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Counting the Homeless 2001

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AUSTRALIAN CENSUS ANALYTIC PROGRAM

New Issue

Australian Census Analytic Program

Counting the Homeless

2001

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PREFACE .....

Homelessness is a continuing public policy issue in Australia. Several official inquiries have been held and there are a range of programs to assist homeless people. In this context, reliable information is needed on the extent of homelessness, as well as information on the social characteristics and geographical spread of the population. *Counting the Homeless 2001* (cat. no. 2050.0) is a research program focusing on these questions. Several reports have been produced but this occasional paper is the centrepiece.

The research program was funded by: the Salvation Army; the Department of Community Services (NSW); the Department of Human Services (Vic.); the Department of Families (Qld); the Department of Human Services (SA); the Department for Community Development (WA); the Department of Health and Human Services (Tas.); Youth and Community Services (ACT); and in the Northern Territory by the Departments of Health and Community Services and Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs. We thank the funding bodies for their support. David Eldridge and John Dalziel from the Salvation Army have been important supporters of our work since the early 1990s. We are also grateful to senior officers in the various departments who championed the research program in their states.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has been a key partner in the project from the outset. Invaluable in kind support was provided under the Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP). We thank colleagues in the ABS for their commitment to the project and for their generous assistance. A special acknowledgement is due to Martin Butterfield, formerly with the ABS. In the early 1990s, he proposed the crucial innovations in the census data collection that made it possible to enumerate the homeless population. Despite formidable practical and technical difficulties, Martin and his colleagues at the ABS thought it should be attempted.

The analysis of the 2001 census is supplemented by information from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection Agency at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). We are grateful to Justin Griffin from the AIHW for his advice, and to Qasim Shah and his team who provided us with much needed data.

The project also required supplementary data on homeless young people throughout Australia. This information was collected through a national census of homeless school students. We thank our research team for their hard work on this component of the project. In each state and territory, departmental officers responsible for student welfare assisted us to gain permission for the

research. However, it was the work of staff in secondary schools across the country that ensured the success of the school census. We are grateful for their input and the time they spent identifying homeless students in their schools.

The Australian Federation of Homelessness Organizations (AFHO) and the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) have both supported our research. Homelessness is now recognized as a 'community problem' and hundreds of people have contributed to a substantial body of policy and research, as well as important initiatives designed to assist homeless Australians. Their encouragement has sustained us over the longer term.

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November 2003

ABBREVIATIONS .....

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this publication.

Australia, States and Territories of Australia

NSW	New South Wales
Vic.	Victoria
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
WA	Western Australia
Tas.	Tasmania
NT	Northern Territory
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
Aust.	Australia

Other abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACAP	Australian Census Analytic Program
AFHO	Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CHP	Council of Homeless Persons
CMU	Census Management Unit
DPC	Data Processing Centre
NDCA	National Data Collection Agency
NILF	Not in the Labour Force
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
THM	Transitional Housing Management

MAIN FINDINGS

1 AIM

The 1996 census was the first census to target Australia's homeless population with a special enumeration strategy, using the cultural definition of homelessness (Chamberlain 1999). *Counting the Homeless 2001* (cat. no. 2050.0) uses the same definition of homelessness, as well as following the methodological precedents established for the 1996 analysis. The aim was to replicate the 1996 analysis and examine changes in the homeless population over time.

2 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The cultural definition contends that homelessness and 'inadequate housing' are socially constructed, cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period. 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. The vast majority of Australians live in suburban houses or self-contained flats, and there is a widespread view—sometimes referred to as the 'Australian dream'—that home ownership is the most desirable form of tenure. Almost 90% of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 72% of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2003, pp. 230–231). 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. This has lead to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness.

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 emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the 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 a separate bedroom and living room; 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 situation is below the minimum community standard.

3 SPECIAL ENUMERATION STRATEGY

The 2001 census targeted Australia's homeless population with a special enumeration strategy. This is outlined in Chapter 2. The census analysis was supplemented by information from the National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) on homeless people using SAAP services. The analysis also used data from the second national census of homeless school students which was carried out at the same time as the ABS census (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002).

4 CENSUS COUNT: INDIVIDUALS

Chapter 3 explains how a count of the homeless population on census night was established, including an adjustment for undercounting. Table 1 (Chapter 3.6) compares the number of homeless people identified at the 1996 census with the number enumerated in 2001. There were 105,300 people in 1996 and 99,900 people in 2001. 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 100,000.

1 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT

	1996	*2001*
Boarding houses	23 299	22 877
SAAP accommodation	12 926	14 251
Friends and relatives	48 500	48 614
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	20 579	14 158
Total	**105 304**	**99 900**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

The numbers are similar in three categories (boarding houses, SAAP accommodation and persons staying with other households), but there was a decline of about 6,400 people in improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out.

This was largely a result of a change in the counting rules in remote Indigenous communities. This is explained in Chapter 3.

It is important to remember that homeless people often move from one form of temporary accommodation to another, including some boarding house residents who are part of the secondary population. Homeless people show up in particular places on census night, but this does not capture the high levels of mobility that are typical of the population (McCaughey 1992; Hanover Welfare Services 1995; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998, Chapter 2; Bartholomew 1999, Chapter 6).

5 CENSUS ESTIMATE: HOUSEHOLDS

It is important to know how many households there are in the homeless population, because service providers deal primarily with households rather than individuals. Table 2 (see Chapter 4.2) shows that the 2001 analysis estimated 74,280 households, compared with 72,850 in 1996. In 2001, 78% were single person households, 13% were couples, and 9% were families. The findings are similar to 1996. There were 6,750 homeless families on census night 2001, but this included 23,000 people (9,543 parents and 13,401 children=22,944). Families were 9% of all homeless households, but they included one-quarter (23%) of the homeless population.

2 HOMELESS SINGLE PERSON, COUPLE AND FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS, CENSUS NIGHT

	1996		*2001*	
	no.	%	no.	%
Single person	55 363	76	58 116	78
Couple	10 307	14	9 420	13
Family	7 177	10	6 745	9
Total	**72 847**	**100**	**74 281**	**100**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

6 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 1973/94). Table 3 (Chapter 5.1) shows that the situation is now very different. Just over half (54%) of the population were aged 25 years or older, including one-quarter (24%) who were 45 years or over. However, 36% were young people aged 12–24 years, and another 10% were children under 12 years accompanying adults.

3 AGE BREAKDOWN OF HOMELESS POPULATION

Years	*no.*	*%*	
Under 12	9 941	10	
12–18	26 060	26	
19–24	10 113	10	
25–34	11 567	17	
35–44	12 992	13	
45–54	10 349	10	54
55–64	7 883	8	
65 or older	5 995	6	
Total	**99 900**	**100**	

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

7 MALES AND FEMALES

Table 4 (Chapter 5.1) shows the number of males and females in different segments of the homeless population on census night. Almost three-quarters (72%) of boarding house residents were male compared with one-quarter (28%) who were female. This accords with the findings from the 1996 census (Chamberlain 1999, p. 33). Just over 60% of people in improvised dwellings were male. Homeless people sleeping out in the capital cities are more likely to be male, but the occupants of improvised dwellings in rural locations are more likely to be families or couples with both males and females. Men outnumbered women staying with other households by 53%–47%. However, women outnumbered men in SAAP by a similar margin. 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 facilitated. Overall, there were more males in the homeless population (58%–42%), but women are now a substantial minority, compared with 30–40 years ago.

4 SEX BY DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Boarding house (N=22 877)	*Friends or relatives (N=48 614)*	*SAAP (N=14 251)*	*Improvised dwellings (N=14 158)*	*All (N=99 900)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Males	72	53	47	61	58
Females	28	47	53	39	42
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

8 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

Indigenous people are more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians. Two per cent of the population identified as Indigenous at the 2001 census, but 16% of SAAP clients were Aboriginal in 2000–01 (AIHW 2001, p. xvi). Indigenous people were over-represented in all sections of the homeless population where we have data. Table 5 (Chapter 5.2) shows that they made up 3% of people staying with other households, 7% of those in boarding houses, 11% of people in SAAP, and 19% of people in the primary population. Overall, 2% of people identify as Aboriginal, but 9% of the homeless were Indigenous.

5 INDIGENOUS STATUS BY DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT 2001

	Boarding house (N=22 877)	*Friends or relatives (N=29 439)*	*SAAP (N=14 251)*	*Improvised dwellings (N=14 158)*	*All (N=80 725)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	92.9	96.6	89.0	81.1	91.5
Indigenous	7.1	3.4	11.0	18.9	8.5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

9 STATE AND TERRITORY VARIATION

There are two ways of thinking about the geographical spread of the homeless population. First, there is the number of homeless people on census night. Second, one can think about the number of homeless people expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population. This is a fairer way to compare states and territories of different sizes.

Table 6 (Chapter 8.3) shows that there were three patterns in the homeless population. First, there were between 40 and 50 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in the 'southern states' in 2001, although New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory were at the lower end of the range (40–44 per 10,000), whereas South Australia and Tasmania were higher (52 per 10,000). The broad pattern is similar to 1996 when the rate was also between 40 and 50 homeless people per 10,000 in those states.

6 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*
2001	42.2	43.6	69.8	51.6	64.0	52.4	288.3	39.6
1996	49.4	41.0	77.3	48.1	71.5	43.9	523.1	40.3

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

The second pattern is Western Australia and Queensland where there were between 64 and 70 homeless people per 10,000 in 2001, significantly higher than the southern states. In 1996, there were between 70 and 80 homeless people per 10,000 in Queensland and Western Australia, slightly higher than in 2001.

The change in the counting rules in remote communities had most effect in the Northern Territory where the number of Indigenous people enumerated in improvised dwellings dropped from 6,000 in 1996 to 1,300 in 2001. The homeless population declined from 9,900 to 5,400, and the rate of homelessness dropped from 523 per 10,000 to 288. However, the rate of homelessness was still highest in the Northern Territory.

7 HOMELESS PEOPLE BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*
2001	26 676	20 305	24 569	7 586	11 697	2 415	5 423	1 229
1996	29 608	17 840	25 649	6 837	12 252	2 014	9 906	1 198

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Table 7 (Chapter 8.3) shows the actual number of homeless in each state and territory in 1996 and 2001. There were 26,700 homeless people in New South Wales on census night 2001, about 2,900 less than in 1996. The number was also slightly down in Queensland (from 25,650 to 24,570), and in Western Australia (from 12,250 to 11,700). In Victoria there were 20,300 homeless people, 2,500 more than in 1996. In South Australia, there were 6,800 homeless people in 1996 compared with 7,600 in 2001. Finally, the numbers were up by 400 in Tasmania and 30 in the Australian Capital Territory.

10 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

There has been some discussion that people renting caravans are in a similar situation to boarding house residents. Caravan park residents have one room for eating, sleeping and cooking, and share communal bathroom facilities. Boarding houses are more common in cities such as Melbourne and Sydney and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

8 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS AND NUMBER OF DWELLINGS

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*	***Aust.***
Persons	6 881	3 407	7 989	932	2 503	271	775	110	**22 868**
Dwellings	4 531	2 307	5 132	599	1 506	179	437	82	**14 773**

Source: Census of Population and Housing.

Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting their caravan but no one in the dwelling had a full-time job, and they were at their usual address. Table 8 (Chapter 7.1) shows that there were 22,868 marginal residents of caravan parks using this definition. There were 8,000 people in Queensland, 6,900 in New South Wales, 3,400 people in Victoria, 2,500 in Western Australia, and smaller numbers in the other states and territories.

Some people were in caravan parks that are used for emergency accommodation in regional centres and country towns. Others would have been in caravan parks that are located in industrial or outer suburbs of major capital cities. Table 9 (Chapter 7.2) shows that two-thirds (67%) of boarding house residents were in the major capital cities, and one-third (33%) were in regional centres and country towns. In contrast, four-fifths (78%) of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes send homeless people to caravan parks if there is no SAAP accommodation available. There are also people who have a sustained problem with homelessness who end up living in caravans on a long-term basis. There is a sense in which caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities.

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

	Boarding House (N=22 877)	*Caravan (N=22 868)*
Capital city	67	22
Regional centre, country town, remote location	33	78
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Census of Population and Housing.

11 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

It is difficult to make an overall judgment about the temporal characteristics of the population. There will be some people who experience a short period of homelessness, and they are more likely to be in the younger age groups.

About 40% of SAAP clients went to independent housing after their final support period in a SAAP service in 2000–01 and 2001–02. Just under half (48%) remained homeless: 19% had gone to another SAAP service; 12% were staying at a friend's place, rent free; 8% had gone to a rooming house, hostel or caravan; 4% were in institutions (psychiatric hospital, the 'detox' etc.); and 3% had no accommodation (streets, squats, car, tent). Another 12% were marginal—they were boarding with another family, often short-term.

When adults lose their accommodation their situation usually becomes worse. Some try to return to conventional accommodation, but they are usually in debt and do not have the financial resources to rent a property in their own right. Others have been evicted and do not have appropriate references. There are

also long waiting lists for public housing in many areas. Overall, we estimate that 60%–70% of people in improvised dwellings, boarding houses and SAAP experience a sustained period of homelessness (six months or longer), as do half of the adults staying temporarily with other households (Chapter 5.3).

12 CONCLUSION

Until recently, there were no reliable statistics on the number of homeless people in Australia, but the major empirical studies in the 1960s and early 1970s suggested that the homeless population was mostly male, and disproportionately in the older age groups (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973/1994). The analysis in this paper indicates that there are now more women in the population, more young people, and a significant minority of families—although there are still homeless people who conform to the old skid row stereotype. It is also clear that the population has increased over the past 40 years, but there is no quantitative data on the rate of increase.

There are a number of structural factors that account for this increase, but one is particularly important. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the unemployment rate was never less than five per cent and for much of the time it has ranged between 7%–10% (ABS 1978–1999). The proportion of people below the Henderson poverty line has increased since the mid-1970s, although there is debate about the exact extent of the increase and how poverty is best measured (Saunders 1994; King 1998; Harding, Lloyd and Greenwell 2000; Saunders and Tsumori 2002). Some low income households can survive financial crises, because they have relatives or friends who assist them, but a minority slide into homelessness. The increase in low income households underpins the increase in homelessness over the past two decades.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....

Policy makers and service providers need information on the extent of homelessness in Australia, as well as the social characteristics and geographical spread of the population. This monograph provides this information, using data from the 2001 Australian Census of Population and Housing. The census data was supplemented by information from the national SAAP data collection on homeless people using SAAP services. The NDCA at the AIHW is responsible for this collection. The analysis also uses data from the second national census of homeless school students which was carried out at the same time as the ABS census (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002).

The 1996 census was the first census to target Australia's homeless population with a special enumeration strategy, using the cultural definition of homelessness (Chamberlain 1999). *Counting the Homeless 2001* uses the same definition of homelessness, as well as following the methodological precedents established for the 1996 analysis. Changes in the homeless population can now be compared over a five-year period.

Until 1999, there was no accepted estimate of the size of Australia's homeless population. There was argument about different definitions because the size of the population depends on how broadly or narrowly a definition is set. For example, in 1976 Sackville prepared a report on *Homeless People and the Law* for Professor Henderson's Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. Sackville (1976, p. 5) observed there was 'no universally accepted definition of the homeless population' (1976, p. 5). A decade later, Field (1988, p. 11) thought that the issue of defining homelessness was 'simply unanswerable'.

Debate continues about the definition of homelessness in Western countries with little agreement on many fundamental issues (e.g. Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992; Neil & Fopp 1992; House of Representatives 1995; Avramov 1995; Hopper 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001). However, in Australia two definitions have emerged as dominant in recent years. One is the cultural definition of homelessness, used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The other is the SAAP definition, contained in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Act, 1994*. 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.

1.1 SAAP DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The most well known definition of homelessness is embodied in the legislation which mandates the funding and operation of the 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:

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 excludes people in boarding houses from the homeless population if they think of their single rooms as home. In addition, the SAAP definition includes people who are living in conventional houses or flats as part of the homeless population if:

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

The SAAP definition is a legislative formulation designed to define legitimate 'service delivery' under the SAAP Act and, sensibly, the SAAP definition allows welfare agencies to assist those about to become homeless (or believe that they are at risk), as well as those who are actually homeless. However, the SAAP definition lacks conceptual rigour and 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 cultural definition of homelessness contends that 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' are socially constructed, 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, it is necessary to identify 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. Second, it is necessary to identify those groups which 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 or are purchasing their home (ABS 2003, p. 233). There is a widespread view—sometimes referred to as the 'Australian dream'—that home ownership is the most desirable form of tenure (Kemeny 1983, p. 1; Hayward 1992, p. 1; Badcock and Beer 2000, p. 96). Almost 90% of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 72% of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2003, pp. 230-231). 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. 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, this benchmark should not be used in a mechanistic way. 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 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). They include, amongst others, people living in seminaries, elderly people in nursing homes, students in university halls of residence, and prisoners.

While it is true that 'housed' and 'homeless' constitute a continuum of circumstances, there are three 'groups' that fall below the community standard. This leads to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness—as well as a group who are best identified as 'marginally housed'.

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 etc.	**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

Primary homelessness is the least contentious category because it 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 emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the 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 a separate bedroom and living room; 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 'marginally housed' refers to people in accommodation situations close to the cultural benchmark, but not strictly homeless under the current definition. This category might include: a couple living in a single room with their own

kitchen and bathroom, but without a separate room for sleeping; or a family staying with relatives on a long-term basis (doubling up); or a couple renting a caravan without security of tenure. Groups on the margins are difficult to classify, and some groups—such as families with children—may be seen as particularly in need of welfare support. There is a continuing argument about whether some marginal groups should be included as 'homeless'.

The 'at risk' population designates people who are living in flats or houses, but are at risk of losing their accommodation. The notion of 'at risk' refers to people who are in housing crisis. These crises can take a number of different forms, but the most common is that people are facing eviction for rent arrears (Chamberlain and Johnson 2002; MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2003). People in housing crisis may be in serious need, but they are not homeless if they are living in a conventional house or flat on census night.

Debate will continue about the definition of homelessness. Many service providers favour the broader SAAP definition—even though it conflates homeless people and those at risk—because it accords with their practice needs. A number of politicians and government officials have criticised the inclusion of boarding house residents in the cultural definition. They argue that supporting people in boarding houses is a realistic welfare approach, and therefore they should not be classified as 'homeless'. However, there has been no convincing argument that single room accommodation is close to the minimum community standard. Other people still think of homelessness as 'sleeping on the streets'. Media images continue to focus on street homelessness and this reinforces the stereotype that homelessness is the same as 'rooflessness'. Inevitably, debate will continue.

In April 2001, *Parity* (the Journal of the Council to Homeless Persons) drew attention to the fact that some SAAP services refer homeless people to caravan parks when there is no other emergency accommodation available in their local community:

> The Council to Homeless Persons has become increasingly concerned with reports it has been receiving … of the increasing use of caravan parks by SAAP services … in response to demands for crisis accommodation. (Editorial, *Parity*, April 2001).

There is no reliable information on how frequently this occurs. Anecdotal reports suggest that caravans are used for emergency accommodation in country towns and regional centres where there are few boarding houses. There has also been discussion that people renting caravans are in a similar situation to boarding house residents. They have one room for eating, sleeping and cooking, and share communal bathroom facilities. Yet the cultural definition classifies boarding house residents as 'homeless', whereas caravan park residents are 'marginally housed'. The cultural definition stands, but in Chapter 7 we present statistical information on 'marginally housed' residents in caravan parks.

1.3 TWO WAYS OF COUNTING

There are two ways of counting the homeless population and the relationship between them is not widely understood (Freeman and Hall 1987; Jencks 1994, Chapter 2). The first is a census count which gives the number of homeless people on a given night. This is a 'point in time' count.

The second method estimates the number of people who become homeless over a year. These are called 'annual counts' or 'cumulative annual totals', and welfare agencies usually gather statistics in this way. The most well known annual data base in Australia is the national SAAP data collection which collects information on all persons who approach SAAP services for assistance. Overall, 95,600 clients were supported by SAAP agencies between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002 (AIHW 2002a, p. 9). 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.

A cumulative annual total 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 x 1/12 = 10,000). Advocates are often attracted to higher figures because they assume 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 cumulative annual total will be 60,000 and the census count will be 60,000 (60,000 x 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 cumulative annual total will be 260,000, but the census count will reveal 10,000 homeless people (260,000 x 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 little 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 always the census count combined with information on the length of time that people have been homeless. This is the actual population. The census figure will always

be lower than the annual count—because people move in and out of homelessness —but it is the census figure which is important.

There are three reasons for attempting to estimate the annual population. First, people are interested in how many people experience a period of homelessness each year. Second, it provides a crude way of estimating the temporal characteristics of the population on census night. For example, if 100,000 become homeless this year but a census count reveals 50,000, then each person is probably homeless for about six months. The relationship between the annual figure and the census figure is mediated by the length of time that people remain in the homeless population. Third, service providers record annual figures on the number of clients who have used their agency. Service benchmarks are stated in terms of annual throughputs. However, for policy purposes a census count is always more important than an annual figure. This is a fundamental point informing our analysis.

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES .....

The ABS project used data from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing, combined with information from the national SAAP data collection and the second national census of homeless school students. The aim was to replicate the 1996 analysis, using the same definitions and methodological procedures. This chapter covers three issues.

First, we identify the census categories for operationalising primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. In some cases, the census categories can be used directly. In other cases, we refer to the census categories as 'starting points' for the analysis. This signals that there are important technical adjustments that have to be made to the census data. These are explained in Chapter 3.

Second, we outline the ABS special homeless enumeration strategy. This focused on 'achieving the most thorough count to date of the number of homeless people … at one particular point in time' (Harvie 2001a, p. 2). Third, we discuss the distinction between 'individuals' and 'households'.

2.1 OPERATIONAL KEY CONCEPTS

Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings. 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. It also includes people using makeshift shelters and more substantial improvised dwellings, but we have no data on the quality of this accommodation or the number of people in improvised dwellings.

Secondary homelessness includes three groups. 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'. One issue is that many SAAP services are conventional houses and it is not apparent to census collectors that they are non-private dwellings. There is a significant undercount here, but the undercount can be estimated because there is data on SAAP clients through the NDCA at the 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 which 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 friend's family. Householders often record them as having a usual address elsewhere because they assume that they will return home. Thus they appear to be 'visitors'. 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 (tertiary homelessness), because it is not possible to ascertain from census data how long people have lived in single rooms. This is an error of misclassification between secondary and tertiary homelessness but it has no impact on the overall homelessness figure. The analysis of boarding house residents of necessity treats residents as one group, but boarding house residents include people in both the secondary and the tertiary population.

2.2 SPECIAL ENUMERATION STRATEGY

The main focus of the ABS Special Enumeration Strategy was to improve the identification of people in the primary population. People without conventional accommodation are particularly difficult to count, because they move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. They may hide away at night for personal protection or to escape the cold. The census was carried out in winter in the southern states when people are likely to try to escape the inclement weather. Some homeless people are hostile to the idea of providing information to the government and do not want to fill out official forms. Others are hidden away in derelict buildings and census collectors are unaware of their presence. Counting the primary population is a major challenge.

There were a number of components to the ABS strategy. When planning local strategies field staff were encouraged to work closely with local service providers who might know where people squat in derelict buildings or sleeping rough in their local area. In some cases the census forms were handed out at agencies that provide services for street people, such as mobile food vans. Local Census Management Units (CMUs) were also encouraged 'to avoid limiting collection of data on homeless people to the 24 hours around the census date. Past experience suggests that better outcomes will result from making arrangements with service organizations to enumerate their clientele for up to one week' (Harvie 2001a, p. 12). The risk of double counting was small where collectors were allocated to the same service for the enumeration.

CMUs were encouraged to employ service providers and homeless people as special census collectors. Young homeless people might be able 'to gain access to … groups which are particularly difficult to enumerate, such as other homeless youth and squats' (Harvie 2001a, p. 13). There were also short forms that could be filled out by ABS staff where personal forms were judged

inappropriate. These were less intimidating than the longer personal form and could be filled out quickly. Finally, there was a procedure for filling out a substitute form 'wherever a homeless person is observed during collection activities but is not able to be interviewed for some reason' (Harvie 2001a, p. 17). Collectors were asked to record sex, estimated age and location.

Harvie (2001b) has reviewed what happened in different parts of the country. There was a sustained effort to count the primary population in specified areas, such as major cities. In New South Wales a special group leader was recruited to coordinate the Homeless Enumeration Strategy. He had worked with homeless people for many years and had extensive contacts and 'on the ground' knowledge. The majority of special collectors in New South Wales were recruited from the homeless population or from service providers. Their training included a 'dress rehearsal one week prior to census day, during which special collectors became familiar with their areas, networked with local information sources and promoted the census to any homeless persons they came across' (Harvie 2001b, p. 2).

In the Australian Capital Territory planning for the enumeration began in March 2001. This was the first time the census in the ACT had been organised locally. There had been less than 10 people identified in the primary population in 1996. In 2001, an initiative called 'Scouting for the Homeless' involved eight staff searching places where homeless people were known to gather late in the evening.

In Victoria, one ABS staff member was responsible for managing the Homeless Enumeration Strategy. Contact was made with the Council to Homeless Persons and a jointly sponsored workshop was held in June 2001, so that the ABS could explain the enumeration strategy to service providers. The enumeration took place over a five day period from August 6–10. Service providers were employed by the ABS as special collectors. Homeless people were recruited to enumerate the population in Melbourne's central business district, as well as in surrounding parklands. The enumeration strategy was well supported in Victoria.

In Queensland, preparations began nine months prior to the census. In Brisbane, a coalition of local organizations had undertaken a census of homeless people in the inner city in November 1999 (Walsh and Caniglia 2000), and there were some experienced people on the ground. Special collectors were recruited through local services and homeless people were employed as special collectors in the central business district. The enumeration in Brisbane took place over three nights. The enumeration period was also extended to three nights in Townsville. In Queensland's major cities, census forms were also distributed at soup kitchens opened especially for the census, with a hot beverage and/or food being offered. 'These ventures were very successful and highly appreciated by the homeless' (Harvie 2001b, p. 6).

In South Australia, no members of the homeless population were recruited as special collectors. In Western Australia, one staff member was given

responsibility for the homeless strategy along with 'shipping, defence and Christmas Island' (Harvie 2001b, p. 8). There were 29 special collectors to cover the Perth/Mandurah metropolitan area of Western Australia. 'The enumeration period was not extended … to minimise the possibility of double counting. Most homeless persons were counted between 10 am and 3 pm on census day. Only the enumeration which took place on trains was extended over a two day period' (Harvie 2001b, p. 9).

Overall, the coverage across the country appears to have been uneven. The category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' is a starting point for estimating the primary population.

2.3 INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS

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

If a woman, her husband and three children request emergency accommodation from a SAAP service, there are five individuals requiring assistance. If a man turns up on his own, then one person needs help. The woman, her husband and three children are one household (a family household), but the man on his own is also a household (a single person household). The number of households in the population will always be smaller than the number of 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. Knowing 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 provided by the ABS census and without this data no population enumeration would be possible. However, it is supplemented by data from the National SAAP Data Collection and the second national census of homeless school students which enable us to make various technical corrections to the raw census figures. An overview of the steps is shown. 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. An estimate of the number of households is set down in Chapter 4. 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 identifies some issues for public discussion.

A MODEL OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE CENSUS DATA TO IDENTIFY HOMELESS PERSONS

Conceptual category	**Operational category**	**Adjustments**
Primary homelessness	Improvised home, tent, sleepers out	- exclude people with address elsewhere in Australia [on camping holiday] - exclude people with an address overseas [overseas visitors]
Secondary homelessness	Hostels for the homeless, night shelter, refuge	- use NDCA data for SAAP in NSW, Qld, SA, WA, Tas. and ACT - use ABS census data for NT and Vic.
	Visitors to private dwellings with 'no usual address'	- include estimate for young people missed in census - exclude missing SAAP individuals
Tertiary homelessness	Boarding house residents	- exclude owners and staff - exclude residents with address elsewhere in Australia [travellers] - exclude residents with address overseas [backpackers] - exclude dwellings identified as hostels and staff quarters - include boarding houses misclassified as hostels and staff quarters - include dwellings from 'other' which fit boarding house criteria

CHAPTER 3 CENSUS COUNT: INDIVIDUALS .....

The cultural definition of homelessness distinguishes between 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness on census night. Chapter 2 explained that we used four operational categories to identify these groups. They were:

- 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 task was to replicate the analysis at the last census, following the methodological precedents established at that time, which comprise the 'ABS conventions'. This was accomplished, but there were a number of changes to ABS procedures in 2001, and some adjustments were made to take these into account. The four operational categories are examined in turn, with the findings summarised in Chapter 3.6.

3.1 IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS, SLEEPERS OUT

The first category is 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. 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 2001, p. 197).

This is the operational category for primary homelessness. This group is difficult to count because homeless people are highly mobile, and this is the category where there is most risk of undercounting. The efficacy of the local count depends on census collectors having good local knowledge. Collectors have to know whether there are people squatting in empty buildings in their local community; or whether there might be families living in their cars; or young people sleeping rough; or persons living in improvised dwellings. As discussed in Chapter 2, there was a special effort to count this population in 2001—but it is unlikely that all rough sleepers were identified.

The category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' also includes overseas visitors and Australian residents 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'. This left 14,158 individuals in 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out', compared with 19,580 at the 1996 census.

Change in procedure

There was an important change in ABS counting rules in 2001. An instruction in the 1996 Census Guide Book for interviewers in remote Indigenous communities advised collectors:

> To be counted as a house for census purposes a dwelling needs to have both a working shower or bath and a toilet. Ask the person if there is a bath/shower and a toilet.

This appealed to the shared community standard that houses and flats are expected to have a working bathroom and toilet. If the Indigenous householder reported that this was not the case, the building was classified as an improvised dwelling. However, census field staff reported that the definition caused difficulties for census collectors. In some Indigenous communities, bathroom and toilet facilities are provided in properly constructed amenities blocks used by multiple households. This arrangement is argued to be culturally appropriate housing because it accords with the wishes of the local community.

In 2001, the guidelines for census collectors in remote communities were changed. The instructions in the Field Officer's Manual (remote Indigenous communities) stated that, 'to be counted as a house for the census a dwelling needs to be a permanent structure built for the purpose of housing people'. Householders were no longer asked whether their dwelling had a working bathroom and toilet. As a result, the number of improvised dwellings in Indigenous communities declined from 8,727 to 823 in 2001.

3.1 INDIGENOUS STATUS BY ENUMERATION IN IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS AND SLEEPERS OUT[(a)]

	1996	*2001*	*Change*
Indigenous	9 751	2 681	–7 070
Non-Indigenous	9 828	11 477	+1 649
Total	**19 579**	**14 158**	**–5 421**

(a) Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status.
Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001.

There were 9,751 Indigenous people in 'improvised homes' in 1996, but only 2,681 in 2001 (table 3.1). At the same time, the number of non-Indigenous people increased from 9,828 to 11,477. This was partly a consequence of changing the counting rules and it makes comparison over time difficult. It could be argued that the decision was culturally appropriate, but the community standard for the rest of Australia is that houses and flats are expected to have their own bathroom and toilet. This point may generate some debate.

3.2 SAAP SERVICES

The starting point for counting people in accommodation provided under SAAP is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. However, many of these dwellings were misclassified at the 1996 census. Youth refuges and women's refuges often look like suburban houses and sometimes census collectors did not realise they were SAAP services (Chamberlain 1999, p. 20). They were classified as 'private dwellings'. The 1996 research team decided to replace census figures with information from the national SAAP data collection. This recorded 12,926 people in SAAP on census night, whereas the census identified 5,799 in 'hostels for the homeless' (Chamberlain 1999, p. 20).

In 2001, there was a risk that some SAAP services would again be classified as private dwellings, if there were no changes to ABS procedures. After the 1996 census, Victoria moved much of the medium and long-term housing in SAAP into a new program called the Transitional Housing Management (THM) program. THMs also provide some emergency accommodation. However, data from these services was no longer available through the SAAP data collection. Thus, the Department of Human Services (Victoria) was concerned that homeless people staying in THM services would be undercounted. Many THM properties are conventional houses or flats—and census collectors would not recognise that they were actually non-private dwellings. The Department of Human Services (Victoria) provided the ABS with a comprehensive list of their SAAP and THM properties. This list was used to allocate SAAP and THM properties to a separate dataset for Victoria. Women's refuges were excluded from this strategy. The national SAAP data collection was used to establish the number of women in domestic violence services. The total number in SAAP and THM properties was 5,146 in Victoria.

What happened in the other states was different. From 1996, the ABS had a register of accommodation services for homeless people. This was updated for 2001. ABS staff in each regional office approached SAAP agencies to explain an alternative strategy for the return of census forms from residents of establishments under the SAAP umbrella. If the agencies were agreeable to the strategy, the agencies themselves distributed information on this approach to their staff and residents. The strategy offered people in SAAP accommodation 'an alternative option for returning your completed census form', so that the census collector would not know that this was SAAP accommodation. They were advised to request a mail back envelope from their census collector to ensure 'your census collector will not see any information on your form'. They were invited to place a green sticker on the front of their completed household form, and to send the form directly to the Data Processing Centre (DPC). Staff at the DPC coded any forms received with a green sticker to the appropriate dwelling category. This strategy was designed to improve the identification of SAAP properties, but not all SAAP agencies were on the list, and the extent to which SAAP clients complied depended on how well the green sticker method was supported by agency workers.

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

	NSW	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*	***Total***
National SAAP data collection	3 918	2 285	1 114	945	315	212	299.0	**9 088**
Hostels for the homeless	1 557	1 208	440	584	117	229	123	**4 258**

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

Table 3.2 shows that the national SAAP data collection identified 9,088 people in SAAP accommodation (excluding Victoria) on census night whereas the census recorded 4,258. The census figure was lower in every state except the Northern Territory. We decided to replace the census data with national SAAP data for all states except Victoria and the Northern Territory. There were 14,251 people in SAAP on census night.

3.3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Homeless people in all age groups often stay temporarily with friends or relatives. They 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. Thus it is possible to count homeless people staying temporarily with other household. The number was 29,918 in 2001. However, an adjustment has to be made to avoid double counting.

The census missed 4,847 people in SAAP accommodation in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. They were probably in SAAP services misclassified as private dwellings. These people will be double counted unless a correction is factored in. An example will illustrate this point.

Let us suppose that all 4,847 people had written 'no usual address' on their census form. The census collectors did not realise that they were in emergency accommodation for homeless people and classified them as residents of private dwellings. By checking the SAAP data we found that they were missing. We counted them because we substituted the SAAP data for the census figures. However, all 4,847 people were still in the private dwellings category reporting no usual address. When we counted 29,900 people (above) in private dwellings with no usual address, the 4,847 would have been counted again.

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

	NSW	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*ACT*	***Total***
Number missing by census	2 361	1 077	674	361	198	176	**4 847**
Estimated % reporting no usual address	9.6	9.2	11.6	10.6	7.7	13.8	**9.9**
Correction	227	99	78	38	13	24	**479**

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

The 1996 research team developed an ABS convention for estimating the double count. The missing 4,847 cannot be identified, but it is possible to identify the individuals who were recorded by the census as staying in hostels and refuges. We use their replies to the question, 'What is your usual address' to estimate the number in the missing group who said 'no usual address?' Table 3.3 shows that this percentage ranged from 7.7 in Tasmania to 13.8 in the Australian Capital Territory, and the correction for double counting is 479 (table 3.3). The number of people staying temporarily with other households on census night was 29,439 (29,918–479 = 29,439).

3.4 BOARDING HOUSES

The final category is people living in boarding houses. The census has 19 coding categories for non-private dwellings including 'hotel, motel' 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') where it is possible to rent a single room for $10 to $30 per night.

Hotels and motels mainly provide short-term accommodation for people who have a permanent home elsewhere. Their guests are usually overseas and interstate or intrastate visitors on holiday, or persons in full-time employment 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. Most of the boarding house residents are either unemployed or outside of the labour force. The starting point for identifying the number of people in boarding houses is the census category 'boarding house, private hotel'.

The census identified 23,589 in this category in 2001. However, three groups have to be taken out. First, it is necessary to exclude owners and staff members who were sleeping over on census night. Second, we have to remove guests who report a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'. They are staying in cheap accommodation when visiting another town. Third, it is necessary to exclude backpackers who report a usual address overseas. This left 15,594 people in 2001.

Local census collectors have to decide whether dwellings should be classified as 'boarding houses' or 'hotels'. The 1996 research team discovered that census collectors do not use these categories consistently. There were some dwellings that were classified as 'hotels', where everyone reported that they were at their usual address and most people were either unemployed or not in the labour force. These were boarding houses, not 'hotels'. Conversely, there were some 'boarding houses' where everyone was working full-time and at their 'usual address'. These dwellings were 'staff quarters'.

The 1996 research team developed four conventions to correct for these errors. The first convention was that dwellings should be removed from the boarding

house category, if 60% or more of their adult residents were working and earning $400 or more per week. These are 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 $400 per week, these dwellings were recoded as boarding houses.

The second convention was that hotels would be recoded as boarding houses if they had the following characteristics:

- 20% or more of their residents reported that they were living there permanently (very unusual for a hotel)
- 75% or more of residents were either unemployed or outside of the labour force and earning less than $400 per week (hotels are not full of people on low incomes who do not have a job).

The same protocol was used in 2001. This time 143 'hotels' were recoded as boarding houses, containing 674 people.

The third and fourth conventions relate to 'residual groups'. There were still 374 individuals in the 'hotel, motel' category who reported 'no usual address', were either unemployed or outside of the labour force, and with an income below $300 per week. They could not have been staying in conventional hotels—possibly paying $100 per night. This group was included in the boarding house population.

Finally, there were just over 2,000 people in other non-private dwellings who reported 'no usual address' on census night. This group included 100 people in psychiatric hospitals, about 300 in other types of hospital, 100 in other welfare institutions, 700 in 'other and unclassifiable', as well as a small number who were probably in the 'lock up', and some who were staying temporarily with religious orders. In 1996, these persons were included in the boarding house population and we followed the same protocol in 2001.

The number in boarding houses on census night, replicating the 1996 analysis, was 17,972 compared with 23,300 in 1996. However, in 2001 there was an important change in ABS procedures which affected the boarding house count.

Change in procedure

Non-private dwellings are classified into 18 categories, as well as 'other' which is used as a residual category. Table 3.4 shows the number of persons and the number of dwellings in each of the categories at the 1996 and 2001 censuses. There were approximately 600,000 people in 20,000 dwellings on both occasions.

3.4 NON-PRIVATE DWELLINGS AND NUMBER OF PERSONS

	1996		*2001*	
	Dwellings	*Persons*	*Dwellings*	*Persons*
Hotel, motel	8 322	198 731	7 369	174 022
Nurses quarters	161	2 766	161	1 335
Staff quarters	1 371	42 463	1 048	30 762
Boarding house, private hotel	2 048	35 730	1 491	23 589
Boarding school	266	27 279	226	22 624
Residential college, hall of residence	433	42 064	423	42 491
Public hospital (not psychiatric)	685	42 204	636	38 022
Private hospital (not psychiatric)	304	16 014	255	15 629
Psychiatric hospital (or institution)	180	7 851	141	6 092
Hostel for the disabled	622	11 745	696	9 323
Nursing home	1 390	73 015	1 478	75 387
Accommodation for retired or aged	1 688	65 905	1 709	67 288
Hostel for homeless, refuge etc.	544	6 385	573	5 194
Childcare institution	62	555	30	195
Corrective institution for children	20	644	18	498
Other welfare institution	244	3 661	213	2 629
Prison or detention institution, adults	170	17 540	181	24 041
Convent, monastery etc.	827	5 899	711	5 144
Other and not classifiable	536	12 938	2 784	54 636
Total	**19 873**	**613 398**	**20 143**	**598 901**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001.

Following 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. In 2001, the ABS discontinued this practice and the number of dwellings in 'other' increased from 536 to 2,784. The number of persons in those dwellings increased from 12,938 to 54,636 (table 3.4). Census collectors sometimes have difficulty distinguishing boarding houses from hotels and staff quarters, and collectors are more likely to record dwellings under 'other' if they are unsure how to classify them. The final step in the boarding house analysis was to investigate the possibility that some boarding houses might be in 'other'. The analysis excluded people with 'no usual address' because they had already been counted.

New rules

Five criteria were used to exclude hotels/motels, staff quarters, aged care institutions, as well as educational and religious institutions from the 'other' category. The criteria were developed from an empirical analysis of the characteristics of people in non-private dwellings. The first criterion was based on labour force participation. This excluded all dwellings from the 'other' category where more than 25% of their residents were employed. It removed all hotels, motels and staff quarters because a majority of their residents are

employed. In boarding houses most residents are either unemployed or not in the labour force. This left about 20,000 people.

The next task was to exclude other types of non-private dwelling. Prisons and corrective institutions could not have been classified under 'other', because the ABS uses administrative records to record persons in those institutions. It also seemed improbable that census collectors would have recorded either public or private hospitals under 'other', because these institutions are clearly signposted.

It was possible that some accommodation for older people might have been miscoded by census collectors. The 2001 census identified 142,700 people in accommodation for the aged (table 3.4). Ninety-five per cent were 65 years or older. Thus the second criterion was an 'age rule for older persons'. This rule excluded dwellings from 'other' if 85% of their residents were 65 years or older. This criterion removed any misclassified retirement villages and nursing homes.

An 'education participation rule' removed schools. This rule removed all dwellings from 'other' where 85% or more of their residents were attending an educational institution. This was designed to remove any boarding schools, residential colleges, halls of residence, and childcare institutions. There was also a supplementary 'age rule for younger persons' which excluded any dwelling where 90% were aged 19 years or younger. This picked up any correctional institutions for children where about 95% of the residents are under 20 years.

Two-thirds of people in non-private dwellings reported a religious affiliation at the 2001 census. This rose to over 95 per cent amongst persons in religious institutions. Our final rule excluded any dwellings where over 90 per cent of people reported a religious affiliation. It removed any convents or monasteries in 'other'.

There was no satisfactory criterion to exclude 'other welfare institutions'. Nor could we develop a criterion to exclude 'hostels for disabled' because the residents of such dwellings have similar characteristics to boarding house residents. They are from all age groups and most will be unemployed or outside of the labour force. Neither of these groups is large, but some dwellings from both categories could remain in 'other'.

After applying the five criteria, there were 665 dwellings left. We then excluded all persons who:

- reported a usual address elsewhere in Australia
- reported a usual address overseas (backpackers)
- were owners and staff.

This left 4,905 people who were at their usual address, living in a dwelling where three-quarters of the residents were either unemployed or outside of the labour force. These dwellings were not accommodation for the aged (nursing homes or retirement villages); neither were they accommodation for young people in educational institutions (boarding schools or halls of residence). They were not hotels or motels; nor were they public or private hospitals,

correctional institutions or accommodation for religious orders. The correction for boarding house residents hidden within 'other' was 4,905.

The final figure for boarding house residents in 2001 was 22,877 (17,972 + 4,905), compared with 23,299 in 1996.

3. 5 CHECKING THE ESTIMATE

The overall figure so far is 80,725 (table 3.5). There were 22,877 people in single rooms on census night. There were another 14,251 in SAAP services such as hostels, refuges and shelters. In addition, the census identified 29,439 people staying temporarily with friends and relatives. Finally, there were 14,158 people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out.

3.5 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT 2001 (PROVISIONAL FIGURES)

	no.
Boarding houses	22 877
SAAP accommodation	14 251
Friends and relatives	29 439
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	14 158
Total	**80 725**

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

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 12–18 years can be checked, using a similar procedure to 1996.

At the same time as the ABS was conducting the Census of Population and Housing, we undertook the second national census of homeless school students (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002). The research team contacted all government and Catholic secondary schools across the country (N =1,937), and 99% of schools completed a census return. Welfare staff identified 8,845 homeless students using the cultural definition of homelessness. We use this figure to estimate the overall homeless population aged 12–18 years.

The homeless population aged 12–18 years includes school students, Technical and Further Education (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 population, then it would be possible to estimate the overall number of homeless young people. For example, if school students were 60% of the homeless, then the population would be 14,142 (8,485 x 100/60 = 14,142).

The best source of information about the proportion of school students in the homeless population is the national SAAP data collection. In the year preceding the 2001 census (1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001), young people aged 12–18 years

were accommodated in SAAP services on 17,800 occasions. These are known as 'support periods' and they can be for differing lengths of time. In 82% of cases (N =14,600), there was sufficient information to establish whether the young person was a school student, TAFE student, unemployed or not in the labour force.

3.6 METHOD FOR ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS YOUTH AGED 12–18 YEARS

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*	***Aust.***
Number of homeless school students	2 116	1 898	2 029	778	635	385	432	212	**8 485**
% of school students in SAAP	33.9	40.7	31.8	32.5	18.1	38.2	29.5	53.0	**34.8**
Estimated number of homeless youth	6 242	4 663	6 381	2 394	3 508	1 008	1 464	400	**26 060**

Source: National Census of Homeless School Students and SAAP Client Collection.

Table 3.6 shows the number of homeless students by state and territory and the proportion of SAAP clients (aged 12–18 years) who were school students (derived from support period data). This allows us to estimate the number of homeless youth in each state. For example, in New South Wales it was 6,242 (2,116 x 100/33.9 = 6,242). Overall, we estimated 26,060 homeless teenagers in census week, whereas the census enumerated 5,922.

3.7 ACCOMMODATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS (CENSUS WEEK) AND OF HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFIED IN THE CENSUS

	School students (N=7 717)		*National Census (N=5 922)*	
	%		%	
Friends, relatives, moving around	80		26	
SAAP accommodation	16		20	
Boarding house	2	20	33	74
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	2		21	
Total	**100**		**100**	

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

Table 3.7 shows that 80% of homeless school students were staying temporarily with friends or relatives at the time of the census. This is to be expected. Teenagers who run away from home (or are kicked out) often stay with other households. In some cases, the young person may return home after a 'cooling off' period. In other cases, the dispute will not be resolved and the teenager will start to move from one friend's house to another, colloquially known as 'couch surfing'. Most teenagers do not get to boarding houses, SAAP services or sleep rough until they are further down the track. However, the census found that 74% of homeless youth were in boarding houses, sleeping rough or SAAP services (table 3.7). This finding can be explained if we understand how parents think when they fill out the census form.

Two middle-aged parents have a daughter aged 15 years. She has brought home a school friend who has been 'thrown out' by her stepmother. The parents allow the girl to stay until the 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 seven asks for the young woman's usual address. The parents have 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 'no usual address'.

Most parents will choose option 2 (address elsewhere), reasoning 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'. They expect the runaway to return home and that she is staying over on a temporary basis. 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.

When adults fill out the census form, they are more likely to put in a young person's family address if she is a teenager, especially if she is still at school. The young person is said to be having 'time out', and there is an expectation that she will return home. Some do, but others move to other temporary accommodation. The census method of identifying homeless teenagers fails, because it depends on adults in the household recording 'no usual address' against their young visitor. These young people appear to be the same as other visitors on census night, because they are reported as having a usual address elsewhere.

There were 42,600 young people aged 12–18 years 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 if it were close to 50/50, then this would account for the missing 20,000 young people. We include a correction for undercounting in the category 'friends and relatives', as we did in 1996. However, it must be borne in mind that we have already replaced young people missed in SAAP (Chapter 3.2), and they must not be double counted. The final correction for undercounting was 19,175.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Table 3.8 compares the number of homeless people identified at the 1996 census with the number in 2001, including adjustments for undercounting at both censuses. There were close to 100,000 people on both occasions. 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 100,000 homeless.

In fact, the numbers are similar in three categories (boarding houses, SAAP accommodation and persons staying with other households), but there was a decline of about 6,400 people in improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out. In Chapter 3.1, we explained that this was largely a result of a change in the counting rules in remote Indigenous communities.

3.8 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENSUS NIGHT 1996 AND 2001 (FINAL FIGURES)

	1996	*2001*
Boarding houses	23 299	22 877
SAAP accommodation	12 926	14 251
Friends and relatives	48 500	48 614
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	20 579	14 158
Total	**105 304**	**99 900**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Finally, it is important to remember that homeless people often move from one form of temporary accommodation to another, including some boarding house residents who are part of the secondary population. Homeless people show up in particular places on census night, but this does not capture the high levels of mobility that are typical of the population (McCaughey 1992; Hanover Welfare Services 1995; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998, Chapter 2; Bartholomew 1999, Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 4 CENSUS ESTIMATE: HOUSEHOLDS .....

It is important to understand the relationship between the number of individuals in the homeless population (99,900) and the number of households, because service providers deal primarily with households. 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 years or younger).

4.1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

It is relatively easy to identify the number of households in private dwellings but more difficult for non-private dwellings. A private dwelling is usually a house or a flat in a block, and persons who are staying temporarily with friends or relatives will be identified here. People in private dwellings are enumerated using household forms which gather information on family relationships. Therefore, it is possible to identify the number of lone persons, couples and families. In the category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out', information is also collected on household forms, with the exception of some people sleeping rough. It is also possible to identify the number of households in SAAP, although the information is gathered differently.

However, boarding houses are non-private dwellings, and people in non-private dwellings are enumerated on individual forms which do not ask about other family members who are with them on census night. This makes it impossible to identify the exact number of households—because there is no coding for family relationships. It is also not possible to identify the exact number of households among young people aged 12–18 years who are outside of the census net. There is only indirect information on this group.

There is a choice. One approach is to exclude people in boarding houses and teenagers not counted by the census from the analysis. This would remove 43,000 people from the homeless population and destroy the integrity of the overall population picture. The alternative approach is to estimate the number of people in both groups, using certain assumptions. This was the course of action taken by the 1996 research team, and we made the same assumptions this time.

4.2 HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS?

The boarding house population was 22,877 on census night and all persons were asked their marital status. In total, 2,320 people ticked 'married'. The first assumption was that they 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 1,317 children aged 14 years or younger in boarding houses on census night. The second assumption was that all children aged 14 years 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 19,000 young people aged 12–18 years missed by the census net. 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. We made the same assumptions again.

4.1 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Enumerated	*Estimated*	*Total*
Boarding house	–	20 400	20 400
SAAP	7 919	–	7 919
Friends/relatives	20 497	17 257	37 754
Improvised dwellings	8 208	–	8 208
Total	**36 624**	**37 657**	**74 281**

Source: 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 our assumptions are plugged into the analysis. The overall figure was 74,300 households on census night including: 37,750 staying temporarily with friends and relatives, 20,400 households in boarding houses, 8,200 in improvised dwellings and 7,900 in SAAP.

Table 4.2 compares the number of households in different categories in 1996 and 2001. In 2001, 78% were single person households, 13% were couples, and 9% were families. The findings are similar to 1996.

4.2 HOMELESS SINGLE PERSON, COUPLE AND FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

	1996		*2001*	
Household type	*no.*	*%*	*no.*	*%*
Single person	55 363	76	58 116	78
Couple	10 307	14	9 420	13
Family	7 177	10	6 745	9
Total	**72 847**	**100**	**74 281**	**100**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Clearly, single people are the largest group in the population, but it is likely that couples and families are under-represented. There could easily be more

de facto couples in the group missed by the census than was estimated. There was also no estimate for de facto couples in the boarding house population.

Some families were missed. People often turn up at SAAP 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. Most people are counted as singles on census night if their children are not with them.

4.3 WHERE WERE THEY STAYING?

There were 58,100 homeless single person households on census night. Single persons were by far the largest household type. Table 4.3 shows that 50% were staying temporarily with friends and relatives. Another 33% were in boarding houses. Only 8% were in SAAP.

There were 9,400 homeless couples. The majority (70%) were staying temporarily with friends and relatives; another 18% were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough; and 4% were in SAAP. 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 doubling up for short periods of time.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS: 2001

	Singles (N=58 116)	*Couples (N=9 420)*	*Families (N=6 745)*	*Total (N=74 281)*
Boarding house	33	8	11	27
SAAP	8	4	41	11
Friends/relatives	50	70	28	51
Improvised Dwellings etc.	9	18	20	11
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

There were 6,750 homeless families on census night. Table 4.3 shows that 41% were accommodated in SAAP. Homeless families are much more likely to get to SAAP than couples or lone persons. Another 28% of the families were staying temporarily with friends and relatives, and 20% were in improvised dwellings. There were 700 families in boarding houses.

Table 4.4 shows that the majority (67%) of families in improvised dwellings were couples with children, whereas the majority in SAAP (81%) were single parent households. Amongst those staying with other families, 53% were

couples. 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.

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Boarding house (N=732)	*SAAP (N=2 738)*	*Friends or relatives (N=1 895)*	*Improvised dwellings (N=1 380)*	*Total (N=6 745)*
Couple	50	19	53	67	41
Single parent	50	81	47	33	59
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

There were 6,750 families in the homeless population on census night. However, there were 9,500 adults in these families—because 41% of the families included two parents and 59% included one parent. In addition, they had 13,400 children with them (table 4.5). There were 2,900 children staying with their parents in an improvised dwelling or sleeping rough (probably in cars). Another 5,200 young people were with one or both parents in a SAAP service, such as a hostel or refuge. There were 4,000 children staying with their parents in a doubling up situation. Finally, there were 1,300 children who were with one or both parents in a single room.

4.5 CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Number of Children
Boarding house	1 317
SAAP	5 186
Friends/relatives	3 953
Improvised dwellings etc	2 945
Total	**13 401**

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

It is important to understand the relationship between the number of individuals in the homeless population and the number of households. There were 6,750 homeless families on census night, but this included 23,000 people (9,543 parents and 13,401 children = 22,944). Families were 9% of all homeless households, but they included one-quarter (23%) of the homeless population.

CHAPTER 5 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS .....

The analysis in this monograph has been complicated. This chapter summarises our main findings and 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 most people have a long or a short-term problem with homelessness. This is a difficult task, because there is no temporal information on most groups in the population.

5.1 AGE AND GENDER

There is information on age for all groups in the population, but we have to estimate the number of males and females aged 12–18 years who were outside of the census net. We know that 55% of homeless school students were female (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002, p. 19). We also know that the census identified 1,500 young people staying with other households and 52% were female. These figures were used to estimate the overall gender composition of young people missed by the census.

5.1 AGE BREAKDOWN OF HOMELESS POPULATION

Years	*no.*	%	
Under 12	9 941	10	
12–18	26 060	26	
19–24	10 113	10	
25–34	11 567	17	
35–44	12 992	13	
45–54	10 349	10	54
55–64	7 883	8	
65 or older	5 995	6	
Total	**99 900**	**100**	

Source: 2001 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 1973/94). For example, Jordan (1973/94, p. 21) reported that there were few teenagers in the population and that 80% of the men in his sample were aged 35 years or older. Table 5.1 shows that the situation is now very different. Just over half (54%) of the population were aged 25 years or older, including one-quarter (24%) who were 45 years or over. However, 36% were aged 12–24 years, and another 10% were accompanying children under 12 years.

There are now more women in the population compared with the 1960s.

5.2 SEX AND AGE OF HOMELESS

	Under 12 years	*12–18 years*	*19–24 years*	*25–34 years*	*35–44 years*	*45–54 years*	*55–64 years*	*65 years and over*	*All*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Males	51	47	54	59	65	66	66	68	58
Females	49	53	46	41	35	34	34	32	42
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

Table 5.2 shows that there are slightly more females than males in the age group 12–18 years, although the pattern reverses around in the age group 19–24 years. Amongst those persons aged 35 years or older, men outnumber women by approximately two to one. Overall, 42% of the homeless were women and 58% were men.

5.3 SEX BY DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Boarding house (N=22 887)	*Friends or relatives (N=48 614)*	*SAAP (N=14 251)*	*Improvised dwellings (N=14 158)*	*All (N=99 900)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Males	72	53	47	61	58
Females	28	47	53	39	42
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 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. This accords with the findings from the 1996 census (Chamberlain 1999, p. 33). Just over 60% of people in improvised dwellings were male. Homeless people sleeping out in the capital cities are more likely to be male, but the occupants of improvised dwellings in rural locations are more likely to be families or couples with both males and females. Men outnumbered women staying with other households by 53% to 47%. However, women outnumbered men in SAAP by a similar margin. 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 facilitated. Overall, there were more males in the homeless population (58% to 42%), but women are now a substantial group, compared with 30–40 years ago.

5.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people are more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians. Two per cent of the population identified as Indigenous at the 2001 census, but 16% of SAAP clients were Aboriginal in 2000–01 (AIHW 2001, p. xvi). In this section we examine the proportion of Indigenous people in different sectors of the homeless population on census night. We were unable to estimate the number of Indigenous young people in the group missed by the census net. Thus we rely on census and SAAP data.

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

	Boarding house (N=22 877)	*Friends or relatives (N=29 439)*	*SAAP (N=14 251)*	*Improvised dwellings (N=14 158)*	*All (N=80 725)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	92.9	96.6	89.0	81.1	91.5
Indigenous	7.1	3.4	11.0	18.9	8.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

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

Indigenous people were over-represented in all sections of the homeless population where we have data. Table 5.4 shows that they made up 3% of people staying with other households, 7% of those in boarding houses, 11% of people in SAAP, and 19% of people in the primary population. Overall, 2% of people identify as Aboriginal, but 9% of the homeless were Indigenous.

5.3 DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

A census count is important for policy makers when it is combined with information on the length of time that people have been in the homeless population. However, there is direct temporal information on only one group: people staying in SAAP. In this section, we comment on 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?'

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, Hume, Rogers and Stephenson (2003, pp. 33–34) found that 74% of their respondents in Adelaide were dependent on Centrelink benefits or pensions, and only 19% had paid work.

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

	All persons (N=18 641)	
	%	
Employed full-time	17	
Employed part-time	9	
Unemployed	14	] 74
Not in the labour force	60	
Total	**100**	

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 5.5 gives the overall picture for 2001. Three-quarters (74%) of boarding house residents were either unemployed or outside of the labour force in census week. Seventy-eight per cent reported an income below $400 per week ($20,000 per annum), and 90 per cent of this group said their income was below $300 per week. It is unlikely that many boarding house residents will save enough money to move into a conventional house or flat. There are some people who have a short-term problem, but the dominant pattern is of a low turnover population.

There were 49,500 people staying temporarily with other families on census night: 29,400 people were identified in the census; and there were 19,200 young people aged 12–18 years who were 'missed' by the census. Chapter 3 argued that the latter group 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, this is because the young person had left home recently, and the adult assumed that the family quarrel would be patched up. It means that many of them probably had a 'short-term' problem. This is a high turnover group.

There is direct information on the main group of 29,400 with no usual address on census night. Just under half (48%) were in households where at least one person had paid employment. The others (52%) were in households where all persons were either unemployed or not in the labour force (NILF households).

5.6 WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF PEOPLE STAYING WITH OTHER FAMILIES, By household type

Weekly household income	*Working household (N=9 007)*	*Unemployed or NILF houseold (N= 9 923)*	*All households (N=18 930)*
	%	%	%
$600 or more	53	12	32
$400–$599	25	12	18
Below $400	22	76	50
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 5.6 shows that 53% of employed households reported an income of $600 or more ($30,000 per annum). The financial needs of these groups will vary, but where one person has a full-time job, the household may have sufficient resources to make a transition into more secure accommodation, or be able to do so with assistance. In the main, these households probably remain in the homeless population for a relatively short period of time.

However, 76% of unemployed and NILF households reported a family income below $400 per week. In general, they are unlikely to have the financial resources to find one month's rent in advance, or the money required for a bond, and money to pay for the other costs associated with setting up a home. These households remain homeless for some time. Some may get financial assistance from welfare agencies but they often have difficulty maintaining secure accommodation. Overall people staying with other households are probably a medium turnover group.

The census identified 14,150 people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out. One-third of households had at least one person in the labour force, and two-thirds were either unemployed or NILF households.

Table 5.7 shows 57% of the working households reported an income above $600 per week, and 43% reported an income below $600, including 22% who had an income below $400 per week (table 5.7). Amongst unemployed and NILF households, almost 90% reported an income below $400 per week. Many people living in improvised 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.

5.7 WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF PEOPLE IN IMPROVISED DWELLINGS, TENTS OR SLEEPING OUT, By household type

Weekly household income	*Working household (N=2 105)*	*Unemployed or NILF household (N=4 306)*	*All households (N=6 411)*
	%	%	%
$600 or more	57	5	22
$400–$599	21	6	11
Below $400	22	89	67
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

The SAAP population is the only group where we have direct information on the temporal characteristics of the population in census week. We contacted all SAAP services in census week, inviting them to provide two case histories of homeless clients. They returned 812 case studies and there was information on the length of homelessness in 94% of cases.

Table 5.8 shows that 9% had been homeless for less than one month and 17% for one to three months. However, 60% had been homeless for seven months or longer, including many who had been homeless for more than a year. These

findings have to be interpreted cautiously, but we know that 90% of clients who left SAAP in 2000–01 were either unemployed or not in the labour force (AIHW 2001, p. 48). There are some SAAP clients who experience a short period of homelessness, but overall this is a low turnover population.

5.8 LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS OF SAAP CLIENTS

	All clients (N=765)	
	%	
Less than one month	9	
1–3 months	17	
4–6 months	14	
7–11 months	12	
One year or longer	48	] 60
Total	**100**	

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie (Unpublished).

There were 100,000 homeless people on census night, but it is difficult to make an overall judgment about the temporal characteristics of the population. There will be some people who experience a short period of homelessness, and they are more likely to be in the younger age groups.

When adults lose their accommodation their situation becomes worse. Some try to return to conventional accommodation, but they are usually in debt and do not have the financial resources to rent a property in their own right. Others have been evicted and do not have appropriate references. There are also long waiting lists for public housing in many areas. Overall, we estimate that 60%–70% of people in improvised dwellings, boarding houses and SAAP experience a sustained period of homelessness (six months or longer), as do half of the adults staying temporarily with other households.

CHAPTER 6 STATE AND TERRITORY VARIATION

For a long while it was assumed that the homeless population was distributed across Australia in proportion to the general population, with the expectation that SAAP funding should be allocated on a population pro rata basis. In practice, the allocation of funding was always somewhat more complicated than this, with smaller states gaining an extra allocation because of remoteness or for other political reasons. In 2001–02, 59% of people lived in Victoria and New South Wales and those states received 56% of SAAP funds (AIHW 2002a, p. 5). South Australia and Western Australia had 18% of the population and they received 18% of funds. Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory did slightly better than other states (5% of the population, but 10% of funds), and Queensland did slightly worse (19% of the population, but 16% of funds). The assumption underpinning current funding arrangements is that the homeless population is distributed in the same way as the general population, with the proviso that more resources are given to the smaller states.

What if the homeless population were distributed in a different way? The 1996 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. For the first time information about the distribution of the population suggested a more complex picture. This chapter investigates whether this was the case in 2001.

6.1 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

There were 100,000 homeless people on census night and there is information on the geographical spread of the population in 80% of cases. These people were identified using census data and information from the national SAAP data collection. Chapter 3 showed that there were another 19,000 people staying temporarily with other households. The 1996 analysis assumed that this group was 'distributed in the same way as other persons staying with friends and relatives' (Chamberlain 1999, p. 42) across the states and territories.

However, it is possible to make the correction in a more sophisticated way. The number of homeless young people (aged 12–18 years) was 26,000 in census week (Chapter 3). After adjusting for missing SAAP data, the census enumerated 6,900 homeless young people on census night. This time we calculated the undercount by comparing the two datasets, by state and territory. This was not the same procedure as last time, but it is a better way of making the correction.

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 different states and territories on census night. Second, one can think about the number of homeless people expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population. This is a fairer way to compare 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. This chapter investigates whether there are differences between the states and compares 1996 and 2001.

6.2 THE 'SOUTHERN STATES'

There were between 40 and 50 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in the 'Southern States' in 2001 (table 6.1), although New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory were at the lower end of the range (40–44 per 10,000), whereas South Australia and Tasmania were at the top (52 per 10,000). The broad pattern is similar to 1996 when the rate was also between 40 and 50 per 10,000 (table 6.1).

6.1 RATES OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	*Vic.*	*SA*	*Tas.*	*ACT*
2001	42.2	43.6	51.6	52.4	39.6
1996	49.4	41.0	48.1	43.9	40.3

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Of course, the number of homeless people was not the same in each state and there are changes over time. Table 6.2 shows that there were 26,700 homeless people in New South Wales on census night 2001, about 2,900 less than in 1996. In Victoria there were 20,300, 2,500 more than in 1996. In South Australia, there were 6,800 people in 1996 compared with 7,600 in 2001. Finally, the numbers were up by 400 in Tasmania and 30 in the Australian Capital Territory. We know that the number of people in the homeless population goes up and down—because people move in and out of homelessness—but the broad pattern in the southern states has not changed significantly.

6.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

	NSW	*Vic.*	*SA*	*Tas.*	*ACT*
2001	26 676	20 305	7 586	2 415	1 229
1996	29 608	17 840	6 837	2 014	1 198

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Table 6.3 shows the distribution of homeless people across different sectors of the population by state. Between 40% and 45% of homeless people were

staying with other households in New South Wales and Victoria (table 6.3). This rises to 55% in South Australia and 65% in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. There were more people in boarding houses in New South Wales (29%) and Victoria (26%), somewhat fewer in South Australia (19%) and Tasmania (11%), and least in the Australian Capital Territory (5%). Finally, about 15% were in SAAP in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania, but this rises to 25% in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. This difference reflects the distribution of housing tenures in the various states as well as the availability of SAAP services.

6.3 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE POPULATION 2001

	NSW (N=26 676)	*Vic. (N=20 305)*	*SA (N=7 586)*	*Tas. (N=2 415)*	*ACT (N=1 229)*
	%	%	%	%	%
Boarding house	29	26	19	11	5
SAAP	15	25	15	13	24
Friends/relatives	45	40	54	66	65
Improvised dwellings	11	9	12	10	6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

6.3 QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The second pattern is in Western Australia and Queensland where there were between 64 and 70 homeless people per 10,000 in 2001, significantly higher than in the Southern States. In 1996, there were between 70 and 80 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in Queensland and Western Australia (table 6.4). The rate was lower in 2001.

6.4 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	Southern States	*Queensland*	*Western Australia*
2001	40–50	69.8	64.0
1996	40–50	77.3	71.5

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Chapter 3 discussed a change in the counting rules in 2001 that reduced the number of improvised dwellings identified in remote communities. This may account for part of the decrease in Queensland and Western Australia. It is also likely that people in the primary population were missed in Western Australia because this state covers such a large area. There were 29 special collectors to cover the Perth/Mandurah area and the special strategy to enumerate the primary population was limited to census day, with most people counted between 10 am and 3 pm (Harvie 2001b, p. 9). It is preferable to count the

homeless population over a number of days, with particular attention to searching for people sleeping out at night.

6.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

	Queensland	*Western Australia*
2001	24 569	11 697
1996	25 649	12 252

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

There were 11,700 homeless people in Western Australia in 2001, compared with 12,200 in 1996 (table 6.5). It seems likely that the number is closer to 12,000 at a typical point in time. There were 24,600 homeless people in Queensland in 2001, compared with 25,600 in 1996. We think the point in time figure is about 25,000.

Table 6.6 shows the distribution of homeless people across different sectors of the population. Just over half of the homeless in Queensland and Western Australia were staying temporarily with other households on census night. Just under one-fifth were in the primary population, and another one-fifth were in boarding houses. About 10% were in SAAP.

6.6 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE POPULATION 2001

	Queensland (N=24 569)	*Western Australia (N=11 697)*
	%	%
Boarding house	22	15
SAAP	9	8
Friends/relatives	53	58
Improvised dwellings	16	19
Total	**100**	**100**

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

6.4 NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory had a significantly higher rate of homelessness than the other states, but a relatively small homeless population in a territory of almost 190,000 people. The change in the counting rules in remote communities had most effect in the Northern Territory where the number of Indigenous people enumerated in improvised dwellings decreased from 6,000 in 1996 to 1,300 in 2001. This is reflected in table 6.7 which shows that the homeless population declined from 9,900 to 5,400, and the rate of homelessness dropped from 523 people per 10,000 to 288. There will be debate about the wisdom of changing the counting rules. However, the important point is that the rate of homelessness is higher in the Northern Territory than in other states. This is

partly explained by Indigenous homelessness, but also 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

	1996	*2001*
Number of homeless people	9 906	5 423
Rate of homelessness	523.1	288.3

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Table 6.8 shows that the homeless population is distributed differently in the Northern Territory. In 2001, 40% of people were identified in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. This is down from 71%, probably because of the change in the counting rules but it is still much higher than in the other states. The comparable figure was 20% in Western Australia, 10–12% in four of the Southern States, and 6% in the Australian Capital Territory.

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

	1996 (N=9 906)	*2001 (N=5 552)*
	%	%
Boarding house	9	17
SAAP	2	4
Friends/relatives	18	39
Improvised dwellings	71	40
Total	**100**	**100**

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

6.5 SUMMARY

In the 1990s, policy makers often assumed that the homeless population was distributed in proportion to the general population. The findings from the 1996 census suggested that this was not the case. The 1996 results indicated that the rate of homelessness was lowest in the Southern States, higher in Queensland and Western Australia, and highest in the Northern Territory.

The findings from the 2001 census are not identical to 1996. Nonetheless, the rate of homelessness in the Southern States was between 40 and 50 per 10,000 of the population in 2001, the same as in 1996. The rate of homelessness was significantly higher in Queensland and Western Australia—between 64 and 70 per 10,000 of the population—although not as high as in 1996. The rate of homelessness remained highest in the Northern Territory where it was 288 per 10,000.

There are four major findings. First, the largest group in the homeless population were staying with other households on census night. This ranged

from 40% of people in Victoria and the Northern Territory to 66% in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. Most homeless people stay with friends and relatives before they approach SAAP services for help.

Second, there is variation in the proportion of the homeless population in boarding houses. It ranged from 6% in the Australian Capital Territory to nearly 30% in New South Wales and Victoria.

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

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*
% in improvised dwellings, tents, sleepers out	11	9	16	12	19	10	40	6

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Third, there is variation in the size of the primary population as measured by the census category, 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' (table 6.10). In the Australian Capital Territory 6% of the homeless were in the primary population, compared with 10% in New South Wales, 20% in Western Australia, and 40% in the Northern Territory.

Fourth, there was significant variation in the proportion of the population in SAAP (table 6.10). It ranged from 4% in the Northern Territory, to just under 10% in Queensland and Western Australia, to 15% in New South Wales and South Australia, to 25% in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. This data is more reliable than the data reported in Chamberlain (1999).

6.10 PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS POPULATION IN SAAP ACCOMMODATION

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*
% in SAAP	15	25	9	15	8	13	4	24

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

The point in time SAAP figures are derived from the ongoing data collection using client start and finish dates. In 1996–97, some agencies recorded start and finish dates inaccurately, inflating the SAAP figures in some states and underestimating in others. The overall SAAP figure was credible in 1996, but the 2001 figures are a more reliable indicator of the numbers in the states and territories.

Finally, the assumption underpinning current funding arrangements is that the homeless population is distributed in the same way as the general population, with the proviso that more resources are given to the smaller states. However, the geographical analysis again revealed three discernible patterns—the Southern States, Queensland and Western Australia with a higher rate, and the Northern Territory with the highest rate. Clearly, the homeless population is distributed in a more complex way than has been assumed.

CHAPTER 7 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS .....

The number of people in boarding houses ranged from 5% of the homeless in the Australian Capital Territory (65 people) to just under 30% in New South Wales and Victoria (7,800 and 5,300 people respectively). Boarding houses are more common in cities such as Melbourne and Sydney and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, it is said that SAAP workers are more likely to send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

This chapter focuses on three issues. First, we develop an operational definition of 'marginal residents' of caravan parks. Then we investigate whether caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. Finally, we compare the social characteristics of marginal caravan parks dwellers with other sub-groups in the homeless population.

7.1 DEFINITIONAL AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

There were about 144,000 people in caravan parks (excluding overseas visitors) on census night and they can be divided into four groups. First, there were people on holiday. They can be identified because they report a usual address elsewhere in Australia. These people were excluded from the analysis.

Second, there were people who have made a lifestyle choice to purchase a caravan and this was their usual address. They can be identified at the question which asks about the tenure of their dwelling. The choices include 'fully owned' and 'being purchased', as well as 'renting'. This group was also taken out.

Third, there were people who were renting their caravan but had a full-time job. This group can be identified at the questions which ask 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. They were also excluded from the analysis.

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

7.1 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS AND NUMBER OF DWELLINGS

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*	***Aust.***
Persons	6 881	3 407	7 989	932	2 503	271	775	110	**22 868**
Dwellings	4 531	2 307	5 132	599	1 506	179	437	82	**14 773**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 7.1 shows that the census identified 22,868 marginal residents of caravan parks in 14,770 dwellings. There were 8,000 people in Queensland, 6,900 in New South Wales, 3,400 people in Victoria, 2,500 in Western Australia, and smaller numbers in the other states and territories.

7.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Some people were in caravan parks that are used for emergency accommodation in regional centres and country towns. Others would have been in caravan parks that are located in industrial or outer suburbs of major capital cities. There is also variation in the spatial distribution of marginal caravan park residents in different states and territories. In this section, we try to get a sense of the overall picture, by comparing the spatial distribution of boarding house residents and caravan park dwellers at the national level.

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

	Boarding House (N=22 877)	*Caravan (N=22 868)*
	%	%
Capital clty	67	22
Regional centre, country town, remote location	33	78
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 7.2 shows that two-thirds (67%) of boarding house residents were in the major capital cities, and one-third (33%) were in regional centres and country towns. In contrast, four-fifths (78%) of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres and country towns and one-fifth (22%) were in capital cities. In these communities SAAP workers sometimes send homeless people to caravan parks if there is no SAAP accommodation available. There are also people who have a sustained problem with homelessness who end up living in caravans on a long-term basis. There is a sense in which caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities.

7.3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Next we compare the social characteristics of people in caravan parks with boarding house residents and those staying with other households. The focus is on census data, but table 7.3 includes an estimate for the number of young people outside of the census net.

7.3 PROPORTION OF PERSONS IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS, BY ACCOMODATION TYPE

	Friends & relatives (N= 42 123)		*Boarding house (N=21 579)*		*Caravan (N=19 025)*	
	%		%		%	
Younger (15–34 years)	68		39		35	
Middle aged (35–54 years)	20	32	34	61	36	65
Older (55 years or older)	12		27		29	
Total	**100**		**100**		**100**	

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 7.3 shows that 68% of the people staying with other households were in the younger age group (15-34 years). In contrast, 65% of those in boarding houses and caravan parks were aged 35 years or older. 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.

7.4 LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY ACCOMODATION TYPE, Excluding persons under 15 years

	Friends & relatives (N=25 749)		*Boarding house (N=18 641)*		*Caravan (N=14 241)*	
	%		%		%	
Employed full-time	27	41	17	26	0	15
Employed part-time	14		9		15	
Unemployed	16		14		25	
Not in labour force	43		60		60	
Total	**100**		**100**		**100**	

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Our definition of marginal caravan park residents only included households where there was no one in full-time employment. Table 7.4 shows that 15% had part-time employment and 85% were either unemployed or outside of the labour force. In contrast, 26% of boarding house residents had either full-time or part-time work, as did 41% of those staying temporarily with other households (census data). People in full-time work (27%) have a good chance of returning to secure accommodation if they have a reasonable income.

7.5 PERSONAL INCOME BY ACCOMMODATION, Excluding persons under 15 years

	Friends & relatives (N=25 172)		*Boarding house (N=18 167)*		*Caravan (N=13 880)*	
	%		%		%	
Less than $300	52		71		73	
$300–$499	19	48	14	29	20	27
$500 or more	29		15		7	
Total	**100**		**100**		**100**	

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 7.5 shows that 70% of boarding house residents and marginal caravan park dwellers reported an income below $300 per week ($15,000 per annum). In contrast, 48% of people staying with other households had an income of $300 per week or more, including 29% reporting an income above $500 per week ($25,000 per annum). They were probably in the group working full-time and their chances of exiting from the homeless population are 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 7.6 shows that 74% of caravan park residents reported a household income of below $400 per week ($20,000 per annum). Three-quarters of this group were below $300 per week and one-quarter were between $300 and $399 per week. In contrast, 32% of those staying with friends or relatives reported a household income of $600 per week or more. This does not guarantee a return to secure accommodation if they have no savings for a bond, one month's rent in advance, and all the other costs involved in setting up a home. Nonetheless, their financial position is stronger than people in caravan parks, and their chances of returning to conventional accommodation are better.

7.6 HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE, Excluding persons under 15 years

	Friends & relatives (N=18 930)	*Caravan (N=10 400)*
	%	%
Less than $400	50	74
$400–$599	18	17
$600 or more	32	9
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

These days policy makers accept that people staying temporarily with other households are part of the secondary population. However, in some quarters there is unease about referring to the long-term residents of boarding houses as the 'tertiary' population. There is also likely to be unease about referring to

some caravan park residents as 'marginally housed'—yet both groups look poorer than people staying with other households. This raises some new issues.

The apparent contradiction is explained by understanding that homelessness is a process. When people lose their accommodation they usually stay temporarily with different 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. They 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.

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION

The analysis in this monograph has been complicated. This chapter summarises our main findings and discusses some matters that should inform policy discussion.

8.1 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

In Australia, two definitions of homelessness have emerged as dominant in recent years. One is the cultural definition of homelessness used by the ABS. The other is the SAAP definition, contained in the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act, 1994*. The SAAP definition is a legislative formulation that identifies who is eligible for services, and includes people at risk of losing their accommodation. The cultural definition is stated in terms of objective circumstances and can be used to enumerate the homeless population.

The cultural definition contends that homelessness is best defined in relation to shared community standards about the minimum accommodation that people have the right to expect in order to live according to the norms of contemporary life. The vast majority of Australians live in suburban houses or self-contained flats, and there is a widespread view that home ownership is the most desirable form of tenure. Almost 90% of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 72% of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2003, Chapter 8). The minimum community standard is a small rental flat—with a bedroom, living room, bathroom and kitchen.

This has led to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness (Chapter 1). Primary homelessness includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks and squatting in derelict buildings. Secondary homelessness covers people residing temporarily with other families; those using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis; and people using various types of emergency accommodation (refuges, hostels for the homeless, night shelters etc.). Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding or rooming houses on a long-term basis. They are homeless because a single room in a boarding house does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard.

The cultural definition is operationalised using four census categories (Chapter 2). Primary homelessness is operationalised using the category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. Secondary homelessness includes all people in SAAP accommodation (hostels, refuges etc.). The secondary population also includes homeless people staying temporarily with other households. They can be identified if they report 'no usual address' on their census form. Tertiary

homelessness is operationalised using the census category 'boarding house, private hotel', although this includes some people in the secondary population who use boarding houses on a short-term basis.

8.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

The purpose of this report was to replicate the analysis carried out for the 1996 Census (Chamberlain 1999), following the same methodology. This was achieved. However, there were a number of changes to ABS procedures in 2001. The full analysis was outlined in Chapter 3. Here we summarise the key points.

People in boarding houses are identified in the census category 'boarding house, private hotel'. However, it is necessary to exclude: owners and staff members who were sleeping over on census night; backpackers who report a usual address overseas; and people who report a usual address elsewhere in Australia. Census collectors sometimes misclassify 'boarding houses', 'hotels' and 'staff quarters' and four conventions were used to correct for these errors. The number in boarding houses was 17,972 compared with 23,300 in 1996.

However, in 2001 there was an important change in ABS procedures. In 2001, the ABS discontinued the practice of telephoning all non-private dwellings classified as 'other' to gather additional information on dwelling type. The number of dwellings in 'other' increased from 536 to 2,784 and the number of persons in 'other' increased from 12,938 to 54,636. Five criteria were used to identify boarding houses misclassified in 'other'. The final figure was 22,877 people in boarding houses, compared with 23,299 in 1996.

Homeless people in the SAAP should be identified in the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. However, youth refuges and women's refuges often look like suburban houses and many of these properties were misclassified as private dwellings in 1996 (Chamberlain 1999, p. 20). The 1996 census figures were replaced with information from the National SAAP Data Collection.

In 2001, the ABS developed a special method to identify SAAP properties, known as the 'green sticker' strategy. The strategy worked best in Victoria where the Department of Human Services (Victoria) provided the ABS with an up to date list of their SAAP and THM properties. This list was used to allocate SAAP and THM properties (identified by green stickers) to a separate data set for Victoria.

In the other states, SAAP agencies were asked to distribute information about the green sticker strategy to their tenants, who were invited to place a green sticker on their completed census form for return to the ABS in a pre-paid envelope. Many people did not comply. The National SAAP Data Collection identified 9,088 people in SAAP accommodation (excluding Victoria) on census night, whereas the Census recorded 4,258 persons. Again census data was replaced with national SAAP data for all states except Victoria and the Northern

Territory. There were 14,251 people in supported accommodation on census night, compared with 12,926 in 1996.

It is common for homeless people in all age groups to stay temporarily with friends or relatives. They are identified at the census 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 form. Thus it is possible to count homeless people staying temporarily with other households—29,439 in 2001, compared with 35,500 in 1996.

The final census category was 'improvised homes, tents, sleepers out'. This is the category where there is greatest risk of undercounting. The final figure was 14,158 individuals, compared with 20,579 in 1996. However, the lower figure was not due to a less efficient operation on the ground. The difference is explained by a change in ABS counting rules.

An instruction in the 1996 Census Guide Book for interviewers in remote Indigenous communities advised collectors: 'To be counted as a house for census purposes a dwelling needs to have both a working shower or bath and a toilet. Ask the person if there is a bath/shower and a toilet'. This criterion appealed to the shared community standard that houses and flats are expected to have a working bathroom and toilet. If the Indigenous householder reported that this was not the case, the dwelling was classified as an improvised home. However, in some Indigenous communities, bathroom and toilet facilities are provided in properly constructed amenities blocks that are used by multiple households. This is argued to be culturally appropriate housing because it accords with the wishes of the local community.

In 2001, the guidelines for census collectors in remote communities were changed. The instructions in the Field Officer's manual (remote Indigenous communities) stated that, 'To be counted as a house for the census a dwelling needs to be a permanent structure built for the purpose of housing people'. Householders were no longer asked whether their dwelling had a working bathroom and toilet. As a result, the number of Indigenous people in 'improvised homes' declined from 9,750 in 1996 to 2,680 in 2001.

At the same time as the ABS was conducting the Census of Population and Housing, we carried out the second national census of homeless school students (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002). School welfare staff identified 8,845 homeless students. We used this figure combined with SAAP data to estimate that there were 26,000 homeless young people aged 12–18 years. This figure was used to correct for undercounting, the same as in 1996.

8.1 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, Census night (final figures)

	1996		*2001*	
	no.	%	no.	%
Boarding houses	23 299	22	22 877	23
SAAP accommodation	12 926	12	14 251	14
Friends and relatives	48 500	46	48 614	49
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	20 579	20	14 158	14
Total	**105 304**	**100**	**99 900**	**100**

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Table 8.1 compares the number of homeless people identified at the 1996 census with the number enumerated in 2001, including the adjustments for undercounting at both censuses. There were 100,000 people on both occasions. 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 100,000.

It is also important to know how many households are in the homeless population, because service providers deal primarily with households rather than individuals. Chapter 4 investigated this issue. It is easy to identify the number of households in private dwellings, because household forms collect data on family relationships, but there is only indirect information on the number of households in non-private dwellings.

The 2001 analysis identified 74,280 households, compared with 72,850 in 1996. On both occasions, single people were the largest group in the population (78% of households in 2001). Couples accounted for 13% of households and families were 9%. There were 6,750 homeless families on census night, but they included 23,000 people (9,500 parents and 13,400 children), or one-quarter of the homeless population.

8.3 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The geographical distribution of the homeless population across the states and territories should inform how resources are distributed. SAAP has existed as a joint Commonwealth-state programme since 1985 and it remains the major government response to homelessness. There have been four bilateral agreements, each covering a five year period. The most recent (SAAP IV) applies from 2000 to the end of 2004. The distribution of funds in the SAAP program reflects its funding history since 1985, and decisions about need that have relied on data sources about 'disadvantage'. Until 1999, there was no reliable information on the number of homeless. The assumption over most of that time was that the homeless population was distributed in proportion to the general population.

There have now been two counts of the population, taken five years apart. Table 8.2 shows that there are three patterns. First, there were between 40 and 50 homeless people per 10,000 of the population in the 'Southern States' in 2001. The rate was also between 40 and 50 per 10,000 in these states in 1996. The second pattern is in Western Australia and Queensland where there were between 64 and 70 per 10,000 in 2001, slightly lower than in 1996.

8.2 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10,000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	*Vic.*	*SA*	*Tas.*	*ACT*	*Qld*	*WA*	*NT*
2001	42.2	43.6	51.6	52.4	39.6	69.8	64.0	288.3
1996	49.4	41.0	48.1	43.9	40.3	77.3	71.5	523.1

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

The change in the counting rules in remote communities had most effect in the Northern Territory where the number of Indigenous people enumerated in improvised dwellings dropped from 6,000 in 1996 to 1,300 in 2001. The homeless population went from 9,900 in 1996 to 5,400 in 2001, and the rate of homelessness dropped from 523 per 10,000 to 288. Nevertheless, the rate of homelessness in the Northern Territory remains significantly higher than in other states.

8.3 HOMELESS PEOPLE BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*
2001	26 676	20 305	24 569	7 586	11 697	2 415	5 423	1 229
1996	29 608	17 840	25 649	6 837	12 252	2 014	9 906	1 198

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001; SAAP Client Collection, 1996 and 2001; National Census of Homeless School Students, 1994 and 2001.

Table 8.3 shows the actual number of homeless in each state and territory in 1996 and 2001. There were 26,700 homeless people in New South Wales on census night 2001, about 2,900 less than in 1996. The number was also slightly down in Queensland (from 25,650 to 24,570), and in Western Australia (from 12,250 to 11,700). In Victoria there were 20,300 homeless people, roughly 2,500 more than in 1996. In South Australia, there were 6,800 people in 1996 compared with 7,600 in 2001. Finally, the numbers were up by 400 in Tasmania and 30 in the Australian Capital Territory.

8.4 TOTAL RECURRENT FUNDING ALLOCATIONS, SAAP, 2001–02, AND PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Total recurrent allocation		*Homeless population*	
	$'000	%	no.	%
NSW	94 517	33.2	26 676	26.7
Vic.	65 435	23.0	20 305	20.3
Qld	44 587	15.6	24 569	24.6
WA	26 908	9.4	11 697	11.7
SA	24 743	8.7	7 586	7.6
Tas.	11 554	4.1	2 415	2.4
ACT	9 916	3.5	1 229	1.2
NT	7 379	2.6	5 423	5.4
Aust.	**285 039**	**100.0**	**99 900**	**100.0**

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002a, p. 5).

Table 8.4 compares the proportion of SAAP funding allocated to different states and territories, and their respective shares of the homeless population. The most notable anomaly is Queensland which received 16% of SAAP funding, but had 25% of homeless people.

This raises some important questions for policy and planning. Over many years, decisions have been taken about how funds ought to be shared across the Commonwealth using overall population figures. The size of the homeless population is larger than was previously thought and the scale of the program response would be one issue. The National Data Collection Agency reports that 'SAAP agencies are operating to capacity with respect to accommodation. The low daily turnover rate for accommodation and the relatively low referral rate for those requiring immediate accommodation suggest that finding accommodation in a SAAP agency may be difficult' (AIHW 2002b, p. 26). The demand for supported accommodation is a complex issue because only some people in the homeless population will be seeking accommodation on any night. There may also be 'discouraged accommodation seekers' who no longer request assistance because they believe services are full. There may also be variation across different communities. One issue for policy makers is the extent to which the provision of supported accommodation sufficiently matches the population in need.

8.4 HOMELESSNESS IS A PROCESS

This report provides a point in time count of the homeless population. Typically homelessness is where people are forced to move from one temporary arrangement to another, because they have no home of their own. An important concept is the 'homeless career'. The 'homeless career' draws attention to the process of becoming homeless as people pass through various phases before they develop a self-identity as a homeless person. In *Homeless*

Careers: Pathways in and out of Homelessness, MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) argue that there are three fundamental career paths, amid an enormous diversity and complexity of individual cases in the homeless population.

The first typology is the 'youth' career that focuses on teenagers forced to leave their family home prior to securing an independent income or position in the labour market. The ideal-typical model traces a 'career' from young people at risk to chronic homelessness. The first tangible indicator of 'homelessness' is when a young person leaves home for at least one night without their parent's permission. Others begin to leave home on a regular basis. This is the 'in and out' stage and typically these young people stay with friends in their community of origin.

Most young people have their first experience of homelessness while they are still at school (O'Connor 1989; Crane and Brannock 1996; MacKenzie and Chamberlain 1995). Students who drop out of school are likely to become involved in the homeless sub-culture. Some make the 'transition to chronicity' where homelessness becomes a 'way of life' (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1994; Visano; 1990). Chronic homelessness is the 'end' of the homeless career in terms of the theoretical model. However, young people may remain homeless for very long periods of time.

There are three pathways into adult homelessness. The first is the 'housing crisis career'. This draws attention to the fact that for many adults it is poverty—and accumulating debt—that underpins the slide into homelessness. There is no 'in and out' stage in the housing crisis career. Once adults lose their accommodation there is a sharp break and their problems usually get worse. Many move into the homeless population for a sustained period of time and some adapt to homelessness as a 'way of life'. The second career path into the adult population focuses on family breakdown, particularly as a result of domestic violence. This career trajectory has some similarities with the youth career, because it involves an 'in and out stage', but the policy implications for early intervention are different.

The third point of entry into the adult population is the transition from youth to adult homelessness. This is not a separate career typology, but a continuation of the youth homeless career into adult homelessness. There is no opportunity for early intervention with this segment of the adult population, because they are already chronically homeless. MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) found that many of these young adults had issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health and a significant number had contact with Juvenile Justice. They were unemployed, extremely poor and highly marginalised. At this stage, intensive support is required. This can take a long time, a lot of resources, and it is a challenging and demanding area of practice for workers. It is also far more costly than early intervention, and the rate of success is lower.

The career framework sensitises policy makers to the range of possible interventions along the different career trajectories. Most importantly, early

intervention programs have to reach homeless people at the earliest stages of the career.

For young people, early intervention is about facilitating family reconciliation and it involves working with parents as well as young people. Once young people make a 'permanent break', then the opportunity for early intervention has passed. However, schools still have a critical role to play because they can support young people who want to remain at school and make the transition to independent living. This is 'early intervention' in a broader sense of the term and it is equally important.

For adults experiencing housing crisis, early intervention is about providing assistance to people before they lose their accommodation. In this context, early intervention might take a number of different forms, including financial counselling, emergency relief, or assistance with applications for public housing. Most importantly, people in housing crisis will need financial assistance either to avoid eviction or to secure alternative accommodation. Unfortunately, some people do not approach agencies until they are facing imminent eviction. An obvious site for the delivery of early intervention services is Centrelink, because most people who experience a housing crisis are also receiving a government pension.

In cases of family breakdown where domestic violence is involved, it is more difficult to deliver 'early intervention' because many victims do not request assistance until they are forced to leave. Women escaping domestic violence may return to the family home a number of times to try to resolve family issues. In this context, early intervention involves family counselling to help couples work through their difficulties. Otherwise, a crisis response means supporting victims of domestic violence to move to alternative, secure accommodation. There are prevention programs that take the form of public campaigns promoting the unacceptability of domestic violence. Between broad prevention campaigns and crisis intervention, there appears to be a service gap where early intervention should fit. This is underdeveloped because there is no obvious institutional site—such as schools or Centrelink—to identify families at risk.

8.5 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In terms of the homeless career process, most people typically approach SAAP services after exhausting their own support networks. About 90% of clients either receive government benefits or have no income. Only a small proportion have employment of any kind. However, 48% of people staying with friends and relatives have at least one person working, and 32% of this group have a weekly income of $600 or more. The inference is that some will never approach a SAAP service for assistance. A working household is likely to recover secure accommodation providing their employment continues.

SAAP assists homeless people to achieve safe and secure accommodation (National Evaluation of SAAP 1999, p. 2). The 1998 SAAP evaluation team found

that most clients were either unemployed or not in the labour force when they left SAAP. They concluded that:

> Overall, the perceptions are that significant and often insurmountable barriers exist for many clients to achieve independent living and self-sufficiency … Major concerns were expressed about the inadequacy of existing arrangements with respect to 'entry' and 'exit' points from SAAP. (National Evaluation of SAAP 1999, p. 57).

8.5 TYPE OF ACCOMODATION AFTER SUPPORT IN SAAP

	2000–01 (N=70 800)		*2001–02 (N=75 300)*	
	%		%	
Independent Housing				
Private rental	20	40	19	40
Public housing	16		17	
Owner occupied	4		4	
Marginal accomodation				
Boarding with another household	12		12	
Homeless				
SAAP service	18	48	19	48
Friend's place (rent free)	12		12	
Rooming house/hostel/caravan	7		8	
Institution (psychiatric hospital etc.)	5		4	
Streets/squat/car/tent etc.	3		3	
Other	3		2	
Total	**100**		**100**	

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2001, p. 45; 2002a, p. 49).

Table 8.5 shows that 40% of SAAP clients went to independent housing after their final support period in a SAAP service in 2000–01 and 2001–02. Just under half (48%) remained homeless: 19% had gone to another SAAP service; 12% were staying at a friend's place, rent free; 8% had gone to a rooming house, hostel or caravan; 4% were in institutions (psychiatric hospital, the 'detox' etc.); and 3% had no accommodation (streets, squats, car, tent). Another 12% look marginal—they were boarding with another family, often short-term. A majority of people who exit from SAAP go to other sectors of the homeless population.

There were about 100,000 homeless people on census night, but it is difficult to make an overall judgment about the temporal characteristics of the population. There are some people who will experience a relatively short period of homelessness, and homeless young people are more likely to be in this group. For adults, homelessness is more likely to be a longer experience. Some try to return to conventional accommodation, but they are usually in debt and do not have the financial resources to rent their own property. Others have been

evicted and do not have the appropriate references to re-enter private rental. There are long waiting lists for public housing in many areas. Overall, an estimated 60%–70% of people in improvised dwellings, boarding houses and SAAP experience a sustained period of homelessness (six months or longer), as well as probably about half of the adults staying temporarily with other households. Temporality is an important issue that underpins the range of program responses.

8.6 BOARDING HOUSES AND CARAVAN PARKS

In major capital cities, it is common for service providers to send homeless people to boarding houses if there is no SAAP accommodation available. There are also people who have a sustained problem with homelessness who end up living in boarding houses on a long-term basis (tertiary homelessness). However, boarding houses are more common in major capital cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers are more likely to send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation, and people who have a sustained problem with homelessness are also more likely to end up in caravans.

Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting their caravan but no one in the dwelling had a full-time job, and they were at their usual address. Table 8.6 shows that the census identified 22,868 marginal residents of caravan parks using this definition. There were 8,000 people in Queensland, 6,900 in New South Wales, 3,400 people in Victoria, 2,500 in Western Australia, and smaller numbers in the other states and territories.

8.6 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS AND NUMBER OF DWELLINGS

	NSW	*Vic.*	*Qld*	*SA*	*WA*	*Tas.*	*NT*	*ACT*	***Aust.***
Persons	6 881	3 407	7 989	932	2 503	271	775	110	**22 868**
Dwellings	4 531	2 307	5 132	599	1 506	179	437	82	**14 773**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Two-thirds (67%) of boarding house residents were in the major capital cities, and one-third (33%) were in regional centres and country towns (table 8.7). In contrast, four-fifths (78%) of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres and country towns and one-fifth (22%) were in capital cities. There is a sense in which caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. This is an additional issue for policy makers to take into account when deciding on the allocation of resources to local areas.

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

	Boarding House (N=22 877)	*Caravan (N=22 868)*
	%	%
Capital city	67	22
Regional centre, country town, remote location	33	78
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

8.7 CONCLUSION

Until recently, there were no reliable statistics on the number of homeless people in Australia, but the major empirical studies in the 1960s and early 1970s suggested that the homeless population was mostly male, and disproportionately in the older age groups (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973/1994). The analysis in this paper indicates that there are now more women in the population, more young people, and a significant minority of families—although there are still homeless people who conform to the old skid row stereotype. It is also clear that the population has increased over the past 40 years, but there is no quantitative data on the rate of increase.

There are a number of structural factors that account for this increase, but one is particularly important. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the unemployment rate was never less than 5% and for much of the time it has ranged between 7% and 10% (ABS 1978–1999). The proportion of people below the Henderson poverty line has increased since the mid-1970s, although there is debate about the exact extent of the increase and how poverty is best measured (Saunders 1994; King 1998; Harding, Lloyd and Greenwell 2000; Saunders and Tsumori 2002). Some low income households can survive financial crises, because they have relatives or friends who assist them, but a minority slide into homelessness. The increase in low income households underpins the increase in homelessness over the past two decades.

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