

Sector bulletin: 15 November 2012

ABS: Estimating homelessness 2011 - Victorian snapshot

Homelessness in Victoria- the trends

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has released estimates of homelessness from the 2011 Census, based on their new statistical definition of homelessness.

The ABS reports that in 2011 across Australia:

- **105,237** people in Australia were homeless on Census night, up from 89,728 in 2006
- this is a **17 per cent increase** in the number of people experiencing homelessness since 2006
- the **rate of homelessness** (taking population growth into account) **increased eight per cent**
- the rate of people who were sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings decreased **14 per cent** from 3.7 people per 10,000 in 2006 to 3.2 in 2011.

Victoria has seen a much more dramatic increase in the rate of homelessness, with:

- **22,789** Victorians homeless on Census night
- a **20 per cent** increase in the rate of homelessness up from 35.3 people per 10,000 in 2006 to 42.6 people per 10,000 in 2011
- a **25 per cent** increase in the rate of rough sleeping, from 1.6 persons per 10,000 to 2 people per 10,000.

- a **five per cent** increase in people staying in temporary supported accommodation, indicating more people are getting access to homelessness services.

Homelessness in Victoria – the numbers

By accommodation type:

- 1,092 in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- 7,845 in supported accommodation for the homeless
- 3,324 staying temporarily with other households
- 4,397 in boarding houses
- 90 in other temporary lodging
- 6,041 in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

By age:

- 5,920 under 18
- 8,375 between 18 and 34
- 5,731 between 35 and 54
- 1,591 between 55 and 65
- 1,119 aged 65 and over.

By sex

- 12,980 male
- 9,810 female.

By indigenous status:

- 832 indigenous
- 19,240 non indigenous
- 2,717 not stated.

Homelessness in Victoria at a glance – rate of homeless persons per 10,000 population

	2006	2011	% change
Persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	1.6	2.0	25%
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	14.0	14.7	5%
Persons staying temporarily with other households	6.5	6.2	-5%
Persons staying in boarding houses	6.2	8.2	32%
Persons in other temporary lodging	0.1	0.2	100%
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	6.8	11.3	66%
Age			
Under 12	39.1	45.4	16%
12–18	39.0	48.2	24%
19–24	64.8	86.4	33%
25–34	49.2	60.2	22%
35–44	35.0	41.1	17%
45–54	29.3	35.1	20%
55–64	21.6	26.0	20%
65–74	15.6	18.5	19%
75 and over	12.3	10.4	-15%
Indigenous status			
Indigenous	212.0	219.0	3%
Non-Indigenous	31.2	38.0	22%
Not stated	85.9	110.0	28%

How does the Census measure homelessness?

We are fortunate to have led the way in Australia for many years with Chris Chamberlain and David McKenzie's work on the cultural definition of homelessness and their pioneering work with earlier Census data.

For the first time the ABS has now developed and applied their own statistical definition of homelessness.

The ABS defines homelessness as when a person is living:

- in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or

- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

This definition of homelessness focusses on three aspects of 'home' in security of tenure, adequacy of the dwelling and social amenity.

The elements are measured within the context of an overarching consideration of accommodation alternatives. People who have the financial, physical, psychological and personal means to access alternatives that are safe and appropriate are not defined as homeless.

Is this the full picture?

The Census measures people who are at home on Census night. Despite the best efforts of the ABS and Census collectors it cannot give us a comprehensive picture of homelessness in Australia.

That is why an agreed statistical definition of homelessness is so important. The ABS will now be able to measure the scope, scale and dimensions of homelessness through a range of data sources including: the General Social Survey; Personal Safety Survey; Disability and Ageing and Carers Survey, among others.

Over the next few years we'll have new and more in-depth statistics on homelessness. Researchers, governments and the sector will have the opportunity to pull together a fuller picture of homelessness in Australia that can inform policy and service delivery.

What does this mean for the Australian Government's targets of halving homelessness by 2020?

The new ABS statistical definition of homelessness has been applied to the 2001 and 2006 Census, and shows how progress is being made over time.

With the rate of homelessness increasing, the Census highlights the need to increase our efforts to meet this goal.