

INTRODUCTION

Housing has been identified as a major factor affecting the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous households are over-represented in social housing and have below average rates of home ownership. The poor quality of some housing can impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Overcrowding, poor dwelling condition and inadequate basic utilities can pose serious health risks. Indigenous people are also vulnerable to homelessness because of their social and economic disadvantage.

Housing assistance programs are especially important for Indigenous people as they are generally aimed at people on low incomes or those with special needs (box 4.5). A large proportion of Indigenous households rent their accommodation through social housing programs such as public housing or Indigenous community housing. For those in the private rental market, rent assistance programs provide an important income supplement for lower income households. Housing assistance programs also play a role in relation to homelessness both by directly assisting homeless people and by helping those at risk of homelessness.

This chapter describes the characteristics of Indigenous households and their housing circumstances. It includes data on tenure type and housing assistance, location and housing costs. The chapter examines the relationship between housing and health, and provides data on those housing characteristics that may contribute to poor health outcomes—overcrowding, dwelling condition and housing-related infrastructure. The final part of the chapter focuses on those who are most disadvantaged in relation to housing, namely homeless people. Detailed information on the characteristics of homeless people is provided through data from the national Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data collection.

INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS

For the purposes of data analysis, Indigenous households can be defined in two different ways:

- a household where the reference person or their spouse is Indigenous
- a household containing one or more Indigenous people.

In this chapter the second definition of an Indigenous household is used, that is, a household containing one or more Indigenous people. This is the definition used in the National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary.

Indigenous households may include non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous people. In the 2001 Census there were a total of 494,000 people living in the 144,700 households identified as having at least one Indigenous person; of whom 75% (371,600 people) were identified as Indigenous and 25% (122,400 people) were either non-Indigenous or whose Indigenous status was unknown. The 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) estimated that 480,500 Indigenous people (of all ages) were

INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS *continued*

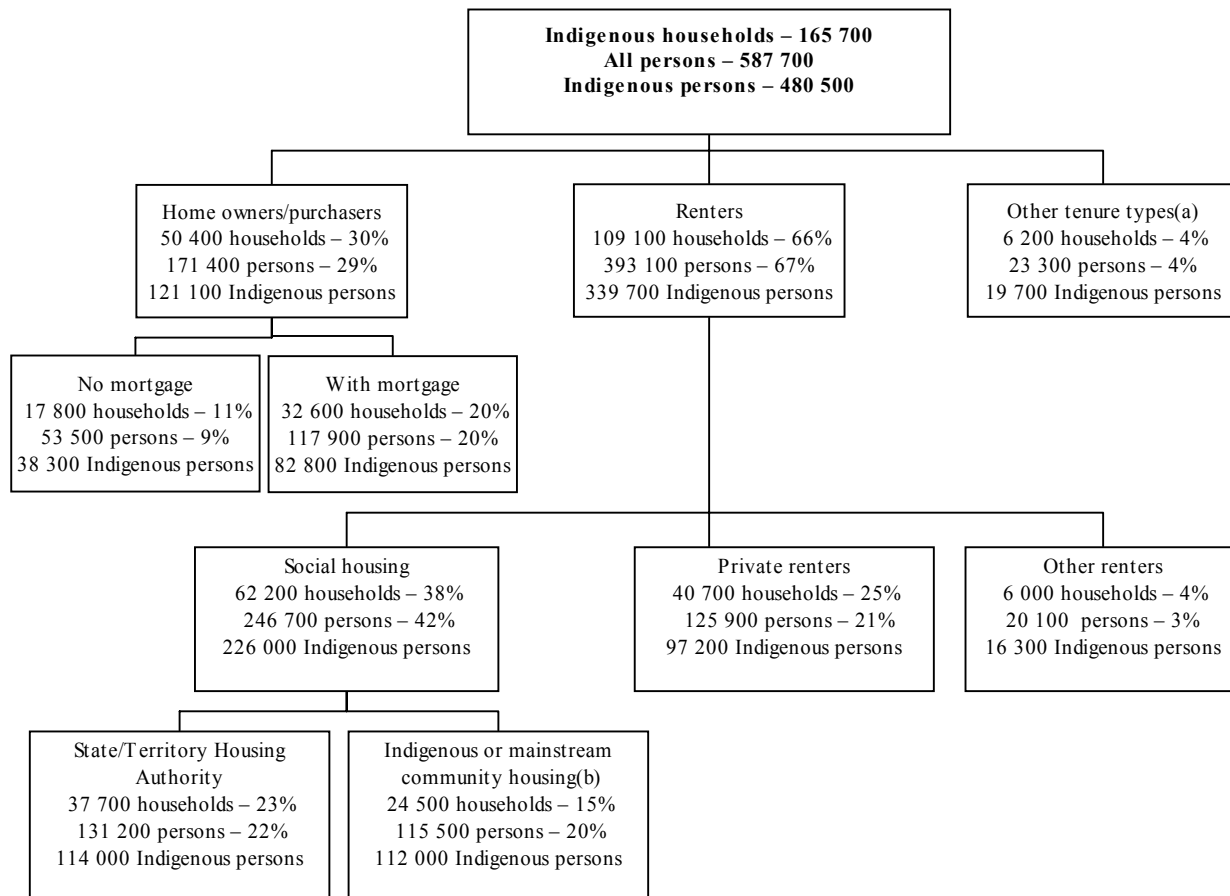
living in 165,700 Indigenous households. Indigenous people comprised 82% of all residents in Indigenous households, with half of Indigenous households having only Indigenous residents.

HOUSING TENURE AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Among the estimated 165,700 Indigenous households in 2002, 30% were home owners or purchasers, 38% were renters of some form of social housing and 28% were private or other renters (figure 4.1). This can be compared with all Australian households where 70% were home owners or purchasers, 6% were renters of social housing and 21% were private or other renters (ABS 2002 General Social Survey (GSS)).

Home ownership provides a relatively secure form of housing tenure but there are much lower rates of home ownership among Indigenous households. This is indicative of the lower socioeconomic status of many Indigenous households, and the small proportion of owner/purchaser households in very remote areas reflects, among other things, the types of tenure available on traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands (ABS 2003c). In 2002, 11% of Indigenous households owned their homes outright and 20% were purchasing their homes.

4.1 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS, BY TENURE TYPE — 2002



(a) Includes households and persons in rent/buy schemes, living rent-free or under a life tenure scheme.

(b) Indigenous community housing managed by Indigenous community housing organisations and community housing within mainstream programs. See also box 4.5.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

HOUSING TENURE AND
HOUSING ASSISTANCE
continued

The majority of Indigenous households (66%) lived in some form of rental accommodation. The largest group were renters in social housing, which included households renting from state or territory housing authorities (23%) and households renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations (15%). One-quarter of Indigenous households were in the private rental market.

The distribution of Indigenous people by the tenure type of the household in which they live is similar to the distribution of Indigenous households by tenure type (figure 4.1). The major difference occurs for Indigenous or mainstream community housing. Reflecting the generally large size of these households relative to households with other tenure types, the proportion of people in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (23%) is higher than the proportion of households with this tenure type (15%). Information on the distribution of Indigenous persons, in addition to Indigenous households, is shown in selected tables in this chapter.

Trends in housing tenure

Between 1994 and 2002 the proportion of Indigenous home owner households increased from 26% to 30%. This change was due to an increase in home purchaser households (from 13% to 20%). The proportion of renter households fell slightly from 69% to 66%. Declines in the proportion renting from state/territory housing authorities (from 35% to 23%) were mostly offset by increases in households renting privately (from 23% to 28%) and in those renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations (from 11% to 15%; table 4.2).

4.2 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIGENOUS PERSONS (a), by tenure type—1994 and 2002

		PERSONS		HOUSEHOLDS	
		1994	2002	1994	2002
Fully owned	%	10.9	9.7	12.7	10.8
Being purchased	%	10.8	16.8	12.8	19.7
Renter state/territory housing authority	%	33.3	22.1	34.7	22.7
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	%	16.6	24.0	11.0	14.8
Private and other renter	%	20.9	23.6	23.0	28.2
Other tenure (b)	%	5.1	3.8	3.9	3.7
Total (c)	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	no.	214 600	282 200	108 500	165 700

(a) Aged 15 years or over.

(b) Includes persons living under life tenure schemes, those living rent-free, and participants in rent/buy schemes.

(c) Includes renters whose landlord was not stated.

Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS and 2002 NATSISS

Tenure by location

STATES AND TERRITORIES

The housing tenure of Indigenous households varies by location. The Northern Territory had the lowest proportion of Indigenous households who were home owners (13%) and the highest proportion living in Indigenous or mainstream community housing (48%) (table 4.3).

The proportion of home owners was highest in the eastern states of Victoria (36%), New South Wales (32%) and Queensland (30%). The proportion of private and other renters was also highest in New South Wales (32%), Queensland (31%) and Victoria (30%).

*Tenure by location
continued*

STATES AND TERRITORIES *continued*

Western Australia (32%) and South Australia (27%) had a relatively high proportion of households renting from the state housing authority.

4.3 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS(a), by tenure type and state or territory—2002

		NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	NT	Australia(b)
PERSONS								
Home owner/purchaser	%	32.2	34.5	26.6	27.6	18.4	7.6	26.5
Renter state/territory housing authority	%	22.2	22.5	21.8	25.8	31.7	10.9	22.1
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	%	12.3	9.6	23.2	26.6	22.6	67.8	24.0
Private and other renter	%	28.8	30.1	26.4	18.0	22.3	*7.4	23.6
Other tenure	%	*4.3	*3.3	*2.0	*1.5	*5.0	*6.3	3.8
Total	no.	83 800	17 400	76 000	15 800	39 600	36 200	282 200
HOUSEHOLDS								
Home owner/purchaser	%	32.0	36.6	30.3	29.2	23.4	*13.5	30.4
Renter state/territory housing authority	%	22.4	21.1	20.6	27.1	31.6	*17.5	22.8
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	%	9.5	8.9	15.6	19.8	13.9	48.4	14.8
Private and other renter	%	31.8	30.1	31.4	21.9	24.9	*15.1	28.2
Other tenure	%	*4.1	*3.3	*2.0	*2.1	6.2	*5.6	3.7
Total	no.	55 900	12 300	44 200	9 600	20 900	12 600	165 700

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

(a) Aged 15 years or over.

(b) Includes persons and households in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

GEOGRAPHIC AREA

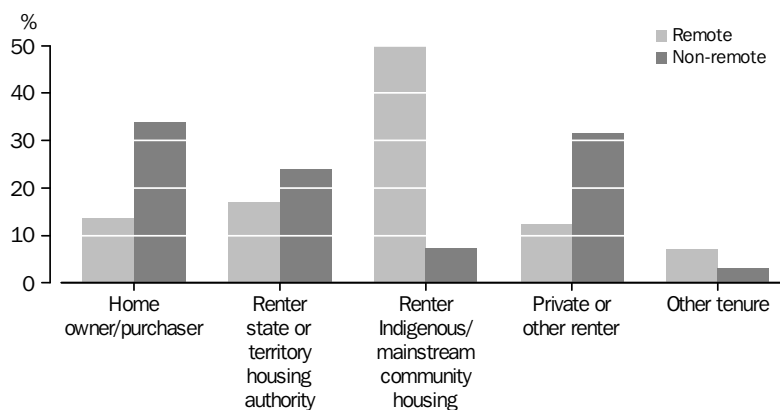
According to the 2002 NATSISS, 29,200 Indigenous households were in remote areas of Australia and 136,500 were in non-remote areas. Tenure type varied by remoteness, reflecting the availability of different housing options for Indigenous people and the lower socioeconomic status of those in remote areas.

Among Indigenous households living in remote areas of Australia, one-half (50%) were renters of Indigenous or mainstream community housing, 17% were renters of state or territory housing and 14% were home owners. Among Indigenous households in non-remote areas, the highest proportion were home owners (34%) followed by private or other renters (32%) and renters of state and territory housing (24%) (graph 4.4).

Tenure by location
continued

GEOGRAPHIC AREA *continued*

4.4 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS, by tenure type and remoteness—2002



Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

A large proportion of Indigenous households receive housing assistance of some kind (box 4.5). The following analysis is based on Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and the National Reporting Framework (NRF) administrative data collections. Data on households by tenure type in these administrative collections differ from data based on the 2002 NATSISS. This is due to a number of factors including the under-identification of Indigenous households in both the public and mainstream community housing data collections. The administrative collections and surveys are also based on different reference periods and use different collection methodologies.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

*continued***4.5** MAJOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA COLLECTIONS**Indigenous-specific programs**

State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH) is managed by the state governments and allocated specifically to Indigenous Australians. Funding is through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA).

Indigenous community housing (ICH) is managed by Indigenous community housing organisations, with funding provided by the states and territories and the Australian Government.

Mainstream programs

Public housing is administered by the states and territories and provides publicly owned dwellings that are funded through CSHA and used to provide appropriate, affordable and accessible shelter for low to moderate income earners who may have difficulty entering the housing market.

Community housing is managed by non-profit community-based organisations such as local governments, churches and charity groups and is funded through the CSHA. It takes several forms: from emergency or crisis accommodation, to medium-term or transitional accommodation, to long-term housing.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is an income supplement that may be payable to recipients of social security, family tax benefit and Department of Veteran's Affairs payments in the private rental market. To be eligible for assistance the rent paid must be above a specified threshold level, which varies according to a client's family situation.

Administrative data collections

The AIHW collects the national administrative data on programs funded under the CSHA. This includes data on the mainstream programs public rental housing and community housing. There is much variability in the quality of information about mainstream housing assistance for Indigenous Australians. Indigenous identification is not complete and the number of Indigenous households receiving assistance under these programs is therefore underestimated.

In 2003–04 for the first time the AIHW collected data on Indigenous community housing from the Australian Government and the states and territories in the National Reporting Framework (NRF) data collection. This data collection is in the early stages of development and both the quality of the data and the amount of information collected will improve over time.

At 30 June 2004 these administrative collections recorded around 55,000 Indigenous households receiving assistance under the social housing programs—21,717 in Indigenous community housing, 19,787 in public rental housing, 12,219 households in State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH), and 1,316 in mainstream community housing (table 4.6). Indigenous households in public rental housing represented approximately 6% of the total number of households receiving public housing assistance (AIHW 2005f).

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

continued

The proportion of households in the different housing assistance programs varied across jurisdictions, related to the available housing options. The highest proportion of Indigenous households in Indigenous community housing was in the Northern Territory (30%) followed by Queensland (28%). New South Wales had the highest proportion of households accessing both SOMIH and mainstream community housing followed by Queensland. The highest proportion of Indigenous income units in the Commonwealth Rent Assistance program were in New South Wales (36%) and Queensland (36%). (See Glossary for more information on CRA income units).

4.6 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS IN MAJOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS—30 June 2004

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NUMBER (no.)									
Indigenous community housing(a)	4 616	476	6 079	1 093	2 837	128	6 456	32	21 717
SOMIH	4 007	1 219	2 720	1 751	2 187	335	12 219
Public housing	(b)8 700	1 078	2 633	1 171	4 041	494	1 498	172	19 787
Community housing	588	12	419	65	212	4	na	16	1 316
Commonwealth Rent Assistance(c)	9 006	1 611	8 997	1 214	2 387	744	1 032	na	25 102
PROPORTION (%)									
Indigenous community housing(a)	21.2	2.2	28.0	5.0	13.1	0.6	29.7	0.1	100.0
SOMIH	32.7	10.0	22.3	14.3	17.9	2.7	100.0
Public housing	(b)44.0	5.4	13.3	5.9	20.4	2.5	7.6	0.9	100.0
Community housing	44.7	0.9	31.8	4.9	16.1	0.3	na	1.2	100.0
Commonwealth Rent Assistance(c)	35.9	6.4	35.8	4.8	9.5	2.6	4.1	na	100.0

.. not applicable

na not available

(a) Estimated number based on number of dwellings at 30 June 2004.

(b) Estimate based on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing, adjusted for undercounting of public housing households.

(c) Income units receiving CRA at 11 June 2004. Income units are single persons or family units comprising parents and dependent children. Not all income units are eligible for CRA.

Source: AIHW, CSHA data collection and NRF data collection

SOMIH is provided across all geographic regions, with 34% of SOMIH households in major cities, 48% in regional areas and 17% in remote or very remote areas. Indigenous households in public housing were also located across urban, rural and remote locations, though there was a lower proportion located in very remote areas compared with SOMIH households (table 4.7). At 30 June 2001 most Indigenous income units receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance were located in major cities or inner regional areas (65%), with only 3% in very remote areas (ABS & AIHW 2003).

HOUSING ASSISTANCE
*continued***4.7** INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS RENTING FROM STATE OR TERRITORY HOUSING AUTHORITY, by program type—2004

	<i>SOMIH</i>		<i>Public housing(a)</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Major cities	4 190	34.3	3 450	31.1	7 640	32.8
Inner regional	2 713	22.2	1 535	13.9	4 248	18.2
Outer regional	3 184	26.1	3 426	30.9	6 610	28.4
Remote	1 054	8.6	1 949	17.6	3 003	12.9
Very remote	1 072	8.7	724	6.5	1 796	7.7
Total	12 213	100.0	11 085	100.0	23 298	100.0

(a) The total for public housing differs from that provided in Table 4.6 because of the under-reporting of Indigenous households from New South Wales in the public housing national minimum dataset.

Source: AIHW analysis of CSHA data repository.

HOUSEHOLD TYPES AND SIZE

In 2002, survey data show that over three-quarters (76%) of the 165,700 Indigenous households were one-family households, while 13% were one-person households. There were another 7% of households that were multi-family households (that is with two or more families in the household) and 3% that were group households (that consist of unrelated adults) (ABS 2002 NATSISS).

Indigenous households tend to be larger than non-Indigenous households with an average household size of 3.5 people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) compared with 2.6 for all Australian households (table 4.8 & ABS 2002 GSS). One-quarter of Indigenous households had five or more people, 19% had four, 18% had three, 24% had two people and 13% had one person.

Average Indigenous household size varied by tenure type with an average of 4.7 people in Indigenous or mainstream community housing compared with 3.1 for private and other renters. More than half (59%) of households in Indigenous or community housing had four or more people. Average household size also varied by location with an average of 3.3 people per household in non-remote areas compared with 4.6 people per household in remote areas (ABS 2002 NATSISS).

4.8 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS, tenure type by number of persons(a)—2002

	Home owners	State or Territory housing authority	Renter Indigenous/ mainstream community housing	Private and other renter	Other tenure types	Total
NUMBER						
One person	3 300	6 900	2 600	7 900	*1 300	22 000
Two people	14 600	8 100	4 200	12 500	*1 200	40 500
Three people	10 300	6 200	3 300	8 900	*800	29 600
Four people	11 400	6 700	3 700	8 700	*1 100	31 700
Five or more people	10 800	9 600	10 700	8 900	1 800	41 800
Total	50 400	37 700	24 500	46 800	6 200	165 700
Average number per household	3.4	3.5	4.7	3.1	3.8	3.5
PROPORTION						
One person	6.6	18.4	10.4	16.9	*21.7	13.3
Two people	28.9	21.6	17.0	26.6	*18.8	24.5
Three people	20.4	16.6	13.6	18.9	*12.7	17.9
Four people	22.7	17.9	15.2	18.6	*17.4	19.1
Five or more people	21.4	25.6	43.8	19.0	29.4	25.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

(a) Household size is based on all household residents.
Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

HOUSING COSTS

Indigenous Australians have access to a range of housing assistance programs, but housing costs remain high relative to incomes for many households. Weekly housing costs were highest for home purchasers whose median weekly payment was \$174 per week, followed by private renters whose median weekly rent was \$140. However, many of these private renters would have received Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). In June 2004 there were 25,102 income units receiving CRA that were identified as Indigenous income units (table 4.6). It is therefore likely that over half of all Indigenous households renting privately are supported by CRA.

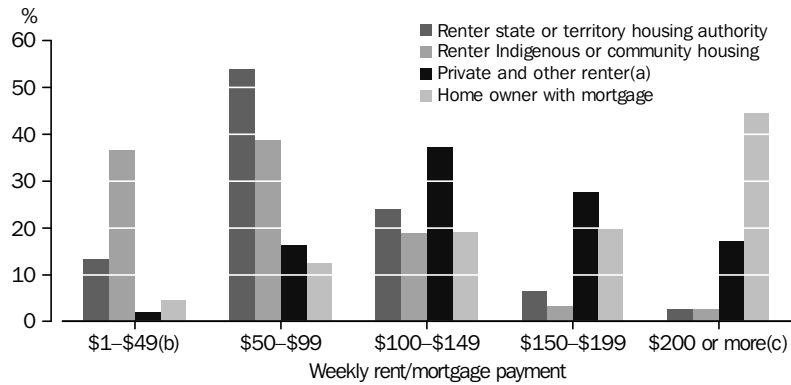
Many Indigenous households renting from state or territory housing authorities or Indigenous or mainstream community housing providers pay rents that are related to income (in some cases, subsidised rents), and therefore have lower housing costs than those renting in the private market (although the latter group have additional income support through CRA payments to, in part, offset the higher rents paid). In 2002 the median weekly rent for Indigenous households renting from state or territory housing authorities was \$80 per week and for those renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations it was \$61 per week. The lower median rent paid by those in Indigenous community housing is also related to the poor condition of many of the dwellings and their more remote location.

The distribution of weekly housing costs is shown in graph 4.9. Some 44% of home purchasers paid \$200 or more per week in mortgage payments. There were 17% of private and other renters who paid \$200 or more per week in rent, compared with 2% of households renting from state or territory housing authorities. Over half (54%) of renters of state or territory housing paid between \$50 and \$99 per week, with 24% paying

HOUSING COSTS
continued

from \$100 to \$149 per week. Three-quarters (75%) of renters of Indigenous or community housing paid less than \$100 per week in rent.

4.9 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS PAYING RENT OR MORTGAGES, weekly amount paid by tenure type—2002



(a) Without adjustment for Commonwealth Rent Assistance.
 (b) Estimate for Private and other renters paying \$1-\$49 in weekly rent has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.
 (c) Estimates for Renters state or territory housing authority and Renters Indigenous or community housing paying \$200 or more in weekly rent have a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Affordability

‘Housing affordability’ relates to the capacity of households to meet housing costs while maintaining the ability to meet other basic costs of living (AHURI 2004). It takes into account the income of households in relation to their housing costs and is generally focused on households with lower incomes. The following data relate to those people living in households in the lowest 40% of equivalised incomes for Australian households and defines those with ‘affordability stress’ as households paying more than 30% of gross household income in housing costs.

Among those who were renting in 2001, 80% of people in Indigenous households and 54% of people in other households were living in households in the lowest 40% of the income distribution as defined above. People renting in Indigenous households with lower incomes were less likely to be experiencing affordability stress (19%) than people renting in other households with lower incomes (43%) (ABS & AIHW 2003). These differences reflect the higher proportions of Indigenous households who live in social housing, where rents are subsidised, as well as the higher proportion living in remote areas where rents are lower. It also includes overcrowded households who have higher total household incomes but live in overcrowded conditions because of a lack of housing options in remote areas, and as a means of reducing housing costs in urban areas. Note also that the comparison of the housing affordability stress has not been adjusted to take account of the CRA income received by some private renters. For comparison with public renters and community housing renters, the CRA income should be deducted from the income and housing costs of these private renters.

Affordability continued

Among residents in dwellings that were being purchased, 43% of people in Indigenous households and 29% of people in other households were living in low income households. Within low-income Indigenous households, 34% of people reported paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs, compared with 41% of people in other low-income households (ABS & AIHW 2003).

Financial stress

A significant proportion of Indigenous households experience some form of financial stress. In 2002, 30% of Indigenous households reported days without money in the last two weeks and 43% had days without money in the last 12 months. Nearly one-half of all Indigenous households (49%) reported that they could not raise funds in an emergency (i.e. \$2000 within a week) (table 4.10). This compares with 15% of all Australian households who said that they could not raise \$2000 within a week (ABS, 2002 GSS).

4.10 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND PERSONS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL STRESS (a)(b), by tenure type—2002

		Home owner	Renter state or territory housing authority	Renter Indigenous/ mainstream community housing	Private and other renter	Other tenure	Total
PERSONS							
Had days without money in last 12 months	%	26.7	61.9	45.6	46.0	*30.1	43.7
Had days without money in last 2 weeks	%	18.3	46.2	36.8	29.7	*24.1	31.8
Could not raise \$2,000 within a week	%	20.2	72.2	79.1	50.8	28.8	54.3
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	no.	74 800	62 200	67 700	66 600	3 400	282 200
HOUSEHOLDS							
Had days without money in last 12 months	%	26.0	59.0	46.4	48.3	35.2	42.7
Had days without money in last 2 weeks	%	17.0	44.0	36.5	30.0	23.8	29.8
Could not raise \$2,000 within a week	%	19.6	71.4	75.7	51.8	44.3	49.4
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	no.	50 400	37 700	24 500	40 700	12 200	165 700

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

(a) Persons aged 15 years or over

(b) Information provided by a nominated spokesperson on behalf of all household members.

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

HOUSING AND HEALTH

Research on housing and health shows a relationship between inadequate housing and housing related infrastructure and poor health outcomes (Howden-Chapman & Wilson 2000, Waters 2001). Overcrowding, poor dwelling condition and inadequate basic utilities such as facilities for washing clothes, sewerage systems or safe drinking water have all been associated with higher rates of infectious and parasitic diseases. These include skin infections and infestations, respiratory infections, eye and ear infections, diarrhoeal diseases and rheumatic fever (Menzies School of Health Research 2000).

In May 2001, housing ministers endorsed a 10-year statement on directions for Indigenous housing reform to provide better housing for Indigenous Australians (HMC 2001). This statement addressed the 1997 ministers' reform agenda the focus of which was to:

HOUSING AND HEALTH

continued

- identify and address outstanding need
- improve the viability of Indigenous community housing organisations
- establish safe, healthy and sustainable housing for Indigenous Australians, especially in rural and remote communities
- establish a national framework for the development and delivery of improved housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians by state, territory and community housing providers.

The national framework for the design, construction and maintenance of Indigenous housing was developed by a working group of state and territory housing ministers to improve Indigenous housing by raising the standard of housing to the level of that enjoyed by most non-Indigenous Australians. One of the major areas addressed in the framework relates to those housing components essential for good health that were termed 'health hardware' (Commonwealth State and Territory Housing Ministers' Working Group 1999).

The framework states that houses should be designed, constructed and maintained to support healthy living practices that were identified as being essential for good health. One of these principles relates to reducing overcrowding and the potential for the spread of infectious diseases. Some principles specify that houses must have the facilities required for washing people, washing clothes and bedding, storing and preparing food. In addition dwellings must be in good physical condition and connected to basic services to support healthy living.

Overcrowding

A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in overcrowded conditions than other Australians and this can adversely affect their health.

Overcrowding can put stress on bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities as well as on sewerage systems such as septic tanks. It can lead to the spread of infectious diseases such as meningococcal, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever and respiratory diseases and skin infections (Howden-Chapman & Wilson 2000). It has also been associated with poorer self-reported physical and mental health, and higher rates of smoking and hazardous drinking (Waters 2001).

Various measures can be used to assess the extent of overcrowding in dwellings. The nationally accepted definition of overcrowding used in relation to housing assistance is the Proxy Occupancy Standard, which is a measure of the appropriateness of housing related to the household size and composition (AIHW 2004k). The standard specifies the following bedroom requirements for different household types:

- single adult—1 bedroom
- single adult group—1 bedroom per adult
- couple with no children—2 bedrooms
- sole parent or couple with 1 child—2 bedrooms
- sole parent or couple with 2 or 3 children—3 bedrooms
- sole parent or couple with 4 or more children—4 bedrooms.

Households that require two or more additional bedrooms to meet the standard are considered to be overcrowded.

Overcrowding continued

In 2001, some 10% of Indigenous households in Australia (13,380 dwellings) were overcrowded according to the Proxy Occupancy Standard. In other words, 22% of Indigenous people living in private dwellings (80,370 people) were living in overcrowded accommodation. Overcrowding varied significantly by tenure type, with the lowest rates among owner/purchaser households and the highest among households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing. About one-third (34%) of Indigenous households and over one-half of Indigenous people (57%) renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing organisations were living in overcrowded conditions (table 4.11).

4.11 INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIGENOUS PERSONS IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS, by tenure type—2001

	Persons(a).....		Households(a).....	
	no.	%	no.	%
Home owner/purchaser	8 110	8.3	2 160	4.7
Renter state/territory housing authority	14 500	17.5	2 660	9.1
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	44 040	57.3	5 320	34.0
Private and other renter	11 330	11.6	2 840	6.1
Total(b)	80 370	22.2	13 380	9.5

(a) Excludes dwellings where the number of bedrooms was not stated.

(b) Includes other tenure types and not stated tenure type.

Source: ABS, 2001 Census of Population and Housing

Overcrowding varied by state and territory. The very high proportion of overcrowded households in the Northern Territory (32%) reflects the high number of Indigenous households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing, and the large proportion of these (55%) that were overcrowded (table 4.12).

4.12 OVERCROWDED INDIGENOUS HOUSEHOLDS, by state and territory—2001

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NUMBER (no.)									
Home owner/purchaser	810	190	580	110	250	100	110	20	2 160
Renter state/territory housing authority	660	160	690	210	630	50	240	30	2 660
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	380	30	1 260	240	870	—	2 530	—	5 320
Private and other renter	890	180	1 110	110	270	60	190	20	2 840
Total(a)	2 810	580	3 740	690	2 110	220	3 160	60	13 380
PROPORTION (b) (%)									
Home owner/purchaser	4.8	4.0	5.2	4.1	5.2	2.5	7.0	2.6	4.7
Renter state/territory housing authority	6.4	7.0	11.3	7.9	13.1	4.4	14.5	6.2	9.1
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	12.5	8.5	27.7	31.2	39.4	—	55.2	—	34.0
Private and other renter	5.5	4.9	7.1	4.8	6.1	3.3	11.6	3.4	6.1
Total(a)	5.9	5.1	9.8	8.2	12.6	3.1	32.4	4.0	9.5

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Includes other tenure type and tenure type not stated.

(b) Excludes dwellings with number of bedrooms not stated.

Note: Overcrowding was measured according to the Proxy Occupancy Standard.

Source: ABS, 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Household facilities

Across Australia, a high proportion of Indigenous households were living in dwellings with the facilities required to support healthy living practices. In 2002, some 99% of Indigenous households reported having working facilities for washing people, 98% had working facilities for washing clothes and bedding, and 95% had working facilities for storing and preparing food.

There were, however, a number of households which did not have these working facilities. For example, 1,700 Indigenous households reported that they did not have working facilities for washing people, 3,500 did not have working facilities for washing clothes or bedding, 8,300 did not have working facilities for storing or preparing food and 1,900 did not have working sewerage facilities.

Renters of Indigenous or community housing were less likely to have working sewerage facilities, working facilities for washing people or working facilities for food preparation and storage, than those with other kinds of housing tenure. For example, 85% of households renting Indigenous or community housing had working facilities for storing and preparing food compared with 99% of owner/purchaser households.

4.13 FUNCTIONALITY OF BASIC FACILITIES, Indigenous households by tenure type—2002

	<i>Home owner/ purchaser</i>	<i>Renter State or Territory housing authority</i>	<i>Renter Indigenous/ mainstream community housing</i>	<i>Private and other renter</i>	<i>Other tenure</i>	<i>Total</i>
NUMBER (no.)						
Has working facilities for washing people	50 300	37 400	24 000	46 500	5 700	164 000
Has working facilities for washing clothes/bedding	50 100	36 900	24 000	45 500	5 600	162 200
Has working facilities for storing/preparing food	49 700	36 100	20 800	45 300	5 300	157 300
Has a working telephone	48 000	27 400	11 800	37 100	4 200	128 500
Total households	50 400	37 700	24 500	46 700	6 200	165 700
PROPORTION (%)						
Has working facilities for washing people	99.8	99.2	98.0	99.3	91.7	99.0
Has working facilities for washing clothes/bedding	99.2	98.0	97.9	97.2	91.7	97.9
Has working facilities for storing/preparing food	98.6	95.9	85.1	96.7	85.3	95.0
Has a working telephone	95.2	72.7	48.0	79.2	67.8	77.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Some 78% of all Indigenous households had a working telephone but this proportion varied significantly by tenure type, ranging from 48% for renters of Indigenous/community housing to 95% of home owners.

Dwelling condition

The physical condition of a dwelling is important for reducing the negative impact of dust, controlling the temperature of the living environment and reducing the potential for trauma (or minor injury) around the house and living environment. The 2002 NATSISS asked households whether the dwelling in which they lived had structural problems. This included rising damp, major cracks in floors or walls, sinking or moving foundations, sagging floors, walls and windows out of plumb, wood rot/termite damage, major electrical problems, major plumbing problems, and major roof defects.

*Dwelling condition
continued*

There were 58,100 Indigenous households, or 35%, that reported that their dwelling had structural problems of some kind in 2002 (table 4.14). The highest proportion of households that lived in dwellings with structural problems were renters of Indigenous or mainstream community housing (55%), followed by renters of state or territory housing (42%).

4.14 DWELLING CONDITION, by tenure type—2002

	Home owner/ purchaser	Renter State or Territory housing authority	Renter Indigenous/ mainstream community housing	Private and other renter	Other tenure	Total
NUMBER (no.)						
Has structural problems	11 300	15 700	13 400	15 600	2 000	58 100
Repairs and maintenance have been carried out	34 800	24 300	14 100	28 700	3 200	105 100
Total households	50 400	37 700	24 500	46 800	6 200	165 700
PROPORTION (%)						
Has structural problems	22.0	42.0	55.0	33.0	33.0	35.0
Repairs and maintenance have been carried out	69.0	65.0	58.0	61.0	52.0	63.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Numbers rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Repairs and maintenance had been carried out in the last 12 months in the dwellings of 63% of households overall. Home owners (69%) were the most likely to have had repairs and maintenance carried out, followed by renters in state or territory housing (65%).

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HOUSING

The 2001 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) collected data on dwelling condition for permanent dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities that were managed by Indigenous housing organisations. The majority of these dwellings were located in the Northern Territory (6,498), Queensland (3,740) and Western Australia (2,725). The data on dwelling condition were categorised according to the cost of repairs required to the dwelling.

*Dwelling condition
continued*

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HOUSING *continued*

4.15 CONDITION OF PERMANENT DWELLINGS IN DISCRETE
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, by state and territory —2001

	<u>Minor or no repair</u>		<u>Major repair</u>		<u>Replacement</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
New South Wales	865	69.9	336	27.2	36	2.9	1 237	100.0
Queensland	2 239	59.9	1 068	28.6	432	11.6	3 740	100.0
South Australia	680	70.2	180	18.6	109	11.2	969	100.0
Western Australia	1 790	65.7	552	20.3	383	14.1	2 725	100.0
Northern Territory	4 829	74.3	1 024	15.8	631	9.7	6 498	100.0
Australia	10 433	68.5	3 179	20.9	1 601	10.5	15 228	100.0

Note: Data only includes permanent dwellings managed by Indigenous Housing Organisations. Victoria and Tasmania included in Australia for confidentiality reasons.

Source: ABS, 2001 CHINS

Most permanent dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities required minor or no repairs or maintenance (69%), but there were 21% requiring major repairs and 11% requiring replacement. Dwellings in Queensland and Western Australia were in the poorest condition with 40% of permanent dwellings in Queensland and 34% in Western Australia requiring major repairs or replacement.

Connection to services

Most Indigenous households in Australia live in dwellings that are connected to water, sewerage and electricity. For example 99% of Indigenous households reported that they had working sewerage facilities (ABS 2002 NATSISS). Connection to services is primarily an issue for those households who live in Indigenous community housing where there are a number of dwellings not connected to an organised supply of water, sewerage or electricity.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HOUSING

The CHINS data on main source of water, sewerage and electricity were collected at the community level for all discrete communities. While the data show services for all communities with permanent dwellings, and the number of permanent dwellings in these communities, some dwellings may not have had access to a service that was available at the community level. Data at the dwelling level can only be reported separately for each service so that the number of dwellings not connected to more than one service is unknown. However, of those communities that had permanent dwellings, 5 communities (with 13 dwellings) had no organised water supply; 35 communities (with 80 dwellings) had no organised electricity supply; and 51 communities (with 153 dwellings) had no organised sewerage system (table 4.16). There were 73 communities (with 208 dwellings) that had two organised services, and 9 communities (with 19 dwellings) that had only one organised service (ABS, 2001 CHINS).

Of the 16,966 permanent dwellings in discrete communities, the majority (10,429 or 61%) were in communities where the main source of drinking water was bore water. There were another 3,064 dwellings (18%) in communities connected to a town supply and 2,422 (14%) in communities where the main source of water was a river or reservoir.

*Connection to services
continued*

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HOUSING *continued*

In addition, there were 214 permanent dwellings in communities where the main source of water was a well or spring and 13 permanent dwellings in communities that had no organised water supply (table 4.16).

In relation to sewerage, the majority of permanent dwellings (7,093 or 42%) were in communities with community water-borne systems. There were another 6,479 dwellings (38%) with some type of septic system and 2,580 dwellings (15%) connected to a town supply. In addition, there were 596 permanent dwellings in communities whose main type of sewerage system was pit toilets, and 15 dwellings in communities whose main type of sewerage system was pan toilets. There were also 153 permanent dwellings in communities with no organised sewerage supply (table 4.16).

The majority of permanent dwellings (9,790 or 58%) were in communities where the main source of electricity was community generators. There were also 5,954 dwellings (35%) in communities connected to the state grid, 727 dwellings (4%) with some form of solar supply and 296 dwellings (2%) where the main source of electricity was domestic generators. In addition, there were 80 permanent dwellings in communities with no organised electricity supply (table 4.16).

The NRF data collection includes data on connection to essential services. These data are still being developed but they will provide annual data on the number of dwellings connected to essential services.

Connection to services
continued

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HOUSING *continued*

4.16 TYPES OF CONNECTION TO WATER, SEWERAGE AND
ELECTRICITY IN DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES—2001

	Number of communities with permanent dwelling(s)	Number of permanent dwellings(a)	Proportion of dwellings
	no.	no.	%
Main source of drinking water			
Connected to town supply	182	3 064	18.1
Bore water	708	10 429	61.5
Rain water tank(s)	50	794	4.7
River or reservoir	71	2 422	14.3
Well or spring	36	214	1.3
Other organised water supply	11	30	0.2
No organised water supply	5	13	0.1
Total	1 063	16 966	100.0
Main type of sewerage system			
Connected to town system	87	2 580	15.2
Community water-borne system	95	7 093	41.8
Septic tanks with common effluent disposal	101	2 573	15.2
Septic tanks with leach drain	551	3 906	23.0
Pit toilets	171	596	3.5
Pan toilets	2	15	0.1
Other organised sewerage system	5	50	0.3
No organised sewerage system	51	153	0.9
Total	1 063	16 966	100.0
Main type of electricity supply			
State grid/transmitted supply	257	5 954	35.1
Community generators	425	9 790	57.7
Domestic generators	119	296	1.7
Solar	88	290	1.7
Solar hybrid	125	437	2.6
Other organised electricity supply	14	119	0.7
No organised electricity supply	35	80	0.5
Total	1 063	16 966	100.0

(a) Data are collected at the community level and some permanent dwellings may not be connected to the type of service reported at the community level.

Source: ABS, 2001 CHINS

HOMELESSNESS

Homeless people are the most disadvantaged in relation to housing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be homeless than other Australians as they generally do not have the same access to affordable and secure housing. The higher levels of mobility among Indigenous people due to the need for many to leave their home to access services or to observe cultural obligations, and the absence of adequate temporary accommodation, can also contribute to homelessness among Indigenous people (Keys Young 1998). Measuring the extent of homelessness, however, can be difficult and depends on the definition used. This section examines how homelessness is defined and measured, and then provides a range of data on Indigenous homeless people in the major program response to homelessness, the SAAP.

Defining homelessness

Homeless people can be simply defined as those with no housing or those residing in temporary or emergency accommodation. However, the concept of homelessness is subjective and depends on prevailing community standards. According to the Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) definition adopted by the ABS, people are considered homeless if their accommodation falls below the minimum community standard of a small rental flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, and an element of security of tenure.

The definition of homelessness however, can be related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, values and beliefs (Keys Young 1998; Memmott et al. 2004). Keys Young developed a number of definitions of Indigenous homelessness which emphasised the multi-layered and multi-dimensional nature of Indigenous homelessness and incorporated the concept of spiritual homelessness. Underlying these definitions was the understanding that 'home' can have different meaning for Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2003a).

That some Indigenous people view homelessness differently from other Australians can be illustrated by the significant number of Indigenous people who do not live in walled and roofed dwellings but who argue that they are both 'placed' and 'homed'. They call themselves 'parkies', 'long grassers' or 'river campers'. Memmott, Long and Chambers (2003) suggest that the term 'homeless' should not be used for these people but that they should be referred to as 'public place dwellers'. He proposed five categories of public place dwellers: those living in public places; those occasionally spending time in public places; spiritual forms of homelessness; crowding where it causes considerable stress to families and communities; and individuals escaping unsafe or unstable family circumstances. However, these definitions are not captured by any of the existing data sources.

*Defining homelessness
continued*

4.17 ITINERANTS PROGRAM, DARWIN AND PALMERSTON

The project began in 1999, when community groups met to discuss the 'itinerant' issues. In 2000, the Darwin office of ATSIC and the Northern Territory Government commenced a jointly funded Policy Research Project to consider the issues surrounding Indigenous 'itinerants' in the Darwin/Palmerston area.

The project developed an Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Northern Territory Government in March 2002. In its totality it reflects the multiple and complex needs of public place dwelling Indigenous people. The rationale behind the Project is to 'encourage "itinerants" in Darwin and Palmerston to find pathways away from the destructive cycle of alcohol and substance abuse, which characterises the lifestyle of many of the client group, towards either a return to home or a more productive lifestyle with appropriate accommodation in town' (Project Coordinator, personal communication).

This plan incorporates accommodation, patrolling, education and alcohol responses, as well as responses to regional issues specific to remote communities. The accommodation component involves a range of strategies, from basic camping facilities, to managed and supported accommodation options, through to conventional housing. Fifty different organisations and agencies are involved in the four main working parties. The project incorporates cultural protocols developed by the Larrakia, the traditional owners of the region, which call on mutual understanding and respect between visitors and the Larrakia nation.

Source: ABS & AIHW 2003.

*Estimating the number of
homeless Indigenous
people*

COMMUNITY STANDARDS APPROACH

A widely accepted method to estimate the number of homeless people was developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie who used the community standard definition to define three levels of homelessness:

- Primary homelessness—includes all people without conventional accommodation such as people living on the streets, in the parks, in derelict buildings etc. It is operationalised using the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'.
- Secondary homelessness—includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. This includes people accommodated in SAAP establishments on Census night from the SAAP data collection, as well as people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. The starting point for identifying people in this group is the Census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refugees'. This category also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis (i.e. for 12 weeks or less).
- Tertiary homelessness—includes people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. These people are regarded as homeless because their accommodation situation is below community standard.

Estimating the number of homeless Indigenous people continued

COMMUNITY STANDARDS APPROACH *continued*

According to this definition there were 7,526 homeless Indigenous persons at the time of the 2001 Census. This included 2,657 with no conventional accommodation, 1,566 in SAAP accommodation, 1,660 staying with friends and relatives and 1,643 living in boarding houses (table 4.18).

4.18 NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS—2001

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
Primary homelessness									
No conventional accommodation	227	62	486	162	442	16	1 257	5	2 657
Secondary homelessness									
SAAP accommodation	391	260	395	158	210	27	97	28	1 566
Friends/relatives	518	127	406	171	249	91	82	16	1 660
Tertiary homelessness									
Boarding house	240	115	631	53	153	17	428	6	1 643
Total	1 376	564	1 918	544	1 054	151	1 864	55	7 526

Source: Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2004g, 2004h

The Census is likely to undercount the number of homeless people because of the difficulties in locating them, particularly those with no conventional accommodation such as people who live in improvised dwellings. For example, the Census estimated that there were 2,657 Indigenous people with no conventional accommodation while the 2001 CHINS recorded 5,602 people living in improvised dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities.

The national rate of Indigenous homelessness was 176 per 10,000, but the rate varied significantly across jurisdictions (table 4.19). The highest rates of Indigenous homelessness were found in the Northern Territory (344 per 10,000) and South Australia (226 per 10,000), while Tasmania had the lowest rate (92 per 10,000).

Across Australia, the rate of homelessness for Indigenous Australians was 3.5 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous Australians. Victoria had the largest difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates, with the rate of Indigenous homelessness more than five times the rate for non-Indigenous people.

4.19 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS ON CENSUS NIGHT (a)—2001

		NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
Indigenous	rate	110	217	164	226	170	92	344	151	176
Non-Indigenous	rate	40	42	66	48	60	50	266	38	50
Total	rate	42	43	70	51	64	52	288	39	53
Rate ratio	%	2.7	5.1	2.5	4.7	2.8	1.8	1.3	4.0	3.5

(a) Per 10,000 population.

Source: Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2004g, 2004h

SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH

There are two major national programs that provide assistance to homeless people, the:

Estimating the number of homeless Indigenous people continued

SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH *continued*

- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which provides temporary accommodation and support services, such as domestic violence counselling, employment assistance and living skills development, to homeless people, and aims to help them achieve self-reliance and independence. It is jointly funded and managed by the Australian and state governments with services delivered largely by non-government agencies with some local government participation; and the
- Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) which is funded under the CSHA and provides emergency accommodation for homeless people. Funds are used for the purchase, lease and maintenance of dwellings.

An alternative approach to measuring homelessness is to use a service delivery definition where the homeless are measured as the population who are eligible for assistance from programs supporting the homeless. Rather than a cultural definition of homelessness, for example, SAAP bases its service delivery on a definition of homelessness provided by the *SAAP Act 1994* (section 4). The Act defines a person as homeless if, and only if, he or she has 'inadequate access to safe and secure housing' (FaCS 1999:19). This is often paraphrased as 'considered not to have access to safe, secure and adequate housing'.

The Act then goes on to refer to what this might mean, citing housing situations that may damage health; threaten safety; marginalise a person from both personal amenities and the economic and social support a home normally offers; where the affordability, safety, security or adequacy of housing is threatened; or where there is no security of tenure. A person is also considered homeless under the Act if living in SAAP or other emergency accommodation. There were 15,400 Indigenous people who received SAAP assistance in the 2003–04 financial year (table 4.20).

Those using SAAP services represent a subset of homeless people as not all people experiencing homelessness will use SAAP services. The existence of the SAAP National Data Collection, however, means that there is a wide range of information available on SAAP clients. In addition to counting all people assisted through SAAP, there are also some data collected on those who seek accommodation but whose request for accommodation could not be met.

Homeless people in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

In the year 2003–04, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 16% of all clients aged 15 years or over assisted by SAAP. The number of Indigenous clients of SAAP services constitutes a substantial over-representation of this population group, which was about 2% of the total Australian adult population during this period (table 4.20). This over-representation was evident in every state and territory. For example, in Victoria, Indigenous clients comprised 5% of SAAP clients but only 0.5% of the general Victorian population. In the case of the Northern Territory, around one-quarter (26%) of the population are Indigenous while just over 57% of all SAAP clients identified as Indigenous.

Homeless people in the
Supported Accommodation
Assistance Program
continued

4.20 INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS AGED 15 YEARS OR OVER(a), by state and territory—2003–04

	Indigenous clients(b)	Indigenous clients as a proportion of all SAAP clients aged 15 years or over	Total Indigenous population aged 15 years or over(b)	Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over as a proportion of the total Australian population aged 15 years or over
	no.	%	no.	%
New South Wales	4 000	17.1	85 100	1.6
Victoria	1 500	4.5	18 200	0.5
Queensland	3 700	22.3	79 700	2.6
South Australia	1 500	16.3	16 700	1.3
Western Australia	3 100	38.4	42 700	2.8
Tasmania	400	9.2	11 000	2.9
Northern Territory	1 800	57.1	38 100	25.7
Australian Capital Territory	200	12.5	2 600	1.0
Australia	15 400	16.2	294 300	1.9

(a) Number of clients within a state or territory who received assistance during the year from a SAAP agency in that state or territory. Since a client may have support periods in more than one state or territory, state and territory data do not sum to the national figure.

(b) Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database and ABS 2004e

The age and sex profile of Indigenous and non-Indigenous SAAP clients, and the Indigenous population is shown in table 4.21. There were significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients in relation to sex, with females over-represented among Indigenous clients. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Indigenous SAAP clients were female compared with only 56% of non-Indigenous SAAP clients.

There was not much difference in the age distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous SAAP clients. The largest difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients was among males aged 15–19 years. This age group represented 18% of all Indigenous male SAAP clients compared with 15% of non-Indigenous male SAAP clients. Children aged under 15 years are only considered clients in their own right if they attend an agency without a parent or guardian and so the proportion of SAAP clients in this age group is relatively low.

Homeless people in the
Supported Accommodation
Assistance Program
continued

4.21 SAAP CLIENTS, by Indigenous status, age and sex—2003–04

	INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS		NON-INDIGENOUS SAAP CLIENTS		INDIGENOUS POPULATION		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Age (years)							
Less than 15	3.6	2.2	1.6	1.8	39.4	36.8	
15–19	18.2	16.8	15.3	18.1	10.9	10.4	
20–24	13.5	17.7	13.5	15.6	8.5	8.4	
25–29	10.3	16.3	12.1	13.3	7.4	7.7	
30–34	14.5	16.8	13.5	14.8	7.5	8.1	
35–39	13.9	12.3	11.7	12.7	6.3	6.9	
40–44	10.7	8.3	10.5	9.4	5.6	6.0	
45–49	7.0	4.7	7.6	5.7	4.4	4.6	
50–54	3.9	2.4	5.3	3.4	3.5	3.7	
55–59	2.0	1.2	3.6	2.0	2.4	2.5	
60–64	1.1	0.7	2.2	1.2	1.6	1.8	
65 or over	1.2	0.6	3.2	2.1	2.4	3.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total(a)	no.	4 400	11 400	35 700	45 200	235 900	239 500

(a) Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database

REASONS FOR SEEKING SUPPORT

The higher proportion of Indigenous female clients is reflected in data on the main reasons for seeking SAAP assistance. In 2003–04, the most common main reason for seeking assistance for Indigenous clients was domestic violence (27% of support periods). The comparable figure for the non-Indigenous population was 19%. For non-Indigenous clients the most common main reason for seeking assistance was accommodation difficulties (23% of support periods). The comparable figure for Indigenous clients was 19% (table 4.22). Non-Indigenous clients were also more likely than Indigenous clients to seek assistance because of financial difficulties (15% and 6%, respectively).

Proportions for the other main reasons given for seeking assistance did not differ greatly. Many clients, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, reported relationship and family breakdown as a common main reason for seeking assistance (in 19% of support periods for Indigenous clients and 17% for non-Indigenous clients). A higher proportion of Indigenous clients, compared to non-Indigenous clients, sought assistance because of sexual, physical or emotional abuse (6% of support periods for Indigenous clients compared to 3% for non-Indigenous clients) and because of drug, alcohol or substance abuse (6% and 4%, respectively).

4.22 MAIN REASON FOR SEEKING SAAP ASSISTANCE, by Indigenous status—2003–04

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total	Number
	%	%	%	no.
Accommodation difficulties(a)	18.5	23.0	22.3	33 700
Relationship/family breakdown(b)	19.0	17.3	17.5	26 400
Sexual/physical/emotional abuse	5.9	3.3	3.7	5 600
Domestic violence	27.0	18.6	20.0	30 200
Financial difficulty	6.2	15.1	13.6	20 600
Gambling	0.1	0.2	0.2	300
Drug/alcohol/substance abuse	5.7	3.9	4.2	6 400
Recently left institution	1.4	1.6	1.6	2 400
Psychiatric illness	0.6	1.7	1.5	2 300
Recent arrival in area with no means of support	5.4	5.0	5.1	7 600
Itinerant	2.7	2.4	2.4	3 600
Other	7.8	7.8	7.8	11 700
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	. .
Total support periods (no.)(c)	25 300	125 700	. .	151 000

. . not applicable

(a) Usual accommodation unavailable; eviction/previous accommodation ended; and emergency accommodation ended.

(b) Time out from family/other situation and interpersonal conflict.

(c) Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database

SAAP clients before and after support

SAAP aims to help clients re-establish their capacity to live independently once they cease to receive assistance from the program. To evaluate the program's success in achieving this objective, information is collected about clients' living arrangements and income source both before and after their use of SAAP services. The data presented in tables 4.23 and 4.24 relate only to support periods for which either both before and after information on clients' living arrangements (table 4.23) or before and after information on income source (table 4.24) were provided. Instances where only before or after information was provided, or neither, have been excluded. Caution should be exercised in assessing the data because they do not necessarily represent a complete picture of the population. The demographic data on excluded clients indicate that they were more likely to be a specific group of clients who received brief crisis assistance. In general, these clients were more likely to be older and to be male.

For Indigenous clients there were only small changes after assistance in the proportions in different types of accommodation. The main change occurred in the proportion of clients living in an institutionalised setting, which decreased from 11% before assistance to 8% after assistance. There was also an increase in the proportion of Indigenous clients in public or community housing, from 30% before assistance to 32% after assistance (table 4.23). Among non-Indigenous clients there was an increase in the proportion of clients in public or community housing (from 10% before assistance to 14% after) and some increase in the proportion in private rental accommodation (from 18% to 20%).

SAAP clients before and
after support continued

4.23 TYPE OF HOUSING BEFORE AND AFTER SAAP SUPPORT(a), by
Indigenous status—2003–04

	INDIGENOUS		NON-INDIGENOUS		
	Before support	After support	Before support	After support	
SAAP or other emergency housing	15.1	15.0	14.6	16.5	
Living rent-free in house or flat	12.3	11.3	11.7	8.9	
Private rental	7.5	8.5	18.4	20.0	
Public or community housing	29.8	31.8	10.1	13.8	
Rooming house/hostel/hotel/caravan	4.7	5.7	11.4	12.0	
Boarding in a private home	13.4	12.1	10.8	9.3	
Living in a car/tent/park/street/squat	2.4	2.6	7.6	6.7	
Institutional	10.5	7.9	11.7	9.1	
Other	4.3	4.9	3.8	3.5	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total support periods(a) (b)	no.	16 500	16 500	87 400	87 400

(a) Support periods with reported living arrangements. Excludes records where both before and after support information on living arrangements have not been provided.

(b) Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database

As to source of income for Indigenous clients, there were also only small changes in the proportions of the various sources of income before and after assistance. The proportion of Indigenous clients on pension or benefit, for example, increased from 90% before assistance to 91% after assistance, and the proportion with no income decreased from 6% to 5% (table 4.24). For non-Indigenous clients, the changes were greater, with the proportion on Government pension or benefit increasing from 85% before assistance to 87% after assistance, and the proportion with no income decreasing from 7% to 5%.

4.24 SOURCE OF INCOME BEFORE AND AFTER SAAP SUPPORT(a), by
Indigenous status—2003–04

	INDIGENOUS		NON-INDIGENOUS		
	Before support	After support	Before support	After support	
Source of income					
No income	6.2	4.8	7.2	4.9	
No income, awaiting pension/benefit	0.7	0.6	1.1	0.8	
Government pension/benefit	90.1	91.3	85.1	87.0	
Other	3.0	3.3	6.7	7.3	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total support periods(a) (b)	no.	19 800	19 800	101 200	101 200

(a) Support periods with reported income source. Excludes records where both before and after support income sources have not been provided.

(b) Numbers have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database

Unmet need for SAAP

The Demand for Accommodation Collection attempts to count unmet requests for SAAP accommodation in two separate weeks during the year. This collection counts adults and children who were seeking accommodation but whose request for accommodation could not be met. The identification of Indigenous status in this data collection is incomplete and the Indigenous status of over one-third of people who were turned away is unknown.

*Unmet need for SAAP
continued*

In addition to those clients who were provided with assistance, in December 2002 and May 2003 there were an average of 56 Indigenous people per day with valid unmet requests for immediate accommodation. There were more Indigenous females (33) with unmet requests for assistance than Indigenous males (23) (table 4.25). It is not possible to extrapolate these unmet demand figures to annual figures because of seasonal factors and because people can have several unmet requests in a year.

4.25 AVERAGE NO. OF INDIGENOUS PERSONS WITH UNMET REQUESTS FOR IMMEDIATE SAAP ACCOMMODATION (a)—2003–04

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.
Males	3.9	1.8	6.5	3.9	5.6	0.1	0.9	0.6	23.2
Females	6.7	1.6	9.0	5.2	7.8	—	1.9	0.6	32.9
Persons	10.6	3.4	15.5	9.1	13.3	0.1	2.7	1.2	56.1

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Data are the average number of unmet requests per day, over a two week period.

Source: AIHW, SAAP database

SUMMARY

The tenure type of Indigenous households differs from that of other Australian households. Indigenous households are much less likely to be owner/purchaser households and much more likely to live in some form of social housing such as state or territory owned housing or Indigenous or mainstream community housing. The proportion of Indigenous households who are purchasing their own home, however, is increasing. The proportion of Indigenous people who lived in households in which someone was purchasing their home rose from 11% in 1994 to 17% in 2002.

The housing tenure of Indigenous households varies by remoteness reflecting, in part, the availability of different tenure options for Indigenous people. Among Indigenous households in non-remote areas, 34% were home owners, 32% were private or other renters and 24% were renting from state or territory housing authorities. One-half of Indigenous households in remote areas were renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing providers and only 14% were home owners.

Some Indigenous households, especially those in remote areas, live in conditions that do not support good health. Some 9% of Indigenous households in Australia were living in overcrowded conditions, which can contribute to the spread of infectious diseases and put stress on basic household facilities. The highest rate of overcrowding occurred in households that were renting from Indigenous or mainstream community housing providers (34%).

Dwelling condition and connection to essential services are also important issues in relation to Indigenous community housing. There were 1,882 temporary or improvised dwellings in discrete Indigenous communities. Among permanent dwellings in these communities, 31% required major repair or replacement and 153 had no organised sewerage supply.

SUMMARY *continued*

There were 7,526 Indigenous people who were homeless in 2001. The rate of Indigenous homelessness was 3.5 times the rate of non-Indigenous homelessness. Indigenous people were also more likely to use SAAP services, especially Indigenous women who made up nearly three-quarters of Indigenous SAAP clients.