

9 Mental health-related Supported Accommodation Assistance Program services

9.1 Introduction

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection (NDC) includes data that provide information about the use of SAAP services by clients with psychiatric or other mental health problems, defined by their having mental health-related closed support periods (see Key concepts box below). This chapter presents information on these mental health-related closed support periods, provided by SAAP agencies in 2005–06.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

The primary aim of SAAP is to provide people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless with transitional supported accommodation and related support services to help them achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Agencies funded through SAAP provide a range of accommodation and non-accommodation support services. As well as being homeless or at risk of being homeless, many SAAP clients have complex needs involving mental health and/or alcohol and other drug issues (Cameron & Payton 2004).

Data presented in this chapter have been extracted from the Client Collection component of the SAAP NDC held by the AIHW. This collection contains information on clients receiving SAAP support lasting for at least 1 hour. However, while participation and consent rates are high, not all SAAP agencies participate in the SAAP NDC and, not all clients of participating agencies give consent to provide their details to the NDC. For further details about the scope and coverage of the SAAP Client Collection, see Appendix 1.

Key concepts

A **SAAP client** is a person aged 18 years or older or an unaccompanied child (aged under 18 years) who:

- receives support or assistance from a SAAP agency which entails generally 1 hour or more of a worker's time on a given day; or
- is accommodated by a SAAP agency; or
- enters into an ongoing support relationship with a SAAP agency.

Supported accommodation is accommodation paid for, or provided directly by, a SAAP agency. This includes crisis or short-term accommodation, medium to long-term accommodation or other SAAP-funded arrangements, such as accommodation in hostels, motels, hotels and caravans, or community placements. This category also includes other types of support, such as meals and/or showers, in addition to accommodation.

Other support services refers to the assistance, other than supported accommodation, provided as part of an ongoing support relationship between a SAAP agency and the client.

(continued)

An **accommodation period** is the period in which the client was in SAAP supported accommodation. A client may have no accommodation periods or one or more accommodation periods within a support period.

A **closed support period** is a support period that had finished on or before 30 June of the reporting year.

Mental health-related closed support periods are closed support periods for which at least one of the following were reported (*italics* indicates an expansion of the definition from previous editions of this publication):

- the source of referral to the SAAP agency was a dedicated psychiatric unit;
- the main, or other, presenting reason for seeking assistance was the client's psychiatric illness or *mental health issue*;
- *the client reported an accommodation type of psychiatric institution either before or after SAAP support*; or
- the type of support needed, provided, or referred was psychological services or psychiatric services.

An **accompanying child** is less than 18 years of age and has a parent or guardian who is a SAAP client. This means that the child accompanies a parent or guardian at any time during the parent or guardian's support period, and/or receives SAAP assistance directly as a consequence of a parent or guardian's support period.

Mental health-related SAAP services

The SAAP Client Collection includes information on source of referral, presenting reasons and type of assistance. Information from each of these data elements have been used to indicate whether a SAAP support period was mental health-related and, in turn, how many clients received mental health-related closed support periods.

Due to definitional changes, the information in this publication relating to the number of mental health-related closed support periods cannot be compared with previous publications in this series. The expanded definition of what constitutes a mental health-related closed support period is in *italics* print, in the key concepts box above.

The number of mental health-related closed support periods reported in this chapter is an underestimate of the actual number of such support periods for the following reasons:

- Data presented in this chapter are unweighted, meaning no adjustment for undercounting of support periods due to the non-participation of some agencies and the non-consent of some SAAP clients to the provision of their data has been made. The data, therefore, are not comparable with other data published from the SAAP Client Collection.
- Information on presenting reasons for seeking assistance is only collected from clients that give consent. In addition, consenting clients with mental disorders may not report psychiatric illness as a presenting reason.
- Information is collected by workers in SAAP agencies, and these workers may not be trained to assess a client's need for psychiatric or psychological services.

It is important to note that some clients that were identified as having had mental health-related closed support periods may have had other closed support periods for which no mental health-related information was reported. These latter support periods are not included in the data presented in this chapter.

Further information on the SAAP collection, including coverage, data quality and the use of unweighted data in this chapter, is presented in Appendix 1.

Table 9.1: SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods: demographic characteristics and number of support periods, 2005–06

Client demographics	Clients			Closed support periods		
	Number	Per cent of clients ^(b)	Rate ^(a) (per 100,000 population)	Number ^(c)	Per cent of support periods ^(b)	Rate ^(a) (per 100,000 population)
Age (years)						
Less than 15	275	2.0	6.8	337	1.7	8.3
15–17	1,107	8.0	131.4	1,393	6.8	165.3
18–19	774	5.6	138.5	1,003	4.9	179.5
20–24	1,783	12.9	123.2	2,345	11.5	162.0
25–44	7,230	52.4	121.4	9,923	48.7	166.7
45–64	2,086	15.1	41.2	2,985	14.6	59.0
65+	155	1.1	5.8	233	1.1	8.8
Sex						
Female	7,277	52.8	69.8	10,243	50.2	91.0
Male	6,490	47.1	62.4	10,067	49.4	88.1
Indigenous status						
Indigenous Australians	1,626	11.8	324.1	2,114	10.4	419.6
Other Australians	11,552	83.8	56.9	15,738	77.2	77.4
Country of birth						
Australia	11,721	85.0	74.8	15,997	78.4	102.3
Overseas	1,796	13.0	35.0	2,355	11.5	45.1
Overseas-born^(d)						
EP country group 1	554	31.5	32.0	742	32.2	42.0
EP country group 2	399	22.7	32.7	535	23.3	34.3
EP country group 3	651	37.0	45.8	821	35.7	56.6
EP country group 4	155	8.8	59.6	203	8.8	71.7
Total number	13,791	20,392

(a) Rates were directly age-standardised, with the exception of age which is a crude rate, as detailed in Appendix 2.

(b) The percentages shown do not include clients or closed support periods for which the demographic information was missing and/or not reported.

(c) For age, Indigenous status, country of birth and client group, information was missing or not reported for more than 5% of the closed support periods. Because of the large number of missing values for support periods for both Indigenous status and country of birth, the missing values for these data elements have been redistributed across the age groups to calculate the age-standardised rate.

(d) For definition of the English Proficiency (EP) country groups see Appendix 3. The four groups sum to slightly less than the total number of overseas-born because a small number of overseas-born clients could not be allocated to an EP country group.

.. Not applicable

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

9.2 SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods

In 2005–06, there were 13,791 SAAP clients with at least one mental health-related closed support period (Table 9.1). The average number of mental health-related closed support periods per client for those with mental health-related closed support periods was 1.5.

There were more female than male clients with mental health-related support periods in 2005–06 (52.8% compared with 47.1%). The rate of access to mental health-related support, as measured by the age-standardised rate, was also higher for female clients than for males (69.8 and 62.4 per 100,000 population, respectively).

Clients aged 25–44 years represented over half of the total number for 2005–06 (52.4 %), but the number per 100,000 population was highest for clients aged 18–19 years and lowest for those aged over 65 years (138.5 and 5.8 per 100,000 population, respectively) (Table 9.1).

In 2005–06, 11.8% of clients with mental health-related closed support periods reported being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This proportion is considerably higher than the estimated Indigenous population proportion as at 30 June 2005 (2.4% of the total Australian population, ABS 2006). The age-standardised rate for Indigenous Australians was 419.6 per 100,000 population for closed support periods, which was over 5 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (77.4).

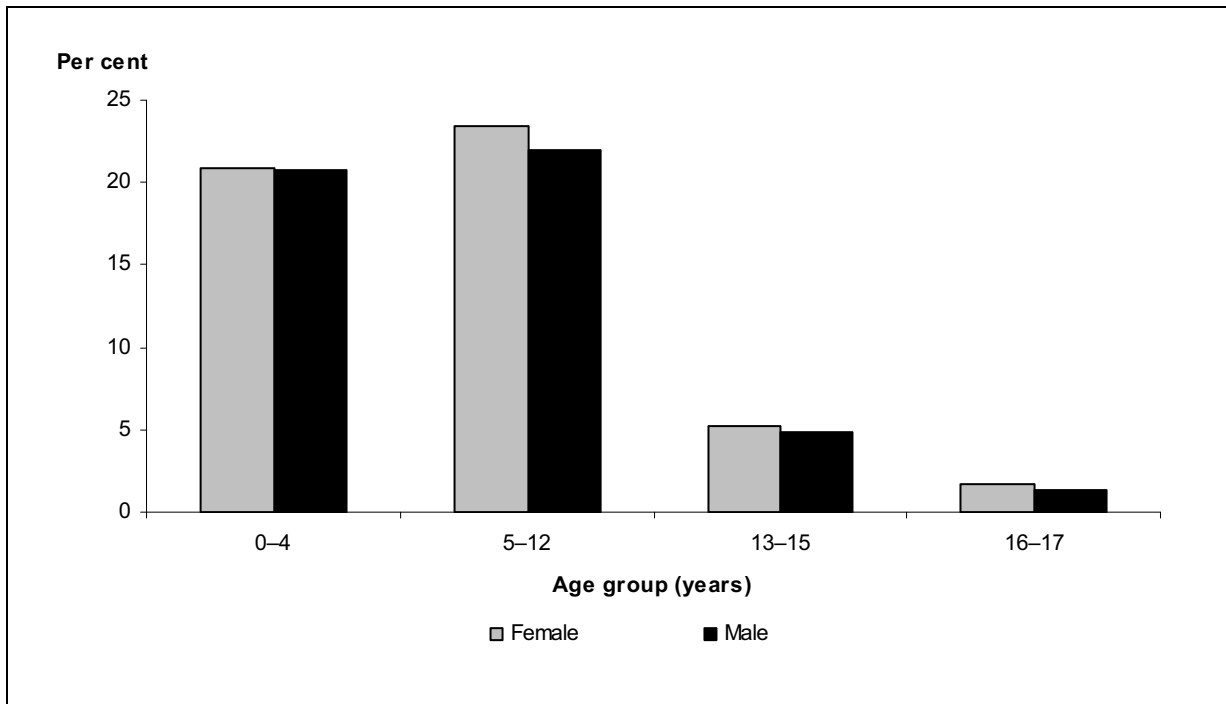
Most clients were born in Australia (85%), and the age-standardised rate for Australian-born people who had a SAAP mental health-related closed support period in 2005–06 was over twice that of those born overseas (102.3 and 45.1 per 100,000 population, respectively).

The 13.0% of clients who were born overseas in 2005–06 can be classified into English proficiency (EP) country groups (see Appendix 3 for details). There was considerable variation in rates of access between the EP country groups. For clients who were born in EP group 4 countries, the rate was almost twice that of those born in EP group 1 countries (59.6 and 32.0 per 100,000 population, respectively).

Children accompanying clients

Information is collected on children who accompany their parent(s) or guardian(s) to SAAP agencies or who require assistance from a SAAP agency as a result of their parent or guardian being a client of the same agency. The number of accompanying children is additional to the number of clients (that is, adults and unaccompanied children) described above.

In 2005–06, 4,563 children (unweighted data) accompanied clients who had mental health-related closed support periods (Figure 9.1). The majority of these children were aged 0–12 years (86.9%). Slightly more than half were girls (51.2%).

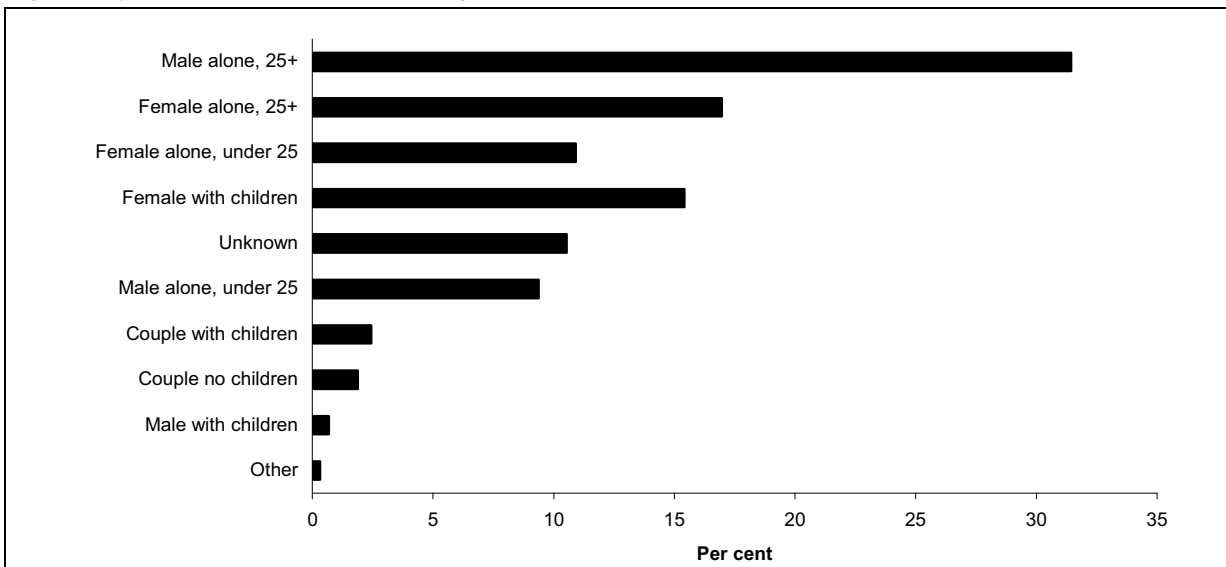


Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.1: Children accompanying SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods, by age and sex of child, 2005-06

Client groups

In the SAAP data collection, each client is allocated to a client group based on the client’s sex, age group and the mode of presentation to the SAAP agency. In 2005-06, the most commonly reported client group with mental health-related closed support periods was unaccompanied males aged 25 years and over (31.4 %), followed by unaccompanied females aged 25 years and over (17.0%) (Figure 9.2).



Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.2: SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods, proportion of support periods by client group type, 2005-06

9.3 SAAP mental health-related closed support periods

The previous section provides details on SAAP clients who had a mental health-related closed support period in 2005–06. This section presents information on the closed support periods and the SAAP services provided to these clients. There were 146,864 closed support periods for all SAAP support types in 2005–06 (unweighted data), and 20,392 mental health-related closed support periods reported for clients, representing 13.9% of the total (tables 9.1 and 9.2).

Type of support period

Of the mental health-related closed support periods provided by SAAP in 2005–06, 11,069 (54.3%) involved supported accommodation services, which may include other support services, while 9,323 (45.7%) involved a range of other support services, which did not include accommodation (Table 9.2).

Taking population size differences into account, the distribution of mental health-related closed support periods varied considerably across each state and territory. In 2005–06, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of mental health-related closed support periods per 100,000 population (287.4), whereas Western Australia had the lowest rate (29.3).

Supported accommodation services accounted for over 70% of the SAAP services provided in the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, while other support services accounted for over 60% of SAAP services in Victoria and South Australia (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2: SAAP mental health-related closed support periods, by service type, states and territories, 2005–06

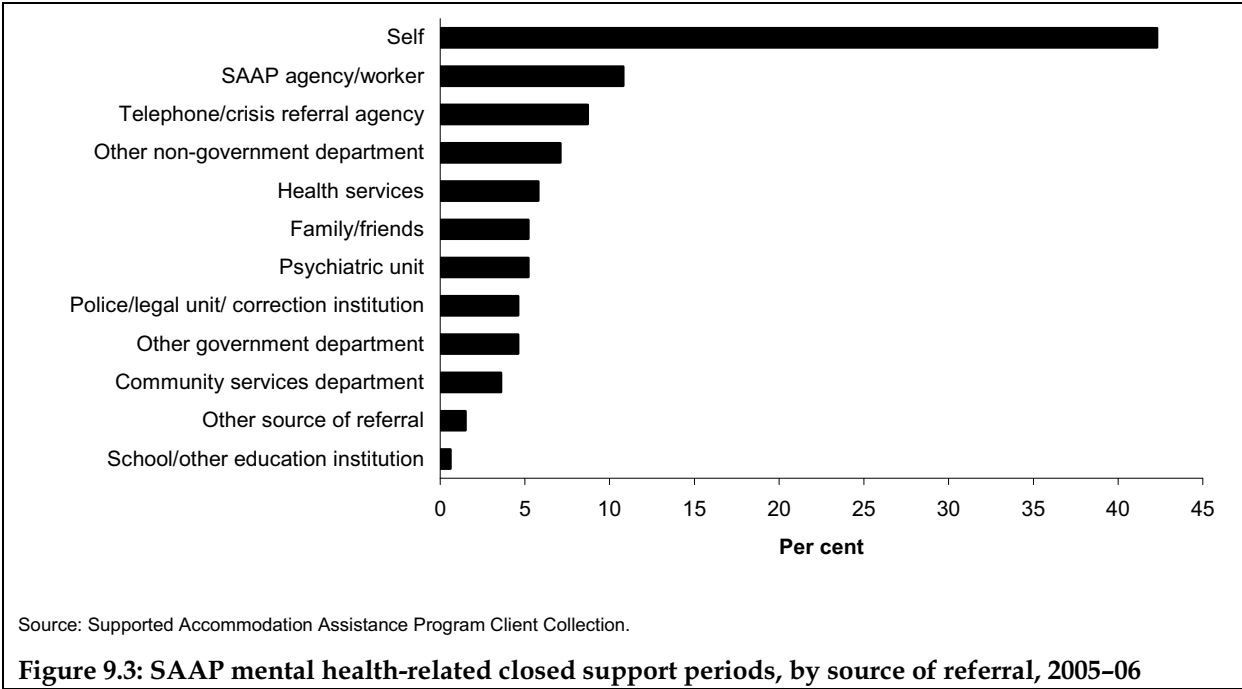
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
	Number								
Supported accommodation	3,514	3,125	1,838	597	652	317	426	600	11,069
Other support services	1,243	5,752	425	218	1,088	294	156	147	9,323
Total	4,757	8,877	2,263	815	1,740	611	582	747	20,392
	Rate (per 100,000 population)^(a)								
Supported accommodation	51.7	61.4	45.4	29.3	41.8	64.9	128.1	287.4	53.8
Other support services	18.3	113.0	10.5	10.7	69.8	60.2	46.9	70.4	45.3
Total	70.1	174.5	55.9	40.0	111.6	125.1	175.0	357.8	99.2

(a) Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population at 31 December 2005.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Source of referral to SAAP services

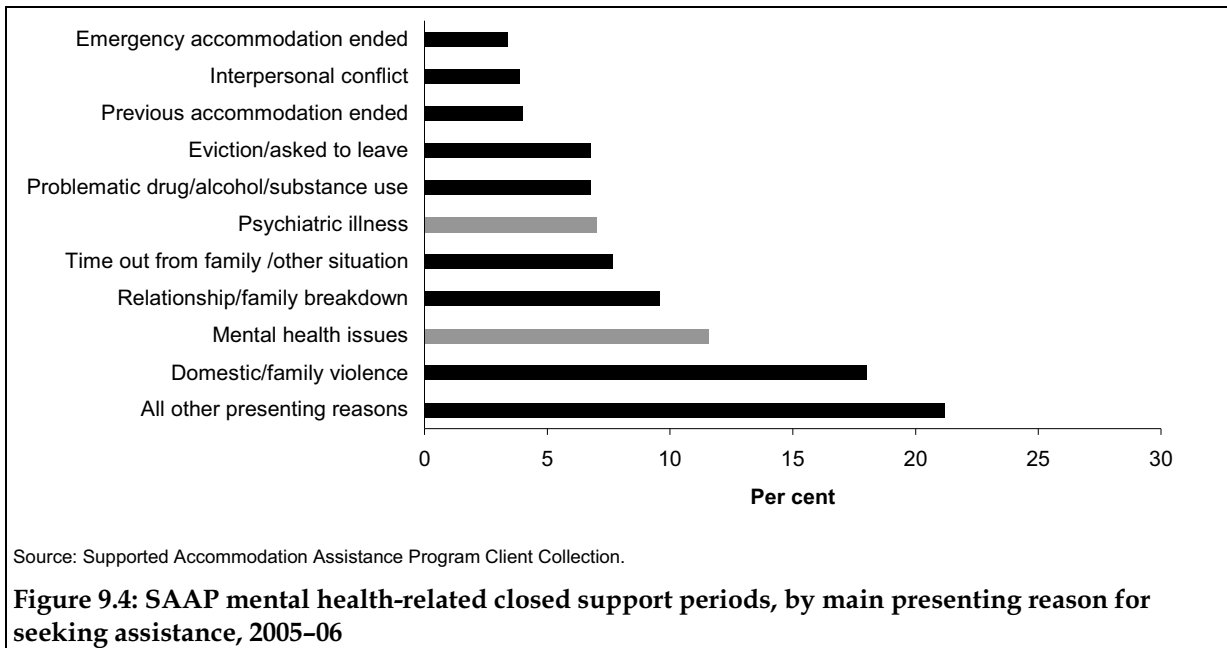
There are several ways in which prospective SAAP clients come in contact with a SAAP agency. In 2005–06, self-referral was the most common source of referral to SAAP services for mental health-related support periods (41.3%), followed by referrals from other SAAP agencies or workers (11.2%) and referrals from telephone/crisis referral agencies (9.1%) (Figure 9.3).



Main reason for seeking SAAP assistance

As part of the SAAP data collection, SAAP agencies collect information on the main presenting reasons for which the client is seeking assistance for each support period. Multiple presenting reasons may be recorded for each support period.

During 2005–06, psychiatric illness or mental health issues were reported as the main reasons for which a client was seeking SAAP assistance in 7.0% and 11.4% of closed support periods, respectively (Figure 9.4). Domestic/family violence was the most common reason for seeking assistance, being recorded for 18.0% of clients.



Length of support period

The length of the closed support periods varied among client groups. For example, clients who presented to SAAP agencies alone tended to have shorter support periods, while clients who were accompanied by children tended to have longer periods. Overall, the length of support varied from less than one day to over 52 weeks (Figure 9.5).

