

Community Housing Data Collection, 2020–21; Quality Statement

Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Quality statement summary:

Description

Data are provided annually to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) by jurisdictions and are sourced from community housing organisations (CHOs) and from the jurisdiction's administrative systems. The annual data collection captures information about CHOs, the dwellings and tenancy rental units they manage, households on the waiting list, and the tenants and households assisted. Limited financial information from the previous financial year is also collected.

Summary

- All states and territories provide the AIHW with community housing data from their administrative systems. The AIHW compiles their data for national reporting in the *Report on government services* (RoGS). The data are also published in AIHW reports.
- Additionally, unit record community housing data are collected from CHOs via an Excel survey tool managed by the AIHW. One jurisdiction, the Northern Territory, does not use the AIHW-managed survey and does not provide any unit record household data.
- Care is required when comparing outputs across states and territories. Differences in the data collected, including which records are included or excluded from a calculation can affect the coherence of the outputs. Coherence over time has been affected by changes in methodology (see 'coherence' section for details).

Institutional environment:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) (AIHW Act), governed by a [management board](#) and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW is a nationally recognised information management agency. Its purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

Compliance with the confidentiality requirements in the AIHW Act, the Privacy Principles in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth), and AIHW's data governance arrangements ensures that the AIHW is well positioned to release information for public benefit while protecting the identity of individuals and organisations.

For further information, see the AIHW website <https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-us>, which includes details about the AIHW's governance (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-governance>) and vision and strategic goals (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-vision-and-strategic-goals>).

The AIHW receives, compiles, edits and verifies the data in collaboration with states and territories. The finalised data sets are signed off by the states and territories and used by the AIHW for reporting, analysis and approved ad hoc data requests. Requests for jurisdiction-level data releases must be signed off by the relevant state or territory.

Timeliness: Data are collected annually. The reference period for this collection is the 2020–21 financial year. The collection is mostly a 30 June 2021 snapshot, but also captures information regarding new households assisted during 2020–21. Limited financial information from the 2019–20 financial year is also collected.

Accessibility: Data are reported in the AIHW's annual [Housing assistance in Australia](#) reports and the Productivity Commission's annual [Report on government services](#).

Users can request additional disaggregation of data which are not available online or in reports (subject to the AIHW's confidentiality policy and state and territory approval) via the [AIHW's online data request system](#). Depending on the nature of the request, access to unpublished data may also incur costs or require approval from the AIHW Ethics Committee.

General enquiries about AIHW publications can be directed to info@aihw.gov.au.

Interpretability: Metadata and definitions relating to this data source can be found in the [Community housing data set specification 2018-](#)

Supplementary information can be found in the housing collection data manuals which are available upon request.

Relevance: The scope of community housing, for the purpose of this collection, includes all tenancy rental units under the management of a community housing organisation, excluding Indigenous community housing organisations. Dwellings are excluded where the tenancy is managed by the state/territory housing authority or by a specialist homelessness services agency. Additional jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions also apply. These jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions reflect a number of factors including differences in the definition of community housing across jurisdictional legislation; difficulties in identifying some organisations among those that are not registered or funded by the state/territory housing authority; and some inconsistencies in reporting, such as the inclusion of transitional housing and National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) dwellings.

The data collected by the jurisdictions conform well in terms of reference period. However, due to the jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions, the data do not conform well in terms of organisation coverage and reporting at a national level.

New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory supply unit record level data. These data include details on individuals, organisations, dwellings and associated tenancies of the organisations that responded to the survey. Queensland supplies unit record data supplemented by aggregate administrative data for funded organisations, properties and current waitlist applications. The Northern Territory submits aggregate data, which includes dwelling- and organisational-level data, but not information on individual tenancies or persons.

The data are highly relevant for monitoring trends in the number of households assisted in community housing. The data are used for many purposes, including by policymakers to evaluate both the circumstances of tenants in community housing dwellings and the amount of rent paid by tenants relative to their income; and to assess the efficiency of community housing organisations in providing dwellings.

Accuracy: The information was sourced by state/territory housing authorities from community housing organisations and/or from administrative records held by them. Data are incomplete for some jurisdictions due to non-reporting or under-reporting by CHOs. The response rate differs between jurisdictions—as outlined below:

State/territory	Coverage
New South Wales	Of the 147 community housing organisations, 35 completed the survey tool accounting for 94% of the total dwelling portfolio. The same coverage rate was observed in 2019–20.
Victoria	Of the 79 community housing organisations, 57 completed the survey tool. This was a decrease from the 65 community housing organisations who responded to the survey in 2019–20. Information regarding dwellings for which the organisation did not provide unit record data was not reported for 2020–21 so the coverage rate cannot be calculated by the AIHW.

Queensland	Of the 145 community housing organisations, 70 completed the survey tool accounting for 93% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents a decrease from the 97% coverage rate in 2019–20.
Western Australia	Of the 34 registered community housing organisations, 28 completed the survey tool accounting for 95% of the total dwelling portfolio. This represents a decrease from the 98% coverage rate in 2019–20.
South Australia	All 28 community housing organisations completed the survey tool covering 100% of the total dwelling portfolio. The same coverage rate was observed in 2019–20.
Tasmania	Of the 53 community housing organisations, 37 completed the survey tool. This was a decrease from the 42 community housing organisations who responded to the survey in 2019–20. Information regarding dwellings for which the organisation did not provide unit record data was not reported for 2020–21 so the coverage rate cannot be calculated by the AIHW.
Australian Capital Territory	All 7 community housing organisations completed the survey tool covering 100% of the total dwelling portfolio. The same coverage rate was observed in 2019–20.
Northern Territory	Only administrative data were provided for 38 community housing organisations. Administrative data were provided for the same number of community housing organisations in 2019–20.

There are some accuracy issues with the data collected, more specifically:

- The community housing organisation and state/territory housing authority administrative systems from which this collection are drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, inconsistent data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.
- Not all organisations capture and report all data items—data may not be collected and reported in a manner consistent with national data definitions.
- For some organisations, some information may be self-identified and not reported under eligibility requirements for some programs (for example, Indigenous status and disability information).
- The sum of 'tenancy rental units by remoteness' may differ to 'total tenancy rental units' due to missing postcode information, the exclusion of postcodes belonging to PO boxes, mismatches between postcode and remoteness concordance files and proportioning of postcodes across remoteness areas (as many postcodes belong to more than one remoteness area).
- There are inconsistencies across jurisdictions in the reporting of National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties managed by community housing organisations. Data for these properties are unavailable for Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.
- Waitlist data are reported separately for each social housing program. All states and territories have an integrated waitlist; therefore, applicants are generally counted once irrespective of the number of programs for which they are applying. In some states and territories, CHOs may additionally maintain and allocate housing to households on their own waiting list. In New South Wales and Victoria, waitlist information for all social housing programs is reported in the Public Rental Housing (PH) & State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH) collections.

State- and territory-specific issues:

New South Wales

- New South Wales does not supply waitlist information in the CH collection. All social housing waitlist information is reported in the PH & SOMIH collections.
- New South Wales does not consider 'boarding/rooming house' and 'joint venture' program types and therefore do not supply data against these programs.

Victoria

- Waitlist data relate to information capture by community housing organisations and not the Victorian Housing Register. Information from the register is reported in the PH collection.

Queensland

- As a result of Queensland's integrated waitlist, all current waitlist applications were included in the CH collection regardless of the housing programs applied for. As applicants can be eligible for multiple housing programs, caution should be used when comparing waitlist totals due to overlap.

Western Australia

- Care is advised when reviewing data for overcrowding due to inconsistencies in the data reported.
- Care is advised when reviewing data for rent charged as some:
 - CHOs charge a flat fee for board or lodging and may include support care, utility and communal costs
 - rents are set as a fixed percentage of the market rent rather than using incomes to calculate the rent payable
 - CHOs cannot separate Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) out of income or rent.

Australian Capital Territory

- Integrated waitlist data are unable to differentiate between new applicants and applicants requesting a transfer. The use of separate community housing organisation-managed waiting lists has grown over time. Consequently, some households on a waiting list may be counted more than once.
- In 2020–21, ACT eviction moratoriums in response to COVID-19 meant that several community housing organisations did not update income details.

Coherence:

States and territories may publish their own analysis of community housing data which may vary in scope from this collection.

Data for individual states and territories may not be comparable across reporting periods, nor with other social housing sectors due to variability in the state and territory government programs reported in the community housing data collection, coverage and completeness rates, and other data quality issues. Differences between states and territories concerning incomplete or missing information, out-of-date information and coding errors can affect the coherence of the outputs.

Coherence over time has also been affected by changes in methodology:

- From 2018–19, remoteness area (RA) is determined using a concordance between 2018 postcodes and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 RA classification. For 2017–18, a concordance between 2017 postcodes and the 2016 RA classification was used. Previous years used a concordance between 2012 postcodes and the 2011 RA classification. Therefore, care is required when comparing remoteness data across time.
- Comparisons of waitlist data prior to 2010–11 should not be made with data from subsequent years due to the implementation of integrated waitlists in some jurisdictions. In May 2009, Housing Ministers agreed to integrate public and community housing waiting lists in all jurisdictions by July 2011. All jurisdictions have their own integrated waiting list. In Tasmania, the 4 main *Better Housing Futures* community housing providers use a shared Housing Register (public and community housing) to select tenants. The other smaller providers have no requirement to use this register and therefore may have their own waitlists.
- Measurements using low income cannot be directly compared with low income measures produced prior to 2013–14 due to a change in methodology. From 2013–14 onwards, low income cut-offs were obtained from the biennial ABS Survey of Income and Housing (SIH). From 2018–19, low income cut-offs are based on 2017–18 SIH results. Care is required when comparing low income measures over time.
- Due to turnover of staff at some CHOs and variation in coding practices, the

classification of some program types and dwelling types vary from year to year. Therefore, care is advised when comparing data across years.

State- and territory-specific issues:

New South Wales

- From 2013–14, New South Wales has provided unit record data. Therefore, data prior to this is not comparable.
- New South Wales reported NRAS dwellings for the first time in 2015–16.
- For 2015–16 and 2016–17, NRAS dwellings were excluded from the calculation of the occupancy rate.
- Data for additional affordable housing properties have been included for the first time from 2016–17.
- In 2017–18, 'other' community housing program dwellings were reported for the first time. In New South Wales, 'other' refers to non-NRAS affordable housing.
- In 2018–19, data quality for income in comparison to rent charged improved.
- In 2019–20, some CHOs changed the way they reported transitional housing. This affected program type and overcrowding calculations.

Victoria

- In 2016–17, reduced survey returns from CHOs resulted in a decrease in net recurrent costs per unit and total rents charged. Therefore, care is advised when comparing data for 2016–17 with previous years.
- Commencing in 2016–17, community housing applications were transferred to the Victorian Housing Register which integrated public and community housing waiting lists. Housing applications were reviewed to remove those that were duplicates, inaccurate or out of date. This could have contributed to the decrease in waitlist numbers in 2016–17. This exercise was completed in 2019–20. Most CHOs now use the common waitlist resulting in a further decrease in waitlist numbers. From 2019–20, waitlist data relate to information captured by community housing organisations and not the Victorian Housing Register.
- In 2018–19, a reporting error by one CHO affected a large number of dwellings which led to inflated underutilisation figures for the state.
- In 2018–19 and 2019–20, for one CHO, program type was coded to 'other' by default.

Queensland

- Changes in methodology in 2012–13 have resulted in improvements in the identification of households containing a member identifying as Indigenous, and/or having a disability and/or from a non-English speaking background.
- From 2013–14, Affordable Housing Program data have been provided. These data were not available in prior collection periods.
- Queensland provided unit record data for the first time in 2015–16. This was supplemented by aggregate administrative data for funded organisations, properties and current waitlist applications. Data prior to this are therefore not comparable.
- From 2015–16, CH program administration and regulation costs were included. Previously, only rates and maintenance paid by the Department of Housing and Public Works were reported.
- In 2016–17, due to a change in policy, all applicants on the housing waitlist for social rental housing were counted, whereas in previous years only those listed for community housing were counted. Therefore, data for 2016–17 onwards are not comparable with that of previous years.
- Since 2016–17, data have only been provided for current tenancies and households as at 30 June. Therefore, care is advised when comparing data for 2016–17 onwards with that of previous years.
- In November 2017, Queensland adopted a new administrative system for property management. As a result, there has been a considerable amount of data cleaning, resulting in an overall reduction in numbers.
- There was a major system change in 2019–20. Caution should be used when comparing 2019–20 data with that of previous years.
- From 2020–21, pre-1996 rental units were included in the collection, although

tenancy data are not reported for these units. Prior to this, these units were excluded.

- From 2020–21, community housing organisations that managed pre-1996 rental units only were included in the collection. Prior to this, these organisations were excluded.

Western Australia

- From 2014–15, methodological changes have resulted in better identification of households with Indigenous members.
- Errors have occurred when CRA has been considered as household income and used in the calculation of rent. This issue has been compounded when CRA has not been able to be separated from either household income or rent charged. While this has improved since 2014–15, some organisations are unable to separate CRA from household income, therefore caution should be taken when interpreting data pertaining to rent charged and gross weekly income.
- A new organisation responded to the survey for the first time in 2017–18, contributing nearly 600 additional applicants to the waitlist. This organisation did not respond in 2018–19 and 2019–20.
- From 2018–19, the scope of this collection is all CHOs registered under the new Community Housing Regulatory Framework as well as any CHOs that were registered under the old framework but not under the current framework.
- In 2019–20, one CHO included wages for the first time in their provider net recurrent costs, resulting in an increase in total provider net recurrent costs.
- In 2019–20, one CHO reported household income for the first time.

South Australia

- Prior to 2012–13, the waitlist data reported were based solely on the Community Housing Customer Register. Applicants for NRAS properties were registered on a separate waitlist and not reported. Since 2012–13, waitlist data have been reported for the total number of applicants for community housing and affordable housing.
- From 2014–15, methodological improvements have resulted in better identification of households with Indigenous members.
- In 2016–17, a single housing register was implemented for public and community housing resulting in an increase in the number of applicants on the waiting list. Therefore, caution is advised when comparing data from 2016–17 onwards with previous years.
- From 2018–19, transitional housing data were included.
- In 2019–20, due to an internal policy change, there has been a large increase in the identification of households that were homeless at the time of allocation.

Tasmania

- From 2015–16 onwards, waitlist data represents information captured by the CHOs and not the shared waitlist. Therefore, care is advised when comparing waitlist data from 2015–16 onwards with that of previous years.
- In 2018–19, survey data received from CHOs contained a large number of errors and a high proportion of 'unknown' data. While substantial data cleaning was undertaken, it is likely that data quality issues still exist.

Australian Capital Territory

- From 2018–19, data for applicants for transfer relate to information captured by community housing organisations and not the shared waitlist.
- In 2018–19, rent was not reported for some tenants (with ending tenancies) who had a negative rent payment (refund) in the last week of the financial year.

Northern Territory

- A review of portfolios in 2014–15 resulted in better identification of community housing dwellings.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [Community Housing Data Collection, 2019–20; Quality Statement](#)

- [AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 13/01/2022