

Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2014-15

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Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2014-15

Identifying and definitional attributes

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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 are 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.
- Of the agencies expected to participate in the collection in at least one month during the 2014-15 reporting period, 97.9 per cent of agencies provided data for each month where they were expected to participate, 1.8 per cent provided data for some but not all of the months where data was expected, and 0.3 per cent 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 2014–15.

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:	<p>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 portfolio.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au.</p> <p>The SHSC was developed by AIHW in conjunction with the states and territories and is 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 are collected monthly from agencies participating in the collection.</p>
Timeliness:	<p>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 2014–15 snapshot contains data submitted to the AIHW for the July 2014 to June 2015 collection months, using responses received and validated as at 13 August 2015. Data for 2014-15 will be first published in the Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Web Report in December 2015.</p>
Accessibility:	<p>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 Digital and Media Communications Unit on (02) 6244 1026 or via email to info@aihw.gov.au. Data requests are charged on a cost-recovery basis.</p>
Interpretability:	<p>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. Information on definitions, concepts and classifications can also be found in the SHSC's collection manual (AIHW 2013).</p>

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.

Not everyone in scope for the 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. 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.

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 SLK (see '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 2014–15 financial year are in scope for the 2014–15 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 government department.

Of the agencies expected to participate in the collection in at least one month during the 2014–15 reporting period, 97.9 per cent of agencies provided data for each month where they were expected to participate, 1.8 per cent provided data for some but not all of the months where data was expected, and just under 0.3 per cent failed to provide data for any month. These proportions represent a data quality improvement from the previous collection period (2013–14).

Nationally, a small number of service providers are excluded from the collection's coverage for a number of reasons including that agencies do not see clients directly but support other SHS agencies (for example, property maintenance), levels of funding are such that reporting is impracticable, or agencies whose method of service delivery does not allow for case management (such as soup kitchens).

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, 97.9 per cent submitted information for each collection month where they were

expected to participate, 1.8 per cent provided data for some but not all months where data was expected, and 0.3 per cent 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 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 2014–15.

Incomplete responses

In many support periods, in 2014–15, 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.

During the 2014-15 reporting period, changes were made to the CMS to prompt data providers to report mandatory data items. This led to a substantial improvement to data quality, in particular a decline in the number of non-response or 'missing' values for those items.

Non-response bias

Non-response occurs where there is less than 100 per cent agency participation, less than 100 per cent 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 SLK 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 SLKs on the total number of clients and results in client weights.

Agencies that are out of scope for 9 months in 2014–15 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 the SHSC no time-related condition exists.

Changes in SHSC data over time may be influenced by changes in underlying jurisdiction policies, programs or systems. These changes might affect the service footprint, the characteristics of priority clients, or how services work together to respond to client needs.

In 2014-15, changes occurred in the way agencies are required to report 'main reason' and 'reasons for seeking assistance'. In addition to improvements in the CMS for these data items, wording providing a specific example of housing crisis was removed from the section relating to reason for seeking assistance in the CMS. Comparisons over time should be made with caution as the reporting of housing crisis, financial difficulties and housing affordability stress may be inconsistent between agencies. These changes in agency reporting were evident in the data from all states and territories.

State/Territory-specific issues:

Data submitted by NSW agencies to the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection were impacted by a major transition period for NSW Specialist Homelessness Services in 2014-15. For example, reporting of the number of days of support and accommodation nights have been largely affected by this transition. The implementation of new contractual arrangements affected the continuity of agency submissions and the completeness of the NSW Specialist Homelessness Establishment Database used to impute missing agency data. Accordingly NSW data for 2014-15 should be used with caution when making comparisons with past years' figures for NSW or with data for other states and territories.

Also in 2014-15, QLD introduced a new Homelessness Information Platform (QHIP), a government-funded assessment and referral tool. The introduction of this tool has affected a number of SHSC concepts and in particular may have led to a decline in the reported number of individuals leaving a service unassisted.

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 (2015). Specialist Homelessness Services 2014-15. Cat. no. HOU XXX. Canberra: AIHW.

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data Quality Statement 2013-14](#)
[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 14/12/2016
Has been superseded by [Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2015–16: Quality Statement](#)
[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 04/12/2017