

National Affordability Housing Agreement: 4: Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness, 2010 QS

Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Quality statement summary:

The key data quality issue for the proxy indicator is relevance:

- The proxy indicator does not cover all homeless people but only those people (and accompanying children) that are supported at a SAAP agency and are assessed as having housing/accommodation needs by a SAAP agency worker.
- Agency reporting practices and policies can result in multiple support periods being recorded for each episode of homelessness. This necessitates an adjustment to support periods to identify repeat homelessness.
- Consecutive SAAP support periods may relate to just a single period of homelessness. A gap of 6 weeks between SAAP support periods has been used to identify distinct periods of homelessness. Without using a gap the number of support periods overestimates the incidence of repeat homelessness, however using a gap can also lead to some repeat episodes of homelessness being unidentified. The gap of 6 weeks provides a reasonable balance between errors in identification of repeat homelessness.
- By only counting homeless people within a single year, persons who had periods of homelessness in previous years could fall out of scope for the proxy indicator.

Institutional environment:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has calculated the proxy indicator using data provided by SAAP agencies in all states and territories. AIHW has had the role of SAAP NDCA since the collection's inception in 1996-97. There are various mechanisms in place that provide the framework for the implementation and governance of SAAP and the NDCA. These mechanisms include the SAAP Act (1994), Memorandum of Understanding, and Multilateral/Bilateral Agreements, which set out accountability arrangements, management structures, and funding allocations. As part of the Australian Government's National Reform Agenda, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has rolled SAAP into the new National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), effective from 1 January 2009. The 2007-08 data used to calculate the proxy indicator are not affected by this change.

The AIHW works closely with all state, territory and Australian Government authorities in collecting, analysing and disseminating data. However, the Institute is an independent statutory authority within the Health and Ageing portfolio, and is responsible to the Minister for Health and Ageing. The Institute is governed by a Board, which is accountable to the parliament of Australia through the Minister. When errors are found in published data, those errors are corrected immediately in publications on the AIHW website, and where necessary, in on-line tables and online interactive data cubes. Corrections are documented on the AIHW website.

Timeliness: The data used in the proxy indicator has been recorded on a continuous basis and published annually since 1996. The most recent reference period for the data is 2007-2008. The data for the 2007-08 financial year was first published in the Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08. The SAAP NDC annual reports are published between 6 to 9 months after the end of the reference period.

Accessibility: Related data to those shown in the proxy indicator tables are available publicly in the SAAP annual reports released by AIHW. Not all disaggregations, including those shown in these performance indicator tables, are published directly but may be requested, subject to jurisdiction approval.
The relevant publication associated with the proxy indicator is; AIHW 2009. Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08 Australia. SAAP NDC report series 13. Cat. no. HOU 191. Canberra: AIHW.

Interpretability: Further information on the adjustment scheme, legislation and the SAAP collection can be found in;
AIHW 2009. Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08 Australia. SAAP NDC report series 13. Cat. no. HOU 191. Canberra: AIHW.
AIHW 2005. SAAP National Data Collection collector's manual July 2005. Canberra: AIHW.
Karmel R 1999. SAAP National Data Collection: adjustment methods for incomplete coverage. Canberra: AIHW.
Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994, Act No. 162 of 1994, Canberra.

Relevance: The proxy indicator does not cover all homeless people but only those that are supported at a SAAP agency and are assessed as having housing/accommodation needs by a SAAP agency worker. Homeless people who do not receive support from SAAP agencies and SAAP clients who are not identified as having housing/accommodation needs are not in scope for the proxy indicator.

The proxy indicator has been estimated from the SAAP NDC and has the same scope as the SAAP Client Collection. In the SAAP Client Collection, data are collected by support providers for each client support period. An individual client may receive support on more than one occasion – either from the same SAAP agency or from different SAAP agencies.

The scope of the proxy indicator is all people who were either SAAP clients or children accompanying SAAP clients, who were identified by the SAAP agency worker as having housing/accommodation needs during the 2007-08 financial year, where:

A SAAP client is a person who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness who:

- is accommodated by a SAAP agency; or
- enters into an ongoing support relationship with a SAAP agency; or
- receives support or assistance from a SAAP agency which entails generally 1 hour or more of a worker's time, either with that client directly or on behalf of that client, on a given day. This includes people who are aged 18 years or older and people of any age not accompanied by a parent or guardian.

An accompanying child is a person aged under 18 years who:

- has a parent or guardian who is a SAAP client; and
- accompanies that client to a SAAP agency any time during that client's support period; and/or
- receives assistance directly as a consequence of a parent or guardian's support period.

People can be considered as SAAP clients for a particular financial year reporting period when:

- the client's support period ended in the reporting period, or
- the client's support period started on or before the end of the reporting period and either was ongoing at the end of the reporting period (30 June) or the end date of

the support period was unknown and the record was entered by the NDCA before the data entry close-off date for the reporting period. Under SAAP, people are considered homeless when they do not have access to safe and secure housing. This definition of homelessness can be considered broader in scope than the cultural definition of homelessness used in other NAHA homelessness Performance Indicators (PIs) as the cultural definition only covers people who do not have access to housing above or equal to the minimum community standard of a small rental flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and some security of tenure.

The financial year was chosen as a standard time frame for the proxy indicator as this is in line with the SAAP reporting period and repeat periods of homelessness must be measured over a period of time. By only counting homeless people within a financial year, persons who had multiple periods of homelessness spanning across different financial years may fall out of scope for the proxy indicator.

Multiple periods of SAAP support can be provided which could relate to just a single period of homelessness. This can happen for example when a SAAP client receives support and then seeks additional support for the same period of homelessness over the following days. A SAAP client's support period is assumed to relate to a different period of homelessness when there is a gap of 6 weeks or more between support periods for which housing/accommodation needs have been identified. A gap of 6 weeks has been determined to provide a reasonable balance between identifying support periods which relate to different periods of homelessness and extending the minimum gap required for identifying distinct support periods. If the minimum gap between distinct support periods is extended too far this leads to more support periods crossing into the following financial year and potentially falling out of scope for the proxy indicator.

Accuracy:

Estimates in the proxy indicator tables, have been obtained using data from the 2007-08 SAAP Client Collection. The 2007-08 SAAP Client Collection achieved an agency participation rate of 92 per cent and valid consent rates of 83 per cent for clients and 69 per cent for accompanying children. Since we do not have data for some of the SAAP clients we have adjusted the estimates so that they cover the entire SAAP client population.

The NDC requires that SAAP clients provide information in a climate of informed consent. If a client's consent is not obtained, only a limited number of questions can be completed, and a 'statistical linkage key' is not recorded. Statistical linkage keys allow data collected on separate occasions from the same person to be combined without identifying the person. Thus they allow enumeration of actual clients and accompanying children in addition to occasions of support. Note that there are a small number of inaccuracies caused by identical statistical linkage keys and changing linkage key information for the same client and this has not been considered in the adjustment scheme.

The adjustment scheme assumes that, on average, the demographic characteristics and circumstances of people are the same regardless of whether data about them were reported to the NDCA. This allows for differences between support periods with consent and those without. The scheme also adjusts estimates to allow for agency non-participation (if this occurs), for clients who give valid consent for some support periods but not for others (referred to as 'mixed consent'), and for clients who do not give consent in any of their periods of support. There is no strictly objective method that can be applied to the data from the Client Collection to adjust estimates for incomplete response. Karmel (1999:23, 26) describes the statistical assumptions underlying the adjustment scheme developed by the AIHW.

Inconsistent reporting of indigenous status by clients has been adjusted for by using the indigenous status of the first valid (i.e. non-missing and consenting) response provided by the client. As different periods of homelessness can occur in different states, a similar option was chosen for determining the state of the client. The state of the client is determined to be the state of the SAAP agency which first assessed the client as having a housing/accommodation need within the financial year.

For confidentiality reasons, numerators with small cell sizes (those less than 5 and the next smallest cell) and corresponding proportions will be reported as np (not published).

Coherence:

Both the numerators and the denominators in the proxy indicator tables have been drawn from the SAAP NDC and have been produced using the same definitions and estimation schemes.

The total number of SAAP clients for whom housing/accommodation needs were identified during the 2007-08 financial year was chosen for the denominator as it is the measure that will provide the most reliable comparison with the numerator of the proxy indicator. The total number of homeless persons is also available as part of NAHA Performance Indicator (c). The denominator for the proxy indicator was estimated from the SAAP NDC so that changes to the proxy proportion would not be driven by inconsistencies in the estimation of the numerator and denominator. The SAAP definition of homelessness used in the proxy indicator comes from the SAAP act 1994 and is consistent with publications such as the *Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007-08*. This concept of homelessness is however different from the cultural definition (Chamberlain and Mackenzie 2003) used in the *Counting the Homeless* reports and the NAHA Performance Indicator (c).

Comparisons of age breakdowns of the 2 NAHA indicators on homelessness must be made with care due to differences in the age categories used for the two indicators. In particular the age category 12-17 could not be produced for NAHA Performance Indicator (c).

Data products

Implementation start date: 21/07/2010