% of the 941 ex-serving men who were SHS clients. Among Australian SHS clients, women also were the primary users of these services—42% of female Australian SHS clients needed these services during 2017–18, compared with 15% of men (AIHW 2019).

Further information on SHS use among ex-serving women who needed domestic and family violence services can be found in the Client groups of interest section.

Figure 4: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, 2011-12 to 2016-17

Types of services needed

Legend: ■ Provided ■ Referred only ■ Neither provided nor referred

Categories (top to bottom): General services, Any accommodation, Short-term accommodation, Long-term housing, Assistance to sustain housing tenure, Medium-term accommodation, Domestic and family violence services, Mental health services, Legal/financial services, Drug/alcohol services, Family services, Immigration/cultural services, Disability services, Other specialist services

X-axis: Number of clients (0, 200, 400, 600, 800, 1000, 1200)

Notes

1. The category Neither provided nor referred indicates that the client needed this service but that the service was neither provided nor referred.
2. Categories are a count of unique clients within all categories in the service and assistance group. A client may request multiple services and assistance types, therefore the sum of the categories is not equal to the group total.
3. If a client needed a service more than once during the 6-year reporting period, they are only counted once during that category of service. The same is true for services provided and referred.
4. Other specialist services include: health/medical services, specialist counselling services, and other specialised services.
5. Information about the services included in the General services category can be found in the glossary of the *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18*.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S4.

Reason support period ended

The period of time a client receives services from a specialist homelessness agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service and ends on the last day the client receives services from the agency.

When the support period for a SHS clients ends, the reason why the support period ended is recorded. Support periods end for a variety of reasons, ranging from the client's goals or needs being met (and therefore support is no longer required), a client is referred to another organisation for support, or the SHS agency has lost contact with the client.

Of the 1,144 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who had a support period close for a known reason, 62% had at least 1 support period end because their needs had been met or their goals were achieved. Nearly half (48%) had a support period end because they no longer requested assistance from the SHS agency, did not turn up to the SHS agency, or because the agency lost contact with them.

This pattern of results for ex-serving ADF was broadly similar to the results for the general Australian population of SHS clients—56% of Australian SHS clients had at least 1 support period end because their goals were met (AIHW 2019).

Over the 6-year reporting period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients each year who had at least 1 support period end because their needs were met or their goals were achieved increased from 45% to 54%.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18*. Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Outcomes for clients at start and end of support

Many of the data items in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) are collected at the start and end of support. Start of support is defined as the start of a client's earliest support period in their first year of support. End of support is defined as the end of the last support period in their last year of receiving support, or if the last support period has not closed, the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017). This section examines differences between the circumstances of clients at the start of support and at the end of support. By comparing the results at these 2 points in time for 4 outcome measures (housing situation, education enrolment status, labour force status, and main source of income), it is possible to examine whether the outcomes of clients have improved after their support.

> **Box 8: Factors to consider in this section**
> - Some clients may have only received support in 1 support period over the 6-year reporting period between 2011–12 and 2016–17. For these clients, their status at the start of support will be their status at the beginning of their sole support period, and their status at the end of support will be their status at the end of this same support period.
> - For clients who had more than 1 period of support during the 6-year reporting period, their status at the start of support will be their status as at the beginning of their first support period. Similarly, their status at the end of support will be recorded as their status as at the end of their last support period.
> - If there is a change between the outcome for clients at the start of support compared with the end of support, it is not possible to attribute causation to the support the client received.
> - Different clients received support for a different number of years, and so the length of time between the start of support and the end of support will be different for each client.

Housing situation at start and end of support

When a person presents to a specialist homelessness service (SHS) agency at the start of support, their housing situation is categorised as either being 'homeless' or 'at risk of homelessness'. Clients are categorised as homeless if they are: living in non-conventional accommodation; sleeping rough; or living in short-term or emergency accommodation. Clients are categorised as being at risk of homelessness if they are currently living in accommodation but are: at risk of losing their accommodation; or experiencing 1 or more factors that can contribute to homelessness. A small proportion of clients may also have their housing situation recorded as 'not stated' at the start of support if their housing situation is unknown.

Among the 1,082 ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the start of support, 46% were homeless and 54% were at risk of homelessness. The results for Australian SHS clients at the start of support were similar—43% were homeless at the start of support, and 57% were at risk of homelessness (AIHW 2019).

Among the 1,039 ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the end of support, 41% were homeless and 59% were in stable housing. Among Australian SHS clients whose housing situation was known at the end of support, 32% were homeless and 68% were in stable housing (AIHW 2019).

Among the 367 clients who received services in multiple financial years (and whose housing situation was known at the start of support), just under half (48%) were homeless, and 52% were at risk of being homeless. Of the 367 clients who received services in multiple years and whose housing situation was known at the end of support, 40% were homeless at the end of support, and 60% were in stable housing.

Housing outcomes at end of support by situation at start of support

Analysis was also conducted to investigate whether clients in different housing situations at the start of support (homeless or at risk) had different outcomes at the end of support (homeless or in stable housing).

Of the 439 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were homeless at the start of support (and whose housing situation was known both at the start and end of support), 32% were in stable housing at the end of support and 68% remained homeless (Table 10). Of the 541 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were at risk at the start of support (and whose housing situation was known at both time points), the majority (82%) were in stable housing at the end of support and 18% were homeless.

Australian SHS clients were more likely to be in stable housing at the end of support, compared with ex-serving ADF SHS clients. Of the Australian SHS clients who were homeless at the start of support, 38% were in stable housing at the end of support and 62% remained homeless. Of the Australian SHS clients who were at risk at the end of support, 90% were in stable housing at the end of support and 10% were homeless.

Table 10: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients (2011-12 to 2016-17) and Australian SHS clients (2017-18), housing situation at start of support by housing situation at end of support

Population group	Housing situation at start of support	Housing situation at end of support: homeless (%)	Housing situation at end of support: stable housing (%)

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients 2011-12 to 2016-17	Homeless	68	32
	At risk of homelessness	18	82
Australian SHS clients 2017-18	Homeless	62	38
	At risk of homelessness	10	90

Notes

1. For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the data for housing situation includes all clients, regardless of whether all of their support periods have been closed. For Australian SHS clients, the data for housing situation only includes clients whose support periods have all been closed. This may limit the comparability of these results.
2. Percentages for housing situation at the end of support have been calculated using the denominator of ex-serving ADF SHS clients in each housing situation category whose housing situation was known at both the start and end of support (439 for homeless, 541 for at risk), excluding those whose situation was not stated.
3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
4. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing.

Sources: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17 (Ex-serving ADF SHS clients); AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2017–18 (Australian SHS clients).

Specific categories of housing situation at start and end of support

Analysis was conducted to examine the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were in each of the specific categories of housing situation (sub-categories of homeless or at risk) at the start of support (1,082 clients whose housing situation was known) and end of support (1,039 clients whose housing situation was known). These changes over time were compared for ex-serving ADF SHS clients and Australian SHS clients.

For both ex-serving ADF SHS clients and Australian SHS clients, the proportion of clients who were sleeping rough (no shelter/improvised) or couch surfing decreased from the start to the end of support:

- The proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were sleeping rough decreased from 18% to 11%, and the proportion who were couch surfing decreased from 14% to 9% (Figure 5).
- The proportion of Australian SHS clients who were sleeping rough decreased from 10% to 6%, and the proportion who were couch surfing decreased from 17% to 12%.

For both groups of clients, the highest proportion of clients were in private housing at both the start and end of support, and the proportion of clients in public or community housing increased from start to end of support.

- The proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were in public or community housing increased from 5% to 12%, and the proportion in private housing remained consistent over time (ranging from 37% to 39%).
- The proportion of Australian SHS clients in public or community housing increased from 15% to 22%, and the proportion in private housing increased from 39% to 44%.

Figure 5: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by housing situation at start and end of support, 2011–12 to 2016–17
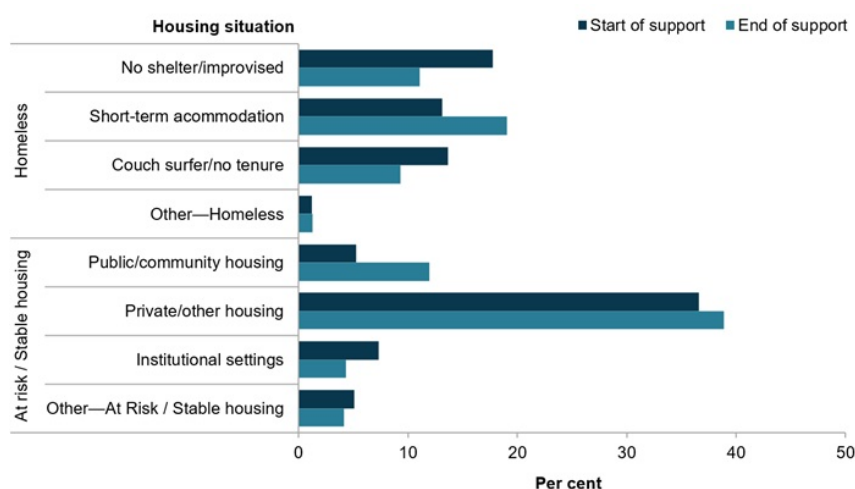
Notes

1. No shelter/improvised includes inadequate dwellings, short-term accommodation includes temporary and emergency accommodation; couch surfer/no tenure includes living in a house, townhouse or flat with relatives rent free; institutional settings includes hospitals, rehabilitation facilities or aged care facilities; public/community housing includes both renting or rent free; and private/other housing includes both renting or rent free.
2. The data for housing situation includes all clients, regardless of whether all of their support periods have been closed.
3. Percentages for housing situation have been calculated using the total number of ex-serving ADF SHS clients as denominator, excluding those whose status was not stated.
4. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
5. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S5.

The housing outcomes at the end of support differed between clients in the 3 different housing situation categories of 'homeless' at the start of support (Figure 6):

- Of the 129 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were 'couch surfers' at the start of support (living in house, townhouse or flat with no tenure), 39% were in stable housing at the end of support.
- Of the 124 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were in short-term temporary accommodation at the start of support, 31% were in stable housing at the end of support.
- Of the 174 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who had no shelter at the start of support (sleeping rough), 29% were in stable housing at the end of support.

Figure 6: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, housing situation at start of support (homeless) by housing situation at end of support, 2011–12 to 2016–17

Notes

1. No shelter/improvised includes inadequate dwellings, short-term accommodation includes temporary and emergency accommodation; couch surfer/no tenure includes living in a house, townhouse or flat with relatives rent free.
2. The data for housing situation includes all clients, regardless of whether all of their support periods have been closed.
3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
4. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing.
5. Percentages for housing situation at the end of support have been calculated using the total number of ex-serving ADF SHS clients in the housing situation at the start of support as denominator, excluding those whose status was not stated.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S6.

For clients who were in different at risk housing situations at the start of support, although the majority of clients did not become homeless, there were differences in the proportion who were in stable housing at the end of support (Figure 7):

- Of the 73 ex-serving ADF SHS clients in institutional settings at the start of support, 60% were in stable housing at the end of support.
- Of the 367 ex-serving ADF SHS clients in private or other housing at the start of support, 84% were in stable housing at the end of support.
- Of the 54 ex-serving ADF SHS clients in public or community housing at the start of support, 93% were in stable housing at the end of support.

A higher proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were in institutional settings at the start of support were homeless at the end of support, compared with clients in private or public housing at the start of support. It should be noted that this pattern is broadly consistent with the results for the general Australian population of SHS clients, where a higher proportion of clients who were in institutional settings at the start of support were homeless at the end of support, compared with those in private or community housing situations (AIHW 2019).

Figure 7: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, housing situation at start of support (at risk) by housing situation at end of support, 2011-12 to 2016-17

Notes

1. Some of these results are based on small numbers and so caution should be taken in the interpretation of these results.
2. Institutional settings includes hospitals, rehabilitation facilities or aged care facilities; public/community housing includes both renting or rent free; and private/other housing includes both renting or rent free.
3. The data for housing situation includes all clients, regardless of whether all of their support periods have been closed.
4. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
5. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing.
6. Percentages for housing situation at the end of support have been calculated using the total number of ex-serving ADF SHS clients in the housing situation at the start of support as denominator, excluding those whose status was not stated.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S6.

Education enrolment status

One of the outcome measures which is collected during support is the client's education enrolment status. Clients are recorded as having any enrolment if they are formally enrolled in an academic institution or technical college, or other accredited teaching institution, and/or engaged in employment related formal training.

At the start of support across the 6-year reporting period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, 6% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were enrolled. This proportion was similar at the end of support (7%).

A higher proportion of clients aged 17-24 were enrolled (13% at the start of support, 14% at the end of support) than any other age groups. There were no differences in the proportion of clients enrolled between the start of support and the end of support among any of the age groups.

Labour force status

Across the 6-year reporting period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, the labour force status of ex-serving ADF SHS clients at the start of support was similar to their status at the end of support:

- Nearly half (45%) of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were unemployed at the start of support, and a similar proportion were unemployed at the end of support (42%).
- 1 in 4 (26%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients were not in the labour force at the start of support, and this was the same at the end of support (26%).
- Nearly 1 in 7 (15%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients were employed at the start of support, and a similar proportion (18%) were employed at the end of support.

A higher proportion of female ex-serving ADF SHS clients were employed (either full-time or part-time) at the start and end of support, compared with male ex-serving ADF SHS clients:

- Of the 266 female ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose employment status was recorded at the start of support, 19% were employed, and of the 269 whose status was recorded at the end of support, 22% were employed.
- Of the 929 male ex-serving ADF SHS clients whose employment status was recorded at the start of support, 14% were employed at the start of support, and of the 925 whose status was recorded at the end of support, 16% were employed.

Main source of income

At the start of support, clients are asked to indicate their main source of income. It should be noted that as this is a self-report question, the source of income identified as the main source of income may not be the source which provides the client with the most income overall.

'Other income' was the main source of income reported by nearly 3 in 4 (71%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients, which includes government payments such as Newstart or the age pension. Further information about this category can be found in Table S8 in the supplementary tables. Employee income was the next most commonly reported main source of income (12%). This pattern was similar for ex-serving ADF SHS clients at the end of support (73% for other income, 15% for employee income).

The proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who reported their main source of income was a DVA payment was 5% at the start of support, and 6% at the end of support. Note, as this is self-reported and only captures the main source of income, this result does not represent all ex-serving ADF SHS clients who are DVA clients and receive a DVA payment. Information about DVA clients can be found in the Client groups of interest section.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18*. Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Client groups of interest

Key findings

- A higher proportion of ex-serving men were homeless at the start and the end of support, compared with ex-serving women.
- Men had a higher need for, and use of, accommodation services compared with women.
- More than half of women needed domestic and family violence services during the 6-year reporting period.
- Ex-serving clients discharged from the Air Force had lower levels of homelessness at the start and end of support (compared with Army and Navy clients).

Of the 1,215 ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) specialist homelessness services (SHS) clients who used SHS between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017, 941 (77%) were men. The proportion of men among ex-serving ADF SHS clients was lower than the proportion among ex-serving members who were not clients (85%). The proportion of women among ex-serving ADF SHS clients (23%) was higher than among ex-serving members who were not clients (15%).

Despite this higher likelihood to use SHS, a lower proportion of ex-serving women were homeless at both the start and end of support, compared with ex-serving men (Figure 8). At the start of support, 29% of women were homeless, compared with 50% of men. At the end of support, the proportion of women who were homeless remained largely unchanged at 26%. This was still much lower than the proportion of men homeless at the end of support (45%). This is consistent with the results for the general Australian population of SHS clients, where men using SHS are more likely to be homeless and women are more likely to be at risk (AIHW 2019).

Figure 8: Ex-serving ADF SHS clients, housing situation at start and end of support, by sex, 2011-12 to 2016-17
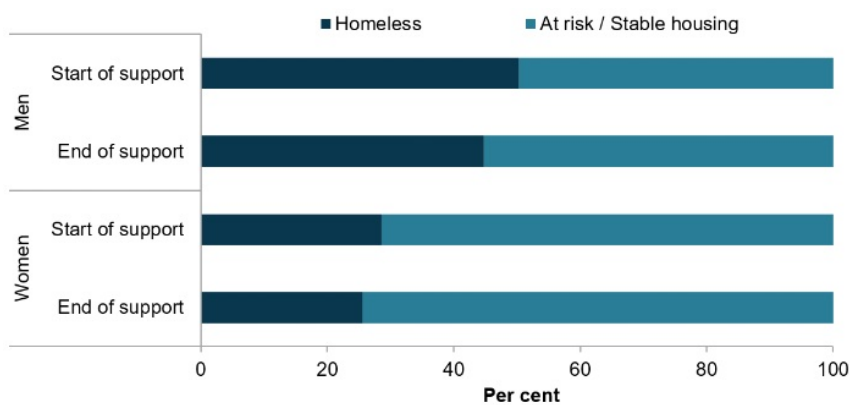
Notes

1. The data for housing situation includes all clients, regardless of whether all of their support periods have been closed.
2. Percentages for housing situation have been calculated using the total number of ex-serving ADF SHS clients as denominator, excluding those whose situation was not stated.
3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
4. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17; Table S7.

Results for female ex-serving ADF SHS clients indicate a lower need for accommodation and a higher need for other services:

- A lower proportion of ex-serving women used accommodation services (31%), compared with men (40%).
- 53% of ex-serving women indicated that the main reason for seeking assistance at the start of support was interpersonal relationship reasons (including domestic and family violence, and relationship or family breakdown), compared with 12% of men.
- 53% of ex-serving women were assessed as needing domestic and family violence services at some point during the 6-year reporting period. Of those that needed these services, 95% were provided with them by their SHS agency.

There are a number of differences that may reflect the higher proportion of men who were homeless at the start of support:

- 44% of ex-serving men indicated that accommodation was their main reason for seeking assistance at the start of support. This is higher than for women (22%), and may reflect the higher proportion of men who were homeless at the start of support.
- 27% of ex-serving men indicated their main reason for seeking assistance at the start of support was financial, compared with 19% of women.
- 68% of ex-serving men identified a need for accommodation of any kind, compared with 49% of women.

- 50% of ex-serving men identified a need specifically for short-term accommodation, compared with 37% of women.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. _Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18_. Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Client groups of interest

Over the 6-year reporting period, 53% (or 145) of female ex-serving ADF SHS clients were assessed as needing domestic and family violence services. Women were also the primary users of these services among Australian SHS clients—42%, compared with 15% of men during 2017–18 (AIHW 2019). Further analysis compared female ex-serving ADF SHS clients needing these services with those assessed as not needing them (129 clients) (Table 11). Key findings include:

- Women in both groups were more likely to present as at risk of homelessness than homeless at the start of support. However, of the 145 women who needed domestic and family violence services, 81% were at risk of becoming homeless, compared with 62% of the 129 women who did not need these services.
- Women needing domestic and family violence services had a longer length of support—43% had a support length of 91 days or longer, compared with 25% of women not needing them.
- Both groups of women received similar amounts of financial assistance.
- Both groups of women were equally likely to present to a SHS agency alone (81% of those needing domestic and family violence services, 75% of those not needing them).
- A lower proportion of women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services were unemployed—15%, compared with 44% of those not needing them.

Table 11: Demographic and service profile of female ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by assessed need for domestic and family violence services, 2011-12 to 2016-17

	Women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services (%)	Women not assessed as needing domestic and family violence services (%)
Age at end of reporting period		
17-24	3	9
25-34	41	41
35-44	37	29
45 and over	19	20
Housing situation at start of support		
Homeless	19	38
At risk	81	62
Support days provided (across 6-year period)		
Up to 5 days	24	31
6 to 45 days	24	31
46 to 90 days	9	13
91 to 180 days	23	12
Over 180 days	20	13
Financial assistance provided (across 6-year period)		
$0 to $200	81	74
$201 to $400	6	5
Over $400	14	21
Presenting type at start of support		
Person alone	81	75
Couple without children	n.p.	n.p.

Person with children	17	18
Couple with children	n.p.	n.p.
Other group	n.p.	n.p.
Labour force status at start of support		
Employed	21	16
Unemployed	15	44
Not in the labour force	28	29
Don't know	35	11

n.p. not published

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, the denominators used for calculating percentages in the table above are 145 for women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services and 129 for women not assessed as needing these services.
2. Women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services includes all female ex-serving ADF SHS clients who were assessed as these services at any point during the reporting period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2017.
3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. The denominator used for calculating percentages of housing situation is the total number of clients excluding those whose status was not stated (denominator of 107 for women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services, 120 for women not assessed as needing these services).
4. If the support period start or end dates are outside of the reporting period for any financial year in the reporting period, total support days are calculated using a start date of 1 July and an end date of 30 June in the financial year. Days of support in the table above are calculated by summing all support days received by the client between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017.
5. The amount of financial assistance for a client is calculated by adding the amount of financial assistance provided across all support periods from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2017. This includes financial assistance, material aid, brokerage and vouchers provided to, or on behalf of the client during the reporting period.
6. Labour force status at the start of support is the status of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. The denominator used for calculating percentages is the total number of clients less not stated (denominator of 91 for women assessed as needing domestic and family violence services, 111 for women not assessed as needing these services).

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

References

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019. *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017-18*. Cat. no. HOU 299. Canberra: AIHW.

Client groups of interest

Of the 1,215 ex-serving ADF SHS clients, 7 in 10 (71%) discharged from the Army, 20% from the Navy, and 9% from the Air Force. The proportion of ex-serving ADF members discharged from the Army was higher among SHS clients (71%) than non-clients (65%), indicating they are over-represented among ex-serving ADF SHS clients. In contrast, the proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients discharged from the Air Force (9%) was lower than among ex-serving ADF members who were not clients (16%), indicating they are under-represented among ex-serving ADF SHS clients.

Some differences existed in the demographic and service characteristics among ex-serving ADF SHS clients between each service:

- Army and Navy members served for a shorter time, compared with Air Force members—64% of Army and 66% of Navy members served for less than 5 years, compared with 46% of Air Force members.
- A higher proportion of Army members were men (82%), compared with Navy (69%) and Air Force members (63%).
- Army and Navy members were younger than Air Force members—54% of Navy and 45% of Army members were aged less than 35 as at the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017), compared with 21% of Air Force members.
- Air Force members were more likely to have discharged voluntarily (62%), compared with Army or Navy members (50% and 27%, respectively).

These differences were also evident in the overall population of contemporary ex-serving ADF members. This suggests that the differences between each service in the use of SHS may be due to demographic and service characteristics, such as the relative proportions of men and women.

There were also a number of other differences between each service:

- 39% of Air Force members were homeless at the start of support, and 28% were homeless at the end of support, which was lower than for Army and Navy members—46% and 47% respectively at the start of support and 41% and 45% respectively at the end.
- Army (39%) and Navy members (42%) were more likely to indicate that their main reason for seeking assistance at the start of support was accommodation, compared with Air Force members (33%).
- A higher proportion of Army and Navy members (66% and 62%, respectively) were assessed as needing accommodation of any type, compared with Air Force members (56%).
- A higher proportion of Air Force members (44%) were assessed as needing assistance to sustain their housing tenure, compared with Army members (37%). This reflects the fact that at the start of support, a higher proportion of Air Force members were housed but were at risk of homelessness (61%), compared with Army members (54%).
- A higher proportion of Air Force members had a support period end because their needs were met or their goals were achieved (66%), compared with Army members (61%).
- A higher proportion of Air Force (19%) and Navy members (21%) needed domestic and family violence services, compared with Army members (13%). It should be noted that 79% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients assessed as needing these services were women, and there was a higher proportion of women among Air Force (37%) and Navy members (31%) compared with Army members (18%).

Client groups of interest

Three groups of clients have been identified as having complex care needs—clients with a current mental health issue, clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use, and clients with disability. Of the 1,215 ex-serving ADF SHS clients, just over 2 in 5 (43%, or 520 clients) had at least 1 complex care need, and 14% (167 clients) had 2 or more.

Although the 3 groups showed differences in service use and needs, these common patterns emerged:

- Higher service use—higher number of support days, more likely to use accommodation, and to stay for more nights, compared with clients who did not have complex care needs.
- Higher rates of homelessness at both the start and end of support, compared with clients who did not have complex care needs.
- Of the clients who listed their main reason for seeking assistance as a health reason, nearly all had at least 1 complex care need.
- Wide range of services used, and multiple complex care needs:

- Substantial level of overlap between the 3 client groups, particularly for clients with a current mental health issue and clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use.
- Higher proportion of these clients needing other specialist services.

The results for these 3 groups of clients are further examined in this section, although the small number of clients with disability among ex-serving ADF SHS clients does not allow for analysis of further breakdowns of results for this group.

Clients with a current mental health issue

During the reporting period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, 37% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients experienced a current mental health issue. The proportion reporting a current mental health issue increased from 21% in 2011–12 to 39% in 2016–17. Further information about how clients are classified as having a current mental health issue can be found in the Technical Notes.

Among the 451 ex-serving ADF SHS clients who experienced a current mental health issue, compared with the 764 clients who did not have a current mental health issue (Table 12):

- 49% were homeless at the start of support, compared with 44% of clients with no mental health issue.
- 43% were homeless at the end of support, compared with 39% of those with no mental health issue.
- 9% identified their main reason for seeking assistance at the start of support was related to a health reason, compared with 2% of those with no mental health issue.
- 33% had problematic drug and/or alcohol use, compared with 8% of those with no mental health issue.

Among ex-serving ADF SHS clients who experienced a current mental health issue, the proportion who needed a service was higher than clients with no mental health issue for nearly all types of services:

- 77% indicated a need for accommodation of any type, compared with 56% of clients with no mental health issue.
- 49% indicated a need for assistance to sustain housing tenure, compared with 31% of clients with no mental health issue.
- 15% indicated a need for drug and/or alcohol services, compared with 2% of clients with no mental health issue.
- 34% indicated a need for other specialist services, compared with 13% of clients with no mental health issue.

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients who experienced a current mental health issue during the reporting period used SHS more and for longer than clients with no mental health issue:

- 43% had 91 or more days of support, compared with 23% of clients with no mental health issue.
- 49% used accommodation services for at least 1 night, compared with 32% with no mental health issue.
- 40% had accommodation for 6 nights or more, compared with 22% with no mental health issue.

A higher proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients who had experienced a current mental health issue had a support period end because their needs were met, compared with clients with no mental health issue (71% and 57% respectively). One in 4 (26%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients who experienced a current mental health issue had a support period end because they were referred to another organisation, compared with 9% of clients with no mental health issue.

Table 12: Demographic and service profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by mental health status, 2011–12 to 2016–17

	Clients with a current mental health issue (%)	Clients with no current mental health issue (%)
Proportion of all ex-serving ADF SHS clients	37	63
Housing situation at the start of support		
Homeless	49	44

At risk of homelessness	51	56
Services which clients were assessed as needing		
Accommodation (any type)	77	56
Sustain housing tenure	49	31
Drug and/or alcohol services	15	2
Other specialist services	34	13
Reason support period ended		
Referred	26	9
Needs met/goals achieved	71	57
Max service period reached/service withdrawn	11	5
No longer requested assistance, did not turn up, lost contact	53	46
Institutionalised, incarcerated, deceased, other	13	8

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, the denominators used for calculating percentages in the table above are 451 for clients with a current mental health issue and 764 for clients with no mental health issue.
2. Clients with a current mental health issue includes all clients categorised as having a current mental health issue at any point from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2017.
3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Percentages have been calculated using the total clients as denominator excluding not stated (denominator of 420 for clients with a current mental health issue, 662 for clients with no mental health issue).
4. Other specialist services include: health/medical services, specialist counselling services, and other specialised services.
5. If a client has more than 1 support period, a reason is recorded for the end of each support period. The numerator for the percentages of reason support period ended counts reasons that all support periods have ended. The denominator is the total clients in the subgroup (with or without a current mental health issue) less the number of clients whose only reason or reasons for support periods ending is not stated. The denominator is 434 for ex-serving ADF SHS clients with a current mental health issue and 710 for ex-serving ADF SHS clients with no mental health issue.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use

During the 6-year reporting period, 18% of clients (214) were identified with problematic drug and/or alcohol use.

A higher proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use were homeless, compared with clients without this use (Table 13):

- 58% were homeless at the start of support, compared with 43% of clients without this use.
- 54% were homeless at the end of support, compared with 38% of clients without this use.

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use (214 clients) also had a different profile of needs compared with clients without this use (1001 clients) (Table 13):

- 14% indicated that their main reason for seeking assistance related to a health reason, compared with 2% of clients without this use.
- 86% needed any type of accommodation, compared with 59% of clients without this use.
- 75% needed short-term accommodation, compared with 41% of clients without this use.
- 35% needed mental health services, compared with 8% of clients without this use.
- 43% needed other specialist services, compared with 16% of clients without this use.

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use also used more support for longer than clients without problematic drug and/or alcohol use:

- 51% had 91 or more support days across the 6-year reporting period, compared with 26% of clients without this use.
- 68% had accommodation for at least 1 night, compared with 32% of clients without this use.
- The length of accommodation services was longer for clients with problematic drug/and or alcohol use—22% had 91 or more nights of accommodation, compared with 8% of clients without this use.
- 18% received more than $400 in financial assistance across the reporting period, compared with 13% of clients without this use.

A higher proportion of ex-serving ADF SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use (70%) had a support period end because their needs had been met or their goals were achieved, compared with clients without this use (60%).

Table 13: Demographic and service profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by problematic drug and/or alcohol use, 2011–12 to 2016–17

	Clients with problematic drug/alcohol use (%)	Clients without problematic drug/alcohol use (%)
Proportion of all ex-serving ADF SHS clients	18	82
Housing situation at the start of support		
Homeless	58	43
At risk of homelessness	42	57
Housing situation at the end of support		
Homeless	54	38
At risk of homelessness	46	62
Services which clients were assessed as needing		
Accommodation (any)	86	59
Short-term accommodation	75	41
Mental health services	35	8
Other specialist services	43	16
Support days provided (across the 6-year period)		
Up to 5 days	12	31
6 to 45 days	24	30
46 to 90 days	13	14
91 to 180 days	19	11
Over 180 days	32	14
Nights of accommodation provided (across the 6-year period)		
No accommodation	32	68
Up to 5 nights	10	9
6 to 45 nights	25	11
46 to 90 nights	10	3
91 to 180 nights	11	4
Over 180 nights	11	5

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, the denominators used for calculating percentages in the table above are 214 for ex-serving ADF SHS clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use and 1001 for ex-serving ADF SHS clients without problematic use.

2. Clients with problematic drug/alcohol use includes all clients categorised as having problematic drug/alcohol use at any point during the reporting period.

3. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Percentages have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator excluding not stated (denominator of 193 for clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use and 889 for clients without this use).

4. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Percentages have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator excluding not stated (denominator of 190 for clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use and 849 for clients without this use).

5. Other specialist services include: health/medical services, specialist counselling services, and other specialised services.

6. If the support period start or end dates are outside of the reporting period for a financial year, total days are calculated using a start date of 1 July and an end date of 30 June. Days of support in the table above are calculated by summing all support days received by the client between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017.

7. For ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the calculation of nights of accommodation includes all clients, regardless of whether all their support periods were closed. The length of accommodation for a client is calculated by adding each night of accommodation (short term/emergency, medium and long term accommodation) provided across all support periods between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017. The length of accommodation for a client only includes nights provided to the client, and does not include nights of accommodation in which the client was referred to another agency.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Young men with complex care needs

Over the 6-year reporting period, 13% of ex-serving ADF SHS clients (159) were men aged 17–34 who had complex care needs (identified as having 1 or both of a current mental health issue and problematic drug and/or alcohol use). Compared with all other ex-serving ADF SHS clients:

- a higher proportion of young men with complex care needs were homeless at the start of support—60% compared with 44% for all other clients
- young men with complex care needs had more support days—28% received over 180 days of support, compared with 16% for all other clients
- young men with complex care needs had a shorter length of ADF service—89% had served for less than 5 years, compared with 59% for all other clients. Of the 159 young men with complex care needs:
  - 46% served for less than 1 year
  - 18% served for between 1 and less than 2 years
  - 9% served for between 2 and less than 3 years
  - 8% served for between 3 and less than 4 years
  - 7% served for between 4 and less than 5 years
- young men with complex care needs were less likely to be a DVA client than all other clients—74% compared with 64% for all other clients
- a higher proportion of young men with complex care needs discharged involuntarily (for non-medical reasons)—55% compared with 33% for all other clients
- a higher proportion of young men with complex care needs were unemployed at the start of support—56% compared with 43% for all other clients.

Clients with disability

The measure of disability in the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) identifies those who always or sometimes need help or supervision with 1 or more core activities (self-care, mobility and communication) due to a long-term health condition or disability. The measure of disability was introduced to the SHSC in 2013–14, so data are only available for 4 of the 6 financial years of the reporting period.

In the current analysis, clients have been categorised as having disability if they were identified as having disability in any of the individual financial years of the 4-year reporting period. Across the 4-year period between 2013–14 and 2016–17, 4% (or 32 clients) of ex-serving ADF SHS clients were identified as having disability.

The small number of clients with disability among ex-serving ADF SHS clients does not allow for further analysis of this group.

Client groups of interest

Of the 1,215 ex-serving ADF SHS clients, 35% (or 425 clients) were DVA clients. Of the ex-serving non-SHS clients, 37% were DVA clients.

Among ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the demographic and service characteristics of DVA clients (compared with the 790 non-DVA clients who used SHS) were as follows (Table 14):

- The proportions of men and women were similar—78% were men and 22% were women (compared with 77% and 23% respectively among non-DVA clients).
- DVA clients were older as at the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017)—71% were aged 35 and over, compared with 47% of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients discharged from the ADF at an older age—29% were aged 35 or over at discharge, compared with 17% of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients had a similar service group profile to non-DVA clients—68% were Army members (compared with 72% of non-DVA clients), 22% were Navy members (compared with 20% of non-DVA clients) and 10% were Air Force members (compared with 8% of non-DVA clients).
- DVA clients had served for longer—34% served for 10 years or more, compared with 14% of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients were more likely to have operational experience—29% had operational experience, compared with 8% of non-DVA clients.
- At the start of support, DVA clients were less likely to be unemployed, but more likely to not be in the labour force, compared with non-DVA clients—31% were not in the labour force, compared with 23% of non-DVA clients. Almost half of non-DVA clients were unemployed (48%), compared with 39% of DVA clients.
- DVA clients were more likely to have been discharged for an involuntary medical reason—37% discharged for this reason, compared with 2% of non-DVA clients.

Table 14: Demographic and service profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by DVA client status, 2011–12 to 2016–17

	DVA client (%)	Non-DVA client (%)
Proportion of all ex-serving ADF SHS clients	35	65
Sex		
Men	78	77
Women	22	23
Age at end of reporting period		
17–24	3	6
25–34	26	47
35–44	37	31
45 and over	33	17
Age at discharge		
17–24	28	55
25–34	43	28
35–44	22	12
45 and over	7	5
Service		
Army	68	72
Navy	22	20
Air Force	10	8
Length of service (years)		
Less than 5	43	74

5-9	23	12
10-14	15	6
15-19	8	4
20 or more	11	4
Operational experience		
Any operational experience	29	8
No experience	71	92
Discharge reason		
Contractual/Admin change	7	3
Voluntary	30	55
Involuntary – other	26	41
Involuntary – medical	37	2

Notes

1. DVA clients were identified through linkage with the DVA client data base, see the Technical Notes for more information.
2. Unless otherwise stated, the denominators used for calculating percentages in the table above are 425 for DVA clients and 790 for non-DVA clients.
3. Service is recorded at discharge and is current as at 30 June 2017.
4. Operational experience is only counted for ex-serving ADF members hired on or after 1 January 1999, due to a change in the data collection approach on that date (denominator of 249 for DVA clients, 638 for non-DVA clients).

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016–17.

Among ex-serving ADF SHS clients, the profile of service use of DVA clients (compared with non-DVA clients) was as follows:

- The proportion of DVA clients homeless at the start and end of support was similar to the proportion of non-DVA clients—43% of DVA clients were homeless at the start and 40% at the end of support, compared with 47% and 41%, respectively of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients were more likely to seek assistance for financial reasons—28% listed their main reason for seeking assistance as financial reasons, compared with 22% of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients were less likely to use accommodation services than non-DVA clients—34% had at least 1 night of accommodation across the 6-year period, compared with 40% of non-DVA clients.
- DVA clients were very similar to non-DVA clients in the number of support days received—56% of both DVA clients and non-DVA clients had up to 45 support days across the reporting period.
- DVA clients received a similar amount of financial assistance to non-DVA clients—78% of DVA clients received between $0 and $200, similar to non-DVA clients (79%).

Client groups of interest

Compared with all ex-serving ADF members, ex-serving ADF SHS clients served for a shorter length of time in the ADF. Nearly 2 in 3 (63%) ex-serving ADF SHS clients served for less than 5 years, and half (49%) of all ex-serving ADF SHS clients served for 2 years or less.

Ex-serving ADF SHS clients who had served for less than 5 years were compared with other ex-serving ADF SHS clients (Table 15). Key findings include:

- Clients with less than 5 years of ADF service were younger as at the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017)—63% were aged 17-34 years, compared with 26% of clients with 5-9 years of ADF service and only 2% of clients with more than 10 years of ADF service.
- There was no difference across the groups with respect to the proportions of men and women.
- A higher proportion of clients with less than 5 years of service were homeless at the start of support—48% compared with 38% of clients with more than 10 years of ADF service.
- Clients with less than 5 years of service received a similar number of support days across the 6-year period to clients with longer lengths of ADF service.
- Clients with less than 5 years of service received similar amounts of financial assistance to clients with longer lengths of ADF service.
- A higher proportion of clients with less than 5 years of service were unemployed at the start of support—49% compared with 40% of clients with 5-9 years of ADF service and 36% of clients with more than 10 years of ADF service.

Table 15: Demographic and service profile of ex-serving ADF SHS clients, by length of ADF service, 2011-12 to 2016-17

	Less than 5 years (%)	5-9 years (%)	10 or more years (%)
Age at end of reporting period			
17-24	8	0	0
25-34	55	26	2
35-44	29	56	28
45 and over	8	18	70
Sex			
Women	22	27	21
Men	78	73	79
Housing situation at the start of support			
Homeless	48	47	38
At Risk	52	53	62
Housing situation at the end of support			
Homeless	42	43	34
At Risk	58	57	66
Number of support days during reporting period			
Up to 5 days	28	27	26
6 to 45 days	30	28	24
46 to 90 days	14	11	14
91 to 180 days	10	17	17
Over 180 days	17	18	18
Amount of financial assistance provided during reporting period			
$0 to $200	78	74	85
$201 to $400	8	7	5

$401 to $800	8	7	6
Over $800	5	12	5
Labour force status at start of support			
Employed (full time, part time or not stated)	15	14	15
Unemployed	49	40	36
Not in the labour force	23	28	33
Don't know	13	17	15

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, the denominators used for calculating percentages in the table above are 766 for clients with less than 5 years of ADF service, 193 for clients with 5-9 years of ADF service and 256 for clients with 10 or more years of ADF service.
2. Housing situation at the start of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support. Clients at the start of support are categorised as either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Percentages have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator excluding clients whose status was not stated (denominator of 690 for less than 5 years, 167 for 5-9 years, 225 for 10 years or more).
3. Housing situation at the end of support is the housing situation of a client during the financial year in which the client last received SHS support. Clients at the end of support are categorised as either homeless or in stable housing. Percentages have been calculated using the total number of clients as denominator excluding clients whose status was not stated (denominator of 658 for less than 5 years, 166 for 5-9 years, 215 for 10 years or more).
4. If the support period start or end dates are outside of the reporting period for a financial year, total days are calculated using a start date of 1 July and an end date of 30 June. Days of support in the table above are calculated by summing all support days received by the client between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017.
5. The amount of financial assistance for a client is calculated by adding the amount of financial assistance provided across all support periods from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2017. This includes financial assistance, material aid, brokerage and vouchers provided to, or on behalf, of the client during the reporting period.
6. Labour force status at the start of support is the status of a client during the financial year in which the client first received SHS support.

Source: AIHW analysis of linked PMKeyS–SHSC data 2011–12 to 2016-17.

Technical notes

at risk of homelessness: For the purpose of the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection a person is described as at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation or are experiencing 1 or more factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness. A full list of potential risk factors for homelessness can be found in the glossary of the *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017–18*.

clients with complex care needs: Clients are identified as having a complex care need if they have at least 1 of the following: a current mental health issue, problematic drug and/or alcohol use, and disability.

clients with a current mental health issue: Specialist homelessness services (SHS) clients with a current mental health issue are identified as such if they are aged 10 or older and have provided any of the following information:

- they indicated that at the beginning of a support period they were receiving services or assistance for their mental health issues or had in the last 12 months
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a mental health service
- they reported 'mental health issues' as a reason for seeking assistance
- their dwelling type either a week before presenting to an agency, or when presenting to an agency, was as a psychiatric hospital or unit
- they had been in a psychiatric hospital or unit in the last 12 months
- at some stage during their support period, a need was identified for psychological services, psychiatric services or mental health services.

clients with disability: SHS clients with severe or profound disability are identified as such if at any time they have provided the following information: they 'always/sometimes need help or supervision' with self-care, mobility or communication for any support period during the reporting period.

clients with problematic drug and/or alcohol use: SHS clients with a current problematic drug and/or alcohol use are identified as such if they are aged 10 or older and have provided any of the following information:

- their dwelling type was recorded as rehabilitation.
- their formal referral source to the specialist homelessness agency was a drug and alcohol service.
- during their support they required drug/alcohol counselling.
- they have been in a rehabilitation facility/institution in the last 12 months.
- they have reported 'problematic drug or substance abuse' or 'problematic alcohol use' as a reason for seeking assistance or main reason for seeking assistance.

contemporary ex-serving ADF population: The contemporary ex-serving ADF population is defined as all ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members who have had at least 1 day of full-time or reserve service on or after 1 January 2001 and discharged after this time.

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) clients: DVA clients were identified through the linkage between the DVA client database and the Department of Defence administrative database (PMKeyS). All DVA clients in the data provided to AIHW were alive as at 1 January 2001. Identification of DVA client status through this linkage was conducted separately from the main source of income variable in the SHSC, which includes data about DVA payments received by clients of SHS agencies.

General services: General services include:

- family/relationship assistance
- assistance for incest/sexual assault
- legal information
- material aid/brokerage
- financial information
- educational assistance
- training assistance
- employment assistance
- assistance to obtain/maintain government allowances
- assertive outreach for rough sleepers
- child care
- assistance for trauma
- assistance for challenging social/behavioural problems
- living skills/personal development
- court support
- advice/information
- retrieval/storage/removal of personal belongings
- advocacy/liaison on behalf of client

- school liaison
- structured play/skills development
- child contact and residence arrangements
- meals
- laundry/shower facilities
- recreation
- transport and
- other basic assistance.

homeless: For the purpose of the SHSC a person is defined as homeless if they are living in:

- non-conventional accommodation or 'sleeping rough'
- short-term or emergency accommodation (including couch surfing) due to a lack of other options.

institutional settings: Institutional settings include a hospital, psychiatric hospital/unit, disability support unit, rehabilitation facility, adult correctional facility, youth/juvenile justice detention centre, boarding school/residential college, aged care facility, or immigration detention centre.

reporting period: The reporting period for this report is the 6 financial years between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017 (2011–12 to 2016–17).

specialist homelessness agency: An organisation which receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services to a client.

start and end of support: SHS clients may have more than 1 support period during a reporting year, and may present with different characteristics in these different supporting periods. When data are reported as at the start of support across a year, the data are taken from the earliest support period in that financial year. When data are reported as at the end of support across a year, the data are taken from the last support period in that financial year. This includes data from the last closed support period, or, if the last support period is not closed, data from the end of the reporting period (30 June 2017). Inclusion of data from open support periods in reporting outcomes at the end of support differs from national SHSC reporting where only closed periods are counted.

SHS clients may also use SHS across multiple financial years. If data are reported as at the start of support across the entire reporting period of 6 years (2011–12 to 2016–17), then the data are taken from the earliest support period within the first year in which the client received support. If data are reported as at the end of support across the reporting period, then the data are taken from the last support period within the last year in which the client received support.

The scope of the data used in this report is SHS use which occurred between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017, that was accessed by an ADF member after their discharge. Therefore, if an ADF member used SHS before their discharge date or after their discharge date but before 1 July 2011, this service use will not be captured in the data.

support period: The period of time in which a client receives services from a specialist homelessness agency is referred to as a support period. A support period starts on the day the client first receives a service and ends when:

- the relationship between the client and the agency ends
- the client has reached their maximum amount of support the agency can offer
- a client has not received any services from the agency for a whole calendar month and there is no ongoing relationship.

The end of the support period is the day the client last received services from the agency.

Technical notes

PMKeyS data

The Personnel Management Key Solution (PMKeyS) is a Department of Defence administrative database that contains demographic and service information on all people with Australian Defence Force (ADF) service on or after 1 January 2001 (when the system was introduced). The Department of Defence provided the AIHW with an extract (as at 11 August 2018) from the PMKeyS containing 115,551 records of all ADF members who have had at least 1 day of service on or after 1 January 2001 and who discharged after 1 January 2001.

Specialist Homelessness Services Collection data

The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) collects information about people who are referred to, or seek assistance from, specialist homelessness services (SHS) agencies. A **specialist homelessness agency** is an organisation which receives government funding to deliver specialist homelessness services to a client. These agencies collect data on an ongoing basis and are responsible for submitting these data to the AIHW on a monthly basis.

The SHSC has 2 parts—a Client collection and an Unassisted Persons collection. All data provided for this linkage project were from the Client collection. For this collection, the base unit is a person who presents to a SHS agency requesting services. A person becomes a 'client' once they receive a service(s). A 'support period' is the period of time a client receives assistance from a SHS agency. It relates to the provision of a service and/or supported accommodation. During a support period, a range of services additional to supported accommodation can be provided. Further detail on the types of services is available on AIHW's website page about the SHSC.

On 1 July 2011, the SHSC replaced the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program National Data Collection (SAAP NDC), which began in 1996. As a result of this change, the scope of the data provided from the SHSC was homelessness service use from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2017, which was the latest data available for inclusion in this study.

Homelessness services not provided by SHS agencies are outside the scope of the SHSC and therefore this service use is not captured in this report.

It is possible for SHS agencies to retrospectively add support periods in a particular financial year (for example 2013–14) which started in a previous financial year (such as 2011–12). If analysis of the national SHSC data in the future is conducted for the entire reporting period (2011–12 to 2016–17), it will include these updated support periods. However, in this report, data for individual financial years have not been updated in this way, and are current as at the end of each financial year. This difference only occurs for a very small number of records.

SHSC data used to calculate level of use

The data provided to calculate the level of use among Australian SHS clients was provided as part of an internal data request within the AIHW. Not all in-scope agencies submit data each year, and not all information sought from SHS clients is answered. This means data may not be completely representative of people receiving specialist homelessness services. How much this affects the representativeness of the data depends on how much information is missing, and how those people whose information was not collected are distributed among the study group. An imputation strategy has not been applied to correct for missing or incomplete data, therefore all SHSC data used for this analysis are unweighted.

Data quality issue with 2011-12 data

The clients in this study first appeared in the SHSC between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012. Previous analysis of the 2011-12 SHSC data identified some data quality issues. In particular, 90% of SHS agencies returned support period data in 2011–12, although many did not return data for all 12 months. This response rate has increased over time in 2014-15, 96% of agencies returned data for each month where they were expected to participate.

In 2011–12, the rate of invalid/'don't know'/missing responses was high for a number of data items. Data completeness has improved each year and this is important to consider when making comparisons between the cohorts within the study group as they differ based on the number of years for which specialist homelessness services were accessed.

The data quality statement for the 2016–17 SHSC is available on the AIHW website here. Data quality statements for previous years are also available at the AIHW Metadata Online Registry (METeOR).

Further information about the SHSC is in:

Specialist homelessness services annual report 2016-17

Specialist homelessness services Collection Manual

Department of Veterans' Affairs client data

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) client database is an administrative database that contains demographic and service information on DVA clients. The extract received by the AIHW Data Linkage Unit contained 226,684 records of DVA clients who were alive as at 1 January 2001. Only those who also had a record in the PMKeyS were included in the contemporary ADF population (those who had at least 1 day of service on or after January 2001 who discharged after that date).

Data linkage methodology and outcome

Data linkage is a process that identifies an individual from more than 1 source and merges that information for analysis. Identifying that an individual is the same person in different data sets can be done by matching identifying information about the individual (such as name and address) or a using a person identifier (such as a client or patient number). In some cases where directly identifying information is not available from data sets, AIHW uses a statistical linkage key (SLK). This is created at the point of data collection and is drawn from the person's name, sex and date of birth (see the statistical linkage key 581 data element cluster for more information). The SHSC uses this approach.

For the PMKeyS, names and addresses were matched to data from the DVA client database. The PMKeyS and DVA client data sets were matched probabilistically, that is, where close matches are likely to be the same person (see Methods section below). Information from the DVA client database was used to update name and address information from the PMKeyS, where available.

Following this, an SLK was generated for each individual in the PMKeyS data, which was then directly matched to the SHSC SLK. This yielded 1,427 distinct matches with the SHSC.

All data linkage was carried out by the Data Linkage Unit at the AIHW, an accredited Commonwealth Integrating Authority. This accreditation requires the AIHW to adhere to stringent criteria and abide by the National Statistical Service *High level principles for data integration involving Commonwealth data for statistical and research purposes* and *Best practice guidelines*. As well as these guidelines, data linkage at the AIHW is carried out under the protections of the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* (which carries additional privacy protections for companies and deceased people).

Strict separation of identifiable information and content data is maintained within the Data Linkage Unit in accordance with the AIHW linkage protocols, so that no 1 person has access to both types of data. Individually identifiable information is not released, and no individual can be identified in any reporting. The AIHW also does not release SLKs. The linked data set created for this study will be stored securely on site at the AIHW for 10 years.

Scope of analysis data set

The scope of the analysis data set is homelessness support received between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017, which was accessed, after discharge, by ex-serving ADF members with at least 1 day of service on or after 1 January 2001.

Scoping of contemporary ex-serving population in the PMKeyS

The PMKeyS extract provided by the Department of Defence contained 115,551 records for ex-serving ADF members, which was thereafter scoped using the process outlined here.

To be included in the final PMKeyS data set, a record must have a termination date (date of discharge) after 1 January 2001 and before 1 July 2017, and at least 1 day of service between the hire date and the termination date. In the PMKeyS data set, 6,726 records were excluded from analysis because they had:

- a termination date after 30 June 2017

or

- a termination date on or before 1 January 2001

or

- a reason for discharge of 'Military—Irregular enlistment' or 'Military—Failed to enlist' and less than 1 year of service. Individuals discharged for these reasons were considered out of scope as they do not meet the criteria of having served at least 1 day in the ADF. Individuals within this group complete the enlistment process and do not attend the first day of service; therefore, they never complete 1 day in service

or

- an exact duplicate record of another record

or

- a missing age

or

- less than 1 day of service.

Unique individuals with multiple records in the PMKeyS data were processed by combining key information from both records where appropriate to create a unique record for analysis.

From the original 115,551 records provided in the PMKeyS extract, the scoping processes resulted in 108,825 unique in-scope records for ex-serving ADF members in the PMKeyS data set.

Scoping of analysis population in the SHSC

SHS use was in-scope if the services were accessed between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2017 by an ex-serving ADF member. As such, the termination dates of clients were compared with the financial years of SHS use to determine if any records were out of scope. A record of SHS service use was considered in-scope if it occurred in the same financial year as the client's termination date, or occurred in a later financial year.

Before scoping, there were 1,425 distinct matches between the PMKeyS and the SHSC, which corresponded to 3,462 records (there are multiple records per client in the SHSC data set). After SHSC records were compared against a client's termination date to determine whether they were in-scope for analysis, 3082 records remained, which represented 1,215 individual clients who linked between the PMKeyS and SHSC.

Technical notes

Sensitivity analysis of marginal links

Of the 1,215 individual clients who linked between the PMKeyS and SHSC data sets, 190 were identified by the AIHW as having a marginal link between the 2 data sets (a low linkage weight). The low linkage weight was primarily due to inconsistent geographical information between the 2 data sets (despite a match on the SLK), and in a few cases, slight differences in the SLK despite consistent geographical information. Sensitivity analysis was conducted to determine if marginal links should be included in the final analysis data set. Analysis revealed there were no substantial differences between the results if individuals who were marginally linked were included.

The demographic profile of ex-serving individuals who were marginally linked was also compared with the remainder of the analysis data set. The only difference observed was in relation to rank—there was a somewhat higher proportion of officers among ex-serving individuals who were marginally linked, compared with those not considered marginal links. This difference had no substantial impact on the results, so the individuals who were marginally linked were included in the final analysis data set.

Combining data across support periods within a financial year

Clients with more than 1 support period during a financial year may present with different characteristics in these different support periods. For example, their main reason for seeking assistance may be related to accommodation reasons in their first support period, and related to financial reasons in their second. Where there are multiple responses to a question, some information presented is based on the client's response to the question when they first became a client of an agency in that financial year. Other information is based on a counting methodology that analyses the client's responses and, if responses differ across support periods, determines the response provided most often, and the client's longest support period for each month in the financial year. The methodology is conceptually based on the client's journey during the course of the financial year, regardless of their movement between jurisdictions.

Combining data across financial years

For many analysis variables, data are reported for single financial years, and for the combination of financial years (usually 2011–12 to 2016–17). The rules for combining data across multiple financial years in this analysis are consistent, where possible, with other published data for the SHSC.

Age

In this report, when comparing the age of ex-serving ADF SHS clients with ex-serving ADF members who were not SHS clients, age is calculated either as at 30 June 2017 (end of the reporting period) or as at the date of discharge.

When age is reported as at the start of support, age is as at 31 December of the financial year in which a client first received SHS support. Please note this differs to the calculation of age in National SHS reporting where the age of the client is defined as the client's age on the start date of their first support period in the reporting period. In National SHS reporting, those who were ongoing clients at the beginning of the reporting period, the client's age on the first day of the reporting period is used.

Using age from PMKeyS

Both the SHS and PMKeyS data sets contain information on client age. There is strong evidence of the use of default birthdates of 01/01/YYYY in the SHSC data used in the linkage for this study, as the frequency of this combination of day and month was close to 10 times the expected frequency.

Sensitivity analysis was conducted to compare the age calculated using the PMKeyS data set to age calculated using the SHSC data set. The analysis found that, while there were differences in the results produced using the 2 age measures, the differences were not substantial. As such, client age was calculated from the PMKeyS data as it was considered to be the most accurate source for the demographic information about ex-serving ADF SHS clients.

Age groupings

This report presents age using the following age groups: 17–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45 and over. The age groupings used in this report aim to provide consistency with *Specialist homelessness services 2016–17*, while ensuring the confidentiality of individuals in the data. Due to the limited number of ex-serving ADF members accessing SHS in the younger and older age groups, the groupings used in this report are broader than those used in *Specialist homelessness services 2016–17*. The lower bound of 17 years was chosen as the youngest individual in the linked PMKeyS–SHSC data set was aged 17 at 31 December in the financial year in which they first received SHS support. It is important to note that while the age groupings have been made as consistent as possible with those used in other published SHSC reporting, age in this report is based on information from the PMKeyS data.

Housing situation

When reporting across the 6-year period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, a client's housing situation is determined as their housing situation in the first support period in the first financial year in which they received SHS support. When percentages of housing situation are presented, the denominator for the percentages is the total number of clients for whom their housing situation was known (excluding not

stated).

Main reason for seeking assistance

When a client attends a SHS agency, they are asked to identify all of the reasons why they were seeking assistance. If a client identifies more than 1 reason, they are asked to choose their main reason for seeking assistance. When reporting across the 6-year period, the main reason used for reporting is the same as the main reason recorded for a client in their first financial year of receiving support (which may be their only year of receiving support).

Reason support period ended

When reporting across the 6-year period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, the total number of clients reported against each reason is the number of clients who have ever ended a support period for that reason, between 2011–12 and 2016–17. A client may have recorded the same reason for multiple support periods in a single financial year, or in different support periods over multiple financial years, however each client will only be counted once for each reason. Percentages for this variable are calculated using a denominator of all clients, excluding those whose only reason for all of their support periods ending is not stated.

Education enrolment status, labour force status and main source of income

For these variables, a client's status is reported at both first and last presentation. When reporting across the 6-year period between 2011–12 and 2016–17, a client's status at first presentation will be the same as their status in the first financial year for which the client received SHS support, and their status at last presentation will be the same as their status in the last financial year for which the client received SHS support.

Mental health status

Any client who was identified as having a current mental health issue, during any support period between 1 July 2011 and 31 June 2017, is reported as having a current mental health issue during the reporting period of 2011–12 to 2016–17. Clients who were identified as having a current mental health issue during multiple financial years are only counted once in the 2011–12 to 2016–17 reporting period.

Disability status

This question was introduced to the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection in the 2013–14 reporting year. Clients who only received SHS support before 1 July 2013 are not included in the analysis of disability status.

The approach for assigning disability status across the 4 year period from 2013–14 to 2016–17 is as follows:

- Any client who identified as having a disability between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2017 is assigned to Yes (having a disability).
- If a client's disability status was Not stated for every year for which they received SHS support between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2017, they are assigned to Not stated.
- If a client reported a combination of No disability and Not stated between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2017, they are assigned to No (No disability).

Services needed, provided and referred

When clients present to a SHS agency, an agency worker identifies their needs. Information about a client's needs is also updated each month while a client is still in contact with the agency. The SHSC also collects information about which services the SHS agency provided to the client. If the agency is unable to provide the needed services directly (or cannot fully meet the client's needs) they can refer the client to other SHS agencies or other organisations that can provide those services. It is important to note that although information about clients referred for other services is collected in the SHSC, it is not possible to know if these referrals resulted in those specific services being provided to the client.

In this report, a client is recorded as needing a service if they are recorded as needing that service in any collection month or year, regardless of the number of months or years over which this need was recorded, or the number of times they presented with this need during the 2011–12 to 2016–17 reporting period. If a client is recorded as needing a service more than once during the reporting period, they are only counted once for each service. This approach is the same for services provided or referred.

Clients are recorded as having a service provided to them if they were provided with this service on at least 1 occasion during support, regardless of whether they were referred to another organisation for this service at any point during support. However, a client is only recorded as having been referred for a particular service in this report if they did not also have this service provided to them on any occasion during the support.

Clients are included in the category of Neither if the service was needed by the client and the client was neither provided with the service nor referred to another organisation for that service.

The denominator used for calculating percentages of clients who needed a service is a unique count of all clients. The calculation of percentages for a service provided uses the denominator of all clients recorded as needing that service across the 6-year reporting period. The approach is the same for calculating percentages for services referred and the category of neither referred nor reported (Neither).

Operational experience

Operational experience refers to 4 broad categories of deployment or operations: warlike operational experience relates to warlike/active service deployments, non-warlike operational experience relates to non-warlike deployments (for example, peace keeping, peace monitoring, United Nations assistance missions), overseas operational experience relates to humanitarian/disaster relief (International) or border protection deployments, and domestic operational experience relates to deployment of Defence aid to the civilian community. Individuals with at least 1 type of operational experience are counted as having 'any operational experience', and those with no operational experience are counted in the category 'no operational experience'. Only operational experience since 1 January 1999 has been consistently identified across the 4 operational experience categories. To ensure comparability, analysis of operational experience includes only personnel hired on or after 1 January 1999. Analysis by operational experience may indicate both protective factors (such as increased training, experience and resilience) and risk factors (such as physical injury, exposure to high stress and traumatic environments and events). Clients are considered to have any operational experience across the reporting period if they are recorded as having operational experience in any of the individual financial years across the reporting period.

Days of support

Days of support is calculated by adding the total SHS support days a client received during the 2011–12 to 2016–17 reporting period, in any State or Territory in Australia. This includes both accommodation and other types of support. The total number of days of support does not necessarily represent a consecutive number of days the client received support. For example, a client who received support for 7 days may have had 2 separate periods of support: 1 for 5 days and another for 2 days.

Nights of accommodation

The length of accommodation for a client is calculated by adding each night of accommodation (short-term/emergency, medium and long-term accommodation) provided across all support periods during the 2011–12 to 2016–17 reporting period, in any state and territory in Australia. This means the total nights of accommodation does not necessarily represent a consecutive number of days the client received accommodation. For example, a client who received accommodation for 7 days may have had 2 separate periods of accommodation—1 for 5 nights and another for 2 nights.

Financial assistance

The amount of financial assistance provided to a client is calculated by adding all financial assistance received by the client during the 2011–12 to 2016–17 reporting period. This financial assistance includes financial assistance, material aid, brokerage and vouchers provided to, or on behalf, of the client during the reporting period.

Technical notes

Data provided and created for this study are stored in accordance with AIHW information security protocols. No third parties, including the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), have access to any identified linked data. Any data provided to DVA by the AIHW are in aggregated and de-identified form and stored in accordance with DVA's security processes and procedures.

Data stored and analysed at the AIHW are protected under the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*. The AIHW is subject to the *Public Service Act 1999* and the APS Code of Conduct. As well, it has issued formal Guidelines for the Custody of Institute Data as a further measure to ensure data protection.

The AIHW performs data linkage projects on a separate secure private network to which only Data Integration Services Centre (DISC) staff and the Systems Manager have access. Dedicated DISC infrastructure capabilities replicate the hardware already used with success on other large data integration projects across the AIHW. This environment is separate from any other AIHW systems. The AIHW connects, through the Intra Government Communications Network, to an Internet gateway provider accredited by the Australian Signals Directorate. The AIHW's Internet gateway is certified to the PROTECTED level. DISC projects are undertaken on a separate secure network not connected to the Internet.

The AIHW uses best practice technology, procedures and policies to protect its information and communication technology assets. A layered system of security is in place, with different technologies and techniques used at different levels. In line with the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework:

- passwords are changed regularly
- accounts are locked out after 3 failed attempts
- Operating System patching of desktops, networking equipment and servers is done in line with Australian Signals Directorate guidelines
- application software updates are tested and applied as soon as practical after release
- access to the data centre is controlled by swipe card
- the network has a state-of-the art firewall to protect against external intrusion, beyond which the accredited gateway has its firewalls
- anti-virus software is constantly updated
- regular backups are taken, including rotation to a secure off-site storage facility
- desktops have been hardened to prevent users from installing software or tampering with the system.

These security measures are backed up by an auditing regime, based around tightly controlled separate information domains (staging, linking, and consolidation domains) that exist for each stage of creating the project data. Each project in each information domain is in a separate storage location, with access limited by user (different users in different information domains for separation requirements).

This architecture determines who can access what data at any time, and access is therefore predetermined and logged. Work logs of basic user and time/date information are generated when code is run against these data and are stored as part of the audit trail.

In summary, access is provided to individuals for each stage of a project. This allows the AIHW to determine and log all access rights to the data throughout the process. At the completion of the project, and in line with the data retention date, the AIHW uses sDelete (Microsoft) to remove all files relating to a project from the hard disk. In line with DISC data retention/backup cycle procedures, data are overwritten on a 4-weekly cycle. Data are encrypted as part of the archival process using Commvault.

Privacy principles and ethics approval

This study is conducted under strict privacy guidelines and the oversight of organisational ethics committees.

Privacy principles

The *Privacy Act 1988* sets out 13 Australian Privacy Principles that govern agencies of the Australian Government in their collection, storage, use, disclosure and management of data containing personal information. The Privacy Act permits the handling of health information for health and medical research purposes in certain circumstances, where researchers are unable to seek individuals' consent. This recognises the need to protect health information from unexpected uses beyond individual health care as well as the important role of health and medical research in advancing public health.

The Privacy Commissioner has approved 2 sets of legally binding guidelines, issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Researchers must follow these guidelines when handling health information for research purposes without individuals' consent. The guidelines also assist Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) in deciding whether to approve research applications. The guidelines are produced under sections 95 and 95A of the Privacy Act, detailing procedures that HRECs and researchers must follow when personal information is disclosed from an Australian Government agency for medical research purposes, and providing a framework for HRECs to assess proposals to handle health information for health and medical research (without individuals' consent). They ensure that the public interest in the research activities substantially outweighs the public interest in the protection of privacy.

Ethics approval

This study is conducted under strict privacy guidelines and the oversight of organisational ethics committees. This study was approved by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) on 20 April 2018 (047–18). It was approved by the AIHW Ethics Committee on 8 May 2018 (EO2017/5/411).

Data

Related material

Related topics

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