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Counting the Homeless

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AUSTRALIAN CENSUS ANALYTIC PROGRAM



Australian Census Analytic Program

Counting the Homeless

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2006

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CONTENTS

page

CONTENTS

Preface v
Abbreviations vi
Main findings vii

CHAPTERS

1 Introduction 1
2 Methodological issues 6
3 Census count: individuals 11
4 Census estimate: households 22
5 Social characteristics 27
6 State and territory variation 34
7 Marginal residents of caravan parks 39
8 Continuity and change 45
References 53

PREFACE

PREFACE

This report has been a cooperative venture between researchers at RMIT and Swinburne Universities, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Funding for the research was provided by the Australian Government via the Community Services Ministerial Advisory Committee and the Housing Ministerial Advisory Committee. We are grateful to senior officers in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the various state and territory departments who championed the research program through a complex approval process.

The ABS has been a key partner in this work from the outset and has provided invaluable in kind support. We thank our colleagues in the ABS for their commitment to the project and for their generous advice and assistance. A special mention should be made of Rob Destradi and Glenn Capuano with whom we worked closely.

The analysis of the 2006 Census required supplementary information from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection at the AIHW. We are grateful to our colleagues Justin Griffin, Anne Giovanetti and Richard Tuttle for their advice and support.

The project required supplementary data on homeless young people in Australia. This was collected through the third National Census of Homeless School Students, and the work of the Swinburne University research team was appreciated. In each state and territory, departmental officers responsible for student welfare assisted us to obtain ethics approval, but on the ground it was the support of secondary school welfare staff that ensured the success of the school census.

The Council to Homeless Persons, Homelessness Australia, the National Youth Coalition for Housing and WESNET have been strong supporters of the research program and we appreciate their encouragement. Finally, our editor, Estelle Tang, made many helpful suggestions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Aust.	Australia
N	population
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
NILF	not in the labour force
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
Tas.	Tasmania
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
THM	Transitional Housing Management
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

MAIN FINDINGS

1. DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The ABS uses the cultural definition of homelessness to enumerate the homeless population (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003). The cultural definition distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary categories of homelessness on census night.

Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, it includes all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. They are homeless because their accommodation situation is below the minimum community standard of a small self-contained flat.

2. SPECIAL ENUMERATION STRATEGY

The 2006 Census targeted Australia's homeless population with a special enumeration strategy. The strategy is outlined in Chapter 2. The 2006 Census analysis was supplemented by information from the National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) on homeless people using Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services. The analysis also used data from the third National Census of Homeless School Students which was carried out at the same time as the ABS Census (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008a).

3. CENSUS COUNT: INDIVIDUALS

Chapter 3 explains how we enumerated the homeless population on census night, including an adjustment for undercounting. Table 1 (see Table 3.5) compares the number of homeless people identified at the 2001 census with the number identified in 2006. There were 99,900 in 2001 and 104,676 in 2006. The number of homeless people goes up and down because people move in and out of homelessness, but for policy and planning purposes it is reasonable to quote a national figure of 105,000. The rate of homelessness was 53 per 10,000 of the population at both censuses.

TABLE 1 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

	2001	2006
Boarding houses	22 877	21 596
SAAP accommodation	14 251	19 849
Friends and relatives	48 614	46 856
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	14 158	16 375
	99 900	104 676

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

The number of people in different sectors of the homeless population was roughly similar on census night 2001 and 2006 (Table 1). There were 46,856 people staying temporarily with other households in 2006, compared with about 48,614 in 2001. The number of people in SAAP had increased from 14,251 in 2001 to almost 20,000 in 2006, but this reflects the increase in the provision of supported accommodation. The number of people in improvised dwellings was up by just over 2,000 people to 16,375 and the number of people in boarding houses decreased by 1,281 to 21,596.

4. CENSUS ESTIMATE: HOUSEHOLDS

TABLE 2 HOMELESS SINGLE PERSON, COUPLE AND FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

	2001		2006	
	no.	%	no.	%
Single person	58 116	78	57 182	76
Couple only	9 420	13	(a) 10 160	14
Family with children	6 745	9	7 483	10
	74 281	100	74 825	100

(a) Includes 384 adults accompanying the couple household.

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

It is important to estimate the number of homeless households, because service providers work primarily with households rather than individuals. Table 2 (see Table 4.2) shows that the 2006 analysis estimated 74,825 households, compared with 74,281 in 2001. In 2006, 76% of households were single persons, 14% were couples only, and 10% were families with children. There were 7,483 homeless families with children on census night 2006 with 26,790 people (10,608 parents and 16,182 children). Families were 10% of all homeless households, but they included one-quarter (26%) of the homeless population.

5. AGE BREAKDOWN

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that the homeless population was disproportionately made up of middle-aged and older men (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973/1994). Table 3 (see Table 5.1) shows that the age profile of the population is now very different. In 2006, 58% of the homeless were in the younger age groups (under 35) and 42% were aged 35 or older. Twelve per cent of the homeless were children under

12 years. These young people were accompanying parents on census night. Another 21% of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own) and 10% were young adults aged 19 to 24. The age profile of the population is now much younger than was thought 40 to 50 years ago.

TABLE 3 AGE BREAKDOWN OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	no.	%
Under 12	12 133	12
12 – 18	21 940	21
19 – 24	10 504	10
25 – 34	15 804	15
35 – 44	13 981	13
45 – 54	12 206	12
55 – 64	10 708	10
65 or older	7 400	7
	104 676	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

6. MALES AND FEMALES

Table 4 (see Table 5.3) shows the number of males and females in different segments of the homeless population on census night. About three-quarters (72%) of boarding house residents were male compared with 28% who were female. Sixty per cent of people in improvised dwellings were male, but women outnumbered men in SAAP by 53 to 47%. Overall, there were more males in the homeless population (56 to 44%), but women are now a substantial minority group compared with 40 to 50 years ago.

TABLE 4 SEX BY DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION

	<i>Boarding house</i> (N=21,596)	<i>Friends or relatives</i> (N=46,856)	<i>SAAP</i> (N=19,849)	<i>Improvised dwellings</i> (N=16,375)	<i>All</i> (N=104,676)
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	72	52	47	60	56
Female	28	48	53	40	44
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

7. INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

Indigenous people are more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians. At the 2006 Census, 2.4% of the population were identified as Indigenous, but 17% of SAAP clients were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in 2005-2006 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, p.30).

Table 5 (see Table 5.4) shows that Indigenous people were over-represented in all sections of the homeless population where we have data. Indigenous people made up 3.8% of people staying with other households, 6% of those in boarding houses, 16% of

people in improvised dwellings and 20% of people in SAAP. Overall, 2.4% of people were identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census, but 9% of the homeless were Indigenous.

TABLE 5 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	<i>Boarding house</i> (N=21,596)	<i>Friends or relatives</i> (N=46,856)	<i>SAAP</i> (N=19,849)	<i>Improvised dwellings</i> (N=16,375)	<i>All</i> (N=104,676)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	94.2	96.2	80.3	84.2	90.9
Indigenous	5.8	3.8	19.7	15.8	9.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

8. STATE AND TERRITORY VARIATION

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population: first, there is the number of homeless people in different states and territories on census night; second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population.

This statistic is required for comparing states and territories of different sizes.

TABLE 6 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
2006	42	42	69	68	53	53	248	42	53
2001	42	44	70	64	52	52	288	40	53

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 6 (see Table 8.3) shows that the rates of homelessness in each state and territory did not change much between 2001 and 2006. In the southern states (New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory), there were 42 homeless people per 10,000 in 2006, similar to the rates recorded in those states in 2001. South Australia and Tasmania had a rate of 53 per 10,000 in 2006, again similar to 2001. The rates of homelessness in the other states were higher. In Western Australia and Queensland, there were between 64 and 70 per 10,000 at both censuses. In the Northern Territory there were 248 homeless people per 10,000 in 2006. The rates are sufficiently consistent over time in each state to suggest that the 2006 numbers shown in Table 7 (see Table 8.4) provide policy makers with a reasonable guide to the number of homeless people in their state at a point in time.

TABLE 7 HOMELESS PEOPLE BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
2006	27 374	20 511	26 782	13 391	7 962	2 507	4 785	1 364	104 676

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

9. MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

The ABS defines marginal residents of caravan parks as people who are renting a caravan, at their usual address, with no-one in the dwelling having full-time work of 35 hours or more (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch.7). Caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. In 2006, 71% of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres, country towns and remote locations, and 29% were in capital cities. In contrast, 70% of boarding house residents were in the capital cities and 30% were in regional centres and country towns.

Table 8 (Table 7.2) shows that the 2006 Census identified 17,497 marginal residents of caravan parks. There were 6,385 people in Queensland, 5,104 in New South Wales, 2,789 people in Victoria, 1,994 in Western Australia, and smaller numbers in the other states and territories. The number of marginal residents of caravan parks declined from 22,868 in 2001 to 17,497 in 2006.

TABLE 8 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

	NSW	Vic.	QLD	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
2001	6 881	3 407	7 989	2 503	932	271	775	110	22 868
2006	5 104	2 789	6 385	1 994	748	162	273	42	17 497
Decrease	1 777	618	1 604	509	184	109	502	68	5 371

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006.

10. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Although the number of homeless people increased from 99,900 in 2001 to 104,676 in 2006, at both censuses the rate of homelessness was 53 per 10,000 of the population. Nonetheless, there have been some important changes in the homeless population.

Table 9 (Table 8.5) shows that the number of homeless youth aged 12 to 18 (living on their own) decreased from 22,600 in 2001 to 17,891 in 2006, a decrease of 21%. In 2006, there were 26,790 people in families with children, an increase of 17% on the 2001 figure. There was also a 10% increase in the number of homeless adults outside of families. This was the largest group with about 60,000 people on census night.

TABLE 9 CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	2001	2006	Change
	no.	no.	%
Families with children	22 944	26 790	16.8
Youth aged 12 to 18	22 600	17 891	-20.8
Adults (singles and couple only)	54 356	59 995	10.4
	99 900	104 676	4.8

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

The major change affecting homeless teenagers has been the increase in early intervention services targeting homeless and at risk youth since 2001. Early intervention to assist youth aged 12 to 18 (on their own) has been effective, and the number of young people has decreased by 21%. Over time, this may begin to stem the flow of homeless teenagers into the adult homeless population.

There has been minimal early intervention to assist homeless families and they have been badly affected by declining supply of affordable housing. Vacancy rates in the private rental market declined from three per cent in 2001 to two per cent in 2006. The private rental market has deteriorated further since 2006, with vacancy rates in 2008 between 1 and 1.5% in the capital cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008, p.177).

The largest sub-group in the population on census night were adults aged 19 or older who were mainly on their own. Most people in this group had been homeless for long periods of time and the opportunity for early intervention had passed. Access to affordable housing with extended and appropriate levels of support would be required to reduce the number of people in this group.

Defining homelessness should be a straightforward task. However, this is far from the case in the United States ... (Toro 2007, p.462)

There is a wide range of official and unofficial definitions of homelessness employed within the European Union ... (Fitzpatrick 1998, p.197)

Debate about the definition of homelessness continues in many western countries with little agreement on fundamental issues (Avramov 1995; Hopper 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001). One consequence of this continuing argument is that in most countries there is no reliable information on the number of homeless people, because there is no agreement on who should be counted. According to Liddiard (2001, p.118):

Clarifying and defining the term homelessness is beset with difficulties ... it is unsurprising there is ... little agreement about how much homelessness there is ...

In some countries, public policy decisions are made in a data vacuum. Everyone agrees that homelessness is a serious issue, but no one is sure whether homelessness is increasing or decreasing.

In a sense Australia is exceptional, because in Australia there are two definitions of homelessness that are widely accepted. One is the cultural definition used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The other is the SAAP definition, contained in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act 1994* (SAAP Act). The cultural definition is used for enumerating the homeless population, whereas the SAAP definition identifies who is eligible for services.

We begin by outlining both definitions of homelessness. Then we discuss the relationship between annual counts and census counts.

1.1 SAAP DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The SAAP definition of homelessness is embodied in the SAAP Act, which mandates the funding and operation of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), a joint Commonwealth and state program to assist homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. The definition of homelessness contained in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act* (1994, p.3,859) states that:

1.1 SAAP DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS
continued

A person is homeless ... if the only housing to which the person has access:

- (a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
- (b) threatens the person's safety; or
- (c) marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
 - (i) adequate personal amenities; or
 - (ii) the economic and social support that a home normally affords; or
- (d) places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.

It is implicit in this definition that one should take into account how people evaluate their housing situation. Thus, the SAAP definition includes people who are living in conventional houses or flats as homeless if:

- they are unhappy with their house or flat because it might damage their health (subsection a)
- or they are at risk of homelessness because of domestic violence (subsection b)
- or they are at risk of eviction because their house or flat is too expensive (subsection d).

The SAAP definition is a legislative formulation designed to define legitimate 'service delivery' under the SAAP Act. Sensibly, the SAAP definition allows welfare agencies to assist those about to become homeless (or believe to be at risk), as well as those who are actually homeless. However, the SAAP definition cannot be used for measurement purposes because it does not distinguish people who are at risk from people who are homeless.

1.2 CULTURAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The ABS uses the cultural definition of homelessness to enumerate the population. The cultural definition contends that 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' are cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period (Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992). In a society where the vast majority of people live in mud huts, the community standard will be that these dwellings constitute adequate accommodation (Watson 1986, p.10). Once this principle is recognised, then it is possible to define 'homelessness'.

First, the cultural definition identifies shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have the right to expect, in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of a particular culture. Then, the definition identifies those groups that fall below the minimum community standard.

Cultural standards are not usually stated in official documents, but are embedded in the housing practices of a society. These standards identify the conventions and cultural expectations of a community in an objective sense, and are recognised by most people because they accord with what they see around them. As Townsend (1979, p.51) puts it:

A population comes to expect to live in particular types of homes ... Their environment ... create(s) their needs in an objective as well as a subjective sense.

The vast majority of Australians live in suburban houses or self-contained flats, and 70% of all households either own outright or have a mortgage on their home (ABS 2006a, Ch.8). There is a widespread view that home ownership is the most desirable form of

1.2 CULTURAL DEFINITION
OF HOMELESSNESS
continued

tenure (Kemeny 1983, p.1; Hayward 1992, p.1; Badcock and Beer 2000, p.96). Eighty-eight per cent of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 75% of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2006a, Ch.8).

The minimum community standard is a small rental flat—with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of security of tenure—because that is the minimum that most people achieve in the private rental market. However, the minimum is significantly below the culturally desired option of an owner-occupied house.

The minimum community standard provides a cultural benchmark for assessing 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' in the contemporary context. However, as Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) point out, there are a number of institutional settings where people do not have the minimal level of accommodation identified by the community standard, but in cultural terms they are not considered part of the homeless population. They include, *inter alia*, people living in seminaries, elderly people in nursing homes, students in university halls of residence and prisoners.

FIGURE 1.1 A MODEL OF HOMELESSNESS BASED ON SHARED COMMUNITY STANDARDS EMBODIED IN CURRENT HOUSING PRACTICES

Minimum community standard: equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen & bathroom

Culturally recognised exceptions: where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard, e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence	Marginally housed: people in housing situations close to the minimum standard
	Tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure
	Secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses
	Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.)

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992, p.291.

While it is true that that the concepts of 'housed' and 'homeless' constitute a continuum of circumstances, there are three situations that fall below the community standard. This leads to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness and the 'marginally housed'. The model is shown in Figure 1.1.

Primary homelessness accords with the common sense assumption that homelessness is the same as 'rooflessness'. It includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter. Primary homelessness is operationalised using the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'.

Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, it includes all people staying in

1.2 CULTURAL DEFINITION
OF HOMELESSNESS
continued

emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The starting point for identifying this group is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. They report 'no usual address' on their census form. Secondary homelessness also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. Residents of private boarding houses do not have separate bedrooms and living rooms; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease. They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard.

The terms primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are widely used, particularly when talking about census counts. However, the profile of the homeless population looks different if you classify people on the basis of their housing histories, rather than on census night. In a study of 4,300 homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that 92% of their sample had moved regularly from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Nearly everyone had stayed with friends or relatives, but 85% had also stayed in a boarding house, 60% had been in SAAP or Transitional Housing Management (THM) accommodation, and 50% had slept rough. People show up in particular places on census night but many homeless people will be somewhere else a few weeks later. Transience is the typical pattern. Primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are useful categories to describe people's housing situations, particularly on census night, but there are not three distinct groups of homeless people.

In *Counting the Homeless 2001*, we also identified 'marginal residents of caravan parks'. These people were renting caravans, at their usual address, and no one in the household had full-time work. Like boarding house tenants, these households had one room for eating and sleeping and communal bathroom facilities. The 2001 research found that two-thirds (67%) of boarding house residents were in the capital cities whereas three-quarters (78%) of the marginal residents of caravan parks were in regional centres and country towns (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch.7). In some communities, there are no boarding houses and SAAP workers send people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

Reid, Griffin and Murdoch (2005) have examined this analysis carefully. They conclude that marginal residents of caravan parks are really part of the tertiary population. Giovanetti, Reid, Murdoch and Edwards (2007, p.275) take a similar position:

Marginal residents of caravan parks were categorised as belonging to the tertiary homelessness category ...

We have two reservations about this approach. First, it is now common to find that cabins are the main type of accommodation in caravan parks. Cabins have significantly better facilities than the traditional caravan. Cabins usually have a separate room for eating and sleeping and an internal bathroom and kitchen.

1.2 CULTURAL DEFINITION
OF HOMELESSNESS
continued

Second, it is difficult for people in the broader community to accept that some caravan parks residents are 'homeless' when 80% of people in caravan parks are either on holiday or have purchased a caravan, typically following retirement. We continue to treat 'marginal residents of caravan parks' as outside of the tertiary population.

1.3 TWO WAYS OF
COUNTING

There are two ways of counting the homeless population (Freeman and Hall 1987; Jencks 1994, Ch.2). The first is a census count (or 'point prevalence' count) which gives the number of homeless people on a given night. The second method estimates the number of people who become homeless over a year. These are called 'annual counts' (or 'annual prevalence') and welfare agencies usually gather statistics in this way.

The most well-known annual database in Australia is the SAAP National Data Collection which collects information on all persons who approach SAAP services for assistance. Overall, 161,000 people received support from SAAP agencies between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, p.xi). However, if homeless people do not approach SAAP services for assistance then they are not included in the SAAP annual database. It would be possible to estimate the annual homeless population if we knew what proportion of homeless people go to SAAP services, but we have no reliable information on this at present.

An annual count will be much higher than a census figure if most people are homeless for a short period of time. For example, if 120,000 people become homeless this year, and each person remains homeless for one month, then a census count will reveal 10,000 homeless people ($120,000 \times 1/12 = 10,000$). Advocates are often attracted to higher figures because it is assumed that they put more pressure on those in power to take action. However, when the annual figure is much higher than the census figure, there is a sense in which homelessness becomes less serious. Two examples will illustrate this point.

Let us suppose that 60,000 Australians become homeless this year and all of them are homeless for 12 months. The annual count will be 60,000, and the census count will be 60,000 ($60,000 \times 12/12 = 60,000$). This is a desperate situation where there are 60,000 chronically homeless people who are part of an underclass from which they have little chance of escaping.

Now let us suppose that 260,000 Australians become homeless this year, but each one returns to secure accommodation after two weeks. The annual count will be 260,000, but the census count will reveal 10,000 homeless people ($260,000 \times 2/52 = 10,000$), because most people experience a short period of homelessness. The fact that the annual total is 260,000 in this example should have no bearing on policy decisions. On a typical night, there will be fewer people requiring assistance than in the previous example (10,000 compared with 60,000), and it will be much easier to help them because no one has an intractable problem.

From the point of view of policy makers, the important figure is the census count combined with information on the length of time that people have been homeless. As we have pointed out, we could estimate the annual figure if we knew what proportion of homeless people used a SAAP service each year. Unfortunately, we do not have this information at the present time. However, for policy purposes a census count is always more important than an annual figure. This is a fundamental point informing our analysis.

The research used data from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, combined with information from the SAAP National Data Collection and the third National Census of Homeless School Students. The aim was to replicate the 2001 analysis, using the same definitions and methodological procedures. This chapter covers four issues.

First, we identify the census categories for operationalising primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. In some cases, the census categories can be used with only minor technical adjustments. In other cases, we refer to the census categories as 'starting points' for the analysis. This signals that there are major technical adjustments to the census data. Our approach is explained fully in Chapter 3.

Second, we outline the Australian Bureau of Statistics' special homeless enumeration strategy. This focused on raising the awareness of people in the homeless population and improving the accuracy of the count in all states and territories.

Third, we discuss the distinction between 'individuals' and 'households'. People usually quote the number of homeless individuals. However, the number of homeless households is also important.

Finally, we provide a map of the analysis that follows.

**2.1 OPERATIONALISING
KEY CONCEPTS**

Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation. This is the segment of the homeless population where there is greatest risk of undercounting. In practical terms, it is not possible to discover the whereabouts of every person without shelter across Australia. Primary homelessness is operationalised using the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. It includes people sleeping rough, camping in derelict buildings and sleeping in vehicles. Primary homelessness also includes people using makeshift shelters and more substantial improvised dwellings. These are more common in rural areas.

Secondary homelessness includes three situations. First, there are people staying in SAAP services on census night. The starting point for this analysis is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. There is a significant undercount here because youth refuges and women's refuges are often conventional houses and census collectors misclassify them as private dwellings. However, the undercount can be estimated because there is data on SAAP clients through the National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Second, there are people staying temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. There is an instruction on the census form that asks people in this situation to record 'no usual address'. Visitors are asked to record that they have a usual address elsewhere in Australia or in another country. The largest error is for young people who have run away from their parental home and are staying with a

2.1 OPERATIONALISING KEY CONCEPTS *continued*

friend's family. Householders often record them as having a usual address elsewhere because they assume that they will return home. These young people appear to be visitors on census night, whereas they should be counted as homeless. We use data from the national census of homeless school students to correct for undercounting in this category.

Third, there are people staying temporarily in boarding houses, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less. The starting point for identifying boarding house residents is the census category 'boarding house, private hotel'. However, temporary residents of boarding houses are enumerated along with other boarding house residents in the tertiary homelessness category, because it is not possible to ascertain from census data how long people have lived in single rooms. This analysis of boarding house residents treats all residents as one group, but boarding house residents include people in both the secondary and tertiary population. This is an error of misclassification between secondary and tertiary homelessness but it has no impact on the overall homelessness figure.

2.2 SPECIAL ENUMERATION STRATEGY¹

The ABS developed the Homeless Enumeration Strategy for the 2006 Census of Population and Housing in consultation with service providers. ABS regional offices were responsible for developing the operational plan for their state or territory. In all states, the plan focused on raising homeless people's awareness of the impending census and attention was directed to identifying people in the primary, secondary and tertiary population.

RAISING AWARENESS

One component of the ABS strategy focused on briefing service providers on the need to promote the 2006 Census to their clients. For example, in Queensland, promotional packs were sent to service providers throughout the state. These packs contained posters, pamphlets, a DVD, business card, time capsule information and a letter explaining why they had received these materials.

In Victoria, the 'Counting the Homeless' forum was held at Melbourne Town Hall to promote the census amongst homelessness service providers. In addition, specialist area supervisors visited all agencies in their region with a suite of promotional material about the Homeless Enumeration Strategy.

In South Australia, the Special Enumerations Strategy (SES) manager attended some 30 meetings with government organisations, non-government organisations and service advisors to raise awareness of the Homeless Enumeration Strategy. At each meeting, packs containing a CD-ROM, fact sheet, posters and postcards were given out. The SES manager also wrote articles for newsletters distributed to local services.

In the Northern Territory, presentations about the Homeless Enumeration Strategy were given to staff from all large community service organizations, peak Indigenous bodies and youth services. A media release was distributed about the importance of counting the homeless and there was television news coverage in Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

¹ The information for this section is taken from an internal ABS report, 'Implementation of the 2006 Homeless Enumeration Strategy' (unpublished).

2.2 SPECIAL
ENUMERATION STRATEGY
continued

RAISING AWARENESS *continued*

Strategies to promote the 2006 Census also focused on providing information on how census forms should be filled out. For example, in New South Wales a letter was sent to all detoxification centres and rehabilitation centres across the state. The letter advised service providers that any clients who had no usual address should record 'none' at the usual address question. Similarly, a group email was sent to all NSW Department of Housing front line staff asking them to advise people in temporary accommodation to record 'none' at the usual address question. The principals of all NSW state and Catholic high schools also received material on homelessness and the 'none' response.

PRIMARY POPULATION

In all states, there was a special effort to count the primary population. People without conventional accommodation are particularly difficult to count because they usually hide away at night to escape the cold. The 2006 Census was carried out in winter in the southern states, where night-time temperatures were generally cold. In addition, some homeless people are hostile to the idea of providing information to the government and do not want to fill out official forms. Others were hidden away in derelict buildings and census collectors were unaware of their presence. Counting the primary population is a major practical challenge.

There were a number of components to the ABS strategy. Field staff were encouraged to work closely with local service providers who might know where people squat in derelict buildings or sleep rough in their local area. The promotional activities were important in building these links. In all states, local services provided intelligence on where people might be found sleeping rough. In some cases, census forms were handed out at these agencies. It was also widely reported that mobile food vans were a good place to hand out census forms.

The ABS also had short census forms that could be filled out by ABS staff where personal forms were judged inappropriate. The short forms were less intimidating than the longer personal forms.

Finally, there was a procedure for filling out a substitute form when a homeless person was observed by a census collector but was not able to be interviewed. Observation is an accepted method for counting people sleeping rough. Collectors were asked to record sex, estimated age and location.

It is now recognised that it is better if the primary population is counted over three or four days and not just on census night:

Past experience suggests that better outcomes will result from making arrangements with service organizations to enumerate their clientele for up to one week (Harvie 2001, p.12)

The risk of double counting is small when collectors are allocated to the same service for the enumeration.

In inner Sydney, the enumeration of the primary homeless population was conducted from 7 to 11 August. In Parramatta and Penrith it was from 6 to 10 August. In

2.2 SPECIAL
ENUMERATION STRATEGY
continued

PRIMARY POPULATION *continued*

Wollongong it was from 10 to 12 August and in Newcastle it was from 8 to 11 August. In Victoria and Western Australia, the count was conducted from Monday to Friday of census week. Only in the Northern Territory and the ACT was the count conducted over a 24-hour period.

2.3 INDIVIDUALS AND
HOUSEHOLDS

Chapter 1 explained the two ways of counting the homeless population—at a point in time (a census count) or over a year (an annual count). However, when counting the homeless population at a point in time or over a year, there are always two possible units of enumeration, individuals and households. In community discussions about homelessness, it is usually the number of homeless individuals that is quoted. However, the number of households is also important.

If a woman and three children request emergency accommodation from a SAAP service, there are four individuals requiring assistance and one household. If a man turns up on his own, then one person needs help but this is also one household.

The number of households in the homeless population will always be smaller than the number of homeless individuals, because there will always be some families (with children) and some couples (without children). Only in exceptional circumstances—where all homeless people are on their own—will the number of households be the same as the number of people. Estimating the number of households is important because service providers deal primarily with households rather than individuals.

2.4 CENSUS ANALYSIS

The main source of data is the ABS Census and without these data no population enumeration would be possible. However, the enumeration is supplemented by data from the SAAP National Data Collection and the third National Census of Homeless School Students. These data enable us to make various technical adjustments to the raw census figures.

An overview of the steps is shown in Figure 2.1. In no category—primary, secondary or tertiary—can the raw census figure in the operational category be used without adjustment. The analysis is complicated and the complete argument is laid out in Chapter 3. The analysis in Chapter 3 is supplemented by a small amount of qualitative data derived from 130 questionnaires filled out by census collectors who enumerated the primary population.

Chapter 4 provides an estimate of the number of homeless households. After that we examine the social characteristics of the population (Chapter 5), and the geographical distribution of homeless people (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 discusses marginal residents of caravan parks. Chapter 8 summarises the main findings and discusses changes in the homeless population since 2001.

FIGURE 2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE CENSUS DATA TO IDENTIFY HOMELESS PERSONS

Conceptual category	Operational category	Adjustments
Primary homelessness	Improvised home, tent, sleepers out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> exclude people with a usual address elsewhere in Australia [such as travellers on camping holidays] <input type="checkbox"/> exclude people with an address overseas [overseas visitors]
Secondary homelessness	Hostels for the homeless, night shelter, refuge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> use NDCA data for SAAP in NSW, Qld, SA, WA, Tas, NT and ACT <input type="checkbox"/> use ABS Census data for Vic
	Visitors to private dwellings with 'no usual address'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> include estimate for young people missed in Census <input type="checkbox"/> exclude missing SAAP individuals
Tertiary homelessness	Boarding house/private hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> exclude owners and staff <input type="checkbox"/> exclude residents with a usual address elsewhere in Australia [travellers] <input type="checkbox"/> exclude residents with address overseas [backpackers] <input type="checkbox"/> exclude dwellings identified as hotels and staff quarters <input type="checkbox"/> include boarding houses misclassified as hotels and staff quarters <input type="checkbox"/> include dwellings misclassified as 'other' which fit boarding house criteria <input type="checkbox"/> include boarding houses misclassified as private dwellings

The cultural definition of homelessness distinguishes between 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness on census night. The homeless population is identified using four operational categories:

- people who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- individuals using SAAP services
- persons staying temporarily with other households
- people staying in boarding houses.

The analysis of the 2006 Census replicates the analysis used for the 2001 Census, following the methodological precedents established at that time. For people staying in improvised dwellings, persons in SAAP and those staying temporarily with other households, our methodological approach was identical to that used in 2001. However, we made some improvements to the procedures for enumerating people in boarding houses.

The four operational categories are now examined in turn, followed by a section on 'checking the estimate'. Section 3.6 summarises the main findings.

3.1 IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS, SLEEPERS OUT

The first category is 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. This is the operational category for primary homelessness. This category includes:

... sheds, tents, humpies and other improvised dwellings, occupied on Census Night. It also includes people sleeping on park benches or in other 'rough' accommodation ... (ABS 2006b, p.182)

In 2006, there was a special effort to count people in the primary population. We know that in some areas census collectors had very good local knowledge and made an extraordinary effort to count people sleeping rough. We also know that in other areas census collectors felt they had partially counted the population. It is unlikely that all rough sleepers were identified.

Previously, there were no data on the quality of the accommodation included under 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out' (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, p.16). However, in 2006 we had the descriptions provided by census collectors. We cannot establish the typicality of these accounts, because it was not a random sample of census collectors. Nonetheless, the census collectors' observations were consistent with the interpretation that most of the improvised dwellings were of poor quality.

In Brisbane, a census collector reported that: Most of the people I counted were sleeping in bus shelters.

In Geelong, two male census collectors visited a squat: The building had running water but little else. There were no signs of furniture

3.1 IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS, SLEEPERS OUT *continued*

and the bedding was piles of old clothes. We went outside and did the census forms under a street light.

In Sydney, a collector found: ... people in doorways and under awnings. A few had erected a makeshift dwelling using a tarp. I found an abandoned car that homeless people were using.

In North Queensland, it was reported that: People were living in corrugated iron sheds with dirt floors ... There was a shocking amount of rubbish strewn around ... tarps strung up here and there ... mattresses strewn around ... There was the smell of faeces everywhere.

In Adelaide, a census collector: ... counted a man aged 50 in the park with a bag and a suitcase on wheels. He was going through the bins. I counted an Indigenous woman and a non-Indigenous man with a swag near one of the boat houses ... they had been sleeping under a veranda.

In another regional city, a census collector found: ... people staying in a rotunda at the park. There were some people in tents ... at the football ground. One homeless man was living in a garden shed.

The category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' also includes overseas visitors and Australian residents who are on camping holidays. International visitors can be removed because they report a usual address overseas, and Australian holidaymakers report a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'. Once these people were removed, this left 16,375 individuals in 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out', compared with 14,158 in 2001.

3.2 SAAP SERVICES

The starting point for counting people in accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. However, we know that many of these dwellings were misclassified at previous censuses (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, pp.23-24). Youth refuges and women's refuges often look like suburban houses and sometimes census collectors did not realise they were SAAP accommodation. These dwellings were mistakenly classified as 'private dwellings'. The ABS convention is to replace census figures with information from the SAAP National Data Collection if the SAAP figures are higher.

In 2006, the ABS had two strategies to count people accommodated in refuges, hostels and other forms of emergency accommodation. The 'list strategy' required the ABS in each state/territory to consult with the relevant government department to see if the department could supply a list of all their SAAP properties. The ABS guaranteed the confidentiality of these lists. After being used in the field, the lists were passed on to specified ABS officers to assist with confidential data processing. The lists enabled ABS staff to identify and reclassify SAAP properties that had been wrongly classified as private dwellings on census night.

All states provided lists but they were of uneven quality. Some states provided a comprehensive list of their supported accommodation. Other states provided a list but

3.2 SAAP SERVICES *continued*

excluded women's refuges (for security reasons), while other states provided partial lists of their SAAP properties.

The second component of the ABS approach was the 'green sticker' strategy which was first used in 2001. This involved the distribution of information to service providers offering them an alternative way to return their census forms. Service providers were advised that they could request a mail back envelope from the census collector to ensure confidentiality. Service providers were asked to return the census forms directly to the Data Processing Centre and to attach a green sticker which facilitated the identification of SAAP accommodation.

3.1 PERSONS IN 'HOSTELS FOR THE HOMELESS' COMPARED WITH NUMBER OF PERSONS IDENTIFIED BY THE SAAP NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION (EXCLUDING VICTORIA)

	NSW	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	All
National SAAP data collection	5 110	3 233	1 395	2 111	622	411	531	13 413
Hostels for the homeless	2 843	2 242	825	1 239	107	—	329	7 585
Number misclassified by census	2 267	991	570	872	515	411	202	5 828

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

Overall, the census strategy worked better than in 2001, but Table 3.1 shows that in all states (except Victoria) the census count was lower than the SAAP count. The Victorian Department provided the ABS with a full list of its SAAP addresses as well as a full list of its Transitional Housing Management (THM) properties. Women's refuges in Victoria were identified using green stickers. The 2006 Census identified 6,436 people in Victoria.

We followed the established convention and replaced the census data with National SAAP Data for all states except Victoria. There were 19,849 people in SAAP on census night 2006, compared with 14,251 in 2001.

3.3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Homeless people who stay temporarily with friends or relatives are identified at the question, 'What is the person's usual address?' Since 1996, there has been an instruction that people with no usual address should write this on the census form. In 2006, the number of people staying temporarily with other households was 32,519. However, an adjustment has to be made to avoid double counting.

First, we explain why an adjustment was necessary. Then we explain how the adjustment was carried out.

The substitution of the SAAP figures for the census figures results in a double count of some homeless people who were staying with friends and relatives, which must be rectified. The 2006 Census missed 5,828 people in SAAP accommodation in NSW, Qld, SA, WA, Tas, NT and the ACT. Let us suppose that all 5,828 had written 'no usual address' on their census form. The census collectors did not realise that these people were staying in emergency accommodation for homeless people and classified them as residents of private dwellings. By checking the SAAP data we found that these SAAP residents were missing. We counted them once when we substituted the SAAP data for the census figures. However, all 5,828 were still in the private dwellings category

3.3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES *continued*

reporting no usual address. When we counted 32,519 people (above) in private dwellings with no usual address, the 5,828 would have been counted again.

3.2 CORRECTION TO AVOID DOUBLE COUNTING OF SAAP CLIENTS WHO REPORTED NO USUAL ADDRESS (EXCLUDING VICTORIA)

	NSW	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	All
Number misclassified by census	2 267	991	570	872	515	411	202	5 828
% reporting no usual address	5.1	4.8	8.4	1.3	7.5	5.5	16.7	5.5
Correction	116	48	48	11	39	23	34	319

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

Established convention was followed for estimating the double count. The missing 5,828 cannot be identified, but it is possible to identify the individuals staying in SAAP accommodation who were recorded by the census as staying in hostels and refuges. From their replies to the question, 'What is your usual address?' it was possible to establish the proportion who stated 'no usual address'. These figures were used to estimate the proportion in the missing group with 'no usual address'. Table 3.2 shows that this proportion ranged from 1.3 in South Australia to 16.7 in the ACT. There was no information on people in SAAP in the Northern Territory, so we used the average (5.5%) for the six states and territories for which information was available to estimate the proportion of persons with 'no usual address' in the Territory. The overall correction for double counting was 319 (Table 3.2). The number of people staying temporarily with other households on census night was 32,200 (32,519 - 319 = 32,200), compared with 29,439 in 2001.

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES

The final category is people living in boarding houses. This is the most complicated part of the analysis. Boarding houses range from large establishments in the inner suburbs of some capital cities to smaller establishments in outer suburbs and some country towns. Boarding houses may be properly registered, but many are apparently set up without conforming to council regulations. The basic rules for identifying boarding houses were laid down in 1996 (Chamberlain 1999), but they were supplemented by additional conventions in both 2001 and 2006. The methodology is explained in three steps: a discussion of the 'basic rules', the '2001 conventions' and the '2006 conventions'.

BASIC RULES

The 2006 Census used 20 categories for coding non-private dwellings. The categories included 'hotel, motel, bed and breakfast' and 'boarding house, private hotel'. This distinction draws attention to the fact that there are major differences between conventional hotels that many travellers use and boarding houses (often called 'private hotels').

Hotels and motels mainly provide short-term accommodation for people who have a permanent home elsewhere. Their guests are usually people on holiday or persons who are working away from home. In contrast, boarding houses and private hotels provide accommodation for people who live in single rooms on a long-term basis, and for persons who are using boarding houses as emergency accommodation. The starting

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES *continued*

BASIC RULES *continued*

point for identifying the number of people in boarding houses is the census category 'boarding house, private hotel'.

The 2006 Census identified 16,273 in 'boarding houses and private hotels'. However, three groups had to be excluded: owners and staff members who were sleeping over on census night; guests who reported a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'; and backpackers who reported a usual address overseas. These are the 'basic rules'.

In 1996, four conventions were developed for the ABS analysis to correct for the fact that census collectors sometimes misclassify 'boarding houses', 'hotels' and 'staff quarters' (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, pp.25-26).

The first rule was that dwellings should be removed from the boarding house category, if 60% or more of their adult residents were working and had incomes of \$600 or more per week. These were either 'hotels' or 'staff quarters'. The same rule was applied to dwellings classified as 'staff quarters'. If less than 60% of residents in these dwellings were working and had incomes below \$600 per week, then the dwelling was recoded as a 'boarding house'.

The second rule was that hotels were recoded as 'boarding houses' if they had the following characteristics:

- 20% or more of their residents were living there permanently (very unusual for a hotel)
- 75% or more of residents were either unemployed or outside of the labour force and had incomes of less than \$600 per week (hotels are not full of people on low incomes who do not have a job).

However, there were still some people left in the 'hotel, motel' category who reported 'no usual address'. These people were either unemployed or outside of the labour force and had an income below \$400 per week. They could not have been staying in conventional hotels, possibly paying \$150 per night. The third rule included them in the boarding house population.

The fourth rule deals with people in other types of non-private dwelling who reported 'no usual address'. In 2006, this group included 130 people in psychiatric hospitals, about 400 in public and private hospitals, 200 in other welfare institutions, a small number who were probably in the 'lock up' and some who were staying temporarily with religious orders. The fourth rule includes them in the boarding house population.

In 2006, the 1996 conventions were replicated. The number in boarding houses on census night was 14,490 compared with 17,972 in 2001.

2001 CONVENTIONS

As part of the 1996 census, ABS staff telephoned dwellings where there was insufficient information to identify dwelling type. Where additional information could be obtained a more accurate classification was entered. The ABS had 19 categories for non-private dwellings including the residual category 'other'.

In 2001, there was an important change in ABS procedures which affected the boarding house count. The ABS discontinued the practice of 'follow up' telephone calls and the

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES

continued

number of dwellings in 'other' increased from 536 to 2,784. The number of persons in those dwellings jumped from 12,938 to 54,636 and it remained at 54,000 in 2006. We developed conventions in 2001 to identify boarding houses in the 'other' category and the same rules were applied in 2006.

This approach has some limitations and these are described in Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003, p.28). The method focuses on excluding dwellings from 'other' that cannot be boarding houses.

Certain institutions were not recorded as 'other'. Prisons and corrective institutions were not classified under 'other', because the ABS used administrative records to record persons in those institutions. Also, census collectors would not record public or private hospitals under 'other', because these institutions are clearly signposted.

Five criteria were used to exclude dwellings from 'other' that could not be boarding houses. These rules were developed from an empirical assessment of the characteristics of people in non-private dwellings (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, pp.27-28). The 2001 rules are shown in Figure 3.1.

- After applying the five criteria, we excluded all persons who:
- reported a usual address elsewhere in Australia
- reported a usual address overseas (backpackers)
- were owners and staff.

The 2001 analysis found 4,905 boarding house residents hidden within 'other'. Applying the same rules in 2006 produced a correction of 3,763.

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES
continued

FIGURE 3.1 RULES FOR EXCLUDING DWELLINGS FROM 'OTHER'

1 Age rule: older persons

- Exclude: dwellings from 'other' where 85 per cent or more are 65 or older.
- Purpose: to remove retirement villages and nursing homes.

2 Education rule

- Exclude: dwellings where 85 per cent or more are attending an educational institution.
- Purpose: to remove boarding schools, residential colleges and halls of residence.

3 Religion rule

- Exclude: dwellings where 90 per cent or more report a religious affiliation.
- Purpose: to remove convents, monasteries and other religious institutions.

4 Labour force rule

- Exclude: dwellings where 50 per cent or more of their adult residents are employed.
- Purpose: to remove hotels, motels and staff quarters because a majority of their adult residents are employed.^(a)

5 Age rule: younger persons

- Exclude: dwelling where 90 per cent or more are aged 19 or younger.
- Purpose: to remove correctional institutions for children.

(a) In 2001, we excluded all dwellings from 'other' where 25 per cent or more of their adult residents were employed. In 2006, the unemployment rate was much lower and it was more common for boarding house residents to have part-time or casual work. In 2006, we excluded dwellings from 'other' if 50 per cent or more of their adult residents were employed.

2006 CONVENTIONS

Recently, one of the authors worked at three housing services in inner Melbourne. Service providers knew that boarding houses were closing down in the inner city, but they also said that new boarding houses were opening in the outer suburbs. Field visits confirmed that these were suburban houses, often with outbuildings used as additional bedrooms. The dwellings rarely had a sign outside. We realised that census collectors were likely to misclassify these boarding houses as 'private dwellings'.

In 2006, an investigation was undertaken to see whether it was possible to identify boarding houses in the 'private dwellings' category. There were 280,000 private dwellings containing unrelated adults. Ninety-seven per cent of these dwellings had two, three or four unrelated adults, which is too few residents for a boarding house. These were 'share households' and they were excluded from the analysis.

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES
continued

2006 CONVENTIONS *continued*

There were 9,000 private dwellings that had five or more unrelated adults. A small boarding house or a share household could have five or more unrelated tenants. Five criteria were devised to exclude dwellings that could not be boarding houses.

First, we excluded any dwelling where 60% or more of the residents were employed. This removed working households of unrelated adults. Then we excluded dwellings where 60% or more of the residents had incomes of \$600 per week or more. This was an alternative criterion to exclude working households.

After that, we removed households where 60% or more of the residents were either studying (tertiary, secondary, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) or 'other') or working full-time. This removed student households and 'mixed' households. We also excluded dwellings where 60% or more of the residents were in need of assistance with 'care activities'. This was supported accommodation for disabled people, usually with a carer on site. Finally, we excluded dwellings with less than four bedrooms on the grounds that these properties were too small to be boarding houses.

This left 705 dwellings with 3,343 residents. These were boarding houses that had been initially misclassified as private dwellings. In 2006, the total number of persons in boarding houses was 21,596 (14,490 + 3,763 + 3,343 = 21,596), compared with 22,877 in 2001.

3.5 CHECKING THE
ESTIMATE

The overall homeless population figure so far is 90,020 (Table 3.3). There were 21,596 people in boarding house rooms on census night. There were another 19,849 in SAAP services such as hostels, refuges and shelters, and 32,200 people staying temporarily with friends and relatives. Finally, there were 16,375 people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out.

The census does not enumerate everyone squatting in derelict buildings, dossing down in railway carriages, sleeping by creek beds and so on. Some undercounting is inevitable and it is difficult to assess the size of the problem. However, the figures for the age group 12 to 18 can be checked, using the same procedure as in 2001.

3.3 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS
POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT 2006 (PROVISIONAL FIGURES)

	no.
Boarding houses	21 596
SAAP accommodation	19 849
Friends and relatives	32 200
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375
	90 020

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

At the same time as the ABS was conducting the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, we undertook the third national census of homeless school students (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008a). The research team contacted all government and Catholic secondary schools across the country (N=2,025), and 99% of schools

3.5 CHECKING THE ESTIMATE *continued*

completed a census return. Welfare staff identified 7,035 homeless students using the cultural definition of homelessness.

This figure can be used to estimate the overall homeless population aged 12 to 18. The homeless population aged 12 to 18 includes school students, TAFE students, unemployed teenagers and a small number of young people who have full-time work. If we knew the proportion of school students in the homeless population, then it would be possible to estimate the overall number of homeless young people. For example, if school students were 50% of the homeless population, then the overall population would be 14,070 ($7,035 \times 100/50 = 14,070$).

The best source of information about the proportion of school students in the homeless population is the SAAP National Data Collection. The SAAP National Data Collection records information on all clients who use SAAP services throughout Australia.

In order to 'estimate up', an assumption was made that the characteristics of the youth population in SAAP reflect the characteristics of the homeless youth population overall. This assumption has underpinned previous analyses, but it cannot be independently verified. As long as it remains reasonable to assume that the proportion of school students in SAAP is reflective of the broader homeless youth population, then the SAAP data can be used for this purpose.

In the five years preceding the 2006 Census (1 July 2001 to 30 June 2006), young people aged 12 to 18 used SAAP on 87,000 occasions. In 86,000 cases there was information on whether these young people were school students, TAFE students, unemployed or in paid employment. The advantage of using a moving average calculated over five years is that it smooths out fluctuations in the data set and provides a better indicator of long-term trends.

3.4 METHOD FOR ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS YOUTH AGED 12-18 YEARS

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
Number of homeless school students	1 700	1 401	1 527	922	761	289	148	287	7 035
% of school students in SAAP (2001–06)	34.1	36.0	34.2	21.5	35.7	37.5	48.2	26.1	(a) 32.1
Estimated number of homeless youth	4 987	3 896	4 469	4 280	2 129	770	307	1 102	21 940

(a) This is the proportion of homeless students in SAAP Australia-wide re-weighted according to the number of homeless youth by state. In MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2008b, p.23) an unweighted proportion was used.

Source: National Census of Homeless School Students 2006 and SAAP Client Collection 2001-06.

Table 3.4 shows the number of homeless students by state and territory and the proportion of SAAP clients (aged 12 to 18) who were school students (derived from support period data 2001-06). This allows us to estimate the number of homeless youth in each state. For example, in New South Wales it was 4,987 ($1,700 \times 100/34.09 = 4,987$). Overall, we estimated 21,940 homeless teenagers in census week, whereas the census enumerated 6,378.

The difference (15,562) between our estimate and the census findings can be explained if we understand how parents think when they fill out the census form. Let us say that two middle-aged parents have a daughter aged 15. She has brought home a school friend who has been 'thrown out' by her stepmother. The parents allow the girl to stay until the

3.5 CHECKING THE ESTIMATE *continued*

weekend. It is census night and the adults sit down to complete the household form. There are two adults, their daughter and her friend. Question eight asked for the young woman's usual address. The parents were given four choices:

- (1) The address shown on the front of this form
- (2) Elsewhere in Australia - please specify address
- (3) Other country
- (4) For persons who now have no usual address write 'none' in the 'suburb/locality' box.

To identify the young woman as homeless, the middle-aged couple must pick option four and write in 'none'.

However, most parents will choose option two (address elsewhere), even though they know the young person is in conflict with her family. Parents reason that the young person has a usual address, even if she is not staying there at present. They do not think of the girl as 'homeless', especially if she is still at school. They expect the runaway to return home and consider her stay temporary. This may happen and if it does, then the girl will have experienced only a short period of homelessness. On the other hand, the girl may leave that house, move to another friend's place, and then go to a youth refuge. The census method of identifying homeless teenagers fails, because it depends on adults in the household recording 'no usual address' for their young visitor on census night. These young people appear to be the same as other visitors because they are reported as having a usual address elsewhere.

There were 39,966 young people aged 12 to 18 who were visiting private dwellings on census night. Some of them would have been staying over with their parents' permission, but others had probably run away from home or been thrown out. The breakdown between the two groups is not known, but we think the missing 15,562 are hidden within this category.

The correction for undercounting in the category 'friends and relatives' has been done in the same way as in 2001. However, it must be borne in mind that we have already replaced young people missed in SAAP (Section 3.2), and they must not be double counted. The final correction for undercounting was 14,656, compared with 19,175 in 2001.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Table 3.5 compares the number of homeless people identified at the 2001 Census with the number in 2006, including the adjustments for undercounting at both censuses. There were 99,900 homeless people in 2001 and 104,676 homeless people in 2006. The number of homeless people goes up and down - because people move in and out of homelessness - but for policy and planning purposes, it is reasonable to quote a national figure of 105,000 homeless.

3.6 CONCLUSION

*continued***3.5** PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT 2001 AND 2006 (FINAL FIGURES)

	2001	2006
Boarding houses	22 877	21 596
SAAP accommodation	14 251	19 849
Friends and relatives	48 614	46 856
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	14 158	16 375
	99 900	104 676

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

The numbers in 2001 and 2006 were similar in three categories (boarding houses, improvised dwellings and persons staying with other households), but there is now more SAAP accommodation than five years ago.

Finally, it is important to remember that homeless people often move from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Homeless people show up in particular places on census night, but the census does not capture the high levels of mobility that are typical of the population (McCaughey 1992; Hanover Welfare Services 1995; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998, Ch.2; Bartholomew 1999, Ch.6; Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald 2007; Johnson, Gronda and Coutts 2008). It is misleading to think about three distinct groups in the homeless population, even though this is how it might appear on census night.

Service providers deal primarily with homeless households, so determining the number of homeless households in the population is important. This analysis identifies three household ‘types’: single person households, couples (including people in *de facto* relationships) and family households (at least one adult and one child aged 17 or younger).

First, we discuss methodological issues. Then, we estimate the number of homeless households. After that, we examine where households were staying. Finally, we comment on homeless families.

4.1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

It is easy to identify the number of homeless households in private dwellings (houses and flats) because the census enumerates residents of private dwellings using household forms. Household forms gather information on family relationships. For example, we can ascertain the number of households staying temporarily with friends or relatives because household forms were used. Also, it is relatively straightforward to identify the number of households in SAAP, although the information is gathered differently. In the category ‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’, the census collects most of the information using household forms, but people sleeping rough are sometimes enumerated using short forms where family relationships are not recorded.

We also have to estimate the number of households in boarding houses. The census enumerates people in non-private dwellings using individual forms which not do record family relationships. There are ABS conventions for estimating this group (Chamberlain 1999, Ch.4; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch.4).

There are also ABS conventions to estimate the number of households among young people aged 12 to 18 who are outside of the census net.

4.2 HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS?

The boarding house population was 21,596 on census night and all persons were asked their marital status. In total, 1,834 people ticked ‘married’. The first assumption was that these individuals were with their husband or wife on census night. This gives us a crude estimate of the number of couples, but there is no basis for estimating the number of people in *de facto* relationships.

There were 486 children aged 14 or younger in boarding houses on census night. The second assumption was that all children aged 14 or younger were accompanying one or both parents, and that each family unit had on average 1.8 children. The final assumption was that half of these families were two-parent families and half were single parents.

There were 14,656 young people aged 12 to 18 missed by the census. On the basis of field experience (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998), the 1996 research team made the assumption that 20% were in *de facto* relationships and 80% were single-person households. The same assumption was made in 2001 and 2006.

4.2 HOW MANY
HOUSEHOLDS? *continued*

4.1 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	<i>Enumerated</i>	<i>Estimated</i>	<i>Total</i>
Boarding house	—	20 193	20 193
SAAP	9 883	—	9 883
Friends/relatives	22 145	13 190	35 335
Improvised dwellings, etc.	9 414	—	9 414
	41 442	33 383	74 825

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

Table 4.1 shows the number of households enumerated by the census and the estimated number once the household assumptions were applied. The overall figure was 74,825 households on census night including: 35,335 staying temporarily with friends and relatives, 20,193 households in boarding houses, 9,883 in SAAP and 9,414 in improvised dwellings.

Table 4.2 compares the number of households in the different categories in 2001 and 2006. In 2006, 76% were single-person households, 14% were couples without children and 10% were families. The proportions were similar in 2001 although the number of families increased from 6,745 to 7,483 in 2006.

4.2 HOMELESS SINGLE PERSON, COUPLE AND FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

	2001		2006	
	no.	%	no.	%
Single person	58 116	78	57 182	76
Couple only	9 420	13	(a) 10 160	14
Family with children	6 745	9	7 483	10
	74 281	100	74 825	100

(a) Includes 384 adults accompanying the couple household.

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Clearly, single people were the largest group in the population, but it is likely that couples and families were under-represented. There could easily have been more *de facto* couples amongst those aged 12 to 18 who were missed by the census. Also, no estimate was made for *de facto* couples in the boarding house population.

Some families were missed in both the census and the SAAP data collection. People often turn up at services reporting that they have children elsewhere. This can happen because families split up when they lose their accommodation and children are left behind with friends or relatives. In other cases, people report that the Family Court will not give them access to their children because they do not have stable accommodation. The census and the SAAP data collection record these people as 'singles' if their children are not with them on census night.

4.2 HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS? *continued*

Bearing in mind these data limitations, we now examine where households were staying on census night.

4.3 WHERE WERE THEY STAYING?

There were 57,182 homeless single person households on census night. Table 4.3 shows that 46% were staying temporarily with friends and relatives. Another 34% were in boarding houses. Only 10% were in SAAP.

There were 10,160 homeless couples without children. The majority (68%) were staying temporarily with friends and relatives, another 19% were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough and five per cent were in SAAP.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

	Singles (N=57,182)	Couple only (N=10,160)	Family with children (N=7,483)	All (N=74,825)
	%	%	%	%
Boarding house	34	8	4	27
SAAP	10	5	50	13
Friends/relatives	46	68	26	47
Improvised dwellings, etc.	10	19	20	13
	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

Why were so many couples staying with other households? In general, couples have a stronger financial position than other homeless people. Even if both persons in a couple are unemployed, they usually have a higher combined income than a single person, and they have more disposable income than a household with children. This makes it easier for other families to accept them in their homes for short periods of time.

There were 7,483 homeless families on census night. Table 4.3 shows that 50% were accommodated in SAAP, up from 41% in 2001. Homeless families are much more likely to access SAAP accommodation than couples or lone persons. Another 26% of the families were staying temporarily with friends and relatives and 20% were in improvised dwellings. Both figures were similar to 2001 (28 and 20% respectively). However, the proportion of families in boarding houses decreased from 11% in 2001 to four per cent in 2006. Most service providers believe that boarding houses are an unsuitable option for families with children and avoid sending them there (Bartholomew 1999).

4.4 PROPORTION OF FAMILIES IN SAAP ACCOMMODATION (a)

	NSW (N=1,787)	Vic. (N=1,765)	QLD (N=1,815)	WA (N=745)	SA (N=680)	Tas. (N=238)	NT (N=283)	ACT (N=170)	Aust. (N=7,483)
% Families in SAAP accom.	50	65	36	35	70	52	26	69	50

(a) Includes THM accommodation in Victoria.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, and SAAP Client Collection

The proportion of homeless families accommodated in SAAP varies by state and territory.

4.3 WHERE WERE THEY STAYING? *continued*

Table 4.4 shows that, in South Australia, Victoria and the ACT, between 65 and 70 per cent of homeless families were in SAAP. In New South Wales and Tasmania it was about 50%. In Queensland and Western Australia, about 35% of families were in SAAP and in the Northern Territory it was 26%.

Next we examine the social composition of homeless families including the number of accompanying children.

4.4 HOMELESS FAMILIES

Table 4.5 shows that most (78%) families with children in improvised dwellings were couples with children, whereas the majority in SAAP (80%) were single-parent households. Amongst those staying with friends and relatives, 54% were couples with children. The reasons for these differences are not obvious, but the overall pattern is clear. About 60% of the families were single parents with children and 40% were couples with children.

4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Boarding house (N=278)	SAAP (N=3,750)	Friends and relatives (N=1,966)	Improvised dwellings (N=1,489)	Total (N=7,483)
	%	%	%	%	%
Couple	50	20	54	78	42
Single parent	50	80	46	22	58
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

There were 7,483 families with children in the homeless population on census night. However, there were 10,608 adults in these families because 42% of the families included two parents and 58% included one. The 7,483 families included 16,182 children (Table 4.6).

There were 3,275 children staying with their parents in an improvised dwelling or sleeping rough (probably in cars). Another 8,160 young people were with one or both parents in a SAAP service, such as a hostel or refuge. There were 4,261 children staying with their parents in a doubling up situation. Finally, there were 486 children who were with one or both parents in a single room

4.6 ACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION (a)

	2006
Boarding house	486
SAAP	8 160
Friends/relatives	4 261
Improvised dwellings, etc.	3 275
	16 182

(a) All homeless children aged under 18 years that are accompanied by a parent.

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001 and 2006.

4.4 HOMELESS FAMILIES
continued

It is important to understand the relationship between the number of individuals in the homeless population and the number of households. There were 7,483 homeless families on census night composed of 26,790 people (10,608 parents and 16,182 children = 26,790). In 2006, families were 10% of all homeless households, but they made up one-quarter (26%) of the homeless population.

This chapter examines the social characteristics of homeless people, beginning with the age and gender profiles of the population. Then we examine the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Finally, we estimate whether more people have a long or a short-term problem with homelessness.

5.1 AGE AND GENDER

There is information on age and gender for all groups who were counted by the census and the SAAP National Data Collection. However, we have to estimate the gender breakdown of the young people aged 12 to 18 who were outside of the census net. We know that 57% of homeless school students were female (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008a, p.14). The census identified 1,500 homeless young people aged 12 to 18 staying with other households, and 52% of this group were female. These figures were used to estimate the gender composition of the young people missed by the census.

5.1 AGE BREAKDOWN OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	<i>no.</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 12	12 133	12
12–18	21 940	21
19–24	10 504	10
25–34	15 804	15
35–44	13 981	13
45–54	12 206	12
55–64	10 708	10
65 or older	7 400	7
	104 676	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that the homeless population was disproportionately made up of middle-aged and older men (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973, 1994). Table 5.1 shows that the age profile of the population is now very different. In 2006, 58% of the homeless were aged 34 or younger and only 42% were aged 35 or older.

Twelve per cent of the homeless were children under 12. These young people were with parents on census night. Another 21% of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own) and 10% were young adults aged 19 to 24. The age profile of the population is now much younger than was thought to be the case 40 to 50 years ago.

5.1 AGE AND GENDER
continued

5.2 SEX AND AGE OF HOMELESS

	<i>Under 12 years</i>	<i>12-18 years</i>	<i>19-24 years</i>	<i>25-34 years</i>	<i>35-44 years</i>	<i>45-54 years</i>	<i>55-64 years</i>	<i>65 years and over</i>	<i>All</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	46	53	57	63	64	61	64	56
Female	48	54	47	43	37	36	39	36	44
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

There are more homeless women in the population now compared with the 1950s and 1960s. Table 5.2 shows that there were more females than males in the age group 12 to 18 (54 to 46%), although the pattern reverses in the age group 19 to 24. Amongst those aged 35 or older, men outnumber women by approximately three to two. Overall, 44% of the homeless were female and 56% were male, similar proportions to 2001 (42% female, 58% male).

5.3 SEX BY DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION

	<i>Boarding house (N=21,596)</i>	<i>Friends or relatives (N=46,856)</i>	<i>SAAP (N=19,849)</i>	<i>Improvised dwellings (N=16,375)</i>	<i>All (N=104,676)</i>
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	72	52	47	60	56
Female	28	48	53	40	44
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students.

Table 5.3 shows the number of males and females in different segments of the homeless population on census night. About three-quarters (72%) of boarding house residents were male compared with one-quarter who were female. The 2001 Census also reported that 72% of boarding house residents were men (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, p.38).

Sixty per cent of people in improvised dwellings were male, an almost identical figure to 2001 (61%). In the capital cities, homeless men were more likely to sleep rough, but in rural locations there was a more even balance of males and females sleeping rough or using improvised dwellings.

In 2006, women outnumbered men in SAAP by 53 to 47%. There is a significant sector of services for victims of domestic violence and because of the perceived vulnerability of homeless women their access to services is often better facilitated.

Overall, there were more males in the population (56 to 44%), but women are now a substantial minority group compared with what was thought to be the case 40 to 50 years ago.

5.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people are more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians. At the 2006 Census, 2.4% of the population were identified as Indigenous, but 17% of SAAP clients were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in 2005–2006 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, p.30).

Next, we examine the proportion of Indigenous people in different sectors of the homeless population on census night. We have information on the Indigenous status of people who were counted by the census and the SAAP National Data Collection. There are two reasons for thinking that the census undercounted homeless Indigenous people.

First, Taylor and Biddle (2008, p.v) report that:

... substantial undercounting of the Indigenous population occurred at the 2006 Census. This certainty arises from the fact that the 2006 Post Enumeration Survey (PES) was extended for the first time to include a sample of localities in remote areas. Nationally, the net undercount rate was estimated to be 11.5 per cent, but in Western Australia and the Northern Territory it was as high as 24 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

If the 2006 Census undercounted the Indigenous population by 11.5%, then the census probably undercounted homeless Indigenous people as well.

Second, Indigenous people staying temporarily with other households were identified at the usual address question. There is a risk of underestimation at this question because many Indigenous people make sense of the ‘usual address’ question within a different cultural frame of reference. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they often move in with members of their extended family. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record ‘no usual address’ on census night, because ‘home’ is understood in a different way. The result is under-reporting in this category.

Bearing these data limitations in mind, Table 5.4 shows that Indigenous people were over-represented in all sections of the homeless population where we have data. Indigenous people made up 3.8% of people staying with other households, 5.8% of those in boarding houses, 15.8% of people in the primary population and 19.7% of people in SAAP. Overall, 2.4% of people identified as Aboriginal at the 2006 Census, but 9% of the homeless were Indigenous.

5.4 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Boarding house (N=21,596)	Friends or relatives (N=46,856)	SAAP (N=19,849)	Improvised dwellings (N=16,375)	All (N=104,676)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	94.2	96.2	80.3	84.2	90.9
Indigenous	5.8	3.8	19.7	15.8	9.1
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

5.3 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

Policy makers and service providers need information on the length of time that people have been homeless. Those who have been homeless for more than a year have different needs from people who have been homeless for a few weeks. However, neither the census nor the SAAP National Data Collection collects information on duration of homelessness.

In this section, we make inferences about the temporal characteristics of sub-groups in the homeless population, using labour force and income data. In each case, we ask the question, ‘Is this a high or a low turnover group?’ We do not have precise figures, so our judgments are qualitative in character.

5.5 LABOUR FORCE STATUS OF BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS AGED 15 OR OVER

	<i>All persons (N=17,269)(a)</i>
	%
Employed full-time	18
Employed part-time	11
Unemployed	13
Not in the labour force	58
	100

(a) Information on 82 per cent of boarding house residents.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Boarding house residents are often unemployed or no longer in the labour force. For example, Horton (1990, p.16) found that 70% of her respondents in Melbourne were receiving welfare benefits and only 18% had paid work. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2003, pp.33–34) found that 74% of their respondents in Adelaide were dependent on Centrelink benefits and only 19% had paid work.

Table 5.5 gives the overall picture for 2006. Seventy-one per cent of boarding house residents were either unemployed or outside of the labour force in census week. Eighty-five per cent of boarding house residents reported an income below \$600 per week (before tax) (Table 5.6), and most people had an income below \$400 per week. Many boarding house residents have considerable difficulty saving enough money to move into a conventional house or flat. There are some people in this category who have a short-term problem, but the dominant pattern is of a low turnover population.

5.3 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS
continued

5.6 WEEKLY INDIVIDUAL INCOME OF PEOPLE IN BOARDING HOUSES AGED 15 OR OVER

	<i>All persons (N=16,799)(a)</i>
	%
\$800 or more	8
\$600 - 799	7
\$400 - 599	11
Below \$400	74
	100

(a) Information on 80 per cent of boarding house residents aged 15 or over.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

There were an estimated 14,656 young homeless people aged 12 to 18 who were not classified as homeless by the census. These young people were staying temporarily with other families. However, adults filling out the census forms reported that these teenagers had a 'usual address' elsewhere. In many cases, the young person had probably left home recently, and the adult assumed that the family quarrel would be patched up. This is a high turnover group.

There were 32,200 people staying temporarily with other households who reported no usual address. Sixty per cent were in households where at least one person had paid employment (either part-time or full-time) and 40% were in households where all persons were either unemployed or not in the labour force (NILF households).

Table 5.7 shows that 57% of the employed households staying with other families reported an income of \$800 or more per week (\$40,000 per annum). These households probably had sufficient resources to make a transition into more secure accommodation, or be able to do so with assistance. This is a high turnover group.

5.7 WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF PEOPLE STAYING WITH OTHER FAMILIES, BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE

	<i>Working household (N=11,988)</i>	<i>Unemployed or NILF household (N=6,749)</i>	<i>All households (N=18,737)(a)</i>
	%	%	%
\$800 or more	57	15	42
\$650 - 799	10	5	8
\$500 - 649	14	17	15
Below \$500	19	63	35
	100	100	100

(a) Information on 85 per cent of households.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

However, 80% of unemployed and NILF households reported a family income below \$650 per week before tax and most had an income below \$500 per week (Table 5.7). They will have difficulty accumulating the financial resources for one month's rent in advance, the money required for a bond and for the other costs associated with setting up a home. This is a low turnover group.

5.3 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS *continued*

5.8 WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF PEOPLE IN IMPROVED DWELLINGS, TENTS OR SLEEPING OUT, BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE

	Working household (N=3,078)	Unemployed or NILF household (N=4,298)	All households (N=7,376)(a)
	%	%	%
\$800 or more	57	5	27
\$650 - 799	11	1	5
\$500 - 649	17	7	11
Below \$500	15	87	57
	100	100	100

(a) Information on 78 per cent of households.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

The census identified 9,400 households in 'improved dwellings, tents or sleepers out'. One-third (36%) of the households had at least one person in the labour force (either part-time or full-time) and two-thirds (64%) were either unemployed or NILF households. Table 5.8 shows that 57% of the working households reported a weekly income of \$800 or more. Amongst unemployed and NILF households, 94% reported an income below \$650 per week and most households had an income below \$500 per week. Many people living in improved dwellings are poor. Some families with higher incomes may exit from the homeless population after a short period, but overall this is a low turnover group.

5.9 ACCOMMODATION AFTER LEAVING SAAP, 2005-06

	SAAP clients (N=106,400)
	%
Housed	
Purchasing own home	3
Private rental	27
Public rental	16
Community housing	5
Homeless/insecure	
SAAP accommodation	17
Institutional setting/improved dwelling/sleeping rough	9
Boarding (boarding house or with another family)	17
Rent-free accommodation	6
	100

Source: AIHW (2007, p.75).

There were 19,849 people in SAAP on census night. In 2005–06, 90% of clients leaving SAAP were either unemployed or not in the labour force (AIHW 2007, pp.67–68). About half of the clients remained homeless after leaving SAAP (Table 5.9). The other half returned to private rental, public rental or community housing. Many of these tenants were poor and some tenancies would have failed. This is a low turnover group.

It is not possible to make a definitive judgment about the temporal characteristics of the homeless population on census night. Table 5.10 shows that one-third (35%) of the

5.3 DURATION OF
HOMELESSNESS
continued

homeless population were more likely to have a short-term problem. These people were often in the younger age groups or in households where one person had full-time employment.

5.10 NUMBER IN HIGH AND LOW TURNOVER PARTS OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	<i>Number of households</i>	%
High turnover		
Youth 12–18	13 190	17
Working household, no usual address (NUA)	13 285	18
Low turnover		
Boarding house	20 193	27
Unemployed / NILF household, NUA	8 860	12
Improvised dwelling	9 414	13
SAAP/THM accommodation	9 883	13
	74 825	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006, SAAP Client Collection 2006 and National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 5.10 also shows that two-thirds (65%) of the homeless were in segments of the population where many people have a long-term problem. When people who are socially isolated lose their accommodation, their situation often becomes worse. They are usually in debt. Some try to return to conventional accommodation but do not have the financial resources to rent a property in their own right. Others have been evicted and do not have appropriate references. Homeless people are often excluded from the private rental market and there are long waiting lists for public housing in most areas. We estimate that 60 to 70% of the homeless on census night had a long-term problem.

For a long time it was assumed that the homeless population was distributed across Australia in the same way as the general population. However, the 2001 Census found that the rate of homelessness was lower in the 'southern states' (New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory), significantly higher in Queensland and Western Australia, and much higher in the Northern Territory (Chamberlain 1999, Ch.6; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch.6). This suggested a more complex distribution of the homeless population than had previously been assumed. This chapter investigates whether this was still the case in 2006.

6.1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important.

First, there is the number of homeless people in each state and territory on census night.

Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing states and territories of different sizes. For example, the number of homeless people will always be greater in New South Wales than Tasmania because of the population difference, but the rate of homelessness may be the same.

There were 104,676 homeless people on census night. Geographical information is available on people counted by the census and the SAAP National Data Collection. Chapter 3 showed that there were an estimated 14,656 young homeless people who were reported by respondents to the census as having a usual residence elsewhere. We have estimated how many young people were so reported in each state, but we have to estimate how they were distributed geographically within states. The convention we have used is to assume that that they were distributed in the same way as other persons staying temporarily with friends and relatives (Chamberlain 1999, p.42).

6.2 SOUTHERN STATES

There were around 40 to 50 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in the southern states (Table 6.1), although New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT were at the lower end of the range (41 to 42 per 10,000), whereas South Australia and Tasmania were at the top (52 per 10,000). The rate of homelessness in each state and territory was similar to that recorded in 2001 (Table 6.1).

6.2 SOUTHERN STATES

*continued***6.1** RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	Vic.	SA	Tas.	ACT
2006	41.8	41.6	52.6	52.6	42.1
2001	42.2	43.6	51.6	52.4	39.6

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 6.2 shows that there were 27,374 homeless people in New South Wales on census night 2006, around 700 more than in 2001. In Victoria there were 20,511 homeless people, roughly 200 more than in 2001. In South Australia, there were 7,962 people in 2006 compared with 7,586 in 2001, and the increase was 92 in Tasmania and 135 in the ACT. The number of homeless people goes up and down because people move in and out of homelessness, but the broad pattern in the southern states has not changed significantly since 2001.

6.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

	NSW	Vic.	SA	Tas.	ACT
2006	27 374	20 511	7 962	2 507	1 364
2001	26 676	20 305	7 586	2 415	1 229

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 6.3 shows the distribution of homeless people across different sectors of the population by state. In New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT, around 40 to 50% of homeless people were staying with other households (Table 6.3). There were more people in boarding houses in New South Wales (28%) and Victoria (22%), and fewer in Tasmania (10%) and the ACT (8%). In New South Wales, about one-fifth (19%) of the homeless were in SAAP. In South Australia and Tasmania this rose to one-quarter (26 and 25%). In Victoria, one-third (31%) of the homeless were in SAAP (including THM accommodation) and in the ACT it was two-fifths (39%).

6.3 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE POPULATION 2006

	NSW (N=27,374)	Vic. (N=20,511)	SA (N=7,962)	Tas. (N=2,507)	ACT (N=1,364)
	%	%	%	%	%
Boarding house	28	22	17	10	8
SAAP	19	31	26	25	39
Friends/relatives	40	36	46	50	47
Imp. dwellings	13	11	11	15	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006, SAAP Client Collection 2006 and National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6.3 QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The second pattern was in Queensland and Western Australia where there were about 68 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in 2006, significantly higher than in the southern states (Table 6.4). The 2006 rates of homelessness in Queensland and Western Australia were similar to the rates recorded in 2001 (70 and 64 per 10,000).

6.4 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	<i>Southern States</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
2006	40 - 50	68.6	68.4
2001	40 - 50	69.8	64.0

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 6.5 shows that there were 13,391 homeless people in Western Australia in 2006, compared with 11,697 in 2001 (Table 6.5). There were 26,782 homeless people in Queensland in 2006, compared with 24,569 in 2001.

6.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
2006	26 782	13 391
2001	24 569	11 697

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Half (49%) of the homeless in Queensland were staying temporarily with other households (Table 6.6), as were 59% of the homeless in Western Australia. Queensland had more people in boarding houses than Western Australia (20% compared with 12%). In both states, just under one-fifth (19 and 18%) of the homeless were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleepers out; and in both states about 12% were in SAAP.

6.6 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE POPULATION

	<i>Qld</i> (N=26,782)	<i>WA</i> (N=13,391)
	%	%
Boarding house	20	12
SAAP	12	11
Friends/relatives	49	59
Imp. dwellings	19	18
	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006, SAAP Client Collection 2006 and National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6.4 NORTHERN TERRITORY

Table 6.7 shows that the number of homeless people in the Northern Territory decreased from 5,423 in 2001 to 4,785 in 2006. However, Taylor and Biddle (2008, p.v)

6.4 NORTHERN TERRITORY *continued*

found that in the Northern Territory Indigenous people were undercounted by 19%. It is probable that homeless Indigenous people were undercounted as well.

The important point is that the Northern Territory still had a much higher rate of homelessness (248 per 10,000) than the other states. The higher rate of homelessness in the Territory is partly explained by Indigenous homelessness but also by the lack of affordable housing.

6.7 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	2001	2006
Number of homeless people	5 423	4 785
Rate of homelessness	288.3	248.1

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 6.8 shows that the homeless population is distributed somewhat differently in the Territory. In 2006, 44% of the homeless were staying temporarily with other households, which was similar to the other states. However, 33% of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. This is down from 40% in 2001, but it is still much higher than elsewhere. Improvised shelters are common in remote communities with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents.

The proportion in SAAP increased from four per cent in 2001 to nine per cent in 2006, but this was still lower than elsewhere.

6.8 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE POPULATION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

	2001 (N=5,423)	2006 (N=4,785)
	%	%
Boarding house	17	14
SAAP	4	9
Friends/relatives	39	44
Imp. dwellings	40	33
	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

6.5 SUMMARY

In the 1990s, policy makers assumed that the homeless population was distributed in proportion to the general population. The findings from the 2001 and 2006 Censuses indicate that this is not the case. At both censuses, the rate of homelessness in the southern states was about 40 to 50 per 10,000 of the population. In Queensland and Western Australia, the rate was between 65 and 70 per 10,000 of the population. The rate was highest in the Northern Territory where it was 248 per 10,000 in 2006.

There are four other patterns. First, in all states people staying with other households were the largest group. They ranged from 36% of the homeless in Victoria to 59% of the

6.5 SUMMARY *continued*

homeless in Western Australia. Most people stay with other households before they approach SAAP services for help.

Second, the proportion of the homeless population in boarding houses varies from state to state. It ranged from eight per cent in the ACT to nearly 30% in New South Wales.

6.9 PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS POPULATION IN IMPROVISED DWELLINGS, TENTS AND SLEEPERS OUT

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT
% in improvised dwellings, tents, sleepers out	13	11	19	18	11	15	33	6

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Third, there is variation between states in the size of the primary population as measured by the census category, ‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’ (Table 6.9). In the ACT, six per cent of the homeless were in the primary category, compared with 11% in South Australia and Victoria, nearly 20% in Western Australia and Queensland, and 33% in the Northern Territory. In the capital cities, most people in this category were probably in squats or sleeping rough, whereas in rural or remote locations they were probably in improvised shelters or camping out.

6.10 PERCENTAGE OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION IN SAAP ACCOMMODATION

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT
% in SAAP	19	31	12	11	26	25	9	39

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection.

Fourth, the proportion of the population in SAAP varied from state to state (Table 6.10). It ranged from roughly 10% in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia; to 26% in South Australia and Tasmania, to 31% in Victoria; and to nearly 40% in the ACT. The states that had the biggest problem with homelessness were Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. These states had only 10 to 12% of the homeless population in SAAP.

The ABS defines marginal residents of caravan parks as people who are renting a caravan, at their usual address, with no-one in the dwelling having full-time work (35 hours or more) (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch.7). This chapter focuses on four issues. First, we explain how marginal residents of caravan parks were identified. Then we investigate whether caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. Third, the social characteristics of marginal caravan park dwellers are compared with the social characteristics of other sub-groups in the homeless population. Finally, we return to the argument about caravans and tertiary homelessness.

7.1 HOW MANY MARGINAL RESIDENTS?

There were 129,487 people in caravan parks on census night and they can be divided into four groups.

First, there were 72,575 holidaymakers. Most (94%) reported a usual address elsewhere in Australia and six per cent had a usual address overseas. Most (90%) holiday-makers were in Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Holidaymakers were excluded from the analysis.

Second, there were 32,390 people who had purchased a caravan and this was their usual address. They were identified at both the 'usual address' question and the question that asked about the tenure of their dwelling. People who selected 'fully owned' and 'being purchased' were taken out.

Third, there were 7,025 people who were renting their caravans but had full-time jobs. This group was identified at the questions that asked about labour force status and the number of hours worked in the previous week. For the purposes of this analysis, we have assumed that employed caravan park residents could move to conventional accommodation if they wished, although in particular locations affordable housing may be difficult to obtain. These households were excluded from the analysis.

7.1 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS AND NUMBER OF DWELLINGS

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
Persons	5 104	2 789	6 385	1 994	748	162	273	42	17 497
Dwellings	3 626	2 112	4 486	1 391	522	108	174	29	12 448

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Finally, there were people who were renting their caravans, but no one in the dwellings had full-time employment and all persons were at their usual address. These were 'marginal residents of caravan parks'.

7.1 HOW MANY MARGINAL RESIDENTS? *continued*

Table 7.1 shows that the census identified 17,497 marginal residents of caravan parks in 12,448 dwellings. There were 6,385 people in Queensland, 5,104 in New South Wales, 2,789 people in Victoria, 1,994 in Western Australia, and smaller numbers in the other states and territories.

Table 7.2 shows that marginal residents of caravan parks declined from 22,863 in 2001 to 17,497 in 2006. The numbers dropped in all states and territories and the overall decrease was 23%.

7.2 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS 2001 AND 2006

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Total
2001	6 881	3 407	7 989	2 503	932	271	775	110	22 868
2006	5 104	2 789	6 385	1 994	748	162	273	42	17 497
Decrease	1 777	618	1 604	509	184	109	502	68	5 371

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001 and 2006.

7.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Next, we investigate whether caravan parks are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. Boarding houses are more common in cities such as Melbourne and Sydney and less common in regional centres and country towns. In some regional centres and country towns, it is said that SAAP workers send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

Some people were in caravan parks in regional centres and country towns. Others were in caravan parks located in industrial suburbs of major capital cities. There was also variation in the spatial distribution of marginal caravan park residents in different states and territories. We try to get a sense of the overall picture by comparing the spatial distribution of boarding house residents and marginal caravan park dwellers at the national level.

Table 7.3 shows that 70% of boarding house residents were in the capital cities and 30% were in regional centres and country towns. In contrast, 71% of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres and country towns and 29% were in capital cities.

7.3 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS IN BOARDING HOUSES AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

	Boarding house (N=21,596)	Caravan (N=17,497)
	%	%
Capital city	70	29
Regional centre, country town, remote location	30	71
	100	100

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

There is a sense in which caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. SAAP workers sometimes send homeless people to caravan parks if there is no SAAP accommodation available in their community. There are also people

7.2 GEOGRAPHICAL
DISTRIBUTION *continued*

who have a sustained problem with homelessness and end up living in caravans on a long-term basis.

7.3 SOCIAL
CHARACTERISTICS

Next we compare the social characteristics of marginal residents of caravan parks with boarding house residents and people staying temporarily with other households. Table 7.4 includes information on young people outside of the census net. Tables 7.5 to 7.7 use only census data. Therefore, the number of persons in the category 'friends and relatives' is lower in these tables.

7.4 PROPORTION OF PERSONS IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS, BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE

	<i>Friends & relatives</i> (N=39,896)	<i>Boarding house</i> (N=21,111)	<i>Caravan</i> (N=15,601)
	%	%	%
Younger (15–34)	55	40	23
Middle aged (35–54)	23	35	35
Older (55 or over)	22	25	42
	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006 and National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 7.4 shows that 45% of the people staying with other households were in the older age group (35 or over). In contrast, 60% of those in boarding houses were aged 35 or older, as were 77% of marginal residents of caravan parks. Younger people are more likely to stay with other households. Older people have fewer options and they are more likely to go boarding houses or caravan parks.

The definition of marginal caravan park residents specified households where there was no-one in full-time employment. Table 7.5 shows that 20% of the marginal residents had part-time employment and 80% were either unemployed or outside of the labour force. In contrast, 18% of boarding house residents had full-time work, as did 28% of those staying temporarily with other households. People in full-time work have a good chance of returning to secure accommodation if they have a reasonable income.

7.5 LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE, EXCLUDING PERSONS UNDER 15

	<i>Friends & relatives</i> (N=26,278) (a)	<i>Boarding house</i> (N=17,269) (b)	<i>Caravan</i> (N=10,566) (c)
	%	%	%
Employed full-time	28	18	—
Employed part-time	13	11	20
Unemployed	10	13	16
Not in labour force	49	58	64
	100	100	100

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Information on 91 per cent of cases.

(b) Information on 82 per cent of cases.

(c) Information on 68 per cent of cases.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

7.3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS
continued

Table 7.6 shows that 74% of boarding house residents and 77% of marginal caravan park dwellers reported a before-tax income of below \$400 per week. They would have little chance of saving a bond, one month's rent in advance and the other costs associated with setting up a flat.

In contrast, 29% of people staying with other households had an income of \$600 per week or more, including 19% reporting an income of \$800 or more. They were probably working full-time so their chances of getting out of homelessness were good.

It is important to consider household income, but there is no information for boarding house residents because they are enumerated on individual forms. Table 7.7 shows that 71% of caravan park residents reported a household income of below \$500 per week. Ninety per cent of this group reported a household income below \$350 per week and 10% had an income between \$350 and \$499. Most marginal caravan park residents were poor.

7.6 PERSONAL INCOME BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE, EXCLUDING PERSONS UNDER 15

	<i>Friends & relatives</i> (N=25,547)(a)	<i>Boarding house</i> (N=16,799)(b)	<i>Caravan</i> (N=10,254)(c)
	%	%	%
\$800 or more	19	8	4
\$600 - 799	10	7	4
\$400 - 599	16	11	15
Below \$400	55	74	77
	100	100	100

(a) Information on 88 per cent of cases.

(b) Information on 80 per cent of cases.

(c) Information on 66 per cent of cases.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

In contrast, 42% of those staying with friends or relatives reported a household income of \$800 per week or more. This level of income does not guarantee a return to secure accommodation if the household has no savings for a bond, a month's rent in advance, and all the other costs involved in setting up a home. Nonetheless, their financial position is stronger than marginal residents of caravan parks, and their chances of returning to conventional accommodation are better.

7.3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS
*continued***7.7** HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE, EXCLUDING PERSONS UNDER 15 YEARS

	<i>Friends & relatives</i> (N=18,737)(a)	<i>Caravan</i> (N=8,115)(b)
	%	%
\$800 or more	42	8
\$650 - 799	8	5
\$500 - 649	15	16
Below \$500	35	71
	100	100

(a) Information on 85 per cent of households.

(b) Information on 66 per cent of households.

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Policy makers accept that people staying temporarily with other households are part of the secondary population. However, in some quarters there is still unease about referring to the long-term residents of boarding houses as the 'tertiary' population. There is also unease about referring to some caravan parks residents as 'marginally housed', yet both groups appear poorer than people staying with other households. How do we explain this?

The apparent contradiction is explained by understanding that homelessness is a process. When people first lose their accommodation they usually stay temporarily with friends and relatives until they have exhausted these options. They are more likely to stay in boarding houses or caravan parks on a short-term basis when they are further 'down the track'. In some cases, this will be before they approach SAAP services for assistance, but in other cases it will be after.

Homeless people are more likely to go to boarding houses and caravan parks on a long-term basis when they have been 'around the system' for a sustained period of time. People in these settings tend to have fewer options and to have run out of friends and relatives to stay with. Long-term residents of boarding houses and caravan parks have often been without conventional accommodation for longer than people in the secondary population.

7.4 TERTIARY
HOMELESSNESS?

Reid et al. (2005) and Giovanetti et al. (2007) argue that marginal residents of caravan parks are really part of the tertiary population. It is clear that in some communities caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses. However, there are two problems with the argument that marginal residents of caravan parks are part of the tertiary population.

First, it is difficult for the wider community to accept that some people living in caravans are part of the tertiary homeless population when most caravan dwellers are on holiday or own their own caravan. The 2006 Census found that 56% of individuals in caravan parks were on holiday. The census was held in winter and this figure would be much higher in the summer months. Another 25% owned their caravan and many had made a lifestyle choice to live in a caravan, typically following retirement. Only 14% were marginal residents on census night and this figure would be significantly below 10% in the summer months.

7.4 TERTIARY
HOMELESSNESS?
continued

Second, it is now common to find that cabins are the main type of accommodation in caravan parks, and cabins often have better facilities than a caravan. A cabin usually has a separate kitchen and bathroom and often has one or more bedrooms. The census does not distinguish between caravans and cabins, but it does ask householders to record the number of bedrooms in their dwelling. Table 7.8 shows the number of bedrooms for households living permanently in caravan parks, by tenure type. Overall, two-fifths (39%) recorded two or more bedrooms.

7.8 NUMBER OF BEDROOMS OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING PERMANENTLY IN CARAVAN PARKS BY TENURE TYPE

	Owner (N=21,371)	Renter (ft employment) (N=4,141)	Marginal resident (N=7,583)	All (N=33,095)(a)
	%	%	%	%
No separate bedroom	12	15	22	15
One bedroom	43	54	51	46
Two or more bedrooms	45	31	27	39
	100	100	100	100

(a) Information on 85 per cent of cases.
Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Amongst marginal residents, 22% reported no separate bedroom and these were caravans. Twenty-seven per cents had two or more bedrooms and these were cabins. However, 51% reported 'one bedroom'. We think some of these were caravans where the informant misunderstood the intention of the question², but others were one-bedroom cabins with internal kitchen and bathroom facilities. Overall, somewhere between one-quarter and one-half of marginal residents were living in cabins. This undermines the argument that marginal residents of caravan parks are really part of the tertiary population.

2 There was an instruction that stated, 'if the dwelling is a bedsitter, mark the "None" box'.

This chapter summarises various patterns in the data presented so far. Then we show that youth homelessness decreased by 21% between 2001 and 2006, while the number of people in homeless families increased by 17%. Homeless adults (without children) increased by 10% over the same period. Finally, we explain why these changes occurred.

8.1 PATTERNS

There are a number of patterns in the data presented so far. First, although the number of homeless people increased from 99,900 in 2001 to 104,676 in 2006, at both censuses the rate of homelessness was 53 per 10,000 of the population.

8.1 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION ON CENSUS NIGHT (FINAL FIGURES)

	2001		2006	
	no.	%	no.	%
Boarding houses	22 877	23	21 596	20
SAAP accommodation	14 251	14	19 849	19
Friends and relatives	48 614	49	46 856	45
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	14 158	14	16 375	16
	99 900	100	104 676	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Second, Table 8.1 shows that the homeless population was distributed in approximately the same way in both 2001 and 2006. There were just under 47,000 people staying temporarily with other households in 2006, compared with 48,600 in 2001. The number of people in SAAP increased from 14,251 in 2001 to almost 20,000 in 2006, but this reflects the increase in the provision of supported accommodation. The number of people in the primary population was up by just over 2,000 people to 16,375 and the number of people in boarding houses decreased by 1,281 to 21,596.

There were between 74,000 and 75,000 homeless households at both censuses and Indigenous people were over-represented in the homeless population in 2006, as they were in 2001 (Table 8.2). In the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that the homeless population was disproportionately made up of middle-aged and older men (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973/1994). This is no longer the case but men still outnumber women by 56 to 44% (Table 8.2).

8.1 PATTERNS *continued*

8.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>Indigenous %</i>	<i>Male %</i>
2006	74 825	9.9	56
2001	74 281	8.5	58

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006

Table 8.3 shows that the rates of homelessness in each state and territory did not change much between 2001 and 2006. In the southern states (New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory), there were 42 homeless people per 10,000 in 2006, similar to the rates recorded in those states in 2001. South Australia and Tasmania had a rate of 53 per 10,000 in 2006, again similar to 2001. The rates of homelessness in the other states were higher. In Western Australia and Queensland, there were between 64 and 70 per 10,000 at both censuses. In the Northern Territory there were 248 homeless people per 10,000 in 2006. The rates are sufficiently consistent in each state to suggest that the 2006 numbers shown in Table 8.4 provide policy makers with a reasonable guide to the number of homeless people in their state at a point in time.

8.3 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
2006	42	42	69	68	53	53	248	42	53
2001	42	44	70	64	52	52	288	40	53

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

8.4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Aust.</i>
2006	27 374	20 511	26 782	13 391	7 962	2 507	4 785	1 364	104 676

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2006.

8.2 CHANGES

Despite the stability of these patterns, there have been some important changes in the homeless population. To show these changes, we divide the homeless population into three groups: homeless teenagers aged 12 to 18 who were on their own; homeless families with children aged 17 or younger; and homeless adults aged 19 or older without accompanying children.

MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2008a) reported that there were 21,940 homeless youths aged 12 to 18 on census night 2006, but they did not distinguish between homeless teenagers who were accompanying parents and homeless teenagers who were on their own. However, the two groups can be disaggregated.

8.2 CHANGES *continued***8.5** CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	2001	2006	Change
	no.	no.	%
Families with children	22 944	26 790	16.8
Youth aged 12 to 18 (alone)	22 600	17 891	-20.8
Adults (singles and couples)	54 356	59 995	10.4
	99 900	104 676	4.8

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006.

Table 8.5 shows that the number of homeless youth aged 12 to 18 who were on their own decreased from 22,600 in 2001 to 17,891 in 2006, a decrease of 20.8%. In 2006, there were 26,790 people in families, an increase of 16.8% on 2001. There was also a 10.4% increase in the number of homeless adults outside of families. This was the largest group with about 60,000 people on census night.

How do we explain these changes? First, we discuss homeless teenagers, then families and, finally, adults without children.

8.3 YOUTH

It has often been assumed that high unemployment increases the level of homelessness and a decrease in unemployment has the reverse effect (Neil and Fopp 1992). However, the number of unemployed youths aged 15 to 19 looking for full-time work declined from 27.7% in August 1996 to 23.9% in August 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997, 2002). At the same time, the number of homeless young people who were on their own increased from about 16,700 in 1996 to 22,600 in 2001, an increase of 35%.

The relationship between unemployment and youth homelessness changed after 2001. The number of unemployed young people aged 15 to 19 looking for full-time work declined from 23.9% in August 2001 to 20.9% in August 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006c). During the same period, the number of homeless youth on their own came down by 20.8% (Table 8.5). The decrease in the unemployment rate was neither large enough, nor sudden enough, to explain much of the decline in youth homelessness.

The major change that did occur after 2001 was the increase in early intervention services targeting homeless and at risk teenagers. The establishment of the Reconnect program in 1999 was a major Australian Government early intervention initiative to reduce youth homelessness. Reconnect targets young people aged 12 to 18 to achieve:

- family reconciliation, wherever practicable, between homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness and their families; and
- engagement of young homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, with employment, education, training and community (DFaCS 2003, p.22).

The Reconnect program was implemented in phases and was not fully operational until 2003. There were 29 services funded in December 1999 (DFaCS 2003, p.22). By 2003, there were 98 Reconnect services across the country, most having two or three early intervention workers.

8.3 *YOUTH continued*

The most recent evaluation of Reconnect (DFaCS 2003, p.8) found that the program had achieved positive outcomes for young people and their families, particularly by 'improving stability in young people's living situations' and 'achieving family reconciliation by increasing the capacity of families to manage conflict and to improve communication'. The evaluation found that the number of young people reporting good or very good skills in managing family conflict increased from 12% to 44% after their engagement with Reconnect; and the number of young people reporting poor or very poor skills decreased from 66% to 16% (DFaCS 2003, pp.9-11). In addition, several states implemented new programs such as the Youth Support Coordinators Program in Queensland and the Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program in Victoria. Some SAAP youth agencies also undertake early intervention with recently homeless young people.

Since the late 1990s, several state and territory governments have expended additional funds to increase the number of welfare staff in schools and to improve assistance to young people and families in crisis. Following the third National Census of Homeless School Students in 2006, we made 173 visits to secondary schools in all states and territories. In many schools, we found welfare staff were using early intervention strategies to facilitate family reconciliation (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008a, Ch.5). School welfare staff were also supporting young people who could not return home. These teenagers were usually boarding with other families or living in share households. Some schools were operating case management programs and most schools routinely worked with community agencies on a range of issues, including support for homeless teenagers. Working with community agencies was rare a decade ago but it is now commonplace.

The two factors most likely to be associated with the decrease in youth homelessness are early intervention and the improved labour market for young people. The labour market has improved and it is easier for young people to find part-time or casual employment. However, the small decline in youth unemployment between 2001 and 2006 cannot explain most of the decrease in youth homelessness.

On the other hand, Australia's early intervention capacity has developed considerably over the past 10 years, and particularly over the past five years. Reconnect is an effective program and early intervention has become an established part of the response to youth homelessness in Australia. These days, many schools work cooperatively with a range of community agencies and a lot of effort goes into assisting homeless students to remain at school. Early intervention appears to account for most of the decrease in youth homelessness since 2001.

8.4 *FAMILIES*

The number of persons in family households on census night increased from 22,944 in 2001 to 26,790 in 2006, an increase of 3,846 or 16.8% (Table 8.5). These days, families comprise about 28% of the users of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (AIHW 2007, p.37). In 2005-06, the number of children accompanying parents in SAAP was 54,700 (AIHW 2007, p.15). First, we examine the increase in family homelessness on census night. Then we discuss early intervention as a strategy to assist families.

The Australian labour market has improved over the past 15 years with the unemployment rate declining from 11% in the early 1990s to below five per cent in 2008.

8.4 FAMILIES *continued*

However, most homeless families are unemployed or outside of the labour force and they have not benefited from the improved labour market opportunities.

Fifty-four per cent of women with children entering SAAP cite domestic violence as their main reason for becoming homeless (AIHW 2007, p.40). Domestic violence continues to be a major cause of homelessness, although the evidence from the ABS (1996) Women's Safety Survey and the ABS (2005) Personal Safety Survey indicate that domestic violence has decreased since 1996 (quoted in Carrington and Phillips 2006, p.2).

There was an increase of 3,846 persons in family households on census night and 1,608 (42 per cent) were women and children in SAAP, who reported that domestic violence was the main reason for their homelessness. For 2,238 people (58 per cent), other factors explain their homelessness including the decline in housing affordability and the increased difficulty of finding accommodation in the private rental market.

Housing affordability particularly affects low-income families, and housing affordability has declined to the point where it has become a public issue of major proportions. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (quoted in Australian Government 2007, p.3) estimates that more than one in five families who are renting are in 'housing stress', defined as households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. The average rent for a three bedroom house increased by 82% between 1996 and 2006 (Australian Government 2007, p.3). Vacancy rates in the private rental market were around three per cent at the time of the 2001 Census, but they had declined to the critical two per cent level at the time of the 2006 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008, p.177). There are long waiting lists for public housing in all states and territories. The lack of affordable housing causes some families to become homeless. The lack of affordable housing also affects homeless families escaping domestic violence, by prolonging their homelessness and increasing the number of homeless on census night.

Next we discuss early intervention for homeless families. In a perceptive study of 103 homeless people, Johnson, Gronda and Coutts (2008) identified five typical pathways into homelessness - 'domestic violence', 'housing crisis', 'mental health', 'substance abuse' and 'youth'. Families can enter the homeless population on any pathway, but the domestic violence and housing crisis pathways are the most significant.

Johnson et al. (2008, Ch.1) found that families on the housing crisis pathway had become homeless following a financial crisis, usually brought on by job loss, ongoing poverty or business failure. These families did not identify with other homeless people and were traumatised by the stigma of being a 'homeless family'. They engaged in a range of strategies to 'deflect' or 'manage' the stigma they experienced, including explaining their housing problems as a form of 'bad luck'. Most thought their housing crisis was a temporary set-back and they would find new accommodation quickly.

Early intervention with families on the housing crisis pathway is a realistic option because families do not accept homelessness as a way of life. In broad terms, early intervention involves providing families with assistance before they lose their accommodation, including family counselling to resolve relationship difficulties, financial advice, some funds to settle debts, and assistance with applications for public housing.

There is a small national program providing this kind of response. In 2001, a pilot program of eight services known as the Family Homelessness Prevention Project (FHPP)

8.4 FAMILIES *continued*

was launched with a single service in each jurisdiction. From 1 July 2004, the program continued under a new name as the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program. An evaluation of the HOME program found that if families at risk of homelessness were reached with assistance before losing their accommodation, 86% of those families remained in adequate housing or improved their housing situation during their period of support (MacKenzie, Desmond and Steen, 2007). The evaluation highlighted two key success factors: the availability of brokerage funds and a capacity to work through issues on a needs basis. The effects of this assistance were found to be sustainable for a majority of families in the 12 months after support. However, the HOME Advice program was a small-scale initiative and had only a small impact on the overall population of at risk families.

Johnson et al. (2008, Ch.4) found that women on the domestic violence pathway responded to homelessness in a similar way to people on the housing crisis pathway. Women escaping domestic violence experienced distress that they might be labelled 'homeless' and developed strategies to minimise the stigma of homelessness. Few women saw any similarities between themselves and other homeless people. Like people on the housing crisis pathway, women escaping domestic violence wanted to return to secure accommodation and to rebuild their lives.

It is not clear to what extent early intervention strategies have been implemented to assist women escaping domestic violence. A 'Partnerships against Domestic Violence' strategy received \$25.3 million starting in 1997 and continued until it was replaced by the 'Women's Safety Agenda' in July 2005 (Carrington and Phillips 2006). There has been a considerable investment in changing community attitudes towards domestic violence, such as the national 'Violence Against Women: Australia Says No' campaign. Another \$1.97 million in grants to community organisations supported new initiatives aimed at preventing domestic violence and responding to its effects (Carrington and Phillips 2006).

However, it is difficult to provide early intervention for women experiencing domestic violence because often they do not request assistance until they have left the family home. On the other hand, women escaping domestic violence may return home a number of times as they try to resolve relationship issues. According to Murray (2002, p.170), 'many women who have experienced domestic violence say that they do not want the relationship to end but rather the violence to stop'. One form of early intervention involves family counselling to help couples work through their relationship difficulties and another is to remove the perpetrator of violence from the family home.

Otherwise, 'early intervention' for victims of domestic violence means assisting them to move quickly to alternative, secure accommodation. Women's refuges provide this kind of support, but women escaping domestic violence are often unemployed or not in the labour force. The downturn in the private rental market and the shortage of public housing mean that many women have difficulty finding affordable accommodation and are forced to remain in emergency accommodation for long periods of time.

Women and children become homeless for domestic violence and other reasons, but the decline in the housing market explains why these women remain homeless for longer, and may contribute to an increase in homelessness on census night.

8.4 FAMILIES *continued*

It is the increase in the number of families entering SAAP to escape domestic violence, combined with the shortage of affordable housing and the absence of early intervention initiatives, that account for the increase in family homelessness.

8.5 ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN

On census night 2006, there were about 60,000 adults (without children) who were homeless (Table 8.5). Two-thirds of the 60,000 were men (66%) and one-third were women. We estimate that half of the women were on their own, as were three-quarters of the men. About two-thirds of the adults were aged 35 or older and one-third were aged 19 to 34 (Table 5.1).

In a large study (N=4,291) of homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain and Johnson³ found that 73% of single person and couple only households had entered the population either by a substance use, mental health or youth pathway. Only 11% of households in these pathways had been homeless for less than three months and 78% had been homeless for one year or longer. There are few opportunities for early intervention with this group.

Adults who have a long-term problem with homelessness have irregular employment histories and their chances of gaining full-time employment are poor. Nearly all will need financial assistance to return to conventional accommodation. The decline in housing affordability is the main factor contributing to the increased homelessness of this group.

People who have a long-term problem with homelessness often have substance abuse issues, which complicates their exit from homelessness. Johnson and Chamberlain (2009) found that 82% of their sample who had substance abuse issues had been homeless for 12 months or longer. In contrast, only 50% of those who had no substance abuse issues had been homeless for that long.

Other people in the long-term population have mental health issues and need long-term support if they are to return to secure accommodation. A minority of people have both mental health and substance abuse problems and their support needs are more complicated. Most of the 60,000 adults who were homeless on census night would have needed assistance to find appropriate, affordable housing and long-term support to maintain that accommodation.

8.6 CONCLUSION

Despite the improvement in the Australian economy, the rate of homelessness has remained steady at 53 per 10,000 of the population, or just under 105,000 homeless people. However, the deterioration in the housing market has impacted on sub-groups in the homeless population in different ways.

Early intervention to assist youth aged 12 to 18 (on their own) has been effective, and the number of homeless teenagers has decreased by 21%. If these programs are expanded, this could begin to stem the flow of homeless teenagers into the adult homeless population.

There has been minimal early intervention to assist homeless families and they have been badly affected by the decline in the supply of affordable housing. Vacancy rates in the private rental market declined from three per cent in 2001 to two per cent in 2006.

³ This is unpublished data from a study on 'Pathways in and out of homelessness'.

8.6 CONCLUSION
continued

The private rental market has deteriorated further since 2006, with vacancy rates in 2008 between 1 and 1.5% in the capital cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008, p.177).

The largest sub-group in the population on census night were adults aged 19 or older who were usually on their own. Most people in this group had been homeless for long periods of time and the opportunity for early intervention had passed. Access to affordable housing with extended and appropriate levels of support would be required to reduce the number of people in this group.

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