



Summary of key findings

Official statistical definition of homelessness (Table 1.AUS)

In accordance with the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical definition, when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement is in a dwelling that is inadequate or has no tenure; if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

Latest national estimates of homelessness (Table 2.AUS)

- 122 494 individuals, representing 0.48% of the total population (2021)
- 44% are women, 56% are men
- Point-in-time count, based on the Australian Census of Population and Housing.
- ETHOS Light groups included:
 - ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces
 - ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
 - ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women's refuges)
 - ETHOS 4: People in institutions
 - ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
 - ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

NB: The headline estimate also includes people living in severely overcrowded dwellings.

Legal framework to collect data on homelessness (Table 3.AUS)

There is no legal obligation to collect data on homelessness in Australia.

National homelessness strategy (Table 4.AUS)

Australia does not have a national homelessness strategy, but regional and local strategies exist.

Approaches to collect data on homelessness (Table 5.AUS)

- Census of Population and Housing: Census with a specific homelessness enumeration strategy (Table 5.1.AUS)
- Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC): Information management system on people experiencing homelessness (Table 5.2.AUS)

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Table 1.AUS. Official statistical definition of homelessness

Homelessness	<p>When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement: is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.</p> <p>Homelessness as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is divided into six categories. These categories comprise of people living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out; in supported accommodation; temporarily with other households; in boarding houses; in temporary lodgings; and in severely crowded dwellings.</p>
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Table 2.AUS. Data on people experiencing homelessness

National data, presented according to [ETHOS Light Typology](#)

Headline estimate of homelessness (Individuals)	% of total population	ETHOS 1 People living rough	ETHOS 2 People in emergency accommodation	ETHOS 3 People in accommodation for the homeless	ETHOS 4 People living in institutions	ETHOS 5 People living in unconventional dwellings	ETHOS 6 People staying with family/friends
122 494 56% men 44% women	0.48%	7 639	Included under ETHOS 3	24 288	Not included	Included under ETHOS 1	16 601

Type of count: Point-in-time Flow

Year: 2021

Included in headline estimate: Children (<18)

Temporary accommodation for: Asylum seekers Refugees Victims/survivors of domestic violence

Note: The headline estimate also includes people living in severely overcrowded dwellings.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census of Population and Housing

Table 3.AUS. Legal framework to collect data on homelessness

Law that governs data collection on homelessness	<p>Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975</p> <p>Census and Statistics Act 1905</p> <p>Australian institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987</p>
Legal obligations	<p>There are no specific legal obligations relating to data collection for people experiencing homelessness. However, all individuals in Australia must respond to the census, including people experiencing homelessness. The census must take place every five years. Furthermore, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which is responsible for the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), must collect and produce health and welfare-related information in statistics.</p>

Table 4.AUS. National homelessness strategy

National homelessness strategy in place	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, but regional and/or local strategies exist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
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Table 5.AUS. Approaches to collect data on homelessness

5.1.AUS.Census of Population and Housing	
Description	
<p>The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census estimates the number of people experiencing homelessness in August of the year of the Census (latest 2021). Letters and Census paper forms are delivered in some areas, whilst visits are made to households in other areas. Households complete the Census form and submit it online or send it back through the mail. The Census employs a homeless enumeration strategy that targets three streams of people on Census night: those who were not in a dwelling; those in a private dwelling; and those in a non-private dwelling (people in supported accommodation for the homeless, living in boarding houses, temporary lodgings).</p>	
Type of count generated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input type="checkbox"/> Flow (period)	Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Census • Street Count
Lead authority(ies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Bureau of Statistics 	Source(s) of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General population
Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National level 	Depth of data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic characteristics and living situation
Frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every 5 years 	
ETHOS Light groups included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women's refuges) <input type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 4: People in institutions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing) <p>Note: Each ETHOS Light group includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as "included" in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted.</p>	
Notes Census Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au) Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)	



5.2.AUS.Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC)

Description

The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) provided by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) collects information about people who are referred to, or seek assistance from, specialist homelessness services (SHS) agencies. The SHSC captures information on people seeking services from agencies that receive funding under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). All agencies that receive funding under the NHHA to provide specialist homelessness services are in scope for the SHS collection, although some agencies are exempt from supplying data. The AIHW receives and aggregates data from over 1,700 specialist homelessness services agencies across Australia on a monthly basis.

Type of count generated	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Point-in-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flow (period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information management system on people experiencing homelessness
Lead authority(ies)	Source(s) of information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist homelessness services agencies
Scope	Depth of data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic characteristics (state, age, sex) Additional breakdowns by specific target groups, the reasons clients sought assistance, homelessness status, clients receiving financial support for short-term accommodation and nights in short-term accommodation
Frequency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly 	

ETHOS Light groups included

- ETHOS 1: Living on the streets, in public spaces
- ETHOS 2: Emergency accommodation (e.g., shelters)
- ETHOS 3: Accommodation for the homeless (e.g., hostels and women’s refuges)
- ETHOS 4: People in institutions
- ETHOS 5: People in non-conventional dwellings (e.g., caravans, cars or tents)
- ETHOS 6: Living temporarily with others in conventional housing (e.g., sofa-surfing)

Note: Each [ETHOS Light group](#) includes one or more sub-categories of living situations. ETHOS Light groups are considered as “included” in the data collection approach if at least one of the sub-categories is counted

Notes

- www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/specialist-homelessness-services-collection/validata
- www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data
- www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/overview

