

# Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2013-14

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# Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2013-14

## Identifying and definitional attributes

<b>Metadata item type:</b>	Data Quality Statement
<b>METEOR identifier:</b>	593778
<b>Registration status:</b>	<a href="#">AIHW Data Quality Statements</a> , Superseded 14/12/2016

## Data quality

### Data quality statement summary:

- The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) replaced the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program(SAAP) National Data Collection (NDC) on July 1 2011. There are significant differences between the SAAP NDC and the SHSC.
- Data is collected monthly from agencies participating in the collection. All agencies that receive funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC, but only those expected to provide data are covered.
- A total of 96.2% (1,542) of all agencies that were in scope of the collection in 2013-14 for at least one month during the 2013–14 reporting period submitted information for each collection month where they were expected to participate. Of the remaining agencies, 2% provided data for some but not all months where data was expected, and 1.8% failed to provide data for any month.
- Matching of data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times requires a valid statistical linkage key (SLK). Ninety-four per cent of support periods had a valid SLK in 2013–14.

## Description

The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) collects information on people seeking services from agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or the NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services.

**Institutional environment:** The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987 to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity established in 1987, governed by a management Board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health and Ageing portfolio.

The AIHW aims to provide authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing. The Institute collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The Institute also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national datasets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these datasets and disseminate information and statistics.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987, in conjunction with compliance to the Privacy Act 1988, ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au).

The SHSC was developed by AIHW in conjunction with the states and territories and is being administered by the AIHW. All agencies that receive funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) or the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC, but only those expected to provide data are covered. Data is collected monthly from agencies participating in the collection.

**Timeliness:** The SHSC began collecting data from 1 July 2011. The SHSC collects information from all participating agencies every month. Data collected is regularly loaded to a Master Database. Once sufficient data is received, validated 'snapshots' are created at particular points in time from this Master Database for reporting purposes.

The 2013–14 snapshot contains data submitted to the AIHW for the July 2013 to June 2014 collection months, using responses received and validated as at 10 August 2014.

**Accessibility:** Results are published on the AIHW website. Data not available online or in reports can be requested via the online customised data request system <https://datarequest.aihw.gov.au>; or obtained from the Communications, Media and Marketing Unit on (02) 6244 1032 or via email to [info@aihw.gov.au](mailto:info@aihw.gov.au). Data requests are charged on a cost-recovery basis.

**Interpretability:** Information on the development of the SHSC, definitions and concepts, and collection materials and processes can be found on the AIHW website, [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au). Information on definitions, concepts and classifications can also be found in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2011).

**Relevance:****Scope and coverage—clients**

The SHSC collects information about clients of specialist homelessness agencies, that is, people who receive assistance from agencies funded by state and territory governments to respond to or prevent homelessness. In addition, some information is also collected about unassisted people, that is, any person who seeks services from a specialist homelessness agency and does not receive any services at that time.

SHSC data does not cover all homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, rather it captures those who seek assistance from an SHS agency.

Not everyone in scope for SHSC is homeless, because specialist homelessness agencies provide services to people who are at risk of homelessness aimed at preventing them from becoming homeless, as well as to people who are currently homeless.

Data about clients is submitted based on support periods—a period of support provided by a specialist homelessness service agency to a client. Information about clients is then linked together based on a statistical key (see ‘Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) validity’ below).

A client may be of any age—children are clients if they receive specialist homelessness assistance.

**Scope and coverage—agencies**

The SHSC collects information on people who seek and receive services from specialist homelessness agencies. All agencies that receive funding under the NAHA or NPAH to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHSC in general, but only those who received funding for at least four months during the 2013–14 financial year are in scope for the 2013–14 reporting period. Agencies that are in coverage are those in-scope agencies for which details have been provided to the AIHW by the relevant state/territory department.

Of the agencies expected to participate in the collection in at least one month during the 2013-14 reporting period, 96.2 % of agencies provided data for each month where they were expected to participate, 2% provided data for some but not all of the months where data was expected, and just under 1.8% failed to provide data for any month.

**Accuracy:****Potential sources of error**

As with all data collections, the SHSC estimates are subject to errors. These can arise from data coding and processing errors, inaccurate data, or missing data. Reported findings are based on data reported by agency workers.

**Data validation**

The AIHW receives data from specialist homelessness agencies every month. These data go through two processes of data validation (error checking). Firstly, data validation is incorporated into the client management systems (CMSs) most agencies use to record their data. Secondly, data are submitted through the AIHW online reporting web-portal, Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR). SHOR completes a more thorough data validation and reports (to staff of the homelessness agency) any errors that need correcting before data can be accepted.

**Agency participation**

Of all the agencies expected to participate for at least one month in the collection (1542), 96.2% submitted information for each collection month where they were expected to participate, 2% provided data for some but not all months where data was expected, and 1.75% failed to provide data for any month.

**Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) validity**

An individual client may seek or receive support on more than one occasion—either from the same agency or from a different agency. Data from individual clients who presented at different agencies and/or at different times is matched based on a statistical linkage key (SLK) which allows client level data to be created. The SLK is constructed from information about the client’s date of birth, sex and an alphacode based on selected letters of their name.

If a support period record does not have a valid SLK, it cannot be linked to a client, and thus it is not included in client-level tables (although it is included in support period-level tables). Ninety-four per cent of support periods had a valid SLK in

2013–14.

### Incomplete responses

In many support periods, in 2013–14, valid responses were not recorded for all questions—invalid responses were recorded, ‘don’t know’ was selected, or no response was recorded. Support periods with invalid/don’t know/missing responses were retained in the collection and, no attempt was made to deduce or impute the true value of invalid/don’t know/missing responses.

Where data relate to the total population the estimate includes clients with missing information. This information has been attributed in proportion with those clients for whom information is available. In tables where the population relates to clients with a particular need or accommodation circumstance, clients with missing needs information are excluded.

### Non-response bias

Non-response occurs where there is less than 100% agency participation, less than 100% SLK validity and where there are incomplete responses. However estimates which include imputation for the missing data will not necessarily be biased, if the non-respondents are not systematically different in terms of how they would have answered the questions. However, no information is yet available to indicate whether or not there is any systematic bias in agency non-participation, SLK validity and incomplete responses.

### Imputation

An imputation strategy is used to correct for two types of non-sampling error: agency non-response and data error in the statistical linkage key data item, which is used to link information about individual clients together to provide a complete picture for that client.

This strategy has two parts. The first part addresses agency non-response by using both explicit and implicit imputation and results in agency weights and some explicitly imputed service period records and end dates. The second part addresses the impact of invalid statistical linkage keys (SLKs) on the total number of clients and results in client weights.

Agencies that are out of scope for 9 months in 2013–14 are deemed to be out of scope for the whole period and excluded from all calculations.

### Coherence:

The SHSC replaces the SAAP NDC, which began in 1996. The SHSC differs from the SAAP NDC in many respects. The major definitional differences between SAAP and SHSC relate to the capture of information about children and support. In the SAAP NDC, children who accompanied a parent or guardian were counted as accompanying children (with only limited information collected); in the SHSC, children are included as clients (in their own right) if they directly receive a service. In SAAP, support was considered to entail generally 1 hour or more of a worker’s time; in SHSC no time-related condition exists.

The SHSC employs an imputation strategy to correct for two types of sampling error; agency non-response and data error in the SLK key data item on a consistent basis for each year of the collection. In addition a ramp up imputation was also utilised in the first year of the collection to account for the month on month increase in the number of agencies that submitted data, and in order to report the full years activities in the first year and ensure that data was comparable across years of the collection.

## Source and reference attributes

**Submitting organisation:** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

**Steward:** [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

**Reference documents:** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2014). Specialist Homelessness Services 2013-14. Cat. no. HOU XXX. Canberra: AIHW.

## Relational attributes

**Related metadata references:**

Supersedes [Data quality statement \(Specialist Homelessness Services Collection —December quarter 2011\)](#)

[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 15/12/2014

Has been superseded by [Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2014-15](#)

[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 14/12/2016